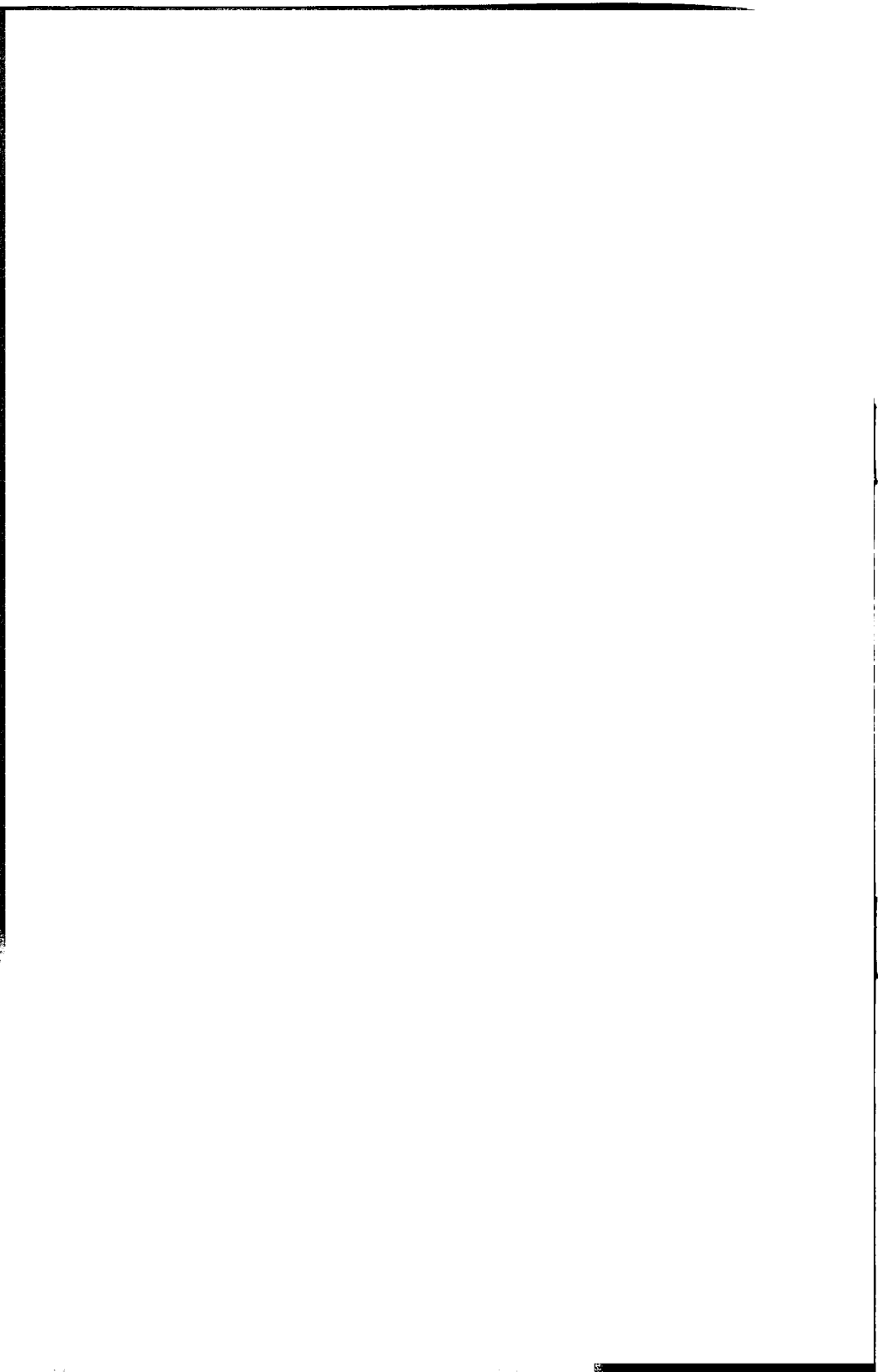
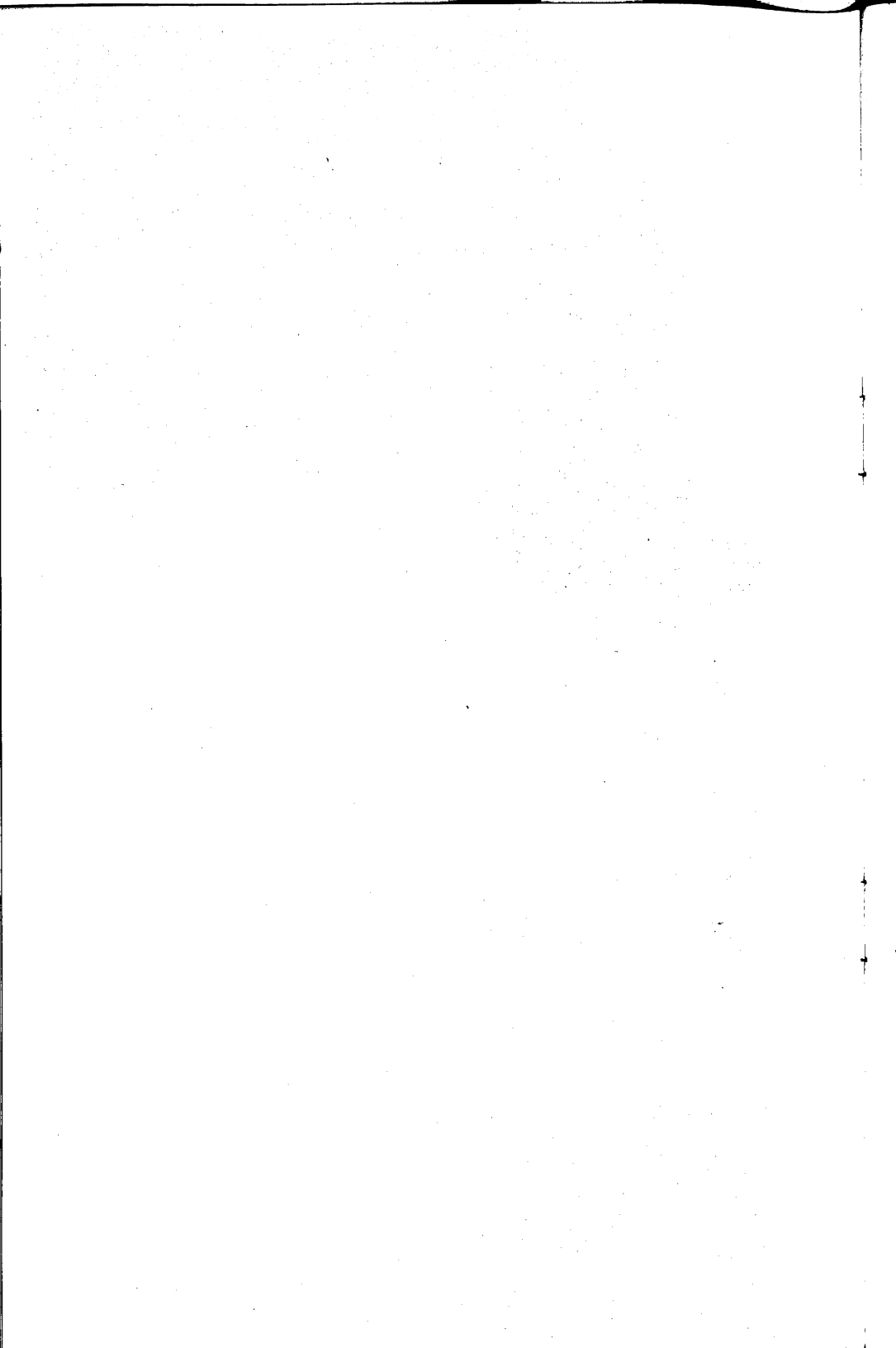


**Mennonite Graves  
on  
Pelee Island  
and  
the Reesor Settlement**



**Mennonite Graves  
on  
Pelee Island  
and  
the Reesor Settlement**

Information Compiled  
by  
Edith Tiessen  
and  
Astrid Koop  
Leamington, Ontario  
1987



## **A Memorial to the Mennonites who Lived and Died at Reesor**

Two cemeteries were established in the Reesor settlement. One known as Cemetery #1 was located near the highway for those living in the southern part. The other known as Cemetery #2 was located in the 3rd Concession of Eilber Township.

Not all of the people listed here were buried in either of these cemeteries. Several were buried on the homesteads before the establishment of the cemeteries. A few are resting in the cemeteries at Hearst or Kapuskasing. There are a few who were not of the Mennonite faith, but they were so much a part of the Mennonite community that they also must be included.

Sadly Cemetery #2 had no maintenance for years. Grass and brush reclaimed the gravesites. Only a few surviving flowers gone wild marked the graves of the seven people buried there until Mr. John Enns cleared it and erected some wooden markers.

Cemetery #1 located along Highway #11 also suffered from neglect for many years. Then in 1967 Mr. Gerhard Enns made it his Centennial Project to improve it. He erected markers for the graves, had a new fence built and took the responsibility of keeping the grass trimmed and neat. After he moved away in 1971, his brother, John Enns, took over the care of the cemetery.

During this time the deed for this cemetery and some land adjoining it was turned over to the Conference of the United Mennonite Churches of Ontario. A fund has been set up for its perpetual care.

In 1978 a monument commemorating the fortitude of the Reesor settlers was erected here. This is now known as Reesor Memorial Park. At the top of this monument is a sketch depicting an axe, several tree stumps, a plough and rays of light emanating from the sun. "The axe and the plough are tools of change. In contrast, the sun and its rays are elements of nature which man cannot change, but must be subject to."

— Edith Isaak Tiessen

## Reesor Settlement

	Died	Age
Child Thomas Wiens	1927	2 days
Child Isaak Bergen	1928	2 years
Child Kaete Klassen	1929	8 days
Mrs. Gerhard Martens	1930	22 years
Mrs. Jacob Tjart	1932	35 years
Mrs. Peter Kroker	1932	78 years
Child Peter Ratzlaff	about 1932	
Child Anganeta Berg	1933	4 years
Child Mary Elizabeth Bergen	1933	7 months
Child Oskar Isaak	1934	7 years
Child Abram Bergen	1935	1 year
Mr. Heinrich Enns	1935	57 years
Mrs. Franz Janzen	1935	58 years
Child Jacob Epp	1937	3 months
Rev. Cornelius Penner	1939	59 years
Child Gerhard Janzen	1939	6 months
Child Woldemar Janzen	1939	11 months
Mrs. Wilhelm Rempel	1941	69 years
Child of Dietrich Janzen	about 1941	
Mr. John Penner	1941	24 years
Mr. Franz Janzen	1942	68 years
Child John Rempel	1943	2 months
Mr. David Janzen	1946	44 years
Mr. Heinrich Lepp	1946	44 years
Mr. Isaak Janzen	1949	38 years
Mr. Abram Lepp	1950	76 years
Mrs. Anna Unrau	1954	67 years
Mr. Abram Lepp, Jr.	1958	48 years
Miss Ebba Holemborg	1964	81 years
Mr. Henry Lepp	1964	38 years
Mrs. Heinrich Enns	1970	90 years
Mrs. Wolfgang Roetscher	1976	77 years
Mr. John Enns	1986	76 years

## **Child Thomas Wiens**

The first death in the Reesor Settlement was late in December of 1927. It was Thomas Wiens, infant son of Jacob and Anna Wiens.

Jacob Wiens writes in his book "Memories" — "He was a beautiful boy and we named him Thomas after my brother, father and grandfather. We only had him for a short time though. Between Christmas and New Year's of 1927 he had trouble breathing during the night and died. There was no help available, since the closest doctor lived 48 kilometers away. The settlement had no cemetery and so we buried our baby in the woods a short distance from the house and placed a large stone on the grave to mark the place."

The grave is on Lot 6W Concession XII Barber Township. The field boulder, 2' long and about 1' in diameter, placed over the grave and between two ever-green trees, is now surrounded by a lush stand of young spruce and balsam fir trees.

## **Child Isaak Bergen**

Born April 15, 1926, in Irapuato, San Juan, Mexico. His parents were Abram P. Bergen and Anna (Renpenning) Bergen. He died June 3, 1928, in Reesor from dysentery.

Since this was before the existence of a cemetery, he was buried on his parents' property in the garden.

When the cemetery was established, the parents were asked if they wanted to move the body. The mother didn't wish to have the casket disturbed, so it was not done.

His sister wrote with sadness, "When we were in



Reesor for the reunion we wanted to visit his grave; but as hard as we tried we could not find the grave on our property since it is all overgrown and his grave is now unknown."

### **Child Kaete Klassen**

Born October 31, 1929 at the Reesor Settlement.

She was born with a throat defect and could not swallow. She lived only eight days and died on November 7, 1929.

We made a little coffin at home. Our father then read a scripture passage and prayed with us.

Since the road to the cemetery was not yet completed, the only way to get there was on foot. So the little coffin was put in a packsack and her oldest brother carried her the more than two miles to the cemetery. Father brought a shovel and the two buried the little girl.

She was buried in Cemetery No. 2, Concession III, Eilber Township, Reesor, Ontario.

### **Mrs. Gerhard Martens (Anna)**

Born July 11, 1907, on her father's farm estate in Grestschanaja, Russia.

Attended Maedchenschule in Halbstadt.

Came with parents, Mr. and Mrs. H. Enns, to Reesor in 1926 where she married Gerhard Martens.

Died February of 1930 after birth of first child Henry in Kapuskasing Hospital.

## **Mrs. Jacob Tjart (Maria Sawatsky)**

Born September 4, 1896, in Petershof, South Russia. Parents were Jacob Sawatsky and Aganetha Neufeld.

Married Jacob Tjart in Orlovo (Bahndorf) on May 21, 1921. They left their home in the village of Bahndorf, Colonie Memrick on October 15, 1926 and arrived at Cottam, Ontario on November 15, 1926. Moved to Reesor, Ontario, on February 28, 1928. Jacob had written in the Family Bible, "Wieder ein irdisches Heim gefunden nach langem hin und herziehen."

There were five children in the family — Jacob, Tina, Mary, Agnes and David.

Maria Tjart died on the 7th of April, 1932, at St. Paul's Hospital in Hearst, Ontario. She was buried at Reesor Cemetery #2, Lot 1, Con 3, Eilber Township. In 1975 shortly after the Reesor Reunion at Reesor in August, her remains were removed from that Cemetery and taken to Lakeshore Cemetery, Niagara-on-the-Lake to be buried beside her husband Jacob, who passed away on January 28th of that year.

Neither of our parents had any formal education other than Dorfschule as they did not have the opportunity to go.

Shortly before their marriage, Maria's father was shot by bandits and died a few days later, so they moved in with her mother. As there were only two daughters in the Sawatsky family, each of them inherited half of the family Wirtshaft. Maria and Jacob built a small house and lived and farmed in Bahndorf until her mother passed away in early 1926.

Jacob had always wanted to come to Canada, but Maria had promised to stay with and look after her mother. Now they were free to go. Times were a little

easier in Russia by then and after auctioning off a barn full of animals and other things they had acquired, they were able to come to Canada debt-free.

In Cottam they decided that rather than working for others and moving from place to place they wanted a place of their own and a decision was made to move to Northern Ontario. No doubt the promise of free or cheap land was a big factor in their decision.

Maria was not a strong woman, being sick a lot of the time. In fact, when they came to Canada a doctor told her she should have her tonsils out, but she was terrified of an operation.

In spite of all this, Maria was a good worker and helpmate. Her father had always depended on her at home so that she was an expert farmer. He also had a harness repair shop and she knew how to work with leather and was able to make shoes as well.

In April of 1932 she took sick; in fact she was very sick. So sick that she didn't pay any attention to her son David who was a six-month old baby at the time. She was taken to Hearst to the hospital and appendicitis was diagnosed, but they had already ruptured. Since this was before penicillin or other antibiotics, the poison spread through her system and she passed away on April 7, 1932.

Maria had asked Jacob to promise her that he would not give any of the children away, a promise which he kept at a high cost to himself, although he always said he was not really lonesome until they were all married or away from home.

## **Mrs. Peter Kroker (Maria Penner)**

Born December 14, 1853 in Gnadenfeld, Russia. Her father, Heinrich Penner, died when Maria was 12 years old and she and her mother lived with her unmarried uncle, Johann Penner in Blumenort, where he was a schoolteacher.

After her marriage to Peter Kroecker on January 10, 1880, they lived in Schoenau and various other places before they moved to the new settlement on the Terek River in 1904. Here they endured the many hardships connected with the pioneer years of establishing a new colony. Just when things were finally beginning to become a little more prosperous, they had to leave everything and flee for their lives in February of 1918 due to bands of Tartars who were terrorizing the villages.

They returned to Schoenau in the Molotschna settlement. From there they emigrated to Canada in July of 1924 with their grown sons, Johann and Heinrich, and daughter, Aganeta, leaving three married children behind in Russia – Maria, Peter and Franz. Of these, only Peter followed them to Canada a year later.

Upon their arrival in Canada they lived at Vineland, Ontario until the spring of 1926 when they decided to try homesteading in Northern Ontario at the Reesor Settlement. Maria died of cancer on July 19, 1932, in Reesor and was one of the first Mennonites to pass away there.

In 1970 her granddaughter, Liesa Peters, and her husband travelled to Reesor and tried to locate her grave and were taken a way into the laneways that led to the old homesteads by Mr. George Enns. As he had assured them the bush had reclaimed the old gravesites at the back of one of the homesteads; they did not actually get to see her burial place.

## **Child Peter Ratzlaff**

Died about 1932 – No other information available.

## **Child Aganeta Berg**

Born July 4, 1928, in Reesor, Ontario.

While playing, she was carrying a toy table into another room, stumbled over the threshold and fell on the edge of the table. She immediately complained of severe pain in her side. During the night she also developed a high fever. This signaled to her parents that something else besides the hurt of the fall was ailing her. She needed medical attention.

The train to take her to the hospital in Hearst could not be reached the following day due to the spring weather. The snowy roads were breaking up and impassible. On the second day colder weather hardened the roads enough to reach the train at Mile 101 and take her to the hospital. However, surgery was too late to save her life.

She was a happy child, imaginative and active in her play. She had a natural gift for singing and picked up songs very easily. She loved to sing for her family and visitors.

She was perceptive beyond her age. As she lay sick in her bed, her father proposed that the family pray for her recovery. Her response amazed him and set him in wonder. She replied in child-like calm, "Now, I am in His care."

She died April 28, 1933, and was buried in Cemetery No. 2 on April 30th with Rev. Herman P. Lepp officiating.

## **Child Mary Elizabeth Bergen**

Born April 21, 1933 at St. Paul's Hospital in Hearst, Ontario.

Parents were Henry H. Bergen and Maria Bergen nee Janzen.

Died November 21, 1933, in Reesor, Ontario.

Her mother tells the following: Our daughter Betty was our first baby and exactly seven months old on the day she died so tragically.

For several days prior to November 21 we had smelled smoke in the house, but were unable to find its source. November 20th was a still day and the smell disappeared, but it was evident again on the 21st, a windy day.

While my husband worked in his forge shop, I fed the baby, put her to bed, and went to the nearby store (N. Isaak) for groceries. We boarded the teacher, Erma Opperthausen, and the two men who lived nearby also ate their meals with us, so I had a large meal to prepare.

On my way home from the store I saw the wind blowing snow off our roof. Suddenly I realized to my horror that it was not only snow, but smoke! In a few minutes the house was in flames, and our baby died in her crib of smoke inhalation.

Men who were unloading pulp-wood at the nearby railroad siding came to shovel snow onto the flames, as we had no water. However, nothing could be saved.

## **Child Oscar Isaak**

Born April 11, 1927, in Hamilton, Ontario. The only son of Nikolai and Frieda Isaak.

Moved to Reesor with his parents when only a few months old.

He was a bright and sensitive boy.

In May of 1934 at the age of seven years while playing with his friends, he fell into the icy waters of Crow Creek and drowned.

## **Child Abram Bergen**

Born November 15, 1933, in Hearst Hospital, Reesor, Ontario.

His parents were Abram P. Bergen and Anna (Rennpenning) Bergen.

This poor child was evidently scalded on December 18, 1934, and was taken to Hearst Hospital by train, where Dr. Arkinstall diagnosed he had third degree burns all over his body.

He was such a husky, strong child that he lived fifteen days. His mother stayed with him until the end, a terrible experience.

He died January 3, 1935.

## **Mr. Heinrich Enns**

Born November 18, 1879 in Molotschna, Russia, on his father's farm-estate, Schonborn where he grew up.

After elementary school he attended three years of upper school in the village of Orloff. In Russia these schools were called Centralschule for boys.

He came to Canada in 1924 with his family to start a new life among their own people. He had been a land-owner in Russia but before leaving the family lost their property and suffered much hardship.

He lived in Hespeler and worked there in the wool-mill until 1926. Working in a factory didn't satisfy him after being a landowner in Russia, so in the spring of 1926 he took up a homestead at Reesor where other Mennonites were starting a settlement.

He died December 3, 1935, from kidney cancer.

### **Mrs. Franz Janzen (Elizabeth)**

Born in Russia in 1877.

At age twenty she married Franz Janzen in Mariawohl, Russia. They lived here and in various vil-lages before settling in Steinbach.

They came to Canada in October of 1925 arriving in Quebec and met by Rev. Jacob Janzen who lived in Kitch-ener at the time.

Their first winter in Canada was spent in Lodnar, Northern Ontario, working in the forest cutting trees.

From here they moved and settled in Reesor. When they arrived in Reesor they lived in a shed with other families for a couple of months until their house was built.

They had eight children during their lifetime, all boys – Jake, Frank, Henry, Peter, John, Isaac, George and David.

Elizabeth Janzen died in 1935 at the age of 58.

### **Child Jacob Epp**

Born December 21, 1936 in Reesor, Ontario.

His parents were John and Annie (nee Friesen) Epp.

Mother had a hard time giving birth to him. The doctor said that Jacob would not live. However, he did



live for three months when he got pneumonia and died at home on March 31, 1937.

## **Reverend Cornelius Penner**

Born in Tiegerweide, South Russia on September 28, 1879.

After the public school in Tiegerweide, he entered the "Central Schule" in Halbstadt. After graduating he made his teachers exam. Then he went as a teacher to the then new Terek District at the Kaukasus Mennonite settlement.

In 1918 he fled with his family to Alkonaiv, Russia. Here he took up teaching again. In all, he taught for twenty years.

In 1924 he left Russia and came to New Hamburg, Ontario. Then in 1925 he left New Hamburg for Reesor, Ontario thinking like so many others that they could carve out a livelihood and home for their families there — but it was not to be.

In 1928 he was ordained as a minister in the United Mennonite Church.

He passed away on January 9, 1939, from intestinal cancer.

## **Child Gerhard Janzen**

On January 3rd, 1939 baby George, 5th son, was born to Henry and Mary Janzen in their home with Anna Janzen as mid-wife.

At the age of six months he became ill and had to be admitted to Hearst Hospital. Here he had to have his blood changed and after 21 days he passed away from blood poisoning.

The funeral was held at the Reesor Church with Pastor J.H. Janzen officiating and burial took place in the Reesor Cemetery.

He left behind at that time four brothers and two sisters.

### **Child Waldemar Janzen**

Passed away in 1939 at age of 11 months. No other information available.

### **Mrs. Wilhelm Rempel**

Susanna Klassen was born September 23, 1869 in Elizabettal, Russia.

At the age of twenty in 1889 she married William J. Rempel and together they had 13 children. They and their family came to Canada in July of 1924, arriving in Quebec and settling in the Markham, Ontario area as labourers.

After a year they decided to go to Reesor where land was accessible and their kind of people were congregating. Here the family worked in the pulp and paper industry.

Susanna loved people and loved to visit. In 1940 she had a stroke and was paralyzed. Three years later she had another stroke and died on January 5, 1942, at the age of 73.

The funeral was held in the Reesor Church and burial was in Reesor Cemetery.

## **Child Dietrich Janzen**

Died in 1941. No other information available.

## **Mr. John Cornelius Penner**

Born in Rohrback, Terek District, Kaukasus, Russia on January 13, 1917.

In 1924 he came with his parents to Ontario, Canada.

He had his schooling at the public school in Reesor. after graduating, he took one year of high school by correspondence.

In May of 1936 he was baptized and joined the United Mennonite Church.

In 1940 he made his exam as a government wood scaler in Minden, Ontario.

On December 28, 1941, he passed away of a rare lung disease in the Toronto General Hospital.

## **Mr. Franz Janzen**

Mr. Franz Janzen was born in Russia in 1877.

In 1897 he married Elizabeth in Mariawohl, Russia. They lived here and in various villages before settling in Steinbach.

In October of 1925 they came to Canada, arriving in Quebec where they were met by Rev. Jacob Janzen who lived in Kitchener at the time.

Their first winter was spent in Lodnar, Northern Ontario working in the forest cutting trees. From there they moved and settled in Reesor. When they arrived in Reesor they lived in a shed with other families for a

couple of months until their house was built.

They had eight children, all boys . . . Jake, Frank, Henry, Peter, John, Isaac, George and David.

Franz Janzen died in 1942 at the age of 68.

### **Child John Rempel**

Died in 1943 at the age of two months. No other information available.

### **Mr. David Janzen**

Died in 1946 at the age of 44 years. No other information available.

### **Mr. Heinrich Lepp**

Born in 1901 in Russia.

Came to Canada in 1925 and worked his farm.

Came to Reesor where he worked on the homestead.

Died in 1946 from complications after stomach surgery.

### **Mr. Isaac Janzen**

He was born in Peterszag, Russia in 1910.

He was fifteen years old when he came to Canada with his parents Mr. and Mrs. Franz Janzen. He attended school in Russia, but his formal education came to an end at any early age when a decision was made to close the school.

He lived and worked in Reesor, at first cutting trees

and later loading the lumber onto carts and taking them out of the bush.

When his parents died and his brothers had moved out, he stayed on in the family home alone.

In the winter of 1949 he died in a house fire when the family home burnt to the ground. He was 38 years of age.

### **Mr. Abram Lepp**

He was born in 1874.

He came to Canada in 1925 and most of his life was spent working on the farm.

He died of a heart attack in 1950.

### **Mrs. Anna Unrau**

Died in 1954 at the age of 67 years. No other information available.

### **Mr. Abram Lepp, Jr.**

He was born in 1910 and came to Canada in 1925.

He worked on the farm and later on, he became a mechanic.

He died in 1958 from a heart attack.

### **Miss Ebba Holemberg**

She was born April 2, 1883.

She attended a private girls school in Reval, Estonia to about grade 10 or 11. Ebba came to Reesor with a group of Mennonites in 1925.

Probably one of the toughest parts of her life would have been the revolution in Russia.

She was teacher-tutor for a few years and worked for a number of families in Reesor.

She enjoyed knitting, crocheting and embroidery work.

She passed away August 27, 1964 at the age of 81 and is buried in the Hearst Cemetery.

### **Mr. Henry Lepp**

He was born in Saskatchewan in 1926.

Later he came to Reesor where he worked at Spruce Falls Pulp and Paper Mill as a foreman.

He died in 1946 as the result of a car accident.

### **Mrs. Heinrich Enns**

Elise Enns (nee Toews) was born in Orloff, Molotschna on March 16, 1880 where she grew up, and attended five or six years of public or elementary school at the village school called Dorfschule.

In 1924 she came to Canada with her husband and five children.

After the death of her husband in 1935 she continued to live on the original homestead at Reesor with her two sons until her death.

She died April 26, 1970, in Kapuskasing Hospital of a stroke at the age of ninety.

## **Mrs. Wolfgang Roetscher**

Erika was born November 26, 1898, in Dorpat, Estonia.

She attended "Grosse Mädchen Schule" through Grade 11. She received a Gold Medal for piano playing.

In November of 1931 she came from Berlin, Germany to marry Wolfgang Roetscher in Reesor.

Her life in Reesor was a very busy housewife who gardened growing lots of flowers and keeping her house filled with flowers also. She had six children including one set of twins: four girls – Margitta, Ilse, Ingrid and Ursula; two boys – Horst and Ingo. She enjoyed sewing and embroidery and was known for her fine stitching and knitting.

Erica passed away June 10, 1976, of a stroke at the age of 77 and is buried in the Kapuskasing Cemetery.

## **Mr. John Enns**

Born March 23, 1910, in Orloff Hospital in Russia.

Attended Centralschule in Halbstadt.

John Enns came to Reesor at the age of sixteen with his parents. He worked cutting pulp with his father and brothers until 1933 and then went to Kitchener to finish high school and attended Teachers College at North Bay in 1935.

He taught public school in Reesor and later in Kapuskasing for a total of thirty-three years.

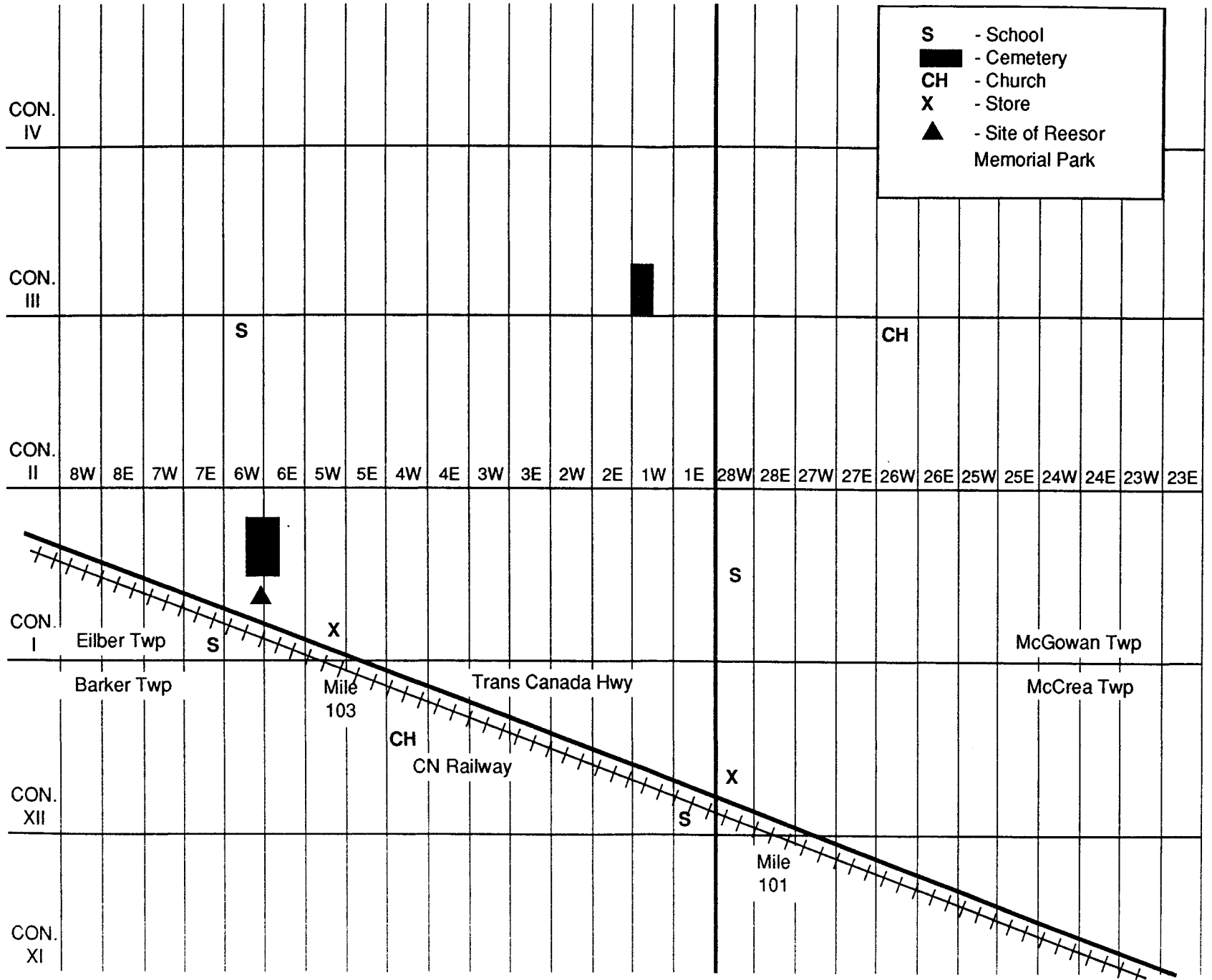
He lived at Reesor for sixty years, the longest period of any of the early Reesor Mennonite settlers. He devoted much time to the preservation of the memory of the Reesor settlement through his continuing friendships

with former Reesor residents and their children, the writing of a history of the Reesor settlement, and finally the establishment of a Memorial Park at the Reesor Cemetery commemorating the lives of the Reesor settlers.

He died on August 30, 1986, at the age of 76 from a heart attack.







## Mennonites at Reesor

<b>Barker Township</b>		<b>McGowan Township (con't)</b>				<b>Eilber Township (con't)</b>				<b>Eilber Township (con't)</b>					
Name	Lot	Conc.	Name	Lot	Conc.	Name	Lot	Conc.	Name	Lot	Conc.	Name	Lot	Conc.	
Johann Schmidt	IW	XI	Jacob Janzen	27W	I	Wilhelm Rempel	6E	I	Alex Hamm	4W	IV	Gerhard Baergen	4E	IV	
Peter Dyck	IW	XI	Abram Penner	27W	I	Abram T. Wiens	7	I	G. Janzen	I	VI				
E. Schmidt	IW	XI	Heinrich Lepp	27E	I	Peter Ratzlaff	IW	I							
Nicholas Schmidt	IE	XI	John Willms	27E	I	Herman Reimer	IE	I							
John P. Friesen	IE	XI	Abram Wiebe	27E	I	Johann Dyck	2E	I	<b>McCrae Township</b>						
J. Willms	IE	XI	John P. Friessen	27E	I	John Janzen Jr.	3W	I	Name	Lot	Conc.				
Jacob Wiens	6W	XI	Abram Enns	28W	I	Franz Janzen Sr.	3E	I	David Fast	28W	XII				
Gerhart Martens	7W	XI	Nikolai Redekop	28W	I	David Mathies	4W	I	Nikolai Isaak	28W	XII				
Herman Lepp	7E	XI	Heinrich Janzen	28E	I	Abram Lepp Sr.	4E	I							
W. Roetscher	8W	XI	Peter Dyck	24W	II	Peter Friesen	5W	II	<b>Others - Addresses Unknown</b>						
Nikolai Isaak	8E	XI	Peter Reimer	24W	II	Johann Rempel	5E	II	David Paetkau						
Gerhart Enns	IW	XII	David Unrau	24E	I	Jacob Heinrichs	IW	I	Peter Kroeker						
H. Klassen	IE	XII	Johann Loewen	25E	II	Wilhelm Reimer	2E	II	Heinrich Wieler						
Heinrich Bergen	2E	XII	Peter Janzen	26W	II	Wilhelm Hamm	3W	II	Cornelius Reimer						
F.F. Janzen	3W	XII	Johann Neufeld	26E	II	Abram Bergen	3E	II	Peter Kroeker						
Heinrich Rempel	5E	XII	P. Berg	28W	II	Heinrich Baergen	4W	II	Isaak Giesbrecht						
H. & I. Janzen	5W	XII	Henry Klassen	28E	II	Johann Baergen	4W	II	Nikolai Martens						
Henry Unger	5E	XII	John Schmidt Jr.	23W	III	Johann Kroeker	5W	III	Herman Wiebe						
Johann Toews	6W	XII	Henry Wiebe	24W	III	Heinrich Kroeker	5E	III	Henry Tiessen						
Corn. Toews	6W	XII	John Toews	24W	III	Jacob Tjart	6W	III	Frank Klassen						
Abram Reimer	6E	XII	H. Toews	25W	III	Peter Warkentin	6W	III	Mr. Heidebrecht						
Jacob Ediger	6E	XII	John Koehn	25W	III	Abram B. Wiens	6E	III	Miss E. Holemberg						
Heinrich Enns Jr.	7W	XII	D.N. Janzen	25E	III	Cornelius Penner Jr.	7W	III							
Heinrich Enns	7E	XII	J.J. Schmidt	26W	III	Cornelius Penner	7E	III	<i>This list may seem incomplete</i>						
John Enns	7E	XII	C. Berg	26E	III	John Penner	9E	III	<i>because it contains only the names of</i>						
			Gerhard Wiebe	27W	III	David Tjart	IW	III	<i>the head of the households and/or</i>						
			G. Janzen	27E	III	Cornelius Rempel	IE	III	<i>property owners. Because it was</i>						
<b>McGowan Township</b>			D.A. Janzen	28W	III	A. Lepp	2W	III	<i>made from old records it does not</i>						
Name	Lot	Conc.	Jac. Wiebe	28E	III	Heinrich Woelk	3W	III	<i>mention the names of all the wives</i>						
John Stoll	24W	I				Jacob Siemens	3W	III	<i>and children who were such a vital</i>						
Peter Klassen	24E	I	<b>Eilber Township</b>				Abe Martens	3W	III	<i>part of this community. We regret</i>					
H.C. Penner	24E	I	Name	Lot	Conc.	Abram R. Lepp	3W	III	<i>any errors or other omissions.</i>						
Franz Janzen Jr.	26W	I	Johann Epp	IE	I	A. Dueck	3E	III							
Gerhard Siemens	26W	I	Jacob C. Toews	6W	I	Nic. Hamm	3E	III							
David Dirks	26W	I													



## **A Tribute to the Mennonites Who Lived and Died on Pelee Island**

The first Mennonite families came to Pelee in April of 1925 to share crop Mr. George Cruikshank's tobacco acreage. They had left their homeland in Russia the previous year, arriving in Kitchener-Waterloo in July of 1924.

The original Mennonite families on Pelee Island were soon joined by Mennonites from the Western provinces and Northern Ontario, swelling their number to about eighty adults. The little Pelee congregation became part of the greater Essex County United Mennonite Church; annual membership dues were directed to the Leamington Church on Oak Street. The elders J.H. Janzen and N.N. Driedger, and ministers from the MB and UM churches in Ontario officiated at weddings, baptisms and funerals on the Island.

The Mennonite population on Pelee peaked in the early 1930's and dwindled in the 1940's. Most Mennonite Islanders eventually moved to the Leamington area to join their larger church family.

The Island's Protestant cemetery is situated on the Northwest corner of Pelee; the Mennonite section borders the North fence. All persons listed here were buried in this cemetery, and all were of German speaking Russian Mennonite background. Not all graves are marked. The wooden frames built around the early plots have rotted away. Ronald Tiessen, the caretaker, keeps the cemetery in meticulous condition.

Every summer, Mennonite people from the mainland come to visit the graves of their family members; some have erected new marker so their loved ones will not be forgotten.

— Astrid Gossen Koop

## Pelee Island Cemetery

	Died	Age
Child Katherina Friesen	1926	4 Months
Child Maria Dick	1928	18 Days
Child Jacob Toews	1929	4 Years
Child Maria Driedger	1931	5 Months
Mr. Wilhelm Schroeder	1931	27 Years
Mrs. Susanna Fast	1935	74 Years
Child Walter Toews	1936	20 Months
Miss Katie Driedger	1936	21 Years
Mr. Johann Heinrichs	1938	22 Years
Mrs. Maria Fast	1939	41 Years
Mr. Dietrich Ginter	1939	25 Years
Mr. Nicolai Wiens	1944	37 Years
Mrs. Aganetha Klassen	1947	81 Years
Mr. Gerhard Wiens	1976	78 Years

## Child Katherina Friesen (1926 - 1926)

Daughter of Gerhard Friesen and Maria Schmidt Friesen

In a letter, Mrs. Friesen states that her daughter Tina:

"was born in New Hamburg, Ontario on Easter Sunday, April 4, 1926, and when she was three days old we left by train for Kingsville, Ontario. Since our belongings had gone on ahead with my parents, we carried only a small suitcase and a basket containing our Tina.

"When we arrived at the Kingsville dock it was so cold and stormy that the Pelee boat couldn't load. They told us to take the boat from Leamington the next day. The taxi came and the driver tossed our suitcase into the trunk, but when he reached for the basket, we both screamed, "BABY! BABY!". The startled driver then placed the basket gently on the seat.

"So it was that our Tina experienced her first adventure (Abendteuer) at the tender age of four days.

"On August 10th that same year Tina died of Dysentery (Gelbe Ruhr). We bought a little white coffin at the McCormick store. The service was held at the Mission Hall. Since it was a workday, only a small group came to our house for coffee after the burial."

This was the first Mennonite grave on Pelee Island.  
(Translated from the the German, A.K.)

## Child Maria Dick (1928 - 1928)

Daughter of Abram Dick and Maria Driedger Dick  
Mrs. Kathe Warkentin, sister of Maria, remembers that:

"Our sister Mary was born that first winter on February 4, 1928. She was delivered by Mrs. Gerhard Wiebe, who was a midwife. Mrs. Agatha Dick remembers seeing Maria for the first time; she was dark-haired and looked like a doll. Shortly after she was born she developed a fungus infection called "Thrush" which was quite common in newborn babies at that time.

"I can still hear her moans get weaker and weaker. Mother and grandmother covered her with oil and wrapped her in cotton batts, because they could hardly dress her. I don't think there was a doctor on the Island, or if there was one, our parents couldn't afford him.

"Her funeral was February 22nd. Mr. Henry Wiens who had been a teacher in Russia officiated, using Isaiah 40:11 as his text. The funeral was held in the living room at our home, "The Clayton Place". The coffin had a white frill around it that was taken from our mother's wedding veil and little pink crepe paper flowers and myrtle, which most people used as house plants at that time, were pinned around the frill.

"I vividly remember the people and especially Mrs. Friesen, who had lost a baby shortly before, singing heartily and beautifully "Tell it to Jesus" ("Sage es Jesu").



## **Child Jacob Toews (1925 - 1929)**

Son of Cornelius Toews (Taves) and Maria Wiebe Toews.

Jacob was born in Winnipeg, Manitoba on April 25, 1925. A niece, Hilda Martens relates that:

"Jacob was the youngest in a large family and was therefore adored and pampered by all. His oldest sister, Mrs. Jacob Dick, remembers his strong interest in Sunday School stories and how he repeatedly asked that she retell the Bible stories to him. The Toews family lived in George Cruikshank's large double house which was later sold to Ewald Wiebe.

"Jacob died on November 12, 1929, on Pelee Island. He had become ill in September after a fall from their porch and died two months later.

"Reverend Jacob N. Driedger officiated at the funeral service."

Mrs. Agatha Dick remembers little Jacob as a happy boy with big blue eyes. When he became sick, everyone in school would ask his sisters, "How is Jascha?"

## **Child Maria Driedger (1930 - 1931)**

Daughter of Jacob N. Driedger and Maria Epp Driedger.

Mr. Jacob J. Driedger recalls that:

"Pelee will always have a special place in our hearts because two sisters are buried in the cemetery there.

"On June 6, 1931, the Lord called the infant daughter of Jacob N. and Maria Driedger home to be with Him in Heaven. Maria was born November 10, 1930, and was with us less than seven months. She died of pneumonia.

"We believe that Reverend Abram Rempel preached at the funeral service which took place in our home, and little Maria was buried in the cemetery on the Northwest corner of Pelee Island.

"We are grateful to God for taking Maria home at such an early age, because she probably would not have been able to enjoy a full life because of her health. We say with Job of old, "The Lord has given. The Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."

### **Mr. Wilhelm Schroeder (1904 - 1931)**

Son of Heinrich Schroeder and Maria Dirksen Schroeder.

Betty Klassen Schmidt informs us that:

"Uncle William came to Canada August 1, 1924 and moved to Pelee Island in 1926. He was one of twelve children who had been orphaned in Russia.

"As a young fellow he farmed along with his brothers and sisters on the South end of the Island.

"When his appendix ruptured on August 13, 1931, the S.S. Pelee made a special trip to take Willie to Leamington. He died in the Hopewell Hospital the following day, August 13, 1931."

Mrs. Agatha Dick recalls that Willie was a tall, slender youth. Ewald Wiebe accompanied him on his trip to Leamington Hospital.

## **Mrs. Susanna Fast (1861 - 1935)**

Daughter of Jacob and Susanna Dick Fast.

Mr. Abram B. Konrad tells us:

"Then there was the funeral of my grandmother, Susanna Fast, my mother's mother. They lived with us in Russia, came to Canada and both lived with us until the good Lord called them to Him.

"What I always will remember is that dad always had a supply of white pine that would be used to make the coffin. After grandmother passed on, Rev. Jacob Driedger, Jacob P. Driedger's dad, came over and he and dad worked into the wee hours of the morning to make the coffin. It was painted black and while the paint was still wet, the coffin was sprinkled with ground up hard coal. It made it look real nice and shiny. It was a piece of art.

"We had dug the grave the day before the funeral. After the service, which was at our house, the coffin was put on a wagon and I had the honour of driving ahead of the funeral procession with our nice young team of black horses to the cemetery about four miles away.

"But what impressed me was that everybody we met on the road, the people working in the fields would stop, take off their hats and sort of stand at attention. It made me feel good inside. It showed a lot of respect for people that were immigrants from a foreign country which really at that time they didn't know much about."

## **Child Walter Toews (1935 - 1936)**

Son of Cornelius Toews and Annie Dick Toews.

Elfrieda Derksen has the following information about her brother, who was:

“born on Pelee Island on March 10, 1935. He was a happy little boy until spring of 1936 when he suddenly became very pale and listless. His parents took him to see the local doctor who said there was nothing to be concerned about.

“However, his condition worsened and he started to get blue spots on his body. His parents took him to Dr. Froese on the mainland and he diagnosed him as having leukemia.

“During the last four months his parents took turns rocking him because he found it difficult to sleep.

“Walter died on November 18, 1936. A coffin was prepared by Mr. Ben Konrad, Senior. The funeral was held on November 21 in the parental home with Rev. Abram Rempel and Rev. Jacob Driedger officiating. The service was attended by relatives from the mainland and numerous Mennonite families on the Island. He was laid to rest in the Pelee Island Cemetery.”

## **Miss Katie Driedger (1915 - 1936)**

Daughter of Jacob N. Driedger and Marie Epp Driedger.

Mr. Jacob J. Driedger writes that:

“Our oldest sister, Katie, was born February 24, 1915 in Wiesenhof, U.S.S.R. God gave her to us for 21 years, and then she followed Her Lord’s call into Eternity. A severe stroke caused her death on December 18, 1936.

"The funeral service for Katie was held in our home. Rev. Gerhard Thiessen and our father, Rev. Jacob N. Driedger, spoke words of comfort and hope as they officiated.

"Katie had been baptized upon confession of her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Her Saviour and Lord, along with Ben Konrad, by Rev. N.N. Driedger in 1934.

"The summer of 1936 had been a happy time our family as we, with many friends and relatives, celebrated our parents' 25th wedding anniversary. Our church group on Pelee looked after all necessities.

"May God bless all those wonderful Islanders who so willingly shared our joys and our sorrows. Heartfelt thanks to God and all those friends."

Blonde-haired Katie was her mother's right hand in looking after the housework and 6 younger brothers, Agatha Dick remembers.

### **Mr. Johann Heinrichs (1917 - 1938)**

Son of Jacob Heinrichs and Helena Riediger Heinrichs.

Mrs. Elizabeth Derksen, sister of John, recalls that:

"John had been out on his bicycle and was hit by a passing motorist on March 12, 1938. He was immediately taken to Dr. Snelgrove's office on the West side, but remained unconscious. When morning came, Mr. Heinrichs took John to the mainland by plane. He died in Hopewell Hospital in Leamington that afternoon, March 13th.

"Sister Tina, who was working in Leamington, returned home with our father and the deceased. A group of men built a casket and Tante Liese Dick lined

the inside and prepared the body.

"The viewing took place in the Heinrichs home on the East and West Road. The coffin was then taken to the Mission Hall on a trailer pulled by car. Rev. Isaac Klassen and Rev. Gerhard Thiessen spoke at the service there.

"After Vesper at the Heinrichs home the adults kept Mr. and Mrs. Heinrichs company while the young people sang hymns."

Rev. Cornie Driedger, a friend of John's, related that John liked to tell stories and could keep his listeners spellbound. Mrs. Hilda Konrad recalls that John played the mouth-organ.

### **Mrs. Maria Fast (1898 - 1939)**

Daughter of Heinrich Braun and Maria Kroeker Braun.

Mrs. Fast's daughter, Erna Janzen, tells us that:

"Mother married Peter Fast in 1922 and in 1924 emigrated to Canada with her widowed mother, dad and myself.

"They worked on a farm for a year, then moved to Waterloo. Here, my sister, Mary, was born. In 1937 Mother contracted T.B. of the lungs and was hospitalized for two years.

"In 1932 we moved to Pelee Island where for a few years she was able to help dad on our farm. However, she again became sick with T.B. As drugs were not then available, she suffered for two years before succumbing to the disease on July 15, 1939.

"Health officials would not allow us to have the funeral in a public place, so it took place outside at our

home. The officiating minister was Rev. N.N. Driedger, with interment in the Pelee Island Cemetery."

Mrs. Hilda Konrad relates that "when Mrs. Fast was already bedridden, my parents (Rev. and Mrs. G. Thiessen), visited her. She told my mother what enjoyment she got from looking at the flowers outside her bedroom window, which she could see by holding up a hand mirror. My mother thought to herself, am I as thankful for my many flowers which I can go out to see every day? Even on her deathbed Mrs. Fast was a witness for God. Nearing her end, a neighbour lady visited her. The lady could not understand the faith and peace Mrs. Fast possessed; she asked her own minister if such a thing was possible near death."

### **Mr. Dietrich Ginter (1914 - 1939)**

Son of Dietrich Ginter and Anna Riediger Ginter.

Mrs. Kay Heinrichs Ginter, a sister-in-law, writes that:

"Dietrich was born in Russia on April 26, 1914. The family came to Pelee in 1937 via Pennsylvania. They lived on the East and West Road where Dietrich farmed with his father and brothers.

"Dietrich suffered from epilepsy and died of heart failure in 1939. Rev. Gerhard Thiessen and Rev. Isaac Klassen, Sr. spoke at the funeral. Burial took place on the Island.

"Rev. Thiessen remembers his text for the service was - 'Das Los ist mir gefallen auf's Lieblichste', Psalm 16:6." ("The lines have fallen for me in pleasant places; yea, I have goodly heritage', RSV).

## **Mr. Nicolai Wiens (1907 - 1944)**

Son of Heinrich Wiens and Elizabeth Neufeld  
Wiens.

Mrs. Anna Wiens Reimer, Nick's sister, writes that:

"My brother Nick was born on June 1, 1907 on the estate of Felsenburg, Ukraine. He was the youngest of us. Nick was tutored at home along with me, sister Mary, and cousins Katy, Martha and Jacob Gossen. When we had to leave because of bandits, Nick went to school in Taschtschenack and later Schönau, then to the Fortbildungsschule in Lindenau.

"In the spring of 1927 Nick came to Pelee Island via Grünthal, Manitoba. He worked in the A.M. McCormick Store on the Island. He married Agnes Nageleisen.

"In January of 1944, after playing hockey on the North Bay with a group of friends, Nick had a heart attack and died on January 30th. The service was held in their home, with Rev. Seegmiller officiating."

Agatha Dick adds that, "One time, a gasoline or coal oil fire broke out in the back of the north end store where Nick was working. Nick had the presence of mind to grab a large sack of flour, ripping it open and smothering the fire with the flour. In those days, flour sacks were made of strong cotton material, and my mother marvelled at Nick's strength. Nick later explained that such a fire could not be put out with water.

"At that time our purchases at the store were wrapped in brown store paper and tied with a string. This string hung down from a spool that was fastened above the counter. The string was always broken by hand, not cut with a scissor. One time, while we were in the store, Nick was teasing the girl that wrapped up our



purchases, about her job, having to break that string all day; he pretended not to be able to break it."

### **Mrs. Aganetha Klassen (1866 - 1947)**

Daughter of Johan and Helene Thiessen.

Agnes Berg recalls that her grandmother:

"came from a family of eight children. She was married in 1887 in Alexanderwohl, Russia. Her husband, Isaac, was ordained in 1904 in Alexanderwohl. The family left Russia in 1925 and lived in Carduff, Saskatchewan, for some time. Their son, Isaac, Jr. lived on Pelee Island, so they moved there also, in 1937.

"She was a very loving grandmother. Whenever we would come to visit our grandparents, she would have some homemade baking for us.

"On July 7, 1947, she passed away from a stroke at the age of 81 years. Rev. N.N. Driedger officiated at the funeral, with burial in the Pelee Island Cemetery."

### **Mr. Gerhard Wiens (1898 - 1976)**

Son of Heinrich Wiens and Elizabeth Neufeld  
Wiens.

Mrs. Anna Wiens Reimer, Gerhard's sister, writes that:

"My brother George was born in Felsenburg in 1898 on November 22nd. He attended school in Rosenhof and later in Alexandrovsk to study technology until 1918 when there was complete anarchy.

"In 1919 he was drafted into the White Army. When they were defeated by the Red (Communist) Army, George fled with a few other officers in a sailboat

over the Black Sea and eventually made his way to Germany.

“George came to Pelee Island in the fall of 1926. He was a well-known lighthouse keeper there.

“He died of cancer on July 30, 1976. Rev. Cornelius Driedger officiated at the service at Reid’s Funeral Home in Leamington. Coffee was served in the Oak Street Mennonite Church basement.

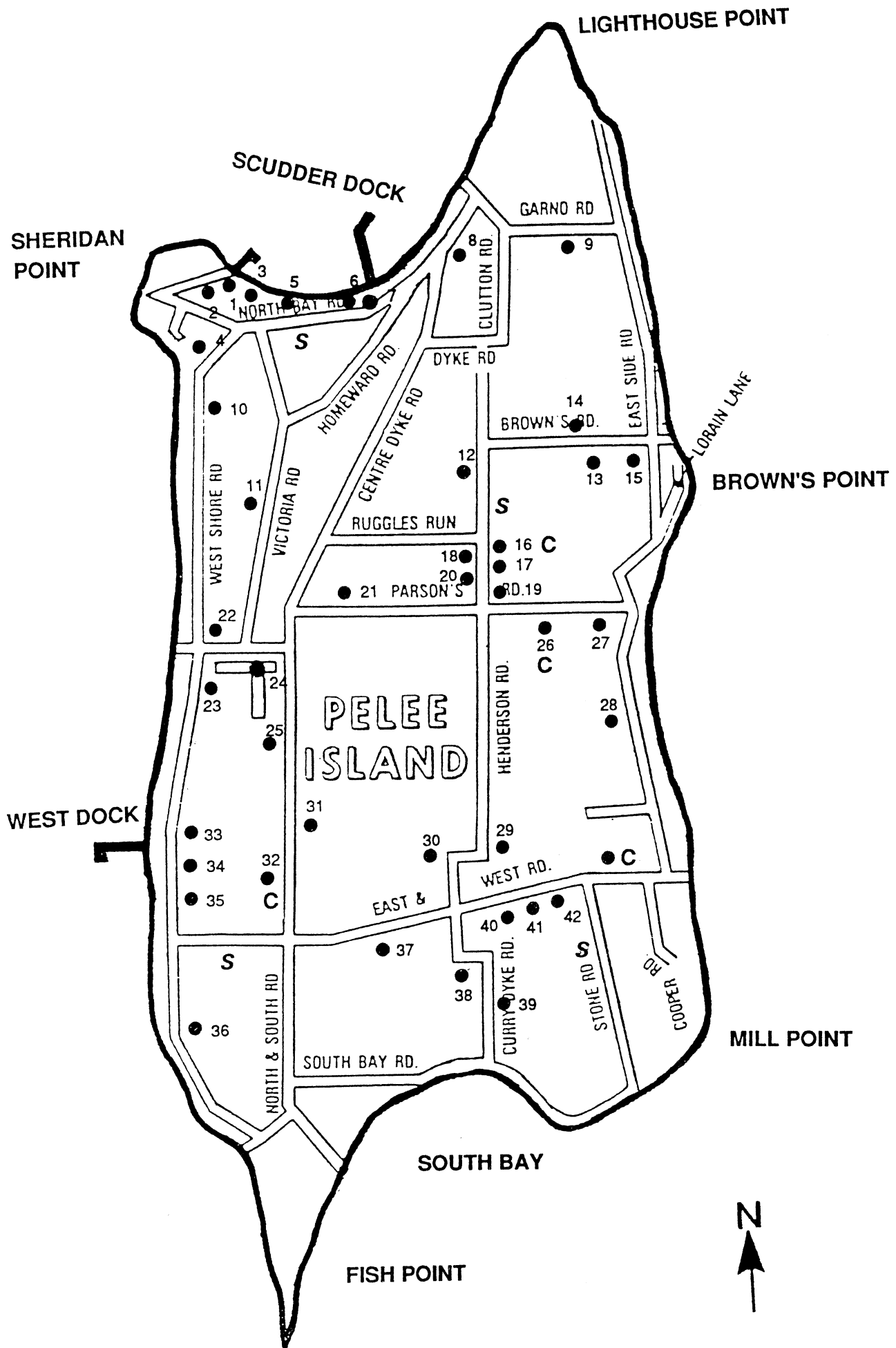
“A service and burial were held on Pelee Island the following day. He loved Pelee so. He never married.”

Jacob J. Driedger says that George was an excellent mechanic who looked after the pumphouses on Pelee, especially the north end, which was more modern.

One summer he remembers George coming to church on his motorcycle. After the service, which was held in the Ben Konrad home, all the young men and boys stood around the motorcycle, probably discussing the pros and cons of such a machine, and then watching George take off in a burst of noise and smoke.

There is one thing all those resting in these cemeteries have in common. They found what they sought when they came to these settlements — a permanent home from which they would not be moved.

John Enns  
Reesor, Ontario



LIGHTHOUSE POINT

SCUDDER DOCK

SHERIDAN POINT

GARNO RD

NORTH BAY RD

CLUTTON RD

EAST SIDE RD

LORAIN LAKE

BROWN'S POINT

BROWN'S RD.

RUGGLES RUN

HOMeward RD.

DYKE RD

PARSON'S RD.

VICTORIA RD

RD.19

WEST SHORE RD

HENDERSON RD.

PELEE ISLAND

WEST DOCK

WEST RD.

EAST &

CURRY DYKE RD.

STONE RD

COOPER RD

MILL POINT

SOUTH BAY

FISH POINT



## Mennonites at Pelee

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Jacob Toews family and Dietrich Bergman and J. Toews, Sr.</li> <li>2) Paul Perk family</li> <li>3) Protestant cemetery</li> <li>4) John Driedger family (1991)</li> <li>5) George Wiens</li> <li>6) Nick and Agnes Wiens</li> <li>7) McCormicks General Store and Scudder Post Office</li> <li>8) Herman Reimer family</li> <li>9) Gerhard Wiebe family</li> <li>10) Ron Tiessen family (1991)</li> <li>11) Rev. Abram Rempel family, Gerhard Neufeld family, Rev. Jacob Epp family, Rev. Jacob Driedger family, Peter Willms and Mrs. Anna Willms</li> <li>12) Johann A. Wiebe family, Mrs. Katharina Friesen family, Rev. Gerhard Thiessen family and Henry Toews and Abe Wiens</li> <li>13) Rev. N.N. Driedger family</li> <li>14) Abram Dick family</li> <li>15) Henry Wiens Sr. family</li> <li>16) George Pegg's mission hall (Mennonite Church Services)</li> <li>17) Mrs. Anna Wiebe family</li> <li>18) Abram Driedger family</li> <li>19) J. Regehr family</li> <li>20) Rev. John Dick family, Jacob Konrad family, Abe Toews family, Jacob Steingart Sr. family</li> <li>21) Peter A. Driedger family, Cornelius Toews family, Ben Fast family, Ewald Wiebe family and Gerhard Braun and Peter Thiessen and Eric Toews</li> <li>22) Nick Redekop family, Abe Ginter family</li> <li>23) Peter Konrad</li> <li>24) Airport</li> <li>25) Henry Cornies family</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>26) Bernhard Konrad family and Bernhard Fasts and Mrs. Suzannah Konrad, Johann Willms family, John Wiebe family, James J. Dick family (Mennonite Church Services)</li> <li>27) David Reimer Sr. family</li> <li>28) Mrs. Lisa Dick family</li> <li>29) Gerhard Friesen family, Peter B. Fast family and Mrs. Maria Braun</li> <li>30) Isaac Klassen Jr. family, and Rev. and Mrs. Isaac Klassen Sr., George and Hilda Konrad</li> <li>31) Jacob Gossen family</li> <li>32) Jacob Willms family (Mennonite Church Services)</li> <li>33) Gerhard Dick family, Peter Suderman family</li> <li>34) Heritage Centre (1991)</li> <li>35) Pelee Island Post Office</li> <li>36) Rev. Gerhard Thiessen family</li> <li>37) Jacob Epp family</li> <li>38) Jacob Dick family</li> <li>39) Peter Friesen family</li> <li>40) Jacob Heinrichs Sr. family</li> <li>41) Frank Schroeder with brothers and sisters</li> <li>42) Dietrich Guenther (Ginter) family</li> <li>S schools</li> <li>C buildings used for combined M.B. and U.M. church services at various times</li> </ul> |
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Families are listed in the order they lived in the house, for example, in house # 12, the three families named lived there consecutively. Rev. G. Thiessens, however, had H. Toews and A. Wiens living with them.

We regret that not all Mennonite families and individuals who lived on Pelee are represented on the map, accurate records are not available.

Kindly report all errors, omissions and additions to Astrid Koop, R.R.5, Leamington, ON, N8H 3V8.

