

Jacob S. Friesen

Jacob S. Friesen, also known as "Dretja" Friesen, had a significant influence on the development of the East Reserve through the publication of a local German newspaper first known as the *Volks Bote* and later the *Steinbach Post*. While his intention was that of providing a newspaper with Christian ideals it also inadvertently became a vehicle of entrepreneurship of the increasingly fast growing business community in the Steinbach area. It is difficult to imagine the rapid growth of these enterprises without the opportunity of extensive and sometimes embellished advertising in this local paper. It complimented and supported the economic growth of a community which otherwise was not particularly favoured in terms of its geographic location.

Jacob Schellenberg Friesen was born in the Molotschna village of Landskrone on Jan. 18, 1862. Likely his parents were anwohner in this village since by trade his father, Heinrich D. Friesen, was a painter and dyer of cotton cloth who had moved from Lichtenau to Landskrone and later to the Crimea. At the age of 14 Jacob arrived in Canada with his parents. They overwintered in Ontario and then proceeded to the new village of Hochstadt in the Manitoba East Reserve in 1877.

The family had few relatives to offer support in their difficult pioneer years since none of this Friesen clan had made the migration to North America. Jacob's mother, Katherine had one brother, Gerhard Schellenberg, living in the near vicinity. When Jacob's father passed away on July 1, 1877, the family was left in a difficult strait and the burden of being the provider fell on Jacob since his older brothers, Heinrich and Gerhard were already married.

It is perhaps small wonder that Jacob never loved to farm. Over the years he was involved in numerous occupations and enterprises. His son Peter, in a brief biography, states that his father worked as an engineer on threshing outfits for a number of years. He helped in the windmill and pump trade in Janzen, Nebraska for four years. After attending cheesemaking classes in Winnipeg he served as cheesemaker in Gruenfeld for seven years. In winter he repaired watches and fitted eyeglasses. During these years of occupational changes Jacob with his young family lived in Langdon, North Dakota; Janzen, Nebraska; Gruenfeld, Rosenfeld and Blumstein.

Finally in 1909, in Gruenfeld, Jacob bought a small printing press and began producing letterheads and other small printing jobs for his neighbors. This venture developed into a full-time occupation when a number of Giroux businessmen invited Jacob to publish a small newspaper, the *Giroux Advocate*. With the promise of support from

these men, Jacob moved his family to Giroux, bought a larger printing press and began a publishing business. The paper, however, was not as successful as originally hoped for and was soon terminated.

With the help of his family Jacob then published a small German paper which he called the *Volks Bote*. The first issue of December 1913, solicited subscriptions from interested readers in Canada and the U.S.A. Getting good reader support, Jacob moved the business to Steinbach and renamed the paper the *Steinbach Post*. The business community of Steinbach and area very quickly became aware of the value of advertising and filled the pages with new and wonderful accounts of the products they promoted. In this way the *Steinbach Post* had a significant role in the growth of Steinbach.

In 1924 the Friesens decided to retire and sold the business to Arnold Dyck. Jacob in his early retirement years again enjoyed the work of watch repair. However, shortly after this his health began to fail and he passed



away on May 16, 1931.

— Henry Fast
May 20/93

Pennerings

We need your articles.

This second edition of the *Preservings* shows us again the possibilities that a local history window offers all of us. Your particular interest can be put on public record.

Henry's article of Jacob S. Friesen may remind you of an interesting character in your community's past. The evocative talks given by Dr. Janzen on material culture inspired Linda to write about the "Haube". What artifacts are in your possession that show the daily life of our people? Not all need be as rare as the Bible Irene reports on to be interesting. Royden's important book reminds us that more and more of our peo-

ple are bringing out books on our Mennonite life—we need to hear about them. Orlando's response to the *Bergthal* book reports helps us seek out significant readings. Houses and places and names have valuable histories worth recording.

And of course, articles such as Jake's "Spoß" and Del's "Kashubisch" remind us that the range of articles is limited only by the alertness of your eye- or ear.

So all readers! Send me your article for publication in the January *Preservings*.

— Wilmer Penner

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Book Review

Regina H. Neufeld, compiler, *Hiebert Heritage 1883-1993: Descendants of Jakob S. and Katharina Hiebert* (Steinbach, Manitoba, 1993), 208 pages, \$32.50. Reviewed by Irene Enns Kroeker.

As I paged through the family book *Hiebert Heritage 1883-1993*, I was impressed with the vast amount of information which it contained. Along with genealogies and pictures, the families have been brought alive through touching stories which have been repeated over the generations and now have been recorded for everyone to read.

Compiled by Regina H. Neufeld, the idea for the book had its beginning as a result of several Hiebert reunions. Included in the book are 2224 descendants of Jakob (1883-1906) and Katharina Hiebert

(1855-1916). This couple lived in the village of Schoenthal in the Bergthal Colony, South Russia, and immigrated to Canada in 1875. They settled near Niverville (Schanzenfeld), and many of their descendants still live in the area today.

Grateful for their heritage, the family acknowledges their strong faith in God which had led them throughout the generations. The Hiebert family has challenged all of us through their statement: "As we page through the book may we be challenged to uphold the beliefs and ideals of our forefathers and keep faith that God will guide and protect us in the future as He has throughout the years. Ours is a rich heritage, one to be cherished and remembered."