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Always a Greener Pasture: Mennonite Settlement in Western North America, 1885 - 1940

by Kevin Enns-Rempel

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Peter T. Duerksen was born on September 28, 1881 in Hillsboro, Kansas, the son of Russian Mennonite immigrants. Peter's father, Cornelius Duerksen, died when Peter was six. His mother remarried to Jakob Hildebrand five years later. In 1898, Peter moved with his mother and stepfather to Weatherford, Oklahoma, where the family homesteaded in an area originally settled by Mennonites in 1892. He was married there in 1903 to Katharina Neufeld. Katharina Neufeld had been born in Russia in 1883, and migrated with her parents to Hillsboro in 1891 before moving on to Oklahoma. The couple remained for a few years in Weatherford, where their first three children were born. In 1908 Peter and Katharina moved south to Mountain View, Oklahoma, and shortly thereafter joined the nearby Gotebo Mennonite Brethren Church.

The following year the Duerksens left Oklahoma, and began a remarkable odyssey across the western United States that would continue for the next quarter-century. In 1909 they moved to the recently-established Mennonite settlement at Escondido, California, near San Diego. A series of hard winters and loss of church leadership caused several families, including the Duerksens, to leave Escondido a few years later. Peter and Katharina did so in 1915, moving north to another new Mennonite settlement at Fairmead, in Madera County. They stayed in Fairmead for about two years, and after living briefly in the nearby town of Madera, the Duerksens moved to the large Mennonite community at Reedley, California. They remained there until 1919, at which time the family left California and moved to Dallas, Oregon. After only a few months, they moved to Portland and then returned south by ship

to San Francisco, where they stayed briefly before settling at Lodi, California.

The 1920s were as full of movement as had been the previous decade. From about 1921 to 1924, the Duerksens lived in Reedley; then in Bakersfield until 1926. In that year they moved to a new, short-lived Mennonite settlement at Kerman, in western Fresno County. Disillusioned with that location, the Duerksens returned to Lodi later in 1926. Turning his sights further afield, Peter Duerksen moved his family to Mud Lake, Idaho in 1927. That location did not live up to the land agent's claims, and the family moved to Salem, Oregon in 1928. It was back to Bakersfield later that year and then on to the Fraser Valley of British Columbia in 1929. Three days of incessant rain in B.C. soured Peter Duerksen on that location, so he hooked the as-yet unloaded trailer back to their vehicle and returned to Salem. They stayed there until 1930 and then moved back to Bakersfield.

Another land agent caught Duerksen's ear in 1931 and lured the family to Coldwater, Texas. Within a year, however, they had packed to move back to Dallas, Oregon. But first Peter decided to visit relatives in Weatherford, Oklahoma that he had not seen for twenty-three years. He died of a stroke there in 1932. Katharina Duerksen and the children went ahead with the move to Dallas, but soon relocated to Salem in search of work. Within a year the family moved again to Bakersfield. In 1934 Katharina Duerksen was struck by a car and killed while crossing a street, thus ending the saga of the

O.M.H.G.S.

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Mirror of the Martyrs

exhibit will be in Oregon from
January 26 through February 25, 1996
at the Lebanon Mennonite Church.

See full page announcement elsewhere in this issue.

wandering Duerksen family.

I do not wish to suggest that the story of my great-grandparents' travels during these years was the typical Mennonite story. It was not. At the same time, I would suggest that--in an extreme form-- their story serves as a metaphor for the remarkable process by which Mennonites scattered across and settled the far corners of the western United States and Canada during the decades of the 1880s through the 1930s. This migration began within a few years after Peter's and Katharina's births and had largely ended within a few years after their premature deaths. Their lives, in a microcosm, are the story I wish to tell tonight.

In 1880 the western frontier of the Mennonite world existed along a more-or-less straight line near the 98th parallel, beginning in the north near Winnipeg and extending south through Hutchinson and Turner counties in South Dakota, York and Jefferson counties in Nebraska, and McPherson, Marion and Harvey counties in Kansas. Looking west from that imaginary line in 1880, one would have found only a few dozen Mennonites and Amish in the Willamette Valley of Oregon. Other than that tiny outpost, the western half of the continent was devoid of Mennonites.

By 1940, the situation had changed profoundly. In that year there were--or had for a time been--settlements of Mennonites in every state and province west of the 98th parallel except Wyoming, Utah and Nevada. From a few dozen members in 1880, the number of Mennonites west of the 98th parallel had swelled to almost 25,000 members by 1940. If non-member adults and children were included in this count, the actual number of total settlers would be considerably higher.

This migration took place with little centralized planning or leadership. It consisted largely of individual families and small groups deciding on their own to seek new homes in the Far West. As such, it tended to be a very scattered, diverse process. These Mennonites did not decide together on a few major settlements to which most of them would move and then coordinate their efforts in that direction. Instead, the migration was characterized by literally hundreds of scattered, isolated settlements, some of which eventually flourished, but many more of which faded quickly into obscurity. As communities perished, the Mennonites there travelled on to the next greener pasture that beckoned them. In too many cases, that new location proved no better than the last. The Duerksen

family may be an extreme example of this phenomenon, but they are not as unique as one might think.

Most--perhaps as many as 80 percent--of those who participated in this migration were Mennonites of Russian descent, whose ancestors had moved to the vicinity of that imaginary line along the 98th parallel beginning in 1874. Poised as they were on the western frontier of the time, Russian Mennonites were quicker to head off into the Far West than were Swiss and South German Mennonites, most of whom lived much further east. Indeed, it appears that most of the Swiss/South German Mennonites who did make their way west moved first to midwestern locations such as Iowa or Kansas before making the leap into the Far West. Relatively few Mennonites from eastern locations like Pennsylvania or Virginia moved directly to the far West during this period, though it did occur. This is not to say that Swiss/South German Mennonites did not also move regularly and often in the United States and Canada, but their migrations took place for the most part on the eastern half of the continent, and therefore are not part of the story I recount this evening.

When most Mennonites think back on their history as a pilgrim people, they remember the great migration undertaken for reasons of conscience. They recall the persecuted Mennonites of the Netherlands and Switzerland fleeing to new homes in Prussia, the PalaKatharinate and Pennsylvania; of Prussian and Russian Mennonites leaving their homes rather than submitting to military service; of twentieth-century Russian Mennonites fleeing the hostility of the Soviet regime. The migration that I describe this evening does not fit into that tradition. It was almost entirely a migration for physical betterment and economic improvement; religious motivations or persecution had virtually nothing to do with it.

What kind of physical betterment and economic improvement were the Mennonites who headed west searching for? The majority of those who joined this migration had come to North America from Russia only a few decades before. What would have made them willing to relocate their families so soon after their arrival in this country? The primary motivation was a desire for plentiful, high-quality, and --if possible--inexpensive farm land.

By the late 1880s and early 1890s, many midwestern Mennonites were discovering that the supply of available land in their original communities was diminishing

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rapidly. Most Mennonite landowners at the time hoped to help their children establish themselves on their own farms near the original family farm. As the land supply decreased, however, this goal became increasingly difficult to achieve. Mennonites facing this situation responded in a number of ways. Some subdivided the original farm among the children. This was rarely economically feasible. Such subdivided farms quickly became too small to remain viable. Others rented farms, though this was not considered as desirable as actual farm ownership. Still others left the farm and sought occupations in nearby towns. This also was considered a step down from the agricultural ideal of the time. The remaining option was to seek more plentiful land elsewhere, on which the extended family could re-establish itself. This was the option pursued by many midwestern Mennonites beginning in the late 1880s, and was the single largest factor fueling the migration of this period.

While inexpensive land certainly was preferable, it does not appear that Mennonites heading West necessarily chose land based on price. Particularly in California, Mennonites often bought land considerably more expensive than that which they had left in the Midwest. It seems that availability, quality and climate counted for more than did price alone for most of these settlers.

Most Mennonites roamed the West in search of improved agricultural opportunities, and most of this presentation focuses on that group. A smaller number of Mennonites, however, went west for reasons of physical health. This phenomenon is a lesser-known, but nonetheless important, sub-theme to our story this evening.

The prevailing medical wisdom of the late nineteenth century suggested that warm, dry climates offered the best hope for recovery from tuberculosis and other similar diseases. This belief brought thousands of health seekers--both Mennonite and otherwise--to the western United States, particularly to southern California. Thousands of invalids flooded southern California during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.¹

While most health-seeking Mennonites went to California during these years, other areas of the West also received such settlers. Amos P. and Delilah Troyer, for example, moved from Garden City, Missouri to the Willamette Valley of Oregon in 1892 in order to help Amos recover from the affects of typhoid fever.² A significant number of health-seekers, particularly those belonging to the Mennonite Church, settled at La Junta, in eastern Colorado, beginning in 1902. So popular was this area for Mennonite health-seekers that they established a tuberculosis sanitarium in La Junta in 1908. The presence of this hospital encouraged even more invalid Mennonites to move to La Junta in subsequent years.

One of the locations thought to possess the greatest

health benefits was the foothill area between San Bernardino and Los Angeles, California.³ It was to this area that the family of Heinrich and Ella Rees, members of the General Conference Mennonite Church, moved from Ashland County, Ohio in 1887 because of Heinrich's "throat ailment." During the next decade perhaps a dozen more Mennonite families, mostly health seekers, settled or resided briefly in the Upland area. Though the bulk of Mennonite settlers in California at this time went to the Upland area, others scattered to various parts of the region. By 1897 health-seeking Mennonite families had settled in Pasadena, Los Angeles, Glendora, Azusa and San Diego.

Health seekers often did not plan to become permanent residents of California. Many hoped that a few months there would cure them and they could return home. Reports from these communities frequently describe the influx of temporary residents during the winter months and the corresponding outflow in the spring.⁴ Perhaps the most telling comment in this regard came from A.S. Shelly, who moved from Bally, Pennsylvania to Upland in 1915 to become minister of the General Conference Mennonite congregation there. Shortly after his arrival he described the "kaleidoscopic changes in the make-up of our audiences from week to week by reason of the...many temporary visitors who come here for a few weeks or months. The work of getting acquainted, in any case difficult enough...was thus made more so, sometimes almost to the point of being annoying."⁵

Many invalids came to southern California with no idea where they would live once they arrived. Among the General Conference Mennonites already residing around Upland were those quick to offer the newcomers temporary lodging. I.A. Sommer mentioned as early as 1894 that the Ledig family in Cucamonga regularly took in such visitors. Heinrich Rees lamented that whenever he read death notices in the Mennonite press regarding young people he wished that he had built a guest cottage so that they could have recuperated in California rather than dying in a bitter eastern climate.⁶

Generosity notwithstanding, the Mennonites around Upland could only host a few of the many health seekers who came to their community. This limitation played a part in the creation in 1914 of the Mennonite Sanitarium at Alta Loma, northeast of Upland. Founded for the care of Mennonite tuberculosis patients, the little sanitarium--it had only eight beds--quickly filled to capacity. Nonetheless, the sanitarium closed in 1923 after nine years of operation. It failed to attract Mennonite consumptives from other parts of the country, and instead drew patients mostly from non-Mennonites already in southern California. Difficulties in providing staffing and adequate funding for the institution also hastened its demise.⁷

It was probably inevitable that the sanitarium would

not survive long. Historians of the health seeker movement in California suggest that the movement peaked around 1900 and began to decline after that time. Not only had residents become increasingly hostile to the presence of communicable tuberculosis patients in their midst, but the medical profession had concluded that climate played an insignificant role in their treatment. Doctors less often recommended the long trip west to their patients, drastically reducing the number of patients available to institutions such as the Mennonite Sanitarium. Despite these changes, the myth of California's healthful climate did not die immediately, allowing the sanitarium to continue functioning even after the peak of the health craze.⁸

The closure of the Mennonite Sanitarium symbolizes the end of the Mennonite health seeker migration movement. We probably will never know how many Mennonites came west for reasons of health. The Upland congregation, which received the largest number of health seekers, had a membership of over 250 in 1923, but this represents only a small fraction of those who came. A few individuals by the 1920s still mentioned health reasons for their moving west, but the numbers had declined drastically compared to earlier decades. During the ensuing decades, the vast majority of Mennonites who went west did so in search of enhanced agricultural opportunities.

Whether they came for reasons of land or health, loneliness and isolation were ever-present problems for western Mennonites during these years. While some Mennonites migrated in large groups or as extended families, others did so in very small groups or even as individuals. Though they rarely were literally alone, the lack of fellow Mennonites to provide spiritual fellowship was difficult for them. Gerhard Rempel, perhaps the first Mennonite to settle in California, wrote to the Mennonitische Rundschau from Redding in 1886, "In temporal terms it goes fairly well, though not spiritually. We are so alone, without any brothers and sisters in the faith nor any Mennonite worship. In our area are Methodists, whose worship services are not very edifying for us, because we don't understand the English language."⁹ The Rempel family eventually left Redding and moved to Oregon, where a larger community of Mennonites existed. In 1898, Jakob Wedel, Jr., wrote from San Diego to the Christlicher Bundesbote that many who come West seeking restoration of health become very lonely in California, "and at such times the ship of faith nearly sinks."¹⁰ From Hicksville, Washington, Peter and Katharina Siemens reported to the Zionsbote in 1909 that they had no congregation, no Sunday school, no fellowship. Their neighbors were almost all "Americans," mostly bachelors who played ball on Sundays.¹¹ The Siemens family soon moved away from their hostile environment.

In an effort to remain connected to their far-flung

friends and relatives and to encourage others to join them in their isolated communities, many Mennonites turned to their church-related periodicals. Large sections of these papers--such as The Herald of Truth, Gospel Herald, The Mennonite, Christlicher Bundesbote, Mennonitische Rundschau, and Zionsbote--were devoted to reports from the various communities in which church members lived. Correspondents frequently would wax eloquent--even poetic--in extolling the virtues of their particular settlement. Those reporting from California were particularly fond of singing the praises of that region's climate, and contrasting it with the harsher eastern regions from which they had come.

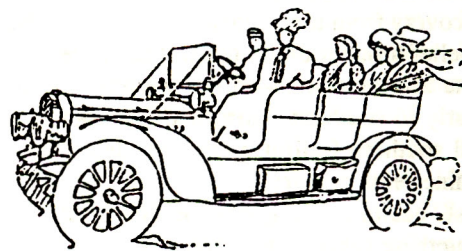
John Hygema, a Mennonite Church minister who moved from Wakarusa, Indiana to California for reasons of health, reported in The Herald of Truth in January 1908 that,

"Here in California things differ a great deal from the Eastern and Northern states. They had one frost since I am here...Orange trees that are well cared for are loaded with nice, good fruit...."

"The weather here is fine. I can sit by the seashore barefooted and in my shirt-sleeves and am comfortable. People bathe in the ocean nearly every day; the waves keep up a perpetual noise...I should like to give a photograph of the nice flowers and green trees that grow here at present...."

"My writing may be doubted by some people in the East. People now in sight are sitting under umbrellas to shade themselves."¹²

In 1912, George and Chris Katharina Goering reported from El Nido, about fifty miles west of Fresno, that "We have moved here from Dolton, South Dakota. "Oh, what a difference between South Dakota and California! When we left there it was stormy and cold,



but when we came to California we found the trees in full bloom, everything beautifully green and the weather warm and pleasant."¹³ ("If I had a \$ for every report bragging about the weather...")

Sometimes these reports ventured beyond praising one's own community to denigrating rival ones. Martin B. Fast, then living in Atwater, California, provided an example of such editorializing in 1912, when he reported to the Mennonitische Rundschau.

After reading the report by [August] Klingenberg from Bakersfield last week, I felt a reply was in order. Klingenberg is a land agent, and most land agents will praise the areas in which they live while looking down upon other areas. If it is so beautiful in Bakersfield, they why aren't the people who move there staying? I have

*been to Bakersfield several times. What I have seen there, and what I have been told by people who have moved from there, is visible evidence that most of the city is of very inferior quality. In moral and Christian terms, the conditions there are sad.*¹⁴

Other correspondents used these papers to promote communities not even yet in existence. One of the more outlandish projects was one proposed by Jakob A. Nachtigall, who reported in 1912 on land available for a German Mennonite settlement in Brazil.¹⁵ Despite Nachtigall's praises, it does not appear that any Mennonites actually moved to Brazil at that time.

Another settlement-related feature of the Mennonite papers of that era that would seem strange to us today were regular advertisements by land agents and railroad companies. During a few months of 1904 alone, the Mennonitische Rundschau featured advertisements for colonies in Montana; the San Joaquin Valley of California; Oakes, North Dakota; Herbert, Saskatchewan; Kentucky; and Quill Lake, Saskatchewan. While this mixing of business concerns and religious literature strikes us as odd today, it did not seem to offend Mennonite readers of that time.

Peter and Katharina Duerksen chose several of their many settlement locations with the help of the Mennonite land agents just mentioned. While these agents did not cause the rush for western land, they certainly helped heighten the enthusiasm for migration among Mennonites already predisposed in that direction.

The best known--and most infamous--of these Mennonite land agents was Henry J. Martens. From his Hillsboro, Kansas, headquarters, Martens directed several land settlement schemes in various parts of the Western United States and Canada. His best known project began in 1909, when he announced plans for a large German settlement in Kern County, California. During that year he led four train excursions from Kansas to California, treating participants to tourist sights in Los Angeles before visiting the settlement location north of Bakersfield. Fueled by reports from enthusiastic excursionists and shameless articles in his own newspaper, *Der Deutsche Westen*, that frequently blurred the line between journalism and advertising, Martens whipped the midwestern Mennonite community into a near-frenzy about his California settlement. In October of 1909 the first group of settlers, numbering about 250, moved to their new home, which had been christened "Martensdale", in honor of its founder. The area was soon transformed from barren land to a small, but thriving, town with several businesses and even a hotel.

In only a few months, however, the initial excitement turned to despair. Residents of Martensdale learned that Martens had only taken out an option on the land they now occupied, and had never completed the purchase. Most of them had turned over their midwestern farm deeds and additional cash to Martens in exchange for land

they now realized Martens never owned to begin with. By spring of 1910 the true owners had evicted the settlers, who were left to start over with few--if any--financial resources. Efforts to extradite Martens to California for criminal proceedings failed when he fled Hillsboro and went into hiding. He died in 1941 in Kansas City, exiled from and vilified by the same community that celebrated him before 1910.¹⁶

Somewhat less controversial was Julius Siemens, the other best-known Mennonite land agent. Siemens began his real estate career in southern Manitoba in the late nineteenth century, but moved to Washington in 1894. He settled in Ritzville, and encouraged many other Mennonites to settle in this area of eastern Washington. While living there, Siemens worked as a colonization agent for the Northern Pacific Railroad, and in that capacity travelled widely in Mennonite settlements across the Midwest, promoting settlement projects in various western locations.

Siemens turned his attention to California in about 1910. He vigorously promoted a settlement at Los Molinos, which he claimed would become "the greatest Mennonite settlement in California". An outbreak of malaria among the settlers there in 1911 brought the Los Molinos settlement to a quick end. Siemens then turned his attention to Fairmead, in Madera County, where Peter and Katharina Duerksen bought land--evidently from him--in 1915. Despite much fanfare from Siemens, and more claims about this being the next "greatest Mennonite settlement", the Fairmead colony also struggled. It almost died when the expected influx of settlers did not materialize, but held on and still exists today as the Madera Avenue Mennonite Brethren Church. Siemens attempted to establish several other major Mennonite settlements, but none amounted to much. His tendency to lead eager Mennonite settlers to obscure locations with the promise of founding "the greatest Mennonite settlement", earned him a controversial reputation, if not the same disdain reserved for Henry J. Martens.¹⁷

Some voices within the church spoke out publicly and specifically against the practices of land agents. In 1909 the Zionsbote reported on a meeting at the Ebenfeld Mennonite Brethren Church near Hillsboro, Kansas, in which men from various congregations met "to discuss what we should do with regard to imprudent land deals in which many of our members are involving themselves." They agreed to publicly announce to the members of the conference that the Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church had excommunicated land agent Henry J. Martens because of inappropriate business dealings, and warned church members against engaging in transactions with him. Finally, they noted that "those of our brethren who work for land agents should not be inconsiderate of the fact that they will be called to accountability for their dealings."¹⁸ Given the Martensdale debacle of the

following year, it is evident that many church members chose to ignore this warning from their leadership.

In a 1914 Gospel Herald article entitled, "A Few Things About Land Sharks," I.S. Mast asked his readers,

"Are you among those who are considering a change of locations? May I ask your motives in desiring to make the change? If the motive is to get a home where you can be of greater use to the Church, I say amen to the motive. There are many small congregations in the West that need your help. But should your motive be dollars, let me give you a note of warning.

Some have been sincere in starting out alone, but they were influenced by land agents who also were out after the dollar. These agents persuaded them to believe that if they would settle in a place where there was no church of their choice that soon others of 'like precious faith' would settle in and they could have church privileges to their liking...



*"But the sad feature of it all was that these members were deceived. The land sharks did not care for their religion; it was their dollars that they were after. The land and neighborhood was all good, but they did not locate other Mennonite families there."*¹⁹

Whether because of land agents' schemes or individual dreams of greener pastures, various church leaders expressed concern at their members' willingness to move so readily. A 1905 editorial in The Mennonite commented that

Among our people, more than among others, it seem 'land hunger' has much to do with the weakening of the congregations. The habit of moving from place to place, with which persecution had much to do in the old days, still clings to our people, attractive lands, just now, go as far as persecution ever did toward scattering them. As long as they...settle in communities with others of our faith it is only the local congregation that loses, the church as a whole is likely to gain by it. But when a family becomes isolated and Mennonite associations are impossible then the church soon loses that family and very often they are lost to Christ...

*"We have yet to discover an efficient way by which our isolated communicants will get a proper spiritual care and be kept in touch with the affairs of the church."*²⁰

Other Mennonite editors took a different approach to expressing their disapproval of the migration trend. Abraham L. Schellenberg, editor of the Mennonite Brethren paper Zionsbote, frequently inserted parenthetical comments into reports from western communities, questioning both the quality of those places and the settlers' motivations for moving there. In a report from Hollywood in 1909, Anna Janzen commented that "I don't know why we must live so alone, but I am sure

God has a reason." To which Schellenberg parenthetically replied, "Is it really God's will that you are there or mostly your own will?"²¹ In 1912, Mrs. F.F. Becker wrote from El Modena in Orange County, California, "We are renting here, until the Lord shows us his will for us." Schellenberg retorted, "The Lord has something for you, but it is in Oklahoma."²² Schellenberg's apparent hostility toward westward migration is ironic in light of the fact that his father, the Elder Abraham Schellenberg, moved from Kansas to Escondido, California in 1907, where he served as minister of a Mennonite Brethren congregation for about six years.

Some church leaders attempted to direct the migration rather than oppose it. In 1910 the Western District of the General Conference Mennonite Church formed a colonization or resettlement committee to help guide the migration among its people. Though the migration had been going on already for fifteen years, the committee hoped to direct church members toward large Mennonite colonies in which it would be easier to establish congregations than was the case when individuals chose their own settlements. Within six years, the committee had come to the conclusion that "our people are too independent to pay attention to the judgment of the committee," and in 1918 it was dissolved.²³

As the opening example of Peter and Katharina Duerksen so vividly illustrates, this migration was often characterized by multiple relocations. Few Mennonite families moved as often as did the Duerksens, but so too was it rare for a migrating family to do so only once or twice. The search for greener pastures often resulted in misguided and ill-fated settlement choices, forcing families to move on soon after their arrivals.

Valentine L. Schrock, for example, was born in Somerset County, Pennsylvania in 1834 and joined the Mennonite Church there at age twenty. He moved from Pennsylvania to Iowa a few years later, but stayed there only a few months before going to Emma, Indiana. He married Mary Troyer there in 1869 and they lived in Emma for thirty years. In 1899 they headed west to Nampa, Idaho, staying there until 1908, when they relocated to Corning, California. In 1918 they went north to Albany, Oregon, but stayed for only eight months. The Schrocks then moved to Modesto, California, where they joined the Christian Church. Valentine Schrock died in Modesto in 1925,²⁴ having been a resident of at least seven different communities across North America.

In 1912 P.P. Giesbrecht wrote to the Mennonitische Rundschau with his particular tale of migration:

I first took up my walking stick to venture into the West in March of 1899, while living in North Dakota. We travelled by train to Oregon, renting a forty-acre farm in Newberg. I still regret leaving that place, since it was not necessary to do so. We decided, however, to go to Dallas. That was not such a good situation for us. The soil was very different there; it stuck to the wheels in the rain.

From there we went to Alberta and lived there for six years. We found that we didn't like such a cold area and so returned to Oregon. There was nothing available for us there and so we went to southwestern Washington, twenty-five miles north of Portland, Oregon. There the climate is similar to that in Oregon. If there was a down side, it was that it rained even more there than in Oregon. We moved from LaCenter, Washington to California because we did not want to be isolated from our church. In California I find that there is little rain, even in winter. We would like to have more rain for irrigation.²⁵ (comment on perpetual dissatisfaction).

The place in California at which the Giesbrecht family originally settled was Los Molinos, the malaria-ridden community mentioned earlier. Several families, including the Giesbrechts, moved from there to Atwater, about one hundred miles south, from which P.P. Giesbrecht submitted his report of earlier travels.

As Mennonites scattered across the western states and provinces, often choosing their new settlements in a hasty manner, it was inevitable that some of those communities would fail entirely. The malaria-plagued settlement at Los Molinos was just mentioned. Another ill-fated settlement was that of the "Schrug Mennonites" who settled near Dallas, Oregon beginning in 1882. When they discovered that the land on which they settled was too poor for grain crops, most of them sold their farms and moved south to Lane County beginning in 1890. By 1892 they had all left Dallas. To their dismay, they discovered that the new settlement in Lane County was no better than the land they had left in Dallas. Enthusiastic reports about Adams County, Washington caused the group to abandon its second location, and by 1900 the entire group had relocated a third time to Washington.²⁶ Accounts of other failed Mennonite settlements across the West could have easily filled up this evening's entire presentation.

In an episode reminiscent of Martensdale, California, a group of Mennonites settled along the Columbia River at Needles, British Columbia in 1912. Land agents promised them that a canning factory and hydroelectric dam would soon transform the region into a rich fruit-growing area and double the value of their land. Buyers soon discovered that the promoters lacked clear title to the property, and were forced to leave when British financiers foreclosed on it. Most of the settlers lost their life savings in the process.²⁷

By the end of the 1930s this unorganized, undisciplined movement of Mennonites across the West had for the most part come to a close. Mennonite migration in the region did not end, but it took on a different character. Subsequent migration flowed either into well-established rural communities or--more often--into urban areas. The new demands and opportunities of a war-time economy during the 1940s did much to pull Mennonites away from the search for agricultural opportunity and into the cities. They increasingly looked

to occupations in industry and the professions for their livelihood, and thus the ceaseless wandering in search of greener agricultural pastures became less important. This movement of Mennonites into the cities and professions became the dominant demographic theme of the post-World War II era, and brought to a close a unique era in the history of North American Mennonites.

NOTES

1. Kevin Starr, Inventing the Dream: California Through the Progressive Era (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), pp. 54-55; John E. Baur, The Health Seekers of Southern California: 1870-1900, with a Foreword by John W. Caughey (San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1959), pp. vii-viii, 34.
2. Hope Kauffman Lind, Apart and Together: Mennonites in Oregon and Neighboring States, 1876-1976, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History, no. 30 (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1990), 36.
3. Baur, p. 8.
4. See for example, Sara C. Sprunger, correspondence from Upland, 25 October 1907, Christlicher Bundesbote, 7 November 1907, p. 6; and Catherine B. Kulp, correspondence from Los Angeles, 20 June 1921, Gospel Herald, 7 July 1921, p. 284.
5. A. S. Shelly, correspondence from Upland, 31 March 1916, The Mennonite, 13 April 1916, p. 2.
6. I.A. Sommer, "Reisemitteilungen," Christlicher Bundesbote, 24 May 1894, pp. 4-5; H. Rees, correspondence from San Dimas, 17 January 1896, Christlicher Bundesbote, 30 January 1896, pp. 4-5.
7. For a more detailed history of the sanitarium, see Kevin Enns-Rempel, "The Mennonite Sanitarium at Alta Loma, California: 1914-1923," California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin (No. 25: November 1991), pp. 1-2, 7-11.
8. Baur, pp. 166, 174-176.
9. Gerhard Rempel, correspondence from Redding, 1 August 1886, Mennonitische Rundschau, 18 August 1886, 1.
10. Jakob Wedel, Jr. corr. from San Diego, Feb. 17, 1898. Christlicher Bundesbote Mar. 3, 1893, p.4.
11. Peter and Katharina Siemens, corr. from Hicksville, Wash., Zionsbote, ??-??-1909.
12. John Hygema, correspondence from Upland, 8 January 1908, Herald of Truth, 23 January 1908, 28.
13. George & Christina Goering corr. from El Nido, 24 Apr. 1923, Der Wahrheitsfreund, 9 May 1923, p. 8.
14. M.B. Fast, correspondence from Atwater, 19 January 1912, Mennonitische Rundschau, 7 February 1912, 2.
15. Jakob A. Nachtigall, correspondence from Escondido, 26 June 1912, Mennonitische Rundschau, 17 July 1912, 2-3.
16. Cite article by Leland and I.
17. For a more detailed study of Siemens, see my article, "In Search of the 'Greatest Mennonite Settlement': the Career of Julius Siemens," California Mennonite Historical Society Bulletin No. 26 (April 1992): 1-2, 6-10.
18. "Bericht von der vorbereitenden Sitzung in Ebenfeld, Kansas, am 20. September, 1909," Zionsbote, 29 September 1909, 3.
19. I.S. Mast, "A Few Things About Land Sharks." Gospel Herald 6, Jan. 22, 1914, p. 682.
20. Editorial by G., "Our Scattered Membership" Mennonite Nov. 9, 1905, p. 4.
21. Anna Janzen corr. from Hollywood, Feb. 10, 1909. Zionsbote, Feb. 17, 1909, p. 8.
22. Mrs. F.F. Becker corr. from El Modena, Apr. 1, 1912. Zionsbote, Apr. 10, 1912, p. 6.
23. David A. Haurly, "Hard the Road to Oklahoma," in Growing Faith: General Conference Mennonites in Oklahoma, ed. Wilma

- McKee (Newton, Kan.: Faith and Life Press, 1988), 8-9.
 24. Obituary of Valentine L. Schrock. *Gospel Herald* 17, Jan. 1, 1925, p. 783.
 25. P.P. Giesbrecht, "Ein Rückblick," *Mennonitische Rundschau*, 17 April 1912, 3.
 26. Lind, 143-145.
 27. Royden K. Loewen, *Family, Church, and Market: A Mennonite Community in the Old and the New Worlds, 1850-1930*, Statue of Liberty Ellis Island Centennial Series (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1993), 206.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

from Hope Kauffman Lind

For years I have been collecting genealogical and historical information about the ancestors of my children. That gets me into the Lind as well as the Kauffman lines, and my husband Cliff, too, has begun working on the Lind lines. Going to maternal lines doubles the listings, but of course mothers were ancestors, too. One maternal line that I've gotten stuck in is my Garber line. A book published some twenty years ago included what the compiler thought was probably our immigrant ancestor. However, that has since been disproved. My Jacob Garber (1787-1855), married to Esther Resch (1795-1865), moved from Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, to Wayne County, Ohio, to Elkhart County, Indiana, where he was buried. I have seen his gravestone. The supposed ancestor of my Jacob did have a son Jacob, but later research indicated that the second Jacob was buried in Pennsylvania. I have seen a picture of his gravestone.

So, who were the parents of my Jacob Garber? I'm still trying to find out. I have found documents which give me possible clues, but to test them, I need more space than this column can provide. In the meanwhile, not long ago I learned about a new Overholt ancestor of my grandfather Leonard Garber (1868-1940), Jacob's grandson. After a long spell of no new leads, such a find is truly exciting!

BITS 'N PIECES

If you are considering buying a program to organize your family's genealogy, "Family Tree Maker" is easy to use, inexpensive and generates great family trees. I use this program to store my family information. I then print it out to store it in notebooks that I can carry with me. As I learn new information, I can easily enter it in the computer and it puts it in the proper place. Even first time computer users will be able to master this program easily. It is available for DOS or Windows. It is also available on floppy disk or CD-ROM. If you purchase the CD-ROM edition you also receive a FamilyFinder Index CD of 115 million names.

Information is entered on a family card. You fill in the blanks with birth date, birthplace, name of spouse, etc. Once the information is entered, you do not have to enter it again. The program links up the families.

This program can generate family group sheets, individual cards, custom reports & lists, calendars, and family trees. Six types of family trees that can be printed: ancestor (pedigree), photo, descendant, outline descendant, direct descendant and outline direct descendant. Trees can be customized by choosing different borders, box styles and information to be printed.

Card files can be converted to GEDCOM or ASCII format. The program can also convert GEDCOM files to Family Tree Maker files. This program is compatible with Roots III.

There is a *notes* section where additional information can be included about individuals such as: education, occupations, personal characteristics, personality, and medical information.

This program comes with an easy-to-use manual. If you plan to start using a computer, this is the program for you.

- - Dianne Jeli

HISTORICAL MEETING

On May 19-20, 1995, two denominational historical groups traveled to Oregon for their regularly scheduled meetings. The Historical Committee of the Mennonite Church (MC) and the Historical Commission of the Mennonite Brethren Church (MB) met in separate sessions on Friday in the Salem-Dallas area. In the evening they attended a program for the public at Salem Mennonite Church in which Paul Toews, Director of the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies in Fresno, California, spoke on Mennonites and the 50th anniversary of World War II. He has authored the forthcoming Volume 4 of *The Mennonite Experience in America* series. This volume begins with 1930.

On Saturday the MB and MC groups met jointly in the morning at Kingwood Bible Church (MB) in Salem, before an afternoon tour of historic sites in the Dallas and Hubbard areas. Vivian Schellenberg led the Dallas portion of the tour, and Margaret Shetler and Beulah Fretz directed the Hubbard tour.

A joint project for the two committees is helping raise funds to translate C.J. Dyck's *Introduction to Mennonite History* into Spanish, at the request of Juan Francisco Martinez of Ediciones Semilla. Anyone wishing to assist in the project may contact Hope Lind at 503-344-5974 for details.

**OMAL will be closed
on December 26, 1995.**