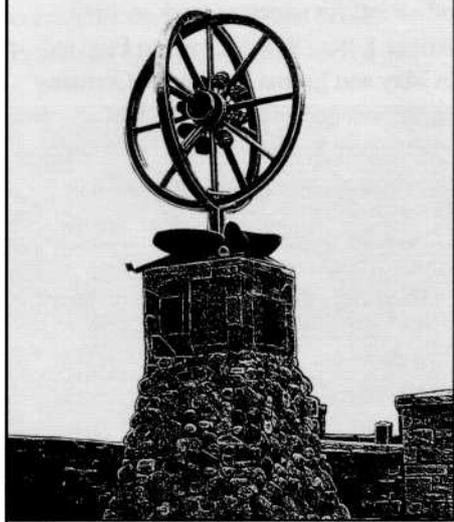


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Legacy of Service:

Dorothy M. Swartzentruber Sauder's
Career in Church Work at Home and Abroad

by Linda Huebert Hecht

In January of this year, I interviewed Dorothy in her Kitchener apartment at 1414 King St. shortly before she and Stan Sauder were about to celebrate 30 happy years of marriage. Despite the vicissitudes of growing older, Dorothy remains interested in the work of the church. When I met her in May at the Mennonite Relief Sale in New Hamburg, her eyes fixed on the quilt being auctioned off, she expressed regret that she was not doing much anymore. However, the legacy of service she leaves tells another story which began in the 1940s.¹

On the 28th of October, 1949 Dorothy M. Swartzentruber, a young woman of twenty-four, left for Germany on the S.S. New Amsterdam. She planned to serve with the Mennonite Central Committee (hereafter MCC), organized in 1920 to bring emergency relief to Mennonites in Russia. Writing in 1989 Dorothy described the work of MCC as follows. "Later, MCC carried on limited relief operations in Spain following the Spanish Civil War, as well as in southern France. However, the catastrophic conditions in Europe following the Second World War launched MCC into high gear in a program of relief and services...."²

Saying goodbye to overseas bound children is hard for parents at the best of times, but when Dorothy boarded the S.S. New Amsterdam the war had ended just four years earlier. However, when I asked Dorothy which part of her life's work had been the most important for her, she said, "My most significant time was spent in five years in Germany." For the young woman who had grown up in the secure environment of church and family, the sight of cities in ruins and people living in terrible conditions was very moving. At the same time it was an opportunity for her to serve – her church and those in need. This is the theme which connects the different



Dorothy M. Swartzentruber circa 1950.
Photo credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario

tasks she undertook throughout her life. Dorothy wanted to "perform a useful service to the church."

Dorothy was born in Kitchener in 1924, the oldest of three children. Because her father was a day labourer the family moved often, especially during the depression years, to places where he could find work in factories or on farms. Her mother worked outside the home only briefly. They lived in the Wellesley area somewhat longer and Dorothy received most of her public school education there. Church was always an important part of the Swartzentrubers' life. They attended First Mennonite Church while in Kitchener, Mapleview while in Wellesley and St. Jacobs when Dorothy decided to be baptized at fourteen years of age. A year later they attended the Bloomingdale Church where Dorothy began serving the church by teaching in the Children's department of the Sunday School, something she did for many years. In addition to the church community, the extended family played an important role in her life, as Dorothy's vivid memories of her grandparents confirm.

At that time, most Mennonite young people did not attend high school. Thus,

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on completing grade eight Dorothy worked in different homes in the summer doing housework and various other tasks and in the family home during the winter when not attending Bible school. The Ontario Mennonite Bible School offered a three month course at the First Mennonite Church in Kitchener. Dorothy attended these classes for up to six weeks each year between eighteen and twenty years of age and lived with her Aunt Sylvia Gascho on Mt. Hope Street during those times. A new and important chapter began in her life in the Fall of 1944 when she went to live with her Aunt Sylvia once more. This time she had a job. It was in the Clothing Depot of the Canadian MCC headquarters in Kitchener, the beginning of Dorothy's career of service in the church. She was now twenty years of age and "felt the need to do something for somebody else." Soon she moved to the MCC house at 223 King Street East which was managed by C. J. Rempel, the Canadian director, and his wife Marguerite who lived there with the workers.



Dorothy handing out Christmas bundles at Charlottenbunker, Frankfurt in December 1949.

Photo credit: Dorothy M. Swartzentruber Sauder

The idea of becoming a secretary came to Dorothy as she got to know young women in MCC from the United States and other parts of Canada. The business college presented an educational opportunity to the young women of her generation. Thus, in 1945, she left her job at the Clothing Depot and attended classes full time at the Euler Business College in downtown Kitchener. She took courses in typing, shorthand, book-keeping and English, the basic subjects that would equip her for work in an office. This training gave her many opportunities

for service and a career in church work. She began her first job as a secretary-bookkeeper in the Kitchener MCC Canadian office in December 1945. During this time, as Dorothy put it, "things were really booming. Monthly reports were sent to Akron, lots of money came in and lots of material aid was sent out." Dorothy was up to the challenge and continued in this position until the Fall of 1949 when she left for Germany.

The inspiration to work overseas came to Dorothy in various ways. First of all, her mother, "who was always very helpful to others and very

encouraging" had been an important role model for her. In the Mennonite Church service was viewed as integral to Christian faith. The work in the MCC office brought her in direct contact with both the needs of people overseas and those who felt called to assist them. "All the Canadian workers came through the Kitchener office and that made her think about going to Europe too." She was already familiar with the German language – she had spoken Pennsylvania German to her grandparents – and her correspondence with friends in Germany gave her a connection to that country. Both of her predecessors in the MCC office left for overseas work in 1945. Arlene Sitler (Woods) went to England in May and Emma Loewen to Germany in December.³ After four years of work in the Kitchener office Dorothy felt she had the experience needed to



Vogtstrasse 44 Frankfurt/Main Germany, MCC headquarters 1949.

Photo credit: Dorothy M. Swartzentruber Sauder

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work in Germany and going overseas seemed the natural thing to do. The summer before she left for Europe she taught Vacation Bible School for six weeks in Northern Ontario in three different mission stations of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario. She enjoyed the work and meeting the people. She had begun to venture further away from home.

"It was fun being on a boat and I loved it," Dorothy recalls. At the same time, she appreciated being part of a group with the five or six other young people who also were going abroad to serve with MCC. The additional support of Paul Erb and Amos Horst, a conservative bishop who accompanied the young people was also appreciated. And so it was that she undertook the first of several trips in what would become for her a life changing experience.

When the group arrived a conference was taking place at the MCC centre in Holland. Hence, they could meet workers from different areas in Europe right away and become part of that larger group. Dorothy was assigned to Germany to do secretarial work in the new Frankfurt centre being started by Paul and Ellen Peachey. By 1950 MCC activities in Germany were in transition and "...large-scale material aid distribution was on the way out..." The aim was to establish Frankfurt as the centre for all of Germany. "Paul Peachey's task of supervising the voluntary service activities... was broadened to include the leadership in MCC's spiritual outreach in Germany from this centre."⁴ Dorothy handled the correspondence and worked in the Peachey's apartment which served as

the first office. Meanwhile the MCC voluntary service workers began renovating the five story former home of well to do people at 44 Vogtstrasse. In return for renovating the house MCC could use it rent free for 20 years. Once the renovations were complete Dorothy lived there with the other MCC staff members. She became close friends with many of her co-workers as well as the people in the Mennonite Church.

In January 1950 Dorothy's first letter to the home office was published in the *Women's Activity Letter* which MCC sent out across Canada. Dorothy described their Christmas.

We chose to distribute our allotted 500 bundles to children of families living in bunkers. These are huge, concrete, air-raid shelters which are being used as emergency homes for refugees and bombed-out folks. The conditions in these bunkers are pathetic because they are crowded, and the lack of ventilation creates a depressing, sickening atmosphere..... The children were tense with excitement and it was so thrilling to see their eyes sparkle and gleam as they received their bundles wrapped in colourful towels.... My mind also now goes back several weeks to our clothing distribution.... It was a wonderful experience to hand out a coat to a grandmother who had none...overcoats and warm underwear to men who had just returned from a POW camp.... This experience, too, has left its indelible impression on our lives. How thankful we were for the blessed privilege of giving, of handing to the needy, those garments which you dear people had, in love,

prepared for them. God bless you, every one, for your untiring efforts and your faithfulness.... And now another year is about to dawn. Another year of opportunities and service! May we take up the challenge and work with our Master in His own great cause.⁵

The letter revealed Dorothy's gift for writing. She painted a vivid picture for the women in Ontario and across Canada who prepared clothing and other articles for shipment overseas. Dorothy not only provided information on how the articles were received, but also placed a high value on the work of the women on the home front.

The work at Vogtstrasse, the MCC Germany headquarters and the European headquarters for MCC voluntary service, varied over time. The tasks included: making government and city contacts, distributing material aid, translating and disseminating religious literature, organizing summer camps and youth work, as well as facilitating Bible studies, Sunday school and sewing circles for the Frankfurt Mennonite congregation. The German newspaper *Der Mennonit* was also based in this office. Dorothy's work included many different jobs from taking care of financial matters and duplicating materials to teaching. In her six page report to Akron, Pennsylvania on February 23, 1954 she summarized the work of the Frankfurt centre during the previous eleven months since the beginning of her second term. She described some of her work as follows. "I have been doing all the secretarial work for the Mennonites. This includes mimeographing of special announcements, of the church bulletin..., typing protocols of meetings, etc. During the month when Richard Wagner visited America, we were responsible for the operation of the church.... Dorothy also stated in this report, "We conduct an adult Sunday School class. This is my responsibility and I usually teach unless Richard Wagner, the minister, happens not to occupy the pulpit in which case he takes over the Sunday School."⁶ The report reflected not only the multi-faceted role of the Frankfurt centre but also Dorothy's



Christmas bundle distribution in Frankfurt on February 19, 1950. Photo credit: Ellen Peachey

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own deep concern for the Christian witness of the centre.

For the Mennonite refugees in particular and the German people in general, Vogtstrasse played an important social, cultural and spiritual role. One large room in the house served as a chapel for worship services. In another room there was a lending library. The people whose lives had changed so traumatically were very open at this time and the Frankfurt office became a kind of community centre for many. There were young boys who would sneak across the border of the Russian zone in order to spend time at the centre. Elizabeth Wiebe who taught children's Bible classes and Cal Redekop who was involved with the Pax program were among the many workers; Rev. C. Wall and his wife Agnes both ministered at Vogtstrasse.

During her first term Dorothy did some work for C. F. (Cornelius) Klassen, who had been the MCC Commissioner for Refugees since 1945 and became the MCC European Area Director in 1953. He worked on immigration, finding new homes in Canada and Paraguay for the approximately 35,000 homeless or displaced Mennonite refugees in Europe.⁷ When his wife Mary was with him she did his secretarial work. Dorothy's first MCC term was extended a year, but when her three years were up in 1952 she intended to return to Canada. However, before she left, C. F. Klassen convinced her to return and work for him in the Frankfurt office. He recognized Dorothy's gift for administrative work and invited her to assist him in processing the papers of the refugees and to handle his correspondence. Dorothy went to Germany for a second term then, in March 1953. In the fall of that year Mary Klassen joined her husband in Frankfurt and two of their children came to Europe as well. Dorothy was among those present when Cornelius brought Mary to 44 Vogtstrasse to meet the members of the unit.⁸

On May 7, 1954 a heart attack prematurely took Klassen's life. His tragic death at fifty-nine years of age dramatically affected MCC's work with Mennonite refugees in Germany. For

Dorothy it was an abrupt ending as well. She recalls, "We got a call from Gronau saying that he was calling for his wife, he wasn't feeling well. And so the next morning we got in the car... and when we got there he was dead." Dorothy and Mary arrived back to Frankfurt very late on Saturday facing the huge and tragic task of notifying MCC and Mennonite leaders

in Europe and North America about his death. Klassen had been a significant figure on both sides of the ocean. Dorothy remembers being up all night, making calls and sending telegrams so that it could be announced in North American churches that Sunday morning. As Klassen's secretary she was closely involved in making arrangements for the funeral which took place four days later in the large Nord Ost Lutheran Church in Frankfurt. At this time the Frankfurt Centre was without a director and now they had lost their European director. Moreover, the MCC units in Basel and Hamburg were being moved to Frankfurt. With everything changing so much, Dorothy decided to return home. In October 1954 in the same month as she had left for Germany five years earlier, Dorothy's ship docked in Quebec.

In the transitions of the next months Dorothy found a new role and a new way to serve MCC on the home front. Her talent for public speaking came to the fore. Everyone was familiar with the process of collecting and sending material aid overseas but few had heard about the conditions there and how the lives of the aid recipients had been affected by the war. Dorothy had worked five years in the German MCC headquarters, the hub of many activities and she had many stories to tell. Since very few people had been to Europe subsequent to the war there was great interest. She spoke to women's groups, ministers groups, in morning



The work must be carefully and prayerfully planned. (Left to right) Paul Peachey, Cal Redekop, and Dorothy Swartzentruber at work in the Frankfurt office. Photo credit: Dorothy M. Swartzentruber Sauder

church services, and in afternoon meetings to groups of women and men and at times at conferences.

Many of the invitations came to her personally. Other arrangements were more formal. The Canadian Mennonite Relief Committee organized her speaking tour in Manitoba to address women's mission groups of the Bergthaler (Old Colony) Mennonite Church.⁹ She braved cold and snow while there, but the benefits were mutual. Dorothy recalls, "That was a good experience too for me." She had never met these Mennonites before, with their different dialect and their own way of plain dressing. The unifying factor was always MCC of which the conservative Bergthaler Mennonites were strong supporters. Her talks were as well received by them as elsewhere and she enjoyed giving them. One of the MCC leaders said of her talks: "Was dem Herz voll ist, geht dem Mund über." [When the heart is full, the words come easily]. Dorothy's experiences were not only news for people in the Mennonite church but also for the general public. It was a first for her, to address the Kitchener-Waterloo Literary Society which included doctors, lawyers, and social workers.

Since the positions in the MCC Kitchener office were all filled and because she felt she wanted to try something new, Dorothy looked to other Mennonite establishments for work. Over Christmas of 1954 she took a job

as a clerk in the Golden Rule Bookstore. But her goal was to return to the secretarial work for which she had been trained. As a true entrepreneur, Dorothy found a creative way to combine her desire to serve the church with her talent for administrative work by establishing the Golden Rule Secretarial Service. Seven years after its beginning, in March 1962, Katie Funk Wiebe, a fellow member of Dorothy's in the Christian Writers Group, described Dorothy's new venture in a full page article in *The Canadian Mennonite* newspaper. In this article Dorothy told Katie, "I felt there was something specific I should be doing for God with my life in the field of office work. When my life was over I wanted to know it had been spent in something that counted for Him....and the Lord led step by step." Before she departed on her second MCC term, "A young minister casually remarked to her, '...You should stay here and open up an office and help fellows like us.' He had neither wife nor church secretary to help him."¹⁰ This idea came back to her now.

When Dorothy explored the possibility of fulfilling her vision in a conversation with John Snyder, manager of the Golden Rule Bookstore in Kitchener, "He was ready right away."¹¹ At first he set up a little office with a typewriter and mimeograph in the basement of the store. Katie Funk Wiebe quoted John Snyder in her article as saying, "Dorothy's vision of a church secretarial service was 'right on' in terms of need." In his work as pastor of the Bloomingdale Mennonite Church, treasurer of the Ontario Mennonite Conference, and executive-secretary of Conrad Grebel College Board, he depended on Dorothy's service. Snyder said, "I couldn't hold these offices if I didn't have the service to fall upon." The only advertising that was done for the Golden Rule Secretarial Service was a "simple one-page flyer... notifying the churches that she was ready to receive their work." Katie noted that, "Good, prompt service has been its own advertisement."¹² It was not long before they were very busy and had to hire additional help to meet the demand. When business expanded John Snyder provided space for it above the store. Dorothy emphasizes,

"he had to give up the rent of one apartment to house it."¹³

By 1962 ten Kitchener-Waterloo area churches of various denominations brought in their weekly bulletins for duplication. Typing minutes and agendas, bookkeeping, correspondence, record keeping and mailing were all part of her role as full time secretary-manager of Golden Rule Secretarial Service. Various non-Mennonite organizations used the service as well as Mennonite Conference of Ontario committees. Dorothy was also the bookkeeper for the Ontario conference. Some of the committees preparing for the Mennonite World Conference brought her work. In fact, Dorothy took on the job of registering the 12,000 delegates attending this Mennonite world assembly in the summer of 1962 and she supervised the billeting of 6000 visitors in Waterloo County homes.¹⁴ As Dorothy says, "That was part of the work that came to me from all kinds of places." The fact that work came to her, reflects that her talent for administrative church work was widely recognized.

Several Mennonite organizations made use of the Secretarial Service on a regular basis. *The Mennonite Hour* radio broadcast asked Dorothy to be the director of their Canadian office. This meant that all their Canadian mail came to her. On a typical day Dorothy would answer around twenty letters for the broadcast. The work included writing receipts for donations and mailing them out with a letter, doing the related banking, mailing out requests for records, books or sermons, and finally, sending monthly reports to the head office in Harrisonburg, Virginia. Dorothy was also circulation manager of the Mennonite Conference of Ontario's monthly publication the *Ontario Mennonite Evangel* (hereafter OME). This job entailed keeping up the mailing lists and was fairly routine but had to be done, among all her other tasks.

The enthusiasm in Dorothy's voice as we talked about the Secretarial Service reflected a bit of that earlier enthusiasm she had when all this was taking place. I have the impression that Dorothy certainly was a well organized, efficient

and energetic person to have managed the Secretarial Service with its many tasks. She had the courage, energy and fervour to realize her vision at a time when, as she says "the time was right."

In 1958, after several years of managing the Secretarial Service, Dorothy took on two other important jobs. From 1958 to 1962 she was a faculty member at the Ontario Mennonite Bible Institute – the first woman in this position – and taught courses in typing. Dorothy minimizes her work by saying "It wasn't anything very deep." However, it does show that her secretarial career continued to branch out and bring her new opportunities. And she was passing on to young Mennonite women an important way in which they could serve the church as she did. Mary Mullet, from Michigan wrote in the 1960 yearbook, "Our teacher, Dorothy Swartzentruber, has done a splendid job in teaching this class... I find this a very helpful course and one that is often put into practice."¹⁵ Also in 1958, Dorothy became an officer for the Women's Missionary and Service Auxiliary of the Mennonite Church. As secretary of this national organization she travelled by train twice a year to committee meetings in the United States, once to Chicago and once to where ever the annual mission board meetings were taking place, the WMSA being part of the mission board. She continued in this position until July 1963.¹⁶

The time had been right for a Secretarial Service and the time was right for other new endeavours. In 1960 the Mennonite Conference of Ontario established archives in an addition to the classroom building of the Rockway Mennonite School in Kitchener. They appointed Dorothy as the archivist. The collection was begun by L. J. Burkholder in the 1930's and continued at the Golden Rule bookstore by the manager Joe (J. C.) Fretz. Now the materials needed to be organized and put in boxes. Melvin Gingrich, archivist of the Mennonite General Conference at Goshen, Indiana, as Dorothy recalls, brought his classification lists to Kitchener so that a system could be set up to relate to the Goshen

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archives. He worked with her for one or two days. Again there was enthusiasm in Dorothy's voice as she recalled:

He got me started.... It was a very small room. We had the boxes and we labelled them and started putting things in them.... We sent out a letter then, to all the churches, saying there was now a historical library and we wanted their old records plus we wanted current records as they came along. So we began some things then.¹⁷

By 1964 over 200 boxes were in use. It took a lot of hours to set this all up. Dorothy worked in the archives on weekends and during the week if she had time. She wrote an article for *The Canadian Mennonite* and described her motivation as follows. "... 'in history we see the thrust of the divine in human striving.' God moves in the events which make up the history of the Mennonite Church. Our faith rests in what we believe to be the acts of God. So let's preserve a record of those acts for those who will come after us."¹⁸ Here was another area then, that of historical collection, which for Dorothy became part of her vision of service in the church.

When the archives were moved to the newly built Conrad Grebel College in 1965, Dorothy felt that her contribution was complete and Lorna L. Bergey took over as archivist. However, that same year the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario was formed and Dorothy became a member of the first board of directors as well as the first secretary, a position she held for two years. In her report of 1966 Dorothy quoted the MHSO president, Dr. J. Winfield Fretz as saying, "Little has been written by Ontario Mennonites about themselves in the province. Therefore, ...the MHSO has a tremendous job to do to permanently record the significant contributions made by Mennonites to the life, culture, and ideals of Ontario."¹⁹ Dorothy made her own contributions in this regard by editing Lorraine Roth's book for the Ontario Amish Mennonite sesquicentennial celebrations

and by serving on committees for several books dealing with aspects of Ontario Mennonite History.

In 1964 Dorothy decided it was time for a change of jobs. She left the Golden Rule Secretarial Service and took the summer off. Some of the Lutheran ministers in the area knew of Dorothy's talents from their use of the Secretarial Service. The Lutheran World Federation was holding its meeting at Waterloo Lutheran University that summer and they asked her to do the secretarial work for the ministers, typing up their letters and reports. Her interest in the work led



Ontario Archivist Dorothy M. Swartzentruber and Goshen Archivist Melvin Gingrich.
Photo credit: Mennonite Archives of Ontario

to a new career possibility. Following the conference she was invited to stay on at the university and work for the dean, Frank C. Peters, and the vice-president, Henry Endress. When Frank C. Peters became president of WLU in September 1968, following Endress's year as acting president, she worked for both the new vice-president, P. Basil Healey, and Peters. Dorothy recalls that for Peters the work "had to be right." But she liked that. And of course, by this time she had plenty of experience in office work and easily could do the work that was expected of her. She enjoyed working for Peters and continued there for more than seven years.

When she began her new position at WLU, Dorothy did not leave her work as a writer behind or give up her close links to the Mennonite world. In 1964 *The Canadian Mennonite* gave her a six month volunteer appointment as news coordinator for Mennonite activity in Waterloo County and provincial activities of the Ontario Mennonite and Western Ontario Mennonite conferences.²⁰ She had the experience for the job from managing the Secretarial Service and had already been provincial correspondent for the Mennonite Conference of Ontario in 1962.²¹

In her ten years as Circulation Manager of the OME, 1956 to 1966, Dorothy wrote the occasional editorial. She wrote one in 1956 for the first issue marking the start of co-operation between the Mennonite Conference of Ontario and the Amish Mennonite Conference. Lorraine Roth worked as assistant editor from August 1966 to October 1967, but in November 1966 Dorothy was appointed as the editor – the first woman in this position. It was quite an honour to be asked to be editor and Dorothy's talent for writing and editing stood her in good stead. She wrote for the journal more frequently now, choosing the theme for each issue, soliciting articles about the ongoing work of Mennonite institutions and reports of conferences and special events. Not everyone cared to handle the time pressures and deadlines involved with the job, but Dorothy handled it well and continued as editor until March 1971.²²

For the first issue of the OME which she edited Dorothy chose the theme, "Service Opportunities, at Home and Abroad." In the editorial she applauded Mennonite young people who at that moment were in Vietnam "...prepared to give the maximum sacrifice – their lives – if need be for the cause of Christ." She disagreed with James Metzler who had written in the *Gospel Herald*, "...the church does not challenge its young people to service." In her view, the materialism and apathy of their elders played a role in young people's attitudes.²³

In the February 1967 issue Frank Epp, who wrote for the OME, commended the editors for introducing a "Forum" section in the OME to provide dialogue among the readers. Again Dorothy was undertaking something new. She was fostering discussion in the journal while at the same time including articles from various Mennonite leaders. For the September 1968 issue on "Academic Pursuits and Christian Faith" Dorothy asked Frank C. Peters for a guest editorial.

The Mennonite Conference of Ontario had appointed its first woman delegate in 1959²⁴ but when Eleanor High was appointed as a delegate to the Mennonite General Conference meetings in Oregon in 1969 – the first woman in this position – it raised the larger question of women's role in the church. The function of the OME was to address topics significant to the work of the church and thus, Dorothy responded in the April 1970 issue with a forthright editorial "An Equal Place to Stand." In it she supported an increased role for women in the church and asked Eleanor High and Rufus Jutzi to write on the subject as well. In her own report of the conference resolution she challenged readers to question whether women should be viewed in the same light as minority groups as had been done at the Oregon conference. She wrote: "...a smaller group women are not and in the context of the church, how can they be defined as different?"²⁵ Her words bring to light the basis on which she had served so faithfully for so many years. She considered herself a full and equal member in the work of the church.

The Canadian Mennonite featured the work of women in secretarial positions in 1958 with an article by Pauline Jahnke on her work in Paraguay and a photograph of Helen Hein "serving in the office of *The Canadian Mennonite* and Mennonite Radio Mission." The caption under the photo stated: "...there is a growing opportunity for Christian secretaries to serve in church vocations."²⁶ Dorothy Swartzentruber Sauder was doing just that already in 1945! Her life is characterized by important opportunities. She combined her secretarial skills with a desire to serve in the MCC Canadian office headquarters

in Kitchener and followed that up with five years of MCC work in Germany. Back in Kitchener she continued to serve MCC as a public speaker, informing people in Canada about the material and spiritual aid which MCC provided abroad.

Her vision for a Secretarial Service in the Kitchener-Waterloo region, the first of its kind, at a time when few churches had secretaries, became a reality and a success. The Mennonite Conference of Ontario saw her abilities and asked her to establish the archives at Rockway Mennonite School as the first appointed archivist. She served as the first secretary of the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. Indeed, she served as secretary as well as bookkeeper for a number of organizations. As Dorothy recalls, "...work came to me from many different places" indicating that her talents were widely recognized. Her abilities as a writer were affirmed when she was appointed editor of the OME, the first woman in this position. Her career followed a path like that of many other women of her time in the variety of her work. But, whether she was working as secretary, bookkeeper, teacher, public speaker, archivist or writer, there was continuity in her life in that, she "...was performing a useful service to the church." Dorothy deserves full recognition for all her hard work and faithful service in her many paid and volunteer positions over thirty years (1944-1974). She served her church and those in her community well. Her contributions are an important legacy for all Mennonite women and for the Mennonite Church.

Endnotes

¹ This article is based on interviews I had with Dorothy, on December 10, 1996 as part of the MCCO History Project, and on January 25, 2001. A written report of the former and an oral interview of the latter are located in the Mennonite Archives of Ontario. Unless otherwise indicated all quotations by Dorothy are from these two interviews. I am grateful for the assistance of Dr. Lucille Marr, writer of the MCCO History Project, in writing Dorothy's story.

² "Mennonite Central Committee: Early Days at the Kitchener, Ontario office" by Dorothy M. Sauder in *Mennogespräch*, March 1989, Vol. 7, No. 1, 1.

³ "Mennonite Central Committee: Early Days," 2.

⁴ John D. Unruh, *In the Name of Christ A History of the Mennonite Central Committee and Its Service 1920-1951* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1952), 160.

⁵ *Women's Activities Letter Mennonite Central Committee, Canadian Headquarters*, No. 64 in the Mennonite Archives of Ontario.

⁶ "Activity Report – Dorothy Swartzentruber, 1954," Mennonite Central Committee Collection, Europe and North Africa Section, Basel Headquarters/Frankfurt Office, IX-19-3, Box 13, File 2, Historical Committee & Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, IN.

⁷ Lucille Marr, "'The Time for the Distaff and Spindle': The Ontario Women's Sewing Circles and the Mennonite Central Committee," in *Journal of Mennonite Studies*, Vol. 17, 1999, 136.

⁸ Herbert & Maureen Klassen, *Ambassador To His People C. F. Klassen and the Russian Mennonite Refugees* (Winnipeg, MB: Kindred Press, 1990), 242.

⁹ See "Mission Group Hears MCC Worker," in *The Canadian Mennonite*, March 30, 1956, Vol. 4, No. 13, 4. Hereafter *The Canadian Mennonite* will be referred to as TCM.

¹⁰ Katie Funk Wiebe, "Church Secretarial Services For K-W Ministers" in TCM, March 23, 1962, Vol. 10, No. 12, 5. The subtitle "This Secretary Frees Pastors For More Important Tasks" was part of the context of that time and not unique to women in church work.

¹¹ Oral interview, January 25, 2001.

¹² Katie Funk Wiebe, "Church Secretarial Services," 5.

¹³ Oral interview, January 25, 2001.

¹⁴ TCM, August 10, 1962, Vol. 10, No. 31, 1, 12.

¹⁵ *The North Star* 1960, 21.

¹⁶ See photographs in the WMSA VOICE, Feb. 1962, 1 and Sept. 1962, 4.

¹⁷ Oral interview, January 25, 2001.

¹⁸ TCM, April 7, 1964, Vol. 12, No. 14, 8.

¹⁹ TCM, May 10, 1966, Vol. 14, No. 19, 8. See photo of the board and reprint of this article in see *Ontario Mennonite History*, (November 2000) 18, 2.

²⁰ TCM, March 24, 1964, Vol. 12, No. 12, 1.

²¹ TCM, June 15, 1962, Vol. 10, No. 24, 1.

²² Dorothy and Lorraine were some of the few Mennonite women in journalism in the late 1960s. Katie Funk Wiebe, wrote for TCM. See TCM, Oct. 31, 1967, Vol. 15, No. 43, 1 regarding Helen Jansen, Winnipeg, the first woman on TCM Publishing Association Board of Directors.

²³ OMEN, November 1966, Vol. XI, No. 11, 2

²⁴ Lorna L. Berger, "Changes in Cultural Symbols for Ontario Mennonite Women of the Swiss Tradition during the 1950s & 60: Stories We Need To Hear," in *Mennogespräch*, Sept. 1990, Vol. 8, No. 2, 10.

²⁵ OME, April 1970, Vol. XV, No. 4, 6.

²⁶ TCM, February 14, 1958, Vol. 6, No. 7, 4.

Linda Huebert Hecht lives in Waterloo. She works at Conrad Grebel College, currently cataloging the Frank H. Epp files.

First Mennonite (Vineland) Bicentennial

The Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario had their spring meeting on June 9, 2001 at The First Mennonite Church in Vineland. With a bus load of 52, and joined by several others, MHSO marked a significant point in Canadian Mennonite history. It was originally called Moyer Mennonite Church, the name was changed in 1955 to The First Mennonite Church (Vineland) to reflect the fact that it was the first Mennonite church established in Canada in 1801.

A bicentennial is a very significant milestone, and the people of First Mennonite were wonderful hosts for the event. Carol Penner gave the Devotional to begin the meeting. Dressed in traditional 19th Century garb Mildred Nigh gave a report from First Mennonite's bicentennial celebration that they had two weeks before on May 26 - 27. It was the same costume Mildred wore for the Saturday evening meal. It was a "traditional" Mennonite supper of chicken pot pie, brown bread and cabbage, with rhubarb pie for dessert. That was followed by a trip down the street to the old frame church building, which is now the local Women's Institute Hall. There they had a traditional service and singing. The sermon was on Abraham going into the new land. Sunday morning's service



The First Mennonite Church, Vineland. Photo credit: Larry Rittenhouse

included a very large birthday cake with 200 candles that the children were able to blow out. There were also choirs and several former pastors who returned to speak. This was followed by a meal together and the afternoon service.

Laureen Harder Gissing, spoke on "*Pioneer Life, Then and Now: First Mennonite Church (Vineland), 1801-2001.*" Laureen drew heavily from the research done for the book she had just completed for the anniversary - ***Their Richest Inheritance*** - which sold briskly that day. She highlighted many struggles that the church had: pioneering in a new land, divisions with the Old Order, the leadership vacuum after the death of S.F. Coffman, the loss of members, and the evolution from a "Swiss" Mennonite church to a "Russian" Mennonite one.

After the noon lunch, people were free to tour the adjoining cemetery. There were several signs placed there by the Bicentennial Committee to highlight some of the earliest graves within the stone walls of the old Mennonite Burying Ground. Some markers were hard to read after nearly 200 years of wear and weathering. Larry Rittenhouse helped by leading many through the cemetery to tell the story of many early pioneers and church leaders. Adjoining is the current cemetery with many family plots of such names as Fretz, Kolb and Rittenhouse.

The bus then departed for the Jordan Historical Museum. At the former site of the Jordan Mennonite Church it has three main buildings. With capable guides like Tanya Zajac, we were shown through the 1859 stone schoolhouse, the pioneer log home of Jacob Fry (Frey) and the main museum building with displays of area artifacts and a fraktur display sponsored by the Moyer Family Society. Also included was a video presentation of how the log house was moved from its original location, across the river, through the town, and to its current home on the grounds of the museum.



Mildred Nigh
Photo credit: Larry Rittenhouse

The next stop was Ball's Falls Heritage Conservation Area. With its natural splendour along Twenty Mile Creek it capped off the day. People were able to walk the grounds of the park, see Ball's Falls and the pioneer buildings there. Included was the flour and grist mill that was built by George Ball to take advantage of the water power created by the landscape.

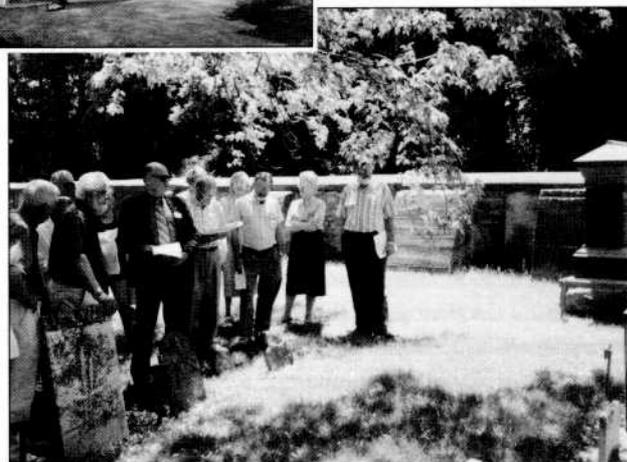
After a full day nestled at the base of the Niagara Escarpment it was time for the departure for home. Again, many thanks to all those who worked so hard to make this day an enjoyable one.

*Report by Brent Bauman,
with additional notes and photographs
by Larry Rittenhouse*



Furry Log Cabin at
Ball's Falls Park
Photo credit: Larry Rittenhouse

Larry Rittenhouse leads cemetery tour highlighting pioneer gravestones in the old Mennonite burying ground
Photo credit: Larry Rittenhouse



Book Reviews

Peace, Order & Good Government: Mennonites & Politics in Canada.

By T. D. Regehr
(Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2000.)
130 pages.

Reviewed by Lucille Marr

Given that the number of Canadian Mennonites represented at all levels of government is disproportionately high in relationship to the rest of the population, the focus of this small volume is a significant one. With the Anabaptist-Mennonite emphasis on the separation of church and state, this may surprise some readers, as it did me. Even more astonishing is to think that this is not a

recent phenomenon. In Ontario in the very first election after the 1848 democratic reform, all of those chosen in Waterloo County were from Mennonite roots. The son of the well-known Mennonite preacher and bishop Benjamin Eby was among them.

In this readable little book, which is the end product of the 1999 J.J. Thiessen lecture series, Regehr discusses this paradox. He claims that despite generally speaking out against involvement in politics at the provincial and federal levels, many Mennonite leaders saw no inconsistency in taking part in local politics. Regehr helps readers negotiate this seeming contradiction through his careful historical analysis of Mennonites and politics in Ontario and in the prairie provinces.

Regehr begins by outlining ways that the Anabaptists and their descendants related to government: "According to Anabaptist and Mennonite theology, secular governments are ordained of God, and have God-given responsibilities

to establish and maintain law and order, and to ensure just and fair treatment of all members of society." (11). They separated themselves from this authority under a two-kingdom theology whereby they were free to follow Jesus' teachings, while secular governments controlled the society in which they lived. While they respected their government, they resisted being coerced into going against their personal convictions. Early in their history this often resulted in martyrdom, but they soon learned to negotiate special privileges from the government in power. Thus in Canada, from 1921 onward, delegations of Mennonites would arrange to meet with each new Prime Minister to explain who they were and their special relationship with the government.

How did this "politics of patronage," as Regehr has described the Mennonite association with governments, work for Ontario Mennonites? Their decision to accept Lieutenant-Governor Simcoe's invitation to immigrate from Pennsylvania

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to Upper Canada in the late eighteenth century gave them plenty of clout to negotiate special privileges. At the same time, they involved themselves with the development of the new Upper Canadian community. It was only with the advent of World War I that their status was challenged. But, as Regehr stresses, the "framework of accommodation" developed in the eighteenth century was adapted during and after the war and would serve Ontario Mennonites well during the twentieth century.

Political accommodation developed differently in the west. In the 1920s and 1930s, few Mennonites paid much attention to the evolution of the emerging populace-based parties designed to aid struggling farm families. For instance, many found the rhetoric of the Canadian Commonwealth Federation to be frighteningly reminiscent of the communism that they had so narrowly escaped. Yet some, particularly those who settled in Saskatchewan, were increasingly drawn to the New Democratic party after World War II, with its similarities to the Anabaptist ideal.

It was the Alberta-based Social Credit party that drew the majority of western Mennonite support. Social Credit's anti-socialist platform held a strong appeal, especially for those who had escaped Communist Russia. Ironically, the connections between the New Democratic Party's philosophy and Anabaptism were overlooked by most; Social Credit's (later the Reform party and Canadian Alliance) support of evangelical and fundamentalist Christianity seemed to attract Mennonite allegiance.

From these varied affiliations at the local level, it was but a short step to becoming involved provincially and federally. Indeed, in recent decades some Mennonites have been drawn to politics hoping to make a difference.

Peace, Order and Good Government raises a number of questions in this reader's mind. Practically, can Mennonites make as much of an impact by becoming involved with provincial and federal politics, as they can through their own organizations, for instance,

Mennonite Central Committee? The discussion of prairie politics also leaves unanswered why politics developed so differently in each of the three prairie provinces.¹ In addition, readers may wish to know more about the situation in British Columbia. Finally, what role did gender play in Mennonite involvement in politics? Was this simply a male enterprise? Or were women also involved in local politics. How did they influence their husbands' decisions? In short, what were the women doing while the men were involved in the public domain?²

Raising these matters is not meant to be a critique, however, for to deal with them would have taken several more chapters. This was a lecture series, and one well worth putting into print. There are some good stories. And Regehr has put together solid history, well grounded in time, place, and the pragmatics of peoples' lives. He also takes a close look at some of the theological issues. In Regehr's words, "Canadian Mennonites have taken seriously the biblical instruction that they are in the world, but should not be of the world. They have interpreted that to mean that they cannot avoid all involvement in secular affairs, but that their primary loyalty and supreme allegiance belong to Christ. They can and have rendered valuable services to the state and to Canadian secular society, but they have also emphasized the need to place their religious convictions above those of political expediency or the demands of the state." (125)

Perhaps what is most striking when analyzing the political developments in Ontario and the three prairie provinces, is the way Mennonites have been true to their faith. At the same time, they have interpreted the Anabaptist belief system in a variety of ways, depending on the environment and circumstances in which they found themselves.

FOOTNOTES

¹ In "The Pattern of Prairie Politics," published in *Party Politics in Canada* 7th ed., edited by H.G. Thorburn (Toronto: Prentice-Hall Canada, 1996), Nelson Wiseman gives a fascinating analysis of the diverse roots of the Canadian Cooperative Federation and the Social Credit parties.

² Historian Gerda Lerner insists that historians must always ask what women were doing. Although questions of what "women do and think" to use feminist historian Gerda Lerner's words, only recently have begun to be considered as "equally important with what the men do and think," Gerda Lerner, *Why History Matters: Life and Thought* (New York, 1997), 143.

Lucille Marr now lives in Montreal, having recently moved from Edmonton.

Her work includes researching and documenting the history of MCC Ontario.

From Danzig to Russia: The First Emigration of Mennonites from the Danzig Region to Southern Russia

by Peter Hildebrand,
Translated by Walter E. Toews
with Adolf Ens,
(Winnipeg: CMBC Publications and
MMHS, 2000)
63 pages.

Reviewed by Brent Bauman

At approximately the same time as the first Mennonites were settling in Canada from Pennsylvania, another group of Mennonites was settling in a new home in Russia. The emigration from Prussia to the new Russian territory, recently captured from Turkey in what is now the Ukraine, became a defining moment for the Mennonites of Dutch and North German descent. As they settled and prospered in this new land they became forever known as Russian Mennonites.

From Danzig to Russia was written by Peter Hildebrand in 1836. He was a retired minister giving an account of events in his own life during the migration of 1787-1789, and the subsequent early years of the Chortiza Colony in Russia.

From Danzig to Russia is part of the Echo Historical Series. They are English

translations of the Echo Verlag series which were German language publications about Russian Mennonite History produced between 1945 and 1965. Of the fourteen books in that series, this is the tenth translated into English and published by the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society and CMBC Publications.

This particular volume was translated by Walter Toews in 1994, with further editing done by Adolf Ens for this publication.

Despite all these writers, the original feel of a first hand account of the recorded events remains fresh. Peter Hildebrand's biases remain intact. For him, a young landless labourer, the new land promised a chance to own property and prosper. His support for Jacob Hoepfner, the man in charge of the emigration, never wavers throughout his account of the events which included; the prolonged negotiations with Russian officials to secure a new home, the months long journey around war-torn territories to this new

settlement, and the difficulties of establishing a colony once they arrived. Neither does his condemnation lessen of Hoepfner's opponents along the way who protested the location of their new settlement and Hoepfner's authority in it.

Peter Hildebrand's background as a minister is evident as he makes many Biblical analogies to the events which transpire. He sees the Hand of God in many events which shaped this new settlement. He also sees the devil's hand in the many troubles and disagreements. He is also an outsider - a Lutheran who converted to the Mennonite church in 1791 - who notes the divisions in the Mennonites along Flemish and Frisian ancestry, even after two emigrations.

In sharp contrast to Peter Hildebrand's account is a short essay by his grandson Cornelius Hildebrand Sr., translated by Peter Pauls, which is also printed in this volume. *A Sunday in 1840 on the Island of Chortiza* is an account of a "typical"

Sunday in the Chortiza colony after it was well established. It is a picturesque image of church bells, joyous children, and humble men and women. It speaks of a pious community crowding into the church to join in enthusiastic singing and to listen to respected leaders. This is followed by the community rallying together to rid the island of a marauding wolf. It comes across as almost too idyllic to believe.

Both essays speak of the same community, but speak of different times in a very different light. This small volume is by no means the definitive narrative of this part of Mennonite History, but it does give an important first hand account of it, thus adding to our knowledge of this time period.

Brent Bauman lives near Drayton, Ontario. He is editor of the Ontario Mennonite History.

People and Projects

ERB ST. CELEBRATES

The Erb St. Mennonite Church, in Waterloo, celebrated its 150th anniversary of their first place of worship (the 1851 the meeting house) on October 26 - 28, 2001. A full weekend of activities included a banquet and program Friday evening at Waterloo North Mennonite Church. At Erb Street itself, on Sunday afternoon there were historic displays and a cemetery walk following the morning Worship Service and potluck dinner. Included for the cemetery walk was a booklet highlighting the lives of many of those now buried there. Sunday evening two performances of an opera "The Tree of Life" was performed. Specially composed by Joanne Bender and written by Margaret Springer and for the anniversary. Directed by Gord Davis, it told the story, through song, of the importance of faith in God and the support of a church family in our lives.

Also, not one, but two books were commissioned for this event. Karl Kessler wrote the history of the congregation,

while Sandra Schiedel and Margaret Stockie compiled a cookbook for the occasion (see Book Notes). Both are available at the church.

CALVARY MENNONITE CELEBRATES

On June 10, 2001 Calvary Mennonite Church in Ayr celebrated their 40th Anniversary. The celebrations included a mortgage burning and a pig roast Sunday afternoon.

FOLKLORE SOCIETY'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY

On November 3, 2001 the Pennsylvania German Folklore Society of Ontario held their 50th annual meeting and dinner. Paul Burkholder, of Markham, was the guest speaker for the event. Many active members of the Folklore Society also belong to the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario.

FRETZ AWARD

The winner of the 2001 J. Winfield Fretz Award is Karen Pauls, an undergraduate student at Dalhousie University

in Halifax, Nova Scotia. Karen submitted the paper *Jacob Y. Shantz: a man who influenced, and was influenced by, his times.*

HERITAGE AWARDS

The Waterloo Regional Heritage Foundation presented their awards on June 12, 2001. Among the recipients was the Detweiler Meetinghouse Inc. for their work in restoring that unique and historically significant structure in Roseville. MHSO members on the board of directors of the Detweiler Meetinghouse includes Sam Steiner and Lorna Bergey. Lorna Bergey was also recognized for her decades of service to the Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario. *from The Record*

ADDITION TO M.B. ARCHIVAL RECORD

Four boxes containing the sermons and some support texts from the estate of the late Rev. Isaac T. Ewert of Kitchener, Ontario have been placed in the

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Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ontario Archives at Tabor Manor in St. Catharines. Ewert was a pioneer minister, Pastor, and Bible School Teacher in Ontario among the M.B. Community. His sermons are contained mainly in ring binders and are almost all in the German language. Ewert was a well known speaker and teacher who finished his service to God as Pastor of Zion M.B. Church (1961-77). He had also served as Conference Moderator, founder and principal of the Ontario M.B. Conference Bible School, and from 1933 on served as an ordained minister and pastor. Ewert died in 1984 at the age of 82. *from Ed Boldt, Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches of Ontario Historian/Archivist*

GERMAN PIONEERS DAY

The day after Thanksgiving Day is now officially *German Pioneers Day* in Ontario. A private member's bill proposed by MPP Wayne Wettlaufer was approved by the Ontario legislature to recognize the accomplishments of settlers of German heritage. There are over two million people in Ontario of German descent which includes; Mennonites, Amish, and German United Empire Loyalists. *from the Canadian Mennonite*

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE DESIGNATION

The Joseph Schneider Haus in Kitchener has been given the status of a national historic site. It was built by Joseph Schneider, brother-in-law of Bishop Benjamin Eby, in the early 19th Century. It is administered by the Regional Municipality of Waterloo as a museum, gallery and community centre. *from The Record*

Book Notes

Esther Epp-Tiessen, author of *A Leader for His Time* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications, 2001) 345 pages, tells the story of J.J. Thiessen, founder of Canadian Mennonite Bible College and

chair of Conference of Mennonites in Canada for many years. This biography makes use of many photos to illustrate this Western Canada Mennonite church leader's life and work. (\$24.00)

Laureen Harder, author of *Their Richest Inheritance: A Celebration of The First Mennonite Church, Vineland, Ontario 1801-2001* (Vineland: The First Mennonite Church, 2001) 80 pages, uses historical documentation and current members' recollections to tell the history of Canada's first Mennonite church, and oldest Mennonite settlement. Harder tells the church's two hundred years of history, including the strong influence of Bishop S.F. Coffman and the struggle and recovery from declining membership in the late 20th Century. (\$20.00)

Karl Kessler, author of *Path of a People: Erb Street Mennonite Church 1851-2001* (Waterloo: Erb Street Mennonite Church, 2001) 167 pages, thoroughly covers the century and a half of history at Erb Street in Waterloo. Also included is a brief overview of the European Anabaptist roots of the Mennonite faith, plus the original settlement of Ontario Mennonites in the Grand River area. The book's large glossy pages contains many historical, as well as recent, photos to enhance the telling of his church's story. (\$25.00)

Sandra Schiedel and Margaret Stockie, compilers of *Be Present at Our Table* (Waterloo: Erb Street Mennonite Church, 2001) 232 pages, have put together a cookbook for Erb Street Mennonite Church's 150th anniversary. But along with the recipes are included stories and anecdotes about potlucks and church life as it is now and once was. (\$15.00)

Woolwich Historical Foundation, editors of *Woolwich at the Turn of the Century: 1900* (Elmira: Woolwich Historical Foundation, 2001), launched their latest publication about the history of Woolwich Township at their Annual General Meeting on November 15 at Gale Presbyterian Church in Elmira. It may be purchased at Shelter Stationery, Church St. W., Elmira.

FICTION

Two new books of historical fiction use Mennonite history as its backdrop. The first is by Rudy Wiebe, author of *Sweeter Than All the World* (Toronto: Knopf Canada, 2001), 434 pages, who tells the story of 400 years of Mennonite history through the struggles of several generations of one family. (\$34.95)

The other is by Sandra Birdsell, author of *The Russlander* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2001), 350 pages, who tells the story of a Mennonite family in Russia during the time of the Communist Revolution as they struggle with their pacifism against the hatred and violence of anarchy and civil war. This book was on the short list for the Giller Prize for Canadian fiction. (\$34.99)

GENEALOGIES

Lynn and Paul Becker, compilers of *The Ziegler Family and Descendants - Pennsylvania to Waterloo County and Beyond* (Kitchener: Lynn and Paul Becker, 2000) 210 pages, uses maps, diagrams and photographs to supplement the story of the Ziegler family, many of whom originally settled in Woolwich Township. Copies are available from:

Lynn and Paul Becker,
38 Highland Road West,
Kitchener, Ontario.
N2M 2B5
519-571-0207

Harold Martin, compiler of *Noah G. Martin Family History* (West Montrose: Harold Martin, 2000) 48 pages, tells the stories of the many branches of the Noah G. Martin family, one of the descendants of Peter Martin who settled in Woolwich with his seventeen children in 1819.

Laura Betzner Edworthy, compiler of *The Betzner Family in Canada* (Kitchener: Laura Betzner Edworthy, 2000) 82 pages, tells the story of pioneer times in early Ontario, and traces the descendants of Samuel Betzner, Sr. who moved from Lancaster, Pennsylvania to Waterloo County in 1800 with the use of genealogy charts.