

Gnadenthal

1880-1980

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Aerial view of Gnadenthal — 1954

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Gnadenenthal

1880-1980

ISBN 0-88925-386-2

Published by
Gnadenhal History Book Committee
Box 367
Winkler, Manitoba
R0G 2X0

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1982

Printed by
D. W. Friesen & Sons, Ltd.
Altona, Manitoba

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Foreword

The objective of this book is to present significant historical events of the first hundred years in the village of Gnadenthal. Emphasis has been placed on accuracy and, where deemed necessary, on reasonable interpretation. It seemed important to do so because it was hoped that future generations will benefit from the facts presented as well as from the portrayal of life styles committed to the service of God — regardless of political or financial circumstances.

A committee of eight present and former Gnadenthal residents accepted the task of producing the book. They organized the materials into two time periods: 1880-1924 and 1924-1982. The reason for this decision was that a major turnover of population was complete by the end of 1924 so that one is able to identify a drastic change in attitude towards education, religious expression, and social behaviour from 1924 and on.

It was decided that 1880-1924 would be dealt with in Chapter I and that 1924-1982 should be presented in Chapters, II, III, IV and V with Chapter VI reflecting on the Centennial Celebrations. Responsibility for research and related activities was delegated as follows:

Paul F. Peters — Chapter I, Treasurer — 1880-1924

Ruth Sawatzky Bock — Chapter II, Co-Ordinator of Photos — Religion

Ben Sawatzky — Chapter III — Education

Mary Ellen Neufeld — Chapter IV — Agriculture

Margaret Peters Froese — Chapter V — Social and Cultural Aspects

Mary Ellen Neufeld — Chapter VI, Distribution of Books — Centennial Celebrations

Elma Penner Dyck — Secretary

Jacob P. Redekopp — Chairman

Each committee member set up his or her own

mode of operation. For instance, Paul F. Peters engaged the services of Dr. John Friesen, Professor at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, to do the research for Chapter I. Mary Ellen Neufeld relied heavily on the services of Elizabeth Dueck Peters and John Kuhl. All committee members received valuable information and help from many sources.

Much discussion took place before a decision was made on how the final copy was to be written. One option was to have each researcher write his or her chapter. This was negated because it was considered important that one style of writing should be maintained throughout the book. This seemed good in theory but became difficult in actual practice. The result was that the committee as a whole wrote the book. In the process the quality of style may have been sacrificed for quality of historical reflection.

Elisabeth Peters, Professor at the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba, accepted the invitation to be the editor. All final copy went from her to the printer. She brought to this task a love for Mennonite faith, tradition and historical development. Her knowledge of Mennonite history and familiarity with southern Manitoba was invaluable.

The committee became a model in co-operative effort. Personality differences enhanced rather than distracted. Peals of laughter mingled with the anguish over lack of energy, time and the problems of interpretation made for interesting work sessions. The Gnadenthal spirit of working together for a common cause became exemplified in the relationship of the committee members.

The book is presented to the public with confidence and anxiety. Confidence because the material has historical significance, and anxiety that someone, or something, may have inadvertently been omitted.

J. P. Redekopp
Chairman

Introduction

The story of Gnadenthal is the story of its people. Its charm lies not only in the serenity of its rural setting, but rather in the unique quality of life which has long been associated with the village and its residents.

Gnadenthal is a unique village. No other settlement has so energetically endorsed religious and cultural concerns in the face of great economic difficulties which beset its people at various times. The early as well as the later inhabitants of the village came of healthy, robust stock, and survived the demands of early pioneering as well as the trauma of persecution in Russia in the 1920s. Throughout these trying times they kept alive the flame of intellectual curiosity, spiritual striving, and aesthetic experience: "Der Mensch lebt nicht von Brot allein," was the maxim of the "Gnadenthalers" as they abandoned themselves to the higher things of life.

Gnadenthal was the only village where two churches, the Mennonite Brethren and the Mennonitengemeinde, worshipped and worked together in harmony for years. The young people participated in the same church activities, and carried forth the heritage of the older generation — venerable men and women of integrity and format, whose unswerving faith and Christian ideals laid the foundation for the spiritual and cultural pattern of life in the quiet village.

"Education" was a most meaningful concept, the teachers were selected with great care. Consequently many young students continued their education, and Gnadenthal can boast of producing the greatest number of teachers in any single Mennonite village in southern Manitoba.

Many economic problems have been experienced in Gnadenthal since its inception in the 1880s. Today, due to dedicated hard work, perseverance, the employment of modern farming methods, and unflinching courage, the village is flourishing with many "firsts" in agricultural undertakings.

But there were other areas, cultural and spiritual, in which the villagers excelled. The "Literatur und Drama Abende," festivals and Sangerfeste, af

forded opportunities for performances in which many participants attained a degree of excellence. Cause or reason for this unusual competence seems to me to have been the perseverance with which the people of Gnadenthal pursued their cultural goals.

There was always singing in Gnadenthal — fine singing, that stirred the soul and warmed the heart. There was always music, too, and as a little girl I envied the members of the Gnadenthal orchestra when they performed in our town. How the bright silk ribbon, which a wistful girl had tied to the neck of her guitar, bounced and bobbed happily to some joyous melodies as the young musicians accompanied the lilting tunes of the violinists. Many of the musicians have left their happy village, but no matter where they have gone, their musical heritage lives on and on and forms wide eddies in the community around them. Today some of them have international repute.

Dedication to a cause and commitment to a pursuit also characterized the committee that brought into being the history of Gnadenthal under the able chairmanship of Professor Jacob Redekopp. The ability of the committee members to work together, unselfishly and with great tolerance, in research and meticulous presentation of data has amazed me many times. Perhaps this is a relic of their youth, which they remember with love and sunlit clarity.

It has been a privilege indeed to work with men and women of this calibre, and to witness the literary shaping of their past into the burgeoning present and future. And so, as an outsider, yet somehow very much a part of this chronicle, I share in a sense the wistful nostalgia which really behooves only a bonafide "Gnadenthaler" as he reads the annals of Gnadenthal's history:

O piper, pipe that tune again,
O minstrel, sing thy lays
Feign would I savour just once more
The sweetness of those days.

Elisabeth Peters

Winnipeg, the 28th of October, 1982

Acknowledgements

We would like to express our appreciation to photographers Werner Ens, Reinland; Ray Peters, Gnadenthal; George T. Sawatzky, Winnipeg; Elmer Heinrichs of the Red River Valley Echo, their work is much in evidence throughout the pages of this book.

We also wish to thank the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg and its archivist, Lawrence Klippenstein, for pictures, maps, and research assistance; Mennonite Brethren Archives, Winnipeg, and archivist Ken Reddig for assistance in research; William Schroeder for the map of Fürstentland, Sandra Klassen for the map of Gnadenthal,

Manitoba, and Jakob Mantler for the map of Gnadenthal, Baratov; the Canadian Mennonite Bible College for its kind permission to use their facilities; the many people who so kindly submitted to interviews and supplied us with valuable information and pictures. We also appreciate the picture excerpts from "In the Fullness of Time" by Dr. Walter Quiring and Helen Bartel, edited by Aaron Klassen.

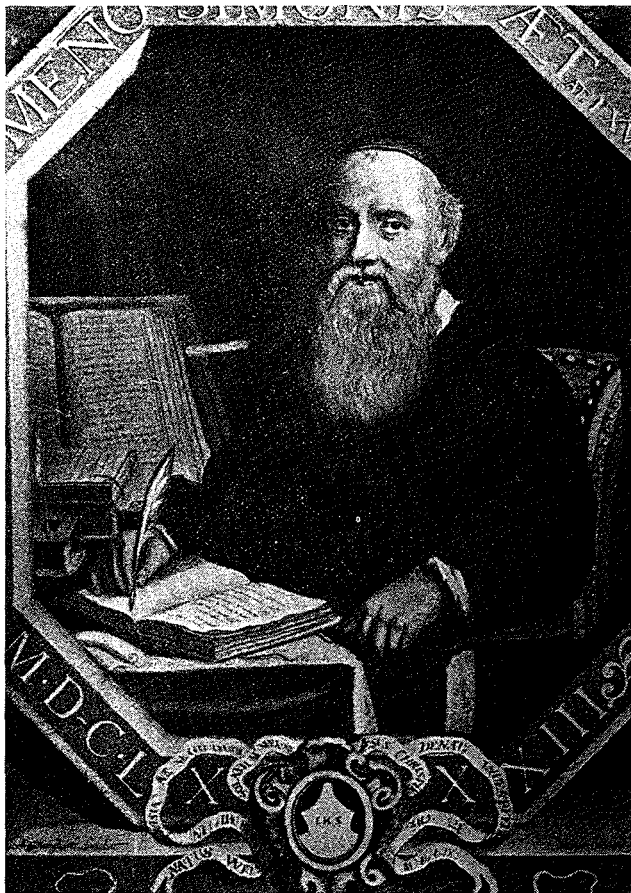
Finally, a word of thanks to the long-suffering families of the committee members, whose patience and forbearance has been exemplary.

Gnadenthal History Book Committee

CHAPTER I

Gnadenenthal 1880-1924

In 1880 between seventeen and twenty young men founded the village of Gnadenenthal in southern Manitoba. Within a few years all of them had married, had built a farmstead (Wirtschaft), and had established a village within the Reinländer Church settlement. Due to the rich, fertile black soil, the hard work of the settlers, and the co-operative system of farming they followed, the difficulties of the pioneer years were gradually conquered.



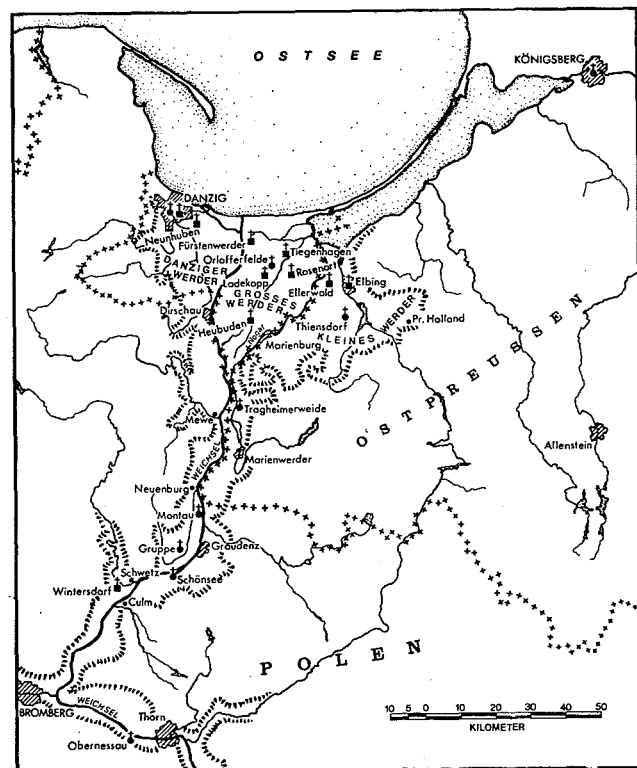
Menno Simons (1496-1561) was born in The Netherlands. A Catholic priest by profession he converted to the faith of the Anabaptists in 1536. He was soon recognized as a leader. Gradually his followers came to be known as Mennonites. Through his writings and pacifist teachings Menno Simons has exerted a significant influence on the Mennonite people.

Who were these “Gnadenthalers”? Where did they come from? What forces had shaped them?

Background

Gnadenenthal roots go back to the sixteenth century reformation era. The identity of their forebears was shaped in the Vistula River valley and delta areas where Dutch settlers, who had been converted to

THE DANZIG AREA



- ⚡ Flämisch Congregations
- ⚡ Friesian Congregations
- Cities
- xxxxx Political Boundaries 1918-1945
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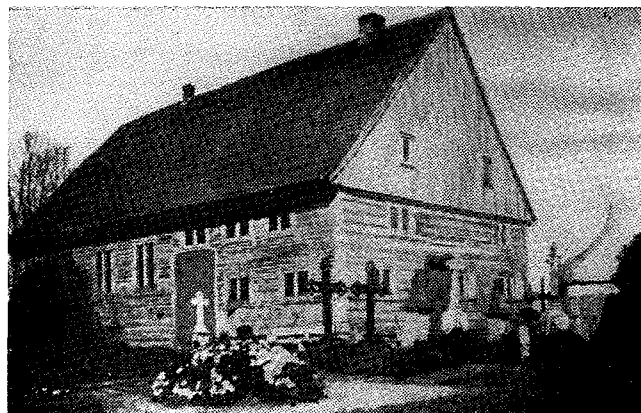
Religious persecution caused many Dutch Mennonites to flee east into the Danzig-West Prussia region. Here they settled on the marshy deltas of the Vistula and Nogat Rivers. At the time this area was partly under Prussian, partly under Polish rule. Over the years the Mennonites became known as excellent farmers. Through massive drainage projects they successfully converted the swamplands into productive farmland.

Anabaptism, as well as Anabaptists from other regions of Western Europe, had established a form of Mennonitism which was unique. Many of them had become materially independent again after years of persecution when they found protection on the estates of noblemen and banking families.¹

From the 1530s onward there were Anabaptists in these areas. They followed the pacifist teachings of Menno Simons, and even took his name to indicate their identification with his views of pacifism, the visible church, discipline, and economic sharing. It was in this small region, within what was Poland at that time, that the Mennonites developed many of the traits which characterized them throughout their subsequent migrations. During the Polish era, from the 1530s to the 1770s, they were not granted the rights and privileges of citizenship, and thus came to see themselves as a people whose primary loyalty was not to a nation, but to Christ and His church. It was here that they learned to see the church as central to the Christian faith. Following Menno, they emphasized the purity of the church which was to be attained by exercising discipline and even excommunication in severe cases. But they also believed in the doctrine of repentance and the re-acceptance of excommunicated members back into full church membership. They followed Menno's views of a visible, holy church, and believed that Christian salvation included a commitment to share with fellow believers both spiritually and physically.

It was during this Polish era that they developed the leadership (Lehrdienst) system of Ältester, "Lehrer" or ministers, and deacons. Elected Ältester had the responsibility to baptize and serve communion, and were responsible for the religious life of churches under their care. Ministers, called "Lehrer" (teachers), had the task of preaching and teaching. During most of this era Mennonites were not allowed to have church buildings, so their services were held in homes, barns or sheds. The Lehrer either stood or sat behind ordinary tables, not pulpits. Deacons had the responsibility of taking care of the financial and physical needs of people in the congregation. The office of "Vorsänger" arose early in the 18th century when Mennonites were again given permission to engage in group singing which had not been practised for years. The German Pietist and Lutheran hymn books which they chose had largely unfamiliar tunes, and thus men were chosen who could lead the congregation in singing. Song leaders did not conduct, but rather learned the tunes and sang vigorously in leading the congregation.²

Toward the middle of the eighteenth century Mennonite congregations were given the right to build meeting houses. They were, however, required



This church in Fürstenwerder, built in 1768, was typical of the Mennonite churches in West Prussia.

to keep the church buildings plain and unobtrusive. It was also during this same time period, the mid 18th century, that Danzig and West Prussian Mennonites changed the language of their worship services from Dutch to High German. For everyday discussion Low-German had already supplanted the Dutch language since the latter part of the 17th century.³

West Prussian-Danzig Mennonites were strongly committed to peace and non-violence. In time of war, when they refused military service, government officials demanded frequent and large cash payments. Because Mennonites were not citizens, they were unable to protect themselves against this extortion. Finally in 1642 they negotiated a *Privilegium* with the Polish king Vladislav IV⁴ in which Mennonites agreed to pay a fixed annual sum of money to the Polish king in exchange for the right to live in the kingdom of Poland as pacifist Mennonites. They were allowed to organize their own schools — a matter of great importance to them, since, with the heavy emphasis on the centrality of the Bible, functional literacy for both men and women was essential. The schools also served the purpose of instilling values and beliefs in their young people.

In 1772 Prussia, Austria and Russia helped themselves to large portions of Poland in the first division of Poland, Prussia receiving that part of West Prussia in which the majority of Mennonites lived. But Prussia was slow in granting Mennonites exemption from military service. When it finally did so, it demanded a large annual cash payment, and forbade Mennonites to acquire any additional land. This caused the rapid development of a landless group, which constituted a crisis in the West Prussian churches.

In consequence, Mennonites during the latter part of the eighteenth century were receptive to the invitations of Catherine II of Russia to settle in the newly conquered steppes of the Ukraine. From 1788 to the 1830s thousands of Mennonites migrated to the

Ukraine and founded the two settlements near the Chortitza and Molotshnaya Rivers.

Settling in the Ukraine

Mennonites entered the Ukraine upon promises entailed in a *Privilegium* agreed to by the Russian government and published in 1800 by Czar Paul I.⁵ The conditions of the *Privilegium* were similar to those granted to every group which emigrated to the Ukraine. For Mennonites the key terms were exemption from military service, the right to exercise their religion as they wished, and control over their own schools. The Russian government wished to insulate its own people from the influences of these foreign colonists, and with these provisions attempted to maintain the necessary distance from them.

The people who settled in Chortitza⁶ pioneered Mennonite life in the Ukrainian steppes. They made the early mistakes. They suffered through the pioneer years, they paved the way for future settlers. Gradually they established not only church organizations according to the pattern they had had in the Vistula region, but also developed a comprehensive

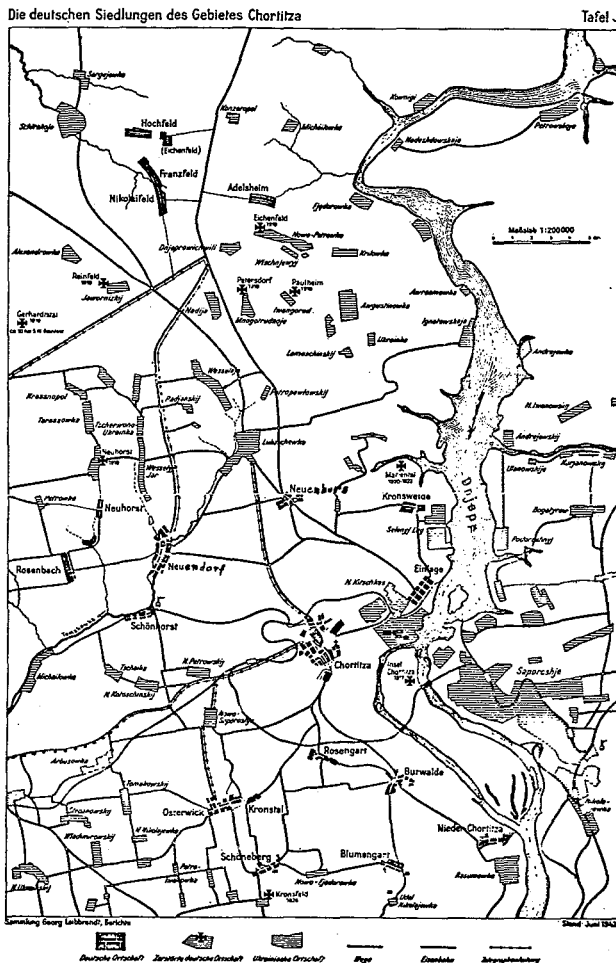
local civil structure which was responsible for schools, village functions, and local justice. The Mennonites did not object to this semi-autonomous civil structure which was required by the Russian government, nor did they see this as a violation of their practice of separation of church and state.

In the settlements in the Ukraine, Mennonites developed the single street or "row" villages (Reihendörfer) with farmsteads on both sides of a central street. This village, adopted from the feudal village form, became their distinctive pattern of community organization, and influenced their religious, social, economic, and political relationships. The settlements of Chortitza and Molotschna were established according to this pattern, each "Wirt" (farmer) receiving sixty-five desjatins of land. As the populations in these settlements increased, new villages were established. Eventually all the land was taken up however, and there emerged in the Russian Mennonite society a new class, the landless, or "Aunwohna". A temporary solution to the problem had been found in the establishment of daughter colonies such as Bergthal in 1836, Fürstenland founded in 1864-70,⁷ and others on crown lands. The prospect of acquiring large land grants at a nominal price in Manitoba in the 1870s held rich promise for an agrarian society.

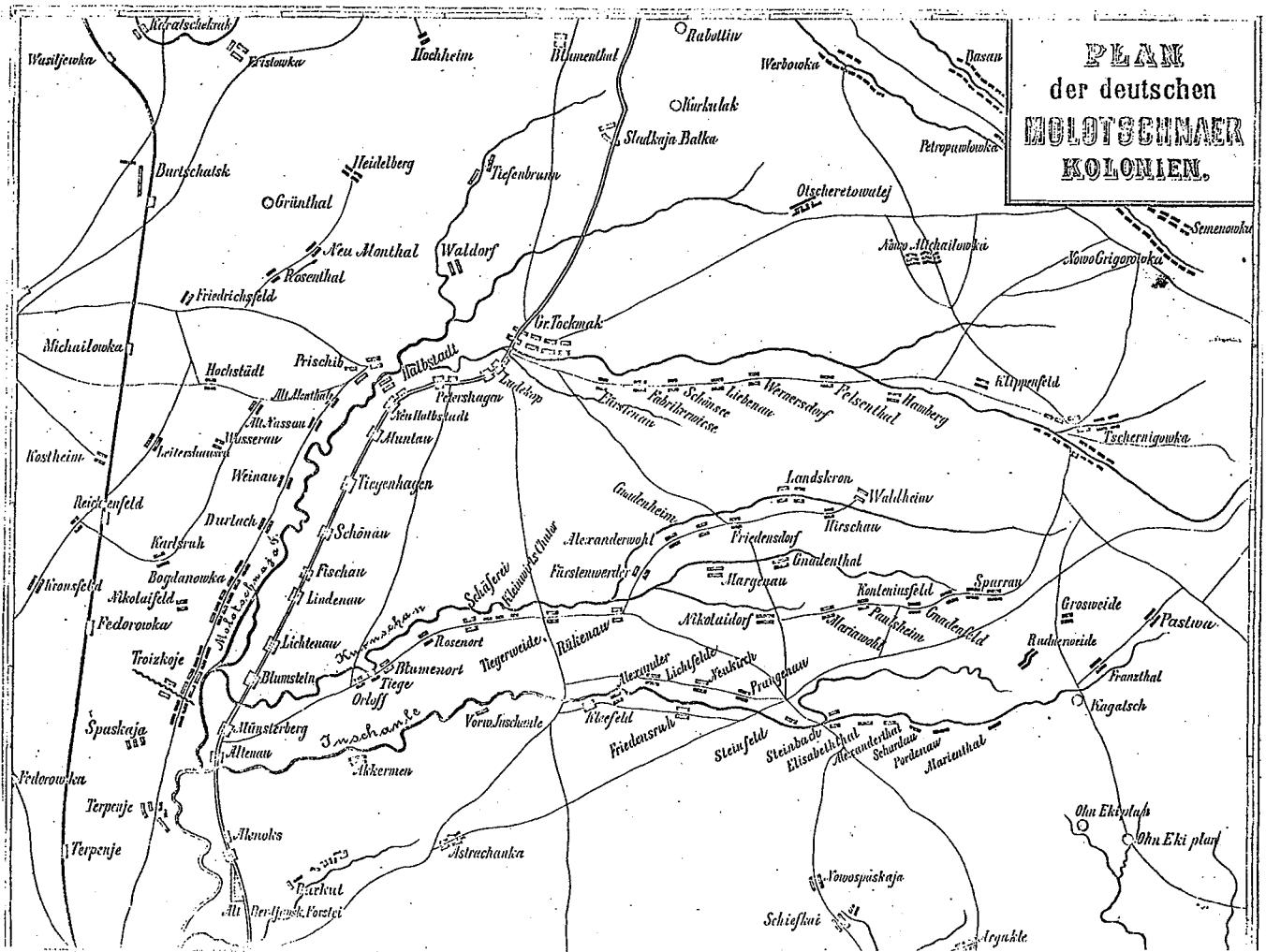
By the 1860s, the Russian government's attitude had, however, changed. In an attempt to "russify" the numerous foreign settlers, the government passed legislation to enforce universal military service, obtain greater control of schools, and to demand the use of the Russian language in schools and civil institutions.

The changes alarmed the Mennonite communities. Negotiations with the government to revise these restrictions in respect to the Mennonite communities were at first fruitless. However, after the Mennonites had sent delegates to North America to investigate emigration possibilities,⁸ the government became apprehensive of a total migration of the 50 thousand Mennonites, the best farmers of the Ukrainian steppes. A German-speaking official representative, General von Todleben, was dispatched to the Mennonite colonies with offers of concessions, the most significant of which was exemption from military service in exchange for alternative forestry service. But for about one-third of the Mennonites who were contemplating emigration these concessions were unsatisfactory, and they persisted in their plans to seek a new homeland.

There were other reasons for emigration.⁹ The innovations upon which the settlements embarked following the Cornies reforms were unacceptable to the conservative element in the daughter colonies.



Chortitza Colony in Russia.

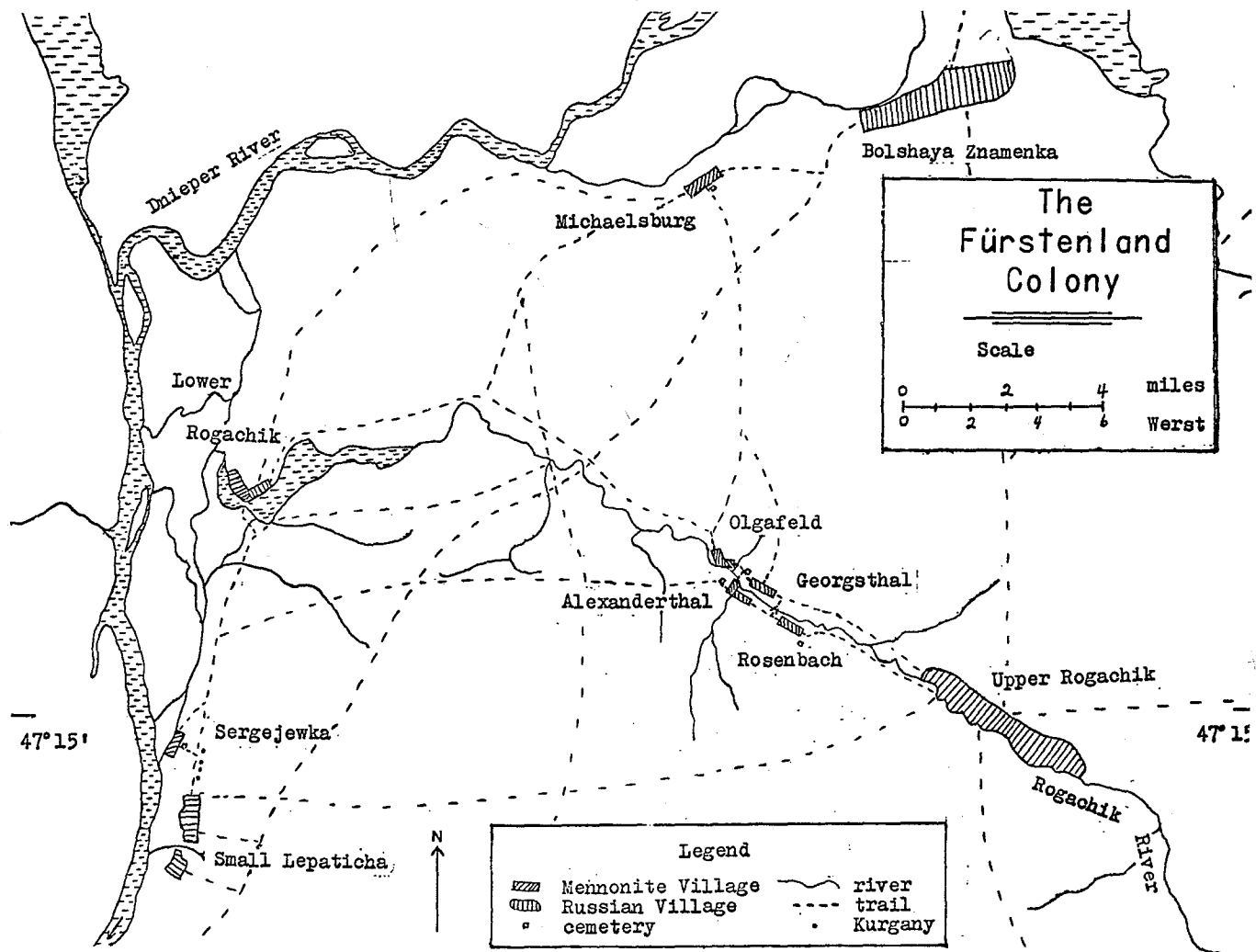


Molotschna Colony in Russia.

Johann Cornies (1789-1848) had prescribed rigorous rules for agricultural improvements, village planning and village layout. He had implemented far-reaching educational reforms which concerned themselves not only with the program of studies, but also with such details as the location and construction of schools and civic buildings. The school program had changed from providing the basic skills necessary for responsible membership in the church and village to offering an increasingly higher liberal arts education, which exposed the students to influences and ideas from the larger world. These changes were a matter of grave concern to the members of Bergthal and Fürstenland, who feared the "Verweltlichung" of their children. They bitterly resented the new hymn melodies which had been introduced into the churches, as well as the pressure from the pietist and Baptist revivals that were instrumental in the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church — emphases which were in some measure promoted within the larger Mennonite church. Emigration to Manitoba held the promise of freedom from these new influences and a return to the old more familiar ways.

In essence, then, the reasons for emigration may be briefly summed up thus: the Mennonites who planned to settle in Manitoba in 1875 and 1876 were not only interested in maintaining exemption from military service. They wanted sufficient land to establish villages which would provide adequate isolation from the outside world for their young people; control of the school system so that they would be able to prescribe the values they wished to be instilled in their children; ample, inexpensive land so that their sons and daughters would be able to carry on the Mennonite farming tradition.

Fürstenland and Chortitza had not sent any delegates in 1873 to inspect the land in America. They had depended upon the reports of the two delegates and one independent representative from the settlement of Bergthal. These three men, together with two representatives from the Kleingemeinde, had inspected the land in Manitoba and had travelled to Ottawa to negotiate terms for immigration. The terms were summarized in a letter dated July 23, 1873, written by the secretary of the Department of Agriculture, John Lowe.¹⁰ The most important points in



Fürstenland Colony in Russia.

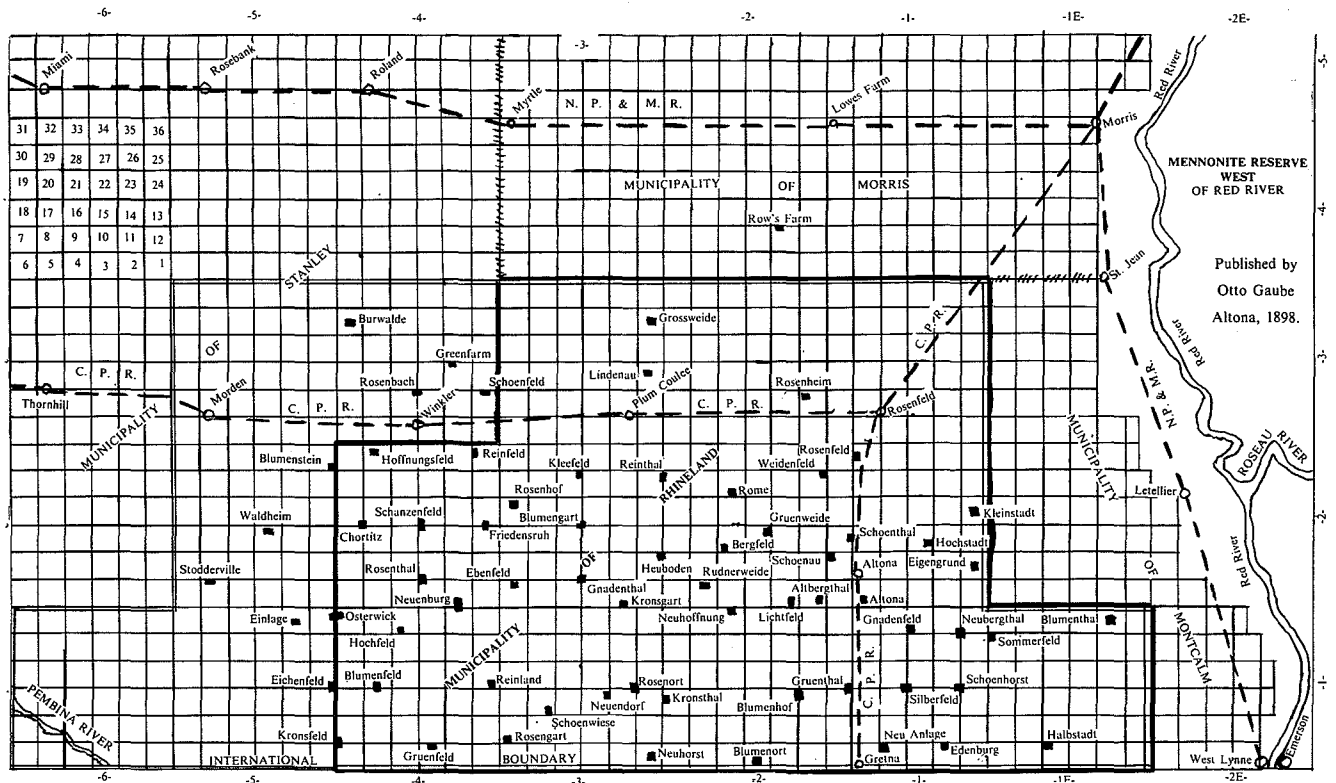
this letter were numbers one and ten. The first point stated: "... An entire exemption from military service as is provided by Law and Order-in-Council, will be granted to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites." Number ten stated: "... the Mennonites will have the fullest privileges of exercising their religious principles, and educating their children in schools, as provided by law, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever, and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools." On their return journey the delegates stopped in London to obtain British affirmation for the validity of these provisions. They received the assurance, and subsequently considered this letter a *Privilegium* which the Canadian government was extending to them.

In fact the letter did not extend any special privileges. According to the Militia Law of 1841, which was renewed in 1849, the Canadian government had already granted exemption from military service to

peace churches, including Mennonites, Quakers and Tunkers. The section promising them control over their schools was consistent with the Manitoba Act of 1870 which provided for denominational schools in Manitoba. This statement on education turned out to be contentious, since, according to the British North America Act, the provinces had the right to legislate changes in education. The federal government had no authority to guarantee the continuation of autonomous denominational schools in Manitoba.

On the basis of this letter from John Lowe, and the positive reports of the various Mennonite delegates, many Mennonite families left Russia. In all, 17,000 emigrated — 10,000 to the United States, and almost 7,000 to the new Canadian province of Manitoba. They were full of optimism regarding the future, and hopeful of a bright new era in this new land.

The three groups which came to Manitoba were the Kleinegemeinde, the Bergthal settlement, and a large number of people from the Fürstenland and



Mennonite West Reserve in Manitoba, Canada.

Chortitz settlements. The last group, those from Fürstenland and Chortitz, settled the villages around Gnadenthal in the emigration of 1875 and 1876. It is from these villages that the young men who settled Gnadenthal in 1880 came — descendents of the Mennonites who settled in Chortitz in 1789.

Settlement

In the spring of 1873 the federal government in an Order-in-Council set aside eight townships of land for exclusive Mennonite settlement east of the Red River. The first Mennonite immigrants who arrived from Russia in 1874 laid out numerous villages on these eight townships. All the settlers were of the Bergthal and Kleinemeinde churches.

The first immigrants from Fürstenland and Chortitz left in 1875. They found the land on the eight township reserve unsuitable, and chose the area between the Red River and the Pembina Hills. This land was treeless and had been considered undesirable for habitation by earlier settlers from Ontario. The fact that it was flat, treeless, and not divided by rivers, made it an ideal location for laying out villages, and a number were established in the next few years. In 1877 the federal government officially reserved eighteen townships in this region for exclusive Mennonite settlement. The area was called the "West Reserve", to distinguish it from the township settlement on the east side of the Red River, which was known as the "East Reserve". Settlers on both re-

serves came with fond hopes of re-establishing the pristine communities which they had lost in Russia.¹²

Two distinct groups emerged on the West Reserve. The western half was settled by immigrants from both Chortitz and Fürstenland, although only a portion of the inhabitants of both these colonies emigrated. These were the people who left Russia because they were uneasy about the numerous changes which had recently been introduced into their two settlements. The Bergthal group settled in the eastern areas.

The process of establishing new religious structures and priorities began as soon as the immigrants arrived. Johann Wiebe, who had served as the Ältester of the Fürstenland settlement in Russia since 1870, assumed the role of Ältester on the West Reserve. Many of the settlers on the eastern part of the West Reserve came from the Bergthal settlement, and rejected his leadership in favour of Gerhard Wiebe, a Bergthaler Ältester who had settled on the East Reserve¹³. In October 1880 Johann Wiebe called a "Bruderschaft" to establish formally a new church under his leadership. The Church took the name "Reinland Mennoniten Gemeinde." Johann Wiebe lived in Rosengart, although Reinland became the central meeting place. Reinland was the first Reinländer village to have a church building, but gradually more churches were constructed in various villages.

The civil administration¹⁴ which developed was an extension and expression of the religious convictions of the settlers who were dedicated to the ideals of the brotherhood, economic sharing, equality and mutual support. The central major difference between village life in Russia and Manitoba was that in Russia the communal village pattern had been supported by law, whereas in Manitoba it was based purely upon voluntary commitment. As a matter of fact, special permission had to be obtained from the federal government to allow Mennonite settlers to fulfill their homestead requirements without actually residing on their own quarter sections.¹⁵ Each village had approximately twenty farmsteads consisting of a house-and-barn-combined building, plus gardens and a small pasture for the cattle. Surrounding the village, in the five nearby sections, were the fields. The fields were divided into long narrow strips, called "Kargel" and were allotted to the people in the village in such a way that everyone had some good and some poor land; some land near the village and some farther away. At one end of the village was a large common pasture in which the village herdsman cared for the cattle of all the farmers in the village.

Village Administration

Each village elected a "Schulze" (mayor) called "Dorfvorsteher", two "Beisitzer" (assistants), and a secretary. Together these officials constituted the "Dorfsamt". They were responsible for maintaining the village street, roads, bridges, drainage, hiring the school teacher and the herdsman, providing guardians for the estates of widows and orphans, and

maintaining the property which belonged to the village.

The top civil administrative official in the settlement was the "Oberschulze" or "Obervorsteher". His duties were roughly equivalent to those of a reeve of a municipality and yet in many respects they went considerably beyond the responsibilities of a reeve. He was responsible for co-ordinating the tasks among the villages, and also for the maintenance of proper administration by the Schulze of each village. Usually the Oberschulze co-operated very closely with the Ältester and ministers in the decisions he made: his task was to oversee the civil expression of the religious conviction of the church community. The first Obervorsteher was Isaac Müller, a long time resident in the village of Neuhorst.

The central village for the western part of the West Reserve was Reinland, where the offices of the Obervorsteher were located. Even the RCMP office was located here for a time. There was very little contact with native people in the area, although a group of Indians migrated north to the southern edge of the Mennonite community near Haskett. Eventually their migration ceased and Mennonites had no further significant contact with native groups for many years.

Life on the West Reserve was difficult during the first few years. Most people spent the first winter in a simlin (sod house), although as soon as possible houses, barns, and granaries were built. Since the railway lines across the West Reserve were only laid in 1892, all supplies in the early years had to be

Register Buch für die Dorfschaft Gnadenthal

im Jahr 1896 am 23 Januar

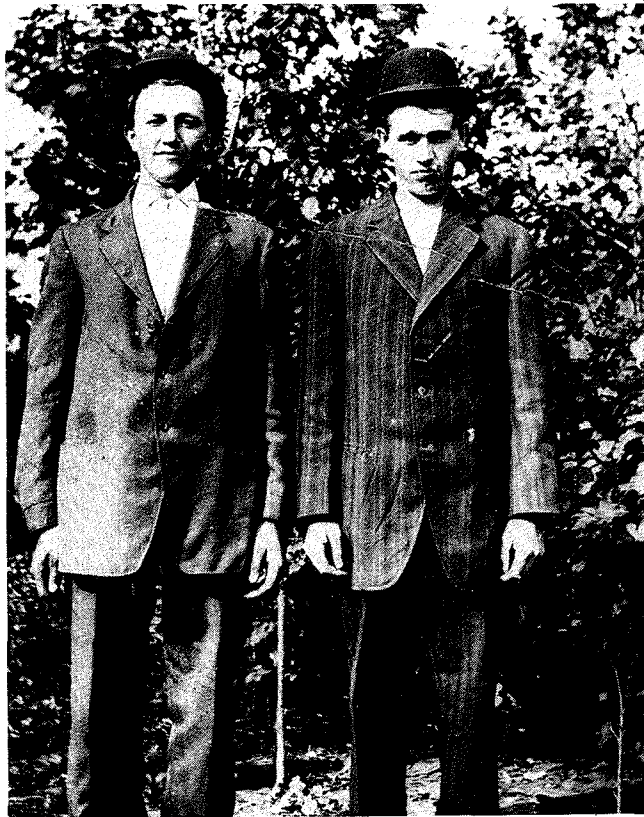
List of the first twenty settlers

Name	Married "Copulirt"	No. of Children Born		Children Died		Age at Marriage		Age at Baptism		
		Children	1880s	1890s	1880s	1890s	husband	wife	husband	wife
Johann Wall and Maria Letkeman	13 July 1879	15	7	5	3	3	24	18	20	18
Johann Froese and Maria Friesen	4 December 1879	5	3	2	0	0	21	22	20	20
Johann Loewen and Sara Harms	8 April 1883	11	4	5	1	3	20	19	19	18
Jacob Dyck and Helene Wiebe	7 November 1882	10	4	4	1	2	21	19	20	19
Heinrich Peters and Elizabeth Dyck	20 April 1884	3	2	1	1	0	23	18	20	17
Kornelius Fehr and Helena Neufeld	5 August 1883	11	4	5	0	0	22	17	21	17
Johann Bückert and Margaretha Dyck	31 December 1882	15	4	6	1	1	23	19	20	19
Peter Giesbrecht and Anna Wiebe	11 January 1881	11	4	6	0	2	22	22	20	20
David Fehr and Justina Friesen	5 December 1880	10	6	4	1	1	21	21	20	20
David Giesbrecht and Margaretha Suderman	25 February 1883	6	4	2	1	2	29	34	22	20
Abraham Friesen and Katharina Dyck	17 November 1881	7	2	3	0	1	23	19	21	18
Peter Penner and Maria Zacharias	28 January 1883	11	4	4	1	1	25	21	20	18
Abraham Fröse and Agatha Rempel (remarried)	16 February 1881	14	3	5	0	2	21	23	20	19
Jacob Reimer and Anna Harder	16 December 1881	11	5	6	1	4	22	19	22	19
Abraham Giesbrecht and Katharina Harder	2 January 1879	10	6	3	2	1	21	21	20	20
Johann Fehr and Anna Harder	4 October 1883	7	4	3	2	1	23	20	21	20
Bernhard Penner and Katharina Giesbrecht	6 January 1886	10	2	5	1	1	24	20	21	19
Johann Harder and Sara Penner	16 July 1891	7	0	7	0	1	21	23	21	20
Abraham Friesen and Anna Klassen	13 December 1892	6	0	6	0	0	21	19	20	19
Peter Dyck and Maria Ham	18 June 1893	4	0	4	0	1	25	17	21	17
TOTALS AND AVERAGES		184	68	82	16	26	22.6	20.55	20.45	18.85

brought in along the Post Road from West Lynn on the Red River just north of Emerson.¹⁶

The Founding of Gnadenthal

In 1880 the leaders of the villages east of Reinland, which had been laid out as complete villages without any room for expansion, recognized the need for founding a new village. Land for the young families who wished to farm had to be provided outside the existing villages, and the initial request for reserved land had been made with this eventuality in mind. About seventeen to twenty young men, most of whom were unmarried or only recently married, were given the opportunity to establish the village of Gnadenthal in 1880. Of the twenty who are listed in one of the early church books, three had married in 1879, the year before the village was founded, two married in 1880, and eleven married in the years 1881-1884.¹⁷ Because so many of the young men were unmarried when the village was founded, it was referred to locally as the "Weibernot" village.



Pictured to the left is Franz Friesen. His father, Abram Friesen, could have been one of the original bachelors who founded Gnadenthal in 1880. Abram came to Canada with his parents, Gerhard and Anna Friesen on June 26, 1876. The family settled in Schönwiese. Then Abram moved to Gnadenthal. On November 16, 1881 he married Katharina Dyck. The Abram Friesen family lived in what later became Diedrich P. Peters homestead. In 1913 the Friesen family moved to Swift Current, Saskatchewan. Pictured beside Franz Friesen is Klaas Peters. Records indicate that a Klaas Peters family lived in Gnadenthal in the early 1920s.



The Peter Bergmann family. Peter Bergmann came to Canada from Russia with his parents, Johann and Gertrude Bergmann, in 1874. The family first settled in the East Reserve. By 1879 they were living in the West Reserve village of Reinland. In that same year their son Peter married Katharina Toews and in 1882 the young couple moved to Gnadenthal. They had three sons — Peter, Johann and Jacob. Mrs. Bergmann died in 1889. Pictured is Peter Bergmann with his second wife, Anna and their children. Seven of the young people shown above were born in Gnadenthal. The last member of the Peter Bergmann family, Jacob (extreme right) died in 1980 at the age of ninety-three.



Bernhard Toews (1863-1927) and his wife Katarina (Funk) Toews (1865-1903). Mrs. Toews was the daughter of Ältester Johann Funk, Alt-Bergthal, Manitoba. The Toews family pioneered in Gnadenthal in 1886.



Peter H. and Helena (Bergen) Wiebe moved to Gnadenthal in 1895 or 1896. They are said to have occupied what later became the D. R. Penner residence. The Wiebe family moved to Saskatchewan in 1904.

Settlement Experiences

Pioneer years in Gnadenthal were difficult indeed. The winters were extremely cold, the average low temperatures for Manitoba during the 1880s being lower than in any subsequent decade. Although the young settlers were able to get assistance from the previously established villages, their start in Gnadenthal was nonetheless a hard one.

A farm inventory of 1880-81 presents part of the picture for the first year.¹⁸ The inventory includes only ten Wirte (landowners). Under the category "total acres" the reference is "160 — uniform amount throughout". The amount of land each Wirt received was equal. However, only one Wirt had a substantial building consisting of 121 square feet. The others all had only small buildings of 40-86 square feet. The construction of the houses and barns clearly occurred in subsequent years. No house and

barn combination was erected in the village of Gnadenthal during the first summer.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
A. Farm buildings										
\$1.00 per sq. ft.	121	61	40	40	53	40	55	80	86	48
B. Usable land										
\$2.00 per acre	50	40	30	30	30	42	21	48	24	36
C. Unbroken land										
\$1.00 per acre	110	120	130	130	130	118	139	112	136	124
D. Total acres										
\$1.00 per acre	160 uniform amount throughout									
E. Work Oxen	—	—	—	—	2	2	2	—	—	2
F. Horses	4	2	2	2	—	2	—	2	2	2
G. Cows	3	1	2	1	2	—	1	1	1	1
H. Young Stock	5	1	4	1	3	1	—	1	2	3
I. Sheep	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
J. Pigs	6	6	2	2	4	4	2	—	4	6
H. Wagons	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1
L. Plows	2	2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2
M. Harrows	2	2	2	1	—	—	—	2	1	2
N. Fanning Mill	1	1	—	1	—	1	—	1	1	1
O. Horsedrawn rakes	1	1	—	—	—	—	—	1	—	—
P. Steam threshing machine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Q. Horse threshing machine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
R. Grain mowers	1	1	1	—	—	—	—	1	—	1
S. Grass mowers	1	1	—	1	1	1	—	1	—	—
T. "Hacksel" machine	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
U. Total assessed value	657	493	442	402	419	446	350	498	432	508
V. Taxes	3.492	4.72	2.212	0.12	1.102	2.231	1.752	4.92	1.62	5.4

Some land was broken during the summer of 1880. Wirt No. 1, whose name is not recorded, had broken 50 acres. All the others had broken less. One had broken only 21 acres. Every Wirt had a plow, and either a team of 2 oxen or 2 horses. One Wirt had 4 horses. The inventory indicates that no one in the village had a threshing machine, so it may be that no crop was harvested that first year. The ten Wirte owned an assortment of other implements necessary for farming. Although they were poor and had just set out on their own, each Wirt was assigned taxes. The taxes ranged from a low of \$1.75 to a high of \$3.49.

Another indication of the difficulty of the settlement years was the infant mortality rate. During the decade of the 1880s, sixty-eight children were born to the families in Gnadenthal.¹⁹ During the same decade, sixteen children died. In the next decade, the 1890s, eighty-two children were born, and twenty-six children died, i.e., one in five children died.

Gradually as the years went by, life in Gnadenthal became less strenuous, although many of the hardships continued. Various children's diseases remained a constant threat; the abundance of work taxed all members of the community. A source of great strength for the village was the organization and patterns of support which the village developed.

Village Organization

The village organization of Gnadenthal, as in all villages, consisted of three persons, the Schulze and two Beisitzer. All three were elected for one-year terms by the Wirte (landowners) of the village in an annual meeting. In Gnadenthal a pattern developed by which any one person rarely held a position more than a year. Consequently numerous people in the village were called upon to exercise local civic responsibility.

The responsibilities of this executive committee of three were great indeed, as the records of the village of Gnadenthal indicate. The Schulze and the Beisitzer (Dorfsamt or Schulzenamt) had the responsibility to maintain the streets of the village and the roads in the area, and to keep the roads to other villages in the settlement in repair. They had the power to exact a specific number of days of work from each Wirt for the job. A careful record of such work was kept with a detailed annotation as to whose team of horses and equipment was used. The Schulzenamt also had the authority to organize groups of men in winter to shovel snow-blocked streets and roads until they were once again passable for sleighs. Men of the village were also liable to be recruited annually to build and repair a dam to protect the village from the waters of a little creek near Gnadenthal during the spring run-off.

The administration and maintenance of the common village pasture was also the responsibility of the Schulzenamt. In Gnadenthal the common pasture was north of the village. The actual labour involved in the maintenance of the "fence", as it was called, was provided by the Wirte.

South east of the village a large plot of land was set aside for hay. There were twenty-seven plots of five acres each. The five acre plots of hay were distributed to the twenty-seven village families by lot. This arrangement also attempted to maintain the principle of equality.

The Herdsman

The herdsman for all the village cattle was not a native of the village, and records indicate that he was usually non-Mennonite.²⁰ Names which appear are Nikolay Duder and Joseph Arremscheck.²¹ The Schulze and Beisitzer annually drew up a formal contract with a person whom they hired as herdsman, and who was under their authority in all matters, as the available Gnadenthal contracts from 1914 onward state. The herdsman's duties were to take the cattle to the pasture punctually in the morning and return them safely in the evening. Usually the cheerful sound of his horn alerted the villagers at an early hour



Village cattle grazing in the community pasture. Herdsman is Peter Penner, who had recently arrived in Gnadenthal as an immigrant from Russia. Photo: 1924.



The "Tränke". The creek which flowed through the village pasture located north of Gnadenthal was dammed to provide adequate water for the cattle. The upkeep of the dam was a community responsibility. Photo: 1918.

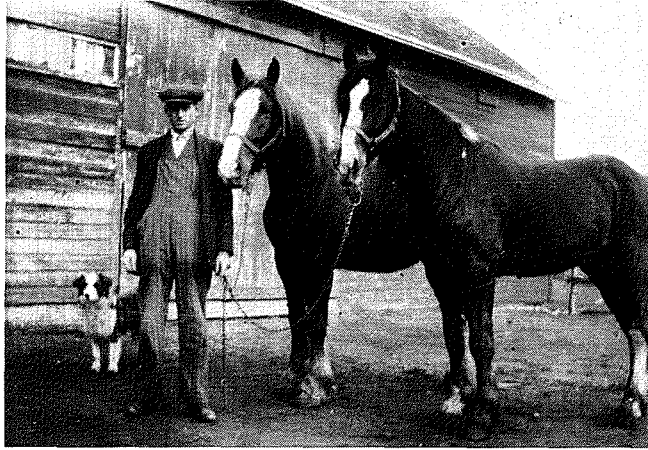
upon which a general hustle and bustle ensued in the barns or "Kohocks" (cow-pens), since "nojoagen" (driving the cattle to the pasture after the herdsman was already off with the herd because the milkers had lain too long abed) was considered a disgrace. Should any harm come to an animal while under the herdsman's care, he was responsible and had to replace the animal. Should an animal be injured due to a storm or hail, the loss was divided equally among all the Wirte and the herdsman, and he was responsible for $\frac{1}{28}$ of the loss. His wages were partially paid in kind, e.g., 3 pounds of meat and 3 pounds of lard from each Wirt, 7 loads of hay, 110 bushels of wheat, 90 bushels of barley, 60 bushels of oats, as much straw as he needed, $\frac{1}{3}$ load of manure from each Wirt, and transportation to get to the market in town, to bring grain to the mill, and to get firewood. He also received a house for himself and his family. In 1914 his wages were \$1.20 per month. His contract year extended from spring to New Year.

The Teacher

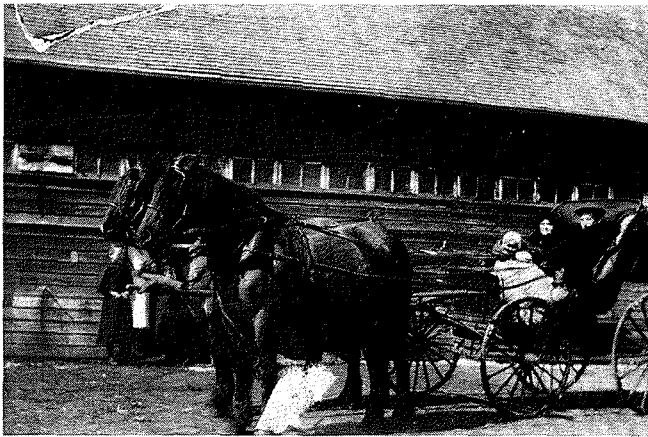
The Schulze and Beisitzer also had general responsibility for the school system, and for hiring the school teacher, who was always a Mennonite. His contract year extended from seeding time to seeding time. According to the contracts which are in exis-

assessed. A neighbour contributed 50 per cent more that year so that the required grain was contributed.

The contract for the school year 1916-17 notes that the teacher was to receive free teaching material. This may indicate that in the earlier years he had to provide the material from his own salary.



Peter P. Klassen, teacher in Gnadenthal from 1919-1922. Photo: 1916.



Teacher Peter P. Klassen taking his family out for a Sunday afternoon visit. 1916.

The Waisenamt

Another responsibility of the Schulzenamt was the overseeing of the Waisenamt, an institution which took care of the estates of orphans, widows, and widowers. Two "Waisenvorsteher" were elected for two year terms by the Wirte of the village to administer the estates. Their terms were staggered so that one of the Waisenvorsteher would always be experienced. A special note in the "Rules and Regulation for Waisenvorsteher and Vormünder and their Duties" specifies that candidates for this office were to be honourable, diligent, and men of good character.²³

The two Waisenvorsteher were required to pres-

ent an annual financial statement to the "Gebietsamt" (Oberschulze), who also signed all the inheritance distribution contracts. Thus they were clearly informed about the transactions, and carried the final authority for the proper administration of estates.

Brandvorsteher

Finally, the Brandvorsteher, who had the task of overseeing a local fire insurance organization, was also responsible to the Dorfvorsteher and Beisitzer. The fire insurance organization included all the farm machinery, buildings and contents of the whole Reinländer Church. Each village had its own Brandvorsteher who was responsible for maintaining accurate records for that village.²⁴ The Brandvorsteher's task was to oversee the fund, collect dues, and pay the fire insurance in case of fire. His tasks also extended to enforcing fire safety regulations.

The life of the village community depended to a large extent upon the quality of leadership provided by the Schulze and his two Beisitzer. Because these offices rotated among the Wirte, the majority of villagers were knowledgeable in the affairs of the village, and could provide the necessary support to ensure the smooth operation of the offices.

The Church

The emigration to Manitoba from Russia had been largely for religious reasons.²⁵ The desire to retain exemption from military service, and to exercise control over the education of their own children so that their values could be transmitted, had been decisive factors for leaving Russia and choosing Manitoba as a new home. These were precisely the considerations that led to settlement in Canada instead of in the United States where these guarantees had not been available.

The whole village structure, from equitable land distribution to the numerous institutions which provided mutual support, was an expression of the religious convictions of the residents. Gnadenthal was part of a larger community which did not sharply distinguish between the religious and the secular. The church nurtured the adults and passed on the ideals and values to the younger generation, giving the whole community purpose, unity, and meaning.

Gnadenthal did not have a church meeting house. The villagers attended church in the village of Blumengart, two miles to the north. Services were held every Sunday morning at 9:30 and continued for one and a half to two hours. Men sat on the left side of the building and women on the right, and men and women entered by separate entrances.

Church services were formal. The preaching was



Aerial view of the Blumengart Hutterite Colony. Before 1922 this hamlet was a Mennonite village with a central church that served residents from Gnadenthal, Kleefeld, and Friedensruh.

done by ministers (Prediger) elected from the membership.²⁶ The ministers were elected for life, and had no formal training to aid them. Their only preparation was the grade school education, attendance at the church, and self study. Some of the early ministers had probably been trained in the Zentralschule of Chortitza in Russia.

Of considerable help to the lay minister was the practice of reading sermons which had been prepared by ministers in the past. The sermons had been copied and recopied numerous times, and were without author or date. It seems likely that many of them had been written toward the end of the 18th century in Prussia, or in the early nineteenth century in Russia. The ministers read the sermons in German, but any interpretative comments were made in Low-German. The sermons were good expositions of biblical texts, reflecting to a large extent the discipleship theology of early Anabaptism, especially the views of Menno Simons. The themes of faith, salvation, adult commitment, grace and forgiveness were prominent.

Salvation was perceived as a corporate reality by the villagers. God had called them to faith in Jesus Christ, and the response to this call was properly expressed by committing themselves to the believing community. This commitment at many points meant subjecting individual desires and wishes to the good of the whole group. The desire to be an independent farmer on one's own private property was subjected to the welfare of the community. The believer lived in the village and participated in its communal structures. At many points individualism of dress and lifestyle was submerged in order to maintain harmony in the community. In this manner the Reinländer Church attempted to maintain a spirit of equality, unity, brotherhood, and a setting in which mutual admonition among church members could occur.

During the 1880s, disruptive, threatening, and

divisive phenomena developed which affected all the Reinländer churches, including Gnadenthal. The General Conference and Mennonite Brethren churches in the United States began to send missionaries to the Mennonite communities in southern Manitoba. The development puzzled the Reinländer churches, because a scant decade earlier, prior to emigration, all of these Russian Mennonite immigrants in the United States and Manitoba had been involved in mutual discussions of religious and economic issues as fellow-Mennonites and Christian brothers. The missionary visits were interpreted by the Reinländer Church as subtle insinuations of a lack of Christian spirit in their Gemeinden: one segment of the body of Mennonites considering another in need of conversion from "heathen" ways.

There are a number of reasons for the response of the Reinländer churches. Most of the people who settled in Manitoba came as groups and settled in groups. The Bergthaler, Kleinegemeinde, Fürstenland, and Chortitza settlers were all intent on maintaining and conserving a way of life which they deeply believed was the Christian way. Most of the Mennonites who settled in the United States did not settle in Villages.²⁷ They were wealthier and could buy the more expensive farms which were available. As a result, they settled on their own individual parcels of land in scattered communities over a five state area. Soon many of them were open to change and looked for ways to get away from the old patterns of life. Consequently, new farming techniques, dress styles, and the English language were quickly adopted by them. Some also adopted new religious terminology and concepts. A number of the earliest General Conference missionaries had been trained in the Moody Bible Institute, and they came to the Manitoba Mennonites holding a Moody Bible Institute understanding of salvation as the norm.²⁸ The communal understanding of the Reinländer churches seemed very different from the individualistic understandings taught at Moody. Consequently the missionaries felt the Manitoba Mennonites ought to be converted according to the Moody pattern if they were to be genuine Christians.

In 1883 the Mennonite Brethren Conference sent Heinrich Voth of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and David Dyck of Kansas, to Manitoba. The General Conference Mennonite Mission Board sent out Reverend N. F. Toews and S. S. Balzer, both of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in the early 1890s. The Mennonite Brethren missionaries rebaptized the converts from the Reinländer church by immersion, and formed a new church at Burwalde near Winkler in 1888. The church building was moved to Winkler in 1897.

These mission efforts had profound effects upon

the Reinländer Church. People who were converted not only withdrew their land from the communal village system, but also withdrew from membership in the various village organizations. This caused numerous villages to dissolve. Sometimes converts would even disregard loans made from the Waisenamt, because they claimed that as a result of their conversion "all things were made new" and even old debts were wiped away. The Mennonite Brethren Church members quickly established themselves in business and government in the town of Winkler. Thus for people who either wanted to live in town, get into business, or become generally more acculturated, religious conversion became diffused with these added attractions. The General Conference missionaries converted the Reinländer in their campaigns, but did not re-baptize them nor establish separate General Conference Churches. They counselled the new converts to join the Bergthaler Church. Because the Bergthaler Church had baptism services only once a year, at Pentecost, some of the new converts became impatient and joined the Mennonite Brethren Church.

It is evident that these mission efforts had divisive results. Not the least of the problems was that the understanding of the Christian gospel which the missionaries brought was considered by the Reinländer Church to be much more limited, narrower, and less biblical than what the Reinländer people already had. The fact that the missionaries were better educated, spoke the language of the land, and maybe even spoke a better High-German, gave them an advantage and put the Reinländer members and leaders on the defensive.

By the mid 1880s the Reinländer Church was not even a decade old, and its members and leaders who came from a number of different colonies in Russia were eager to form a new united community, spiritual and otherwise. The mission programs from the south hit this emerging community at an early stage of its development, and the characteristics of defensiveness, fear of change, and suspicion of outsiders were molded into its very nature at this time. The Reinländer Church might have developed along very different lines had not mistrust and the suspicion of being considered crude and unchristian by two larger Mennonite Church groups thrust them into a role renouncing all innovations, good or bad.

The mission endeavours created and accentuated conflicts in Manitoba, and the relationship between Reinländer and Bergthaler obviously became precarious. The Bergthaler Church was seen as the accomplice of the General Conference missionaries, although it too was uncomfortable with some of the developments. They had not invited the mission-

aries, indeed some of the Bergthaler leaders even requested that the missionaries be withdrawn. The whole affair soured the Bergthaler view of the General Conference to the extent that they refused to join the Conference until almost a century later.

This mood, these events in the larger Reinländer Church, were shaping the mentality of the people in Gnadenthal. Their later conflict with the Manitoba government and their decision to emigrate was influenced by forces set in motion during this era.

Church Leadership

The Reinländer Church had three levels of ordained leaders. All ordinations were for life. At the head of the church was the Ältester, whose responsibility it was to set the tone for the church, chair the discussions of the major meetings, and be a leader in every respect. He in turn was careful to keep in close contact with the congregation and the Prediger so that his reactions on various issues usually were in harmony with a predictable consensus of the members. Much authority was vested in the Ältester. This authority could be exercised properly only if it was based on the support of the people. The Ältester kept the church membership books and recorded all the names of the people whom he baptized, or accepted as church members through transfer. He recorded marriages, births, and deaths. It was his responsibility to ordain all ministers and deacons, as well as to officiate at all communion services.

The Prediger (ministers) had the task of preaching. Because they were lay-men and had their own farms to take care of, not every preacher spoke every Sunday. They were also responsible for local care of members; they counselled, visited the sick, and officiated at funerals and weddings. Their task was frequently difficult, often interfering with their farming operations, especially if there were no older sons or hired hands to carry on the farm work.

It was the duty of the deacons to identify and alleviate physical or financial needs in the congregation. The poor, sick and elderly came under their care.

The Ältester, ministers and deacons formed the "Lehrdienst" in the Reinländer Church. The Lehrdienst was responsible for organizing the rotation of ministers, handled matters of discipline, and made recommendations regarding specific cases to the congregation. In general, it was the first body to discuss any important issues which confronted the church. All matters of principle had to be decided by membership (Bruderschaft) meetings in which the Lehrdienst usually would come forward with recommendations.

Institutions

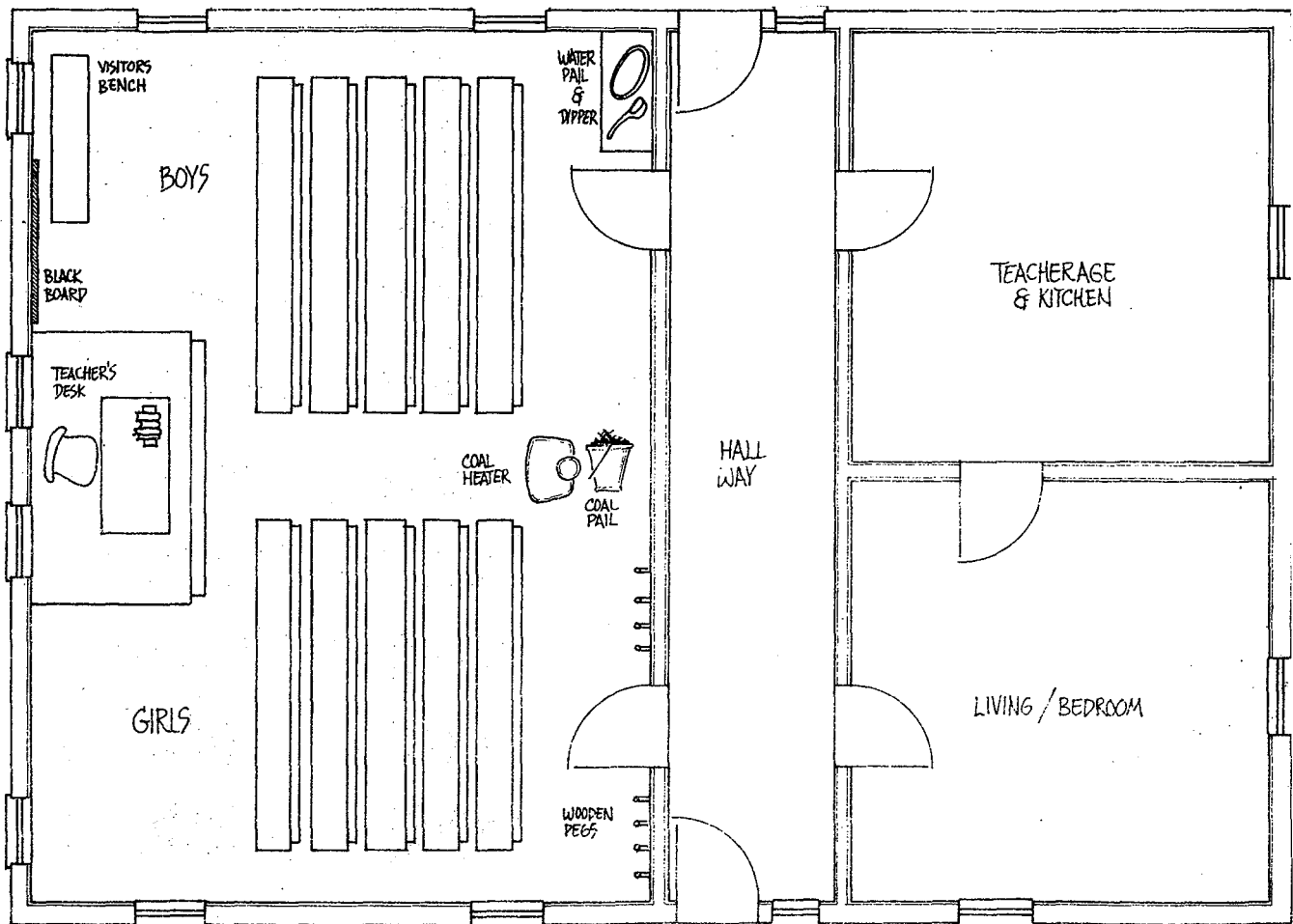
The Village School

One of the most important institutions in the village of Gnadenthal was the school. The community had left Russia because it insisted that control of its schools was absolutely essential, and that structuring the values of their children was the parents' and not the state's responsibility. Each village had a school building. In Gnadenthal it was set in the middle of the village.

The architecture of the school building had been developed in Russia during the fifty years prior to emigration under the school reforms of Johann Cornies. A standard school building had emerged: a building divided into two sections with a hallway in the middle. On one side of the hallway lived the teacher and his family. Usually the living quarters had only two rooms, one which served as the kitchen, dining and living room, and the other as the bedroom. On the other side of the hallway was the classroom. It had a number of large windows on each side of the building so that the room was bright with the natural light.

The school was an extension of a much larger educational process. The community saw the education in the school as integral to the training in the home, the work on the farm, and the teaching in the church. It was designed to reinforce the values of the home, the village, the church, and to provide the necessary tools to discharge the responsibilities to which as adults they could possibly be elected or appointed, e.g., Ältester, Prediger, deacon, Oberschulze, Schulze, Beisitzer, Brandvorsteher. Training which did not contribute to the discharge of these duties was considered superfluous and even harmful.

The school curriculum was clearly designed to prepare people for adult church membership. It taught the basic tools of reading, arithmetic, writing and penmanship (Schönschreiben). The reading curriculum determined the four grade levels. In the first grade level students studied the Fibel, from which they learned the alphabet, phonics, and spelling. In the second grade level the main book was the catechism. The students learned to read the catechism, thus increasing their vocabulary and reading skills.



Basic plan used for village schools where half the building was used as a schoolroom and the other half for teacher's living quarters.

They also memorized the catechism and in this manner received considerable religious instruction. Considered a common hermeneutic for interpreting the scripture, the catechism was instilled in every child, so that every Reinländer child received the same basic religious instruction. In the third grade level students were required to read from the New Testament. This increased their vocabulary, but the method also indicated that the church considered the New Testament the norm for understanding the Bible. In the fourth grade level the whole Bible constituted the reading curriculum. The children sang the songs from the "Gesangbuch" (hymnary), and patiently memorized many verses. It was not expected that a student would necessarily complete one grade level in one year. The fourth grade levels normally took about six to seven years to complete.

A broadening of the meager curriculum depended on the teacher. In the early years the instructors had had some training in the Chortitza Zentralschule, but the later teachers were usually untrained and greatly handicapped by their own lack of formal education, which rendered them incapable of widening the horizon of their charges. Obtaining a higher education was out of the question, even for those who might be inclined to study, since any communication with the "outside" world was considered suspect by the church authorities. The teachers were always male, and stern disciplinarians, with, at best, a minimal sense of humour. Any would-be prankster must expect a harsh reception for a prank, no matter how innocent, perpetrated in an imprudent moment. The strap or the cane was a common instrument in administering punishment for misdemeanours.

For the children, the school year was relatively short. It offered some diversion from the heavy farm-work at home, however. Recesses and any other free time were spent in playing group games, with few sports as we know them today. In their reminiscences the men and women who attended the private schools many years ago, describe school as having been generally rather dull and uninteresting — a condition they bore stoically, knowing that any complaints they might make to their parents would fall upon unsympathetic ears.

The Teacher Training School

The lack of adequately trained teachers to staff the large numbers of schools in the Reinländer Church settlements resulted in a proposal to found a teacher training school after the pattern established in Russia. The principle group promoting this idea was the Bergthaler Church. When such a teacher training school was established in 1889 in Gretna, the first teacher was Wilhelm Rempel, a Reinländer-church

teacher from the village of Reinland. He, however, felt inadequate for the task of heading the teacher training program. The school was closed for a year, to re-open in 1918 under the leadership of Henry H. Ewert. Ewert was recruited from Kansas by the Manitoba Department of Education, in co-operation with the Mennonite Normal School in Gretna.²⁹

It should have been possible for the Bergthaler and Reinländer churches to co-operate in this teacher training school venture. They both had similar needs for teachers and used similar educational systems. They both were familiar with this pattern of school from Russia. However, co-operation did not materialize. The mission efforts of the past number of years had strained the relationship between the two groups. Besides, the Bergthaler had gone to the Manitoba government for help in getting a teacher. The Reinländer group felt this kind of alliance with worldly authorities could threaten their whole educational system. In addition, the new teacher was from Kansas, and the Reinländer members were by now suspicious of people from Kansas.

Thus it happened that the Reinländer Church's school system, of which Gnadenthal was a part, did not develop a teacher training school despite the fact that these same people had supported such a school in Russia. The lack of a teacher training institution meant that after a number of decades there were fewer teachers who had had any training beyond the village school. Many of them were undoubtedly very capable, but the exposure to a wider sphere of interest was absent, and gradually the standards deteriorated.

The Waisenvorsteher

One of the unique institutions developed by Russian Mennonites was the Waisenamt. Its principle function was to protect the estates of orphans, widows, and widowers. Because these estates had to be invested in order to gain a return, the Waisenamt also became a lending institution.

The Reinländer Church had one Waisenamt for all of its members. Two Waisenvorsteher with equal authority, who were responsible for administering the fund, were elected by the church. The monies from the various estates which the Waisenamt held in trust received 5 percent interest per year.³⁰ This money was in turn loaned out at 6 percent interest per year, and the 1 percent difference was used to service the fund.

In each case where one or both parents died, two people, called Vormünder, were appointed to handle the arrangements of the estate. The Vormünder were elected by the village. The regulations regarding the manner of handling the estates in Gnadenthal stressed that the two Vormünder had to be of exemplary character. For the Vormünder this respon-

sibility involved a considerable commitment of time and effort, since they were required to meet once a week, on Monday, to review the cases under their care. All their work, all decisions, were reviewed by the Schulze and Beisitzer. The contracts they signed were also signed by the Schulze and Beisitzer.

Upon the death of either a father or mother, the remaining estate was carefully appraised by the Vormünder. A statement listing all assets was drawn up, signed by the Vormünder of the village, and verified by the Schulze and Beisitzer. Yet another contract was drawn up, which was usually designated as a "Theilungs-Kontrakt". It named all the children, listed the monetary value of the estate, and designated all children equally as heirs. The remaining parent was not an heir, but was declared the "Schichtgeber" or "Schichtgeberin".³¹ This meant that he or she had the responsibility to provide for the children, and to take good care of the estate until the children reached adulthood. All of this was of course under the supervision and authority of the Vormünder, and eventually of the Dorfsamt.

The Schichtgeber(in) were also assigned various specific responsibilities. When the heirs reached adulthood, their Schichtgeber(in) had to provide them with some basic tools for life. For boys these included one horse, or \$150.00, one chest of drawers, one heavy coat, one light coat, two dress outfits, twelve shirts, five pillows, two feather ticks, one Bible, one Gesangbuch, and one catechism.

In addition the Schichtgeber had to pay 5 percent per year interest on the estate of the heirs from their fifth year of age onward. Until the children were five years of age the Schichtgeber could use the estate free of charge.

The arrangements made under the terms of this Waisenamt were remarkable. The Waisenamt made no distinction between boys and girls in terms of their eligibility to inherit. It also made no distinction between men and women. If either died, the property was placed in trust on behalf of the children. The whole process was administered by community leaders, duly elected to this task. Their terms of reference were carefully, and in great detail, drawn up in the "Theilungs-Verordnungen Gnadenthals" ("Rules and Regulations concerning Waisenämter").³²

Relationship to the Government

The people of Gnadenthal, like all Reinland Church groups, believed that they should be separated from the world. This included especially separation from the "structure" of the world, namely governments. They did not believe in the separation of religious and civil functions. They did believe very strongly that all the economic, civil, and social functions of their life ought to be organized within

the priorities of their religious convictions. All felt that they should remain separate from "worldly" governments, that is, from governments which operated according to secular priorities.

Thus all the forty-seven Reinländer villages refused to organize their schools under the Protestant denominational system established by the Manitoba School Act of 1871 which was in effect up to 1890. They were not impressed particularly by the revisions of the school act in 1890 and 1896. They simply believed that any kind of government control over their school system would jeopardize their ability to communicate their religious values to the younger generation.

Another major area in which Gnadenthal came into contact with the provincial government was in municipal responsibilities.³³ It has already been mentioned that the Obervorsteher and the Schulze of each village were responsible for drainage, roads, and bridges in the area of the Reinländer villages. In 1879 the provincial government, in the Municipal Act, established municipalities throughout Manitoba. Each municipality was to have a reeve for the whole municipality, and councillors for the various wards. These officials were to be elected in regularly scheduled elections. Their duties also were to build and maintain roads and bridges, and to dispense charity to the poor.

For the Mennonite areas this change represented a dilemma: should Mennonites dismantle their system, and elect officials under the Manitoba government municipal system, or should they retain their own structure? The Bergthaler and Kleingemeinde settlements dismantled their own systems, and operated within the municipal structure. The Reinländer, however, refused to give up their structures. They were in principle opposed to being yoked with a government. They refused to vote in any provincial elections, or hold any political office.

Thus, in the village of Gnadenthal, and in all the Reinländer village areas, two local governing structures existed up to the time of emigration to Mexico. A fairly harmonious relationship was eventually established between these two systems. The Reeves and councillors were Mennonites from the regions near the Pembina escarpment, Bergthaler settlers at the fringe of the Reinländer settlements, or former Reinländer who had been converted by the Mennonite Brethren or General Conference missionaries. Any Reinländer who ran for office was warned, admonished, and asked by the church to give up his office. If he refused, and in this manner defied the brotherhood, he was excommunicated. Usually he would then join one of the other churches, Bergthaler or Mennonite Brethren.

The Reinländer "Gebietsamt" (municipal office) developed its own taxation system. This taxation system functioned alongside the government system, and complemented it. The Reinländer taxes went for a much broader range of purposes than did the government taxes. The tax records for the whole "Gebiet" (municipality) began in July 1875, the date of the founding of the settlement.³⁴ The record lists each village, the name of each villager who paid taxes, and how much he paid. This was totalled up at the end of the year. The year's record concluded with a brief statement on disbursements.

A portion of the money each year was used to pay for expenses related to operating the central Gebietsamt office. There are numerous entries for the Obervorsteher, Isaac Müller's, travels to Winnipeg. The reason for these frequent trips is not indicated, but may have involved negotiations with government officials.³⁵

The largest payment each year during the 1880s and 1890s was repayment of two loans, one from the government for \$100,000.00 and one from the Swiss Mennonites in Ontario for \$20,000.00. These loans were necessitated by the severe economic stress of the first few settlement years, and were guaranteed by the Swiss Mennonites in Ontario.³⁶ The payments on the principal and some of the interest were made annually by the Reinländer settlement. In 1884, for example, they paid \$5,737.33 of the government loan. The records also indicate repayment of loans from the Bergthaler, from the "Kanadische Brüder", which probably means Ontario Swiss Mennonites, and from various individuals.

Through this central treasury the settlement was also able to support needy settlements. Gnadenthal was founded in 1880, but the records indicate the first payment from Gnadenthal in 1900. It seems that for the first twenty years these young farmers were not assessed taxes to operate the Gebiet.

A further dimension of financial help is indicated. When the new reserve in the Hague-Osler area was negotiated and opened up for settlement, finances were provided by the Gebietsamt in the Manitoba Reinländer settlement. Every year, beginning in 1895, payments by Hague-Osler settlers are listed. The settlement is identified as the North-West settlement. Beginning in 1905, payment entries are included from the Swift Current settlement. The Reinländer community exercised a fairly extensive system of mutual economic support.³⁷

Economic Developments

The original settlers in the village of Gnadenthal all received 160 acres.³⁸ As in most villages, there was very little mobility, so farms tended to stay in the same hands. However, some families were more suc-

The original settlers of Gnadenthal each received 160 acres. This chart shows the land allotment of the individual farmer. Some disparity is already in evidence since some farmers seem to own a double portion.

Kolonist 1.	Kolonist 2.	Kolonist 3.	Kolonist 4.
24	24	24	24
24	24	24	24
34	34	34	34
34	34	34	34
3	3	3	3
3	3	3	3
10	10	10	10
10	10	10	10

The original settlers of Gnadenthal each received 160 acres. This chart shows the land allotment of the individual farmer. Some disparity is already in evidence since some farmers seem to own a double portion.

cessful in farming than others. Some moved to the new reserves in Hague-Osler and Swift Current settlements in 1895 and 1905. Gradually the initial equality gave way to considerable disparity. When the land in Gnadenthal was sold in 1922 the amount of land owned by each villager varied from 40 to 640 acres.³⁹ This disparity created problems in a closely knit community in which so many of the relationships were based on the principles of equality and brotherhood.

A major influence on the life of the villages in southern Manitoba was the coming of the railway. Before the railway came, the two nearest towns were Nelson at the edge of the Pembina escarpment, and West Lynn on the Red River. Both were some distance away from the land settled by the Reinländer Mennonites. Travel to both by horse and buggy or wagon was along the Post Road which went through Nelson to the Red River. Because of this tedious means of transportation, travel was curtailed, and the

villages were isolated. Contact with the outside world was at a minimum — this suited the leadership well.

Then in 1882 the CPR railway was strung across the West Reserve, one spur running east-west across the Reserve about six miles north of Gnadenthal. The Canadian Pacific Railway established depots and refueling stops every six miles. The towns of Rosenfeld, Horndean, Plum Coulee, Morden and later Winkler were founded on this east-west line. Altona and Gretna were founded on the spur south of Rosenfeld to the international boundary. The outside world had suddenly come to the isolated Mennonite communities. Gnadenthal was now only a few miles from a ribbon of steel that united it with all of Canada.

The towns situated near the railway quickly became commercial centres and the selling of farm products and the purchasing of the necessary goods was greatly facilitated. From the stand-point of the community this easy access to commercial links was a mixed blessing, since the easy accessibility to the outside world made it more difficult to mold the values and lifestyle of the community. New ideas and new values which were inevitably going to change the communities were slowly being introduced. Those who accepted the new, and those who resisted it by forming defense mechanisms, were all subject to change.

World War I Causes New Tensions

Gnadenthal existed very far from Sarajevo, Austria. Although the villagers spoke German, they had no identification with the Austrian Empire, and its oppression of minorities. They might even have had some sympathy for the oppressed minorities, for in the sixteenth century some of their forebears had fled from Austria-Moravia to the land of refugees in Polish West Prussia. They also had very little ideological identification with the German Empire which joined Austria in the war. Their emigration from Prussia, a part of Germany in 1914, had followed because they had been refused exemption from military service.

Canada became involved in World War I days after Great Britain declared war on Germany and Austria. Very early the Canadian government passed the War Measures Act, calling young men to volunteer for her army. Although Canada did not impose military conscription until 1917, it was considered the patriotic duty of Canadian young men to enlist in the fight against the enemy.

The Reinländer people were not greatly affected by these developments. The leaders viewed the war with concern, but they felt that the Order-in-Council of 1873 would be honoured by the Canadian government, and that they would be exempt from the necessity to volunteer for military service.

They did, however, have to face the pressure of negative public sentiment. The Mennonites were, after all, a German-speaking minority in a country which was at war with two German-speaking nations. The Winnipeg Free Press⁴⁰ articulated the anti-Mennonite feelings in articles and editorials. Since Reinländer Mennonites did not read the Free Press, the immediate pressure came from non-Mennonites who resided in the railway towns of Plum Coulee, Winkler, and Morden. The latter town especially became a centre for anti-Mennonite sentiment.

Villagers in Gnadenthal were still not greatly affected by these events. Their everyday life went on without significant interruption. But in 1916 developments occurred which changed life irrevocably for the Gnadenthal people. In December, the Canadian government called for the registration of all male adults in Canada between the ages of sixteen and sixty-five. The National Service cards were available at post offices and were to be filled out and sent in during January, 1917.⁴¹

This move alarmed the Mennonites, and government contacts were established. The Reinländer Church was represented in these meetings with the Canadian government by its Ältester, Johann J. S. Friesen. He was assured by Prime Minister Borden that his people would continue to be exempted from military service, but they were advised to register, identifying themselves by writing "Mennonite" across their registration card. The registration was for purposes of establishing the manpower available for agricultural productions, they were informed,

NO. 3148 WINNIPEG, Jan. 21/16, 191

MANITOBA PATRIOTIC FUND

RECEIVED FROM Gnadenthal Village (John Wall) \$ 341.50

DUPLICATE

No. 4, Plum Coulee, Man.

MANITOBA PATRIOTIC FUND
CHAS. F. ROLAND, SECRETARY

THE COMMITTEE BEG TO EXPRESS THEIR APPRECIATION FOR THIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ABOVE FUND

NO. 3955 WINNIPEG, Feb. 21/16, 191

MANITOBA PATRIOTIC FUND

RECEIVED FROM Mennonite Village of Gnadenthal \$ 31.00

DUPLICATE

MANITOBA PATRIOTIC FUND
CHAS. F. ROLAND, SECRETARY

THE COMMITTEE BEG TO EXPRESS THEIR APPRECIATION FOR THIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ABOVE FUND

To show their gratitude towards the Canadian Government for their exemption from military service during the first world war, the Gnadenthal villagers made donations to the Manitoba Patriotic Fund.

and after some hesitation, the Reinländer Mennonites did register. In gratitude for their exemption, the Reinländer Church made donations to the Manitoba Patriotic Fund, which was designed to be used for war victims, orphans and widows.⁴²

In August of 1917 the government of Prime Minister Borden passed the Conscription Act. The act allowed exemption from military service, but disfranchised all conscientious objectors. This too was of no material consequence for Mennonites in Gnadenthal, since they had no intention of voting in any federal or provincial election.⁴³

The anti-Mennonite feeling reached its climax after the soldiers returned from the European War theatre. Canada Clubs and returned men led the opposition to pacifist groups until in May, 1919, the Canadian government in an Order-in-Council closed Canada's doors to further immigration by Mennonites, Hutterites and Doukhobors.

The passing of this Order-in-Council also did not directly affect the Gnadenthal residents. What did affect them greatly was the new school legislation. The anti-pacifist sentiment had been growing in Manitoba. In 1916, T. C. Norris's Liberals campaigned on the promise to develop schools in which the spirit of nationalism, love for king, flag and navy would be taught more thoroughly.⁴⁴ Norris promised to abolish the bilingual schools established in the 1897 Laurier-Greenway compromise, and to demand instruction in English only. After his election, he implemented these policies. He also was responsible for the passing in the legislature of the School Attendance Act which made attendance in a public school mandatory for children between the ages of seven and fourteen. The alternative was private education that could meet the standards of the public school authorities. The act presented a hardship for the farmers who needed their sons for work on the farms even at the age of twelve or thirteen; it also made the villagers ominously aware that the days of their private schools were numbered. For the time being, they continued to conduct their schools according to their conscience and tradition, as they always had conducted them since their emigration to Canada. Although for some time no drastic changes were forced upon them, they were uneasy, and felt certain that such changes would occur, taking from them their most cherished right: the education of their children in the ways of their forefathers.

Although Gnadenthal Mennonites had not participated in the provincial election, the effects of the election were of immediate concern to them. They realized that legislation by the provincial government threatened the Reinländer private schools, including Gnadenthal, and they decided to appeal to the gov-

ernment. Their appeal was separate from the other Mennonite groups in Manitoba, who had by and large accepted bilingual public schools, while the Reinländer group still operated only private schools.

The provincial government refused to change its legislation, but did not enforce it strictly for over two years after its passage. With the return of war veterans in 1918, the public pressure against the pacifist Mennonites escalated.

The End of a Community

In 1918 life in Gnadenthal was very normal. Widows and orphans were being cared for by the Waisenamt, the teacher Johann Enns had faithfully taught the forty-six children in the village school, Joseph Arremscheck had regularly taken the village cattle to and from the pasture, the people had attended church services in Blumengart, and the Dorfvorsteher, Bernhard Penner, had provided capable leadership. Life was pleasant, but storm clouds were billowing on the horizon.

Das Dorf Gnadenthal

<i>Südseite</i>	<i>Strasse</i>	<i>Nordseite</i>
<i>Johann Busckert Cornelius Mantens Jacob Wall Peter Peters Abr. Froese Peter Penner Peter A. Froese Johann Wall Diedrich Reimer Peter Peters David Fehr Peter Liebschicht Johann Busckert</i>	<i>Strasse</i>	<i>Johann Reimer Johann Loewen Wenrich Dyck Abr. Reimer Richard Friesen Frank Amos B. W. Penner Johann Wall Johann Froese Johann P. Klassen Lfr. C. G. Rempel Abr. Dyck Bernhard Penner</i>
<i>Peter Wall Abr. Blatz Bernhard Rempel Isaac Reimer Klaas Peters Abr. Sauerhofen Philip Klassen</i>	<i>Strasse</i>	<i>Jacob Dyck David Bergen Peter J. Froese Jacob Wall Klaas Wall Peter Wall</i>
		<i>Mrs. Peter P. Klassen Winkler Box 278 Man.</i>

Village map, early 1920s. Submitted by former teacher Peter P. Klassen, presently of Winkler, Manitoba.

The Manitoba government began to enforce its school legislation of 1916 more strictly in 1917 and 1918. The initial enforcement focused not on the Reinland, but rather on the other Mennonite schools, many of which had reverted to private status after the

legislation of 1916. The various Mennonite churches felt that the government was violating the terms of the *Privilegium* of 1873.

In March 1916, John F. Greenway was appointed Supervisor of School Attendance. In October 1917 he was appointed as special trustee of districts attempting to revert to private school status. In 1918 to 1920 many former Mennonite public schools which had reverted to private status were taken over by J. F. Greenway by special Order-in-Council. Since the Gnadenthal village school had never been a public school, it was not affected by this development.

In February of 1920, the blow fell upon Gnadenthal and the other Reinland schools. Since the villages were unwilling to change their private schools into public schools, the government organized ten public schools in the Reinländer region. Some of these one room schools were designed to serve two or even three villages: all were given Anglo-Saxon names. On February 1, 1920, the establishment of the *Wells School District #1998* which encompassed the village of Gnadenthal and the surrounding area became a reality, if only on paper.⁴⁵

On February 20, 1922, a new set of entries was made in the *Register Buch* which listed the births, deaths, baptisms of parents and children of Gnadenthal. This new set of entries seems to include those who had agreed to emigrate.

No. of acres	Name of Parents	Birth Date	# Children
240	Bueckert, Johann	1859	6
	Dyck, Margaretha	1863	
200	Bueckert, Peter	1890	3
	Dyck, Maria	1894	
480	Blatz, Abraham	1896	2
	Penner, Katherina	1896	
	Blatz, Gerhard	—	—
	Dyck, Anna	1897	
200	Bergcn, David	1872	7
	Friesen, Elizabeth	1875	
400	Dyck Jacob	1861	3
	(adult ages — 33, 30, 24)		
	Wiebe, Helena	1863	
80	Dyck, Heinrich	1892	3
	Dyck, Maria	1895	
240	Dyck, Abraham	1885	1
	Loewen, Katharina	1884	
420	Enns, Franz	1873	1
	Neudorf, Agatha	1865	
-	Froese, Johann	1900	
	Penner, Elizabeth	1903	
480	Wall, Johann	1884	6
	Fehr, Margaretha	1887	
200	Penner, Peter	1858	0
	Zacharias, Maria	1962	
576	Froese, Abram	1860	4
	Hildebrandt, Maria	1867	
—	Fehr, Johann D.	1899	0
	Froese, Margaretha	1803	
300	Friesen, Gerhard	1869	4
	Loewen, Elizabeth	1872	
—	Friesen, Gerhard	1901	0
	Giesbrecht, Agatha	1903	

—	Wall, Cornelius	1901	0
	Penner, Susanna	1900	
120	Wall, Jakob	1856	0
	Boschman, Anna	1860	
	Wall, Peter A.	1896	2
	Friesen, Elizabeth	1898	
—	Wall, Klaas	1894	4
	Dyck, Maria	1896	
160	Wall, Peter	1883	8
	Froese, Sarah	1885	
80	Froese, Peter	1891	2
	Dyck, Elizabeth	1892	
320	Froese, Johann	1858	0
	Friesen, Maria	1857	
—	Froese, Johann J.	1891	4
	Friesen, Anna	1894	
220	Froese, Peter, J.	1887	6
	Rempel, Katharina	—	
360	Fehr, David	1859	0
	Friesen, Justina	1859	
—	Fehr, David D.	1897	1
	Wall, Maria	1897	
—	Fehr, Johann D.	1897	0
	Froese, Margaretha	1903	
40	Friesen, Peter G.	1896	2
	Peters, Katharina	1897	
200	Giesbrecht, Peter (widower)	1859	4
	Giesbrecht, Anna	1888	
—	Klassen, Peter J.	1893	5
	Wolf, Helena	1893	
—	Kauenhoffen, Abraham	1854	0
80	Martens, Cornelius	1890	2
	Fehr, Susanna	1891	
—	Penner, Abraham	1898	
	Blatz, Anna	1901	
640	Penner, Bernhard	1862	3
	Giesbrecht, Katharina	1866	
240	Penner, Bernhard B.	1888	4
	Wall, Aganetha	1890	
240	Peters, Peter	1857	4
	Giesbrecht, Elizabeth	1870	
—	Peters, Klaas	1892	1
	Fehr, Anna	1894	
160	Peters, Peter P.	1887	4
	Sawatzky, Maria	1895	
—	Reimer, Dietrich A.	1872	9
	Froese, Elizabeth	1881	
142	Reimer, Abraham	1878	5
	Giesbrecht, Maria	1881	
125	Reimer, Isaack A.	1883	5
	Penner, Katharina	1885	
104	Reimer, Johann A.	1892	2
	Wall, Helena	1891	
200	Rempel, Cornelius C.	1886	5
	Froese, Susanna	1890	
200	Rempel, Bernhard	1892	3
	Froese, Maria	1896	
—	Wall, Johann	1855	2
	Letkeman, Maria	1861	
160	Wall, Johann L.	1884	6
	Fehr, Margaretha	1887	
160	Wall, Isaak	1894	0
	Penner, Anna	1892	
153	Wall, Abram	1896	0
	Wall, Sarah	1897	
—	Wall, Johann J. (widower)	1854	2
	Froese, Aganetha	1882	
200	Wall, Jakob	1885	1
	Martens, Anna	1886	

Since Gnadenthal was not willing to give up its school building for use by the public school, the official trustee, Mr. J. F. Greenway, made a loan of \$5,000 on behalf of Wells, to facilitate the erection of a new school building, the loan to be repaid by the people of Gnadenthal. The inspector's report two years later, however, does not list Wells, so the Wells school building was not erected until after the emigration to Mexico. In the half yearly school reports of the Department of Education there is no report from Wells until the first half of 1925, after most of the people of Gnadenthal had emigrated to Mexico.⁴⁶

Like many other village residents, the people of Gnadenthal were also faced with the threat of fines and imprisonments, penalties which had been part of the School Attendance Act of 1916. The fines were, however, not implemented in 1920 and in the two years following, because the whole Reinländer Mennonite Church was actively pursuing emigration possibilities.

By 1919 the Reinländer Mennonite Church felt that the Manitoba government was not interested in negotiating with them, but was intent upon destroying their school system and foisting upon them a system which would teach their children national values. They sensed, correctly, that the issue was not one of quality of education but rather of values.

In the summer of 1919 the Reinländer Church met and decided to investigate emigration possibilities. They selected two delegates, who, together with Saskatchewan representatives, journeyed to Ottawa, and then on to Latin America.⁴⁷ In Ottawa they made one final futile attempt to get the federal government to intercede on their behalf, and then proceeded to Argentina, Brazil and a number of other Latin American countries. None of these countries were willing to grant them the privileges they were looking for.

Upon the return of the delegation after the fruitless journey to Latin America, the Reinländer Church investigated settlement possibilities in Quebec, Mississippi and Mexico. In each case, they presented to the respective governments six conditions which would have to be met before they would consider settling in this region. They requested that they and their children be exempted from military service, have the right to affirm instead of taking an oath, be granted religious freedom, have complete responsibility for as well as control of their schools, have freedom to administer their Waisenamt, and have control over the disposition of all colony lands by their society.⁴⁸

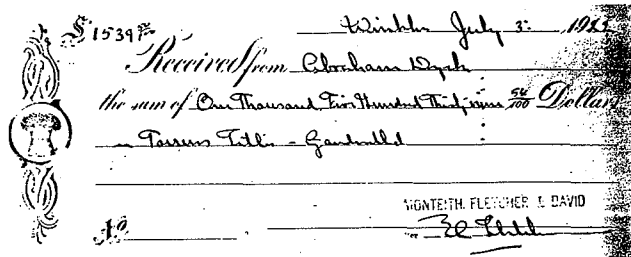
In May 1920, the Reinländer agreed to purchase land in Mississippi and move there, but in July a delegation on the way to Mississippi was refused entry into the United States. The leaders considered

this a sign that emigration to Mississippi was not advisable, and the plan was cancelled. However, land agents from throughout the western and southern United States continued to try to get some settlers onto their land through attractive individual offers.

In 1920 the Hague-Reinländer Church investigated settlement possibilities in Mexico which were fruitful. Mexico had just gone through a revolution, and the government was eager for settlers. The Manitoba Reinländer delegates failed to get their papers in order in time to accompany the Saskatchewan Reinländer delegation to Mexico. The delegation was able to see the Mexican President A. Obregon, and received from him a letter granting any Mennonites who would settle in Mexico exemption from military service, the right to deny the oath, religious freedom, the right to operate their own schools, and the right to organize any economic institutions they wished. This provided the opportunity which the Reinländer had been waiting for. Plans for emigration began shortly after the delegation's return.

Departure for a New Homeland

In September 1921 land was purchased in the Mexican state of Chihuahua near Cuauthemoc. In anticipation of the move in the coming summer, the Reinländer that winter attempted to sell their land as a block in order to gain the necessary money to pay for the 155,000 acres which had been purchased in Mexico. The Reinländer Church was unsuccessful in its attempt, but the village of Gnadenthal was successful



Receipt issued to Abraham Dyck for sale of land.

in selling all its land which they had listed with A. C. D. Pregitt, realtors from Morden, in December, 1921. On the second of May, 1922, they finalized the land sale to Monteith, Fletcher, and David, also of Morden, who were purchasing the land for twenty-eight dollars per acre.⁴⁹ Monteith, Fletcher and David agreed to pay the full taxes for the year, and to allow renters to take off the crop in 1922. Gnadenthal was given the right to vacate half the dwellings on July 15, 1922, and the other half in fall.⁵⁰

Gnadenthal residents were busy that year making preparations for emigration. The last contract for the school teacher was made on December 31, 1920,



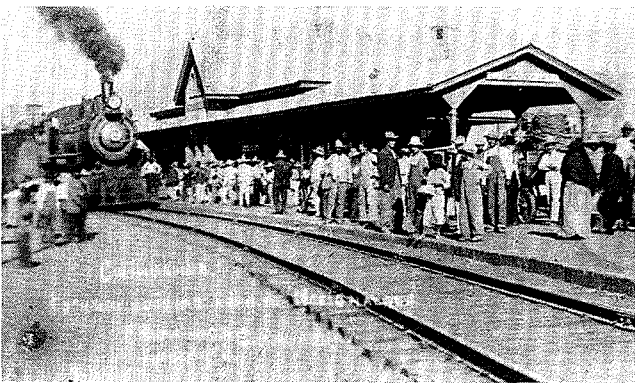
Auction sale at the Peter Penner (later A. P. Bueckert) home, 1921, in preparation for the move to Mexico.

with the teacher Peter P. Klassen for the school year 1921-1922. In the fire insurance register (Brandbuch) all the accounts have an entry for April 6, 1922, with the comment, "Gestrichen" (cancelled), and the sum to which it applied. All also have another entry for September 16, 1922, and again the comment "Gestrichen" is entered. Some have additional entries for July 21 and for October 10 of the same year.

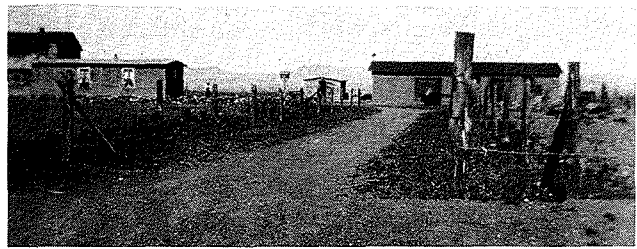
It appears from these entries that all Gnadenthal



Bound for Mexico.



Mennonite immigrant train arrives at the Chihuahua train station, Mexico.



Mennonite homestead in Mexico, 1920s.

residents left for Mexico in 1922. This did not happen. A few of the original emigrants state that they left Gnadenthal in the fall of 1924. This has been verified by residents who moved to Gnadenthal in that year. There is also some confusion about the land purchase by Monteith, Fletcher, and David. Residents of 1924, and later, claim that they bought their land directly from the emigrants.

It is of interest to note that the Gnadenthal emigrants settled on the "Manitoba" settlement near Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, in two villages, Gnadenthal (2A) and Gnadenfeld (2B).

With the migration forty-two years of history came to an end. A community in which deep religious commitment had shaped the social and economic fabric, had decided to move in order to preserve the integration of faith and life. A community which believed that its children were its future, was willing to emigrate in order to retain control of its children's educational system. A community which had gradually seen the world encroach upon it, had decided to sacrifice a dearly won established settlement for pioneer conditions. A community which had seen the disrupting influence of wealth and economic disparities grow, decided to re-establish greater equality in a new settlement on marginally arable land. And so they left their pleasant farms and the country they had grown to love.⁵¹

The Gnadenthal which the Reinländer left behind became the home for new Mennonite settlers from Russia — the Rusländer.



A familiar sight in Gnadenthal even in later years. This livestock belonged to the Bernhard Penners. Photo: 1918.

The following are some of the pictures submitted by David Penner, Mexico, son of former Dorfvorsteher Bernhard Penner. It was rare for a lad growing up in Gnadenthal at that time to own a camera. These pictures permit a brief glimpse into village life before 1924.



The Bernhard Penner (later Henry Kuhl) Wirtschaft in 1923. Note the summer kitchen to the right. Mr. Bernhard Penner was one of the more prosperous farmers in the village.



Many of the homesteads along the south side of the village street were built with the house and barn at right angles to each other whereas on the north side of the village the house-barn combinations were constructed in one continuous line. This yard at one time belonged to the Peter Peters family. It is presently owned by Abram H. Klassen.



David Penner, son of Bernhard Penner, is seen here with his pet dogs. Photo taken in 1916.



Johann Fehr (left) and Heinrich Peters, son of Peter Peters. The Peters family had planned to move to Mexico along with the rest of the villagers. Shortly before the move, the elder Mr. Peters died. Heinrich then decided to remain in Canada. He is presently living in Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Peters family lived where the Abram H. Klassen live now. Photo: 1920.



Hey, ho, away we go, riding on a donkey . . . in Gnadenthal? Johann Wall, son of Peter Wall. Photo: 1918.



Peter Penner, son of the Bernhard Penners, with his favourite colt. This horse was taken to Mexico when the family moved in December, 1924. Photo: 1923.



The Gnadenthal bachelors of 1918.



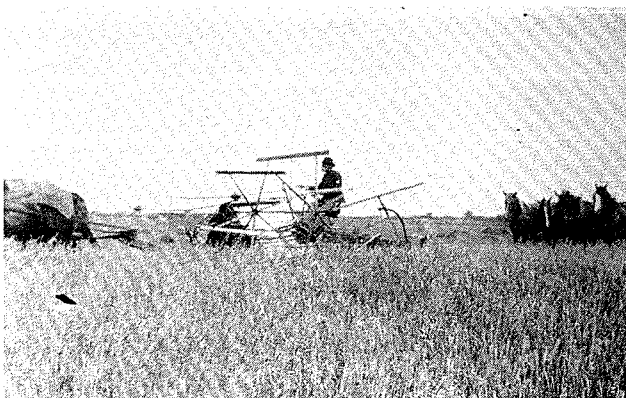
Tina Letkeman (left), daughter of Johann Letkeman, is seen here with cousin, Lena Wall, daughter of Johann Wall. Photo: 1918.



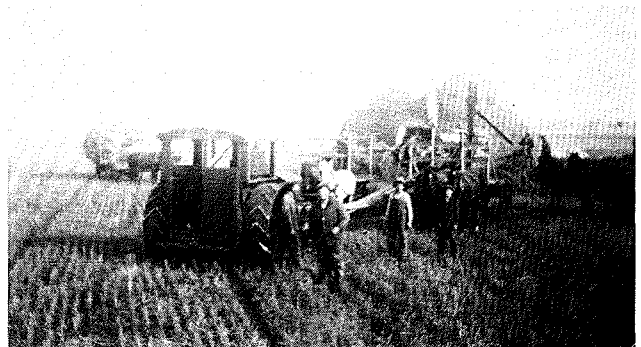
The stalwart youth in the middle is Peter Letkeman. His family, the Johann Letkemans, were the only family who remained in Gnadenthal after the 1922-1924 exodus. To Peter's right is Cornelius Wall, son of Johann Wall, and to his left is Peter Peters.



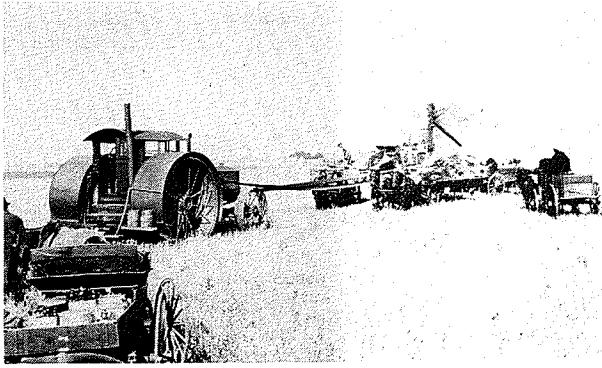
Threshing with the steam engine on the Johann Wall farm. Later this property was owned and occupied by the Henry Driedger family. Photo: 1916.



Cutting the grain on the Bernhard Penner field. Photo: 1924.



Harvesting in Gnadenthal, 1918. The tractor in use is a Universal and run with gasoline.



Threshing outfit owned by Johann Wall and Bernhard Penner. Tractor is a Pioneer and gasoline powered. Photo: 1920.



Hauling wheat to Plum Coulee. Wagons and teams belong to Bernhard Penner. Photo: 1923.



Taking a well earned break during harvesting is (L.-R.) Cornelius C. Rempel, Bernhard B. Penner, Peter P. Klassen and a neighbour. Photo: 1924.



Crushing feed, 1916. Left to right, Johann Reimer, Klaas Wall, Peter Wall.

CHAPTER II

Religion 1924-1982

The “Russländer”. Who Were They?

Suddenly the train lurched forward, and I left my homeland forever. . . . Behind me lay a life and a world I had learned to love; before me loomed a world of uncertainty.

Anna Reimer Dyck

Gnadenenthal is perhaps unique when compared to other villages in southern Manitoba in so far that by the end of 1924 it had experienced an almost complete turnover in population. By this time the migration of its residents to Mexico or elsewhere was complete. Of the original settlers of the 1880s the Johann Letkemann family remained.

As the homesteads became available, other families were eager to move in immediately after negotiation for their land was completed. In some cases there occurred an overlapping of occupancy as former owner and present owner were forced to share accommodations for several weeks or sometimes months until arrangements for moving could be fi-



Johann Letkeman (1864-1923). Johann came to Canada from Russia with his parents in the 1870s. In 1894 he bought the property in Gnadenenthal. Three years later he married Katharina Dyck (1877-1955). The Letkeman family was the only family of the original settlers to remain in Gnadenenthal when the exodus to Mexico and other places occurred between the years 1922-24. A son, George Letkeman, lived in Gnadenenthal until 1981, when he and his wife Barbara moved to Winkler, Manitoba. The only members of the Letkeman family still residing in Gnadenenthal are son Bill Letkeman and grandson Vern Letkeman and their families.



The Johann Letkeman homestead in Gnadenenthal. Buildings on the yard include a corn bin on the right, Reatjakoma (smoke house) centre, and the traditional “two-holer” at the extreme left.

nalized. The Henry H. Kuhls were one such family, who, upon arriving in Gnadenthal from the Morden area in the fall of 1924, were obliged to share their newly acquired home with the previous owner. The Kuhls lived in the same house with the Bernhard Penners till the end of the year when the latter were able to join their fellow-villagers in Mexico. Mr. and Mrs. Kuhl with their two children occupied the living-room while the Penner family utilized the rest of the house. The kitchen was shared by the two housewives.

The Mennonites who moved into Gnadenthal came from various different geographical areas and had diverse cultural and religious backgrounds. Basically they could be divided into two main groups — the Kanadier (Canadian) Mennonites and the Russländer (Russian) Mennonites. The term “Kanadier” generally referred to those Mennonites — and their descendents — who had come to Canada during the first migration of the 1870s. Some of the Kanadier families who moved to Gnadenthal had been members of the Reinländer Church before they left Manitoba for Mexico, and others belonged to the Sommerfelder Church. The Russländer were the newly arrived immigrants from the Ukraine. They comprised the majority of the new population in Gnadenthal. This group presented two major church denominations — the Mennonite Brethren and the Mennonitengemeinde (Mennonite Church) also known in Russia as the “Big Church”. The Russländer came from many areas in southern Russia.

Generally the Mennonite Brethren stemmed from the various villages in the Molotschna Colony and the Mennoniten members came almost exclusively from the Chortitza Colony areas.

Both denominations organized into official congregations almost immediately upon settling in Gnadenthal. Because there was only one viable meeting place in the village, the two groups worshipped together under one roof for the first few years. In the spring of 1928 the Mennonite Brethren withdrew from the fellowship and the two congregations worshipped separately. A more detailed account will appear in a later portion of this chapter.

Unlike the immigrants of the 1870s, these new arrivals came to Canada as refugees. Children growing up in Gnadenthal often heard their Russländer parents reminisce about “das schöne Russland” (beautiful Russia). From their nostalgic descriptions the children could visualize the village street lined with tall “Kruschtji” trees (a native fruit resembling a small pear), backyard orchards opulent with exotic fruits, flower gardens blooming in wild profusion, the cool valleys, the shady woods, the sweeping meadows, the amber wheat fields and the mighty flow of the majestic rivers. It took the devastating experience of persecution, violence, famine, disease, and the loss of all personal freedom to uproot the Mennonites from their utopian homeland and to precipitate the flight of 21,000 of them to the barren prairielands of Canada in the 1920s.

The Mennonite sojourn in southern Russia had



Auction sale in progress at the Bernhard Penner home. By the end of 1924 Gnadenthal residents, intending to move to Mexico, had left the village. The Penner family was one of the last to leave, December, 1924.

lasted almost 150 years. After overcoming the initial hardships of getting established in a strange and foreign environment, the Mennonite colonies in Russia seemed to stagnate. Geographically isolated and with no desire to integrate with their Russian neighbors,¹ they became introverted socially as well as culturally. With their right to self-government they chose to limit educational opportunities and imposed strictures which eventually were reflected in a dearth of spiritual nurture in the churches. Efforts to give new life and direction to colony life were made by individuals like agriculturalist Johann Cornies and educator Tobias Voth. Their labours were to come to full fruition only during the latter half of the century.

Meanwhile two major events had shaken the Mennonite brotherhood to its very roots. The first of these events was the establishment of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860; the second was the announcement by the Russian government of new national policies which caused the migration of about one third of Russia's Mennonites to America. The former event was the result of a religious awakening, the effects of which spread to the established church as well. The latter caused the remaining Mennonites to reassess their prospects for the future and to realize

the necessity of broadening and revitalizing their concepts on spiritual, educational, social and economic levels. In the decades which followed, the Mennonites in Russia were to reach unprecedented heights in academic, cultural and economic achievements. Schools improved greatly; opportunities for higher learning became available. Institutions for the sick, the aged, the mentally ill and the handicapped came into existence. Many advancements were made in agriculture. Industry flourished on an ever-growing scale. Duties to their country were being fulfilled by the establishment and support of numerous forestry camps in which Mennonite young men served in lieu of military service. The full potential of this coming-of-age of the colonies, however, was never to be fully realized due to the intervention of World War I in 1914.

With the declaration of war against Germany the Russian press proceeded to unleash a vindictive hate-campaign against anything and anyone remotely German. The prosperous German-speaking Mennonites as well as all other German colonists became targets of the consummate hate of a Russia aflame with patriotic ardour. The Mennonite refusal to bear arms added fuel to the fire. The fact that at that time 13,000



Wounded are transported from the Polish front to hospitals in Moscow and St. Petersburg. At the outbreak of World War I many Mennonite men served in various capacities in the Russian army. Some chose to fulfil their duty to their country by joining the army's medical corps. A great number of Red Cross trains such as this one were staffed to a large extent by young Mennonite men. In the group pictured above is Red Cross worker Johann G. Sawatzky, (back row, third from left).

young Mennonite men were serving in the army's medical corps on the battlefields and in other areas of alternate service did little to stem the tide of discriminatory innuendo against them.

The effect of the war in the Mennonite settlements was depressing. The use of the German language in any assembly, including church services, was forbidden by decree, and the threat of dispossession and deportation inland hung like a dark cloud over them. The overthrow of the Czarist regime in March of 1917 and the establishment of a new provisional government raised hopes for a stronger, better rule and stabler conditions. But the downfall of this government after a few months in office shattered all hopes for a brighter future in the Mennonite settlements. The rise of the Bolsheviks to power signified their doom. The new rulers employed ruthless methods of terror and oppression to bring the country to heel. The Mennonites as well as other segments of the population lived under constant threat of imprisonment, robbery and murder. Church properties were confiscated and preachers were forbidden to preach. Schools, which in spite of the 1880 new language policy had retained a certain degree of liberty in the teaching of German and Religion, were now forced to relinquish this freedom. Atheism became the philosophy of the day.

When civil war broke out in 1918 in opposition to the new regime, any semblance of law and order broke down completely. Anarchy reigned supreme as the battle fronts oscillated back and forth across the Ukrainian steppes, so that on numerous occasions the Mennonite villages were caught in the crossfire. During this time of lawlessness the Machno² bands roved the countryside from village to village, plundering, burning, and wantonly killing, leaving in their wake disease, destruction, death and despair. As the Bolsheviks gradually gained control in the south, they escalated their systematic reign of terror. Countless families were broken up as fathers and sons were arrested and either imprisoned or sent to labour camps. Many were simply shot on sight. At first ministers and wealthy land owners were the targets for the murderous regime, but eventually the Bolshevik arm reached out to all. Following these horrors the twin spectres of famine and disease stalked the land. Death claimed a heavy toll in every Mennonite household as the dreaded typhus swept through the settlements in the wake of lice-infected, typhus-carrying bands. Many more lives would have been lost due to starvation had not the Mennonite communities in America sent relief to their brethren in need.

It was evident to the leaders in the Mennonite communities that there was no future for their people

in Russia. They began to search for a haven of refuge in other countries. When Canada finally opened its doors to immigration the Mennonites availed themselves of the opportunity to escape "dem roten Joch" (the red yoke of oppression). Most of the Russian Mennonite immigrants who settled in Gnadenthal arrived in Canada between 1923-1925 when the Russian government policy toward emigration was somewhat relaxed. Between 1926 and 1928 emigra-



The grave of Paul Hindenburg. In 1929 thousands of Mennonites and others of German descent, congregated in Moscow in a last desperate attempt to leave Russia. Only Germany, under the President Paul Hindenburg, responded to the appeal for help. As a result over 5000 Mennonites escaped. In 1934, when Hindenburg died, some groups of Mennonites sent wreaths to be placed on his grave.

tion became more difficult but not impossible. By 1929 the door to freedom for the Mennonites in Russia had closed. This was the year of the historic gathering of thousands of despairing Mennonites at the gates of Moscow, making a desperate bid for escape. Relatively few were successful in their flight to the west. Many hundreds were banned to Siberian labour camps or else, forever branded as traitors, transported back to the settlements where their homes were now usurped by the state. The David F. Peters and the Paul P. Peters were two Gnadenthal families among the few fortunate ones able to pass through the Red Gate to a new land and a new future in 1929. Mr. David Peters describes his family's escape scripturally: "Wie ein Brand aus dem Feuer gerettet" (. . . when thou walkest through the fire thou shalt not be burned: Isaiah 43:2).

These then, were the Russländer Mennonites who settled in Gnadenthal between 1924-1930. The first family from Russia, the Julius Letkemans, arrived in Gnadenthal on February 17, 1924. In the months following and indeed for the next number of



Paul and Margareta Peters with their children, Margaret (standing) and Helen, managed to escape from Russia in 1929. They arrived in Canada on March 30, 1930. After spending an initial year in Gnadenthal, the family lived in Blumenort, moving back to Gnadenthal in 1938.

years, Gnadenthal experienced a continuing fluctuation of population as immigrants came and went. The village was becoming a kind of a “drop-in” centre as immigrants, not certain of their final destination, settled in the area for a while and then moved on when opportunities for them arose elsewhere. By the end of 1924 eighteen immigrant families had found new homes in Gnadenthal. By January 1926 twenty-seven of the thirty-two homesteads in the village were occupied by Russländer Mennonites. In addition there were twenty-five immigrant families living in Gnadenthal on a temporary basis, waiting for an opportunity to acquire a place of their own. The village was bursting at the seams and yet there always seemed to be room for more. Established villagers would think nothing of offering their “Feathus” (anteroom) or “Sommastow” (summer-room) to a destitute family who had just arrived from overseas.

Not all new residents of Gnadenthal were Russländer. There were a few families like the Henry Kuhls, the John Friesens and the Abram Hiebets who had moved in from other parts of Manitoba. Coming from various parts of Russia and Manitoba, the new villagers were in essence strangers to each other. In spite of their differences in origin and heritage, they had one thing in common — they were all poor. Most of the immigrants had lost everything either at the hands of the marauding Machno bandits or through confiscation of property by the Bolsheviks. Mr. Johann J. Schellenberg, a new Gnadenthal

immigrant, described his financial status upon arriving in Canada as having fifteen cents in his pocket and an \$800.00 transportation debt. Because they all had virtually nothing, they were dependent on each other for many essentials. Much borrowing back and forth of farm implements and various household items was common. This interdependency and a common desire to make a new and meaningful life here in this peaceful hamlet created a spirit of community which prevailed among them through the years.

From Gnadenthal, Russia, to Gnadenthal, Manitoba

Gnadenthal — a Village in Russia

The Mennoniten Church group in Gnadenthal was made up largely of immigrants who came from the Baratow-Schlachtjin Colonies in Russia. More specifically, the majority originated from one particular village in that area — Gnadenthal. Others from the same region in Russia settled in some of the surrounding villages like Reinland and Blumenort. These immigrants were to form part of the nucleus which was to become the Blumenorter Church.

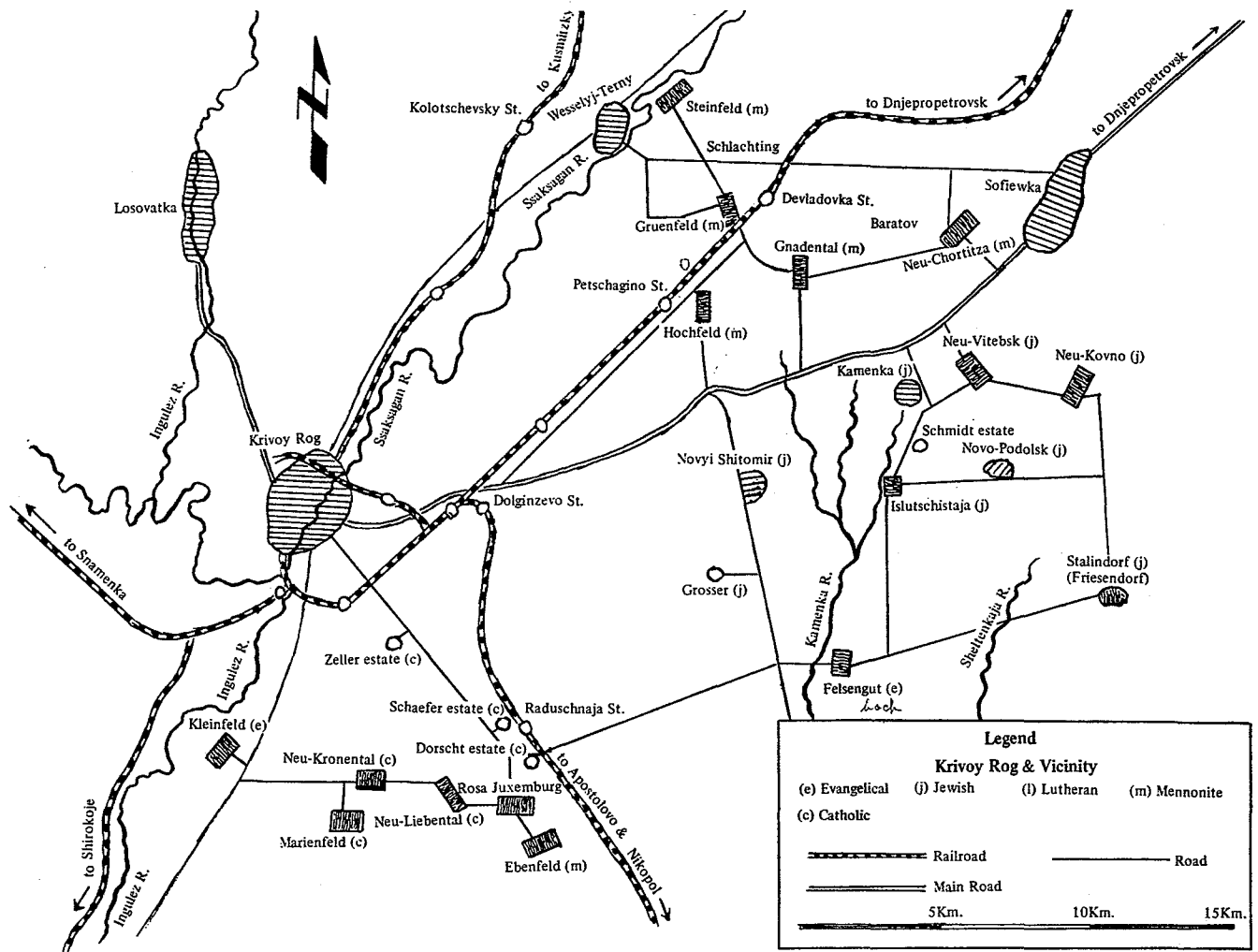
A brief glimpse into the history of the Baratow-Schlachtjin Colonies and its people will contribute to the understanding of the Blumenorter Church of which the Gnadenthal Local was such a vital part.

The settlements named above were daughter colonies of the original Chortitza Colony. In 1871 a large tract of land was purchased from Count Repin, a Russian nobleman. It was bought for the purpose of providing land acquisition opportunities for the growing number of landless citizens now living in the mother colony. It so happened that Count Repin's daughter was present when final arrangements for the purchase were being made. Through her intervention, favourable terms were worked out. Her married name was Baratow, so the grateful settlers adopted that name for their new colony in recognition of the generous transaction.

Two villages were established in this area. One was Neu-Chortitza, so named because most of its settlers originated from the village of Chortitza in the Alte Kolonie (Old Colony). The other one was Gnadenthal.

One year later, in 1872, another land complex immediately adjacent to Baratow was purchased. This was named after the former owner, Count Schlachtjin, another Russian nobleman who had lost heavily at the gambling table, and was forced to sell some of his land holdings to cover his debt. These holdings were large enough to support another two villages — Grünfeld and Steinfeld.

Each of these four villages has its own unique history. For the purposes of this publication, only



Map of Krivoy Rog and vicinity.

Gnadenthal will be considered, for it is from this village that most of the Baratow-Schlachtjin immigrants who settled in Gnadenthal, Manitoba, originated. No doubt it was to some a good omen to have found another Gnadenthal in Canada.

Gnadenthal, Russia, like the other three villages, was located in one of the several valleys which characterized the landscape. The practice of settling in low-lying areas had originated with some of the early Mennonite pioneers in the Ukraine. Low visibility, they felt, served as protection against the plundering raids of hostile tribes. Suspiciously aware of the numerous native Ukrainian villages in close proximity to the colonies, the new settlers, in keeping with general practice, chose not to break with tradition now. "Aunjesiedelt mot enne Leajt!" said our pioneering forefathers.

The theory of settling in lower valleys had a direct bearing on the naming of the village of Gnadenthal in Russia. When the site for this community was first surveyed, some apprehension as to the suitability of

this particular valley for the location of a village was expressed. The type of vegetation as well as the scarcity of lush green grass seemed to indicate the presence of saltpeter in the soil. More of the same concerns were voiced when the time for the actual construction of the village came. The matter was quickly settled, however, when one prospective settler drew attention to a biblical parallel. Had not the Israelites in their wanderings camped in barren places and had not God provided? The same principle might be applied here, since the success of every venture was ultimately dependent upon God's grace. The important thing was to locate in a suitable place and let God supply the rest. In the wake of this reasoning the settlers became enthusiastic once again and decided to name their hamlet "Gnadenthal", indicating their willingness to wait upon the "Gnade" (grace) of God for all good things in their "Thal" (valley).

Their trust in God was soon to be tested. True to the ominous earlier predictions, the villagers soon

found that the poorly draining soil was in fact a bane upon the productivity of the land. Only those homesteads located on the east side of the village street were able to grow gardens and orchards with any success. What is more, it was soon discovered that although there was plenty of water, it was not fit for human consumption. Drinking water had to be transported in from wells located directly east and also north of the village. There the water was wholesome and so plentiful that its abundance led to the establishment of a treadmill. (It is a strange coincidence that in Gnadenthal in Manitoba the north side residents also had a better water supply than the south.)

Soon other industries were developed in the new village. An oil plant was constructed for the production of sunflower and mustard seed oil. Four flour mills were operational at different times in the village. After the construction of the railway line which ran between the two colonies, the residents of the area had easy access to neighbouring cities in which to market their products. With increased trade more and more land was brought under cultivation. The establishment of an implement factory in the colony greatly facilitated improvements in farming operations. In 1887 the first multi-shared plow was used and later the drill, the mower, and the threshing machine were manufactured. So over the years the village thrived and became prosperous. In spite of the initial difficulties the villagers' trust in God was justified, and to its many inhabitants Gnadenthal, Russia, truly became a "Vale of Grace".

The Neu-Chortitzer Church

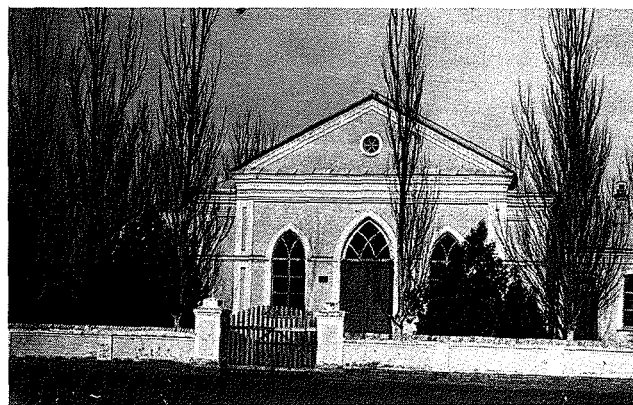
Although each village constituted a separate socio-economic unit, the four villages joined forces to form the Neu-Chortitzer church. There had been several ministers among the first settlers in the colonies. From this group, Jacob Paetkau, an ordained minister from the Alte Kolonie was chosen as leader for the new church. The ordinances of baptism and communion, however, were performed by Ältester Isaak Dyck from the Alte Kolonie. The umbilical cord to the mother church was cut in 1910 when the Neu-Chortitzer Church became independent. It was also then that Reverend Paetkau was ordained as Ältester (Elder), a post he held until his death in 1919.

In fairly close proximity to the Baratow-Schlachtjin Colonies were situated six settlements which made up the "Judenplan". They were six Jewish villages in which the government had placed six to eight Mennonite families to act as model farmers for the Jewish population. These Mennonite families also belonged to the Neu-Chortitzer Church.

There were only two church buildings in the entire settlement — one in the Baratow village of Neu-Chortitza and the other in the Schlachtjin village



Peter Paetkau was the Ältester of the Neu-Chortitzer Church in Russia from 1910-1919. Residents of Gnadenthal, Russia, were members of this church.



The Neu-Chortitzer Church building in the Schlachtjin village of Grünfeld. Many Gnadenthal, Russia, residents were baptized there.

of Grünfeld. The other locales, including Gnadenthal, had their services in the local schoolhouses or in individual homes. For the annual spring baptism ceremony, as well as for a few other special occasions, the entire membership congregated in one of the two churches. Although they were one church, each village seemed to have its place on the rungs of the ladder of status and prestige. Its place in the hierarchy was determined by the level of industrial development and the educational opportunities the individual village afforded. In general every village was a very close-knit community and intermarriage between villages was rare.

In 1919, after the death of Ältester Jacob Paetkau,



Jacob Aaron Rempel as a student in Basel, Switzerland, 1911. Jacob Rempel was elected Ältester of the Neu-Chortitzer church in 1919.

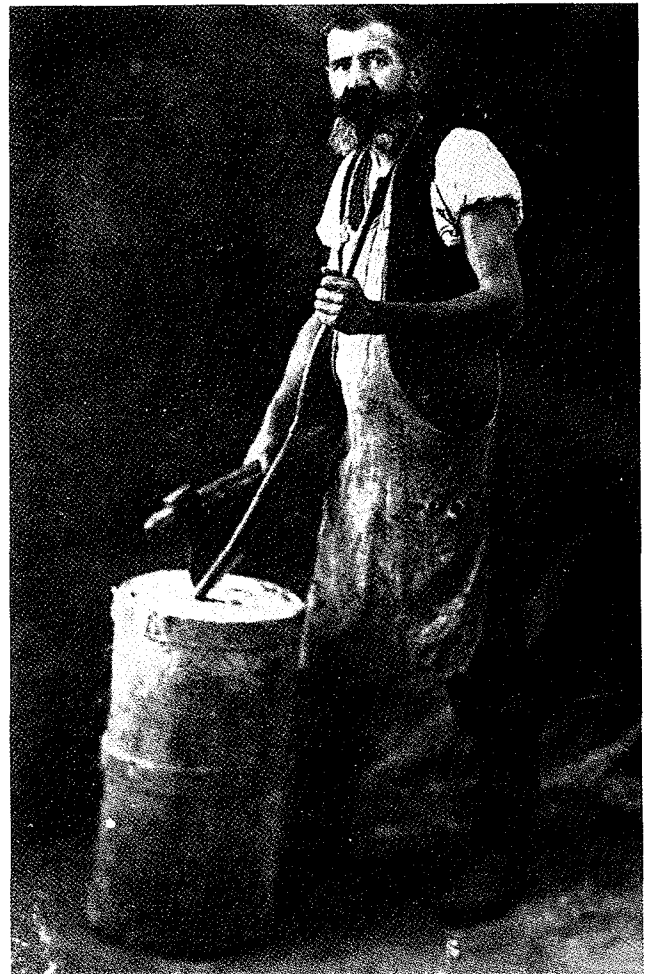
the church invited Reverend Jacob Aaron Rempel to take his place. The former Ältester had run his church in the traditional style of the Mennonite churches of that time. In consequence it had become ritualistic to a large extent and lacked vitality. In the words of one of its former members "the church had fallen asleep".

After his ordination on May 2, 1920, Ältester Rempel attempted to bring new life into the church. Through hard work and self sacrifice he had managed to acquire a substantial education which included six years at the Biblical Seminary in Basel, Switzerland.

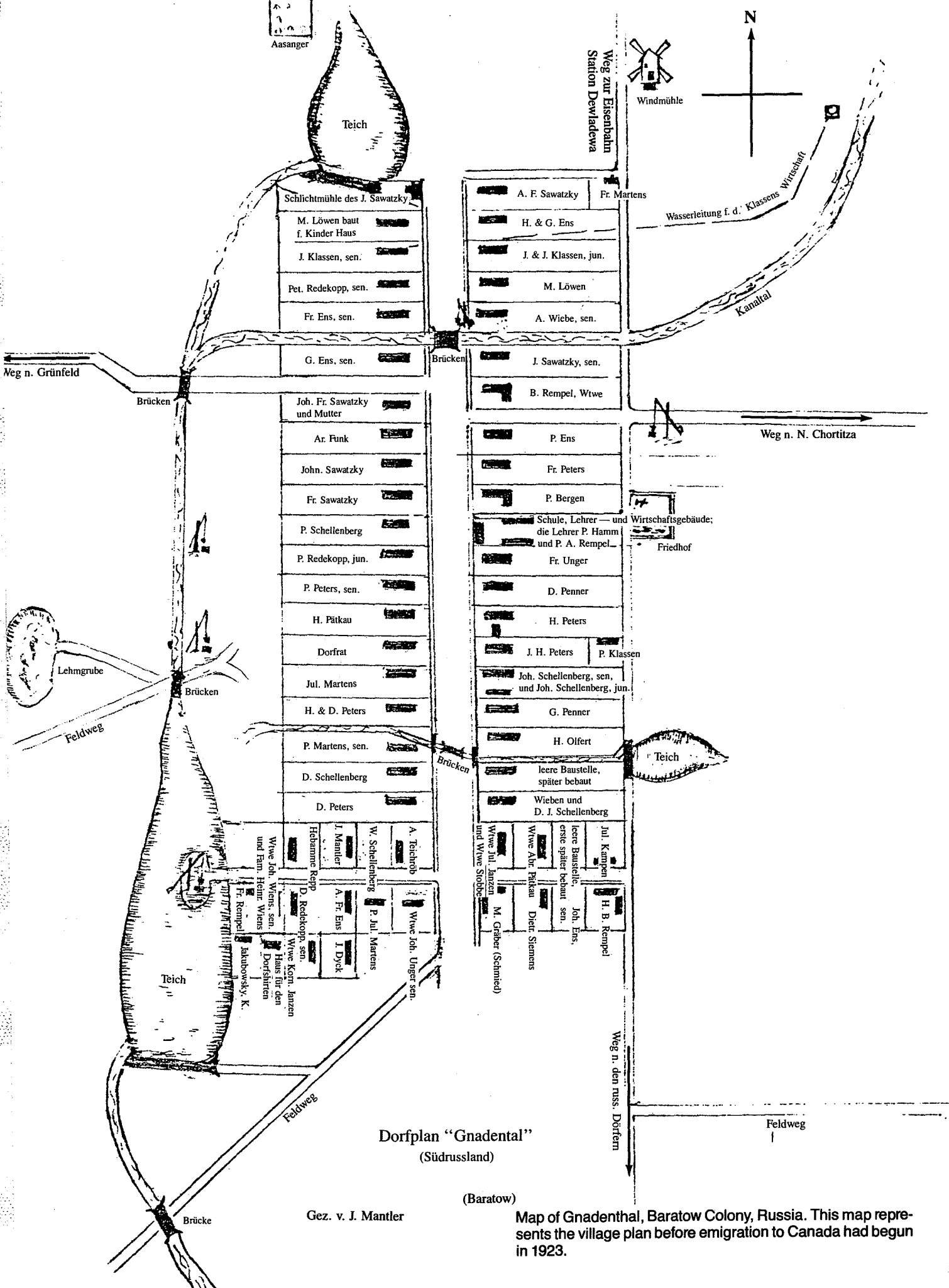
The church was soon to benefit from an educated, trained leader. No longer was the regurgitation of memorized catechism answers sufficient for receiving baptism. Preceding baptism a spiritual experience was expected, and a verbal testimony to this effect spoken before the church council was required. This innovation received opposition at first, particularly from some of the older members of the church. Gradually acceptance came, and the form is still practiced in the Blumenortter church today. Prayer meetings and Bible studies were soon intro-

duced, and in some villages choir practice had begun. Ältester Rempel called regular conferences and conducted special Bible courses for the ministers in order to provide them with the background information necessary in their concerns to meet the needs of the congregation.

The story of the Baratow-Schlachtjin Colony and the Neu-Chortitzer Church abruptly ends in 1923 when the immigrants, who were eventually to settle in southern Manitoba, began to leave the colony. However, a sequel must be added to the life story of Ältester Rempel in order to recognize and acknowledge the influence of this spiritual leader on the men and women who were to play leading roles in the founding of the Blumenortter Church. Ältester Rempel chose not to join the immigrant group. He felt it was his duty to remain with his church, which was already experiencing relentless harassment from officials of the Red regime. By 1929 persecution of the church had been intensified, with particular attention directed at the clergy. An excellent opportunity to escape was afforded Ältester Rempel when he was permitted to attend a conference in Germany. Fully



Ältester Jacob Rempel in exile.



Aasanger

Teich

Weg zur Eisenbahn
Station Dewladewa



Windmühle

N



Wasserleitung f. d. Klassens Wirtschaft

Kanalal

Schlichtmühle des J. Sawatzky
M. Löwen baut f. Kinder Haus
J. Klassen, sen.
Pet. Redekopp, sen.
Fr. Ens, sen.

A. F. Sawatzky
Fr. Martens
H. & G. Ens
J. & J. Klassen, jun.
M. Löwen
A. Wiebe, sen.

Weg n. Grünfeld

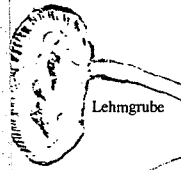
Brücken

G. Ens, sen.

Brücken

J. Sawatzky, sen.
B. Rempel, Wtwe

Weg n. N. Chortitza



Lehmgrube

Brücken

Joh. Fr. Sawatzky und Mutter
Ar. Funk
John. Sawatzky
Fr. Sawatzky
P. Schellenberg
P. Redekopp, jun.
P. Peters, sen.
H. Pätkau
Dorfrat
Jul. Martens
H. & D. Peters

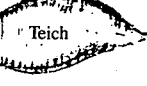
P. Ens
Fr. Peters
P. Bergen



Friedhof

Schule, Lehrer — und Wirtschaftsgebäude;
die Lehrer P. Hamm
und P. A. Rempel

Fr. Unger
D. Penner
H. Peters
J. H. Peters
P. Klassen
Joh. Schellenberg, sen.
und Joh. Schellenberg, jun.



Teich

P. Martens, sen.
D. Schellenberg
D. Peters

H. Olfert
leere Baustelle,
später bebaut

Hebamme Repp
I. Manler
W. Schellenberg
A. Teichrob

Jul. Kampen
leere Baustelle,
erste später bebaut
sen.

W. Fr. Rempel
D. Redekopp, sen.
W. Korn. Janzen
Haus für den Dorfsitten
Jakubowsky, K.

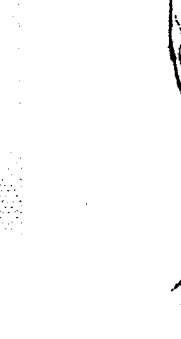
W. Fr. Janzen
W. Fr. Janzen
M. Graber (Schmied)

A. Fr. Ens
I. Dyck
W. Fr. Rempel

W. Fr. Janzen
W. Fr. Janzen
M. Graber (Schmied)

W. Fr. Rempel
D. Redekopp, sen.
W. Korn. Janzen
Haus für den Dorfsitten
Jakubowsky, K.

W. Fr. Janzen
W. Fr. Janzen
M. Graber (Schmied)



Brücke

Dorfplan "Gnadenal"
(Südrussland)

(Baratow)

Gez. v. J. Mantler

Map of Gnadenal, Baratow Colony, Russia. This map represents the village plan before emigration to Canada had begun in 1923.

aware of the dangers of his position and of the fact that his return home would mean almost certain death in those turbulent times of persecution, he nevertheless chose to come back, declaring that if his church was to endure suffering he had to lead the way. Later that year, when through dispossession and deportation the church was utterly torn apart, Ältester Rempel and his family joined the desperate thousands at the gates of Moscow in an attempt to leave the country. Here he was arrested, imprisoned, and eventually banned to a labour camp on an island in the White Sea. He is believed to have been shot and killed in 1941.³

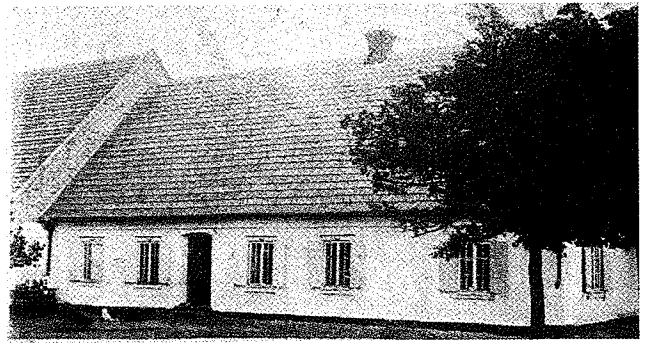
Such is the story of a man dedicated to a church he believed entrusted to him by God. No doubt his spirit dominated the teachings in the new church established in Canada by his followers.

Immigration

In 1923, in the village of Gnadenthal, Russia, emigration plans were underway. The group plan-



Students in Gnadenthal, Baratow Colony, Russia, with teachers, Abram Wieler and Peter Martens. Photo: 1911.



Home of Peter P. Redekopp, Gnadenthal, Baratow Colony, Russia.

ning to leave had found an able leader in the person of Reverend Jacob J. Klassen. His perception and evaluation of the deteriorating conditions in Russia were invaluable in planning and executing the migration process. Reverend Klassen made numerous trips to the Alte Kolonie to make travel arrangements on behalf of his fellow villagers — a distance of about one hundred kilometres at a time when travel was extremely dangerous. Preparations for the journey to Canada were completed by the end of June. Twenty-eight families moved from Gnadenthal. Altogether more than 400 persons from the Neu-Chortitzer Church left for Canada at that time. More followed later.

Another minister, Reverend P. A. Rempel (a brother to Ältester Jacob Rempel) who also lived in Gnadenthal, Russia, kept a personal diary describing the journey from the colonies. A translated, slightly condensed version reads as follows:

Our Journey Out of Russia (Village of Gnadenthal, Baratow Colony, Municipality [Kreis] of



School children at play, Gnadenthal, Baratow Colony, Russia. Photo: 1908.

Krivoy Rog, Province [Gouvernement of Jekaterinoslaw] to Canada in 1923

July 8 — A farewell is held in the "Querscheune" (barn) of the Widow Philip Wiebe in Gnadenthal.

July 9 — Monday, 11 A.M., we leave Gnadenthal. My brother-in-law, Gerhard Franz Ens, takes us on his wagon (Leiterwagen). My brother Jacob Aaron Rempel accompanies us up to the village of Neu-Chortitza. For the night we stay in Friedensfeld at the homes of Messrs. Boschmann and Wiens, where we find friendly hospitality.



Train station in Russia. This scene was typical at major train stations in the Mennonite settlements in Russia. Emigrants arrived on ladder wagons (Leiterwagen) with their possessions which were then loaded into box cars for the long journey to Canada.

July 10 — We arrive in Neuenburg at the home of my wife's parents just in time for Vesper.

July 13 — Friday, 5:30 P.M., the #3 immigrant train departs from the Alt-Chortitza train station. As the train sets into motion, the passengers sing "Befiehl du deine Wege". On board this train are approximately 206 men, 211 women and 339 children under the age of 16, making a total of 756 persons. Among these are 11 active teachers, 9 former teachers, 8 ministers (one of them an Ältester), 5 lady teachers — 3 of them Kindergarten teachers, 47 persons with Zentralschule or higher education, 4 bookkeepers, 1 medical doctor, 2 midwives, 1 nurse, and 1 Provisorgehilfe (pharmaceutic assistant).

July 14 — A short devotional service is held in Sinjelnikowo at the train station, led by Reverend Isaak Epp.

July 15 — 7 P.M., we arrive in the big city of Charkow. Here we are given a bath.

July 16 — 6:10 P.M., we continue on our journey.

July 17 — 3 P.M., we arrive in Kursk. This is where Mrs. David Schellenberg sprains her knee; the guard shouted at her and she fell on her knee.

July 23 — 7 A.M., we arrive in Sebesch — the Russian border city. Here we spend some time enjoying a picnic out of doors. There is also opportunity to swim in a lake nearby or to do some laundry. The customs officers look after our luggage. The staff here is quite friendly.

July 24 — 9:12 A.M., we come to the Russian-Latvian border and pass through the Red Gate! The officials are not friendly. In Reschitza we are all given a bath and our baggage is disinfected. Two Canadian doctors examine us. The condition of our eyes is given particular attention. My wife has to remain behind because of her eyes. After the inspection our group presents the following picture: Out of 756 passengers, 196 are detained for health reasons. They, plus 54 healthy family members, stay in Lechfeld, Germany. Baratow-Schlachtjin — 451 passengers; 151 sick and 181 go to Lechfeld. Gnadenthal — 130 passengers; 29 are sick and 40 stay in Lechfeld.

July 27 — 2:23 P.M., we part from those staying behind.

July 28 — 6 P.M., we sail from Libau on the C.P.R. vessel "Bruton". Many of us see the sea for the first time. Next we cross the Baltic Sea.

July 30 — Noon we come to the Kiel Canal. We are able to see into Germany; sleek cattle grazing on lush green meadows.

Aug. 2 — Thursday noon we dock in Southampton, England. A few passengers disembark to try out their knowledge of the English language. It would appear that the English do not understand their own English language too well.

Aug. 4 — 2 P.M., we set sail to cross the Atlantic. As a result of a medical inspection in Southampton another eight persons are held back. Several hundred immigrants from previous groups are put aboard making a total of 815 passengers.

Aug. 5 — G. Warkentin conducts morning devotions. Our sea voyage is made in a small, rather decrepit vessel about a quarter of the size of an ocean liner. The weather is favourable. Even so many are quite sea-sick. The cuisine and especially the hygiene of the ship leaves much to be desired. My daughters and I are hardly sea-sick at all. Whenever possible, depending on the weather, morning devotions are held on deck. During the voyage a baby is born; the ship's medical staff cares for it quite tenderly. Before we reach Quebec one family is forced to leave the ship due to the illness of a child.

Aug. 17 — Friday noon we dock in Quebec. Here we undergo a final medical examination. Two women are detained. Towards evening we board the train for Winnipeg. On this train we hold



Immigrants arriving in Altona, August 21, 1923. Local farm families welcomed the new arrivals and offered accommodation and whenever possible, temporary employment. The Paul D. Peters family were among the immigrants arriving on this train.



Newly arrived immigrants walk, baggage in hand, towards what for them must have seemed like a strange and uncertain future.

devotional services as well. The Canadians who have an opportunity to observe us seem to be favourably impressed.

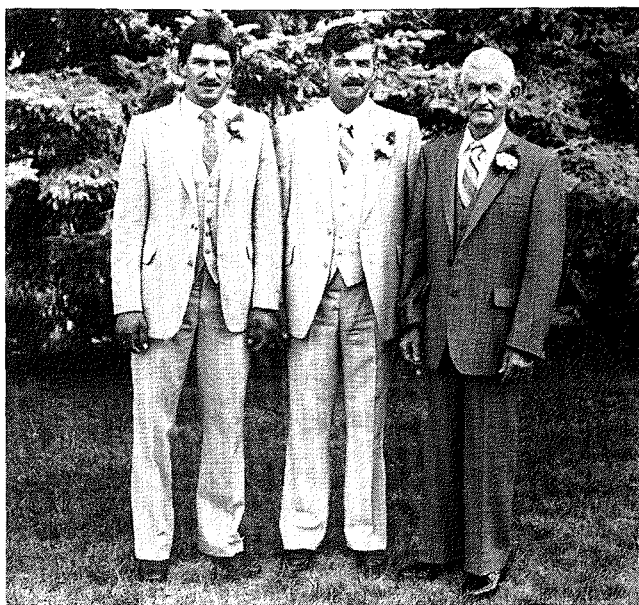
Aug. 21 — Around noon we arrive in Winkler. The journey from Alt-Chortitza to Winkler has taken thirty-nine days.

The immigrants were welcomed by local farmers. With harvesting just beginning, short term employment was easily found. Some of the new arrivals remained with their initial employer throughout the

winter, working for little more than room and board. Others spent the winter working the railway lines in Saskatchewan, returning to Manitoba in the spring.

Since the farms in Gnadenthal became available in 1924, twelve families from Gnadenthal, Russia, immediately settled there. A later migration brought two more.

When the children of these families began to marry and set up households, a total of twenty-seven families claim one or both family heads as having



Four generations of the Paul D. Peters family have lived or are living in Gnadenthal. Pictured above are Paul D. and Helena Peters. Photo: 1940s. Below are, (l-r): great-grandson, Paul Raymond Peters, grandson, Paul Jacob Peters and son, Paul P. Peters.

lived in both Gnadenthals at one time or other. One family from the original group of immigrants is still living in Gnadenthal today: Johann Peters has lived there for fifty-eight years. Another interesting statistic is that Mr. and Mrs. Paul Raymond Peters, recently married and making their home in Gnadenthal, are the fourth generation of the Paul D. Peters family to live there. Ten other families originating from the Baratow-Schlachtjin area have lived in Gnadenthal as well: five from the village of Steinfeld and five from one of the Judenplan villages.

The Baratow-Schlachtjin Colonies are no more. Colony life as such had suffered severe disruption shortly after immigration, because the new Communist regime enforced its philosophies of atheism and socialism with brutal disregard for human life and property. During the evacuation of the villagers with the retreating German troops in late 1943, the last vestiges of these settlements as Mennonite communities were utterly destroyed. Their people were scattered all over the world — in Canada, Paraguay and Brazil. Many were forced back to Russia from German refugee camps. As for the villages, only Grünfeld remained, although not as a Mennonite village. Steinfeld was burned to the ground as the battle front swept over that area. Two dwellings and the school house mark the site where Gnadenthal once stood. The entire area is now a vegetable garden for the industrial workers in the city of Krivoy Rog.

List of family heads (and spouses) who have lived in Gnadenthal, Russia, and also at one time or another in Gnadenthal, Manitoba.

NAMES	ORIGIN
Johann Johann Schellenberg (parents)	Gnadenthal, Russia
1. Lena Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Peter P. Redekopp (in Russia)	Gnadenthal, Russia
2. Justina Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Abram G. Teichroeb (in Russia)	Gnadenthal, Russia
3. Margaret Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Peter Hamm (in Russia)	Gnadenthal, Russia
4. Anna Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Peter Krause (in Russia)	Gnadenthal, Russia
5. Johann J. Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Justina Rempel (in Russia)	Gnadenthal, Russia
6. David J. Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Anna Wiebe (in Russia)	Gnadenthal, Russia
7. Mary Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Jacob G. Sawatzky (in Canada)	Judenplan, Russia
8. Tina Schellenberg	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Henry S. Friesen (in Canada)	—
Paul D. Peters (parents)	Gnadenthal, Russia
1. Henry P. Peters	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Helena Wiebe (in Russia)	Gnadenthal, Russia
2. Paul P. Peters	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Margareta Hildebrand (in Russia)	Neu Chortitza, Russia
3. Cornelius P. Peters	Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Maria Fast (in Canada)	—

- 4. Diedrich P. Peters Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Margaret Sawatzky (in Canada)
- 5. Jacob P. Peters Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Anna Sawatzky (in Canada)
- 6. Johann P. Peters Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Aganeta Born (in Canada)
- 7. Anna Peters Gnadenthal, Manitoba
married to George Fast (in Canada)
- 8. Neta Peters Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Henry Peters (in Canada)
- Frank F. Sawatzky (parents) Gnadenthal, Russia
- *1. Margaret Sawatzky Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Diedrich P. Peters (in Canada)
- *2. Anna Sawatzky Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Jacob P. Peters (in Canada)
- 3. Frank F. Sawatzky Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Anna Letkeman (in Canada)
- Peter Johann Schellenberg (parents) Gnadenthal, Russia
- 1. Nettie Schellenberg Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Peter Penner (in Canada)
- 1. Philip Wiebe Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Anna Dyck (in Canada)
- 2. Tina Wiebe Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Jacob J. Sawatzky (in Canada)
- *3. Anna Wiebe Gnadenthal, Russia
married to David J. Schellenberg (in Russia)
- *4. Helena Wiebe Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Heinrich P. Peters (in Russia)
- David D. Peters (parents) Gnadenthal, Russia
- 1. Margaret Peters Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Frank G. Sawatzky (in Canada)
- 2. David D. Peters Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Tina Fehr (in Canada)
- 3. Frank D. Peters Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Kathy Kehler (in Canada)
- * have been listed before

List of family heads (and spouses) of other areas in the Baratow-Schlachtjin Colonies or members of the Neu-Chortitzer Church such as residents of the Judenplan and also at one time or another of Gnadenthal, Manitoba.

From Steinfeld-Schlachtjin Colony

- Abram Olfert (parents) Steinfeld, Russia
- 1. Maria Olfert Steinfeld, Russia
married to Abram D. Klassen (in Russia)
- 2. Margareta Olfert Janzen Steinfeld, Russia

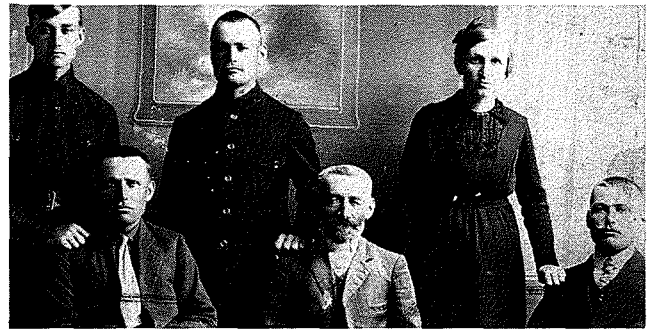
From Judenplan-Neu-Chortitzer Church

- Gerhard Sawatzky (parents) Judenplan, Russia
- *1. Johann G. Sawatzky Judenplan, Russia
married to Margareta Olfert Janzen (in Canada)
- 2. Bernhard G. Sawatzky Steinfeld, Russia
married to Margaret Klassen (in Canada)
- *3. Frank G. Sawatzky Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Margaret Peters (in Canada)
- *4. Jacob G. Sawatzky Gnadenthal, Russia
married to Mary Schellenberg (in Canada)
- Gnadenthal, Russia

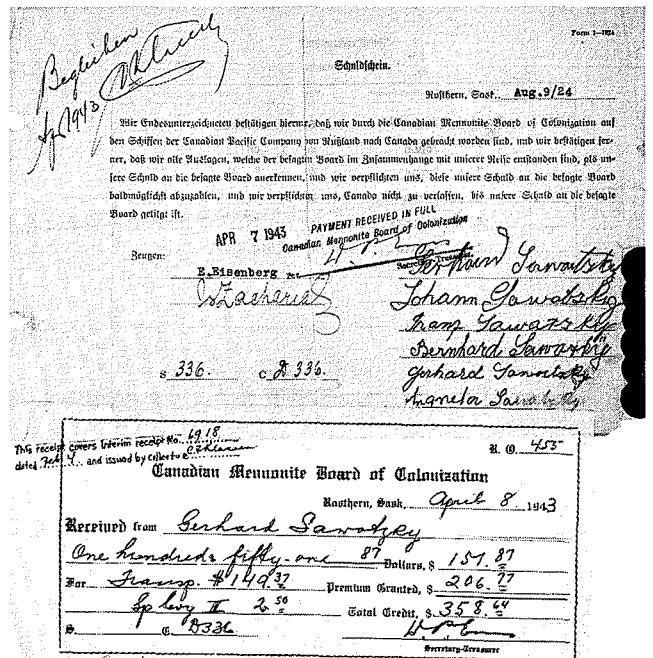
* have been listed before

married to Johann G. Sawatzky (in Canada)

- 3. Abram A. Olfert Judenplan, Russia
married to Margareta Sawatzky (in Canada) Steinfeld, Russia
- 4. Tina Olfert Steinfeld, Russia
married to Abram A. Teichroeb (in Canada) Gnadenthal, Russia



Passport photo of the Gerhard Sawatzky family. Seated, left to right: Johann, Gerhard Sawatzky, George. Standing: Bernhard, Frank and Mrs. George Sawatzky. The Sawatzky family came from Neu-Vitebsk in Russia, a village in the Judenplan. All, except the George Sawatzkys, made their home in Gnadenthal.



Copy of contract between the Gerhard Sawatzky family and the Canadian Board of Colonization with accompanying receipt of final payment. The majority of immigrants made the journey to Canada on credit extended to them by the Canadian Pacific Railroad. It was up to the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization to collect the debt. In some cases hard pressed settlers reneged on their agreement with the Board and refused to submit payments, claiming they were too poor. In order to honour the contract with the C.P.R. the Board of Colonization instituted a "fünf Zent Steuer" (five cent levy). All immigrants, whether paid up or not, were expected to contribute five cents to help cover the debt of those who could not or would not keep up their end of the bargain. Most immigrants, however, were anxious to be rid of the "Reise Schuld" (transportation debt) and paid it as quickly as they were able.



Certificate of Canadian Citizenship.



Abram and Maria Klassen with their children, Mary (standing) and Abe, were the first family to arrive in Gnadenthal from the Schlachtjin Colony village of Steinfeld in 1924.

The Blumenorter Church Formation

Much of the credit for the founding of the Blumenorter Church must go to Jacob J. Klassen who had been instrumental in preparing the way for the residents of the original Gnadenthal to migrate from Russia. Once in Canada, he was equally concerned about the welfare of his former fellow villagers and church members, and sought to establish communication between them. He made it his responsibility to visit them and whenever possible to conduct a church service. This was no small matter since he himself

had settled in the village of Blumenort near Gretna, and the immigrants were scattered in as many as nine different locations in mid-southern Manitoba — some as distant as the town of Morden. Most of the trips had to be made in the wee hours of a Sunday morning. After completing the morning chores on the farm, a team of horses was hitched up to the buggy or sleigh (depending on the season) and Rev. Klassen set out to reach his destination in time for the morning service.

On September 9, 1923, he conducted the first service in Blumenort. On October 28 he led the church service in Reinland which may well have been the first one for the immigrants there. In 1924 Rev. Klassen conducted sixty-one services for the immigrants in their various locations. Nine of these were held in Gnadenthal.

The immigrants soon felt the need for a more formal church structure and at first considered joining the Bergthaler Church. Some already had, upon arriving in Canada, transferred their membership to the Schönwieser Church in Winnipeg, but this was not a feasible solution due to the geographical distance. The logical alternative seemed to be the founding of an independent church.

At a Bruderschaft meeting held in Reinland on April 14, 1925, the new church was to be unofficially organized. Rev. Klassen was elected to preside; Gerhard Ens, Reinland, and Abram Voth, Gretna, were elected secretaries. According to the minutes as they appear in the April 22, 1925, issue of "Der Bote", vital discussion preceded the final decision to organize a church. An alternative could have been found by simply joining one of the numerous churches already active in southern Manitoba, but the group at the Bruderschaft was apprehensive of such a step because of diversity in forms of worship, interests and background. A strong desire to belong to a formal church with familiar traditions was expressed by all present, and the decision to form a congregation independent of any established denomination was reached. Plans for a church limited in size and membership and restricted to a specific area to avoid a "scattered" congregation were favoured. The prospective leader or Ältester, it was felt, must know each individual member personally, so that the smaller, more intimate fellowship would facilitate meaningful interaction between the leadership and the members of the congregation. Immigrants wishing to join immediately were required to present verification of their church membership in Russia. A fee of twenty-five cents was levied for each family that registered.

Rev. Klassen agreed to become the leader of this



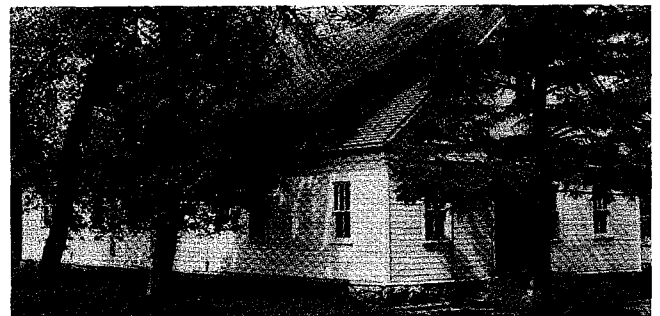
Reverend Jacob J. Klassen, founder and leader of the Blumenorter Church, 1925-1928.

new congregation until an Ältester could be elected. The only other ordained minister the church had at the time of its establishment was Rev. P. A. Rempel from Gretna. Since the young church was without an Ältester, Rev. J. P. Klassen, Ältester of the Schönwieser Church, officiated at the first baptism on June 6, 1925, a few weeks after the founding. At least six persons were baptized on the confession of their faith.

Almost a year later, at a Bruderberatung held in Rosenort on March 21, 1926, the church decided to apply for membership in the General Conference of Mennonites in Canada. At this same meeting the name "Blumenorter Mennoniten Gemeinde" was adopted, using the name of the home village of the church's founder.

On June 27, 1925, the congregation purchased the Reinländer Church building in Rosenort for \$800.00. To pay for the building a sum of four dollars was levied upon each member. Due to the extreme poverty of the immigrants the money came in rather slowly and it was not until 1934 that the church received a clear title. A second church building was purchased in 1926 in Reinland, again from the Reinländer church people who were leaving for Mexico. This structure cost \$500.00 and was paid for in cash on October 29, 1926. The cash payment was made possible by a generous gift of \$400.00 towards the purchase of the building by Rev. Isaak P. Friesen from Rosthern, Saskatchewan, minister of the Rosenort Mennonite Church there. The Blumenorter congregation now owned church buildings in two locations. In the village of Blumenort the immigrants were meeting in a renovated house, while in Gnadenenthal the school house was used as a church. Thus the congregation was provided with meeting places in four of its major locales. For occasions when the congregation as a whole would meet, the church in Reinland was used, since it offered the greatest seating capacity.

For the first number of years the church worked without an Ältester. Baptisms and communion services were conducted by the Schönwieser Ältester, J.



Blumenorter Church building in Reinland, Manitoba.

P. Klassen, or by Ältester F. F. Enns from the church at Whitewater, Manitoba. Others who served the church were Rev. J. J. Siemens and Rev. Peter Epp from the Berghaler Church.

The election of an Ältester had been deferred since the church was expecting its revered Ältester Jacob Rempel, still in Russia, to assume the leadership of the new congregation. At an election meeting on September 14, 1927, he was elected in absentia to the candidacy of Ältester with a majority of twenty-four votes. Two other candidates, J. P. Bueckert and P. A. Rempel, received seven and six votes respectively. When hopes for the possibility of Ältester Jacob Rempel's emigration from Russia became dim, another election for the position of Ältester was held on August 5, 1928. Rev. Johann P. Bueckert was elected. He was ordained on November 18, 1928, by Ältester David Toews from Rosthern, Saskatchewan. At this time the church numbered 199 members.

Leaders

Johann P. Bueckert was born on July 29, 1879, in the village of Schöneberg, Chortitza Colony, in Russia. In 1900 he was baptized, and in the fall of the same year he married Katharina Froese, also of Schöneberg. Mr. Bueckert was elected to the ministry on January 7, 1906, and ordained on April 6th. At the time of his election, he and his wife were experiencing much sorrow and heartbreak due to the death



Johann P. Bueckert, first Ältester of the Blumenorter Church, 1928-1954.

of a two-year old daughter. Four days after his election a second daughter passed away, and just three days after his ordination they lost a third daughter.

In 1907 Rev. Bueckert accepted the post of Prediger Ökonom (resident minister-manager), Neu-Berdjansk Forstei (forestry). The position enabled him to pursue Bible studies in his leisure time and to



Ministers of the early Blumenorter Church. Back row, left to right: Heinrich Ens, Reinland, Abram P. Bueckert, Gnadenthal, Cornelius B. Krahn, Reinland, Heinrich Albrecht, Gnadenthal, Heinrich Warkentin, Hochfeld. Seated: Johann Bueckert, Schönwiese, Johann P. Klassen, visiting Ältester from the Schönwieser Church in Winnipeg, Jacob J. Klassen, Blumenort.

practice preaching. After a five-and-a-half year stay the couple moved to the new Mennonite settlement of Arkadak where they lived for over twelve years. Rev. Bueckert's leadership qualities came to the fore in Arkadak as he served his church and his community during years of war, revolution and famine. One of the many tasks he performed was to intercede on behalf of the community's young men of draft age whom he represented before the courts in order to free them from military service.

In 1925 Rev. Bueckert, with his family, was able to migrate to Canada, arriving in Plum Coulee on September 7, 1925. The following October they were accepted as members into the Blumenorter Church, and Rev. Bueckert was ordained as Ältester in 1928.



Baptism class in the Blumenorter Church, 1948. Men in the back row are, left to right: Dan Peters, Blumenort, Frank Peters, Gnadenthal, Peter Bergen, Blumenort. Ladies are, left to right: Helen D. Peters, Gnadenthal, Susie Penner, Gnadenthal, Margaret Goertzen, Blumenort, Agatha Thiessen, Gnadenthal, Betty Teichroeb, Gnadenthal, Mary D. Peters, Gnadenthal, Helen Neufeld, Gnadenthal, Susie H. Peters, Gnadenthal, Helen Buhler, Haskett, Nettie Peters, Blumenort. Seated are minister, Frank F. Sawatzky, Paul J. Schaefer, Ältester Johann P. Bueckert, Abram A. Teichroeb.

Being the first Ältester of a new church in a new land during those pioneering years was no easy task for Johann Bueckert. Nevertheless he saw this position as a God-given responsibility and rendered his church faithful and competent leadership. For most of his twenty-six years as Ältester, Rev. and Mrs. Bueckert lived in the village of Schönwiese, moving to Gretna upon retirement. In an ordination ceremony held in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute auditorium on August 22, 1954, Ältester Bueckert handed over the reins of leadership to his successor, Paul J. Schaefer. He continued to serve the church in a limited capacity until his sudden death on April 27, 1958.

Paul Schaefer was well received as the second Ältester of the church, the membership of which had long since become aware of his outstanding leader-

ship qualities. Mr. Schaefer had entered the southern Manitoba Mennonite community in 1928 when he was hired by the Gnadenthal School Board to teach in the local school. Mr. and Mrs. Schaefer became members of the Blumenorter Church in 1932. Ten years later Mr. Schaefer accepted the church's call to the ministry, and on March 21, 1954, he was elected Ältester.

A few months prior to his ordination another short but significant ceremony was performed. Paul Schaefer was of Lutheran parentage and as such had received infant baptism with confirmation at the age of sixteen. At the time of his first marriage he was accepted into the Mennonite Church in Russia by Ältester F. F. Enns. Since he had been elected leader of the Blumenorter Church the question of adult baptism was raised. Rev. Schaefer offered to settle any misgivings the church might have in this regard by requesting adult baptism. The simple but well-attended ceremony was performed by the retiring Ältester J. P. Bueckert on May 2, 1954, in the church at Reinland.

In the meantime Mr. Schaefer had succeeded G. H. Peters as principal of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute of Gretna in 1948. He now carried a double load — administrating a school and shepherding a church. He also assumed numerous duties and responsibilities in the Conference and the Mennonite community as such, for Paul Schaefer loved his adopted people. He saw a wealth in their heritage which few "native" born Mennonites realized they had. His writings, a biography of H. H. Ewert and a Mennonite History in four brochure volumes, are some of the many contributions he made to the community of the Mennonite people in southern Manitoba.

Paul Schaefer's death in 1969 was a great loss for the Blumenorter Church. During his fifteen years as Ältester the church had experienced strong directive leadership. It had grown not only numerically, but in spiritual stature as well. Under Ältester Schaefer's disciplined but undictatorial guidance, a greater measure of unity had been achieved through the merging of the scattered membership into a single worshipping body at the centrally located church building in Rosenort.

Ältester Schaefer was succeeded by Abram A. Teichroeb as leader of the church. Although it was difficult to fill the void left by the death of the former Ältester, Reverend Teichroeb filled it well. His simple direct manner enabled him to establish good rapport with his parishioners. His many years of work with young people in Bible School, with children in camp, and with adults in the many facets of church participation, had endowed him with the ex-

In Gnadenthal vom 22. Febr. bis zum 25. März 1937

	M - n - n - d - n - n - g - l - a - n.				
	Montag	Dienstag	Mittwoch	Donnerstag	Freitag
9-9-10	M - n - n - d - n - n - a - n - d - a - t.				
9-10-9-55	Das Leben Jesu	Montagen	Kirchengeschichte	Montagen	Kirchengeschichte
10-5-10-50	Kirchengeschichte	Lehrplan	Israel's Geschichte	Lehrplan	Nolan
11-11-45	Montagen	Kirchengeschichte	Das Leben Jesu	Das Leben Jesu	Kirchengeschichte
1-1-45	Die Bibel Gottes Wort	Licht. Geographie	Montagen	Kirchengeschichte	Montagen
1-5-2-40	Nolan	Kirchengeschichte	Licht. Geographie	Kirchengeschichte	Das Leben Jesu
2-50-2-35	Japan	Israel's Geschichte	Nolan	Israel's Geschichte	Japan

Timetable of a Bible School course conducted in Gnadenthal by Abram A. Teichroeb.

perience necessary for a leader of various age groups.

Abram Teichroeb was born in Gnadenthal, Bar- atow Colony in Russia, on October 20, 1907, where he subsequently received his elementary schooling. He and his parents were among the first group to leave Gnadenthal, Russia, for Canada in 1923. Like many others from the area, the family settled in Gnadenthal, Manitoba. Abram was then fifteen. At the 1928 religious revival in Gnadenthal, Manitoba, Abram Teichroeb experienced salvation, and his life took a new and positive direction. He attended the Bible School in Winkler for five years, graduating in 1936. The year before he had been called to the ministry in the Blumenorter Church. He accepted the call and was ordained on April 22, 1935.

The year following his graduation from Bible School he conducted a series of Bible School courses in some of the villages together with Rev. J. J. Klassen from Blumenort. The first of the sessions was held in Blumenort, followed by instruction in Schönwiese and ending with six weeks of Bible School classes in Gnadenthal. These weeks of classes culminated in a program held in Reinland with all students participating.

This experience initiated Rev. Teichroeb into years of teaching. At Ältester Bueckert's urging, and because he felt a need for a strong and vital Bible School within the Conference, Abram Teichroeb accepted a teaching position at the Elim Bible School, initially situated in Gretna and later in Altona. There

he taught for twenty-five consecutive years, twenty-three as principal. In 1964 he accepted a two-year assignment to organize a Bible School in the Menno Colony in Paraguay. After his return he served as secretary-treasurer for the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna for many years.

In 1975 he tendered his resignation as leader of the Blumenorter Church. It was accepted with great reluctance. In 1982 Rev. Teichroeb continues to work on the ministerial staff on the church. The church showed its appreciation for forty-five years of faithful service in a celebration held in his honour on November 16, 1980.

Rev. C. C. Thiessen was elected to succeed Rev. Teichroeb as minister in charge. He served the church from 1975 to 1982. Currently, Rev. Peter D. Zacharias, elected May 2, 1982, is the leading minister in the Blumenorter Church.

The Gnadenthal Local of the Blumenorter Church

A Church Within a Church

When the stream of Mennonite immigrants ceased in 1928, the Blumenorter Church numbered 199 members. Of these thirty-four lived in Gnadenthal, thirty-two in Blumenort, twenty-eight in Reinland, twenty-eight in Hochfeld, twelve each in Rosenort and Schönwiese, and isolated members in Blumenfeld, Neu-Reinland, Haskett, Eichenfeld, Chortitz and Neuenburg. The Gnadenthal Local of the church participated fully in the activities of the



Ministers of the Blumenorter Church, 1959. Back row, left to right: Abram A. Teichroeb, Cornelius B. Krahn, Frank F. Sawatzky, Diedrich P. Peters (deacon), Gerhard Ens, Henry G. Ens, Peter Fehr (minister of the Elm Creek congregation). Front: Abram G. Teichroeb (deacon), Jacob J. Klassen, Ältester Paul J. Schaefer, Jacob H. Klassen, Abram P. Bueckert, Peter A. Rempel.

larger congregation. Some Gnadenthal residents who have served the Blumenorter Church, besides Paul Schaefer and A. A. Teichroeb, are: Rev. A. P. Bueckert, Rev. F. F. Sawatzky, Rev. Heinrich Albrecht, Mr. Diedrich P. Peters (deacon), Abram G. Teichroeb (deacon), Bernhard G. Sawatzky and Heinrich P. Peters (congregational song leaders), Johann J. Schellenberg (secretary-treasurer), and in later years Rev. Peter Paetkau, Mr. Johann P. Peters (deacon), Mrs. Elizabeth Peters (choir conductor) and Ben Schellenberg (secretary-treasurer). At the same time the Gnadenthal group maintained a vital fellowship within its own smaller circle. In many ways it functioned like an independent congregation complete with its own administration, bookkeeping and leadership.

The first church services of the Mennoniten members, when they settled in Gnadenthal in 1924, were held in homes. Since there were no ministers among them, sermons were read by one or the other of the participants. When by the end of November 1924 the residents of Gnadenthal had purchased the school house from the Reinländer Church people, services were held there. Ministers from other villages such as Jacob J. Klassen, Blumenort, and Cornelius B. Krahn, Reinland, were available to preach

the Sunday morning sermon. At this time the Mennonite Brethren Church and the Mennoniten Church shared the pulpit in Gnadenthal. When they parted ways in 1928, the Mennoniten Church, or Blumenorter group, continued to use the school house as their church building.

**List of Gnadenthal members of the Blumenorter Church at the time of its founding.
October 24, 1928**

Name	Year of Birth
1. Peters, Paul D.	1872
2. Peters, Helena (Rempel)	1873
3. Redekopp, Peter P.	1887
4. Redekopp, Helena (Schellenberg)	1887
5. Schellenberg, David	1896
6. Schellenberg, Anna (Wiebe)	1901
7. Schellenberg, Peter	1869
8. Schellenberg, Aganetha (Goerzen)	1876
9. Schellenberg, Peter	1906
10. Schellenberg, Johann	1889
11. Schellenberg, Justina (Rempel)	1894
12. Albrecht, Heinrich	1880
13. Albrecht, Sara (Siemens)	1891
14. Teichroeb, Abram G.	1884
15. Teichroeb, Justina (Schellenberg)	1886
16. Krahn, David	1892
17. Krahn, Elisabeth (Klassen)	1895

18. Schellenberg, Johann	1856	27. Klassen, Maria (Olfert)	1898
19. Schellenberg, Helena	1859	28. Sawatzky, Jacob	1881
20. Bueckert, Abram	1892	29. Sawatzky, Margaretha (Warkentin)	1885
21. Bueckert, Helena (Krahn)	1894	30. Sawatzky, Margaretha	1907
22. Krahn, David	1862	31. Peters, Heinrich	1903
23. Sawatzky, Franz	1869	32. Peters, Aganetha (Peters)	1903
24. Sawatzky, Margaretha	1871	33. Penner, David	1900
25. Sawatzky, Franz	1906	34. Penner, Aganetha (Peters)	1900
26. Klassen, Abram	1893		

List of Ministers and Deacons from Gnadenthal in the Blumenorter Church.

Name	Address	Birth	Election	Ordination	Death
Ministers					
Heinrich Albrecht	Gnadenthal	June 22, 1880	Aug. 5, 1928	Nov. 18, 1928	Jan. 31, 1933
Abram P. Bueckert	Gnadenthal Winkler	Sept. 2, 1892	Aug. 5, 1928	Aug. 30, 1930	Feb. 8, 1973
Frank F. Sawatzky	Gnadenthal	July 15, 1906	Oct. 21, 1934	Apr. 22, 1935	Jul. 6, 1963
Abram A. Teichroeb	Gnadenthal Altona Gretna	Oct. 20, 1907	Oct. 21, 1934	April 22, 1935	
Paul Schaefer (minister) Elder	Gnadenthal Gretna	Feb. 5, 1899	Nov. 15, 1942 Mar. 21, 1954	Aug. 25, 1946 Aug. 22, 1954	June 8, 1969
*Peter Paetkau	Gnadenthal	March 17, 1951	Oct. 18, 1970	Not ordained	
Deacons					
Abram G. Teichroeb	Gnadenthal Winkler	Nov. 22, 1884	Nov. 15, 1942	Apr. 26, 1943	June 18, 1969
Diedrich P. Peters	Gnadenthal	June 18, 1901	Nov. 15, 1942	Aug. 8, 1946	
Johann P. Peters	Gnadenthal	June 8, 1911	Jul. 14, 1971	Sept. 17, 1972	

(Courtesy Dr. Adolf Ens in his essay "Contributions to the History of the Blumenorter Church".)

* is no longer a member

Leaders in the Church

On August 5, 1928, two Gnadenthal men were elected as ministers of the Blumenorter church — Heinrich Albrecht and Abram P. Bueckert. Both were part of the core group which founded the Blumenorter Church.

Although Heinrich Albrecht lived in Gnadenthal only for a relatively short time (1924-1931), his contribution to its people is significant. As co-founder and teacher of the Sunday School he was instrumental in establishing this service on solid and productive ground. He was also involved in the first organized

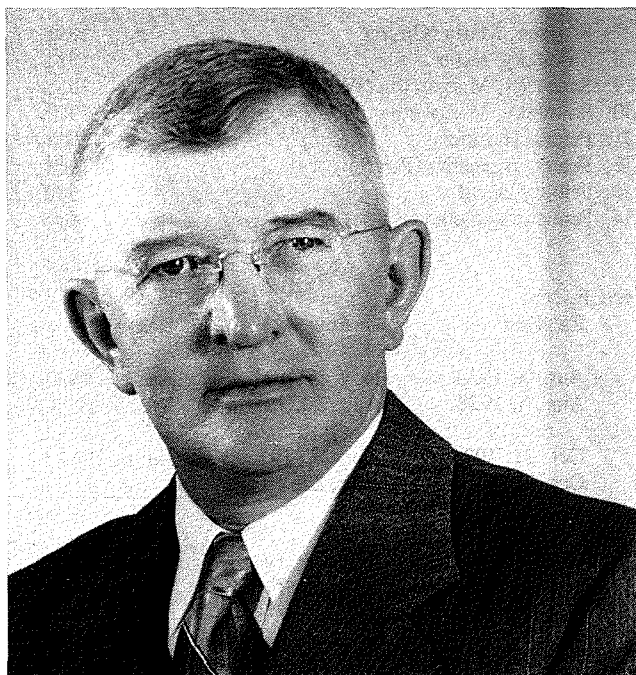
Jugendverein. His most unique gifts to the Gnadenthal people were his letters and articles which appeared in the Mennonite periodicals at fairly regular intervals. Here he talks about Gnadenthal — the people, the church, the crops and the weather, thus keeping its history alive to this day — surely, a gift to last. The Albrecht family moved to Mather, Manitoba, where Rev. Albrecht died suddenly on January 31, 1933.

Abram P. Bueckert lived in Gnadenthal for a period of thirty-two years, twenty-five of which he was leading minister in charge of the local Gnadenthal group. He was born on September 2, 1892, in the village of Schöneberg, Chortitza Colony in Russia. After completing his elementary education in his home village, he attended the Zentralschule in New York in the Bachmutter Kreis for two years, and also completed the two upper classes at the Zentralschule in Chortitza. In 1912 he was baptized in Osterwick by the Chortitzer Ältester Isaak Dyck. He spent the war years in alternate service at a forestry camp. On May 15, 1918, he married Helena Krahn, also from Schöneberg. On July 13, 1924, with his wife and their two children, he emigrated to Canada, arriving in Winkler on August 11. Later that fall the family moved to Gnadenthal.

As one of the first ministers in the Blumenorter Church he contributed much to the building of the congregation in those formative years. During the years between 1949 and 1954 when his brother, Altes-



The Heinrich Albrecht family. Rev. Albrecht was instrumental in establishing the Sunday School and Jugendverein in Gnadenthal. He also served as a minister in the Blumenorter Church. Standing, left to right: Margaret, Heinrich Albrecht, Annemarie. Seated: Henry, Helen and Mrs. Sara Albrecht.



Abram P. Bueckert served as leader of the Gnadenthal local church group for twenty-five years.

ter J. P. Bueckert, was incapacitated due to failing health, Abram Bueckert took over many of the major responsibilities of the congregation. After the ordination of Ältester Schaefer, he served as his assistant for many years. The accurate records he kept of the Predigerberatungen (ministers' meetings) have become historic documents.

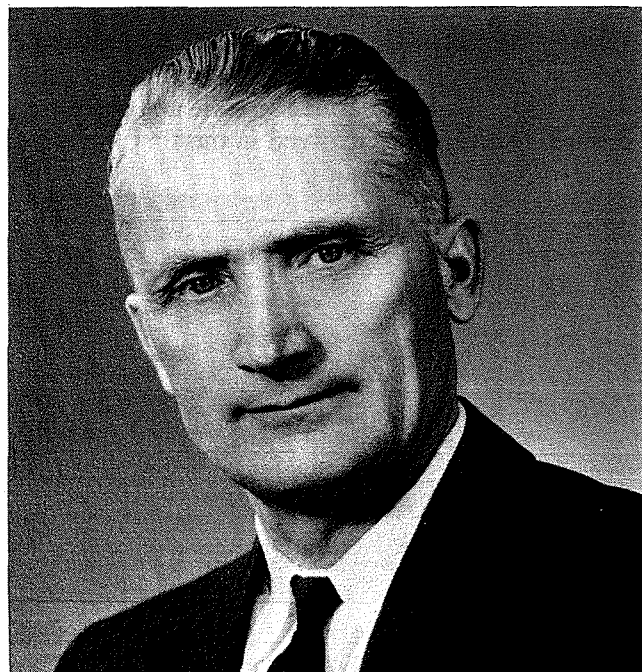
As a leader of the Gnadenthal group Abram P. Bueckert served the community well. He was active on the Jugendvereinkomitee (youth committee) for over twenty years and was a member of the local school board for eight years. His quiet, unobtrusive but pragmatic way of dealing with people had a stabilizing and unifying influence upon the church and the community as a whole. His steadfast faith in God was evident in his humble commitment to the many tasks that he performed.

In 1956 Rev. and Mrs. Bueckert retired from farming and moved to the town of Winkler. From there, Rev. Bueckert continued to serve his church until ill health forced him to give up the work he dearly loved. He died on February 8, 1973, at the age of eighty-three, after many years of illness.

In the May 23, 1967 issue of Der Bote, Paul Schaefer writes about him: "Bruder Bueckerts Arbeit in der Gemeinde ist hoch geschätzt worden. Heute erinnern wir uns noch gerne seiner geschickten Winke die uns oft zur Lösung praktischer Gemeindefragen halfen. Wir vermischen seine Mitarbeit im Predigerrat, auf den Bruderschaften wie auch in der Gemeinde überhaupt."

Rev. Bueckert had resigned from the leadership of the Gnadenthal group on January 14, 1957, and Rev. F. F. Sawatzky was elected to take his place. Born on July 15, 1906, in the Baratow village of Gnadenthal in Russia, he emigrated to Canada with his parents in 1923 as a young man of seventeen. The family settled in Gnadenthal, Manitoba. He had completed six years of elementary school as well as one year of high school (Fortbildungsschule) in Russia. His further education was severely restricted by the political unrest of the time. On February 24, 1928, Frank Sawatzky sought and found peace with God at a revival meeting in Gnadenthal, with Rev. Abram Nachtigal preaching. Shortly thereupon he was baptized and accepted into the Blumenort Church. In 1931 he was married to Anna Letkeman, also living in Gnadenthal, Manitoba.

His work in the church began as a Sunday School teacher shortly after his conversion. On October 21, 1934, he was elected to the ministry and ordained the following year, on April 22. A year later, in 1936, he graduated from the Winkler Bible School. Following his graduation he continued to serve the local and the Blumenort Church, the Conference and the Mennonite community. Rev. Sawatzky was perhaps best known for his work as an evangelist. His first invitation to conduct evangelistic services came from the village of Blumenort in February of 1938. In 1940 he was invited to preach at Elm Creek. The following year an invitation came from the church at Whitewater for a two-week series of meetings. Feeling une-



Frank F. Sawatzky, a well known evangelist, also provided leadership for the Gnadenthal church group from 1957-1963.

qual to such a task, he declined. The invitation was repeated in 1943 and this time he accepted. From that time on, with one exception, Rev. Sawatzky spent the winters visiting various churches in the Conference, sometimes as far as British Columbia and Ontario, preaching and evangelizing. He preached sincerely, forcefully, in an earnest straightforward way. Children as well as adults were captivated by his well-planned, well-executed sermons. His messages, enriched by examples taken from daily living, always had one thrust — salvation.

He worked well with his colleague, Rev. Bueckert. Their opposite natures complimented each other in such a way that the spiritual life of the church was enriched. During his years as leader of the local group, he worked in a systematic, goal-oriented fashion. His concerns were people and their spiritual welfare. His early death on July 6, 1963, was a tragic loss to the Blumenorter Church and to the community of Gnadenthal.

The death of Rev. Frank F. Sawatzky left the church group without a spiritual leader. Mr. Diedrich P. Peters, who had been ordained as a deacon in the Blumenorter Church in 1942, assumed many of the duties that were now unattended. He made it his responsibility to obtain the services of ministers for Sunday morning meetings as well as for other church occasions. He and Mrs. Peters made many visits to the sick and lonely. Especially appreciated were the visits to the elderly at the Salem Home in Winkler, of which he was one of the founding fathers. For many years Mr. Peters was the chairman of the Board of Trustees (Wirtschaftsrat) and as such also treasurer of the church. His meticulous bookkeeping and carefully kept records provide a wealth of information about the work and mission of the church. His calm manner and keen business sense guided the church through many financial straits. He worked unceasingly to maintain its status as a viable constructive group in the community.

A New Church

Very early it became evident that the premises at the disposal of the Blumenorter Church in Gnadenthal were too small for its needs. Only half of the building could be used for congregational purposes since the other half provided living quarters for the village school teacher and his family. This left little space for the growing number of church-goers in Gnadenthal.

Sometime in the late thirties, perhaps 1937-1938, there were prospects of acquiring a larger building by purchasing the church in Rosenort, to be relocated in Gnadenthal. A church building fund, with Abram A. Olfert as treasurer, was established for this purpose. The plans did not materialize, however, and some

"The Real Property Act"
Transfer of Land

I *Caruelino E. Rempel* formerly of the Village of Gnadenthal, Past Office of Plum Council in the Province of Manitoba farmer, now of the Past Office of Gnadenthal in the State of Chihuahua in the Republic of Mexico, farmer, being registered

owner of an estate in fee simple in possession subject, however, to such encumbrances, liens and interests as are notified by intendorandum underwritten or endorsed hereon in all that piece or parcel of land known and described as follows:

Being all that part of Lot 11 (1) in Block 1 (1) as shown on a plan of subdivision (of the Village of Gnadenthal) of the North West quarter of Section 27 (1) in Township 27 (1) and Range 23 (1) of the 1st Principal Meridian in the Province of Manitoba, registered in the Manitoba Land Titles Office as No. 266, described as follows: - Bounded on the West by the westerly limit of said Lot 11 bounded on the North by a straight line drawn parallel to the westerly limit of said Lot 11 from a point in its westerly limit 7 feet from the westerly corner of said Lot 11 and on the South by a straight line drawn parallel to the westerly limit of said Lot 11 from a point in its westerly limit 7 feet from the westerly corner of said Lot 11 and on the East by a straight line drawn parallel to the westerly limit of said Lot 11 from a point in its westerly limit 7 feet from the westerly corner of said Lot 11 and on the South West angle thereof a distance of one hundred and thirty (100) feet to a point hereinafter referred to as "A" and bounded on the South by a straight line drawn parallel to the westerly limit of said Lot 11 from a point in its westerly limit 7 feet from the westerly corner of said Lot 11 and on the South West angle thereof a distance of one hundred and thirty (100) feet to a point hereinafter referred to as "B" and bounded on the East by a straight line connecting said points "A" and "B".

do hereby in consideration of the sum of Seventy (70.00) Dollars

paid to me by the School District of Wells No. 1998

the receipt of which sum I do hereby acknowledge, transfer to the said School District of Wells No. 1998 all my estate and interest in the said piece of land

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto subscribed my name, this twentyseventh day of June, A.D. 1935.

Signed by the said *Caruelino E. Rempel* in the presence of *Caruelino E. Rempel*

Transfer of Reinländer Church property in Gnadenthal to the Wells School District, 1935.

contributors withdrew their money. Others chose to leave their donations in the fund in anticipation of a future opportunity to obtain a proper meeting place. Fifty dollars of the fund were used to purchase the grounds from the Gnadenthal School Board. The remaining funds were invested. At the year-end business meeting it was decided to use the money in the fund to buy a litter of piglets from Mr. Abram D. Klassen. One pig was to be given to each of a certain number of members willing to feed it to a weight of 200 pounds. The money realized from the sale of the pigs would then be reverted back into the fund. Six of the eight participating farmers were successful in the venture and sold their hogs for ten to fourteen dollars each. This, together with some cash donations, brought the total amount in the fund up to \$191.38 by the end of 1941.

The idea of building a church came from Mr. Schaefer, who was teaching Sunday School at that

Manitoba
"The Real Property Act"
Transfer of Land

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GNADENHAL NO. 1998

owner of an estate in fee simple in possession being registered
subject, however, to such encumbrances, liens and interests as are notified by memorandum underwritten or endorsed hereon, in all the case piece or parcel of land known and described as follows:

Being FIRSTLY: all that part of Lot Nine (9) in Block One (1), as shown on a plan of Subdivision (of the Village of Gnadenthal) of the North East Quarter of Section Four (4), in Township Two (2) and Range Three (3), West of the Principal Meridian, in the Province of Manitoba, registered in the Northern Land Titles Office as No. 266, described as follows: Bounded on the West by the Westerly limit of said lot, bounded on the North by a straight line drawn parallel to the Northerly limit of said lot from a point in the Westerly limit of said lot, distant Northerly thereon Four hundred and fourteen and two-tenths (414 2/10) feet from the South West angle thereof, said line being drawn Easterly a distance of One hundred and Ninety (190) feet to a point hereinafter referred to as "A", and bounded on the South by a straight line drawn parallel to the Northerly limit of said lot from a point in the Westerly limit thereof distant Northerly thereon Sixty-six (66) feet from the South West angle thereof, said line being drawn Easterly a distance of One hundred and Fifty (150) feet to a point hereinafter referred to as "B" and bounded on the East by a straight line connecting said points "A" and "B", and SECONDLY: all that part of said Lot Nine (9) lying and being to the South of a line drawn parallel to the Northerly boundary of said Lot from a point in the Westerly boundary thereof distant Northerly thereon Sixty-six (66) feet from the South West angle thereof and lying and being to the West of a line drawn East of, parallel with, and One hundred and Fifty (150) feet perpendicularly distant from the Westerly boundary thereof, EXCEPTIVE thereof and therefrom FIRSTLY: all that part of Lot Nine (9) in Block One (1) as shown on a plan of Subdivision (of the Village of Gnadenthal) of the North East Quarter of Section Four (4) in Township Two (2) and Range Three (3), West of the Principal Meridian, in the Province of Manitoba, registered in the Northern Land Titles Office as No. 266, described as follows: Bounded on the North by a line drawn parallel to the Northern limit of said lot through a point in the Western limit thereof One hundred and Seventy-five (175) feet distant from the South West angle thereof, on the West by a line drawn parallel to the said Western limit through a point in the said Northerly limit Ninety (90) feet East from the North West angle thereof, on the South by the Southern limit of said lot and on the East firstly: by a line drawn from the said Southern limit, parallel to the Western limit, Northerly to a point hereinafter referred to as point "A", said point "A" being One hundred and fifty (150) feet distant Easterly from the said Western limit in a straight line drawn parallel to the said Northern limit through a point in the said Western limit Sixty-six (66) feet distant Northerly thereon from the South West angle of said lot, secondly: by a straight line joining the said point "A" to a point One hundred and Ninety (190) feet distant Easterly from the said Western limit in a line drawn parallel to the said Northern limit through a point in the said Western limit Four hundred and Fourteen and Two-tenths (414 2/10) feet distant Northerly thereon from the South West angle thereof;

*Balance in 38142
connected with 38143*



*Johann Peters
Chairman
Abram D. Klassen
Secretary*

doth hereby in consideration of the sum of Fifty (\$50.00) Dollars
paid to it by CORNELIUS P. PETERS, HERNHARD G. SAWATZKY and FRANK F. SAWATZKY, all of the Village of Gnadenthal and Post Office of Plum Couloos, in Manitoba - Parishes
the receipt of which sum it hereby acknowledges, transfers to the said
CORNELIUS P. PETERS, HERNHARD G. SAWATZKY and FRANK F. SAWATZKY,
all its estate and interest in the said piece of Land as joint tenants

In Witness Whereof THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF GNADENHAL NO. 1998
has caused its corporate seal to be hereunto affixed, attested by the signatures of its proper officers in that
behalf this thirteenth day of January A.D. 1950



per *Johann Peters* Chairman
per *Abram D. Klassen* Secretary

Transfer of property from Wells School District to the Gnadenthal church group, 1950.

time. On the average sixty children attended, and overcrowding was becoming a serious problem in morning services. To make room for adult worshippers all children, including young people, were forced to leave after Sunday School. A new church-building would permit children, young people, and adults to attend the services. Once the idea of a new

church-building took root, things moved quickly. At the annual meeting held on January 16, 1942, these decisions were made:

1. A church would be built within a year.
2. A furnace room would be constructed underneath the building.
3. Construction would begin not later than May 30, 1942.
4. The materials to begin construction were to be purchased immediately.
5. A building committee consisting of three members was elected. They were Johann J. Schellenberg (fourteen votes), Diedrich P. Peters (ten votes) and Johann G. Sawatzky (ten votes).
6. By unanimous vote Mr. Abram D. Klassen was elected treasurer.

Before the meeting was adjourned the new building committee was commissioned to investigate the difference in cost of a full basement as opposed to a furnace room only. At a meeting held five days later, the committee quoted a difference of eighty-five dollars. The vote which followed (thirteen in favour and two against) determined that a lower auditorium

25

Diedrich P. Peters.

1942	Für den Kirchenbau geb.	zurückgeben	gegeben
Mon. dat.		holl. cent.	holl. cent.
Jan. 27	gegeben.	50.00	50.00
" 27	Emma Kordes Fund.	2.50	2.50
" "	Julia	1.00	1.00
" "	Mariaehon	50	50
" "	Lina	50	50
" "	Leisa	50	50
May 1	Einn für 8 mon. geb. 613 st.	12.76	12.76
April 11	für einen Stuhl.	1.25	1.25
Marz 9.	7 Kunst. Hefen geb.	1.	1.
" "	Hafen gegab. 90 lb.	1.00	1.00
" "	geschweht.	80	80
April 20	Missionsauswurf.	28.50	28.50
Marz 13	Kirchengrund.	1.25	1.25
Marz 26	Einn. Schwestern geg.	9.00	9.00
" "	Kirchenfond. geg.	8.00	8.00
Marz 1.	gegeben für Kirchenfond. Hufst. gegab.	50.00	50.00
Novem 28	Beitrag für Kirche	15.00	15.00
" "	Beitrag für Kirche (miss.)	10.00	10.00
(M. 2. 1942)	In dem Mon. Einn	8.12	6.20
Novem 30	Beitrag für d. Kirche		4.33
			200.00

*Absetzungen beim Kirchenbau
gaben 270 st.*

Careful records were kept of the contributions made in time and money by each participating member. Collector and book-keeper for the project was Abram D. Klassen.



Digging the basement for the Gnadenthal church, 1942.

should be included in the construction of the church. It was also decided that each participating member donate two yards of gravel towards the building.

The group hired W. Janzen from Plum Coulee as chief construction engineer. All other labour was donated by the twenty-one participants in the project. In total, almost 4000 work hours were donated to build the church — an average of 205 hours per participating member. All those who were not able to put in this amount of time were asked to make up the balance by paying fifteen cents per hour into the building fund. Teachers and ministers were exempted.

The final cost of the 26 feet by 48 feet building was \$2800.00. Although church buildings belonging to the Blumenort Church in Rosenort and Reinland had been financed by the church membership as a whole, Gnadenthal residents knew from the outset that they would have to assume financial responsibility alone, but this fact did not dampen their enthusiasm. With the depression over and the Reise-schuld (transportation debt) paid, the group felt optimistic about their ability to finance the project.

Various means were employed to facilitate financing. An initial collection after the organizational meeting of January 16 yielded an amount of \$800.00. This sum was used as a downpayment on materials. The rest was bought on credit. Pledges for further donations after the fall harvest were made; auction sales were being arranged and farmers donated some of their stored grain in order to raise the required sum. Another unique source for the building fund

Namensverzeichnis der Personen die für den Gnadenthal Kirchenbau gespendet.		
Numm.	Name	Umsatz
1	Paul H. Peters	11.
2	Johann Schellenberg	12.
3	Johann G. Sawatzky	15.
4	Paul P. Peters	17.
5	Berhard G. Sawatzky	19.
6	David F. Peters	21.
7	Abraham Rückert	23.
8	Nicolaus P. Peters	25.
9	Abraham H. Klassen	27.
10	Berhard T. Sawatzky	29.
11	Jacob J. Sawatzky	31.
12	David Keaton	33.
13	Kornelius P. Peters	35.
14	Heinrich P. Peters	37.
15	Frank F. Sawatzky	39.
16	Julius Lettkemann	41.
17	Paul Schäfer	43.
18	Johann P. Peters	45.
19	Jacob P. Peters	47.
20	Jacob Nickel	49.
21	Abraham A. Schradt	51.

List of members who participated in the building of the Gnadenthal church.

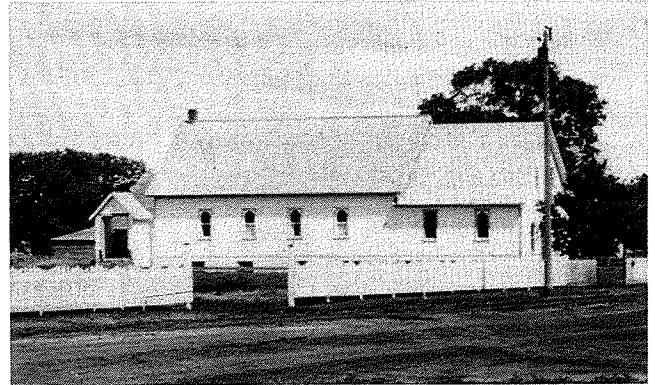
were the Sunday eggs. Individual families — usually for a three month-period — donated all the eggs laid on Sundays. Donations up to a total of \$266.90 were received from Gnadenthal residents not belonging to the original organizing body and from the church groups in Reinland and Blumenort. With much pride



The first wedding in the new church, October 18, 1942. Bride and groom are Helen Redekopp and Peter Thiessen.



Mr. and Mrs. Frank Sawatzky, Sr. Mrs. Sawatzky died in a car-train accident at a level crossing near Plum Coulee. Her funeral, on February 26, 1943, was the first held in the new Gnadenthal church.



The Gnadenthal church.

and joy in their new church the Gnadenthal group celebrated the dedication service on August 2, 1942.

In essence the church belonged to the twenty-one participants who had given their time, money and energy towards its creation. There were a few persons in this group who were members of churches other than the Blumenorter Church, but for all who had a share in the new building, financial or otherwise, this church was of significance, and provided a source of spiritual and social enrichment throughout the years. The first wedding celebrated in the new church was that of Helen Redekopp to Peter Thiessen on October 18, 1942. The first funeral held in the church was that of Mrs. Frank F. Sawatzky, Sr., on February 26, 1943.

In 1949, long after the last bills had been paid, a twenty-two foot extension and a balcony were added to the church. The committee in charge of this project consisted of Johann J. Schellenberg, Johann P. Peters and David Bueckert. The cost of \$2,800.00 was the same as the cost of the original part. The work also was done on a voluntary basis.

The Work and Activities of the Church

The Blumenorter Church locals, of which Gnadenthal was one, were served on a rotating basis by ministers from within the congregation. Services were held regularly except on those occasions when "Hauptversammlungen" (joint meetings) were scheduled at Reinland. While church services in Gnadenthal followed a somewhat rigid format, they nevertheless provided a meaningful experience for those who participated. According to tradition, the women took their places to the left of the aisle, while the men sat to the right. The Vorsänger (song leaders) occupied one of the front pews on the men's side. To begin the service the Vorsänger "led off" in a song. During the singing of a second hymn the minister of the morning made his way from the Predigerstübchen (minister's room) at the back of the church to the pulpit. Occasionally he was assisted by a local person

Fredigerliste für das erste Halbjahr, 1956		Latium	Blumenort	Rosenort	Gnadenthal	Reinland	Letina	Elm Creek	Windsor Hospital
I	Alt. Bückert								
1	Alt. Schäfer								
2	P.A. Rempel	Jan. 1	2	②	⑤	⑤			
3	C.B. Krahn	10	1	②	⑤	⑤			
5	A.F. Bückert	15	2	②	⑤	⑤	2		
6	F.F. Sawatzky	22	1	②	⑤	⑤			
7	J.H. Klassen	29	②	②	⑤	⑤			
8	A.A. Teichröb	5	1	②	⑤	⑤			
9.	Dr. Tiesan	12	1	②	⑤	⑤			
	Passion (Kon. A.K.)	19	2	②	⑤	⑤			
		26	1	②	⑤	⑤			
		März							
		4	7	②	⑤	⑤			
		11	②	②	⑤	⑤			
		18	②	②	⑤	⑤			
		25	②	②	⑤	⑤			
	Karfreitag	30	Abendmahl in Reinland						
	Ostersonntag	1	7	②	⑤	⑤			
	Ostermontag	2	2	②	⑤	⑤			
		8	3	②	⑤	⑤			
		15	1	②	⑤	⑤			
		22	②	②	⑤	⑤			
		29	7	②	⑤	⑤			
	1. Pfingstsonntag	6	Zeugnissonntag 1 u. 6						
	2. Pfingstsonntag	13	Hauptversammlung 2 u. ② 7 Letina						
		20	Tauffest & Abendmahl - Rid.						
		27	7	②	⑤	⑤			
		Juni							
		3	1	②	⑤	⑤			
		10	②	②	⑤	⑤			
		17	②	②	⑤	⑤			
		24	2	②	⑤	⑤			

*Jugendunterricht: 11. März in Blumenort
18. " " Reinland
2. April " Gnadenthal*

Schedule of church services for the ministers of the Blumenorter Church. This particular list belonged to Rev. Abram A. Teichroeb, which accounts for the circled numbers.

who gave the invocation and said the opening prayer. The sermon, although not always eloquently spoken, was delivered with dedication and sincerity. The collection plate was passed during the singing of a final hymn. After the blessing the congregation was dismissed with the words, "Gehet hin in Frieden" (Go in peace).

There was usually no special music in a regular Sunday morning church service. However, at Christmas and Easter and other festive occasions, the choir performed many of the well-loved hymns and carols. The singing of one particular selection, "Der Friedensfürst" became a tradition at the Gnadenthal Christmas morning service. On this occasion all former choir members present in the audience were invited to join in the rendition of this favourite selection. It was difficult to tell who experienced greater joy — the singers or the listeners. The group in Gnadenthal used two types of song books for their congregational singing. The Gesangbuch, which contained many of the traditional church hymns and stately chorales, was used for the more formal Sunday morning services, weddings and funerals. The "Evangeliums Lieder Buch" (Gospel Song Book) was a favourite at other church functions.

The piano, which has remained in the church to



Tabea Nähverein at a Christmas celebration at the home of Mrs. Justina Hildebrand (seated in rocking chair). Standing, left to right: Mrs. David R. Penner, Mrs. Paul P. Peters, Mrs. Diedrich P. Peters, Mrs. Jacob P. Peters, Mrs. Bernhard G. Sawatzky, Mrs. Johann P. Peters. Seated beside Mrs. Hildebrand are Mrs. Henry P. Peters, Mrs. Frank F. Sawatzky and President, Mrs. Johann G. Sawatzky.

this day, was installed in 1944. It was purchased from the teacher, Miss Anne Wiebe, by the Gnadenthal Jugendverein. Although the Jugendverein made regular use of the piano, the idea of instrumental accompaniment for Sunday morning congregational singing was at first viewed by some with considerable misgivings. When it was discovered, however, that piano music added rather than detracted from the service, the practice was gradually accepted. The use of piano accompaniment for Sunday congregational singing was sanctioned by the church fathers at the annual business meeting in January, 1948.

In 1956 the Gnadenthal group organized a "Bibelstund" (Bible study hour). Before that some members had been attending Bible study sessions organized by the Blumenorter Church. However, too often bad roads and adverse weather conditions made trips outside the village impossible.

For a number of years Gnadenthal hosted the annual "Bibelbesprechung" (Bible interpretation sessions). These two to three-day events took place in the week between Christmas and New Year's and were usually led by visiting ministers. Many outside visitors were attracted to these meetings.

From time to time the Gnadenthal group invited evangelists to conduct revival meetings in the village. One of the best remembered is Rev. A. G.

Neufeld, also known as "Groota Niefelt". His large frame and booming voice inspired awe in the hearts of the listeners, at the same time lending credence to his call for repentance and salvation.

In early 1948 the church group invited the General Conference of Mennonites in Canada to hold its annual meetings in Gnadenthal, July 3-7. The coming of this event triggered a general clean-up, paint-up campaign in the village. Tired-looking houses and buildings received new coats of paint. Special attention was given to lawns, yards, and flower gardens. Most noticeable of all were the white picket fences which sprouted along the village street. A tent, large enough to accommodate the many conference guests from in and out of the province, was erected on the church grounds. Meals, prepared by the village ladies, were served in a large machine shed situated across the street on the property of George Labun. Most of the conference delegates were billeted in the homes of the villagers. Although this was a major undertaking for such a small group, it was not the first time that the Gnadenthal Church had hosted a Canada-wide conference. A similar conference had taken place in Gnadenthal in June, 1933.

Church matters were regulated at a business meeting, held annually, usually at the beginning of the year. No records of these meetings were kept until the year 1938. The agenda included reports from five specific areas of church life — Wirtschaftsrat (Board of Trustees), Nothilfe (aid to the needy), Kleidersammlung (clothing drive), the Sunday School and the Jugendverein.

The Wirtschaftsrat consisted of a three-member committee whose duty it was to see to the mainte-

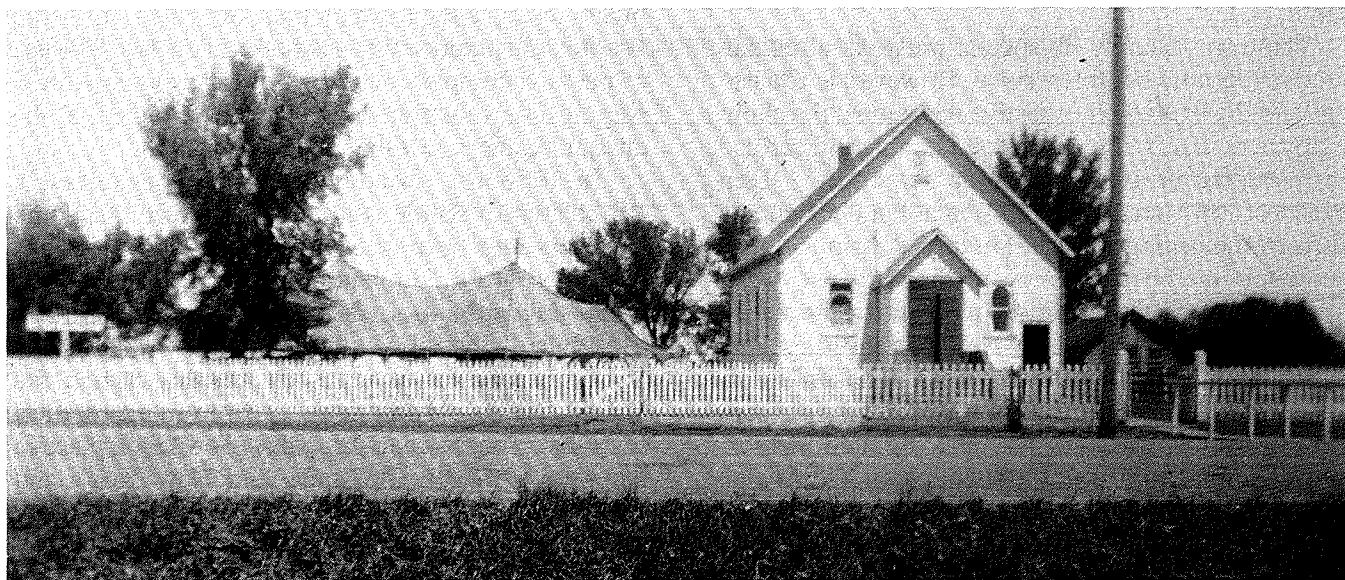
nance of the church, the grounds and the cemetery. The chairman of this committee also acted as treasurer for the church. During the 1940s the church members shared the janitorial duties in the church. For many years Abram H. Klassen was employed as caretaker of the church and premises. In 1959 George Friesen assumed these responsibilities. Before the oil furnace was installed in 1959 all regular church functions, other than Sunday services, were scheduled for Friday evening in order to economize on the heating bill.

To a large extent the congregation supported itself with funds from the weekly Sunday morning collections. The average yearly Sunday receipt between the years 1952-1968 was \$513.32. However, extra collections were held whenever large expenses were incurred. In the years 1952 and 1953, when the congregation found itself in financial difficulty (possibly due to construction costs of the church extension in 1949), a fee of \$1.25 was levied per attending person, children included. The year of the highest giving was 1960, when an amount of \$725.06 was collected at the Sunday morning services.

Sunday School

Perhaps the most consistently active branch of the Gnadenthal Local was the Sunday School. P. A. Rempel, in his unpublished manuscript, "Etwas aus der Vorgeschichte der Blumenorter Gemeinde" writes about the Gnadenthal Sunday School: "Man steht unter dem Eindruck das der Herr dieses Werk besonders gesegnet hat." (One gets the impression that the Lord has particularly blessed this work.)

Sunday School in Gnadenthal was started in 1925 by Rev. Johann Retzlaff and Heinrich Albrecht. En-



Gnadenthal Blumenorter Church group plays host to the General Conference of Mennonites in Canada, 1948. A large tent (background) was erected on the church grounds to accommodate conference delegates and guests from many provinces.

rolment figures during these early years were thirty-five to forty. In the summer of 1928 members of the Mennonite Brethren Church withdrew their children to form a separate Sunday School.

Cornelius P. Peters, Johann P. Peters, Frank F. Sawatzky and a little later Paul J. Schaefer and Abram A. Olfert carried on the work of the Sunday School. The classes were held in the former school building. It was sectioned off into four areas by brightly coloured curtains to accommodate four age groups.

With the coming of Mr. Paul J. Schaefer some methodology in teaching Sunday School was introduced. The young inexperienced teachers availed themselves of his experience and knowledge in teaching young children. In his calm, unobtrusive manner he demonstrated techniques in lesson planning and presenting the Bible stories in a meaningful way, so that the lessons might become alive and real to the children. Paul Schaefer taught Sunday School in Gnadenthal for over ten years. His contribution towards the development of the Gnadenthal Sunday School has accounted to a large degree for its strength and vitality which was still evident for many years after he was gone. That he enjoyed his work in Gnadenthal is indicated in a letter dated January 28, 1966. As Ältester of the Blumenorter Church, he thanks the Gnadenthal Sunday School for a sizeable donation of \$600.00 which was to go into the church's mission coffers. In it he writes, "[Ich] Erinnere mich noch öfters der Zeit als ich mit euch zusammen arbeitete. Meine Zeit in Gnadenthal und die verschiedene Arbeit daselbst werde ich wohl nie vergessen."

The work was continued throughout the years by many sincere dedicated teachers. Two of the most outstanding were the brothers Cornelius P. Peters and Johann P. Peters. They taught faithfully for over thirty years. Their unselfish dedication to the task was evident in the gentle and sincere way they dealt with the children in their care.

For many years Mr. Cornelius Peters was in charge of the children just starting Sunday School, many of which were only four years old. It was not an uncommon sight to see him walking to church on Sunday morning clasping hands with the small folk who were his pupils. On rainy days he carried them across muddy driveways on their way to Sunday School. In the classroom his calm, steady manner made the little ones feel welcome and secure. Cornelius Peters died in December, 1981.

Johann Peters usually taught some of the older classes. He will probably be best remembered for his friendly, buoyant nature and the enthusiasm with which he led the singing at the start of the Sunday School hour: "Wenn am frühen Sonntagmorgen ich

gesund und froh erwacht, Und zur Sonntagschul' sich sammeln Gross und Klein. Wenn sie hören von der Botschaft wie der Herr uns selig macht, Dann will ich auch in der Sonntagschule sein." To his pupils he was not only a teacher but a warm approachable human being — a friend.

The main concern of these men was the spiritual welfare of the children and their preparation for service to God and man. Much satisfaction came to them when their pupils continued in Sunday School until old enough to take a class themselves. This happened in a number of cases.

In 1960 the village held a special celebration for Cornelius and Johann Peters in recognition of their contributions and dedicated service. For the many who have long since left the Gnadenthal Sunday School the memory of these two teachers will stay alive — a symbol of sincere dedication to a cause in which they believed.

Annual highlights for the Sunday School children were the outings or picnics organized by the teachers. Some years visits to the Assiniboine Park Zoo, Walhalla, North Dakota, or the Morden Experimental Farm were planned. At other times games and sports events were held closer to home on the local school grounds or in a wooded area nearby. Everybody was expected to participate in the races and relays. Win or lose, the prize at the finish line often was a chocolate bar, a rare treat indeed.

The first Gnadenthal Sunday School teachers used no prescribed curriculum. Later the Bible-story lesson books by P. A. Rempel and also by J. C. Rempel were utilized by some teachers. By the 1960s the new "Living Faith" graded Sunday School material by Faith and Life Press (Mennonite Publications), Newton, Kansas, had been introduced. At this time some teachers also began using "Scripture Press" materials which seemed particularly suitable for the pre-school and beginner levels.

Singing was an integral part of Sunday School. Songleaders were picked from the teaching staff. A popular songbook, "Das Singvöglein" was introduced in the early 1930s. A favourite song was the one the children sang as the collection plate was passed around:

Hört das Geld erklingen, horchet wie es fällt,
Jedes Stück für Jesum, Ihm gehört das Geld.
Kling, kling, kling, kling, horchet wie es fällt,
Jedes Stück für Jesum, Ihm gehört das Geld.

(Unfortunately the collection plates were velvet lined and the children never did hear the jingle of their pennies.) Many of the songs learned had a mission theme: "Im Fernen Heidenlande", "Über dem Blauen Meer", and "Die armen Heiden jammern mich". The songs were taught for the specific pur-

pose of reinforcing the strong mission emphasis of the Sunday School.

Missions in Sunday School were first inspired by Rev. Retzlaff who introduced the Sunday School collection. The first year an amount of \$2.00 was collected. In the second year two boys planted and harvested four rows of potatoes for missions. The proceeds from the sale netted \$8.00. The total amount for that year was \$11.27.

The mission effort in Gnadenthal Sunday School grew rapidly. Besides growing potatoes, penny auctions were introduced as a means of raising money in those cashless days. At these events buyers were allowed only one penny per bid. A penny bid, however, was a penny paid, and the last bidder could receive the article for one cent only. At one such auction sale a dozen eggs sold for \$2.75.

The good will of the buyers was always a joy to behold at these occasions. On a dare one boy dropped a metal price tag into the Sunday morning collection plate. Somehow this price tag ended up on the auction block that afternoon and was sold for a total of \$3.26!

The momentum of free and generous giving at any Gnadenthal auction sale was never lost. The first available record of a regular auction sale in 1939 yielded a total of \$67.30. Sixty-eight articles were donated by the villagers, ranging all the way from harness bits to baby clothes to pillow cases and knitted socks. As times prospered, giving increased. 1960 seems to have been a particularly good year, for the combined amounts of the year's Sunday morning collections and the receipts of the Sunday School mission program netted a sum of \$1,112.32. By this time auction sales generally had been abandoned in favour of simple mission programs performed by the children. Surprisingly enough an increase of contributions was recorded when the latter method of fund raising was employed.

For almost the entire life of the Sunday School in Gnadenthal a large part of collected monies went towards the education of a certain number of children at a mission station in India. Many former students of the Gnadenthal Sunday School must surely remember names like Rhoda, Shanta, Emmanuel and Gottlieb — all children supported by the Sunday School. Other areas which received support were the Blumenorter Church missionaries: Mr. and Mrs. Dan Peters, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ens, Helen Ens, and Rita Klassen, all serving in Mexico; also Margaret Peters in Formosa, Mr. and Mrs. John Peters Jr. and Rev. and Mrs. A. A. Teichroeb in Paraguay. Closer to home, some other projects which were supported were the Pioneer Mission in northern Manitoba, the Assiniboine Mission Camp, the Radio Mission in

Altona and the Evangelical Tract Association. In later years lump sums went into the mission coffers of the Blumenorter Church and also directly to the Foreign Mission Board of the General Conference of Mennonites.

The Sunday School in Gnadenthal existed from 1924 till the end of 1970. During these fifty-six years the average enrolment was approximately sixty. In 1948 attendance rose to eighty. It was an accepted fact that Sunday School, like day school, was for all children regardless of the church affiliation of their parents.

Probably the most revealing testimony to the effectiveness of the teaching of the Sunday School in Gnadenthal can be summed up in the words of one of its former pupils: "Generally speaking, through the teaching of the Gnadenthal Sunday School I came to love the Lord and His Kingdom and was challenged to serve Him to the best of my ability."



Sunday School class with teacher Abram A. Teichroeb. Students are, left to right: Tina Born, Tony Friesen, Lily Schaefer, Jake Krahn, Justina Schellenberg, Frank Peters, Elsa Sawatzky, David Peters, Annie Schellenberg, Eddie Friesen, Mary Klassen. Photo: early 1930s.

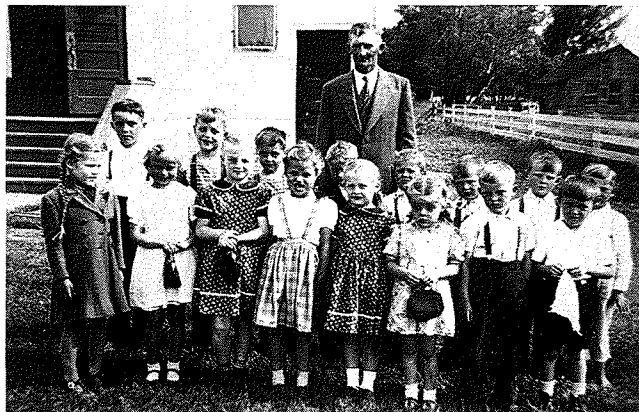


Gnadenthal Sunday School class with teacher Johann Peters. Students are, left to right: Mary Peters, Irma Schaefer, Cornie Hildebrand, Helene Sawatzky, Tina Esau, Ben Born, Tina Schellenberg, Abe Klassen, Susie Peters. Also in picture is Mrs. Johann Peters. Photo: early 1930s.

"Weihnachtsprogramme abgehalten in Gnadenthal,
vom 24. Dez. bis 6. Jan. 1930"

1. Einleitung von P. F. Lindert.
2. Lied von dem Kinderspiel: "Wille Kraft ft. Kraft" Nr. 70
3. Gedicht: "Müllerrücken" von Gustav Knaack, Nr. 107.
4. Die Weihnachtskrippenspiele: Teil 1-29, von Louise Engelke, Nr. 108
5. Fingerringe: a. Maryjan Peters, Teil 1-16; [Erläuterung]
 b. Yvonne Engelke, Teil 1-16;
 c. Yvonne Engelke, Teil 1-15;
 d. Yvonne Engelke, Teil 1-16;
 e. Yvonne Engelke.
6. Lied von der: "In heller Weihnacht" II Teil Nr. 7.
7. Gedicht von 6 Kindern: "Der Christbaum kommt".
8. Weihnachtskrippenspiele von Yvonne Engelke.
9. "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
10. "Lied von der Weihnacht" Teil der Weihnacht Nr. 71.
11. Gedicht von "Der Christbaum", "Hast du für Jesus Raum?"
12. Weihnachtsspiel von F. Biederer.
13. Gedicht: "Licht und Dunkelheit" von Yvonne Engelke.
14. Weihnachtskrippenspiele von Yvonne Engelke.
15. Gedicht: "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
16. "Lied von der Weihnacht" Teil der Weihnacht Nr. 71.
17. Apparat: "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
18. Gedicht: "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
19. Apparat: "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
20. Gedicht: "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
21. Lied von der Weihnacht: "Gloria von der Weihnacht" Nr. 72.
22. Gedicht: "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
23. Apparat: "Der Christbaum" von Yvonne Engelke.
24. Lied von der Weihnacht: "Friede von der Weihnacht" Nr. 73.
25. Schlusswort.
26. Ende.

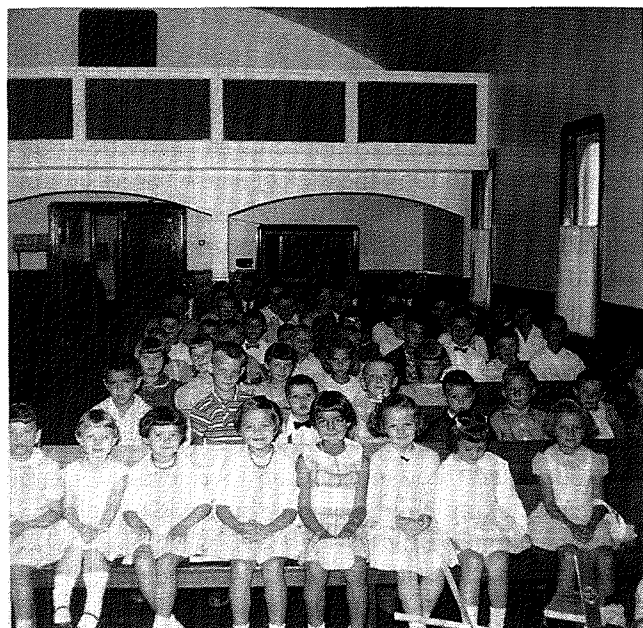
Sunday School Christmas program, 1930.



Cornelius Peters with his class of beginners. Left to right are: Irene Sawatzky, Henry Thiessen, Marlene Penner, Benny Wiebe, Erna Peters, Davey Wiebe, Johanna Sawatzky, George F. Sawatzky, Pauline Peters, George Albert Sawatzky, Irma Wiebe, George Friesen, Peter Peters, David Friesen, ?.



Helen Bueckert with her class of Sunday School pupils. Back row, left to right: John Sawatzky, Rudy Klassen, Irwin Penner, Jake Sawatzky, George Peters. Front: Mary Ellen Neufeld, Annie Friesen, Sara Peters, Annie Elsie Peters, Erica Sawatzky, Martha Klassen, Margaret Letkeman, Marianne Sawatzky. Photo: 1948.



The Gnadenthal Sunday School, 1961. At the beginning of the Sunday School hour the children assembled for a time of singing.



Johann Peters with his class of Sunday School pupils. Back row, left to right: Peter Sawatzky, George B. Sawatzky, Ernie Sawatzky, Ben Penner, Art Sawatzky, Albert Friesen, Cornie Thiessen, John R. Peters, John H. Peters. Front: Katherine Friesen, Helen Friesen, Mary Penner, Nettie Peters, Helen Sawatzky, Hilda Peters, Tina Peters. Photo: 1948.



Teacher Mary Peters with her Sunday School class. Back row, left to right: Jake Sawatzky, Ernest Peters, Alfred Sawatzky, Jim Sawatzky, Cornie Peters, Peter Neudorf. Middle row: Clara Peters, Susie Friesen, Rita Klassen, Agnes Peters. Front: Ruth Sawatzky, Helen Penner, Ella (Olga) Penner, Tina Letkeman, Evelyn Kuhl, Louise Peters, Susan Peters. Photo: 1948.

- Der S.S. Heiliger Abend 1951
- Einleitung.....
1. Lied: Sei gegruesset heil'ge Nacht.
 2. Willkommen....Festredner #2, Seite 13
Marlyn Bueckert Margaret Rose Peters
Lorchen Wiebe
 3. Weihnachtswuensche....K. & B. Seite 13, #27 (3Kinder)
 3. Jesus, Lehrer und Prophet....#10, Seite 58
Erna P. Katherine F. Rudi K.
Jash S. Irene S. Benny W.
Irwin P. Johnny S. Lena L.
 5. Die Strafe....Man.J.O. Seite 141
Marlene Penner George A. Sawatzky
 6. Das kranke Kind....Man.J.O. Seite 155
Irma Wiebe Peter Peters
 7. Lied: Leise rieselt der Schnee.
 8. Der Naehverein....#11, Seite 12
Sara P. Betty Dr. Mary Ellen N.
Elsie P. Marthia K. Annie F.
Erica S. Marianne S.
 9. Weihnachtswunsch.....
Pauline Peters
 10. Gott ist die Liebe....Jugendfreund...Blatt
George Peters Johanna Sawatzky
George F. Sawatzky
 11. Der gute Onkel....Man.J.O. Seite 150
Ernie S. David W.
Peter S. David F.
 12. Lied: Suesser die Glocken nke klingen.
 13. Am Weihnachtsabend....loses Blatt.
Dolly P. Walter S. Menno W.
Harry P. Dennis B. Hilda N.
Victor Saw. Harold W.
 14. Die schoenste Weihnachtsgeschichte....Lukas 2
Helen Nikkel Katie Braun
Elsie Saw. Helen Peters
Leni Klassen
 15. Lied: M. C. I. Maedchen
 16. Weihnachtsgespraech....#12, Seite 71
Olga P. George B. S. John Peters
Ruth S. Arthur S.
Tina P. Ben Penner
 17. Gedicht: "Stille Nacht"....Blatt
Helen S. Helen P. Hilda P.
 18. Lied: Stille Nacht.
 19. Der W.Mann Haelt Umschau....Festredner #2, Seite 42
Johnny Wiebe George Friesen
 20. Vor der Bescheerung....Festredner #2, Seite 37
Jakie Buhler
 21. Freiwilliges:
 22. Schlussgedicht....K. & B. Seite 25, Reiny Peters
 23. Schluss;
 24. Bescheerung.....

FROEHLICHE WEIHNACHTEN!

Sunday School Christmas program, 1951.

List of Sunday School Teachers in Gnadenthal 1928-1970 (incomplete)

Heinrich Albrecht
 Cornelius P. Peters
 Johann P. Peters
 Paul J. Schaefer
 Abram A. Olfert
 Frank F. Sawatzky
 Abram A. Teichroeb
 Helen (Henry) Peters (Mrs. John Loewen)
 Helen Bueckert
 David Bueckert
 David Schellenberg
 Tina Schellenberg (Mrs. Peter Friesen)
 Susie (David) Peters (Mrs. Peter Harms)
 Mary (David) Peters (Mrs. John Fehr)
 Paul F. Peters
 Susan Peters (Mrs. Abe Wiebe)
 Louise Peters (Mrs. Henry Friesen)
 Rita Klassen
 Ben Sawatzky
 John Sawatzky
 George B. Sawatzky
 Erica Sawatzky (Mrs. George Krempler)
 Elsie Peters (Mrs. Diedrich Hildebrand)
 Dorothy Peters (Mrs. John Peters)
 Mrs. Margaret (Jim) Sawatzky
 Mrs. Elizabeth (Paul) Peters
 Mrs. Kathy (Frank) Peters
 Mrs. Tina (David) Peters
 Erna Peters (Mrs. Peter Hoepfner)
 Pauline Peters (Mrs. Ed Giesbrecht)
 Peter W. Peters
 William Schroeder
 Margaret Sawatzky (Mrs. A. A. Olfert)
 Margaret Peters (Mrs. David Froese)
 Justina Schellenberg (Mrs. Henry Baerg)
 Ruth Peters (Mrs. Peter Kroecker)
 Elfrieda Peters (Mrs. George Janzen)
 Agnes Peters (Mrs. Alfred Loewen)

The End of an Era

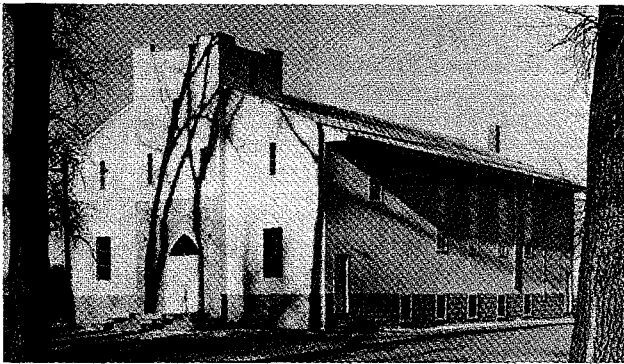
Since its inception in 1925, the Blumenortter Church had been meeting in the church building located in Reinland for most of its joint gatherings (Hauptversammlungen) and church festivities (Gemeindefeste). In 1954 the idea of a new, large, central meeting place for these major functions was discussed. It was hoped that a centralized meeting place would bring about a greater degree of unity among the scattered members.

In 1955 a committee of five (one from Gnadenthal) was elected to study the various aspects of such an undertaking. A year later the committee had considered a number of architectural styles and had also surveyed the congregation to determine the financial backing available for the building project. The 1956 annual Bruderschaft held in Reinland, tried to designate a location for the proposed church building. This proved to be difficult indeed. Since Rosenort represented most nearly the geographical centre of the church membership, it seemed the logical place to build. Gnadenthal was also considered as a

possible site for the new church because it had the largest and most active local group.

The Gnadenthal group was fully in favour of the latter suggestion. Some months previous at a special meeting on September 20, 1955, they had decided that the existing church was to be sold and the money to go towards the cost of the new building in the event that Gnadenthal should be chosen for a building site. The grounds were to be donated as well. The group also agreed that they would offer to take charge of the maintenance of the building and grounds should the church be located in Gnadenthal.

In spite of this attractive offer no decision was reached at the 1956 Bruderschaft. A year later the required 70 per cent majority decided in favour of Rosenort, much to the disappointment of the Gnadenthal villagers. Once the choice was made things moved rapidly. In March 1957 a three and one-half acre lot was purchased in Rosenort for \$800.00, and less than a year later, on January 19, 1958, the dedication of the new church was celebrated.



Blumenorter Church in Rosenort. Blumenorter members living in Gnadenthal have attended here on a regular basis since 1970. The name of the village of Rosenort was changed to Rosetown in 1976.

After its completion the church was used for most of the congregation's major activities. Communion and baptismal services, special services involving the whole congregation, Bruderschaften, monthly joint meetings of all local youth groups as well as most weddings and funerals were conducted in this building. On one of every four Sundays the entire congregation met in the new building.

The congregation in the village of Blumenort was the first to discontinue its Sunday morning services and join the Rosenort local on a regular basis. In Reinland, after the Rudnerweider Church withdrew their children from a joint Sunday School, too few remained in the Blumenorter group to continue. By October 1968 they too had joined the congregation at Rosenort for all church functions. Gnadenthal did not fully merge with this group until 1971.

At the time of the erection of the new church in Rosenort the Gnadenthal local congregation was still strong and active, carrying on programs in all of its major areas. But even at this time a changing society made the eventual disintegration of this group as a congregation almost predictable. The Jugendverein was the first to feel the effects of the changing trends of the times. With the urbanization of the young people fewer and fewer remained to carry on the work. In 1957 twelve programs were rendered. By 1965 the performances had dwindled down to three — one each on Mother's Day, Christmas and New Year's Eve. After 1960 no replacement for the last choir leader could be found, and it was left up to the committee to attempt to incorporate some music into the programs. By 1967 the Jugendverein, as an organization in Gnadenthal, had disintegrated completely. The remaining young people joined the youth activities scheduled monthly at the church in Rosenort.

The call to distant places was heeded not only by the young but by the elderly as well. The 1950s marked a major shift in population. Many of the original settlers of 1924 were reaching retirement age and were relocating in the nearby towns. The death in 1963 of Rev. Frank F. Sawatzky had left the dwindling congregation orphaned and leaderless. The church, however, carried on with its routine activities. Regular church services were held whenever none were scheduled in the larger Blumenorter congregation. The roots put down over the years were strong and binding, imbedded in a wealth of tradition and custom unique to this group alone. Its members were reluctant to change. By 1970 there were sixteen families and thirty-three members of the Blumenorter Church in Gnadenthal. As the size of the group continued to decrease, the advantages of merging with the larger group began to outweigh its negative aspects. It was becoming increasingly difficult for the ministers to serve this small group since their energies were needed in the larger congregation. The choir in Gnadenthal had ceased to function a number of years ago. Joining the Rosenort church would give young people the opportunity to participate in a choir on a regular basis once more. In general, the Gnadenthal members realized that congregational development would be better served by integrating with the main group at Rosenort. At the annual business meeting held on January 27, 1970, a vote of twelve in favour and one against decided that such a change should be made.

Sunday School activities were not included, however. This branch of the Gnadenthal local church was still active at the end of the 1960s. Sunday School classes were conducted regularly even on those Sun-

days when congregational worship services were held at Rosenort. Teacher meetings were held a number of times a year. Promotion exercises and teacher/parent days had also become part of the overall Sunday School programs during the last ten years. In 1969 the enrolment stood around forty, and only eighteen of these children were from Blumenorter families. The reluctance of some members to dissolve the Sunday School in Gnadenthal was based on fears that a shift in location would disrupt the Sunday School because some children would be unable to attend. At another meeting held on November 10, 1970, a vote was taken. A nine to one majority favoured the move of the Sunday School to the larger congregation. By 1971 the merging of the Gnadenthal Blumenorter group with the principal congregation was complete.

The transition from the small local into the mainstream of the larger church was not as traumatic as anticipated. As full-time participants in all church activities, the Gnadenthal residents found that they learned to know their fellow church members in a more intimate and meaningful way. They also became more involved in church programs, some holding key positions. At the present time (1982) nine families living in Gnadenthal are affiliated with the Blumenorter Church.

List of Families in the Blumenorter Gnadenthal Church at the Time of Transition to Rosenort in January 1970

Waldemar G. Sawatzky
Bernhard G. Sawatzky
David R. Penner
Diedrich P. Peters
Abram H. Klassen
Johann P. Peters
David D. Peters
Jim Sawatzky

George Klassen
Paul J. Peters
George Friesen
Jacob P. Peters
Ben Schellenberg
Frank D. Peters
Willi Letkeman
Peter Paetkau

List of Families Living in Gnadenthal (1982) Who Belong to the Blumenorter Church

Johann Peters
Abram H. Klassen
David D. Peters
Frank D. Peters
Ben Schellenberg

Raymond Peters
George Friesen
Paul J. Peters
Willi Letkeman

An Interlude

For a period of ten years the church building in Gnadenthal was used only occasionally. Then for a brief interlude, from November 1980 till October 1981, its doors were once again opened to receive worshippers. At this time a certain segment of the larger southern Manitoba Old Colony Church had withdrawn to form the Zion Mennonite Church under the leadership of Rev. Wilhelm Thiessen from Schönwiese and Rev. Jacob P. Wiebe from Winkler. Since the Gnadenthal church was available, the new congregation arranged to gather there while perma-



Reverend Jacob P. Wiebe (left) and Reverend Wilhelm Thiessen — leading ministers of the Zion Mennonite Church. This congregation held services in the Gnadenthal church from November 1980 till October, 1981.

nent and more spacious facilities were being constructed. The first members came from all four (Blumenfeld, Chortitz, Rosenort, Reinfeld) Old Colony Church locales. Later members from some other denominations, who found the new fellowship to their liking, also joined. However, none of the residents of Gnadenthal participated in the formation of the new church.

During its eleven-month stay in Gnadenthal the Zion Mennonite Church conducted its services in the Low-German language. The singing of hymns from the old Gesangbuch (without notes) was led by four Vorsänger. An active Young People's group met every Monday evening. In January 1981 a women's Nähverein (sewing circle) was organized. During the Sunday morning service the children, between the ages of three to sixteen, gathered downstairs for Sunday School. Alternate Wednesday evenings were devoted to Bible study and prayer.

Mrs. Sara Thiessen, formerly Sara Peters, daughter of Henry P. Peters from Gnadenthal and the wife of one of the leading ministers, expressed her feelings as once again, after many years, she had the opportunity to worship in the church of her childhood: "For me personally this has been a very moving experience. It was with extreme emotion that I entered the church on that 16th day of November. To

sit in the same benches I sat in as a child and teenager, to see the familiar wall mottos I so well remember watching my father refinish, and to hear my husband preach from the pulpit my father helped design and build, was an experience I cannot put into words.”

In October 1981 the congregation moved to its new facilities located approximately four miles south of Winkler. The doors of the church in Gnadenthal have closed once more. But those who knew and loved it were gratified to know that, if even for only a short time, it has once again been of service to a group of people who desired to worship God.



Members of the Zion Mennonite Church are enjoying a time of informal fellowship after a Sunday morning worship service.

The Mennonite Brethren Church in Gnadenthal (1925-1954)

Beginnings

The origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church dates back to 1860 when a group of dissenters seceded from the established Mennonite Church in Russia. (See Appendix A) The first Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada was organized in 1888 at Burwalde, Manitoba. In 1897 the congregation moved to the nearby town of Winkler. This church became strong and influential. It took a leadership role in the establishing of numerous Mennonite Brethren congregations throughout southern Manitoba, especially after the arrival of the immigrants in the early 1920s.

Many of the Mennonite Brethren immigrants who settled in Gnadenthal had temporarily joined the church in Winkler immediately upon their arrival in Canada. When the number of Mennonite Brethren

members in Gnadenthal increased, they felt a need for stronger organization. In the spring of 1925, the group presented a petition to the Winkler Church requesting branch membership. At a church meeting held in Winkler on April 10, 1925, the council voted to receive Gnadenthal as one of their “Kreise” (districts). (Two other Kreise under the care of the Winkler church at that time were Kronsgarten and Grossweide.) For several years the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church functioned as an extension of the church in Winkler. Sometime during the summer of 1929 the Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Manitoba was formed. At about this time the church in Gnadenthal became independent, but close ties with Winkler were maintained. When after twenty-nine years the Gnadenthal Church disbanded, its remaining members became part of the Winkler congregation once more.

The first organizational meeting of the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church was held on May 31, 1925, after Bible Study, at the home of Gerhard Konrad. At this meeting Rev. Johann Retzlaff accepted the leadership. Gerhard Konrad and Herman Voth were elected deacons. Gerhard Matthies was elected to assist the leader, and Gerhard Konrad accepted the position of church secretary.

PROTOKOLL von der BRUDERBERATUNG der MENNONITEN BRUEDERGEMEINDE

abgehalten zu Winkler am 6ten January, 1926. 1 Uhr nachmittags.

Die Beratung wurde von Br. J. Warkentin eroeffnet mit dem Liede: Kann im wilden Sturm ein Lichtlein glimmen, lesen eines Abschnittes aus Eph. Kap. 4, einige Bemerkungen dazu machend und Gebet.

Es wurden zuerst einige Mitgliedscheine von Russland eingewanderter Geschwister vorgelesen. Auch wurde eine kurze Statistik ueber den gegenwaertigen Stand unserer Gemeinde hier in Manitoba, von Br. Warkentin vorgelegt.

Eine Vorlage zwecks Regelung des Verhaeltnisses der Kreise der M.B. Gemeinde hier in Manitoba wurde vorgelesen und mit kleinen Veraenderungen angenommen. Dieselbe lautet wie folgt:

1. Die Kreise der M.B. Gemeinde sind: Winkler, Kronsgarten, Grossweide und Gnadenthal.
2. Die Kreise sind in betreff der Erbauung, einschliessend Abendmahl und Fusswashington, vollstaendig selbststaendig und verstaendigen sich ueber die gegenseitigen Besuche.
3. Die Kreise bewahren in allen Hauptpunkten bruederliche Einigkeit.
4. Die Wahl der Diener der Gemeinde, der Prediger und Diakonen, geschieht in den Kreisen unter Teilnahme von Bruedern, die von der allgemeinen Bruderschaft gewaehlt werden.
5. Der Leitende der Winkler M.B. Gemeinschaft wird im Falle der Notwendigkeit von der allgemeinen Bruderschaft gewaehlt, ebenso das Mitglied der Verwaltung und der Hauptkassierer, wenn ihre Dienstzeit abgelaufen ist.
6. Die Winkler M.B. Gemeinde hat allgemeine Bruderschaften die nach Notwendigkeit einberufen werden, jedoch nicht weniger als vier mal im Jahr.

Anmerkung: Die allgemeine Bruderschaft wird auf der Beratung des Vorstandes der Kreise, die monatlich stattfindet, bestimmt und kann durch diesen bekannt gemacht werden.

7. Die Tauffeste bestimmt jeder Kreis selbstaendig, feiert die Tauffeste jedoch nicht ohne Einladung der andern Kreise.
8. Die Gemeindeglieder, einschliessend den Ausschluss ungehorsamer Glieder, uebt jeder Kreis selbstaendig, in notwendigen Faellen jedoch unter Mithilfe der andern Kreise.
9. Die Kreise haben bei selbststaendiger Buchfuehrung eine gemeinsame Buchfuehrung in Winkler. Vierteljaehrlich haben die Kreise die Veraenderungen die im Kreise stattfinden, der Hauptbuchfuehrung zu melden.
10. Die Rechnung ueber Einnahme und Ausgabe, ausschliessend die Unkosten fuer Haushalt, sind jaehrlich an den Hauptkassierer der Gemeinde zu senden.

Leaders

During its existence in Gnadenthal the Mennonite Brethren Church had four leaders:

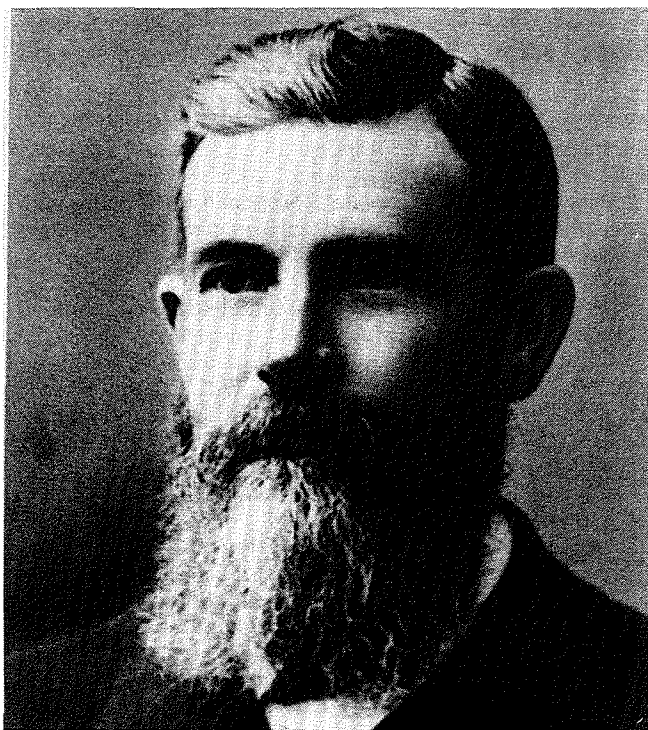
Johann Retzlaff — May 1925-April 1929

Wilhelm Dyck — April 1929-September 1930

Gerhard Konrad — September 1930-May 1939

Heinrich Harder — May 1939-December 1954

Johann Retzlaff (1859-1929) was originally an ordained minister in the Mennonitengemeinde in Russia. He was born in the village of Gnadenfeld, Molotschna Colony, where he spent the first thirty years of his ministry. For nine of those years he served as a Prediger Ökonom (resident manager-



Johann Retzlaff was the first leading minister of the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church, 1925-1929.

minister) in two separate forestry camps. A teacher by profession, he taught school for twelve years. In May 1922, he was re-baptized and accepted into the Kalantarower Mennonite Brethren Church, of which, in September of that same year, he was or-

dainied assistant Ältester. Approximately a year later Rev. Retzlaff emigrated to Canada. He arrived in Laird, Saskatchewan, in late 1923. After three months he came to Manitoba and together with his children, the Herman Voths, settled in Gnadenthal in 1924.

As one of the first Mennonite Brethren to arrive in Gnadenthal, Rev. Retzlaff took the initiative in gathering the flock as it filtered in, and in creating a church that once again worshipped undisturbed in the warmth of Christian fellowship. His former affiliation with the Mennonitengemeinde enabled him to appreciate his denominational counterparts more fully. This was a factor in bringing about the unity which characterized church life in Gnadenthal during the years that followed. He had a great zeal for missions, and, through his initiative in the formation of the Sunday School, he awakened an awareness of missions which extended well beyond the confines of his own congregation. Eventually his concepts permeated the entire community.

Rev. Retzlaff, who came to Canada as a widower, was a man of slight build with a long white beard. He enjoyed doing woodwork and kept his living quarters as neat and as orderly as his own life. He was a leader in the community, and his dedication to God was exemplified in his service to his fellowmen. In the spring of 1929 illness and old age forced him to retire from active church work. He died on September 18, 1929, and is buried in the Gnadenthal cemetery.

In April 1929, Rev. Wilhelm Dyck (1854-1936) was asked to take over the leadership of the church during Rev. Retzlaff's illness. After the death of the latter, Rev. Dyck was elected leader of the group at a meeting held on September 29, 1929. He served the church in that capacity for a little more than a year. From the time he and his family arrived in Gnadenthal in the spring of 1925, he took an active part in building and shaping the emerging church. As one of the charter members of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Gnadenthal he worked together with Rev. Retzlaff to lay a solid foundation on which to build a church. Together they moulded the spiritual groundwork from which would spring a fellowship of believers, strong in their faith and dedicated in their service to others.

Wilhelm Dyck was born on February 4, 1854, in the village of Rosenthal, in the Chortitza settlement. Orphaned at the early age of six months, he nevertheless managed to acquire an education, and become a successful business man. In 1892 he was ordained as a minister in the Mennonite Brethren Church at Nikolaipol and immediately became an itinerant minister travelling widely on preaching missions. In 1903 Rev. Dyck moved to the Russian city of Mille-



Wilhelm Dyck was the leader of the Mennonite Brethren Church, 1929-1930.

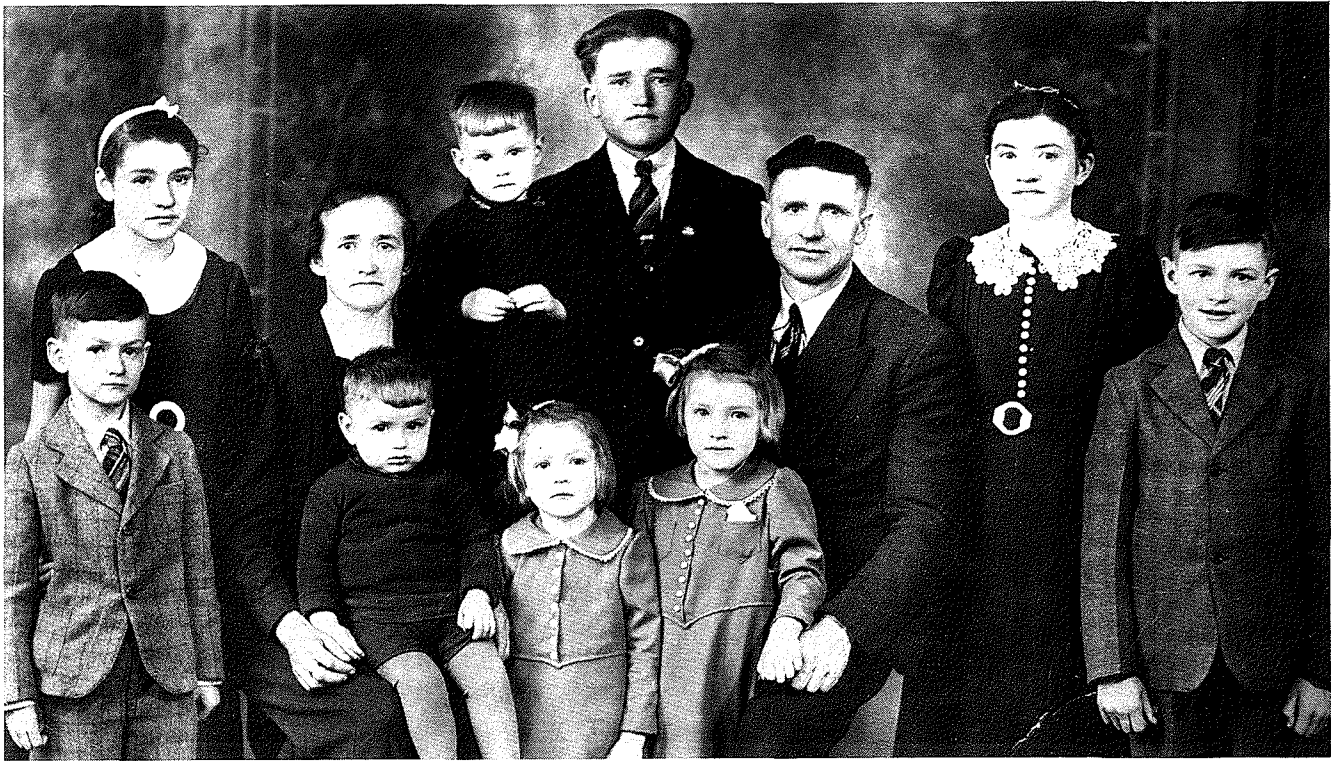
rova where he established a thriving business as part owner of a large steam-powered flour mill and implement factory. Here, in 1914, he was ordained as Ältester of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Through his travels and also because of his knowledgeability, Mr. Dyck became well-known in government circles and frequently represented Mennonite concerns at government levels. He was known for his compassion and generosity towards the poor and oppressed, and for his sense of fair play when dealing with his many employees. During his years in Gnadenthal he worked not only within the church, but outside of it as well. Since he was adept at dealing with people, he often represented the church at conferences in Manitoba and also in Saskatchewan. Much of his time in winter was spent travelling and preaching as once again he was given the responsibilities of the itinerant preacher. He was an individual of strong character and forceful personality-attributes which enabled him to transmit a powerful message. After one year in office in Gnadenthal the illness of his wife forced him to move to Niverville, where an older daughter was able to take care of her. Wilhelm Dyck died in March, 1936, and is buried in the Niverville cemetery.

At a meeting on September 29, 1930, after a Sunday morning service, Gerhard Konrad (1896-) was given the mandate to replace

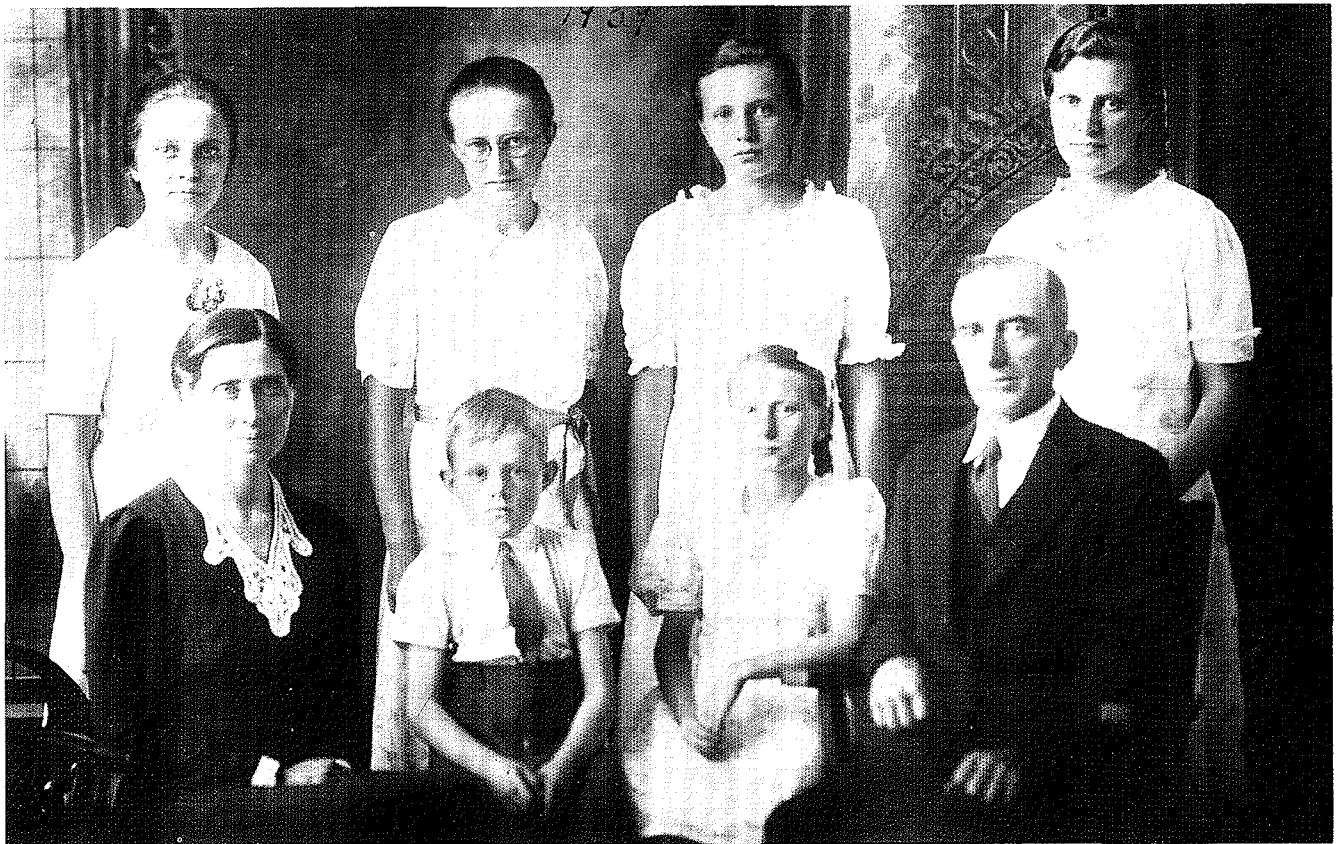
Wilhelm Dyck. Up to the time of his election Mr. Konrad had served the church as deacon and church secretary. The Konrad family left their home in South Russia on August 12, 1924, arriving in Winkler on September 1. Fall harvesting was at its height and Mr. Konrad was able to obtain employment for a number of weeks before moving to Gnadenthal later that fall. He and his family were part of the core group which was to become the nucleus of the church. During his tenure Mr. Konrad built on the foundation laid by his predecessors. Although he was not an ordained minister, the church developed internally with a focus on personal growth, and externally with an emphasis on missions. New policies were set in regard to communion, footwashing, tithing, and receiving of members. Attention was directed to the development of youth programs, Sunday School activities, and the spiritual nurture of individual members. Mr. Konrad, a spiritual and dedicated man, had a deep love for the word of God and was able to quote scripture for any occasion. In 1939 the family moved to Newton Siding where Mr. Konrad became the leader of the local church. He and his wife are now making their home in Clearbrook, British Columbia.

Gerhard Konrad was succeeded by Heinrich Harder (1890-1971) who was elected by the church on May 14, 1939. Mr. Harder was born in the village of Fischau in South Russia. He spent the time between 1912-1918 as a military recruit, first in the forestry service and then in the army's Medical Corps. Both he and his wife found peace with God during the time of spiritual renewal which accompanied the persecutions in the early twenties. They were baptized on May 22, 1923, and accepted as members into the Mennonite Brethren Church. On June 8, 1924, Mr. Harder was ordained as a minister in the Tiegenghagen Brethren Church. In 1925 the family moved to Canada and settled on a farm about five and one half miles north-west of Gnadenthal, joining the Mennonite Brethren congregation in Gnadenthal on September 22, 1935. Previously they had been members at Winkler, and Rev. Harder had served as a minister to a small Mennonite Brethren group in the village of Hochfeld. Mr. Harder was a devout God-fearing man, who took his responsibilities as leader of the church very seriously. He was dedicated to the work of God and put the tasks of the church before his own comforts. When bad roads in winter made it impossible to travel to church, he walked the distance from his farm to the church in order to be present at the service. After a late Saturday spent seeding or harvesting, Rev. Harder would get up at four o'clock in the morning to review his sermon for the day.

Under his leadership the church reached a degree of maturity. A church building obtained during his



Gerhard Konrad, leader of the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church, 1930-1939. Pictured with Mr. Konrad is his family. Standing, back row, left to right: Helen, Jake, Henry, Margaret. Front: Abe, Mrs. Konrad with John, Agnes, Katy, Mr. Konrad, George.



Henry P. Harder, leader of the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church, 1939-1954. Back row, left to right: Gertrude, Helen, Margaret, Tina. Front: Mrs. Harder, Ben, Susie, Rev. Harder. Photo: 1939.

time in office lent stability to the congregation. Through his guidance, young people were drawn into service. One missionary, Helen Harder, went out from the church to do mission work in India, and another, Anne Ediger, was active in the mission field up to the time of her death in 1981. Rev. Harder became exemplary in keeping the faith and fighting the good fight. He won the respect of everyone with whom he came in contact. When the church in Gnadenthal dissolved in 1954, he transferred his membership back to the Winkler Church. There he served as assistant leader from 1956-1962. For seven years he served as Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Winkler Bible School. The last years of his life were spent in Winnipeg where he was a member of the Elmwood Brethren Church. Here he found much joy in ministering to the elderly in the city. He died on November 6, 1971, and is buried in the Winkler cemetery.

A Place to Worship

In order to promote spiritual life in the congregations, evangelists were scheduled to preach in the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Manitoba. One such evangelist was Rev. Abram Nachtigal who visited Gnadenthal in February, 1928. Rev. Nachtigal was born in the village of Franzthal in the Molotschna Colony, Russia, in 1876. In 1905 he was ordained as a minister in the Mennonite Brethren Church, and in 1924 he and his family joined the immigrants coming to Canada. The family settled near Arnaud, Manitoba, where Rev. Nachtigal made his living by farming. His services as an evangelist were in great demand by the Brethren Churches across Manitoba. He was an eloquent speaker, endowed with the ability to create vivid images in his lively, vibrant sermons.

At the time when Rev. Nachtigal visited Gnadenthal in the winter of 1928, the Mennonite Brethren and the Mennoniten Church shared a common meeting place. Members of each group participated freely in all church functions. On this occasion the church was filled to overflowing. The village choir, under the direction of Wilhelm Dyck Jr. was in full attendance. In spite of the stirring message, no one responded to the altar call. The following day the response changed. Early next morning Anna Letkeman and her friend, Mary Teichroeb, made their way to the home where Rev. Nachtigal was billeted. They asked for spiritual counselling. Others followed throughout the day. Abram G. Teichroeb interrupted his hog-butchering activities in order to join his son and daughter, Abram and Mary, in their quest for peace with God. The evening meetings continued for several more days, but even after Rev. Nachtigal's departure the revival fires kept burning. The

Wilhelm Dyck home became the centre for spiritual counselling. In an account of these happenings Mrs. Anna Dyck states that over half of the village found peace with God, and all but two of the choir members claimed salvation.

Rev Nachtigal wrote this song and dedicated it to the people of Gnadenthal in commemoration of the 1928 revival.

Melodie: Was kann es Schoeneres geben.

1. Ich hab ein Heim gefunden,
In meinen dunklen Stunden
Das kann ich frei bekunden
Und tu's auch ueberall.
Es traegt den schoensten Namen
Fuer die, die hier kamen,
Und fanden sich zusammen
Im schoenen Gnadenthal.

Chor:

Ich schaeetze, ich schaeetze, ich schaeetze
Diese Heimat, ich schaeetze, ich schaeetze
Ich schaeetze sie recht sehr.

2. Hier hab' ich Heil gefunden
In meines Heilands Wunden.
Hier konnte ich gesunden
Im schoenen Gnadenthal.
Hier hab ich meinen Tempel,
Es traegt des Heilands Stempel
Zum heiligen Exempel
Drum reut mich nicht die Wahl.

3. An diesem schoenen Orte
Hoer' ich oft sel'ge Worte
Von Jesu meinem Horte
O du mein Gnadenthal.
Hoert Schwestern und ihr Brueder
Hier sing ich meine Lieder
Und tu es immer wieder
Ich sing sie ohne Zahl.

4. In dir will ich zunehmen
Und mich des Herrn nicht schaemen
Um irdischen Rat nicht graemen
Mein liebes Gnadenthal.
In diesem schoenen Garten
Will ich den Herrn erwarten
Den edlen und den zarten
Vom hohen Himmelssaal.

5. Steht Gnadenthal in Gnaden
Auf unseres Heilands Pfaden
Und ist von Ihm geladen
Zu seinem Gnadenmahl.
Dann ist mein Wunsch erfuehlet
Die Sehnsucht ganz gestillet
Wenn du in Gnad' gehuellet
O du mein Gnadenthal.



Gerhard Matthies.

It was a highly emotional experience for the residents of Gnadenthal. It proved to be a lasting one.

The newly converted were baptized and began a life of service to God and man. Two well-known figures whose lives were changed at that time were F. F. Sawatzky, who became an evangelist, and A. A. Teichroeb, who is still serving as a minister in the Blumenorter Church in 1982. Gnadenthal residents as well as other communities in Manitoba and other provinces have profited from the dedicated work of these men.

After this time of spiritual renewal a shadow appeared on the horizon which momentarily threatened the harmonious relationship of the two denominations. A tug-of-war developed between the churches in an effort to "get" the new converts. Although the evangelistic services had been instigated by the Brethren Church, the majority of the new converts originated from the Mennonite families. For some of the new Christians, the free confession of personal faith and the publically spoken prayer customary in the Mennonite Brethren congregation, was appealing. In the end some became members of the Brethren Church while others joined the newly formed Blumenorter Church. Eventually also, partly through the enthusiasm of newly converted members and partly through a natural relaxation of ultra-conservative traditions, a more verbal way of communicating faith became acceptable in the Blumenorter congregation of Gnadenthal.

At this point the Mennonite Brethren Church began to look for a separate place of worship, a goal they had in mind from the very beginning. Records of a church meeting on June 20, 1925, indicate consideration of a specific building, located somewhere north-west of Plum Coulee. A committee of three men, Wilhelm Dyck, Gerhard Matthies and Herman Voth, were delegated to inspect the structure with the intention of purchasing and relocating it in Gnadenthal. A tentative site had been selected at the west end of the village on the Mrs. Anna Ediger property. But crop failures, debts and the depression made it financially impossible for the members to pursue the project. A building fund was established, however, and kept up through the years. Usually one-third of the proceeds of the Ladies' Mission Sale was donated to this fund.

During the months and years following the winter of 1928, the saga of their efforts to procure a meeting place reads as follows:

March 15, 1928 — the question of separate facilities is raised but is left unresolved since no suitable location seems to be available.

October 7, 1928 — it was decided to rent the home of Mr. Johann Toews (later Paul P. Peters homestead) for Sunday morning services until May of next year for the fee of \$40.00.

May 4, 1929 — it is decided to rent the granary on Wilhelm Dyck's yard (now David D. Peters homestead) until November 1929 for the fee of \$2.00 per Sunday. Mrs. Enns is to receive one dozen eggs from each family for maintaining the facilities.

April 19, 1931 — the question of acquiring a church building is again brought forward. P. P. Redekopp, W. Dyck Jr., and G. Konrad will seriously study the matter.

September 12, 1931 — the local public school building situated just south of the village and currently used for church meetings will not be serviceable for the winter months. Mr. Johann Toews has again offered his home for church use.

October 9, 1932 — it has been decided to continue with church services in the school through the winter.

March 1, 1936 — another committee consisting of members H. Kuhl, P. P. Redekopp and A. Suderman is again delegated to arrange purchase of a church building for the congregation.

June 19, 1938 — the search for a "Versammlungs-haus" continues. Committee members are Mr. Krause and Mr. P. P. Redekopp.

September 25, 1938 — the committee reports that a school building is available. The congregation decides against purchasing it because of lack of funds. Permission has been granted by the Gnadenthal School Board to utilize the new school's basement for the purpose of conducting church services. H. Kuhl, John Janzen and P. P. Redekopp are responsible for provision of benches. The first meeting in the school basement will be held on October 9.

October 29, 1939 — one ton of coal is to be donated to the school for heating the building on Sunday mornings.

October 29, 1942 — the membership is given notice that a house which could be renovated and used for a church is available in the village of Kronsgart. P. P. Redekopp, G. Labun, Jacob Sawatzky, Johann Janzen, Philip Wiebe and Henry Kuhl will look into the matter, and, in the event of purchase, will be authorized to find a location for the building.

October 27, 1942 — P. P. Redekopp and Johann Janzen are commissioned to approach each member individually with two questions: (a) Are you in favour of the purchase of this building? (b) If so, how much would you be willing to contribute towards it?

November 1, 1942 — P. P. Redekopp and Gerhard Labun report that the building has been bought

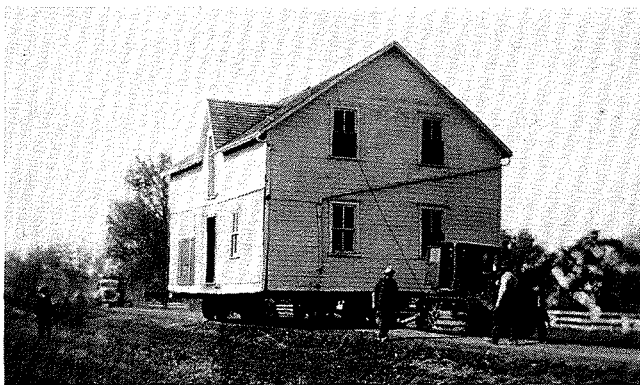
for \$540.00 with \$240.00 down, the remainder to be paid by December 1, 1942.

November 24, 1942 — a) Wilhelm Enns has agreed to move the building. b) The committee will travel to Kronsgart to make the last payment and to get the previous owner's (George Dyck) permission for leaving the building at its present location until the mover comes. c) It is decided to break down the chimney for the move. d) The building will be insured for \$600.00 against fire. e) Mr. Jacob Sawatzky has offered a portion of his yard as a site for the location of the building. f) Every family will donate four yards of gravel.

April 18, 1943 — the question of putting in a basement is discussed. An estimated cost must first be established.

September 19, 1943 — the house has still not been moved. A decision is made to move the building as soon as possible.

The church was finally moved after the last entry was made: not by mover Wilhelm Enns, but by Hut-terites from the neighbouring Blumengart Colony. Numerous difficulties were encountered along the way. Every bridge had to be widened or enlarged. When the movers came to Plum Coulee they had to wait for the officials to come and guide them under the hydro wires. When no one appeared after a long wait, Mr. P. P. Redekopp climbed to the top of the building, measured the clearance, found it within legal limits, and gave instructions to move on. By the time they came to the Blumengart Colony an irate police constable had caught up with them and accused them of acting outside the law. With great calmness and presence of mind Mr. Redekopp explained what had occurred and assured the constable that no law had been broken. But, he added, since the officer had taken the trouble to do the necessary checking, would he accept some money as a token of their appreciation. The policeman would, and the incident was never heard about again.



The house which was to become the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church is being moved from Kronsgart to Gnadenthal, 1942.

No further problems were encountered and the house was lowered safely onto its foundation which had been constructed under the direction of Mr. Peter Neudorf. The building was remodelled and redecorated during the following winter. In October 1944, in conjunction with the annual Mission-Thanksgiving festival, the church was dedicated to the service of God. After nineteen years in Gnadenthal the Mennonite Brethren finally had a church of their own. This achievement must be largely attributed to the efforts of Mr. P. P. Redekopp.⁴ His consistent leadership during the negotiations of purchasing and moving the building, and also in preparing the groundwork among the members, kept the project alive.

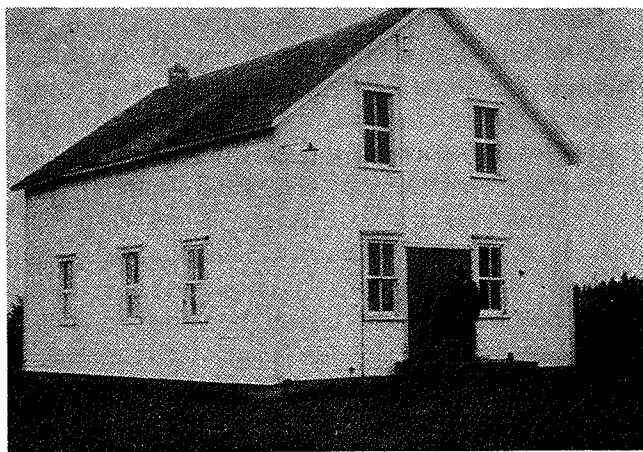
From its inception the membership of this church has been fairly small. The charter group in 1925 consisted of only twenty-four people. In 1936 it reached a peak of fifty-one. A little over ten years later, in 1947, an all-time low of twenty-seven was recorded. With the influx of the post World War II immigrants from Europe the membership again rose to forty-one in 1950. The next years, however, were to see a steady decline in numbers. Some of the original members reached retirement age and relocated in Winkler. Most of their children were pursuing careers in other places. The last recorded membership figure in 1952 was twenty-eight.

A further drop in attendance indicated the necessity to disband the congregation in Gnadenthal. The last church service was held on the last Sunday of June, 1954. The church was formally dissolved at a council meeting at the home of Rev. Harder in December of that same year. The remaining Mennonite Brethren membership transferred to Winkler. The church building was sold to Mr. David Buhler from Gnadenthal who reverted it back into a house.

Life Within the Church

The Mennonite Brethren Church was known in Gnadenthal for the sincerity of its members. The same motivations which guided the founders of the original Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860, namely to create among its followers a Bible-based, Christ-centered fellowship which expressed its faith freely in open prayer and spoken word as well as in daily life, were evident in the little congregation in Gnadenthal. Throughout its short history the church was concerned with the church body as a whole, as well as with the spiritual nurture of the individual member.

Very soon after settling in Gnadenthal the Mennonite Brethren members initiated Saturday evening prayer meetings. During the 1930s and possibly sooner, members from the Blumenorter congregation in Gnadenthal also participated in these weekly ses-



The Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church.

sions. The time after Sunday Vesper was reserved for group Bible study. Participants were expected to take turns hosting and leading these gatherings in their private homes. Later this particular function was changed to Wednesday evenings.

At the annual meeting of all the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Manitoba (Vertreterversammlung), a roster of itinerant ministers were scheduled to visit all congregations. Every year "Reiseprediger" (itinerant ministers) visited Gnadenthal, sometimes to conduct evangelistic services and sometimes to lead an in-depth study of the Bible. Some years an evangelist and a minister who was particularly adept at teaching the Bible worked together. Bible study sessions were conducted during the day, and revival meetings at night. Some of the Reiseprediger who visited Gnadenthal were C. N. Hiebert, Winnipeg, A. H. Unruh, Winkler, H. Goosen, Manitou, J. Reimer, Steinbach, D. D. Derksen, Boissevain, and J. Braun, Morden.

Connected with these annual visits were the "Hausbesuche" (home visitations). The itinerant minister, together with a local representative, had the responsibility to visit every household in Gnadenthal regardless of church affiliation.

Baptisms were usually held in the little creek



A baptism in Gnadenthal.

running between Gnadenthal and the Blumengart Colony. Between the years 1925 and 1950 sixty-eight persons were baptized and accepted into the Gnadenthal Brethren Church. Each baptism was preceded by a verbal presentation to the church membership by the candidates in which they indicated the reasons for their wish to join the fellowship of the church. A candidate was accepted for baptism after thorough examination and a consensus within the membership.

The ordinance of communion was held regularly on the first Sunday of every month. Only baptized members were permitted to take part in this act. Footwashing was also a common practice in the earlier years, and was still carried out with some regularity into the late forties.

Sunday morning services were simple. They included a short time for prayer in which members of the congregation were free to participate. These prayer meetings were usually led by lay-persons from within the congregation. Although the leading minister took charge of the Sunday morning service, he did not always preach the sermon. The contributions of lay-ministers were very much encouraged in



The Nicholai Redekopp family attended the Mennonite Brethren Church in Gnadenthal. As a lay-minister, Mr. Redekopp was a frequent speaker at church functions. Pictured with Mr. and Mrs. Redekopp are their children, left to right: Tina, Peter, Sadie.



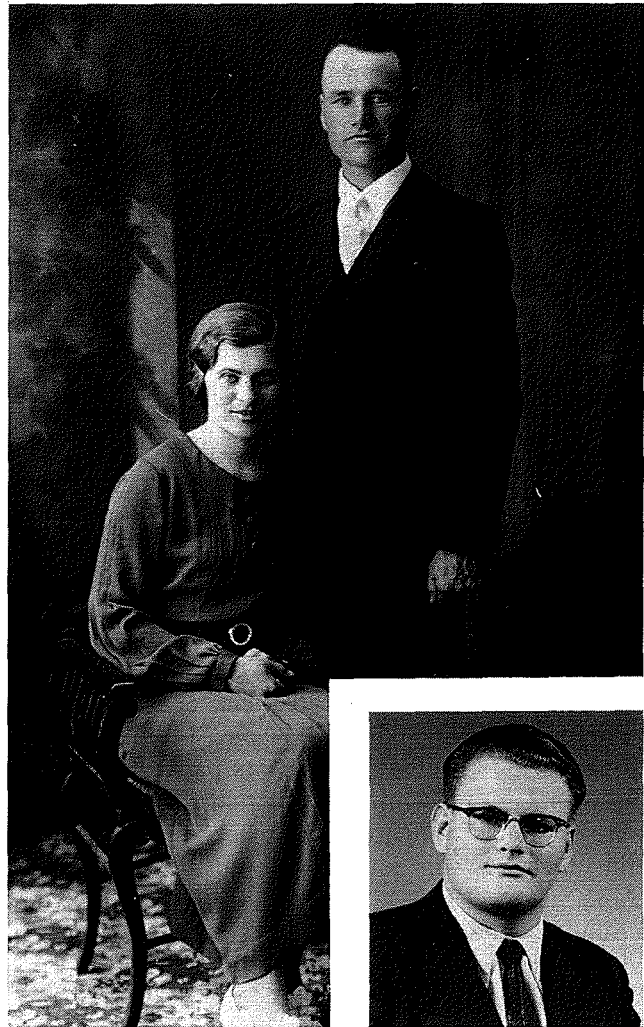
Reverend David K. Duerksen was well known in southern Manitoba schools as a promoter of the German language and religious instruction. Rev. Duerksen assisted in the preaching ministry in the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church during those years when he taught in neighbouring schools.

the Gnadenthal congregation. Some who preached regularly were Johann Toews, Nicholai Redekopp, Philip Wiebe and D. K. Duerksen. The Evangeliums Lieder Buch (Gospel Song Book), introduced to the Church by Henry H. Kuhl in 1934, was the standard song book used by the group. There were no "Vorsänger"; the songs were selected and announced by the minister or persons in charge.

Members of the congregation frequently addressed each other as "Brother" and "Sister" giving an indication of the warmth and fellowship which characterized the congregation in Gnadenthal.

Sunday School in the Brethren Church

With the separation of the two denominations the Mennonite Brethren Church also formed its own Sunday School. The first classes, which began in November 1928, were held at the home of Johann Toews (later Paul P. Peters home) between nine and



Frank G. Sawatzky was a popular Sunday School teacher in the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church. Pictured with him are his wife, Margaret, nee Peters, and their son, Arthur (insert).

ten in the morning, preceding the worship service. Frank G. Sawatzky and Johann Toews were the first teachers. Both these men are remembered by former pupils for their kindness toward the children in their care and for the way they "told stories at our level so we could understand". Mr. Gerhard Konrad, another dedicated teacher, taught a class of teenagers for several years. He endeared himself to his students with a Bible card game which fascinated them. A former Sunday School pupil, Anne Ediger, talked about the many Sunday afternoons that were spent at the Konrad house playing this game. She commented: "What an intrusion on his Sunday afternoon siesta, but he took it gallantly and never let us thoughtless youth feel it."

By 1937 a number of changes began to occur in the Sunday School. A "Lektionsheft" (Lesson book) by A. A. Unruh was presented to the membership for consideration and accepted as suitable for



Johann Toews, Sunday School teacher and lay minister in the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church. He also served as choir conductor and as a member of the Jugendverein Komitee. Pictured with him is Mrs. Toews.

use in Sunday School. Until then only the Bible, with few other sources, had been used as a text. The church was gradually adopting the graded lesson system, and by the end of 1938 four classes were in session — Beginners, Primary, Junior and Youth. The new concept of in-service teacher training was introduced in 1937. The first teacher training course in which the Gnadenthal teachers participated took place in Gimli, Manitoba. Thereafter the teachers were expected to attend annual teachers' conventions and other training courses offered at the Winkler Bible School. Many of these innovations came from a Sunday School Committee set up by the Manitoba Mennonite Brethren Conference.

An annual event was the "Kinderfest" (Sunday School picnic). This was held at the Harder farm and could be more appropriately named "church picnic" because it was an event which the whole church attended. The day started off with a church service held out in the open. After an elaborate lunch the teachers occasionally took their pupils out to visit the Morden Experimental Farm while the adults stayed behind for a leisurely afternoon visit. At other times the day would be highlighted with games and track events topped off with a giant wiener roast. One year the picnic coincided with the raspberry season and all the children were allowed to eat their fill. The first such picnic caused some queries among the senior members of the congregation as to the propriety of such goings-on on a Sunday. But the obvious enjoyment derived from the occasion by young and old effected gradual acceptance.

Giving to missions was an important part of the Sunday School program. Besides the Sunday School collections, a practice which was introduced by Missions enthusiast Rev. Johann Retzlaff in 1925, annual auction sales were held to raise money for certain mission projects. In 1929 the income from these sources amounted to \$54.68. Forty dollars were sent

to India for the support of two orphaned children. Another ten dollars was spent on songbooks for the Sunday School, which were replaced by the popular "Neues Singvöglein" nine years later.

In 1940 Sunday School for adults was implemented. The Sunday School hour started off with a joint session which consisted of an invocation and a time for singing. Young and old joined heartily as they sang the old familiar children's songs: "Jesus liebt mich ganz gewiss" and "Weil ich Jesu Schäflein bin". After lessons, the Sunday School assembled once more for closing exercises. As part of the proceedings Rev. Harder often quizzed the children about their lessons. Sometimes an individualized version of the Bible story was given, much to the chagrin of the teacher.

The church was never reluctant to try new and better methods in teaching the children for whom they felt a keen responsibility. In 1947 a pick-up service was organized for those unable to attend in any other way. In 1951 serious consideration was given to ways and means of accommodating the pre-schoolers in Sunday School.

Concern for the young characterized the Mennonite Brethren Sunday School during the years of its existence in Gnadenthal. This was reflected in the dedication and devotion with which the teachers carried out their tasks. Their teaching proved to be a beneficial and positive influence in the lives of many of the children who attended the Mennonite Brethren Sunday School in Gnadenthal.

List of Sunday School Teachers in the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Sunday School (Incomplete)

Name	Appointed	
Johann Toews	1928	
Frank G. Sawatzky	1928	
J. Dyck	1931	Youth Class
Anna Dyck	1931	
Lena Redekopp	1933	
Gerhard Konrad	1933	
Esther von Niessen and Katy		
Adrian	1937	Primary
Johann Janzen	1938	Primary
George Labun	1938	Youth
J. Sawatzky	1938	Youth
Jacob Toews	1938	Juniors
Anne Ediger	1939	Beginners
Tina and Nettie Redekopp	1939-45	Adults
Philip Wiebe and Jacob Sawatzky	1940	Adults
Ella Kuhl and Gertrude Harder	1943	Beginners
Hilda Ediger and Mary Duerksen	1943	Juniors
Dave Kuhl	1944	Class 2
Tina Harder	1944	Class 1
D. K. Duerksen	1943	Youth
John Redekopp	1946	Youth
Philip Wiebe	1948	Superintendent

The Mission of the Church

Another area of church life which was emphasized by the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church was giving for missions. "Giving" must have been truly a sacrifice, since its members were desperately poor during the first fifteen years of the church's existence. Arriving in Canada with not much more than the clothes on their backs, experiencing successive crop failures, suffering from the depression of the thirties, and, overshadowing all, the seemingly unsurmountable debts, (Reiseschuld and other) would indicate that there was nothing left to give. But there was.

In the beginning the church maintained itself with a levy of a one dollar membership fee. In December 1934 this was raised to one and a half dollars, and that amount remained constant until at least 1940. When more prosperous times came, the amount was gradually increased, and by 1950 thirteen dollars was required for membership dues. A portion of this fund, at least in the early years, was placed in the "Armenkasse" (Emergency fund). These monies were dispersed by the deacons when a special need arose within a family or in an individual.

Because of its close affiliation with Winkler the Gnadenthal congregation took its directive for the causes it supported from the Winkler Church, especially during the early years. One of the areas of particular concern in those days was the Winnipeg City Mission which at that time was designed to assist in the orientation of incoming immigrants. This mission also had under its jurisdiction the "Mädchenheim" (Girls' Home) which was established to provide a family atmosphere for young immigrant girls who had homes in rural areas of Manitoba but were employed in the city, their salaries often furnishing the only available cash for the family at home. Besides offering practical help the Winnipeg City Mission always sought to meet the spiritual needs of the people under its care. For many years the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church also helped support the City Mission in Minneapolis, Minnesota. Another project which was not Conference sponsored but always found willing response among the Mennonite Brethren in Gnadenthal was the Jewish Mission in Winnipeg. Foreign mission fields in Africa and India also benefited from the yearly contributions of the church.

As the situation among the Mennonites who had remained behind in Russia became more desperate and the call for help more persistent, a good portion of the mission dollar went to alleviate the need in Russia. Since cash money was not readily to be had in the 1930s, the church leadership decided to make available a previously established "building" fund to

those who wished to alleviate suffering of relatives and friends in Russia. They could borrow money from the fund at the rate of twenty-five cents for every three dollars. Many who were almost destitute themselves made loans and sent help to their brethren in need.

"Innere Mission" was another area which demanded financial support from the members of the Brethren Church. The money in this fund was used to help defray the travelling expenses of the itinerant ministers of the Conference. The Gnadenthal Church considered the rental fees covering congregational meeting places as part of "Innere Mission". The money for "Innere Mission" was collected either at communion services or at such times when special meetings were being held by itinerant ministers. Collections for some of the other projects were taken at prayer meetings and Bible studies. Funds for church maintenance were gathered in regular Sunday morning services.

Besides these mission endeavors, money was donated to various institutions like the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, the Winkler Bible School, Tabor College in Kansas, U.S.A., the home for the elderly in Winkler, Bethesda Home for the mentally ill in Vineland, Ontario, and the Winkler Hospital. Contributions were made to the building fund of churches or missions in Vancouver, Swift Current, Lindale and Saskatoon. Money was collected for the work of Benjamin Unruh in Germany, as well as to



Helen Harder, missionary. Officiating at her commissioning, October, 1944, are Winkler Mennonite Brethren Church ministers, H. S. Voth and Johann Wiens. Helen spent a total of twenty-five years in India.

pay for the travelling expenses of C. F. Klassen to the Conference in Holland, and to help cover the medical expenses for Ältester David Toews in Rosthern. The women's sewing circle also sponsored a yearly auction, the proceeds of which were distributed equally among foreign aid projects, the local building fund, and aid to Russia.

The members of the congregation practised good stewardship with their time and money. They felt amply rewarded when their children became involved in active Christian service. Two full-time missionaries have gone out from the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church.

Helen Harder, daughter of Rev. and Mrs. Henry Harder, was commissioned on January 20, 1946. A month later she left for India, where she put in over twenty-five years of service. During an extended furlough she took a public health course in Saskatoon and then returned to India for another ten years. After her return home in 1971 she became involved in mission work in Toronto, Ontario. Here, under the auspices of Mennonite Brethren Missions and Services, she worked among the poor and underprivileged in the core area of the metropolis for a period of five years. She is presently married to Peter Loewen and is living in Waterloo, Ontario.

Anne Ediger came to Gnadenthal in the spring of 1927 with her mother, her sister and two brothers. The family had experienced the loss of the family head a summer ago while farming near Dominion



Anne Ediger, missionary in India for twenty-eight years. She was still active in the mission field when she became ill. Anne died in spring, 1981.

City, Manitoba. Anne grew up in Gnadenthal in the fellowship of the local Brethren Church. On August 18, 1935, she expressed her desire to be baptized and became a member of the church. While studying at the Mennonite Brethren College in Winnipeg, she felt the call to missions. At that time she also transferred her membership to the Elmwood Mennonite Brethren Church. Anne worked in the mission field in India for twenty-eight years. Her death in the fall of 1981 was a sad shock for her fellow-church members. Anne is buried in the Chapel Lawn Memorial Gardens in Winnipeg.

Excerpt from a letter dated May 21, 1981, written by Anne Ediger to Ruth Bock a few months before her death.

I came to India given the responsibility of principalship of a middle school (I-VIII) and soon found out I had much more to learn than to teach. But I loved it, even the language study. I spent my first term of six years here in Gadwal.

My second term of five years I worked in a high school at Mahbubnagar and joined our radio work towards the end of the term. Highlights of my teaching years were the many young people that came to know Christ, some of whom have been my colleagues in radio the last several years.

My third term I spent building up our radio programs which the Lord was blessing wonderfully. When our mission turned over schools and radio work to the Indian Church, some missionaries went home, others were loaned out to other organizations. I had in the meantime taken an M.A. course in communications in U.S. so when I returned, I worked in Delhi for three years with the Far East Broadcasting Association, training national staff, then for four years with Back to the Bible in similar work. Following that the Evangelical Fellowship of India asked me to set up a Communications Department for them. I worked here two years (Delhi) developing communications and training a national, to whom I turned over the department Jan. 1, 1981. Since then I am working as executive secretary of the Communications Commission of the World Evangelical Fellowship. My base is in Delhi.

Highlights of the radio ministry — to discover, draw out and develop national young people in the radio ministry, besides seeing many listeners become Christians!

The sudden discovery of cancer and an immediate return to Canada for surgery were traumatic experiences. However, many of God's people at home and abroad were praying. The Lord provided a competent surgeon and my sister's home, the John Dicks, with four hyper lively teenagers for convalescence — just what I needed. Even the doctor, not a committed Christian, one day remarked, "Your recovery is a miracle!" The precious lessons the Lord taught me those four months at home, I shall never forget. The love of family and the Lord's people humbled me, but made me very grateful.

I've been back in India for a year now, living a normal life with some restrictions, enjoying the work and the people tremendously. As long as the Lord allows me to work here, I'd like to continue but I don't plan to retire here. After that, I'd like to go home to Winnipeg, take a chaplaincy course and work as a hospital chaplain, the Lord willing. That will provide new challenges to which I'm looking forward too.

In closing, my years of missionary work have been tremendously stimulating. I enjoy my work and the people and every assignment seems to be better than the previous one.

To God be the glory! Great things He has done.

Some of Gnadenthal's young "missionaries" worked much closer to home. For a number of years during the forties several young people volunteered

to conduct Summer Vacation Bible School classes in some of the surrounding villages in a few of which no Sunday School existed. The work was considered essential and was carried out with much conscientiousness and sacrifice of time and energy.

An important part of missionary work was carried on by the itinerant minister. The system of the itinerant ministry was set up by the Mennonite Brethren Conference as a means to keep the scattered flock together. Not all immigrants of the 1920s had settled in close communities like Gnadenthal. Many lived on isolated farms scattered throughout Manitoba and Saskatchewan. With the limited means of transportation at that time, their access to a church or any kind of fellowship with other believers was limited. The itinerant minister provided the solution.

The life of the itinerant minister demanded absolute devotion to his cause. Often he was away from home for weeks on end, usually in winter, travelling a prescribed circuit on preaching missions. Usually he was a farmer by occupation. This meant that while he was away his wife and growing children were left in charge of the farm and livestock.

1

LIST OF MEMBERS

Chronol. Reg. No.	Outgoing Reg. No.	Name	Born: Time, Place	Baptism: Time, Place	Baptizer	Admission		Departure: Through				863	Remarks
						By Certificate	Peru. Test'y.	Certificate	Peru. Appl.	Cancellation	Death		
1.	15.	Pauls Hermelust	1/2 1871 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1921 - Sid. Rusland	Johann J. Amos	2 Jan 1925		22 Oct 1939					12.
2.	16.	Pauls Elisabeth	2/2 1871 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1921 - Sid. Rusland	Johann J. Amos	2 Jan 1925		22 Oct 1939					12.
3.	13.	Konrad Gerhard	27/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1918 - Sid. Rusland	Wilhelm Hinner	2 Jan 1925		8 July 1939					13.
4.	14.	Konrad Maria	9/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1911 - Sid. Rusland	Benjamin B. Jang	2 Jan 1925		8 July 1939					13.
5.	1.	Adrian Heinrich J.	1/2 1882 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		1/2 1925	8 Nov 1928					14.
6.	2.	Adrian Emil	1/2 1899 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		1/2 1925	8 Nov 1928					14.
7.	3.	Adrian Katharina	2/2 1892 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1925	8 Dec 1928					14.
8.	4.	Adrian Ana	2/2 1892 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1925	8 Dec 1928					14.
9.	8.	Ka. Niess Wilhelm H.	1/2 1880 - Haskett, Man.	1/2 1915 - Tomhill, Sask.	Benjamin Jang	22 May 1925		22 May 1939					15.
10.	9.	Ka. Niess Maria	2/2 1880 - Haskett, Man.	1/2 1915 - Tomhill, Sask.	David Dyck	22 May 1925		22 May 1939					15.
11.	10.	Ka. Niess Peter	2/2 1880 - Haskett, Man.	1/2 1915 - Tomhill, Sask.	Heinrich P. Harde	22 May 1925		22 May 1939					15.
12.	8.5	Neudorf Peter P.	2/2 1915 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		20 August 1935	14 Dec 1954					12.
13.	8.6	Neudorf Helma	1/2 1878 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		20 August 1935	14 Dec 1954					12.
14.	23.	Dyck Susie Karoli	1/2 1918 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 August 1935	15 Dec 1944					23.
15.	22.	Dyck Bernhard B.	2/2 1879 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1928 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Aug 1926		22 May 1952			21 April 1941		15.
16.	77	Dyck Ana	2/2 1882 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1926 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Aug 1926		22 May 1952					15.
17.	78	Dyck Ana	2/2 1912 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1929 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		4 August 1929	22 May 1952					15.
18.	5.	Redekopp Nikolai P.	2/2 1895 - Sid. Rusland	2/2 1922 - Sid. Rusland	Schierberg	2 Aug 1925		16 Dec 1928					16.
19.	6.	Redekopp Katharina	9/2 1896 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1929 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		7 August 1929	16 Dec 1928					16.
20.	109.	Harde Heinrich P.	1/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1922 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Sept 1925		17 Dec 1954					16.
21.	110	Harde Helma	1/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1922 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Sept 1925		17 Dec 1954					16.
22.	111	Harde Emma Helen	2/2 1913 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Haskett, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		2 Sept 1935	17 Dec 1954					16.
23.	54.	Harde Tina Louise	2/2 1912 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1935	21 Nov 1947					16.
24.	113	Harde Barbara Pauli	1/2 1924 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1937 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		11 Sept 1937	17 Dec 1954					16.
25.	7.	Samatky Franz G.	2/2 1900 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1923 - Sid. Rusland	Abraham Wall	2 Aug 1926		21 Nov 1939			8 Jan 1939		17.
26.	17.	Joan Johann J.	12/2 1898 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1920 - Sid. Rusland	Daniel Siemen	2 Sept 1925		21 Nov 1939					17.
27.	18.	Joan Maria	14/2 1898 - Sid. Rusland	2/2 1923 - Sid. Rusland	Franz Siemen	2 Sept 1925		21 Nov 1939					17.
28.	37.	Jang Johann J.	2/2 1878 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1906 - Sid. Rusland	Richard P. Reigt	2 Sept 1925		35 July 1943					18.
29.	40.	Jang Anna	1/2 1882 - Sid. Rusland	2/2 1927 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		28 August 1927	25 July 1943					18.
30.	11.	Krause Peter P.	9/2 1896 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1927 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth			24 May 1949					18.
31.	13.	Krause Helma	9/2 1896 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1927 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Johann Markstein			24 May 1949					18.
32.	50.	Samatky Jakob J.	2/2 1910 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1934 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		28 Feb 1934	26 Jan 1947					19.
33.	51.	Samatky Tina	2/2 1910 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1934 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		28 Feb 1934	26 Jan 1947					19.
34.	55.	Schlag Anna Maria	1/2 1901 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1901 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Franz Jang	2 July 1925		21 Nov 1947					20.
35.	56.	Schlag Anna	2/2 1920 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1935	21 Nov 1947					20.
36.	36.	Friesen Jakob P.	14/2 1893 - Sid. Rusland	14/2 1931 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich H. Harde	2 Sept 1937		11 July 1943					21.
37.	37.	Friesen Agathe	2/2 1897 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1913 - Sid. Rusland	Franz Harde	2 Sept 1937		11 July 1943					21.
38.	102	Redekopp Peter P.	2/2 1887 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1929 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		18 Aug 1929	15 Dec 1954					20.
39.	103	Redekopp Helma	1/2 1887 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1929 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		18 Aug 1929	15 Dec 1954					20.
40.	44.	Redekopp Helma	2/2 1910 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1933 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		22 Feb 1933	27 Jan 1946					20.

List of members of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Gnadenthal, 1925-1954.

Several itinerant ministers have come from Gnadenthal, but one of the first and possibly one of the best known in Manitoba at that time was Rev. Wilhelm Dyck, formerly from Millerowa, Russia. A summarized version of one of his preaching trips, given here in diary form, reads as follows:

"Early in the new year (1930) I travelled to Winnipeg by train, intending to go on from there. But the extreme cold forced me to stay over for five days during which I held several church services and also led the Bible Study. After the cold let up somewhat, I boarded the train for Griswold, Manitoba, where I stayed for seven days. The church in Griswold was not being utilized at this time because of the deep snow and bitter cold, so the services were held in the homes. During the day a local farmer, Mr. Friesen, took me by horse and sleigh to the homes scattered in the district. At each of these house visits I conducted a brief service consisting of scripture, prayer and song, after which certain aspects of the faith were discussed. In many instances I was able, with the help of God, to solve a particularly oppressing problem, or draw a backslider back onto the narrow path,

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Chronol. Reg. No.	Outgoing Reg. No.	Name	Born: Time, Place	Baptism: Time, Place	Baptizer	Admission		Departure: Through				863	Remarks
						By Certificate	Peru. Test'y.	Certificate	Peru. Appl.	Cancellation	Death		
1.	15.	Pauls Hermelust	1/2 1871 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1921 - Sid. Rusland	Johann J. Amos	2 Jan 1925		22 Oct 1939					12.
2.	16.	Pauls Elisabeth	2/2 1871 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1921 - Sid. Rusland	Johann J. Amos	2 Jan 1925		22 Oct 1939					12.
3.	13.	Konrad Gerhard	27/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1918 - Sid. Rusland	Wilhelm Hinner	2 Jan 1925		8 July 1939					13.
4.	14.	Konrad Maria	9/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1911 - Sid. Rusland	Benjamin B. Jang	2 Jan 1925		8 July 1939					13.
5.	1.	Adrian Heinrich J.	1/2 1882 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		1/2 1925	8 Nov 1928					14.
6.	2.	Adrian Emil	1/2 1899 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		1/2 1925	8 Nov 1928					14.
7.	3.	Adrian Katharina	2/2 1892 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1925	8 Dec 1928					14.
8.	4.	Adrian Ana	2/2 1892 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1925 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1925	8 Dec 1928					14.
9.	8.	Ka. Niess Wilhelm H.	1/2 1880 - Haskett, Man.	1/2 1915 - Tomhill, Sask.	Benjamin Jang	22 May 1925		22 May 1939					15.
10.	9.	Ka. Niess Maria	2/2 1880 - Haskett, Man.	1/2 1915 - Tomhill, Sask.	David Dyck	22 May 1925		22 May 1939					15.
11.	10.	Ka. Niess Peter	2/2 1880 - Haskett, Man.	1/2 1915 - Tomhill, Sask.	Heinrich P. Harde	22 May 1925		22 May 1939					15.
12.	8.5	Neudorf Peter P.	2/2 1915 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		20 August 1935	14 Dec 1954					12.
13.	8.6	Neudorf Helma	1/2 1878 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		20 August 1935	14 Dec 1954					12.
14.	23.	Dyck Susie Karoli	1/2 1918 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 August 1935	15 Dec 1944					23.
15.	22.	Dyck Bernhard B.	2/2 1879 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1928 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Aug 1926		22 May 1952			21 April 1941		15.
16.	77	Dyck Ana	2/2 1882 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1926 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Aug 1926		22 May 1952					15.
17.	78	Dyck Ana	2/2 1912 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1929 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		4 August 1929	22 May 1952					15.
18.	5.	Redekopp Nikolai P.	2/2 1895 - Sid. Rusland	2/2 1922 - Sid. Rusland	Schierberg	2 Aug 1925		16 Dec 1928					16.
19.	6.	Redekopp Katharina	9/2 1896 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1929 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Wilhelm Dyck		7 August 1929	16 Dec 1928					16.
20.	109.	Harde Heinrich P.	1/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1922 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Sept 1925		17 Dec 1954					16.
21.	110	Harde Helma	1/2 1870 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1922 - Sid. Rusland	Johann Voth	2 Sept 1925		17 Dec 1954					16.
22.	111	Harde Emma Helen	2/2 1913 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Haskett, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		2 Sept 1935	17 Dec 1954					16.
23.	54.	Harde Tina Louise	2/2 1912 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1935	21 Nov 1947					16.
24.	113	Harde Barbara Pauli	1/2 1924 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1937 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		11 Sept 1937	17 Dec 1954					16.
25.	7.	Samatky Franz G.	2/2 1900 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1923 - Sid. Rusland	Abraham Wall	2 Aug 1926		21 Nov 1939			8 Jan 1939		17.
26.	17.	Joan Johann J.	12/2 1898 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1920 - Sid. Rusland	Daniel Siemen	2 Sept 1925		21 Nov 1939					17.
27.	18.	Joan Maria	14/2 1898 - Sid. Rusland	2/2 1923 - Sid. Rusland	Franz Siemen	2 Sept 1925		21 Nov 1939					17.
28.	37.	Jang Johann J.	2/2 1878 - Sid. Rusland	9/2 1906 - Sid. Rusland	Richard P. Reigt	2 Sept 1925		35 July 1943					18.
29.	40.	Jang Anna	1/2 1882 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1927 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		28 August 1927	25 July 1943					18.
30.	11.	Krause Peter P.	9/2 1896 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1927 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth			24 May 1949					18.
31.	13.	Krause Helma	9/2 1896 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1927 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Johann Markstein			24 May 1949					18.
32.	50.	Samatky Jakob J.	2/2 1910 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1934 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		28 Feb 1934	26 Jan 1947					19.
33.	51.	Samatky Tina	2/2 1910 - Sid. Rusland	27/2 1934 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich S. Voth		28 Feb 1934	26 Jan 1947					19.
34.	55.	Schlag Anna Maria	1/2 1901 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1901 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Franz Jang	2 July 1925		21 Nov 1947					20.
35.	56.	Schlag Anna	2/2 1920 - Sid. Rusland	1/2 1935 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich P. Harde		18 Aug 1935	21 Nov 1947					20.
36.	36.	Friesen Jakob P.	14/2 1893 - Sid. Rusland	14/2 1931 - Gnadenthal, Man.	Heinrich H. Harde	2 Sept 1937		11 July 1943					21.
37.	37.	Friesen Agathe	2/2 1897 - Sid. Rusland	7/2 1913 - Sid. Rusland	Franz Harde	2 Sept 1937		11 July 1943					21.
38.	102	Redek											

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Chronol. Reg. No.	Outgoing Reg. No.	Name	Born: Time, Place	Baptism: Time, Place	Baptizer	Admission		Departure: Through				Remarks
						By Certificate	Per. Testy.	Certificate	Per. Appl.	Cancellation	Death	
41.	69.	Ruhl Heinrich S.	1/2 1894-Romold, Mo.	19/2 1931-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich S. Voth	19 Feb 1941	16.2.51					22.
42.	70.	Ruhl Maria	9/6 1892-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1931-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich S. Voth	18 Feb 1941	16.2.51					22.
43.	41.	Schradt Stefan	19/2 1894-Homergat, Mo.	19/2 1925-Homergat, Mo.	Heinrich S. Voth	17. Oct. 1941	21. Mai 1945					21.
44.	42.	Labun Oetke	19/2 1897-Hohst, Sask.	19/2 1925-Hohst, Sask.	Heinrich S. Voth	17. Oct. 1941	21. Mai 1945					21.
45.	76.	Wiese Philip B.	19/2 1912-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1932-Sid. Rusland	Alum Lorenzen	16. Apr. 1941	22. Mai 1952					23.
46.	24.	East Alexander Joh.	19/2 1912-Rusland, Russ.	19/2 1944-Rusland, Russ.	Korabelin Wiers	24 Feb. 1941	10 Aug. 1941					22
47.	25.	East Christina	19/2 1912-Rusland, Russ.	19/2 1944-Rusland, Russ.	Winkelmann Dyrck	24 Feb. 1941	10 Aug. 1941					22
48.	74.	Redekopf Johann	19/2 1914-Gradental, Mo.	19/2 1931-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	27 Aug. 1939	14.5.1951					20
49.	13.	Kander Margret Heidi	19/2 1916-Rochford, Mo.	19/2 1937-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	27 Aug. 1939	17 Dec. 1954					16
50.	97.	Heisen Bernhard B.	19/2 1911-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1932-Gradental, Mo.	Jacob P. Regier	42.6.1940	30 Aug. 1942					34
51.	98.	Heisen Sara	19/2 1911-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1932-Gradental, Mo.	H. Neufeld	42.6.1940	30 Aug. 1942					34
52.	29.	Heisen Aganetha	19/2 1912-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1932-Gradental, Mo.	H. Neufeld	42.6.1940	30 Aug. 1942					34
53.	30.	Heisen Grete	19/2 1916-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1931	Frans Erns	42.6.1940	30 Aug. 1942					34
54.	31.	Braun Jakob	19/2 1913-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1936	Frans Erns	42.6.1940	30 Aug. 1942					34
55.	21.	Braun Kornelius	19/2 1917-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1931	Frans Erns	42.6.1940	30 Aug. 1942					34
56.	87.	Dyck Gerhard	19/2 1917-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	14 Dec. 1954					25
57.	88.	Dyck Susanna	19/2 1917-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	14 Dec. 1954					25
58.	18.	Schellenberg David	19/2 1916-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	31 Jan. 1941					25
59.	20.	Schellenberg Anna	19/2 1917-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	31 Jan. 1941					25
60.	38.	Friese Ellie	19/2 1916-Monster, Mo.	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	10 Aug. 1943					21
61.	26.	East Gertrude	19/2 1913-Abnashier, Mo.	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	10 Aug. 1943					22
62.	115.	Ruhl Ella	19/2 1913-Winkler, Mo.	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	30 Aug. 1942					22, 25
63.	92.	Heisen Lena	19/2 1913-Abnashier, Mo.	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	30 Aug. 1942					24
64.	57.	Eiger Hildegard	19/2 1917-Abnashier, Mo.	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	31 Nov. 1947					20
65.	47.	Duerksen David H.	19/2 1917-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1918-Abnashier, Mo.	Johann Loms	3 Aug. 1940	34 July 1946					26
66.	48.	Duerksen Maria J.	19/2 1918-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1915-Abnashier, Mo.	Bernhard Regier	3 Aug. 1940	24 July 1946					26
67.	52.	Duerksen David D.	19/2 1923-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1938-Schroeder, Mo.	Rev. Gerboordt	3 Aug. 1940	24 Aug. 1947					26
68.	53.	Duerksen Mary	19/2 1926-Homergat, Mo.	19/2 1940-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	4 Aug. 1947					26
69.	43.	Heisen Peter B.	19/2 1911-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1938-Winkler, Mo.	Herman Neufeld	3 Aug. 1940	29 Jan. 1946					24
70.	34.	Matthies Peter D.	19/2 1911-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1938-Winkler, Mo.	Herman Neufeld	3 Aug. 1940	30 Aug. 1946					24
71.	35.	Matthies Olga	19/2 1918-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1931-Winnipeg	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	30 Aug. 1942					24
72.	93.	Braun Oetke	19/2 1918-Sid. Rusland	19/2 1941-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	30 Aug. 1942					24
73.	104.	Redekopf Peter	19/2 1922-Gradental, Mo.	19/2 1941-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	17 Dec. 1954					20
74.	116.	Redekopf Lena	19/2 1923-Winkler, Mo.	19/2 1941-Gradental, Mo.	Jakob P. Friese	3 Aug. 1940	17 Dec. 1954					20
75.	117.	Van Nissen Esther E.	19/2 1921-Abnashier, Mo.	19/2 1935-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich P. Harder	3 Aug. 1940	16.2.1951					27
76.	72.	Hard David	19/2 1920-Abnashier, Mo.	19/2 1944-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich P. Harder	3 Aug. 1940	16.2.1951					23
77.	45.	Arvid Redekopf	19/2 1925-Gradental, Mo.	19/2 1944-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich P. Harder	3 Aug. 1940	19.4.46					20
78.	46.	Margaret Dyck	19/2 1928-Winkler, Mo.	19/2 1944-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich P. Harder	3 Aug. 1940	19.4.46					20
79.	49.	Frederik Duerksen	19/2 1929-Winkler, Mo.	19/2 1944-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich P. Harder	3 Aug. 1940	24 Feb. 1946					26
80.	114.	Luis Harder	19/2 1928-Winkler, Mo.	19/2 1944-Gradental, Mo.	Heinrich P. Harder	3 Aug. 1940	17 Dec. 1954					16

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						By Certificate	Per. Testy.	Certificate	Per. Appl.	Cancellation	Death	
81	58.	Redekopf Jakob	19/2 1920-Gradental, Mo.	19/2 1942-Gradental, Mo.	H. P. Harder	3 Aug. 1940	April 25, 1949					20
82	59	Redekopf Peter	19/2 1911-Gradental, Mo.	19/2 1946-Homergat, Mo.	A. A. Fleide	3 Aug. 1940	Dec. 17, 1954					22
83	73.	Ruhl Katha	19/2 1924-Rusland	19/2 1940-Abnashier, Mo.	H. S. Luedemann	9 Jan. 1947	16.2.1951					29
84	63.	Tussen Anna	19/2 1905-Rusland	19/2 1926-Abnashier, Mo.	Abraham Klassen	12 Dec. 1947	May 1, 1950					30
85	62.	Heisen Kornelius	19/2 1909-Rusland	19/2 1948-Winkler, Mo.	H. J. Voth	15 Jul. 1948	May 26, 1949					30
86	59.	Banner David	19/2 1926	19/2 1948-Winkler, Mo.	H. S. Voth	15 Jul. 1948	May 26, 1949					30
87	60.	Niebuhr Anna	5.10.1900-Rusland	5.6.1920-Carlisle	Abraham Klassen	10.10.1948	Dec. 19, 1949					30
88	61.	David Kempel	13.3.1908-Rusland	7.9.1947-Zionia, Sarny	Jakob Oetke	12.12.1948	May 1, 1950					31
89	66.	Kliem Sara	22.3.1911-Calen	31.5.1931-Wynnysskole	Gustav Redekopf	12.12.1948	Jan. 28, 1951					31
90	67.	Kliem Albert	24.8.1898-Calen	24.12.23-Karson	Johann Schmidt	12.12.1948	Jan. 28, 1951					31
91	90	Heisenbrandt Helen	10.9.1930-Winkler, Mo.	21.8.1949-Winkler, Mo.	H. P. Harder	18.8.1949	Dec. 17, 1954					31
92	68.	Kliem Ruth	15.1.1935-Calen	21.8.1949-Winkler, Mo.	H. P. Harder	18.8.1949	Dec. 17, 1954					31
93	41	Kliem John	22.3.1928-Gradental, Mo.	21.8.1949-Winkler, Mo.	H. P. Harder	18.8.1949	Dec. 17, 1954					33
94	101	Klassen John	22.3.1936-Winkler	21.8.1949-Winkler, Mo.	H. P. Harder	18.8.1949	Dec. 17, 1954					33
95	105	Kliem Heinrich	27.11.1883-Calen	15.6.1901-Wynnysskole	Peter Ratzeff	12.1.1950	Dec. 17, 1954					32
96	106	Kliem Olga	1.1.1896-Calen	14.6.1919	Loeth	12.1.1950	Dec. 17, 1954					32
97	75	Ernst Gerhard	19.9.1921-Rusland	2.7.1939-Eismold	Peter Mandtler	12.1.1950	Jan. 1952					32
98	64.	Neufeld Gerhard	9.2.1916-Rusland	26.7.1939-Ulster, Mo.	D. D. Duerksen	12.1.1950	Nov. 25, 1952					32
99	65.	Neufeld Helene	30.8.1925-Gradental	12.9.1948-Ulster, Mo.	B. B. Lant	12.1.1950	Nov. 25, 1952					32
100	92	Kriem Wilhelme	4.8.1927-Winkler	26.8.1945-Winkler	H. S. Voth	11.6.1950	Dec. 17, 1954					33
101	93	Ruhl John	23.3.1928-Gradental	23.7.1950-Gradental	H. P. Harder	23.7.1950	Dec. 17, 1954					34
102	94	Ruhl Hilan	23.3.1928-Gradental	23.7.1950-Gradental	H. P. Harder	23.7.1950	Dec. 17, 1954					34
103	71.	Ruhl Evelyn	11.10.1934-Gradental	23.7.1950-Gradental	H. P. Harder	23.7.1950	Dec. 17, 1954					34
104	83	Kliem Bruno	23.7.1950-Gradental	23.7.1950-Gradental	H. P. Harder	23.7.1950	Dec. 17, 1954					34
105	79	Warkentin Gerhard	23.9.1908-Calen, Sask.	24.8.1930-Dalbny, Sask.	Jos. Koepf	26.11.1950	Oct. 1, 1952					32
106	80	Warkentin Martha	2.5.1909-Rusland	10.7.1929-Calen, Sask.	Abraham Klassen	26.11.1950	Oct. 1, 1952					32
107	81	Warkentin Tracy	30.1.1913-Waldheim, Sask.	26.6.1949-Abnashier, Mo.	Jos. Koepf	26.11.1950	Oct. 1, 1952					32
108	82	Warkentin Viola	27.9.1934-Waldheim, Sask.	6.1.1949-Abnashier, Mo.	Jos. Koepf	26.11.1950	Oct. 1, 1952					32
109	107	Van Nissen Wilhelm	10.9.1880-Hohst, Sask.	14.7.1913-Tombill, Sask.	Prof. J. J. J. J.	21.10.1951	Dec. 17, 1954					25
110	108	Van Nissen Maria	25.4.1886-Hohst, Sask.	2.7.1900-Winkler, Mo.	David Dyck	21.10.1951	Dec. 17, 1954					25
111	95	Duerksen Johann E.	Nov. 27, 1929-Rusland	June 12, 1940-Abnashier, Mo.	C. C. Voth	Nov. 19, 1953	Dec. 17, 1954					35
112	96	Klassen Julius E.	June 19, 1899-Rusland	July 26, 1931-Winkler	H. S. Voth	Nov. 19, 1953	Dec. 17, 1954					35
113	97	Klassen Elizabeth	Sept. 26, 1903-Rusland	July 26, 1931-Winkler	H. S. Voth	Nov. 19, 1953	Dec. 17, 1954					35
114	84	Klassen Abram	Dec. 19, 1926-Winkler	Sept. 9, 1945-Winkler	H. S. Voth	Nov. 19, 1953	Dec. 17, 1954					35
115	98	Klassen Heinrich	Jan. 25, 1929-Winkler	Sept. 9, 1945-Winkler	H. S. Voth	Nov. 19, 1953	Dec. 17, 1954					35
116	99	Klassen Lise	May 23, 1931-Winkler	Sept. 9, 1945-Winkler	H. S. Voth	Nov. 19, 1953	Dec. 17, 1954					35
117	100	Klassen Aganetha	May 23, 1931-Winkler	Sept. 9, 1945-Winkler	H. S. Voth	Nov. 19, 1953	Dec. 17, 1954					35

or even help a rebellious youth find peace with God. From Griswold I went on to Alexander and then to Brandon and four settlements just west of the Saskatchewan-Manitoba border. At all of these stopovers there was someone who offered to take me around to make my house visitations, sometimes as far as twenty-one miles. Always I was well received. The people seem hungry for spiritual food. In one case the service in a home where several families had gathered lasted till three o'clock in the morning. To complete my circuit I went on to visit the churches at Whitewater, Barnsley, Culross, and Springstein. In Springstein I even participated in the Valentine's festivities of the local school children."

In all, Reverend Dyck visited twelve communities and made fifty-four visits to individual homes in the five weeks of travel. At that time he was seventy-six years old.

Two Churches Work Together Two Churches Worship Together

During the resettlement years of the 1920s the spiritual climate among the immigrants in Gnadenthal was one of thanksgiving for deliverance from death, slavery, or worse — life under atheistic Communism. For many of the new arrivals the loss of religious freedom and all that it entailed had been the main reason for the decision to leave their homes in Russia and come to a land where freedom of worship was considered a basic human right. They compared themselves to the Israelites who had escaped the bondage of Egypt. The Moses in this case had been a David Toews⁵ from Rosthern, Saskatchewan, who had worked tirelessly to prepare the groundwork here in Canada to make the mass migration possible. The gratitude and security the refugees felt in their new homeland can perhaps be illustrated best by some excerpts from a letter to the editor of the "Mennonitische Rundschau", appearing in the January 20, 1926 issue. The letter was written by Herman and Maria Voth, who were early newcomers to Gnadenthal in 1924:

"Gnadenthal ist wirklich ein Ort der Gnade für uns geworden denn durch Gottes Gnade haben wir hier lebendige Gemeinschaft auf geistlichem Gebiet . . . alles nach gewohnter Weise . . . Wir sind glücklich und zufrieden, dass wir hier in einem Lande sind, in dem Ruhe und Friede herrscht, und wollen dem Herrn dafür danken alle Zeit."

Translation:

Gnadenthal has truly become a place of grace for us, for here through God's grace we are experiencing genuine fellowship on a spiritual plane . . . everything is as it was . . . We are happy and content to live in a land where peace and calm reigns and for this we want to thank God at all times.

Since there was no church building in Gnadenthal at that time, the immigrants began to congregate in private homes for worship services — each denomination in its respective circle of adherents. In the week preceding November 23, 1924, the school building of the former villagers was purchased. For the next several years the Mennonite Brethren and the Mennonitengemeinde (later the Gnadenthal Local of the Blumenorter Church) conducted their church services together. The first minister to speak in this school-turned-church was Cornelius Krahn from Reinland. His sermon was based on 1 Corinthians 2:2. The worshippers sang the old familiar songs out of hymn books brought along from Russia — just like home.

The Sunday morning services were conducted jointly with each denomination taking responsibility for alternate Sundays. On special days like Christmas and Easter both churches were represented in the pulpit. A humorous situation developed when on three successive Sundays the same text was used by three different speakers. All sermons were based on: "Remember Lot's Wife". Gnadenthal's congregations were beginning to wonder whether God was trying to tell them something . . .

This method of combined church services worked out very well for the villagers. Not always in their past histories had the Mennonite Brethren and the Mennonitengemeinde occupied the same church bench. Their relationship in Russia had at times and in certain places been a stormy one. Now denominational barriers had disappeared and they were able to worship together in harmony and genuine fellowship. The experiences of the recent past, in which their tormentors had recognized no distinction of church denomination, had drawn them closer to each other and to the God they worshipped.

Soon other functions besides the Sunday morning worship were held jointly as well. A choir was formed consisting of young people from both churches. Sunday School was staffed by teachers from each denomination. Christmas, New Year's Eve, Mission and Thanksgiving festivals were celebrated together. These occasions usually included musical selections rendered by a group of village musicians. Possibly the best remembered church activity, and the one in which members of both groups participated most widely, was the bi-monthly Jugendverein. This interdenominational, intergenerational society did much to draw the community together, offering the residents purpose for constructive interaction.

At that time the church was the focus of village life. Besides providing spiritual nourishment and enrichment, it also served as a social outlet in a community which existed long before modern cars

and paved roads were in common usage. But the church was more than that. After six days of back-breaking labour, doing battle with stubborn quack grass in soggy fields, after the daily struggle of keeping a family of six to eight children clothed and fed, church activities provided a blessed release from the worries and cares of everyday life. For a few hours the villagers were able to bask in the sunshine of God's goodness and to be thankful for what they had.

One such notable occasion was a Thanksgiving festival held in Gnadenthal on September 26, 1926. This was a combined effort of all the villagers. A huge tent, with a seating capacity of 2000, had been erected for the occasion and was filled to overflowing for both morning and afternoon sessions. Many visitors had come to join in the celebration of thanksgiving in spite of adversities during the year. The crop year had been a frustrating one. Incessant rain had interrupted harvesting operations which had not yet been completed. Humanly speaking there was little to be thankful for. Nevertheless the joy of seeing a familiar face "aus der alten Heimat" (from the old country) and the memory of many blessings in the past year was enough to inspire heartfelt thanks. The participants were particularly grateful for just being able to be there. Not in their wildest dreams had they dared to imagine that they would once again be able to take part in a gathering of this nature. For a little while life's cares were pushed into the background. The wet stooks in the field were forgotten and even the ever-present anxieties over unpaid debts were left

behind. They were able to rejoice truly in the goodness of a great God.

All church functions in those early years were very well attended. Besides the resident villagers, visitors from surrounding areas travelled the distance to Gnadenthal to attend whatever happened to be going on, be it a Christmas concert or a revival meeting. Christmas and Easter festivities lasted three days, and for all services the church was filled to overflowing. During the festive season of 1925, three hundred persons were counted at the Christmas morning service. At that time there were fifty-six families living in Gnadenthal.

A Common Sunday School

The first Sunday School was organized by Mennonite Brethren minister, Johann Retzlaff, probably sometime during the winter of 1924-1925. Classes were held in the former school building on Sunday afternoons. Sunday School among the Mennonites is an innovation of the Mennonite Brethren Church. The idea of a special religious service for children was a foreign concept for the Mennonitengemeinde. In their home villages in Russia, Sunday School had not been customary nor did the children accompany their parents to church. They received their religious instruction in school. The idea of Sunday School must have appealed to them in their new homeland. Not only were they eager to send their children, but they appointed Mr. Heinrich Albrecht, a member of the Mennoniten congregation, to assist with the teaching.

By late spring of 1925 another immigrant family



Amalie (Dyck) Bock on her wedding day, October 23, 1927. As recent immigrants from Russia, Amalie's family did not have the means to sponsor an elaborate wedding. At Amalie's request, however, her Sunday School pupils, pictured with her here, headed the guest list. At right, wearing hat, is Rev. Johann Retzlaff, leading minister of the Mennonite Brethren group in Gnadenthal.

had moved to Gnadenthal. They were the Wilhelm Dycks with their three adult children. The oldest daughter, Amalie, had been a school teacher and a Sunday School teacher in her former home in Russia. One beautiful Sunday afternoon her curiosity about a Canadian Sunday school prompted her to visit the grey frame church building. She noticed a group of children gathered on the grassy area next to the church. In answer to her question she was told they were waiting for Mr. Albrecht, their Sunday School teacher. Amalie asked if, while they were waiting, she might tell them a story. The children agreed enthusiastically, and as they listened, Mr. Albrecht appeared, greatly pleased with what he saw. He immediately recruited Amalie to teach the older children, and she taught her first Sunday School lesson in Gnadenthal that very afternoon. Amalie continued with this class until the following fall when she left to attend school in Gretna. When she returned the next spring she organized a "Mädchen Verein" (Girl's Club) with her Sunday School pupils. She taught them to sew and knit. Her devotion to her students was exemplary. One week after her wedding to Johannes Bock on October 23, 1927, she returned to Gnadenthal from Rosefarm (a two or three hour trip by horse and wagon) with her teacher husband to be present at the mission-auction where the articles handcrafted by the girls, mostly from remnants and recycled wool, were to be sold. Steady rainfall throughout the previous week had softened the dirt roads making them almost impassable. Another downpour on the Sunday morning of the auction completely dashed any hopes that visitors from outlying areas would be able to join in the afternoon's activities. The temptation to cancel the whole affair was great, but in the end Amalie and the church authorities decided to go ahead with the Mission festival and auction sale. In spite of the weather the church was filled with eager bidders and the sale netted \$90.00 — a considerable sum for those days.

In 1927 and 1928 Amalie had been hired by the Mennonite Brethren Church to operate a kindergarten for the children of Gnadenthal during the summer months. Her salary for the summer was \$40.00 plus \$5.00 for expenses. Although her stay in Gnadenthal was short, the impressions she left on the children in her care remained. Men and women in their sixties still remember "Tante Amalie" with much fondness.

Like the church services in Gnadenthal, the Sunday School in those early years was well attended. During the month of December, 1925, the enrolment fluctuated between forty and sixty children. These large classes were generally taught by only two teachers. The Sunday School hour started with a time

of singing. Bible stories were usually told in chronological order, and with every story a verse was taught. The children were expected to repeat the story and recite the memory verse the next Sunday. The Bible was the only text the teachers used.

But all was not formal learning and memory work in the Gnadenthal Sunday School. There were times for fun and enjoyment in the great outdoors. The Kinderfest (Children's Festival) held on July 18, 1926, may have been the first Sunday School picnic held in Gnadenthal. Typically this was a community affair. Many visitors from neighbouring farms and villages joined in the festivities. On this occasion a train of assorted vehicles (buggies, boxwagons, hayracks and even some cars) could be seen making its way towards the wooded area near the village. The activities began with a short formal service at which the children recited Bible verses and poems, and sang songs they had learned in Sunday School. A short message based on Isaiah 45:11 was delivered by one of the ministers. When the formalities were over, apples were distributed among the children as a special treat. The rest of the afternoon continued to be pure enjoyment for the children and easy relaxation for the adults. Mothers and fathers sat under the shade of the huge cottonwoods exchanging progress reports on the haying season and the flower gardens while enjoying the children's singing games:

Ringel, ringel Rosen
 Schöne Aprikosen
 Veilchen und Vergissmeinnicht —
 Alle Kinder setzen sich!

(The English counterpart to this rhyme would be the popular "Ring Around a Rosy".)

The picnic lunch was a highlight. Table cloths were spread on the grass, and from tea-towel-covered baskets emerged veritable marvels of Mennonite baking. In honour of the occasion, customary practice was waived: the children were allowed to eat first, and on this special day they were permitted to drink their tea as sweet as they liked! There were eighty-five children at the first setting with more running and playing about. All too soon it was time to pack up and hurry home for evening chores.

Two Churches Interact

During the first resettlement years the two denominations in Gnadenthal gathered together for many occasions. They worshipped together, sang together, worked together and played together. That they would eventually separate was perhaps inevitable. But the unity established in those early years was strong enough to carry over into the time when the two denominations would operate as separate churches.

Through the years the practice of joint services

for special events was maintained. Gifted speakers from either church were invited to conduct evangelistic services or in-depth Bible study sessions. On such occasions the entire community attended. The host church asked ministers from the other church to share in responsibilities like giving the invocation or assisting in counselling prospective converts. At times leaders from the two congregations organized special meetings to be held in the larger facility at Rosenort or Reinland so that more people could be accommodated. The Sunday School Christmas concert was, for many years, the joint effort of children from both groups. At festive occasions like Christmas and Easter the village choir performed in one church one day and in the other on the next. The two denominations combined efforts to produce a strong youth movement in Gnadenthal. They also shared a mutual concern for the needy and in many instances worked together to alleviate suffering. Over the years both churches produced strong leaders in areas such as music, literary arts, evangelism, preaching and teaching, and as the congregations interacted, the entire community benefited from their contributions. The relationship between the two churches was unique and served to promote a positive community spirit.

Jugendverein

The Jugendverein concept was not entirely new to the immigrants in Gnadenthal since the Mennonite Brethren Churches in Russia had practised this form of youth involvement. In the Neu-Chortitzer Church, the home church of the many immigrants in Gnadenthal who originally came from the Baratow-Schlachtjin Colonies, programming for young people was just beginning to become popular when the migration to Canada began. In Canada, Jugendvereins were active in most Mennonite Brethren and Berghaler church communities long before the arrival of the immigrants. The program had evolved from the choir and Sunday School movement which first originated in Manitoba with the founding of the educational institute in Gretna in the early 1890s.

In Gnadenthal informal youth activities were going on for quite some time before any formal Jugendverein was organized. The young people got together socially, singing the familiar "Heimatlieder" (songs from home), and re-living their times in Russia. An orchestra consisting of mandolins, guitars and violins provided fine entertainment. Many a pleasant Sunday afternoon was spent playing and singing, often outdoors and at times followed by a picnic lunch.

The formal organization of the Jugendverein did not take place until late in 1927. At a meeting held on

November 21 of that year it was decided that a Jugendverein was to be organized, and that a constitution was to be drawn up. The constitution mentioned in the records was probably written by the founder and first principal of the educational institute in Gretna, Mr. H. H. Ewert. The purpose of the Verein was stated as follows: "(Der Verein) soll dazu dienen, durch geeignete Übungen unsere geistlichen Gaben zu entwickeln, unser Erkenntnis zu fördern, uns an der Nachfolge Jesu zu stärken, Wohltätigkeit zu üben und christliche Gesellschaft zu pflegen."

Elections for officers were held with the following results: Chairman — J. J. Dick, Secretary-Treasurer — Herman R. Voth; elected to the Program Committee: Anna Dyck, Wilhelm Dyck, Gerhard Konrad, and Heinrich Albrecht. In addition a Welcoming Committee (Empfangs Komitee) and a Membership Committee (Werbe Komitee) were elected. At this time a list of active members numbered thirty-seven, and by February, 1928, there were fourteen more.

At first the Jugendverein held weekly programs. In the late spring of the following year the organization of the Jugendverein fell apart. The last recorded program took place on May 29, 1928. Various sources indicate that the reasons for this abrupt termination of the Jugendverein programming were twofold: the disruption of the executive because a number of key persons had moved away from Gnadenthal, and the separation of the two denominations which took place at about that time.

After a span of about two and one half years the Jugendverein was reorganized. During the interlude many of the youth activities were carried on as before and a number of Jugendverein programs were rendered. It is interesting to note that the original youth movement in Gnadenthal was initiated by members of the Mennonite Brethren Church, whereas the reorganization was the work of the Blumenorter group. Examination of the membership lists of both organizations indicates that the Jugendverein was developed along community rather than denominational lines. The interdenominational nature of the Gnadenthal Jugendverein has been maintained over the years. Membership of persons not attached to either of the two major denominations has always been encouraged.

The organization of the new Jugendverein, led by Abram G. Teichroeb, took place at a meeting held on October 14, 1930. Abram P. Bueckert was elected chairman of the Verein. At a subsequent meeting the former constitution was re-examined and adopted with a few minor changes. Elected to the Program Committee were Abram P. Bueckert, Paul J. Schaefer and Abram G. Teichroeb.

Jugendverein Gnadenthal am
31. August 1930.

Einleitung von Fr. J. Schaefer.

1. (Gedicht) Kampf der drei Vd. ?
von Maria Fajfrot.
2. (Gedicht) Das wackende Weib. (Lena Kerd.)
3. (Lied) Jauchet dem Herrn in dem Herrn.
4. (Gedicht) Gib acht auf deine Worte.
(Ober: Köhler)
5. (Gedicht) Erntefest. (Lena Peters?)
6. (Lied) Wollt ihr kommen.
7. (Gedicht) So wie ich. (Ober: Fajfrot)
8. (") Gütlicher Kampf. (Annie Kerd.)
9. (Lied) Heiligkeit.
10. (Gedicht) Ein Kind von einem alten Weibe.
(Lena Kerd.)
11. (Gedicht) Ein Weib. (Lena Kerd.)
12. (Lied) Weib und Kind. (Lena Kerd.)
13. (Gedicht) Jesus ist da. (Lena Kerd.)
14. (") Zu spät. (Lena Kerd.)
15. (Lied) Jauchet dem Herrn in dem Herrn.
16. (Gedicht) Ein Weib von dem Ober: Köhler.

Jugendverein Program, 1930.

The first year after organizing, twenty-six programs were practised and performed, including one Deklamatorium. The following year Paul Schaefer was elected as leader of the Verein. Yearly re-elections to this post gave him the opportunity to provide strong leadership for the organization. In 1932, Mennonite Brethren member Johann Toews was elected to the executive, and for many years Paul Schaefer, Abram P. Bueckert and Johann Toews worked together to develop and strengthen the youth movement in Gnadenthal. After the departure of Johann Toews in 1939, Henry Kuhl, Sr., joined the committee.

The programs covered a wide range of topics. Besides the seasonal and festive programs, biblical and mission themes were presented. Church and Mennonite history were also favourite topics as were the programs dealing with moral ethics and Christian living. Every year at least one and sometimes as many as three larger works such as "Daniel" and "Der Unfruchtbare Feigenbaum" by Ernst Moderhorn were successfully performed.

During the early years the Verein was plagued by

a shortage of suitable material. In the 1930s the Ebenezer Jugendbund was organized by the Jugendvereins of southern Manitoba. The purpose was to evoke an interest among the young people to work together, to share ideas and program materials and present well-prepared programs on an exchange basis. The Jugendbund met four times a year to present a joint program for the entire district. Thus all participants gained access to more and better material.

Another innovation which made for more interesting programming was the use of the Lichtbilderapparat (slide projector). Individual Vereins had access to this machine through their membership in the Jugendbund. In 1935 Gnadenthal began using picture presentations dealing with nature, mission themes or biographies of interesting men such as David Livingstone.

1932.

Programm
für den Gnadenthaler Jugendverein, abgehalten am
23. Februar 1947.

Thema: "Nächstenliebe."

1. Einleitung: A. Leichroth.
2. Gedicht: Lena Neufeld.
3. Lied vom Kinderchor.
4. Gedicht: Lena Peters.
5. Lied vom Chor.
6. Aufsatz von David Bueckert.
7. Gemeinsames Lied u. Kollekte: #3. 77.
8. Gedicht: Abram Klassen.
9. Lied vom Kinderchor.
10. Gedicht: Alma Penner.
11. Geschichte: Susie Peters.
12. Lied unter Leitung von John Redhopp.
13. Gedicht: Lena Neufeld.
14. Sprüche die sich auf Thema beziehen von der Versammlung.
15. Freiwillige: Lied vom Knabenchor.
Gedicht von Marianne Sawatzky.
16. Bekanntmachungen.
17. Lied vom Chor.
18. Bericht von der Nothilfe u. Schluß von D. Peters.

Jugendverein Program, 1947.

The Manitoba Youth Organization was founded in 1942. Among other things this province-wide organization sought to provide and supply a selection of suitable literature and music to the local groups. Gnadenthal joined in 1945, thereby securing a reliable source of good material.

The urgent need for literary and religious materials gave birth to a modest "Bibliothek" (library). At

the 1933 year-end business meeting the members of the Jugendverein decided to establish a church library. A four-member committee was elected, consisting of Gerhard Konrad, Abram A. Teichroeb, Frank F. Sawatzky and Abram G. Teichroeb, whose primary duty it was to set some policies regarding the use of a library. At a subsequent meeting on January 7, 1934, the committee presented a statement which, among other things, said that a borrower's fee of one to three cents per book would be charged, a five-cent per week overdue rate would be required, a children's section would be included, and the library would be made accessible to all residents in the school district. A twenty cent membership fee was charged to get the project underway. Another committee, consisting of Gerhard Konrad, Abram A. Teichroeb and Johann Toews was elected, whose responsibility it was to monitor the contents of the books. Mr. Abram G. Teichroeb was elected first librarian.

Under the direction of Mr. Schaefer this humble beginning blossomed into a library with several hundred books, providing good reading material for young and old readers. Initially all books were in the German language, but very gradually English materials were added.

Two books that became very popular among the young people were "Was ein junges Mädchen wissen muss", and "Was ein junger Knabe wissen muss" (What a Young Girl/Boy Should Know). Many Gnadenthal parents recognized the need for some sex education and felt, perhaps rightly so, that books were the best source of information. By today's standards this information is rather outdated, but it served its purpose at the time.

Books and financial records were kept in meticulous order by dedicated librarians who were elected on an annual basis — the service was unremunerated of course. Some of the more recent records show that the library had 400 books, and that both the Winkler Berghaler Church and the Arnaud Church borrowed books from Gnadenthal.

Membership in the Jugendverein was not restricted to the young only. Generally speaking almost every member of the village, above a certain age, became a member. For many years a ten cent membership fee was charged which was used to buy program material. Upon becoming a member, and sometimes even before, a person was given an assignment to perform at the next Sunday evening program. Tasks were usually, but not always, assigned according to ability. At times a not particularly musical person was expected to be in charge of a singing group. Refusal of an assignment was unheard of. The backbone of the Jugendverein was the choir which gathered weekly to rehearse for the

next performance. An interesting part of the program was the time set aside for voluntary participation (Freiwilliges) by any member of the audience. Opportunities to render recitations, songs and musical selections for the enjoyment of the listeners were given to budding performers or to persons who felt they had a contribution to make.

The Jugendverein was an integral part of community life. It was an area where much interaction took place, between adults and youth, between Mennonite Brethren and Blumenorter, between Russländer and Kanadier, between church members and non-church members.

Active Members of the Gnadenthal Jugendverein

December 4, 1927

Abram Teichroeb
Bernhard G. Sawatzky
Peter Hildebrand
David Schellenberg
Johann Sawatzky
Henry Kuhl
Johann Peters
Philip Wiebe
Frank Balzer
Henry Kuhl Jr.
Armin Sawatzky
Peter Redekopp Jr.
Lena H. Fast
Lena Reimer
Anna Kuhl
Lena Redekopp
Aganetha Schellenberg
Anna Sawatzky
Anna Dyck
Tina Voth
Aganetha Balzer
Lena Penner
Anna Letkeman
Maria Teichroeb
Anna Hiebert
Maria Fast
Anna Albrecht

Frank F. Sawatzky
Peter Penner
Frank G. Sawatzky
Tina Voth
J. A. Dick
Herman R. Voth
Heinrich Albrecht
Gerhard Matthies
Frau Anna Dyck
Wilhelm Dyck

January 22, 1928

Tina Dyck
Maria Voth
Peter Neudorf
Abram Klassen
Jacob Peters
Jacob Wiebe
Lena Hiebert
Gerhard Sawatzky
Jacob Sawatzky
Gerhard Fast
Margaret Sawatzky
Margaret Albrecht
Johann Toews
Abram G. Teichroeb

Aid to the Needy — A Community Effort

"Nothilfe" (aid to the needy) took a number of forms in Gnadenthal. In the early settlement years the main incentive for vigorous support of the Nothilfe was the suffering brethren in Russia and Europe. Since money was scarce, donations often took the form of farm produce: a dozen eggs or a couple of bushels of grain. Often the volunteer collector made the rounds of the village and farm areas with a team of horses hitched to a doublebox wagon. Farmers shovelled a portion of grain right into the box which would then be taken to Plum Coulee and sold at the elevator. The money obtained was channeled through the MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) to the needy overseas.

According to records, cash collections for the Nothilfe were started in 1941 and kept up until 1970

when the Gnadenthal group merged with the Blumenorter congregation. For some time villagers took turns making these monthly house to house collections, but in later years, first Abram P. Bueckert and then Bernhard G. Sawatzky served as collectors. The yearly amounts gathered ranged from approximately \$50.00 in the 1940s to over \$350.00 in the 1960s. A special effort was made in 1949 when over \$800.00 was collected for cream separators and farm implements to be sent to the World War II refugees in Paraguay.

Another form of relief work was the annual, and sometimes semi-annual, used clothing drive. This project was started in 1945 when 800 pounds of clothing were gathered. These were taken to MCC depots in Reinland, Winkler or Altona. A monetary value placed on these items of clothing indicate that from 1945 to 1963 an approximate amount of \$2500.00 worth of clothing was collected from Gnadenthal. The practice stopped in 1963 when the villagers were encouraged to deliver their discarded items of clothing directly to Altona.

The charity efforts of the Gnadenthal residents did not end here. Other collections for money or food materials were made regularly for institutions like Bethel Hospital and the Altenheim (Senior Citizen's Home) in Winkler or schools in Gretna, Winkler, Altona and Winnipeg. The women of the congregations spent many hours sewing bedding and wearing apparel for the victims of war, floods or famines in many parts of the world. Sunday School and Ladies' Fellowship fund raising projects in the form of auctions, mission presentations and fowl suppers were supported by the villagers by good attendance and generous giving. In some years the village had as many as three mission auction sales, one sponsored by the Sunday School and the other two by each of the two Mission Circles.

One additional area of Nothilfe in which Gnadenthal participated was the post World War II MCC relief project in Europe. Mennonite communities in southern Manitoba were approached to supply beef cattle, which were to be slaughtered and processed at the cannery in Reinland. This product was then to be sent to refugee camps in Europe. Typically, Gnadenthal was very much involved.

At a meeting of all villagers, held on October 28, 1946, Peter P. Redekopp, David R. Penner and Johann J. Schellenberg were elected to form a committee whose duty it was to collect money for the purchase of cattle. Due to their efforts a total of \$462.15 was collected. This sum bought three cows and two steers. An additional four heads of beef were donated by individuals.

The following year the project was pursued on a

much larger scale. Another committee, consisting of Abram D. Klassen, Jacob P. Peters, David R. Penner and Heinrich H. Driedger, was elected. The villagers decided to slaughter the cattle in Gnadenthal, the meat to be processed in Reinland. In 1947 a total of \$1,055.00 in cash and cattle was donated. Added to this was the sum realized from the sale of the cow-hides. Altogether the village delivered fifteen slaughtered animals to Reinland as well as \$196.76 in cash. In addition, Gnadenthal men volunteered twenty-five days of labour in order to facilitate packaging.

The project was a mammoth undertaking. In keeping with Mennonite tradition it was executed with speed and efficiency. Heading the operations at the cannery was former Gnadenthal resident Peter R. Redekopp. Under his management a product of superior quality was produced. The first shipment of 1947 left the Winkler train station on December 5th, and was destined for a Mennonite children's refugee camp in Germany. A second shipment on December 23rd went to Austria. Altogether in 1947 a total of 419 heads of cattle, 14 sheep and 1,019 chickens were processed, yielding 11,632 tins of beef, 1,728 tins of chicken, 192 tins of chicken noodle soup, 4,495 pounds of tallow and \$500.00 (21 ton) worth of bones.



Rita Klassen. Rita spent one year (1959-1960) in Mexico, teaching the children of parents who had left the Old Colony schools. From 1963-1965 she instructed Hopi Indian children at a mission school in northern Arizona. Her duties, beside teaching, included secretarial services, involvement in summer camps, Vacation Bible School, mid-week clubs, Bible study groups, community choirs, and general visitation programs.



John R. Peters, son of Johann P. Peters, served for five years (1964-1969) in a crop and cattle improvement program sponsored by MCC in Paraguay. He is seen here (centre, left) explaining a new crop variety to Mennonite farmers at an experimental station at Fernheim.



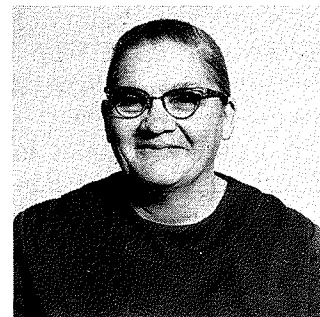
Nettie (Redekopp) Baer. Nettie worked for five years as a matron in the clothing centre in Kitchener, Ontario and as a P.A.X. matron in Germany, Greece and Austria. Later she won the Gold Medal, St. Boniface Hospital in Winnipeg, as an Xray technician.

Church Life in Gnadenthal Today 1970-1982

As in the early 1920s Gnadenthal has once again experienced an almost total turnover in population. The last three decades have seen all but one of the 1924-1930 residents retire from farming and move to neighbouring towns. Others have come to take their places. In a few instances the sons have taken over

the family farm and so have been able to carry on the tradition of village life. In many more cases, however, the vacated homesteads have been purchased by Mennonites arriving from Mexico who were searching for new beginnings in the villages of southern Manitoba. A few properties have been bought by people from surrounding areas and villages who saw new opportunities opening in Gnadenthal.

This shift in population has resulted in a major redistribution of the church denominations represented in Gnadenthal. Throughout the years there has been a sprinkling of Sommerfelder, Rudnerweider and Reinländer families in the village. Their numbers have increased. However, the majority of new-comers to Gnadenthal belong to the Old Colony Church. In the years preceding the 1950s only about 25 percent of the families living in Gnadenthal and area were of other than Blumenortler-Mennonite Brethren persuasion. By 1966 this percentage had increased to 54, and in 1982 it stands at 82 percent. These statistics lead to the observation that Gnadenthal has come almost full circle — in 1880 it was founded by members of the Old Colony-Reinländer Church, and over a hundred years later it is again populated largely by adherents of that denomination. In a few cases direct descendents of Gnadenthal's original pioneers are making their homes in the village today. The grandparents of Mr. Ben Wall and Mrs. Margaret (Jake) Wall lived on the Diedrich P. Peters homestead before moving to Mexico. Peter P. Klassen, uncle to Gnadenthal residents Jacob F. Klassen and Corny F. Klassen, was the village teacher for the years 1920-1922. Another long-time resident who can trace his ancestry back to those early years of Gnadenthal's existence is George Friesen. His grandfather built the house presently owned by the Abe Giesbrechts (formerly the John G. Sawatzky home) in 1916. The family left for Mexico with the

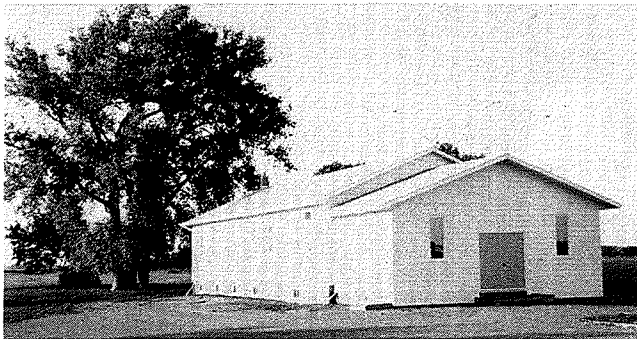


Margaret and Abram Wall lived in Gnadenthal from 1963-1978. The last number of decades have seen direct descendents of the original pioneering families occupy homes in Gnadenthal once again. Abram Wall's parents, the Johann Walls, lived in Gnadenthal prior to 1924. Children of the Abram Walls are living in Gnadenthal at the present time.

rest of the villagers, except for George's father, who married a Blumenfeld girl and settled there. George was born and raised in Blumenfeld, and years later he married Susie Penner from Gnadenthal. The couple have lived in Gnadenthal ever since and are members of the Blumenorter Church.

As in the pre-1923 period when Gnadenthal church-goers had to travel north to Blumengart for their church services, the present-day residents also find their places of worship located outside the village. The majority of the Old Colony families in Gnadenthal today attend church in the village of Rosenort. A few attend at one of the other Old Colony churches located in Blumenfeld, Reinfeld and Chortitz.

Church membership is taken seriously by the Old Colony worshippers in Gnadenthal. The regulations and guidelines set forth by the church are strictly adhered to by the members. They see the church as a



The Old Colony church in Rosenort, where many of the Gnadenthal's Old Colony members attend.

means to maintain valued traditions and customs which serve to glorify God. Regular church attendance is a must. Children accompany their parents and attend Sunday School in the lower auditorium while the adults worship upstairs. Services are conducted in both High-and Low-German languages. The dedication of the members to their church was exemplified during the winter of 1982 when the congregation at Rosenort undertook a major renovation project. Many volunteer hours were donated by the local members — painting, remodeling and re-decorating.

The largest church representation, next to the Old Colony and the Blumenorter in Gnadenthal today, is the Sommerfelder group. Many of these families are long-time residents of Gnadenthal, and some, like the Pete Neufelds and the George Letkemans, have lived there all their lives. Sommerfelder members attend church in Winkler or Plum Coulee. Another church represented in Gnadenthal today is the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Church (known formerly

as the Rudnerweider Church) located in Winkler. The Bergthaler Church also has a small following.



The Isaac Driedger family, formerly of Gnadenthal, on the occasion of daughter Sharon's marriage to Alvin Dueck, March, 1981. In 1960 Isaac left his farming occupation at Elm Creek to attend the Elim Bible School in Altona, Manitoba. From there the family moved to MacGregor, Manitoba where they became involved in a church planting ministry under the Evangelical Mennonite Mission Conference. They were ordained to the ministry in 1972, in the Bagot Community Chapel, a church which they helped establish. In 1975 the family moved to Steinbach where Isaac pastored the Gospel Fellowship Chapel. At the same time he took up part-time studies at the Steinbach Bible College. Presently he is serving as the Minister of Discipleship at the Gospel Fellowship Chapel. Appearing in picture are, back row, left to right: son, Gerald and wife Wilma, son Jim with wife Margaret, son Kenneth. Standing to the left of the bridal couple are daughter Marlene with Sheri and son-in-law Marvin Vogt with son Darcy; and to the right are Isaac and Helen Driedger.

1966 Survey of Gnadenthal and Area Families and Their Church Affiliations

Sommerfelder

Mrs. Kay Neufeld
Peter Neufeld
Jacob P. Dyck
Peter Ginter
George J. Letkeman
Jacob Fehr
Isaak Ginter
Blumenorter
Bernhard G. Sawatzky
David R. Penner
David D. Peters
Diedrich Peters
George B. Sawatzky
Abram H. Klassen
Johann Peters
Peter W. Peters
Jim Sawatzky
Mrs. Frank F. Sawatzky
George Klassen
Paul J. Peters

George Friesen
Jacob P. Peters
Ben Schellenberg
Paul P. Peters
Frank D. Peters
Willi Letkeman
Bergthaler
Cornelius Peters
Cornelius Peters Jr.
Rudnerweider
David Bergen
Sara and Anna Bergman
John K. Nickel
Henry Z. Klassen
Isaak Letkeman
Alt Kolonier
P. Wiebe
John Neufeld
Peter Teichroeb
John Wieler

Ben Schmidt
 Abram Wall
 Jacob Thiessen
 Abram Bueckert
Reinländer
 Cornie Martens

Frank Wall
 C. Nickel
 Abram Paetkau
 Franz Wall
Mennonite Brethren
 Art Sawatzky

Isaac Wall
 Jacob Wall
 Jacob Penner
 Abe Rempel
 David Wiebe
 Jacob Klassen
 Mrs. S. Schellenberg
 Aaron Zacharias
 Abe Fehr
 David Wiebe
 Henry Peters
Bergthaler
 Cornelius C. Peters
Sommerfelder
 Ben Wall
 Pete Neufeld

EMMC
 Corney Wall
 Jake Wall
 John Nickel
 Jake Dueck
Blumenorter
 Johann Peters
 Abram H. Klassen
 David D. Peters
 Frank D. Peters
 Ben Schellenberg
 Paul Raymond Peters
 George Friesen
 Paul J. Peters
 Willi Letkeman
Reinländer
 C. Banmann

1982 Survey of Gnadenthal and Area Families and their Church
 Affiliation

Old Colony
 Abram Bueckert
 Corney Klassen
 Abram Giesbrecht
 John Wieler
 Ben Banmann
 Peter Wall

Mrs. Kay Neufeld
 Jacob I. Fehr
 Peter Ginter
 George Letkeman
 Jacob F. Klassen
 Peter Penner



Guests at the wedding of Wilhelm Dyck and Anna Reimer, June, 1927.



Youth outing on the Wilhelm Dyck farm. Seated, front right is choir conductor Wilhelm Dyck Jr. and Mrs. Dyck. Photo 1928.

Appendix A

When the first organizational meeting of the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church took place in the spring of 1925, only sixty-five years had passed since the inception of the original church. The role of the local congregation in the development of the religious life in the village is reflected in the light of events and circumstances which led to the founding of the mother church in southern Russia on January 6, 1860.

Mennonite historians and theologians generally agree that the first half of the nineteenth century was a period of spiritual and moral decline within the Mennonite churches in Russia. Religion, to a large extent, had become institutionalized.¹ Basic anabaptist principles of a church where membership was a voluntary association of believers, entered into by baptism upon sincere confession of faith, seemed to have fallen by the wayside. Baptism had often become merely a matter of necessity since it was prerequisite for marriage and full community status. Church membership demanded little more than regular attendance and adherence to church rules. The position of Ältester (elder), which in anabaptist tradition is one of leading and shepherding, had turned into a position of authority in civil as well as religious matters. Often the church leaders became so embroiled in the administrative element of the colony that less and less attention was paid to the spiritual nurture of the congregation. Church discipline was practised only when blatant sins had been committed. Services were unstimulating, and the sermons were read, not spoken. The state of the Mennonite churches of that era may perhaps best be summed up in the words of Gerhard Lohrenz when he says, ". . . (They) were fossilized, subscribing to a rigid orthodox form of Christianity but lacking warmth and knowing nothing of a personal commitment to Christ whose followers they claimed to be."²

The first sign of religious awakening came as early as 1812, when, in an effort to practice a more meaningful Christianity, a man by the name of Klaas Reimer led in the formation of the Kleine Gemeinde.

In the early twenties, Tobias Voth, who had been invited by Johann Cornies to teach in the newly established Vereinsschule in Orloff, Molotschna Colony, made great strides in widening the theological horizons of the Mennonite community. Besides fulfilling his role as a talented and innovative educator, he also instigated prayer meetings, mission services and the distribution of Christian literature. Most significantly perhaps, according to P. M. Friesen,³ Tobias Voth "was the first among us to put into practice what we today call 'brotherhood' . . .", a concept to which the Mennonite Brethren, as well as other Mennonite churches, still adhere.

In the 1840s and 1850s the centre of religious and intellectual activity shifted from Orloff to Gnadenfeld, another village in the Molotschna Colony. Traditionally a more progressive congregation, Gnadenfeld provided the spawning ground for a religious movement of deep intensity which would later give birth to the Mennonite Brethren Church. The church at Gnadenfeld was open to having neighbouring ministers serve at special occasions, such as mission festivals. One such minister was Eduard Wuest, the pastor of the Lutheran Church at Neu-Hoffnung, a settlement not far from the Molotschna. Pastor Wuest was a powerful speaker and his message was one of true repentance and free grace. Many in the Gnadenfeld and surrounding area were greatly attracted to Wuest and his preaching. A core of sympathetic Mennonite followers formed a group of "Brethren" who held regular devotional meetings which Wuest was invited to attend. Here he continued to expound the Word.

Wuest died in July 1859, six months before the new church came into existence. Mennonite Brethren theologians agree that Eduard Wuest's contribution was the single most influential factor in the founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church. P. M. Friesen calls him the "second reformer", Menno Simons being the first.

After Wuest's death the orphaned Brethren felt a need for re-orientation. Prayer and Bible study groups had sprung up in many areas as a result of the new life emanating from the Orloff-Gnadenfeld centre. The spiritual intimacy of the fellowship in these groups was such that they desired a separate and more frequent communion. When a request to this effect was denied by August Lenzman, Ältester of the Gnadenfeld Church, a small group of believers took it upon themselves to serve one another with communion in a private meeting. News of this event caused great consternation among the elders of the various Molotschna churches. Some members of the dissident group were immediately excommunicated from their respective congregations. Six participants belonging to the Gnadenfeld church were asked to appear before the Ältester and ministers and were required to promise to submit themselves to everything that was not against God's Word and their conscience. Ältester Lenzman was generally well-disposed toward the Brethren and at this point ready to allow them to continue in the fellowship of the church. A certain vocal element, however, refused to accept them, and when the meeting promised to become unruly, Johann Classen, the spokesman for the group of six, asked leave of Ältester Lenzman to retire from the meeting. Permission was reluctantly granted. Not only did Johann Classen leave, but nine others walked out of the meeting as well.

This happened in December, 1859. On January 6, 1860, at a private gathering a letter of secession was composed and subsequently submitted to the leaders of the Molotschna churches. The statement contained ten points of which the main ones can be summarized as follows:

1. The undersigned wish to disassociate themselves from these decadent churches for fear that the wrath of God will come upon them. They will, however, pray for the salvation of their brethren. They deplore the immoral behaviour of baptized church members at public functions.
2. They believe that baptism is to be administered only upon confession of a true faith and not a "memorized" faith.
3. They believe that the ordinances of communion and footwashing should be participated in by true believers only.
4. They believe that the ban should be invoked when a member does not respond to Christian admonishment and discipline.
5. Ministers can be called directly to God; they may declare themselves, or they may be appointed by the church body.
6. In all other points they declare themselves in full agreement with the doctrines and teachings of Menno Simons.

Baptism by immersion, which most visibly characterizes the Mennonite Brethren church today, was not an issue at that time. This form of baptism was adopted later, after a revelation from the Bible and the writings of Menno Simons had been interpreted to mean immersion. In the years following, unordained members assumed leadership functions in regards to singing, invocation and speaking public prayers.

The formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church had a great impact upon the Mennonite Colonies. According to Gerhard Lohrenz, nothing, between 1789 and 1914, had shaken the Mennonite brotherhood as had the establishment of this church. The movement was severely criticized by the Mennonite brotherhood, although it was stated that the original intention of the group was not withdrawal from the existing church but rather implementation of reforms that would redirect its goals.

In an evaluation of the secession document, Mennonite Brethren historian and theologian J. B. Toews states that ". . . the charges brought against the church and its ministers (Lehrer) were far too sweeping and too severe in character."⁴ He goes on to say: "It would appear that . . . the brethren had tem-

porarily forgotten the spiritual nurture they received in the mother churches." There were many members in the "Mother Church" who agreed with the secessionists in theology but disapproved of their vehemence. They remained in the Mennonitengemeinde and sought to wield some influence towards evangelistic orientation in the congregations. One of the foremost in this category of "Mennoniten" members was Bernhard Harder, teacher and writer, who attempted to bring about church renewal with great evangelistic zeal.

In spite of the many obstacles put in its way by the established church and despite the stress of growing pains from within, the new movement took root and spread to other colonies. When in 1874 the mass migration of the conservative faction of the Russian Mennonites began, relatively few Mennonite Brethren joined them in the trek to America. The first recorded incidence of Mennonite Brethren activity in Canada is the visit of two missionaries, Heinrich Voth and David Dyck, to the Mennonites of the West Reserve in southern Manitoba, in the spring of 1884. They had been delegated by the American Mennonite Brethren Conference to investigate evangelization possibilities in the Mennonite communities in Manitoba. Subsequent to a favorable report on the part of the visitors, Rev. Voth was commissioned by the conference to work in southern Manitoba. For the next five years he visited the area several times a year, teaching, preaching and ministering to the people. The first of these visits took place in December, 1884, in the village of Hoffnungsfeld, a mile southwest of Winkler. Two years later on May 30, 1886, the first baptism took place near Burwalde in the Dead Horse Creek. Two couples were baptized at that occasion. Two weeks later another four converts were baptized and added to the group which was to form the nucleus of the first Mennonite Brethren Church in Canada. This church was officially organized in 1888. A year later a meeting house was erected at Burwalde. In the fall of 1897 it was moved to Winkler.

Here the church developed and became influential. It was a source of comfort and security to the Mennonite Brethren immigrants arriving in Manitoba between 1923 and 1930 and did much to help various groups establish congregations of their own. On April 10, 1925, the Winkler church voted to receive the Mennonite Brethren group in Gnadenthal as one of its daughter congregations. Several years later the church in Gnadenthal became independent but continued to maintain strong bonds with the parent church in Winkler.

CHAPTER III

Education 1923-1982

Education has always played an important role in the life of the Mennonite community. In the Gnadenthal of 1880 and indeed up to the present time, the purpose of education was perceived to be two-fold: it must contribute to the spiritual growth of the individual, and it must provide him with the knowledge needed to operate successfully in the working world.

The particular emphases on immediate educational goals have changed from time to time. Exact time periods cannot be assigned to these changes, but as identification of general transition, approximate dates can be used. Thus the villagers in the period between 1880 and 1923 had an identifiably different goal from that of the residents in the era between 1923 and 1945. Differences in aim and execution of schooling occurred again from 1945 to the present time.

In the years before 1923, the school building also served as the meeting place. School attendance was not compulsory, but it was taken for granted that children would attend when they could be spared from work at home. The curriculum was a simple one. The basics of reading were taught through the use of the Bible, the "Fibel" (primer) and the Catechism. German was the language of instruction. The children sang the songs from the "Gesangbuch" (hymnary), and learned a little arithmetic, "Schönschreiben" (penmanship), and "Rechtschreiben" (spelling). Sports as we know them today were not on the curriculum in the early private schools of Gnadenthal, and coaching teams was a duty unknown to the teachers of those early times. The teaching profession had its disadvantages, however — salaries were low, and the teachers were hired annually for the season and paid in cash and goods.

When the School Attendance Act of Manitoba was passed in 1916, the residents of Gnadenthal, like the other villages of southern Manitoba, faced a difficult problem. The final blow came with the establishment on February 1, 1920, of the **Wells School District #1998**, which encompassed the vil-

lage of Gnadenthal and the surrounding area. The villagers felt confirmed in their sense of doom when the building that had served them many years as a private school was now designated as the public schoolhouse. Parents were apprehensive of losing their heritage, their language, their religion, if they succumbed to government pressure. They saw the day coming when an English language curriculum would be enforced in their school, threatening their basic tenets of faith. Not even the new amendment to the School Act, which provided for some religion and language instruction at the end or the beginning of the school day, could allay their fears.

Once again their course appeared designated for them: they must leave their pleasant farms and emigrate to a country where freedom to educate their children in their own tradition would be ensured. Nothing could persuade them to change their minds, and between 1921 and 1924 most of the residents left Gnadenthal for Mexico, their new chosen country, together with 6,000 other Mennonites from the province of Manitoba. The years of the exodus coincided with the arrival of about 8,000 of their cousins from Russia, who had been driven from their villages in the steppes of the Ukraine, and were eagerly seeking a new home in Canada.

Arrival of Immigrants from Russia, 1924-

The Mennonite immigrants from Russia were beginning to occupy some of the newly purchased or rented farmhouses of the village, bringing with them a great interest in learning generally and in the acquisition of the English language particularly. The old schoolhouse soon proved inadequate, and in 1924 a one-room school was built on a new school site south of the village.

It is of interest to note that some of the Russländer children attended the German school that was still in existence. Mr. Klaas Harder, the teacher, was fluent in English. Former students recall that Mr. Harder became so engrossed in reading the Free Press Week-

glish was by attending night school. The course was given by the day school teacher — an incredible performance after meeting the demands of the large classes during the day. Night classes continued through the winter when the farm work was not pressing. Records show that in 1926 the night school class numbered between forty-five and fifty students. The men were evidently more avid in their efforts to learn English than the women, spurred on by the fact that they must handle daily business transactions with non-German merchants. Records are somewhat sketchy, but the 1924 night school class list shows forty-three students enrolled in night school, eight of them female; in 1926, out of forty-seven, there were only two females, and in 1930, out of twenty-nine, there were five. Perhaps, in true village tradition, females were reluctant to attend school in a predominantly male class. The mothers, who would have been eager to learn the language, were unable to do so because they had charge of the young children while their fathers went to night school. Residents generally were vitally concerned about good schooling, particularly with the acquisition of the English language.

A Local School Board

By 1927 the village residents decided that they were now in a position to administer their own school district without the services of Mr. Greenway, the official trustee. They had two capable men in the persons of Mr. Henry Kuhl, who had moved to Gnadenthal from the Zion School District in 1924, and Mr. J. J. Friesen, from the Altona district. Both men were Canadian-born and had a much better command of English than most of the others. The local residents, who were Canadian citizens and rate-payers in the district, elected a school board of three men: Mr. John J. Friesen, Mr. Henry H. Kuhl, and Mr. John Janzen.

One of the foremost concerns of the new board was to hire a competent teacher, qualified to teach the required curriculum, and able to instruct German and Religion as well. They were fortunate in obtaining the services of Mr. Paul J. Schaefer, an immigrant from Russia, who had studied at the MCI (Mennonite Collegiate Institute) in Gretna, and was that year completing his requirements for a teacher certificate. He was hired for the 1928-29 term at a monthly salary of \$105.00. In return for teaching German and Religion every day, he was to have the use of the teacher's residence (the old school building, half of which was used for Sunday worship services). His class totalled sixty-nine students that first year.

The Schaefer Era **Paul J. Schaefer**

Paul J. Schaefer was born in the Kuban settlement (Crimea), on February 5, 1899, the youngest of nine children. At a very early age he displayed a keen interest in books and learning. His father, a prosperous farmer, recognized his son's ability and his thirst for knowledge. After completing his elementary education in just three years, young Paul was enrolled in a private Lutheran high school in Tartino. He was then ten years old. The school was situated some distance from his native village, and his visits home were rare, so that he sometimes did not see his family even during the summer vacation. His original ambition to study medicine was thwarted when the revolution of 1918 made further studies impossible. Instead, he accepted a teaching position in the Kuban Mennonite village of Alexanderdar. Here he taught for seven years, and met his future wife, Margaretha Wiebe, a colleague in the same school. The wedding was celebrated on July 5, 1921, in the city of Berdjansk, the home of the bride.



Paul J. Schaefer, teacher
1928-1943.

In 1925 P. J. Schaefer emigrated to Canada with his wife and daughter, Lily. Their first home in the new country was in Newton Siding, Manitoba, where he, the educator, together with two other immigrants, a banker and a photographer, tried his hand at farming. When this venture proved unsuccessful, Mr. Schaefer began to consider the possibility of resuming his teaching career. In the fall of 1925 he moved his family to Gretna, where he attended the Mennonite Collegiate Institute for the next two years. He then went to Manitou for a year of teacher training at the provincial Normal School.

His teaching position in Gnadenthal brought him much work, but also many rewards in esteem and recognition of his services. His dedication to the teaching profession, his sound Christian principles and his thorough, systematic instruction, earned him the confidence of the community. He was open to

N.B.--This record of new work taken up during the month must be completed accurately at the close of the month

GRADE	MATHEMATICS	LANGUAGE	GRAMMAR	READING	LITERATURE	SPELLING	GEOGRAPHY	HISTORY	MUSIC	DRAWING	NATURE STUDY	AGRICULTURE	PHYSIOLOGY	ELEMENTARY SCIENCE
I	Informal Arithmetic			I Reader pages 25-52										
II	Book 27-34	Oral and written exercises		I Reader pages 100-137		I Speller lessons 50-64	Directions north, south, west, east							
III	Pages 80-89	Oral and written exercises		II Reader pages 108-140		I Speller lessons 57-77	Directions north, south, west, east							
IV	Long division fractions p. 64	Oral and written exercises		IV Reader pages 130-165		I Speller lessons 57-77	Denmark							
V	Arithmetic Book I pages 113-130	Oral and written composition		I Reader "Review and the Book" Treasure 128"		II Speller 5 grade lessons 84-100	Review U. S. A	History Book pages 103-130						
VI	Arithmetic 7/10	Oral and written composition	Adjective Adverb Conjunctions	Old Simeon Traces, Maps, Stories		II Speller 5 grade lessons 74-91	Africa	History Book pages 130-160						
VII														
VIII	Thorndike Book II Chapter IV	Oral and written composition	Adverbs Adjective Verb	Pericles, Lady of Shalott, The Story of the Book	Gradation Birds at Sea, Vacuum, Rain in Autumn	II Speller 5 grade lessons 60-80	Review Africa Study British Empire	British History pages 10-50						Chapter XVII, XVIII, XIX

A teacher's work was never done. Every month a record was kept of the work covered in each grade.

new ideas, he could arouse interest in his students, and he encouraged them to realize their potential. In his convincingly persuasive way, he gave purposeful guidance and direction. Indeed, a master teacher! His reputation extended much beyond the local community, so that several non-resident students took their grade ten with him.

However, a teacher's salary was insufficient to



Grade 10 students, 1942.

support a family. During the summer holidays, Mr. Schaefer would don his overalls and join the local threshing gangs during harvesting. It was not uncommon to see in the Gnadenthal fields a group of gangling boys clustered around Mr. Schaefer, engrossed in serious conversation during a break in operations, while waiting for the next hayrack of sheaves to arrive at the threshing machine. There, under the hot sun, amidst the blowing chaff, the works of Goethe and Schiller were discussed. Sometimes a quick lesson in Mennonite History was delivered on the stubble fields. The lesson might just as easily have been given in the barn of the teacher's residence, for besides stooking hay and pitching sheaves, Mr. Schaefer sought to augment his income by keeping a cow and raising chickens in the barnyard.

He taught in Gnadenthal for fifteen years and might have continued indefinitely, had not urgent and repeated appeals made to him by the Board of Directors of the MCI convinced him that his services were needed in that institution. The family moved to Gretna in 1943. In 1948 Mr. Schaefer succeeded G. H. Peters as principal of the M.C.I. He resigned from the position in 1967. After a brief illness, he died on June 8, 1969, at the age of seventy.

Margaretha Schaefer

Margaretha Schaefer, nee Wiebe, dedicated her life to her husband, her family, her community. She



Paul J. Schaefer family. Mr. and Mrs. Schaefer, Irma and Lily, Wilfred and Theodore.

had given up a promising teaching career in Russia when she gave her hand in marriage to P. J. Schaefer.

Mrs. Schaefer was a woman of many talents. She was well-educated, artistic, musical, and had brought with her the skills she acquired in her successful teaching years. She is remembered for the excellent Christmas concerts for which Gnadenthal became known. Somehow she created costumes with gauzy angels' wings out of mere nothings and goosefeathers, and innovated Christmas scenarios that delighted the viewers and warmed the hearts of the staunchest Scrooges in the audience. Although Mr. Schaefer appreciated good music and instilled in his pupils a love for classical music, he could not sing. Mrs. Schaefer put her musical talent to use, and met one of the most urgent requirements of Gnadenthal: the teaching of singing. She invited some of the older girls from school into her home and taught them songs that she had selected. Once they had mastered the melody, they would hurry back to school and teach the song by rote to Mr. Schaefer's class — before they forgot the tune. This "relay" teaching proved quite satisfactory, since at that time no one read notes in the village school. Annie Ediger and Nettie Sawatzky were the first two girls to participate in the rote teaching.

The Schaefer family were the only family who owned a piano. Mrs. Schaefer used it for her own personal enjoyment and for private instruction to a few stu-

dents. She also taught music notation. Her first and foremost student, Armin Sawatzky, speaks in appreciation of Mrs. Schaefer when he says: ". . . musically and culturally, Mrs. Schaefer was far ahead of the Gnadenthal of that time. She was therefore often misunderstood. Many of her fine endeavours met with opposition. Such was the case when her presentation of Schiller's *Das Lied von der Glocke* with some young people was denounced as not being 'of the Holy Ghost'."

Margaretha Schaefer was also an accomplished seamstress. The dresses of velvet and lace, that her little daughters wore, were the envy of all Gnadenthal girls. In spite of the pressure that must have been hers, she offered a complete sewing course to four girls: Nettie Sawatzky, Tina Bueckert, Helen Klassen (Blumenort) and Tina Bueckert (Schönwiese). The course lasted two months and offered many aspects of the art of sewing, from lingerie to dresses and suits, from design and cutting of patterns to "Handarbeit" (embroidery).



Mr. and Mrs. Schaefer with Lily and Irma wearing pretty dresses made by Mrs. Schaefer.

Mrs. Schaefer died on March 19, 1948, leaving behind her husband, her daughters, and her teenage sons. She was laid to rest in the cemetery in Gretna.

School Buildings

In 1932 there were sixteen grade one students. This forced the school trustees to plan actively for a second classroom. A temporary solution was found by locating the primary grades in the old school building, half of which served as the teacher's residence.

The idea of building a two-room school had occupied the minds of the trustees for some time. Meetings with the rate-payers, however, failed to give

Department of Education
Winnipeg
Man.

June 22, '38
Plum Coulee
Man.
RECEIVED
JUN 27
DEPT. OF EDUC.

Dear Sir:-

at a meeting held by the rate payers
the 10th day of June 1938 A.D. at the
Wells school house. A Motion was made by
A. P. Bueckert to change the name of
the school district; Wells to
Gnadenthal. Sec. by John J. Schellenberg
all the rate payers in favor of the
Motion Carried.

As the name of our village is
Gnadenthal it is kind of a problem for
some people to find our school because
the most of the time it is called Wells.
and as we are going to build a new
school we thought it would be a fine
time to change the name; therefore we
ask the Department to favor this motion

Henry Kuhl
Sec.

2nd July, 1938.

Mr. Henry Kuhl
Secretary-Treasurer
Gnadenthal S.D. No. 1998
Plum Coulee, Manitoba

Dear Sir, re Gnadenthal S.D. No. 1998 (formerly Wells)

Replying to your favor of the 22nd ultimo, the
Minister has agreed to the change of name proposed and the
resolution is being passed making the corporate name of your
district read as follows: "The School District of Gnadenthal
Number 1998".

Yours truly,

Deputy Minister.

RF/B

Wells School District was renamed Gnadenthal School District
in 1938.

them the necessary support. There were a few for
whom education was not a priority, while others saw
the financial burden as a risk. The board, consisting
at that time of Mr. Abram P. Bueckert, Mr. Henry

Kuhl, Sr., and Mr. John J. Janzen, persevered, and in
spite of the objections raised by those opposed to the
scheme, the Department of Education gave its ap-
proval to construct the two-room school that was
existent up to 1982. Much of the labour was donated,
and the civic-minded supporters of the school-base-
ment project donated the cement for a full basement.
This basement provided the community with a meet-
ing place for local functions for many years. The
building was a modern one and boasted a forced air
coal-burning furnace which heated the two new
classrooms. It was named Wells School District No.
1998.

In 1938 the name "Wells School District" be-
came an issue for some of the residents who preferred
to have the school district carry the name of the
village. The subject was discussed at a rate-payers'
meeting. A decision was made to ask the Department
of Education to change the name to Gnadenthal
School. Mr. Henry Kuhl wrote the letter and received
the consent of the Minister of Education on July 2,
1938. With the new name and the new school build-
ing, a new era began in the history of the school and
the community.

Teachers During the Schaefer Era

Miss Nettie Kroeker from Winkler was hired in
1923 to teach grades 1-3. Miss Kroeker brought to
Gnadenthal an enthusiasm for teaching and a love for
children. She is remembered for her exuberance,
lively singing, and emphasis on Bible stories. She
taught in Gnadenthal for two years.

Mr. Armin Sawatzky was hired in 1934 to teach
grades 1-4. He was Gnadenthal's first 'home grown'
teacher; a former student of Mr. Schaefer and an
accomplished musician. It was agreed between the
two teachers that Mr. Sawatzky would teach music to
grades 4 to 10, while Mr. Schaefer would teach the
primary grades. This proved to be a productive ar-
rangement.



Aganetha Kroeker, teacher
1932-1934.



Grade 1-4 with Aganetha Kroeker as teacher (centre front).

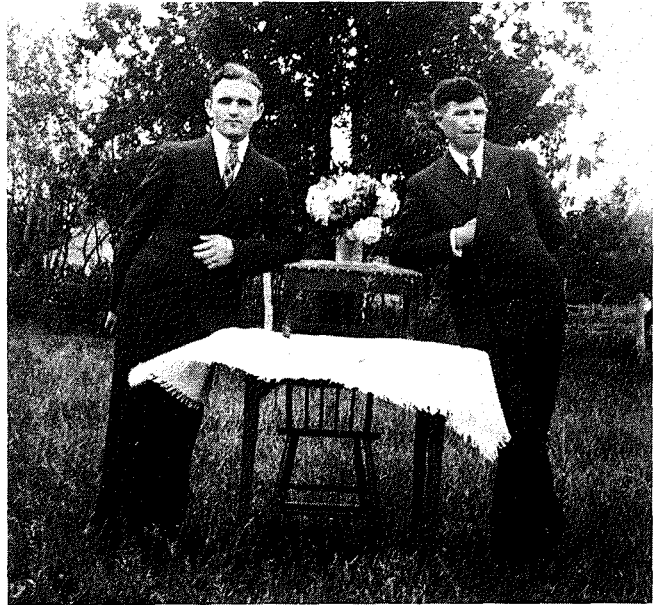
Mr. Sawatzky taught music theory, history and appreciation. He brought new life to classroom singing: an appreciation for good vocal sound, harmony singing, and sight reading. Classroom singing became an event to look forward to.



Grade 1-8 class, 1930s, with teachers Paul J. Schaefer (far left front) and Armin Sawatzky (right front).

As well, Mr. Sawatzky infused a new sense of music into the community. He was recognized as a violinist of stature in the larger Mennonite circles. His services as a private instructor of the violin were in high demand. Some students benefited socially from this instruction, while a few continued and attained professional status. Mr. Sawatzky also conducted the church choir. Music with notes, rather than with "Ziffern",¹ was used. The choir gained a new perspective on choral sound and a taste for fine music. Even though Mr. Sawatzky taught in Gnadenenthal for only four years, his influence is still evident.

Armin Sawatzky was replaced by Mr. Jacob Toews, who continued the practice of exchanging periods for music instruction in the upper grades. Mr. Toews came to Gnadenenthal in the fall of 1938. He taught in the old school building for a few weeks before the move into the two-room school was made. In commenting about his time of teaching in Gnadenenthal, Mr. Toews says that he was impressed with



Armin Sawatzky and Paul J. Schaefer posing for the camera.

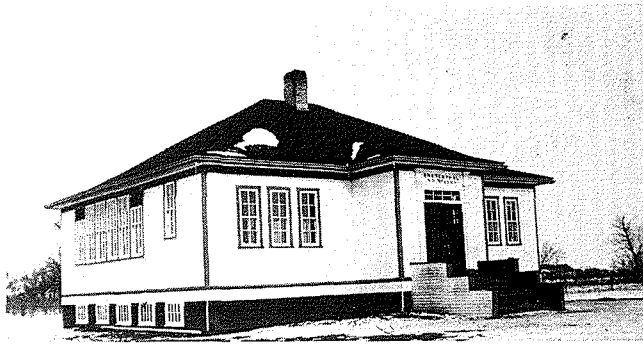


Class picture taken on a spring outing with Armin Sawatzky.



Class on a winter outing, 1930s.

the "good, solid foundation for musical instruction and participation that had been laid in the school and in the community." Mr. Toews continued in that tradition. The school choir participated successfully



New two-room school in Gnadenenthal, 1938.



Mr. Jacob Toews with trophy from music festival — early 1940s.



Photographs of classes in the early 1940s with Jacob Toews and Paul J. Schaefer as teachers.



Gerhard Ens, teacher 1942-1943.

in the music festivals held in Altona and Winkler. The strong competition with the Reinland school choir led by Mr. Brandt added greatly to the excitement of the competitions.



Mr. and Mrs. George Labun — residents in the 1940s. Mrs. Labun taught Grade 1-4 in 1943 to complete the year when Gerhard Ens had to leave.

After Jacob Toews left in 1943, Gerhard Ens Jr., from Reinland, who had taken grade nine and ten in Gnadenthal from Mr. Schaefer, taught the primary grades. Unfortunately these were years of war, and being of draft age, Gerhard Ens was forced by the draft board to stop his teaching assignment in mid-term. Because Mr. Ens was a conscientious objector, he was given a different assignment. Mrs. George Labun taught the primary grades for the remainder of that school year.

At this time Mr. Schaefer consented to join the staff of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna.

End of the Schaefer Era

Mr. Schaefer was a dominant influence in the village of Gnadenthal. His presence was felt everywhere. He fostered good relationships, helped the churches to work together, participated in Sunday School, promoted the village library, assisted in organizing 4-H clubs, gave much time and energy to Jugendverein and Literarischer Verein, influenced parents to send their children to other schools for further studies, and became a minister in the church. It will be difficult to find another village from which emanated as many teachers — Mr. Schaefer modeled teaching behavior that inspired all who came in contact with him. While he maintained this hectic pace, he took correspondence courses and attended summer school, until he completed a Bachelor of Arts degree.

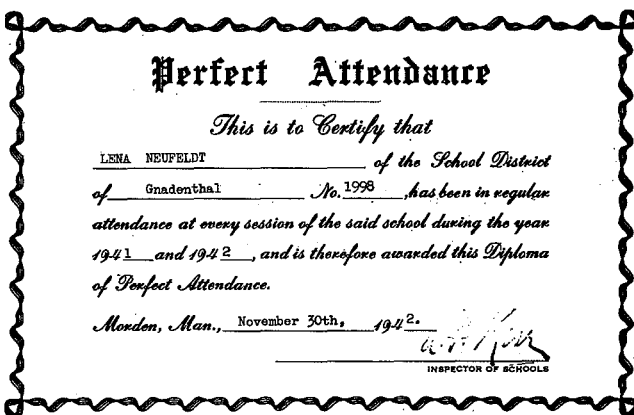
The legacy Mr. Schaefer left to Gnadenthal is overwhelming in terms of immediate and long-term benefits. Residents, especially the school trustees, were acutely aware that the transition to another principal would be difficult. The community had become used to services well beyond the call of duty. As well, the mentality of the residents had been shaped for fifteen years by a highly respected man.

The school trustees took their task seriously. They searched diligently for a teacher of stature who would have a chance to live up to Gnadenthal's expectations. They finally found a teacher of impeccable reputation in Mr. David Heidebrecht.

Mr. David Heidebrecht, 1943-1946

Mr. Heidebrecht completed eleven years of distinguished teaching service in Grunthal, Manitoba. He was acclaimed for his scholarly efforts, his emphasis on excellence, and, above all, his dedication to German and Religion. The Grunthal community was deeply appreciative of his contributions and was reluctant to release him. He seemed to be a logical choice for Gnadenthal.

Unfortunately, Gnadenthal's unrealistic expectations and Mr. Heidebrecht's preconceived ideas of changes created a tense atmosphere. An attitude of



School was an exciting place to be. A perfect attendance certificate was awarded to Helen Neufeld in 1942.



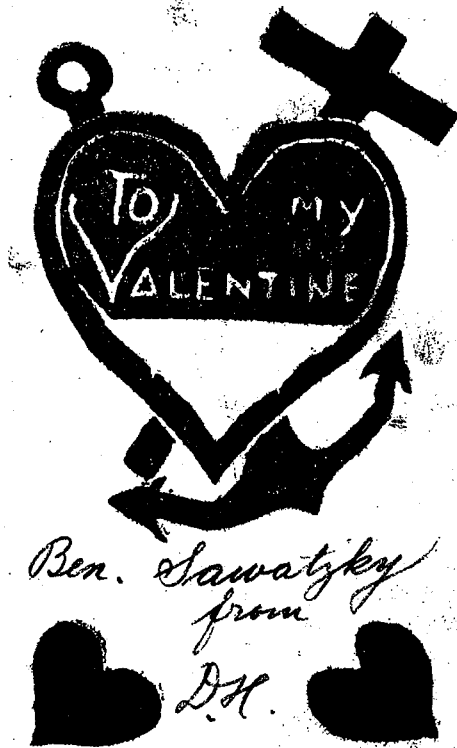
Mr. and Mrs. David P. Heidebrecht, teacher 1943-1946.



Grade 5-8, D. P. Heidebrecht teacher.



Grade 5-10, 1947.



Hand-made Valentine card — made by D. P. Heidebrecht for each student in his class.

flexibility and a willingness to compromise seems to have been lacking on both sides. As a result, the community's relationship with the principal remained strained.

In spite of this tension, Mr. Heidebrecht maintained a learning atmosphere in the classroom and expected a high level of performance from his students. His colleagues teaching the primary grades were Katie Janzen (1943-1944), Anne Wiebe (1944-1945), and Susie Peters (1945-1949). Anne Wiebe, in reminiscing on her year in Gnadenthal, writes:

The children of Gnadenthal were very fortunate in being able to speak three languages: Plattdeutsch, German and English. It is very natural, therefore, that the carry-over from one language to another was rarely idiomatic, but rather a literal translation. As I overheard the children chattering to each other, I occasionally jotted down some amusing expressions. Examples: "Come once here. I will say you something." "That laughs me so much." "That came me so funny for." "My sweat is all over



Katie Janzen, teacher
1943-1944.



Anne Wiebe, teacher 1944-1945.

me." "Now I must pull myself out once." (I must remove my overcoat, or I must undress.) "We pulled ourselves on." (We dressed ourselves.) "We baked out our kitchen." (We papered the kitchen.) "We all had Mary Penner fast." "You don't ken her anyways." (know her) "I tore me a tooth out." "My nase was very bleeding." (nose) "This is the place where the boy had tooken it off." (This is the place where the boy had photographed it.) "May I carry the waste-basket paper around?" "He bound it to." (Er hatte es verbunden, oder zuge-

bunden.) "That goes good." (Das geht gut.) "We baked it on." (angeklebt) "We laughed and laughed till the tranes ran down our wangs." (Wir lachten bis die Tränen über unsere Wangen liefen.)

New Immigrants — 1948

The early post-war years were years of change in the world. War-torn Europe found itself unable to cope with the thousands of refugees and displaced persons who had lost their homes during the war, and Canada again opened its doors to unfortunate immigrants who had lost their homeland. Many Gna-



Mrs. Elizabeth Nickel with her daughters Helen, Tina, and young son John — an immigrant family who found a temporary home in Gnadenthal.

denthal residents sponsored relatives in Europe, who, after fleeing from their devastated villages in Russia, were now migrants, seeking a new home in a new country, away from revolution and famine. Eventually great numbers of them were able to come to Canada. Usually families who sponsored immigrants also housed them in their own often crowded quarters. Many immigrant children had to be provided with an opportunity to attend school. The year 1948-49 saw the walls of the classrooms in Gnadenthal bursting at the seams. Since the school board recognized that non-English speaking children required more than average teacher time, another classroom was opened in the basement of the school.

The character of the immigrant children was no doubt shaped by the first school in Canada with which they came in contact. The change of circumstances, the cultural differences, the demands of the village society to conform to a norm which was totally new and often alien to them, presented difficulties for the teachers and for the children. These were up-rooted young individuals, "Flüchtlings-

kinder", who had undergone the horror of the Russian experience, and after an agonizing trek, had reached Germany, where home was a refugee camp. After the uncertainties of the life they had experienced, they appreciated the peace and serenity of Gnadenthal. At the same time the secluded village seemed strange to them in its orderliness and primness. Gone were the carefree years of roaming around at play with fellow inhabitants of the camp. The staid, conservative village stood by with gaping mouth as the newcomers spun endless yarns of experiences wild and romantic, sometimes garnished and spiced beyond credibility. But the Canadian era of their lives had begun. The school was the major influence in their new surroundings, and they adapted to it in a remarkably short time. They were diligent and interested, if at times somewhat high-strung.

The task of providing a proper learning atmosphere for this diverse group of children fell on principal Susie Peters, and teachers George and Helene Neufeld. Particular recognition is due Susie Peters. Her unlimited optimism and boundless energy established an environment in which the children thrived. Her interests and influence extended



Susie Peters, teacher
1945-1949.



Grade 1-10, teacher Susie Peters.



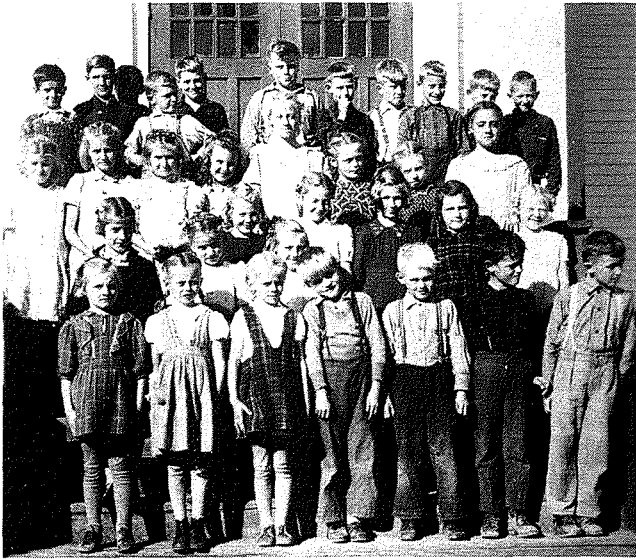
Grade 10 class, 1950.



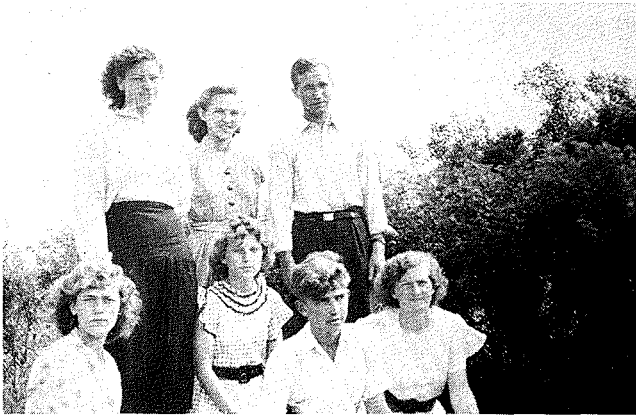
Grade 10, 1951. Clara Peters, Jim Sawatzky, Rita Klassen, Louise Peters, Ruth Peters, Susan Peters.

throughout the community. She is remembered by many people as the organizer and conductor of a girls' choir called "Himmelschlüsselchen". This group became a favourite attraction at conferences and special events. It was one of many extra-curricular activities engaged in by Susie Peters.

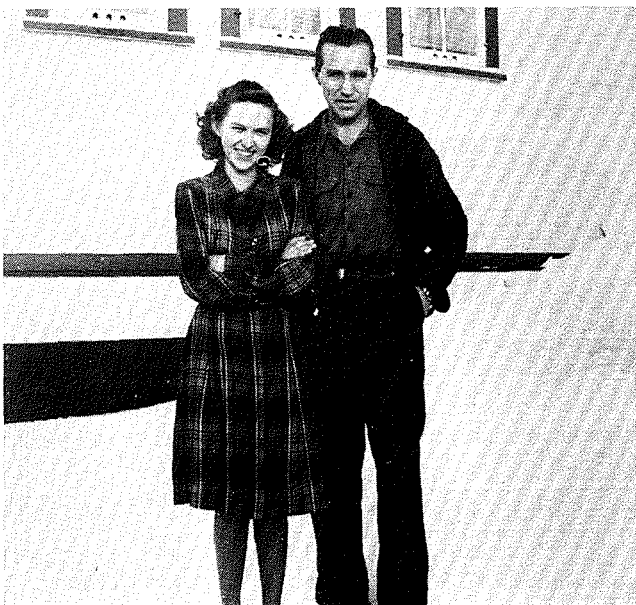
George and Helene Neufeld taught in Gnadenthal at the right time. George Neufeld's sense of humour, his expert readings of Fritz Reuter² and his knack for acrobatics caught the imagination of the children. Helene (Sawatzky) Neufeld was recognized for her teaching efficiency, creativity, and particularly for her musical instruction. She had much success with her school choir. Of note is the fact that she had an ARCT diploma in piano performance. This became a true asset to Gnadenthal, because a number of students were able to get first-rate instruction in the village. Gnadenthal school thrived in spite of the heavy enrollment. Teachers like Susie Peters and George and Helene Neufeld succeeded in making education an experience of new, vital perspectives and interests. Their attempts to create in their students an awareness of greater opportunities and ad-



Helene Neufeld's class, 1947.



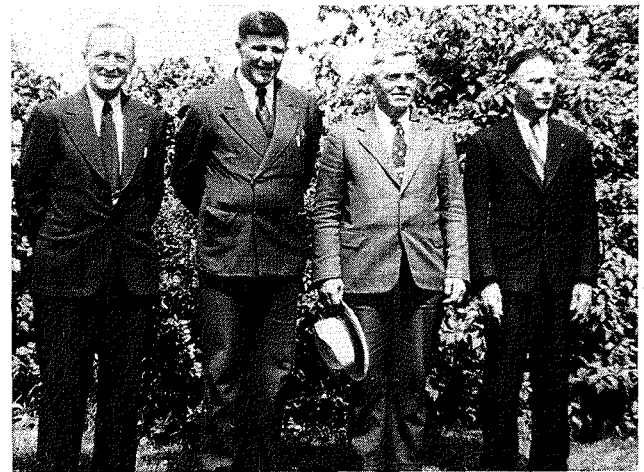
Grade 10 students, 1948-1949 with teachers Susie Peters, Helene and George Neufeld.



Helene and George Neufeld, teachers 1947-1950.



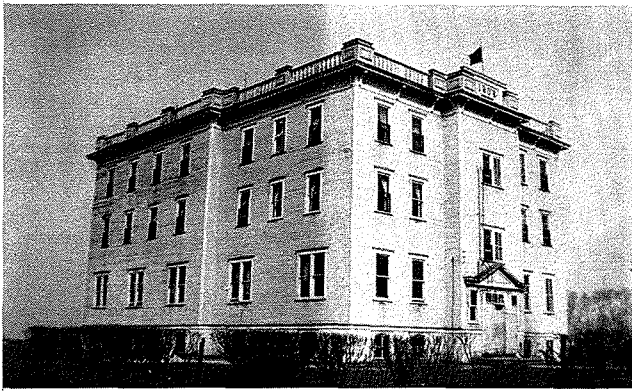
Award winning — festival class choir — with teacher Helene Neufeld. Grades I-III girls' choir trophy winners at Winkler Festival, May 1950. Left to right, back row: Annie Remple, Martha Klassen, Mrs. Helene Neufeld, Annie Friesen, Erica Sawatzky, Frieda Krahn, Elsie Peters, Mary Ellen Neufeld, Mary Letkeman. Front row: Sara Peters, Pauline Peters, Katie Buhler, Irene Sawatzky, Erna Peters, Katie Krahn, Johanna Sawatzky, Margaret Letkeman, Marlene Penner, Lena Letkeman.



Mennonite Collegiate Institute (Gretna) teachers, 1947. Left to right: J. Esau, Paul J. Schaefer, Gerhard Peters, Jake Siemens.

vancement in their future lives is appreciated in retrospect by those who were once their pupils.

Parents in Gnadenthal placed great value on education. When economic conditions improved in the 1940s, large numbers of students continued their education in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute or the Winkler Collegiate Institute. University became a viable option since it opened the door to many professions. The somewhat closed, circumspect atmosphere of Gnadenthal changed. This change can be seen as necessary and welcome in the light of technological advancement throughout the Western World, according to the perception of the teachers from the time of Mr. Schaefer to the present.



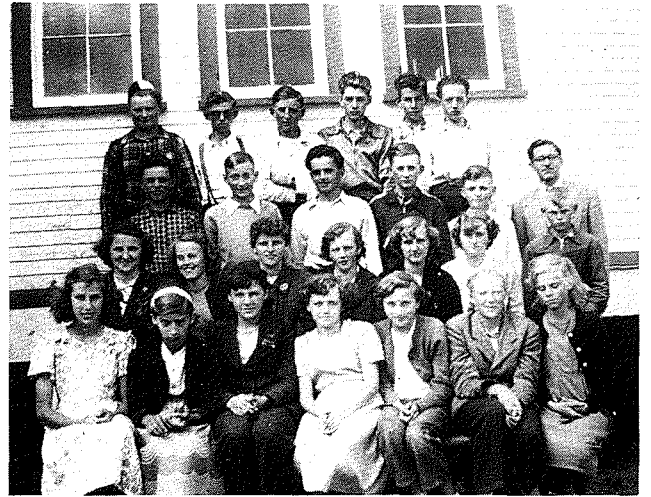
Menonite Collegiate Institute school building, 1940s.



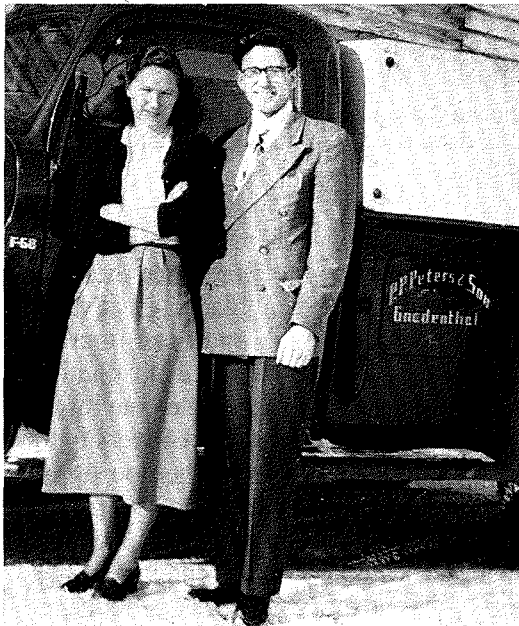
Menonite Collegiate Institute students, 1949, Grade 11. Gnadenenthal students in front row: far left — Betty Teichroeb, far right — Helen Peters.

Teachers and Students 1946-1980

Mr. John M. Giesbrecht,
teacher 1946-1947.



Grade 6-10, 1952, with teacher William Schroeder.



Mr. and Mrs. William Schroeder, teacher 1949-1953.



Class picture taken in 1953.



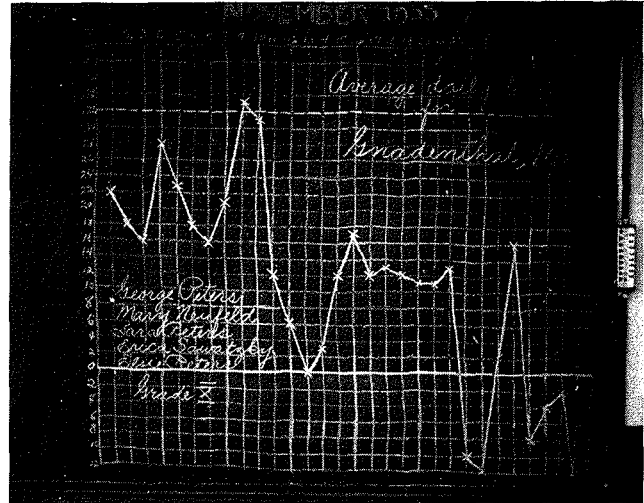
Anne Dueck, teacher 1950-1952. Elizabeth Dueck, teacher 1952-1954.



Grade 5-10, 1955. Henry G. Ens, teacher.



Grade 1-4, 1954.



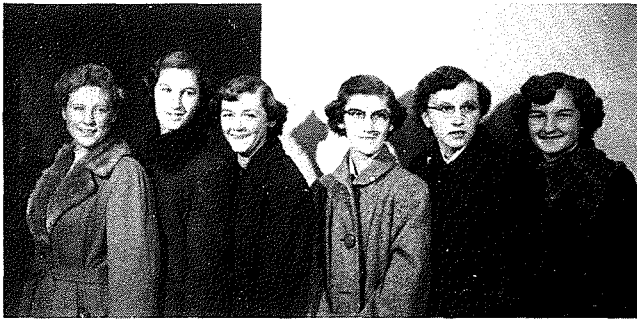
Evidence of a science project, Grade 10. November was cold that year!



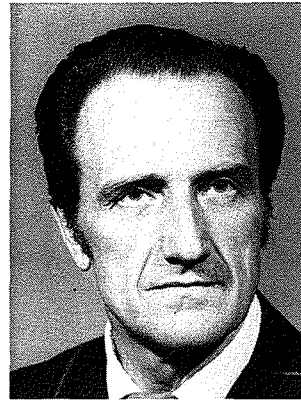
Henry G. Ens, teacher 1954-1958.



On a Science hike, 1953. Jackie Buhler, Harold Sawatzky, Ted Klassen, Peter Peters, George Friesen. How many tadpoles will a jar hold?



Good friends! 1955.



Henry Dick, teacher
1952-1953.



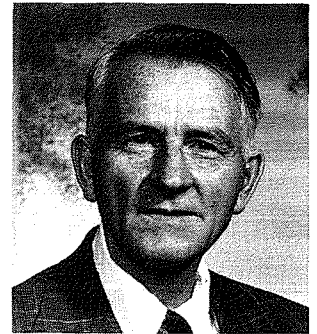
Elise (Dyck) Epp, teacher
1954-1956.



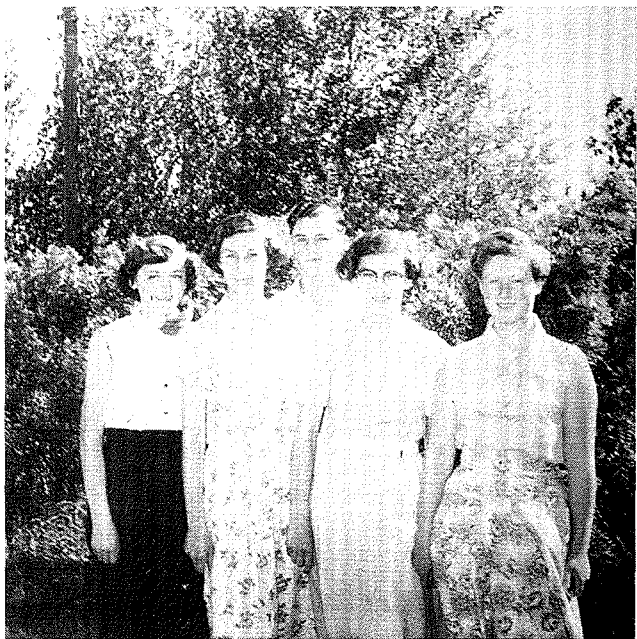
Grade 6-10, 1956.



Phyllis (Hooge) Wiebe,
teacher 1956-1958.



Alfred Kroeker, teacher
1959-1960.



Grade 10 class, 1956. Left to right: Sara Peters, Erica Sawatzky, George Peters, Elsie Peters, Mary E. Neufeld.



Irvin Penner, teacher,
1959-60.



Anne Thiessen, teacher
1959-1961.



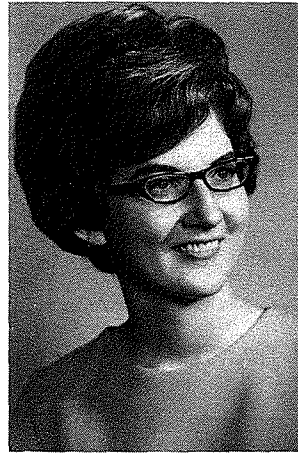
Anne Thiessen with her primary class, 1961.



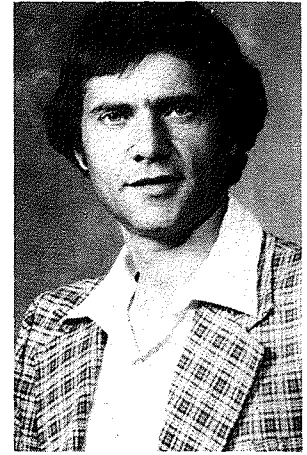
George Hildebrand, teacher 1960-1964.



Ted Klassen — teacher 1963-65.



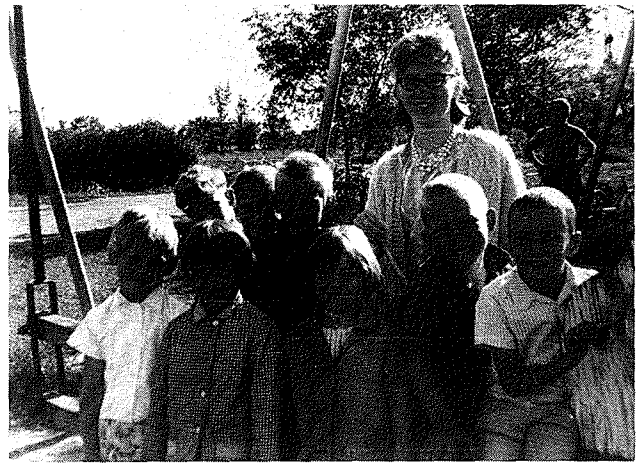
Helen Klassen, teacher 1964-1965.



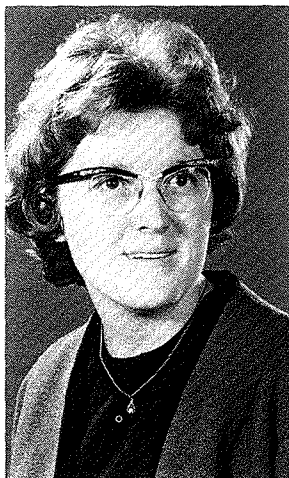
Ken Doell, teacher 1967-1969.



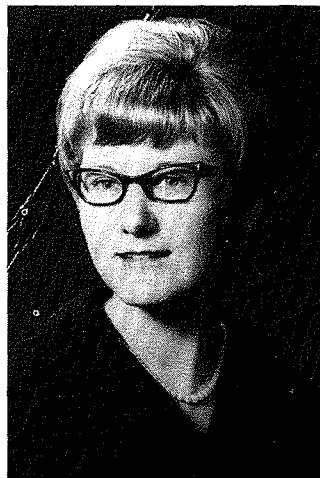
George Hildebrand sharing a watermelon and "Rollkuchen" treat with his class.



Helen Klassen and her students, 1965.



Anne Schmidt, teacher 1961-1964.



Mary Klassen, teacher 1964-1968.



Doreen Enns, teacher 1965-1967.



Esther Janzen, teacher 1967-1972.



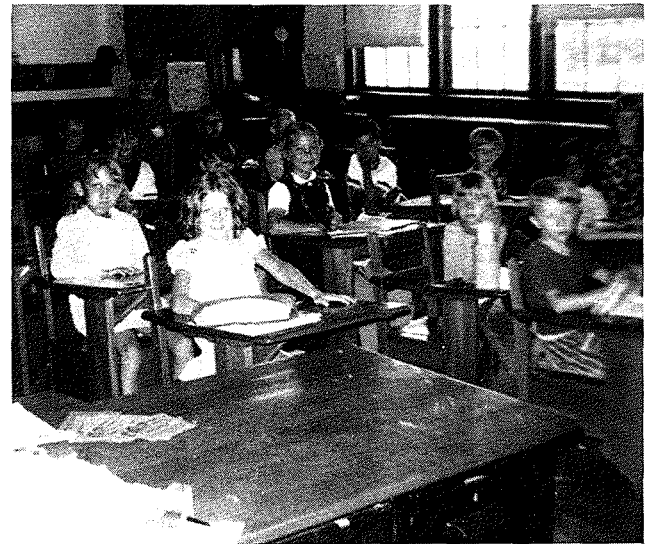
Gordon Wiebe with his wife June, and children Trevor and Terry.



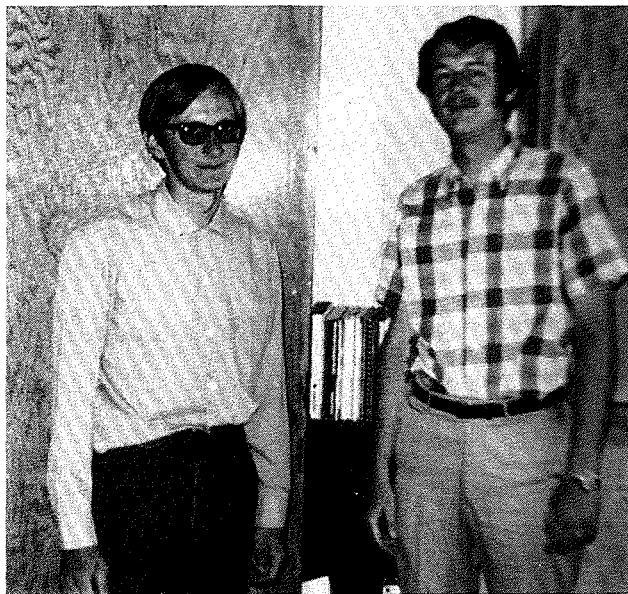
John J. Arndt, teacher 1965-1968.



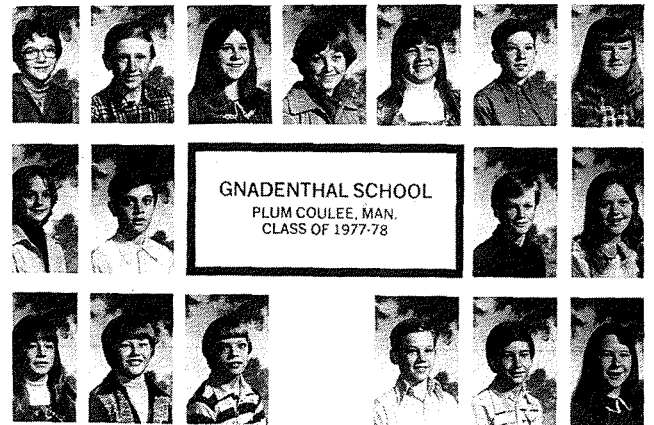
Iris Hiebert, teacher 1972-1973.



Grade 1-3 with teacher Iris Hiebert, 1973.



John Derksen, teacher 1971-1975, with colleague Gordon Wiebe, 1968-1973.



GNADENTHAL SCHOOL
PLUM COULEE, MAN.
CLASS OF 1977-78

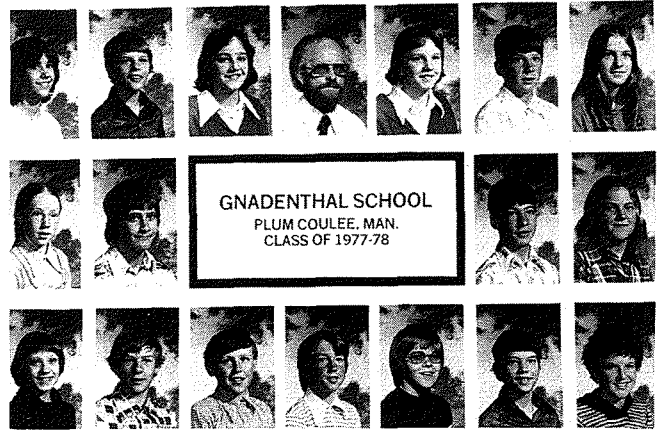
Grade 4 and 5 class of 1977-1978 with teacher Meg Wiebe (top centre).



Martha (Thiessen) Hoepfner, teacher 1976-1978.



Edwin Hoepfner, teacher 1974-1975.



Grade 7 and 8 class of 1977-1978 with teacher Fred Peters (top centre).



Rita Mathies, teacher 1973-1976.



Karen Kuhl, teacher 1975-1977.



Carol Klassen, teacher 1979-.



Fred Peters, teacher 1976-1980, with wife Helen and children Ian, Juanita and Corey. A well-known musical group — "Abram's Children".

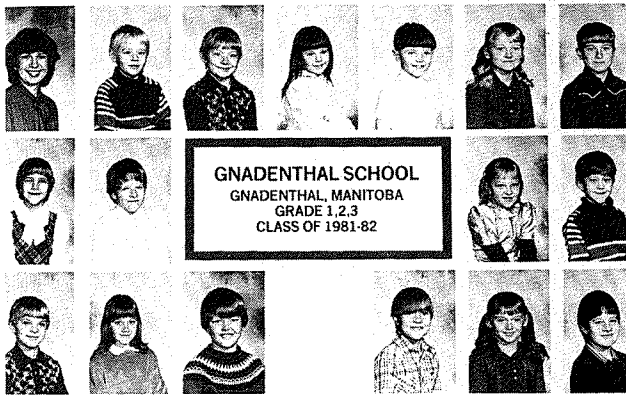


Grade 4 and 5 class, 1980, with teacher Carol Klassen.

Judy Froese, teacher
1978-.



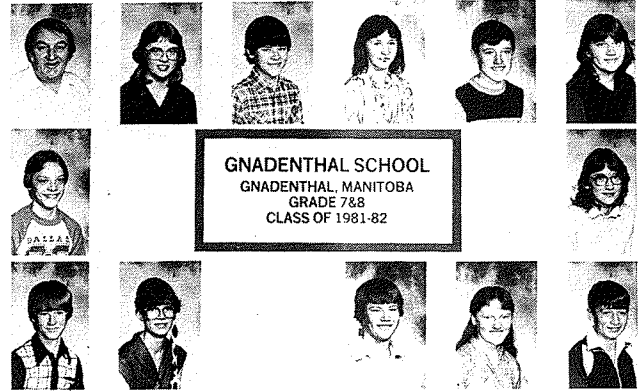
Grade 1-3 class of 1979-1980, with teacher Judy Froese.



Grade 1-3, 1982, with teacher Judy Froese.



Grade 4-6, 1982, with teacher Carol Klassen.



Grade 7-8, 1982, with teacher Albert Schulz.

Mr. Albert Schulz, teacher
1980-.



Grade 7 and 8 class of 1979-1980, with teacher Albert Schulz.



Good friends! 1965. Tina Teichroeb, Brenda Neufeld, Justina Bueckert, Johnny Fehr, Gordon Martens, Terry Wiebe.

Picnics and Outings

School was more than a tedium of hard work in the classroom from day to day. There were special occasions that became part of the tradition that every school has. One of these traditions was the spring outing to a place called "Peters' Creek" (Petasch Leajt). It was located approximately 2½ miles due west of the village. As soon as the warm spring winds had caressed the cold earth back to life, and the balmy sunshine in the great outdoors beckoned luringly to the caged "slaves" inside the classrooms, there was always the hope that this might be the day when the teacher would decide that it was warm enough to go to the creek for the afternoon. When the day arrived, as it eventually did, children took their lunches and the baseball and bat, and set out for the walk to the pasture and the creek. Here would follow a baseball game, and then a swim. Since swimming trunks were a scarce commodity, the boys would go separately, while the girls played games among themselves. After a time they would change activities, and "a good time was had by all". These



Girls' Baseball Team, 1952. Back: Katherine Friesen, Tina Peters, Ruth Sawatzky. Middle: Helen Friesen, Helen Sawatzky, Nettie Peters. Front: Sara Peters, Erica Sawatzky, Hilda Peters, Marianne Sawatzky.



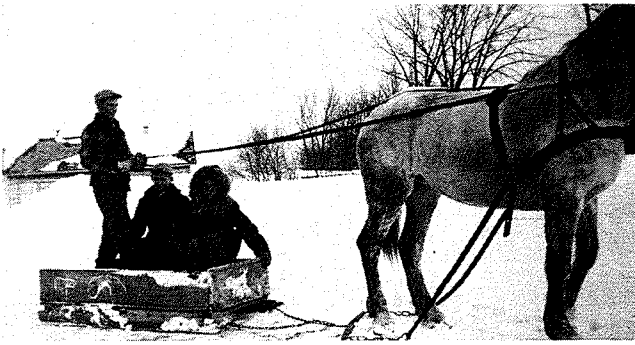
Eating lunch during the school picnic and field day in 1948 — a community affair.



Skating Enjoyment Group: Mary E. Neufeld, Martha Klassen, Marianne Sawatzky, Pauline Peters, Johanna Sawatzky, Helen Sawatzky, Sara Peters, Marlene Penner, Irene Sawatzky.



Preparations for a refreshment booth at a picnic around 1950s — Mr. George J. Sawatzky in charge.



A convenient ride home from school on a stormy day — Ben Krahn, Jake Sawatzky and Albert Friesen.



Convenient transportation to a ball game at Blumenort — H. G. Ens driving John Peters' half ton.



Ready! Set! Go! We're off to another race!



Recess snow frolics, 1947.



Playground fun — 1953.

outing, small and insignificant as they may seem, were important highlights for everyone.

In later, more affluent years, it became customary to have community school picnics, or field days, in which the larger community participated. These community picnics would begin with track and field events. Every age group had the opportunity to compete with their peers. Prizes were awarded. The noon lunch was eaten communally. All the food was shared in good picnic style on the grassy ground of the pasture where the event happened to be held. The afternoons were spent in baseball competitions and fun games. For the children, one of the unique attractions of the day was riding down to the site on the back of an open truck.

Christmas Concerts

As in most rural schools, the Christmas concert was the highlight of the year. It made life at school more interesting, and was therefore anticipated by young and old. That there could be a Christmas without a concert was inconceivable. The Gnadenthal tradition of holding the school concert on Christmas Eve was upheld for many years. Another tradition was that the greater part of it be in German.

December was a busy month. Term exams were required in all subjects. Plays and recitations had to be selected, and songs chosen. Doubtless it was no easy matter to come up with material for a two-hour Christmas concert without repeating anything that had been done recently. The time spent at rehearsing and memorizing lines was a welcome relief from other more tedious school activities, although some of the more "hard-headed" students did not always manage to learn their parts by memory, much to the embarrassment of their parents and teachers.

When at last the morning of the twenty-fourth of December did come around, it seemed the day would never end. Finally, at dusk, students and parents walked through the crisp, crunchy snow, and entered

CHRISTMAS PROGRAM

Dec. 20, 1978

1. Processional - Stille Nacht
- God's Choir in the Sky
2. Opening
3. Willkommen Gedicht - Rm. 2
4. Rm. 1 - Welchen Jubel
- O Heiliges Kind
- Psalm 23
5. Rm. 2 - Isn't the Love of Jesus
- Star of the East
- Message of the Candles
6. Rm. 3 - (play) Lost and Found
7. Rm. 1 - O fest aller heiligen Feste
- Das Wort Weihnachten
8. Rm. 1 & 2 girls - Away in a Manger
9. Rm. 2 - Das Schoenste Kleid
10. Congregational Singing
11. Rm. 3 - (play) German Play
12. Rm. 1 - Classroom Favorites
- He is Life
- Everybody Ought to Know
- Lasst die Herzen
- Choral Speaking
- Glockenspiel

Christmas concerts were always a highlight in the school year.

Weihnachtswunsch

1. Das Weihnachtsfest hat uns gebracht
Ein holdes Kindelein
Das arme Sünder selig macht
Von Sündeschuld und Pein.
2. Die Engel freuen sich so sehr
Und bringen GOTT dem Herrn
In ihren Lobgesange Ehr
Auch ich lob ihm so gern
3. O Eltern drückt auch ihr erfreut
Das Jesu Kind an's Herz
Dann geht es durch die Lebenszeit
So selig himmelwärts

Learning special Christmas recitations (Weihnachts Wunsch) was an important tradition in Mennonite homes.

13. Rm. 2 - Classroom Favorites
- Family of God
- Seek and Ye Shall Find
- Jesus My Saviour
- Choral Speaking - Psalm 150
14. Rm. 1 - Weihnachtsgedicht
- Lieber Heiland
15. Rm. 3 - Once in Royal David's City
- There's a Song in the Air
- Dear Little Stranger
16. Rm. 2 & 3 - Love is Flowing Like
a River
17. Rm. 3 - Why do We Have Christmas
18. Freiwilliges
19. Closing

O Du Froeliche

O du froeliche, O du selige
Gnaden bringende Weihnachtszeit

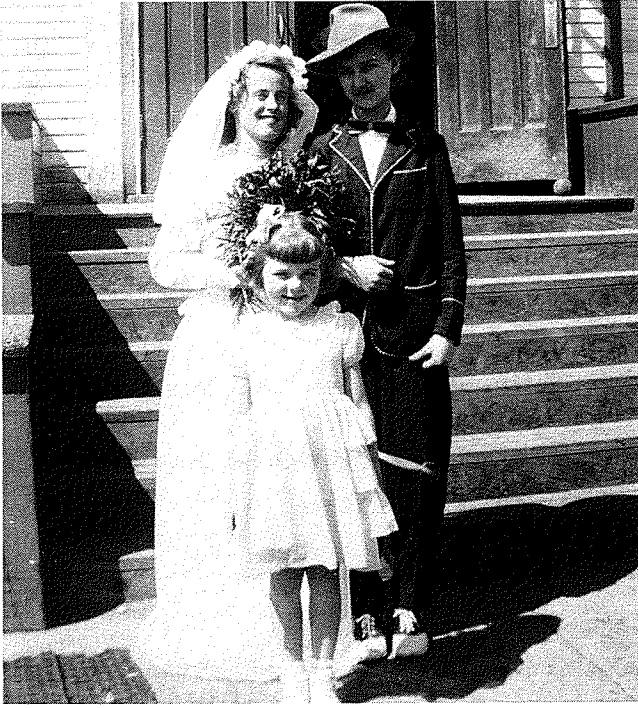
1. Welt ein verloren
Christ ist geboren
2. Christ ist erschienen
uns zu versuchen

Freue, freue dich O Christenheit.

the magically decorated school basement. The children's feelings of elation and anticipation, their joy as the gifts and the bags of goodies were handed out to each child at the end of the program can surely never be matched. Since every pupil had to be involved in a substantial way, the evening lasted more than two and a half hours, and necessitated an intermission. Today we marvel at the stamina and energy of the teachers who took the initiative to prepare the programs, and the children who memorized all the parts. In retrospect it seems miraculous that no fires were started by the candles on the tree.

Other Activities

Other activities at the school kept up a high interest level. There were the regular monthly Red Cross Programs, planned by a program committee of students, and presented for entertainment and fund-raising for the Red Cross — a very special cause in the war- and post-war years. There was also the annual Hallowe'en program, when the community was invited for an evening of fun, skits, plays, music, etc. The Valentine's Day party, a highlight of the cold



Time for drama! Helen Fehr and Nettie Peters, bride and groom with Dorothy Peters as flower girl, enacted at a Junior Red Cross program.

month of February, brightened the winter considerably. Other highlights were the Festival Competitions: choral speaking, spoken poetry, choral and solo singing, violin and piano performances. With the coming of CFAM radio in Altona, there was the challenge of preparing half-hour variety German radio programs that were tape-recorded by Mr. David K. Duerksen, the German inspector, and aired on Sundays at 6:30 P.M.

Spring Floods

Spring floods have always been a problem for the residents of Gnadenthal. Low lying land just south of the village was subject to spring flooding, and the school site chosen in 1924 was in this low area.

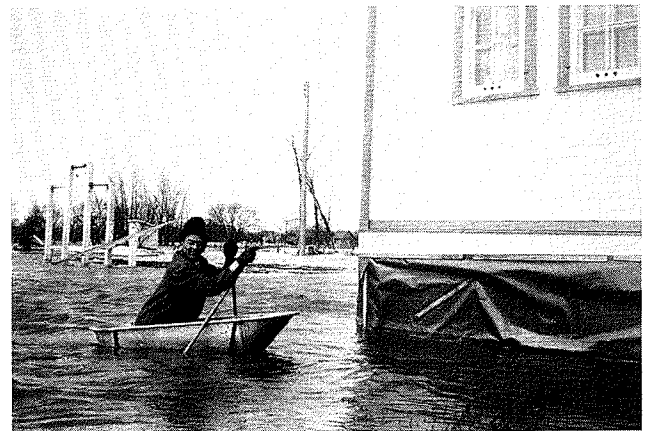
Flooding proved particularly disastrous when temperatures rose rapidly and the snow thawed quickly. At those times the waters rushed down the Pembina Hills across low lying fields, and consequently across the Gnadenthal school yard. Except for soil erosion, the damage was generally minimal.

However, flood days provided adventure for the school children. Occasionally the rushing water would surround the school and take everybody by surprise. Fathers would go to the school with a team of horses, back the wagon against the school steps, and load the children. The basement flooded occasionally. Fortunately the waters never reached the first floor of the building.

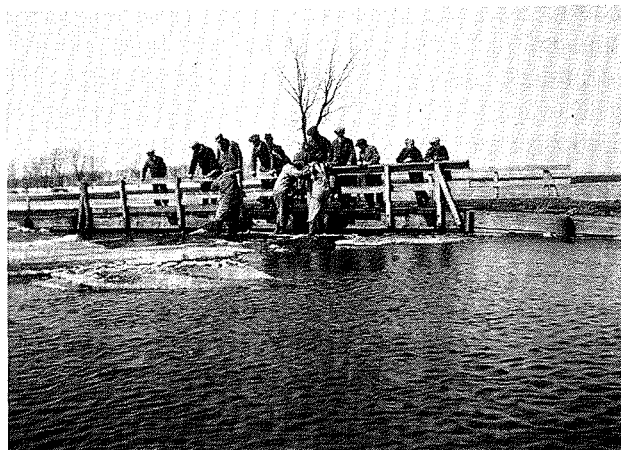
While students welcomed the diversion created



Agatha Thiessen, somewhat puzzled by all that water!



Portable bath tub makes a convenient boat for William Schroeder and George Neufeld.



Clearing ice from the bridge during a flash flood in the 1940s.



Hasty evacuation from the school during a flash flood in 1947.

by these waters, teachers generally did not. Enterprising youngsters tended to fill their boots, soil their clothes and catch colds. It was difficult to get students back into the classroom after a fifteen minute recess, particularly when the waters froze over and the students, having put on their skates, became oblivious to time and distance from school. The occasional teacher, like George Neufeld and Bill Schroeder, would share the exuberance of the students and brave the waters in a bath tub.

Observations

by Anne (Bueckert) Braun

Many changes have come to the Gnadenthal school in the hundred years since its beginning. They are reflected in the school life of today, and so fifty students currently enrolled in eight grades in the three classrooms were asked to write briefly on the things they experience, enjoy and learn in the present Gnadenthal school. The responses have been summarized, but an attempt was made to retain original vocabulary and expression:

In the Gnadenthal School, the first thing we do in the morning is to stand and sing **O Canada** and say the **Lord's Prayer**. The teacher then reads a portion of scripture to the older students, and a Bible story to the younger ones. Sometimes we have some current news, or we are allowed to read our story-books before our morning's work of Spelling, Reading, Maths, and English Language Arts.

We have a fifteen-minute recess morning and afternoon. At noon we get an hour and fifteen minutes to go home for lunch, but we always eat quickly and hurry back so that we can play as long as possible. Some children come on a bus and therefore cannot go home, so they bring their lunches with them and eat them at school.

In the afternoon we work at Social Studies, Science, German, Art and Music. The younger students do a lot of phonics. Some of the work is hard, but most of it is easy and fun to do.

When the weather permits, we play outside at recess. If it rains or storms we stay inside to play table-tennis or just sit around. Naturally, we prefer to go outside to play baseball or scrub in spring and summer, football in the fall, and hockey in winter. The little ones like to play ball-tag, skip rope, swing, or just run and play.

Some of the special things we enjoy are fieldtrips, picnics, and exchange-visits with other schools for a game of baseball, football or hockey, depending on the season of the year. Of course we like to come home the victors, but we don't even mind a loss. We have lots of fun anyway.

Fieldtrips are always very interesting and lots of fun. Last fall we visited the Stanley Park and other areas in the Morden hills, and gathered lots of beautiful leaves. The primary classes went to visit the Hutterite Colony about one and a half miles north to see the pigs, the school, and the geese. All of us went to Winnipeg one of the last days in June to swim in the Pan Am Pool, shop a bit in the stores, eat at

MacDonald's (two times!), and sail on the Paddle Wheel Queen! That was fun! Most of us had never been on a big boat like that. There were three decks on the boat, and a store where we could buy things. Everything was so nice!

Picnic usually marks the end of the school year, and everybody is especially happy when the day turns out to be bright and sunny. Our parents come to the picnic to see us compete against other schools of the surrounding villages. They are as proud and happy as we are when we can "beat" the other school in baseball or win in the many races. The sack races are especially much fun. Some people even played baseball with an egg! There's always lots of fun, much laughter, and of course dirty children by the time the day is over. Picnics are so much fun. We like school and we like our teachers.

Essentially, the Gnadenthal children today are much like the children of yesteryear, although many changes are evident in school procedures and activities. To those who once attended here, the physical changes are most apparent. Having toured the classrooms, I sit down on one of the swings and nostalgically contemplate the things that have changed: the price of progress. From the swings, now in the front of the school, I see the forty-three year old building showing signs of wear, tear, and repair. As I enter the school house, I can see in my mind the many students of past times running down the wooden steps, in and out the double doors, or sitting on the board porch railing, relaxing in the sun. The porch, which had many cracks wide enough for pens, pencils, rulers and small articles to fall through (they could not be retrieved without removing a board), has now been replaced by solid cement steps. The double doors are no longer there, and one wide door leads through the first foyer for muddy boots into the centre hall. The pump on the right has been replaced by a sink with shiny water-taps where thirsty mouths are slaked by cool running water. The senior students' cloakroom now is the staff-room (with a telephone), and part of the junior cloakroom is the girls' washroom. The walls in the classrooms have cupboards and shelves for book storage and supplies. One sees pianos, paper cutters, a duplicating machine, volumes of encyclopedias — all articles conspicuously lacking in by-gone years. The hot air register between the wall of the two classrooms has been closed, and heat is radiated into the rooms from the outside walls underneath the windows. The rows of double desks with inkwells that spilled over every time someone sat down forcefully in front or behind the seat, have been replaced by single desks with drawers for books and school supplies. Of course,

with the invention of the ballpoint pens, the inkwells have become dispensable and obsolete.

The spindled railing to the basement has been closed with a wall. No longer will the Gnadenthal "Grads" look down on today's students as they perform one of the three-hour Christmas programs. Today Christmas programs and other functions are held at the church, and the "Schulfest" or Commencement has been dropped.

My steps echo hollowly as I look around in the basement. I notice that the coal chute, which served as an "illegal" entry into the school for many a delinquent Gnadenthaler, is gone, and two oil furnaces replace the one original coal furnace. The classroom set up hurriedly when immigrants of Europe "invaded" Gnadenthal in the late '40s is no longer there. A boys' washroom has been put in and a stairway leading up through an enclosed ramp to another classroom in an additional building outside. Mats are scattered on the floor, evidence of gymnastic activities. The walls and the floor show signs of water having passed through the basement almost annually during spring run-offs. A special pump today takes care more or less of the water still regularly seeping through the floor, but in spite of it, the atmosphere down here is damp and musty.

I leave the basement, and retrace my steps to the swings. A solid wooden fence in the south-west corner of the school yard encloses a skating rink in winter, while a shack nearby provides shelter for skaters and hockey players. The small red barn for Driedger's pony is gone, and a car garage has been built instead. The small outhouses on either side back of the school have become obsolete and are no longer there. The fence with the little turning gate east of the school is gone, as is the well-trodden sidewalk leading from the village street to the school. Cars parked in front of the school signify that teachers no longer make use of the teacherage on the school yard, nor live in the village and walk to school. They commute



Garden Valley Board of Trustees at the time of consolidation, 1973. Ben Schellenberg, second left, back row, and John Kuhl, centre.

from nearby towns, one as far as Morden — twenty miles away.

Many changes occurred during the '60s. A second school building was moved in to accommodate the children of families moving back from Mennonite colonies in Mexico. It is located where the swings used to be and is connected with the main building by an enclosed ramp. Changes in the administrative system also occurred during this decade. Local trustee boards having three or four members operated till the early '70s when school divisions were formed and **Garden Valley**³ came into existence. Gnadenthal had to change over to a unitary division with the result that it has today one representative on the large school board. It was during this period that many of the smaller schools closed their doors. The children were transferred either to town or into consolidated rural schools. This made buildings like the second school on the Gnadenthal yard available for use elsewhere. The grade nine and ten students had to go to the single high school of the division in Winkler. Parents were no longer responsible for transporting their children the now longer distances to and from school. Today, big buses travel from farmyard to farmyard, picking up the students. The grade one to eight children are dropped off at the Gnadenthal school, and the high school students are picked up and taken to Winkler. The reverse takes place at four o'clock.

The ravages of time and change will continue in our old alma mater. Those of us who have passed through the doors of learning in Gnadenthal have pleasant memories of those times — happy times, difficult times and playful times, with days of laughter and tears, words of praise and words of admonition. The past is indelibly imprinted on our being as we look back nostalgically to the days when we were young in Gnadenthal.



A meeting of school friends from the 1940s took place at the Centennial Celebrations . . . John Krause, Mary (Penner) Driedger, Peter Neufeld, Anne (Peters) Neufeld, Abe Schellenberg.



A school class of the 1950s meets at the Centennial Celebrations. Henry Hoepfner, Marianne (Sawatzky) Thiessen, Helen (Sawatzky) Froese, Ben Penner, Nettie Peters, Hilda (Peters) Schulz.

Gnadenthal School in the 1980s

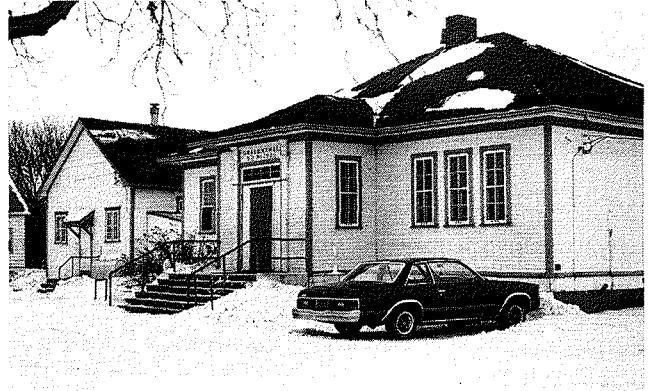
What is the future of the Gnadenthal School today?

Its outlook is bright indeed, judging by the number of school-aged children which is as high today as it has ever been. Community-minded parents have



Sod turning for new school building, October 14, 1981. Ben Schellenberg, trustee; Arnold Brown, MLA; Walter Siemens, board chairman.

resisted the pressure to amalgamate and bus their children to larger distant schools. They insist that the best place to educate their young children is at home, and they look on their local school with pride. They therefore reacted enthusiastically to the proposition of Garden Valley to build a new school, with three classrooms in Gnadenthal to replace the older, outdated two-room school house and the auxiliary building beside it. The pleasant surroundings and up-to-date facilities offered by the new structure will be of significance to a community like Gnadenthal, always dedicated to education and progress.



Gnadenthal School with a one-classroom annex.



Invocation at the sod turning led by John Peters. Background shows Len Penner, Walter Siemens, Henry Neufeld.



Side view of construction of the new building, 1982.



School choir sings at sod turning led by Judy Froese.

Gnadenenthal School Report

Year	Approx. Enroll.	Teachers	Trustees	Sec. Treasurer
1924-25	68	David Heinrichs	Official Trustee	Mr. Greenway
1925-26	75	John H. Giesbrecht	Official Trustee	Mr. Greenway
1926-27	80	John H. Giesbrecht	Official Trustee	Mr. Greenway
1927-28	53	Jacob A. Dyck	*J. J. Friesen H. Kuhl J. Janzen	H. Kuhl
1928-29	69	Paul J. Schaefer	*J. J. Friesen H. Kuhl J. J. Schellenberg	H. Kuhl
1929-30	65	Paul J. Schaefer	*J. J. Friesen H. Kuhl J. J. Schellenberg	H. Kuhl
1930-31	65	Paul J. Schaefer	*J. J. Schellenberg J. J. Sawatzky H. Kuhl	H. Kuhl
1931-32	59	Paul J. Schaefer	*J. J. Schellenberg J. J. Sawatzky H. Kuhl	H. Kuhl
1932-33	70	Paul J. Schaefer Aganetha L. Kroeker	*J. J. Sawatzky J. J. Schellenberg D. Krahn	H. Kuhl
1933-34	69	Paul J. Schaefer Aganetha L. Kroeker	*J. J. Sawatzky J. J. Schellenberg D. Krahn	H. Kuhl
1934-35	74	Paul J. Schaefer Armin Sawatzky	*J. J. Schellenberg G. Konrad D. Krahn	H. Kuhl
1935-36	75	Paul J. Schaefer Armin Sawatzky	*J. J. Schellenberg G. Konrad D. Krahn	H. Kuhl
1936-37	75	Paul J. Schaefer Armin Sawatzky	*J. J. Schellenberg P. Redekopp J. Janzen	H. Kuhl
1937-38	79	Paul J. Schaefer Armin Sawatzky	*A. P. Bueckert H. Kuhl J. Janzen	H. Kuhl
1938-39	82	Paul J. Schaefer Jacob Toews	*A. P. Bueckert H. Kuhl C. Hildebrand	H. Kuhl
1939-40	77	Paul J. Schaefer Jacob Toews	*A. P. Bueckert H. Kuhl C. Hildebrand	H. Kuhl
1940-41	76	Paul J. Schaefer Jacob Toews	*A. P. Bueckert H. Kuhl C. Hildebrand	H. Kuhl
1941-42	73	Paul J. Schaefer Jacob Toews	*A. P. Bueckert H. Kuhl C. Hildebrand	H. Kuhl
1942-43	75	Paul J. Schaefer George Ens	*A. P. Bueckert J. J. Schellenberg C. Hildebrand	H. Kuhl
1943-44	77	David P. Heidebrecht Katie Janzen	*J. J. Schellenberg C. Hildebrand D. P. Peters	H. Kuhl
1944-45	74	David P. Heidebrecht Anne Wiebe	*J. J. Schellenberg C. Hildebrand D. P. Peters	H. Kuhl
1945-46	82	David P. Heidebrecht Susie Peters	*D. P. Peters H. Kuhl D. R. Penner	G. J. Sawatzky
1946-47	75	John M. Giesbrecht Susie Peters	*D. P. Peters H. Kuhl D. R. Penner	G. J. Sawatzky
1947-48	72	Susie Peters Helene Sawatzky	*D. P. Peters A. P. Bueckert D. R. Penner	G. J. Sawatzky
1948-49	86	Susie Peters	*D. R. Penner	G. J. Sawatzky

1949-50	84	G. W. Neufeld Mrs. Helen Neufeld William Schroeder George W. Neufeld	A. P. Bueckert Johann Peters *Johann Peters D. R. Penner D. Bueckert	G. J. Sawatzky
1950-51	67	William Schroeder Anne Dueck	*Johann Peters D. R. Penner D. Buecker	G. J. Sawatzky
1951-52	59	William Schroeder Anne Dueck	*Johann Peters D. R. Penner D. Bueckert	G. J. Sawatzky
1952-53	63	William Schroeder Elizabeth Dueck	*Johann Peters D. R. Penner D. Bueckert	G. J. Sawatzky
1953-54	59	Henry Dick Elizabeth Dueck	*D. Bueckert Johann Peters D. R. Penner D. Bueckert	G. J. Sawatzky
1954-55	57	Henry G. Ens Elsie Dyck	*D. Bueckert Johann Peters D. R. Penner	G. J. Sawatzky
1955-56	63	Henry G. Ens Elsie Dyck	*Johann Peters D. Bueckert P. B. Penner	J. Kuhl
1956-57	57	Henry G. Ens Phyllis Hooze	*Johann Peters D. Bueckert P. B. Penner	J. Kuhl
1957-58	60	Henry G. Ens Phyllis Hooze	*Johann Peters D. Bueckert P. B. Penner	J. Kuhl
1958-59	60	Alfred H. Kroeker Anne Thiessen	*Johann Peters D. Bueckert P. B. Penner	J. Kuhl
1959-60	66	Erwin H. Penner Anne Thiessen	*Johann Peters D. Bueckert P. B. Penner	J. Kuhl
1960-61	75	G. A. Hildebrand Anne Thiessen	*D. D. Peters J. P. Dyck D. Bueckert	J. Kuhl
1961-62	78	G. A. Hildebrand Anne Schmidt	*D. D. Peters D. Bueckert J. Nickel	J. Kuhl
1962-63	93	G. A. Hildebrand Anne Schmidt	*D. D. Peters John Nickel J. Kuhl	J. Kuhl
1963-64	90	T. G. Klassen Anne Schmidt	*D. D. Peters J. Nickel J. Kuhl	B. Schellenberg
1964-65	74	T. G. Klassen Mary Klassen Helen Klassen	*D. D. Peters J. Nickel F. Peters	B. Schellenberg
1965-66	72	John J. Arendt Mary Klassen H. Doreen Enns	*D. D. Peters J. Nickel F. Peters	B. Schellenberg
1966-67	80	John J. Arendt Mary Klassen H. Doreen Enns	*J. Nickel F. Peters P. J. Peters	B. Schellenberg
1967-68		Esther Janzen Ken Doell Mary Klassen	John Nickel Frank D. Peters Paul J. Peters	B. Schellenberg
1968-69		Esther Janzen Ken Doell Gordon Wiebe	John Nickel Frank D. Peters Paul J. Peters	B. Schellenberg
1969-70		Esther Janzen Alan Giesbrecht Gordon Wiebe	John Nickel Frank D. Peters Paul J. Peters	B. Schellenberg
1970-71		Esther Janzen Alan Giesbrecht Gordon Wiebe	John Nickel Frank D. Peters Paul J. Peters	B. Schellenberg
1971-72		Esther Janzen John Derksen Gordon Wiebe	Paul J. Peters Frank D. Peters Ben Schellenberg	B. Schellenberg
1972-73		Iris Hiebert John Derksen Gordon Wiebe	Paul J. Peters Frank D. Peters Ben Schellenberg	B. Schellenberg
School District Consolidated in 1973				
1973-74		Rita Matthies John Derksen Ed Hoepfner	Ben Schellenberg	Ben Schellenberg
1974-75		Rita Matthies John Derksen Ed Hoepfner	Ben Schellenberg	Ben Schellenberg
1975-76		Karen Kuhl Rita Matthies John Derksen	Ben Schellenberg	Ben Schellenberg
1976-77		Karen Kuhl Martha Thiessen Fred Peters	Ben Schellenberg	Ben Schellenberg
1977-78		Meg Wiebe Martha Thiessen Fred Peters	Ben Schellenberg	Ben Schellenberg
1978-79		Meg Wiebe Martha Thiessen (till Easter) Judy Froese (Hoepfner) (after Easter)	Ben Schellenberg	Ben Schellenberg
1979-80		Fred Peters Fred Peters (till Christmas)	Ben Schellenberg	Ben Schellenberg

Albert Schulz
 (after Christmas)
 Carol Klassen
 Judy Froese
 Ben Schellenberg
 1980-81
 Carol Klassen
 Judy Froese
 Albert Schulz
 1981-82
 Carol Klassen
 Judy Froese
 Albert Schulz
 1982-83
 Carol Klassen
 Judy Froese
 Albert Schulz

* denotes Board Chairman



The John R. Penner children, Marianne, Betty and Jake.



Verna Letkeman, six years of age — daughter of the Peter Letkemans.



Left to right, Benny Penner, Marianne and Ernie Sawatzky. Photo: 1945.



Sisters, Susie and Mary D. Peters.



Cousins, Irene and Johanna Sawatzky.



Teacher Anne Wiebe, centre, with Margaret Peters, right, and Justina Schellenberg. Photo: 1945.

CHAPTER IV

Agriculture 1924-1982



Left to right: David Krahn, Peter Penner and Abram Bueckert. The Bueckerts bought the Penner farm when the Penners moved to Mexico.

The original settlers of Gnadenthal followed the tradition their fathers had brought from the Russian homeland. The Russian Mennonite “Landwirt” was essentially a grower of grain, especially of wheat. Prosaic as the “Bauern” may have been, even the most practical would wax poetic over the rich black prairie soil, or a golden-ripe grainfield waving in the breeze. Thus it was natural that grain was the chief crop during the early years in Gnadenthal. Together with some livestock raising, grain growing was profitable enough to afford most of the early settlers a fairly comfortable existence.

When the Gnadenthal residents decided to emigrate to Mexico in the 1920s, the migration process, although planned for years, was made difficult because not all property owners were able to sell their land at the same time. The villagers who were obliged to wait for their land sales, were left in a state of flux, which naturally affected their agricultural practices. Understandably, they resorted to “scorched earth” or haphazard farming methods during the

long drawn out transition period. The open field system they had followed (their land division used the “Koagel” as a unit of land measure) left a strip between the Koagels, called the “Rain”, serving as the boundary. The Rains had been meticulously kept in normal times, but in the anxious days when migration was imminent, they had been neglected. Over the years dust blew up on these Rains in the light soil and developed into difficult ridges which later took years to wear down in spite of tractors and bulldozers.

The Russländer that settled in Gnadenthal in the 1920s were faced with enormous problems. The debts that many of them had incurred with the CPR for transportation costs from Russia to Canada hung like millstones around their necks. Land conditions at first seemed to them to be poor, some areas around the village having rather light soil, others clay. At a time when interest payments could hardly be met, much of the land was purchased on credit and refinanced later. The lack of funds to finance farming

operations proved a great hardship, although any available farm machinery was shared through sheer necessity.

Agriculture was the life line of the new settlers. Most of what they consumed was produced on the farm. There was very little cash, and very little trade, except for necessities such as salt, sugar, and cloth, but every farmer raised his own chickens, cows, and hogs, as well as horses.

In 1924 Mr. and Mrs. Paul D. and Helena Peters moved to Gnadenthal with their children. They were originally from Gnadenthal, Russia, and therefore delighted when an opportunity offered itself to purchase a farmstead in Gnadenthal, Manitoba — perhaps most former Gnadenthal (Russia) immigrants felt that the name augured well for them. The Peters family had been kindly received by a Canadian Mennonite family in Sommerfeld. Like most of the immigrants, they financed their farm purchase by loans which the wealthier Canadian Mennonites made available to them. Paul and Helena Peters, again like most of the new arrivals, were confident of repaying all debts by dint of sheer hard work.

Johann Peters, a son of the Paul D. Peters family, gives a vivid account of their experiences during the early years in Gnadenthal:

My father bought 320 acres of land and 22 acres of community pasture at twenty-eight dollars per acre from John Wall, who had moved to Mexico. I still farm 160 acres of the original land, and 10 acres of the village pasture. We had



Johann Peters checking on his horses. Horses were an essential part of farm life in the '20s and '30s.

ten horses — eight to work on the field, and two for driving to church and to the nearby town of Plum Coulee for shopping, which predictably included yeast, flour, sugar and oatmeal as main items. (On rare occasions, as a very special treat, father would buy us a few ounces of mixed candy at fifteen cents a pound.) We also had two twelve-inch Cockshutt plows, two Mc-

Cormick seven-foot binders, one seven-foot cultivator, one five-foot McCormick grass mower, a hayrack, and two five-section harrows. The cost of the machinery was, approximately: Plows — \$15.00 each, harrows (new) — five sections \$25.00, drill — \$50.00, cultivator — \$12.50, binder — \$25.00. An old wagon cost us only \$15.00, while a new one would have been \$58.00. Our buggy cost \$18.00. Farm labour at that time was ninety dollars for six months of work.

My father had about 280 acres under cultivation, as well as 40 acres for hay. We seeded Ruby wheat, although Marquis was a better wheat. We also sowed a six-row feed barley, and "60 day oats" which grew to be about 18 inches tall. This was a good oat for the horses, yielded up to 60 bushels per acre, and ripened very quickly. We seeded 60 acres of wheat, 70 acres of oats, 50 acres of barley, and 90 acres of sunflowers. Later, in the thirties, we had 40 acres of corn, which we could sell at 75 cents a bushel, and also use for hog feed.

Wheat sold at 75 cents to 95 cents and sometimes even at \$1.10 per bushel. Barley sold at 25 to 30 cents per bushel, although this changed as a result of the Open Market. Oats were seldom sold. They were generally used to feed the horses, since the price was only 13 to 17 cents per bushel. Prices were low: cream sold at \$1.75 to \$2.50 for three gallons. Eggs yielded 4 to 12 cents a dozen. Cows sold for \$15.00 to \$20.00, calves for \$1.00 to \$1.50, and heifers for \$5.00 to \$12.00. The price of wheat was low, but we had to sell in order to meet our payments in the fall. The 1930s were difficult years for all farmers.

We planted corn and some sunflowers in the 1930s. Corn yielded a fair cash return, helped to keep the soil from drifting, and retained the snow on the fields in winter. Sunflowers also were profitable to raise. We were unfamiliar with commercial fertilizers, although we used the manure from our horses and cattle.

Mr. Eugene Lange, the Agriculture Representative, did much to improve our farming methods. He introduced fertilizer 11-48-0 and also Uria to the farmers in the area, and, using a test plot on my land, demonstrated great improvements in the yield after the fertilizer had been used. He also introduced new varieties of grain: Renown wheat, Harman oats, and malt-ing barley. Later came TCA chemicals to kill wild mustard. This improved grain yields.

In 1938, after I was married, we bought my



Johann Peters, a farmer interested in the improvement of grains and farming conditions, has been a registered seed grower since 1954.

parental farm at fifty dollars per acre. It was difficult for young couples to venture into farming, but there were always some well-to-do retired farmers who were willing to finance us. Farming became easier in 1940 as a result of war-time prices and markets. Land prices went up to \$55.00, wheat was \$1.25 a bushel, barley went up to 80 cents, and oats to 40 cents. Horses sold for \$100.00, but at this time tractors came into use, with distillate at 13 cents a gallon.

Professor Lange was also concerned with beef and dairy cattle. "Johann", he said to me, "you have too many boarders in your barn, you have to change to producers. Change to Aberdeen Angus for beef and to Holstein for dairy purposes."

After Eugene Lange left, Mr. Ed Howe, his successor, continued the program for improved farm methods. He was a very busy man, and



The first purebred Holstein cow owned by Johann Peters.

even learned to speak a few Low-German words — "Almost a Mennonite", the farmers said when they spoke of him.

I am still farming, thanks to Mr. Lange and Mr. Howe. To my knowledge we have never had a complete crop failure, although we were plagued by grasshoppers one year. Actually, the grasshopper disaster proved a blessing in disguise: they destroyed the crops, but they also killed all the sowthistle.

The principle of sharing when possible proved most useful in harvest time. Farmers threshed in groups, which greatly reduced expenses. Large threshing gangs were formed, the "gang" going from farm to farm. The crew were paid on a bushel basis, Johann Peters states. They received six cents a bushel for wheat, four cents for barley, and three cents for oats. Most of the farmers enjoyed threshing time because the group working together were good company, and labour was made lighter by the jolly atmosphere that went with the bustle of the season. Careful records of the amount of time the threshing gang spent at each farm were kept. Wages were paid for the different jobs, from the "engineer" to stokers and grain haulers. Threshing season was a hey-day for the children, but a distressingly busy time for the farmer's wife. Mrs. Johann Peters describes her experiences with a "threshing gang" at her parental home and later on in her own home:

The owner of the outfit, Mr. Doell, would come with his big tractor and threshing machine, and a whole crew of wagons, horses, hayracks and men. The latter would pitch sheaves, haul them to the machine, and pitch them into the machine. Then a few men with wagon boxes would haul the threshed grain to the granary in the yard or to the elevators in town.

The men slept in a mobile home called a "caboose". Day and night, rain or shine, the crew stayed at the place where they threshed until the crop was "in", sometimes a period of weeks in a rainy season. The women of the house had to be prepared to feed about fifteen hungry men four times a day, over and above all the other work such as washing by hand, milking, making butter and baking bread.

A few years after we were married my husband bought his own threshing outfit which made life even busier, since he had to take care of the machine. If some part broke during the day he had to repair the damage immediately to save precious time. He would go out to the field to check the machine at 5 A.M.

The women had to take the food to the



A threshing gang in 1924. Far left is Julius Letkeman who had come to Gnadenthal from Russia the year before.

fields. Dinner had to be on the field at 11 A.M. and lunch (Faspa) at 3 or 3:30 P.M. Hot food had to be cooked and packed so it would stay hot, and the cold food so it would stay cool. Dishes and cutlery had to be taken too, since no paper plates or plastic cutlery were available then. The horses had to be harnessed and hitched to the buggy, and after everything had been loaded up, away you went. On the field you would spread an old tablecloth (oilcloth) on the stubble, "set the table", and there were the men, raring to eat! When they were finished it meant packing up again (dirty dishes and all), counting knives and forks so none would be lost in the stubble, then back home again. There you had to put the horses in the barn, unpack and wash the dishes, and pack up again to be on the field once more at 3 or 3:30 with Faspa. All the food had to be prepared days before, and if you had an ice cellar (a hole in the ground packed with sawdust and ice that had been made in late winter or early spring in the dugout) you were lucky. There were no refrigerators or freezers in those days. If it happened to rain a day or two, all the food had to be eaten or else it would spoil, and when dry weather returned, you had to do all the cooking over again.

Taking food out to the workers was a chore that must be done not only during threshing time, but also during "Sodeltiet", when the acres were prepared and seeded. In Gnadenthal, as in other villages, the fields were too far away to make it feasible for the men to return home for meals in those horse and buggy days. Besides doing all the chores, I had to have food prepared for the whole day, packed up and ready by the time the men were ready to go at about 7 A.M.

Those were the good old days! I am glad they are over.

Now we have a swather to cut the grain, and

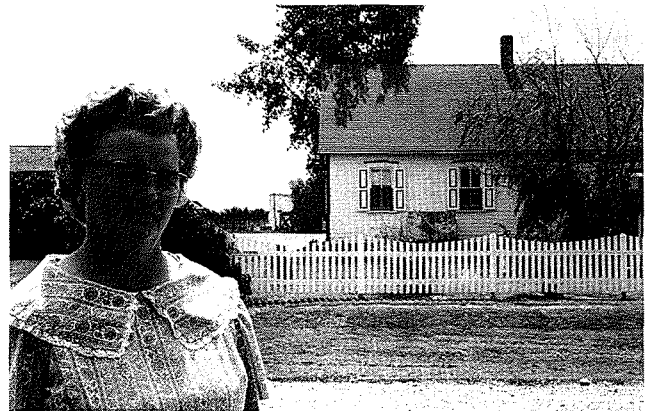


Outfit belongs to B. Penner, 1924. Horses and men had their meals on the field. Left to right: Peter Reimer, Peter Penner and Abram Bueckert.

there is no stooking. A big combine threshes the grain, with one man on the combine and one on the truck. My husband comes in at noon for the meal (the hired man brings his own). Faspa is still brought to the field. I have no cows to milk,



Faspa on the field — Johann Peters and son Peter.



Johann Peters won an award for having the nicest Mennonite village yard. Mrs. Nettie (Born) Peters is seen with the house in the background, 1967.

no pigs to slop, no chickens to feed, no eggs to wash, just a small garden to weed and lawns to mow. What a tremendous change!

Mr. Henry Kuhl, with his wife and family, moved to Gnadenthal from the Morden area on November 18, 1924. He had bought 490 acres of land at twenty-five dollars per acre. About 260 acres were virgin land which had constituted the old village pasture; but the rest of the acreage was in poor condition and in need of improvement. Mr. Kuhl had a two-bottom plow and a tractor, the first in the village, but generally used two horsedrawn two-bottom plows. He also had six sections of harrows, a drill, a binder, and a land-packer, as well as a threshing outfit to harvest the grain crops and flax. In spite of this equipment, the family had to work very hard, as Mr. Kuhl states in his reminiscences of the beginning years:

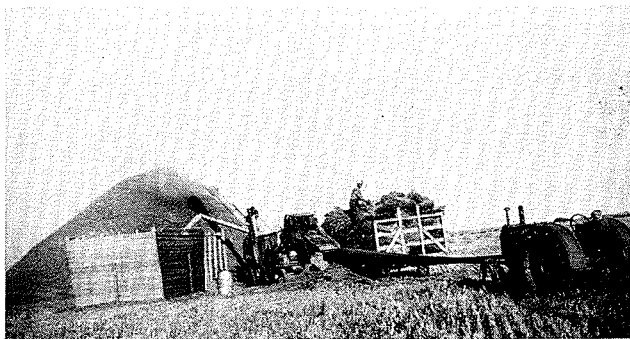
We got up at five o'clock to feed and brush the horses, harnessing twelve of the twenty we kept at that time. The cattle had to be fed, ten cows were milked, pigs and poultry were cared for, all before breakfast.

After breakfast we immediately proceeded to the fields. One could sow twenty acres in a day. Harvesting was done with two eight-foot binders, but the sheaves were all stooked by hand. The binder cut the grain, packed the cut

grain into bundles, bound twine around each sheaf, tied a knot, cut the twine, and threw up to six or seven sheaves on a carrier. The driver of the binder then released a lever that controlled the carrier which folded up and caused the sheaves to fall down on a pile. Then the stookers picked up the sheaves and set them up in stooks.

In the threshing season about six farmers pooled their resources. I ran the threshing machine which was driven at first by a steam engine and later by a gasoline tractor. It was stationary. The other farmers supplied the haystacks, wagons and manpower. The sheaves of grain which had been drying in the stooks for some days were loaded into large racks pulled by two horses and drawn to the threshing site, where the sheaves were fed into the machine as fast as it could devour them. A good worker had to be able to keep up with the feeding into the machine, and then get his rack loaded in time for his turn. I was up very early every morning in order to have the machine ready for smooth operation during the day. We threshed from seven in the morning until sundown.

Our first hired labourer received three hundred dollars in wages for six summer months of work. In 1930 a labourer earned fifteen cents per hour for pitching manure all day to produce the "Mestsoden" (manure sods) which kept our household warm during the cold winter. (This inexpensive mode of heating was used by all the



Threshing machine driven by a gasoline tractor.



Pitching sheaves during threshing time, 1929.



Manure blocks stacked in neat piles. They had to dry before they could be used as fuel in the brick ovens that heated the homes.

villagers.) During the 1930s we sold wheat at twenty-five cents per bushel, barley at nine cents a bushel, oats at seven. I recall selling a carload of barley — 1500 bushels — for which I received nine dollars, the rest of the money having gone into paying storage. At one time we burned eighty acres of wheat. It had matured

so rapidly that no kernel had formed in the head, while the straw was thick enough for fifty bushels to the acre.

Mr. Kuhl retired from farming in 1951, but the land is still in the family.



One of the first combines in the village was owned by Johann Schellenberg. Ben is on the combine and Abe on the tractor.



By the 1940s machinery had changed, with tractors taking the place of horses. In 1940 when Paul P. Peters bought his first tractor it cost \$645.75.



Dave Schellenberg harvesting.

behind the cultivator to steer it, and one riding the horse that was pulling the cultivator. The sweaty horse often gave the rider prickly heat rash. Usually half-grown boys, too young to do a man's work, were assigned to this onerous task of "derchfoaren".



Cultivating row crops, 1941. Johann Peters with his Farmall tractor and cultivator.

Serious production of corn in the Gnadenthal area was started in the early 1940s. Planting was done with two row planters that planted the seed in check rows. This was accomplished by stretching a wire with knots in it every forty-two or forty-eight inches, depending on the width of the row. The wire was run through a special mechanism in the planter causing the planter to drop a seed of corn every time a knot passed through this attachment. Thus the field would be planted in neat check rows, so that it could be cultivated at different angles. Since corn was planted partially as a substitute for summer fallow, it was



The Henry P. Peters family hoeing corn.

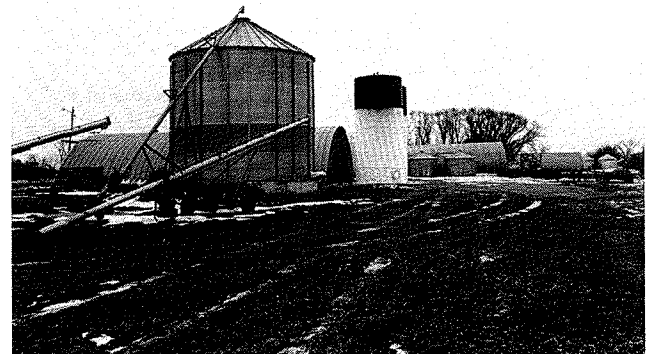
important that it be kept clean. Consequently, corn fields were very often hoed by hand.

During the early years corn was harvested by hand. When the corn was ripe, the whole family turned out to pick it. The cobs were thrown into a horsedrawn wagon and hauled to the farm yard where they dried, either in long rows or in corn cribs. Shelling was done on the field while picking the corn or on the yard in the shelter of a building. It was usually February by the time the corn was ready to be threshed.



Dave and John Kuhl shovelling corn after it's been shelled.

As production increased, a number of farmers purchased corn pickers. These were one or two row machines, operated by power-take-off, that picked and shelled the corn. The corn was augered into a wagon attached to the picker. It was then loaded into corn cribs or else was dumped into long rows about four feet high and six feet wide to allow it to dry properly before threshing. Generally the natural drying process took several weeks or even months. Today farmers have grain driers heated by electricity or propane.



Stor-Mor grain dryer. The large storage bins and liquid fertilizer tanks belong to S.M.P.C., Gnadenthal.

Corn pickers proved to be dangerous equipment. Dave Bueckert and John Redekopp suffered serious right hand injuries. Dave lost his thumb and four fingers, while John lost a thumb and two fingers. Both men continued farming successfully in spite of their handicaps.

In the early 1950s corn production dropped sharply. Since it was used mostly as green silage, corn could not compete on the grain market. The problem of late-maturing varieties was not solved, yields were poor in comparison to other crops, and there was difficulty with marketing the corn. Circumstances changed and corn came back as a viable crop during the 1970s. The demand for corn increased as the markets for wheat decreased. As well, new varieties of corn with a shorter maturation period had been developed. Introduction of chemicals used to control weeds eliminated use of intensive labour. Yields increased significantly with the use of fertilizer. Harvesting practices became streamlined. Corn headers became available for all makes of combines so that a grain combine could be used to harvest the corn.

Today corn is being sold to feedlots in Manitoba and Alberta. Seagrams uses large quantities of corn at their distilling plant in Gimli. As a viable cash crop, corn is once again grown on a large scale.

Sunflowers

The planting, cultivating and hoeing of sunflowers employed a method similar to that used in growing corn, but harvesting operations were very different. Sunflowers were harvested by hand. A group of workers cut off the heads which were tossed on a horsedrawn hayrack or flatbed wagon. The load was then hauled to the farmyard where another group of workers beat out the seeds on a large binder canvas, bagging it, and storing it until the winter months. The bags were hauled to Neche, North Dakota, and unloaded by hand into boxcars to be shipped to market.

Fortunately the hand method for beating out the seeds was soon abandoned when it was discovered that the machine used to thresh corn could also be used for sunflowers. The machine left the seed cleaner, since most of the chaff from the sunflower heads fell away.

The Gnadenthal farmers, who had been growing sunflowers, became shareholders when Co-op Vegetable Oils became a reality in 1943. This meant that the seed could be marketed much closer to home. Later, when two row combines and then self-propelled combines with sunflower and corn headers came into use, the harvesting of these crops became much more efficient.

Today the soil in sunflower fields is treated with pre-emergence weed killer. Nor are sunflowers necessarily a row-crop any more. Some farmers plant the seed with a seeder disk, harrowing the land once the sunflower plants have emerged, to kill off small weed growth. Harrows are anywhere from sixty to eighty-five feet wide and make short work of even the largest fields. Spraying for beetles in this case is done by air. Once the crop has been harvested the land is ploughed or worked with a tandem-disk to break up the stalks.

Sugar Beets

The Selkirk settlers were growing sugar beets in Kildonan on the Red River in the 1840s, albeit with limited success. A hundred years later, in 1940, the first sugar factory was established in Winnipeg by a group of shareholders. It was sold to the B.C. Sugar Co. in 1955, who now process the large beet yields of southern Manitoba. The best beets, grown on summer fallow or potato fields, thrive in the type of soil found in Gnadenthal and surrounding areas. Over half of all Manitoba beet growers are Mennonites.

The first beets were grown in the Gretna area in 1931, when twenty-six farmers signed beet-growing contracts. One of these farmers was Mr. H. P. Hildebrandt, the father of Eva Schellenberg of Gnadenthal. Eva well remembers the first primitive methods used in the growing of beets. At that time



Windrows of sugar beets are loaded with a tractor-drawn loader.

horses were used to draw all machinery for planting and harvest operations, and indeed, at times for hauling the harvested beets to market in Neche, North Dakota. In 1930 an agreement had been reached with the United States which permitted shipping of Canadian beets to Grand Forks, North Dakota. Canadian beet growers shipped 2,540 tons of beets to the south in 1931.

Mr. Diedrich P. Peters was the first farmer in the

Gnadenenthal area to grow sugar beets. He began experimenting with beets in 1947, which presented a risk, since the soil in this area had been considered too light for beets to be grown successfully. Albert Pieper, an implement dealer at Gretna, encouraged him to give the venture a try, and also to experiment with the use of fertilizer. The project proved a great success. The beets yielded ten tons to the acre, which netted Mr. Peters seventy dollars per acre.

In 1977 both Mr. Jacob Peters and Mr. Johann Peters received certificates from the Manitoba Sugar Beet Company, listing them as beet growers for twenty-five years. Johann Peters still grows beets today. He is the one farmer in Gnadenenthal who has grown beets under his own contract continuously since 1952.

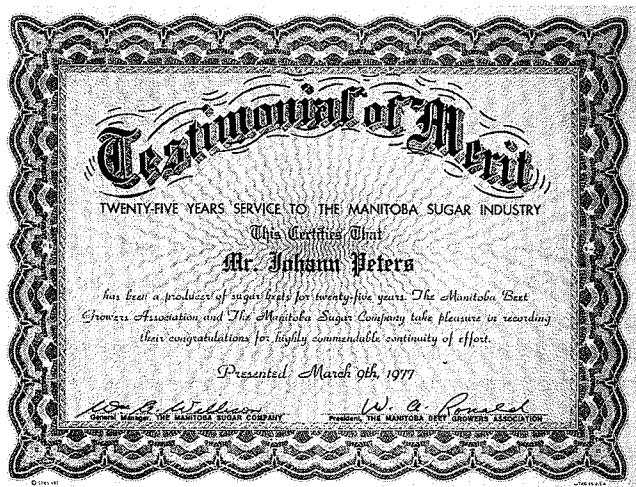
Like any other new crop, beet growing was complicated and involved a great deal of back-breaking labour until mechanical devices were perfected. In

accordance with factory requirements, beet seeds, which were at first multi-germ, were put in the ground — twenty pounds to the acre. Naturally the young plants came up “as thick as the hair on a dog”, since each seed sprouted four to five seedlings. This necessitated thinning, which was a tedious job done by crawling along the rows on hands and knees, using a short-handled hoe to space the seedlings. The fields were cultivated several times before and after hoeing.

In the fall the beets were loosened with a horse-drawn digger, then lifted by hand, knocked together to shake off some of the dirt, and thrown into windrows consisting of eight rows of beets. Next they were topped with an 18” knife with a hook at the end to lift the beet. The tops were slashed and the beets thrown into a central pile. From here they were loaded with a blunt tipped fork into trucks or wagons and hauled to the loader. (A “Sprie” [chaff] fork worked well for this.) From Gnadenenthal the loaded trucks proceeded to the railway station in Plum Coulee. Here the side of the truck box was opened as the truck itself was lifted by a winch, so that the beets could fall out. The “tare”, as the soil residue and broken beets were called, was put back onto the truck and taken back to the field, where it was unloaded by hand to be used as fertilizer.



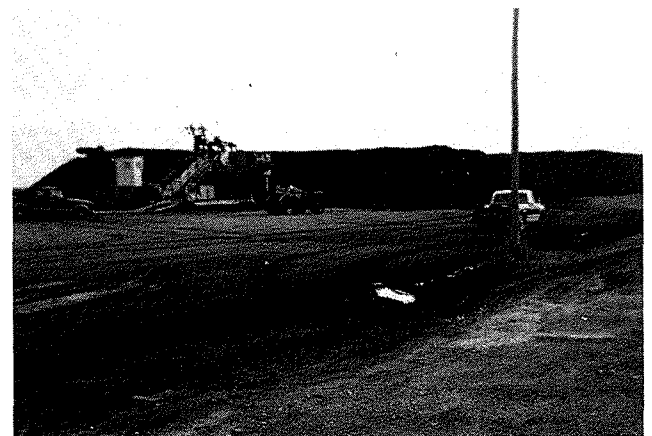
Back row, left: Johann Peters and right: Jacob Peters were recipients of 25 year certificates as sugar beet growers.



Beet-growers certificate.



Trucks lined up at the beet dump waiting to unload.



Large quantities of sugar beets at the loader near Plum Coulee. All beets from the Gnadenenthal area are stockpiled. Later they are hauled to Winnipeg by truck.

Mechanization for beet growers developed rapidly. Soon one row beet harvesters were used; then two row, four row and six row harvesters appeared. The harvester took care of the lifting and loading of beets.



Beet harvesting had its problems in 1981. The ground was soggy and an extra tractor was used to pull the loaded trucks.

Hand-hoeing is still the general practice today, although a machine called a "magic eye" has been used experimentally for several years around Gnadenthal. Hand-hoed beets, however, still bring better yields. "Mono germ" beet seed, which sprouts only one seedling per seed, as well as the practice of spraying with weed-killing chemicals, has made this task easier in present times.

It is interesting to note that the sugar company gradually allowed farmers to seed less and less poundage of seed per acre. When in 1967 all contracted beet growers were able to grow mono-germ seed for the first time, the job of hand-cleaning the fields became very much easier. Mono-germ had been experimented with since 1949. The idea came from Russia and was brought here by Dr. and Mrs. V. F. Savitsky. The Savitskys spent much time looking for a beet that had come from a mono-germ seed, and finally found two in a field in Oregon. This seed was developed and perfected until it brought yields that equalled those of the multi-germ variety. Beet seed is not grown locally, but is shipped in from such places as the B.C. Fraser Valley, where there is a milder climate.

Potato Industry

Young people from the Gnadenthal area have often had to look for outside work in order to earn extra money. During the 1940s it became a fairly common practice to go "across the line" into North Dakota to work in the potato fields. Many of the young local girls worked in the potato fields for several weeks each fall. They would cross the border at the beginning of the week, work in the potato



Lunch break during potato picking time on a field near Walhalla, North Dakota. Mary and Anne H. Peters and Hilda Penner are among the pickers.



Potato sacks dot the fields near Walhalla, North Dakota, where local young people helped with the potato harvest.

harvest for the next five or six days, and return home again for Sunday.

The potatoes were dug out of the ground with a tractor or horsedrawn potato digger, but they had to be picked up and put in sacks by hand. This was a backbreaking job, but the young people engaged in potato picking found it bearable because of the fellowship of good friends, and the thought of the remuneration in the end. Wages were ten cents per bushel, and a good worker could make up to twenty dollars per day, which was a great amount at that time.

About fifteen years later potatoes were grown commercially in the Gnadenthal area. Although by this time the growing and harvesting process had been mechanized, potato growing remained, and is even today, a fairly labour intensive crop. Potatoes require a deeply worked, loose soil in order to grow well. Gnadenthal, which has some light soil areas, has excellent potato-growing land. The first experiment with commercial potato-raising was undertaken in 1960 by John and Henry Kuhl and Dave Bueckert, under the name of "Southern Manitoba Potato Company", or "SMPC". At first they produced potatoes for marketing purposes only, but they soon branched

out into growing seed potatoes under the name "K and B Seeds".

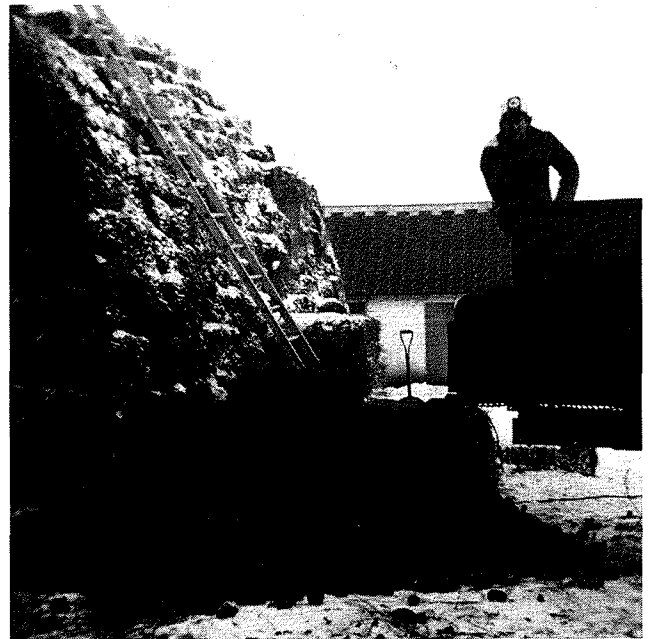
The crop requires deep cultivation as well as an application of liquid fertilizer, anhydrous ammonia, which is harrowed into the soil in fall. Frequently the long white tanks containing the fertilizer are seen on potato and various other fields. In spring the soil needs only light preparation before it receives the seed. In the early years potatoes had been cut at the potato storage by hand. At that time the seed was treated with a water solution containing a fungicide, after which it was bagged and transported to the field. Here the bags were emptied into the planter by hand, a backbreaking, messy job, since the bags weighed 100 pounds and were wet from the fungicide. Today a powdered fungicide is used, which is automatically spread on the potatoes as they are machine cut. The seed is taken to the field in an open truck, and is unloaded by conveyor onto another conveyor with a movable boom. The boom in turn fills the planter, which is then ready to plant six rows at a time. Approximately 1200-1500 pounds of potatoes are planted per acre, depending on the variety. Usually there are five rows to the acre. Most common potato varieties are Norland and Pontiac, which are red table potatoes. Netted Gem and Norchip are white potatoes used for French Fries, chips and baking.



Planting potatoes.

After planting, potato fields require much care. They are harrowed at least two times and re-cultivated between each harrowing. They are first harrowed to kill off small weeds, just after the plants appear. Then they are cultivated to re-shape the hills, and are harrowed again. After this, they are cultivated with a shovel cultivator to hill up the plants and thus prevent the tubers from turning green from the sun. The fields are sprayed every ten days for blight and bugs, usually by air.

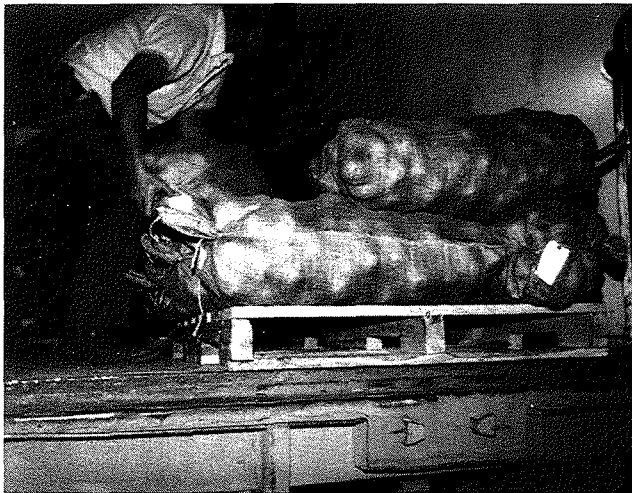
In the case of seed potatoes, the rows have to be worked to check for diseased plants such as ring rot, black leg, purple top, leaf roll and others. The process is called "roguing" and is carried out when the plants are in full bloom. Usually five or six people fan out over a field, pull up all diseased plants, place them into gunny sacks, and take them off the field. In some cases the tubers are also dug up and taken away. Seed potato fields are inspected three times during the growing season by Agriculture Canada, and must be approved before the potatoes can be sold as seed. The top growth is killed off once the tubers reach the required size. Over-sized potatoes are later sorted out and used for cattle feed.



Rick Neufeld is unloading damaged, over-sized, and small potatoes to be used for livestock feed.

Occasionally potatoes grown for early market are harvested as early as July. They are hauled to the storage, graded and washed, and then transported to Winnipeg in seventy-five pound bags to be sold in stores and supermarkets across the country.

Potato harvests begin in earnest by the second week in September. In 1981 S.M.P.C. had eight two row harvesters in operation. Each harvester had several pickers, who pick off the worst of the dirt lumps, weeds, and the occasional bad or broken tubers. Two trucks serve each harvester. As one loads, the other hauls the potatoes to the storage in Gnadenthal or Winkler. Each truck holds approximately 250 hundredweights. The bottom of the potato box has a chain conveyor which conveys the load onto another conveyor — the bin piler. Before they reach the bin, the potatoes are treated with a fungicide, and, in the



Jake Buhler loading potatoes into truck for delivery to Winnipeg.



Harvesting potatoes.

case of commercial potatoes, with another chemical, which keeps them from sprouting.

Potato Storages are not heated during the winter. They are kept warm by potato power. Actually, cold air from outside is continually being forced through the bins to maintain the desired temperature.

Southern Manitoba Potato Co. Ltd.

Southern Manitoba Potato Co. Ltd. became a reality in March of 1960 when Dave Bueckert, Henry Kuhl, and John Kuhl organized the company and decided to apply for a charter registering S.M.P. Co. as a farming company for the production of agricultural crops. Little did they realize the eventful experiences that lay ahead of them.

John Kuhl states: "I still vividly remember how we went to Mr. A. P. Bueckert, Dave's father, and asked him to lend us \$8,000.00 to start our venture. He was more than willing to lend us the money, and he gave us his blessing as well.

"The A. A. Kroeker family was instrumental in helping us make the decision to go into the production of potatoes. They were the pioneers in growing potatoes in this part of Manitoba and were always willing to share their knowledge and expertise.

"To produce potatoes you need: financing, seed potatoes, land, equipment, buildings, markets, and people (employees)."

Most of the land the three principals owned was suitable for the production of potatoes, and the first year the potatoes were all planted on their land. However, as time went on production increased from





Five S.M.P.C. employees receive long-time service recognition. Making the awards is Dave Bueckert. Left to right: Dave Bueckert, George J. Klassen, Pete Neufeld, Jacob P. Dueck, Peter Redekopp and Jake Buhler. All are past or present residents of Gnadenthal.

175 acres to more than 2,000 acres. Since they did not own the required land, they rented from the Bueckerts, Peters, Sawatzkys, Wiens, Blumengart Colony, Dr. Wiebe, Elias, Friesen and many others. At first the rent was \$5.00 an acre, but it soon went up to \$8.00, \$10.00, \$15.00, and \$25.00. They also started to purchase some very select pieces of land to provide a broader base for operations.

Potatoes require very specialized equipment: planters, planter fillers, cultivators, harvesters, graders, wash lines, potato truck boxes, bin pilers, conveyors, etc. S.M.P.C. started by purchasing a two row I.H.C. planter and gradually increased their planter size to four rows in 1964, and six rows in 1973, while becoming steadily more mechanized in all areas. Their first harvester was a two row Champion. "Well do I remember how excited we were

when this new machine pulled on to our yard", John Kuhl reminisced. Through the years the company continually upgraded their equipment to keep it current and in good repair.

S.M.P.C.'s first potato storages were purchased from A. A. Kroeker & Sons. These were the underground storages located on Highway 32 just south of the Schanzfeld School. In 1966 they were sold back to Kroekers, and in 1962 they built a quonset type storage in Gnadenthal. In 1964 they built a storage, together with Kroekers, to store chipping potatoes for the chip market. S.M.P.C.'s present Winkler location was purchased in 1966, and a potato storage was built on it. An addition was put on this storage in 1969. In 1968 the Fehr house on 375 North Railway in Winkler was purchased and used as Southern's (S.M.P.C.) office till the end of October,

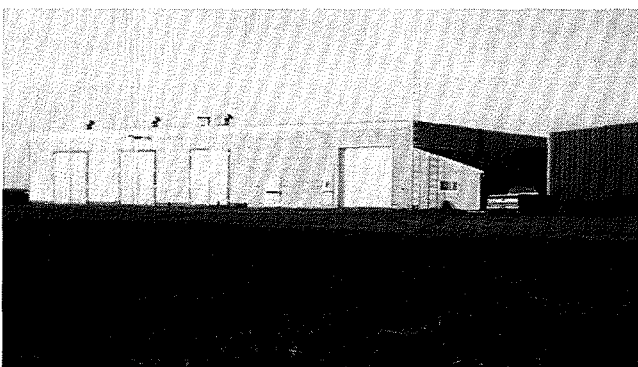
1981, when they moved into their new office building.

In the production of potatoes, marketing is a major factor. All table stock potatoes were first sold through the Gardener Sales Co-op, then through the Marketing Commission, and finally through the Manitoba Vegetable Producers Marketing Board. The Board has served potato growers well. It has the power to appoint agents (Keystone Growers Association is one), by whom all surplus contract potatoes can be moved, with the exception of table potatoes. Through the years, S.M.P.C. have contracted their produce with various processing firms, e.g., Hunters, Irish, Federated Fine Foods, Old Dutch Foods, Carnation Foods, McCain Foods and Naleway Foods. It has been their aim to supply quality products to all.



John and Lillian Kuhl in the president's office of the new warehouse of the Southern Manitoba Potato Co. Ltd., Winkler, 1981.

John Kuhl and his sons Douglas and Keith operate the company known as S.M.P. Co. Ltd. They grow market potatoes only. The other company known as "K and B Seeds" is operated by Dennis and Ron, the sons of Dave Bueckert. Their seed potato storages are located at the corner of highways



K & B Seed Potato storage on Highway 32, 6 mile west of Gnadenthal, is owned by Dennis and Ron Bueckert.

32 and 201. The potatoes they grow are sold across Canada and parts of the United States as registered seed.

Fly It On! Custom Farming From the Air

Spraying has replaced much machine cultivating and hand labour. Various methods have been employed at different times in spraying for weeds or insects. Aerial spraying is widely used today since it eliminates any mechanical damage to the growing crop.

Ted, Al and John Klassen, who own Altona Aerial Spraying, are the sons of Henry Z. and the late Mrs. Klassen. They farm just south of Gnadenthal on the land which is still owned by the family. The company does custom aerial spraying for farmers, including the Gnadenthal area. Ted vividly describes the operation:

It's 3:30 A.M. and a red tinge is beginning to appear along the eastern skyline as John and Ted push the red and white Cessna Ag Wagon out of the hangar. Al, in his radio-equipped 4x4 pick-up, is already on his way to the first field, 15 minutes away, where he will check field and weather conditions.



John Klassen with his sprayplane.

John, in his green, fire-resistant coveralls and white flight helmet, climbs into the one-man cockpit and buckles himself into place. The primer pump whines, the starter catches, and with a cough and a roar and a belch of black smoke the 300 horsepower engine comes to life. A blast of cold air from the 86 inch, two blade McCaulley prop washes back over the aircraft. As the engine warms up, a hose is connected to the side loader, and water and chemical is pumped into the hopper. In a matter of minutes the hose is disconnected, and now

the ragged idling of the Continental engine becomes an even, smooth roar as John taxis onto the runway. The aircraft vibrates as full power is applied, and moves with increasing speed down the runway. In a few seconds it is off the ground, and becomes a graceful and maneuverable bird, as John heads out to find Al and the marker truck. It is now 3:45 A.M. and another working day has begun for Altona Aerial Spraying.

Once at the field, John banks sharply, lines up with the marker truck, and slips low into the field which he is working. With the wheels of his aircraft a scant 4-6 feet above the crop, he skims back and forth along the field at a speed of 115 miles per hour. The tight turns at the end of each run, and the presence of wires, trees, and other obstacles demand his complete concentration and unerring skill. After approximately an hour, the load has been sprayed, and John heads back for another. Back on the ground, with the engine idling, chemical and fuel are once more pumped into the aircraft, and 3 to 5 minutes after landing, John is back in the air again.

The two Cessna aircraft which John flies — an Ag Wagon and a slightly larger Ag Truck — are especially designed for agricultural flying. They are very stable aircraft with large, reinforced wings, and powerful engines; they have wire cutters along leading edges to help snap wires that may be hit; and they have cockpits reinforced with steel tubing to form a solid “cage” which protects the pilot in a crash.

Farming has changed in many ways in the last 100 years, and the use of aircraft in agriculture is a major change. Many modern farmers now count on the aerial applicator as a member of their farming team. Aircraft can be used for seeding, as well as for spreading granular Treflan, Avadex, and fertilizer. Aircraft can be used for spraying herbicides, insecticides, and fungicides. Aircraft can even be used for “fanning” crops to ward off a killing frost. Aircraft is especially useful when speed of application is essential, or when crop height, or wet field conditions make the use of ground equipment impractical or even impossible. More recently, farmers have been turning to aircraft spraying for the purpose of crop dessication — killing crops in fall — so that the harvesting of crops such as sunflowers and flax can be done earlier in the season. The aerial applicator is part of a new age. He has brought innovations to modern agriculture which the farmer of 100 years ago would find well-nigh incomprehensible.

Cattle Raising

In 1924 the village still employed a herdsman, a relic of the old village system. This changed during resettlement of the village by the Russländer. Ten farmers agreed to start a community pasture, hiring a herdsman to take the cattle out in the morning and return them by six in the evening. Mr. Groening was the first herdsman they engaged. He was succeeded by Mr. Henry Peters, who took over his duties until he moved to Fork River. The group of ten farmers specialized in improving their cattle for milk production, making use of a purebred Ayreshire bull supplied by the government. The Gnadenthal farmers were among the first to avail themselves of this free government service. The village bull was kept in a pen beside the gate. He attracted the respectful attention of teenagers who liked to peer over the side of the pen to observe the ominous beast.

In the early 1950s, many farmers discontinued mixed farming, and turned to grain production and row crops exclusively. Growing and marketing grain was a simpler process than livestock or hog-raising, and the number of cattle in the village were greatly reduced. The village pasture became obsolete within a few years, and so the land was divided among the shareholders and put under cultivation.

The cattle that remained once again became “scrubby” through the use of inferior bulls, since a village bull was no longer available for the reduced herd. The few remaining farmers who still raised some cattle welcomed the use of artificial insemination when it came into use. The S & R Breeders Co-operative, dealing with cattle-breeding, was formed by enterprising cattle raisers in the rural municipalities of Rhineland and Stanley. Through the services of a technician employed by the Co-op, a variety of semen was made available to the farmers.



This large Holstein dairy herd belongs to the David S. Wiebes who live just west of the village. The dairy is a family concern and consists of approximately 50 milk cows.

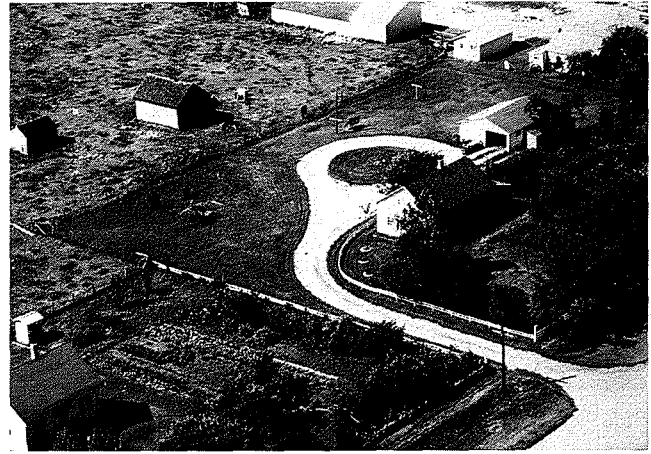
The "S and R Breeders Co-op" was in operation for many years. One of its first technicians was John R. Penner, a former Gnadenthal resident.



Rick Neufeld with part Beeffalo bull calf raised on his grandmother's farm, 1977.

Many heavy breeds became prominent in the Gnadenthal area, with Maine-Anjou, Simmental, Chardois, and Beeffalo enjoying popularity. Frequently delivery was difficult due to the large size of the calf at birth. Mr. Peter W. Peters, having bred a Hereford cow with a Simmental, was obliged to call the veterinarian from Morden to perform a Cæsarian. Both cow and calf did well, but the bill for the service certainly strained Mr. Peters' pocketbook. Fortunately the high price yielded by the sale of the calf minimized the problem.

For many years Gnadenthal boasted a local veterinarian in the person of Mr. Abram D. Klassen, who was well known throughout southern Manitoba for his skill with sick animals. The Klassens were one of the first Russländer families to move to Gnadenthal. They came in 1924 and bought a farm which they operated for many years. Mr. Klassen had always been interested in veterinary medicine and began to read extensively on the subject. During the 1930s, when money was scarce, he began to practice in his own neighbourhood, usually for a small fee. Over the years his skill became widely known, and he was called out at all times of the day and night, fair weather or foul. By 1950 his services were so much in demand that he gave up farming and became a full-time veterinarian.



Aerial view of the A. D. Klassen yard in Gnadenthal.



Abram D. Klassen working the field.

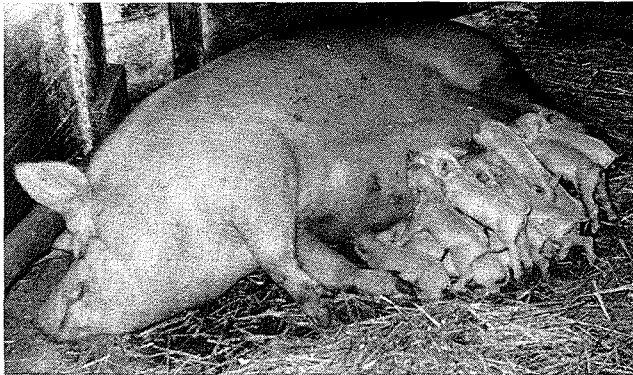
The Klassens moved to Winkler in the fall of 1965. Due to his age and failing health, Mr. Klassen retired from his chosen profession. His interest in his work remained, and he was always willing to direct and advise by telephone when a farmer reported a sick animal.



Mr. and Mrs. Abram D. Klassen during their retirement years. Abram Klassen, known as "Feh Dokta Klossen" provided veterinary services for farmers in Gnadenthal and in many other areas of southern Manitoba.



Pigs —

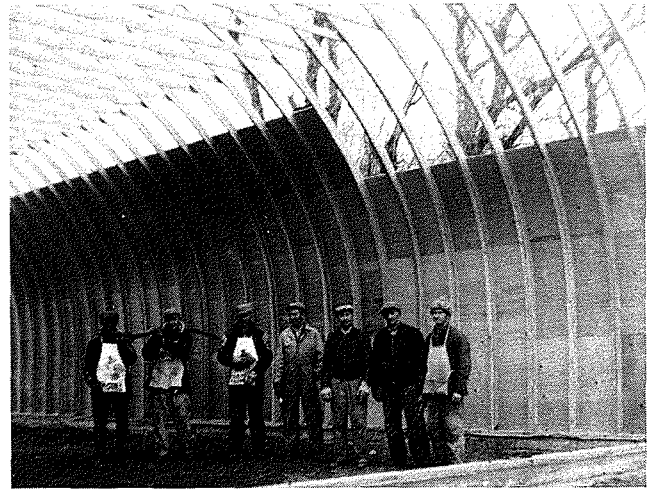


... and more pigs.

Hog Raising

For some years Gnadenthal has been known for its hog operations, because a number of villagers at one time or another have raised hogs for market. Abe H. Klassen and Paul J. Peters each have a large hog-raising operation. Paul Peters had pigs of his own when he was still at home with his parents, often buying runty weanlings for a few dollars from the Hutterites at Blumengart Colony. With much care and special feeding, he nursed them along until they reached market weight. At the time of his marriage in 1955 he had five or six brood sows, and plans for a larger hog operation. The old barns in the yard proved sufficient until 1958, when he decided to build a new barn, 32 feet by 60 feet, in order to operate on a larger scale. With the help of a building-bee to cut down on labour cost, he reduced building expenses to \$5,000.00. In 1969 another addition, 34 feet by 60 feet, equipped with a gutter cleaner which reduced labour demands, was added. The last addition in 1978 was 22 feet by 48 feet, and included a pit, bringing the whole length of the barn to 150 feet. By 1981 he had sixty brood sows.

The Peters grind their own feed with a mix-mill, using their own grain in a mixture of barley and hog concentrates. Weanlings are fed wheat with added supplements — with perhaps a few handfuls of sugar



A building bee helped Paul J. Peters build his hog barn.

thrown in to tease the appetite. For years the feed was augured into the loft and later carried by five gallon pails to the self-feeders in each pen. In 1978 both older sons of the Peters family were away at boarding school, and Paul found himself spending many hours in the barn, carrying feed. The idea of an automatic feeding system was very tempting, and soon became a reality.

Market-weight pigs are shipped once a week by pick-up. Fourteen hogs make a load. Prices have varied over the years from \$27.00 to \$140.00 per hog. One hog consumes approximately 800-1000 pounds of feed before it reaches market weight at today's cost of \$60.00 to \$70.00. Each sow averages about fifteen weanlings per year, approximately $7\frac{1}{2}$ weanlings per litter, and two litters per year.

In 1959 Paul Peters was able to buy a registered Lacombe boar from the research station at Indian Head, Saskatchewan. He was thus able to improve the quality of his hogs by cross breeding. He has tried Landrace, Hampshire and York breeds.

Hog-killing Bees



The pig being led to slaughter.



Scalding and shaving the pig.



Preparing casings for liver sausage — a smelly job usually done by the ladies. Johann and Diedrich Peters do the job while Paul looks on.



Eviscerating. Lyle Neufeld looks on as Jacob P. Dueck does the job.



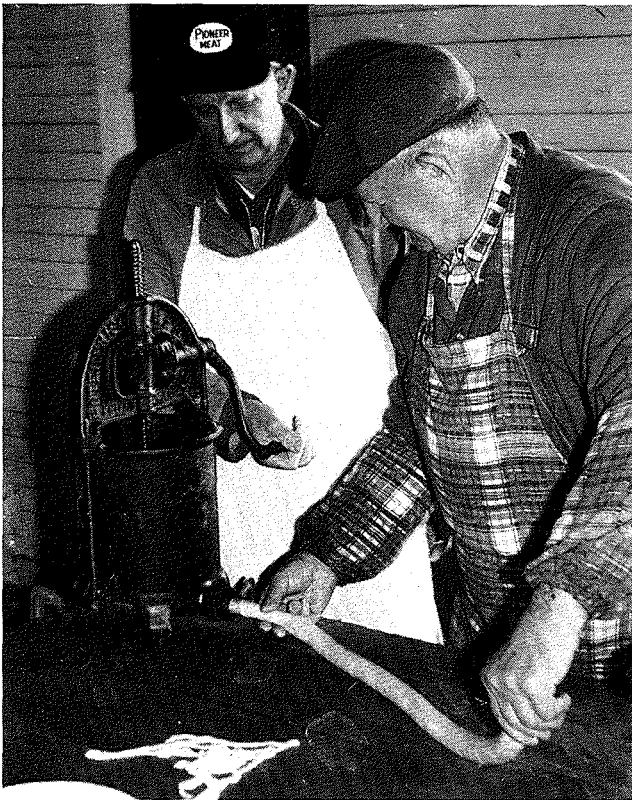
Rick Neufeld grinds the meat for sausages.



Preparing the sausage meat. Cornelius Peters and Diedrich Peters.



Ray Peters pretends to clean the pig's head with a blow torch under the supervision of brother Eric.



Jacob Peters and Diedrich Peters operating the sausage stuffing machine. These sausages were then smoked in a shed built specifically for that purpose. Home-made "Reachaworscht" was a delicacy not often refused.

Horse Breeding

In the early years, when horse power was still predominant in Gnadenthal's agricultural operations, it was important that horses were of good quality.

In 1943 Mr. Peter V. Neufeld of Gnadenthal bought a purebred Belgian stallion. For the service of siring one colt an initial fee of one dollar was charged, with the remaining six or seven dollars to be paid after the colt was born.



Left to right: Mrs. Paul P. Peters tests to see if the liver sausage is done. Mrs. Diedrich Peters, Mrs. Johann Peters are rendering lard.

Good horses were in demand. People then felt as much pride in owning a well-bred, well-groomed team as the owners of a new loaded automobile feel today.

ADDRESS YOUR REPLY TO
LIVE STOCK BRANCH



DEPARTMENT OF
AGRICULTURE AND IMMIGRATION
WINNIPEG

June 29, 1943.

Mr. Peter V. Neufeld,
Plum Coulee, Man.

Dear Sir:

We are enclosing herewith the Canadian Certificate of Registration of the Belgian stallion FARCEUR MILITAIRES -5961- which you purchased from Mr. I.J. Wiebe, of Altona, Man. You will note certificate is now recorded in your ownership.

We also enclose herewith enrolment certificate A-9641.

On June 9th we forwarded you receipt No.14235 for \$2.00 re the enrolment and transfer of enrolment fees on above stallion. However, as Mr. Wiebe had already forwarded us enrolment fee of \$1.00, we are applying for a refund of this amount for you. A cheque will be forwarded you in due course.

Yours very truly,

J.P. Bell

Secretary,
Stallion Enrolment Board.

VH/
Encls.

921-12461-2-54

CANADIAN NATIONAL LIVE STOCK RECORDS
CANADIAN BELGIAN DRAFT HORSE BREEDERS ASSOCIATION
 Société Canadienne des Éleveurs de Chevaux de Trait Belges.
 Incorporée en vertu de la Loi sur les Associations pour l'Enregistrement de Trait et l'Association de l'Agriculture, Ottawa, Canada.

Copie certifiée de Généalogie inscrite au Stud Book Canadien pour les Chevaux de Trait Belges.
 En un changement de propriété à titre, ce certificat avec ses données de transfert et l'annonce de transfert devront être envoyés immédiatement au Bureau d'Enregistrement.

FARCEUR MILITAIRE -5961- Male

Brun, étoile, né 23 juin, 1932, élevé par H.R. P.P. Trappistes, St. Norbert, Man.; la propriété de, 11 mars, 1938, Alexandre Cadieux, Letellier, Man.
 Transfert au verso.

PÈRE Farceur Boy -3856-
 MÈRE Milton's Rose -4293-

PÈRE DU PÈRE Grphas Boy -2597- 10960
 MÈRE DU PÈRE Farzella -2962- 8842
 PÈRE DE LA MÈRE Milton -2249-
 MÈRE DE LA MÈRE Flossie de Zande -3073-

DUPLICATA
 Une déclaration substantielle est
 sur dossier que le certificat original
 a été perdu ou détruit, ou ne peut
 pas être obtenu.

Ne-ends 27 novembre, 1939 VES 527303
 écrit par RM 421774 OTTAWA, CANADA, 29 septembre, 1936.
 Honoraires 44.00 Re-nuels, 21.00 Transfert 32.00
 Honoraire par FOUR CERTIFIÉS que la Généalogie est inscrite au Stud Book
 Canadien pour les Chevaux de Trait Belges.

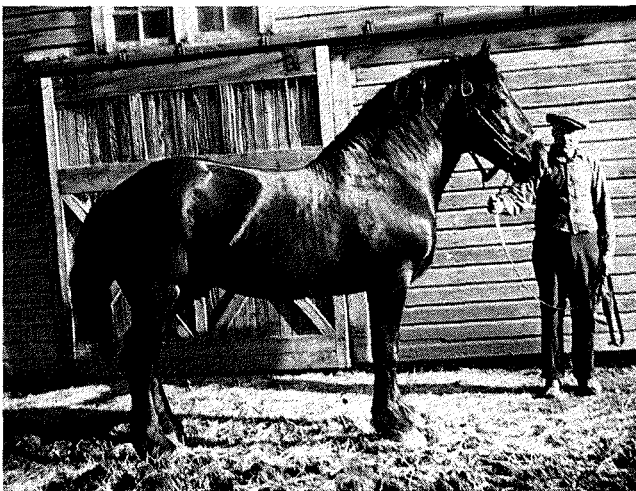
Approuvé,
R. M. Montanuel
 Pour le Ministre de l'Agriculture.

J. A. Wilson
 Régistrateur.

Registration certificate.



David H. "Garage" Friesen.



Peter V. Neufeld with his registered stallion.



Gnadenthal garage, late 1940s.

Garages and Repair Shops

Since machinery breaks down when the farmer can least afford to wait for repairs, a garage-repair shop is of prime importance in an agricultural community. When tractors and heavy machinery came into general use, the dependence of the farmer on the repair shop became even greater.

Gnadenthal has had various repair shop operators, but undoubtedly the most vividly remembered and best known is David H. Friesen. Mr. Friesen was born in Gnadenthal in 1909, where his parents, the Heinrich Friesens, lived on the present George Friesen property. The family moved to Saskatchewan



The Friesen garage was destroyed by fire in 1954.

and later to Mexico, but in 1938 Mr. Friesen, with his wife and two daughters, returned to his native Gnadenthal. Here he set up a repair shop at the east end of the village. He sharpened plow shares and cultivator shovels, fixed tires and did welding jobs.

In 1945 Mr. Friesen moved his house and shop a half-mile north of the village. His shop became a place where farmers met to discuss farming problems and to express their views on the latest community happening. The Friesens lost their livelihood in the spring of 1954 when fire destroyed the business. For health reasons, Mr. Friesen decided not to rebuild, but to try his hand at farming in the Gladstone area. Gnadenthal deplored the loss of their repair man. David H. Friesen died in 1975 at his home in MacGregor, where he and his wife had retired. To this day he is still affectionately known to Gnadenthal residents as "Garage Friesen".

Several years after the Friesens had left, Mr. Peter B. Penner set up a repair shop in the village proper. He doubled as mail carrier and repairman for Gnadenthal until his move to Morden in the 1960s.

Abram P. Wall and Cornelius Froese also served as repairman on a part-time basis. Both men moved to Bolivia. Currently, Jake W. Klassen operates a garage. He accepts the odd repair job when he is not driving a gravel truck.



The A. P. Wall auction sale in preparation for their move to Bolivia, fall 1976.



Backyards of Peter Redekopps and Johann Schellenbergs.

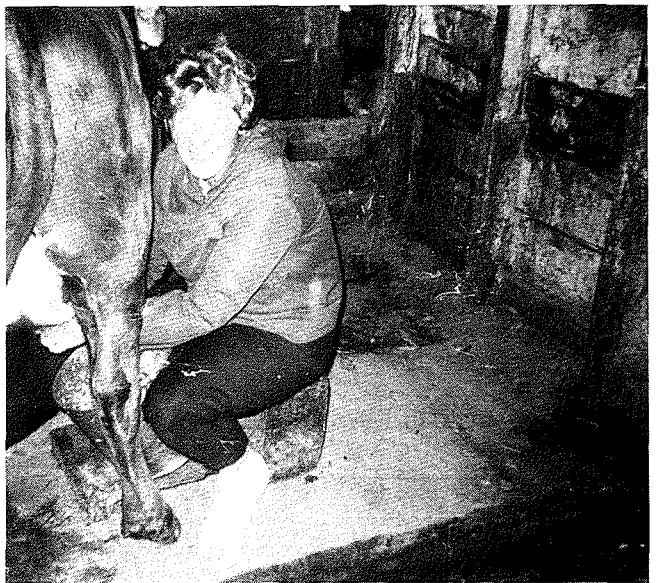
Chores



Watering the horses at the well. Mr. Johann Toews with John and Annie, 1928.



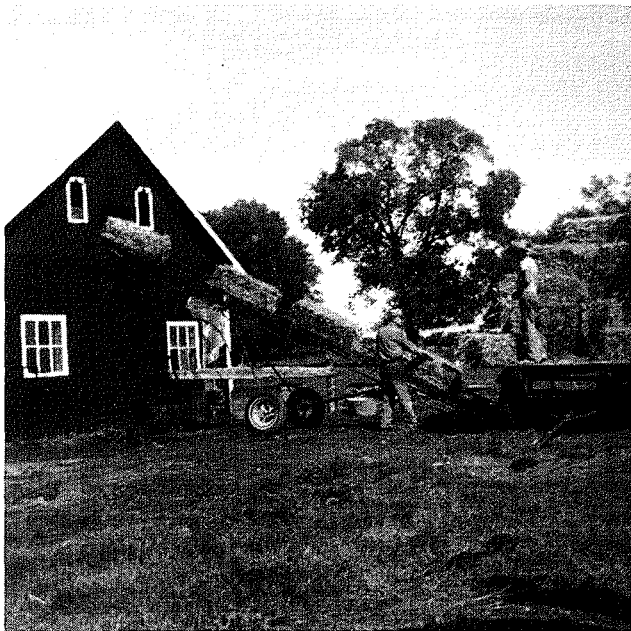
Clearing out the well. Dave and Ben Schellenberg "look like a bath is called for."



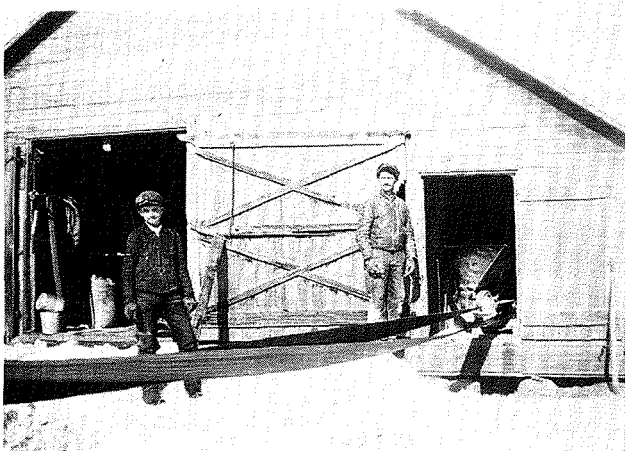
Milking. Mary Neufeld on the job.



Loose hay was stored in the hay loft for winter feed, Peter P. Redekopp barn.



Baled feed is being loaded into the loft with electrically driven bale elevator. A. Giesbrecht's farm.



Paul J. Peters and his Dad grind grain for livestock feed.

4-H Clubs

The first 4-H Club was organized by Walter Frazer of the Department of Agriculture at Morden, with Henry Kuhl serving as the first leader in Gnadenthal. Some of the members were G. Sawatzky, H. H. Kuhl, Johann and Jacob Peters, John Redekopp, and Jacob Friesen. The club began by growing Marquis wheat, and later experimented with corn varieties.

MANITOBA BOYS' AND GIRLS' CLUBS

Enrolment Form for Year 1950

Name of Club *Gnadenthal* Date Organized *1947* No. Members *11*
(Please Print in full, part of name)

Kind of Club *Seed Club* Year (1st, 2nd, etc.) *4th*

Other Details (Variety, Acreage, etc.) *Corn, Fences*

Name and Location of School (or meeting place) *Gnadenthal School District 198*

OFFICERS

Name	Address
Manager or Leader <i>Mr. Henry Kuhl</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>
Assistant Leader <i>Mr. Paul Kuehnel</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>
President <i>Mr. John Kuhl</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>
Vice-President <i>Mr. Alvin Kuehnel</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>
Secretary <i>Ben Kellonberg</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>

MEMBERSHIP

Name	Age	Address	Sec. - T. - R. (Give Club Code)
<i>John Kuhl</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>John Kuehnel</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>John Kuehnel</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>Ben Kellonberg</i>	<i>21</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>John Kuehnel</i>	<i>10</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>Paul H. Peters</i>	<i>19</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>3-2-3</i>
<i>John Peters</i>	<i>18</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>3-2-3</i>
<i>Ben Sawatzky</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>John Sawatzky</i>	<i>15</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>John Sawatzky</i>	<i>16</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>
<i>John Sawatzky</i>	<i>14</i>	<i>Gnadenthal, Man.</i>	<i>4-2-3</i>

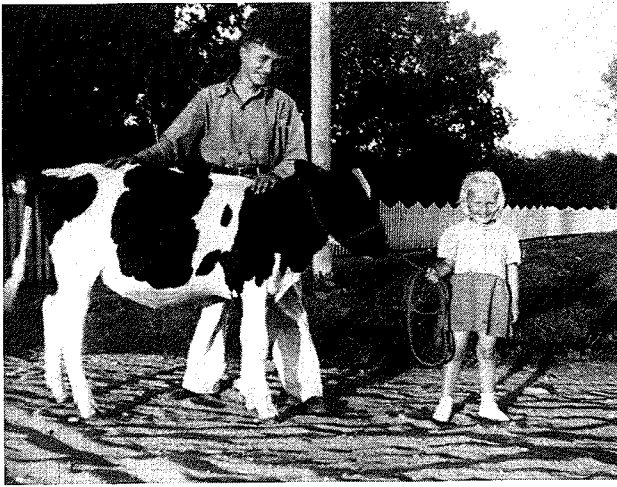
Enrolment form for 1950 4-H club year.

Eugene Lange, who succeeded Walter Frazer, expanded the 4-H Club by including men of eighteen and older. During his time the club introduced new varieties of grains and started a Beef Club.

In 1957 Gnadenthal had one of the nine Sugar Beet Clubs in Manitoba, called the "Fertile Plains Club". Membership was open to boys and girls, ages fourteen to twenty-one. Each member had a personal grower's contract with the Manitoba Sugar Company.

Under the leadership of Johann Peters, the Fertile Plains Sugar Beet Club was the top club in Manitoba. Mr. Peters was also director in charge of 4-H Sugar Beet Clubs for the Manitoba Beet Growers' Association in 1961, and later was in charge of various award trips such as the "Manitoba Beet Tour"

Several generations of Gnadenthal youth have



Alfred Sawatzky and niece Marjorie Janzen with prize Holstein heifer.

embroider by leaders who were following courses set out by the Extension Service. The girls learned many skills which had immediate and future value. Mrs. Susie Kuhl, Margaret Peters, and Mrs. Katie Kuhl, as well as others, were leaders of the club.

During the 1950s, 4-H home economics classes were often a part of the school curriculum. Usually the teacher was the leader, while older girls from the community came in to help. 4-H sessions generally took place once a week, during what would otherwise have been the art period. By the 1950s, club activities had already expanded into fields of communication

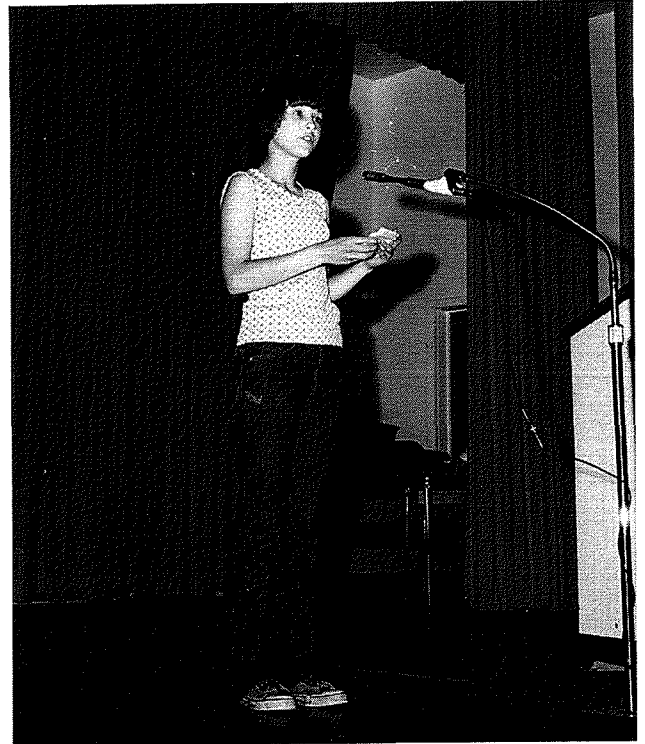
Pail J. Peters

DATE *Nov 8 1975*

M *Beck Neufeld*

	ACCT.	FWD.
1 <i>Plant beets</i>	300	
2 <i>Furadon</i>	500	
3 <i>Eptam</i>	530	
4 <i>Aradox</i>	355	
5 <i>Beet Seed</i>	675	
6 <i>Fertilizer</i>	2670	
7 <i>Calcium</i>	600	
8 <i>Beet bait & harvest</i>	2400	
9 <i>Hand beets</i>	2700	
10 <i>Garage preparation</i>	300	
11 <i>Rent</i>	6000	
12		
13		17030
14		
15 5		

Account of beet growing costs, 4-H club, 1975.



Joyce Schellenberg delivers the award winning speech for which she won a trophy, 1975. Another good speaker for the Gnadenthal Home Economics Club was Hedy Sawatzky.

benefited from 4-H homemaking clubs. As far back as the late 1930s girls were being taught to sew, knit and

and competitive exhibitions, for which awards were given. One award was a free week at 4-H camp. In the summer of 1955 Mary Neufeld and Lena Letkeman attended a week of 4-H camp at Gimli. This was a new and educational experience for them. Also, that same year, with the help of the teacher, Henry Ens, the club entered a display at the Rhineland Agricultural Fair and won first prize.

From the mid 1950s to the mid 1960s the Home Ec. club seemed to be a wavering concern, because of a scarcity of people who were willing to serve as leaders. In 1966 a club was once more organized, and has been active ever since. Much has been achieved during these fifteen years, and many awards and recognitions have come to the group.

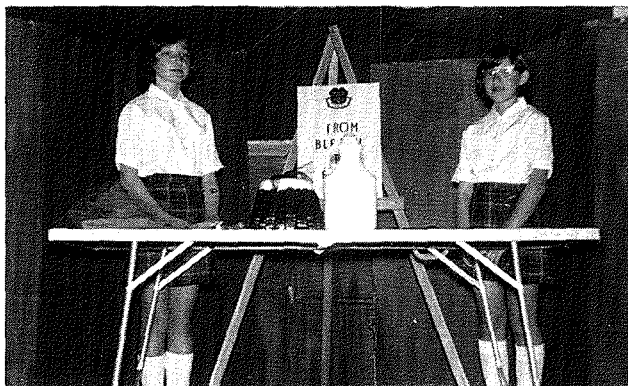
Reorganizational meetings are usually held during September when a slate of officers is elected. Meetings are to follow correct procedures but often



4-H club Halloween party, 1968. Left to right: Geraldine Neufeld, Judy Nickel, Carol Peters, Verna Nickel, Verna Friesen, Nettie Klassen, Charlotte Klassen, Linda Wall, Brenda Neufeld, Hedy Sawatzky, Linda Peters, Agatha Wall, Elaine Guenther.



Drama is always fun — especially if it is a Low German drama. "De Domme Saunke" was presented in conjunction with an old fashioned supper sponsored by the 4-H club as a fundraising project. The suppers were very popular. Left to right: Geraldine Neufeld (Father), Brenda Neufeld (Saunke), Margaret Fehr (Maid), Agatha Wall (Mother).



Achievement Day. Brenda Neufeld and Delores Nickel demonstrate how to turn a bleach jug into a beach hat. A prize winning demonstration — 1969.

become very informal. Many entertaining activities are carried out during the year besides the project work. Skating parties, wiener roasts, outings and social evenings are just a few of many. The year winds up with an Achievement Day, when the home economist comes out to judge the year's work. Articles of superior workmanship are selected to go to rallies at Morris and Altona. All work is displayed, and the community is invited to share in a program and repast in the evening.

During the period that Gnadenthal had both agricultural and home economics 4-H clubs, there was keen competition between the two groups. Nowhere was this more apparent than at the rallies. Clubs competed for parade, display, and other prizes, with many protestations by the losing group. The strong competition was an incentive to win high honours, such as gold watch and silver tray awards.

Rallies



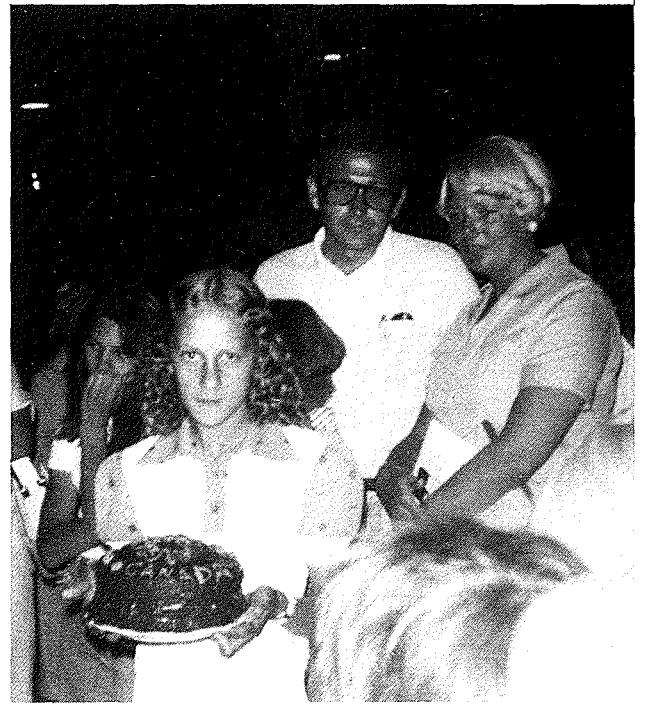
Elfrieda Peters — No. 9 models the skirt she made during the 1962-63 4-H year.



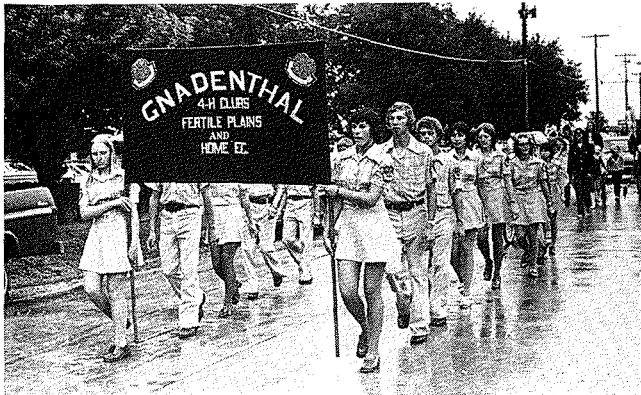
Anne Mary Sawatzky is crowned dress review queen while princess Alvina Nickel looks on. 1967 rally.



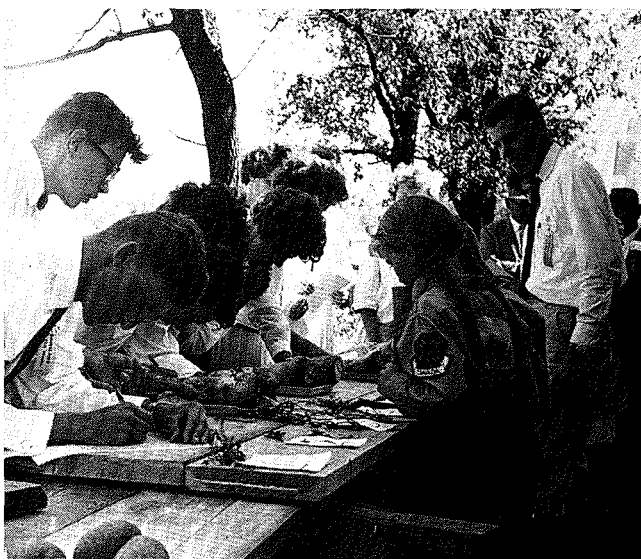
Jake Neufeld, Sunflower Festival President, has just crowned Eric Peters of the Fertile Plains Sugar Beet club 4-H king for 1973.



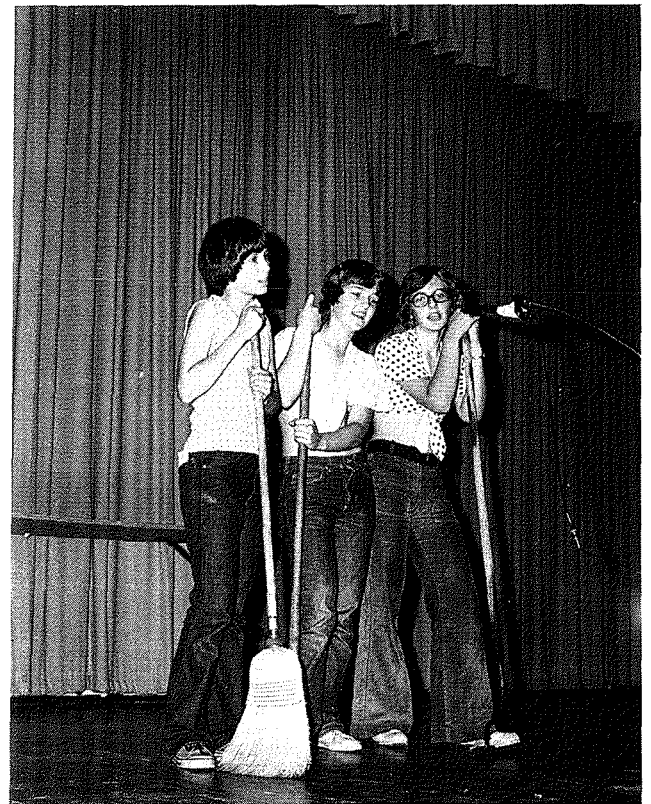
Betty Kroeker won the 4-H club bakeoff competition with a decorated cake. Jack Murta and wife Lynn look on, 1977.



The two Gnadenthal 4-H clubs marching in the Sunflower Festival parade, 1974.



Weed judging at the 4-H rally. Beet club members Pete Peters, left, and Victor Sawatzky, right, take part.

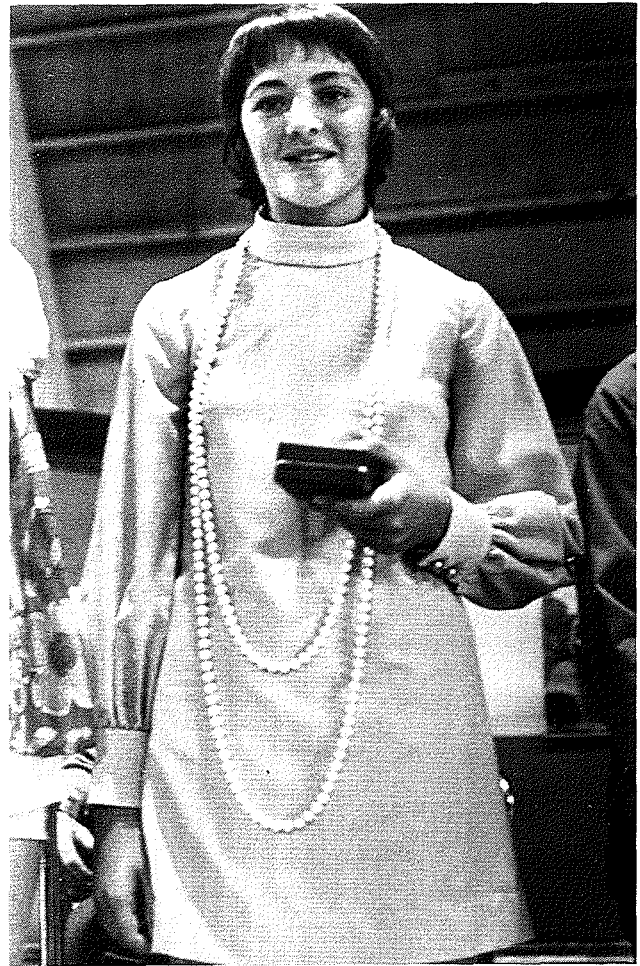


Singing at the 1975 Rally. Left to right: Joyce Schellenberg, Wanda Neufeld and Frances Peters. Wanda and Frances won trip awards, Wanda to Iowa in 1979 and Frances to New Brunswick in 1977.

Gold Watch Winners



Nettie Klassen, gold watch winner, 1969.



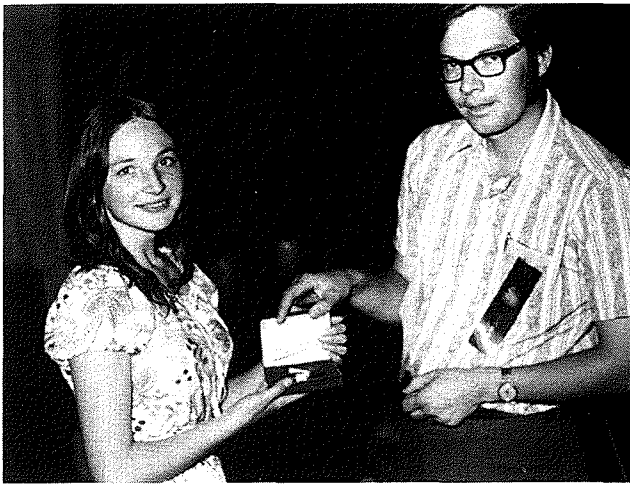
Carol Peters — gold watch winner and dress review queen,



Agatha Wall — Home Economics gold watch winner, 1971.



Charlotte Klassen (left) — gold watch winner for Home Economics, 1972, with Susan Remple, agricultural winner. Charlotte did well in public speaking and was awarded a trip to Alberta. Two other Alberta awards winners were Margaret Fehr and Linda Wall.



Brenda Neufeld, 1972 winner of the Home Economics gold watch. She is modeling the dress she made from material received from Tex-Made as an award the year before. Brenda was also an accomplished speaker and took part in many demonstrations and several dramas. She was awarded a trip to the National 4-H club Conference in Toronto — one of the highest awards given.



Eva Schellenberg — 4-H club leader with sewing class at her home. Left to right: Theresa Letkeman, Mrs. Eva Schellenberg, Ruth Schellenberg and Audrey Neufeld, 1977.

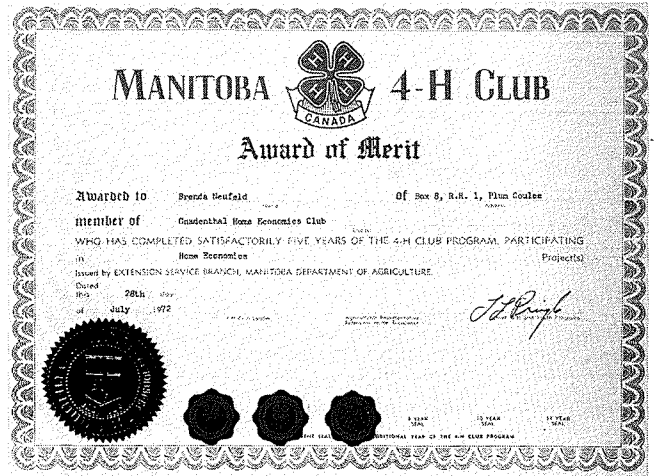


Debbie Neufeld receives the Home Economics gold watch award from 4-H specialist Mrs. Vanstone, 1975.

Some local people who have given time and energy to serve as leaders of the 4-H clubs are Johann Peters, who can boast a twenty-year certificate, and Mary E. Neufeld, who has a fifteen-year one. Other leaders were Eva Schellenberg, Paul J. Peters, Susie Friesen, and Elinor Peters, to mention but a few.

Life Styles

Over the years changes were creeping into the life



Certificate awarded to Brenda Neufeld, indicating that she has completed eight years with the Gnadenthal Home Economics club.



Certificate presented to Mary E. Neufeld in recognition of fifteen years as leader of the 4-H Club in Gnadenthal.

styles of the village. Until approximately 1950, most of the village residents had been self-sufficient farmers, while today there are only a few families whose total income comes from the land. One reason for this change can perhaps be attributed to the fact that many older people retired to the towns. In some cases the farms were sold to their sons and remained intact, but in many instances farmyard and land were sold separately. This left the new owner of the farmyard with only the few acres which had originally been called the "Huskoagel" — a plot too small to support the occupant. Some young farmers who had taken over the farm from their fathers enlarged their holdings and expanded their farming activities.

Of the farmers who came from Russia in the 1920s, five farms are still being farmed by second and third generations. Ben Schellenberg and his son Ron farm his father's farm, the late John J. Schellenberg. Clifford Peters helps his father, Frank, and Uncle Dave farm the land which belonged to grandfather, David F. Peters. Johann Peters, though past retirement age himself, is still farming some of the land that belonged to his father, Paul D. Peters. Paul J. Peters, with his sons Ray and Eric, works land that



Paul J. Peters, centre, with sons Eric, left, and Ray. The sons are 4th generation Gnadenthal farmers.

belonged to his father, Paul P. Peters, and his grandfather, Paul D. Peters. This makes Ray and Eric fourth generation Gnadenthal farmers. Dennis and Ron Bueckert operate the land owned by their semi-retired father, Dave Bueckert and before him, grandfather Rev. Abram Bueckert. John Kuhl, with sons Douglas and Keith, have retained the land of Mr. Henry Kuhl, who established a farmstead in Gnadenthal in 1924. They have increased their holdings considerably by buying more land.

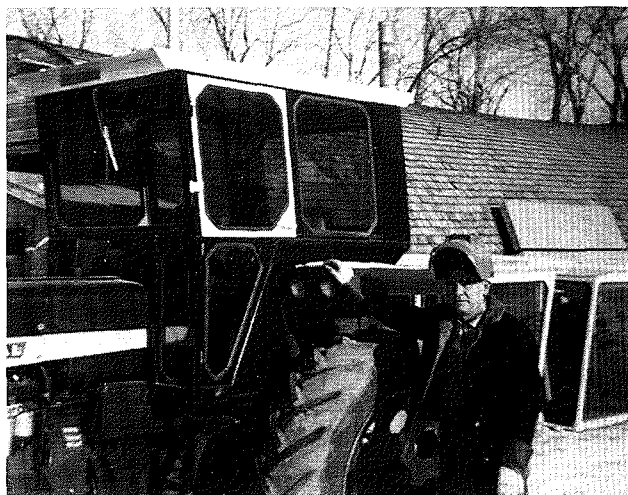
Two present day farmers began operations in Gnadenthal during the early 1950s. The Abe H. Klassens bought the farmyard and land that had originally been the farmstead belonging to the Diedrich Dycks, who had moved to Paraguay in 1948. George

and Susie Friesen bought the Isaac Braun yard in 1954; they were able to buy the necessary farmland elsewhere.

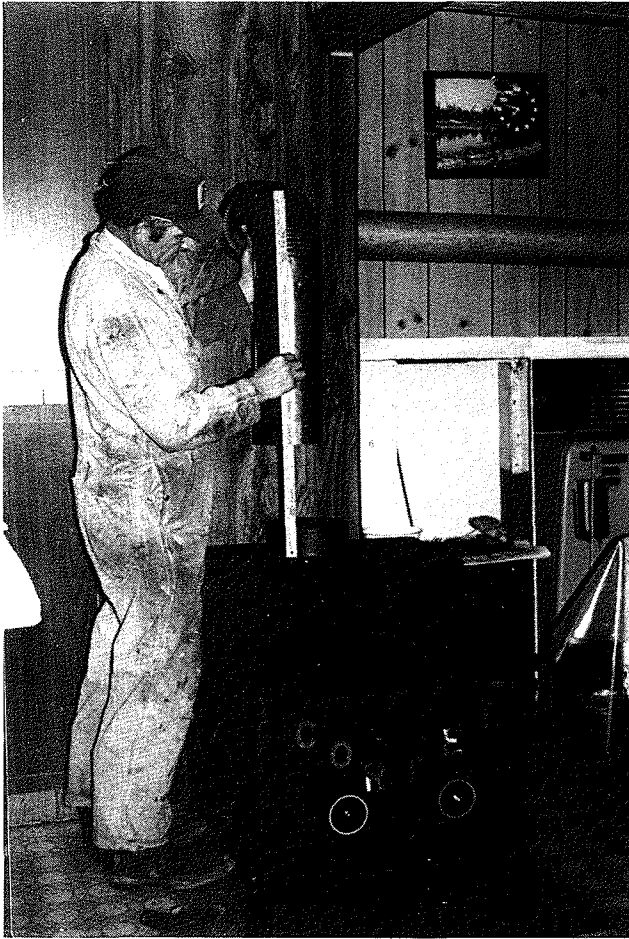
At this time many families were returning from Mexico, where they had moved with their parents in the 1920s. Some of them were descendents of the founding fathers of Gnadenthal, and were eager to settle in their ancestral village. They were able to buy farmyards but no land. Most of them had large families, and the few farmyard acres were inadequate for total support. The large barns enabled them to raise some livestock for their milk and meat supply, but there was insufficient pasture for large herds of cattle, and they had no means of raising grain to feed chickens or hogs. Most of these families had to seek employment outside of the village.



Darlene, Darrell and Garry, children of the Jake W. Klassens, with gravel truck. Jake works for Altona Concrete.



Abe Giesbrecht with a finished "Prairie Cob" which he helped to manufacture.



Cornie C. Peters with one of the stoves he built.

Today out of thirty-one families that constitute the village proper, nine make a living by farming enough land to support themselves, seventeen depend on outside incomes, three are retired, and one has other means of support. Ten farmyards still have livestock. These include the large hog operations owned by Paul J. Peters and Abe H. Klassen.

Gone are the days when the whole family worked together to make the family farm a success. Once breakfast is over, everyone seems to scatter. The father and the older family members are off to their jobs, probably each in his or her own vehicle. The highschool student rushes away to meet the school bus, while the younger children hurry to the local school. Unless she has pre-schoolers, the mother is alone for lunch, with only those of her children present who attend the local school. The family probably will not be together again till supper time. After supper everyone hurries away again. Father has a meeting, Junior has hockey practice, the girls are having 4-H, and mother probably has a ladies' meeting. There may not be any outside chores, but life is busier than ever before.

Affluence has changed the life style of present-day Gnadenthal residents. It is possible today for people to take extended holidays in places like Florida or Hawaii. Modern furnishings and up-to-date transportation are taken for granted. The pace of village life has undergone a drastic change. Gone forever is the peaceful serenity the village once knew.



Diedrich and Jacob Peters with a restored manure press—the old-time way of making fuel for the winter. Photo 1974.



Re-enactment of the manure-pressing process, 1974. Finished product can be seen in the foreground.

CHAPTER V

Social and Cultural Aspects

The first family of Russländer to move to Gnadenthal, Manitoba, was the Julius Letkeman family, who arrived on February 17, 1924. They chose this village because Mr. Letkeman had a cousin, Mr. Johannes Letkeman, living there. When the Letkemans came, not all prospective emigrees had left for Mexico, although at this time they constituted only a fraction of the former population. They were apprehensive of impending changes in government policies regarding education and social traditions. The

“Schulze” (village mayor), fearing the influx of immigrants with different backgrounds, exacted from Mr. Letkeman a promise that he and his family would not become a disruptive influence in the village. The youthful members of the Letkeman family were in their teens and older, which was of particular concern to the Schulze. He requested that there be no socializing between the younger members of the Letkeman family and the village youth.

The restrictions imposed by the Schulze placed



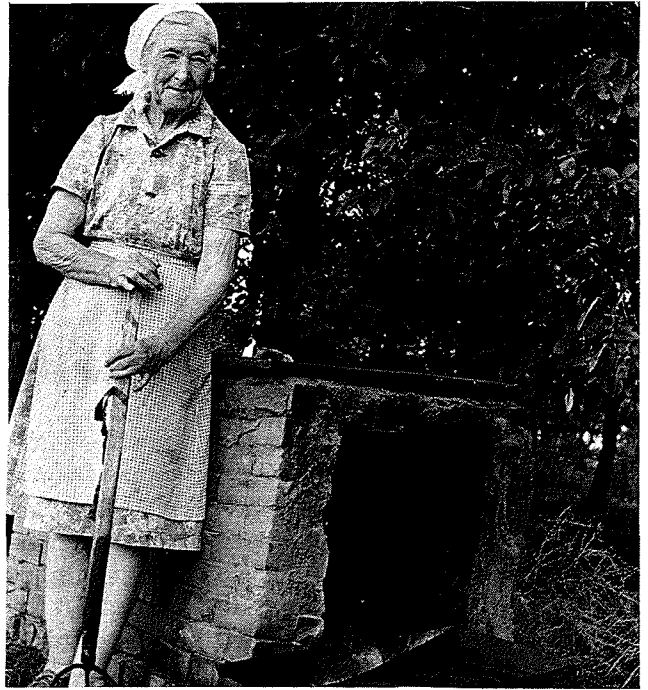
Julius Letkeman family — first immigrant family to move to Gnadenthal in 1924. Top row, left to right: Frank Sawatzky, Cornelius Peters, Peter Neudorf, Henry Fast, John Fast, George Fast. Second row, left to right: Anna Sawatzky, Maria Peters, Lena Neudorf, Elizabeth Fast, Elizabeth Fast, Anna Fast. Third row: Maria Fast, Jacob Fast, Mr. and Mrs. Julius Letkeman. Mr. and Mrs. Henry Thiessen also live in Gnadenthal.

the family in a state of isolation which became difficult for the younger Letkemans. George Fast, a son of Mrs. Letkeman's first marriage, was a compulsive musician who simply had to make music. Behind closed doors and windows he spent many hours strumming the beloved mandolin which he had brought from Russia. Since they were anxious to avoid causing tension in the community, the concerned parents cautioned him to play and sing very softly so the neighbours would not hear. One day, however, the walls of the "Vintjelstow" (corner-room) could not contain the music. The lively strains attracted the village youths, who soon made the Letkeman yard their goal. Eventually they gathered enough courage to venture into the home from which the pleasant music came. They loved George's music, and never disclosed to the elders their newly-found diversion. Consequently, the "fraternizing" never became an issue.

By late 1924 all but Johannes Letkemans, one of the original families, had vacated their Gnadenthal homes. Relatively few second generation Canadian Mennonites moved into the homes left by the emigrants to Mexico. Thus, from the year 1924 on, the socio-cultural life of Gnadenthal was influenced and dominated by the customs and mores of the new Russian Mennonite immigrants. Once prosperous, they had lost everything in the years of revolutionary turmoil, and hailed with enthusiasm the opportunity to start afresh in a new country. Above all, they valued the freedom from want and fear of death or banishment.

The Mennonite work ethic soon became the trade-mark of the new arrivals. They found jobs even though opportunities were scarce. Family ties were very close, and the members that had to find work outside of the community faithfully sent their earnings home to help with the purchase of urgently needed commodities. Most of the waking hours of a village family were spent in physical labor, trying to make a living from the land they had rented or bought on credit. Rigorous demands were made on all family members so that their debts — Reiseschuld and land purchases — could be paid. Children, especially boys, were deemed an asset on the farm, and they assumed adult responsibilities at an early age. In a sense this was a positive factor, since every child felt important and useful within the family group. A disruption of the family unit was unthinkable. The family toiled incessantly. The only day when they could relax without a guilty conscience was Sunday. Recreation, leisure time, retirement, were terms not to be found in the village vocabulary between 1929 and 1950, and no one went to town for coffee-breaks.

Saturday demanded a great deal of extra work



Mrs. Kay Neufeld firing up the brick oven for baking. Mrs. Neufeld still likes to use her outdoor bake-oven. Everything baked in it seems to have a special flavour.

from the women of the village. Every house was meticulously scrubbed, the gardens raked, and the front yard swept. Fresh "Butterzwieback" were placed on long baking pans and baked to crusty perfection in the brick bake-ovens. Spread with home-cooked jam, these buns were a Sunday delicacy at every "Vaspa".¹ When time permitted, mothers and grown daughters made special baking efforts and turned out curly "Kringel", "Piraschki", or a fine "Obstplatz". Frequently the Sunday meals were prepared on Saturday. The aroma of "Komstborcht" or the mellow fragrance of "Oftmoos"² mingled with the scents of the garden flowers which every Mennonite housewife grew in profusion in her garden.

Saturday night was bath time. Soft water was in short supply and there were no bathrooms, so the available water had to be heated on the cook stove. Since there were no bathtubs, the galvanized wash tubs were used, and the kitchen was temporarily converted to a bathroom. For the sake of efficiency and economy the bath routine usually began with the smallest member of the family and worked progressively from the cleanest to the dirtiest. It was generally perceived that boys were dirtier than girls and consequently had to bathe in water used by their sisters. Saturday nights proved to be a survival test for mothers.

Saturday night was also a time when the young people played ball, made music, played games, went



1925 — George Fast and Jacob Redekop ready to go courting. Jacob Redekop was an orphan who emigrated with the Julius Letkeman family. These two "Russlândia" eligible bachelors were welcomed by "Canadja" girls in Rosenort.



Jacob Redekop, Helen and Maria Fast. The girls are attempting to keep Jacob from leaving their home.

walking, and did some courting. Going for walks along the village street to a nearby creek or to the next village always posed the possibility of a romantic experience. Before cars came into general use, and even later, it was unheard of to go to a cafe for coffee or a repast. In fact, the practice was unknown except for the one time a year when a family might go to Winnipeg.

Because there was little time for social events during the week, they usually took place on Sundays. Spontaneous visiting occurred with regularity, and there was no need to invite or announce Sunday visitors. Nor was any village resident consigned to a lonely afternoon at home. If no visitors had arrived by the time "Meddachslop" (afternoon nap) was over, the family went to visit. Every mother, especially if she had grown daughters, was prepared for guests at Sunday "Vaspa". Children often accompanied the parents. They were kept in the back-

ground, but usually within easy calling distance so that they might be sent on errands. Most of them learned a great deal about the adult world during the few hours of "oppschnacken" (eavesdropping) on Sunday afternoons.



1941 — A typical Sunday scene. Elsa Sawatzky, Irma Schaefer, Ella Kuhl, Tina Hamm (standing) and Helene Sawatzky perching on the fence are engaged in the latest village gossip?



1940s — Checking out the locked school on Sunday. Front to back: Dave Peters (Jake Krahn?), Helene Sawatzky, Mary Peters, Irma Schaefer, Henry Peters.



Schoolground. Swings and see-saws — a favorite summer meeting place for the young folk: Tina Redekopp, Tina Schellenberg, Frank Peters, Helene and Elsa Sawatzky (others difficult to identify).



M.C.I. students and friends for the weekend. One of the bonuses of going to the M.C.I. was missing Saturday chores at home. Male and female fraternizing was strictly prohibited in school, so friends were brought home for weekends. Parents kept a close watch on the maneuvering that occurred.



Ready for a Sunday stroll. Left to right: Elma Penner, Ruth Sawatzky, Ella Penner.



"Those were the days my friend, I thought they'd never end". Posing for this picture are from bottom to top: Abe Klassen, Dave Penner, Dave Peters, Jake Krahn, Henry Peters, Frank Peters. "Take your pick girls!"



The four inseparables! Irma Schaefer, Helene Sawatzky, Mary Peters and Helen Peters — all in the same grade. Frank Peters and Dave Schellenberg are engaging in some harmless flirtation with the girls.



Whose house will we go to for Vaspa? Left to right: Elma Penner, Laura Klassen, Martha Peters, Henrietta Schellenberg.



Bicycle era! Peter Neufeld going full tilt on a Sunday evening. He'll catch the best girl first.

Singing in Gnadenthal

Singing in Gnadenthal seemed as essential as having three meals a day. A church service, Jugendverein, or almost any other public function had to have some singing. Many Bible truths were internalized through frequent singing of songs. Teachers in school and Sunday School had children memorize and sing dozens of songs. Singing with or without accompaniment was a life force all its own. It is not surprising that choirs thrived in this kind of atmosphere.

Choirs came into being shortly after the arrival of the Russländer in 1924. The Russländer had been used to fine singing in Russia and needed this medium of expression in their new environment. As a

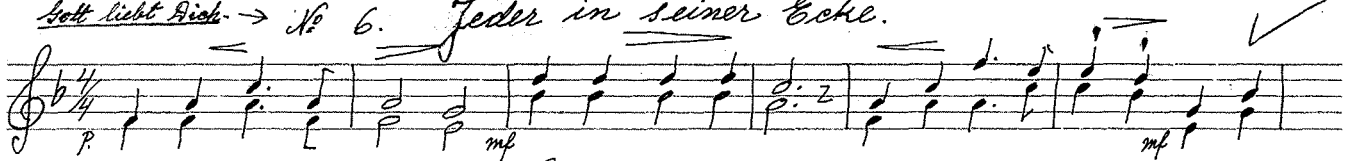
result both the Mennonite Brethren and the Menoniten groups organized their own choir.

The first Mennonite Brethren choir was conducted by Johann Derksen and, for a short while, by Cornelius A. DeFehr. The first Menoniten choir was organized by Heinrich P. Peters on December 9, 1924. Since the two denominations shared a common meeting house, both choirs performed at church functions, sitting on opposite sides of the pulpit, facing each other.

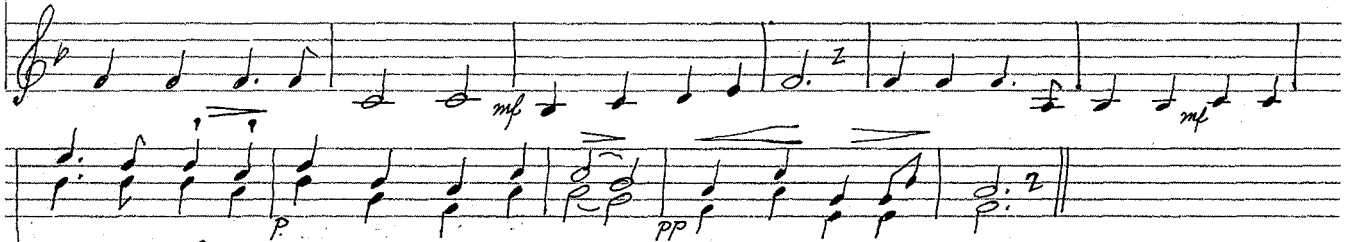
In April 1926 a combined choir was formed under the direction of Heinrich Goosen. He was succeeded by Johann Toews in 1927 and Wilhelm Dyck, Jr., in 1928. The early choirs generally had a membership of twenty to twenty-five participants, and their repertoire consisted mainly of sacred music. Popular songbooks used by the choir were the **Heimatklänge**, **Dreiband**, and **Liederperlen**. The latter used the Ziffernsystem of music reading which the immigrants brought from Europe, known as "Ziffern trafen". Lyrics were in Fraktur or Gothic script. The music was copied laboriously by hand and duplicated by hectograph (Mr. Henry P. Peters will always be remembered for his masterpieces in song copy). Occasionally the choir indulged in secular music and sang favourite German, and sometimes Russian folk-songs. "Schön ist die Jugend", "Sah' ein Knab' ein Röslein stehn", "Hab' oft im Kreise der Lieben" and the nostalgic Russian Dnjepr songs kept alive the memories of happy days in their former homeland.

The choir sang at special Sunday services and at Jugendvereins, but from time to time small singing groups emerged from the large core choir. Male quartets were popular. Frank G. Sawatzky organized the earliest one in Gnadenthal (1935-38). First tenor was John Redekopp, second tenor Peter Redekopp, Frank G. Sawatzky sang baritone, and Henry Kuhl bass. They practised diligently for their first performance at the "Literaturabend", but when their turn on the program came, nervous tension got the better of them, and they had to start the song seven times before it got underway. Since literary evenings frequently were humorous, the audience was under the impression that the delayed action was intentional. The quartet members have never forgotten the spectacular launching of their musical career, and chuckled in fond memory of the occasion when Henry Kuhl recalled the incident at the centennial celebration. The second male quarter (1938-42) was formed by John and Peter Redekopp, first and second tenor, Henry Born, baritone, and Philip Wiebe, bass. At about this time ladies' duets, trios and quartets also became popular.

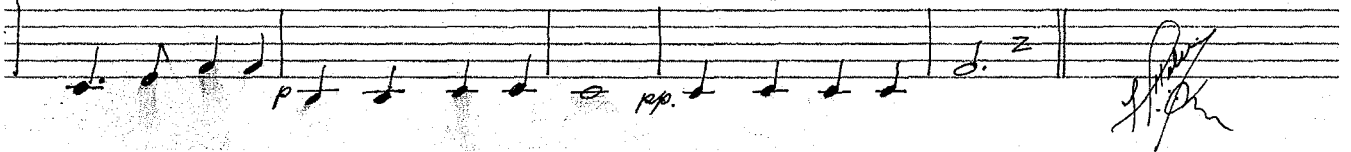
Gott liebt dich -> No. 6. Jeder in seiner Ecke.



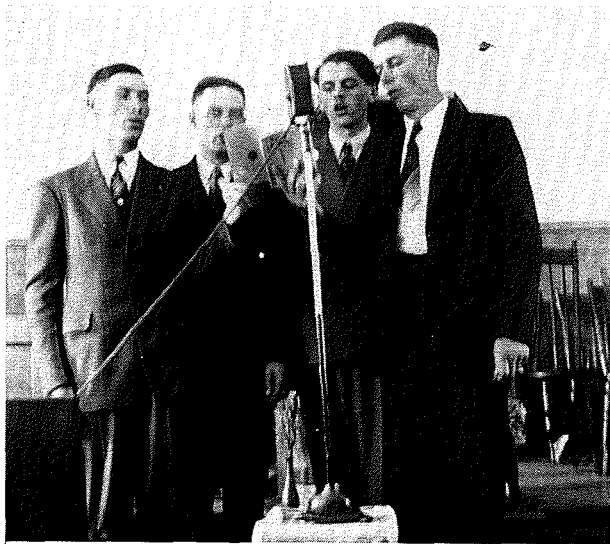
1. In der Welt ist's dunkel; Leuchten müssen wir, Du in deiner Ecke, Du in
 2. Sieh, an jedem Orte gibt es was zu tun, Wo die echte Liebe, Wo die
 3. Wirke du im stillen Fröhlich da und dort, Zu-e Gottes Willen Zu-e
 4. Mit der Treu' im Kleinen Eh-re deinen Herrn, So nur wirst du leuchten So nur
 5. Ist es, was' u. Kleine Leuchten müssen wir, Du in deiner Ecke, Du in



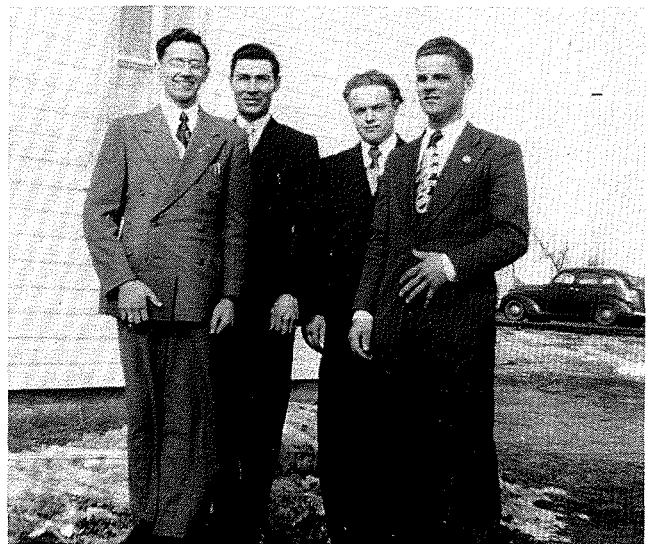
deiner Ecke, Ich in meiner hier, Ich in meiner hier.
 echte Liebe wie Kamm müssig ruh'n wie Kamm müssig ruh'n.
 Gottes Willen Herrn an jedem Ort Herrn an jedem Ort.
 wirst du leuchten als ein heller Stern. Als ein heller Stern.
 deiner Ecke, Ich in meiner hier, Ich in meiner hier.



This copy is a sample of the writing skills of Mr. Henry P. Peters.



1938-1942. Male Quartet. John Redekopp, Peter Redekopp, Henry Born, Philip Wiebe.



1949-1950. Mennonite Brethren Quartet. William Schroeder, John Redekopp, John Kuhl, Abe Klassen.



1944 — Abe Klassen strumming his guitar.

Himmelschlüsselchen

In 1946 Susie (Peters) Harms, at that time principal of the school, organized a girls' choir in Gnadenthal. Realizing the venture depended to a great extent on a competent, sensitive pianist, she asked Helen (Peters) Loeppky, one of the first piano students of Helen (Sawatzky) Neufeld, to serve as official accompanist of the group. Twenty to twenty-five girls between the ages of nine and seventeen came to the first rehearsal. The goal of the choir was to provide the group with an opportunity to learn and enjoy the singing of sacred and secular music, but its main purpose was to honour God, who had given the singers the gift of voice and music. The performances served as a key which opened a "bit of heaven" for the listeners. The name "Himmelschlüsselchen" (key to heaven) was an appropriate name.

The "Himmelschlüsselchen" provided many hours of pleasure for choir and audiences. The girls performed at church services and special spring concerts. In 1948 they sang at the General Conference of Mennonites in Canada, which was held in Gnadenthal that year. The president of the conference,



1946 — Himmelschlüsselchen. Conductor Susie (Peters) Harms. Left to right, back row: Evelyn Kuhl, Henrietta Schellenberg, Anne Peters, Martha Peters, Laura Klassen, Anne Bueckert, Anne Sawatzky, Nettie Penner, Clara Peters, Tina Letkeman. Centre Row: Susan Peters, Helen Penner, Ruth Peters, Louise Peters, Elma Penner, Rita Klassen, Tina Peters, Olga Penner, Ruth Sawatzky. Front row: Marianne Sawatzky, Helen Friesen, Nettie Peters, Katherine Friesen, Mary Penner, Helen Sawatzky.

Ältester J. J. Thiessen, paid a special tribute to the delightful singing group.

Singing was not the sole activity of the choir. Under the energetic leadership of Mrs. Harms, outings such as picnics, trips to Winnipeg, visits to the zoo were organized. These diversions were highlights for the choir members who recollect them with a great deal of fond nostalgia today. One of the younger members, Tina Peters, commented on the "Himmelschlüsselchen": "I feel extremely fortunate to have had this experience, both for musical and social reasons. We all became such good friends, and to this day there is a special tie that binds us. We have learned to appreciate good music, sacred and secular. I really appreciate the opportunity we had to entertain, and to express our feelings through music."

For performances the choir members wore white blouses, black skirts, and black bows. Spring concerts were very special events, and Tina Peters remembers the time they went to her grandfather and grandmother Peters to pick enough small violets (Schwaulmoojtjis or Johnny-jump-ups) to make a corsage for every member of the choir.

The membership of the choir remained stable. Helen (Peters) Loeppky, Evelyn (Kuhl) Dyck and Louise (Peters) Friesen were the accompanists successively.

Instrumental Music

The first strumming of George Fast's mandolin in 1924 was the harbinger of a whole generation of music makers to come. Several Canadian musicians of national and international repute today proudly trace their history, or at least that of their parents, to Gnadenthal. Instrumental music had become popular at an early date. When the Henry Kuhl family took up residence in Gnadenthal, Mr. Kuhl, who played the violin, introduced that instrument to the village, and soon violin, guitar and mandolin players joined forces to form the first orchestra.

The organization of an orchestra had a great impact on the village. Called "de Spälstund", it is fondly remembered by Armin Sawatzky: ". . . it was a rather informal gathering of everyone who owned an instrument. You learned as you played — violin, mandolin, and guitar. While taking refuge (at age eleven) behind a huge Eaton's guitar, I kept watching the veterans on the mandolin and violin: George Fast, Henry Kuhl, Sr., and Henry Kuhl, Jr. — The scene shifted to our lamplit kitchen where my brother George and I were carving on a piece of firewood with the purpose of making a violin. My father put a merciful end to the hopeless project . . . he announced, as he always did, to Mother: 'Mutta, hia



1926 — Gnadenthal Orchestra with Johann Derksen. Left to right: (1) Frank G. Sawatzky, Gerhard Fast, Franz Thiessen, Bernhard Sawatzky, Anna (Peters) Fast, Lena (Fast) Neudorf, Anna (Letkeman) Sawatzky, Mary (Teichroeb) Wiens. (2) Anna (Sawatzky) Peters, Sara Hamm, Lena Hamm, Jacob G. Sawatzky, Maria (Fast) Peters, Johannes Bock, Willie Dyck, Gerhard Matthies, Henry Kuhl, Johann Derksen. (3) Cornelius Peters, Heinrich Peters, Jacob Born, Abram Teichroeb.

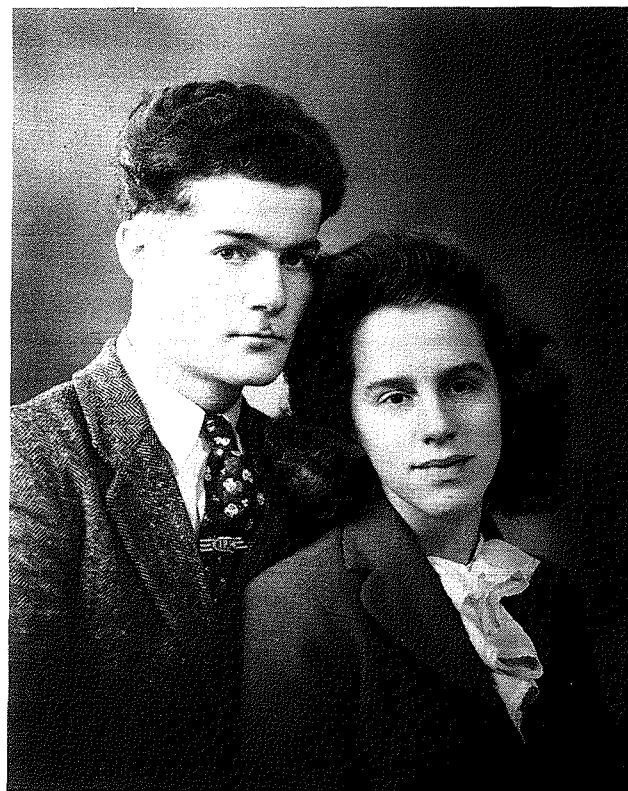
mott waut jidohne woare' ('Mother, something must be done'). It turned out that the 'something' was an order to Eaton's for a violin, completed with bow and instruction book! It cost a cool \$5.00."

(In 1964 Lady Eaton heard Armin's son, Otto, play as concert-master of the National Youth Orchestra. She liked his playing. She found it surprising that Paul, Richard and Adele, the other children of Ar-

min, also occupied first chairs in the orchestra. Over a cup of tea she asked how violins got into the Armin-Sawatzky family. She was told the story of the \$5.00 violin bought from the Eaton's store in 1926. A year later, after consultations between Otto and Lady Eaton, she decided that another Eaton's violin was due in



Armin Sawatzky — 1955 — a great inspiration to music lovers of Gnadenthal.



Jake and Elsa (Sawatzky) Redekopp. Elsa is first Mennonite female to play in Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. Jake is professor of music education in Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba.



Mr. Jacob J. and Margareta Sawatzky, parents of Margaret, Mary, Jacob, George, Armin, Elsa and Helene.



Armin String Quartette — 1960. Left to right: Otto, Adele, Paul, Richard.

the family, this one to Otto, at her expense. Not a five dollar instrument this time. The violin she got for him is now valued at upwards of \$100,000.)

The orchestra thrived in the musical atmosphere of Gnadenthal. It was always inspiring and somewhat romantic to see radiant girls with big ribbons in their hair and on their instruments, strumming their guitars. Together with violins, cello, mandolins and an occasional Jewish harp, they produced a fine melodic line and a pronounced beat.

It is not surprising that some students chose to study music and develop a repertoire other than church music. One such group, a string quartet, with Elsa Sawatzky, Jake Redekopp, Jake Toews and Henry Born, performed for some unresponsive listeners when they played Mozart and Haydn. Gnadenthal residents, generally, promoted the expression of music when used in a church setting, but some older residents expressed concern about the use of secular music. Many found classical music to be unacceptable. They did not understand the need for music "without words".

A few families in the village promoted instrumental music: the Kuhls, Peters, Borns, Redekopps, and, particularly, the Sawatzkys.

Mr. Jacob J. Sawatzky, a native of Chortitz-Rosental in Russia, had been a musician (trumpet) in the large, professional brass band at the Perm Forstei. He also played the violin with natural ease and with beautiful expression. He played by ear, like everyone else. His son, Armin, has vividly described the role

music played in the Sawatzky family: ". . . it was the leisure time by kerosene lamplight that provided for us the hours to remember . . . During those long winter evenings father took up the slack, and in his deep baritone sang with us the songs he had learned in school. He sang with fine musical expression . . ."

The mother of the family, endowed with inherent artistic talent, knew literally hundreds of songs by memory. In her clear soprano voice she sang the songs she loved — during working hours, or when playing with her children, particularly at bedtime. With this background it is small wonder that children and grandchildren have distinguished themselves by their musical accomplishments.

Armin has played the violin with symphony orchestras in Ontario and served as music supervisor in Toronto schools. Elsa is the first Mennonite female to play in the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra. She is also the founder, organizer, and violist of the Holiday String Quartette. Helen is the first Gnadenthal recipient of an A.R.C.T. diploma in piano performance.

The grandchildren who have won international acclaim in music are the Armin children: Otto, Paul, Richard and Adele. They became known as the Ar-



Karin (Redekopp) Edwards and husband Mark. Karin, daughter of Jake and Elsa, was the first Mennonite pianist performing as guest artist with the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra.



Ingrid (Sawatzky) Suderman, daughter of Jacob and Tina Sawatzky, lyric soprano. Ingrid has appeared as soloist with the Vancouver, Victoria, Calgary and Kitchener Symphony Orchestras. Many of her performances in opera and oratorio have been heard on radio and television internationally.

min String Quartette and later all were recognized soloists on their chosen instruments. The daughter of Jake and Tina Sawatzky, Ingrid Suderman, is frequently heard on radio and television. Of note are her appearances with the Vancouver Philharmonic Symphony. The daughter of Jake and Elsa Redekopp, Karin Edwards, was the first Mennonite pianist to appear as guest artist with the Winnipeg Symphony. Since then she has made numerous appearances with other symphony orchestras and has completed a doctorate in piano performance at Bloomington, Indiana.

The Musical Festival and Sangerfeste

The Southern Manitoba Music Festival provided another opportunity for Gnadenthal residents to develop and share their musical talents. The festival received strong support from Gnadenthal groups and individuals. Jacob P. Redekopp served as secretary-treasurer and president of this organization for sixteen years. During this time the number of performers at the festival increased from a few hundred to ten thousand.



Louise and Nettie Peters — trophies they won for piano performances at the Southern Manitoba Music Festival.

The Gnadenthal choir became a regular participant in the Massenchor at the Sangerfest which Dr. K. H. Neufeld organized and conducted. Gnadenthal musicians were in constant demand as accompanists and soloists at these performances. Tina (Henry) Peters and Margaret (Diedrich) Peters served as soprano soloists in the Neufeld Cantatas. The choir also

took part in the “mass” Sangerfest in the Winnipeg Auditorium.

Literary Evenings or “Literaturabende”

The “Gnadenthal Literarischer Verein” or Literary Society was brought to life by eight young people of the village, with a format closely resembling the Literary Society of the MCI in Gretna. Some of the presidents were Armin Sawatzky, George Sawatzky, Peter R. Redekopp, and Henry Kuhl, Jr. Mr. and Mrs. Schaefer were ardent promoters of the Verein. Recognition is due to the latter for her spirited pioneer work in the presentation of such literary works as Schiller’s “Das Lied von der Glocke” and others. Excerpts from the greatest works of German and English poets and writers were presented at the meetings in the school, which were attended by the whole community.

*Program des Literarischen Vereines zu Gnadenthal
abgehalten am 13. Marz 1942.*

1. Einleitung — Lehrer Schaefer.
2. Lied — vom Madchenchor.
3. Journal — Stad. F. Madchen.
4. Lied — von Mariechen D. Peters.
5. Auffuhrung —

*“Die Ursache der Armut.”
Ort — Rahnotadt, in Mecklenburg. — 1848.*

Beteiligte:
 J. Jours — Rein — President des Reform Vereines
 D. Schellberg — Brasig — “Oekonomiker”
 J. Redekopp — Commichelkopp — Lutsbesitzer.
 W. Schellberg — Wimmersdorf — Schneider.
 D. Peters — Schulz — Zimmermann.
 D. Krahn — David — Judischer Kaufmann
 J. Braun — Grammelin — Wirt.
 G. Klassen — Thiel — Tischler.
 C. Hildebrand — Baldrian — Rektor.
 D. Bynner — Bank — Schuster
 H. Peters — “Menswegens” — Farber.
 J. Krahn — Kurz — Kaufmann
 J. Peters — Scheibert — Fuhrmann
 J. Friesen — Jagelbner des Commichelkopp

6. Lied — von Tina Schellberg.
7. Music — J. Redekopp.
8. Lied — vom Madchenchor.
9. Schluss —

Copy of Literarischer Verein Program — 1942.

Much work and careful planning was put into the literary programs. Performers went to a great deal of trouble to find suitable material for an assigned task, and spent hours on critical reviews and interpreta-

tion. An interested audience thoroughly appreciated and enjoyed the information or entertainment provided for them. Mr. Schaefer worked tirelessly in supportive activities, coaching and rehearsing for the well-planned programs. Shoddy performances were unacceptable to him, and he insisted on perfect memorization and flawless declaiming.

The literary evenings were greatly enhanced by the instrumental and vocal contributions made by the orchestra or "Spälstund", quartets, choirs, and small singing groups. The singing and playing of folk-tunes and lighter classical music became memorable musical experiences. Tenor John Redekopp and soprano Tina Wiebe (Mrs. Jacob Sawatzky) were favourite soloists.

In connection with the "Literarischer Verein" a journal was mimeographed every month. It contained anecdotes, verse and humour, and provided a vehicle of expression for the members of the Literarischer Verein.

Besides the arbitrarily arranged literary meetings, dramatic performances or "Bühnenstücke" were presented on a yearly basis, frequently in Low-German. **Die Fria, De Bildung, De Enbildung, Daut Schultebott**, etc., were carefully rehearsed and successfully performed. Humorous readings provided much amusement and many a villager was found chuckling on the way home. In an era when there was no television and limited radio entertainment, these literary evenings proved a welcome diversion for the villagers on long winter evenings. The participants developed confidence and poise, and eventually presented well-polished performances.

To this day the memories of a unique cultural phenomenon of a unique village serve as a binding link for the former villagers who nostalgically recall the years when much joy came to them in the delights of literature, music, and the written contributions to the journal.

New Year's Eve — "Sylvester"

In keeping with tradition, special celebrations were held on New Year's Eve — "daut nieje Joa aufwachten". Because of the humorous content of the secular part of the three-level agenda for the evening, the program was held in the school basement rather than the church.

On "Sylvesterabend" the smell of "Portzeltji" pervaded the entire school basement as more and more people entered. The aroma of the yeast-dough fritters (peculiar to New Year's Eve only), fried in deep fat, had a tendency to adhere to the fur collars and woolen shawls of the wearers. A regular church service with the choir in attendance was held from seven-thirty to nine o'clock. This was followed by an

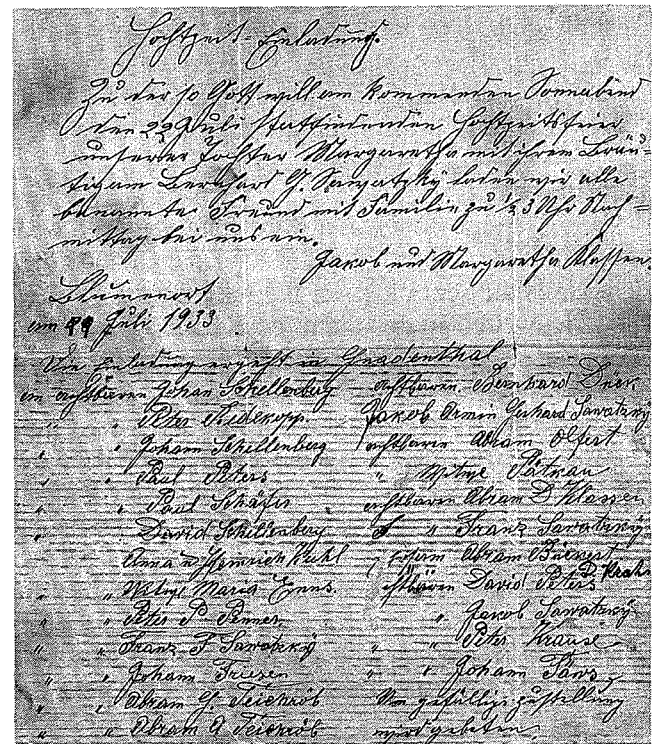
hour-long Jugendverein program, after which the older members of the congregation, parents, and children returned to their homes. The hours from ten to midnight belonged to the young people of the village. They now presented their own program of music and literary potpourri which expressed the exuberance of youth in a spirit of entertainment and fun.

The highlight of the evening was the refreshment hour. Food was rarely served at any social functions the young people attended, and so the joint meal was particularly enjoyable. For this special evening, the girls had prepared sandwiches and brought leftover Christmas dainties: pepper nuts, Hirschhornsalz Grusnick, and cakes. There were no facilities for preparing coffee in the school basement, so it was brewed in Henry Kuhl's kitchen. Several young stalwarts donned their wraps and braved the intense cold (New Year's Eve always seemed to attract -40° temperatures) to fetch the hot coffee, making sure they returned by eleven o'clock.

Just before midnight, the gathering fell silent as, with a prayer on their lips, they bade farewell to the old and welcomed the new year. The ten minutes before and after twelve midnight were a time of intense spiritual reflection and re-dedication. It became a tradition to end the evening by joining hands and singing Auld Lange Syne.

Polterabend

"Polterabend", held the eve before a wedding, is an old German tradition which the Russian Men-



"Wedding Invitation" — 1933.

nonites continued in the rural areas where they settled. Actually the word derives from "Poltergeist", the mischievous sprite who must be driven away by loud noises. It was customary long ago to accompany the presentation of a gift to the couple with a clattering noise, such as breaking dishes (poltern), to keep evil from their future household. The original meaning of the Polterabend had long been lost by the time the Mennonites left Prussia, but the custom of having an entertaining social evening, honouring the couple while gifts were presented to them, remained alive in Mennonite communities into the 1920s. In Russian Mennonite villages the event was held in the "ütjijreende Schien" (garlanded Scheune) which had been decorated for the wedding with greenery by the young people late Saturday afternoon. Instrumental and vocal music, plays performed on a primitive stage, humorous readings of poems, or comical literary selections entertained the audience until it was time for the "Gesellschaftsspiele" (games), which frequently involved singing.

In the Mennonite villages in Manitoba between 1920-1950 Polterabend was a special evening held on the Saturday before the wedding. No invitations were required — it was taken for granted that the "social" would take place. The young people gathered at the home of the bride fairly early in the evening, bearing wedding gifts. There was much spontaneous singing which alternated with games such as "Schlüsselbund" and "Grünes Gras", until it was time to open the wedding gifts. With great excitement the guests awaited the unwrapping of the inevitable joke gift that alluded to the fact that children would bless the union. The Polterabend, a delightful, entertaining event, preceded the customary bridal showers, which later became so prominent in Mennonite circles.

Weddings

Great excitement was always generated by a wedding in the village. An old German adage best expresses the sentiments of the villagers: "Hochzeit und Heuwetter gibt es nicht jeden Tag".

One of the early wedding celebrations in the 1920s was the marriage of Diedrich P. Peters and Margaret Sawatzky, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Sawatzky, who had arrived from Russia with her mother in 1923. Her father and one sister had remained in Germany to undergo medical treatment, while Margaret, her mother, two sisters, a brother and a nephew proceeded to Altona, Manitoba. Responsibility for their welfare was assumed by the late Mr. A. D. Friesen, in whose family Margaret became a popular member as household help for the next two years.

Margaret had been "keeping company" with



Wedding Photo — Diedrich and Margaret (Sawatzky) Peters, July 26, 1925.

young Diedrich Peters, but the relationship was interrupted by her emigration to Canada. Diedrich Peters' family also left Russia, while he remained to meet the demands of military service by working in the army kitchen as a baker. It was through the intervention of B. B. Janz that Diedrich Peters was able to leave Russia in 1924. When he arrived in Manitoba, wedding plans were laid for July 26, 1925.

An invitation to the wedding was extended to relatives and friends in Gnadenthal, Blumenort, and Reinland. The invitation was set up in letter form and written in Gothic script. The guests were listed on the back of the invitation, and the letter was first passed to the invited guests in Gnadenthal. Delivery was prompt, since no one wanted to be identified as the one "bi dem de Breef lidjen bleef".³ The last Gnadenthal guest on the list was responsible for delivery

of the invitation to the first guest of the next village, in this case Blumenort. The letter then made the rounds. The last Blumenort guest had to deliver the invitation to the first guest in Reinland. Once again the letter made its way through the village. Often the delivery of the invitation to the next village was a welcome excuse for a social visit, even on a weekday evening.

Of necessity, the wedding plans were kept very simple. Financial means were desperately meager. But love, the most powerful motive for undertaking such an important step in such financially insecure times, was there in abundance.

Diedrich Peters had anticipated this wedding when he left Russia. While enroute to Canada he had indulged in a small measure of sight-seeing in the British Isles and on the continent of Europe, quite in keeping with his adventurous spirit. On a visit to the ancient city of Augsburg in Bavaria, he bought a suit for five dollars, which was to be his wedding outfit. His bride bought three yards of silky white material at ninety-five cents a yard in Plum Coulee to make her own wedding-gown. She completed the bridal costume by shirring some gossamer-sheer, filmy fabric into a headdress and veil. Both the dress and veil were adorned with sprigs of myrtle according to tradition of the former homeland — the myrtle, the white dress and veil signifying purity or virginity of the wearer. A pair of black patent shoes purchased at two dollars and fifty cents lent the finishing touches to the bridal costume.

The groom finalized preparations by buying two wedding bands at six dollars apiece, and contributing ten dollars toward the purchase of groceries for the wedding meals. This left him the sum of two dollars to establish a home for his bride and himself.

The wedding took place in the small village school in the centre of the village of Gnadenthal. Prediger Jacob Klassen, Blumenort, a minister of the Blumenorter church, performed the ceremony. The vows were read by the minister and responded to individually by the couple. The service ended with the German Segensspruch:

Ihn heiligt nun Beruf und Stand,
Ihn heiligt euer Herz
Und folgt der Leitung seiner Hand
In Freude und in Schmerz.
Bis ihr den Lauf der Pilgerzeit
Nach Gottes Willen schliesst,
Und ihn in seiner Heiligkeit
Einst schauet wie er ist.

The wedding reception was held in the Scheune of the bride's parents, the part of the barn where hay and feed for the farm animals is stored. Having been swept immaculately, the area was festively decorated

with flowers and greens. Tables and benches had been set up, and a repast consisting of buns with sugar cubes and coffee was served.

The buns were an important feature of the wedding. The day before the wedding the women of the village would bring the ingredients required for the buns or Tweeback to the home of the bride. Lard, milk, and butter were donated, while the flour was provided by the family hosting the wedding. The women arrived in spotless dresses and aprons and tied their hair severely back with a clean kerchief, while they mixed and kneaded the dough to perfect smoothness, under the watchful eye of the bride's mother. Once the kneading was completed, portions of dough were taken to the individual homes, shaped into buns, and baked. Later that evening, the cooled buns were returned to the bride's home, to be relished at Vaspa on the wedding day.

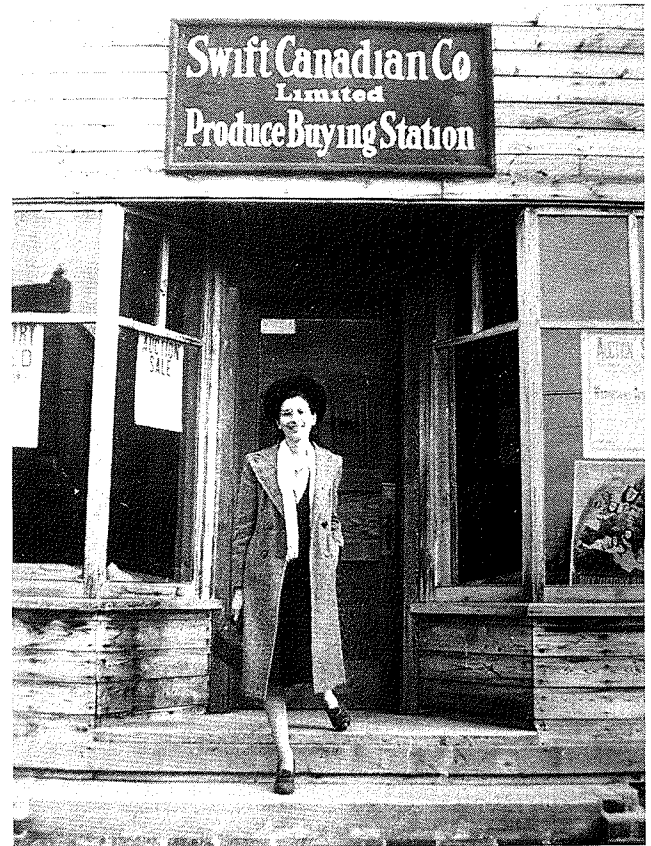
The simple meal was followed by "spazieren" or visiting. People from neighbouring villages had few occasions to meet in those horse and buggy days — weddings provided a great opportunity to share the experiences of everyday life.

Vaspa was followed by an evening meal several hours later. Dishes for the occasion were borrowed from neighbours and other villages, depending on the numbers involved. The supper was somewhat more substantial: "Sommaborst"⁴ and "Mannagrütze" (cream of wheat) were served. When all had eaten, and cleaning up operations were over, most of the older guests left for home. The young people went home to do chores, but after hurried milking and feeding of stock, they returned for the evening of Schlüsselbund and Grünes Gras, games akin to a folksy type of dance. Schlüsselbund was played by having an enterprising young person who could sing, choose a partner, and while walking around in a circle, begin one of the many folk songs the people in the village knew by memory. Soon all others selected a partner and followed suit. At an unexpected moment the person who started the game dropped a set of keys. The clanging sound was the sign for all to run to a seat. The last one to get a chair had to start the game again. When a girl was last, everybody called out "Damenwahl" (ladies' choice), and for this round the girls chose the partners. Schlüsselbund was a good mixer, and young males and females looked forward eagerly to weddings and other occasions where it was played. It provided an opportunity to socialize, and perchance to meet a future partner.

The evening came to a close with the "Auspielen von Kranz und Schleier" (literally, "playing out the veil and wreath"). The unmarried girls formed a circle around the blindfolded bride. She held a tray

on which the veil and myrtle wreath she had worn was now placed. A white bow had been pinned into her hair.⁵ The girls, who had all joined hands, now moved around in a circle singing the charming tune: “Wir winden dir den Jungfernkranz aus veilchenblauer Seide”, ending with the somewhat wistful “schöner, grüner, schöner grüner Jungfernkranz”. The bride then walked to one of the girls in the circle and presented the veil and wreath to her. The game was repeated with the single young men encircling the blindfolded groom who, after singing the same tune, with the boutonniere⁶ substituting for the veil, presented his “Strauss” to a young man. Subsequently the bride and groom were lifted up on two chairs (usually the chairs for the bridal couple were garlanded with greenery and flowers) by the young men, and the general cry of “Gorka!” (Bitter!) was chanted while the couple exchanged a hearty kiss.⁷ Then the girl and young man who had “won” the veil and boutonniere were lifted up on their chairs, until they too timidly exchanged a secretly long-desired kiss. Of course the blindfolded bride and groom could see enough to choose a couple who were already “going together”, and so another wedding often followed in the wake of the symbolical “Kranz-und Schleier-Spiel”.

The stability of traditions in Gnadenthal is evident in the similarity of wedding proceedings almost twenty years later. But these were war years, and occasionally the groom was absent from his village, because he was in the alternative service as a conscientious objector. John Janzen found himself in this predicament when he was ready to enter into marriage with Nettie Sawatzky. He had been placed in



Nettie Sawatzky in front of Egg Grading Station in Plumas. She was engaged to John Janzen who was assigned to a farm near Plumas. All conscientious objectors performed some alternative service for their country.

Plumas, but eventually was able to get a work sanction for Altona. Here he serviced farm machinery in the John Deere garage — a job which was recognized



“Verlobungsfest”. Engagement celebration of John and Nettie (Sawatzky) Janzen on the premises of Nettie’s sister and brother-in-law, Diedrich and Margaret Peters.

by the government as a significant contribution to the country. He received seventy-five dollars a month, out of which twenty-five dollars had to be paid to the Red Cross.

Gnadenthal had become more sophisticated with the approach of greater economic security, and for this wedding the bridal outfit had been ordered from the Eaton's catalogue, at a cost of ten dollars. Of course, the store-bought dress and veil were considered extravagant by some. The fact that a bouquet of "real" flowers had been ordered at Eaton's during the shopping trip on which occasion the groom purchased his suit, must have created a stir when suit and flowers arrived by train the day before the wedding. True, the flowers had suffered somewhat from travel fatigue, but they lent a touch of class to the celebration, nevertheless. The groom's grandmother, Mrs. Maria Olfert, supplied the traditional myrtle sprigs, which were still essential to a Mennonite wedding.

In keeping with tradition, the marriage ceremony was performed on a Sunday afternoon in the new Gnadenthal church. It was a fashionable wedding for the times, with the bride's niece, Margaret Peters,

and her nephew, Henry G. Ens from Reinland, acting as attendants, while the groom's sister, Ruth Sawatzky, and a niece of the bride, Louise Peters, served as flower girls. It was also the first time that a piano was moved into the church, and the couple entered to the wedding music played by Helen Peters, another niece of the bride. The traditional "Gott grüsse dich" was no longer in vogue, although still sung at some weddings.

A noonday meal for immediate family and out-of-village guests featured Kommstborscht, cold meats and home-baked bread — a decided improvement from the Sommaborscht of twenty years ago.

The reception was held in the basement of the church. The bride remembers vividly that the menu featured bologna, which was a treat at the time, and store-bought cookies, the variety kind, for dessert. And the bridal table proudly displayed a wedding-cake! The layers had been baked by a friend, but in the days of wood-stoves it was difficult to obtain an even heat in the oven. One of the layers suffered from excessive heat and exposure, and reached a near-burnt state. However, generous amounts of icing camouflaged all baking deficiencies, and the cake was admired by all as a work of art. Luckily no one even thought of cutting it.

By this time a regular feature of the wedding celebration was an evening program, with musical entertainment and poetry recital as main performance items. At the Janzen wedding, Bessy Hildebrand sang a solo — a first for a Gnadenthal wedding. A play written especially for this evening by Gerhard Ens, a nephew of the bride, was performed with much spirit. After the program the young people moved to the bride's home, where the rest of the evening followed the traditional pattern of playing games.

As the villagers became more affluent, the wedding traditions changed somewhat. Today, individual printed invitations are mailed out to invited guests. There are social events such as "Verlobungsfest" at the home of the bride, sometimes months prior to the wedding, and several showers for the bride. The bridal gown and veil and co-ordinated dresses for the female attendants are custom-made, with little consideration of price, while tuxedos are rented for the groom and his attendants. The couple now enters to the strains of Handel's "Largo", and visitors sign a guest-book before they attend the short service. The register is signed to the accompaniment of fine music, and guests file past the reception line formed by the wedding party. The supper menu consists of salads, cold meats and dainties. Jugendspiele (games) of earlier days are no longer fashionable, and entertainment generally consists of toasts and



John and Nettie Janzen, October, 1944.

speeches. Gifts are opened in the privacy of the bride's home in a small circle of friends and family, and instead of the verbal expression of thanks to the kind givers, formal thank-you notes are mailed to each. After the gifts have been opened, the couple usually changes into travel outfits, enters the kleenex-flower decorated car, and rolls away for a two-week honeymoon in Banff or Florida.

Funerals

Before the establishment of funeral homes all the arrangements for the burial of the deceased were made in the village. People died at home, many never having seen a doctor. Death was accepted as a natural phase of the life cycle of a human being, and children grew up familiar with this fact.

The body of the deceased was washed in preparation for burial. Mrs. A. G. Teichroeb and Mrs. Julius



Fall of 1936. Funeral of Mr. Franz F. Sawatzky, Sr. All arrangements were made in Gnadenthal. The coffin was made by Mr. David Krahn.

Letkeman were usually called on to perform this function.⁸ The corpse was placed on sand in a very cold room in winter, and in summer was covered with ice and a blanket. Coffins were made by Mr. David Krahn, who was an accomplished carpenter. The funeral service was held no later than three days after the death had occurred. Arrangements for the funeral were made with the help of the local minister, who held a short religious service with the bereaved family at the time of the preparations.

Announcements of the burial service were made by a common letter, first in the local village, then elsewhere. The grave diggers were selected by the bereaved family, and were thanked by an invitation to a meal. The day after a death, the women of the village gathered at the home of the deceased, bringing butter, lard and milk to prepare the dough for the buns, which would be served after the burial.

Funeral services were simple. The minister delivered a sincere, comforting sermon and read the "Lebensverzeichnis" or obituary. The Vorsänger led the congregation in suitable hymns: "Geht nun hin und grabt mein Grab", "Die Liebe darf wohl weinen wenn sie ihr Fleisch begräbt" and "Wo findet die Seele die Heimat, die Ruh". The coffin remained open during the entire service and the whole congregation filed past to view the deceased once more before being carried to the plot in the cemetery.

At the cemetery there was a short grave-side service, after which the coffin was lowered and covered with earth. The sound of the first shovels of



Funeral of Helena D. Peters, June 7, 1951.



Funeral of Mr. Paul D. Peters, April 11, 1953. The grandsons are carrying the coffin to church.



Funeral procession for the burial of Mr. Bernhard Dyck. Jacob Redekopp is in charge of the front wagon.

earth mercilessly grated on the ears of the bereaved, but at that time no one spared himself the pain of his loss by leaving an open grave or resorting to sedatives.

There was always a meal of buns and coffee after the burial, generously prepared by the women of the village. Consolation and sympathy were extended to the bereaved, and the initial shock of that painful time after the burial was greatly alleviated by the presence of friends and relatives who had come from far and near to comfort and support. Everybody shared in the loss when a death occurred, because everybody truly "belonged" in this village community.

In the early 1940s funeral homes were established in the towns of Altona and Winkler. Transportation had been greatly facilitated by that time, and cars or trucks were to be seen in every yard. People now were hospitalized when they were ill, and many died in a hospital bed rather than at home. Currently, the funeral home takes care of the deceased, but the funeral services as such have not changed greatly in the past thirty years.

The Midwife

Life in Gnadenthal was made somewhat easier by those people who tended to the general physical well-being of the village residents. Among them are the storekeepers, the delivery man, and of course, the midwife.

Gnadenthal was fortunate in having an excellent midwife in the person of Mrs. Anna (Reimer) Janzen. She was born in 1882, the second daughter of Jacob and Helena Reimer in the village of Neu-Osterwick, Alte Kolonie, Russia. When Anna was eighteen years old, she lost her mother in childbirth when her sister Elisabeth was born. The death occurred due to

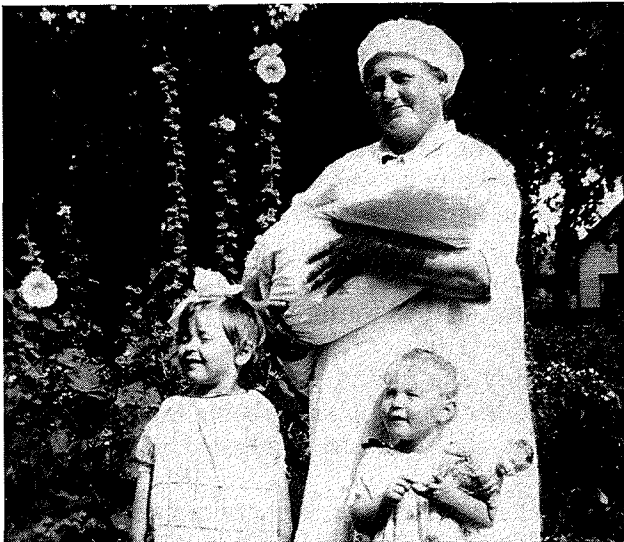
infection caused by unsanitary conditions, and an ignorant woman who delivered the baby. Anna, who was heart-broken at the loss of her mother, resolved then and there to become a country doctor. Her father, however, would not give his consent to such a career. Eventually he was persuaded through the intervention of a friend to allow her to enter professional studies in obstetrics which would earn her a practicing midwife degree. In 1909 she left for Riga in Latvia and studied for three years under Dr. Keilman, the head obstetrician in the Riga Hospital. Subsequently she took a six month course in chiropractice, her special interest being bone fracture. Talented as she was, she graduated with highest honours.

Upon her return home, her services were in great demand. Three or four villages joined forces to engage her as midwife for their area for a three year term at a set salary. When World War I disrupted the placid life-style of the Russian Mennonite villages, she was conscripted into the services of the Red Cross and sent to Ekaterinoslaw, the capital of Ukraine. With her excellent qualifications, she became the head nurse at her station. She was also responsible in the operating room, where her assistance was required mostly for amputations.

When in 1917-18 anarchy was rampant in Russia, the Red Cross was disbanded. She returned home again, and was immediately hired as midwife by the village of Niederchortitza on the Dnjepr. At this time the Machno bands ravaged the land, and she repeatedly came into contact with the terrorists. In one instance one of them demanded morphium to which he had become addicted after a leg amputation. When she could not meet his incessant demand for the drug, she was placed against the wall to be shot. She calmly told the villain to shoot, since she was not afraid to die; death might be preferable to being under the tyranny of men such as he, devoid of any sense of law and order. The terrorist put down his gun and told her she would have to go on living a little longer, because Russia needed the help of brave women like her.

When the typhus epidemic broke out in the wake of the soldiers returning from the front, Mrs. Janzen too fell prey to the disease, but was restored to health after three weeks. Then famine stalked all Russia, and food became scarce indeed. As if in answer to a prayer, Mrs. Janzen was called to a delivery in the home of a formerly wealthy farmer in Schöneberg. She was reimbursed with a huge baking sheet of Tweeback. Her family had had no flour for Christmas baking, and wept for joy when the Tweeback made their appearance.

In 1923 Mrs. Janzen emigrated to Canada with



Midwife — Mrs. Anna Janzen. She is holding one-week-old Betty, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Dyck, Jr. Standing in front on the right is Emily Dyck (sister of the baby) and left is Elfrieda Dyck (aunt of the baby).

her family (one of the first groups to leave Russia), and arrived in Winkler in July, 1923. Here she met John J. Janzen in Kroeker's General Store, and in November, 1924, they were married. In the same month they moved to Gnadenthal, where they had purchased the Dietrich Reimer farm. The marriage was almost a family affair, for they took with them Mrs. Janzen's father, old Mr. Reimer, her oldest sister Helena, who was to look after house and garden when she was out on calls, and a niece, Helen Reimer, her brother's daughter, who also came to live with them.

Mrs. Janzen served Gnadenthal and the surrounding area for many years. She did not lack professional ethics, and recommended that a doctor be consulted whenever she had the least doubts about her ability to handle a case. After a successful delivery, Mrs. Janzen returned on a daily basis for the next ten days to take care of both the mother and the baby.



Mr. and Mrs. John J. Janzen, Christmas, 1949. They had retired and moved to British Columbia.

Her fee for a birth attendance and ten-day care was ten dollars.

Frequently Mrs. Janzen was called on to advise in medical matters other than childbirth. She had cures for sore throats, extracted troublesome teeth, and set broken bones. Her medicine for sore throats was so vile that most patients were "cured" after a single application, and the throats were allowed to heal naturally. Mrs. Janzen had enough medicine to supply a drug store, but her favourite remedy for all ills was Camomile tea. It cured most internal and external maladies promptly.

Mrs. Janzen's concern was not only the physical condition of her patients. She was also deeply interested in their spiritual welfare. Young people who came to enlist her medical help had to accept spiritual advice, while she set a limb or massaged a sprain.

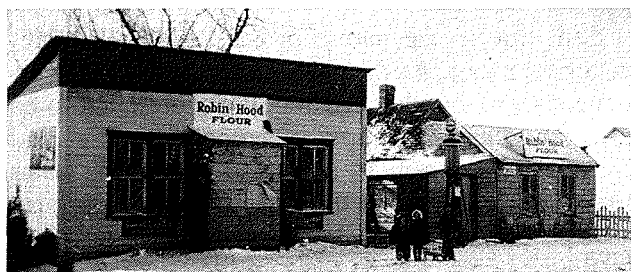
In 1943 her health began to fail; she and her husband sold their farm in Gnadenthal and moved to a five-acre farm in Yarrow, B.C. Here her health waned a little more each day, and she had to give up the chiropractic work she had still persisted in doing when she became too frail to attend confinement cases. In 1958 the couple moved to Chilliwack, where she succumbed to a heart attack on April 26, 1964, at the age of eighty two.

The General Store

Although generally the farmers tried to be self-sufficient, there were numerous commodities that had to be purchased in the nearby towns. Horse and buggy travel, however, was time-consuming. As a result, some enterprising men answered a particular need by opening a store. Typical of part-time ventures was the store in a small room of the Wilhelm Dycks, the J. B. Sawatzkys, and the John S. Friesens. It became obvious that Gnadenthal had enough business possibilities to support a full-time storekeeper.

A. A. Olfert

The Olferts moved to Gnadenthal from Sperling in 1933 to open a store. At first the business premises were small, but they were later extended to twice the original size. The store carried most essential household commodities, some cream separators, and gasoline and oil. Best sellers at that time were "kitchen" items such as salt, matches, sugar, dried fruit, and flour. The groceries were purchased from Winnipeg Wholesalers (McLeans Groceries Wholesale), gas and oil from Altona B. A. Bulk Station, binder twine cream separators, meat grinders, cutlery and other German imports from C. A. DeFehr in Winnipeg. They did not deal with other local retailers. Most items were sold for cash, but credit was available.



The first store in Gnadenthal.

Eggs were taken in trade. Store hours were long, until about 9 P.M. or later. Since no outside help was kept, the day was demanding for Mrs. Olfert, who helped in the store and took care of house and family as well.

In the six years that the Olferts operated the store, they noticed changes in demands for consumer goods as the villagers became more prosperous. Instead of taking grain to the flour mill, they bought the flour at the store; rather than use lard, they purchased cottonseed oil. Cream separators were beginning to sell more readily, and there was even a demand for bicycles.

In 1939 Olferts sold the store to the George J. Sawatzkys, and moved to Starbuck, Manitoba, in order to open a large general store together with J. S. Friesens.

George J. Sawatzky

On May 1, 1939, George J. Sawatzky bought the store from Abram Olfert for the sum of \$717.00. Included in the price was the store, living quarters, and all stock and equipment. In 1942 Mr. Sawatzky purchased a larger store building from John S. Friesen, and moved it from Rosenort to Gnadenthal.

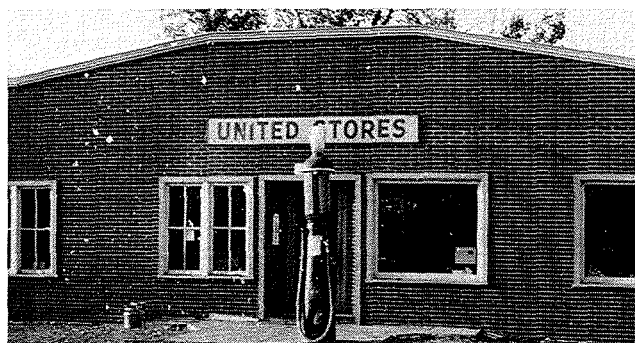
The general store carried groceries, hardware, and dry goods, as well as gas and oil. Mr. Sawatzky also had the B.A. Oil Distributorship of the area. Credit buying was very popular, against which eggs, graded by the storekeeper, were brought in and credited to accounts. Horsehair, cowhides, and gopher tails were also accepted as payment, since cash was exceedingly difficult to get in the thirties.

The customers were loyal and generally traded in the village store, which was also a meeting place for some farmers. Not always uplifting, but certainly interesting discussions were carried on. Because wives wanted their husbands home on winter nights, the store closed for the evening, with dire results for the storekeeper, who was continually running back and forth between store and home to supply essentials that customers had forgotten to buy during the day. Early spring was welcomed by Mr. Sawatzky, because the store remained open in the evening.

As he relates in his reminiscences, Mr. Sawatzky's sense of humour stood him in good stead.

One time a shipment of fine hammers had come in, which sold at \$1.98 apiece. A man came in and purchased a hammer for the price asked. A few minutes later a second customer bought a hammer, but demanded a reduction of eight cents, which he was eventually granted. The first customer now objected to the initial price of \$1.98 which he had paid, but accepted the answer Mr. Sawatzky gave him: "Wouldn't you give a beggar something if he asked?"

Sawatzkys bought creamery butter in Winkler, selling it at two cents per pound above the wholesale price to cover time and handling expenses. One lady customer asked Mr. Sawatzky to bring her two pounds of butter, wholesale, from the creamery, because she would save four cents that way. She paid for the butter with eggs.



Gnadenthal General Store — 1939. Proprietor — George J. Sawatzky.

When people in the area became more prosperous, their buying habits changed considerably. They started to buy canned goods, canned meats, and bologna. A popular item was cotton print which the store handled — an attraction to a large area around Gnadenthal.

Mrs. Sawatzky looked after the business when Mr. Sawatzky went to Winnipeg for supplies, usually one day a week. The children helped after school hours and on weekends, but extra help was required as business increased. Nettie Sawatzky (Mrs. John Janzen) was the first person to be hired. She was succeeded by Tina Neufeld (Mrs. Enns). Both contributed greatly to the service the Gnadenthal store was able to give.

When the store expanded, Tina took great pains to arrange an attractive window display. After finishing it to her satisfaction, a very stout farmer came in, shoved it all aside with one sweep of his arm, and sat down on the cleared window-seat. This occurred repeatedly for several days, to Tina's great frustration, until one day she strategically placed thumb-tacks on the window-seat. That was the last time the farmer interfered with her window display.

Mr. Sawatzky and his family mixed well with the

villagers, who respected and looked up to their local merchant. Upon popular request, Mr. Sawatzky negotiated for telephone and hydro services: hydro in 1947 and telephone in 1948.

The Sawatzky family sold the business and moved to Winkler in 1955.

Jacob Dyck

Jacob Dyck became the general merchant in Gnadenthal in 1955, but the store building was destroyed by fire in June, 1956. Temporary store facilities were set up in the barn attached to the home, and services were again provided to the area residents two days after the loss. In approximately two months a new store building was in operation. In May of 1960, a small whirlwind picked up burning rubbish and hurled it onto the barn roof next to the store, resulting in fourteen holes in the roof. The villagers set up a bucket brigade and the fire was extinguished without further damage. The fire loss might have forced closure of the store had it not been for the loyal support of the Gnadenthal residents and the hard-working clerks.



Gnadenthal Store — 1956. Proprietor — Jacob Dyck.



May, 1960. Store fire — villagers came to the rescue.

Still true to the nature of the “general” store, groceries, meats, hardware, feeds, gasoline, oil, kerosene and many other commodities continued to be sold. An abundant supply of bologna, coffee, and hardware was essential, since these were the items generally in demand at the time. But the store also made other services available:

Service and repairs for appliances and lawnmowers

Bulk gas and oil deliveries

Cleaning and adjusting of all oil stoves in the village as a free service

Official collection agency for Manitoba Hydro and Manitoba Telephone System

Licensed property and auto insurance sales

Twice weekly poultry and egg purchasing

The local patrons loyally tried to make their purchases in “their” store, and the increase in the number of cars in the village after a few years had no impact on the sales volume. If anything, the new transportation facilities boosted business, for customers came from the Morris, Emerson, and Winkler areas, perhaps because Fairfield blankets, made of recycled wool from discarded woolen clothing, were handled in the store at that time. Hard cash was always difficult to come by, so the storekeeper sold the chickens, eggs and cream of his customers in Winnipeg, and they in turn spent the proceeds in his store to buy necessary items. This “barter” system required a great deal of time, and, although Mrs. Dyck helped whenever possible, other clerks had to be employed. Mary Neufeld, Peter Neufeld, and Pauline Peters all worked in the Dyck store at some time.

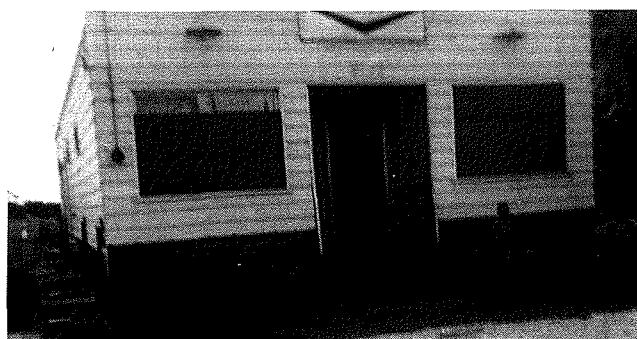
The office of general merchant was not without its humorous moments. The store provided the community with a pick-up and-delivery service to Winnipeg and Winkler twice a week. One customer



Sale of Gnadenthal store to Stanley Co-op in Winkler.

ordered a can of coffee from Winkler where it had been advertised a cent a pound lower than the Gnadenthal price (twelve cents a case). Mr. Dyck complied, and delivered the coffee to the customer's door at no extra cost. Although butter was delivered twice a week to Gnadenthal, a staunch Winkler Co-op Creamery member on occasion requested Mr. Dyck to bring two pounds of butter from the creamery, since he felt that as a member his business should go there. The butter, too, was promptly delivered.

For reasons of health, Jacob Dyck sold the store to the Winkler Consumers Co-op who were in a position to provide good service to a community the Dyck family had learned to appreciate. The store was managed by George B. Sawatzky, and later by John Buhler. In 1967 it was moved to Blumenfeld.



August, 1969. The former Gnadenthal store building is being moved to Blumenfeld.

The Post Office

In 1924 Gnadenthal mail was addressed to the Plum Coulee post office. It was placed into a common box and picked up by any Gnadenthal resident who happened to go to Plum Coulee. This mail was delivered to the B. Penners (the Kuhl yard) and sorted into open boxes located in an old shed on the yard. The arrangement provided access to the mail at all times. Later, mail service was provided by the general store.

When mail handling became more restricted, the residents of Gnadenthal once again used a common box — Box 4, in Plum Coulee. Everybody had access to this box.

In 1944, at the insistence of store owner, George J. Sawatzky, Gnadenthal received its own registered post office. Mr. Sawatzky, the registered post master, sold stamps and money orders. Residents were able to mail parcels and send registered mail. Mail was delivered across the counter — the public no longer had access to everybody's mail.

Since the post office in Gnadenthal was a branch of the Plum Coulee post office, a carrier was hired under contract by the government to deliver mail to

and from the village. The first carrier was Henry S. Friesen, 1944-1947, followed by Peter V. Neufeld. Due to ill health, Mr. Neufeld made only one trip, but his seventeen-year-old son, Peter, continued this work until 1954. The task of the carrier was not always easy in those horse and buggy days. There was no shelter for the horses, and when the train was late — sometimes hours — the carrier had to await its arrival.

By 1954 the work of the carrier became less onerous. Roads had improved, and travel was done by car or truck. Mr. Peter B. Penner provided carrier service from 1954-1961 after which store keeper and post master Jake Dyck took on this task. The arrangement continued after the store was bought by Winkler Co-op Limited and managed by George B. Sawatzky.



Mr. and Mrs. Jacob W. Neufeld of Plum Coulee. Mr. Neufeld was mailman for 12 years in southern Manitoba, including the village of Gnadenthal.

In 1963 Gnadenthal became part of a rural route service provided through the post office at Plum Coulee. Mail was delivered every day. Ben Dueck was the first delivery man. When he left, George B. Sawatzky combined postal delivery with driving the school bus. Jake W. Neufeld, Plum Coulee, received the contract in 1967. Upon his retirement in 1979 the contract was not renewed. Gnadenthal residents once again got their mail from a general delivery box in Plum Coulee. However, the post offices in Plum Coulee and Winkler had expanded, making it possible for residents to buy individual boxes in the town of their choice.

“De Schmaunt-feara” — Mr. Corny P. Peters

Cornelius Peters, with his family, the Paul D. Peters, emigrated from Russia to Sommerfeld, Manitoba, in 1923, later moving to Gnadenthal. In his

teens, Corny had done heavy harvest labour for thirty dollars a month, and eventually felt the urge to find more lucrative work. Like so many others, he was impatient to earn money, and accepted a short term job with the CPR railroad in Wymark, Saskatchewan. When the harsh Saskatchewan winter set in, he returned to Manitoba, where he worked on various farms for the next few years.

He married Maria Fast, and settled permanently just east of the village of Gnadenthal. However, the unemployment crises of the 1930s clouded his existence in spite of his excellent work record.

Necessity breeds ingenuity, and one day Mr. Peters loaded four three-gallon cans of cream onto his buggy and took them to the Winkler Creamery. They were well received by Mr. Coltart, the manager at that time. A bargain was struck: Corny Peters would deliver fresh cream to the creamery, and Mr. Coltart would pay him fifteen cents per pound of butterfat and provide a permanent parking place for his horse and vehicle besides. As a means of encouragement, he even gave the new cream delivery man a one dollar tip, and therewith Mr. Peters' twelve-year cream delivery business was launched.

The villagers welcomed the delivery idea. Every Thursday morning at 6 A.M. Mr. Peters, starting at the eastern end of the village, sounded his piercing shrill whistle, and cream cans and containers of every sort were brought to the street. Once the cans were loaded, he hurried to Winkler with his cargo.

Before long his booming business demanded the purchase of a larger vehicle and a team of horses. He bought a "democrat" which had the capacity to hold fifteen to twenty cans, and extended his route to include the villages of Friedensruh and Reinfeld, which were conveniently located on his way. In winter there was no problem in keeping the cream intact, and if the farmers, who had ice-cellar, stored their cream properly in summer, Mr. Peters usually managed to get it to its destination in good condition.

Once the cream had reached the creamery, it was weighed and graded:

- (1) "Table" — perfect
- (2) Special (a bit sour)
- (3) No. 1 — sour
- (4) No. 2 grade — not acceptable

The cream was also tested for butterfat; the higher the butterfat content, the higher the price. In the 1930s a



"De Schmaunt-feara". Owners and staff of the creamery. Mr. C. P. Peters is third from the left.

WINKLER CREAMERY CO.
CREAM STATEMENT

A. P. Peters

CREAM CANS
AT
WHOLESALE
PRICES

All Cream Graded By Government Appointed Grader

Date Retek'd	Sheet No.	Size of Can	Pounds Cream	Test	Grade	Pounds Butter Fat	Price Per Pound	Amount
	6	5-	4841		1	196	32	640
					9 AUG. 1927			
								15 640

Above find statement for your last can of cream. If satisfied, tell others. If not, tell us. Remember we guarantee top market prices always.

WINKLER CREAMERY CO.'Y

A stub from a 1927 cream cheque.

three gallon can of cream netted the farmer sixty-five cents.

After rinsing all the cans at the creamery, Mr. Peters was given the list of the customers and the amount of money which they were to receive. On his return trip he delivered the cans and the money to the owners, usually very promptly.

Wishing to expand his business, Mr. Coltart bought a panel truck from Alex Heim, the Raleigh's dealer in Winkler, and put it at Corny Peters' disposal. This rapid means of transportation greatly broadened the territory that could be served, and soon cream was picked up as far east as Altona, south to the border, north to Rosenfeld, and west to Winkler. The business grew into a six-day operation, with Tuesdays and Thursdays the pick-up days for Gnadenthal. With the increase in business volume, Mr. Peters experienced no end of frustration with his truck, since no vehicle appeared to have shock absorbers sturdy enough to carry his load. His overhead was high, and during the busy season on the farm he would "moonlight" to augment his income. When he was overbooked, Mr. Olfert, the storekeeper, delivered the cream for him on a few rare occasions. Corny Peters continued in this strenuous work for nine years, and came to be known as the southern Manitoba "Schmauntfeara".

In the early 1930s rural Manitoba was fairly immobile, and visits to the town were few and far between. Before long, the "Schmauntfeara" was met at the street with the cans of cream and a shopping list from some villagers. Having taken care of the cream, he headed for the different stores in Winkler to shop for his customers. The shopping requests ranged from nails and foods to yardgoods and drugstore sundries, and Mr. Peters soon became quite expert in the art of shopping. He recalls some of the unusual requests with great relish:

On one occasion a woman asked him to bring her

a dress-length of material which she had seen in a Winkler store some time ago. She accurately described the exact aisle, the location on the shelf, and the exact position of a particular bolt of material in that area. Mr. Peters easily located it, and was able to satisfy the customer. At another time a young bride asked him to buy her several yards of lace, which she must have to finish sewing her wedding-gown. It was harvest time, and there was no thought of anyone driving her to town. Reluctantly Mr. Peters, who had grave doubts about his choice in laces, yielded to her pleas. Somehow, he made just the right purchase, but he always felt the transaction had been a close call!

The most precarious situation he ever found himself to be in was when he gave a ride to a widower in his sixties, who was obviously very lonely. "Do you know why I came with you today?" the man asked as they neared a particular village. "To go to Winkler?" Mr. Peters queried. "No", was the answer, "I'm out to look for a wife. When we come to a certain house in the next village where an eligible young woman lives, I would like you to go in and ask for her hand in marriage for me."

Mr. Peters' answer to the proposal was an emphatic "no". He drove on to the yard of the home in question, however, but refused to take any further action. The suitor on the other hand refused to budge from his seat in the cab. Meanwhile the occupants of the house had noticed the vehicle in the yard and came to the barn door. The widower still refused to move. Greatly embarrassed, Mr. Peters slowly got out of the truck, greeted the couple, and explained his mission.

Their response took him by complete surprise. The mother fairly flew to the door, ecstatically shouting: "Aun, komm schwind, doa sett een Fria em Truck!" (Anna, come quickly, there is a suitor for you in the truck.) Aun coolly replied: "Etj wel tjeenen Fria!" (I don't want a suitor.)

Both mother and father pleaded and remonstrated with their daughter — she might at least come and have a look at a prospective husband. To no avail! "Aun" knew what she wanted — not a husband!

The Lasting Ties of Village Life

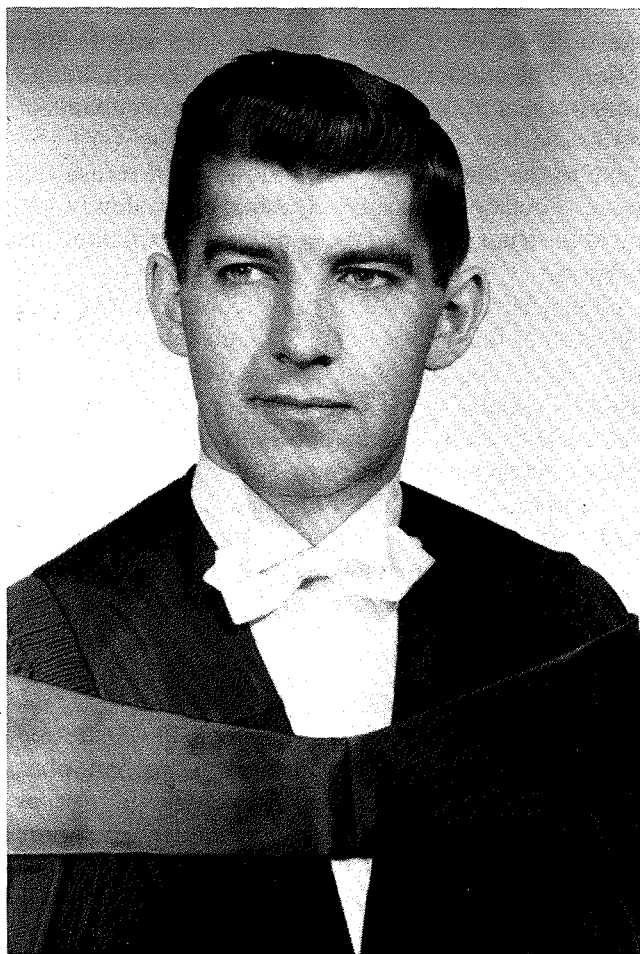
With the pressure of modern times, the hustle and bustle which was formerly only an urban phenomenon, has also invaded the idyllic village of Gnadenthal. Yet the hard years in which the members of the village survived because of their fine community spirit, the genuine concern each felt for his fellow-man, has lent a singular cohesiveness to Gnadenthal residents, past and present, as the centennial celebrations have born out again and again.

Casuals

Sam Kuhl, son of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kuhl — first Gnadenthal resident to receive a Bachelor of Science degree in Agriculture.



Clarence Labun, son of Mr. and Mrs. George Labun, psychiatrist. At the time of his death in 1972 he was medical director of the Eden Mental Health Centre in Winkler.



Paul F. Peters, son of Mr. and Mrs. Diedrich P. Peters — Gnadenthal's first medical doctor.



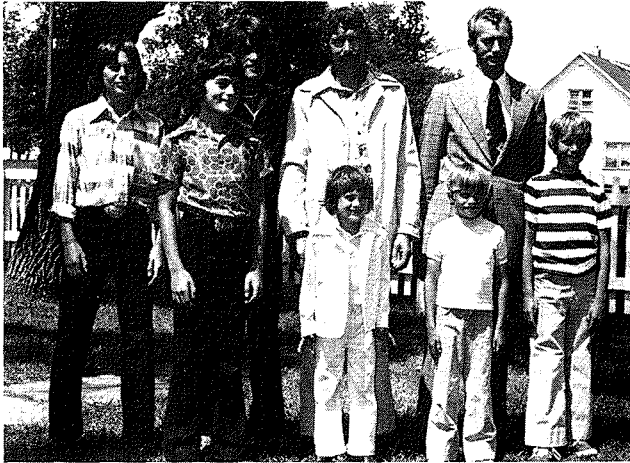
Ted Schaefer, son of Mr. and Mrs. Paul J. Schaefer, chemist. Dr. Schaefer is a graduate of Oxford University and is presently teaching and doing research at the University of Manitoba. He was named the 1979-1980 recipient of the Graduate Students' Association Award for Excellence in Graduate Teaching.



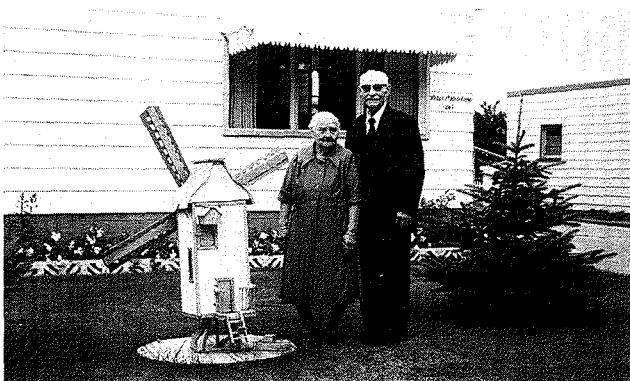
George A. Sawatzky, Prof. of Physics, Groningen, Holland. Dr. Sawatzky has been a guest lecturer in most major universities in the world.



Rev. and Mrs. Abram A. Teichroeb with their mother, Mrs. Justina Teichroeb, on the occasion of their golden wedding anniversary. Photo: August, 1981.



Jim and George Sawatzky and their sons. Photo: 1970s.



Peter P. and Lena Redekopp, August 1982, the year of their ninety-fifth birthdays and their seventy-fifth year of marriage.



Weddings — an opportunity to work together. Traditionally, cream and butter were donated by the village ladies to the home of the bride. Mrs. Diedrich P. Peters (left) and Mrs. Cornelius P. Peters (right) are at the home of Paul P. Peters kneading dough for buns, in preparation for daughter Anne's wedding the next day.



Mixing potato salad at the Paul P. Peters home for Helen's wedding. Pouring cream (left) is Mrs. Peters, and giving instructions to Liz Dyck is daughter Susan (right).



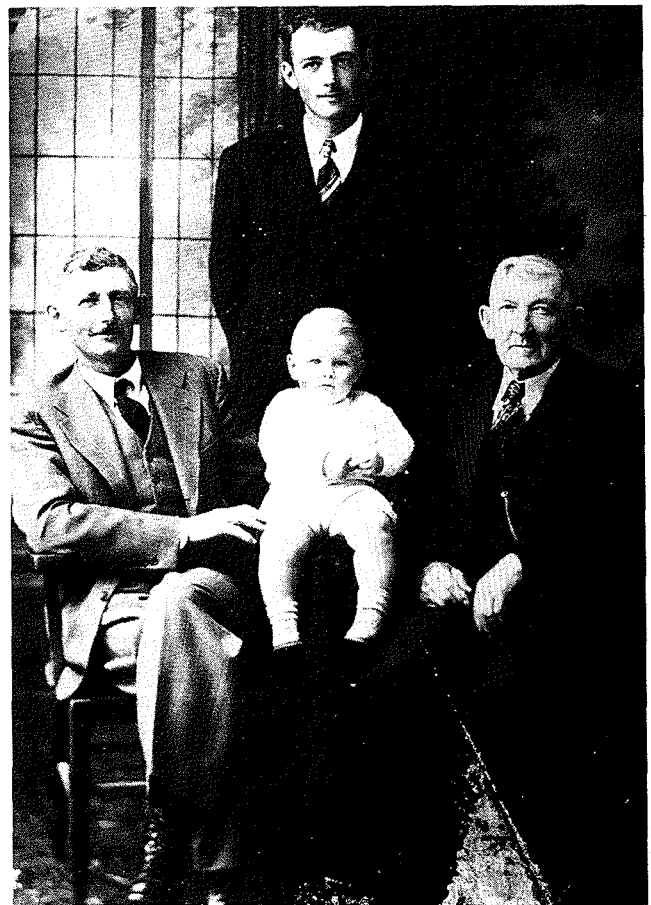
Engagement celebration of Alfred Sawatzky and his fiancée Olga Voth (background) at the Sawatzky home.



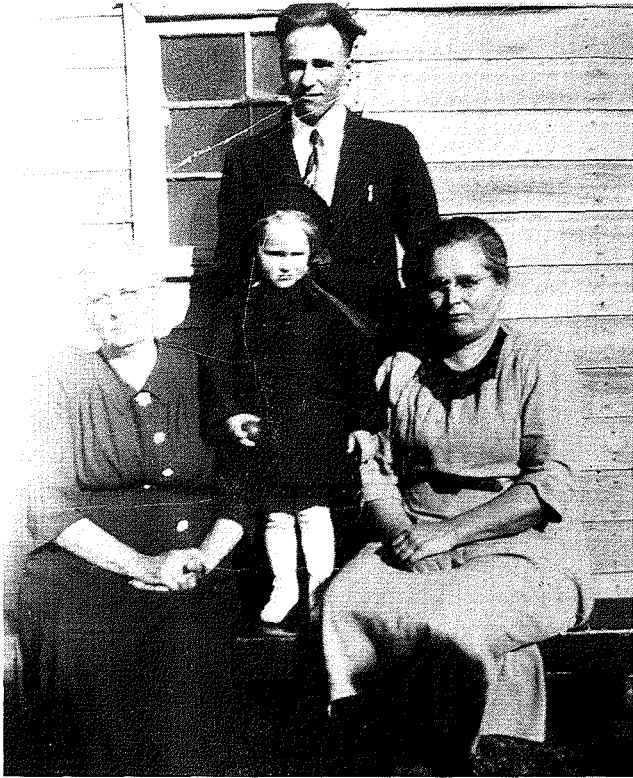
Playing wedding. The Redekopp girls enjoyed dressing neighbour children, Ruth and Alfred Sawatzky, in wedding finery.



The long and short of it. George Sawatzky (tall) and Willi Kliever (short). Photo: 1950.



Four generations: great-grandson Harry Peters, standing, father Henry H. Peters, seated left, grandfather Henry P. Peters and right is great-grandfather Paul D. Peters.



Four generations: Marjorie Janzen with father John Janzen (standing), seated right, grandmother Margareta Sawatzky, and left is great-grandmother Maria Olfert.



Four generations: Quenton Peters with father Peter Peters and grandmother Aganetha (Born) Peters (seated left), and great-grandmother Mrs. Anna Born (right).



Mrs. Anna Born celebrating her 90th birthday on July 9, 1978. With her are 11 of her 12 children.



C.F.A.M. — Radio program "Wort des Lebens" — Mr. D. D. Klassen was the speaker. Henry G. Ens was in charge of music. The singing group was, first row, left to right: Marlene Penner, Tina Peters, Rita Klassen, Erna Peters, Johanna Sawatzky. Second row: Siemens, Braun, Corny Friesen, Ben Sawatzky, David Friesen.



Gnadenthal Homecoming, 1967. Mr. P. J. Schaefer and many of his former students.



"Petersfest", one of the many Peters' gatherings.



"Paul J. Peters and Elma Penner". Oh to be so innocent and carefree again!



"Birthday Party". Anne (Kuhl) Sawatzky was famous for the elaborate birthday parties for her children. She was also the expert wedding cake decorator.



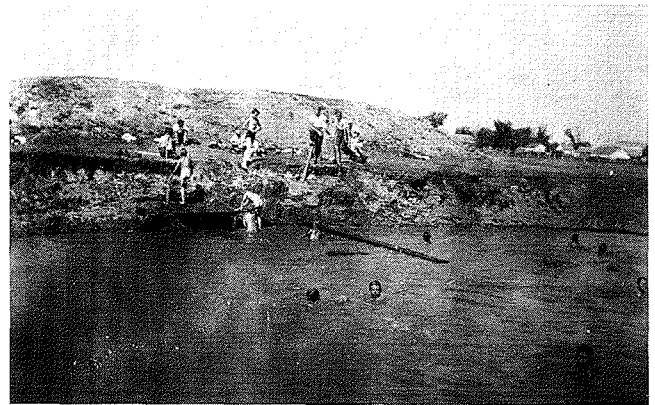
"Watermelon Feast". Helen (Paul) Peters slicing watermelons for two hungry gents.



"Group Picture at Picnic in Walhalla". Everybody is dressed in his Sunday best.



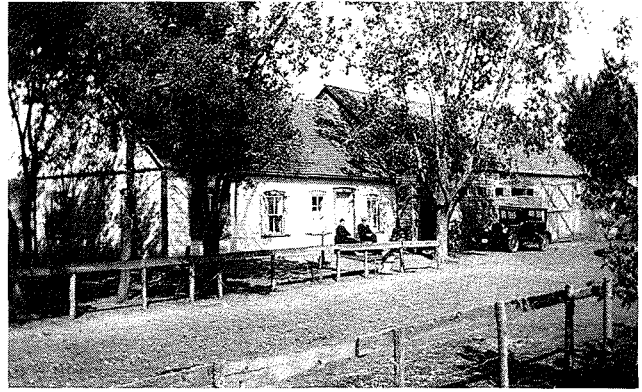
"Picnic in Walhalla", 1937. Henry Kuhl's and George Sawatzky's trucks.



"Gnadenthal boys cooling off on a hot summer's day". The David Penner pond was a favourite swimming place. Swimming trunks were not in vogue so consequently all females remained at a safe distance.



"Hockey Fever in Gnadenthal". John Klassen in goal, Bruno Kliever standing.



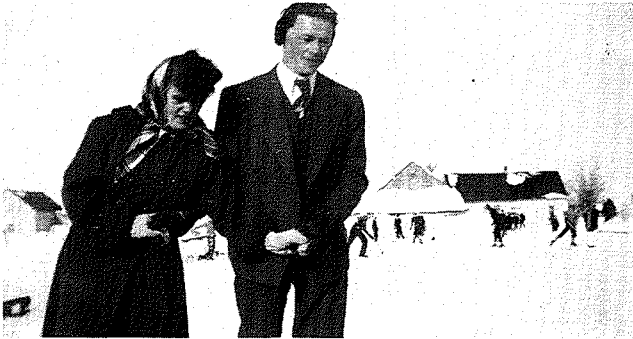
Typical positioning of house and barn on the north side of village.



"Hockey Players Lined up for Action". Horse manure "pucks" were readily available. Everything was recycled in those days.



Typical positioning of house and barn on the south side of village.



"Pleasure Skating on a Sunday Afternoon". Elma Penner and John Dyck during their courting days.



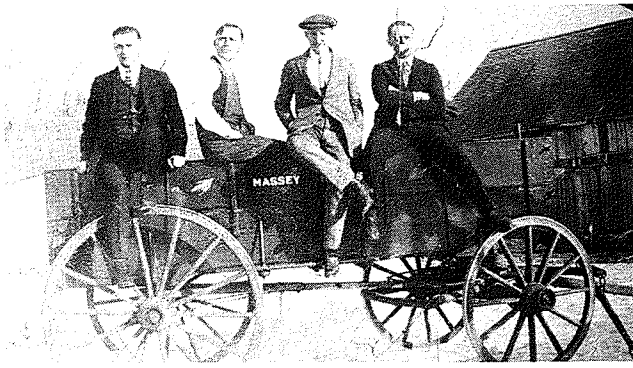
Mr. F. F. Sawatzky and son Jim.



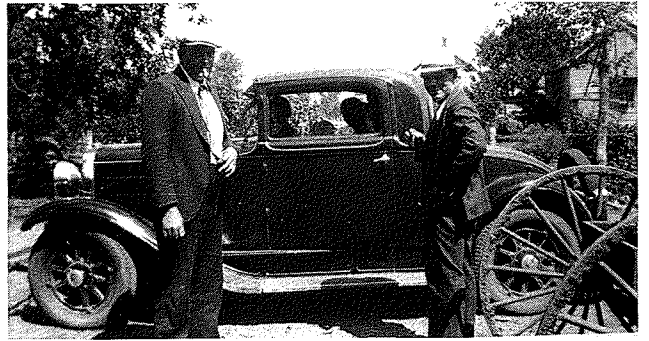
The famous March 4, 1966 blizzard. The street was blocked solidly.



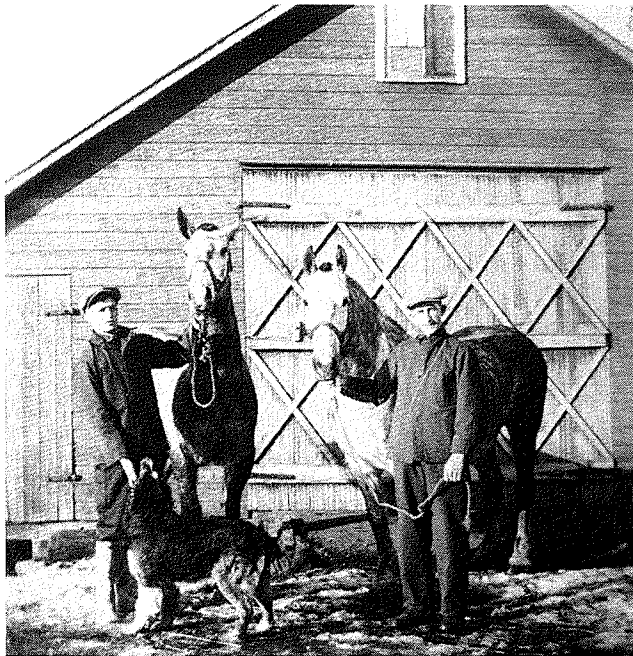
Mr. and Mrs. Paul D. Peters proudly presenting their beautiful horse.



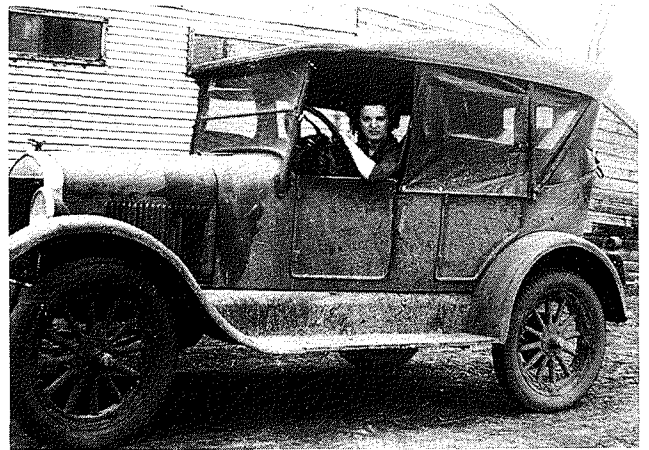
Double box wagon used to haul grain and many other things in the early years. Left to right: Bernhard G. Sawatzky, George G. Sawatzky, A. D. Klassen, Jacob G. Sawatzky.



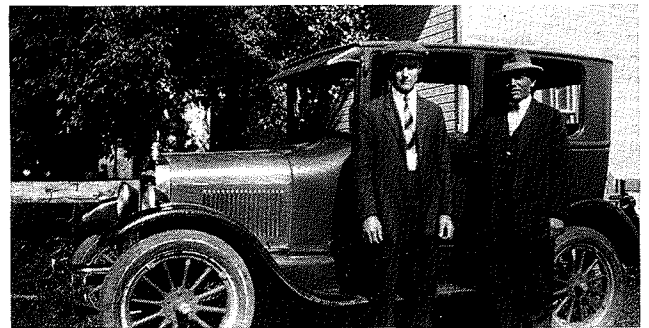
John Letkeman and brother-in-law Abe Penner with their 1930s Ford Coupe.



John and Jacob Peters with their "Schemmels" in front of their father's granary.



Mary Penner in convertible Model T.



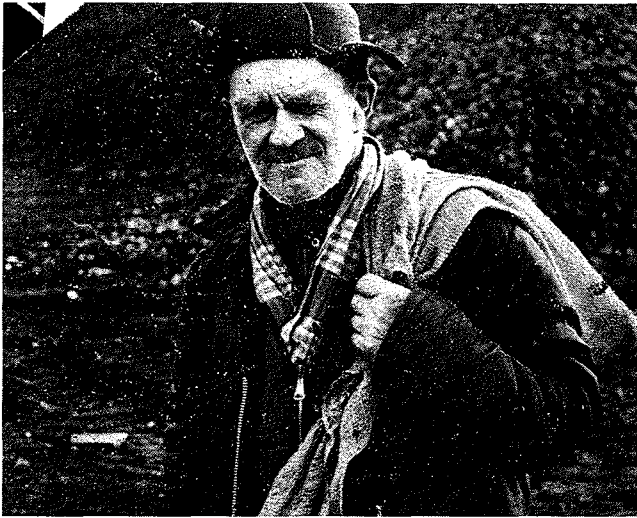
Bernhard G. and Johann G. Sawatzky in front of a Model T Ford, 1932-1933.



Katherine Zacharias beside a 1947 Plymouth.



Convertible Model T — 1922. Proud driver is Johann Letkeman.

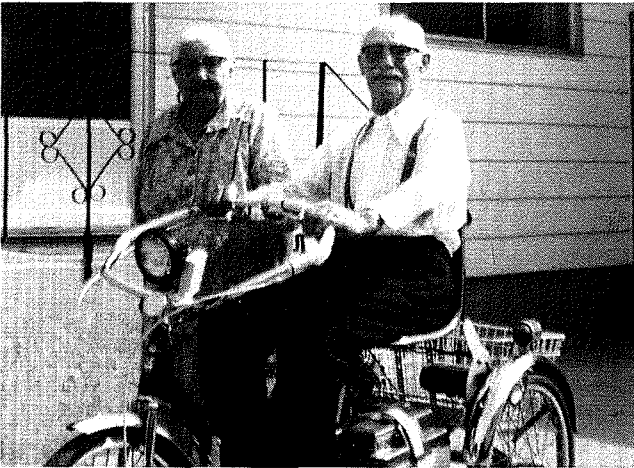


Peter Penner, "The Free Spirit of Gnadenthal". In the midst of a work ethic conscious community Peter insisted on his own lifestyle. His daily routines were predictable. Winter and summer he could be seen on the road to Winkler or Altona. He attended many weddings and funerals that happened to be "on" in these towns.

Family Pictures



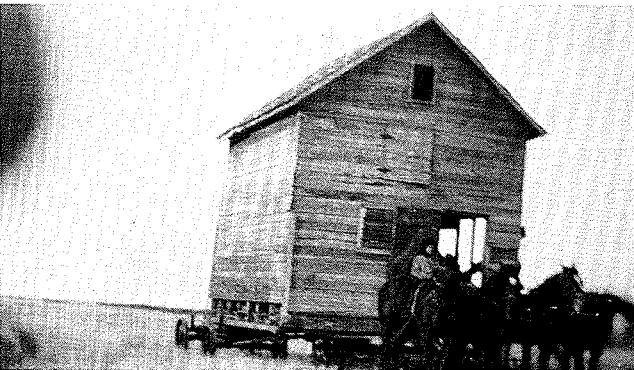
The Peter Krause family, who lived in Gnadenthal from the 1920s until 1938. The picture shows Peter, Susie, Helen, Mrs. Krause, and Mr. Peter Krause, Sr. Missing from the picture are John and Annie.



Mr. and Mrs. Peter P. Redekopp in front of their home in Winkler, June 16, 1982. Mr. Redekopp and Mrs. Redekopp are 95 years old this year. The motorized tricycle is used by Mr. Redekopp to perform the necessary daily errands.



The Peter Penner family. Left to right: Peter, Mrs. Helena Penner, Helen, Peter Penner, Gerhard.



"Real Live Horsepower". Barn of Peter P. Neudorf being moved from Winkler to Gnadenthal, 1939.



Johann Retzlaff (seated, centre) was the first leading minister of the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church, 1925-1929. Pictured with him are his four daughters with their families who also settled in Gnadenthal. Standing, left to right: Cornelius Pauls, Gerhard Matthies, David H. Voth, John H. Voth, Herman R. Voth, Herman H. Voth — father, Henry A. Adrian with Eva, John Retzlaff Jr. Seated: Mrs. Cornelius Pauls with Cornelius, Mrs. Gerhard Matthies with John, Eva Toews, a widow, Rev. Johann Retzlaff, Mrs. Herman Voth and Margaret, Mrs. Henry Adrian, Mrs. John Retzlaff with Margaret. Front: Evangeline Matthies, Henry Voth, Mary Voth, Tina Voth, Katie Adrian, John Retzlaff. Photo: 1923 in Russia.



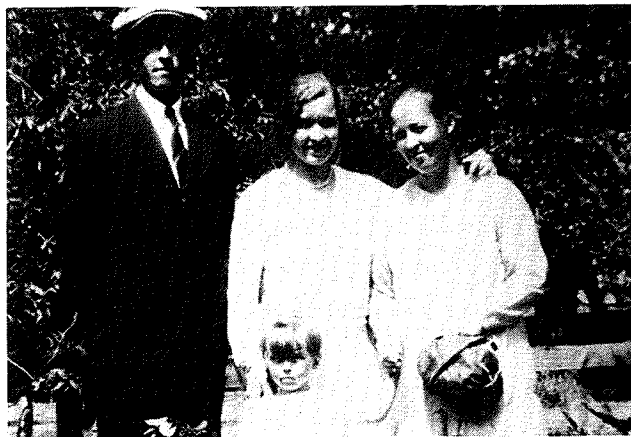
Abram Olfert family with children and grandchildren at the marriage of Johann G. Sawatzky and Margaret (Olfert) Janzen. Abram and Tina Teichroeb, Abram and Maria Klassen, Johann and Margaret Sawatzky, Abram and Maria Olfert with John Janzen, Johann and Margaret Olfert, Abram and Margaret Olfert, Peter and Helena Olfert.



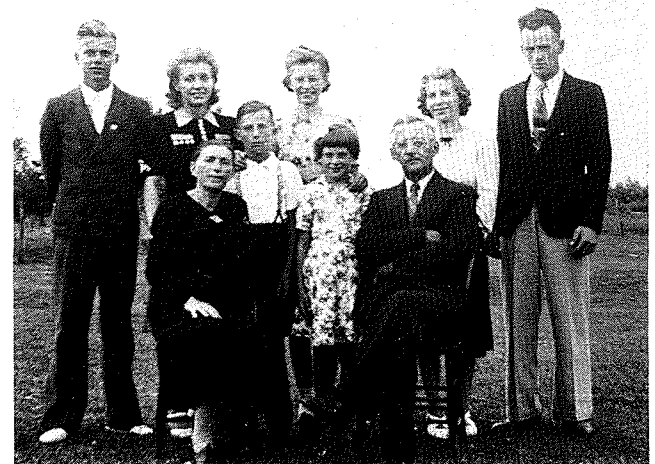
Reverend and Mrs. Wilhelm Dyck and daughter Elfrieda. Elfrieda later became a missionary. She and her husband, Cornelius C. Balzer, have been missionaries in Equador and Germany for the past twenty-four years.



The Balzer family. Back, left to right: Henry Dueck, Annie (Balzer) Dueck, Frank, Katherine, David. Front: Aganetha, Mrs. Anna Balzer, Mary, Helena.



The children of Rev. and Mrs. Wilhelm Dyck: Wilhelm Jr., Agatha, Amalie and Elfrieda.



Peter and Margaret Hamm family with children: John, Nettie, Katherine, Margaret and Jake (Friesen), Bill, Erna.



Mr. and Mrs. Bernhard Dyck.



Abram and Justina Teichroeb with children Abram and Tina, and Mary and George Penner.



The David and Anna Schellenberg family. Left to right: Helen, Martha, Annie sitting with Ella and Alfred.



The Henry Born family with children: Abe, Aganetha, Henry, Annie, Margaret, Katherine, Marie, George, Bennie, and Elsie.



Henry and Maria Kuhl.



The John S. Friesen family. Back, left to right: Bill, Jake, Tina, John, Henry. Middle: Abe and Peter. Front: Tony, Mrs. and Mr. Friesen, Eddie.



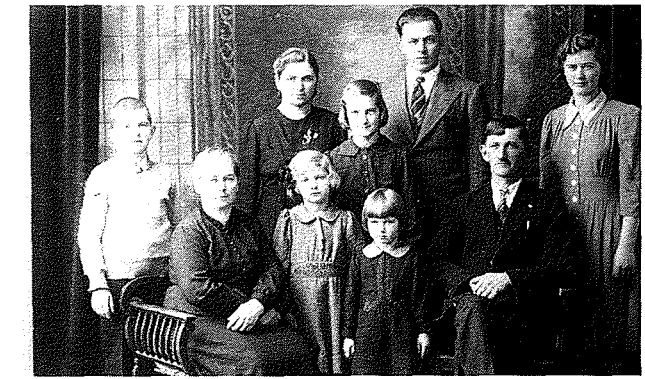
The Cornelius Pauls Family.



J. Sawatzky children. Back, left to right: George, Jacob, Armin. Front: Elsa, Tina (Wiebe), Helene.

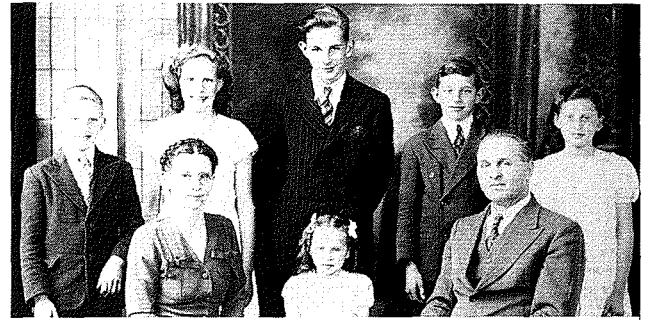


Mr. and Mrs. Johann J. Schellenberg. Mr. Schellenberg was blind by the time they arrived in Canada.



The Paul P. and Margaret Peters family with children, left to right: Paul, Margaret Susan, Anne, Hilda, George Born, Helen.

The Jacob J. Nickel family. Back, left to right: Marianne, Hilda, Helen. Front: Jacob and Helen Nickel.

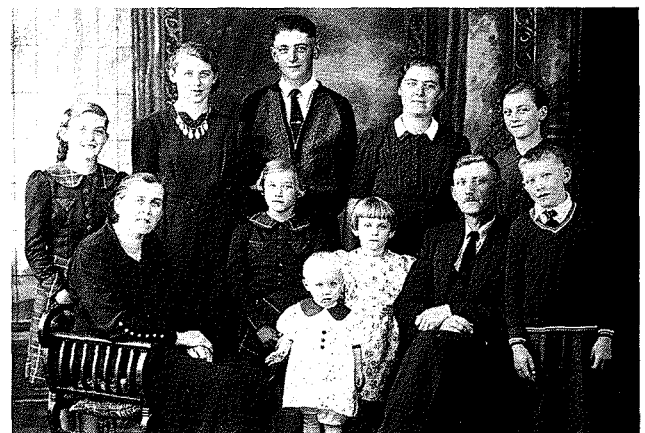


The Abram and Margaret Olfert family with children, left to right: Henry, Hilda, Heidi, Jake, Abe, Helga.



Henry and Judith Driedger with children: Judy, Tina, Isaak, Jacob, Henry, Frank, Susie, Betty.

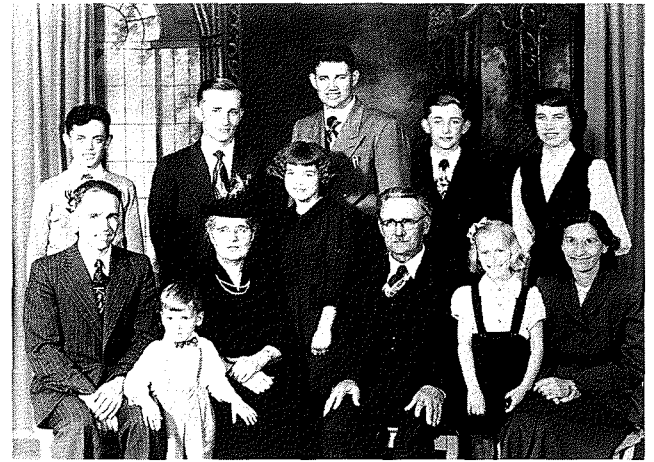
The David Krahn family. Back, left to right: Jake, Dave. Middle: Elizabeth, John. Front: Mrs. Elizabeth Krahn, Ben, David Krahn.



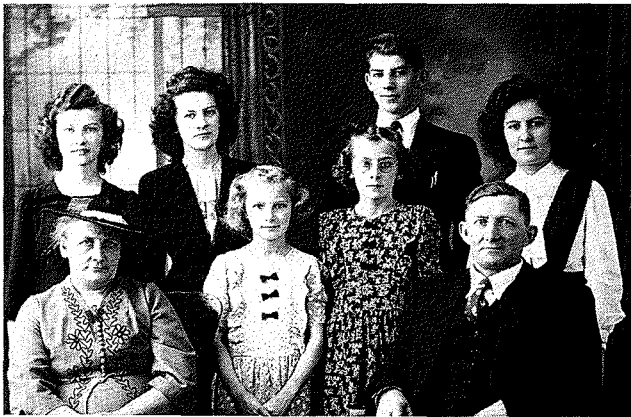
The Heinrich and Helena Peters, with children, left to right: Susie, Anne, Henry, Agnes, Tina, Sara, Helen, Mary, Paul.



David and Marie Penner with children, Mary and John Driedger, Hilda and Harry Sukkau, Ben and Marg, Ella (Olga) and Wes Sawatzky, Susie and George Friesen, Dave and Martha, John and Elma Dyck and Leonard.



Johann and Margaret Sawatzky and children: John (Janzen), Jake, Alfred, Johanna, George, Peter, Mrs. Nettie Janzen, Ruth and grandchildren Richard and Marjory.



Diedrich and Margaret Peters family with children, left to right: Mary, Margaret, Nettie, Louise, Paul and Helen.



Abram A. and Tina Teichroeb family with children. Back, left to right: Johnny Albert, Tina, Abe, Elsie and Susie. Front: Denis, Hilda, Mary Esther, Elfrieda and Grace.



Bernhard and Margaret Sawatzky with their children: Erica, Jake, Waldemar, George, Elsie, Ann-Mary, John, Victor, Adeline, Hedwig, Ben, Irene.



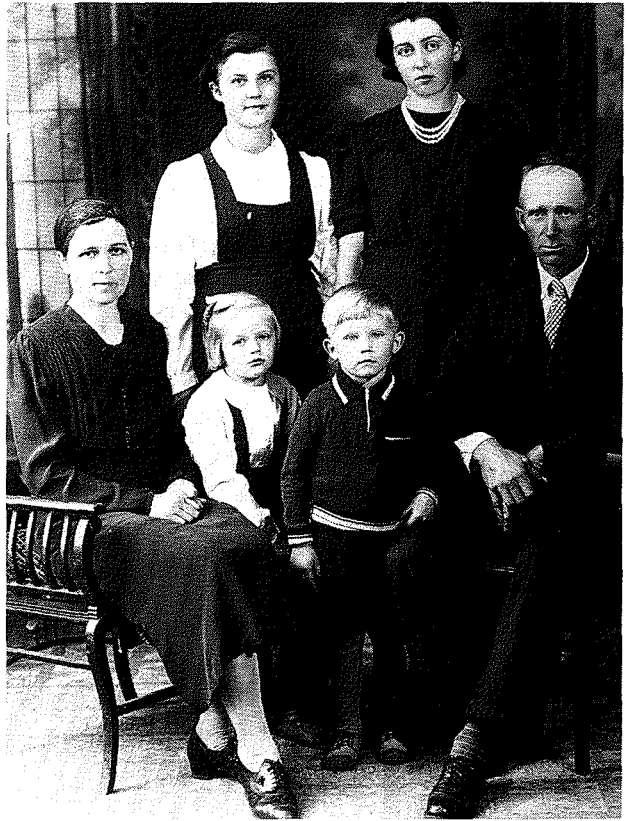
The Jacob Nickel family. Across, left to right: Cornie and Annie, John and Annie, Mrs. Anna Nickel, Annie, Helen and Jake, Jacob Nickel, Tina and Ben, Nettie and Peter Kehler.



The Julius Klassen family. Back, left to right: Abe, Corney, Marlene, John, Helen, George, Henry. Front: Nettie, Mrs. Elizabeth Klassen, Julius Klassen, Betty.



The Cornelius Hildebrand children. Back, left to right: Franklin, Ben, Corney. Front: Catherine, Nellie, Elizabeth (Bessie).



The Peter F. Hoepfner family. Back: Eva and Dora. Front: Henry and Hilda.



Cornelius and Elizabeth Hildebrand. The picture also shows their small house as they built it in 1935, after they lost their home in a fire. The original foundation line shows how much larger the former house had been.



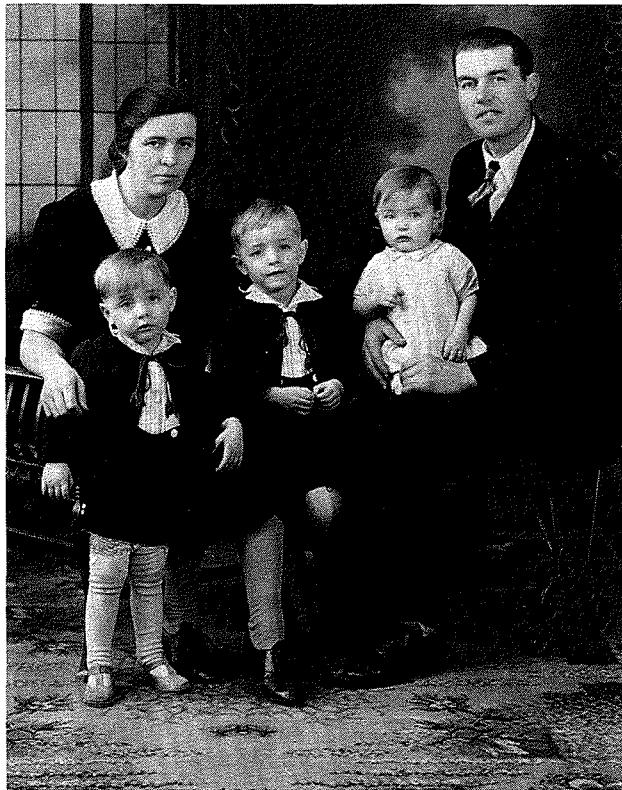
Abram and Maria Klassen at their 60th wedding anniversary. Abe, Mary, Laura, John, Martha, Rita and Rudy.



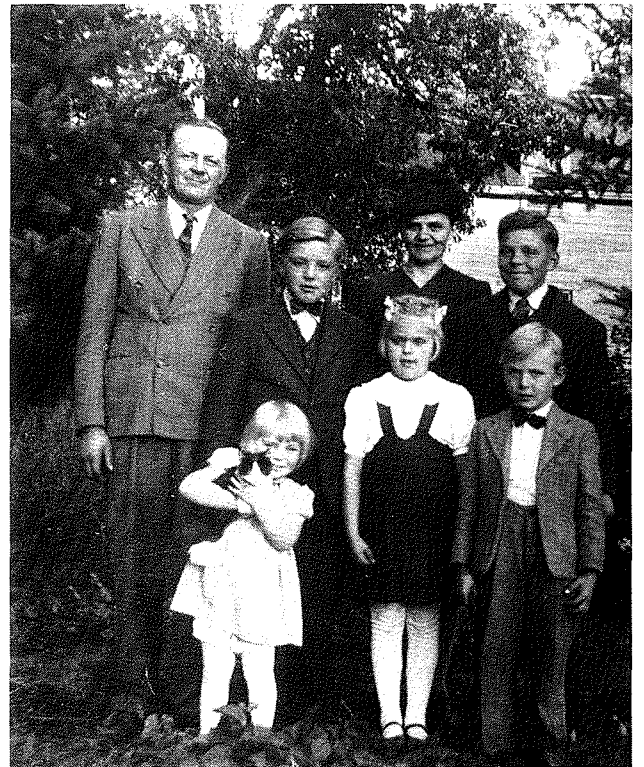
The family of Isaak and Aganetha Unger.



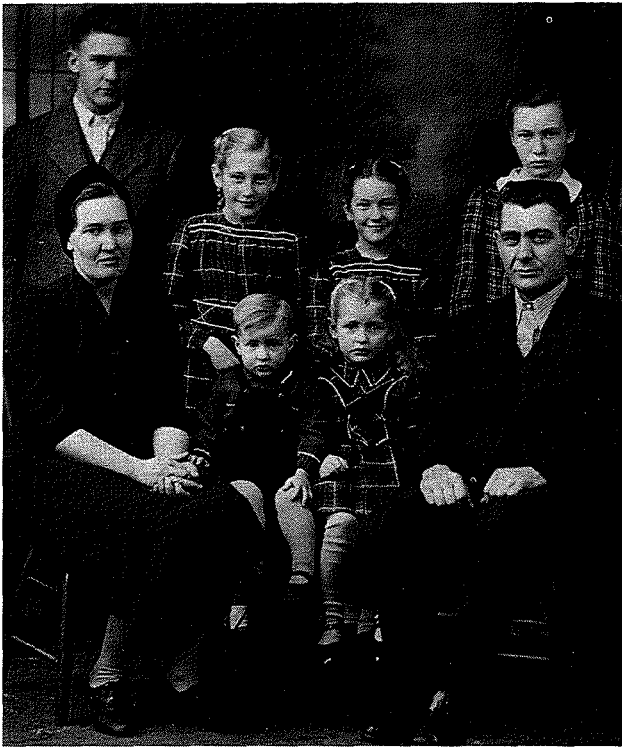
Peter and Helen Neudorf with their son Peter.



The young family of Philip and Tina Wiebe: Benny, Davie, Lorchen.



George and Nettie Labun with children: Art, Clarence, Evelyn, Lenora, and Albert.



The Diedrich Dyck family moved to Paraguay in 1948. Back, left to right: John, Marie, Katie, Helen. Front, left to right: Mrs. Dyck, Dickie, Annie, Mr. Dyck. John, Helen and Marie are living in Manitoba presently.



The Abram and Helen Bueckert family with children: Helen, Anne, David.



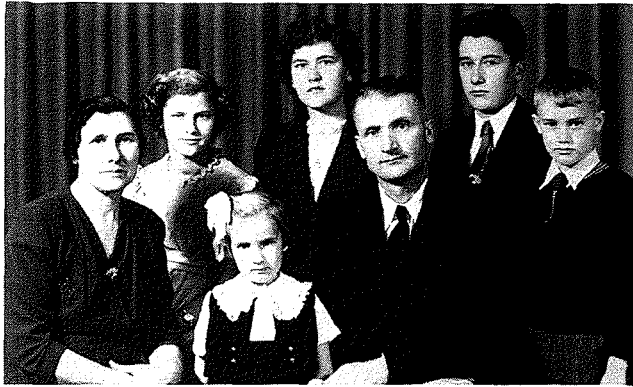
The Jacob P. Peters family. Back, left to right: Margaret, Annie Elsie, Helen. Front: John, Mrs. Anna Peters, Jacob Peters.



Cornelius and Maria Peters and children: Gerald and Marie Dyck, Frank and Martha Neufeld, Peter and Clara Penner, Cornie and Elinor, Ernest and Eva, Erna and Peter Hoepfner, Pauline and Edward Giesbrecht.



The Jacob J. Sawatzky family. Back, left to right: Alice, Erica, Hedy, Ingrid. Front: John, Mrs. Tina Sawatzky, Jacob Sawatzky, Carl, Helmut.



Frank F. and Anna Sawatzky and children: Helen, Hilda, Anne, Jim, George.



John and Justine Schellenberg and children and grandchildren at the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary. Children: Ben and Eva, Peter and Tina Friesen, Peter and Lena Ewert, Henry and Grace, Dave, Henry and Justina Baerg, Abe and Carol, John and Edith.



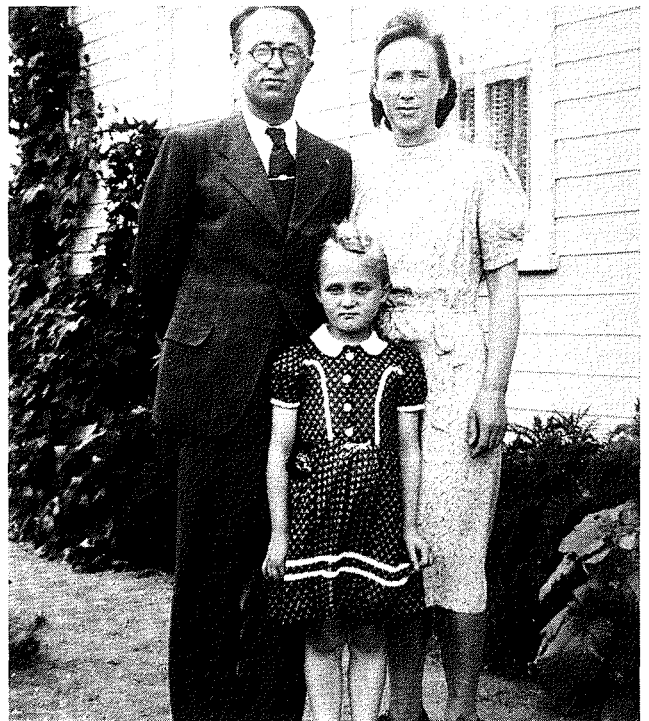
The George J. Sawatzky family. Back, left to right: Ernest Ronald, Harold, Marianne, George. Front: Edwin, Mrs. Annie Sawatzky, Elaine, George Sawatzky, Robert.



David and Elizabeth Peters. Back, left to right: Dave, Peter Harms, John Fehr, Margaret Sawatzky, Elizabeth, Kathy, Frank, Henry Peters, Abe Petkau. Front, left to right: Tina, Susie, Mary, Sara, Tina.



The Peter P. Redekopp family at their 70th wedding anniversary: John and Katherine, Tina and Bernhard Martynes, Jake and Elsa, John and Anne Braun, Nettie and Ray Baer, Helen and Peter Thiessen, Peter and Anne.



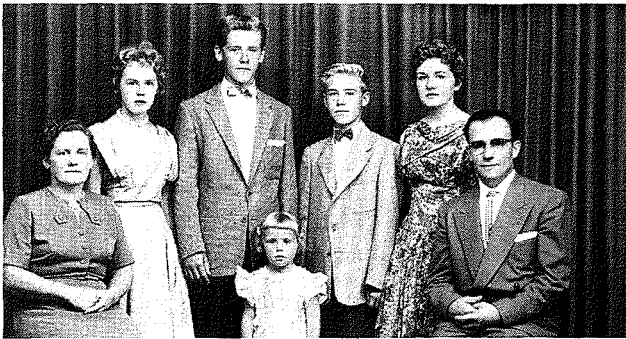
Jacob and Marie Neufeld with daughter Ingrid.



The Heinrich Kliewer family. Left to right: Lilli, Mrs. Olga Kliewer, Arnold, Willi, Heinrich Kliewer, Bruno, Eric.



Mrs. Anna Niebuhr with daughters Lydia and Annie.



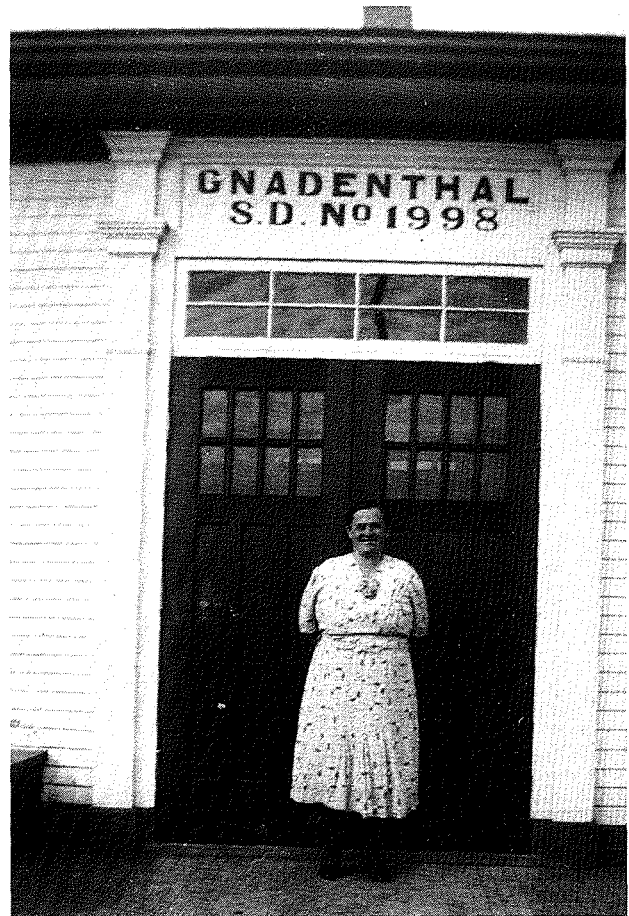
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Krahn and their children: Frieda, Peter, Helmut, Katie.



Mr. and Mrs. George Letkeman, original residents of Gnadenthal.



The wedding of Bill and Mary Letkeman, 1958.



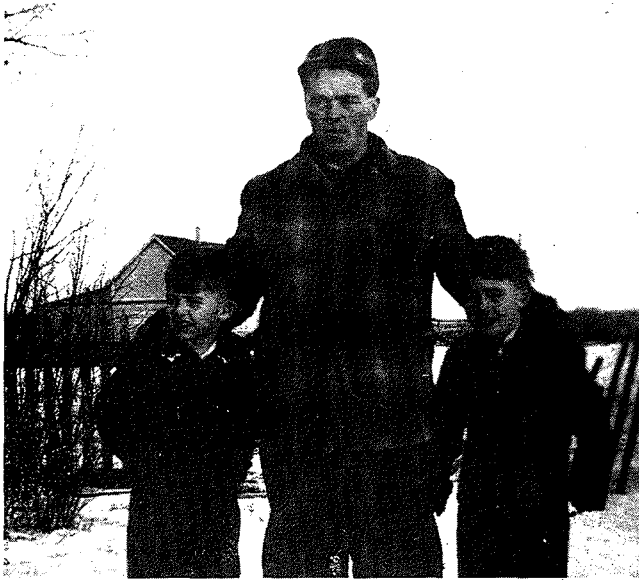
Agnes (Nettie) Letkeman.



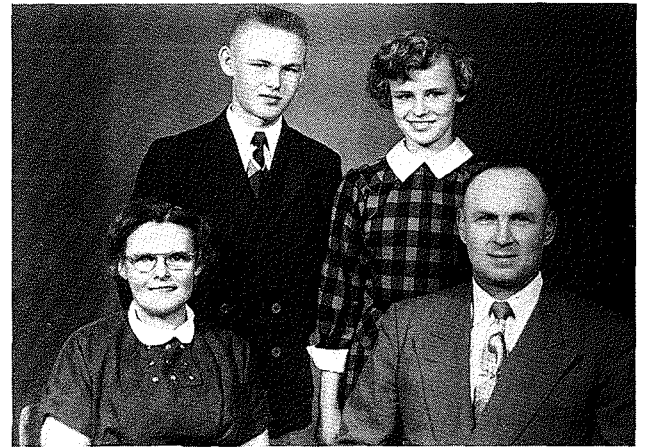
The Johann Letkeman family. Tina, Peter, Annie, John and Mary in the 1920s.



Mr. and Mrs. David H. Friesen with children: Anne, Pete, Helen, David, Hilda, Katherine, Susie, George.



Jacob Letkeman and friends.



Mr. and Mrs. Peter Penner with children: Irvin and Marlene.



Mr. and Mrs. John Letkeman. Tina, Margaret, Mary, Helen.



Peter and Mary Friesen with children: Brian, Marilyn and Ruth.



Peter Friesen, long time farm worker at the Peters farm, and later a resident with his family.



Frank and Kathy Peters with their sons: Bob, Garry, Clarence, Clifford, Gordon, Ken, Charlie, Terry.



The Isaac Letkeman family. Back, left to right: Isaac, Leonard, Lloyd, Barry. Front: Helen, Delilah, Dorothy, Bradley.



The Frank G. Ens family. Back, left to right: Margaret Ann, Henrietta, Fred, Irene, Ted, Helmut. Front: Mrs. Betty Ens, Monica, Hilda, Wilma, Adolf, Frank G. Ens.



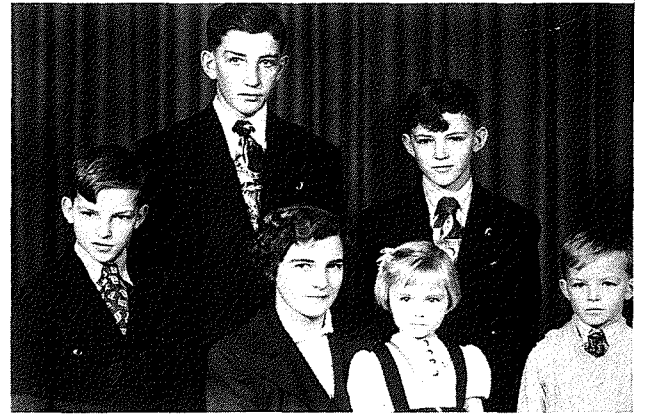
The George Klassen family. Left to right: Albert, Irene, Henry, George and Mary Klassen, John, Victor, Edna.



The David Bueckert family. Back, left to right: David Bueckert, Ralph, Ron, Dennis. Front: Mrs. Ella Bueckert, Mrs. Maria Kuhl, Eleanor, Mr. Henry Kuhl, Marilyn.



John and Lillian Kuhl with children Keith and Karen, Douglas and Karen, Glen and Rebecca Joldersma, Deborah and Susan.



Children of John and Aganetha Peters: George, John, Ruth, Elfrieda, Peter, Menno.



Jake and Helen Dyck.



Mr. and Mrs. Jacob P. Dueck.

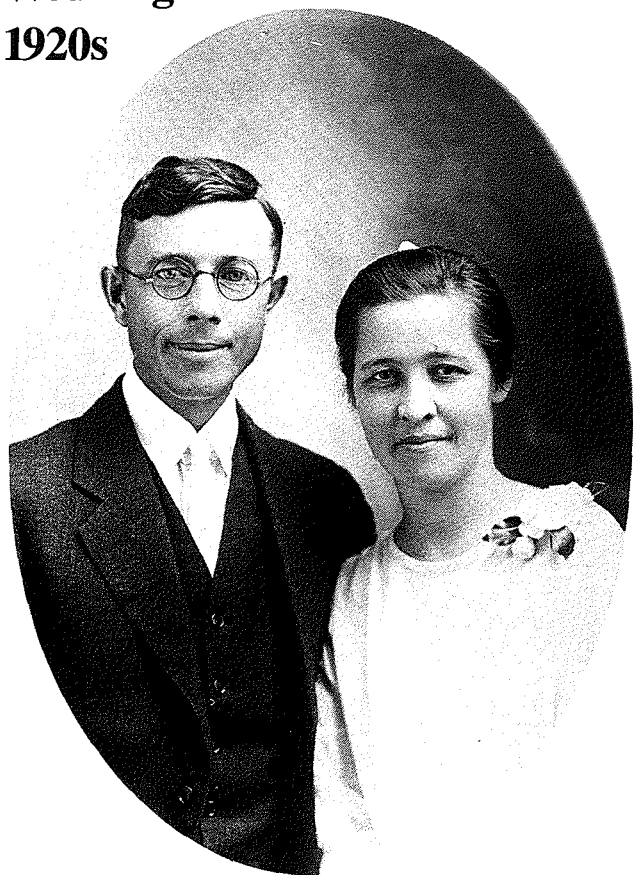


George and Hilda Sawatzky with daughters: Pam, Iris, Joyce, Lynette. George grew up in Gnadenthal and lived there with his family when they operated the store.



The Wilhelm Dyck family. Left to right: Betty, Jake, Wilhelm Dyck, David, Mrs. Anna Dyck, Wilhelm Jr., Emily.

Weddings 1920s



Johannes and Amalie (Dyck) Bock.



Gerhard and Anna (Peters) Fast.

1930s



Cornelius and Maria (Fast) Peters.

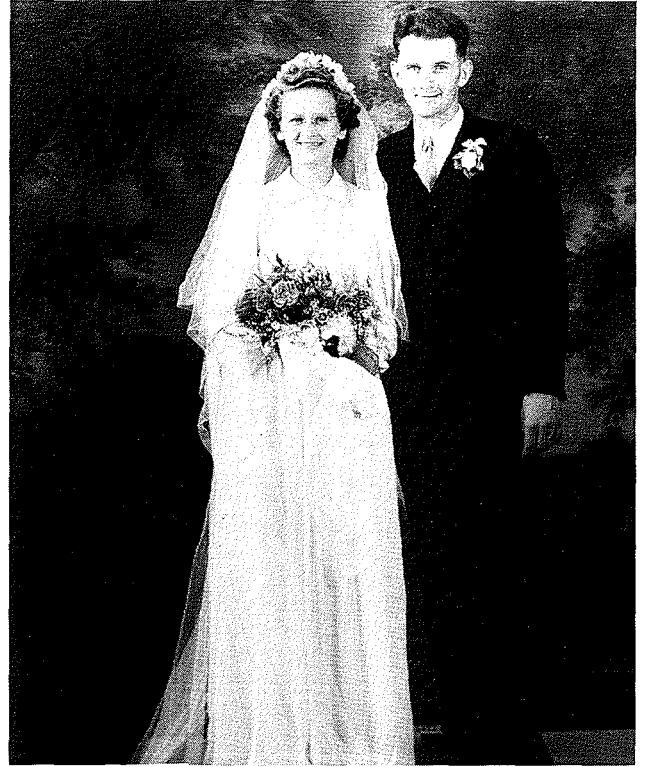


Abram and Margaret (Sawatzky) Olfert.

1940s



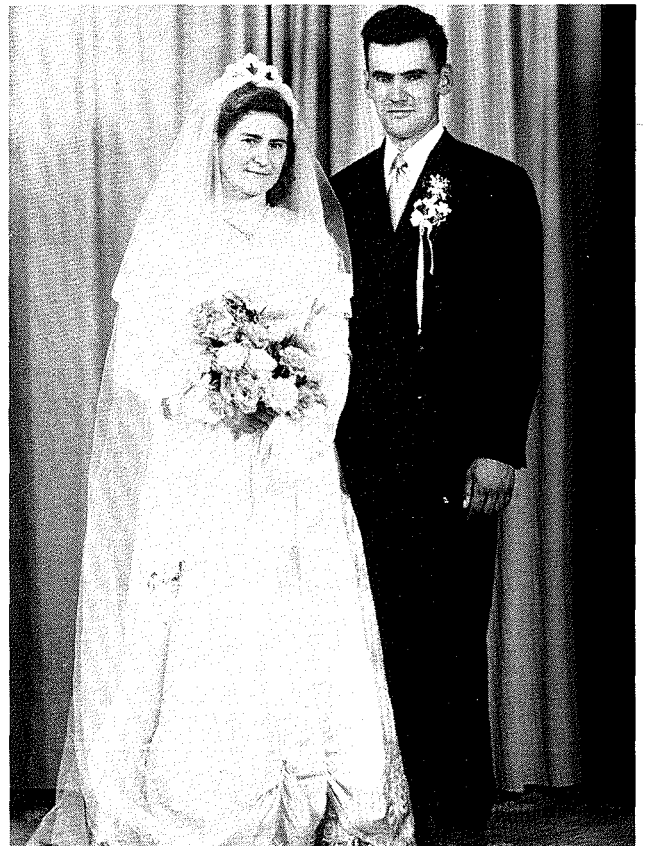
Abram and Tina (Olfert) Teichroeb.



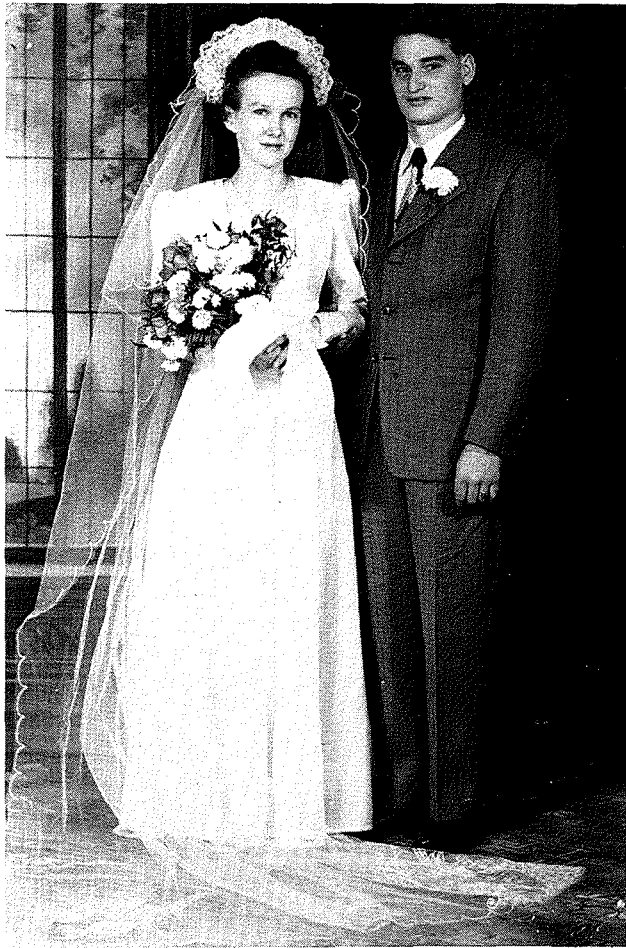
David and Ella (Kuhl) Bueckert.



George and Annie (Kuhl) Sawatzky.



John and Mary (Peters) Fehr.



John and Mildred (Trinke) Krahn.



Herb and Mary (Peters) Fransen. Bridesmaid — Nettie Peters, Flowergirl — Rosanna Klassen.

1950s



Peter and Anna (Goertzen) Sawatzky. Bridesmaid — Mary Goertzen, Best Man — Jake Sawatzky, Flowergirl — Eleanor Schmidt.



Wesley and Ella (Penner) Sawatzky. Bridesmaid — Ruth Sawatzky, Best Man — Jack Braun, Flowergirl — Beverley Penner, June Sukkau.

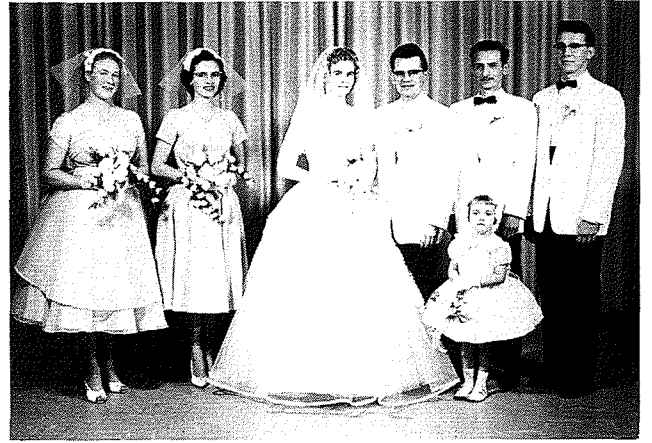
1960s



Waldemar and Nancy (Giesbrecht) Sawatzky.



Henry and Hilda (Peters) Schulz.

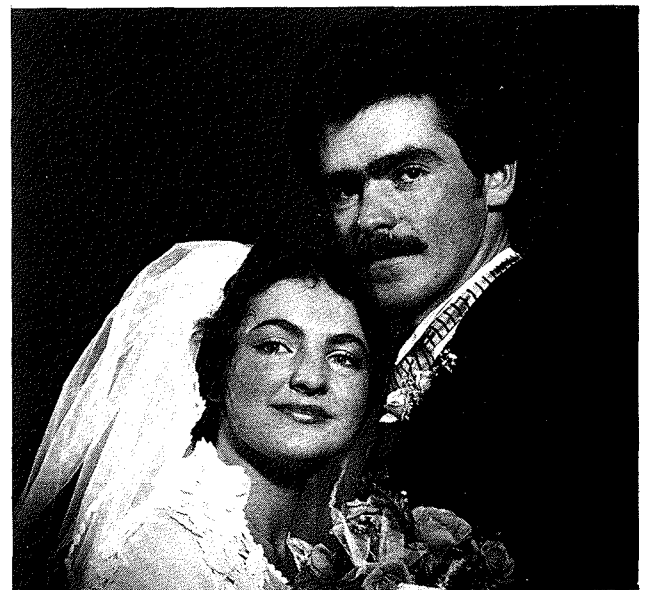


Lloyd and Helen (Letkeman) Rietze. Left to right: Mary Ellen Neufeld, Lenora Cameron, Helen (Letkeman) and Lloyd Rietze, brother of groom, niece of groom, Brian Wonnick.

1970s



Menno and Linda (Allen) Peters.



Henry and Debbie (Neufeld) Enns.



Peter and Irene (Friesen) Petkau.

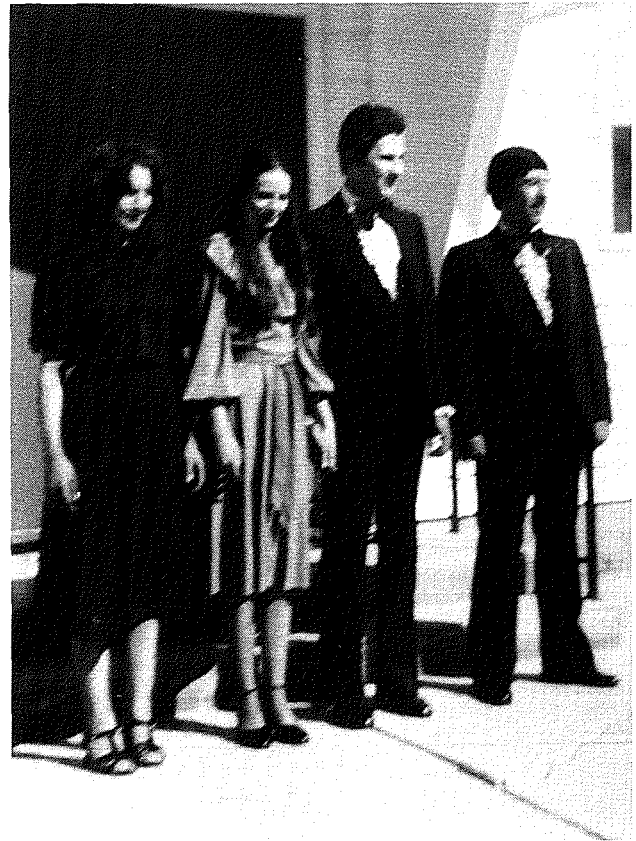


Terry and Linda (Peters) Penner.

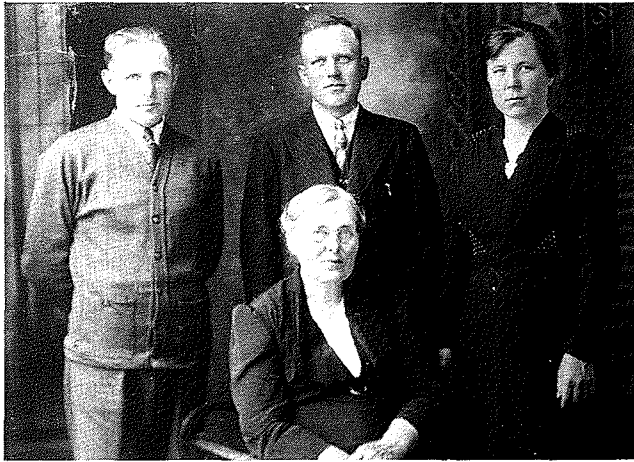
1980s



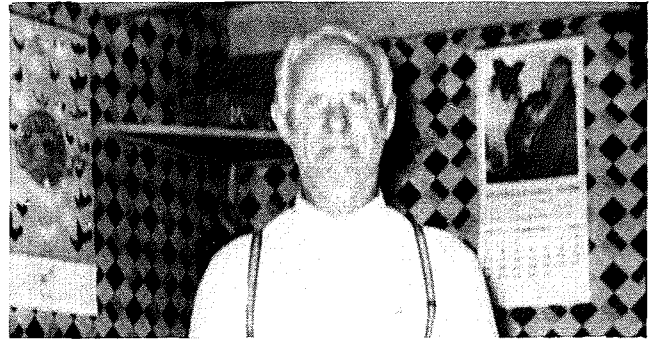
Ray and Corinne (Dyck) Peters.



Ike and Tina (Klassen) Wall.



The children of Peter Penners. Standing, left to right, are Peter, George, Helena. Seated is their foster-mother, Helena Reimer.



Mr. Abram Petkau.



The Ediger and Toews cousins at the Ediger home. Standing, left to right, are: Hilda Ediger, Herta and John Toews, Anne Ediger. Front: Annie and Lena Toews. Photo: 1944.



Courting days. Dave Penner and Martha Schellenberg, 1947.



Annie (Heinz) Peters.



"Dweagaus". Background — the Kuhl farmyard. Cyclists are Helen Neufeld and Agatha Thiessen.

CHAPTER VI

The Centennial Celebration



Original planning meeting of the Gnadenthal centennial celebrations. This was also the occasion at which the decision was made to write a history book. Standing, left to right: Ben Schellenberg, Marie (Peters) Dyck, Margaret (Peters) Froese, Ella (Kuhl) and Dave Bueckert, Helene (Sawatzky) Neufeld, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Kuhl, Paul F. Peters, Paul J. Peters, John Dyck, Jacob P. Redekopp, Peter Redekopp, Johann P. Peters, John H. Peters. Seated: Aganetha (Born) Peters, Mary Ellen Neufeld, Elizabeth (Dueck) Peters, Rita Klassen, Tina Peters, Elma (Penner) Dyck, Helen (Peters) Redekopp, Ruth (Sawatzky) Bock. March, 1979.

Everyone involved at the initial Gnadenthal Centennial meeting in 1979 plunged into activities at once, particularly the planning committee consisting of Ben Schellenberg, treasurer; Mary Neufeld, secretary; and Paul J. Peters, president.

Months before the actual celebrations this committee spent many hours meeting, planning, discussing, telephoning, writing, personally establishing private and business contacts. Conversation among members was predictable, since it ran along the same lines whenever they met: "Have you contacted the firms specified, Mary?" — "I've been in to see the



Interesting discussions are going on everywhere.



Centennial Celebration planning committee. Ben Schellenberg, Mary Ellen Neufeld, Paul J. Peters.

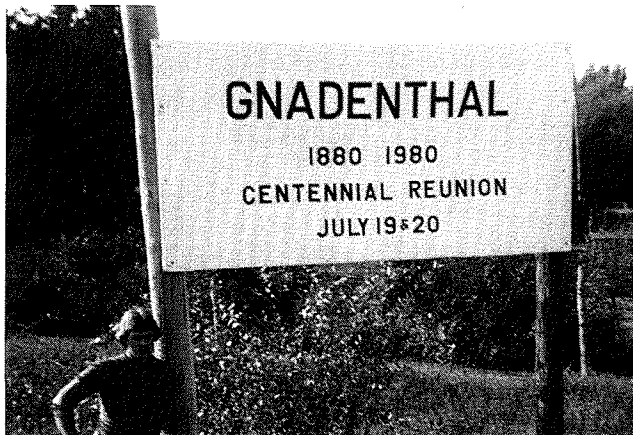
Pork-Pro-Motors and booked them”, came from Paul — “How is the account in the Credit Union coming, Ben?”. Thus they went on and on.

As the celebration date drew nearer, community activities were accelerated, with amazing co-operation from all concerned. The committee stepped up action to an astounding degree. After consultation with communities where similar celebrations had been observed, a local meeting was called in the Gnadenthal School on April 3, 1979. The village residents, upon whose co-operation the success of the venture depended, reacted positively and enthusiastically. The room buzzed as committees were set

up involving, on a voluntary basis, many of the thirty-six residents who were present. Food committees, clean-up committees, and parade committees were struck, which immediately deliberated on their course of action, in preparation for an after-harvest meeting slated for the fall.

By the beginning of 1980, the centennial year, the centenary project was well-launched. Newspapers carried announcements far and wide, letters of invitation to speakers and dignitaries had been sent out, with high hopes for positive replies. A tentative program had been drawn up in collaboration with the history book committee. Mugs, spoons, pens and

brochures were ordered to be distributed for advertising purposes or to be sold as souvenirs. The food committee was drawing up the menu, while our village bustled with clean-up activities, painting and renovating, as residents put their best foot forward to receive the numerous visitors that were anticipated in the most efficient and pleasant way. The parade committee reported a large variety of entries which promised to be of general appeal, and a large tent with a seating capacity of 500 to 1,000 had been rented to accommodate the large audiences that were expected. Helen Redekopp and Mary Neufeld were writing a play depicting the history of Gnadenthal, while J. P. Redekopp was preparing songs and music for sing-songs and perhaps a mass choir in true Gnadenthal tradition. The atmosphere in the village was reminiscent of the Gnadenthal in the twenties and thirties on a Saturday evening, when all the yards had been swept, the gardens raked, the residents, after ablutions in the galvanized wash tubs, dressed in their "tjleensindoagsche" attire, in anticipation of Sunday, which was not merely a day of rest, but so frequently also a day of joyful festivity and social communion.



Rick Neufeld with the centennial signs he had helped to construct. Two were erected, one at each end of the village.



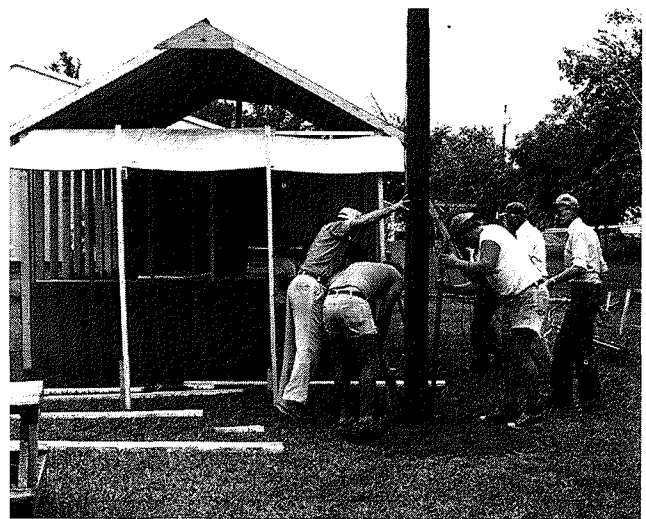
Mugs, spoons, pens, brochures and printed programs all contributed to wide publicity for the event.

July 1980: The village of Gnadenthal mobilized for final preparations. Name signs indicating occupant identity appeared on gateways, together with lists of former residents of the dwelling. The church building, which was to house the centennial displays, was painted inside and out. Temporary booths for registration, and others for food service, were set up. A tractor mower brigade made short work of the tall grass on the churchyard. Once the tent was erected, chairs were set up, a stage was built, lighting and public address systems were installed. By Friday night all was in readiness, and people had begun to gather in order to savour the preliminary festive atmosphere that augured well for the following day.

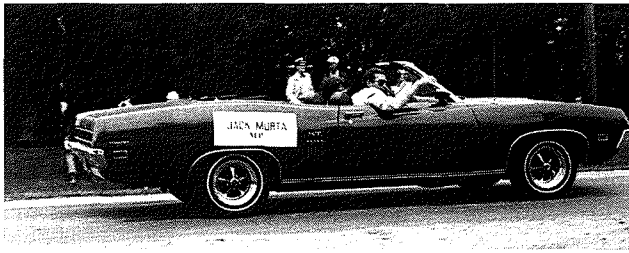
On Parade



A welcome banner carried by Ruth Schellenberg (Raggedy Ann) and Audrey Neufeld (Andy) led off the parade. A decorated birthday cake float, escorted by local children on decorated bicycles, followed.



Setting up a lightpole in front of the confectionary booth are: Paul J. Peters, Garry Peters, Clifford Loewen (who did the wiring) and Corny Klassen. The young supervisor at left is Robert Schellenberg.



Jack Murta, MP for Lisgar, in a car driven by Joyce Schellenberg.



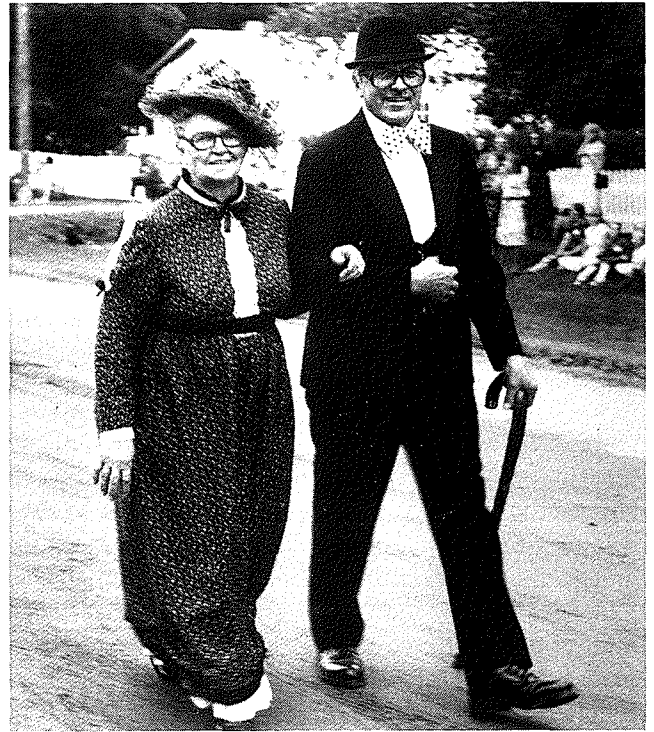
Many familiar faces were found among the crowds that lined both sides of the street.



Norman Peters enjoys his role as a clown.



Occupants of a float depicting the local general store as a meeting place, are, from left to right: Jacob I. Fehr, Peter B. Penner, Delilah Letkeman, George J. Klassen, and Jake P. Dyck. the partially concealed figure behind Mr. Penner is Isaac Letkeman.



Mr. and Mrs. George Born, dressed in the finery of days gone by, came all the way from Blumenort in the East Reserve to take part in festivities.



The 4-H group of the Gnadenthal Home Economics Club ride their colourful float.



Depicting household chores of early days are, from left to right: Mrs. Mary Klassen, Mrs. Frieda Janzen, Mrs. Hilda Wall, Mrs. Jake Wall, and Mrs. C. Klassen. Partially hidden from view are Mrs. B. Banman and Mrs. Margaret Wall.



875 Versatile owned by K & B Seed Potato Growers.



An old tractor and separator.

The Day of Celebration: Saturday, July 19th, 1980

It was a pleasant day with a light cloud cover hiding the hot summer sun. Last minute preparations such as spraying the streets to keep the dust down, while parade participants were lining up at the east end of the village, changed the quiet rural scene to one of bustling activity. Many former residents arrived early, carrying delicious Zwieback (buns) and home-made baking into the church basement — voluntary contributions for the occasion.

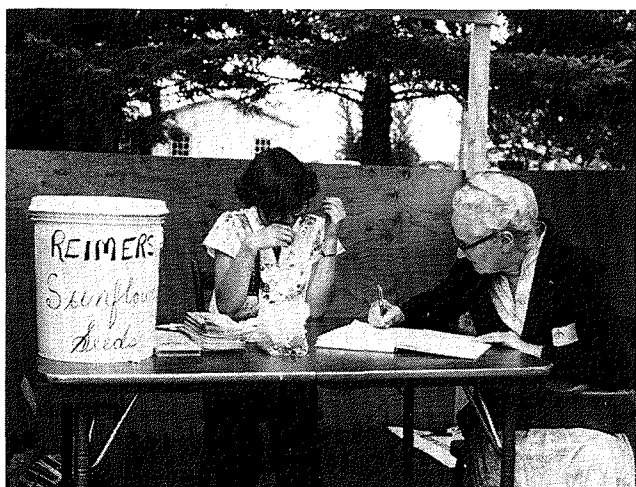
At last all was in readiness, and a flurry of excitement intimated that the parade was about to begin. Several thousand spectators had come to watch, and crowds from near and far had begun to line the streets in the early afternoon. Enthusiastic murmurs of "Ah! Here they come!" announced the actual opening of festivities as the parade, led off by two clowns carrying a welcome banner, got under way. A huge birthday cake, marked proudly by a large "100" and surrounded by youngsters and decorated bicycles,

followed. Elegant cars and convertibles driven by pretty local girls carried the guests of honour, while enormous modern farm implements owned by local farmers emphasized changes in farming methods by contrast to older farm machinery and horses. Fire trucks and floats, bicycles and big trucks, motor homes and marchers, buses and business vans lent variety to a most impressive parade.

The clouds had become heavier and greyer, and, as if to mark the end of the parade, the first raindrops began to fall. Everyone hurried towards the tent, from which music and song already greeted the guests as J. P. Redekopp and the Winkler Senior Citizens Band led off the afternoon with a rousing sing-song. Chairman Paul J. Peters opened the program with a warm welcome to all, after which Johann Peters spoke the opening invocation and prayer. Recognitions and presentations alternated with entertainment items, and were followed by addresses from all levels of government, from Premier Lyon on to Ben Schellenberg, the mayor of Gnadenthal. The guest speaker, Robert Dalton, a former school inspector of the area, related some of his experiences while living in a Mennonite community. Songs rendered by present day school children, as well as a male quartet, consisting of John and Peter Redekopp and John and Henry Kuhl, provided enjoyable variety. Elma (Penner) Dyck reported on the progress of the history book, and Ben Sawatzky presented the theme of the celebration, Psalm 100:5. George Friesen closed the afternoon program with a few well-chosen remarks and a prayer.

Supper commenced at 5 p.m. The Pork-Pro-Motor from Manitoba Pork Producers provided a pork barbecue, served with baked potatoes, salads, and pie for dessert, all of which the ladies had prepared.

Although the rain which had begun earlier was still coming down steadily, it did not dampen the




Joyce Schellenberg attends the guest book at the registration booth as Mrs. Peter Neudorf signs.

spirits as people stood in line to be served. Luckily some had been wise enough to bring an umbrella.

 Nunston, Wardsch, Napp, & D.A.M.

**GNADENTHAL
CENTENNIAL**

**1880 - 1980
JULY 19 & 20**

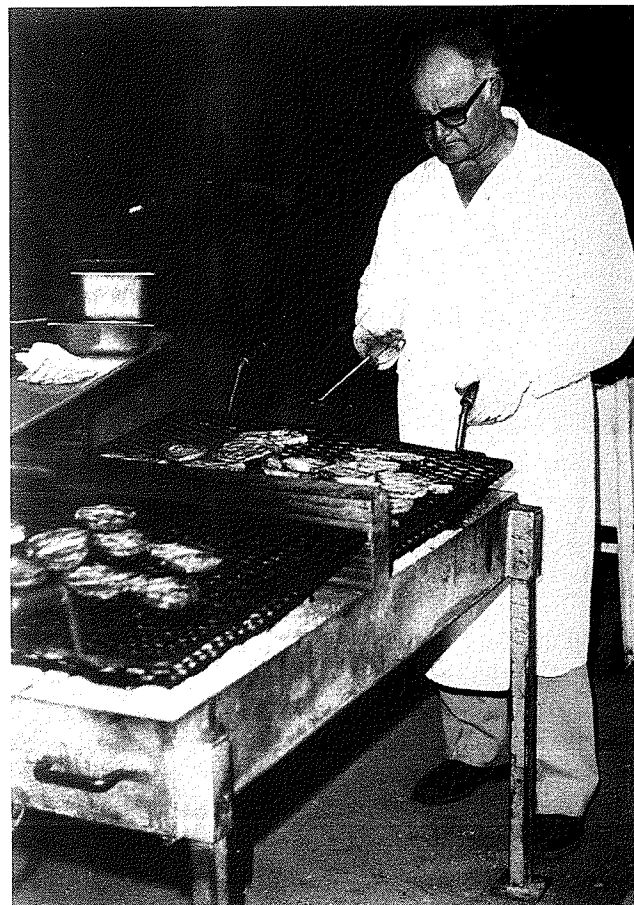


*For the Lord is good, his mercy is everlasting,
and his truth endureth to all generations.*

Sing-Song

1. Opening - Chairman Paul F. Peters
2. Invocation & prayer - Johann Peters
3. Tribute to the Sea
4. Congregational Song - Faith of our Fathers
5. Trio - Irma Peters - 2 songs
6. Meditation - Julia Krohn M.B.
7. Congregational Song
8. Sermonette - Alie Wiebe - Sommerfelder
9. Songs - Marlene Ess
10. Poem - Mrs. Johann Peters
11. Ansprache - Willie Thiessen - Old Colony
12. Congregational Song & Collection
13. Festansprache - A.A. Teichroeb - G.C.
14. Resumé - Paul F. Peters
15. Congregational Song - Gott Mit Euch
16. Closing Prayer & Benediction

**Dinner
Visiting
Free Feasts**



A gentleman from Pork-Pro-Motors does the barbecuing.

Gnadenthal Centennial Reunion

**Official Opening Program
Sat. July 19, 2:30 p.m.**

Sing-Song - 2:15 - J. Redekopp

1. Words of Welcome - chairman Paul J. Peters
2. Oh Canada
3. Invocation & prayer - Johann Peters
4. 2 songs - School children - Karen Kuhl
5. Opening Address - Bob Dalton
6. Greetings:
 - F.D. Peters - Councillor R.M. of Rhineland
 - N.D. Hildebrandt - Reeve R.M. of Rhineland
 - Albert Driedger - M.L.A. Emerson
 - Arnold Braun - M.L.A. Rhineland
 - Jack Murta - M.P. Lisgar
 - Others—
7. Song - Men's Group - F. Redekopp
8. History Book Report - Etne Dyck
9. Song Men's Group - P. Redekopp
10. Theme Introduction - Ben Sawatzky
11. Announcements
12. Closing & Prayer - George J. Frieser

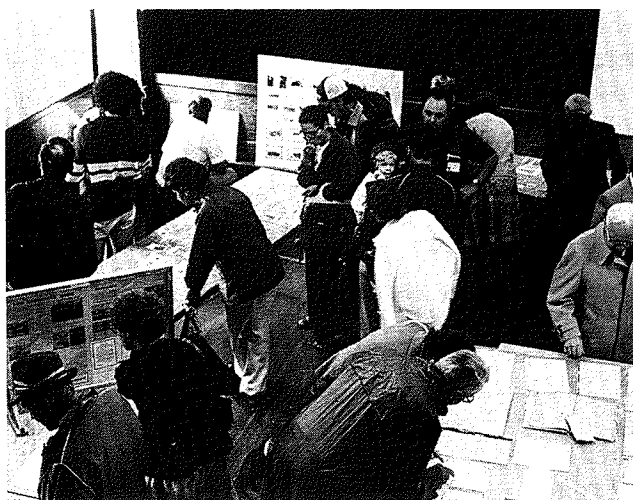
Pork Barbecue - 3:00 p.m.

Sat. Evening Program - 7:30

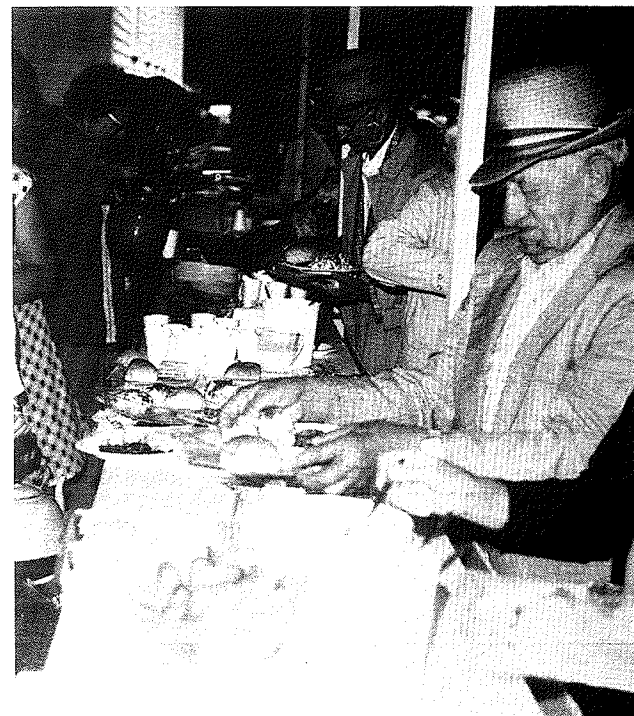
Sing-Song - 7:15

1. Opening - chairman John W. Kuhl
2. Invocation & prayer - Ben Schellenberg
3. 2 song - Himmelschlusel
4. History of Gnadenthal - Ruth Beck
5. Instrumental Selection - Elva Nadeberg
6. Former Teachers
 - J. Arvin - Irma Paula - Henry Ess
 - Mary Klassen - Esther Jansen - Gordon Wilson
7. 2 song - Himmelschlusel
8. Collection - Announcements
9. 100 years of Gnadenthal (Low German Play)
10. 2 songs of Himmelschlusel
11. Friendship
12. Closing - Jim Sawatzky

Top — Centennial programs.



Visitors browse through the displays set up inside the church.



Mr. D. Penner who had come from Mexico is serving himself, cafeteria style.



Local ladies busily dish out the food.



This food booth served hot-dogs, chips and free coffee, and also offered souvenirs for sale. Abe Giesbrecht, Elinor Peters, Mary (Peters) Klassen, and Doreen P. Neufeld serve some of the Hutterite neighbours who had come from the nearby Blumengart Colony.



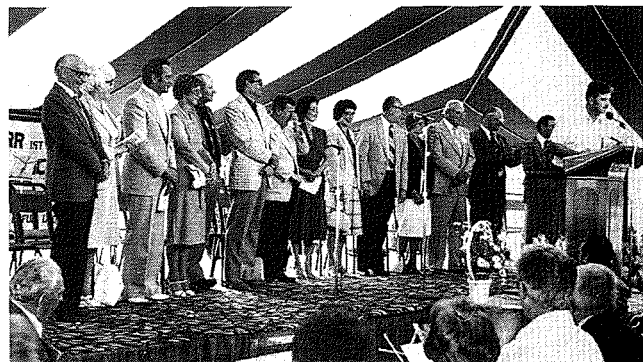
Lines of visitors, in the best of humours, are waiting to be served.



Enjoying the fare at the outdoor tables is Mr. George Sawatzky, his daughter Marianne and her husband Henry Thiessen, together with other members of the Sawatzky family.



They filled the tent . . .



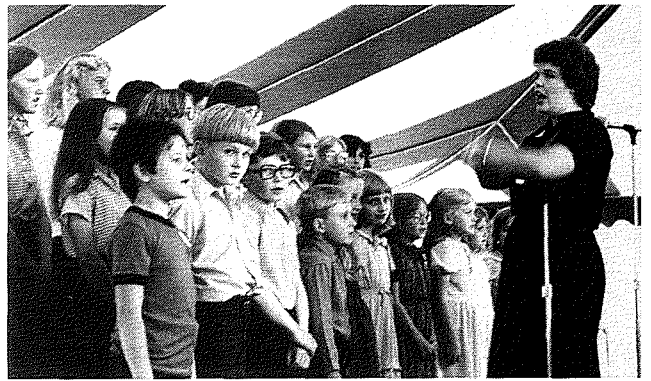
Paul J. Peters, who chaired the Saturday afternoon opening festivities, introduces the dignitaries.



Mrs. Elizabeth Peters pins corsages on Mrs. K. Neufeld and Mary Neufeld in recognition of their services in the centennial project.



Jack Murta presents the village of Gnadenthal with a Canadian flag.



Directed by former teacher Karen Kuhl, the Gnadenthal school children sing two songs.



The Winkler Senior Citizens Orchestra accompanied the singing which opened the Saturday celebration.



Left: Ben Schellenberg accepts a plaque from the town of Winkler.



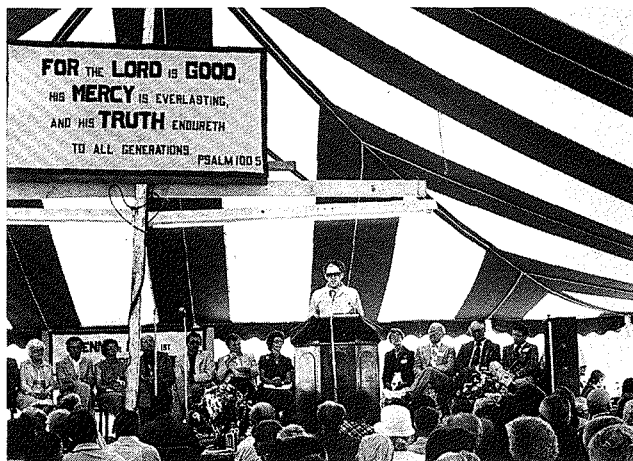
The guest speaker, Robert Dalton, former area school inspector.



Ben Schellenberg and Paul Peters hob-nob with Premier Lyon.



John and Peter Redekopp, and John and Henry Kuhl, render two numbers, one of which had been written for the occasion by John Kuhl.



Ben Sawatzky of Winnipeg introduces Psalm 100:5, the theme for the celebration.

Speakers



Sterling Lyon, Premier of Manitoba.



A. Driedger, MLA for Emerson.



Jack Murta, MP for Lisgar.



H. O. Hildebrandt, Reeve, Rural Municipality of Rhineland.



Arnold Brown, MLA for Rhineland.



A local resident, Frank D. Peters, Councillor for the Rural Municipality of Rhineland.



H. H. Kuhl, Deputy Mayor of Winkler.



Ben Schellenberg speaks on behalf of the village of Gnadenthal.



Mrs. Susie (Peters) Harms directs the "Himmelschlüsselchen", a group that had sung under her direction many years ago when they were her school pupils.

Entertainment

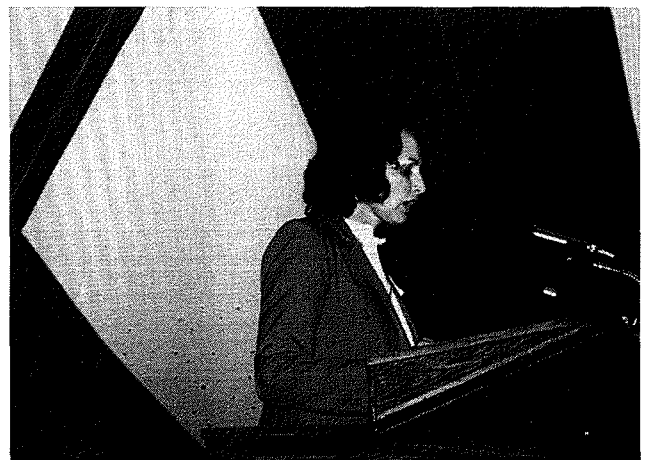
"Entertaining, but long", was the comment heard about the Saturday evening program. The tent was filled to overflowing by the time J. P. Redekopp, assisted by the orchestra, conducted an opening sing-song. No one seemed to mind the rain which was still pattering on the canvas tent walls: a few damp patches never hurt anyone, and the moisture is a blessing for the crops and gardens, seemed to be the general opinion on the weather. The word "gemütlich" best describes the atmosphere at this session, capably chaired by John Kuhl, who regaled the audience with accounts of humorous incidents in the past.

Mrs. Susie (Peters) Harms had come from B.C. to lead the choir she once had organized while teaching in Gnadenthal in the late 1940s. At that time it consisted of young girls between the ages of nine and sixteen, and the group was known as "Himmelschlüsselchen". Twenty of the "girls" once more took part in the choir, although many of the "Himmelschlüsselchen" today have daughters of their own of the age they were then, and indeed, some are already grandmothers. Age had not deteriorated the quality of the singing, and the group was a tremendous success.

Ruth (Sawatzky) Bock had spent many hours



Saturday night's chairman, John W. Kuhl.

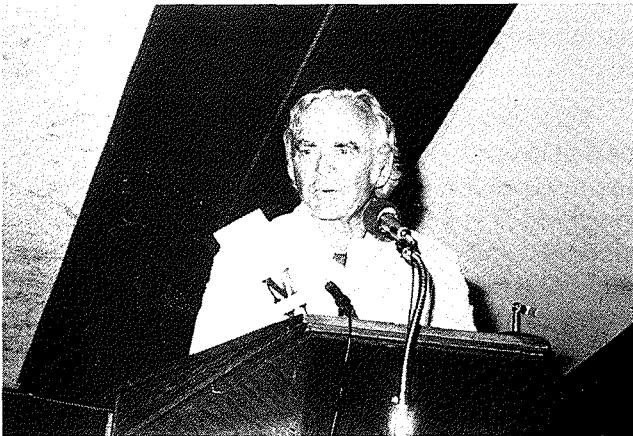


Ruth (Sawatzky) Bock presented a resume of the history of Gnadenthal, the result of many hours of diligent research.

gathering material for a report on the history of Gnadenthal. Her interesting and most informative account gave a clear picture of the village's past hundred years.



Irma (Schaefer) Pauls shares her memories of the years when her father, Mr. Paul Schaefer, taught in Gnadenthal.



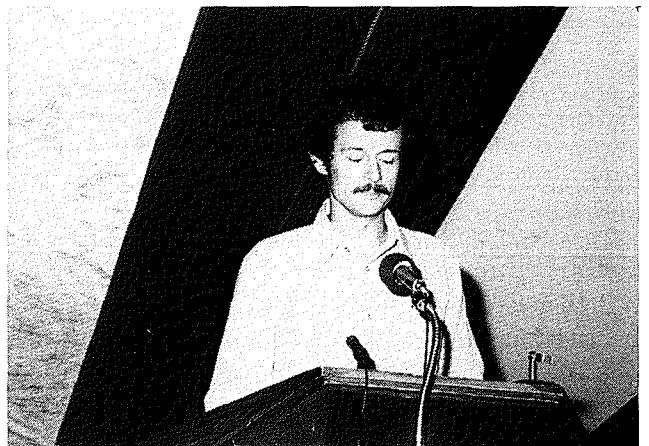
Armin Sawatzky was Gnadenthal's first "homegrown" teacher.



Henry G. Ens, a popular teacher of the 1950s, shared various humorous incidents with an appreciative audience.



Mary Klassen was the first to teach grades 4 and 5 after three classrooms had been established.



Gordon Wiebe was a favourite teacher during the 1960s.



Esther Janzen taught grades 1 to 3 for five years.

Former teachers had come from far and near to attend the Gnadenthal centennial, and five of these had been asked to give a brief account of their teaching experiences years ago. Irma (Schaefer) Pauls reminisced about her father, Mr. Paul J. Schaefer.

Mrs. Pauls came all the way from Ontario, as did Armin Sawatzky, the first local teacher in the village. Mr. Henry G. Ens, who had taught in Gnadenthal during the 1950s, had come from Mexico where he is presently teaching in a Mennonite private school. Mary Klassen from Winnipeg attended, and Gordon Wiebe and Esther Janzen from Winkler and Morden, respectively, were present.



Armin Sawatzky and his sister, Elsa Redekopp, warmed the hearts of the audience with their music.

Low-German plays always enjoy great popularity, and according to audience response the one Helen (Peters) Redekopp and Mary E. Neufeld had prepared was no exception. It told of Gnadenthal's past 100 years in song, pantomime, dialogue and verse, and was presented in five parts, each depicting a particular time period.

In spite of the late hour, the chairman asked for "Freiwilliges". Few came forward, but Mr. David Penner from Mexico addressed the audience briefly. In the 1920s, at the age of 23, he had left Gnadenthal



"100 Years of Gnadenthal", a five-part play written by Helen (Peters) Redekopp and Mary Neufeld.

with his family, and had now come home to his village especially for the centennial celebrations after long years of absence.

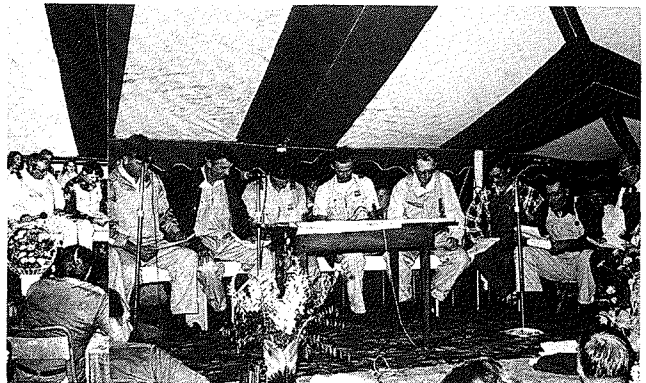
Jim Sawatzky concluded the Saturday festivities with suitable closing remarks and a prayer.



The first Gnadenthal families were acted out in pantomime to the words of a Low-German song sung by a large male group. The couples are: Lyle Neufeld and Elma Guenther, Rick Neufeld and Shirley Klassen, Ron Schellenberg and Wanda Neufeld, John Fehr and Debbie Guenther, Eric Peters and Joyce Schellenberg, Garry Peters and Margaret Fehr, Ed and Darlene Guenther.



Alvin Friesen and Charlotte Klassen as — "Schult and Schultsche".



The "Schultenbot" or "village council" in session: John Klassen, John H. Peters, Paul J. Peters, Dr. Paul Peters, Ben Wall, Jake Klassen, Cornie Peters, Alvin Friesen, Pete Neufeld, and John Kuhl.



Peter Peters and Brenda (Neufeld) Wiens discuss the migration and immigration of the 1920s.



Mary Neufeld reads a poem she composed for this section of the play.



Wilfred Schaefer portrays his father in the "Mr. Paul Schaefer era".



"A Parade of Professions" features various professional persons whose roots were in Gnadenthal.



Helen (Peters) Redekopp and Mary Neufeld — co-authors of the script.

A Time to Worship — July 20th, 1980

After a restful night either in one of the homes in Gnadenthal, in a camper, or in a relative's home, the occupants woke up to a Gnadenthal bathed in sunshine, refreshed after the night's rain. People began to gather on the church grounds at an early hour — the Gnadenthal men to clean the grounds after Saturday's activities, the Gnadenthal ladies to prepare for the noon meal, the ardent singers to practise for the Mass Choir (conducted by J. P. Redekopp), and many just to get in some early visiting.

By ten o'clock the tent was filled and the overflow was settling in chairs in God's great "outdoor" church. A deep hush, a feeling of expectancy — and then J. P. Redekopp led the congregational singing as



All one-time residents of Gnadenthal over sixty-five were asked to rise as the congregation sang "Faith of our Fathers" in tribute to the village pioneers.

voices were raised in praise of God. "Ich bete an die Macht der Liebe" and "How Great Thou Art" rang out, intensely moving with the warmth of enthusiasm, worship, and love borne out by the singing.

Dr. Paul F. Peters, the Master of Ceremonies, interspersed the morning program with interesting, amusing or serious comment. Past and present residents of Gnadenthal over age sixty-five were asked to rise as the strains of "Faith of Our Fathers", sung as a tribute in their honour, resounded in the grounds and echoed through the village.

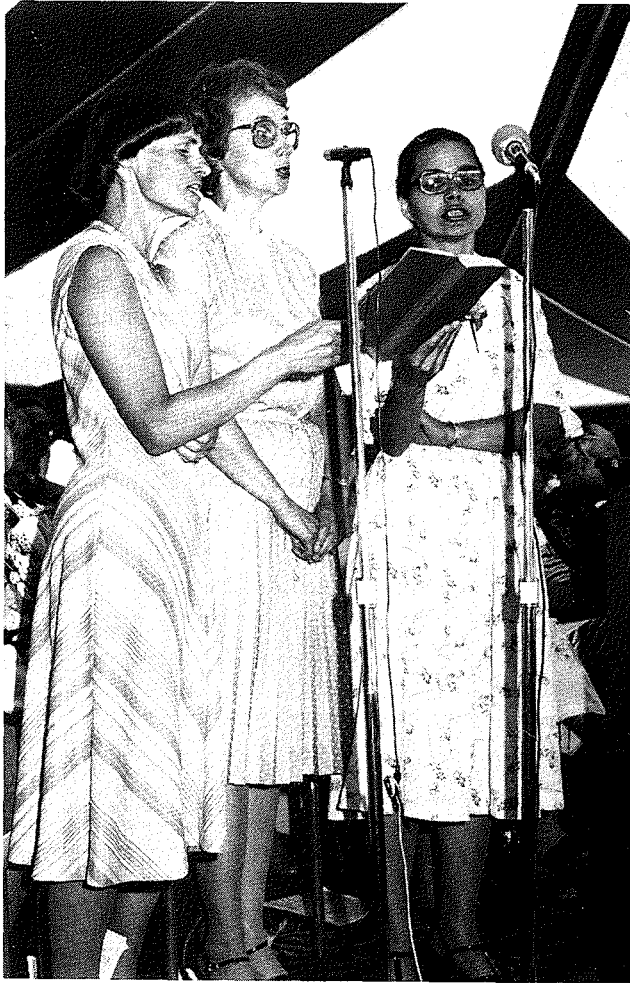
Mr. Diederich P. Peters, seventy-nine year old village resident, led in the invocation and prayer, after which an inter-Mennonite service followed. All those present were richly blessed; all daily cares and worries were washed away in this hour of worship, just as the dust had been washed away by the rain.

John Krahn, now of Brandon (Mennonite Brethren Church) and a former resident of Gnadenthal, recounted some experiences of the past, emphasizing the dedication of parents and ancestors and the stress they put on spiritual values. The message of Psalm 100, the theme of the day, pervaded his address.

Rev. Abe Wiebe, Winkler (Sommerfelder Church), the husband of a former Gnadenthal resident, Mary Dyck, admonished the congregation with Psalm 103:6. His poignant question, "Have you lost your first love for Jesus?" was answered in the words "Repent and re-dedicate, then thank, work for, and praise God".



J. P. Redekopp with a mass choir that gathered to sing on Sunday morning.



Marlene (Penner) Ens, Rita Klassen and Johanna (Sawatzky) Braun singing.



Another trio: Erna (Peters) Hoepfner, Sarah (Peters) Thiessen, and Tina Peters.



Mrs. Johann Peters reads a poem she had written for the occasion.



The mass choir of the Sunday morning worship service filled the stage. "Der Friedefürst" was sung in traditional style. Speaker is A. A. Teichroeb.

Mrs. Johann Peters (Aganetha Born) swept over the century quickly and interestingly as she read a German poem, "Hundert Jahre Gnadenthal" which she had composed.

The spirit of the congregation was uplifted by the beautiful singing of the groups led by Tina Peters and Marlene (Penner) Ens.

Rev. Willy Thiessen (Old Colony Church) whose wife, Sara (Peters), is a former resident of Gnadenthal, enlarged on Psalm 84:6-8 in Low-German. "Brunnengraben", the spiritual wells of spring water the forefathers had "dug", had been a blessing in his family, he stated.

During the collection, the Mass Choir rendered the well-known "Friedefürst" generally sung around the Christmas season. The conductor's explanation dispelled all doubts as to the propriety of "Der Friedefürst" in summer: "Gnadenthal Church, the choir and the Friedefürst are tradition. So why not in the summer?" It was interesting to note that many of the music sheets were copies of the ones Mr. Henry Peters had written in his beautiful script. The summer rendition of the "Friedefürst" so captured the members of the congregation that they restrained themselves with difficulty from joining in the singing.

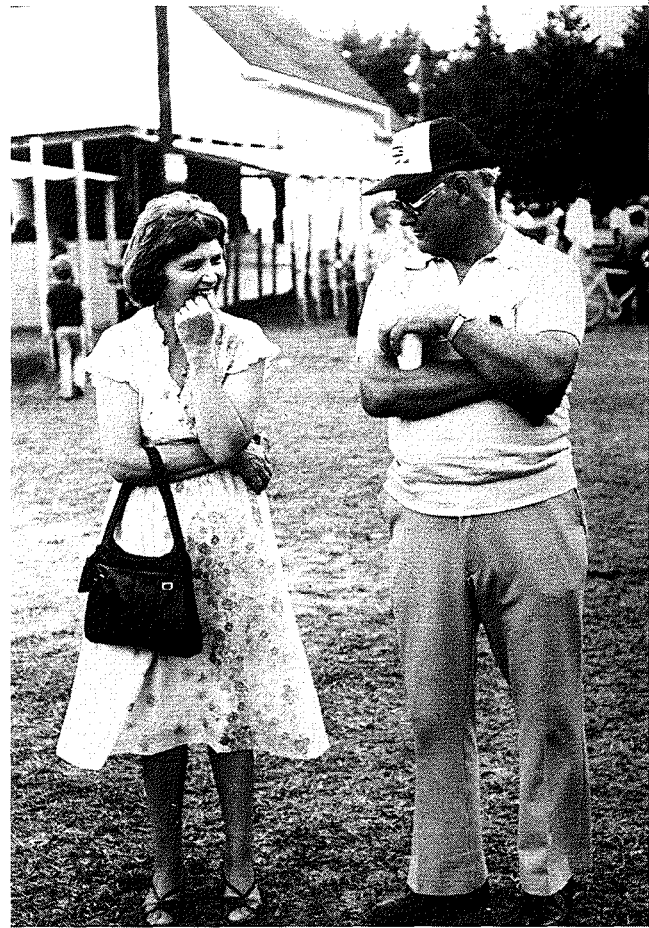
The Festansprache by Rev. A. A. Teichroeb

(Blumenorter Church), a long-time resident of Gnadenthal, followed. He dwelled on the beauty of bygone days, the days of evangelism, conversions and blessings that the village has experienced.



Sunday morning worship speakers, from left to right: John Krahn and wife Mildred (MB Church); Chairman Dr. Paul F. Peters; Rev. Willy Thiessen (Old Colony Church); Rev. A. A. Teichroeb (Blumenorter Church); Mr. D. P. Peters who spoke the invocation, and Rev. Abe Wiebe of the Sommerfelder Church.

The noon meal was served after the morning worship. The women of Gnadenthal had laboured diligently and prepared borscht, moos, potato salad, meat and tweeback. The food was served in an orderly, friendly, well-organized manner, and the comments of the long line-up of visitors invariably seemed to be: "Delicious!" — ample reward for the



Mrs. Helene (Sawatzky) Neufeld and Mr. Frank Peters . . .
"Remember when . . .?"



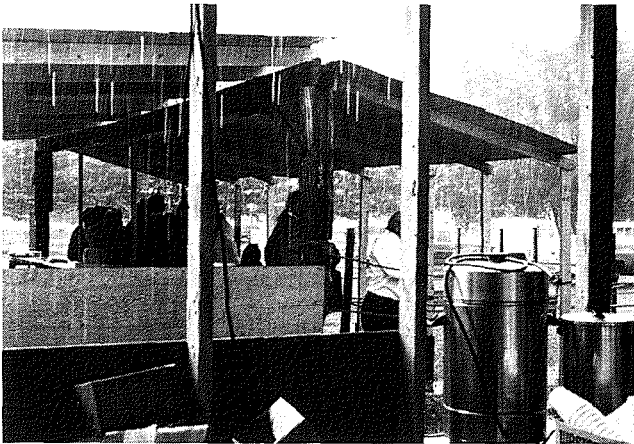
"We haven't forgotten how!" — Jugendspiele bring back memories of a happy youth.

hard work expended by so many on the planning and preparing of masses of food. All had become well acquainted in their combined endeavours, and had learned to respect and care for one another.

“Oh to be young again!” was the implied sentiment as in the afternoon forty-, fifty- and sixty-year-olds relived the memories of their youth by joining in the Jugendspiele they had engaged in with such abandon, long ago. “Grünes Gras” and “Schlüsselbund” came into their own again as the lilting tunes and happy rhythms once more charmed the players. And then, alas, the rain came and everyone sought refuge in the tent. Voices raised in conversation, laughter, happy reminiscences drowned out the noise of the rain pelting on the canvas on this happy afternoon.



Jake Redekopp: “Does it still ‘squish’ through the toes?”



Rain! Oh, how it rained!

All too soon time for Vaspa had come, but the loss of the fleeting minutes was softened by the excellent coffee, cheese, and dainties served, by necessity, in the tent. The Gnadenthal women, resident or non-resident, had outdone themselves in their baking accomplishments on this day of celebration.

Many of the ladies — and also Jake Redekopp — removed their shoes and stockings and dashed across the yard to the food booths in order to serve the “talkers” in the tent. In spite of rain, mud-spattered clothes, bare feet and wet hair, “Vaspa-time” was a most happy time. The spirits of the crowd could not be dampened even though everything else was.



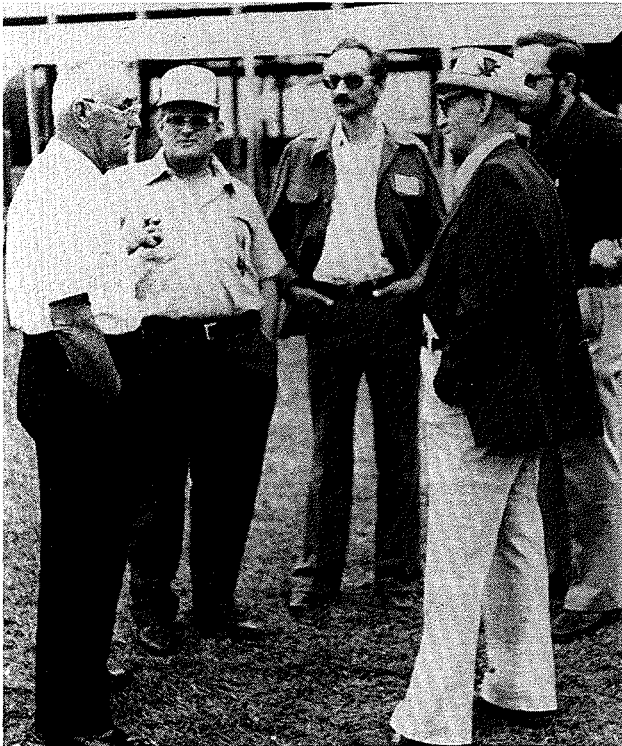
Visiting on the grounds, while others walk in the cemetery.



Abe Klassen, Walter Ediger, Jacob Peters, Henry Toews.



Dave Peters, Henry Konrad, Mr. and Mrs. John Janzen.



Left to right: Pete Enns, George Klassen, Rudy Klassen, Peter B. Penner, Abe Klassen.

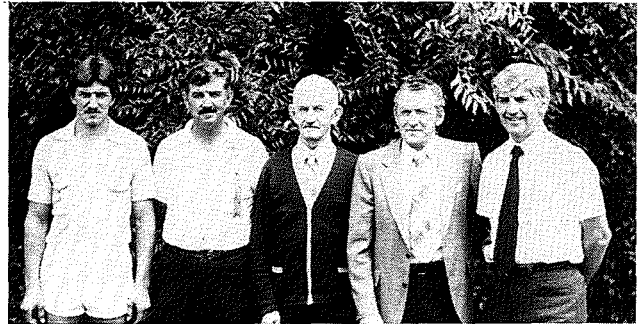
A Time of Reunion

Centennial time may be equated to reunion time, be it a family reunion, a class reunion, a reunion of old neighbours, or a reunion of long missed friends.

The Gnadenthal centennial provided the incentive for a true "home coming" of its members. People had come from across the prairies, from British Columbia and Ontario, from the U.S.A. and from Mexico, to join family or neighbours, classmates or old friends.

Time had changed much. Neighbours meeting neighbours of yore found that they who once were children now had children of their own. Teachers meeting former pupils no longer saw boys and girls, but grown men and women, professionals and career people. One thing had remained constant through the years: the mutual sharing of concerns, be they everyday experiences, material or spiritual, or be it simply the recognition of the comfort of fellow wanderers who shared the paths of life for a time, some longer, some regrettably short.

Over the years Mennonites of widely different backgrounds have learned to live and work together in Gnadenthal — perhaps the village could be called "a melting pot of Mennonites". Their faith and the grace of God have made this lovely village truly a "vale of grace" as the name implies.

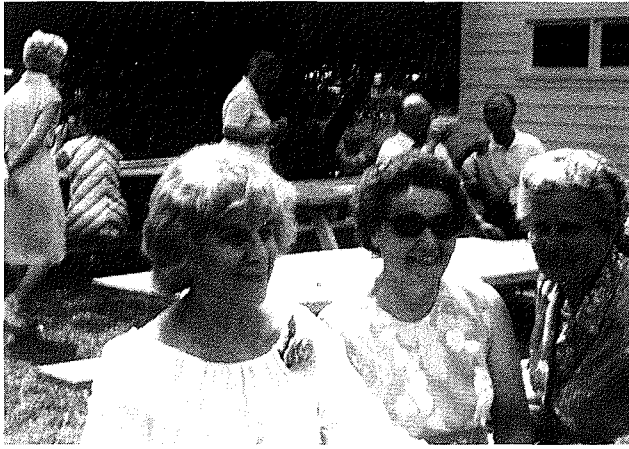


Family reunions. These five men bear the same name, span three generations. They came from Gnadenthal, Winkler, Edmonton and Steinbach. Left to right: Paul Raymond Peters, grandson, Paul J. Peters, son, Paul P. Peters, father, Paul H. Peters, nephew, Dr. Paul F. Peters, nephew.

School Friends



Left to right: Mr. John Kuhl and wife Lil; Mr. and Mrs. Dave and Martha (Schellenberg) Penner; Ben Schellenberg; John Krahn and wife Mildred. Home areas are Winkler, Winnipeg, Gnadenthal and Brandon.



More family reunions. Foreground, left to right: Elsa (Sawatzky) Redekopp, Nettie (Redekopp) Baer, Justina (Schellenberg) Baerg. Background: Marianne (Sawatzky) Thiessen, Annie (Kuhl) Sawatzky, George Sawatzky, George Neufeld.



Three school friends meet on Saturday evening: Dennis Bueckert, Waldemar Sawatzky, and Menno Bergman.



Mrs. Anna Dyck, centre, recalls the days when she first arrived in Gnadenthal in the spring of 1927, as an immigrant from Russia. Listening to her are daughter, Emily Fast, right, and Ruth (Sawatzky) Bock.



Mr. Johann Peters greets George Friesen and his sister Anne Neufeld. The Friesens are the son and daughter of D. H. Friesens, better known as "Garage" Friesens.



Teacher, Mrs. Susie (Peters) Harms, with her former pupils: Mrs. Ruth (Sawatzky) Bock and Mrs. Ella (Penner) Sawatzky.



Friends and family meet near the registration booth.

A Time of Parting

In spite of the rain, people were reluctant to leave the pleasant scene of friendship and fellowship. Even physically the departure was made difficult by the rain which left some yards soft and muddy. Eric Peters, with the aid of his large tractor, busily towed vehicles on to the street, the big refrigerated creamery truck necessitating a particularly heavy tug. Eventually all visitors left, and quiet reigned, as the weary villagers went home to their well-deserved rest. The aftermath — the clean-up — would be there on the morrow.

Everyone had a good time. Everyone was blessed. We all thank and praise God for those beautiful days, as the lovely memories linger on and on.



Mud and water everywhere.



We will long remember how it was.

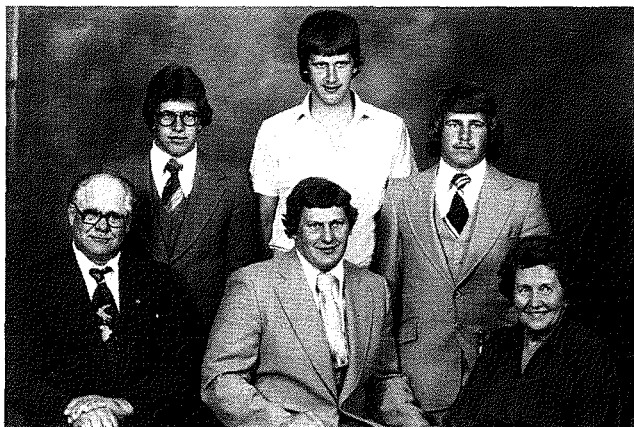
1980 Residents Hosting the Centennial Celebration



Residence of Mr. and Mrs. Abram P. Bueckert, John, Jake, Frank and Aron.



The Abram Giesbrecht family. Standing, left to right: John, Jake, Lieza, Eva, Tina. Seated: Abe Giesbrecht, Abie, Mrs. Katharina Giesbrecht.



The Frank D. Peters family. Back row, left to right: Terry, Charlie, Garry. Front: Frank D. Peters, Clifford, Mrs. Kathy Peters.



The Ben Wall family. Left to right are: Vernon, Karen, Mrs. Hilda Wall, Ben Wall.



The Cornie Klassen family. Back, left to right: Mary, Johnny, Tina.



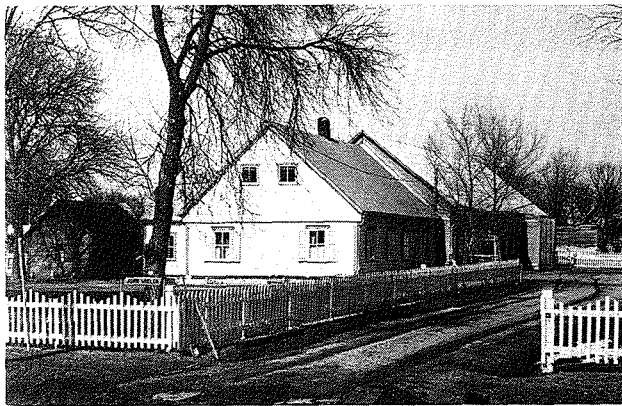
Corny and Verna Wall.



The Ben Schellenberg family. Back row, left to right: Ben Schellenberg, Robert, Joyce, Ron. Seated: Mrs. Eva Schellenberg, Ruth.



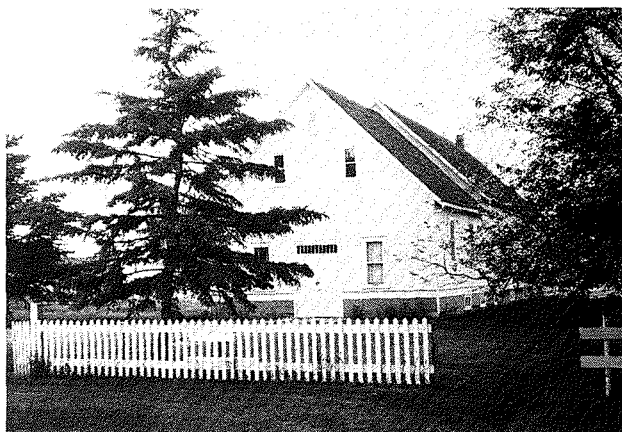
Paul Raymond and Corinne Peters.



The John Wieler residence.



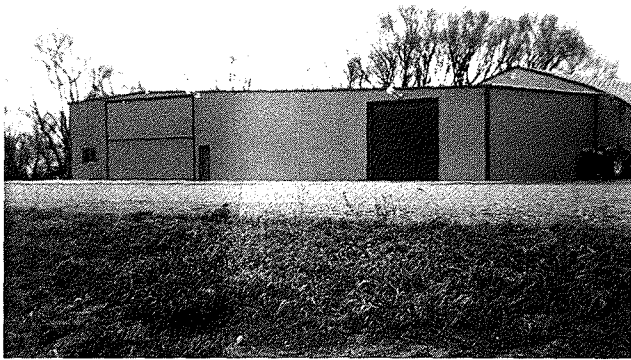
George and Susie Friesen.



Gnadenenthal church.



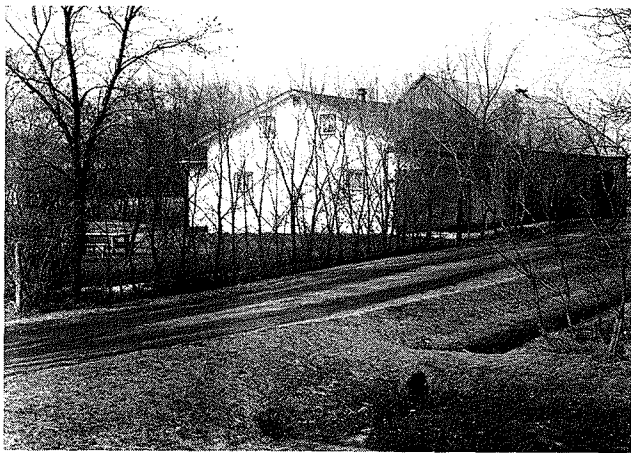
The Paul J. Peters family. Left to right are: Mrs. Elizabeth Peters, Eric, Norman, Paul J. Peters.



Southern Manitoba Potato Company storage at Gnadenthal.



The Burt Brownsberger family. Left to right are, Peter Reimer, Kathy Reimer, Burt Brownsberger, John Reimer, Mrs. Helen Brownsberger, Abe Reimer, Helen Reimer, Susie Reimer. Front: Larry Brownsberger, Benny Reimer.



The Peter Penner residence.



The Aron Zacharias family. Standing, left to right: Martha, Liz, Benny, John, Jake, Isaac. Seated: Mrs. Zacharias, Nancy, Aron Zacharias.



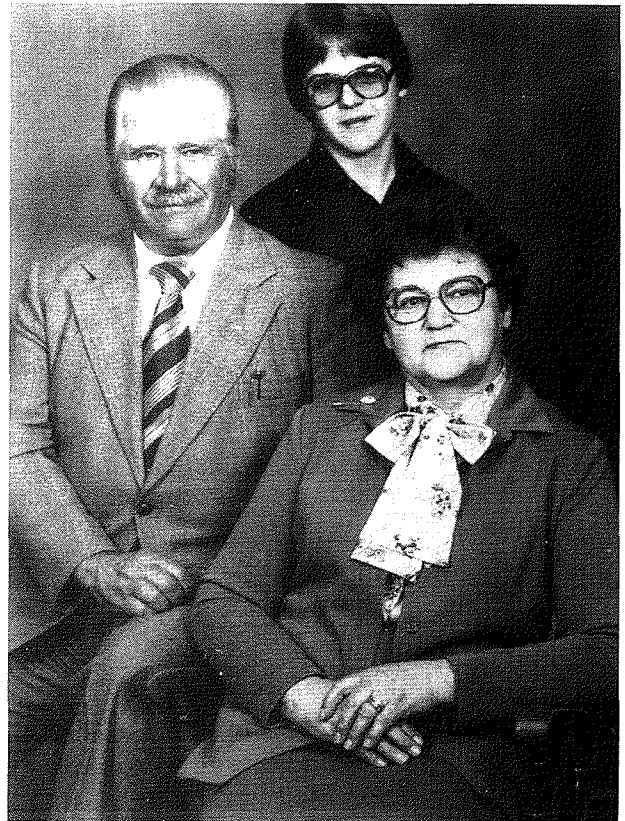
The Cornie C. Peters family. Left to right are: Karen, Corry C. Peters, Frances, Mrs. Elinor Peters.



The Corry Banman residence.



The Mrs. Susanna Schellenberg residence.



David D. and Tina Peters with Randy.



The Jake Klassen family. Left to right are: Darlene, Garry, Danny, Mrs. Mary Klassen, Jake Klassen, Dorothy, Darrel.



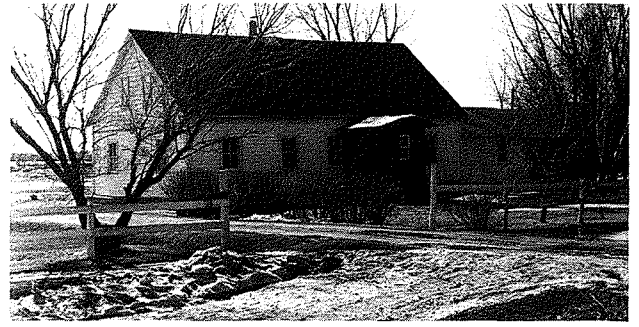
Jake and Margaret Wall with Linda (left) and Judy.



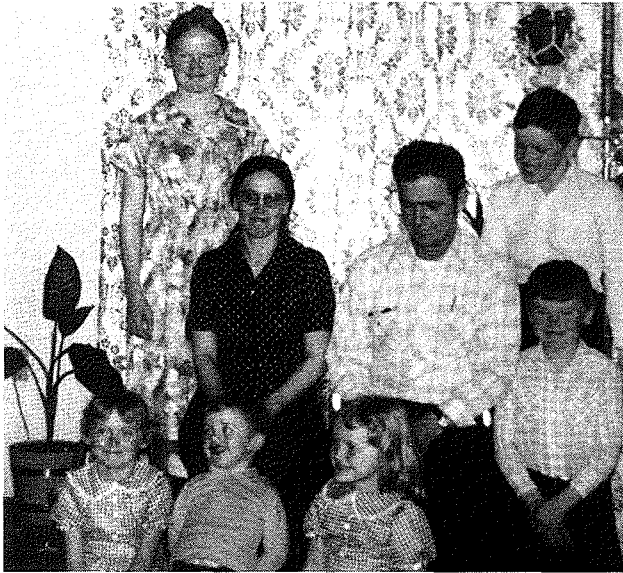
The David Wiebe family. Back row, left to right: John Froese, Mr. David Wiebe, John Schapansky, Gordon Groening. Middle: Mrs. Dianne Froese and baby, Mrs. Helen Wiebe, Mrs. Margaret Schapansky, Mrs. Helen Groening and baby. Front: Daughter of the Groenings, Erma and Laura Schapansky.



Diedrich and Margareta Peters.



The residence of Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Penner, Sarah and David.



The Abe Rempel family. Back row, left to right: Tina, Mrs. Elizabeth Rempel, Abe Rempel, Abe, Johnny. Front: Linda, Isaac and Liesa.



Johann and Aganetha Peters.



The Jacob Wall family. Left to right are: Johnny, Tina, Jacob Wall, Helen, Nettie, Mary, Mrs. Wall, Peter.



Abram and Mary Klassen.



Ike and Tina Wall.



The Peter Wall residence, formerly the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church building.



The old and new school buildings.



Mr. and Mrs. Ben Banman with Peter and Sarah.



Jake and Nettie Dueck, Ken and Steven live in the teacherage.



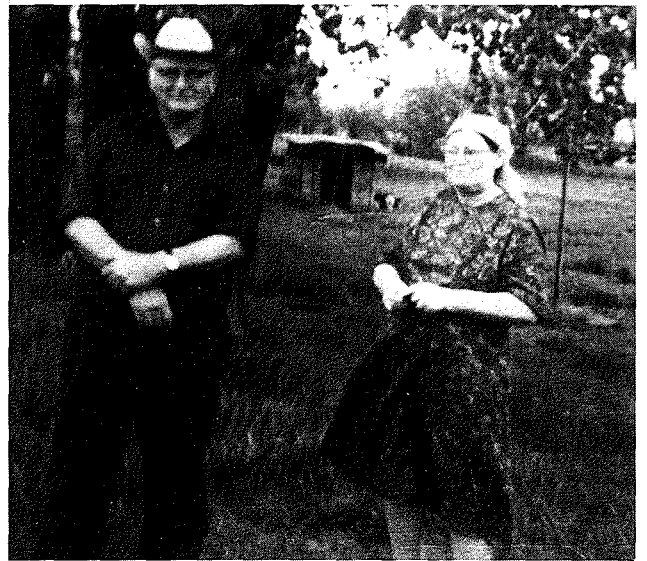
The Pete Neufeld family. Back, left to right: Audrey, Kelly, Wanda, Lyle. Seated: Mrs. Doreen Neufeld and Pete Neufeld.



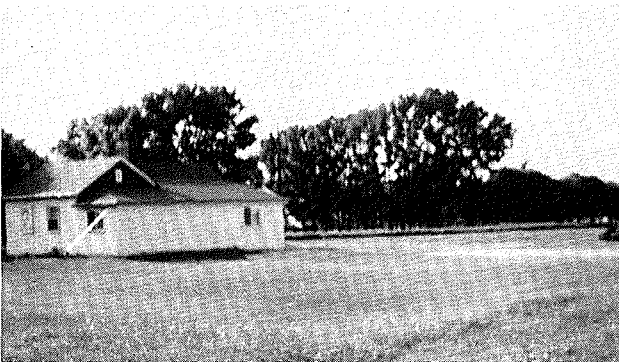
Henry and Anne Peters with Jimmy (left) and Johnny.



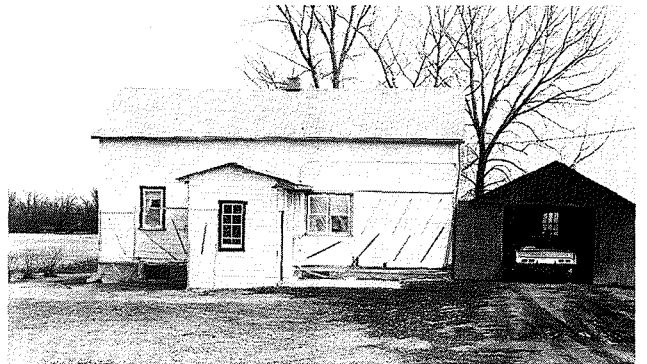
The Jake F. Klassen family. Standing, left to right: Johnny, Brian, Jake F. Klassen. Seated: Mrs. Marge Klassen with Laurie and Linda. Front: Shirley, Brenda, Sandra.



Jacob and Maria Dueck.



The former home of the George Letkemans. It is presently occupied by grandson Vern and wife Peggy.



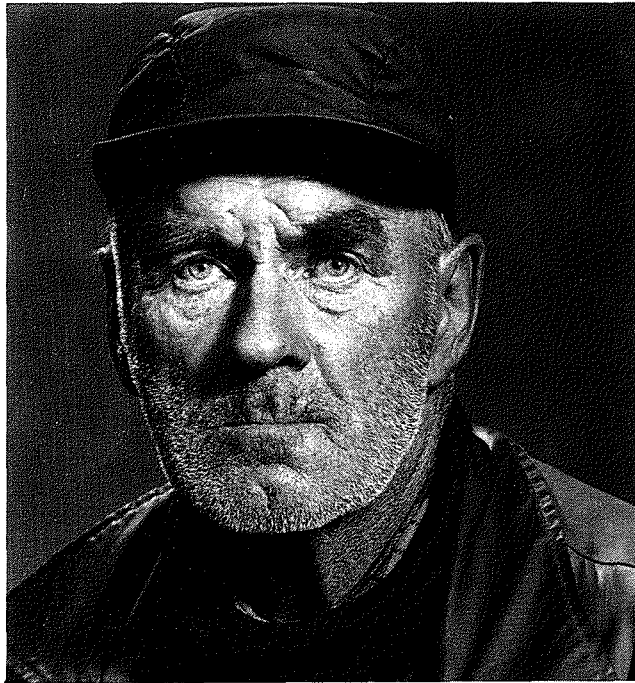
Residence of Abe and Susan Fehr, Isaac and Kenny.



The David Wiebe farm house located west of Gnadenthal.



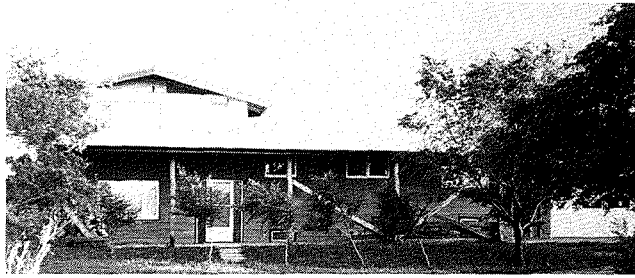
Mrs. Katharina Neufeld and family. Left to right are: Mary Ellen, Mrs. Neufeld, Pete Neufeld, Mrs. Helena Dyck, Mrs. Tina Enns.



Peter Penner.



Henry Z. and Elizabeth Klassen.



The home of Bill and Mary Letkeman, Kim and Theresa.



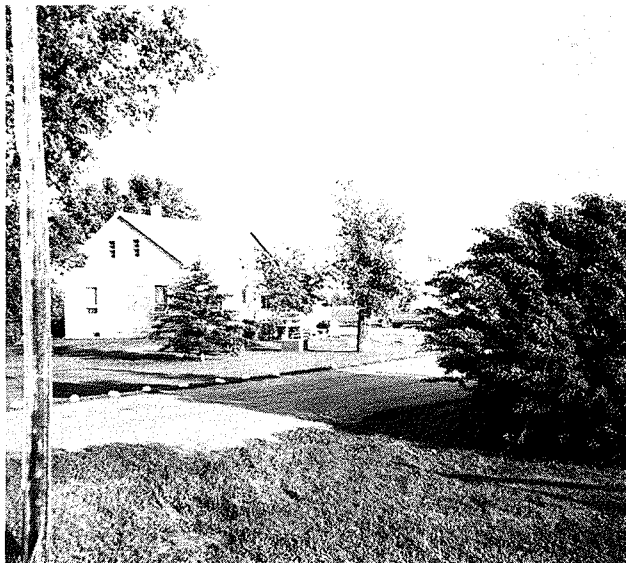
Mr. and Mrs. Joe Giesbrecht with Margie (left) and Lisa.



The Jacob I. Fehr family. Standing, left to right: Corny, John, Tina, Mrs. Mary Thiessen, Jake and David. Seated: Margaret, Mrs. Helena Fehr, Jacob I. Fehr, Mrs. Helen Klassen.



The Jacob Fehr family. Standing, left to right: Andrew, James, Linda, Edward, Arthur. Seated: Mrs. Catherine Fehr with David and Jacob Fehr.



The home of John and Tina Nickel and Marvin.



The Peter Guenther family. Back row, left to right: Mrs. Helen Guenther, Debbie, Verna, Elma, Darlene. Front: Elaine, Edwin, Peter Guenther.



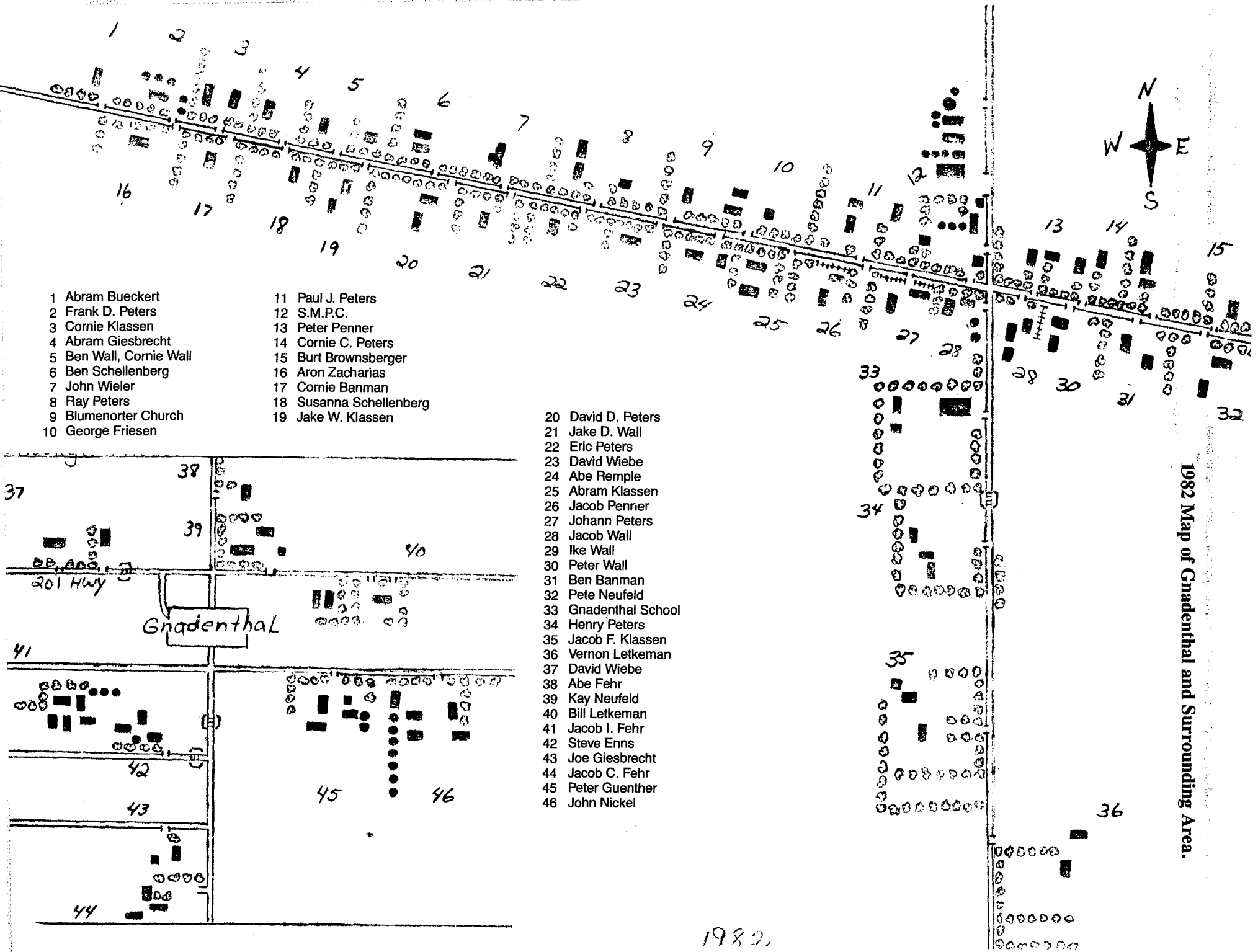
Singing at the Gnadenthal Centennial. Left to right are: Tina Peters, Martha (Schellenberg) Penner, Helen (Peters) Redekopp, Hilda (Peters) Schulz, Margaret (Peters) Froese, Anne (Redekopp) Braun.



Liesa Giesbrecht, Susanne Wiebe and Eva Giesbrecht entertain at the community barbecue, June 13, 1982.



Gnadenthal Community Barbecue, 1982.



- 1 Abram Bueckert
- 2 Frank D. Peters
- 3 Cornie Klassen
- 4 Abram Giesbrecht
- 5 Ben Wall, Cornie Wall
- 6 Ben Schellenberg
- 7 John Wieler
- 8 Ray Peters
- 9 Blumenorter Church
- 10 George Friesen
- 11 Paul J. Peters
- 12 S.M.P.C.
- 13 Peter Penner
- 14 Cornie C. Peters
- 15 Burt Brownsberger
- 16 Aron Zacharias
- 17 Cornie Banman
- 18 Susanna Schellenberg
- 19 Jake W. Klassen

- 20 David D. Peters
- 21 Jake D. Wall
- 22 Eric Peters
- 23 David Wiebe
- 24 Abe Remple
- 25 Abram Klassen
- 26 Jacob Penner
- 27 Johann Peters
- 28 Jacob Wall
- 29 Ike Wall
- 30 Peter Wall
- 31 Ben Banman
- 32 Pete Neufeld
- 33 Gnadenthal School
- 34 Henry Peters
- 35 Jacob F. Klassen
- 36 Vernon Letkeman
- 37 David Wiebe
- 38 Abe Fehr
- 39 Kay Neufeld
- 40 Bill Letkeman
- 41 Jacob I. Fehr
- 42 Steve Enns
- 43 Joe Giesbrecht
- 44 Jacob C. Fehr
- 45 Peter Guenther
- 46 John Nickel

1982 Map of Gnadenthal and Surrounding Area.

1982

FOOTNOTES

Chapter I

1. A major recent study of the origin and history of Mennonites in Danzig-West Prussia is Horst Penner, *Die ost- und west-preussischen Mennoniten* (Weierhof, Mennonitscher Geschichtsverein, e.V., 1978).

2. For a discussion of the development of hymnody in the early eighteenth century among Danzig-West Prussian Mennonites see the article "Gesangbücher" in *Mennonitisches Lexikon*, Vol. II, pp. 86-91 by Christian Neff, and the article "Hymnology" in *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Vol. II, pp. 875-879 by Cornelius Krahn. It is quite likely that this early German language Prussian Lutheran and Pietist hymnody influenced the hymnody of the Reinländer Mennonites in Manitoba.

3. See H. G. Mannhardt, *Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde* (Danzig: Selbstverlag der Danziger Mennonitengemeinde, 1919), for further information about the building of church buildings, and the language changes. Also see Horst Penner, *Die ost- und west-preussischen Mennoniten*. It should be noted that the emigrants to Russia in 1788 had used Low German for about a century, and thus were fluent in it. The transition to High German as their language of worship had not been fully made by the time they emigrated. Thus, throughout their stay in Russia, and even when they emigrated to Canada in the 1870s, they were most fluent in Low German.

4. A German translation of this document which was originally drawn up in Latin is included in Wilhelm Mannhardt, *Die Wehrfreiheit der Altpreussischen Mennoniten* (Marienburg, 1863), pp. 80-82.

5. The text of the earliest petition of Danzig-West Prussian Mennonites to the Russian government, together with the Russian government's response, is contained in Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten*, pp. 24-32. An extensive discussion is found in Peter M. Friesen's *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* (1789-1910) (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978). This volume is the most extensive history of Mennonites in Russia written by any Russian Mennonite. In addition to lengthy discussions, the volume also includes the texts of many sources, the originals of many of which have since been lost. Peter M. Friesen, a member of the Allianz Mennonite Church, was a strong supporter of Pietism. He evaluated Russian Mennonite history from this perspective.

6. A detailed discussion of the Chortitza settlement including the problems of the early pioneer years is found in D. H. Epp, *Die Chortitzer Mennoniten. Versuch einer Darstellung der Entwicklung derselben* (Rosenthal/Chortitz, n.p. n.d.).

7. For a detailed discussion of the founding of the Bergthaler settlement see William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publication, 1974). No comparable study has been made of the Fürstenland settlement.

8. Gerhard Wiebe, Aeltester of the Bergthal Church, entitled *Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderungen der Mennoniten aus Russland nach America* (Winnipeg: Nordwesten, n.d.), expresses his reasons for emigration. This book has recently been translated by Helen Janzen, and published by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society under the title: *Causes and History of the emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America*.

9. A perceptive and analytical study was made of this tension among the Russian Mennonites between the "conservers" and the "progressives" by the British anthropologist Dr. Jim Urry in his doctoral dissertation, "The Closed and the Open Social and Religious change amongst the Mennonites in Russia" (1789-1889), (Ph.D. dissertation, Oxford University, 1975). A copy of the dissertation is in the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg.

10. For copies of the letter by John Lowe, and of the revised official version of that letter which was accepted by the Order-in-Council, see William Schroeder, *The Bergthal Colony*, pp. 85-91. For further discussion about the early Manitoba settlement arrangements see E. K. Francis, *In Search of Utopia* (Altona: D. W.

Friesens & Sons Ltd., 1955), and Adolf Ens, "Mennonite relations to Governments, Western Canada 1870-1925" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1978).

11. A number of lists are available of Mennonite immigrants into Canada beginning with 1874. All the immigrants who arrived by ship in Quebec were entered on ship lists. These lists are available in microfilm form.

At the CMCA ship lists are available in vols. 981 and 989 for the years 1874 to 1880. These are based upon Public Archives of Canada microfilm reels.

Jacob Y. Shantz also compiled a list of immigrants in the 1870s. This is published in *List of Mennonites who migrated From Russia To Manitoba* (1874), (Kitchener).

12. For a detailed discussion of the boundaries of the "West Reserve", see the two dissertations, one by John Warkentin, "The Mennonite Settlement of Southern Manitoba" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto), 1960, pp. 28-44, and the other by Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments", pp. 47-64.

13. Henry Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith* (Altona: Bergthal Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1970), p. 80, states that according to oral tradition there was a discussion between the Reinländer and Bergthaler Aeltester regarding the hymnody they would adopt in Manitoba.

The two Aeltester, Johann Wiebe, Reinländer, and Gerhard Wiebe, Bergthaler, agreed to use the older melodies in their churches. For the Reinländer this meant switching from the newer melodies which had been introduced in Fürstenland and Chortitza in Russia. Shortly after this agreement, the Bergthaler Church decided to switch to newer melodies. Thus the unity the two Aeltester had sought eluded them.

14. See Peter Zacharias, *Reinland, An Experience in Community* (Winkler: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976) for a description of the earliest developments in the village of Reinland. His discussion includes the developments also for the whole region (Gebiet), not only for the village of Reinland.

15. See Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments", pp. 76-80.

16. Frank Brown, *A History of the town of Winkler, Manitoba* (Winkler: Frank Brown, 1973), p. 12, states: "The line (CPR) from Winnipeg to Manitoba, between which two points Winkler is situated, was placed in operation on December 10, 1882".

17. "Aufschreibe Buch der Geborenen, Gestorbenen, Ge- trauten der Dorfschaft Gnadenthal, 1884", Conference of Mennonites in Canada Archives (hereafter CMCA), vol. 2228. In 1896 a new book was started. The number of founders cannot be verified definitely from the data available. The oral tradition says 17 young men founded Gnadenthal village. The *Aufschreibe Buch* 1884 includes 20 families listed by the same hand. Of those 20, the last three were probably too young to have been original settlers. In 1880, one was 17, one 12, and another 10. Earlier in the list there is however, also another 17 year old, as well as an 18 year old.

18. "Farm Inventory 1880-1881" CMCA, vol. 2228.

19. "Aufschreibe Buch der Geborenen, Gestorbenen, Ge- trauten der Dorfschaft Gnadenthal, 1884", CMCA, vol. 2228. The *Register Buch für die Dorfschaft Gnadenthal, 1896* may have been drawn up after some people had emigrated to the new Hague-Osler settlement. A number of the families from the 1884 *Aufschreibe Buch* are missing, and new names appear. A high percentage of these new Wirte are older than the ones which are omitted. This may indicate that well-to-do farmers used this opportunity to increase their holdings.

20. "Kontrakt wie der Hirt Gemietet ist", CMCA, vol. 2228.

21. "Kontrakt zwischen die Dorfgemeinde Gnadenthal und Joseph Arremsheck", CMCA, vol. 2228. Joseph Arremsheck was hired as the herdsman for the years 1914, 1918 and 1920. He may also have been hired in the intervening years, but the contracts for

those years have not been retained. His name was spelled differently each year. The handwriting indicates it was written by the person who drew up the contract. Each year the herdsman confirmed the contract by signing with an "X" after his name.

22. "Kontrakt vom Schullehrer mieten" CMCA, vol. 2228. All the contracts begin the year with the month after seeding time, and end with seeding time the following year. Each contract was signed by the teacher, the Dorfvorsteher and two, sometimes three, Beisitzer.

23. "Theilungs-Verordnungen Gnadenthal" CMCA, vol. 2228. This is a twenty-one page document detailing the operation and responsibilities of the various people responsible for handling the estates.

24. "Brand-Buch für die Dorfschaft Gnadenthal im Jahre 1917" CMCA, vol. 2229. The Brand-Buch included one page for each resident on which his assets were listed.

25. There were also non-religious reasons for emigrating from Russia. A large percentage of the Bergthal colony in Russia was landless. More land was a practical necessity and this need was met by emigrating to Manitoba. Even in Chortitza and Fürstenland there were numerous landless people. The need for more land was rooted in the Mennonites' understanding that the appropriate lifestyle for a believer in God was to be a Wirt in a village with sufficient land to raise a family and start his sons in farming.

26. In Danzig-West Prussia, before emigration to Russia, ministers had been called Lehrer (teachers). This designation was gradually supplanted in Russia by the term "Prediger".

27. Some Mennonite settlers established villages in Kansas, but the villages were abandoned fairly soon. See C. Henry Smith, *Story of the Mennonites*, 5th edition, revised and enlarged by Cornelius Krahn (Newton: Faith and Life Press, 1981), pp. 447-450.

28. For a discussion of the earliest Mennonite missionary activities in the West Reserve in Manitoba see Henry J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, pp. 103-115, and John A. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975), pp. 153-156.

29. Even within the Bergthaler Church only a minority supported the establishment of a secondary school whose principal function would be to train teachers. The majority of the Bergthaler Churches' members separated and organized the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, with Abram Doerksen from the village of Sommerfeld as the Aeltester. See Henry J. Gerbrandt, *Adventure in Faith*, pp. 90-91.

30. "Theilungs-Verordnungen Gnadenthals", p. 20. CMCA, vol. 2228, states that the payments of estates are to include 5 percent interest.

31. In cases where both parents had died, another couple was given the responsibility of "Schichtgeber". An example of this is the "Theilungs-Kontrakt" dated 27 October, 1919, which dealt with the case of the estate of the widow Mrs. Johann Penner. Abram and Margaretha Friesen, Schönweise were assigned the responsibility of "Schichtgeber" CMCA, vol. 2228.

32. "Theilungs-Kontrakt", March, 1915, CMCA, vol. 2228.

33. See the following studies regarding the development of municipalities in Manitoba: Francis, *In Search of Utopia*, pp. 80-109, and Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments", pp. 116-141.

34. "Anschreibe Buch des Bezirks Amt zu Reinland, Der Schlussrechnung vom 6ten July 1875", CMCA, vol. 2229.

35. *Ibid.* Other expenses were for labourers hired at Emerson for work and repair on the church buildings and the "Amtshaus".

36. *Ibid.*, p. 109. Summary of payments to the government up to January, 1888.

37. *Ibid.*, p. 128. The record indicates that the village of Neueinlage, presumably in the Hague-Osler settlement, owed the Manitoba Reinländer Church \$200.00 for the purchase of one section of land as of June 1, 1895, and an additional \$233.75 as of June 1896.

38. The Reinländer Church extended help beyond its own fellow believers. In the same "Anschreibe Buch" on page 218, there is an entry which reads as follows, "Kollekte für die Nothleidende in Rusland. 1921 28 Dezember, zusammengerechnet, \$3,778.32."

39. List of land in Gnadenthal, dated Gnadenthal, 8 April 1922. CMCA, vol. 2228.

40. Adolf Ens, in an unpublished paper "The Mennonites as Reflected by the *Manitoba Free Press* 1910-1929" (University of Ottawa, 1973).

41. For discussion of the influence of the First World War upon Mennonites in Manitoba, and in particular Reinländer Mennonites, see Frank H. Epp, *Mennonites in Canada 1786-1920* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), pp. 365-418, and Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments", pp. 278-358.

42. A number of receipts from the Canadian Patriotic Fund for donations by people from Gnadenthal are still extant, CMCA, vol. 2228.

43. For a general survey of this era see W. L. Morton, *Manitoba A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), p. 329-379.

44. The *Manitoba Free Press* ran a large type headline in May 22, 1920, in which it stated, "One King, One Flag, One Fleet, One Empire For God! For duty! For Empire!"

45. See Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments", p. 249f.

46. *Ibid.*

47. H. Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought A Country. Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), p. 31.

48. Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments", pp. 232, 333.

49. CMCA, vol. 2228. The handwritten document, in Gothic script, begins with the following sentence: "Nachfolgend ist die Vereinbarung wegen dem Landhandel zwischen Monteith, Fletcher und David als Käufer und die Dorfgemeinschaft Gnadenthal als Verkäufer niedergeschrieben."

50. *Ibid.*

51. Isaak M. Dyck, *Auswanderung der Reinländer Mennoniten Gemeinde von Canada nach Mexico* (Cuauhtemoc, Mexico, 1971, 2nd edition, 1971) discusses the reasons for emigration to Mexico. Among other reasons he also suggested that emigration had become necessary because too many people had become too rich in Manitoba. A new pioneering start was necessary in order to purify the community.

Chapter II

1. Proselytizing was illegal in Russia.

2. Nestor Machno, a peasant from Guljai-Pole, had massed into bands great numbers of lawless desperados, rabble, and some unfortunate social outcasts or starving homeless transients. The bands terrorized the Mennonite settlements with a force that almost broke them. A description of the era may be found in Victor Peters, *Nestor Machno, The Life of an Anarchist* (Winnipeg: Echo Books, 1969).

3. Subsequently rumours, perhaps unfounded, have arisen according to which Jacob Rempel was an inmate in one of the prisons which was blown up in anticipation of the German occupation in World War II.

4. Mr. Peter P. Redekopp was elected assistant pastor of the Gnadenthal Mennonite Brethren Church on October 29, 1931. In 1950 he was elected deacon. Like so many others in Gnadenthal he has lent his active support to his church in an exemplary fashion at all times. Even in his ripe old age (currently 95) he has remained devoted and actively interested in the concerns of the organization which has been his spiritual home through many long years.

Appendix

1. Gerhard Lohrenz, *Mennonites of Western Canada* (Steinbach: Derksen Printers, 1973).
2. Ibid.
3. Peter M. Friesen *The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia* (1789-1910) (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978).
4. J. B. Toews, *A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church*, ed. P. J. Klassen (Fresno: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975).

Chapter III

1. "Ziffern" or numerical equivalents to notes in music notation were in use by Russian Mennonites.
2. Fritz Reuter is a popular, often humorous, Low-German author, whose works were read in Russia as well as in Canada after the wave of immigration during the 1920s.
3. The term "Garden Valley" replaces the former "Winkler School District".

Chapter V

1. "Vaspa" is a light meal, usually consisting of coffee and pastry, taken in midafternoon.
2. "Oftmoos" is a sweet fruit soup, traditional holiday or

Sunday dinner fare. "Komstborscht" is a cabbage soup which the Mennonites adopted from the Russians.

3. Delivery of wedding or funeral invitations was generally prompt since it was considered a disgraceful negligence on the part of the last recipient if the invitation was not forwarded at once.

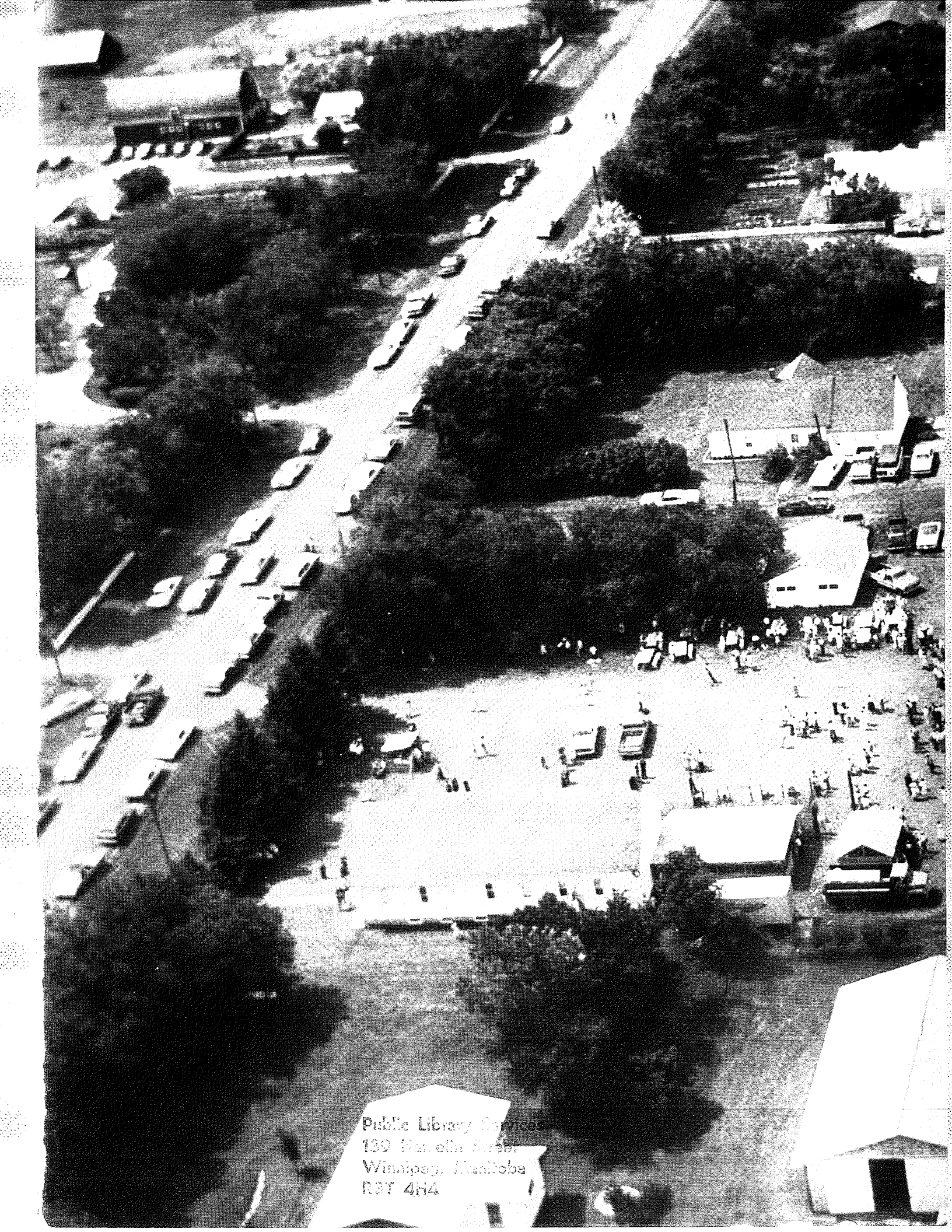
4. "Sommaborscht" is a frugal soup of greens, usually considered to be a modest dish or repast.

5. Married women wore a white bow on public occasions during the first years of marriage. Later, after the children had arrived, the white ribbon was exchanged for a black one, as more becoming to the status of a matron. The custom perhaps stems from the biblical commendation that women wear a head covering.

6. At that time the groom's boutonniere was much more substantial. Usually it consisted of sprigs of myrtle with a white ribbon attached to it.

7. "Gorka", the Russian word for "bitter" was chanted to induce the young couple to kiss in public, thereby making the occasion sweeter for all. Much persuasion was never needed. Today's custom of tinkling spoons against glasses is similar to the "Gorka" practice of by-gone days. Both resulted in the newly-weds happily exchanging kisses.

8. In Russia, the necessary service frequently was undertaken by some older women in the village. For esthetic reasons, these persons did not take part in food preparation such as kneading the dough for funeral buns.

An aerial, black and white photograph of a town street. The street runs diagonally from the top left towards the bottom right. It is lined with numerous cars, likely from the mid-20th century. On the left side of the street, there are several large, dark trees. On the right side, there are several buildings, including a large white building with a gabled roof in the foreground. The overall scene depicts a busy town street.

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