Johann Broesky (1838-1912), Colourful Pioneer

by great great grandson Robert Broesky, West Bank, British Columbia

Family Background.

Without a doubt, Johann Broesky (1838-1912) was one of the most colourful characters to settle in the East Reserve in 1874.

Johann Broesky was born in Prussia. After his first wife died, he joined Gottlieb Jahnke, Juluis Radinzel, and a Mr. Vetrowsky in a move to Russia. Evidently all three men were Lutheran. Their only possession evidently was a hand cart.[1] In Russia the men found employment with various Kleine Gemeinde (KG) farmers, including Cornelius Loewen, in the Borosenko area northwest of Nikopol.

Daughter Anna Broesky (born July 6, 1869) was taken in as the foster daughter of Peter P. Toews, Bishop or *Aeltester* of the Blumenhof KG. Another daughter Florantine Katharina Broesky was taken in as the foster daughter of Jakob Friesen (1820-88), brother to Johann Friesen, third *Aeltester* of the KG. Another daughter Elisabeth Broesky was taken in as the foster daughter of Johann Esau (1828-1906), Rosenfeld, the first KG *Brandaeltester*.

Johann Broesky had a desire to join the KG and was presented to the brotherhood at a meeting held on December 26, 1873. According to the "Genealogy Register" of Peter Toews, Broesky was baptised in the KG upon the confession of his faith on May 20, 1874, possibly one of the last baptisms before the emigration to America.

Ten days later, May 30, 1874, the first group of emigrants left Borosenko and embarked upon what would be a 6 week-long journey to Manitoba. Johann Broesky was among the first group of 65 families who arrived at the confluence of the Red and Rat Rivers in Manitoba on August 1, 1874.

Second Marriage, 1874.

Gottlieb Jahnke and Julius Redinzel also came to Manitoba and settled in Blumenort, where all three married daughters of veteran Molotschna school teacher Cornelius Friesen (1810-92) and Maria Rempel (1819-97): see Helena Jahnke, "Lineage of my Grandparents, Klaas Friesens, born in West Prussia," in *Profile 1874*, pages 209-212, for the story of this family. Maria Rempel was the daughter of Abraham Rempel (1798-1878), a prosperous *Vollwirt* from Margenau who emigrated to Blumenort, Manitoba in 1878.

On December 19, 1874, Broesky married Anna, daughter of Cornelius Friesen, in the first wedding to take place in Blumenort. Daughter

Johann Broesky's son Cornelius F. Broesky was an aggressive farmer who also owned steam thresher.

Elisabeth is listed as part of Johann Broesky's family in Peter Toews' "Genealogy Register", an indication that she may have been given back for him to raise after his second marriage.

"Johann's second marriage was quite traumatic and ended in separation, and so did his membership with the Blumenort Kleine Gemeinde" (*R. Loewen, Blumenort*, p. 269)

Anna became mentally ill and Johann moved out of the home living at various locations such as Heuboden and Didsbury, Alberta. Johann died in British Columbia, separated from his family.

Anna was taken in by her parents and looked after by the Blumenort church. The journals of neighbour Abr. F. ("Fula") Reimer contained numerous references to her situation, such as when she tried to burn her house down. Anna died September 9, 1927, and was buried in Grünthal. She was honoured by a lengthy write-up in the *Steinbach Post*, September 14, 1927, by school teacher Gerhard G. Kornelsen, in which he stated, "According to Katherina (Jahnke) Klassen, niece of Johann and Anna Broeski, her aunt Anna was a praying mother and grandmother, who prayed much for her children and grandchildren."

Children:

Some of the Broesky sons joined the Chortitzer church and lived in Schöneberg, northeast

Johann F. Broesky, a son of Johann Broesky lived with his wife in the village of Schoenenberg, northeast of Grünthal.

of Grünthal. Cornelius F. Broesky was an agressive farmer, owning a threshing outfit and steam-engine.

Son Martin F. Broesky (1887-1921) was an inventor and built the first car in southeastern Manitoba in 1905. In 1914 Martin moved to Saskatchewan, homesteading north of Morse. He was appointed as one of the delegates to investigate settlement opportunities in Paraguay but died of a heart attack before this came to pass.

Daughter Anna Broeski married Peter W. ("Schmedt") Toews, well-known Steinbach blacksmith who moved to Swalwell, Alberta, in 1907: see Peter W. Toews, "Life's Chronicle," in *Pioneers and Pilgrims*, page 137-155. They were the parents of Herman B. Toews, formerly Calgary, Alberta, an avid genealogist.

Conclusion.

The good in our history can serve as a heritage for generations to come and the bad can be an example so that descendants need not suffer the same mistakes.

Endnotes:

1   Royden Loewen, *Blumenort, a Mennonite Community in Transition* (Blumenort, MB: Blumenort Mennonite Historical Society, 1983), p. 268.