MENNONITE LIFE

Centennial Double Issue

MID-YEAR 1974

This Issue

is entirely devoted to commemorating the coming of the Mennonites to the prairie states and provinces a century ago. The articles and many of the illustrations in this Centennial Issue were brought together by Cornelius Krahn, founding editor of *Mennonite Life,* who continues as consulting editor. Dr. Krahn also made major contributions to 1973 issues in advance of the centennial, and has a central role as planner and speaker in numerous commemorative events during 1974.

¶ This expanded "double issue" takes the place of the March and June 1974 issues. Its delayed publication schedule has made possible the inclusion of a photo section of centennial events held in Kansas this summer. We thank readers for their patience in waiting for this special number. (Single copy price this issue, $2.00)

¶ An outstanding group of writers—all knowledgeable particularly in Russian Mennonite history—have contributed to the issue. Their articles cover a wide range—examining the background reasons for the 1874 migration, relating experiences of the journey and settlement, plus describing and evaluating the new community life in North America. Even with all this, the field is of course not completely covered, and the next issue will include additional material on the centennial theme.

¶ Historical observances such as this are an excellent window to the past—an opportunity to see more clearly both the triumphs and shortcomings in our heritage—and thus helping us better understand our present and future mission. The settlers a century ago possessed unusual vision. Arriving on the open prairie, they could visualize vast fields of Turkey Red wheat and well-ordered communities—an environment of freedom to practice their faith. They were willing to work vigorously to make their dreams realities. They believed in themselves and the future. They trusted in the promises of God. Yet humility should mingle with joy on this occasion. The praise and thanksgiving must be directed toward the Almighty, without whose grace and blessing nothing could have been accomplished. And we must look ahead. Should the Lord give us more time, how faithfully will we fulfill our charge in the second century?

¶ Credits: Illustrations on pages 5-7, 16, 18-23 and back cover, courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kan.; pages 24-29, unless otherwise indicated, from *Mennonite Weekly Review.*

¶ Cover: Shocks of Turkey Red wheat at the historic Hopefield Mennonite Church west of Moundridge, Kan. This was one of the acreages of Turkey Red, the original wheat variety brought from Russia, raised in Kansas this year and harvested by old-fashioned methods as part of the centennial activities.

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MENNONITE LIFE — Centennial Double Issue

Mid-Year 1974, Vol. 29, Nos. 1 & 2

A Quarterly Magazine
Focusing on the Anabaptist-Mennonite Heritage
& Its Contemporary Expression

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With Abraham, we are called to go out with courage, faith and obedience toward

THE PROMISED LAND

By ELLIS GRABER

NOW THE LORD SAID to Abraham, 'Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you" (Genesis 12:1). The King James Version puts the call of Abraham even more graphically, "Get thee out of thy country." Out from your kindred! Out from your father's house!

This is a strange language to us, the implications of which are difficult to fathom. To leave one's native land, relatives, property, all that is near and dear and move out across mountains, plains, and sea to an unknown destination to begin all over again—that for most of us, I say, is an unknown experience.

It must have been hard for Abraham. Ur. of Chaldees in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries before Christ had a high culture which anticipated that of Egypt, Assyria, Phoenicia and Greece. For Abraham, who had wealth and possessions, it meant giving up a two-story brick house of comfort for the nomadic life of the desert tent. At seventy-five years of age a man is more inclined to retire on social security than to take up cattle, sheep, camels and servants to lead a caravan on a long, wearisome, uncharted trek.

Where was he to go? The Scriptures tell us he did not know. But he had a call and a promise, "Get thee out . . . to a land that I will show you . . . and I will bless you." And Abraham went!

Such is the call and such is the promise that has come repeatedly to our forefathers through the course of Mennonite history. They have always asked solely for the freedom to worship as they believed, for liberty of conscience. Nothing was more dear than this. The story of our heritage is the matchless epic of courage and faith, suffering and deprivation, blessing and prosperity, revealing itself in what our historians call "waves of migrations."

Ellis Graber, a native of Freeman, S. D., is pastor of the Union Congregational Church, St. Louis Park, Minn.

The Recurring Call

Beginning in 1525 in the cradle of our faith at Zurich, Switzerland, men were killed like flies, imprisoned, burned at the stake, beheaded, killed and quartered as cattle. A voice said, "Get thee out. . . ." From Switzerland they fled by the thousands to Strassburg. In 1557 in that city a meeting was held with 50 elders present representing 50 churches, some with a membership of over 500. By 1600, only 43 years later, we are told not one of these churches was intact. The heavy persecution tolled the tune "Get thee out . . ." and our fathers fled far and near.

Ever and again our people were caught in the struggle with their faith. Ever and again God said, "Go from your country . . . to the land that I will show you." And they went. Out of Holland to the Vistula Delta to clear swamps, to Prussia, to Russia to America, Paraguay, Uruguay, Canada, Mexico, wave upon wave of migrations.

What does this call of Abraham which subsequently came to our people mean for us today?

Move Across Boundaries

First, the call is to move across national, geographical and physical boundaries. It was as simple as that for Abraham and our fathers, but underneath that call were implications of world-wide proportions. People transplanted from one country to another through pangs of experience grow in breadth of understanding, depth of vision, and

sense of values. Usually they surpass those who never get out of one country or culture.

With the amalgamation of two cultures, for a time, if not for lifetime, it is as though they have two homes, the one they left and the one into which they have come. Adjustments are difficult and only with the passing of time surely and slowly the boundaries of language, culture and nationality are erased. It is good for us to see that from the call of Abraham to our day God has been doing His utmost to break down and erase these artificial barriers that separate brother from brother.

Today, even with most countries of the world settled, the call remains the same. Still God calls us to move out in our thinking, in our living, in our faith, from concepts that are limited by opinion, nationalism, or narrow denominationalism to unexplored vistas of thought and human relationship which God would show us.

Much as we love our country, our kindred, our property, in the spirit of those who have gone before we must cherish our faith even more. With them we stand ready to forsake all. We hear Jesus say, "He who does not hate father and mother, and brother and sister is not worthy of me." Our field becomes the entire world.

Move Out With Faith

Secondly, the call is to move out with faith. "By faith Abraham went out not knowing where he was to go" Hebrews 11:8. The fact remains that he went with confidence that in the end it would be for the good.

If a man can believe in the reality of tomorrow and in the goodness which it will surely bring, and then moves on as if the things which he can not see, feel, or touch will exist in the unknown just as surely as the things he beholds today, then that man has faith. If he can not act on that assumption he is faithless.

All too often today we have the vague conception of faith expressed by the little lad who defined it in Sunday school as "Faith is believing what you know ain't so." What a contrast this is to the classic definition of Hebrews which our forefathers experienced, "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

Let us remind ourselves today that our sires had a tremendous faith. Read again the accounts in the *Martyr's Mirror,* many substantiated by authentic court records. See a devout faith in Almighty God, unshakable in the belief of separation of church and state and other doctrines accepted today.

Or, consider just one of many possible accounts—the epic of Paraguay and our people. I've been told of a university professor who remarked in his classroom, "No person can live and survive in the Green Hell of the Chaco in Paraguay." A student spoke up, "But the Mennonites are living there." Said the professor, "But the Mennonites do the impossible."

Again, turn to our world-wide relief program in which we endeavor to help people around the world to help themselves. Consider our endeavors to establish the indigenous church in our mission fields. On many fronts you have the story of how we have heard and are answering the call to move out with a strong, abiding faith.

If you want to see a real "faith-work," then I suggest you make a realistic appraisal of how God has called and led us out from where we have been toward the land of promise to which we are going.

Move With Obedience

Thirdly, it is a calling to move out obediently. "Abraham obeyed when he was called to go to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance" Hebrews 11:8.

Faith and action always go together. With Paul we must be able to say, "I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision." We have been known as a peculiar people for whom faith and works are inseparable.

We rejoice in recalling the first formal protest against slavery signed by Germantown pioneers, Mennonites and others. Let us also remind ourselves that our fathers were somewhat unique in that they not only protested against slavery, but actually had no slaves. They practiced what they preached.

Today, our call in this aspect comes with increasing clarity. We have rising crime rates, immorality, divorce, mental illness, juvenile delinquency, in the face of increased church membership. A paradox indeed!

Or consider the dilemma of selling 9,500,000 copies of the Bible in America in one year, only to find in a nation-wide survey that 53 per cent of the Americans can not name a single book of the New Testament.

Quite obviously owning the scriptures and searching the scriptures are two different things. It is also evident our words are way ahead of our deeds. The lag of religious practice today offers us a unique opportunity to answer this call of God to obedience. What a glorious privilege to make the thought and deed one!

An Abiding Reward

There is a twofold reward in answering this call of God. The first is that of sheer survival and life.

The divine principle which holds for us, both as individuals and collectively as a denomination, was put to us by Jesus when he said, "He that will save his life shall lose it, and he that loses his life for my sake shall find it."

If we cling together, hoarding jealously that one talent which God has given us, zealously striving for self-preservation we shall utterly fail. But if with boldness and courage we give to the winds of God our fears, declare to the world our faith, risking all that we have and all that we are, we shall live.

The second reward is that of blessing. "I will bless you . . . and make you a blessing."

Slowly, ever so slowly, we learn with Abraham that it is not primarily the numerical strength of God's people but the measure of dedication that makes the difference. It is the quality of life that determines the measure of God's blessing. Today we are humbly grateful for every blessing God has seen fit to bestow upon us.

Abraham never did live to possess the promised land. God explained, "To your descendants will I give this land." But, as the writer of Hebrews put it, Abraham was not concerned with geographical boundaries. Instead, "He looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God."

The vision which we have of a world of peace and brotherhood, where men will live as Christ taught us to live likely will not be realized in our lifetime. Nevertheless, with Abraham we are called to go out with courage, faith, and obedience toward this promised land, that some day our descendants may be blessed in that earthly kingdom which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

Above: A worship service on a boat so that no one would know what they were doing.

Left: This man is making a hand-written Bible.

A MINI-HISTORY OF THE MENNONITES

By HILDA W. KRAHN

ABOUT 550 YEARS AGO there was only one kind of Christian church. The leaders did their best to keep things going just the way Jesus had taught their ancestors a thousand five hundred years ago. However, since they could not read the Bible they had changed some of the teachings. They could not read the Bible because there were only a few hand-written Bibles. Also most people could not read. Of course people knew a lot of things about the Christian faith because their ministers and teachers told them about Jesus and the apostles and the parables. They also told them about the people mentioned in the Old Testament—Adam and Eve, Noah, Moses, the prophets and all the others.

Every city had a magnificently beautiful church, called a cathedral. It was always the tallest building in the city. It is difficult to imagine that such enormous buildings of such splendor could be built in those days without the power machinery we have today. The spires and domes and stained glass windows are breath-taking even today. The cathedrals helped to teach people much about the Bible

Hilda W. Krahn, wife of Dr. Cornelius Krahn, is a public school teacher who wrote this "Mennonite history primer" for use in vacation Bible school classes.

In Holland they built canals and windmills so they could live in swamps.

Many families lived together in an immigrant house.

stories. All of the Bible characters and teachings of Jesus were shown in statues and paintings.

Johannes Gutenberg invented the first workable printing press in 1450. The Bible was the first big book to be printed. Now some of the church leaders and others began to read the Bible. They discovered that some of the teachings of the church were different from the teachings of Jesus. They had gradually been changed.

For example, it was believed that God ruled the world with his two arms—the government and the church. These two must always agree and everyone in a country must belong to the same church, just as he belongs to the same government. Also everyone must belong to the church and every baby must be baptized soon after birth.

Some of the church leaders who read the Bible decided that changes would have to be made. Babies should not be baptized because they did not know what was happening to them. Also only true followers of Jesus should join the church. Many church leaders thought that these new teachings would cause a lot of trouble in a country and should not be allowed.

A man in Switzerland who wanted to make many changes in the church was Conrad Grebel; another man was Menno Simons who lived in Holland. Followers of these two men were first called Anabaptists and later given the name Mennonites, after Menno Simons.

When the Anabaptists insisted on making certain important changes there was real trouble. The church and the government warned them that they simply would not be permitted to carry out these changes. Still they refused to go to the regular church and met together in small groups in caves, homes, and in hidden places, on boats or anywhere they could to read the Bible, pray and sing. They refused to have their babies baptized, and baptized each other in homes, at fountains, on the streets or at streams. The government and church leaders feared that the entire country would go to pieces if the Anabaptists were not stopped. They were warned that they would be tortured and killed if they did not come back to the state church. Thousands of them were indeed burned to death, drowned, or killed in other ways. They would surely all have been killed off if there had not been so many of them. Now they moved from place to place so that they could not always be found. In Switzerland they went to the mountains to live. In Holland they moved to swampy places where no one else could live.

There they built windmills and canals and dikes to pump the water out of the swamps. Sometimes princes or counts

Mennonite relief worker feeding hungry children.

Menno Simons pointing to his motto, I Corinthians 3:11.

or other rich men hired them to work on their very large farms because they were such good honest workers. Finally the Dutch government let the Mennonites live and work in peace if they would promise not to invite others to join them. They could even build church buildings if they would not put bells or steeples or towers on them. So the early Mennonites built hidden churches in the middle of a block with shops and offices all around the outside.

Many Mennonites went from Holland to West Prussia where they also built windmills and canals to drain the swamps.

Some of the Mennonites from Switzerland went to America as early as 1683. Others of them went to France.

In 1789 the Czarina Catharine the Great invited Mennonites to come to Russia because they were such good workers. Many went to Russia. They were given free land to live on. They could keep on speaking German and have their own laws and their own schools. They did not have to go to the army.

In 1874 the Russian government decided that the Mennonites should be like other Russians. They should speak Russian, have regular Russian schools, and the young men should do some kind of forestry or hospital service or go to the regular army.

Many of the Mennonites did not want to do this so one-third of them (about 18,000) decided to come to America. To sell their land and pack the things they would need to take with them was a big job. The ocean voyage was long and often very difficult. When they finally arrived in America they had to decide just where in this big country they would live. Many settled in Kansas and farther north all the way to Manitoba. They had to live in immigration houses provided by the Santa Fe Railroad until they found out exactly where they were to go. Many lived first in dugouts until they could manage to build a house of sod or even adobe brick. A frame house made of wood was a real luxury most of them could not afford for many years. In fact, the first nice buildings the Mennonites built were churches and schools. Also every community built a hospital for all people in the community.

Now Mennonites are scattered all over the world but they still try to follow the teaching of Jesus. They do special mission and voluntary service work, especially among people who do not know of the love of God, or where the need is great because of war, tornadoes, floods or famine. They remember the motto of Menno Simons: "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid which is Jesus Christ." (I Cor. 3:11)

NONRESISTANCE REEXAMINED

Why did Mennonites leave Russia in 1874?

By J. B. TOEWS

THERE IS ABUNDANT DOCUMENTATION for certain aspects of the Russian Mennonite migration to North America in the 1870s and 1880s. Reports and letters provide a very adequate account of the frustrating dialogue between the Mennonites and the czarist government which ultimately triggered the exodus of about one-third of the Mennonite population.[1] What happened to the Russian Mennonites once they arrived on this continent has also been judiciously analyzed. The materials include the reports of the delegates sent to search out the land,[2] the correspondence related to the negotiations for Mennonite entry[3] and sporadic records portraying the actual Mennonite encounter with the new frontier.[4]

Why Leave Russia?

In our broad ranging concern with the migration, however, we have not fully answered the question, "Why did they leave?" Traditionally we have viewed the migration as a quest for religious freedom. But people can have different motives for doing the same thing. Often a simple explanation for an action can hide a complex and involved situation. Certainly we want to believe that our forefathers came for conscience sake but instinctively we know that their migration, as migrations at any time in history, did not result from only one cause. More than likely the exodus was interwoven with the total life situation in which the later nineteenth century Russian Mennonites found themselves. At the same time we must assume that certain dominant issues emerged to trigger the movement.

From the Russian viewpoint amazingly little material on the migration has survived apart from the official documents pertaining to the Mennonite dialogue with the czarist government. Why did the individual Mennonite decide to leave? How did the Mennonites of the 1870s feel about leaving Russia? Were they only preoccupied with drafting traditional-sounding memoranda on nonresistance and submitting them to czarist officials? Elder Gerhard Wiebe (1827-1900) of Bergthal, has left a detailed account of his experiences in Russia. In his *Causes and History of the Mennonite Migration from Russia to America,* he describes how, amid many difficulties, he managed to settle his entire colony in Manitoba. Some of Wiebe's contemporaries regarded him as conservative, independent and at times obstinate, which may explain the tinge of polemic in memoirs. The booklet's sincere, simple reporting, however, raises several issues pertaining to the migration which provide useful perspectives for our discussion. It provides a useful glimpse of the Russian Mennonite world of the 1870s; describes the activities of regional leaders in the movement; makes some fleeting references to the economic issues of the day and finally offers some clarification on the role nonresistance played as a catalyst in the migration. All of these perspectives are helpful in examining the circumstances out of which the migration emerged.

The Russian Mennonites of 1870

In his diary entry of January 22, 1871, Dietrich Gaeddert, a minister of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite church, noted prosaically, "Now we think there will be peace. God grant it."[5] He was referring to the first conference of Mennonite elders in Alexanderwohl to discuss the pending czarist military law. All of his subsequent entries describe life as usual in the Molotschna colony. Gaeddert does not seem aware of any impending crisis. For him the Mennonite world stands intact.

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Even a cursory reading of the documents and reports related to the exodus of the 1870s suggests the portrait of a closed, self-sufficient community, deeply shocked when confronted by the demands of the Russian state. Such a socially, economically and religiously stratified group should not surprise us. The czarist *Privilegium* which induced the Mennonites to come to Russia promised complete religious freedom, exemption from all military service and perpetual land possession, a legal basis of entry which virtually ensured the erection of a self-contained community.

In a sense each village became a state within a state and featured a highly centralized social, economic and political system. Though he found himself in a new land with a new language, the average Mennonite continued to speak Low German and High German in his village, church and school. And of course he stood inside looking out, not really comprehending that since everyone in his community belonged to the church and to the village at the same time, church and state were one. The entire group was affected if any religious or civil problem arose. Prior to 1870 the Mennonites of South Russia experienced two decades of strife resulting from this situation, in the one instance an economic struggle involving landless Mennonites, in the other a religious conflict related to the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren Church. The issues of land and religion were hopelessly intertwined.

Such struggles naturally produced severe inner tensions and conflicts within Mennonite society and certainly worked against any implementation of the Anabaptist concept of the church. In fact until the 1860s economic values were probably more important than religious ones in the Mennonite world of South Russia. Happily the sobering economic and religious struggles of that decade produced a better sense of balance in Mennonite society. By 1870 the self-contained community had not only survived, but achieved greater solidarity as well. With universal military conscription and an intensifying program of Russification, however, the Mennonite world was threatened with external destruction for the first time in seventy years. As the 1870s progressed the extent of the danger gradually became more apparent. Within a few years the pressure split the Mennonite world. The majority felt an acceptable compromise was possible, while the rest viewed a flirtation with the state as compromising the faith.

Invariably when this minority articulated its reasons for leaving Russia, the preservation of faith emerged as the dominant one. Critically viewed, some of this concern certainly revolved about preserving the community structure they had come to know and love. Certainly freedom from military service was first on the list of priorities for the Mennonites settling in Manitoba but the other fourteen items related to the terms of settlement pertained mainly to conditions of land ownership, townships exclusively for Mennonite use, travel assistance and the right to have their own schools.[6] It must be remembered that instructions given the delegates sent to explore settlement possibilities not only included a guarantee of religious freedom and exemption from military service, but the right to settle in closed communities with the right of self-government and the use of the German language in their own schools. As far as possible the potential migrants wished to retain the same life patterns they possessed in Russia. In fact, the guidelines for the delegates were "indispensable pre-conditions" for settlement terms with any government.[7] Migrants to the United States ultimately received less liberal terms of settlement, but initially both groups brought with them the cultural, technological, educational and religious world of Russian Mennonitism. It was after all, for the preservation of that world that many of them left Russia.

Leadership and the Emigration

In his recollections Elder Wiebe freely acknowledges the conservative stance which he adopted in the emigration negotiations. When consulting with other Mennonite leaders or czarist officials he constantly insisted he could not act or sign documents before seeking a colony consensus. Was the emigration a spontaneous movement of the people or did it result from the skillful leadership of orthodox ministers and elders?

To a degree the migration of the 1870s and 1880s was probably attributable to a group of conservative leaders. Had they advised patience and compromise to their communities, fewer Mennonites would probably have left their homeland. Who were these leaders and what was their outlook? The question is difficult to answer for only Elder Wiebe left a substantial record of his personal views and activities.

Wiebe's memoirs tell us several things about the migration leaders. The elder possessed a limited awareness of the world in which he lived. Realistically viewed, he was the product of an educationally and culturally impoverished Mennonitism. Only in the last three decades prior to World War I can we really speak of arts and letters, newspapers, books, high quality schools and a broader awareness among the Mennonites in Russia. The Mennonite world of 1870 was still very narrow. Critically examined, Wiebe's account reveals an inability to understand the changes Russia had undergone by 1870; a strong suspicion of the outside world, especially government officials; a cultural isolation which involved an ignorance of the Russian language; a negativistic pacifism which rejected war but refused to assume any positive obligations and duties. All this casts no shadow on the elder's honesty and sincerity, nor the fact that he sought to serve his God to the best of his understanding. But it does speak to the limitations of the Mennonite self-contained community. In February 1871, when Mennonite representatives stood before a czarist minister, it became apparent that none of them could speak an adequate Russian. And that, as the minister remarked, after living in Russia for 70 years.

Mennonites Aliens in Russia?

The Russian Mennonite historian, P. M. Friesen, himself the product of the more progressive Mennonitism of later days, judged the migration leaders rather harshly. "These men," he wrote, ". . . knew nothing of and wanted nothing from Russia, except its rich, fertile soil and its czar as a lofty abstraction, who was only real to them, as the giver and protector of the great *Privilegium.*" Friesen expressed dismay that the emigration leaders did not understand the intent of the new military law and "did not and could not think of working with this people [Russians] in their needs or of suffering with them in their calamities."[9] They wished to avoid all contact with Russian society, knew very little Russian history and possessed only a fragmentary knowledge of the Russian language. Several of the leaders thought in terms of a Mennonite island amid the Russian

sea, set apart by its identification with German language and culture. These leaders feared assimilation in any form, which left emigration as the only alternative.

Friesen's somewhat caustic remarks raise a perspective which assails our conventional thinking on the migration. Some of the emigration leaders were reactionaries! Insufficient sources survive to prove or disprove his contentions, although a critical analysis of Wiebe's memoirs may tend to support his view. Another view of the emigration leaders was expressed by General von Todleben in a report sent to the czarist Minister of the Interior after his consultation with Mennonite leaders in Halbstadt and Chortitza during April, 1874. He expressed the view that a segment of the potential emigrants had been influenced by fanatics within their own group or by outside agitators.[10] Todleben's encounter with the Mennonites did point to one fact. The emigration question had become a wedge which more than anything else separated conservative and progressive Mennonite leaders. According to Wiebe, Todleben tried to single out conservative leaders like himself for special dialogue. He was apparently willing to offer this minority freedom to migrate in order to curtail any increase in the exodus as a response to additional czarist pressure.

Promoting the Migration

There is an additional, somewhat more diffuse element connected with the leadership of the migration. Elder Wiebe reports a fascinating incident when Mennonite leaders met at Alexanderwohl in December, 1870, to discuss the mounting pressures for Russification:

Elder Sudermann and consul Jansen from Berdynask also came to the conference at Alexanderwohl. Jansen had already ordered many little books from America . . . and these were distributed among us. Initially I did not want to take one since at that time I was a determined opponent of America (i.e. migration to America) . . . In the end we took one along and when we arrived at home we allowed people to read it. In one or two weeks there were already a considerable number who wished to emigrate. Soon several travelled to Berdyansk and as a result of this rumors were flying everywhere.[11]

Cornelius Jansen, Prussian consul at Berdyansk, from the very onset advocated emigration to North America as the best solution to government pressure. For some time he carried on a correspondence with the editor of the *Herald of Truth* (Elkhart, Indiana), John F. Funk. In the process Jansen gathered considerable information about conditions in the United States, some of which he compiled and printed in 1872.[12] The booklet enjoyed a wide circulation as did the materials from the United States which Wiebe refers to in his memoirs. Further evidence for the prevalence of this "American fever" related to the activities of Bernhard Warkentin, the first man to leave Russia in order to "spy out" the new land. His lengthy letters to his friend David Goerz were not only read at mass meetings, but duplicated and circulated among villagers. Nor should we overlook the activities of the Canadian (of German descent) William Hespler who, until the Russian government curbed his activities, toured the Mennonite colonies in South Russia in the interests of a Canadian migration. Hespler's work was aided by the Berlin (Kitchener, Ont.) businessman and farmer, Jacob Y. Schantz, whose promotional pamphlet, *Narrative of a Journey to Manitoba,* was translated into several European languages by the Department of Agriculture. Stressing the economic advantages of Manitoba settlement, it must have made a profound effect upon its readers.[13]

Such activities suggest that the psychological conditioning for emigration was well advanced before the Mennonite confrontation with the government really became serious. Few Mennonites understood the exact nature of government demands and mass rumors often tinged with panic persisted. Amid such conditions the American alternative emerged, coinciding almost exactly with the increase of czarist political pressure. Then too the structural framework which made migration a real possibility was erected within an amazingly short period of time. "The "Committee of Twelve" returned to Russia from North America late in 1873. In the same year the first Russian Mennonites arrived in the United States. When General von Todleben visited Halbstadt and Chortitza in April, 1874, he found that many Mennonites had sold their homes and lands and were awaiting permission to leave.[14] Well over 6,000 persons arrived in the United States in 1874.

Mennonite Overpopulation

Elder Wiebe's memoirs speak poignantly to the question of land hunger: out of 500 families associated with the Bergthal group there were only 145 or 146 landowners.[15] Did a similar situation figure in other migrating colonies like Alexanderwohl and Fuerstenland? Unfortunately no exact statistics have survived, nor is the land issue mentioned in the migration documents of the period. It nevertheless must have played a major role.

The great land shortage which characterized the Mennonite settlements in South Russia in the mid-nineteenth century has stimulated much discussion but rarely has it been associated with the great migration. By 1850 most of the reserve lands in the original colonies were depleted due to rapid population growth. Simultaneously an increased demand for grain in Europe brought high prices for wheat and soon the Mennonite farmer doubled the acreage under cultivation, but the new markets only benefited the landowner. By the law the Mennonite farm could not be subdivided. As a result landownership and affluency went hand in hand. By 1860 half to two-thirds of the Mennonite families in the Chortitza and Molotschna colonies were without land. Unfortunately such families could not leave their communities except by special authorization, a concession which was often withheld. Many went into trades and crafts and soon these economic alternatives became oversubscribed. The remaining landless often became seasonal agricultural workers. Economics affected politics. In almost all cases the people with land emerged as the church and village leaders. When the poor protested and demanded their share of land, a bitter struggle ensued in which brotherhood was forgotten and where many church leaders sided with the landowners against the exploited and oppressed. The conflict ended only when the government intervened and sided with the poor in 1866.

Shocked and perhaps sobered by the bitter land struggle, the colonies initiated more enlightened policies to deal with the population pressure. A vigorous expansion involving the establishment of daughter colonies began. Between 1869-1874, for example, four settlements comprising a total of 330 families were founded by the Chortitza Mennonites. Similarly the Molotschna colony settled 484 families in Zagradavka. In 1889 Chortitza sent another 244 families to establish Ignatievo while Memrik with 303 families was

founded in 1885 as an extension of the Molotschna settlement.[16] This colonization in Russia was a direct response to the intolerable economic conditions generated by population pressure.

Population growth within the Mennonite settlements must be counted as one of the major factors stimulating emigration. If the landless figures in 1860 stood at 50% and 66% in Chortitza and the Molotschna respectively, the situation was infinitely worse by 1870. Figures for the Molotschna colony show an overall population of 20,085 as of December 1, 1860. On December, 1865, it stood at 24, 236 while by December 1, 1870 it had reached 26,447. It is not surprising that the major thrust of Mennonite colonization in Russia came in the 1870s. Nor is it unreasonable to argue that the mass migration to North America constituted a very necessary relief from overpopulation. With the exception of the Memrik and Ignatievo settlements the next major colonization in Russia only came in the 1890s. Two settlements, Orenburg and New Samara, received some 1,095 families from the Molotschna and Chortitza.[17] None of the nineteenth century migrants left records which said "I came because I needed land!" But in the light of the economic circumstances within the Russian Mennonite colonies it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that land hunger was one of the elements implicit in their decision to seek a new homeland.

Nonresistance Reexamined

In Elder Wiebe's account of the emigration dialogue with Russian officialdom he cites a number of interesting encounters which perhaps throw some light upon the prevailing Mennonite concept of nonresistance. Late in 1872, he travelled to Yalta with several other Mennonite ministers in order to obtain information concerning the new military law. In a personal conversation with General Hase, Wiebe queried the nebulous nature of the czarist religious guarantees and modestly suggested to the general that without these the Mennonites could not remain in Russia. "Russia opened its doors to our fathers when they saw the danger facing their children. And now that we fathers see the danger facing our children, we are not obligated to do the same?"[18]

In January, 1873, Mennonite leaders again meeting in Alexanderwohl decided to inform the czar of their willingness to submit to state service provided he granted them exemption from military service. Some delegates, including Wiebe, refused to sign. Later the Bergthal representatives submitted their own petition to the czar. The move generated considerable controversy at the eighth meeting of Mennonite elders at Alexanderwohl and resulted in a verbal attack on Wiebe's diplomacy. Subsequently it drove Bergthal toward independent action in emigration matters.[19]

Elder Wiebe had two contacts with General Todleben during April, 1874. In Halbstadt, Todleben had presented forestry work as the only possible alternative to military service. Wiebe reports his own reaction:

So dear reader, the general transmitted to us the decision as what we had to do. For four years the government had led us about by the rope and had never really informed us what we were to do, except to let us see a bit now and then. And now it (government) knew that Satan had split us and that the majority was prepared to accept a compromise. And so they came with their decision, perhaps in the hope that the smaller group would adjust itself to the larger one."[20]

At Chortitza Wiebe addressed Todleben directly: "The colony fears the future (course of events in Russia) and through us requests your eminent Excellence for permission to emigrate."[21]

Wiebe records a further strange encounter with an emissary of the czar in Grunau. The elder is given an opportunity to first request anything which the colony wished and second, anything he might desire. Suspecting a trap the Bergthal congregation requested permission to leave Russia. Wiebe via a story implied that as the chief shepherd he could not leave his flock.[22]

Nonresistance and Cultural Insulation

Taken as a whole Wiebe's memoirs raise a disturbing perspective. In all his encounters with officialdom the concept of nonresistance is only implied, never clearly articulated. Where it does emerge it strikes us very non-active, negativistic view. There is no suggestion that a Christian might be obligated to heal the wounds of war and so project a positive peace witness. A skeptical reader might even conclude that Wiebe was more concerned with avoiding cultural assimilation than with nonresistance. But we must be cautious in our judgment and try to understand the narrow guidelines which conditioned the Mennonite conscience of 1870. Wiebe was one of the more orthodox leaders of the period and his views are not necessarily normative for the rest of the Mennonites, in the 1870s.

But his outlook does raise some serious questions about the quality of Mennonite pacifism at the time of the emigration. Why did a sizeable minority consider the czarist civil service program the work of Satan? Why the fear for the future course of events in Russia when freedom from military service was still guaranteed? Why should a group whom czarist benevolence granted extraordinary privileges for some seventy years, refuse to make even a moderate compromise? Answers to these questions can possible be found in the Mennonite concept of nonresistance as it had evolved by 1870.

The Beginning of A Peace Witness?

The sheltered conditions under which the Mennonites initially entered Russia did not radicalize the institutionalized nonresistance they practiced in Prussia. It remained intact upon its arrival, assuming the character of a hallowed community trust but one which had never been seriously tested in a major crisis. Russia allowed nonresistance as a legal condition of settlement with the result that it remained a traditional doctrine operating within the Mennonite institutional framework. What evidence for an active peace witness existed before 1870? During the Crimean War the Mennonite settlers were lauded for troop transportation and the quartering and feeding of soldiers. The Molotschna Mennonites undertook to care for some 5,000 wounded and sick soldiers, a service for which Nicholas I especially commended the colonists in 1854. Such generosity was also in evidence during 1861-62 when the Molotschna Mennonites provided aid in the excess of 50,000 rubles to Bulgarian settlers. Similar aid and benevolence can also be cited after 1870; especially during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.[23]

However we might interpret such generosity, it remains a fact that the Mennonite peace witness prior to 1870 still occurred within the context of *Privilegium*. Until then the state had not requested the personal service of Mennonite young men and consequently there was no direct threat to

the self-contained community. Pacifism as a creedal tradition seems to have experienced little modification during the landless struggle of the 1860s. Similarly the emergence of the Mennonite Brethren Church with its stress on personal religious experience did not add substantially to a revitalization of nonresistance. After 1870 the pressure for Russification and the new military law initiated the threat of direct assimilation. Now the Russian Mennonite would have to practice nonresistance on the marketplace, for the czarist government insisted that some form of service was essential. Such identification with the state meant compromise for the more orthodox Mennonites. As the emigration leader Leonhard Sudermann commented, "In the civil service we would give tacit support to the military . . . then too we wanted to protect our youth from the dangers connected with life in the barracks. We saw our future in Russia decidedly threatened and had to think seriously of changing our place of abode."[24]

Whether the overall community view of nonresistance was much more liberal than that of conservatives like Wiebe and Sudermann is not self-evident. The first deputies sent to St. Petersburg by the Alexanderwohl Conference (January 22, 1871) were instructed to present to the czar "the pleas of our people for further gracious tolerance and legal confirmation of our freedom from military service both now and in the future."[25] Initial contacts with government officials in St. Petersburg confirmed the inevitability of a civil form of state service, possibly under army jurisdiction. A special petition (February 27, 1871) directed to the Minister of Government Domains, Selonoi, referred to the "complete religious freedom" initially promised the Mennonites and confirmed on two later occasions. Would Mennonite privileges be considered when the new military law was drafted?[26] At the request of government officials a memorandum on nonresistance was drawn up on March 2, 1871. Though a clear presentation of the biblical basis of nonresistance, there was little in the petition which stressed a positive service to humanity. In the past the Mennonites had "kept themselves distant from military service," had "given up many an earthly advantage (*manchen irdischen Vorteil*)," and now hoped "that we will experience no pressure or constraint on account of our faith. . . ."[27]

Two further Mennonite delegations in St. Petersburg during 1972 learned little new about the planned military law except the certainty of some type of state service. A fourth delegation journeyed to the Russian capital in February, 1873, which managed to personally present a petition to Grand Duke Constantine. It again referred to the "freedom from military service forever" granted by Catharine II, to the "reaffirmation of these privileges by czars Paul I and Nicholas," and the fact that the Mennonite could "under no circumstances take part in military matters, either directly or indirectly. . ."[28] A fifth delegation in the fall of 1873 also left a petition for the czar which again referred to historic Mennonite privileges and pleaded for exemption from military service.[29] In none of the petitions submitted did the delegates state a willingness to participate in an alternative service program in which, as officials repeatedly informed them, they must participate.

January, 1874 saw the proclamation of the new military law. Shortly after General von Todleben arrived in Halbstadt (April, 1874) to persuade the Mennonites to accept the new law, he received a special memorandum requesting further clarification of the new law. Among other things it requested that Mennonite youths in state service be placed in circumstances where it was possible "to provide them with the necessary spiritual care and to maintain [among them] our church discipline according to our confession and church polity."[30]

On May 14, 1875, the Russian Senate issued a decree further clarifying the nature of Mennonite state service. It specified duty in marine workshops, fire protection and the forestry service. Another Mennonite delegation, the sixth, was sent to St. Petersburg to confer with Todleben on the proposals. The delegates suggested forestry work as the most acceptable form of service; Mennonite supervision of the camps themselves as well as the regional conscription centers; freedom to emigrate for any Mennonite desiring to do so.[31] Most of the subsequent negotiations related to the technical aspects of setting up the forestry camps. In the end the Mennonites succeeded in entirely removing their service from army jurisdiction, but were forced to bear the entire cost of the institution themselves.

Nonresistance and Cultural Identity

Did alternative service substantially affect the Russian Mennonite concept of nonresistance? Probably not. Though the collective task of financing and organizing state service brought the Mennonites closer together and resulted in unified action in a number of areas, nonresistance continued to be practiced as legal concession institutionalized into forestry camps in peacetime and noncombatant military service in time of war. As a consequence, a fundamental rethinking of the broader implications of the peace principle did not occur. The concept retained many creedal elements and remained primarily a renunciation of war. It remained a traditional doctrine operating in what soon became a traditional institutional framework.

How then did nonresistance function as a factor in the migrations of the 1870s and 1880s? For the majority of Mennonites who decided to leave nonresistance was certainly the major issue. But from our viewpoint their thinking on peace was rather circumscribed. Nonresistance was an historical community value, interwoven with a strong social system and a definite cultural identity. When the czarist military law challenged it, it not only challenged a corporate value, but Russian Mennonite society itself. In the Mennonite mind of 1870, pacifism was associated with a closed community, strict separation from the world and the avoidance of cultural assimilation. But the average Mennonite was probably not aware of all these appendages. To him the peace principle was a sacred trust handed down by his forefathers. If Russia no longer honored it he would seek countries which did. Because of his loyalty to the peace principle he willingly faced the hardships of a new frontier. Unfortunately at no stage of his migration and resettlement did he seriously re-examine the spiritual content of his nonresistance. In both Russia and North America this occurred only in the twentieth century.

An Applied Peace Witness?

The migrations of the 1870s and 1880s marked a substantial turning point in the history of the Russian Mennonites. Both those who stayed and those who left experienced significant changes in their life styles and life values.

In Russia compulsory state service at least modified an orthodox pacifism. The peace principle became more

relevant. Now Mennonites cared for Russia's forests and planted new ones. In war they engaged in active healing in a noncombatant medical service. And, perhaps fortunately, the cost of upholding the peace principle was very high. In later years 200,000 rubles annually supported some 1,000 young men in state service. Such a common burden brought unity and brotherhood. Old rivalries and hostilities vanished. The Russian Mennonites began to work together. Even czarist pressure in the areas of education and culture had its advantages. To avoid assimilation the Russian Mennonites forged institutions capable of preserving their faith and way of life. By the early twentieth century a broad array of educational, welfare and medical institutions provided impressive evidence of Mennonite solidarity. Mennonite young men studied at major Russian universities or abroad and attained high levels of cultural and educational achievement. There was an interest in history, literature, music and poetry. A sizeable Mennonite intelligentsia emerged.[32] By 1914 the Russian Mennonites had progressed more culturally and intellectually than their brethren who had left for North America. These, after all, faced a new language and culture as well as the difficulties of a new economic frontier. Some cultural and educational attrition was inevitable.

The Mennonites who left Russia on account of their religious and cultural orthodoxy faced a drastic change in economic and social circumstances. From Kansas to Manitoba they struggled with the incredible hardships of the western frontier. Common difficulties forced a certain blending of people from different churches, different geographic areas and different levels of wealth. The stratified society of the past meant little in the face of drought, grasshopper plagues, prairie fires and life in primitive sod houses. But such severe trials also held blessings. With the exception of Manitoba the emigrants did not settle in self-contained villages but on private farms. The world of the Mennonite, regardless of his occupation, became a more individual one. There was no longer the village assembly and the village church to impose conformity. The Mennonite and even more his children gradually made contact with the outside, English-speaking world. Now that he had left the social protection of the village, only one focal point remained—the church. As he began to explore the meaning of his Christian commitment to the total community in which he lived, the church once more became a functional brotherhood—encouraging counseling, aiding—but never dictating the inflexible life style of bygone decades. Religiously he and his brothers moved closer towards becoming the voluntary association of believers which their Anabaptist forefathers advocated.

NOTES

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14. Smith, 94.

15. Wiebe, 27-28.

16. D. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia," *MQR*, XLVIII, No. 1 (Jan. 1974), 31.

17. *Ibid.*

18. Wiebe, 23.

19. *Ibid.*, 24-26.

20. *Ibid.*, 30.

21. *Ibid.*, 31.

22. *Ibid.*, 32-37.

23. Friesen, 484-90.

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26. *Ibid.*, 300-01.

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THE IMMIGRANTS AND THE RAILROADS

By JOHN F. SCHMIDT

ONE OF THE ASSIGNMENTS given the Mennonite delegates to America in 1873 was to contact transportation concerns and contract for the most favorable rates and conditions of passage. The delegates did make some contacts with steamship lines but the burden of the detailed work of negotiating with rail and steamship lines fell to the committees formed to facilitate the migration: The Mennonite Board of Guardians of Summerfield, Illinois, and the Mennonite Executive Aid Committee of Pennsylvania. A further such committee was also formed in Canada.

Railroads Sell Lands

The Mennonite Executive Aid Committee of Pennsylvania, for example, negotiated with the Red Star Line and the Pennsylvania Railroad. Upon arrival in Philadelphia the Mennonites were received by officers of the railroad and taken directly to their destination "without loss of time or change of trains."

The Mennonite immigrants soon discovered that the railroads not only provided transportation—they also sold land. They were, in fact, so eager to sell land that very favorable contracts could be made with railroads expanding in the West. That the railroads had extensive lands to sell was due to a policy of the government of granting lands to qualified railroads. These grants could be sold to provide the railroads with necessary capital and to stimulate the settlement of the West. This policy had at first been followed to develop highways and canals, and since 1850 was applied to railroad expansion.

Among the railroads affected by this land grant policy were several which were building and expanding their lines west of the Mississippi—the Northern Pacific, the Burlington and Missouri River, (later the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy), and the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe. Passed before the close of the Civil War, the Pacific Railway Act granted to the projectors of the first Continental railroad a land bonus of ten sections for each mile of road built and in addition a substantial loan of money. Usually, alternate sections (640 acres) of land in primary strips for a limited number of miles on each side of the projected improvement were granted, with indemnity limits beyond the primary strip in case the lands in the primary strip had already been settled. A time period was also set for the completion of improvements so the railroads would not dally in building their roads.

Pioneers in Dakota

One of the first railroad contracts involving the sale of land to Mennonites was that of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company and a Mennonite deputation consisting of seven of the twelve deputies sent to America to spy out the land. This contract carries the date of August 20, 1873. It proposes to reserve from sale until March 1, 1874, lands adjoining the railroad in Dakota territory, and within 50 miles of the Red River provided that on or before the first day of March, 1874, the Mennonite Committee will notify the company whether they will settle on their line. If so, the selection of lands must be made before July 1, 1874 so that the townships not wanted by the Mennonites may be released from reservation.

The lands selected by the committee would be held for them by the company for five years from July 1, 1874, provided that 10 per cent of the lands would be sold each year at an average of three dollars an acre. Terms of payment included the cash option or ten per cent down and various deferred payment options at an interest rate of seven per cent per annum. The railroad pledged itself to protect the Mennonite communities from interference by any outside parties.

The railroad further offered to provide land for churches and schools and to build reception houses which the colonists would later have the option of buying at cost. Reduced rates for freight and coal were also provided. The company went so far as to promise the lowest attainable transportation rates from New York to Dakota.

This contract signed by W. Cass, president, and Frederick Billings, chairman of the land committee of the Northern Pacific Railroad Company, set the pattern for many of the succeeding contracts offered to the Mennonites.

The Burlington and Santa Fe

In November, 1873, the Burlington and Missouri River Railroad Company offered to reserve for three years for purchase by Mennonites all of its lands in five counties in Nebraska, conditioned upon the purchase of not less than 50,000 acres each year at a price of $2.15 per acre.

The propositions again include offers of reduced freight, accommodation for the reception of Mennonites and donated lands for the erection of churches and school houses. The

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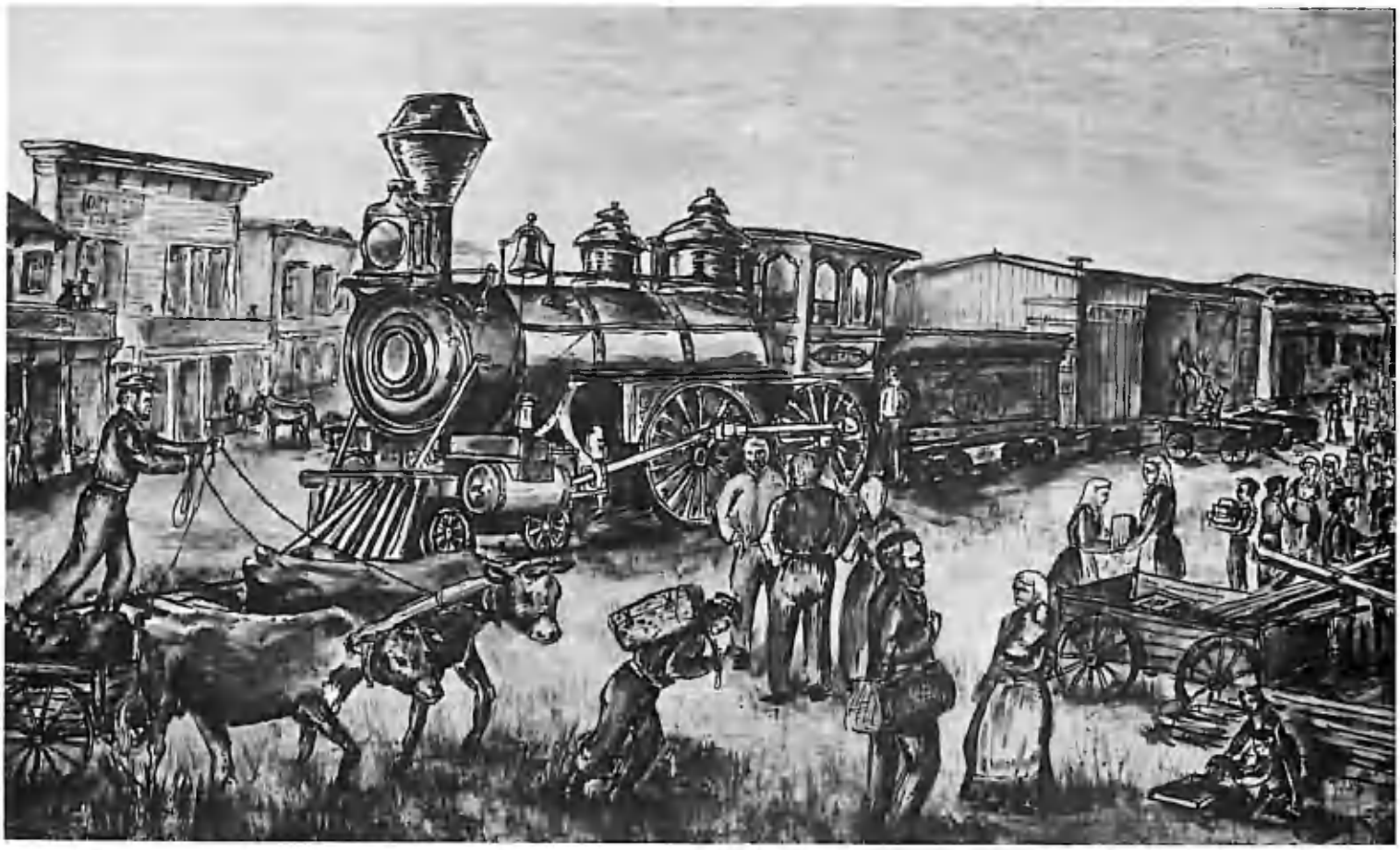


Mennonite immigrants arrive by Santa Fe train at Peabody, Kansas in the fall of 1874.

Northern Pacific offered six free season passes for a period of three years while the Burlington offered eight free passes to Mennonite leaders good for a term of five years.

The first contract drawn up by the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe and a Mennonite group was one made January 1, 1874, with the group led by Christian Krehbiel. This contract applied only to a specific area in the vicinity of Halstead where Krehbiel's group from Summerfield, Illinois, had chosen to settle.

The contract specified that a total of 18,000 acres was to be purchased by May, 1874. While the appraised value of the land varied from $3.50 to $12.00 per acre, discounts of 50 and 56 per cent were to be allowed. Terms of credit up to five years would be granted on one-third of the purchase price of the 18,000 acres. A staggered schedule of interest and principal payments was agreed upon.

As was the case in earlier contracts, the Santa Fe agreed to make a gift of land for church and school purposes. For the first year of their settlement Mennonites were to enjoy a freight discount of 20 per cent from the regular rates.

A special feature of the Santa Fe-Krehbiel contract included provisions for the benefit of the Mennonites from Russia and Prussia. They were to enjoy a reduction of $2.00 each in passenger rates from Atchison to Halstead. The railroad also pledged to use its influence to secure special rates for land investigators from any part of the U.S.

The final two contracts at hand were made by the Santa Fe with the two Alexanderwohl groups—the one identified as the group represented by J. Buller, H. Richert and others, and the other group represented by D. Gaeddert, P. Balzer and others. With the exception of the amount of land involved and the plans for the respective immigrant houses, these contracts are almost identical.

In the case of the Alexanderwohl group, 65 sections of land are under consideration while the contract with the Hoffnungsau group mentions 42 sections. In each case, half of this land was to be bought immediately while the rest would be reserved for twelve months. Those who bought land the first six months would only have to pay the first half year's taxes.

Immigrant Houses

In regard to the immigrant houses, both groups would have two buildings erected. The ones at Alexanderwohl were to be 200 feet long by 18 feet wide. Each building was to have six windows on each side, with two doors on each side and on each end. The buildings at Hoffnungsau were to be 114 feet long by 18 feet wide; windows and doors are not mentioned. The Hoffnungsau contract specifies that the railroad company will furnish the building foreman and three carpenters for each building. The Mennonites were to furnish additional workers, including the cook. The board for the workers would be furnished by the railroad. The Alexanderwohl contract did not specify the number of workers the railroad would furnish. At both locations a kitchen shed was to be built to adjoin each building but

Immigrant houses at Alexanderwohl, two of the five erected by the Santa Fe for Kansas settlers.

The Mennonites from Russia wore typical peasant kerchiefs and caps when they arrived on the prairies of North America.

without a floor. The Mennonites would have to buy the lumber for this at wholesale rates but would not pay the freight on the lumber.

The common elements of the two contracts dealt with terms of the land sale, freight rates and supplementary benefits offered by the railroad.

The cash price of the land was fifty per cent of the marked price and was in effect whenever one-fifth of the sale price was paid and the balance paid in five equal installments with ten per cent interest. Those who expected to pay the full amount in twelve months could also take advantage of the fifty per cent discount by paying the full amount within twelve months plus ten per cent interest.

Credit and Discount

Two long term credit options were offered. In the one case a discount of forty per cent was offered on a contract of eleven years with seven per cent interest annually paid in advance in addition to one-tenth of the sale price. A more generous contract allowed a discount of thirty per cent and required that for the first four years the interest, seven per cent, only be paid. After these four years, one-eighth of the principal plus seven per cent interest on the unpaid balance was to be paid annually.

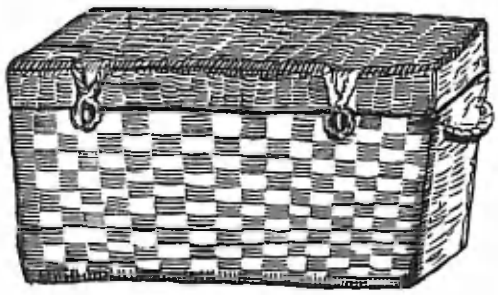
In the Alexanderwohl area, two sections of average worth were donated by the railroad for those without means to buy. In the Hoffnungsau area, the contract specified a donation of one section for every 17½ sections sold to the congregation.

Since these contracts were drawn up when Mennonites of each group were still in Nebraska and much of their freight was still in Philadelphia, these problems were also considered. Both contracts offered free transportation to the Mennonites still in Nebraska to the station nearest the Mennonite settlement if such a move was made before the end of October. To those who were still in Elkhart or Philadelphia, free transportation was offered from Atchison to the railroad station nearest the settlements as well as reduced rates from Philadelphia to Atchison.

Freight from Philadelphia was to be transported free of charge to the Mennonites to the station nearest their settlement. Other necessary freight for the settlements was to be transported free of charge until January 1, 1875, and from January 1 until October 1, 1875, a forty per cent reduction from regular rates was allowed.

In each case, the railroad offered one free pass for every five sections of land already bought by the congregation. Finally, the railroad promised to be considerate of the poor by lowering freight rates and extending credit. Its advisory services would also be available to those who wished to buy from other sources and to those who desired help in examining titles of lands bought.

The contracts entered into by the railroads and the Mennonites were negotiated agreements. Whether any specific provisions in these contracts were unique to contracts made with Mennonites is not known. It is noteworthy that American corporations in their relative infancy were found to behave with unusual humanitarian considerations. Of course, C. B. Schmidt would also have seen these considerations as being "good business."



A Russian willow trunk. Most of the heirloom trunks were built of solid in-laid wood and are now precious antiques.

YESTERDAY AND TODAY

By AGNETHA DUERKSEN

NOW THAT WE have crossed the threshold of the Centennial year 1974 we realize that many changes have occurred during the past one hundred years. We are the product of our nostalgic yesterdays. A long procession of exciting events have followed since our forefathers set foot on the prairies. Each festivity had meaning: the dedication of hospitals, churches, schools, museums, and all anniversaries, weddings, reunions, etc. They bring back happy memories.

We Mennonites have considered ourselves a practical people. To make things worthwhile they had to serve a purpose. There is the old coffee mill, the quaint butter mold, and the treasure chest, all of which have not been used for many years. No matter what artifacts, heirlooms, or antiques we look at, they are not only reminders of by-gone days, but it is a delight knowing they served the pioneers well. Old tin and iron cooking utensils have been replaced by stainless steel and polished aluminum, poverty and want have changed to affluency and convenience. It's strange how some things come back in different shapes and forms. Where grandmother used the iron kettle on the back of the hearth for slow cooking, we now have the crockpot doing the same thing. *Schlorre*, a type of sandal, has been replaced by a more comfortable slipper.

We are a part of tradition and culture, and I fully believe they are essential. *Mak-Kuchen, Zwieback, Borscht, Plumemoos,* and other Mennonite dishes are parts of a worthy style of life to preserve. Besides they are palatable, and could we say "gourmet" dishes?

To many it did not seem like Sunday without Zwieback. Among the Low German folks a menu of *Zwieback,* sugar cubes and coffee, served well for weddings, funerals, and family gatherings. It was customary to make *Zwieback* dough at the bride's home on the day before the wedding and then it was distributed among the neighbors. Later the groom would gather the *Zwieback.* Naturally they varied some in size and shape. But woe to the *Zwieback* if the yeast failed to work well. Smelling coffee at a birthday gathering I overheard a little boy say, *Daut ritjkt oaba so noa Stetja Tsocka.* (It smells so much like sugar lumps.)

Food for Sunday was prepared the day before. Simplicity was the keyword for living. Going to church by horse and buggy made Sunday dinners late, especially for those who lived far from church. I recall one particular Sunday, when father invited Elder Heinrich Banman and family to stop for dinner. Mother had planned a simple meal of *Brocke-Moos* (hot milk with *Zwieback*). But she thought this too plain for guests like the Banmans. So she improvised, by frying ham and eggs. How different today with push buttons and time clocks.

On Sundays we were not permitted to do any work other than that which was absolutely necessary. Those of us who grew up in this culture feel less tolerant to some of the practices today. If weather prohibited attendance at church, father would read a sermon from an *Andachts-buch.* These sermons seemed long to us and we could hardly wait for the Amen. After returning from church we changed our clothes to *tjlien Sindoagsche.* The buying of "Sunday-shoes" often created a chuckle among the clerks.

Holidays were of great significance. Not only did we celebrate or keep one day, but three in a row. As long as possible this custom was practiced, but now only one day is kept. There were always the maternal and paternal grandparents who expected these time-honored observances. It was a time for cousins to get better acquainted. *Plume-Moos en Schintje Fleesch* were usually on the menu, for the main meal. If there was a large group, the children had to wait to eat at the "second table," sometimes eating out of the same plates that had been used at the first setting.

At New Year's the menu changed and *Portsilke* were baked. It took a lot of *Krutze* (corn cobs) to keep the fire hot for the deep fat to make the fritters tumble over, that's what *Portsilke* really means. Not only did we like to watch mother fry them but instead of begging for a sample we recited this rhyme:

Etj sach de Schornsteen rooke,
Etj wisst woll waut jie moake,
Jie backte schoene Niejasch Koke.
Jew jie mi ene, dann bliew etj stoane,
Jew jie mi twe, dann fang etj aun to goane,
Jew jie mi dree tojlitj,
Dann wensche etj junt daut ewje Himmelritj.

This practice of making *Portsilke* is no longer reserved for New Year's only, but has become a favorite at other occasions.

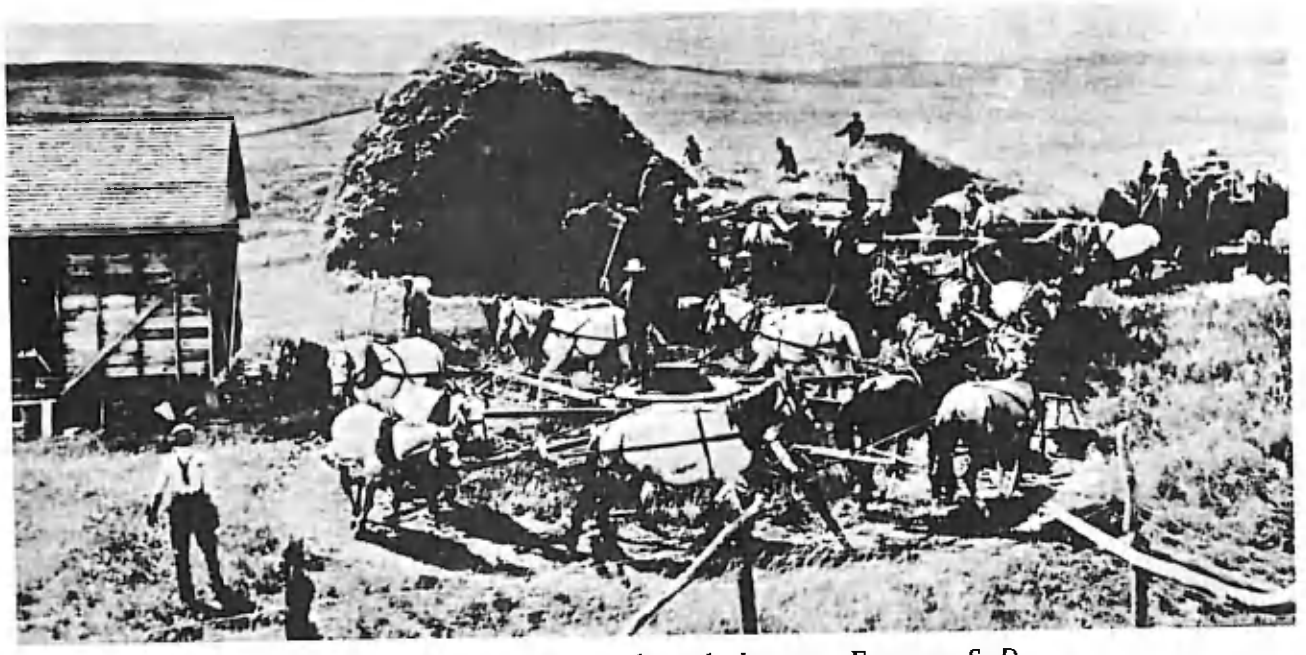
"By the sweat of thy brow shalt thou eat thy bread," was a slogan by which the pioneers lived. Idleness was considered sinful. During the early years the wife and mother was the constant companion of her farmer husband. During drought and poverty she was the one who faithfully stood by him. As a rule the following rhyme did not apply in a Mennonite home:

Woat de Maun met dem Ladawoage nenna bringe kaun,
Daut kaun de Fru met dem Schaldoak ruta droage.

Taking wheat to the mill in exchange for flour and bran was practiced among pioneers. A detailed sale bill from the mill at Marion showed that in 1913 wheat flour was $1.65 for a 48 lb. sack. Sugar at that time was priced at $1.08 for 25 lbs.

What was, and is the underlying motive for doing what Mennonites have done all these years? There was a time when "necessity was the mother of invention." We might say it was an outgrowth of experience which later became a matter of habit. There was an instinctive frugality which admonished people not to waste. Those who grew up under this tutorship find the energy crisis not so stringent. It was sin to waste; bread or any food was considered a gift of God and was never to be burned or destroyed. This carry-over is still part of the lives of many.

Aganetha Duerksen, a native of the Alexanderwohl community, Goessel, Kan., has been a public school teacher in Wichita and is now in retirement at Schowalter Villa, Hesston.



Threshing by horse power in the early days near Freeman, S. D.

LIFE, WORK AND LEISURE IN PIONEER DAYS

By ORPHA SCHRAG *and* STELLA SCHRAG

Editor's Note: This article consists of selections from a long term paper written 30 years ago in a Mennonite History class at Bethel College. Although the article is based on findings in one community it is representative of others, particularly those of Swiss (Schweitzer) *background. Keep in mind that when the writers speak of the "present" that that was 30 years ago.*

Farm Activities

Practices and methods in farm work have greatly changed, as they have in every community. The settlers, arriving with no machinery and for several years unable to afford to buy any, did their early sowing of seed by hand. The first corn planter, after the hoe or stick, was a little box containing corn, attached to two sticks, which when pushed into the ground, in some manner parted to allow several kernels to fall through.

The harvesting of corn has undergone considerable change, too. Originally it was a long process. The first huskers were hand made, and though they aided in removing the ear of corn from the stalk, the husks remained on the ear. Consequently the ears were first thrown into a basket, piled outside the field, and later the husks were removed. Some years later they would empty the baskets into a wagon, take it home, and remove the husks during the winter at "husking bees" or otherwise. The softest husks were utilized as mattress filling.

Even when husking in the field as we know it today was begun it was a very slow and tedious process. Several people often filled not more than one wagon box a day. The wagons originally had no side boards and a picker was placed on either side. This inevitably left a row of corn underneath the wagon, and the lot of the children was to rescue that. Reports of this date back about fifty years. The addition of so insignificant an item as bang boards greatly improved conditions and pride was soon developed in being a good picker. At present some corn pickers are in use though most often the task is still done by hand.

Haying at one time held its place among the major farm events of the summer. It was a cooperative undertaking with all family members and usually some neighbors joining. The large haylofts of today were unheard of and all hay had to be put up in stacks. Naturally more assistance was required. Today, with large haylofts, rubber-wheeled hayracks, and in some instances, hay loaders, the haying process has been greatly simplified.

The earliest harvesting was done by scythe and cradle.

Reapers came next but the binding still had to be done by hand. The introduction of self-binders was a great improvement. The grain was put in stacks where it was left for curing before threshing it later in fall.

During the immediate beginning of the settlement the use of threshing stones or flails was common. As soon as it could be afforded a large threshing machine, run by horses, made its appearance in the community. Until threshing machines were more numerous the grain was piled in stacks as previously, and the machine and crew travelled from place to place for several months. The threshing crew, which boarded and slept at the farmer's home until the job was completed, included the pitchers, feeders, and separator tenders. Neighbors came to help, too.

These were hard and long days. A man rose in the early morning and usually assisted with the chores before beginning his threshing job. If he was helping his neighbor he often walked several miles in order to save his tired horses, which were left at the place of threshing, and after a long day's work again walked home, perhaps helped with the chores, and after a very late supper at perhaps ten or eleven o'clock, retired for a few hours sleep.

A practice carried over the Ukraine and continued to the present day is the observance of an *Obyinka* on the evening of or the evening after the finishing of harvesting and threshing. The word *Obyinka* is a Ukrainian word which means feasting at the end of harvest. In that country the last bundle that was taken out of the field was decorated with flowers and given a prominent place in the festivities which followed. It is not believed that the bundle was used in this country, but the feast itself continued for some time.

The food served on this occasion varied with each crew and with the years. Some had a simple lunch while others made it quite elaborate. Ice cream, cake, and cookies were served practically without exception. The crews that served beer during the threshing certainly would not do without it on this, the climaxing night!

In connection with farming customs it might be mentioned that the women and girls are not at all unaccustomed to farm work. Although this is not as true as it was some years ago, before modern equipment had simplified the practice of farming, it is still very common to see girls on tractors, binders, shocking grain, making hay, picking corn, and as has been mentioned, pitching bundles. There are very few girls that do not milk. The milking is often taken over entirely by the women, particularly during the busy summer seasons when the men work late.

Butchering

Butchering is another event that has always brought the aid of several neighbors or close relatives. When families were large at least three to five hogs were butchered at one time. Formerly, no beef was killed. Several reasons are evident for this. Hogs matured more quickly and cattle were scarce since cows were used to supply milk and the steers trained as oxen. Those who remember having their first taste of beef describe it as sweet and sickening. Apparently one's palate had to become accustomed to it.

The canning of meat was unheard of during the earliest years. It was well preserved by smoking. In the years when houses and barns were built together a small *Hausgang* connected the two. Here a very high chimney often led to the top. The meat was hung on crossbeams and the smoke from the clay stove passed over the meat as it ascended. Meat, cured in this fashion, kept for several years without any signs of spoiling.

When the *Hausgang* became extinct and larger homes were built, a smokehouse usually was built near the house explicitly for the purpose of smoking the meat. Inside these was a container, a barrel or tub, in which the fire was kept burning. At present the majority of people take their meat to town to be smoked and cured.

With improved equipment and lesser amounts of meat required, butchering does not take nearly as much time or work as it once did. However, someone almost always comes to assist. In appreciation a piece of meat or sausage is given to those who helped.

Little of the hog is discarded. Though butchering practices vary even within the community, the end of the butchering day usually produces, besides ham, bacon, steak, lard, and such things as meat sausage, liver sausage, head cheese, *Gallerich*, and cracklings. The latter are not used as a food as commonly as they once were. In earlier years when homes could not afford the delectable foods of today, they were never thrown away, some often ground and used as a spread for bread.

Johann Waltner home between Yankton, S. D. and the turkey Valley settlement. It served as a stopping place for the Swiss Volhynian Mennonites on their way to Yankton.

Cheese-Making

The making of cheese must be briefly mentioned, for the *Schweizer Kaese* is a common sight in many a home even today when cheese of any variety can easily be purchased.

With money and food scarce, and with a sufficiency of milk on the farm, many a large round cheese was made in the pioneer home. During summer some families put aside one day in order to supply a stock for harvesting, threshing and for fall and winter.

Sweet milk is used in the process, rennin tablets added to it, and this allowed to stand until thickened. After cutting it into small pieces it is slowly heated until warm, drained in a big cloth, and placed in a press. The first day the press has to be unscrewed often and the cloth changed. Daily salting

has to be made for several weeks. The cheese may taste rather flat and insipid at first, but it improves as it ages until a cheese is produced that is truly delicious.

Wine, Beer, Schnaps

The serving of wine was a custom practiced by many of our forefathers in the community as an effort to show their hospitality towards friends or strangers as they chanced to come to their homes for business or social calls. Wild grapes, pie plant, and other fruit, as mulberries, were plentiful after the first few years, and sugar was cheap, so that seemed to them the most practical way to have something on hand when guests, invited or unexpected, arrived.

There was an art to the making of good wine, and pride was taken in being called a good wine-maker. The process, as recalled by an observer, was on the following order. The grapes, or other fruit if used, were picked, cleaned, and crushed. Some water was added and they were put into a crock and left for perhaps two days to ferment. When only slightly fermented they were crushed very finely and the juice squeezed. This juice was then placed into a wooden keg and usually, for economy's sake, one-fourth or one-fifth part water added. Naturally, a more pure juice would have produced better wine. In this keg the wine was left for fermentation, the foam running out of the "bung-hole" at the top. Sugar water was constantly added to continue the purifying process. When the wine ceased foaming it was an indication that the fermentation had ceased and that the wine was pure. The keg was stoppered and the wine left to age and season. Two months improved it considerably though it continued to get better with age. It is interesting to note in this connection that wine does not season unless it is in a wooden container.

The distilling of whiskey was not uncommon either. Aside from the social gesture of serving a drink, the production of this had an economic aspect. Some of the big hog raisers at that time believed it was advantageous to cook the feed for the hogs. The hogs were believed to make better gains. Then, alongside with the feeding of their hogs, with special kinds of feed cookers they could distill some whiskey for themselves and for their friends. This was not at all illegal at the time, and was considered a gesture of friendliness and neighborliness.

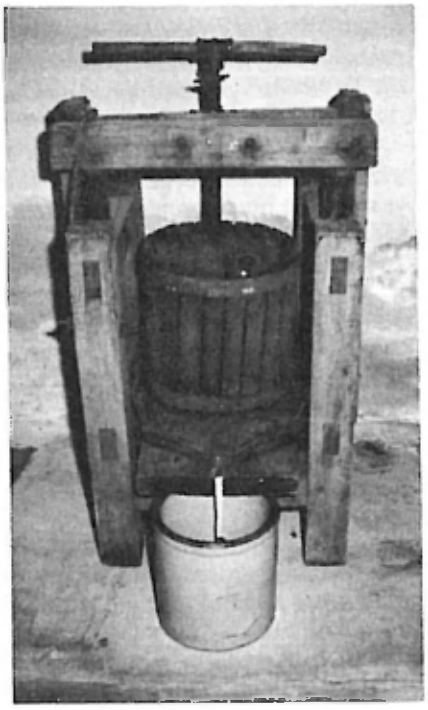
Prevalent, too, was the custom of buying a keg of beer for special occasions such as weddings, funerals, Fourth of July celebrations, threshing, *Obyinku,* etc. These were the days of open saloons and it was no trouble to get as much as desired. When two neighbors met in town they showed their neighborliness by getting a drink. First one bought the other a drink and then his favor was immediately returned.

One of the writers faintly recalls a day spent at making wine at her grandfather's home. The serving of wine at that home is remembered more vividly, for even the grandchildren sitting on the long grey benches around the Christmas or Thanksgiving table, occasionally were given a swallow. Secret trips to the basement, where the large wine barrel stood, were occasionally dared, too, though time was never taken for anything more serious than one insignificant swallow.

One custom that has survived to the present day, though not common, is the making of *Honigschnaps.* This was served at the arrival of a newborn child in the family. It was our elders' way of drinking a toast to the new arrival and wishing the parents God's favor in helping them bring up the child in the fear of the Lord and as an honorable citizen.

The *Honigschnaps* was made by adding hot water and honey to alcohol or whiskey and seasoning it with cinnamon. The custom points back to the belief that it was nutritional for a young mother to drink a very mild whiskey with large proportions of honey in it.

According to one of the older members of the community, only a favored few, the most intimate of friends and relatives, got a taste of it. Another report, however, says that no one who came to see the child was neglected. Perhaps the custom changed since the earliest years or perhaps it varied in the various homes of the community.



A wine press built by Jacob H. Goering, Pretty Prairie, Kan., about 1885. It was used to press juice from grapes, apples, and other fruits grown by the pioneers. (Owned by Walter W. Graber, who will donate it to the Mennonite Centennial Village, Bethel College.)

Social Life Among the Young Folks

In spite of the fact that there was little opportunity for social gathering among the young folks during the earlier years, it was not neglected entirely. Lack of space created an acute problem in the first few years. Homes were built of sod or clay and were far from spacious. The front room served as a bedroom, and quarters were crowded. This led to the practices of two or three couples sitting on the bed, those arriving first having first choice. As larger homes were built, larger groups assembled. Such parties were held during the leisure of winter more than during summer, for then working hours were long and the horses had to be saved for farm labor.

Dancing was not very common. Folk games, however, were sanctioned. Lively Russian and German songs were sung to these. Very popular, too, were the kissing games. Games of various sorts were played in which the players were penalized with a forfeit. This forfeit was given in various forms. One of these was the "Bridge." Alternations of boys and girls were gradually lined up, beginning with one boy and one girl and continuing with as many as had to pay the forfeit. With the addition of each couple a kiss was passed down to the end of the line. Or there was the

Double wedding of Jonathan J. Goering and Katie Emma Zerger, and Anna Goering and Benjamin B. J. Goering, Nov. 26, 1914 in Moundridge, Kan.

Hasen-Kuss, in which some object was tied to the center of a string and the ends placed in the mouths of the penalized couple. They, then, had to "nibble" the string until both parties had reached the attached object. A third such forfeit was the "Double Shovel." In this the boy knelt, the one knee extended for the girl to sit on and in so doing, to kiss him. This completed, he extended the other knee and the process was repeated.

Sunday afternoons were a favorite time for social gatherings. The boy would ask a girl friend to accompany him after the forenoon church services, and after the dinner at his parent's home they would usually join the other young folks of the community at some large home. Pictures of the groups taken at these parties can be found in many homes.

The parties were often attended on foot, boys and girls both walking. The purchase of a carriage, or better yet, a modern auto-cushioned top buggy, was certain to spread rumor that the young man must have found his heart's desire or have become engaged.

Not only boys with dates could attend. All young folks thirteen or fourteen or over were welcome. It has been said that the yardstick by which the "child" and the "young person" were measured was the attendance at parties. When of party age dresses lengthened, too. Girls, even in those days, were seemingly not without fault! It is said that if a girl, rather desperate to get to the party accompanied a not too well-liked boy, and someone more preferred asked her to go home, there were those who had no scruples about accepting.

The Sunday afternoon parties developed, as a substitute or supplement, into evening parties. Word was passed that next Sunday the party would be at a designated place. The parents, at whose home the group assembled, conveniently left for the evening. There were no evening church services at that time; transportation means prohibited driving great distances to other sources of entertainment, and thus these gatherings were eagerly anticipated.

During summer parties were held outside playing "Ring Games" as "Pin in the Parlor," "Please of Please," "Shoot the Buffalo," "Steal" and various other lively forms of folk games accompanied by much swinging and promenading. Square dancing, not having the regular dance step, was not considered as sinful by some. This, however, did not take deep roots in the community.

These large parties were gradually replaced by private evening parties. Invitations were extended after church or otherwise. These allowed for more planned entertainment which was generally conceded to have been more wholesome. With the introduction of evening church services, Sunday evening parties were more or less discouraged. Of course private parties such as birthday, Halloween, New Year's, Leap Year, or farewell parties still are common. Refreshments are always served at such, which, too was not a practice at the large parties of former years.

The hour at which the girls had to be in would seem heartlessly cruel today. Naturally there must have been exceptions, but in the well regulated home of forty years ago 10:00 p.m. would see the boy back from his girl friend's place, even though the miles had to be covered by horse.

That parents must have disapproved of late hours is indicated by the fact that one young man, arriving home rather late, climbed the ladder to the top porch as a means of entering unnoticed. The plan was somewhat spoiled, though, by the form of his father lying in front of the door leading to the porch, seeking relief from the night's heat.

Aside from the Sunday gatherings and parties, the spelling bee offered entertainment during the earlier years. These were conducted during the years following the establishment of schoolhouses and continued perhaps until the close of the nineteenth century. To accommodate the various localities the people gathered in different schoolhouses at each meeting, and thus no school had the privilege more than once or twice during the winter. Attendance, however, was not limited to one district; anyone could attend. The children, young people, and younger married folks were enthusiastic attenders. The old pioneers remained at home. Perhaps they did not look too approvingly at this entertainment.

Not the entire program consisted of the spelling bee. A portion of the time was spent in singing. The home schools always did some previous practicing, and with the school's teacher leading the singing, the children lustily sang with the old. There were also dialogues, recitations, and poetry. These were often very long. There being a shortage of available poetry, the same ones were often repeated from time to time. "See My Sled" is one that is perhaps still recalled by some.

The spelling bee was replaced by basket socials sometime after 1900. The girls brought beautifully decorat-

ed baskets containing food, which were auctioned off. The girl expected to share the contents of her basket with the gentleman offering the highest bid. If it was known that a young man was determined to buy a certain basket, which he knew belonged to his lady friend, the others often made him pay dearly for it. Pie socials were also introduced, and outlived the basket socials by a number of years.

Sleigh-ride parties, in those days of ungravelled and ungraded roads, as well as large prairies, were great sport. The sleigh driver would often travel as far as ten miles, picking up young folks along the way. When a large enough group was accumulated they would go out for adventurous riding. Unless someone in some way managed to tip the sleigh, throwing occupants, girls as well as boys, from the sleigh, it was not considered genuine fun. No one ever was injured since sleds were low and the snow ordinarily not too hard. The introduction of cars also terminated this most pleasant of sports.

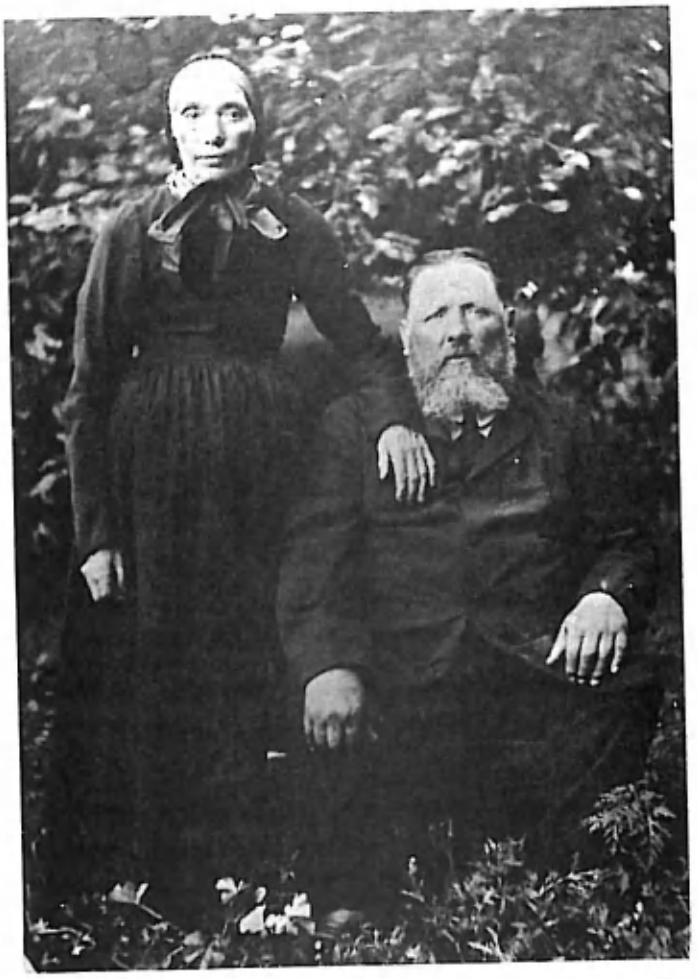
Autumn and winter brought the hunting season, and many an hour was spent in quest of pheasants, ducks, rabbits, or fish. Large groups sometimes gathered to march through a corn field in order to bring the pheasants to flight. The rabbit drives were equally common and included a larger number of men. Coyotes and foxes also provided for pleasurable pursuit.

From Courtship to Marriage

In marriage tradition it was customary for the parents to help their sons in finding a life-mate. After the boy was of age and desired a mate, the parents would suggest someone, preferably someone who was strong, healthy, wealthy, and not afraid to work. A young man never proposed to the lady he intended to marry but always sent someone who made it his business to propose for the others. This was a custom which was brought from Switzerland and the matchmaker or *Stoeckelmann,* as he was referred to at the time, mediated between the young people until he had an affirmative—or a negative—answer. These matchmakers, who often traveled in groups of three, had more to say than the young people themselves. In cases when a *Stoeckelmann* was not to be had the parents and their son would get into the buggy and drive to the parents of the girl to strike a bargain in their behalf. Because the girls were considered to be old maids at the age of twenty-five and to marry young was customary, the young girls would often as a last resort consent to marry a widower that had children as old as the bride.

When the engagement took place the families prepared a feast in celebration of the event. All the members of the community were invited to participate, and both dinner and supper were served to the group. Engagements during the early years of the settlement of our community were not marked by any special rings. During the second decade of this century the gift of a watch from the suitor marked the outward announcement of the engagement. Since then engagement and wedding rings have become common.

The bride and groom would come to church in a decorated buggy drawn by a well groomed horse. They would then enter the church to the strains of the familiar *Frohes Geleit, gruesse Dich heut. Sei du willkommen braeutliches Paar,* which was sung by the congregation. The minister would already be at the altar and thus would not precede the couple as it is customary to do at the wedding today.



Rev. and Mrs. Christian Kaufman, Freeman, S. D. The first elder of the Salem Mennonite Church, he died Aug. 14, 1906.

A regular service would include congregational singing, scriptural reading, prayer, a long sermon admonishing the marriage candidates and impressing upon them the duties that they take upon themselves as man and wife. The pastor then performed the marriage ceremony by exchanging vows proclaiming them man and wife. The service was completed with more singing, prayer, and benediction, and the newly married couple would march out unaccompanied by music, for at that time musical instruments were still considered to be evil.

The wedding attire at the time of the 1880's was a traditional black dress, usually cotton, with a black silk head scarf. The clothes were bought by the groom and presented to his bride for the wedding. Ornaments at that time were considered a luxury so the bride was simply dressed, without flowers or jewelry. The simple black dress was gradually brightened to a degree by the carrying of a small white bouquet, and there was a change from the black silk head covering to a sheer white shawl trimmed with lace. At the time of grandmother's wedding, the brides took the first step away from the conventional and traditional, and became married in gray dresses.

At the time of our grandparents' weddings we may also add the custom of double and triple weddings, which at times were even accentuated to the point of quadruple or quintuple weddings. The introduction of these came as a

result of the before mentioned custom of inviting the entire congregation, which in many cases involved a cost that many of the parties felt they could not afford. To ease the financial burden of the large weddings, not to forget the burden of preparation, several young couples would decide to be married on the same day. In this way they could divide the cost of the feast among the families that were concerned, and the entire congregation would still have been present at all the weddings.

It was not until approximately the period of the last war that invitations were sent to individuals rather than to the entire church. These written invitations were preceded by oral invitations which would be extended to the persons concerned by the bridal couple aided by the best man. The best man, at this time, was at the height of personal responsibility, for he would have to help with the preparation and would also "make the rounds" to invite the guests.

The wedding feast was usually held in the home of the bride's parents, or by mutual agreement at the home of some relative where it was more convenient to serve. The length of the wedding was three days—the day of preparation, the wedding day, and the day after. During the third day only the close relatives assembled and that was mainly for the cleaning of the home and yard.

In the words of the vernacular, we can say that the food was served in *Huelle und die Fuelle.* A fat beef and a hog would be butchered in preparation for the dinner, a large barrel of Kraut was stomped, and a few bushels of potatoes were cooked. Beans were a side dish, and for dessert a large supply of *Krussel-Kuchen,* raisin bread, and *Schnitz* were brought before the guests. Waiters with white handkerchiefs tied around their arms and a paper rose on a hanky, carried big pitchers foaming with beer. Wine kept in basements was for those who preferred something a little stronger.

One of the great events of the afternoon was to put a woman's cap or a mother's cap upon the bride. The older women wore a style of cap or headdress which was uniform in style and which marked their status. The bride, with due hesitancy and with blushing timidity, usually remonstrated to this with tears, but this simply 'had to be'! She was then presented to the guests and was duly admired by everyone, praised for her fair countenance, and told how becoming the cap was on her. The evening was usually spent in fellowship and goodwill, participated in especially by the young folks of the community. This means of social gathering was practiced from almost the very beginning of the community's history and is still a part of our culture today. At the close of the evening the guests departed after congratulating and wishing the couple happiness. Such an expression as "cabbages as big as wagon wheels" and similar wishes undoubtedly account for their prosperity.

After the wedding reception and parties, the bride stayed with her parents for almost two weeks after the wedding, and the getting of the bride from her parents' home to the new home that the groom had now provided was also a great event. On the day which was decided as the acceptable day after the period of waiting, the groom would hitch the oxen or horses to a large lumber wagon and drive to the bride's home. They would pack the belongings that were sent with the bride and take them to the new home, or if that had not been completed as yet, to the groom's home where they would reside for a few weeks until the new home was finished.

Joy and Sorrow Walk Hand in Hand

In earlier days sickness was common, as it is today, but there were very few doctors available, and no telephones to call them. Doctors were therefore not readily called and many home remedies were used instead. Among such remedies were as follows: Pricking the spot with needle and then applying oil to draw out the impure blood, wine and cinnamon mixed as a medicine, garlic and warm milk for colds (people evidently did not mind the offensive odor, though the kiss as salutation was still in vogue), onion juice and sugar, butter and honey mixtures with whiskey, Camellia tea, horsh radish, cutting blood vessels and draining blood.

At that time some people in the community were considered as especially talented with the treatment of the sick. This included a bit of superstition, and the *Absprecher* as they were called claimed to be able to heal the illness by burning things, walking around buildings, and doing other types of hocus pocus that seemingly brought results. (Some families evidently carried over the superstitiousness to a

A homemade casket on a horse-drawn wagon on the way to the cemetery.

greater degree than others, and they were the ones who would vouch for the immediate healing of an individual.) The *Absprecher* were not only called for human beings but also for the animals, and when a horse would be badly cut by wire, they would, as the legend goes, be able to make the animal well immediately.

That there was much illness at that time and that the mortality rate was high can easily be explained by the conditions under which our forefathers lived. The houses were crowded, with two or more families living in a one or two room house. The sod houses had poor ventilation, with single small windows that could hardly be opened, and when they were opened, were taken out completely.

The friends and relatives of the sick would sit with him and care for him, and when death came, they continued the watch over the body throughout the night until his burial. There were no undertakers. The family would call on some individuals to make the coffin. Until the coffin was constructed, the corpse, dressed in his best clothes, was placed upon a slab or a board. Upon completion of the

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PIONEERS, WHEAT, AND FAITH

Centennial Photo Section: Kansas Mennonites pay tribute to their heritage

Postmaster General E. T. (Ted) Klassen returned to his hometown of Hillsboro, Kan. on August 16, 1974 for ceremonies dedicating a stamp honoring Kansas wheat and the Russian Mennonite immigrants who brought it to the American prairies a century ago. The third in the Rural America series, the stamp commemorates "Kansas Hard Winter Wheat, 1874-1974."

The Chores Of Yesteryear

Demonstrations of threshing wheat as it was done in bygone years were among the attractions at centennial festivals in various Kansas communities this summer.

Above is the threshing bee at the Hopefield Mennonite Church west of Moundridge on August 31. Power is provided by a mammoth 1917, 65-horsepower Case steam tractor.

At left, threshing stone used by Mennonite pioneers a century ago is guided by Albert Frantz in one of the farm demonstrations at the Goessel centennial festivities, Aug. 16-17.

Other activities, such as plowing with horses, hog butchering, soap-making and cheese-making, were also shown.

"In Search of Freedom," a folk play recalling the migration of the Alexanderwohl congregation from the Ukraine to Kansas, was performed by this cast at the Goessel High School Auditorium, Aug. 15-16. The scene here is a reunion at the immigrant house in 1882. (Photo by Simon W. Schmidt)

Left: Bundles of Turkey Red wheat are pitched into a steam-powered threshing machine set up near the newly-dedicated Mennonite immigrant house replica—part of the complex of historical buildings at Goessel.

Below: Special guests and speakers at the dedication of the Goessel complex hold a chain of wheat heads, symbolic of the individual contributions that made possible the 1874 migration and the 1974 memorial structures. August Duerksen (right), Goessel centennial chairman, presides.

Above: Part of the crowd at the Swiss-Volhynian centennial festival views agriculture demonstrations near the Hopefield church, oldest existing Mennonite church building in Kansas. An estimated 6,000 persons attended the weekend activities.

Right: Ed G. Kaufman, president emeritus of Bethel College, and Harley J. Stucky, chairman of the Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association, stand at the first of seven plaques in the Swiss Mennonite Memorial just west of the Hopefield church.

Left: Brian Stucky demonstrates threshing with the flail on a two-acre field of Turkey Red wheat at the historic Bernhard Warkentin farm, Halstead, Kan. The wheat was cut with scythes and cradles and a reaper from the 1860s. Warkentin pioneered in the wheat raising and milling industry in Kansas. (Photo by the Wichita Eagle)

Below: A 1911 Case coal-powered steam engine was used to run a 1928 International threshing machine in the centennial threshing bee held Aug. 17 at the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church northeast of Buhler, Kan. Other vehicles used were two Model T trucks and a horse-drawn water wagon. More than 2,000 persons attended to recall the way of life of their ancestors.

Above: Several hundred descendants of Alexanderwohl immigrants joined in a nostalgic walk on Sunday morning, July 7, from the church to the site of the two immigrant houses where the pioneers were quartered upon their arrival in the fall of 1874.

Below: Swiss pioneer monument at the Hopefield church is topped by stainless steel cross and globe. It is located on the site of the immigrant house occupied by this group from Volhynia, Russia, who crossed the Atlantic on the ship "City of Richmond."

FREEDOM FOR RELUCTANT CITIZENS

By JAMES C. JUHNKE

"AMERICA is a land of freedom," wrote Abraham J. Moser in an 1876 issue of *Zur Heimath.*[1] Moser was an American Mennonite who wrote to this Mennonite immigrant newspaper in order to instruct the newly arrived brethren on their civic rights and responsibilities.

The Mennonite immigrants from Russia to Kansas had indeed come in quest of freedom. But Mennonites had their own understanding of freedom. The freedom they found in America was something quite different than they had anticipated or hoped for.

For the Russian Mennonites, freedom was a matter of community autonomy. They wanted to be free to establish their own villages and communities in order to maintain their distinctive and highly disciplined style of life. It was the threatened loss of this community autonomy, or self-direction, that led the Mennonites to seek a new home.

In American democracy, freedom was much more oriented around the rights of the individual, rather than around the autonomy of the community. In the Jeffersonian vision for America, which remained a reality in much of America in the nineteenth century, the distinctive citizen who epitomized American freedom was the individual yeoman farmer. It was this rugged and self-sufficient farmer on his own homestead, isolated from the corruptions of towns and industry, who was supposed to be the backbone of the republic. But Mennonites were not in quest of this American vision. They sought freedom in community, not freedom in individual self-sufficiency.

In Russia the Mennonites had had virtually complete control over their own community affairs, both in the religious and the political realms. Each colony was ruled by its own political assembly and executive committee, which included a Mennonite mayor, clerk, and assistants. The Mennonites made their own community decisions regarding taxes, distribution of lands, discipline of offenders, and other administrative matters. With their substantial political experience in the Russian Mennonite commonwealth, the immigrants to Kansas were no strangers to the arts and frustrations of local government.[2]

When they came to Kansas in the 1870's the Mennonites lost control of many local administrative affairs. They moved into political units which were already constituted. Marion, McPherson, Harvey, and other county units already were officially organized and had elected officers. Some of the Mennonite groups, notably the Gnadenau and Alexanderwohl settlements, attempted to duplicate the closed village pattern of settlement on the Kansas prairies, but these villages soon broke down and gave way to the typical American pattern of individual farmsteads. With the demise of the village, additional Mennonite community administrative self-control evaporated. Individual American freedom eroded Mennonite community autonomy.

In order to participate directly in the American political scene Mennonites had to undergo naturalization proceedings. The decision to become a citizen symbolized a kind of commitment. It was a public sign of a personal decision and as such it shared certain overtones with the decision to join the church through baptism. The American naturalization paper made clear that now one's civic status changed from subject to citizen:

. . . who being duly sworn, upon his oath declares that it is BONA FIDE his intention to become a citizen of the UNITED STATES OF NORTH AMERICA, and to renounce and abjure forever all allegiance and fidelity to every foreign power, prince, potentate, state and sovereignty whatever, and particularly to the _____ of whom he was heretofore a subject.[3]

If, as one scholar suggests, in the modern national state "the secular registration of birth is the national rite of baptism,"[4] the Mennonites had an even more precise analogue to naturalization in their ritual of adult baptism. As such, the rate of naturalization may be one of the most important indexes of Mennonite Americanization.

The question of naturalization was too sensitive an issue for Mennonites to reach a collective decision on the matter. The first meeting of the Kansas Conference of Mennonites in December, 1877, explicitly refused to "recommend or condemn in a onesided manner the aversion for or inclination to become a citizen." In the very same resolution, however, the conference advised Mennonites to set up public school districts in areas where they could control them.[5] Such action, left to the discretion of the individual congregations, required public elections and the completion of first citizenship papers. Jacob Buller, pastor of the Alexanderwohl congregation, counseled his members to take out first papers in order to wield influence in the establishment of public schools.[6] Some Mennonites took pride in being among the first to initiate naturalization

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proceedings.[7] Others felt it wise to hesitate for a time before taking such a serious step.[8]

One reason for Mennonite hesitation was that naturalization seemed so closely bound up with politics. As early as 1876 Republican politicians in Marion County made an effort to round up Mennonites who would take out first papers and vote a Republican ballot.[9] The stakes were even higher in railroad bond elections held in Marion and McPherson counties in December, 1878, and February, 1879, respectively. The Mennonites of McPherson County were a potential anti-railroad force because the proposed road, a branch line of the Santa Fe, passed north of their territory. They had closer access to the Santa Fe main line at Newton and Halstead. Politicians on both sides went after the Mennonite vote and accused their opponents of unfair tactics. J. T. Moffatt, an anti-railroad resident of Mound township, claimed that someone in Lone Tree township to the north had boasted "that the people of McPherson had raised $140 for him with which to naturalize the Mennonites of Lone Tree, and as they could not read the English language, and he could speak their language, he intended to vote them all for the proposition."[10] The McPherson *Freeman* meanwhile told its readers that Newton businessmen had raised $1,500 "in a short time" for use in McPherson County against the railroad.[11] The Newton *Kansan* saw this charge as evidence of "a few big liars" in McPherson, but did admit that a Harvey County deputy official had been active in McPherson County writing out first naturalization papers for Mennonites in the days prior to the election.[12] The Mennonites themselves, said the *Kansan,* had hired the job done. Harvey County had a clean conscience.

There are no contemporary written records to indicate whether they in fact did hire a Harvey County official to come over the line and write out first papers, or what their reaction was to the solicitations of uninvited politicians. The experience, however, must have left an indelible impression upon Mennonites as they considered the nature of American politics and its relationship to the process of becoming a citizen. David Goerz of the Halstead (Harvey County) *Zur Heimath,* who printed column after column of theological argument regarding church and state and political participation, remained safely silent when the brotherhood confronted politics as an immediate practical decision. The individual Mennonite farmer had little help from his church on what to do when the politician came around with his palm grease and naturalization papers.

Mennonites did leave a permanent record of naturalization proceedings in the county clerk offices. These records show that the McPherson County bond election stimulated an unprecedented enrollment of Mennonites for citizenship. In 1879, the year of the election, 215 Mennonites took out first papers, more than twice as many as in any previous year. Of the eighty-five Mennonite applications in McPherson County, eighty-one were between February 15 and 25. The election was on the 25th. Harvey County records show fifty-one applications on February 24, which verifies the newspaper report that an official from Newton had crossed into McPherson to qualify Mennonites for votes against the proposition. The record in Marion County is less dramatic. Here there were fifty Mennonite first papers in 1878, (the election was held several months earlier in Marion County) and the correlation with the bond election was not as great. Four Mennonites from the Gnadenau community are registered for December 16, 1878, the date of the election in Risley township.[13] Because the railroad was projected to pass close to a section of the Mennonite settlement in Marion County, the Mennonite vote there lacked the potential to upset the Santa Fe plans.

The bond issue succeeded in both Marion and McPherson counties. Opposition to the railroad increased in direct proportion to distance from the proposed route, which suggests that Mennonites voted according to their economic interests rather than to pay a debt of gratitude to the Santa Fe railroad or to please politicians who sought their vote.[14]

The records of first naturalization proceedings in Harvey, Reno, McPherson and Marion counties reveals that, in spite of the 1879 flurry, many Mennonites who came in the mid-1870's waited a decade or more before taking out first papers. Four years stood out as exceptional: 1879, 1885, 1892, and 1906. In 1879 and 1885 the Mennonites took out first papers in order to vote in railroad bond elections. In 1892 the increase was related to November state and national political elections.[15] A prospective change in the naturalization law, which made the process more complicated and time-consuming, accounts for a large number of first papers in 1906. Most of the enrollments in that year took place in Hutchinson where Peter J. Galle, a Mennonite native son who had made good in politics, served as district judge in charge of proceedings. The days set aside for naturalization in 1906 coincided with the state fair in Hutchinson, which may have proved a double attraction for Mennonites to come to the Reno County seat.

There exist no records of naturalizations as a percentage of immigrant population to make accurate comparison of the Mennonites with other immigrant groups. The records of McPherson County on nearly every election year, however, show that a higher number of Swedes from the northern part of the county took out first papers than did Mennonites. It is not unusual, however, that about twenty or twenty-five Mennonites became naturalized in order to vote. As early as 1876 twenty-six Mennonites took out first papers between November 4 and 7. The following year a newspaper correspondent from Risley township boasted shortly before elections, "Fifteen more Germans naturalized in this township."[16] In the elections of 1888 and 1890 about 20 Mennonites took out first papers in the week before elections in both McPherson and Harvey counties. Mennonite voting and interest in politics may have been limited but it surely took place from the very beginning.

By the end of 1906 over 2,500 Mennonites had overcome their inhibitions and reservations and had taken out first naturalization papers. The overall picture is one of reluctance, especially in comparison with other immigrant groups. Mennonites cannot be included in the generalization that the American immigrant "accepted the invitation to become naturalized as soon as the residence requirements permitted. . . ."[17] The ground for Mennonite caution included a history of experience with untrustworthy governments, a church-state doctrine which encouraged political noninvolvement, and fears that citizenship implied duties, such as military service, which could not be performed in good conscience. Many Mennonites went to their graves without the saving benefit of civic baptism. It would be many more years before the Mennonites would completely lose their character as reluctant citizens.

Notes on next page

NOTES

[1]A. J. Moser, "Regierungschulen," *Zur Heimath*, Aug. 1, 1876.

[2]See David G. Rempel, "The Mennonite Commonwealth in Russia, A Sketch of Its Founding and Endurance, 1789-1919," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, XLVIII (January, 1974), 8-15.

[3]First naturalization paper used in McPherson County, Kansas.

[4]Carlton J. H. Hayes, *Nationalism: A Religion* (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 165.

[5]*Gesamtprotokolle der Kansas- und Westlichen Distrikt-Konferenzen* (n.p.: n.d.), p. 10.

[6]H. P. Peters, *History and Development of Education Among the Mennonites in Kansas* (Hillsboro: n.p., 1925), p. 23.

[7]Edna Nyquist, *Pioneer Life and Lore of McPherson County, Kansas* (McPherson: Democrat-Opinion Press, 1932), p. 79.

[8]David V. Wiebe, *They Seek a Country* (Hillsboro: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1959), p. 166.

[9]*Marion County Record*, Nov. 10, 1876.

[10]McPherson *Independent*, Feb. 20, 1879.

[11]McPherson *Freeman*, Feb. 17, 1879.

[12]Newton *Kansan*, March 6, 1879.

[13]Pantle, Gnadenau Mennonite Settlement, n., p. 276.

[14]For a summary of the vote in McPherson County, see the McPherson *Independent*, Feb. 27, 1879. C. B. Schmidt, the Santa Fe agent responsible for bringing the Mennonites to Kansas, had been soliciting railroad votes among Mennonites in the days prior to the election. See the McPherson *Independent*, Feb. 20, 1879.

[15]The 1892 increase in Marion County has not been fully explained, for the pile-up did not occur in the days shortly before November elections. Also worth further investigation is the fact that 182 Mennonites undertook *final* naturalization proceedings in Marion county in 1892, more than three times as many as in any other year.

[16]*Marion County Record*, Nov. 9, 1877.

[17]Marcus Hansen, *The Immigrant in American History* (New York: Harper and Row, 1940), p. 78.

NOT ENOUGH ROOM

By ELMER F. SUDERMAN
Gustavus Adolphus College
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Having time before he died
the old Mennonite farmer
thought a lot about death, but couldn't
work up a lively interest in a grave.
To trade a section of wide-open
sky where he'd always been able
to look fifty miles north, west, south and east
for eight feet by four, six feet under
would, he thought, be cramped.
He'd rather be on top
than under the ground. There wouldn't
be much of a view, and he would miss
watching, as he always had,
the storms gather in the west,
the sun rising in the east.
"The grave is not the place for a restless
man who has tamed the prairie.
This rich black loam was made
for planting Turkey Red, not bodies."
He thought a graveyard took up too much room.
"Too many people there already.
You could raise a bushel of wheat,
maybe two, if the rains came at the right time,
in the space it will take to dig my grave."

But death would not yield to his taming hand
as the prairie had. The parched wind blowing
over the wheat stubble and through his
open window, slammed death against his eyes.
"I knew it all the time," he said a day
or two before the end, "but I know it
a lot better now." His last words were:
"The weary man speeds to his final rest,"
as if he were glad, after all, that it
was over.

We buried him in the land
he'd loved and plowed for over thirty years
and he's been sleeping there another thirty.

I still wonder, though, when I
walk around his grave how an active man
used to all that space gets along
under six feet of solid sod.
As far as I've been able to tell
he's never turned over or complained.
He seems to sleep restfully there—
perhaps for the first time.

C. B. SCHMIDT, HISTORIAN: FACTS AND FICTION

By DAVID G. REMPEL

C. B. SCHMIDT, for many years the immigration commissioner of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company, was undoubtedly an unusually skilled and highly successful recruiter of European colonists for his employer. Within a relatively short period of years he appears to have been able to procure thousands of emigrants in Western and Central Europe and settled them on large tracts of land purchased from this railroad company. According to his own account it was also he who succeeded in persuading thousands of Russian Mennonites to go to Kansas instead of Canada, and that these immigrants represented the best settlers among the vast numbers of fine pioneers who had founded their homes in that state.

It is not my intention to question Schmidt's accomplishments as a procurer of colonists in general, or of Mennonite settlers in particular. His success in this endeavor would seem to be beyond peradventure of doubt. But it is an entirely different matter when it comes to his knowledge of even the barest outlines of the Mennonite sojourn in Russia. One would not fault him for this lack of knowledge, were it not for the fact that in typical salesman's fashion he comments on Mennonite experiences in that country about which he knows nothing, and yet proceeds to offer interpretations of them which are grievously in error. It is especially unfortunate that his fairy tales about Mennonite experiences in Russia continue in their persistance and acceptance as historic facts by some contemporary writers.

In characterizing C. B. Schmidt's brief adventure into Russian Mennonite history one is reminded of one of Churchill's famous tributes to men of the RAF (to the effect that never had so many people owed so much to so few people), except that here it must read: never have so few pages of purported history contained so many errors of fact and interpretation. The year 1974, when we celebrate the centennial of the great migration from Russia to the United States and Canada, it is appropriate to correct C. B. Schmidt's version of important events in our history.

I shall preface my commentary by either quoting relevant sentences from Schmidt's address of January 28, 1915 to the Topeka Commerce Club, or by summarizing briefly lengthier statements from the speech.

1. CATHARINE II INVITES MENNONITES

When in 1783 the Crimea, with the adjoining provinces, was ceded by the Turks to Russia, the Empress Catharine II, herself a German Princess, invited the Mennonites to colonize in her newly acquired southern province of Taurida. She knew them to be excellent farmers and hoped that they would intermarry with the natives and improve the race.

As a matter of fact, the Crimea was not *ceded* by Turkey in 1783. It was simply annexed by Russia. Nor did it involve any adjoining provinces, but only the Crimean Peninsula.

Catharine's German origin had nothing whatsoever to do with either the exclusively German response to her July 22, 1763 *Manifesto,* which led to the founding of so many colonies in the Volga area and smaller numbers of settlements in other districts, or with the invitation to the Mennonites in the summer of 1786. Between 1763 and 1767 Russian agents, representing in the main Frenchmen, roamed over Western and Southern Europe in pursuit of would-be settlers for Russia. Prussia, Austria, Switzerland and some small German states had strict prohibitions against emigration from their territories, and England, France and The Netherlands, for example, had their own colonies to which their citizens could emigrate. All this, coupled with the extremely bad economic conditions which prevailed in several West German states, accounted for the fact that the first colonists from abroad were exclusively West Germans.

Potemkin, who after 1774 dominated the country's colonization policies. was ready to accept settlers from anywhere in Europe, north, south and west, including even English jailbirds.

The invitation to the Mennonites in Danzig and environs came as result of the activities of the well-known Georg Trappe, who had been recommended to Potemkin by the wife of the heir to the throne, Grand Duke Paul. An extended comment on this matter and Trappe's activity can be found in my article "From Danzig to Russia; The First Mennonite Migration," in *Mennonite Life,* January 1969, pp. 8-17. Catharine's "invitation" of September 1787, formally approved in her name by Chancellor Bezborodko, was merely a confirmation of the agreement already concluded by Potemkin with Jakob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch.

Strictly speaking, the Mennonites were not really invited to colonize in the province of Taurida. Potemkin's dispatch of Trappe to Danzig was based upon a new colonization decree, issued by Catharine on July 14, 1785, which was

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designed to invite colonists to settle in the Caucasus. Potemkin completely ignored the intent of this decree, and arranged with Trappe to woo colonists for the territory under his control, namely New Russia. The contract of Potemkin with Trappe confronted the empress and the Foreign Ministry with a *fait accompli.*

The empress may, or may not have known much or anything about the Mennonites. More important was the fact that a number of Russian military officers, including Field Marshal Rumiantsev, who were in position to influence the making of policies, knew the Mennonites from the days of their service in the vicinity of Danzig during the Seven Years War, and that some of these had already earlier tried to enlist some *Mennisty* for their private estates.

There is no evidence whatsoever that Catharine expected the Mennonites to intermarry with the natives "to improve the race." The empress was greatly influenced by the "populationist" of "peopling" policies then current in Western Europe. That is, the belief that the larger a country's population, the stronger and richer it would be. In this connection, it might be pointed out that Catharine, when informed that she might possibly enlist colonists from Mohammedan countries, such as Persia, for example, replied that this might be an advisable course, for the Mohammedan practice of poligamy would surely help to increase the country's population.

2. Promised Privileges

Privileges promised would-be colonists. They are well-known to most readers of Mennonite history. C. B. Schmidt lists some of them, and then adds: These privileges were guaranteed to the colonists for 100 years and then each family was to get title 'in fee simple' for sixty-five desjatines."

None of the applicable legislative acts issued under Catharine and her successors, or special contractual agreements entered by them with particular groups of colonists or colonist-recruiters, contain such a time limitation. Certain general privileges, like religious freedom and exemption from military service, were granted in perpetuity to any and all colonists irrespective of church affiliation or nationality. Others, like tax exemption years, financial subventions, etc., were made for shorter or longer, but always delimited periods.

Nor is there anywhere a statement that to each family, upon expiration of a certain period of time, was to receive an allotment of land in "fee simple." On the contrary, the Land Law of March 19, 1763, upon which the land allotments were generally based, though with some variations as to the amount to be granted to a male "soul" (*dushevoi nadel*) or a family, specifically vested the title to the land in the village community, with each family receiving a specified allotment merely as a perpetually inheritable right, which it could never sell, mortgage or subdivide. Only after the abolition of the class of colonists as a category of State peasants in 1871 were the colonists given the right to receive a family allotment in fee simple. The issuance of these title-deeds took more than a decade to complete.

3.-5. Settlements, Wheat, and Intermarriage

"Other settlements were made along the Volga, near the cities of Saratov and Samara, and also in the provinces of Vohyni *and Bessarabia."*

I presume that Schmidt means Volhynia. Only a very small settlement was ever established in that *gubernia,* and its inhabitants migrated en masse in the 1870s. No Mennonite colonies were ever founded in Bessarabia.

According to Schmidt "wheat was the staple product" in the German colonies, and "the annual supply of South Russian wheat governed the price of that staple in the world's market."

Since Schmidt writes about conditions as they existed at the time of his visit in South Russia, namely 1875, the claim that Russian wheat determined the world's market price must be taken with great caution. American wheat, which could reach European markets with greater ease than Russian, since the latter depended upon Turkey's willingness to let its shipments through the Straits, or else be routed through the Baltic Sea ports, often had a greater effect upon world prices than Russian.

"The expectation of Catharine, the imperial colonization agent, that the Mennonites would intermarry with the Tartars and the Russian natives proved a disappointment."

Catharine could scarcely be called the "imperial colonization agent." Moreover, the overwhelming majority of the Mennonites came to Russia long after the death of Catharine, namely in the reigns of Alexander I (1801-1825), Nicholas I (1825-1855) and Alexander II (1855-1881). While the basic privileges granted them were those laid down in Catharine's reign, the vast majority of the Mennonites had come to Russia under certain limitations after 1810, more specifically as laid down in the acts of 1819, 1851 and 1859. I shall touch on the latter two below. In regard to intermarriage with Tartars and Slavic Russians, this, as already pointed out above, was never stated in the Russian appeals for settlers. Moreover, very few, if any, of the German, Swedish, Italian, Greek, Armenian, Bulgarian, and other settlers from abroad ever intermarried with the Slavic or non-Slavic Russians. Although some government officials and intellectuals toward the close of the past century deplored this fact, it is to be noted that the far more influential views of the Pan-Slavists and their press organs used this primarily as a pretext to advocate restrictive legislation against the colonists, especially the German, while the equally influential Orthodox Church looked very much askance at such an intermingling, particularly where this involved, or was merely suspected to involve, the Orthodox member of such a union leaving his church.

6. The Czar and Bismarck Make a Deal

After stressing that the wealth and exclusiveness of the German colonists, coupled with their privileges, had aroused jealousy among the Russian peoples, Schmidt proceeds to make the most of astounding pronouncements:

"The government was importuned to withdraw these privileges, but that could not be done before the end of the century limit, the year 1883, had been reached. The Franco-Prussian war of 1870-1871, however, seemed to present to the Russian government a way out of its pressing dilemma. Russia remained neutral during that war on certain conditions, imposed on Germany, one of which was that the German government should withdraw its political guardianship, which it had exercised over all German colonists in the Russian empire. Bismarck accepted that condition upon the counter-condition that these colonists, of whom there were some 3,000,000 including the Mennon-

ites, should be allowed a period of ten years within which to emigrate, if they did not wish to become full-fledged Russian subjects. This counter-condition was also agreed to by Russia."

The above is a fairy tale of such proportions that it is impossible at this place to refute it in detail. As stated above, none of the colonists' privileges and other concessions had been pledged for 100 years, and the Russian government, as that of a sovereign state, would not have had to wait for a Franco-Prussian war to modify of abrogate its promises to the settlers. Sovereign states, big or small, powerful or weak, have always asserted, and almost invariably practiced, such a right, and usually irrespective of their liberal or autocratic form of government. And as far as the Mennonites are concerned, is there any government, in time and place, which has as scrupulously observed its pledged word over some 125 years as the Czarist government? Neither Prussian nor Imperial Germany could stand even a remote comparison with that record.

And, as a matter of fact, twenty years before the Franco-Prussian war the government of Russia, in acting favorably upon a Prussian Mennonite request to open its doors once more for a new Mennonite migration, made in 1850-1851, did so with limitations. That a favorable response came at all was due largely to a report of Count Kiselev, Minister of State Domain, rendered on November 19, 1851, and approved by the Governing Senate of July 31, 1852. The 100 families who received permission to migrate to Russia received basically the same privileges as those of the earlier migrants to New Russia, but with the following exceptions:

First, each family had to deposit with a Russian diplomat or consular office in Prussia the sum of 350 *Thalers* to guarantee its financial independence and ability to operate a sixty-five dessiatin farm without reliance upon government assistance. The deposit, aside from a small incidental fee, was to be returned to the depositor upon his arrival at the place of settlement (Samara *gubernüa*) and actual commencement of erecting buildings and farming.

The second limitation was much more fundamental. The migrant family and its descendants were to be permanently exempted from personal military service. However, after the expiration of a twenty-year period, the family in question, that is, its male members and its future descendants, when reaching military age, were obligated to pay the cost of a recruit to take their place. That fee was at that time estimated in the amount of approximately 300 rubles.

Lastly, the new Mennonite settlers were specifically denied the right granted the New Russian Mennonite colonists, to distill spiritous liquors and to brew beer with the exclusive right to sell them within the confines of their settlements.

And when in 1859 another 100 Prussian Mennonite families asked to be admitted on the "usual colonists" conditions, the government consented to their petition on the basis of the conditions laid down in 1851, but with further restrictions, namely that they had to pay for the land which they received from the State Domain, the tax-exemption period was limited to three years, and they had to pay all the taxes and render all the other obligations imposed upon the ordinary State peasants.

The Prussian Mennonites' fear in the 1850s that compulsory military service might be facing them, and then the actual passage of such a law in the 1860s, led to a much larger number of them asking for permission to migrate to Russia than the government had originally agreed to, and in fact between 1853 and 1873 nearly 400 such families were allowed to settle on two tracts of land in the Samara *gubernüa*. During the early 1860s the government also permitted several thousand families of Bulgarians to settle on colonists' conditions in New Russia.

The above admission of settlers from abroad marks the end of admitting foreigners as colonists. Although there had been concern in many agencies of government, especially in the Ministry of Internal Affairs, over the high cost of establishing the colonists on land, the heavy expenditures connected with their administration, the failure of their assimilation with the native people, etc., combined, in certain segments of the public, with a degree of jealousy over the colonists' prosperity in comparison with the peasantry. The main reasons for the decision to change the status of the colonists, with all that this implied for their former privileged position, were the incomparably difficult problems of devising measures for the relief of the situation of over 40,000,000 recently emancipated serfs and altered status of State peasants. The Franco-Prussian war had nothing to do with these serious issues of the day.

The alleged secret dealings between Russia and Imperial Germany relative to the position of the settlers in Russia, Bismarck's supposed role in this matter, Prussia's and or Germany's "claimed political guardianship" over some 3,000,000 German colonists, and other rather wild ideas have no basis whatsoever. Not even the most rabid of German annexationist voices on the eve of World War I ever claimed that the total number of people of German descent in Russia—including Baltic Germans, business, professional, scientists, literary, workers of every conceivable trade and craft, and others—was that large. And certainly not a single responsible German official at the time ever claimed that Germany had and exerted "political guardianship" over some 3,000,000 colonists, including the Mennonites, in Russia. And to claim that Bismarck, who had scarcely any feeling but disdain, if not contempt, for pacifists in his own country, would have intervened on behalf of conscientious objectors in Russia, is the height of naivete. And would Russia have ever tolerated such an affront to her dignity and honor?

7. Cornelius Jansen and "The Agreements"

The Mennonites were kept in ignorance of this international agreement, which was of so much consequence to them. . . . They would have found themselves ten years later as Russian subjects, their children compelled to go to Russian schools under the control of the orthodox church, and their sons drafted into the imperial army, had it not been for one man, Herr Cornelius Jansen, Prussian consul at the city of Berdiansk, a Mennonite himself, but owing to his official position, fully in touch with the outside world. Herr Jansen realized the consequences of the agreement between the two governments, and explained it to his co-religionists, thereby causing the greatest excitement throughout the Mennonite colonies. . . .

Jansen's role in promoting the emigration fever among the Mennonites is too well known to require any elaboration

at this place. And certainly the Russian government, anxious to keep the Mennonites in the country, was aware of Jansen's and undoubtedly also of Schmidt's activities. Hence the expulsion of the former. However, it seems surprising that Jansen could have scared the Mennonites, or at least substantial numbers of them, with the bugaboo of becoming, in ten years, Russian subjects, when they had been subjects of the country since their arrival and settlement, and having, moreover, loudly proclaimed and signally demonstrated their love and loyalty for their fatherland in the War of 1812 and the Crimean War of 1853-1856, as well as on many other occasions.

Catharine's *Manifesto* of July 22, 1763, and other laws and agreements made with special groups of colonists, expressly recognized the right of a colonist to leave Russia, providing a certain percentage of his accumulated wealth was paid to the Russian treasury. That right the government observed, and scores of thousands of German and other colonists were allowed to leave for the United States or other American countries without any hindrance. Any reader conversant with Russian Mennonite history knows about the government's alarm over the loss of so many of them emigrating to the New World and the steps it took to halt the tide. Schmidt relates about this, and then writes:

8. America or Amur

. . . but rumors reached me that the Russian government was making strong efforts to stop it, or to turn the attention of the intending emigrants to other parts of the empire, especially the Amur valley in eastern Siberia, where they might retain their special privileges as foreign colonists. Three influential Mennonite colonists from southern Russia were already on the long overland journey which was to consume nine months. . . . These three delegates were to report their findings to the colonists upon their return. Under these conditions, the Santa Fe company deemed it advisable that I should undertake a journey to Russia myself in the interest of Kansas. . . .

At the risk of appearing facetious, one is tempted to state that a well-known Russian saying applied to Schmidt at this stage, namely *slyshal zvon, da ne znaet gde on* (He heard a sound, but knows not whence it came). Here is the situation in regard to the Amur region and a possible Mennonite settlement there. Not so long after the Treaty of Nerchinsk (1858) had been concluded with China, ceding the Amur River valley to Russia, the government in 1860 invited the Mennonites in New Russia to send a delegation to the area in question to spy out the land and the prospects for the founding of some Mennonite colonies along that river. Such a delegation, consisting of three men, went there at government's expense, returned that same year and made a rather favorable report concerning the possibility and feasibility of such a colonizing effort. It is next to impossible to find any information in Mennonite records as to why no such effort was ever made. The likeliest explanation which suggests itself is the fact that the flight of several scores of thousands of Nogais and Tartars from the Crimea to Turkey in 1860-1861, opened vast stretches of grazing, truck-farming and grain-raising lands for purchase or lease in closest proximity to the *Molochnaia* settlement as well as to the settlements of other colonists. Large numbers of Mennonites availed themselves of these opportunities so near to their homes.

There is, however, another and very plausible explanation for the failure of Mennonites establishing colonies in that remote corner of Siberia at this time. Alexander A. Klaus, who held important posts in the Ministry of State Domain during the 1850s and 1860s, and mostly with committees and special commissions dealing with the affairs of the colonists, and author of the well-known book on the colonies under the title *Nashi Kolonii. Opyty i Materialy po Istorii i Statistike Inostrannoi Kolonizatsii v Rossii.* Vypusk I. (St. Petersburg, 1869), states on page 187 that the "Mennonites and colonists" who wished to move to Eastern Siberia, having met certain obligations in their colonies, and accepted certain conditions for the move to the Amur River region, must sign specific papers that with such a move they and their descendants forego forever any claim to the rights and privileges which appertain to the status of colonists in their former homes.

Klaus was intimately acquainted with the situation in the Mennonite colonies in New Russia, as indeed with all the foreign colonies throughout the empire, and must therefore have known what special conditions, and for what reasons no colonies were founded along the Amur River in the early 1860s.

Schmidt gives the impression that the above events were taking place at the time of his visit in New Russia in 1875, when in fact they had transpired fifteen years earlier.

9.-10. Winning Millionaires for the Santa Fe

In relating his visit in Halbstadt to a wealthy Mennonite merchant, named Klaassen, who was an avowed opponent of emigration, Schmidt states that "only a few weeks ago General von Todleben . . . had been traveling through the settlements as special ambassador of the czar to assure the Mennonites of his majesty's interest in their welfare, and to prevail upon them not to give up their homes."

Schmidt traveled through the *Molochnaia* settlement—apparently he did not visit the Chortitza settlement and its daughter colonies, Bergthal and Fuerstenland—in the late spring of 1875. Todleben's visits in the *Molochnaia* took place a full year earlier, in April of 1874.

. . . I pursued my journey through the fifty-six Mennonite villages, which constitute what is known as the Molotschna (Milk River) colony. My reception was cordial everywhere. . . . They were certainly the best appointed farming communities I had seen anywhere. Scattered over the country were large, isolated estates, with buildings reminding one of the feudal baronial estates of Western Europe. Their owners were millionaire Mennonites, who had acquired large tracts of land by private purchase. I was entertained by one of them, who had the reputation of being the largest sheep owner in Europe. When I asked him how many sheep he owned, he could not tell, but said he had 3,000 shepherd dogs taking care of his flocks. A little figuring developed that he owned over 500,000 sheep, scattered in flocks all along the coast of the Black Sea.

Schmidt's account of his travels through the *Molochnaia,* about the reception he received wherever he went, the very lively interest in emigration he found in most villages, his enthusiasm about getting as many Mennonites interested in moving to Kansas, etc., is undoubtedly a true picture of the events. But his reference to "Mennonite millionaires," his impressions of their estate buildings as resembling "feudal baronial estates of Western Europe," and his reference to one of them as possessing "over 500,000 sheep, scattered in

flocks all along the coast of the Black Sea," and with 3,000 shepherd dogs guarding them—here the vivid imagination and facile tongue of a traveling land salesman and recruiter of colonists obviously took a flight into the wild blue yonder. Aside from the fact that there is no record of a Mennonite estate owner ever having possessed a number of sheep even remotely approximating that 500,000 figure, by 1875, the year in which Schmidt visited South Russia, sheep-rearing throughout the area had been in very sharp decline since about 1850. The main cause for this decline was the extreme competition from Australian wool in the world's markets.

Schmidt's description of his visit with Warkentin in *Terpenie,* which he labels as a village in one place, and another as "an exclusively Russian town," is open to much doubt. Terpenie was a Dukhobor village, and it would seem a bit strange that Warkentin, a Mennonite, would have been the "chief magistrate" of it, and that, moreover, the latter would have observed that "Here I am the czar, and no gens d'armes will dare touch my guest."

Again, Schmidt's observation that Warkentin "had but recently returned" from an exploration trip to Eastern Siberia and the Amur valley, is an obvious error, in view of the fact that the event had taken place fifteen years earlier.

In Summary

It is a highly regrettable fact that an account by a land agent, who was only bent upon enlisting the largest number of colonists for Kansas, and who knew so little about the affairs in the Mennonite colonies, has not only in the past, but even in this year of 1974, been accorded an unquestioned acceptance by Mennonite writers in Canada and the United States. And, furthermore, Schmidt's reader, who is not conversant with the real apprehensions of the would-be emigrants and the great sense of satisfaction which permeated the minds of the largest majority of the Mennonites with the concessions offered by the Russian government, does gain the impression that those who decided to leave for America—and Canada—were perhaps more concerned with the economic gains of a move, rather than by idealistic motives, as professed by them. This, of course, lends credence to the contention of some Mennonite writers of the past and present, including some Russian commentators of the last decades of the nineteenth century, namely that the exodus of the 1870s was motivated more by the lure of free homestead land and other advantages of an American Eldorado, than by a deep desire to preserve uncompromised the heritage of their forebears.

A restudy of the emigration of the 1870s, with a more careful scrutiny of the motives and activities of Cornelius Jansen in that significant event, is in order.

EDITOR'S NOTE

Dr. David G. Rempel's article refers primarily to C. B. Schmidt's "Reminiscences of Foreign Immigration Work For Kansas" in *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society,* 1905-06, Vol. 9, Topeka, 1906. It has been used widely as an undisputed source of information to this day. It has now been reprinted by Clarence Hiebert in *Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need* (Faith and Life Press, Newton, Kansas, 1974, pages 450-531.)

One of C. B. Schmidt's most significant descriptions of the early Mennonite settlements appeared in an English translation entitled "Kansas Mennonite Settlements, 1877" in the April, 1970 issue of *Mennonite Life.* In the preface "In This Issue" it was pointed out in addition to the above that Schmidt claimed in his "Reminiscences" that "about 15,000 of these people (Mennonites) settled on the lands of the Santa Fe road." This is an illustration of Schmidt's exaggerations. Only some 18,000 Mennonites came to North America a century ago. Of them some 8,000 went to Canada, which leaves the rest for the U.S.A. No more than about 7,000 of the 10,000 could have come to Kansas. (See Hiebert p. 453.)

On the other hand C. B. Schmidt "underestimated" his achievement when he stated that "approximately 30 bushels of wheat were brought to the United States by the people from the Ukraine area of Russia when they migrated to central Kansas." By now the descendants of the winter wheat pioneers are tempted to count the kernels that their ancestors brought along and sowed in the prairie upon arrival. The success C. B. Schmidt had as an agent of the Santa Fe spurred him to exaggerate figures and facts. There should be no reasons for us at this time to do the same. First of all there does not seem to be any evidence at this time that Mennonites planted winter wheat in the fall upon their arrival in 1874. There are numerous evidences that they bought spring wheat in 1875 for their first seeding in the prairie. Some hard winter wheat came in only gradually and on a larger scale only after Bernhard Warkentin and Mark Carleton had imported large quantities of Red Turkey seed wheat from the Ukraine where the Mennonites had come from. After this the wheat spread rapidly in Kansas and beyond.—*Cornelius Krahn*

The following is the life story of C. B. Schmidt taken from *Mennonite Life,* April, 1970, page 49 (see also page 50):

C. B. SCHMIDT

C. B. Schmidt was born in Dippoldiswalde, Saxony, Germany, in 1843, where his father was an architect. He attended a commercial school at Dresden and then obtained a position as a foreign correspondent in Hamburg. The following year he went to St. Louis, Missouri. In 1866, he married Mattie Fraim and in 1868, he came to Lawrence, Kansas, where he established a grocery business. He also functioned as a correspondent for newspapers in Germany, which led to his appointment as Commissioner of Immigration for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company in Topeka. In 1880, he established a Santa Fe office in London, and in 1895, he became the manager of the Suburban Land and Investment Company in Pueblo, Colorado. He crossed the Atlantic thirty-seven times, mostly in the interests of railroad land settlements.

C. B. Schmidt influenced many Mennonites to settle on the Santa Fe land, starting in 1874. The files of the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College contain much correspondence which C. B. Schmidt had with David Goerz, Christian Krehbiel, and Bernard Warkentin, who were the main leaders of the Russian migration to Kansas. Later Schmidt became Commissioner of Immigration for the Rock Island Railroad and also an agent of the Wyoming Development Company (1914-1916). At this time he had an extensive correspondence with H. P. Krehbiel in an endeavor to sell land in Wyoming to the Mennonites. ("Reminiscences of Foreign Immigration Work for Kansas" by C. B. Schmidt, *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society, 1905-1906,* Vol. 9, Topeka, 1906.)

TO MEET THE LORD AND ESCAPE THE DRAFT

From Central Asia to Kansas

By FRED R. BELK

Introduction
By Cornelius Krahn

One of the most spectacular and adventuresome journeys that took place in connection with the coming of the Mennonites to the prairies of America was that of a group of Mennonites that went to Central Asia with the purpose of meeting the Lord and escaping military conscription. The background of this movement and the experiences of those involved are an unusual chapter of Mennonite migrations through the centuries. This story was recorded in diaries and narratives as well as in correspondence by many participants which have now been gathered, researched, and presented by Fred R. Belk in, The Great Trek of the Russian Mennonites to Central Asia, 1880-1884 *(1973).*

The following presentation deals only with the disillusionment of some of those involved and their coming to North America during the years 1884-94 and following. Some of them became absorbed in the Mennonite congregations of the Newton and Beatrice areas, and particularly in the Herold Mennonite Church of Cordell, Oklahoma. Since their coming, however, descendants have spread through North America and among them were such well known leaders as David Toews, Rosthern, Saskatchewan, and P. S. Goertz, former dean of Bethel College.

This is a brief sketch of events that led to the Central Asian adventure among the Mennonites of Russia. Claasz Epp led a group of Mennonites around 1853 from West Prussia to the Volga region where a Trakt settlement originated. Others followed. His son Claasz Epp, Jr. was elected minister and became the inspirer of the Central Asian adventure seeking a place of refuge for the saints and an escape from military service.

All of this was influenced by a South German medical doctor, Johann H. Jung-Stilling and others who wrote pietistic-mystic books in the form of novels and meditational literature. Jung-Stilling had a large following in general and also among the Mennonites in South Germany and West Prussia. Numerous sets of his twelve volumes of writings were brought along to America by those who came to this country 100 years ago, which demonstrated how popular his writings were.

Claasz Epp, Jr. became the Mennonite interpreter and speculator in regard to the assumption that God had chosen some Eastern part of Russia to become the refuge for his saints of the latter days. When the universal military conscription law became a threat to the Mennonites and Central Asia was conquered by Russia, Epp with longing eyes searched in Central Asia for the refuge he was looking for and which was referred to in the writings of Jung-Stilling.

Some Trakt Mennonite followers of Claasz Epp, Jr. appealed to the Russian government to make it possible for them to find the divinely appointed place of refuge in Central Asia and the guarantee that they would be exempted from military service. Thus, eschatological speculation and the desire to remain exempted from military service inspired them to proceed in five long wagon trains in 1880-82 into a land they had no knowledge of and that was not interested in their coming. On their various long journeys they encountered extremely great hardships, but their faith and hope made them endure it all, however, not without rift and great disappointments in the final outcome. Most of them finally established themselves and some even developed prosperous oases in the deserts of Central Asia.

The following article by Fred R. Belk, is the chapter "Migration to America" (pp. 302-328) taken from his dissertation. (Those interested in buying a copy of the book by Fred Belk should write to the Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas 67117).

Fred R. Belk has written a doctoral dissertation on the Mennonite trek to Central Asia, and teaches history at Sterling (Kan.) College.

IN THEIR SPIRITUAL and physical desperation some Central Asian Mennonites had been corresponding with Heinrich Zimmermann of Beatrice, Nebraska, and Peter Claassen of Newton, Kansas for some time. Since the American Mennonites promised them financial aid to come to America, it seemed to them that the Lord was leading them westward. Many American Mennonites were willing to help. During 1883 alone, well over $3,200 had been contributed by private individuals to aid Mennonites in

Central Asia. Many of these relatives and friends had warned them earlier against going to Central Asia, but when they saw the plight of brethren in need they responded faithfully nonetheless.

This seeking of assistance from America was a natural recourse because of the many Russian Mennonites who had settled there during the major migration of 1874-78. Many had relatives, and they had corresponded throughout the intervening years. Some of these letters from Central Asia were published in Mennonite papers in America. David Goerz, the editor of *Zur Heimath* periodically wrote editorials and even put in notices concerning gifts to Central Asian Mennonites. It was soon learned that more than twenty of the Lausan families were planning to come to America. They would travel by wagon along the western side of the Aral Sea to Orenburg, obtain passports, go by train to Bremen, Germany, and take a Lloyd Lines Steamship to New York. From there a train would carry them to the American plains states. Encouraging letters from America were received in Lausan during March and early April, 1884.

Several organizations were formed in order to aid them systematically. Of these groups the "Board of Guardians" of Newton, Kansas, and the "Aid Committee for the Needy in Khiva" of Beatrice, Nebraska, were the most active. Soon efforts were made to combine the two organizations.

At the instigation of Peter Claassen of Newton, a group of influential men who had been individually sending help to Central Asia came together on April 4, 1884, at the home of Bernhard Regier to discuss the most rapid means of expediting aid to the coming refugees. As the meeting began, Christian Krehbiel was named chairman and David Goerz was elected secretary. Claassen presented documents and letters from Nebraska Mennonites telling of their desire to have a joint meeting to discuss mutual concerns. In the meantime, an emergency subcommittee was formed to handle immediate requests for help. Goerz was appointed to inquire with steamship companies and railroads about special rates and was given the option to negotiate contracts.

Estimating that it would take anywhere from eight to ten thousand dollars to bring the refugees to the United States, the men discussed ways of obtaining means of procuring low interest loans that could be easily secured. Closing the meeting, they chose the "American Mennonite Aid Committee" as their name and sent a telegram to Khiva and a letter to six families in Aulie Ata telling them of their plans. Following the meeting, Claassen left for Nebraska.

Six days later, L. E. Zimmermann called several leaders together for a special meeting at his home in Beatrice, where Claassen outlined the hopes and plans of their Kansas brethren. The Nebraskans urged that it was imperative to help the Lausan refugees because of their great need and their dangerous situation among the Turkomen. Previously, on April 2, this group had sent a telegram to Elkhart, Indiana, entitled a "Call for Help," which had received wide distribution. Peter Jansen of Beatrice was given a liaison assignment similar to that of Goerz. Plans were made to send money to an intermediary named Johann Bergmann at Lysanderhoeh, in the Trakt, in order to help the Lausan Mennonites travel from Orenburg to Germany.

Returning from Nebraska, Claassen called a meeting at his home on April 18, in which he informed his brethren of the actions of the "Aid Committee for the Needy Brethren in Khiva" at Beatrice. The Kansans went on record that they desired to aid all Mennonites in Central Asia who wanted to come to America. With this charge, Goerz was sent back to Nebraska to try ro work out some coordinated plan with Jansen.

Meanwhile, the Lausan Mennonites were busily preparing to leave. From both Kansas and Nebraska they had received much encouragement and assurances of continued support, and twenty-three families resolved to undertake the long journey to America. This was indeed a difficult time for the America-bound group because the majority party with diametrically opposed convictions were anticipating a much shorter move to Ak Metchet and were trying continually to convince those tottering on the brink of indecision to come with them to a "new" refuge.

Leaving Lausan, Central Asia

On Easter Sunday, 1884, the American-bound Mennonites, having received Russian permission to leave, held their final communion service in Khiva. The newly constructed mud-brick houses and barns were sold to the natives. A week later, on April 17, a day after some families departed for Ak Metchet, 23 stalwart families left for America, over 12,000 miles away. The small wagon train, composed of 130 people, 17 wagons, and 30 horses, left the village of Lausan.

Having sent most of the women, children, the infirm, and the baggage ahead by river boat, the men and a few women drove westward on a road which led through thick reeds and underbrush. The primitive road and even worse bridges caused repeated delay for the cumbersome wagons. Having covered less than ten miles the first day, they camped in a circle, as they had on many other occasions, slept amid the reeds under a clear sky, and posted six men to stand guard. Few slept that first night however, since they feared at any moment an onslaught of vengeful Turkomen.

Arriving a week later at Kungrad, near the mouth of the Amu Darya, they first met the boats that had arrived earlier. Although this place was but a dirty little town with simple mud brick houses and trash conspicuous on its streets, they found a lively marketplace where they rented camels to carry their household goods across another formidable desert. At Kungrad, they received two telegrams that had been forwarded from Kansas and Nebraska. This renewed the courage of the group to push onward, for they knew that the prayers and the money of kinsmen stood behind their efforts. Calculating the distance from Kungrad to Orenburg at well over 650 miles, they planned on traveling about two miles per hour and arriving at their destination in 300 hours.

With this long distance facing them it was imperative that they hire a guide with special qualifications: knowing the quickest route and where water was available as well as being a capable leader of camel drivers. They found such a man in a Tartar named Kardijigit, who was immediately hired. With him leading the way, the wagons and the heavily loaded camels set out on May 1, toward the city of Karakamisch far to the north of the Aral Sea.

Crossing the Mountain Range

After three days they reached the Aral Sea and proceeded along its western shore below the Ust-Urt Mountains farther to the west. This would be a new experience for all

of them; on their passage into Central Asia they had seen only the eastern side of the Aral Sea. Approaching this area, Kardijigit told them it had never been crossed by a wagon trail.

In order to reach the plateau that rose some 600 feet above the sea, the migrants encountered their most difficult day of travel in four years of wandering. Foregoing their usual noontime rest, the men laboriously pushed the heavy wagons up the steep incline, as the women and children walked behind. Rocks had to be placed behind the wheels at almost every step in order to prevent the wagons from rolling backward into the sea. At the end of four hours of tedious, backbreaking labor they had succeeded in moving only 600 feet nearer their destination. After a most welcome respite at a cold spring atop the plateau, they renewed their weary journey.

For two weeks the trail carried the wanderers between the rugged cliffs on the Ust-Urt and the vast Aral Sea. Then, after fording the bed of the Tschegan River, they entered the bleak wasteland to the north. Kardijigit skillfully led the caravan across country so barren of forage that had their trek occurred in summer, it would have been impossible to find adequate grazing for the horses. Familiarity with short-cut trails and the location of grass and water was within the competence of their knowledgeable guide, however, and when the Mennonites later looked back on their journey, they were full of praise for Kardijigit's services. He could have easily betrayed the defenseless wanderers to nomadic bandits, but he took pride in doing his duty.

As always, the children suffered most from the privations and dangers of the journey. One little boy fell beneath the wheels of a wagon, which crushed his chest. But after his broken ribs were set and oil and lard applied to his injuries, the little fellow enjoyed a miraculous recovery. Other children were not so fortunate. Of the two babies born in the desert, one died after a few weeks.

Among People Again

As the trip passed the halfway mark they began seeing Kirghiz tent villages along the road. How happy they were to see people, for they had not seen native inhabitants for several weeks. As they passed by, the friendly nomads came to the wagons to talk and bring fermented mare's milk, or *Kumys*, as a hospitable gesture to the weary Mennonites.

Almost 500 miles from Kungrad, with much of the distance through deep shifting sand, they reached Karakamisch just before Pentecost Sunday. From Karakamisch, J. K. Penner and Jacob Toews went ahead to begin arranging passports in Orenburg.

In The City of Orenburg

Finally, after some eight weeks of traveling, they reached Orenburg on June 8. Their trip of over 820 miles lasted 53 days, with 32 spent in driving and 21 resting. Camping along the Ural River in a grove of trees, they remembered the area as their previous halting place on the road to Turkestan years earlier. The officials in the city were slow to act upon their requests for passports owing to the death of the Governor General of Orenburg. Three separate times they telegraphed St. Petersburg for assistance, but no help came. They remained stranded in Orenberg for more than two months.

With their brethren unwillingly delayed in Orenburg, the worried Mennonites in the United States began a petitioning campaign. A passionate appeal for help first went to Governor James W. Dawes of Nebraska and then even to United States Secretary of State Frelinghuysen. It is not known if these petitions had any impact, but state and federal officials were at least aware of the plight of the Mennonite migrants in Orenburg.

Awaiting passports, the Orenburg refugees were not idle. Some went to visit relatives at Saratov; others went all the way to Molotschna and Kuban to see if their passport problems could be resolved by the authorities there. Still others received guests at their river bank camp ground. The Klaassens and Penners were lucky enough to rent an apartment in the city where they could look for interim work. Some of the young men found work loading and unloading freight at the railroad station. The leaders disposed of their wagons and faithful horses by selling most of them to Kirghiz natives; Friederich Dirks and some friends, impatient with merely waiting in Orenburg, drove to Samara to sell their horses for a higher price.

Trip Through Russia and Germany

These men were still absent on August 10, when a number of the requested passports at last arrived at Orenburg. It was therefore decided that the group would be divided into two parties, with the first departing immediately while the remainder awaited additional passports and the return of the Dirks contingent from Samara. The first party boarded the train forthwith and set out on their long journey to Germany and then to America.

Arriving in Bremen on September 1, 1884, the emigrants were issued identification cards and directed aboard the *Ems* of the North German Lloyd Line. Of its more than 1,000 passengers, the Mennonites comprised the not inconsiderable minority of 78, including 15 families under 11 different names. They were of course dazzled by the immensity of the vessel and fascinated by the sight of the sea. They delighted in the simultaneous views of the French and English coasts as they passed through the Channel toward the open Atlantic. But though they made good speed, the voyage was a stormy one, and seasickness plagued the passengers considerably. They were quite ready to disembark when the *Ems* docked at New York on September 9.

A Welcome in New York

Heinrich Zimmermann and Gerhard Wiebe of Nebraska and David Goerz of Kansas were there to meet them. The greetings were warm and joyous. In fact, Johann Jantzen and Zimmerman had been fellow ministers in Germany years earlier; after a heart-to-heart talk with his old friend, Jantzen decided to switch his train ticket from Halstead, Kansas to Beatrice, Nebraska. In all, nine families decided to go to Nebraska while six elected to stake their future in Kansas. Those besides Jantzen who took their families to Nebraska were Heinrich Jantzen, J. K. Penner, Cornelius Unruh, Widow Marie Klaassen, Gerhard Fast, Heinrich Albrecht, Johann Martens, Heinrich Wegeli and the spinster, Anna Penner. Those who chose Kansas, 30 people in all, were Peter Unruh, Tobias Dirks, Abraham Dirks, Bernhard Wiebe, Heinrich Graeves, and Cornelius Wiebe.

Forty-eight of the immigrants boarded a separate rail coach which took them to Beatrice, arriving some three years and 12 days after they had left the Trakt. Later the Kansas group traveled by train to Newton. Thus ended a journey which had taken many of the older ones from

Prussia to Russia, Turkestan, Bukhara, Khiva and now America.

Those Left Behind

Concern was now focused on the group left behind in Russia. It was learned on September 24 that the rest of this company had received their passports and had started for Bremen. Among the 39 members of this party were the families of Abraham Jantzen, Jacob Toews, Heinrich Toews, Benjamin Dirks, Friederich Aron Dirks, Heinrich Albrecht, Hermann Bartsch, Philipp Bier, the Ensz and Pauls families, and Mrs. Elizabeth Abrahams, the widow of the murdered Heinrich Abrahams, and her young child. After a nine-day voyage from Bremen, they arrived in New York aboard the *Fulda.*

So far, the American Mennonite Aid Committee had brought a total of 117 refugees to America. It now undertook an elaborate accounting of receipts to show American Mennonites how their contributions of more than $6,000 had been used. To transport their first group from the Russo-German border to its final destination had cost the aid committee approximately $2,000, while the second party required about $1,000 in support. Besides other funds spent for incidentals, there were still almost $2,000 left in their treasury to help future refugees.

Later Arrivals

Most of these would come from the Aulie Ata settlement. Originally, only six of these families had requested aid to come to America, but by the beginning of 1885, it was learned that the number had increased to 15 families, or 79 people in all. As early as August 11, the American Mennonite Aid Committee had sent some $1,280 to help these people reach the railhead at Orenburg, and they were subsequently given $2,810 for the completion of their journey. Among these Aulie Ata immigrants who sailed from Bremen to New York in August, 1885, were the Eck, Esau, Funk, Janzen, Koop, Kornelsen, Reimer, Riffel, Schmidt, Schultz, Wedel, and Wiens families. With the arrival of three more families, this group dispersed to their various destinations in Kansas, Nebraska, the Dakotas, and Minnesota. They constituted the last of the large immigrant parties, and the original aid committees were officially dissolved. Their remaining funds were distributed to the Indians and to Mennonite missionaries.

Though the last of the great migrations was over, separate family groups continued to repeat the emigration experience until well into the twentieth century. For each had its unique story to tell. In 1892, for example, the families of Jacob Jantzen, Peter Quiring, and Jacob and John Becker left Ak Metchet for America. Jantzen married Becker's sister, Susanna, and had two children while in Ak Metchet, Lena and Johann. John Becker married Marie Dick in 1889. These young couples drove their wagons to Petro-Alexandrovsk, boarded a steamer named *Czar Alexander* to Astrakhan on the Caspian Sea, and took a steamer up the Volga to see relatives in Saratov. From here they went to Moscow, where they obtained their passports, and went by train to Smolensk, Eidkuhnen, and to Bremen. In Bremen, they boarded the vessel *Aller* and after a nine-day voyage reached New York. After the opening of the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma, on September 16, 1893, Jantzen moved to Bessie, Oklahoma, and became pastor of the Herald Mennonite Church.

Leaving many brethren behind in Central Asia, other remnants of the Great Trek continued to migrate to the United States until the late 20's and early 30's when the Soviets would no longer permit them to leave Central Asia. Those coming to America found a new life in a strange new land, but they would always remember Turkestan and their brethren who had stayed behind.

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coffin, the departed member of the family would be placed into it. In the case of the death of small children, the coffin would be filled with some of the wood shavings, and then lined with white cloth. Some of the coffins were painted black, though many of them were left without any finishing on them at all.

During the night watch period, the community would assemble at the home of the bereaved, and they would stay with the family during the night. For the young folks of this group this was at times an occasion of gaiety and hilarity, in spite of the solemn occasion. The boys and girls had a regular party at such a time. They too would become sleepy, but that was often solved by some active youngster as he would run from child to child squirting water until the entire group of children would be wide awake and participating with him. Laughter and footsteps would not be kept quiet, though some part of the evening was spent in singing sacred songs and in prayer. This tradition too has been discontinued, and though the living pay tribute to the dead by stopping at the home, it is no longer an all-night event, and the bereaved can rest.

To notify the community of the death of an individual, the members of the family would walk to the nearest neighbors, and inform them of it, and the neighbors would in turn walk to some of their neighbors. Thus the news would be spread as quickly as possible. Since there were no undertakers at that time, the body would not be kept longer than absolutely necessary. In order to keep it as nice as possible, some families would try to procure ice, and keep the body placed on it. That, of course, would be very messy since the ice would melt in the warm room, and tubs and kettles had to be placed under the coffin to catch the water as it dripped through the boards. In summertime especially, the odor would often be quite unbearable, and if any delay occurred at all, they would dispense with a church burial.

The body would be transported to the church and cemetery in a lumber or spring wagon and whenever possible it was drawn by a team of black horses. Songs were sung by the congregation and a sermon was delivered by the minister. The family wore traditional black garments.

The body was buried in the free burial lot at the church cemetery and all the friends and relatives remained until the grave was filled.

After the funeral the family and friends would return to the home of the bereaved to partake of a meal prepared as a memorial to the deceased. The meal at this time was a simple but substantial one, and often the invitation to it was announced after the funeral service at the church.

MANITOBA MENNONITES: PAST AND PRESENT

By H. L. SAWATZKY

IN THE PERIOD from the creation of the province in 1870 until World War I, Manitoba's population increased from about 11,000 to 550,000. A large part of this increase was due to immigration. During these years most of the potentially arable sections of Manitoba became accessible through an expanding rail network. Western, central, and eastern Europe, as well as other parts of North America, were the sources of the majority of these immigrants. Within the range of alternatives and options open to them, many settlers chose to locate in areas whose visible resource base gave promise of meeting their immediate needs and ambitions. Once a nucleus was established, like attracted like. The result was to be a recognizable mosaic of "ethnic islands" throughout that part of Manitoba which lies south of the Pre-Cambrian Shield. From the beginning, however, a broad range of factors, operating from within and without, "conspired" to alter the character and structure of these "islands." It is the purpose of this article to examine the nature of this process in the major Mennonite settlements in southern Manitoba.

The European Background

In 1873 and 1876 the Dominion government, by Orders-in-Council, set aside two blocks of land in Manitoba exclusively for settlement by Mennonite colonists from South Russia—the East Reserve, comprising the eight townships of the present municipality of Hanover, and the West Reserve of 17 townships in the south-central part of the province in what are today the municipalities of Rhineland and Stanley. By 1880 nearly 8,000 Mennonites had settled on these two reserves. They came with written assurances from the Dominion government which, most importantly to them, aside from the provision for ethnically homogeneous settlement, guaranteed them perpetual exemption from military service and the right to maintain German as the language of instruction in their schools. The Dominion government considered the acquisition of so large a group of settlers a very worthwhile coup indeed, especially in view of concerted efforts which were made by United States railroad interests and state authorities to divert them to the climatically and therefore economically more favored corridor of settlement then extending from Dakota Territory to Texas. Persistent annexationist sentiment in the United States made early effective occupation of the West imperative if it was to remain Canadian. The Mennonites were certainly well qualified as settlers for the Canadian frontier. The remoteness of the West was hailed by them as offering welcome isolation from a secular world with which they wished a minimum of involvement. Moreover, they had behind them on their arrival in Manitoba a three-and-one-half centuries' long agrarian and pioneering tradition, which they had carried as freemen from their origins in the Low Countries to the Baltic marshes of Prussia and Poland and thence through four generations on the open Steppes of South Russia.

In those three-and-one-half centuries, too, their character had been moulded into a distinct cultural and ethnic identity by many factors, the most significant of which deserve mention here. As part of the pacifist wing of the Anabaptist movement in the early years of the Reformation, they became victims of religious persecution. Only the ideologically tenacious among them survived and they formed that original group of "Mennonists" which in 1536 acknowledged the erstwhile Dutch Catholic priest, Menno Simons, as their Elder and leader. By the early 1540's, when they responded to the appeals of Hanseatic noblemen for settlers to reclaim the marshes in the hinterland of Danzig, it was already evident that there was great strength—dogged determination and dedication to toil—in the Mennonite brotherhood, but it was also clear that there would be tension and rifts within it.

These tensions might have destroyed the brotherhood before it developed a firm identity based on shared experience and mutual interdependence, if it had not been for the strong centripetal forces generated by church and crown, whether Catholic or Lutheran. Although prized for their practical contributions to the areas in which they settled, they were regarded as heretics by both the Catholic and the Lutheran churches, at whose instigation many discriminatory and disabling edicts, of both religious and economic nature, were proclaimed against them. Although they would continue their toilsome ways, successfully expanding manufactures, crafts, and trade, while gradually extending their lands over the lower valleys and delta of the Vistula and Nogat rivers, they would learn to maintain a low "public profile," gradually exchanging the Dutch language of The Netherlands for the Low German (*Plattdeutsch*) dialect of the region as their mother tongue, and became the *Stillen im Lande,* the unobtrusive ones.

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In the late eighteenth century, largely in response to diminishing opportunity stemming from economic strictures imposed by church and state, the Mennonites were to accept an invitation extended to them directly by Catherine the Great. The enserfed peasant of feudal Russia was not free to occupy the new regions north of the Black Sea from which the imperial armies had but lately driven the Turks. In consequence, then, colonists had to be sought elsewhere, outside the Slavic lands. The Mennonites, promised far-reaching inducements hinging on free land, perpetual freedom from military service, economic privileges, and civic and religious liberties, made a strong response. In 1789 they founded the colony of Chortitza, near Zaporozhe (then named Alexandrovsk), and 15 years later the Molotschna colony to the southeast near the Sea of Azov. The only important specific requirements made of them in return were that they established closed, self-administering villages, and that they refrain from proselytizing the Russian people of Orthodox faith. Of importance to future developments in Mennonite history was the fact that the arch-conservative and materially less well-endowed represented the dominant element in the Chortitza colonization venture, while the more liberal wing, which did not make the break with Danzig until after the Napoleonic wind with its concept of the citizen army had fanned across Europe, founded Molotschna.

Chortitza and Molotschna

In South Russia they recreated the cultural landscape of their former Baltic homeland as nearly as possible—joined houses and barns (*Wohnstallhaeuser*) set at regular intervals along linear single-street villages (*Strassendoerfer*) surrounded by their open "champion" fields (*Gewanne*) and pastures, which made up the villages' lands (*Fluren*). Their land-use practices continued to exhibit a substantial emphasis on livestock. During the 1830's, however, emphasis was to shift to the growing of wheat for export to industrial Europe, and a strong bias toward cash crops would henceforth characterize their agriculture. Pasturage, which was utilized communally, would eventually be reduced to approximately 20 per cent of the village land. Vacant colony lands were rapidly brought under cultivation. By 1836 land hunger was felt to the degree that the first of what were ultimately, by the eve of the Revolution, to number some 50 daughter settlements scattered through European and Asiatic Russia, was established. The rate of land acquisition was thenceforth never to keep pace with population growth, and provision had to be made to accommodate the landless (*Anwohner*) by providing them with small building lots, together with grazing rights for a few animals, in the village pastures. Land hunger exerted steady pressure to "hive-off" and to seek new opportunity through migration.

The difference in attitude which had been discernible between the founders of the Chortitza and Molotschna mother colonies were to continue to manifest themselves in respect to the nature and depth of involvement with the host society, and in the quality of material progress and cultural change, just as in their former Baltic homeland. Within a decade of its founding, however, outside influences were to create the first of a series of major disturbances in the more open Molotschna society. Most important of these influences was to be a stream of pietistic sentiment emanating from non-Mennonite German-speaking settlements in South Russia. In 1812 a pietistic, fundamentalist splinter church, the *Kleine Gemeinde,* emerged. The *Kleine Gemeinde* would, however, maintain an inward-looking stance and make little attempt to extend its influence either within the colony or without. They had always considered themselves Dutch in Danzig, and they continued to do so in South Russia.

During the mid-nineteenth century several more Mennonite splinter groups of varying degrees of pietistic, millennial, evangelical, and missionary inclination were to emerge in the Molotschna region. In this same period influential individuals of the Molotschna colony thoroughly revamped the Mennonite educational system in South Russia, a process which had as a side effect the establishment of close cultural ties with Germany. Particularly among the more well-to-do, many began to adopt High German, which had already been the language of church usage before the migration to Russia and had developed more or less of a disdain for their little-written Low German mother tongue. These influences were felt in the conservative Chortitza colony and its daughter settlements, too, but, though they had some impact, they were almost universally resisted.

In 1870 the tsarist government, responding to a burgeoning pan-Slavic sentiment, decreed the abrogation of the special status of all alien colonies and announced a program for their Russianization. To the Mennonites this represented a threat that evoked massive sentiment for emigration. However, when it proved possible to arrange the continuation of certain of their privileges, particularly those applying to military service and language, some two thirds, in particular the propertied and "progressive," chose to remain. The campaign to achieve their integration, however, evoked profound Mennonite determination to preserve their identity, and prompted closer cultural ties with Germany.

From Russia to Manitoba

For the 18,000 who emigrated during the 1870's, North America would become their new home. Attitude determined destination. The conservatives from Chortitza and its daughter colonies, and a substantial segment of the *Kleine Gemeinde* which had separated from its parent body, numbering some 8,000 in all, came to Manitoba, where the Dominion government had assured them essentially the same privileges and immunities once given their forefathers by Catherine the Great. For the others, who were mainly from the more "progressive" Molotschna, environmental and economic factors more or less balanced sentiments such as the ones which governed those who went to Manitoba. They chose to see the vague but generous-sounding promises made by the United States in a good light and settled in the states between Kansas and Minnesota.

In Manitoba certain significant patterns became discernible from the beginning. The colonists from Bergthal, the mildly "progressive" daughter colony of Chortitza which had led a separate existence since 1836, began to arrive in 1874 and settled on the East Reserve. Their more conservative brethren from Chortitza and its more youthful daughter colony of Fuerstenland (they called themselves *Altkolonier,* Old Colonists) settled on the open prairie west of the Red River and set in train those events which in 1876 culminated in the creation of the West Reserve. The *Kleine Gemeinde* formed two small segregated enclaves, the one

within the East Reserve, the other across the Red River on the Scratching River. In every instance the Mennonites set about recreating the "colonial" landscape evolved in Russia—closed, homogeneous settlements studded with *Strassendoerfer* (villages) surrounded by their *Streifenfluren* and communal pastures, in which village and "colony" were regulated by an elected hierarchy of officials. The prospects of isolated independence were shortly to be shattered by influences working from within as well as without the Mennonite communities. The East Reserve had been selected for them by Canadians. It presented a motley terrain, part forested, part open, part marshy, endowed with good supplies of water and readily available fieldstone and gravels, In short, it offered a broad spectrum of those subsistence resources of pasture and cultivable soil, building materials, and fuel which the pioneer from eastern Canada or Europe would be wont to seek. It did not, however, encourage a rapid transition to commercial agricultural production. By 1878, in response to these and other environmental frustrations, *Bergthaler* were trickling away from the East Reserve to the open country of the West Reserve, where, like the *Altkolonier,* they could more easily establish the traditional Mennonite cultural landscape and follow their inclination to engage in commercial rather than subsistence agriculture.

Old Colony and Bergthal Groups

This movement was to have almost immediate consequences for the solidarity and unity of purpose with which the Mennonites faced the outside world. The province was being rapidly settled. In 1880 the Municipal Act, creating the machinery of local government throughout the province, was passed. Not only was this seen as a threat to Mennonite independence and isolation, but it created profound divisions within the brotherhood itself. The *Altkolonier* (Old Colony) ignored the fact that the status of their "colony" had changed to that of municipality, and they refused to exercise their franchise and accept municipal ordinances. The *Bergthaler,* through almost equally concerned about official incursions from without, decided that the best method of retaining control of their community affairs was by selective involvement. They therefore quickly voted their own people into municipal offices. The conservative *Altkolonier* condemned this *Bergthaler* "pact with the world" and resented the fact that *Bergthaler* municipal officials were now responsible for *Altkolonier* affairs.

The *Bergthaler,* moreover, also adopted a more permissive posture with respect to certain secular innovations which the *Altkolonier* proscribed. It was difficult and indeed often impossible for *Altkolonier* authority to assert itself over those of its people who began to follow the ways of the *Bergthaler,* even by invoking the extreme measures of excommunication and ostracism, since the *Bergthaler* would accept such outcasts into their congregations. So acrimonious did relations become that the *Altkolonier* leadership forbade all fraternization with the *Bergthaler* branch of the brotherhood.

The *Bergthaler,* however, were not to be free of their own internal schisms. In 1885 the West Reserve *Bergthaler* formed their own church organization, independent of the East Reserve parent community. Then, as the limited educational heritage of the Mennonites continued to deteriorate due to lack of cultural interchange in an essentially pioneer environment, some of the more forward-looking of the *Bergthaler,* particularly businessmen in the emerging centers of the West Reserve but also including the Elder began to agitate for the teaching of English in Mennonite schools. The provincial authorities actively encouraged these activities, emphasizing the need for English in the future. In 1889 a group of West Reserve *Bergthaler* opened a teacher-training school at Gretna, the present Mennonite Collegiate Institute. They were responding to the same motivation that prompted participation in municipal matters, namely that by looking after their own affairs to the satisfaction of higher authorities they could forestall or at least control the nature of incursions from without.

The *Altkolonier* and indeed the majority of the *Bergthaler* opposed the new school. To them, knowledge of the English language meant that young people particularly would have easy access to the "world," while any diminution of the German being taught would seriously threaten the continued functioning of the churches, based as they were upon use of the German language. The majority of the *Bergthaler* split away and formed two new independent church organizations, one on the West Reserve, the other on the East Reserve. Ultimately they and the *Altkolonier* and *Kleine Gemeinde,* responding to the eventual enforced secularization of school curricula and the imposition of English as the prime language of instruction, would spawn migrations in the 1920's and 1940's which involved over 9,000 persons and resulted in the founding of new colonies in the isolated highland valleys of the Sierra Madre Occidental in the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Durango, and in Paraguay. Long before that, however, beginning about 1890, increasing numbers of Mennonites—mainly the more conservative—were escaping the tensions in the Manitoba reserves by going west to homestead at the limits of settlement in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Influences from the North

Other forces, too, were to intrude upon the Mennonite reserves in those first decades of adjustment to the New World. One of the most far-reaching forces was a persistent wave of pietistic and revivalist missionary influence emanating from the United States. Predictably, it seems the *Kleine Gemeinde,* as the only one of the Manitoba Mennonite groups which had already accepted such influences in Russia, was the first to undergo transformation as a result. In 1882 one Johann Holdeman, of Pennsylvania German Mennonite extraction and a native of Ohio, visited the *Kleine Gemeinde* in Manitoba. He had just founded a new branch of his revivalist organization, the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, among Mennonites in Kansas. Similar success attended his efforts among the members of the *Kleine Gemeinde,* with the result that it underwent an almost even numerical split. As would be the case amongst the *Bergthaler* in the school issue of 1890, the Elder opted for the new radical group.

Those Mennonites who had selected the United States as their new homeland during the migration of the 1870's had, it will be recalled, been exposed to considerable pietistic and revivalist influence over several decades in Russia. In the United States they came into close contact with various pietistic and millennial factions of those fundamentalist confessions often referred to as the Plains Sects, all of which displayed proselytizing zeal. In consequence, then,

from about 1890 onwards, there was an increasing stream of missionary effort emanating from the Mennonite settlements in the mid-western United States and directed at the conservative Mennonites in Manitoba. That these efforts obtained a measure of initial and self-perpetuating success is indicated by the fact that today there are 17 recognized confessions in Manitoba which consider themselves Mennonite. Although the majority profess a proselytizing missionary ethic, their individual visible success can be largely measured in terms of adherents won from other Mennonite groups.

Communal and Village Life

Other disruptions in the traditional order of things are to be found in geographic, economic, and legal factors as they impinged on the Mennonite settlements. In creating the reserves, the Dominion government also modified the homesteading provisions of the Dominion Lands Act so as to permit the formation of the traditional Mennonite villages. Whereas each individual was required to file on a particular homestead by legal description, he was not required to reside there for three years in order to qualify for a patent. To set up a village on the traditional pattern, then, required the voluntary pooling of their homesteads by a group of colonists. The village or completed *Strassendorf* and its *Flur* usually had 20 farmsteads and contained 5 sections, 4 of which might be cultivated and the other held in common usage as pasture. Altogether 59 villages are known to have been established on the East Reserve and 70 on the West Reserve. However, this system of landholding caused problems from the very beginning. Although provision had been made to permit the voluntary pooling of land to form villages, it had no binding foundation in law. Some colonists at once expressed a preference for the compact isolated farm over the several fields scattered over a *Streifenflur*. Since the law upheld patent ownership, only community pressure could dissuade persons desirous of establishing compact farms from doing so. Moreover, on the East Reserve the broken nature of the landscape made it very difficult to establish functional villages along traditional lines. Then, too, there was the problem of exodus to the West Reserve, which is estimated to have siphoned off one half of the 3,500 residents of the East Reserve by 1881. As a result there were not enough people left to fully occupy the East Reserve villages. Of the 59 villages established there, perhaps no more than 45 were ever occupied at one time. In 1891 only ten possessed ten or more farmsteads. Although most of those who left for the West Reserve in the early years settled in villages again, quite a few nevertheless had isolated homesteads.

On the West Reserve, too, although the terrain was more uniform and thus better suited to the *Gewann* village, there were problems in maintaining this form of occupancy. As farm equipment grew in size and sophistication, there was increasing impatience with the narrow fields and scattered holdings of the medieval *Streifenflur*. Larger equipment made possible the handling of larger acreages. Both invited going into debt, and not all who contracted them were successful in discharging such obligations. If a homestead were foreclosed or even threatened with foreclosure, and particularly if some or all of the village farmsteads were located upon it, consternation gripped everyone and the village was likely to dissolve. Thus, even before all the 70 villages of the West Reserve, of which some 50 became fully functional, were established, some had already gone into oblivion. The *Altkolonier* held tenaciously to *Strassendorf* and *Streifenflur* against all pressures until they left Canada. Those *Bergthaler* villages which survived did so by redistributing the land in compact farm units and drawing new deeds for them and for the village farmsteads. With the *Altkolonier* exodus to Mexico in the 1920's, all the *Streifenfluren* were broken up, and land and farmsteads deeded to their owners by legal description. On the West Reserve, some 17 have survived as residential farm villages, usually with some retail and service functions. On the East Reserve none of the farm villages survived the exodus to Paraguay in the 1920's. However, a few, among them the *Bergthaler* villages of Chortitza and Gruenthal and the *Kleine Gemeinde* villages of Steinbach and Blumenort, have become market and service centers.

The end of the traditional village, though it solved certain problems for the propertied class, removed one of the few economic props of the landless. Hitherto they had had rights by custom to a building plot and to the keeping of a few animals in the communal pasture. Some purchased their plots and remained. Nevertheless, the end of the traditional village set in train the urbanization of the landless among the Mennonites. They drifted to the small but growing market centers, such as Steinbach, Altona, Winkler, and Winnipeg, and were to be for many years, and in a diminishing measure even today, a substantial and largely impecunious segment of the population, eking out a livelihood by casual and common labor. Only in recent decades have the Mennonite towns attained a "normal" occupational and economic distribution.

Architecturally, too, the Mennonite landscape began to undergo change almost from the beginning. The *Wohnstallhaus* (dwelling place and barn together) although it was the universal building style brought from Russia, was rarely built after 1900. Style in new construction since the 1890's has mainly reflected the influence of farm journals and lumber merchants. Some of the surviving *Wohnstallhaeuser* have been renovated, but, as all are now old, it is more customary to tear them down and replace them with buildings of "modern" appearance. As a result the surviving villages have become nondescript in appearance and are now much less aesthetically pleasing than once they were. The avenues of trees which always flanked both sides of the village street are now approaching a hundred years. They, too, have felt the remorseless tooth of time, but since such things became a matter of individual initiative some 50 In some cases trees have even been cut down to make way for power lines or to facilitate minor corrections to the original sectional survey.

Events and experience have augured little better for the preservation of other elements of Mennonite culture. Since about 1940 the trend toward diminution of individual farm sizes has been reversed. Modern equipment has made the farm an independent unit. Not only have these trends essentially terminated that element of community solidarity which was based on mutual assistance and interdependence, but lack of opportunity in agriculture, despite a persistent strong agrarian tradition, has forced the surplus rural population into crafts, trades, and professions in the local centers and, to an ever-increasing extent, outside of their communities. In the 1960's the schools were consolidated. Even in the villages there is little occasion any more for the application of joint action in respect to

common everyday interests and causes which in time past provided sturdy practical underpinning to the community.

Conservative Mennonite leaders have long recognized that the maintenance of community solidarity as they understood it was possible only from an agrarian base and "colonial" habitat. With the disappearance of these factors from the lives of the majority—over 80 per cent of the Mennonites in Manitoba may now be classed as urbanized—there has emerged an identity crisis. The perpetuation of their folk history as a unifying counterbalance to the divisive impact of outside cultural influences has been neglected. "Progressives," particularly those of a proselytizing religious affiliation, generally recognize little merit in folk history. The conservatives, on the other hand, continue to foster that low public profile which scriptural admonition and the practical considerations of survival taught their forebears to maintain in the Low Countries and in Danzig. Few Mennonites in Manitoba today are aware of the very significant accomplishments of their people in the past: that for well over three centuries their forefathers maintained unbroken their status as freemen in lands of eastern Europe where the universal condition of the peasant was one of *Leibeigenschaft* or serfdom; that they reclaimed and held the flood-prone lower Vistula valley and Vistula-Nogat delta, recognized later as among the finest agricultural land in all of Baltic Europe, against all onslaughts of the elements after they had been abandoned by others as irreclaimable; and that they were perhaps the only peasant folk in all those lands who through those centuries consistently maintained an almost universal literacy among their people.

Migration to Mexico and New Arrivals from Russia

The individual Mennonite's question to himself as to his cultural and ethnic identity has been further complicated by "internal" factors. The exodus of the 1920's to Mexico and Paraguay came at a time when thousands of Mennonites, refugees from the Bolshevik Revolution, were arriving from Russia. Large numbers of them located on the East and West reserves, in many cases replacing those who were leaving for Latin America. Many had had the equivalent of a high school or even college education and, once they learned some English, readily qualified for teaching certificates and soon came to staff substantial numbers of classrooms in the newly enforced public schools of the Mennonite districts. These *Russlaender* in consequence of the close cultural ties maintained with Germany over the preceding 50 years or more, no longer considered themselves ethnically Dutch, generally spoke High German in their homes and tended to regard the Mennonite Low German mother tongue as a dialect deserving of a status well below that of "language." To a pronounced degree they were responding also to the rationalization that, Low German not being a widely written tongue, High German offered the only real hope for the long-range retention of a German cultural presence in the Mennonite communities. In their dedication to the preservation of German, since it was the language of church usage throughout the reserves, they had the support of the conservative elements in the community at large, which, however, laid weight on the "exclusiveness" (non-conformity) it imparted, almost to the exclusion of any appreciation of the access it offered to the rich literary heritage of one of the major European languages. The private secondary schools, which educated the majority of the young people who would ultimately staff public school classrooms in the Mennonite districts, and which also quickly came to be headed and largely staffed by *Russlaender,* while they maintained a recognized high curriculum standard in both English and German, gave no recognition to Low German. While it was generally assumed that Low German would be learned by everyone anyway, in practice, for whatever combination of reasons, children in the public schools were generally strictly forbidden to speak *any* Low German during the course of the school day. Whatever may be said with respect to the wisdom of this approach to their linguistic heritage, the majority of Mennonites were, until perhaps 20 years ago, functionally literate in two languages besides the Low German.

In Search of Identity

The two world wars brought out certain identity problems. Although in World War I the Mennonites were disfranchised and although there was much storming in the press in regard to their pacifist stance, the government held to the promises made in 1873. But the war sentiment did complicate the required transition of the Mennonite schools from private to public status in these years. World War II caused considerably greater stress. Predictably, there were the super-patriots in Canadian society who resented these people of Germanic culture and speech and classed them with the enemy. Substantial official pressure was brought to bear upon the Mennonites, but the steadfast had their right to refuse military service upheld, although they were then drafted into essential industry. Characteristically, under such circumstances, a substantial segment of any minority group undergoes psychological identity-modification in the direction of what the larger society "expects," or they abdicate their inherited identity altogether and amalgamate with the larger society as one way of being inconspicuous and avoiding critical and discriminatory attention from the world at large.

Summing up, it appears to this writer that, whereas certain pressures have been brought to bear upon the Mennonites of the southern Manitoba communities, the majority of the forces auguring for their ultimate dissolution have emanated from within the Mennonite brotherhood itself. What elements of cultural and ethnic identity survive appear to have done so largely by virtue of inertia and the rear-guard action of conservative elements rather than by any particular forward-looking plan. Certainly the young Mennonite in these communities today, when he goes out to make his way, is already almost totally acculturated to the world at large. Moreover, he is ignorant of the salient elements of the history of his folk. His mother tongue (if he has learned it) is, at the insistence of his own people, not a language, nor, by the same token, does he possess an ethnic identity. With such a self-denigrating base for self-assurance and self-assertion he tends to assimilate readily, if not very selectively, elements of the larger society with which he is thrust into contact. As each individual, more and more, goes his own way in his own way, the basis for a common identity among the Mennonites of the southern Manitoba communities, already much diminished, as the cultural landscape is already largely a relict one, appears likely in the next generation or two to disappear altogether, and they, as ethnic culture islands, will have slipped into oblivion.

MENNONITE CENTENNIAL PUBLICATIONS

Compiled by Cornelius Krahn

De Fehr, William, Gerhard Ens, George Epp, Helen Janzen, Peter Klassen, Lloyd Siemens, Jack Thiessen (compilers and editors). *Harvest.* Anthology of Mennonite Writing in Canada 1874-1974. Manitoba Centennial Committee, Box 58, Gretna, Manitoba, Canada. 182 pp. $3.50.

Dyck, Arnold, Translated by Henry D. Dyck. *Lost in the Steppe.* Derksen Printers, Ltd., Steinbach, Manitoba, Canada. 354 pp. $9.95.

Ens, G. *Dee Easchte Wiehnachten enn Kanada.* Low German short stories on the Christmases of 1875, 1926, 1949. Manitoba Centennial Committee, Box 58, Gretna, Manitoba, Canada. $1.50.

Epp, Reuben. *Biem Aunsiedle* (When the Settlers Came). Low German Stories and Humour from the Past. R.E.C. Recordings, 966 Portage Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba. LP Album. $5.00.

Gaeddert, Albert M. *Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church.* 1874-1974 Centennial History. Hoffnungsau Church, Route 1, Inman, Kansas 67546. 143 pp. $5.00.

Hiebert, Clarence (compiler and editor). *Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need.* A Scrapbook about Mennonite Immigrants from Russia 1870-1885. Faith and Life Press, Newton, Kansas. 469 pp. $20.00.

Hymn Sing Celebration. Mennonite Centennial 1874-1974. Manitoba Centennial Committee, Box 58, Gretna, Manitoba, Canada. 71 hymns. $1.00.

Kaufman, Alice, and Ruby Stucky. *The Centennial Treasury of Recipes,* Swiss (Volhynian) Mennonites. Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association, Mennonite Press, North Newton, Kansas. 190 pp. $5.00.

Kaufman, Edna Ramseyer, and the Bethel College Women's Association. *Melting Pot of Mennonite Cookery,* 1874-1974. Bethel College Women's Association, North Newton, Kansas. 372 pp. $7.50

Krahn, Cornelius. *The Witness of the Martyr's Mirror For Our Day.* Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas. 47 pp. $1.75.

Lohrenz, Gerhard. *The Mennonites of Western Canada.* Derksen Printers, Ltd., Steinbach, Manitoba. 52 pp. $2.50.

Miller, Betty A. and Oscar R. Miller. *The Cornelius Jansen Family History,* 1822-1973. By the Authors, Box 229, Berlin, Ohio. 73 pp. $3.00.

Quiring, Dr. Walter, and Helen Bartel. *In the Fullness of Time.* 150 Years of Mennonite Sojourn in Russia. Reeve Bean Limited, Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, 212 pp. $16.50.

Schrag, Martin. *The European History of the Swiss Mennonites from Volhynia.* Swiss Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association, Mennonite Press, North Newton, Kansas. 128 pp. $4.50.

Stucky, Harley J. *A Century of Russian Mennonite History in America.* North Newton, Kansas. 127 pp. $4.00.

Suderman, Elmer F. *What Can We Do Here?* Centennial poetry. Daguerrotype Publishers, St. Peter, Minnesota. 40 pp. $2.00.

Sudermann, Leonard. Translated by Elmer F. Suderman. *From Russia to America:* In Search of Freedom. Derksen Printers, Ltd., Steinbach, Manitoba, 47 pp. $2.00.

Toews, A.P. *The Mennonite Church of Manitoba.* Lark Printing, Rosenort, Manitoba. 93 pp.

Toews, Julius G. and Lawrence Klippenstein, editors. *Manitoba Mennonite Memories.* Manitoba Centennial Committee, Gretna, Manitoba, $7.50 paperback, $9.95.

Tri-College Choirs of Hesston, Bethel and Tabor. *Music for the Centennial,* 1874-1974. Sponsored by Tri-College Centennial Committee. Available through Mennonite Bookstores. LP Album. $4.00.

Unruh, N. H. *Kaunst du di noch dentje?* (Low German) Morris, Manitoba. $2.00.

Wedel, David C. *The Story of Alexanderwohl.* Goessel Centennial Committee, Goessel, Kansas. 194 pp. $6.00.

The Swiss-Germans in South Dakota, prepared by the Centennial Committee, Pine Hill Printery, Freeman, South Dakota. 200 pp. $6.00.

Wiebe, David V. *They Seek a Country.* A Survey of Mennonite Migrations. The Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, Hillsboro, Kansas 2nd. ed. 228 pp. $6.00.

History of the Hutterite Mennonites. The Hutterite Centennial Steering Committee, Freeman, South Dakota. 172 pp. $6.00.

Wiebe, Joel A., Raymond F. Wiebe, Vernon R. Wiebe (compilers and editors). *The Groening/Wiebe Family* 1768-1974. 2nd Ed. Available from the authors, Hillsboro, Kansas. 294 pp.

Interior view of one of the Mennonite immigrant houses in Kansas a century ago. The Santa Fe Railroad, from whom the Kansas settlers purchased their land, assisted in erecting five temporary houses of this type in various communities.