

Bridesmaid and Best Man

By Dr. Edward R. Brandt, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Ours was an interdenominational marriage, so something was borrowed from each side.

We were married in the Lutheran church, although my parents were Mennonites. Among the Mennonites, it was customary (at least where the bride's parents did not do it themselves) to pitch in with making the food served after the wedding, in this case in the church basement, so members of my family helped quite a bit with that.

But my ancestors did not dance, although I did. So after the dinner we went to the Friedensfeld Community Hall. Marie had told me in advance that it was customary for people at the dance, where some food was also served, to donate money to the bridal couple. (I was fortunate in that respect, since - can you believe it? - I had only \$6 in my pocket the night before.)

The first dance was for the bridal couple but after that, all of the men who were present were given an opportunity to dance with the bride. Quite frankly, I don't remember how this worked for the groom, because my focus was on my new bride, but I know I danced a lot - perhaps every dance.

My recollection is that the last dance of the night was also reserved for the bridal couple.

Another custom was for those in attendance to tinkle their glasses by striking them with their cutlery. This meant the bridal couple was expected to stand up and kiss.

Although it didn't happen at our wedding, it was (and remains) customary to toast and roast the bride and groom. Marie's family was Volhynian German on her father's side and half-Reformed, half-Lutheran Galician German on her mother's side. But the congregation consisted predominantly of Volhynian German Lutherans, although I found out much later that the first arrivals had been from East Prussia. When I talked about East and West Prussian records at the 2005 FEEFHS convention, I was amazed at the number of descendants of immigrants from East and West Prussia who were present. This was obviously the result of an article in The Carillon of Steinbach, which covers the southeastern part of the province, with a few readers in the Morris area on the west bank.

All of the Rural Municipality of Hanover (the most heavily German and most heavily populated part of the paper's circulation area) was originally settled by Mennonites with the mostly west Volhynian Germans arriving a good 15 years later. It seems that Germans settled mostly in areas where there were already German-speakers - definitely in the eastern part of Manitoba, but also it seems in many areas in Saskatchewan.