



# Gleanings from the Threshing Floor

Bethel  
College

Newsletter of the Mennonite Library and Archives  
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No. 8, December 2007



## Schedule of Mennonite studies events

Nov. 2-4, 2008: Menno Simons Lectures, James Stayer, historian of 16th century Anabaptism, professor emeritus, Queen's University, Kingston, Ontario

- Oct. 24, 2006, Richard Friesen, "Missionary Kid" (growing up among the Cheyenne and Arapaho in Oklahoma in the 1940s and 50s)
- Feb. 27, 2007, Nataliya Venger, "History of Mennonite entrepreneurship in Russia, 1789-1871"

## Friends of the MLA

The purpose of the "Friends of the Mennonite Library and Archives" (and friends of the Mennonite Church USA Archives-North Newton) organization is to provide a more active sense of support and participation for the MLA and to promote Mennonite studies in general for the central Kansas audience.

Annual membership in the Friends of the MLA is \$25. Please become our friend!

Since the last newsletter we have sponsored the following programs:

- Sept. 19, 2006, Barbara A. Thiesen, "Every beginning is hard: Darlington Mennonite Mission, 1880-1902"

## Mennonite Life Online

Just a reminder that *Mennonite Life*, published by Bethel College since 1946, continues to publish quarterly on the web at <<http://www.bethelks.edu/mennonitelife>>.

## Genetic Genealogy

By *Tim Janzen*  
(Happy Valley, OR)

The science of genetics and DNA research has come a long way since Watson and Crick first discovered DNA (deoxyribonucleic acid) over 50 years ago. Mennonite genealogists have particularly been utilizing DNA testing during the past three years. Amelia Reimer and Glenn Penner began a DNA

project for Mennonites and the Amish with the company Family Tree DNA ([www.familydna.com](http://www.familydna.com)) in 2004. So far, there are about 170 members who are participating in that project. Of those, 102 people are of Low German Mennonite ancestry. Just recently Glenn Penner and Richard Thiessen have set up a web site at [www.mennonitedna.com](http://www.mennonitedna.com) that is focused solely on the DNA results for Mennonites of Low German ancestry. The long term goals are to determine the number of male progenitors there were for each Mennonite surname, to determine how many female Mennonite progenitors there were, and to use the DNA results to complement traditional genealogical research in determining relationships among various ancestors.

The DNA results that have come in from the testing done thus far give fascinating insight into the geographic origin of various Mennonite surnames. The Y chromosome results strongly suggest that the progenitors of Mennonites with the surnames Epp, Loewen, Wiebe, and Hiebert, as well one line of Janzens and one line of Wielers, were Frisians and thus originally lived in the area of Friesland, which is located in the northeastern portion of the Netherlands. The results for Mennonites with the surnames Fehr, Thiessen, Neufeld, Friesen, and Wall indicate that their progenitors were of Anglo-Saxon origin, suggesting that they originally lived somewhere in the vicinity of the Netherlands or north-western Germany. The data for Mennonites with the surnames Dyck, Bartsch, and Reimer would suggest that their progenitors lived along the coast of Europe, possibly as far south

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as Iberia at one point. The data for Mennonites with the surnames Froese, Ratzlaff, as well as one line of Wielers and one line of Schroeders, would suggest that they were part of a common European variety called the Atlantic Modal Haplotype.

Family Tree DNA is an excellent company, but participation among Mennonites has been limited by the costs of the testing. Typical tests, such as the 37-marker Y chromosome test for males, cost \$189 (U.S.) and the mitochondrial DNA test for Hypervariable Regions 1 and 2 costs \$189 (U.S.) if ordered through the Mennonite DNA project. Due to the high costs associated with DNA testing with companies such as Family Tree DNA many genealogists have instead been using the Sorenson Molecular Genealogy Foundation in Salt Lake City, Utah to do their DNA testing since the foundation will do the testing for free. The Sorenson Foundation was established in 1999 and is funded by a very wealthy philanthropist named James Sorenson. In December 2005 I discovered that one could readily extract one's DNA markers from the foundation's online Y chromosome database at <http://www.smgf.org/pages/ydatabase.jsp> if they simply changed the marker values on the search screen until all the correct values appeared. The option of free testing led a large number of Mennonites to send samples to the Sorenson Foundation during the past two years. So far, about 1000 Mennonites have sent DNA samples to the Sorenson Foundation. It usually takes at least 6 to 12 months for one's results to appear in the foundation's databases.

The Sorenson Foundation is currently testing 43 Y chromosome makers, the 3 hypervariable regions of the mitochondrial DNA, and 300 autosomal DNA markers. Their mitochondrial DNA database was released in July, 2006 and is available at <http://www.smgf.org/mtdna/search.jsp>. Their autosomal DNA database will be released in about a year. The foundation is comparing the autosomal markers found in the Mennonites who have sent in samples with the genealogical data in the GRANDMA database and other genealogical information to infer the various autosomal markers that each of

our Mennonite ancestors carried in their DNA. This information will then be used to determine relationships among people that can't be determined through traditional genealogical research.

At this point a DNA sample from anyone of Mennonite ancestry, particularly older Mennonites, would be helpful. Ideally, it would be best to have all older Mennonites tested by the Sorenson Foundation. If anyone has questions about DNA testing in general feel free to contact Glenn Penner at [gpenner@uoguelph.ca](mailto:gpenner@uoguelph.ca) and/or me at [tjanzen@comcast.net](mailto:tjanzen@comcast.net). If you would be willing to contribute a DNA sample to the project, you could order a free test kit from the Sorenson Foundation from their web site at [http://www.smgf.org/pages/request\\_kit.jsp](http://www.smgf.org/pages/request_kit.jsp). If you were to do this you would need to enter "Mennonite project" in the "Additional Comments" section at the bottom of the form. Please let Glenn and/or me know if you order a kit since we are trying to keep track of the Mennonites who have sent samples to the Sorenson Foundation so that we can extract the results from the databases as the results become available. All that is required for the test is a sample of cells from the inside of your mouth that comes from rinsing your mouth with a mouthwash. You also must submit a copy of your pedigree chart. If you decide you would like to donate a DNA sample, I would also be willing to create a pedigree chart for you taken from information found in the GRANDMA Mennonite genealogy database that you could send in with your sample. I would also be willing to extract your results for you and send you my interpretation of them when they come in.



## The Hans Bret tongue screw

Sometimes over the years we've been asked whether we have this tongue screw,

supposedly acquired by Cornelius Krahn many years ago. This photo appeared in the April 1965 issue of *Mennonite Life* (p. 65) and perhaps other places.

The implement of torture was used on the martyr Hans Bret, an Englishman burned at the stake in Antwerp in 1576. The application of Bret's tongue screw is, indeed, one of the Jan Luyken illustrations to the *Martyrs Mirror*. Hans Bret's story is on pages 1037-1054 of the English edition of the *Mirror* (Thieleman J. van Braght, *The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians...* Trans. Joseph F. Sohm. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977.)



The tongue screw was recovered from the ashes by Hans de Ries (1553-1638), who became a major leader among Dutch Mennonites. Eventually the artifact ended up in the possession of Jacob Gijsbert de Hoop Scheffer (1819-1894), a Dutch Mennonite seminary professor and historian.

Cornelius Krahn and C. J. Dyck viewed the tongue screw in Amsterdam probably in the early 1950s, which is presumably when the photo was taken.

De Hoop Scheffer's collection, including the tongue screw, was kept by his descendants. One of them was a Dutch diplomat, and the collection moved with him, even being in Baghdad for a time. In addition, the family had turned Roman Catholic during the 20th century. As of 2003, the tongue screw was in the possession of Boudewijn de Hoop Scheffer, a great-grandson of Jacob G. de Hoop Scheffer, in Geneva, Switzerland. (Boudewijn's brother Jaap was NATO secretary general.)



It may be that in recent years the tongue screw has returned to the Mennonite archives in Amsterdam. (Based on an email from Piet Visser to Keith Sprunger, 14 Dec. 2005)

### **“La lingoo internacia estas komprenita de la tuta mondo edukita”**

The February 1907 *Bethel College Bulletin*, a century ago, carried the following note on page 1:

“The new international language Esperanto, named so by its inventor, Dr. Zamenhof, seems to be gaining in popularity and importance as time passes. The editor of the *North American Review* is convinced of its practicality as a world language, and makes the announcement in a recent number of that magazine, that a series of primary lessons will be given in the *Review*. It is claimed that a reasonable proficiency in the use of the language can be obtained by studying it one hour a day for three months. The following is a short sentence in Esperanto, with the English translation:

“La lingoo internacia estas komprenita de la tuta mondo edukita.”

“The international language should be comprehensible to the whole educated world.”

### **The Flag in School**

Again a century ago, the *Bethel College Monthly*, April 1907, p. 15, carried this article, probably by G. A. Hauray.

As already noted in another column in this issue, our state legislature last winter made a law that the flag shall be displayed upon, near or in each public school building during school hours, and that it shall be saluted at the opening of each day of school. The object of this law evidently is to cultivate in the pupils the respect for



the flag in particular and patriotism in general. In the opinion of the writer, the law, for strong reasons, will accomplish neither purpose; its effect will rather be the opposite to that intended, and if this question were brought to a vote among experienced teachers, it is very doubtful whether it would carry.

The objection is not raised to the presence of the flag in the school; for each school, if at all possible, should have a flag and should display it on special occasions. But the idea of displaying it all the time and saluting it every morning is open to objections, both from moral and a financial standpoint.

Looking at the matter from a pecuniary standpoint, one can easily see that it will be a very costly affair, not only because of the first outlay in procuring the flag, but also, and this particularly, because the flag must be renewed from time to time. A flag discolored and in tatters would hardly inspire respect in the hearts of the youngsters in school. This outlay will be a very heavy one for such districts that find it almost impossible to raise enough money for a term of school of ordinary length. Upon these therefore the law imposes additional hardships.

The financial side of this question, however, as compared with the moral side, is not an important one, and we might easily overlook it. The moral side is always the one that should weigh heavily in the balance, and it ought to do so in this case.

Patriotism and respect for the flag cannot be forced upon anyone, nor is it likely that children will become better and more patriotic citizens because they have become accustomed to salute the flag every day. Under such conditions children will eventually take the flag as a matter of

course. The saluting of the flag will become little more than a perfunctory ceremony, a lip service in which the heart has no part. Familiarity breeds contempt, is a common saying that might find its exemplification in this matter, especially since the training of the children is in so many cases in the hands of boys and girls who themselves have no clear conception how much the terms patriotism and love for the flag really include. Too many will get the idea that if they have faithfully saluted the flag every morning, and are ready to resent any insult to the flag with their fists, they have shown their loyalty to it. Too many will not see their country because the flag is in their way. The person that always has the name of God on his lips and is always ready with pious expressions, will bear watching; the chances are that he is an arrant hypocrite. So the man who boasts of his patriotism and forever prates of his love for the flag is likely to be, in his heart, a deep-dyed traitor, one who violates the laws, not openly of course, or uses his political position for personal advantages, or directly sells his country for gold.

Much can be done in school to cultivate patriotism in the proper sense, but not in the way proposed. Do not confuse the thing with its symbol. Do not try to bring about love for the country by teaching respect for the flag. The method is illogical and therefore unwise. Where there is true love for one's country, for its institutions and its people, there will be respect for the flag, and not otherwise. To accomplish this, ought to be the purpose of all teachers, and if their work is conscientiously done, their efforts will not be in vain.

### **Mennonite Sightings in Print**

Notes and tidbits related in some way to Mennonites appear in a wide variety of places:

- *The Globe* (Atchison, Kansas), May 11, 1880, issue 748, column B

“A peculiar incident happened in the Central Branch waiting room this morning, and which a reporter for this paper was witness. A large party of Mennonites [sic] men and women just arrived, were scattered about the room, waiting for the departure of their train. One of the women

opened her box, procured a clean shirt, and coolly proceeded to put it on, dropping her dress down to her knees. An audible titter went round, but she paid no attention. Getting the shirt somehow mixed over her head she raised up to fix it, when her dress fell to the floor, leaving her as naked as the day she was born. This is not overdrawn a particle. There were fifty people present, including several employees of the company. Our reporter didn't stay to see what effect the calamity had upon the woman, but with a loud yell he fled."

- John Roy Carlson, *Under Cover: My Four Years in the Nazi Underworld of America—The Amazing Revelation of How Axis Agents and Our Enemies Within are Now Plotting to Destroy the United States*. Cleveland: World Publishing Co., 1943.

On p. 170-171, Carlson quotes a story told to him by N. J. Roccaforte, an employee of Gerald Winrod, a fundamentalist and right-wing political figure based in Wichita, Kansas, in the 1930s, whose magazine was called *The Defender*.

"The call was from Newton, Kansas, and Mr. C. H. Willms [George H. Willms], manager of the Herald Publishing Company, the printers of *The Defender* Magazine, was on the wire, Mr. Willms said in substance that a government investigator who was sent by the Dies Committee [House Un-American Activities Committee] in Washington was in his office demanding to see their books and records of Winrod's account."

- Allana Martin. *Death of a Saint Maker*. (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998)  
This is a "Tex-Mex" murder mystery, set along the Texas-Mexico border. One of the characters, "Josh," is a Mexican Mennonite imprisoned for drug smuggling.
- Von Hardesty, "On the Road in the Great Depression," *V8 Times: Magazine for Early Ford V-8 Enthusiasts*, part 1 in the September/October 2006 issue, and part 2 in the November/December 2006 issue.  
Von Hardesty some years ago taught at Bluffton University and now is at the

Smithsonian Institution in Washington. His article described the Bethel College choir tour of the western U. S. and Canada in 1935, in considerable detail and with many photos.

- Kevin Kurdylo, "A Conversation with Jack Thiessen, Author of the *Mennonite Low German Dictionary*," *Max Kade Institute Friends Newsletter*, vol. 15, no. 4, winter 2006, pp. 3, 6, 15.

The Kade Institute for German-American Studies at the University of Wisconsin helped to publish Thiessen's recent Low German dictionary.

- *Intellectual Property Needs and Expectations of Traditional Knowledge Holders: WIPO Report on Fact-Finding Missions on Intellectual Property and Traditional Knowledge (1998-1999)*. (Geneva: World Intellectual Property Organization, 2001). <[www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/ffm/report/final](http://www.wipo.int/tk/en/tk/ffm/report/final)>

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) is a United Nations agency that works with international governance of intellectual property (such as copyrights and patents). They did a study of such issues in relationship to "traditional knowledge," primarily of indigenous groups around the world. In their fact-finding mission in North America, they report that interviewees told them,

"Other persons distinguished between 'Indigenous peoples' and 'local communities' . . . They pointed out that in Canada there are 'local communities,' such as the Huggurites, Mennunite, Amish, trappers and hunters." (p. 118)

- Bill Ellis, *Aliens, Ghosts, and Cults: Legends We Live* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 2001).  
Ellis is a folklorist, interested in contemporary folklore and urban legends. One story he investigates is the "Gore Orphanage" story which circulates in the Cleveland, Ohio, area, in which a site where an orphanage burned down is haunted. Although Ellis is primarily interested in how folklore is passed along rather than in its historical veracity, he does give a page to historical background. Here he says, "In 1902, the Reverend John Sprunger, a Lutheran minister from Bern, Indiana, moved to the area,

purchased several abandoned farms along Gore Road, and started the Light of Hope Orphanage. Supported by free-will, nonsectarian contributions, the institution trained orphaned and destitute children to do agricultural work and housekeeping. It operated uneventfully for twelve years; after Sprunger's death it collapsed into bankruptcy and the children were resettled into other homes." (p. 192)

He is referring, of course, to John A. Sprunger (1852-1911), a Mennonite, not Lutheran, from Berne, Indiana, founder of the Light and Hope Missionary Society and associated organizations, including the orphanage. (See *Mennonite Encyclopedia*.)

- James E. Casteel, "The Russian Germans in the Interwar German National Imaginary," *Central European History* 40 (2007): 429-466.  
Casteel on pp. 455-458 discusses the notorious pro-Nazi propagandist of Russian Mennonite background Heinrich "Hajo" Schroeder.

## Bibliographic Discoveries

A few interesting printed items that have come into the MLA recently:

*Geringes und einfaches Reim-Gedicht über das frühzeitiges Absterben des Aeltesten Peter Kuerber zu Montau, im Amte Neuenburg in Westpreußen*. Graudenz: C. G. Möhte, 1826.

This 16-page pamphlet was previously unknown. It commemorates the death of Peter Kuerber or Kerber, born 3 Aug 1783, elected minister at Montau 13 Aug 1809, elected elder 30 Oct 1814, and died 1 May 1821.

Cornelius Zeisset, *Zwei Leichenreden auf 1) den verstorbenen Mennoniten-Prediger Samuel Zeisset, von Lautenbach, Königl. Würtemb. Oberamts Neckarsulm, und 2) die verstorbene Ehefrau des Christian Hunzinger, Eva geb. Fellmann, von Heinsheim, Großherzogl. Badischen Oberamts Neckarbischofsheim*. Worms: Johann Andreas Kranzbühler, 1830. The cover title is *Predigten eines Mennoniten-Predigers in Württemberg*.

This set of two funeral sermons from the early 19th century is listed as existing only in a single copy in the Amsterdam



Mennonite library in *Mennonite Bibliography 1631-1961* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1977).

Abraham Thiessen, *Aus russischer Gefangenschaft durch Süd- und West-Europa in die Ver. Staaten Nordamerikas. Mit einer kurzen Beschreibung der hiesigen Verhältnisse*. Fairbury, NE: Thiessen, 1880.

This previously unknown pamphlet by the Russian Mennonite "revolutionary" Abraham Thiessen (1838-1889) was found in the Cornelius Jansen papers here.

## Vistula Mennonite Studies Project

The story of Mennonites in the Vistula Delta (what is now northern Poland) is one of the less thoroughly studied chapters of Mennonite history, especially in English. This is despite the fact that it is the fountainhead of the Russian Mennonite experience, which features so prominently in North American Mennonite story. The history of Mennonites along the Vistula river in eastern Europe deserves more intensive cultivation.

The "Vistula Mennonite Studies Project" focuses on the collection of archival material, and the translation and publication of historical texts about the Vistula Mennonites.

We have recently published a translation of H. G. Mannhardt's *Die Danziger Mennonitengemeinde* [The Danzig Mennonite Congregation] (1919), a history of one of the leading congregations. You can contact the MLA to purchase a copy of *The Danzig Mennonite Congregation: Its Origin and History from 1569-1919*, translated by Victor G. Doerksen, edited by Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen (jointly published by Bethel College and by Pandora Press of Kitchener, Ontario). The price is \$31.00.

We also are at work annotating a draft translation of Wilhelm Mannhardt's *Die Wehrfreiheit der altpreussischen Mennoniten* [The Military Exemption of the Prussian Mennonites] (1863). This is the central historical work on the Vistula Mennonite story. We hope to publish this in 2009.

We also have had some accomplishment in the collection of archival materials. In spring 2007 we received 5 reels of microfilm from the Polish government archives in

Gdansk containing the surviving records of the village of Heubuden. This set of village records is the most complete of any of the Vistula Mennonite villages. Unfortunately, there is not a lot of material from before 1850; the bulk of the records are from 1840-1900. We plan to make a request for more records from the same archives.

Donations toward this project to help with publication costs and future archival collecting are always welcome.

## GRANDMA data entry

The GRANDMA (Genealogical Registry AND Database of Mennonite Ancestry) database has significantly changed Mennonite biographical and family history research. The project is sponsored by the California Mennonite Historical Society (<http://www.fresno.edu/affiliation/cmhs/gpc/home.htm>)

The MLA has been submitting information to the GRANDMA database project from its early stages in 1993. We have focused mostly on original church membership record books that reflect the immigration to the plains states in the 1870s. So far we have entered all of the data from the following church record books and other sources:

- Alexanderwohl (Kansas) and its predecessors in Russia and Poland (Przechowka)
- Hoffnungsau, Inman, Kansas
- Bethesda, Henderson, Nebraska
- Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, Henderson, Nebraska
- First, Mountain Lake, Minnesota
- Karlswalder, Turner County, South Dakota
- a book labeled "Mennoniten Gemeinde im Turner County," South Dakota
- Emmanuel, Moundridge, Kansas
- Bergthal Mennonite Church, Pawnee Rock, Kansas
- Heinrichsdorf, Volhynia
- Michalin-Gnadenberg-Grace Hill record book of Volhynia and Kansas
- Lonetree (Holdeman) church of Moundridge, Kansas
- Friedensthal (Central Heights) church of Durham, Kansas
- scattered records of Low German Volhynian families
- Bethel Mennonite Church, Inman, Kansas

- the former Bruderthal Mennonite Church near Hillsboro, Kansas
- the former Johannestal churches near Hillsboro
- First Mennonite, Hillsboro
- Emmaus Mennonite Church, Whitewater, Kansas
- 9 of 11 vols. of Albert J. Ruth, "Ruth Family Genealogy," a typed compilation held by the MLA. (One of the 11 volumes is an index and another is a collection of photos and texts. These two volumes were not entered in the database.) Some financing for this project was provided by Dale and Bertha Galle of Moundridge, Kansas.
- Goessel, Kansas, Mennonite Church
- First Mennonite, Newton, Kansas.
- First Mennonite, Beatrice, Nebraska
- Hebron, Buhler, Kansas
- First Mennonite, Halstead, Kansas
- First Mennonite of Christian, Moundridge
- Lehigh, Kansas, Mennonite Church
- Tabor Mennonite Church, rural Newton, Kansas
- Zion Mennonite Church, Elbing, Kansas
- Menoville Mennonite Church, north of El Reno, Oklahoma
- West Zion Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kansas
- Walton, Kansas, Mennonite Church
- Kotosufka/Hoffnungsfeld/Hopefield Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kansas
- Eden Mennonite Church, Moundridge, Kansas
- Arlington, Kansas, Mennonite Church
- First Mennonite Church, Pretty Prairie, Kansas (in process)

## Oklahoma Church Records

Many Mennonite churches existed in Oklahoma over the past century and more. Some have dissolved over the decades and others continue in the present. We have records of some of those congregations, but many are missing. As the Oklahoma centennial approaches, we would be interested in having membership records and church meeting minutes (copies or originals) from any Mennonite church in Oklahoma, but especially those that have closed.

Below is a list of Oklahoma congregations for which we already HAVE some records (although in some of these cases our collection is missing the membership

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records). You can see that there are some obvious gaps. *If you can help us acquire missing church records, we would very much appreciate it.*

- Greenfield–Carnegie
- Herold–Cordell
- Sichar–Cordell
- Bethanian–Coy
- Deer Creek
- Springfield–Eakly
- Bethel–Enid
- Grace–Enid
- Friedensthal–Gotebo
- Bethel–Hydro
- Turpin
- Watova
- Zion–Canton
- Zion–Perry

## Wedel Book Series

In 2007 we published vol. 14 in the C. H. Wedel book series, H. G. Mannhardt's *The Danzig Mennonite Congregation: Its Origin and History from 1569-1919*, translated by Victor G. Doerksen, edited by Mark Jantzen and John D. Thiesen. This volume was published jointly with Pandora Press of Kitchener, Ontario.

## Identify This



This is supposed to be a group working on Newton, Kansas, flooding in June 1965. Can anyone identify the people and the specific location?



Can anyone identify this small town? The boxcar labeled "T&BV" is from the Trinity and Brazos Valley railroad in Texas. See detail of the institutional building in the background below.

*Left:* Can anyone say anything about this religious telescope? Note the flooding at the base. The signature on the photo seems to be "W. H. Dyck."

