

Since then I have gathered many more records of families related to me and to my husband. For me these records form the skeleton for the stories of their lives. I'm hooked on stories. Once I began collecting them, I discovered that they aren't so hard to find as one might suppose. Old newspapers and church records have been a rich source of information for me. Long interviews with our oldest living relatives have also added to my collection of stories.

These stories have given me a real sense of gratitude for the heritage that is mine.

Evangeline Kroeker (Clovis, California)

Alan Peters is responsible for my interest in genealogy. I met him in 1975, when I began attending College Community Mennonite Brethren Church in Clovis, California; he was my first Sunday school teacher there. In talking with him, I found that he was a nephew of one of my closest girlhood friends. Then I discovered that his great aunt was the wife of one of my uncles, and that he had information on my maternal grandfather's family. This sparked my interest in researching my mother's people. It took me two-and-a-half years of research and work to complete this book. This was so exciting that I kept on with one project after another; now I'm on my thirteenth book. Two are collections and translations of Low German humor. There are copies of these books all over the United States, Canada and Mexico. Several historical societies have requested copies of my books, so I feel I will have left a mark of some kind in this world after I'm gone. In 1995 I said that book number twelve would be my last, but now here I go again!

GRANDMA Volume 1 available; Volume 2 on the way

September 6 was a red-letter day for the Historical Society's Genealogy Project Committee. That was the release day for volume 1 of the GRANDMA database on CD-ROM. Volume 1 contains detailed genealogical data on 135,482 persons of Low German Mennonite ancestry in 35,715 families. Also on volume 1 are maps of Prussia and South Russia; ship passenger list indexes containing 14,220 names in 2,488 families; scanned images of the Rosenort (Prussia) Mennonite church membership records; DOS and Windows versions of the Brother's Keeper program (which is used to view the contents of the database). The CD sells for \$30.00, plus \$2.00 shipping (Calif. residents add 7.5% sales tax). Please send orders to the address on the back page of this issue.

Though volume 1 has only been available for a few months, the committee already is working on volume 2. This second volume will contain nearly 300,000 names

(including those already on volume 1). We hope to have it ready by the end of 1997.

A particularly noteworthy aspect of volume 2 will be the addition of many Canadian Mennonite families, many of whom migrated to North America during and after the 1920s. Given that most of the family lines in volume 1 migrated from Russia to the United States in the 1870s, the addition of these new families will vastly increase the value of the database.

For more information on the GRANDMA database project, call 209-453-2225 or e-mail to kennsrem@fresno.edu.

Helping Grandma: Adding to our knowledge of Mennonite genealogy

GRANDMA is alive and well! As a Society, we should be pleased with our accomplishments in collecting, organizing, and making available the family records of almost 200,000 individuals of Mennonite ancestry around the world. The data is available at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Fresno, the first volume of data has already been issued on CD-ROM, and a second one is on the way. We are seeing our fondest genealogical hopes and dreams being realized!

All of us who have caught the "family tree bug" know, however, that genealogical work is never done. Each discovery multiplies the mysteries, because each ancestor we discover has *two* parents, giving us twice as many new people to hunt for than we had before! Just as important, every day brings new data – the birth of a new child, the celebration of a marriage, the passing of a dear one – and each of these events must be recorded and chronicled. In other words, the work never ends; it only gets a little more complete.

Our effort to enlarge the scope of the GRANDMA (Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry) project is more than a few people can handle. The pool of information is so immense that only a concentrated and coordinated effort of many people can make the project move toward its goal of being as complete a record as possible. Fortunately, there are a variety of tasks that need to be done, giving almost everyone – with or without computer skills – a role to play in the "perfection" of the GRANDMA project.

Here are just a few of the things that need to be done to help the project grow:

1. Review the available published U.S. and Canadian ship passenger lists to determine the identity of the passengers listed there, see if they are already

- included in the GRANDMA database and, if so, note the GRANDMA number for each of them.
2. Create the artwork for the CD-ROM (volume II) to be issued in the next several months.
 3. Read and transcribe the available Molotschna Colony school registers, so that we can identify the families of the children listed in each village. This would probably require the ability to read the old German handwriting of a generation ago.
 4. Scan the Internet, and enter the many available Mennonite family records there into the GRANDMA database. Some Web sites, such as the Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society page, have outstanding sources that need to be entered into GRANDMA.
 5. Review the published index to B. H. Unruh's book on Mennonite migration from Prussia to Russia, and add the GRANDMA number for each person in the index.
 6. Locate and collect old family photographs to include in future volumes of GRANDMA. There are various tasks that different people could do in this regard: find suitable photograph collections; identify the persons shown on the photos; determine the GRANDMA number for each person, and scan the photos into a digital format that can be included on future CD-ROM volumes.
 7. Review microfilm copies of early federal and state censuses to locate Mennonite families and make hard copies of relevant records; determine if these families are already in GRANDMA and, if so, enter the GRANDMA number; enter the family into GRANDMA if there is no current record for that family.
 8. Collect biographical information about any Mennonite persons of interest to you — authors, leaders, scientists, musicians, etc. — and add the information to the notes contained in the GRANDMA entries for these people.
 9. Identify persons listed in such books as *Who's Who Among the Mennonites*, and determine if they are in GRANDMA. If so, indicate their GRANDMA number; if not, enter their information into the database.
 10. Review and index already-published family history books, and make sure that all persons in the book have been entered into GRANDMA. You can even enter this information for books of special interest to you, if no one else has already completed them.
 11. Locate and scan plat maps for areas where early U.S. and Canadian Mennonites lived. These maps are found in various county tax assessors' offices, and show the names and property holdings of all landowners for various years.
 12. Locate old church records that have not been microfilmed, and make hard copies of those records, so that the information in them can be entered into GRANDMA. Many church records in different Mennonite conferences and congregations have not yet been made available for entry in GRANDMA.
 13. Go to county seats in areas with high Mennonite population concentrations, and copy birth, marriage and death records, so that this information can be entered into GRANDMA.
 14. Review copies of periodical such as *Mennonitische Rundschau*, *Zionsbote*, *Mennonite Weekly Review*, and *The Christian Leader*, to make sure that personal information in articles, correspondence and obituaries is properly entered into GRANDMA. Someone could even take on the task of reviewing the current issues of such periodicals, making sure that GRANDMA is updated to reflect the most recent information about persons and families.
 15. Conduct a Family Bible survey in your own congregation, making copies of the family history information contained in them, and enter that information into GRANDMA.
 16. Borrow copies of students' classroom family history projects, and make sure the information they contain is entered into GRANDMA.
 17. Visit retirement centers and nursing homes, where older people can tell their stories, and those of their families. Take notes, make copies of documents, and acquire information about their ancestors. Make sure the information gets entered or submitted to GRANDMA.
 18. If traveling to overseas Mennonite settlements, secure family information for those of Mennonite ancestry living there, and make sure that it is submitted to GRANDMA.

These are only some of the ways to help GRANDMA grow; you can probably come up with a list of your own.