

The snow falls quiet and slow – look out over the marsh.

Christmas shines through the sad times.

Happy we'll be in our home.

Well, that's not exactly how the song goes, but it's what I hear in my head. Me? I'm Helena. English is still difficult – so I sing the song in German.

Leise reiselt der schnee...

We live near the village of Whitewater. It was only last year in 1924 that the train dropped us here. Thank God. The journey my husband, mother and I took from Russia, through IN 1924 a Mennonite family from Russua Latvia, to Halifax, into Ontario and finally here, was long and numbing. At least - we got out of Russia. We Mennonites were doing well there – good crops, busy villages, large families, and church. Always so much church.

Chaos descended though and lawlessness. We relied on neighbours. And by telling lies - so bandits wouldn't find food we'd hidden. Mercy, mercy.

In the midst, though, there was also love. My husband and I got married before crossing the ocean, because - it was safer that way, and, we were betrothed anyway.

He's a serious, God-fearing man. Our new Whitewater church has called him to the ministry. Yes, we need Christian leadership in this new land. But, calling him so soon? At 23 years? What am I to do? He'll be completely taken up by the church. Me? I'll cook meals. For him, my mother, any children that come along - and all the visitors too.

The first year in Canada, we stayed among Mennonites in Ontario. It was good to rest from the violence. One evening there, my husband held me and said, "Liebchen, we may not again see abundance like we had in Russia. Our lives in Canada will be more difficult - a sacrifice

perhaps - dedicated to our children and their children."



From the Whitewater Mennonite Church Cairn

Before the violence, we thrived on land given to us by Czar Catherina. Were we punished for what we had built? Judged and preyed on for being wealthy? Scripture says to be modest – to be quiet on the land - like softly falling snow. Especially for me. I'm to be my husband's servant! As my husband is the church's servant. I'm only 22. Still in youth choir! God give me strength. I don't adapt as quickly as my husband. My blood still flows with anger and hurt - hurt for any person, any people who are sent away from their land.

I can see Whitewater marsh from our hill. I *will* love this place. I've loved land before – where we had a stream – where we'd walk hand in hand. Ahh. And here. We will learn and love - with this land - glistening like Christmas.

'The Mennonites' was inspired by a story in Vantage Points 1.

David Neufeld