



Wennogespräch

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Jacob H. Janzen: "A Minister of Rare Magnitude"

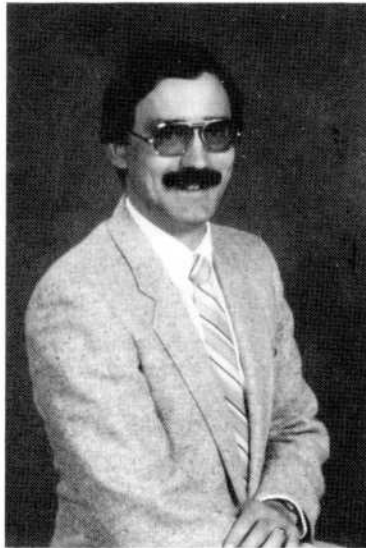
by Henry Paetkau

Introduction

On Christmas Eve, 1924 the Jacob H. Janzen family landed on Canadian soil. Three days later they were welcomed by their Swiss Mennonite hosts in Kitchener. They were among the last of the almost 1,500 Russian Mennonite immigrants who had arrived in Ontario that year.

The Janzen's soon found a permanent home in Waterloo and began the difficult task of rebuilding their lives. J. H. Janzen, already an ordained minister, was immediately put to work as *Reiseprediger* (itinerant minister) among the scattered newcomers by the Home Mission Board of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Janzen traveled extensively throughout the province, seeking out, organizing, encouraging, teaching, and ministering among the widely-dispersed individuals and groups of Russian Mennonites. In 1926 David Toews of Rosthern, Saskatchewan ordained Janzen as *Ältester* (bishop) of the newly formed United Mennonite Church in Ontario, permitting him to baptize and serve communion in the emerging congregations. His "parish" ranged far and wide, encompassing the Niagara Peninsula, Essex County, and the settlement of Reesor near Kapuskasing, some 600 miles to the north. At the same time, Janzen pastored the Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church. In time, the outlying congregations became independent, permitting him to concentrate more on other interests, such as preaching and lecturing throughout Canada and the U.S. and writing — perhaps his first love. Janzen's bibliography includes poetry, drama, fiction, devotional materials, and a Sunday School curriculum for children.¹

Except for a two-year interlude (1935-37) spent in British Columbia, bishop Janzen served the Ontario churches until his retirement, just short of his seventieth birthday, in January 1948. In recognition of his extensive ministry and diverse contribution to the Mennonite people, Bethel College in Newton, Kansas awarded Janzen an honorary Doctorate of Divinity. In December, 1949 bishop Janzen suffered a severe stroke. He died two months later. At his funeral, recalls N.N. Driedger, then bishop of the Leamington United Mennonite Church,



Henry Paetkau

The churches in Ontario had a feeling that they were standing at the coffin of their spiritual father. Not only Ontario, but the entire Mennonite community, possessed in him a *minister of rare magnitude*.²



J. H. Janzen

Biographical Sketch

When Jacob H. Janzen came to Canada at the age of 46 he had already established himself as, among other things, a respected teacher, a gifted writer, a compassionate pastor, and a skilled organizer. Janzen was born in the village of Steinbach in the Molotschna colony on March 19, 1878. His father, Heinrich Johann, was both a teacher and an ordained minister of the Gnadensfeld Mennonite Church. His mother was Maria Dirks, a daughter of Heinrich and Agnes Dirks, missionaries in Sumatra (now Indonesia).

From 1884-91 the family lived at the Vladimirov forestry camp where the elder Janzen served as preacher. J. H. Janzen eagerly pursued his education during these years and in 1894, at the tender age of sixteen, earned his elementary school teachers' certificate. Teaching remained his primary occupation for the next two decades, most notably at the Girls' School in Tiede-Ohrloff. In 1906, Janzen was also elected and ordained as a minister in the Gnadensfeld Mennonite Church, his home congregation.

A traumatic personal experience helped to shape another dimension of Janzen's life during those intervening years. In his memoirs, Janzen admits to a deep gloom and intense spiritual struggle during his young adulthood. Even the joy of marriage to Helena Braun in 1899 could not dispel this suffocating darkness of spirit and soul. The low point of that odyssey came at the death of their first child of scarlet fever at one and a half years of age. Janzen recalls his cry of despair. " 'Oh God, if you exist, then reveal yourself to me and help me!' And God heard my prayer. And the answer illuminated one of the darkest hours of my life . . ."³ That experience revitalized Janzen's teaching career and became the basis for his first major literary work, *Denn Meine Augen Haben Deinen Heiland Gesehen* (For My Eyes Have Seen Your Saviour).⁴ From that time on, literature became the primary form of self-expression for Janzen. "I consider myself a belletrist," he later confessed.

If I see something especially beautiful or amusing, which brings me real joy without leaving a bitter aftertaste, then I would like you also to share this joy

Continued on page 2



J. H. Janzen as a young man

with me and I write it down as best I can.⁵

In September, 1915 Janzen was conscripted into the forestry service, a world he had come to know in his youth. The turmoil of the Bolshevik Revolution occasioned his release in June, 1917 whereupon he resumed teaching. In July 1919 Janzen volunteered to serve as chaplain to the young Mennonite men who had been inducted into the so-called German Battalion of the White army. In the course of this service, he was promoted to the rank of Colonel and received an honourable discharge as such in July, 1920.

When his wife Helena died in 1922, Janzen was left to care for their seven children. Shortly thereafter he married Elsie Reimer Neufeld, a widow with four children of her own. Among them was Woldemar, the future artist, whose work is on permanent display at Conrad Grebel College. During the last four years in Russia Janzen was forbidden to teach because he was a minister of religion. His concern for education, however, propelled him into an active role in the Commission on Church Affairs which petitioned the Soviet government for permission to resume religious education. Janzen's persistence before the authorities as chief representative of this body resulted in his eventual arrest. Although charges of subversion were eventually dropped, continued harassment by Soviet officials prompted Janzen's flight to Canada in 1924.

On Education

Throughout his life Janzen remained preacher and teacher, as well as perpetual student. In 1913 his thirst for knowledge led him to take the unusual step of leaving his family in Russia in order to study in Germany. He explains the critical interest which lay behind that venture.

I studied Theology, Psychology, Philosophy and every subject pertaining to Natural Science that I could lay my hands on — with the sole purpose of knowing everything that could be

said against my faith and my dogmatics, and the religious ways of my people in general, and of finding whether these objections were justified and well founded or not.⁶

Janzen was not interested in pure knowledge as much as he was in the ability to think independently and to hold to one's faith with integrity. About the Girls High School in Ohrloff, at which he taught for over a decade, Janzen commented,

The purpose of this school was not, in the first place, to pass on extensive knowledge, but rather to facilitate a deeper mental and spiritual development, to awaken the thirst for knowledge thereby and to equip [students] with the tools for independent thought and inquiry . . . Schools should teach people to think and inquire for themselves.⁷

When he encountered some rather vocal opposition to this philosophy of education, particularly from those convinced that "the more educated the more perverted," Janzen took pen in hand to illuminate the issue in a lighthearted way. His one-act play entitled *De Bildung (The Education)*, written in 1912, follows the argument to its logical conclusion in the person of the unforgettable "Mumke Siebatsche." In her disgust over teachers like Janzen, this outspoken woman finally throws up her hands and despairs, "Nä Lied! sennt de aoba domm!" (Are they ever stupid!)"⁸

For Janzen, however, ignorance, and not education, posed the greatest threat to Mennonitism. He defended higher education as the only course whereby Mennonite faith and life could have integrity and influence in the wider world. He firmly believed in the power of truth, both spiritual and secular, to triumph over falsehood, prejudice, and evil. He was a staunch advocate of private schools and placed a heavy burden of responsibility on them. "We expect," Janzen wrote, "that our schools will give us the knowledge and education with which we can be a match for every learned person of the world."⁹ He taught evening courses throughout the United Mennonite churches on a wide range of subjects for much of his life. He also urged ministers to read widely and to go back to school if possible. "I believe that I must of necessity stay in touch with what is happening in the world of thoughts and feelings," Janzen maintained, "so that I will not say something in my sermons that will not stand up to the judgement of true knowledge."¹⁰ In a short story about the search for spiritual truth entitled "Gott", he illustrated this dilemma and challenge through the experience of a young Mennonite student leaving the colony to pursue his education at a Russian university.

It seemed to Johann Huebert that a whole new world lay unlocked but as yet unexplored before him. And in this new world Mennonitism occupied such an insignificantly small part that it was hardly worth considering. If one happened to be born and to grow up in this corner of the world, one knew it better than all the others. But it had no significance beyond that. It could even

seriously hinder objective investigation. One had to free oneself from the prejudices absorbed at home in order to be able to see clearly, to comprehend and digest inwardly without bias.¹¹

Janzen persistently challenged the parochialism he perceived in the Mennonite world. He believed that "The Truth shall set you free." In that spirit, and with that purpose, he dedicated his life to the Mennonite people. He exhorted them with these words:

Nimmer erlöschende dein Hunger
nach Licht.
Die Wahrheit siegt, drum verzage nicht!
Laß dir den Glauben nicht rauben!

(Never extinguish your hunger for light.
Truth will triumph, therefore do not despair.

Do not be robbed of your faith.)¹²

On Denominationalism and Unity

Janzen was deeply distressed by the divisions within the Mennonite church. A number of his short stories feature the personal and spiritual struggle experienced by those caught in the tension between the *Brüdergemeinde* (Mennonite Brethren) and the *Kirchengemeinde* (churchly, i.e. General Conference Mennonites) in Russia. He admonished his people for their divisiveness on spiritual grounds. "There is to be one flock and one shepherd," he maintained.

Do we really believe that the basis of our salvation lies in the externals which, as a rule, constitute the difference between the individual denominations? The nearer we come to the centre of our faith, Jesus Christ, the nearer we will stand to one another. And the fact that we are still far from one another is an indication that we are still far from Christ . . .¹³

His immigrant experience gave Janzen reason to hope that such a reunification might be in process. The shared suffering, deprivation, and relocation of recent years had created a bond of kinship among all Russian Mennonites. As the newcomers sought each other out for worship and fellowship, they often joined together despite their diverse Russian origins or traditions. Smaller groups of settlers, like those in Vineland, New Hamburg, Port Rowan, and Leamington, worshipped together for some years. Janzen welcomed this develop-

Continued on page 3

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Continued from page 2



Jacob and Helene Janzen

ment as "the destruction of one of the formal dividing walls" which had for over sixty years separated the two groups.

But such a reversal of history was not to be. On May 25, 1925, some 58 immigrants of *kirchlichen* background met in Kitchener to organize themselves as a congregation under the leadership of J. H. Janzen. They called themselves "The Mennonite Refugee Church". On the same day, representatives of the *Brüdergemeinde* met in St. Jacobs to establish their own congregation. Nonetheless, Janzen's appeal for unity was symbolized in the name adopted by the Refugee Church a year later, namely "The United Mennonite Church." Significantly, the only Russian Mennonite churches to use this designation were those in Ontario, which Janzen helped to organize, and those in British Columbia where he ministered in a similar capacity from 1935-37.

Janzen was saddened and, at times, deeply hurt by the reemergence of "the dividing walls" within the Mennonite church. As new conference structures arose he sought out avenues of cooperation. "In this time of confusion," he wrote, "our work is emerging as the unifying impulse . . . Churches are joining together as conferences to work in home and foreign missions even if differences of belief still exist here and there . . . In this manner the way to unity is being prepared. May it reach completion."¹⁴ The emergence of the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada some fifty years later is, in a sense, a fulfillment of that dream!

On Settlement and Acculturation

Janzen's love and concern for the Mennonite faith and heritage and the German culture prompted an ardent fear of assimilation into the prevailing Anglo-Canadian society. "In Russia our children could not compare us with others," he observed. "Here they *have* to."¹⁵ An unfavourable comparison, he warned, would lead the younger generation to reject their religious and cultural inheritance.

Initially Janzen responded in the traditional pattern of withdrawal. In 1925 he asked his fellow immigrants, therefore,

Where can we settle in groups, establish and build our own churches, bring our schools under our influence and, under God's guidance, work, grow and increase in grace with God and man?¹⁶

Northern Ontario seemed to offer the best possibility. The ill-fated settlement of Reesor emerged largely as a result of Janzen's promotion. But it never fulfilled those initial expectations.

Eventually Janzen, like most of the other Russian Mennonites, came to accept the inevitability of acculturation. But he worked all the harder to prevent complete assimilation. His lectures, articles, stories, and poetry were dedicated to preserving the best of German culture and Mennonite faith while adopting only the acceptable elements of the dominant Anglo-Canadian culture. In effect, Janzen advocated a form of bilingualism and biculturalism. By this time, he no longer feared the new world as he had, nor blamed it entirely for any falling away, a lesson already alluded to in the experience of Johann Huebert in the short story "Gott". Another character summarizes Janzen's perspective when he comments on the threat to moral purity presented by swimming pools and skimpy bathing suits. "The problem is not the swimming pool," Derksen observes in his low German drawl. "We are the problem."¹⁷

On Nonresistance and Alternative Service

Janzen drew a similar conclusion regarding the emergence of the *Selbstschutz* (armed self-defence corps) among the Russian Mennonites during the civil war. He differed with those who viewed this response as a sudden perversion of a nonresistant faith. According to

Janzen, the precedent for this digression was set much earlier in the experience of the colonies. "Since 1905", he maintained, "the Mennonites of South Russia were no longer nonresistant because members of the Mennonite churches hired armed protection for themselves and the churches said nothing."¹⁸ He noted that in the wake of the social unrest of that time some colonists began to carry revolvers with them on trips and to keep weapons in their homes. It was not the young men in 1918, therefore, but their parents long before them who had rejected nonresistance, Janzen argued. After all, he demanded, where does one draw the line between individual self-defence and the defence of a group? Between self-defence and warfare? Although the *Selbstschutz* was a terrible mistake in Janzen's opinion, both strategically and theologically, he suggested that these young men "were only what we had brought them up to be."¹⁹

At the same time, however, Janzen sharply rebuked those who criticized this armed response to the Revolution from the peace and comfort of North America. "I grant no one the right to judge the south Russian Mennonites if he has not lived through what they lived through," he insisted. "We ourselves, however, may, indeed must and want to place ourselves under judgement."²⁰

Janzen was also critical of the alternative service privileges of the Mennonites in Russia. More than half of these men would have taken up arms, he maintained, for they were not really nonresistant. He was convinced that the forestry service in Russia "was needed by no one, appreciated by no one, and therefore no good to anyone at all."²¹ "I am no friend of the privileges," Janzen declared.²² In the first place, he suggested, they permitted Mennonites to waver on the sincerity of their nonresistant beliefs and, secondly, they granted them un-

Continued on page 4



1923 Passport Photo

Continued from page 3

just advantages not open to other citizens. Members of the same state, Janzen believed, should enjoy the same rights and shoulder the same responsibilities. The best, truest and fairest witness from the Mennonites could only come in a service which was no easier or less dangerous than that rendered by other citizens.

That experience and outlook shaped Janzen's response to alternative service in Canada during World War II. He explained his position, and that of his fellow immigrants, as follows:

Russian Mennonites do not think very much of Alternative Service outside of the Army because they know that such service is neither needed nor appreciated by anyone; . . . No mother will ever sell her son into death for all the millions which we may spend in Relief Work at home and abroad, or for the soil which we reclaim or the timber which we save from going to waste by forest fires. Only a service alongside those who die daily will be appreciated. Such service only will count in the long run, even if it is rendered without arms. . . . Had we had the privilege at the beginning of this war to serve in the Medical Corps of the Army without arms there would have been very few Mennonites serving under arms now. As this was not the case they have volunteered to serve under arms to show their faithfulness to their home land and its people. . . . I shall be the last to judge them for what they have done for their country.²³

In this position Janzen differed sharply from the Swiss Mennonites who sought alternative service under civilian control outside the army in which circumstance alone they believed they would not compromise their nonresistant faith.

Conclusion

Despite his literary gifts, academic interests, and self-critical perspective, all of which stirred considerable controversy from time to time, Jacob H. Janzen never sought to move outside or beyond the Mennonite community of faith. He recognized that he could be nothing other than a German-speaking Mennonite. At the same time, he dreamed of what his people might become as a Christian witness

in the world. "I have come out of this people," he acknowledged. "Therefore I must give this people the best I have."²⁴

Furthermore, Janzen loved his people as, in the words of the writer Arnold Dyck, "it has seldom been loved and as perhaps only a poet can love a people."²⁵ Janzen himself expressed that affection in the forward to *Mein Felsengarten*, a collection of poetry, in which he wrote:

Gefühle, die tief im Herzen erwacht,
Gedanken, in schlaflosen Nächten
gedacht,
von leisem Singen und Klingen
durchzogen
Versmaz und Reim manchmal etwas
verbogen:
so wank' ich hinaus in Liebe und Treue
und suche das Herz meines Volkes
auf's Neue.
Ich habe dich lieb!²⁶

(Feeling, arising from deep in my heart,
Thoughts, sleepless nights to me do
impart,
Pervaded throughout with song and soft
chime
Though sometimes uneven in rhythm
and rhyme:
In faith and sincerity I venture forth
In search of the heart of my people
once more.

I live you dearly!)

The world of the Mennonites which he discovered in this search and which he oft-times shamelessly laid bare was far from pure or ideal. Nevertheless, Janzen writes, with its advantages and disadvantages, with its bright side and its dark shadow, [it] is the foundation on which I work, out of which the empathetic figures which impressed themselves upon me emerged. . . . It is this Mennonite people that I love so dearly, to whom I have faithfully devoted myself unto death, even if they occasionally scold or even scorn me. For this people I will always work, to call attention to its bright sides, to scold its dark side, to expose its absurdities, and to gently lift the veil somewhat from the depths of its soul so that it will shine before the world as a gem out of darkness.²⁷

That purifying zeal prompted Janzen to work and to write, to preach and to teach with



J. H. Janzen in 1946

little remuneration, yet with unfailing determination. With keen perception, shameless honesty, an abiding faith in God and human worth, and a fervent hope for growth and renewal, Janzen called his people to be true to their spiritual inheritance as Christians, their faith heritage as Mennonites, and their culture as Germans. For the time and circumstances in which he lived and worked, Jacob H. Janzen was indeed "a minister of rare magnitude."

FOOTNOTES

- 1 For an extensive bibliography see *Mennonite Life*, VI (July, 1951), p. 42.
- 2 N. N. Driedger, "Jacob H. Janzen als Prediger," *ibid.*, p. 41, Emphasis added.
- 3 *Aus Meinem Leben. Erinnerungen von J. H. Janzen* (Rosthern, Sask.: *Der Bote*, 1929), p. 32.
- 4 *Denn Meine Augen Haben Deinen Heiland Gesehen* (Homburg v.d. Höhe: Christliches Verlagshaus Wiegand & Co., n.d.).
- 5 "Tote Geschichten", *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, LI (Oct. 31, 1928), p. 7.
- 6 "Alternative Service and the Cessation of Nonresistance of the Mennonites in Russia after 1914." 1944 (?), p. 1.
- 7 *Aus Meinem Leben*, pp. 35-36.
- 8 *De Bildung*, 2nd ed. (1912;rpt. Waterloo, Ont.: the author, 1945), p. 15.
- 9 *Erfahrungen, Gedanken und Träume* (Waterloo, Ont.: the author, 1947), p. 103.
- 10 *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.
- 11 "Gott", *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, LI (Aug. 15, 1928), p. 7.
- 12 *Mein Felsengarten: Gedichte und Gespräche* (Waterloo, Ont.: the author, 1951), p. 41.
- 13 "Mennonitentum", *Die Mennonitische Rundschau*, XLVIII (July 8, 1925), p. 13.
- 14 *Aus der Kirchengeschichte* (Waterloo, Ont.: the author, n.d.), p. 23.
- 15 *Wanderndes Volk*, vol. III (Waterloo, Ont.: the author, 1949), p. 59.
- 16 "Siedlungsmöglichkeiten in Ontario", *Der Bote*, III (Jan. 13, 1926), p. 4.
- 17 *Wanderndes Volk*, p. 119. Emphasis added.
- 18 "Ein Ritt an die Front", 1925, p. 6.
- 19 *Ibid.*, p. 12.
- 20 *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- 21 "Alternative Service and the Cessation of Nonresistance", p. 5.
- 22 *Aus Meinem Leben*, p. 49.
- 23 "Alternative Service and the Cessation of Nonresistance", p. 5.
- 24 *Aus Meinem Leben*, p. 25.
- 25 Arnold Dyck, "Jacob H. Janzen — Writer", *Mennonite Life*, VI (July, 1951), p. 34.
- 26 *Mein Felsengarten*, p. 1.
- 27 *Aus Meinem Leben*, p. 56.



Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church

“New Mennonites” in Waterloo County

[The following is transcribed from the minute book of the New Mennonite congregation at Blair, Ontario. The New Mennonites joined the Reforming Mennonites in 1875 to form an earlier United Mennonite group. After later mergers they became the Mennonite Brethren in Christ (now Missionary Church). This continues the transcription begun last issue.

— Ed.]

At a semiannual Conference held at Blair in the New Mennonite church on the 5th day of May 1871, the conference was opened by Singing and prayer after which Rev. Daniel High was elected to be chairman and Samuel B. Bowman to be secretary. After the routine order had been gone through, the following resolutions were passed. Namely,

1st a. That our trustees for the Blair Meeting house shall so soon as they can ascertain what sum the debt on the said meeting house will amount to by the first day of January 1872; and how much of the said debt will remain unpaid, after the sum safely to be obtained from the sale of the New Dundee Meeting house is applied to the said debt.

b. And the then unpaid balance shall by the said trustees be apportioned to be paid by the several members of our congregations, as near as the said trustee can judge according to the circumstances and localities of the said members respectively.

c. And if the said members of our congregation will make themselves bindingly liable to pay to the said trustees on or before the first day of January 1873, the sum to which the said remaining debt will amount to by that time; and so soon as the said members will fully have made themselves liable to the said trustees as aforesaid, the said trustees shall give their promissory notes to Samuel B. Bowman for the sums payable on the said first days of January 1872 and 1873; and get a conveyance prepared for the northern part of the meeting house lot to the southern end of the meeting house buildings, and Samuel B. Bowman shall then sign seal and deliver the said Deed of conveyance to the said trustees, for the said meeting house and the said northern part of the said lot.

d. And if the said members of the New Mennonite church in Waterloo Co. and vicinity, or the aforesaid trustees, do on or before the first day of January 1873, fully pay to Samuel B. Bowman, what the unpaid part of the said debt will by that time amount to; and if the said congregations will then choose to build finish and fully pay, during or before the expiration of the year 1873 along the center of the remaining southern part of the said lot, two rows of sheds joining on the center of the lot, the two rows of sheds together to contain eighteen stalls ten feet wide each by including one post between the stalls;

which is according to the length and width as the lot was originally measured off and fenced for; then Samuel B. Bowman shall sign seal and deliver a lawful deed of conveyance also for the southern part of the said original Meeting house lot, the same as above mentioned for the northern part.

e. But if no such sheds will be built in or before the year 1873, then Samuel B. Bowman may replace to the funds of the church the price of the southern part of the said lot at the rate of one hundred dollars per an acre, which fund may be used as the future conferences may direct; and if no such sheds are built as afore said, Samuel B. Bowman shall not give a Deed of conveyance for the southern part of the said lot but may after the end of the year 1873 again take and keep the southern part of the said lot in and for his own use.

2d Resolved that our next semiannual conference shall be on the 15th day of September next in Blair. On 16th preaching in Blenheim A.M., inquiry Meeting in Blenheim on 16th at 2 P.M. by A.R.. On Sunday 17th sacrament in Blenheim at 10 A.M.

Rev. Daniel High, chairman
S.B. Bowman Secretary

At a semiannual Conference held in the Blair Mennonite Meeting house, on Friday the 15th day of September A.D. 1871, John McNelly was appointed chairman, and S.B. Bowman secretary. And after the Conference was opened by singing and prayer, and the necessary preliminaries were duly arranged for general business,

1st It was Moved by John McNelly and seconded by Wendel Clemens, that Jacob Z. Detwiler and Abraham Sharrick be appointed to see to it that the members of our congregation raise the required sum to procure a Deed of conveyance for the Blair Meeting house. Carried.

2d Moved by Wendell Clemens and Seconded by John McNelly, that our next semiannual Conference shall be in the Blair Meetinghouse at 10 O'clock A.M. on the 3d day of May 1872.

Rev. John McNelly, chairman
S.B. Bowman, Secretary

At a semiannual conference on the 3d day of May 1872 held by the New Mennonites of Waterloo Co. in Ontario, in Mennonite Meeting house at Blair, Jacob Huber was appointed chairman and S.B. Bowman secretary: After the Conference was Organized and opened by singing and prayer, the following resolutions were adopted, namely,

1st Moved by David Snyder, seconded by John McNelly, that John S. Huber shall see John Strome who is a trustee to the Blenheim union meeting house, and urge Strome that he shall call a public meeting at the said union house, for electing trustees for the superintending the keeping and putting in order the said meeting house and premises. Carried.

2d Moved by John S. Huber, seconded by Abraham Sharrick that our next semiannual conference shall be held on Friday the 20th day of September next, in the Blair Meeting house. Carried.

Jacob Huber chairman
S.B. Bowman Secretary

At a Semiannual conference held in the Blair Mennonite Meeting house on Friday the 13th day of September 1872 John McNelly was appointed chairman and S.B. Bowman secretary; and after the conference was duly organized and opened by singing and prayer, John S. Huber, who was at a previous conference appointed to see John R. Strome a trustee for the Blenheim union Meeting house, in order to form a plan for repairing the said house, and the said John S. Huber now reports that Strome advertised a public Meeting to arrange a plan for repairing the said house; but no one attended the said meeting except John R. Strome, John S. Huber and Jacob Huber, consequently there was nothing done.

Resolved that S. Schlichter & John Bear shall be a committee to answer Rev. Daniel High's question concerning Bishops, and send their answer or reply in to the Friedensbote.

Resolved that our next semiannual conference shall be at Blair on Friday the 3 day of May 1873.

John McNelly Chairman
S.B. Bowman Secretary

At a half yearly conference held at Blair, Waterloo County, September 12th, 1873.

John McNelly was appointed Chairman and Joel Clemens Secretary, where the following resolutions passed, viz.

Whereas application was made by the United Brethren to hold meetings in our church at Blair, it was moved by David Snyder and seconded by Jacob Huber, that Abram Sherk be authorized to offer to the United Brethren, the use of the Church at Blair for a limited time, on the conditions that they bear their share of the expenses.

Moved by Jacob Huber, seconded by Jacob Z. Detwiler that John Huber be Treasurer for money received to defray the expenses of Strange Ministers visiting us on Sacrament occasions.

Moved by David Break Seconded by Jacob Huber, that our Semiannual Conference be holden on the second Friday in May, that is May the 8th 1874 in the Blair Meeting house.

At a half yearly conference held at Blair Waterloo County, May the 8th 1874.

Reverent Samuel Sherk of Michigan was elected Chairman, and S.B. Bowman as Secretary.

Then the Conference was opened by Singing and prayer, after which the following resolutions were adopted.

1. Resolved that there is nothing known in our Waterloo Congregation between Ministers or members throughout, contrary to union peace and harmony.

2 Resolved that the money in John S. Hubers care and belonging to our church,

Continued on page 6

Continued from page 5

be placed in Jacob Z. Detwilers hands, on interes for one year.

- 3 Resolved that our fall sacrament shall take place on the 11th of October next, that is on the 2d Sunday of October 1874.
- 4 Resolved that Peter Geiger, Jacob Huber, Samuel Sherk and John Steckly, shall be a committee to decide when and where our next annual Ontario, Ohio and Michigan Conference shall be.
- 5 Resolved that our next half yearly conference shall be holden at Blair on the 18th day of September next.

Rev. Samuel Sherk chairman
S.B. Bowman secretary

At a half yearly conference held at Blair Waterloo County Ontario, September 18th 1874. But as only four persons appeared there was nothing done except appointing a half yearly Conference to be holden at Blair on the second Friday in May 1875, that is on the 14 May 1875.

The New Mennonite Church Record for Waterloo September 1869

We the undersigned do unite ourselves together in Church fellowship in connection with the body of Christians knowing by the Name New Mennonites and agree to take the schripture as our rule of faith and practise by which we will be governed in the discharg of all our Christain Duteys

Names of members

Rev. Samuel Schlichter died July 17th 1873 aged 51 year 9 mo
 Rev. John McNally [1822-1913]
 Rev. John McAuley
 Rev. Abraham Z. Dettweiler [1830-1912]
 Bro. Jacob Huber, Decon. [1817-1890]
 Samuel B. Bowman [1802-1883]
 Dadies Schnider [1799-1875]
 Jacob Z. Dettweiler [1820-1889]
 John Huber [1814-1896]
 Henery Z. Dettweiler [1822-1884]
 Abraham Sherk [1817-1898]
 David Brak [1820-1892]
 Jacob Weaver [1808-]
 Wendel Clemens [1823-1898]
 Daniel Reitlinger
 Joel Clemens [1823?-]
 Henery Bukler
 Nathen Casel [1833-1913]
 Solemon Gehman died Aug. 14th 1872 [1800-1872]
 Daved Gehman [1838-1917]
 Davied Traup
 John Gable [-1872?]
 Benedick Clauser
 Abraham Kinsey died 1872 Feb. [1802-1872]
 Jesey Bowman
 John Castner
 John Rodz
 Charles Bryen
 Wolf
 John Cassel [1823-1908]
 Jacup R. Detwiler [1807-1885]
 1874 July 5 Frederick Dettel
 1874 May 16 Henry Gildner [1851-1931]
 Samel Detwiler

Mary Schlichter [1832-1889]
 Mary ann McNally [1826-1909]
 Reachel Dettweiler [1837-]
 died October 3d 1870
 Cathrian Huber [1823-1899]
 Leha Schneider [1804-1876]
 Hanah Z. Dettweiler [1827-1895]
 Cathrian Huber [1823-1886]
 Luseah Sherk [1828-1905]
 Mary Break [1825-1881]
 Cathrian Clemanes [1829-1917]
 Susanah Buckler
 Nancy Cassel removed by Death
 [Magdalena] Gehman [1813-]
 Gredal Gehman [1837-1901]
 Hannah Troup
 Clauser
 [Salome] Kiney [1810-1889]
 Nancy Bowman
 Cathrian Hoffman
 Faney Dettweiler
 Hannah Wismar
 Polly Weaver died
 Cathrian Shoemaker
 Nancy Bowman
 Elizebeth J. Schlichter [1853-1922]
 Elizebeth D. Schlichter [1811-1882]

Hannah Schlichter [1841-1908]
 Elizebeth Lang
 Marey Panebaker
 ? Dydells
 Mary Dydells
 Faney Witmar
 Susanah Bowman
 Cathrian Moyer died April 28th 1871
 Cathrin Break died June 7 1873
 aged 75 years
 Anney Castner
 Rudy
 Bryen
 Wolf
 Wolf
 1870 Oct 2 Nancy Witmer
 1871 May 7 Gon
 Anna R. Detwiler Died 1871 Nov 5th
 aged 63 [1808-1871]
 Joseph B. Bowman Died 1871 Nov 3d aged 34
 hannah Sherik
 Mariah Cassel
 Raechel Cassel [1828-1902]
 Anna R. Dettweler
 Sarah Snyder
 1874 Sep 12 Sarah Detwiler
 " 12 Elisabeth Detwiler

Readers' Ancestry

by Aden Eby

[This is our first effort to publish a "Readers' Ancestry". Your comments about this kind of feature would be appreciated. We are grateful to Aden Eby for preparing this article on his family's distinguished heritage — ed.]

Pictured is the 1980 Golden Wedding Anniversary of Aden and Ruby Eby with their four children.

This family is a direct descendant of Bishop Benjamin Eby founder of 'Ebytown' now Kitchener, Ontario and first Mennonite Bishop in inland Upper Canada. He came from Pennsylvania in 1806. Benjamin Eby was a great grandson of Theodorus Ebi who migrated from Europe to Pennsylvania in 1715 on the invitation of William Penn.

Aden Eby has reprinted the *History of the Eby Family* which was written by his great uncle Ezra E. Eby in 1889. Aden's wife, Ruby

Continued on page 7



Eby Family (Golden Wedding Anniversary 1980).

Left to right: Elizabeth Eby, Rev. Malcolm Eby, Aden Eby, Ruby (Winger) Eby, Dwight Eby, Allona (Eby) Higgins.

Continued from page 6

Mae (Winger) Eby was twice the great, great, great granddaughter of Bishop John Winger, founder of the River Brethren Church in Canada.

For information on the Eby Family, write to: Aden Eby, at 2110 Eagle St., Cambridge, Ontario N3H 4R7.

- 1.a. EBY, Rev. Malcolm A., b. Aug. 13, 1940, Stevensville, Ont.; m. June 1, 1968, Maryon C. McGee; c. Melodie D., Malcolm Chris, Megan J.
- 1.b. EBY, Allona M. (Higgins), b. June 11, 1943, Welland, Ont.; m. July 14, 1962, Rev. S. Keith Higgins; c. Cheryl M.; S. Glen.
- 1.c. EBY, Dwight A., b. June 21, 1946, Fort Erie, Ont.; m. Joan D. Craig; c. Jonathan D. A., Jeremy D. A., Jessica D. A.
- 1.d. EBY, Elizabeth R., b. May 11, 1953, Fort Erie, Ont.

* * * * *

2. EBY, Aden, b. Nov. 10, 1906, New Hamburg, Ont.; m. June 3, 1930, Ruby Mae Winger.
3. WINGER, Ruby Mae, b. July 16, 1910, Stevensville, Ont.; d. Aug. 13, 1985, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.

* * * * *

4. EBY, Isaiah S., b. Oct. 5, 1865, Berlin, Upper Canada; d. Feb. 8, 1955, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.; m. Dec. 6, 1905, Matilda Gingrich.
5. GINGRICH, Matilda, b. June 1, 1866, Preston, Upper Canada; d. Oct. 16, 1947, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.
6. WINGER, Melvin, b. Aug. 19, 1884, Black Creek, Ont.; d. Nov. 21, 1951, bu. Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. Nov. 3, 1909, Jessie Mabel Winger.
7. WINGER, Jessie Mabel, b. Jan. 10, 1891, Stevensville, Ont.; d. Sept. 4, 1961, bu. Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.

* * * * *

8. EBY, Isaac S., b. Oct. 31, 1837, Berlin, Upper Canada; d. Feb. 5, 1915, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.; m. May 10, 1859, Elizabeth Stauffer.
9. STAUFFER, Elizabeth, b. Aug. 23, 1840, Butler, Co., Pa.; d. June 8, 1926, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.
10. GINGRICH, Deacon Solomon, b. Mar. 17, 1838, Preston, Upper Canada; d. June 18, 1928, bu. Union Cem., Hespeler, Ont.; Mr. Mar. 1, 1864, Annie Cober.
11. COBER, Annie, b. May 18, 1836, Hespeler, Upper Canada; d. Dec. 14, 1911, bu. Union Cem., Hespeler, Ont.
12. WINGER, Josiah, b. Feb. 28, 1849, Black Creek, Upper Canada; d. 1939, bu. Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. Feb. 23, 1875, Elizabeth Caroline Climenhaga.
13. CLIMENHAGA, Elizabeth Caroline, b. Sept. 13, 1857, Stevensville, Ont.; d. July 1, 1893, bu. Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.



Aden's parents — Isaiah S. Eby — (no. 4); Matilda (Gingrich) Eby — (no. 5); taken in 1941. They were both aged 75 years.

14. WINGER, Emmanuel, b. May 18, 1862, Black Creek, Upper Canada; d. Mar. 25, 1939, bu. Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. Sept. 12, 1888, Christie Ann Sider.
15. SIDER, Christie Ann, b. Oct. 10, 1869, Stevensville, Ont.; d. Jan. 24, 1950, Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.

* * * * *

16. EBY, Elder Isaac, b. July 30, 1808, Ebytown, Upper Canada; d. May 20, 1874, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.; m. Oct. 30, 1831, Veronica Shoemaker.
17. SHOEMAKER, Veronica, b. Feb. 2, 1815, Pa.; d. July 20, 1894, Eby Mennonite Cem., Kit., Ont.
18. STAUFFER, David, b. Dec. 31, 1813, Chester Co. Pa.; d. about 1907, bu. Conestoga Cem., Conestoga; m. May 24, 1836, Anna Maria Shelley; (1848, came to Canada).
19. SHELLEY, Anna Maria, b. May 29, 1819, Harmony, Pa.; d. Aug. 1910, bu. Conestoga Cem., Conestoga.
20. GINGRICH, Michael, b. Mar. 13, 1802, Preston, Upper Canada; d. May 14, 1866, bu. Union Cem., Hespeler, Ont.; m. Oct. 11, 1825, Mary Wanner.
21. WANNER, Mary, b. Nov. 2, 1806, Hespeler, Upper Canada; d. Feb. 12, 1886, bu. Union Cem., Hespeler, Ont.
22. COBER, Nicholas Jr., b. Mar. 4, 1811, Vaughn Twsp., York Co., Upper Canada; d. June 22, 1887, bu. Union Cem., Hespeler, Ont.; m. April 3, 1832, Nancy Holm.
23. HOLM, Nancy, b. Nov. 4, 1813, Vaughn Twsp., York Co., Upper Canada; d. April 5, 1878, bu. Union Cem., Hespeler, Ont.
24. WINGER, Joseph, b. Mar. 22, 1822, Black Creek, Upper Canada; d. Sept. 10, 1889, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. —, Susannah Climenhaga.

25. CLIMENHAGA, Susannah, b. Dec. 16, 1829; d. Dec. 8, 1904, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.
26. CLIMENHAGA, Martin Jr., b. Dec. 26, 1829, Bertie Twsp., Upper Canada; d. Nov. 22, 1866, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. Sept. 30, 1856, Esther Barnhardt.
27. BARNHARDT, Esther, b. Nov. 27, 1832, Bertie Twsp., Upper Canada; d. Sept. 10, 1858, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.
28. WINGER, Peter Jr., b. 1835, Black Creek, Upper Canada; d. Jan. 11, 1901, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. —, Ann Danner.
29. DANNER, Ann, b. 1839, Black Creek, Upper Canada; d. April 8, 1915, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.
30. SIDER, Jacob C., b. Aug. 1, 1835, Stevensville, Upper Canada; d. Oct. 14, 1915, bu. Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. 1858, Anna Pickhart.
31. PICKHART, Anna, b. May 18, 1834, —, d. Nov. 3, 1898, bu. Tunker Cem., Stevensville, Ont.

* * * * *

32. EBY, Bishop Benjamin, b. May 2, 1785, Hammer Creek, Pa.; d. June 28, 1853, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.; (founder of 'Ebytown' "Kitchener"), 1st Mennonite Bishop in inland Upper Canada, 1st Church built in 1813, in inland Upper Canada; m. Feb. 25, 1807, Mary Brubacher; (1806, came to Canada).
33. BRUBACHER, Mary, b. Aug. 6, 1789, Hammer Creek, Pa.; d. Aug. 18, 1834, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.
34. SHOEMAKER, John, b. May 12, 1775, Frederick Twsp., Pa.; d. Jan. 30, 1828, Pa.; m. May 2, 1797, Mary Shantz.
35. SHANTZ, Mary, b. Mar. 13, 1775, Pottstown, Pa.; d. April 6, 1866, bu. Eby Mennonite Cem., Kitchener, Ont.; (she came in 1829 with her three youngest children to Canada after her husband's death).
36. STAUFFER, Jacob, b. —, Pa.; d. —, Pa.; m. —, Mary Hoch.
37. HOCH, Mary, b. —, Pa.; d. —, Pa.

Continued on page 8



Deacon Solomon Gingrich — (no. 10). Aden Eby's grandfather age about 85 years. (1923).

Continued from page 7

- 38. SHELLEY, Samuel, b. 1793, Butler Co., Pa.; d. 1825, Butler Co., Pa.; m. Polly Bechtel.
- 39. BECHTEL, Polly, b. 1798, Pa.; d. 1871, Pa.
- 40. GINGRICH, David Sr., b. 1776, Lancaster Co., Pa.; d. 1849, bu. Wanner Cem., Hespeler, Ont.; m. 1800, Elizabeth Groh; (1801, came to Upper Canada).
- 41. GROH, Elizabeth, b. 1780, Pa.; d. —, bu. Wanner Cem., Hespeler, Ont.
- 42. WANNER, John M., b. Sept. 27, 1775, Pa.; d. Feb. 1, 1848, bu. Wanner Cem., Hespeler, Ont.; m. —, Elizabeth Wecklin; (1810, came to Canada).
- 43. WECKLIN, Elizabeth, b. Dec. 7, 1777, Pa.; d. May 22, 1817, bu. Wanner Cem., Hespeler, Ont.
- 44. COBER, Nicholas, Sr., b. Nov. 24, 1763, Sommerset Co., Pa.; d. Aug. 31, 1842, bu. Cober Cem., Maple, Ont.; m. 1796, Eve Fisher; (1800 came to Canada).
- 45. FISHER, Eve, b. June 27, 1777, Sommerset, Pa.; d. Feb. 21, 1859, bu. Cober Cem., Maple, Ont.
- 46. HOLM, Niehls P. Sr., b. Oct. 19, 1774, Copenhagen, Denmark; d. Jan. 12, 1865, bu. Wanner Cem., Hespeler, Ont.; m. Anna Catherine Phillips. (1805, came to Canada, he escaped from Denmark and worked his way to America as a pirate, where he left his ship by cover of night and worked his way to Canada).
- 47. PHILLIPS, Anna Catherine, b. Nov. 7, 1785, Free City of Hamburg, Germany; d. Oct. 11, 1838, bu. Wanner Cem., Hespeler, Ont.
- 48. WINGER, Bishop Peter, Sr., b. Aug. 22, 1796, —; d. Feb. 20, 1879, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. —, Elizabeth (Elisa) Pickhart.
- 49. PICKHART, Elizabeth (Elisa), b. April 8, 1804, —; d. Mar. 29, 1881, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.
- 50. CLIMENHEGG, William, —.
- 51. —.

- 52. CLIMENHAGA, Martin Sr., —; bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. Elizabeth Damude.
- 53. DAMUDE, Elizabeth, b. —, Fonthill, Upper Canada; —, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.
- 54. BARNHARDT, Peter, b. Oct. 25, 1805, —, d. Nov. 5, 1866, —; m. Mary Fretz.
- 55. FRETZ, Mary, b. June 5, 1809, Welland Co., Upper Canada; d. Dec. 10, 1888.
- 56. WINGER, Peter Sr., refer to no. 48.
- 57. PICKHART, Elizabeth (Elisa), refer to no. 49.
- 58. DANNER, Samuel, —; m. — Neisly.
- 59. NEISLY, —.
- 60. SIDER, Christian, b. Dec. 12, 1797, Bertie Twsp., Upper Canada; d. Nov. 12, 1862, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.; m. around 1820, Barbara Winger.
- 61. WINGER, Barbara, b. Jan. 3, 1801, —; d. Sept. 22, 1869, bu. Winger Cem., Stevensville, Ont.
- 62. PICKHART, Peter, —; m. Hannah —.
- 63. —, Hannah, —.



Ruby's parents — Melvin Winger — (no. 6); Jessie Mabel (Winger), Winger — (no. 7). Picture taken about 1949.

Book Notes

The Amish wedding and other special occasions of the Old Order communities by Stephen Scott (Intercourse, Pa.: Good Books, 1988), 128 p.

Stephen Scott, a convert to the plain people, has provided another highly informative booklet on the life and customs of the Old Order community (*Plain buggies* and *Why do they dress that way?* are earlier books by Scott).

Ontario Old Orders are included in the descriptions of weddings, baptisms, ordinations, funerals, Sunday worship and holiday observances. The writing style is clear, anecdotal and comparative. Scott describes the differences between Amish and Old Order Mennonite practice, and the variations between geographic areas. Highly recommended.

* * * * *

The Niagara United Mennonite Church, 1938-1988 (Niagara-on-the-Lake: The Church, 1988), 196 p.

This anniversary volume follows the pattern of an editorial committee coordinating separate chapters by a wide variety of people on various aspects of church life. This limits the overview that one author would bring. But there are nuggets — and many, many photographs.

— Sam Steiner

I would like to become a member of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. I will be informed of all Society events, will be eligible to serve on the various committees of the Society, and will receive *Mennogespräch* as part of my membership.

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