

De Schwoate Bruhne
V O N
E I G E N G R U N D.

The Blacks and Browns

o f

O U R O W N
G R O U N D.

In Five Parts.

FROM THE PLAUTDIETSCH,

retold by

TERESA BRAUN.

De Schwoate Bruhne
V O N
E I G E N G R U N D.
I n F i v e P A R T S .

- I . Resurrection. In which The Sausage joins The Soil.
II. Sausage Making. In which all Selves become Pregnant.
III. Reheading. In which Mother feeds The Pig.
IV. Unslaughtering. In which Mother and Father sing.
V. Slaughter Fest. In which Mother finds Father.

With additional MATERIAL

A full list of WORKS, An INTERVIEW towards the improvement of understanding of the emotional history of early Mennonite Settlers, and EPHEMERA from the Schwoate Bruhne Archive.

By *T. BRAUN.*

HERE LIES a foundational fable, where cycles of reproduction and digestion overlap in DE SCHWOATE BRUNE von EIGENGRUND.

E I G E N G R U N D ,
N E / S W 1 2 - 0 2 - 0 1 W .
M a n i t o b a
*printed by CONVEYOR ARTS for DE SCHWOATE
BRUHNE FAMILY on the occasion of their disinterment, 2015.*

De Schwoate Bruhne
V O N
E I G E N G R U N D.

HERE LIES a foundational fable, where cycles of reproduction and digestion overlap in DE SCHWOATE BRUNE von EIGENGRUND. The story originates with a COTTONWOOD TREE planted by THE MOTHER over the graves of THE FATHER and TWO DAUGHTERS. Performances follow the spirit-seed dispersals of the Tree. The Seeds are ingested by a PIG who is butchered, unbutchered, and eaten by Mother as a sacrificial act of MOURNING, SUSTENANCE, and PROCREATION.

Our work is loosely framed around narratives of SLAUGHTER, SACRIFICE, and CHORAL TRADITIONS.

We are guided by material from the SCHWOATE BRUHNE Archive and perceptions of particular members of the family, from the vantage point of informed observers of the MENNONITE faith, an ethno-religious protestant tradition that emphasizes PACIFISM, LITERALISM, and MARTYRDOM.

The Story
O F
T H E T R E E .

Should I tell you the story about the Tree now? The Mother, The Father, and Two Daughters lived on a pig farm on the northeast corner of the land. One winter a 'flu went around and Father and the two little Daughters died. Mother planted a cottonwood tree right where they were buried. The Tree grew down into their bodies until there was nothing left but Soil.

Each summer the Tree sent down Cotton and made the ground white.

Mother took over the pig farm. One day a goodly amount of Cotton fell on the slop she was feeding her largest and finest hog. The Pig ate it.

Slaughtering time came. Mother shot and butchered the Pig. She found Father inside. She put the Pig back together, but some of the meat didn't fit. She used it to make sausages and placed them at the base of the Tree.

Soon the Sausage joined the Soil and the Daughters crept into the Cotton of the Tree. Mother gathered the Cotton. She stuffed it into stocking-casings and ate it. Mother went into herself. Everything became pregnant with the Daughters. They began to grow.

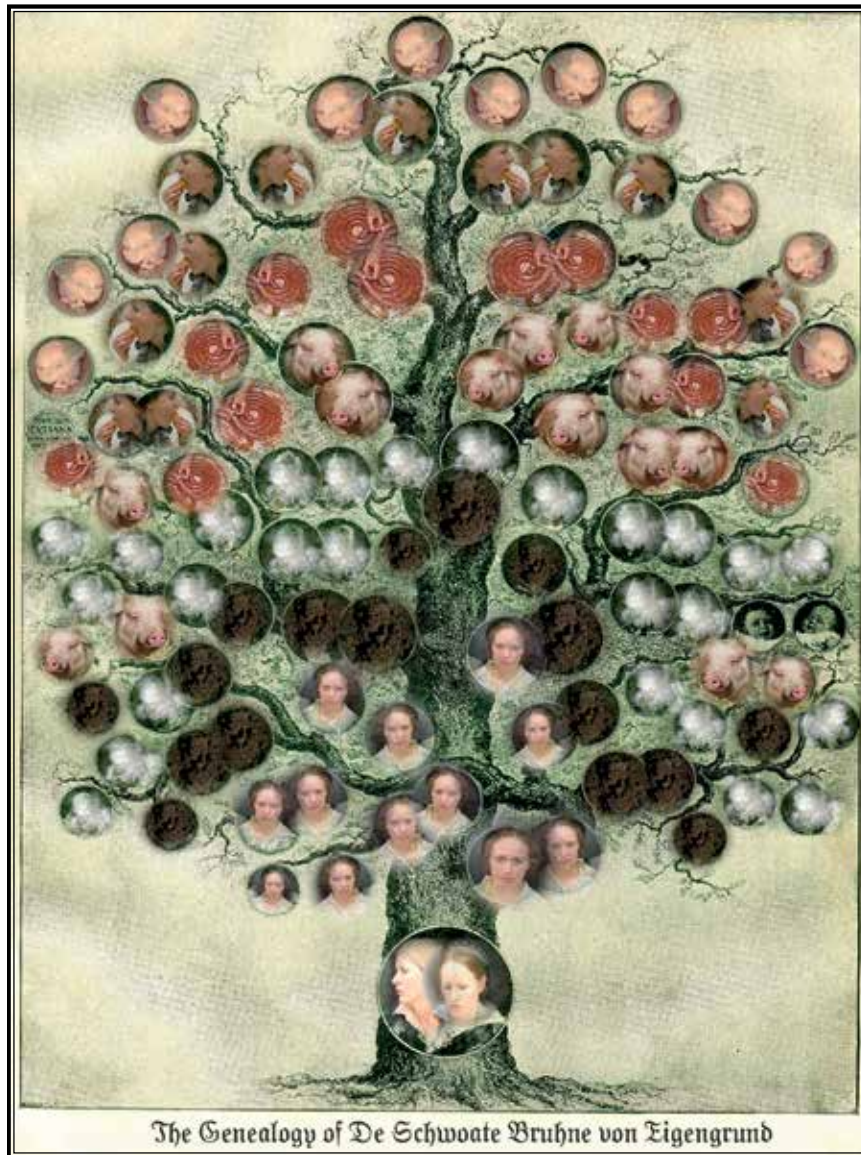


The Tree.

E I G E N G R U N D .

Eigengrund Cemetery is in the middle of where the Schwoate Bruhne family lived.¹ Eigengrund means “our own ground or soil”. We are The Blacks and Browns of Our Own Ground.

¹ See Appendix III, pp. 88 – 93.



Mother-Father-Daughters-Soil-Cotton-Pig-Sausage-Babies.

Father Speaks.

Your own! Eigen! Selfish! Mine! My cemetery! Eigen-grund! Now I'm mixed up. What is called Eigengrund?

The place was overgrown. Dirt, dust, the taller grasses...it all had to be scraped off. Graves get blown under on the open prairie. Some were unmarked and that is not fair to your past. Build up the sides to keep the farmer back.

It started with taking an acre strip to the road. Dig away the black soil and find the brown soil underneath. A smaller plot is for a child. We marked each grave so we don't hit the same spot twice. Babies are here.

Bury them as they drop, drop 'em as they fall! One after the other! See? They're buried up to there now. I guess we go here.¹

¹ From interviews with Father, conducted July - December 2012, regarding the renovation of Eigengrund Cemetery.

Resurrection.



In which the Sausage joins the Soil.

*The Mother, The Father.**A 'flu went around.*

*Eating-Pig-Saliva-Meat-Self.*

Mother Speaks.



The air sweetly rots. It smells of autumn and spring together. I stand before the Tree rooted in the graves of my family. They are so vague, they are barely a story!

I look for them in what's left: in the dirt that grows the Tree that makes the Seeds that feed the Pigs that become the Sausage that I eat. Are they there? Are they in me? I look for them there, but I don't know what to recognize.



"We need to do something before the epidemic takes over."

Text from a Letter¹ to Mother from Father.

Dear Mother,

I think we need to do something before the epidemic takes over. Eating sausages will improve health so that bad cannot take over and do damage to our favourite parts of the body.

It can get in everywhere – prostate, testicles, lungs, throat, breasts – you name it.

If I come to the pig barn on Friday by noon, would I get to see you? You might want to hear the evening lecture. I'll go look for the topic of the presentation. "Conscientious Objectors and the Peace Movement". They said "love your enemy" when there was no enemy in sight. You and your freedom. Free to push your idea of freedom on everybody else? Yeah. Act as a mediator between people who hate each other. Kill the enemy. That is why we support sausage-making. No breasts, no milk, no sex – the essence of life. I enjoy writing about bodies. I cringe when I think of the epidemic. We picked squash and pumpkins with the neighbours, then coffee, tea, hot blueberry platz and heard gushy reports on their trip.

All I wanted to say was – could we get together for a short visit? Not "if" but when should I drop in? Do you think I should join you for breakfast? It's 8:10 am. Daylight time now. If I don't wake up, ask me if I'm hungry before you leave. I had a mental orgasm towards morning, when I realized I made it through the night. That's why I called. I am so grateful that I can be of help to these old suckers.

When I got there I couldn't find the keys. Got 'em. Started doing what I was supposed to do.

1 Now lost.



"It can get in everywhere."

Mother Speaks.

Remembering is difficult. I'm looking at one hundred years of history and trying to get them into some sort of order.¹



She found Father inside.

¹ See Appendix III, p. 79.



The Tree grew down into their bodies until there was nothing left but Soil.

The Cotton Spreader Speaks.



Soon the Sausage joined the Soil.

My skin holds meat and Cottonwood seeds. Children are born. I absorb them.

I've inherited a colony. They sow and reap, sing and weep. They are of heavy hip and tread, broad foreheads tilted heaven-ward. They argue in me always.

We carry dust, cemetery, sky. We spread Cotton and make Sausage. Before everything, this existed.



Each summer The Tree sent down Cotton.

Father Speaks.



They began to grow.

How we find the graves? Below the black soil is the brown soil. Go straight down. When you find where it's been mixed, you know somebody is buried there. You just have to dig down. Dig away the top soil and find the different coloured soil.¹

¹ From interviews with Father, conducted July – December 2012, regarding the renovation of Eigengrund Cemetery.

Sausage Making.



In which all selves become pregnant.



It was a time of confusion.

Mother Daughters.



Mother gathered the Cottonwood seeds that had fallen from the tree. It was clear that the Pig had been infected. Who could tell whether the meat was safe? What Sausage could keep in such weather?

Mother stuffed the Daughter-Seeds into her stockings. She was caught between her longing for the good taste of Sausage and a fear of death. She ate.

*Orgasm.*

Mother Goes Into Herself.

*Orgasm.*

Mother became two. One penetrated the other. Orgasm. All selves became pregnant with Daughters. Mother fell away like old skin. Conception arose in the head. The Cotton-Spreader emerged from the womb. Daughters grew. The Pig cut them out. Mother gathered them and made Sausage once more. It was a time of confusion.

*Orgasm.**Orgasm.*



Orgasm.

Mother Speaks.



The birth of the Daughters.

What does the Sausage taste like?...it's very strong, as though I'm eating every part of myself. It tastes like blood mixed with the steps Father and my Daughters took. Chewing is a confusion of me and them. The taste stays with me. I taste it now.

Reheading.



In which Mother feeds The Pig.



Mother became two.

Mother speaks.



The first thing we do after shooting the Pig is to bleed it out at the neck and take the head off. We leave the head outside and bring the meat in. We string it up and begin to make Sausage.

*She ate.**I taste it now.*

Unslaughtering.



In which Mother and Father sing.



"I salvaged good wood."

Mother Speaks.



It is best to prepare for the days of necessity. After I found Father inside the Pig, I tore down the pig barn, salvaged good wood, and burnt the rest. God was in the garden.¹

¹ See Appendix III, p. 85.



Chewing is a confusion of me and them.

The Daughters Speak.



Father took a grain bag and put the pigs in. There were too many and he needed to put them away. We followed him to the pond. One of them got out and was in the grass still and quiet like a seed.¹

¹ From a memory, 1989.



Some of the meat didn't fit.

Mother and Father Sing.¹



Hymn HWB #444

Take Thou my hand, o Father,
And lead Thou me,
Until my journey endeth, Eternally.
Alone I will not wander
One single day;
Be Thou my true companion
And with me stay.

O cover with Thy mercy
My poor, weak heart!
Let every thought rebellious
From me depart.
Permit Thy child to linger
Here at Thy feet,
And blindly trust Thy goodness
With faith complete.

¹ See Appendix III, pp. 76 – 77.

Slaughter Fest.



In which Mother finds Father.



Mother¹ butchers her best pig and finds Father inside.

¹ See Appendix III, p. 94.

Father writes.

It's time to reflect, reminisce, and B.S. for a little while. The weather is blustery. Winds change. We're looking at normal temps. coming soon. Could be spring. As we get older, we find the weather concerns us.

My pictures are elsewhere. How to fit into a family that puts me in a line of Mommies and Daddies? My visual contact with events before my birth honestly dictates that I am carrying on.

There is one picture of me taken when I was two years old. The comment on the back is: "Will it hurt?" I thought it was a bad tooth. Mother thinks it was a spanking coming. To this I objected and after sober refection I think it was this god-awful thing called a camera, taking a picture. I still don't like having a camera pointed at me.

It's a kind of idolatry that we take pictures of everything. Can we not remember? Can we not record our history? Can we not write? But who would read?

Write more another day.¹

¹ See Appendix III, p. 79.



"Will it hurt?"



*A sweetly perfumed death
Sausagemaking
Dust to flesh.*

Appendix I.

Appendix I contains a list of works.



The Genealogy of De Schwoate Bruhne von Eigengrund.

Digital collage.

2015.

Resurrection.



HD video, found footage, family interviews.

5 minutes, 31 seconds.

2015.



Sausage Making.



HD video, found footage.

5 minutes, 4 seconds.

2015.



Reheading.



Performance.

SANCTUM - Nuit Blanche at La Petit Morte Gallery, Ottawa, Canada.

September 20, 2014.

Unslaughtering.



Performance.

2014.

Slaughter Fest.



Performance.

2013.

Appendix II.

Appendix II contains an interview with Susie Fisher, who is pursuing a PhD with an emphasis on the emotional history of Mennonites in southern Manitoba as told by their complex relationships to the garden and the land.

Teresa Braun: How did you get interested in Mennonites and what made you want to study them?

Susie Fisher: I grew up in Winnipeg in a secular family. My mom wanted to send my sister and I to a private school, so we went to Westgate Mennonite Collegiate. I've often wondered if she wanted to provide us with something she couldn't, to give us some sort of spiritual community.

My eyes were opened to the Mennonite community and it became my world. I had a lot of Jewish friends and to me it was really comparable. Mennonites are a weird, ethno-religious people; their beliefs are expressed in how they live. It extends to the clothes they wear, the food they eat, and how they organize their communities.

TB: Can you tell me more about your current work?

SF: I'm looking at the history of emotion and the history of the garden by way of material culture. Mennonites are my case study. Many came to southern Manitoba in the late 1800s and early 1900s to escape persecution in Russia. I'm looking at how we can write this story of immigration and settlement in a new way by telling it by way of emotion. We're so used to talking about it as a success story. We don't often talk about the difficulties and sadness they faced.

I'm researching the Mennonite rhetoric of *Gelassenheit*, which means resignation in God's will, or readiness to suffer for the sake of God. It also means peace of mind, so you're calmly suffering. It's directly connected to the cosmology of Mennonite life in southern Manitoba and has shaped the lives, emotions, and behaviors of many people there. Mennonites have never gotten over the trauma of persecution and have come to think of it, directly or indirectly, as part of their culture and everyday lives.

TB: *Gelassenheit* sounds like a manifestation of biblical literalism, which is a theme in my work. When you take the Bible word-for-word, suffering and sacrifice go from being aspects of life on earth to cosmological truth. I'm particularly interested how these ideas connect to the body. For example, for biblical literalists, eating is more than sustenance. When you take communion you're chewing

and drinking Jesus.

In the world of my work, everlasting life is physically present in the land via the body of The Mother. Dead family members become soil and circulate through cottonwood tree seeds, pigs, sausages, and digestion-pregnancies. Death is not death. Eating, suffering, and sacrifice are imminent truths, and The Mother develops systems of logic and material culture around them.

SF: The story you're telling relates to *Gelassenheit* in complex ways. If suffering is a cosmological truth, it makes sense that the people of your world make efforts to understand it through physical things like trees and everyday acts like eating. Finding life in death becomes an avenue for understanding historical truths such as persecution in a new way.

TB: The story of my family cemetery is central in my work. It's all that's left of our initial settlement in Manitoba. In the early 1990s, my dad and uncle helped renovate the cemetery, which had fallen into disrepair and contained many unmarked graves. They scraped off the topsoil and placed a concrete marker at each burial plot. After consulting the family death records, they were able to account for everybody except the three little sisters for whom the cemetery was started. They were buried beneath a cottonwood tree. Dad says they got sucked up into the root system. It's a beautiful, insane thing. Who digs up their cemetery?

SF: Tree graves were common in early Mennonite communities in Manitoba. Several people believe that they have tree graves on their yards, but in many cases it can't be proven. In Sommerfeld, there's a cemetery with a grave where the tree has grown around the headstone. They're one thing now. I wonder if they were put there simultaneously.

A lot of Mennonite immigrants knew there would be no trees in the prairies so they brought them in buckets. The village of Neubertghal is known for its cottonwood trees. There's this mythic logic that they were brought over from Russia. At one point an arborist came and did a study and none of the trees are old enough for that to be true. But that mythology is important for the people that live there.

TB: I'm building on the Mennonite mythology of cottonwoods. When I get buried at Eigengrund I believe that I too will get sucked into the root system of the tree and mixed up in its seeds. Seeds are my afterlife.

As fascinating as mythic logic is, it must be confusing at times for your work as a historian. A lot of your research depends on oral history,

diaries, and letters. How do you deal with things that can't be factually proven?

SF: One of the inherent difficulties of ethnography is that everybody's stories are full of conjecture. Before I started my PhD, I was in religious studies, which is a social science. In a lot of ways, I'm an anthropologist. Now I'm in history, which is a humanities discipline so there's more philosophical untangling that needs to be done. In addition to personal papers, I'm dealing with material culture. I'm trying to read physical items like I would a text.

TB: I think there's a lot of creativity in what you do. When I read your work, I'm thinking about how people's stories come together to give us insight into who we are. It reminds me of listening to a family member tell a story. When my aunt talks, I listen to what she's saying and take the story as truth, but I'm also looking at her face and hearing her breathe. That tells another story. I think of the ways you weave together your work as lenses. You place yourself through these lenses and acknowledge your role in your research and how it's affecting you.

SF: I talk about how I arrive at a place. If I'm going to be writing about Mary Loewen, I talk about what it's like to stand with her in her garden. What does she look like? How does she talk to me? I think of it as bracketing my writing. My writing is also bracketed with academic analysis; it weaves scholarship in and out. For example, I'll look at what world history says and what the history of horticulture says. But I'm also writing a book about emotion. So I ask, "How does this make me feel?" If I leave that out, what's missing is the admission that this work moves me and is part of my story.

Part of the difficulty in the work that we do is if we don't place ourselves in it, it's missing something. There's a whole discourse about this in anthropology, the question of whether to talk about yourself. I'm sitting here in Gretna writing about Mennonites, trying to live a certain kind of life and to cultivate certain feelings by way of moving here. If I don't acknowledge that in my writing, I'm not being totally honest.

TB: You've talked about Mennonite settlers bringing seeds. Obviously it was so that they could plant them, but I'm curious about how you're looking at this as a nostalgic act.

SF: There are stories of women who sewed seeds into the hems of their dresses, for fear they would be confiscated. That's an interesting myth because at the time there wouldn't have been legislation against bringing seeds from other countries.

So many people will say: "My great-grandmother had this seed and we still have it in our family." Gardening is a physical act of continuation through planting. There is a melon called the charantia that has been passed down in one family each year and it's really important that you don't plant it next to other melons because it'll cross-pollinate. Apparently it's not even a very good-tasting melon, but the fact that it was brought from Russia in the 1870s is reason enough to continue its life. Eating it connects you to your ancestors.

A subsequent generation growing what grandma grew is a nostalgic act. But people also keep seeds. The number of people who have seeds that belong to a dead family member is astonishing to me. Why? Why do you keep this thing?

TB: Seeds and trees are more than themselves. The story of Eigengrund makes me reflect on what a tree is. Thinking about my ancestors inside that tree changes the way I look at all trees. Every tree has the potential to grow out of past lives. A tree is a bridge between earth and atmosphere.

SF: I think there's something about the open space of the prairies that emphasizes that permeability. Here, everything is thin. Nothing is a barrier.

I was talking to Sean Friesen, a local person, the other day. He also believes that Mennonites have never gotten over the trauma of their many migrations and persecutions and that it's actually in their genes. He thinks seeds and trees not only represent hope, but that they are hope. Things people brought with them not only embody the emotion associated with them, they are that very feeling. It's an interesting idea to explore in relation to Mennonites, who don't place a lot of value on material culture. Living simply embodies the belief that the afterlife has value. But having nothing and experiencing the trauma of migration is an emotional event here on earth. If you can't find answers in your religious beliefs but that's the only discourse you have, of course a seed comes to be something other than a seed.

I think so much of what your work is about is that a tree isn't a tree, it's everything. It's infinitely alluring and it has a lifetime of meaning behind it. Planting a tree isn't done without forethought. You put it there because you think it's going to matter one day and it's going to be big. It's shelter. It marks a life. A tree is planted with the hope that it'll grow and be there after we're dead.

TB: The idea of planting a tree is especially powerful in the prairies. They become architecture for this very flat, desolate place. I remem-

ber looking at the cottonwood tree when I was a child and thinking, this is my link to something beyond this earth. My people are inside this ground but they're also inside this tree. One day I'll be here and I won't be a body anymore. It made me think about what a grave is and where a grave ends and what happens to the body after we cease to be human. It's a physical expression of the idea that we're always circulating in something larger than ourselves.

SF: Perhaps saving seeds and planting trees helps bring Mennonites out of their cosmological fog and back to the reality of their presence on earth. To place hope and feeling in a tree is risky for Mennonites, but if you yield to the tree's will and life cycle, you begin to write a new story. You generate fantastical beliefs that work to explain what the hell is going on here besides God's will. Because there must be more to life than suffering. Can we not hope?

TB: Eigengrund Cemetery includes several unmarked graves of babies and children. The land is rich with incomplete lives and I believe they are in me too. I see my work as an expression of my heritage, and a contribution to the legacy of my bloodline. I listen for those voices within my body. My body does not end with my skin. When I say "body", I mean my family body, inextricably tied to the land on which we lived and where our flesh rots when we die.

I think of lament as the collapse of language, an affective space that's difficult to qualify. You talk about the "nostalgic lament" that characterizes traditionalist Mennonite communities, and that this is a response to "modern people's loss of an embodied sense of the past." Can you expand on this, especially on how nostalgia is embodied? How do you define lament?

SF: I live in lament daily. I grieve that I don't understand what it's like to live simply. I think nostalgia and lament can work together as one emotion by way of longing. I see it a lot in young, urban Mennonites. There's a whole back to the land movement. Why is that? Modern people don't have access to the same intensity of feeling as their ancestors, because they're not at the mercy of the world.

It's interesting to think about how lament or expressions of grief shoot through my work. Life is lament. We're going to die. When I hug my child, I recognize that. I look to the corner of the yard and I see my great-grandmother buried under a tree and the relationship between life and death is physically present. It's a beautiful thing to be in that mindset. It's part of the thinness of the prairies. I feel like the earth isn't a scary thing. It's not a scary thing to think of being under it, when I live so close to it.

Appendix III.



Wilhelm Schwartz in summer.

Appendix III contains personal correspondence between members of the Schwiate Bruhne family, photographs, maps, transcripts of oral interviews, and notes found tucked between the pages of family albums.



Wilhelm Schwartz in winter.

Father Speaks.

That story of Wilhelm Schwartz? You want to hear that story again, of the one who fell off his wagon? He was coming in from the half-mile north, along that long driveway. Horses knew their own way home. Dad says he was inebriated. I don't know if he was dead drunk, but...

With a horse and wagon there's that hitch bolt in front and he tumbled off and hit his head on there and – concussion – and died. Bit of a drinker. When you're an alcoholic, you fall off the wagon. That's how dad told me. That's how Wilhelm Schwartz ended his life.¹

¹ From interviews with Father, conducted July – December 2012.

444 Take Thou My Hand, O Father

For He hath prepared for them a city. Heb. 11:16

Julie K. Hausmann, 1862

Trans. by Herman Brückner, 1866-1942

SO NIMM DENN MEINE HÄNDE 7 4 7 4 D.

Friedrich Silcher, 1842

1. Take Thou my hand, O Fa-ther, And lead Thou me, Un-til my jour-ney
 2. O cov-er with Thy mer-cy My poor, weak heart! Let ev-ery thought re-
 3. Tho' naught of Thy great pow-er May move my soul, With Thee thro' night and
 end-eth, E-ter-nal-ly. A-lone I will not wan-der One
 bel-lious From me de-part. Per-mit Thy child to lin-ger Here
 dark-ness I reach the goal. Take then my hands, O Fa-ther, And
 sin-gle day; Be Thou my true com-pan-ion And with me stay.
 at Thy feet, And blind-ly trust Thy good-ness With faith com-plete.
 lead Thou me, Un-til my jour-ney end-eth E-ter-nal-ly. A-men.

Father Sings.

I will sing a favourite among Mennonites, "Take Thou My Hand, O Father". Music is by Friedrich Silcher, 1842. It's listed as a children's song. It has become meaningful to sing one verse in German and one in English.¹

¹ From a recording of Father singing, August 2012.



The cemetery gate. The tree is visible in the background.

March 7, 2008

It's time to reflect (reminisce) B.S. for a little while.

The weather is blustery, (winds of change). We're actually looking at normal temps. coming soon. Could be spring. We get older + find the weather concerns us a little too much.

This picture project is somewhat difficult. I'm looking at hundreds of pictures from 100 yrs. of history. Mom + Dad's pictures + trying to get them into some kind of order in a photo album. The first step is to remove pictures of people who lived long ago. Dad would be 100 yrs. this year. Another celebration? My own "family" pictures are else-

From Father.

where but how do I fit into a "family" album that puts me in a line of "Mommys + Daddys" if my visual contact with events up to 1942 honestly dictate that I am carrying on a tradition of "passing the torch".

So you take baby pictures of Albert, (still to be done) + you go down the line until there are no more babies (Oly, born in 1949) already in my memory as the "wonder of new life."

There is one picture of Dad taken in 1912. He's 4 yrs. old + his comment on the back is "Wird das weh tun?" I thought it was a bad tooth. Marianne that it was a spanking coming. O this

I objected and after sober reflection I think it was this god-awful thing called a camera, taking a picture. I still don't like having a camera pointed at me.

It's a kind of idolatry that we take pictures of everything. Can we not remember? Can we not record our history, write a diary? Of course, who would read it? So we buy film, take a camera +, thanks to Kodak, are able to see who our relatives are in Coaldale, in Russia, + God knows where else. Paraguay, Abbotsford, B.C. Steinbach. And a few cousins + 2nd cousins here in Altamira.

So on with the "commissioned project." P.S. Write more another day.



The cemetery.

This aerial picture of our farmyard was taken in 1964. acc. to Dad's date in the corner.

I was 22 yrs. old, frustrated & eager to get away & I think Dad thought the same. Frustrated & eager to get away. We were mowing with the old grass mower around the dug-out & this plane was hovering over our yard.

Well, a nice memorable picture resulted. The Funk brothers built the granary/garage, lower right. The pig barn, upper right. The summer kitchen is now an artist's studio & came from the yard to the east, the J. Brauns or Henry Keller's who lived there. Joe built the play house.

The old barn we tore down in 1959



Father at the old yard.

and the Funk house was moved to the Silberfeld area to be used as a chicken barn.

We lived here from 1954 - 1983 when Mariann + I bought the yard corner, 11½ acres, + lived there until 2001 when we sold + moved to Altona, 128 Poplar Dr.

This place was our pride + joy. Mom had a new house. In 1975 we built a machine shed, 40'-70', concrete floor in middle right of picture, where the fuel tanks are. In 1988 I pulled a granary/garage apart and built a 20'x20' 2 door garage a little to the left.

The pig barn, (salvaged good wood) + burnt the rest.

The garden area represented a special place. GOD was there!

"The pig barn, (salvaged good wood) + burnt the rest."



“Some were unmarked.”



“There are babies here.”

**NOTES ON THE EIGENGRUND HERITAGE IN RELATION TO THE
FIVE FOUNDING FAMILIES OF THE EIGENGRUND CEMETERY**

Abraham and Johann Braun's mother, moved to the Altona, Manitoba area from Mapleton, N.D. after her husband Johann Sawatsky died in the spring of 1877. There she married for a third time to Mr. Henry Klassen of the village of Neuberghthal, Manitoba.

Because of the address on my grandfather's Application For a Homestead Right, I assume that Abraham and Johann Braun were staying with their mother and new step-father in 1880 when the filed for homestead rights on Section 12-2-1west in the County of Manchester, in the Province of Manitoba. W.B.

Abraham filed for rights on the south east quarter with a preemption on the north east quarter, Johann the south west quarter with a preemption on the north west quarter.

I remember my parents telling me, as a boy, that when my grandfather and his brother Abraham homesteaded on section 12-2-1west, they named the area EIGENGRUND, which translated means "my own ground or soil". W.B.

The 1881 Federal Census, as listed in the Berghaler Gemeinde Buch, indicates that Abraham Braun was staying with his brother Johann and they were both still single.

I feel that it would be appropriate to mention that my great grandparents Johann and Agatha (nee Rempel) Schwartz and family, this included two of their married children, Jacob and Katharina (nee Schwartz) Braun, and Bernhard and Agatha (nee Schwartz) Wiebe, left Berghthal, South Russia for America on a Tuesday evening, the 30th. of June 1874. They arrived at the east reserve in Manitoba on August the 2nd. of the same year.

The "Atlas of the Original Mennonite Villages on the East Reserve, Manitoba" by John Rempel and William Harms, indicates that Johann and Agatha Schwartz and their two married daughters were all living on the same section in the R.M. of Hanover in 1881. Said section being 12-7-4east.

Johann Schwartz senior wrote in his notes that they moved to DARP AULTNEIV in the west reserve in September of 1881. The house that Johann and Agatha (nee Rempel) Schwartz lived in, in DARP AULTNEIV, is presently being used as a gift shop and tea room.

Johann Schwartz, son of Johann and Agatha Schwartz, having married Katharina Nickel on the 9th day of August 1879, was living with his parents according to the 1881 Federal Census. From here on I shall refer to him as Johann Schwartz junior.

My father had mentioned to me over the years that his grandmother, Agatha Schwartz, had boarded the crew that built the railroad from Rosenfeld to Gretna in 1882.

On June 24th, 1883, my grandfather, Johann Braun married Sarah Schwartz, daughter of Johann and Agatha (nee Rempel) Schwartz. Seeing as my grandfather's half brother Jacob Braun had married Sarah's sister Katharina in Russia on the 11th of December 1867, the Schwartz family were no strangers to my grandfather.

I would like to mention at this point that my grandmother, Sarah (nee Schwartz) Braun, while still single, had worked for the Wilhelm Hespeler family in Winnipeg as a hired girl. I don't know if this was prior to her parents moving to DARP AULTNEIV or between 1881 and 1883.

In 1884, the year of the Diptheria Epidemic, Jacob and Katharina (nee Schwartz) Braun were living on the N.E. 1/4 of Section 12-2-1west. Three of their daughters died inside of six days. This prompted my grandfather, Johann Braun, to donate land for a family cemetery. Hence the Altona Eigengrund cemetery.

I have come to the conclusion that Abraham and Jacob Braun must have had a verbal agreement re the purchase of the N.E. 1/4 of Section 12-2-1west. I have in my possession a copy of a land transfer dated the 2nd. day of February 1889 which states that...."Abraham Brown of the village of Eigengrund in the County of Manchester and Province of Manitoba, Farmer of the first part and Jacob Brown of the same place and County and Province. Aforesaid farmer of the second part." Abraham sold the above mentioned quarter for the sum of five hundred dollars and according to my records Abraham had obtained title to this property on January 10th., 1888.

As mentioned earlier, Johann Schwartz junior married Katharina Nickel on the 9th. of August 1879. On June 9th. 1882 a son was born to them, but he died the same day. Katharina died on the 18th. of April 1883 and on the 5th. of November 1883 Johann Schwartz junior re-married to Katharina's sister Maria. Johann and Maria had nine children. The oldest two being girls, Katharina born 13 Aug. 1884, died 1 Dec. 1887 and Maria born 17 Jan. 1886, died 12 Feb. 1886. Both of these girls were buried in the Eigengrund cemetery. Judging by their birthdates, I'd venture to say that all of their children were born at Eigengrund except for the youngest son Jacob who was born on March 29th. 1898.

The Indenture between Johann Braun and Johann Schwartz reads as follows..."Johann Braun of section twelve (12) township (2) range (1) west in the County of Manchester in the Province of Manitoba Farmer of the first part and Johann Schwartz junior of aforementioned section-township and range in the County of Manchester in the Province of Manitoba Farmer party of the second part." Johann Braun sold the above mentioned quarter section to Johann Schwartz junior for one hundred and sixty dollars. Johann Braun had obtained title to this quarter section on February 16th. 1885. He sold it to Johann Schwartz junior on the 25th. of June 1885. Re the wording in this agreement of sale I would assume that Johann Schwartz junior was residing on said quarter section prior to the actual sale.

At this point I would like to present a quote from the book "Altona, The Story of a Prairie Town", page 30, "Village Life". The author states that life in the village of Altona was characterized by close interaction and cooperation. Where one farmer's land was often farmed or even occupied by another. This seems to have applied at Eigengrund between half brothers and brothers-in-law.

Mrs. Mary Wall of Winnipeg, told me that her grandfather, Johann Schwartz junior, having established himself as a Lumber and Grain merchant had moved his family to the town of Altona a few years prior to 1899.

On the 22nd. day of November 1899, "Johann Schwartz the younger of the Town of Altona in the Province of Manitoba Lumber Merchant of the First Part" sold the N.W. 1/4 of Section 12-2-1west back to Johann Braun for the sum of four thousand dollars.

The cottonwood tree that is presently standing in the Eigengrund Cemetery was planted by Jacob Braun near the graves of their three daughters. My Aunt Susan Moody told me that her Uncle Jacob had hired her to water the tree for him. She had been about six or seven years old at the time. She was born in 1900.

Aunt Susan Moody also told me that Agatha Braun, daughter of Jacob and Katharina (nee Schwartz) Braun, used to walk by their place carrying a basket of tools on her way to the cemetery. She would tend to her sister's graves by planting flowers to form the name of each sister on their respective graves. Four of her sisters were buried in the cemetery. She would also tend to her Uncle Wilhelm Schwartz's head stone by doing the lettering in gold.

On the 25th. day of January 1912, Agatha's parents sold the N.E. 1/4 of Section 12-2-1west that they had bought from Jacob's half brother Abraham, to Mr. Abraham Sawatsky for six thousand five hundred dollars. They moved to the town of Altona, where in 1915 Agatha's mother passed away and the following year her father died. Her parents are both buried in the Darp Aultneiv Cemetery. About three months after her father's death, Agatha married Mr. Bernhard J. Klippenstein.

I am enclosing a drawing indicating where the farm buildings of the four families were located on their respective quarter sections.

I'd like to mention that two of the four families had often been referred to as "De Schwote Bruhne von Eigengrund."

I'd also like to mention that part of the half section of section 12-1-1west that our grandfather Johann Braun owned stayed in the family until 1994 when John K. Braun sold to a Mr. Wiebe.

My Aunt Susan mentioned that her grandmother, Mrs. Agatha(nee Rempel) Schwartz has spent the last years of her life staying with her children Jacob and Katharina Braun. She died on Sept. 18th. 1907. Her husband Johann Schwartz senior had predeceased her on August 30th. 1885. They are both buried in the Darp Aultneiv Cemetery.

In order to establish where Mr. Wilhelm Schwartz had resided at the time of his accidental death I contacted two of my older cousins, Jacob H. Hamm of Hochstadt, Manitoba and John A. Braun of the Town of Altona, Manitoba. On January 30th of this year (1995), I interviewed them (individually) as to whether they had any knowledge of Mr. Wilhelm Schwartz's residence at the time of his death on the 10th of October, 1903. Both Jacob and John told me that Wilhelm Schwartz had been living in the same buildings that his brother Johann Schwartz junior had lived in prior to his selling the N.W. 1/4 of Section 12-2-1west back to his brother-in-law Mr. Johann Braun in 1889.

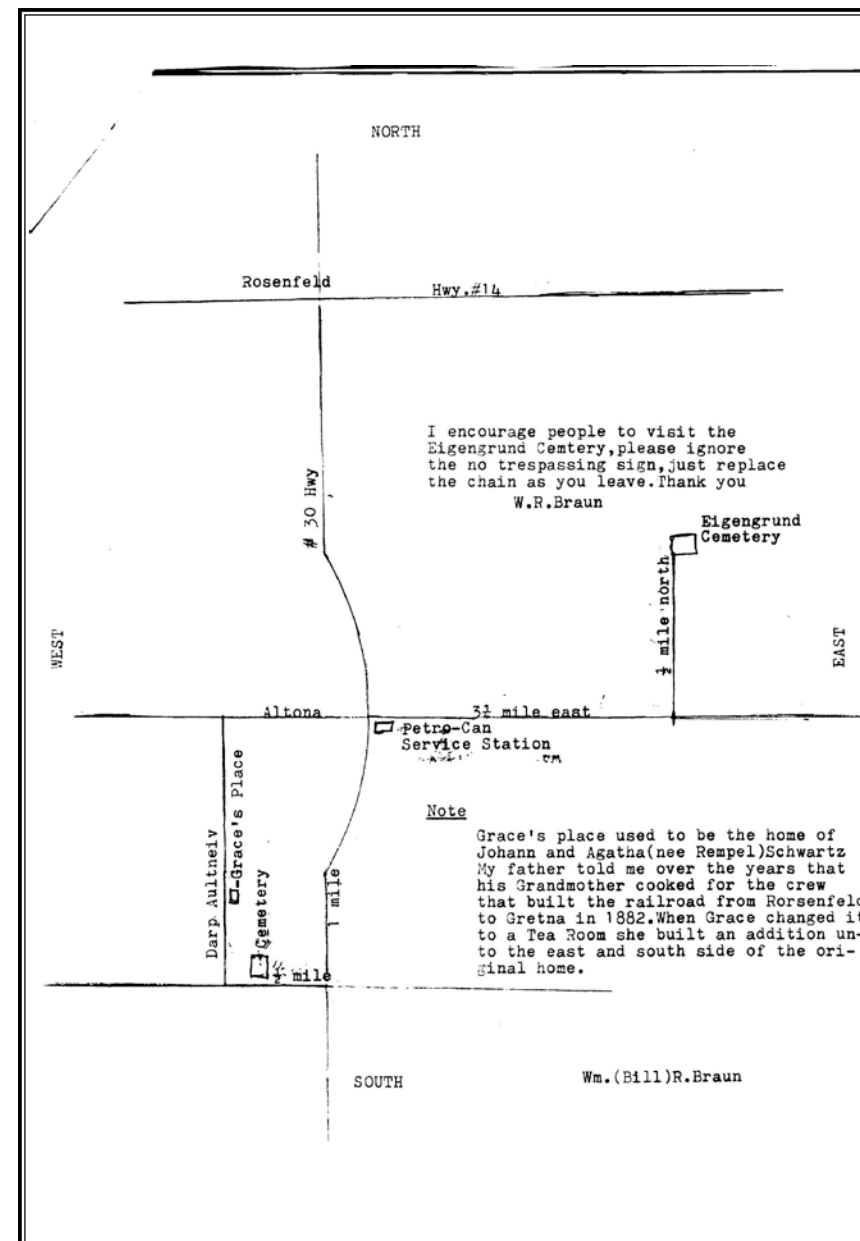
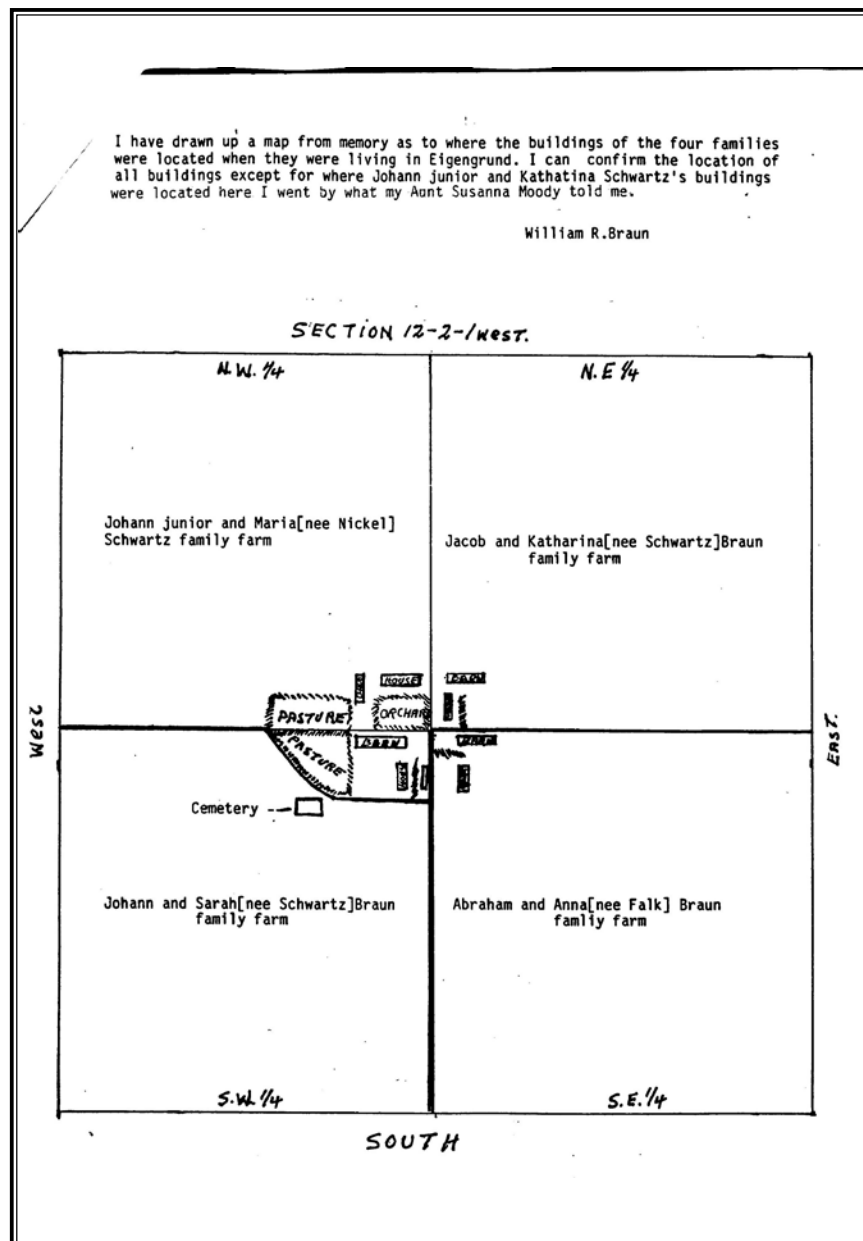
Aunt Susan also remembered that her Uncle Johann (junior) and Aunt Maria (nee Nickel) Schwartz had planted an orchard in the south east corner of the N.W. 1/4, adjacent to the property line separating the N.W. and S.W. 1/4s of Section 12-2-1west. Their farm buildings had been just north of the orchard. Jacob H. Hamm also mentioned the orchard during our discussion.

Seeing that Johann Schwartz junior had supposedly moved to the Town of Altona a few years prior to the sale of his farm, it is possible that the Wilhelm Schwartz family may have moved into the former Johann Schwartz junior residence as early as 1897. To say that Wilhelm Schwartz had rented the land from his brother Johann junior until the sale of the land in 1899, and that he was renting the land from his brother-in-law Johann Braun between 1899 and 1903 would be an assumption on my part. May I suggest that the reader use his/her own discretion as to what took place at that time.

I'd like to mention that Johann Schwartz junior, Wilhelm Schwartz, Katharina Braun and Sarah Braun were siblings. Abraham and Johann Braun were brothers and Jacob Braun was their half brother.

My grandparents, Johann and Sarah (nee Schwartz) Braun, Johann b. 6 Jul 1858, d. 13 Aug 1924, Sarah b. 27 Apr 1861, d. 25 Nov 1926, were both buried in the Eigengrund Cemetery.

Wm.R.Braun





Father.

Thank yous.

Special thanks to all those who have devoted time and energy to the development of my work:

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Most of all, thank you to my family for planting this story and instilling in me the importance of preserving it. I love you. See you in the cemetery.

