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Theatre Curtain

Our dust jacket is a photographic reproduction of the theatre curtain which hung in the Gretna Theatre in the early decades of this century.

The many advertisements which appear on the curtain underscore the fact that Gretna was the business centre of the era.

In the early 1940's the theatre was purchased by A. B. Klassen, who renovated the interior to convert it to a confectionery/general store. The curtain was destined for the garbage dump, but was rescued by H. P. Hildebrandt, who recognized its historical and sentimental value and happened to be at the right place at the right time.

He took it home and put it in a granary on the family farm, where it stayed, rolled up and forgotten, until the early 1970's. By that time, his son, Peter E. Hildebrandt was living on the family farm. He re-discovered it when the granary was being demolished.

The love of historical artifacts proved to be a family trait, and again the curtain was plucked from the rubble and given a new resting place in the barn, where it hangs to this day.

GRETNA is the story of a Manitoba community situated on the 49th parallel. It is the story of a village which provided thousands of immigrants with a window on the Canadian "Northwest". It also is the story of a commerical and educational centre which has experienced its share of successes and failures, of good times and bad, of controversy and harmony.

Floods, fires, and smallpox epidemics have been among the challenges faced by the people of Gretna. Scandal, politics, and religious controversy add spice to the pages of a story about a community which has always shown warmth, kindness, and understanding to those who shared their lives with Gretna.

For every setback the people of Gretna encountered they usually found a "silver lining". The Gretna spirit saw its citizens through wars and depressions and much more in the community's first hundred years. The memories and experiences of Gretna's first century are only partially laid bare in this history of Gretna.

At the Eureka Sale Room, Portage A TOWN SITES OF CI

Two of the Finest Locations on Order of the

A safe and solid investment for speculators, and [all desirous of placing their money where it splendid selection of

WOOD LOTS! FARM A

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Instructed by J. H. McTavish, Esq., Land Commissioner of the C. P. R. Co. I will sell on

GRETNA is situated on the international boundary, being the south half of section 5, township 1, range 1 Grand Forks division, with the southwestern branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway, being one of the most in of a magnificent stretch of the most fertile land in the whole of Manitoba, acknowledged as the finest grain procenter of a great agricultural section must of necessity command the vast western trade now in part enjoyed by centrate at this point to be distributed by the great railways radiating from Gretna, making this town a great country being surveyed; thus buyers have an assurance that the Company does not intend to overstock the market with wooded and picturesque Pembina River; plenty of fine water and wood is therefore easily procured.

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I do the most good, guaranteed by the C. P. R. Co. as their town survey,s. Also a Company's

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7e evenings at my new sale room, the "Eureka," without reserve, lots in Gretna.

ist of the principal meridian. It is the junction of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba R. R., ant junctions and railway centers of any part of the great Northwest. Gretna stands in the hearting country to be found in the world, and justly termed the GARDEN OF MANITOBA. Such a terson, West Lynne, St. Vincent, Pembina and other places. Millions of bushels of grain will conercial city in the near future, fostered as it is by the C. P. R. Company. Only a half section has but giving a capital chance to the first purchasers. Gretna is admirably located close to the well

GRETNA

Window on the Northwest

by F. G. Enns Research by Gaile Whelan Enns

Village of Gretna History Committee © 1987

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

Village of Gretna © 1987

The Gretna History Committee wishes to thank the following for assistance leading up to the publication of this book:
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Dear Reader:

This book is dedicated to the early pioneers who settled in this area.

For a number of years we often talked about recording the history of Gretna. It wasn't until February of 1982 that the Council of Gretna called a meeting of interested persons and appointed a committee to carry this project forward.

An advertisement was run in a number of papers. Garry Enns responded to this advertisement and was engaged to author this book.

I think some of the committee members might have had second thoughts about serving on this committee if they had known how much would be involved in this project.

They have spent many hours in research and proofreading of the manuscript. Some members spent many hours in the Archives in Winnipeg researching early newspapers such as the Southern Manitoba Times, the Emerson International, the Neche Chronotype and the German papers Der Nordwesten and Der Mitarbeiter, plus many other papers that carried news of years past.

We owe a debt of gratitude to the many people that contributed other materials, for example, close to 2000 photographs, that have enabled our author to put together what we think is an accurate and interesting history of the early development of our province and particularly the Village of Gretna.

We would also like to thank our office staff for their part in the project. I am sure their work load was doubled while this was in progress.

We now often wonder what Gretna would be like today if most of the main business section of the village had not been destroyed by the fires of 1913 and 1931. Some of the trees that were planted by our pioneers, however, are still standing in Gretna today.

We sincerely hope you enjoy this book, and relive the booming success of early Gretna.

Carl Schroeder Mayor Village of Gretna

Cover Design

A committee consisting of Died. Klassen, David M. Friesen, Frank L. Friesen and Peter E. Hildebrandt was selected to design a pewter belt buckle to commemorate Gretna's centennial. Included in the design are: the MCI, Ogilvie grain elevator, CPR steam locomotive, Queen's Hotel, Post Office, a sign indicating the Post Road to the north, the IPL, cottonwoods and the blacksmith's anvil. It is outlined by heads of wheat to represent our farming community. A limited edition of 300 buckles was cast by Missouri Breaks Mint, Hazen, North Dakota.



The Gretna History Book Committee

Sitting: Debbie Toews, Mary Harder, Elizabeth Bergen, Edith Pieper, Helen Braun and Margaret Lundin. Standing: Abe Loewen, Peter Hildebrandt, C. P. Zacharias, R. C. Pieper and Died. Klassen.

1980-1983 Mayor Carl Schroeder D. M. Friesen Roy Haney Margaret Lundin John Thiessen

Members of Council During Book Production

1983-1986

Mayor Carl Schroeder Henry F. Friesen Roy Haney Margaret Lundin Jake B. Reimer

1986-

Mayor Henry F. Friesen John C. Braun Edward J. Friesen Roy Haney Jacob Reimer Sr.

Introduction

Gretna: Window On The Northwest

In the summer of 1982 we read a small advertisement in the Mennonite Mirror. It asked anyone with information regarding the Village of Gretna to contact Mrs. Margaret Lundin. Always interested in Gretna-goings-on, Garry called the number in the ad. By the end of the conversation, Margaret Lundin had convinced Garry he should attend the next meeting of the Gretna History Committee. The shape and scope of the project presented to him at that meeting was fuzzy and unclear. Before the summer was out we both had become inextricably involved in a history project which has dominated much of our lives over the last five years.

The fall of 1982 was spent simply finding out what kind of a history the Comittee wanted; what kind of research was needed to prepare such a history; what kind of activities the Committee should organize to bring together resources from within and without the Village of Gretna; and what outside help was available to publish the history of Gretna's first century. Gaile agreed to coordinate the research for the history. Garry agreed to write the book. Enlisting a research coordinator for a local history project who is not from the community is both the best and the worst thing to do! Enlisting a home–grown writer to pull all the information together also is not without its pitfalls. Combining homegrown with imported expertise, we are sure, has been a challenge for the Gretna History Committee. Thank you for your confidence in us!

The research co-ordinator started looking for financial and any other help she could find before winter set in. Grants from Manitoba Culture, Heritage & Recreation; New Horizons and Manitoba Jobs Fund were aided by the Village of Gretna. Debbie Toews was hired as research assistant, and Maria Nickel as clerical assistant. Gaile started her co-ordinating role fulltime, and the project got under way! Debbie, Gaile and members of the Committee began reading microfilm at the Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM) and at the Mennonite Heritage Centre. A call went out to Gretna residents, and to anyone who may have been associated with Gretna at one time, to loan their photographs, their records, their artifacts to the Committee. Everything and anything was of interest to the researchers. Information on all aspects of Gretna life started to arrive at the Village office, which was the centre of all our information–gathering activities.

Response from current and former residents was staggering. Municipal records for the Village of Gretna, assumed permanently lost, were recovered and placed in the Village vault along with other files. Every photograph, every slide and negative, was accessioned and inventoried, as indicated by the numbers at the end of each cutline. Every donor received a detailed receipt. Each morning's mail provided another piece to the puzzle of Gretna's past. Stories that had been forgotten, facts that nobody could remember, and records that painted a picture of a very different Gretna kept arriving on Mary Harder's desk. As Secretary–Treasurer for the Village of Gretna, she got to put up with researchers, writers, History Commiteee members and all the papers, photos, stories and memorabilia which took over her office. Her patience and dedication to the history project has been crucial to its success.

The information uncovered by the Committee and their research staff came from sources unknown before the research began. Serendipity was a factor which should not be ignored. Letters from California, Texas and from as far away as England always gave us new insight into the community we were examining. These letters seemed to simply drop out of the sky. However, all of them were responses to a small news item, a tiny advertisement, or a long-distance conversation with a friend or relative. People who had never seen Gretna, but had listened to their parents talk

about the Village came to the Village office. Each visit gave us another nugget for our story about a community which has experienced feast and famine, joy and despair.

This wealth of personal information was just one part of the research effort. Thanks to the patience and helpfulness of PAM staff, we discovered sources of information none of us had considered. We made many demands on the government documents division soon after it came into existence. Our questions and requests were always met with knowledgeable and sensitive advice. The same was true when dealing with the recently–transported maps archivist at PAM. The help we received in finding information and in understanding research procedures, was matched by an access to the richness of documents available at PAM.

For almost two years we dug into the resources at PAM. Through them we gained access to Customs and Immigration, North West Mounted Police, and a large variety of provincial, federal and American government documents. Debbie, Gaile, Abe and Margaret Loewen read miles of microfilm, much of it in German. Each mile seemed endless. However, it was rare when that mile of microfilm didn't provide us with some new fact about Gretna. We encourage anyone working on a local history to search the microfilm. Information about pre–Gretna days was gleaned from **The Southern Manitoba Times** and the **Emerson International. Der Nordwesten** carried a weekly Gretna column from the late 1880's into World War. I. The **Neche Chronotype** carried Gretna news throughout its history. Combined, these publications provided us with three–quarters of a century of information about our village. Our experience reading these and other papers confirmed much that was previously considered to be hearsay.

The information gleaned from the microfilm put the frame on the picture we are painting. It gave us a wealth of information which described an ever-changing community. A community which helped newcomers in a new country. A community which was a centre of commerce for the German-speaking West Reserve Mennonites. A community which witnessed the pioneer spirit of co-operation as well as the fiercely partisan competition spawned by politics. A community which worked, played and worshipped together regardless of ethnic or religious background.

All of the research materials went into a set of subject files, with source and subject noted. While originals will be returned to our donors, these files will remain to provide a trail of history and information, both primary and personal, for the Village of Gretna. A second set of subject files will be deposited with the Provincial Archives to help researchers who are starting out on a project similar to our own. Many of the photos in this book are also on deposit with PAM. We thank the owners for giving other Manitobans access to their photos.

The 1600 photographs we have accessioned at the Village office have come from places near and far. One way the History Committee got people to respond to requests for photographs and information was to hold a Homecoming weekend in July, 1983. It was a weekend to enjoy. It was a weekend for meeting and renewing acquaintances both old and new. It was an opportunity for Gretna residents, past and present, to share their experiences and memories and to give the Committee and its researchers more leads and hints about Gretna's past. Months of preparation went into making the Homecoming the success it was.

Five thousand people descended on Gretna during Homecoming. A great parade kicked off the festivities, although many family groupings arrived earlier to hold their reunions. The weather cooperated and Gretna was declared to be officially one hundred years old. The Gretna Public School gym was turned into a temporary museum. The Committee and its many sub-committees hoped the displays would nudge peoples' memories and draw out even more information than had been collected already. The Gretna Theatre curtain hung prominantly on one wall. Photographs from Gretna's early days into the present were mounted and identified. Fire maps of Gretna at each stage of development and aerial photographs which showed where the race track, the old ball park,

and West Gretna used to be were also on display. Artifacts from Russia, early Gretna china, the original clock from the Gretna train station, the offeratory accoutrements from the Presbyterian Church, medical and pharmaceutical artifacts loaned to us by Dr. Boreskie which represented the practices of doctors in Gretna from before the turn of the century, and many more items took visitors back in time.

Many people travelled far to Gretna's Homecoming. They brought their memories and anecdotes. They also brought more photographs and information. The history committee was kept busy receipting and identifying materials throughout the weekend. We tried to interview as many former residents as possible. These and other interviews were taped, transcribed, and have been used to help fill the gaps in the history where no other primary source was available. The tapes also have been placed in the Oral History collection at PAM. If we have any regrets, we regret not having the time and resources to interview everyone we had planned to interview before writing this history. We hope someone will finish the oral history work started by the Gretna History Committee. The help and guidance, including the use of equipment, we received from the Provincial Archives resulted in the beginning of an oral history which added colour to an already colorful story.

At the time when people began asking when the book would be out, we were starting to wonder when the information and material for the history would stop arriving. The writing task began even though the research continued. A guide to banking, printed by the Siemens Brothers in 1892 arrived one day; photos of Gretna's first school came a day later; information and photographs of one of the MCI's founding fathers arrived a few days after that. We tried to incorporate as much information as possible into the manuscript. What couldn't be rewritten we made room for in a sidebar.

Throughout the research and writing phases of this history, Garry attended monthly Gretna History Committee meetings. The committee spent time deciding on the way they wanted the history written and what it should look like. Family geneologies were avoided, although they have been used as information for the history. We have tried to build a chronology. We have tried to situate Gretna in a time and a place in such a way that the reader need not have lived in Gretna to understand its story.

No matter how much the writer works to shape the information to suit his own theories about a place and about people in that place at a given time, it is the information which shapes the work of the writer. The 49th Parallel has dictated what the history of Gretna looks like. Gretna's German customs, traditions and lifestyles dominated its first 50 years. Garry worked with the information to create a history representative of all walks of life in Gretna. He worked weekends and took extended periods of time off work through the winters of 1984 and 1985 to get the bulk of writing done. He also got up early on many mornings to sift through the files and begin outlining the next period in the life of a community. Once a chapter was completed, it was given to the Editorial Committee for review and approval. Some chapters were rewritten and some were expanded. Through all of this the researchers tried to keep ahead of the manuscript. Since Homecoming, Gaile's time was on a volunteer basis.

When the writer came up to a point in history where information seemed to be missing, everybody was sent on the hunt in hope of turning up something new under some rock yet unturned. Footnotes and appendices were built as the manuscript grew. Many return trips to PAM and the Mennonite Heritage Centre were made in an effort to tie up loose ends. Time also was spent with the records of the Municipality of Rhineland. When all else failed, Pemrose Whelan would be asked to suggest alternate approaches. She even decided she needed to visit a friend in Ottawa (and spend time in the Public Archives of Canada). She came back with immigration, customs, NWMP records and yet more maps.

Support from our families was consistent and crucial to us in seeing this project to its conclusion.





In addition to her archival pointers and suggestions and her own research efforts on Gretna's behalf, Pemrose Whelan (Gaile's mother) made sure the footnotes, manuscript, appendices and bibliography were as perfect as possible. Much of the work on the appendices can be credited to her, and when we were really stuck on an approach to a problem she usually could suggest a solution. The specifications used to type and to typeset this manuscript were based on her advice. Garry's family also got to do its share of the work. In addition to suggesting relevant sources, Frank Enns translated much of the material which was in German, including all of the Douglas Municipality minutes from the 1880's. These were written in the Gothic script and even Garry could no longer decipher them. Father also proofread the entire manuscript and caught most of the writer's split infinitives. All four of our parents have patiently let us use them as sounding boards. Thank you for listening. Thank you for setting us straight when you considered our approach to be off the mark!

We would like to say much more about the process used in putting this history book together. Although much of our material found its way to the Gretna Village office, much more of what you will find in this history needed to be tracked and hunted. This can be fun, but when the expected results don't materialize you must be prepared for the disappointments. Some things we would do differently if we were ever to do this again. We know there is enough information in the vault for a second volume. We have only skimmed the surface of what Gretna has to tell about the second fifty years of its life. If you start now, volume II could be ready in time for the Centennial celebrations to mark the incorporation of the Village of Gretna (1896).

The writer and research co-ordinator have one small request of the people of Gretna. Think about those who will be writing a history of Gretna's second century. Do them a favour — continue the process which was undertaken for this book and begin building a subject file today. Keep this information in the vault and periodically check with the Archives to see if they would be interested in what you have collected. Paper will keep indefinitely if stored properly. (So far we have no guarantees that anything kept on magnetic tapes will keep its information and images more than a generation.) Write letters or keep a diary. What you might consider trivial today could provide a future historian with a new insight on our world and our times.

We both want to thank the people of Gretna for the confidence they have shown in us. Special thanks to the Mayor of Gretna, Carl Schroeder, who helped get this project under way, assisted when asked and was supportive throughout.

Researching and writing the history of Gretna was a lot of work for everyone. As a result of her involvement, this writer considers Gaile to be "from Gretna". She knows almost as much about the place as I do. As a result of his involvement, Garry has a much better idea of why he still says "Gretna" when he is asked where he comes from. It has been a lot of work, but we think it has been worth it.

Francis Gerhard Enns Gaile Whelan Enns Aubigny, Manitoba October, 1987

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RED RIVER TERRITORY

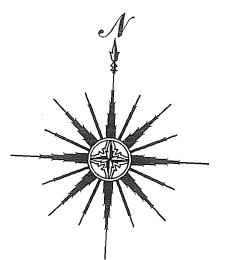
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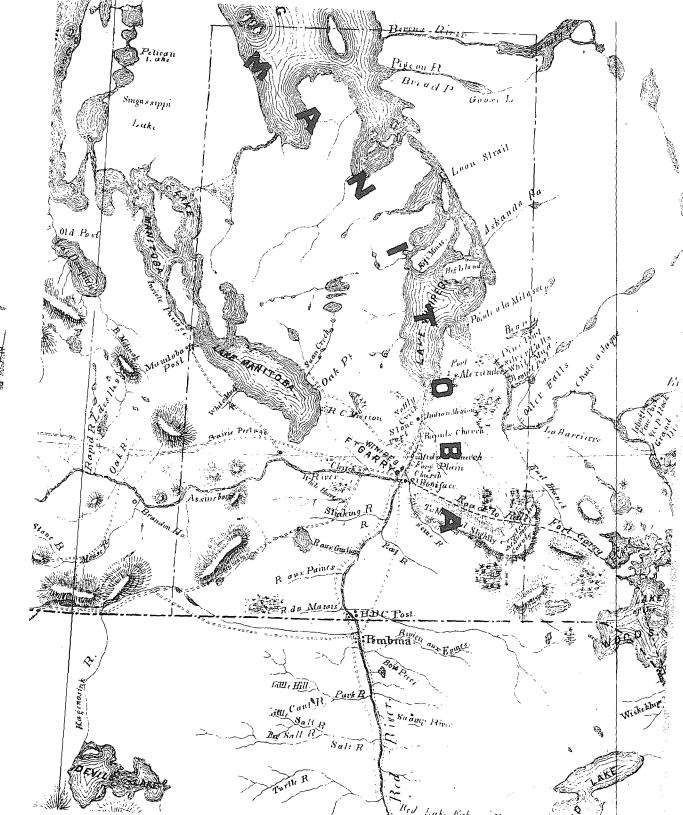
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E. H. CHARLES LIONAIS



1870 Dawson Bros. map of Red River area.

Glenbow Museum



Chapter One

A New CPR Town

"Hespeler is the name of the new CPR town now being surveyed at Smugglers' Point."

This single line entry in the August 26, 1881 edition of the **Nelsonville Mountaineer** heralds the start of a new community in Western Canada.¹ The surveying ended years of speculation. Ever since the arrival of Mennonite settlers to the "West Reserve" getting produce to market had not been easy. Emerson provided access to river transportation both north and south but was impossible to get to after a rain. This new trading centre and border crossing would permit the Mennonite settlers to do their business closer to home.

Smugglers' Point came into being soon after the 49th Parallel was chosen as the artificial line separating American territories from the British, west of Lake of the Woods. The region along the Pembina River, from the Turtle Hills to the Red River, was rich in furs and was a winter home to thousands of buffalo well into the 1800's. A Hudson's Bay Trading Post was built at the "W" etched by the Pembina River just south of the 49th Parallel around 1800. This location is described by Alexander Henry as protected from the cruel prairie winds out of the north by tall oak and poplar. 2 Representatives of the rival North West Trading Company burned the trading post to the ground not long after it was built.

Unofficial Crossing

The Pembina River almost found its way back into British territory at the location of the

Hudson Bay post. An excellent grove of trees extended north from the river, setting the stage for future generations of "free traders" to travel through this unofficial port of entry. Even before the boundary was surveyed in 1872 to 1876 Smugglers' Point acted as a reference point for travellers.³ Smugglers' Point was a convenient refuge for man and beast, providing shade and water in the hot prairie summers and easy access to the grasses beyond the trees.

These trails, combined with the river transportation networks which eventually carried you north, or south, or east, all served to bring that valuable North American commodity — the animal pelts — to the European and British markets. And while the diminishing supply of pelts forced traders further and further into the North American hinterland, a major revolution across the Atlantic was under way. International trade had concerned itself with goods for the aristocracy and the wealthy. It had supplied silk from the far east and furs and tobacco from the New World. It had sent clipper ships around the world in search of teas and spices.

A Changing World

The Industrial Revolution in Great Britain was changing the way people worked and lived, not just on the British Isles, but around the world. The old system of producing goods had not greatly altered the realities of farming for centuries. Mechanization of major industries, such as the textile industry, which had

Smuggler's Point

The official records are incomplete with respect to an early Canadian Customs Preventive Station in Manitoba, shown in Henderson's Directories, 1879–1882, as being situated 'opposite Smuggler's Point (North Dakota), twenty miles west of West Lynne, a settlement on the west side of the Red River from Emerson, Man., but the circumstances are such that this station could first have been called 'Smuggler's Point' after the opposite United States Customs office of that name, and then to Spencerfield.

Gretna, Man. was established as an Outport of Customs on 12th March, 1883.

W. P. Leslie was in charge of the Preventive Station "opposite Smuggler's Point", and he was also the first Sub-Collector of Customs at Gretna, which is exactly twenty miles west of West Lynne, the same location of Smuggler's Point in the United States. All these offices were under the survey of the Port of Winnipeg at the time.

In Andrea's Atlas of Dakota, page 200, the following appears in re: Smuggler's Point, N.D.:

"In 1864, William H. Morehead, removed from Walhalla, and located on Section 11, of Township 163, Range 54, erected a building which he occupied as a residence, tavern, saloon and store — a Customs house was established there."

Pin-pointing the location of Spencerfield was a difficult matter, as neither the Dominion or Manitoba Provincial authorities had any record of its existence, or a Customs office being at such a place. As a last resort, I wrote to W. H. Otten, now living at La Grande, Oregon, U.S.A., an old timer of this area (North Dakota) and he replied to my enguiry on 30th November, 1961, as follows:

"I was born in June, 1879, about ½ mile South of where Mr. Leslie lived or had his office (with a family by the name of McCartney, in a square, white, two–storey house on the

continued

Smuggler's Point con't

east side of the coulee that crosses the Boundary line. Our home was in the U.S. and on the west coulee bank)."

"I was too young to remember much, but I know Mr. Leslie and my father, John Otten, visited very often."

"I never heard the name 'Spencerfield', but that is the location of where Mr. Leslie had his home and office, 1873/1883. I never did know where the house that they occupied went to. I believe it was moved away, as the Mennonites own that land now and they live in Blumenorte, in their village. I would be about four when the move was made."

"My father came to Smuggler's Point in the summer of 1869, as a Collector of Customs, as a single man, and held the job about six years, then went back to Henderson, Minn., and got married and came back and settled on the farm just south of Spencerfield."

> Herbert Legg Customs Services in Western Canada

Customs in 1876

There are records of a Customs Preventive Station in the vicinity of Gretna as early as 1876 — only six years after establishment of Customs service on the prairies in 1870 at Winnipeg and only two years after the march west of the North West Mounted Police. The Preventive Station was apparently called Smuggler's Point after the American Customs House of the same name in North Dakota. The Customs Station at Smuggler's Point in North Dakota dated from 1864 when the Americans were making strenuous efforts to keep the Selkirk settlers and the Metis from running their furs into the United States without paying duty. In the 1876-77 fiscal years, Smuggler's Point collected \$378.43 in revenue. The Customs House then was moved to Spencerfield which today nobody seems able to locate exactly except that it was in a coulee three sections west of Gretna. The Canadian Customs officer at Smuggler's Point and Spencerfield was W. P. Leslie and he lived with a family named McCartney. Leslie became the first Sub-Collector at Gretna, which was made an Outport March 12, 1883, at a salary of \$1,000 a year.

Canada Customs

existed through generations on the craft and skill of individual workers, suddenly required large numbers of workers to operate machinery capable of tremendous productivity.

Under the old system, food was produced relatively close to where the goods were manufactured. Often a farmer and his family would process the wool they sheared from their sheep — spinning, weaving and knitting — and bring their finished products to market. Surplus foods would be sold to people in towns, cities and villages.

The factories, and the cities which grew up around them, drew their workers from the country, creating a situation where fewer people were available to produce the food needed to feed rapidly growing numbers of city dwellers. The Corn Laws which were passed by the British Parliament were intended to provide a protective market for the farmer in England in an effort to stimulate wheat and oats production domestically. Wheat and oats had been coming in from Sweden and Poland at reduced prices and the farming and land-owning classes in Britain felt they could not compete.

Factory workers in Britain lived on a diet which was primarily bread. Before the days of refrigeration and today's multitude of preservatives, bread was a staple easy to purchase and which could be stored on the shelf for a reasonable period of time. It was also all that the average worker in Britain's factories could afford. Consequently, as the factories kept growing so did the country's demand for wheat. Bread shortages in France helped bring about the violent French Revolution; the potato blight in Ireland brought wide-spread starvation and unrest because the Irish peasants were too poor to buy wheat at Britain's inflated prices under the Corn Laws. People in the industrial centres were also unable to feed themselves. Worried that Britain might experience a fate similar to that of France, Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel and his government repealed the Corn Laws in 1846.

Wheat's New Importance

Wheat suddenly became an international commodity which was to eclipse in value the importance of luxury goods which at one time had formed the backbone of international trade. While new wheat surpluses were exploited in the Black Sea region and brought to England through Odessa, merchants in London began importing wheat and flour from Baltimore and Richmond in the new American country across the Atlantic. Improved methods of storage and handling of grains, combined with steel-hulled ships and steam power which replaced wind as a source of locomotion for these ships, made distances less significant in the grain trade.

The laying of the transatlantic cable in 1866 provided the North American supplier of wheat with quick communication to the dealers and consumers in Britain. And as the western frontier was gradually being pushed back by increasing numbers of settlers, word of the land's bounty was swiftly transmitted back across the Atlantic to excite future generations of pioneers. Rail transportation had also proven itself in the first half of the eighteenth century as more economical and reliable than the limiting river and canal transportation networks.

The push was on to open the North American Midwest. In the Red River district in the north, the Selkirk settlers had demonstrated white man could eke out an agrarian existence north of the 49th Parallel. As boundaries were firmed up in Western Canada, and as the lands in Kansas and the Dakota Territories were falling to the plow, possibilities for the production of wheat farther north seemed good. Difficulties with wheat varieties not hardy enough and requiring a growing season longer than afforded by the harsh climate of the northern prairies, were finally overcome in the 1870's. Mennonites who had taken up a large block of land in Kansas had brought with them from the Crimea a hard variety of wheat similar to David Fife's Red Galician. It proved to have a high yield and the quality necessary to satisfy the growing demand for even finer flours in Britain.4

At the same time, Britain had begun its grain trade with India, another of its colonies. The first wheat from India arrived in Britain in 1873 soon after the opening of the Suez Canal made it economical to do so. The wheat that was grown in the India and Ganges River basins had been developed over centuries. This wheat was developed to permit quick ripening between the Indian monsoons. This characteristic was more useful in North America where seeds from these faraway regions were used in adapting the Marquis wheat to the short, northern growing seasons of the Canadian prairies.⁵

Questions regarding the exact location of the boundary between American and British territories were being raised as the lands south of the 49th Parallel were rapidly filling up. Rail transportation was bringing grain from the American Midwest to eastern seaports by the 1850's and railroad magnates such as James J. Hill were looking north to expand their empires. Hill's vision of a grain route from the Canadian and American prairies was in direct competition with the "Canadian National Dream" which gave birth to the Canadian Pacific Railroad, and his St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad Company was to play a part in the development of Gretna toward the turn of the century. Railroad companies, milling and grain-handling companies often worked together in promoting and protecting their interests in bringing this precious commodity to market. This was evident in the Midwestern States as the Cargill elevators quickly sprang up once James J. Hill's railroad company had laid its track. Once the potential of the Canadian prairies in producing grain was discovered, a similar pattern was seen to develop between the Canadian Pacific Railway and the Ogilvie Milling and Elevator Company some years later. The border did not prevent Hill and his counterparts in the CPR from negotiating deals to ensure monopoly control of the Manitoba railroads.

Like other aspects of the American Dream, the wheat business often promoted progress and economic exploitation simultaneously. Wheat provided the economic incentive for the settling of the prairies; it gave value to the land homesteaded by landless immigrants; and it helped finance the extension of the railroads across the continent.⁶

Much happened in the early 1870's to speed up the settlement of lands in southern Manitoba. Riel's provisional government negotiated the formation of a new province joining confederation in 1870. The Canadian Pacific Railway was under construction, the Boundary Commission finished its work along the southern part of this new province, and in 1874 the first group of Mennonites came to homestead in Manitoba — east of the Red River. They travelled by train as far as Moorhead, Minnesota and came north along the Red River in the "International" a riverboat owned by none other than J. J. Hill. Other developments on the Canadian prairies in 1874 included the establishment of a settlement near the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Dufferin. Thomas Carney and William Fairbanks, who established this settlement later called Emerson, did so at the advice of one James J. Hill who predicted this region would soon be penetrated by the railroad.7

Picking a Winner

One of the Ogilvie brothers also visited Manitoba in the fall of 1874. John Ogilvie intended to purchase land on the Canadian side of the border and, after experimental plantings, to begin the growing of hard wheat on a large scale. For whatever reason, this plan was abandoned. He went south instead and bought the first major quantity of hard spring wheat in the Dakota Territories which was shipped through Duluth, Minnesota to Eastern Canada. The quantity was eight hundred bushels, "sufficient for a milling test, and it proved to be of magnificent quality." As a result of this experiment the Ogilvies embarked on a policy to

Needs at Customs

June 28, 1883 Letter to F. T. Bradley, collector at Emerson from W. P. Leslie collector at Gretna.

I have the honor to send you herewith seizure papers for John Johnson, caught smuggling. I have been watching this same party all spring and it is my opinion that an example must be made of these smugglers at this point. As we have no horse it is a difficult matter to catch them. Having no stable accommodation here, officer Nicholson will deliver to you horse, waggon etc. Expense account amounting to \$10 enclosed.

July 23, 1883:

I beg to inform you that I will not hold myself responsible for loss of money collections when no safe is furnished me... The nearest post office at which we can register letters containing our collections at this outport is a distance of four miles and all efforts to have an office opened at this point or a private shack for use of Customs having been of no avail, I require your authority to hire a conveyance, weekly, for the purpose of having said collections duly mailed to our office.

Customs and Excise, Ottawa

encourage the production of hard wheat in Western Canada to be processed in Eastern Canadian mills for the export market. This decision was derided by friends of the family and it took a full 10 years before enough wheat was produced on the Canadian prairie to export overseas, the first shipment going to Scotland. The result of this shipment in 1885 was a request for wheat and flour valued at a half-million dollars for the British Army and Navy. This order could not be filled, but it indicated to the Ogilvies that they had been backing a winner.⁸

The shape of settlements would drastically change by 1885. The Mennonite settlers in Manitoba found the land in Eastern Manitoba less to their liking than at first. When a second wave of Mennonite settlers left Russia to come to West-

Golden wedding picture of David and Anna (Friesen) Schellenberg, taken in 1935. The Schellenbergs were original settlers at NeuAnlage on the Post Road. P#878

ern Canada in 1875, they settled west of the Red River on the "West Reserve" situated along the Manitoba — Dakota boundary. By this time, many of the settlers who came in 1874 had moved off the east to the West Reserve. They, too, followed the Post Road, conducting much of their business with Emerson and West Lynne. These towns were prospering at their location along the 49th Parallel on the Red River.

Letter to a Friend

Much has been written about the coming of the Mennonites to Manitoba, their religious beliefs and persecutions and their progressive agrarian practices. These accounts need not be repeated or paraphrased. The following letter, written in 1950 by Mr. David Schellenberg, provides an accurate firsthand description of what it was like to move to the West Reserve in 1878:

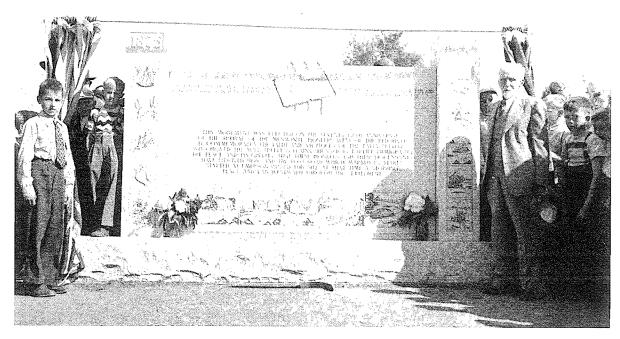
Gretna, October 25th, 1950

Mr. F. B. Kirkwood Montreal, Canada Dear Mr. Kirkwood,

First of all I will let you know that I am still privileged to be up and around. We just got through harvesting our grain crops. On account of the unusual weather, for we had many rain showers, and for good measure a four-inch snowfall covering the scattered grain, it certainly was not very encouraging. Well, the snow melted away in a few days and the grain dried so that we could go ahead with our combining. But that wasn't very easy for, due to the rain and snowfall, the fields were so soft in spots, that the combine could not get through by its own power, and a tractor came in very handy. For every combine needed a tractor; it was an unusual sight to see a tractor in every field where a combine was working. Although the harvest was a long drawn out affair, we got through with it about a week ago. The yield was very good, wheat from 15 to 32, oats averaged about 40 and Barley about 35 Bush. per acre. The beets are also turning out very good up to 14 tons per acre. The sunflower fields are rather patchy and will be below average - ours are pretty good, we are expecting about 600 lbs. per Acre which we call good, and is about the

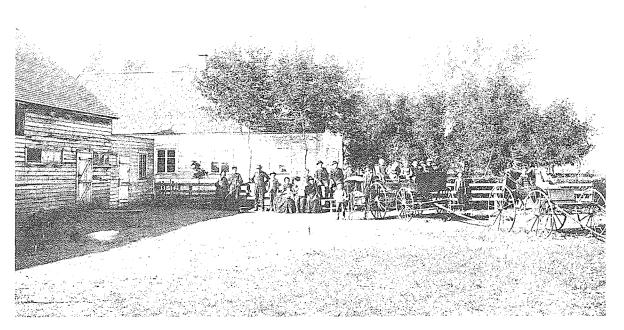
average yield. There are some fields which won't pay to harvest. The vegetables turned out very good, especially the tomatoes. The pantrys are full with canned goods. As I am getting forgetful I don't know if I mentioned in my last letter to you that we are going to erect a cairn in commemoration of our old pioneers who came here 75 years ago and settled on the so-called western reserves known as the Rhineland Municipality. Said pioneers had certainly tough going the first years, but through perseverance and hard work, they converted the open prairie into a thriving settlement. They were the trail blazers and opened the road for us, their descendants, so that we now have clear sailing. And we owe it to them to have a cairn erected in their commemoration. A committee was appointed which got the go-ahead signal, and I am happy to report that said cairn is going to be erected in the near future. The foundation is under construction at the present time. It is to be erected at the N.W. Corner of my building lot at the junction of the Post Road and the highway.

To give you a true picture of the hardships the early settlers had to endure, I will describe to you the journey and the settling here in Man. of a small group of 5 families, including my parents and their children who came here in 1878. But, first, here is my brief biography. I was born July 21st, 1861, about 60 miles north of the Sea of Asov. In 1867 I started to go to school, (83 years ago). I attended school till I was 14, for in those days the children were a good deal smarter than they are nowadays. In 1878 I came here as a lad of 17 to Man. and lived through those hard years which the settlers had to go through. In 1875 a group of settlers from our village moved to Man. Then, three years later another group decided to follow them. They certainly must have had a hard time before they reached their decision - to leave everything behind, including the kinfolk - and move away. The latter group started the journey at the latter part of June. I am not going to describe the journey in detail, but I'll mention that we crossed the north sea, landed at Hull, then came across to Liverpool. At the latter place we were delayed for about four days, to give them time (that is, the I.L.C.) to convert a small freighter into a passenger ship. It was not a modern ship as they have nowadays. Instead of cabins, they had upper and lower bunks, constructed of rough lumber. The occupants of the lower bunks had a disadvantage, for it so happened sometimes that, when the occupant of the lower bunk stuck out his head to empty his upset stomach, the occupant of the upper bunk was forced to do the same. Then the lower one got it in his neck. Oh well! that happened 72 years ago. The dining room was in the middle of the ship; there was a long table and a bench at each side, also constructed from rough lumber. After the ship was ready to sail, we left Liverpool and after about 12 or 13 days landed in Quebec. From there we went to Toronto. From there we went to Duluth and then on to Fargo, N.D. And from there with a Red River Boat, on the Red River, as far north as where St. Agathe now is, where we landed on the east side of the river. There we were greeted by our friends who came here three years previously. They took us to where they lived, about 7 miles S.E. of Niverville. They discussed with their friends where to settle — at the Eastern or Western Reserve. They were advised to settle on the West Reserve for the land



Monument (cairn) erected at Schellenberg corner at the intersection of Highway #30 and PR 243 in 1950. Robert Siemens (left), son of J. D. Siemens, and Dietrich Klaassen (right), father of Paul and Anna Klaassen. Cairn commemorates 75 years since Mennonites arrived in West Reserve via the Post Road. P#502

was better there. But, before deciding, they hired a taxy, comprised of a pair of oxen and a wagon, and Mr. Klassen, his two married sons, one sonin-law and my father went to the West Reserve, to look things over. Well, it didn't take them long to decide where to settle. They picked Sec. 4, Twp. 1, Rge. 1, W and Sec 9, just north of Sec. 4, for a village site. Before they came back they bought four pair Oxen in the Reserve and also a couple acres bush, each from the superintendent, who bought a number of acres of bushland, on the N.S. side and sold it to the settlers in small lots, at cost price. He was a great man. The manager of the H.B. Store at West Lyne, gave him the name as Kaiser Mueller. At Emerson the only market place at that time, they bought four wagons and came back to take us to our future home. And a home it was for all of them. They all passed away, most of them at a ripe old age. There are three of us alive who were present when this village was started just 72 years ago. The one living is my nephew, Dav. Klassen, 74, then my neighbor Mr. Died. Klassen, 83, and last, but not least, the



The David Schellenberg farm, famous stopping place along the Post Road, circa 1900. Red River Valley Echo.

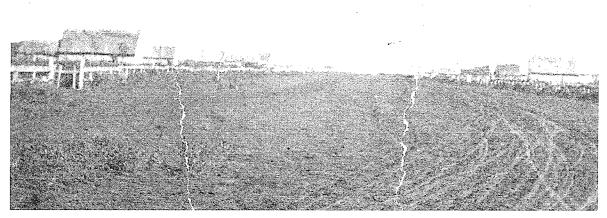
writer of this, who will be 90 on his next birthday, July 21st, 1951. I am writing about a home, but forgot to write how we got there.

I have mentioned that they came back to take us to our home and I think it is in order to describe the journey. A day after they came back, the few belongings we had were loaded on the wagons and we began the last lap of our long journey. As they intended to buy some needed goods, as a stove, etc., they went through to Winnipeg. And after they had the supplies needed, then we started on the west side of the Red River on an old trail as far as Emerson. From there we turned west on the now called Post Road 20 miles west to the village of Blumenort which was established three years before. There was a Grist mill there. After staying there a night and a day, and having bought some vegetables and a sack of flour, we left Blumenort in late afternoon, and drove east 5 miles to the place which they had picked for the village. We arrived here a little after sunset. But that was a journey I'll never forget. For as a rule we are against fighting but here we were putting up a stiff fight with the millions of attacking Mosquitoes. After a restless night, for we had to defend ourselves from the mosquitos, we got up prepared, and ate our breakfast. Then we began to settle down. First a plan of the village was made; then divided into lots; then the cast and everybody drove on his lot and home we were. Then the few belongings, as a big trunk packed full in Russia, some baggage, the cook stove and that was about all. Then father drove to the bush with the oxen, a distance of five miles for some poplar poles for rafters. In the meantime I had to cut some grass by hand. When he came home with those poplars, it did not take him long to nail the rafters together and cover them with the grass I had cut. It was a good start to get a roof over our head the first day. But the cooking and baking had to be done in the open. Speaking about baking, I must tell you about mother's first baking experience here in Manitoba. The second day mother prepared the dough, put it on the baking pan, and when it was ready she started the fire with green poplar twigs for we had no dry firewood, and shoved the bread into the oven, or in the new cook stove. But in the first place nobody knew anything about the stove, and secondly that green poplar stuff did not give enough heat to bake the bread in one afternoon, but in the following forenoon we got it done. Well we could eat it, but that

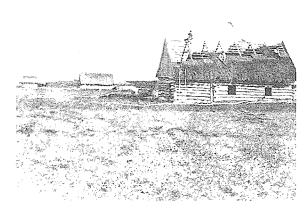
was all. You can imagine how discouraging it was for mother, first the homesickness for all her kinfolks staying back in Russia, and now the bad luck with her first baking. The second day, hay making was on the program and as there was lots of grass, it did not take very long to put up enough hay. The following program was to erect a shelter for the winter, for us and also for the stock consisting of two ponies, two oxen and two cows. I forgot to mention that we got here August 31st, 1878 so you will agree that it was about time to start the cooking inside for the rainy weather and some cold days we had were certainly not pleasant for the cooks. For us we built a Sodhouse, 14' × 24', which didn't cost much to erect - a few windows and boards for a door. The cash outlay wasn't more than \$25.00 and above that it was very warm. We all, especially mother, were glad that, after cooking in the open for about three weeks, the cooking could now be done inside. For the stock shelter, we raised rafters and put a thatch roof on them and were done with it. It was not very warm but it had to do.

After that father constructed one light sleigh for the ponies, and a heavy one for the oxen, and as soon as there was enough snow, we started to haul logs from the bush 5 miles distant for the erection of the intended buildings. Father hired a man (for about 40 cents per day) for help. Then, each morning, weather permitting, we started at sunrise, father and the hired man with the ponies, and I with the oxen. By the time I got there, father was ready to go home with a small load. Then the hired man and I cut down and prepared enough trees for two loads, for father always came back for his second load by about the time we were ready. Then we loaded both sleighs and started for home which we generally reached by sunset.

During the winter, we had enough logs home, for the erection of a house 24×40 and a barn 26×50. Then, in the spring, father hired two men to prepare the logs into building material. Although I don't know whether it will interest you, I am going to describe to you the whole procedure. First a trench was dug about five feet deep, four feet wide and about 16 feet long. Then two pieces of 8 or 10 inch timber was laid across the trench; then the logs which were to be cut, were rolled on top of the trench, then they took the saw, which had the shape of an ice saw, one man on top of the log and the other in the trench. and started to cut the logs into building material. It was rather a slow job, you can imagine for, out of one of the oak logs 26 feet long, they cut three pieces, 5×7 inches. Of course, those days were different from the present day. A day was called a



Village of Blumenort, four miles west of Gretna, circa 1880. P#1334



First Blumenort school under construction in 1876. P#1333

Indian Cross International Boundary

Indian Agent McLaughlin, of Fort Totten Agency, was at St. Joe last week sent by the U.S. Government to talk treaty to the Turtle Mountain band of Chippewa Indians, who are said to own the land from a point thirty miles west of Pembina on the International Boundary Line. They claim as their boundaries from the said point on the International Boundary Line, running south, striking the west side of Stump Lake to the Cheyene River, then west, following said river to a point direct south of the Rache Pache, or "Hole in the Rock" and thence due north until they again strike the International Boundary Line. This territory will thus embrace Devils Lake, Fort Totten and the Sioux Reservation in that immediate vicinity. The Indians ask that a reserve be set apart for them at the Turtle Mountain, thirty miles wide and sixty miles long, that scrip be given for their half-breed relations, the Indians to name their own agent and post trader with other things too numerous to mention.

It is generally supposed the treaty will be all completed within three months.

A.B.C Blumenort, Mar. 17, 1881 Nelsonville Moutaineer day — not eight hours — and no strikes of any kind. Of course, the wages were satisfactory, at that time, for you know the wages were 50 cents a day, mind you, not an hour. Well, no doubt it will interest you to know that those logs were cut into building material, the house and barn I have mentioned, built the same summer, and was finished so that we could move into them before winter. Some accomplishment, in about 14 months' time, is it not? Emerson was the only market place in southern Man, at the time, and the so-called Post road was the only Road the settlers travelled, and people stopped with us, and fed their horses or oxen, and some of them stayed overnight with us; Mennonites, as well as English speaking people, who lived west of the Reserve, as far as Killarney, which gave me an opportunity to learn to speak and read English. This is how I went about it. At first I bought a book, combined English and German. Then at night, when English speaking people were staying with us, I read the English sentences, and they corrected my pronounciation and the meaning of what I read in German. Then in 1885 I went to the public school in Gretna for seven weeks. Well, I am satisfied for I can get along nicely without an interpreter. Is it not a wonder that I attempt to write history at my age? I am writing it as well as I know how, and I trust that you will be able to form for yourself a true picture, from my writing.

The so-called Old Colonists came here, i.e. the first ones, in 1875, in late summer, several hundred at a time. They had no easy task to put up a shelter for themselves and their livestock before the winter and to put some hay up for the winter. Most of them were poor, and had to rely on the more fortunate ones, but as there was no possibility to earn any money, the leaders were compelled to apply to the Government for a loan for about one hundred thousand dollars. As much as I know, it was the two Reserves, combined, who applied for it. The loan was granted to them, but the Government didn't expect that they would get it all paid back, but it was paid back in 1892 or 1893. I remember it well, as I had the honor to take the money in to Winnipeg, I was clerk of the Rt. Municipality at that time and the money was given to me to take to Wpg. and deliver it. It is different now — a cheque or money order would do it. The good old days were different. Anyhow, when the debt was paid off, the Mennonites got the reputation of being good debt payers and,

consequently, when in the twenties, lots of Mennonites came to Canada, credit was granted them by the CPR for their passage. But it took the latter more than 20 years till they had it all paid back.

Before I close, I'll tell you how this road got the name Post Road. From Emerson, a stretch of 20 miles, there was open prairie and the travelling in the winter on same was very dangerous so the leaders of the Reserve decided to put posts up along the road, about 75 yards apart, 6–7 inches thick and about 7 feet above the ground so the travellers would have something to guide them. I almost regret that I started this writing for I am afraid that you'll have trouble to get a clear picture of everything.

Wishing you and yours the best of health and well being.

Your old friend, D. Schellenberg

P.S. I am still enjoying life, for sometimes I like to drive into the fields and see how everything is going. I like driving myself as it is a great pastime for me. I am glad that I am still able to write, and as I am still writing quite a bit, it is also a pastime. The many personal calls and the many letters from friends I am receiving are flowers on my life's pathway while I can still enjoy them. If you by chance should come to Manitoba, I certainly would like very much to have a chat with you.

D.S.9

The Post Road

The Post Road followed the early Indian trails which took travellers from the junction of the Red and Pembina Rivers into the Turtle Mountains. These trails were followed by the International Boundary Commission surveyors in the early 1870's. The surveyors used Fort Dufferin at the Red River as a base for their operations as far west as the foothills of the Rocky Mountains, using the Red River in getting supplies and men to the fort and setting up supply caravans to points west along the Boundary Commission Trail.

This trail was important in the settlement of southwestern Manitoba before the coming of the railroad. It brought the Mennonites to the West Reserve, but it also carried homesteaders west to establish places like Mountain City, Nelsonville, Alexandria, Calf Mountain, Archibald, Pembina Crossing, Ruttanville, Crystal City and Deloraine. ¹⁰ The trail branched out into several northerly directions at Calf Mountain to serve places with names like Kingsley, St. Leon and Swan Lake. The following account, written by the first priest at St. Leon for the newspaper Le Manitoba in the summer of 1882 provides a good overview of the growth of settlement along the old Boundary Commission Trail between the years 1879 and 1882. Father Theobald Bitsche writes:

In order to give a fair idea of the rapid progress of settlement on the south-western part of Manitoba, I only have to make a true narrative of what I saw during the course of my first trip from Emerson to St. Leon, in September of the year 1879, and indicate afterwards what we can now see in July of 1882.

Emerson was, in 1879, a small town where there were already a few good stores and many dwellings but every building was built of wood. We could not see a single brick building, and there was no railway station. In West Lynne, situated on the left shore of the Red River facing Emerson, I found only the remains of the ancient log fort of the Hudson Bay Company.

First Stop

From there a primitive road ran across the virgin prairie to the first Mennonite village sixteen miles distant from West Lynne. In all of this distance there was only one farm. The first Mennonite village was named "Neu Anlage" — New Establishment. It was only a few months old and consisted of 5 houses only recently constructed. From there the road led across the more ancient Mennonite establishments. These settlers already had large stretches of land but small compared to what they have now.

The Mennonites have the habit of giving pretty names to their establishments. Just to cite a few examples, they have the principal village named Rhineland meaning pretty or nice countryside. Other towns are called "Blumenort" Town of Flowers, Rosenhau — plain of roses; Rosengarten — garden of roses; Rosenfeld — Countryside of

Roses and so on. A few others have names that recall the native country to their inhabitants.

The Mennonite colony ends at the foot of the Pembina Mountain. After having climbed the first ramps of this chain of hills we arrive at section 24 of township 2, range 6. From this elevated spot forming a nice prairie one has a magnificent view of one of the most beautiful vistas of the Province. That is why the proprietor of this land had resolved to erect a town to which he gave the name of Mountain City. This "city" consisted at that time of one house of log construction serving as a store. Mr. Nelson of Nelsonville had also started the construction of his little mill. In the surrounding countryside we could see a few farms of recent date. From Mountain City the trail continues in a westerly direction across a hilly region to Alexandria. This place that is only 4



NeuAnlage community along the Post Road, circa 1900. P#1110-B

miles distant from Mountain City was touched as being an important centre — "thriving city"! To my astonishment I found myself in the midst of innumerable signs indicating the many streets and lanes of the future, and found only a single house serving as a store and lodging to the sole inhabitant of the place.

From Alexandria the road goes on West of Calf Mountain that the French Metis call "la Petite Montagne". This 'mountain' is situated on section 6–3–7 and is a little butte, nearly round, at the most of 50 feet elevation. It has much resemblance to the ancient tumuli, or mounds of earth, erected by nations of olden times to their heroes. The red men who have a certain veneration for this little butte did not pass by without stopping for a few moments to climb it. From the top of Calf Mountain we may have a sweeping panorama of the vast prairie that extends as far as the eye can see to the west and south.

A half mile west of Calf Mountain the trail divides into many directions. In this area there now stands the growing town of Darlingford, but in 1879 there was not yet vestige of construction. From Calf Mountain we take the trail leading to the northwest. This road first leads across some swampy terrain and then climbs a spread-out and fertile chain of hills until one arrives to the approximate area where the future and important city of Archibald is to rise. On the 12 miles separating Archibald from Calf Mountain, I found in 1879, one sod hut. From Archibald to St. Leon there is a distance of 8 miles. Already in 1879 we could see numerous farms spread out in between the two localities.

St. Leon is situated on the second base line at the spot where the corners of sections 2 and 3 range 9, and of sections 34 and 35 of township 4, range 9 meet. A small lake, that is nearly round, of roughly 120 acres from the centre. On the other three sides the terrain slopes gently down towards the lake, and on the fourth side the soil is firm enough and elevated to permit the erection of the vastest buildings. All those who visit St. Leon are charmed by the really pleasing site of this locality. St. Leon distinguishes itself by the goodness of its waters that are amongst the best in the province.

At my arrival in St. Leon on September 11th, 1879, I found only one house, that was, you might say, lost in the middle of the forests. Now after a span of three years how everything has changed!

Output Tripled

Emerson has become a quite important city. West Lynn has hundreds of constructions in progress and is incorporated as a city. From West Lynn to the Mennonite colony all the ground is covered with farms. The Mennonites themselves have built numerous new villages and tripled their agricultural output.

Mountain City has become a lovely village with an elegant palace of justice. All of the Pembina Mountain is covered with farms and a number of them boast of really vast and elegant constructions. Calf Mountain looks with pride upon the farm houses that are rising even in the places where agricultural possibilities seemed improbable. In one word, from the Red River to St. Leon everything has changed in the short space of 3 years. What will happen when the railroad will cross this beautiful and rich country?

But after Emerson and West Lynn the locality that has made the most progress is without doubt St. Leon. This locality now has a Catholic Church with resident pastor, a flour mill of large dimensions, a small mill, a shingle mill, 2 general stores, 3 hotels, 2 blacksmith shops and 2 wheelwrights shops, 15 carpenters and many masons, shoemakers, etc., and more than 20 homes with a population of 150 souls. Construction work is continuing summer and winter with an activity really surprising.

But it is not only the village of St. Leon that has made rapid progress. The surrounding countryside is not lagging behind. It is sufficient to say that in a radius of 14 miles around St. Leon all the farms are taken up and that nearly on all sections there are constructions and resident settlers, to know the rapid developments that this colony has taken.

In order to assure the future of St. Leon, the only thing that is needed is a railroad in order to export the products.

Theobald¹¹

Mennonite Democracy And the Kaiser

The Mennonites were in the habit of doing more than giving pretty names to their villages. In setting up these pioneer communities they also ensured that everyone was cared for and that a system of local government was put in

place. Each village had three officials: the village chief, the fire chief, and the herdsman. In addition to this, all the villages of the West Reserve appointed one individual who would co-ordinate the affairs of the villages in the reserve and act as "head chief". This individual was Isaac Mueller. His word was law on the West Reserve in many matters, and he often interceded for the new Mennonite settlers in their dealings with the outside world. An area of immediate concern for the Mennonites was transportation, especially as it affected the ability of farmers to get their produce to market. It was "Kaiser Mueller", as he was referred to by non-Mennonites in the area, who called together the village chiefs to determine what would be done along the trail to Emerson and West Lynne. Winter had been severe and settlers had lost their way, resulting in some tragic deaths during the first winter on the West Reserve.

The next summer all village chiefs were called together (by Kaiser Mueller) to consider if it wouldn't be advisable to erect posts along the road from Emerson through the Reserve to the west to serve as guide-posts. It was decided that the residents of each village should supply and deliver a certain number of posts, — to measure about 7 inches in diameter, to be dug in at 75 "stride" intervals. And that is how the road got its name: Post Road. 12

The Post Road was marked as far west as Mountain City, from which junction it continued to be referred to as the Boundary Trail. Settlers brought with them household effects as well as lumber, machinery and even small buildings if considered economical to do so. Merchants along this route brought in their supplies from Emerson and West Lynne with the trade along the Post Road to points west controlled by businessmen in those two centres. Mennonites preferred to do business with Enoch Winkler and his Emerson store soon became known as "the Mennonite Store". 13

Teams hauling freight along the Post Road would pull an average load weighing between 1 or 2 tons and the maximum distance covered by

a team in a day was about 30 miles. Mail also travelled along this trail, with service to early settlers in existence soon after the arrival of the Mennonites on the West Reserve. 14 Stage coach service also came into existence in the latter part of the 1870's. This transportation was never very reliable and depended a great deal on the road and weather conditions. Primitive night accommodations for travellers and their animals were available along this Post Road every 8 or 10 miles or so. The David Schellenberg place was described as having an "inn" although this stopping place at NeuAnlage never officially declared itself open for business. Schellenberg's description of how he practised his English on those overnighting at his parents' place indicates that privacy was not part of the Schellenberg "inn's" service and that there was only one bed to be had — the floor.15

Post Road Business

Others, along the Post Road, were more business-minded in providing accommodation for the traveller. Mr. W. Brown ran a hostelry near Neuhorst and advertised his services in the Emerson and West Lynn newspapers. The Blumenort correspondent to the **Southern Manitoba Times** sent the following report on April 2, 1881:

W. Brown, of the Central House, has given a contract for a first-class stable to be erected and finished within a month. Auld Bros., of West Lynne, have the contract.¹⁶

Entries by the same correspondent on March 26, 1881 provide the reader with a little insight into life along the Post Road at that time:

Wall's mill is now running day and night; sawing by day and grinding by night.

Postmaster Lewis, of Emerson, passed west last Monday on the Pembina Mountain Stage.

Frank Friesen's threshing engine that he has been using for grinding at the village of Rhineland is rendered useless owing to the boiler leaking badly, and otherwise burnt out.

Moorhead and Marcellais combined engines

Mennonite Census Trouble

Two of our usually quiet and law abiding Mennonites named Gerhard Klassen and Johan Dick, residents of Choritz, in the West Lynne Mennonite Reserve, were summoned before J. F. Tennant, J.P., on information received from Wm. Hespeler, Esq., for refusing to give to the census enumerator the information required by law. The stubborness of the two Mennonites in this instance was most annoying to people who are naturally their friends, when it is known that the census enumerator was not only one of their own people, and allowed them one day and a half in which to consider whether they would answer his questions or not, but considerable trouble had previously been taken by Mr. Hespeler in explaining to the heads of their people what was required by the Government. These head men, had in turn enlightened their people to the necessity of answering all the questions and what was the object of the Government.

The refusal of the two men in question to answer the questions put to them, determined Mr. Hespeler on making an example of them for the case was tried before Justice J. F. Tennant, who taking into consideration the profound sorrow expressed by the Mennonites at what they had done, imposed the smallest fine allowed by law, viz., \$5 with costs, which swelled the amount to \$17 each. They were allowed thirty-one days to pay it in. Before retiring the Mennonites listened to some very good advice from Mr. Hespeler on the folly of their conduct and the bad example they gave to the younger men of their village in resisting the laws of a good Government.

Nelsonville Mountaineer June 10, 1881

Development of Southern Manitoba

I have promised you a letter once in a while, so I may commence now to fulfill my word. As an old settler, who came to Manitoba when this southern portion was in its infancy, so far as population was concerned, and West Lynne consisted of the old H.B. Co's post, I can assure you that the growth and development of Southern Manitoba in general has far exceeded my most sanguine hopes. I remember well my first tramp from West Lynne to the west; it was in the early part of July, 1875, when in company with two others, with four pounds of H.B. Co's hard tack and a tin of salmon, we sallied forth to take possession of our homesteads. Not a Mennonite village greeted our eyes on the way — and now great is the number thereof! It took us two days to reach our destination, and it was a great relief when we came in sight of our camp again, after five days absence, in which time we had only four "square meals". Settlers were like old men's teeth, very few and far between and 1876 did not add many to our numbers (probably the grasshoppers of the previous years had frightened most intending immigrants). But in '77 a change took place; new comers came in flocks; and '78-'79 showed no abatement in the stream; so that now for 100 miles west of here the white man hath taken up his abode, and the once familiar visage of the noble red man greets our eyes no more. Winnipeg has trebled its population; Emerson has grown into a respectable town, and West Lynne is doing its best to catch with her older sister across the river; Nelsonville is attaining respectable dimensions, and Mountain City is enlarging her boundaries; and in the west Crystal City increaseth in size. Thousands of toiling sons of Adam are engaged in laying the foundation of a great and prosperous nation, where, less than seven years ago, the noble savage and the genial metis had it all to themselves. Truly, a great and marvellous change! The "iron horse" seems to be in a fair way of paying us a visit within two years, and then our progress will be more rapid than ever. With our splendid soil and energetic pioneers, we will prove to the world that the human race is still worthy of its forefathers, and has not degenerated so much as some learned men would have us believe. Still there are things to be done which are left undone, and of which I intend to treat in some future epistles.

"Landworth"
Thornhill, Man. Nov. 8, 1880
Nelsonville Moutaineer

started their saw today on the Pembina River. They are now busy sawing other lumber and other timber for their settlers.¹⁷

The correspondent had this to say about progress at Brown's on April 2, 1881:

Wall's mill has been busy cutting sills for Auld Bros., contractors of Brown's barn.

Also appearing is a mention of a soon to be Gretna resident:

We notice the arrival of ''Manitoba John'', a thoroughbred bull purchased by W. P. Leslie, Esq., of Spencerfeldt. ¹⁸

No record exists of "Manitoba John" moving to Gretna, however W. P. Leslie became the first Canadian Customs agent to be stationed at Gretna in 1883.

Protecting the Posts

Villagers who had erected the fourteen-foot high posts along the Post Road discovered that the posts were not all that stationary and frequently needed replacement. The posts were easy targets for lazy travellers, or others, look-



The Post Road in 1984, taken from Highway #30. On right is the original Schellenberg farm. P#1534

ing for a ready source of firewood. (It is assumed that the scourge of the souvenir hunter was unknown in these early years!) Isaac Mueller, on behalf of the residents along the Post Road, asked the local representative in the Provincial Parliament for help in maintaining the posts as markers. On May 25, 1881 the Provincial Assembly of Manitoba passed "An Act to protect guide posts along certain roads in this Province." This piece of legislation, introduced by Mr. Greenway, states:

Whereas guide posts have been planted along certain roads within this province by private persons, and whereas certain evil disposed persons are in the habit of mutilating such posts, and the same are in danger of being destroyed.

The Legislative Assembly of the Province of Manitoba enacts as follows: —

I. Any person willfully mutilating, cutting, or in any way injuring or destroying any guide posts planted along or beside any road in this Province shall upon conviction thereof before any justice of the peace be fined in any sum not exceeding ten dollars, and in default of immediate payment thereof, together with costs of suit, shall be imprisoned in the common gaol for any period not exceeding thirty days, with or without hard labor, in the discretion of such justice. ¹⁹

Time has shown that this legislation did not serve well as a deterrent. It does stand as one of the first provincial regulations governing road travel in Manitoba! It is not known whether this Act was ever used to convict any "evil disposed persons". Over a hundred years later all that is left is the name and stories of pioneer settlers who owed their lives to the existence of these guide posts.

Railroad Fever

From 1876 on, speculation regarding a major railroad from Winnipeg serving the Mennonite settlers in the "West Reserve" and connecting with rail lines in the United States, was constant. Emerson and West Lynne merchants and business leaders lobbied the Provincial Legislature as well as the Dominion Parliament to

make sure that the main line to eastern parts of the Dominion of Canada would be routed through Emerson and south of Lake Superior. When it became clear that the Ottawa politicians had opted for a Canada only mainline, these same leaders worked hard to establish a rail line going west along the 49th Parallel. This line was seen as essential if Emerson was to maintain its trade with the new Mennonite farmers of the West Reserve. It was also hoped that Emerson would serve as port of entry for much of the new immigration to Western Canada expected out of Britain and central parts of the Dominion in the early 1880's.

Emerson was located on the east side of the Red River to place it alongside the CPR track which crossed into the United States, hooking up with the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad at St. Vincent. The ferry crossing the Red River at Emerson was less than ideal since the river's steep banks made getting on and off the ferry quite treacherous. As well, spring thaw and fall freeze-up made the crossing inoperable several months of the year. To further complicate Emerson's existence, the Hudson's Bay Company established a commercial centre, called West Lynne, on the west side of the Red River in 1879. ²⁰

Several attempts were made to improve access to Emerson for the new settlers in Southwestern Manitoba. A traffic bridge was constructed, and a railway scheme to connect Emerson with the West Reserve and Turtle Mountain regions was concocted. The first plan called for the construction of an Emerson and Turtle Mountain Railroad and when it did not get off the ground the Emerson and Northwestern Railroad was formed. Organized by Emerson businessmen, this company sold debentures and sought the support of the provincial and federal governments in acquiring the patents necessary to build the railroad. Mayor Carney sought the support of a friend of him, James J. Hill, who agreed to build the line provided he could determine such a move would be profitable for his company. When this came to naught, thanks to the monopoly of the

Canadian Pacific Railroad (in those days commonly referred to as "The Syndicate"), the CPR entered into an agreement with the city of Emerson to provide a railroad from Emerson to the west, conditional on the city constructing a bridge for the track across the Red and providing a right of way through Emerson. Should these conditions not be met by the time the track reached the west side of the river, CPR would no longer be held by the agreement. So it seemed that, in 1883, Emerson was finally going to get the track it considered so essential to its continued viability as a commercial centre in Western Canada.

This CPR line, however, never crossed the Red River. The total cost of the bridge could not be covered by Emerson and the contractor would not permit the CPR to lay its track on the bridge until Emerson's financial situation improved. Emerson was already heavily in debt and could not resolve the matter, resulting in "The Syndicate" turning around and pulling up the newly laid rails. It looked like West Lynne was going to become the centre to which settlers in Western Manitoba would come to do their business. ²¹

A New Era

During this difficult time in Emerson, many faces that were to become familiar in Gretna in future years considered this community home. Enoch Winkler established a store in Emerson in 1875. The store was built upon the instructions of J. H. Ashdown, the Winnipeg Merchant Prince. Since it was not clear at the time whether Winnipeg or Emerson would become the dominant centre in Western Canada, Ashdown was hedging his bets. Alexander C. Smith came west from Nova Scotia in the late 70's and was soon renowned for his knowledge and ability in the cattle business. Other wellknown Gretna names appear in church registries and as signatures on petitions. D. G. McEdward, J. R. Hoffmann, William Pieper, A. Coblentz, J. F. Tennant, John W. Copeland, Max C. Heyden, J. A. Hoffmann, Charles



William Hespeler, immigration agent for the Mennonites, later Member of the Legislative Assembly for the Gretna area. P#1602. PAM



James J. Hill, owner of the International Railway, and later owner of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad. P#1603



Joseph and Alta Tennant with Alta's mother, Mrs. Hutchison, circa 1900. Mr. Tennant was an early Gretna customs officer. P#1299



Alexander C. Smith, pioneer settler at Emerson and later at Gretna. Mr. Smith was engaged in buying and selling horses and cattle in the surrounding area. Circa 1930. P#848

Wahn, John Leslie, Alexander Smith, Ambrose W. Stock, E. Coblentz, J. E. Tennant are among the signators of a petition dated at West Lynne, in the County of Manchester on the 15th of May 1882.²²

Everybody sensed the beginning of an era. Political and commercial prospects for Emerson and West Lynne were uncertain, at best. However, the citizens did not let this prevent them from tasting the finer and more meaningful aspects of life in the West, as the following report suggests:

Opera House, Emerson, Wednesday evening. A lecture was delivered by John Peter of Winnipeg on "Life Insurance", their benefits, etc. E. T. Bradley, Esq. in the chair, O. P. Jackson, assisted by A. C. Smith stands on his head on the platform — doorkeeper, H. Waxelbaum — receipts 25 cents. Admittance according to weight. After all expenses were cleared the receipts are to be handed over to the Winnipeg General Hospital — consequential results — Hospital owes Rinskopf \$30.

This April 29, 1881 account in the **Nelsonville Mountaineer** illustrates the dangers of fundraising even in those times! The same article also provides a terse one-liner — "A. C. Smith gone after more mules." ²³ The following entry in the same paper, dated October 21, 1881 provides further insight:

A. C. Smith, the most genial, most popular, and best horse trader in the Dominion, arrived in Emerson on Wednesday with a carload of brood mares which he is now offering for sale, and a carload of sheep for G. F. Fitzgerald of the Ridge.²⁴

Fund-raising events, church activities, and the formation of agricultural associations began soon after the first streets were laid out in Emerson and West Lynne. And Smugglers' Point was not forgotten. Reverend John Scott reported to the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Church in Canada in June of 1878 from Emerson, stating: "The most strenuous efforts are being made to complete the commodious church begun a year ago in Emer-

son . . . Two points, River Marais Settlement and Smuggler's Point require occasional visits of the missionary". ²⁵

The registry of donations toward the building fund of the Presbyterian Church and Mission in Emerson lists such names as Peter McBain, W. A. Scott and Mrs. Hogg, names that would later appear among Gretna congregational records.

J. F. Tennant served on the first Board of Directors of the Morris Agricultural Society, which was formed in West Lynne on January 17, 1880. The meeting was opened by the Society's President who urged "Members to adopt a system of tree planting and also of meeting together monthly for the discussion of subjects important to farmers." The Society also organized the First Annual Exhibition of the Morris electoral district, at West Lynne, on October 5th and 6th, 1880. This agricultural fair provided local farmers and town residents the opportunity to show cattle, produce, sewing, etc. Among the prize winners were: A. C. Smith who won first prize for a Berkshire boar and sow; Mrs. Thomas Tennant for a collection of pickles; Reverend J. Scott for a collection of flowers in pots; Mrs. A. Coblentz for fancy braiding and Mrs. Charles Grant for Indian bead work.26

Two Waterloo Adventurers

It is unfortunate that little is known about the origins and early history of the Western Manitoba and Gretna pioneers. Most may have found themselves too busy to document events around them and too preoccupied with the day-to-day activities of survival to record family history. Accounts which do exist are primarily official records, press clippings, or personal memoirs which have been set down long after time has worn down the sharp edges of early memory. Often even the official record is not as complete as it ought to be. An individual, as important as William Hespeler, who played a key role in bringing the Mennonites to Western Canada is unrecognized for the large

numbers of German, Dutch, French, Swiss, Prussian, Belgian and Icelandic settlers he brought to this country. Hespeler was visiting Germany in 1871 when he heard about the German Lutheran, Mennonite and Hutterite peoples who were considering emigration from Russia and Europe to North America. He seized the opportunity, notified Ottawa of the information he had uncovered, and was given authorization as special Canadian immigration agent in February of 1872. He visited Berlin and Berdiansk and convinced the Russian Mennonites to send a delegation to Canada when considering possible settlement locations. Before returning to his home near Preston in Waterloo County, Ontario, he visited the Mennonite villages in the Besarabia, Cherson and Crimea areas, at the same time meeting with Lutheran and Hutterite representatives in this region.27

Hespeler relied on the services of another businessman from Waterloo County to coordinate the Mennonite delegation's visit in the fall of 1872. From Berlin (now Kitchener), Jacob Y. Shantz was a highly regarded member of the Mennonite Church and someone whose leadership abilities were well known in the area. Shantz was to play an important role in getting the first Mennonites settled in Manitoba by constructing immigration sheds and making sure provisions and medical assistance were at hand when the Mennonites disembarked at the junction of the Rat and the Red Rivers. ²⁸

The telegram to Shantz in Berlin, Ontario in 1874, letting him know that the Mennonites were on their way out of Russia was received at the telegraph office by a young man named Enoch Winkler. Winkler was working in Berlin as a pharmacist and shared his accommodation with the town's telegraph operator who was out at the time the message arrived. He felt the message could not wait for the return of his room–mate and delivered it to Shantz himself. When Shantz learned that Enoch was fluent in both English and German, Enoch was persuaded to accompany the immigrants as interpreter.

From the end of the steel at Moorehead, Minnesota, Enoch walked with the men buying livestock and equipment en route. Since the Mennonite immigrants coming to Manitoba at that time were mainly farmers, Enoch was persuaded by them to set up the lumber business which he did, first at Emerson, then Gretna and later Morden. It was to his brother in Emerson, after the death of his father in 1879, that Valentine came at the age of 14, being in charge of the Gretna business at the age of 16 . . . 29

That Winkler, Shantz and Hespeler all had origins in Waterloo County probably played a considerable role in drawing others west from this part of Ontario. Enoch's father, David, was a friend of and did business with Valentine Wahn during the earlier part of the 18th Century. It was shortly after Enoch decided to set up the business in Emerson that Charles Wahn arrived on the scene. It was also natural that German residents in Canada came to establish commercial ventures in the Mennonite settlements in Manitoba. Christian Pieper came west from Waterloo County with Henry Ritz in early 1882, arriving in Emerson on March 6. Pieper and Ritz, both in their early twenties at the time, headed west to homestead in the Killarney and Deloraine areas.

Gretna was little more than a gleam in "The Syndicate's" eye when these Waterloo adventurers set out to seek their fortune in the west. Roots never grew very deep as long as uncertainty about the railroad continued. While Smith, Winkler and Coblentz based their operations out of Emerson and West Lynne and Pieper and Ritz tried homesteading in the Turtle Mountains, others were looking to Winnipeg or to the small towns like Tannenau and Niverville in the East Reserve to carry out their various enterprises. Jacob Y. Shantz had been promised a section of land in return for the construction of the immigration sheds for the Mennonites. By spring of 1879 Shantz was divesting himself of this section of land, writing his Member of Parliament for Waterloo that he "should like very much to get the Patent (for this section) at once as I have sold it to Jacob Woelfe and he wants to start settling



Adolph and Sara Coblentz owned and operated A. Coblentz & Sons, together with sons Isaac and Godfrey, from 1883–1942. P#515



Enoch and Helen (Stewart) Winkler were among the first settlers to arrive in Gretna. Photo taken at Campbell's Studio in Winnipeg circa 1910. Enoch was a brother to Valentine Winkler and uncle to Howard Winkler. P#530



The Coblentz brothers: Adolphe, Aachel and Edmond. Circa 1877. P#517

thereon."³⁰ Hespeler was also provided with land entitlements in return for services rendered as special immigration agent, acquiring the townsite of what is today known as Niverville. This entitlement was made in 1878, the same year the first railway line in Manitoba, the Pembina Branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway was completed. This townsite was only two miles distant from the section held by Shantz. Had the track been laid as Shantz had expected, it is likely that the short-lived village of Shantzenberg might be serving the region now served by Niverville, the community started by Hespeler.

Mennonite Gold

While this was going on, Otto Schultz and Erdmann Penner were conducting business in Winnipeg. Schultz had come to Winnipeg from Ontario, to work in the general store owned by a Mr. Sutherland. Penner arrived in Manitoba with the first group of Russian Mennonites. He had given up a comfortable holding in Russia at the request of his fellow "Bergthalers". His experience as a manager of a very large estate as well as the trust and respect he had gained as Magistrate for the local government were considered good references by the Mennonites who had decided to emigrate to Canada. His knowledge of financial matters was sought by the leaders of this venture since the Mennonite farmers were in the process of selling all but the most essential belongings:

Penner knew about banking methods and he wanted to deposit their joint capital in a bank in Russia and then draw it out in Canada. But to so many of them this was so alien that they were afraid. 'Once out of sight, out of possession', they would not hear of that. So they decided they would turn all their joint capital into gold, have a number of very strong suitcases made, pack the gold into these and carry it to America. This they did. They assigned individual suitcases to six sturdy dependable men, they had to keep guard over it at all times and under all circumstances. This happened to work out all right. Every last penny was delivered to its rightful owner . . . 31

The Mennonite settlers also brought along seed grain and potatoes, hoping they might be able to raise some food that first summer. Erdmann Penner's daughter describes how her father's first concern upon entry to Canada was the dispersal of the hard cash with which the Mennonites had entrusted him. Although the account of how the gold was transported is not in the official record, it is known that the Winnipeg and Emerson merchants were most pleased to do business with these new settlers because they bought what they needed to build their villages without demanding credit. The Mennonite gold gave Manitoba merchants a brief moment of prosperity at a time when hard currency was scarce.

Unlike his compatriots, it sounds like Erdmann Penner was not all that sure he wanted to stay in this land of mud and mosquitoes. He found accommodation for his family in Winnipeg and set out to try and find a suitable place to live in America.

He went all over, looking and enquiring everywhere and seeking a home. Whenever he heard of German speaking, especially Mennonite, groups living, there he went and investigated. He covered the whole middle States, the Dakotas, Missouri, Minnesota, Nebraska, Kansas, Illinois, Pennsylvania, Ontario and whatever place he thought likely. He came back after a couple of months and was very depressed. He had found nothing, nothing that appealed to him. He told Mother that if they wanted to stay in America they might as well stay where they were. Here, at least, they had quite a few friends and relatives and would not live all by themselves. 32

Supplying the Mennonites

Penner went to work learning the language and through his new friendship with Otto Schultz went to work for Sutherland, at first as a teamster and then as a clerk to help with all the German-speaking customers the store was attracting. Before the year was out, Schultz and Penner had set up a partnership and they let it be known in the Mennonite villages that they would be open just south of Winnipeg, north of

the present University of Manitoba location. The partners made as many as half a dozen trips down the Red River that first summer, returning on flatboats loaded with essentials needed by the settlers. Even the flatboats would be taken apart and sold as lumber. This tent business along the Red River existed for two summers. News of the impending railroad convinced Schultz and Penner that they should set up their business near this line. They built the East Reserve's first store at Tannenau, situated near the Rat River, south of today's Niverville. It was only a small shop but it proved most convenient to the settlers in the East Reserve because it carried all the necessary staples. The Penners' living quarters were on the second floor of the shop. When the business expanded and more space was needed, Penner moved the family to a small log cabin behind the store. The store was kept open for several years and the move was made to Niverville when the train came through that village instead of Tannenau.

Life there was not nearly as isolated and lonely as it sounds. Father's store, being the only one outside of Winnipeg, 45 miles away, people had to come from far and wide to do their shopping. And our store was, so to speak, the clearing house for all the gossip, the news, the friendly intercourse. When our lumber wagons went to the city for goods every so often, as they had to, they naturally brought along the mail for the whole colony. Anybody coming to shop would, of course, take it home and distribute it in his neighbourhood. A new settlement like that had to be as a matter of course a friendly and co-operative community. 33

Penner and Schultz shipped the first commercial shipment of grain in Western Canada in 1879. The 5000 bushels were sent from Niverville via Duluth, Minnesota for export to Europe. Their approach to business was never parochial where, even during the years in Tannenau, Penner would make an annual foray to Montreal to purchase supplies for the store. One particular summer, during a diphtheria epidemic in which the Penners lost three of their children, it was impossible for Erdmann

Penner to make the trip to Montreal. Otto Schultz went in his place, travelling through the United States and stopping at St. Paul. Here Schultz fell in love with one of the innkeeper's daughters. Coming back after his trip to Montreal to announce to his partner that he wanted Penner to buy out his share of the business. It was Schultz's plan to go into partnership with an about to be brother-in-law, a Mr. Hansen, and start a grocery store in St. Paul.

Catching the Train

The next several years were difficult ones for Erdmann Penner. Schultz had been an excellent partner in that he was particularly good at closing sales with Mennonite buyers who tended to drive hard bargains. Penner was often too kind-hearted and found his business in some difficulty. Some lean years as a result of poor crops resulted in fewer cash sales and more credit being extended. When word reached the East Reserve that the CPR and the St. Paul and Pacific Railway from Minnesota were scheduled to go through to the West Reserve, Penner immediately decided to relocate to NeuAnlage, some seventeen miles west of Emerson along the Post Road.

This small village was almost midway between east and west extremes of the Mennonite settlement. With the brisk traffic along the Post Road going east and west and a railroad linking the Reserve to Winnipeg in the north and St. Paul to south, Penner calculated that his fortunes would improve. He had visited the settlements west of the Red and had been impressed with the progress they had made since 1876. John Hiebert, a Penner son-in-law, would continue management of the store in Niverville until the mid 1880's while the stores on the west side of the river were put into operation.



Erdmann Penner, first mayor of the Village of Gretna after incorporation in 1896. Circa 1900. P#1086

Helena Penner (Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert), daughter of Erdmann Penner, at University of Manitoba. Helena was in the first class of women to graduate. Circa 1900. P#1081

Pattern for Success

Not everyone who came to Western Canada in the 1870's was as unimpressed as Erdmann Penner had been. Although Penner learned to like the way of life in Manitoba, others saw this as the land of opportunity. Among the businessmen who came to serve the Mennonite settlers were a hardy group of Jewish merchants. In 1877 Adolph Coblentz came to Emerson, accompanying his brothers Edmond and Aachel to the west. Unlike many of the Jewish settlers who came to do business with the Mennonite farmers, the Coblentz brothers did not come from the Russian "Pale of Settlement" to continue associations which existed between Mennonite and Jewish communities in Russia. The Coblentz family came to America from Lixheim, France where Adolphe was born in 1842. In 1876, a year before coming to Western Canada, Adolphe Coblentz took out United States citizenship at Bethlehem, Pennsylvania. The Coblentz brothers were the first Jewish settlers in Manitoba. They set the pattern for the early success of Jews in business undertakings because they spoke French and German as well as English and were equally able to develop good relations with the French-speaking Metis and the German-speaking Mennonites. 35 At first the brothers worked as clerks in Winnipeg businesses, but by the 1880's Edmond was a partner in a clothing store, Brown and Coblentz, at the corner of Main and Logan in Winnipeg, and Adolphe was doing quite well in Emerson.

The following account of Coblentz's new hotel in Emerson provides a delightful insight into the life associated with such a business in a pioneer community:

May 13, 1881 Southern Manitoba Times — The Golden Hotel, Coblentz & Co. proprietors, was inaugurated on Saturday evening last, by a free lunch, on the western principle. Mr. A. A. Coblentz who has no little taste in such matters, had a large table spread at the western end of the spacious barroom and an excellent cold lunch free to all comers was participated in by every one who wished. There was a large attendance and the

more vivacious members of the gathering entertained the company with choice songs well sung and rapturously received. Mine host, Coblentz, assisted by Harry Waxelbaum presided, and the Golden was properly raised to the sublime degree of a good hotel, second to none. The building is situated on the corner of Brydges Avenue and Third Street. It has been nicely fitted up for the purpose.

The Billiard table in the Golden is really a fine piece of mechanism. It is a Brunswick Balk affair, a fifteen ball pool business, and our boundary 'swells' delight to pocket the ball, and bend over said table, and look like they do in the pictures. It is the best table of the sort in the corners.

We tender our best wishes for the success for the Golden.³⁶

Other Jewish businessmen who came to the West Reserve to serve the Mennonite pioneers came more directly from the Russian settlements which had brought them into contact with the Mennonites in that country. Since the Jews were not allowed, by law, to own any land, they were restricted to their villages, or "sheltls", from which they would conduct their trade with, among others, the Mennonites. Most of them arrived in America with few, if any, resources of their own, and those who came to Western Canada came with the dream of owning land of their own. Max and Lazar Wodlinger exemplified the Jewish immigrant who had lived among the Mennonites in Russia and sought out the Mennonite reserves when they came to Western Canada in 1880 because they were familiar with the ways of the Mennonites. The Wodlingers started out in the west by working for the CPR, but when they were able to get their homesteads, they chose to settle near Gretna. 37

These were some of the pioneers who would find their way to Gretna in the 1880's. Custom's officials like Tennant or Leslie, members of church families like the Scotts who had served Smugglers' Point, labourers like Levi Williams or Robert Johnston — all would join the Smiths, Penners, Schultzes, Piepers and Ritzes (to name only a few) once it was clear where in the

West Reserve "The Syndicate" was going to locate its new centre of operations.

Speculating

Those daring speculators who tried to anticipate the arrival of the CPR often found themselves just a few miles one side or the other of the track after it had been laid. Prior to the identification of the site near Smugglers' Point, rumour had it that the line would pass through NeuAnlage. Erdmann Penner built his store in NeuAnlage based on this information. The Ogilvie Milling Company accepted several parcels of land along the 49th Parallel, just south of the same village. The Hudson's Bay Company was seeking its land entitlement in the same area just east of where Gretna stands today. Schantzenberg and Tannenau, in the East Reserve lost the CPR to Niverville, Nelsonville would lose to Morden, and Neu-Anlage (and Emerson) would find the CPR opting for a town over which it would have greater control.

The first specific definition of the square mile of land which was to become Gretna was made in March of 1876 in a report to the Minister of the Interior in Ottawa. Signed by Lachlan Kennedy, it summarizes the surveyor's descriptions as follows:

Sir.

I have the honour, in accordance with the instructions contained in the Dominion Lands Surveyor's Manual, to submit the following Report on the Survey of Township No. 1 in the 1st Range West of the principal Meridian;

That is to say: that this Township comprises very rich soil well drained by watercourses, and commands a beautiful view of the Pembina River belt of timber to the South and also that of the Red River to the East. The only timber that this Township contains stands in Sections Nos. 5 and 8 and will soon be appropriated for building purposes. Generally, the Township is rolling Prairie and

adapted for immediate cultivation there being little or no low land.

I have honour to be Sir Your Obediant Servant Lachlan Kennedy D.L.S.³⁸

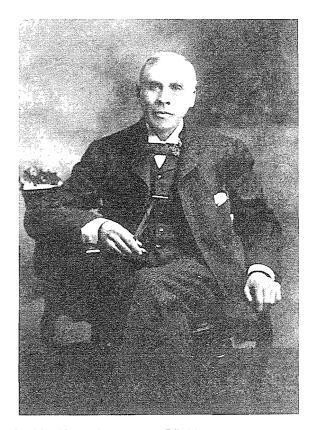
Original Homestead

The Homestead Patents for this section of land were held by two brothers, Martin and Johann Klassen, and by Mrs. Elizabeth Hiebert, daughter of Johann Klassen, the widow of Jacob Ens. Along with the Franz Kliever, Gerhard Spence, Kapuclias Voth, Erdmann Nickel and David Schellenberg families, they had come to Canada in 1878 on the Borussia Steamship of the Montreal Steamship Company. The ship left Liverpool on July 13 and arrived in Quebec on July 25th. 39 Mrs. Martin Klassen nee Maria Schellenberg describes reaching their homestead:

(From Emerson), our first lap took us to the east end of the village of Blumenort. There we camped like the Indians. The villagers were most hospitable, bringing us bread and potatoes. We also did some of our own bread baking — our oven being a hole in the ground with a tin around it. It worked rather well!

In the meantime our fathers paid another visit to Mr. Miller in order to complete the claim papers, and, once again we continued on our trek to our homestead. In the middle of nowhere father suddenly turned off the trail, stepped off the cart and announced, 'Now we are home.' There weren't any habitations in sight except the distant village of Gruenthal in its early stages. 40

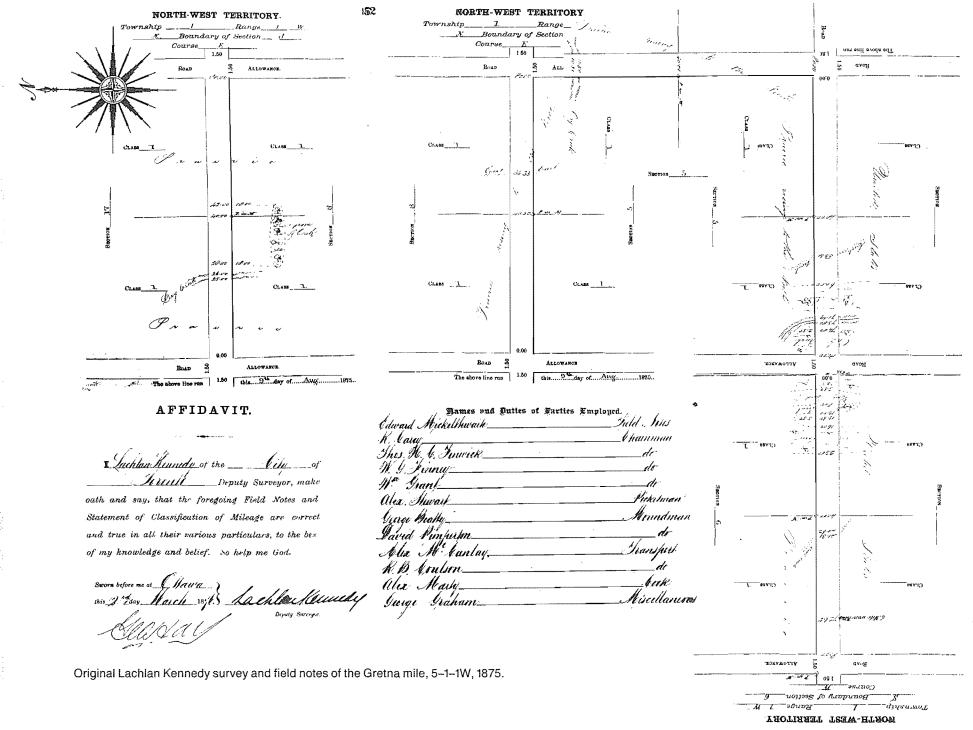
The ox cart transported the new settlers to their homesteads and it continued to be the primary form of locomotion until the track was laid to the West Reserve. Lumber was hauled from the Pembina River, as was firewood, and the harvest taken to Emerson along the Post Road. This road proved virtually impassable on any wet day and descriptions of wading



Lachlan Kennedy, surveyor. P#726.

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Map of Township 1, Range 1 West.

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Martin and Maria Klassen, homesteaders of NW1/4 5-1-1W now part of the Village of Gretna. Johann Klassen (Martin's brother) and his daughter Elizabeth are listed as homesteaders of the S½ 5-1-1W and the NE1/4 5-1-1W respectively. Circa 1903. P#399

through coulees past fields too wet to farm are common among pioneer accounts. The section of land which was surveyed by the CPR, however, did not have this problem. It most likely played a part in the decision to put the track through to the border at this point.

The earliest mention of the railroad south from Winnipeg into the West Reserve is found in the July 15th, 1881 edition of the Emerson paper, the **Southern Manitoba Times**:

Newsy Railway Items

From information we have received we are led to believe that the construction of the 'line' of the Syndicate will be commenced immediately. The new road connects with the C.P.R. about sixteen miles west of Winnipeg, near Headingly, and strikes a straight line between ranges 1 east and 1 west. It passes Morris, the nearest point it gets to the river about six miles to the west, in the vicinity of the Lowe Farm. At the Boundary Line it is distant from West Lynne some 15 miles, crossing the Boundary Line on Section 5, tp. 1, range 1 west of which section the Syndicate have lately bought the south half.

This road will connect with the St. P., M. & M.R.R. at Ojata, the junction, twelve miles west of Grand Forks. There is now working on this end of the road 400 men and 150 teams, and this number was to be increased immediately to 1,000 men and 400 teams.

Forty teams have arrived with the contractor to commence grading on this side, they will start at the Lowe Farm and work south to the line. \$40 per acre is now refused for wild land in the vicinity of Smuggler's Point, at the crossing of the line. 41

Selling to the CPR

Land Titles records provide an interesting account in regard to the sale of the southern half of Section 5, Township 1, Range 1 West. Johann Klassen, the Younger, held the deeds for both quarters. On June 13, 1881 each quarter was sold to Mr. A. B. Stickney for \$800 for a total of \$1600. Stickney registered this transaction with the Land Titles Office on September 8, 1881, the very same day in which he sold both quarter sections to the Canadian Pacific Railway for one dollar each. The total sale came to \$2! But hold

just a minute! Yes, the SE quarter of Section 5W was sold in total to the CPR, but the SW quarter was sold to two parties — the west half of the SW quarter was sold by Stickney to William Hespeler for \$1 and the east half of the SW quarter was sold to the CPR for \$1. Stickney was able to sell the whole southern half for three, not two dollars! Martin Klassen and Elizabeth Hiebert sold only the right of way in the north half of Section 5 to the Canadian Pacific Railway. In each instance the price was \$3.50. Considerably more than Stickney received for sale of the whole of both southern quarters! 42

What's in a Name?!

In March, 1882 it was becoming clearer to observers that the CPR line to the International Border would not pass through NeuAnlage. By the summer's end the track was almost all in place. The Ogilvie Company had miscalculated by one mile in an easterly direction and therefore did not own any of the land upon which the town was going to be built. But W. W. Ogilvie travelled along the line south in 1882, and it is believed that it was he who gave Gretna the name it carries today. The Ogilvie family was Scottish and, it appears, William was reminded of the border town in Scotland where young English couples crossed from England in order to be married. English law required parental consent until the age of 18 was reached, Scotland felt you were old enough at 16. No official record of Gretna's naming exists, however, Gretna retains the flavour and atmosphere of the border community which reminded the Scottish miller of home.

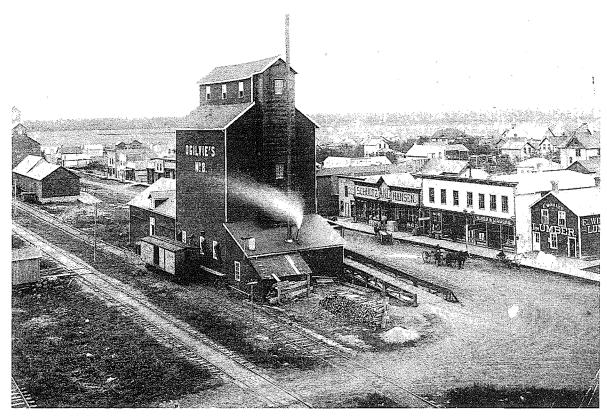
The **Southern Manitoba Times** had this to say about the new border community taking shape to the west of the Red River:

'The **Winnipeg Times** says: 'the new C.P.R. Town site at the boundary line, which is now being laid out into lots, has received the appropriate name of Gretna, and will be offered to the public by auction in the course of a few days. Applications for lots for building purposes, notably for elevators and general stores, are pouring

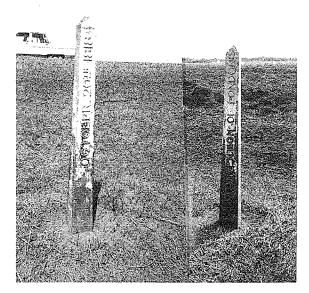
in, but the Land Commissioner has determined to dispose of nothing by private sale until after the auction. The St. P., M. & M. Road is through to Smuggler's Point which is on the American side immediately opposite to Gretna and the C.P.R. southwestern branch is being pushed forward as fast as possible, and will connect with the American system in time to move the heavy wheat crop

now being harvested in Southern Manitoba, and which has hitherto been marketed in West Lynne and Emerson.'

We venture to inform the **Winnipeg Times** that West Lynne intends to again command the grain trade of Southern Manitoba, and will take more than a dozen or so of Gretna grain elevators to get away with us. ⁴³



Seventh Street south of Hespeler Ave., 1890. Note 'wye' in tracks, Ogilvie's and McBean Bros. elevators, E. Winkler Lumber, Coblentz and Schultz & Hansen stores, two implement dealers, and bell-tower of second public school (built in 1892) in upper right of photo. P#888



Original boundary markers, one mile west of Gretna, placed on the Canada–U.S.A. border between 1872 and 1876, following the proclamation of the Convention of London on October 20, 1818. P#1496 and 1497

INTERNATIONAL BOUNDARY FROM THE GULF OF GEORGIA TO THE NORTHWESTERNMOST POINT OF THE LAKE OF THE WOODS SHEET No. 52 SURVEYED UNDER THE DIRECTION OF UNITED STATES COMMISSIONER HIS BRITANNIC MAJESTY'S COMMISSIONER O. H. TITTMANN MANITOBA LISGARDISTRICT T. LA-R. 2 W. T. 1 - R. 1 W. Neuhorst Blumenort 31. 2. 61 918 27 26 29 28 (816) PEMBINACOUNTY UNITEDSTATES Boundary Monuments We certify that this chart is one of the quadruplicate set of fifty-nine (59) charts the original sites adopted under Articles VI and VII of the Treaty between Great Britain and the Im new sites United States, signed at Washington April 11, 1908, and that we have marked Boundary Line thereon the Boundary Line as re-established by the Commissioners designated above, in accordance with the provisions of the said Articles. Scale 43800 Signed April 7, 1922 Contour interval 20 feet United States Conditionioner PAM His Bridginghic Majesty's Commissioner Datum is mean sea level.

Chapter Two

Beginnings

Newspaper accounts of the day suggest Gretna's beginnings were late in 1882. These are cast into some doubt by other sources which state that "the first country grain elevator in Western Canada, of the type employed today, was constructed at Gretna in Southern Manitoba by the Ogilvie Milling Company in 1881."1 This was the original unit of the planned Ogilvie chain, providing services "in the form of storage space and grading facilities. It was also an intelligence centre, from which its owners kept themselves informed upon the quantity and quality of crops in various regions."2 The Canadian Pacific Railway was quick to recognize the advantages of a system of local elevators in the rapid transportation of grain. Not wishing to take on the vast work involved in the construction of the elevators, the CPR offered elevator sites on its right of ways at a nominal rent to companies interested in constructing the new type of square elevator such as was constructed at Gretna. In return, "The Syndicate" agreed it would discourage the loading of cars with grain through flat warehouses or directly from farmers' wagons.³ The Ogilvie Milling Company saw this as an opportunity to take advantage of the CPR's monopoly position, not just in Gretna, but throughout Western Canada. Standards for these square grain elevators were set by the CPR, including the capacity requirements, making it more difficult for the small entrepreneur to operate independent grain handling operations along the CPR lines.

Doubt is also cast on reports of the Ogilvie operation being the first business in Gretna. Erdmann Penner of NeuAnlage and David Peters of Blumenort moved their businesses to Gretna as soon as it became clear that this was where the track was coming through. Enoch Winkler, merchant in Emerson and West Lynne and farmer along the Post Road, moved a flat warehouse to Gretna and was doing business with the farmers in the area during the 1881 crop year. Unconfirmed reports also describe piles of grain on the open fields at Gretna, from which they were shipped by wagon along the Post Road to Emerson. 4 None of this is too clear, but it points to life at Gretna before the coming of the Canadian Pacific Railway.

Howard W. Winkler, in his memoirs, describes his father Valentine Winkler's arrival in Gretna:

As a boy of 14 he joined his older brother Enoch at Emerson in 1879 and worked there for 2 years in his brother's retail lumber yard. By 1881, the Canadian Pacific Railway which was pushing its transcontinental tracks westward in the Northwest Territories, as they were then known, decided to have a subsidiary line southward to join the Great Northern at Neche in Dacotah Territory and from a point about 12 miles North of the boundary build a branch as far as Manitoba Junction (Manitou). They reached Gretna in 1881 but not before Enoch Winkler had become established there with a lumber yard and grain warehouse and his young brother, Valentine Winkler, now a mature 16, in charge.⁵

Winkler Interprets for Mennonites

Enoch Winkler, second son of Barbara and David Winkler was a pharmacist in Berlin (Kitchener) in 1874 and shared accommodations with the local telegrapher. On one occasion when the telegrapher was out a message came through for Jacob Y. Shantz a Berlin businessman advising about the arrival of Mennonite immigrants travelling to Manitoba. Realizing the message was urgent, Enoch delivered it to Mr. Shantz. When Shantz learned that Enoch spoke both English and German, he persuaded Enoch to accompany the immigrants as interpreter. From the end of the steel at Moorehead, Minnesota, Enoch walked with the men buying livestock and equipment en route. Since the Mennonite immigrants coming to Manitoba at that time were mainly farmers Enoch was persuaded by them to remain and set up the lumber business which he did; first at Emerson, then Gretna and later (1885) Morden. It was to his brother in Emerson after the death of his father in 1879 that Valentine came at the age of 14, being in charge of the Gretna business at the age of 16 and setting up the Morden business which he bought from his brother.

Ruth Winkler from Howard Winkler Papers

Postal Service to Neche

Post Office Inspector's Office Winnipeg, Man. 12th May 1881

No. 483

Sir.

I herewith return the letter 65079 from the General Post Office, Washington, of the 3rd instant, proposing a direct exchange of mails between Neche, Dakota, and Gretna, Manitoba, which you referred to me for report.

In No. 211 of the 7th January last, I informed you that a Post Office would be opened at Gretna on the 10th January, that Gretna was situated near the International Boundary line and adjoining the town of Neche in Dakota, that it was the southern terminus of the Southwestern branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and a connection point with the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway, and I recommended, inasmuch as correspondence for the United States mailed at Gretna would have to come from Gretna to Winnipeg and go down via St. Vincent (thereby suffering a material delay) until such time as a direct exchange of mails with Neche, or with the mail clerks on the Breckenridge and Neche Division, of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway, was authorized, that measures be at once taken to effect such exchange.

I would therefore recommend that the proposal of the United States Postal Authorities for a direct exchange of mail between Neche, Dakota, and Gretna, Manitoba, be at once acted upon and adopted.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your very obedient servant, (signed) W. W. McLeod P.O. Inspector

Public Archives of Canada

The Syndicate

The Emerson and West Lynne businesses and newspapers were carefully watching developments to the west of them. They were convinced "The Syndicate" had cheated them out of their right to serve as the "gateway to the west" and now it was becoming clear that the CPR was also planning to bypass their communities in building its link to the American Midwest. By August of 1882, most of the track to Gretna was laid, according to the Emerson International:

Mr. J. H. Marsden, just in from his contract on the Pembina Mountain branch of the C.P.R. reports grading operations as progressing rapidly. About twenty-six miles of railroad have yet to be constructed between Winnipeg and Smugglers' Point. The entire line from Grand Forks to Winnipeg will be complete and open for traffic by November. Mr. M., feels quite confident that West Lynne and Pembina will get a road. The surveyors will commence locating the branch line into Emerson next week.⁶

By the beginning of September, it was becoming imperative that arrangements be completed to quickly link up the railroad south into the United States:

Assistant Manager Baker, of the C.P.R., lately visited Collector Bradley at Emerson, and effected customs arrangements for the admission of track materials completing the link to connect with the Manitoba road at Smuggler's Point. The track on the Grand Forks Northern branch of the Manitoba line has been laid to Smuggler's Point on the Pembina River near the boundary line, and it is proposed to proceed with the continuation of the track from the boundary to connect with the Southwestern branch of the C.P.R. By the arrangement effected with the customs authorities, considerable time and trouble will be saved, and material will be brought over the Manitoba road to the border, instead of being brought to Winnipeg and then forwarded over the Southwestern branch.7

The Canadian Pacific Railway was pushing ahead in its bid to secure all rail traffic to Western Canada. The Manitoba Road described above is the St. Paul Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad of the J. J. Hill network and Smugglers' Point is used in reference to Neche. This fuzziness in decription persisted well into 1883. At times, no distinction was made between the centres on either side of the border. Perhaps this was a good omen. Gretna and Neche can reflect on a century of co-operation (with occasional family-feuding) and goodwill which has its roots in the border legacy of Smugglers' Point.

The Competition

Emerson and West Lynne business and community leaders decided to investigate for themselves the progress at the border crossing and set out on a pleasant September Saturday:

Ouite a number of our citizens drove out Saturday, to Gretna, the proposed town on the boundary line where the Grand Forks extension is to connect with a branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway from Winnipeg, 18 miles west of Emerson. The track from the south has not reached the boundary line yet as the bridge over the Pembina River, one mile and a half south of the International Boundary Line is not quite ready for the track, so that it will probably be a week or ten days before the Boundary Line will be reached. There are no signs of building yet at Gretna and there is only one building in Hespeler — the townsite on the American side of the line - and that is a saloon. It is the opinion of those who visited these proposed towns Saturday — and among the men there were several of our shrewdest business men who had some idea of putting stocks of goods in there — that Emerson and West Lynne have but little to fear from the competition of these points this fall and winter. Even should elevators be put up on the American side of the line and wheat buyers purchase wheat there, it is believed that the great majority of farmers would come in here, where they have business relations and where competition of goods is keen, to do their trading. As things look now, we believe the "Dual Cities" can calculate on getting the bulk of the wheat of Southern Manitoba this coming fall and winter. By another season we shall have railway connection with the west, and then what we lose in local trade we shall make up as a wholesale and manufacturing point. — Emerson International.8

By December 1st, 1882 trains had reached Gretna at the border and had gone as far west as Manitoba City. Progress along the CPR Southwestern line is described in the Winnipeg Free Press:

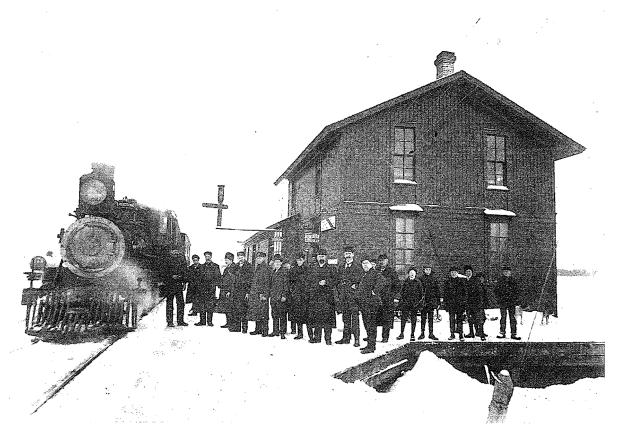
Superintendent Egan returned home yesterday morning from an inspecting tour over the Southwestern branch. He reports the line in fair condition, with the exception of portions which are not yet ballasted. Six gangs of men are now employed. The track is now laid within three miles of Manitoba City, and will be completed to that point by next Thursday. Extra trains will be run this week to accommodate the people living in that locality, and regular trains will be run next week to Gretna and Manitoba City. Land Commissioner McTavish, who also returned vesterday morning from a trip over the South-Western branch, is quite charmed with the country in the neighbourhood of the terminus of the first hundred miles. He predicted that there will be a large city somewhere in that locality, the exact point is not yet finally determined upon. From Ogilvie Heights overlooking Lake Killarney, there is a magnificant view of one of the finest pieces of rolling prairie to be seen in the North-West. With the exception of Gretna, none of the stations on the South-Western branch have been finally located, but several will be shortly.9

Customs was operating in Gretna, with W. P. Leslie from Spencerfeldt in charge, and the CPR station was open for business before Christmas of 1882. These two ingredients in the Gretna fabric were to dominate the first hundred years in the life of this village. But there are earlier records of customs activity at the Gretna—cum Smugglers' Point port of entry:

A customs preventive station existed in the vicinity of Gretna as early as 1876 — only six years after establishment of customs service on the prairies in 1870 at Winnipeg, and only two years after the march west of the North West Mounted Police. The preventive station was apparently called Smuggler's Point after the custom house of the same name in North Dakota. The customs

house in North Dakota dated from 1864 when the Americans were making strenuous efforts to keep the Selkirk settlers and the Metis from running their furs into the United States without paying duty.

In the 1876–77 fiscal years, Smuggler's Point collected \$378.43 in revenue. The customs house was then moved to Spencerfeldt which today nobody seems able to locate exactly, except that it was in a coulee three sections west of Gretna. The Canadian Customs Officer at Smuggler's Point and Spencerfeldt was W. P. Leslie and he lived with a family named McCartney. Leslie became the first sub–collector at Gretna, which was made an outport March 12, 1883, at a salary of \$1,000 a year. 10



Gretna CPR station, circa 1890. P#228

Surveys and Sales

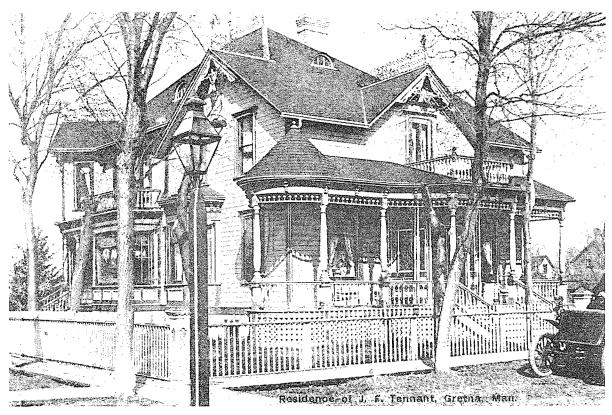
Further confusion regarding the official start of Gretna as a living and breathing community can be found in the County of Manchester land registry records. On November 23, 1882, Eliher Stewart paid out \$200 to the Canadian Pacific Railway Company. The amount was a down payment on lots #27 and #28 of Block 36 as surveyed by the CPR in 1881. On the same date, Richards Blundell and John Hartally also put down \$200 for lots #19 and #20 of Block 45. In both cases a balance of \$400 was marked as due on May 23, 1883. These were the first two sales

of lots on the Gretna property owned by "The Syndicate".

The remainder of the transactions in the County of Manchester register for the years 1883 and 1884 all carry the remark: "Rebate of 50% be allowed for building". From this, it appears that buildings already existed on properties sold by the CPR in these two years. It is unclear, also, what became of the property offered up in the first two contracts. The remark, "forfeited", is entered after each and dated 1894. The CPR registered contracts with the following in 1883 and 1884 for sales made in the South half of Section 5, Township 1, Range 1 West:



Chris Pieper (left) and J. D. Pierson (right), in front of Pieper's implement dealership which operated from 1895–1927. Boardwalk dates picture pre–1905. P#538



Erdmann Penner house. Bought by J. F. Tennant in 1908. Became Old Folks Home, 1919. Used as MCI girls' residence later. This site, at corner of Eighth & Montcalm, is now the location of the Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite Church. P#174

8/11/83	Enoch Winkler
	Lots 19/20, Block 5
8/31/83	Benjamin Mazoliuck
	Lot 18, Block 5
10/16/83	Bessie Hoffman
	Lots 27/28, Block 5
11/7/83	Otto Schultz
	Lots 39/40, Block 16
11/7/83	Erdmann Penner
	Lots 21/24, in Block 4
11/7/83	E. Penner & Co.
	Lots 19/20, Block 25
11/12/83	C. Wahn
	Lot 22, Block 5
11/12/83	E. Winkler
	Lot 21, Block 5
12/11/83	Gierres
	Lot 24, Block 16
5/22/84	Bessie Hoffman
	Lot 26, Block 5
7/29/84	Charles Wahn
	Lot 23, Block 5
8/1/84	E. Penner & Co.
	Lots 19/23, Block 16
8/2/84	Mrs. R. B. Fischer (Elizabeth)
	Lot 25, Block 5
8/4/84	B. Mazoliuck
	Lot 25, Block 16
9/24/84	Watson Manufacturing Co.
	Lot 24, Block 5
10/7/84	Cochrane Manufacturing Co.
	Lots 16/17, Block 5 ¹¹
Dlaaka	E 16 and DE and located along Co.

Blocks 5, 16 and 25 are located along Seventh Street, across from the train station site. Block 5 also borders what is today known as Hespeler Avenue. Block 4 is immediately west of Block 5 on Hespeler Avenue. The Bergthaler Mennonite Church today sits on the lots originally bought by Erdmann Penner in Block 4. With the exception of the NE quarter of Section 5, Township 1, Range 1 West, and a small segment of the SE quarter of the same section, all of Section 5 was surveyed into blocks with a street grid identified. The "Gretna Mile" was encompassed by Boundary Avenue along the International Boundary on the South, Twelfth Street on the West, Pieper Avenue on the North and

First Street (now part of Provincial Trunk Highway #30) on the east side of the village. Seventh Street and Hespeler Avenue cut the square mile into neat quarters.

The Canadian Pacific Railway records paint only part of the picture of Gretna's beginnings. Agreement #5820, dated March 12, 1883 shows Martin Klassen selling a portion of one acre forming the southeast corner of the NW quarter (5-1-1 West) to Christian Pieper. On March 14, Martin Klassen enters into an agreement for sale with Enoch Winkler for another portion of the same quarter section. A further agreement for sale is recorded for May 22, 1883 in which a portion of the same quarter section is transferred out of the hands of Christian Pieper to Alexander Gouldie. It is interesting to note that the Homestead Patent for this quarter section was not registered in Martin Klassen's name until January 1884. The Homestead Patent for the southeast and southwest quarters were registered in Johann Klassen's name in March 1885 and Elizabeth Hiebert's Homestead Patent was registered in Land Titles offices of the County of Manchester in November 1884. 12

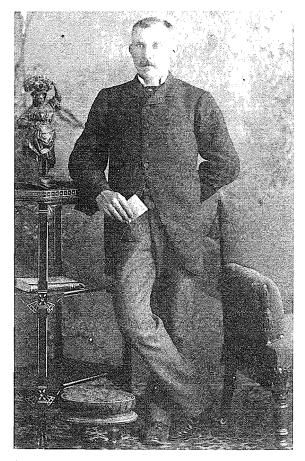
Business Gets Underway

With deals being made and land changing hands before transactions were "inked" it is necessary to assume that the official documents tell only part of the story. The worried watchers in West Lynne described the following on April 6, 1883:

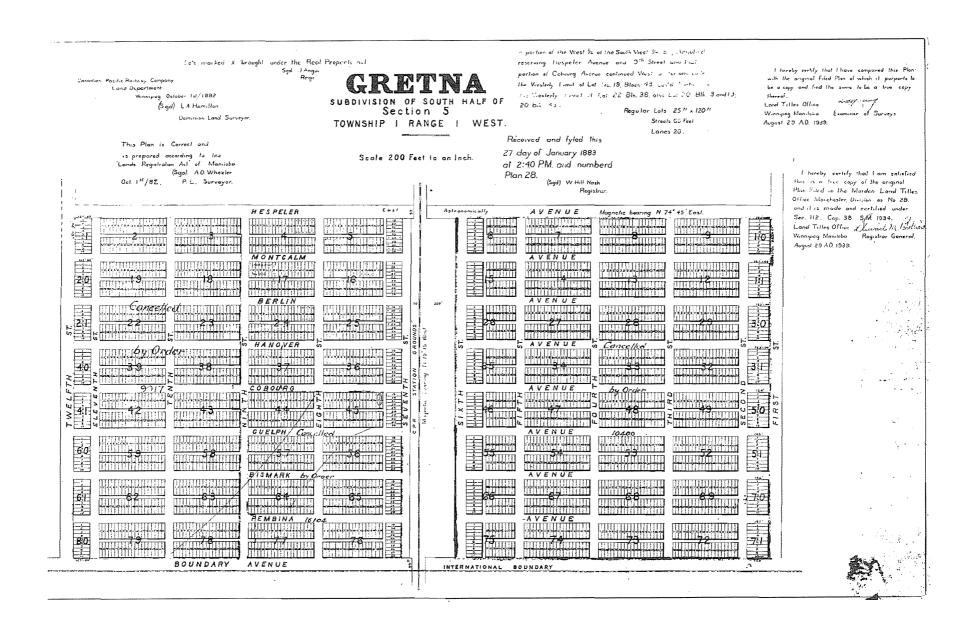
Gretna is the name of the new border town on the railway crossing on the Boundary Line some twenty miles west of West Lynne. Gretna is the southern terminus of the western division of the C.P.R. and is also an output of H.M. Customs.

The St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad connects here with the Southwestern branch of the C.P.R. making a direct line to St. Paul. Mssrs. Ogilvie have erected a grain warehouse, and through the agency of their buyer Chris Pieper have purchased 25,000 bushels of wheat during the past six weeks. Penner, Schultz and

continued on page 32

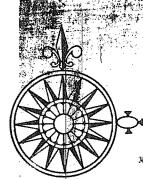


Christian Pieper, Dominion Land Surveyor, auctioneer, implement and auto dealer, and insurance, loan and land agent. Married Minnie Pierson in 1890 at Gretna. Taken in 1890, P#535



First survey of Gretna townsite, 1882.

VGA

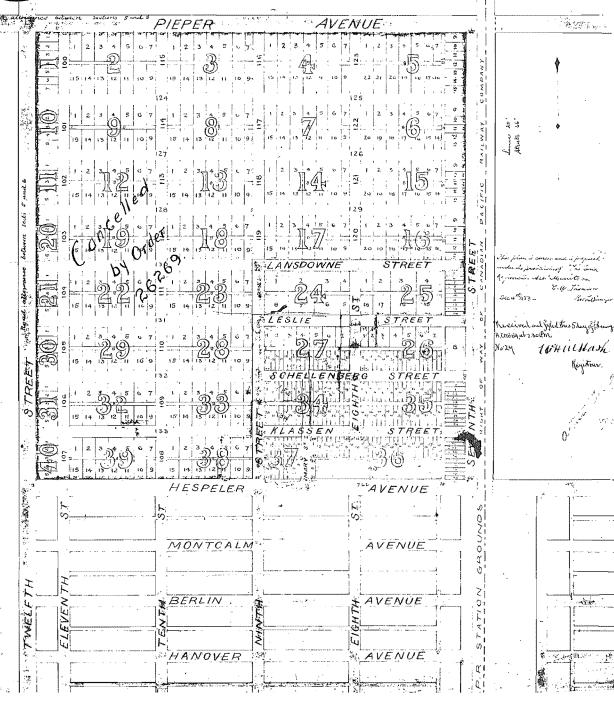


KLASSENS ADDITUM GRETNA

BEING SUBDIVISION INTO LOTS, STREETS AND RESERVES OF NORTHWEST QUARTER OF SEC. 5, TP 1, RIWPMI

Scale. 200 feet to an inch.

Note. The boundaries of the property indended to be shown are tinded lightly in red.



Co. are building a large store, which will cost in the neighborhood of \$15,000.00. Enoch Winkler of West Lynne has opened a lumber yard and doing a thriving trade. Other industries are about to be started and will be ready for business before next season's crop can be harvested. It is also the intention of Ogilvie and Co. to erect an elevator capable of holding 100,000 bushels of grain, and Messrs. J. & J. Livingstone are making arrangements to build a large flax warehouse for storing flax.

A number of agricultural implement warehouses are about to be built, and machines of all kind will be offered for sale. The C.P.R. Co. own a share of the town site, and they offer their corner

lots at \$375.00 each, and the inside lots at \$300.00 with a refund of half if built upon within a limited period.

Mr. Wm. Hespeler who is also a large property holder in the town site offered good building lots at from \$100.00 to \$150.00 each. E. Penner and Co. are the agents for selling the Hespeler property and the C.P.R. Co.'s. Their residence and office is at Gretna. C. Pieper the pioneer wheat buyer of the new town is an old West Lynner, and he informs us that the highest prices paid for wheat this spring is up to 53¢ a bushel. The area price paid for Russian Wheat is 50¢. W. P. Leslie another of West Lynne's old townsmen is the Customs official at Gretna. J. E. Tetu, Esq.,



Charles Wahn implement dealership, circa 1883, on west side of Seventh Street. Charles Wahn behind baby Maude Wahn in baby carriage. Small girl is Barbara Wahn. Immediately left of baby carriage is Mrs. Wahn, nee Louise Winkler, and her sister Wilhelmina Winkler. P#662

Dominion Immigration Agent is also about to establish an immigration office there on behalf of the Dominion Government. A lively town on the American side of the line called Neche has also sprung into existence and we have no hesitation in prophesying a brilliant future for both towns.¹³

Other newspaper accounts point out that W. J. Tyson came from Emerson to Gretna to continue as the area representative of the Watson Manufacturing Company. This implement business was further represented by Charles Wahn, who worked as its traveller. Alexander Gouldie built the Anglo-American Hotel in the spring of 1883 and it was described as fair-sized, having 25 excellent rooms, and "is without exception one of the best kept hotels in the country". 14 The Hoffmanns served Gretna as general merchants, later taking on the duty of the Post Office. Other names which would become common to Gretna may not have considered this their home just yet, but they were not far off. Adolphe Coblentz was hobbling about Emerson on crutches during the summer and fall of 1883, having survived a serious traffic accident when his horse bolted and smashed the buggy he was in. Alexander Smith continued to build on his fine reputation as a cattleman and horse trader while homesteading just 4 miles northwest of Gretna.

By today's standards Main Street Gretna in the summer of 1883 would not seem particularly attractive. The business street, facing the railroad track, was not fully built up and businesses all had false fronts to give the appearance of urban (if not urbane) construction. Horse manure was piled up at intervals along the street and, if it wasn't muddy, a little wind could whip up the dust quickly. Businesses were unpretentious, nonetheless, since their aim was to keep the merchandise moving. It was a most astute merchant who could calculate inventory requirements for the busy crop seasons. Those who knew what to bring into town and had judged demand accurately were soon able to expand and improve their premises. By November 1883 Gretna was described as "having a boom; buildings are going up in all directions and trade is brisk . . . The new custom house is about completed. A wing is being added to the Occidental Hotel." Characteristic of the Gretna entrepreneurs' approach to business, Erdmann Penner decided to diversify his holdings and established Morden's first general store in 1883. His operation in Niverville also stayed open and continued under his son-in-law's management.

Moving to Gretna

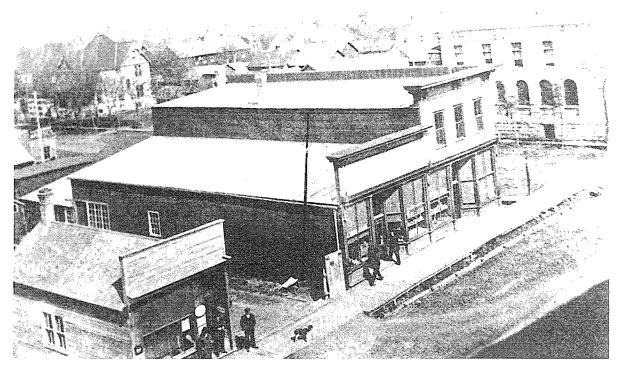
Not everything was coming up roses for Gretna in spring of 1883, however. On May 30, William Peel Leslie filed a report the Department of Agriculture and Statistics describing the outbreak of smallpox on the Dakota side of the line. He had travelled along the border to the western edge of the Mennonite Reserve and had found the Mennonites moving back and forth across the border to go to the saw mill along the Pembina River. The department authorized him to place "two quarantine constables, one speaking French and the other speaking English and German, at the boundary to prevent them crossing the line. Feeling that if the disease was once brought into the Mennonite villages then its ravages would be serious."16 The Pembina County authorities installed eight quarantine constables and two medical officers in the area of the outbreak and soon brought the disease under control.

W. P. Leslie brought other needs of the growing community of Gretna to the attention of the government decision–makers of the day. Mail was still distributed to the West Reserve through the Post Offices at Blumenort and Emerson, and, although Alexander Smith frequently travelled the Post Road and acted as courier, service through the mails was highly irregular and could stand some basic improvements:

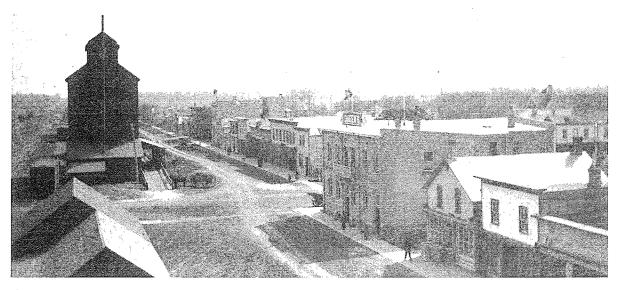
Gretna, June 13, 1883

Sirs,

I have the honor to request that you kindly address the Hon., The Minister of Customs at



E. Penner & Co. store on Seventh Street. Firemaps indicate the small building on left is Customs Office. P#575



Seventh St. in Gretna circa 1900. P#1451-F

Life and Its Problems

I have several times mentioned Mr. Schultz in Gretna. Well as a matter of fact, his venture in St. Paul with his brother in law, Mr. Hansen lasted a very short time when their business failed. Mr. Schultz immediately approached Father about joining up with him again. Father was delighted. He liked Mr. Schultz and he needed help. But there was one reservation about this. Mr. Schultz wanted to bring his brother in law, Henry Hansen along with him. Father did not want to do that, he did not know Mr. Hansen, and he was rather suspicious about that St. Paul venture. However, at last he gave in and he took Henry Hansen too.

With the Great Northern really being built and a townsite pretty sure to be located near the Mennonite village of Neuanlage (New Settlement) near the U.S.A. border, he built a little store there and put these men in to manage it. As soon as a branch line was built from the Great Northern to serve the country west of the West Reserve through and beyond the Pembina Hills, and the town of Morden was surveyed, they built a really lovely up-to-date store in Morden and put Mr. Hansen in there to manage it. Father and Mr. Schultz the two old friends, stayed in Gretna. They soon discarded the little store opposite the station and built a nice new one farther into the town.

Things were expanding, growing and booming along that western line in that lovely country more rolling and more picturesque than our old lake bottom. Soon the English speaking settlers poured in and a whole lot of new towns sprang up — Pilot Mound, Crystal City, Delorraine, Boissevaine, and others. A lot of these people only came from Ontario where their forefathers had farmed before them. So they did not have to go through any acclimatisation. The language, the ways of the country, they all knew already. Lovely prosperous communities grew up there. Soon Father gave up the Niverville store and built one in Pilot Mound and put John Hiebert in there to manage that.

Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert memoirs

Ottawa asking that he would draw the attention of the Post Master General to the necessity of establishing a Post Office at this point to be supplied by a daily mail via Winnipeg by Minn. Already a large signed petition has been forwarded and I am forwarding recommendations by the Post Office Inspector of this province. All points along this branch of Railway excepting Gretna are being supplied. For customs purposes it is absolutely necessary that this office be opened at the earliest day possible. Hoping you will do your utmost.

Your obedient servant, W. P. Leslie Customs Collector

F. L. Brady Esq. Collector of Customs Emerson¹⁷

W. P. Leslie played an important role in the

early development of Gretna and of the West Reserve. Although a municipal authority existed on the West Reserve in that the R.M. of Rhineland was incorporated on February 14, 1880. 18 "Law and order" as defined today was exercised on a very limited scale. "Kaiser Mueller" strove to keep things running smoothly in the Mennonite villages, but certain situations made it impossible for him to find a solution. In dealings with the world outside the Mennonite communities, in the area around Gretna, W. P. Leslie had served as a magistrate as early as 1881 as the following story indicates:

Reports say that complaints laid by Mennonites today before Magistrate Leslie, that their seized cattle after being kept a long time on expenses, at Nelsonville, were sold in a hole and corner sort of way, one horse bringing something like \$20, and a cow \$17, when they immediately



Anglo-American Hotel circa 1890. P#443

changed hands at double the price, Bailiff Lane of Morris being in attendance. We understand the thing will be represented by Magistrate Leslie to the Hon. Attorney–General.¹⁹

Post Office Opens

Recommendation for the "establishment of a Post Office at Gretna in the County of Provencher" was made by the Postmaster General in Ottawa on November 1, 1883 following the August 22nd suggestion of "termination of the Emerson and Reinland route and establishment of service between Gretna and Reinland Pembina Junction and Gretna **CPR**."²⁰ The Post Office in Gretna would open its doors in January of 1884 with J. H. Hoffman as postmaster. To keep law and order in this brand new border town, three Justices of the Peace were appointed on September 11 of 1883. All giving addresses as Gretna, William P. Leslie, Otto Schultz and Joseph F. Tennant received their commissions on the same date. In the absence of any other government officials, as Justices of the Peace they were empowered to issue marriage licences, take affidavits, register conveyances and act as Notaries Public. 21

Wild Strawberries

Creating a new community in the Canadian West was hard work and required conviction and determination on the part of those seeking to create a new home where tall grass, roaming buffalo and Indian hunters had dominated. Not everyone who came to Gretna in the summer of 1883 remembered it as all work and no play. In her memoirs, Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert (Helen, daughter of Erdmann Penner), describes her move to Gretna:

About the breaking up of the house in Tannenau and the actual move I remember very little. I imagine I was most likely sent to my married sister in Niverville while they were busy at home. They had to come to Niverville anyway to catch the train to Winnipeg and then transfer to the

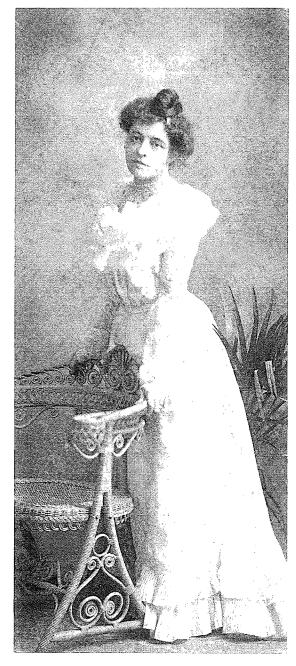
Great Northern (In fact, this the C.P.R. Southwestern Branch) to go south to Gretna. It was my very first train journey and I and my brother Erdman stood at the end door of our coach, I believe, all the way from Winnipeg to Gretna. For some reason or another they had hitched the engine on to our coach backwards, and the engine backed up all the way. That meant the front of the engine faced us and we could look right in. It was all terribly exciting. Well, we got there all right on a Saturday afternoon.

It was a bright sunny day and it must have been about midsummer because it was strawberry time. The train always arrived at Gretna from Winnipeg about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, so I guess to try and get something to eat and find a place to sleep would pretty well fill that day. The next day, Sunday, Father took Mother for a drive in the buggy to show her a bit of the country. It was lovely. As far as Gretna goes, there was nothing there but a platform and a little creep-under for the telegraph operator and train dispatcher I suppose. Just opposite the station, facing it on the other side of the main street was Father's little store which had already been transferred from NeuAnlage a mile away. Then there was a small one storey house where Mr. Schultz lived, one house and barn, and two shanties with sloping roofs. One was unpainted boards, the other covered with black tar paper.

I suppose there were stakes where the streets were supposed to be but to all appearances it was virgin prairie. And the wild flowers were wonderful. Of course there were no roads leading in or out of town. When father and mother returned from their inspection trip the buggy was just squishy with wild strawberry juice, they had crushed so many on their drive. Mother gave us pails and told us children to go and pick strawberries for supper and we did. Never have I experienced anything like it before or since. Of course, once the country became settled and cultivated, that virgin glory, alas, disappeared.²²

Under Construction

Gretna's first summer must have been an exciting time for young and old alike: constant construction as carpenters tried to keep up with an ever–growing demand; trains arriving daily from Winnipeg and St. Paul bringing company



Helena Penner, later Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert, daughter of Erdmann Penner, in party dress in 1902. P#1078

Business Activity in the Border Town Monopolies at War Grain Plentiful and Country Sound.

This little place is a scene of activity, business and bustle from daylight to dark. When I was here at this time last year there was not a house in the place. Now it has fine stores, crowded at all hours and selling for cash. Some twenty houses have been built within three months and the carpenters are hard at work on a good many more. The one hotel gives very good food for about half Winnipeg prices, but not much sleeping accommodation. The streets are blocked at all working hours by long lines of wagons so closely drawn together that passage between them is difficult. I am told that four thousand bushels of No. 1 hard wheat have been bought on the average day for two months past by Mr. Pieper, the very efficient business man acting here for Messrs. Ogilvie and Co. He is of the opinion that not more than fifteen per cent of the grain in the large district tributary to this point was injured by the frost. Much of this damaged grain will, no doubt, be bought at a good price later in the season. At present the railway company supplies cars so slowly that the elevator can barely handle offered wheat of the best quality. Not knowing this, some farmers occasionally bring in the slightly damaged grain, and feel it to be rather hard that they should find no market after a journey of fifteen or twenty miles. To meet such cases the Messrs. Ogilvie issued on Saturday last instructions to their agent to buy all grain, the refusal of which would put individuals to hardships. This is felt to be very satisfactory, and, so far as I can see, the Ogilvie Company is extremely popular.

Perhaps something of the popularity is owing to their order to Mr. Pieper to buy flax seed in competition with the agent of Mr. Livingston, who recently appeared as a public benefactor by buying wheat against the Ogilvie's here, without raising prices however. A side track was run by the St. P., M. & M. to the boundary line for Mr. Livingston's accommodation, and is known here as Livingston's Railroad. The American Customs allowed the Canadian farmers to cross, and bonded the grain on the cars. While thus breaking the "Ogilvie monopoly" a "Livingston monopoly" was, I am told, prepared for the guileless Mennonites. At a meeting of flax buyers in Montreal, it was agreed that no one should supply the demands of the "flax ring" on certain terms. For this trade the "Livingston Railway" was extremely useful, but the "Livingston Monopoly" no longer exists. Ogilvie's man buys flax, "tit" has been given for "tat" and the farmer is the gainer. Long and bitterly may the two firms compete.

continued

representatives, travellers, and supplies for the merchants; and new faces arriving in town almost daily to work, to live, to play. Children would find the prospect of their first fall and winter in Gretna a little less exciting. Since no school existed, those parents who could afford it sent their children to a teacher in one of the nearby villages, bringing them home for the weekend. Erdmann Penner's children were sent to Edenburg, others to villages north or west of town. Although most villages had built schools by this time, the education available tended to follow the traditional memorization methods brought from Russia. This was not considered satisfactory by the townspeople in Gretna and they began agitating for a facility of their own long before the harvest season had started. A petition was circulated in the fall and winter of 1883 and 1884, for Gretna to establish itself as its own school district. When a change in municipal structure was assented to in the Provincial Legislature, Gretna found itself the seat of a new municipality. This Municipality of Douglas (named after C. S. Douglas the Member of the Legislature from Emerson) consisted of townships 1, 2 and 3 in ranges 1 and 2 west and came into effect on December 22, 1883.

By this time Gretna's Ogilvie elevator (capacity 30,000 bushels) and warehouse (capacity 1,500 bushels) and the J. & J. Livingstone warehouse (capacity 2,000 bushels) had been doing business for several months. The harvest scene along the Post Road to Gretna from West Lynne received this description:

Along the Post Road to Gretna

A cordial invitation having been extended to a **Times** reporter by Mr. Thomas Shortreed to accompany him on a trip to Neche on Wednesday last it was accepted, and behind one of Mr. Shortreed's fast nags we were soon bowling along at a lively gait along the Famous Post Road to Gretna. We found the road in good order, and Contractor Schultz's men busy at work with a grading machine, grading the road within the city limits.

On the south of the road is the farm of E. Winkler and we noticed a large brick house under construction, it will be a handsome residence when completed. On the opposite side of the road

is the Scott farm, and men were busy at work harvesting. From the appearance of the shocks in the field the yield will be a heavy one.

Driving on we passed the large Pruyn farm which with some other farms adjoining are leased to Mr. Davy, one of the most practical farmers in Manitoba. We have not learned how much land he has under crop, but it was a pretty sight to see the belt binders at work in the field, five of them in a row following one another, and gangs of men busy picking up the sheaves placing them in shocks. On this farm, farming is no doubt reduced to a science, everything about the place was clean and neat, and teams were heavy at work fall plowing. As far as the eye could reach was to be seen nothing but the golden grain and the harvestors busy at work amongst it. From this farm alone some thousands of bushels of grain will be marketed in Emerson.

On the Johnston farm to the south we found the harvesting far advanced and two machines at work. They will be done cutting this week. Passing through the Mennonite villages we found nearly all of the inhabitants busy in the ripe fields of grain. Men, women and children had deserted their homes to follow around, picking up the bundles as they dropped from the tables of the self binders, which appears to be the machine in universal use, only on one field did we notice the now old fashioned (sawyer)?. Some miles distant from Gretna we noticed the large elevator of Ogilvie and Co. which building is now about completed.

Emerson — September 7, 1883 Southern Manitoba Times

Gretna

Gretna lies a short distance from the Pembina River, immediately north of the International Boundary Line. The situation is high and dry, and is as nice a looking place for a town location as ever could be desired.

The banks of the Pembina are heavily timbered with oak, basswood, and elm, and Gretna is built on the prairie just skirting the edge of the woods. From W. P. Leslie, Deputy Collector of H. M. Customs at Gretna we learned that the capacity of the Ogilvie elevator is 40,000 bushels, and it is to be fitted up inside with all the latest improvements for elevating grain. A Collingwood firm had also recently examined into the prospects of Gretna's grain market and were considering the

advisability of at once building another elevator. Messrs. McMillan and Mannon were about to put up grain warehouses and would each have a buyer off the market. A former townsman, Mr. Pieper is in charge of the elevator. Besides these the firm of Livingstone & Co. flax dealers, have also a warehouse, E. Winkler, a lumberyard, Penner & Co. a large general store, several private residences, machine agencies etc. One hotel kept by a Mr. Goldie, leaving more than ample room for another on a larger scale. A large number of Mennonite villages lay within a radius of 10 miles of Gretna and will be tributary to it. Its prospects are good to make a place, and the best station of the S.W. branch of the C.P.R. is built here. Across the Pembina River is the American town of

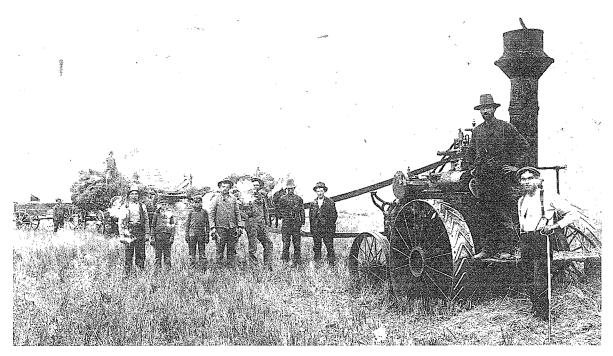
Neche

Which is also a thriving place, containing a large number of stores, and as is common in all American frontier towns a more than usual percentage of saloons. Neche is laid out in the woods,

and is distant from Gretna about 1½ miles. A proper road is to be made through the woods between the two places. At present the road connecting them is almost impassable owing to stumps, fallen trees and mud. Neche can boast of two first class elevators, Pillsbury and Co's with a capacity of storing 40,000 bushels, and the other which is not yet completed with a capacity of 30,000.

We were shown around the town by my old friend Mr. T. O'Brien, one of the new town fathers. Neche has lately risen to the dignity of an incorporated town. We recognize a number of old familiar faces of former townsmen now doing business in Neche.

A Mr. A. Suffel of the firm of LaMone & Suffel is here keeping a large general store with a heavy stock of goods. Mr. A. Nesbit is postmaster. Mr. Geo. McDougal has a large boarding house. Messrs. C. Prudhomme and J. Laporte are keeping store, besides a number of old Pembinites, who have thrown in their lot with Neche.



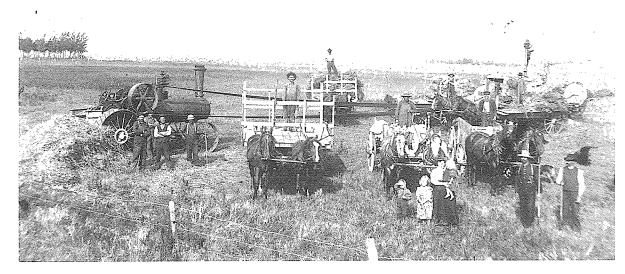
Threshing scene on Derk Harder farm, east of NeuAnlage, in 1896. Owner of threshing outfit was Abram Penner, Gretna. P#1061

Business Activity . . . cont'd

At present the result of the Livingston and St. P., M. & M. attempt to trench on Ogilvie and C.P.R. ground is decidedly injurious to general traffic. It appears that the railroad managers, having got excited over the affair, are now, "bucking" vigorously against each other and everybody. "No transfer" is the order of the day at Neche and Gretna. Goods are lying at each place for the other and the public suffers and grumbles. The C.P.R. Co. refuses to send grain south even when billed to southern roads, and train loads of grain are sent north to Winnipeg. Where it goes to then no one knows that I know of, but the opinion here is that the C.P.R. men are putting shippers to any amount of trouble, partly that the St. P., M. & M. may be annoyed and partly that the Port Arthur line may be "boomed". The utter idiocy of trade restrictions is well appreciated in towns on the boundary. To describe how the tariff smells in the nostrils of the farmers and traders, who most do congregate at Gretna, would require more space than I can claim.

If the word "boom" had fewer depressing associations I should say that Gretna is "booming". There is no wild gambling in town lots but they are selling at good prices rapidly, because many are required by men who will build as soon as possible. In fact enough business is being done here and enough demands are unsatisfied to give support to six or eight hundred people of various occupations. The liveliness will last till spring, the grain buyers say, as three hundred thousand bushels of wheat are still to come into Gretna. The Mennonites who come here in about three hundred wagons daily, seemed well-to-do, satisfied with their crops and prospects. I am assured on the best authority that thirty bushels of Red Fyfe to the acre was the average yield of the season in this district, where the farmers know enough to sow early. Forty-one bushels was certainly taken off his land by a friend whom I have visited since coming here. Who can doubt that the country is ''sound''. I am always strengthened in this opinion when I get outside of the towns that have been ''boomed'' to death, and see the farmers and hear what they have to say. Their story is that its such a fine country that it can hardly be ruined even by the worst Government with which any people were ever cursed.

> Gretna November 29, 1883 Winnipeg Free Press Correspondent



Threshing scene on P. W. Rempel farm, two miles east of Gretna along Post Road (3-1-1W). Circa 1900. P#871



Wooden bridge across the Pembina River, connecting the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad and the Canadian Pacific Railway, which linked Winnipeg and Minneapolis via Gretna. P#1119D



Enoch Winkler lumberyard and office at southwest corner of Seventh St. and Hespeler Ave. X shows Valentine Winkler. Enoch to his left. P#532

Mr. K. Shay one of the town Proprietors (in partnership with the railroad company) was the first settler who took up land on the Marais. He is doing well, and, besides his town property, he is the owner of several large farms in the neighborhood.

Returning to Gretna we met the train from Winnipeg. Messrs. Tetu, Dominion Government Immigration Agent, and Mr. R. Howard were on board on their way to Manitoba City. With Mr. Tetu was the newly appointed Immigration agent for Gretna, Mr. Turgeon also of this city, and brother-in-law of Mr. Tetu. After partaking of the warm hospitality of Mr. W. P. Leslie, we bid Gretna and its enterprising citizens adieu, and turned our faces towards home, reaching the city (after a most pleasant and highly informative visit to our little rival Gretna) before dark. ²³

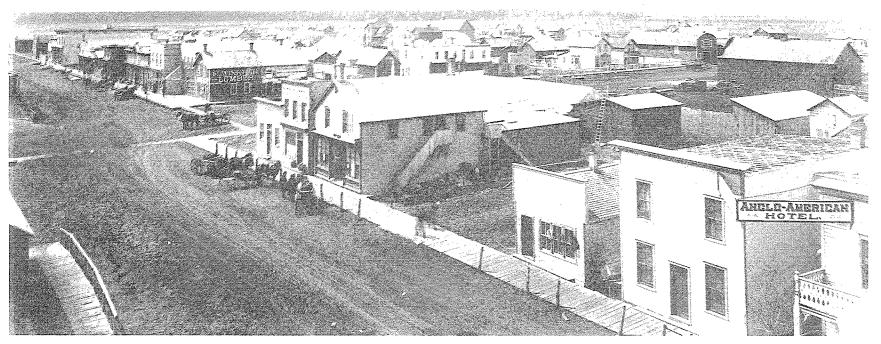
Farmers Unite

The farmers in the area were far from happy with the service they were getting at the Gretna

Ogilvie elevator. The monopoly situation which was enjoyed by Ogilvie, despite the Livingstone warehouse, created prices which were high at the peak of the harvest season but dropped steadily as winter approached. Prices in mid–October had declined from the month previous, when No. 1 hard wheat sold at 77¢ a bushel; and flax was "nominal" at 80¢. ²⁴ These prices had dropped to as low as 40 to 45¢ a bushel at the Ogilvie elevator by December, resulting in the first united action by farmers in the area:

Gretna, December 6, 1883

A large meeting was held in the Mennonite reserve, near Gretna, at which Head Kaiser Miller presided. A resolution was adopted denouncing the Ogilvie Monopoly. The offer of a Chicago buyer to buy 3,000 bushels of No. 1 Northern frozen wheat was accepted. Ogilvie had offered from 40–45¢. ²⁵



View of Gretna in 1889, south along Seventh Street towards U.S. border. Note first Queen's Hotel, Presbyterian Church, Winkler lumberyard and stables. P#217

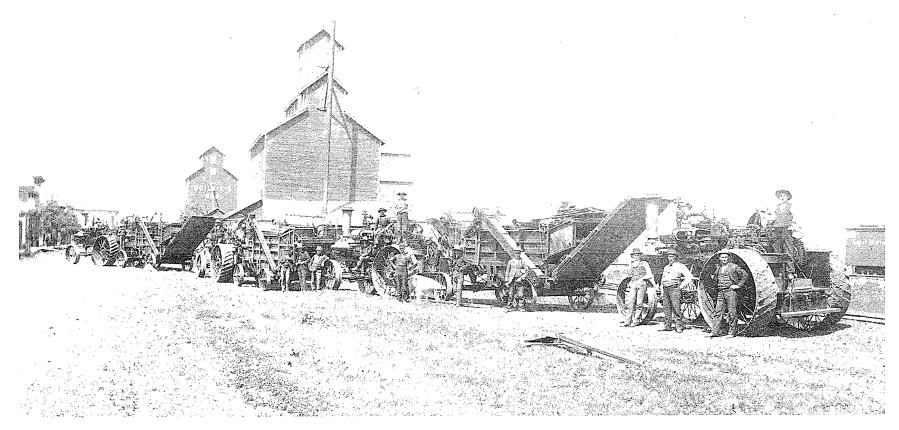
This was not the only meeting of its kind in the fall and winter of 1883. Other meetings were held in the district and similar concerns were coming forward at gatherings in communities trying to serve the rapidly expanding agricultural needs in Southern Manitoba:

Carman, November 27, 1883

The farmers held a large and enthusiastic meeting in the schoolhouse last Thursday evening when Doctor McConnell and Major Allen of Nelson delivered spirited and stirring addresses on the necessity of combined action in order to keep away the monopoly of middle men; and deal directly with the millers in the older provinces. R. McKnight presided with marked ability. Other speakers included R. P. Roblin, Warden of the

Municipality, W. Badger, George Sexsmith, A. Hudson, W. H. Glendinning.²⁶

W. W. Ogilvie's ears must have been burning. Or maybe it was such a lovely autumn that he decided a bit of a holiday might be in order. The late fall was permitting ploughing to be done in November. There had been an early frost and some of the grain had been damaged. Perhaps Ogilvie had a hard time believing his Gretna agent's reports that he had been buying 4,000 bushels of No. 1 wheat each day since late September. Whatever his reasons, W. W. Ogilvie included Gretna on his tour of Western Canada in the first week of November. One of the sights that will have greeted him at Gretna,



Seventh St. lined with Wahn's shipment of threshing machines around 1890. Charles Wahn, centre. P#663

aside from all the "buildings going up in all directions", was the "large gang of men digging a ditch and laying pipes a distance of five thousand, seven hundred feet to get a water supply from Pembina River for the use of the (C.P.R.) engine."28 It would be another 75 years or so before Gretna would import water from North Dakota for human consumption and proudly boast to be a "town with water". No records of import duties exist and little is known as to the practicality of this water line installed in 1883. Water for home use was not an issue in the Village of Gretna. One did not have to dig too deep to find a more than adequate supply of water for domestic use. Although hard and full of minerals, Gretna's well water was quite tasty, once you got used to it.

Drought Fires Discontent

The year 1883 had proven a busy and a tumultuous year for Gretna. The Mennonite farmers had been quick to come to the new centre of commerce to do business with the merchants they remembered from Emerson and they had looked forward to selling their grain closer to home. It was reassuring that the difficult Post Road to Emerson could be ignored in bad weather, and that the iron road would give access to markets north and south regardless of climate. The disappointment with the Ogilvie and the CPR monopolies took just one short season to grow into a concern to which the farmers seemed intent on finding a solution. The discontent expressed at meetings near Gretna was widespread, was nurtured by a series of drought years which, although they had been less severe in the West Reserve, had brought hardship to many western farmers. While Mennonite settlers were not known for participation in political activity, they no doubt were influenced somewhat by the emergence in 1882 and 1883 of a farm movement called the Manitoba and North West Farmers' Union. They sought to protect their interests against "big financial interests . . . railway monopoly ... and recommended the immediate construction of a Hudson Bay Railway' as a remedy to this situation. The original aims of this organization, including a 'Declaration of Rights' adopted at its first convention in Brandon on November 26, 1883, sound too familiar to be reassuring more than one hundred years later. Its pamphlet was widely distributed and stated the following:

We have hopefully faced the hardships of isolation and of a vigorous climate and have been and are still willing to contend manfully with the natural disadvantages of our new location. Now, however, that we have, for the first time, a surplus of grain, we have discovered that the prices we obtain are not sufficient to cover the cost of production and that we are face to face with the fact that not withstanding all our labour and outlay, we can barely subsist.

No doubt a combination of unfavourable circumstances, such as early and severe frosts, together with imperfect arrangements for saving and marketing grain, have this season aggravated the farmer's condition and contributed to his discontent. Yet the fact remains that those of us whose crops were untouched by frost and who were at the same time most conveniently situated as to markets, realized little or no profit on our produce.²⁹

These words surely struck a sympathetic chord in the minds and hearts of the farmers near Gretna who could not understand how the price they were paid for their wheat by Ogilvie's could drop from 80¢ to only half as much in the space of two months. Government pronouncements would soon link pronouncements by members of this farmer's organization with the agitation in Assiniboia, the Territory to the west of Manitoba, and attempt to place the blame for the 1885 Riel Rebellion square on the shoulders of the Farmers' Union.

In spite of all this, business continued to be brisk in Gretna. Farmers did hold their grain back in efforts to get the price at the Ogilvie elevator back to where it had been earlier in the year. None of the farmers saw Chris Pieper as the culprit in this situation, confident in his



Children of J. R. and Betsy Hoffman. Back: Mary, John. Front: Ruby, Josephine. Circa 1881. P#933E

fairness and honesty in carrying out his obligations as buyer for the company. More and more Mennonites were coming to Gretna to buy the supplies they would need to see them through the winter.

First Christmas

One person who did not concern herself with the worries of the world, who was still caught up in the newness of the place and who was awaiting the coming of Christmas with excitement was Erdmann Penner's daughter, Helen. The Penners had always tried to impart the importance and magic of Christmas to friends and family, and, from Helen's account, the first Christmas in Gretna was a special one:

In the early days in a small town the general store was more than just a place to buy and sell, for the townspeople, especially the men, it was sort of a gathering place in the evening where they would sit around the stove with their feet up on the nickle-plated railing of the heater. They would swap stories and tell of the doings of the day. Father, our own boys, the clerks, the neighbours, commercial travellers, the odd customer and all - they were all boys together having a social time. But on Christmas Eve they tried very hard to close at 8 o'clock and certainly not later than 9. Then they all trekked home. Those that had homes of their own went there, others might have special friends to go to, but everyone else came to my parents' home.

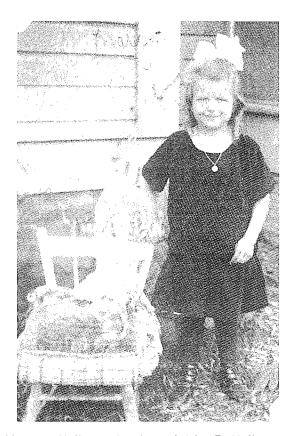
Christmas was always a grand occasion. But I especially remember the first Christmas we spent in Gretna in our new house. The picture is as clear as crystal in my mind now, the Christmas of 1882.

We always had had a Christmas tree even when we lived in the wildwoods, where we were surrounded by pine forests. All it meant was for someone to go and chop down a little tree, put on a few apples and candy, a bit of home made trimming and we were delighted and happy. But now, in our lovely new home it was something very special. In the front parlor in the corner facing the hall door, between the window facing east and the one facing south stood a tall mirror reaching from floor to ceiling, with a small marble bracket at the base on which generally a vase filled with flowers was kept. But this day they put a large Christmas tree reaching from floor to ceiling right in front of it. The custom was that when Father and all the boys from the store came home we would all gather in the living room, family, visitors, store personnel, maids, stableman and all. Then at a given sign the parlor door would be thrown open and we would all troop in to see and enjoy all this glory. We would enjoy that lovely hospitable warmth of the house, the delicious smell of burning wax candles, and the perfume of the pine tree. After that they would serve coffee, cake, nuts and candy until about midnight and all would go home and to bed happy.

But this particular Christmas I fell by the wayside. I, till then, had never had a real nice doll. I had two, one a rag doll that Mother had made out of old stockings - this was lovely and soft and cuddly and I loved it — the other was a bought one with a china head, jet black china hair, china hands and feet, and a cloth body. She was always cold and not a bit cuddly, so the rag doll, soft and warm, was loved and the rather more pretentious one was just tolerated. But on the (1882?) Christmas when the doors had just been thrown open there stood this glorious tall Xmas tree reflected in all its glory in the mirror of this new room. A large angel was at the very tip and dozens of candles and glittering ornaments on its branches - the smell, the cheer, the warmth of it all was too wonderful but - but - we had barely begun to sing our carol when I spied the loveliest large doll with a mass of real golden hair sitting in a corner of the sofa. I forgot all about the Xmas tree, the singing, and everything, I rushed forward, knelt down before the sofa and clasped the doll in my arms, and nothing or nobody could pry me away from that beautiful doll all evening . . . I kept her in good condition till after I was married and my own children even enjoyed her and finally finished her. She was the most wonderful Xmas gift that came to the right little girl at just the right time.

Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert, the Helen Penner describing her first Christmas in Gretna, had just turned 87 when she wrote this story. She concludes this chapter in her memoirs with the following thought:

Pioneer life was by no means always dull and drab - there was lots of excitement, life and laughter. I think that the very feeling of being at the very beginning of the building of a new virgin country carried with it a stimulus and made people put up with deprivations and lack of comforts more cheerfully and philosophically. ³⁰



Margaret Hoffman, daughter of John R. Hoffman. Circa 1910. P#993A



Margaret, age 1½ years and Marie, age 3½ years, daughters of Jacob J. Friesen. Circa 1895. P#1302



Helena Friesen, later Mrs. Simon Sobering (1892–1980). Taken around 1902. P#793



Seventh St. north, elevators on east side. West side, note Nickel's tinsmith shop, German House, Penner store, Union Bank, and Queen's Hotel. P#309

Chapter Three First Steps

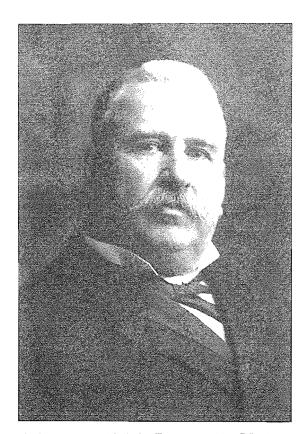
Growing up is not easy. The more sociologists, psychologists and other expert professionals categorize, hypothesize, theorize or try to generalize, the more they confound the individuals left with the responsibility of growing up. The baby arrives, it has physical needs, it has emotional needs, and it requires constant attention. Parents accept the first burp, the first smile, the first gurgle as ample reward for the long hours and the constant worry. When the infant takes its first tentative steps, parents admit that maybe, just maybe, this small miracle has begun to grow into a unique entity. This infant is on its way to becoming a human being.

First steps are remembered by parents. A child's first steps open up new worlds for the parents as much as for the child. The first fall quickly brings home the fact that growing up will carry with it many ups and downs and that, maybe, crawling is still a better way to go at times. The professional would be quick to point out that going back can also be considered part of going forward, and that one stage of growth does not automatically end with the beginning of a new phase.

First steps in the growth of a pioneer community are not unlike those of a child; faltering, but eager to set a course for itself; excited, but quite aware of the pain of occasional setback; determined, despite all odds, to control its destiny. Gretna's first steps were fairly confident. Born out of the needs of the Mennonite farmers on the West Reserve to have easier access to markets for their wheat and flax, and out of "The Syndicate's" desire to monopolize access



Seventh St. south in 1890. Flag shows customs and immigration offices. First roundhouse on left between street and elevator. P#1127



C. S. Douglas, M.L.A. for Emerson, 1883. P#1088

and transportation, Gretna's parentage may have been called into question by some critics. But, in the 1880's, it was difficult to come by a better pedigree. The building boom which got its start in Gretna in 1883 seemed unaffectd by the less than hoped for yields in the 1882 crop year. The Canadian Pacific Railway and its agents and promoters provided the steadying hand that would see Gretna grow into an important centre in the development of the Canadian West.

The CPR water tank and section house had been completed by the end of 1883, and the CPR telegraph poles had been planted and telegraph wires from Winnipeg to Gretna strung. Gretna's first station agent, Mr. Meirs, stayed just long enough to get business under way before he accepted a transfer to Stonewall. He was replaced by Jim Turner who arrived in Gretna just in time to participate in the first municipal election in the history of the Village.

New Municipality

The Provincial Government in Manitoba was attempting to persuade the Mennonite settlers to accept the Dominion's system of government. The "Oberschultze", Isaak Mueller, in the West Reserve (known to the outsider as "Kaiser Mueller") exercised an authority among the Mennonite settlers which the Manitoba Government wished to change. William Hespeler sought compliance among the West Reserve leaders with the new Provincial Municipal Act which had come into effect in 1881. The West Reserve was designated as the Municipality of Rhineland by this Act, but the Kaiser continued his control despite the election of municipal officers. The Bergthalers, under church Elder Johann Funk, sought to get out from under the theocracy of the Old Colony leadership of Isaak Mueller, but were unable to do so under the originally structured Rhineland Municipality. From the point of view of the Provincial Government some method of collecting taxes for local improvement was necessary, and they had encountered a certain

recalcitrance among the Mennonites led by Kaiser Mueller. Hespeler's interests lay in the eastern part of the Rhineland Municipality and in the coming of the railroad to Gretna where he owned land. He recommended splitting up the West Reserve municipality. As a result, the eastern part of the Mennonite settlement, including Gretna, was separated from the Rhineland Municipality and became the Douglas Municipality. The name came from C. S. Douglas, representative in the Provincial Legislature from Emerson, editor and publisher of the Emerson International.

Situated in the County of Manchester, the Municipality of Douglas "shall comprise townships 1, 2, and 3, ranges one and two west."2 The proclamation of this Act, creating the new Municipality, was made on November 16th, and came into effect on December 22, 1883. The most likely centre from which to supervise the business of this new municipality was Gretna. An election call was issued and on January 3rd nominations for reeve and councillors were held at Gretna. Enoch Winkler and Otto Schultz contested the reeve's position with Schultz elected by a margin of 25 votes. Johann Schwartz was elected deputy reeve with a majority of 29 votes. Other members of this first Municipal Council of Douglas were Johan Buhler, Peter Funk, Gerhard Klassen, Peter Friesen, and Johann Braun.³ The founding meeting of this new Douglas Municipal Council was called for January 8, 1884 in the home of Erdmann Penner in Gretna. Standing committees for finances and assessment; schools and printing; and roads and bridges were immediately struck. The Reeve and Deputy were requested to seek out the services of a clerk and assessor.

The final item of business that day was a motion which asked the Municipality of Rhineland for a ''reckoning up of accounts so that this part of the former Municipality of Rhineland may get its share from the funds now in the hands of that Municipality''. Financial disputes, assessment challenges and frequent

municipal boundary revisions became a regular feature of Douglas Municipality business. The "reckoning up of accounts" often seemed unfair to the Gretna businessmen and burgesses and it would not be many years before they began to consider an arrangement better suited to their needs.

Bilingual Council

On February 2, 1884 the Municipal Council met in the home of John Klaassen in Neu-Anlage. This became the Council's meeting place for the duration of the year. Council met the first Tuesday of each month at 10 a.m., would break for lunch, and resumed their deliberations at 1 p.m. One of the advantages of meeting in the Klaassen residence, it seems, was the luncheon menu. Franz Kliewer of Neu-Anlage, was appointed to the position of Secretary-Treasurer for Douglas Municipality for 1884 at its first meeting. He was to remain in this position until 1890. Peter Abrams, also of Neu-Anlage, was given the task of carrying out the first assessment for the Municipality of Douglas in 1884. Once the housekeeping items on the agenda were taken care of and, after a lunch, which stretched beyond the appointed 1 p.m. reconvening deadline, Council passed the following motions:

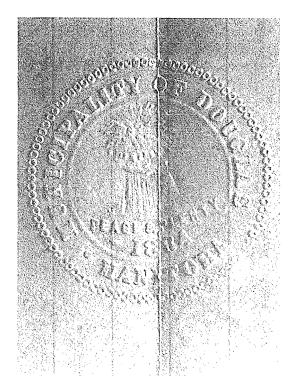
That this Council petition the Legislature of Manitoba to enact as follows: That it may be lawful for this Council to conduct its workings in German language and writings, except as to official documents required by the Provincial Government, etc., that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Hon. G. H. Tennant, M.P.P. for this district, with the request for his advice and action thereon.

That this Council; having been petitioned by the Mennonite population of Township 1, Range 1, East, to assist them to have the said Township dissolved from the Municipality of Montcalm and made over to this Municipality of Douglas; now appoint a special committee to consist of the Reeve, the mover and seconder (Schwartz and Klassen) of this Resolution, to confer with the Municipality of Montcalm, that a copy of this Resolution be forwarded to the Municipality of Montcalm and that a copy also be sent to G. H. Tennant M.P.P. for his advice on the matter.

That this Council petition the Legislature and Government of Manitoba to discontinue the holding of the County court in the City of Emerson and also remove the Registry office from that place, unless the Council of the City of Emerson be willing to rent the necessary accommodations to the County Council at a reasonable compensation, as we believe it to be adverse to the interest of this County seat, the unnecessary large and expensive County buildings, coupled with the City of Emerson's financial standing being in the opinion of this Municipality beyond the means of this Municipality to assume its share of the cost of Purchase and disbursements necessary to maintain so unnecessarily a costly Structure, and that a copy of this Resolution be sent to the Government.5

Not every meeting of Douglas Municipal Council dealt with issues as weighty as these. The success of the Council in getting support for such resolutions is evidenced by the fact that the Municipal Council conducted its business in both English and German until the dissolution of the Municipality in 1890, and by the fact that the disputed territory in Montcalm was absorbed into Douglas. Over the year some of the County Court functions were set up in Gretna. Michael Long was appointed to audit the Rhineland Municipality treasury and oversee the transfer of funds into the Douglas Municipal coffers. In March 1884 Erdmann Penner was appointed Roadmaster in Gretna. In April "J. R. Thompson and others of Gretna petitioned the Douglas council requesting the creation of a Gretna School district" and the establishment of a school no later than September of 1884. By-law #12, passed in Council on August 19, 1884 established "the Gretna School District comprised of Sections 5, 6 and 8 in Township 1, Range 1 West, and Section 1 in Township 1, Range 2 West. 6

A special meeting of the Protestant Section of the Board of Education was held here today at 4:30 p.m. The following by-laws were presented for the formation and re-adjustment of school



Municipality of Douglas seal. Gretna was part of Douglas Municipality from 1884–1888, then became part of the Municipality of Rhineland until Gretna's incorporation in 1896. P#9999

Postal Service to Neche

Post Office Inspector's Office Winnipeg, Man. 12th May 1881 No. 483

Sir,

I herewith return the letter 65079 from the General Post Office, Washington, of the 3rd instant, proposing a direct exchange of mails between Neche, Dakota, and Gretna, Manitoba, which you referred to me for report.

In No. 211 of the 7th January last, I informed you that a Post Office would be opened at Gretna on the 10th January, that Gretna was situated near the International Boundary line and adjoining the town of Neche in Dakota, that it was the southern terminus of the Southwestern branch of the Canadian Pacific Railway, and a connection point with the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway, and I recommended, inasmuch as correspondence for the United States mailed at Gretna would have to come from Gretna to Winnipeg and go down via St. Vincent (thereby suffering a material delay) until such time as a direct exchange of mails with Neche, or with the mail clerks on the Breckenridge and Neche Division, of the St. Paul, Minneapolis and Manitoba Railway, was authorized, that measures be at once taken to effect such exchange.

I would therefore recommend that the proposal of the United States Postal Authorities for a direct exchange of mail between Neche, Dakota, and Gretna, Manitoba, be at once acted upon and adopted.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your very obedient servant, (signed) W. W. McLeod P.O. Inspector

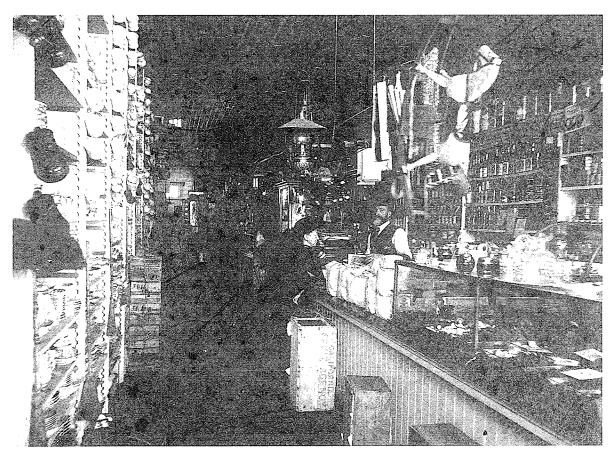
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districts and were duly confirmed: By-law #12 of the council of the municipality of Douglas dated the 19th day of August, 1884, and forming the following school districts: viz: Edenburg, Grunthal, Kronsthal, Rudnerweide, Bergthal, Altona, Neu-Bergthal and Rosenfeld.

Post Office Opens

Activity at the Municipal Council level was parallelled by the ongoing construction in Gretna. The Hoffman General Store had been expanded. The CPR was building a roundhouse large enough to accommodate two

engines, and its trains were beginning to run on time.⁷ And J. R. Hoffman officially opened Gretna's Post Office in his General Store on February 1, 1884. The Ogilvie elevator cleared more than 200,000 bushels of wheat by spring of 1884, and had started to ship grain east via Winnipeg and Fort William, rather than through the former southern route via Duluth. The possibility of another mill locating in Gretna was also an ongoing topic of conversation in 1884. Speculation grew out of the late fall visit of "a gentleman from Port Elgin, Ontario who was here (Gretna) looking over the ground, with the view of erecting a roller flour



Interior of J. R. Hoffman store, showing first Postmaster of Gretna and unidentified customer. Circa 1884. P#113

mill, to cost twenty-five thousand dollars."8 Others closer to home were also considering Gretna as a possible site for a flour mill.

Throughout the winter and well into the year, immigration and customs was kept busy with carloads of stock, immigrants and their effects heading west from the U.S. An April report in the **Manitoba Weekly Free Press** describes the immigrants as headed for Man-



Betsy Robinson Hoffman, wife of Jacob R. Hoffman, Postmaster. P#933F

itou and other points along the CPR southwestern line. William Peel Leslie (W.P.) had been joined in Gretna by Thomas Shannon, Andrew Nesbitt, and A. Turgeon to handle the customs and immigration work. 10 Gretna would continue to handle much of the immigrant traffic headed for the southern prairies until later in the 1880's when the CPR mainline across Canada was finished. Much of the settlement in the area around Morris and Lowe Farm came through Gretna. Customs records provide detailed descriptions of homesteaders' effects, length of anticipated stay and purpose for entering Canada. W. P. Leslie's reports from the Gretna station, as early as spring and summer of 1883, describe the problems in running an effective customs office without adequate resources. Leslie also insinuates that Gretna continues to be regarded as Smugglers' Point."

With Erdmann Penner as Gretna's Pathmaster, (also referred to as "Roadmaster") street conditions in the Village improved immediately. By the middle of April a contract for new sidewalks had been let and grading of Seventh Street, along the CPR track had begun. The sidewalks were wooden and the street remained "Gretna gumbo", but the grading resulted in water draining away from the community's buildings. Penner also convinced the CPR that they were responsible for some of the improvements; and a gang of men were put to work "making culverts so that the water can be drained from the highway south of the depot."12 Civic pride manifested itself in other ways in Gretna. General meetings agitating for the establishment of a public school in Gretna got under way long before the snow was gone in the spring. Farmers in the area, spurred on by the activity of the new Farmers' Union, congregated in Gretna to try and gain greater control of wheat and flax prices. Gretna's Ogilvie grain elevator was getting an addition, expanding its capacity to 60,000 bushels, but the farmers did not see this as the answer to their problems. Discussions were held with A. G. McBean, an independent grain merchant in

Local Mail Service

Post Office Inspector's Office Winnipeg, Man. 24th April 1885

No. 112

Sir,

The Gretna, County Provencher, Manitoba, Post Office was opened on the 10th January 1884 upon the understanding that the Postmaster would perform the mail service between the Post Office and the Railway Station 4 of a mile, without cost to the Department for six months.

The Postmaster having recently applied to be allowed for the service, and particular inquiry having been made into the matter, the best offer that could be obtained for the service in question was one from Mr. Jacob R. Hoffman, the Postmaster for a service between **Gretna** and **Railway Station**, 4 of a mile, 12 times per week at 15 cents per Trip which I would beg to recommend to you for acceptance from, say the First of October 1884.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your very obedient Servant (signed) W. W. McLeod P.O. Inspector

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Manitoba, and by midsummer a new elevator "scheme" for Gretna was hatched:

The New Elevator Scheme August 2, 1884 — Gretna

Āt a meeting here today of farmers and townspeople in regard to having better facilities for marketing grain in this section, moved by John Youseen, seconded by E. Winkler, and resolved, that the second elevator scheme explained by A. G. McBean meets with general approval, and everything will be done by citizens and farmers of this district to secure the erection of the elevator immediately. ¹³

Business Booms

Gretna townspeople were accustomed to the sight of long lines of farm equipment com-



Queen's Hotel, corner of Seventh St. and Hespeler Ave. in the 1890's. P#177

ing off the train to be assembled by Charles Wahn and W. H. Tyson. Some stiff competition in the farm machinery business arrived early in 1884 when Max Heyden came to town as representative for the Massey Co. Along with the hardware store opened by R. B. Fischer, the general store built by David Peters of Blumenort and P. Reid's harness business, most watched was the construction of the Queen's Hotel which observers described as a first-class, two-story high edifice. J. N. Braun, proprietor of Winnipeg's Sherman House, established the Queen's Hotel, bringing with it Gretna's first wholesale liquor business. McBean's elevator was also going up in a hurry, to be in business by the time harvest got under wav. 14

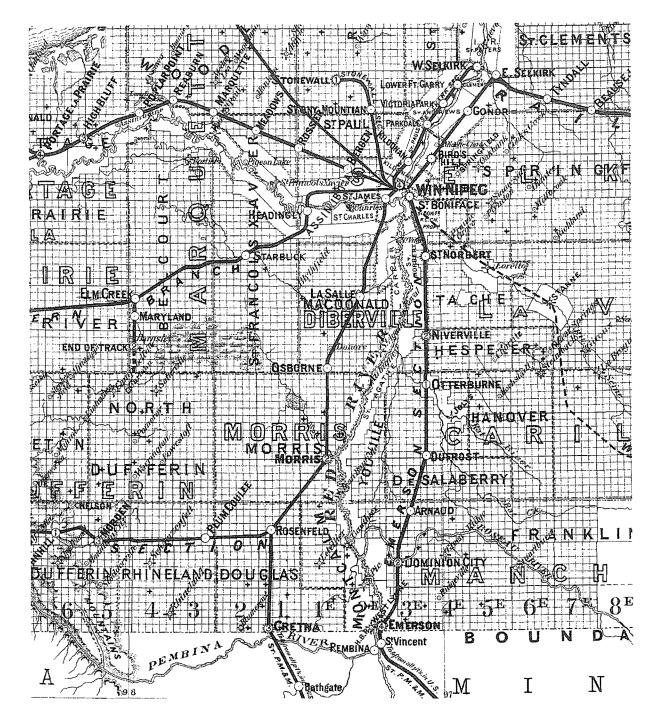
Improvements on the CPR track between Rosenfeld and Gretna were also under way in the spring of 1884. Although this work caused disruptions in the train schedules, 140 men worked at lifting track while three ballast trains were at work in order to make "the road first class when finished for fast running."15 The railroad brought with it some dangers not well known among the settlers it served in Southern Manitoba. The company removed the planks between the tracks where roads crossed the railway lines during the winter to make it easier for its maintenance crews to keep the crossings free from snow. In spring the crews were often slow in putting the planks back in place. The Manitoba Weekly Free Press reported one mishap June 5, 1884, like this:

A party was driving to church and in crossing the Railroad too fast the hind seat of the wagon was jerked out. Miss Penner, one of the occupants was seriously hurt. Dr. Donovan attending her, pronounces her injuries as dangerous. ¹⁶

New Rules New Celebrations

It would take a municipal petition to the Provincial Legislature to set regulations requiring the railway companies' maintenance of its

continued on page 52





PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY OF THE

Provincial Covernment.

D. Harrison

WINNIPEG, MARCH 1887.

Minister of Agriculture

Compiled by

J.H.Brownlee, G.E., D.L.S.

In the Offices of the

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS.

SCALE OF MILES

EXPLANATIONS.

Solid line indicates Rtys. constructe	et.
Broken line do. do. projected.	
Circle shows Rly. Station .	
The figure inside, shows the number	(a)Anticas
of Grain Elevators and Warehouses.	4)
Station or Town shown thus	
indicates a Grist Mill.	6
Schools, and Meeting Houses.	4
Post Offices	0
Schools and Post Offices.	-¢-
County Boundaries .	ACCUPATION.
Municipal Bounderies .	NOT WAS
Hudson Bay Co's Posts	Post.
A Section of 640 acres or	
One square Mile .	L_4
All Towns on the Lines of Railways	
have Schools.	

PAM

crossings. Until this time few rules of the road existed. As the rails were laid and as farmers claimed all of their homestead acreages for agricultural production, old cart trails and Indian trails were ploughed under. Road allowance provisions had to be introduced in the Provincial Legislature in order to get farmers' agreement to permit road construction on land which they considered theirs exclusively.

A wet winter and heavy spring rains were making crop prospects around Gretna in 1884 look excellent. Businessmen were benefitting from booming sales. They saw summer as a time in which to do more than work indoors. Some trees had been planted in individual yards the year before, but Gretna still looked as if it were caught in the middle of a barren wasteland. Seedlings were dug out along the

Anglo American Hotel, Gretna, Man.

Anglo-American Hotel, corner of Seventh St. and Klassen Ave. Rebuilt in 1906. P#184

Pembina River and brought to Gretna. The heavy spring rains made the venture much easier than expected. The seedlings, predominantly cottonwoods, took hold quickly. The Dominion Day celebration July 1, 1884 was the first such event to take place in Gretna. Guests came from as far away as Morden to participate in the West Reserve's first Dominion Day party.¹⁷

The wild strawberries in the vicinity continued to be plentiful in the summer of 1884. Children were sent out with pails and any uncultivated prairie provided a yield worthy of publication in the local newspapers. ¹⁸ Aspects of the western frontier town which are more often associated with the wild and woolly American West, south of the border, did not altogether escape Gretna in 1884 either. Alexander Goldie, owner of the Anglo-American Hotel, and Conrad Gankel got into an altercation that did not resolve itself peaceably:

September 4, 1884 — In an altercation today between A. Goldie, hotel keeper and Conrad Gankel nicknamed "Coon", a machine agent, the former produced a revolver and threatened to shoot Gankel who, in the meantime, had gotten some distance away. Later, under the influence of liquor, Goldie became frantic and chased Gankel through the streets. He was arrested by Officer Allen at the instigation of Otto Schultz, Justice of the Peace, and was locked up in a box car. The case will come up tomorrow before W. P. Leslie, Magistrate.

September 5, 1884 — A. Goldie, hotel-keeper, was tried today before W. P. Leslie magistrate for flourishing a revolver, threatening to shoot Conrad Gankel and resisting arrest yesterday. He was sentenced to two months in jail, one month at hard labor. He was taken to Winnipeg in charge of Officer Allan. ¹⁹

The liquor trade was to play a role in the history of Gretna right up to modern times. Its medicinal properties would be explored, its bootleg potential would be tested and its social implications, good and bad, would be discussed and sermonized. The Douglas Municipal Council had seen fit to pass, as one of its first

bylaws, Bylaw #3, "Regulating Taverns and the Sale of Intoxicating Liquor." Bylaw #3 laid out a basic system of licensing within the Municipality of Douglas, with a maximum fine of \$20 assessed against anyone who did not abide by the regulations.

First Assessment

Other bylaws set forth by the 1884 Douglas Council included regulations regarding peddlers and hawkers, duties and responsibilities of a poundkeeper, creation of a ward system within the Municipality for electoral and administrative purposes. And, while Peter Abrams, Jr. submitted the first assessment roll to the Douglas Council in June 1884 it took the Municipal Council until September to set taxes at five mills on the dollar. The following Gretna names appear on Abram's first assessment list:

	age	
Canadian Pacific Railroad	Ü	
William Hespeler		
Martin Klassen	32	
Peter Hiebert	30	
Marcus Long	29	agent
Ogilvie Milling Company		
Otto Schultz	31	merchant
Erdmann Penner	48	merchant
Enoch Winkler	32	lumber
B. Mazalnik	50	merchant
Charles Wahn	26	agent for David
		Maxwell
J. R. Hoffman		merchant
Erdmann Penner & Co		merchant
C. Pieper	29	0 /
George McDougal	65	hotelkeeper
Alex Gouldie	30	hotelkeeper
Cornelius Rempel	27	merchant
Walter H. Thiessen		agent for
		Watson Mfg.
W. P. Leslie	30	customs
		collector
Adolphe Coblentz	42	, A
R. B. Fischer	35	
		merchant
W. Crosbie		agent Cochrane
		Mfg. Co.
Mr. Ritz		agent for
		machinery

In addition to these persons and companies located within the surveyed Village of Gretna, the assessment lists many farmers with a Gretna Post Office address. This assessment describes the property, the cattle, the family and even the religion of Douglas Municipality residents. Along with the Mennonites could be found Roman Catholic, Protestant, "Israelit", Presbyterian, Lutheran and Reformed Jew.²¹

Gretna residents must have held mixed feelings about the year 1884. Municipal government showed its limitations when bylaws proved inadequate to deal with the Alexander Goldie case. The summer had been glorious and had seen many new businesses come to Gretna; and yet the McBean elevator was less of a blessing than the farmers had expected:

Southern Manitoba News — Gretna

There is a lull in the grain trade, the farmers holding for higher prices. The average now paid is 53 cents. Ogilvie & Co. shipped 400 cars mostly to Port Arthur. McBean's new elevator is working but there is no competition in prices.²²

Competition Keen

The Mennonite farmers may have discovered a lack of competition in the price they could get for their wheat and flax, but the opposite was certainly true when it came to dealing with the merchants in Gretna. Competition was keen and no self-respecting Mennonite would make a purchase without "comparison shopping" and often vociferous haggling about prices. The 1882–1884 Gretna listing in the Henderson's North-West Gazetteer and Directory provides a good overview of Gretna business by the end of that year: Gretna

A station of the Pembina Mountain section of the C.P.R., on the west bank of the Red River, at the Dakota boundary. Connections are made with the St. P.M. and M. Railway; the farmers in the vicinity are principally Mennonites. Mail daily. Population 150. Has telegraph and express offices. Distant from Winnipeg 70 miles. There are two elevators here, capacity 80,000 bushels. Stages leave Gretna for Blumenort and Rheinland, Tuesday and Saturday, 1.30 p.m.; leave Rheinland



Henry Ritz and son, Scott, in 1902. Mr. Ritz owned the Ritz Elevator built in 1916 and operated the Ritz & Widmeyer Bank with Eugene Widmeyer. P#369



Mr. and Mrs. Peter H. Loewen with eldest son, Henry. P#1432

Tuesday and Saturday 8.30 a.m. Gretna to Rosenfeld, Tuesday and Saturday, 2.10 p.m.; leave Tuesday and Saturday, 12.50 p.m.

Brown, James Campbell, A. D. Campbell, Alex Charters, John Coblentz, Adolphe Coblentz & Brown Crosbie, W. F. Cruickshanks, Alex Gouldie, Alex Davy, William Fisher, Robert Green, T. W. Hamilton, David Hayden, Max Hazelwood, R. Hewson, Joseph Hoffman, Jacob R.

Johnson, Robert

Klassen, Henry

Leslie, W. P.

Mazolick, B.

Mills, Robert

Oleson & Co.

Peters, David

Peiper, C.

Rau, Philip

Riley, Thomas

Robertson, Alex

Rebel, F.

Ross, E. K.

Schram, W.

Schultz, Otto

McDonald, John

McDougall, George McIntosh, Henry

Nesbitt, Andrew H.

Penner, Erdmann

Penner, E. & Co.

Quentenbaum, H.

Rempel, Cornelius

shoemaker machine agent butcher car inspector C.P.R. liquor dealer dry goods

machine agent contractor hotelkeeper blacksmith hardware dealer section foreman C.P.R. plasterer machine agent hardware dealer livery stables

postmaster and general

store Janson (Janzen?), Nels laborer contractor clerk

customs collector

Lowe, (Lowen?), Peter painter general store contractor baker hotelkeeper hotelkeeper customs broker painters

Secretary Treasurer

(Gretna S.D.) general store general store

agent Ogilvie Milling Co. bookkeeper E. Penner &

Co.

harnessmaker (Reid?) general store agent C.P.R. liquors carpenter

agent McBean Bros.

elevator machine agent

Reeve, municipality of

Douglas

customs officer Sharmon, Thomas

Smith, Alex livery stable Smith, James laborer Spencer, W. painter Taylor, Joseph contractor Treloar, Wm. blacksmith Turgeon, A. emigration agent Tyson, W. H. machine agent Uhrich, Philip machinery Wahn, Charles machine agent Wersner, T. clerk Williams, Levi Winkler, Enoch

laborer lumber dealer²³

Not all of these names were unique to Gretna. Max Heyden and Enoch Winkler continued to operate their businesses in Emerson and the Erdmann Penner business branched into communities such as Morden, Niverville, Reinland and Schantzenfeld. Coblentz & Brown, selling dry goods in Gretna, were business names familiar to Winnipeg at the corner of Logan and Main. Partners in the business were Adolphe's brother, Aachel, and Philip Brown, a tailor and clothing merchant.²⁴ Not everybody in Gretna receives mention by Henderson's, and no accurate picture of the travellers, peddlers and immigrants passing through the Village can be gleaned from the record.

First School

The record does tell us that progress was being made in the educational interests of Gretna by the fall of 1884. Martin Klaassen was paid \$105 for the public school property situated on Lots 33-40, Block 35 on Klassen Avenue, and Joseph Taylor was paid \$570 for the materials and labour required to build the 18' × 24' oneroom school. 25 Mr. Holmes began the school year as Gretna's first teacher but left before the start of the new year. 26 His replacement was William Symington from Neche.

With sidewalks in, a year of municipal government under their belts and a new school open, Gretna residents could truly boast of being more civilized than they had been only twelve months earlier. If there had been any

doubt in the minds of the burghers regarding their community's progress, this was quickly put to rest by the visit of Manitoba's Premier Norquay and Provincial House Speaker Murray who stopped in Gretna en route to Ottawa, December 15, 1884. The Hon. Dr. Nelson and the Hon. Mr. La Riviere came as far as Gretna with the Premier. ²⁷ It would seem that Western Canadians continued to prefer the southern route to the east, planning stops in such thriving metropolises as St. Paul, Chicago, Detroit and Gretna. This new community, this new Gretna, illustrated to elected officials and the immigrants newly arrived on the bald prairies what potential existed in the Canadian West.

The December 16th meeting of the Douglas Municipal Council issued a writ calling for the election of a new council to take place on January 6, 1885. When it was pointed out that this date happened to be a Mennonite religious holiday, the election was postponed to the 7th. The Council gathered, as had been customary throughout its first year of business, at the Johann Klaassen residence in NeuAnlage. Council had agreed to provide \$60 every quarter to a needy, elderly Mennonite couple living in the municipality. Payment was authorized to Elder Johann Funk, who was given the responsibility of administering this fund for the couple. Whether the councillors debated the pros and cons of "welfare" and its philosophic ramifications over lunch is not known. Nor is there any record of discussion concerning the impending elections. Michael Long was again to be the Returning Officer. Were they all planning on letting their names stand for re-election? Were any of the positions on Council to be contested?

On Tuesday, December 30th, nominations for reeve and councillors were held at the Johann Klaassen residence. Johann Buhler and Johann Braun did not receive nomination and would therefore not be returning to sit on council for a second term. Nominated and acclaimed under the new ward system were: Peter Friesen of Silberfeld in Ward 1, Johann Schwartz in Ward 2, Abraham Loeppky in Ward 3,



First Gretna Public School built in 1884 on Klassen Ave. Teachers were: Wm. Symington 1884, Henry Kraft 1885–86, and Ambrose W. Stock, 1886–89. This is probably Kraft. P#1087

Gerhardt Klassen in Ward 4, David Wiebe in Ward 5, and Peter Funk in Ward 6. No election for councillors was needed, but two candidates were nominated for reeve: Johann Schwartz and John Buhler nominated Otto Schultz; and Alexander Goldie and Robert B. Fischer nominated Enoch Winkler.²⁸

Elections for reeve were held on Wednesday, January 7, 1885 returning Enoch Winkler as the new reeve by a margin of 38 votes. ²⁹ Goldie's indiscretion and brush with the law earlier in 1884 obviously had not hampered Enoch Winkler's election chances. His electoral victory over Otto Schultz had been helped by the large increase in non-Mennonite voters in Gretna, while his support among Mennonites continued to be good. He was still remembered as the honest lumber merchant from Emerson



Gretna Public School students with teacher, A. W. Stock, in 1889, P#1460

and his brother Valentine had represented the family business well during its fledgling Gretna years.

Democratic process was new to Western Canada. It was as foreign to the non-Anglo Saxon settlers as the land they were claiming as their own. This newness of people and process created an excitement and vitality sadly lacking in today's political arena. Forces might differ on specific issues but a unity of purpose prevailed at a local level. Winkler's election produced no significant change in direction for the Municipality of Douglas or for Gretna. The business of bridge construction and development of proper drainage were items of business carried over into 1885. Meetings were continued at the Klaassen residence in NeuAnlage and minutes confirm that lunch remained an important part of each meeting's agenda. Klaassen's remuneration for providing the meeting space and the lunch was fixed at \$85 for 1885, and councillors again awarded themselves the \$2 per meeting honorarium established the year before. Franz Kliewer was given a vote of confidence at Council's first meeting, January 13, 1885, and was kept on as Secretary-Treasurer for a second year.30

Immigration Challenged

Reform movement groups were springing up in Manitoba. Louis Riel was back in the Northwest Territories, this time at the request of Métis along the North Saskatchewan River, and the Farmers' Union was advocating a halt to immigration westward as long as grain surpluses and low wheat prices made the western farmers' life tenuous. The Mennonite farmers tended to avoid any political agitation, and reform was a foreign concept to most of them. Nonetheless, the impact of events outside the West Reserve on the Mennonite farmers and the businesses serving them, was not small. Meetings were held in the area to try to find a solution to low wheat prices. The North West Mounted Police train followed the Post Road west to the Territories where Riel and his

followers were providing a show of armed strength. Winnipeg businessmen and promoters of other major Manitoba centres spoke out against the Farmers' Union organizers who wanted to halt the flow of immigrants. Eighteen eighty-five certainly was turning out to be full of activity.

In Gretna this included a continued growth in the businesses locating here. Familiar to residents, Herman Hellofs started a butcher shop while continuing to farm east of Gretna along the Post Road. R. A. Baby of the Emerson Baby Bank, out of Sarnia, Ontario, had taken possession of the west half of Section 8 just north of Gretna, and the John Hayward family had taken up a farm just three miles northeast of the Village. Municipal minutes show that Dr. Patrick Donovan, of Neche, North Dakota, was paid from municipal coffers for the treatment of Mrs. Flaming at Gruenthal, early in 1885. Payment was recommended by the newly created subcommittee of Council — the "Schools, Publications, and Protection of the Poor Committee".31 Dr. Donovan served people in need of medical attention on both sides of the International Border by this time, although subsidiary medical activities were carried out by others in the area. No knowledge of their qualifications exists in the Douglas Municipal record which states that Peter Pries of Silberfeld looked after smallpox vaccinations in 1885 and Cornelius Wiebe of Neuhoffnung took on the vaccination duties in December of 1885. Disease prevention and birthing help would not be considered the doctor's exclusive jurisdiction until closer to the turn of the century.

The first mortgage on Gretna property was issued to Cornelius Hiebert by David Schellenberg et al, and Enoch Winkler felt compelled to slap a Mechanics Lien on the McBean enterprise represented by that company's agent, Thomas Hooper in 1885.³² Hespeler Avenue and Seventh Street received upgrading from First to Twelfth Street and from the International Border to Pieper Avenue (cum Post Road). Requests from neighbouring villages to Douglas Municipal Council for bridges and

road improvements called for bridges "along the road to Gretna", and suggest that drainage across the International Border was creating problems for the farmer as well as the traveller. To help resolve the matter, on July 7, 1885, Council authorized construction of a drainage canal north from the Dakota border for two miles between Range 1 and Range 2 West.

As 1885 drew to a close, Alex Smith's livery stable, cattle and feed business was in full swing; Adolphe Coblentz operated a wholesale liquor business as part of his general store's operation; J. Eliot & Son provided additional competition in the implement business with M. McEdward as manager of their Gretna operation; and Michael Long was firmly established in the loan and mortgage business.³³ It was difficult for Gretna residents not to be optimistic with so much happening around them.

Sharing Cultures

All the trappings of civilization were finding a home in Gretna. Church services were attended in Neche by non–Mennonites and in Edenburg by the devout Mennonites and only in bad weather would the faithful stay at home. It was not uncommon for Presbyterian, Catholic, Lutheran and Mennonite to gather in Gretna and worship God together:

Of organized religion we had very little as children. Of course there were no church buildings, what services were held must have been held in private houses. And of course, no Sunday School - that was an American institution and they never had that in the Old Country. But religion pervaded our whole life. With all the drilling we had in Catechism and Bible reading at school, and we did have to know the bible stories in the biblestory book, that was our history lesson. You certainly absorbed a certain amount of it, every story had its moral for you. Every now and then, Mother would get out a book of sermons -Hofacker's Predigten (Hofacker's Sermons) and gather us all around her — in Gretna, help and all — and read us a sermon. By the looks of the picture of the author on the front page, he might



Erdmann Penner, first mayor, and brothers and sisters: Cornelius, Jacob and Peter Penner, and Mrs. Jacob and Mrs. Peter Friesen. P#224

have been a contemporary of Martin Luther or Menno Simon, and his sermons were as incomprehensible. But Mother was a good reader and it was nice to hear her read any kind of a story.³⁴

By late 1885 and through the winter into 1886, the Gretna citizenry was organizing cultural activities that were not always strictly religious. The hall in the second story of the addition built for the Anglo-American Hotel was the scene of orchestral evenings with musicians brought out from Winnipeg. Some events took the form of dramatic productions presented by local talent and others included "hypnotists, cartoonists" and other like charlatans who roamed the new west. Gretna's definition of a "Culture Club" in the late 1880's would certainly seem foreign to the young people in the 1980's!

The young people in Gretna in the mid-1880's may have presented a certain kind of challenge to their teachers. William Symington concluded the spring semester at the Gretna Public School in May of 1885, but did not return in the fall. Henry Kraft agreed to take on the 28 students that fall. His stay was also for just one term. By that fall Erdmann Penner & Company had expanded operations in Morden and added Reinland to the list of centres serviced by the company. E. Penner & Co. must have felt some colour would brighten the lives of students and parents that fall, advertising widely their first major sale on the West Reserve. Probably inspired by the more flamboyant manager in Morden, H. P. Hansen, the First Annual Red Figure Sale featured goods bought by Erdmann Penner on his annual buying expeditions in Eastern Canada. Yes, the inexorable march of civilization was quickly finding its way into the West Reserve.

Depression Cushioned

Following this forward movement, new names and faces were adopting Gretna as their home in the new West. Among them were George Hazelwood, L. O. Turgeon, John Hunt,

Charles Bell, Gerhard Rempel, John Mosach, Fred Blair, David and Alec Chisholm, Charles White, Eugene Widmeyer, Ambrose Frelekte, William Forsyth, and Charles Stevens. Despite the drastic decline in immigration to Western Canada since the boom stopped in 1883, Gretna continued to attract new investors in its future. More than 44,000 immigrants came through Emerson's Port of Entry in 1883 while reports from Emerson and Gretna by the end of 1884 show only 12,164 immigrants processed in 1884. Figures were not released in 1885, or 1886, or 1887. The decline in numbers continued as prospective immigrants heard more and more of the harsh realities associated with homesteading on the prairies. The 1885 immigration report out of Emerson attributed the decline to the general world depression, the low price of wheat (it had dropped in 1885 to 50¢ a bushel or less), the collapse of major United States railway companies, and the climatic scare due to the drought of 1883. This report concluded that those farmers who had practised wise tillage methods and had not relied exclusively on grain but had operated mixed farms had managed a comfortable existence during this difficult time. 35 The fact that the Mennonite farmers on the West Reserve carried on a diversified agricultural economy, coupled with the fact that it had rained enough to produce good yields in this part of the prairies, had resulted in a more stable economy in the Gretna area. This stability must have looked attractive to the outsider who was seeking a new home in Western Canada.

William Forsyth came to Gretna as the new agent for the Harrison Implement Company, Turgeon came to work with his brother who was the immigration agent at this Port of Entry and Eugene Widmeyer worked as a clerk, perhaps for Winkler, Ritz, Pieper or Penner. The people were quick to accept newcomers and put them to work for the community. The January 15, 1886 meeting of the Douglas Council named Widmeyer as one of its auditors for the year just ended. It would not be long before Widmeyer would form a partnership with Ritz

to provide banking and loan services to people in Gretna and communities nearby. Monetary systems were still quite crude in 1886, although credit was possible through many of Gretna's stores at a reasonable rate of interest. Merchants used an advanced system of barter with farmers who brought in produce in exchange for goods the merchants had in stock. If the farmer did not see what he or she wanted, the merchant would provide trade dollars for the amount the produce was worth, in the merchant's mind. These trade dollars could be used only at the store where received; a sure way of getting the producer back into the store as consumer.

The one financial institution known to all Mennonites in the area was the "Waisenamt" (literally translated to mean a business or office for orphans). Brought to Canada from Russia, its main purpose was to provide widows and orphans with a financial umbrella which husbands and parents provided through deposits. The Bergthaler and Sommerfelder churches each ran their own Waisenamt although transactions were not restricted to church members. Since it served primarily as a savings institution, the Waisenamts did not issue loans and mortgages during its early years in Canada. As Canadian banking laws changed so would the structure and function of the Waisenamts.

Financial Institutions

The first traditional bank in Gretna was the Post Office Savings Bank. It came into existence soon after the opening of the postal service in Gretna in 1884 and operated out of the Hoffman Post Office and store. Any depositor with the Post Office Savings Bank transacted business with the local postmaster who, under federal regulation, acted as an agent for the Postmaster General of Canada to whom all deposits were transmitted and by whom all disbursements were issued. A ceiling of \$300 was set for daily deposits and interest was 4%.

These savings institutions and the extension of credit by merchants and businesses in

Gretna provided a stable and secure repository for any profits farmers in the area might have eked out of the land those first few years. Private lending firms, whether officially registered or not, appeared quickly as Gretna grew. Michael Long was the first among these and his earliest correspondence out of Gretna is on letterhead advertising Long's Insurance & Loan Agency. Mortgages on Gretna property began to be financed by the North of Scotland Canadian Mortgage Company in the year 1886. One of its owners and directors was none other than William Hespeler. It would continue to be a part of the Gretna business scene throughout the Village's formative years. Private loans could also be arranged through several of Gretna's leading business figures. Enoch Winkler, Henry Ritz, Christian Pieper, Erdmann Penner and Otto Schultz provided ready capital to those considered to be good risks. Property holders were not free from threat of foreclosure. When the decline in immigration to Western Canada slowed the rate of expansion of villages like Gretna, speculators who had purchased lots in Gretna expecting a quick return on their dollar would often simply abandon their properties to the mortgage holders.³⁶ Those who survived the decline in the late 1880's would be amply rewarded in the prosperous decade to follow.

D. G. McEdward, grain buyer for McBean Brothers, offered 60¢ a bushel for No. 1 Hard Wheat early in the 1886 harvest, and eggs sold for ten cents a dozen.³⁷ W. P. Leslie was finding it difficult to keep up with the road work expected of him along his farm properties at Spencerfeldt. The Douglas Municipality decided it could not afford any bridgework at all in 1886, and Municipal Council passed a motion firmly stating that it expected persons who created holes in municipal roads to fill them.³⁸

Eighteen eighty—six was not an easy year, yet optimism continued to flourish in the border Village of Gretna. Maybe Leslie was just too busy and roads became a low priority for him. His customs territory was extensive, and enforcement had its problems. The McBean

elevator in Morden ran afoul of Leslie's customs operation. The cleaner for the Morden elevator had come through Gretna customs in 1885, but, upon review of the transaction at the border, Leslie determined there had been a violation and "seized the cleaner in the McBean elevator, on the grounds it having passed customs undervalued." ³⁹

Leslie's problems with the Douglas Municipality would not be resolved for a few years. Reeve Winkler and Council were in their second year of a dispute with the Rhineland Council over taxes collected by that municipality on land now in Douglas. Montcalm Municipality was also demanded that Douglas Council assist them in retiring a \$20,000 debt based on the sections which had joined Douglas and Montcalm the previous year. No straightforward solution to these municipal dispute could be found and they were eventually settled through arbitration. 40

Douglas Council watched provincial surveyors stake out a provincial road planned to run from Walhalla in the Dakotas to Morris. Farmers along the route lodged complaints with their councillors during the survey in the fall of 1886, and the new Douglas Council which met for the first time on January 11, 1887 decided a petition to the Provincial Legislature was in order. The motion called for a review of the planned route since the surveyed road would be detrimental to the operations of many farmers. Peter Funk was the new Douglas Reeve. Enoch Winkler nominated him for the position which he won by acclamation. Winkler chose not to continue as Reeve because he was preparing for a bigger political move. Unlike Gretna businessmen such as Penner, Pieper and Schultz, Winkler aligned himself with the "Reform" movement which was growing in Western Canada.

Reform Politics

Thomas Greenway, sitting as a member of the Provincial Legislature from Crystal City, was the leader of members in opposition to the

policies and programs of the government of the day. Gretna had been represented by William H. Nash, Thomas Carney and C. S. Douglas during its days as part of the Emerson Constituency. Henry Tennant, elected in Morris West Constituency, represented the area as of January 23, 1883 and A. F. Martin succeeded him in the December 9th election in 1886. Electoral boundaries were in a constant state of flux in the early years of provincial politics in Manitoba. While Gretna was situated in one constituency it often sought support from the neighbouring representative in the early 1880's. Perhaps the electoral disputes involving Carney, P. E. Burnham and C. S. Douglas provided the colour and excitement in the Emerson Constituency which fired the imagination of Gretna and area residents. Whatever the attraction, provincial politics would interest Gretna residents for years to come and would involve many of them directly.

The Sixth Legislature in the Province of Manitoba, elected in 1886, was in trouble right from the start. Party politics were just beginning to find their footing in the Manitoba Legislature, and interest groups such as Farmers' Union would align themselves with the party most willing to support its cause in the legislature. Norquay worked hard and long as Premier to try to break the CPR monopoly in the West. He fought in the provincial house and in Ottawa to make provincial railway charters legitimate. Eventually Ottawa would win the jurisdictional battle; and provincial charters for rail lines, such as the one approved from Emerson to Western Manitoba, would be overruled by Ottawa, with the CPR reaping the spoils. Greenway took the issues of Manitoba's Reform groups and built them into what was to become the first Liberal party platform in provincial politics. The redistribution of electoral districts following the 1886 election, combined with Greenway's ability to attract some well-known and well-liked candidates such as Enoch Winkler, would result in a change of government in 1886.

Horse Still King

In the spring of 1886, Enoch Winkler created a stir in the Gretna and Emerson communities for quite a different reason. Farmers and townsfolk with an eye for quality breeding stock noted Winkler's purchase of a "Thoroughbred imported Clydesdale stallion "Simon Pure" (who was) dark brown with one white hind foot, weighing 1950 pounds."41 Gretna's half-dozen machine and implement agents may have extolled the virtues of their new lines, but the fact remained that the primary energy source on Southern Manitoba farms was the horse. The importance of this form of locomotion was emphasized when John Irving set up another blacksmith shop joining William Davy and William Treloar who were already offering these services. Alex Smith's expanded livery stable and Philip Rau's harnessmaker business provided further testimony to the horse as "king". The stages from Gretna to Blumenort, Reinland and Rosenfeld remained in operation and daily mail service was re-established for the people of Emerson, via Gretna, "by team" along the Post Road. This service was established as a result of the CPR's decision to discontinue daily train service between Winnipeg and Emerson in 1886. Considering daily mail to Winnipeg of importance to the business community of Emerson, horses were used to fill the gap left vacant by the irregularity of the "iron horse". 42

Other links between Gretna and Emerson were forged in 1886.

D. Stewart of the Emerson "Court of the Canadian Order of Forresters" organized a Court in Gretna that year. 43 Ambrose Stock left his teaching position at Emerson and moved to Gretna to take over the teaching position left vacant by Henry Kraft's departure. Stock would dig in his heels and earn the distinction of being the first teacher to complete a whole year in the Gretna school. The student population would continue to grow during his stay. Dr. Patrick Donovan opened a drug and stationery business on Seventh Street in the sum-

mer of 1886. Although Donovan lived in Neche and was licensed in the United States, he would remain an important part of the Gretna scene for some time to come.

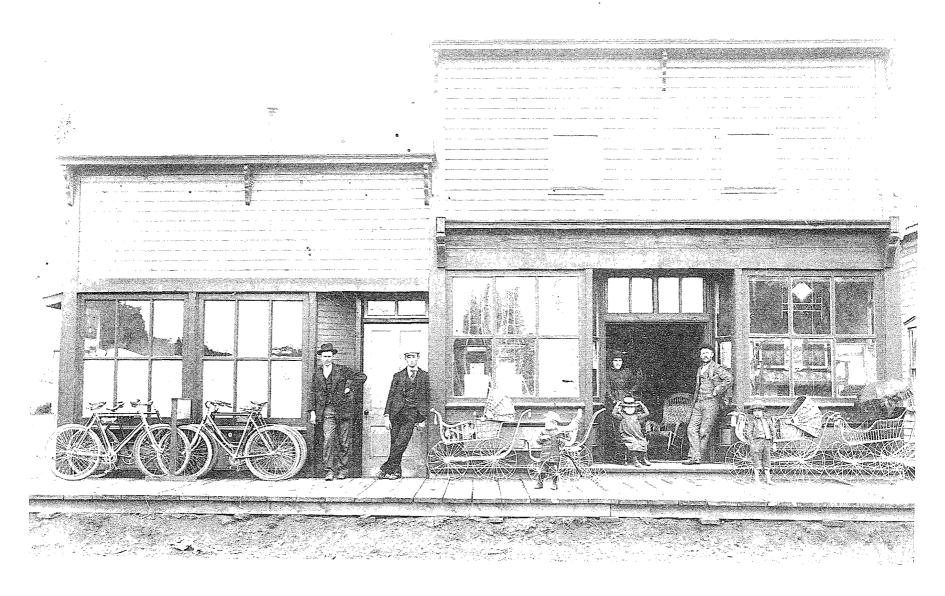
By the summer of 1887, John Longworth had "removed" from Emerson to take charge of the CPR station at Gretna, with Youill accompanying him as baggage clerk. John Charters was the CPR car inspector, Frank Revel, his assistant and T. W. Green the CPR section foreman. Train schedules had been revised to permit easy connection between the CPR and the St. Paul Minneapolis and Manitoba Railroad at Gretna. This convenience was regarded by some travellers as an invitation to transport goods across the border without making a declaration at customs. Human ingenuity and deviousness know few bounds when it comes to "getting away with it".

Gretna's building boom appears to have carried on during the more difficult years in the late 1880's. General contractors living and working in Gretna in 1887 included the Chisholm Brothers, Robert Johnson, and Oleson & Company. The latter was listed as a painting business, along with painter Peter Loewen. Carpenters Alex Robertson and John McGregor, with the help of laborers Nels Janson, Levi William, James Smith, Charles Campain, Robert Johnson and William Johnson worked to provide buildings for the Watson Manufacturing Company, the Heppner & Klassen store, and the fanning mills agency operated out of Gretna by Ambrose Kroetsch. 45 James Smith went to work for J. R. Hoffman's store that summer, and E. K. Ross and James Lawrence took over as agents for the McBean operation in Gretna.

German Town Manitoba

The Village was beginning to acquire the shape and character that was to earn it the title, "Germantown Manitoba". German-speaking

continued on page 63



Jacob J. Friesen's furniture store with wife Margaret (Lempkey) in the doorway, daughter Anna in chair, James with tricycle, and Jacob Hamm. Brother Martin Friesen, left doorway. Other gentleman in doorway unidentified. P#1301

immigrants to the prairies found it easy to fit into the community. Frank Roff, Paul Henzel, Charles Whidden, Simon Wolkof, Karl Krueger, Jacob Unger, Johann Koslofsky, Heinrich Reimer, Cornelius Hiebert, Peter Abrams, M. Bachmayer and C. Finkelstein had settled in Gretna by the end of 1887. Hiebert & Abrams had come to open stores, Roff's interest was dealing in horses. Finkelstein set up a liquor business to compete with A. Coblentz, not to mention John Hunt, Charles Bell and J. N. Braun of the Queen's Hotel and Alex Goldie and Henry Brown of the Anglo-American Hotel. 46 Booze may not have been big business in Gretna in 1887, but it must have been considered good business.

Not everyone who came to Gretna was of German descent. William Hutcheson, William Brodie, D. C. Woodman and G. F. Blair came to work for the CPR, for Customs, or for one of Gretna's thriving businesses. If they did not speak or understand German upon arrival at Gretna, they soon acquired at least a working knowledge. Business in town and at the border was done predominantly in German and if W. P. Leslie's reports to Ottawa were written in English, he certainly needed the German language to carry on his customs work.

Border Traffic

By this time an upsurge in traffic crossing the border to do business in Gretna required constant vigil on the part of Leslie and his assistants. He had discovered, as well, that not all of the Mennonite farmers declared all that was purchased on "the other side of the line". Even the fine young ladies of Gretna would try on the "sport" for size:

Living as we did right at the border of the U.S.A facing Dakota with its well established farm communities and flourishing towns we all of a sudden had a good many of the amenities of civilization which we had missed out on so far in America. They were right at hand — there for the taking . . . There was a good deal of trading going

on, of goods the Americans wanted and for us things we missed out on in Canada.

It brought with it its hazards and disillusion-ments too. For one thing there was a great deal of smuggling going on. We went over to buy luxuries, and they came over to buy woollen goods mostly, which they said were much better and cheaper on the Canadian side. I don't think that the idea that smuggling was wrong or cheating the government ever entered anybody's mind. And if a person got away with a real clever disguise it was the joke of the town.

Shortly after we had moved to Gretna my older sister Anna took my younger sister Tina and me to Neche to buy new hats for all of us. Neche had a good millinery shop which Gretna lacked because the town was so new and needed essentials rather than luxuries and also because the farm women on the Reserve mostly wore bonnets which they made themselves or shawls to protect them from the cold. Well, we walked over one nice spring afternoon, it was only a bit over a mile if you walked on the track. We went bare headed, bought the hats, put them on and walked back.

As ill luck would have it just before we reached our station one of those sudden summer showers sprang up and it began to rain. My sister told me to run on ahead, go into the waiting room at the station and wait there for her while she picked up Tina and followed as fast as she could. At the rear of the station, however, was the Custom's House and I had to pass that to get to the waiting room. And there in the door stood burly Mr. Shannon, the Custom's Officer.

When he saw me running he called to me, "Come in here quick, quick, Helen, before the rain spoils your pretty hat." I did, of course, and when Anna and Tina came along my sister came straight in, greeted Mr. Shannon, whom we knew very well, (his boys worked in father's store) and after saying 'How do you do' she told him that she had just come in to show him our new hats and declare them for duty. He looked at them and I do not know whether he charged Father any duty for them or not. Anyway, our attempt at smuggling had sadly failed!⁴⁷

Gretna offered many diversions for children growing up in the shadow of the great U.S.A. to the south. Many had friends and relatives living on the American side of the border. Many

Early Commerce

Going south from Morris we will take a glimpse at Gretna, before going west from Rosenfeld. The first peculiarity of Gretna is that every one there speaks a German dialect. The business of Gretna is almost entirely with the Mennonites, who are about the only settlers in the surrounding country, this region being a portion of the Mennonite reserve. The business people, regardless of nationality, all speak the language familiar to the Mennonites, and from the conversation heard on the streets and in the stores, one would imagine that he was in a foreign country. The business people, however, can all speak English, though some of them not very clearly. Others are English speaking people, who have acquired the Mennonite dialect.

Gretna is a splendid wheat and produce market, and an excellent business point. In addition to the farm products usually marketed at Manitoba towns, Gretna is a flax market. There are only two points in Manitoba where flax is marketed to any extent. These are Gretna and Morden. Flax growing is confined almost entirely to the Mennonite population, which accounts for the fact just stated. The flax is shipped mostly to Waterloo county, Ontario and to Winnipeg, where there are linseed oil mills. Recently Minneapolis buyers have been taking the article to some extent. About 100,000 bushels of flaxseed is marketed between Gretna and Morden. The price now current is 90 cents per bushel, though 80 cents has been the ruling figure heretofore. The advance is said to be due to the advent of Minneapolis buyers.

The Mennonites are a thrifty and industrious people, and strictly honest as a rule. They are nearly all doing well, and many are now in good circumstances. They are also a progressive people, and with the improvement in their circumstances, they are going in more for the luxuries of life, and adopting the conveniences of modern domestic life. To show the honesty of the Mennonite people, Mr. Schultz, of the firm of E. Penner & Co., says that they have lost more through trusting English speaking persons, than they have on account of the Mennonites, though they deal with one hundred of the latter to one of the former.

continued

Early Commerce cont'd

Among the business institutions of Gretna stands out most prominently the firm of E. Penner & Co. The firm is composed of Erdman Penner, Otto Schultz, and H. P. Hansen. The firm carries on business at four different points, namely, Gretna, Morden, Rhineland and Plum Coulee. Messrs. Penner and Schultz reside at Gretna, and Mr. Hansen at Morden. J. Peters is manager at Rhineland, and August Wagner at Plum Coulee. This firm was the first Mennonite store in Manitoba, the business having been established near Niverville in 1876. The business at Gretna was established in 1881, in one of the Mennonite villages near the place, but was moved to the depot when the railway arrived. Messrs. Penner & Co. do a very large business at Gretna, and employ eight or ten clerks. The present size of their store is 26×75 feet, two storeys and cellar, and besides they have a large warehouse, size 50×50 and several smaller additions all filled with goods, including almost every line of general merchandise except liquors. A building is now in course of erection which will be connected with their main store by an archway, which will exactly double the size of the store. The store is fitted with the Lamson automatic cash carrier service. The bill of a purchase of goods, together with the cash, is placed in a wooden ball, and is carried to the office, where the cash is taken and the change is returned. Penner & Co. is the only firm in Manitoba using this wonderful system, and both the Gretna and Morden stores are fitted with the cash carriers. The firm has established no less than seven branches in Manitoba, though only four are now in opera-

D. Peters & Co. also do a general store business, and they were the second to start at Gretna, having commenced there over five years ago. The firm does a good trade, carries a large stock and is rated high. Abrams & Esau have recently commenced business at Gretna, though the firm is not a new one in Manitoba. They were in business at Rhineland and Schanzenfeld before starting at Gretna, and still carry on business at these places. They commenced at Gretna last summer, where they purchased the bankrupt stock of the Hoffman estate. The members of this firm, like the ones already mentioned, are Mennonites. C. Hiebert opened in the general merchandise line at Gretna in September last. Mr. Hiebert was formerly with his brother, J. Hiebert & Co. of Pilot Mound, Man. He carries a good stock and reports trade very good since he opened. A. Coblentz deals in liquors and cigars, and has been for years at Gretna. Philip Rau does the harness and saddlery trade,

continued

picnicked and played in the "park" at Otten's Wood. They also pestered the CPR train engineers and hitched rides across the border as the trains were shunted back and forth. These connections and associations across the International Boundaries continue to this day, only changing in detail as styles and customs change. Smuggling was only one diversion among the activities of Gretna's youth in the twilight years of the 1880's.

Search for Schooling

Keeping their children out of mischief was less of a concern for Gretna parents than was the provision of a good education. Ambrose Stock was a good teacher and well-qualified, but the one-room school house on Klassen Avenue was getting cramped. Furthermore, once the school children had received the basic education available they had to be sent away for more advanced learning opportunities. The Penner children were sent to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, the Coblentz and the Winkler children went to Winnipeg, and others used the Convent school at St. Jean. Choice of a school was often based on location of family and friends. Discussions and meetings had been held as early as 1885 where Wilhelm Rempel, Peter Abrams and Wilhelm Esau had participated with other concerned members of the Bergthaler congregation. Elder Johann Funk encouraged these discussions. He agreed that better teachers were needed for the Mennonite schools in the villages. To get better teachers you needed to train and educate them. It was not enough that the teacher was chosen based on a criteria of availability. After all, herding cattle and herding children required somewhat different skills.48

In 1887 Peter Abrams moved to Gretna from the village of Reinland setting up a general store with his partner Wilhelm Esau who had a store in Reinland. Abrams and Esau bought out the bankrupt Hoffman store. J. R. Hoffman retained the Post Office and established a small grocery and confectionery store, not far from

the original general store. This new partnership in Gretna was to be important, not just for its impact on business in the community, but also for the development of educational opportunities in the area.

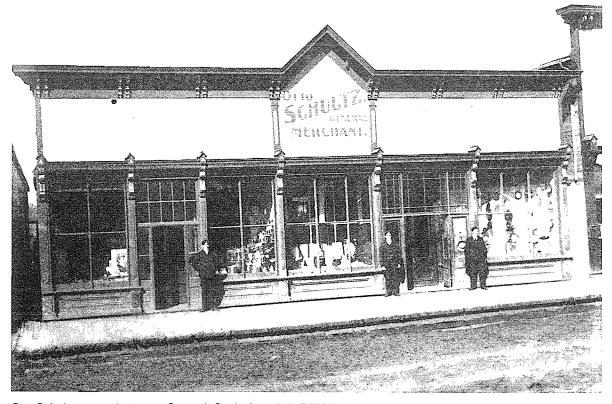
Gretna was to take in other Mennonite "refugees" in the next few years. Businessmen Cornelius Hiebert and Gerhard Rempel, among others, came to Gretna seeking its progressive atmosphere within the Mennonite Reserve. As leaders in the Mennonite community, they contributed much to Gretna's growth and development in the latter part of the century. The influence of Gretna leadership reached well beyond the village and municipal boundaries. Otto Schultz sat on the Protestant Board of Education for the Province of Manitoba, taking his seat for the first time in 1884. Here he assisted in directing the educational affairs of the province with such luminaries as J. B. Somerset, Dr. George Bryce, William Hespeler, Rev. D. M. Gordon, Rev. Professor Hart and the Ven. Archdeacon Pinkham. 49

Formula for Success

Erdmann Penner continued his practice of buying excursions into Eastern Canada and maintained a reputation for the best in silks, even if these were primarily in the traditional Mennonite black. Penner's stores in Gretna, Plum Coulee, Reinland, Schantzenfeld, Pilot Mound and Morden all carried stock brought back to the "frontier" by Penner. His ability to anticipate the buying trends of the West Reserve Mennonites assured him consistent profits, even in more difficult years. His formula for success seemed to be working well. His son-in-law Hiebert sold out the Niverville store and took over the store in Pilot Mound. Hiebert operated a branch store at Clearwater from there, but soon consolidated his stock at one location. Penner's Plum Coulee store also thrived under the watchful eye of J. I. Bargen. Otto Schultz managed the affairs of the Gretna store to a great degree, freeing Penner to oversee all of his varied affairs. But one store gave

him problems, and that was the one managed by Henry Hansen in Morden. Hansen, Morden's first mayor, came to Canada from St. Paul, Minnesota where he and Schultz had tried their hand at the retail business. Schultz brought Hansen with him to Gretna when Penner agreed to their partnership. Hansen's Morden location was the first store in that town. Hansen had a way of constantly running it in the red, making it necessary for Penner to carry the Morden store from profits out of his other locations. In the winter of 1887 and spring of 1888, Penner decided that it would be necessary to absolve himself of the Morden facility, and of Hansen. Penner's partner in Gretna, Otto Schultz, who happened to be Hansen's brother-in-law, did not see this as the appropriate solution. So Schultz and Penner dissolved their partnership for the second time since coming to Canada. In 1888, Schultz and Hansen opened a general store in Gretna, just north of the Penner store on Seventh Street. Penner, who had been generous the last time Schultz parted company with him, now helped Schultz and Hansen keep the Morden store open and helped them get the Gretna venture off to a good start.

Erdmann Penner's business interests were not restricted to his chain of general stores in the West Reserve and along the CPR southwestern line. He continued his real estate work for the CPR in Gretna and he stayed in touch with his family in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. This connection south of the border put him in



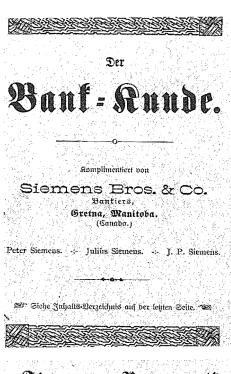
Otto Schultz general store on Seventh St., before 1913. P#639

Early Commerce cont'd

and has been established since 1883. He employs three men. Herman Hellofs deals in meats, poultry and produce of all kinds, which he ships largely to Winnipeg in addition to supplying his local trade. He also ships livestock. E. Winkler (Enoch) handles lumber and building material, and reports that the Mennonites have built many new houses of modern design during the past summer. He looks for a great deal of building in the Mennonite reserve next summer, as the settlers have commenced to replace their original house with thatched roofs, by modern style of frame dwellings.

There are two hotels. The Anglo-American is kept by J. D. Pierson, formerly of Maple Creek, Assa. (?) who is well and favorably known to nearly all the commercial travellers in the country. The Queen's is kept by J. N. Braun, who also has a liquor store. There are two large shipping elevators for handling grain, owned by the Ogilvie Milling Company and McBean Bros., of Winnipeg. There are a number of other business establishments, in addition to those named, including a drug store, tin shop, agencies of all the leading implement dealers, blacksmith shops, liveries, doctors, lawyers, etc. J. R. Hoffman, it is understood, contemplates opening again in the general store line. Altogether Gretna is as busy and solid a little town as there is in Manitoba, and it speaks well for the thrift of the Mennonite settlers inhabiting the district.

The Commercial December 24, 1888



Siemens Bros. & Co. Banfiers, Gretna, Manitoba, Sanaba.

Die einzige Bant in ber Mennoniten : Referbe.

Kauft und verkauft In- und Ausländische Wechsel. Thut ein allgemeines Bantgeschäft. Zahlt Zinsen für eingezahltes Gelb.

Diskonliert gute Noten gegen Farmer ober Geschäftsleute.

Wir nehmen Gelder von Geschäsischäusern und Privat-Personen auf gute Bedingungen entgegen.

Saupt=Korrefpondenten

in Canada: Commercial Bank of Manitoba, Winnipeg, in den Ber. Staaten: The National German-American
Bank, St. Paul, Minn. — Knauth, Nachod
& Kuchne, New York City.

Saltet dieses Büchlein für zufünftigen Gebrauch.

touch with the Siemens family in that community. In the mid–1880's Penner began negotiations with the Siemens brothers, encouraging them to come to Gretna. Penner remained a silent partner in the Siemens Brothers & Company Bank which opened its doors in Gretna by the end of 1887. The brothers Julius, Jacob P. and Henry Siemens proudly boasted that their bank was "Die Einzige Bank in der Mennoniten–Reserve" (The one and only bank in the Mennonite Reserve). The bank offered a complete range of services and operated from rented premises.

Michael Long and Dr. Patrick C. Donovan also formed a partnership in 1888. Long's insurance and loan business brought him into contact with many people and the partnership would help those who were looking for the services of a customs broker. Immigration created the need for the services of someone who could act on behalf of the American Government in Gretna.

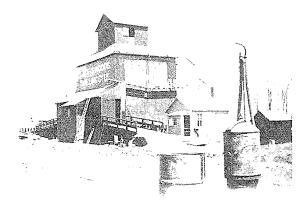
Signs of Civilization

By this time Douglas Municipal Council was being confronted with a growing lawlessness in the Gretna area. Trouble was partly due to the smuggling, partly due to the liquor trade in Gretna and Neche, and partly due to increased levels of immigration from United States to Canada. Council gave its Finance Committee the authority "in Gretna ein kleines Häuschen zur Einsperrung Gefangener erbauen zu lassen, d.h. wenn die Regierung einen Polizei Mann auf Ihre Kosten in Gretna einsetzt." ⁵¹ (See footnote for translation) Council was prepared to foot the bill for construction of a small "jail" provided the Province was willing to station a constable at Gretna at provincial expense.

"Little houses for the detention of prisoners" is only one symbol of the advancement of civilization. The school, the railway, the customs and immigration, the hotels, livery stables, and liquor wholesalers all contributed to the "atmosphere of civility" to be found in Gretna. By 1888, Louis Ziegler worked full-time

as a bartender in the Queen's; John McDonald ran Gretna's first bakery; Simon Wolkof had joined James Brown in providing shoemaker services to the area; and a Mr. Goldstein had set up Gretna's first tailoring business. 52 The specialized services provided by these businesses were joined by the fourth blacksmith to come to Gretna - Wilhelm Fitor. Fischer and Hazelwood joined forces to open a general store as did David Peters and Gerhard Rempel. Shops were also opened by a Mr. Singlestoel and by a Mr. Wolfneuff, in 1888, although little is known about these enterprises. They did not survive long enough to leave a lasting record. What is remarkable is the number of pioneering family names which continued their association with Gretna well into the twentieth century.

Business activity in 1888 was focused on the grain trade, as it had been since the village's inception. J. & J. Livingston, now based out of Morden, built a flax warehouse in Gretna with a capacity of 10,000 bushels. The grain warehouse of Body & Noakes was considerably smaller, holding 2,000 bushels. The big news was the construction of a standard elevator by the Lake of the Woods Milling Co. The original capacity of this elevator was 17,000 bushels and its location in Gretna in 1888 renewed hope among area farmers that maybe, just maybe, greater



Lake of the Woods Elevator on Seventh St. north, around 1930. Gas pumps in foreground. P#627

competition in grain prices would exist following the harvest that year. 53 Built on the CPR right of way across the street from the Anglo-American, this elevator would serve the area farmers for three quarters of a century. It was to watch over many changes on Seventh Street during its lifetime.

The summer of 1888 plunged Gretna into the world of provincial politics in a manner thus far unknown to it. The previous year Enoch Winkler had relinquished his post as Reeve of Douglas. It is unknown whether his decision to leave municipal government to others had anything to do with his decision to enter the provincial political arena. His friend and mentor, Thomas Greenway from Crystal City, convinced Enoch Winkler to seek a seat in the Provincial Legislature on the Liberal Party reform ticket. Electoral boundaries had been redistributed since 1886, Norquay's administration was floundering and new political alliances were being formed in Manitoba. Using much of the Farmers' Union policy proposals, Greenway and his Liberal Party promised to get the province out from under the oppressive monopoly of the CPR and to get a better deal from Ottawa. Many of the burghers eligible to vote in the newly formed Constituency of Rosenfeldt knew and respected Enoch Winkler. They had done business with Enoch in Emerson and Gretna and they knew his younger brother Valentine in Morden. They were not surprised when Winkler was elected.

Education as Catalyst

Educational politics were also starting to heat up in Gretna and on the West Reserve. Peter Abrams had always taken a keen interest in the education of his children. He moved to Gretna in 1887, in part to get away from the strictures of the Mennonite church. Other businessmen like Cornelius Hiebert, came to Gretna for greater freedom in educational matters. When Abrams and his brother-in-law, Wilhelm Rempel, read a notice of a teaching demonstration in Mountain Lake, Minnesota,

they decided to go and see for themselves what educational possibilities existed in this western hinterland. ⁵⁴ Their decision to investigate the Mountain Lake event acted as a catalyst in bringing together those groups and individuals in the West Reserve who wanted to improve the quality of education available in their village schools. At this time no secondary schools or collegiates existed in rural Manitoba. Only Manitoba College offered tenth, eleventh and twelfth level classes to students seeking the education required for entry into a university program of studies. ⁵⁵ Upon their return to Manitoba Elder Johann Funk invited Abrams and Rempel to participate in discussions with



Wilhelm Rempel family. Standing: Wilhelm, daughter Sara, son-in-law Janzen, son Wilhelm. Seated: wife, Mrs. Sarah (Abrams) Rempel, son Peter, son Gerhard, and daughter Mrs. Janzen. P#1457

Bergthaler church leaders hoping to establish a better system of schooling on the West Reserve.⁵⁶

The majority of the Bergthaler church leaders disagreed with the suggestion of Funk, Rempel and Abrams that an educational institute or society be formed for the furtherance of education instruction for teachers on the West Reserve. Mennonite leaders were, no doubt, fearful of these worldly individuals who had gone so far as to establish their businesses in Gretna. They were also suspicious of the English inspectors who had started to "snoop" around the schools on the West Reserve. They knew about school inspector D. H. McCalman's visit to the Gretna Public School.⁵⁷ They had heard about the school picnics and holidays to honour the Queen's birthday that the English teacher in Gretna organized. They were worried about government interference in their educational and religious matters and about Otto Schultz's participation on the Provincial Board of Education. W. P. Leslie, Customs Collector and Magistrate now situated in Gretna, supported the Mennonites and appears to have worked against some of the policies of the Provincial Board of Education:

Southern Manitoba Times — November 8, 1888

The Mennonites kick against taking government aid for their schools on condition that they be run Normal style as indicated by the Inspector Thiem White appointed by the Board of Education. It is reported that Mr. Leslie, the Customs' Officer at Gretna used his influence to prejudice the Mennonites against the Inspector. The Mennonites don't care too much for the Canadian educational system or any education. It is wise that the Board of Education put an Inspector there that understands their language. ⁵⁸

It would appear that Leslie was flying in the face of official wisdom. No record exists to indicate how his superiors regarded this errant civil servant who spoke out in support of the people with whom he had been doing business for more than a decade. The record does show, however, that W. P. Leslie was relieved of his

duties and replaced at Gretna customs by J. F. Tennant of Emerson in September of 1888. The educational debate would not be resolved easily and Gretna would find itself in the centre of the controversy for years to come.

Organizing Churches

Gretna's growth brought with it a greater need for religious and spiritual support within the community. The predominantly German population at Gretna was made up of Lutherans, Baptists and Mennonites. The latter attended services at the Edenburg Bergthaler Church. Other German speaking Christians often joined in the Mennonite services at this church. By 1888, however, they felt their numbers had increased to the point where it could be possible to receive spiritual guidance from a minister of their own faith. Some Germans, among them those who had come from Emerson, along with the majority of the English residents in Gretna, were Presbyterian. Many of them maintained their membership in the Emerson Presbyterian congregation which continued to serve Gretna as a mission — a designation established in the 1870's by the Rev. Scott when he provided services to Smugglers' Point. Catholic believers went south of the border to Neche or to Bathgate in the practice of their religion. The Jews in Gretna congregated with other members of their faith in Morden. Representation by Gretna residents were made to church officials in Winnipeg and Eastern Canada to consider the needs of Gretna and assist in the building of places of worship. Organization to make construction of a Presbyterian Church possible in early 1889 got under way that winter.

Consular Agent at Gretna

The Government of the U.S.A. determined through the course of the summer of 1888 that a more temporal representation was also necessary in Gretna. Dr. Patrick C. Donovan was found willing to serve his country and on

November 22, 1888 he was "appointed the Consular Agent of the United States at Gretna, Manitoba . . . with all the privileges and authorities of right appertaining to that office, subject to the conditions prescribed by law."

Donovan's Consular Agent duties and responsibilities at Gretna were in addition to his medical, pharmaceutical and business interests which he continued on both sides of the border.

Dr. Donovan's partner, Michael Long, continued his mortgage and banking business in Gretna and also took on a customs brokerage. Although Donovan's Consular Agent status will not have hurt Long's brokerage business, it is not clear how involved the partnership was and how each partner's personal ventures were affected by their association. Among other things, Michael Long ran a farming operation outside Gretna and owned a "well-boring machine". The business of drilling wells had slowed down by the summer of 1888 and this enterprise was abandoned for the season.

Founding the MEI

While the business in wells may have dried up temporarily, concerned residents primed the pump that would bring life back to the dream of improved educational opportunities for citizens of the West Reserve. A meeting was held on the 23rd of November 1888 in the Public School in Gretna. Community and church members, interested in establishing an association whose goal was the founding of a Mennonite Institute for higher education, set up a steering committee. Members of this committee, made up of David Peters, Erdmann Penner, Franz Kliewer, Peter Abrams and Gerhard Rempel, were commissioned to work out a course of action and to draw up the statutes which would serve as the foundations for the Mennonite Educational Institute. The matter had been discussed and debated since 1885. Firm and resolute action was being put in motion at last. 60

All friends of the high school idea were

invited to return to the Gretna Public School on December 1, 1888. Bishop Johann Funk prayerfully opened the day's business, requesting God's guidance in the deliberations of the day. The steering committee presented its recommendations. Wilhelm Rempel was chosen to chair the meeting and serve as first head of the new educational association. The steering committee's recommendations received approval from the meeting with minor revisions. One can wonder whether the people assembled in the Gretna School that day realized how many lives would be affected by their decisions and convictions. The German Normal School and High School was to be built in Gretna, making provision for student accommodation. 61

At further meetings of the new educational society (Schulverein) in January and February of 1889, it was decided to build a two story wood frame school building, 30'×50'. The MEI was located on Lots 1-6, Block 36, Plan 29 (corner of Mary St. and Klassen Ave.) This land was sold to the MEI for \$1 by David Peters. The building was to be completed in time for the fall school year. Wilhelm Rempel agreed to take on the teaching duties. Optimism was high, even though a large portion of the Bergthaler membership broke away from the parent church and its leader Johann Funk, in opposition to this higher education. The "Schulverein" was confident that its goals could not be faulted and would be proven over time. "Die Mennonitische Lehranstalt zu Gretna" was born in controversy and was to mature through it. The school was to play a major role in the growth and development of Gretna and the West Reserve.

The establishment of the "Schulverein" in Gretna in 1889 was only one activity in the community:

This year, (1889) in a sense eclipsed the progress of all former ones. Patterson Bros. opened an implement office; J. J. Conacher a law office; Moulson an agency for the purchase of flax seed; F. Roff began in horse dealing.

Seimens, Bros. & Co. operate a general banking business. They buy and sell foreign and



First MEI which opened in 1889. 1946 MCI yearbook.

domestic exchange, collect, allow interest deposits, do an extensive farm and loan business, and are especially important in being the only banking institution in the Mennonite reserve. Their connections, on the reserve and in many portions of the Northern States, give them a standing the country over. They are permanently established, and make it an object to look after all Mennonite interests, as well as customers of all nationalities, in all parts of the country. They are very popular with all classes, and are making their bank a very useful and important institution.

Gretna was in the past year the third largest wheat market in the province, shipping very nearly 300,000 bushels, nearly all Mennonite product. One half the land in the vicinity, and the municipality of Douglas, is in the fortunate position of having every acre taken up by actual settlers, bringing the land up to \$15 an acre for eight miles from town. 62

The progress described in the **Brandon Mail** missed some of the high points of Gretna life for the year 1889. It failed to mention the construction of a flour mill by David Peters; it neglected to mention the first church erected in Gretna by the Presbyterian congregation that summer; it overlooked the fruit store and restaurant opened that year by Seth Davidson and it failed to point out to its readership that Gretna's population had jumped to 200 from less than 150 the year before. ⁶³

Reflecting the Times

The list of businesses and occupations in 1889 reflect the times. Building a new community, opening up a new country, called for basic skills and supplies. The 1889 **Henderson's** lists Charles Bell and John N. Braun as hotel proprietors, which they had been since Gretna's early years. Enoch Winkler continued as lumber dealer. Clerks at Penner & Co. included Jake and John Kehler and John Shannon. Levi Williams had become the engineer at the Ogilvie elevator. P. Puchinsky worked as blacksmith for J. Mosach and Frank Robb was Alex Smith's stableman. Chris Pieper managed the Ogilvie elevator, Paul Henze looked after

McBean's elevator and James Lawrence had moved over to the Lake of the Woods establishment on the north end of town. Jake Hoffman was clerking in the Queen's Hotel, Louis Wagner was a clerk at the Winkler lumber yard, and Eugene Widmeyer was clerk and bookkeeper for E. Penner & Company. Carpenters Alex Robertson, Robert Fischer, Charles Widden, and contractors Johnson, Chisholm and Oleson & Co. were busy in 1889 trying to keep up with the demand for new buildings. Charles White set up his "waggon maker" business to round out the blacksmith and harnessmaker industries in town. And H. McKay became Gretna's first "bus driver" for the Queen's Hotel. The hotels could not keep up with the traffic through Gretna so George McDougal established a boarding house to ease the strain on the Anglo-American and the Queen's. The implement dealerships also continued their thriving business with T. J. Warnken joining the ranks of the agents, representing J. Elliot & Sons.64

Frank Revell and William Gordon joined the growing list of CPR employees and Charles Phillips became Gretna's second gardener. The liquor business in the hotels and in the Coblentz store, and the customs and immigration commerce, rounded out the picture. Small wonder that James. J. Conacher thought Gretna could do with a law office. 65

While new names and faces kept arriving almost every time the train pulled into the station, departures were also commonplace. Some names simply disappeared from the record. Others linger, well after the individual in question packed his bags and left for parts unknown. Some left Gretna to take up farming nearby or to open up a business in another community. Others left in haste, leaving questions unanswered and doubts in the minds of those who stayed. In 1889, W. P. Leslie left his Spencerfeldt farm and headed south into the United States, presumably settling in Oregon. Leslie had been a part of the Smugglers' Point and Gretna scene for more than 15 years. He had arrived at Fort Dufferin in 1872, coming down the Red River from the United States in a log canoe with Richard Powers who would become the first chief of Manitoba's Provincial Police Force. 66 As young men, Leslie and Powers arrived with little more than the shirts on their backs, seeking the adventure promised them in Canada's newest province.

Perhaps Gretna was becoming too civilized for Leslie's tastes. Perhaps government service did not suit his personal style. He was forever pointing out the inadequate resources and bureaucratic bungling which made his job as Customs Collector difficult. He was outspoken and colorful. Not much is known of his activities after he was relieved of his customs duties by J. F. Tennant. It is rumoured that "he became a defaulter and absconded". Whatever the conditions of Leslie's departure might have been, the only notice of his disappearance from the Gretna scene were the following accounts in **The Southern Manitoba Times:**

August 1, 1889 --

The effects left by W. P. Leslie, once of Gretna, customs officer in charge of that outport, will be sold at sheriff sale at Gretna, on Saturday. They consist of gun, pistol, field glass, buffalo robe, and misc. goods."

August 8, 1889 —

A sheriff's sale of Leslie's effects took place at Gretna yesterday.⁶⁷

The newspapers also reflected more positively on the character of Gretna and its inhabitants. The **Southern Manitoba Times** disputes an account which appeared in the **Winnipeg Free Press** which suggested that:

Emerson has been reduced to a customs outport of Gretna. This, if true, was entirely uncalled for on the part of BOWELL, no person having objected to the old state of things. Gretna has the C.P.R. influence, however, which Emerson has not. We imagine, however, that the word 'Gretna' should be 'Winnipeg' in the dispatch which appeared in the **Free Press**.

Collector Phillips of H.M.C. informs us that he has no instructions re the tacking of Emerson to Gretna as a customs suburb, as was reported in a recent Ottawa dispatch to Winnipeg. 68

Gretna residents will have sided with the Emerson newspaper, although it may have brought a smug smile to the face of some Gretna businessmen to think of Emerson as a Gretna suburb. The small town rivalry certainly existed between these two centres and would stay alive as long as the CPR pushed its Gretna properties, and at least until Altona began to take on the shape of a larger trading centre for the West Reserve.

Social news also received prominence in the fall of 1889. The first annual exhibition of the Rosenfeldt Agricultural Society was held at Gretna on September 27th and 28th. "The weather was favourable and there was a very large attendance." ⁶⁹ Credit for the success went, in part, to former Emerson residents like Tennant and Winkler. The latter was by now representing the Rosenfeldt Constituency in the Provincial Legislature.

Business and Pleasure

Another event of importance in Gretna was picked up by the **Toronto Globe** which was quoted in the September 12th edition of the **Southern Manitoba Times:**

Until we saw the following in the **Toronto Globe**, we had not the least idea of how Mennonites got together their wedding guests, on the occasion of a marriage in the settlement, which proves that if you want to learn of your neighbors you must go from home.

When a Mennonite young lady is married her relatives do not worry their heads about the social position of the guests who are to be invited. There is something very free-hearted and hospitable in this notice which was posted in prominent places in Gretna, Manitoba.

To Attend The Marriage Of Mr. J. I. Bargen and

Miss Anna Penner

The Ceremony Will Be Held By Rev. John Funk At The German School House Next Sunday (25th last) At the Hour of 9 o'clock In The Morning. ⁷⁰

Jubilant Immigrants

Monday last witnessed a sight at Gretna that will live long in the memory of those present as a monument of satisfaction. On the north bound train from Dakota were seven car loads of settlers' effects and the seven families to which they belonged. It was previously made known in Gretna that these settlers and effects were kept in Neche (just across the line) nearly the whole day, and that while there their jubilance at leaving Dakota was so great that the American authorities got on their dignity, sat on the settlers and tore down the banners, mottoes and bunting, with which they bedecked their cars while waiting.

The train, however, at last moved out from Neche and in a few minutes, after running through groves of large trees, stopped at another station, where there was quite a crowd of people. An elderly man, bearing every sign of hard and disappointed toil, alighted and asked the first person he met "what place is this?" and on receipt of the answer "Canada" he took off his hat, straightened up, looked glad, jumped with joy, shouted hurrah for the Queen, gave three cheers and a tiger for Her — which was taken up by his just as demonstrative companions — they shook hands with the crowd of Gretnaites, stumbled up against a mounted policeman (who, in his British uniform, was taking in the sight) gazed at him a few seconds, took off their hats and cheered for "Freedom," "Canada," "The Queen," "The red coats," and "Southern Manitoba" until they fairly wept with feeling of gladness. They did not, however, stop at such demonstrations as these. In a very short time they had their cars bedecked with what bunting, banners, Union Jacks, mottoes, &c., they had saved from the destruction of their decorations by the authorities at Neche.

Streamers with the following amongst other mottoes were conspicuous: —

Good bye Dakota.
No more oxaline fuel.
No more 5 mile water haul.
No more grinding machine agents.
No more bankers' associations.
No more 3 per cent per month.
Free land, plenty timber, pure water,
good crops, interest 8 per cent per annum.
Hurrah for Southern Manitoba.
Bound for the land of freedom.

Southern Manitoba Times *April 30, 1891*

Shades of '92

The undersigned begs permission to respectfully submit the Annual Report as Inspector of Schools.

The Inspectoral Division assigned to me comprises the District Schools within the Mennonite settlements of this Province. I took charge of my office September 1st, 1891. There having been no immediate predecessor in this office, I found no statistics, reports, or any papers of information regarding the condition of schools in the Mennonite settlements except what was furnished me by the Department of Education. To get a proper insight into the condition of education in my district, I made an extended trip through the Mennonite settlements, endeavoring to come into personal contact with teachers and officers of District Schools. I found that there had been eight District Schools in operation during the previous years — four in the settlements east and four in the settlements west of the Red River and that these schools had given good satisfaction to the people, and were considered by most of them an improvement on the private schools still maintained by the vast majority of Mennonites. All teachers expressed themselves much pleased with the prospect of having normal Sessions provided for them, some only regretting that they were not able at the present to spare time and money for attending the same, as they were obliged to supplement their income from their professional work by outside earnings in order to support their families.

Besides inspecting schools I am commissioned by the Department of Education to make arrangements for the training of teachers. To carry out this provision, I assumed charge of the Gretna Normal school, an institution built and supported by an Association of Mennonites. I opened a five weeks' Normal Session on 21st of September, which was attended by twelve students, three of whom received permits from the Department of Education to teach in Mennonite Schools. After one week's vacation, another Session was opened for less advanced students. The enrollment at present has reached twenty-four with prospects of an increase after New Years. It is proposed that another Session of three months be opened about the fifteenth of April for the benefit of those now engaged in teaching.

H. H. Ewert, 1892 Inspector's Report, reprinted in

Gretna Public School Yearbook 1937

The marriage of Erdmann Penner's daughter to his Plum Coulee store manager, J. I. Bargen, followed in the tradition of the Hiebert marriage at Niverville. The modern axiom that "business and pleasure don't mix" seems not to have been coined as yet.

The other Erdmann Penner story of that fall was the dissolution of the partnership of Penner, Julius Siemens and Jacob P. Siemens. The dissolution effective August 9, 1889 was by mutual consent and the banking business continued in Gretna under the Siemens Bros. & Company name.⁷¹ The Siemens family may have lost the association with Erdmann Penner but it gained on the family side of the ledger. When the Siemens brothers first set up their banking venture in Gretna they left Abram Siemens in Minneapolis, Minnesota where he studied medicine. 72 In 1889 studies completed, Abram arrived in Gretna to set up his medical practices. Dr. Donovan would find himself with more time to devote to his consular and business affairs in Gretna and in North Dakota, but his services as a doctor remained invaluable to the border communities in the area.

German School Opens

The "Mennonitische Lehranstalt", usually referred to as the "German School House", opened without fanfare in fall of 1889. The last Sunday in August saw a quiet group gather in the new school to dedicate the building and encourage the teacher, Wilhelm Rempel, who had moved to Gretna from Reinland. The Mennonite school also made it possible for members of the faith in Gretna to congregate in a place of worship which was truly their own. The Presbyterian Church was very much a part of their lives and they would continue to participate in religious and social events presented in that church. The school, however, represented a first break within Gretna from the ecumenical form of religious worship practiced in the community. With the growing population came the opportunity to worship in one's own traditions.

The **Lutherische Kirchenblatt**, published by the Canadian Lutheran Synod in Ontario, printed the following letter from Rev. Herman C. Schmieder, in 1889:

Dear Kirchenblatt,

. . . however, since my last letter I have experienced much work and care, joy and blessing. On one occasion I was in Gretna, 65 miles south of Winnipeg. Here I met a wonderful young man, a friend of our mission work, Mr. Herman Spring, the manager of an apothecary shop. He is a son of our beloved Mission President for so many years, the blessed Pastor Spring of New Hamburg. He had made it known in Gretna that I would be preaching there and as a result we had a well attended service, most of these present being Mennonite people. Gretna is situated in a reserve for the people of that faith who immigrated here from Russia 16 years ago. They are very conservative folk, close-knit, and indisposed to altering their German tongue, costume, or customs. There are less than 10 Lutherans in Gretna, but for the sake of these it is my intention to visit them again, indeed as often as possible. 73

Douglas Municipality Absorbed

Just as the new German School received little publicity in the newspapers of the day, little mention was made of the discussions, debates, and decisions which resulted in the disappearance of the Douglas Municipality. Municipal boundaries were redrawn in 1889 to put the Douglas citizenry back into the Rhineland Municipality. The West Reserve was to be divided again with the Bergthalers and Sommerfelders (predominantly) situated in Rhineland municipal district. The newly created Stanley Municipality would border the Rhineland Municipality at the village of Reinland on the west side, and the northern and eastern borders of Rhineland would be virtually unchanged. Douglas Municipality would continue to exist up to the end of 1890, under the leadership of Reeve Gerhard Klassen. Eighteen eighty-nine would be Franz Kliewer's last year as the Douglas Secretary-Treasurer. He was succeeded by J. P. Siemens and Wilhelm Rempel in the transitional year of 1890. All of these men continued their municipal duties in the redrawn Rhineland Municipality.

In addition to providing Gretna with the first Mennonite highschool in the country, the Mennonite School Society gave Gretna a most valuable servant in Wilhelm Rempel. William Hespeler went about setting up Western Canada's first German weekly newspaper, Der Nordwesten, in 1889. Wilhelm Rempel was called upon to be its Gretna correspondent. Rempel was not new to the world of newspapers. He had served the **Southern Manitoba** Times as correspondent for Reinland and Blumenort throughout the 1880's. His regular notes on events and personalities in Gretna throughout the 1890's, combined with the occasional lengthier submission from other Gretna readers and the advertisements, paint a vivid picture of life in a border town at the turn of the century.

Gretna had survived the boom and bust cycles of the 1880's virtually unscathed. Its existence was not based on land speculation and get-rich-quick schemes. Its growth as a commercial centre resulted from the market for goods and services among the solid Mennonite farming population of the West Reserve. Businesses changed hands regularly and as the needs of the farmers changed so did the nature of the businesses in Gretna. Christian Erickson came to Gretna in late 1889 to become its first tinsmith, August Katol worked as miller in David Peter's new mill when it opened in 1889. He was joined by C. Fischer of Rockwell, Texas in June of the following year. 74 The implement industry continued to expand in 1890 with Hans Hotopf taking on the agency for Patterson Bros., and Jacob Hoffman taking on the Maxwell machinery agency from John Hofley, who moved to Plum Coulee to open a hotel.75 Provincial records indicate John Hofley was the first provincial police constable in Gretna. Henry Ritz took on the agency for Brantford Machinery in addition to his partnership with Chris Pieper. Carl Kriger arrived to expand the shoemaking services already offered by Simon Wolkof. 76

The finer things in life were also getting more attention in Gretna by 1890. Minnie and Ruby Hoffman advertised their services as music teachers. 77 J. J. Abbott moved his photograph gallery between Gretna and Emerson on a regular basis, and J. R. Hoffman added books and stationery to items carried in his general store. 78 William Russell took over the CPR telegraph agency from Frank Revell, bringing along Gretna's first telegraph operator identified as holding down that occupation was James Keefer. 79 Modern communications technology was pulling Gretna inexorably toward the twentieth century.

Name Change

February 20 — Our municipality has been established for some time now and has changed its name from Douglas to Rhineland. Most of the votes this year went to the old Reeve Gerhard Klassen, who served last year.

Der Nordwesten February 27, 1891



Friesen Flour Mill on Mill Road, built in 1889. Original owner was David Peters. P#789



Isaac Loewen and Peter Abrams families. Standing: William Abrams, Sara Abrams. Seated: Isaac Loewen, Susanna Rempel Abrams Loewen. Center, standing: Peter Abrams, Katrina Abrams. Seated, front: Gerhard Abrams and seated on Mrs. Loewen's lap: Susanna Loewen. Taken in 1893. P#1459

Public Schools Moves

Schools made the news as well. Wilhelm Rempel found the 60 students in the high school more than he could handle. He left his post as teacher to become involved in other activities in Gretna and surrounding area. The German School House closed its doors after one short year, but the buildings did not stand empty. The Gretna Public School population had outgrown the one room school. A larger school was needed. On May 9, 1890 a general meeting of ratepayers was held in the Public School. The meeting was well attended. It gave its school trustees the authority to build a new school, large enough to accommodate further growth in student enrollment. 80

Work on the new two-story school encountered a few snags and did not get under way in time for the return of students that fall. The Public School rented the empty "German School House" just in time for the start of the school year late August in 1890.81

That fall Philip Rau sold his saddlery to A. Feich, Abrams & Esau disbanded, with Esau picking up Isaak Loewen as his new partner. Frank Roff bought the well-drilling equipment from Michael Long and Long became the Gretna representative for the North of Scotland Canadian Land & Mortgage Company. Long also became the collection agent for Hutcheson Bros. agents for Hofley & O'Leary. John Nicholas Braun, owner of the Queen's Hotel died on June 5th, 1890, and Harry Braun assumed proprietorship of this establishment. 82 The Anglo-American also experienced some changes with J. D. Pierson relinquishing ownership to the partnership of Ritz & Widmeyer before the year was out.

Along with the good news also comes some bad. Hans Hotopf hastily departed his post with Patterson Bros. at Gretna, apparently absconding with varying amounts of money extended to him by several businessmen. Another story concerned itself with Peter Bright who at one time had worked for the CPR in Gretna. This unfortunate young man was

hospitalized when he mistook a bottle of "Carbolsäure" for whiskey. This account likely created less of a stir among **Nordwesten** readers than the story of Gretna's first recorded fire which broke out near the Schultz & Hansen store. The fire caused little damage and was quickly brought under control. 83 It was the first in a long list of fires which would plague Gretna throughout its history.

Fall and winter of 1890–1891 was a hectic time for Gretna businessmen and residents. Dr. A. Siemens made several excursions to Winnipeg to buy the necessary medicines and supplies to open a second drugstore. The new store was to carry a complete line of medical and pharmaceutical goods and sundry goods, especially items for the Christmas season. Dr. Siemens opened the "Gretna Medicine Store" early in November of 1890 in David Peters' former store, serving his customers himself until a suitable pharmacist could be found. 84

Gretna's Social Life

The social side of the ledger was full of activity in the year 1890. The Rosenfeldt Agricultural Society Fall Exhibition was held in Gretna for a second year, on October 2nd and 3rd. The socialites also decided it was time to structure Gretna's social and cultural life. To this end:

A select party of young people of Gretna have formed themselves into a social club called 'The Home Circle'. In view of the approaching long winter evenings this is a step in the right direction, and if the opening hop, which was held in Forrester's Hall on Friday evening last, can be taken as a criterion, the success of the Home Circle is assured. About 50 couples, some from Bathgate, others from Neche and the remainder from Gretna, whose merry, smiling faces wore expressions of pleasure throughout the evening, tripped 'the light fantastic' to the Apollo-like strains of the Winnipeg string band. The last dance of the programme of 20 pieces was finished at about 2 o'clock, and dispersive chaperones hurried away to their homes, to meet again every alternate Friday at the same place and under the same auspices.85

Located above the Coblentz liquor wholesale business next door to the Anglo-American, the Forresters' Hall played an important part in the life of residents, young and old alike. To keep Gretna's light footed friends dressed and coiffed for such social occasions, A. Svenson set up a tailor's shop and H. Voigt a photography and barbershop. All of this may have been upsetting to some of Gretna's Mennonite businessmen. One at least, David Peters, the owner of the mill, let it be known that he was not suited for that business and hoped to sell his enterprise soon. 86

By year's end a second lumber yard was established by partners Reimer & Wiebe; Charles Wahn left his job with the Watson Manufacturing Co. to take up the agent's position with the Hutchison firm, Harry and Thomas Tennant followed J. F. Tennant to Gretna to work as customs brokers, and the CPR transferred Colonel Soper to Gretna along with John Abrams (clerk) and Robert Binney (section foreman). Colonel Soper was a car inspector and ''repairer' and, like CPR employees who preceded and followed him, would play an important part in the development of this border community.

An illustration of how busy life had been in Gretna in 1890 can be found in the immigration records for this Canadian Port of Entry. A total of 804 settlers immigrated through Gretna to take up residence in Canada, bringing with them no less than 20 train cars of stock. "In addition to the foregoing 237 settlers entered their goods and effects at the Custom Office, Gretna, and from there were distributed to various parts of the Province." ⁸⁷

The demise of the Douglas Municipality and the restructuring of the Rhineland boundaries and wards seems to have attracted little concern in Gretna during the course of the year. The name change was not significant as far as the local businessmen and community leaders were concerned. In their opinion, Douglas Municipality had been expanded to include Rhineland and the municipal government would continue to be administered from



Rachel Coblentz and Mrs. Sadie (Scott) Ritz, circa 1900, P#366

The School

All friends of the school in southern Manitoba will be glad to hear that Prof. H. H. Ewert leader of the school for higher education in Halstead, Kansas, is coming to visit us during the Christmas.

I would like to inform those who are not acquainted with the school movement, that at a recent meeting in Gretna they decided unanimously to call Prof. Ewert to come and help us establish a Normal School and to take over the leadership. As a result Brother Ewert comes first to personally view the circumstances, demands, and conditions required. He happens to be a minister, and will very likely preach in various churches. All friends of the school should make it their duty to renew their interests regarding the school question during the coming holidays.

A general meeting concerning the school will be called, where Prof. Ewert will have the opportunity to express his views regarding suitable arrangements, administration and supervision of the school. The date for the meeting will be announced later.

The School Committee

Der Nordwesten December 19, 1890 Gretna much as it had been before. Results of the municipal election seemed to substantiate the accuracy of such assumptions: Gerhard Klassen was re-elected as Reeve. However, it would not be long before people in Gretna felt that the new municipal government did not serve their interests as well as they had been served under Douglas.

Perhaps municipal politics seemed unimportant in comparison to the main story around Christmas, 1890. Certainly, it was noteworthy that:

A large number of young men of the Gretna and Neche area will spend their Christmas in Winnipeg. The Leland House Christmas dinner bill of fare appears to be a drawing card. 88

Visitor from Kansas

But the event that received special attention was the visit from Halstead, Kansas of one Professor H. H. Ewert. He had been asked by the Mennonite School Committee to consider coming to Manitoba to found a "Normal School" and instruct in it. Announcement of the impending visit, during the Christmas break, was accompanied by a notice in **Der Nordwesten** that a general meeting of the Mennonite School Society would be organized to give Professor Ewert an opportunity to explain how the school might be operated.⁸⁹

When it became apparent to trustees of the Gretna Public School that the German School House would be unavailable by the fall of 1891, they quickly re-activated their previous plans to construct a two-story school. The contract was let to Robert Fischer. Work was under way by the middle of April and completed before the end of the summer. Plans called for a bell tower and a German/English reading room which would be open to all local residents. The German School House was definitely re-opening its doors as an institute of higher learning with an emphasis given to the training of qualified teachers for the Mennonite schools in Manitoba. Professor George Bryce, on behalf of the Provincial Board of Education, visited H. H.



Daughters of Charlie Wahn in 1903. Top to Bottom: Alberta, Barbara, Josephine, Maude, Margaret. Note period dresses and hairstyles. P#859

Ewert in Kansas during the summer of 1891. His assignment included an evaluation of Professor Ewert's qualifications as teacher to determine his suitability as Normal School headmaster at the Gretna School. Bryce also went to see if Ewert would be willing to take on the duties of school inspector for the schools on the Manitoba Mennonite Reserves. 90

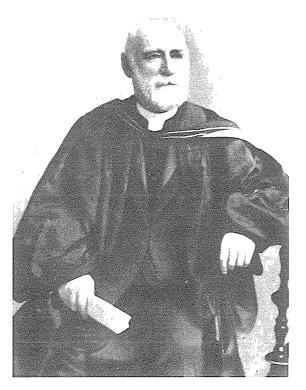
It is possible that Otto Schultz suggested the excursion to Kansas at one of the Education Board's meetings. It is also possible that Enoch Winkler played a part in sending provincial representation to interview Professor Ewert. It is known that Professor Bryce was so impressed with the dedicated H. H. Ewert, that he took it upon himself to sell the idea of a Normal School in Gretna to the Kansas educator. Bryce reported back to the Provincial Government in glowing terms, indicating that the problems in the Mennonite schools in Manitoba would soon be overcome with the help of Professor Ewert. 91 Ewert had already been approached by the Mennonite School Society on the Mennonite West Reserve. This Society (Schulverein) owned a building in Gretna and was committed to improving the educational standards in the Manitoba Mennonite schools. This Society, furthermore, had the financial backing of several prominent Mennonite businessmen in the area.

Bryce could also report on Ewert's missionary dedication and determination which were to be the key elements in keeping the Gretna Normal School open. His ability and experience were to keep its standards high. Ewert and the re-opened German School House often were to be the centre of controversy among Manitoba Mennonites. This controversy was fueled somewhat by the dual role played by H. H. Ewert within the Manitoba educational system. In addition to his duties as headmaster and teacher in the Gretna Normal School, Ewert took on the duties of school inspector in the Mennonite schools for the Provincial Government. Since the school inspector was feared by many and loathed by others, it is not surprising

that Mennonites might view the Professor from Kansas with some suspicion.

Ewert Settling In

When Professor H. H. Ewert and his family stepped off the train at Gretna in the summer of 1891, they entered a prairie climate and landscape not unlike that of Kansas. They settled into a way of life similar to what they knew in the U.S. Sitting on the border, Gretna had a foot in both worlds, making the newcomer feel at home. The political climate, however, was quite different in Manitoba. Professor Ewert encountered a political world that was still trying out British law and custom where twenty



George Bryce. He visited Kansas to convince H. H. Ewert to come to Manitoba. P#1102

PAM

Religious Privileges

Mr. A. L. Young, who resides in Winnipeg has visited several Catholic Schools in the Province, calling himself an Inspector, appointed by the Government for that object. He followed no uniform system in his inspection, most of the time being admitted merely as an ordinary visitor.

He advised the people to accept the new School Law, stating that they could continue with their books and methods, provided they would have the religious teaching at the end of the class.

He went as far as to say that the religious instruction may be given between 3 and 4 o'clock, although these hours are included in the **school hours** fixed by the advisory board.

It is well known that 2 schools in St. Anne, one in St. Leon and one at Lake Manitoba, though Catholic Schools and conducted entirely according to the by-laws framed by the late Catholic Board of Ecuation, have received their share of the Legislative Grant for schools.

They obtained that particular recognition by signing certain declarations prepared by the actual Department of Education; though such declarations are not in accordance with the practices followed in the said schools.

After the passing of the Public Schools acts of 1890, the Department of Education made arrangements with the Mennonites at Gretna, by which facilities are granted to them for education, without requiring any sacrifice with regard to their religion or language.

Professor Ewert, a Mennonite brought from Kansas, occupies the triple position of teacher of a Mennonite denominational school, of Government Inspector of normal teachers in the same school, and of Government Inspector.

The gentleman in his official report of the Department of Education page 37 says himself: "I assumed charge of the Gretna Normal School, an institution built and supported by an Association of Mennonites".

It is evident that the right, taken from the Catholics by the School Acts of 1890, with regard to the teaching of religion in their schools and the existence of their normal schools, have been offered and given to the Mennonites, after the passing of the same acts and that without sacrifice on the part of the interested.

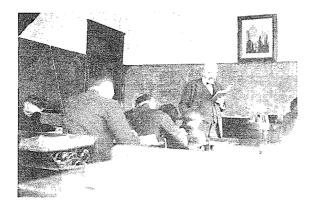
> January 13, 1893 From: Lieutenant Governor, A. L. Young To: Clifford Sifton, Minister of Education John Christian Schultz Papers PAM

German in District Schools

In regard to the report of the Manitoba School Board to the School Trustees of Gretna, we bring the following news to the Germans in Southern Manitoba to promote better understanding. We understand that many people are getting the wrong impression; that the district schools will not be allowed to teach any German. The translation of the report reads: "Some taxpayers take the view that the private Mennonite schools are hindering the progress of the upper classes in the public school, by removing students who want to learn German. At the same time the taxpayers also think that the school has an important task to fulfill and should be continued. To meet these difficulties I would recommend that the Gretna public schools trustees hire teachers that are also capable of teaching German. By the time the beginners under these arrangements would reach the intermediate classes they would have learnt enough German to meet their needs."

Accordingly the trustees of the district schools have given full permission to teach German as well as English.

Der Nordwesten February 24, 1893



Heinrich H. Ewert teaching in classroom in the MCI in 1927. He was principal of the MEI and the MCI from 1891–1934 and government inspector of Mennonite schools for many years. He was also the founder and editor of *Der Mitarbeiter*. P#821

years earlier the only law had been the territorial administration and the Hudson's Bay Company. Only a year earlier, the Greenway government in the Provincial Legislature had dropped the French language and declared Manitoba an English only province, contrary to the British North America Act provision which saw Manitoba enter Confederation as a bilingual province.

When Ewert arrived in Gretna, German speaking citizens in Manitoba were beginning to detect changes in attitude to the use of the German language in doing business. The more conservative Mennonite leaders expressed the concern that, with school inspectors looking into their schools and with English instruction being provided in the Gretna school for Mennonite teachers, it would not be long before they would be required to teach their children in English. The language issue was debated in Der Nordwesten. Time would be the final adjudicator in the debate, although each side in the minority rights discussion would point to differing evidence to show the validity of its position. Ewert would find himself thrown into the centre of this controversy. It would be impossible to separate himself, the Normal School, or Gretna, from the debate.

For the time being all municipal and commercial businesses in Gretna and on the West Reserve continued to be carried out in the German language. The Siemens Bros. bank published a lengthy guide to the Canadian banking system for its customers in Gretna. It was in German.⁹² The Siemens Bros. expanded their banking and pharmaceutical services to Plum Coulee in 1891. The apothecary business must have been going through difficult times since Hermann Spring, manager of Donovan's drugstore decided to return home in 1891. Gretna businessmen gave him a farewell presentation of a "suitably engraved wristwatch". 93 The lumberyard partnership of Henry Reimer and Johann Wiebe was dissolved that summer, with Wiebe continuing on his own. Henry Ritz added the London & Ontario Investment Company to the growing list of enterprises for which

he acted as agent. Chris Pieper became an agent for the Manitoba Mortgage & Investment Company, and Wilhelm Rempel took on the Gretna agency for the Manitoba & Northwestern Loan Company. Finkelstein & Co. gave notice that they planned to close their Gretna store, John Koslowsky's blacksmith shop announced it was beginning to repair steam engines, and Jacob Hoffmann advertised his new line of Westbrook machinery. Anderson & Calvert Farm machinery also set up an agent, Johann Schwartz in Gretna. Schultz and Hansen undertook to divest themselves of their Plum Coulee and Reinland stores in 1891. Pieper and Ritz dissolved their partnership in early spring with Pieper keeping the machinery business and Ritz purchasing the Anglo-American Bank.⁹⁴ Chris Pieper added the Stevens & Burns line of farm implements to his line when he and Ritz went their separate business ways.

Gateway to Freedom

Banking was only part of the Siemens business in Gretna and Plum Coulee. Taking advantage of their location at a Port of Entry, they offered land for sale to immigrants between Gretna and Winnipeg. They also organized expeditions to view lands opening up in the Territories west of Manitoba. Siemens Bros. also assisted those, in South Russia or Germany, who wished to come to Canada but lacked the immediate financial resources to make the trip. In July of 1891, Gretna saw 45 immigrants from Russia arrive at the train station. This was not the first nor the last group that Siemens Bros. & Co. helped come to the new world. Gretna's importance as a Port of Entry would continue as long as lands in the southwest and central parts of the Territories were available as homesteads. Settlers from the American Midwest joined the European and Russian immigrants in seeking the "land of freedom".95

Not all was serious business in 1891. Mrs.

Hoffman drilled some Gretna young people in preparation for:

. . . an amateur performance and concert to be given in aid of the organ fund of the Gretna church. As the concert and performance has every indication of being exceptionally good, efforts are being made to have them perform here (Emerson). They will very likely come in the near future. ⁹⁶

Der Nordwesten reports that this concert was first presented in Gretna's new Public School on the first Thursday evening in May. The same report also mentions that Joseph Tennant and Adolphe Coblentz were not around for the concert since they had left to partake of the curative baths at Banff. It can be surmised that Coblentz had complete confidence in his new store manager, Fred Osborne, and that civil servants even in those days were entitled to holidays. ⁹⁷ Or perhaps things in Gretna had slowed down just a bit. The mill had shut down for a general maintenance check and overhaul. Jacob Friesen had bought the mill from David Peters in February of 1891.

Der Nordwesten correspondent at Gretna reported a particularly wet spring and summer in 1891 with prospects of an excellent harvest. The same writer implies that the good weather and fine crop prospects contributed to an increase in matrimonial occasions. No connection is made between the Home Circle social events in the Forresters' Hall and the number of weddings, or between the number of liquor licences issued and the young hearts turning to love, nor does the park and picnic activities at the Pembina River receive credit for the increase. And then again, maybe it was the excitement at the race track!

Gretna Turf Club

The horse was an important part of everyday life in Gretna. Those who could afford the best chose to bring to town the finest and the fastest of horses. The high-stepping trotter and classy carriage turned the heads of all aspiring young hearts, just as the Mercedes or Cadillac would

turn them half a century later. It was only a matter of time before those interested in good horses organized themselves into a racing association. Maybe it was the rain. Maybe it was good prospects in the summer of 1891. Whatever the motivation, organizational meetings were held throughout the summer and fall and a track was laid out. "The first meeting of the Gretna Turf Club Association was held on the 19th and 20th of October. Good purses were offered and the entries all filled." 98

The increased social activity did not result in any increased lawlessness. The occasional problem at the border was being looked after by the frequent patrols of the NWMP. The local problems had required only a part-time police constable hired by the Village of Gretna in 1888. John Hofley had managed his law enforcement duties in addition to his business activities until he left for Plum Coulee. Upon his departure in April of 1890, Gretna was assigned a provincial constable. Constable Paul Heuse occasionally was called upon to transport a lawbreaker to provincial gaol and he would sometimes be asked to attend court proceedings in Gretna or Emerson. 99 Gretna may have been a border town and the scene of regular smuggling, and may have been viewed as a veritable Gomorrah because of its several bars and liquor wholesalers, but newspaper accounts fail to place Gretna among the "wild west" towns so popular on twentieth century Hollywood screens.

Hardly Mundane

Citizens were concerned with the more mundane in 1891. The new school, the appointment of H. H. Ewert as Inspector of schools, the building of sidewalks along the streets other than Seventh Street, the beginning of German Lutheran services by Pastor Hermann Schmieder and the new schoolteachers in the two-story Public School generated enough excitement. 100 Perhaps Gretna was bracing itself for the year to follow. Eighteen ninety-two was going to be talked about well into the twen-

Not So Temperate

In the winter of 1891, one John Mordy was travelling on the prairies with his magic lantern and slides and giving lectures, ostensibly on temperance. Collector Joseph Tennant at Gretna, Manitoba caught Mordy trying to smuggle slides from the Dakota Territory. He obliged Mordy to pay the duty but didn't seize the slides, though from his report to Winnipeg February 24, 1891, he sounded as if he wished he had:

On the 20th inst. Mr. Mordy secured the use of the church from the trustees for the ostensible reason of giving a temperance lecture, and a lantern exhibition. One of his views showed a female crossing the suspension bridge at Niagara from Canada into the United States, clad in very scant apparel. A following view shows the same person on her return, padded both in front and behind with her appearance highly suggestive that she was soon about to become a mother. This was the grounds for a free trade argument in which the gentleman was so abusive of the Canadian Customs and launched out into such open tirades against the Dominion Government that he was compelled to stop by some members of the audience present not willing to pay for such an entertainment and the trustees refused him the church for any further such exhibition.

> Carnet Vol. 12 No. 3 1983 Customs and Excise Canada

Gretna Turf Club

The first meeting of the Gretna Turf Club Association was held on the 19th and 20th inst. Good purses were offered and the entries all filled.

This was the most exciting race of the meeting and large sums changed hands on the event; pools sold even on Avon Girl against the field. Avon Girl did some fast work the first day in the 3 min. trot, and knowing ones bet their money freely and won by a close call. There were 3 entries Avon Girl, Paragon and Black Joe, in the 1st heat Paragon had the lead Black Joe next and Avon Girl on the outside. It was too hot a place for Black Joe, and he soon got behind, Paragon and the little mare having a splendid race. Paragon led to the wire and won the first heat in 2:37½.

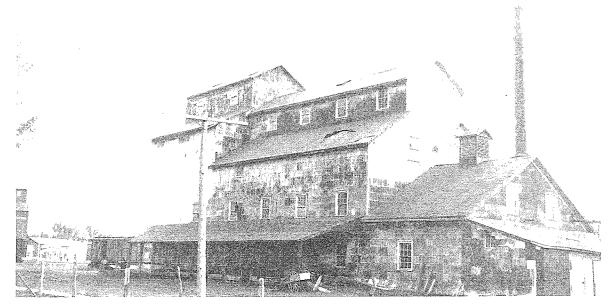
In the second heat Paragon got a bad start, nearly a length behind. On the first turn the driver of Avon Girl closed in, breaking his pace, and although Avon Girl won by a few feet, the race was given to Paragon; time, 2:39. In the 3rd heat a good start was made with Paragon leading to the ³/₄ pole, when the bay mare drew ahead and on the curve was slightly in the lead.

Somebody drove too close or both, as the shaft of Paragon's sulky tangled in the wheel of the other's sulky and the horse must have struck the wheel also, as he fell flat, throwing his driver, H. Ronah, smashing the wheel of Cable's sulky and throwing Avon Girl on her side. It took considerable time for the judges to decide this, both drivers claiming a foul; there were no poling judges out and it was declared no heat. Paragon was evidently hurt by the fall, as he refused to show his speed in the next three heats, taking 3rd place in 2:41, 2:41½ and 2:43.

Southern Manitoba Times October 29, 1891 tieth century. It was the community's good fortune that Dr. James McKenty had set up a medical practice in Gretna in the spring of 1891. His services would be crucial to the area.

Quite early in the year, Dr. McKenty found himself up against competition he had not bargained for. The Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company arrived in Gretna in late January and promoted their "Indian Oils and Salves" until the market was saturated. 101 J. B. Masters, M.D. also made a brief foray into the Gretna medical market in 1892, at the same time setting up a general store with a John Unger. 102 The name McKenty was to become a part of Gretna life for some time to come. It would remain long after Masters or the Kickapoo consortium had packed their bags and left town. McKenty and Donovan shared the responsibility of providing medical services on both sides of the border. This tradition is continued today and demonstrates the illusory nature of the 49th Parallel. The 49th Parallel was shut down in midsummer 1892, however, when an outbreak of smallpox at Gretna brought fear to the hearts of area residents.

The year had been pleasant enough. Reeve Klassen retained his position which was contested by Michael Long. Alex Smith returned from a trip to Ontario with the news that farmers there were experiencing hard times. Thomas Shannon, son of the Customs Officer, died early in January. The Gretna Turf Club Association sought incorporation, hoping to sell 16 shares at \$125 each to raise capital of \$2000. Contractor Charles Wheeler called for tenders to build a residence in Gretna for Enoch Winkler MPP. The building was to cost \$5,000 and would have a brick veneer. The Ladies Aid Society of the Presbyterian Church held their annual oyster supper in March of 1892. It was well attended. Certain citizens sent a petition to the Grand Lodge of the Masonic Order requesting a lodge be chartered in Gretna. 103



Friesen Flour Mill on Mill Road with elevator added to south end of mill around 1900. Owner of mill at this time was Jacob P. Friesen, P#255

Penner and Politics

May Tennant, daughter of J. F. Tennant, and Helena Penner returned from school for the summer in July that year. They had been attending the Catholic School in St. Boniface. They would wish by month's end that they had stayed with the kind Sisters at school. The month of July provided Gretna residents with a great deal of excitement. The annual meeting of the Mennonite School Society was held as usual on the first Tuesday of July. This year they could entertain a report from Professor

Ewert. School business was overshadowed by the provincial elections which were beginning to heat up somewhat. This time both Enoch and Valentine Winkler were seeking seats in the Manitoba Legislature. Enoch hoped to be reelected in the Rosenfeldt Constituency and brother Valentine was seeking election in the newly created Rhineland Constituency. The July 23rd election returned both Winklers to the Provincial Legislature. Voters were also given an opportunity to vote for or against prohibition when they cast their ballots in 1892. Excitement must have been quite high during the



Peter Schellenberg and brothers Diedrich Klaassen and Abram Klassen on Seventh St. near Dr. McKenty's office, in 1899. P#216

Federal Election and Prohibition Referendum To the Mennonite Electorate

The undersigned has been nominated (appointed) as returning officer by the Government for the constituency of Rosenfeldt.

The instructions that I received from Mr. C. Graburn, secretary of the Executive Council, make it the duty of every returning officer and voter to cast his vote on the election ballot distributed either for or against prohibition. (Also some have had to promise to vote against the government because of debts outstanding or other circumstances that forced them.) This kind of thing is a rather underhanded and low means to gain votes, and is highly improper. Thanks to the government's foresight, we can cast our ballots in secret so nobody can know how we voted. Therefore take advantage of this privilege and don't let any obligation prevent you from voting as you want to. Vote for the Government candidate.

Der Nordwesten July 24, 1892

Smallpox in Gretna

Gretna, July 30 — Our town is experiencing something now that has not happened to us in all the seventeen years we have lived in Manitoba.

About a week ago a case of smallpox was discovered among the Chinese people living in town. This caused quite a disturbance among the citizens here. Without much planning or deliberating these braided mongolians were rushed out of town, half a mile east, where they hurriedly erected some shanties, and there they delivered the whole Asiatic relations close to the North Dakota boundary. No doubt this created great tension and excitement among these people having to leave (and not of their own free will). About 20 of them living in one house, imprisoned, so to speak, and living mostly on rice and fruit now had to leave their home without really knowing the reason. Hence a discussion started amongst them that the civilized world does not understand.

Luckily though, there were some of them who could speak a little English and could serve as interpreters, and then could explain what was expected of them. The news of the eruption of this dreadful disease spread rapidly through town, and some were so frightened that it is a wonder they didn't get sick. They claim to have a reason to be frightened since smallpox is an Egyptian disease.

Besides the Chinese, several others contracted the disease, but they were not sure it was smallpox. However, yesterday one more person got sick out of pure fright, after he had been vaccinated to avoid sickness.

In order to prevent spreading the disease to other areas, the town has been isolated from all communications, and punishment will be administered to anyone who crosses the boundary of quarantine. So we are isolated from all personal communications and have not heard from anyone in the country for a whole week. All business in town has been crippled, especially the machinery dealers who work for commission. They are stricken with the fever of impatience, because they know the time to sell machinery is now, and they fear the farmers might go to Emerson or elsewhere to get it. The town seems to have died. One finds only one clerk in the stores to serve the odd customer that comes along to buy 5 or 10 cents worth of merchandise. The blacksmith has laid down his hammer. The waiters in the hotel have no glasses to fill and sit in front of the door on a beer-case practically all day looking down the empty streets. The Postmaster looks somewhat disheartened and disgruntled at the overfilled mail-boxes and newspaper

continued

campaign, given that Erdmann Penner sought election in the Rosenfeldt Constituency on the Conservative ticket. His daughter, Helena remembered this election.

For a man like father, with his keen active mind, and who had been so completely deprived of that side of life in Russia where the ordinary man had no say in the running of the government and elections were unheard of, when he arrived in Canada just a few years after Confederation and John A. MacDonald was the hero, he became a MacDonald worshipper and a Conservative to the core. To him John A., right or wrong, was always right. And all the boys in the store became Conservatives too. Whether they really were at heart or only paid lip service I do not know but anyway there was complete agreement and harmony on that score. On the whole Gretna was a Conservative stronghold.

It went so far they even persuaded my father to be a candidate in the provincial election. He was rather reluctant but finally consented. He was no politician and no public speaker and would not raise a finger to win the election. He said that the people in the reserve knew him and if they wanted him to represent them they could vote for him. His opponent was a Mr. Winkler — a good man too. His fellow workers toured the country in a buckboard with a keg of beer in the back of the rig. They would stop, be friendly, pat the children on the head, all have a beer together, and the deal was made. The upshot, of course, was that Father was defeated. I don't think he minded much, he had done his duty and Mother was very much relieved. She had an idea that all politicians and all lawyers were not to be trusted. 'They were opportunists'. She was a fundamentalist, yea was yea and nay was nay and all else was evil. 104

Penner lost to Winkler and the liquor kept on flowing in Manitoba even though 19,637 votes were cast provincially in favour of prohibition to 7,115 against.

Smallpox

Life was returning to normal in Gretna when smallpox was discovered at the Chinese laundry on the south side of town. By July 28th the whole town was under quarantine. Six cases were identified by the end of July in addition to the deaths of Mr. Mosach and Mr. Hamilton. Quarantine sheds were erected outside the Village just south of NeuAnlage, despite the protests of David Schellenberg who expressed concern over the sheds' proximity to his farm. Dr. Donovan was the Provincial Health Officer for the Rhineland Municipality throughout this crisis. His report to the Hon. Thomas Greenway provides a detailed description:

Dear Sir:

I beg leave to submit the following Report in connection with the recent outbreak of small-pox at Gretna and Rhineland:

On July the 20th I discovered a suspicious case of sickness in the family of Lewis Calder in Gretna and at once set about guarding the house and preventing communication with the family. On the following day I felt justified in pronouncing it small–pox, and quarantining the place fully. I then set about discovering the source from whence it came, and suspicion having fallen upon a house in which a number of Chinamen had lived for some time, an investigation revealed the convalescent. I at once telegraphed your Department for authority to act, and received instructions very promptly to establish the fullest quarantine.

I at once summoned all the carpenters and others whom I could get to build a temporary hospital on the prairie for the Chinamen and the daughter of Lewis Calder. Twelve of these Chinamen had been partly isolated from the three sick ones, and begged to be permitted to have a place separate from them, which necessitated the building of two shanties, one to contain twelve and one to contain the three sick. They were removed that night about 11 o'clock. On the following day and before the place for Calder's girl could be prepared, three more cases showed in two houses. Two in the house of Ambrose Kretch; the other in the family of Robert Fisher, a family of nine children and three adults. These were at once isolated as well as possible in the houses in which they were until they could be removed to the prairie, and so effectually was it done that although the young man from Fisher's house and from Kroetch's died of the disease, only one new case occurred and that in Kroetch's family, and

was the result of obstinacy and impudence and disobeying our orders.

On the same day information came to us of a case of small-pox at the village of Rhineland. Dr. McKenty, my assistant who had returned from investigating a rumor of small-pox at Rosenfeld, was despatched that night sixteen miles to Rhineland and found a man named Puhr in a small house with six children in the same house and two men from Plum Coulee staying there for the night. Puhr had had small-pox broken out on him several days. The house was at once quarantined, and the men from Plum Coulee were dispatched home and compelled to stay in their home for fourteen days under guard.

Quarantined

Gretna was fully quarantined on the 23rd, and guards placed in sufficient numbers to fully protect all places suspected.

Another camp had to be built at once, in which was placed Mosach, Hamilton and Kroetch's girl. All cases, except the Kroetch girl, were severe cases of confluent small–pox, of which Hamilton and Mosach died. On the 28th Rev. Mr. Small, who was stopping with Mr. Irvine's family showed symptoms that were suspicious, and precautions were immediately taken to protect Irvine's family, and his case closely watched, and on the 28th there was no doubt of the condition, and he was removed to the prairie, another camp having been built.

So many cases coming down in such a short space of time, and most of these cases very severe, it was a grave matter to care for them. I found it impossible to get sufficient help to nurse the sick, so desparate was the case that the sick were wandering around in delirium unrestrained. I offered a man who had formerly had small-pox \$10.00 a day, but he refused to go. At this time I appealed to the Sisters of Charity of St. Boniface, and, as you are aware, two of them came at once. This necessitated the building of another place, making in all six shanties that I was obliged to build on the prairie.

Soon after our quarantine was established the officers of North Dakota established an international quarantine, prompted largely by the false statements of the Superintendent of the Board of Health, and this was continued for ten or twelve days only, while it was their intention to keep it up for three weeks or more. But in the face of our

efficiency and good control of the disease, they could not well continue it longer.

On the fifth of August Mrs. Kroetch, in whose house Mosach and the little girl was prostrated, was also taken down and at once moved to the quarantine ground. This was the last case and the only one who did not contract the disease from the Chinese. Her case was a severe one and slow in recovering. She did not leave the prairie until the 9th of October.

The excitement occasioned by this sudden outbreak and inconvenience resulting from the Dakota quarantine made it necessary to allay as much as possible unnecessary fear, and to accomplish this, much of the work was done at night, and this made some of it a little more expensive. The whole affair was carried out with the best possible care and caution, and as great care as was possible under the circumstances was exercised to prevent any needless expense, and I am happy to state that no criticism of any of the work has been indulged in, and no complaints, as far as I know, have been heard.

Many bills sent in have not been certified by me as I could not consistently do it, but if the Government should see fit to send a representative to Gretna, I have no doubt but all can be fairly and satisfactorily adjusted.

Enclosed you will find vouchers for money received by me to meet certain necessary expenses.

Trusting that the work done may meet with the approval of the Department.

I remain, Your obedient servant, (signed) P. C. Donovan¹⁰⁵

Dr. James Patterson, Health Advisor to the Minister of Agriculture and Immigration, arrived in Gretna on July 28th as a result of Donovan's request. His letter to Premier Greenway provides further insight into the situation at Gretna, Rhineland and Plum Coulee:

Dear Sir:

In accordance with your desire I came down here yesterday. On my stay at Rosenfeld and here, I have made the closest inquiry and am convinced there are no cases of small-pox at Rosenfeld. A case of measles was mistaken for one of small-pox in its early stages.

This place, Gretna, is under legal quarantine.

Smallpox in Gretna . . . cont'd

stands that have no more room for incoming mail; eventually he will have to pile them up in a corner of his office until the farmers can come and get them.

Before the farmers really knew that Gretna had been isolated by order from Premier Greenway, many came to finish their business. However, they had to turn around and go back without setting foot in town. One farmer who had previously prepared for all necessary goods for the harvest season came to get his flour from the mill so he would not be delayed at harvest time. He was not allowed to enter and had to return without his flour. Another one came to get the machine he had ordered sometime ago. However much as the dealer would like to give it to him it was impossible.

The boundary patrol won't allow anything to cross the border; he has to be alert as he is being observed closely by superiors in town; it appears as if they suspect the machines to be contaminated by the disease! Another farmer ran out of tobacco and hurried to town to get some. This is not really a necessity, (for those with the habit it was irksome) and could do nothing about it. Although it would have been easy for someone to throw some bars of tobacco across the border fence, nobody wanted to risk it because of the steep penalty. Finally, when everybody thought that all knew that Gretna was quarantined, along comes a servant of the bakery to quench his thirst with a glass of beer. He had no alternative but to turn back — no entry.

Don't think that in this isolated town everyone is satisfied with the way things are going. Where fear and stupidity join and reproach the government all reason suffers. That's what happened here. We are all going to be happy when this undesirable ordeal of quarantine will leave and we will be free again. We hope it won't be long before we will be able to greet our brothers from out of town.

Der Nordwesten August 1, 1892



J. R. Hoffman residence on Klassen Ave. P#480



Home built by Enoch Winkler around 1900, sold to Alexander C. Smith in 1903. House is still standing on Hespeler Ave. P#1446

The citizens accept the situation and aid the officials in every way. The Health Officer in charge, Dr. Donovan, of Neche is an intelligent, active man. The people of Neche are so much alarmed that he is specially interested in trying to confine the disease to present patients.

The first case here occurred on the 19th July. Miss Calder, aged 16, on the 20th, Mosach, aged 19, and Kroetch aged 9 developed, and on the following day Hamilton aged 17. Last Tuesday it was found that Rev. Mr. Small had the disease. All of these are in rough board cabins about 1½ miles east of the town. Miss Calder is taken care of by her father and mother. The others are simply cared for by the guard.

On the 20th July when the 2nd and 3rd cases occurred the Chinese laundry here was examined with the result that 15 Chinamen were found living in the one house, three of them in the almost convalescent stage of the disease; the postules had all dried up, and the crusts were about ready to drop off. These have been disposed of by placing the three cases in one cabin, and the 12 who have not the disease in another at a safe distance on the camping ground. They are simply supplied with food and medicines asked for and left to attend to themselves.

The houses where the white cases occurred and the occupants are quarantined, that is, the occupants voluntarily remain in, and the other citizens keep away. This I have advised them to continue up to fifteen days from date of last case to see if other cases occur, when, if none do, they will be liberated after taking all due precautions which I have detailed to the health officer. These houses can then be purified, which will be done.

The house occupied by the Chinese remains untouched with the exception of burning a little sulphur in it by the man in charge of the quarantine ground. It is right in the centre of the residence portion, and is simply constructed of boards. It must be thoroughly impregnated with the germs of disease. Citizens here say that of late Chinamen have been ill there, have recovered and gone south. The building should be burned with its contents. I have advised the health officer to that effect and it will be done the first calm hour. There are other buildings adjoining lots, and it cannot be set fire until the wind falls.

I find many people here very apathetic about vaccination. I have met several who have never

been vaccinated. I have advised the health officer to vaccinate every one. A telegram from you to that effect would be advisable.

Before leaving Winnipeg yesterday morning Father Drummond telephoned me that two of the Sisters would go down today and nurse all the cases if I would have a tent or cabin erected for them to sleep in. A cabin is being built this morning and they will be here to-day, as I telegraphed Father Drummond that accommodation would be ready. At the present time all cases are in a favorable condition, but these nurses are fully needed until the patients can tend to themselves.

Gretna Under Guard

The whole village is well quarantined, guards camp on the outskirts and allow no egress. Those who insist upon coming in have to remain. Yesterday a man from Winnipeg came down upon the train with me, when he stepped off the car the guard met him and warned him not to land, and told him that if he did so he would not be allowed to depart. He could not be persuaded to go on to Neche and from there go where he pleased. He wandered around the town for about two hours, viewed the Chinese house, etc., and then started to go six miles out into the country but failed, and is now in a fix. He has to wait until quarantine is lifted, at which he is very annoyed.

I have gone over the whole situation with Dr. Donovan, the acting health officer here, and if present stringent regulations are carried out, and if what is contemplated to be done is done, I believe the trouble at this point will soon disappear. There are no civic officials here to act, the whole responsibility is upon the shoulders of the health officer.

Rhineland

Dr. McKenty, who is Dr. Donovan's partner, tells me there is one case there which he has seen twice. It is right in the village with no one in charge upon whom they can rely with any confidence at all. I drove there to-day to see what can be done, and if I can get a responsible party will take him with me and leave him to act as quarantine officer. The doctor tells me that upon his second visit he found two young men who slept in the house all night, knowing the man of the house was lying with small pox, and left after he got there for their home on S. 22, Tp. 3, R. 2, about six miles north-east of Plum Coulee. All (i.e.)

patient, his wife, five children and these two men, slept in the same house of only one room of about 14–20 in size. This was last Tuesday night. My intention is to go down from Rhineland to this man's farm, vaccinate them and do what may be possible to keep them at home for a time. I fear this place Rhineland is going to give much trouble.

Yours most respectfully, (Signed) James Patterson. 106

The smallpox danger was over within a few weeks, although Gretna residents must have felt their captivity lasted much longer. The quarantine was lifted on August 9th and Gretna was allowed to resume its daily routine, although the sheds remained in use well past the declared epidemic. The Presbyterian Reverend Small remained ill for some months as did Mrs. Kroetch. Mr. Mosach had boarded at the Kroetch residence. For him the disease had been fatal, although he was only 19 years old. Hamilton was younger still when he died that summer. Two unmarked graves in the Gretna cemetery, set aside from the rest of the plots as though the disease might attack the dead, remind us of a time when even the best medical attention was inadequate in protecting lives. Today it is assumed these graves mark the final resting place of two Chinese victims of smallpox. There is no record of any deaths among the Chinese residents who were quarantined at Gretna in 1892. The Chinese laundry and living quarters were burned on the first calm day and other homes in which the smallpox had found its victims were fumigated and items of clothing and furniture destroyed. Without including personal claims from people affected by the incident, the cost of containing the smallpox, curing the afflicted came to nearly \$5,000.107

Long Hot Summer

The hot dry weather of 1892 continued into August with frequent thunderstorms which brought little relief to those looking for rain or cooler temperatures. Barely a week had passed since the quarantine had been lifted when

Gretna residents were called to face a different crisis. In the morning of August 16th lightning hit the southern peak of the new two-story schoolhouse. They dry roof was quick to ignite. Fortunately, the fire was quickly spotted and put out. The storms and resultant fire prompted Otto Schultz to install lightning rods on the roof of his store. Maybe Schultz's business partner and father-in-law, A. W. Stiefel, requested the security. Mr. Stiefel had been visiting in Gretna during most of August, returning to St. Paul on August 30th.

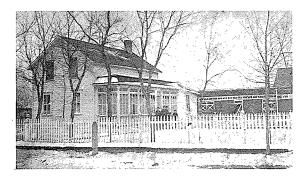
August and September saw Gretna activity rebound. Esau & Loewen repainted their storefront, Otto Schultz and Cornelius Hiebert completed new residences as did Mr. A. Robertson and the seamstresses, the Erickson sisters. Klaas Peters and Mr. H. Grimm sunk new wells and found good drinking water. The CPR was not satisfied with the waterworks it had installed when it first arrived in Gretna. Tent accommodations were set up in the first week of September for a crew of 20 men who upgraded the water line from the Pembina River. The water tank was functioning as desired before the first frost in October. Phillip Purper and his son set up another butcher shop in the former Patterson Implements salesroom, and Wilhelm Rempel opened his small wares store in September. And the wild plums were so plentiful, though good, that the initial price

Wheat prices dropped too. Gretna wheat prices ranged from as high as 70¢ a bushel to as low as 45¢. The Mennonite farmers had always felt they were at the mercy of the CPR and the private grain companies. They talked about setting up their own elevator, a farmers' elevator, so that they could control market prices. This agitation had existed ever since the CPR and Ogilvie had opened up the Gretna terminus. ''The Syndicate'' responded to accusations of price-fixing and monopoly in an article by their western representative, Mr. R. Waugh, which appeared in **Der Nordwesten** early in the year. Waugh contended that the problem lay in the fluctuating quality of the wheat received

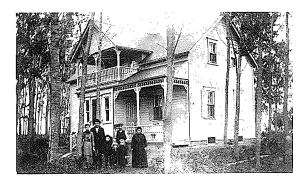
per pail of 50¢ dropped quickly to 25¢. 108



Home of Henry Ritz, on Hespeler Ave. at Mary St. It was built before 1900. P#235



Peter H. Loewen family home on Schellenberg Ave., around 1900. Note outbuildings, barn and horse-drawn sleigh. P#351



Jacob P. Friesen family home on Mill Road around 1910. P#792



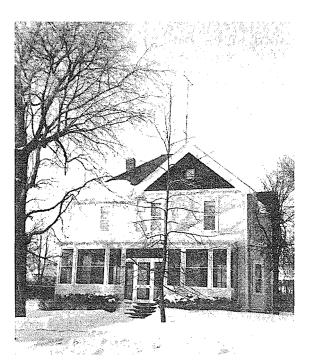
Herman Dirks family at their home on corner of 8th St. and Berlin Ave. P#1267



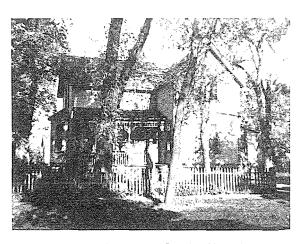
J. D. Pierson home on Klassen Ave. Destroyed by fire in 1928. P#536



Martin Salzwedel home on 7th St. P#407



Dr. Joseph P. Boreskie's house, home to most Gretna doctors, built in 1884 on Berlin Ave. P#1548



Home of John Buhr, former Charles Whidden residence, on corner of Hespeler Ave. and Mary St. P#1300

and attempts on the part of the farmers to cheat the grain buyers by delivering different qualities of wheat to the elevator on the same load.¹⁰⁹

The discontent brought in several independent wheat buyers, among them John Wittich from Niverville representing C. P. Clark & Co. of Winnipeg. Wittich proved to be a disappointment to the area farmers. He sent samples to Winnipeg to be tested, promising good prices at Gretna. On the day when Wittich had arranged to make his purchases, he informed the many farmers who came to do business with him that he could not honour his original offers. Some of the farmers could not return home without some cash in hand, so they parted with their wheat at prices from 45¢ to as low as 30¢ a bushel. ¹¹⁰

Birth Brings New Hope

Der Nordwesten had more to report than business, pestilence and the falling price of wheat in the fall of 1892. The young Shannon couple had been blessed with a son and the Jacob Hoffman family reported the same good fortune. Birth in the community gave hope and re-assurance at a time when death had so recently stalked the village. Reports fail to mention who was in attendance at these births. Perhaps Dr. Donovan or Dr. McKenty were given the pleasant duty. It is as likely, however, that Gretna's first midwife would have performed the honours. Anna Kaczmarski came to Gretna with her husband Paul and their family following failure of their homestead at Balgonie in the District of Assiniboia. Paul worked as a carpenter and Anna as a seamstress. When called upon, Anna would also carry out the duties of midwife. The Kaczmarski name would be a part of the area for some time as the two oldest sons bought a farm in the Emerson area. One of the boys, Anton, would soon marry Magdelena Walter who came to Gretna to live with her brother Franz, one of Gretna's blacksmiths.¹¹¹

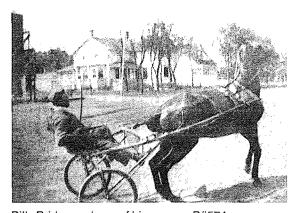
Julius Siemens returned to Gretna early in

September, bringing with him more settlers from the South. He also brought along a rather impressive and large young man, Hermann Dirks, from Chicago. Dirks had been brought along to take on the bookkeeping duties at the Siemens bank. They arrived just in time for the first partridge hunt of the season, organized out of the Anglo-American.

Other sport in Gretna included horse racing at the track. The event was getting to be quite sophisticated complete with grandstand and a bar. Perhaps Gretna's correspondent to **Der Nordwesten** took offence at the Turf Club's liquor licence. He failed to report which horses were successful at the track. It isn't even known if Philip Rau's horse "Paragon", which won handily at the race track in Winnipeg in June that year was entered in any of the events at Gretna.

Wilhelm Rempel does name the participants at the first Gretna Normal School exams in November. These included teachers C. P. Friesen, N. Sievert and Franz Goosen from the Mennonite East Reserve. The regular Normal School session got under way in late October, following renovations to the German School House, making the building more comfortable and a little less drafty that winter.

Repairs to the Gretna cemetery in October of 1892 included a new fence and plots were sur-



Billy Briden and one of his pacers. P#574

veyed for the first time. Perhaps the summer's smallpox deaths had shown a need for the cemetery, another signpost of a community's maturity.

Great Debates

Entertainment took the form of a Mock Parliament which convened every Tuesday evening to debate the issues of the day. Prohibition received a majority vote in the December 5th session. Other topics debated that winter included "Unrestricted Immigration", "British Empire and its Colonies", "A National School System" and "Women's Voting Rights".

Julius Poschinsky must have found in Gretna a peculiar mixture of people and ideas, of social and religious events, of progressive and traditional opinion. Julius arrived in the fall of 1892 to set up a tinsmith shop in the C. Finkelstein & Co. building. St. Thomas, North Dakota, his most recent home, likely did not have the strong British sentiment to be found in Gretna. The sporting events, the race track, the agricultural fair, and the Home Circle activities in the Forresters' Hall — all gave a certain colour and excitement which must have seemed somewhat out of place in the quiet, conservative Mennonite settlement.

Home Harvest Festival

Julius Poschinsky arrived in time for the Harvest Festival in the Presbyterian Church. The 25¢ admission charge bought a supper and an extensive program of songs and presentations by young and old alike. The admission charge did not cut into attendance (children under 14 cost only 15¢). The Harvest Festival was well attended by Gretna residents of all religious beliefs. Despite dry summer weather, a wet and cold harvest season; despite uncertain prices for farm produce; and despite the Rev. Small's lingering illness, everyone found the harvest celebration timely and enjoyable.

Coblentz Complains to Greenway

Gretna April 13/93

Dear Mr. Greenway

I have noticed a report in the Winnipeg press lately that Mr. Julius Siemens of Gretna has been selected by the Government as one of its representatives at the World's Fair in Chicago.

As a Reformer and supporter of your Government I protest against this appointment on the following grounds, namely

1st Mr. Siemens and his brothers, during the last election in Rosenfeld, worked tooth and nail against the return of Mr. Winkler, using every argument that they could invent to belittle your candidate.

2nd He is disliked by the Citizens of Gretna of both political parties, in fact there is not a person in this Constituency that has a Good word for him.

3rd This appointment would cause a Good deal of discontent among the Government Supporters, and would give its opponents a Good show to use against the party.

I write you this few lines that you may know the universal feeling of this town in reference to above mentioned report; this, I trust, placing you in a better position to judge of the advisability of sending Mr. Siemens to Chicago or elsewhere in any Government capacity.

I have the honor to be my Dear Sir Your obedient servant (signed) A. Coblentz

Provincial Archives of Manitoba



Gretna Catholic Cemetery (on Highway 30 east of Gretna). P#1536



Gretna Cemetery. P#1494

The evening concluded with the National Anthem.

Other events that fall included sermons in the German School House by Rev. A. F. Petereit from Winnipeg. The Presbyterian Church was the scene of two sermons one Sunday in October by the Rev. George Bryce. Professor Bryce was always welcomed in Gretna by his friends Otto Schultz and H. H. Ewert. Bryce was pleased with the continued success of the Normal School and with School Inspector Ewert's reports of progress among the village schools on the East and West Reserves. H. H. Ewert took his work among the young people in the West Reserve most seriously. He disapproved of some of the social activities available to Gretna's younger set. The Home Circle was certainly popular, but not uplifting enough. Ewert did not attempt to shut it down, however. He simply went about creating some competition with the Young People's Society of Christian Endeavour (Verein der christlich strebenden Jugend). The Young People's met regularly on Sunday evenings, making it possible for Gretna's youth to continue their Home Circle as well.

The first life insurance scheme to hit Gretna was organized by the International Order of Forresters in early December 1892. More than 30 men signed up for premiums surpassing \$60,000 in total. Public meetings were held to explain the meaning of life insurance. Early winter snows, as well as vivid memories of the recent smallpox epidemic, will have helped some men make up their minds on this matter.

Christmas preparations were again under way. Wilhelm Rempel reminded parents and children who read **Der Nordwesten** that Gretna merchants had been to Winnipeg to stock up for the Christmas rush. Esau & Loewen promised the best Christmas trees this year. The municipal elections created little controversy or change, even though former Reeve Gerhard Klassen tried to unseat Reeve Jacob Heppner who had succeeded him in 1892. Heppner withstood the challenge and business went on as

usual. David Schellenberg was appointed Secretary–Treasurer of the Rhineland Municipality for the second year. All councillors were elected by acclamation.

Urban Issues Ignored

While the municipal machinery seemed to be running smoothly, Gretna businessmen were beginning to experience some difficulty getting the things done which they saw as priority items. Cornelius Hiebert questioned the Rhineland municipal tax structure as it applied to residents and businesses within the unincorporated village of Gretna. 112 Water drainage at Gretna and Plum Coulee remained an issue each spring, and the business interests in both villages were becoming convinced that the Rhineland councillors and Reeve were more concerned about the problems of voters in their rural wards than of voters in the urban centres. The rapid growth in Gretna's population in the early 1890's was seen as further evidence that Gretna was quickly outgrowing the municipal "britches". With 500 residents counted by year's end, 1892, this CPR village was showing signs of urbanity!

The public school population swelled with that of the Village. The Public School, which was only a few years old, was unable to hold the over 100 students to be found in Gretna. Principal D. A. Wickware and teacher Calista Post finished the previous school year with 112 students in their classes. Neither teacher stayed to see how the School Board was going to resolve the overcrowding problem. The School Board launched an appeal to the municipality and to the Provincial Board of Education to begin construction of a new school immediately. The request may have seemed absurd since the Gretna school was new. The school board was given the authority to hire three teachers for the 1892-1893 school year. John S. Poole, Nellie R. Scott and Iara Scott closed the first half of the school year with 130 students. 113 The school had the extra teacher, but not the extra classroom. The problem was solved by renting Winkler's Hall on Hespeler Avenue and converting it into a classroom. This would not be the last time that students and teachers in Gretna would have to put up with temporary quarters.

The Kickapoo Indian Medicine Company arrived again early in February of 1893. School children and parents alike indulged in exploring the various health aids and cures. The British & Foreign Bible Society held their annual meeting in Gretna in February as well. The Farmers' Market (Yahr Markt) held on February 22nd and 23rd proved to be a disappointment for the local farmers. Enoch Winkler had billed the event as an excellent opportunity to sell livestock and farm produce to buyers from Winnipeg. The farmers came early and waited in the heavy falling snow for the train to arrive. The train came without any customers, however, and the farmers left for home emptyhanded. All they took back to their families was the latest gossip out of Gretna and questions about the farm economy.

The farmers entered the new year with caution. Reports of difficult times in the East combined with wheat prices, at times as low as 15¢ a bushel, made them cautious when going to market at Gretna. Henry M. Klassen moved to Rosenfeld in March, renting his boarding house "hotel" to Jacob Hoffman. G. T. Harnberger moved back home to Ontario. Michael Long and Alex Smith bought Harnberger's saddlery and placed August Schimnowski in charge of the shop. August had arrived in Gretna several years earlier with his friend Carl Krause. August's father, John, and the rest of his family came from Germany in 1892, bringing with them Mary Krause, Carl's sister. The rest of the Krause family arrived in Gretna in June 1893, with Anton Krause starting up his harnessmaking business in the front room of their Montcalm Ave. residence, situated behind Erdmann Penner's store. Carl Krause continued working in the Penner store after his family had followed him to Gretna. The Krause and Schimnowski families were to play an important part in the growth of the Catholic congregation at Gretna. 114

An Italian Swing Band

The young people's ball held in the evening of February 1st, in the Forrester Hall, was a great success. The hall was rented and tastefully decorated with Canadian and American flags, flowers and evergreens. The more than 100 people attending were entertained by the sounds of an Italian Swing band till the wee hours of the morning. About midnight a splendid supper was served in the Anglo-American Hotel. Specially honored for the success of the evening were: Mr. Stiefel, Mr. Bowman and Ritz, Widmeyer, Herchmer and others who did their utmost to make the evening entertaining and relaxing.

Der Nordwesten February 15, 1894

Forresters in Gretna

The principles of the mutual Life Insurance Association of the Independent Order of Forresters were explained last Thursday evening by Mr. W. Sanderson, the organizer of the Order, in an open presentation. Gretna retains a branch of the Order of Forresters, and over thirty men have already joined and more than \$60,000 worth of life insurance policies have been written up.

Der Nordwesten December 9, 1892

Ecumenical Auditorium

After the Presbyterians had built us a nice little church and we had a proper auditorium to have things in more and more groups arrived. Some of the most enjoyable ones were the Jubilee Singers. Could those negroes ever sing! Their full deep voices and the sincerity of them were simply thrilling. In the church we held our socials, the box social was one of the standard and hilarious methods of raising money for the church. The young women, any woman, would get a picnic lunch ready for two people. These would be packed into containers, boxes, baskets; what have you, and elaborately trimmed. Then after a short program these would be auctioned off and the men would bid — it going to the highest bidder. And then when the young man found out whose box he had, the name was inside, he would have to search out his hostess and the two would have supper together. Sometimes when a young man and a young lady were very anxious to sup together, she would tell him of some identification sign and he could buy it. But lo and behold if that leaked out or was suspected. The other chaps would drive the price so high that the poor fellow had to pay dearly for his supper — but how could he let down his girl friend?

> Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert memoirs Mennonite Heritage Center, Winnipeg

Religious Harmony

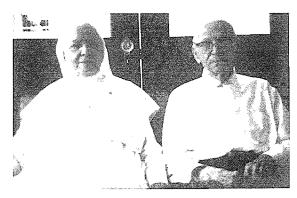
The Lutheran congregation was also gaining strength. When Rev. Wilhelm Carl Peter Willing arrived to work in the Manitoba missions for the Lutheran Synod in June 1893, he was soon dispatched to service in the Gretna area. At first he served the area from Winnipeg, but by year's end he was stationed at Gretna. Lutheran services were conducted in the Presbyterian Church which many Mennonites attended. The German language provided the common denominator within a community where religious differences were overshadowed by shared beliefs. The Mennonites in Gretna worshipped at the German School House, with Rev. H. H. Ewert providing leadership for this group. At a time when church was frequently the main source of social activity and entertainment, residents often attended

services whenever they were held, regardless of which denomination provided sponsorship. One Gretna pioneer, Helena Penner, considered the early years before the church factions began to appear as the happiest times in Gretna:

For a long time our family was the only Mennonite family in the town and we all worked and played together without let or hindrance. I think that was really a very happy time. Later on, we split up into a number of denominational factions. The Mennonites worshipped in the M.C.I. Chapel, the Presbyterians still had their church but a very small congregation when it was no longer a mission. There was a Catholic, a Presbyterian, a Baptist, a Lutheran, and a Seventh Day Adventist congregation all struggling to support separate entities with church buildings and separate pastors. And all worshipping the same God. 115



Seventh St. north including Germanhouse (Salzwedel Hotel) and the Lake of the Woods Mill, circa 1890. P#1128



Sister Martha Krause and brother Frank Krause in 1971, P#1288

The Young People's and the Willing Workers ladies' groups crossed denominational boundaries nonetheless and would continue to do so for some years to come. The Willing Workers organized a social toward the end of March in 1893 starting with a supper, followed by a program which provided three touring theology students with an opportunity to test their oratorical abilities. Music led by John Millar and Mrs. E. Millar rounded out the spring event.

Political Discord

At a partisan political level one found less harmony. Adolphe Coblentz fired off a rather harsh missive to Premier Greenway, dated April 13, 1893 in which he questioned the intelligence in the decision to send Julius Siemens to the Chicago World's Fair as one of Manitoba's representatives. As fate would have it, the Coblentz allegations would be a minor irritant for the Siemens' venture in Gretna. The Premier risked the consequences and sent Siemens with Erdmann Penner. Economic factors produced a stock market panic in the United States and in Eastern Canada. Gretna and area residents showed their concern by pulling their financial resources out of the Siemens bank. This activity, combined with the collapse of the company's banking partners in New York and St. Paul, forced the Siemens brothers to declare bankruptcy before the year was out. ¹¹⁶ The banking family moved back to the United States, with the exception of Helena who married the company's bookkeeper, Herman Dirks, in the fall of 1894. ¹¹⁷

The economic hardships which affected the Siemens bank had less of an impact on the other private bankers in Gretna. Rîtz & Widmeyer continued to underwrite mortgages and make out loans, in addition to running the Anglo-American Hotel, Chris Pieper and J. D. Pierson also provided a loan service, as did Michael Long whose business partner, Dr. P. C. Donovan, was finding himself at odds with the new U.S. Consul in Winnipeg. As U.S. Consular Agent, Dr. Donovan had retained 100% of all fees collected in payment for his services. His new boss, Consul M. Duffie out of Winnipeg, insisted that standard practice required the monies collected by the Consular Agents be split 50/50 with himself, since he was ultimately responsible for the actions of the American representatives working for him. Dr. Donovan chose to ignore Duffie, refusing to reply to letters and telegrams sent to him from Winnipeg. The result of this conflict was the removal of Dr. Donovan from his post in Gretna. Enoch Winkler was appointed to replace him in September 1893. 118

Ouarantine Station Built

The Consular Agent was important in the early life of Gretna. Large numbers of American citizens seeking a new start in Western Canada often came through Emerson or Gretna in those years. The Consular Agent was there to help these American citizens through any difficulty encountered upon crossing into Canada. As the country became more settled, different sets of issues presented themselves. By the 1890's Canada was encountering problems in the quality of livestock being brought by settlers from the United States. Often it was simply a matter of weak or old stock. Other times disease found its way onto the western plains, resulting

NOTICE TO FARMERS.

A large number of the German Agricultural population of Russia are desirous of leaving their homes and finding a new field of occupation for themselves and their families, if they are assisted in their transportation.

The amount of passage to Winnipeg to be paid on arrival at that point will be as follows:—

For all from twelve years upwards - \$45.00 For those from five to twelve years of age - 22.50 For those from one to five years of age - 15 00

It is guaranteed that no Jews will be brought out under this scheme,

Parties wishing to take advantage of this opportunity should address themselves without delay to the

DOMINION GOVERNMENT IMMIGRATION AGENT, WINNIPEG.

or any other Government Immigration Agent,

Stating the number of families they want and whenthey will require them; not less than a month's time to be reckoned for the voyage,

WINNIPEG, March 7th, 1892.

R.M. of Rhineland

Lutheran Communicants

Pastor Willing's first list of communicants at Gretna dated 10 Sept. 1893

Franz Zeitlinger Max Stretzel Rudolp Ziebarth Ottilie Ziebarth Henriette Henke Peter Baber Henriette Steinke Alwine Bergmann Wilhelmine Wirchies Wilhelmine Schiotteck

Lutheran Church register Felix Kuehn, Beausejour

Requests to Government

Gretna, November 10/94

Hon Thomas Greenway Winnipeg

Dear Sir

The parties that have accounts Re the Small Pox are anxious to have their money. I wish you would hurry along that committee to investigate their claims and get things settled. They are bothering me about it daily. Let me know when someone is coming down so that I can get them all together and get it settled. There are some of the parties anxious to get away for the winter that have bills.

Ask Mr. Graham if he has a copy of letter that he sent to Wm. Rempel, the Returning Officer here, itemizing the different charges and payments made to Poll Clerk, Constables and for Polling Booths to send me a copy of same. Rempel gave it to me and I mislaid it.

Also Mr. Sifton, he promised sometime ago to come to Gretna to talk over the subject of an intermediate school, with the trustees. They are anxious for him to come as soon as possible as they want to know if they are going to get an intermediate before engaging the Teacher for the next year.

Yours sincerely, Enoch Winkler

The Winkler Papers

in great losses to farmers and ranchers west of the Great Lakes. Quarantines which existed in Emerson were rapidly proving inadequate for the number of cattle crossing into Canada. The NWMP patrols had cut down on the herds which were simply driven across the 49th Parallel from the south. Settlers were faced with selling their stock before coming to Canada, or processing their cattle through a period of quarantining. By March of 1893, Gretna was being considered as second quarantine station on the Manitoba–Dakota border. 119

The NWMP had been patrolling the International Boundary since 1885. Patrols were not concerned with law enforcement in Manitoba, other than in relation to customs and immigration matters, since the provincial constables were expected to keep law and order in Manitoba. The NWMP Commissioner out of Regina, L. W. Herchmer, arrived in Gretna on Monday, March 27th to oversee the establishment of quarantine facilities. Herchmer bucked conventional wisdom in choosing Gretna as a quarantine site. The Immigration Department in Ottawa was convinced that all that was needed was an expansion of the quarantine at Emerson, along with the setting up of quarantine at Estevan in the Territories. Herchmer agreed with the decision to set up quarantine barns and pastures at Estevan, but he still insisted on a quarantine facility at Gretna. Perhaps his inclination towards the Gretna location had something to do with the fact that his son, Henry W. Herchmer had just established a law office in Gretna in late fall of 1892. Whatever his reasons, aside from good common sense, Herchmer was to spend a considerable amount of time in Gretna in the spring and summer of 1893:

Gretna, Man., March 30, 1893

Sir,

I have the honour to inform you that I arrived here on Monday March 27th and at once looked over the ground with view to establishing a thoroughly efficient quarantine.

The field offered by the C.P.R. I found covered with deep snow, without any shelter whatever,

and fenced with wire and quite useless at present. I found a race course with a board fence 10 ft high close to the Station, which after inspection, I found admirably adapted for our purpose, and ony requiring a very slight expense to make it an efficient quarantine until the grass will carry cattle, say in about six weeks.

I then met the Secretary of the Turf Association, (A. W. Stiefel), and on his calling a meeting of the committee, he was authorized to rent the track for two months for \$100.00, or \$200.00 for a long period, with liberty to put up and remove any temporary shedding I deem advisable.

The weather is still cold, and an open shed will be necessary for the next 20 days, and it will be also necessary to have a few warm sheds to lie up calving and newly calved cows in. The high fence of the race course will make a good back wall for these buildings and all the expense of rent buildings and will be under \$600.00, a considerable portion being recovered when the lumber is sold later on, as I do not propose to cut it, except when absolutely necessary. Racks for hay and troughs for water will also be made. I have made a satisfactory arrangement for hay at \$5.00 per ton as required and a little bran for weak and calving cows will be wanted. There will be no great expense in watering cattle, as several men want the job, it will all have to be hauled while cattle are fed hay, as it will not be safe to take quarantine cattle to the public wells, and it is necessary to keep the different stages of quarantined cattle from drinking or travelling over the same place, otherwise the quarantine would be useless and the first English Inspector that came along would condemn the whole system.

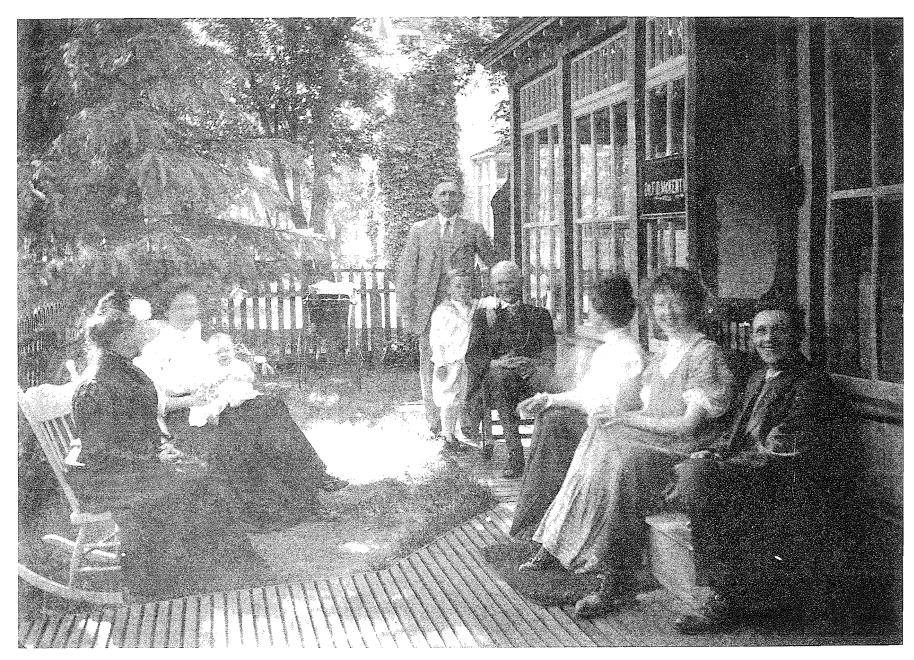
I wired you pretty fully yesterday, laying great stress on the necessity of running all cattle arriving within each 15 days together. This is imperative and a quarantine for immediate use cannot be established here without, as the ground is frozen solid and the expense of putting up yards and shelter for each bunch of cattle arriving daily would be enormous, if possible, in time to take them over. But it is impossible under this climate.

When grass starts the cattle could be taken to Estevan, or, if in small numbers, placed in the C.P.R. field until quarantine is up. This field is only fenced with wire, and to make it efficient

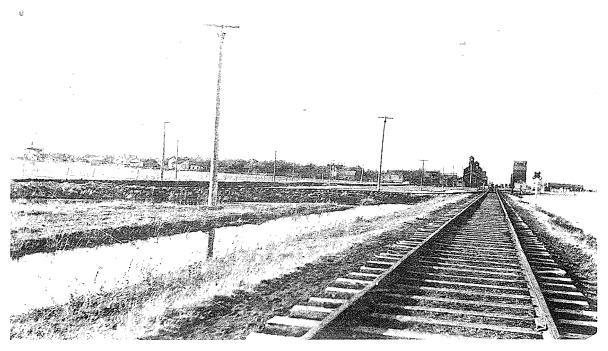
continued on page 95



Singing and social group. Back Row: Benjamin Ewert, Anna Siemens, John Friesen, Isaac Loewen, Anna Regier, Abe Friesen. Middle Row: David Toews, Elsie Regier, H. H. Ewert, Anna Regier, Dr. Hiebert, Sara Friesen. Front Row: Sara Abrams, ? Shannon, L. Esau, Jacob Kehler, ? Woelk, John Kehler, Marie ?, Wm. Abrams. Taken in 1893. P#1461



Socializing in front yard of McKenty home on Montcalm Ave. P#1111A



CPR spur track leading off from main track to quarantine barns, south end of town, 1920's. P#430

another wire fence must be run at least 40 feet inside the other, otherwise there would be no quarantine, as the place is surrounded with cattle. This can be got over, I think, by making a corral for the night and keeping a Mounted Policeman on duty all day keeping cattle away from the outside of fence, but I am not sure whether this is sufficient, as inside cattle licking the posts might contaminate outside cattle, and it would be impossible to keep cattle away from fence all the time, particularly bulls.

The latter will be very troublesome and will, I expect have to be tied up, as in the spring they are impossible to confine when loose. It will be useless to visit Estevan at present as snow is everywhere and I can see nothing of the country near the boundary which I know pretty well. As soon as I am informed of the intentions re that quarantine I will prepare plans and visit the place as soon as travelling is feasible. Cattle cannot get there over land for at least six weeks, as there is not grass.

I enclose a rough plan of proposed Quarantine, the red being new work. I have decided to

only put sheds in the first yard as I think we can do without any in the others, of course racks and troughs will be required in all. Cattle are expected daily and if I do not hear from you I shall proceed on the 15 day plan.

Sir, I have the honour to be, Your obedient servant, sgd L. W. Herchmer. Commissioner. 120

Not everyone agreed with the quarantine regulations laid out by the Dominion Government. On March 9th, Chris Pieper wrote to the Minister responsible, Hon. L. M. Daly, on behalf of William Galloway from North Dakota who was on his way to the Northwest Territories. The request was for the lifting of quarantine requirements since:

I think it would help our country a lot in Immigration this spring as there are a great number ready in Dakota to come to Manitoba. Kindly let me know by return mail what can be done.

Quarantine Station

The quarantine station at Gretna was established on the 27th March last, the enclosed race track being leased for the purpose and the work of erecting sheds, stables, loose boxes and fences, also the making of hay racks, water-troughs, etc., was at once commenced.

The following remarks, quoted from Staff Sergeant Joyce's report, will fully explain the arrangement and working of the station: —

On 1 April, the stables and shedding of No. 1 yard were ready for the reception of stock, forty-one head of cattle entering quarantine on that date.

On account of the lack of space a fifteen-day limit was decided on, whereby all cattle entering quarantine during the period of fifteen days were yarded together so that under this system four yards were all that were required for the season.

From 1st to 15th April, one hundred and thirty-one head of cattle entered quarantine.

The shedding and fences for No. 2 yard were commenced on 13th and completed on 15th April, the first fifteen days, all first-class cattle being removed to that yard on 17th April.

During the next fifteen days, fifty-one head of cattle entered quarantine. No. 3 yard was commenced on the 27th and completed on the 29th of April, and on the 5th of May, the second class cattle, fifty-one in all, were removed from No. 1 to No. 3 yard.

On 20th April, the Commissioner and Dr. McFadden, the Veterinary Inspector, inspected the quarantine, giving instruction to alter No. 3 yard and to erect fences, boxes and hay mow for No. 4 yard. The alterations in No. 3 yard were completed on 22nd May, and No. 4 yard was finished on the 23rd, and occupied by the third-class cattle (16) on the 29th May, the fourthclass cattle (30) occupying No. 1 yard.

On 10th April, the unloading yard was supplied by the Canadian Pacific Railway side track with the quarantine station, and was completed on the following day.

A portable chute for the unloading yard was supplied by the Canadian Pacific Railway Company and placed in position by them.

The nuisance ground was fenced in, and all manure, refuse, etc., from the quarantine was taken thereto.

At intervals the stables, fences and boxes received a coat of lime wash, which added considerable to the health of the cattle, besides giving a clean and tidy appearance to the premises.

continued

Quarantine Station cont'd

Particular attention was paid to the cleansing and disinfecting of the railway cars, the manure, etc., being thrown into the unloading yard, from whence it was hauled to the nuisance ground. A strong solution of carbolic acid was used for disinfecting the cars, the floor, sides and ceiling being thoroughly washed.

The branding of the cattle was done by means of a hot iron, the numerals from 1 to 10 being in use. The brand, where branded, name of owner, late and future residence, date, description and condition being entered in a

register kept for the purpose.

Hay is the principal fodder used, bran and chop are given to animals in a poor and debilitated condition; a warm mash is always given to cows after calving. The cattle were fed twice a day, at 6:30 a.m., and 4:30 p.m. In severe weather (such as we frequently experienced last April), a noon ration was allowed. The small cattle such as yearlings and calves, I found necessary to feed by themselves, the stronger animals driving them from the feeding racks.

A few pieces of rock salt was distributed in each yard, being essential for the maintenance of health, the cattle exhibiting much greater relish for their food, consuming it in a short time, and drinking larger quantities of water.

The water used in the quarantine is obtained from the Canadian Pacific Railway tank. It is hauled by a civilian, and during the very warm weather large quantities were used. A suitable hose and coupling was purchased by the department and attached to the Canadian Pacific Railway tank, for use in filling the quarantine tank.

Four members of the force and one civilian were employed during the 'rush' of cattle coming in; their work consisted of unloading, branding, disinfecting cars, feeding, repairing fences, etc. A constable was detailed each night for duty in the quarantine, to visit every part thereof, etc., every two hours. The milking, cleaning stables, sheds and yards being done principally by the civilian employed.

Total number of cattle received into Gretna	
quarantine	190
Increase	87
Deaths of increase in quarantine	4
Deaths of cattle received	3
Destroyed in consequence of injury to hip joint	1
Lost on prairie (calves dropped on trail)	2
Died on prairie	1

Legislative Journals House of Commons PAC

With kind regards from Mr. and Mrs. J. D. Pierson who is at present staying with me.

Yours very truly, C. Pieper¹²¹

The hardship placed on settlers as a result of quarantine regulations was not ignored by Commissioner Herchmer. He telegrammed Ottawa to point out that settlers could not use the milk of cows in quarantine, and could not use any horses or oxen for the period of quarantine. He also pointed out that settlers would be advised to sell their stock in the U.S. and arrive in the country unencumbered since the price was good in the U.S. and stock, certainly horses, was of better quality in Canada than in the American Midwest. 122 The importance of ensuring disease free stock in Western Canada overruled any immediate complaints and objections. Gretna's quarantine was operational by April 2nd. Thirty-eight head of cattle were taken in at Gretna on the station's first day of operation. Commissioner Herchmer was concerned about the possibility of a run on the facility although he was confident that NWMP Sergeant Joyce, who had been placed in charge of the Gretna quarantine, was equal to the task at hand.

Turf Club Leased

The lease agreement between the NWMP and the Gretna Turf Club was signed by Henry W. Herchmer on behalf of Commissioner L. W. Herchmer and the Turf Club president, Otto Schultz, and Secretary–Treasurer Stiefel signed on behalf of the racing association. The Turf Club arrangement was only temporary. As soon as the weather improved a more permanent location was to be investigated and developed. The permanent quarantine would be located on the southwest edge of the CPR holdings. This would prove to be insightful since it would serve traffic coming into Gretna on the Midland Railway some 10 years later.

Commissioner Herchmer's April 19th report out of Gretna lists 169 head of cattle in quarantine, most from Nebraska. This was less than anticipated since the settlers:

. . . had heard of the quarantine and getting a good sale for their cows, viz. \$25 per head, sold them, and brought cash, and I do not think we shall have more cattle from Nebraska, as settlers can buy cattle here in the country at about the same price with costs and charges deducted as they can sell for at home.

The U.S. railroads are harassing the settlers considerably in transit, not allowing them time to water, and when they do I am informed making them pay for it. Settlers proposing to come here are also very badly used by the merchants and business men of the towns in their vicinity, and complain of Whitecaps organized among those classes who dread the failure of business from loss of inhabitants. ¹²³

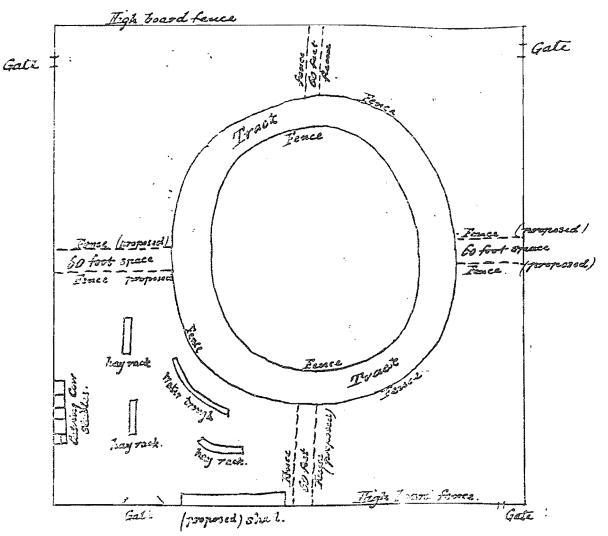
Herchmer's April 19th report describes blizzards and heavy snow which made the work of quarantine officers particularly difficult. Precautions had to be taken whenever a calf was about to be born, and also for any weak or sickly stock. The same report predicts that the option of using the CPR pasture in spring of 1893 was unavailable since the Pembina River was expected to flood to levels experienced in 1882. The cold, damp weather did not slow down traffic coming through Gretna immigration. Sgt. Joyce's diarized report for the three weeks ending on May 20th, 1893 shows steady growth in the number of cattle in quarantine. The 212 cattle in quarantine by that date required special supervision because a storm of hurricane proportions descended on Gretna that week. The barn at Hellofs' Butcher Shop was blown down and lumber in the Winkler yard was scattered all over town. 124 The fence at the race track, on both north and south sides, was blown down requiring additional men to make sure the cattle stayed in their enclosure. Carpenters Robertson and Corbett spent six hours repairing the fence, with the Turf Club picking up cost of the repairs. Constables Snell and Earnshaw had their work cut out for them. Along with Constable Kembry, they were assigned additional night duty as a result of the storm.

Despite the rotten weather and deteriorating conditions within the quarantine yard, Veterinary Inspector McFadden declared all cattle in excellent health with two exceptions. Alex Smith had the contract to supply the hay and he made sure supplies at hand would last a week if necessary. Robert Ross had the contract to supply the cattle with water and to haul the manure to the nuisance grounds where it was burned. A. B. Friesen also worked at maintaining the quarantine yards. Sgt. Joyce and his NWMP constables continued their regular border patrol in addition to night duty at the quarantine. By early June the storms had abated and duties in Gretna were more routine. Sgt. Joyce's report suggests that things were running smoothly and business continued to remain brisk.

New School Approved

By early June, work was under way on a more permanent quarantine site. While Herchmer and Joyce worked on this, the Gretna ratepayers organized a June meeting regarding school overcrowding. The meeting voted in favor of building a new school on 16 lots surveyed as part of the CPR Plan 28, Block 4, Lots 1-8 and 33-40. The lots cost \$340. Adolphe Coblentz bought the property on which the existing school was standing. The Gretna ratepayers decided not to wait for the municipal assessment which would raise the funds for a new school. They moved the existing structure to the new school yard and went about adding an additional two rooms to the old frame structure. 125 Their hastiness would result in friction within the community when the school board was unable to pay the bills later in the year.

Schools and quarantines played back seat to the news about the horse races held that June. A two-day event was topped off with a musical concert featuring the singing talent of Miss Stevenson. Even correspondent Wilhelm Rempel



Sketch submitted by L. W. Herchmer to Ottawa in 1893, showing proposed changes to Gretna Turf Club (race track) to accommodate quarantine site.

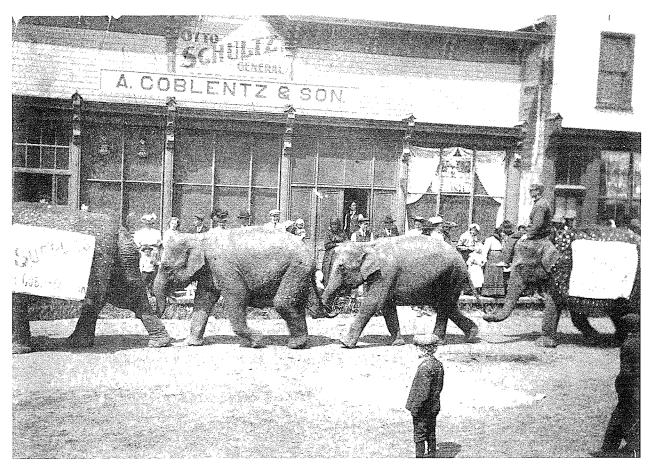
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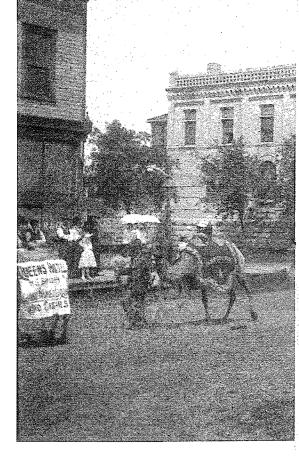
gave her good reviews and praised the organizational talents of the Gretna International Order of Forresters. The weather also refused to leave the news. Heavy rains in the first week of July 1893 brought the Pembina River up 12 feet in a few days. Hailstorms had damaged property in nearby Blumenort. Professor H. H. Ewert's brother, Benjamin moved to Gretna in spite of the bad weather, arriving just in time to see Gretna's first circus which put up its 'big top' on August 8th. The 'Greatest Show on Earth' must have felt it had some competition from the community itself. It was faced with

preparations for the annual Agricultural Fair and with a visit from the Federal Minister of Agriculture, Hon. John Lowe. He came to sort out the controversy over the location of the quarantine. A succession of religious personalities came to claim a corner of the spiritual market in this border town, bringing their own sideshow of sorts.

Business and Social Growth

Bishop Peter Regier of the Rosenorter Church in Germany arrived in June. Rev. John





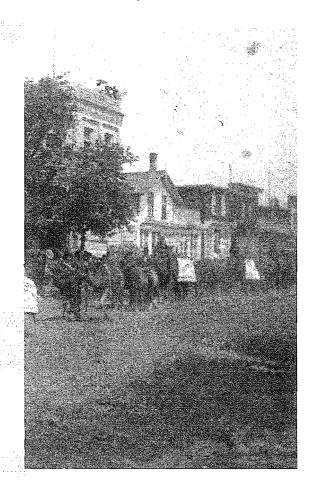
Campbell Bros. circus in Gretna on 7th St. in 1905. P#1108C, 1284 and 1286

Friesen began laying the groundwork for construction of a Baptist Church before the year was out. Reverend Willing moved to Gretna to serve his Lutheran constituents better. He took up residence in the Anglo-American Hotel.

Coinciding with this surge in religious activity was the founding of the East Star Lodge No. 55 at Gretna whose charter was signed on July 10th, and instituted on August 11, 1893.

Officers named in the charter dispensation were Colonel Levi Soper — Worshipful Master, Thomas Shannon — Senior Warden, and Robert Binney — Junior Warden. The Grand

Officers who signed the Charter were Thomas Tweed — Grand Master, Charles N. Bell — Deputy Grand Master, Corbet Locke — Senior Grand Warden, Hugh U. Bain — Junior Grand Warden, and William G. Scott — Grand Secretary. The officers named in the charter were Otto Schultz — Worshipful Master, Thomas Shannon — Senior Warden, and Robert M. Binney — Junior Warden. By the time the paper work had been done, Colonel Soper had moved to Moose Jaw to continue his CPR work there, selling his house and lot to Enoch Winkler. On August 11, 1893 the East Star Lodge No. 55 had





47 members. Its charter membership included Colonel Levi Soper, Thomas Shannon, Robert McQueen Binney, Enoch Winkler, James D. Tomkins, Thomas William Campain, William Frederick Osborne, Ernest Otto Reitze, Joseph D. Pierson, Christian Pieper and Otto Schultz. The Gretna Lodge maintained a strong presence in Gretna for over three quarters of a century before it amalgamated with the Emerson Lodge No. 6 in 1970. 126

Business in Gretna was not dull in 1893 either! Photographer J. C. Voigt faced some competition when Alfred Knowles set up a barber shop and photographic studio in town. Voigt countered by moving his studio to the Queen's Hotel and adding a public bath to his list of attractions. Whether the ploy worked or Voigt's customers remained loyal to him, Knowles soon packed his camera case and left town. D. G. McEdwards became the London & Canada Loan Co. representative in 1893. The same company also appointed Eugene Widmeyer later in the year. Ritz & Widmeyer purchased the Siemens Bros. & Co. bank in October. Der Nordwesten stood by its boast that Gretna was the German capital of Manitoba and opened up an office and a printery in Enoch Winkler's former residence. George Harbs was placed in charge of the printery and office while Wilhelm Rempel retained his post as Gretna correspondent. Activity around the Friesen & Sons Flour mill was hectic. Around the clock shifts were needed to keep up with the demand placed on the mill by farmers and others who were getting ready for winter. Up to 1300 bushels of wheat were ground daily. The concern for winter preparations was easily understood. Gretna had received an inch of snow and severe frost on September 29th. Anticipating a long winter, the Gretna citizens went about building a skating rink which rivalled the Neche rink in size. 127 The Pembina River and outdoor skating rinks had afforded Gretna sports enthusiasts many hours of excitement. The new rink complete with canvas roof marked the beginning of a new era in sporting life in Gretna.

First Sunday School

The children were going to be able to try on something new to the West Reserve, and it wasn't just their skates! The Baptist Rev. John Friesen began a Sunday School in the Presbyterian Church. Each class started at 9 a.m. on Sundays and ran for three quarters of an hour. The first German arrangement at the Presbyterian Church was temporary and the Rev. Friesen moved into the Baptist Church in January of 1894. It was a building measuring $22' \times 24'$ located near the new site of the public school. Sunday School was an American phenomenon viewed with suspicion by many religious leaders of the West Reserve, but with time it would become a popular and well attended function for Gretna young people.

A Hectic Winter

Business activities did not slow down as a result of the early winter on the prairies in 1893. Esau & Loewen dissolved their partnership in January, each setting up his own business venture. John Wittich made another attempt to buy grain for the S. P. Clark Co. in Gretna. William Esau bought out the Cornelius Hiebert store following Hiebert's appointment as Secretary-Treasurer of Rhineland Municipality. The Secretary-Treasurer's office was located in the former Enoch Winkler house on the corner of Seventh Street and Hespeler Avenue. Charlie Wahn opened a feed and flour business in the former Wilhelm Rempel store and Chris Pieper set up a warehouse, adding a second story for an office. John Irvine moved his blacksmith shop into the former Warnken warehouse. By the time the snow had melted Louis Wodlinger had opened another general store, Mr. Brown, who had sold his farm along the Post Road, decided to erect a new hotel on the original Erdmann Penner warehouse site, and many storefronts were being treated to new, or maybe their first coat of paint. Even the postmaster was looking for a change. Hoffman decided his store area was too small so he simply moved the wall separating the store from

the post office. The Post Office size decreased enough to worry the Gretna taxpayers.

Perhaps things were warming up too much for young William Abrams. He left Gretna to attend Business College in Winnipeg. Gerhard Hiebert, an employee at the Erdmann Penner store decided to quit the business world and enter the medical profession. He went to St. Paul, Minnesota to study medicine at the beginning of the new year. Both young men missed some good times that winter. The Forresters' Christmas ball got Gretna folks in the mood for more winter fun. Gretna staged two winter carnivals. Ernest Rietze, from the Anglo-American Hotel, and his daughter Lizzie skated off with first prize for their costumes at the January carnival. The March carnival was a more fanciful event complete with music supplied by the Emerson orchestra. A travelling theatre group also came to town that winter and put on a show to a packed Forresters' Hall.

The community pasture was organized by two Swedish residents, Mr. Bylow and Mr. Svenson. They rented the land north and south of Gretna and made it available to those who needed pasture to graze their animals. Almost everyone owned a cow, or a horse or two, making this rental arrangement quite a feasible proposition. The community pasture would continue to exist as long as residents in town kept up their barns and horses remained the primary energy source for local traffic. Mr. Bylow started a woodworking shop in May of 1894. He rented Alfred Knowles place for this purpose.

Health Officers

This was another busy summer in the construction industry for Gretna. Dr. McKenty finished up the house he started building the year before, Robert Chambers erected a new house and the Queen's Hotel got a third story. Heiman & Co. based out of Morden, continued their liquor business in Gretna in 1894 and Dr.

Donovan continued to sell drugs and sundries in his store.

Dr. Donovan came up against Canadian regulations in his role as medical Health Officer for the Municipality of Rhineland. When the smallpox accounts for 1892 were reported in the Manitoba Legislature in 1893, Dr. Donovan's name was prominent in the records. The Manitoba Board of Health took notice and asked Cornelius Hiebert, Rhineland Municipality Secretary-Treasurer, for clarification. It was pointed out to the municipality that for the Board of Health to have any authority over its medical Health Officers, these officers had to be Canadian citizens living in the Province of Manitoba. 128 The Health Board also suggested locating the next medical officer at Morden. This suggestion did not please the Municipal Council of Rhineland. It informed the provincial Health Board that they had appointed Dr. James McKenty at Gretna to replace Dr. Donovan as their medical Health Officer. Acceptance and confirmation of this decision came back to Rhineland Council on June 11, 1894. Dr. Donovan, however, was to continue his medical practice in Gretna.

Gretna and area residents continued to benefit from the services provided by the Enoch Winkler sawmill and lumber yard, by the legal services of James. J. Conacher and Henry W. Herchmer, by Simon Wolkof's shoemaker and repair shop, and by the blacksmiths, saddlery and harnessmakers in town. Z. Siebert added a tannery to the list of Gretna's service industries and H. E. Feiher opened the first jewellery store on the West Reserve in 1894. While merchants were starting to provide some of the finer things to the Gretna customers, the basic farm needs were not overlooked. The farm implement companies continued a brisk business out of Gretna, as did the grain companies. W. Esau & Co. became the agent for Lake of the Woods and the Dominion Elevator companies in Gretna in 1894. John Wittich was also buying wheat in Gretna by September, with payment available at the Isaac Loewen store. Ritz & Widmeyer bought flax in Gretna, Emerson and

A Time to Rest

All of this region has been transformed into a vast winter landscape; wherever you look ice and snow meet the eye. Sleighs have replaced wagons on the street; and everywhere you hear the tinkling of bells. Winter arrived with a brisk +12 degree Fahrenheit. The weather for the past week was fair, occasionally even mild. For the farmer a time of rest has now come. If he doesn't have to go to town or the woods, or work in the house or barn, he may make himself comfortable in the warm house reading papers or a useful book.

The price of wheat is still the same, hence there is little shipping. Life in town and the stores is not the same as in other years.

In the vicinity of Mr. Pieper's lumber yard in Gretna another ice rink is to be constructed. Mr. Pieper expects to use this building next summer for storing his machinery.

Mr. Koslowsky, the Rosenfeld blacksmith is presently working on a new home.

The Gretna mill is now working day and night. According to reports the Hudson Bay mill will soon be operating again.

Mr. Ross, the expressman from Gretna, bought the lot and house of Mr. Thompson, who moved away, for \$500. Because the house is located near the railway station, he appreciates it even more.

Mr. Shannon, duty collector, has been transferred from Gretna to Killarney. One hears reports that there are many applicants vying for this position.

John Wiebe, formerly of Gretna, has moved to the United States, leaving his poor family here.

The Gretna Women's Auxiliary (Sewing Circle) is busy preparing gifts for the poor children at the Christmas festivities.

Pastor Willing is contemplating opening a private school.

The previous notice in the paper reporting Phil Doern's passing (death) in Gretna, may now be confirmed due to a stroke. The burial took place last Tuesday.

On November 26 in the evening fire broke out in the Forrester's Hall in Gretna right above Mr. Coblentz's liquor store. It was discovered immediately and put out. This fire was contributed to by the lack of metal floor covering under the stove. Had the fire not been discovered immediately, untold damage could have occurred, since the wooden buildings there are in close proximity to each other, and no firefighting equipment was at hand.

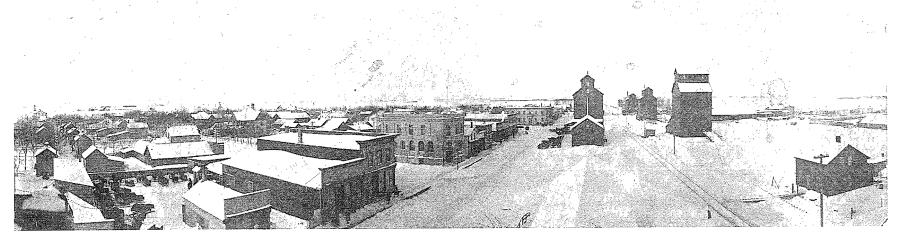
Der Nordwesten November 27, 1894 Letellier, shipping it to markets in the United States. The McMillan brothers bought flax, storing it in their warehouse built a year earlier. Even though there were five grain buyers in town by January of 1895, and sales were going well, Gretna merchants experienced a degree of difficulty in collecting outstanding accounts. Erdmann Penner had been advertising in **Der Nordwesten** as far back as December of 1892, requesting customers to pay their debts. Enoch Winkler took a more direct approach two years later. He let it be known that delinquent accounts would as of January 1895 be turned over to his lawyers for collection.

Officialdom

Certain official responsibilities were assigned to Gretna citizens in 1894. James McKenty was named Coroner for the Province of Manitoba. Adolphe Coblentz received authorization to issue marriage licences, a joyful task carried out exclusively by Cornelius Hiebert since 1890. Eugene Widmeyer assumed the mantle of Notary Public in March of 1894, a post held by Michael Long since 1891. By 1894

Eugene Widmeyer, Enoch Winkler, Joseph P. Tennant, Michael Scott, Jacob P. Siemens and Julius Siemens had all been registered as commissioners for the taking of affidavits in the Province of Manitoba. ¹²⁹ As with most other things in Gretna, legal and official responsibilities were shared and no one individual had exclusive rights in these matters.

Businessmen were active in issues affecting other communities on the West Reserve, although one concern in 1894 affected their Gretna enterprises as much as it did their ventures in Plum Coulee. The Municipality of Rhineland permitted "many Peddlars of Merchandise" to drive their trade without having to pay tax or license. The Gretna merchants, most of whom also owned businesses in Plum Coulee, petitioned the Reeve and Council of the Municipality to impose a license fee on all peddlers, to provide for a greater equality between merchants with property and those whose only overhead was the wagon which carried their wares and the hat which shielded them from the elements. 130 More than two thirds of the petition's signatures were Gretna names. Some, like Erdmann Penner, Enoch Winkler



Looking north towards the main business section. On extreme right is fence of the Turf Club (horse racetrack) on Hespeler Ave. Photo was taken from Ritz elevator by Dr. F. D. McKenty around 1900, and is an example of the innovative photography in his albums. P#719

and Otto Schultz, owned businesses in both communities. Others like Fred Osborne had recently started a business in Plum Coulee. Osborne had been a long-time employee in the Adolphe Coblentz store in Gretna before striking out on his own in the summer of 1894.

Mr. Osborne was not the only long-time Gretna resident to pull up stakes and leave for other pastures. Thomas Shannon was transferred to Killarney, to take on the customs duties there. Julius Siemens, who had moved to Seattle, Washington a year earlier, returned to Gretna to attend the wedding of Helena Siemens and Herman Dirks. Weddings livened up a summer which had been very quiet compared to summers past.

Growth of Churches

When the young minister of the German Lutheran Church left Gretna in June to meet his bride, Sophie Engelland, he took her to Philipsburg, Ontario to be married. The future Mrs. Willing was to become another of the Lutheran immigrants who settled in Gretna first after leaving their homes in Germany. 131 Rev. Willing had established the St. Paul's Lutheran parish at Gretna on February 22, 1894. It was the first German Lutheran parish in Manitoba outside of Winnipeg. The 22 charter members who helped formalize the Lutheran parish at Gretna organized a surprise party for the newlywed Willings, to welcome them home. Not unlike the services held by Rev. Willing, this surprise party was attended by many in Gretna who were not members of his congregation.

While the Rev. Willing's departure was only temporary, that of the Rev. Small was not. Small had served the Presbyterian congregation in Gretna for three years. He had become seriously ill during the smallpox epidemic in 1892 and had not fully recovered. Gretna residents regretted his leaving, but wished him a happier experience at his next posting. Later in the year N. F. Toews left Gretna to serve a congregation at Mountain Lake, Minnesota. He had been in Gretna for a short period of time,

serving smaller Mennonite settlements in the Canadian West and local folks saw his stay as a temporary one. Gretna's history with its many arrivals and departures reads much like a train schedule.

Second Private School

Pastor Willing found the response to his Lutheran ministry using the Presbyterian Church, most encouraging. His German St. Paul's Lutheran Church membership was not large, but he consistently filled all pews to capacity. Pastor Willing sent out feelers to determine the viability of a private Lutheran school. This school was not intended to compete with the Mennonite Normal School whose charter membership had grown to more than 100. The school proposed by Willing was for the children of Lutheran families living in his parish. The Presbyterian and Catholic believers were also looking to the future. Otto Schultz, Robert McQueen Binney, Robert Fischer and Charles Corbett were elected as church council for the Presbyterian congregation. John Schimnowski and Anton Krause had begun canvassing Catholics in the Gretna area in order to build a Catholic church in the foreseeable future.

Although a certain amount of this church activity grew out of religious rivalry, school celebrations in Otten's Wood, skinny-dipping at the swimming hole (no girls of course), football and horse racing crossed all ethnic, religious, political and national boundaries. The Gretna competitiveness emerged as a strong unifying force when the time came to challenge another community in sports. To get ready for such competitions, the Normal School would field a team against the town. At times these events proved as lively and as challenging as games against other towns.

Planting Trees

The political rivalry in Gretna simmered just beneath the surface and at times found its way

Too Many Peddlars

To the Reeve and Council of the Municipality of Reinland:
The undersigned Petitioners, Merchants and the heaviest Tax-payers, within your Municipality humbly show:
that their business is seriously hampered by the many
Peddlars of merchandise being permitted to drive their
trade without having to pay a tax or license. Your petitioners being residents and contributing to the prosperity of
this commonwealth are thereby unjustly called upon to
compete against a class of men who live on the generosity of
the farming and who contribute nothing to the prosperity
of this municipality.

Wherefore your petitioners pray that a license be imposed on all such dealers, who have no permanent place of abode and whose names do not appear on the Roll of Assessment for this Municipality.

And your Petitioners as in duty bound will ever pray.

Schultz & Hansen
W. Esau & Co.
Enoch Winkler
R. B. Fisher
Isaac Loewen
E. Penner & Co.
C. Pieper
C. Hiebert
Lewis Ziegler

August Schimnowski Max Heyden John Irving H. Hellofs Ritz & Widmeyer W. W. Tyson Philip Rau Otto Ritz & Co. H. Braun Wm. Rempel

R.M. of Rhineland

Gretna's Stately Cottonwoods

Gretna, Man., October 22, 1895

Dear Mr. Greenway

By today express, I am sending to your address, Crystal City a bundle of Cottonwood seedlings. If you want more when these arrive let me know at once. I can get you a few thousand the same as these shipped, if it don't freeze up too soon. They grow on the water edge of river so you have to start them in a well watered piece of land.

Yours sincerely, E. Winkler

The Winkler Papers

into the business dealings. Ever since Chris Pieper started his lumber business he had provided keen competition for Enoch Winkler. Pieper's strong Conservative leanings were known to any who had done business with him over the years, and Winkler's loyal support of the Liberal party's policies in the Provincial Legislature made it evident that these two prominent Gretna business leaders did not see eye-to-eye on many major issues of the day. The disagreement and rivalry would be put aside, however, on occasions which called for community unity. One such occasion was tree planting day which was observed every May. This day had been inaugurated by Gretna citizens almost as soon as the village had been named in the early 1880's. Community leaders like Alex Smith, Otto Schultz, Enoch Winkler, Erdmann Penner and Chris Pieper all had a hand in generating interest for community improvements. Schultz continued the organizational work when he became Gretna's Pathmaster, gradually changing the barren

landscape into a well-treed garden. The cottonwood seedlings were dug from the Pemina River banks and carried into Canada where Gretna's streets became lined with quick, straight growing trees. The work done in those years continues to benefit Gretna residents today.

The tall trees provide a physical symbol of the foresight, work and planning which took place a century ago. Gretna's impact on the larger Mennonite community might be less visible than its trees, but should not be underestimated. Two young men who arrived in 1892 and 1893 best illustrate the significance of Gretna and its Mennonite Normal School in the development of Canada's Mennonite community. Benjamin Ewert followed his older brother H. H. Ewert, to Gretna in October of 1892 and David Toews came one year later. They both started their careers as teachers in the area, young Benjamin taking on the school at Edenburg in 1895. David Toews would teach in Gretna until 1898 when he moved to Rosthern,



Pembina River swimming hole at Neche, N.D. just west of bridge. P#305

District of Saskatchewan, where he would play an important role in establishing a school similar to the one in Gretna. Both men had a profound influence in leading their fellow Mennonites into the twentieth century.

The Third Reserve

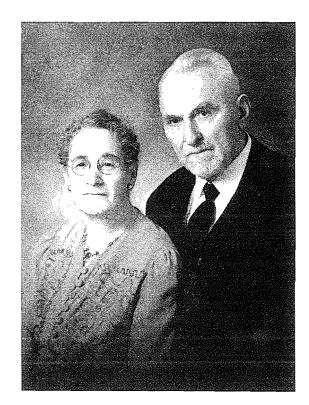
Gretna's ties with Emerson, Plum Coulee, Reinland, Morden and Winkler were as old as Gretna itself. Its connections with communities beyond the boundaries of the Manitoba Menonite reserves had begun when the first train load of immigrants from the United States came through Gretna customs and immigration. It was no accident that David Toews found himself looking to Rosthern for new worlds to explore. Klaas Peters had organized settlement excursions to Rosthern, bringing many Menonite settlers from the United States. Working out of Gretna, Klaas Peters will have been able to provide David Toews with a good under-

standing of the needs and potential of the new Mennonite settlements in this unknown territory. As transportation networks emerged in the decades ahead, Gretna would prove to be an ideal location from which to serve the larger Mennonite constituency.

Young people in Gretna likely did concern themselves with the larger issues affecting their Village. They would have observed the quarantine sheds and pastures nestled near the border and they would not necessarily have understood the significance of Enoch Winkler's opening of a machinery business in April 1895. They must have wondered about the several boxcars of hogs shipped to Winnipeg markets by Alex Smith, but would not have understood that the increase in hog production on the West Reserve was a direct result of poor grain prices. (The hog prices turned out not to be all that good either!) They would have endured the visits of Dr. Tweed, the dentist from Morden who provided Gretna's dental care in 1895. The



Montcalm Ave., looking west, around 1950. Krause residence on left. P#302



Rev. Benjamin and Emilie (Ruth) Ewert. Ewert taught and was minister in Edenburg, publisher of *Der Mitarbeiter*, first superintendent of Old Folks' Home. P#114

occulist from Winnipeg came less frequently, so eyeglasses for those who needed them often were purchased from peddlers or from a local merchant who happened to have a pair that fit. The young people may have wondered at Mr. Williams from Deloraine. The son-in-law of the recently deceased William Brown arrived in Gretna in early spring with plans to finish building the hotel Mr. Brown had started a little more than a year earlier, shortly before he died.

A Genteel Sport

Gretna's youth, however, would certainly have taken notice of the Lawn Tennis Club organized in the spring of 1895. Sports activities in previous years had centred around the football and baseball clubs, catering to the male population. Tennis would provide an outlet for the men and women of the area to share in the community's recreational activities. Until now it seemed that when the ice melted and the skating stopped, a young woman's options were limited. Nonetheless, the horse was considered a genteel enough interest for boys and girls alike:

In those early days when most of our pleasures were homemade, my own greatest pleasure was horse back riding . . . In Gretna we had a proper house and barns, carriages, horses, everything, a whole civilized set up with proper help to look after it. So one horse more or less did not matter a bit.

. . . Father had brought me from Winnipeg a most beautiful soft pale yellow side saddle, bridle crop, and everything to match, so with these beautiful accoutrements on my lovely black horse I felt really smart. And Mother made me a real riding habit with a long side saddle skirt. So what more could any young girl wish for.

Those side saddle skirts were really something. They were of walking length at the back and quite a bit longer in front. On the right side

was a bulge that fitted over the pommel of the saddle in front. So when you sat on the horse, sideways, of course, the skirt was of equal length all around. When you walked in it you draped it around you toward the right, fastened a small loop onto a button at the back, and it was of walking length all around.

Another trick that you had to learn was how to get onto a horse properly. Not only you, but all your gentlemen friends had to have lessons so as to help you on to your horse properly. The man knelt on the stirrup side of the horse on one knee. He put his right hand palm upward on his left knee, the right palm inside the palm of his other hand. Then you would step lightly into his hand, catch hold of the pommel of the saddle, give yourself a little hoist while he gave you a little push and you jumped right into your saddle. After you got used to it it was really quite simple. ¹³²

Incorporation Talk

The young people in 1895 must have felt becalmed. Gretna's community leaders, however, were experiencing a rougher time. Enoch Winkler hired H. W. Herchmer to represent him in a court case against the Municipality of Rhineland. Taxes were high and assessments were being challenged. Other Gretna businessmen were finding the municipality less responsive to their requests than seemed in order. By the end of the year talk of incorporating the Village of Gretna had resolved itself into firm action. Gretna had grown considerably since its inception. It had played a key role in the administration of municipal government from its earliest days. It had helped other communities get a start. It had begun to feel that it was mature enough to chart its own development, independent of the larger municipality. It was time for Gretna to take the next steps on its own.



Lists compiled from school registers indicate that staff members may be: William Martin, principal, and teachers Martha Krause, Annie Krause, Nairn Horn, Annie G. Mitton, Josephine Wahn, and S. G. Snelgrove. P#440

Chapter Four

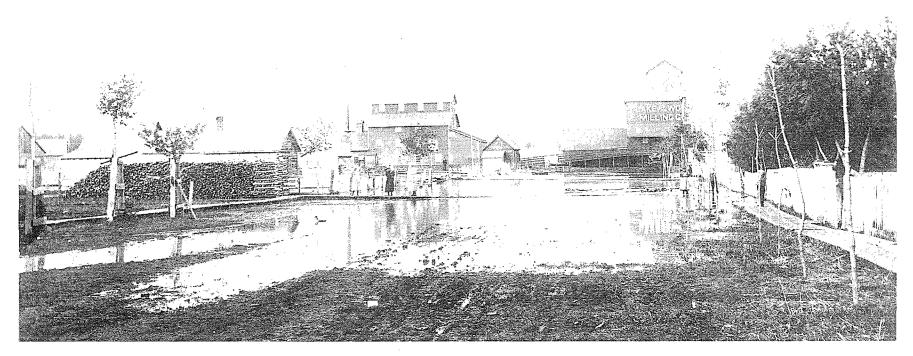
Finding a Sure Path Into the Twentieth Century

Taking those first steps was not easy. The first decade and a half of Gretna's life was proof of that. Internal differences needed to be overcome. External influences, like the "panic of 1893" and the unstable wheat prices, could not be ignored. Living on the longest and most open International Border in the world provided a temptation and an invitation that was hard to resist. Events in Gretna at the turn of

the century bear out the observation that if an infant can get into trouble before it can walk unassisted, the things it can get into once it is walking on its own far outreach a parent's imagination.

Once those first few steps have been taken, walking by oneself is the only way to go. And so

continued on page III



Spring flooding due to overflowing of Pembina River in the 1890's. Photo taken along Klassen Ave. P#1163

Petition to Incorporate Gretna

To the Honourable James Colebrooke Patterson, Lieutenant-Governor of the Province of Manitoba in Council

The Petition of

Erdman Penner, Merchant Otto Schultz, Merchant John Irving, Blacksmith Alfred Svenson, Tailor R. B. Fisher, Merchant I. G. Kertcher, Grain Buyer R. Chambers, Hay Buyer C. Meder, Tinsmith Alexander Robertson, Carpenter Peter P. Siemens, Agent Robert Ross, Teamster F. W. Wahn, Agent M. Wodlenger, Merchant Adolphe Coblentz, Liquor Merchant Otto Ritz, Hotel Keeper Christian Pieper, Lumber Merchant H. H. Ewert, Teacher George Tymcurak, Carpenter Louis Peder, Carpenter Jacob B. Unger, Blacksmith John J. Peters, Merchant John Hott, Shoemaker James McKenty, Physician Philip Rau, Harnessmaker August Schimnowski, Harnessmaker Andrew W. Johnson, Grain Buyer

Robert M. Binney, Section Foreman Iacob Hoffman, Člerk Levi Bub, Tanner Peter I. Bergen, Clerk Martin Salzwedel, Shoemaker Enoch Winkler, Lumber Merchant M. Long, Banker H. Dirks, Bookkeeper I. I. Köhler, Clerk Henry G. Bean, Clerk I. P. Shannon, Clerk Louis Robock, Tinsmith John Ritz, Hotel Keeper Charles Wahn, Agent William Rempel, Municipal Clerk Iacob Janzen, Farmer I. A. Friesen, Baker Hugh Street, Butcher Henry Ritz, Banker Max Heyden, Agent Joseph D. Pierson, Clerk Philip Döern, Tailor Philip Schott, Labourer Simon Wolkof, Shoemaker Gerhard Hamm, Carpenter William Rempel, Gentleman

Albert Renkel, Labourer John Campain, Labourer Herman Hellofs, Butcher Hugo Gailfus, Clerk Louis Calder, Labourer Ludwig Wurster, Labourer Charles Heyden, Tinsmith Bernhard Friesen, Clerk John Zimmerman, Clerk John Schimnowski, Carpenter Michael Friesen, Labourer Charles B. Corbett, Plasterer Peter Siemens, Gentleman Anton Kraus, Harnessmaker Frank Roff, Well-borer Walter H. Tyson, Agent Wendelin Wolff, Labourer Conrad Schweitzer, Labourer George Walker, Clerk Peter Archdekin, Labourer Bernhard Penner, Teamster Charles J. Whidden, Carpenter Albert W. Stiefel, Merchant Robert Fisher, Sr., Carpenter Henry Braun, Hotelkeeper Henry Hubman, Grain Buyer

Humbly Showeth:

- 1. **That** your Petitioners are freeholders and householders, residing in the unincorporated Village of Gretna, situate on Section number Five (5) in Township number One (1) Range number One (1) West of the first principal meridian in the Province of Manitoba according to the Dominion Government survey thereof.
- 2. That over one half of your Petitioners are freeholders within the limits of aforesaid Section number five (5).
- 3. **That** your petitioners are desirous of obtaining a Charter of Incorporation by Letters Patent under "The Municipal Act" R.S.M. Cap. 100. and Acts amending the same, incorporating your Petitioners and other inhabitants of aforesaid Section (5) a body corporate and politic under the name of "The Village of Gretna".
- 4. That your Petitioner's desire that the proposed corporation of "The Village of Gretna" aforesaid shall extend over and occupy within the limits of incorporation the whole of aforesaid Section number Five (5) in Township One (1) in Range One (1) West of the first principal meridian in the aforesaid Province of Manitoba, comprising Six hundred and forty acres of land.
- 5. **That** the territory comprised within the proposed limits of "The Village of Gretna" aforesaid has a population of Five hundred and eighty inhabitants according to the last census returns of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland, within those jurisdiction the proposed Village of Gretna is situate, taken in the month of March in the year One thousand eight hundred and ninety six, under the directions of the Council of said Rural Municipality of Rhineland.
- 6. That the inhabitants referred to in the last preceding paragraph mostly reside in that portion of aforesaid Section number Five (5) which has been surveyed into Village lots and are sufficiently close together to form an incorporated Village.
- 7. That your Petitioners, in accordance with the provisions of Section Eleven (II) of the aforesaid Act, have given at least one month's previous notice in the Manitoba Gazette of your Petitioners intention to apply for the said Letters Patent. Dated at the Village of Gretna in the Province of Manitoba this Fourteenth day of April A.D. 1896.

Note:

Petition is signed by all 75 petitioners as named above, witnessed by E. Widmeyer. Accompanying the above petition was an affidavit of Wm. Rempel, Clerk of the Rural Municipality of Rhineland, verifying that the population of Gretna as of March 1896 was 582. E. Widmeyer also witnessed this document.

Also accompanying the petition is an affidavit of E. Widmeyer, verifying that he witnessed the signatures of the 75 petitioners and the signature "E. Widmeyer" is his "own proper handwriting". This affidavit is witnessed by H. W. Herchmer.

Also included is an affidavit of Otto Schultz, verifying that he is one of the Petitioners, that all the Petitioners are freeholders or householders residing in Section 5–1–1W, and that all the Petitioners reside sufficiently close together to form an incorporated village. This document is witnessed by E. Widmeyer.

A copy of the Public Notice referred to in the Petition was enclosed, together with an affidavit of Hugo Gailfus verifying that said Public Notice was printed in the Manitoba Gazette, and including a copy of that printed notice. This document was witnessed by H. W. Herchmer. The affidavit of Godfrey Coblentz verifies that he posted 25 copies of the Public Notice, and is again declared before H. W. Herchmer.

Following the receipt of the Petition by the Municipal Commissioner, he forwarded it to Lieutenant-Governor Patterson, recommending that Letters Patent be issued, and that Albert William Stiefel be appointed returning officer.

Letters Patent were subsequently issued, incorporating the Village of Gretna as requested, and specifying that: a public meeting for the nominations of Mayor and Councillors be held on Thursday, May 21, 1896, at Winkler's Hall in Gretna, at 12 noon; that, if an election is required, that it be held on Thursday, May 21, 1986, at eight o'clock in the afternoon; and that Albert William Stiefel be appointed returning officer.

It is assumed that no election was necessary, as the first council meeting of the Village of Gretna was held at eight o'clock that same day, with the new mayor, Erdman Penner, presiding. By-law No. 1 of the Village of Gretna appointing H. W. Herchmer as Secretary-Treasurer and Solicitor for the Village, was passed at that first meeting.

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

it was with Gretna. Its citizens had long felt neglected by the Rhineland Municipal Council. The matter of school expansion had come up again in 1894 and the request for an additional levy for a primary class was unresolved more than a year later. Then there was the matter of Enoch Winkler's disagreement with the Rhineland Municipality regarding the 1894 assessment which, when brought before the County Court, placed Winkler in a situation he had not bargained for. The Court requested a detailed and documented statement of all his real assets. This he was not ready for, so his legal counsel, Henry W. Herchmer, advised him to drop the matter. 1 Drop it he did, but only because he had concluded there must be another way.

Winkler's signature was the second among 80 Gretna property holders on a petition submitted to the Government of Manitoba on April 14, 1896. Approval to incorporate the Village of Gretna was granted on May 16, 1896. The new Village of Gretna could now set its own course, plan its own improvement projects, take full responsibility for its own successes and failures.

A Banner Year

Eighteen ninety six was a banner year for Gretna. Business was on an upswing as indicated by the completion of Gretna's third hotel by Martin Salzwedel.3 Known as the "German House", its construction was begun by the late Mr. Brown from Brown's Corner on the Post Road, but it never reached completion due to his untimely death. The German House became the hostelry predominantly used by Lutheran visitors to Gretna. The Salzwedel Hotel was completed before fall, but the work on the Queen's Hotel was delayed due to an early frost. The Queen's new third story, facelift and new brick front brought a sense of permanence to the enlarged building on the corner of Hespeler and Seventh. A new store had been opened by a Mr. Bergen on the north end of town, and a millinery shop had begun business next to the barber-photographer-bathhouse of J. C. Voigt. Both of these businesses hoped to divert customers who normally went across the line for their fine goods. They also hoped to catch the imagination of the students at the Gretna Normal School whose needs were not the same as those of the farmers in the area. With Professor H. H. Ewert offering the first summer school for teachers at the Normal School in 1896, a new tradition was born for teachers on the West Reserve. A tradition that lingers on in the West Reserve even today — teach in winter, study during the summer — had its practical beginnings at the Normal School.

A festive mood took hold of Gretna citizens in May 1896. Preparation for the pending proclamation and Council election included extra measures during the annual tree-planting day. Additional trees were planted, and flower gardens sprang up in many front yards. The Public School received a new fence, in addition to the decorative flower gardens laid out by teachers and students. Paint was not spared either and the Village looked scrubbed and spruced up in time to acclaim Erdmann Penner the first mayor of Gretna. Council was also elected by acclamation. Otto Schultz, Michael Long, Robert Fischer and Enoch Winkler were named as Gretna's first Village Council. The mood, however, gave way to apprehension very quickly.

The constant threat from south of the border — no, not the Fenians, and no, not the Bathgate ball team — the Pembina River spilled over its banks by the end of May. The river reached into Gretna making boat travel possible in Gretna's business section. The waters were slow to recede until the CPR granted the new Village administration permission to breach its railroad dyke just north of the border. The Village returned to its normal acitivities within a few days, although the flood continued its damaging path eastward through NeuAnlage, Silberfeld, Edenburg, Halbstadt and other villages caught between the Pembina and Red Rivers. Max Heyden, Gretna's Massey Harris agent, missed all the excitement. He had given himself a month off to take the cure at Banff. He came

back in time to watch the annual horse races in June which proved very successful, even though most of the first place finishes were horses out of Winnipeg. A sideline to the horses was the latest form of transportation — the bicycle. Half mile races at the track saw a Cavalier competitor, name of Peterson, finish in 1 minute, 25 seconds. As an unrequested attration, "one sly fox out of Winnipeg netted some \$150 with his wheel of fortune, just to demonstrate that we've not run out of fools yet . . . "4 The Banff vacationer did miss the Buchanan Theatre Company while sitting in the Hot Springs. This theatre troupe arrived in Gretna in a private railcar and entertained to capacity crowds for the entire first week in May. The new Baptist minister from Illinois arrived at much the same time as did the theatre company. It is impossible to tell from **Der Nordwesten** reports which arrival created a bigger stir.

The recent arrival from Illinois must have found the celebrations for the Queen's birthday something of a revelation. Here he was, in a German speaking community, one step shy of being in the U.S.A., participating in a birthday party for someone thousands of miles away in a country most had never seen! The day included some football games (soccer) and fireworks which began before sunrise and continued intermittently well into the night. The Union Jack flew from all the businesses and some homes as well. The Gretna Football Club had reorganized in the early spring of 1896 aiming to

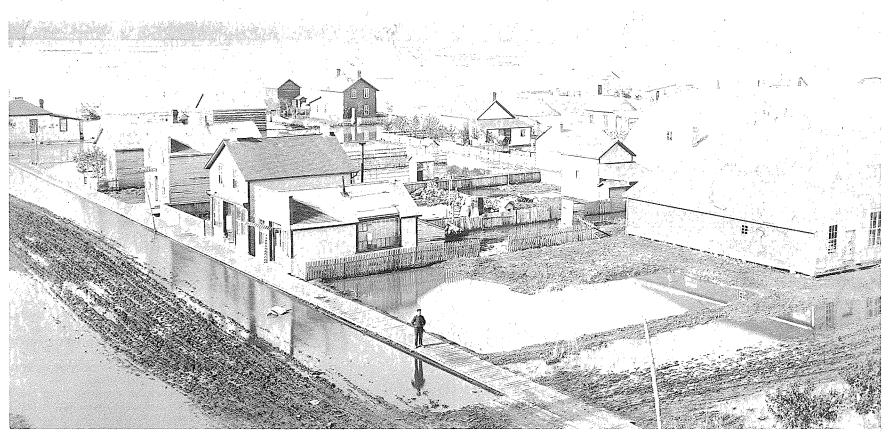


Flooding in early 1890's, south of Gretna. The CPR opened their tracks to allow water run-off. CPR water tower can be seen near tracks. P#1164

improve its record, especially against teams from Plum Coulee, Morden and the U.S.A. Mr. R. Bryans was chosen as captain to lead the team this season.

All of the excitement and celebration in Gretna did not slow down any of the serious business in the Village. Henry W. Herchmer was named to the position of Gretna's first Secretary-Treasurer. Enoch Winkler led a deputation from Gretna and the Rhineland Municipality to the provincial capital to get support for the digging of new drainage ditches and dykes as flood protection. Chris Pieper received

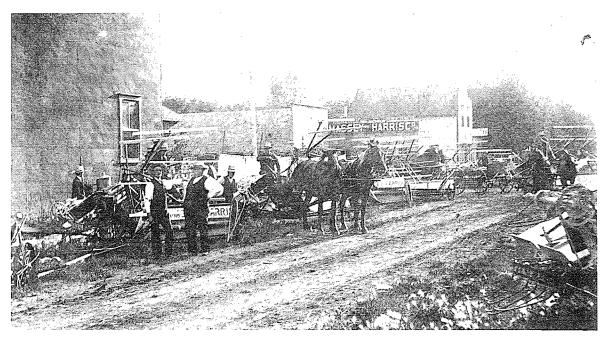
two carloads of lumber from British Columbia to supply the building needs in the area — the hotels in Gretna and the Frank Unrau windmill in Blumenort. The Michael Long residence was also going to require several carloads of bricks, mortar and sand, and the new R. P. Roblin elevator was to be built by Mr. McGaw in 1896.⁵ In addition to these more notable projects, A. J. Friesen opened a fruit store next to the bank and Schimnowski formed a partnership with J. Reinecke in a harness business in Altona. This was not the first nor the last time that a Gretna business would start a subsidiary adventure in



Spring flooding in 1890's along Seventh St. Note the guonset canvas-covered building to the right, which is the skating rink on Berlin Ave. P#1165

Altona, the little village situated seven miles north of Gretna. So far, competition between these two centres took place mainly on the playing field. On the last Friday in July 1896, three cyclists were chosen to represent each community in a 15-mile race. Ed Johnston of Gretna came in first and J. Engelland of Altona placed second.

The serious business of competition was often overshadowed by weather news in 1896. On June 16th a lightning bolt hit the home of Wilhelm Rempel in Gretna, fortunately only damaging the chimney and stovepipes and shaking up a house full of visitors. The North West Elevator in Neche did not get off as lightly. The same lightning storm set the elevator ablaze destroying building and contents completely. Another violent storm in the first week of August took out trees and flattened many grainfields near Gretna, although no buildings were damaged.



H. G. Bean farm equipment dealership in 1903. Sid Bean on left. William Rempel in the back left. John Rempel sitting on the binder. Henry Penner standing left of binder. P#1504

Excitement and serious business, weather reports and sure cures were all a part of the **Gretna News**. Gretna's newspaper was started early in 1896 and was published by Edward Stanley of Neche, N.D. Issue No. 23 for Wednesday, April 15, 1896, the only issue extant today, paints the following picture of Gretna:

New Hotel

The Hotel is rapidly approaching completion. It will be a commodious one, with roomy offices, dining room, sitting room and sample rooms, with 12 bed rooms upstairs, and will be under the mangement of Mr. Otto Gaube, who will be the right man, in the right place.

Altona

Situated in the Garden of Manitoba this town has sprung up in a few months, with six general stores, three lumber yards, three elevators, two flax warehouses, two implement dealers, a modern roomy hotel, just building, to be opened in June next, two boarding houses, a harness shop, also building, and with as gentlemanly capable, lot of business men as can be met with anywhere.

We expect great strides from Altona in the near future. We have not space in this issue to give what is an adequate notice of this rapidly progressing place.

Funeral

The remains of the late J. C. Voight, Photographic Artist, were laid in their last resting place, on Friday, followed by a numerous company of Friends and Sympathisers. Mr. Voight, was a member of the Independent Order of Forresters and that Benevolent and Fraternal Association took charge of the Funeral arrangements and brought a Halo of Benevolence where without such Society all would have been dark and gloomy, this society also through their Insurance Policy provides for those dependant upon the late Mr. Voight, he was clever in his business, of a kindly genial disposition, his faults are covered by mother earth, and we are sure that nothing but a kindly thought will remain of a clever man, gone in the prime of life, 36 years of age.

Brethern of the Order attended from North Dakota and other outlaying districts. Mr. W. J. Briden looked after the undertaking, in his usual

continued on page 116

GRETNA NEWS,

A. STANLEY

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REALLY

FIRST CLASS.

Cure For Headache.

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relativated in a plate, a splited Grean From your sharehold to a good many special cases. The Hotel is rapidly approaching completion. It will be a commodium, one with roomy officer, during room, utting room and sample rooms, with 12 led rooms updates, and will be. ander the management of Mr. Otto on the oth retority for La Frairie lands, who will be the right man, in Gaube, who will be the right man, in he right place.

Mr. Shinowsky visited Altana on Thursday, he expects to have a harmon sloop ready by the lat May.

Mr. Hawkins, of Winnipeg, a paint; and paperhanger, is working at Mr. S under's house, painting and opering it.

O. Gambe has rented his house in

David Klasson is building an Interpret Warehouse on his lot for Mr. ieper,

A Blacksmith is much required and special in soon,

A Boot and Shoe Maker is wanted

Mr. Pede is moving his house to rect a building as an implemen archouse, near Hickers's story. The Manjespality has granted \$10 provide a sidewalk on Main Street

Mr. Schwartz, wheat buyer, pening out a lumber yard.

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TERMS MODERATE.

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Bankers.

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RUAL ESTATE AGRACES

Altona Town Lots.

Land For SALE.

Fruits.

Moving to Gretna

Father and mother, our parents, were married in the Edenburg Mennonite church on Sept. 21, 1886, by Rev. Heinrich Wiebe. After they were married they lived in Strassburg near Emerson, where three children were born, Maria, born May 29, 1891; Margaret was born Feb. 24, 1893; Anna was born May 5, 1895. After a few years of farming, father sold his farm and bought a nice 2 story home in Gretna; there was a good barn on the yard and a nice fence around the entire place. Here in Gretna, father had a furniture store. Uncle Abram, mother's brother, helped in the store. In winter we enjoyed sleigh riding; father always had a nice horse and sleigh-cutter. In summer he had a nice Top-buggy with fringes to go out joyriding. Especially did we enjoy going to Grandparents. They had a nice home with many tall trees and a swing in their garden. Later on in Gretna my brother James was born, June 28, 1897. He died June 28, 1969. My youngest sister Alma was also born in Gretna July 12, 1904.

Gretna is a small community town, 700 population, and very thriving in those days. It was next to the U.S.A. in the Red river valley in south central Manitoba, north of the International boundary line. The Pembina river had a large forest of trees between Gretna and Neche, U.S.A. This big forest reached almost as far as Emerson. Neche and Gretna are only a mile apart, with the Pembina river and forest between the two.

About the year 1878 many Mennonites came west and settled near Gretna, Manitoba, because the land here seemed more promising for grain-farming. Among this farming group were David Schellenburg and Klassens who settled in Neuanlage. They were very good friends of my father. Other business settler groups who came to Gretna were — Erdman Penner, Merchant; Benj. Ewert, Bookstore, Prof. Ewert in school and church; Dr. McKenzie, M.D., and many other places of business were started.

continued

business like manner, the Rev. A. Edington, Presbyterian Minister held the Funeral Services, and the following were the Pall Bearers. Messrs Max Hayden, J. G. Kercher, Phil. Rau, Paul Henze, Peter Archdeacon, Wm. Whan.

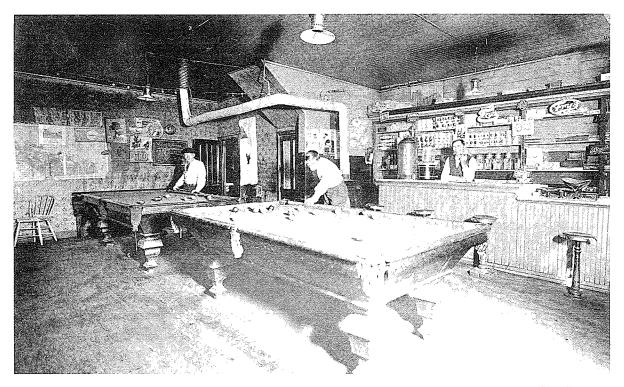
Incorporation

The committee met last Friday evening and reported in favor of incorporating the Town, and have prepared a Petition to forward to the Lieut. Governor on the matter. We consider this a step in the right direction in these days of progress, if you are not gaining ground you are, ipso facto, standing still.⁶

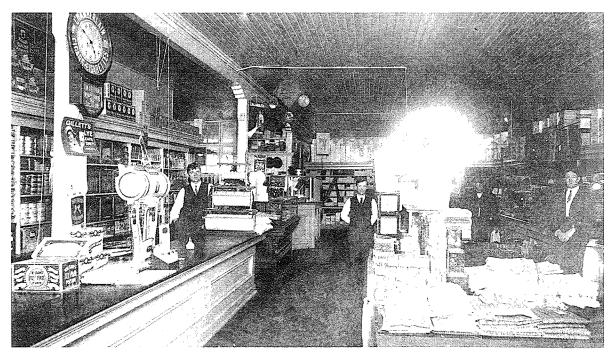
Issues of the 1896 **Gretna News** earlier or later in the year have not been found. They might tell an interesting story of Gretna's personalities, some of which can be gleaned from other sources. It would be interesting to know

some of the background to the sale of Enoch Winkler's lumber business to Ritz & Widmeyer in July 1896. It would be equally as fascinating to know the reasons for the sale in late August of the Chris Pieper lumber business to J. P. Friesen & Sons, owners of the Gretna flour mill.

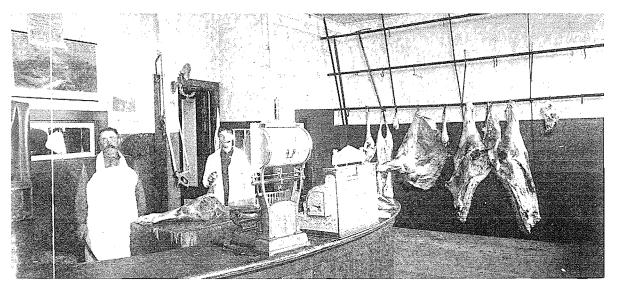
Chris Pieper had contested the Rosenfeldt seat in the Provincial Legislature in the January 1896 election, attempting to unseat the Liberal incumbent Enoch Winkler. The election had been a heated one, with the Conservative Party and Pieper smelling a possibility of victory. The Greenway Liberals fought hard and won the election, returning both Enoch and Valentine Winkler to the Legislative Assembly in Winnipeg. Gretna's **Nordwesten** correspondent Wilhelm Rempel questioned the need for abusive language and name-calling in a contest



Inside the Gretna poolhall and confectionery, on west side of Seventh St. between Klassen Ave. and Schellenberg Ave. L. to R.: Phil Schuppert, John Loewen and Henry Unger, proprietor. P#304



Adolphe Coblentz and Sons store on Seventh St. around 1900. Destroyed in the 1913 fire. P#955



Hellofs' butcher shop on Schellenberg Ave. Later moved to Hespeler Ave. Herman Hellofs and Gordon McEdwards in the shop around 1910. P#227

Moving to Gretna cont'd

Gretna was always the Educational center. Prof. H. H. Ewert, formerly of Kansas, who no doubt made an outstanding contribution to this community at large, and especially to the Mennonite church, was the pastor of the church. He started a S.S., Young People's meeting, and a good A Capella Choir. He insisted that all Mennonite parents teach their children the High-German language, in their homes. Here are some of the names of the Mennonite families living in Gretna when my parents lived there - Benj. Ewert, H. H. Ewert, Leonard and Herman Dirks, Kehlers, Penners, Loewens, Siemens, etc. Later on my Grandparents Friesen and their married children moved to Gretna. My Grandparents' home was only one block from my parents' home. There were many Maple trees in Gretna and also at Grandparents' home. I remember how my grandparents would tap the Maple trees in their yard to make Maple-syrup, also Maple sugar and candy.

At first there was no Mennonite church in Gretna, so all the Mennonite people went to the Edenburg church which was only 3 miles east of Gretna. Later on Church services were started in the Mennonite Collegiate Bible School. Since they were short of teachers, H. H. Ewert asked father to teach school in the neighboring villages. Father had a good school education in Russia. Prof. Ewert also had a three weeks teachers night school, and I still remember father going to this night school. Father taught school in Schoenthal near Altona. He also taught in Neuanlage, and also Edenburg. These schools were near Gretna and Father could always come home every night. I remember that on week-ends he would always bring treats for us children.

Marie (Galle) Friesen

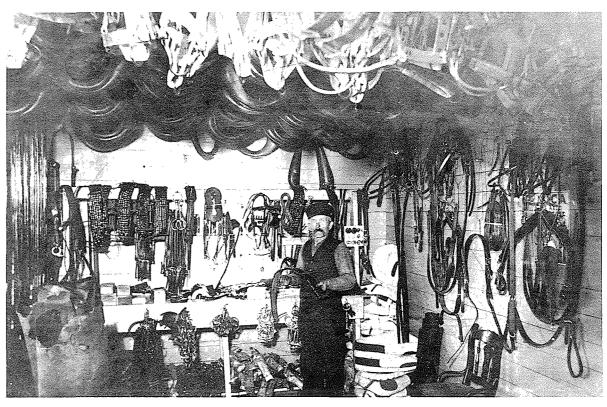
which was intended to place the most representative and capable individual in such an important office.

Ĥ. Hellofs and William Ritz who had been in partnership for only a short time, sold the meat market to Frank Roff in 1896. Mr. Hellofs used his new resources to go into the cattle buying business. Other changes in the Gretna business world included the continuation of the photographic studio by George Viertel following the death of its previous owner J. C. Voigt. The Ritz & Widmeyer Bank advertised that it had moved to the corner of Hespeler and Seventh Street. Partners Friesen and Janzen promptly established a general store in the former bank building. William Esau & Co. saw the need for improved parking facilities for farmers coming

to Gretna with their teams, buying two empty lots just north of Herchmer's law office across from the Lake of the Woods Elevator, and fencing them in to serve as a stableyard.

An Invisible Line

Smuggling was a top news item in Gretna in 1896. Customs Collector Tennant seized and confiscated several shipments of cattle that were found in Canada illegally. Farm machinery was also a hot item, although the greatest amount of smuggling was carried out by the local Mennonite farmers who found the tobacco prices much more to their liking in the U.S.A. Smuggling in commodities such as this would continue to make the first name of

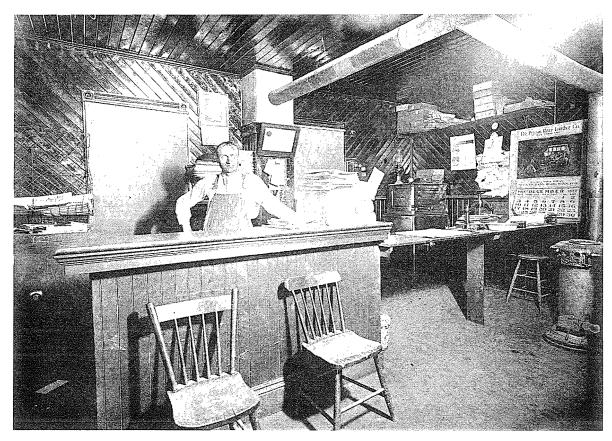


Anton Krause inside his harness shop on Montcalm Ave. in 1902. P#1464

Gretna, Smugglers' Point, ring true for generations to come. Besides local smugglers, a real thief was caught in the fall of 1896. An undercover constable from the U.S.A. Constable Hennay, followed a lead and crossed the border at Gretna. He was hot in pursuit of a W. R. Smith who had pulled off a spectacular diamond robbery in Chicago earlier in the year. The suspect had chosen Gretna as a good hideout and had been in the Village for more than three months when Constable Hennay and the Customs officials descended on him. The arrest was made in October but only several hundred dollars worth of diamonds were recovered. The suspect allowed himself to be taken back across

the border into the U.S. No deportation orders or extradition papers needed to be filed to bring the prisoner back from whence he came. The 49th Parallel's invisibility was a simple fact of life.

Things were just beginning to return to normal in Gretna when Dr. James McKenty, in his capacity as Public Health Inspector closed both schools. A particularly virulent strain of measles was making the rounds on the West Reserve and several deaths had been attributed to the disease. The young people may have rejoiced at the time out of the classroom, but their spirits certainly fell with the canvas top on the skating rink when it was brought down by



Inside Friesen Lumberyard in 1911. J. P. Friesen behind the counter. P#724

Manitoba Smuggling

The jug gets water until it breaks. This saying has been proven to be true again. So many things were smuggled into Canada from U.S.A. that some articles could not be sold for quite some time. Especialy tobacco and fuel oil were smuggled in not merely for useful purposes, but to sell for gain. Now there are two inspectors in our midst, and a number of secret-police are to remain in the vicinity. One farmer had to pay a fine of \$100 for possessing smuggled tobacco. Several others have Democles' sword hanging over their heads. This command will no doubt be sharply impressed on their minds: "Give to the Kaiser, what belongs to the Kaiser."

Der Nordwesten

January 27, 1898

Smugglers Gain

Winnipeg Free Press reports it is troubled by the (news it has discovered in the) amount of smuggling that is going on. The extent to which smuggling has been going on in the Mennonite Reserve is something appalling to the customs and inland revenue officials.

A quiet investigation has been going on for a while. At first it was thought only tobacco was being smuggled, Neche price per can \$3.0. Mennonites are heavy smokers thus saving quite a bit. Smuggling spread further to coal oil, they buy barrels from Canadian firms with the inspection stamp still on (which should be destroyed with the contents out), and take them to Neche and have them filled with oil and sell it at 194 a gallon in the reserve. The price of oil on which duty is paid is 35¢ a gallon.

Dried fruit, apples, blankets, quilts and clothing are smuggled the same way. The merchants of Gretna are deprived of thousands of dollars and so is the government.

> Neche Chronotype February 26, 1898

Manitoba's First German Catholic Church

Gretna, the largest German town in Manitoba, will soon see the raising of a new and beautiful building open to all.

Realizing that there are about 65 Catholic families, they decided to erect a church of their own in Manitoba's main German town.

Two years ago they had talked about such a plan, but had to postpone starting because no German-speaking priest was available.

On Sunday, Oct. 25, Father F. Woodcutter was asked by the Archbishop of St. Boniface, Dr. L. A. Langevin O.M.D., to make the first official visit to Gretna. That day one attended the church service, holy mass with sermon, as well as an afternoon service held in a nearby private home namely Mr. M. Long's previous residence.

In the afternoon Father Woodcutter asked where they intended to hold their church services in the future. A decision was made that with goodwill offering of gifts, and the people's interest in developing Gretna, they would be able to erect a fairly large building. The people present, representing numerous families, pledged sums they were willing to donate to the project, encouraging others to do the same. Two individuals present, August Schimnowski and Johann Voth volunteered to canvass the people of Gretna and in 24 hours they came up with a sum of close to \$500.

The writer of this article feels he needs to point out that none of the Mennonites, other Protestants, even Israelites, were disappointed at the results, since out of the \$500 collected \$85 came from them.

Two reasons for this willingness to offer gifts were: firstly, to show the willingness to co-operate and work together of the Gretna people despite differences in religious beliefs, and to show that a mixture of nationalities can work together for the common good of men, thus proving that "Unity makes strength", and Christ said, "Hence all will realize that you are my disciples if you love one another" John: 13:34. The other reason was: the Gretna residents' goodwill and tolerance, would be well-rewarded through increase of population, resulting in better and more business.

This first collection was an attempt to show the Archbishop that the Catholics of Gretna were serious about erecting a church, as well as acquiring a clergyman in the near future.

continued

the first major snowfall of the season on November 2nd. Fortunately, the heavy wet snowfall happened before the skating season had begun and no one was under the roof at the time. Undaunted, Gretna's sports enthusiasts redesigned the rink. It was made 20 feet narrower and the new canvas roof was pitched much more steeply to shed snow more easily. The rebuilt rink, complete with a repaired canvas top, was open for the skating season by the end of November.

Ecumenism in German Town

On Sunday, October 25, 1896 the Honourable Catholic Archbishop Dr. Langevin from St. Boniface paid his first official visit to Gretna upon the invitation of Father F. Woodcutter. The Archbishop conducted mass and communion in Michael Long's home. The afternoon was taken up in discussion of the construction of Manitoba's first German Catholic Church. To demonstrate the viability of such an undertaking, August Schimnowski and Johann Voth canvassed the community in the 24 hours immediately following the Sunday meeting. They raised close to \$500 in one day, with \$85 contributed by non-Catholics in Gretna. This commitment was taken back to Archbishop Langevin on October 27th to seek approval for the steps necessary to establish a German Catholic Church before the end of the next year. The authority to proceed was granted and a committee was struck to oversee the project. August Schimnowski was elected chairman, Michael Long treasurer, Andreas Koch secretary, and Wendelin Wolff and Anton Krause were chosen as committee members.

Other local church activities included the semi-annual Sunday School conference held at the Edenburg Church on November 8th. The concept which had first been introduced to Gretna by the Baptists under the Rev. Friesen was being promoted by others like Benjamin Ewert. Topics on the November agenda included: What can and should be done to promote the Sunday School concept within our churches

(Rev. Benjamin Ewert, Edenburg); The role of Sunday School in our churches (Hermann Dirks, Gretna); Christian education for our children (Rev. H. H. Ewert, Gretna); What can be considered as success of the Sunday School? (W. Abrams, Altona).¹⁰

The German Lutheran Church in Gretna was also undergoing some change in the fall of 1896. Pastor Willing accepted a call from the Edenwold parish in the Territories and Rev. Emil Gustav Berthold came to replace him on October 23rd. Pastor Berthold continued to conduct services in the Baptist church. However, he did bring with him a new evangelical commitment which went beyond his local parish. He would be a guiding force in the completion of the Lutheran church construction over the next couple of years. The Lutheran congregation continued to grow in 1896 as was reflected in the enrollment of students at the weekday German Lutheran School, taught by Mrs. Jacob Popp of Crystal, North Dakota.¹¹

The Rev. Berthold was one of the five pastors instrumental in the creation of the first German Lutheran Synod in Western Canada in July 1897. He served as its treasurer from the time of its inception until he left Manitoba in 1900. Organized under the name "Deutsche evangelische-lutherische Synod von Manitoba und den Nordwest-Territorien', this body became known as the Manitoba Synod. 12 Rev. Berthold was also the first Lutheran pastor on the prairies to hold large mission festivals to raise funds for this work. The first such mission festival was held in Gretna on June 6, 1897. Gretna's pioneering spirit was finding its expression in a variety of ways and this was just another one of them.

Gretna did not sit on the sidelines in the Manitoba School Question debates either. ¹³ The question of bilingual schools proved to be an issue in the Village Council elections for the year 1897. German residents of Gretna supported the concept of instruction in both German and English but, according to a November 24th account in **Der Nordwesten**, a sizeable number of Gretna taxpayers fought such an

undertaking. The December 1896 election returned Erdmann Penner to the mayor's chair by acclamation and elected Enoch Winkler, Robert Chambers, Isaac Loewen and G. Bean to Gretna Council. John C. Miller and R. B. Fischer were unsuccessful in their bid to sit on council in an election which saw 102 voters cast ballots. Henry W. Herchmer was again appointed Secretary-Treasurer and Otto Schultz was elected to the School Board. Among the 102 voters, many had cast their votes to choose the first Douglas Municipal Council more than a decade before. Others, recent on the assessment rolls included: Johann Hutt, shoemaker; Peter Kunanz, labourer; Ludwig Wurshter, labourer; Jacob Pfeiffer, labourer; J. B. Unger, blacksmith; J. G. Kercher, grain merchant; Abram Penner thresher; William Mishkofsky, labourer; Christian Link, labourer; A. W. Stiefel, merchant and Frank J. Defehr, lumber merchant. 14 The record declaring the new Gretna Council is clearly stated; the record of consensus on the bilingual school question appears to have been lost.



Gretna Public School built in 1892, located on Berlin Ave. Taken in 1906. P#230

Harmonies and Horsetrading

If harmony was difficult concerning the Manitoba Schools Question, Gretna found its harmony in another way. A choral group was organized in time for the 1896 Christmas season. The winter weather was holding firm and all of Southern Manitoba was blanketed by several heavy snowfalls before the year was out. It was an unlikely time for a rumour about that cooling beverage, beer, the story just before Christmas was that this Village would witness the opening of a brewery in springtime. The brewery did not happen, although Klaas Peters became the Manitoba distributor out of Gretna, for Wittemann's Lagerbier brewed in Prince Albert, N.W.T. The''Bayrisches Lagerbier'' claimed to use a Munich recipe to produce its lager. This must have received a hearty welcome in the German trading centre of Manitoba.

The liquid refreshments made available by Klaas Peters may have helped lubricate the horse trading which took place in the spring of 1897. Alex Smith and Max Wodlinger each imported a carload of horses in March 1897. Mr. Smith had also expanded his operation to include all types of farm machinery while specializing in Fairchild Buggies and McCormick Binders. Shoemaker Salzwedel saw an opportunity for expansion from his observation point at the German House. Salzwedel noticed that passengers arriving in Gretna going to or from the United States had to wait a half hour or more to make the necessary train connections. Since this was in the early afternoon and some would not venture beyond the train station platform, Salzwedel decided to offer a light lunch to those travellers with an appetite, and since travelling has a way of making one hungry, he did well in this sideline. Mr. Larsen added another tailor shop to Gretna's services and Jacob Kehler bought the former Pastor Willing residence from John C. Miller.

Other Gretna businessmen saw opportunity further afield. Max Heyden sold his house to customs officer Mather and purchased John

Manitoba's First . . . cont'd

The number of Catholic families in Gretna might not now be sufficient to occupy a clergyman full-time. However, one could count on other German-speaking families, being attracted to settle near or in Gretna, knowing they would be ministered to in their own language.

Father Woodcutter again went to St. Boniface on Oct. 27 to see the Archbishop to inform him of the decision of the Gretna Catholics. The Archbishop was pleased with the report, and Father Woodcutter returned on Friday, Oct. 30, with the Archbishop's support.

On Sunday, Nov. 1 (All Saints Day) High Mass took place. Afterwards a well-attended gathering of interested parties took place.

Next they called an election to elect a church-representative (head) to function for a year. August Schimnowski was elected as chairman, Andreas Koch as secretary, M. Long as treasurer and Wendelin Wolff and Anton Krause as assessors.

These committee members will concern themselves during the winter with preparations for building of the church in spring. Necessary land for the church and parking space will have to be purchased soon. Then those who want to contribute to the funds can save for this good cause.

During the winter necessary things such as the altar, communion rail, seating, etc. will have to be planned and acquired.

Many Gretna Catholics have declared willingness to help personally in the building and paying church expenses.

During the winter, church service will take place every four weeks at A. Krause's place. The next service will be there on Nov. 29th.

As soon as the church is finished, church services will take place more often, perhaps every 14th day.

A. Koch declared he was willing to instruct Catechism every Sunday afternoon, seeing that there are many children to participate in these instructions. A deep feeling of gratitude and thankfulness is due him for his willingness to serve.

There is no doubt that the building of this church will fill a great need felt for a long time. May God protect the church, and may all Christians rejoice.

> Der Nordwesten November 12, 1896

Gretna Elevators in 1897

Ogilvie Milling Co	44,000
McBean Bros	30,000
Lake of the Woods Milling Co	20,000
Roblin, R. P	25,000
Livingston, J. & J u	10,000
Body & Noakes	w 7,000

Winnipeg Grain and Produce Exchange Ninth Annual Report 1897 Hofley's hotel in Plum Coulee. Gretna's first Secretary-Treasurer, Henry W. Herchmer pulled up stakes in April 1897 to start a new life in British Columbia's gold fields. Hermann Dirks, once the Siemens Bros. bookkeeper, now in the employ of Erdmann Penner & Co., was appointed by Village Council to replace Herchmer as Secretary-Treasurer. Max Wodlinger left Gretna for business in Montreal, but only long enough to bring some of it back with him.

Spirits High

Not all the news was good in the spring of 1897. The Pembina and Red Rivers overflowed their banks and created flooding much worse than Gretna had experienced the previous spring. Wood cutting permits were being reconsidered thanks to their abuse by Mennonite

BEAT.

Looking west between Berlin and Montcalm Ave. Note hitching posts, circa 1905. P#634

farmers who crossed into the U.S. to cut fire—wood without returning the permits upon completion of the 30 day time limit. The bad news for J. F. Tennant this spring was that he should not have involved himself in the last provincial election. Civil servants were not permitted to participate actively in the political process in those days. Because of his activity, Tennant was dismissed as Customs Officer at Gretna and replaced by A. W. Lawrence. Unlike W. P. Leslie, Tennant did not abandon the community which had become home to him. 15

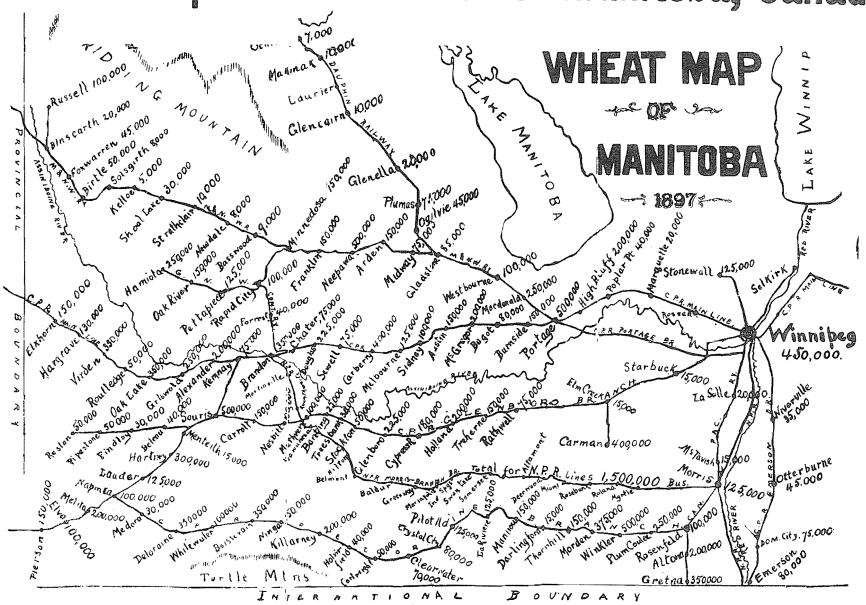
Water filled most area basements and many fields and roads. Wheat prices dropped to 50¢ a bushel in Gretna and 53¢ at Neche. Despite such soggy weather and poor wheat prices, Gretna recorded the highest price ever paid for a quarter section of land just outside the Village. The land sold for the princely sum of \$4000.16

The new owner must have been as optimistic as farmers are wont to be. It was only two months later, in June that dust storms and high winds and unexpected frosts were plaguing farmers in the area. Crops in 1897 would be of medium quality only. If the thought of even lower grain prices wasn't painful enough, Dr. Tweed, the dentist, again advertised that he was offering his services at the Anglo-American Hotel for two days in June.

The spring and summer festivals, picnics, sports and racing events were something to look forward to again. Sixty horses from Winnipeg were entered in the annual invitational racing event held at Gretna's track on June 15th and 16th. The Turf Club took out a liquor permit for the event. It is not known whether the liquor sold at the track included any of the good German beer available through Klaas Peters. The spring and summer of 1897 brought news for Gretna readers. The Gretna News which had been printed in Neche gave way to an amalgamated publication called the Neche Chronotype. The Chronotype provided as good an

continued on page 124

Wheat Map of the Province of Manitoba, Canada.



eye on Gretna as **Der Nordwesten** had over the years. Unfortunately, one of the **Chronotype's** first news items from Gretna had an all too familiar ring to it:

Neche Chronotype April 28, 1897

The C.P.R. roundhouse at Gretna was totally destroyed by fire between 9 and 10 o'clock Thursday evening. The fire caught from the engine which had been put away for the night and was not discovered until too late to save the building or any of its contents, the engine being also destroyed.

The **Chronotype** was as much at home covering events in Gretna as it was reporting the news south of the 49th Parallel. World news came to Gretna readers through the Chronotype and Der Nordwesten. The latter reported on June 10, 1897 that it was possible to buy an excursion trip of 10 months to the Yukon goldfields for as little as \$400; that Queen Victoria performed the opening ceremonies for the new power generating plant at Lachine Rapids near Montreal by pressing a button at Windsor Castle; that the 200 Ruthenian immigrants refused to leave their accommodation at the Winnipeg immigration sheds and when they were to be forcibly removed they simply lay down on the floor offering "passive resistance".

Gretna business advertising was anything but passive by the summer of 1897. Ritz & Widmeyer, Chris Pieper, Klaas Peters, Alexander Smith, D. G. McEdwards, Erdmann Penner, Schultz & Stiefel, William Esau & John C. Miller, Friesen & Janzen and Abram Klassen all carried large advertisements in Der Nordwesten. The larger general store merchants also printed catalogues for their West Reserve customers. John C. Miller and Otto Ritz spent the summer in Ontario visiting family and friends and nurturing Gretna's business connections in Eastern Canada. Otto Ritz had taken over the Anglo-American Hotel and John Miller's partnership with William Esau provided continuity of service in an everchanging border business world. One constant in the life of Gretna was its disagreement with the Rhineland Municipality concerning financial matters. Taxes collected before Gretna's incorporation were being claimed by the Rhineland administration as unpaid. A court decision some years later would finally resolve the matter in Gretna's favour.¹⁷

A New Jerusalem

The lead news stories in the summer and fall of 1897 were not concerned with business and taxes. The religious and social life of this rapidly growing Village dominated that year. Even the annual horse and bicycle races were eclipsed by stories about the growth of the German Literary Society, the Harvest Festival in the Presbyterian Church and the School Board meetings in each of the schools. Even the opening of a branch of the Union Bank next door to the Hoffman Post Office received little more than an honourable mention. The excitement surrounding the racing successes of the Gretna horses "Anti" and "George S" against old rivals in Morden and Grand Forks did not equal the joy and energy Gretna residents displayed in religious matters that year.

The Rev. Berthold found enthusiastic support for his "Mission Festival" on June 6, 1897:

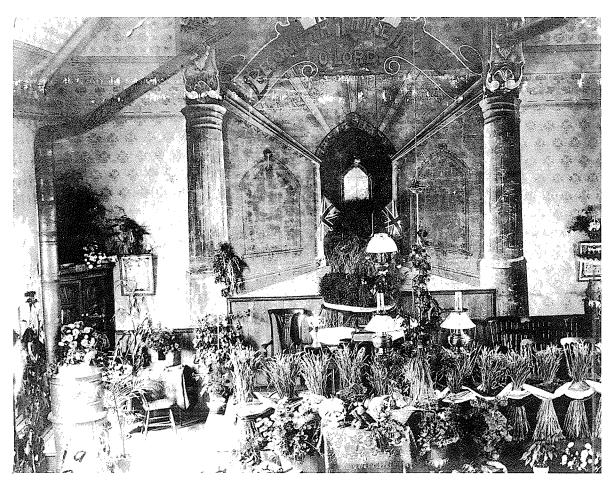
A sense of delight reigned supreme in the congregations of the Gretna parish on this festive day. In the morning, the sound of a brass band playing German choral music announced that this was the day of the great mission festival. Many visitors, especially from Chortitz, soon began to arrive and by 10:00 the large English church was filled to capacity. Among the guests were Lutherans from Crystal and Bathgate, North Dakota; from Altona, Rosenfeld, Plum Coulee, Morden, Dominion City and from various other places. The festive services of both morning and evening will long remain fresh in the memories of those who had the pleasure of participating in them.

It was especially interesting to hear the missionary report of the "Heidenwelt" related by Herr Lehrer Kohlrusch. There were some 200 people present for the morning service and in the

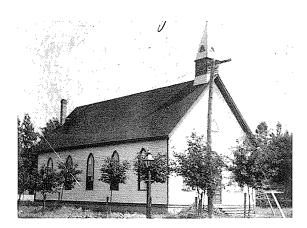
afternoon the attendance was about 300. The brass band from Dominion City under the leadership of Mr. Klingsporn and consisting of Mr. J. Klemke, J. Kruschel, Adam Klemke, J. Singbeil and Andreas Klemke presented a concert in the garden of the Lutheran parsonage featuring German folk songs and various motets. At a meeting held later in the day it was resolved to begin the building of a German church as soon as possible. The collection for the day totalled \$16.16 [sic] and has been designated for the building of the church. All the participants at the festival, and in particular the members of the band, were treated

to a delightful lunch served by the Gretna congregation. From every side one heard the wish expressed that there might soon be another such celebration that all might have the privilege of participating in. ¹⁸

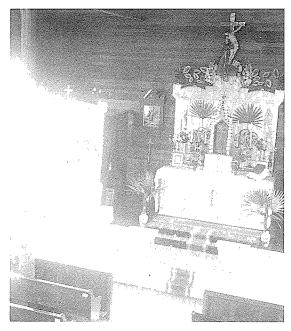
Church construction got underway soon after this "Missionfest". While the hammers and saws were busy for the Lutherans at one end of town, the activity surrounding the construction of the Catholic Church on Gretna's northwest corner was no less hectic. Western Canada's first German Catholic Church was



Inside front wall of the Presbyterian Church during Home Harvest Festival, 1905. The painted motif depicting religious themes on the side panel was done when the church was built in 1889. P#1024



Gretna Presbyterian Church on Berlin Ave. It was built in 1889 and was demolished in 1960. P#645





Two views of the interior of the Catholic Church, c. 1900. P#1296 and 1297

dedicated on Sunday, October 3, 1897 and Manitoba's first German Evangelical Lutheran Church was dedicated on the following Sunday, October 10.

October 14, 1897: Church Dedication

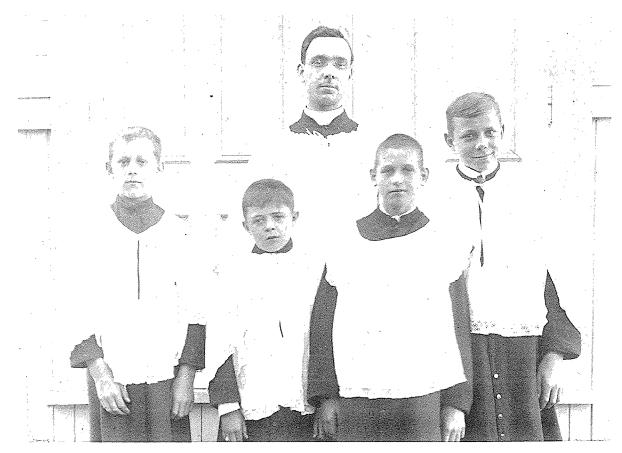
As already announced on several occasions in the **Nordwesten**, the Catholic Church in Gretna was to be dedicated on October 3rd.

This imposing festivity is now over. May it be of interest to a number of readers of the **Nordwesten** to read a short report about it.

Dedication of Lutheran Church

Yesterday, Oct. 10, the festive dedication of the

Lutheran German Church took place in Gretna. At 10:30 the first Church service with Holy Communion took place before the presence of officials of the new church. The German pastor and clergyman Berthold dedicated the church with the assistance of Pastor Walter Ruccius of Winnipeg and Pastor Hermann. The Liturgy was rendered by a friendly director with a trumpet choir, choir and solos. Pastor Ruccius gave the message based on the Epistle of the day of the church dedication according to Revelation 21: 1–4, stressing the meaning of an earthly church, the glory of a heavenly Zion, and the praise due a gracious God, who through Christ accepts us and revealed himself. Pastor Berthold drew special attention to the



Father J. H. Prud'homme and altar boys, Alfred Schimnowski, James Briden, Reginald Tennant and Bruno Schimnowski, 1908. P#1298



St. Francis of Assissi Catholic Church built in 1897 on 9th St. Later moved to Elm Creek, Manitoba. Still in use there. P#511

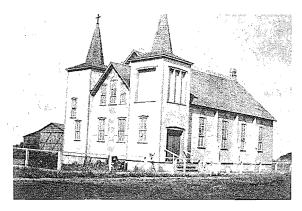
goodness of God — who only in three months allowed this church, despite much difficulty, to succeed. What makes this building especially precious, is the fact that the pastor and the members could do it themselves. Afternoon at 3:00 o'clock the baptism and confirmation of a girl took place. Pastor Berthold spoke on Acts II. In the evening at 7:00 o'clock there was another service where Pastor Hermann spoke on Acts 9:31. The worship services were good, and well attended, even by outsiders. Collections amounted to \$200. The church is spacious, simple, with tasteful German style. It has an organ. Some things are still needed. Debts are still to be paid. But the Lord will help in the future. Yesterday was important, in that, if it's God's will this place is where God's Word will be preached, and taught in this town. Glory to God in the Highest. May God's Word preached yesterday bear fruit. Where will the next German Lutheran Church be dedicated?

The highly honored, Archbishop, due to his illness, had asked the highly honored General Vicar Rev. Father Allard to take his place. He was accompanied by Mr. Caron, a student of the-

ology. Because of the delay of the train, they arrived at about 7:30 o'clock in the evening. Because of the lateness of the hour they, together with several others, made their way to the rectory. Sunday morning was pleasant; this accounted for the large gathering that came to participate in the festivity. At the appointed time all places were occupied. At 10:30 the ceremonies began, after all had left the Church as the ceremony requires. When the ceremonies in and out of the church had taken place, the real dedication service began, led by the Hon General Vicar, assisted by Mr. Woodcutter as deacon and Mr. Caron as subdeacon.

A rendition by an organ and three mandolins served as the opening, followed by a choir from Neche and Gretna singing the Kirie Eleison. The offering was accompanied by a solo from Lydia Schulz which delighted all those present. After that the Rene's from Neche sang a duet. After the communion service Mr. Woodcutter took over and welcomed the German, English and French. He then spoke on the meaning of the occasion, and explained what the Church was, and what our obligations were towards it. Then General Vicar spoke in English and in French. The service rendered in three languages was thus extended somewhat, people arriving home by 1 o'clock.

At 2 o'clock in the afternoon they sang the Vesper, followed by sacramental blessings. Then the welcoming addresses were read, one in English, one in German, directed at the Most High Archbishop. Also an address was giving in honor



St. Paul's Lutheran Church on Church St., built in 1897 and destroyed by fire in 1924. P#275

of Mr. Woodcutter. The Most High General-Vicar answered in the name of the Hon. Archbishop and Mr. Woodcutter, and in his own name.

Monday morning at 8 o'clock the first celebration of holy communion of children began. There were 14; 4 boys and 10 girls. Mr. Woodcutter held two different speeches to draw attention to the importance of the festivity of the day. During the Mass the Gretna Choir sang several German songs.

No doubt the Church dedication services will leave a lasting impression on them all. Everyone who participated in enhancing the festivities and contributed to the collection, are hearby thanked heartily.

With such hectic religious activity going on in Gretna, it is not surprising the Der Nordwesten correspondent commented on the relative disinterest surrounding the Gretna Village Council elections in December 1897. Nominations for Mayor, Council and School Board would suggest otherwise: Erdmann Penner, Enoch Winkler and Dr. McKenty were nominated for the mayor's job; Isaac Loewen, William Wahn, Enoch Winkler, Robert Chambers, John Miller, Jacob Kehler, Jacob Friesen, Michael Long, A. W. Stiefel, William Esau and Philip Rau were nominated for council; Eugene Widmeyer and Chris Pieper as school trustees. Elections became unnecessary, however, when all those who were not already in office withdrew their names.

The German Lutheran membership held their elections that December and returned John C. Miller as treasurer, Jacob Hoffman as secretary, Christian Pieper as chairman with Philip Purpur, F. Klawatski and F. Wollroth as trustees. ¹⁹

Frontier Entertainment

The religious and other homemade entertainment provided by the choral and literary societies, the lodges and the sporting clubs was supplemented by the circuses, magicians, poets and other travelling shows which frequented prairie centres at the turn of the century. **Der Nordwesten** correspondent was enthusiastic about the December 3rd and 4th performances by Pauline Johnson, the Mohican poetess decked out in full Indian regalia. Her presence in Gretna left a lasting impression and some who were there describe her activities during her stay at the Anglo-American Hotel. Louise Ritz was a little girl living with her parents at their hotel and vividly remembers the Indian princess' visit:

I wasn't allowed to stay up, but the others stayed up practically all night to see all her things. She had a trunk . . . She came to the Presbyterian Church ladies who had invited her to lecture. Now she liked her drink too. So she came and asked for this. And my mother said, "I think she wants to inform on us". My dad said, "I'm not giving her any on a Sunday." Mother said, "I think it's safe to give her a drink."

She asked mother if she could use the sewing machine and mother said yes, so Sunday morning she sewed up a blouse for herself. It was a rose-coloured with stripes.

She got that done for the evening. The Wahns were going to take her. She said, "I'm very upto-date, five minutes ahead of time I go and five minutes after the meeting I'll be back again. Her lecture was in the evening at 7:00 o'clock. She was a temperance lady; she spoke on temperance.

So at night she had to show the people all the things she had; a bear claw necklace, little booties, and a blanket from Queen Victoria and scalps of white men. We weren't allowed up in her room though. She stayed just that day. I guess she had other lectures to give.

At the time of Pauline Johnson's Gretna debut news from the British Columbia and Yukon gold fields was making headlines all across North America. Henry W. Herchmer had followed the lure of the gold dust, not as a prospector but as a businessman who saw a golden opportunity. Another well known businessman did not have to leave town to benefit by the Klondike fever. Alexander Smith contracted his services to furnish 2000 head of cattle to Klondike suppliers. By the middle of January 1898 Smith had already shipped 50 cattle

through to Victoria on their way up the British Columbia coast. Smith was an old hand at this sort of thing since he had procured large herds of cattle to help feed the NWMP expedition to the Territories in 1885. Much has been written about the lawlessness and flaunting of authority on the Klondike trail, but little has been said of problems in this regard closer to home. Perhaps all the transients and travellers coming through Gretna had an influence on the Village and on the Mennonites on the West Reserve generally. Bad influences are always looked for outside one's own community.

Free Trade

Gretna was more than living up to the area's former name of Smugglers' Point during the years 1897 and 1898. The amount of smuggling going on had reached the point where sales in stores were suffering. The hot items were tobacco and fuel oil. Individuals were doing more than smuggling for their own needs and a brisk trade in contraband goods was reported in the West Reserve. The number of customs inspectors in Gretna was increased and a number of undercover agents were presumed to be working in the Gretna area. The mild winter experienced on the prairies may have contributed to the increased international trade.

The good news in 1898 was a statistical report showing 49 births from time of incorporation to the end of December 1897. Twenty-four boys and 25 girls made up this total. Gretna also reported 13 deaths during the same time with 6 of these being under 9 years of age. On the plus side of the ledger were 13 weddings during the first year and a half. The Godfrey Coblentz advertisement, announcing his business in wood permits and tax brokerage, signified the beginning of second generation business activity. Adolphe Coblentz continued his liquor wholesale business with H. Heiman out of Morden, and maintained the general store in Gretna. Even those who had left continued to do commerce in the area. Julius Siemens, formerly of the Siemens Bank, advertised land for sale in the Pacific Northwest, inviting written enquiries be sent to St. Paul, Minnesota. The success of this real estate venture could best be measured by the large number of Gretna residents who relocated to Oregon and Washington States, not to mention California.

Moving On

Others did not go far afield. Alexander McEdward Ball left his bookkeeping job with Ritz & Widmeyer to go to work for Confederation Life Insurance in Winnipeg. Herman Hellofs bought out Wilhelm Esau, who bought a store in Winkler and relocated to that centre in the summer of 1898. Eugene Widmeyer also sold his share of the Gretna interests he had accumulated over the years, moving to Dauphin to build a hotel in that emerging trade centre. Widmeyer systematically resigned the positions he held in Gretna.

Dr. James McKenty was elected by acclamation to replace Mr. Widmeyer as school trustee and D. J. Ashley was appointed to replace him as Justice of the Peace. Thomas J. Mather had already begun serving as Provincial Magistrate for Gretna so the law was in good hands. In keeping with the tradition which began several years earlier with the departure of station master Russell, a farewell banquet was held in honour of Eugene Widmeyer by the business associates. They presented him with a plaque and wished him well in the newly announced partnership of Widmeyer & Shields. They were taking over the Grandview Hotel in Dauphin. H. H. Ewert bought the Widmeyer home. 20 The opportunity to farm attracted others from Gretna's urban setting. Robert Ross took up farming near Rosenfeld and C. P. Sawatzky decided to "go against the current" and move to the East Reserve.

Restlessness must have permeated the atmosphere in 1898. The smuggling, the moves to "other pastures", the gold rush produced changes in the border community. Donald McDonald and W. Leggins were caught up in

Befanntmachung

bert. Aufhebung einer Ceilhaberschaft.

Hiermit wird Roliz gegeben, daß die Teibhaberichaft, bisher bestehend zwiichen uns, ben Unterzeichneten, als Bankiers und Holz händler, in den Törfern Greina und Altona, in der Provinz Dlanitoba, mit gegenseitiger Einwilligung an diesem ersten Tage im Juni ausgehoben in.

Alle Schulden an besagte Teilhaberschaft find an henrn Rig in Greina zu zahlen, und alle Forderungen gegen besagte Leithaberschaft find an besagtem henrn An; einzuteichen, der dieselben abschlieften wird.

Lauert zu Grenna am 1. Lage im Zum A. D. 1894.

(9e4) Henry Alb. _Cagene Widmerer. Zenge: (9e4.) Ossa Alb.

Fezugnehmend auf Chiges erlaube ich mer bem geehren Publikum muzuseilen, doch ich bas hisher betriebene Seichait in unveran bester Meile und unter der Firma Rin E Bidumener fartieten werde und bint gie du Jeuig um ferweres Mohlwollen und Nertrauen.

Greine. Mos.

Herry Liq.

Highly Pleasing Entertainment

On Tuesday last the members of the Gretna Presbyterian Church gave a concert at the opera house in that village, which in every particular was an unqualified success. The programme was of a most excellent selection and happily rendered. The attendance was good and the only drawback to the entertainment was the fact that the room was rather close and poorly ventilated. Rev. S. L. Hart, of this place, officiated as master of ceremonies, to the entire satisfaction of all present. The singing by the choir was very good, indeed, and the instrumental music of an order which left nothing to be desired by even the most fastidious musical critics; more especially in the case of master Norman Fisher, a lad of perhaps fifteen years, who rendered that grand old air "In the Sweet Bye and Bye" on the piano in a manner to elicit rounds of applause. Among the recitations those of Mrs. Lee entitled "The Widow" and "The Polish Boy'' are deserving of special mention. Mrs. Lee possesses a no mean order of ability as an elocutionist, which, coupled with a most graceful appearance and highly charming manner, made her one of the chief favorites of the evening. The music of the mandolin guitar quartette, composed of the Misses Hoffman, O'Hara, Tennant and Schultz, was exceptionally fine, evidencing ability and careful preparation on the part of the young ladies.

However, the event of the evening was easily the march and flag drill by sixteen little girls ranging in age from ten to fourteen years, each bearing the "meteor flag of England, "in miniature, and going through the most intricate and difficult evolutions in a faultless manner, to the inspiring strains of "Marching Through Georgia". This number was heartily encored, nor did the din raised by the enthusiastic audience subside until the drill was repeated. When the tumult of applause, created by the second rendition of this beautiful number had in a measure subsided, Miss Sadie Scott, whose pupils the young ladies were, and to whom they are indebted for their proficiency in the drill, was called upon the stage and presented with a beautiful bouquet of flowers. That the concert as a whole was an unalloyed success is the least that can be said of it; there being not a dry or uninteresting number in the entire programme, and our sister village is to be congratulated in the possession of musical and elocutionary talent of so admirable an order as this concert demonstrated that it does. The Chronotype trusts that this is to be but the beginning of many of these highly pleasing entertainments.

> Neche Chronotype August 28, 1897

the gold rush excitement and headed for the Klondike. Other citizens travelled to relieve their restlessness. Max Wodlinger travelled to Ottawa and Chicago and places in between. Godfrey Coblentz and his sister Gabriella journeved to Philadelphia to see family and friends. Godfrey came back to take care of business, but his sister decided to make an extended visit. Others, like Wilhelm Abrams, went to check out the Rosthern country while David Schellenberg Jr. and Jacob Hamm did the same in the East Reserve. Martin Salzwedel found his adventure right around Gretna, bagging a large wolf in the Pembina woods and taking ownership of a registered stud horse at an auction held at the Esau & Loewen store.

Among the comings and goings in 1898 another Hiebert joined the Erdmann Penner operation. John P. Hiebert from Mountain

Grema!

Kin jeder bläft sein eigenes Horn, deshalb blase ich das meine und lade jedermann ein, mich in meinem Store zu besuchen und zu hören, was ich zu sagen und zu blassen habe.

Von jest bis Weihnachten wird es in meinem Store viel Aufregendes und Sehenswertes zu sehen geben.

John C. Miller.

Der Nordwesten, June 9, 1898.

Lake, Minnesota arrived in March to take on a clerking job at the Penner store. His arrival caused a stir because he was as big a man as Penner's bookkeeper Hermann Dirks. Der Nordwesten correspondent speculated that Erdmann Penner preferred his staff to be tall men. Friesen & Janzen advertised for those who were not taking up the call of the Klondike, suggesting that "those who want to save gold and stay close to mother should shop at their store". Furthermore, you would be able to keep warm with a "Gurney Furnace" available through Louis Robock. If transportation was a problem, Alex Smith had two carloads of horses to sell and Max Wodlinger had one. The horses were all considered to be excellent quality and demand was high, drawing prices as high as \$300 for a pair.

The new barristers and solicitors in Gretna in 1898 were T. L. Metcalfe and E. E. Sharpe. They handled real estate and also provided a loan service from offices next door to the Anglo-American Hotel. It is not known how long they did business or how successful they were. By the end of the year, Dr. C. H. Parr and the lawyer Harold J. Maulson had bought the Friesen & Janzen building between the Queen's Hotel and the Anglo-American. The Gretna people hoped that both young men would find the town to their liking since legal services were at a premium after Herchmer's departure. Furthermore, Dr. McKenty's profile in the Manitoba medical community often took him to Winnipeg and away from his local practice.

Optimism Rises

Wheat prices climbed steadily in spring and summer of 1898, settling at 85¢ a bushel in March and then climbing quickly to \$1 and more a bushel where they hovered for some time. This provided a great deal of optimism in the business community. It also did not hurt the newly formed Mennonite Hail Insurance Society whose directors included Peter Wiebe of Edenburg, Dietrich Klaassen of NeuAnlage and John C. Miller of Gretna. John C. Miller became

more involved in Gretna affairs each year. He likely will have taken part in organizing the Sunday School excursion to Elm Park in Winnipeg on June 29, 1898. The German Sunday School was sponsoring the event and a special train was hired for the occasion. Leaving Gretna at 8:00 a.m., it was stopping in Altona and Rosenfeld. Isaac Loewen was selling the tickets and all seats were to be reserved. No rush tickets! The event was open to everyone and the organizers anticipated no less than 500 picnickers. With adult tickets only \$1.25 each and children, ages 5 to 12, able to get on the excursion for only 50¢ it is hard to imagine a local farmer not taking up the offer. ²¹

MEI Incorporated

The Gretna Normal School was incorporated under the name Mennonite Educational Institute in spring of 1898. It was consolidating its educational activities and would not offer its summer school program for this year. The incorporation provided a greater sense of permanence for the school society which was constantly working to improve the quality of education in both the East and West Reserves. Professor H. H. Ewert's dual role as head of the school, and school inspector for the Mennonite Reserve schools, resulted in a stability for the MEI since it did not absorb the full costs of his salary. Not that H. H. Ewert was overpaid by the Provincial Government. His annual salary as school inspector for both Mennonite Reserves in Manitoba was \$800. This was considerably less than his English counterparts received. They earned \$1500 per year. 22

The mood in Gretna was positive. New side-walks and improved streets, combined with an assessment which surpassed \$50,000 illustrated the growth and pride in the community. **Der Nordwesten** correspondent could not help commenting that taxes used to be higher when Gretna was part of the Rhineland Municipality and no amount of pleading had produced the improvements requested by the ratepayers. The new Presbyterian minister, Rev. T. H.

Medd, was installed in the Gretna church on Friday, July 29, 1898. He may have sensed that the building boom and the bustling activity presented only one side of Gretna's nature. He must have been pleased with the large community participation in his church's Home Harvest Festival and concert. He must have rejoiced with the Catholic Church membership when they dedicated their new bell on October 30th, and perhaps found the scene among the grain buyers and elevator companies intriguing. Robert Chambers left the J. Livingstone firm to become the Ogilvie grain buyer; Sidney Bean went to work for Erdmann Penner; Farmers' Union Elevator Company was planning to put up an elevator on the CPR track just east of the Ogilvie elevator; and the R. P. Roblin elevator had been absorbed into the Dominion Elevator Company.

The Rev. Medd also must have felt change in the air. True, the annual picnics, school outings, horse races, football games and church concerts carried on in the lively tradition. True, Gretna had always attracted first class entertainment, whether it was for a Home Circle dance or live theatre in the local hall. The well known "Uncle Tom's Cabin" presented by the McPhee Theatre Company, played to capacity audiences under their canvas top, in spite of the heavy rains that August. The Literary Club debates dealt with current issues, and the world of "moving" pictures made its debut with Max Tasler's wonders of the world as seen through his ''peep-show'', (Einem beweglichen GuckKasten). Audiences were further amused by the magical gramophone presentations of Peter Bergen.²³

A Bumpy Road

The multitude of bicycles in town represented the coming of modern times to Gretna. As with any change as fundamental as that represented by the "two-wheeler", the road to acceptance was often bumpy. Magistrate Thomas J. Mathers was confronted with a case in which a farmer driving an empty wagon

MEI Incorporates

To the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly, of the Province of Manitoba.

The Petition of the undersigned, namely Erdman Penner, William Esau, Isaac Loewen, Peter Wiebe, John M. Friesen, Martin Kehler, John Funk, Jacob J. Kehler, Abraham Klassen, and John Buhr.

That a normal School for the training of Mennonite Teachers, has been in operation at the Village of Gretna in the Province of Manitoba for sometime past.

That it would tend to advance and extend the operations of the said institution, and promote the purposes for which it has been established that it should be incorporated.

That your petitioners desire an act of Incorporation constituting your petitioners members of the said corporation under the name of "The Mennonite Educational Institute."

That the affairs of the said corporation be managed by a Board of Directors, consisting of Seven members, all of whom must belong to the Mennonite Denomination, and Erdman Penner, Wm. Esau, Isaac Loewen, Jacob J. Kehler, Abraham Klassen, Peter Wiebe, and John Funk shall constitute the first Board of Directors, who shall continue in office until their successors are appointed.

The Board of Directors after the annual meeting of the said corporation, shall appoint from among themselves, a chairman and Secretary-Treasurer.

That the said Board of Directors, shall in addition to all the powers conferred by law and incident to corporation aggregate, have power to draw up, and pass and enact, statutes, ordinances or By-laws, for the appointment and confidence in office of the Directors, naming the number of Directors who shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and the supervising the powers thereof, shall decide upon what terms any person may become a member of the said corporation, for the appointment of teachers, forescription of the course of study, instruction, training, discipline, or for whatever else in this direction may be deemed needful and expedient for the welfare of the said school.

That the Board of Directors shall have the whole management of the financial affairs of the said Institute, and shall receive and distribute all its monies, contract, keep and manage all its property, and transact all business relating to property and money committed to its care.

continued

deliberately ran down a bicycle being pedalled on a road near Gretna. The farmer was educated in modern reality, namely that the law entitles bicycles to half the road just like any other vehicle. The farmer was found guilty and fined \$19.50.²⁴

Gretna's **Nordwesten** correspondent was sure everybody in the area had a bicycle by the summer of 1898, but he fails to report any "bicycle built for two". This should have been a popular item in 1898 and 1899 because weddings were constantly in the news. A. W. Stiefel married Miss Heath from Wisconsin, William Burkowski married Gretna's Mathilda Doern, E. J. Ryan married Miss O. W. H. Woodcutter,

Sidney Bean married Miss Fife of Hyde Parke, Miss Batta Anderson of Gretna was to marry Leopold Fry of Neche, and that town's Dr. P. C. Donovan brought back his new bride from a honeymoon in California in the summer of 1898. A year later, observers reported the nuptials of Henry Ritz and Sadie Scott. The news as announced in the summer of 1899 was incorrect. All that was false was the timing. The wedding did take place at another time.

Farmers' Union

Gold fever, love, marriage and politics provided much of the excitement at the turn of the



Seventh St. showing treeless section and wooden sidewalks around 1900. P#636

century. The politics of wheat was heating up again. The farmers who had long been agitating for greater control of the marketing of their produce had organized in 1898 and elected the first Board of Directors of The Farmers' Union Elevator Company of Gretna, Ltd. The board was made up of farmers Dietrich Klaassen, David Schellenberg, Klaas Heide, Johann Dueck, Jacob Reimer, Peter R. Friesen and Peter Harder. 25 The Farmers' Elevator, situated east of the Ogilvie elevator, was built during the spring and summer of 1899. Local grain buyers might have been worried about the "new kid on the block" but certainly did not let their concerns show publicly. The farmers on the board of this co-operative enterprise were well-respected on the West Reserve and could affect the grain trade with good management and access to markets. They were also intent on opening a general store with the aim to serve their grain clients.

Bilingual Politics

School politics had also started to simmer by the summer of 1898. The language question which was a part of the larger Manitoba School Question had its own dimensions here. The German population had grown steadily since the CPR town was created, yet the instruction in the Gretna Public School continued in English only. The school trustees did not accurately reflect the predominantly German-speaking composition of the tax-paying public, until 1898, when all three trustees elected were German-speaking. Eugene Widmeyer's departure, however, created a vacancy and opened the possibility of one trustee being of English background. Initially three candidates let their names stand for this position, but R. B. Fischer and Andrew Johnston withdrew in support of the third candidate, Dr. James McKenty. It is interesting to note that both Fischer and Johnston left Gretna within 12 months following the by-election.

Dr. McKenty provided the English residents of Gretna with representation on the Public

School board, and his diplomatic abilities cooled the language debate. The German Lutherans paid their taxes but ran their own school and English continued as the language of instruction at the Public School. The controversy flared up again in a year's time, however, when the election of Hermann Dirks was declared invalid and a by-election was called. Instruction in German was a clear issue in the selection of a new trustee. The contest between Hermann Dirks, bookkeeper for E. Penner & Co. and Gretna's Secretary-Treasurer, and Thomas J. Mathers, Gretna's Magistrate, resulted in Dirks' election, despite Mathers' claim that he favoured German instruction in the Gretna Public School.

The language issue was not a unique situation nor was it merely a reflection of local issues and demographics. The people watched closely the provincial debates which rose out of the controversial 1890 legislation of the first Greenway administration. They observed the efforts made by the Liberal government over a period of years to placate the French voters in Manitoba. The Provincial Board of Education gave permission for the founding of a French Catholic Normal School in St. Boniface in January 1899, "based on the model of the Gretna Normal School", with Inspector Rochon as its principal.²⁶ Gretna's German population insisted that the German citizen of Manitoba should be entitled to the same religious and language privileges as those extended to the French in Manitoba.

This issue did not resolve itself with Dirks' election. It was to find its way into the provincial election held in 1899 and it would help defeat the Greenway government. Gretna would experience some major changes as a result of this election. Education had been important to local citizens since 1882. Education would gradually dominate the future growth and development of this community.

Those people most affected by education decisions, Gretna's youth, had other interests in the spring of 1899. A club was organized to

MEI Incorporates . . . cont'd

And Your Petitioners as are duty bound, will ever Pray

E. Penner

Jacob J. Kehler W. Esau
Abr. Klassen Isaac Loewen
Johann Buhr Martin Kehler
Johan M. Friesen Johan Funk
Peter Wiebe

Excerpts from Petition of E. Penner and eight others praying for the incorporation of the Mennonite Educational Institute Rec'd 16 March 1898 Petition #25.

Mr. E. Winkler (Rosenfeldt)

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Farmers' Elevator

Our Gretna correspondent reports on the intended undertaking of the farmers at Gretna under the name of: The Farmers' Union Elevator Company of Gretna, Ltd., to erect an elevator combined with a mill.

We are glad that the Gretna farmers have taken this step of self-preservation, because we believe that it is an undertaking, if handled properly (and there should be, according to the known honor, unselfishness and adeptness of the Mennonites, no doubts of the success of this gigantic undertaking.) will save the farmers many dollars and bushels of wheat.

If the producer is in direct contact with the consumer and they work together they save the profit that would otherwise go to the middleman. This is more than and above expectations; the best way to supply the needs and provide for the future, and secure the best price for his product.

Every farmer in this area, if possible, according to the suggestion of our correspondent, should endeavour to support the venture to bring about its success. The more supporters who help, the greater the success, and the greater the advantages will be for the members.

There is no doubt that the project will be carried out. The necessary documents for incorporation of the company are apparently ready. Tuesday and Wednesday David Schellenberg, Dietrich Klaassen, Neuanlage, and Klaas Heide, of Grünthal, were in Winnipeg to talk to the CPR concerning a proper place to build the elevator.

Der Nordwesten January 19, 1899

Elevator Plans

The farmers of the Gretna area have decided to build a farmers' elevator. They will be incorporated under the name: The Farmers' Union Elevator Company of Gretna, Ltd. A capital of \$10,000 shall be authorized consisting of 200 pledges of \$50 each. Every buyer of a pledge pays only \$25 now. Should this not be sufficient more will be called for as necessary. They are planning to build an elevator with the latest and best equipment including cleaning machinery — a gristmill to grind the best of the separated wheat particles shall also be installed. This would help to cover quite a few expenses.

The advantages of this undertaking are obvious. The company does not want to pocket the profits, but share them with the farmers who sold the wheat. Every farmer shall have the privilege to load cars through the elevator for a small fee. A better measure of weight is expected by the farmers for their wheat than received before. In order to take advantage of the opportunities farmers should hurry and buy at least one membership to avoid the possibility of a whole number of farmers losing their membership to a few strong farmers who then could take control of the elevator. The more farmers that participate the more secure will be the goal of the undertaking.

Whoever is a member has the right to attend the annual meeting and voice his opinions regarding the operations and leadership, as well as expressing his wishes and desires. Only members are allowed to attend. Leaders of the undertaking are farmers of recognition in the district, such Peter R. Friesen, Silberfeld, past reeve — Klaas Heide and Peter Harder, Grünthal; Dietrich Klaassen and David Schellenberg, Neuanlage; Jacob Reimer, Schönhorst; Johnn Dick, Halbstadt and others. The names of these people assures that the undertaking is reliable and trustworthy. "Unity makes us strong."

Der Nordwesten January 19, 1899

bring in a new sport. Gretna had football (soccer), skating, curling, tennis, bicycling and horse-racing. The time was ripe for the promotion of indoor sports. Neche provided Gretna skating enthusiasts with roller skating, but a more leisurely sport was being sought, a sport in which even the less active could participate. Bowling was a logical sport to consider since it should appeal even to Gretna businessmen who "are accustomed to little physical activity". An indoor bowling alley would protect sports enthusiasts from the scorching sun in summer and the icy storms in winter. The idea and planning may have received particular support from Dr. McKenty who spent part of the previous winter "wearing his nose in a sling, the result of frost-bite while making a professional call".27 Late that year a bowling alley was opened in the Anglo-American Hotel.

Dr. McKenty was kept busy during that winter. The diphtheria quarantine signs had gone up before the first snowfall and many stayed in Gretna until the spring of 1899. Dr. Parr also had his work cut out for him. It was his role to pick up the doctoral duties during those days when Dr. McKenty served as examiner at the Winnipeg Medical College. McKenty's pharmacy also required special attention and resulted in trips to Winnipeg for supplies. The doctor bought the R. B. Fischer store upon Fischer's departure to Carman. Max Wodlinger bought the hardware merchandise which Fischer left behind. A. W. Stiefel also relocated in 1899, moving to Morden to continue his association with Schultz & Hansen at that location.

Dr. McKenty may have been influenced to open his apothecary as a result of Robert Fischer's move to Carman, but his life would be more directly influenced by the opening of the Union Bank in Gretna. Immediate attention may have been given to the new banking branch office and its manager, J. Siegel, who opened its doors on May 13, 1899. However, it was the banker's daughter, Marie, who started to take up more and more of Dr. McKenty's time. This should have been good for the busi-

ness of Dr. Parr. On the other hand, it might have been the final straw. By the end of the year, Dr. Parr had closed his practice to enter into a partnership with Morden's Dr. Schay.

A Hectic Pace

Life may have proven too hectic in Gretna for Dr. Parr. The Farmers' Elevator was completed before seeding in 1899 and the CPR extended its spur line south of the Friesen Mill another 400 feet to reach the new elevator. John C. Miller's brother George, arrived that summer and opened a jewelry store. Dr. Parr's lawyer associate, Harold J. Maulson, located across the hall, was representing Gretna business interests in an ongoing dispute with the Rhineland Municipality and the doctor may have wanted to disassociate himself. Whatever his reasons, Dr. Parr turned over his practice to Dr. J. Wilkinson who was licensed in North Dakota. Wilkinson took over the Gretna practice by the end of October 1899. Within a few months he hung up his shingle in Neche, starting the new century south of the 49th Parallel. 28

The summer sporting events could not be complete without one or two good horse stories to talk about through the coming winter. "George S", a stallion owned by Michael Long and Dr. Donovan, had been winning first place money for more than one season. He was raced throughout the U.S. and the spring of 1899 found the partners in negotiations with the Winnipeg owners of a horse called "Wellahead". The trotters were staked for \$1000 a side, although Long and Donovan had hoped for at least twice that amount. The race between these two horses was to take place in Minneapolis before the end of April. Results of the race are not known, however, it is known that "George S" was sold to a Brandon horse lover before summer had begun. He was replaced at Long and Donovan's Gretna stables by a new trotter, "Ben Ali", and by their pacer "Alban" who had been wintered at Aurora, Illinois. Der Nordwesten reported that "George S" had drawn a price of \$1700 while the **Neche Chronotype** claimed the horse went for a price of \$2500.²⁹

The summer also called for the usual Empire Day celebrations and picnics. Since the German Sunday School excursion the previous year met with tremendous success, Isaac Loewen again undertook to sell all seats available in time for the June 29th event. A local picnic was organized for the woods "across the line" in August. Both picnics involved interested families from neighbouring farms and communities. Other entertainment that summer included Professor Pull, the hypnotist, and rumours of an early election in the Province of Manitoba. Gretna residents also got to watch a regular stream of immigration trains arriving from the U.S. The first such train arrived in March, carrying 12 carloads of immigrants from Watertown, SD and others followed during the course of the summer.

Many of the immigrants were Mennonites, with Klaas Peters often acting as agent bringing them into Canada. 30 They usually were headed for the Northwest Territories where land was still available. Land prices at Gretna had risen dramatically since and land was not easy to buy on the West Reserve: Chris Pieper sold a halfsection of land for \$10,000 and \$8,000 was not an unusual price to pay for less desirable half sections on the West Reserve. Those who moved to Gretna, usually did so to start a business. Jacob Friesen, who had been teaching in Schoenthal, went into partnership with his father-in-law Jacob Lempke and bought the Abram Klassen furniture store. John Leslie also owned a furniture store at the time, P. W. Dueck ran a book store, Jacob Wiens & Co. represented the MacLennan Bros. Grain Exchange interests, and Mr. Manndrell opened a new butcher shop in the building just south of the Salzwedel German Hotel. Herman Hellofs and Hugh Street were the other butchers at the turn of the century. Business activity following harvest was particularly good in 1899. Five elevators provided an excellent drawing card for farmers in the area. Blacksmiths John Irvine,



Jacob (Schreiber) Friesen, Marie (Leike) Friesen and son Martin. P#1304

Frank Walters and John Unger continued to be busy and August Schimnowski and Phillip Rau did well with their harness shops. Although new forms of locomotion and transportation were beginning to make the news before the turn of the century, the horse remained "king" on the West Reserve.³¹

Unsettling Times

December 1899 was an unsettling month for those who thought the world would continue as it always had, just as the horse would always play a primary role in everyday life. First a tornado came close to the 49th Parallel,

Remembering Gretna

Well, the country grew, and Gretna grew with the country. Soon we had more stores. Father built a nice new store on Main Street only farther into the town on the same street that our house was only on the opposite side. We had a bank, a private ''lunch'', two hotels with bars, a town hall and even a jail. When we reached twelve hundred inhabitants the town could be incorporated. Father became its first mayor and stayed so perennially until he was too ill and died.

We did not lack entertainment. We had an ice rink, and across the border, a good mile away in the town of Neche, they had a roller skating rink. They ice skated with us, we roller skated with them. My Father learned to roller skate at fifty. And all the young people wanted to skate with him, still as he was. Once every week on Friday they would hitch up a big bob—sleigh, put lots of hay and blankets into it and everyone who wanted to piled in and came along.

We even had theatre on the stage in the town hall. We wept over East Lynn and sorrowed with Uncle Tom, and in Uncle Tom's Cabin even had a good laugh one time when the pulley jammed and darling Little Eva could neither reach Heaven nor leave the earth. There she dangled.

One real nice posh thing was the Home Circle. Every two weeks we'd get an orchestra from Winnipeg. It was violin, harp and one other instrument and we had a dance on a very good floor as slippery as glass, made so by some acid they sprinkled on to it. We even rose to a ball—a calico ball. Later, on, when the M.C.I., Mennonite Collegiate Institute got on its feet and flourished under Professor Ewert, we had more uplifting entertainment, certainly good singing etc. Unfortunately the dear old professor, whom I admire tremendously as an educator, did not approve of our Home Circles and such.

Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert Memoirs

School Elections

It was during lovely weather at Eastertime that elections for school board took place. H. Dirks received 67 votes and Thos. J. Mathers, 43; the former thus leading by 24 votes to victory. Votes in favour of Dirks were tripled since the last election. That should certainly show the people in Gretna which way the wind blows. However, **Der Nordwesten** was not rightly informed when in its former issue it stated that the contentious issue concerned the English versus German elements. There are enough predominantly Germans to be the determining factor. Mather's agents acted completely as Germans for Germans.

According to their talk Mathers would appear to be more dominantly German than Dirks. How long this kind of love for German from the English will last all American Germans know. Just until the election was over.

In the present case most of the English voted for Dirks for reasons everybody knew. When some instigators of trouble caused the previous election to be declared null and void because of an error of form, the writer of these lines made the comment that the next election would show what the electors thought of such conduct. Mather's personal friends voted against him, because he had agreed to represent such a clique. Nothing can be said against Mather's personality, only concern for him that he became the sacrifice of such people. Mather's candidates told the Germans that the Department of Education had already authorized the use of German books but that the trustees Schultz and Dirks had denied this because it did not suit them at this time. Thus they were portrayed as traitors to the Germans and Dirks, as unworthy of their trust. How little the Germans believed in these lies is shown in the results of the election. As soon as German books have been authorized, Schultz and Dirks will do their utmost to find a qualified teacher to instruct German.

> Der Nordwesten April 6, 1899

destroying a church in Dresden, ND. Members of the St. Paul's Lutheran congregation were quick to assist in the rebuilding of the small structure at a cost of \$500. The provincial general elections hit closer to home. Enoch Winkler was defeated along with the Liberal government under Greenway in the December 7th election. William Hespeler was the successful Conservative candidate for the Rosenfeldt Constituency. Not everybody in Gretna was unhappy with this turn of events. A victory celebration in Hespeler's honour was held in the sample room of the Anglo-American Hotel. Enoch's brother Valentine, was re-elected as a Liberal in the Rhineland Constituency.

Village Council elections also took place that December. They reflected Gretna's contentment with the Village administration. Erdmann Penner was again acclaimed to the mayor's chair and Isaac Loewen, Enoch Winkler, Alfred Svenson and Chris Pieper were elected as councillors. With the new year this semblance of order would change. Erdmann Penner had been experiencing throat pains for some time. Upon diagnosis he went to Montreal for removal of a cancerous growth. Erdmann Penner was away from Gretna from late January until March. When he returned, he handed in his resignation as Mayor of Gretna. Enoch Winkler also resigned his council seat at the same time.

Gretna residents must have harbored some doubts about the twentieth century. Their Catholic Pastor Woodcutter had left for France early in 1899 followed by the Presbyterian Rev. Medd in the fall. The Rev. Medd's health had never been good and the diphtheria quarantine had included him. He needed a warmer climate. Furthermore, the Public School teaching staff had changed frequently in recent years. Sarah Scott had been the one teacher providing the little scholars with some continuity. Now it seemed as if Gretna's long-standing citizens were also looking elsewhere. True, Dr. James McKenty and his brother, Dr. Francis Daniel McKenty, entered into a partnership, but Gretna had seen other doctors leave soon after

setting up practice. These doubts must have grown when Otto Ritz sold his interests in the Anglo-American Hotel to his brother John and purchased the wholesale liquor business from Adolphe Coblentz. It was Adolphe Coblentz's plan to return to the country which was his birthplace, and visit the World Exposition in Paris. After re-acquainting himself with France he intended to return to Manitoba and start a business in Winnipeg. Godfrey Coblentz also decided it was time to leave Gretna. He loaded his printing press and left for Great Falls, Montana in April, 1900. 32

Another concern was the school. The cold weather in January made it impossible to heat the building. The fires could be as hot as safely possible, but most students still had to wear coats and mitts to keep warm. Customs Officer A. W. Lawrence died in the first month of the new century. The well-liked civil servant was replaced by Thomas J. Mathers who had been Lawrence's assistant for several years. Fires haunted Gretna in the first months of 1900 as well. S. G. Bean's house was destroyed by fire in late February. The volunteers who fought the blaze were barely able to save the Joseph F. Tennant residence. The firefighters' pumps completely emptied the Village wells. Two months later the CPR roundhouse was again destroyed by fire.

Renewal and rejuvenation had become a part of Gretna's character. S. G. Bean not only rebuilt his house, he set about opening a drug store across the street from McBean's Elevator. The CPR began rebuilding the roundhouse in May. Weddings were news, and every bit as hot as the fires. Citizens began to understand why the younger brother of Dr. James McKenty had come to town. Dr. Francis Daniel McKenty was to look after the practice while James and his bride Marie Siegel took an extended honeymoon in Europe. The newlyweds would not find their way back after their wedding on February 15, 1900, until late in June. On March 14th Henry Ritz and Sarah Scott also were married, no mention of a honeymoon here. One might

assume that the teacher felt obligated to finish the school year.

Continuity seemed more likely following the council by-elections which were held in March 1900. Enoch Winkler had let his name stand for the mayor's job; he was elected to that position. Phillip Rau was elected to replace Winkler as member of Council. Although Cornelius Hiebert moved to Alberta in May, the return of the Coblentz clan soon filled the space left by them just a few months earlier. Adolphe Coblentz decided to stay on and Godfrey Coblentz decided to leave his printing equipment in Montana and come back to his home town. The Coblentz family served Gretna for nearly three-quarters of a century and they have long been forgiven their momentary

Dominion Government Bonded Warehouse

A. COBLENTZ & SON, Proprietors

GRETNA, MANITOBA

NITED States citizens can obtain pure whiskies of domestic manufacture for medicinal purposes from us, by purchasing in bond, and after paying the duty at the nearest U. S. customs office, the cost will be exactly the same as charged in Canada. The tollowing goods are kept in stock by us in our Bonded Warehouse:

Gooderham & Worls' Whishles, Seagram's Whishles, Walker's Whishles, Meicher's Red Cross Gin.

A. COBLENTZ & SON, GPCING, MGA.

Neche Chronotype, September 10, 1904.

lapse. Adolphe Coblentz quickly re-established his wholesale liquor business. Consequently, Otto Ritz departed from Gretna to continue his business interests in Winnipeg. A farewell banquet was held in the Anglo-American Hotel sponsored by the business associates.

The Gretna community joined the St. Paul's Lutheran membership in bidding farewell to the Rev. Berthold in July 1900. He had built up the Lutheran congregation and during his 3½ years of service, had baptized more than 100 into the Christian faith in the West Reserve. Rev. Berthold was accepting a call to service in Germany where he would take on the responsibility of a private Lutheran school for the children of the church's missionaries. His successor was the young Rev. Eduard Aksim, who was installed by the Western Canadian Synod president, Pastor Beer, on July 23rd.33 Others who left Gretna that winter and spring included Mr. Tyson of the CPR and the Public School principal, Mr. Conklin, Conklin decided his future lay in the field of electronics and his resignation was to free him to enroll in a fouryear program of studies. Ludwig Erk also decided to leave his Nordwesten post to take a teaching position elsewhere on the West Reserve.

By this time Dr. Stevenson, the veterinarian who first came to Gretna in 1893, to inspect and

A. GOBLENTZ & SON

ESTABLISHED 1882

WILSON'S INVALIDS' PORT WINE

A BIG BRACING TONIC for Anaemia, Fevers, Indigestion, Dyspepsia, La Grippe, Loss of Appetite, General Debility.

THE VIN ST. MICHAEL

is one of the best preventative remedies against fever and is indispensible where fever is prevalent.

A. Coblentz & Son. - Gretna, Man.

Neche Chronotype, May 7, 1904.

The Anglo-American

I was lying facing the window and I remember the color of the blind, you could show me a dozen blinds and I would still get the color 'cause that's so vivid in my mind. It had a long wide border kind of no it wasn't lace kind of printed on like brass or tinsel and in a pattern.

Well, it was in two sections, you could see that on the picture too. And then there was an overhead an upstairs. There was the family part of it and there was a sample room beside it. The sample room is where the travellers used to come from Winnipeg and bring all their ware and they would display them in the room. (It was a larger room). That was next to the dwelling place. They dried their clothes there. They had a great big pot-belly stove in there. It would get red-hot. I don't know the temperature in there, but you could only go in there for about 5 minutes. There were strings or ropes across to put the sheets on. My dad used to go in there and change them. In 10–15 minutes these things were dry. And then we had the laundry right beside and that was busy. We had six girls working for us. These pot-belly stoves were heated with coal. The dining room had an organ in it.

The travellers had a section of the hotel upstairs, and there was a private place too. Room eleven was ours and we could go in there. There was an organ in there. Also a couch and a bed. There was a bathroom upstairs and a long hall. There were five rooms, two on each side and the bathroom at the end. This was on the second floor, but it was all carpeted and every spring the carpets were lifted, pounded out and it was cleaned out. Every room was carpeted. The carpets were sand ones with rose in it. It was good carpet. (And all the walls were wall-papered.) And there was always paintings going on. The stoves were a job to try to keep the place warm. They had a big one in each hall. They also had one in the parlor right next to the main entrance. Our room was the other entrance, and the sample room entrance. The hotel was white and grey from the outside.

Louise Ritz Interview

Aksim Installed

Pastor Aksim's first service in his new parish was the dedication of the new Zion Lutheran Church at Friedensthal on Sunday 22 July. he was assisted at their impressive service by the synod president, Pastor Beer, and the following day, Rev. Beer installed him in his parish.

"It was a beautiful celebration today for the members of the Gretna Lutheran Church; installation of Pastor Eduard Aksim as successor of Pastor E. G. Berthold by the president of the Manitoba Synod, Pastor Beer of Winnipeg. The installation sermon was based on I Cor. 4:1–5, in which St. Paul speaks of the manner in which both the ministers are to be regarded. In referring to this passage, Rev. Beer stated that for the stewarts of the mysteries of God and for the servants of the Almighty, all depends upon their trust in Him. Following his sermon, Pastor Beer entrusted Pastor Aksim with the welfare of the congregation according to the admonitions of the Holy Scriptures and the order of the Evangelical Lutheran Church." After the service a general congregational meeting took place.

Felix Kuehn History of St. Paul's Lutheran Church treat the animals in quarantine, was becoming a permanent fixture. The quarantine barns, pasture and offices on the southwest quarter of the "Gretna Mile" were referred to as the "stock yards". The noise and activity at the stock yards always saw a dramatic increase early in spring when the first carloads of immigrants destined for the Canadian territorial settlements were brought through the Gretna Port by agents like Klaas Peters, Michael Long and the Siemens family. The interests of Americans migrating to Canada continued to be looked after by USA Consular Agent, Enoch Winkler.

A New Century

The spring and summer of 1900 was hot and dry. Consequently, fire remained a topic of conversation at the various meeting places. The

three-year-old daughters of Alex Mathers and Joseph Tennant were burned severely as a result of playing with matches on the Tennant front lawn. Tennant's daughter was critically injured. ³⁴ Fires in the Chris Pieper barn and in one of the village stables that summer got Gretna Village Council talking about the need for chemical fire extinguishers for the Village's volunteer fire fighters. Concern was expressed that the entire town could burn down in a dry spell. The water supply simply was not adequate to cope with any major conflagration.

Building activities experienced a renewal in Gretna during the first summer of the twentieth century. The Ogilvie elevator was given a much needed facelift, with replacement of machinery included in the repairs. The Ogilvie elevator was almost 20 years old and no longer represented the best in grain handling techniques.



Canada Customs in the southern portion of the CPR Station on Seventh St., in 1910. Probably immigrants passing through on their way to other parts of western Canada. P#1478

The new equipment would make them competitive again. A lot of new homes were built that summer, including a manse for the minister of Gretna's Presbyterian Church. The trustees of this church bought the Otto Ritz property on Hespeler Avenue for this purpose. Robert Chambers tore down the old buildings on the J. N. Braun Seventh Street property which he had purchased. Ice sport enthusiasts also got to work on the construction of a skating and a curling rink in August, in time for the coming season.

While some got ready for the sporting events on ice, Gretna's football club was making a name for itself on the playing fields of Plum Coulee, Cavalier and Walhalla. Hoping for a win against Plum Coulee at an Arbor Day match, the Gretna team managed to come home with a tie. The team was more successful in its soccer games south of the 49th Parallel. Baseball and tennis, still less known than football, started to gain greater acceptance among sports enthusiasts during the summer of 1900. The popular church picnics provided young and old with a less competitive leisure pastime. The Lutheran picnic at the "Neche Grove" was marred by the antics of "several of the local threshing hands loaded on liquid lightning. [They] were not too much appreciated by some of the Gretna people by their style of entertainment."35 These young men must have taken the Coblentz advertising to heart. The Chro**notype** advertisement suggested one "prepare for the coming harvest by laying in a supply of Seagram whiskey".36

The pros and cons of the liquor debate remain a part of the Gretna tradition to this day. The debate, fueled by the provincial election in 1899 and the pro-temperance position of Hugh John Macdonald's Conservatives, helped defeat the Liberals who had included the temperance question on the 1896 ballot but had not acted upon the voters' "yes". Premier Macdonald introduced a Manitoba Liquor Act in 1900 to fulfill his election promise of provincial prohibition. This Act was amended in 1901 by Premier Rodmond Roblin who took over the

reins of the Conservative administration upon Macdonald's retirement. It is not known how the new member for Rosenfeldt stood on this issue, nor is it known whether liquor found its way into any of the Home Circle dances. It is known that the dances were well attended, as always, in the late fall and winter of 1900. Their success was highlighted by the continued participation from south of the 49th Parallel.

A Secure Future

The Gretna Council election on December 6, 1900 returned Enoch Winkler as Mayor by acclamation and brought Robert Chambers, Phillip Rau, Alfred Svenson, Martin Salzwedel and J. J. Friesen on as Council members. The Village had a population of 666 in 1901, with 118 Mennonites residing within the Gretna Mile. 37 This figure compared with a population of 9,891 for the Rhineland Municipality in the same year. The volume of business in Gretna is a reflection of the size of the trading area served. A secure future was seen. The amount of business carried out in the Gretna Post Office after 1890, when comprehensive records were begun in all of Canada's Post Offices, indicates steady growth. 38 This growth had a direct correlation to the improved agricultural economy. Grain prices were holding steady and the cost of land was rising near Gretna. Peter Schellenberg, of NeuAnlage, sold 40 acres at \$50 an acre that year.

Gretna business was keeping up with the times. Charles Wahn acquired the J. I. Case Threshing Machine Co. agency in the spring of 1901. J. Siegel represented the Standard Life Insurance Co., in addition to his duties as the manager of Gretna's Union Bank. D. T. Ashley represented the Excelsior Life Insurance Co. and Alex Smith took on the Gaar, Scott & Co. dealership, selling their line of farm machinery. E. J. Ryan, Gretna's Watkins agent, placed a notice in the July 3rd **Der Nordwesten** warning his customers that some of the dealers in the area claiming to represent Watkins were swindlers. Abram Klassen sold Merrich &



View of Gretna from corner of Seventh St. and Hespeler Ave. around 1900. P#632

Anderson & Co. sewing machines, P. W. Dueck sold fruits, cookies and other confections.

Chris Pieper sold coal in addition to his implement and financial ventures. J. P. Friesen and Sons built an elevator as an addition to their milling operation while expanding the lumber yard premises to increase office and storage facilities.

A Construction Boom

Nineteen hundred and one saw much construction take place in Gretna. Along with the new Friesen elevator, the stores of Otto Schultz and John C. Miller received new foundations and exterior paint. Erdmann Penner also gave his store a facelift that summer. Robert Chambers was among those who built new residences. While the business and construction activity was hectic at home, Gretna's entrepreneurs did not overlook opportunity elsewhere on the prairies. Michael Long and

Statement Showing the Accounting Office in Operation — Gretna, Manitoba Annual Report of the Postmaster General

Year	Gross Postal Revenue	Number of Money Orders Issued	Total Amount of Money Orders Issued	Number of Money Orders Paid Out	Total Amount of Money Orders Paid Out	1	Compensation Paid to Postmasters on Money Orders	Salary	Overtime Allowance	Rent, Fuel and Light
1.890	1085.88	157	1881.63		472.27		4.78	310.00	48.00	
1891	1168.86	349	4524.17		1280.56		11.75	380.00	40.00	40.00
1892	1399.53	396	6939.99		2033.92		17.64	400.00	30.00	40.00
1893	1606.31	464	6742.12		2060.97		17.98	460.00	20.00	100.00
1894	1697.18	573	7723.09		2172.84		19.65	520.00	20.00	100.00
1895	1681.66	620	8028.03		2025.67		21.27	540.00	20.00	125.00
1896	1812.85	630	6492.91		1095.51		16.80	540.00	20.00	125.00
1897	1897.47	678	6086.30		2082.31		15.56	570.00	20.00	125.00
1898	1977.62	738	7238.27		1449.69		18.39	580.00	12.50	125.00
1899	2110.57	792	8603.88	138	2703.52	131.02	22.27	600.00	10.00	125.00
1900	1660.05	700	8217.23	119	2799.00	167.67	21.35	640.00	10.00	150.00

See appendix for balance of Gretna Post Office statement 1890-1917.39

Erdmann Penner had been petitioners to establish "a body corporate and politic under the name of The Winnipeg General Trusts Company" back in 1899 and they were active shareholders in this Manitoba venture. 40 Max Wodlinger opened stores in Rosthern and Hague, Saskatchewan, while continuing to do business in Gretna, and Henry Ritz built a banking office in Altona managed by his brother Otto Ritz, who had just recently left Gretna for Winnipeg. Alfred Svenson must have taken Der Nordwesten correspondent's commentary to heart when it was suggested that Gretna might have a surfeit of tailors, butchers, saddlers, etc. Svenson took his tailoring operation to Neche in the fall of 1901, hoping business would be better south of the 49th Parallel. Svenson's Gretna premises, next to the Loewen & Abrams store, were immediately occupied by the photographer, Abram Hamm.

Soccer Steals Spotlight

The real excitement in town centered around the soccer team. The team kicked off its season with a game on the Queen's Birthday, May 24th. All patriots joined in a celebration which also included baseball, bicycle races, a parade and musical entertainment. The soccer team participated in a June 6th tournament which included Altona and Plum Coulee. Der Nordwesten correspondent wrote that the Altona players were too intimidated by Gretna to show up for their game and that Gretna was so confident as a result of the defaulted win that they promptly lost to Plum Coulee with a score of 2-1. The Altona spectators apparently relished this turn of events and vociferously cheered on the Plum Coulee players. (Sie schriehen sich den Hals aus!) The Gretna writer implied the loss was intentional, to provide a bit of entertainment, because the soccer players promptly whipped the Winkler team with a score of 4-0. Baseball enthusiasts at this event were treated to a tournament including teams from Emerson, Bathgate, Neche and Cavalier.

The defeat at the hands of Plum Coulee was

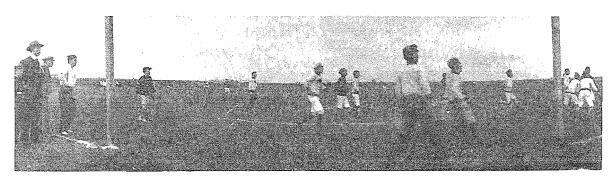
more than the proud players could endure for long. A rematch was organized for June 20th and the football club hired a special train to bring supporters, and others, from Gretna, Altona and Rosenfeld to the game which was played in Plum Coulee. The weather was ideal and a large crowd came out to watch the game. Benches were set up for the ladies in attendance and the correspondent admitted that the referee from Altona had been very fair. But this was easy to say, since Gretna shut out the Plum Coulee team 3–0. The report painted a glowing picture of the team's victory, pointing out that:

. . . if Plum Coulee's goal–tender, Dr. Francis Daniel McKenty, had not been as outstanding as he was, Gretna's score would have come to 30 and not merely 3! (Gretna's players were) always in the right place at the right time. Dr. F. D. McKenty's the only person in the Plum Coulee (Football) Club who is a good player and worthy enough to belong to the Gretna Club. It was unfortunate that the Plum Coulee Club were such poor losers. They protested the game without cause, now that the shoe was on the other foot. 41

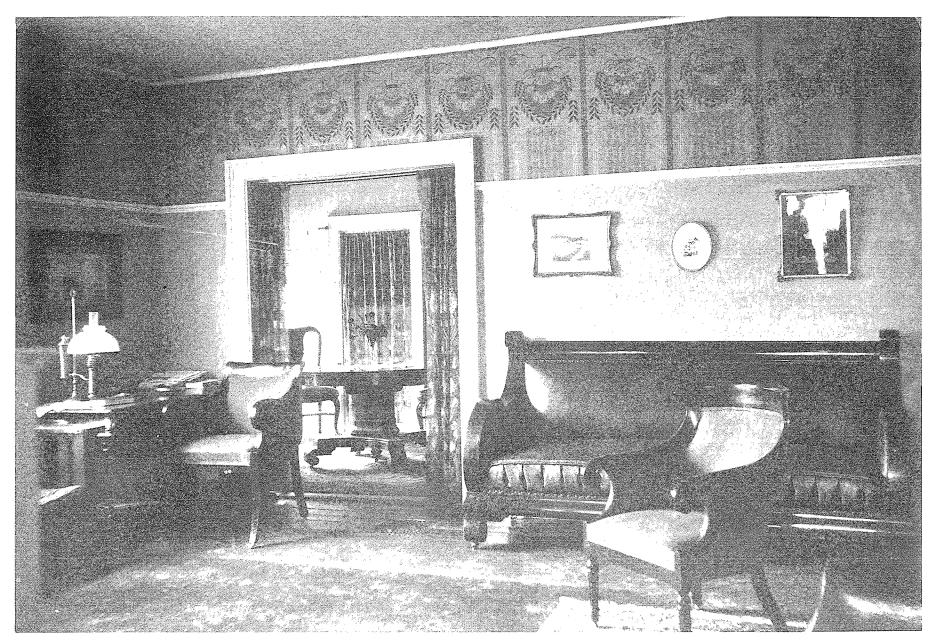
The train, the players and spectators did not get back until late in the night where its arrival was welcomed by supporters with a fireworks display and victory celebration.

A July rematch between the Gretna and Plum Coulee soccer team later resulted in an unclear decision when the referee called the

continued on page 143



Soccer game in Gretna in 1901. Dr. K. D. McKenty playing goal. P#1450B



Dr. F. D. McKenty living room at the turn of the century. P#1113B

game before its conclusion due to darkness. Since this was a crucial game, advancing the winner to a series of games leading to the Southern Manitoba Championship, Gretna asked that the remaining half hour be played the following morning. The request was denied and Plum Coulee went on to challenge Manitou. Altona spectators at the Gretna-Plum Coulee game actively cheered on Gretna's protagonists. The Gretna-Altona rivalry was getting a firm footing early in the twentieth century. Community competitiveness had shifted away from those centres on the edge of the West Reserve serving the same trade area as Gretna. Competition was emerging strongly from within the area of Mennonite settlement.

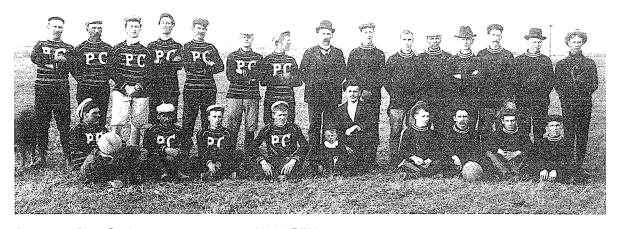
This competitiveness may have shown itself



Dr. Francis Daniel McKenty, who practised medicine in Gretna from 1900–1907. Karsh photo taken later in life. P#718

strongest on the playing field, but it did not affect business decisions. Gretna business interests in Morden, Winkler, Reinland, Plum Coulee and Altona contributed to the success of its merchants. The Village had been in existence long enough to produce less-tangible and mercenary attachments. Heartstrings could pull in directions the mind may have rejected, as Dr. Parr discovered. The doctor had not practiced in Gretna long enough to build up an enduring business association, but he had been in the community long enough to grow fond of Otto Shultz's daughter, Lydia. They were married in the fall of 1901. A less fortunate case of pulled heartstrings was the Swede, H. Anderson, who had left when he was suspected on several accounts of forgery. Anderson had represented the Toronto Clothing Co. in the district for some time. He threw caution to the wind however, and crossed the border back into Canada to visit his sweetheart. George Miller, who had been appointed provincial constable in 1900, apprehended Anderson.

While love may have drawn some young men back, the call to service often left Gretna's churches without continuity in leadership. The Catholic congregation, served by the Rev. Woodcutter until his move to France was briefly served by the Rev. Bittner until Rev. A. Enck came to Gretna in 1900. Unfortunately, Father Enck caught pneumonia while officiating at the funeral of Mrs. John Schimnowski on a bitterly cold day in February 1901. He died a few months later. Parish records indicate that the St. Francis of Assisi parish then reverted to mission status, served from Winnipeg. 42 The St. Paul's Lutheran Church also underwent a change of leadership in 1901. The Rev. Aksim left Gretna to return to Eastern Canada in the late fall of 1901. His post was taken over by Rev. Johannes Burgdorf. The brothers Benjamin and H. H. Ewert provided the Mennonite believers with a greater degree of continuity. Sunday services and Sunday School were provided in the MEI by the school's principal while Benjamin served the Bergthaler congregation at Edenburg. Furthermore, Mrs. Henry H. Ewert, along with



Gretna and Plum Coulee soccer teams around 1900. P#531

Mrs. Erdmann Penner and Mrs. Peter Abrams provided active support to the church missions through their ''Wohltätigkeitsverein'', which became known as Gretna's First Mennonite Mission Aid. Started in 1895, and remaining active today, its primary purpose was providing support to the MEI and later the MCI.

Turbulent Times

The steadying influence of the Ewert family in Gretna was the main ingredient in the school's survival. Their influence also ensured an importance for the Village of Gretna in Mennonite affairs far exceeding the size of the community. The turn of the century brought hard times to the "Mennonitische Lehranstalt" (Mennonite Educational Institute). Student enrollment had dropped to the lowest ever in the history of the school. Sixteen students were registered in 1899, 13 in 1900 and 17 in 1902. 43 In addition to declining enrollments, certain Mennonite church factions had actively begun to undermine H. H. Ewert's role as public school inspector in the East and West Reserves. The school's second decade was proving to be its most difficult time. Born out of controversy, caught up by the issues in the Manitoba School Question, it was H. H. Ewert's unswerving

faith in the school's mission among Mennonites which kept the school alive and a force to be reckoned within Southern Manitoba. Gretna's story would not be the same if the determination, dedication and devotion of H. H. Ewert and his brother Benjamin had not been a part of the MEI.

The Public School also helped provide a continuity in a turbulent time. When Sarah Scott married Henry Ritz and left the teaching profession to become a full time homemaker, her place was taken by Maude Mawhinney and Minnie Irving. E. H. Walker took over the principal's duties when Mr. Conklin left in 1900. Principal Walker, a large man (with only one arm), stayed on until 1905. Like many other single professionals and businessmen in town he boarded at the Anglo-American. 44.

It was often the scene of discussions, debates and meetings which affected life in this lively border village. In April 1902, a group of sports enthusiasts met at the Anglo-American "for the purpose of advancing the game of baseball and lawn tennis in Gretna". ⁴⁵ An Athletic Club was formed for this purpose with membership fees of \$1.00 and \$2.00. Its executive included George B. Miller, Godfrey Coblentz, J. D. Tompkins, P. J. Friesen, Thomas J. Ashley. D. T. Ashley was named its secretary. Its first task

was the organization of successful baseball games for the Victoria Day celebrations. The new club hoped to find as much support for baseball and tennis as Gretna had provided for its soccer team and to its curling teams. Sports options existed for anyone with the slightest twinge of competitiveness in their bones.

The Der Nordwesten correspondent was as busy watching the activities of the Gretna business world as he was trying to keep up with the world of sports. Ike Coblentz bought the Otto Schultz store in Altona in February 1902. Friederich Port, the miller at the Friesen mill, moved to Altona to continue his trade. Wilhelm Abrams as businessman, active in church and Sunday School, had been talking about moving west. When he disappeared from the Gretna scene it was assumed he went west. Jacob J. Friesen sold his furniture store to Jacob H. Buhr, the teacher. The Gretna orchestra was being dissolved for now because its leader, Peter Abrams, was moving to Lowe Farm, and other orchestra members were headed for points west.

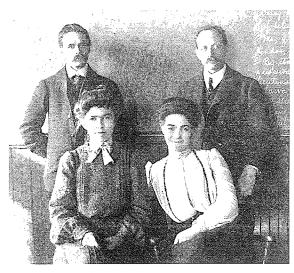
Dr. James McKenty accepted an offer to work more closely with the Manitoba Medical College in Winnipeg, moving during the summer of 1902. The football club must have had mixed feelings when their doctor left them, to be replaced by his brother from Plum Coulee. 46 With Dr. Francis Daniel McKenty tending their goal, they could set their sights on the championship. Dr. McKenty was no stranger here. He had tended to his brother's practice while James and his bride honeymooned in Europe. Dr. James McKenty's residence was bought by August Schimnowski, however, and Dr. F. D. McKenty found room and board at the Anglo-American Hotel. Dr. James McKenty may have felt a bit of regret upon leaving the community he had served so well for more than a decade, but he also breathed a sigh of relief. He had dealt with the smallpox quarantine in 1892, he had coped with a diptheria epidemic, and he got another smallpox scare early in 1894. A northbound train coming across the border was carrying a child with a mild case of small pox.

The entire sleeper in which the child was discovered was moved to a siding at Neche. All passengers on board spent a tense weekend. The car was not allowed through customs and was returned to Grand Forks.

On June 26, 1902, all businesses were closed to join the school children in a picnic to celebrate Coronation Day. The Gretna Athletic Club fielded a baseball team against Neche and lost 5 to 4. Later that summer they fared much better against Altona and Rosenfeld baseball teams. Things must have been pretty amicable on the soccer field that summer. Der Nordwesten correspondent fails to report any major disagreements on the playing field.

Voting Against Prohibition

The prohibition issue provided the controversy in 1902. The shrewd Conservative government under Premier Rodmond Roblin called a referendum question in such a way as to make it unclear whether to vote "yes" or "no". Roblin furthermore, had alienated many



Gretna Public School staff in 1903–04. Principal — Edward H. Walker. Teachers — Josephine Wahn, First Room (right front); Lou Erk, Second Room; Florence M. Nixon, Third Room. P#1119A

Shades of '99

The following is respectfully presented as my report for 1899:

There are now thirty-four schools with forty-one teachers in my district, two new schools having been organized and their schools opened during the past year. In twenty-three districts the population is all German; in the rest there is a larger or smaller sprinkling of English residents. I am pleased to observe that in the districts of mixed population there seems to be no friction on account of national prejudices. The English appreciate the opportunity their children have for acquiring some knowledge of the German language and the Germans see the importance of letting their children learn English. One reason why the work in these districts goes on so harmoniously, no doubt, lies in the fact that it is made a special point to employ only thoroughly competent teachers in these schools.

The teaching force has again sustained some loss through the retirement of some of the best teachers from the profession. This is very deplorable, as it tends to neutralize the gain made otherwise in the advancement and elevation of the whole body of teachers and delays the period when the service of the poorer qualified teachers could be altogether dispensed with. Six of the teachers hold regular certificates, the rest teach on interim certificates. The standing of about twelve of these is such that with a three to six months' special preparation they might pass the Non-Professional third-class teachers' examination. Seven teachers pursued Professional and eleven others Non-Professional studies at the last Normal Session held at Gretna.

Comparing the state of education among the Mennonites today with that of about eight years ago, when special steps were taken to induce them to adopt the public school system and improve their schools it is gratifying to observe that great progress has been made. The number of schools that have come under Government control has more than trebled; the standard of teachers has been immensely raised; the schools are much farther advanced; very much of the prejudice against the English language has disappeared, and a large number of people entertain much more liberal views in regard to education. With these gains, which mean so much of an increase of the forces making for progress, it may be reasonably expected that the movement will continue to spread, and progress in the future be even more rapid and satisfactory.

> H. H. Ewert, 1899 Inspector's Report, reprinted in

Gretna Public School Yearbook 1937

Ewert Called To Bluffton

Gretna, Man., Apr. 17th 1900

Rev. H. P. Krehbiel Canton, O.

Dear Brother:

Your Board of Directors of the new Educational Institution at Bluffton have given me a call to the presidency of that instititon. It is a very hard matter for me to make up my mind in regard to this proposition. I feel that I am filling my place here pretty well and I don't feel that I have all the necessary qualifications for that position yet, possibly, I could make myself more useful there than here. I wish I could see 3 or 5 years ahead. With the light I have at present it is almost impossible for me to decide. On the one hand I am so well satisfied with my present position that I should not have dreamt of taking the initiative to get another field of activity; on the other hand I cannot think that it is without the direction of Providence that this call is extended to me. If I should follow my inclination I would stay here, but whether that would be right might be another question. What if God wants me to pass through new experiences? What if he should want to humble me? Should I follow?

Now why do I write this to you? I really don't know myself. I feel like asking your opinion or advice, and still at the same time I don't feel that any person's opinion will do me much good. Still I do ask you. How does the whole school situation look to you? What do you think is the idea or what are the expectations of the board in issuing me that call? Would it put your school in any way to a disadvantage if I refused the call? Don't you think they could very well get along without me? What advantages would you see for me in that position? What unpleasant experiences may be in waiting for me there? — What would you do if you were in my place?

I have written to H. O. Kriere that I see the fine opportunity before me ''to do the craziest thing in my life''. Which decision would you consider the foolish one, to stay or to 20?

If you can spare the time write me a few lines upon these questions.

Yours fraternally, H. H. Ewert.

Mennonite Heritage Center

prohibition supporters by amending the original Manitoba Liquor Act of 1900 and submitting it to the Judical Committee of the Privy Council to ensure its validity. This judical body ruled that the Act was within provincial jurisdiction. Premier Roblin, instead of proclaiming the Act, submitted it to a referendum which required 62.5% affirmative support. The referendum question asked: "Are you in favor of bringing the Liquor Act into force on June 1st, 1902?" Twenty-eight Gretna men voted in favour and 137 voted against bringing the Act into force. ⁴⁷ The referendum resulted in defeat of the measure, making it an issue in the provincial election coming up in 1903.

That Long Distance Feeling

Telephones were the talk of the town throughout the summer of 1902. Gretna was not unfamiliar with this new communication technology. Private telephone hook-ups had existed between some homes and businesses since before the turn of the century. A few fortunate and venturesome Gretna businessmen also brought in a 'long-distance'' line from the American Telegraph & Telephone company out of Neche, N. D. It is not surprising that the Bell Telephone Company representative, who established Manitoba's first ''toll' lines from Winnipeg to the U.S., did so through ''Gretna, North Dakota''. Mr. C. B. Handcock describes the work this way:

One of the first jobs I had to tackle was to make a survey of a route for a toll line from Winnipeg to the International Boundry to connect with the A. T. & T. at Gretna, N. D. I obtained maps of this country through which we would go and outline a route I thought might do, and told the Repairman to call for me the following morning as early as he could get a team of mustangs from the livery stables. We got away to a good start and for ten miles followed close to the Assiniboine River, which we had to cross on a scow, then we headed straight South. For half a mile the road was visible, but we came to what seemed to be a huge lake, water covered the earth as far as one could

see and here and there were tufts of grass, and in the far distance a house, that was our mark to try and reach which we finally did. That lake was about 30 miles across. The ponies didn't seem to mind paddling through the water.

When we reached higher ground, we put up at the first stopping place deciding that we had done enough for one day. The following day we completed the survey and started back to Winnipeg on a different route. On enquiry I found that the Assinboine River was in flood and had broken through the banks about twenty miles west and spread over land towards the Red River which drains the country between the International Boundry and Lake Winnipeg about 25 miles north of the City. 48

Mr. Handcock's surveying expedition to Gretna took place in early April, when widespread flooding occurred in Southern Manitoba. The Pembina River left its banks and flooded the south end of town on April 17, 1902. Handcock's description seems very matter-offact about an event which presented serious problems to Gretna residents and neighbouring farmers. The telephone poles were placed before the summer was over and the Bell Telephone connection between Winnipeg and Grand Forks, through the A.T. & T. at Gretna, N.D. [sic], was completed by October of that year.⁴⁹

The following advice to the new telephone subscribers in Gretna was placed beneath their listings:

The Shrewd Business Man

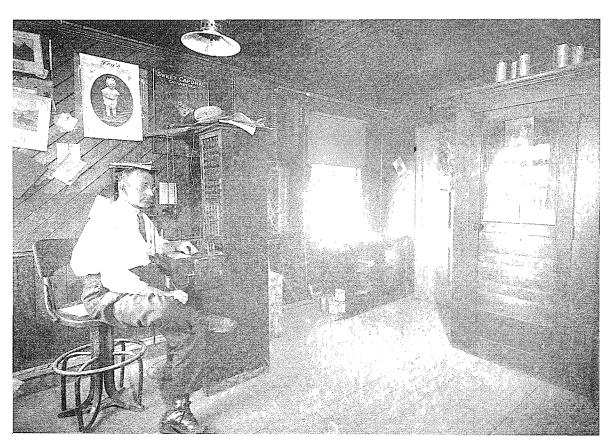
No longer allows the "Dead Head" to use his Telephone and have his line reported "Busy".51

This advice might be considered by some telephone users today! The telephones were a welcome addition to the public services available in Gretna. Transportation was considered well taken care of by the CPR and its staff when J. D. Tompkins replaced F. E. Marshall. D. G. McEdwards returned to his job at Customs following a lengthy illness displacing J. G. Hamilton, who had been filling in for him, and who then moved to North Portal, Assiniboia.

Charles Johnson was appointed by town council to the newly-created position of night watchman. Louis Ziegler continued his evening rounds as lamplighter, in addition to his maintenance work at the stock yard. He would light the gas lamps just before dusk and snuff them out at midnight. The lamps were located at each major intersection, giving the late night wanderer enough illumination to show the way home.

The Rev. T. R. Forbes officiated at the Presbyterian Church's Thanksgiving Festival, while the Home Harvest Festival was held the following Tuesday, October 14, 1902, in the Town

Hall. The Festival proved to be a musical and literary evening presented by talent of all faiths. Weddings remained a form of activity and the telephone quickly confirmed any rumours of impending wedlock heard about town. Late fall of 1902 witnessed the nuptials of Ruby Hoffman to Noah Bowman. If you missed the fun and entertainment at this wedding, the Christmas Ball and the St. Patrick's Day Ball were open to anyone interested in dancing. The Gretna dancing club was in charge of arrangements. For imbibing Americans "Gretna is a Mecca for those possessing a strenuous thirst, the pilgrimage to that shrine is frequent in some cases." ⁵²



J. K. A. Neufeld in the Bell Telephone Communications office in Gretna in 1912. P#877



J. K. A. Neufeld in the Gretna Telephone Exchange after it was rebuilt due to the 1913 fire. P#1129

THE BELL TELEPHONE CO OF CANADALTO.

NORTHWEST DEPARTMENT LONG DISTANCE AND RURAL LINES

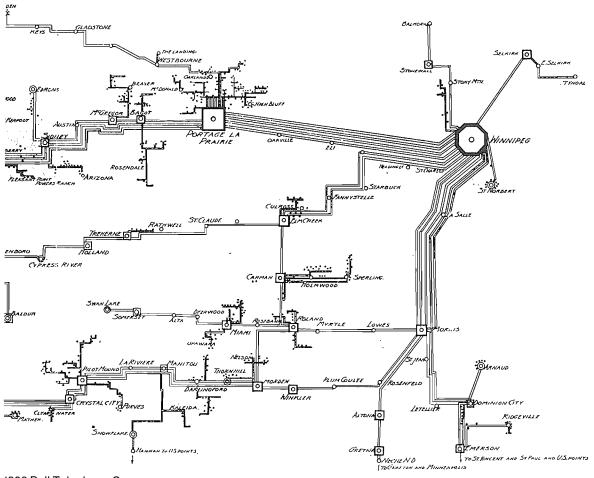
PROVINCE OF MANITOBA IN OPERATION AND IN COURSE OF CONSTRUCTION 1906

HERBERT HINEW DEL 920 UNION BANK BUILDING.

Pembina Break Through

We had a row boat on the river, much to Mother's delight. In winter we skated on the river and that really was fun, on a bright moon-lit night. Daddy was nearly drowned doing that one evening. A party of us had gone to skate and as the girls, on the whole, were not such good long distance skaters, they had taken little sleighs along. You would sit down, the lad would put his hands on your shoulders and push you along. Daddy was pushing me, of course. Just before you reached Neche, the railway had dammed back the river to give them an all year round water supply for their railway engines. Here the water was pretty deep. Well, someone had been cutting ice there, the hole was slightly frozen over and covered with a thin layer of snow. As he pushed me along the momentum carried me on my sleigh over the hole, but he, on skates, broke through and went under the ice. Fortunately he came up on the far side of the hole and the new ice being thin he broke through and the men could pull him out. The first thing he did was to pull out his lovely new watch, hold it to his ear, and say, 'It still goes'. We all laughed and the spell was broken. But we had at least a mile and a half to walk home in freezing weather. Before we reached home his clothes were frozen stiff and at every step he took he rattled like boards being clapped together. However, a change of clothes and a good hot drink seemed to fix him up all right. I don't think he even developed a cold.

Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert memoirs



1906 Bell Telephone Co. map.

PAM

The Gretna exchange makes its first appearance in the 1903 Bell Telephone Directory: 50

Gretna, J. F. Tennant, Local Manager

5	Anglo-American Hotel	Klassen & Seventh
12	Canadian Pacific R'y	Station
11	Coblentz, A	Liquor Store Seventh
17	Dirks, H	Residence Eighth
1	Dueck, P. W	Fruit Store Seventh
13	Friesen, J. P. & Son	Lumber & Mill Office
6	Hellofs, H	Meat Market
14	McKenty, Dr. F. D	Drugstore Seventh
2	Miller & Schopp	General Merchant Seventh
18	Penner, E. & Co	General Store Seventh
19	Penner, E	Residence Eighth
3	Peters, K	Residence Schellenberg
16	Pieper, C	Office Hespeler
10	Pieper, C. F	Residence Hespeler
4		Residence Klassen
9	Queen's Hotel	Hespeler & Seventh
15	Schultz, O	General Store Seventh
20	Tennant, J. F	Residence
7		Lumber Hespeler
8	Wiens, H. J	Residence Klassen

Winter Sports Mecca

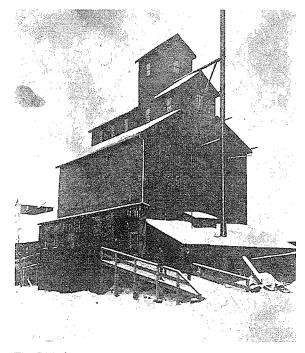
Gretna was also a mecca for the winter sports enthusiast. The skating rink drew regular crowds of pleasure skaters and speed skating contests were a part of the attraction. The curling club held invitational matches and, if indoor recreation felt too confining you could join the skating expeditions to the Pembina River. Even Erdmann Penner could not resist the skating fun, joining his family and friends whenever an opportunity presented itself.

By 1903, however, Erdmann Penner's interest in his business ventures had begun to decline. He left more and more of the decision making to his bookkeeper, Herman Dirks, and to his sons-in-law in his branch operations. Early in spring 1903, E. Penner & Co. divested itself of its Reinland store. Max Wodlinger sold his Gretna store to David Brownstone and started a new venture in Dominion City. The Anglo-American Hotel was sold by John Ritz to Ernest O. Rietze from Winkler for \$6,000 and the Queen's Hotel was sold by Harry Braun to

William Briden from Neche, for \$13,000. T. Finkelstein opened a store in the former Isaac Loewen location in the summer of 1903. The Gretna Post Office also found a new home that year, moving into the tinsmith shop on Seventh Avenue which had been vacated by Louis Robock. Otto Schultz took advantage of these "musical business locations" to expand his hardware department in the old post office premises.

By the end of the year 1903 the Union Bank of Canada had moved into its handsome two-story stone building on the corner of Seventh and Montcalm. P. W. Dueck sold all his merchandise and moved west. Johann Schimnowski, sold his house and lots and took a trip to Russia. With his wife gone, he must have decided there was little to return to in Gretna, he never came back from his trip. Alexander Smith rid himself of his machinery agency before the year was out and Benjamin Ewert had set up his bookstore and printery business.

Building activity was hectic throughout the



The Dirks' brothers 35,000 bushel elevator in Gretna. P#1269

year 1903. When Gretna's energetic citizens were not playing soccer (including against the Shamrocks from Winnipeg), bicycling, racing horses, playing baseball, tennis, or bowling, they took time out to rebuild the homes of Chris Pieper and Alex Smith. They also gave the Friesen mill a major overhaul and painted the Ogilvie, Farmers' and Dirks elevators. Jacob P. Friesen Sr. built a new house on Mill Road on the outskirts of town. Although the house was not finished at the time of daughter Maria's wedding on October 11th, the happy couple took advantage of the situation and held a dance in the large building on the evening of their wedding.⁵⁴ The event created some controversy in certain Mennonite circles because

Jacob L. and Maria Friesen on their wedding day in Gretna in 1903. P#791

the traditional Mennonite form of ceremony, the "Nokjast" (post wedding) activities, were blended with some more worldly practices.

Banking Changes

The new stone bank building had hardly opened its doors when the Bank of Montreal moved into the old Union Bank offices on Hespeler Avenue. The age of the chartered bank was coming to Western Canada. Private lenders would play a declining role in the banking affairs on the West Reserve. At the same time the Mennonite Waisenamts changed, as times and banking laws and practices were adapted to the needs of the new century. The private bankers had played an important part in the development of Gretna and area. The Siemens Bank had helped educate the evercautious Mennonite farmer with their banking

Maria Friesen

Jahob M. friesen

Mir beehren uns Sie gu der am

Sonntag den 11 Ohtober 1903

nachmittags 2 elbr

stattfindenden Crauung unserer Cochter Maria mit Deren Jahob Friesen

freundlichst einzuladen

Inhob D. Friesen und Frau.

Greina, Man., im Bentember 1908.



Jacob P. and Margaretha (Penner) Friesen, owners of mill and lumberyard. P#794

booklet. Furthermore, by combining banking and mortgage services with such other services as insurance and real estate, these early financiers easily moved into other business areas when the chartered banks came upon the scene. The Bank of Montreal sent S. J. Jarvis to Gretna to manage their new branch office in May 1903.⁵⁵

The Union Bank of Canada did not consider the competition from the Bank of Montreal to be anything to worry about. Union Bank manager, Mr. Siegel, did not consider it necessary to confront the new bank's advertising in Der Nordwesten with an ad campaign of his own. Gretna businesses had always advertised; merchants such as John Buhr & Son advertised their furniture business, Charles Wahn, his implement dealership, Benjamin Ewert, his Book Store and Printery, P. W. Dueck, his Watkins dealership, just to mention a few who thought it paid to advertise in 1903. Professionals such as Dr. Mecklenburg, the eye specialist, announcing his Gretna visits and Dr. James McKenty letting his friends know where to find him in Winnipeg, also took advantage of this medium. Real estate promotions of agents in Gretna trumpeted the virtues of Quill Lake and Herbert and other points west. Peter H. Loewen and Peter Siemens invited immigrants to come through Gretna to points in Western Canada. Anyone coming into Canada via the Great Northern found a delay not advertised. Dr. F. D. McKenty had resumed the inspection of all passengers coming through the Gretna Port of Entry as a preventative measure against smallpox. 56

Competing and Sharing

Gretna maintained its importance as a commercial centre throughout the early part of the new century. Similarly, its sporting and cultural and educational role was the envy of other communities within the West Reserve. Soccer, baseball and tennis along with bicycle and horse races produced a healthy rivalry with its

neighbour to the north, Altona. Plum Coulee also considered Gretna the one to beat. Cultural events, on the other hand, often served to draw the neighbours together to share the joy of Harvest Festivals or Empire Days or Home Circle dances. Education should have provided a unifying force also, but this was not to happen.

Professor H. H. Ewert had been at the centre of the Mennonite educational controversy in Manitoba since the day he arrived almost 20 vears earlier. The Bergthaler Church had split over this issue in 1890, and the opposition to the MEI and the Normal School remained strong. The Mennonite leaders who had opposed the school in Gretna saw Professor Ewert as an agent of the Manitoba Government whose job it was to undermine that fundamental right which Mennonites felt they had been given when they migrated to Canada; the right to educate their children in their own way. H. H. Ewert's dual role of Normal School principal and school inspector for Manitoba's Mennonite schools was evidence enough for many Mennonites that this man was going to rob them of this right. Some churches on the East and West Reserves excommunicated families who sent their children on to Gretna for higher learning. The use of maps in publicly supported district schools, and the flying of flags at schools such as the one at the Gretna Public School, served as symbols of government militarism and authority over schools not controlled by the local church leadership.

Strength in Adversity

Professor Ewert must have wondered why he had turned down the offer made to him in 1900 by the Board of Directors of the Bluffton Educational Institute to become its first president.⁵⁷ He remained because of his sense of mission. He must have looked at the growing number of district schools which he had helped establish on the Mennonite Reserves and wondered why this hostility towards himself and the MEI remained so strong. His sense of purpose and commitment almost seemed

Letter To A Friend

Gretna, Manitoba February 1, 1904

I have also felt like running away sometimes, especially when the miserable politicians play one such a dirty trick. In my fantasy I have sometimes thought I'd be happier as a rancher in the north-west. But then I feared that I might hear a voice saying to me: "What are you doing here?" and such desires disappeared again.

Quietly we continue the work in our school. Some very good workers have already emerged from the same. Among the present students there are many beautiful talents, so that one can have a real joy in this part of the work. I am unhappy only when I see how much more could be done in this direction if there were more people who knew how to approach and carry out a matter.

How time flies! Hardly does one consider his youth behind him and one sees his children around him — grown up. Paul has one more year until he is finished at Oberlin and Carl is already a sophomore in a college in Winnipeg. Soon one will have to get used to the idea that one should make room for others, and still one feels that one has only just begun.

H. H. Ewert letters, MHC

Mennonite Schools Report

I have the honor to present the following as my report for 1902: The number of school districts in my division is forty—one. Two new districts were organized within my territory during the year, but these have not commenced operations yet. New school houses were built in the districts of Hoffnungsthal and Edward. Twenty—nine districts possess good school houses, the rest have either unsuitable or insufficient school room accommodation, but I am glad to be able to report that in some of these cases steps are being taken for erecting new buildings or board accommodation, good seats and whatever else constitutes a proper equipment of a school.

The largest school in my division is that at Winkler; it employs three teachers. Four other districts, Burwalde, Plum Coulee, Altona and Steinbach employ two teachers each. Two districts have two schools each but the separation of pupils is not along national or religious lines. The arrangement has been made simply to suit the convenience of the ratepayers.

The principals of the graded schools, with the exception of the one at Steinbach, hold first-class certificates. Thirteen teachers hold third-class certificates. Of the remaining teachers nine teach on normal diplomas and twenty-one on interim certificates. This showing is about the same as last year's but the stand-still is only apparent inasmuch as several teachers with a third-class certificate have taken a lay-off in order to prepare themselves for a higher certificate.

There is a great scarcity of teachers qualified to conduct these bi-lingual schools. Two schools had to go altogether without a teacher for the last half year.

The salaries paid to third-class teachers average above \$500 per annum. Teachers with interim certificates get from \$400 to \$450 per annum. The schools in the Municipality of Hanover, however, pay far less, as low as \$20 per

continued

strengthened by this adversity. The MEI had seen steady growth since his arrival and it would need another teacher by fall of 1903. The school's umbrella organization, the "Mennonitische Lehrverein" (Mennonite School Society), had started to talk about the inadequacies of the existing school building and was considering the creation of a building fund. The organizational and developmental work at the MEI were primarily the work of H. H. Ewert. Those who opposed the MEI decided they would take on Inspector Ewert and thereby stop the erosion of control of their children's education.

The July 20th provincial election in 1903 provided Inspector Ewert's opponents with the opportunity they had been looking for. Furthermore, redistribution of electoral districts for this election had seen the amalgamation of parts of the Rhineland and the Rosenfeldt Constituencies to form the Constituency of Rhineland under new boundaries. William Hespeler, who had represented Rosenfeldt since 1899, and who was the Speaker of the Manitoba Legislature at time of dissolution, did not seek reelection.

H. P. Hansen, and his Conservative Party, under the leadership of the Hon. R. P. Roblin, promised the opponents of H. H. Ewert that a Conservative government would fire Inspector Ewert and replace him with someone who would not meddle in their educational affairs. This promise was not enough to defeat the popular Valentine Winkler who received 355 votes to Hansen's 284. Dirks garnered a total of 148 votes, helping Winkler to a personal victory, while the Conservatives kept their majority in the Provincial Legislature. 58 The Conservative promise to the West Reserve Mennonites to get rid of Ewert as inspector had not been enough to elect a Conservative in Rhineland. This provided Ewert's supporters with small comfort when the Conservative government still made good its election commitment and dismissed Ewert. Professor Ewert asked himself "Was hast Du hier zu tun?" (What am I doing here?) and wondered what it would be like to be a rancher in Canada's Northwest! 59

But he rose to the challenge presented to him by this setback. The MEI could not rely on the annual stipend of \$800 to cover Professor Ewert's wages, and the Society was having difficulty making ends meet without worrying about paying their school principal. The school's opponents sat back and waited to see the school close its doors.

They had not counted on Professor Ewert's resilience and dedication to the school. Ewert was a very effective fund-raiser and organizer. Freeing him from inspector's duties gave him more time to devote to the school. The result was not what his enemies had expected. The school opened in September of 1903 with an increase in staff. Edward Mosimann was hired by the MEI to teach the lower grades and to provide strength in the English and History subjects offered by the Gretna school. Ewert began the fund-raising activities required before a new building could be erected in Gretna. His strongest support came from the Gretna businessman, Erdmann Penner, although contributions came from Kansas in the United States and from places such as Rosthern in Canada's Northwest.

Fighting Assimilation

H. H. Ewert had been outspoken in his support of English language instruction among Mennonite district schools. He was as vocal in his support of German and religious instruction for the children of Mennonite parents. A front page article by Ewert in the March 12, 1903 edition of Der Nordwesten probably helped fuel the opposition fires prior to the midsummer election. 60 His belief that both languages were essential to the well-being of the Manitoba Mennonite community and to the preservation of the German Mennonite heritage prompted him to speak out frequently against the Conservative government policy which sought to assimilate all Manitoba citizens into the British Empire. This policy was carried on, in the tradition begun by Greenway's government in 1890, and by subsequent provincial governments.

Nonetheless, Conservative Premier Roblin and his colleagues Rogers and Campbell, who made up the Department of Education Cabinet Committee, considered H. H. Ewert the most capable individual to run the Gretna Normal School in the summer of 1903. This Cabinet Committee met on June 18, 1903, resolving "that a Normal Session for Mennonite Teachers be held in Gretna commencing July 23 with Inspector H. H. Ewert in Charge". 61 The campaign leading up to the July 20th provincial election was already underway when this resolution was passed. How quickly political opportunism could displace this trust is illustrated by the resolution of this same Cabinet Committee passed on October 12, 1903. It "Resolved that Mr. Edward H. Walker be allowed the sum of seventy-five dollars (\$75) for services in connection with the Gretna Normal School, in place of Mr. H. H. Ewert''. 62 Mr. Walker was the principal of the Gretna Public School at the time. He would carry out the Normal School responsibilities in the following year also, receiving nearly half the wages that Mr. Ewert had received from the government for running the Normal School as well as inspecting the schools on the East and West Reserves. Mr. Walker's duties did not include inspecting the schools. This job was taken over by Johann M. Friesen from Altona. 63

Difficult times were just beginning for Professor Ewert and the Mennonite Educational Institute. The new school term had brought renewed hope and optimism to friends of Mr. Ewert and the Gretna school. The increased enrollment and additional teaching staff underlined the need for a better and bigger building. The MEI resolved to construct a new facility on larger grounds once it had secured \$25,000 in pledges and donations. This fundraising task fell on Mr. Ewert's shoulders when it became obvious that even ardent school supporters found little time for the task themselves. 64 Nonetheless, it would take less than 3 years to gather the resources necessary for a new school.

H. H. Ewert was not the only Gretna citizen

to be fired in 1903. Enoch Winkler had not been getting along with his new supervisor out of Winnipeg in carrying out his United States Consular Agent's duties at Gretna and Killarney. H. H. Graham had taken over the Consul position and he expected his representatives in the field to follow his directives to the letter. Enoch Winkler had not been following the letter of the law in the performance of his Consular Agent's responsibilities for some years. The Killarney Customs Officer would require the services of the Consular Agent in the signing of certain immigration invoices. Enoch Winkler decided the costs of time and travel to carry out these obligations were not warranted by the small amount of traffic through the Killarney Customs. As a result, Consular Agent Winkler had been signing blank forms to be filled out as the need arose by the customs staff at Killarney. 65

The situation was further aggravated when Mr. Graham refused to grant Enoch Winkler's request for sick leave to begin in October 1903. Winkler chose to ignore the directive which forbade this leave of absence, appointed D. T. Ashley to oversee the Consular Agent's desk in Gretna just as he had done the year previous, and went south to California for the winter. 66 When he received no reply to a request for information from the Gretna office, Mr. Graham went to Gretna to investigate the matter personally. He arrived to discover that Winkler had placed a clerk in charge of the Consular Agency and that he was not expected back until some time in the new year. In fact, Enoch Winkler had bought a fruit farm in California and had moved all his cattle and horses with him when he left that fall. 67 Mr. Graham saw no alternative but to appoint a new Consular Agent for the Gretna office. He recommended that Michael Long be appointed to that position. 68 Long was a logical choice for the job, an early resident in the community, he was familiar with the people living just south of the border. His partnership with Dr. Donovan, Gretna's first US Consular Agent, provided him with the support and access he required to

Mennonite Schools Report . . . cont'd

month. These schools, in order not to offend the majority of the ratepayers in that municipality who are opposed to the public school system, do not draw the municipal grant and this cripples them very much. It does not only mean low salaried and usually poorly qualified teachers, but also short terms and poor equipment of schools. These schools—their number is six—do not therefore share in the progress of the other schools.

The progressive schools, those in the Municipalities of Rhineland, Morris and Stanley, do not, of course, all keep even pace. The many factors that go to make up a good school are not everywhere equally distributed; yet faster here, or slower there, some progress is everywhere discernible. The teacher is usually given a free hand in managing his school. The trustees and the ratepayers take an active interest in the school. Many districts are so liberal in the way of expenditures for the school that they supply free text books for the pupils. The attendance of pupils is as regular as circumstances will permit.

In the school work as such, most progress has been made in the teaching of arithmetic. Routine work in giving way to rational development. As to language, German is usually predominant in the lower grades and English in the higher. Pupils are as early as possible taught to think in the language in which they are speaking. They do not learn their second language by means of translation but very much in the same way that a child acquires its mother tongue. Translation exercises are had only for developing the ability of turning thought with facility from one language into the other. Above the middle grades the English language is the medium of instruction in all the common school branches and German is spoken only when the language is taught.

H. H. Ewert

Manitoba Sessional Papers 1902

Country Competition

Country merchants are today doing just as big a proportion of the business as they ever did. The business done by mail order houses is comparatively a small item. It has grown largely because merchants have failed to adopt the right methods. Mail order competition is getting its share of trouble now that many good merchants are using the same methods that mail order houses do.

Fighting fire with fire is a good idea. The mail order house endeavors to start a trade fire in the local merchants community thru its wide advertising. The only way that fire can be conquered is by advertising.

This paper has no sympathy with those merchants who see their business already gone by the board because the catalogue and the advertising matter of the city stores is invading their communities. Throwing up their hands in despair is simply a confession of weakness. The merchant who has made his money by old methods, the man who has little ability as a business man, are the ones who are shouting the most.

Merchants who realize they must expect competition consider this the same problem all other competition presents and they are meeting it.

Neche Chronotype October 8, 1904 get a quick grasp of the Consular Agent's responsibilities.

Another Gretna oldtimer received recognition for his contribution to Western Canada late that year. **Der Nordwesten** paid tribute to Otto Schultz in its December 17, 1903 edition for his 30 years of hard work on the prairies. Schultz was acclaimed as Gretna's mayor for the following year, 1904. His store's advertisements proudly boasted quality merchandizing in Gretna since 1881. Among the new faces to arrive in 1903 was that of Rev. M. G. W. Arendt, who took over duties at the St. Paul's Lutheran Church from the Rev. Bergdorf. 69

Religious Unity

Also on the religious front, Gretna was caught up in developments which extended well beyond its boundaries. On September 8, 1902, the General Conference of the Methodist



Krause family: Father Anton, Mother Maria. Back Row: Carl, Frank, Mary. Middle Row: Elizabeth, Cecelia. Front Row: Anna and Martha. P#1292

Church of Canada had met in Western Canada for the first time. The Presbyterian Church Board met in Winnipeg at the same time as the Methodists and it heard representations from smaller communities; notably Selkirk, Manitoba, asking if it would be possible to have a single minister serving both Presbyterian and Methodist congregations within their communities, since the burden of sustaining two separate ministries resulted in a poorer service to both. The first practical application of this move to unification occurred in Gretna. The Presbyterian Board authorized a Congregationalist minister at Gretna to serve the Presbyterian congregation there. 70 Rev. T. H. Medd had served Gretna's Presbyterian members for a few years around the turn of the century, but the congregation had grown too small to support its own resident minister.

Unity of purpose was also finding expression within the Mennonite community at Gretna. Despite the growing tensions surrounding the Mennonite school and despite the growing small town rivalries affecting religious decisions on the Mennonite Reserves, a movement was under way to establish a conference of Mennonite churches in Western Canada. By the end of 1903, Benjamin and H. H. Ewert had begun working with David Toews of Rosthern to lay the foundation for such an organization.

Gretna's important role in Mennonite education was described in the May 12, 1904 Nordwesten. So was its importance as a horse-trading centre. Alexander Smith sold a livery barn and his machine shop to W. Juelfs and Volrath. John Irving sold his blacksmith shop and Erdmann Penner was advertising the latest in two-seated spring carriages. Furthermore, the Gretna Turf Club's annual horse races in July (complete with musical entertainment between heats) emphasized the supremacy of the horse in transportation matters.

The "Red Devil"

Despite his interest in horses and twoseated carriages, Erdmann Penner bought a

"Knox" automobile in the spring of 1904. It was considered one of the best on the market and looked exciting. At a price of \$1600 it should have been able to outclass the horse-drawn vehicles in the area without any difficulty. However, the car was not the most reliable and those young Gretnaites who were favoured with a ride beside Mr. Penner often found themselves walking home when the car broke down. The Gretna correspondent to Der Nordwesten suggested that Mr. Penner had time to travel in his car now that he had divested himself of his business interests and was letting Hermann Dirks manage his affairs. In addition to his responsibilities in the Penner & Co. business, Hermann Dirks conducted business with his brother Leonard out of Gretna. The tall bookkeeper had been given power of attorney over all of Penner's interests as a result of Erdmann Penner's steadily deteriorating health. This capable bookkeeper continued his civic duties as Gretna's Secretary-Treasurer and also served on the Board of Directors of the MEI.71

Customs Officer D. G. McEdwards died on July 8, 1904. He had worked for customs for over 20 years and was replaced at Gretna by F. H. Mills. Wallace O'Hara of Neche was put in charge of the express run between Gretna and Winnipeg and Miller and Schimnowski were advertising their partnership in an Altona harness shop. Jacob Hoffman added on to his house, renovations to the Friesen Mill were undertaken and P. H. Loewen moved back to Gretna from Quill Lake in the summer of 1904. Daniel Gross, a mason from Russia, arrived just before winter set in. His specialty was advertised as stonework and bake oven construction as it was done in Russia. A visit by former Manitoba Premier Greenway to Gretna in October capped a hot and busy summer of activity. Greenway's speech was enthusiastically received by a large partisan audience, but he was pressed to create as much excitement as the baseball season did in the Neche Chronotype:

Baseball Fever

May 21, 1904: Neche, 6; Gretna 4.

The baseball season opened auspiciously for the Neche team when on Thursday evening they invaded the domain of King Edward and returned with the scalps of nine young men of the tribe of Gretna and incidentally the big end of the gate receipts dangling at their belts. The game was characterized by a lack of anything like heavy hitting, but few balls being hit out of the diamond. Manager Holmes' men came out winner by a score of 6 to 4, the result being largely due to the free and frequent manner in which Mr. Taylor, who occupied the center of the stage as the star performer of the Gretna troupe, handed out passes to first base. No less than seven Necheites were thus presented with tickets to the initial station. Both teams scored once in the first inning, and Neche tallied again in the second, taking the lead and retaining it until darkness put an end to the festivities in the sixth. The score by innings:

1 1 2 1 1 0-6 Gretna, $1 \quad 0 \quad 0 \quad 0 \quad 1 \quad 2-4$ The teams lined up as follows:

ne teams lined	up as follows:	
Neche	•	Gretna
Gynn, Jas.	catcher	Briden
St. Amour	pitcher	Taylor
Crawford	1st base	Ashley
Gynn, John	2nd base	Schimn'ski
George	3rd base	Bond
Johnson	short stop	Fralich
Lampman	left field	Campbell
Lewis	center field	Coblentz
Duprey	right field	Wilson

June 18, 1904: The Gretna baseball club are running an excursion to Winnipeg Beach, 'The Saratoga of the West', on Thursday, June 23rd. The train will leave Neche at 6:30 Thursday morning. Fare for the round trip, \$1.80, children, 95¢. Tickets for sale on the train. 72

The Gretna curling club was getting an early start in October 1904. Their semi-annual meeting on the first Wednesday elected the following officers: Patron, A. Coblentz; president, L. Williams; 1st vice-president, E. S. Miller; 2nd vice-president, P. Carlson; secretary and treasurer, G. B. Miller; executive committee, D. M. King, J. S. Holmestead, H. Hellofs, H. J. Wiens; representative members, E. O. Rietze, G.

Tradition Is Not Leadership

Gretna, Manitoba January 22, 1906

In regard to the building of our school, my last year's collection trip is the last thing that has happened. I wanted to let others continue working now, but if it's as quiet as this for long, I will again have to get into harness. It is really against my principles. I believe that in a democratically constituted society like ours, as many people as possible should work, according to their gifts and abilities, at our common undertakings. But one is probably too impatient in pursuance of one's goal in order to wait until a number of others get moving. Usually we don't want to be satisfied just to have planted the seed and to let it sprout in concealment, but we are eager to see the fruit at least during our lifetime. How infinitely more wise and patient was our Lord Jesus Christ in this respect as well.

On the other hand, I would like to say that it is not only impatience which provokes me in this case. I see our people have not been disciplined to activity. For centuries our people have been told what to do and this not even by the more gifted of the living, but it has been done by those who have died long ago — by tradition. And there again it does not seem right to me that, if one feels the ability and the urge to do something, one should sit still and wait until others get the desire to do something. Under the given circumstances one should be permitted to push, always taking care that others who want to push too will not be pushed aside.

H. H. Ewert letters, MHC

MEI Pledges

When the 1905 M.E.I. Annual Meeting ruled that the new school was going to be built in Altona, many of the promissory notes which H. H. Ewert had collected (and which made up a large portion of the often quoted \$25,000) could not be collected. A large number of school supporters did not agree with the decision handed down at the Annual Meeting and proved reluctant to act on their promised financial backing. Little, if any, of the \$25,000 was collected following the May 22nd, 1905 meeting. The 1906 M.E.I. Annual Meeting acknowledged this problem and passed a resolution calling on its Board of Directors to set up its collection efforts. The Altona school was built only after the Board of Directors was authorized to proceed without all necessary funds having been raised in the spring of 1908.

The Gretna Menonnite Collegiate Institute Board of Directors sent a delegation to the M.E.I. Annual Meetings in 1908 and 1909 in an effort to resolve the differences between the two factions through a division of the monies and pledges gathered by the M.E.I. prior to the 1905 Annual Meeting. The request was rejected out of hand in 1908. The 1909 Annual Meeting recognized that it would likely never be able to collect on the pledges made by supporters of the Gretna school anyway and relinquished their claim to all promissory notes collected from Gretna supporters. H. H. Ewert was able to follow up on these pledges and greatly improve the initial financial position of the Gretna M.C.I.

Der Nordwesten March 6, 1908 Coblentz; skips, Williams, Mather, Miller, Wiens. 73 Many of Gretna's games in curling were played against American rinks, including Langdon, Walhalla and St. Thomas. Although the contests did not get as heated as the baseball and football games, the long-standing tradition of international curling competition lives on to this day.

MEI Split Begins

Sports rivalries seemed insignificant to the Gretna observer as winter wore on. Ever since the MEI had embarked on a fund-raising campaign for a new school and residence, talk had started concerning the location of the school. Erdmann Penner's daughter, and son-in-law, Johann Hiebert, wanted the school to be relocated to Altona. Along with others, which by 1905 included Bishop Johann Funk, Cornelius Bergman and H. D. Dueck.⁷⁴ Hiebert argued that Gretna was not central to the majority of Mennonites and that Altona was a more logical site. Furthermore, opponents of H. H. Ewert had become bolder since his dismissal as school inspector and they considered the fact that E. H. Walker had conducted the Normal School in 1904 as another sign that the position of Gretna's supporters was vulnerable. 75 Although MEI supporters were aware that H. H. Ewert's fund-raising efforts had proven successful, they did not know that the MEI principal had collected enough pledges and donations to exceed the targetted \$25,000.

When the MEI annual meeting came to order at 1:05 p.m., May 5, 1905, in Altona, it quickly became obvious that any decision reached regarding the location of the school would be controversial. Attempts to lay to rest the accusations and recriminations which grew out of this meeting have proven futile. It is acknowledged that voting procedures did not follow the constitution of the Society. It is recognized that not enough notice of the meeting was given, resulting in absences at the meeting which may have produced a different outcome. The method of redistributing the votes of those not

in attendance among those at the meeting has been questioned. The block of votes which Erdmann Penner held as a result of his substantial \$5,000 donation to the building fund appears not to have been counted during this crucial vote that day. The Altona proponents point to the final vote and Gretna diehards point to the number of irregularities which took place at this historic meeting. Anyone familiar with Gretna MEI-MCI folklore knows that the meeting decided the new school should be built in Altona and that it took until 1908 for this to happen. It is also known that a split occurred among school supporters which resulted in the formation of a new educational association rebuilt in Gretna in 1908. This split existed before the 1905 annual meeting and had as much to do with local community rivalries as it did with any differences in educational and religious politics among Mennonites. Perhaps the 1905 annual meeting minutes best describe the problems, the animosity, the attempts at reconciliation without judging the outcome of the meeting:

The first on the program was; the report of the Directors, which was given orally by Gerh. Wiebe. He reported among other things regarding the collection of the Sinking fund; that the said fund had not only reached the desired amount, viz: \$25,000, but that it had exceeded the same. This was to many a surprising, yet pleasant notice. The reporter tendered a special commendation to the teacher H. H. Ewert for what he had done in this respect and made a motion that the meeting should thank Mr. Ewert by rising. But Mr. Ewert asked that such should not be done, and made a motion to rise and sing a hymn of praise to the Lord.

Whereas the question respecting the erection of a new school, and whether the same should be removed to another place, had been agitated and considered for some time, this question was now submitted to the meeting.

The directorate presented a suggestion as to who was eligible to vote. All persons who during the course of the year paid five dollars towards the maintenance fund should have the right to one vote.

Moved by H. H. Ewert, seconded by Joh. I. Bargen, that those members who have subscribed to a contribution — or sinking fund-note, but have made no payment thereon, shall also have a right to vote.

Carried.

Moved by Joh. I. Bargen, seconded by Edw. Wiebe, that all those who after the 1st of May have paid a contribution, shall have no right to vote.

Carried

Moved by Joh. I. Bargen, seconded by Peter Friesen, that those who after the 1st of May paid a contribution for the sole purpose of obtaining a right to vote, shall have their money refunded, if they should demand it.

Carried.

The directorate brought in the following resolution: Whereas the notice for this meeting seemingly had not reached all the members at the right time, the meeting will, after the vote of these present, and by proxy is cast, distribute the votes of those not present and having nobody authorized to vote for them, that these may vote for the absent members. The votes shall be grouped after school districts and equitably distributed to the present members of the respective districts.

Carried.

The directorate further appointed Gerh. Wiebe, F. F. Siemens, and Jac. Buhr to receive and count the votes of the election.

Carried.

Before the voting took place, however, a question caused considerable excitement, viz: that in case the votes should be distributed upon more than two places, (which was expected), if the place should have the school which received the majority of votes by the first voting, or whether a second vote should take place between the two places, which would receive the greatest number of votes.

Two motions were made:

First: moved by H. H. Ewert, seconded by Joh. I. Bargen, that the absolute majority of all votes cast should decide the place where the school should come to.

Second: Moved by Joh. Schwartz, seconded by Joh. M. Friesen, that that place should have the school which by that first voting received the majority of votes of any of the three places mentioned. Both motions were brought to vote. The second motion was brought to a vote first, because the chairman considered the same as an amendment to the first. The majority voted for the second motion. Now followed the voting, which took place in this manner, that the selected election–committee called all those who had a right to vote to come forward and cast their votes by ballots

After all those present had voted for themselves, and for those for whom they had been authorized to vote, the votes of those who were not present and had also nobody authorized to vote, were distributed and, according to the preceding resolution, voted for them. During the time, the committee retired in order to count the votes, the meeting proceeded to deliberate. As the chairman had left the meeting and had gone home, a motion was made by H. H. Ewert, seconded by Joh. Hiebert, that the secretary of the meeting should be chairman ad tempore, and have a substitute chairman elected. Mr. Joh. Hiebert was elected.

Then followed the discussion about the school building which was to be erected. It was reported that by order of the directorate Messrs, Jacob Heppner, Lowe Farm, Diedr. Klassen, Neu-Anlage, and H. H. Ewert had been in the City of Winnipeg in order to see the school-buildings and arrangements there, and to make inquiries respecting an appropriate school-house.

Mr. H. H. Ewert gave a report in the name of this committee of what they had seen and inquired into. A plan, drawn by an architect and giving in outline an appropriate school-house, was also shown and explained.

Now the election committee was ready to report and the report was received. Mr. Gerhard Wiebe read the results:

Winkler 117 votes Altona 179 votes Gretna 151 votes

It was now decided according to the preceding resolution of the meeting that Altona should get the school.

Moved by H. H. Ewert and seconded by F. F. Siemens, that the election should be made unanimous.

Carriec

Respecting the question when the erection of the new school-building should begin, a motion was made by H. H. Ewert, seconded by Gerhard

Ewert Vindicated

Copy of correspondence, which a number of bishops from Kansas wrote to Bishop Johann Funk, regarding the slander which has been spread about H. H. Ewert here in Manitoba.

Newton, Kansas May 8, 1908

Rev. John Funk, Altona, Manitoba

Dear Brother!

During my visit in Manitoba a few weeks ago I experienced that some believe that Teacher H. H. Ewert, 16 years ago, before leaving here had created dissension and splits in our area, and during my visit with you, dear brother, I got the impression you also believed these rumors. I told you, as I told others, that you, dear brother, are in error in these references. Since my return from Manitoba I have spoken to other Brethern who had close contact with Brother Ewert and the school question at that time, and they spoke with brotherly appreciation of Brother Ewert's contributions at that time, as I expressed to you when I was there.

That not all of the brethern involved in our school questions at the time were in agreement on all points may well be the case. Likewise, B. Ewert may also have been involved in expressing differences of opinion. But to now blame him solely for any dissensions or splits at the time is both unbrotherly and wrong. Would the brothers in Manitoba really know this better than we do? Who has told you all these stories? Would it not be right, dear brother Funk, if you would request the people who have made these allegations to bring you evidence (proof) of the same. Brother Ewert did not go to Manitoba because he could not work here any longer, he went because he felt the Lord was calling him to the work in Manitoba.

I do not write you, dear brother, because I want to get involved in your controversy, but hope to help toward reconciliation.

I can only believe that you are a just man, and you do not want to malign Brother Ewert, and therefore I thought you would like to hear the opinion of other Brethern on this issue

In the hope and with the plea that our faithful Lord will help in bringing peace, and that He can use you as His vessel, I remain,

> Your humble friend and brother, H. R. Voth

[The above letter is accompanied by testimonials from the following persons: Christian Krehbiel, Jacob Toews, Gustav Harder, Abram Ratzlaff, Christian J. Goering, William Galle, H. P. Krehbiel, H. Bauman, Johann Plenert, William J. Ewert.]

Bethel College Library, Kansas

Hendersons's Northwest Gazetteer And Directory

Gretna, Manitoba, 1905

An incorporated village, 69 miles south of Winnipeg, one mile from the international boundary, in municipality of Rhineland eastern judicial district. (Gretna was incorporated as a municipality in 1896). The C.P.R. connects in with the C.N.R. The farmers in the vicinity are principally Mennonites. Has 6 elevators, telegraph, telephone and express service; Presbyterian, Baptist, Lutheran, Mennonite and Roman Catholic churches and a public school. Mail daily.

Elevator capacity
Population, 1905 700
Postmaster J. R. Hoffman
Mayor Otto Schultz
SecyTreas. and tax collector H. Dirks
Police Magistrate J. F. Tennant
Provincial Constable Charles Johnston
Customs collector J. T. Mather
Asst. collector Martin Salzwedel
Schools Principal Florence Nixon teacher
Mennonite pastor Rev. H. H. Hewart (Ewert)

ANGLO AMERICAN HOTEL E. O. Rietze, Proprietor
Anderson, Ward barber
Averbock, H clerk
BANK OF MONTREAL S. J. Jarvis, mgr.
Beachell, H Asst. agent C.P.R.
Bean, H. G salesman
Bean, R. S Agent Massey-Harris Co.
BELL TELEPHONE CO J. F. Tennant mgr.
Campbell, W. G. H drug clerk
CANADIAN PACIFIC RAILWAY . Frank Revell agent
Cavers, J operator C.P.R.
COBLENTZ & SON wines liquors and cigars
Coblentz Godfrey job printer
DIRKS BROS. (Hermann and Leonard) general store
Ellis, Edward bookkeeper J. P. Friesen & son
Ewart, Benjamin books and stationery
FARMERS' TRADING CO general store J. H. Buhr
mgr.
Finkelstein, T general store

continued

Loeppky, that the erection of the school-building should begin this year.

Carried.

Moved by H. H. Ewert, seconded by Joh. M. Friesen, to leave the further building affairs to the directorate.

Carried.76

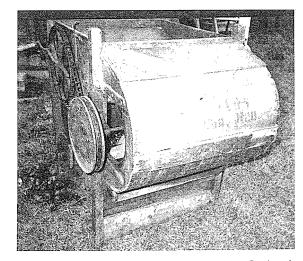
Following the May 5th meeting, Gretna supporters went to work to keep the school in Gretna. They felt confident that the issue would receive another hearing at the next annual meeting. In the meantime they approached the school's Board of Directors in the hope of getting school location placed on the agenda for the following year. They were successful in convincing most of the Board that this matter required another hearing; the school was not immediately constructed in Altona as recommended by the May 5th Altona meeting. The determination of the Altona loyalists could also not be underestimated. When the Board still had not started construction by 1907, the Altona school supporters decided it was time to replace those members of the Board who had been stalling. Gretna supporters did not give up their fight until work on the Altona school building had started in the spring of 1908. When the old school building was dismantled and moved, Gretna school supporters took offence and decided it was time to make the split official and go ahead with their own school building project. It looked like another split over the education issue, as serious as the one which saw the Sommerfelder Church formed from part of the Bergthaler congregation back in 1890.

Syndicate Sees Competition

The MEI annual meeting was only one of a number of events and issues generating a great deal of interest in the border village during 1905. Rumours of a second railroad coming through Gretna to serve Canada's Northwest were confirmed in 1905 when surveyors arrived in town to begin charting the course this new road of steel was to take. ⁷⁷ Thus, while business confidence was a little shaken over the decision to

move the MEI, business was reassured that a new era of commercial growth was on its way. This was not a false hope. A sudden surge in immigration through Gretna had begun before spring of 1905, creating congestion at the quarantine sheds and in Gretna generally, demonstrating the inadequate accommodation situation. The Anglo-American had closed its doors a few years earlier and the Queen's Hotel and the Salzwedel German House were too small to keep up with the immigrants and the travellers. Merchants did a booming business and the farm equipment companies could not meet with the demand created by the waves of immigrants who were getting ready to head into the unknown Northwest. Charles Wahn was enlarging his warehouse to make room for his new United Machinery Company agency. Leonard Dirks took over the Massey Harris dealership from Sydney Bean.

The CPR was also attempting to anticipate the arrival of its competition. It revised its train schedules early in 1905 to cater to Gretna businesses. Beginning in January, CPR trains left early each morning and returned in the evening, thus enabling anyone with business in



Grain-cleaning machine manufactured by Gerhard Spenst. P#1487

Winnipeg to leave in the morning and return for the night. It is not known how many Gretna residents took advantage of this new "commuter special". The change ended an era in train travel through Gretna, however, in that connections with the Great Northern going south were made impossible, except with great delay, and the sleeper service from Winnipeg to St. Paul, Minnesota had to be discontinued. CPR personnel underwent some changes in 1905 as well, with Frank H. Mills transferring to Emerson and Frank Revell taking on the agent duties at Gretna. 78

George Spenst was setting Gretna on its ear with another one of his inventions. This one was "a machine to remove wild oats from wheat".79 While waiting to get it patented he made arrangements to show it at the fall Agricultural Exhibition in Winnipeg that year. He was also working on a binder attachment which would set up sheaves automatically. A selfsharpening saw had also been introduced to the market by a Mr. Klassen who had recently moved to Gretna from Altona. 80 Changes in the world of business included the purchase of the Miller & Son General Store by the Farmers' Trading Company which also took over the furniture business of John Buhr & Son. Partners in the Farmers' Trading Company were John Buhr of Edenburg, Jacob Buhr of Gretna, Jacob Reimer of Schoenhorst and H. J. Wiebe of Gretna.81

The Gretna Public School was also going through some changes in 1905. Ludwig Erk gave up his teaching position to take on the duties at Dr. McKenty's drug store following druggist G. H. Campbell's departure for Calgary. School Principal Walker left Gretna to take up school inspector's duties in the Dauphin district. 82 Public School staff that fall included J. H. Conklin, Florence Nixon, Edith Carruthers, Josephine Wahn, D. S. Tod, Jacob Braun and Lean Gayton. 83 **Der Nordwesten** correspondent expressed concern at the loss of Mr. Erk to the Public School. German instruction in the school had been the new druggist's

responsibility. With Erk gone, so was the German language instruction.

Business and educational news from Gretna received almost as much coverage as the social and sports news in 1905. Things got off to an early start with Gabriella Coblentz marrying Mr. E. Frankfurter of Winnipeg in her father's house on January 3rd. Not much later in the month, Gretna was treated to a speed skating demonstration by the world champion Norval Baptie of Bathgate who skated against John Johnson of Grand Forks. Baptie handily won all three races. The **Neche Chronotype**, on March 31, 1905 reported that Joseph Tennant had received a telegram from his daughter Nora that she and her mother-in-law, Mrs. Hutchison, were unharmed in San Francisco following that city's devastating earthquake. Later news from the North Dakota State Fair suggested Gretna was well represented there by Ernest O. Rietze, Thomas Mather and W. J. Briden; Mr. Briden having fully recovered from a severe case of pneumonia after having been sick much of the previous winter. Excursion trains to the baseball and soccer tournaments, in which Gretna met with mixed success, augmented the trips to Winnipeg Beach which were organized by Gretna. The June 26th excursion train consisted of 14 passenger coaches. The Walhalla band accompanied the beach party.

Midland's Slow Start

Not all the news from Gretna carried such optimism. The Midland Railway was slow in starting work on the line from Gretna to Portage la Prairie. The Dominion Government appointed Godfrey Coblentz as Customs Officer for the "Port West of Gretna on the new Manitoba Midland Railway" even though Gretna did not see the surveyors before the end of the year. 84 Collector Mathers was moved to an "uptown office from which he will oversee the work of both the Manitoba Midland and CPR station offices. Collector Salzwedel will have charge of the office at the CPR station with

Hendersons' Northwest . . . cont'd

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FARMERS UNION ELEVATOR CO. LTD (30,000)
Henry Loewen mgr.
FRIESEN, J. P. & SON (JACOB) Flour Mill Elevator
(12,000) lumber
GERMAN HOUSE proprietor Martin Salzwedel
Hellofs, H. H butcher
Hoffman, J. R postmaster and general store
Irving, John blacksmith Johnston, Charles Prov. constable
Johnston, Charles Prov. constable
JUEHILTS, W. & CO farm implements
Krause, Anton harness
Krause, Anton harness LAKE OF THE WOODS ELEVATOR (16,000) L. Wil-
liams manager
Leo, Wo laundry Long, Michael U.S. consular agent
Long, Michael U.S. consular agent
McKenty, Francis D M.D. and druggist
McKenty, Francis D M.D. and druggist MASSEY-HARRIS CO. LTD makers seeding, haying
and harvesting goods, plows, wagons and sleighs
Miller, George jeweller Nixon, Florence teacher public school
Nixon, Florence teacher public school
OGILVIE'S ELEVATOR. (44,000) R. Chambers mgr.
PENNER & CO General store
PENNER & CO General store PIEPER, C. implements, real estate, loans & grain dealer
Piercon I D agent
Pierson, J. D agent QUEEN'S HOTEL W. J. Briden prop.
Rau, Philip harnessmaker
Reid, J freight clerk C.P.R.
Reimer, Jacob Farmers' Trading Co.
RIETZE, E. O prop. Anglo American Hotel
RITZ, HENRY Loan and Insurance
Schimnowski, August harnessmaker
Coloulta II tellar Pauls of Montreal
Schultz, H teller Bank of Montreal SCHULTZ, OTTO General store, Mayor of town
Critte Alexander Court
Smith, Alexander farmer Street, Hugh butcher
Street, Hugh outcher
Tennant, J. F immigration and insurance agent, police
magistrate
UNION BANK OF CANADA D. T. Ashdown manager
Wahn, Charles farm implements Walter, Francis J blacksmith
Walter, Francis J blacksmith
Watch, A. C. S Accountant Union Bank of Canada Weibe, H. H
Weibe, H. H
Wiebe, H. I of Farmers' Trading Co.
Wiens, Jacob & Co Lumber aealer
Wilson, George W clerk Wolkof, J. S ledger keeper Union Bank of Canada
Wolkof, J. S ledger keeper Union Bank of Canada

Ewert Reinstated

Gretna, Man. May 19, 1908

Dear Brother, (Krehbiel)

Our hearty best wishes on your birthday! So that you can really be happy I would like to share some interesting news, I have been appointed as inspector again. Isn't that interesting? The same Government that fired me is now reappointing me, and at a time when in Altona all means are being used to destroy my reputation.

Maybe our loving God is intervening here to help us through our school problems?

As reason for my re-enstatement the government admitted they had made an error in dismissing me, and that since that time no progress has been made in the schools — but there had been a regression. They had given in to the strong pressures from some politicians, so now they wanted to make good their error. The reason for this move I'm sure can be credited to the efforts of many of my friends. Personally, I have remained very passive about this issue, since this position will give me more work and maybe even more hostility.

In Altona the school building is nearly finished. Here the building is just beginning. Our building will only be half as large as Altona's. \$5000.00 is to be collected ahead of time.

We have ideal weather for the young seedlings. One is hopeful for the future.

In the family we are well, and we wish you the same.

With heartfelt greetings, Your brother, H. H. Ewert

Mennonite Heritage Center

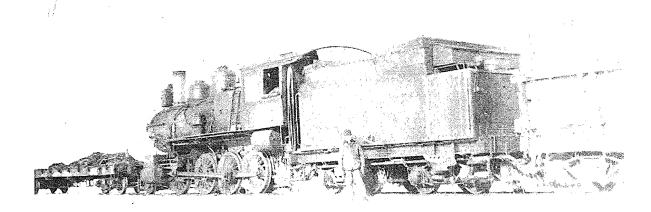
a deputy assisting." 85 Philip Rau sold his building to William Briden and moved to Winnipeg. Rumours that the Anglo-American was going to be torn down were confirmed by the end of the year. Mrs. Tompkins died at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Ashley, in October 1905. Mrs. Tompkins' son, James, had served Gretna as its CPR station agent at one time. Fire was also in the news in December of that year. This time Charles Wahn lost his barn and its contents, including two cows, on a wintry December morning.

A new Village Council was elected in December 1905. Michael Long was chosen to be the new mayor and Harry F. Stirk replaced Hermann Dirks as Secretary–Treasurer. Councillors elected were Alexander Smith, Martin Salzwedel, George Miller and Jacob Toews. 86 The Council's business in 1906 included negotiations with the Rhineland Municipality in attempts to improve drainage along the International Boundary eastward. Sidewalk repair was also a major project in 1906 as was the placement of gasoline street lights along Gretna's major streets.

All activity in 1906, was overshadowed by the work of the Manitoba Midland Railway Company. Grading of the new railroad bed got

under way early in spring and the new station was under construction by March. Even speed skater Norval Baptie got second billing in the Neche Chronotype when he returned to Gretna in January that year. The surveyors had completed their work and all the rumours were beginning to take on some substance. Ernest Rietze decided the time was ripe to complete the demolition of the old Anglo-American and build a bigger and better hotel in its place. Rietze dismantled all but one wing of the old hotel which had housed the bar and the dining room. The new hotel was completed before the end of summer, measuring 50×80', three stories high; it was the biggest building in Gretna. With the new railway and station on the west side of Gretna and with the relocation of the old CPR station north of its original location, expectations were running high in the hostelry industry. These hopes were not ill-founded since the movement to the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan provided Gretna with a steady stream of people moving west from its train stations.

Although the Midland Railway was not quite finished by the end of the year, the company had begun to ship freight from its Gretna station by December 1906. James J. Hill had been



The Great Northern train stopping at West Gretna en route to Portage la Prairie from Grand Forks, 1907. P#1000

trying to make inroads into the Canadian railroad network ever since he left his steamboats for railroads in the American Midwest back in the late 1870's. He saw the realization of his ambition when the tri-weekly runs began on the new track out of Gretna. James J. Hill's proprietorship became official early in 1907 when the Great Northern out of St. Paul -Minneapolis took over the Midland Railway Company.87 The name of the new Manitoba Midland was not changed for the time being. The first regular run between Portage la Prairie and Gretna did not take place until mid-June of 1907. The new elevator in West Gretna was up and operating before the snow had melted and its grain buyer had been doing business through most of the winter. The new quarantine stables and sheds, located between the CPR and the Midland tracks south of Gretna, were operational by the time the trains were running regularly along the Midland. Dr. Stevenson continued his duties as veterinary inspector in the new facilities, with his offices located next door to the German House.88

Mitarbeiter Founded

Another venture which got its start in Gretna in 1906 was Der Mitarbeiter, a publication of the Conference of Mennonites in central (mittleren) Canada. It was described as the organ for the various endeavours of the Mennonite churches and associations such as missions, school, and support groups concerned with orphans, the poor and the needy. Published monthly, a year's subscription cost 50¢ with special rates available to churches wishing to distribute Der Mitarbeiter to their membership. As with so many projects started by the Mennonite Conference in its early day, this one was initiated by H. H. Ewert. He was to serve as editor through the life of the publication. H. H. Ewert's last editorial and his announcement that Der Mitarbeiter was being discontinued appeared just a month before his own passing in 1934. David Toews of Rosthern, Saskatchewan was associate editor and Benjamin Ewert was business

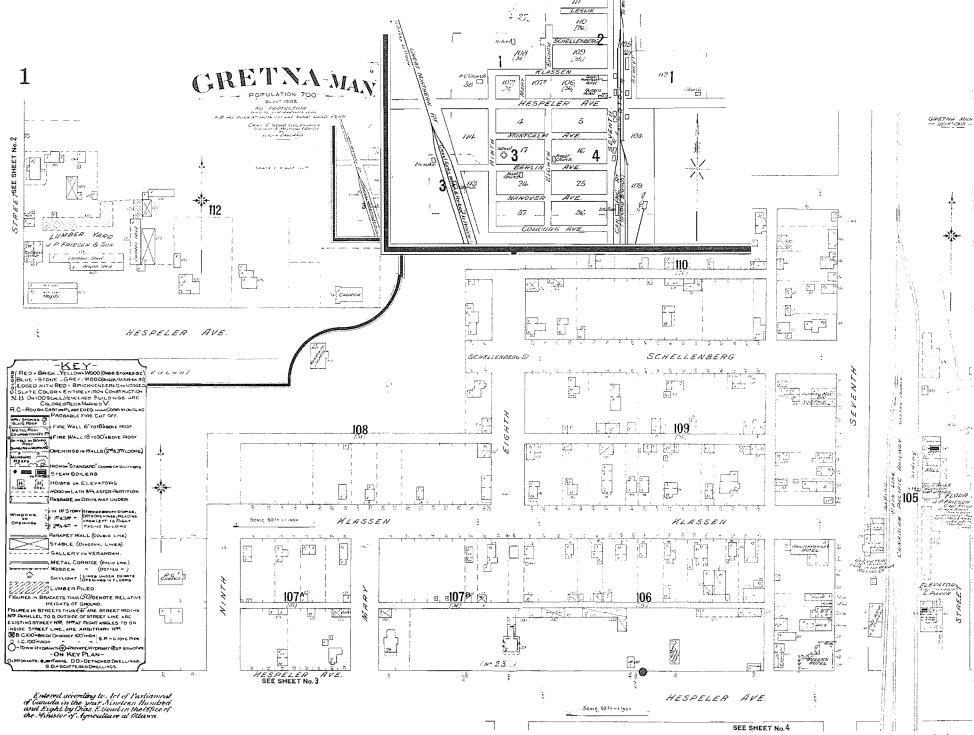
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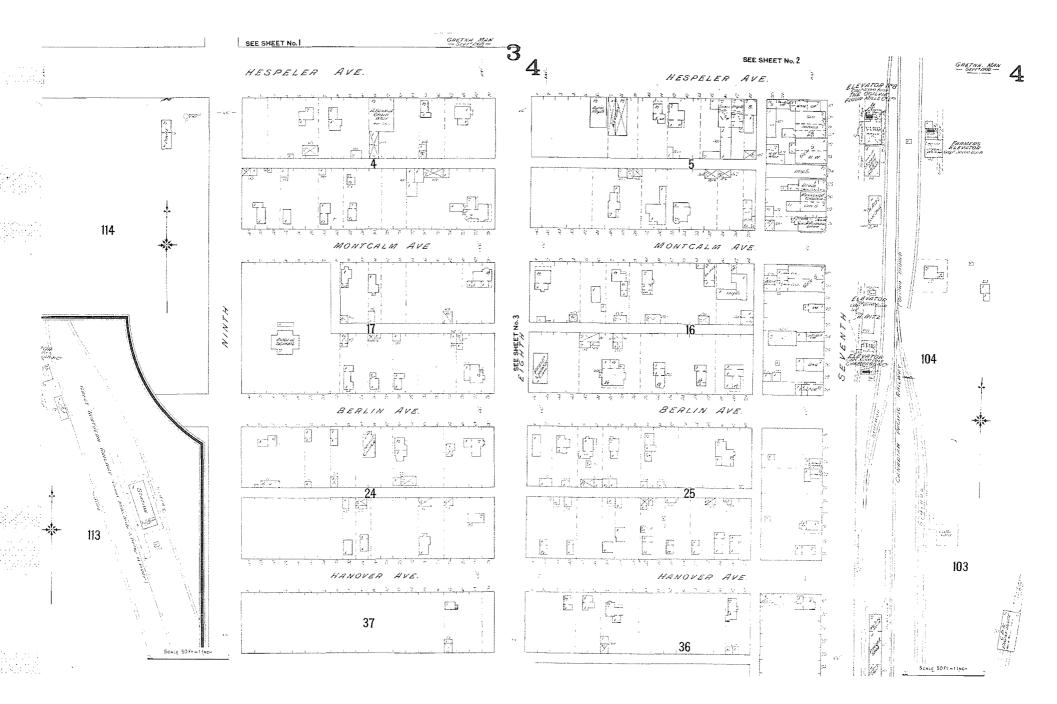
A view of Gretna from the boundary crossing. Note McCabe elevator in West Gretna on left. P#222



At West Gretna train station waiting for Midland train to Plum Coulee, 1916. At far right: Aaron and Katherine Friesen, and John and Agatha Toews. P#1237



Fire maps such as this one from 1908 were used by insurance companies to set fire insurance premium rates for properties. Details on map (see key) provided information needed. 162



Penner A Philanthropist

If amassing money means success I think he [Erdmann Penner] was pretty successful. Dunn and Bradstreets had listed him as a millionaire. He stoutly denied that. He said they never got that information from him. But his riches did not lie in the money he had in the bank, they consisted. in what he did with his money, and there, I am sure, he would rank pretty high. The number of people whose lives - paths had been made a bit smoother through his existence I have heard was just incredible. Every old lady in that reserve who thought she needed it could have tea, coffee, and sugar free. Every old man could have all the tobacco he wanted. If he'd see so and so come into the store he'd tell the boys that so and so was coming to shop and to give her what she wanted but not to charge for it. One day he came and told Mother that old Wiebe had been in for 16 pairs of boots — he came annually. "Sixteen?", Mother said. "Yes, he said they had a new baby." "But a little baby does not need shoes." "Well, I suppose he figures it will grow and learn to walk and then will need them."

The M.C.I. could never have existed nor come into being if it had not been for his drive and energy and money.

Dirks and Penner

The finest thing I think I have ever experienced was in 1906. Mother was already dead, we children all married, and Father was alone in the old house with a housekeeper, and dying with cancer. Because of that he had given a former bookkeeper and now his general manager power of attorney. He was just like a son to him and Father loved him. The temptation was too great and this fellow speculated thousands of dollars away in wheat, and then fled. All in all, he did away with not less than \$200,000. Father found that instead of his affairs being in apple-pie order, they were all muddled up. Instead of not owing a cent to anybody and having money in the bank, he owed money here and there and his bank account was overdrawn by

continued

manager and publisher of **Der Mitarbeiter**. 89 This threesome had participated in similar projects in the U.S., understood the importance of communication in furthering the goals of an organization, and shared the same dream of Christian brotherhood for Canadian Mennonites.

Der Mitarbeiter started without much fanfare. The Gretna businessman saw it as another
vehicle through which they could attract customers to their Village. Its presence in Gretna
was further proof that this commercial centre
continued to play a leading role among Mennonites in Western Canada. The new mayor,
Charles Wahn, advertised in Der Mitarbeiter as
did Salzwedel, Ritz, Penner, Buhr and
Coblentz. In fact, much of the paper's advertising revenue came from non-Mennonite
sources and many of its readers, in the Gretna
area, belonged to diverse faiths.

Skating Rink Christened

The new skating rink probably received more notice than the new Mennonite monthly did in the winter of 1906 to 1907! The rink was enlarged and outfitted with a new canvas top in time for the skating season that winter. Norval Baptie came out to help christen the new ice palace and Gretna's young folk put on a winter carnival which attracted many skating enthusiasts from south of the border. 90 Winter sports were reaching a new high that winter when the Gretna curlers returned from a bonspiel at St. Thomas with the Elrathisne Trophy; and when the first winter carnival proved a smashing success, Gretna's energetic youth put on another one a month later. Indoor fun was not overlooked either. The annual New Year's Eve dance was held in the Forresters' Hall, music provided by the Wigston Orchestra out of Winnipeg. 91

When summer rolled around, this youthful energy was thrown into the baseball and football leagues. This was going to be Gretna's year on the playing field. The Juniors won most of their games but the Grays found stiffer com-

petition, losing some games to Altona. Timothy Sheedy's pitching was Gretna's strength and he proved too much for Neche and Altona teams on several occasions that summer. The usual number of excursion trains were put together that summer, with the new Midland Railway providing access to Portage la Prairie for Gretna's sports enthusiasts. Many Gretna residents chose to celebrate Dominion Day in Portage la Prairie, making things fairly quiet locally for a change, at least until the excursion train returned to the West Gretna station around midnight that day. 92 Although baseball dominated the sporting scene in 1907, tennis tournaments, trap shoots and horse races helped keep Gretna entertained and active. The gun club was most popular among those sporting folk who were looking for something a little less active and enervating, yet wished to test their skills on the sporting field.

With so much going on, was there time for anything else? There certainly was! Reverend Dan McIvor came to Gretna to serve the Presbyterian Church and Reverend Paul Baehnisch succeeded Rev. G. Runge at St. Paul's Lutheran Church before the beginning of the year. The Rev. Baehnisch took over a very active church organization which had celebrated its steady growth in 1905 with the dedication of a new bell. The Sunday morning call to worship was an exciting time for children when the church bells started ringing from the different corners of the Village.

End of an Era

The bells rang out a more sorrowful song late in November 1907, when they called residents to memorial services in respect for Gretna's first mayor, Erdmann Penner, who died on the morning of November 26, 1907. His declining health had not been helped by the controversy surrounding the MEI. He found himself opposed by the first bookkeeper he had hired in Niverville, back in the days before the West Reserve sprang into existence. This bookkeeper had managed his stores in Niverville and Pilot

Mound and had received Penner's help setting up his Altona business. This bookkeeper, Johann Hiebert, married one of his daughters and was considered a close friend by Erdmann Penner. It was in Hiebert's home that Penner spent the last months of his life, following the sale of his Gretna residence to J. F. Tennant earlier in the spring of 1907.

A further shock to Erdmann Penner came from another close and trusted friend. Hermann Dirks had misused his power of attorney over the past several years and had invested a substantial portion of Penner's resources in ventures which were disasters. Dirks deserted his family, his employer and his community when he realized he could not keep this hidden. Leonard Dirks had left Gretna and moved to Idaho in the summer of 1906. At first, people thought Hermann Dirks had gone south to visit family. This was not the case. When Penner's attorneys advised him to prosecute, he refused. He pointed out to them that such action might lead to a conviction, but would not return those lost finances nor would it benefit the Dirks family who were experiencing enough hardship as a result of Hermann Dirks' disappearance.

Erdmann Penner's legacy lived on. His management and organizational abilities proved invaluable in the first Mennonite migrations to Manitoba. His business acumen served as an example to other Mennonite entrepreneurs who did not fit the agrarian mold as prescribed by Mennonite church leaders. His dedication to his people was illustrated by his unselfish support of the educational society and school founded in Gretna in 1890. His success and his commitment to the Mennonite idealism which brought him to this country have not always received the treatment they deserved. Even the funeral and memorial services on November 28, 1907 produced friction. This controversy had to do with the small town rivalries of Gretna and Altona and the hostilities coming to a head regarding the location of the MEI:

November 30, 1907:

On the morning of Tuesday, November 26th,

at Altona, occurred the death of Mr. Erdmann Penner, aged seventy years and nine months. Death took place rather suddenly, although the end had been expected for several months. No one was present when he expired. The funeral took place on Thursday. Service was held in the schoolhouse at Altona and from there the procession proceeded to the Gretna cemetery. A large cortege followed the body to its last resting place, the citizens of Gretna with Mayor Wahn and the councillors at their head appearing en masse. A procession of all the pupils of both schools was formed and marched to the cemetery, where the body was laid beside that of his wife who had gone before. A civic half-holiday was proclaimed from one to five o'clock in honor of the deceased, who was Gretna's first mayor.

Mr. Penner was a very eminent figure in social, business and political life. He was one of the most successful business men in southern Manitoba and took a great interest in education, especially in the Mennonite educational institute here. He was also an active member in the Mennonite church. Erdmann Penner was born in southern Russia, February, 1837. He emigrated to America in 1874 and settled as one of the first pioneers at Niverville, Manitoba, where he conducted a store for some time. In 1876 he started a store in Gretna in company with O. Schultz, and in 1881 he took charge of the store alone and conducted the business together with branch stores at Reinland and Plum Coulee with great success. When Gretna was incorporated he became its first mayor, and has continually taken an interest in the town's welfare. The deceased had been bothered by a cancer and in 1899 he went to Montreal, where an operation was performed by which his speech was made almost inaudible and he was forced to quit active business. The next year, 1900, Mrs. Penner died, and now to add to these sorrows he had serious financial troubles incurred by the erring Dirks. In spite of several other operations performed on him his condition grew steadily worse, and he was taken under care by his sonin-law, John Hiebert, of Altona, in March of this year, at whose home he died. Two sons, Dr. E. Penner and Henry Penner, of Winnipeg, and four daughters, Mrs. J. Hiebert, Altona, Mrs. J. J. Bargen, Plum Coulee, and Mrs. J. A. Stephenson and Mrs. G. Hiebert of Winnipeg, as well as two brothers and two sisters, besides two step-sons,

Penner a Philantropist . . . cont'd

more than \$100,000. It was a mess. I fortunately was home with him when this happened.

Daddy and I were in Berlin, Germany, where Daddy was doing post-graduate surgery when I got the letter that Father had had a recurrence of his old trouble, that he had been to his old doctors in Montreal and they had pronounced him inoperable. I at once got a ticket to go and be with him in spite of him urging us in the letter to stay and finish our work. I argued that Daddy should stay and finish and I would go home and see Father. If I needed Daddy I'd send for him. In Father's letter, written by Dirks, he urged us not to interrupt our work. In order not to worry Father we decided I would not tell him I was coming but telegraph him from New York that I would be home in two days. They told me that when he got the telegram he sat there with the tears rolling down his cheeks and kept on repeating, 'I knew she would come, I knew she would come.' The people reasoned that my coming back so unexpectedly had really driven Dirks away. What he must have figured on was that Father would die and he would say that he had speculated for Father. My Father, who was death on speculation! Campbell and Crawford, Father's lawyers, (Mr. Campbell, the Attorney General of the province) wanted to bring Dirks back to justice. Father would not lay a charge, he would not let him.

Dirks had left behind a wife and 5 young children and Father said that bringing him back and putting him in jail would make it very much harder for the wife and children if they had the stigma of a jailbird father to carry with them through life. Not only that, but as long as Mrs. Dirks and her family remained in Gretna he told her to come and buy at the store whatever she needed free, and he made arrangements at the butchers and bakers to charge anything that Mrs. Dirks bought to him. He was responsible for her debt. After about 5 months her older brother who had a banking business in Seattle came and got them.

Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert memoirs



R. C. Pieper house 1985. It used to be West Gretna's Great Northern Detention House. P#1542

Jacob Kehler, of Gretna and John Kehler, of Rosthern, Sask., remain to mourn his death. The deepest sympathy of the whole community is extended toward the bereaved ones.

December 2, 1907 Der Nordwesten

Erdmann Penner's funeral was held on November 28th. Erdmann Penner came from Russia as leader of a group of people to Winnipeg in 1874. He lived there for two years where he got to know Otto Schultz. He moved to NeuAnlage in 1881 and with the help of Henry Schultz in 1883 started the town of Gretna. He soon had three branches going: One in Plum Coulee, Reinland and Gnadenthal. He was an energetic and honest business man.

He had some health problems in 1900 and went to Montreal and had surgery for cancer. The following year he lost his wife through death. He did well till 1906 when his cancer came back and his health declined. He was Gretna's first mayor. Gretna people were hurt that the Hiebert family insisted the funeral be in Altona. The Hieberts had looked after Mr. Penner during the last nine months. The Gretna people did not take an active part in the funeral. Mayor Wahn called a meeting and the program was planned. Town Council and Trustees were all present at the funeral. In all, 28 vehicles.

Gretna proclaimed a half-day holiday and old and young that could not go to Altona went to the cemetery on Sunday December 1st. They had a service for him in Gretna (too bad the Hieberts did not attend.) with songs, prayers, Bible readings and an English message was brought by Otto Schultz and the original message by H. H. Ewert. He was a good friend of the private school. He was the first one to donate \$600 and \$1,000 during the year. He had promised \$5000 for the kitchen. 93

Mayor Charles Wahn must have felt disheartened. Gretna's first mayor and founding father was gone. He had remained in Gretna right up to his final months. His enthusiasm and support would be greatly missed. Others who had served in the mayor's chair no longer lived in Gretna. While retaining his business and land holdings, Enoch Winkler had moved to Winnipeg and, although he lived at 587 Wellington Crescent, his heart remained in Gretna.

Michael Long was also living in Winnipeg by late fall of 1907 while keeping his banking and mortgage ventures in Gretna active. Long's departure, however, did mean that the US Government was again without a Consular Agent. Following a review of operations, it was decided to close down the Gretna Consular Agency, as of December 31, 1907.94

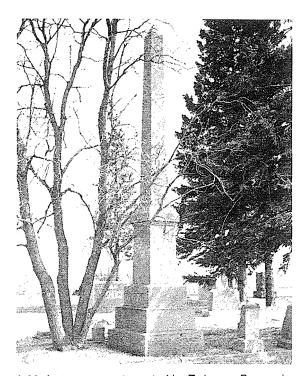
Erdmann Penner's death marked the end of an era for Gretna. It would be some time vet before the motorized vehicle displaced the horse as the primary means of transportation. The telephone was already changing the way people communicated with each other. Gretna's first reported moving pictures were shown at the Town Hall on December 7th.95 Their novelty received commentary, just as the free exhibition by an acrobat in front of the Queen's Hotel had been viewed with pleasure earlier in July. The ease with which residents were able to participate in tournaments and events in other communities, ever since the Manitoba Midland started operations, helped bring home the realization that Gretna no longer was the centre within an isolated community. The isolation was falling away, bringing with it changes that were not completely unanticipated, Michael Long and Enoch Winkler were demonstrating that it was possible to keep their Gretna interests going without living there. This was not new, since William Hespeler and W. W. Ogilvie had never lived in Gretna but played a significant role in shaping its earlier existence. Erdmann Penner had very ably kept his finger in many pies in a number of Manitoba communities, while Gretna had served as his base.

Life Goes On

Endings and beginnings were not new. It seemed as though a part was always finding its conclusion while another part was coming to life. From this perspective, life was going on as it always had through the winter of 1907 to 1908. The MEI began another year of instruction under H. H. Ewert and the Public School had

taken on new leadership under N. B. Tufts who also conducted the Gretna Normal School exams that year. And while the MEI's revamped Board got ready to build the new MEI in Altona, by contracting Charles Whidden of Gretna to do the work, Gretna supporters began organizing to build their own Mennonite Collegiate. H. H. Ewert had come alongside the Gretna faction, and with his support prospects for the new school looked better than they had for several years. A general meeting was called for March 12, 1908 in Plum Coulee with the objective to establish a separate school association which would keep the Gretna Institute open and provide it with new facilities. 96

Successful candidates in the Normal School



A 20-foot monument erected by Erdmann Penner in memory of his wife at the Gretna Cemetery. It is made of Red Granite from Nova Scotia, weighs 26,000 lbs. and was created by Alex McIntyre, Morden Marble Works. P#1486

examinations in the fall of 1907 were William Long and Martha Krause. Philip Schuppert, William Ewert, Edward Hoffman, Paul Pieper, Gladys Irving and Leopold Doern successfully completed their entrance exams. 97 In other school news, Carl and Paul Ewert left for Medical College at Montreal's McGill University in the fall of 1907 and Ludwig Erk was attending Pharmacy College in Winnipeg under Dr. McKenty's sponsorship. 98 Mr. Erk had returned to Gretna after a year's absence and had resumed his duties in the drug store. He had left for Hanover, Germany which was his original home, but returned sooner than his friends had expected. He arrived back in town to find gasoline lamps along the streets and talk about building cement sidewalks to replace the rapidly deteriorating boardwalks.

Other changes in Gretna included side tracks linking the Midland and CPR lines with the new quarantine barns. A new bakery had started with Mr. Groszig, the owner, offering authentic German baked goods. Godfrey Coblentz had resigned his position as Prevention Officer at Canada Customs. He wanted to concentrate all his efforts on preparatory work at his offices next to Gretna's Bookstore, anticipating the launching of yet another weekly newspaper to serve the West Reserve. Coblentz was looking for a printing press equal to that of the Neche Chronotype, on which to print his eight page weekly called Der Rheinlaender. He was having problems getting started:

It will take some time before Gretna's weekly will appear since the press had to be returned for one which will be more adequate for the work. Otherwise everything is ready for the printing of the paper which will appear under the name **Der Rhinelander**. 99

H. G. Bean took over the position vacated by Godfrey Coblentz, F. C. Vollruth sold his livery barns and went to work for the CPR in Winnipeg. Peter Brown of Edenburg was appointed local agent for the Massey Harris Implement dealership, and R. S. Bean stayed with the company as a travelling agent. W. J. Briden

Schultz Defends Gretna

Gretna, Man., Jan. 8th, 1908 The Chronotype Neche, N.D.

In your issue of January 4th, last you state in your leading editorial that the prime factor leading to the late sad murder tragedy in your town as the fact, that the Gretna Hotels sold liquor on Sunday, and that the keeping of these hotels in our community, was to the everlasting Shame of the Gretna Community as a Whole. As Gretna's Executive I have been requested by the Gretna Council or a number of Gretna's citizens to reply to your 'Editorial', which have been reprinted in the large dailys of Winnipeg, St. Paul and Minneapolis has thereby received a Standing it otherwise in nowise merits.

As to your "opinions" on the Sale of Liquors I have no objections, you are welcome to them. Your statements however make a whole community responsible for the act of an Individual, and even the act you alleged to be true, you have failed to prove.

I charge you with wilfully trying to obscure the conditions of your own town and trying to throw the blame on your neighbor. You are acquainted with the Law of this Province and it is well known to you that the Liquor Laws are administrated by the Provincial Government, and that Gretna as a village has no power to deal with the subject.

I claim our hotels are well conducted and a credit to our Village, its owners are good respectable men and if the Chronotype saw fit to find fault and knows that the law is transgressed, why did not the Chronotype prove its position first and write the ''editorial'' afterwards. It does not sound reasonable to me to say, that a few glasses of beer taken at three (3) o'clock in the afternoon, would contribute much fire to the brains of a youth, used to liquor, to commit a crime eight (8) hours afterwards.

If you have a case against a man in our midst; proceed and fight it out with him, but do not besmirch a community as a whole whose record for a period of thirty (30) years show, that its people were in every sense most loyal and law abiding.

> Respectfully yours, Otto Schultz, Mayor Gretna Village

Neche Chronotype January 8, 1908

A Crying Evil

To **The Chronotype's** way of thinking, one of the most appallingly significant facts to be adduced from the testimony called forth during the inquest attendant upon the recent gruesome tragedy enacted at Neche, whereby two happy homes have been sadly desolated, is the ease and readiness with which, apparently at all times, and especially upon the Sabbath day, all classes regardless of age, color or condition, so desiring may be supplied with intoxicating liquors by the public bars of our neighboring village of Gretna.

From the testimony above referred to it appears that on that particular Sunday when this most grievous of all crimes was committed, the saloons of that village did a rushing business, liquors being disposed freely; to the youth of tender years as well as to those who had reached or passed manhood's prime, the sole qualification being the ability of the patron to pay the regulation price. From this same evidence it is further made to appear that the sixteen year-old murderer in company with his not yet twenty-year-old victim, on two different occasions on that day, visited one of these bars — The Anglo-American — and were unhesitatingly supplied with all the intoxicants for which they were pleased to call.

The Chronotype contends that to the liquor so procured by these young boys on that occasion is largely, if not directly, chargeable the commission of the monstrous crime of murder, and it further maintains that the man or men who furnished them with the same is guilty, morally at least, of being in a great measure accessory to the crime.

What assurance have any of our citizens, if this iniquitous condition is allowed to continue at Gretna, that horrors of a similar nature may not be repeated with their own minor sons as the principal actors?

Having long since purged their own community of illicit mantraps, at a great cost and by herculean effort, it would seem that the people of Neche were clearly entitled to a full and complete immunity from the evils attendant upon the maintenance of institutions of that class at Gretna,

continued

bought the Wiens & Co. Lumberyard and turned the buildings into a large stable and sample room. A. P. Shettle left Gretna as did the teacher, Florence Nixon. The latter was replaced by Miss Armstrong from Clearwater. The former had been in partnership with Otto Schultz.

Henry J. Wiens planned to start up in the lumber business again, this time at Lockwood, Saskatchewan. Others moving west included John Miller and Peter Loeppky. Mr. Loeppky auctioned off everything in the pool hall which he had operated and started life anew in Waldeck, Saskatchewan.

Robert Smith, son of Alexander Smith, also began a new life in the fall of 1907. Robert married Rose LaPlaunt in a quiet ceremony in the Smith home, conducted by the Rev. Ross of the Presbyterian Church. The public was invited to a recital in honour of the new couple. The Town Hall was full and everyone present enjoyed the concert. The November 12th festivities were a success; not until the moving pictures came to town in December was there anything with which it could be compared. The Town Hall was all abuzz again when Rube Allyn came to hold forth on a number of subjects. The critics were most impressed with his imitations, especially of a "Syllivan Sylvester" Fight. 100

Hockey Hits Town

Otto Schultz was elected to the mayor's post for 1908 and Robert Chambers, J. D. Miller, Jacob E. Toews and Charles Wahn were elected to Council. As far as the young people were concerned, the important elections of that winter happened in a different arena, namely the Gretna skating rink. A new hockey club started to take advantage of the magnificent facility which now boasted "two thousand candle-power gasoline lamps which are doing excellent service". Officers elected were: F. Salzwedel, captain; K. Schimnowski, secretary; with committee members H. Miller, A. Ewert and A. Whidden. "The team is ready, colors red and grey. They will hold an hour

practice two or three times a week.''101 Winter sporting activities were gaining momentum in this border village. Curlers kept busy every night of the week during a bonspiel hosted during the Christmas holidays.

Morals Questioned

The festive spirit was tragically marred that Christmas by the murder of Arthur LeClaire by his friend, James O'Brien. The Neche affair spilled across the border when the Neche Chronotype editor lashed out at the bars and saloons in Gretna who had permitted the sixteen year old murderer to drink himself into a stupor. The murder took place while the young O'Brien was intoxicated and grew out of a quarrel the two had on their way back from Gretna.

One of Otto Schultz's first acts as Gretna's new mayor was to respond to the editorial in the January 4, 1908 Chronotype which laid the blame for the LeClair tragedy squarely on the shoulders of the immoral Gretna community, which had provided that "Fatal Glass of Beer": "If you have a case against a man in our midst, fight it out with him, but don't besmirch a whole community whose record for over 30 years show its people are loyal and law abiding. 102 The incident may have been a topic of conversation for some time, but it did not dampen the social life of sports enthusiasts. P. J. Friesen entertained members of the curling club to an oyster supper at the rejuvenated Anglo-American Hotel, early in January. A grand masquerade carnival was held at the Gretna rink, with good prizes offered for the best costumes. Participation from Neche at both functions helped normalize relationships between neighbours.

The Neche Chronotype did not stop doing business with Gretna, despite its scathing attacks on the moral fibre of that community. The February 1st edition reported that:

Gretna's newspaper was printed at Neche this week. The German paper "Der Rheinlaender"

[consists of] eight pages all line print. The foreman of the newspaper is Mr. Hauben. He speaks next to no English. He is a printer of 13 years experience.

February 6, 1908:

Godfrey Coblentz went to Winnipeg with a view to purchase a newspaper press on which to print **Der Rheinlaender**. The press he got was again unsatisfactory and it was again printed at the **Chronotype**. ¹⁰³

Musical Chairs

Frustrations with the equipment, coupled with the retirement of his father, Adolphe Coblentz, helped Godfrey Coblentz decide that the newspaper business was not for him. The printing press was sold to Rev. Benjamin Ewert, and Godfrey took over the family store in late spring of 1908. Other changes in the Gretna business world that spring saw the Juellf warehouse opened up again by R. S. Bean when he took over the Deering Binder agency. The banks were playing "musical chairs" while trying to determine which commercial centre best suited their interests — Gretna or Altona. The Bank of Montreal bought out the Union Bank of Canada in Gretna and the Union Bank bought out the Bank of Montreal in Altona.

Doctors in Gretna were also moving around, first, with Dr. Stewart of Winnipeg filling in for Dr. F. D. McKenty while the latter was on vacation, and then with the arrival of Dr. A. J. Schilstra who opened up Gretna's second medical practice that spring. Dr. McKenty was probably not too worried and had his mind on other things anyway when he discovered, upon returning from vacation that he was to be a father later in the year!

School Rebuilt

Gretna observers keenly watched the progress of construction of the new MEI in Altona, noting that the building was going up very slowly due to lack of funds. The same observers were pleased when construction of the new school got under way later that spring. The

foundation was finished by the middle of June and construction progressed quickly through the summer months. The Gretna project did not seem to encounter the same funding problems experienced by its Altona counterpart and the school was planned to be in session that fall. Tensions ran high that summer between the Gretna and Altona school faction. The MEI refused to consider the possibility of splitting assets with the new group which had been organized at Plum Coulee that spring. When the MEI dismantled and moved the old school building, supporters in Gretna considered the action little short of outright theft. The obstinacy of the Altona school supporters helped motivate the Gretna faction to contribute more generously and work more diligently in the rebuilding of the Gretna school which now was called the Mennonite Collegiate Institute. The new school building was situated on several acres of land on the northwest corner of town, purchased from Alexander Smith for \$600.104 People living in Gretna took pride in the new school building which was influenced by the architecture of other educational structures in Winnipeg and Brandon. The threestory structure was dedicated in November by Bishop Hoeppner, H. H. Ewert and Benjamin Ewert. The optimism at the dedication ceremonies was not without foundation. Although the Gretna school was not as big as the Altona school, it was fully "modern", including a boiler and steam heating system. The optimism was also based somewhat, on the fact that H. H. Ewert was reinstated as inspector of Mennonite schools by the Manitoba Government. 105 The situation among Mennonite schools had deteriorated since Ewert's dismissal in 1903 and the number of district schools had in fact, declined. The Conservative government, which had dismissed Ewert in 1903, was re-elected in 1907 but had been unable to defeat Valentine Winkler in the Rhineland Constituency. Thus, the same administration which had fired Ewert rehired him.

continued on page 171

A Crying Evil . . . cont'd

which persist in maintaining their outlaw traffic to the lasting shame of that village and to the incalculable cost and inestimable detriment of our own.

The government of Manitoba has wisely enacted drastic statutes against abuses of this nature, and the fact that the same are being openly and flagrantly violated by the rumsellers of Gretna should, as a matter of self-protection against a repetition of the recently enacted tragedy, be in a most forcible manner — and at once — called to the attention of the provincial authorities, to the end that these dangerous nuisances may be effectually and speedily abated.

The LeClaire Murder

You take a drink or two, and if you're strong enough it may never do you harm.

You take a few more drinks, and the jovial spirit is aroused.

You take a few more and the lion in you roars for trouble.

So it was with Arthur LeClaire and James O'Brien of Neche.

They went to Canada, and overindulged in liquor. They came back to Uncle Sam's domain with their lion spirit aroused. LeClaire said he could lick three O'Briens, and O'Brien in his drunken state resented the drunken boast of his old-time friend.

And this trivial matter led to the terrible murder of Arthur LeClaire.

And that is not all. Two homes in Neche are blasted. A youth who might have amounted to a great deal in this life, will spend a greater part, if not all of that life in a prison.

One shudders as he fully realizes what can result from a little drunken celebration.

Fathers and mothers, where are your children tonight?

- Evening Press

Neche Chronotype January 4, 1908

The Runaway Schoolhouse

I think that the most ridiculous trip of any was when our M.C.I. building decided one night to shake the dust of Gretna off its feet, and start to wander off. That was such a delightful adventure it would have made a most humorous story for the pen of a Stephen Leacock.

Gretna was for a long time the only worthwhile town serving that large prosperous reserve stretching 50 miles along the U.S.A. border. The nearest larger towns were Morden to the west 30 miles away, and Emerson on the Red River 18 miles to the east at the foot of the Pembina Hills. Both were situated on the edge of the West Reserve. Towards the south was the U.S.A. already well settled with thriving farms, villages and towns, and 12 miles to the north was Rosenfeld, hardly a town at all, that was situated in a poor farming district where they could only get brackish water, the land was low, but it was situated at the junction of the great Northern railway going south to St. Paul and the Line going west to the lovely rolling farming country west of the Pembina Hills. This was mostly settled by English speaking farmers who had come from Ontario, etc. It was a beautiful district — not as rich as the alluvial plain, the lake bottom of the prehistoric Lake Agassiz, which the Mennonites had for their reserve. This was said to be the best farm land in the whole world, no stones, inexhaustible rich humus soil.

However, this condition could not last forever. After a while other towns sprang up — Winkler and Plum Coulee on the Western Railways between Rosenfeld and Morden, and Altona immediately became a thriving little community. It was right in the heart of this prosperous farming country. They were enterprising people who settled there, and good schooling for their children was essential. But it was not too long before they desired more than a grade school. They wanted a good High School for their growing children. Now, they had to be sent to Gretna to the M.C.I. as boarders. Why not, they reasoned, why not move the M.C.I. to Altona where it would be located right in the heart of the Reserve and it would be closer to a lot of people. But there were snags. For one thing, Prof. Ewert did not want to leave Gretna, and he and the M.C.I. were almost sunonymous. The Gretna people had had all the early struggles of starting it, and it had raised the school status of the town — anyway it was their baby — the two were indivisibly interwoven. Also, the students preferred

Gretna as a centre to Altona. Gretna had the stimulus of the U.S.A., already well settled and with many advantages that we didn't have. Just about a good mile away was the town of Neche, and half a mile to the south, just across the border was the Pembina River with its beautifully wooded banks, picnic grounds and lovely walks. It had lovely old homes and was well treed. Altona was new on the bald prairie. Much could be said for both sides. There were meetings and meetings and nothing came of it.

So—one morning during summer vacation time, when my Father, being mayor, was taking his early morning walk about the town to see how things were going and the places being kept, lo and behold, the M.C.I. building had disappeared. He could not believe his eyes. How could that have happened? But there it was — an empty basement without any debris such as a fire would have left. It had simply wandered off.

I'll never forget when he came into the house about 8 o'clock to share a second breakfast with Mother and the children. He told Mother, "Our school is gone."

"What?" she said. "I did not hear the fire bell ring the alarm. How could it burn down so quietly without anyone hearing anything?"

"It did not burn down. It has gone — walked off," he said. "It is standing about a mile out of town on its way to Altona."

Well, everybody was most surprised and indignant. What now?

"Will you go and get it back?" Mother asked.

"No," said Father. "No, I have thought about it. It would cause a lot of complications. They have pulled it just beyond the Gretna town-site border. There would be legal problems. And — besides, it would give rise to a terrible row and cause a lot of ill feeling. I think we will just let them have it. They really need a High School and it was getting too small for us anyway. We would have to add to it very soon. So now they have taken it away we shall say and do nothing and simply let them have it. We'll go and build ourselves a new building from the ground up — the kind we really want." And so they did.

What the Altona fellows had done was simply to come during the night, jack up the school, (it was a white frame building), put it on rollers, attach horses to it and drive off with it. To their advantage it had been situated a bit out of town on the north side towards Altona. They must have worked very quietly though not to rouse any of the Gretna people.

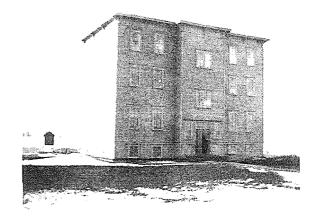
So what Father suggested was exactly what happened. By fall we had a lovely up to date new school building with our Prof. Ewert and our old teaching staff. The Altona people managed to get some bilingual teachers from the States and everyone was satisfied. After a couple of years though, their building did burn down and was never rebuilt.

The Gretna M.C.I., quite an institution by now, is still flourishing. But Gretna as a commercial centre has been by-passed and is quite an insignificant little village.

But it must have been embarrassing to the Altona-ites when the day after their enterprising theft so many of the Gretna people seemed to have business in that direction. They would stop, say "Good morning," give some kindly advice or even offer a helping hand. Never a word of resentment or censure, that was the motto. And was it ever a field day for the youngsters to go and watch their school being taken away.

Well, such were the ups and downs of small town life. I wish I were Stephen Leacock to do it justice.

Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert memoirs



MCI built in 1908 at the corner of Mary St. and Schellenberg Ave. P#624

Some of the MCI optimism must have spilled over to the rest of the Gretna ratepayers. The Village built a fire hall and mounted a bell in its tower to summon the volunteer firefighters when needed. The bell was to serve a dual purpose in that it also announced a curfew for Gretna's young people. The ratepayers started talk about building a new public school in the Village. The building currently in use was too small and difficult to keep warm in winter. Yet, things could not have been too terrible as far as the quality of education was concerned, since Bathgate teachers paid Gretna a visit during the 1908-1909 school year. They came to observe classes in both the Public School and the MCI. 106 Other visitors from "across the line" received quite a different kind of welcome. That was not too surprising because they were big rats, of the four-legged variety. Der Nordwesten correspondent reported heavy damage in the elevators and storage bins in Gretna

although the village cats had a good time. Gretna officials did everything possible to discourage this unwelcome migration.

Rats in such numbers might be reminiscent of darker days in other countries, but they did not affect the modern pace of commerce in Gretna. The mill was extremely busy that winter and J. R. Hoffman expanded his business, telephone exchange and post office by removing the wall between his business and the former Schimnowski harness shop. Benjamin Ewert moved his book store next door to the Bank of Montreal, into the former Miller store, and Ludwig Erk was back in town running the drug store. Otto Schultz sold his store to the Coblentz brothers in the winter of 1908-1909 and moved to Winnipeg. After the Coblentz store opened its doors in the new location, the old store was sold to August Schimnowski & Son who were back in the harness making business before winter was out.



MEI students and teachers in 1900. Sitting: Mr. Moseman and Mr. H. H. Ewert. P#887

Voice of the Mennonites

As announced in **Der Mitarbeiter** previously, the new Mennonite Collegiate Institute punctually opened its initial year of instruction under the capable leadership and principal of many years, H. H. Ewert, and Mr. Jacob Braun who has taught a number of years in the old school. The opening began with fourteen students, as well as the presence of several directors, living nearby, and some friends of the school. Ten of these fourteen students are preparing to write their third class teacher's examination. Eventually more students came to attend raising the total to eighteen students. Some have registered and some have shown interest raising the total yet expected by 22; these will begin their studies on November 23.

The teachers are very pleased with the present group of students who, they say, are hard workers and gifted. The parents can rest assured that the sacrifice they make to provide a sound education for their young people will be much appreciated later in life. Last but not least, "Menno's voice" could still be respected and honored and held high, despite the undeniable fact that today we find much "chaff" among the Mennonites of our community.

Our male choir, consisting of lovers of singing, in both English and German, has begun it s regular practices again with H. H. Ewert as director.

> Greeting, H. H. Hamm Gretna, the 10th of October, 1908

> > Der Mitarbeiter November, 1908

Gretna Grays Get a Grilling

The Gretna baseball team played its first game on Thursday and incidentally suffered its first defeat. Altona's fast nine, playing on its home grounds, put it all over the Grays. The score was 3 to 1 in Gretna's favor until the fourth inning, when the Altonas got busy with the stick, and from that time to the end of the game we occupied the same relative position as a tin can tied to a dog's tail, with Altona acting the part of the decorated canine. The score was 11 to 3. Considering the chilly weather, both teams played good ball. Altona's speedy little pitcher, Charlie Fraelich, was the principal factor in Gretna's defeat. He had our boys at his mercy throughout, and allowed but few hits. Ike Coblentz umpired the game to the satisfaction of all. The teams lined up as follows:

Gretna		Altona
S. Miller	catcher	J. Schimnowski
Sheedy	pitcher	Fraelich
W. Schimnowski .	first	J. Schwartz
	second	
Ellis	third	Olmstead
Kachler	short	Tennant
Long	left field	P. Schwartz
Erskins	center field	Coblentz
C. Schimnowski .	right field	Wodlinger .

Neche Chronotype May 11, 1907

Early Lutheran Families 1904–1913

Births and Parents

John Sheppard, Sept. 18, 1904 to Conrad and Emilie (Weiss) Sheppard; Marie Catherine Schweitzer, June 15, 1905 to Conrad and Elizabeth (Miller) Schweitzer; **John Hampel**, May 8, 1905 to Albert and Pauline (Kuntz) Hampel; Adolfine Wonnek, May 6, 1905 to Gustav and Pauline (Schmidke) Wonnek; John Philip Weiss, June 6, 1905 to Johan Phil. & Barbara (Geres) Weiss; Gus Muth, July 24, 1905 to Michael and Emilie (Gurnewald) Mut; Barbara Anna Geres, Sept. 11, 1905 to Peter and Christina (Herman) Geres; Anna Eliz. Weiss, June 3. 1906 to Johan Phil. and Barbara (Geres) Weiss; Eliz. Geres, Oct. 10, 1906 to Valentine and Pauline Geres; Conrad Sheppard, Nov. 15, 1906 to Conrad and Emilie (Weiss) Sheppard; **Dora Sylvia Kire**, Aug. 7, 1906 to Christof and Caroline Kiere; Rudolf Busch, Jan. 9, 1906 to Johan Busch; Joseph Alexander Pieper, June 19, 1906 to Carl and Christine (Cameron) Pieper; Anna Hampel, June 5, 1907 to Albert and Pauline (Kuntz) Hampel;

continued



Gretna Firehall built around 1910 on Hespeler Ave. Taken in 1968. P#512

Mayoral Mudslinging

Otto Schultz's departure left the mayor's seat vacant. Gretna voters were not used to electing their mayor. They were also not used to the mudslinging which developed in the heat of the first true mayoralty race in December 1908. Chris Pieper and Henry Ritz were both nominated and both let their names stand. They had come out to Western Canada as close friends, settling in Gretna in the early 1880's. They had found themselves on opposing political cards through provincial and federal elections since that time. Der Nordwesten correspondent does not elaborate on the issues during this election, but does suggest that less name calling would result in greater respect for the position of mayor. Despite the negative effects of the election, the same correspondent reports that "because Gretna has kept up with the times, in keeping its stores up-to-date, many people outside Gretna come to shop and do business in town". 107

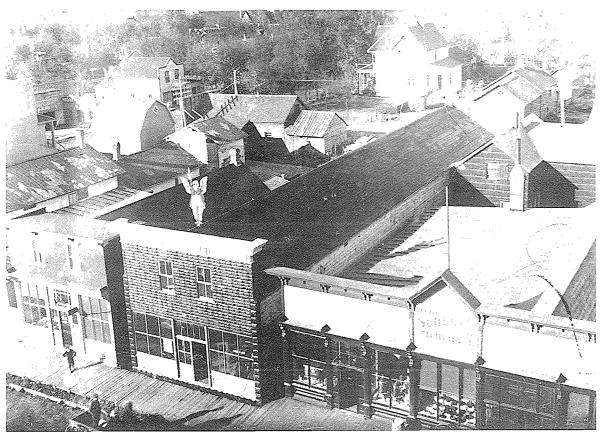
Gretna ratepayers elected Chris Pieper as their mayor for 1909. Council members chosen to serve with him were Ludwig Erk, Charles Wahn, Hugh Street and George Spenst. Council named H. F. Stirk as Secretary-Treasurer and appointed Gretna's new doctor, Dr. Schilstra, as Health Officer. The Council's first meeting set a date for a public meeting at the fire hall to organize the fire brigade. It also set a number of committees including public works, which would supervise street lights and sidewalk construction, and public health which would see Dr. Schilstra's appointment overturned and Dr. McKenty re-appointed. Other appointments in 1909 were Louis Ziegler as poundkeeper and caretaker of the fire hall, Council chambers and jail; P. H. Loewen as tax assessor and W. J. Briden as lamplighter. Council was petitioned by its ratepayers that year with a request for immediate action to give the Village a new public school. The new cement sidewalks were appreciated by the citizens of Gretna who saw them as a sign of progress, but a new school would prove even more important to the growth and development of the community. 108

Upstaged By Circus

Although the young students at the Public School probably welcomed the news of a new school, they were taken up with more exciting events in the summer of 1909. The Gretna junior baseball team was in fine form again, defeating its Neche and Altona opponents with the same consistency they had shown in the previous year. The senior team, lead by the pitching of Tim Sheedy, was also hot that year defeating Walhalla 20 to 2 and Neche 3 to 2 at Gretna's Empire Day celebrations. The real excitement came to town with the circus that spring. The one–day event promised to be the biggest show

to arrive since the coming of the railroad, and it overshadowed other important moments in Gretna's history that year. It overshadowed the news that the Rural Municipality of Rhineland was offering young hunters 1¢ for each gopher tail delivered to the Municipal Office. It overshadowed the Lutheran ladies' ice cream social held next door to the Charles Pieper home. This social was a follow-up to the joint picnic which the Evangelical Lutheran and St. Paul's Lutheran women organized on July 1st at John Otten's park. Albert Rosenau and Henry Latozke were singled out for their hard work in making the event a successful one.

Co-operation among the local Lutherans was important that year. A struggle was emerging among the different Synods which had established missions on the prairies. The Manitoba and the Missouri Synods both laid claim to the Gretna membership, resulting in a split which produced the Evangelical Lutheran group. This group met in the former Baptist Church which had been bought by Chris Pieper from the retiring Baptist minister, the Rev. Hansen. The Baptist congregation had been getting too small to keep going and its membership was absorbed by the different German churches in Gretna. A third Lutheran Synod,



Schultz General Store. 1908 fire map identifies these Seventh St. buildings: (R. to L.) Schultz General Store, Implement Shop, Dr. McKenty's office and drugstore, and a Mennonite Church. P#1247

Early Lutheran Families . . . cont'd

Evelyn Marie Miller, Oct. 4, 1905 to Edward and Clarissa (Ritz) Miller; Sylvia Schweitzer, May 16, 1907 to Conrad and Elizabeth (Miller) Schweitzer; Johannes **Penner**, June 24, 1907 to Lorenz and Barbara (Kuhlnaum) Penner; Adolf Ferdinand Gross, July 30, 1907 to Rudolph and Caroline (Popp) Gross; Lydia Helen Funk, Dec. 24, 1903 to August and Bertha (Machdanz) Funk; Anna Bertha Funk, May 2, 1907 to August and Bertha (Machdanz) Funk; Helena Bertha Funk, Oct. 23, 1906 to August and Bertha (Machdanz) Funk; Anna Marie Gross, Feb. 4, 1908 to Friedrich and Maria Gross; Reinhard Carl Edward Pieper, Jan. 30, 1908 to Carl and Christine (Cameron) Pieper; John Funk, July 13, 1908 to August and Bertha (Machdanz) Funk; Lorenz *Victor Rietze*, July 7, 1908 to E. O. and Maria (Buschau) Rietze; Anne Kiere, July 16, 1908 to Christof and Caroline Kiere; Bertha Busch, Aug. 21, 1908 to Valentine and Catherine (Popp) Busch; Anna Eliz. Gross, Sept. 26, 1908 to Daniel and Philippine Gross; Karl Friedrich Schimnowski, Oct. 16, 1908 to Johan and Wilhelmina (Winkler) Schimnowski; Erdmann Friesen, Feb. 1, 1909 to Peter and Albertine (Figus) Friesen; Peter and Cornelius (twins) Aug. 16, 1906 to Peter and Albertine (Figus) Friesen; Pauline Hampel, Aug. 22, 1909 to Albert and Pauline (Kuntz) Hampel; Mildred Annabelle Pieper, June 4, 1910 to Charles and Christina (Cameron) Pieper; Albert Baber, Oct. 13, 1910 to Johann and Maria (Boehlke) Baber; Jacob Bernhard Eppler, Nov. 6, 1910 to Jacob and Margaretha (Popp) Eppler; John Otto Funk, Jan. 31, 1911 to August and Bertha (Machdanz) Funk; Albert Ulrich, March 25, 1911 to Carl and Maria (Gaetz) Ulrich; Wilhelm Adolf Kiere, June 26, 1911 to Christof and Caroline Kiere; Adele Rose Eppler, Jan. 26, 1912 to Jacob and Margaretha (Popp) Eppler; Anna Schweitzer, Nov. 16, 1912 to Philipp and Katie Schweitzer; Wm. Otto Funk, Feb. 4, 1913 to August and Bertha (Machdanz) Funk; John Eppler, May 12, 1913 to Jacob and Margaretha (Popp) Eppler; Chosen at random from the Lutheran Church registry.

> St. Pauls' Lutheran Church Register, Gretna Rosenfeld Lutheran Church

CIRCUS DAY

IN

Gretna

ONE DAY ONLY

MONDAY, JUNE 1411

CAMPBELL BROS. CONSOLIDATED SHOWS

Circus - Museum - Menagerie Hippodrome

The Only Big Circus Coming This Season

can	Transa Linear on Trans	500
500	Finest Horses on Earth	500
42	Double Length Railway Cars	42
20	World's Famous Bare Back Riders	20
40	European and American Aerialists	40
30	Lady and Gentleman Acrobats	30
19	Happy Jolly Funny Clowns	19
17	Performing Elephants	17
Do	able Menagerie Hippodrome Ra	ces
700	People All Together	700

Special Feathre THE MARVELOUS RENELLO

Will positively appear at each performance, turning a complete somersault on a bicycle while leaping the gap

One price of admission takes you all the way through. Two performances daily—rain or shine. Afternoon show, 2 p. m.; night show, 8 p. m. Doors open one hour earlier.

Blg Sircel Parade al 10:30 a. m

Neche Chronotype, June 12, 1909.



August Funk, lamp-lighter and constable. Firehall in background. P#1002

the Ohio Synod, in 1909 began work in Neche where Lutheran membership had been steadily on the increase. While the Evangelical Lutherans rejoined St. Paul's within a year's time, the competition from the other side of the border would eventually prove too great for the St. Paul's congregation. 109 Meanwhile, the Lutheran congregation was to remain active in Gretna for some years.

Other church news of that year dealt with the seventh annual Conference of Mennonites in Edenburg and the first annual meeting of the MCI, both of which took place in July. Both reported considerable progress and H. H. Ewert was able to report that the MCI had more than held its own against the competition in Altona. 110 Father Prud'homme had served as Gretna's St. Francis of Assisi non-resident priest since 1908. He was relieved of his Gretna responsibilities late in the year 1909 when Gretna Catholics welcomed Rev. Father Schultz as their parish priest. Like Prud'homme before him, Schultz served the congregation from St. Boniface, staying with the Krause family whenever he came to minister to the Catholic members in Gretna. 111 The Home Harvest Festival in the Presbyterian Church and the other annual church event Gretna had come to look for, the Lutheran Sunday School program on Christmas Eve, provided the regular opportunity for sharing. As usual, they were well attended and maintained their importance to people of all faiths, although they found themselves in competition with secular activites that year.

The Literary and Debating Society was active that winter. Dr. F. D. McKenty was elected the Society's president. The popular doctor entered another Gretna debating arena by taking on the duties of mayor for 1910. Dr. McKenty would be very busy that year. He was probably relieved to give over the Health Officer's responsibilities to Dr. A. J. Schilstra. His biggest headache that year proved to be the building of the Public School. The Village of Gretna had issued a school levy in 1909 which was intended to raise the necessary monies. The

project initiated in 1910 proved much more ambitious than had been anticipated. Consequently there were delays and the school was not ready as soon as had been intended. 112

Delays were also felt by farmers coming to Gretna's mill to get their wheat ground. The steam engine blew a cylinder during the busiest time in the harvest season, resulting in weeks of business lost by the Friesen mill. The mill had been busier than usual as business picked up. The number of immigrants passing through town had also increased ever since the second railway had been operational. Mr. Martin Salzwedel saw West Gretna as offering the brightest future and moved his German House close to the West Gretna station. The Dominion Government opened an office in the relocated Salzwedel hostelry by the end of the winter, hiring O. J. Gould to manage it for them. The Anglo-American maintained its reputation as the best place to stay in Gretna. Its expansion and refurbishing made it the most prestigious of the three hotels. Its basement bowling alley presented itself as an ideal place for even the ladies to gather. A ladies' bowling club was organized at the Anglo-American, as was a "Practical Women's Club". These clubs met in private homes, but they also organized the occasional social at the Anglo-American. Gretna's menfolk probably wished the women had been a little less organized when the men's bowling league suffered its first defeat at the hands of the women in March 1910. The women still served them lunch! The Anglo-American was also the scene of a farewell banquet for J. P. Holmstead, who was being transferred to Moose Jaw by the CPR. Dr. McKenty chaired the proceedings and Ludwig Erk and Godfrey Coblentz made a presentation on behalf of the people of Gretna. Holmstead would miss the dances and social life, but was probably relieved to get away from the complaint from the CPR engineers who were not impressed with their new bunkhouse. It was next door to the quarantine barns, also called the "stockvards''!

Signs of the times that year came in the form

of a generous donation by P. J. Friesen to the Gretna Ball Club. Friesen donated eight acres of the old race track to be used by all Gretna sports clubs. Friesen also fenced in the new ball park and put up some bleachers. The Gretna ball team invited Neche to help them celebrate the new park with a few friendly games.

The Gretna Tennis Club also benefited from the Friesen generosity, receiving two courts behind the curling rink for its more than forty members. Victoria Day baseball scores in Altona were: Gretna 15, Altona 13, Neche 5, Gretna 1; Neche 10, Altona 6. It is not known how long Gretna's offer of "no quarrelling" was honoured that summer. Gretna played a set of games in their new park in which they narrowly defeated Neche 4 to 3 both times. 133

New School Built

Village Council and its school trustees had other matters to worry about by the time the baseball season was over. The day-to-day maintenance and policing of the Village was well looked after by August Funk but the thorny issue of Public School construction was



Nora Ellis Hayward, Marie Schilstra, and Dr. Alexander John Schilstra. Circa 1910. P#402



Anna (McConnell) Schilstra joined her husband in practicing medicine. P#405

A Busy Life

Gretna, Manitoba December 20, 1909

Dear Brother:

Maybe you have already waited a long time for a letter from me and I never got around to writing you. The newly organized Society (Verein) has come forward energetically for the continuance of the school, yet they have left the actual work to me. I have to collect the funds, recruit members, look for students, and take care of just about everything. On top of that there are all kinds of requests to officiate at silver weddings, weddings, and funerals, requests one cannot very well refuse. That is why hardly any time remains for a friendly letter.

During the past summer I found no time to drive to Langdon. In any case, it is too late now to make any demands on the Bartel estate. You should have let them know immediately after the death of Mrs. Bartel. For the time being I will retain the notes here.

With my collections, I have come close to \$3,000.00. We still need \$150.00. In outside help, I have received \$100.00 from Peter Jansen, Nebraska, and \$65.00 from friends in Newton, Kansas, through C. F. Classen.

Our school enrolment this year is little better than last year, but still not as good as the prospects were last fall. It has happened that this or that prospective student could not come for one reason or another. In Altona they are supposed to have a similar enrolment but they achieve that only by reducing the public school to one classroom. In outside areas they do not find much acceptance. The Mennonite Brethren Church sends their children to us and so does the Holdemann Church. For Altona the enthusiasm is mostly in its immediate area.

Their finances were in very poor shape and we expected the collapse of the undertaking in one or two years. But the Altona people are politicians. They have managed to 'lead the government around by the nose' so that they get support of maybe \$1,500.00 annually. This is in the form of a salary for the 'school organizer' Johann Hiebert, who, of course, does not need to do anything but accept the salary and turn it over to the school treasury. In this way they will be able to get along a bit better, at least for the present.

Balzer is being feted. Sunday evenings he lectures about the millenium, about the gospel, the Book of Exodus, etc. But even in those circles many are becoming suspicious of him when he says that all sickness is of the devil and when a small child dies he says that the devil has strangled it.

H. H. Ewert letters, MHC

no further ahead than it ever had been. On October 1, 1910, the trustees met to review the building project. Student count was high and the school was cramped. Something needed to be done. It was a stormy meeting, with the question of location as contentious as it had been for the MEI. When the dust settled it was decided that the school should be built on the east side of the CPR tracks on Friesen's property, near the section house. The trustees agreed that the CPR would be asked to whistle at the school crossings and that it should ring its

bells and use air brakes. The motion to locate the school on the east side of town was introduced by Robert Chambers, conditional "on the lack of further complications presenting themselves before construction" was to get under way.

The controversy surrounding the Public School was far from over when the October 1st meeting was adjourned. In fact, the controversy would continue well past the time the new school opened more than a year later. The MCI and the MEI controversy was also heating



Gretna Baseball Team, 1912. Phil Schuppert, W. Schimnowski, A. Ewert, Ed Friesen, Tim Sheedy, Howard Murphy, C. Ziegler, Buster Tennant, Pete Friesen, James Briden and Fritz Holtzmann. P#1294

up again in the winter of 1910. The Altona MEI had cast aspersions in the direction of the Gretna MCI and its board in a brief summary article included in their first annual catalogue. The MCI Board considered the statement of facts erroneous and misleading and prepared a rebuttal which detailed the history of the Gretna-Altona conflict from the MCI Board's perspective. 114 The establishment of a Normal School in Morden, under the tutelage of Inspector Weidenhammer, was also viewed with disfavour by Gretna supporters. Weidenhammer was seen as an agent of assimilation by educators such as H. H. Ewert. Furthermore, Gretna's Nordwesten correspondent returned from the official opening of the Morden Normal School with the disquieting report that the Gretna Normal School was misrepresented by speakers who sought to discredit the work which had been done over the years. 115

Changing Doctors

Dr. F. D. McKenty decided against seeking a second term as mayor. For some time he had contemplated furthering his studies, and decided not to wait any longer. He had already found a replacement for his practice, Dr. H. J. Friesen, who came to Gretna from Mountain Lake, Minnesota. Doctors James and Francis D. McKenty had served Gretna for two decades through some of its most difficult times. The photographic interests of Dr. F. D. McKenty have produced some of our best records of those years. The farewell banquet for the McKenty family was held on December 31, 1910. Then Dr. Friesen was on his own. By the time he had arrived in 1910, Dr. Schilstra and wife had left for Steinbach. The Schilstras departed at a time when they did not consider Gretna big enough for two doctors. They were also looking for a practice which would permit both husband and wife to work alongside each other, since they were both trained to be doctors. In Gretna, Mrs. Schilstra had been "underemployed", although she had assisted her husband whenever possible. 116

When Dr. James McKenty first arrived, Gretna was not incorporated and a new German Mennonite Institute was just getting its start. When Dr. Francis D. McKenty packed up to do postgraduate work in the United States, Gretna had two railway lines and a new school. And six new automobiles! Chris Pieper had purchased a new McLaughlin-Buick touring car in the summer of 1909 with licence #575. Others who were licenced in 1910 were: H. P. Friesen, #596; J. D. Pierson, #1300; Henry Ritz, #1342; W. Briden, #1343; and W. J. Hellofs, #1388.

Robert Chambers took over the Mayor's duties upon McKenty's departure. Councillors G. Coblentz, G. Spenst, A. Smith and C. Pieper got off to a stormy start at their very first meeting. Charles Wahn was appointed as Secretary-Treasurer, replacing Harry Stirk who had held that post for a number of years. The new school building or more specifically, the lack of a new school building was the main item on the agenda during much of that year. By the middle of July, construction of the new brick and stone building was well under way with occupancy anticipated by September. The students of the Public School presented an evening of entertainment in the Gretna Hall to raise funds for the library in the new school. Inspector Weidenhammer, from Morden, was among the audience which was treated to songs, drills, dialogues and a humourous musical sketch entitled "Matromonee". 117 This entertainment was one of several social events which livened up life in Gretna that winter. The annual "bachelors ball" was held in February. This event consisted of dancing for those light of feet and card playing for those who fancied other risks. A midnight lunch was served and the evening's festivities did not wind up until the wee hours of the morning. A more edifying entertainment, also becoming an annual event, was the male choir and mixed choir programs under the direction of H. H. Ewert. The musical event was held on April 12th in Gretna's Presbyterian Church in spite of cold and stormy weather. The choirs drew their membership from the

DOMINION DAY i CELEBRATION i

FRIESEN'S PARK GRETNA, MANITOBA

SATURDAY, JULY 1ST, 1911

BASEBALL TOURNAMENT

FOR BASEBALL ALONE
First Price, \$75 Second Price, \$50 Third Price, \$25 \$150
First Fast Conference, at 10 to a.m.

FOOTBALL

ALTONA vs. GRETNA "A Good Day in a Good Town"

ATHLETIC SPORTS, FOOT RACES, ETC. . CAVALIER BAND IN ATTENDANCE

W. J. BRIDEN

All For One Price of Admission

E. B. ADAMS

VGA



Young people visiting in front of McKenty home around 1905. P#1113A

MCI as well as from the community. Like other "Saengerfests" (song festivals) in years to come, this one featured some of the worst spring weather imaginable. Despite the rotten weather, attendance was good.

August Funk was appointed town constable, in addition to his general responsibilities, in the summer of 1911. The Village took advantage of a Provincial Government grant which paid \$300 toward the salary of a town constable. This was the first recorded wage assistance, cost–sharing program in which the Village of Gretna participated.

Henry Loewen and Jacob Friesen from Halbstadt took over R. S. Bean's International Agency that summer, Fritz Hallman from Brunkild had opened a blacksmith shop in Franz Walter's former business, the Anglo-American had been sold to some Winnipeg interests, Gerhard Wiebe from Chortitz was brought in by Benjamin Ewert as printer's helper. H. A. Loewen and Jacob Friesen sold one of the first gasoline powered tractors to Mr.

Schellenberg from NeuAnlage; Chris Pieper went to Winnipeg to get a new 40 horsepower McLaughlin automobile; and a fire completely destroyed the International Harvester Machine Shop and attached livery barn.

Gretna's big news that fall, of course, was the opening of the new Public School on November 15. The **Neche Chronotype** November 18, 1911 provides us with this picture of the occasion:

New School Opened

The new and handsome school just completed here was formally opened by the minister of education, Hon Geo. R. Coldwell, Wednesday night. Together with the other representatives of the department who were present, he took occasion to refer to the work of the bilingual schools and all affirmed that, whatever else was taught in school, there was one thing needful for every child in the province, a working knowledge of the English language. The school is two stories, with four rooms, being an intermediate school, and was erected at a cost of \$20,000. There is a large basement, serving both an assembly hall and gymnasium, as may be required. All the appliances

are the most modern, and the general impression conveyed by the speakers was that it is the finest school of its kind in the province.

In declaring the school open Mr. Coldwell said that he saw only one fault, and that was the lack of more ground around the school. He advocated the purchase of several acres nearby as a playground for the children. He hoped the children would learn orderly habits in school and take pride in keeping it clean and tidy. Deputy Minister Fletcher, Inspector Weidenhammer, Mayor J. Tennant (Sorry reporter, believe it was Robert Chambers), and Chairman Stevenson, of the school board, gave addresses and several choruses were well rendered by the children under the leadership of Principal Martin. The boys also gave an excellent exhibition of physical drill. 118

The time capsule placed in the cornerstone of the new Gretna Public School contained the following record:

Local Officials

Bank of Montreal — R. A. Field
Agent for the Canadian Pacific Railway —
E. B. Hutchinson
Agent for the Midland Railway — M. Dunne
Population of the Village of Gretna — 550
Number of school children enrolled — 140

The above records have been certified correct and signed and sealed by R. Chamber, Mayor; and J. A. Stevenson; V.S., the Chairman of the School Board of the Village of Gretna; and by their instruction placed in a box enclosed and secured in the foundation wall of this school building, now building by the Harris Construction Company of Winnipeg, at contract for \$17500.00.

These records are deposited in this vault with current copies of the Daily Press on Coronation Day. The school children were each one presented with a souvenir Coronation Medal by their teachers. The celebration was in every way a marked success in the annals of the Village of Gretna in the Province of Manitoba.

We certify this to be correct and attached thereto our seals of office.

[signed] R. Chambers
Mayor
[signed] J. A. Stevenson
Chairman of School Board¹¹⁹

Coronation Day - Gretna, Manitoba

June 22nd, 1911

His Majesty King George V and his wife Queen Mary were crowned to-day in Westminster Abbey, London, England in the presence of millions of their loyal subjects from all parts of the world.

The King — George V, by the Grace of God, of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and of the British Dominions beyond the Seas, King, Defender of the Faith, Emperor of India.

His Majesty was born June 3rd, 1865. Married Queen Mary, July 6th, 1893. His son Edward, born June 23rd, 1894. Albert, born December 14th, 1895. Victoria, born April 25th, 1897. Henry, born March 31st, 1900. George, born December 20th, 1902, and John Francis Charles, born July 12th, 1905.

Dominion of Canada

Governor General of Canada. His Excellency the Right Honourable the Earl Grey, P.C., G.C.M.G., G.C.V.O.

Prime Minister — The Right Honourable Sir Wilfred Laurier, M.P., G.C.M.G. President of the King's Privy Council. Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition — Honourable Robert Laird Borden, M.P.

Province of Manitoba

Lieutenant-Governor, Province of Manitoba. His Honour, Sir Daniel Hunter McMillan, K.C.M.G.

Premier and President of Council, Honourable R. P. Roblin, M.P.P.

Minister of Education — Honourable Geo. R. Coldwell, K.G., M.P.P.

Deputy Minister of Education — Robert Fletcher.

Member of the House of Commons (Dominion) for this district (Lisgar) W. H. Sharpe; M.P.

Member of the Provincial Legislative Assembly for this district (Rhineland) V. Winkler, M.P.P.

Port of Gretna Dominion Officials

Collector of Customs — T. J. Mather

Customs Officers — H. S. Bean

M. Salzwedel

Quarantine Inspector — J. A. Stevenson, V.S.

Immigration Officer — O. J. Gould

Post Master - J. R. Hoffman

Assistant - J. L. Hoffman

Provincial Officials

County Court Judge for the Southern Judicial district, Honourable Corbet Locke. Police Magistrate, County Court Clerk, and Superintendent of Immigration — J. F. Tennant. Health Inspectors — D. F. McKenty, M.D. and H. J. Friesen, M.D.

Municipal Officials

Village Council — Mayor R. Chambers

Councillors — E. Ellis

C. Pieper

A. Smith

G. Spenst

School Board — Chairman J. A. Stevenson, V.S.

Trustees — R. Chambers

J. J. Kehler

Secretary Treasurer Council and School Board — C. Wahn

Gretna Public School Staff — Principal W. Martin

L. Erk, teacher of German

Assistants - Misses N. Horn

A. Krause

I. Wahn



The Schilstra Family

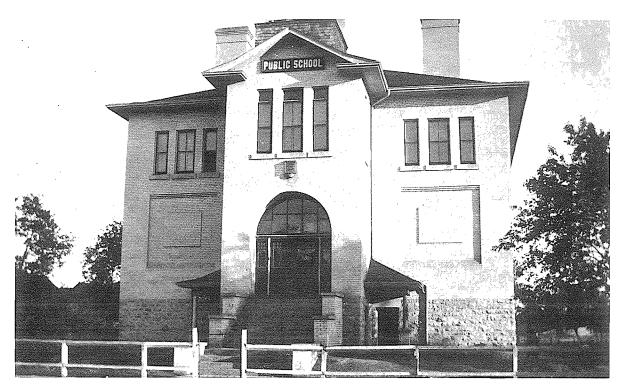
Where did they go to Medical School? Father studied for a year at the University of Michigan, then changed to Trinity College, Toronto, which later became affiliated with Toronto University. This was not because the studies didn't suit him at Michigan University. He found them extra good in laboratory work. But the family, his parents, brother and sister, had a notion to returning to the Netherlands and an American degree was not accepted there. A British was, in case he should return too.

Mother studied at the Ontario Medical College for Women, which was affiliated with Trinity College. Her ambition was to become a Medical Missionary in India. No, her forebearers were not rich or famous or noteworthy. But they were all Scottish — one a pioneer four times over, as many others have been — except for one branch on her Father's side, who were U.E. Loyalists from Long Island. What made mother and her sisters work was just plain poverty. It was either earn money or marry. Earning was desperately hard.

Their hometowns? Mother was born in Clinton, Ontario, but did not remember the town. She grew up in Wingham, and Teeswater. Then the family moved to Toronto. Father was born in Java, where his father was a missionary. When he was about 12 years old, they were recalled for health reasons and lived in Steenwyck, Netherlands. He had fond memories of both places. He was about 18 years old when his father was again transferred, this time to a Dutch pastorate in Rochester, N.Y. You know the rest.

My father . . . was ''not afraid of a professional partner who was also a good marriage partner.'' You hit the nail on the head when you put it that way. I am reminded of a classmate of father's, who said, he wouldn't care to marry a woman doctor because ''She knows too much.'' Evidently he belonged to a fraternity dedicated to keeping wives ignorant. But there were others like my father who had nothing to hide. And jealousy was utterly foreign to his nature. I recall a patient who asked to be transferred to Mother for third pregnancy because he was too rough. He asked, ''Is that the only reason?'' She assured him that it was and he didn't mind in the least. He was proud of mother.

continued



Gretna Public School on corner of Montcalm Ave. and 9th St. in 1911. P#1325

Not included in the time capsule was the listing of mechanics liens which the Harris Construction Company and some of its subcontractors placed on the new school until all bills were finally paid a few years later. The school ended up costing considerably more than the people of Gretna had thought it would, and it was **not** built on the east side of the CPR tracks. A change in thinking had taken place, the school was located closer to the west end of town and most children would not have to cross the railroad tracks to get to school.

Gretna seemed to settle down for a little less controversial time once the school was open. Townsfolk had endured another provincial election in the meantime, helping return Valentine Winkler in the Rhineland Constituency, although the Roblin Conservatives were again returned to the provincial house with a majority. Local elections had also not produced any change, returning Chambers as Mayor, and electing Chris Pieper, Alexander Smith, Edward Ellis, George Spenst and Ludwig Erk to Council.

First Rhodes Scholar

Gretna's pulse was just getting back to normal when news hit that Alfred Ewert, son of H. H. Ewert, had received the highest marks possible in the Province of Manitoba's university examinations conducted at Wesley College, and that he would be Manitoba's Rhodes Scholar at Oxford University in England for

1912. The Village of Gretna declared a special school holiday to honour the occasion. The festive mood remained well into summer that year and special attention was made of Alfred Ewert when he arrived home to visit his parents that spring. A ''mammoth celebration'' was planned for Gretna that July 1st, and organizers boasted that it was going to be Southern Manitoba's biggest celebration ever. Two bands were promised for the event which was to include a baseball tournament, races, jumping and other athletic activities. Gretna businesses, and even Neche businesses, shut down for this gala affair! 120

The Anglo-American passed into memory when Mr. Reddick from Winnipeg took over its management from the Rietze family, but only the name had changed. The hotel was now called the "King Edward" and it continued to offer its facilities to travellers, clubs for meetings and socials, and the bowling lanes played host to many tournaments. The highlight of the year for Mr. Reddick and the King Edward was the meeting of local Conservatives who came to the hotel to hear W. J. Tupper, son of Sir Charles Tupper, entertain in true Tory tradition.

Besides the regular truck and trade which kept the hotels in Gretna busy, a steady stream of immigrants added to the volume of business done. As many as 200 people passed through in any given month, bringing with them many sheep, horses and cattle. Many immigrants remained in Gretna while their livestock was processed by Dr. Stevenson through the quarantine facilities. 121 Much of the traffic was coming through the Great Northern & Manitoba Midland Railway station at West Gretna. This American railway company, owned by the James J. Hill family, provided particular ease of travel between Canada and the U.S. and did not really consider its business to be any different on the Canadian side of the border than in the United States. Consequently, the Company thought it perfectly normal to use only American citizens in the operation of its Gretna station. Village Council forwarded the following

resolution to the Provincial Government to protest this practice:

Canadian Content Demanded

Whereas we the Council of the Village of Gretna petition the Government that we protest the way the Great Northern "Midland" are at present running their railway crews and operating that section of their road in this part of the Province of Manitoba and desire the Parliament of Canada thru our member Mr. W. H. Sharpe to see that this matter is made right. And that the road with in the borders of Manitoba be operated by Canadians who shall live in Canada and not in U.S. as is the case at present time with the exception of a very few sectionmen and two or three station agents. This whole system is operated by and from the United States the dispatching is done from Grand Forks. If there are any repairs to telegraph or bridges or culverts these are done by men from the United States, men who were employed in Canada and refused to live in the States have been discharged by this System and we the Council and citizens and electors of this district have come to the conclusion that it is time this matter was looked into and investigated and put right. See that our town of Gretna got caught [got] what property belongs to it. Such as Round House. Also that the men employed in Canada live and make their homes in the Country in which they are earning their living. Signed and sealed on behalf of the citizens and Council of the Village of Gretna. 122

In other Council business that year, a bylaw was passed prohibiting the dumping of manure and other garbage on the streets. August Funk was again appointed police constable, more cement sidewalks were poured, and a bylaw was passed prohibiting the storage of large quantities of gasoline within the Village of Gretna boundaries. Special levies that year included a business tax of 12 mills and a school tax of 14 mills.

The Council for 1913 saw some changes take place. J. F. Tennant was acclaimed new mayor and George Spenst, Edward Ellis, Martin Salzwedel and Henry Ritz were elected as Council members. The new Council kept Charles Wahn

The Schilstra Family . . . cont'd

Mother as a forerunner in her profession? Perhaps it is incorrect to class Mother as a representative of her time. So far as I know, none of her classmates in medicine married. One became a well-known and much loved doctor in Toronto. Others had official jobs. Mother enjoyed her own office, her own work in the hospital where she was an intern. To obtain a licence to practise on her own, would have taken only another year. But she had promised to marry Father the year she left the hospital, so she kept her word. And somehow the year for the licence to practice never came. There were always the children to think of. It was never a career but a choice as to which came first. And she put family first.

So whatever medical work she did was technically under father's authority and as his substitute or assistant. He, in turn, made things as easy for her as he could, physically, that is. The work she knew as well as he.

Did my mother do obstetrics work and see primarily female patients? Of course there was no rule about this. A doctor is qualified to help persons of either sex and does so wherever help is needed. It is a matter of circumstance and the preference of the patient. However, that was the way things eventually worked out. At first, there was no nursing home in town. (Mother was not expected to make the 20 mile trips in 30 degree below weather). When there was a nursing home the patients could stay there and she could attend to them; as well as to the ones who lived in town. And it seemed most of the women preferred a woman doctor.

Why did my parents choose a home in Manitoba? They did not choose. It was fate. They tried living in a town near Father's folks. It was all work and no pay there. Father wanted to go to Edmonton. He thought there would be oil there. But his father, being careful of money, and thinking this an extravagant distance gave him only enough to reach Winnipeg. Here he found that his early schooling was an asset. He was fluent in German and at least able to communicate in the French language. So here he and mother stayed.

Yours truly, Marie Schilstra Steinbach, MB

Village of Gretna Archives

Fundraising for the Gretna Educational Institute Expansion

The fundraising drive for the purpose mentioned above is making satisfying progress. On March 11 the Board of Directors decided to build an annex as soon as they receive \$5,000. In one month this sum was realized. Such enthusiasm for enlarging the institute was beyond the highest expectations of the supporters of the undertaking. The Board no longer doubts that the required sum of \$8,000 will come in.

The students who undertook to raise \$1,500 have already attained their goal, and will easily reach the sum of \$2,000. The committee that invited ex-students to contribute has also realized a very satisfying response. Some earlier students receiving letters of invitation sent money by return mail, others a few days later. Many pledges have been made and accompanied with fine letters showing loyal support and creating heartfelt thankfulness.

Thus writes a former student from Herbert, Saskatchewan, "I am very thankful for the benefits I received from the institute, however, I feel I owe my support also to the Rosthern Junior College, therefore allow me to send you a cheque for \$25 plus a note for \$25 so that the sum of \$100 will be divided between the two. I hope that God will bless this small sum, and that the institute will grow and be a great blessing."

Another past student from Didsbury, Alberta writes, "I send you a note, enclosed in the letter. I am sorry that I cannot send you cash. I am presently not in a position to support you with cash, because my crop was hailed out this year leaving me no income; besides I had to buy all my seed and feed. I hope, however, with God's help to send you the promised amount plus by New Year."

Having experienced such splendid responses, would it not be proper to call on students that have not yet decided what they would like to do, to ''do likewise''? Wouldn't it be wonderful if the greatest portion of this building project could be paid for by the donations from these students?

continued

as Secretary-Treasurer but hired Peter H. Loewen as constable to replace August Funk who had taken on the caretaking duties in the new public school. In addition to the usual committee work, a new task presented itself to the Village Council. It had been asked for representation at meetings of the Manitoba Auto Club, which was developing meridian road routes for Southern Manitoba. Spenst and Salzwedel were appointed to represent Gretna. Another task for the new Council was getting a new post office and customs built. The Federal Government had set aside a grant of \$15,000 for this purpose. ¹²³

Year Looks Promising

The annual Gretna bachelors' ball had proven better than ever, moving pictures from the General Film Company of Winnipeg were shown in the Presbyterian Church almost every Thursday evening, and the summer sports clubs were beginning their organizational work. 124 The steady increase in enrollment at the MCI since 1910, demonstrated that the expansion of the physical plant had been a wise move. Completed by the beginning of the 1913 school year, the school had doubled in size, thanks to its many generous supporters. The trees and caragana bushes planted on the new school grounds by H. H. Ewert had grown considerably, giving the school that collegiate look and feeling which resulted in the occasional poetic licence among its students:

M.C.I. Hymne

Hoert in Gretna auf der Eck ist ein Haus zu finden: Schaut zum Norden frei und keck, Trotz den starken Winden. Dieses Haus ist hier das groesste Und auch wohl das allerbeste, Lasst Euch das verkuenden. 125 Hark — in Gretna at the corner You will find a house; Looking north sprightly and free Despite the strong winds, This house here is the greatest And also the very best. Let that be made known to you.

Fire!!

Then on Monday evening, April 28th, it happened! Fire! Gretna was no stranger to fire. Unfortunately, Gretna's new fire equipment and volunteer fire brigade were no match for the conflagration which erupted somewhere in the Chris Pieper offices on Hespeler Avenue. Many who were there remember that day vividly. This is how the **Neche Chronotype** and **Der Nordwesten** described the catastrophe:

Business Block Burned

Thirteen Business Places and Several Residences in Gretna Destroyed by Fire Monday Evening.

On Monday evening at six o'clock fire broke out in the post office at Gretna and as a result the entire business district of the town was razed to the ground. A strong south wind made it practically impossible to check the flames and as the fire crept towards the business section of the town, the fire fighters ceased their efforts to check the flames and went to work at cleaning out the stock of the business places. An attempt was made to dynamite some of the buildings in order to save the Bank of Montreal building, but efforts in this direction were futile and as a result the bank building is numbered among the ruins. The Queen's hotel was saved only by the heroic efforts of the fire fighters. Buildings all around the hotel were a mass of flames and the intense heat made it extremely difficult for the fire fighters and if it were not for the fact that the building is of solid brick, there is not the slightest doubt that it would have been burned to the ground. The King Edward hotel caught fire several times, but was kept well soaked with water until the fire around it had died out. About six residences were burned



Carpenters working at the MCI addition in 1912. P#1477

to the ground besides several smaller buildings including icehouses, stables, etc. The fire raged until about 11:30 o'clock, when it was finally checked by keeping the buildings well soaked with water. The following is a list of the buildings that were destroyed:

The Bank of Montreal; L. Erk's drug store; Dr. Friesen's office; Coblentz & Son's general store; Ewert's printing office and book store; Wm. Schimnowski's harness shop; Ritz's insurance office, Hellof's butcher shop; Wahn's implement warehouse; John Irving's blacksmith shop; Manitoba government telephone office; Ogilvie's elevator; government postoffice and about six residences. The origin of the fire is unknown and the loss is estimated to be about \$200,000.128

April 30, 1913: One Fourth of Business Section Destroyed

About 6 o'clock Monday evening a fire broke out in C. Pieper's office, that, fanned by strong winds, swiftly spread to other buildings, and despite all strenuous but futile efforts destroyed

half the business section of the town. First the Postal business burned; then the incensed elements destroyed in order: H. Hellof's Meat-market, the telephone office, H. Ritz's office, the Saddlery of W. Schimnowski, the Printery & Bookstore of Ewert, the General Store of Coblentz & Son, the Drugstore of Lou Erk, the Bank of Montreal, the warehouse of E. Wahn, Ogilvie's Elevator, the Butcher Shop of Briden, Dr. Friesen's drugstore, J. Larson's blacksmith shop. Six homes, and numerous bigger and smaller buildings were totally destroyed.

An effort to dynamite one of the buildings, in order to save the Bank of Montreal, was unsuccessful.

The King Edward Hotel caught fire several times, but each time with strenuous efforts it was extinguished. Through similar efforts the Queen's Hotel was saved.

The damage was assessed at \$300,000. Towards morning the fire fighters finally gained control. 127

Fundraising . . . cont'd

What encouragement that would give the older friends of the school.

The following donations have thus far been received:

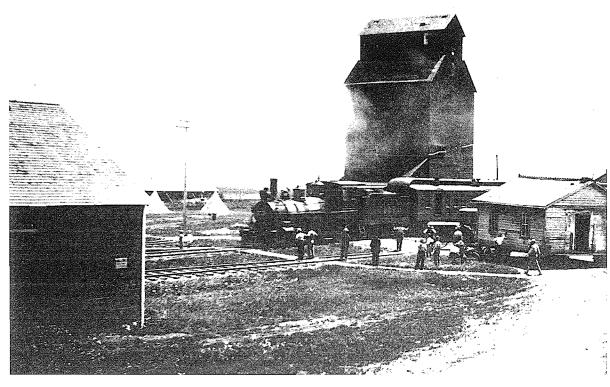
	The jouowing donations have thus jur been re	ceiveu.
Α.	This Year's Students	
	John R. Friesen, Rosenort	\$100
	Jacob G. Kornelson, Steinbach	100
	John P. Friesen, Steinbach	100
	Abram H. Enns, Rosenort	100
	Jacob G. Rempel, Rosenort	100
	Heinrich Vogt, Neville, Saskatchewan	100
	E. S. Bartel, Drake, Saskatchewan	25
	Joh. E. Wiens, Herbert, Saskatchewan	10
	Isaak E. Wiens, Herbert, Saskatchewan	10
	P. A. Loewen, Silberfeld	100
	S. H. Sobering, Steinbach	100
	Gerh. F. Wiebe, Chortitz	100
	Peter J. Loewen, Didsbury, Alberta	100
	Minna Rempel, Hillsbury, Kansas	100
	Hannah Bargen, Plum Coulee	100
	Erna Kehler, Gretna	100
	Marg. U. Friesen, Gretna	100
	Heinrich U. Friesen, Gretna	100
	Erdm. U. Friesen, Gretna	100
	Wm. Ewert, Gretna	100
	Gert. Giesbrecht, Kronsgart	50
	Abr. B. Klaassen, Gretna	33
	Tina Klaassen, Gretna	33
	C. P. Siemens, Hochfeld	25
В.	Former Students	
	Julius Toews, Kronsgart	100
	Anna Giesbrecht, Kronsgart	50
	David P. Peters, Winkler	100
	Susie Neufeld, Winkler	100
	A. K. Friesen, Winkler	50
	Aron Friesen, Winkler	50
	Anna Hoppner, Winkler	50
	A. P. Friesen, Steinbach	100
	H. H. Hamm, Gretna	100
	Benj. Ewert, Gretna	100
	,	-20

Fundraising . . . cont'd

	E. T. Loeppky, Gretna	100
	Anna Klaassen, Gretna	34
	Louis Erk, Gretna	25
	Jacob U. Friesen, Gretna	100
	Peter U. Friesen, Gretna	100
	Paul Ewert, Montreal, Quebec	100
	Karl Ewert, Nanaimo, B.C.	100
	Alfred Ewert, Winnipeg	100
	Isaak S. Wiens, Herbert, Saskatchewan	50
	Jacob Heinrichs, Aberdeen, Saskatchewan	25
	Jacob Klaassen, Rush Lake, Saskatchewan	35
	J. J. Giesbrecht, Didsbury, Alberta	100
	Diet. Hoppner, Lowe Farm	100
	Agatha Hoppner, Lowe Farm	25
	Helena Hoppner, Lowe Farm	25
	Diet. Hoppner, Lowe Farm	25
	J. S. Wolkof, Lowe Farm	100
	Peter Zacharias, Bergfeld	100
	Abram D. Friesen, Altona	10
C.	Other School Friends	
	H. T. Neufeld, Gretna	100
	W. Esau, Gretna	100
	Heinr. A. Loewen, Gretna	100
	Peter Peters, Winkler	100
	Marg. Peters, Winkler	100
	Johann Hooge, Winkler	100
	Jakob Toews, Jr., Winkler	100
	Jakob J. Funk, Winkler	25
	John R. Wolkof, Winkler	25
	W. G. Rempel, Rosenort	100
	P. R. Friesen, Steinbach	10
	G. K. Stewart, Rosenfeld	25
	Mr. Middleton, Winnipeg	50
	1 6	H Fanort

H. H. Ewert Business Secretary

Der Mitarbeiter April 1912



Great Northern train bringing water to Gretna during the 1913 fire. P#628



Union Bank of Canada on the corner of Seventh St. and Montcalm Ave. in 1903. Later the Bank of Montreal. P#245

Chapter Five

Out of the Ashes

The devastation and demoralization which followed in the wake of the 1913 Gretna fire cannot be overestimated. The fear instilled by this conflagration among the children of Gretna can still be felt in their stories of that day. The children remember the father's despair, and the mother's anxiety. They recount spending the night in the MCI residence because parents feared the fire might start up again in the tinder-dry and wind-swept conditions which had levelled the heart of Gretna's business section. The Ogilvie elevator and its full bins continued

to smolder long after the fire had been put out. The Bank of Montreal manager, Johann Penner Friesen, spent the night of April 28 in the vault to guard its contents against possible looting. The stone bank building had been considered fireproof. Bank staff had not been worried about its contents until the wooden porches on the back of the building caught fire. By the time the fire reached the bank, it was too late to take any preventative measures.

continued on page 189



Seventh Street north of Penner's Store after the 1913 fire. Queen's Hotel was saved, P#1483



The remains of the Union Bank building, after the 1913 fire, at Seventh St. and Montcalm Ave. P#549

Remembering the Fire

My mother came and got my brother and I. They were afraid that we'd get up town (in 1913 he was five yrs. old.) My father was working when the fire started. We had a buggy horse and one of the men rode this horse to go get him, but he couldn't get him to go past home. My dad jumped off the horse and went downtown as fast as he could. The fire had a pretty good start.

This was told to my dad — This building was burning and people were going in to gather what they could save and a woman came out, she was so excited, she picked up the newspapers and she set them down (outside) and there was quite a wind blowing . . .

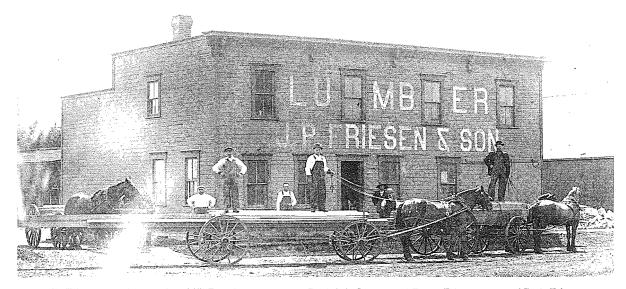
(People did try to save things.)

I remember that it started in my uncle's, and it went in all directions.

R. C. Pieper interview



Seventh Street south after 1913 fire. Ogilvie Elevator on east side of Seventh destroyed by fire. P#1281



Jacob P. Friesen lumberyard on Mill Road around 1915. Rudolph Gross and Peter Friesen, son of P. J. Friesen, on long wagon. Back is J. L. Friesen, manager, between windows and Mr. Ed Ellis with white hat. Others not identified. P#783

Saving the Mail

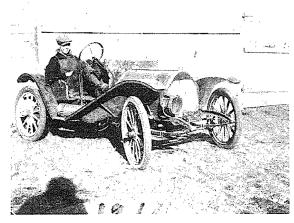
Josephine Hoffman rescued the mail out of the Post Office which her father had managed for 30 years. She saved the mail but lost her eyebrows. "I can still see her sitting on the grass at the house where they lived with the mail bags beside her, trying to recover her composure." Her father, Jacob Roos (J.R.) Hoffman, decided the fire was a signal for him to retire. He moved to Winnipeg before the end of May, although Josephine remained in Gretna a few more months. She was able to "break in" Gretna's new postmaster, Edward Ellis. Edward Ellis had arrived in Gretna in 1904 and had worked as a bookkeeper for the J.P. Friesen Mill & Lumberyard.² Taking on the postmaster's office in Gretna seemed a good move. Business in the Gretna Post Office was steadily growing and a new building had been approved in Ottawa. The new Post Office was planned for the southwest corner of Hespeler Avenue and Seventh Street, on the former Enoch Winkler lumberyard location. The Government of Canada passed an Order-in-Council on June 10, 1913 authorizing the purchase of lots #19, 20 and 21, Block 5 Plan 5 No. 28 from Enoch Winkler for the sum of \$3000. When Mr. Ellis opened up the temporary postal facilities on the north side of Hespeler later that spring, he could not know that his entire tenure as Gretna's postmaster was to be spent in these temporary offices!³

People, who remember the fire of 1913, suggest this inferno brought to an end the "Golden Age" of the Village of Gretna. But childhood memories capture not only the excitement and the sorrow; but also describe the determination to make a new start shared by most of Gretna's entrepreneurs. In less than a month after the fire Chris Pieper started work on a new office building southwest of the Queen's Hotel; A. Coblentz & Sons had a new stock of goods in the Buhr building and were open for business; the telephone agency, operated by J. K. A. Neufeld since 1911, had re-opened next to the "temporary" Post Office; Dr. Friesen was

tending to the area's sick from new offices; and Benjamin Ewert was scouting for a new printing press. Coblentz built a new store on Seventh Street in the summer of 1913, serving as a centerpiece for the "many other buildings [which] will be erected this year and this place promises to be the busiest town in Southern Manitoba during the summer months". 4

Tourist Mecca

Gretna was too busy to wonder whether its time had passed. It was too busy welcoming in a new era marked by the opening of the Meridian Road. The Council's representations to the Manitoba Auto Club had borne fruit and Seventh Street, also known as Main Street, was now to be known as Meridian Road:



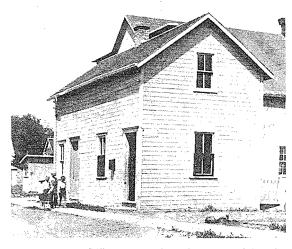
Peter J. Toews in his hupmobile bought from Henry Latozky in 1926. P#782



This 1909–1910 car owned by "Bugs" Adams, employee of Mr. Ritz. Passengers are Ruth Milton, Josephine Wahn, and Alma Yaeger. P#648



Josephine Hoffman took on post office duties when J. R. Hoffman retired. She married Isaac Coblentz. P#932D



Gretna Post Office, owned and operated by the Edward Ellis family, 1913 to 1925. P#940

Sunday, May 18, was the opening day for the Meridian road, as there were over 800 autos which took advantage of the fine weather and used the Meridian road for the first time this season and all are unanimous in declaring the conditions to be good. The cars which passed this point were from all points north and south, from Morris in the north to Hamilton, N.D., in the south, and Gretna seemed to be the Meca: at one time there were 27 cars from outside points on the streets. From enquiries into the condition of the roads all were of the opinion that the conditions were excellent and there is no doubt that the Meridian road via Gretna and Neche will be the popular route with tourists this summer. It is reported that the other road via Emerson is in poor condition.

- Free Press⁵

The motoring enthusiasts who came to inaugurate the Meridian Road must have taken note of the new buildings going up where ash and rubble had so recently lain. The Coblentz store and Henry Ritz's new office building made downtown Gretna look less forlorn, although the lots anchoring each end of the block remained vacant. The more adventurous trav-

eller may have toured the more remote corners of this well-treed village, drawn by the tall brick school in the southwest and the expanded, and newly painted, three-story MCI in Gretna northwest corner. The two new schools were the pride of Gretna residents and provided hope at a time when it was easy to despair.

Growth at the MCI

The June 24, 1913 annual meeting of the MCI at Gretna was also filled with hope. School enrollment had grown to the point where the Board was obliged to follow Professor H. H. Ewert's recommendation that a third teacher be hired. The school's financial position was healthy enough to permit this increase. The annual meeting was also informed that a library was in place at the school through support and organization of the MCI Women's Auxiliary. The annual meeting accepted the report of its school principal, Professor Ewert, but not before it admonished him to provide a greater



MCI students A. L. Friesen and Edwin Bartel in 1914. P#1190

proportion of instruction at the MCI in the German language. Reports of subsequent meetings suggest that Professor Ewert was quick to follow this request from his board and membership.⁶

While the MCI met in an optimistic mood, Gretna Village Council was faced with the fact that it had been unable to provide any kind of defence against the fire that spring. Their new fire hall, bell and equipment had been proven grossly inadequate. A special public meeting of Council was convened on July 26th to discuss the matter of fire protection. When the meeting was called to order, Council was faced with evidence which came to light as a result of yet another fire. A fire broke out in the kitchen of the Alex Smith residence early in July; help was immediately sought at the fire hall which was almost next door to the Smith residence. "The key to the fire hall could not be found and, after breaking down the door, a pile of cement had to be removed before the pump could be moved. The fire was controlled before much damage could be done."7

The July 26th meeting asked Council to draw up a comprehensive fire bylaw which would be voted on at the civic elections that year. The bylaw was presented to Council at its regular November meeting, and approved by the electorate in the new year.

Unrest in the Balkans

A brief dispatch from London, England, appeared in the **Neche Chronotype** alongside the April 30 account of Gretna's \$300,000 loss. It described a growing unrest in the Balkan states in Southeastern Europe. The fighting involved Greece, Albania, Turkey, Bulgaria and Servia; and as alliances shifted, so did the fighting.

London, April 30

The mystery surrounding events in the Balkans is becoming deepened. Further news has been received of Essa Pasha's exploits in Albania and the situation at Salonika is difficult to understand.

A dispatch from Salonika of current date confirms the report that orders were given for the Bulgars to evacuate all places occupied by the Greeks, but that later these orders were countermanded and that official attempts were made to pretend they were never given.

A Bucharest dispatch, dated April 20 to the Daily Telegrah expresses the firm conviction that immediately after peace is signed between the allies and Turkey a new war will commence between Servia, [Serbia] Bulgaria and Greece.

A Bulgarian correspondent says that large concentrations of opposing troops are in readiness for these new campaigns, and adds that he has heard from reliable sources that considerable fighting has already occurred and that three important engagements were fought during the last week, concerning which the greatest secrecy has been maintained.⁸

This report from another world must have seemed irrelevant to Gretna readers of the **Chronotype** at a time when they had witnessed so much destruction right at home. As time slowly erased the scars left by the fire, it broadened the awareness of conflict and destruction abroad, which would reach into the farthest corners of "the Empire" and draw communities as remote and isolated as Gretna into the conflict known as "The Great War".

Ogilvie Era Ends

By the end of the year it became clear that the Ogilvie elevator in Gretna was not going to be rebuilt. This loss was not felt as acutely as the loss of the Bank of Montreal. The Ogilvie elevator had held the largest number of bushels, but farmers often sought other grain buyers in Gretna in attempts to get a better price for their product. The six grain elevators which continued operations included the companies of "J.P. Fraser (sic) [Friesen] & Son; Klassen Bros. & Schallenburgh (sic); Lake of the Woods Milling Co.; Chris Pieper; Henry Ritz; Ogilvie Flour Mills Co.;" and McCabes in West Gretna.9 As grain kept arriving at Gretna elevators local businesses felt the need for an established banking branch to service their community.



Mr. and Mrs. Gerhard Spenst and daughter Anna. Mr. Spenst was a manufacturer of cleaning mills. Circa 1907, P#786

News Notes from Gretna

Mr. and Mrs. Yoegar and daughter met with a serious accident last Sunday in Winnipeg. The car turning turtle. They were taken to St. Boniface Hospital and are doing as well as can be expected.

Mr. and Mrs. Chas. Pieper and Mr. and Mrs. Richardson autoed to Walhalla Sunday in the former's car.

Mrs. Blake Hutchinson and children left for Moose Jaw, Sask. on Monday, where they will visit for a few weeks.

B. Tenant, of Winnipeg, has moved down to Gretna for the summer.

Mrs. (Dr.) McKenty and family of Winnipeg has moved down for the summer.

Miss Margaret Wahn visited her sister, Miss J. Wahn of Portage.

Mrs. Chas. Wahn is visiting her daughter, Mrs. Walker at McGregor.

Miss Pity, of DeWet visited last week with Mrs. Chas Pieper.

Mr. I. Coblentz and family went down to Walhalla on the 4th.

Dr. D. McKenty was in Gretna for the week end.

The Boy Scouts returned from Camp on Saturday, all reporting having had the best time possible.

The conscription bill was passed last week.

Mrs. Shallcross autoed to Walhalla this week in E. R. Dennison's car.

continued

They lobbied their Council this fall, calling on them to take this matter into their hands. In February 1914, a delegation, made up of Mayor P. J. Friesen and Councillors Henry Ritz and Gerhard Spenst, journeyed to Winnipeg to interview bank managers with "the view to locating a branch bank in Gretna". ¹⁰ Council's early efforts were unsuccessful, but they persisted in their attempts. As an interim measure, J. P. Friesen, who had been relocated to the Altona branch of the Bank of Montreal, continued to represent the bank to its Gretna clients. ¹¹



Peter J. Friesen and Henrietta (Unger) Friesen. Mr. Friesen served as Gretna's mayor 1914–1916 and 1921–1924. P#800

Business as Usual

Gretna's banking involvements extended beyond its own boundaries. Private lenders continued the practise of real estate investment through mortgage financing of farms in the area. Gretna names also appear as shareholders in larger financial institutions: William Ritz owned shares in the Northern Crown Bank and the Union Bank of Canada. Listed as a Gretna liquor merchant, Wm. Ritz also acquired shares in Weyburn Securities Co. in 1913. Sarah Coblentz and Philip Purpur also purchased shares in the Union Bank of Canada in 1913. 12

Further evidence that life went on as usual following the fire can be found in the annual report of the Veterinary Director General to the Minister of Agriculture for the Dominion of Canada, for the year 1913:

Gretna Quarantine Station

This station is located at Gretna, on the international boundary line, conveniently situated between the Canadian Pacific railway and the Midland Branch of the Great Northern railway, each of which lines has a branch spur running into the quarantine station.

The equipment consists of a substantially fenced enclosure 140 feet in length by 120 feet wide; stable 100 feet by 30 feet, providing accommodation for 45 animals, and which is well lighted and thoroughly ventilated.

Besides the inspector in charge, there is also maintained a caretaker, whose services are made use of in assisting the inspector in charge, keeping the yards and stables in good repair and cleanly condition, as well also as the cleansing and disinfection of the stable with limewash and carbolic acid, from time to time, as required.

During the past year there has been presented for entry and inspection at this station, the following number of animals: horses, 2,160; mules, 436; cattle, 425; sheep, 228; goats, nil; swine, 1. Fees collected, \$599.01.

Seven hundred and thirty-six horses and mules were submitted to the mallein test of which two were submitted to a second test, and 1 reacted to the mallein test, was slaughtered upon being again presented by the owner, for entry.

Two head of cattle were submitted to the tuberculin test and proved to be healthy. ¹³

Baseball Fever

Gretna's social and sporting life was not affected by the 1913 fire. A committee, with Godfrey Coblentz, President; Henry Ritz as Vice-President and W. H. Tennant as Secretary-Treasurer was struck in early June to plan and organize July 1st celebrations for Gretna. Their plans included construction of additional bleachers and hosting facilities on the site of the former race track. The baseball games and tennis matches received favorable press in the summer of 1913, as illustrated by the following reports in the Neche Chronotype:

July 5, 1913: Dominion Day was celebration in Gretna and was a big success. A baseball tournament and field sports were the principal attractions. The Neche Military Band was in attendance.

July 12, 1913: The home of Mrs. Jos. Tennant was the scene of much gaiety on Monday evening when the young people held a farewell party for Dorothy and Reggie Tennant who are leaving home for some time. There was a large number of guests present and all had a splendid time.

A very exciting baseball game was played here Wednesday evening when the Old Timers crossed bats with the Young Bloods. A large crowd witnessed the game and according to reports, Briden, Argue and Marshall were the star players. Marshall was warned by the umpire for making too much noise, but it would have taken two or three umpires and a half dozen straight jackets to keep Marshall quiet on this occasion. The game resulted in a win for the Young Bloods with a score, Young Bloods 13; Old Timers 8.

July 19, 1913: Another exciting baseball game was played on Tuesday between the regular team and a team composed of Briden, Marshall and the rest



"Brommtopp" in 1913. A singing group dressed in masks and old clothes travelling from house to house on New Year's Eve, looking for food and drink. P#223

News Notes . . . cont'd

Mr. Rosenow made a business trip into Winnipeg this week.

Mr. Sydney Bean has purchased a new horse and democrat.

Miss McEdwards, of Winnipeg visited with her mother from Saturday to Sunday.

Mr. and Mrs. Schimnowski visited in Gretna over the week end.

Miss Louisa Zeigler is spending her holidays in Morden.

Mr. and Mrs. R. Ellis are visiting at the home of Mr. and Mrs. E. Ellis.

Mr. and Mrs. Shallcross spent Sunday with Mr. and Mrs. Vosper of Neche.

Miss Marjorie Hobbs is spending her vacation at Gretna.

Mrs. Smith made a business trip to Winnipeg this week.

Mr. W. Ewert has enlisted in the dental corps.

Miss Mildred Hoskins, of Manitou is spending her vacation in Gretna.

T. Sheedy shipped a carload of iron to Winnipeg this week.

Miss Thelma Finlayson and Miss Bernice Pieper are visiting friends in Winnipeg.

Neche Chronotype July 12, 1917

Gretna News

A Schimnowski, of Montreal, who is studying for the priesthood is visiting with his parents here.

Miss Dickson, of Kildonan, is visiting with Mr. and Mrs. Alex Smith.

Howard Murphy of Winnipeg, visited over the weekend with Mr. and Mrs. W. Tennant.

Alex Smith is building a new barn.

Pte. E. Ewert left last week for England, with the medical crops.

One of our prominent autoists entered the butcher trade last week. He didn't mean to though. He killed a calf with his auto and the calf badly damaged the car, thus they are quits.

Miss McDonald of Winnipeg is visiting her friend Edna Hobbs.

Harry Brown went to the city on Tuesday.

Mrs. Jas. Gainer and Pearl Gainer, of Neche, visited with Mrs. Gustafson on Tuesday.

Miss Jean Stewart of Rosenfeld is visiting with Mrs. Shallcross.

Chris Pieper went into Winnipeg on Wednesday.

Mrs. J. Tennant has returned to her home in Winnipeg. Police Constable Sabity is back again in Gretna.

Mr. and Mrs. Jack Richardson took the train into Winnipeg on Thursday and autoed back again the same day.

Lil Smith gave the girl guides a lawn social on Friday evening. Everybody had an enjoyable time.

Carl Hemphil broke his ankle on Monday.

The Mennonite Sunday School held their annual picnic in the grove last Thursday.

Mr. and Mrs. German, of Altona visited Mr. and Mrs. I. Coblentz last Wednesday.

Mr. and Mrs. Hobbs, daughters Edna and Marjorie and Miss Jean McDonald autoed to Miami on Sunday. Marjorie Hobbs will take up her duties as school teacher there.

Mrs. Hobbs and daughter Edna have gone to Winnipeg Beach for a short holiday.

Miss Jean McDonald returned to her home in Winnipeg on Monday.

Miss H. Wilmot has arrived to take up her duties in the Public School.

Miss E. Ellis visited over the Week end with Mr. and Mrs. Ray Ellis at Altona.

Pte. Albert Pieper autoed down from Winnipeg on Saturday.

Miss Mabel Dewar has returned to Winnipeg. Mrs. Hoskins is visiting friends at Selkirk.

> Neche Chronotype August 16, 1917

of the world-famed stars. The game served to introduce a new umpire in the person of Lou Erk and the way he handled the indicator puts him in a class by himself. This game also brought to light the fact that there is still a great deal of good baseball material here going to waste, for Marshall as a pitcher is certainly a world-beater, although the local club refuses to give him a tryout, and he has such a variety of curves that a new backstop would be needed to stop the balls, and the club does not feel that they can afford to spend so much money at this late period in the season. Marshall also has a slow ball that produces a feeling of drowsiness on the batter while the ball is coming to him. Fancy Marshall fanning

August 9, 1913: The Catholic Sunday School picnic was held on Tuesday in the Neche grove and those who attended reported a fine time.

December 20, 1913: Successful Bazaar at Gretna

A very successful bazaar was held at the Presbyterian Church in Gretna on Saturday, December 13th, in the afternoon and evening. There were four booths and a daintily equipped tea room, fish pond and wizard's corner. Miss Maud Wahn, Miss Myrtle Tennant and Miss Alma Yoeger were in charge of the fancy goods booth. Miss Annie G. Mitton and Miss Ada Ziegler presided over the home products booth. The candy booth was in the charge of the Misses Pearl and Minnie Pieper and Lil Smith. Miss Margaret Wahn, Miss Dorothy Tennant and Miss Annie Stevenson managed the fish pond — every fish being caught and the pond exhausted early in the afternoon. Mrs. Jesse Marshall presided over the flower arbor, while the Colonial tea booth was tastefully decorated with holly and mistletoe, and tea, cake and sandwiches were served by Mrs. John Irving, Mrs. John Hodgson and Mrs. Henry Bean. Jesse Marshall conducted the curious to the wizard's corner and instructed them how to proceed, while Clifford Marshall revealed one of the secrets of life to them. The booths were designed and erected by Mackinstosh Brown, assisted by Albert Rosenow.

Elections in Gretna

Civic elections for Council and School Board for the year 1914 provided Gretna with some pre-Christmas excitement. J. F. Tennant did not seek the Mayor's chair for another year. In fact, he advertised his house and moved to Winnipeg.

The contest for mayor was between J. P. Friesen and Robert Chambers; for school trustee between R. S. Bean and Charles Pieper. The candidates worked industriously and there was much excitement exhibited by candidates and others during the day. Mr. Friesen was elected mayor and Mr. Bean was the successful candidate for school trustee [School Board Chairman]. The officials for 1914 are as follows: Councillors, Messrs. Salzwedel, Sheedy, Ritz and Spence; school trustees, Messrs. Erk, Ritz and Bean. 14

Elections to the board of the Gretna Presbyterian Church gave this congregation new leadership in Levi Williams, J. Hodgson, Hugh Street and Henry Ritz. The Presbyterian Church was experiencing renewed energy brought to it, in part, by the services of the Rev. Cole of New York and Rev. Dr. D. M. McIntosh from Grand Forks, N.D. Along with their inspiring messages and the annual Sunday School Christmas exercises, religious activity was more than keeping up with the active Gretna social scene:

Annie G. Mitton, superintendent of the [Presbyterian Sunday] school prepared an elaborate program which was enjoyed by a large audience of teachers, scholars and parents. Ancient Christmas carols were sung, and Mr. and Mrs. Newton amused the audience with selections on the phonograph. The game of ''hide and seek'' and ''hello'' were played. Diving for apples was one amusement. Rev. Mr. Cole had a message. ¹⁵

From Gretna

The St. Francis of Assisi Catholic congregation had been served by Rev. J. H. Prud'homme since March of 1908. Stationed at the Archbishop's Residence in St. Boniface, he occasionally brought friends and colleagues to Gretna to assist him in his service. Rev. Father Cahill, O.M.I., from St. Mary's Church in Winnipeg, participated in services in February 1914. Rev. Father Schultz from Winnipeg's Holy

Ghost Church conducted services and held mass in March. Father Schultz had returned to Gretna earlier in the year to officiate at the Ollhoff-Krause nuptials on February 14. In other wedding news, A. P. Shelter "formerly of Gretna, but now of Semans, Sask." married Miss Irene Bull in Buffalo. The brief account found in the Gretna News column of the Chronotype points out how the Gretna community considered, as one of its own, an individual who may have stayed only briefly. Nonetheless, such people were described as "from Gretna" and most often they would describe themselves as originally from Gretna. The Gretna correspondent was also quite prepared to take credit for the "bad" along with the "good". Consequently, John Krofchenko, who was arrested as the suspect in the "murder of H. M. Arnold and the theft of over \$4000 from the Bank of Montreal in Plum Coulee, was described as having started his career of crime in Neche 18 years ago when the store of C. M. Murphy was robbed. Krofchenko was a resident of Gretna at the time. 16

The 1914 **Gretna News** column was full of reports of visitors to Gretna:

W. Coblentz and Frank Saltzwedel, both of Winnipeg, were visitors in town last Wednesday to attend the regular meeting of the East Star Lodge, No. 55.

Rev. Mr. Spring, who formerly supplied the pulpit of the Presbyterian Church, and who is now a resident of Winnipeg was a guest at the King Edward hotel, Monday and Tuesday. He is a delegate to the large temperance convention being held in Winnipeg, and will attend lectures at United College, preparatory to taking a new charge.

W. H. Tyson, 360 River Avenue, Winnipeg, was a visitor in town last week.

Mrs. Robert Todd, 338 Brooklyn Str., St. James, was the guest of Mrs. John Hodgson Tuesday and Wednesday of last week.

Chief Elliott, chief of Provincial gaol and Jacob Handel, chief turnkey in the Winnipeg gaol, spent Wednesday afternoon and Thursday morning in town on business returning to the city on the noon train Thursday.¹⁷

Changing Faces

Some came to stay in 1914. The family of Mr. Howe, the King Edward Hotel proprietor, moved from Fort Francis, Ontario that winter to take up permanent residence in Gretna. I. Hobbs, Gretna's Customs Officer, moved his family from Winnipeg into the Salzwedel house which he had rented. Aaron L. Friesen came to assist Benjamin Ewert in his printery and bookstore and M. Cohen opened a branch of "The New York Watch Maker and Jewelry Company", located one door south of the Gretna Drug store. Not much is known of Mr. Cohen and his new Gretna enterprise. On the other hand, A. L. Friesen was to become another of Gretna's longstanding residents and businessmen. Mr. Friesen arrived at a time when



Abram and Katherina Guenther in 1910. They came to Canada in 1874 and were long-time residents of Gretna. P#367

Gretna News

A. Smith has returned from the West for the harvest. Mr. and Mrs. Robinson, of Rosenfeld, have gone to Duluth for a visit.

Mr. and Mrs. Law, of Carman, have been visiting with Dr. and Mrs. Stevenson.

A lawn social was held on the Presbyterian church lawn last Tuesday. A good crowd was present and a good sum was raised.

Mr. Williams and sons Reese and Russell returned last week from Winnipeg, where they had been visiting for a few days.

Marshall Ellis of Moose Jaw, who has been visiting Mr. and Mrs. E. Ellis, returned to his home last week.

Miss Jean Stewart, who has been visiting with Mrs. Shallcross returned to her home at Rosenfeld this week.

Miss Alice Pieper is teaching school at Sanford.

Annie Stevenson has been visiting at Carman.

Miss Cecile Stewart of Rosenfeld visited Mrs. Shall-cross for a few days last week.

Mrs. E. Ellis, who has been visiting in Altona, returned to Gretna last Thursday.

Mr. Rideout the new principal of the Public school arrived here last Saturday.

A sign in Gretna reads: Speed limit 10 miles an hour. Apparently some of the autoists cannot see it; if they can, they don't heed. 30 and 40 miles per hour is not unusual. It may be fun for the driver but not for the pedestrian.

Your correspondent would like to say well done, to all those who are quietly doing their bit in so many ways for the boys who have left the town. Cheer the boys by sending letters and parcels.

Mr. and Mrs. Ray Ellis, of Altona autoed down to Gretna on Thursday and took in the lawn social.

J. A. Hobbs went into Winnipeg on Friday and spent the week end with his family at the Beach.

Chas. Pieper and wife, and J. Richardson and wife autoed to Emerson on Thursday. Miss Alice Pieper returned to Gretna with them.

H. Ritz went into Winnipeg on Friday.

Miss E. Koelar went into Winnipeg for a few days last week.

Miss Jean Stewart of Rosenfeld spent the week end with Pearl Gainer at Neche.

Mrs. H. Street received a visit from her brother of Michigan last Friday. It was a very happy meeting, the first time they had met for 45 years.

Neche Chronotype August 23, 1917

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Ollhoff-Krause Nuptials

A pretty wedding was solemnized in St. Francis' Roman Catholic church, Gretna, at ten o'clock on Saturday morning, Feb. 14, when Miss Caecelia Helen, second daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Anton Krause, was united in marriage to Henry W. Ollhoff, of Winthorst, Sask. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Father Schultz assisted by Rev. Father Hermandung, of Winnipeg, in the presence of a large number of relatives and friends. The church was prettily decorated with cut flowers.

The bride, who entered the church leaning on the arm of her father, was handsomely gowned in ivory charmeuse, with tunic of chiffon caught with tiny pink rosebuds, the bodice being trimmed with chiffon. Her veil of brussels net was wreathed with smilax and lillies of the valley, and she carried a sheaf of cream roses. The bridesmaids, Miss Annie Krause, sister of the bride and Miss Selma Feik, of Rosthern were attired in shell pink messaline and carried shower bouquets of pink and white carnations and maidenhair fern. Mrs. Krause, mother of the bride wore black peau de soie with touches of cream. Mr. Frank Krause brother of the bride supported the groom.

The wedding music was skillfully rendered by Mr. Karl Krause, brother of the bride.

After the ceremony the guests repaired to the home of the bride, where a sumptuous wedding breakfast was partaken of.

Mr. and Mrs. Ollhoff left on the 3 o'clock train for southern points, amid a shower of rice and the good wishes of their many friends. Mrs. Ollhoff travelled in a one-piece dress of garnet broadcloth and wore a long coat of dark grey chinchilla piped with black silk. Her hat was of black silk with flowers in the Bulgarian shades. Mink furs completed her costume.

Mr. and Mrs. Ollhoff will be at home after March 14, 1914 at Windthorst, Sask.

Neche Chronotype February 19, 1914 Gretna was saying good-bye to the J. F. Tennant family, whose house had been bought by a local organization of churches which planned to use it as a "home for the friendless", a purpose which the original owner of the house, Erdmann Penner, surely would have endorsed.

Spring and summer was a lively time once again. More than 1500 people turned out for the Dominion Day tournament and celebrations. The Gretna baseball team did not do well, finishing third in a field which brought together teams from Emerson, Altona, Plum Coulee, Bathgate, Neche, Cavalier and Crystal. The Gretna team had not fared much better at games played in Emerson that spring. The real sports news of the year was the report that Alfred Ewert had played on the Oxford University hockey team that winter and had given his English student colleagues a taste of how the sport was played in Canada. Besides playing good hockey, Gretna learned that Alfred had been at the top of his class that year and had won a scholarship to help him further his stud-

Son of Charles

The old adage that it is possible to find excitement and controversy wherever two people attempt to resolve their differences regarding sex, religion, or politics was vividly illustrated in Gretna in the spring and summer of 1914. Registration for voters participating in the 1914 provincial election was held on May 25th. Valentine Winkler was in Gretna frequently at that time. His election opponent in the Morden-Rhineland constituency was none other than the son of Charles Tupper, W. J. Tupper; who never let it be forgotten that his father was the only surviving member of the Fathers of Confederation. W. J., son of Charles, had spoken in Gretna before. He came back to the King Edward Hotel to rally the Conservative forces in Gretna. Valentine Winkler relied on his loyal friends and supporters, such as Charles Wahn and Isaac Coblentz, to get out the Gretna Liberal vote. The provincial Conservatives had tried to claim the Rhineland constituency as their own ever since William Hespeler had stepped out of active politics when the Rosenfeldt riding had been absorbed into the Rhineland territory. The Winkler staying power had been ably demonstrated in many elections. It was hoped that the Tupper name was the key to Conservative success in the Morden–Rhineland constituency. The electors were not easily wooed. Rodmond Roblin and his Conservatives returned to the Provincial Legislature for another term, but Valentine Winkler kept his seat in opposition. ¹⁸

Weddings

In the summer of 1914 it was difficult to know which of the three controversial topic areas provided the most excitement. While religion wasn't playing a back seat to politics, marriage was much in the news that year. Schoolteacher Annie Gertrude Mitton married C. Albert Rosenow of Gretna. Nuptials took place in Moncton, New Brunswick, but received good coverage in the **Neche Chronotype**. The happy couple honeymooned in Halifax and at the groom's parents' home in Mildmay, Ontario, before taking up residence in Gretna again. The wedding should have squelched any idle gossip created by an earlier report which had both of them spending Easter holidays in Winnipeg. The new Mrs. Rosenow was not returning to her teaching duties at the Gretna school. Her grades five and six class was being taken over by another Moncton native, Miss H. Wilmot. Miss Wilmot would join principal J. MacLennon; Miss Martha Krause, grades three and four; and Miss Annie Krause, grades one and two.

Josephine Hoffman and Isaac Coblentz were married in Winnipeg later in the year, taking up residence in the Queen's Hotel until their residence on Montcalm Avenue was ready for them. Ada Ziegler was also among the ranks of young Gretna women to get married that summer. She was "given a surprize party and

handkerchief shower by members of her Sabbath school class [in Gretna] on Wednesday afternoon.''19

Rev. Chrismas Comes to Town

The religious excitement in Gretna focused on a new evangelist and a new congregation which challenged religious folk in the area in

> THE NEW YORK WATCH MAKER AND JEWELRY COMPANY 236 Logan Avenue, Winsipe. As regards our new branch is Gretna, we are going to and are willing to show our patrons in the Gretna constituency our best altention to all the work as well as the selling. Our two years guarantee is good not only here, but also in Winnipeg. Please bear all these things in your mind. Try our service and you will not be sorry. Here are some of the prices we charge: Best Cleaning Best Main Spring Best Balance Staff Best General Jewel CALL AND GIVE US A TRIAL M. COHEN. Manager. Located one door south of the drug store, Grotna, Man.

Neche Chronotype, July 23, 1914.

summer and fall that year. Taking advantage of the uncertainty of the times, Rev. W. E. Chrismas made his Gretna debut in the summer of 1914:

The renowned evangelist and divine healer, will hold a week's mission in the people's church at Gretna about the end of July, or as soon as the arrangements can be properly made. Mr. Chrismas has just returned to his home from a successful mission in Alberta and is resting up and attending to a few affairs around his home. Gretna is to be congratulated on getting the services of so great an evangelist. It may be possible that he will also hold services at Neche if the arrangements as they now stand go through. ²⁰

The "end of time" message was not new to the area. One of the major disagreements between Rev. H. H. Ewert and his counterpart, Rev. J. J. Balzer, when the latter had arrived to start the MEI in Altona, had been the message of the millenium which had come with Balzer from Mountain Lake to Altona. The Rev. Chrismas carried his message to:

A new congregation of Christians organized at Gretna and [will be] known as "The Church of Our Father". Located in the building formerly occupied by the Lutherans and prior to that by the German Reformed and Baptist denominations, it will hold services in German and English. Rev. Mr. Young will be in charge. 21

Rural Telephones

The news was also travelling faster than it ever had before. A crew of 25 government telephone employees were camped in Gretna, east of the CPR tracks, while putting up the lines and installing rural telephones in the Gretna vicinity. When a group of men like that converge on a town the size of Gretna, it would be a poor baseball manager who would not challenge them to a friendly game or two. Gretna had been doing quite well on the local baseball circuit that spring and summer and they were looking for a new challenge. The resulting 20–1 score in favour of Gretna suggests that the

Rev. Chrismas Comes to Gretna

The Rev. W. E. Chrismas will visit Gretna on Sunday and Monday, November 22nd and 23rd, and will deliver his great lecture on the war, as foretold in the prophecies of Daniel and the book of Revelation. His lecture will be divided into six sections: First, "Duration of the War"; second, "Famine in One-Quarter of the Earth"; Third, "Formation of the ten Kingdoms"; fourth, "Fall of the Turkish Empire"; fifth, "Rise and Fall of the Latter Day Anti-Christ; sixth, "The Return of Christ."

Mr. Chrismas is one of the most forceful speakers of Canada, and will undoubtedly be greeted by large audiences in Gretna. The morning and evening meetings will be given entirely to the discussion of the war, while the afternoon session will be devoted to divine healing.

Everyone is welcome to attend these meetings and a special invitation has been given to the people of Neche and vicinity.

Neche Chronotype July 23, 1914

Successful Field Day

Field Day in Gretna, May 25, was most successful. Sports began at 1 p.m. sharp and it took until 5 o'clock before the last item on the lengthy programme was completed. The day was fine and the crowd large. First, second and third money prizes were awarded as follows:

Boys running race 8 yrs. and under, Frank Strezelbicki, John Friesen, Klass Loewen; Girls running race 8 yrs. and under, Mary Friesen, Annie Friesen, Lizzie Klaassen; Boys running race 9 to 11 yrs. and under, Bernhard Heinricks, Horace Hows, Cameron Pieper; Girls running race 9 to 11 yrs. and under, Annie Friesen, Lena Heinricks, Mary Buhr (Edinburg); Boys running race 12 yrs. and over, John Rankel, Karl Knopf, Cameron Bean; Girls running race 12 yrs. and over, Margaret Wahn, Louisa Ziegler, Sadie Neumann; Boys running race any age, John Rankel, Karl Knopf, Bernhard Heinricks; Girls running race any age, Louisa Ziegler, Eva Fedronka, Annie Friesen; Boys three legged 11 yrs. and under, John Schuppard and Bernard Heinricks, Henry Schellenberg and Joseph Hruda (Edinburg) Girls three legged, 11 yrs. and under, Emily Marshall and Katie Gross, Annie Friesen and Vera Pieper, Amanda Ewert and Mary Friesen; Boys three legged, 12 yrs. and over, Clifford Marshall and Ben Jansen, Fritz Schweitzer and Jacob Geres, John Konanz and Louis Hellofs; Girls three legged, 12 yrs. and over, Eva Fedronka and Mary Konanz, Margaret Wahn and Sadie Neumann, Mary Buhr and Gerta Schmidt, (Edinburg) Boys sack race, 11 yrs. and under, Bernhard Heinricks, Horace Hows; Boys sack race, 12 yrs. and over, Rees Williams, Fritz Schweitzer, Willie Heinricks; Girls potato race, 10 yrs. and under, Mary Schellenberg (Edinburg) Emily Marshall, Lydia Funk; Girls potato race 10 yrs. and over, Mary Konanz, Louisa Ziegler, Anna Machtanz, Boys wheelbarrow race 10 yrs. and under, Henry Schellenberg and Joseph Hruda (Edinburg) Bernhard and Anton Krause, Johnny Hampel and Jacob Friesen; Boys wheelbarrow race over 10 yrs. Ben Janzen and Willie Heinricks, Louis Hellofs and John Klaassen, Rudolph Mohr and Fritz Schweitzer; Boys running broad jump, open, John Rankel, Cameron Bean; Boys running hop, step and jump, open, Ben Janzen, Eddie Hodgson; Teachers race, Miss Martha Krause, Miss Annie Krause, Mr. Feuenschwander; School board race, L. Erk, H. Ritz, R. S. Bean; Tug of war Edinburg school vs. Gretna, Gretna school; Basketball, town vs. school. 1-0 in favor of school girls; Baseball, 3rd room vs. 4th room boys, 12-10 in favor of the 3rd room; Game of baseball in the evening on ball grounds, Neche vs. Gretna score II to 7 in favor of Gretna.

> Neche Chronotype May 28, 1914

Gretna team may have been more interested in a solid win than a hard-fought contest. Gretna had outclassed almost all of its baseball competition that season, starting at the Gretna Field Day, May 25th.

By the end of the year outdoor sports had been augmented by the organization of a gymnasium program at the Intermediate School. A meeting to initiate this gym class elected the new Moncton teacher, Miss H. Wilmot, President; Miss Marjorie Hobbs, Vice-President; Miss Annie Krause, Secretary-Treasurer; Committee Members: Margaret Baehnisch, Alice Pieper and Annie Stevenson. Marjorie Hobbs and Annie Krause were chosen to be that winter's gymnasium instructors. The basic fitness approach receives mention, and, although little more is known about this class, it is almost certain that the instructors did not offer "breakdancing" on their program of activities.

War Funds

The gymnasium class was one response, in Gretna to the outbreak of war in Europe in August 1914. Other responses included the creation of a Gretna chapter of the Patriotic Fund. By September 17, Mayor Friesen had collected more than \$300 for the Red Cross; \$18 was raised by "the Gretna ladies and sent to Mrs. A. W. Smith, Winnipeg, as a donation to the Hospital Ship fund"; and patriotic teas and dances were organized regularly as fund-raisers. In October, the Patriotic Society elected the following officers: Chairman, Mayor P. J. Friesen; Vice-Chairman, J. MacLennon; Secretary-Treasurer, Godfrey Coblentz; Auxiliary Committee, Mr. and Mrs. Henry Ritz, Mr. and Mrs. Jacob Kehler, Mr. and Mrs. Benjamin Ewert, and Mr. and Mrs. Levi Williams. The Patriotic Society and its fund provided an avenue through which Mennonite pacifists and area patriots could work together to improve the lot of the Allied enlisted men; Mennonites felt they were not directly contributing to the war. The Canadian Government, also, considered material support from the Mennonite Conscientious Objectors as one way in which Mennonites could help without sending their young men to war. Consequently, donations to the Patriotic Fund by churches in the area began to happen soon after the outbreak of the war was made official. A donation of \$1200 to the Patriotic Fund, made by the Sommerfeldt Mennonite Church, was reported by the Gretna columnist in the October 15, 1914 Neche Chronotype.

The same edition mentions an auction at the former J. F. Tennant residence, conducted by Charles Pieper. The Hobbs family had already moved into the Tennant house. August Schimnowski had moved back from Winnipeg to open a harness shop in the store owned by George Spenst, most recently occupied by A. Coblentz & Sons following the fire of 1913. The same publication announces the departure of Dr. Friesen for Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in the U.S. and introduces his replacement, Dr. George Dyck. It quotes a drop in the price of wheat from \$1.11 a bushel to \$1.00 at Gretna elevators. Gretna's CPR agent, E. B. Hutchinson, was relieved by Mr. Booth for a time that fall and the King Edward Hotel was vacated by the Howe family. The existence of the King Edward would be a tenuous one from this time on. Many Gretna residents remember its deserted bowling lanes and darkened dance hall.

Hoping for Peace

Although reports of the petition for a new skating rink and Ludwig Erk's return from holidays made it to the Gretna News column in the fall of 1914, most of the news dealt with the war effort. Mrs. J. Hodgson and Mrs. H. Newton shipped 240 lbs. of clothing to the Belgian front in October. Mrs. Newton's son, Harry, had joined Winnipeg's Princess Patricia and was already overseas. On November 16, carloads of horses passed through town on their way to the European war. A sack of flour destined for Belgium could be sent for \$1.50 and \$171 was

collected by the Bank in Neche in the first week of November for the Flour Fund. Mrs. Levi Williams and Mrs. J. Hodgson "entertained at a patriotic tea" at the home of Mrs. Williams on December 3rd, with cards in the afternoon and dancing in the evening; the "goodly sum" of \$32.15 was raised at this function. Donations to this point had exceeded \$200. The teachers and pupils of the Gretna Public School held a Patriotic Fund concert early in December and boosted this total by another \$78.50.

Despite the loss of loved ones and close friends overseas, hope for peace remained alive in the Christmas programs offered by the Lutheran, Catholic and Presbyterian Sunday Schools. Actually, the Presbyterian Sunday School was Gretna's Sabbath School. It had been inoperative for the better part of the year and was activated by Mrs. J. Hodgson, its new superintendent, for the Christmas season. The Masons also had a busy time in December 1914. The East Star Lodge elected A. German as Grand Master; W. Coblentz, Senior Warden; A. Argue, Junior Warden; Henry Ritz, Treasurer; G. Coblentz, Secretary; and Mr. Tyler and C. Wahn, Committee Members. The selections likely created as much interest in Gretna as the council and trustee election did that year. Salzwedel chose not to sit on Gretna Village Council for another year. He was replaced by Mr. Alderson, Gretna's barber. No other change in representation took place, and Mr. Friesen remained as Gretna's mayor for 1915. Ludwig Erk, Sidney Bean and Henry Ritz were elected to the School Board and Charles Wahn was reappointed as Secretary-Treasurer for both Municipality and School Board.²²

All eleven grades at the Gretna Public School had enjoyed an unplanned, six-day holiday in October when Dr. George Dyck, Gretna's new Health Officer closed the school due to the threat of a diptheria epidemic. The scare passed quickly and the students were back at their desks earlier than expected. The young people soon had another cause for celebration; R. Ellis opened a "moving picture show" in the Queen's Hotel sample rooms early in

December. Even the adults must have shared in the excitement when Queen's owner, W. J. Briden "installed an electric lighting plant and is lighting the Queen's Hotel and the sample room, which has recently been converted into a moving picture hall." ²³

Scarce Commodities

Mr. Briden could not have introduced the New Year in a more fitting way. Prophets of doom and darkness abounded and received greater credence as the war in Europe dragged on. Hope and progress were scarce commodities in a climate of fear, which saw the Mennonite farmers on the West Reserve draw back from the larger commercial centres where they usually conducted their business. Their pacifist beliefs were questioned by Gretna parents whose sons had enlisted and by citizens who were dedicated to the patriotic protection of "the Empire". Support of the Patriotic Fund was questioned by some Mennonite leaders while others hoped their contributions might ensure the guarantees granted them by the Canadian Government when they arrived in Manitoba in the 1870's. Benjamin Ewert and his brother, H. H. Ewert, again provided leadership to area Mennonites in formulating their position to the Government of Canada. Although conscription was not a burning issue until the war had dragged on for more than a year, they began to organize with the Conference of Mennonites as well as at the local level.

The pressure to sign up for active service was always there; in Gretna many Mennonite men did join. Some sought active service and others joined the Medical Corps. Not everybody knew what they were getting into when they signed up and there were times when deserters were rounded up near Gretna and marched back onto the train under police escort. Such incidents served to make Mennonite farmers near Gretna even more wary, causing business in Gretna to slow down dramatically.²⁴

Baseball

Pembina defeated Gretna in a fast game of ball Saturday evening. The score was five to four. Kain and Schuppert for Gretna and Enos and Bouvette for Pembina were the batteries.

The Neche junior baseball team went to Bathgate on Saturday and defeated the junior team of that place. The score was eleven to four. The batteries were Beaudry and Symington and Foster and Witmer for Bathgate.

Morden and Gretna clashed on the Gretna ball ground Wednesday evening and Gretna won. The score was 13 to 12. Bill Quinnell was put in to bat in the last half of the ninth with two gone and two on. He delivered a nice hit and brought in the winning runs.

Old Woman's Adventure

The account in the Manitoba Free Press of Monday, May 4, of an "Old Woman's Adventure" was interesting for Gretna readers. The pen picture called forth that of a familiar figure on the streets of Gretna for the past 25 years. The subject of the article was Mrs. Franz Steiger, who lived with her husband in a small home at the extreme north end of Main street, until last summer when she was ill-treated by Franz Steiger and decided to live apart from him and alone. It was at this time when the Priest and members of the Roman Catholic church undertook to take matters in their hands and she was sent to the Home in St. Boniface where she had been for the past eight months. Mrs. Steiger has no children and her husband is alive and living in solitude in the old home of the pair. Last Saturday Mrs. Steiger slipped away from the Home and wandered to the Union Depot where she hoped to meet the Gretna train and see a familiar face. After many attempts it was discovered that German was the native tongue of the old lady and when she could not be persuaded to return to the home and was bent on meeting the Gretna train and it was found that said train was not due for half an hour a kindness was shown Mrs. Steiger and she was escorted to the C.P.R. Depot where she met with disappointment as there was not a familiar face among the passengers. The Sisters of St. Boniface were telephoned and they met Mrs. Steiger at the depot and took her back to St. Boniface.

> Neche Chronotype May 7, 1914

Business did continue; and not all Mennonites avoided Gretna. Gretna's correspondent considered the purchase of 1000 bushels of wheat by Henry Ritz from Klaas Heide of Blumenort worthy of mention. Heide was paid \$1.42 per bushel. Flax prices at Gretna in 1915 were listed at \$1.40, oats at 55¢ and barley at 60¢ a bushel. The same correspondent recorded record temperatures that winter and reported on indoor activities which could be found in Gretna during such inclement weather. In addition to the moving picture hall with its "Delco" power plant, one could seek refuge in Unger's poolhall and confectionery which was under new ownership.25 D. Loewen planned to keep this Gretna landmark open for business. Robert G. Findlay was as determined to

make a go of the King Edward Hotel which he purchased from M. W. Howe. He made sure he got the liquor license to go with the structure itself before he signed the deal. Business prospects brightened for the inventor, George Spenst, during this cold spell — he found a Winnipeg buyer for his patented grain cleaner.

Active Women

Despite the availability of the poolhall, bowling alley, moving picture hall and the hotel "watering holes", the most activity in Gretna that winter was devoted to the war effort, coordinated mainly out of the Presbyterian Church. A group of Gretna ladies met at the church in May to form an "interdenominational ladies



Ladies' Aid meeting during W.W. I., held at the Pierson home. L. to R.: Mrs. Gustafson, Ethel Hutchinson, Lil Smith, Clara Roeder (standing), Mrs. J. H. Pratt Grossie (in chair), Mrs. Alex Smith, Mrs. Hodgson (sitting), Mrs. Charlie Pieper (standing), Mrs. Rosenau, Mr. Shallcross (minister), Mrs. Pierson, Mrs. Chris Pieper, Alice Ellis and Mrs. Shallcross. P#412

sewing club on behalf of the needy in Winnipeg. 26 Mrs. Hodgson was elected the new club's President; Mrs. Williams, Vice-President; and Mrs. Shallcross, Secretary-Treasurer. They wasted no time in beginning their sewing projects. Gretna's original Ladies' Benevolent Society, the "Wohltätigkeitsverein" or "First Mennonite Mission Aid" was also active. It had undertaken the MCI library as its project, and had furnished the school with more than 1000 volumes in the first two years of the project. In addition to this, the women had purchased a new piano in time to be used in the 1914–1915 school year. 27

The Gretna Public School ended the year in 1915 on a positive note. Inspector A. Weidenheimmer's report to the Manitoba Department of Education points out that students at the Gretna Public School received one hour of German language instruction a day up to grade 6, and that no German was taught beyond that grade. The Inspector emphasizes that "all students speak English perfectly" and singles out Miss Annie Krause for her devoted service for the past 11 years. The student enrollment for the year was 137, with 12 of those taking classes in the senior grades. 28 The students must have felt some disappointment when the school field day and the usual July 1st celebrations were cancelled because of the war. To make up for their frustrations at home, Gretna's young people decided to win first money at the Altona baseball tournament that July, Gretna's senior baseball team also did very well that summer, in spite of an early season loss to Pembina. Some of Gretna's best players would soon join the Armed Forces. By November, Reginald Tennant, William Schimnowski, Louis Hobbs and George Irving had enlisted for active service. Tennant was killed in action before the year was over.

Meanwhile, Gretna's boys played hard on the field and made all of Gretna proud of them. A new activity was instigated by the Presbyterian minister, the Rev. Shallcross, who started up the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides that summer. Based out of the Presbyterian Church, they learned basic skills designed to improve character and foster a sense of patriotism. Several camping expeditions were conducted along the Red River during the summer of 1915. There are no reports of mosquitoes or poison ivy, although the Chronotype does provide some space on poison ivy remedies along with reports of the Scouts and Guides! Gretna was to take pride in the activities of its clubs for girls and boys for some time to come. The Gretna Girl Guides met in their club room every Wednesday evening above the Chris Pieper offices to sew and knit for Canadian soldiers. As far as is known, the Boy Scouts spent their time practising to become soldiers.

War Tensions

By this time it was becoming evident that this war was going to continue for some time. Tensions in Gretna were high because rumors had begun to circulate that the United States was thinking about entering the war, but on the side of Kaiser Wilhelm and the Axis forces.²⁹ This possibility resulted in a change of honeymoon plans on the part of Aaron L. Friesen and his new bride, Tina Loewen. The newlyweds married in Winkler by A. L. Friesen's employer, Rev. Benjamin Ewert, decided to be cautious and not completely ignore the rumors. Rather than risk travel to Montana, they altered their plans and visited family and friends at Rosthern, Regina and other points west. They travelled by train, returning to take up permanent residence in Gretna by September 1st. Henry Ritz paid less attention to the rumors and ventured forth on a 900 mile automobile trip from Gretna to St. Paul, Minnesota and back again. It took the Ritz family ten days to "cover the distance. There were no mishaps to mar the pleasure of the trip and the entire distance was traveled without a puncture."30 Without rain, too, if other reports on rain and road conditions are not to be discounted!

Invitation Ignored

Gretna, Man., Dec. 6, 1915

Hon. Valentine Winkler, Winnipeg, Man.

Dear Sir:

I see by the papers that Dr. Thornton is endeavoring to acquaint himself by personal inspection with the educational conditions in the province. We had hoped that he would honor us with his presence at our annual teachers' convention at Altona and perhaps spend a day or two looking at several of our schools. We were disappointed in having to forego the honor of his presence at the convention and felt this disappointment the more keenly when we learned through Mr. Newcombe that Dr. Thornton would perhaps have come if he had received an invitation. It was due to the oversight or the intentional neglect of Mr. Weidenhammer that he had not received this invitation for the executive committee of the association had instructed Mr. Weidenhammer to invite Dr. Thornton.

Mr. Newcombe however informed us that it still was the intention of Dr. Thornton to pay us a visit. Now the purpose of this letter is to extend through you, as our representative, an invitation to the Minister of Education to favor us with his visit, if possible, before the opening of the legislative session. Of course, we would like to see you accompany Dr. Thornton and assist him in getting a first hand view of the educational conditions here. Among other things we would want Dr. Thornton to visit our institution and see what we are doing to advance education in this part of the province. If the Minister would consent we would arrange for a public meeting to be addressed by him. We would assure him of a full house. If he would deem it desirable arrangements could also be made to have him meet some of the representative men from among the Old Colony people, the Sommerfelder, etc.

Hoping that you can arrange such a visit I remain

Yours sincerely, H. H. Ewert

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Language Rights

Gretna, Man. Jan. 10, 1916

Hon. Valentine Winkler, Winnipeg

Dear sir:

Having reconsidered the points presented to you at that meeting of the Mennonite School Commission, Friday Jan. 7, I wish you would present point six as originally presented to you, namely that a **majority** of the rate payers of a district should have the right to demand teaching in another language other than English, besides the teaching of English etc., instead of stating that if 75% of the rate payers demand this, it should be granted. — Which you know was your suggestion.

The latter statement, if adopted, might not be sufficient to ensure to all of our schools the teaching of German. Take for instance a district like Plum Coulee or some other districts have also other than Mennonite rate payers, anyone wishing to be mischievious towards the Mennonites or Germans and towards their wishes, might start an agitation and thus manage to get one more than one fourth of the rate payers to vote against the bi-lingual teaching in that district, whereas, if the act states that the majority may demand such teaching, it could not be so easily counteracted. By looking after the interests of our schools, we wish to do it in such a way that in all of the districts in which our people reside, German can be taught without trouble.

Please make this change.

As to sending a delegation to Winnipeg in regard to this matter, we are of the opinion, that the sooner such could take place, the better for the matter in question. It should take place before the bill to be put before the House has received shape or form.

Depending on your willingness and assurance to cooperate in this important matter with us, I am respectfully yours,

Benj. Ewert

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

Ritz and other Gretna supporters of Valentine Winkler must have felt vindicated following the August 6, 1915 provincial election. Only one year earlier, Sir Rodmond Roblin and his Conservatives had been given a new mandate, but the administration had been in "hot water" from the start. Its position on bilingual schools was not popular among many voters. The Tories had claimed to be the upholders of morality and responsible for the advances made in the Temperance battle against booze, but at the local level there was little evidence of progress in the war against "demon rum". The ethics of the Conservatives regime also came into question when irregularities were discovered in the contracting of the construction of the new Legislative Building in Winnipeg.

The Liberal Party was given "an over-whelming victory and Valentine Winkler was re-elected in the Morden-Rhineland seat with a majority of 466 votes" in the August 6, 1915 election. ³¹ Valentine Winkler was rewarded for his hard work and support for the Liberal cause by being named Minister of Agriculture.

Normal School Marks

It was not unusual, in those days, to see exam results published. The Gretna Normal School had always posted its examination results in **Der Nordwesten** and **Der Mitarbeiter** and the MCI proudly broadcast its students' achievements in its annual reports. Gretna Public School students were in the news again in November when the Neche Chronotype ran a story about the school's October examinations. The October 1915 exams produced the following results: Lizzie Klassen, 87; Ferdinand Popp, 84; Katie Sweitzer, 71; Amanda Ewert, 70; Johnny Hample, 69; Emma Whidden, 65; Annie Klaassen, 65; Willie Pieper, 77; Klaas Loewen, 71; Annie Friesen, 71; Heinz Hollman, 64; Bernice Pieper, 63; Annie Venechoch, 63. Johnny Hample had the highest mark in departmental mathematics with a mark of 92, along with Rose Schwittich. Lizzie Hellofs,

Amanda Ewert and Annie Klaassen had all scored 88 in the same exam.

Other school news included closure of the Gretna Public School for Thursday and Friday. November 11th and 12th, to enable all teachers to attend the fifteenth annual German-English Bilingual Teachers Conference held in Altona in 1915. The conference involved school trustees and was conducted in German on Thursday and in English on Friday. H. H. Ewert gave a presentation on "Pestalozzi" this year, as part of the first day's presentations. MEI Principal, J. S. Schultz, led a discussion on the "Teaching of Music in Elementary Schools" as part of the second day. The Superintendent of the Provincial Department of Education, C. R. Newcombe, and the new Minister of Education, Dr. R. S. Thornton, came out to attend the conference on Friday. 32

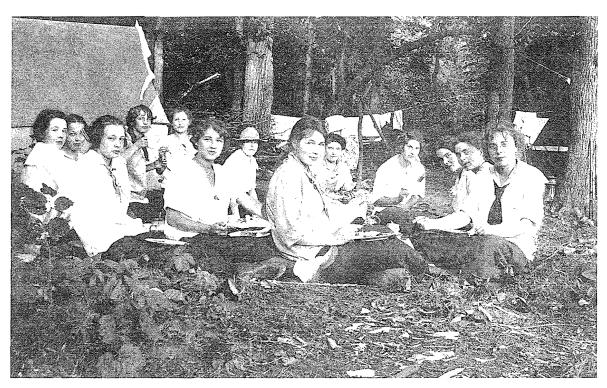
It was a busy time for Gretna schools and their students. The Patriotic Society Christmas fund-raiser was again successful and did not seem to hinder the programs prepared by the Sunday Schools. Red Cross donations were gathered in a promotion to sponsor hospital beds in England; Alexander Smith donated \$50 and Mayor Friesen collected another \$80. The Red Cross also received \$702 in donations from Gretna in 1915 and another \$683 was raised for the Patriotic Fund; school children raised \$19 of this amount through their programs and concerts.33 Mennonite Church contributions to the Patriotic Fund for the area were coordinated by Rev. Benjamin Ewert. The churches felt they could demonstrate their national commitment through such support as long as it was not used for expressly military purposes.

The Girl Guides practised a three-act comedy that winter, presenting "A Southern Cinderella" on March 23, 1916 in the Presbyterian Church. It was held over by special request and played to sell-out crowds at a matinee and evening performance on the 24th. Proceeds from all performances were added to the donations the Guides had already made to the Patriotic Fund. 34

Patrons and Patriots

Business was again brisk in Gretna by the time summer's activities hit town. The MCI Schulfest [School Festival] had been a success again. People came from as far away as Steinbach to observe this annual display of the students' rhetorical and musical abilities. The movement of immigrants continued through the Gretna Port of Entry and, although it was not as steady as it had been before the outbreak of war, as many as 40-50 carloads of cattle and horses came through the quarantine sheds in Gretna in a given month, headed for Saskatchewan and Alberta. 35 Area farmers had become less skittish and were back to doing business with their favorite Gretna merchants. They were quick to patronize the latest enterprise in town. Benjamin Ewert had been unable to keep Aaron Friesen on his payroll any longer. The enterprising young Friesen wasted no time striking out on his own. By the middle of May he had:

between the Queen's Hotel and the King Edward Hotel, for \$8.00 a month rent and opened a Fruit and Confectionery business. My father gave me \$300.00 to begin with. The store-keepers in Gretna, A. Coblentz & Sons and Mr. J. J. Kehler were very good to me and offered to give up the fruit and soft drink business; in fact when I was ready they sent their supply of fruit and soft drinks to me. The little joint was doing fine. It was the only place in town where the people could buy soft drinks or fruit, except apples. It was too good to be true, it should not last forever.



Girl Guides having a picnic in Otten's Woods south of the border in 1915. Pearl Pieper in center. L. to R.: Olina Ziegler, Gertrude Bowan, Gladys Alderson, Vera Pieper, Nora Ellis, Louise Ziegler, Annie Stevenson, Mrs. Shallcross, Margaret Wahn, Sadie Neumann, Annie Krause and Martha Krause. P#1020

Scout And Guide Meet In Gretna

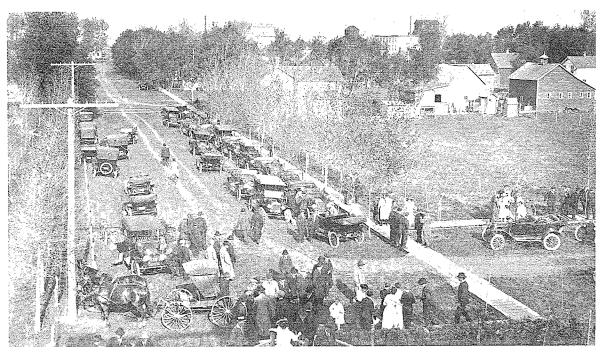
An enthusiastic meeting was held in the Presbyterian church on Wednesday evening, when Rev. A. T. MacIntosh, Boy Scout Commissioner for Manitoba was present and addressed the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. At 7:30 the scouts and guides in uniform paraded the town headed by the Neche band. Arriving at the church the Scouts and Guides filed into the seats and saluted the Union Jack, sang the National anthem, gave their yells, sang the camp fire song and the Maple Leaf Forever. The chairman, Mr. J. A. Hobbs, had an encouraging address which was followed by a recitation by Nora Ellis and Boy Scout stave drill, which received great applause. Commissioner MacIntosh gave an inspiring address and plainly showed the audience that the main quality of the Scout and Guide movement was the development of Character, Mr. Shallcross proposed a vote of thanks to all who had taken part in the meeting. A local association was formed and the following officers were elected: President, Mr. Hobbs; vice-presidents, Messrs, H. Ritz and Dunne, Secretary-treasurer, Mr. Hodgson; Committee, Mrs. James, J. A. Stevenson, L. Williams and C. Pieper. Scout Master, Mr. Shallcross. The church had been prettily decorated with the British flag and bunting by the Scouts and Guides.

> Neche Chronotype August 26, 1915

The same year Manitoba had a liquor referendum and the result of the election was, that the liquor business in the Hotels was discontinued, not even beer was sold in Hotels, except what was called two percent beer. The King Edward Hotel was closed up and Mr. Briden in the Queen's Hotel, no doubt was trying to make both ends of the business meet. Observing that I did a nice little business right next door to him, he put in the same merchandise as I had; ice cream, fruit and soft drinks; hereafter Mr. Briden got the Society business and I got the rest of it. I didn't notice a difference in my joint.³⁶

Banish the Bar

The Temperance Movement had gained considerable strength in Manitoba since war broke out. Its attempts to see a Temperance Act introduced in Manitoba had been thwarted by a referendum back in 1902, just after Rodmond Roblin had taken over the leadership of the



MCI Schulfest 1914. P#1185

Conservative Government from Sir Hugh John MacDonald. The Liquor License Act, put in place back then, basically established licensing and inspection regulations for Manitoba. The temperance forces, pointing to the evils that had grown under this system, gained considerable strength during the 1914 and 1915 provincial elections. The new Liberal Government could not ignore the demands of the movement whose slogan was "Banish the Bar," and so a new Manitoba Temperance Act was enacted early in 1916. Before bringing this new law into play, a provincial referendum was held on March 13, 1916. The question asked was: "Are you in favor of bringing the Manitoba Temperance Act into force?" There were 50,484 votes cast in the affirmative and only 26,502 votes opposed the Act.

The Act accordingly was proclaimed and came into force on June 1st, 1916. It must be admitted that this vote was taken under abnormal conditions, in war time when a good many voters were absent, when all efforts were bent towards winning the War, and many people were prepared to sacrifice self-indulgence and submit to restrictions for the purposes of winning the war that they otherwise might not have agreed to. The argument that liquor was weakening the sinews of war and tending against the efforts of the men in the field had great force; those using that argument apparently failed to realize that when peace-time conditions were restored, this main ground of support would be cut from under them. 37

The new Act proved difficult to enforce since it did not take into consideration jurisdictions in the liquor trade (such as import and export) which were under federal law. In places like Gretna it created changes in how liquor was merchandised. The Coblentz wholesale liquor license was restricted under this new law to sale of alcohol for medicinal purposes only. [How many of us can still remember the brandy bottle or port which grandmother used "for medicinal purposes only?" "Doat's fe Miene Moagekrankheit!" is an expression familiar to this writer.]

The Bootleg Business

The hotels also had to adapt. The Temperance Act was the final blow to the King Edward Hotel. It was closed and opened several times in the next few years, but could not generate the business needed to remain viable. The Queen's Hotel, under Mr. Briden, revised its approach to include the sale of soft drinks, ice cream and fruit, in direct competition with A. L. Friesen. Mr. Briden continued his trade in beer as well. The 2% beer was legal and may have satisfied some of his "society" customers, but he also catered to others, as Walter Neufeld remembers:

The mahogany bar and mirrored "back bar" was quite a fascination to us kids. Mr. Briden sold a 2% beer called "maltum" at 15¢ a bottle. We would buy this beer and usually two of us went in to split a bottle and he would give us two glasses. One thing I could never understand (until later) was that while we were sipping our "2%", adult customers would come in and order a beer (no label on the bottle — of course) and Mr. Briden would ring up 35¢ on the cash register. The question was, why did he charge us kids 15¢ a bottle and adults 35¢. Well, you know the answer — the 35¢ bottle was bootleg stuff. 38

The bootleg business was the sideline of several Gretna risk-takers and this would remain common knowledge among most Gretna citizens for the years in which the United States also enacted prohibition. The "Smugglers" Point" reputation was again tacked onto Gretna's business respectability. The large six and eight cylinder automobiles which were now on the market provided a new dynamic in the smuggling equation. By July 1916, Gretna's Council felt it was again necessary to hire a constable. Charles Johnston was willing to take on the village police and poundkeeper duties again. Village Council minutes suggest that people in Gretna were more concerned about the cattle and horses running loose in their village then they were about the crime rate that summer. When Magistrate Wahn was faced with a large number of liquor infractions a year

later, he collected \$1060 in fines; all the offenders came from Altona.³⁹ The new liquor law was confusing at best, and was interpreted differently by different magistrates in Manitoba.

A. L. Friesen, after being in business for only a few months, was convinced that he could do very nicely without any participation in the liquor trade. His immediate success upon opening his fruit and confectionery business made him decide to move out of rented premises and to own his store outright. He paid C. Pieper \$1000 for the corner lot at Montcalm Avenue and Seventh, where the Tyndall stone bank building had stood before the 1913 fire, intending to build on it in the spring of 1917. His father financed the purchase of the lots as well as all of the building costs;

When the building was finished I owed father the nice sum of \$3700.00. Imagine, for \$2700.00 in 1917 I had a house built 50×26 . The store part was 36×26 one story, including the kitchen 12×12 , the living quarters 14×26 , two story. (It would cost at least \$15,000 to put up a building like this at present.[1956])

I had this debt cleaned up in 2 years and 3 months; he didn't charge me any interest. I



Katherine (Mrs. A. L.) Friesen with children: Anne, Laurence, Ernie and Marie in 1930. P#902

Women to Vote

Winnipeg, Manitoba 16th May, 1917.

Dear Sir,

It has just been suggested that many Women in the Province do not know that they will have the privilege of registering as Voters at the Registration sittings, beginning on the 21st inst., for the purpose of compiling a new Voters List for the Province.

While I can hardly believe that this important change in the Election Law is not common knowledge, local insertions in the papers of the Rural Districts, stating that Women have the right to register, would dispel any doubt in this regard.

I would suggest that you have the Editors in your constituency insert in their respective papers, a news item to this effect.

Yours truly, J. W. Armstrong Provincial Secretary

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

remember very well the time I gave the statement of my indebtedness to him; he sure was surprised to see the sum of \$3700. He said in Plattdeutsch; "Boy, when will you be able to pay for it!"

Our future was better than I had expected, I had figured to be in a position to pay it in about 10 years; but during the years to come everybody had money and a lot of money to spend, and the people sure patronized my little business place. It was nothing new to have \$100.00 or more turn over in a day and it was only a 5 and 10¢ business; not to forget we had long hours and had to work for it. 40

Many of the children who patronized the A. L. Friesen confectionery tell stories about Benjamin Ewert, one of Friesen's best customers. It

was a regular occurrence for the Rev. Ewert to take his Sunday School charges to the "ice cream" store where he bought all of his young friends present an ice cream cone. His warmth and kindness are vividly remembered by the children in Gretna who knew him as "Uncle Bim". His ability to tolerate Gretna's little urchins in his printery and bookstore probably did as much as school to develop an awe and wonderment for the printed page among the young people. While Benjamin Ewert's chief source of income was the sale of (mainly German) textbooks to schools in the area, he continued to print Der Mitarbeiter in his shop and also published materials for the Conference of Mennonites and local businesses.

continued on page 208



Seventh Street in 1929. Extreme left is A. L. Friesen confectionery, Henry Ritz garage and office, A. Coblentz & Son store, and the new Post Office. P#626

1917 List Of Electors Electoral Division of Morden and Rhineland

Polling Division No. 2 (Including Village of Gretna only)

Brown, Charles F. M., Painter Broesky, Jacob, Carpenter Bean, Henry G., Hotelman Brown, Harry, Merchant Beau, Sidney R., Agent Buhr, Jacob, Farmer Buhr, John, Farmer Buhr, John J., Farmer Briden, W. J., Hotelkeeper Baumann, Jacob, Laborer Buhr, Peter S., Laborer Bachmann, Andrew, Laborer Brown, Ada, Married Bachman, Nena, Married Bauman, Cornelius, Laborer Carling, Hugh, Bartender Coblentz, Isaac, Merchant Chambers, Robert, Grain Buyer Coblentz, Josephine L., Wife Coblentz, Minnie, Wife Dunn, Michael, C.N.R. Agent Derksen, Jacob, Gentleman Dyck, George, Doctor Dunne, Ida May, Wife Dyck, Frank N., Teacher Ellis, Edward, Bookkeeper Erk, Ludwig, I. F. Druggist Ewert, H. H., Teacher Evler, Iacob, Laborer Ewert, Benjamin, Book dealer Ellis, R. S., Tinsmith Ewert, William, Student Ellis, Lincoln A., Mail Clerk Ellis, Mittie, Spinster Ellis, Anna, Wife Findlay, Robert, Hotelkeeper Friesen, Peter I., Miller Friesen, Jacob L., Laborer Friesen, Peter R., Farmer Friesen, Jacob P., Miller Funk, August, Laborer Friesen, Isbiund I., Teacher Friesen, Jacob N., Miller Fedronka, Josef, Laborer Friesen, Peter W., Miller Friesen, Abraham P., Teacher Friesen, Heinriette, Wife

Friesen, Maria, Wife Friesen, Lina A. L., Wife Francis, Reginald, Mounted Police Friesen, Sara M., Wife Friesen, A. L., Clerk Guether, Abraham, Farmer Gesner, August, Laborer Geres, Valentine, Laborer Gross, Fred, Laborer Gross, Rudolf, Laborer Gross, Philip, Sectionman Groessy, John, Baker Gustafson, John, Foreman Gross, Heinrich, Laborer Geres, Natalia, Wife Hobbs, John A., Collector of Customs Hutchison, E. B., C.P.R. Agent Hellafs, Herman, Butcher Heibert, Peter A., Farmer Hodgson, John, H.M.C. Hampel, Albert, Shoemaker Hellofs, Wm., Farmer Heinrich, Johann, Laborer Hobson, Andrew J., Asst. Agent C.P.R. Hiebert, Jacob P., Laborer Hodgson, Ellen, Wife Hutchison, Ethel, Wife Hellofs, Mary L., Spinster Irving, John, Blacksmith Irving, Gladys M., Teacher Irving, Margaret, Wife Johnston, Chas, Horse trainer Iangen, Isaac I., Clerk Jauzen, Jacob I., Teacher Kauss, Adolf, Sectionman Klaasen, Abraham, Farmer Konanz, John, Farmer Krause, Anton, Harnessmaker Kroeker, Peter, Farmer Kehler, J. J., Clerk Klassen, John, Sr., Clerk Klassen, John J., Farmer Kiere, Christen, Laborer Kuliman, Jacob, Laborer Krause, Maria, Wife Krause, Annie, Teacher Krause, Martha, Spinster Krause, F. A., Harnessmaker Kehler, Anna, Wife Konanz, Mary, Wife Leiding, Gustav, Laborer Loeppky, E. T., Clerk Loeppky, Abraham, Gentleman

Loewen, P. H., Farmer Loeppky, Johon T., Farmer Loewen, Henry, Farmer Latzko, Henry A., Blacksmith Loewen, Deidrich P., Laborer Loewen, Peter P., Laborer Loewen, Henry P., Laborer Martins, Carnelius, Farmer Martens, Jacob, Farmer Marshall, Jesse, Mail Clerk McLennan, James, Teacher Mohr, John, Tailor Machdanz, Hermann, Gentleman Morrison, M. L., Grain Buyer Massewiez, Julius, Laborer McEdward, Gordon G., Butcher McPherson, John, Liveryman Nikkel, Jacob E., Teacher Newton, Harry, Caretaker Neufeld, I.K.A., Telephone agent Newfield, Marie, Wife Orser, Alfred, C.P.R. hand Orser, Daisy, Wife Pieper, Christian, Machinery Agent Pieper, Charles F., Farmer Penner, Heinrich, Farmer Penner, Iacob, Farmer Penes, Alex, Section foreman Popp, Ferdinand, Gentleman Proskurniak, Wm., Laborer Pieper, Christena, Wife Pieper, Mary, Wife Pierson, Nancy, Widow Pieper, Pearl, Spinster Pennes, Mary, Wife Pennes, Nettie, Spinster Reimer, Henry P., Farmer Rosenow, Albert C., Bookkeeper Ritz, Henry, Banker Reimer, Peter, Farmer Reimer, Philip, Farmer's son Reimer, Iacob, Farmer's son Richardson, John D., Auto agent Rosenow, Annie G., Wife Ritz, Sara, Wife Roeder, Clara M., Wife Richardson, Beulah, Wife Schimnowski, August, Harness maker Schuppers, Philip, Bookkeeper Shallcross, Frank, Minister Schwitek, Fred, Laborer Schweitzer, Johan, Laborer Smith, A., Farmer

Schwittick, John, Laborer Sopel, John, Laborer Street, Hugh, Butcher Spenst, Gerhard, Grain buyer Schmidt, Jacob, Merchant Schott, Philip, Laborer Sheedy, Timothy F., Grain buyer Schellenberg, David, Jr., Farmer Schopper, Conrade, Caretaker Sawatzky, J. I., Farmer Schmidt, Henry H., Farmer Schimnoski, John, Jr., Carpenter Sawatzky, Henry, Farmer Stevenson, James A., Vet. surgeon Schott, Fred, Laborer Schenll, Jacob, Laborer Siemens, John J., Laborer Schrein, Fran, Laborer Siegel, Franz, Clerk Scharein, Humann, Plasterer Searie, F., Baggageman C.P.R. Schmitt, Peter, Laborer Sirebizki, Robert, Carpenter Schimnowski, B. M., Harness maker Sheedy, Elizabeth, Wife Street, Amelia, Wife Stevenson, Sara Grace, Wife Schimnowski, Elizabeth, Wife Suderman, Jacob E., Teacher Schwittick, Annie, Spinster Shelleross, Elizabeth, Wife Siegel, Tina, Wife Schwittich, Wilhelmina, Wife Schroeder, Johann, Laborer Toews, Jacob Ir., Gentleman Towes, Jacob Sr., Farmer Ulrich, Carl, Laborer Villers, De Louis A., Brakeman Wiebe, Gerhard F., Student Williams, Levi, Grain buyer Wahn, Charles, Agent Whidden, Arthur, Carpenter Wilwand, Reinold, Laborer Wiebe. Heinrich D., Laborer Wanniezuk, Fred, Sectionman Wiebe, Abraham II, Student Williams, Jessie, Wife Wahn, Louise, Wife Wilmot, Helen G., Teacher Ziegler, Louis, Carpenter Ziegler, Carl F., Harnessmaker

Public Archives of Canada

Budget Report of MCI for 1915-1916.

	Income	
	Members & School friends	\$4400.40
	Paid up Notes of students	66.00
	Income from students	3317.05
	Advance from Sec. Treasurer	212.00
	Total Income	\$7995.45
	Expenditures	
\boldsymbol{A} .	Capital expenditures	
	Teacher salaries	\$2730.00
	Coal & wood (fuel)	558.80
	Looking after the furnace	56.50
	Cleaning of school	93.50
	Service salary	48.10
	Chemicals	26.35
	Printing material, chalk, paper, etc	56.85
	Miscellaneous expenses	76.10
	Shopping expenses at Kehlers	100.20
	Travelling expenses	106.00
	Total	\$3852.40
В.		
D.	One-time Expenses Furniture	\$129.90
	Cook & Table ware	81.50
	Painting the rooms	103.13
	Table for the laboratory, etc	141.56
	Physics apparatus	50.00
	Lumber at Friesens	50.68
	Interest at Friesens	265.00
		\$822.29
	Total	\$022.23
C.		
	Debts of the Verein	\$1775.84
	Assets of the Verein	
	Notes of students	\$306.10
	Old Promises	350.00
	New Promises	500.00
	Past donations	100.00
	Total	\$1256.10
	Leaving net debt of	\$519.84
	Der	Mitarbeiter
	501	July 1916
		Juny 2010

Principals' Report

The July 1916 edition of **Der Mitarbeiter** carried the following report of the Principal of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute to the school's Board of Directors for the school year 1915–1916:

Looking back at the past year we must happily acknowledge: "The Lord has done great things for us, for that we rejoice!" He directed an unexpectedly large number of students our way, let us do our work, and protected us from disturbances and set-backs and gave strength for the completion of the numerous tasks he gave us.

With the arrangement of courses for first class teachers, the Board of Directors filled a real need, which became evident when ten candidates applied and finished the course. Next year probably the class won't be as large, but perhaps half a dozen will apply. The other classes were as follows: 11 in Class II; 11 in Class III—A; 17 in Class III—B; 5 in Class III—A & B; 19 in Grade VIII—A and 11 in Grade VIII—B. Students that attended the Institute only a short time are not included in the above totals.

The total registered number of students, including the six students of the summer courses

was 94, exceeding the total of the previous year by 38, and the highest number of students ever enrolled thus far by 27. The number of female students increases every year too. This year there were 20 students (female). The age of students ranged from 11 to 34. Three were married. Sixteen students came from outside Manitoba, 13 from the east reserve, the rest from the Mennonite settlements west of the Red River, 15 were from Gretna and surrounding area.

In regard to religious denominations: one came from the Catholic Church; two from the Presbyterian; six from the Lutheran; five from the Adventist; two from the Baptist; and two from the New Church — altogether 18 that were not Mennonite. Out of the Mennonite Churches: three came from the Kleinegemeinde; four from the Bruderthal Gemeinde; ten from the Sommerfelder Gemeinde; eighteen from the Brethern Gemeinde; and twenty-eight from the Conference Churches.

The students really appreciate the arrangement of the reading room, the expansion of the library, and the improved furnishing of the laboratory with apparatuses. However, it would be



H. H. Ewert playing hockey in 1917. P#497

wonderful if both the library and the laboratory could be furnished even more fully and extensively.

The first attempt will be made to have a course during the summer. Six students want to attend to extend their education. The subjects offered will be those required in the examinations for the second class teachers.

More and more the need for Latin in the teaching courses becomes evident. The Latin language is one of the roots of the English language. Some knowledge of Latin would help much to understand the English language better. The teachers have received much satisfaction and joy working with the students, and hope that good things will result. The conduct of the students on the whole was good. Occasionally direction and admonishing were necessary, however no serious deviations have occurred.

H. H. Ewert⁴¹

tion:

Conscription

As the war dragged on the Canadian Government came under increasing pressure to introduce a conscription bill. Attempting to unify the Mennonite front to the Ottawa politicians, H. H. Ewert and his brother Benjamin worked with other Western Canadian Mennonite leaders to make sure that Mennonites would be exempted if conscription in Canada became a reality! The Government of Canada passed an Order-in-Council on October 5, 1916 which set up a National Service Board to coordinate a national assessment of manpower available in Canada. This assessment resulted in the mailing of registration cards to all Canadian households. These cards were the first tangible threat to those Canadians who were Conscientious Objectors. A delegation of representatives of Mennonite settlers from Western Canada, made up of Rev. Abraham Doerksen, Rev. Heinrich Doerksen, Rev. David Toews, Rev. Benjamin Ewert, and Klaas Peters presented a petition in regard to military service to the Government at Ottawa on January 8, 1917.

Benjamin Ewert printed a booklet entitled

Important Documents (Wichtige Dokumente), which included the 1872 and 1873 Reports and Orders-in-Council upon which the delegation based its exemption claims. 42 The time and energy required to ensure the guarantees and privileges the Mennonites had obtained from the Canadian Government, which the Ewert brothers devoted to this cause, paid rich dividends. They had received help from the Honorable Valentine Winkler, who knew the importance this issue had for his continued electoral success. He was quick to intercede in matters of a more local nature when one of his Gretna constituents brought them to his atten-



Men serving during W.W. I. Seated: Jack McPherson. Standing: Jim Briden, son of Wm. Briden and John P. Loewen, son of P. H. Loewen. P#353

Time For Registration

Registration took place in Gretna on May 20, and an onlooker would have thought that there was an election on; the excitement being intense at times. Automobiles from all over the district were bringing in candidates for registration from early morning until the close at 9:30 p.m., 105 being added and 26 names were struck off. Registration clerk, M. Loewen having a very busy day of it. Mr. W. Graham looked after the interests of W. J. Tupper and V. Winkler looked after his own.

Neche Chronotype May 28, 1914

Keep It Clean

Gretna, Man., May 17, 1915

Hon. Val. Winkler, Winnipeg, Man.

Dear Sir:

Allow me to congratulate you to your accession to the position of minister to the Crown. We are looking for good clean government from you and your colleagues and hope that the days are ended where good citizens have to live in fear of the government. I hope that you will not be bothered much by hungry office hunters from your constituency. You may be glad that the few of our Mennonite people who had a desire to get to the public crib have long ago switched over to the conservative side. I think it is well if the aspirations of people in this direction be not much encouraged.

Wishing you much success in the administration of your department I remain

Yours truly, H. H. Ewert

Provincial Archives of Manitoba

June 21st, 1916

Hon. V. Winkler, M.P.P., Minister of Agriculture, Winnipeg, Man.

Dear Mr. Winkler:

Regarding the appointing of a clerk for Gretna County Court, I have taken this up and Charles Wahn will accept the appointment provided he gets a rental allowance of \$15 per month for use of office. In case of County Court meetings a special hall will be required and this will be in additional to the above. The trouble apparently is that certain firms of lawyers, writing for information, neglect to enclose the necessary fees, or even a postage stamp for reply.

I understand there is some trouble regarding our telephone central here. Want to move it to Altona. If we could get the particulars I believe we could arrange some without any trouble.

Can you not arrange to come down and see us? There are some little things like the above to be settled and we could do so in short order if you could pay us a visit.

Yours sincerely, (signed) G. Coblentz

Winnipeg, June 21st, 1916

Godfrey Coblentz, Esq., Gretna, Manitoba.

Dear Sir:

I have your letter, and note what you say in regard to the appointment of a County Court Clerk at Gretna. I will see what can be done in the matter.

I also note what you say in regard to your Telephone Central: I have taken this matter up with the Telephone Commission, and they inform me that there is no intention of changing the Telephone Central, except about 25 feet to the north of where it is at the present time, where, I understand, Mr. Neufeld is establishing a store. If this is not satisfactory, report to me at once.

I am unable to say when I can go to Gretna, as I am very busy.

Yours very truly,
[Valentine Winkler]
Minister of Agriculture and Immigration.

The Hon. Valentine Winkler, Minister of Agric. & Immig'n, Legislative Buildings, City.

Sir:

Re Clerkship, County Court of Gretna.

I have the honor to acknowledge receipt of your letter under date the 21st. inst., relative to above, also Mr. Erk's letter of resignation. Awaiting your further instructions,

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your obedient servant, (Signed) Irving Inspector L.O.

302 Confederation Life Building Winnipeg, Sept. 13th. 1916

Inspector Legal Offices Boyd Building, City.

Dear Sir:-

Re Acheson vs Braun

About a month ago I forwarded to the clerk of the County court at Gretna the necessary documents to procure the issue of a writ for Mrs. Acheson against J. J. Braun. Not hearing from the Clerk, I have written him once or twice but failed to receive any reply.

Surely there is something seriously wrong with the system when our business is attended to in such a fashion, or rather is not attended to at all. Can you do anything to assist me in this matter. It is not possible to arrange for the issue of the writ in another office if this man will not attend to his business.

Your truly, (Signed) L. D. Smith.



Ludwig Erk and Philip Schuppert in 1962. P#832

Personal

P.O. Box 911, Winnipeg. September 18th. 1916.

Hon. V. Winkler, Minister of Agriculture, Legislative Buildings, City.

Sir:-

Re Resignation of L. Erk as County Court Clerk of Gretna.

Referring to this matter about which I wrote you on June 16th.; June 21st. and July 12th. last, I now have the honor to enclose copy of a letter just received from Mr. L. D. Smith, Solicitor, Winnipeg.

I am informed Mr. Erk has some occupation in Winnipeg and does not attend to the business of the Court at Gretna in a way satisfactory to suitors. I would also advise you that the next sittings of the Court will be held on October 5th. next and that it is of the utmost importance some arrangement be made for the appointment of a successor to Mr. Erk without delay.

I have the honor to be, Sir, Your obedient servant, (Signed) Irving Inspector L.O.

1Enclosure.43

Wartime Limbo

Gretna's commercial success continued despite the war. The CPR was running two trains a day between Gretna and Rosenfeld. Gretna maintained its reputation as a centre for the flax trade. Immigration had dropped off, but there was enough business to keep both the Gretna and West Gretna Customs and staff occupied most of the time. The 1916 Canadian census shows that the population of Gretna had dropped to 554 from 646 ten years earlier, but that the number of residents had increased from the 519 souls identified by the 1911 census. Business at the Post Office also showed a steady growth even though its new building hung in the Ottawa limbo due to the war. 44 Edward Ellis must have hoped for a quick end to the war so that the Post Office construction could get under way at the corner across from the Queen's Hotel. The rubble from the 1913 fire, which had occupied the original site of Enoch Winkler's lumber business, had long been cleaned up and the vacant lots were "grassed" over and called "the Park" by Gretna's younger set.

The Village Council saw its first change in some years when Godfrey Coblentz was elected Mayor for the year 1917. Alex Morrison, Customs Collector, replaced Alderson on Council. Dr. George Dyck was re-appointed as Health Officer and Charles Wahn was in his usual position as Secretary-Treasurer. The only change among the trustees was the replacement of Ludwig Erk by Levi Williams. Erk had "dropped out" of the School Board because of his move to Winnipeg earlier in the year. Gretna people had observed his departures and returns before and made little comment. They knew that even if he never came back, he would always remain a part of their community.

Others would not be fortunate enough to return to Gretna. "Killed in action, Lance Corporal William Timothy Schimnowski, better known as Big Bill."

Back home the Boy Scouts held a meeting at Briden's Hall: Commissioners McIntosh and

Mills from the Winnipeg Army and Medical Corps spoke to the gathering. The Scouts gave demonstrations of first-aid and general scouting skills. The Girl Guides raffled a quilt following a tennis tournament in May 1917, raising \$17.50 for the Red Cross. Packages were sent overseas by Scouts and Guides intended for Gretna soldiers. Among local boys who enlisted that spring were Albert Pieper and George Irving. William Ewert enlisted in the military dental corps. Because of the war, Gretna again decided not to put on a July 1 celebration. The young people attended a farewell dance for the Gretna and Neche boys who were about to leave for points overseas. J. F. Tennant received mention in the August 2, 1917 **Neche Chronotype** for spending his holidays in Gretna recruiting on behalf of the Army and Navy Veterans Association. The active 72 year old war veteran had successfully signed up 20 young people to enlist in the Canadian Armed Forces. The farewells given these young soldiers were filled with the hopes and prayers of parents and friends who knew not all would come back.

Midsummer provided an opportunity for a less cloudy farewell to Rev. Paul Baehnisch and his wife who had served St. Paul's Lutheran Church since 1906. The Ladies' Aid presented Mrs. Baehnisch with a flower vase. The Rev. Baehnisch had served at Gretna during some of the congregation's more difficult times. He had watched many parishioners move to points west to homestead. Church membership at the time of his departure hovered around 200. Pastor Friedrich Ewald succeeded the Rev. Baehnisch at St. Paul's Lutheran. He brought with him an interest in music and under his leadership Lutherans would see their choir and young people's group revitalized. 46

Joining Forces

The young men in Neche and Gretna did not let the war interfere with their love for baseball. The Internationals had been re-organized the previous season as a way of coping with the



Bill and Al Pieper, sons of Chris Pieper in 1913. P#529

World War I

I left Gretna in 1914, worked in Winnipeg, enlisted in the Winnipeg Rifles in 1915, went to France in 1916. Returned to Winnipeg May 1919 a day before the Winnipeg strike. The ugliest strike that ever took place in Winnipeg.

Jim Briden came to our machine gun unit when he arrived in France. We spent the next three years carrying machine guns through France, Belgium and finally into Germany after the armistice.

We spent five months in and around Cologne on the Rhine. We managed to get in touch with Jack McEdward now and then. We were on leave in London at the time the armistice was signed, and managed to help the people there celebrate the occasion November IIth. We had spent the day with George Irving who was working in the pay office in London at the time. Unfortunately we had to go back to France the next day. We managed to see Alfred Ewert several times, also Reg Tennant before he was killed.

J. P. Loewen

sudden depletion of their ranks by a consolidation of playing talent. The Gretna-Neche team's record was a great one in the summer of 1917:

The Neche–Gretna baseball team has been putting up a fast article of ball during the past two months and on records of wins and losses against the fastest teams of the territory claim the championship of the northeastern part of the state. They won nine games out of thirteen played and have shut out their opponents four times. The Pembina team, touted as hard hitters, were shut out and allowed three safe hits on July Fourth. Only 29 men faced Cook, the Neche–Gretna pitcher in nine innings. He struck out ten of the Pembina players. The boys are fast, clean players and are willing to go up against any team in the northwest. 47

War did not slow down the pace of Gretna's social life in 1917 either. The Sunday School picnics, lawn socials organized by the Presbyterian ladies, baseball games and tennis matches were supplemented by visits from friends and family. A regular summer visitor, Dr. James McKenty, received a warmer than, usual welcome that summer in recognition of his election as President of the Canadian Medical Association. He was one of the Association's more active members and Gretna took pride in his achievements.⁴⁸ In addition to the latest war reports, talk focused on the possibility of starting a hospital in Gretna. Dr. Dyck occupied the former Erdmann Penner (Joseph Tennant) residence, providing his medical services from that spacious facility. Townsfolk suggested the doctor convert some of this space into a hospital. The idea gained some backing from Council which proposed that Dr. Dyck be exempted from taxes if he establish a hospital facility with accommodation for at least six patients and with one full-time nurse in charge.⁴⁹ The proposal came early in the winter, but it arrived too late. Dr. Dyck was already looking for a change in location, turning over his practise to Dr. Paul Wolochow, a recent graduate of the University of Manitoba

Medical School.⁵⁰ The hospital idea died with the departure of Dr. Dyck.

Wartime Elections Act

The war dominated all news by this time. The Allied Forces had not marched to the quick victory they had anticipated, troop morale was low and Prime Minister Borden's visit to England early in 1917 convinced him that drastic action was necessary. He introduced a Military Service Act that summer and passed a Wartime Elections Act in September. This Act effectively took the vote away from all who refused to fight and from all aliens who were not British or Canadian born. Anyone who chose to vote in the federal election held that year, forfeited their exemption from military service under this Act. This did not concern most Mennonites, since many had never exercised their right to vote before this time. 51 Concern among some leaders in the Mennonite community grew with the changes in the legislation which had come into effect the previous year governing Manitoba public schools. The Wartime Elections Act took away the political mechanism from the Mennonites in Manitoba in their fight against the move, by the Provincial Department of Education, to bring all schools in Manitoba under their jurisdiction. Instruction in the German or French language was no longer recognized, and school inspectors worked diligently to subvert the Mennonite school districts.

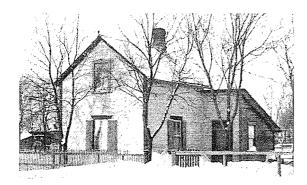
Gretna school children were not caught in the controversy, but both Ewert brothers made representation to the Provincial Government through their Honorable Valentine Winkler. Winkler took his constituents' concerns to his Cabinet colleagues, but did not succeed in overcoming the strong Anglo–Saxon biases inflamed by the continuing war in Europe. It was a small consolation for Mennonite church leaders that H. H. Ewert's school in Gretna had trained enough of their own membership that the English only schools imposed on them were staffed by Mennonite teachers.

The Public School in Gretna, nonetheless, was not without its problems at this time. Staff departures had left the school shorthanded and without a principal. The School Board appointed Margaret Wahn as Acting Principal until the end of the school year. The number of Gretna students who passed their departmental exams that year served to illustrate Miss Wahn's abilities as school administrator. The principal's responsibilities were turned over to Mr. Rideout in August 1917. He came on the scene at a time when war fever was at a new high in Gretna.

Victory Effort

The Girl Guides organized frequent fundraising teas and card parties while the Boy Scouts collected old clothes, rubbers, old stockings and rags to sell in aid of Red Cross efforts overseas. The Girl Guides motto was "If you can't boost, don't knock." The young people sent Christmas boxes to Gretna's James Briden, William McPherson, Louis Hobbs, John Loewen, A. Kluhas and J. McEdwards in the trenches.

Casualty lists kept growing. A sniper killed Lt. Hobson in France and Pte. Jake Hiebert died of wounds in a hospital in England. Political differences were set aside in Gretna to consolidate efforts in the Village's work to end the war.



Dr. F. D. McKenty album identifies house at Mont-calm Ave. and 9th St. as Gretna's Hospital. Circa 1905. P#1449D

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Scorecard of baseball game between Gretna and McGregor on July 5, 1921.

Military Service Registration of June 22, 1918

Male

- 1. Full name. (Surname last). Present address.
- 2. Age. Date and country of birth.
- 3. Race. Do you speak English? French?
- 4. Are you a British subject?
 - a) through birth? b) through naturalization? If naturalized, give year and place.
- 5. If not a British subject, what country do you pledge allegiance?
- 6. Are you single, married, widowed or divorced?
- 7. How many children under 16 have you?
- 8. Any physical problems?
- 9. If registered under the military services act, what is your number?
 - (Mennonites are to answer: "Exempted as Mennonite")
- 10. Occupation?
 - a) present occupation?
 - b) usual occupation?
 - c) What other work can you do? Length of experience in a, b, or c.
- 11. If working, give name and address and business of present employer.
- 12. Would your present situation allow you to serve in the present national crisis, i.e. change to different job, change jobs if the conditions were satisfactory?

 a) go home every day?
 - b) if you were away from home?
- 13. Were you raised on the farm?
 - a) Till what age?
 - b) Have you worked on a farm? How long?
 - c) Are you a returned farmer?
 - d) Can you handle horses? Operate cauldron or boiler? Use (run) farm machinery?
 - e) Would you be willing to do farm work? Where? What time?

continued

A "union" meeting was held in Briden's Hall early in November and Henry Ritz and J. A. Hobbs were unanimously elected to attend a "Convention to Win the War" at Morden, Ritz set up a Victory War Loan Office at his Seventh Street place of business, and the Victory Loan campaign which was already under way was intensified. More that \$100,000 was raised in Gretna before the New Year. Donations were made to the Red Cross by the school and its students as well as by the Village of Gretna Council. Residents were bombarded with one drive or another on a monthly basis. When things seemed to be slowing down, the Presbyterian Ladies' Aid stepped into the breach and provided new organization and enthusiasm. Under Mrs. Shallcross' leadership they united all the various Ladies' Aids in town and created a Red Cross Sewing Circle. Commented the May 1918 Neche Chronotype. "It is gratifying to see the Ladies of the various churches united for a common cause. Surely the war has accomplished what our creeds have failed to do."52

Gretna's menfolk got together and decided that the Ladies' Aid and Girl Guides needed some recognition for the hard work they had put into the war effort. Mssrs. Shallcross, Hogg and Coblentz were chosen to organize a social evening in their honour. Records do not show who made the sandwiches, dainties and coffee. A note of optimism was beginning to find its way back into social life once more. Men, such as the son of John Hodgson, were returning from the front. Bearing the scars of war, and a military medal for bravery, Hodgson was living proof that it was possible to survive the war and come home again. The Girl Guides sold carnations for Mother's Day for the first time that year. The flowers, a symbol of hope for the future, raised money for the Red Cross and reminded Gretna mothers of their sons overseas. Corporal W. Hodgson returning to the front that spring was killed in action. Fred and John Schwittick were "called to the colors" in the spring of 1918 and Flying Cadet C. A. Pieper was transferred to Toronto. Dr. Dyck and his

new bride, Eva Murphy, moved to the U.S. and Martha Krause entered the Grey Nuns Convent at St. Boniface. By the time summer had arrived, John Hodgson was also getting ready to move to Winnipeg. The losses overseas were becoming Gretna's losses in a very real way.

The German army had received reinforcements from the Eastern Front in early spring of 1918. With fresh troops and new strategy they were able to recapture in a week's fighting the French territory they had given up to the Allied Forces in the two years previous. The Canadian Government was alarmed by this turn of events and intensified recruitment efforts. "Food controllers" were appointed and organized by the Young Men's Christian Association, with the objective of raising even more money in support of Canadian forces. Godfrey Coblentz was put in charge of the food drive for Gretna, with the objective of raising no less than 25¢ for every man, woman and child living in the Village.

Boys' and Girls' Club

The first Boys' and Girls' Clubs had started in Manitoba in 1913 and had grown into a well organized system of competitions, under the direction of Provincial Agriculture and Education Departments personnel. The clubs encouraged young people in rural Manitoba to increase both the quality and quantity of agricultural produce in their community. The government interest grew out of the need to provide as much grain as possible to send to the troops in Europe. The farm garden had become an important part of the war effort. The Department of Agriculture encouraged Manitoba teachers to organize these garden and farming activities by providing certain seeds and supplies free, on condition that club participants provide additional amounts. The Department encouraged banks to provide Manitoba's Boys' and Girls' Clubs with the financial resources needed to purchase livestock such as pigs and sheep. This was intended to build a sense of responsibility and provide money management experience to the province's future farmers.⁵³

The July 1918 Presbyterian Sunday School picnic held the first local Boys' and Girls' Club competition, a wild flower bouquet competition, which acted as a catalyst in redirecting the activities of the Guides and the Scouts. The Gretna Boys' and Girls' Club formally came into existence later in July 1918. Poultry and Horticulture Clubs would be in operation before the end of the year.54 All Gretna Boys' and Girls' Club activities were supervised and instructed by local citizens - who often assisted with their own speciality. At the same time, citizens took on the responsibility of coordinating all Red Cross activities for the Rhineland Municipality. The introduction of conscription in Canada had produced an even greater insularity than had existed to date among the Mennonites in Manitoba. Gretna was the only centre on the West Reserve at all receptive to the government's intensified war effort.

Mennonite Registration

On the last Saturday in June 1918, registration of all men 16 years of age and over took place in Gretna. All exemptions for men 20-22 years of age inclusive had been cancelled in April and every able-bodied young male was expected to carry proof of exemption. The police had sweeping powers to search for evaders. It was a tense day for the registrars in Gretna. Miss G. Irving, Miss A. Krause, P. Loewen and the new principal, Mr. Rideout, tried to reassure those Mennonites who did come to register that this was nothing more than a formality and that their 1873 Conscientious Objectors privileges were not in danger of being taken away. But stories of long jail sentences and confusion over the difference in status between Manitoba's Mennonites and those in Ontario made Gretna a place to avoid at all cost, if you were worried about the long arm of the conscription law.55

Shortly after the war started Dr. Basil S. O'Grady had set up his dental practice in the

Village. He had been a firm believer that even young Mennonite men would come to see him if the pain got bad enough. His aggressive advertising campaign kept his business alive for a few years but finally he gave up in the summer of 1918, turning his facilities over to Dr. Lyon Bercovitch.

Dr. Wolochow's offices and drug store, meanwhile, were situated in the former H. Unger store. Wolochow also could be reached at his new residence near the Chris Pieper place, the house recently vacated by John Hodgson.⁵⁶

August 4, 1918, Gretna's churches observed the fourth anniversary of the beginning of the

continued on page 217

Beitgemäße Alufündigung.

Da sich bereits die Borboten des Winters bemertbar maden, bente, tieber Leser an Deine Kähne, die vielleicht nicht meta so sind, wie sie sein sollten, Wisse, bat, solche die Ursache verschiedener Leiden put

Ronnne sofort zu mir, und ich werte Deinen Unnaperat wieder herstellen wie er sein soll.

Ich garantiere meine Platten und Aritenarbeit und ich bin sicher, daß wenn Du bis erst einmal von mir wirft. Deine Zähne zwecht machen lassen Du wünschen wirst, hinc. ih es duch sich in längst getan.

Space Dir Wetd und Schmerzen indem Du Deine Rähne nicht länger vernachläßigh. Sprich bei mir vor ober telephoniere wegen Reitbestimmung.

Dr. Basil S. O'Grady

Gretna, - - Manitoba.

Der Mitarbeiter, 1916-18.

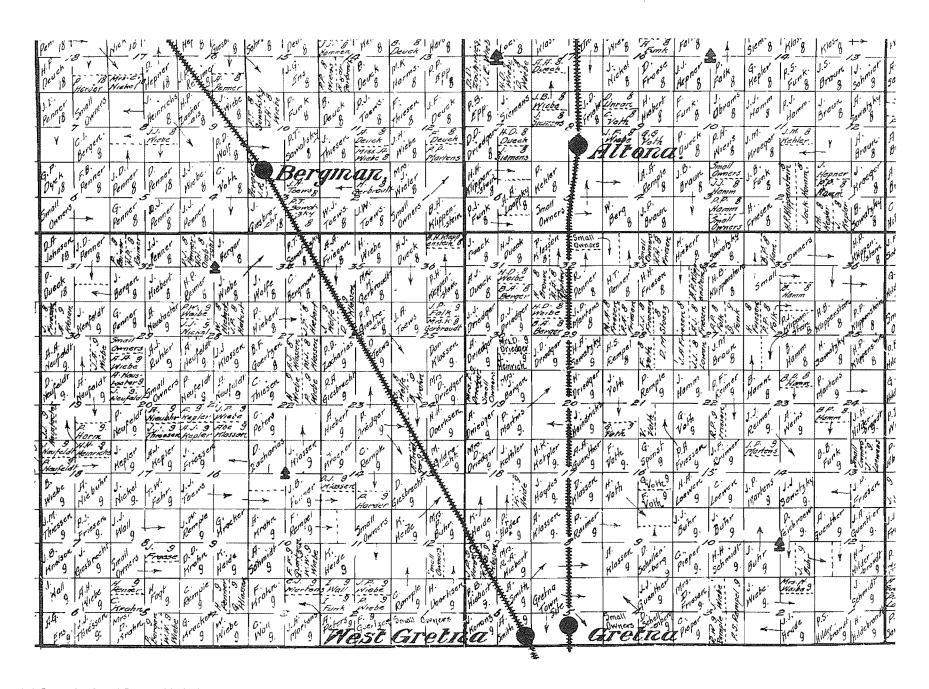
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Military Service . . . cont'd

Female

- 1. Full name. (Surname last).
- 2. Age?
- 3. Present regular address?
- 4. Nationality. Do you speak English? French?
- 5. Are you a British subject?
 a) through birth? b) through naturalization? c) through marriage?
- 6. Are you single? Married? Widowed? Divorced?
- 7. How many children or foster under 16? Are others going to register these children?
- 8. Would your health and family responsibilities allow you, if requested, to work full time for wages? (If no, omit next questions. If yes, or in doubt you must answer. All must sign the statements made.)
- 9. Do circumstances allow you to be away from home?
- What is your present occupation?
 a) If an employer, list number of workers b) If employee, give name, business and address of employer c) If in voluntary service fulltime, give name of association.
- 11. Give details of trade or calling, grade diploma, certificate or special training.
- 12. Amount of experience in: a) farming, b) growing vegerables, c) fruit growing, d) raising poultry, e) dairying.
- 13. Can you operate a) cauldron? b) motor car? c) can you cook?
- 14. State aptitudes or practical experience not yet men-
- 15. Considering health, education (training) and experience, how could you best serve?
- 16. Do circumstances allow you to work full time without remuneration?

Rural Municipality of Rhineland vault Altona, Man.



1918 Cummins Land Ownership Index.

PAM

"war to end all wars". Attendance was low that Sunday prompting Gretna's correspondent to the **Neche Chronotype** to do a little editorializing:

Is it any wonder Victory is delayed when so many people don't take one hour for divine service. The greatest Ally we have to win the war must not be forgotten.⁵⁷

Epidemic Closes School

By the end of October, news from the front was much more encouraging. The home front, however, was in no mood to celebrate. An influenza epidemic was marching across North America. Gretna residents were driven to their beds and Dr. Wolochow was busier than he had ever hoped to be in his new practice. The Gretna Public School was shut down for the months of November and December. All of Gretna joined the Pieper family in mourning the death of their daughter Pearl early in the new year. MCI students were also sent home

for over a month at the height of the epidemic. Still, the MCI stayed open for nine months in 1918 with one of the school's healthiest enrollments ever. 58 The Public School was much harder hit, it operated its classes only on Saturday mornings until the end of the school term in June 1919. 59

Celebrations marking the end of the war, because of the epidemic, were less boisterous than they might have been. Those who were well enough took to the streets on November 11, 1918 excited at news of the Allied victory, but even more relieved that life in Gretna — once proudly called the German capital of Western Canada — could return to normal. Mothers with sons overseas could look to the safe return of their boys who would come back grown up and older than their years. A bonfire was lit on Seventh Street, a joyous fire which would be forgotten long before the fire of 1913.60 Nonetheless, it was every bit as important in marking the end of an era in the life of this community poised on the 49th Parallel.

Armistice Day

When it was over, I remember them burning the Kaiser, right on the corner of Hespeler & Main (burned an effigy).

There was a bit of feelings as far as (the number of Germans) who lived in Gretna. (Anything in school?) They had bond sales. There were feelings not too good at times. You did what all the other schools did . . . Have exercises (drills), (we were) taught not to forget what was going on.

R. C. Pieper interview

Suffrage in Canada

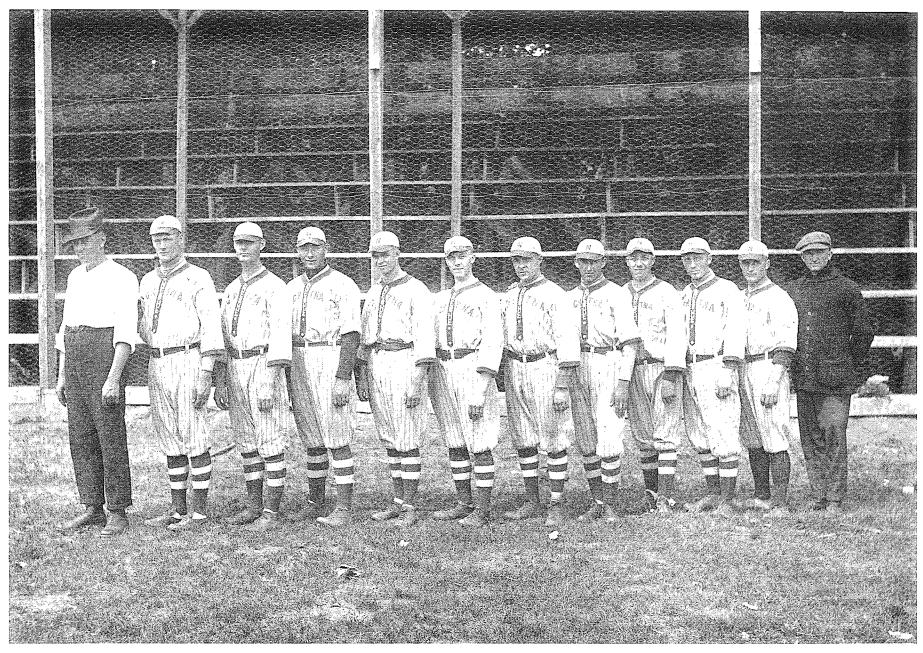
The election for the 13th Parliament was held under "The Dominion Elections Act," and the "The Military Voters' Act 1917," and consequently under unprecedented conditions. Polling took place, not only in Canada, but Overseas, and not merely in British territory, but in allied countries as well. Each man serving in the Canadian Army and Navy was entitled to vote and so were his immediate female relations of age. The unusual period of four weeks which intervened between nomination and election day was attributable to the operation of the Military Voters' Act and the time required for polling overseas. At home, as usual, the voting was confined to one day, December 17, 1917, except in the Yukon, where voting took place Jan. 28, 1918, and Nelson, Man., where the election (acclamation) took place March 4th.

Contrary to customary practice, for a Federal franchise operated in this election,, Provincial lists were not used. Returning officers selected enumerators to compile new Dominion lists and, for the first time in a Dominion election, these lists contained the names of women. Complete woman suffrage was not granted, but the wives, mothers, widows and sisters of soldiers were entitled to vote. Army nurses were also accorded votes.

Naturalized aliens of enemy nationality whose citizenship was secured since 1902 were debarred from the privilege of voting at this election.

While the laws governing the election were exceptional so was the political situation. Instead of the two historical political parties confronting one another on familiar lines, in this case a "Union" Government party including Liberal "Unionists" as well as Conservatives and Conservative "Unionists" faced an opposition of anti-Unionist Liberals.

The Parliamentary Guide 1918



Original Gretna-Neche Internationals Baseball Club in front of grandstand (southeast quarter, section 5) near Turf Club. Fred Vosper, manager; Henry Jenson, first base; Bobby Foster, center field; Woodyville, right field; Eddie James, shortstop; Charles Hayward, third base; J. Briden, left field; George Symington, catcher and utility; Jimmy Symington, secretary-treasurer, in 1923. P#200

Chapter Six

Modern Times

Excitement mounted in Gretna in the spring of 1919. The influenza epidemic was slowly losing its grip on the village inhabitants. The war was over and some of the Gretna boys who had gone to the front returned home as heroes. It was time to prepare for a major celebration. Honorary banquets had been held during the course of the winter, both indoor and outdoor sports were taken up with renewed vigour, and the Gretna Theatre offered its magic light shows on an almost weekly basis.

Dominion Day was chosen as the day for Gretna citizens to celebrate the ending of the horror of war. Key to the festive occasion was a baseball tournament. Parades, dancing and displays prepared by the Gretna Boys' and Girls' Club, along with baseball, were advertised on both sides of the border. The response was tremendous. The \$100 first prize money attracted five teams to the tournament. A Gretna team went up against a Neche team for the first prize money in the final game of the day. The Gretna team emerged victorious, confirming all reports that this was the team to beat in 1919. Victors and vanguished alike joined in the festivities at Briden's Hall that evening, dancing to the music of Finlay's Kiltie Band.¹

A Clear Message

Things left undone during the war years were picked up again. Village Council, made up of H. Street, M. Dunne, H. Ritz, W. J. Briden, and Mayor Godfrey Coblentz unanimously endorsed a motion at their March 4th meeting stating:

That the Mayor and secretary (Charles Wahn) draft a letter and send same to our present members (of parliament) and one to the Department of Public Works, Ottawa, regarding the crying need of a Public Building in our Village as per estimates brought down before the war.²

The message was clear. The Village of Gretna and Postmaster Ellis had waited long enough for the new Post Office. The small park at the corner of Hespeler Avenue and Seventh Street was pleasant enough, but customs and immigration, as well as post office personnel, felt the volume of business passing through Gretna warranted new and expanded quarters. The border crossing had remained busy during the war years.

In 1916 alone, Veterinary Inspector J. A. Stevenson had helped settlers coming into Canada bring 638 horses, 19 mules, 99 cattle and 7,698 sheep. Gretna Quarantine Station also supervised entry of swine and goats into Canada that year.³ The stables and stockyards were kept in a satisfactory state but the offices of the customs and immigration staff were crowded and in a state of disrepair. Not everybody in the area felt these federal employees were all that hard done by. The war had created extreme labor shortages and farmers agitated to have staff reduced at the Gretna offices. Nothing came of the representations made to the Minister of Customs, the Hon. A. L. Sifton, in the latter part of the war. By the time the minister got around to this particular concern the war had ended and suddenly labor shortages had become labor surpluses.

Labor Problems

Winnipeg, June, 21st, 1918.

My Dear Sifton:

As you are aware the labor question in connection with gathering of the next harvest is going to be quite a serious problem. Some little time ago it was necessary for me to visit Gretna, which is in my Constituency, and the people there are considerably agitated, in view of the shortage of labor, about the fact that your Department has employed four men, also a Veterinarian at that Port, while immediately across the line, at Neche, the United States Government have only one man to do the same work. I am informed that one man and a boy would be sufficient to do all the work necessary to be done.

I am writing this for your own personal information.

Yours very truly, Valentine Winkler The Hon. A. L. Sifton, Minister of Customs, Ottawa, Ont.

Winkler Papers, PAM

Ottawa, June 24, 1918.

My dear Winkler,

Your letter in regard to Gretna Customs House has been received and will receive immediate attention.

Yours very truly, Arthur L. Sifton Hon. V. Winkler, Minister of Agriculture Winnipeg.

Winkler Papers, PAM

Abram Janzen, long-time resident and harnessmaker in Gretna. P#483

Spring Forward — Fall Back

Gretna residents responded to the problems associated with the return of its enlisted men by organizing a Returned Soldiers' Association and creating a Repatriation Committee chaired by Mayor Coblentz. This committee acted somewhat as a subcommittee of Council, reflecting its concerns that the labor unrest in centres as close as Winnipeg would not reach Gretna. Council showed its leadership in other areas by adopting Daylight Saving Time in the Municipality of Gretna for the first time. This step forward in exercising community control over something as basic as the time of day proved even more controversial than the Council motion which adopted a resolution condemning the General Strike in Winnipeg.4 Perhaps more enlightened leadership was evidenced in the Council's financial support of the Gretna Old Folks' Home.

The Home was established by the Bergthaler Mennonite churches in the area. The Bergthaler "Lehrdienst" had considered the need for such an institution for some years. When the idea of a hospital in the former Erdmann Penner home moved out of town along with Dr. George Dyck, the Bergthaler Lehrdienst signed a lease of \$19 a month for the house and appointed Johann Buhr, Daniel Teichroew and P. P. Epp as the first administrative committee for the Old Folks' Home.⁵ Rev. Benjamin Ewert became the first supervisor of the Home, which was purchased by the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in January of 1919 for \$2500.6 Residents of the Home came from various church backgrounds. Municipalities placed those of its senior citizens who were without family support in their declining years in the Home. Gretna Council recognized the importance of such a facility and provided financial and personal assistance to the administrators of the Home.

Pastor of the St. Paul's Lutheran congregation was also demonstrating new approaches to his membership in 1919. Pastor Friedrich Ewald had arrived to serve a fairly subdued congregation in Gretna in 1917. The war had been

especially hard on this German community whose loyalties lay as much with their German homeland as with the country they had chosen as their new home. Pastor Ewald brought a love of music to his parishioners and joined with other spiritual leaders, such as the Ewert brothers, in organizing the activities of the village's young people around music and worship which did not consider the war effort its raison d'être. Pastor Ewald's previous missions work gave him a background in such wartime issues as famine and persecution. His messages remained timely when the war was over and his hospitality was well remembered by visitors to St. Paul's in Gretna.

Students attending the Mennonite Collegiate Institute were confronted with a manifestation of modern times not available to them in many of their home communities. Professor Ewert informed his charges that his Board had passed a motion forbidding students of the MCI to attend the moving pictures at the Gretna Theatre. No mention of counter-arguments from theatre owner W. J. Briden exist. The 20 male and 21 female students who attended the MCI during the 1918–1919 school term dutifully obeyed the new edict.8 Gretna Theatre got along just fine without their patronage. Both institutions were in good shape. The school reported revenue of \$4500 against expenditures of \$4400 for the school year, including teachers' salaries of \$2900. Support for the MCI had steadily improved since its 25th Jubilee Festival which concluded the 1916 school year. The annual Schulfests continued to demonstrate the talent and the dedication of MCI student and staff.

The successful school year at the MCI, the opening of the Old Folks' Home, combined with the renewed activity of the Presbyterian Ladies and the East Star Lodge breathed new hope into a community which was concluding a particularly dark decade of its history. When the Bank of Hamilton opened its doors at the north end of the Queen's Hotel, Gretna's civic officials immediately moved their account from the Altona branch of the Bank of Montreal to

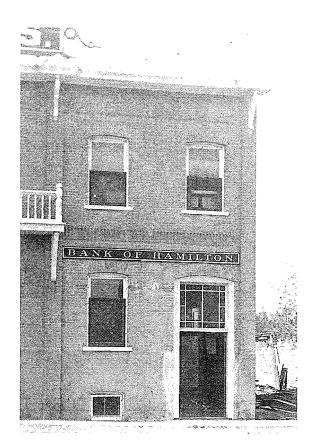
this new banking facility. This first Bank of Hamilton branch manager in Gretna was L. C. Bitzer, who was brought in from Kitchener, Ontario. Bitzer opened the doors of the Gretna branch on January 11, 1919, and took on C. L. Hayward as clerk and teller on February 3rd, less than a month later. Charles Hayward quickly got to know Gretna, especially one Nora Ellis, the postmaster's daughter and assistant. Somehow Hayward found time in the busy baseball season to court this young lady, resulting in marriage before the start of the baseball season a year later.

Gopher Wars

Baseball dominated Gretna news through the summer. The younger set, especially those members of the Boys' and Girls' Club, who no longer needed to push the Patriotic Fund, had other ventures to keep them busy. Of course, they also played ball, and they took their club work very seriously, but when the Provincial Government declared war on the gopher, they swung into action. The provincial co-ordinator of the "Gopher Campaign of 1919" concluded his report to the Hon. Valentine Winkler, Minister of Agriculture thus:

There is no doubt that a great blow has been dealt the gopher this year which is in itself a direct appreciation of the effort of the Department of Agricutture to make Manitoba a clean and thrifty province. It also shows what can be done through such an organization as the Boys' and Girls' Club. This year the results were seven-fold those of last year with no extra effort. When the returns for Crows are made on July 1st, the results will not be less surpising and gratifying. I doubt if so many crows come to Manitoba next year - one bad season is sufficient to the wise. There is great satisfaction in knowing what we can do. It is now obvious that we can get the crow and the gopher if we want to. The power for good is in your hands — and good hands. 10

The Government of Manitoba had met its objective, getting 351,394 spring gophers with a $2\frac{1}{2}$ ¢ bounty per tail. Another 21,247 pocket



Bank of Hamilton opened January 19, 1919 in the northeast corner of the Queen's Hotel. The space had been used as a poolhall. P#411

gophers were also trapped at a higher bounty rate, making those gopher trap lines big business for many a young Manitoban.

The North West Mounted Police detachments had re-established a border patrol in Southern Manitoba in 1916, with headquarters in Emerson. Many of these detachments closed down as a result of officer enlistment in the final year of World War I. Only a few were reopened after the war. Inspector H. Thorne took over duties at the Gretna detachment offices in May 1919. Except for the Emerson and Boissevain district headquarters, where McLaughlin-Buicks were stationed for the patrol, horses

Arrival in Gretna

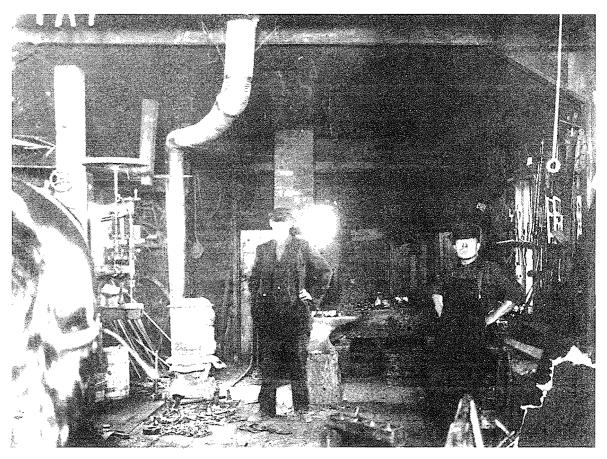
When I came back, I went to see if I still had a job. When I left they wrote me a letter and said my job was open. When I came back G. V. Hanna had passed away with the fire in 1918 and now I didn't know anyone in the bank so I didn't go up there. I went straight to Wpg. to see the district director and had an interview with him. He said he had a job out in the country so I went to Gretna in 1919. (For the Bank of Hamilton.) Mr. Bitzer from Kitchener, Ont., just opened the branch; was the manager; he came to Gretna on January 3, and I went to Gretna on my birthday, February 3. (Was located in Queens hotel) on the north side where the beer parlor is; that door was the entrance to the bank.

(When you first came to Gretna did you stay in the hotel?)

Only the Queens going then, the Anglo was closed.

Charlie Hayward Interview

continued to be used by members of the force. Inspector Thorne will have found Gretna a good location to ride from since Anton Krause and Abram Janzen both did excellent harness work. Henry Latozke, Gretna's blacksmith, was also considered one of the best in the area, despite his well-known love for the automobile. Janzen had deliberately sought out an opportunity to settle in Gretna. He wanted his children to get a good education at the MCI and could not accomplish this while farming. Latozke, on the other hand, came to Gretna reluctantly.



Inside Henry Latozke blacksmith shop in 1920's. Jack Richardson in center. Mr. Latozke was in business more than 50 years. P#561

Never A Better Place

Henry Latozke had worked as blacksmith for Frank Walters from 1906 to 1908, but he felt that Gretna had too many blacksmiths at that time and headed west to Carnduff, Saskatchewan. Here he ran his own shop for a year before returning to North Dakota, where he had first landed after arriving in America from his native Russia. When the number of Gretna blacksmiths started to dwindle during the war, businessmen and farmers in Gretna and area began to pressure Latozke to move back.

How they coaxed me. Letters kept coming continuously, but I refused all invitations to return to this border town. Finally, a letter from Christopher Pieper's secretary–treasurer arrived, stating that everything was ready and waiting for me. This convinced me that these men would not give up, and I weakened. Soon after, I returned, I returned to the place where I once said I would never live again. Well, I have never looked for a better place to serve. ¹²

Henry Latozke kept the blacksmith shop in Gretna open for over 50 years. He served Gretna in many other ways such as the Lutheran Church and as councillor for the Village for 22 years, and was considered a part of the Neche community in the same way as the Krauses and Sheedys.

The Nitikman name also came to be a part of Gretna in 1920. The Penner store, which had been operated by the Kehler brothers since the death of Erdmann Penner, was taken over by Max and Michael Nitikman. Like Penner in earlier years, the Nitikman brothers owned retail outlets in Winkler and Altona as well. The year 1919 saw one of Gretna's founding fathers retire from business and move to Winnipeg. Henry Ritz left the operation of his business to his son Scott and, although no descendants of the Ritz family live in Gretna today, the name continues to be a part of the Gretna business community. The Ritz elevator operated until 1983 and had held a private grain license since 1912.

Another Gretna name that lives on is that of Wallace Conrad (W. C.) Miller who first came

west from New Hamburg, Ontario to attend Normal School under A. Weidenheimmer in Morden. W. C. Miller took up a teaching position in a one-room country school near Gretna. He taught until Chris Pieper brought him into the Pieper business, first as a part-time and later as a full-time bookkeeper. World War I had taken Miller away from the Gretna area, but he returned to his job with the Pieper business after the war.

He added land conveyancing to his list of accomplishments and later Justice of the Peace. Since Mr. Pieper was an avowed Conservative in politics, it followed that his partisan affiliation must have been bestowed on the young apprentice who may or may not have received directives in that line from his father, a Lutheran Clergyman in Ontario.¹³

Whatever the root cause of Miller's political tendencies, his arrival in Gretna assured the Winkler political dynasty stiff competition in electoral contests for another generation. Miller's political star would take a few years to rise, yet his interest in politics in their community would not be dull.

An Exciting Place

Politics was just one part of life in the 1920's which made Gretna an exciting place to be. The United States introduced the noble experiment of prohibition in January of 1920, increasing the tourist traffic to Gretna almost immediately. Manitoba, supposedly was also dry but the various Acts of Legislature and of Parliament had more to do with the importation and transportation of liquor from one province to the next. Much of the liquor sold in Manitoba came from Kenora, Yorkton, and Regina, and the 1920 referendum posed the question as to whether the importation and bringing of intoxicating liquor into Manitoba should be forbidden. Another referendum in 1923 would lead to the introduction of the Liquor Control Act which led to the creation of the Manitoba Liquor Commission. Manitoba has never been

under total prohibition except for the period from April 1, 1918, to December 31, 1919 (as part of the War Measures Act), and again for the period from February 1, 1921, to the coming into effect of the Government Liquor Control Act in September, 1923.14 The new Act effectively put the Coblentz Wholesale Liquor Store out of business, and the constant legal changes leading up to that eventuality made it difficult for Coblentz to know exactly where he stood legally. This problem was shared by Gretna's Dr. Wolochow and druggist J. K. A. Neufeld. Prescribing and dispensing of alcohol for medicinal purposes was a common practice but it came under closer scrutiny just after the war. Dr. Wolochow submitted his resignation as Health Officer to Gretna Council on June 7,



Wallace Conrad Miller started as a teacher in the Gretna area, and was a long-time M.L.A. for Rhine-land Constituency. W.C. Miller Collegiate in Altona is named in his honor. P#439

Licensing Peddlers

Winkler, Man. Mch 20th, 1916

The Municipality of Rhineland Altona

Gentlemen, -

Enclosed please find cheque for \$140.00 for which in receiving to forward by first mail Peddler License for the above Peddlers: A. Nitikman, J. Nitikman, Ab. Greenblat, M. Buchwald.

Kindly send at once because they want to go out in the country this week yet and doesn't want to be in trouble.

I remain, Yours truly, A. Nitikman

Rural Municipality of Rhineland Vault

Mr. Steigart

Then there was Mr. Steigart. He lived in the last house on the north side of Main Street. I don't know what nationality. He and his wife lived in the one-room house. There was a big garden, with the biggest part planted with peas and potatoes. He was a small man about 5 ft. tall with a balding head, white hair and beard. He'd sit on his chair that had the legs sawed off, split his wood and piled it up neatly. None of us ever knew that he worked. One day each summer during harvest he would sit by the road and ask for help. His wife had problems and was sent to Selkirk. One winter in the early 20's the neighbors didn't see him for a few days. My mother sent us over to see if there was something we could do, if he needed help. He was very ill. Since he was a Catholic, Annie Krause also a Catholic, and the mayor saw that he got to the hospital in Winnipeg. That is the last anyone ever saw or heard of him. He was quite a character.

Pauline Winkler Memoirs

1920. Dr. J. A. MacKenzie was appointed as the new Health Officer at the same meeting. ¹⁵ A cloud of suspicion surrounded Wolochow's departure at a time when people were not sure what the limits of the law really were.

Some enterprising Gretna citizens considered American prohibition a golden opportunity to make some profit at a time when money was tight. The Great Northern line, coming through West Gretna, provided best access to American markets in St. Paul and Chicago. The line also best served the manufacturers situated in the Yorkton region. The refined grain products were shipped to Gretna

where they were buried under the unrefined grains destined for American buyers. The West Gretna agent sealed the boxcars after both varieties of grain had been loaded, thus getting the bootleg booze across the border. The McLaughlin-Buick, with its big eight-cyclinder engine, was another way local bootleg distributors got their product to American buyers. The bootleg business thrived in the Gretna area right up to the end of prohibition in the United States. It was a high-risk business, offering good returns at a time when jobs were scarce and money even more scarce.

continued on page 226



Gretna before 1910. Note Henry Ritz elevator, CPR station and cattle loading chutes. P#633

1920 List of Electors Village of Gretna

Alderson, Ward, Barber Buhr, P. H., Agent Braun, Jacob J., Carpenter Berger, Jacob, Caretaker Broesky, Jacob, Carpenter Baunman, Jacob, Laborer Braun, Harry, Gentleman Briden, W. J., Hotel Keeper Bitzer, L. C., Banker Buhr, Johann, Farmer Gergen, Miss Marie, Spinster Bean, Mrs. H. G., Widow Bauman, Peter, Laborer Baber, John, Laborer Coblentz, G., Merchant Coblentz, I., Merchant Chambers, R., Gentleman Coblentz, Mrs. I. L., Married Woman Coblentz, Mrs. D. M., Married Woman Doerksen, Jacob, Laborer Doerksen, Jacob, Gentleman Doerksen, Jacob D., Laborer Dune, McM. I., Agent Ewert, Mrs. L. K., Married Woman Ewert, Benj., Minister Ewert, H. H., Teacher Ewald, Friedrich, Minister Eppler, Jacob, Laborer Ellis, Edward, M. Clerk Fald, Peter, Laborer Frisen, E. U., Miller Friesen, Martin, Gentleman Friesen, Jacob U., Laborer Friesen, P. U., Laborer Friesen, P. J., Miller Friesen, Mrs. D., Widow Friesen, Aron, Confectionery Friesen, Isbrand, Carpenter Funk, August, Laborer Fedronda, Joseph, Laborer Friesen, J. L., Clerk Friesen, J. P., Miller Gross, Ferd, Laborer Geres, Valentine, Laborer Gross, Philip, Laborer Grossig, John, Baker Gross, Rudolph, Laborer Gustafson, John, Sectionman Hampel, Albert, Shoemaker

Harder, Heinrich, Laborer Helloffs, Herman, Butcher Hiebert, Abram, Laborer Hutchinson, E. B., Operator Harder, Peter, Gentleman Hanna, H. E., Customs Hodgson, John, Customs Heinrichs, John, Laborer Hembroff, Walter, Brakeman Huskins, John, Customs Helloffs, Mary, Spinster Hogg, Hames R., Customs Helloffs, Herman, Butcher Imperial Oil Company, Oil Johnston, Chas., Bailiff Janzen, Abram, Harnessmaker Konanz, Mrs. John, Married Woman Klassen, Katie, Spinster Konanz, John, Farmer Krahn, Peter, Laborer Klassen, Dietrich, Farmer Kehler, Mrs. J. J., Married Woman Kehler, J. J., Gentleman Krause, Anton, Harness Klassen, John, Farmer Kaas, Adolph, Laborer Kuehre, Chris, Laborer Kopaniki, Mike, Laborer Kroeger, Alvina, Widow Loewen, P. H., Painter Loewen, Heinrich, Gentleman Loeppky, Abram, Gentleman Loeppky, Erdmann, Clerk Latozky, Henry, Blacksmith Loewen, D., Pl. Clerk Large, T. G., Gentleman Lang, Sam, Laborer Loewen, Peter, Farmer Lake of the Woods, Flour Muth, Michael, Laborer Mann, Jacob, Laborer Machdanz, Herman, Laborer Machiwiz, Julius, Laborer McEdward, Mrs. G. M., Widow McEdward, G., Clerk McPierson, John, Livery Neufeld, J. K., A., Drugs & Stay. Nitikman, Max, Merchant

Nitikman, Mike, Clerk

Orser, Alfred, Engineer Pieper, C., Agent Pierson, Mrs. Nancy, Widow Pratt, John, Conductor Pennes, Alex, Section Foreman Pieper, C. A., Agent Pieper, Mrs. Minnie, Married Woman Proskurnick, Mrs., Widow Phorezky, Fred, Tailor Popp, Ferdinand, Laborer Pieper, Mrs. Christina, Married Woman Pieper, Chas. F., Farmer Ruth, Amanda, Spinster Ritz, Mrs. Adeline, Married Woman Remvel, Jacob, Farmer Ritz, Henry, Agent Rieger, Mrs. Wm., Widow Richardson, I. D., Export Renkel, Mrs. A., Widow Rosenaw, C. A., Clerk Rosenaw, Mrs. A. G., Married Woman Smith, Alex, Farmer Sawatzky, Peter, Carpenter Steigert, Franz Spenst, Mrs. Sara, Married Woman Spenst, Miss Annie, Spinster Schapanzky, Jacob, Laborer Spenst, Gerhard, Manufacturer Sheedy, T., Grain Buyer Stribitzky, Robert, Laborer Sopple, John, Mrs., Married Woman Schuppert, Conrad, Laborer Shallcross, F., Minister Schweizer, John, Laborer Schwittik, John, Laborer Schmit, Gottfried, Laborer Street, Hugh, Butcher Thorne, H., R.N.W.M.P. Toews, John, Engineer Unger, H. P., Stock Buyer Ulrich, Karl, Laborer Walter, Bernhard, Laborer Whidden, Arthur, Carpenter Wahn, Chas, Agent Wahn, Mrs. Louise, Married Woman Wolochow, Dr. P., Doctor Williams, Levi, Grain Buyer

Walter Neufeld Collection

Dominion Day Celebration

The big Dominion Day Baseball Tournament at Gretna was a decided success. A record crowd was in attendance and every one was shown a good time. There were five ball games played during the day, the first taking place in the morning between Altona and Winkler. A pretty lively game was put on and Altona got the best of it by a score of 17 to 10. This game was between two amateur teams, but before the day was over it was found that it ranked high among some of the professional games put on.

At 1 o'clock p.m. Crystal and Cavalier staged a very ragged game and Cavalier finally won by a score of 11 to 8. This game was featureless.

The next game took place between Walhalla and St. Thomas and a pretty good game was put on and it was St. Thomas' game but for hard luck in some close decisions. The score ended 5 to 4 in Walhalla's favor.

Immediately following this game the Internationals and Cavalier were put out on the diamond to battle. The game started out as pretty fair, but before many innings could be played the Internationals got started with the stick and it was all up with Cavalier. With two men on bases, Foster put over a home run and then Schuppard followed suit. There were many other hits. The game ended 6 to 2 in favor of the Internationals.

At 6:30 p.m. the big game for first money was played by Walhalla and the Internationals which proved disastrous for the former. The boys got at it right and by the end of the game had piled up eight runs to their opponent's four. Cook was twirler for the Internationals and notwithstanding the fact that his thumb is not normally healed, pitched a stellar game, Foster gave the fans another home run hit in this game. Bobbie has a total of about 15 homers to his credit so far this season and by the end of the season we think Babe Ruth will have nothing on him.

In the evening a big dance was held in Briden's Hall and good music was furnished by the Walhalla Orchestra. There was a big attendance and a good time.

> Neche Chronotype July 8, 1920

BANK OF HAMILTON

2. '6. Biber, Bermatter.

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DR. W. EWERT

Bahnarst

GRETNA

MANITOBA

DR. J. A. MACKENZIE

Greiun, Man.

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Werte Kunden u. Freundel

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A. COBLENTZ & SON General Merchants GRETNA MANITOBA

P. H. BUHR

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GREENA

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Ads from the May 1921 issue of Der Mitarbeiter. MHC

International Baseball

You did not have to do anything illegal to have an exciting time in Gretna in the 1920's. The Gretna-Neche baseball team, the Internationals, opened the season by defeating Altona on the Gretna diamond. The annual Dominion Day tournament was a big success again. Record crowds came to watch the games that day, and throughout the season. Not all games played by Gretna enthusiasts were under the Internationals' banner. Home teams were often thrown together to pick up challenges from neighbouring communities. Baseball fever hit a new high the next year. Gretna and Neche baseball fanatics planned and schemed through the winter to draw up a team which would be unbeatable. Some of the scheming happened informally, at events such as the New Year's Eve dance in Briden's Hall and the East Star Lodge spring banquet held on March 24th in the Gretna Lodge.

Meetings to organize the baseball season were held in Neche and in Briden's Hall in Gretna. In the beginning of May 1921, Gretna hired Wade Cook of Neche as pitcher. He joined players such as Charlie Hayward and Phil Schuppert. For a short time in 1921, Neche and Gretna each had their own ball clubs. When the season got into full swing they resurrected the Internationals. The Gretna team did all right on its own, too, taking first place money at a Winkler tournament early in June. Hayward's connection with the town in which he grew up, Treherne, Manitoba, resulted in an appearance by the Gretna club in that town later in June. Gretna took first prize of \$300 at Treherne, but the Internationals were back in uniform in time for the Gretna Dominion Day tournament. "In the evening the Findlay Orchestra from Grand Forks played in the Queen's Theatre and the many who could not make their feet behave took in the big dance."16 The Internationals' crowning achievement that season was its first victory at a three-day tournament at Portage La Prairie on July 11th, 12th,

and 13th. They won this tournament by defeating Pembina, N.D. in the final game. First prize was \$500.

Leaving Canada

Gretna immigration officials had been kept busy since the war with a steady stream of settlers coming up from the Midwestern States, headed for new farms in Canada's Northwest. They got more than they bargained for though, when groups of Mennonites from the West Reserve and Saskatchewan decided to find a country which did not impose state education on all its subjects. A number of Mennonites from Gretna and district left for Mexico on

June 10, 1921:

They go as advance agents and will look for future settlements where their families will go. They are leaving Canada because they cannot have their own schools. We wish them success, but we do pity them because of small uprisings (in Mexico) which seem to have grown so popular in the last few years.

August 19, 1921:

Another delegation of Mennonites is going to Mexico, this being the third. They expect to find a suitable place for themselves in Mexico. When Mennonites settled in Canada they were granted their own schools and exemption from military service. Since then the government has required that these colonists learn the English language and that they accept the regular English teachers.

October 14, 1921:

About 100 Mennonites will leave Gretna and Haskett for Mexico on October 15. They have bought 400,000 acres in Central Mexico. [They have bought] the old Madeim Plantation from the Mexican government.

December 16, 1921:

About a thousand Mennonites of the Old Colony Church will leave the Hague, Saskatchewan area for Mexico. There are about 30 different sects of Mennonites. Some have bought land in South America.

February 3, 1922:

Mennonites to Leave Canada

On March 1, a large party of 1,500 Mennonites from Southern Manitoba and Wymark district,

Sask., will leave for Durango, Mexico, where they have purchased 200,000 acres of land. Railway officials gathered here from the United States, having this week completed arrangements for the transportation of the migrating body to their destination.

About 1,000 are from the several settlements lying along the southern border of Manitoba, comprising about one-twentieth of the Mennonite population of the province. The remaining number, 2,000 at Wymark, and 4,000 in Manitoba, who are leaving, will leave as soon as the difficulties over the sale [of their lands has] been adjusted. Both groups belong to the Old Colony section of the Mennonite faith, and are reactionaries in education of the youth.

March 3, 1922:

Mennonites from Plum Coulee (Man.) and many other parties of southern Manitoba began their trip toward Chihuahua, Mexico, one group passing through Neche Wednesday afternoon.



Mennonites embarking for Mexico at Great Northern train station in West Gretna in 1920's. P#677

The School System under the Mennonites of Manitoba

The government was in a hurry with its project and had not been successful in its search through correspondence; therefore Dr. George Bryce, a member of the Advisory Board, was sent to Kansas. What was the shortest way but to go to the institute that the Mennonite Churches had established to prepare teachers. I represented this institute and he wanted to know where he could find a suitable teacher to teach in the Gretna school. He did not heed the propositions and suggestions given, but surprised me with the question, whether I would consider taking over this position in Manitoba. Since I had a very attractive position and the support and trust of the leading brethren and enjoyed an intellectual, spiritual association, I could not really give him a satisfactory answer. However his description of the work in Manitoba and the opportunities it offered to lay the ground work for the future educational course made a deep impression on me. Upon repeated invitations from members of the "Verein" as well as the government, I relented and went in December, 1890 to Manitoba to investigate and get my impressions of the situation and thus help me in my decision. I needed to make closer contact and become better acquainted with the "Verein", and to know what especially the government expected of me, and how the church (Gemeinde) would react to this situation. Thus the "Verein" had prepared for a meeting to become better acquainted. The gathering was attended by 30-40 persons, and it was apparent that it lacked business organization. The meeting, for example, wanted to pay the teacher \$500 a year, but had no plan how to raise the money. After some discussion they decided that every member should pay \$5.00 a year for the next five years. However these commitments were not achieved so that the salary had to be lowered to \$400. These commitments, however, were subject to dissolution by either the "Verein" or teacher after three months notice. The "Verein" also considered expanding the teacherage somewhat.

It was necessary now to find out what the government really expected. The negotiations were held with education minister Mr. Clifford Sifton and were quite simple. Mr. Sifton told me that the government had had no success with the school system with the Mennonites. They had divided the settlement into various districts and wanted to give them the financial support that all districts received. But this was not accepted, because they were afraid to lose their freedom and would be required to do military work. Also with the hiring of a school inspector for the Mennonite Schools they had not been successful. The government believed that their lack of success was due to a lack of

continued

The Mexican government has made a land grant of one million acres to the Mennonites. It is expected that before the manoeuvre is completed 20,000 of this sect with their cattle and farming implements will have made the pilgrimage.

The vanguard commenced the trip in a special train of 23 cars of stock and effects and two cars filled with Mennonites and their families, about 125 people in all.

Trouble in Mexico May 5, 1922:

To investigate reports that Mennonites who left Manitoba to settle in Mexico are dissatisfied with their location there, leaders of the sect in Manitoba will leave today for Mexico to conduct investigations. They are John W. Rempel and Klaus (sic) Heide of Blumenort, near Gretna, and Franz Froese of Rhineland, all in southern Manitoba. These men were included in delegations which scouted Utah for their religionists and who made final purchases. There are 8,000 yet to go.

Letters continue to arrive from those who settled in the State of Chihuahua, Mexico, telling of disappointment of immigrants. During the day the temperature goes as high as 30 degrees while at night it falls to zero. There are high winds which blow over the tents in which the Mennonites are housed temporarily and the air is extremely dry. Despite the advanced season nothing has sprouted yet, not even grass according to the letters. Villa's men who are located 50 miles away are continually threatening them despite the pressure of a regiment of soldiers.

May 12, 1922:

Mennonites Returning to Manitoba

The Norris government has now in hand the back to Manitoba of large numbers of stranded Mennonites in Chihuahua district, the Villa-bandit infested table land of northern Mexico. Delegations have waited on the government the last few days to see what can be done.

The state of the people who left southern Manitoba and the Swift Current, Sask., district is very distressing and pitiable, according to Mennonites remaining in Manitoba who have been communicating with settlers in Mexico. Only the most stubborn of Mennonites intend to remain. As a concession to returning Mennonites, the Norris government has decided to hand over to the Mennonites for local administration two hundred schools which have been administered by school

commissioners for the Norris government, it is reported.

Johann Froese and a delegation will leave soon for the Mennonite colony in Mexico to make arrangements to bring the Mennonite Canadian colony back to Manitoba, they informed Premier Norris today. Land on which they are located is very high and dry and it is impossible to plant crops on it this year. Three Mennonites of the Altona district, Peter Hamm, John Froese, and Bernhard Sawatzky, returned today from Mexico after making a survey of living conditions at the Mennonite colony in Mexico. They said the climate was not good and otherwise they did not like Mexico as well as Manitoba. The delegation visited the districts of Chihuahua, Durango, Carotis, Rancho Rico Turde and Tampico. One member stated: "Now we at least know where we belong; it is best in Manitoba". 18

While deputations and delegations travelled back and forth between Manitoba and Mexico to try and solve the problems of the Mexico settlement of Mennonites, a Russian Mennonite delegate, A. A. Friesen, arrived in Canada to explore the possibility of a migration of Mennonites from Russia to Canada. The Mennonite congregations in Western Canada appointed H. H. Ewert and H. A. Neufeld, principal of the MEI in Altona, to accompany Mr. Friesen to Ottawa to make a case for the lifting of immigration restrictions which made it impossible for Mennonites to migrate into Canada from Russia. The reception in Ottawa was cool and the result of these representations was less than had been hoped for.19

Colonization Scheme Opposed

The Mennonite Western Colonization Board had sought support for its representations to Ottawa from the Gretna Village Council. On June 6, 1921 Council tabled it for discussion at their next meeting. Other business took up the time of council members A. Orser, G. Spenst, H. Street, J. Kehler, and the new mayor, P. J. Friesen. They approved donations to the Boys' and Girls' Club and to the Pony League. They accepted A. L. Friesen's tender for gravel and

lumber for new sidewalks. They appointed A. Whidden as poundkeeper, P. H. Loewen as assessor and C. Wahn as weed inspector. They also borrowed \$2,000 from the Bank of Hamilton for public works. At Council's July 4th meeting Orser moved and Street seconded a motion which stated that the colonization issue be left "in the hands of the Immigration people". The issue did not go away with this motion; an August 1st motion was passed stating "that this council go on record that they are against the Government borrowing money for this colonization scheme as stated by the Colonization Board in their circular and letter".

These same Council minutes also raise the issue of unpaid taxes. A motion was passed at Council's October 3rd meeting to buy up property for tax arrears, and while Council refused a "grant to any Children's Aid" at their first meeting in January 1923, they did donate \$100 to the operation of the Gretna Old Folks' Home. They also granted a restaurant license to H. C. Long and granted Mr. Briden's application for a beer license.

There is no record of this having any effect on the dances held at the Queen's Hall. The hall had been active during the summer. It seemed that every time the Internationals won a baseball game, a dance was held in celebration. A league of five teams, "to be only home boys", had played through the summer in addition to the Internationals. The Dominion Day dance, a Hallowe'en party complete with ribbons, bows, costumes and short skirts, and a Thanksgiving ball led the way to a light-footed winter season with a show and dance on December 25th, kicking off to "real peppy dance music furnished by the Pep 'Em Up Five Orchestra''. Hard Times dance at Gretna on Monday, February 5th, was the last dance in the area before Lent, although a smaller Valentine's party at the James Briden home provided dancing and games and good food for Gretna's young at heart.

Play Day festivities at Neche offered different athletic events although it also included a baseball game between Pembina and the Inter-

nationals. Schools participated in an event which would eventually be known as "Field Day". Gretna Public School was particularly active in the Boys' and Girls' Club and took on the responsibility of presenting the annual fair and exhibition in late September 1923. Gretna's Poultry and Horticulture Clubs, in particular, were gaining some attention for the prizes they were winning at local and regional competitions. For several years in a row, they would compete, under the capable leadership of Tim Sheedy and James Hogg, in the provincial demonstrations. These competitions were cosponsored by the Manitoba Department of Agriculture Extension Division and T. Eaton & Co. The annual demonstrations were held in the Eaton's auditorium in downtown Winnipeg. The Manitoba Boys' and Girls' Club were the precursor to our current 4–H Clubs.

Mr. Sheedy also was a part of the Gretna baseball success story. The 1923 season saw the Internationals stronger than ever with very few losses in tournaments against their usual league competition. It also saw them take on and defeat, a semi-pro team from Winnipeg, but they got their "come-uppance" on July 6th when they took on the original All-Nations Club from Kansas City. The All–Nations play– ers were blacks who were part of an alternate baseball league at a time when the National Baseball League did not allow blacks in the league. The Internationals were humbled in front of a paid crowd numbering over 900, getting in only one run to the 12 scored by the visiting team. Nonetheless, the Internationals compiled an impressive record of 21 wins and 7 losses by the end of the season.

Electricity Imported

Nineteen twenty-three was a banner year in Gretna for a number of reasons. The most important of these likely was the installation of electric lamps at every street corner of the village. Many businesses and homes already had electricity brought in from the United States by Adolphe Coblentz shortly after the war. Gretna

continued on page 231

The School System . . . cont'd

knowing the Mennonites. They wanted to hand over the duties of inspection to the Mennonites and I should deal with the situation according to my best judgment. The responsibility they wanted to give me was that I should concern myself with the training of teachers for the Mennonite schools, and that those who accepted the financial support of the government should be inspected by him.

Naturally I let him explain the complicated school system to me and found that it was very tolerant and did not restrict freedom of the people. There was no coercion or restriction regarding the language used in instruction, they only asked that the English language not be excluded. They wished to persuade the Mennonites that they would submit to inspection of their schools, and that teachers would be willing to undergo a test and receive permission from the government to teach. Included in this system was the favourable contribution of \$13.00 by the government and \$20.00 from the Municipality received every month, and furthermore to have the right to receive remuneration from the municipality for maintaining the school in each district.

All I needed was to get to know my field of work better; and I found the outlook not attractive. A strong opposition had developed against the proposed school system. They saw in this movement and especially the involvement of the government in the advanced system the downfall of Mennonitism, and thus they hounded Bishop Johann Funk that he should dissolve all government involvement in their school and to most of them it was self-evident that the new person to come here was a servant of evil and would just arouse trouble. This conflict was most bitter in the Bergthaler Church. In the Rosengarter Church there was hardly any disturbance, because there were no enemies of reform there. All other churches such as Chortitzer, Kleingemeinde, and Holdemanns were antagonistic.

These impressions must raise the question: How can somebody work with people who cling so determinedly to the old things. Would it not be rather irresponsible for a person to leave a pleasant field of work at home and move to a strange area where strong, antagonistic forces work against you? I had to find an answer. Humanly considered little success could be expected. The friends of the school were too few and weak to carry through. The support of the government might drop out should a change in administration occur. This would take weeks and months of real testing and weighing of matters. What finally led to a decision was the fact that this was a call from God and dare not be refused. Thus I terminated my ties with the Kansas School and came to Manitoba in the fall of 1891.

Der Mitarbeiter October 19, 1923

Gretna's Annual Fair Attracts Large Attendance

The annual Fair and Exhibition of school work and garden produce was held here on Tuesday, and notwithstanding the adverse weather of the previous day there was a wonderful display of flowers and vegetables. Potatoes were all that could be desired and were an outstanding feature in the vegetable classes. The tomato and cucumber display was also exceedingly meritorious, demonstrating fully the reputation Gretna has earned in the province for its gardens.

Cut flowers were greatly admired, especially the vases of flowers for effect, where a vase of gladioli and asparagus earned the first award. A display sent in and arranged by Messrs. A.L. Friesen and Jas. R. Hogg was also much admired, especially after having experienced the inclement weather of last week.

The entries were as follows:

School work	323
Children's Other Projects	
Adults	
Total	912

Mrs. Black, agricultural college, judged sewing, cooking, etc. Mr. Ray, agricultural, Winnipeg, livestock and garden produce, butter, etc. Mr. Hogg and Mr. Friesen, the gardens, and Rev. J. Liggitt and Mrs. Liggitt, Gretna, the school work.

In school work special prizes for highest number of points in drawing and design, as follows:

1st - Dorothy Kerman

2nd — Bernice Pieper

3rd — Margaret D. Friesen

Numerous other prizes were given. All sections of school work were arranged according to grades.

Neche Chronotype September 28, 1923



Gretna Horticulture Club in 1924. Betty McGavin, Thelma (Gustafson) Smith and Dorothy Kerman, with James Hogg, leader and instructor of the club. P#845

Council minutes show that the cost of installing the first set of lights along Seventh Street was \$347.05. This included installation by J. R. Hogg, Charles Johnston and Charles Wahn, and the price of poles purchased from the Manitoba Telephone Company. The Village of Gretna used 42 kilowatt hours of electricity for the month of November, the first full month the lights were in operation. Gretna paid Adolphe Coblentz \$10.50 that month for the electricity purchased through him.²⁰

Fire Bell Bought

Work on cement sidewalks continued in 1923, and 1924. All of Seventh Street was bordered with this latest sign of modern times. Tenders for gravel, cement, and lumber were accepted from A. L. Friesen and work was done by K. Knopf, G. Leiding, J. Baber, A. Funk, P. Giesbrecht, J. Konantz, H. Schuppert, J. Schapansky and others. Peter Falk and Charles Johnston were paid for road work they completed. Council purchased a 26 inch fire bell from Watrous Empire Works at a price of \$84 in November 1923. The fire bell, it was hoped, would not often need to be rung.

It could have rung on Saturday, November 24, 1923 when the Lutheran Church burned to the ground. Situated on the east side of town, the fire went unnoticed until it was too late to do anything. The fire threatened a granary and machine shed owned by Charles Pieper, but no other buildings were in danger. The bell would have been rung again within a week when one of Alexander Smith's barns caught fire as a result of of a gasoline engine backfiring. Again, building and contents were completely destroyed.

Gretna St. Paul's Lutheran congregation had a new home before the end of the year. The church was partially insured and a church, sitting empty and unused in the Park Centre district, was purchased and moved to a vacant lot adjoining the Lutheran manse on the west side of Gretna. This will have met with the approval of the most recent pastor of St. Paul's, Rev.

Project No. 25-Sewing.
Miss G. Findlay, leader.

- sec. 142 Pair rompers,
- 143 Plain house dress.
- 144 Nightgown with crocheted yoke,
- 145 One piece embroidery,
- 146 Any piece crochet work,

Prizes: \$1.50 1.00 .50

Leaders for Boys' and Girls' Projects.

- 1 Live Stock-Chas. F. Pieper
- 2 Dairying-G. McEdwards
- 3 Poultry—T. F. Sheedy
- 5 Gardening-J. R. Hogg
- 6 Cookery-Mrs. J. Kehler
- 7 Sewing-Miss A. Spenst
- 8 Canning-Mrs. E. B. Hutchinson
- 9 Noxious Weeds-G. Coblentz
- 10 Farm Mechanics-Harry Huskins
- 11 Insects-G. Coblentz
- 12 Team Demonstration-Mrs. I. Coblentz
- 13 Writing-Mrs. J. A. Mackenzie
- 14 Essay Writing-Mrs. J. A. Mackenzie
- 15 Drawing-Miss A. Krause
- 16 Handwork-Miss A. Krause

Rules for Adults.

- All exhibitors must be over 18 years of age on the day of the fair.
- All exhibits must be the work of the exhibitor.
- All exhibits in needlework must be the work of the exhibitor during the twelve months immediatly preceding the fair.
- Entries should be made before the day of the fair; those made on the day of the fair will be subject to a fee of 25 cts.
- Exhibits should be in place by 10 a.m. on the day of the fair.
- Any exhibitor who violates any of the rules will forfeit all prizes won.



Prize List



Gretna Boys' and Girls' Club



OFFICERS:

Hon.President, Mayor P.J.Friesen President, - Chas.F.Pieper 1st Vice-Pres., Dr. J. A.Mackenzie 2nd Vice-Pres., - Miss A. Krause Secretary-Manager, Geo.E.Wolkof Treasurer, - - - A.L.Friesen

Executive Committee:

A. Orser, T. F. Sheedy, H. Hoskins J. R. Hogg.

THE WINKLER PRINTERY

BIG LEAGUE BASE BALL

Neche, N. D.

ON

FP1003, July 6

The Original ALL-NATIONS

OF KANSAS CITY, MO.,

will play the

INTERNATIONALS

OF NECHE-GRETNA

000

The All-Nations will present an All-Siar Lineap from all Nations including. Mendez the Cuban, known the world over as the Black Mathewson. Donaldson, also colored, and considered one of the world's best pitchers, is with the team.

000

The Internationals will present the same line-up which won the non-salaried Championship of North Dukota in 1922.

000

DONALDSON Pitching for the ALL-NATIONS

STEVENSON Pitching for the INTERNATIONALS

0 0 0

ONE GAME ONLY, 6 P. M.

0 0 0.

Admission to Ball Game-Admize, 50c; War Tax, 5c

0 0 0

DANCE AFTER THE GAME

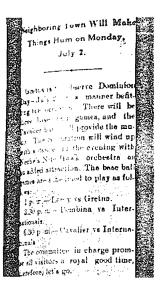
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Real Dance Music Dance Tickets, \$1.00 War Tax, 100

Neche Chronotype, June 29, 1923.



Neighboring town will make Things Hum on Monday July 2.

Gretna is to observe Dominion Day - July 2 - in a manner befitting the occasion. There will be three baseball games and the Cavalier band will provide the music. The celebration will wind up with a dance in the evening with Neche's Night Hawk Orchestra as an added attraction. The baseball games are scheduled to play as follows:

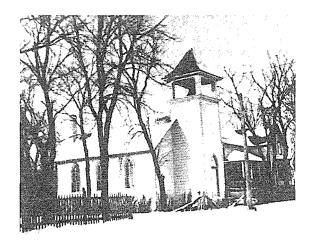
1 p.m. - Leroy vs. Gretna 3:30 p.m. - Pembina vs. Internationals 6:30 p.m. - Cavalier vs. Internationals

The Committee in charge promises all visitors a royal good time, therefore, let's go.

Julius Martin. He came to the parish just a year before the fire, replacing Pastor Ewald who had asked to be relocated. Rev. Martin was 69 years of age when he arrived in Gretna. Having the church next door to the manse certainly made his life easier.²¹

The Catholic congregation of St. Francis of Assisi was also entering a period of transition. Archbishop Beliveau of St. Boniface confirmed a class of 30 at Gretna on August 18, 1921; Father J. H. Prud'homme of Regina presided over the joyous ceremonies. Still, the administration and care of the Catholic congregation were assigned to Rev. J. H. Forbes of Neche in October 1924. A few years later all services were discontinued in the Gretna Catholic Church and its membership attended services in Neche, N.D. Gretna's Catholic church building remained a part of the community until 1952 when it was moved to Elm Creek, Manitoba, where it now serves the Catholics of that region.²² On a more optimistic note, the Presbyterian Church re-opened its doors on September 2, 1923 and attendance was good. Planning of a Home Harvest Festival got under way almost immediately, with the Ladies' Auxiliary taking charge.

Losses of a more personal nature also had their impact in 1923 and 1924. Mr. H. Hellofs sold his business to nephews P. Hellofs and P. F. Thompson in April. He planned to visit his native Belgium before settling into retired life in Winnipeg. The deaths of Wellington James Briden and Joseph F. Tennant in May and June were mourned on both sides of the 49th Parallel. The Briden funeral was conducted by the East Star Lodge membership in Briden's Hall and his lodge compatriots escorted him to the burial site in the Gretna Cemetery. W. J. Briden came to the west in 1886 and worked as a druggist in Neche until he took over the Queen's Hotel at the turn of the century. Joseph F. Tennant served as a member of the Wolesley Expedition "through the uninhabited spaces to Fort Garry, Manitoba in 1870. From 1885 until recent years he had been a collector of customs at Gretna and proprietor of the King Edward



St. Paul's Lutheran Church on Eighth St. P#514

Hotel. He was 76 years old when he died. Funeral services were held in the Neche Catholic Church.''²³

Feeling the Pinch

These personal losses underscored the change taking place in and around Gretna in the mid-1920's. The Mennonite exodus had left many farms and villages near Gretna empty. Charles Pieper had been kept extremely busy auctioning property and possessions. His business may have been good, but other Gretna businesses were feeling the pinch. Lean economic times had descended on Manitoba. ²⁴ Many who went to war had returned home to find themselves without work. Traffic at West Gretna Great Northern train station was sporadic at best.

The MCI contemplated closing its doors for the 1923–1924 school year, but discovered their worst fears to be groundless. Enrollment was good, despite hard times, with the influx of Russian Mennonite student–teachers, learning the English language, giving the school the boost it needed to keep its full complement of students and teachers. ²⁵ Gretna also benefited by this influx since these teachers took up residence here and often brought family as well. These mature students received additional instruction in the English language at night classes, which were open to others in Gretna who wished to improve their command of the language. MCI supporters realized a small surplus at the end of the year. Other good news at the 1924 MCI annual meeting was the report of progress made in the co-operative developments which were beginning to take place between the Gretna and Altona schools. The meeting recommended a continuation of these efforts. ²⁶

The arrival of the Russian Mennonite teachers provided the MCI with a maturity of students which affected the level of academic



Charles Frederick Pieper, 1863–1943. Mr. Pieper was a farmer within the town limits and also an active auctioneer. P#436

Concert at Gretna

The people of Gretna were given a real musical treat Wednesday evening by the Boys' and Girls' Club of that city. The program consisted of drills, recitations, vocal and instrumental duets, solos, Highland Flings, Dialogues, constrast of flappers, minstrel show, campfire scene and poultry and horticultural demonstrations.

A talk on how these clubs happened to be started and the work accomplished during the past few months was given by J. Ward.

Well worth seeing was the drill, "Britania", by nine girls; the dialogue, "The Runaway Wife", by Miss Jean Hambroff and T. Sheedy, and a rending, "Legend of Quepolle", by Miss Hambroff.

The poultry demonstration team composed of Miss Bernice Pieper, captain, and Helen and Tina Heinrichs made a fine showing. Miss Pieper told of the value of poultry, Helen Heinrichs gave a demonstration of candling eggs and Tina Heinrichs explained the development of the chick in the egg. Six chickens appeared on the platform which caused much merriment to the spectators.

An excellent demonstration was given by the Horticultural team — Thelma Gustafson, Dorothe Korman, and Lizzie Fedronka, who appeared to be quite at home in their work. They decorated a cross with flowers, made a wreath and arranged a vase of cut flowers, at the time telling how the cross and frame for the wreath was made; how the flowers were wired and fastened, also the arrangement of flowers for a bouquet.

Other numbers on the program was a recitation by Eva Friesen; song, Helen and Maggie Kopeninski; song, Veronica Sheedy; recitation, Harold Whidden; song, Lizzie Fedronka; recitation, Dorris Miller.

> Neche Chronotype August 1, 1924

Father Prud'homme

Father Pruden [Prudhomme] was ordained a Bishop during the time he served the Gretna Catholic Church in the early 20's. I accompanied Mrs. Sopel the Sunday afternoon the congregation presented him with a ring. I don't know if it was the official seal or not. Veronica Sheedy, a young girl of 5 or 6 years carried the ring up to the altar on a flowered covered plate with ribbons falling down from it with a flower on each end. I'm sure my memory serves me right on this. Her mother was one of the Krause daughters. They lived in the Catholic rectory. The Priest served different congregations. Father Pruden as I remember him was a happy man, and everyone seemed to like him. The church I believe was sold sometime in the 40's.

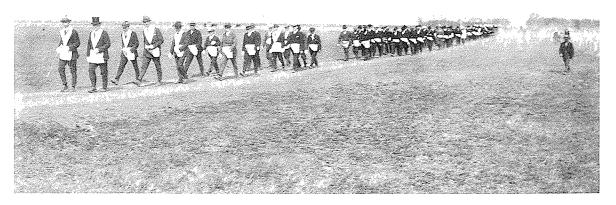
Pauline Winkler Memoirs

activity in the school. Virtually all students enrolled in the 1924–1925 school year were taking classes grade 9 and up and very few elementary subjects were offered at the MCI. The increase in the education level of students coming to Gretna also reflected the fact that the work of the MCI, "Der Mennonitische Lehranstalt zu Gretna", was producing results in schools throughout the East and West Reserves. Principal H. H. Ewert gave the following statistics in his 1921 annual report:

In the school year just completed there were 74 schools in southern Manitoba which were staffed by former students of our school. A total of 209 graduates [of the MCI] have occupied teaching positions for longer and shorter periods of time since leaving our school over the past 30 years. In the 30 years of the [Gretna] Institute's existence, 707 students have attended here.²⁷

An increasing number of Mennonite young people on both Manitoba reserves were completing the elementary grades now available because the schools were in the hand of qualified teachers, many of whom had been educated at the MCI. Gretna's young people had the option of attending MCI or the Public School which offered instruction to grade II. Language instruction, most notably Latin and Greek, was available only at the MCI. Anyone considering university enrolled at the MCI in order to gain the background in languages which was a prerequisite to university entrance at that time.

Gretna's young people gained additional knowledge and confidence through the energetic work of the Boys' and Girls' Club leaders who ensured a successful annual fair and exhibition in fall. The success of the Club was somewhat overshadowed by the virtually undefeated Internationals, who had begun to look to Winnipeg for competition. Local clubs complained about the Internationals' hired help, but these accusations were brushed aside and Stevenson, Bae and Nelson were named as the only paid members of the Internationals. When the Columbus and Dominion Express Clubs from Winnipeg came out to take on the Internationals, the local boys put on a show and played



W. J. Briden funeral in 1924. Note masonic lodge member and regalia. P#950

flawless baseball. The Neche and Gretna combination was booked into the next season, **Neche Chronotype** crowing that the team's pitcher, Bae, was being scouted for the national big league teams. The Internationals went into the 1925 season with much the same line-up but encountered stiffer competition winning seven and losing four of the regular season games. Home games were well attended, some played at Neche and some at Gretna. The Dominion Day tournament remained the highlight of the season for Gretna fans and businesses involved in the concession trade.

A Most Difficult Year

Not everyone was caught up in the baseball fervor. Village Council elections in December 1924 gave Gretna a new mayor, A. Orser. He replaced P. J. Friesen who had held the post since 1921. New Council members were Dr. James MacKenzie, M. A. Nitikman, Henry Latozke and Abram Janzen. Nineteen twentyfive was the most difficult year for the Council since the 1913 fire. Difficult, not because the Great Northern had started to dismantle its line at West Gretna, not because of differences with the School Board and not because council recorded its first relief case in March. It was a difficult year because Council was confronted by a discrepancy in village funds. The discrepancy was due to a misappropriation of funds by the Secretary-Treasurer, Charles Wahn. 28

Charles Wahn served as Secretary-Treasurer from 1911 to 1925. Over the years Wahn developed a system whereby he collected property taxes slightly greater than listed in the assessments. Charles Wahn was one of the most trusted and respected citizens. He had conducted business in Gretna since the 1880's. He was a kind and compassionate man, but he had suffered great financial loss in the fires which had plagued the Village over the years. The increasingly difficult times, which were affecting almost everyone by the mid-1920's must have been the final straw. On top of this, Charles Wahn was not well and it was during

one of his absences due to illness that the irregularities in the accounts were discovered. When Council suspected something was wrong they passed a motion that the Municipal Commissioner be requested to appoint an auditor to examine the books as soon as possible. The same December 3rd council meeting accepted the resignation of Charles Wahn and appointed Philip Schuppert as acting Secretary-Treasurer for the remainder of 1925.

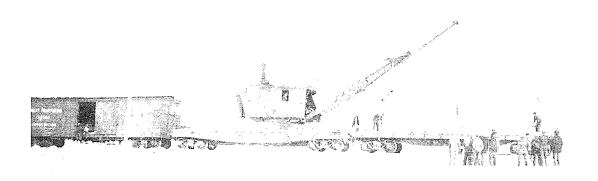
The regular Council meeting held on December 7th at the Council Chambers and chaired by A. Orser moved that:

. . . as far as may be conveniently done, the shortage be realized from the assets of Mr. Wahn first and that the surplus remaining, if any, after payment of the deficit be returned to Mrs. Wahn.

When the auditor handed down his preliminary report, Council learned that Wahn's indiscretions left them with a "known deficit of \$8,790.74 and an unverified tax sale certificate deficit possible of \$500". The misappropriation of funds had occurred over more than a one-year period and affected properties which the Village had sold for taxes. The total assessment levy for the Village of Gretna in 1925 was \$222,950.29

Peter H. Buhr bought Lots 14–20, Block 17 of Plan 28 in February that winter. He paid \$2,500 for these properties which the Village had accepted as part of the restitution plan in the Wahn case. Wahn did not survive the winter or live to see the day his family completely made up the shortfall. The Wahn family moved away from Gretna and their many friends before spring thaw. They left at a time when community and business activity was back to its normal hectic level experienced before the war.

The Queen's Hotel was getting a facelift in 1925, under the new ownership of the Riedle Hotel chain. Jimmy Briden had taken over the hotel following his father's death, but was not able to keep it in the black, forcing him to sell a little over a year after he assumed control. Still in the Queen's, the Bank of Hamilton and the Canadian Bank of Commerce amalgamated effective December 31, 1923. When the Gretna branch opened on January 2, 1924 it was as a branch of the Commerce. It also had a new management by 1925. Mr. Bitzer was transferred to Altona and F. B. Hornibrook came to replace him. Charles Hayward stayed on through these changes although he was about to be given an offer he couldn't refuse. The July 13 and October 16, 1925 editions of the Neche



Great Northern Railway being dismantled around 1926. (Portage to Neche, N.D. track) On flat car, Johnny and Alex Proskernik. P#1025

Bank Policy on Marriage

Harry Scott was in Morden in the Royal Bank and he got married and they canned him. He had to have a certain salary. I had \$80 at that time, but he got canned. (Because he got married). So when I came back from getting married I told Bitzer I hate to tell you this but we got married. He said it was all right and I said I don't think so, you know the regulations, right there in the book; under such a salary you get the can. Well, he says don't say anything for a minute, play it cool. I didn't get canned. I never asked him and he never told me!

Charles Hayward interview

Chronotype describes Gretna affairs as follows:

Mr. and Mrs. P. Schuppert passed Friday in Walhalla.

Nitikman Bros. have had their large general store re-roofed.

Leo Bitcher and Chas Pieper spent Saturday afternoon in the country looking over crop conditions.

Dame Rumor has it that Mr. Friesen, owner of the King Edward hotel property, will remodel it into an apartment house.

J. Ward, conductor on the Canadian Pacific, has returned from annual two weeks' vacation — and he arrived in a fine new closed—in car, too.

Among those from here who took in a day or more at the Emerson 3-day celebration were: I. Coblentz, Levi Williams, Charley Hayward, Henry Frizen, Jas. Briden and E. B. Hutchenson and family. It was Emerson's 50th anniversary.

Harry Scott of Morden has been named as customs officer at this place, made vacant by the death of Harry Hoskins. He assumed his new duties Tuesday, but left on Monday to take charge of the office at Haskett until a permanent appointment is made for that place.

Dr. MacKenzie is back from his two weeks vacation which took him as far east as Detroit,



Charles Wahn moved to Gretna circa 1883. He served as mayor in 1907, councillor 1908–1909, secretary–treasurer 1911–1925. P#864

Mich., from which city his wife and her sister continued on their way by auto for a visit with relatives in Toronto.

The matinee at the Gretna Theatre Saturday attracted close to 100 children, it is said. The price of admission — 5 cents and five tin cans — caused the youngsters a lot of scurrying about, and as a result the refuse piles in the back yards and allies are less obnoxious. A full truck load of cans was received by the management who took them to the nuisance ground. It is now suggested by a village wag that the price for the next matinee be five cents and an armful of weeds. Now what do you know about that!

Aside from the improvements noted in a recent issue of The Chronotype, the following have been made: I. Coblentz residence remodeled and finished with ivory enamel; G. Coblentz, residence being remodeled — four rooms into two. hardwood floors. The cost of the latter is estimated at \$1500. The painting contract for the two jobs was awarded to P. D'Heilly of Neche. Another improvement on a large scale is the general overhauling of the Queen's Hotel. It took five experts three weeks to do the work. The exterior of the building has been repainted, also the interior. A lot of redecorating has been done and the stairway and halls covered with linoleum. The ladies' parlor has been made particularly attractive, likewise the dining room. A. W. Riedle of Winnipeg is the new owner of the popular hostelry, the management being left to Hugo Klamaunn with W. A. Bathie as assistant. An expert chef is in charge of the kitchen, and the meals served are equal to those in the more pretentious hotels in the larger cities. Manager Klamaunn informs us that business is picking up and that he looks forward with every confidence that the investment will bring reasonable financial returns to the owner.

Gretna Shows Interest in Election

Next Thursday a general election throughout the Dominion will be held for premier, the candidate of the Liberals being MacKenzie King and of the Conservatives Arthur Meighen. The campaign is a hot one, with indications pointing to the success of Meighen. Gretna is manifesting great interest in the outcome, and next Friday, the 23rd, a big Conservative rally will be held in the theatre, the speakers secured for the occasion being prominent in Manitoba politics. On the evening

of the 29th, the day after the election, the returns will be bulletined in the theatre at intervals during a movie show. It is expected that the Conservative candidate will receive a majority of the votes here.

Thompson and Hellofs shipped two cars of livestock to Winnipeg Monday.

Thompson and Hellofs report a brisk business in the movie line. Packed houses greeted "Babbit" and "The Ten Commandments", standing room being at a premium in the initial presentation of the latter. Rain considerably lessened the attendance on the second night.

Big Exodus of Mennonites for Mexico

Two train loads of Mennonites and their effects leave here on the 1st and 4th, respectively, for Mexico. They are all old residents of this vicinity who by thrift and hard work have acquired a competency, and their departure will leave a void in the financial resources of the district which will take years to overcome.

C. F. Pieper and H. P. Thompson were attending to business matters in Neche Tuesday. Aside from looking after his rather extensive farming interests, Mr. Pieper is kept on the jump assisting people in getting out of the country by making use of his clarion voice in the crying of auction sales. Some salesman is the colonel, too.

J. D. Richardson and family are about to move west, and will have an auction sale of their household goods and garage equipment on Saturday, Oct. 24. Mr. Richardson expects to locate in Vancouver, but as the trip will be made by auto he will investigate conditions along the road of travel for the opening of a garage. He has resided here for 15 years, and he and his family will be greatly missed.

Medals Brought Home

Nineteen twenty-five was an especially busy and important year for all Gretna supporters and members of the Boys' and Girls' Club. Every year judges came out from the Departments of Education and Agriculture to judge the annual fair's displays and demonstrations which might be considered good enough to participate in the T. Eaton Competition or the Canadian Bankers' Competition held in the 7th floor auditorium of the Winnipeg T. Eaton department store. Gretna's Boys' and Girls'

Club had qualified for the competitions in Winnipeg several years running, but had not brought home any medals. Nineteen twentyfive changed all that. Gretna's demonstration teams, especially in the Poultry and Horticulture divisions, came home with gold and silver medals. The stiff competition and tricky demonstration topics (how do you make a brood hen perform on stage?) are justly and proudly remembered by Katherine and Helen Hendricks and Bernice Pieper and from the Horticulture team, Dorothy Kerman, Thelma Gustafson and Betty Fedronka, who brought the medals home. The town could not have been more proud if the Internationals had captured a national league baseball pennant!

Baseball glory continued to be brought home by the Internationals although they lost a few games in the 1925 season. Talk of pitcher Bae moving up to the major leagues made Internationals supporters and players uneasy. His would not be the first Gretna area sports name to make it to the majors, although no local news reports followed the career of hockey goalie, Harold Lang (Hal) Winkler. The following entry can be found in Stan Fischler's 1975 Hockey Encyclopedia:

Harold Lang (Hal) Winkler

Born: Gretna, Manitoba, March 20, 1892

Died: Unknown

Position: Goalie, Edmonton (PCHL), 1922–23; New York Rangers, 1926–27; Boston Bruins,

1927-28

Goalie Hal Winkler's problem was that he was born too soon. After a distinguished pro career in Canada during the early twenties, Hal made it to the NHL just when the league was expanding to include more and more American cities. He entered the NHL during the 1926–27 season, playing for the New York Rangers and Boston Bruins. At the age of thirty–six, Winkler played a full forty–four–game schedule for the Bruins the following year. He allowed but 70 goals for a 1.59 average. Better still, Hal had 15 shutouts. By then he was a senior citizen and the Bruins had gifted Tiny Thompson in the wings so it was exit Winkler. 30

continued on page 239

School Fair

The Annual School Fair was held in the public school on Tuesday, the 14th. The exhibits of school children were much admired and demonstrated the care and practical tuition of our teaching staff.

The floral exhibits were up to the usual Gretna standard, especially the vases of cut flowers and the floral devices, which is something new in boys' and girls' exhibits in Manitoba. The old Winnipeg winners showed well up to advantage in this class. Needle work was good, bread and cakes looked very tempting and justified their appearance at the refreshment tables later on.

The committee feel assured that Gretna School Fair is an established institution in our town, and will continue to be a helpful auxiliary to the usual school ritual.

Mr. Thompson lived up to his promise and provided the kiddies and adults with a splendid comic and instructive picture. In addition he had radio established in the theatre and election results were announced by loud speakers as soon as correct returns were known. Patrons were thus assured, before meeting closed, that the Liberals would again take over affairs of the Dominion government.

Neche Chronotype September 17, 1926

Boys' and Girls' Club

We had two leaders. Mr. Hogg had a horticulture club and we had quite a few men in that. Mr. Tim Sheedy had the poultry club and the drama club and my sister and I were members of Mr. Sheedy's club. There was always a little bit of rivalry between the two clubs. We'd have meetings, the first meeting I went to, the poultry meeting, I just went to see. I was invited and it was in the public school. I was maybe about 17. Here I was at that meeting and I listened to the whole thing and then they asked me to join and immediately after I joined they asked me to have the talk at the next meeting.

That talk had to be 15 minutes long which is pretty long to start on and my subject was the chick developing within the egg. It took a lot of studying to know from day-to-day how the chick developes in the egg and the day of the meeting I went to the school and drew pictures on the board of these chicks in the egg from day-to-day. I managed to keep going for 15 minutes. It wasn't too hard; there were quite a few people here including business people.

I was asked to demonstrate in Winnipeg with Bernice Pieper and my sister, Helen. We were going to have a poultry demonstration. In this demonstration we had to have a cluck and set her on the nest and I was terribly scared the cluck would jump up and run out into the audience but we managed to keep her down. We had a pretty good demonstration and I had these pictures of these chicks developing in the eggs on large charts.

All of Manitoba was competing (in Eatons). We would all stand side by side. Bernice would introduce my sister and myself and she would talk and we would act while she was talking and then my sister talked and we acted and then I would talk and the others would act.

I designed the dresses that we wore, with the little round collar and on each corner of the collar were little yellow chicks. I drew them in and we had a little chick on the forehead on a headband and across the chest we had a wishbone with G.P.C. (Gretna Poultry Club) on it. So that was our first demonstration.

Then the next year I took out a team myself. In fact, I took two teams; one on eggs, two girls spoke on eggs and recipes and then a first aid team where I had a couple of girls on this team demonstrating and competing. Gretna did pretty well that year; got the silver medal in Mr. Hogg's

team in the flower arrangements. They did very well. Mr. Sheedy's son and Rhinehart Friesen had a poultry demonstration and they won a gold medal and we came right next to the brass. Before you came to Winnipeg they had a judge come out and picked the teams to go in. So we would demonstrate in the town hall in front of all the people and this judge. Then the townspeople gave us some spending money and saw us off. Also we put on a play or some kind of a program to raise money for our trip and we'd go to Winnipeg and compete.

We'd spend about 10 days at the university and we were very well taken care of. We were entertained by many of the large companies in Winnipeg like Lake of the Woods, Eatons, the City Council would take us on banquets. The judges 1 think were from the Agriculture College and University. There were always a number of judges and they sat right up at the front. And when you were finished, you'd do as well as you could and when the time came, they would question you and you had no idea what questions they would ask.

Katherine Friesen interview



District Champion Boys' and Girls' Clubs Demonstration Teams of Manitoba in 1924. Gretna Poultry Club winners: (5th to 7th in back row). Katherine and Helen Hendricks and Bernice Pieper. The horticulture winners: (3rd row from back, girls without hats) Dorothy Kerman, Thelma Gustafson and Betty McGavin. P#1124

How Slippery It Is!

Councillor Nitikman was probably justified in his confusion. Baseball and tennis in the summer were sports with which he was familiar, but hockey and curling were foreign to him. Council was asked to provide some financial support to a new sports organization called the Gretna Curling Syndicate. The group had approached Council back in 1921 with plans for a new enclosed curling arena. They had been making do with the facilities built early in the century. Toward the end of 1925, curling enthusiasts decided to take action and ensure a new facility in time for the next season. When approached by a member of the Gretna Curling Syndicate, Councillor Nitikman is reported to have responded with, "But I don't even known how to skate! Why should I contribute to this rink?" 31 By June council meeting the Gretna Curling Syndicate had worn down opposition and was granted a \$500 interestfree loan repayable by April 1928. Membership of the Syndicate included J. C. Ward, G. G. Serkau, C. F. Pieper, A. W. Riedle, Peter Levesque, Phil Schuppert, F. Hornibrook, H. P. Unger, A. R. Hill, D. Totten, H. C. Young, Van Young, G. G. Neufeld, J. R. Hogg, A. F. E. Gross and P. W. McNabb. 32 The two sheet curling rink measuring 44×148 feet was ready for the 1926-1927 season. A new town skating rink was also erected at the south end of Seventh Street, under the supervision of Mayor Orser and Councillor P. H. Buhr, in the summer of that year. The new open air rink would remain on the same spot for several generations of Gretna skating and hockey enthusiasts.

A Community Focus

There was no end of activities in which to participate during these wonderful years. Young people attended Sunday evening "Jugendverein" at the MCI and took part in regular literary and drama evenings. The MCI

provided the focus for community choirs and Bible study evenings as well. Friday and Saturday evenings could be spent at the Gretna Theatre watching such shows as "Abraham Lincoln", "Mark of Zoro" starring Douglas Fairbanks, "The Last Spike" along with the countless comedies and serializations which kept the audience coming back every weekend. Pauline Winkler remembers:

The first I remember of the movie theatre was going when I was 4 or 5. My younger brother carried the movie bills from house to house each Saturday. He could bring one of his sisters, so I went every other week. The comedy was in one reel at a time, the other was two. I believe it was very flickery. The main feature was in two reels with an intermission. The movie machine was turned by hand. It had to be turned at a very steady pace. Then came the continued shows, such as Tarzan, etc. Each week there were two reels shown always built up to a fever pitch, the soap operas must have taken their lessons from it. In the thirties they had some German pictures, with the English words in print (subtitles). I heard these were made in Germany, but I could not verify this. The first price I remember for the movies was 25¢. Later in the thirties I remember it as 35¢, perhaps they went up in the twenties, I do not know. Now and then there was a special at 45¢. This price was for adults. When they had a Western there was generally a full house. Love stories with a happy ending were shown a great deal. Children in the theatre generally sat in the front as they could see better. It was a level floor.33

The "Real Show" arrived in Gretna on May 28, 1926. Gretna had seen circuses before, but the Cooper Brothers combined railroad shows upstaged even the Internationals who were importing three players for the 1926 season. These three were Ansen and Isaacs as pitchers and Bach on third base. Charlie Hayward was playing centre field again and Phil Schuppert was the catcher. One of the team's biggest problems were the cattle which were left to graze in the ball park. Perhaps third base was more slippery than it was supposed to be. Nonetheless, by the end of the season the In-

Gretna's First Curling Rink

The new curling rink erected this fall was the occasion of a large gathering of ladies and gentlemen at the official opening Friday evening. Mr. Ward, the president, opened the meeting with interesting remarks on the success of their effort, also introducing Mr. Friesen the contractor. Mr. Friesen gave a resume of some of the specifications, but declared they did not in anyway bind, as the intention was to have a first class rink for Gretna, and in looking over the building every evidence is there to substantiate his declared intentions. Mr. Ward then called on the Mayor, Mr. Order [Orser] to officially open the rink. After a few complimentary remarks on the success of the Curling Club he in a scientific manner curled the first stone on each sheet and declared the rink open. The general opinion of all present is that Gretna has a rink to be proud of and a successful season is anticipated. However, the committee would gladly welcome more of their friends from Neche to participate in this roaring game. A good time is assured for all and we trust the invitation will be taken advantage of.

> Neche Chronotype December 10, 1926

Robert Chambers

Robt. [Robert] Chambers of Gretna, aged 78 years and 8 months, died Tuesday morning, funeral services being held from the home on Wednesday afternoon at 2:30. Mr. Chambers was one of the early settlers of Gretna, locating there forty years ago. At one time he was a grain buyer, but of late years had no active occupation. He never married, and as far as known had no relatives in Canada or the United States.

Neche Chronotype June 11, 1926



MCI students presenting a drama in early 1900's. P#212

ternationals had again chalked up an impressive record of 21 wins, 4 losses and 1 tie game. 34

It wasn't all play in Gretna in 1926. P. F. Thompson had a contract to re-arrange the electrical wiring at the bank in Altona; Otto Martens was back at his job in Buhr's garage following a serious bout with pneumonia; the interior of the Coblentz Store was brightened with a new coat of paint; Dr. MacKenzie was

opening up new offices in the rear of the Nitikman Bros. general store next to the Krause Harness Shop; and Walter Neufeld motored to Winnipeg with P. F. Thompson "to take the examination for a motion picture operator. If he is successful, Mrs. Thompson will conduct the theatre for two months while her husband is on the road as advance agent for Green, the Magician."³⁵

One of America's Most Thrilling Historical Deeds—
The Driving of the Last Spike for the Transcontinental Railroad

The Monthouse and comedy

GRETNA THEATRE, FRIDAY & SATURDAY

MAY 21-22

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Neche Chronotype, May 1926.

Stiff Competition

Pieper and Buhr were giving each other stiff competition in the rapidly growing automobile sales business. Reports quoted C. F. Pieper stating that his Ford truck was the best investment he ever made. Close on the heels of this news, Gretna readers of the Neche Chronotype learned that A. C. Pieper had sold a whole carload of Fords and Fordson tractors and was forced to make a quick trip to Winnipeg to replenish his inventory. The Chronotype's October 8, 1926 edition also carried this entry:

Your reporter is informed that a truckload of the "Foaming lagger" was received here from Winnipeg Sunday morning at 1 o'clock. And by the way, while the writer of these notes is not a prohibitionist, it does seem that a little more caution should be exercised by the dispenser and users, especially on Saturday nights and Sundays. There is such a thing as carrying things too far, you know — especially in public.

Prohibition left a particular mark on the memories of the Village's residents. The 1920's were not quiet times in this border community.

Legitimate traffic at the Friesen Mill and Lumber Yard, at the grain elevators, farm implement and automobile dealerships, and at customs and immigration created a rhythm and excitement of its own. The less legitimate liquor trade developed in several ways. H. C. Young was given a restaurant license by Council, but not granted a liquor license. John J. Penner's request for a liquor license for his establishment at Berlin Avenue and Seventh Street was turned down, as was that of Unger's Billiard Hall. Interest in the King Edward Hotel was also shown by a Winnipeg individual. Gretna could obviously generate enough business for two bars, if the Queen's Hotel reflected the market potential. The Queen's could not keep up with the demand for the "foaming lager" and frequently reported running out before the end of the day. A local distribution system grew out of this demand, with results that were not always the best:

Unwanted Business

While playing as a child on the street in front of our house, I heard the noise of cars coming from

A Real Show Coming

Cooper Bros. trained animal shows and combined wild west will visit Gretna on Friday, May 28, for two performances. This is the only big show that will visit this territory this season, and this and surrounding communities will have the opportunity of seeing the show in its entirety, on the above date. Cooper Bros. shows are not only well received everywhere they go, but has played so many return dates in the last few years that they are rated at the top as far as tented amusements are concerned. One is surprised at the vast array of talent that has been assembled to make this one of the premier amusement enterprises of all times. Here one will see wonders from every country and every clime, gathered together to amuse the public. Here is a fairy wonderland brought to your very door, one trip through the menagerie where is assembled practically every known animal is worth coming many miles to see, together with a small army of the world's greatest and most daring performers, whose death defying and startling stunts keep you in high tension, and the performance will live long in your memory, after the show has faded into forgetfullness. Cooper Bros. have added for full measure, a real Wild West performance, put on the West's greatest riders, ropers, bulldoggers, etc. In fact, a triple show for the coming season. The public is invited to bring in their bucking horses, and cowboys will ride them at every performance. A big free street parade daily, so come early, bring all the children and see it all. Two performances given daily, afternoon, 2 p.m., night 8 p.m.

> Neche Chronotype May 21, 1926

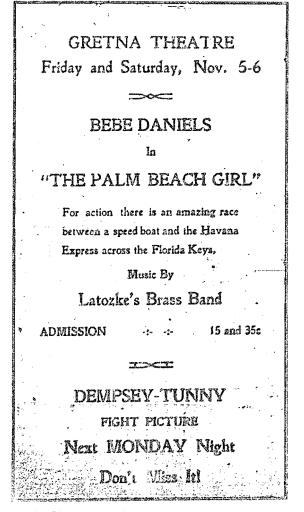
Elephants Put to Work

We went to one circus; I was possibly 6 or 8 years old. [It was held in Friesen's Field]. Around where the curling rink is now. That whole area was grass up to where Smith Street is now.

[I remember the] elephants, of course and camels, lions . . . those are the ones I remember most. I think [the circus was American]. I am of the opinion it came by truck. I think I can remember the trucks standing there. I just know they used the elephants to set up the tents. The elephants did a lot of the work.

Alf Loewen interview

the south end of town and could tell from the loudness that something unusual was happening. Being of a curious nature and not wanting to be left out of any excitement, I took off running for Main Street, and as I came closer to Main, I hear my father, who was standing on the entrance ramp to Ritz's elevator, whistle sharply at me motioning for me to return home. At this instant two cars went speeding by in great clouds of dust and the sound of gunfire evident.



Neche Chronotype, May 1926.

On questioning my father later on in the day I was told the authorities were chasing smugglers. Some time later, I remember a big car, by those days' standards, parked in the horse hitching rail area between Nitikman's General Store and Alderson's Barbershop and myself and friends in awe counting bullet–holes in various places in the car. ³⁶

Phil Schuppert's son, Herb, likely had his imagination fueled by Gretna's new constable, Henry Schuppert. As always, law enforcement in such a small community will have required a particular diplomacy when citizens of the community were known to conduct business on the wrong side of the law. It was known who was "in the business" and Gretna residents sometimes were inadvertently involved. These remember this time in Gretna's past. All admit that they were never close enough to this risky business to completely understand the extent and nature of it. The accounts do provide a description of one aspect of Gretna's story that most would rather forget:

Bronfman used to ship as sort of a sideline and bury it (liquor) in grain cars. I think this would be loaded in Gretna. The grain would come from farther west. They had a deal with the track foreman and he could open the cars so that they could put their supplies in. Then they had to be resealed and he had the equipment to do this. He got a bit of a commission on the operation. This man employed by the Great Northern was transferred over to Northern Minnesota. What he invested in farm mortgages through Phil Schuppert so Phil got all the information on where this money was coming from and the story behind it. And the Bronfmans were shipping carloads of this stuff buried under grain. He had to have somebody down at the south end, where these things would be switched and somebody that could open and provide new seals and unload. But it was the means of transporting it a few hundred miles and no interference on the way. It must have been operated on a big scale. There were bootleggers in the town and they claimed that there were 15 bootleggers in this town — on Main St. and the next street. They were doing it not just in town but there was a connection and that was at the high time. They used to come in here. This was

beer. It came in barrels and that was when Bill Briden was here and my father used to come bringing it to the house because he couldn't keep it in the hotel. Many a time during the winter he would have to hitch up a team and haul a barrel of beer down to the hotel. That stuff, as far as I know, came from Portage la Prairie. It was bootlegged beer. It was served here in town. The legal beer (2%) would be in a 26 oz. bottle (that you could get over the counter) Maltum, I think it was called.

Alec Pennis, section foreman, the police tried to catch him, cause they knew what he was doing. He was hauling liquor across the line. He'd take it to the jigger. It must have been good liquor because he kept it in the railroad crossing (in the culverts). He never kept it in his house.³⁸

Transportation of liquor in and through Gretna was accomplished by a variety of methods and, while the McLaughlan-Buick was the vehicle chosen by the Mounted Police and at least one of the Gretna bootleggers, the Ford (sold by Pieper), the Chevrolets (sold by Buhr) and the Overlands (sold by Spenst) must have been checked out for speed, capacity and reliability. It is not known to what extent this busi-

ness affected Gretna's business generally. The modern day Smugglers' Point must have worried many a parent, although none of this seems to have affected the educational institutions.

Old Wounds Reopened

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute was affected, however, by a tragedy which befell its Altona counterpart. The Altona MEI was destroyed by fire one cold January night in 1926, ending an existence which began in controversy back in 1908. The fire hastened the process of reconciliation between Gretna and Altona, which had started soon after the war. Prompted by individuals such as H. H. Hamm, who was an MCI alumnus, Rhineland Municipality Secretary-Treasurer, and Altona resident, definite headway had been made. H. H. Hamm was elected to the MCI Board of Directors for his first term in 1917 and was regularly called on to serve as Secretary at the MCI's annual meetings. 40 Old wounds heal slowly, and it was not until the depression set in that

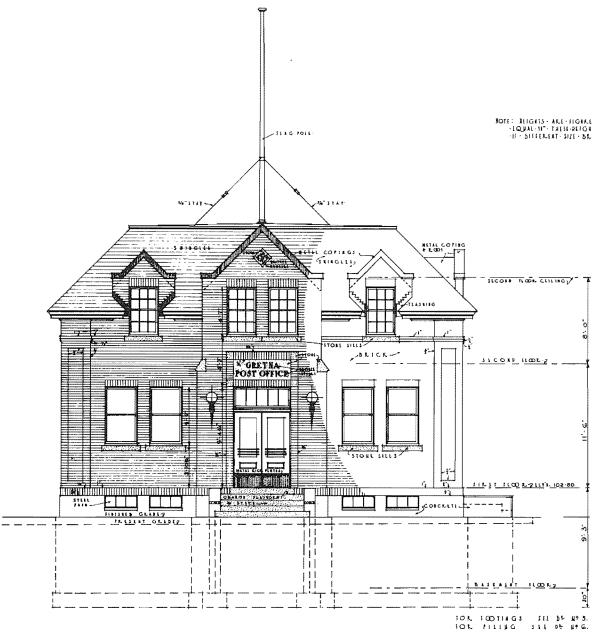


New doctor's office built in 1926 by Dr. J. A. MacKenzie on Montcalm Ave. and used until 1978. P#1513

GRETNA ONE DAY THURSDAY MAY 12



Neche Chronotype, May 1925/1926.



Architectural drawing of Gretna Post Office. National Postal Museum, Ottawa

talk of rebuilding at Altona died down completely. (Differences surrounding the MCI continue to simmer, and came to the surface again when fire claimed the MCI in 1963!)

Enrollment at the MCI set new records in the 1925-1926 school year. Seventy-four students attended that year and 53 of these wrote the provincial government examinations. The MCI also offered a pedagogical summer program for teachers in the summer of 1926 and was planning to create a Bible School program distinct from the regular program of studies offered. Because of this increase in students and additional course offerings, H. H. Ewert asked his Board of Directors for a fourth teacher for the MCI. Mr. Ewert's wife had passed away in 1925, placing an additional burden on Principal Ewert and his staff. The library work had been the domain of Mrs. Ewert and a loyal group of Gretna volunteers. Co-ordination of this volunteer workforce now had to come from school staff. Mrs. Ewert's death was a loss strongly felt by residents who were not part of the MCI sphere. Like her husband, she had provided a continuity when change seemed the norm.

New Postmaster

The Post Office, that unchanging and constant factor in the community, had been managed by only two postmasters since opening its wickets in 1884. Mr. Ellis, and his daughter Nora, had served Gretna well following the departure of the Hoffmans after the 1913 fire. Edward Ellis had patiently waited for his Ottawa superiors to make good their promise of a new Post Office on the corner of Seventh and Hespeler. He continued to provide postal services out of temporary quarters. Dr. J. A. MacKenzie was actively involved in recruiting a suitable replacement for Ellis when word got out that retirement was being considered. Nora Ellis had married this capable young fellow who worked at the bank. It was decided that Charles Hayward should be approached to take on the Post Office contract:

Ellis retired. Doc MacKenzie and Ike Coblentz were standing outside and I just turned around to walk home up in the north end and they said, "We just want to talk to you." They asked, "How about taking over the Post Office?"

I said, "What do you mean, Post Office?"

He said, "It's coming up for bids."

I said, "Boy, I got some opposition there" and in those days the politics . . .!

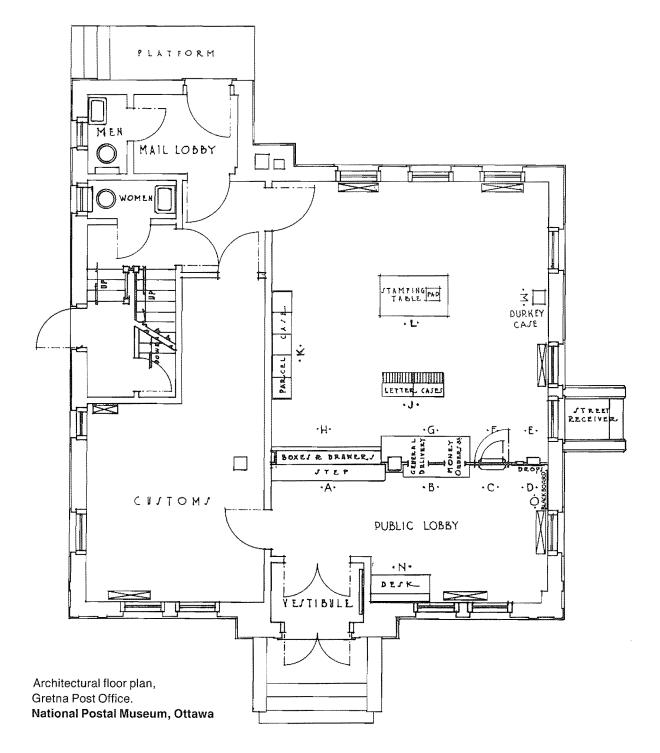
"Well", he says, "I think you're on the right

side of the fence."

I didn't do anything. I sat back and kept my mouth shut and they called me. The Inspector came down to the Post Office [Ike Coblentz and Doc MacKenzie talked to the Inspector about Charlie getting the job]. In 1926 in August I started working for the Post Office. [In the building along Main Street, they had a café along with the Post Office]. It was just north of A. L. Friesen's store. [That was Ritz's office and Coblentz' store next door to it]⁴¹

Dr. James A. MacKenzie became mayor in the December elections, and Phil Schuppert was appointed for his second term as Secretary-Treasurer. Councillors for 1927 were H. A. Latozke, P. H. Buhr, J.C. Ward and Albert C. Pieper, Dr. MacKenzie continued as Health Officer and Council maintained its financial support of the Old Folks' Home. It again supported the efforts of the Boys' and Girls' Club and renewed the contract of Constable Henry Schuppert. It was the first year, though, in which Council contributed financially to the Freemason's Hospital in Morden. Following representations by Judge Corbett Locke, Council agreed to provide a grant of \$50 hospitalization costs for several Gretna residents who had staved at the Morden facility. These people were part of a dramatic increase in the number of relief assistance cases brought before Council in 1927 and the only sign that the times were not as good as they appeared to be.

Gretna celebrated the Dominion of Canada's Diamond Jubilee by ridding itself of its gasoline lamps. All lighting on the village's streets was now electric. The old gasoline lamps could be had for \$8 a piece. Dominion Day celebrations go unrecorded for this year, although bulbs



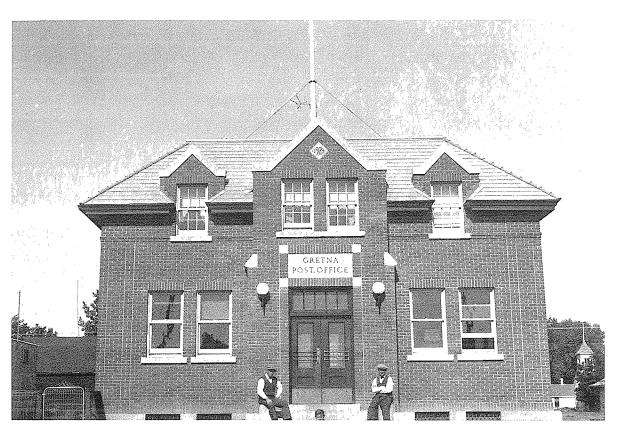
received from His Royal Highness, the Prince of Wales, were planted on the government property which should have contained a Post Office by now. Gretna decided it was going to officially turn this spot into a park. Perhaps the government in Ottawa might then take notice of its commitment made before the war.

The Gretna of 1927 was described by the **Winnipeg Evening Tribune** as:

Gretna, Thriving Border Town, Serves Famous Wheat District

Gretna is happily situated in a choice stretch of farming country, half a mile from the international boundary line, and almost due south of Winnipeg.

Southern Manitoba is wonderfully fertile and



Gretna Post Office shortly after it was built in 1929. P#147

the soil, a deep, black loam, overlaying a clay subsoil, is exceptionally rich. Practically the entire Gretna area is given over to grain growing, and the quality of wheat grown is equal to the best produced anywhere. It has gained a world-wide reputation as a milling wheat or one used for blending purposes.

Gretna's broad wheat fields became famous early in 1882 or immediately following the advent of the Canadian Pacific railway line through this southern part of the province. Each year some 450,000 bushels of wheat are shipped from this point. The wheat averages from 20 bushels upwards, oats 30 to 40 bushels, barley 30 bushels and flax 15 bushels.

Splendid vegetables are grown on the farmsteads in the district and there is a bountiful supply of good water. Good drainage is another important feature of the area. The Pembina river flows through the neighborhood.

Dairy Industry

A most profitable agricultural sideline, and one that is expanding rapidly, is the dairying branch. Large shipments of cream leave daily. No other branch of farming is more important than this, and its value is now recognized by a large percentage of the most progressive farmers. It is also evident that the returns the dairymen receive from this commodity, which does not deplete the soil's fertility, is a matter of great importance to the business life of the province.

Land here is valued from \$50 to \$75 an acre, depending on location, etc.

Driving along the main roads one will find the fields well-tilled, cosy homes, and the barns and the farm equipment up-to-date. Every farmer enjoys the use of a telephone. Rural schools and churches are only a few miles apart, and the agriculturists are far beyond the experimental stage.

The rural population of Gretna is made up principally of hard-working Mennonite settlers, who have met with amazing results.

In the midst of this peaceful landscape lies the little town of Gretna, with its four stalwart grain elevators to tell its tale of fertility and prosperity. These houses are owned by the Maple Leaf Milling Co., the Lake of the Woods Milling Co., the McCabe Elevator Co., and the H. Ritz Elevator Co.

A well-equipped flourmill, the home of White Rose Flour, is operated by J. F. Friesen (J. P.

Friesen — Ed.) and Son, Ltd. The mill turns out about 100 barrels daily.

Rail Terminus

As Gretna is the terminus of the Winnipeg-Rosenfeld-Gretna branch of the Canadian Pacific railway, there is a roundhouse, in charge of A. Orser. E. B. Hutchison is station master. The midland railway also serves the town, the station being located at West Gretna, a short distance away.

Excellent transportation facilities and good roads are two of Gretna's major assets, while by virtue of it being a customs port of entry into the United States, it is regarded as one of the most important towns in Southern Manitoba.

Since motor tourist traffic has increased in volume so enormously during the last few years, everything possible has been done by the authorities at Gretna to facilitate matters for the travellers.

Tourists coming and going to the United States will find splendid accommodation, and their motors can be released in eight minutes. John Hodgson, customs officer at this port, has been in charge for the past 15 years, and during that time has seen over 10,000 motorists pass into Canada from the other side.

Immigration stables are also maintained at Gretna. The officer in charge being J. R. Hogg, immigration officer.

Gretna Services

The town of Gretna was founded in the spring of 1883, and has a population of about 600. It is a judicial centre and the seat of the county court.

The little town has kept pace with the times, and the ordinary conveniences of life are within the reach of all. Public utilities are in a satisfactory condition. The supply of electrical power for all purposes is brought from Pembina, N.D.

Dr. J. A. MacKenzie is mayor; J.C. Ward, A. C. Pieper, P. H. Buhr, and H. Latozke, councillors; P. Schuppert, town clerk; and C. L. Hayward, postmaster, P. F. Thompson is town electrician.

There is a well-equipped fire hall and a splendid theatre, known as The Gretna, which seats more than 300 people. The building has a large auditorium, stage and a splendid floor, and is used for motion picture productions and road shows, etc. The Gretna is the property of P. F. Thompson.

Cement sidewalks have been laid throughout the business section of Gretna, while in the residential part the walks are bordered with rows of Manitoba maples. Substantial business blocks and pretty homes give the town a very flourishing appearance.

All banking matters are taken care of by a branch of the Canadian Bank of Commerce, under the management of F. B. Hornibrook.

Excellent hotel accommodation is provided at the Queens, a comfortably furnished, fully modern house. The hotel contains 16 guest rooms, lobby, dining-room, sample room, etc. Emil Soroczen is proprietor.

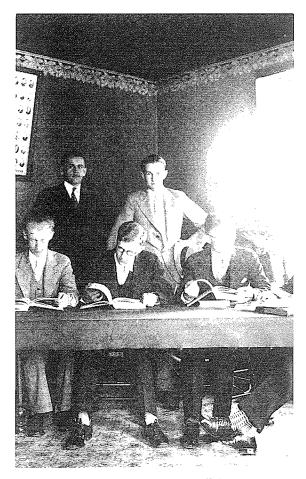
Four churches, the Roman Catholic, the United, the German Lutheran and the Mennonite provide for the religious and spiritual needs of the community.

Fine Schools

From an education point of view, Gretna's advantages are exceptional, as the Mennonite Collegiate Institute is located in the town. A handsome four-roomed brick school provides



Seventh St. north around 1928. Foreground is the Nitikman store, (formerly Erdmann Penner store), A. L. Friesen store, Ritz office and garage, Coblentz store and Queen's Hotel. P#630



Reading room in the "biscuit box" in 1930–1931. Standing: Henry Friesen, Peter Isaac, Frank Enns. Seated: Jacob Isaac, Peter Harder, Barney Gerbrandt. P#1609

public school training, the principal, T. G. Neufeld (G. G. Neufeld — Ed.) is ably assisted by a staff of four.

Practically all lines of merchandise can be purchased in the different, well-equipped shops, and the merchants are doing a good business.

A list of the town's leading business men include: Dr. J. A. Mackenzie, physician and surgeon; Dr. J. M. Williams, dentist; C. Pieper, notary public, insurance and loan agent, and farm implement dealer. Mr. Pieper also operates a large garage and service station, and has the agencies for McLaughlin and Pontiac cars.

J. P. Friesen and Son, Ltd., general dealers, lumber yard, builders' material, etc.; Henry Ritz, coal, grain, farm implements, insurance and real estate; a large wholesale and retail meat market is owned by P. H. Hellofs; J. K. A. Neufeld, drugs, stationery, etc.; John J. Penner represents the International Harvestor Co., and sells auto accessories; G. Spenst, manufacturer and agent for the Spenst Combination Grain Cleaner and Separator; Peter H. Buhr, Massey Harris and Imperial Oil agent, manages the Chevrolet sales and service station.

G. Spenst has the Overland and Dodge agencies, and operates a filling station; A. L. Friesen has been in business since 1917, and carries on a successful grocery and confectionery establishment; A. C. Nickel, plumbing and tinsmith; C. L. Hayward, confectioner; A. Coblentz, general merchant, has been in business since 1853; Nitikman Bros., general merchants and wholesale tobacconists, also have retail stores in Winkler and Altona.

Plenty of Sport

Fraternally, Gretna is strongly represented by the Masonic lodge. The society have their own attractive lodge rooms.

The Gretna community generally is actively interested in promoting amateur sport, taking a particular interest in baseball and tennis. All other western games have a host of devotees here. Wintertime athletes turn their attention to skating, hockey and curling. The skaters have an open air rink, the curlers are housed in a new \$2,400 rink.

Splendid sport grounds adjoin the town, and the annual sports day is an event of great interest to the entire neighborhood.

When the road from Crookston to Grand Forks

on the Minnesota State highway is gravelled, tourists will have a splendid highway from Crookston to Grand Forks on to Neche, Gretna and Winnipeg, and as Winnipeg is only 76 mile run from Gretna, this highway will no doubt be one of the most popular routes in Southern Manitoba. 42

The students at the MCI described the village as:

. . . a thriving business centre. It boasts of two general stores, A. Coblentz & Son and Nitikman Bros. (E. Penner & Son); three garages: Pieper, Buhr and Spenst; a butcher shop: P. Hellofs; two harness shops: A. Janzen and F. Krause; two confectionery stores: H. Unger and C. Hayward; a grocery store: A. L. Friesen; a blacksmith: H. Latotzky; a tinsmith: A. Nickel; two implement dealers: H. Ritz and C. Pieper; and a flour mill and lumber vard: I. P. Friesen & Son. The health of the natives is ably looked after by Dr. J. A. Mackenzie; Dr. Williams is the dentist; Ward Alderson, the barber, and P. H. Loewen the interior decorator: J. K. A. Neufeld is the druggist, and C. Hayward the postmaster. The banking needs of the community are efficiently handled by a courteous bank staff under the management of Jack Hornibrook.

In the world of sports Gretna has always been in front. In 1905 the football trophy for Southern Manitoba was brought home, G. Coblentz and F. Krause playing on the team. Formerly the baseball teams of the nearby towns were no match for Gretna, so the local team went as far as 100 miles to play a game. This sport has gradually died out and others have taken its place. Tennis has always been played at the MCI and the town now also has two gravelled courts. The pioneer curlers of the town were recently awakened by the younger enthusiasts. Last summer a new curling rink was built. It has two sheets of ice and is equipped with electric lights and a spacious waiting room. The present curling club consists of 75 men and 25 ladies. Basketball, football, and in winter, skating and hockey are the other sports engaged in.

Gretna is situated in one of Manitoba's richest grain growing areas, and enormous quantities of grain are handled every season; 125,000 bushels of wheat alone were handled by one of the four elevators in the past season.

Excellent roads wind in and out throughout

the entire municipality, and speeding along the fine highways are many of the latest models in motors. Up-to-date rural schools and rural and long-distance telephones are in operation.

At night the town is lit up by electric street lights. The sidewalks are of cement. On arriving, the first thing that impresses the visitor is the abundance of trees and pretty lawns. The population is 610.

Educational facilities are well provided for. There is a substantial four-room school, where high school work is taught. The principal, Mr. G. G. Neufeld, is well supported by a staff of three certified teachers. Mr. Feller, who has charge of the third room, also instructs French in the evenings. Miss Annie Krause is teaching in the first room for the twenty-sixth year. Mrs. Wall has charge of the second room. German is taught after four. The number of pupils at present is 150. The Mennonite Collegiate Institute also has a staff of four teachers, namely, Mr. H. H. Ewert, principal; Mr. Peter Brown, instructor in science and mathematics; Mr. Edwin Weaver, English, and Mr. Henry Wall, German and religion. The enrollment for the last term reached 74.

Three attractive churches are to be found here, the Lutheran, the Presbyterian, and the Catholic; the spiritual needs of the congregations are cared for by periodical visits from their respective pastors and priests. The Mennonites of the town have their regular services in the chapel of the MCI.⁴³



John J. Bueckert garage and H. A. Friesen & Son meat and grocery store, situated on Hespeler Ave. P#1271

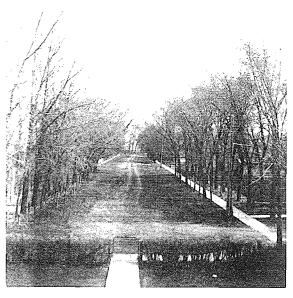
Smallpox Closes School

Highlights for the year 1927 included public school closure for two days in February when a case of smallpox was reported by the Public Health nurse. The nurse, Miss McClung stayed in Gretna for six weeks to observe, during which time she got involved in the village social life, giving a snowshoe party before spring thaw. A community Glee Club and a Drama Club were organized in time to prepare spring concerts and a play before Easter. The Bitzer Shield, Gretna's highest curling honor, went to the rink of F. Krause, skip; T. F. Sheedy, third; A. Pieper, second; F. Schuppert, lead. The public school organized a tennis club and Charles Hayward took on the management and coaching duties of a young boys' ball team. Principal of the public school, G. G. Neufeld took charge of the girls' baseball team.

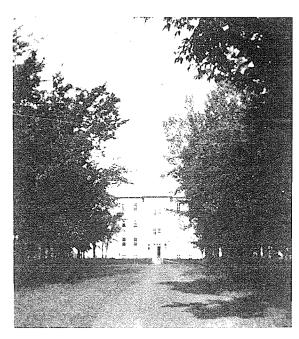
Naturalists Organize

A chapter of the Audubon Society was organized for the naturalists in town. It took over some of the activities of the Boys' and Girls' Club and added to the list of things to do in an already busy summer. The Cooper Bros. circus was in town for one day, May 12, and baseball tournaments were almost overshadowed by reports of tennis matches. The Internationals appear to have hung up their cleats in favour of leagues which recognized the 49th Parallel. Gretna had played in the Manitoba Red River Valley League for a few years, but 1927 was the first year Gretna had no representation in a league south of the border.

Visitors to Gretna in 1927 included the John Ritz family who had managed the Anglo-American some 20 years earlier. Mrs. Ike Coblentz' mother, Mrs. Hoffman, came to stay in Gretna for the summer and Leo Sheedy came up from Thief River Falls to vacation with Francis Sheedy. Dr. and Mrs. Stevenson visited the Hutchinsons and Chris Pieper spent part of the summer in town taking care of business. Mrs. Thompson was left to look after the theatre



View of Schellenberg Ave. east from third floor of "biscuit box". Circa 1930, P#1605



"Biscuit box" at west end of Schellenberg Ave., 1933. P#1606

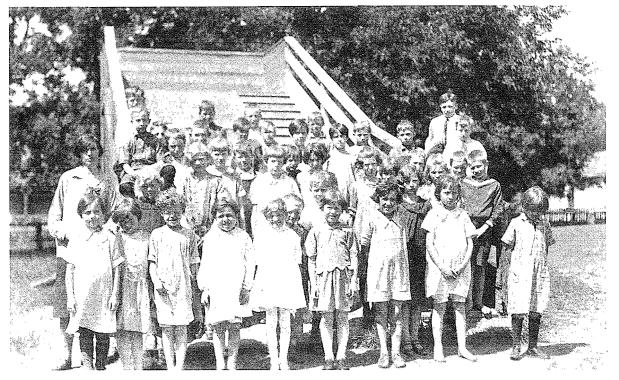
business through the summer while her husband "is conducting a picture theatre show at a summer resort west of Winnipeg". The Altona ladies came to Gretna for a tennis tournament in early July and attended a post-tourney tea at the Mrs. J. A. MacKenzie residence. Picnics and wiener roasts happened with regularity in the grove in Otten's Woods, and those with lighter feet danced to the music of such orchestras as the "3TK's" and the "Fletchers".

When Normal School students Helen Janzen, Margaret F. Friesen and H. Giesbrecht came home for Thanksgiving they encountered

talk of organizing a Public School paper to be known as School Chimes. The School Chimes staff consisted of G. G. Neufeld, editor; Otto Braun, sports news; Veronica Sheedy and Edward Neufeld, news section; and Eva D. Friesen in charge of advertising. The Gretna community was a beehive of organizational activity; a school athletic association, a skating rink committee, Girl Guides and Boy Scouts troups, Glee Club and Dramatic Club. In addition to the regular ladies' auxiliary and curling clubs, a men and women's hockey committee was also officially structured.



Interior of A. L. Friesen grocery store in early 1920's. Jake Loewen, clerk, and Ernie Friesen, sitting on counter. P#1241



1927 Second Room (Gr. 3 & 4) class in front of old toboggan slide. Some of the students as identified by Mildred Giesbrecht are: Miss Annie Krause, Arona Klassen, Gertrude Klassen, Tina Harms, Ernie Friesen, Lil Ulrich, Mary Ulrich, Rose Geres, Dorothy Funk, Rose Sheedy, Tim Sheedy, – Proskernik, John Schapansky, Willie Falk, Ray Gustafson, Charlie Whidden, W. Janzen, Mildred Loeppky, Menno Klassen, Johnny Eppler, Johnny Gross, Mary Stribisky, Sarah Hamm, Arnold Mann and Menno Klassen. P#1131

Co-operation

An organizational meeting which was going to have long-term implications for Gretna took place earlier in the year. Farmers in the area had tried to find alternatives to a world grain market which forced the farmer to accept prices on terms dictated by a few ever since they started to farm on the West Reserve. A Farmers' Elevator at Gretna had not been the answer. When discussions to form a "Wheat Pool" got under way in prairie communities, area farmers invited spokesmen to come and explain the advantages of the wheat pool philosophy. It would take another generation to build a Wheat Pool elevator at Gretna. It was not much longer, though, before the seed of co-operative philosophy was going to bear fruit in the village. Community co-operation was a strength which



Peter Brown, math and science teacher at the MCI for six years, and principal of the Gretna Public School for 13 years. P#1026



Gretna Glee Club in front of the Gretna Theatre. Second from left: Isby Bergen, Veronica Sheedy. G. G. Neufeld in foreground and Katherine Friesen, left of Neufeld. P#103

Kicked Out of College

We had a drama club there in Gretna, a dramatic club and I was there in the evening, working. There was a man by the name of Tim Sheedy and he was our director — an Irish man and the only experience he had was that he had worked in a circus and vaudeville himself.

Mr. Neufeld came along (he was a school inspector later on). And during their time, that's when we got into the various things, drama and we started clubs. There was also Mr. Hogg; he started the Horticulture Club...

I used to enjoy the drama plays we'd put on. We put on, "Kicked Out of College" and it lasted about 2 hours and we travelled with it and we'd hire an orchestra to go with us. It wasn't a musical but there was some music in it. We went to Plum Coulee and to Neche with our demonstration — Henry Funk's group played violins, guitars, and so forth. About a half dozen (people in orchestra). Not only [was it attended] by the whole community, but people from across the border came to the hall. It would be packed.

Katherine Friesen interview

had provided Gretna with a lively and rich social, religious and cultural life. As economic times made life more difficult, co-operation was going to find an application in its commercial life.

The Gretna Dramatic Club prepared two plays in the 1927-1928 season. The drama "Stranded Strangers" turned out well despite the absence of some of the characters in the play and the three-act comedy "Kicked Out of College" played before a record crowd at Thompson's Theatre. The spring comedy fare was followed by musical entertainment from the "Duke's Hoodlums" under the direction of P. D. Friesen. Nurse McClung sang two numbers accompanied by Hilda Buhr. The public health nurse was in town to give a series of lectures on first aid with Dr. MacKenzie. Gretna's Literary Club celebrated Robbie Burns' Day with a lecture on the poet given by Immigration Inspector Hogg at the MCI. The Drama Club's hit went on the road in March 1928 and found Plum Coulee audiences as easy to please as those in Gretna. Other communities in the area brought the play into their theatres before the end of April.

The season was wrapped up by two very different entertainments. The Cole and Rogers Circus featured parade, beautiful women, clowns and acrobats at a one-day event held Friday, May 25, 1928. The students at the MCI put on a show, also under the canvas top, on June 8th. That Schulfest attracted the largest crowd Gretna had seen at this annual MCI event. An estimated 2,000 people came to hear students perform under Professor Ewert's direction. The streets were lined with cars and trucks and hitching posts stood unused. No mention is made of Gretna's gumbo and it could be assumed that this was one of those rare MCI spring festivals which was spared the joy of spring rains and Manitoba mud.

West Gretna Closed

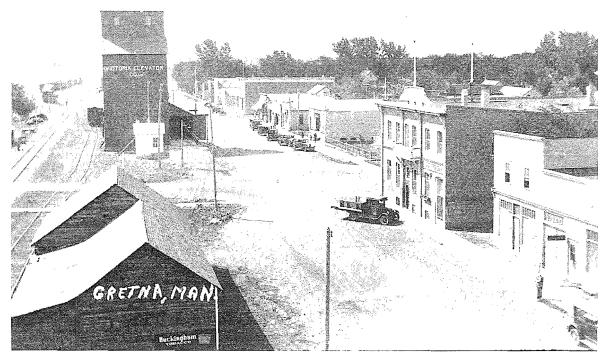
The cars and trucks and unused hitching posts signalled the beginning of a new stage in

this community's existence. As more and more people adopted the "horseless carriage" as their preferred form of transportation, passenger traffic on the trains steadily declined. Immigration traffic to the Northwest had also slowed to a trickle once the West was settled. The Great Northern Railway Company decided to cut its losses and sold its Manitoba holdings to the Brandon, Saskatchewan and Hudson's Bay Railway Company. The sale was finalized on October 1, 1927 and received the approval of the Department of Railways and Canals on May 10, 1928. The sale effectively ended the life of West Gretna and marked the end of rail service from Gretna to Plum Coulee, Carman and Portage la Prairie.44

The June 4th meeting of Gretna Council gave the McCabe Elevator Company the authority to move their elevator from West Gretna to the CPR right of way in Gretna. The elevator was set on rollers and painstakingly moved to the site where Ogilvie's had erected the first standard elevator several decades earlier. The McCabe name would change to Victoria although CPR records continue to list a McCabe Elevator Company operating in Gretna right into the 1960's. The West Gretna railway station was eventually moved to a site on Hespeler Avenue where it became known as Buhr's Garage.

The Gretna Old Folks' Home experienced several staff changes in the 1920's. Benjamin and Mrs. Ewert had moved to Winnipeg shortly after he was appointed to the "Reiseprediger" (itinerant minister) service for Mennonite conference churches in Western Canada. Mr. and Mrs. Peter B. Krahn, Mrs. Agnes Buhr Fast, and P. A. Rempel all briefly took on the administration of the Home. In 1928 Mr. and Mrs. Gerhard Bergen took over the duties of the Home. They moved to Gretna from Hague, Saskatchewan with their daughter Elizabeth. Gerhard Bergen died three years after the move but Mrs. Bergen and her daughter continued their work at the Home until it was closed in 1937.

Council must have given up on the Dominion Government ever building a new Post



Seventh St. after the Victoria Elevator was moved from West Gretna to the site where Ogilvie erected the first standard elevator in 1883. P. H. Buhr coal shed left foreground. P#268

Office in Gretna. It created a citizen's committee at the April 2nd meeting and gave its purpose as "finding ways to beautify the Dominion Government property on the corner of Seventh Street and Hespeler Avenue". The committee was given \$200 to accomplish its task.

Policing The Border

Law and order was also a concern of Council in 1928. A Police Commission of mayor and two council members was appointed in January to look after policing of the town. Constable Henry Schuppert was asked to turn in his equipment and the secretary-treasurer was instructed to write to Manitoba's Attorney-General and request that a provincial constable

be stationed at Gretna, explaining its position as a border town. While Council waited for an answer, it appointed Timothy Sheedy to serve as temporary constable at a salary of \$20 a month. Mayor J. A. MacKenzie missed council's regular sessions on several occasions in the course of the year. He was in the process of setting up a medical practice in Milwaukee, specializing in diseases of the eye, ear, nose and throat. Michael A. Nitikman succeeded MacKenzie as mayor; Dr. James W. Simpson took over his medical practice and drug store. 45

Continuity in health care came from the Public Health Nurse, Miss McClung and from Katherine and Helen Hendricks who had worked in the doctor's offices since 1916. Their mother had served Gretna and area as midwife from the times they arrived in town and she

Circus In Town

Yes, there were [circuses in town]. That across the street there was the grounds, they'd park right next to the train track. They'd made us carry water for the animals but you'd get a free ticket in. There was a well right out there. It was the town well. But the circuses, I don't know if they'd come every year. It was a big deal for the town. There would be the elephants and Shetlands. In the tent they would have [some acts]. You wouldn't call it an elaborate circus but it was enjoyable. [There would be magicians and clowns] and a parade. That was when you drove the Shetland ponies and the carts. [The parade] was the advertising to get the locals [to come out]. You didn't get the chance to go to a circus for free very often. They really put on a show. You didn't see an elephant too often — [or camels]. They'd have caged animals too...

R. C. Pieper interview

Report for M.C.I. Remembrance Day Reminiscences of the good old times.

It occurred to me to write a small sequel to my husband's essay, and hope it will be appreciated by all of you.

Not only did collecting funds for the MCI require much effort, but also supplying nourishment for the students boarding there created much concern. Had there been enough money to buy what you needed, it would have been simple, however, one had to plan and think how to buy the necessities at the most reasonable prices. That is where the wives could make their contributions, even though on a small scale. Some friends of the school made it their obligation to donate a pot of butter or a quarter of beef, and sometimes a few tasty sausages to the MCI. Often these gifts were sent via the collectors who came around. This was good and very helpful, and we want to look up with thanks to these friends. However, much more could have been done and can still be done since prices of goods has gone down.

I heard last fall what methods were used to supply the Rosthern School with foods, and would like to mention it here. One person is chosen who visits friends of the school and asks the wives what they can contribute in the way of food for the school. Various promises are made: one will contribute a dozen jars of vegetables; another several jars of fruit; a third jelly; some potatoes; several a slaughtered pig or beef. The jars supplied by the school are delivered by the

continued

often helped the doctor out when delivery dates made it impossible for him to attend both birthings. Katherine Hendricks (Mrs. K. Friesen) describes this medical role with great satisfaction: 46

Medical Care In Gretna

I did all the dispensing. Imagine me, without any training. My sister was in there first. She'd taken a year of Latin. She taught me the Latin she knew that I would need to fill the prescriptions and then when I got in there the doctor wrote out a simple prescription in the dispensary and asked me to fill it. He watched me very carefully. I had to measure the minims and the grams very carefully.

But if I had any problems I could always go to him and he said he did appreciate that because I tried very hard not to make mistakes and I would always check with him when I wasn't quite sure. The inspectors from Winnipeg would come out time and time again and they didn't like it. They said I should take out apprenticeship papers but somehow or other I got by without it.

My sister filled prescriptions for 11 months and I did it later for 8 years. That was a position every girl in town wanted. And we never even went to apply because we thought we wouldn't be lucky enough to get it, we knew everybody wanted it. The people next door had a woman working for them and she said, "Why don't you go and apply?" She said she had heard the doctor say to his wife that he'd wait until one of the Hendricks girls applied.

My sister needed money very badly to go to Normal School so I went and applied for her and he accepted her and she stayed for about a year and then I stepped in and took her place. I stayed there until I was married a year. He said, "You can come back any time. Your job will always be open to you."

Midwifery

This working for the doctor is sort of a traditional thing because my brother was there for a while first and my sister did and then I did and my mother worked with the doctor on cases. She had cases in the house and she also went out on cases with him. He would pick her up. She worked mainly with confinements. She was a midwife and the doctor appreciated her. He would sometimes get two calls at one time. He could only take

one so he'd pick her up and take her to one while he went to the other.

Mother's mother was a midwife and she trained in Mountain Lake. When mother came here, evidently midwives were rather scarce. She was called out not only locally but far, far away. And it was very hard on her. Sometimes in the winter they would come on sleighs, sometimes on bobsleighs and it would be very cold and she'd go out. I hated those trips because sometimes we would be without our mother for days. She would not only stay there through her confinement but she would do the washing and cleaning. The few people that had money would pay maybe \$4. If they didn't have money she never charged them anything, just gave them her services. Somehow the babies lived; there were few that died.

She must have brought thousands of babies into this world. She did it until she was old. Even into the States. She would go across the border. They would come up and pick her up.

One time the baby was fine and the confinement had gone well but the baby was screaming and screaming and they couldn't stop it. They didn't know what was wrong. So mother asked them if they had dill seed and they did and they brought out the seed and she made a tea of the dill seed and strained it and added just a little bit of sugar and they fed that to the baby and it was immediately quiet and satisfied. It had cramps and it did just the right thing; an old Grandma's remedy.

My mother always carried a little brown sack when she went out on her trips. We as children were forbidden to open the satchel and of course, it was a mystery as to what was in that satchel and everytime she'd go on these calls she would rush to the closet and pick up the satchel and go. One day when she was working downstairs, I was playing upstairs and I came across the little satchel in the closet. I knew I wasn't supposed to open it but curiosity got the best of me and I opened it up and I was disappointed. There was enema apparatus in there and all kinds of herbs tied up in little bits of white cloths and some remedies in little bottles. When I dug down a little deeper I found four \$1 dollar bills which was really a surprise. I took these dollar bills and ran downstairs and showed them to my mother. I knew she wouldn't like it that I'd been in there and she said, "Oh, you shouldn't have been in there". But she was so delighted to get those \$4 that she never really scolded me.

One time she was called on a case where they'd had triplets. Three little boys and they were identical and they named them Abram, Jacob and Isaac. That was near Gretna and they were really hard up, these people. The mother cried that they didn't have provisions for one, what would she do with three and they already had other children. My mother got me to write a letter to the Red Cross stating this case and they sent a lot of clothes. People came to see the triplets and no one came empty-handed. They all brought stuff till these people put a notice in the paper for people to stop bringing stuff.

Surgery

[I was at drama club] and a man came and said the doctor had sent for me; that there had been an accident and would I be willing to come right out. That was around 10:00 at night and of course, I went. This man had got cut up in a saw machine.

At one time when I was watching the doctor I was administering the chloroform. They used to put the mask on the face and I would keep dropping it. I was so afraid that I might give too much that I would just give them enough that they would barely be asleep.

One time I was so interested in what the doctor was doing, (he was stitching up somebody that had been badly mauled up and cut up), that the mask had slipped because the man had moved his head a little and the chloroform went to his eye instead of to the nose which I didn't notice in time and later on that man had a very sore eye.

Some operations were done in the office and some were done in our home. We did a lot of tonsilectomies and adenoids. We did it right in the diningroom on the table and before we started this we'd spread newspapers, we'd get ready, get sterilized and then we'd have the one room for the patients to sleep in.

Doctor MacKenzie

The doctor would go out to Plum Coulee. He was a very well-liked doctor. He used to be a captain in the army and they called him even when they had other doctors. He was a very wonderful person to work for. He was understanding, kind, sympathetic and intelligent.

Dominion Day celebrations provided a continuity in the life of Gretna residents as did the Boys' and Girls' Club, who worked through the summer in preparation for the Annual School Fair. The Boy Scouts, led by Anton Konantz, spent ten days camping in the Pembina bush. They were back in time for a Flag Presentation ceremony on August 14. W. A. Riedle donated the flag pole to the village and headed the list of dignitaries assembled in the park opposite the Queen's Hotel. Gretna's mayor chaired the meeting and Riedle, Principal G. G. Neufeld, James Hogg, Chris Pieper, P. J. Friesen and Rev. Hawthorne (Presbyterian minister stationed in Neche) all spoke to those patriots who came out for the ceremonies.

The real gossip that summer came from an incident in the Queen's Hotel:

A woman disguised as a man, with a cigarette in her mouth (who was a performer at Hamilton, N.D.) walked into the local beer parlor accompanied by two men. The tone of her voice, and her manner of sipping beer gave her away. Police were called and she was escorted out. The trio was released with a warning and ordered over the line.⁴⁷

This incident certainly illustrates why law and order was a burning issue at Council! As if local folk needed any outside help in entertaining themselves. The sale of alcoholic beverages remained an issue in Gretna, especially since a Ben Lerner from Winnipeg was requesting permission to build a second hotel in the village. The King Edward had been closed for quite some time, its dining room and bar serving as meeting rooms for the Gretna Masons. Nothing ever came of the request from Mr. Lerner, even though the Manitoba Liquor Commission had granted a license for a second liquor outlet. Gradually the King Edward fell into complete disuse and became a playground for the more daring of Gretna's young people.

The first place I remember them [masons] meeting was in the old King Edward Hotel. I remember they were on the second floor. They had a place there. And that was in 1929; that's

Report For M.C.I. . . . cont'd

same person, who make the visits, to a specified place where they can be picked up by the contributor. So much is contributed that all requirements of nutrition are fulfilled and need not be bought. I heard that one area had filled completely a big car with canned goods and took it 100 miles to Rosthern. Where there is a will, there is a way, right?

However, now I want to remind us of the good old time we had, in helping to provide nourishing food for the MCI, and you loving friends, that are present there will agree that we enjoyed working together. When autumn arrived and the vegetables and fruit were ready to be canned, then usually a person was named at the auxiliary, who was responsible that a day be selected when the required things would be brought to the school. What was usually done first? Gooseberries and rhubarb, right? On this day not only did the wives come, but also the small girls, to help with the stemming of the berries. After about a month the plums and other fruits were done. Often a 100 lb. bag of sugar would not be sufficient and a second bag would be opened. Then after a few weeks the cucumbers and greens were done, yes, a big container of sauerkraut was stomped, and two big containers of cucumbers prepared. During this sociable work much joking and gossip took place, and when dusk approached, the stone crocks and jars with fruits would stand on the kitchen table; and we were glad.

Mrs. Jacob Kehler

Der Mitarbeiter January 1932 when I went to school in the MCI. We boys would climb up the trees and get in through the window. Then we would go in there. We never did any damage. It aroused our curiosity. They had some of their paraphernalia in there [This was a meeting room or reading room.] I remember in particular, the open Bible they had in the center towards the front. Somehow that memory staved.

There were more than [50 Masons] there in the 1940's. I think they had their greatest numbers in the 1940's. They bought an old church building and that's where they had their meetings after that. 48

On November 8, 1928, Enoch Winkler died at his home on 587 Wellington Crescent in Winnipeg at the age of 77. He had been ill for some time. Gretna people who remembered him must have felt a sense of justice in the fact that a flower park and flag center now stood where the Enoch Winkler offices were located until the 1913 fire. He would not see the eventual construction of a combined Post Office and Customs Office in 1929. He would also be spared the pain of the difficult times which were already upon villages like Gretna.

Planning for Hard Times

The Village of Gretna Council decided to take specific action in response to the poor economic climate by establishing a Gretna Board of Trade:

At a representative gathering of citizens, presided over by Mayor M. A. Nitikman in W. C. Miller's office on Thursday afternoon, February 21, it was unanimously decided to organize a Board of Trade to look after such problems as town beautification, securing desirable industrial development and employment of the citizens, the construction of an all weather road to connect Gretna with the Jefferson highway, and also to act in connection with the procuring of a public building. Great interest was shown in the election of an executive. As president, Chris Pieper; as members of the executive committee, W. Ritz, P. H. Buhr, and I. Coblentz were elected for two years, and L. Pollock, P. J. Friesen and G. Newfeld for one year; A. L. Friesen as secretary-treasurer.49

The Board of Trade joined forces with the Citizens' Committee in preparation for the diamond Jubilee celebrations of the Province of

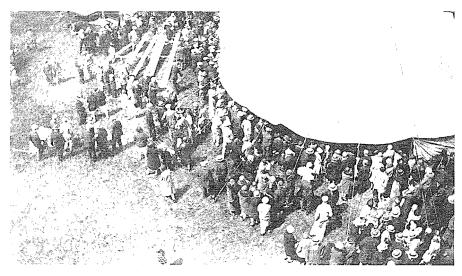


MCI Schulfest. By 1930 horse and buggy days were past. P#825

Manitoba which were to be held in 1930. In consultation with both groups, Council passed a large number of bylaws at a special meeting held on May 10, 1929 including bylaws to regulate billiard rooms, bowling alleys and restaurants; to regulate heavy vehicles passing on Gretna's highways and bridges and riding of bicycles on sidewalks; to license public exhibitions, shows and theatrical companies; to control and regulate transient traders; to provide for the location of slaughter houses; to control the running at large of horses, cattle, etc.; and to regulate the health and cleanliness of the Village of Gretna. Council also purchased five new fire extinguishers and sank three wells in Gretna for fire protection. Total expenditures for this fire control were not to exceed \$400. A well was also approved by the Gretna-Neche Curling Club at its March business meeting held at the Gretna Theatre. Sixty-five enthusiastic curlers showed up for the meeting and banquet which followed. Ex-President, Mr. Ward, now living in Winnipeg, was presented with a life membership by P. J. Friesen and the Bitzer and Kennedy Shields were awarded to the Hellofs and the Frank Krause rinks.

Gretna lost their public school Principal, G. G. Neufeld at the end of the 1928–1929 school year. He was accepting the position of school inspector for the coming year, and Gretna ratepayers were pleased at the appointment. They immediately chose Peter Brown as the person to replace Neufeld. Brown had joined the public school staff a year earlier and had shown his abilities in the classroom as well as in community activities. Annie Krause, J. G. Feller, Helen Janzen and Kathie Carstens stayed on to teach for another year. ⁵⁰ Gretna also lost their bank manager Mr. Hornibrook when he died unexpectedly that year while on vacation; he was replaced by L. W. H. Pollock. ⁵¹

The MCI entered the 1929–1930 school year with Rev. John Enns teaching a Bible school program designed to improve the knowledge and ability of teachers in Mennonite Sunday Schools. Fourteen pupils were enrolled for this course which included instruction in the German language. A similar number of teachers from Mennonite schools attended the summer school for professional instruction under H. H. Ewert's direction. The number of students enrolled in the regular school year at the MCI



MCI Schulfest, circa 1925, was held in a tent until an auditorium was built in 1952. P#817



Tent set up for MCI Schulfest, c. 1930. P#1607

had dropped to 56 but the school's finances were in good shape. The drop reflected the fact that fewer parents could spare the tuition, room and board costs and more children were staying at home to help make ends meet. Nonetheless, Ewert was able to report that a \$10,000 scholarship fund was in place to assist needy students in the completion of their examinations. ⁵² These students were teachers who had come from Russia, were already educated and trained as teachers, but needed to become fluent in the English language before they could take on a teaching post in Manitoba.

A Special Tribute

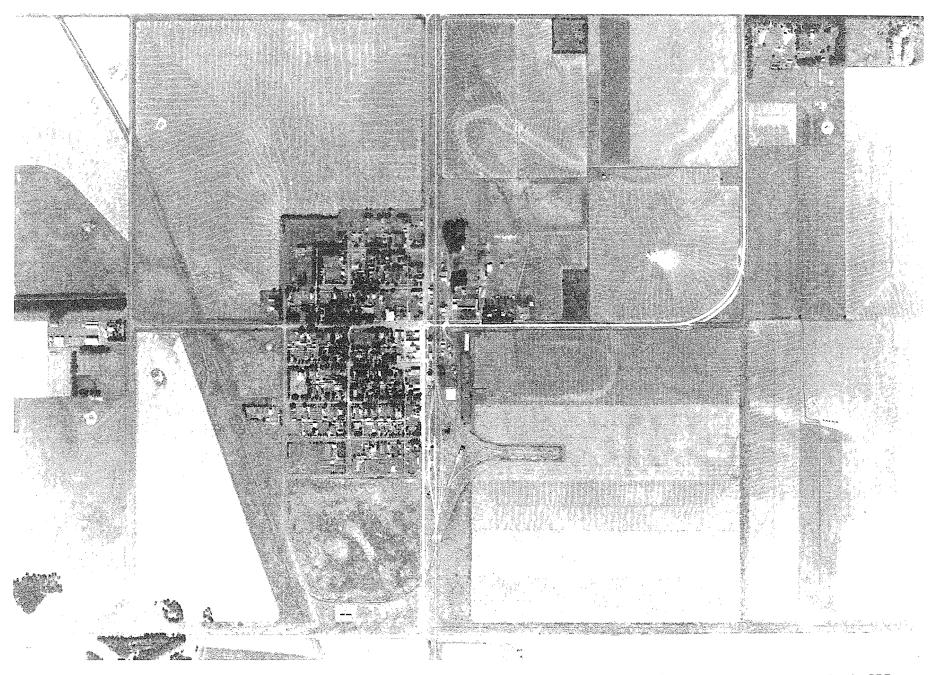
A special celebration brought many friends and supporters to the MCI on the last weekend in May, 1930. In addition to the annual Schulfest and Saengerfest, friends also presented a special 50th anniversary program in recognition of the completion of 50 years of teaching by Rev. H. H. Ewert. A combined choir of 250 voices, gathered from churches in the area, joined forces with MCI choristers to give praise and thanks in song. A teachers' convention was held the day before to review the progress in Manitoba's Mennonite schools. Many of the teachers were former pupils of

Ewert. They were the measurement of H. H. Ewert's success in his mission to the Mennonite community of Southern Manitoba.⁵³

The annual Dominion Day festivities featured a ball tournament which involved teams from the Red River Valley League. The fireworks and dance in the evening seemed a little less lively than usual. Celebrations marking Manitoba's Diamond Jubilee, on July 15, 1930 were also quieter than Gretna was used to. The parade, baseball games and tennis tournament drew crowds from neighbouring villages, but evening events drew mainly local participants. The Crash of 1929 had happened. Some Gretna investors who had played the money markets at Winnipeg suddenly found themselves penniless. Closer to home, both the Bergthaler and Sommerfelder Waisenamts had been operating with very small reserves. The panic of 1929 created a rush among depositors who discovered the Waisenamts' reserves were pitifully inadequate to meet the demands. Nearly 1,000 Waisenamt depositors lost more than \$1,000,000 when these Mennonite financial institutions were forced to close their doors. Any doubts about the seriousness of economic problems were wiped out along with the savings. The depression was not going to overlook the citizens of Gretna.



Note two-sheet indoor curling rink, McCabe corn dryer, Imperial bulk station, Smith St., and U.S. Customs in the background. P#487



Aerial view of Gretna in 1937. Note the stooks in the field, the old race track east of the curling rink, the quarantine barn south of town, and the trackbed connecting the CPR and the Midland railways (both the track and the Midland are gone by this time).

Chapter Seven

Into The Present

"Depression" is a term used today primarily to describe the hardships of the Dirty Thirties or to describe an individual's mental state. Although unemployment and farm foreclosure figures in the mid 1980's have outstripped those of the 1930's we refuse to use the word "depression". Depression is something you experience personally when life isn't unfolding as you had dreamt it might. "Economic recession" is what we have today. A recession can be over even while unemployment and foreclosures remain high: the language has changed. Perhaps, if we were to deal with a "depression" instead of "recession", we might come up with creative ways of coping with hard times as people in Gretna and area did in the 1930's.

Canadian National Railway's Director of Colonization and Agriculture, W. J. Black, provided the spark which got the farmers and business leaders in Gretna motivated to work to overcome some of the problems of the early 1930's. Under Black's direction the CNR established, for a five-year period, annual competitions in community progress for all settlement of European origin in the three prairie provinces. These Prairie Progress Competitions encouraged communities to demonstrate their ability to work toward the Anglo-Saxon ideal of Canadian citizenship. When in 1930 a CNR spokesman announced the competitions for the first time he stated:

It is generally accepted that the truest measure of progress towards the attainment of the advan-

tages which Canadian citizenship provides, is to be found in the extent to which individuals and communities avail themselves of the institutions and facilities which exist in Canada for the upbuilding of a high standard of home, community, and national life. This appears true of all peoples — Canadian-born, Anglo-Saxon or otherwise. It is with the desire to make a substantial contribution to the encouragement of such community progress and development among new Canadians that the competitions have been inaugurated.¹

The Gretna area was organized for purposes of this competition by individuals such as Diedrich Klaassen and David Schellenberg. The Gretna Unit placed third in a field of fifteen communities in 1930. The \$250 prize money was used:

. . . for the purpose of improving their school grounds and adding to equipment. The tremendous improvement observed in these schools bears out their statement that the prize money was only a fraction of the actual expenditure which involved the purchase of materials and use of voluntary labour.²

The organization and co-operation engendered by the Prairie Progress Competition placed the Gretna Unit in first place in 1931, the second year of the competition. In awarding the prize, the judges reported:

This community is very highly organized, and the intense enthusiasm displayed by everyone in the districts is responsible for the splendid showing made. It will be remembered that Gretna was

Nostalgia

Not recording things and not saving things has to do with the Depression. Nobody saved anything at that time unless it helped him in his living. People got down to the bare essentials. Placing value in things which were worn out did not happen . . . Today we would pay high prices for things such as antiques. I think we would have a lot of antiques if it hadn't been for that. They just had no value, so they were scrapped. If nothing else they would use them for firewood.

[Possibly] there was less relief here; there was more employment here in Gretna. The customs people were always around here. There were always railway people here. We had the two schools, MCI and the Public School.

Alf Loewen interview

A Farmer's Lament

When the farmer is in trouble, he should listen to his friends,

Who are always glad to help him with advice,

What if farming doesn't pay, we would like him to be gay, Though production costs the double selling price.

Chorus:

As on the highest mound I stand, look away across the plains,

And wonder if it will never rain, but as I turn to view my corn I think I'll never sell my farm!

When your oats are not worth threshing, and you cannot sell your rye,

And there's not a gleam of hope with your kin,

At a hatch or two of chickens, send your troubles to the dickens,

There's a promise in the cackle of the hen!

Though your sloughs are dry as powder and your dugouts just the same,

That's the time to change your plans, and turn the leaf When the country is in grief, why should farmers seek relief,

They'll not need it, if they concentrate on beef.

When the clover is a failure, and your pasture black and bare.

And you cannot manage forage anyhow;

That's the time to turn to dairying, your wife could be the maid.

There is magic in the mooing of the cow.

Though wool is hardly worth the shearing, and lambs are not worth the salt

The price you get for mutton makes you weep;

There is something so romantic in the shepherd with the crook

And a blessing in the bleating of a sheep!

When you have to sell your barley at a bushel for a cent, It is wicked for the pessimist to whine;

Buy some swine and slop your hogs, though you're going to the dogs.

There's glamour in the clamour of the swine.

Mr. Farmer you'll be happy, if you do as you are told, If you don't, you will surely come to harm,

With your chores to keep you busy, no brainwork to make you dizzy.

You may live to pay your mortgage, if you stay on your farm!

Mary Wall

placed third last year, and the fact that this community took the lead over the highly competitive effort for Steinbach — which won second prize last year — is a tribute to the citizens of the Gretna community.

A brief summary of results attained in the community (of Gretna) during the Competition: All school grounds repaired and improved. Plowing for tree-planting done at four schools. (These were Edenburg, Halbstadt, Blumenort, Gretna.) Playground equipment installed where needed. Marked increase of clover acreage. One Bull Club organized; three farmers growing experimental plots of sugar beets. Intensive interest in community enterprise developed during the year. One Consumers' Co-operative Association organized; U.F.M. Local organized; three garden clubs and four Junior Red Cross Societies organized; School Festival organized; one Literary Society reorganized and one new Literary Society organized; softball League of six teams organized; one Sewing Circle organized; Nutrition Class organized.3

Co-operation Builds Gretna

The first prize money of \$1,000 helped get community projects under way in the area. Participation in the competition focused on community activities and promoted a co-operative approach in seeking solutions to problems, economic and social confronting farmers and businessmen in Southern Manitoba. Local residents felt at home with the co-operative concept. They had co-operated to build and maintain their skating and curling rinks. They had joined forces with their Neche neighbours to organize the awesome Internationals baseball team. They had ignored religious and cultural differences to assist Prof. H. H. Ewert in his educational mission to Manitoba Mennonites. Members of all denominations attended special services at Thanksgiving and Christmas wherever they were held, and the Mennonite song festivals and Bible study programs involved people from all walks of life.



When sugar beets were first introduced to the area in the 1930's, they were loaded into train cars. All labor was done by hand. Today it is all mechanized. P#479

The Boys' and Girls' Club had also broken down barriers engendered by the Great War. The era of co-operation which developed during the depression years had a head start in Gretna.

Members of the local Farmers' Union had introduced a system of bulk buying as far back as 1921. Because they felt they were being held ransom by the oil companies, farmers banded together to purchase carload lots of fuel, which they distributed to members of the buying club directly from the railway track. By 1931 over 90 members were benefiting from this loosely structured buying co-operative which showed that savings were possible if consumers pooled their resources. It also illustrated the limitations of this approach to consumer co-operation, since all other consumer goods still had to be bought through the usual retail outlets. 4 Local residents sought to expand their co-operative venture. To this end, they became active in the Rhineland Agricultural Society at its first public meeting held in Altona on January 17, 1931. Under the leadership of men such as J. J. Siemens, J. G. Neufeld and P. D. Reimer, the Society was organized as a vehicle for united action at a time when "the disintegrating shock of the Depression on the agricultural and economic life" threatened the very existence of their rural communities.⁵ Representation on the Rhineland Agricultural Society's Board of Directors from Gretna, elected for 1932, was provided by Peter and Jacob Schellenberg.6 Gretna was also represented on the provisional board of a broad-based co-operative buying association called the Rhineland Consumers Co-operative [RCC]. The first items of business of this co-operative was the purchase of the Farmers' Oil Company station and inventory in Altona. Farmers who had participated in the bulk buying activities at Gretna quickly took advantage of the additional items, such as twine, available through the Altona based coop and discontinued their Gretna operations.

The move did not result in hard feeling or regret among Gretna residents and businesses. Memories of the devastating 1913 fire returned

early in 1931 when the buildings between the Queen's Hotel and the closed-up King Edward Hotel were destroyed by fire. The stationery and drug store business of J. K. A. Neufeld, along with the telephone and dental offices on the second floor, were completely gutted, as was a portion of the King Edward Hotel. The old Spenst garage housing Jim's Cafe at the time was also lost in the fire.8 Those who remembered 1913 and the role played by gasoline in causing the fire were sure the latest conflagration would have been much more serious if the Spenst garage had still been in business. All in all, they were relieved that the fuel needs of area farmers would now be served out of Altona.

Spirit of Rochdale

The Rhineland Consumers Co-operative, rather than dampening the co-operative spirit in Gretna, spurred on organizers and challenged them to consider the Rochdale model of

continued on page 265



Gretna Café, Spenst Garage, Gretna Drugstore and the King Edward Hotel. P#631

Cooperative Movement

December 11, 1936

Mr. S. H. Sobering Gretna, Manitoba.

Dear Sir:

The establishment of successful co-operative stores at as many points as possible in the province would in my opinion be of great advantage to the members and at the same time would provide a solid basis for the future development of the co-operative movement. On the other hand, to establish stores which did not turn out to be successful would be a very bad thing, and therefore I feel it is necessary for those who are thinking of establishing stores to be very careful in making sure that conditions are favorable before going ahead.

In the first place there should be a need for a cooperative store. If there are already stores at the point giving good service, charging reasonable prices and satisfying the people fairly well, it is doubtful if a co-operative would be able to secure sufficient of the trade to be a success.

It requires a considerable number of steady cash customers to provide sufficient business to establish and run a store economically. Before starting you need to have sufficient members to put up the necessary capital to fit up the store and lay in a stock of goods. You must also be sure that when the store is opened there will be sufficient cash customers to give a volume of business that will make it possible to operate at a low percentage of the turnover.

It would be foolish to attempt to start business in debt. The fitting up of the store and the purchase of the first stock of goods should be paid for in cash. Otherwise difficulty will soon arise. This money would of course be obtained by the sale of shares. The payment of commission for the sale of shares is a bad practice. Members should join willingly or not at all. (The proper co-operative practice, by the way, is to sell goods at current prices in the district and distribute the savings at the end of the year when the surplus — or profit — is known.)

It is also very necessary that all sales should be made for cash. Credit business is bad for many reasons, of which I will mention two. First, there is bound to be some loss from uncollected accounts. Second, if you do not get cash for what you sell you will not have money to pay cash for what you buy, and you will have to pay more for goods (through loss of discounts or the addition of interest) and once you get into debt to a wholesale you will be almost bound to continue dealing there even though you might have an opportunity to buy better somewhere else. This is not merely theory, but is based on experience of stores and other co-operatives in many places.

Then in estimating the amount of business you expect to do don't expect too much. Remember you can only sell to those who will pay cash, and many people will expect the co-operative to sell its goods just a little cheaper than the other fellow. Most people will do their buying where it is most convenient. So in estimating the amount of business you expect to do don't depend on getting 100 per cent of the business even of your members, and be sure and make sufficient allowance for the weakness of human nature.

A good manager is necessary, a man who understands storekeeping and who at the same time has an understanding of co-operation — who will realize that he is there to do the best he can for every individual member and for the association as a whole. You will also need a good board of directors, with a president and secretary who will take a real interest and help to get more members and customers. And of course you have to have a loyal membership.

I do not know what the local conditions are in your district. You do, and should study them in the light of the above observations. If you believe the conditions laid down can be met, then I would say "Go ahead and good luck to you."

At present there is no co-operative wholesale supplying groceries and dry goods. When there is a sufficient turnover no doubt Manitoba Co-operative Wholesale, which now serves oil stations, will cater to stores unless a separate wholesale is organized.

To incorporate a co-operative, application must be made to the Provincial Secretary, Parliament Buildings, Winnipeg. With the application must be a set of by-laws providing for the election of directors, the holding of meetings, distribution of profits and so forth. It is my duty as Registrar of Co-operative Associations to prepare the application and by-laws for those who wish it, without charge, but if you prefer to engage a lawyer to do this you may do so, in which case the by-laws would have to be approved by me before being submitted to the Provincial Secretary. If you would like me to draw up the papers please let me know the amount of capital you wish authorized, the par value of shares (\$20,000 divided into shares of \$10.00 each would probably be about right - you would not need to sell the whole \$20,000), the number of directors (not less than five but any greater number), how long each director is to serve (one year or two), whether partronage dividends are to be paid to members and patrons or to members only, and the name of the association, which must include the word ''co-operative'' or the abbreviation ''co-op''.

The fees payable to the Provincial Secretary on the incorporation of a consumers' co-operative with capital stock not exceeding \$20,000 are:

area in the contraction of the c	
Letters patent	\$25.00
Approval of by–laws	5.00
Advertising in the Manitoba Gazette, about	5.00
Registration	<u>25.00</u>
	\$60.00

If there is any other information you desire I shall be glad to give it if it is within my power.

Co-operatively yours, John W. Ward Registrar of Co-operative Associations & Secretary, Co-operative Promotion Board.

Cooperative Promotion Board

co-operative democracy. Abram Janzen and Aaron Klassen, members of the RCC Board of Directors, brought back new ideas and worked with other leaders toward starting a co-operative enterprise in Gretna. Simon Sobering undertook to find out more about the practical steps necessary to start a consumers' co-operative. The philosophy and the knowledge was present in Gretna in the 1930's but the community support simply did not exist.

Loyal to Merchants

Gretna and district consumers maintained their loyalty to existing merchants in town. Coblentz & Sons had been there longer than many could remember and the fairness and generosity of Adolphe Coblentz had been passed on to his sons Godfrey and Isaac. Credit could be had at the Coblentz store and other establishments such as the Red & White Store owned by A. L. Friesen or the Nitikman Bros. store. Many remembered when the Nitikman's emporium had been the Erdmann Penner store. This loyalty took one back to the very beginnings of the West Reserve and the hardships of settling on the bald prairie.

Other businesses had been in Gretna from the earliest time: the Friesen Mill & Lumber Yard, Hellofs' Butcher Shop and the Alderson Barber Shop, the Abram Janzen Harness Shop, the P. H. Buhr and Chris Pieper machinery and car dealerships, and the Henry Ritz elevator and machinery business - all had existed before the end of the Great War and most had survived the Great Fire of 1913. P. H. Loewen, painter, decorator and handyman extraordinaire also had served the area for as long as some could remember. Henry Latozke's blacksmith work was widely respected as was that of the tinsmith, Anton C. Nickel. Shoemakers Jacob Fast, Edward Gonske and Albert Hampel were craftsmen who not only repaired but also created footwear designed for the Southern Manitoba market. Hampel held the distinction of making superb violins.9 Add to these the Bank of Commerce, the Queen's Hotel, the



For Sale by

A. COSLENTZ & SON

Gretna, Manitoda.



Leicht auf den Füssen.

Wir halten grosses Lager von dauerhaften Schuhen.

A. COBLENTZ & SON. Gretna, Manitoba.

General
Merchants.
GRETNA, - MAN.
Cash receipts
good for 2½%
face value any time here.
Return \$20 worth and
get 50c. in Trade.

Wir haben reiche Auswahlin Schuhen, Hüten, Mützen, u. s. w. für den Sommer oder den Winter. Unsere Preise sind gerecht. A. COBLENTZ & SON. Gretna, Manitoba.

Die Schlacht-Zeit rückt naher. Wir haben eine grosse Auswahl von Schlachtmessern von Henkels, Solingen, in verscniedenen Grössen und Ausführungen. Fettbüchsen. Wurstmaschinen, Gewürze aller Art.

A. COBLENTZ & SON. Gretna, Manitoba.

Bringen Sie \$20.00 solcher Quittungs-scheine zurück und wir geben Ihnen gratis 50c. in Waren. Es verlohnt sich alles bar einzukaufen. Es ist hier jederzeit für 1% gut. A. COBLENTZ & SON. Gretna, Manitoba.

Messages imprinted on cash register receipts from Coblentz store. Printer's rolls were interchangeable.

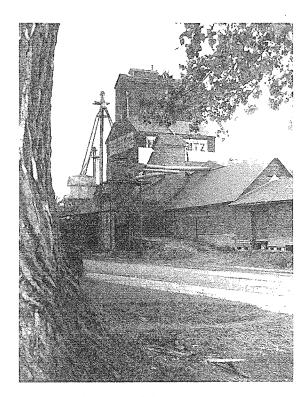
Co-operation and \$165 Started Gretna Co-op

The Co-op members raised \$165 in Gretna and the rest of the district by selling 33 shares at five dollars apiece and the directors themselves and the manager-to-be among them went ahead and began renovating a building for the proposed store.

Though keenly aware of the many difficulties involved with such small working capital, they knew they did have one asset — the demonstrated faith and confidence of their members in co-operation. Gretna had been in 1930 the first one in this part of the province to organize an entry in the CNR's Progress Competition and the work had continued even after the competition was discontinued in 1933.

Heading the provisional board of directors in 1938 was Dave Wall, who later served as the society's first elected president, an office he held with distinction until 1949.

continued



Henry Ritz elevator, built in 1916, is still in operation. Ritz retained an interest in the business until 1985. P#1566

Post Office, the churches and the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, the elevators and the train, and you were hard pressed to come up with a good reason why not to do business in Gretna! Furthermore, Dr. Simpson's reputation was as good as that of other Gretna doctors and the dental chair remained open for the regular visits of Dr. Williams. Dr. Simpson could also fit you with glasses if you needed them and his spectacles seemed to work better than the ones you could order from the Eaton's catalogue!¹⁰

As the Depression dragged on and farmers could afford less, Gretna business suffered. Merchants P. J. Kehler and H. P. Unger, machinery agents J. J. Penner and Ewert, and butcher Hugh Street had all closed their doors before the end of 1931. The Richardson garage, sold to "the Dyck brothers", shut its doors again in 1931. It was bought by Henry Ritz shortly thereafter. The automobile business was much less stable during those years than the livery and dray business proved to be for

Charles Johnston and Henry Schuppert. This partnership remained intact through most of the Dirty Thirties. The Bank of Commerce manager, L. W. H. Pollock, watched the impact of the Depression on this border community and found himself in an almost unbearable position. Many a loan request had to be turned down. However, as a member of Gretna's fledgling Board of Trade, he was able to help Gretna's unemployed and needy. The Board of Trade sought ways to generate business in the community, business which would mean work for those who were without any source of income.

Relief Projects

The Board of Trade endorsed an October 6, 1931 Village Council motion which approved a matching of Provincial and Dominion dollars "to be spent on improvements of Road from Hanover Avenue to the Southern Limits of



Gretna Fire Hall, on left, next to the former P. H. Buhr garage. The west half of the garage was the former Great Northern Railway station. Taken in 1957. P#1338

town by raising grade and properly surfacing it and the work to be done by hand labor".12 Gretna's third of the cost was \$1,333.33. C. A. Pieper, H. A. Latozke and A. A. Hiebert were appointed as a special committee to supervise this unemployment relief project. Council set the schedule of wages: 25¢ an hour for unskilled labor; 35¢ an hour for foreman and 45¢ an hour for teamster with team. 13 The road building carried well into the following year and helped fill the gap left when the Manitoba Telephone System (MTS) completed its new pole line from Winnipeg to Neche in 1930. The \$60,000 MTS project had helped boost business by stationing a 14-man crew at Gretna for the duration of the undertaking. General construction labor had also been hired locally for the project. The new Post Office was finally completed in the summer of 1930, the last major construction project in the Village for some years.

Council Has Heart

Village Council, under Mayor M. A. Nitikman, did much more than build roads to ease the pain inflicted by the Depression. While other municipal councils were demanding taxes and issuing foreclosure notices. Gretna Council tried to find ways to enable property owners to meet their tax obligations. Council reviewed its position late in 1931 and decided



Dray business was one of the essentials. The Queen's Hotel is getting its winter supply of coal. Team of horses and trailer owned and operated by J. J. H. Friesen, drayman. P#503

Co-operation and \$165 . . . cont'd

A loan of \$300 made in the spring of 1939 increased the capital of the society to \$465 which was used to buy supplies for the store.

May 11, 1939 was the day of the long awaited opening of Gretna Consumers Co-op. Sales during the first week amounted to \$64.38. And at the end of the year after seven months of operation, the store had done \$542 worth of business and had made net earnings of \$151.

The board realized that under the conditions of limited goods and services, low volume, and small capital reserves, they could not continue to exist.

However, the owners of a local general store had expressed a willingness to sell their business at a price of \$12,000 for stock and an assurance that the society would in time buy the building which for the present they could rent.

The money was raised and the privately owned business was purchased. This proved to be the turning point for the Gretna Co-operative.

In 1954 a new, modern Co-op store was built and the Grand Opening took place on October 23, 1954.

By 1955 the Society had an approximate membership of 700.

Sales have more than doubled during the past nine years of operation, despite a membership drop due to urbanization.

The first manager of the Gretna Co-op Store was John Gross. Other managers were: John Nikkel and E. T. Loeppky.

Clerk

Present Management & Staff:

H. P. Kehler, Manager, 22 years B. Teichroew, Assistant Manager

C. Martens, Hardware
P. Friesen, Warehouse & Deliveries

Anne Loewen, Cashier
Anne Schellenberg, Dry Goods

Elma Funk,

Red River Valley Echo

November 15, 1962

not to hold a tax sale that year. A year later when a tax sale was advertised, Council was offered 50% of tax arrears and costs by certain owners to keep their property off the tax sale list. Council accepted the offer and continued its good will by granting P. H. Hellofs a \$10 rebate on his 1932 business tax, provided tax arrears were paid before December 15. (An interesting \$10 rental was paid out to Mary Hellofs by Council in March the following year. No further mention is made of the matter. except that the Hellofs' business tax is absorbed by the shop's new owner, J. Hiebert in April of 1933). Council ratified several old age pensions that winter and brought in a carload of poplar cordwood for relief purposes early in January.

Gretna property owners regularly appealed their assessments. This was a common procedure ever since Ogilvie built the first standard grain elevator on what became Gretna's Main Street. Negotiation of one's tax payable also became standard practice in the 1930's. Council seemed comfortable with this arrangement and, while other municipalities demanded stricter legislation dealing with recalcitrant taxpayers, Gretna passed Bylaw #164 which stated that the Municipal Tax Arrears Consolidation Act of 1933 should not apply to the Village. 14 Council even went so far as to repay taxes when they had collected too much!

New Council

The 1934 inaugural meeting of a Council "with a new face", voted to repay \$70 to Riedle's Brewery (owner of the Queen's Hotel) for excess taxes. Members of the 1934 Council were Dr. J. W. Simpson, E. B. Hutchinson, H. A. Latozke and Anton C. Nickel. C. A. Pieper was the new mayor, taking over from Nitikman who stepped down because he was leaving Gretna. (The Nitikman store, which was built by Erdmann Penner, would soon be known as the Schnier store.) Phil Schuppert was appointed Secretary–Treasurer of Council for another term.

The 1934 Council asked the Manitoba Power

Commission to extend provincial hydro service to Gretna, after receiving a petition presented by citizens at their November 5th meeting. A. Coblentz & Sons had supplied hydro-electric power to Gretna users for more than a decade but the source, The American Gas Machine Co. in North Dakota, was not as dependable as the Power Commission. By 1936, all Gretna street lamps were powered by electricity purchased from the Manitoba Power Commission. Walter H. Neufeld was given the contract to put up the electrical supply line. To Once street lights were in place, Council strung lights at the skating rink, in time for the 1935–1936 hockey season.

A New Co-op

By the end of 1935 the idea of a consumers co-operative seemed as far away as it had been five years earlier. Dave Wall and Simon H. Sobering had worked with Aaron Klassen, Abram Janzen (Dave Wall's father-in-law), school principal Peter Brown and other Gretna leaders to raise the equity necessary to start the store. Over the next year they were able to raise a grand total of \$165 by selling shares at \$5 apiece. The provisional Board of Directors chose Dave Wall as leader and by 1937 they were looking for a suitable location for their store. The J. H. Gerbrandt garage and dealership stood empty on Montcalm Ave. Its first owner had been Charles Wahn. A lot of work was required to make the old garage fit for business. Long hours were devoted to the preparation of the facility during the spring of 1937. The Board called a public meeting to try to get the project on its feet, but the results were disappointing. Nonetheless, the Gretna Consumers Co-operative was incorporated in May 1937 with total assets of \$465 including a \$300 loan underwritten by the Co-op's provisional board. 16 It was a slow start with John Gross as the store's first manager. Total sales during the first week of operation amounted to the princely sum of \$64.38. By the end of 1939 there

continued on page 270

Gretna Co-op Minutes

April 9, 1942

It was moved by P. H. Buhr and Jac. H. Hildebrand that the old Co-op store be sold for \$1000-\$850 to John J. Bueckert and that any merchandise he may have be taken as part payment and that he make a down payment of at least \$100 and that he make monthly payments of at least \$100 and that he make monthly payments of at least \$25 and pay interest at 5% per annum. (Cd.)

May 26, 1942

Jac. H. Hildebrand and A. Klassen move that J. J. Bueckert be given a discount of the June 1, 1942 payment on purchase of the old Co-op building since the building was in worse condition than had been anticipated. (cd.)

June 9, 1942

P. C. Heinrichs and H. P. Hildebrand moved that the employees of the store be given the privilege of buying merchandise from the store at retail price less 10%. This privilege will include all the purchases of heads of families and the personal purchases of all unmarried employees from June 1, 1942. (Cd.)

September 8, 1942

P. H. Buhr and H. P. Hildebrand moved that all store employees be paid the cost of living bonus as per Wartime Wages Control Order P.C. 5963. (cd.)

July 11, 1944

J. H. Hildebrand and M. D. Klassen moved that we increase our over draft temperly (sic) in the Bank up to \$2000. (car.) P. H. Buhr and A. Klassen moved That we alow our clerks 1 week holiday with pay. (car.)

Sobering and P. H. Buhr moved That we give the M.C.I. 10 per. over cost price and pay them 50 per cent of the didvints due to the M.C.I. (car.)

February 12, 1944

Sobering and A. Janzen moved That we give the Credit Union of Gretna some counter space in the store for the union activities. (car.)

J. H. Hildebrand and P. C. Heinrichs moved That we raise A. Kreuger salary to \$95.00 a month, without any overtime allowances. (car.)

. . . moved That we contribute to the M.C.I. for their building . . .

March 13, 1945

Janzen and A. Klassen moved That we now give the M.C.I. the \$100 promised to them at annual meeting. (car.)

April 17, 1945

J. H. H. and A. Janzen moved That in view of the fact that we still owe a considerable amount of our creditors we as Directors decided that we postpone with the purchages of the store building. (car.)

Iune 30, 1945

Annual Meeting held in the Gretna Public School: Walter Neufeld and C. Klassen moved That the Board of Directors investigate the Education programs of other Cooperatives in view of organizing a Education comity in Gretna.

Sept. 13, 1945

Sobering-J. H. Hildebrand: That we engage Tina P. Loewen as clerk for one month on trial for \$35. (car.)

September 13, 1945

W. T. Heinrichs and A. Klassen moved That Dan D. Teichroew be contracted to set up our feed house, on our lot south of the store.

October 9, 1948

J. H. Hildebrand and A. Klassen moved That we engage Benno Teichroew for \$50.00 a month from October 1 (car.)

Sobering — J. H. Hildebrand moved That we rent our egg station to the Manitoba Egg Pool for a nominal sum.

W. T. Heinrichs — J. H. Hildebrand moved That we increase the salarys of J. Neufeld and Benno Teichroew \$5.00 a month. (car.)

A. Klassen — W. T. Heinrichs moved That we approve the action of the executive in hiring Tony Funk for \$100.00 a month on trial. (car.)

May 14, 1946

J. H. Hildebrand–M. D. Klassen moved That we delegate A. Janzen and J. Reimer to investigate the possibility to erect a coal shed and procure a site on the track. (car.) **June 11**, 1946

A. K.-W. T. Heinrichs moved That we contribute up to \$70.00 for the production of a film of Rural Electrifition out of our Educational fund. (car.)

Nov. 12, 1946

A. Klasen-M. D. Klassen moved That we pay our portion of the bill Re: Education Week in the amount of \$14.00. (car.)

J. H. Hildebrand-W. T. Heinrichs moved That we agree to with the Education Comitee to contribute \$100.00 out of the education fund for purchase of projector. (car.)

April 11, 1947

W. T. Heinrichs-J. H. Hildebrand moved That we donate \$25.00 to the Gretna Band Comitee. (car.)

June ?, 1947

H. E. Hildebrand-M. D. Klassen moved that our staff be priveleged to pick out a wedding present for Benno Teichrow priced from ten to \$15.00. (car.)

August 1, 1947

Special Shareholders Meeting. The meeting was opened by the President D. Wall. The purpose of the meeting was called in order accept or vice versa the offer of A. Coblents & Sons to buy the store and land for \$7,000.

Sept. 17, 1947

Salary was discussed and the employees were in the opininon whereas the cost of living being about 9% higher than last year, they were entitled to a raise.

P. H. Hyde-D. Kehler moved That we raise the salary of our employees 10%. (carried)

Oct. 21, 1947

M. D. Klassen-H. E. Hildebrand moved That we denote \$25.00 to the Gretna Sports Club. (car.)

April 17, 1948

10th ANNUAL Meeting of SHAREHOLDERS: Organization of a Pool Elevator was discussed and it was agreed that we elect a Provision Board as follows:

- 1. I. H. Hildebrand*
- 2. A. Klassen*
- 3. W. T. Heinrichs
- 4. I. Martens*
- 5. S. H. Sobering*
- 6. I. W. Klassen
- 7. P. P. Nickel*
- 8. D. T. Heinrichs
- 9. P. K. Hyde
- 10. D. Wall
- 11. M. D. Klassen*
- 12. H. J. Hildebrand*

*Directors elected

September 20, 1948

M. D. Klassen-J. D. Siemens moved That we join the Gretna Film councl and apoint Tony Funk as representative.

November 15, 1948

Business at this meeting included the formal organization of the Pool Elevator with J. H. Hildebrand chosen as President, M. D. Klassen as sect. and P. P. Nickel as Vice-President.

- at a Wheat Pool Board and Co-op Board meeting held on December 13, 1948, the following motions were passed:
- That we are in favour in a Wheat Contract with Great Briton, and that the contract be renewed each year.
- That we are in favour of a Wheat Board and that the Wheat Board be in control of Oat & Barley & Rye & Flax.
- That we give our employes a \$5.00 bonas for Christmas. (carried)

Peter Braun and M. D. Klassen secretaries Gretna Consumer Co-op Minutes Book, All spelling and grammar as in minutes

Gretna Co-op records

VGA



The former Charles Wahn garage-implement business transformed into Gretna's Co-op store. Phil Isaac of Federated Co-op with unidentified youth. John Gross was the store's first manager. P#343

were 139 shareholders of which 100 were farmers. There were 125 active members who shopped at Gretna Consumers' Co-operative on a regular basis. Some of the store's supplies were bought from RCC at wholesale prices. To Sales totalled \$11,222 for the fiscal year ending December 30, 1939. Gretna Co-op, with John Nikkel as manager also marketed farm products for its patrons in 1939, for a total value of \$5200. After all expenses were paid, including dividends of \$80.60, the Co-op's net income for 1939 came to \$251.24.18

Despite such a healthy looking balance sheet, resources remained limited:

Only a very limited stock of the most needed groceries and equipment could be made available. It was a bitter struggle for survival right from the very beginning. By 1941 the small store showed a deficit of over \$700. It was obvious that the small store could not supply even the needs of the smallest families. Interest in the business started to lag and some of the more timid members were ready to call it quits. Thanks to a relatively few members who still had faith in the venture it carried on. Some of these hardy pioneers were Dave Wall, Peter Loewen, Abram Janzen, Peter Brown, Aaron Klassen, Simon Sobering, J. H. Hildebrand and M. D. Klassen. These men have all served on the board of directors.

In 1942 the Board of Directors approached A. Coblentz & Sons on the purchase of their building and stock. They were willing to sell to the co-op providing a substantial down payment could be made on the stock and fixtures. An option to purchase the store at a later date was also available.

After a general membership meeting gave the go ahead signal to the board of directors, a drive for funds was again undertaken. This, together with the personal guarantees of the directors resulted in the purchase of the Coblentz store in March of 1942. ¹⁹

Co-op Buys Coblentz Store

Gretna Co-op Board of Directors met several times a month early in 1942. From the original decision to buy the Coblentz Brothers, to the

dotting of "i's" and crossing of "t's" on the lease/option to purchase agreement, to the vote on the printed agreement, there was a willingness of those on the Board to give of their time as well as their pocketbook. Board members personally guaranteed the Co-op's commitment to Coblentz Brothers. Like all good boards, they also decided to spread the risk a bit further. At the Friday, February 13, 1942 meeting secretary Peter Brown recorded the following:

On a motion of P. H. Buhr and Simon Sobering, the following parties, and others equally good, are to be secured as signatories for the personal guarantees required to purchase the Coblentz store: P. C. Heinrichs, Jacob H. Hildebrand, K. K. Heide, Martin Klassen.

These parties are by such action of signing the necessary guaranteeing documents automatically added to the Board of Directors.²⁰

The Board of Directors ratified the "printed form of the agreement for sale" at the March 9th meeting. On a motion of P. H. Buhr and Abram Janzen it was agreed, also, that a formal motion to buy the Coblentz store be passed and adopted as Bylaw No. 1 of the Gretna Consumers Co-operative. The Board acted swiftly and proceeded to hire staff. Erdman T. Loeppky was engaged as store manager at \$80 a month, A. H. Krueger as bookkeeper for \$35, Willie Falk for \$40 and Frank Krahn of Blumenort "was given a chance to grade eggs for the Coop store beginning at once at an initial monthly salary of \$20.21 Staff turnover was almost as swift as the hiring itself — Willie Falk was granted leave of absence just one month after starting work in order to perform his alternate service duties at one of the country's "CO" (conscientious objector) camps. Karl Hruda was hired to replace Falk as clerk and started on May 1st at a monthly salary of \$35. By summer Florence Machuk and Tillie Mann were also working at the Co-op. The Coblentz store was finally purchased by the co-op in 1947, after a period of steady growth. Herman Kehler had taken on management of the store in 1944. His

direction, combined with a renewed sense of optimism in the country following the end of World War II, made it possible for Gretna co-op to pay for the roof over its head.

Co-op Leads to Credit Union

The establishment of a strong co-operative on Gretna's Seventh Street marked a dramatic shift in the life of the community. It signalled gradual acceptance of the business world and a greater readiness to participate in this world by Mennonites who had been coming to Gretna "to do business" since 1882. It might be concluded that co-operatives were considered a Mennonite way of doing business. The leadership which doggedly worked through the

1930's and 1940's to ensure the success of the Co-op formed the nucleus which helped bring the Gretna Credit Union into being in 1943. The Credit Union could boast only 10 shareholders at the time it received its charter on August 7, 1943, with paid share capital adding up to a grand sum of \$18.50. The first directors were David Wall, P. P. Kehler, John W. Klaassen, William Janzen and Carl Klassen.

The first manager was A. H. Krueger. Activities of this new lending institution were conducted on the Co-op premises. The Co-op Board officially recognized this fact at its February 12, 1944 meeting at which time Simon Sobering moved and Abram Janzen seconded a motion "that we give the Credit Union of Gretna some counter space in the store for their



Coblentz & Son store purchased by Co-op in 1942. P#482



Herman Kehler, manager of the Co-op store, 1944–1976, is seen handing over the first dividend cheque to Abram Janzen in 1962. P#1337

union activities". ²² This arrangement continued until June 1945 when A. L. Friesen took on the Credit Union responsibilities and worked out of his own office.

In February 1952 the Credit Union moved back to the Co-op store and Tony Funk became manager. When fire destroyed the Co-op in 1953, Credit Union membership decided it was time to strike out on its own. A new office building was erected on Seventh Street next to the rebuilt Gretna Co-op and was officially opened on October 3, 1954. Tony Funk served as the Credit Union manager until his death in 1966. At that time membership had grown from the original 10 to more than 1200.23 The importance of the Credit Union to the community, like the Co-op, is immeasurable. Both have expanded their facilities, modernized operations and continue to be central to the community's business prosperity. Both exemplify a community's ability to organize and operate its own businesses, even when private interests raised questions of viability. The motto of the Gretna Co-op's founding membership is worth remembering:

Co-operation means peace. Competition leads to war. Let's co-operate!²⁴



Seventh St. north in 1985. On left is Audrey's Kitchen, Credit Union, Co-op, Post Office and Queen's Hotel. P#1565

The philosophy and financial success of these two member-owned and operated commercial ventures did not preclude the existence of other businesses in Gretna. Both, however, grew out of need created when local businesses either shut down or changed dramatically. The Credit Union replaced the Bank of Commerce branch office which had closed its doors on January 31, 1938: T. F. Moore had served as its last manager, taking over from Mr. Pollock in 1934. ²⁵ Although the groceries, hardware and dry goods were carried by the Schnier and A. L. Friesen stores, these stores were not what they once had been.

Grain Cashier

A note dated November 21, 1947 provides a specific illustration of the position a cashier for one of Gretna's elevator companies could find himself in, at a time when markets were constantly changing:

Eines tages kommen zwei Maenner herein, einer war mir bekannt, Mr. Cambo von Killarney, der andere ein Mr. Serumbuard von Minneapolis war mir fremd, diese Maenner machten mir den Antrag ob ich wuerde als Agent dienen um Roggen (Rye) von den Statten inzuportieren, ich nahm es an und war sozusagen a importer of Rye from the United States to Canada. (One day two men came into my office, one, Mr. Cambo from Killarney, I knew; the other Mr. Serumguard from Minneapolis was a stranger to me. These men made me the offer to become an agent for importing rye from the United States. I accepted and became, so to say, an importer of rye from the United States to Canada.)

It lasted only 5 days, then the International boundary was closed by the Canadian Government, but my commission on the Rye that was imported during these 5 days amounted to \$346.00. Last week the Superintendent of McCabes Elevator came in and asked me if I was willing to cash their Rye tickets with American funds; I certainly was only too glad to accept the proposition he made me, but the question was, where and how will I get the American money?

To my surprise, he had the actual cash with him, \$10,000 and on Friday the Company made a

delivery of \$15,000 to be used for cashing Rye tickets; it sure was going nicely, too good to be true, on Saturday morning the boundary was closed for the Rye business. I have never seen anything like it in Gretna nor anywhere else, our streets were full of great big semi-trailer trucks, 7, 8 and 900 bushels of rye on, coming from as far as the State of Missouri.

It sure was a scenery in the mornings, 8 o'clock the monster trucks were lined up at the custom office to make their inward report and the same way going out. In the Ritz elevator they broke the scale and gangway so that he had to have the elevator closed for a few days fixing it up — The firm I was agent for is in Minneapolis, Minn., Van Dusen Harrigan Co., and the rye was delivered here to the Lake of the Woods elevator. ²⁶

Fire Strikes Again

The above observations were made from A. L. Friesen's new home and offices. The old Red & White store and attached residence had suffered a fate familiar in Gretna. Mr. Friesen's description of the November 21, 1946 fire vividly captures the fear and panic residents experienced:

It was on November 21st, 1946, 5 o'clock in the morning, when I woke up and saw that our bedroom window was lit up, my first thought was that the clerk from the Co-op store was burning paper in their backyard, but looking out of the window, I saw flames shooting out of Ritz's workshop on the northwest corner of the building, with a heavy northwest wind, I was sure that there was no way of saving the building and also was sure that our house and office would go up in flames; the only thing to be done was to take out of the building whatever could be carried out, but only with Mama and me, it was impossible to do something worthwhile, so Mama went to our neighbours, John E. Kehler's and also to Phil Schuppert's to wake them and in the meantime I was cleaning out the four safes in the office, private safe, the County Court safe, the Village of Gretna safe as well as the safe belonging to the Gretna Credit Union Society empty and all the valuables, consisting of Chatel Mortgages, Victory Bonds, Life Insurance Policies and last but

not least, money belonging to the organizations and elevators I represent.

Worth mentioning is that I got \$5,000 from the grain elevator in the day before the fire, it still was untouched as sent. Also most of the records in the office were saved, the drawers of the filing cabinet were taken out and placed on the street in front of our garage, the documents and cash out of the safes were in the garage in the back of the automobile, also the furniture — everything was on the street in front of the garage, and afterall I saw the McClary heater we had in the dining room and the Goodcheer heater that served the office for good many years, with glowing fire in them. Thanks to the people in Gretna for the help and support we were given. Seeing Dr. McNeill, I asked him to take care of Mama and he sure did; she was taken to the Batchelor home by J. D. Siemens and Don Batchelor and later the doctor



Dr. J. A. McNeil and family left Gretna in 1949 after serving the area for 4 years. P#1251

Steam Engine

I used to have to go there (to the Mill) to get the brown flour. Mr. Eppler was the engineer and he could tell you the next day what you were doing the day before because he'd be in the mill looking out the window. I knew that mill upside down. He had taken me around that mill so often. [It was a steam powered mill]. It had an awful big flywheel on it. That machine just shone like a . . . I don't know what happened to it but a man by the name of Wall bought the mill [Miss Helen Wall's] brother bought it.

R. C. Pieper interview

Family Waved Through Gretna Customs

I always thought that moving day was the 1st of May? However, Mrs. Skunk and her five healthy and well-grown offspring, left their home in the United States and crossed over into Canada on Thursday afternoon in plain view of Canadian Customs officer Don Batchelor, who was on duty, and the Neche reporter for the Cavalier Chronicle and her husband, who had just stopped to report.

The skunk family had just come up from the ditch on the United States side and crossed over the road leading to Gretna. The mother skunk marched along the newly-built road along the west side of the customs house.

Unmindful of the spectators watching them, Mrs. Skunk kept her procession moving by, every once in a while, going to the back of her parade of five offspring and giving "Tail End Charlie" a nudge to keep him from wandering.

No one felt brave enough to get out of their car to take pictures.

"And I just called to her and told her she didn't have to report to Customs" commented Batchelor.

What prompted the exodus to Canada will never be known. How far they ventured onto Canadian soil will also remain a mystery.

But! Could they possibly have learnt of the chicken–egg factory two miles down the road?

"I sure didn't follow them to find out," said Don.

Red River Valley Echo July 15, 1981 went over to give her the proper treatment. To me it was only like a few minutes till the house was level with the foundation.²⁷

Fire did not level the hope and perseverence of A. L. Friesen in 1946, nor did it hold back Gretna's co-operators when their store was lost to fire in 1953. Rebuilding and renewal had brought the Village through times more difficult than the years following the second great war to end all war. The new Gretna Consumers Co-operative was a modern structure replacing the building Adolph Coblentz built after the 1913 fire. The King Edward Hotel was torn down by the Riedle Hotel chain before the end of World War II. The Friesen Mill was bought by Dr. Simpson in 1933, from which time it operated only sporadically. The mill was torn down

in 1940 and the beautiful steam engine, admired and revered by many young Gretna boys, was dragged north of town where it was blown apart in order to be sold as scrap metal. The concrete and limestone block foundations of the mill stayed in place for several decades, providing an exciting playground for those growing up on the east side of the tracks.

New Customs Offices

Changes to the skyline north of Hespeler were matched by similar developments to the south. In July 1954, Canada Customs and Immigration officials at Gretna moved into new quarters, just east of Seventh Street on the 49th Parallel. Until then, customs officers had



Officers working their shift in the new customs building: Don Batchelor and Henry F. Friesen. P#109

worked in a building on the south end of Seventh Street built at the turn of the century. Customs had occupied this dilapidated old building since 1917. Immigration had its offices in the Post Office following its completion in 1930. Business at the Gretna Port of Entry continued to be brisk, evidence of which manifested itself when the Government of Canada replaced the 1954 facility with a "new and improved" steel, plate glass and metal clad building less than thirty years later in 1983. A far cry this, from the days when W. P. Leslie took charge of the first Preventive Station on the prairies at Smuggler's Point in 1874.

A Town With Water

Gretna experienced its wettest spring in 1950. Stories of the Pembina River leaving its banks and crossing the 49th Parallel did not prepare townsfolk for the deluge confronting them on the morning of April 19. The muddy river had quietly invaded the south part of town during the night; many losses resulted from people being unprepared. No warning had been issued and nobody had seemed concerned before that morning. Gretna never took the Pembina River for granted again.

When flooding conditions occurred in the late 1960's and early 1970's Gretna was prepared. A dike along the Canadian side of the International Boundary kept flood waters south of town and diverted the waters easterly, where they continued their short-cut through the Halbstadt and Marais area to the Red River. The dike had to be raised several feet in 1969 and 1970 to cope with higher than average flood crests.

This was not what Council had in mind when it proudly announced that it was a

continued on page 277



Canada Customs occupied a small building on the southwest corner of Seventh St. and Berlin Ave. from 1917–1954. Prior to that, fire maps indicate customs was housed in a small building just south of the Erdmann Penner store on Seventh St. Taken during 1950 flood. P#378

New Canadian Customs

Canada customs officials at Gretna Saturday felt few regrets when they moved out of their old, dilapidated office into spanking new quarters about a half mile south-east of the town.

The building they left had been erected around the turn of the century and had housed the customs and immigration office since about 1917. Prior to that it had served among other things as drug store and confectionery shop.

Although far from elaborate or spacious, the new building constructed since last fall is a considerable improvement over those just vacated.

The general customs and immigration officers as well as a collector's office and washrooms occupy the first floor of the building. The basement of the 24 by 32-foot building houses the oil heating plant and ample storage space. Upstairs are located the lunch room and the long room.

The building is decorated in pastel shades of grey, blue and yellow.

Third Largest on Prairies

As the largest port of entry between Emerson and Coutts, Alberta, and the third largest on the prairies, four customs excise officers and an immigration officer handle a large volume of vehicular traffic annually.

During the eight-month period from April to November to 1953 an average of 2,000 U.S. cars per month cleared through the Gretna customs as well as another 2,300 cars per month from Canada.

With statistics available only for the lightest months of January, February, March and April of this year, it is noted that a total of 12,122 cars, both Canadian and foreign, passed through the port during that time. During heaviest traffic this summer there have been as many as 1,000 persons recorded at the port during one 24-hour period.

Staff members at Gretna include Collector P. W. McNab, Immigration Officer Ralph Eisbrenner, F. C. Coulter, D. W. Batchelor, H. F. Friesen and relieving officer Peter Loewen.

Red River Valley Echo July 21, 1954



Flood of 1950. P#976



Seventh St. during flood in 1950. P#1245



Manitoba Water Services provides Gretna with water from the water tank situated a half mile east of the Queen's Hotel. Water from the Pembina River is treated and pumped from Neche, N.D. P#1512

"Town with Water". These words, placed on a billboard beneath the water tower situated on the east side of the Gretna Mile, announced the completion of water and sewer services in 1961. The J. S. Quinn Construction Company had found laying pipes in Gretna a greater challenge than expected, the high water table, ironically, proving a major obstacle. Digging was slow because of the mud, and once the desired depth had been reached, often as not it became necessary to immediately begin pumping out the water that filled the hole. Several large pumps were used to try and keep the corner sewer manhole at the old Lake of the Woods elevator dry enough to pour the concrete footings. Gretna's streets were literally impassable in the spring of 1962. Even large tractors got stuck in front of the Co-op that year.

Street conditions have improved greatly since then. Seventh Street and Hespeler Avenue East were paved in 1963, connecting with the newly paved (1955) Provincial Trunk Highway #14, now P.T.H. #30. The hard top made life easier for Thiessen Bus Lines. A. J. Thiessen, a farmer living halfway between Gretna and Altona, started his first bus route from Gretna to Winnipeg in 1949. The daily service quickly replaced the train as the most reliable means of public transportation in the area. Thiessen Bus Lines has grown, absorbing the Grey Goose Bus Lines Ltd., and taking on that name. Today the company provides service to most Manitoba communities and also runs a tour service to all parts of North America.

Modern Times

Gretna residents have always been quick to accept technological change. When the Manitoba Telephone System installed its first rural direct digit dialing service in Gretna in 1960, people were eager to subscribe. By 1963 MTS had converted 400 telephone users to the seven—digit dialing system. This modernization did not bring with it rejection of all earlier methods of communication. When the old brick Public School was dismantled, the bell which

had called students to school for half a century was installed in a Peace Tower in the Gretna Centennial Park. It was designated as Gretna's Peace Bell, but it also was re-enlisted as school bell for the new Public School just across the street.

Voters were less eager to change the liquor laws in Gretna. They defeated a referendum in 1956 by a vote of 121 against to 88 in favour of permitting the Queen's Hotel to change its men-only drinking establishment to a mixed bar. When another vote was held only a few years later, the outcome was different: Gretna became the first community in the West Reserve to grant women the same right as their menfolk where liquor was concerned.



Charles and Nora (Ellis) Hayward, who served Gretna for many years in the post office until their retirement in 1961, on their 50th wedding anniversary. P#108

Thiessen Buys Grey Goose Bus Lines

A. J. Thiessen, president of Thiessen Bus Lines, said today that his company has purchased Grey Goose Bus Lines and will take over the operation of Grey Goose on March 1.

The purchase involves 21 buses and a garage on Burnell Street in Winnipeg. Thirty-one mechanics, drivers and office staff are employed with Grey Goose at present.

Mr. Thiessen said they will operate the line under the Grey Goose name for the first year, before changing it to Thiessen Bus Lines.

The new line serves towns along Highway 3 to Deloraine; Highway 23 to Elgin; Highway 59 to Vita; Fort Frances via Minnesota, and three buses travel to Hodgson, Gimli and Arborg north of Winnipeg.

Vice-president of Thiessen Bus Lines is Ronald Thiessen, son of the president.

Thiessen Bus Lines currently operates services in southern Manitoba to Winkler and Gretna, a local line in Transcona as well as a line between Transcona and Winnipeg; a service to Gypsumville in northern Manitoba, and another to Thompson.

Red River Valley Echo

February 15, 1961

Weather Station

The meteorological division of the Department of Transport last August installed weather equipment at the Interprovincial Pipeline station at Gretna. The synoptic weather station reports to the Winnipeg office four times daily, helping weathermen to form a more accurate weather picture over the Red River Valley as well as the entire province. Installation of the weather station was done by Mr. C. C. Warkentin of Winnipeg.

Red River Valley Echo September 5, 1956

Dr. J. P. Boreskie, who set up his practice in 1949, shown in his current clinic. P#1521

Gretna Regional Industrial Development Corporation received its charter on September 29, 1961. Its purpose was to co-ordinate efforts in attracting business to the community. One of the very first changes it witnessed in the business community was the retirement of Charles Hayward and his wife Nora as Postmaster and Postmistress. Nora Ellis Hayward had served as acting Postmaster from December 1, 1942 to October 1945, when her husband enlisted in World War II. Mrs. Anne Kehler, who had been assistant at the Post Office was Acting Postmaster until David M. Friesen was officially installed as Postmaster on October 25, 1961. D. M. Friesen is the fourth Postmaster to serve Gretna in its first century.

A servant of the public, who has provided health care to Gretna and area residents, longer than any of the four postmasters have provided mail service, is Dr. Joseph P. Boreskie. He started his medical career at Altona in 1948, setting up his practice in Gretna in 1949. He continues to offer quality care to the community today in a much expanded clinic on Hespeler Avenue. Dr. Boreskie's first offices were the same as those used by Dr. Simpson during the

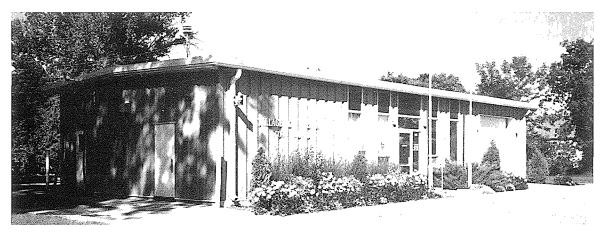
1920's and 1930's. The cramped waiting room and the cold stethoscope are two of this writer's strongest memories.

Across from Dr. Boreskie's new offices on Hespeler stands Gretna's new civic building. Officially opened on August 28, 1974 by Mayor Don Heinrichs and Councillors D. M. Friesen, John Teichroeb, J. J. H. Friesen and Roy Haney, it houses a new fire truck and pumper. It also houses the Village of Gretna offices and a couple of jail cells just in case some emergency accommodation is needed. The metal-clad building stands where the old jail used to be. The old fire hall with its bell is also gone, and the key in its glass frame on the door which had been an open invitation for those brave New Year's revellers who felt the need to ring in the new and usher out the old. This is among the unofficial traditions recalled by those who grew up in Gretna. Such traditions have given way to others likely to become as time-honoured. 28

Renewal and regeneration are a part of the Gretna tradition of change, as illustrated by the Village tax records describing business property owners:



Dr. Boreskie's current clinic. P#1554



Gretna's civic building, housing offices, firehall, jail and bulk water station. P#1573

Business Assessment Roll (Starting 1924)

	(Startanie	5 **/***/					
Year Start	Name	Business	Last Year	Year Start	Name	Business	Last Year
1883	Can. Pac. Railway	Station	1972	1883	A. Coblentz & Sons	Merchants	1942
1883	Dr. P. Wolochow	M.D.	1924	1883	Henry Ritz	Coal	1967
1883	L. Erk	Drugs	1924	1883	Henry Ritz	Grain, Imp.	1984
1883	R. S. Bean	0	1924	1883	Chas. Wahn	Agent-Imp.	1926
1883	B. O'Grady		1924	1883	A. Krause	Saddlery	1929
1883	R. Findley		1924	1883	Nitikman Bros.	Merchants	1936
1883	Dominion Gov.		1924	1883	Ward Alderson	Barber	1945
1883	International Harvester	Imp.	1924	1883	J. McPherson	Livery	1925
1883	P. H. Klippenstein	•	1924	1883	J.D. Richardson	Garage	1927
1883	W. Schimnoski		1924	1883	McCabe Bros.	Grain-Coal	1928
1883	Mae Brown		1924	1883	John Grossig	Baker	1925
1883	John Mohr		1924	1883	Hugh Street	Butcher	1929
1883	H. Hellofs	Butcher	1924	1883	H. Harms	Blacksmith	1925
1883	H. A. Latozke	Blacksmith	1955	1883	Imperial Oil	Refiners	1967
1883	P. H. Loewen	Decorator	1936	1883	Maple Leaf Milling	Flour	1946
1883	A. L. Friesen	Confectionary	1946	1883	Lake of the Woods Milling	Flour	1930
1883	H. P. Unger	Merchant	1929	1924	J. P. Friesen & Son	Mill	1932
1883	Neufeld Bros.	Merchant	1924	1924	Dr. J. A. McKenzie	Doctor	1929
1883	Dr. Wm. Ewert	Dentist	1924	1925	Thompson & Hellofs	Butcher	1925
1883	G. Spenst	Manufacturing	1932	1925	J. K. A. Neufeld	Drugs	1928
1883	Tom Wong	Cafe	1924	1925	J. M. Williams	Dentist	1928
1883	W. J. Briden	Queens Hotel	1925	1925	H. C. Young	Cafe	1929
1883	Bank of Commerce	Bank	1938	1925	Chas. Johnston	Dray	1925
1883	P. H. Buhr	Garage & Imp.	1945	1925	A. C. Nickel	Tinsmith	1949
1883	Albert Hampel	Shoemaker	1943	1925	F. Pohoresky	Taylor	1925
1883	Abram Janzen	Harness maker	1943	1925	J. P. Friesen & Son	Lumber	1932
1883	C. Pieper	Agent-Imp. Garage	1938	1926	P. Hellofs	Butcher	1932

Year Start	Name	Business	Last Year	Year Start	Name	Business	Last Year
1926	A. W. Riedle	Queen's Hotel	1940	1942	A. B. Klassen	Merchant Mach.	1946
1926	P. F. Thompson	Hall	1929	1943	A. B. Klassen	Theatre	1943
1926	Penner & Ewert	Machinery	1928	1943	J. J. Bueckert	Transfer	1946
1926	Johnston & Schuppert	Dray	1941	1943	John J. Martens	Dray	1950
1927	C. L. Hayward	Cafe	1930	1943	McCabe Bros.	Corn Dryer	1952
1929	J. K. A. Neufeld	Merchant	1944	1943	Man. Pool Elev.	Corn Dryer	1946
1929	J. J. Penner	Machinery	1929	1943	J. J. H. Friesen	Dray	1963
1930	P. J. Kehler	Merchant	1930	1943	E. T. Loeppky	Hatchery	1951
1930	Mary Hellofs	Hall	1936	1945	Dr. J. A. McNeill	Doctor	1948
1930	J. H. Gerbrandt	Machinery	1933	1946	H. A. Friesen & Son	Merchant	1955
1930	Dr. J. W. Simpson	Doctor	1944	1946	McCabe Bros.	Grain	1967
1930	Dyck Bros.	Garage	1930	1946	Dave Enns	Garage-Imp.	1954
1930	Lake of the Woods	Grain	1959	1946	A. H. Krueger	Bookstore	1950
1931	Edward Gonska	Shoemaker	1933	1946	J. J. Bueckert	Garage-Imp.	1953
1931	H. K. Goertzen	Wood	1934	1947	Gretna Transfer	Trucking	1949
1931	Victoria Elev.	Grain	1945	1947	Ritz & Schuppert	Agents-Garage	1961
1931	Federal Grain	Grain	1971	1947	Gustuv Huff *	Grocer	1948
1931	Canadian Oil Co.	Refiners	1963	1947	Gretna Lumber Yard	Lumber	1973
1932	Abram D. Friesen	Dealer	1933	1948	Marg. Johnston	Hairdresser	1948
1932	Jacob Fast	Shoemaker	1949	1948	John Wiebe		1948
1932	W. H. Neufeld	Merchant	1952	1948	Ben Gildemaster	Barber	1948
1933	Jacob Hiebert	Butcher	1945	1948	Man. Co-op Ass.	Egg Grading	1958
1933	Gretna Milling Co.	Mill	1940	1948	John Machuk	Cafe	1948
1933	W. H. Neufeld	Cafe	1935	1948	Carl Hruda	Trucking	1950
1933	I. L. Friesen	Lumber	1946	1948	Menno Hruda	Trucking	1951
1935	Friesen & Schellenberg	Garage	1935	1948	P. J. Loewen	Shoemaker	1951
1935	A. B. Klassen	Filling Station	1935	1948	Gretna Credit Union	Bank	In Business
1935	H. P. Hildebrandt	Gas & Mach.	1943	1948	Earl Smith	Trucking	1950
1936	Fehr & Hildebrandt	Machinery	1936	1949	Machuk & Friesen	Cafe	1949
1936	Karl Knopf	,	1936	1949	Dr. J. P. Boreskie	Doctor	In Business
1936	W. C. Miller	Beekeeper	1936	1949	I. E. Loewen	Garage-Gas	1955
1936	Neufeld Bros.	Agent Merchants	1936	1949	J. E. Loewen	Coal	1955
1936	I. K. A. Neufeld		1939	1949	I. A. Unrau	Bookstore	1952
	,	Telephone	1942	1949	Wm. Giesbrecht	Barber	1963
1936	North Star Oil	Agent — I. Fehr Hall-Merchant	1942	1949	H. D. Giesbrecht	Body Shop	1951
1937	J. M. Berezuik	Wood		1949	Peter P. Falk	Garage-Gas	1967
1937 1937	P. Falk	Gas	1940 1939	1949	Loeppky & Krueger	Grocers	1949
	D. D. Fehr			1949	A. C. Nickel	Hardware	1968
1937	P. J. Kehler	Merchant	1941 1939	1950	Jacob Fast	Confectionary	1965
1937	H. P. Hildebrandt	Machinery	1939 1955	1950	Gretna Cafe	Cafe	1958
1937	McCabe Bros.	Flour				Trucking	1953
1938	C. Pieper Estate	Garage-Implements	1945	1950	G & K Trucking	Lunch-Pool Hall	1954
1939	B. W. Berg	Dray	1963	1950	Anton Kay Abram Ens	Teweller	1952
1939	J. W. Derksen	Dray	1942	1950		,	1954
1939	Cornelius Friesen	Dealer	1939	1950	R. K. Shields	Lawyer	1954
1939	Gretna Consumers Co-op	Merchants	In Business	1950	Red & White Store	Grocers	1955 1957
1939	Peter J. Klassen	Dray	1939	1952	Martin & Willie Falk	Hatchery	1957
1940	Queen's Hotel	Hotel	In Business	1952	David Redekopp	Shoemaker	
1940	Peter Falk	Coal	1948	1952	Man. Pool Elev.	Grain	In Business
1940	Peter Falk	Gas-Garage	1948	1952	Henry Schmidt	Garage	1957
1942	P. P. Kehler	Confectionary	1974	1954	Ben Hiebert	Garage	1955



The southwest corner of Klassen Ave. and Seventh St. which proudly housed the King Edward Hotel and is now occupied by Bueckert Motors, the Chrysler dealer. P#1558

Year Star	t Name	Business	Last Year	Year Start	Name	Business	Last Year
1954	John A. Unrau	Trucking	1963	1968	H. Ritz & Co.	McCabe Elev.	1983
1954	W. P. Peters	Trucking	1965	1968	Peter Falk	Fix it Shop	1979
1954	J. J. Bueckert	Fertilizer	1958	1972	M. Lecuyer	Hairdresser	1972
1955	John D. Enns	Garage	1958	1972	J. T.'s Cafe	Cafe	1979
1956	Thiessen-Transportation	Bus Depot	1961	1972	Albert's Esso	Car Wash-Garage	In Business
1956	Harry Dyck	Meat-Ĝrocer	1965	1972	Gretna Feed & Seed	Storage	1984
1956	C. B. Perras	Rest.–Pool Hall	1957	1973	A. H. Krueger	Rubber Stamps	1979
1956	White Rose Service	Gas & Oil	1958	1973	Haney's Clothing	Children's ware	1978
1958	Menno Hruda	Plumber	In Business	1973	Economy Fabrics	Fabric shop	1978
1958	Phillip Schuppert	Insurance	1967	1973	G. P. Guenther	Shoe Repair	1978
1959	P. J. Bueckert	Dealer	In Business	1975	Dick Stoesz	Manufacturing	1977
1959	D. J. Friesen	Cafe	1960	1975	John Teichroeb	Sign Making	1976
1960	A. Knudson	Woodwork	1961	1975	Koert Kaman	Car Sales	1976
1961	G. H. Wonnocot	Cafe	1971	1975	Wm. Heppner	Excav.	1978
1962	Loewen Motors	Garage	1971	1975	Jacob Reimer	Excav.	1978
1964	R. Drummond	Barber	1965	1975	Alvin Rempel	Can. Oil Dealer	1979
1964	P. A. Costello	RestPool Room	1968	1977	Carl Schroeder	Sign Making	1982
1964	Irene Barton	Broker	1968	1977	Koert Daman	Electrician	1977
1964	Abe Peters	Can. Oil Dealer	1974	1978	K-7 Sales Ltd.	Mens Wear	1982
1964	P. J. Bueckert	Storage	1972	1978	Leisure Travel Vans.	Recreation	In Business
1965	Dave Hildebrand	Electrician	1978	1978	Man. Pool Elev.	Anhydrous	
1965	Eleanor Knopf	Hairdresser	1972			Ammonia	In Business
1966	Thiessen Trans.	Bus Garage	1972	1978	Linda Kehler	Hair Dresser	1982
1966	Man. Pool Elev.	Fertilizer	In Business	1979	Art Enns	Stamp Supply	1982
1966	Sidney A. Lesperance	Barber	1982	1980	Annie's Cafe	Cafe	1984
1966	Federal Grain	Fertilizer	1971	1980	Wesley Kehler	Can. Oil Dealer	1983
1966	Henry Ritz & Co.	Grain Tanks	1968	1981	Gary Ĥildebrandt	Insurance	1984
1968	Ed. Schmidt	Insurance	1980	1983	Gretna Woodwork	Woodwork	1984
1968	Toews Esso	Gas-Garage	In Business	1984	Rhineland Farm Services	Can. Oil Dealer	In Business
1968	Imperial Oil	Office	1972	1984	Border Grain	Grain-Seed	In Business

Year Start	Name	Business	Last Year
1984	Audrey's Cafe	Cafe	In Business
1984	Norma's Hair Design	Hairdresser	In Business
1985	Gretna Feed Service	Feedmill	In Business
1985	Gretna Insurance Agencies	Insurance	In Business
1985	Neustaeter Bros. Const.		In Business

Interprovincial Pipeline

Perhaps the biggest boost to Gretna business since World War II resulted from the Interprovincial Pipeline Company decision to place a pumping station just north of the village. Discovery of extensive oil reserves at Leduc, Alberta in February 1947, combined with the rapid growth of crude oil reserves, necessitated transportation to markets in Eastern Canada and the United States. This made construction of an underground pipeline from Edmonton, Alberta to Superior, Wisconsin the most practical and economical way of getting this black gold to its destination.

Interprovincial Pipeline (IPL) was incorporated by a special act of the Canadian Parliament early in 1949. The company's whollyowned American subsidiary, Lakehead Pipe Line Company, Inc., was incorporated in the same year to take care of business south of the

line. By October that year, IPL had mapped out the general route for the pipeline from Edmonton, across the 49th Parallel at Gretna and on to the Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin regions. IPL purchased the SE quarter of 8–1–1W from Alexander N. Smith for the pumping station site. Pipeline and pumping station construction got under way the following year. The Gretna pumping station went into service in April 1951 using four 900 horsepower dieseldriven pumping units which were housed in a brick building. IPL also built three tanks measuring 100 feet in diameter and 40 feet in height. Five staff houses were situated just east of the pumping station.

A rapidly expanding market for the crude oil in the U.S. and Central Canada, combined with additional oil discoveries in all three prairie provinces, resulted in expansion of the Gretna station in 1953. By 1958 the station had grown to include two complete pipeline systems, seven



Interprovincial Pipe Line station housing diesel engines and controls. P#1141

diesel pumping units totalling 9,700 horsepower, six tanks and nine staff houses. The Winnipeg Pipeline Company also operated out of this location, diverting some of the crude oil to Winnipeg refineries. Its staff houses were built on the east end of Hespeler Avenue.

Technological advances brought constant change to the Gretna pumping station. By the end of 1967 all diesel-driven pumping units had been replaced by electric units which did not need to be kept indoors. Consequently both wings of the brick building were demolished before the end of 1969. All that remains of the building itself is the central section which today houses the station's controls and gauges. Most of the Gretna operation is computerized and monitored from Edmonton with local staff providing some monitoring along with maintenance. As many as 30 men worked at both the IPL and Winnipeg stations in the early to late 1950's. Electrification and automation has reduced this number considerably, even as a third pipeline, installed by IPL in 1969, boosted the station's total pumping horsepower to 18,400. By 1976 this had been increased further to 26,040 horsepower.

When the Gretna IPL station came on stream in 1951 its capacity was approximately 75,000 barrels per day. By 1983 its pumps were pushing through more than ten times that volume, and also doing it much more quietly. The original diesel engines were noisy, smelly and had the ability to shake you awake as they were started up at different times during the night. (The drone of the diesels and the vibrations could also have soothing effects at times.)

The overall supervision of the Gretna IPL station has always been the responsibility of the Station Chief. In succession this position has been filled by: C. W. (Bill) Colledge, S. R. (Ralph) Brackenridge, R. J. (Ralph) Guthrie and W. (Bill) Seibel and presently Marvin McEdward. Supervisors and staff of the IPL and Winnipeg Pipeline stations have become an important and active part of the Gretna community. Many have been drawn from Gretna and district. The staff at the Gretna IPL station



I.P.L.'s present building with tank farm. P#1492

today are: Art Knopf, Carl Seibel, Art Enns, Bruce Johnston, Ralph Friesen, Ken Bahr, Albert Giesbrecht, Bob Cappan, Calvin Driedger, Marvin McEdward, and Ben Krahn. Three of these employees — Knopf, Enns, and Krahn — have been on staff since the pumping station was established.

Schulfest and Sängerfest

Regeneration and change characterized Gretna's social, spiritual, educational and sporting life in its second half-century as it had in its first. When cash became scarce during the Depression, movies at the Gretna Hall under Mary Hellofs' direction became less frequent. Homegrown entertainment took their place with dances featuring local orchestras and dramas prepared by Gretna's literary societies. Choral groups have concerts through the year and presented major works at the spring Schulfests and Sängerfests at the MCI: declining enrollment brought back the tradition of joint community and school choirs. Any lack in numbers was made up in enthusiasm.

The Rev. F. F. Enns remembers Sängerfest in Gretna during the 1930's:

The MCI had a choir during the entire year. But this was more of a community choir than just a student choir. Practices were on Sunday afternoon and interested people from town came to participate. The choir served mostly on the occasion of the bi-weekly "Jugendverein". I don't remember the choir singing during the Sunday morning church service.

The big musical event of the year, the "Sängerfest" was usually held on a Sunday in May. To practice for this, K. H. Neufeld would come out a number of times and interested people from Winkler might also participate. There were usually some former students teaching in the surrounding districts who would also come to help out. This was a great help to the small group of students at the M.C.I.

On Saturday before Sängerfest a big tent was erected by the students with help and supervision of some of the older choir members from town. Acoustics of course, were a problem and those of us who had to recite poetry or read a "paper" had had special coaching in speaking up loudly so that we could try to make ourselves heard at the back.

An even bigger problem was the weather. Wind and rain could really play havoc with performance and sometimes bring it to a complete stop while the men rushed to prop the tent poles to keep the tent from collapsing. Sometimes after the thundershower was over, we could go on from where we had left off. But the "atmosphere" of the thing suffered anyway.

But on a sunny and dry May day it could become a real celebration. The morning program was usually an elaborate church service with the choir singing. People had brought their picnic lunches, the M.C.I. supplied cauldrons of hot water for tea and coffee, and a lot of visiting went on during the two-hour break. In the afternoon the program took more of the character of a literary with recitations and reading from our courses and the choir supplying the folk and nature songs of which K. H. Neufeld was especially fond.

Around four o'clock parents and friends said goodbye and went home to do the chores. While the students prepared for the ''last lap'' of the school year and the final examinations in June.

Social interaction grew out of community organizations such as the Co-op and Credit Union. It also continued, as it always had, through youth clubs, church auxiliaries, the Masonic Lodge, as well as through less structured card parties and rounds of visiting and picnics in the Pembina woods. Stories are told of poker games, not for the faint-hearted, which were regular all-night fare in one of the rooms of the Queen's Hotel. Until the old King Edward Hotel was torn down, adventurous

children dared each other to explore the sanctuary of the Masons. Accounts of skulls and strange symbols still abound among Gretna citizenry who boldly assert they dared to investigate. Much of the mystery surrounding this fraternal lodge dissipated when the East Star Lodge moved to the site of the former Lutheran Church in the winter of 1941–1942. Until its amalgamation with Emerson Lodge No. 6 on June 3, 1970, Gretna's Masonic Lodge met in the modest structure which had served the Lutherans since 1925 when fire destroyed their wonderful large church.

New Lutheran Church

Rev. Heinrich Becker, along with travelling missionaries of the Manitoba Lutheran Synod, had taken on the duties and responsibilities of the Gretna Lutheran congregation, following Rev. Martin's departure in 1926. The congregation looked for more consistent leadership and to this end Pastor Otto Becker was installed at St. Paul's on December 7, 1930. Membership stood at 103 at that time. Other statistics for St. Paul's, as reported in the minutes of the 1930 Manitoba Synod Convention, were: four baptisms, four confirmations, 25 communicants, 21 Sunday School pupils and eleven members of the ladies' group. Pastor Becker had first moved to Neche to serve the Lutherans just south of the 49th Parallel. We would serve both Neche and Gretna up to the outbreak of World War II, adding Bathgate, N.D. parishioners to his responsibilities in 1939. Although an American citizen, Pastor Becker was not allowed into Canada following this country's declaration of war against Germany. This, effectively, shut down St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Gretna. The congregation was served from Rosenfeld for a short time. On April 28, 1941 Gretna Lutherans were granted approval by the Manitoba Synod to dispose of the Gretna church property, providing the funds from the sale went to the new Immanuel congregation at Bathgate. 31 Karl Knopf, Gretna's apiarist, presided over this final chapter in the life of



Gretna Maple Leaf Band, organized in 1947. Back Row: Lawrence Buhr, Peter J. Bueckert, Kent Schuppert, Harold Enns, Grace Nickel, John Enns, Frank Krahn, Helen Heide, Ruth Enns. Middle Row: John J. Bueckert, Frelan Loewen, Bill Johnston, Shirley Smith, Hannah Heide, Ida McGavin, Marilyn McGavin, John Bueckert Jr. Front Row: Olga Enns, Marjorie Smith, Muriel Harder, David Enns (conductor), Joan McGavin, Ervin Enns, Willie Falk. Majorettes: Patsy Enns and Florence Johnston. P#220

Gretna's Lutheran Church. Since 1941 Gretna's Lutherans have attended services in Neche.

Worshipping in Neche

Presbyterians and Methodists joined forces to become the United Church of Canada, with Gretna membership eventually worshipping in Altona. The first manifestation of this union, in Gretna, occurred as early as 1902 when the General Conference of the Methodist Church of Canada authorized a Congregationalist minister, "working in Gretna, Manitoba, to serve the

Presbyterians of his area, who were too few to afford their own minister".³² This became the pattern in Western Canada until formal church union took place.

The Catholic membership at St. Francis of Assisi, like that of Gretna's Lutherans, was placed in the hands of its Neche pastor although services through the Depression years were often conducted by Rev. A. Deschambault of St. Boniface. The records of the Gretna congregation were kept in St. Boniface Diocese as well, with the date of the last entry being May 4, 1947. The Church of St.

Mennonites Are Released From Jail

Four young Manitoba Mennonite men, who were serving sentences of six months imprisonment, imposed when they ignored the order to report for compulsory military service, were released last week, after serving some four months of their sentences, by order of the dominion government as a result of a petition lodged by Mennonite ministers of Manitoba and Saskatchewan, Rev. J. H. Enns, bishop of the Schoenwiese Mennonite church, Winnipeg, stated Monday.

The men were Jacob Fast, Mountainside, Man., who was in Brandon jail; John Wiens, Glenlea, Man.; Jacob Froese, Domain, Man., and Nick Schmidt, Culross, Man., all of whom were in Headingly jail.

The four men claimed exemption from compulsory service as conscientious objectors, but the divisional board refused their claims, it is understood.

When they ignored the order to report to camp, they were sentenced by police magistrates, Schmidt to 12 months imprisonment and a \$200 fine; Fast to 12 months imprisonment, with hard labor; Froese to seven months imprisonment and Wiens to six months imprisonment. On appeal, the sentences of the first three men were all reduced to six months imprisonment, Mr. Enns stated.

Mr. Enns said that the Mennonite ministers petitioned the dominion government for the release of the four men on the ground that other young Mennonites, claiming to be conscientious objectors, were allowed to perform labor service in lieu of compulsory military service.

continued

Francis of Assisi was moved to Elm Creek, Manitoba in 1952 where it continues to serve Catholics in that community.

Over the years, all the visiting priests, who ever came to Gretna, always stayed at the Krause home where a bedroom was reserved for their use. The names of members of the Krause family are frequently found throughout the church records, attesting to the many times that they were involved as witnesses, sponsors and god-parents for events that took place. Next in frequency are the names of members of the Sheedy family.³³

Just east of the Village, but inside the boundaries which define Gretna, stands a silent reminder of the continuing importance of the community's Catholic citizens, past and present. The small Catholic cemetery shares a part of Gretna's NE quarter section with the Village of Gretna Cemetery. At a time when it is often assumed that Gretna must always have been a predominantly Mennonite community, these burial sites remind us of the rich diversity which sparked much of the energy in Gretna's competitive and co-operative spirit.

Gretna Mennonites

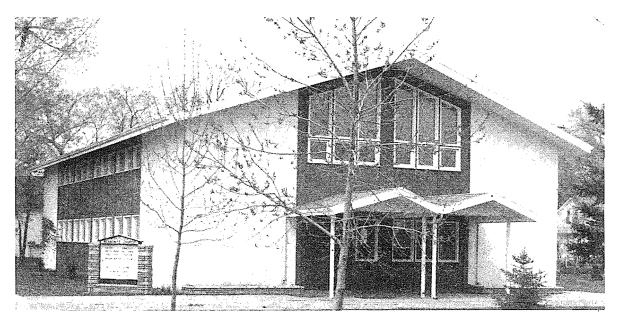
Mennonites in Gretna continued to worship in the MCI chapel until 1958 as they had since before the turn of the century. Their closest ties were with the congregation at Edenburg, just east of town. As road improvements made travel easier by horse and buggy or by automobile, the Edenburg membership was slowly drawn into the sphere of the Gretna fellowship.

Until his death in 1934, H. H. Ewert worked hard to dispel fears among rural Mennonites that worship in an urban centre such as Gretna brought with it certain inherent evils. The continued good work by the MCI and the existence of the Old Folks' Home served as examples that Gretna's urbanity had not tarnished the faith and works of good Mennonites in town. Closure in 1937 and disposal of assets of the Old Folks' Home in 1940 happened despite repeated donations and grant in-lieu-of-taxes from the Village of Gretna. Mrs. Bergen and her

daughter Elizabeth had kept the Home operational for six years following Gerhard Bergen's death in 1931. It was then rented to the MCI and used as a girls' residence until 1955 when it was dismantled.³⁴

Gretna Bergthaler Mennonite Church was built in 1958 on the original Penner property. Rev. Ed Plett was the new church's first pastor. The Gretna Mennonite congregation physically moved from the MCI chapel which had served them for generations but, to this day, they maintain their strong support and commitment to the MCI. The school's morning devotions were open to the public and were frequented by Gretna residents who were used to starting their day in shared devotions with the students of the school. One of the regulars at these morning worship services was Abram Janzen, the last of Gretna's harness makers. He served many years on the MCI Board of Directors and actively promoted the school until his death at the age of 87.

The Depression, followed by the Second World War, brought changes which left their mark on the community. Another generation of young men went off to war. Of those who lived to see its end, many did not come back to Gretna. This time more Mennonite men joined the armed forces, despite the pacifist teachings of their church. Tensions in Gretna were not as extreme as they had been during World War I, but young conscientious objectors in the area were as shy of Gretna as their fathers had been during the Great War. Their fears were not without cause: notices announcing the mandatory registration of enemy aliens were up in all Post Offices by the summer of 1940. Point 4 of the Notice read: "All persons of German or Italian racial origin naturalized after September 1, 1929 (must) be registered". RCMP in Emerson were especially thorough in their application of this wartime regulation. Mennonites considered themselves as Russian naturalized citizens, but the Registrar at Emerson considered anyone who spoke the German Language an enemy alien. Howard Winkler MP, repeatedly came to the defence of the Mennonite



Bergthaler Mennonite Church was built in 1958 on the original Erdmann Penner property. P#873

position, doing his utmost to keep his Mennonite constituents informed of developments.

Winkler's supporters in Gretna included Rhineland Constituency Liberal Association president, S. H. Sobering and Public School principal Peter Brown. Through regular correspondence with them, Howard Winkler was able to keep track of his chief political threat, Wally (W. C.) Miller.³⁵

Wally Miller

Wally Miller had worked for the Pieper business in Gretna after giving up teaching in the area. The Pieper Conservative tendencies were shared by Miller, who was considered a powerful orator and the man most likely to defeat Winkler in the 1935 federal election. Howard Winkler prevailed against Wally Miller in 1935 and held the Lisgar seat until his retirement in 1952. Miller tried to wrest the seat away from Liberals in 1940 and again in 1945, by which time

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Archie Batchelor, R.C.M.P., served the Gretna detachment, 1937–1947. (Other person unknown.) P#1063

Mennonites Are Released . . .cont'd

It is suggested that conscientious objectors who are now employed in the national parks could more advantageously be employed to meet the need for farm help, since food production is an important part of the war effort. Most of the conscientious objectors are accustomed to farm work. The proposal seems reasonable if a feasible plan can be arranged.

These men are under military control and they would go to the farms under orders. It is to be remembered, of course, that they have been called up for national service; they are not in the position of prisoners or internees. They are entitled to service pay and to reasonable treatment.

If they were sent to farms, there would have to be assurance that they would work and live under fair conditions. This would call for the visits of an inspecting officer who could hear any complaints and judge as to their validity. The pay might come partly from the farmer, as in the placing of unemployed men on farms a few years ago.

Men on military service are never placed under such loose control, but the conscientious objectors would be under orders to remain on the farms or to leave them temporarily only under specified conditions. And they could be warned of the result of disobeying a military order.

In view of the shortage of farm labor, this plan is, at least, worth considering. The number of conscientious objectors will increase as more men are called up for military training.

Morden Times January 28, 1942

Copy of Telegram

Winnipeg, Canada. Oct. 8, 1938 Suite 23 Moxam Court, River Ave.

To the Rt. Hon. Neville Chamberlain, Prime Minister of Great Britain. 10 Downing Street, London, England.

Sir:

It is with heartfelt satisfaction that we, the bishops and ministers of the Mennonite Church, in meeting assembled in Winnipeg, wish to record our gratitude to Almightu God, for the answered prayers of millions of loyal subjects of His gracious Majesty, King George VI, and express our admiration for your successful efforts as a peacemaker, under most difficult circumstances. — Stop. —

We also praise the Lord for the wonderful grace he has displayed in using you as His instrument to avert the tragedy of another world war. Stop. It is our earnest prayer that you may long be spared to collaborate with other national leaders towards the preservation of peace for our empire and the welfare of mankind.

> Signed: Benjamin Ewert, Chairman. Iulius G. Toews, Secretary.

Travel Permit Application FORM H (SHORT FORM) TO The Collector of Sustoms and Excise at	Canadian Passport No. No. of resident alien's identification gard issued by U.S. Immigration U.S. citizen resident in Canada Other nationality (specify)
I am a resident of Canada residing at and I desire to	(number) (street)
(means of transportation) The purpose of my trip is I have no United States funds and not over No transportation or other expenses in the trip have been or will be paid for in Canada	s \$5.00 Canadian funds in my possession. The United States in connection with this in the Conditions of this permit

- 1. This card may be used in place of the usual travel permit on Form H in cases where a resident is making a trip to the United States which does not involve expenditures outside Canada (except of the kind indicated in paragraph 3) either directly by the applicant or by any other resident on his behalf or indirectly by reason of transportation or other expenses in the United States being paid for in Canada.
- 2. Accordingly this card may not be used where aeroplane, railway, bus or other tickets have been purchased in Canada for any destination in the United States except a city or town immediately across the border.
- 3. The applicant may take with him up to \$5 in Canadian funds so that he may have money on hand for immediate expenses on his return to Canada. The expenditure of such funds in the United States is not authorized except for nominal amounts for urban transportation in connection with social visits to friends or relatives or for incidental expenses in connection with business trips or in the event of an unforeseen emergency, unless specific authority has been obtained from the Board.
- 4. This card when surrendered to and stamped by a Collector of Customs constitutes a permit for a resident to proceed to the United States in the circumstances and on the conditions referred to above.
- 5. A resident desiring to travel to the United States in circumstances where this card is not suitable should apply to his bank for the ordinary travel permit.
- 6. Penalties of both fine and imprisonment are provided by law for violations of the Foreign Exchange Control Order, including false declarations to Customs Officers.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE CONTROL BOARD.

he represented his party and constituency (Rhineland) in the Manitoba legislature.

Miller was well-liked throughout the constituency and was given strong support, even from Altona, until his death in 1959. Miller started out as banner carrier of the Conservative Party but ended his service as a Liberal-Progressive MLA. He was a member of the Coalition Government of Manitoba in the early 1940's and joined the Coalition Government formed by Premier Douglas Campbell in 1948. He took on the position of Provincial Secretary until the following year when he became Speaker of the House. When the Conservatives withdrew from the Coalition in 1950, Miller defied his party's leadership and stayed on to become Minister of Education in the Campbell administration. During eight years as Minister of Education he was constantly the centre of controversy; one of Manitoba's most colorful politicians in his role as government minister or on the campaign trail.

W. C. Miller's strongest political opponent, Howard Winkler, describes the vicious battle waged during the 1945 campaign in which Miller challenged the traditional Liberal support among the Mennonites. A letter, in the German language, had been distributed through the schools in Lisgar three or four days before the election, in an effort to show the contradictions between the Conservative candidate's platform and that of his federal leader. Winkler claimed not to have authorized it. Whether it helped or hindered the Liberal cause, Miller was destined to remain in the provincial political arena.

In his memoirs, Howard Winkler describes W. C. Miller and his politics:

The good relations between Mr. Miller and the Campbell Government persisted and soon it became Coalitionist with Mr. Miller as Provincial Secretary. Later he was to become Minister of Education and Speaker of the Assembly. Also he won the crown awarded by Miss Salome Halldorson, M.L.A. as the best looking man in the Legislature.

But as the poet says "Uneasy lies the head that wears the crown". Enter Mr. Miller's nemesis in

the person of Hon. George A. Drew, leader of the Federal Conservative Party in 1950. He called a meeting of the Manitoba party stalwarts in Brandon. There he announced that the Conservatives in Campbell's Manitoba Government were to resign from the Government forthwith. Hon. Eric Willis complied. Hon. C. E. Greenlay appeared uncertain that his Conservative ties were strong anyway and declined. Hon. W. C. Miller assured the assemblage and Mr. Drew that he was a strong Conservative and always would be but he could remain in Mr. Campbell's Government without getting any tarnish on the labels. To this Mr. Drew strongly dissented. Mr. Miller must resign, or else as he added he would not again receive the Conservative nomination. Mr. Miller didn't pursue this any further at the moment but returned to his home where he laid the matter before his executive. Without further delay they called a Conservative nominating convention for the constituency of Rhineland. As he stood before them, Mr. Miller said, "They say I can't accept Liberal money and still remain a loyal Conservative!" The response came from over 50 throats — "Sure you can, Wally!"

Having received the official Conservative nomination, the next move was by Premier Campbell. He called on S. H. Sobering, the President of the Rhineland Liberal Association whom he informed Mr. Miller had been giving "us Liberals" such good support, he, Mr. Miller, should receive a Liberal nomination. The worried Mr. Sobering could not find it in his power but to comply, so called a Liberal nominating convention. This was attended by well–primed Liberals and by the grateful Mr. Miller who was accordingly duly nominated.

Thereby he achieved a distinction which is very rare, if ever has been duplicated. To receive both the official Conservative nomination and the official Liberal nomination in the same constituency in the same year is a feat by any standard.³⁶

W. C. Miller distinguished himself not only as a shrewd politician but also as a strong advocate for his constituents who came to him for help with their problems. In 1951 he represented the Premier of the Province at the unveiling of a commemorative cairn on Schellenberg's Corner. The cairn acknowledges the contribution of Mennonites in Canada since their arrival.

McWilliams Stresses Faith, Unity

The early settlers of Manitoba and the prairies laid the foundation of a new civilization which preaches no hatred, but unity between the racial nationalities of the world. Hon. R. F. McWilliams, Lieutenant-Governor of Manitoba, told the people attending the cairn unveiling ceremonies at Gretna, Sunday.

People across the wide global expanse today are looking to this young country for leadership, to lead it out of strife, hunger and misery.

"A responsibility rests upon everyone here today, to revere the principles of the founders of this country," Mr. McWilliams said. "This responsibility has been handed down from the shoulders of your forefathers, who bore it so well. May you do the same."

When the first settlers saw the open plains they must have been disheartened. The Red River Valley, dotted with handsome farmsteads today, was then only an open expanse, blotted occasionally by a group of trees, or a buffalo wallow, the speaker related.

Mr. McWilliams pointed out these pioneers had remained firm in their conviction. They saw more than a prairie grassland, for they were filled with a Divine guidance which told them someday this would be a home where their kindred could live in peace and prosperity.

A similar spirit is needed among the Canadians in the 20th Century, the Lieutenant Governor stressed. Today's youth should be wary not to disturb the foundations of its forefathers, for it is a solid one. What is needed however, he said, is the determined will to build a righteous civilization upon the rocks implanted by the pioneers.

"Canada's frontiers are vanishing, and the rugged settler is fast giving way to a sedated civilization," commented Mr. McWilliams.

> Red River Valley Echo June, 1951

Manitoba's Lieutenant-Governor, the Hon. R. F. McWilliams, did not overlook the significance of the cairn's location on the historic Post Road, suggesting that the memorial should be a link between the founders of the country and the youth who hold the key to the country's future.

School Consolidation

The most controversial measure introduced by Miller as Minister of Education was school district consolidation. Ironically, Rhineland was the last hold-out in the Province of Manitoba. This consolidation included the closing of the high school classes in Gretna in 1965. Beginning that fall public high school students from Gretna would be bussed to the new W. C. Miller Collegiate situated on the southern outskirts of Altona. A further irony took place during the official opening ceremonies for this new educational institution. Conservative Premier Duff Roblin delivered the eulogy, which left a variety of impressions among his listeners concerning the former Rhineland representative. One thing Conservative and Liberal supporters of Miller all agreed on: W. C. Miller's death signalled the end of a political era in Southern Manitoba as surely as Howard Winkler's retirement from office had in 1952.

There are those who will argue that Wally Miller's educational policies helped bring education in Manitoba into the twentieth century. Others claim that these same policies helped undermine the local autonomy of parents who want the best for their children. Time has worn down some of the sharp edges in the debate, making these policies more acceptable if not better understood.

Keeping the MCI Alive

Time has certainly brought understanding of the vision and the work of MCI. The fierce opposition which challenged Ewert throughout his lifetime has gradually changed to acceptance and grateful acknowledgement. The school's critics had watched student enrollment drop to as few as 22 in the year 1922. They did not expect the Gretna institution to survive the decade. However, the need to upgrade the Russian refugee teachers who came to Manitoba in the latter half of the decade had resulted in a sudden increase in student population. It did not bring with it a corresponding increase in revenues because the new immigrant student could not afford to pay for schooling. The MCI Board of Directors also recognized that the school could not depend on the fund-raising efforts of its principal.

The MCI Board realized that a more systematic approach to school financing was required and to this end they approached the Mennonite Brethren, Sommerfelder, Bergthaler and Russian Mennonite Churches in Manitoba. They requested that a joint board be organized to oversee the financial affairs of the school. The only church group refusing to give its support to this concept was the Bergthaler Church, which suggested that its individual members could join but that the church itself would not. Nonetheless, four out of five Bergthaler churches did join this new society, launched in 1931. A. L. Friesen, Abram Janzen and H. H. Hamm, all members of the Bergthaler Church group, were elected to the society's first executive.37

H. H. Ewert Tired

The pressures of keeping the MCI alive and healthy were taking their toll. H. H. Ewert acknowledged his desire to retire while affirming his love for the work which God had granted him the strength to pursue for so many years. As editor, he and his brother Benjamin still produced the monthly **Der Mitarbeiter**, even though Conference support had been withdrawn in 1925. The publication continued to come out with the financial help of friends and supporters, although the Ewert brothers saw no remuneration for their time and trouble. The pace finally proved too much for H. H.

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H. H. Ewert

On September 13, 1882, one hundred years ago, a young man (27) was ordained to the Christian ministry in a small Kansas Mennonite community of Emmethal. The person who officiated at this ordination was Leonhard Sudermann, Elder of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church. Present at this ordination was also, without a doubt, the candidate's father, Elder Wilhelm Ewert, who eight years earlier had brought his family and his congregation from Thorn, Prussia to Marion County, Kansas. His eldest son, Heinrich, had elected to be a teacher and this ordination was to launch him on his life's work. He had already spent eight years of informal and formal preparation for this task to which he now came with an advanced academic degree and full teacher's qualifications. The task to which he was now called specifically was to head a continuation school, an academy, under the auspices of the Kansas Mennonite Conference. A year later, 1883, a new school was built in Halstead, Kansas. It was a bilingual academy which in a sense was the forerunner of two considerably different Mennonite schools in two different countries, one thousand miles apart. After a number of years in operation, the Halstead Academy was absorbed into Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas, while the founder of the Halstead Academy, Prof. H. H. Ewert, went to a small community in Gretna, Manitoba, Canada to re-open a school which had been started by a group of progressive, educationallyminded Mennonite immigrants who had come from Russia to Manitoba in the same migration that had brought the Ewerts to Kansas. This was in 1891.

Two years earlier, in 1889, an immigrant teacher, Wilhelm Rempel, had opened a continuation and teacher training school in this little border town under the auspices of the newly formed Mennonite Educational Society, only to insist after a trial year with sixty students, that the task was beyond his ability and capacity. Aided and encouraged by the provincial Department of Education the society reopened the school in 1891 after it had procured the services of H. H. Ewert. Two schools at Gretna, the Mennonite Educational Institute until 1908 when it was moved to Altona, and the Mennonite Collegiate Institute built in 1908 were the centre of H. H. Ewert's activities for the next 43 years, 1891-1934. He died at the end of the first term of the school year 1934-35. In this almost half century of tireless activity in both church and school, H. H. Ewert exercised an influence which went far beyond the bounds of a small Mennonite community and the lifespan of one



MCI students and staff in 1931–1932. Henry H. Harder, Henry H. Ewert, Gerhard H. Peters. P# 1608

human being. There is hardly a phase of the development of the Mennonite community in Western Canada that was not in some form touched, and in many instances given decisive direction, by H. H. Ewert.

On the Manitoba Mennonite Education scene he succeeded against considerable odds to recruit and train over the years enough qualified Mennonite teachers to staff the Mennonite public elementary schools. This was important before 1916, but crucial after this landmarked date on the Manitoba educational scene. That was the year of the virtual abolition of the Mennonite private elementary school. Not a single Mennonite public school in Manitoba was forced to accept an "outsider" a non-Mennonite teacher; all could be staffed by qualified Mennonite teachers, very many of them trained in H. H. Ewert's school. Many a former opponent of Ewert and of his aims has later made grateful acknowledgement of this fact. But it was not only on the educational scene in which H. H. Ewert left his mark; he was a towering figure on the Conference scene as well. A prime mover in the formation of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, he was also the founder and editor of the only periodical the Conference has ever published, "Der Mitarbeiter".

In the matter of Mennonite immigration to the country of his adoption, Canada, he was very open and positive. The founding of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, which facilitated the immigration of twenty-thousand Mennonites from the Soviet Union to Canada, was his idea and happened under his initiative. A former

student of his, Elder David Toews, was a long-time administrative officer of the Board which made the actual immigration possible.

H. H. Ewert's interests were wide and varied: one might in fact almost call them universal. He was equally well versed in German and English literature. He was one of the very few of his generation who had a knowledge of classical Latin and biblical Greek; he was a lover of music, a conductor of choirs (no history of choral singing among Mennonites in Manitoba can bypass the contributions of H. H. Ewert). He played the piano and already in the 1920's and 1930's he had a collection of recordings of classical music.

His classroom manner was relaxed, rather than flamboyant, his methods were, from all accounts, simple and unsophisticated. With H. H. Ewert, it was not technique but the man himself who inspired his students and got them to do their best. Perhaps the lasting legacy of H. H. Ewert in his 42 years' sojourn at Gretna is the number of grateful people who studied under his tutelage and were inspired by his vast knowledge, his kindly wisdom and most of all by his gracious presence.

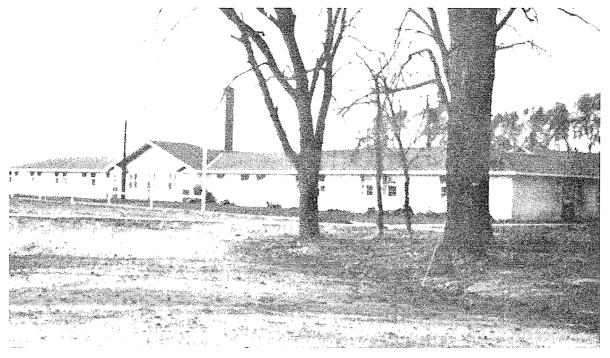
In many ways, this legacy still lives on in our alma mater, the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, the school which he founded and nurtured for forty-three years.

> Gerhard Ens, Editor **Der Bote**

MCI Alumni and School Newsletter, Nov. 1982



MCI built in 1946 at the north end of Mary St. 1965 MCI yearbook.



MCI student residence built in 1955, 1965 MCI yearbook.

Ewert; he was forced to take a rest in the spring of 1934. It was a subdued Schulfest that spring with the principal observing rather than leading the festivities.

The summer break seemed to have given the MCI principal new strength and enthusiasm. Ewert was back in the classroom when the fall term got under way. He had made certain decisions during his convalescence, one being to give up the work of **Der Mitarbeiter**. The last issue was published in December of 1934. Editor Ewert's farewell letter to his **Der Mitarbeiter** readers expressed regret. It also acknowledged that the publication had perhaps outlived its usefulness, as other Mennonite publications were serving a changing readership.

None of the MCI students who left Gretna to return home for the Christmas holiday in 1934 suspected that they would never see Mr. Ewert alive again. When Heinrich Ewert returned home from a day's business in Altona on the Saturday before Christmas he was exhausted. On Monday, Christmas Eve, he suffered a mild stroke and took to bed. Complications set in and on December 29, 1934 just short of his 80th birthday, he died. He was buried in the Gretna Cemetery on January 2nd. Here he joined Gretna pioneers, among them Alexander Smith, buried there in March of 1932. These two friends had shared a vision for the Gretna community. They had planted trees together and both had understood the richness which the diversity of Gretna's people brought to their community.

Principal Peters

Doomsayers abounded. They did not think it possible that anyone could fill the shoes of the legendary Heinrich Ewert. The Depression was at its worst and the MCI had not managed to pay its teachers' salaries for over a year. The man to prove them wrong was MCI teacher G. H. Peters. He had come to Gretna as one of the teachers from Russia who needed to learn the ways of the new world and to learn its language. His critics have suggested that he never

quite left behind the methods and traditions acquired in Russia. Those who did not get to know him well saw only his external manner and failed to understand the romantic and the poet who found himself in a role for which it was impossible to prepare.

Another New School

Principal Peters followed closely the methods and traditions established by Mr. Ewert at the MCI. Under his leadership the 50th anniversary was celebrated on June 1, 1940. 38 A few years later G. H. Peters with his Board's help and support started a building fund. The old school building was no longer adequate and its heating system, considered modern when installed in 1908, was inefficient and outdated. The school moved into its new building in 1946 at a time when student enrollment was the highest it had ever been. One hundred and fifty-eight students came to attend classes in the newly opened facility. 39

Along with these students came the problems of where to board them. Male students had always lived in the old "Biscuit Box" and it continued to serve this purpose for a few more years. The number of female students had increased over the years making it impossible to board them in private homes. As many as five Gretna residences were leased and used as residences for the MCI's female population, including the former Erdmann Penner residence.

Fire broke out in the old school building's top floor in 1955. This forced the Board of Directors' hand: a new students' residence was needed. It was built just north of the old threestory structure. The size of the school grounds was expanded by 15 acres that same year to make room for the outdoor sports activities in which students participated more and more each year. The hockey teams coming out of the MCI were making a name for themselves, and an interest in tennis resulted in the construction of two shale courts. The large auditorium which had been built in 1952, to give the Schulfest and



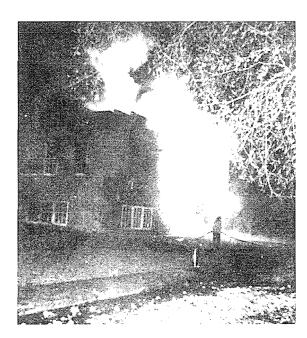
P. J. Schaefer Library, a valuable addition to the MCI in 1981. It was underwritten by A. J. Thiessen (Thiessen Bus Lines). P#1559

Sängerfests and similar school functions a better home than the tents used until then, was also used for indoor sporting events such as volleyball and basketball.

The quonset-type structure was not well suited for either Sängerfests or basketball; its acoustics were not improved when it was later insulated. At the time it was the largest facility of its kind in the Gretna area and it could seat as many as 1,500 people to a performance. The auditorium played host to a performance of Handel's "Messiah" on December 8, 1962 sponsored by the Southern Manitoba Community Choir and featured soloists Lois Marshall, Donna Bauma, Ronald Dobbs and Gerald Loewen. Members of the Winnipeg Symphony Orchestra and the Philharmonic Choir joined the members of the sponsoring choir under the direction of conductor Mr. Bryant. Gretna was proud to host such an event, but nobody thought it unusual. Music was part of the MCI tradition and it was fitting that such an event take place in its auditorium.

Schaefer Succeeds Peters

The traditions and quality of leadership, which G. H. Peters had carried forward following Ewert's death, were maintained by Rev. Paul J. Schaefer, who succeeded Peters. Like



MCI school destroyed by fire on May 7, 1963. 1965 MCI yearbook.

After the Fire

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute has in its history gone through many crises. However, the crisis in which the school finds itself at present will probably be the greatest of them all.

In many districts of the Mennonite comunity of Manitoba the private school question has become an important conversational and discussion theme. Many aspects of the subject, particularly as it applies to the MCI are being aired.

This discussion frequently reveals that very little is known about the school, its work, and its aims. For this reason I would like to announce the aims and purposes of the school as they are given in the revised statutes:

- a) It is the aim of the institution to lead its students in acquiring a thorough and useful general education,
- b) Special attention is to be given to the nurture and study of the German language,
- c) It is the aim of the institution to give instruction in our biblical insights as well as with our past as Anabaptist Mennonites,
- d) Further it is the high aim of the institution to assist its students to a deeper knowledge of the Word of God,
- f) Last but not least the institution seeks to train its students in the service of the Kingdom of God and in human society.

Next Year

The teachers and directors of the school are at present concerned with the many-sided preparations for the next school term.

We are preparing five classrooms for the instruction of students in grades 9–12. Two of these classrooms will be in

continued

Peters, Schaefer had come to the MCI following his arrival in Manitoba. He also had received his initial schooling as a teacher in the old country and had been a student under H. H. Ewert. Mr. Schaefer's books served as the basis for the MCI course in Mennonite History. His belief in the Institute and its importance in training Mennonite teachers for Mennonite schools did not diminish even as graduates entered to increasingly varied professions and fields of endeavour. Schaefer's son Ted, like Ewert's son, Alfred, was a Rhodes Scholar. Like Ewert, Schaefer would also be faced with the question of school location. This was a crisis which could not have been anticipated at a time when the school was experiencing a period of relative calm.

Fire Strikes Again

On May 7, 1963, the classroom and administration building of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, not yet 20 years old, was burned to the ground by a fire of unknown origin. By the time the firefighting equipment of the neighboring towns was in full operation, the fire had advanced too far to save anything of significance.

A few old books so impregnated with the smell of smoke that they had to be destroyed later, a few pieces of laboratory equipment and one classroom behind the main building as well as the old chapel pews in the large auditorium building were the only things saved.

Actually the old chapel pews are almost the only tangible link with the past that the school has at present. Some of these pews were still in use in Mr. H. H. Ewert's time. Our symbolic link with the past, so important to an institution such as ours, is however symbolized best by the action of the vice-chairman of the building committee, Mr. Diedrich Klassen.

Mr. Klassen recovered the old bronze plaque once given to Mr. Ewert by his colleagues and restored it to its original state. It now occupies, as it did in the old building, the place of honor under a portrait of Mr. Ewert in the main corridor of the new school. It thus symbolized the continuation of the best in the school's 75-year history.

Quick Recovery

The attention of the school administration and the constituency was however not focused only on the past but also on the present and the immediate future. The ruins of the school were still smouldering when already the sound of saws and hammers was heard in the nearby auditorium building. Five emergency classrooms and a staff room were hastily partitioned by plywood walls.

The Gretna, Neche, N.D. and Winkler School boards, as well as our sister school, the Elim Bible School, generously supplied us with desks. The Rhineland Division offered us the use of textbooks. Gestetner and Ditto each allowed us the free use of a duplicating machine for the balance of the school term, and with a delay of only one day, classes resumed full operation on May 9.

To those who have never tried teaching full days for six weeks in a building designing to amplify every sound to three times its intensity in classrooms insulated from each other with a single plywood partition, I would like to say that it is an unforgettable experience in more ways than one.

However, on the whole, both staff and students co-operated very well under, at best, very trying conditions, and when the results of the June examinations came out, the diligent student found that external difficulties can indeed be overcome with hard work, good co-operation and last, but not least, a sprinkling of good humor.

When it became clear that a new school building would not be ready for 1963–64 in any case, the board, together with the staff, made temporary plans. The recreation rooms in the boys' and girls' residences were converted into boys' and girls' Grade XI classes respectively.

A corner of the dining room was partitioned off for the Grade IX class. This was our most crowded class and both teachers and students found that "togetherness" is not the cure for all problems. In fact it can intensify problems as well. And yet this arrangement worked better than expected.

The opposite corner of the dining room became an "open shelf" library. Three classes, the Grade X class and two Grade XII classes were housed in special units. Two rented huts and the old Aesop school, which had served as the home room for Grade X for a number of years and had been saved from the fire, were used for this purpose. An intricate wiring system devised by our capable science teachers, Mr. Friesen and Mr. Ens, enabled one student in Grade IX to give the

class change signal simultaneously to all classes.

Our assemblies were held every morning, with only a few exceptions, on the stage of our auditorium building.

Decision To Rebuild

In the meantime a good deal of soul searching had gone on in the constituency. The question whether to continue the school at all was answered with an overwhelming "yes" at both a special meeting of the board with various church leaders and a special delegates' meeting in Altona called on June 8, 1963.

At the same time it was quite evident that a growing segment in the constituency favored some policy changes.

The most difficult question, as it turned out, became the question of the location of the school. A free vote at the delegates' meeting on June 8 showed a majority favoring relocation.

However, the same meeting accepted a motion from the floor that the board appoint a study commission to make a thorough study of the location of the school. When this commission made its report to another delegates' meeting on July 17, 1963, a small majority of the votes favored the unanimous recommendation of the Commission to rebuild the school on its old location.

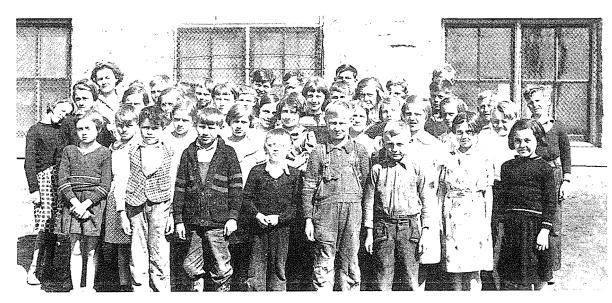
The board now went ahead with its building plans. After much consultation with the staff and after a number of inspection tours to newly-built school plants the board decided on a 10-classroom, one storey, block and brick structure on piles and concrete pad. In addition a three-classroom size chapel was to be added.

An efficient building committee was appointed which after much consultation decided to take over the whole project as general contractors. This is where the knowledge and experience of the vice-chairman of the building committee, Mr. Diedrich Klassen, became invaluable. He negotiated all the sub-trades and acted as the building committee's general overseer.

If, as has been claimed, the total cost of the school, \$174,000.00 is about \$100,000 less than the cost of other structures of similar size and plan the credit must, in large measure, go to our building committee.

The construction was completed far enough for us to begin classes for the school year 1964-65 as scheduled. On November 11 it was officially dedicated.

We are truly grateful for a beautiful, modern, practical plant. Let us prove worthy of the trust deposited in us. 40



Helen Janzen and her Public School class of 1937, P#1218

After the Fire . . . cont'd

the dormitory, one each on the north end of the respective dormitory wings.

Further, three single classrooms are being erected south of the dormitory. This work has already been begun. A faculty room and the library will be housed in the business offices of the dormitory.

The choir practices will be conducted on the platform of the auditorium and the rest of the auditorium will again be used for sports. Laboratories for physics and chemistry are also being prepared. The Board of Directors has decided to purchase several pianos to make music lessons possible.

We are inviting young people to enroll as students for the coming year. We know only too well that we cannot offer the best and most comfortable physical facilities, as they are known in many modern schools today. However, we believe that our instruction in the coming year can be equal to that of the last year.

The spirit and character of the school are not determined by the classrooms and modern facilities, but through the curriculum and the attitude of the teachers.

We challenge you: come and dare to be with us under very unique circumstances! An opportunity like this probably comes only once in a century! We promise a good quality but also a wide variety of work. Our course will not be changed or shortened in any way.

Our motto for the coming school year is: "I will lift up my eyes to the hills. From whence does my help come? My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth" (Psalm 121:1-2)

P. J. Schaefer, Principal

Canadian Mennonite

July 5, 1963

New Modern School

Well over 300 townspeople and guests from neighboring communities attended the official opening of the \$90,000 school and auditorium in Gretna Friday afternoon and evening.

Mayor J. W. Dyck cut the ribbon and declared the school open. Rev. Donald S. Henderson, of Emerson, spoke the invocation.

The building, of ulta-modern design, has five class-rooms, a 300 seat capacity auditorium, a principal's office and teachers' room, a science room, a fully-equipped kitchen and washrooms with running water and flush toilets.

The auditorium has been laid out for both volleyball and badminton, and although it is too small for a regulation size basketball court, basketball will also be played.

Members of the school board who started planning the new building project about a year ago are: Diedrich Klassen, chairman, Tony Funk, secretary-treasurer, H. J. McGavin and Alfred Loewen.

At the formal opening program that followed the ribbon-cutting ceremony, Chairman Diedrich Klassen paid tribute to the teaching staff of the school and defended the present generation that would be enrolled in the school.

Every generation since time immemorial has been labelled as "going to the dogs", he said. He did not believe that the young people of the Gretna community, or any other community for that matter, were worse than any other generation of young people had been.

J. W. Butcher, division schools inspector, congratulated the trustees and ratepayers of Gretna on their good sense and planning for new school facilities.

Pride of Ownership

He felt assured that the standard of scholarship would rise from pride of ownership in the new school.

He urged parents to work with teachers and together to try to produce a satisfactory product. If parent-teacher

continued

Public School Leaders

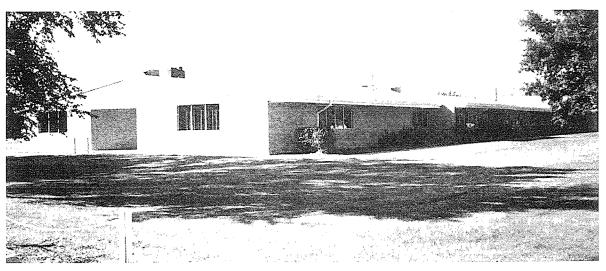
Peter Brown maintained the leadership role at the Public School when G. G. Neufeld left in 1930 to become school inspector. Peter Brown was principal from 1939 to 1942. Brown, Annie Krause, Thomas Anderson and Helen Janzen stayed on at the Public School through the Depression and into the Second World War. Peter Brown's active participation in the affairs of the community combined with his school leadership contributed to the community spirit which proved vital in seeing Gretna through the Depression.

Melbourne Walmsley replaced Peter Brown as Public School principal in 1942. Staff changes were frequent although Principal Walmsley stayed until 1949. By that time Miss Vilborg Breckman had taken on the duties of the Grade 1 and 2 classroom. She provided continuity in the school until her retirement in 1960, becoming a legend in her own time in the same manner as Annie Krause before her. Miss Krause taught the Grade 1 and 2 class from 1907 to 1940, with a break of three years beginning in 1922. These two teachers had taught over half a century of Gretna beginners to read and write.

Their influence on education was probably greater than that of anyone else in the public school system in Gretna.

A New Public School

Principals David Winter (1953-1955) and John Dyck (1956-1959) helped Gretna's school trustees take their school through a time of change. The two-story building was showing its age and needed extensive renovations to be safe for its students. The school board, under chairman Diedrich Klassen, decided it would be less costly to build a new school just west of the existing school grounds. David M. Friesen was one of the teachers who helped John Dyck break in the new facility. Its ultra-modern design described in the December 11, 1957 edition of the Red River Valley Echo included modern plumbing features, which worked much better once Gretna was equipped with water and sewer services in 1961. The skylights were ahead of their time, producing condensation which dripped on our penmanship exercises and greatly annoyed Mr. Friesen, our teacher. Until the school's engineers finally



Gretna Elementary School containing Kindergarten to Grade 8, with 10 teachers. P#1577



Peace Bell. P#1578

gave up, admitted defeat and simply took the sky lights out, students would position buckets to catch the water dripping from the ceiling. This added new perspective to the question, "And what did you learn in school today?"

When the old school building was torn down, its bell was salvaged and erected at the corner of the old school site. It was dedicated at a November 11 Remembrance Day ceremony in 1965:

A new name has been given the more-than-80-year-old school bell in Gretna. Officials in Gretna have decided to call the old bell the 'Peace Bell' or the 'Bell of Peace'.

Erected at its new site on the north-west corner of the Gretna Centennial Park at the corner of Ninth and Montcalm, the bell now rests on a steel frame designed and built by Died Klassen of Gretna. For the first year or so it will serve only as a school bell, as it has in the past. It is designed to operate electrically once the electrical drive is installed.

The bell was officially dedicated on November 11 in a Remembrance Day service in honour of the nation's war dead. Official dedication speaker at the ceremonies was Alf Loewen of Gretna. He said the bell was 'fitting as a bell of peace on earth' and that many people had expressed their desire to have the bell sound again since it was silenced in 1959.

The Rev. Bernie Wiebe read from 1 Peter 1:22–25 at the ceremonies. As part of the ceremonies, the bell was rung at 3 minutes to 11 a.m. for a one minute duration, then it was silent for two minutes, ringing again at the end of the silence period to note that the two minutes had elapsed.

The bell first rang in the old wooden school built in 1884. In 1912, the first school was replaced by a large stone structure. The bell was salvaged from the wooden school and placed into the tower of the 1912 building. The stone school was abandoned in 1959 when a new public school was built across the street. The bell had been silent since then till 1964, when the old stone structure was torn down. It rang for the first time since 1959 on November 11.

As a school bell, it will ring at 8:30 a.m., and 1:00 p.m. After the electrical equipment has been installed, it will also ring at 9:00 p.m.

Parks and Sports

The old school grounds were renamed Gretna Centennial Park in the year of Canada's 100th birthday, 1967. The grade one school building, formerly the Edenthal school was retired at the same time as the old brick building and became a general purpose building for the park, which featured an outdoor roller skating rink, and wading pool. Centennial Park was one more step in the ever–evolving recreational scene in Gretna.

Horse racing, soccer, tennis and speed-skating were prominent in Gretna's first few decades. Hockey and baseball gradually took a front seat in the sports line-up by the time of the War to End All War. Indoor sports such as bowling and billiards were popular around this time as well. By the time the Depression had arrived, hockey had captured the minds and

New Modern School . . . cont'd

relations were good during the child's formative years, he said, little trouble would result later in the child's school life.

Hon. W. C. Miller, minister of education, returned to his home town for the opening of the new school, congratulated the people of the school district for their interest in education.

He recalled that some 30 years ago when he was a member of the Gretna school board, council and ratepayers had been persuaded to increase payments on their debentures and pay off the loan on the old school at a faster rate. The last payment on the school in 1910 had first been slated for 1950.

He said that Manitoba's teachers today were of better quality than ever before and that standards of education had not been lowered during his term in office. "Standards would be raised as soon as possible," Mr. Miller stated.

Recalls First School

Lou Erk, teacher in Gretna in 1902, now retired and residing in Altona, recalled that the first school ever built in Gretna had later become a stable and a refuge for rats. The school built in 1910, and occupied as recently as a month ago, had had everything when it was built, Mr. Erk said. Now he hoped that the new school would turn out solid citizens like the other had done.

Rev. D. S. Henderson, Emerson, stressed the importance of well-ordered souls as well as well-ordered minds. He urged the school, the church and the parents to perform their solemn duty in this regard.

Gerhard Ens, teacher at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute gave the dedicatory address.

Red River Valley Echo December 11, 1957 imaginations of most sports lovers. The Stanley Cup was already established as the symbol of hockey's ultimate achievement. By 1936 Gretna's hockey aficionados decided they needed a better hockey rink. Charles Hayward represented the Gretna Hockey Club at a Village Council meeting on Monday, April 6, 1936. Hayward presented a petition to move the rink from its current location on the Hellofs' property on Hespeler to Lots 22 to 28 on the south end of Seventh Street. The Hockey Club offered to supply free labor if the Village supplied the materials to build and maintain the rink. The Village agreed and also agreed to drop an 8'×8' well at the site.



Gretna Canucks c. 1933. Leonard Latozke, Billy Giesbrecht, Eddie Friesen, Bill Falk, Martin Falk, Ed Falk, Earl Smith, Wilf Loeppky, Don Batchelor and Norman Batchelor. P#576

When the well went dry Mr. John Konantz and his son Johnnie . . . used to flood the skating rink. They used to haul water for the steam engines in threshing time and hauled the water from the dug-out where Homer Smith now resides and kept the rink flooded all winter — free. They didn't have a pump so they filled the tank with a pail with a long handle attached, first having to cut a hole in the ice. (They would also) see that the ice was clear using horses and a wooden scraper that they made themselves.

Joe and Albert Stribisky built the first board fence around the skating rink with no charge. There would be hockey players who would see that the snow was shovelled off the ice with the help once more of the Konantz horses. Charlie Johnston also always seemed to know when someone needed a lift and he was always there to help. 42

Hockey Fever

The new hockey rink, combined with the raw talent which Hayward and Schuppert coached and trained, produced hockey fever in the winter of 1937 such as Gretna had never seen before. The Gretna team, known as the Canucks, received stiff competition from the Orioles who represented the MCI. When hockey enthusiasts needed a game, but couldn't find outside competitors, they formed teams within Gretna itself. The teams were based on the north and south geographic parts of the Village with Hespeler Avenue serving as the Mason-Dixon line. This north-south demarcation remained in the minds of many Gretna sports fans long after the excitement of those years had worn off.

The Gretna Public School Annual for 1937 describes the Gretna sports scene as follows:

Hockey, 1937

Hockey enthusiasm ran higher in Gretna this year than it has for some time. With the building of a new rink in the south end of the town, the purchasing of new, smart outfits in Coronation colors for the boys, and the re-christening of the team, the Canucks, the season started very auspiciously. The boys were taken in hand by Coach Hayward and given to a thorough course in P.T.

in the school gymnasium so that when the hockey season opened they were in good shape.

The first game of the season was played on home ice against Winkler and resulted in a 6-2 win for the Canucks. The Emerson High School team provided the next opposition. The Canucks evened many an old score left from the Oriole–Aces days by inflicting a 3-1 drubbing on the Emerson boys on their own ice.

With all this success, the team was in high spirits to participate in the Manitoba Secondary Schools Provincial Hockey tournament in Winnipeg during the Christmas recess. Fortunately transportation to Winnipeg was generously provided by our public spirited citizens: C. L. Hayward, C. A. Pieper and Peter Brown.

There were 32 teams in the tournament. They were divided into 8 sections of 4 teams each. Gretna was in section A with Ravenscourt, Crystal City and Roland. The Canucks downed these three teams neatly. Ravenscourt was defeated 8 to 0; Crystal City, 3 to 0; and Roland, 1 to 0. Out of six points possible, Gretna collected six points here. They scored 12 goals and had no goals scored against them.

After this the Canucks came up against the winners of section H. This was the Kelvin team. These boys had plenty of speed, style and stamina, and eclipsed our boys 6–1.

The tournament gave the Gretna team an opportunity to play in good company under the efficient refereees in good rinks such as the Amphitheatre and St. John's.

The decisive victory over the Karnes-Wolski team of Grand Forks in January by a score of 7 to 0 brought the hockey season to a close on a high note of optimism and enthusiasm.

The members of the team were Leonard Latotzke, Bob Howe, Earl Smith, Elmer Buhr, Willie Falk, Eddie Friesen, Tony Machuk, Norman Schnier, Ed. Falk, Wilfred Loeppky and Henry Friesen.

The management consisted of the Honorary President, Mr. W. C. Miller, M.L.A.; President, Mr. M. Schnier; Manager and Coach, Mr. C. L. Hayward; Secretary-Treasurer, Mr. Peter Brown; Captain, Mr. ''Bud'' Pieper; Referees, Mr. Phil Schuppert and Mr. Fred Schuppert; Executive Committee, Mr. H. G. Scott, Mr. I. Coblentz, Mr. J. Hiebert, Mr. Phil Schuppert and Mr. C. A. Pieper.

Baseball

A Characteristic G.P.S. vs. M.C.I. Encounter "Batter up!" the umpire called.

The last half of the seventh inning of the game against the M.C.I. started with a score two-all.

"C'mon Slops old boy," the crowd yells, for "Slops" has done a great job of his pitching, allowing the 'Stooks' only two runs.

''Ball one.''

"Ball two."

"Strike one!" One of Elmer Buhr's fast ones cuts the plate and the count is one and two.

Next Slops hits a high pop fly that lands in the shorts' mitt. One down for the G.P.S.

"Yea, Ed," the crowd cheers as Ed, one of the hardest hitters on the team, walks up to the plate.

"Come on Ed, just one run," yells someone. Smack! A honey by Ed and a three bagger!

Leonard Latotzke, the next one up, sacrificed, and Ed came in with the winning run, making the score 3–2 in favor of the G.P.S.

Curling Rocks and Brooms

Before matched rocks, each curler owned his rocks which weighed between 38-44 pounds. They were kept in curling rock boxes along the head of the curling sheet. Everyone in Gretna used each other's. Rocks were identified by two-colored wool pompoms.

Curling brooms changed from the side corn-brooms to the narrower width which was later contained by a leather strip. These brooms were refined until they today share the ice with brush brooms and foam brooms.

R.C. & Edith Pieper



Gretna Orioles and Vics. Front: Conrad (Kutz) Schuppert, Albert Ulrich, John Konantz, Bruno Winkler, ??. Back: ??, Fred Schuppert, ??, Joe Konantz, Joe Stribisky. P#1589

Flooding the Curling Rink

We had to pay 25¢ each, so one dollar per game [four on each curling team]. It was a closed rink located where it is now.

Pete Hellofs and Percy [looked after the ice]. Of course they would have it all fixed up the night before and the next morning it would be all ready to go. All he'd have to do is go over there and heat it up. They watered it with barrels, big apple barrels. They had this big tank of hot water.

When they fixed it up they put a runway in the center. Before that they'd just take it on the side. Five or six barrels and they'd have to have 5 or 6 guys there and they would dump them all at once and flood all over the place. Then they'd scrape it and that was good ice.

Charles Hayward interview

Tennis

An annual of this sort would be guilty of serious omission did it not devote some space to tennis.

One may say with truth that this popular sport forms a very integral part of the social life of our community. In fact many of our young people think of summer in terms of tennis.

The location of the town tennis courts is particularly fortunate. Situated as they are, on the eastern extremity of the town, they afford tennis enthusiasts the opportunity to enjoy their favorite pastime in more or less pastoral surroundings.

Our membership consists of Public School students and adults, the former generally occupying the courts between four and seven o'clock. Anyone watching their efforts will realize that we have most promising material for future tennis champions among our juvenile players. 43

Curling enthusiasts such as J. C. Ward, G. G. Serkau, C. F. Pieper, A. W. Riedle, F. Hornibrook, H. P. Unger, A. R. Hill, D. Totten, G. G. Neufeld, G. C. Young, A. F. E. Gross, P. W. McNab, J. R. Hogg, Van Young, Peter Levesque and Phil Schuppert formed the Gretna Curling Syndicate in 1926. They proceeded to build a new two-sheet curling rink in time for the 1927 season. This indoor rink was kept busy every winter with men and women curling through the Depression and war years, drawing support from both sides of the border. By the early 1950's, however, the rink was dilapi-



Modern curling rink with artificial ice and community centre, P#1525

dated and people in the area began looking for ways to replace the old building. Members of the Gretna Community Club were faced with a similar problem. They had been holding community functions in the old brick school vacated by students and teachers in 1956.

The Community Club

Community Club executive had been named by Gretna Council in April of 1958 to run the activities in the old school. The executive consisted of Hugh Campbell, Forbes McRae, Bill Kramer, Charlie Hayward, Art Barton, Art Enns and Wilf Loeppky. The Club held fundraising events such as bingos, raffles and community dances to finance Gretna sports activities, the Santa Claus parade, the Gretna Band and wood-working classes. Many of the Community Club members also participated in the Gretna Co-op Athletic Association, formed in 1963 as a non-profit organization, with a combined membership of all sports clubs, including the curling club. The main purpose of this association was to co-ordinate and supervise all sports programs and facilities in the Village of Gretna. The degree to which Neche and Gretna area sports lovers continued to play together is indicated by the fact that Lawson Paton, from North Dakota, was the first president of this new Gretna Co-op Athletic Association, and served as drawmaster for most local bonspiels until 1983.44

Assets of the Community Club and Curling Club were formally combined in March 13, 1963. A building committee was struck and charged with the job of designing and constructing a facility which could serve both as a community hall and curling rink. Tenders were called to dispose of the old curling rink. It was sold in short order, the site was levelled and basement work for the hall and foundation walls for the curling area were poured. Henry Friesen, who operated the Gretna Lumber Yard across the street from the curling rink, constructed a jig to make the quonset-type beams for the rink and hall.

The building of the beams became a total community effort. Anyone who had a hammer was there pounding nails. School children were there spreading glue between the laminations and the ladies were there with lunches and refreshments. Other than hiring two or three master carpenters the construction was done entirely by volunteer labor. This included curling club members from Neche, N.D. Many members would put in their usual day's work and then come out and work in the evening. The rink was far enough advanced by the fall that it was curling as usual in the season of 1963–1964. Improvements to the rink were made as monies became available. Styrofoam insulation was added to the curling area for a more controlled environment. A new lighting system was installed and in June 1971 a contract was signed for the installation of an artificial ice plant. Other improvements have been made over the years and as of 1983 the retained equity of the building was \$150,000.45

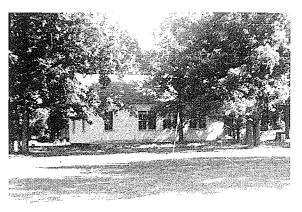
When the Neche swimming pool was built, Gretna children got on their bicycles every summer day to take swimming lessons in the morning and for the free swim in the afternoon. The pool has never completely replaced the "old swimming hole" on the Pembina River, and Gretna swimmers are more likely to travel to Altona to swim these days. Summer sports now include slowpitch baseball which has replaced the hardball leagues of the 1920's and 1930's. Junior teams organized at the Public School have replaced the Little League Baseball organized by Hugh Campbell and others in the 1950's and 1960's.

Golf emerged as a dream come true for Hugh McGavin, Ed Sunquist and Bill Falk when the Oakview Golf Club was formed in 1952. Built on property just north of Gretna which was owned by Kate Klassen, a descendant of the homesteader who held the original homestead title for the Gretna Mile, Oakview was a project which found Gretna and Altona golfers working together to get the nine-hole course operational. The original course was laid out and approved by Sandy Weir who wrote the golf column for the **Winnipeg Free Press** at the time. Work got under way in 1950; the complete nine

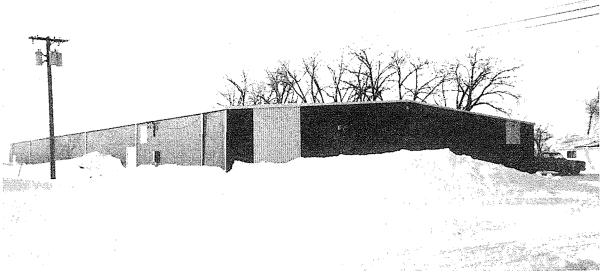
holes were not playable until two years later.

In the early 1970's the sand greens were changed to grass greens and a new clubhouse was built. Today the course is still being upgraded and sees golfers from a large area coming to use the course. When Kate Klassen died in 1978, the land which had been leased from her was willed to the Conference of Mennonites in Canada. The Oakview Golf Course then went from being a tenant of Kate Klassen to buying the existing golf course on the NW quarter of Section 8. Later, in 1982, adjacent acres were purchased from Florence Buhr. 46

More than 40 years after Charlie Hayward made his pitch to the Village Council to build a new skating rink on the south end of town, the Gretna Community Arena Committee paid off the last of the loan used to build a new, enclosed arena just south of the Public School. Built in 1976, it took six years of hard work and constant fundraising activities to pay for the building. This arena demonstrates the continuing community spirit which Gretna residents display, which has carried the Village from early beginnings through many difficult times.



The first Oakview Clubhouse. The nine—hole golf course with grass greens is situated one mile north of Gretna. P#1272



Gretna community arena completed in 1976. P#1551

Burning the Mortgage

The ceremony marking completion of the arena building project turned the tables on Gretna's greatest adversary; fire, which had done much to impede the progress of the community. Using fire to symbolize the completion of yet another building project, the arena committee recognized another milestone in the life of the community.

A small bonfire on the stage at Mennonite Collegiate Institute, February 1, 1982, was a milestone for the Gretna Community Arena Committee. That was the night they burned the mortgage of the arena, just three days short of six years from the time the decision was made to build.

As committee chairman, Roy Haney told close to 250 guests at the Burn the Mortgage Banquet, 'it has taken a lot of work by a lot of people to fulfill this day.

After just six years, we have been able to pay off a debt of \$293,394 on the arena. As of tomorrow (Feb. 2) we will be able to pay off the final \$2,225. The proceeds from this dinner will allow us to do this.

So we are going to burn the mortgage tonight so that all you people here can see that the arena is now debt-free. You, and people like you, are the ones who made this possible.⁴⁷

Post Script

The Canadian Pacific Railway and the Ogilvies created Gretna for their purposes back in 1881, 1882 and 1883. The Ogilvie influence left Gretna in 1913 after fire destroyed their elevator. The CPR continued to serve Gretna, not always with regularity or consistency; but no longer was it the only means of transportation on the Prairies. "The Syndicate" had always been considered a necessary agent to get the farmers' produce to market, but to most farmers it was little more than a leech which would suck them dry if given a chance.

Early in Gretna's second century farmers



South end of CPR station, which earlier housed customs and immigration offices, is now Gretna Feed & Seed storage area. P#1574

learned that the CPR was getting ready to abandon its tracks to Gretna. Perhaps company decision–makers and accountants felt they had managed to get all that they could out of Gretna. The Pool Elevator and its member farmers stood to lose the most. The community as a whole would certainly be affected. Towns which saw their train tracks torn up soon became shadows of their former selves.

Farmers in the Gretna area and Village representatives lobbied the Canadian Government through their elected Member of Parliament, Jack Murta. They also lobbied the CPR and let the local and Winnipeg media know what was going on. After a few anxious months, Murta announced that the CPR line to Gretna was a part of the federal rail rehabilitation program. Work to upgrade the line started in 1985. The train will continue to come to Gretna. The shrill steam whistles are long gone, but the rumble of the diesels will be heard for many more years.



Homecoming banner made by Neil and Mary Zacharias, welcoming visitors to Gretna. P#HC 10-13

Chapter Eight Celebrating A Centennial

Coming Home

Coming home! The strong images and emotions engendered by those two words are seldom equalled. Coming home evokes bittersweet memories. When filtered through the sands of time even hardship and trauma become part of that which we cherish. Good times push to the fore, making the past shine brighter somehow. Although distance makes things less clear, friendships are often strengthened with the passage of time.

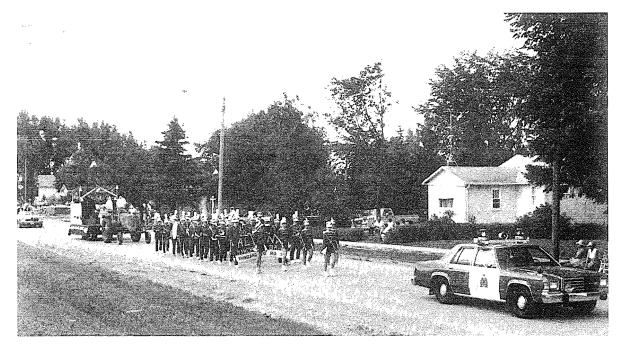
Coming home means family. Blown to the four corners of the world by the winds of time, Gretna's family is especially large and loyal. The Gretna family knows that the size of the home has little to do with the quality of life and experience which grows out of a loving and nurturing environment. That's not to say that the occasional family feud never happened, but considering how different the members of the family were, and are, that's not all that surprising. It also has its share of prodigal sons and daughters, but even those who prefer not to acknowledge their roots remember fondly a place and a time when life seemed simpler, easier, better . . . somehow.

Centennial in 1983

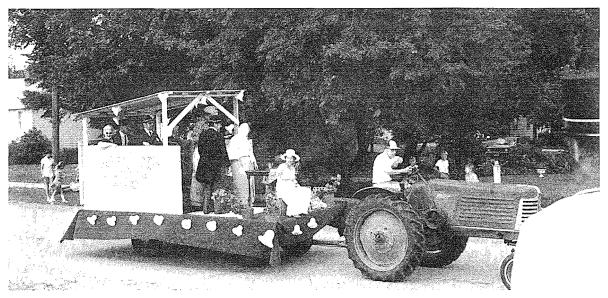
Gretna invited its family and friends to come home on July 23rd and 24th, 1983 to help celebrate its one hundredth birthday. Some 5,000 friends and family came home to Gretna that clear July weekend to renew old friendships and to catch up on current, and not so current, news and gossip. Many family reunions coincided with Homecoming. The families within the Gretna family were more complete than they had been in a long time. We came to look back at our past, but we also came to affirm our faith in the future. Looking back is the mirror which helps us see what we are, what we have become as individuals, as community. History is not something of the past; we are a part of it every day of our lives. By coming home our sense of history, of family and community, was strengthened and renewed.

The Gretna community worked hard to make its family and friends feel at home again. Accommodations were arranged, meals prepared, events planned, parade organized, history displays mounted, birthday cake baked and tours of Gretna mapped out. Souvenirs were ordered in good supply, programs prepared and printed, and the weekend was advertised.

The parade was a fitting way to kick off festivities. The large number of entries, both local and international, captured the flavour of a colourful past. Those who were confused as to who the real clowns were and who Gretna's illustrious civic officials might be had a right to be unsure! The enthusiasm of parade participants set the tone for the entire Homecoming.



R.C.M.P. leading parade with Altona Marching Band, P#HC 4-2



Village of Gretna float, depicting a Gretna Green wedding. R. C. Pieper on his 1950/66 Oliver. P#HCS 1–28

Those looking for less excitement could spend time with the ''old family albums'' at the Public School auditorium where the History Committee had set up a photographic and archival display.

As in any family gathering, there just wasn't enough time to do all the things one wished. Checking out old haunts, participating in the formal program, playing ball, horseshoes or a friendly game of chess or checkers, not to mention the visiting we said we would do — Gretna was busy into the small hours of the morning. International and generational boundaries were crossed as stories were swapped and the past revisited. The history display refreshed many memories and gave us an opportunity to compare past with present and reconcile the two. So much had changed, yet so much remained the same.



John K. Klassen, itinerant preacher from Blumenort. P#HC 4–16



Village of Blumenort float. P#HCS 4-27



Village of Neuhorst float with an antique kitchen theme. P#HC 3-18

Well done, Gretna

Sorry, Folks, if you missed the Gretna Centennial celebration you'll have to wait a hundred years for the next one.

The town council and the Centennial committee did a fine job of organizing the two-day event held July 23 and 24. The large parade that started things off was highly entertaining and the ceremonies in the arena that opened the second century were well received by a large crowd.

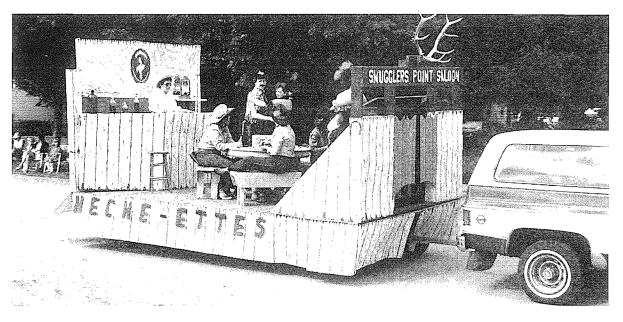
That the first day was a big success was borne out by one Altonan who later reported, "My wife and I went for the parade at 10 in the morning, but we didn't get home till 11 at night." Many of the 2,000 visitors to Gretna that day had similar experiences.

Sunday started with breakfast in the park followed by an ecumenical church service in which representatives from the Catholic, United, Lutheran and Mennonite churches participated. The first three were churches that once had congregations in Gretna. The latter is the only one left. The service was a moving experience for many of the visitors, and Rev. Gerhard Ens's address contained many timely reminders of what lesssons the past has to teach the present and future.

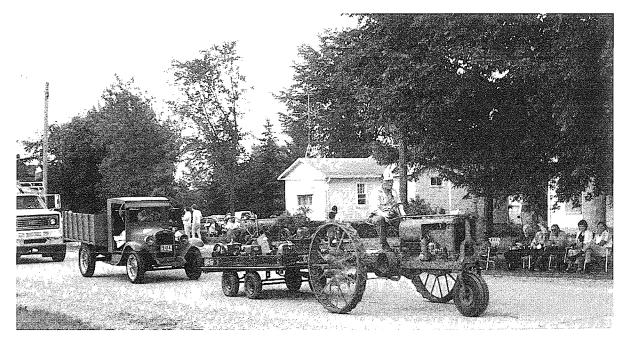
The historical displays in the school auditorium did a fine job of recalling Gretna's past.

Well done, Gretna. Those of us who were there enjoyed ourselves immensely. Too bad some had to miss it. (PVP)

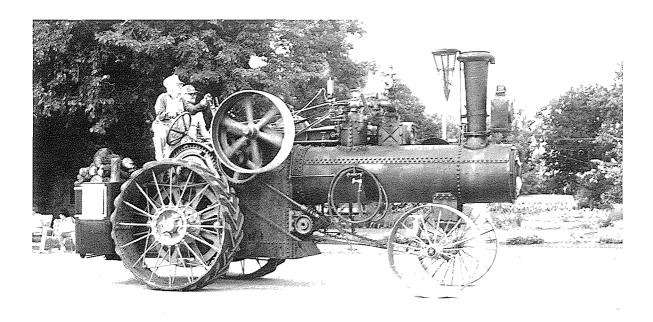
Red River Valley Echo August 3, 1983



Smuggler's Point Saloon float from Neche, N.D. P#HCS 1-24



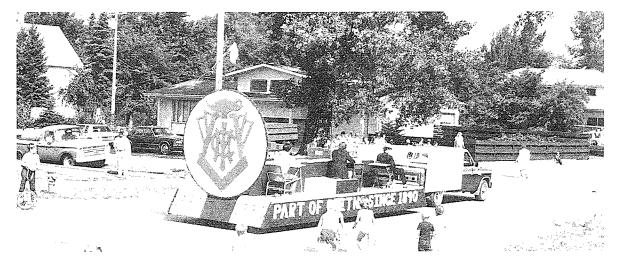
Truck, tractor and antique engines owned by Peter Falk. P#HCS 1–37



Steamer brought out from the Pembina Threshermen's Museum. P#HCS 1-6



Stagecoach owned by Frank Wiebe, Winkler. P#HCS 1–20



Mennonite Collegiate Institute's "Then & Now" float. P#HCS 4-22



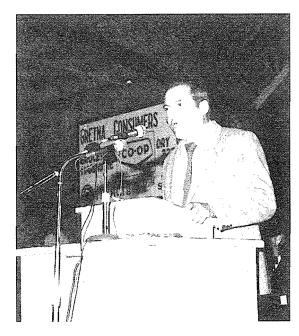
Registration. 2,082 friends of Gretna registered during the weekend. P#HC 5–1



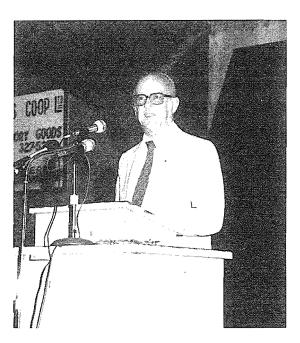
Irma (Latozke) Hill opening Gretna's celebrations by striking the anvil her father used in his blacksmith shop. P#HC 8-1



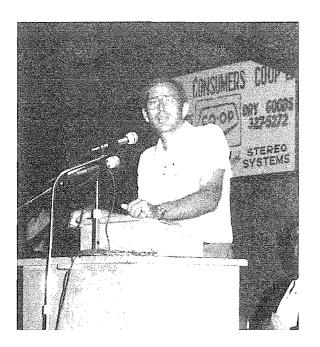
Crowning of centennial queen, Thelma Smith, by Eva Loewen and Lil Hruda. P#HC 8-3



Gretna native Victor Schroeder, Minister of Finance for Manitoba. P#HC 8–5



Arnold Brown, M.L.A. for Rhineland. P#HC 8-6



Jack Murta, M.P. for Lisgar. P#HC 8-17



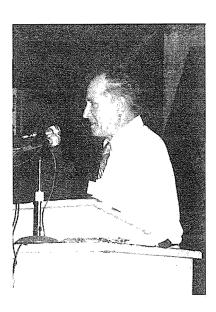
Henry D. Hildebrand, Reeve of R.M. of Rhineland. P#HCS 3-9



Mayor Dick Penner, Altona. P#1595 Red River Valley Echo.



Leland DeMars, Mayor of Neche, N.D. P#HC 8-20



Ralph Eisbrenner, Mayor of Emerson. P#HC 8–21



Ingvar and Margaret Lundin serving the birthday cake baked by Margaret. Red River Valley Echo



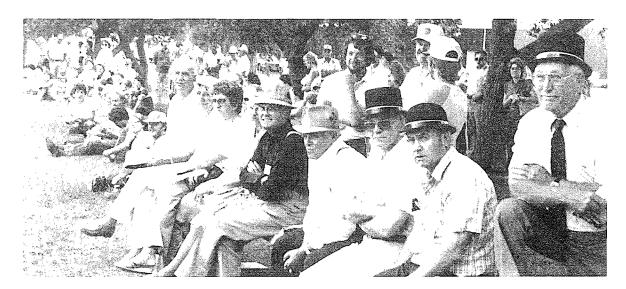
Ben W. Berg, a long-time resident of Gretna was Honorary Citizen of the Day. P#HCS 4-25



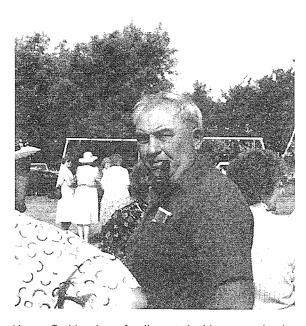
Martha Leiding, a lifetime resident of Gretna, honored at luncheon. With her is Gertrude Rempel. P#HCS 3-23



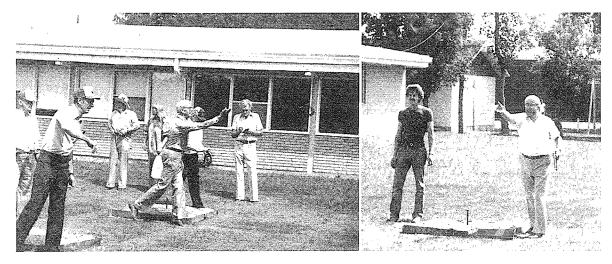
Ted Saunders (Echo), umpire, with Jerry Rempel at bat and Harry Hildebrand as catcher. P#HC 6–2



Spectators watching games. On right is Lawson Paton of Neche, N.D. P#HC 6-1



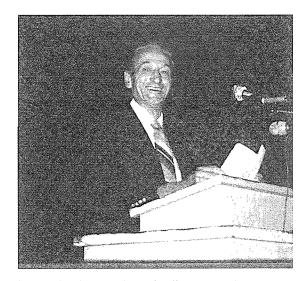
Homer Smith, whose family roots in this area go back to pre–Gretna days, was interesting and knowledge– able as tour guide and bus driver. P#HCS 3-4



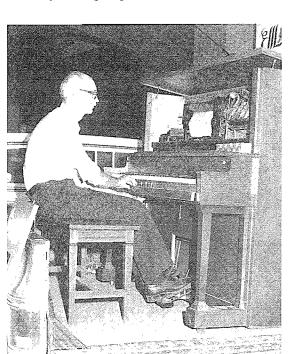
C. P. Zacharias, John K. Klassen and Gerhard Ens at horseshoes. P#HC 6-12 and 6-13



Old-fashioned picnic activities for the children. P#6-14



Henry F. Friesen, whose family roots in this area go back to pre-Gretna days, masterfully emceed the Saturday evening stage show. P#HCS 4-4



Art Enns at his antique player piano. P#HC 1-4



Gretna Community Ladies' Choir singing Gretna's own "Anvil Chorus", directed by Dennis Reimer. P#HC 6–10



Saturday's beef barbeque supper at the curling rink. P#HCS 2-4 and 2-5

Gretna Centennial Song Contest Winner

Come Back Home to Gretna

Folks strive for fame and riches Which often lead to strife;
Forgetting very often
The best things in this life.
The love of friends and neighbours
That help you when you're down.
And no place is more special
Than Gretna, our hometown.

So come back home to Gretna Fond memories to share. Yes, come back home to Gretna Your friends are waiting there.

So many of us played here And grew up in this town So come and let us join them Invite the old friends down. Attended school and churches We watched Gretna grow, And if we love our hometown We'd better let them know.

Come meet with all the folks then Make it a happy day.
Century old reunion
No one should stay away
The happy years we spent here
With friends we review
So come along and join them
They'd love to see you too.

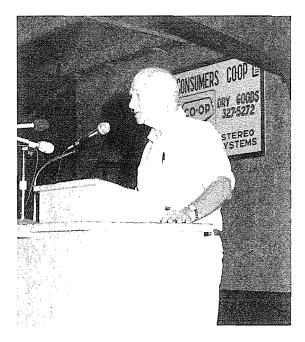
Composed by Katherine Friesen



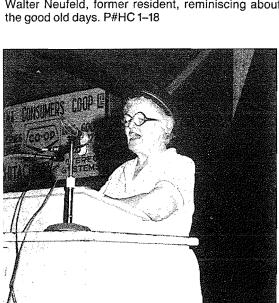
William P. Peters and sons Bill and Cornie display family's musical talent. P#HC 6-9



Men's singing group: Rudy Krahn, John Klassen, Reg Harder, Art Enns, Neil Zacharias, Dave Regehr, Dennis Reimer and Abe Toews. P#HC 1–3



Walter Neufeld, former resident, reminiscing about



Nettie (Janzen) Neufeld recalls her family's past years in Gretna. P#HC 1–19



Parade of costumes: Anne and Ben Krahn, Marie and Carl Schroeder, Anne Neufeld, Phyllis Brig, Anne Klassen, J. B. Harder, Justina Thiessen, Doug Krahn, Curtis Harder and Sadie Harder. P#HC 1–21



Saturday evening dance at the curling rink. It was hard to determine which was more important, the reminiscing or dancing. P#HC2–19



Getting ready for the pancake breakfast are: Frank Goerzen, A. A. Teichroew and Ken Loewen. P#HC 2-5



Helen Braun, homecoming co-ordinator, Peter E. Hildebrandt, committee member and Mary and Ruth Schroeder relaxing at the end of the day. P#HC 2-4



Visitors enjoying breakfast sponsored by the Gretna Credit Union and Gretna Co-op store. P#HC 2-11

Ecumenical Worship Service

The ecumenical Sunday morning worship service in the Gretna arena harkened back to Gretna's first decades where all denominations came together every week to share their experience of a common God. The hard, backless, plank "pews" evoked more recent memories of school festivals, concerts, graduations and "Saengerfest" in the MCI auditorium. The service had the flavour of one of Gretna's early Home Harvest Festivals where thanks was given for the bounty of the land, for the country and community and for the many friends found in it.* It was a lengthy service, but we didn't mind since this also helped remind us of times when any service seemed too long.

*''Thank God for this town of Gretna, and for the thousand friends I have made here.'' Walter Neufeld

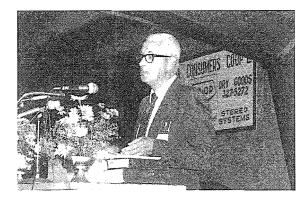
Gerhard Ens Reflects

"Home is the place where values and morals are taught and inculcated," said Rev. Gerhard Ens, a former principal of the MCI. "What we knew about right and wrong, we learned right here (in Gretna) in one of the churches, in Sunday school and in our families right here in town."

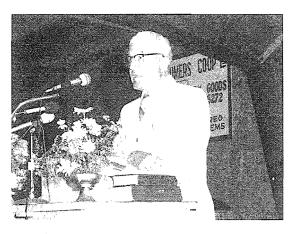
"This occasion marks a century (in the life) of the town of Gretna. We stand in profound gratitude to God and are deeply grateful for the country in which this little town could develop and in which we could experience a hundred years of peace and plenty . . ."

"We don't earn our home, our homes are gifts to us. We take our place in a family, we take our place in a community, because in a sense it is a place where you go when you go home. It is the place where we are unconditionally accepted."

Gretna certainly made us feel at home that weekend, although they did not provide us with the Gretna "Gumbo" we all considered an ingredient in this kind of an event at home.



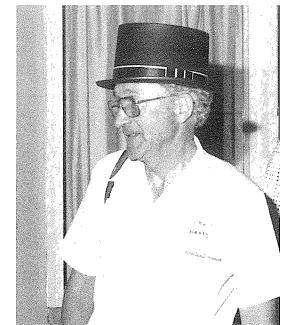
Rev. David F. Friesen, pastor of the Gretna Mennonite Church, leads the Sunday morning worship service. He also spoke on behalf of the Mennonite church. P#HC 2–2

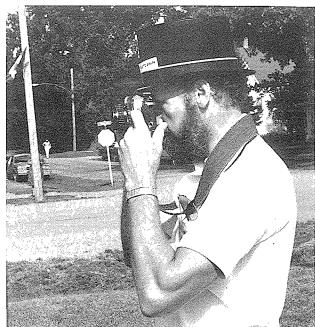


Rev. Gerhard Ens, guest speaker, with the theme "The Joy of Coming Home". P#HC 7–19



Morning worship service in arena. Front Row: Rita Young, Dr. F. Sheedy, Art Braun, Mary and Edwin Plett (first pastor of the Gretna Mennonite Church), Gerhard Ens, C. P. Zacharias. P#HC 7–17

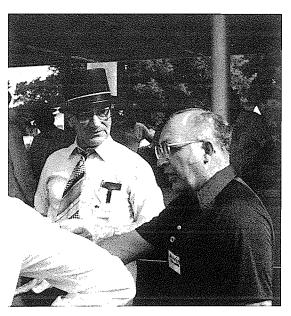




Homecoming photographers Henry and Werner Ens. P#HCS 4–1, P#HC 1–13



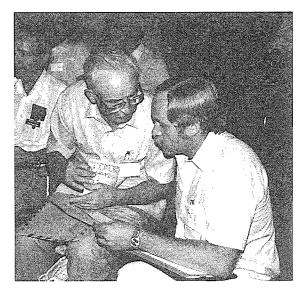
Buhr family: Elma Driedger, Clearbrook, B.C.; Florence Dyck, Alberta; Hilda Friesen, Winnipeg; Elmer Buhr, Winnipeg; and John O. Friesen (husband of Hilda), Winnipeg. P#HC 9–8



Alf Loewen and Al Hayward visiting. P#HCS 4-35



The Sheedy family. P#HC 7-22



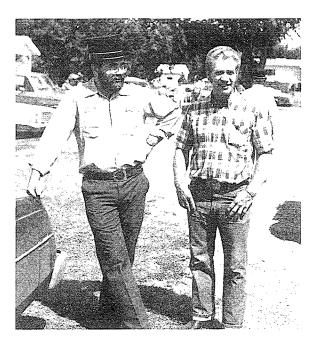
Garry Enns interviewing Dr. Francis Sheedy. P#HCS 3-1



Rev. Frank F. Enns in discussion with Finance Minister, Hon. Vic Schroeder. P#HC 6–15



Former residents Bernie and Marge Wiebe, and Herman and Marie Isaac. P#HC 6-6



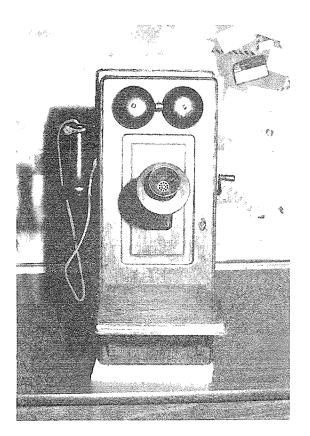
Abe Toews in conversation with Jake Peters. P#HC 6-3



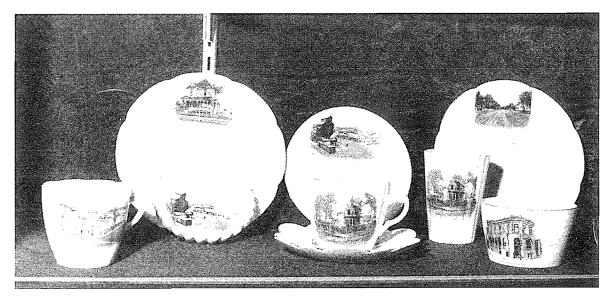
Past presidents of Willing Helpers. Top Row: Tina Fehr, Sara Ens, Margaret Loewen, Anne Heide, Betty Regehr, Susan Rempel. Bottom Row: Mary Zacharias, Susie Loewen, Helen Braun and Annie Ens. P#HC 9-14a



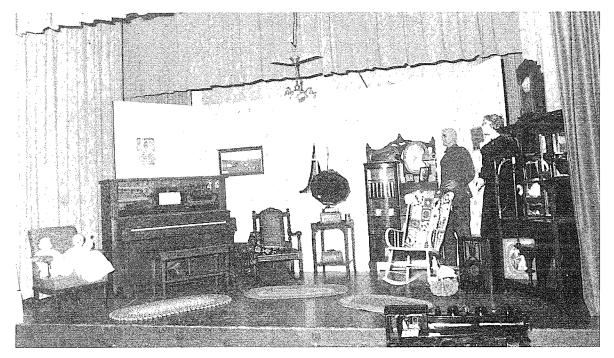
Antique medical equipment from Dr. J. P. Boreskie. P#HC 5–8



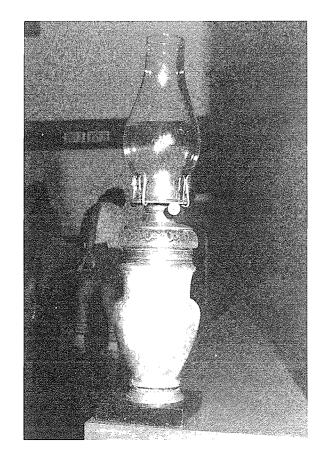
Antique telephone brought by Walter Neufeld. P#HC 9-6



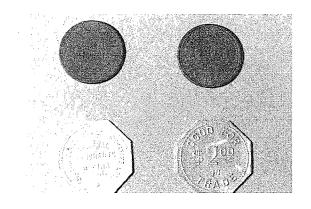
Antique china with Gretna scenes, brought in by various former residents. P#HC 7-3



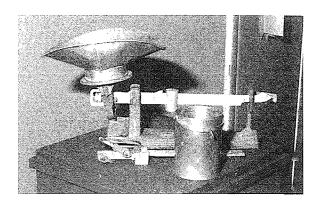
Typical turn of the century living room. P#HC 7-4



Antique kerosene lamp. P#HC 7-13



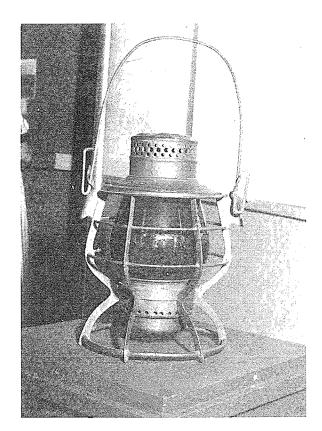
Coin pieces used in trading at the Co-op store. Brought in by D. M. Friesen. P#HC 7-7



Scale used in the grain trade and owned by Alf Loewen. P#HC 7-2



Church vessels, once property of the Gretna United Church now at the Altona United Church. P#HC 7-8

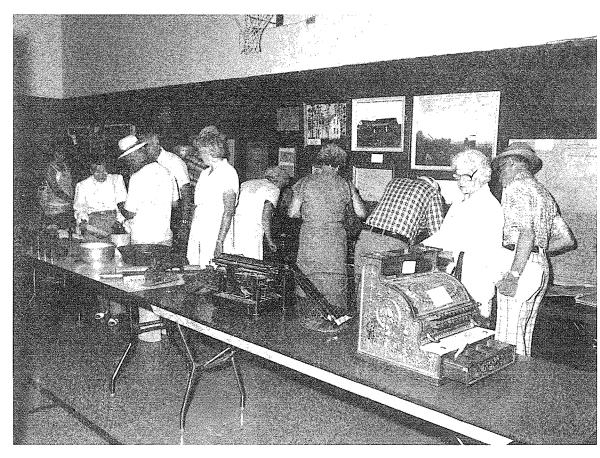


C.P.R. lantern used by R. S. Bean. Brought in by Menno Hruda. P#HC 7-16

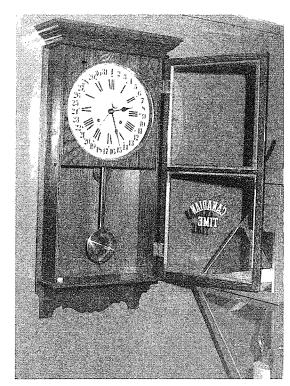
Two Full Days

Sunday afternoon and evening were given over to those traditional pursuits known to rural families and communities — visiting and walking under the tall cottonwoods which we will always associate with Gretna. The Sunday quiet was interrupted only by the shouts and cheers emanating from the baseball diamond. Were the Oldtimers willing to concede defeat to the young players? Probably never!

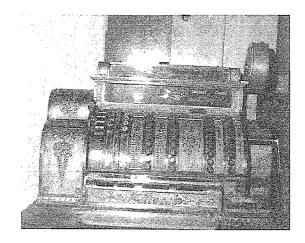
Quite a few visitors stayed to continue their conversations late into the night. Those who had travelled a long distance, after a long absence, needed more time with those who also came "home". Furthermore, some planned to explore their old home during the week, when things had quieted down. Some remembered places remained much as they had been. Everyone who experienced the Homecoming got a better understanding of what it means to be "from Gretna".



Visitors looking at displays of bygone days. P#HC 5-7



Antique Great Northern Railroad clock from the West Gretna station, brought in by Menno Hruda. P#HC



Cash register used by A. Coblentz & Sons from Menno Hruda. P#HC 7-11

Appendices

Councillors for Gretna area in R.M. of Douglas (Ward 2) and R.M. of Rhineland (Ward 1)

Douglas	Rhineland
1884 — Johann Buhler	1889 — D. Hiebert
1885 — Abram Loeppky	1890 — D. Hiebert
1886 — Johann Buhler	1891 — D. Hiebert
1887 — Johann Penner	1892 — Peter R. Friesen
1888 — Peter Bergen	1893 — Peter R. Friesen
9	1894 — Johann Loewen
	1895 — Cornelius Kroeker

Elected Officials and Secretary-Treasurers for the Village of Gretna

Mayors Buhr, P. H. Chambers, Robert	1939-1945 1911-1912	Councillors Alderson, Ward Barton, Arthur	1915–1916 1958–1961	Klassen, A. B. Latozke, H. A. Loeppky, E. T.	1937-1938 1922-1938, 1941-1947 1946
Coblentz, Godfrey	1917–1920	Bean, G.	1897–1899	Loewen, Abe	1977-1980
Dyck, John W.	1954–1957	Berg, B. W.	1944-1949, 1952-1953	Loewen, Alf	1949-1952
Friesen, P. J.	1914–1916, 1921–1924	Braun, John C.	1986-	Loewen, Isaac	1899–1900
Friesen, Henry F.	1986-	Briden, W. J.	1917–1920	Long, Michael	1896
Heinrichs, Donald	1971–1976	Brown, P.	1939-1944	Lundin, Margaret	1980-1986
Loewen, Peter	1958–1970	Bueckert, J. J.	1948-1953	MacKenzie, J. A.	1925-1926, 1929
Long, Michael	1906	Buhr, P. H.	1924, 1926-1930, 1937-1938	Martens, John	1976–1977
MacKenzie, Dr. J. A.	1927-1928	Chambers, Robert	1897-1899, 1901, 1907-1908	Miller, John D.	1906-1908
McKenty, Dr. F. D.	1910	Colbentz, Godfrey	1910-1911	Morrison, ?	1917
Nickel, Á. C.	1946-1953	Davis, Duncan	1968	Neufeld, J. K. A.	1940-1941
Nitikman, M. A.	1929-1933	Dunne, M.	1918-1919	Nickel, A. C.	1934–1943, 1945
Orser, Alf	1925-1926	Dyck, Harry	1959–1962	Nitikman, M. A.	1925-1926, 1928
Penner, Erdmann	1896–1900	Dyck, John W.	1946-1951	Orser, Alf	1921-1924
Pieper, C. A.	1934–1938	Ellis, Edward	1911–1913	Pieper, Chris	1900, 1908, 1910-1912
Pieper, Chris	1909	Enns, Arthur	1953–1958	Pieper, C. A.	1927-1928, 1930-1933
Schroeder, Carl	1971, 1976-1986	Erk, Ludwig	1909–1910	Pieper, Chas. F.	1924, 1935-1936
Schultz, Otto	1908	Falk, Wm.	1952-1960	Pieper, R.C.	1958-1963
Tennant, J. F.	1913	Fischer, Robert	1896	Pieper, W. P.	1929-1930
Wahn, Charles	1907	Friesen, D. M.	1965-1983	Rankel, John	1946
Winkler, Enoch	1900–1901	Friesen, Edward J.	1986-	Rau, Phillip	1901
Secretary-Treasurers		Friesen, H. F.	1954, 1983-1986	Reimer, Jacob	1970-1971, 1986-
Booth, Alan	1973-1976	Friesen, J. J.	1901, 1939-1943	Reimer, Jake B.	1983-1986
Dirks, Hermann	1897-1904	Friesen, J. J. H.	1956-1957, 1964-1965, 1969,	Rempel, D. J.	1969-1972
Foussard, Monty	1976-1981		1972-1974	Ritz, Henry	1913–1920
Friesen, A. L.	1938-1956, 1958-1962	Giesbrecht, M. P.	1963-1964	Salzwedel, Martin	1901, 1906, 1913-1914
Friesen, H. F.	1957	Haney, Roy	1971-	Sawatzky, C. F.	1963-1968
Harder, Mary	1981-	Heinrichs, Donald	1971	Schmidt, Ed	1966-1967
Herchmer, Henry W.	1896–1897	Hiebert, Abram A.	1931-1932	Schmidt, Henry	1955–1957, 1961–1962, 1975
Neufeld, G. G.	1925	Hruda, Menno	1965-1971	Schultz, Otto	1896
Schmidt, Henry	1957, 1963-1972	Hutchinson, E.B.	1933-1934	Sheedy, T. F.	1914–1917
Schuppert, Phillip	1925-1937	Janzen, A.	1924-1925, 1939, 1944-1945	Siemens, J. D.	1947-1948
Stirk, Harry F.	1906-1910	Janzen, Wm.	1950-1951	Simpson, James W.	1931–1936
Wahn, Charles	1911–1925	Kehler, Jacob J.	1921–1924	Smith, Alex	1906–1907, 1911–1912

Spenst, Gerhard	1909-1917, 1920-1921
Street, Hugh	1909, 1918-1921
Svenson, Alfred	1900-1901
Teichroeb, John	1972-1977
Teichroew, Benno	1954-1955
Thiessen, John	1977-1983
Toews, Jacob	1906, 1908
Wahn, Charles	1908-1909
Wall, David	1962-1964
Ward, J. C.	1927-1928
Winkler, Enoch	1896-1900
Williams, Levi	1907

Note: Some of Gretna's records are incomplete for the years 1896–1905.

Gretna Public School Principals, 1884–1986

Braun, John C.	1967-
Brown, Peter	1929-1942
Conklin, J. H.	1905
Cooke, R. J.	1898-1899
Dyck, John	1956-1959
Elmes, T. F.	1909
Enns, Frank F.	1959-1965
Forrest, K.	1924-1925
Garratt, Alfred W.	1901
Hodkinson, B.	1918-1920
Kraft, Henry	1886
MacLennon, J.	1912-1916
Martin, William	1909-1912
Neufeld, G. G.	1925-1929
Plett, Joseph G.	1965-1967
Pomeroy, Douglas Gordon	1949-1953
Poole, John S.	1893-1896
Rideout, W. A.	1917-1918
Russell, Alex	1916-1917
Shygol, Joseph	1955-1956
Smith, T. J.	1897
Stock, Ambrose W.	1885-1889
Symington, William	1885
Tod, D. S.	1906
Tufts, Norman B.	1907-1908
Walker, Edward H.	1902
Walkof, George E.	1920-1923
Walmsley, Melbourne	1942-1949
Wickware, D. A.	1890-1892
Winter, David	1953-1955

Gretna Public School Teachers, 1884–1986

1884–1986	
Allen, Clayton	1955-1956
Anderson, A. W.	1931-1932
Anderson, T. D.	1932-1940
Armstrong, Mary	1908-1909
Axelson, Joan	1953-1955
Babb, Reta	1918-1919
Barnwell, Mabel	1897
Bergman, Bill	1967-1977
Biley, Minnie Rose	1941-1947
Booth, Kathryn	1972-1976
Brandt, Nettie	1980-
Braun, Brenda	1980-1985, 1986-
Braun, Jacob	1905-1906
Braun, John C.	1965-
Breckman, Vilborg	1946-1960
Breen, Edith	1898
Brown, Barbara Ann	1975-1978
Brown, Margaret	1897-1898
Brown, Peter	1929-1942
Bruckner, John	1959-1960
Buhr, P. S.	1924-1925
Campbell, Catherine	1940-1941
Carruthers, Edith	1905
Carstens, Kaethe	1929-1930
Conklin, J. H.	1905
Conklin, Roscoe	1899-1900
Cooke, R. J.	1898-1899
Cramm, Vera	1919–1921
Creighton, F. H.	1922-1923
Cullen, Florence M.	1941-1942
Curran, Maxine	1938-1939
Davidson, Wm. C.	1947-1950
Davidson, Maude	1899
Derksen, Mary	1922-1923
Dueck, Helena	1973-1974
Durden, Vivian H.	1922-1923
Dyck, Dorothy	1967-1971
Dyck, Iris	1965-1966
Dyck, John	1956-1959
Dyck, Katherine Bernice	1960-1961
Elias, Frank	1960-1961
Elias, Patricia June	1968-1969
Elliot, Bertha Mae	1942-1943
Elmes, T. F.	1908-1909
Enns, Alfred G.	1966-1973
Enns, F. F.	1959-1965
Enns, Irvin	1971-
Enns, Jacob J.	1965-1966
Enns, Jake	1953–1955

Enns, Susan	1958-1964
Ens, Irene	1972-1974
Epp, Martha	1971-1972
Erk, Ludwig	1905, 1914-1916
Fehr, Ruth	1968-1969
Falk, Edward P.	1958-1960
Fallis, Leona	1940-1941
Fast, Isaac M.	1942-1943
Feller, John G.	1925–1927, 1928–1929
Findlay, Gladys E.	1921-1922
Foot, Clara	1939-1940
Forrest, K.	1924–1925
Friesen, David M.	1955-1961
Friesen, Judith A.	1961–1964
Friesen, Maria L.	1947-1948
Friesen, Norma	1977-1979
Froese, Margaret	1963–1965
Funk, Carolyn	1966-1968
Garratt, Alfred W.	1900-1901
Gayton, Lena	1905-1907
Godley, M. A.	1898
Graham, Bethel	1925-1926
Graham, L. W.	1920-1921
Grainger, Dorothy E. C.	1940-1942
Handel, Doreen B.	1930–1931
Hanna, A. F.	1924–1925
Harder, Arthur A.	1968-
Harder, Evelyn	1960-1961
Heinrichs, Esther	1953-1954
Hiebert, Martha	1972-1973
Hildebrand, Anne	1982-1984
Hildebrand, Jolane	1967–1968
Hildebrandt, Justina E.	1960-1961
Hodkinson, B.	1918-1920
Hoffman, B. R.	1909-1910
Hoffman, Minnie	1891
Horn, Nairn	1910-1911
Hunchak, Judith Lee	1978-1980
Irving, Gladys M.	1902, 1915–1919
Isaac, Herman	1960–1965
Isaak, Helen	1974–1975
Isenberg, Minnie	1942-1944
Janzen, Helen	1928-1930, 1931-1938
Janzen, Johanna	1985–1986
Johnston, Hilda	1898
King, Ellen R.	1918-1920
Klassen, John George	1961–1962
Klassen, Kate	1946-1947
Klassen, Marie	1924-1928
Klassen, Margaret	1965-1967
Koshy, Alvina	1971–1972
Kraft, Henry	1886
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Krause, Annie	1906–1922, 1926–1940	Scott, Sarah	1897-1899	Gretna
Krause, Martha	1911–1915 1968–1969	Shearer, Catherine E.	1949-1951	I & II 3
Kroeker, Hildegarde	1940-1942	Shygol, Joseph	1955–1956 1943–1946	Anderso
Little, Hermine		Smith, Betty		Baber, G
Loeppky, Agatha	1951–1953	Smith, T. J.	1896–1897	Batchelo
Loewen, Carolyn	1966-1967	Snelgrove, S. G.	1911-1912	Batchelo
Loewen, Eva	1974–1980, 1981–1986	Stock, Ambrose W.	1885–1889	Batchelo
Loewen, J.	1907	Speoule, G. A.	1902	Broesky
Loewen, Marion	1966–1969	Symington, William	1884-1885	Buhr, El
Loewen, Nettie	1957-1958	Thiessen, David I.	1961-1962	Buhr, He
Loewen, Tammy	1985- 1984-	Thiessen, Elsie	1955-1956 1969-1971	Buhr, Le
Maas, Mona	1912–1916	Thissen, Howard	1950–1971	Driedge
MacLennan, J.	1948-1949	Thiospen, Katio F	1962-1964	Eppler, I
Madill, Frances Hazel	1961-1963	Thissen, Katie E.	1961–1962	Eppler, (
Mann, Patricia D.	1978–1981	Thiessen, Marilyn		Falk, Da
Martens, Frieda	1909-1912	Thissen, Martha	1969–1972	Fast, Isa
Martin, William	1974-1975	Thiessen, Norma	1976-1977, 1979-1980 1965-1966	Friesen,
Martinson, Lezlie	1899-1901	Thissen, R.	1965–1966 1985–	Friesen,
Mawhinney, Maude		Thiessen, Wendy		Friesen,
McDonald, Sandra Lee	1976-1978	Tod, D. S.	1905-1906	Friesen,
McIntosh, Patricia	1969–1970 1899–1901	Toews, Lois	1969–1974, 1975–1976 1954–1955	Friesen,
McTavish, Wm. J.		Toews, Mary		Friesen,
Milne, Mae	1944-1946	Toews, Peter A.	1977-	Friesen,
Mitton, Annie G.	1911-1914	Tufts, Norman B.	1906–1908	Funk, H
Neufeld, G. G.	1925-1929	Van Sickle, William H.	1940-1942	Funk, W
Neufeld, Marilyn	1980-1982	Villeneuve, Patricia	1968-1969	Geres, B
Nixon, Florence M.	1905-1908	Wahn, Josephine G.	1905-1911	Geres, F
Peters, Johnny	1964-1965	Walker, Edward H.	1900–1902, 1905	Geres, N
Peters, Susan	1964-1966 1967-1968	Walkof, George E.	1920-1925 1966-1968	Giesbred
Peters, Susie	1907-1908	Wall, Eugenia	1942-1949	Giesbre
Pieper, Alice M.	1921-1923 1965-1967	Walmsley, Melbourne	1942-1949	Gildema
Plett, Joseph G.	1949-1953	Webb, Edith Wickware, D. A.	1890-1892	Gross, F
Pomeroy, Douglas Gordon	1893-1896	Wilmot, Helen G.	1915-1918	Gross, J
Poole, John S.	1892	•	1925-1926	Gustafs
Post, Calista Pye, Patricia R.	1958-1960	Windsor, D.	1952-1955	Gustafse
<i>y</i> ,	1919-1920	Winter, David	1952–1953	Haywar
Rea, Phyllis M. Record, Clarence	1920-1921	Winters, Jacob Yuill, Carrie	1897-1898	Heinrich
•	1981-	·	1919–1920	Heinrich
Reimer, Dennis	1980-1985	Zincks, Ella S.	1919-1920	Hiebert,
Reimer, Eleanor Rideout, W. A.	1917–1918	Note: Prior to 1890 Gretna	Public School was a	Hildebra
Roddick, Janet K.	1965–1967	one-room school.		Hildebra
Russell, Alex	1916–1917			Johnston
Sawatzky, Frank	1973-1980	Sources:		Kehler,
Sawatzky, Ruth M.	1962-1964	Neche Chronotype		Kehler,
Schoenrath, Lily	1956-1957	Der Nordwesten		Klaasser
Schroeder, Carol	1967–1969	Public School yearbooks		Konantz
Schroeder, Jake E.	1962-1964	Louise Ritz interview		Krause,
	1964-1965	Provincial Archives of Man		Loeppk
Schroeder, Mary Anne Schulz, Rudolph Aron	1951-1953	Gretna Public School regis	ters at MHC, CMBC	Loewen
Scott, Iara	1893-1896	Winnipeg, MB		Loewen
Scott, Nellie R.	1893-1897			Loewen
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Gretna Postal District World Wars I & II Veterans

son. Duncan Loewen, Peter George Machuk, Anthony lor, Donald Machuk, John lor, Glenn Machuk, Mary lor, Norman Mann, Arnold Mann, Philip y, John McNab, Donald Elmer Herman McNab, Kenneth Neufeld, Walter eonard Peters, Peter J. er, Jacob . Edward Pieper, Jack Otto Rankel, John avid Rempel, Anthony aac Rempel, Diedrich Rempel, Herman , Anthony i, Bernhard Schroeder, Carl , Edward F. Schroeder, John , Edward K. Schuppert, Herbert , Nick Schuppert, William , Peter Scott, John , Rhinehart F. Sheedy, Francis Sheedy, Timothy Η. William Simpson, Holmes Bernhard Smith, Earl Herman Sobering, Arnold Sobering, George Martha Stirbiski, Albert echt, Peter echt, William Stirbiski, Frank Ulrich, Emil naster, Norman Villeneuve, Joseph Harry Wiebe, D. John son, Ralph Wiebe, Jacob son, Roy Source Veterans Affairs, ard, Charles Ottawa chs. Edward Additional Gretna Veterans chs, Otto Bergen, Jacob t, Abram Buhr, Edward rand, Allan Driedger, Bernhard rand, Peter Driedger, Edward on, Bruce Friesen, Gertrude Bernhard Friesen, Henry F. Peter Giesbrecht, Bernhard P. Giesbrecht, Henry en, Paul Giesbrecht, John P. tz, Joseph e, Joseph Harms, Gerhard ky, Wilfred Hiebert, David B. n, Donald Hiebert, Jacob n, Henry Hildebrand, Abram P. n, Klaas Kehler, Jacob J.

Loewen, Henry G. Schapansky, John Schmidt, Henry Scott, Ruth

Sources: Red River Valley Echo, Additional names: Frank H. Epp research on Mennonite veterans, and Gretna subject files.
There is no listing of Mennonite conscientious objectors available.

Population of Gretna

1886 -	2,681*	1926		591
1901 -	666	1931	war	541
1906 -	646	1936		515
1911 -	519	1941		507
1916 -	554	1946	***	482
1921 -	581			

^{*-}population as for Douglas Municipality Census of Manitoba, PAM

Annual Report of the Postmaster General 1890–1917 Statement Showing the Accounting Office in Operation — Gretna, Manitoba

Year	Gross Postal Revenue	Number of Money Orders Issued	Total Amount of Money Orders Issued	Number of Money Orders Paid Out		of Postal Notes	Compensation Paid to Postmasters on Money Orders	Salary	Overtime Allowance	Rent, Fuel and Light
1890	1085.88	157	1881.63		472,27		4.78	310.00	48.00	
1891	1168.86	349	4524.17		1280.56		11.75	380.00	40.00	40.00
1892	1399.53	396	6939.99		2033.92		17.64	400.00	30.00	40.00
1893	1606.31	464	6742.12		2060.97		17.98	460.00	20.00	100.00
1894	1697.18	573	7723.09		2172.84		19.65	520.00	20.00	100.00
1895	1681.66	620	8028.03		2025.67		21.27	540.00	20.00	125.00
1896	1812.85	630	6492.91		1095.51		16.80	540.00	20.00	125.00
1897	1897.47	678	6086.30		2082.31		15.56	570.00	20.00	125.00
1898	1977.62	738	7238.27		1449.69		18.39	580.00	12.50	125.00
1899	2110.57	792	8603.88	138	2703.52	131.02	22.27	600.00	10.00	125.00
1900	1660.05	700	8217.23	119	2799.00	167.67	21.35	640.00	10.00	150.00
1901	1490.39	624	6879.21	132	5480.90	205.43	17.96	631.67	10.00	150.00
1902	1552.39	990	10645.44	159	4629.92	308.91	27.45	610.00	10.00	137.50
1903	1393.88	1082	13412.85	233	4318.82	401.54	35.53	600.00	10.00	125.00
1904	1411.45	1106	12930.11	203	4813.20	622.85	37.19	600.00	10.00	125.00
1905	1260.76	859	10592.65	206	4842.52	790.49	31.28	600.00	10.00	125.00
1906	1295.45	765	9854.27	268	8258.50	834.22	28.34	550.00	10.00	112.50
1907	1058.98	547	7409.34	253	7107.98	738.13	21.50	375.00	7.50	75.00
1908	1334.14	844	12320.97	485	12542.53	557. <i>7</i> 5	36.34	608.00	10.00	125.00
1909	1475.36	926	13380.59	525	9639.53	754.04	42.29	608.00	10.00	125.00
1910	1478.30	1276	15330.15	601	15841.60	649.16	57.05	643.00	10.00	125.00
1911	1448.40	1318	16246.70	547	12343.71	935.32	58.19	643.00	10.00	125.00
1912	1454.32	1484	17439.23	629	14195.25	855.27	65.65	643.00	10.00	125.00
1913	1493.44	1759	20943.57	624	14947.66	724.05	76.60	643.00	12.00	125.00
1914	1236.51	2225	32482.18	466	12216.40	655.39	93.66	648.00	12.00	125.00
1915	1206.42	2786	38563.75	553	12333.12	626.82	116.97	612.00	12.00	125.00
1916	1716.99	2671	34585.24	515	13596.61	725.75	111.99	576.00	12.00	125.00
1917	1782.48	3015	42411.21	753	29678.21	778.28	128.13	586.00	12.00	125.00

Public Archives of Canada

All-Britons' Day Catechism May 23, 1907

To be used for British Subjects

- Q: What is your stand in connection with the British Empire?
- A: I am a subject of King Edward VII and a citizen of the British Empire.
- Q: What is the full title of King Edward VII?
- A: His Majesty, Edward VII, by God's Grace King, Protector of the Faith, The United Commonwealth of Great Britain and Ireland and all British Colonies across the oceans, Kaiser of India.
- O: What is the British Empire?
- A: That part of the earth's surface which is subject to the authority of King Edward VII.
- Q: How many square miles make up the British Empire?
- A: About 12,000,000 sq. miles, 121,000 of which make up the United Kingdom (Empire).
- O: How does the expansion of the British Empire compare to other countries?
- A: Its expansion is greater than that of any other State (country). The nations, outside the British Empire, that occupy the largest areas of land are: Russia, 8,000,000 sq. mi.; USA, 3,623,000 sq. mi.; Brazil, 3,220,000 sq. mi.
- Q: How many subjects does King Edward VII have?
- A: About 400,000,000. 43,000,000 of these live in the United Kingdom.
- Q: What portion of the inhabitants of the earth are subjects of King Edward VII?
- A: About 1/5 or 22%
- Q: How does the population of the British Empire compare with the other most populated countries?
- A: It is similar to China, and greater than all other countries. The most populated countries outside the British Empire are: China—400,000,000 Russia—130,000,000 USA—84,000,000.
- Q: How is the British Empire governed?
- A: Different regions are governed in different ways. The United Kingdom, the Dominion of Canada, The Australian Commonwealth, New Zealand, the Cape-Colony, Natal and Newfoundland govern themselves. Other parts have partial self-government; others like India are governed by an official appointed by the British government; but all swear allegiance to the crown.
- Q: What duties does a British subject owe his ruler?
- A: To honor him and to be obedient to him.
- Q: Why are subjects of Britain obligated to honor and obey the King?
- A: Because King Edward VII represents the majesty and honor of the Empire and because he has sworn as a constitutional ruler to keep the laws, and to govern his subjects righteously and impartially.
- Q: What are the duties of a citizen of the British Empire?
- A: To be a faithful friend of all subjects under the Emperor; to live in such a way that no blemish or blame will fall on the Empire. To spare no efforts to prepare to live and seek the welfare of fellow citizens whether white or colored during peacetime or wartime.
- Q: Why does a citizen of the British Empire owe the state these duties?

- A: Because British Empire citizens have rights and greater personal freedom to enjoy than those of any other state, thus owing the Empire faithfulness and thankfulness for these privileges of freedom of action and protection.
- Q: What is the meaning of the "All-Briton Day" movement?
- A: It is an effort to remind all the Emperor's subjects of the virtues that constitute a good citizen, i.e. faithfulness, love of the fatherland, enthusiasm, endurance, respect for obedience to the laws of the land, and self-sacrifice in promoting the welfare of the community. To teach everyone, especially youth, the sacredness of trust, and to encourage them to fulfill their obligations.
- Q: What are the watchwords of the All-Briton Day movement?
- A: Responsibility, Duty, Self-sacrifice.
- Q: What is the motto of the All-Briton Day movement?
- A: One king, one flag, one fleet, one Empire.
- Q: Shall the Union Jack be raised on All-Briton Day, the 24th of May?
- A: Yes, on all public buildings, church steeples, and private buildings.

Manitoba Department of Education Art Harder Collection

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Braun, Helen	Hayward, Nora	Penner, Shirl
Braun, John C.	Hendricks, W.	Pieper, Edith
Craven, Ruth	Herzfeldt-Kamprath, Tim	Pieper, R. C.
Dyck, Edna	Hiebert, Dr. Paul	Reimer, Maria
Dyck Wilson, Ruth	Hiebert, Susan	Ritz, Louise
Enns, F. G.	Hildebrand, Doris	Ritz, Scott
Enns, Frank F.	Hildebrandt, Henry E.	Schroeder, Carl
Ens, Gerhard	Hildebrandt, John E.	Schroeder, Vern
Ens, Henry G.	Hildebrandt, Peter E.	Sheedy, Dr. Frank
Epp, Frank H.	Klassen, Dan P.	Toews, Debbie
Evenson, Carl	Klippenstein, Lawrence	Wall, Mary
Fehr, Jacob	Krause, Florian	Whelan, Pemrose
Frankfurter, Irene	Kuehn, Felix	Whelan Enns, Gaile
Friesen, David M.	Loewen, Abe	Wiebe, Helen
Friesen, Katherine	Loewen, Alf	Winkler, Ruth
Friesen, Dr. Rheinhardt F.	Loewen, Margaret	Woelke, John
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^{*}As of December 31, 1985

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Gretna Gretna Gretna Altona Gretna Winnipeg Gretna Gretna Gretna Altona Winnipeg Winnipeg Altona Altona Winnipeg Gretna Gretna Winnipeg Winnipeg Gretna Gretna Gretna Gretna Steinbach Gretna Gretna Gretna Altona Gretna Gretna Gretna Altona Gretna Steinbach Sewell Gretna

Gretna

Winnipeg

Peter B. Kehler Roy Haney Henry Harder Jacob J. H. Friesen **Iake Penner** Dolly Villeneuve (Mrs.) D. T. Heinrichs Klaas P. Loewen Thelma Smith (Mrs.) Helen O'Brien (Mrs.) Walter H. Neufeld Anne Neufeld (Mrs.) Arthur A. Harder Frank B. Sawatzky Peter I. Bueckert Ben W. Berg Albert Sawatzky Henry F. Friesen Frank Harder Eve Harder (Mrs.) Dave Hildebrand Hugh Campbell Mrs. J. J. Nickel Carl Schroeder Dr. Stewart McKenty Abe Wiebe Olga Wiebe Peter Wiebe Mrs. Cornelius Funk Tillie Hagglund (Mrs.) Selma Loewen (Mrs.) Dr. Rhinehart Friesen Ben Heinrichs Henry Schmidt Frank F. Enns John K. Broeska Otto Heinrichs Lawrence B. Friesen Sophia Steppler (Mrs.) Dorothy Hildebrand Frank L. Friesen Diane Peters (Mrs.) Jacob F. Klassen Edward P. Falk Don Batchelor Gwen Batchelor (Mrs.) Homer Smith Betty Goerzen Jerry Enns

Alf Loewen

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Abe Driedger Helen Braun (Mrs.) Helen Krueger (Mrs.) Marion King Helen Saunders Glen Wiebe I. I. Janzen Helga Peters (Mrs.) Anna Murphy Jake B. Wiebe Felix Kuehn Rudy Friesen Bill Johnston Wm. Falk Barb Wiebe Ken Loewen Helen Schellenberg Ted Hykawy Herman Kehler Anne Goertzen (Mrs.) **Jacob Schmidt** Dave Kehler Ed I. Toews Laverne Wiebe Helen Janzen (Mrs.) Elma Friesen Jake F. Kehler Dave Rempel Mary Brown (Mrs.) Pauline Mauthe Ruth Winkler (Mrs.) Hilda Kehler (Mrs.) Nettie Braun (Mrs.) David Klaassen Eric Bueckert Helen Wiebe (Mrs.) John Plett Dr. Frank Sheedy Mary Wall (Mrs.) Dan Peters Robert Binney (Mrs.)

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Persons outside Manitoba who loaned materials for Gretna research:

Smith, Betty Symington, Katherine Klassen, Dora Schuppert, Kent Black, Luella Krause, Florian Pieper, Elsie McGavin, Joan Pieper, Bud Bixler, Margaret Wahn Walker, D. Irvine

Pieper, Bud
Bixler, Margaret Wahn
Walker, D. Irvine
Scholer, F. P. & Emily
Burnett, Mary L.
Behesti, Dorothy
Schuppert, William
Schuppert, Herb
Lamb, Margaret
Seidelman, Hazel
Loewen, Ken
Michaels, Lois
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Allen, Hugh J.
Schweitzer, Fred
Brown, Catherine

Giesbrecht, Peter (Mrs.) Schink, Clifford Loewen, Edward Unrau, Albert Unrau, H. B.

Helmer, Rosemary Hart Friesen, Dr. Stanley R.

Kunka, M. E. Esau, Paul J. (Mrs.) Cowan, May Dyck, Edna Epp, Frank H.

Koch, Mary Loewen, J. P. Neufeld, Peter C. Rosychuk, Mary Smith, Francis Winkler, Pauline

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Hamilton, Ontario Bramalea, Ontario

Sequim, Washington, USA Neche, North Dakota, USA Kelowna, British Columbia

Kitchener, Ontario

Armstrong, British Columbia

El Paso, Texas, USA

Ormand Beach, Florida, USA

Mississauga, Ontario Riverdale, Maryland, USA Vancouver, British Columbia Langdon, North Dakota, USA Langley, British Columbia Waite Park, Minnesota, USA Vancouver, British Columbia Charlie Lake, British Columbia Victoria, British Columbia

Calgary, Alberta Cambridge, England

Walhalla, North Dakota, USA

Belveil, Quebec Kenora, Ontario

Palo Alto, California, USA Hamilton, Ontario Fort Assiniboine, Alberta Edmonton, Alberta Sealy, Texas, USA Kansas City, Kansas, USA

Kansas City, Kansas, USA Coquitlam, British Columbia Walnut Creek, California, USA Leavenworth, Washington, USA

Newton, Kansas, USA Waterloo, Ontario Castlegar, British Columbia Victoria, British Columbia Rosthern, Saskatchewan Edmonton, Alberta Gabriola, British Columbia

Grosse Pointe Farms, Michigan, USA

Neche, North Dakota, USA Edmonton, Alberta Newton, Kansas, USA

Note: This is a chronological listing.

The Research

Note: The following institutions and organizations responded to Gretna's requests for research assistance.

Government of Canada

Department of National Revenue, Customs & Excise

Department of Finance

Department of Consumer & Corporate Affairs

Department of Agriculture Canada Post Corporation

Government of Manitoba

Department of Education

Department of Natural Resources

Department of Community Services & Corrections

Department of Attorney General

Department of Culture, Heritage & Recreation

Organizations in Manitoba

Rosenfeld Lutheran Church Rosenfeld Grey Goose Bus Lines Winnipeg Mennonite Collegiate Institute Gretna Gretna Public School Gretna First Mennonite Mission Aid Gretna Archdiocese of St. Boniface St. Boniface University of Manitoba Library Winnipeg Mennonite Village Museum Steinbach Jewish Historical Society of Western Canada Winnipeg Derksen Printers Steinbach Mennonite Heritage Centre Winnipeg

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Manitoba
Gretna Consumers Co-op
Gretna Credit Union
Gretna Credit Union
Winnipeg Commodity Exchange
Air Photo Library, Surveys & Mapping
Morden Land Titles Office
United Church of Canada Archives
Winnipeg
Mornipeg
Morden
University of

Winnipeg, Winnipeg

Federal Industries
Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society
Manitoba Historical Society

Manitoba Historical Society Duncan & Company Manitoba Telephone System Grand Lodge of Manitoba

R.M. of Rhineland History Book Committee
Die Mennonitische Post

Die Mennonitische Post Archives of the Order of Grey Nuns

John E. Robbins Library

Canadian Grain Commission

Provincial Archives of Manitoba Manitoba Legislative Library W. C. Miller Collegiate Winnipeg Winnipeg Winnipeg Morden Winnipeg Winnipeg

Steinbach St. Boniface Brandon University,

Altona

Brandon Winnipeg Winnipeg Winnipeg Altona Red River Valley Echo

Rhineland School Division Rural Municipality of Rhineland Manitoba Pool Elevators

Manitoba Pool Co-operative Records

Fire Commissioner of Manitoba Law Society of Manitoba Archives

Altona United Church

Out-of-Province Organizations

Inter-Provincial Pipeline Ltd.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police Museum

Central Canada Synod

Lutheran Church of America

Public Archives of Canada

National Library of Canada

North Dakota Heritage Centre

National Archives & Records Services

Glenbow-Alberta Institute Archives

Ogilvie Mills Ltd.

Canadian National Library Services

Saskatoon Public Library

Bell Telephone Company

Canadian Centre for Architecture

American Association for State & Local History

Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce

Royal Bank of Canada

Bank of Montreal

Maple Leaf Mills Ltd.

National Archives and Records Services

Bethel College Archives

Saskatchewan Archives Board

Neche History Committee

Newspapers Used In Research

Brandon Mail

Der Mitarbeiter

Der Nordwesten

Der Rheinlaender

Emerson International

Germania

Manitoba Weekly Free Press

Neche Chronotype later Printer's Ink

Nelsonville Mountaineer

Red River Valley Echo

Southern Manitoba Times

The Commercial

The Gretna News

The Winnipeg Daily Sun

Winnipeg Evening Tribune

Winnipeg Tribune

Altona Altona

Altona Winnipeg

Brandon University,

Brandon Winnipeg

University of Manitoba, Winnipeg

Altona

Edmonton, Alberta Regina, SK

Saskatoon, SK Ottawa, Ontario Ottawa, Ontario Bismarck, N.D. Washington, D.C. Calgary, Alberta Montreal, Quebec Montreal, Quebec Saskatoon, SK Montreal, Quebec Montreal, Quebec Nashville, Tennessee Toronto, Ontario Montreal, Quebec Montreal, Quebec Toronto, Ontario Washington, D.C. Newton, Kansas Regina, SK

Neche, N.D.

Footnotes

Abbreviations:

MHC — Mennonite Heritage Centre

PAM — Provincial Archives of Manitoba

SAB — Saskatchewan Archives Board

PAC — Public Archives of Canada

VGA — Village of Gretna Archives

FGE — Francis Gerhard (Garry) Enns

GWE — Gaile Whelan Enns

MLL — Manitoba Legislative Library

RM — Rural Municipality

LTO — Land Titles Office

HPH — Helen Penner Hiebert (Memoirs)

MCI — Mennonite Collegiate Institute

MEI — Mennonite Educational Institute

Corres. — Correspondence (with, of)

Note: Abbreviations appear regularly after first cite.

- Mrs. Gerhard Hiebert, nee Helen Penner, wrote her memoirs at the home of her daughter, Catherine Brown, at age 85. They are available at both VGA and MHC.
- The Village of Gretna Archives constitute the Municipal records of Gretna, the Gretna History Committee Collection, and supporting documentation for this book. VGA is used in the footnotes to designate all of the above. Occasionally VGA is used to designate materials that are available elsewhere - that have been photocopied.
- In Chapter Three, after establishing the pattern of citing **Der Nordwesten**, not all material from this source is footnoted. The text indicates continued use of Der Nordwesten as a source. In Chapter Four the same pattern holds in our citing of The Neche Chronotype.
- The records of the Municipality of Rhineland and of the Municipality of Douglas are available in the RM Office. Altona. Many of those records are on microfilm at the Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg. Many of these records pertain to Gretna's history and are now copied and translated, and in the Village of Gretna Archives.

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 - 90. Chronotype, 3 December 1906.
 - 91. Chronotyupe, 26 January 1907.
 - 91. Ibid., 29 June 1907.
 - 93. Der Nordwesten, 4 December 1907; Chronotype, 30 November 1907.
 - 94. U.S.A. National Achives.
 - 95. Chronotype, 7 December 1907.
 - 96. MCI Annual Meeting Minutes, 30 November 1907.
 - 97. Chronotype, 10 August 1907.

- 98. Chronotype, 13 December 1906 and 19 September 1907.
- 99. Ibid., 17 August 1907.
- 100. Ibid., 7 December 1907.
- 101. Ibid., 21 December 1907.
- 102. Ibid., 4 January 1908.
- 103. *Ibid.*, 11 February 1908.
- 104. LTO, Morden.
- 105. H. H. Ewert Corres., 19 May 1908, MHC.
- 106. Chronotype, 27 February 1909.
- 107. Nordwesten, 16 December 1908.
- 108. Village of Gretna Council Minutes 1909.
- 109. Kuehn, History of St. Paul's
- 110. Der Mitarbeiter, July 1909.
- 111. Krause family history, VGA.
- 112. Village of Gretna Council Minutes, 1910.
- 113. Chronotype, 11 June 1910.
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- 115. Der Nordwesten, 15 October 1910.
- 116. Marie Schilstra Corres., 1983, VGA.
- 117. H. H. Ewert Papers, MHC.
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- 119. Village of Gretna Achives.
- 120. Chronotype, 17 June 1912.
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- 123. Ibid., 25 January 1913.
- 124. Chronotype, 16 November 1912.
- 125. MCI Annual, 1927.
- 126. Chronotype, 3 May 1913.
- 127. Der Nordwesten, 30 April 1913.

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- 1. Corres. with Mrs. Margaret Lamb, 1983–84, VGA.
- 2. Nora (Ellis) Hayward interview, FGE, VGA.
- 3. Canada, Public Works Records, 1913, PAC.
- Chronotype, Gretna News, 24 May 1913.
- 5. Ibid.
- 6. MCI Annual Meeting Minutes, 1913, MHC.
- 7. Village of Gretna, Council Minutes, 19 July 1913.
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 - 11. Bank of Montreal Corres., Cancelled Cheques, VGA.
 - 12. Canada, Sessional Papers, PAC.
 - 13. Canada, Department of Agriculture, Annual Report, 1913, PAC.
 - 14. Chronotype, 27 December 1913.
 - 15. Ibid., 17 January 1914.
 - 16. Ibid., 26 February 1914.
 - 17. Ibid., 26 March 1914.
 - 18. Manitoba, Electoral Records, since 1870, MLL.
 - 19. Chronotype, 9 July 1914.

- 20. Ibid., 23 July 1914.
- 21. Ibid., 9 July 1914.
- 22. Gretna Public School Registers, MHC.
- 23. Chronotype, 5 January 1915.
- 24. A. L. Friesen, Letters to His Children.
- 25. Walter Neufeld Corres., VGA.
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- 32. Ibid., 18 November 1915.
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- 34. Chronotype, 6 April 1916.
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 - 45. Chronotype, 18 January 1917.
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- 53. Proceedings of the Eleventh Annual Convention, Manitoba School Trustees, March 1917, PAM.
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 - 57. Chronotype, 29 August 1918.
 - 58. MCI Annual Meeting Minutes, 1919, MHC.
 - 59. Gretna Public School, Attendance Records, MHC.
 - 60. Thelma Smith interview, GWE, VGA.

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About the Author

Born in Killarney, Manitoba, Francis Gerhard Enns lived at Lena and Blumenfeld before moving to Gretna with his parents and sister in 1954. Garry graduated from the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna in 1964 and graduated from the Manitoba Teachers' College a year later. Garry has taught at Reinfeld, Emerson, and Steinbach.

He received his Bachelor of Arts from the University of Manitoba. His studies in English and German Literature, combined with his work at the student newspaper, the MAN-ITOBAN, started his interest in "word-smithing". He assisted in the translation of selected writings of Pilgram Marpeck and has freelanced for a variety of publications including "Saskatchewan Business" and "Skyword" magazines. Some of his early poetry appeared in the "Mennonite Reporter".

Garry works for the Government of Manitoba, following employment with the Government of Canada, and with Crown Corporations in Saskatchewan.

Gaile Whelan Enns met Garry in Regina. Had she known he would convince her to coordinate the research for a history of Gretna, she might not have agreed to marry him. Gaile has worked as Director of Regina Co-ordinated Youth Services, as Public Relations Director for the Globe Theatre in Regina, and as tour coordinator for Prairie Theatre Exchange in Winnipeg. She also co-ordinated the research for a religious studies text entitled "Seasons of Woman".

Both Garry and Gaile work with words — writing, researching and editing — in their separate and combined occupations. They both have a consuming interest in the Manitoba community. Working on this history has given them an enhanced appreciation of that community and its history.

Garry Enns and Gaile Whelan Enns live with their sons Jared and Kelly at Aubigny, Manitoba.



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GENERAL DEALER IN BUILDING MATERIAL LUMBER-CEMENT ETC.