

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANITOBA

A HISTORY OF MENNONITE EDUCATION
IN MANITOBA

BEING A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE COMMITTEE
ON POST-GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
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BY

PETER GEORGE KLASSEN

GRETNNA, MANITOBA

MARCH, 1958



AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

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This thesis is an attempt to develop the story of Mennonite education in Manitoba and to show how in spite of problems a religious philosophy has been maintained in the new land.

The Manitoba Mennonites had a Russian background. In 1786 large numbers of Mennonites of Prussia settled in the provinces of Taurien in the Ukraine in southern Russia. Until 1870 the Mennonites of Russia enjoyed freedom of religion and complete school autonomy. Education was entirely within the control of the local Mennonite communities. The school reform movement started by Johann Cornies produced schools of a relatively high order, much higher than those of their Russian or non-Russian neighbors. The prospect of losing control over their schools was a strong contributing factor to the emigration movement of the Mennonites in the early 1870's.

Over 7000 of the Russian Mennonites migrated to southern Manitoba. They were promised the fullest freedom to exercise their religion and educate their children. Eight townships of land were reserved for the Mennonites east of the Red River and, several years later seventeen townships west of it.

When the Mennonites came to Manitoba they retained the religious aims in education they had held in Russia.

They were determined that in the new land their children should be taught the fundamentals in religion and German. Between 1874 and 1883 the Manitoba Mennonites had complete school autonomy. In those first ten years of pioneer life the government of Manitoba left the Mennonites completely to themselves in matters of education. But then, as time went on, the government tried to persuade them to come out of their isolation and to seek closer cooperation with the provincial school authorities. Some of the Mennonites realized the dangers of isolation and did seek closer cooperation with the provincial authorities. As this idea spread, group conflicts brought to an end the peaceful period of Mennonite school autonomy.

Mennonite education passed into a second stage when the public schools were organized. A period of religious and language conflicts followed. The rise in Canada of a national ideal of cultural uniformity and a policy of systematic cultural assimilation caused the conflict with the Manitoba Mennonites. With the emigration of 7000 Mennonites to Mexico and South America in the 1920's, the controversy over the private schools quickly subsided. Religious and language conflicts gradually dropped into the background and a very difficult and unpleasant period in the history of Mennonite education came to an end.

A third stage, if it may so be called, for it was present all the time, was that of the struggle for better

education. The main weakness of the early Mennonite schools lay not in their narrow curriculum or in poor methods of instruction but rather in their complete separation from higher centers of learning. H.H. Ewert established a school at Gretna which very definitely raised the standards of Mennonite education.

Striking changes have occurred in recent years in the field of education, mainly under the influence of the Russlaender immigrants of the 1920's. Many of these immigrants were well educated and were desirous of continuing their education. By obtaining the cooperation of the Canadian Mennonites they have built high schools, Bible schools and Bible colleges. There has been much duplication of effort because the Mennonites who are vitally interested in education are divided into two factions, the Conference of Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren Conference. In the last decade there has developed a profound interest in secular education. The need now seems to be for both secular and theological training.

The Mennonites in Manitoba were not opposed to education. They believed and still believe that education is a special function of the church. The educational institutions they have built are there to maintain and promote their cherished way of life.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This thesis is an attempt to develop the story of Mennonite education in Manitoba and to show how, in spite of problems, a religious philosophy has been maintained in the new land.

During the time of the "Manitoba School Controversy" much was said about the Mennonite schools. When parents were fined and jailed for not sending their children to school and when the great exodus of Mennonites to Mexico and South America followed, many persons believed that Mennonites were opposed to education.

History shows that the early Mennonite leaders were well-trained. Even the common people were not illiterate. Nevertheless, Mennonites of old disagreed with the purpose for which education was used. Catholic and Protestant scholars and theologians used their education to persecute Mennonites. This persecution resulted in the withdrawal of Mennonites from centers of civilization and sometimes they were slow in overcoming their suspicion of learning and to acquire the facilities for higher education.

In Manitoba, Mennonite education has a live and interesting history. It is the conviction and desire of the writer that this rich history should be preserved for future generations. A. Willows in his history of

the Mennonites, which refers especially to the Mennonites in Manitoba and Ontario, touched only briefly upon the elementary Mennonite private schools in Manitoba but stressed more the public schools in the Mennonite districts during the time when he was inspector of schools from 1910 to 1916.

E.K. Francis has given a thorough treatment of the Mennonite school problem in his book, In Search of Utopia. He does not, however, touch upon Mennonite education in modern times or give the detailed development of the important Mennonite educational institutions. Other writers have touched only briefly upon Mennonite education. Therefore, the writer felt the need for a comprehensive story of Mennonite education in Manitoba.

An understanding of the development and nature of Mennonite education in Manitoba can not be achieved without a distinct knowledge of the complex history of the Mennonites. For this reason the writer has provided in chapter II an adequate outline of Mennonite history. The general subject of the thesis, the history of Mennonite education in Manitoba, lends itself well to chronological treatment. No effort has been made to draw elaborate conclusions since the study is not of an experimental nature. Nevertheless, the writer has sought to point out present trends in Mennonite education.

Information regarding the early history of the

Mennonites was obtained primarily from a book compiled by H.S. Bender, Mennonites and Their Heritage. The section dealing with the settlement of the Mennonites in Manitoba was compiled almost entirely from C.H. Smith's book, The Coming of the Russian Mennonites.

Valuable information for the chapter on early Mennonite education was obtained from the book Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten? by P.J. Schaefer. First hand information was obtained from Mrs. C.B. Sawatzky, who attended the early private schools and later became a private school teacher. Further information was gleaned from the book by Schmiedehaus: Eine Feste Burg Ist Unser Gott.

In the preparation of the chapter on the period of religious and language conflicts in Mennonite education, the writer has leaned heavily upon E.K. Francis' article, The Mennonite School Problem In Manitoba. In addition, all volumes of the Reports of the Department of Education from 1871 to 1916 were scanned.

For information regarding the work, contributions and influence of H.H. Ewert to Mennonite education, the writer is indebted to P.J. Schaefer for the loan of H.H. Ewert, Lehrer, Erzieher Und Prediger Der Mennoniten. The writer is also indebted to Elder Benjamin Ewert for correspondence and historical documents dealing with immigration of the Mennonites to Manitoba and to the opposition of the Mennonites to the school policy of the Government.

I trust that the author's attendance and teaching experience at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna, his contacts with pioneers and former students and teachers of elementary private schools, and his participation in Mennonite teachers conventions and his discussions of educational problems with present day leaders in Mennonite education, will have given the study added validity. The writer believes that he has succeeded in presenting a true picture of the development, aim and scope of Mennonite education in Manitoba.

The writer wishes to express his appreciation to all those who through their kindness have helped make this study possible. He is especially indebted and grateful to Dr. J.M. Brown, Professor at the University of Manitoba, for his direction, assistance and enthusiastic interest in the development of the study. It is also the wish of the writer to make public recognition of the help given by each of the following: Dean N.V. Scarfe for advise and assistance during the early phases of the project; Victor Penner for reading the manuscript; Reverend P.J. Schaefer, Mrs. C.B. Sawatzky, Miss Helena Wall, the late Miss Helena Siemens, Abram Janzen, T.E. Friesen, Jacob Rempel and Jacob Redekop.

CHAPTER II

MENNONITE ORIGINS

Founding of the Mennonite Church

The Mennonite Church had its origin in Switzerland. It was founded by the followers of Ulrich Zwingli, but they were unable to accept the compromise which he and Luther made in setting up a Protestant state church system. Although Conrad Grebel (1498-1526) was the leader of the group, and may truly be called the founder of the Mennonite church, other men such as George Blaurock, Felix Manz and Michael Sattler played a very important role. In spite of persecution from the Zurich governmental authorities, the movement grew. The message of the Mennonites travelled far and wide. Travelling missionaries brought their gospel to northwest Germany and finally to Holland. The first name of the church in Switzerland was simply "Brethren". Their enemies called them "Anabaptists" because they refused to accept infant baptism as a valid baptism and insisted upon adults being baptized upon confession of their faith.

Out of Holland, from the little Frisian village of Witmarsum, came Menno Simons. Menno studied the New Testament, read Luther's and Bucer's writings and became convinced that in the matter of baptism their views were contrary to the teaching of the New Testament.

In 1536 he openly renounced the Roman Catholic

Church and, at the urgent request of the "Brethren", cast his lot with them. Menno immediately entered upon an active campaign on behalf of the new faith. The remainder of his life was spent in preaching, organizing new churches, and writing in defence of his position. Since Menno Simons was the outstanding leader of the group, people began naming the group after him.

The Mennonites from the first distinguished themselves from the followers of Luther and Zwingli. The Mennonites held that the church was to be composed of believers only, who voluntarily assumed the Christian faith. Grebel, Blaurock, Manz, Menno and their brethren believed in a complete separation of Church and State, held to the doctrine that religion is an individual experience of the heart, that each individual is therefore personally responsible to God alone for his spiritual standing, and that the Bible alone should be taken as his rule of life, to be accepted without question and faithfully obeyed regardless of what might be the attitude or requirement of the State. Another important fundamental concept was the principle of peace, love and nonresistance as applied to all human relationships.

Conrad Grebel said:

True Christians use neither the worldly sword nor engage in war since among them taking human life has ceased entirely, for we are no longer under the Old Covenant The

gospel and those who accept it are not to be protected with the sword, neither should they protect themselves." 1

The Mennonites also held to the concept of non-conformity of the church to the world and consequently excluded themselves from the rest of the world. On the other hand, the Protestant movement was a united effort on the part of ecclesiastical and political leaders to correct the abuses of Romanism, and to support this contention, if need be, by force of arms. This committed them to a policy of State-Churchism. It made Protestants as well as Catholics the persecutors of nonresistant people who could not support their program. While times are changed and circumstances different, yet the fundamental difference between these two schools of thought and classes of people remains substantially the same. It must be added here that some of these fundamental religious principles brought not only grievous persecutions but were the source of many of the peculiar educational problems experienced by the Mennonites during their sojourn in Russia and in their early years in Canada.

The Mennonites in Russia

Since the Manitoba Mennonites (with whom we are primarily concerned) had a Russian background, the Russian story must be examined.

1

Bender, H.S. "Mennonite Origins in Europe" as given in Mennonites and Their Heritage edited by H.S. Bender, Akron Pennsylvania: The Mennonite Central Committee, 1942, p. 14.

About the year 1786, Catherine the Great of Russia extended an invitation to the Mennonites of Prussia and other countries, where they were being persecuted for their faith, to settle in some part of southern Russia. She promised them exemption from military service, freedom to worship God according to the dictates of their own conscience, self-government within their settlements and complete freedom of language and schools. Large numbers of German Mennonites accepted the invitation and settled in the province of Taurien in the Ukraine. Two large settlements were formed - The Chortitza settlement,² which lay along the Dnieper River, and the Molotschna settlement, which followed the Molotschna River.

Economically the Mennonite colonies were eminently successful and were the pride of the Russian government. In cleanliness, order, culture and prosperity their villages far surpassed the Russian villages. Since the Mennonites had been given so many privileges, the colonies actually formed a state within the Empire. The colonies had self-government, their own civil administration, their own agricultural society and their own schools.

Because the Mennonites who migrated to Manitoba in the early 1870's set up nearly the same school system which they had had in Russia, and because those who migrated after World War I brought with them, and strongly

propagated, the educational ideas of Johann Cornies, one must take a close look at the Mennonite school system in Russia in order fully to understand Mennonite education in the new land.

Education was entirely within the control of the local Mennonite communities. Compulsory public school attendance was not yet required in Russia nor anywhere else in Europe. Nevertheless, the Mennonites built an elementary school in each of their villages. These schools were very primitive to be sure, but certainly better than those of the Russians, and they probably compared favorably with those of many of the enlightened countries of Europe.

Teachers, at first, had little or no preparation for their work. Often the village herdsman served as teacher during the winter. At times craftsmen functioned as teachers. By changing part of his workshop into a classroom, it was very convenient for him to earn a little extra money as a teacher. Since they were very poorly paid, few teachers could earn enough to make a decent livelihood.

The methods of teaching were the same as those used in many European schools. The rod was the main incentive to learning. For many, the school period was completed when they had mastered the elements of the alphabet and the art of writing. The primary aim of the school was

"to perpetuate the German language and to save the children for the faith of the fathers".³ The main aim of education was centered in the propagation of their faith. However, the Mennonites in Russia were also concerned with fostering the German church language which they had acquired during their sojourn in Prussia and which they were determined to keep in Russia. For some Mennonites the German language became an integral part of their religion and, as will be pointed out in a later chapter, caused great difficulties for the Mennonites in Manitoba.

The curriculum consisted of the four R's -- reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. Religious instruction always held a prominent place in all Mennonite schools. Some attention was given to singing. Although at first the medium of instruction was "Plattdeutsch" it was soon changed to high German and in later periods the Russian language was used in some classes.

At first the schools kept the cultural standards brought from Prussia, but during the second generation deterioration was inevitable both in general culture and in spiritual ideals.

There were many far sighted men, nonetheless, who were aware of what was happening. In 1822 a school association under the leadership of Johann Cornies started a teachers' training school at Orloff on the Molotschna.

3

Smith, C.H. The Story of the Mennonites. Berne, Indiana: The Mennonite Book Concern, 1945. p. 414.

An institution for this purpose, as well as for general education, was also established at Chortitza, (Old Colony) under the name of Central School in 1840, and another in 1858 at Gnadenfeld (Molotschna). This resulted in a gradual improvement of the village schools. In the Molotschna colony, Johann Cornies succeeded in introducing many reforms such as "erection of model school houses, compulsory attendance, the licensing of competent teachers, uniform text books, and well planned courses of study".⁴

To inform the people of the prevailing conditions in their village schools, Cornies prepared and distributed to all the mayors and churches a pamphlet entitled, "In School X". In realistic manner a typical school as it existed in the villages at that time was described in minute detail. "School X" had nothing praiseworthy in the quality of teaching, classroom discipline, physical environment, curriculum, or in the progress of the pupils. The following is a short extract from the pamphlet.

In a room of a miserable looking house which is the dwelling of a schoolmaster, his wife and children, sits the teacher dressed in a linen gown; he wears a cap on his head, and the ever-present pipe is in his mouth. He is surrounded by dirty books, paper and instruments of all kinds of punishment. Around a table a group of pupils are seated in no recognizable order. On the walls of the dark room hang saws, planes, shoemaker's knee-straps, and other household tools. The stove is hung with old stockings, trousers, and other articles of clothing. A little baby is crying in a cradle which one of the school

THE CHORTITZA AND MOLOTSCHNA SETTLEMENTS



PLACES MARKED IN RED CONTAINED
IMPORTANT SCHOOLS.

TAKEN FROM MENNONITE LIFE

APRIL 1947, p.20.

girls has been asked to rock. A hen with her chicks and some pigeons are roaming about among the feet of the children." 5

A month later Cornies distributed another paper entitled, "In School A". In it a model school was described, the kind of school Cornies desired in each Mennonite village. The following typical lines are taken from the document.

"If a child errs in School A, the teacher reprimands him in a fatherly, kindly manner, pointing out the consequences of such errors. Only the child that persists to err is finally punished; no punishment injures the child physically or mentally. Through such kind treatment and because of interesting recitations, the teacher wins the respect and love of his children. The relationship between teacher and pupil is like that between friends." 6

In order to prepare the way for a systematic course of study, Cornies made a list of the subjects to be taught in all the schools of the colony and published it. The list was called "General Instruction As to How All Children in the Village School Shall be Instructed and Supervised". According to it all schools should have three divisions. The suggested curriculum was as follows:

1. A.B.C.
2. Pronunciation of syllables and spelling.
3. Reading, Bible reading with proper pronunciation.
4. Writing (penmanship).

5
As quoted in "A Pioneer Educator -- Johann Cornies" by M.S. Harder in Mennonite Life, October 1948, pp 6-7.

5. Arithmetic
6. Mental Arithmetic
7. Singing from the church hymn book (using number system)
8. German
9. Memory-work; Bible verses, prayers and songs.
10. Letter-writing.
11. Elementary geography.
12. Bible story, church history, dictation and nature study.⁷

A fourth document, entitled "General School Regulations", was designed to bring about harmonious relations between teachers and their constituencies. "General Rules Concerning Instruction and Treatment of School Children" was probably the most significant work by Cornies.

Of these rules M.S. Harder writes:

"In eighty-eight rules Cornies presented the philosophical and psychological principles underlying teaching and disciplinary procedures. An analysis of these rules reveals, again, a profound insight into the most basic, fundamental principles of education." ⁸

The following are some of the more important rules from Cornies' document:

1. The early training given to a child is of great importance for his future. An educational procedure which is in harmony with the natural and undisturbed process of maturation is to be supported. (Purposive activity, mental discipline, and opportunity for expression.)

7

Goerz, H. Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung. Steinbach, Manitoba; Derksen Printers Ltd., 1950. p. 99.

8

Op. cit., Mennonite Life, p. 7.

6. Mistreated children develop adverse behaviour and become unresponsive. They become lazy, cold, irritable, taciturn, malicious, tricky. The exercise of harshness is unnecessary in the training process. No beating is necessary where a child with self-respect responds to encouraging words.

16. Subject matter must be presented so that all the senses are stimulated. Such a presentation promotes learning even in the most retarded child.

41. If a teacher wants to awaken in the children a love for learning, he must prove that teaching is a joy.

54. The physical body needs as much and the same care as the mind. This does not call for two separate educational institutions, for the two together constitute man. A human body perpetually at rest is like a lake without an outlet.

67. Every teacher should strive toward the goal where rewards and punishments are superfluous. He should direct not by authority of his office but by the power of his personality. Rewards should bring out the fine feeling of worth; punishments should produce the feeling of unworthiness. 9

Although Johann Cornies had not had much formal education, he must have read much. The educational ideas he expressed are as progressive and revolutionary as those of John Dewey and showed him to be far beyond his time. He remained true, however, to that religious aim in education which the Mennonites had always tried to foster, revealed in his rule No. 37 in "General Rules Concerning Instruction and Treatment of School Children":

"Religious instructions and religious impressions must furnish strength and meaning to all other instructions and impressions. Never will a person achieve a true character if he doesn't express respect, love, and faith in a Supreme being whom he accepts as master of his destiny. All educational procedures must be religious in their emphasis." 10

As chairman of the educational association, Cornies continued his struggle to raise the level of Mennonite education by organizing teachers conferences at which problems of education were discussed. By this time Mennonite schools were of a relatively high order, much higher than those of their Russian or non-Russian neighbors.

Of the two colonies, the Molotschna Colony made by far the greater progress in raising the standards of the schools. In the Old Colony, particularly among the Fuerstenland people, the schools were not allowed to become "progressive".¹¹ The people particularly frowned upon those educators who wished to introduce instruction of the Russian language. Later, when the Russian government insisted on the instruction of the Russian language, these people rebelled. The school issue finally became one of the major reasons for the emigration of a large number of the Fuerstenland people. As will be seen in a later chapter the school issue was also the main reason for the Fuerstenland and Sommerfeld people leaving Manitoba.

In 1870 a proclamation was sent out by the Russian government that a new law was about to be enacted making military service compulsory for all. A Mennonite delegation was sent to St. Petersburg in February of the same year to petition the government for the continuance of

11

Fuerstenland was a daughter colony of the Chortitza settlement.

military exemption in accordance with the promises made by the Empress Catherine and succeeding Czars. The Mennonites were given little hope, and returned home, greatly disappointed with the results of their mission.

Emigration soon became the answer for many. Delegates were sent to the United States and Canada to select sites for settlement. The trip of inspection was highly successful, and it resulted in the migration of at least eighteen thousand Mennonites to America in the years 1874-1880. Approximately one-third of these went to Manitoba, the remainder to the United States.

The Russian government had evidently not considered the possibility of Mennonite emigration and now became thoroughly alarmed. To lose its best agriculturists would be a great shock to the country's economic prosperity. In fear of losing the entire Mennonite population, the government once more promised full military exemption. Instead of military service the young men of military age were to serve the state in forestry work. Thus the principle of nonresistance was maintained and most of the remaining Mennonites decided to stay in Russia.

Settlement in Manitoba

Twelve delegates were dispatched by the Russian Mennonites to "spy out" the promised land. In America these delegates were accompanied by William Hespler, the

representative of the Canadian government, Jacob Y. Schantz, representative of the Ontario Mennonites, John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana, and the representatives of several railroad companies.¹²

Manitoba at this time was still almost a prairie wilderness. In 1870 the Canadian government had made it a province, buying out the rights of the Hudson's Bay Company. The white population was scattered around a few trading posts along the Red and Assiniboine Rivers and Lake Winnipeg. Winnipeg had a population of less than five hundred people.¹³

The Mennonites made their first tour of inspection southeast of Winnipeg. They encountered large stretches of swampy land with which they were not favorably impressed. Three of the delegates decided to leave Manitoba and tour the Dakotas instead. Hespler and Schantz, together with the remainder of the delegation, then started on a western tour. They travelled west as far as Portage la Prairie and some of the delegates went north to the Riding Mountain region. Only the delegates of the Bergthal and Klein Gemeinde groups decided that their people should settle in Manitoba.¹⁴ The other delegates all chose the

¹²

Smith, C.H., The Coming of the Russian Mennonites, Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, p. 52.

¹³

Ibid, pp. 56-57.

¹⁴

The Bergthal settlement was a daughter colony of the original Chortitza settlement. The Klein Gemeinde was a group which had broken away from the main branch of the Mennonite Church.

United States.

Before returning to Russia, the delegates secured a charter of freedom from the federal authorities. They were promised complete exemption from military duty, and the fullest freedom to exercise their religion, and educate their children.¹⁵ Eight townships of land were reserved for the Mennonites east of the Red River and, several years later, seventeen townships west of it.

In Russia the most conservative groups, those from Chortitz, and her two daughter colonies, Bergthal and Fuerstenland, together with the Klein Gemeinde, chose Manitoba as their home. They chose Manitoba because here they were definitely promised military exemption and large compact areas of land. Thus they could live as they had done in Russia, could build their own schools and could live under the jurisdiction of the Queen of England.

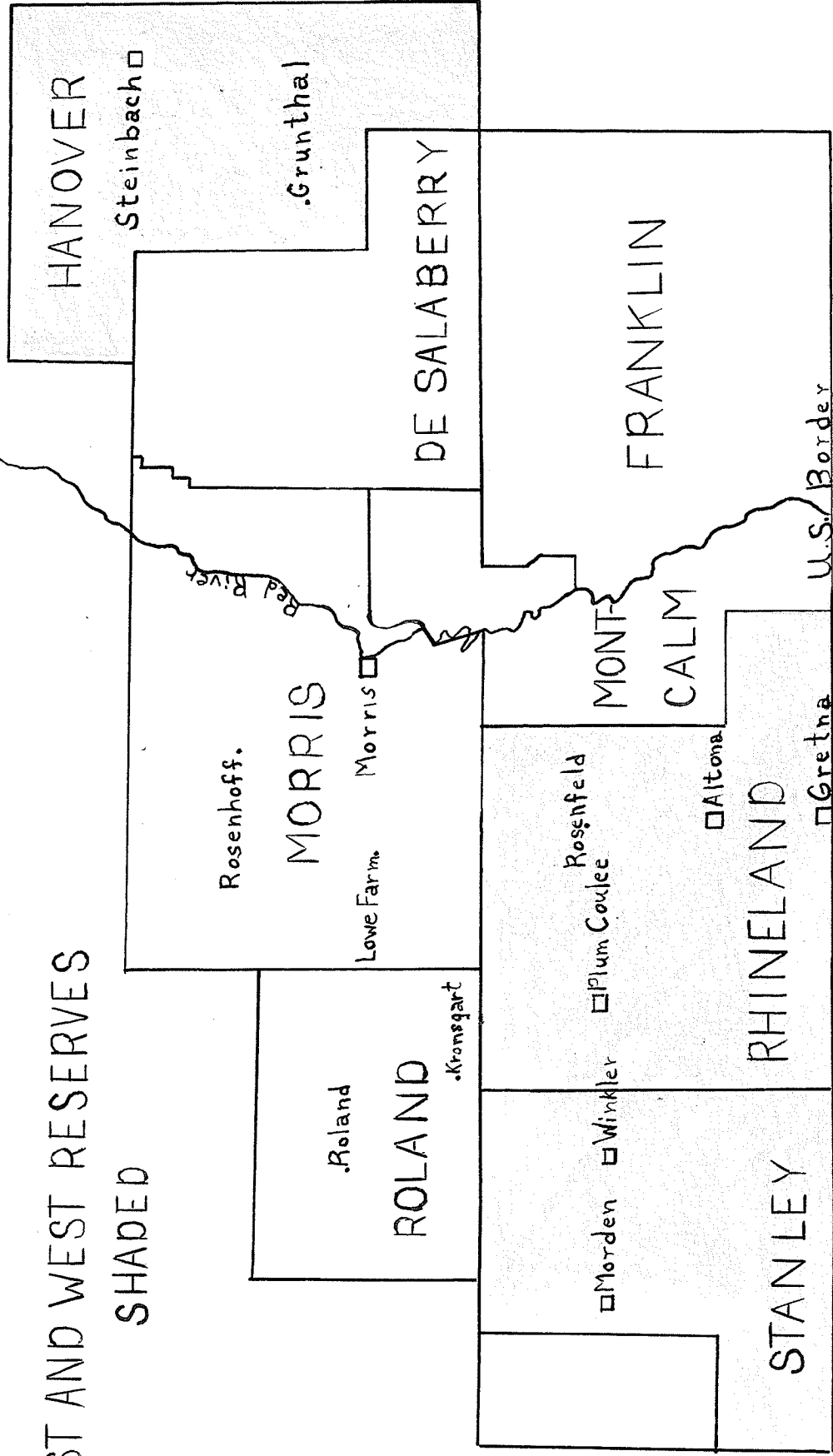
The first to leave Russia were the Klein and Bergthal Gemeinde in June 1874. They settled in the East Reserve in what is now the municipality of Hanover. The Fuerstenland colony did not leave till the spring of the following year, 1875, and then began the new settlement west of the Red River which became known as the West Reserve, now the greater part of Rhineland and Stanley municipalities. While by far the greater number of Mennonites in Russia

¹⁵

See Appendix C.

MENNONITE SETTLEMENTS

EAST AND WEST RESERVES
SHADED



emigrated to the United States, still by August, 1879, it was estimated that there were over seven thousand in Manitoba.

The settlers encountered great hardships in the early pioneer years. Some of the dwellings were built partly underground, and partly above ground, with sod roofs. Others were made from pine or poplar trees lined on the outside with manure. Grasshoppers completely destroyed the first crop. The second crop was somewhat better. In the East Reserve many fields suffered from excessive rains each year. Still, each succeeding year was a little better.

Many of the earlier settlers of Manitoba had thought it hardly possible, extremely unpractical, and certainly unwise for anyone to settle on the treeless prairie. The Mennonites, however, using the experience they had gained from cultivating the steppes of southern Russia, were now turning the wild Manitoba prairie into valuable farm land. One of the first to give the Mennonites full credit for this marvelous feat was Lord Dufferin, the Governor-General of Canada, who visited the East Reserve on August 21, 1877.¹⁶ The Free Press in 1876 said of the Mennonites:

"The Mennonites no doubt are the best settlers that have thus far come into the Province. No man could believe what these people have done in so short a time. From 10 to 20 miles away from the timber, they are already putting up substantial

16

Schaefer, P.J., Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten! 3 Teil Die Mennoniten in Canada. Altona, Man. p. 46.

homes. Many of them already speak 'a good English'. They seem contented and happy. In my three weeks travel over the Province I have seen nothing as regards industry equal to the Mennonites." 17

At present the West and East Reserves are flourishing districts. In the northeast portion of the East Reserve is found one important center, Steinbach. In the West Reserve are found, on the north, important towns such as Winkler, Plum Coulee, and Rosenfeld, and on the eastern edge, Altona and Gretna. Of these, Winkler and Altona are the most prosperous towns. The West Reserve is the most densely populated rural area in Manitoba. The Mennonite population has expanded to the north beyond the original confines of the Reserve but to the south it has never crossed the international boundary line.

In 1950 a monument to commemorate the outstanding efforts of the pioneer Mennonites was erected near Gretna just seventy-five years after the first settlers arrived. The inscription of the monument reads:

"In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct they paths. Proverbs 3:6

"Gedenke an ihn in allen deinen Wegen, so wird er dich recht fuehren. Sprueche 3:6 18

This monument was erected on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the arrival of the Mennonite settlers west of the Red River. It commemorates the faith and sacrifices of the early settlers who braved the wild treeless plains shunned by earlier immigrants; the peace and prosperity that these pioneers and

17

Op. cit., Smith, C.H. Coming of the Russian Mennonites p. 189.

18

Inscribed both in English and German.

descendents have enjoyed here; and the post road which, marked by stakes, started at Emerson, passed this site, at that time a stopping place, and ran westward through the settlement."

CHAPTER III
MENNONITE EDUCATION DURING THE TIME OF COMPLETE SCHOOL
AUTONOMY IN MANITOBA (1874-1883)

Privileges

As stated in the preceding chapter, the Mennonites in Russia had enjoyed complete school autonomy. There was practically no interference from the Government and the Mennonites were able to maintain their "religion-centered education". The Bible and German were important subjects of study. The Russian language, however, received scant attention particularly amongst the Fuerstenland Mennonites. Word came to them in 1870 that the Government planned to enforce new laws in education making the Russian language the official school language for all. The prospect of losing control over their schools was one of the strong contributing factors to the emigration movement in the early 1870's.

When the Mennonites came to Manitoba they retained the same religious aims in education they had held in Russia. They were determined that in the new land their children should be taught the fundamentals in religion and German. They believed that what the school was, the church would some day be. Therefore, education was a special function of the church.

Between 1874 and 1883 the Manitoba Mennonites had complete school autonomy. This was promised them in the

agreement which their delegates had reached with the Dominion authorities as a condition of their immigration.¹ The following concession was made in clause 10 of Mr. John Lowes' letter of July 23, 1873:

The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law, afforded to the Mennonites, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever; and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools. 2

Accordingly, upon their arrival the Mennonites set up their own school system on the pattern which had existed in Russia.

Aims

In spite of the difficulties of homesteading, the Mennonite settlers early provided for the educational needs of their children. During the first winter in Manitoba, some of the Mennonites in the East Reserve grouped their children together in houses and one of the farmers taught them the fundamentals in reading, writing, arithmetic and religion. In time each village built its own schoolhouse.

A school decree was published for the Mennonite private schools in the Sommerfeld district. This decree throws much light on the aims and objectives of all the schools, not just on those in the Sommerfeld district.

1

Francis, E.K. The Mennonite School Problem in Manitoba 1874-1919.

2

Wichtige Dokumente betreffs der Wehrfreiheit der Mennoniten in Canada, p. 11.

Although the decree was published only in 1903, the religious philosophy of education which it brings forth is the same as that which governed the Mennonite educational system in Russia. The following is the writer's translation of the school decree.

"In 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 15, Paul, an apostle of our Lord Jesus Christ, says: "And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus". This is the main aim of life and the most necessary task to fulfill. Very worthy of imitation is the wonderful testimony which God gave Abraham, founder of the Jewish people, when He says of him in Genesis 18:19: "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment." In order for us to instil this more and more into our children and our children's children, instruction in school is absolutely necessary since the school is the first nursery of Christianity where Christ's lambs are to be brought to good pastures. Our wish and prayer to God is that we might indeed be such people as we proclaim to be, namely non-resistant Christians who live as the pious of the land.

"In name we immigrated as a christian people from Europe. The endeavors of the teachers of the Church in Russia had always been, to point out that the "Seeking

of the Kingdom of God" is the most necessary and best thing for us. And the Word of God, as well as our own experiences, teaches us that in America we cannot neglect to bring our children to Jesus, the Redeemer who still calls out to us "Suffer little children, and forbid them not to come unto me; for of such is the kingdom of heaven". Matth. 19:14. Therefore we find it quite necessary to sow early the seeds of a living Christianity by good and true biblical school-instruction. Our government has given us a free hand in education if we support our own schools and if we raise our children in a christian way of life. Therefore we are thankful to God and to our government for the freedom which has been granted us enabling us to instruct our children in school according to the principles of our Faith so that a people might be formed which is in practice what it claims to be in name.

"Therefore we as teachers of the church and as members of the school committee have thought it necessary and have decided to set up a school-decree according to which the fundamental principles of the schools shall be formed.

1. Each teacher who takes on a school must be known as a peaceful and obedient church-member, as one who loves order and who will be active in his work, since without the aforementioned he will not be able to be a good example to his pupils. In general it is the special duty of the teacher that, when he meets his pupils outside of

the school, he shall not have frivolous, silly and idle conversation in their presence, for thereby he so easily can destroy that which he has sown while teaching. Therefore the teacher's deportment at all times shall be such that his students will meet him with esteem, respect and love.

"2. School shall be begun and closed with song and prayer. The prayer shall be said aloud and in unison with the students so that they too will learn how to pray. The songs shall be chosen from the church hymn-book. In addition the teacher shall take time, as he sees fit, to give special instruction in singing. All singing shall be done in as simple a manner as possible.

"Singing according to several voices or several parts is definitely forbidden since this would soon lead us away from simplicity and humbleness. That we people tend very easily to create for ourselves a visible God and Christ just as Israel did in making the golden calf, we see in the christmas tree which is rapidly finding its way into our own circles and for many has become a god. Since God does not wish to give his honor to anyone else or his glory to idols he says in the second commandment: "Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything." Therefore the teacher shall not be allowed under any circumstances to set up a christmas tree in school.

"3. When school has been opened with prayer and song the teacher shall begin instruction with reading and writing in the morning and arithmetic and reading in the afternoon. During the reading lesson the teacher shall see to it that the reading is done correctly, that is, with proper emphasis and pronunciation.

"Instruction in writing shall be given in German and Latin script. In order to arouse greater enthusiasm for reading and writing, the teacher shall give periodic tests in reading and writing every Friday morning and whoever rates best shall be able to sit at the front of the class.

"Every month the teacher may gather test-samples in writing which shall include the date and the name of the pupil. When the church-inspectors arrive the teacher shall display these test-samples. Instruction in arithmetic must be given by the teacher according to the capabilities of the individual student with respect to age and capabilities of grasping and understanding since it is self-evident that a mature mind, which reveals itself only in the later school years, is necessary for difficult calculations.

"4. It is the main duty of the teacher to give the children instruction in religion. This instruction may be given according to our Bible, Bible stories and catechism. As much as the children can grasp shall be explained

to them, such things as the fall of man and how we have obtained salvation again through the sufferings, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. For every teacher according to Acts 8 has the mission of Philip who was commissioned by the Spirit of God. "Go near, and join thyself to his chariot. And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readest? And he said, How can I, except some man should guide me?" Similarly it is the duty of the teacher to render the Scriptures intelligible to the pupils in order that they can comprehend and rightly understand what they read.

"Since it is necessary that students shall also be able to read written material well, the teacher shall practice this on Friday afternoon. The teacher shall in advance have obtained a variety of written material which he shall then give to the pupils to read. Thus Friday afternoon can be used for reading letters, writing paragraphs correctly on the blackboard, mental arithmetic, catechism and singing. Since the natural duty of a child is obedience, it is important that the attention of the pupils be drawn to the fact that they must in all things be obedient to the teacher in school and to the parents at home, in order that they from their childhood on, are aroused and directed towards that which they later shall be, namely god-fearing and peace-loving Christians.

"5. It is requested that, if circumstances permit, teachers visit each other now and then in their classrooms. The purpose of such visitations shall be that teachers can discuss common problems arising in the different subjects whereby the less capable teachers would acquire much information and a more uniform school system would be formed for the betterment of school administration.

"6. All teachers shall keep a school register marking the attendance of the pupils. It shall be shown to the pertaining school committee when its members visit the school (which shall happen twice each winter). Those parents who do not send their children to school for instruction without an acceptable reason (or even because of disobedience keep them at home) shall become responsible to the church.

"7. As far as possible, the children shall come to school clean, orderly and on time and shall be obedient to the teacher as they are at home to their parents. No other reading books are allowed in our schools but the Bible, Testament, catechism and 'Fibel'.

"8. The teacher shall at all times conduct himself in a fatherly manner with respect to his pupils and shall give each child the same privileges. The teacher is also allowed to apply, according to his judgment, punishments for misdemeanors or for laziness in studies but above all

should not be too strict or to punish out of revenge or envy. If, however, quarrels or contentions arise between children, it is the teachers obligation to carefully inquire who the offender and the offended is and after having discovered this, pass judgment and point out required mutual love to both parties concerned and by admonition help them to reconcile. If the teacher fails in any of these things he will be held responsible according to clause 6.

"9. Lastly, to the school-decree the following is added. As was stated, our government has given us complete freedom in our school-system, to plan everything as we wish and thus have the control of our schools completely in our own hands. We should therefore support and maintain our private schools as much as possible since we all know and to a large extent already witness that what the school is, the church will be. For if we will turn from the right way of truth and life (which Jesus himself is) in school, and turn to fables, the foundation of our church will be undermined and its downfall near. In order not to hinder or disturb the rise of our private schools all parents as well as unmarried persons who own property and belong to our private school district and to our church are required to take part in all school expenses as agreed upon by the particular school district. Either all expenses are to be calculated on each quarter

section of land in the school district, (which would be a great advantage for those poor parents who have many children and no land) or compute a fraction of the teacher's wages on each child. This will be left up to the church in each school district, but every church member should feel the obligation and the necessity to go along in everything and to do everything possible in support of the school so that we do not ourselves bring about the downfall of our schools through disobedience or strife. The salary of the teacher shall be collected by the school committee and be paid the teacher regularly.

Children are of school age from 6 to 12 and 14 years. The school term extends from October 1 to April 1, and from May 1 to June 1, that is, there are seven months for instruction in school."³

The decree shows clearly that the Mennonites very definitely regarded education as the special function of the church. The purpose of the school was to prepare the child for church membership and the simple duties of farm life. The children were to be brought up as devout Christians, humble and sincere in what they professed to be, obedient to parents and church and as quiet and peace-loving citizens of the land. The school was concerned more with changing the behaviour of the individuals than with giving useful information and understanding. The

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Allgemeine Schulverordnung in den Privatschulen der Gemeinde zu Sommerfeld in Manitoba, Canada.
Volkerzeitung Publishing House, Winkler, Man.

emphasis was on attitudes and habits rather than on skills and understandings. "Ethical character" and "Worthy Home Membership" formed the core of their general aim in education.

Curriculum

The curriculum consisted of reading, writing, arithmetic, Bible study, catechism and singing. Although not mentioned in the decree, nature study was taken incidentally. Excursions into the open fields helped arouse interest in the wild life about them but beyond learning the names of a few common plants and animals there was no formal study. The only history that the children studied was that of the Bible and it too was taught only incidentally. There were no maps and globes in the classroom and consequently the children as well as the teachers had little knowledge of geography. The belief that the earth was flat was quite prevalent in the schools.

In the early years arithmetic was taught from a book of which only the teacher had a copy. The first stages of arithmetic consisted of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. The following are examples of the more difficult types of problems which accompanied these fundamental processes of arithmetic.

1. Someone bought 4 barrels of wine. The first barrel held 296 quarts, the second, 39 quarts more than the first; the third held 41 quarts more than the second and

the fourth 27 quarts more than the third. How many quarts did all four barrels hold?

2. At a stockyard were 279 oxen, 426 cows, 337 sheep and 250 pigs. Of these the following were sold: 188 oxen, 296 cows, 179 sheep, and 98 pigs. How many animals were there? How many were sold? How many were left of each kind? How many animals remained?

3. A horse-buyer bought 135 horses at 180 dollars each. Of these he first of all sold 48 at 195 dollars each, then 57 at 200 dollars each and the remainder at 185 dollars each. How much had he paid? How much did he receive? What was his profit?

4. With the money which I need to buy 72 horses at 132 dollars each I can buy 216 cows. How much less does a cow cost than a horse?

5. A merchant bought 180 lbs. of coffee at 35 cents a lb. He sells 42 lbs. at 40 cents, 62 lbs. at 42 cents and the remainder at 45 cents. How much was his profit?

6. 3 dollars and 4 cents added to half of my money gives 28 dollars and 16 cents. How much money did I have?⁴

After having had practice in these fundamental processes of arithmetic, the pupils started working with fractions and decimal fractions. Considerable emphasis was also placed on problems of weights and measures.

⁴

These problems were taken from the school books of Mrs. C.B. Sawatzky, Gretna, who attended the early private schools and later became private school teacher.

They did interest problems, and the last section in arithmetic dealt with the squaring and cubing of numbers, as well as taking the square and cube roots of the smaller numbers, but for the larger numbers they were given detailed notes on finding them. The method of finding the square root was the same as we find in our present arithmetic texts, but the method of finding the cube root, the writer has never seen before.

The perfect cubes less than one thousand, 1, 8, 27, 64, 125, 216, 343, 512 and 729 were memorized. The cube roots of these numbers range from one to nine. For perfect cubes larger than one thousand the following method to find the cube root was used. To illustrate the method the cube root of 91125 will be calculated.

Starting at the decimal divide the number 91125 into three digit parts. Take the closest cube less than ninety-one. It is sixty-four. The cube root of sixty-four is four. Place the number four to the left of 91125. Subtract sixty-four from ninety-one. The difference is twenty-seven. Take down the second part, 125, of the number 91125 and write it beside the number twenty-seven. Next multiply the number four (which was placed to the left of 91125) by three which gives a product of twelve and write it under the four as shown. Then take three times the square of four. The product is forty-eight. Add two zeros to it. Place 4800 to the left of 27125. Divide 27125 by 4800. The lowest whole number quotient

is five. Write five to the right of twelve. Multiply 125 by five. The product is 625. Add 625 to 4800. The sum is 5425. Next multiply 5425 by five. The product is placed under the number 27125 and subtracted. There is no remainder. Therefore the cube root of 91125 is forty-five.

$$\begin{array}{r}
 4 \\
 125 \overline{) 4800} \\
 \underline{4800} \\
 0 \\
 \underline{0} \\
 0 \\
 \underline{0} \\
 0
 \end{array}
 \qquad
 \begin{array}{r}
 91,125 \\
 \underline{64} \\
 27 \ 125 \\
 \underline{27 \ 125} \\
 0
 \end{array}$$

The pupils were divided into four classes. The first class was called "Fiebla", the second class "Katechisma", the third, "Testamenta" and the fourth, "Bibla". The pupils spent one school-year in each of the first three classes and remained from three to five years in the fourth class.

In the first class children were taught their A B C's, and to read and write from a small book called "A-B-C buchstabier - und Lesebuch", or in general, "Fibel". The first page contained the alphabet, the second and third pages phonetics, the fourth the Lord's Prayer, the fifth the Confession of Faith, the sixth the Ten Commandments and so on. It contained short morning and evening prayers, prayers of thanks and prayers for grace at table. The whole book contained fourteen pages. On the last page there was a picture of a red rooster together with a verse about rising early to go to school. The following

is an abstract of pages two and three showing the phonetic system.

Ab	eb	ib	ob	ub
Ba	be	bi	bo	bu
Ca	ce	ci	co	cu
Da	de	di	do	du
Fa	fe	fi	fo	fu
Ga	ge	gi	go	gu
.				
.				
.				
Xa	xe	xi	xo	xu
Za	ze	zi	zo	zu

They had to learn to pronounce these syllables and to run through them very quickly. What was in this book was the only material the children read during their first year at school.

In the second class the pupils learned to read the catechism. In addition they had to memorize many little verses and short prayers.

In the third class the children were taught reading from the New Testament. They also had to memorize the whole catechism.

In the fourth, or Bible class, the pupils practiced reading from the entire Bible, beginning from Genesis. They had to learn the contents of fifty-two Old and fifty-two New Testament stories. Of these stories they committed large sections to memory. In fact, most of the stories

were memorized.

Much emphasis was laid on writing, particularly on beautiful script. The period in the day set aside for this was called "Schoenschreiben" or penmanship. In appendix A are samples of writing in German and Latin scripts taken from Helena Wall's writing book done in her third year at school in 1894.⁵ The writing samples of Johann Wall illustrate, too, how well boys wrote. Mrs. C.B. Sawatzky, a former Mennonite private school teacher, claims that children in all schools always enjoyed "Schoenschreiben" and tried to excel in it.

Art was not taught formally as were reading and writing, but the pupils were allowed to draw and paint in their spare time. That strong emphasis was placed on drawing can be seen from the way in which some words have been written or printed in the samples. The samples of art by Helena Wall indicate the effort that was made to do good work.⁶

Methods

Some of the teachers were fairly well equipped for their simple tasks, having been trained for their work in Russia. It must be remembered however that the most conservative Mennonite groups emmigrated from Russia and

5

Most of the samples included are the work of Miss Helena Wall, Gretna. The writer was unable to obtain any material previous to this but it can be safely said that the work done ten to fifteen years earlier was every bit as good or better.

6

See Appendix A

that their schools had not been at as high a level as those of the more liberal minded groups. The curriculum was very limited as has been noted but most of the teachers had received some training and did a fairly thorough job of teaching.

There is little doubt that in general, teachers had good classroom discipline. For example, a teacher would send his class home if the children did not settle down to work after the third warning knock on his desk. Woe unto the children if they came home early. If a child were strapped in school, he would automatically receive the same from his father at home. Often the older brothers and sisters would bribe the younger members of the family not to report them at home, and parents therefore did not always know what had happened in school. Although the strap was used frequently (and not on the hand) other methods of disciplining the child were often tried before strapping. If a pupil did not pay attention while reading, he might have to stand and hold the Bible above his head. Children who did not do their assigned work were also punished. One teacher is reported to have drawn a picture of a donkey on a piece of paper and had the pupil stand on a desk and hold the paper for long periods of time so everyone could see it. Under the picture was written "I am a lazy donkey". If two pupils were involved, then the second person had to take a stick and steadily point



at the picture.

As crude as these methods seem, the children did learn to obey the teacher. They came quietly and politely into school and at four o'clock did not rush out of school as present day children are want to do. They walked home along the village street just as quietly as they had come.

In order to learn to read, the children first had to memorize the A.B.C.'s. Next phonics were practiced as outlined for them in the "Fibel". The pupil would first sound out the letters and then pronounce the syllable. For example: b-a- ba; b-e- be; After having committed these to memory, the pupils would begin to read words. Obviously, the children learned to read very slowly.

In all the classes, the children had to read material which was much too difficult for them and which they frequently did not understand. The teachers seldom explained what was read. But as one person remarked, "As we got older we understood that which we had memorized so well in school. All those difficult passages from the Bible which we had memorized became meaningful and real to us later and helped us to live as Christians".

A very poor method, which seemed to be quite common in all the schools, was used in spelling(Diktat). The teacher would dictate a sentence to the pupils and write it on the blackboard. He would purposely make many errors. The children were to write the sentence correctly.

Frequently the slower writers or the ones who could not spell well would copy all the words down incorrectly and learn them that way. For example, the teacher would write out a sentence like this: "dER JuNge KNaBe giT ZUr sHuLLE" (That young boy goes to school). Apparently the teachers were very proud of this pedagogical method. Many errors in spelling were also caused through the use of the Low German dialect. In school German was used, while out of school, children, parents and teacher all spoke Low German.

Every Friday the older pupils had to practice letter writing. Invariably the letters would begin like this:

"Well good-day dear teacher, what shall I write."

Then the pupils would continue in this manner:

"I like school we have four horses three cows
three calves ten pigs thirty hens thirty chickens."

They might vary the letter somewhat by saying how many brothers and sisters they had or how old they were. Their ability to express themselves was very limited.⁷

That very little attention was placed on understanding can be seen from Helena Wall's samples of writing. The first sample ends in "and". The teachers would often dictate words which would fill one line, regardless of whether or not the thought was complete and then the pupil was required to write it out eight times in both German and Latin script.

Much of the aforementioned information was obtained from Mr. Abram Janzen, Gretna. Mr. Janzen first attended school in 1880.

For work that was well done, pupils would receive acknowledgments and often rewards. The children all sat in home-made desks - usually four to a desk. If a pupil had done well in his work he would be allowed to sit in position number one in his desk, closest to the teacher. What seems peculiar here is that the older pupils sat at the front of the classroom and those in the first grade near the back. Often, too, the teacher would reward a pupil by giving him a beautifully decorated little booklet filled with many illustrated Scripture verses. If the beginners read well, the teacher would place a penny beside the red rooster in the ABC book and the children would believe that the rooster had deposited it there.

Most of the written work was done on slates and, necessarily, always erased. Only a small portion of the work was written out in small notebooks.

The school decree indicated that the teacher should open the school day with song and prayer. The teacher would in most cases also close the morning and reopen and close the afternoon classes with song and prayer. The Lord's Prayer, as well as most other prayers, was recited in a monotonous sing-song. Similarly, at the end of each day, sometimes before the closing prayer and sometimes after, the multiplication table was recited. This, too, was done in a sing-song fashion.

The school building, identical to the dwellings in the village, was large and well ventilated with one end of the building forming the teacher's dwelling. No pictures hung on the walls.

The teacher's salary was very meager - anywhere from forty to a hundred dollars a year. But, the teacher had free residence and sometimes free board. On the schoolyard was a barn and the teacher was able to obtain free pasture for his cows and chickens.

Deterioration

Until the early 1880's there were only private schools in the Mennonite settlements of Manitoba. In those first ten years of pioneer life the government of Manitoba left the Mennonites completely to themselves in matters of education. But then, as time went on, the government tried to persuade them to come out of their isolation and to seek a closer cooperation with the provincial school authorities. Some of the Mennonites realized the dangers of isolation and did seek closer cooperation with the provincial school authorities. As this idea spread, group conflicts brought to an end the peaceful period of Mennonite school autonomy.

With regard to the Mennonite educational system Dr. Francis says:

"Considering time and circumstances, the Mennonite educational system seems to have been fair enough. It was an essential part of their Protestant culture and democratic institutions, which require

literacy and a rather high educational standard from every member of church and secular community."⁸

Many of the teachers had obtained high school education and teacher training in Russia and had been under the influence of Johann Cornies. That the teacher as well as the elders of the church was interested in good teaching can be seen from the fact that teachers tried to benefit from the experience of others, and that as early as 1879 a teachers convention was held at Chortitz in the East Reserve. Yet the Mennonite schools began to deteriorate. They had never reached as high a standard as those in Russia, partly because the more liberal-minded teachers did not emigrate and partly because there were not enough trained teachers for all the schools. But these were not the chief reasons why the Mennonite private schools deteriorated. Very aptly Dr. Francis states the real weakness of the Mennonite private schools:

"The real weakness of the Mennonite private school should not be sought in its limited curriculum and conservative teaching methods, or in its autonomous church-controlled administration. Generally speaking, school and education do not thrive in a vacuum but require the intellectual stimulus which only inter-action with a rather large area of high civilization can provide. Manitoba's English school could easily have met the same fate as the Mennonite German school, had it not remained in constant living contact with the old civilization of Great Britain and the new civilization which was arising, on a broad foundation, in the United States. Even in Russia, Mennonite intellectual life and culture had been somewhat isolated; in Canada it was completely cut off from intercourse with any congenial area of high civilization." ⁹

8

Francis, E.K. Op. cit., p. 210

9

Ibid, p. 210.

CHAPTER IV

THE PERIOD OF RELIGIOUS AND LANGUAGE CONFLICTS

Public Schools

As was mentioned, the main reason for the deterioration of the Mennonite private schools lay in the fact that there was no intercourse between them and higher centers of learning. Some of the Mennonites, particularly those of the Klein Gemeinde and Bergthal groups, saw the dangers of isolation and sought closer cooperation with the provincial school authorities.

At a Mennonite teachers convention held at Chortitz, East Reserve, in March of 1879, the Manitoba government suggested to the teachers as well as to the taxpayers, that they change their private schools into public schools. Their financial worries would be over and the government would inspect the schools.¹ Those present, however, feared that if the government took over the inspection of the schools, the Mennonites would be in danger of losing their right to teach religion and German. Only a few districts, particularly those of the Klein Gemeinde chose to change to the public school. In the early 1880's the following district schools (public schools) were formed: Steinbach, Blumenort, Gruenfeld, Blumenfeld and Hochstadt.²

The organization of public schools, however, did not

1

Schaefer, P.J., Woher? Wohin? Mennoniten? 3 Teil.
p. 68.

2

Ibid, p. 68.

mean that the Mennonites in these districts had to give up their religion or the German language. On the contrary, these schools upheld the Mennonite religious aims of education and in addition tried to build up their academic standards in school. For the time being instruction remained much as it was. For a number of years the inspectors even omitted inspection of the newly formed district schools.

The following is a portion of a report of the Mennonite district schools given by Jacob Friesen in March 1882 to the Department of Education. It shows what type of work was done as seen by a Mennonite inspector.

To the Superintendent of Education:

Sir, - I have the honor to report that I have inspected the following schools during last month.

I. Steinbach - Here I found 22 daily scholars in attendance, the school well conducted, the teacher very efficient, and the scholars well advanced in their studies. Reading, writing, arithmetic and geography.

II. Blumenhof - Here I found 10 scholars in attendance in a very good and well ventilated building, kept clean and warm, the teacher very capable, and the scholars well advanced in all subjects. 3

Mr. Friesen reported similarly for the schools of Blumenort, Hochstadt, Rosenhoff and Rosenort.

Four years later Inspector Wilhelm Rempel gave a detailed report of the Mennonite district schools to the Department of Education. In this report Rempel wrote:

3

Report Department of Education 1871-1883
Winnipeg: Coldwell and Cunningham 1872. p. 23.

It is with pleasure that I say there are several of the teachers employed who try hard to fill their positions honestly, and indeed they have succeeded considerably. This principally applies to the teachers on the Eastern Reserve, but at the same time I am glad to state there are some five or six of those on the Western Reserve and at Morris who are going to rival their colleagues. The rest of them form a mixed class of men, doing their work in ways of their own, some bearing in deep earnest, while others are indifferent, some having a little knowledge and trying to make the best of it, while others lack knowledge and are just dragging along slowly.

But it is not only the teachers whom I would hold responsible for the defects in conducting their schools, for there is a great deal of indifference amongst the farmers as to properly educating their children, and even opposition to several of the subjects being taught, and it seems to me as if we will have to wait for years to come till our wrongly informed people surmount that aversion prevailing amongst them regarding the better education of our rising generation. 4

The condition of these schools is also fully stated in the report of a committee of the Board of Education in 1888. This report, however, shows the Anglo-Saxon view of the Mennonite schools.

The Mennonite people have during the last few years kept a number of schools, varying from twelve to twenty, under the control of this Board. This number of schools, however, is not more than one-half the number sufficient to accommodate the Mennonite children; and a number of other schools under the control of the Mennonite religious bodies, have also been kept in operation.

In the Mennonite schools under the control of this Board the character of the teaching has never been satisfactory, and your committee has reason to think that in the other Mennonite schools it has at least been no better. But the Board has continued to accept and aid such schools as have been placed under its control in the hope that gradually the people

and teachers would aim at the accomplishment of better results. 5

The report goes on to state that in February 1887, Mr. Thiem White was appointed inspector. Mr. White had given the following report:

The teachers are illiterate and without ambition toward improvement, their work in the schoolroom is useless or nearly so; and the course of study - if it may be so called consists in many cases almost wholly of religious exercises. The teachers are in some instances paid only the amount of the legislative grant received by the school and in no case is the salary offered a teacher sufficient to induce any qualified person to accept it. 6

Grants of one hundred and fifty dollars had been given annually to schools and only if conditions were fulfilled. 7

Inspector H.H. Ewert, principal of the Gretna Normal School gave a somewhat brighter picture of the Mennonite schools in his report to the Department of Education in 1893. He wrote:

Parallel with the increase of the number of District Schools goes a growing desire of the people to improve their schools. It is gratifying to observe that after the people have once adopted the Public School System, they soon begin to drop their old-time prejudices against the use of text-books, the introduction of studies like geography, and the employment of modern methods of teaching. Some schools have made good progress in English, others would have done more in this line had the ability of the teacher been equal to his willingness. 8

H.H. Ewert reported that a teachers' convention was held

5

Ibid, pp. 10-11.

6

Ibid, p. 10.

7

Ibid, p. 10.

8

Report Department of Education 1890-1897
Winnipeg: David Philip, Queens Printer, p. 37.

at Gretna. It was well attended and it aroused great enthusiasm. The result was that two local teacher's associations with monthly or bi-monthly meetings were organized. H.H. Ewert wrote:

"These meetings are conducted in the following manner: The teachers meet at some school in the district, and the teacher in charge of the same teaches a few of his regular classes during the forenoon. In the afternoon his work and methods are criticized by the visiting teachers, and the programme is finished by the discussion of a paper on some educational topic, presented by a member of the association. These meetings tend to create an "esprit de corps" among the teachers and will no doubt be a most potent factor in improving the status of education in this division."⁹

In all schools except one, the German language was the medium of instruction with English also being taught. Where the teacher had sufficient command of English, the most important branches on the programme were taught in English. The Plum Coulee school was the only one that taught in English exclusively.¹⁰

There is evidence that some of the Mennonites actually wished to fulfill the requirements of the Department of Education. They asked that the school law be translated into German. H.H. Ewert reported to the Department of Education:

"I am convinced too, that a considerable amount of the trouble that has existed in some of the districts has arisen to a great extent from the people's ignorance of the law. I would, therefore, recommend that the Government issue a German translation of those sections of the school law which

9

Ibid, p. 37

10

Ibid, pp. 40-42.

pertain to rural schools."¹¹

The Mennonite schools gradually improved. In 1899 there were thirty-four district schools with forty-one teachers. In twenty-three districts the children all were German and in the others there was a sprinkling of English. The English parents seemingly appreciated the opportunity their children had of acquiring some knowledge of German. About half of all the district schools now instructed in English and the others all taught some English. Some schools taught grades as high as seven and eight, but others only grade four. The reasons for this difference in schools were varied. There were of course, differences in teachers and some districts were more progressive than others. Most schools were painted inside and out. A new four-room school had been built in Altona.¹² All in all the schools were operating at a much higher standard than a decade ago. Ewert said of the schools:

"Comparing the state of education among the Mennonites to-day with that of about eight years ago, when special steps were taken to induce them to adopt the Public School system and improve their schools, it is gratifying to observe that great progress has been made. The number of schools that have come under Government control has more than trebled; the standard of teachers has been immensely raised; the schools are much farther advanced; very much of the prejudice against the English language has disappeared, and a large number of people entertain much more liberal views in regard to education. With these gains,

11

Ibid, pp. 41-42.

12

Report Department of Education 1898-1901
Winnipeg: pp. 44-45.

which mean so much of an increase of the forces making for progress, it may be reasonably expected that the movement will continue to spread, and progress in the future be even more rapid and satisfactory." 13

In 1902 there were forty-one districts. By 1907 there were nevertheless still sixty private schools with an enrollment of 1500, whereas the public schools had an enrollment of 1406. Some schools taught grade nine. In 1911 Inspector Weidenhammer reported that since 1910 all the subjects of the public school curriculum had been taught in the English language. Teachers encouraged the children to use English on the playground three days of the week and High German on the other two. Children evidently spoke both languages quite fluently. Grammar, geography and history were now given their proper place on the curriculum.

Inspector Weidenhammer also visited a number of private schools by special request of the teachers. English was taught in twelve out of sixteen schools visited. All of those visited a second time had introduced English. Thus a forward movement had begun. A large number of private school teachers had been present at a convention held in Plum Coulee in November, 1910, indicating that they too wished to improve their educational standard.¹⁴

The teachers' conventions which Professor H.H. Ewert

13

Ibid, p. 45.

14

Manitoba Department of Education Annual Report.
Winnipeg: Kings Printers, 1911. pp. 115-124.

organized in the West Reserve were held each year. Although one might say that the teacher-training courses offered in summer at Gretna, Altona and Morden helped most of all to raise the educational status of the teachers, yet the annual teachers' conventions also helped much. These conventions were of two-day duration. The first day the proceedings were in German and the second in English or visa versa. To these conventions all public and private school teachers and all preachers and school trustees were invited. Anyone interested in education was welcome.

The writer studied the convention programs from 1911 to 1920 and found them all very similar in structure. The following is a copy of the convention program for 1915. It gives considerable insight into the type of work done.

Programm

fuer die fuenfzehnte deutsch-englische Lehrerkonferenz, welche Donnerstag und Freitag, den 11 und 12 November, 1915 in Altona tagen soll.

Donnerstag.

- 10:00 Einleitung und Begruessung vom Vorsitzter.
(Opening remarks by chairman) 15
- 10:15 Die Behandlung der Kleinen - Helena Warkentine
(Treatment of the primers)
- Besprechung (discussion)
- 11:15 Das Verhaeltnis der Mennonitischen Schul-

kommission zu den Schulen. (The relationship between the Mennonite School Commission and the schools) - Johann D. Klassen

Besprechung (discussion)

12:00 Mittagspause. (lunch hour)

1:30 Pestalozzi - H.H. Ewert

Besprechung (discussion)

2:15 Der Standtpunkt des Lehrers von Seiten der Trustees - Gerhard Wiebe
(The position of the teacher as seen by the trustees)

Besprechung (discussion)

3:00 Fragekasten (questionbox)

4:00 Sitzung der Schulbehoerde (trustee meeting)

Abends 7:30

Vortrag in Englischer Sprache von Herrn C.K. Newcombe, Superintendent des Erziehungswesens in Manitoba. Auch wird Dr. R.S. Thornton, Unterrichtsminister von Manitoba erwartet gegenwaertig zu sein.
(A talk in English by Mr. C.K. Newcombe, Superintendent of Schools. Dr. R.S. Thornton, Minister of Education, is also expected to be present.)

Freitag

9:00 The Teaching of Music in Elementary Schools
- J.S. Schultz.
Discussion

10:00 The Teacher's Favorite Pupils
- Miss Amelia C. Winger
Discussion

11:00 Reading - O.A. Wurster
Discussion

12:00 Noon Intermission

1:30 Molding the Destinies of Youth
- J.E. Linscheid
Discussion

- 2:15 Advantage of the Public School over
the Private School - J.J. Jost
Discussion
- 3:00 Question Drawer
- 3:30 Business Meeting.

Abends 7:30

Zehn Minuten Ansprachen von folgenden Herren:
(ten minute talks by the following)
P.H. Siemens, D. MacLeod, G.E. Wolkof, J. McLennan,
A. Weidenhammer, H.H. Ewert and J.S. Schultz.

Intragroup Conflict

The formation of public schools resulted in serious conflicts among different Mennonite groups. In several places, particularly in the Municipality of Douglas, existing private schools were converted into public schools without any controversy. Similarly many private schools were retained without conflict. But serious trouble arose in those localities of the West Reserve where Bergthal people demanded that a school district be formed while the Fuerstenland (Altkolonier) people opposed it.

The Bergthal people were first of all motivated by economic considerations to create district schools. The pioneer years were difficult years and the provincial grant for schools was a great help. The Mennonite system weighed heavily upon the poorer and larger families since in many schools the greater part of the school tax was assessed according to the number of children of

school age. The Bergthal people, too, were more liberal minded and were inclined to take on the customs of the Anglo-Saxons.¹⁶ Many of the business men from Winkler, Altona and Gretna realized the need for an adequate education and the necessity of knowing the English language. They became leaders in the movement for district schools.

However, the Fuerstenland people were very conservative. They were definitely an agrarian people and did not intend to change. The church leaders insisted upon withdrawal from the "world". To them the English language was a dangerous channel whereby foreign and undesirable ideas would gain entrance into the religious and social life of the people. Had they not emmigrated from Russia because they were asked to teach the Russian language and to use different text-books in school? What was now most difficult for them to understand was not that the government wished them to organize public schools, but that their own brethren insisted upon their formation.

The Fuerstenland people desired only the knowledge needed for participation in religious functions and local community life plus the little that was needed for simple farming. The children, they believed, should be able to read the Bible and understand it. But that was all they should read. Anything beyond this was "of the world" and therefore sinful. A member of the Old Colony church men-

tioned to the writer that in his opinion the church had not been consistent. If they had not wished to learn anything of the world, then arithmetic should not have been taught either. However, the church leaders evidently did not see simple arithmetic as a threat to their religious and social life. They felt though that a knowledge of English would enable the young people to leave home and seek employment outside their established circles. There would then be the added danger of intermarriage with other denominations or even other races. Instruction in English would inevitably also lead to a decline in the knowledge of German, which had almost become a part of their religion. Thus the Fuerstenland people clung to tradition and refused to give up their parochial schools. They considered the organization of district schools a direct violation of the Mennonite principle of church control over schools and of the privileges granted to them by the Dominion authorities. The Fuerstenland church leaders therefore, put a ban on any parents who allowed their children to go to a public school.

Since the right of the municipality to collect the school tax had been established, the Fuerstenland people had to pay, whenever in some district a Bergthal majority petitioned for a public school, even though the Fuerstenland people continued to send their children to their own church-school. It can easily be understood that this

situation, wherever it existed, caused much resentment between the two Mennonite groups. What made matters even more difficult was the fact that members of the two groups were often related.

Whether private or district school, what was most needed was competent Mennonite teachers. In view of this a group of members of the Bergthal church in the West Reserve, including Elder Johann Funk, stressed better teacher-training as the first step toward better schools. They formed the Mennonite Educational Association, which opened a Mennonite normal school in Gretna in the fall of 1889. Wilhelm Rempel, a former inspector of schools, was asked to teach. The enrollment reached almost sixty, ranging from first-graders to candidates for the teaching profession. Rempel soon realized that this work was too difficult for him and he resigned at the end of the session. The school was closed for a year.

The Department of Education was interested in this latest progressive movement amongst the Mennonites and decided to give their support to the new venture. The Association, in conjunction with the Department of Education, was able to obtain the services of H.H. Ewert, principal of the Mennonite normal school at Halstead, Kansas. Ewert's role was a difficult one. He was to teach the upper grades of public school, offer a teacher-training course, inspect the schools and try to persuade

the people to give up their parochial schools and form district schools.

The Fuerstenland people violently opposed the work of the Mennonite Educational Association. Education, they believed, should be solely in the hands of their church; but this group of Mennonites had hired a teacher who received a salary from the Department of Education. H.H. Ewert would be working in the interests of the Department of Education and not in the interests of the church. A member of the Fuerstenland Mennonites told the writer that since the Mennonites had the privileges of parochial schools, Ewert should, in his opinion, have put his efforts not into influencing the Mennonites to form public schools, but into raising the standards of the private schools. Had this been the aim of the education association and of H.H. Ewert, the Fuerstenland people in time would have given their support to it. Members of the Bergthal Mennonites, however, say that in general the Fuerstenland people were not interested in raising the standards of the private schools; that the Fuerstenland people were in the majority and would not allow school reforms. The Fuerstenland Mennonites were suspicious of the normal school and of Ewert in his dual role as principal and government inspector, and considered this man from Kansas to be working for the forces of evil.

Not only did the Fuerstenland Mennonites take this

attitude but likewise did the majority of Elder Johann Funk's Bergthal congregation. This was the worst blow of all to the Mennonite Educational Association. Elder Funk had felt certain that his own congregation would support him. Of 476 families of his church, 415 broke away and founded the Sommerfeld church with Abraham Doerksen as elected elder.¹⁷ Only sixty-one families decided to stay with Elder Funk and support the school reform movement. In the East Reserve the struggle was much less intense. The Bergthal people here were also quite conservative. It had been the more liberal-minded Bergthal people who had left the East Reserve and settled on the better land in the West Reserve. When the school controversy reached its height and the split in Elder Funk's congregation occurred, the Bergthal church in the East Reserve also demonstrated its disapproval by changing its name to Chortitz church.

When H.H. Ewert opened the Gretna school in the fall of 1891 there were only eight students. But from where should students come? Only a few families had stayed with Elder Funk and some of these evidently were not too decisive in their position.

The conflict continued. The progressive element did not cease in their struggle to form public schools. Wherever they could persuade the majority of ratepayers in any one locality to petition for a public school, the

17

Schaefer, P.J., Heinrich Ewert, Op. cit., p. 56

municipality would provide the funds out of taxes paid by all residents. In such a village the conservative minority was compelled to pay twice; for their own private school and the public school. Bitter resentment arose since the enemies of the public school realized that this double taxation was imposed upon them not by the government, but by their own brethren.

As was related earlier in this chapter, the number of public schools gradually increased in spite of the conflict until in 1903 there were forty-one district schools, most of which were staffed by teachers who had received some training in Gretna. Since Ewert no doubt did most to influence the formation of these schools, he was hated most. In the election campaign of 1903, the conservative Mennonites promised the Conservative candidates their votes, if, in return, the Conservatives, when in power, would dismiss Ewert as inspector of public schools. It was hoped that, once his salary was suspended, the education association would be unable to retain his services. Ewert was dismissed as inspector but he continued as principal even though the education association could pay him only a small salary. Consequently, the Gretna school no longer functioned as a normal school but operated only as a private high school. Ewert's aim, however, to train young people for the teaching profession in order to raise the standards of the Mennonite schools, never

changed.

Ewert's dismissal as inspector was a serious blow to the Mennonite Educational Association and when it split into two groups over petty differences of opinion in 1905, the school reform movement almost ceased. Two Mennonite private high schools resulted, one at Gretna and the other in Altona. Since this issue will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapter, it suffices to say here that though both schools had identical aims and were supported by the same progressive element, they caused another major controversy in this period of religious and language conflicts.

Intergroup Conflicts

The school conflict thus far was largely confined to the Mennonites themselves. Until this time there was little interference by the government in the local management of Mennonite education.

The Manitoba Public Schools Act of 1890 had not had any serious effects. It stated that; (1) all public schools in the province should be non-sectarian, state-controlled, and supported by all taxpayers. (2) school attendance was not compulsory, and (3) religion could be taught before or after school hours in the public school itself.¹⁸ Since attendance was not compulsory, the Menn-

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The Mennonite Quarterly Review. Published by the Mennonite Historical Society, Goshen College, Goshen, Indiana. Oct. 1950.

onites could send their children to the private schools. Thus the law did not affect the Fuerstenland and Sommerfeld people. However, the public schools were to give instruction in English, which some Mennonite teachers could not do.

In 1896 the famous Laurier-Greenway compromise was reached. It permitted the teaching of religion and made possible a bilingual system of instruction in schools attended by at least ten pupils whose mother tongue was not English.¹⁹

In 1907 the Roblin government made a small attempt at assimilating the smaller ethnic groups into an Anglo-Saxon Canadian pattern. The provincial government asked that the Union Jack be flown over every public school building. Premier Roblin said that the decree was intended to "inculcate feelings of patriotism and materially assist in blending together the various nationalities in the province into one common citizenship irrespective of race and creed".²⁰ Mr. Roblin also declared that "what we need is to get the youth filled with the traditions of the British flag and when they are men, they will be able to defend it".²¹

Roblin's "flag-flying policy" was ill received by the Mennonites. The Mennonites looked on the flag as a military emblem. The flying of the flag might ultimately

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Francis, E.K., Op. cit., p. 216.

20

Ibid, p. 220

21

Ibid, p. 220.

result in abrogation of the privilege of exemption of military service. One of the major reasons why the Mennonites had emigrated from Russia was because their privilege of exemption from military service was being taken away from them. The Union Jack proclamation caused much anxiety. If their children were lured into strong patriotism, it would be difficult for the parents to rear the children in the doctrine of non-resistance.

The first reaction to the new law came from the Klein Gemeinde, Holdemann and Sommerfeld groups. To them it was reason enough to change back to the private school and the number of public schools decreased. Some public schools even returned the provincial grants, since they had not been flying the Union Jack. In a few years, however, most of the Mennonites who had public schools became accustomed to the idea of a flag and the controversy subsided.

The Roblin administration soon realized that if it wished to rebuild the Mennonite public school system it would have to engage an inspector who knew the German language, and they succeeded in obtaining A. Weidenhammer from Ontario.²² Weidenhammer became inspector January 1, 1910. By 1916 most of the schools that had reverted to private were again public and new districts were formed.

The next great set-back for the Mennonites came with the outbreak of World War I. The Liberal party

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Mr. Weidenhammer changed his name to Willows.

advocated assimilation of minority groups in their election campaign. They demanded national schools, obligatory teaching of English in all public schools, and compulsory school attendance.²³ In 1916 the Liberal party was swept into power. The war placed the Mennonites at a disadvantage which most of the other minority ethnic groups did not experience. The Mennonites were a German-speaking minority and conscientious objectors. Professor C.B. Sissons of Victoria College, Toronto referred to it in this manner; "when the use of the German language was an offence added to conscientious objection to war, the Mennonites, who had remained true to their faith, found themselves in a very uncomfortable position".²⁴

At the turn of the century large groups of European emigrants had settled in Manitoba so that by 1916 no more than 58 percent of Manitoba's population were of British origin.²⁵ The government became alarmed and launched a policy of assimilation. However, the bilingual schools actually prevented assimilation.

In the bilingual schools outside the Mennonite districts, administration became very difficult. In some districts two or three ethnic groups existed, each with about the same population. Which was now the language other than English to be taught? Sometimes Polish child-

²³ Francis, E.K. Op. cit., p. 226.

²⁴ Ibid, p. 227.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 228.

ren were forced to attend Ruthenian or Finnish schools or vice versa. Sometimes, if one or two families of one group moved away, a different group was in the majority.

In many bilingual schools the teaching of English was very poor. Professor Sissons in his book "Bilingual Schools in Canada" refers to the reports of special inspectors sent out by the Department of Education in 1915, to investigate the condition of bilingual schools and says, "Those in the French Bi-Lingual schools, are generally unfavorable, and the same is true of the Polish and Ruthenian Bi-Lingual schools, while the words "Very well", "Very well indeed", "Fluently" appear quite frequently in the description of those among the Germans."²⁶ In another paragraph Professor Sissons says: "As a matter of fact, among the progressive Germans of Southern Manitoba in 1912, were found real Bi-Lingual schools, that is schools in which the pupils learned to read, write and speak two languages."²⁷

The Mennonites, sensing that the Liberal government would carry out their policy of assimilation and do away with bilingual schools, formed a Mennonite School Commission which set up a petition on January 7, 1916, to be presented to the Manitoba Legislature. The following is a copy of this petition.

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Willows, A, Op. cit., pp. 67-68.

²⁷

Ibid, p. 67.

"Some points relating to bilingual teaching in our schools, put before our representative in the Manitoba Legislature, Hon. Valentine Winkler, by the Mennonite School Commission, and discussion of same at a meeting at the home of Mr. John D. Klassen, Rosenfeld, on Friday, January 7, 1916.

1. The majority of the Mennonites have so far put their confidence in the Liberal party and have uninterruptedly sent a Liberal representative to the legislature. They would not like to be betrayed by the Liberal party.
2. If they were betrayed, they would feel so offended that they would cease to support the Liberal government.
3. The Liberal party has no mandate from the people to abolish bilingual schools. They said in their platform only that they would see to the efficient teaching of the English language. The question of bilingual schools was not the issue of the last election, but honest government.
4. If the teaching of the German language in the public schools of this province should be prohibited or curtailed very much, it would surely jeopardize the interests for public schools in our midst; and what has been achieved during the course of the last twenty-five years, would thereby be set back very much.
5. We want no special privileges through administrative channels. Because this would
 - a. Arouse the jealousy of other nationalities and denominations.
 - b. It would make us dependent on the feeling and opinion of officers of the Department of Education and to the whim of the inspector.
 - c. It would be whip in the hands of the politicians at election times.
6. We wish and demand that the present act in regard to the bilingual system remains in force. Probably with one change, namely that the majority of the ratepayers of a district may make application for the teaching of also in another language other than the English, instead of that the ratepayers of ten children may demand this, as stated in the present act, so as to make it easier to carry it out.

7. We wish to have the right to teach in our schools besides the English also the German, and to give religious instruction to our children. The educating and obtaining of the qualified teachers for our schools will be tended to by ourselves, so that the government need not have any trouble or expense in this connection, as far as the Mennonites are concerned.

8. We do not see any reason why people should begrudge us the opportunity we are seeking to give our children a broader education than they would get if taught only in one language.

9. We further wish to have a school inspector who is conversant in the German language, so as to be also able to inspect our schools regarding to the teaching of German, and to be better able to converse with the trustees and with the people of our districts. If possible, we would prefer to have a school inspector belonging to our denomination.

10. Some reasons why we want to have instruction in German:

- a. Not out of national interests.
- b. Not out of ecclesiastical interests. But
- c. Because German is our mother tongue, and all our religious and devotional books and other valuable documents are published in the German language. These would be useless to our children in the course of time, if they were taught only in English.
- d. So as to enable our children, when away from home, they may be able to write in correct German to their German parents and also be able to read the letters, which they receive from their German parents and friends.
- e. So as to enable our children to worship intelligently together with their parents and other relatives.
- f. To enable our children to understand the English language more thoroughly than they are able otherwise.
- g. If others go to much trouble and expense to obtain a knowledge of the German language, we, who are in possession of the same, do not want to give it up.

11. At the time when the Mennonites emigrated to Canada, they received a written declaration from the Dominion Government, stating that they

would have perfect freedom as to school and church affairs. Upon this declaration they decided to settle in Manitoba, and have always put much weight on it. They would be very much disappointed and worried, if this would be taken from them.

12. In case the government should intend to change the law in regard to the bilingual schools, the Mennonite School Commission would be very much obliged to be informed, when such a law would be in preparation, so as to then send a delegation to Winnipeg to speak for our wishes and our interests. 28

Notwithstanding, a large number of bilingual schools did unsatisfactory work and caused many difficult problems of administration. Then too, bilingual schools prevented assimilation with Anglo-Saxon ways of life. Therefore, the Liberal government adopted the new school policy which the party had advocated prior to its election and passed the School Attendance Act on March 10, 1916. First: All children between the ages of seven and fourteen were compelled to attend public schools unless private education was provided for them in a manner acceptable to the school authorities. Second: English was made in practice the sole language of instruction in all public schools of the province. 29

Since the Mennonites had hoped that the bilingual system of schools would remain and because of the legal loophole that had been included in the Public School Attendance Act, the Mennonites did the expected thing;

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The copy was obtained from historical documents kept by Mr. Benjamin Ewert.

29

Francis, E.K. Op. cit., p. 230.

they declared their schools once more as private. There was opposition now not only from the conservatives but also from the progressives who had been most favorable to the extension of the public school system.

There was one more factor which, as Willows states, was largely responsible for having created the Mennonite school problem.³⁰

The various Mennonite churches had appointed an advisory committee (Fuerstenland people excepted) to consult with the inspector, whenever necessary, on matters of importance to the schools. This committee had no official standing with the Department. In the fall of 1915, this committee and a number of Mennonite preachers held a meeting at a farm house. The minister of agriculture, who was the representative of the Mennonites in the Legislature, was present. At this meeting the school question was discussed. The Mennonites said: "A man, higher in authority than Inspector Willows, had told them that their schools would not be affected by the new legislation if they operated them privately".³¹ Willows discouraged this backward step but it was of no avail. When the School Attendance Act was passed, many of the public schools were declared private.

It would seem then that for the majority of the Mennonites the new act would not be a great hindrance.

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Willows, A. Op. cit., p. 96.

³¹

Ibid, pp. 74-75.

Anxiety grew amongst the Mennonites because of the clause in the compulsory school act which read: "That any child attending a private school, may be examined by the officer of the government at any time, and upon finding that the same has not got satisfactory knowledge, impose a fine on the parents of that child." The Mennonites were afraid that this clause could be a legal loophole for an inspector to cause private schools to be closed and command children to go to a public school. The inspector would decide whether a child had sufficient knowledge or not and it would be an easy matter for him to declare all the children in the private schools as having insufficient knowledge. Consequently the Mennonites sent delegates to the Manitoba government to present their views. The following is what they presented:

A presentation of views to the ministers of the Manitoba government by delegates of Mennonites, in regard to the private schools, which are in existence in their midst.

Honorable gentlemen:-

We appreciate it very much to have the opportunity to appear before you today in the interest of education and hope you will give our wishes kind consideration.

The preceding speaker, Mr. H.H. Ewert, had mentioned among other things, that originally all the schools among the Mennonites of southern Manitoba were private schools, and although in the course of time a number of public schools have been adopted, the majority of the schools among our people are still private schools, - there must be reasons for this. The main reasons have already been mentioned by the preceding speaker.

At the time when the Mennonites emigrated to Canada, it was not only good land and healthy climate that they were looking for; most of all it was freedom to live and worship their God and Saviour according to the dictates of their conscience and according to their interpretation of the Holy Scriptures, and also freedom to be permitted to bring up and educate their children in a way, which would be in accordance with their ideas and belief.

As stated in that written declaration received from the Dominion government at the time of their immigration, which has been mentioned by the preceding speaker, our people still want to be unmolested and unrestricted in the teaching of religious branches and also in the teaching of their mother tongue in the daily schools.

We consider the education of our children entirely insufficient if they receive no instruction in the principles of the Christian religion in the daily school, and if the education is not carried on in the Christian spirit. And we further also consider the education of our children insufficient, if they do not also receive instruction in the mother tongue.

The majority of our people have refrained from adopting public schools, because they feared, that they would thereby compromise their position with the privilege of educating their children according to their faith.

For the above reasons the majority of our people prefer private schools to public schools, so as to be "unmolested and unrestricted" in the education of their children. - They do not want the Bible and religious teaching barred from the school.

This is such a serious matter with them, that they would rather leave the country, than to give up their rights, which had been promised them by the Dominion government. They would however regret very much to leave this country, as they have always been treated satisfactorily and have had no cause to be discontented. They are very thankful to the government - both provincial and dominion - for the protection and good will extended to them.

Regarding the private schools in our midst, we can assure you, that great progress has been made during the last few years. At several places new and better school buildings have been erected, better educated teachers are now em-

ployed in most of the schools, and the teaching of the English language is receiving more attention every year. And it is without doubt that progress will be much faster in the future than what it has been in the past.

We are very glad and thankful to note that the compulsory school act, recently passed by this legislature, contains the statement, that the child must not necessarily attend a public school, but that it may receive its education at home or in a private school, and we sincerely hope that this provision will not be changed.

But this compulsory school act also contains a statement, which has worried our people quite a bit, namely the statement: "That any child attending a private school may be examined by the officer of the government at any time, and upon finding that the same has not got satisfactory knowledge, impose a fine on the parents of that child".

Our people fear that this clause might be made use of by the officers of the government in such a way, whereby trouble could be given to the people preferring and conducting private schools.

We sincerely hope and pray, that the government of Manitoba will be considerate of the Mennonites of southern Manitoba, when changing or making new laws in regard to education, so that they may not be "molested or restricted" in the fulfillment of their religious convictions and in the way of educating their children.

Benj. Ewert. 32

For several years the government followed a watchful waiting policy, and the law was not rigorously enforced. German was still retained as a subject for an hour or more each day among the progressive groups which had already adopted the English language as the principal medium of instruction. The inspectors did not inquire too closely into the small amount of German that was still retained, so long as the schools measured up to the required standards of instruction, and English was well

taught. The private schools were given time to adapt themselves also to the new conditions.

Two years later, however, in the fall of 1918, the authorities began strictly to enforce the laws. The school administration had full power to condemn any private school by simply finding fault with it. The building might be inadequate, or the school could be classed as having poor equipment, ill-trained teachers or low standards. In each case the children attending it would not then be fulfilling the requirements of the Act and could be forced to go to a public school. Soon the Mennonite private schools were all condemned. What the Mennonites had feared would happen, had happened.

Most of the groups after many petitions to the Legislature and appeals to the courts, finally gave in and conformed to the provincial laws. The Fuerstenland people to whom the German school seemed an integral part of their religious system nonetheless preferred persecution. They felt that without their German school and without religious instruction, the maintenance of their religious faith would be seriously threatened. They strongly believed also that what the Manitoba government was now doing was a violation of the promises of 1873, in particular the promise "that the Mennonites will have the fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles and educating their children in schools, as pro-

vided by law, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever".³³ The Fuerstenland people interpreted this as meaning they had the privilege of conducting whatever schools they wished, prescribing their own course of studies, and that the provincial school law did not concern them. They felt that they could not be compelled to educate their children in schools established by law in the province.

In a petition of October 14, 1921, the Mennonites emphasized:

"That they were unable to delegate to others the all-important responsibility of educating their children, convinced as they are, that instruction in other than religious schools would result in the weakening and even loss of faith, and would be generally detrimental to the moral and spiritual welfare of the children".³⁴

They declared that they would be willing to:

"provide for adequate instruction in English, strive for as high a standard as possible, intensify the training of teachers, facilitate the inspection by the Department of Education".³⁵

They said that they wished to place their schools beyond just criticism.

The government, however, was determined to carry out its program of assimilation and decided that the parochial schools must go. J.F. Greenway was appointed official school trustee for all districts without public schools. Schools were built and funds obtained from the

33

See Appendix C.

34

Francis, E.K. Op. cit., p. 233.

35

Ibid, p. 233.

district or village by the levying of taxes. English teachers from outside were sent in. Few children came. To enforce attendance, the government fined and jailed the parents. Sometimes Mennonites from whole villages had to appear in court.

This was too much for many of the Fuerstenland and Sommerfeld people and they started talking of leaving Canada. Delegates were sent to various South American countries, Mexico, and even to the United States. In the South American countries and in Mexico they were promised their demands, - religious liberty, complete control over their schools, with permission to teach in German.

In 1922-24 about 5000 Mennonites, mostly of the Fuerstenland group but some of the Sommerfeld church, emigrated to Mexico and settled in the state of Chihuahua. In 1926-27 another 1700 settled in the Chaco of Paraguay in South America.

In writing about the outcome of the issue over the Mennonite private schools, Dr. Henry C. Smith writes:

"Narrow minded, undoubtedly the Old Colonists were, and mistaken in their contention that the kernel of Mennonitism can be preserved only in German shell. Nevertheless they were pious, honest and sincere. In all Canada there was not a more industrious and law abiding people than they, nor with a firmer conviction to do the right as they saw it. Their going was a distinct loss to the moral as well as economic development of the western Provinces;³⁶ and could have been prevented by a wiser administration of affairs

on the part of the school authorities."³⁷

With the emigration of these 7000 Mennonites, the controversy over the private schools quickly subsided. Religious and language conflicts gradually dropped into the background and a very difficult and unpleasant period in the history of Mennonite education came to an end.

CHAPTER V

THE STRUGGLE FOR BETTER EDUCATION AMONG THE MENNONITES

Progressive Movement in Education

Pioneer conditions were especially difficult in the East Reserve and as a result a large number of Bergthal Mennonites left their homesteads and settled in the West Reserve in the district south and east of Rosenfeld. Since they had no effective means of transportation by way of which they could keep in contact with their church in the East Reserve they formed their own church organization and elected Johann Funk as their bishop. It was out of this group of Mennonites that the movement for better schools was born.

Many members of the Bergthaler Gemeinde were dissatisfied with existing conditions in the church. They thought that too much emphasis was placed on customs and traditions and that there was a need for a more pietistic way of life. They felt that the church was not fulfilling its purpose and if its spiritual standards were to be raised, this must be done through the medium of education. Sunday-schools should be organized, church choirs started, and most of all the schools should be improved.

The followers of this new movement energetically set about to convince the Mennonites of southern Manitoba of the necessity of an educational institute. The Fuerstenland people however kept themselves aloof from this

movement. For the young people, more education would just open the door into the "world of sin", they believed. The desire for knowledge beyond that needed for participation in religious functions, local community life, and the occupation of a simple farmer, was an occasion for sin.

Having lost hope that he would gain any support from the Fuerstenland Mennonites or "Altkoloniers" as they were called, Elder Funk made a motion in his own church to the effect that a normal school should be built somewhere in the middle of the settlement. But even his own members did not all support him and the motion was defeated.

The struggle for better education nevertheless did not cease. In February 1889 an educational association was formed, including Elder Johann Funk and four preachers. Better teacher-training was stressed as the first step toward better schools. In the fall of 1889 they opened a Mennonite normal school in Gretna. A building 30' x 50' had been erected and with Wilhelm Rempel of Rhineland as teacher, classes were begun in September.

The story of the ensuing struggle over the Gretna school has been described in the preceding chapter. Elder Funk's congregation felt relieved when they saw the normal school close its doors after only one year of existence. When the Association gained the services of H.H. Ewert, an American whom they fully distrusted, the

conflict took on new proportions. H.H. Ewert was not only teacher for the Mennonites but inspector of district schools for the government. They feared, and with some justification, that Ewert would discourage the common parochial schools and encourage the formation of district schools under the auspices of municipal councils. As has already been stated the outcome of the conflict was a church-split in Elder Funk's congregation. Only a few families declared their willingness to continue to support the progressive movement in education. Another blow was struck the Mennonite Educational Association when the Conservatives came into power and dismissed Ewert as inspector of public schools. The enemies of the normal school now felt certain that the school would have to close its doors once more. Ewert no longer was paid by the government and the Mennonite Educational Association did not have sufficient funds to pay him his full salary. The opponents of the school, however, had made themselves extremely unpopular with their tactics, and new enthusiasm for the Mennonite normal school was born. Within a year's time a \$ 25,000 fund to assure the continued operation of the school had been raised. Nevertheless, what followed in the ensuing years almost stopped the school reform movement.

Since the time of Ewert's dismissal as inspector of schools, the school at Gretna operated primarily as a

high school and plans were made to construct a new building. Although Gretna had, in the pioneer years of the Mennonite settlement in the West Reserve, been the main business center, Altona and Winkler had in the meantime developed into promising towns. When the question of where to build the new school arose, business men in each of the three aforementioned places set about to convince the people that their town offered the most appropriate site.

The directors of the Mennonite Educational Association invited all the members of the association to a meeting in Altona on May 5, 1905. At the meeting all the members seemed to have been in favor of erecting a new building, but a bitter controversy resulted over the problem of where the school should be situated. According to the statutes of the Association, the school could only be transferred to a new location by a two-thirds majority vote cast by the members at an authorized meeting.¹

Realizing that the votes would be cast for three different places, many of the members asked that they all vote twice. One vote should decide which two towns would have the majority votes. Then everyone should vote again and thus give one town at least a two-thirds majority. The majority of people present were not in favor of this procedure and by a show of hands it was decided that

¹

Schaefer, P.J., Heinrich Ewert, Op. cit., p. 66.

everyone would vote only once. The ballots were cast and the outcome was as follows:²

Winkler	117
Altona	179
Gretna	151

Altona did not have the two-thirds majority which was required. Since the members however had decided to vote only once, Altona was regarded as the site for the new school. Since Gretna was losing the school, it was the people of Gretna who insisted on another vote. Ill feeling towards one another grew very quickly and when H.H. Ewert saw what was happening he suggested that everyone should show by rising to their feet whether they would support the school if built at Altona. Evidently everyone rose from their seats and pledged their support for the school.³

The school directors bought ten acres of land just west of Altona, but did not have sufficient funds to begin construction of the new building. At a directors meeting on September 1, 1906 H.H. Ewert was assigned the task of working out the details of construction with an architect.⁴ In the summer of 1907 the new school building was erected. In the meantime classes continued in the school at Gretna.

2

Ibid, p. 66.

3

Wiebe, Gerhard, An Die Schulfreunde der Mennonitischen Bildungs-Anstalt in Sued Manitoba Ein Geschichtliches.

4

Ibid, Dokument. 1908 p. 1.

The sentiment of the Gretna people had not changed. A petition which asked for a re-vote and signed by sixty-five members was rejected by the directors. A second petition signed by nearly 100 members was also rejected.⁵ Moreover the directors no longer agreed and a number of them resigned. The result was that complete control fell into the hands of Altona people. In Altona members of the Association began to question whether Ewert should stay on as teacher. In the summer of 1908 the directors ordered the school at Gretna torn down and rebuilt as a teacherage in Altona. This last act brought the conflict to a climax. The dissatisfied members of the Association met and elected their own directors. Immediately they decided to build a school in Gretna. In September of the same year both schools opened their doors for instruction. The school in Altona under the direction of another Mennonite from the United States, J.J. Balzer, was called the Mennonite Educational Institute and the one in Gretna, the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, under the direction of H.H. Ewert.

As can readily be understood, the conflict did not cease. Each school competed with the other in gaining moral support, acquiring students and strengthening their financial conditions. Both schools, with almost identical aims and supported by the same group of progressives,

5

"Beleuchtungen und Berichtungen einiger Angaben, die im ersten Katalog der Mennonitischen Bildungsanstalt von Altona ueber gewisse Schulverhaeltnisse gemacht werden."

continued to function till 1926 when the school in Altona burned down. Insufficient funds prevented it from being rebuilt. Nevertheless, the students from Altona did not now seek admittance in Gretna. Instead, they entered the public school at Altona and continued their education there. Even to the present day the results of the Altona-Gretna conflict can be felt. Parents from Altona still hesitate to send their children to the Mennonite Collegiate Institute.

The school at Gretna experienced great financial difficulties in the years following the episode of 1908. By 1912 the enrollment reached eighty-eight. The school did not have sufficient accommodation for the boys in the two storey dormitory above the school classrooms. Girls had always had to acquire board and room in private homes in town. In the Mennonite monthly paper, "Der Mitarbeiter", Ewert wrote that even more encouraging than the increased enrollment was the fact that they would be able to offer courses leading to a first class teaching certificate. Fifty-two students took teacher-training courses whereas the remainder of the eighty-eight took preparatory courses.⁶ The teaching staff was increased from three to four.

In succeeding years the enrollment dropped again, which can in part be attributed to uncertain conditions

6

Ewert, H.H. Der Mitarbeiter Feb. 1916. p. 5.

following World War I. In the early 1920's Mennonites from Russia began to emigrate to Canada once more. By 1930 approximately 8000 Mennonite refugees had arrived in Manitoba. These Mennonite refugees generally called "Russlaender", had a high regard for education. Many of them had been teachers in Russia and on settling in Manitoba took advantage of the teacher-training courses offered in Gretna. Financially these people could do very little for the school, but the enrollment went up to sixty-four in 1927 as compared to a low of thirty-two in 1923.

The school appeared to have a bright future. In 1930, however, the great depression started. Very few could earn enough to pay tuition at a private school. In 1932 the enrollment had decreased to twenty-two, of which twelve were in grade twelve.⁷ The number of teachers was reduced to two. When suggestions from members of the directorate were put forth to close the school, Ewert donated half his salary and insisted that the school carry on. In 1934 conditions were somewhat improved and three teachers were placed on the staff once more.

In the spring of 1934 Ewert became ill, but during the summer holidays he recovered sufficiently to take on his responsibilities as principal again. When the students left school for their Christmas holidays H.H.Ewert

7

Op. cit., Schaefer, P.J. p. 93.

seemed quite healthy, but he suffered a relapse on December 24 and died five days later.⁸

Funeral services were held in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute chapel. Despite blizzard conditions many people came to pay their last respects. Those present realized that a great educator, to whom the Mennonites of Manitoba would be indebted for generations to come, had passed away.

The Work, Influence and Contribution of H.H. Ewert
to Mennonite Education

H.H. Ewert had been ordained as minister of the Mennonite church in Kansas. Although he had many invitations to speak at church festivities and Sunday morning services, he believed his first responsibilities were to his students at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute. All students from grades nine to twelve attended Sunday school and church service.

The great contribution of Ewert was the establishing in Manitoba of a center of learning for the Mennonite people. The main weakness of the early Mennonite schools lay not in their narrow curriculum or in poor methods of instruction but rather in their complete separation from higher centers of learning. Had the English schools in Manitoba separated themselves from intercourse with schools of England, Scotland, the United States or even

from the schools of eastern Canada, they too would have met the fate of many of the Mennonite private schools. Ewert tried to establish a school which would very definitely raise the standards of Mennonite education. Had the majority of the people accepted the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, the Mennonite private schools would have fared better. In all probability the great exodus of Mennonites from Manitoba to Mexico and to South America would not have taken place.

H.H. Ewert had very definite principles of education. In an article called "Our Responsibilities in the Field of Education", he states his aims and methods. Education is the harmonious development of all the faculties of the child. The ultimate end of education is for man to become Christ-like.⁹ Ewert believed that to achieve anything less was a sin against the objectives of education. The public schools of Canada were trying to make good citizens, people who would be useful to society. The state, however, omitted the highest, best and most important part of education - religious instruction. Ewert felt too that the state was not responsible for this and that Christian parents must realize that the state cannot provide for a well-rounded education. Many churches give religious instruction in Sunday school, but this is only a small part of what should be done.

9

Ewert H.H., Der Mitarbeiter, Unsere Aufgabe auf dem Gebiete der Erziehung. Maerz 1917, p. 1.



H.H. Ewert, Principal, 1891-1934

For Ewert, religious education should serve a three-fold function. First, it was to influence the pupil to become a "Child of God". Second, it was to develop the character of the individual in order to render him as much as possible like Christ. Third, religious instruction was to provide the individual with the necessary tools for effective work in the church.

In his program of religious instruction Ewert included the following: Bible story, hymns, fundamentals of faith, church history and Mennonite history. The pupils shall know the Bible to the extent that they can verify their faith, and know what to look for and where to find it.¹⁰

He believed that religious instruction should be given in the home, in school and in the church. To the child the home is the first and most important educational institution. No one can influence and mould the child as well as the parents. Out of relations with father and mother, with sister and brother, moral obligations such as obedience, truthfulness, honesty, kindness, courtesy, love, etc. can grow. The home can also furnish religious nurture for the child. The parents are the child's earliest objects of worship. Ewert believed that by and large parents were neglecting their duties in giving religious training to their children. Fathers who are away from

10

Ibid, pp. 1-4.

their children most of the day come home, read the paper and find very little time for their children. Religious training is then left to the mother. Mothers often feel that they, too, have too much work to do and anxiously send them out or quickly put them to bed. Ewert suggested that parents should meet and discuss common problems of child training. Parents should acquire books on how to bring up children. They should sing a great deal with their children from song books suited to the age of the child.¹¹

For H.H. Ewert, the most important factor in religious instruction in school was the teacher himself. The example of a noble, Christian teacher, one whose heart is in his work, one who sees in every child the image of God is going to have a good and important influence on the child. Although such a teacher's direct religious influence in the classroom is necessarily limited, his personal life in the school and his witness in the community are deeply felt.

Ewert stated that the schools should make use of the last half hour of the school day for religious instruction. Although much is accomplished in Sunday school yet no one should believe that one-half hour of religious instruction per week is sufficient. So much more could be done if one-half hour of instruction were given each day.¹²

¹¹

Ibid, April issue pp. 1-3.

¹²

Ibid, May issue pp. 1-3.

The church, too, must play an important part in the religious education of the children. The church must provide for Sunday schools, young people's work, choirs, etc. But Ewert was convinced that the church must do more. If the membership of a church is large enough, then church schools should be built which would be satisfactory to both the state and the church. If this was not financially possible then the church should seek other ways in which to provide religious education for the young people. The church, for example, could lengthen the school year. After the school term had been completed as prescribed by the Department of Education the church could continue for a month or more. This plan had been adopted in some states in the United States. Another plan which Ewert suggested was to have a half a day of school on Saturday. If this would be continued for a number of years the child would receive a considerable amount of knowledge in religion. A third plan would be to use the last half hour of each school day for religious instruction, as was described in the preceding paragraph. The church also should encourage students to enter the teaching profession. Not only should all the Mennonite schools have Mennonite teachers but Mennonite teachers should go out with missionary zeal into the schools of the other people in the province.

Ewert expected much of a teacher and especially of

those teachers who graduated from his school. It was his belief that only the best, the most conscientious and the most intelligent students should enter the teaching profession. Teachers must have a thorough and well rounded education and must be able to instruct in religion. Ewert believed that the teacher must have a personality that would evoke respect and admiration in children. In the eyes of the children the teacher should be the ideal person, representing that which is noble and good. A teacher must put himself whole-heartedly into the profession.

Teaching must become his life work. He must constantly seek to improve his methods of presentation. He must continue his education, studying especially the works of famous educators but also keeping pace with new trends in education. A teacher nevertheless must seek to be original and avoid at all costs the error of becoming pedantic.

The teacher must feel that during the school-day he is largely taking the place of the parent. He must not only love teaching but also love children. He must love each individually and not only the group as such. Parents expect a teacher to be interested in each child and help wherever possible. A teacher must never be gloomy, nervous or irritable but jovial and friendly. If children misbehave the teacher must not scold but instruct and admonish in a loving manner. Ewert also expected of a teacher that he be an active member of society, adjusting

himself as much as possible to the people and showing interest in social activities. He must above all be active, in the work of the church and Sunday school. If the parents expect the teacher to give extra classes in religion and German, he must do it willingly. Above all Ewert expected the teachers to do their very best since the parents entrusted to them that which was most valuable to them -- their children.¹³

Not enough time has elapsed since H.H. Ewert's days to ascertain how great his influence was upon his people, nor will it probably ever be fully known. His objective was to raise the educational level of the Mennonite schools in Manitoba. His main influence was through the school at Gretna.

Ewert had a very difficult task as inspector of schools. His appointment to the position in Manitoba coincided with the enactment of the Public Schools Act. It primarily sought to establish a system of free, national schools which all ratepayers were obliged to support. The denominational system of public education was abolished. The controversy which followed raged with great violence particularly between the years 1890 and 1897. Among conservative Mennonites the new school act caused a considerable stir. They opposed the efforts of H.H. Ewert to organize district schools and looked with sus-

¹³

Op. cit., Schaefer, P.J. pp. 137-139.

picion upon his double capacity as principal of a private normal school and inspector of public schools. But as inspector of schools he was able to remain in close contact with many of his former students and encourage them in their efforts to raise the standards of the public schools and in gaining public support.

Ewert was dominant in many other fields of service. He organized the first Mennonite Sunday school, "Jugendverein",¹⁴ and church choir¹⁵ in Manitoba. He was instrumental in organizing Mennonite teachers conventions and local teachers' associations.

In the fall of 1934 the Mennonite teachers at their convention in Altona presented H.H. Ewert, in acknowledgment of the service rendered to them, a Bible, cane and a bronze plate with an inscription on it. The following was written inside the Bible:

Professor H.H. Ewert
Gretna, Manitoba.

In kindest recognition of a life of sacrifice,
devotion and service to the Mennonite people
of Manitoba.

Principal of the M.C.I., 1891-1935
Inspector of Public Schools, 1891-1903
Organizer of Public Schools
Organizer of Teachers' Institutes and Conventions
Pioneer Leader of the People
Religious Leader in the Community
Staunch Friend and Benefactor of the German Cause

¹⁴

Young People's Endeavor.

¹⁵

Op. cit., Schaefer, P.J. p. 155.

Truly a life that has not been lived in vain.

Yours sincerely,
The Teachers.

Manitoba, Canada, July 1934.¹⁶

H.H. Ewert wrote many articles. As editor of the church paper, "Der Mitarbeiter" he contributed a great deal to educational and spiritual thought not only for the Mennonites in Manitoba, but throughout Canada. He often wrote articles for the "Winnipeg Free Press". In 1932 he was asked by "The Historical Society of Winnipeg" to write a paper on "The Mennonite". On another occasion Ewert is reported to have said that he was not interested in writing history but in making history. That Ewert made history is beyond a doubt. Upon his death the "Winnipeg Free Press" wrote:

"The death of Mr. H.H. Ewert bereaves Gretna of a beloved teacher and Manitoba of a distinguished citizen. It is not only his length of service, nearly fifty years in one community; it is not only the leadership he gave among the people of his own faith, the Mennonites; it was the quality of the man himself, his devotion to scholarship that made him outstanding.

"Gretna Collegiate had become under him a high school giving the same facilities of education as the many other high schools in the province. It has been that and more. It has been an institution to which young people of the Mennonite faith have looked, and not in vain, for inspiration and guidance along the cultural way. Mr. Ewert in all the long years of his service never lost his enthusiasm. Each morning was a new day to him, and each boy and girl a new opportunity to start on the delightful adventure of learning. He had travelled to some extent but his kingdom was the kingdom of the

mind and that opened windows on all the world. It was this sense of horizons that he tried to impart to his pupils, that indeed he imparted to whom soever came his way and saluted his ship in passing.

"The easy comradeship of books was his, so too the wings of music, so too the fellowship of his friends. Mr. Ewert planted his garden and tended it in a small Manitoba town, but the perfumes of it are carried forth through many, many lives." 17

In the February 1935 issue of "The Western School Journal", Dr. W.A. McIntyre, principal of the normal school in Winnipeg, wrote of the influence that Ewert had had upon his people.

"There has been no one in the province actively interested in education that has exercised a wiser and more gracious influence. Of him as of the great Pestalozzi might be written the words: 'Everything for others; nothing for himself; blessed be his name'. He was scholarly, broad in his sympathies, progressive in his attitudes, capable in every way of directing work that engrossed his life. And his task was not an easy one. Coming here over forty-three years ago at the request of the Government and the Mennonite people, he had to meet the needs of a community that had yet to learn the customs and the language of the country of their adoption. How well he has succeeded will be appreciated by anybody who visits the great districts in which the Mennonite people have settled. Away back in 1877, Lord Dufferin made reference to the Mennonite people in a eulogistic address delivered in Winnipeg. That his dreams have been realized is largely owing to the patient, far-seeing effort of this teacher of teachers - the true missionary. It is few men who can serve so long and retain the whole-hearted respect and esteem of his students and also the good-will and confidence of the general public. His people at a

great demonstration have shown their gratitude. The least we can do is to join with them in silent sympathy. The work he has done will last forever, for in those who have learned from him "the dead yet speaketh". 18

CHAPTER VI

MENNONITE EDUCATION IN MODERN TIMES

Striking changes have occurred in recent years in the field of education, mainly under the influence of the Russlaender immigrants.¹ At the end of the first World War, the schools in the Mennonite colonies had been "nationalized" with the purpose of assimilation with Anglo-Saxon ways of life. Since then a whole generation has grown up which has never attended a parochial Mennonite grade school. Year after year, the secular public school has taught Mennonite children the Anglo-Saxon language and culture. The public school has been accepted as a matter of fact and the majority of Mennonites are taking a keen and active interest in educational affairs.

High school and university attendance by Mennonites has been on the increase since 1932 and particularly so in the last ten years. Many young Mennonites have been preparing for the teaching and nursing professions whereas others have graduated as missionaries, agriculturists, professors, social workers, lawyers and physicians.

Public schools in the Mennonite colonies have absorbed most of the Mennonite high school students. Steinbach, Winkler, Plum Coulee and Altona public schools have

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The Mennonites who immigrated to Canada from Russia in the twenties were termed Russlaender.

played a very important role in Mennonite secondary education. Three private secondary schools have been maintained under the auspices of the Mennonite church. The earlier story of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna has already been told. The Steinbach Bible Institute opened its doors in 1931 and the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Insitute in Winnipeg in 1945.

Progress in general education did not solve the particular educational problems of the church. Advanced training had to be given to those who became ministers, deacons, Sunday school teachers and choir leaders. For this purpose the Winkler Bible School and the Elim Bible School were founded in 1925 and 1929 respectively. To give a more advanced theological and secular education the Mennonite Brethern Bible College was opened in 1944 in Elmwood and the Canadian Mennonite Bible College in 1947 in Winnipeg.*

Thus it appears that in recent times Mennonite education has acquired an increasingly complex structure. Public schools, private high schools, Bible schools and Bible colleges form the main framework. In addition to that the kindergarten and teachers and trustees associations have formed intrinsic parts of the expanding educational structure.

Starting then with the public schools, the writer

*

The latter is now located in Tuxedo.

shall trace briefly the development of each of the institutions mentioned and the contribution that each has made to Mennonite education.

Public Schools

The reader will recall that the eventual outcome of the unresolved issue over the private Mennonite elementary schools in Manitoba was the withdrawal of the Fuerstenland group and some of the Sommerfelder congregations from the unequal struggle with the government and their emigration to other lands where they could continue their own schools. Yet, the Mennonites who arrived at this time from Russia had no objection to learning the English language and were not opposed to the public schools. Thus it was that the private Mennonite elementary schools closed their doors.

Of necessity the public schools began to flourish. School attendance in Mennonite school districts was excellent. Soon scholastic achievements in these schools were superior to the provincial average. Because the Mennonites continued to live in compact settlements, and many of them in villages, the public school became an integral part of their own community structure rather than the foreign body it had been in the earlier years. It was run by their own trustees and manned by their own teachers, mainly men of the Russlaender group, many of whom had received at least a part of their education in

the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna.

It did not take long until there were fewer one-room and more two-room schools in rural areas with a Mennonite majority than anywhere else in the province.² High school attendance was soon to be on the increase.

Since 1945 the high school enrollment has increased tremendously. Out of a total enrollment of 752, the Winkler public school had 246 in the secondary division in the 1956-1957 school-year. For the 1957-1958 school year the high school will have ten teachers on its staff, an increase of two over the past year. The town erected a new school with a large auditorium in 1953 at a cost of \$200,000. Steinbach has a high school enrollment of 190 with eight teachers on the staff. In 1955 Altona erected a new school with accompanying auditorium at a cost of \$150,00, and in the past year the high school had 105 students in regular attendance.

At the end of the first World War the inspectors of public schools felt that many of the Mennonite teachers were insufficiently prepared to teach even in elementary schools. A quarter of a century later Manitoba has experienced a great influx of Mennonites into the teaching profession. As many as one out of every five students at the Provincial Normal School have been Mennonites. Dr. D.S. Woods, former Dean of the Faculty of Education

at the University of Manitoba, went so far as to say, "the teachers in Manitoba are Mennonites".

Secondary schools, too, have experienced an increase in academically qualified teachers. Winkler has ten teachers with university degrees, Steinbach seven and Altona four.³ Many, if not most, of the male elementary teachers are also continuing their education in summer school at the University of Manitoba.

As is required of all public schools in Manitoba, the Mennonite schools follow the program of studies issued by the Department of Education of the Province. Most of the elementary schools teach German and an increasing number are availing themselves of the one-half hour daily which can be set aside for religious instruction. Wherever the German language is taught the school day is lengthened by one-half hour. Some schools start at eight-thirty; others shorten their lunch hour. In most high schools only the German course prescribed by the Department is taught. The Morden high school, however, has changed to the study of the French language. Religious education in high school in most cases takes the form of religious exercises in the morning. Winkler has a special Christian emphasis week when a guest speaker holds evangelical services in the evenings at the colle-

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The writer was unable to obtain the required information from the Morden public school.

giate. Attendance is optional. Steinbach has a religious period on Fridays for all high school students. Furthermore the Inter School Christian Fellowship plays an important role in the religious lives of the students in most of the Mennonite high schools.

Music and singing have always come to the forefront in Mennonite schools. Winkler has a school choir and orchestra, Plum Coulee a school band, Altona and Steinbach both have school choirs. Participation in the South-eastern and Southern Manitoba Musical Festivals indicates that music and singing is becoming increasingly more important in the schools. The Southern Manitoba Musical Festival was started primarily through the efforts of K.H. Neufeld and the first festival was held in 1933 with one session. Since that time it has developed into the second largest rural festival in the Province with three adjudicators and over twenty sessions. In 1952 about 2,000 competitors took part. Entries totalled 498 - 179 in speech arts and 319 in music.⁴ Sessions are held in Mor-den, Winkler and Altona. The South-Eastern Manitoba Musical Festival Society has been in operation since 1936 (prior to 1945 it was called the Hanover Festival) and has held annual festivals in Steinbach.⁵

4

Condensed Report of the Third Annual Conference of the Manitoba and North-Western Ontario Area Council of Music Festivals, 1952. pp. 7-8.

5

Ibid, pp. 4-5.

Kindergarten

The kindergarten idea was brought to the Manitoba Mennonites by the Russlaender Mennonites in the early twenties. Miss Anna Vogt, generally known in Mennonite circles as "Tante Anna" did more than any other person to make the kindergarten idea known in Manitoba.

Born in the Chortitza settlement in the Ukraine in 1883, Anna Vogt received her early education in Schoenwiese. Since she was greatly interested in the welfare of small children, her father decided to have her trained as a kindergarten teacher. In 1912 at the age of 29 she began her studies at the Pestalozzi-Fröbel Seminar for kindergarten teachers in Berlin. Two years later she went back to her home to expound Froebelian ideas to the Mennonite communities.

Anna Vogt was given a cordial reception. In her first kindergarten class the enrollment rose to 95 and her work proved to be a success. The idea took root and more teachers sought training at the Pestalozzi-Froebel school. Considering the importance of the work, the Mennonites asked Anna Vogt to give a kindergarten course to young teachers at the Central school in Chortitza. At one time five kindergartens were operating in the Mennonite settlements. But World War I and the revolution in Russia were not conducive to German kindergartens and they were closed.

In 1923 Anna Vogt emigrated to Canada. She was in Manitoba for only a month before she started a German kindergarten in Steinbach. Undoubtedly it was the Russ-laender Mennonites who, being familiar with the kindergarten, sent their children. Untiringly and with missionary zeal Anna Vogt continued her work. Each year's kindergarten started in May and ended at Christmas. Classes were from nine o'clock to twelve. Most children started at the age of four but some at three. Some children attended as many as three years. After fourteen years of continuous teaching she decided to leave Steinbach to try to start a kindergarten movement in Winnipeg.

Anna Vogt soon realized that the Mennonites were much too widely scattered in the city to make a kindergarten feasible. Therefore the following year in April of 1938, she started a kindergarten in the Mennonite district of North Kildonan. Over thirty children attended regularly that first year. The kindergarten idea grew. In 1955 a second kindergarten class was introduced in North Kildonan and despite this and the fact that she is seventy-four years of age, Anna Vogt still has sixty-five to seventy children in her classes.

In the kindergarten, the children recite children's poetry, act in children's plays and learn to use the German language correctly. Exercises consist of light gymnastics, games and singing. Yet, not all Froebelian

activities are introduced since the classes are too crowded.

The kindergarten idea has not spread to other Mennonite communities to any great extent. Parents show interest in kindergartens but it seems that they are not willing to pay sufficiently high wages to induce teachers to enter such work. In Steinbach the kindergarten class was discontinued after some years. In 1950, however, the public school introduced two English kindergarten classes which have been in operation ever since. Winkler took the initiative in 1952 and introduced a class in the public school. Altona, too, had a kindergarten for two years but it has been discontinued.

Teachers' Association

It has been pointed out in an earlier chapter that H.H. Ewert was instrumental in organizing Mennonite teachers conventions and local teachers associations. The conventions played a vital part in raising the educational standards of the Mennonite schools. Because great stress was placed by the Mennonite Teachers Association on the teaching of German, the conventions were discontinued at the beginning of World War II.

After the war a teachers association sponsored by the Manitoba Teachers Society was organized. Although this society was desirous of raising educational standards, it did not stress the teaching of German and reli-

gion. Being aware that the Mennonite teachers would soon lose sight of the need of teaching German and religion in the public schools, P.J. Schaefer arranged an organizational meeting which was held in the Elim Bible school in the spring of 1954. Schaefer still had the minutes of the meetings of the teachers conventions held prior to World War II.

Approximately fifty teachers took part in the meeting in Altona. Present were public school, high school, private high school, Bible school and Bible college teachers. F.F. Enns chaired the meeting. A committee was elected with John Dick as president.

Since that time annual meetings of the Mennonite Teachers Association have been held. Not nearly all Mennonite teachers attend, but nevertheless it is felt that the association is at least partially successful in awakening a new interest in the teaching of German and religion in the Mennonite public schools of southern Manitoba.

At the convention held on October 3, 1955, at Grunthal a committee was set up to investigate the possibility of setting up a program of studies for the teaching of German and religion. Until this time each teacher more or less decided what he would teach. This made it extremely difficult for the teachers who came directly out of Normal school and seldom knew what to teach in

German and religion. Furthermore, a teacher on taking a position in a different school seldom knew what the preceding teacher had taught in each grade.

The curriculum committee did not accomplish much during its first year of existence. Therefore at the convention held in October of 1956 at Lowe Farm it was enlarged. The following members were elected: John Janzen, Plum Coulee; D. Wiebe, Rosengart; Dave Friesen, Winkler; P.J. Rempel, Rosenhoff; H.G. Ens, Gnadenthal; J. Peters, Steinbach; Paul Neustaedter, Grunthal.

At the time of the annual Manitoba Trustees convention held in Winnipeg the Mennonite trustees held a meeting of their own in the Marlborough Hotel. At this time John Janzen, chairman of the curriculum committee, reported to the trustees of the work that teachers were doing in setting up a program of studies for German and religion. The trustees under the chairmanship of A.J. Thiessen supported the endeavour whole-heartedly. On February 18, 1957, the school house at Rosenhoff became the scene of a significant meeting in the history of Mennonite educational efforts in southern Manitoba. A quarter-century old dream of H.H. Ewert was realized when representatives of the teaching profession, the Mennonite Trustees Association, and leaders of various church groups met to discuss problems in education,

The main item for discussion was the new coordinated

curriculum for instruction of the German language and religion in Mennonite public schools prepared by the committee of the Mennonite Teachers Conference. Great enthusiasm was shown by all. Chairman of the meeting was H.G. Ens, teacher in Gnadenthal. Secretary was P.J. Rempel, teacher at Rosenhoff.

The immediate result of the meeting was the formation of a twenty-one member educational council to include seven teachers, seven trustees, and seven church leaders. The seven members of the curriculum committee automatically became members of the council. The seven representing Mennonite trustees in the council are: Abram Wiebe, Steinbach; Dave Bueckert, Gnadenthal; H.F. Wiebe, Winkler; V. Giesbrecht, New Bothwell; Abram Enns, Rheinland; John Stoesz, Altona; and John Hildebrand, Lorette. The seven elders and church leaders to represent the various church groups appointed at the meeting are: David Reimer, Steinbach, Evangelical Mennonite Church; H. Schellenberg, Grunthal, Chortitz Church; J.H. Friesen, Altona, Rudnerweider Church; J.A. Friesen, Lowe Farm, Sommerfelder Church; J.F. Penner, Morden, Old Colony Church; D.K. Duerksen, Winnipeg, Mennonite Brethren Church; P.J. Schaefer, Gretna, Manitoba Mennonite Conference.

The twenty-one member educational council once more met at Rosenhoff on March 2. The program of studies for German and religion, which had now been completed, was

approved by the council. It is to be printed as soon as possible in order to be ready for the schools when classes begin in September, 1957. Two copies of the program of studies are to be sent to each school, one copy for the board of trustees and one for the teacher. The trustees said that they would pay all expenses incurred. Furthermore the council asked the curriculum committee to begin work immediately on the writing of textbooks for religion and German. The trustees plan to ask all schools which will be using the texts to pay fifty dollars per classroom and thus cover the costs of printing. The program of studies will be sent free of charge upon request.

Trustees Associations

The reader will recall that a Mennonite school commission was created in 1916, to set up a petition to be put before the Manitoba legislature on matters relating to bilingual teaching in the public schools of Manitoba. When the commission did not achieve what it set out to do, it was dissolved. Thereupon, H.H. Ewert succeeded in interesting the Mennonites in the formation of a Mennonite trustee association. The association was quite active. It sponsored a summer school course for teachers of German and religion, held each summer at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, and it held an annual educational conference. To this conference teachers, ministers, trustees and anyone interested in

education was invited.⁶ Important topics relating to education were discussed and demonstration lessons were given in German and religion.

When the second World War began in 1939 the Mennonite Trustee Association was dissolved. After the war, however, Mennonite trustee conventions were held once more. The first meeting was held in the St. Regis Hotel in Winnipeg in 1948. Similar meetings were held annually on one evening of the week of the Manitoba School Trustees Association convention. In 1957 the Mennonite Trustees Association was formally organized at the meeting held in the Marlborough Hotel at which H.F. Wiebe, of Winkler, was elected president. The municipalities represented in the Association are Rhineland, Stanley, Morris and Hanover. The Association represents about 200 schools in southern Manitoba. The Mennonite Trustee Association set itself a two-fold aim; firstly, to improve teacher-trustee relations and, secondly, to unify the work of the Mennonites on the Manitoba School Trustees Association.

As previously mentioned, the Association is sponsoring the production of the program of studies and the printing of textbooks for German and religion to be used in the Mennonite public schools. In addition, the Association has made a formal appeal to the minister of education regarding the matter of authorizing the teaching

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Op. cit., P.J. Schaefer, p. 89

of German from grades four and up.

The Mennonites have begun to take an active part not only in their own trustee association but also in the activities of the Manitoba School Trustees Association. The latter association represents the trustees of all of Manitoba. B.L. Brown and Dr. C.W. Wiebe have served as directors on it in the past. J.M. Froese is one of the directors at the present. For the past four years A.J. Thiessen has been president of the Manitoba School Trustees Association. Since 1953 the Mennonites have been represented on all the educational boards of Manitoba. These boards are: Advisory Board of Education, Discipline Committee, Collective Agreement Committee, Teachers Certification and Selections Committee and Teachers Pension Fund Committee. A.J. Thiessen is the Mennonite representative on each of these committees.

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute

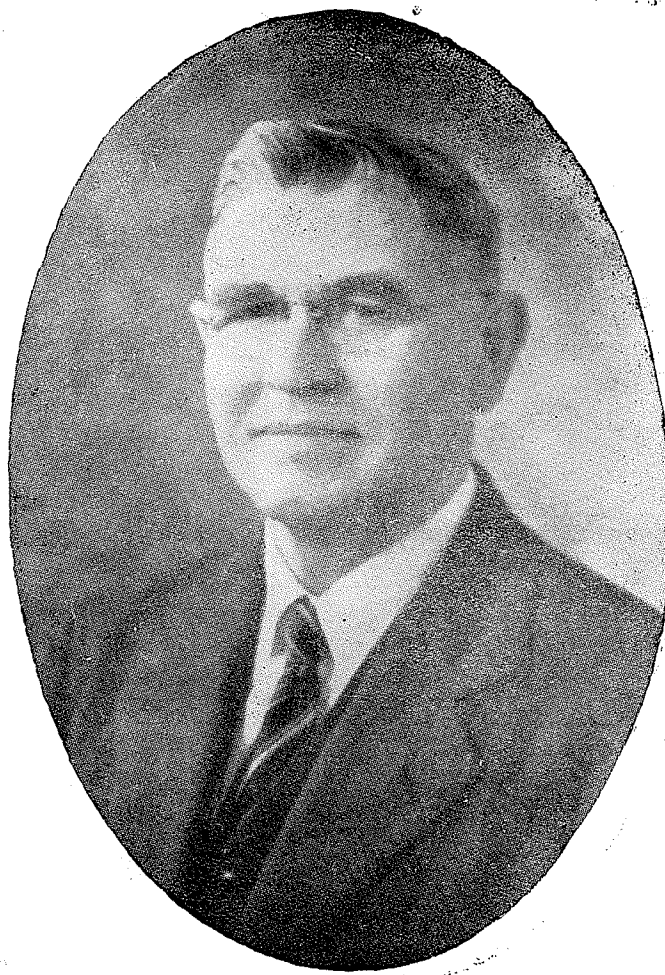
The founding of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute and its development up to the death of H.H. Ewert in 1934 have been described in previous chapters. In order to understand the present status of the school it will be necessary to relate the historical development of the institute from the time of H.H. Ewert's death to the present.

Upon the death of H.H. Ewert, the principalship of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute was placed in the cap-

able hands of G.H. Peters, who for seven years had been a member of the staff. Peters stated as he took over the duties of principal, that he wished to continue in the same principles on which Ewert had been working. Education in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute would, as in the past, be founded on a fundamental Christian basis and he would strive against any form of modernism which was beginning to make itself felt in Mennonite circles. Peters said that he wished to hold high the old and tried principles of the Mennonite forefathers with religion and German continuing to have a very important place in the course of studies. The staff would try to watch over the life of the students and by reasonable but strict rules prevent the students from treading wrong paths, and yet help them become acquainted with an orderly way of life.⁷

In 1936, because of financial trouble, the educational association which had been operating the school placed it in the hands of the Manitoba Mennonite Conference, but the conference was unable to solve the financial difficulties of the school. Because the Mennonite Brethren Church was actively interested in the Gretna school but was not a member of the Conference, and, because some churches which belonged to the Conference had a very passive attitude toward the school and gave it no support,

⁷ Peters, G.H., "Der Werdegang der Mennonitischen Lehranstalt zu Gretna, Manitoba" in "Wart-Jahrbuch fuer die Mennonitische Gemeinschaft in Canada. Steinbach Post, Man. 1943, p. 24.



G.H. Peters, B.A.
Teacher 1929-1948, Principal 1935-1948

a new educational organization was formed called Association of Manitoba Mennonite Churches.⁸

Churches which annually contributed thirty cents per church member to the school became members of the newly formed association and had the right to send one delegate per twenty church members to the annual school meetings. In general, churches which annually contributed money to the school treasury automatically became members of the school association. Parents who had children at school and any person who paid an annual fee of two dollars also had the right to vote. The Association elected twelve directors to take care of the business matters of the school, with four new members to be elected each year.

The Association of Manitoba Mennonite Churches was able to gain the support of many of the Mennonite people and particularly the Russlaender Mennonites. By 1938 the enrollment had increased to eighty-one. With the outbreak of the war in 1939 the enrollment decreased somewhat but by 1943 it had risen to 124. Four teachers were now placed on the staff. Most of the students were the children of Russlaender Mennonites, approximately equal numbers from the Mennonite Brethren Church and the so-called "Kirchengemeinden".⁹ Parents were asked to pay their fees in advance so that enough beds, chairs, tables and other

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Ibid, p. 23

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Most of the so-called "Kirchengemeinden" were members of the Manitoba Mennonite Conference.

equipment could be acquired to accommodate the large student body. A large house was bought a block east of the school to help accommodate the boys and another house (which became known as the second G.R.) was rented to¹⁰ accommodate the girls. A large number of girls still had to find lodgings in private homes.

The prospects that the enrollment would be even higher the following year caused the teachers and directors to work on a plan of building a new school. A planning committee consisting of C.A. De Fehr, C.F. Klassen, Elder Benj. Ewert and G.H. Peters was appointed by the directors. Articles familiarizing the people with the idea of a new school appeared in the different Mennonite papers and on November, 1943, the Association of Manitoba Mennonite Churches decided at an annual meeting to build a new school. The estimated cost of the school was \$60,000 and the contract was given to Waterman and Waterbury Co. The money was to be raised by individual contributions. By the spring of 1944, \$25,000 were collected and \$3,000 more was promised. At a special meeting of the school association it was decided that at least \$40,000 must be collected before building operations could begin. By 1946 this amount of money was raised and the school consisting of five large classrooms, principal's office,

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The Bergthaler Church had allowed the school to use a former "Old Folks Home" as a girls residence previously and it was known as the first G.R.



Mennonite Collegiate Institute, Gretna

staff-room, wash-rooms, chemistry and physics laboratories and a chapel was built.

In the fall of 1944 the enrollment had risen to 145 and a fifth teacher had to be placed on the staff. In January 1947 the new school was opened with an encouraging enrollment of 148. The old school was used as boys dormitory and the house that had been used for some of the boys now became a girls' residence.

From the time of the death of H.H. Ewert until his resignation in 1948, G.H. Peters had worked hard towards the development of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute. From the time when it was doubtful whether the school would remain in existence, to the time when the Mennonites were enthusiastically giving it their support, Peters worked untiringly. It was his firm belief that if the Mennonites did not provide an education on a fundamental Christian basis for their children, they would soon lose their Christian faith. As a teacher Peters was interested in seeing that all his students passed their examinations in June. Graduates of the school often remarked, "If you failed in Mr. Peters' subjects, then you must have tried to fail" or "Mr. Peters makes it difficult for anyone to fail in his subjects". Peters also was vitally interested in "character building". Graduates admit that the training received in residence meant just as much to them as the knowledge received in class.

There were very few graduates who did not deeply respect G.H. Peters. In the eyes of his former students, the new school building stands as a monument to him. The Mennonites owe much to G.H. Peters for the contributions he made to Mennonite education.

With the resignation of Peters, P.J. Schaefer, who had been a staff member of the school since 1943, was asked to take on the principalship of the school.

In 1950 the school celebrated its 60th anniversary. Festivities took place in a large tent at Gretna on June 10.

The directors had made a special effort to pay the debt on the newly built school. Contributions came in from all parts of the province and when the school inherited \$3,707.85 from Miss Tina Klassen, of Gretna, the school debts were paid. In 1952 a large auditorium, 54 feet by 120 feet, was built adjacent to the new school to fill a need that had been felt for some time (the tent which was used for the annual "Schulfest"¹¹ and graduation exercises was beyond repair). For sports activities, too, the auditorium was invaluable.

In the meantime the boys and girls dormitories had become outmoded -- some of them beyond repair. Many parents warned the directors that if new dormitories were not built they would cease sending their children. When

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School's closing program.



P.J. Schaefer, B.A.
Teacher 1943-1948, Principal 1948-

the directors, at an annual meeting, learned that the delegates were in favor of selling all the old buildings and constructing a new dormitory, plans were laid. Some people strongly argued that Gretna was not central enough and suggestions were made that the school and auditorium be moved, preferably to Morden, where a large tract of land could be acquired and a school campus founded. In order that another conflict should not arise as had arisen between Gretna and Altona in 1905, the directors very carefully and thoroughly aired all sides of the question. In the spring of 1955 it was finally decided by a large majority vote that the school should remain in Gretna, whereupon it was decided to build a new dormitory.

The construction of the new dormitory was given to Hofmann Construction of Morris, Manitoba. A large one-story E-shaped building was to be constructed just west of the school. One wing of the dormitory was to serve the boys and the other the girls. Between the two wings, the dining room and kitchen were to be situated. By October 1, 1955, the new dormitory was completed at a cost of about \$130,000. The school directors expect that within ten years the residence will be paid for.

With the erection of the new dormitory the enrollment of the school increased from the previous 134 to 179 for the school year of 1955-56. Many believed that the residence had been built much too large, but it was

filled to its capacity of 152 the first year. Since the enrollment was high, seven teachers were placed on the staff.

Although it appears that much more progress has been made since the death of the founder, his were the crucial years. Today the school appears to have a bright future, and if the economic conditions in the province do not become appreciably worse in the next ten years the school should again be free of debt.

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute offers the General Course as prescribed by the Department of Education for Grades nine to twelve. Students of Grades, 9, 11 and 12 write departmental examinations, whereas the grade 10 students write the school inspector's examinations. All the Grade 9 and 10 boys take a course in woodwork and the girls a course in sewing and knitting. Prizes are given for the best work done.

Emphasis is placed on the study of German and religion. Each grade has seven periods of German a week with the exception of Grade 12, which has five. German compositions must be submitted to the teacher just as often as English compositions. Grade 11 and 12 students study German dramas and German poetry. Monetary prizes are given for highest marks in German in Grades 10, 11 and 12. Courses in religion are taught in German. Grade 9 takes Bible story and the Old Testament. Grade 10 studies

Bible story, the Old Testament, catechism and church history. For Grade 11 the courses are doctrine, Mennonite history, and Old Testament. Grade 12 has doctrine, ethics, character study, methods of teaching Sunday school and Mennonite history. Approximately one-third of each school day is used for the study of German and religion.

Every Thursday afternoon the whole student body participates in singing. Twice a week after school hours a selected group of singers practice. This group often renders special programs in different churches. Most years it has participated in the southern Manitoba musical festival. Boys and girls quartets, trios and choirs are also organized.

Extra-curricular activities are of a varied nature. Volleyball, basketball, tennis, curling, hockey, skating and touch football are the popular sports. Since the Mennonite Collegiate Institute is primarily a boarding school most of these activities take place after school hours. The student body elects a sports committee, which organizes the activities for the year.

Three or four "socials" are organized each year, taking the form of skating parties, wiener roasts, games and informal programs. Each year the graduation banquet, which is prepared by Grade 11 for the Grade 12's, is the most important social event of the year.

Other student activities are of a religious nature.

All students are asked to attend Sunday school and church service. The students render two literary as well as two religious programs each month.

During the first week of school the students are given a sheet of rules and the principal explains reasons for each rule. Following is a copy of the most important rules:

Rules of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute

I. Dormitory rules.

Time Schedule

7:00 A.M.	- rising bell
7:30 A.M.	- breakfast
8:10- 8:40	- study period
8:50 - 12:00	- classes
12:05	- lunch
1:00 - 4:05	- classes
6:00	- supper
7:00 - 9:00	-study period
9:00 - 9:20	- recess
11:00	- lights out

Study hours in the dormitory do not apply on Saturday and Sunday evenings. Monday mornings from 9:00 - 12:00 is study time again in the dormitory,¹² The teachers

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The Mennonite Collegiate Institute has classes on Saturday but not on Monday. This arrangement has been retained from H.H. Ewert's time when he had classes on Saturday and inspected schools on Monday.

alternate as deans of the dormitory once a week.

II. General rules

Deportment

1. Students may not visit each other during study hours.
2. Students are forbidden to smoke, attend movie theaters or play cards. Any student taking any type of alcoholic beverage into his room is expelled immediately.
3. Girls are asked to appear in class in blue uniforms. Boys shall wear jackets, shirts and neckties in class.
4. Girls are not allowed to wear slacks except at organized sports activities.

Since the school does not receive a grant from the government, the students pay tuition. The schedule is as follows:

	Grade IX	Grade X	Grade XI	Grade XII
Tuition	76.00	96.00	117.00	141.00
Registration	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Laboratory fees	3.00	4.00	5.00	8.00
Sports fees	2.00	2.00	2.00	2.00
Board and Room	<u>275.00</u>	<u>275.00</u>	<u>275.00</u>	<u>275.00</u>
Total	357.00	378.00	400.00	427.00

After considering the program for the Mennonite Collegiate Institute, the reader undoubtedly will already have formed the conclusion that the institution still has in its aims the religious basis that H.H. Ewert laid when he founded the school. The aims of the Mennonite

Collegiate Institute correlate very closely with those that President Samuel Johnson, first president of King's College, stated for his college.

The chief thing that is aimed at in this college is to teach and engage the children to know God in Jesus Christ, and to love and serve Him in all sobriety, godliness, and righteousness of life, with a perfect heart, and a willing mind; and to train them up in all virtuous habits, and all such useful knowledge as may render them creditable to their families and friends, ornaments to their country and useful to the public weal in their generation." 13

In the Mennonite Collegiate Institute the Bible has been the effective focus for the curriculum. Correlation of subject matter is a living reality. It means such things as this: that the study of the Bible holds not a marginal but a central place in the curriculum; that the teachers of the so-called secular subjects will be alert to help students discover the Christian implications of the subject matter they are considering, and that youth be made to understand that all honest work, well and faithfully done, is a service for God and is in that sense Christian. The essential principle for youth to grasp is that no aspect of life is outside the scope of the Christian philosophy. Religion shall not become something apart from life, studied only on Sunday. Thus only when religion is given its rightful place in the

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Samuel Johnson, President of King's College, His Career and Writings, edited by Herbert and Carol Schneider, V.L.V., p. 223, as quoted in God in Education by H.P. Van Dusen.

child's life in school can the school curriculum be said to be well rounded. Education then is no longer just instruction in the three "R's" but education for the whole of life.

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute has always encouraged its students to choose a vocation in line with their interests and abilities, but also to consider the aspect of service to society. From its early Normal school days to the present the school has encouraged students to enter the teaching profession. Certainly the teaching profession affords ample opportunity to serve. The leaders of the progressive movement in education in the early pioneer years realized that if the Mennonite schools would not have teachers of their own faith, their people would soon be assimilated in the new land and lose their identity. Even though most of the Mennonite public schools in Manitoba do have their own teachers now, the Mennonite Collegiate Institute still encourages its students to enter the teaching profession and with missionary zeal make their influence felt in as many public schools as possible. The example of a noble, Christian teacher, one whose heart is in his work, one who sees in every child the image of God is going to have a good and important influence on the child. Although such a teacher's direct religious influence in the classroom is necessarily limited, his personal life in the school and

his witness in the community may be deeply felt.

The Mennonite Collegiate Institute has always felt that by the discipline and routine work of the school, children can be taught the mechanical virtues of promptness, regularity, cheerfulness, industry and obedience. Children should be taught the meaning of "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not", a lesson of the greatest importance to Canadian as well as Mennonite youth. They can be taught self-control, self-reliance and perseverance. The disorderly must be warned and admonished. Children should be taught to follow the good, to learn to work and to enjoy it, to be thankful and respectful to parents, teachers and their elders and to fear God. They should learn to retain the good and abstain from evil.

The Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute

The increasing number of Mennonites seeking work in Winnipeg in the early 1940's created the circumstances for the formation of a Mennonite private high school in that city. Until this time the Mennonite Brethren Church had supported the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in Gretna, with approximately half the enrollment being children of parents who belonged to this denomination. Most of the Mennonites in Winnipeg were financially unable to send their children to Gretna, yet many felt that their children would lose the Mennonite faith if religious training was not provided. Knowing that their children needed

high school training, the Mennonites in Winnipeg decided to build a private high school rather than a Bible school. Since the Mennonite population in the city was predominantly Mennonite Brethren, it was this faction which started the new school.

The Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute had its beginning in the autumn of 1945. An association had been formed after much contemplation and discussion and a school committee elected with C.C. Warkentine as chairman. Permission was obtained from the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, corner of Kelvin Street and Talbot Avenue in Elmwood, to start a Grade XI class in the administration building,¹⁴ but parents requested that a Grade X class also be added.

In the first year the enrollment in the two grades reached fifty-six. H. Wall, M.A., was the principal and full-time instructor. A teacher of English descent was obtained as part-time instructor for the subjects prescribed by the Department of Education. J.B. Toews and Dr. A.H. Unruh, of the Bible College, gave instruction in religion.¹⁵

In the summer of 1947 at the provincial conference

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The Mennonite Brethren Bible College will be described later in the chapter.

¹⁵

Minutes of the Provincial Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Manitoba, October 1945, pp. 21-22.

of the Mennonite Brethren Church held in Morden, J.H. Unruh the newly elected chairman of the school board of the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute, asked the conference to give its support to the school. The conference gave the school board permission to solicit funds for their school in the respective Mennonite Brethren churches of the province. J.H. Unruh further reported that the Bible College no longer could spare the classrooms for the high school and as a result the school board had been forced to move its classes. A large house at 193 Talbot Avenue, near the college, had been purchased for \$10,900 and Grades 10 and 12 had been taught in it for a year. Grade 11 had remained in the Bible College building. Future plans were to build a large addition 40 feet by 40 feet to the house. G.J. Lorenz, B.A., was now principal and the other teachers on the staff were H. Regehr, dean and instructor of religion; J. Toews, B.A., and W. Dueck, B.A.

The enrollment for the 1947-48 school year had risen to eighty-six. Grade IX had been added. It is interesting to note that forty-five, or over half the students came from rural areas. Evidently parents from outside of Winnipeg who belonged to the Mennonite Brethren Church no longer were sending their students to the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna, but to Winnipeg. In December of that year the planned addition of two classrooms

was completed. The total cost of the school was now \$24,000. Of this sum \$10,000 had been paid. In the years that followed, the school was gradually accepted by the different Mennonite Brethren churches. The enrollment rose to 127 in the 1951-52 school year. Of this student body, nineteen came from Mennonite families which did not belong to the Mennonite Brethren Church. At the end of this school year the principal, G.J. Lorenz, and A.J. Dick, a full-time teacher, resigned. W. Neufeld, of Abbotsford, B.C., and H.J. Dick, of Saskatoon, took their places.

In the summer of 1954 another building program was begun. The house which was first used as school was separated from the other newer classrooms and moved onto an adjacent lot on Talbot Avenue and remodelled into a dormitory. The dormitory can house twenty students. This is used for the girls whereas the boys have to find accommodation in private homes. Kitchen and dining room facilities were provided in the basement of the dormitory. In place of the house, new classrooms were added to the school. This building program cost approximately \$38,000. Thus the Mennonite Brethren Collegiate Institute now consists of a dormitory and a six-room modern school with chapel, recreation room and offices. The property of the school is now valued at \$96,000.00.¹⁶

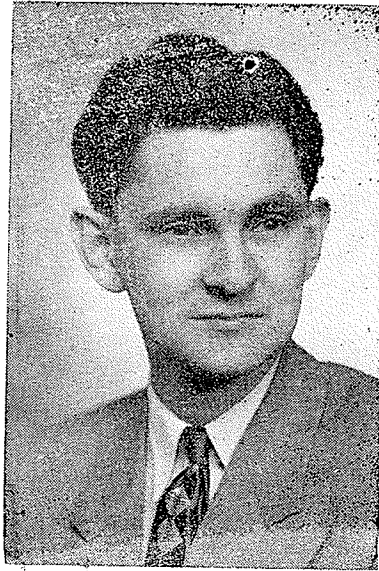
W. Neufeld remained as principal of the school for only one year. For the following year D.K. Duerksen, instructor of German and religion, became acting-principal and was succeeded by V. Adrian in September of 1954. The following year Grades 7 and 8 were added to the school and J. Enns obtained as teacher for this class. The need for such a class was soon verified, for not all students who wished to attend could be accepted that first year for lack of room.

For the 1957-58 school-year the teachers which have agreed to serve are H.J. Dick, B. Ed., principal; H. Visch, B.A., vice-principal; H. Regehr, dean of students; G.H. Peters, B.A.*; H. Letkemann, B.A.; J. Enns, teacher of Grades 7 and 8; H. Voth, part-time instructor in music.

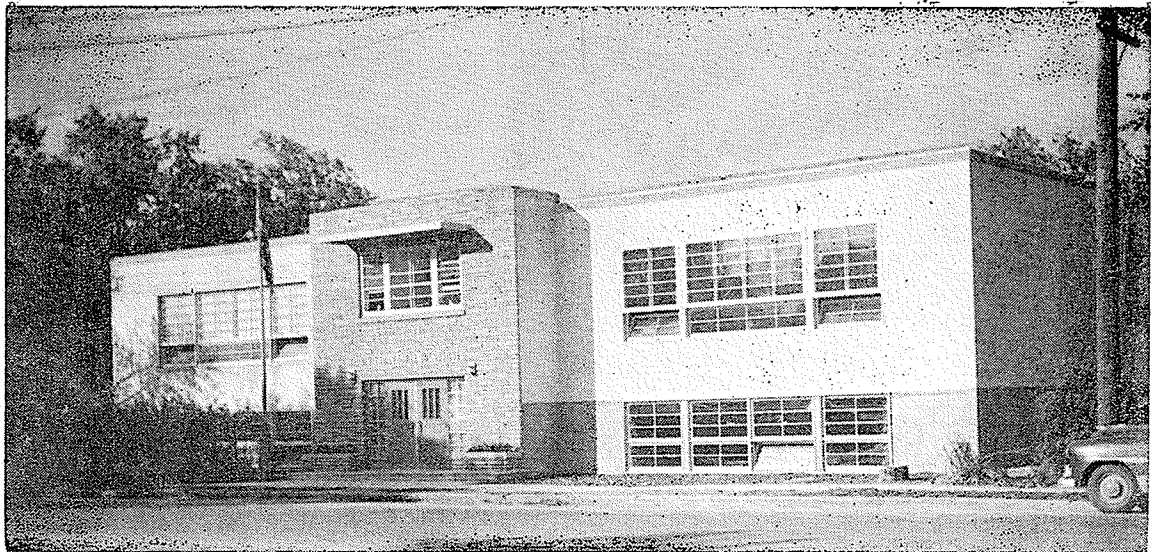
Enthusiasm for the school has grown to such an extent that nine Mennonite Brethren churches have pledged their support of the school. The school is now really the property of these churches. The churches concerned are North Kildonan, South End, Elmwood, Niverville, Mor-den, Manitou, Springstein, Domain and Newton Siding. Each church elects a member to the school board with the exception of the three urban churches which each elect two members. The chairman of the board is elected by all the churches at the annual meeting. The present chairman is C.C. Warkentin.

*

G.H. Peters was principal of the Mennonite Collegiate Institute at Gretna for many years.



H.J. Dick, B.Ed.
Teacher 1952- , Principal 1957-



Mennonite Brethern Collegiate Institute, Winnipeg.

Having given the reader a brief glimpse into the historical development of the school, the writer shall now try to give as clear a picture as possible of what the school stands for.

The aim and purpose of the Institute is stated as follows:

It is the desire of the churches, the parents and the teachers, that our youth acquire a Christian view of life and of the world, that they become deeply rooted in a biblical faith and that they develop into useful men and women serving God and their fellowmen.

For this purpose all the teachers on the staff are required to be positively Christian. Then too, all students must take the religious instructions offered in their respective classrooms. 17

The school curriculum includes all the subjects required by the government according to the "Program of Studies for Secondary Schools". Then, too, the study of religion and of the German language is particularly emphasized. The religious instruction consists of Bible story, biblical knowledge, church history, Bible doctrine and Mennonite history. German consists of grammar, literature, poetry, German reading and essay writing. The attendance of these classes is compulsory. Exceptions are made where students have satisfactorily completed these courses at a Bible school.

The Institute is recognized by the Department of Education as an examination center. During the school

year the school is under the supervision of the school inspector. The graduates of this school receive equal rights and privileges with students from public schools.

The school accepts students of all denominations for Grades 7 to 12. The school accepts only those students who are willing to submit to the school rules. Students, too, are expected to do some gratis work for the school. During school hours the girls are expected to wear a light blouse and a navy jumper.

The school has graduation exercises for the Grade 12 students at the end of the school year. These students may graduate:

1. who write at least four departmental examinations and therewith complete Grade 12.
2. who write two or more departmental examinations, attend all classes in religion and German and thereby either complete Grade 12 or complete Grade 12 less one subject.

The graduation dresses must be of uniform color, with sleeves and respectable neckline. 18

Because the Institute is a private school, and receives no government grants, the students have to pay school fees. The following table shows the rates.

Grade	Tuition	Registration	Sports fee	Laboratory fee	Total
7 & 8	\$105.00	3.00	1.00	1.00	110.00
9	109.00	3.00	1.00	2.00	115.00
10	128.00	3.00	1.00	3.00	135.00
11	141.00	3.00	1.00	5.00	150.00
12	155.00	3.00	1.00	6.00	165.00

Students living in the dormitory pay \$8.00 per month (single rooms \$10.00). Those who engage in light housekeeping pay \$1.00 per month extra. Board for the year is \$270.00.¹⁹

Each student is given a copy of the school rules. The following is a copy of these rules.

School Rules

Principle: "Walk as children of light" (Eph. 5:8)

I. School and Classroom Attendance

1. The daily morning devotion periods are to be attended by all students. Late-comers are required to report to the classroom teachers.
2. Students are not allowed to be absent from classroom instruction unless they have a worthy reason for it. If a student appears in school in the morning he may not leave the school that day without the permission of the classroom teacher or the principal. Those who out of necessity have remained at home are required to bring their explanation to the classroom teacher when they return.
3. These regulations apply for every school day. Regular school and classroom attendance is of supreme importance and is the duty of every student.

II. In the School

1. We definitely expect a positive and co-operative attitude on behalf of the student in regard to:
 - (a) Working together with the teachers.
 - (b) participating in school projects and activities.
 - (c) completing the assigned homework.
2. Students are to be respectful and courteous at all times.
3. It is obligatory for the girls to wear their uniforms to the classroom. It is expected that all students are dressed respectfully during their attendance at school.

III. General Conduct of the Students. We expect:

1. Regular church attendance on Sunday.
2. Participation in the "Young Peoples" work at church, if able.
3. That the evenings are devoted to study, particularly the evenings during the school week.
4. That under no circumstances our students smoke, play cards, or visit the theatre, dance halls, or similar places.
5. That boys and girls definitely refrain from dating.

IV. Notice

Besides developing Christian principles in the students, this school is interested in maintaining a high academic standard. That is why we are happy to invite students to attend this school. Here the students will find teachers who are desirous in aiding him to achieve high aims. The school adheres to this basic principle: "The best of which the student is capable shall be expected." In instances, where despite repeated interviews the student reveals both in his attitude and work that he does not want to study, the principal may ask him to leave the school. 20

The Winkler Bible School (Pniel)

The Winkler Bible School saw its beginning in October 1925.²¹ A number of earnest Christians felt the need for a Bible school and under the able leadership of Dr. A.H. Unruh the school was established.

Since the public schools could not give much in terms of religious instruction, the leaders of the various Mennonite churches began to realize the necessity of doing more in giving the children a religious education. Not only should their youth receive a general in-

20

Ibid, pp. 16-17.

21

Konferenz-Jugendblatt der Mennoniten Bruedergemeinden in Kanada. Dez. 1955, 3. 11.

struction in religion, but they should be educated as Sunday school teachers, youth workers, and ministers of the gospel. Church leaders also realized the necessity of instilling a missionary spirit in the congregations. Furthermore, many parents required the services of their children on the farm during the spring and summer months and consequently could not send them to the Mennonite Collegiate Insitute which operated over a ten month period. Furthermore, the Mennonite Collegiate Institute gave courses in religion only in addition to the courses prescribed by the Department of Education and consequently could not specialize in the preparation of ministers for the churches. Gretna's main aim was to provide christian teachers for the Mennonite public schools. All these considerations helped to start a movement for the formation of Bible schools. Three Bible schools were begun, the Winkler Bible School (Pniel), the Elim Bible School and the Steinbach Bible Institute.

The idea of the Bible school seems to have originated in the Crimea, South Russia, where the first three teachers of the Winkler Bible School, Dr. A.H. Unruh, Rev. J. G. Wiens and George J. Reimer, had formerly taught at the Mennonite Theological Seminary. The Bible school had been in existance for only six years when, in the spring of 1924, the Communist government of Russia closed its doors. The teachers were brought before a court but

were set free.²² Thereupon the teachers decided to emigrate and to start a Bible school in Canada.

Professor Unruh was the first to arrive at Winkler and during the winter of 1925-26, the classes were held in the private home of Cornelius Warkentine on the west side of Sixth street.²³ G.J. Reimer assisted Dr. Unruh as class teacher. The Bible school was a private undertaking. Since the teachers belonged to the Mennonite Brethren Church the school involuntarily received its strongest supporters from the local M.B. Church. Rev. Johann Warkentin, leader of the church became a strong proponent of the Bible school. However, Elder Jacob Hoepfner, of the Winkler Bergthaler Church, was also kindly disposed to the school and donated some of his lots for the purpose of having a school building erected on it. Thus, for its second year of operation the Winkler Bible School had a building of its own and Rev. J.G. Wiens, who had now also arrived from Russia, joined the staff.²⁴ Although the enrollment had been nineteen during the first year, it now increased to thirty-two.

As was mentioned previously the Bible school was begun as a private undertaking by the teachers, and the school was financed by voluntary contributions. Programs

²²

The Morning Star, Winkler Bible School year book, 1950, p. 9.

²³

Frank Brown, "A Short History of the Village of Winkler" June 1952.

²⁴

Op. cit., The Morning Star, p. 10.

were often given by the school in various churches, which resulted in moral and financial support. The teachers asked three men of the Winkler community to become co-directors. They were J.B. Dyck, J.A. Kroeker and Rev. A.A. Kroeker.²⁵ These men had possibly made the greatest financial contributions to the school when it was first built.

In 1932 the enrollment had reached seventy-nine and the school was enlarged. By 1938 the enrollment had increased to 100 and again the necessity arose to enlarge the school.²⁶ Since that time a girls' dormitory has been purchased on West Street and a large boys' dormitory on the South Road allowance.²⁷ The latter was for many years the Hooke Old Folks Home.

In 1944 the school was given to the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Manitoba and has been its project since that time. The Conference elected a board of directors with an executive to supervise the financial and educational problems of the school.²⁸

The school experienced its highest enrollment (129) in 1943. Since then the enrollment has steadily decreased until in 1950 it was 100 and in 1955 it was less than

25

Ibid, p. 19

26

Ibid, p. 32.

27

Op. cit., Brown, Frank.

28

Op. cit., Konferenz-Jugendblatt p. 11.

seventy.²⁹

Dr. Unruh remained with the school until 1944, at which time he left the school in the hands of his capable co-worker Rev. J.G. Wiens to become the founder of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College in Winnipeg. Upon the retirement of Rev. J.G. Wiens, who had faithfully served the Winkler Bible School for twenty-three years, Rev. H. H. Redekopp became principal in 1948. In 1956 Rev. Redekopp resigned and Dr. G.D. Huebert, the present principal, took his place.

The primary aim of the Winkler Bible School is to encourage the systematic study of God's Word.³⁰ The school believes that if there is to be a revival among the people of God, it will surely be through the Holy Scriptures, and that there is a great need for the dissemination of Bible knowledge. A second aim of the school is to foster an expressional program to help students pass on to others the "Truth of God". Since the Sunday school is one of the most potent means of propagating the Word, emphasis is placed upon correct methods of Sunday school work. A third basic aim of the school is to arouse interest in and prepare young people for any other work in the "Kingdom of God", especially in personal and missionary work of the church.³¹

29

Ibid, p. 11.

30

Catalogue, The Winkler Bible School, 1955-57, p. 8

31

Ibid, p. 9.



G.D. Huebert, B.A., D.Th.
Principal 1956-



Winkler Bible School, Winkler

The school states its guiding principles of education as follows:

1. One of the primary principles is the development of a Christian character.
2. Growth in devotional life. An atmosphere of personal fellowship with God is created through meditations of the Word of God.
3. The course of study shall be Christ-centered - all subjects taught shall bear a direct relation to the study of Christ in the Bible.
4. The guiding of the emotional life into desirable channels of expression. Students learn what they experience.
5. Improvements through experimentation. A growing Christian is an active Christian. 32

From the foregoing statements one can deduce that the students are trained in practical work. Those who are enrolled in the Christian Education and Missionary course are assigned to one or more of the following:

- (1) Hospital visitations
- (2) Evangelical services in surrounding districts
- (3) Weekly evangelistic services in school
- (4) Personal Work
- (5) Sunday school teaching
- (6) Special programs
- (7) House visitation 33

The school offers its students four courses:

- (1) General Course (2) Christian Education Course (3) Music Course (4) Home and Foreign Missionary Course.

The General Course provides systematic instruction in Bible, Christian education and music. It is a two-year

32

Ibid, p. 9.

33

Ibid, p. 10.

course and the subjects enlarged upon are the following; Bible history, Bible synthesis, Bible geography, biblical archeology, language, study of prayer, personal evangelism, fundamentals of faith, Bible doctrine I, church history, life of Christ, the Acts of the Apostles, child study I, rhetoric, history of the Mennonites, music.

Students of the Christian Education Course take the prescribed subjects of the Evangelical Teacher Training Association, and are offered special instruction in daily vacation Bible school work. The students are required to finish some project in connection with Christian education and must demonstrate the same before the faculty. The time required to finish this course is three years. The subjects to be covered in addition to those in the General Course are as follows: Bible analysis, prophecy, Bible doctrine II, missions I, pedagogy II, Sunday school administration, child study II, evangelism II, department specialization, daily vacation Bible school, homiletics I.

The Music Course has taken a more prominent place in the curriculum in the past two years. The aim is to fit young people for the ministry of music in evangelistic services as choir directors, soloists, etc. For those who desire vocal or piano lessons, special training is offered.

The Missionary Course has as its aim specialized training for men and women to serve in home and foreign

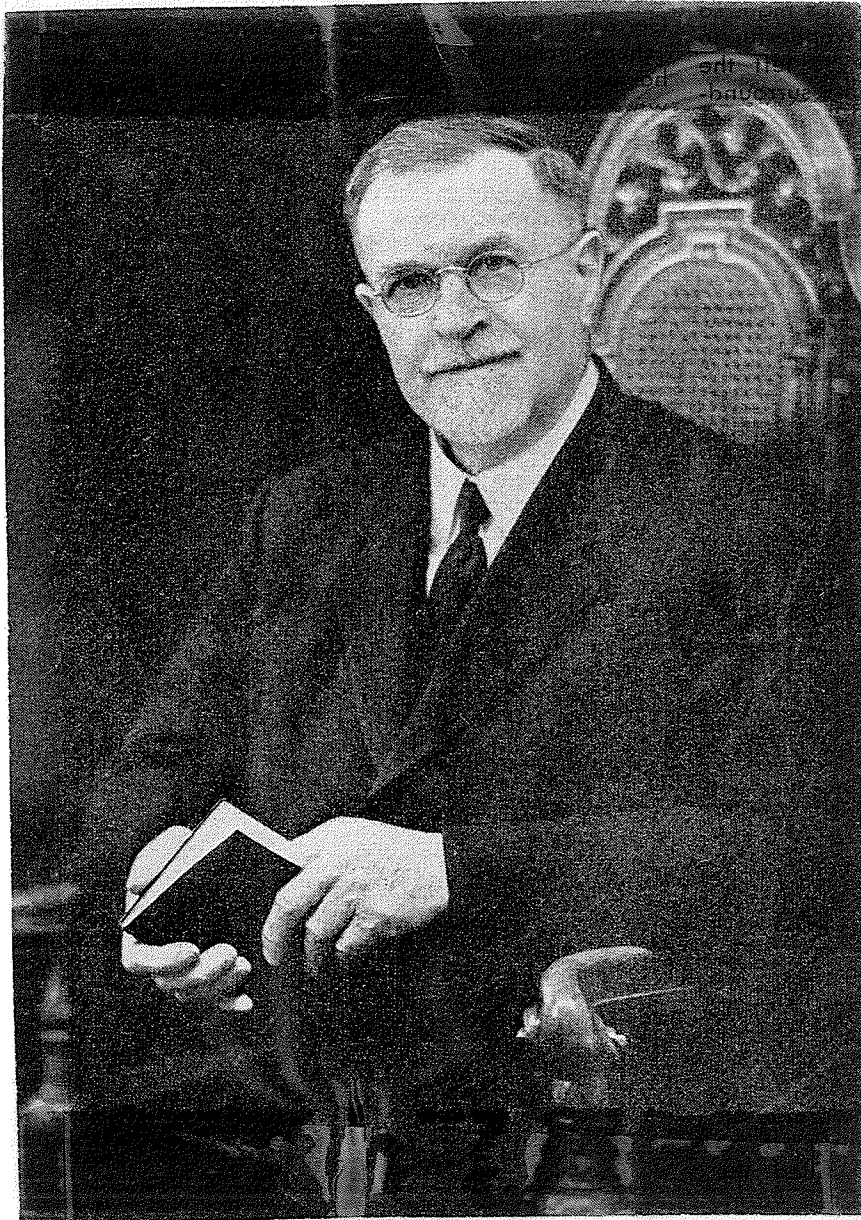
mission fields. Students enrolled in this course must complete the Christian Education Course and take the following subjects; mission II, Bible exegesis, New Testament, theology, ethics, systematic theology, evangelism III, Christian psychology, homiletics, Christian evidences.³⁴ Each school year is a six-month period. Classes generally begin in mid-October and end about mid-April.

In conclusion to the story of the Winkler Bible School the writer wishes to point out very briefly some of the major contributions of A.H. Unruh to Mennonite education in Manitoba.

Not enough time has elapsed to ascertain how great A.H. Unruh's influence has been upon his people. Whereas H.H. Ewert sought to provide teachers for the Mennonite public schools, A.H. Unruh sought to provide workers for the Mennonite churches. The great contribution of A.H. Unruh lay in that he organized and established at Winkler the first Mennonite Bible school in Manitoba. Perhaps no other man has helped shape the philosophy of life of the Mennonites of the Mennonite Brethren church in Manitoba as has A.H. Unruh. From the early days of the Winkler Bible School to the present A.H. Unruh has continuously sought to help young people see the truth of the philosophy of Christ expressed in the words, "What shall it

³⁴

Ibid, pp. 11-13.



Dr. A.H. UNRUH

One of the outstanding pioneers in M. B. Bible Schools

profit a man if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul". By and large students of the Winkler Bible School have realized the importance of religious training and have fostered it in their own homes. Regardless of the profession chosen the graduates have largely maintained their christian philosophy of life.

The Elim Bible School

Since the Winkler Bible School was sponsored primarily by the Mennonite Brethren churches of Manitoba, other Mennonite churches sought to establish their own Bible schools. Only four years after the opening of the school in Winkler, the Elim Bible School was started in Gretna.

The first Bible school classes were held in one of the spare classrooms in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute in the autumn of 1929 under the direction of J.H. Enns.³⁵ The Bergthaler and Blumenorter Mennonite churches sponsored the school. Two years later Enns was chosen as minister for the Schoenwieser Mennonite Church in Winnipeg, and since the Bible school could not acquire the services of another teacher, it was closed for a period of five years.³⁶

In 1936 the Bergthaler church asked Rev. P.P. Tschetter of Freeman, South Dakota, to become their teacher in

35

Elim Palme, Das erste Jahrbuch der Elim Bibelschule 1952-53.

36

Ibid.

the Bible school and once more classes were resumed in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute. Because of ill-health, Rev. Tschetter was able to remain only for one year and Rev. D.P. Esau, a Bible school teacher from Saskatchewan and a member of the Mennonite Brethren Church took his place the following year. In 1938 Rev. J.P. Loewen as full time instructor and Rev. Jacob H. Peters as part-time instructor were added to the staff.

The enthusiasm for the school grew, but the accommodations in the Mennonite Collegiate Institute were very limited and it was decided that a two storey dwelling be acquired in Altona. In the autumn of 1940 Bible school classes were begun in Altona with Rev. A.A. Teichroeb, who had been on the staff for several years, as principal.³⁷ The second floor of the building was used as a dormitory.

In 1941 three classes were instructed in the school³⁸ following the course of studies prescribed by the Evangelical Teacher Training Association. A fourth class was added in 1946 and in 1949 a large modern building that provided ample accommodation was erected.

Although the enrollment was only twenty-five in 1940, by 1948 it had risen to eighty with the school experiencing its highest enrollment in 1952 when it climbed to

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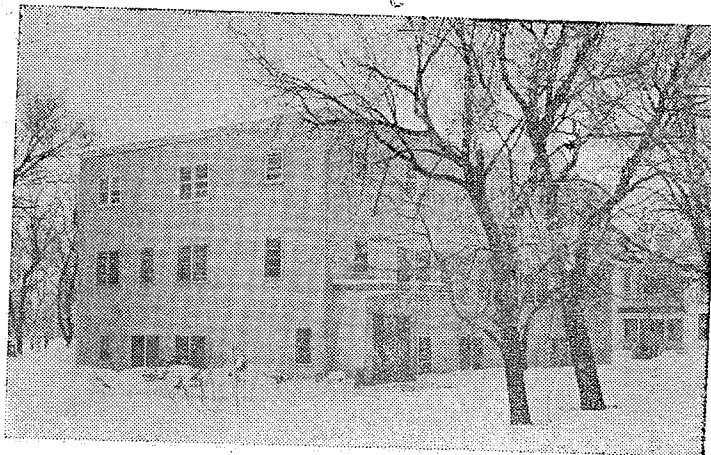
Rev. D.P. Esau took on a position as instructor of religion at the Mennonite Collegiate Institute.

38

Grades I, II and III.



A.A. Teichroeb
Teacher 1939- , Principal 1940-



Elim Bible School, Altona

109. Since then it has suffered a steady decline until in the 1956-57 school year the enrollment was down to seventy-five.

The present staff consists of A.A. Teichroeb, principal, G.A. Braun, P.A. Rempel, J.A. Wiebe and H.J. Gerbrandt. The school is administered by a board of directors elected by the following Mennonite churches co-operating in its operation: Arnaud church, Niverville church, Bergthaler church, Blumenorter church, Glenlea church, Rudnerweider church, Springstein church, Steinbach church and Whitewater church. The Board organizes and elects an executive committee out of its own membership, which is responsible for carrying out the resolutions of the Board and to attend to routine administration matters.³⁹

The purpose and aims of Elim Bible School are stated as follows:

1. To help retain and foster evangelical faith as far as we can make our influence felt; further to create a strong line of defence against encroaching liberal thought and apostasy.
2. To help young people gain a working knowledge of God's Word and to lead them into deeper spiritual life.
3. To train its students for various fields of Christian service in the church and in home and foreign missions.
4. To create and foster in the students an appreciation of and affection for the Mennonite Church and its biblical principles. 40

39

Catalogue The Elim Bible School, Altona, Manitoba, 1952-1953, p. 1.

40

Ibid, p. 4.

Elim Bible School offers a general Bible course, stressing the Bible and related subjects and a Christian education course. In the third and fourth years further subjects are added which help prepare students for the ministry of the Word. The first year courses include the subjects prescribed by the Evangelical Teacher Training Association.⁴¹ Each school year is of five months duration with classes generally beginning near the end of October and stopping in the beginning of April or the end of March.

Steinbach Bible Institute

The Mennonites in the East Reserve have generally remained somewhat apart from the Mennonites of the West Reserve. Consequently the Mennonites of Steinbach and surrounding districts did not to any great extent make use of the Bible schools in Winkler and Gretna. In spite of this, they did realize the need for such a school and were determined to form one of their own.

The Steinbach Bible Institute had its beginning in the fall of 1931 as the Steinbach Bible School with classes both day and evening, conducted by a Mennonite Brethren minister, Jacob W. Reimer, and a Mennonite Alliance minister, Isaac Ediger. The following year classes were continued with an Evangelical Mennonite Brethren

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Since the courses of study were given in considerable detail in the story of the Winkler Bible School, they will not be given for Elim Bible school since they are much the same.

minister, Henry P. Fast, taking the place of Rev. Ediger.⁴²

Thereupon the school had to close its doors for several years but classes were resumed in the autumn of 1936 in the local Mennonite Brethren church under a new staff of two teachers. This venture was sponsored primarily by seven members of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

In the fall of 1938 a new development took place. More of the Mennonites of the local churches were seeing the need for more Bible instruction and a "Bibelschulverein" was organized, composed of members of four Mennonite churches of the town of Steinbach and vicinity. This association elected a board of directors to operate the school. This meant that the school was now interdenominational in its administration and service. The following year the Bible school moved to its own property and classroom building, and by 1942 had some forty-two students.

In the fall of 1946 a high school curriculum was introduced. The high school department was continued for a few years and then dropped to be reinstated in the fall of 1953. During these transition years, from 1946 to 1953, a number of changes took place. The name of the Steinbach Bible School was at first changed to

⁴²

The remainder of the history of the Steinbach Bible Institute is drawn heavily from an article written by Rev. Archie Penner for the Mennonite Encyclopedia.

Steinbach Bible Academy because of the introduction of a high school course. In 1953 when a new constitution was written and the administration changed from the association to a corporation of directors or self-perpetuating board, the name was again changed, the school became the Steinbach Bible Institute.

Rev. Archie Penner, a staff member of the school, writes that a very basic and significant change took place at this time. While the Bible Institute was at first a school with the primary purpose of building Christian character and training Sunday school teachers, it now has as its express purpose the training of young people for Christian service with emphasis on missions, both home and foreign. As a result of this change a large proportion of students and graduates are entering mission work.

In 1955 the school moved onto a new campus of some thirteen acres just outside of the town of Steinbach on highway No. 12. A modern, red tile building has been built and classrooms, laboratory, library, and dormitory facilities provided.

During the school year of 1954-55 the school had twelve full-time and part-time teachers, ninety-eight students were enrolled in the day classes and forty-two in the evening classes.

The school is now offering a three-year Bible-theol-

CLASSROOM – ADMINISTRATION – DORMITORY

– BUILDING –

FOR THE GREATER GLORY OF GOD



STEINBACH BIBLE INSTITUTE – B.D. REIMER, Principal.

ogy course, a two-year Christian education course, and Grades 10, 11 and 12 in the high school department.

The Bible Institute keenly felt the loss of J.N. Wittenberg in June 1956 after serving on its teaching staff faithfully for eighteen years. B.D. Reimer, who has been principal of the school for a number of years, puts the motto of their institute into three words, "Evangelical, Interdenominational, Missionary".

Mennonite Brethren Bible College

The Mennonite Brethren Bible College was founded in response to the acute problem of obtaining properly qualified teachers for Bible schools. J.A. Toews, Sr. of Coaldale, Alberta, in 1939 is reported to have stated:

"Advanced theological training and a broad general secular education must be required of our Bible school teachers if the schools are to survive and progress.* The young men of our churches, who are called to the teaching ministry, should be offered an opportunity to attend an advanced Bible college or seminary."

Faced with a growing shortage of men prepared to serve the needs of the church, the Canadian Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church which met in Herbert, Saskatchewan, in July 1943, took steps to rectify this condition. The Conference asked the Bible school committee of the Canadian conference to set up definite plans for the formation of a "higher Bible school"⁴³ -- possibly

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Toews referred to all the Mennonite Bible school across Canada.

⁴³

Year Book of the Northern District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America. July 1943. p. 18.

an extra class could be added to one of the existing Bible schools, preferably the one in Winkler.

A year later, when the conference was held at Coaldale, Alberta, Rev. B.B. Janz of Coaldale, who was chairman of the Bible school committee brought forth the findings of the committee. He reported that a "higher Bible school class" had been opened in the Winkler Bible School in October of 1943. Six students had taken the courses offered. The committee suggested that a separate building be acquired preferably in Winnipeg and that two classes be opened for the following year. The Conference thereupon created an executive board to supervise the new venture.⁴⁴ Rev. H.P. Toews of Arnaud, Manitoba, became chairman of the board.

The newly elected board met in August of the same year at Herbert, Saskatchewan. C.A. De Fehr, H.P. Toews and C.F. Klassen believed that the Winnipeg public school on the corner of Kelvin and Talbot in Elmwood could be purchased and that it seemed a suitable building for their "higher Bible school class". At a joint session in Herbert, Saskatchewan, of the Canada Inland Mission, the executive board of the "higher Bible school class" and the Bible school teachers of western Canada, it was decided to purchase the building. Later it was approved by the Mennonite Brethren Conference of Canada.⁴⁵

⁴⁴ Ibid, July 1944, p. 28.

⁴⁵ Ibid, p. 86.

Purchased for \$10,000.00, the administration building, now called the Mennonite Brethren Bible College, was renovated with the help of the three Winnipeg Mennonite Brethren churches. An adjoining house, later called the "White House", was purchased for approximately \$5,000 and used as a residence. On October 19, 1944, the college opened its doors and classes began. Dr. A.H. Unruh had been appointed president by the Conference and J.A. Voth, Chicago, Illinois, U.S.A., was hired as a full time lecturer.

For the following year A.H. Unruh, J.B. Toews, J.H. Quiring and Ben Horch were obtained as lecturers. Since Dr. Unruh felt that the strain of being president was too great for him, the Conference asked J.B. Toews, originally from Coaldale, Alberta, to take on this responsibility. Ben Horch was asked to conduct the college choir and teach music.⁴⁶

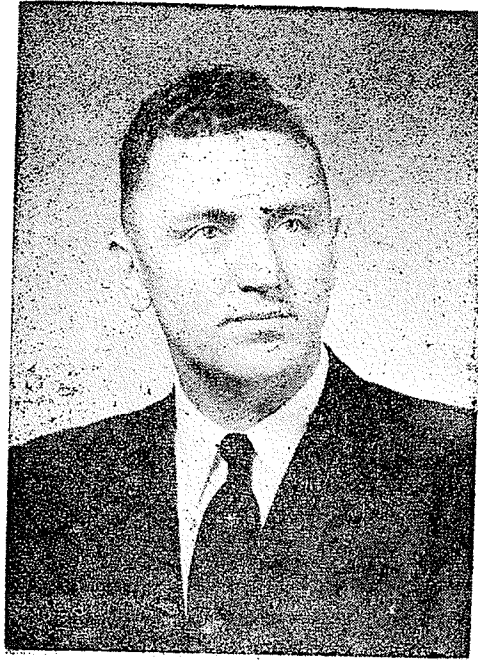
In the first year of operation only thirteen day students attended the Bible college. However, the next year seventy-five students registered and each succeeding year the enrollment increased till it reached well over one hundred. The "White House" no longer could provide living quarters for all students. When Federal authorities refused permission to build a second storey on the administration building, plans were laid to erect a resi-

dence on the adjoining lots along Talbot Avenue. Ebenezer Hall, 54 ft. by 67 ft., three stories high, with two floors of living quarters and a basement containing dining-room, kitchen, store-rooms, laundry, and reception room was completed in 1947. Nevertheless, student accommodation remained a constant problem. McIntosh Hall was purchased in 1950 for \$7,500 and Carmen Hall in 1952 for \$10,000.⁴⁷ The "White House" or Bethany Hall, as it was later called, was used by the music department.

While sufficient accommodation had been acquired for living quarters, the administration building had not been enlarged at any time. The library room was quite inadequate for an enrollment of over 100 students. Facilities for physical recreation were almost nil and overcrowded classrooms caused poor ventilation. Plans were laid for the construction of a large library building, with offices and a large auditorium. The Mennonite Brethren Conference nevertheless was opposed to any further construction unless over half of the estimated \$90,000 had been collected. Not until the spring of 1956 was the college able to start building. In October of the same year the new library and auditorium building was completed at a cost of \$100,000. The attractive brick structure provides adequate auditorium and library facilities as well as two offices and two classrooms. It

is situated on Kelvin Street, immediately north of the main building. On a plaque is the following inscription: "For other foundation can no man lay, than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ".

Not magnificent buildings, but good teachers are the most important assets of a school. The Mennonite Brethren Bible College was able to acquire teachers who were not only well prepared spiritually and academically but who were also leading figures in the Conference. Dr. Unruh, who might be termed the "spiritual father" of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Canada, stayed with the school until 1951 when he resigned because of failing eyesight. Before his resignation, however, he completed his "History of the Mennonite Brethren Church". J.B. Toews, M.Sc., was president of the college from 1945 to 1948. When he resigned H.H. Janzen, from Ontario, became president. J.A. Toews, B.D., B.A., M.A., the present president, joined the staff in 1947 and became president in 1956. Other members on the staff have been J.H. Quiring, B.A., B.D.; Rueben Baerg; Ben Horsch, B.M; I.W. Redekop, B.A., Th. B., M.Sc.; G.D. Huebert, B.A., Th.D.; Henry Regehr; Cornelius Wall, and David Ewert, M.A., B.D.. F.C. Peters, Ph. D., has joined the staff for the 1957-1958 school year. In addition there have been many part-time teachers such as medical doctors and nurses giving instruction to out-going missionaries, language teachers



J.A. Toews, B.D., B.A., M.A.
Teacher 1947- , President 1956-



Mennonite Brethern Bible College
Winnipeg, Man.

and music teachers giving instruction to students taking vocal or instrument lessons.

The objectives of the Mennonite Brethren Bible College are, as President J.A. Toews states in an article in the February issue of the Konferenz-Jugendblatt, the objectives of the Church as formulated in the "Great Commission" in Matthew 28: 19-20. In the annual catalogue of the Bible college one can find the following statement:

"The Mennonite Brethren Bible College seeks to provide an opportunity for earnest young men and women to prepare adequately for the high calling of Christian service as ministers, teachers, missionaries, choir leaders, and workers in other fields of Christian work." 48

From the very beginning the college has offered a limited number of courses in the liberal arts field. President Toews states that the increasing demands for a broad, general, secular education for Christian workers has led to a strengthening of the liberal arts division. Students of the college receive full recognition of their courses at the various Mennonite colleges in the United States, as well as in Waterloo College, Waterloo, Ontario.

The College sets certain requirements which students must comply with before they can be admitted. Students must be at least eighteen years of age and they must have completed their high school training before entering college. Only a limited number (5%) of students without

high school training are admitted. This concession is evidently made to otherwise acceptable mature applicants who wish to train for Christian service and is not designed for those of high school age, but for mature students who have had some experience in Christian work and are unable to qualify as regular students. Such students will be permitted to follow a course of study meeting their need without receiving any credit toward a degree. Finally, the college receives Christian men and women of approved character from all evangelical Christian denominations.

The college offers four courses: firstly, the Theological Degree Course, which is primarily a preparation for ministers; secondly, the Religious Education Course, which is intended for teachers of Bible schools and high schools; thirdly, the General Bible Course for students who have not the adequate college training, and fourthly, the Sacred Music Course designed for choir and orchestra conductors as well as for music teachers. A missionary course can be included in either the Theological Degree Course or in the Religious Education Course.

The degree of Bachelor of Theology is conferred upon students who have completed second year University and the Theology Degree Course and who have met all the requirements for graduation.⁴⁹ The degree of Bachelor of

49

The second year University courses chosen must be from the following: Philosophy, Psychology, World History, English Literature, German Literature, History of Religion.

Religious Education represents the successful completion of high school and the three year course as prescribed. Diplomas are awarded to students who have satisfactorily completed either the Sacred Music Course or the General Bible Course. Certificates which show completion of studies at the Bible college are awarded to students who have done satisfactory work but are not eligible for any degree or diploma for lack of academic training. The following are some of the more important requirements for graduation:

1. The student must give definite evidence of scholastic ability, Christian character, personality, soundness of doctrine, and ability to do that type of Christian service for which he has trained.
2. He must have satisfactorily completed the course of studies from which he expects to graduate.
3. The student's scholastic record must be on an accepted average basis; that is, he must maintain a C (70-79%) average during each year at the College.
4. He must demonstrate proficiency in the use of either the English or the German language. 50

As has been mentioned previously the college was built in Manitoba not only to serve the Mennonites of this province but to be centrally located for the Mennonites of all of Canada. Manitoba at first had the largest share of students, but British Columbia has now taken the lead. Foreign students have also come from Holland, Germany, Japan and South America.

At first the college enrollment was predominantly

male but now has leveled out to an equal number of both sexes. With initial influx of students, largely those who came out of alternative service, and those who had not had the opportunity of gaining an education, the age level remained high for several years. It has now come down and levelled out to an average age of twenty-four and a half years. There is an increase in students who have received their full high school and there has been a corresponding decrease of those who have had only Bible school training. The number attending with a professional training is steadily increasing. In 1954, for example, there were six university graduates, five of whom were high school teachers. In all there were twenty-three teachers and seven registered nurses.⁵¹

The enrollment of the Bible college in the 1955-56 school year was 107. Of these twenty graduated -- three with a Bachelor of Theology degree, eight with a Bachelor of Religious Education degree, six in the General Bible Course and three in the Sacred Music Course.

As previously mentioned, the aim of the college is to "prepare young men and women for the high calling of Christian service as ministers, teachers, missionaries, choir leaders, and workers in other fields of Christian work". The following statistics indicate that this objective has in part been realized. The occupation of the

graduates (approximately, and based on 146 graduates)

is as follows:

Bible School Teaching	31	
Public and High School Teaching	30	
Foreign Missions	24	
Home Mission Work	18	
Pastorates	13	
Domestic	9	
Nursing	5	
Farming	3	
M.C.C.	1	
Continuing training in other schools	47	52

The Canadian Mennonite Bible College

Sixteen years ago the Conference of Mennonites in Canada first began discussing the creation of a college. In July, 1941, at a conference in Laird, Saskatchewan, a committee of five was set up to study the problem. In 1942 at the conference in Winkler, Manitoba, it was decided that a special teacher be hired to start a "higher Bible school class" at the Rosthern Bible School in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. However, the committee was unable to find a teacher, and besides, only one student registered for the class.⁵³

52

Op. cit., Jugendblatt, Feb. 1957. p. 9.

53

The Tenth Anniversary Yearbook, the Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1957, p. 8.

At the conference held in June, 1945 at Rosthern, Saskatchewan, the problem of a Bible college was again discussed. It was decided that the college be added to the newly formed Rosthern Junior College. Only students with Grade 12 standing would be allowed to enter. However, this plan did not materialize either and in the following year the college committee decided to call their proposed college "The Canadian Mennonite Bible College". Plans were made to buy the old Provincial Normal school on William Avenue in Winnipeg.⁵⁴ But this they were unable to do.

At the conference in Coaldale, Alberta, in the summer of 1947 it was decided that classes should begin in the basement of the Bethel Mission Church at Furby and Westminster in Winnipeg⁵⁵ and a girls' dormitory was purchased for \$11,000 at 146 Furby Street shortly afterwards. The school was opened on October 5, 1947 with a staff consisting of A.J. Regier, B.A., B.D.; I.I. Friesen, B.A., M. Ed., B.D., M.Th., D.D.; H. Wall, M.A.; P.A. Rempel and John Konrad.

The enrollment increased from year to year and the church basement in which classes were held soon became too small. In the summer of 1949 the College was able to purchase a large well-built house on the banks of the Assiniboine River at 515 Wellington Crescent for the nom-

⁵⁴

Ibid, p. 8.

⁵⁵

Catalogue, The Canadian Mennonite Bible College
1955-1957, p. 10.

inal sum of \$25,000. This building, which was partially used as a residence, served the purpose of the college well for some years, but it soon became too small.

On July 6, 1953 the conference held at Drake, Saskatchewan, decided to buy a piece of land in Tuxedo, at 600 University Blvd. E., across the street from the Manitoba Teachers' College. Twenty acres of land were purchased at \$18,000, upon which the future college building should be built.

In the summer of 1955 the new college building at a cost of \$152,237.00 was erected on the new campus. The building contains large well-ventilated classrooms, a large library room, an auditorium, offices and a bookstore. It is anticipated that this new structure will provide for the needs of the college for many years to come.

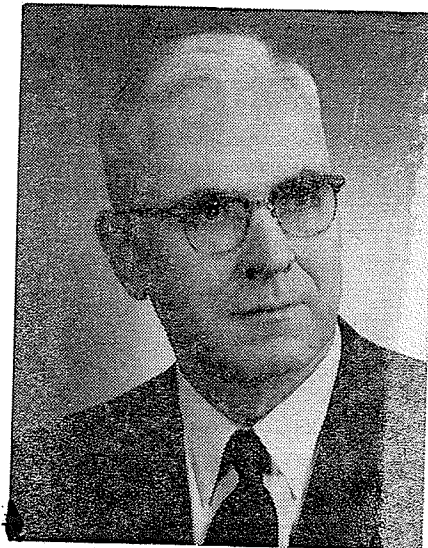
What the college now needs is a large dormitory on the campus. The building on 515 Wellington Crescent was sold in 1956 to G. Richardson, of Winnipeg, for \$35,000. This has left the college with no residence except the one on 146 Furby Street, which is too far away to be of practical value. Consequently, even though the newly erected College building has not nearly been paid for as yet, the board of directors, whose chairman is Dr. J.J. Thiessen, of Saskatoon, has drawn up plans for a large

new residence. Nevertheless, the Conference decided not to get involved in too large a debt when it met in Winkler in July, 1957. Therefore a new college residence is something still to be acquired.⁵⁶

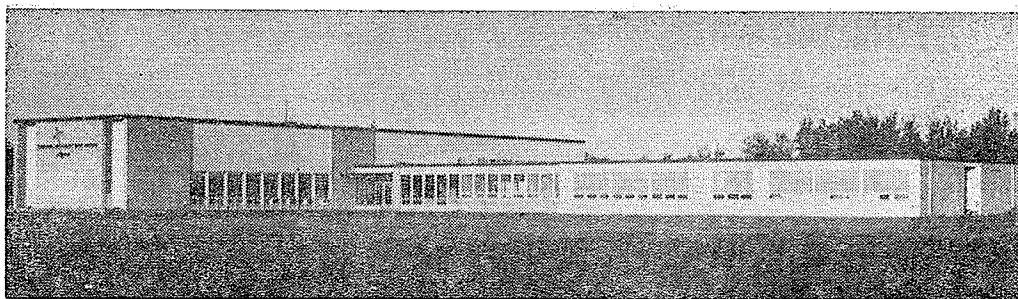
The present members of the staff are I.I. Friesen, B.A., M.Ed., B.D., M.Th., D.D., president; Henry Wall, B.A., M.A.; David Janzen, B.A., M.A.; Gerhard Lorenz, B.A.; J.D. Adrian; Henry Poetker, B.A., B.D.; and Waldemar Janzen, B.A., B.D. Part-time lecturers are G.D. Wiebe, B. Ch. Ed., A.M.M.; E.A. Wiebe, A.R.C.T., A.M.M.; and Irma Wiens..

The aims and objectives of the college are stated in the college catalogue as follows:

- The Canadian Mennonite Bible College seeks to provide the opportunity for earnest young men and women to prepare adequately for Christian service as ministers, missionaries, choir leaders and workers in other fields of Christian endeavours.
1. To create a Christian atmosphere in which the spiritual life of its students may deepen and become more firmly established.
 2. To cultivate a love and respect for God's Word as man's authoritative rule in faith and practice.
 3. To give opportunity to students to secure proficiency in both the English and German languages. German needs to be emphasized because this language is at present being used in most of our Conference churches and also because a knowledge of two languages gives access to two world cultures instead of but one. English is taught because the future needs of our churches in this direction must also be recognized.
 4. To inculcate an understanding and appreciation for the special tenets of our Mennonite faith.



I.I. Friesen,
B.A., M.Ed., B.D., M.Th., D.D.
Teacher 1947- , President 1948-



Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Tuxedo, Man.

5. To emphasize the importance of a fully consecrated life, revealing itself in a willingness to do God's will in whatever field of service He may call us. 57

Before a student can enter the college he must fulfill two basic requirements; firstly, he must be eighteen years of age or older, and secondly, he must have Grade 12 or the equivalent of first year university standing. Students entering college with less than this minimum academic standing do not qualify for degrees offered by the college unless such standing has been completed before graduation.

The degree of Bachelor of Theology is awarded to students having Grade 12 or the equivalent of first year university and having satisfactorily completed a four-year course. The degree of Bachelor of Christian Education is awarded to students having Grade 12 or the equivalent of first year university and having satisfactorily completed a three-year course. A diploma is awarded to those students who have satisfactorily completed the Sacred Music Course.

The courses of instruction are divided in four departments as follows: 1. Bible Department, 2. Christian Education Department, 3. Arts Department, 4. Social Science Department. The senate of the University of Manitoba in the winter of 1957 approved an arrangement

whereby work done at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College will be recognized by the University of Manitoba. According to this arrangement, students at the Canadian Mennonite Bible College will be given credit for advance standing at the university on the same basis as students proceeding from other institutions of higher learning. Such credit will be given on the basis of equivalents of work in both institutions.⁵⁸

In 1956-57 the school had an enrollment of eighty-four of which twelve graduated. One student graduated with a Bachelor of Theology diploma, nine with a Bachelor of Christian Education degree, one with a Bachelor of Christian Education diploma and one with a diploma in Sacred Music.

⁵⁸

The Canadian Mennonite, Feb. 22, 1957.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In the preceding chapters the writer has recorded the story of Mennonite education in Manitoba. It is not possible to conclude the story in this final chapter, since it continues. It is the purpose here to present the reader with a brief summary of the major periods in the story and to make certain observations concerning future trends in Mennonite education.

A study of Mennonite education in Russia revealed that the Mennonites had almost complete control over their own schools. There was practically no interference from the government in regard to either the subject matter of the curriculum or the language in which it was presented. The Bible and German were the most important subjects of study. The prospects of losing control over their schools with the exclusive use of the German language was a strong contributing factor to the emigration movement in the early 1870's. It is to be noted too that the Fuerstenland people had kept themselves fairly well aloof from the school reform movement started by that great educational reformer Johann Cornies.

When they came to Manitoba, the Mennonites were promised complete freedom in the education of their children in their own schools. At that time the Canadian government believed in a plurality of cultures. The first stage, therefore, in the history of Mennonite education in Mani-

toba was that of the private school. Suffering from a lack of trained teachers and being cut off from intercourse with any congenial area of high civilization, the Mennonites experienced serious consequences of cultural deterioration.

Mennonite education passed into a second stage when the public schools were organized. The rise in Canada of a national ideal of cultural uniformity and a policy of systematic cultural assimilation caused the conflict with the Manitoba Mennonites. The Mennonite group sought to maintain its position against the powerful and persuasive pressure of the surrounding culture aided by political action. Perhaps the values which the Fuerstenland and Sommerfeld people sought to maintain were not adequate. H.S. Bender, writing on this issue, said, "Perhaps the 'Old Colony' people were the victims of their own history and their isolation, and should have had help to find their way through to a more wholesome solution".¹

A third stage, if it may be so called for it was actually present all the time, was that of the struggle for better education while attempting to maintain a culture different from the surrounding society. The Mennonites of Russia solved this problem through feeding on the culture of Germany and Switzerland. The Mennonites of Manitoba, outside of those who emigrated to Mexico and

1

Op. cit., Francis, E.K. The Mennonite School Problem In Manitoba. p. 203.

South America, have solved their problem by assimilating themselves to some extent with the national culture while retaining most of their distinctive religious and cultural ways.

With the coming of the Russlaender Mennonites in the early 1920's Mennonite education passed into a fourth stage of development. Many of these immigrants were well educated and were desirous of continuing their education. Furthermore they wanted their children to obtain the type of education they had received, regardless of the sacrifices required. The Russlaender Mennonites had a number of medical doctors, nurses, lawyers, linguists, mathematicians, chemists, engineers and teachers, some of whom had studied abroad either in Germany or Switzerland. It is these Mennonites who are primarily responsible for the upsurge in Mennonite education in recent times. Held back by the depression in the 1930's, these people never gave up their plans of building great educational institutions as they had had them in Russia prior to the Revolution. Not quite reaching the prosperity they had had in Russia, the Russlaender Mennonites have not been able to fulfill all their aspirations. By obtaining the cooperation of the Canadian Mennonites they have, however, built high schools, Bible schools and Bible colleges.

There has been much duplication of effort because the Mennonites who are vitally interested in education

are divided into two factions, the history of which is a story in itself. The two factions are the Conference of Mennonites and the Mennonite Brethren Conference. The result is that there are two private high schools, two Bible schools and two Bible colleges.² The reader will also have noticed that the aims and objectives set for each institution by the two conferences are almost identical.

The reader will possibly have wondered what correlation, if any, exists between the three types of Mennonite institutions. Hugo Jantz, a former Bible school teacher, has explained the existing correlation:

If the Sunday School serves the purpose of creating a growing awareness of Bible facts, truths and principles, with the end in view that the individual pupil find Christ as Saviour, then the Christian High School moulds that awareness into a workable Christian philosophy that is able to interpret the secular satisfactorily as the student prepares to take his place in a worldly society. And just so the Bible School builds upon the Christ-centered philosophy gained in the atmosphere of a Christian High School, filling the prepared mould with content that is both inspiring and Bible-centered. And the function of the Bible College seems to be to take the students thus prepared, and equip them to become well-balanced workers and leaders who have no doubts about a Christ-directed calling and goal in life. 3

Many Mennonite students do not attend any of the aforementioned institutions. They attend elementary

2

The Steinbach Bible Institute is interdenominational.

3

Op. cit., Konferenz-Jugendblatt, Dec. 1955. p. 5.

and secondary public schools instead. Some parents feel that the religious education given in the church and in the home is sufficient for their children and consequently do not give their support to the private institutions.

In the last decade there has developed a profound interest in secular education. Well over one hundred Mennonite students were registered at the Manitoba Teacher's College for the year 1957-58. An increasing number of Mennonite youth are attending the University of Manitoba each year. On the other hand fewer students attend the Bible schools in the province. Students intending to enter the ministry or the mission field register at the Bible colleges. Those who wish to teach at the secondary level, or enter some profession, study at the university. Some students attend both the Bible college and the university. The need for both secular and theological training will probably give rise to the formation of a liberal arts college.

The trend to abandon the cause of bilingualism is becoming increasingly evident in the Mennonite schools of the province. In the majority of the private institutions the German language has been replaced as the official school language and is studied primarily as a second language. That the German church language will give way to English in the not too distant future seems almost inevitable.

It is to be noted that the Mennonites in Manitoba were not opposed to education. They believed and still believe that education is a special function of the church. They cherish and value their own educational system to the degree that they are willing to give up all earthly possessions and endure the hardships of pioneer life in countries entirely unknown to them. The Mennonites use education as a means to achieve a certain goal, which is to preserve their way of life. The educational institutions are there to maintain and promote that cherished way of life and prevent disintegrating influences from undermining it.

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APPENDIX A

Penmanship: Gothic Script - Helena Wall (1896)

Die Demuth.

Appendix A
p. 181

Jesús Christus, ob er wol in göttlicher Gestalt war, hielt sich nicht für einen Raub, Gott gleich sein, sondern unterwarf sich selbst und nahm Knechtsgestalt an, ward gleich uns ein anderer Mensch, und an Gebrechen als ein Mensch erfahren. Die Demuth. Jesús Christus, ob er wol in göttlicher Gestalt war, hielt sich nicht für einen Raub, Gott gleich sein, sondern unterwarf sich selbst und nahm Knechtsgestalt an, ward gleich uns ein anderer Mensch, und an Gebrechen als ein Mensch erfahren. Die Demuth. Jesús Christus, ob er wol in göttlicher Gestalt war, hielt sich nicht für einen Raub, Gott gleich sein, Gelene Hall in Glummoat am 15^{ten} Junius 1896.

HIMMELAHR.

Also liesz sich (Jehen) sehen von den Aposteln nach
seinen Leiden, vierzig Tage lang, und redete mit
ihnen vom Reiche Gottes. Und er führte sie
hinaus an den Ölberg, hob die Hände auf
sie und segnete sie Und als er sie geseg-
net hatte, ward er vor ihren Augen, von einer
Wolke aufgehoben, gen Himmel. a, b, c, d, e,
f, g, h, i, j, k, l, m, n, o, p, q, r, s, t, u, v, w.
Helena Hall in Blumenort an 17^{ten} Januar
1896

Latin Script - Helena Wall (1893)

NAPHTHA.

Ein brennbares Mineral, welches
im reinen Zustande ganz tropf-
bar und wasserhelle ist, das
unreine hat allerlei Farben und
ist zäher. Es verflücht sich leicht
brennt schnell und ohne Russ.

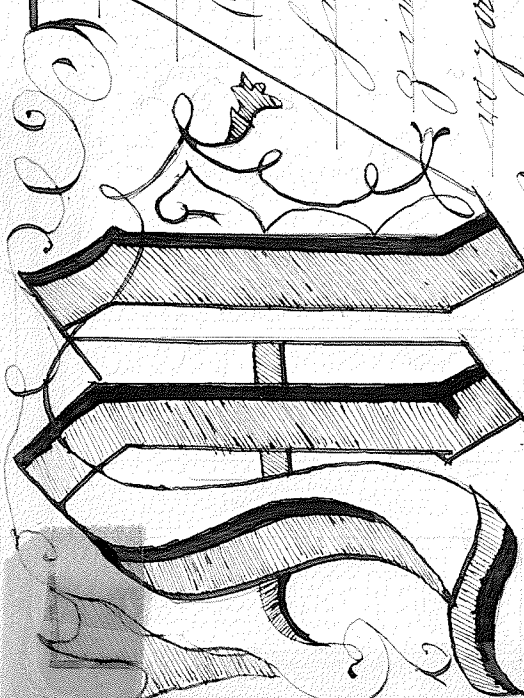
Blumenort Helena Wall. am 11. April
1893

Reis.

Er ist etwas dem Weizen ähnlich, seine
Wurzel ist dieselbe und treibt Stengel
von der Höhe zu drei bis vier Fuß
welche dicker, und harter als die
Getreides tengel und an Stellen mit
Knoten oder Gelenken versehen sind.

Helena Wall in Blumenort am 1. April

Gothic Script - Johann Wall (1895)


 an findet man nicht
 einen von Gerechtigkeit
 (Dunkelheit) wofürst es
 einmahl ist. Ein Pfund
 ein brayen von wofür
 was die Körner auf Luft
 und in den fupsthen Gugen
 guckt es abse, als in den Kol
 den die gutachten Lachen ge
 den die Lachen Lachen
 ein Lachen (Lachen Lachen)
 Lachen von einem Lachen
 Lachen in Lachen Lachen
 Lachen und Lachen Lachen
 Johann Wall in Lachen. 19. November 1895

Latin Script - Johann Wall (1895)

acabus, an Knecht Gottes und
des Herrn Jesu Christi, den z welf
Geschlechtern, die da sind hin
und her, Freude zuvor!

o. Meine lieben Brüder, achtet es
sehr Freude, wenn ihr in
mancherlei Angelegenheiten
ist,

Und wisset, daß nur Staube, so
er rechtschaffen ist, Geduld und.

Johann Wall in Blumenort.

1895 am W. ten. Jannuar.

Art Sample - Helena Wall



Art Sample - Helena Wall



APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE

	Elementary	Secondary
1. What is the student enrollment?	_____	_____
2. How many teachers are there on the staff?	_____	_____
3. How many of the teachers are Mennonite?	_____	_____
4. How many teachers have university degrees?	_____	_____
5. How many classrooms are there?	_____	_____
6. (a) When was the last school erected?	_____	_____
(b) At what cost?	_____	_____
(c) Does it have an auditorium?	_____	_____
7. (a) Do you have any manual arts classes?	_____	_____
(b) If so what type?	_____	_____
(c) In which grade?	_____	_____
8. (a) Is any German taught outside of that prescribed by the Department of Education?	_____	_____
(b) If so what does it primarily consist of?	_____	_____
9. Does your school have a choir or an orchestra?	_____	_____
If so on what occasions does it perform?	_____	_____
10. (a) Do you have a kindergarten class(es) in your school?	_____	_____
(b) When was it first introduced?	_____	_____
11. If there is no kindergarten class in your school, is there one in your community?	_____	_____
If so, who is the teacher?	_____	_____
12. What religious education is given in your school?		
(a) Religious exercises	_____	
(b) Bible story, catechism	_____	
(c) Interschool Christian Fellowship	_____	
(d) Any other form	_____	

APPENDIX C

Lowe's Letter, July 25th, 1873

DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Ottawa, 25th July, 1873

Gentlemen:

I have the honour, under the instruction of the Hon. the Minister of Agriculture, to state to you in reply to your letter of this day's date the following facts relating to advantages offered to settlers, and to the immunities offered to Mennonites which are established by Statute Law and by orders of his Excellency the Governor-General-in-Council for the information of German Mennonites having intention to emigrate to Canada via Hamburg.

1. An entire exemption from military service is by law and Order-in-Council granted to the Denomination of Christians called Mennonites.

2. An Order-in-Council was passed on the 3rd March last to reserve eight townships in the Province of Manitoba for free grants on the condition of settlement as provided in the Dominion Lands Act, that is to say, "Any person who is head of a family or has obtained the age of 21 years shall be entitled to be entered for $\frac{1}{4}$ section or a less quantity of unappropriated Dominion lands, for the purpose of securing a homestead right in respect thereof."

3. The said reserve of eight townships is for the exclusive use of the Mennonites, and the said free grants of $\frac{1}{4}$ section to consist of 160 acres each, as defined by the act.

4. Should the Mennonite Settlement extend beyond the eight townships set aside by the Order-in-Council of March 3rd last, other townships will be in the same way reserved to meet the full requirements of Mennonite immigration.

5. If next spring the Mennonite settlers on viewing the eight townships set aside for their use should decide to exchange them for any other unoccupied eight townships, such exchange will be allowed.

6. In addition to the free grant of $\frac{1}{4}$ section or 160 acres to every person over 21 years of age on the condition of settlement the right to purchase the remaining $\frac{3}{4}$ of the section at \$1.00 per acre is granted by law so as to complete the whole section of 640 acres which is the largest quantity of land the Government will grant a patent for to one person.

7. The settler will receive a patent for a free grant after three years residence in accordance with the terms of the Dominion Lands Act.

8. In event of the death of the settler, the lawful heirs can claim the patent for the free grant upon proof that settlement duties for three years have been performed.

9. From the moment of occupation the settler acquires a "homestead right" in the land.

*10. The fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles is by law afforded to the Mennonites without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever, and the same privilege extends to the education of their children in schools.

11. The privilege of affirming instead of making affidavits is afforded by law.

12. The Government of Canada will undertake to furnish passenger warrants from Hamburg to Fort Garry for Mennonite families of good characters for the sum of \$30.00 for adult persons over the age of eight years, for persons under eight years half price or \$15.00 and for infants under one year, \$3.00

13. The minister specially authorizes me to state that this arrangement as to price shall not be changed for the seasons of 1874, 1875, or 1876.

14. I am further to state that if it is changed thereafter the price shall not up to the year 1882 exceed \$40.00 per adult and children in proportion, subject to the approval of Parliament.

15. The immigrants will be provided with provisions on the portion of the journey between Liverpool and Collingwood but between other portions of the journey

they are to find their own provisions.

I have the honour to be,
Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
(sgd.) John Lowe
Secretary, Department of Agriculture.

Messrs. David Klassen
Jacob Peters
Heinrich Wiebe
Cornelius Toews
Mennonite Delegates from Southern Russia.