

Today little attention is paid toward teaching Russian history and geography in the German schools of southern Russia. Although geography is studied for a lengthy period, during my inspection of several schools most sixth-grade students could not locate Travrichesk gubernia on a map, did not know the capital cities, and did not know where His Majesty the Emperor lived.

Similar reports have been received from other locations. The inspector of the Berdyansk-Melitopol district reported that Mennonites in the Molotschna colony had published their own textbook for teaching the geography of the Motherland. In fact, it only describes the geography of the Molotschna colony. The book is entitled *Hilfsbüchlein beim ersten Unterricht in Heimatkunde* [A Handbook for the Introductory Teaching of Local History and Topography], and is published in Leipzig by Brockhaus. It is designed for use in the schools of the Gnadenfeld and Halbstadt volosts, and is intended to teach what the Mennonites call "the geography of the Motherland." The classes are held in the German language. Based on the contents of the *Hilfsbüchlein*, however, it is not the "Motherland's geography," but rather the geography of the German colonies in Russia. For the French people the Motherland is France, for Germans—it is Germany, and for Russians—Russia, but for the Mennonites near Berdyansk—the Motherland is the Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld volosts!

The book does not contain any information about Russia; it would seem that the Mennonite colonies were outside Russia. The nearest Russian villages are mentioned either accidentally (on page 3, when mentioning the village of Troitzkoye), or with regard to the Russian workers from various places who are employed by the colonists.

On page 3 of the chapter entitled, "*Gehankenreisen*," the author suggests taking a "mental journey" through Russia as follows:

Let's imagine that we are going east from Tiede. First, we will arrive in Blumenort. If we continue east we will go through Rosenort, Tiegerweide, Rückenau, Nikolaidorf, Paulsheim and Gnadenfeld. To the east of Gnadenfeld is Grossweide. Terek is to the east of Tiede. There are many Mennonites there. Asia is located further to the east. There are Mennonites in Turkestan, Pavlodar and Barnaul. To the west from Tiede is Ohrloff. Going west from Ohrloff we will pass Blumenstein, Troitzkoye and Fedorovka. The railroad station at Fedorovka belongs to the Mennonites. Further to the west is a place called Sagradowka. There are seventeen Mennonite colonies there. To the west from Sagradowka lie Austria, Germany, Spain and Portugal.

The chairman of the government inspection meeting reported that

such teaching of "the Motherland's geography" by Germans can be disturbing for Russians, who share the same Motherland. While visiting a German school in Neu-Halbstadt, I noticed that students knew a lot about the colonies in Siberia, Samara and Saratov Trakt. They could even name the different villages there and give information about them. But when I asked what they knew about the neighboring town of Gross Tokmak, they did not know what to say.

Based on these reports, the meeting concluded with a resolution to increase the teaching of Russian history and geography. Furthermore, inspectors are responsible for ensuring that these classes would be taught in Russian rather than German.

## Volume 2 of GRANDMA CD-ROM now available

The California Mennonite Historical Society's Genealogy Project Committee is pleased to announce that the second volume of GRANDMA (the Genealogical Registry and Database of Mennonite Ancestry) is now available for purchase. Distributed on CD-ROM, the new volume contains 267,864 names of persons whose ancestral lines can be traced to Mennonite communities in Poland and Russia.

Also included on the CD are:

- New maps of South Russia and Prussia, ship list indexes for Mennonite immigrants from Russia to North America
- scanned images of B. H. Unruh's book, *Die niederlaendisch-niederdeutschen Hintergrunde der mennonitische Ostwanderungen im 16., 18., und 19. Jahrhundert* (Part II only)
- photographs of selected persons in the GRANDMA database
- Software for viewing the contents of the CD, including Brother's Keeper (both DOS and Windows versions), GedTool, and image viewer programs.

It is not necessary to purchase volume 1 in order to use the new volume, since all genealogical data from the first volume is included on the second.

The database is designed to be used with existing commercial genealogy software programs. We strongly recommend Brother's Keeper, which is distributed as

shareware on the CD-ROM in both DOS and Windows version. The database may be used with other programs capable of importing GEDCOM files, though many of these programs cannot import databases as large as GRANDMA. We have not yet found any Macintosh program capable of importing GRANDMA, though we are still working on providing a Macintosh-compatible version.

In order to use GRANDMA on your computer, you will need a DOS or Windows system with a CD-ROM drive and at least 85 MB available hard drive space.

To order, send US \$30.00 plus \$2.00 shipping to the California Mennonite Historical Society, 4824 E. Butler, Fresno, CA 93727. For Canadian and other foreign orders, please send payment in US dollars.

The database may also be accessed by the public at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Fresno, California. There is no charge for using the database in the Center; printouts of ancestor charts and family group charts are available for 25 cents/page. Contact Kevin Enns-Rempel at 209-453-2225 or kennsrem@fresno.edu for more information.

## 1998 annual meeting will feature stories of the Russian Mennonites

Make plans now to attend the 1998 annual meeting of the California Mennonite Historical Society, to be held Saturday, April 18 on the campus of Mennonite Brethren Biblical Seminary in Fresno. This year's featured speaker is Glenna Janzen, a storyteller from St. Catharines, Ontario.

Janzen tells family and Mennonite stories, as well as folk tales, fairy tales, myths and epics. She has traveled to Ukraine with the Mennonite Heritage Cruise twice to tell stories. Her presentation at this year's meeting is entitled "From Bread and Salt to Roasted Zwieback and Tears: Family Stories From the 1920s Russian Mennonites."

During the afternoon, Alan Peters and other members of the Genealogy Project Committee will present a genealogy workshop. They will provide information on the work of that Committee, particularly as it relates to the GRANDMA CD project. Other plans for afternoon sessions have not yet been finalized, but will probably include the showing of a recent film on Mennonite history.

A traditional *faspa* dinner will precede a brief business meeting and the featured speaker during the evening. You will receive more information about the program, times of events and cost of tickets in several weeks.

## Historical Society receives record donation from Neufeld Trust

The Historical Society received an unexpected Christmas gift this year—a check in the amount of \$17,000 from the Theodore C. Neufeld Trust. This is the largest single donation ever received by the Society. The gift was not designated for any particular project or Society activity, and the Executive Committee will be meeting in the near future to discuss how it might best be used.

Theodore C. (Ted) Neufeld was born December 28, 1908 in Fairview, Oklahoma, the youngest son of Isaac U. and Catharina (Claassen) Neufeld. His maternal grandfather was Johann Claassen, one of the eighteen founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church. In about 1920 the Neufeld family moved to Reedley, California. Ted Neufeld was baptized and joined the Reedley Mennonite Brethren Church on June 18, 1922.

Probably in late 1920s Neufeld left Reedley to attend college in the Los Angeles area. He formally transferred his membership from the Reedley MB Church in September 1931. During this time he married Helen Crane and worked on the pastoral staff of a Los Angeles-area Baptist Church. After leaving the ministry, Neufeld worked for many years as a school administrator in various parts of southern California.

Following the death of his first wife, Neufeld married Helen Hogan. There were no children born to either marriage. Helen Hogan Neufeld taught chemistry for many years at Glendale Community College.

Following their retirement, the Neufelds moved to the small community of Mt. Baldy, north of Upland, California. They both were active in community affairs there, and Ted served on the board of the local volunteer fire department. They attended the Mt. Baldy Community Church.

In 1979 the Neufelds participated in the Historical Society's Heritage Tour to the Soviet Union and Poland. This event apparently was the only active involvement that they had with the activities of the Society, though they remained on its membership list afterward.

Ted Neufeld died in 1990. His wife moved to Pomona soon after, where she died in 1997. Following her death, the assets of the Theodore C. Neufeld Charitable Trust were distributed to various organizations, including the California Mennonite Historical Society.

The Society Executive is grateful for the generosity and support shown by this donation, and looks forward with anticipation to the projects that are now possible as a result of it.