

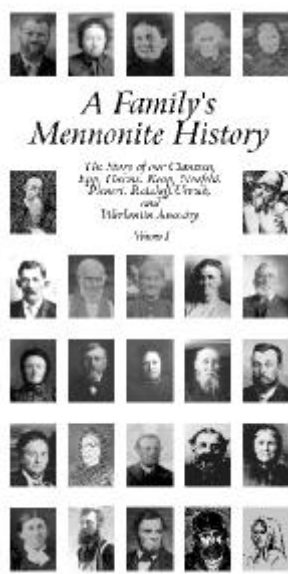
# *A Family's Mennonite History*

*The Story of Our Claassen,  
Epp, Harms, Koop, Neufeld,  
Plenert, Ratzlaff, Unruh,  
and  
Warkentin Ancestry*

*Kenneth L. Ratzlaff*

*Volume I*

*Second Edition*



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### Cover page

Top Row: Jacob P. Ratzlaff, Helena Dirks Unruh, Maria Unruh Ratzlaff, Kornelius Plenert, Anna Bartel Plenert

Second Row: Two posthumous portraits of Menno Simons

Third Row: Cornelius J. Plenert, Heinrich W. Ratzlaff, Anna Wilms Ratzlaff, Bena Ratzlaff Plenert, Peter P. Warkentin

Fourth Row: Justina Wiens Warkentin, Peter J. Warkentin, Anna Koop Warkentin, Cornelius S. Harms, Peter T. Harms

Fifth Row: Katharine Epp Harms, Katharina Fröse Harms, David Harms, David M. Unruh, Eva Schröder Unruh

Sixth Row: Eva Unruh Harms, Isaac U. Neufeld, Johann Claassen, 1874 sketches of two Mennonite immigrants

Printed December 29, 1998 (4:28PM).

*For*

*Our Children,  
Michael Mpho Ratzlaff,  
Jonathan James Ratzlaff,  
Rebekah Margaret Harms Ratzlaff,  
and  
Our Grand-daughters,  
Kathryn Abigail  
Gypsy Marie*

*In Honor of*

*Our Parents,  
Kermit O. Ratzlaff and  
Ruth Warkentin Ratzlaff,  
Isaac N. Harms and  
Annie Louise Weaver Harms*





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# 1 Preface

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you; your elders, and they will tell you.

Deuteronomy 32:7

## **Family History: The Story of Ourselves**

Each of us are made unique, both a child of God and the offspring of our parents. This book is an exploration, a search for both our uniqueness and our commonality.

We are who we are because of a combination of important contributions--the grace of God, a special family environment, a unique larger environment and a singular set of genes. To learn who we are and why we are, we must learn about a God of grace and about our ancestors: how we were shaped by a God who has been constant, and by parents who were shaped in part by their parents who in turn were shaped by their's for generations.

But this is not a separated story of the ephemeral and the eternal. It is both a story of families and a story of faith. Among our kin in history, we do not find one without the other, and our family story has real meaning only as we find these themes together.

That understanding defines the beginning of our story: an exceptional time when our family before us learned the meaning of a unique identification with the story of God. For this family, that bond was created in the conflict and upheaval of the Reformation in Europe.

From there we travel, not only over 400 years, but over much of both well-known and exotic Europe:

- N beginning in Switzerland (with roots in Germany),
- N west into Holland and Strassbourg,
- N east to Prussia (now Poland),
- N south into central and southeastern Poland (the latter now western Ukraine),
- N southeast into South Russia (now Ukraine) and the Caucasus,
- N and finally to North America.

These were not rootless wanderers simply looking for better grazing or finer cropland. They were communities seeking to follow God's leading as they understood it, every move considered in the light of being true disciples.

It is also a story of many names. Although we carry but one or two family names, we are the descendants of many. The names in our family story are not common where most of us live, and that can help tie us even closer to the story of God working in a community. In the community of our ancestry the names include Ratzlaff, Warkentin, Harms, Unruh, Plenert, Neufeld and Koop. For each of those names, there was a time at which someone made a spiritual commitment to be part of a new community. Later, someone with that name made the decision to leave the old world and come to America. That commitment and that decision, and therefore that name, are a part of us as well.

## **Family History and Mennonite History**

One more name belongs to this family, and that name is Mennonite. The community of our ancestry which sprang from the Reformation called first for a church made of only believers.

From that commitment came the need for baptism of adults, which was for many a re-baptism, and they were called Anabaptists. Some call this part of the Reformation the Radical Reformation. Many detractors attached the name Mennists, named for their longest surviving leader, Menno Simons. Today we use the name Mennonites.

Saying that this community always sought be a community of faith does not automatically make it so. There were periods when they were seduced into confusing the community for God or into confusing the community for the people in the community. These difficulties also form part of who we are, and we need to remember to include them. In fact, more than one story has developed that our forebears did not want us to know.

Unsolved mystery remains a component our story. It can be difficult to determine how choices were made 50 and 100 years ago that have remained influences on us today.

However, even with all the difficulties, the story can still be worth telling and, even more, worth knowing.

### **The Objectives of This Story**

I also want to make a note about the objectives in writing this history. This is for my family. It is not meant to give the big picture of Mennonite history but only the picture of our forebears within Mennonite History. Even so, I realize that it contains all the Mennonite history that some might ever read. I hope it provides a fair picture.

While I have tried to credit all sources in a moderately rigorous way, I have not obtained permission for use of figures. For family distribution, this use should be covered under Fair Use copyright rules.

I also debated whether to use footnotes. They are included, mostly to answer the reader's question, "how does he know that?" but also to make further research and reading possible.

My hope is that anyone reading this volume will feel the connection between us and our forebears. I both have been inspired by the tradition that makes us who we are today and have been concerned by what we have lost.

### **Organization**

For practical reasons, this study is divided into two volumes.

Volume I contains three sections. The first sets the stage for our family by explaining an overall picture of Mennonite history. We need to understand that history in order to understand why our Mennonite forebears made the decisions that they made.

The following twelve chapters give the history of each of the twelve Mennonite families in our ancestry that had to decide whether or not to come to North America. For some we have a great deal of information, but for several, we are still looking for fundamental facts.

The third section contains the supplementary information. There are pedigree charts for each of these families and group sheets (tables containing detailed information about each family) for each of the twelve families and their ancestry. At the end a list of references, a glossary, and an index can be found.

A second volume is underway. Chapters on the next three generations are being researched and written.

## **A Request of Readers**

I am always looking for more and better information and pictures and for corrections. I would greatly appreciate hearing from anyone who has something that they are willing to share. I am glad to pay the cost of making copies of photos or information. In particular, there are families described herein for which no photo has been found, and I am eager to find pictures of, for example, Heinrich Neufeld.

Genealogists are always trying to push back the historical boundaries, and I would appreciate receiving information about additional ancestors, but even more, I would like to find more about the histories of these people. Rev. Peter Ratzlaff presents the greatest difficulty. I would like to think that yet another edition would be in order.

I have hoped to make this heritage come alive as the stories of real people who made real decisions that determined who and where we are today. Reader questions, comments, and feedback are always welcome.

## **Appreciation**

I have been very dependent on very many people who have provided support for this project in very many ways. Experts have been willing to take time and provide help. Thanks to Peggy Goertzen at the Center for Mennonite Brethren Studies at Tabor College and the staff of the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College. Many individuals have given pointers to further information.

Finally, credit is due my wife, Virginia Harms Ratzlaff, who has demonstrated great patience as this passion for history overwhelmed me. Without her encouragement I would not have been able to take the time to engage in this project.

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## The Stage on Which We Find Our Story

### IF YOU WHISPER

*Walking alone on the Kansas Prairie  
the prodigal sun at your back,  
if you whisper, your words wander  
all the way out into that space*

*that goes around the world and beyond.  
It doesn't take long for those whispered  
words to cross the Atlantic,  
meet the grootfoda you never knew*

*crying his way on the Switzerland  
sailing solitary seas to Philadelphia.  
They whisper their way, these words,  
yet farther back to Pordenau in the Molochna*

*where Grandmother bakes rache tweback  
for the long journey west. The words  
you whispered, the same words, yet changed  
somehow, come home to you from where*

*yesterday hides, whisper to you in soft  
hesitant voice, of grandparents, poor  
on Russian Steppes, of Menno and martyrs,  
to ask you, stroller on the prairie:*

*"Do you understand who you are?"*

Elmer Suderman<sup>1</sup>





## 2 The Emergence of Mennonites and a Free Church

The context in the Reformation for our Anabaptist beginning was a period of rapid change in the church and society, but this change was many years in the making. If major change was needed and a break from the established church became necessary, there must have been something wrong with the way things were.

### The Church Losing its Way

In the early 1500s, *the* church on the continent of Europe was the Roman Catholic Church. With very minor exceptions, to be Christian was to be part of a structure headed by the Pope in Rome, and to be a citizen or subject of any nation, state or principality was to be Catholic. They were inseparable in most people's eyes. In fact, the church as a political power was bigger, even more powerful, than any nation or state.

Such power will inevitably find self-preservation to be its primary mission and corruption its inevitable ingredient. That was how it turned out in the early 1500s.

The beginning of this state of affairs is readily traced to the conversion of Constantine of Rome. As General Constantine, he saw a vision of the cross against the sun after defeating his son's army in 312, and to him, it was a divine sign. Constantine became emperor in 324 and established Christianity as the state religion of the Roman empire.

Constantine accomplished conversion to what he believed to be Christianity, not on confession of one's own personal faith, but through baptism of his army by driving them through a river.

Thereafter, church missionaries, loyal to both Pope and God, accompanied the troops, following each conquest with "Christianization" as long as the Roman empire persisted. Later, Europe emerged as a collection of nation-states, but there remained one Pope and a church with immense power in each state. That church held huge amounts of land which provided material prosperity and, because it taught that it held the keys to heaven, the Church held power over local sovereigns. The capacity for moral leadership was diminished, dominated by the need to maintain prosperity and power.

The need for reform was recognized by the twelfth century,<sup>2</sup> but elements of that reform actually led to further abuses: a new requirement of celibacy for the clergy led to monastic frugality which actually led to wealth that corrupted. In the Papacy, it took the form of establishing a papal theocracy while maintaining independence from control by kings and emperors. In the monastery, it meant that the truly religious joined the religious orders while those outside expected to be judged by a different standard.

As some nation-states recovered and internal problems built up in Rome, the Papacy found itself without the financial base that it once had through its land holdings. Consequently, new methods of raising funds were developed. The best-known was the indulgence. A theory developed that the Pope had control of surplus merits from the saints that he could dispense to remit penalties that he had imposed.

The indulgence was so successful that it was soon expanded to cover removal of guilt from sin and aid for relatives in purgatory. The church's income from the sale of indulgences at one point tripled the income of the king of France.<sup>2</sup>

With these burdens on the people and continual schism in the Papacy, the time was ripe for reform from the outside, *both* on a political basis and for spiritual reasons. In the 1400s, some small sects did emerge. John Wyclif in England and John Hus of Hungary who was finally burned at the stake in Germany in 1415 sowed early seeds.<sup>3</sup>

## **The Reform Takes Root**

Martin Luther led the first broadly successful reform. His wrestling with issues of abuse and of theology led to the famous posting of his ninety-five theses on the church door in Wittenberg, Germany, on October 31, 1517. Luther reacted strongly to the prevailing theology that made salvation depend on works more than on faith. With the support of powerful political benefactors, he founded the Lutheran Church. Although not the first reformer, his activity was the first to found a successful organized movement, a new denomination.

There were those, however, who were disturbed by Luther's willingness to emphasize only the acceptance of faith at the expense of the life of discipleship and by his compromises with political authority in order to achieve dominance by his movement.

One who started to carry the reform further was Ulrich Zwingli (1484-1531). Zwingli had been a very capable student, and he engaged in deep studies of the New Testament while a priest in Switzerland. He began to preach against the power of the church, its wealth, and its mercenary armies that attracted many Swiss young men. But most of all, he spoke out against theological specifics: the veneration of images, fasting during Lent, and the celibacy of the clergy.<sup>2</sup>

In 1522, Zwingli was a priest in the urban center, Zürich, but he resigned, leaving the Roman Catholic Church. The city council was in a mood to show independence from the Pope as well, and they reinstated Zwingli as head of the local parish, now no longer Roman Catholic but "Reformed".

Zwingli's forthright preaching attracted several young radicals from the university who sought to learn from Zwingli how to study the Bible for themselves. At the same time, his preaching was starting to strike a nerve with the political authorities in Zürich. Consequently, Zwingli made his compromises. His definition of the church delineated the limits of Zwingli's reformation. For him, the church was synonymous with the political canton of Zürich where he had authority. It was inconceivable that the church and the state should be separated.

## **The Beginnings of an Anabaptist Revolution**

In Zürich, several of Zwingli's young students began to meet among themselves to further study the scripture and to attempt to understand the true nature of the church.<sup>4</sup> Conrad Grebel was a native of Zürich, the son of a councilman, and educated in the great universities of Vienna and Paris. Felix Manz, also a native of Zürich, was the son of a religious leader. Georg Blaurock came from a monastic establishment; he had renounced the Catholic Church even before Zwingli and had come to Zürich to find new answers. They were prepared to follow the Gospel further.

On January 17, 1525, these and others, calling themselves “Brethren”, participated in a public debate over the issue of the doctrine of infant baptism in Zürich, an issue that was very important to the church establishment. Neither Luther nor Zwingli could accept the separation of church and state, and infant baptism was a necessary component. At the time of an infant’s baptism, the child’s name was registered in the church. These lists were simultaneously the government records. They even formed the basis for military conscription. The objection of the Brethren, which was theological to the core, had profound political ramifications.

Believers’ baptism, on the other hand, calls for an individual making a free choice, and a free choice implies sufficient maturity to make that choice. Furthermore, if the choice is real, not everyone will make the choice to be a part of the church. Infant baptism could never be consistent with the Brethren understanding of the church.

The debate was held before the city council of Zürich which was not ready for the concept of a believers-only church. Within days, the council issued two orders: all infants must be baptized within eight days of birth, and special meetings for Bible study must cease. Non-citizens who were a part of the Brethren were banished from Zürich.

The next step for the Brethren, now in defiance of Zwingli and the city council, followed logically. At a Bible study in the home of one of the Brethren, they introduced the practice of believer’s baptism. An old Hutterite document describes what followed:<sup>5</sup>

And it came to pass as they were together, anxiety came upon them, yes, pressed upon their hearts. Therefore they began to bow their knees before Almighty God in heaven and to call upon Him as the one who knows the heart; and they prayed that He would grant them to do His divine will, and that He would reveal His mercy unto them. Flesh and blood or human wisdom had not brought them to this point, because they well knew what they would have to suffer on account of it. After prayer, Georg of the House of Jakob [Blaurock] arose and entreated Conrad Grebel for God’s sake to baptize him with the right Christian baptism upon the confession of his faith. And as he kneeled down with this request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such work...

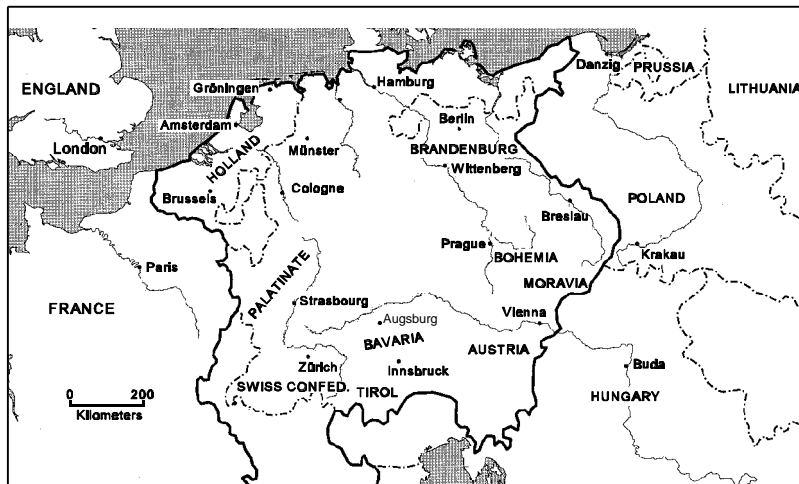
Then Blaurock baptized all those who wished to participate. Communion followed the baptism.

Symbolically, they had made a revolutionary break, the most radical act of the Reformation. First, they had repudiated infant baptism and broken the council’s edict. Second, they had been baptized a second time, an act considered unpardonably blasphemous. Third, those who baptized and served communion had not been ordained and could trace no line of authority to the Pope. Finally, and most important, they instituted the believers’ church, the church in which one became a member by his or her own confession of faith rather than by citizenship in a political entity. In such a church, they believed, faith must bear fruit in purer living.

The Zwinglians called the Brethren “Wiedertäufer”, or *re*-baptizers, a name they rejected since they denied the validity of the infant baptism. Gradually, however, in English the term stuck and became “Anabaptists”, a term that remains today.

Over the following years, Anabaptism spread throughout the cantons of Switzerland, into South Germany, Austria and Moravia, and northwest to Holland. These locations are found on the map which has been adapted from a map in a Mennonite Atlas by William Schroeder.<sup>6</sup>

## The Martyrs and the Persecution



Map of Europe showing many of the locations touched by the Anabaptist revolution in the mid-1500s. Adapted from a map in reference 6.

The following phase of our story is characterized by martyrdom. The first martyr of the Anabaptists in the “Radical Reformation” was Felix Manz. A decree had been issued in March of 1526 that those refusing to comply with the earlier dicta were to be drowned.<sup>7</sup> On January 5, 1527, Felix Manz was rowed from the town hall in Zürich to the Limmat River; his hands were tied to his knees while a Reformed clergyman attempted to secure a recantation. Felix uttered Christ’s prayer, “Father, into Thy hands I commend my soul,” and was thrown into the river while his family and friends on the river bank encouraged him to be steadfast.

Georg Blaurock was beaten and exiled later that same day. He became a missionary through the Tyrol and Austrian region until he was burned at the stake a little over two years later.

Conrad Grebel escaped execution only by dying of the plague after a period of imprisonment.

During these years, the Anabaptist movement spread in all directions. In South Germany, large congregations sprang up first in Augsburg, where repression was fierce, and then in Strasbourg, where they found relative freedom. One important leader was Michael Sattler, an ex-monk who was tortured to death in 1527.<sup>7</sup> Hans (John) Hut was also imprisoned. He died in his cell from an accidental fire. Nevertheless, he was tried and condemned as a heretic, and his body was burned at the stake.<sup>7</sup>

The number of Anabaptist martyrs ran into the thousands as edicts were issued. A count in the Palatinate asked “What shall I do? The more I condemn and execute, the more they increase.”<sup>4</sup>

In spite of being scattered and having no central leadership or leaders who lived even long enough to develop great authority, they held remarkably close to a core set of essentials. A summary is difficult, but useful:

- Baptism is a symbol, not a sacrament. That is, the act contains no spiritual power on its own. The form is not significant; sometimes they immersed, sometimes they sprinkled. However, baptism must be administered only on confession of faith of the individual; consequently infant baptism is invalid.
- Spiritual life must affect one *personally*. Conversions result from deep conviction and must be followed by a sense of contrition.
- Each one must learn to use the Bible as a guide and endeavor to interpret the Bible message for him- or herself. Bible study is core to the spiritual life.
- Ministers, like those in the New Testament, should live by their own labor.
- Love must be the basis of all social relations; the injunction to “Love thine enemies” was taken literally. War could not be sanctioned, and military service must be rejected.
- Taking literally the Biblical injunction to “Swear not at all” in the Sermon on the Mount, they refuse the oath.
- The Christian life must bear the fruit of pure living, free of vices. Membership requires freedom from adultery, gambling, drunkenness, usury, etc.
- In private property, they were seldom communalists, as is often thought. (The exception is the Hutterites who keep a community of goods to this day.) However, Anabaptists were critical of clergy who held a “fat living,” and they held that compassion for the less fortunate must constrain the Christian to share liberally.
- The Lord’s Supper (communion) is held to be a symbol, not a sacrament. That is, there is no spiritual benefit in the mere ingesting of the bread or wine.



Sixteenth-century engraving of an Anabaptist preacher. (Reference 2.)

To say that all who were known as Anabaptists agreed perfectly would also be incorrect. The short lifetime of most Anabaptist leaders prevented them from providing stability or the checks and balances that are needed. There were those inclined toward mysticism on one hand. On the other, there was a tragic incident in the 1530s. A militant millennialist, Jan Matthijsz (also known as Jan van Leyden), joined himself to the Anabaptists in Münster who were suffering under great repression. Matthijsz has been described as the “David Koresh<sup>a</sup> of the sixteenth century”<sup>8</sup>, and the parallels are remarkable. When the local leader was imprisoned, Matthijsz declared Münster to be the “New Jerusalem”. The military forces of Catholic Bishop von Waldeck brought a siege that led to intense famine. When the end came, the followers of Matthijsz were slaughtered except for a few leaders who were publicly tortured to death. The cages in which their bones were displayed still hang from a church in the city.

The Münsterite leaders never had significant intercourse with other Anabaptists; their only commonality was baptism. Though mainstream Anabaptist leaders repudiated the Münsterites' violent means from the beginning, the entire movement was immediately tarred with their brush. There are those who attempt to group the Münsterites with Mennonite Anabaptists to this day.

Persecution in northern Germany continued unabated throughout the 1530s, directed toward the peaceful Anabaptists as well as those who had strayed to violent means. Even Martin Luther signed a memo in 1536 extending the use of the sword to punishment of peaceful Anabaptists:

I assent. Although it seem cruel to punish them with the sword, it is crueller that they condemn the ministry of the Word and have no well-grounded doctrine and suppress the true and in this way seek to subvert the civil order.<sup>9</sup>

Luther clearly felt threatened by the separation of church and state. However, within a few years he opposed the killing of peaceful Anabaptists. Even so, in his home parish the persecution continued with intensity equalling that found anywhere in Germany.

### **Anabaptism in the Low Countries**

In 1530, the movement proceeded to the Low Countries: Holland and Friesland. The reformation had not yet reached this corner of Europe. Melchior Hoffman came to Holland, one of the first of the Anabaptists to preach there. Jan Trypmaker was one of the first Anabaptist converts.

Holland turned out to be no less dangerous than the other regions in which Anabaptists were martyred. Philip II of Spain controlled Holland and was influenced by the Spanish Inquisition. The Inquisition was a terrible scourge on the church as a whole, possibly best understood in a wonderful story by Dostoevsky, “The Grand Inquisitor,”<sup>10</sup> in which not even Christ himself is free from condemnation by the powerful church establishment bent on forcing society to become part of the church.

---

<sup>a</sup> David Koresh was the leader of the Branch Davidians in Waco, Texas. Most of the Davidians died in their “New Jerusalem” in 1993 as a result of a fire following a siege by the government.



Dirk Philips, early Anabaptist leader and bishop in Holland and Danzig.

Trypmaker was beheaded the following year after preaching in Amsterdam and The Hague. Among the early converts of Trypmaker was Sicke Freerks (also called Snijder), a tailor. Freerks was beheaded with the sword in Leeuwärden in 1533,<sup>7</sup> but his witness bore a lasting impact. A priest named Menno Simons later wrote:

...it happened, before I had ever heard of the existence of brethren, that a God-fearing, pious hero named Sicke Snijder was beheaded at Leeuwärden for being rebaptized. It sounded very strange to me to hear of a second baptism. I examined the Scriptures diligently and pondered them earnestly, but could find no report of infant baptism.<sup>11</sup>

Menno became a great leader among the Anabaptists, but that story comes later.

Able leadership developed and brought some stability to the Dutch Anabaptists. Obbe Phillips and his brother Dirk were well-educated and devout Catholics from Leeuwärden. Dirk came out of the Catholic order of the Franciscans while Obbe was a surgeon. Both became elders in the Anabaptist movement; Obbe was ordained first and soon found himself dealing with the fallout from the Münsterite crisis.

Persecution continued with a vengeance in the Low Countries. The accounts were held dear by the communities of Anabaptists, and in 1660 Thieleman J. van Bracht published a collection of hundreds of accounts of martyrdom, from the first century through the date of his writing.<sup>7</sup> The *Martyr's Mirror*, over 1100 pages in the English edition, contains traditional reports from the first century (including the apostles) through the fifteenth century followed by accounts of Anabaptist martyrs that he had assembled. Over fifty engravings add graphic detail. This volume remains in print, and many of the original engraving plates were recently recovered after having been lost in World War II. As a picture of the importance of the tradition of the martyrs, it remains a valuable addition to anyone seeking to understand their Anabaptist spiritual heritage.

One of the favorite narratives of the Anabaptist martyrs is that of Dirk Willems, taken from the *Martyr's Mirror*.<sup>7</sup>

In the year 1569 a pious, faithful brother and follower of Jesus Christ, named Dirk Willems, was apprehended at Asperen, in Holland, and had to endure sever tyranny from the papists. But as he had founded his faith not upon the drifting sand of human commandments, but upon the firm foundation stone, Christ Jesus, he, notwithstanding all evil winds of human doctrine, and heavy showers of tyrannical and sever persecution, remained immovable and steadfast unto the end; wherefor when the chief Shepherd shall appear in the clouds of heaven and gather together His elect from all the ends of the earth, he shall also through grace hear the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."...

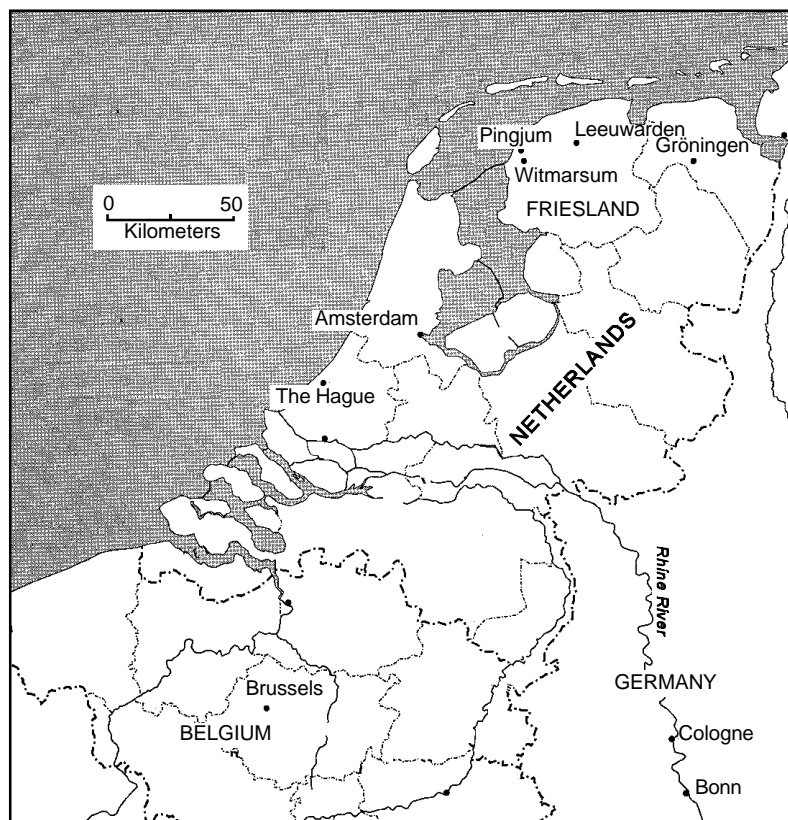
Concerning his apprehension, it is stated by trustworthy persons, that when he fled he was hotly pursued by a thief-catcher, and as there had been some frost, said Dirk Willems ran before over the ice, getting across with considerable peril. The thief-catcher following him broke through, when Dirk Willems, perceiving that the former was in danger of his life, quickly returned and aided him in getting out, and thus saved his life. The thief-catcher wanted to let him go, but the burgomaster, very sternly called to him to consider his oath, and thus he was again seized by the thief-catcher, and at said place, after severe imprisonment and great trials proceeding from the deceitful papists, put to death at a lingering fire by these bloodthirsty, ravening wolves, enduring it with great steadfastness, and confirming the genuine faith of the truth with his death and blood, as an instructive example to all pious Christians of this time, and to the everlasting disgrace of the tyrannous papists.

Note--In this connection, it is related as true from the trustworthy memoirs of those who were present at the death of this pious witness of Jesus Christ, that the place where this offering occurred was without Asperen, on the side of Leerdam, and that, a strong east wind blowing that day, the kindled fire was much driven away from the upper part of his body, as he stood at the stake; in consequence of which this good man suffered a lingering death, insomuch that in the town of Leerdam, towards which the wind was blowing, he was heard to exclaim over seventy times: "O my Lord; my God," etc., for which cause the judge or bailiff, who was present on horseback, filled with sorrow and regret at the man's sufferings, wheeled about his horse, turning his back toward the place of execution, and said to the executioner: "Dispatch the man with a quick death." But how or in what manner the executioner then dealt with this pious witness of Jesus, I have not



Illustration of the account of the martyr, Dirk Willems, saving the life of his pursuer, taken from the Martyr's Mirror.<sup>7</sup>





Map of Holland and the surrounding region. Adapted from a map from reference 6.

been able to learn, except only, that his life was consumed by the fire, and that he passed through the conflict with great steadfastness, having commended his soul into the hands of God.

### **Menno Simons, the Anabaptists' Greatest Leader**

The story of Menno Simons is important to our story for two reasons: his name is attached to the Anabaptists who call themselves Mennonites, and his leadership helped to define a consistent course.

Menno Simons was born in 1496, a few years after Columbus first sailed for the New World, in the village of Witmarsum which lies several miles from the coast of the North Sea in the region of Friesland; the location is noted on the map on page 21. Menno grew up on a farm and attended grammar school in the monastery.<sup>8</sup> When he was twenty-eight he became priest of the rural village of Pingjum where he officiated with two others about his same age. To that experience, he gave this description:<sup>11</sup>

...The one was my pastor, fairly well educated. The other was below me. Both had read the Scriptures a little, but I had never touched them, for I feared if I should read them, I would be misled. Behold, such an ignorant preacher was I for nearly two years.

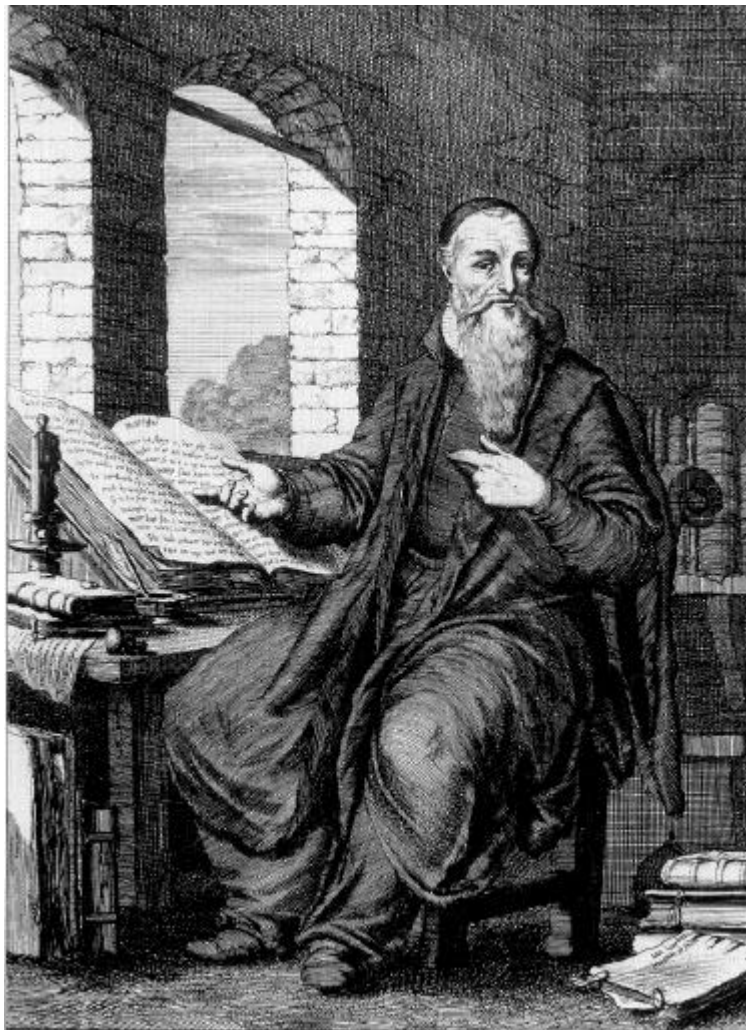
In the year following it occurred to me, as often as I handled the bread and wine in the Mass, that they were not the flesh and blood of the Lord. I thought that the devil was suggesting this so that he might separate me from my faith. I confessed it often, sighed, and prayed; yet I could not come clear of the idea.

The two young men mentioned earlier and I spent our time emptily in playing cards together, drinking, and in diversions as, alas, is the fashion and usage of such useless people. And when we touched upon the Scriptures I could not speak a word with them without being scoffed at, for I did not know what I was driving at, so concealed was the Word of God from my eyes.

Finally, I got the idea to examine the New Testament diligently...

Through the illumination and grace of the Lord I increased in knowledge of the Scriptures daily, and was presently considered by some (not correctly however) to be an evangelical preacher. Everyone sought and desired me; the world loved me and I loved the world...

Menno noted that he had heard of the martyrdom of Sicke Freerks and of infant baptism. He read the Scriptures, then compared them with the writings of Luther and of contemporary theologians, and came to the conclusion that his church was wrong about baptism and about communion. Nevertheless he stayed in his position and became more successful.



Menno Simons. This popular drawing by Jan Luyken dates from 1681, long after Menno's death.

A promotion to the larger parish at Witmarsum followed. The Münster affair was developing, and Menno spoke out effectively against the disciples of Matthijsz, but inwardly, he was not satisfied with what he was offering instead. He knew that in his heart he was in sympathy with the Anabaptists, but not the Münsterites. However, leaving his position of importance and ease was another matter altogether.

Another tragic event made further inroads on Menno. His brother had joined a “neo-Anabaptist” group with some Münsterite tendencies; they believed that there were occasions in which the sword was sanctioned. Most of the group of three hundred were killed.<sup>4</sup> The errors of these courageous people led to their death, and Menno was ready to help take a role in helping them avoid such disastrous mistakes.

In January, 1536, Menno left the priesthood and found refuge in Gröningen where he studied the Bible and began writing. Soon he was baptized by Obbe Philips. He took a wife, Gertrude, who shared his precarious existence, and together they raised at least three children.

The Dutch Anabaptists, in the wake of the Münsterite debacle, were discouraged and in need of a strong leader. Menno was just the one for the job, and in 1537, he was ordained an elder. He, together with Obbe and Dirk Philips, set about providing authentic leadership. Although they called themselves “baptizers” or “*doopsgezinde*”, these Anabaptists came to be known as the followers of Menno or “Mennists”-- in English, “Mennonites”.

Menno’s activities had to be carried out in secret. In 1542, Emperor Charles V issued a decree that

no one was to receive ‘Minne Symonsz’ in his house or on his property; to give him shelter, food or drink; to speak with him; or to read any of his books, under penalty of loss of property and life as a heretic.<sup>4</sup>

A reward of five hundred Dutch Gulden was placed on his head.

Toward the end of his career, Menno wrote:

For eighteen years now I, my poor feeble wife, and little children have endured extreme anxiety, oppression, affliction, misery, and persecution; and at the peril of my life have been compelled everywhere to live in fear and seclusion; yea, while the state ministers repose on beds of ease and of soft pillows, we generally have to hide ourselves in secluded corners; while they appear at weddings and banquet with great pomp, with pipe and lute, we must be on guard when the dogs bark lest the captors be on hand. Whilst they are saluted as doctors, lords, and teachers on every hand, we have to hear that we are ana-baptists, hedge preachers, deceivers and heretics, and must be saluted in the name of the devil. In short, while they are gloriously rewarded for their services with large incomes and easy times, our recompense and portion must be fire, sword, and death.<sup>11</sup>

Stories of narrow escapes have entered the Dutch Mennonite tradition. When Menno, as a hitchhiker, rode on the driver’s seat rather than inside of a coach, his would-be captors asked “Is Menno within?”. He turned around and asked “Is Menno Simons within?”. After being satisfied that he was not within, his enemies left.<sup>4</sup>

A variety of portraits of Menno Simons have been treasured by Mennonites over the years, though none were made by eye-witnesses.<sup>12</sup> Some depict him as lame since he referred to himself as such. A contemporary description from 1550 left this physical description of Menno:

A stout, fat, heavy man, broken or rough of face and a brown beard, could not walk well.<sup>12</sup>

Many depictions, including those on these pages, show a Bible, open to his favorite scripture:

For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. I Corinthians 3:11

Indeed, the authority of the scripture, rather than the authority of the church, was the centerpiece of Menno's theology. That leaves the question of interpretation.

The Anabaptist sources . . . presuppose a different understanding of the way truth is discovered and articulated from that of the Catholic or Reformers' parties. For them truth was given by the Holy Spirit, the governor of the people of God. The setting for its articulation was brotherly discussion. Truth was not defined by an ecclesiastical monarch or secular prince. Neither was it laid out by professional scribes reading and interpreting a book. It was discovered by the whole body of the faithful and represented a *consensus fidelium* when stated.<sup>13</sup>

To be sure, Menno Simons was not the founder of the Mennonites or even of the Dutch Mennonites. He possessed great spiritual and practical leadership ability, but his impact arose in part from the fact that he was one of the few to live long enough to fully employ his gifts. It allowed him to write lasting works such as his "Foundations of Christian Doctrine" in 1539. During his later years, he found refuge on the estate of a sympathetic countess. He died at the age of sixty-six in a village near Hamburg; the village was destroyed by the Thirty-Years War, and the burial location is not precisely known.

In a short biography by Mennonite historian, Cornelius Krahn, Menno's contribution has been summarized:



Menno Simons, engraving by Christoffel van Sichem, 1607. Note the prominent crutch and the open Bible.

The greatness of Menno Simons lies in three factors of influence, his character, his writings, and his message. His character was a steadying, heartening, building influence in the long, hard years of persecution and struggle from 1535 to 1560, based on deep conviction, unshakable devotion, fearless courage, and calm trust. His writings... included some admirable tracts for the times, pointed, plain, well adapted to their purpose. They reached the common people at the right time, and were powerful agents in the building and strengthening of the church and in winning new adherents. But most of all it was the message of Menno Simons which made him a great leader in a great cause. He built no great system of theology, nor did he discover any great new or long-lost principle; he merely caught a clear vision of two fundamental Biblical ideals, the ideal of practical holiness and the ideal of the high place of the church in the life of the believer and in the cause of Christ.<sup>11</sup>



### 3 Setting Our Prussian and Russian Mennonite Stage

From the period of martyrdom of the Anabaptists and leadership by Menno Simons, our Mennonite story goes to a new phase: migration for the sake of the faith. The Mennonites sought places where they could live both peaceably and in a way of life that was consistent with their understanding of a people of God. This was not easy. Always there were those who would not tolerate this people who refused to combine the church with the state. But it was also true that with their work ethic and their Dutch skills of draining swampy lowlands for agriculture, this people brought increased economic prosperity to the local society.

Consequently, we will see a repeated story of moves that initially brought freedom and a slowly rising level of prosperity. However, in each case this phase would be drawn to an end as the government demanded compromise.

#### **Flight to Danzig and the Vistula Delta.**

The religious climate in Holland together with a lack of opportunity led the persecuted Mennonites first to the region that is now northern Poland. The location that involved our family ancestry was Danzig<sup>a</sup> in what is now northern Poland. The location of Danzig can be found in the accompanying map of eastern Europe. Boundaries of countries are not shown because these boundaries moved a great deal over the centuries of our story, but this map covers what is now Poland (Danzig, Elbing, Schwetz, Wymyśle and Warsaw), Russia (Kuban, Petersburg and Moscow), and Ukraine (Volhynia, Chortitza, Molotschna, and Crimea).

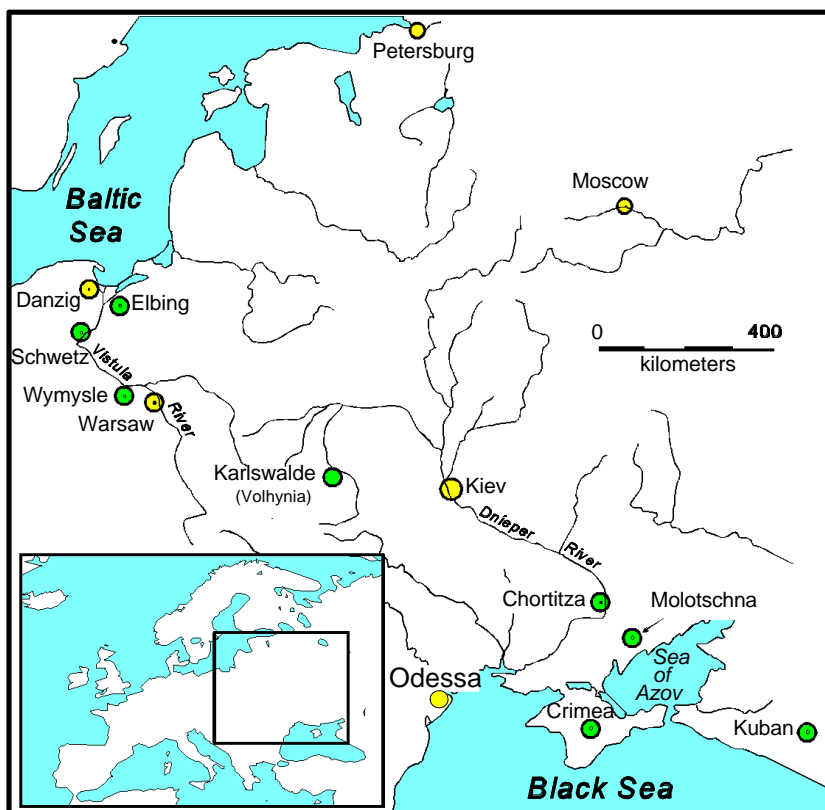
Although Danzig is far from the Netherlands, it was a natural location for Anabaptist expansion. The independent city-state of Danzig and the country of Holland had close economic ties; over a thousand ships traveled between these two locations each year.<sup>14</sup> Outside the city, however, the Vistula river and delta region are marshland. The people of the Danzig area were aware of the skills of the Dutch in draining swamp lands. Consequently, in 1547 Danzig sent a representative to Holland to find settlers to come farm these areas and make them productive.

Dirk Philips, the Dutch Mennonite bishop, also moved to Danzig, providing stable Anabaptist leadership, and the Mennonites rapidly spread through the Vistula delta and later, up the Vistula River valley. Philips ordained the ministers for new congregations, and Menno Simons visited the area at least once.<sup>4</sup> In nearly every location, if not every one, the Mennonites reclaimed otherwise unproductive swampy land, making themselves valuable to the city and regional governments.

Because of their economic value, the Mennonites were issued a series of royal *Privilegia* authorizing the “privilege” of religious toleration even though they could not have citizenship in the country.<sup>15</sup> In 1642, the king of Poland, King Władysław IV issued the following proclamation with reference to the Mennonites:

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<sup>a</sup> Danzig is today known by its Polish name, Gdańsk.

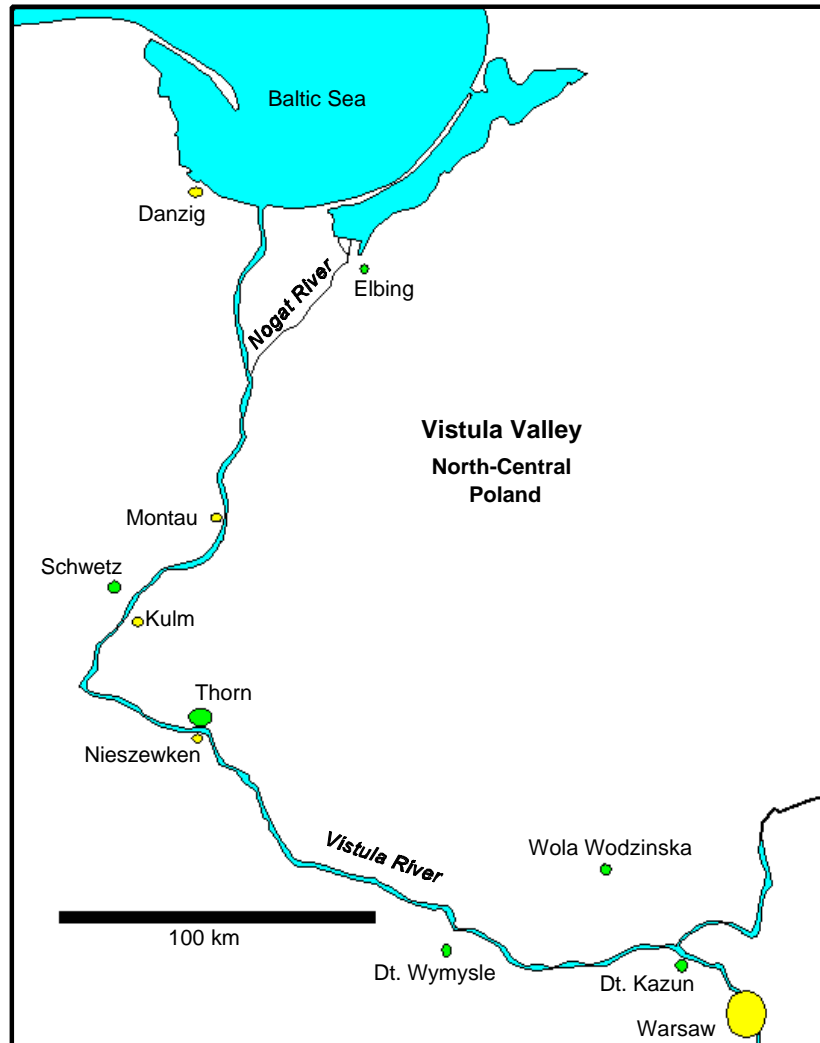


Map of eastern Europe showing the locations inhabited by the Prussian and Russian ancestors in this book. (Adapted from reference 6.)

At the humble request of the aforementioned [Mennonite] inhabitants of our Marienburg islands, we retain and protect completely, without exception, each and every right, privilege, freedom and custom granted by the gracious Sigismund Augustus, our grandfather, and confirmed by the gracious Stephen, Sigismund III...<sup>14</sup>

Accounts of restrictions on the Mennonites are part of each our families' histories. They were not allowed to build schools or their own churches for over a century and a half. Often they were only allowed to sell produce in certain cities or were prohibited in other cities. In the area around Danzig, the Mennonites produced quality braid and lace, and the local guilds attempted to restrict access to markets all over Poland, charging that "adherents to 'harmful sects' were taking bread out of the mouths of its citizens". In many areas restrictions impeded land ownership. These restrictions often arose from the practice of linking military conscription to land ownership. Since the Mennonites would not participate in the military, efforts were made to disallow ownership of land.

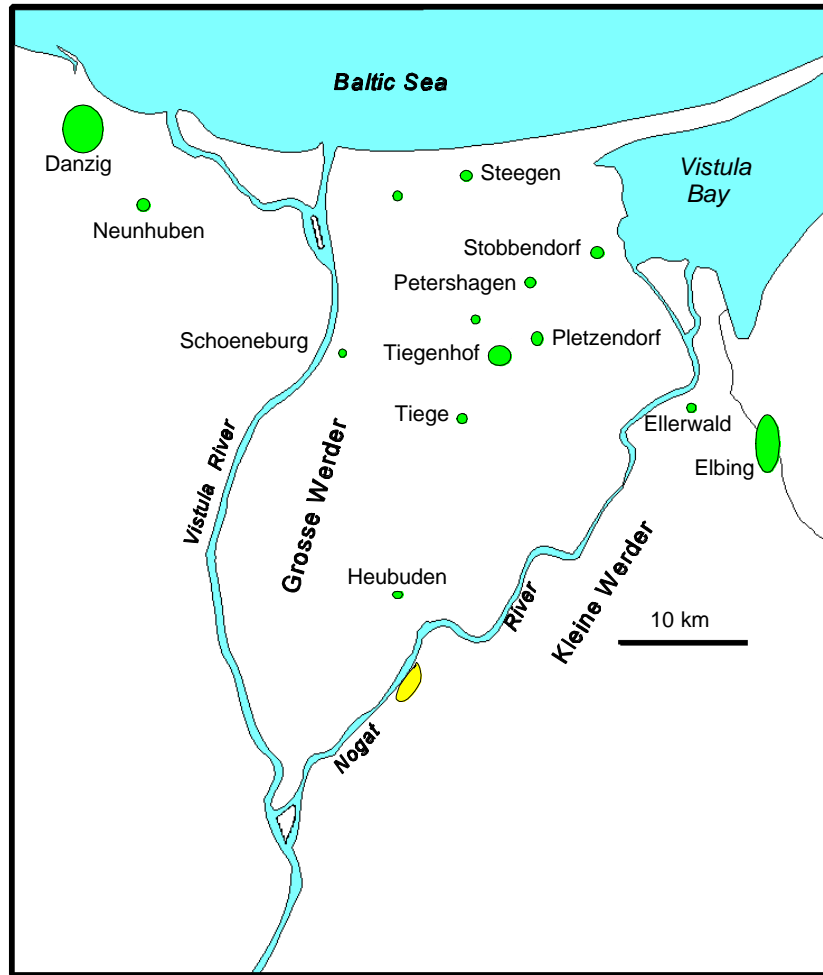




Locations in present-day Poland once inhabited by our ancestry.

Almost always, Mennonites were forbidden to accept converts as members if they came from other denominations, which would have been Catholics or Lutherans. If a Mennonite married outside the church, they were required to move to either the Lutheran or Catholic church. Nevertheless, these marriages did occur, and in those events, some went to the Netherlands to be baptized into the Mennonite church. On return, they could be accepted without penalty.

Natural disasters came repeatedly. Located in lowlands, the farms were vulnerable to floods, and several times these Mennonites requested financial aid from their spiritual brothers and sisters in Holland. Fires also visited their thatch-roofed homes. Following the Mennonite tradition of mutual aid, they formed the *Brandordnung*, the first known fire insurance program. Homes and programs for the care of orphans and widows (the *Waisenamt*) also marked Mennonite communities.



Locations in the Vistula River delta once occupied by our ancestors.

more devastating were the wars. A war with Sweden spread over the region in the early 1700s. Many homes and churches (meeting-houses) were lost during the invasion by Napoleon. records went up in smoke with the meeting-houses.

much remained the language of the Mennonite church in Danzig and Poland for over two hundred years. (It is interesting to note that for ethnic Russian/Prussian Mennonites who think themselves as German-speaking for generations, Dutch was the language of church for much *Plautdietsch*

In the late 1700s, a great change Poland was partitioned in several steps between Prussia, Russia, and Austria. and then n  
n se land, a ruling which was tied to their exemption

from the military. Without land, the young men of the large Mennonite families had no future. These factors once again led to migration, described in the next section.

When we delve into the study of our particular lineage of Mennonites, the stories begin, at least from available information, in this period in the Vistula delta and river valley, located in Poland and Prussia. All of the family names have Dutch, Prussian, or Polish origin.

## Migration to Russia

Farming was key to maintaining a free Mennonite church. Farming communities could maintain separation from the rest of society much more easily than urban communities. Unfortunately, as the Prussians gained ascendancy in the 1700s, the restrictions on land ownership for peaceful Mennonites grew.

A way out of this land problem developed in the mid-1780s.<sup>15</sup> The Russian Empire had been expanding steadily to the south, taking vast regions from the Turks of the Ottoman Empire. Many of the occupants had fled or were driven away, and most were nomads. Czarina Catherine II (the Great), herself an ethnic German, had brought in a great many ethnic Germans to settle the steppes of South Russia under very favorable terms. Today, the region forms the country of Ukraine.

Georg Trappe, a Russian of German heritage, convinced the czarina's Vice Regent, Grigorii Alexandrovich Potemkin, to recruit among the Dutch Mennonites of Danzig.<sup>15</sup> In response, the Mennonites sent two scouts with Trappe to investigate the Dnieper River region. These scouts found an ideal location near the town of Kherson on the Dnieper, and they began negotiating an agreement with the Russian government. In 1787 their selection was part of a Twenty-Point Petition to the czarina. First they discussed it with Trappe, and then they met with Potemkin. Finally they were required to spend time traveling with the czarina herself. The scouts ended up with a very favorable arrangement, though not everything they asked for was granted.

This historic agreement, the *Privilegium*, was completed and ratified a few years later by Czar Paul. It opened with the following statement:<sup>16</sup>

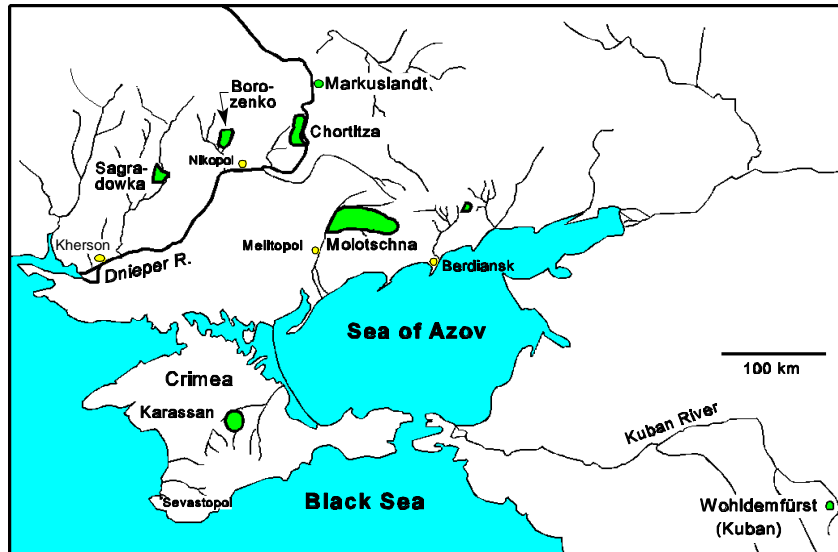
We, by the grace of God,  
Paul the First, Emperor and Autocrat of all Russians, etc., etc.

In order to confirm our most gracious approval of the petition sent to us by the Mennonite settlers in the province of New Russia who according to the testimony of their supervisors and who, because of their extraordinary industriousness and exemplary lifestyle can serve as a model for the rest of the colonists settled there and therefore deserve our special attention, we have in this charter not only reaffirmed all the previously granted rights and privileges but have also, in order to further encourage their diligence and care for farming, graciously granted them additional privileges...

The privileges may be summarized in ten points:

First, freedom was granted to follow their religious teachings unhindered. One specific was that they would not be required to swear oaths. However, they would not be allowed to proselytize among Christians of other churches but only among non-Christians;

Second, an allotment of 65 dessiatines (about 165 acres) of land was to be provided per family;



Map of the South Russia of the 19th century showing the locations in which lived the Russian Mennonites in this book.

Third, the Mennonites had freedom to begin economic enterprises other than farming;

Fourth, they received the right to brew and distill beer, vinegar, and brandy;

Fifth, non-Mennonites would not be permitted to bring taverns into the colony;

Sixth, according to the pact, no Mennonite would ever be forced to participate in military or civil service;

Seventh, though exempted from serving in the military, Mennonites could be required to care for wounded soldiers and transport supplies (a service to be known as the *Podwod*);

Eighth, procedures of inheritance of land were outlined; among these procedures a prohibition on dividing farms among one's heirs;

Ninth, a 10- to 15-year exemption from imperial taxation was granted;

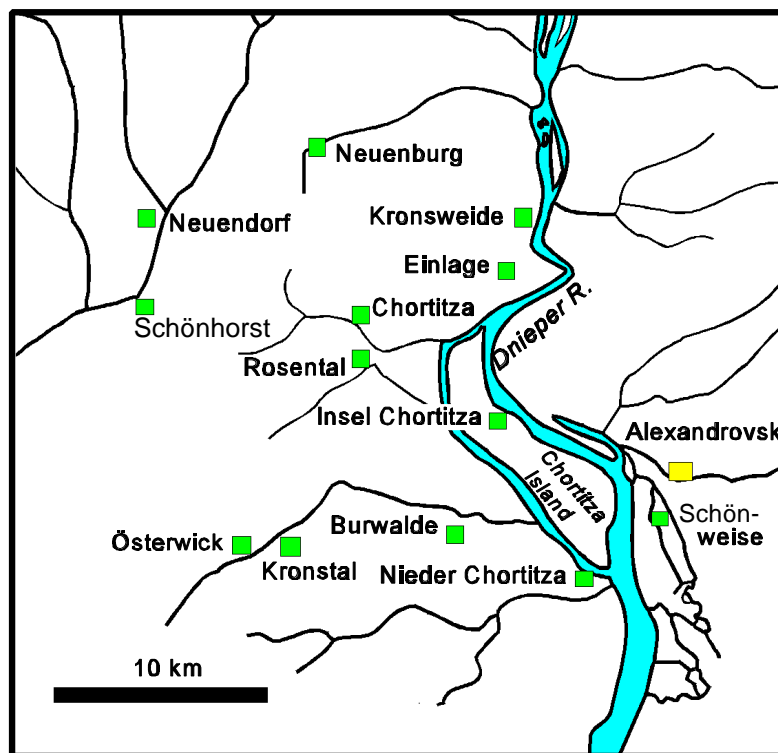
Tenth, all authorities would be required to protect the Mennonite privileges.

Other German colonies in South Russia negotiated their own privileges, some being granted greater privilege, most less. Two items were granted only to Mennonites: production of alcoholic beverages and exemption from military conscription.

The first wave of emigrants began to organize but found roadblocks. The Prussian authorities in both Danzig and the Elbing area, wishing not to lose a skilled workforce, delayed providing the necessary documents. In the end only the poorest were permitted to leave. This had important ramifications down the road. The first Mennonite settlers in South Russia had the fewest skills, and probably the most important, they lacked church leadership. The ministers were unpaid in those times, and consequently, only the moderately well off had the time to be ministers. Without church leadership, they had no leadership at all since they had never been involved in any organizing outside of their church.

The early settlers encountered serious setbacks in their migration.<sup>17</sup> Upon reaching South Russia after a long and difficult trip, they were told that the land that had been selected was unavailable due to continuing military activity in the area. Their location was moved upriver to less desirable land along the Chortitza River and on Chortitza Island in the Dnieper. Furthermore, their goods, which were shipped by the government, had been pilfered, and finally, their building materials, supplied by the government, did not arrive in a timely matter. The first order of business was preparing shelter, even though many were sure that they should be moved to better land. The first winter was very difficult, and without spiritual leadership, they were not equipped to handle the difficulties. It was a difficult time, and morale sank.

They began agricultural activities, mostly raising livestock. The region was much different than anywhere that Mennonites had lived in Prussia. Instead of having to drain swamp land,



Map of the Chortitza Colony in South Russia in about 1836. (Adapted from references 6 and 17.)

they encountered dry, windy steppes<sup>a</sup> where the lack of water, not the excess, was a serious problem. Instead of having to clear trees, they had to plant them if there were to be any at all.

Compounding their problems with the new environment, difficulties developed with the nomadic Nogai-Tatars in the area. Theft of livestock became a serious problem, and they consequently moved into small, close villages which together made up the colony named Chortitza. It was later called the "Old Colony". In spite of the difficulties, by 1796 several hundred families had made the trek from Prussia to Chortitza.

By 1804, the demand for Mennonite land had outstripped the government allocation, and 162 additional families came from Prussia. They founded the Molotschna Colony to the southeast on the Molotschnaia (milk) River after wintering over in Chortitza. The Molotschna offered richer soil than in Chortitza, but the rivers and streams in the area did not flow year around. A German merchant traveling in the area two years later described the land...

and reported that the grass was as tall as a man and so thick that it could be penetrated only with difficulty. Not a single tree or even a bush was visible on the broad plain.<sup>16</sup>

These families had a great advantage over the first Chortitza settlers in that they had more economic resources, better support by the Russian government, and the Chortitza experience from which to learn.

### **Life in Molotschna on the Steppes**

Villages were organized as *Strassendorfs* in which all of the farm homes faced a single street, typically about 20 farmsteads on each side of the street. The farmstead was typically 84 meters (forty *Faden*) wide and spread out behind the house. An example of a *Strassendorf* village is Alexanderwohl in Molotschna, shown on page 53. The house was placed nearly 30 meters from the street, and the garden was located in that area. Village names were often the same as the ones that had been their homes in Prussia: Ohrloff, Tiegenhagen, Schönsee, etc.

Each farm (*Wirtschaft*) was initially 65 dessiatines (175 acres), and the provisions of the *Privilegium* prevented settlers from dividing it into smaller farms. Later, when land became in short supply, some additional land that was held in common by the community as a whole was divided into "small farms" (*Kleinwirtschaften*) of 40 acres.

The basic political/governmental unit was the village.<sup>18</sup> The *Wirtschaft* owners formed the village assembly which elected a mayor or *Schulze*. The *Schulze* in turn reported to the administrator or *Ober-Schulze* of the next higher unit, the *volost*. Most colonies comprised a single *volost*, but Molotschna was divided into two. While the Mennonite Church was, in principle, separate, the church played a dominate role in decision-making.

Homes in South Russia were patterned after the style in Prussia, as a "house-barn"; the barn was built onto the back of the house. The design is shown on page ?. Initially, they were built of wood, but as the colonists became more prosperous, they built of burnt brick. The roofs were initially thatched, but later, thatch gave way to tile roofs.

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<sup>a</sup> The steppes are the Russian equivalent of the North American prairie, characterized by treeless expanse of grass.

Mennonites in Kansas are known for bringing the cultivation of winter wheat from South Russia on a large-scale, but that is not how they started out. In the early 1800s, settlers bred sheep successfully, reaching a peak in the late 1830s.<sup>18</sup> The quality of the local South Russian cattle was poor, and the very productive cattle from northwest Europe could not tolerate the harsh climate, so the Mennonites bred from the two the “German Red Cow”, said still to be the dominant milk cow of Ukraine.

In the middle of the century, a shift began. Draft-horse breeding took off, and the Mennonites implemented innovative farming methods such as crop rotation. Quickly, the fraction of the farm under cultivation doubled, most of that in winter wheat from Turkey. New machinery found its way into the colonies, and in the 1860s, Mennonite factories sprang up to meet demand throughout Russia. Improved transportation allowed them to farm for a global market as South Russian wheat was in demand as far as Britain. An argument made later by a U.S. senator was that Mennonites should be recruited to the midwest because Americans were unable to compete against them in the world wheat market.

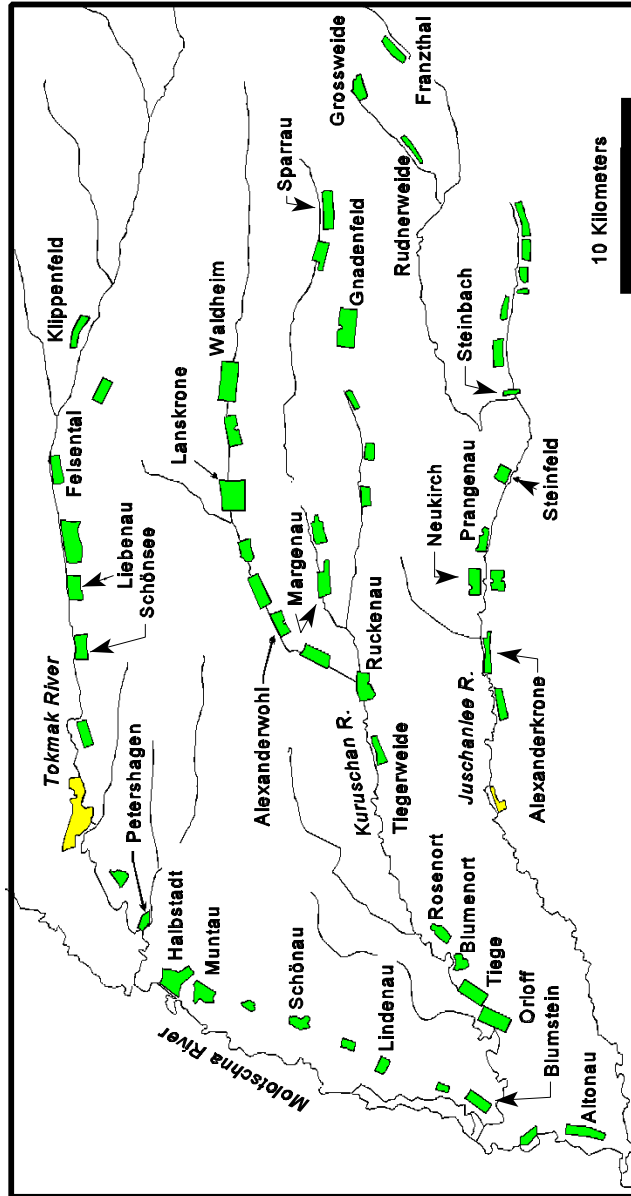
More detail about Mennonite life in South Russia will appear in later chapters. If one is very interested, references 4 and 18 have some of the most detail.

### **Other Locations for Mennonite Settlement in Russia**

Mennonites from Prussia in search of land and religious freedom moved to several other locations than the South Russian steppes as well. Several of our ancestor families moved upriver along the Vistula within Poland to the area just north of Warsaw (Chapters 10, 11, and 12). By the 1870s, the region became part of the Russian Empire when Poland was partitioned. Here they once again faced the recurrent flooding that Mennonites had known for centuries, but gradually they became moderately successful, protected by levees along the Vistula River. Two groups of settlements formed, one based around Deutsch Wymyśle, near the present town of Płock, and Deutsch Kazuń. Later, another Mennonite settlement grew up a little north, at Wola Wodzyńska.

Some Mennonites went to the region of Volhynia (see Chapter 6) in what is now western Ukraine. A small number actually found their way to Volhynia after going from the Vistula lowlands into the Brandenburg area of what is now eastern Germany. Economically, and possibly spiritually, the Volhynians were the least successful of the Russian Mennonites; almost none remained after the migrations of the 1870s.

Farmland in South Russia came to be in critically short supply in the 1850s. Families were large, but the farm could not be divided among the children; they had to find new farms. New colonies had to be founded, a continual challenge to the Mennonites in Chortitza and Molotschna. Some families went from the original South Russian colonies of Chortitza and Molotschna to Crimea (Chapter 9) or Kuban in the Caucasus (Chapters 13 and 14). By the late 1800s, new Mennonite colonies were springing up in Asian Russia and into Siberia; some members of our family who did not leave Russia were last heard from in that part of the world. All of these families, however, remained subjects of the Czar of Russia and part of the greater South Russian Mennonite community.



Map of the Molotschna Colony in South Russia. The villages of the people mentioned in this history are marked. (Adapted from reference 6).



## 4 Setting Our North American Stage

In 1870, a new political upheaval was visited on the Russian Mennonites. The Czar of Russia, Alexander II, stated his intent to rescind the historic Mennonite privileges, Czar Paul's Charter of Privileges of 1800. The political climate of the times could no longer support special rights for people who could not even speak the language of the country. Russian would have to replace German. Certainly this was a difficult change for a people who had allowed themselves to believe that God could be understood best in German. The Czar also announced plans for universal military conscription in the Empire, abrogating the charter which had guaranteed religious freedom and exemption from military service *for all time*. To the Mennonites, this was an even greater burden.

The announcement stimulated two different activities among Mennonite leadership: searching for a new homeland and negotiating with the Czar over the terms of the new order.

Delegations were sent to Petersburg and to Yalta (Crimea) to secure exemption from the new regulations.<sup>19</sup> Principle among their objections was military service, but they were also greatly concerned about control of their own colonies. The czar dispatched General von Totleben who announced that Mennonites would be allowed to substitute for military service work in fire brigades, hospitals, and forestry units, all under their own control. They chose forestry units because of the isolation that this service afforded. In the end, the majority of the Mennonites were satisfied with the czar's compromise.

At the same time, a delegation was dispatched to North America to investigate new lands.<sup>20</sup> There were members from each of the major colonies in South Russia as well as Prussia and Volhynia. American Mennonites provided advance work and offered support for Mennonite immigrants while they toured Manitoba, the Dakotas, Minnesota, Nebraska, and Kansas.<sup>21</sup> A prosperous grain merchant from Berdiansk, Cornelius Jansen, urged emigration; he was exiled by the czar and continued to push for emigration from his new home in Iowa.

The issues that came to the fore were these: First, religious freedom, which included exemption from military service and the right to practice their faith without interference (and for many, that had to be in German). Second, the need for land; too many people were landless (*anwohner*), and sufficient land could not be obtained easily in Russia for all sons of the large Mennonite families.

Canada offered land, free of charge, plus freedom from military service.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, the land was in contiguous blocks so that Mennonites could isolate themselves from outside influence. In the U.S., there was no military conscription in the states under consideration, but that condition could not be indefinitely guaranteed. Kansas passed a law exempting the Mennonites from service in state militia; Nebraska and Minnesota followed.<sup>4</sup>

Land in the U.S. was available for purchase from the railroads in alternate square-mile sections like a checkerboard. The Santa Fe Railroad even sent a German-speaking agent, C.B. Schmidt, to South Russia to recruit Mennonites; while staying barely one step ahead of the authorities, he made his case very effectively.<sup>4,21</sup> In matters of protecting the faith, Canada clearly offered a better deal, but the cold weather and the mosquitoes were seemingly decisive for many.



Castle Garden, New York's Immigrant Reception Center from 1855 to 1892. This 1885 painting shows relatively prosperous immigrants strolling with New York and various ships in the background. (Reference 23)

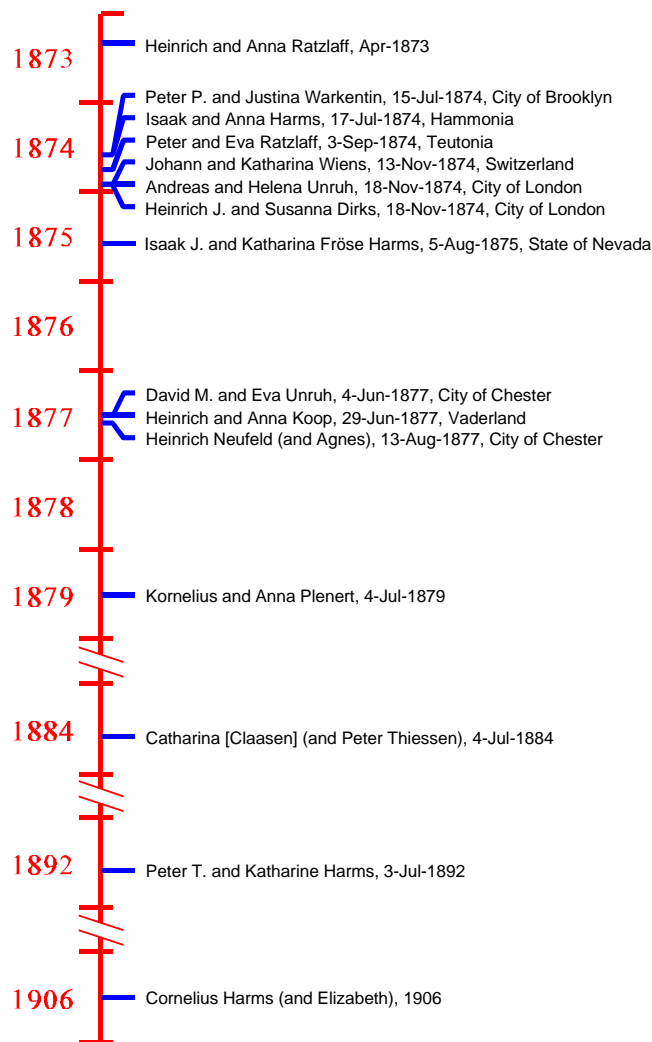
Although a few families came earlier, the trickle became a flood in 1874, and approximately 17,000 Mennonites came to North America over several years, about a third of the Mennonite population in Russia. As will be seen in following chapters, a great many were aided financially by the Mennonite Board of Guardians which raised over \$100,000 (in 1874 dollars!). The funds were loaned willingly by "Old" Mennonites, chiefly from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, responding to pleas in the Mennonite newspaper, *Herald of Truth* published by John F. Funk in Elkhart, Indiana.<sup>21</sup> This branch of the Mennonite Church had been in North America for as much as 200 years already, but they maintained a spiritual kinship with their Polish and Russian brothers and sisters. Old Mennonite trust and generosity made emigration possible for many Russian Mennonites.



Immigrants arriving at Castle Garden, 1879. (Reference 22)

When one search shiplists for Mennonite immigrants of the nineteenth century, the difference between the Mennonites and most other immigrants is striking. The Mennonites came almost exclusively as families. The Irish, Germans, and other immigrants came dominantly as young singles who had left family behind. Without doubt, the care that Mennonites in Russian and America had for their community made a huge difference.

Our immigrant forebears left their isolated South Russian communities and came by rail to northwest Europe. From ports in Prussia, Holland, and England, they traveled by steamship, usually to New York. We are still searching for some of the ship records, but most are known and many photos of these ships are included in following chapters.



Time line for immigration by our ancestors. In several cases, one of our ancestors died and the spouse remarried; in these cases, the name of the later spouse appears in parentheses. Ship names are listed where known.



Barge leaving from Castle Garden for the Erie Railway train station on the New Jersey side of the river (1874). (Reference 22)

We often think of Ellis Island, by the Statue of Liberty, as the entry point for immigrants into the United States, but all but two of the immigrant families in our history came before the opening of Ellis Island in New York in 1890. Our families disembarked at Castle Garden which was located in the Battery, at the southern tip of Manhattan island in New York.<sup>22,23</sup> The building was built as an entertainment center on the grounds of a historic fort, joined to the mainland by a causeway. At Castle Garden, over 8 million people entered the United States between 1855 and 1890.

Here many immigrants were the prey of unscrupulous hucksters, pickpockets, and cheating money-changers; a government report called the center “a perfect farce.”<sup>24</sup>

Most Mennonites came in large groups that stayed together. Typically there were no English-speakers. Representatives of the Mennonite Board of Guardians usually met the ships. With this support, they were able to pass through immigration with a minimum of difficulty.

The historic Castle Garden is now maintained as a National Monument. Today, the ferry to the Statue of Liberty from Manhattan leaves from those grounds.

After passing through immigration, the immigrants took a ferry to the New Jersey side of the river where trains departed for America’s interior. With little delay, the Guardians helped them to the trains and a suitable destination.

Many of the Mennonites came as part of congregations that were completely transplanting themselves. Our history has four such stories. These contingents traveled to various places in America to wait while their leaders searched for the ideal location. Others traveled from New York to meet family that were already settled in America.

### **Settling in North America**

In the U.S., most of the Mennonite immigrants bought land from the railroads. The railroads received land from the government in return for building the railroad, and they were anxious to sell it to productive farmers who would, in turn, use the railroad to ship crops and supplies. To a lesser extent, Mennonites bought farms from the many settlers who had tried Kansas and were giving up.

Very few Mennonites of South Russian origin took advantage of the federal Homestead Act which would have made the land free if they would live on it for a period of time. The Mennonites purchased land privately rather than accepting the government program because of the concern that if they took land from the government they might be more likely to be required to submit to military service. Mennonites were not about to risk exchanging military conscription in Russia for military obligation in America.

In the spring of 1874, just before any of these families came to Kansas or Nebraska, a natural catastrophe came to Kansas that worked to the advantage of the immigrants. An unimaginable grasshopper invasion wiped out the year's crops. Settlers left in large numbers; they had seen the locust hordes laying eggs in the soil for the next year. The Russian Mennonite immigrants were unfazed, believing that they had seen even bigger grasshoppers in larger numbers in Russia.

Consequently, they were often able to rent or purchase land from settlers who may have thought they had the advantage over the Mennonites thought to be doomed by the coming grasshoppers. In fact, the Mennonites benefitted from a rainy spring in 1875 that drowned the eggs in the ground. There were no serious grasshopper plagues during the first years.

Initially, the majority of our Mennonite immigrant ancestors came to Kansas. Of those, the majority came to Marion County, settling on farms in the west-central portion of the county.

The map shows the locations of the farms on which they settled, as identified in county records, and the locations of their churches and cemeteries for reference in later chapters. Farm locations for second-generation immigrant forebears are also included.

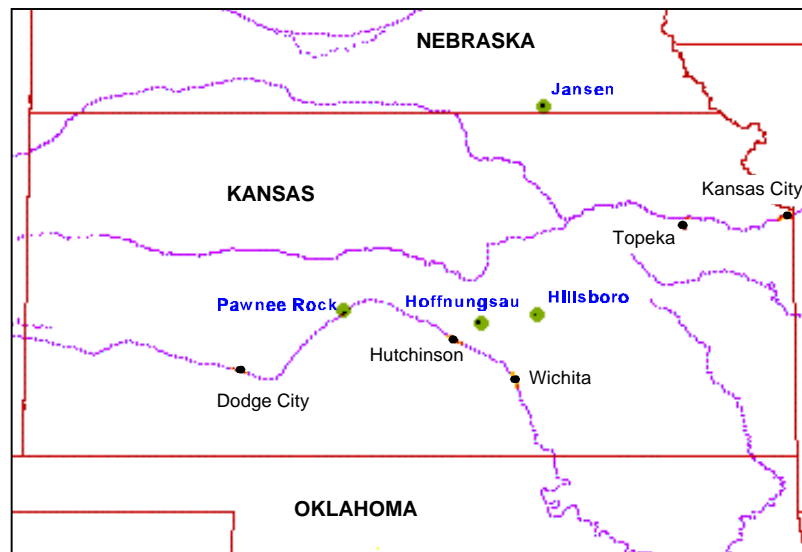
Also within Kansas, one family immigrated to McPherson County in central Kansas (chapter 5) and another Barton County in west-central Kansas (chapter 6).

For the others, Kansas was often a thread. One family went first to Detroit, Michigan, but settled in Kansas (chapter 11); another tried in Minnesota before settling in Kansas (chapter 14).

Three generations of the same family came separately to Jansen, Nebraska in Jefferson County, just across the border. None of the three stayed (chapter 8).



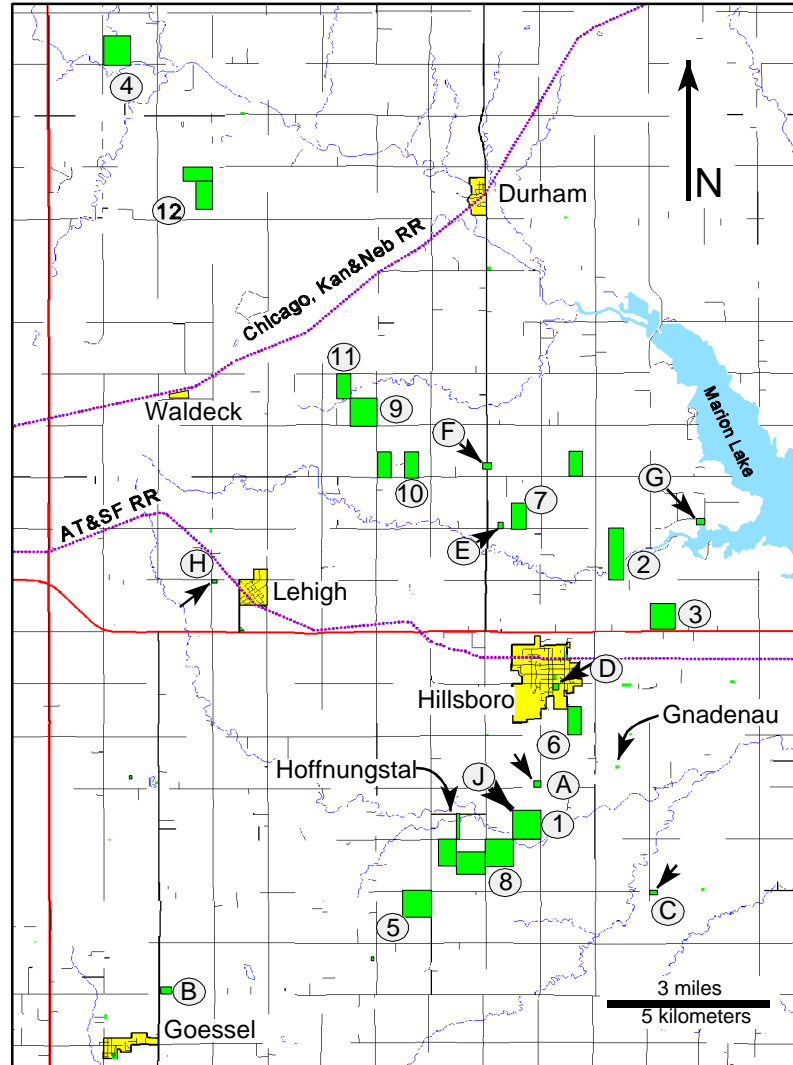
Sketch of a train carrying immigrants through the United States in the 1870s. (Reference 22)



Map of Kansas, showing areas that were home to our Mennonite immigrant ancestors: Pawnee Rock (Barton County), Hoffnungsau (McPherson County), Hillsboro (Marion County), and in Nebraska, Jansen (Jefferson County).

### **And Now the Family Stories**

From this point we can look at individual stories of our immigrant forebears. The following twelve chapters describe the twelve families who were faced with the decision of whether to remain in Russia or come to North America. Some came because an entire church congregation was moving; others left as single families in the company of other Mennonites. All left behind family and a known community for the unknown future, and all settled and farmed as part of Mennonite communities in America.



West-central Marion County, Kansas. Locations for immigrant families are superimposed on a modern map of the area. **A** Gnadenu church site and cemetery. **B** Neu-Alexanderwohl Church and cemetery. **C** Ebenfeld M.B. Church and cemetery. **D** Hillsboro M.B. cemetery. **E** French Creek cemetery. **F** Johannestal church site and cemetery. **G** Brudertal church site. **H** Lehigh M.B. cemetery. **J** Grave of Johann Wiens and grandchildren. **1** Peter P. Warkentin. **2** Cornelius K. Plenert. **3** Heinrich W. Ratzlaff. **4** Peter Thiessen. **5** Heinrich Neufeld. **6** Heinrich Koop. **7** David M. Unruh. **8** Peter J. Warkentin. **9** Cornelius J. Plenert. **10** Jacob P. Ratzlaff. **11** Isaac U. Neufeld. **12** David Harms



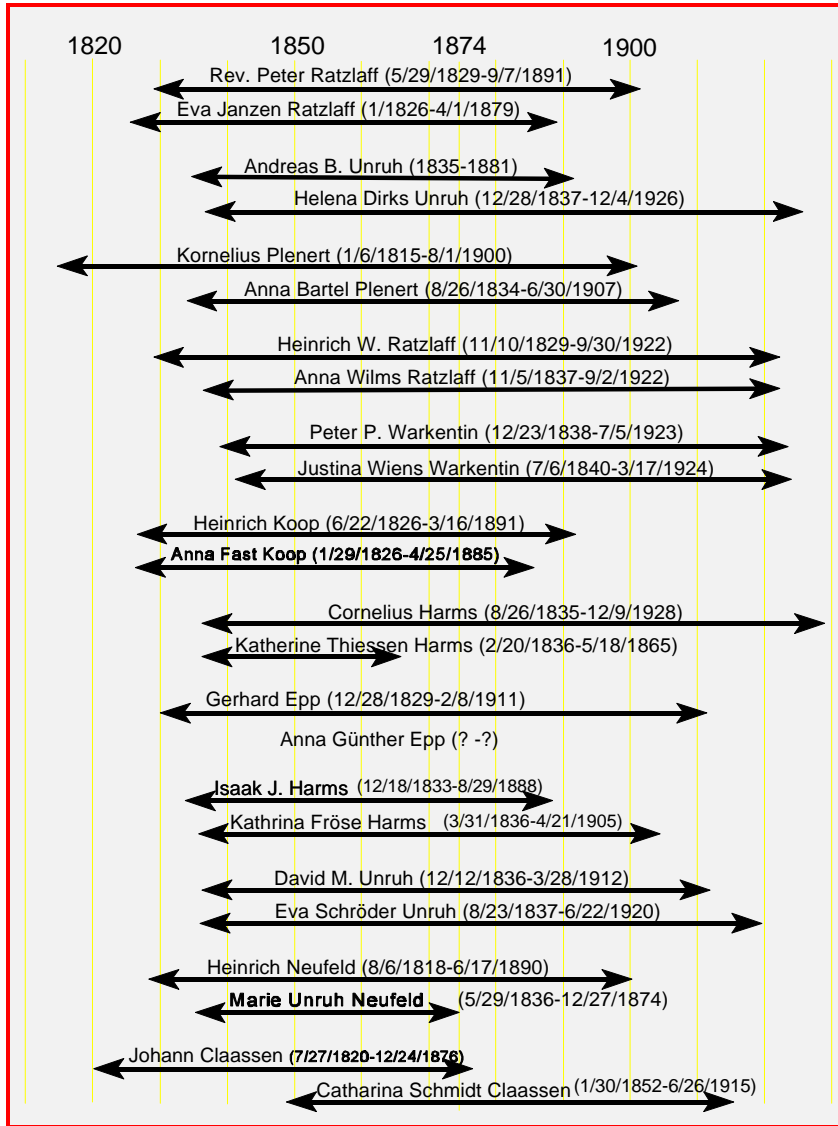


# Immigrants from the Russian Empire

+)) *Rev. Peter Ratzlaff*  
 +)) *Jacob P. Ratzlaff*  
 \* \* +)) Peter Janzen  
 \* .) *Eva Janzen*  
 \* .) Eva Ratzlaff  
 +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Benjamin Unruh  
 \* \* +)) **Andreas B. Unruh**  
 \* \* \* .) Maria Buller  
 \* .) *Maria Unruh*  
 \* \* +)) *Heinrich J. Dirks*  
 \* .) **Helena Dirks**  
 \* .) *Susanna Isaak*  
 +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) **Kornelius Plenert**  
 \* \* +)) *Cornelius J. Plenert*  
 \* \* \* +)) Rev. Johann Bartel  
 \* \* \* .) **Anna Bartel**  
 \* \* \* .) Maria Ebert  
 \* .) Marie Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Andreas Ratzlaff  
 \* \* \* +)) **Heinrich W. Ratzlaff**  
 \* \* \* .) Elizabeth Drier  
 \* .) *Bena Ratzlaff*  
 \* \* +)) George Wilms  
 \* .) **Anna Wilms**  
 \* .) Anna Wolgamut  
 /))) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
 \* +)) Peter Warkentin  
 \* +)) **Peter P. Warkentin**  
 \* \* .) Margaretha Schellenberg  
 \* +)) *Peter J. Warkentin*  
 \* \* \* +)) *Johann Wiens*  
 \* \* .) **Justina Wiens**  
 \* \* .) *Katharina Wiebe*  
 \* +)) Rev. Henry K. Warkentin  
 \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
 \* \* \* +)) **Heinrich Koop**  
 \* \* \* \* .) Anna Friesen  
 \* \* .) *Anna Koop*  
 \* \* .) **Anna Fast**  
 .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
 \* +)) *Isaak (Ohm) Harms*  
 \* +)) **Cornelius C. Harms**  
 \* \* .) *Anna Sawatzky*  
 \* +)) *Peter T. Harms*  
 \* \* \* +)) Rev. Peter Thiessen  
 \* \* .) **Katharina Thiessen**  
 \* \* .) Margaretha Friesen  
 .)) Margaret Harms  
 \* +) Heinrich Epp  
 \* +)) **Gerhard Epp**  
 \* \* .) Anna ?  
 .)) *Katharina Epp*  
 \* +) Heinrich Günther  
 .) **Anna Günther**  
 .) Aganetha Jantzen

+)) Johann Harms  
 +)) **Isaak J. Harms**  
 \* .) Maria Giesbrecht  
 +)) *David Harms*  
 \* \* +)) Kornelius Fröse  
 \* .) **Katharina Fröse**  
 \* .) Eva ?  
 +)) Rev. Isaac Harms  
 \* \* +)) Heinrich Unruh  
 \* \* +)) **David M. Unruh**  
 \* \* \* .) Petronella Nickel  
 \* .) *Eva Unruh*  
 \* \* +)) Kornelius Schröder  
 \* .) **Eva Schröder**  
 \* .) *Maria Kiewer*  
 +)) Isaac N. Harms  
 \* \* +)) Abraham Neufeld  
 \* \* +)) **Heinrich Neufeld**  
 \* \* \* .) Helena Teichgraf  
 \* \* +)) *Isaac U. Neufeld*  
 \* \* \* \* +)) David Unrau  
 \* \* \* .) **Marie Unruh**  
 \* \* \* .) Katharina Funk  
 \* .) Emma Neufeld  
 \* \* +)) David Claassen  
 \* \* +)) **Johann Claassen**  
 \* \* \* .) Agnetha Penner  
 \* .) *Katharina Claassen*  
 \* \* +)) Abraham Schmidt  
 \* .) **Katharina Schmidt**  
 /))) Virginia Louise Harms  
 \* +)) Dudley H. Weaver  
 \* +)) William Dudley Weaver  
 \* +)) William Albert Weaver  
 \* \* .) Johanna A. Miller  
 \* +)) William Dudley Weaver  
 \* \* \* +)) Thomas J. Marshall  
 \* \* .) Laura Jane Marshall  
 \* \* .) Ellen H. Thompson  
 .)) Annie Louise Weaver  
 \* +)) Sidney Webster Conn  
 .)) Omenia Hamilton Conn  
 \* +)) Francis Marian Jenkins  
 .) Azzalier Marantha Jenkins  
 .) Annie Wilmuth Seal

Those persons whose names are shown in italics immigrated from the Russian Empire to the U.S.



## 5 Ratzlaffs from Przechowka to Hoffnungsau

In 1873, Reverend Peter Ratzlaff both farmed and served as a minister when his congregation was forced to decide whether changes in Russia would compel them to leave their homeland for North America.

Peter and his family lived in the village of Waldheim, part of the colony of Molotschna, South Russia. Molotschna can be located on the maps on pages 27, 31, and 35. Peter's wife, Eva, was the daughter of Peter P. and Eva Janzen of the village of Franzthal and members of the Alexanderwohl Church. These two congregations were closely aligned, and the two acted as one in many ways.

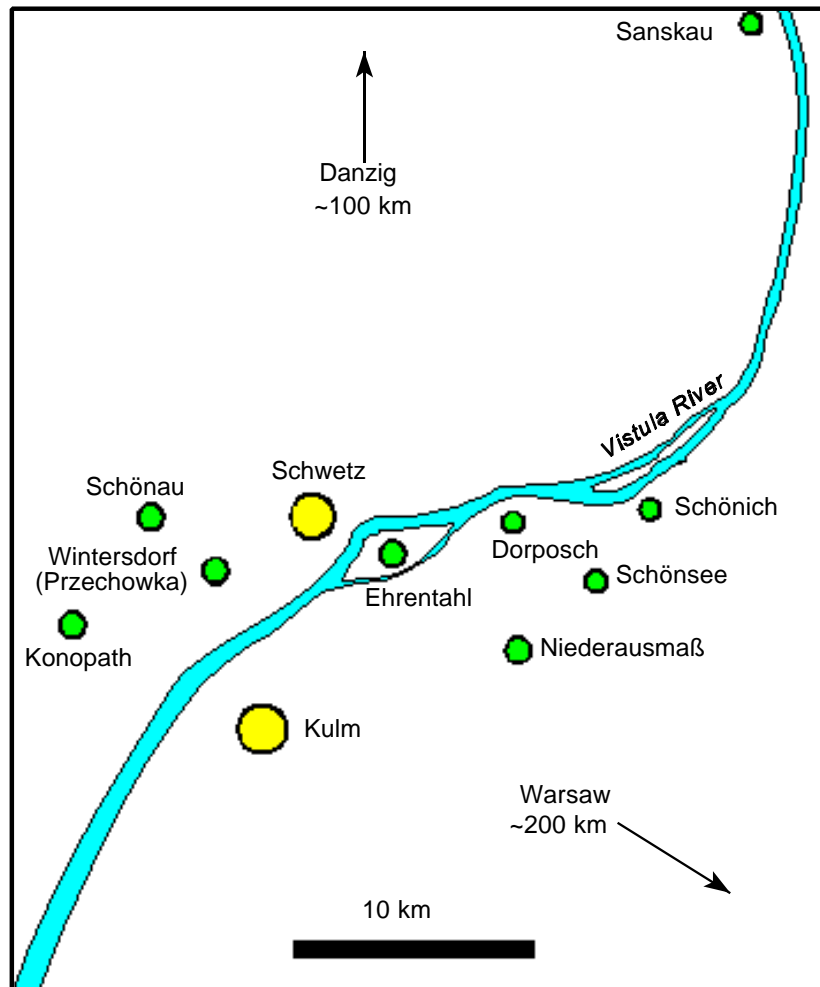
The extended Alexanderwohl congregation played a central role in the life of the Peter Ratzlaff family. That church has a long history that preceded its existence in Russia, and the family name of Ratzlaff had a coincident beginning. Consequently, it is with the beginnings of the Przechowka/Alexanderwohl congregation that we begin our story.

### Przechowka and the Ratzlaff family

The church at Przechowka (pronounced in Polish as Pshikhof'ka<sup>25</sup>, it was called Wintersdorf in German), Prussia, was home to the first Ratzlaff to be a Mennonite -- quite probably the first Ratzlaff anywhere. To find out the original location of this church, we must look on the map of Poland. If it is a present-day map, it will have Polish names, but the names were German when the Mennonites lived there, so two names often apply to most locations. (Readers unfamiliar with the Polish language will notice a number of characters found neither in English or German.) Przechowka was located on the Weichsel River (Visła in Polish, Vistula in English), between Warsaw (Warszawa) and the port city of Danzig (Gdańsk). It was near the towns of Schwetz (Świecie) and Kulm (Chełmno).

Mennonites came to this area around 1540 from Gröningen in the Flemish area of Holland.<sup>14</sup> Here they found relief from the intense persecution against Mennonites at that time in Holland. The area around the Vistula near Schwetz was swampy lowland, as was in nearly all the area that Mennonites were allowed to settle in Prussia. However, these Hollanders settled with confidence; they brought with them the unique Dutch skills of reclaiming lowlands through systems of canals, dikes, and windmills. They were good farmers as well. Although they brought a religion that was often perceived as a threat to the local

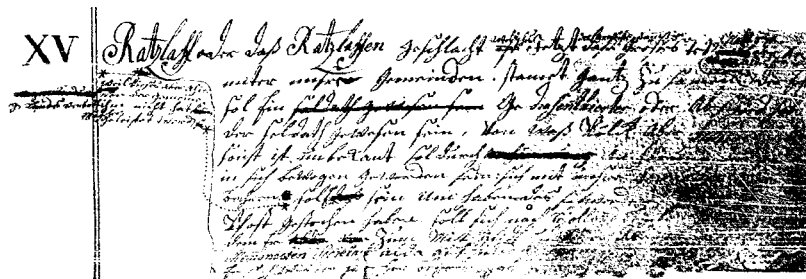
- +)) **Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff**
- +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff
- \* .)) **Eva Janzen**
- +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh
- \* .)) Maria Unruh
- \* .)) Helena Dirks
- +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert
- \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Bartel
- \* .)) Marie Plenert
- \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Bena Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Anna Wilms
- +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin
- \* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens
- \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin
- \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Koop
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Fast
- \* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms
- \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms
- \* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen
- \* .)) Margaret Harms
- \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp
- \* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp
- \* .)) Anna Günther
- /)) *Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,*
- \* *Rebekah Margaret*
- \* +)) Isaak J. Harms
- \* +)) David Harms
- \* .)) Kathrina Fröse
- \* +)) Isaac Harms
- \* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh
- \* .)) Eva Unruh
- \* \* .)) Eva Schroeder
- \* +)) Isaac N. Harms
- \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld
- \* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh
- \* \* .)) Emma Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen
- \* \* .)) Katharina Claassen
- \* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt
- .)) Virginia Louise Harms



Location of some villages of the Przechowka church in the region of Schwetz (Świecie) and Kulm (Chełmno), shown on the map with their German names. These include Ehrentahl (Ostrower Kämpe), Schönich (Szynych), Schönsee (Sosnowka), Dorposch and others. Niederausmaß (Dolne Wymiary) was part of the Kulm congregation.

Catholic and Lutheran establishment, they received some degree of toleration because of the economic benefit. They could make productive use of land that nobody else could farm.

Land was leased by the Mennonites from various owners, but the terms included stiff fees for their religious toleration and for any privileges of local authority such as the right to have schools. They raised rye and barley, and their dairy herds produced butter and cheese. The nobility even granted permission to sell produce in the towns and take fish from the rivers, privileges not to be found at all times in all parts of Prussia. In addition, they practiced their skills brought from Holland as linen weavers.



The entry for the Ratzlaff family name in the Przechowka church records of 1700s. The translation is found in the text.

Despite their management skills, disastrous floods came on several occasions. On these occasions, they turned to others in the Gröningen Old Flemish branch of the Mennonite church back in Holland, and their Dutch brethren provided flood relief.

The Przechowka church maintained ties with the Gröningen Old Flemish Mennonite congregations in Holland into the late 1700s.<sup>25</sup> By then, this was the most conservative wing of the Mennonite church found in Prussia. For example, they did not allow such decorative items as ribbons, braids, and buttons or polished rings on horses' saddles.

One expression of their desire for simple clothing was to use hooks and eyes instead of buttons. A verse in German from the Gröningen Old Flemish tradition expresses their view of these disciplines:<sup>25</sup>

Die mit Haken und Oesen,  
wird Gott erlösen;  
Die mit knöpfen und Taschen  
wird der Teufel erhaschen.

Those with hooks and eyes  
will be saved by God;  
Those with pockets and buttons  
will be seized by the devil.

Dutch remained the language of church until about 1775 when their elder, Jacob Wedel, introduced German in the church services. A few years later, he undertook another task which has been of great importance to those of us whose family histories are traced to the Przechowka congregation. In 1784, Wedel gathered the church records back as far as possible and organized them into a single record.<sup>26</sup> In this volume is recorded the entry of the first Ratzlaff in the Mennonite Church.

## The First Ratzlaff

The family name, Ratzlaff, has a unique and compelling story behind it.

Jacob Wedel, in his records, gave an account of the conversion of the one who he called “the first Ratzlaff” which occurred some time in the early 1600s. A copy of this story, written in the old gothic German script, is shown in the figure. The translation by Lydia Pankratz and Anna M. Unruh tells this story:

The Ratzlaff or Ratzlaffen family is now the largest family in our congregation. All indications are that the first Ratzlaff was a discharged soldier or veteran, originally from Sweden, but no other information is known. He was influenced by sermons he heard and wanted to join our congregation. He was moved to withdraw his sword from its sheath and thrust it into a hedgepost and break it. Because of the laws of the land he was not

able to join our congregation, and moved to Holland. Later he returned and was able to become part of our Mennonite Society.<sup>26</sup>

The laws of Prussia forbade him from joining the local Mennonite church. Only the Lutheran and Catholic churches were officially recognized, and the Mennonite Church was not allowed to take new members from any other church. Consequently, he moved to Holland where by this time the Mennonites had greater freedom. In Holland he was baptized and joined the Gröningen Old Flemish Church. Upon his return, he was eligible to join a Mennonite congregation.

Later, descendants of this convert suggested a romantic interest in the daughter of a church father, but actually, no further hard information is available.

Where did this "Swedish" Ratzlaff come from with his Slavic-sounding name? Several sources have pointed to Pomerania, a region of northern present-day Germany, on the Baltic Sea west of Danzig. Pomerania at that time was under Swedish control,<sup>27</sup> and Sweden had been at war with Poland and Russia. Consequently a soldier from that region might have had contacts around Przechowka, and someone from Pomerania could have been identified as Swedish. A similar name, Retzlaff, is common in the area around Stettin in Pomerania.<sup>28</sup> The name Retzlaff could have been changed to Ratzlaff to fit the Low German dialect of West Prussia.

That leaves another question: Ratzlaff sounds slavic; why would a slavic name come from a Germanic area? Centuries earlier, Pomerania had been occupied by Slavs. Though Retzlaff is not a Serbian-sounding name, a possible origin in the present-day area of Serbia has been suggested.<sup>29</sup> The Slavic identity had been lost, but the name Retzlaff was possibly a relic of that occupation.

This man listed in Wedel's record was only ever identified as "the first Ratzlaff." He married the daughter of a church leader from nearby Kulm whose name was Voht.

The only son of "the first Ratzlaff" to be recorded, Hans, also received special comment from Wedel. According to the Przechowka records,

He was a humble man and a charitable person -- but by our people's standards, a very wealthy man. He was a deacon in our congregation.

The grandson of the first Ratzlaff was Berent Ratzlaff who was identified in Wedel's record as the first Elder or *Ältester* of the Przechowka church. The *Ältester* had the connotation of a senior minister. Mennonite churches before the 20th century did not have paid ministers. Consequently congregations needed to have more than one minister, and the *Ältester* held authority over the other ministers. An *Ältester* had to have been ordained by another *Ältester*, in this case probably from Holland. Other ministers were simply elected by the congregation.

By the time that the church records were assembled in 1784, 150 years after the first Ratzlaff's conversion, Jacob Wedel reported that the Ratzlaff name was a mainstream Mennonite name, the most common in the this large congregation.

## The Przechowka Church and Alexanderwohl

The Przechowka church continued to grow. They were organized as a single large congregation, but with their primitive transportation, they found it necessary to divide for worship. Local churches were found in Schönsee and further out in Kleinsee (Jeziorken).

Mennonites in this region of Prussia were barred from nearly any occupation except farming, but if everyone was to stay on the farm, the pressure for more land grows ever stronger. In 1786, Mennonites in Prussia were legally denied the right to purchase any land. The Mennonites of the Przechowka congregation needed to find new areas in which to settle. When they did, new churches formed that stayed in very close contact with the mother church.

For a while, a daughter congregation was located well to the west in the area of Neumark, now part of Germany. This colony was the only westward expansion from Prussia. It did not last long; once the land was made productive, the rights of the settlers were withdrawn. The Neumark connection was found in our family through the Dirks, in chapter 6.

Another colony and daughter church was in the area of Volhynia (see the map on page 27). This area was once Poland, but after the partition of Poland in the late 1700s, it became Russian territory. The Volhynian settlement and church was the home of some of our ancestry: Unruhs. Their story will come later in chapter .

Yet another of these churches was planted farther upstream, to the south on the Vistula River. In 1764 a group of Przechowka families settled Deutsch-Wymyśle (see the map on page 29), and that area was home to more of our ancestry. Their story will also come later in chapter 11.

In 1817 there were still 1,105 Mennonites affiliated with the Przechowka congregation, but emigration was diminishing that number.<sup>30</sup> The future appeared bleak. War resulting from the invasions of Napoleon had brought poverty, and the Mennonites had no opportunity to own their own farms. The stability of the farming community was a necessary component of stable Mennonite congregations.

Finally, in 1821, the remainder of the Przechowka congregation packed up to move. They chose Molotschna in South Russia where there was already a large colony of Mennonites who had left Prussia over the previous twenty years. In Molotschna they would have the opportunity to own their own farms and to enjoy full freedom to practice their religion.

The Molotschna Colony in the early 1800s, a few decades after the first Mennonite colony in South Russia, was located in a vast, treeless area, lightly populated because the Russians had just seized this territory and had driven out the Turks.

The young *Ältester*, Peter Wedel, led the great majority to the southeast to Molotschna. According to tradition, while *en route* they met the czar, Alexander, and his entourage. Alexander was said to have wished them well, and from that greeting, they took the name of their new village, Alexanderwohl.

Other groups with roots in Przechowka came a few years later. In 1837, a group from Volhynia came to form the village of Waldheim in Molotschna.<sup>31</sup> In 1854, most of the remaining Neumark church moved bodily to Molotschna, forming the village and congregation of Gnadenfeld.

The village of Waldheim was founded on land provided by Johann Cornies, the great Mennonite agricultural leader. Cornies had been leasing the land for his sheep ranch. The name can be translated "home in the woods", clearly not a description of the South Russian steppes but a memory of the wooded hills of Volhynia. Since the Waldheim group had been separated from other Mennonites of Prussian origin for several generations, they even developed their own dialect of Low German which was called the *Waldheim Plautdietsch*.

The population of Waldheim by 1853 was already 961. By 1861, it was the largest village in Molotschna.<sup>31</sup> In that population there were about 34 families with full farms of about 175 acres and 12 families with half-farms; the remainder, about 56 families, were without land, *anwohner*. The lack of land was once again a serious problem for Mennonite communities who, at that time, were just beginning to attempt solutions.

Waldheim had its own church and its own school. The school census of 1862 shows 176 children, ages 6 to 13, from 97 families with but one teacher listed.

By this time of settlement in Molotschna, the Przechowka descendent congregations were already becoming more progressive and reaching out to other Christian traditions. They had contact with pietist Lutherans and German Baptists. Peter Wedel became the president of the Molotschna chapter of the Russian Bible Society and soon was the first to develop a more spontaneous style of preaching instead following the tradition of reading older sermons.

### **Waldheim/Alexanderwohl, South Russia, and Peter Ratzlaff**

Peter Ratzlaff was born May 29, 1829. Of where he was born or who his parents were, we have no record. From his name and congregation, we may assume that he was a descendant of the Przechowka Ratzlaff family, but we can only infer the route to Waldheim. We do know that he was raised in the Waldheim/Alexanderwohl congregations; his baptism was recorded in Alexanderwohl. At the time of Peter Ratzlaff's baptism, there was no elder in Waldheim; this is probably the reason he was baptized there rather than in Waldheim. Other records are incomplete, but for several reasons it seems likely that Peter Ratzlaff came with his family, not directly from Przechowka, but from Volhynia or possibly even Neumark in 1837.<sup>a</sup>

Peter married Eva Janzen when he was 21 and she was 24. Eva was born in January, 1826, in the village of Franzthal, to Peter Janzen. Her family is listed on page 202. There is confusion about who her mother was. The Janzen Genealogy<sup>32</sup> and other records state that she was Eva Ratzlaff, but her parents are unknown. For details on the family, see the section starting on page 202.

Like most weddings of the day, this one was held at the home of the bride's parents which was in the village of Franzthal. Weddings were a full-day's affair with big meals under a large tent and lots of celebration. According to a family story, a huge storm arose shortly after the ceremony, and the wind caught Eva just as she was entering her parents' home. The wind slammed the door, catching her hand and snipping off the tips of several fingers.<sup>32</sup>

In 1853, Peter Ratzlaff was elected minister in the Waldheim congregation.<sup>33</sup> He was also a farmer and, by the 1870s, father to at least 8 children. The previous decade had been good

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<sup>a</sup> Peter Ratzlaff's home was in Waldheim, Molotschna, the village settled by immigrants from Volhynia; his name is absent from the 1835 Molotschna census, and his second wife came from Volhynia which could indicate a family connection.



economically for Mennonites in South Russia, but 1870 brought the threat of a dramatic change in the relationship of the Mennonites to the government of the czar.

### Migration from Molotschna to Kansas

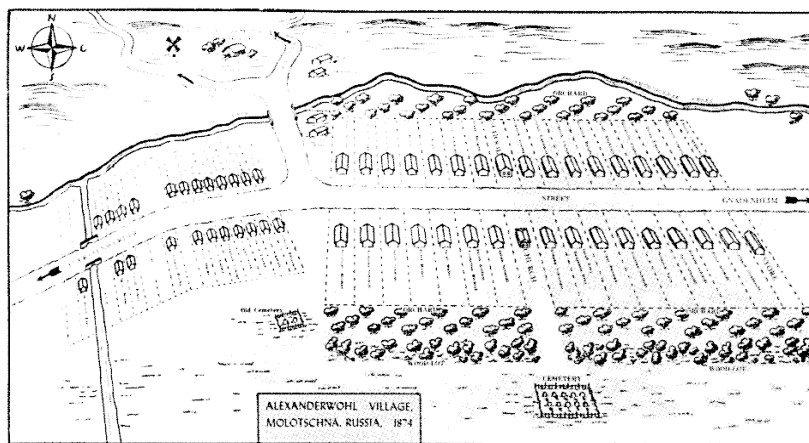
We recall that the Mennonites had come to South Russia at the invitation of Czarina Catherine the Great. This area had been taken from Turkey; the Turks and Tatars who had lived there had been expelled, and she was looking for settlers who shared her own German heritage. She offered about 175 acres per family and aid for moving and settling the area. In 1800, Czar Paul issued the *Privilegium*, a promise of a number of privileges including that these colonies would remain exempt from military conscription forever and that they should have the right to maintain their own German-speaking schools.

In 1870, the czar announced that over the following ten years, these privileges were to be rescinded; special rights for a foreign-speaking group were no longer allowed. Russian would have to replace German; schools were to be supervised by the imperial authorities, and the exemption from military conscription would end.

Delegates from Alexanderwohl and from other Mennonite colonies attempted to negotiate an exemption, and the government suggested that it might substitute hospital or forestry work for military. While this was acceptable for some Mennonites, the Alexanderwohl group immediately prepared to emigrate.<sup>4</sup>

During 1873, a delegation of Mennonites from all over South Russia visited North America. They were offered free land and freedom from conscription in Manitoba, Canada. The U.S. offered land, but it was not free nor were there guarantees of freedom; the U.S. Congress debated an offer for a week before deciding against special privileges for Mennonites.<sup>21</sup> Land was relatively cheap, and there was no conscription at the time, but no promises were made for the future. Furthermore, the land would not be available as large, closed blocks as was the practice in South Russia and was offered in Manitoba. Many of the more conservative Mennonites accepted the Canadian offer, but many others including the Alexanderwohlers prepared to go to the U.S. citing, among other factors, the cold and mosquitoes of Manitoba.

Even though the Alexanderwohlers were among the first to decide to go, finding buyers for



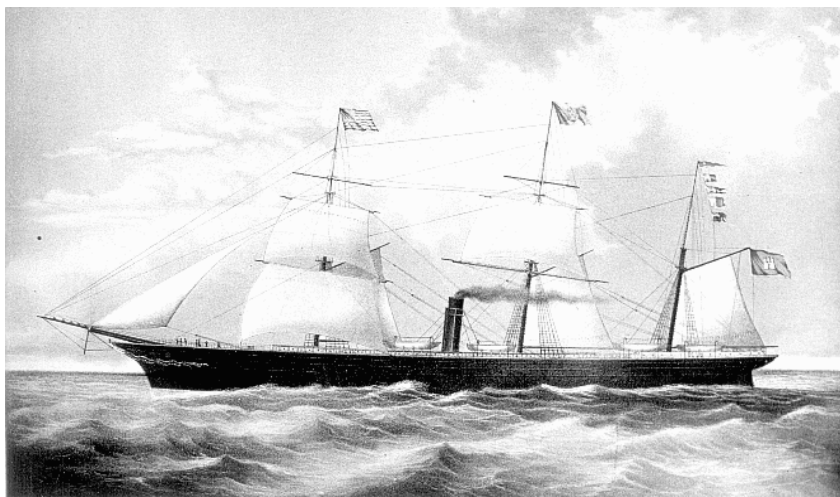
Alexanderwohl village in Molotschna, 1874. The church and school face each other in the middle of the village.

their farms and goods was difficult.<sup>37</sup> By Russian law, the farms could only be sold to other Mennonites, and there were so many sellers that buyers could offer half or less of the real value. The problem of passports and other travel documents followed. Although officials made no official objection and promised passports for March 1, there were delays and heavy expense. Representatives were sent to Petersburg who finally received permission, but the passports were not made available until later in Simferopol in the Crimea and were distributed on July 18.

The czar became concerned about losing those who were described by some as the most productive farmers in Russia. He dispatched General von Totleben, an ethnic German already known to the Mennonites, who came with a firm offer of alternate service. He met the Alexanderwohlers in May, 1874, and spun stories to frighten would-be emigrants: he told of threats from Indians, and suggested the difficulty of draining swamps and clearing forests; he presented the prospect of hard work without cheap labor; after the serfs had been freed in Russia in the 1860s, Mennonites had been hiring them at low wages for manual labor. While some Mennonites changed their minds after this report, the people of the Alexanderwohl congregation continued their plans to emigrate. From the Alexanderwohl congregation, only 7 families remained in South Russia.

Two days after receiving their passports they began saying their tearful goodbyes and about 216 families left over four days starting on July 22. They first traveled by train from the railway station at Micailorow on the Molotschna River near Halbstadt to Hamburg, Germany. There, after 5 days of sight-seeing and waiting, the Alexanderwohlers embarked on two ships for America. The first ship to leave was the *S.S. Cimbria* on August 12, and about half its passengers were Alexanderwohl Mennonites.

The second ship was the *S.S. Teutonia*, an old coal-transport ship. This was the great period of immigration from Europe to North America, and the *Teutonia* had been converted for passengers. Layers of coal dust still could be found in the passenger quarters. Like most ships of its day, it had both steam power and sails. On August 16, the Peter Ratzlaff family joined about a thousand other Mennonites and eight non-Mennonite families for the trans-



The *S.S. Teutonia*, which carried the Peter Ratzlaff family to North America. (Photograph courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.)

Atlantic voyage.

Before boarding, the apprehensive travelers listened to a memorable sermon from John 14:18, "I will not leave you desolate..." Peter's good friend, Abraham Ratzlaff, later described the difficulties of the trip:<sup>34</sup> the ship was greatly over-crowded, and although they encountered no major storms, many suffered sea-sickness, particularly in the North Sea. Even in summer, it was often cold and foggy.

For some, the ship's fare of salted herring was a treat, but for others it was not edible. However, many families had packed large quantities of toasted bread, ham, and onions that kept well.

They were on the ship almost 18 days when, early in the morning on September 2, land was spotted. Late in the afternoon, they disembarked at Castle Garden, New York City. This was the port of entry for immigrants, the predecessor of Ellis Island. The congregation settled for the night in the large open room of Castle Garden, arranging before retiring for a worship service of thanksgiving, song and prayer. Little did they know that they had traveled on the *Teutonia's* last successful trip; it sank the following year.<sup>a</sup> The next day, representatives of the Bible Society came to bring them New Testaments; this welcome allayed some uneasiness about the new world.

The New York Herald newspaper described the Alexanderwohlers in New York's typical condescending style:

They were all Germans, but having lived all their lives in Russia, their German has a curious Russian flavor, which did not at all improve the harsh Teutonic sounds. They were dressed in their primitive, homespun garments, which were usually of coarse wool and of the most primitive style...The women and children--the young ones were all consuming huge pieces of bread and butter with a rapidity which argued well for their digestion--had funny old handkerchiefs tied round their heads, and certainly no Broadway milliner ever supplied one of the quaint bonnets which the fair Mennonite beauties wore. They had all brought huge tin pans, crockery, etc., with them, and their outfit included in almost every case, baskets groaning under loads of bread, cheese, sausage, etc.<sup>21</sup>

The *Teutonia* group was met by C.B. Schmidt, a native German who now represented the Santa Fe railroad in recruiting settlers for Santa Fe land in Kansas. About two days were needed to make the arrangements for the next stage of the trip; following Schmidt's advice they purchased tickets and left Friday evening for Topeka, Kansas.

The passengers of the *Cimbria* had already left for Nebraska before Schmidt had arrived in New York; some of their relatives who were on the *Teutonia* followed them. Schmidt



1874 sketches of the Russian Mennonites.

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<sup>a</sup> The statement that this ship sank seems well established in several Mennonite references, but other sources show that a ship by that name continued to sail.

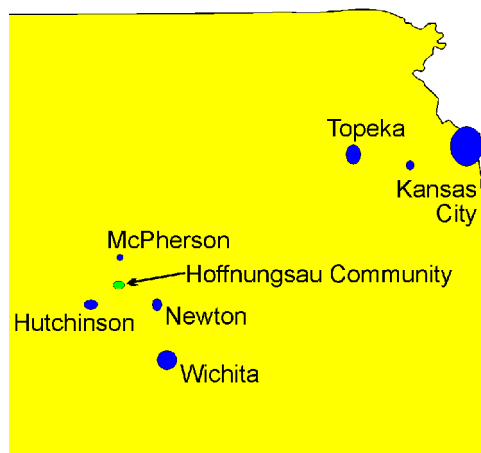
caught up with the *Cimbria* group in Nebraska. A bidding battle ensued between Schmidt and the representative of the Union Pacific Railroad. Schmidt was successful; most of the *Cimbria* group went on to Kansas and settled near Goessel in Marion County, Kansas, forming the American Alexanderwohl congregation, still a major Mennonite church.

### Settling in Kansas

Upon arrival in Topeka, some of the leaders of the group, led by Dietrich Gaeddert, went immediately to select land in Kansas for the entire contingent. The remainder, including Peter and his family, stayed in Topeka, housed in a large shed known as the King's Bridge Shops. While in Topeka, they bought animals and supplies: horses, milk cows, draft oxen, plows, stoves. Some found work for neighboring farmers, as much to give something to do as to earn money. The *Topeka Commonwealth*, a local paper, published interesting descriptions of the group:

A visit to the bridge shops this morning disclosed a scene of the greatest activity. Large numbers of people were there with horses and cows to sell, some of which were good, but more old and disabled; it was of no use to try and sell this last kind to the Mennonites--they know what they want and how much to pay for it, and a fair price for such stock and other things as they need, but they do not want any old mowers or worn out cider mills, or any other useless lumber that some people think can be palmed off on them because they cannot speak English. The stock so far purchased by them is rather better than the average, and was got at very good prices for both buyer and seller. These people pay cash and they are right in having the worth of their money.<sup>35</sup>

Land was available either for homesteading or from the railroad. The railroads had been rewarded by the government with half the land 12 miles to each side of their tracks, in alternate sections forming a checkerboard of one-mile squares. The remainder was homestead land, and in that part of Kansas, most of the homestead land had been taken, though much had been abandoned or was for sale.



Map of central and eastern Kansas showing the location of the immigrant community led by Dietrich Gaeddert which was to be named Hoffnungsau.

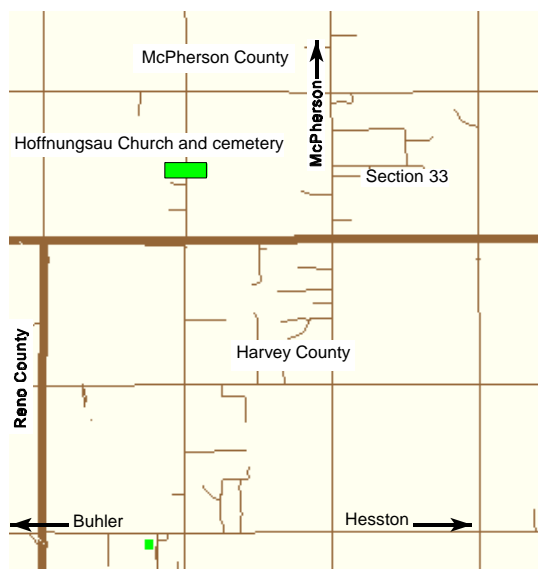
Most of the Russian Mennonites chose to buy from the railroads, fearing that homesteading would obligate them to the government for military conscription. In behalf of his group, Gaeddert agreed to buy 35 square miles in the area where McPherson County, Reno County (containing Hutchinson), and Harvey County (containing Newton) meet, the largest private sale ever made by then in the west. Some additional land was also purchased from homesteaders. This tract of land was bounded by Turkey Creek on the east, sand hills and the Little Arkansas River on the south and west, and the boundary of railroad land to the north. Gaeddert's expressed hope was that the only Mennonites in this area would be those from the Alexanderwohl/Waldheim congregation of Molotschna, living in peaceful isolation.

The AT&SF railroad agreed to \$1.50 to \$2.50 per acre, adding in free land for the church, cheap land for a school, two sections for the poor with a 100 foot by 16 foot adobe immigrant house on each and free transport of equipment. The terms of sale were 7% down and the balance in eleven years at 6% interest.

The *Topeka Commonwealth* again reported, on September 24, 1874, about this group of Mennonites:

They are said to be admirable judges of land, and they have chosen from among the best sections on the line. They come from a treeless country, the steppes of Russia, very similar to our prairies, and they have learnt from long experience how to fight and vanquish the grasshoppers. What would discourage and deter another class of immigrants, they brush aside as obstacles unworthy of mention. Kansas is to be congratulated on the possession of so valuable class of citizens, who are professional agriculturalists and nothing else, and are able to teach our numerous, shiftless and unsuccessful farmers how to make farming a profitable, not to say a pleasant and elevating employment.<sup>21</sup>

Peter Ratzlaff bought 240 acres in Section 33 of Turkey Creek Township, McPherson County, arriving about October 2. This section is on the road from McPherson to Burrtown, two



The Peter Ratzlaff farm was located on section 33, a mile east of the Hoffnungsau Church.

miles north of what is now Dutch Avenue from Hesston to Buhler

The Mennonites moving to this area took the train to Burrton, west of Newton, from where they traveled in a caravan with their goods and livestock. The settlers passed sections not owned by the railroad that had been homesteaded in 1871 and 1872, but many of these homesteads had been abandoned after the devastating grasshopper invasion earlier in the year.

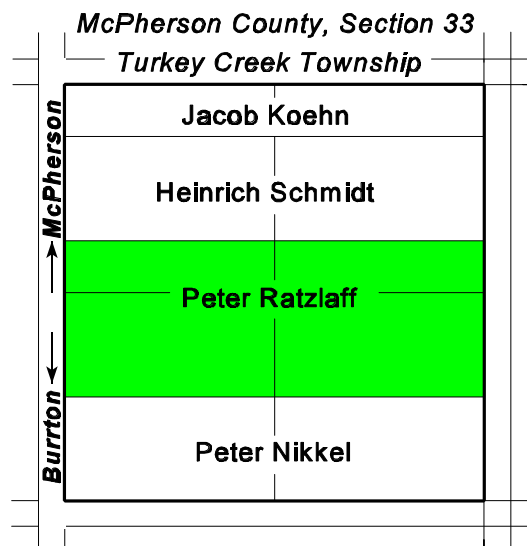
The railroad land had never been plowed. Tall-grass prairie was covered by bluestem grass over five feet tall, so tall that it was often difficult to keep track of the livestock. There were no trees whatsoever except by the creeks, and the nearest town was 10 miles away. The Native American population was gone as were the buffalo; antelope could still be found.

In Russia, the people lived in villages with a single main street and houses on either side. They went daily to their fields from the village. While many other Russian Mennonites attempted to reproduce this arrangement in America, these settlers immediately decided to live on their land. As one can see from the map of the section of land on which Peter lived, farms were long strips of land instead of square parcels. Homes were built closest to where neighboring farms met, creating neighborhoods. The sketch on a following page illustrates that neighborhood with a number of yards nearby.

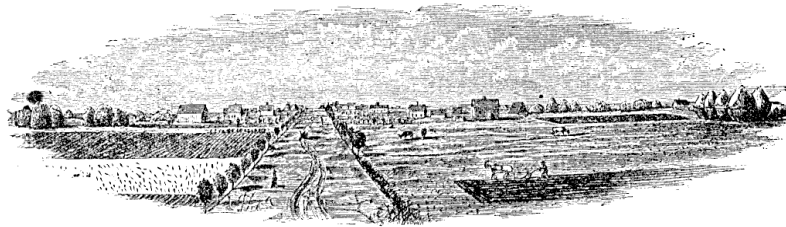
In all likelihood, Peter Ratzlaff built his first home at the west end of his parcel of land; there is no evidence of any building activity at the east end which is nearer Turkey Creek.

When they settled, the first winter was rapidly approaching, and the first order of business was shelter for Peter and Eva and their 8 children, listed in the section starting on page 202. The first, temporary house was probably a sod house or "soddie". Sod, held together by thick matted roots, was cut from the prairie and stacked like bricks. After smoothing, it could be plastered, making thick, comfortable walls. Roofs were made from grass, and the floor was often dirt at the beginning.

Besides being a farmer, Peter was also one of two ordained ministers in this large com-



The Peter Ratzlaff farm was the shaded portion of Section 33, Turkey Creek Township, McPherson County, Kansas.



Sketch of the neighborhood in which Peter Ratzlaff lived, made in the 1880s.

munity. The group worshiped in the immigrant house and officially formed the congregation that they named Hoffnungsau (meadow of hope) on April 19, 1876; the Peter Ratzlaff family is the second listed in the Hoffnungsau Church record book (the *Gemeindebuch*). In October of 1875, they held their first baptism; two of Peter and Eva's children, Peter and Eva, were among those baptized. A storm destroyed the immigrant house in 1880, and the first church building was constructed shortly thereafter.

Meanwhile, Peter and Eva and their family were busy starting their farm. By the following year, they had a couple of horses and 4 oxen as draft animals plus two milk cows. Breaking the native prairie must have been extraordinarily difficult, and in 1875, Peter had about as much land under cultivation as anybody: mostly corn and oats with some potatoes and winter wheat.<sup>36</sup>

Life was hard, and tragedy struck soon. Eva died in 1879 at the age of only 53; her youngest child was only 13.

Peter's friend and neighbor, Abraham Ratzlaff, began a diary in 1883 which refers often to their joint activities.<sup>34</sup> They traveled together to preach, going as far as Canton, Kansas; Peter's text was Matthew 9: 18-26, the accounts of miracles including the restoration of a dead child. They went to Halstead together to underwrite loan notes for members of the congregation. They participated together in preachers' meetings for the purpose of church discipline and for aiding those in need. They plowed and threshed with and for each other. Both the church and the life of farming were cooperative affairs in the 1880s.

On January 30, 1883, Peter remarried, taking a widow from Pawnee Rock, Kansas, Helena Unruh nee Dirks. Abraham preached at the wedding from I Peter 5: 7-11 which begins "Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you." Helena brought her young daughter, Maria, with her from Pawnee Rock. Helena and Maria were born in Volhynia. More will be told of their story in Chapter 6.

In 1879, a crack developed in Gaeddert's dream of a community that would be free of competition with the rival Mennonite Brethren. The Ebenezer M.B. church was built less than three miles south of Hoffnungsau. Three of Peter's children, Heinrich, Anna, and Jacob, were baptized by Ebenezer elder, Jacob Schellenberg.

During this period, the older children of the family were married. Peter's oldest son, Peter, was married March 10, 1889, and Abraham noted that the elder Peter and his family spent that night with Abraham. It was the custom for newlyweds to live with parents until they could secure their own land, and in a time before honeymoon trips, it appears that the young couple was given the house to themselves on their wedding night.



These were difficult years for the entire community. Elder Gaeddert had to request a loan from more prosperous Mennonites in the east on behalf of many of the families. The land records show that Peter had to secure additional mortgages on his farm. However, he continued to make improvements. By 1885, he planted 60 acres wheat, 6 of rye, 50 of corn, 20 of oats, 1 of potatoes; he had 3 horses and 2 mules, 5 dairy cattle and 5 beef cattle, 35 fruit trees, a vineyard and a dog.<sup>37</sup> There were now 10 in his household including his second wife, Helena, and Helena's daughter, Peter's 3 youngest children, and the family of his son, Benjamin which included 2 of Peter's grandchildren.

In 1886, Peter sold 160 acres to his son Benjamin for the recorded amount of \$10,000.<sup>38</sup> Benjamin and his wife, in October, 1887, sold the land to his sister, Eva, and her husband.<sup>a</sup> In May of 1891, Peter sold 80 acres to our ancestor, Jacob Ratzlaff, for \$3200. A few months later in September, Peter Ratzlaff died of a stroke. His grave has not been located.

### **After Peter and Eva--A Brief Account**

Our forebear, Jacob Ratzlaff, married his stepmother's daughter, Maria Dirks, under unusual circumstances. Even though the Mennonite Brethren in the area had extremely strained relations with Peter Ratzlaff's Hoffnungsau church, Jacob had been baptized into the Ebenezer M.B. church; Maria was not. Probably as a consequence, he and Maria had to take the unusual step of being married in a civil ceremony in McPherson.

Jacob obtained land from his father, and farmed on the home section. Our ancestor, Jonathan, was born there. A few years later, Jacob suddenly went blind, and in the following period they lost some of their land. In what was said to be a purely business decision, they sold out and moved to Marion County.

The estrangement between the Mennonite Brethren and what came to be the General



Jacob P. and Maria Unruh Ratzlaff

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<sup>a</sup> Henry W. Nikkel; Nikkel held that land at least into the 1930s.



Conference Mennonites continued to be a factor into the next generation as Jonathan was himself put out of the Mennonite Brethren for “marrying outside the church.”

The story of Jacob P. and Maria Ratzlaff and their family, including Jonathan, will come in Volume II.



## 6 The Volhynia/Great Bend Unruh Connection

Volhynia is where this story begins, a much different land than that of the expansive steppes of Molotschna or Chortitza. Volhynia is hilly and wooded, and the soil is poor. However, Volhynia afforded one of the early opportunities for the community of the Przechowka congregation to expand. In the village of Karlswalde, Andreas B. Unruh and his wife, Helena Dirks Unruh, raised their family. We will explore how they got there and how they left.

The region of Volhynia, shown on the map, is located in what has been Poland, then Russia, and is now western Ukraine, shown in the map of east Europe on page 27.

### The Unruh and Dirks Families of Karlswalde

The history of the Mennonite village of Karlswalde, from what little we know, suggests that everyone in it would have roots in Przechowka. The genealogy of Helena Dirks shows this to be so, and although we do not have extensive information about Andreas, it makes sense for him as well.

Andreas' parents lived in Volhynia before him, but we are left without more information than that. Given the relationship of his church to the Przechowka congregation and that Unruh was one of the most common in Przechowka, it would be a good guess that Andreas' roots were in that congregation.

The Unruh name is rooted in the area of Silesia<sup>27</sup> and is found there as early as the 1400s. Today, Silesia is part of Poland, in the southwest. Silesians with the name Unru were recorded in the universities of what is now western Germany where they may have come into contact with Anabaptists, or perhaps the contact was made in the middle Vistula valley. In any case, the name was common in the middle Vistula valley among Mennonites but was found much less in the northern Vistula delta.

The name itself seemingly has some interesting, though archaic, roots in German.<sup>39</sup> The Old and Middle German roots "unrowe" and "unrowe" mean unrest or trouble; the Middle High German root "unruoch" connotes wicked.

Among Mennonites, the name is found since 1568. In the Low German, the original Unru became Unrau; in the late 1700s when the Mennonite churches changed to use of High German instead of Dutch, many families changed the spelling to Unruh. Though most changed, the name Unrau is still common among Mennonites today.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Eva Janzen  
 +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) **Andreas B. Unruh**  
 \* . )) Maria Unruh  
 \* . )) **Helena Dirks**  
 +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Bartel  
 \* . )) Marie Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Bena Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Anna Wilms  
 +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
 \* \* \* . )) Justina Wiens  
 \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
 \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Koop  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Fast  
 \* . )) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
 \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
 \* \* \* . )) Katharina Thiessen  
 \* . )) Margaret Harms  
 \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
 \* . )) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
 \* . )) Anna Günther  
 /)) *Michael Mpho, Jonathan James, Rebekah Margaret*  
 \* +)) Isaac J. Harms  
 \* +)) David Harms  
 \* . )) Katharina Fröse  
 \* +)) Isaac Harms  
 \* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
 \* . )) Eva Unruh  
 \* \* . )) Eva Schroeder  
 \* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
 \* \* \* . )) Marie Unruh  
 \* \* . )) Emma Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
 \* \* . )) Katharina Claassen  
 \* \* . )) Katharina Schmidt  
 . )) Virginia Louise Harms

Helena's family name, Dirks, can be traced directly back to the Przechowka congregation.<sup>40</sup> Her grandparents and their ancestors are found in the *Przechowka Gemeindebuch*.<sup>26</sup>

The Dirks family originated in Holland and shares a common origin with the Dirksen name and variations such as Duerksen.<sup>41</sup> The *-sen* ending can refer to "the child of Dirk." In fact, there were several well-known people named Dirk among the early Anabaptists, including a leader, Dirk Philips, and the martyr, Dirk Willems whose story was told on page 16.

The Martyr's Mirror contains the account of the martyrdom of three members of a family whose family name was Dircks. Although we can trace no direct connection, their story illustrates the environment in which the Dirks family name became part of the Mennonite community.<sup>7</sup>

#### JACOB DIRCKS, WITH HIS TWO SONS, A.D. 1568

In this bloody and perilous time of persecution, also pious Jacob Dircks and his two sons, Andries Jacobs and Jan Jacobs fell into the hands of the tyrants. This Jacob Dircks, a tailor by trade, resided with his family at Utrecht, and as he was spied out there as one belonging to the persuasion of the Mennists, and as the lords wanted to apprehend him, he from fear of the tyrants fled to Antwerp. His wife, who did not hold these views, still remaining there for some time, the thief-catchers seized their property, and took about half of it.

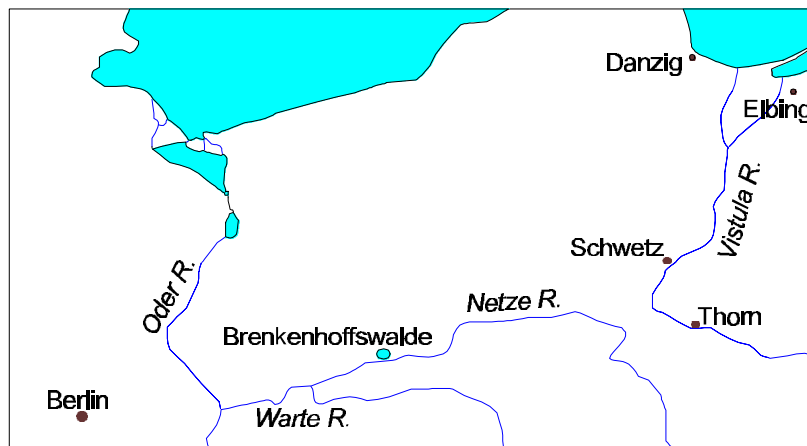
While Jacob Dircks resided with his family at Antwerp, his wife died there, and he and his aforementioned two sons, though having escaped the hands of the tyrants at Utrecht, subsequently fell into the claws of the wolves at Antwerp, where the trial of their faith was found much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire (I Pet. 1:7); so that they were together condemned to be burnt, each at a stake, only for the divine truth, and living according to it, and not on account of any crime committed.

On their way to death, Jacob Dircks' youngest son, named Pieter, met them, who, as he in his great sadness and sorrow, put his arms around his father's neck, was instantly most cruelly seized by the thief-catchers, and thrown under the feet of the people following. With what sorrow the father and the brothers beheld this is easily imagined.

When the father and his two sons had each been placed at a stake, he said: "How is it my dear sons?"



Jacob Dircks and his sons, being led to the stake, are met by a third son. Figure from Reference 7.



Brenkenhoffswalde lay a few kilometers west of Driesen on the Netze River. In the late 1700s, it lay just on the Prussian side of the Polish border.

Each replied: "Very well, my dear father." Andries being betrothed at the time, his bride and his sister viewed from a distance with sorrowful hearts and weeping eyes this offering, how their bridegroom and brother, forsaking a temporal bride, and temporal relationship, chose the eternal Bridegroom Christ Jesus above all visible things. Thus these heroes were strangled, each at a stake and then burnt, sealing the truth with their death and blood on the 17th of March, 1568.

Therefore they shall also for their severe travail, hear the sweet and welcome voice of Christ: "Ye good and faithful servants, ye have been faithful over a few things, I will make you rulers over many things; enter ye into the joy of your Lord." And again, the king will say: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matt. 25:23,34.

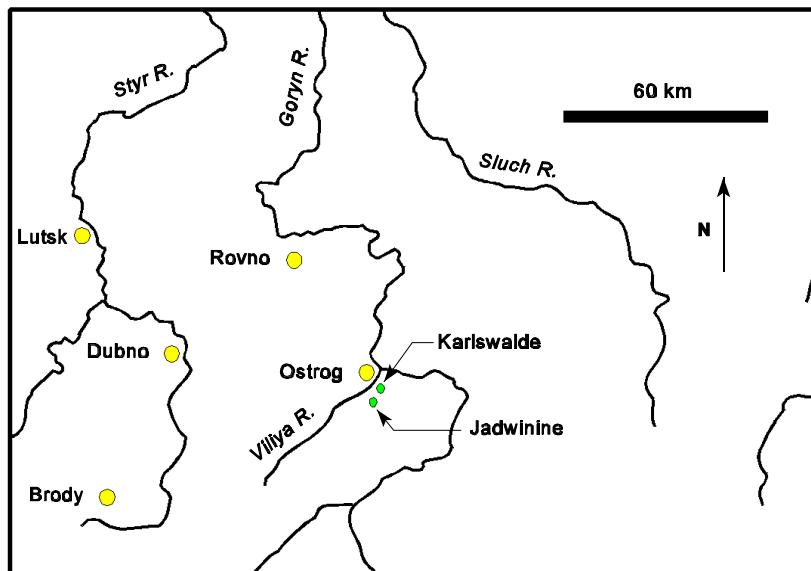
This narrative is recorded from the accounts of trustworthy persons, who witnessed this offering themselves.<sup>7</sup>

By the mid-1500s there was already a Mennonite from Holland with a name derivative of Dirks in the Elbing area, and in the 1600s, there were many. Later some moved to the Schwetz/Przechowka region and joined the local congregation. From today, we can trace our Dirks family back as far as the Przechowka Gemeindebuch will allow. The family tree and family group sheets for Helena's family are found on page 205.

In the spring of 1765, Hans Dirks, son of David Dirks and Sarcke Schmidt Dirks, left the Przechowka community to join a daughter settlement to the west.<sup>40</sup> The oppression by the Polish nobleman, Anton Wybczynski, on whose estate they labored, triggered a migration of about 35 Przechowka families.<sup>25</sup>

The destination was called Neumark, referring to its being a new border region recently acquired by Prussia. Neumark lay about 200 km west of Schwetz on the Netze River in the province of Brandenburg -- about midway between Schwetz and the city of Berlin. Today, it lies within Poland and the river is the Noteć. After acquiring the area, Frederick the Great needed settlers and granted quite liberal privileges of religious freedom to the Mennonites.<sup>42</sup> They settled just west of the town of Driesen (today known as Drezdenko<sup>43</sup>), forming the village of Brenkenhoffswalde.

The story of the settlement in Neumark is reminiscent of so many other Prussian Mennonite settlements. This area was swampy, and once again the Mennonites brought their Dutch skills



The region of South Russia known as Volhynia. It is now in the western Ukraine. (Based on the map in reference 6)

to reclaim the swamps for agriculture. Once again, they were quite successful, and of all the settlers,

“... the Mennonites proved themselves most industrious and most useful...[They are] excellent, useful citizens of the state, even though they do not bear arms.”<sup>25</sup>

Their favor with the authorities did not last. In the early 1800s, after the work of reclaiming the swamps was successful, their privilege of religious toleration was withdrawn. Most Mennonites moved on, some to the southeast to Volhynia and some further on to Molotschna.

One to move was Johann D. Dirks. In 1811, he moved from the Neumark region to Volhynia with his sons, Karl, Heinrich and Benjamin, his first wife having died. While traveling, Karl became deathly ill, and it became apparent that his only hope was to let a military hospital care for him. The military took him in on the condition that he become their servant, to which Johann reluctantly agreed. Karl did recover and later visited his father in Volhynia as a successful military musician.<sup>40</sup>

## Life in Volhynia

Mennonites came to Volhynia at the invitation of Russian noblemen who wished to spur economic development by encouraging skilled farmers. The group from Neumark came to the region of Ostrog where they were invited to settle by Count Karol Jablonsovsky. In his honor, they founded the village of Karlswalde (Karl's Forest) four miles south of Ostrog. The terms that the noblemen offered were not as favorable as those in South Russia; the land was rented, not owned. On the other hand, they were given freedom of worship and of vocation as well as some aid in starting their farms.<sup>44</sup>

It was difficult for the people of Volhynia to get ahead economically on rented land. Since they did not own the land, they could not benefit from the improvements that they made, and they could not depend on long-term stability. Much of the land was poor and not productive. Some of the people took up other professions such as blacksmith, carpenter, or stonemason. Later ship records listed Andreas and others as having been miners,<sup>45</sup> although this could easily have been a recording error. No reference has been found to Volhynian Mennonites being miners.

Homes were built side-by-side with narrow fields behind them extending for up to 5 kilometers.<sup>46</sup> They built their houses of lumber from local forests and thatched them with straw. Agricultural methods were crude, even for the times since neither could they afford to innovate nor were they encouraged to do so.

Mennonites of non-Prussian heritage also lived in Volhynia: the Swiss Mennonites. They lived in different areas of Volhynia, though under similar circumstances. Much less contact existed between Prussian and Swiss Mennonites than existed among the Prussian Mennonites themselves.

The various Prussian Mennonite churches of Volhynia came under the authority of a single *Ältester*. Benjamin Dirks, an uncle of Helena in our family, was ordained to the eldership in 1817, and Tobias Unruh, the uncle of Andreas, took over in 1853. The church also had responsibility for the schools, often with ministers as teachers. Because of the hardships, however, schooling usually ended when the young person was needed on the farm. Helena, for example, was never able to write her own name.<sup>47</sup>

## **The Trip from Karlswalde to Great Bend**

When the changes in the Mennonites privileges came in 1870, the Karlswalde group were affected just like those in Chortitza and Molotschna. In response, they sent their *Ältester*, Tobias Unruh, to be part of the group that scouted out North America in 1873, and they toured the prairie states and Manitoba.

Before returning, Tobias Unruh joined Paul and Lorenz Tschetter in one additional stop. They personally petitioned President U.S. Grant for special privileges. After explaining their plight in Russia, they made specific requests proposing a similar structure to what they experienced in Russia but with additional special privileges:

We the undersigned deputies therefore most respectfully beg to ask of Your Excellency to allow to us and all our brethren exemption from military service for the next fifty years, without payment of money on our part for such exemption. We also desire to be allowed to keep our German schools in our colonies, and to administer them according to our own rules as we have done in Russia.

We further beg to ask of your Excellency whether we shall be allowed not to serve as judges or jurymen...When we shall be able to show a written grant of these privileges on returning to our brethren in Russia, an immense emigration from that country will take place...<sup>21</sup>

They delivered the petition in person to President Grant who received them kindly and promised a reply. Later they noted their regret that

the President was not able to understand the German language so they could converse with him personally...

rather than noting that they were unable to speak English.

The next day, Grant forwarded the request:

Respectfully referred to the Secretary of State. Of course no privileges can be accorded to foreign born citizens not accorded to all other citizens. But it may be proper to state to these people that it is entirely improbable that they will ever be called upon to perform involuntary Military Service.<sup>21</sup>

The request was later rejected.

*Ältester* Unruh was greeted at home by his anxious friends:

...An hour had not elapsed before the room was full. The anxiety in all to hear was very great. Here with us all that can, are seeking to flee from the approaching calamity; but poverty will prevent many; therefore they pray and call for help...<sup>21</sup>

They determined to move to America as a congregation and set out to get the necessary papers. This decision was underlined when the noblemen announced new and difficult measures ending their leases and announcing that they would not be compensated for the improvements on the rented land.

Consequently, many had not the means for the trip and for starting a new life; in addition, the circumstances of their leaving meant that their goods would sell for a very low price. Andreas joined a group of leaders in writing to American Mennonites for a loan. The letter was published in the American Mennonite newspaper, *Herald of Truth*:

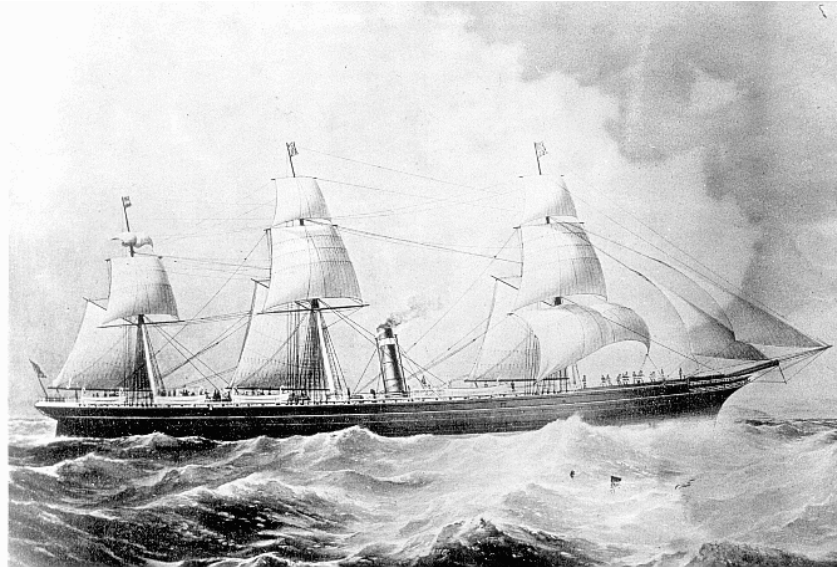
...in order, by the aid of Providence, to accomplish this [migration], we feel compelled, beloved brethren, to beg and pray of you in the name of the whole church to manifest towards us, for heaven's sake, your kindness and Christian love...and beseech you, if it be possible, to furnish us with a sufficient sum of money, as a loan...there are in the various colonies of our church a large number of members without the means to emigrate, and who also desire so very much to come, that they may escape the sad calamity threatening us, in the drafting of our young men into the service of the army, which is so directly opposed to the teachings of Menno Simon and the pure doctrines of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and also of...the Martyrs, who gave up not only their property and possessions, but with their own blood sealed their faith.<sup>21</sup>

The request was for \$40,000 and was signed by Andreas, his brother, his brother-in-law and several others.

The Mennonite Board of Guardians responded with loans for those who needed them sufficient that nobody stayed behind for lack of funds. All but a couple families prepared to leave. After some delay while waiting for their papers to arrive, the Volhynians left in four separate groups. Andreas, Helena, and their two children were in the second group. They were joined by several Dirks family groups including Helena's parents, Rev. Heinrich and Susanna Dirks,<sup>48</sup> who were themselves accompanied by a grandson, Heinrich K. Dirks.

The Ostrog area being isolated, they had to make a two-day journey by wagon to the nearest railway station at Brody for a departure date of October 24, 1874.<sup>49</sup> Most of the contingent had never seen a train, so the appearance of the first was frightening,<sup>50</sup> but they loaded their goods and families on this conveyance to travel through strange and new worlds.



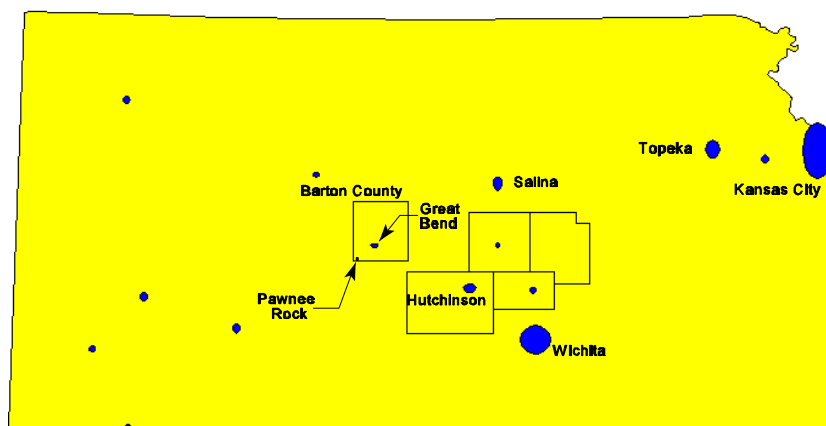


The ship, S.S. *City of London*, that carried the Unruh family to America.

From Brody a day was required to reach Krakau (Krakow in present-day Poland) and 2 more days to reach Berlin; the next day they were in Köln (Cologne). The following stage brought another new experience: 24 tunnels, some up to 3½ kilometers long. Soon they arrived safely in Antwerp, Holland. Here they were able to view parts of the city and saw their first multi-story buildings, some, they noted, up to 7 stories high.<sup>49</sup>

From Holland, a ship ride was followed by another train ride which took them to Liverpool, England, where they boarded the S.S. *City of London*, an 1880 ton vessel with a steam engine and sails. It carried 690 passengers; 313 were Mennonite, and of those, 266 came from Karlswalde. The ship arrived at Castle Garden, the immigration reception point in New York City, on November 18.<sup>51</sup> Here they were processed for immigration.

## Arrival in Kansas



Map of Kansas, showing the location of Barton County.

Economically, the group from Karlswalde was poorer than the emigrant groups from Molotschna. Not only were they poor as a group, but nobody was in a good position to help the others financially. However, they were willing to help each other in other ways. Although they were advised by some to stay in the east for the first winter and work for Mennonites there, Andreas' family, Heinrich's family, and a group of other families headed straight for Kansas. (For the data on the Unruh and Dirks families, see the family group sheets starting on page 205.)

The AT&SF Railroad was recruiting at the time for Barton County in west-central Kansas, and Andreas' family and about 20 other families immediately traveled to Great Bend, Kansas. Arriving in late November, the settlers could do little until spring. As was the case for a number of immigrant communities, the railroad erected an immigrant shelter for them for the winter. It was just a simple shed--one big room for everyone.

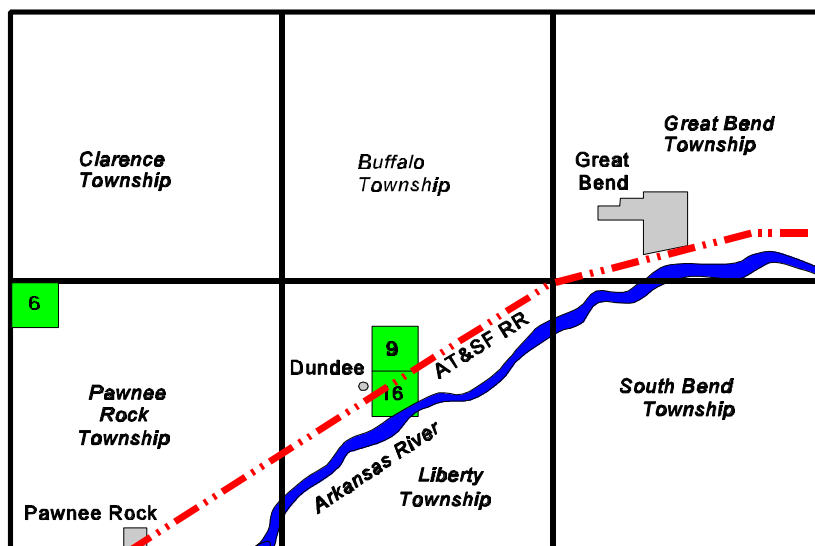
Unfortunately, the shelter blew over during a winter storm sending the immigrants scurrying to the station house. They were taken from there to spend the rest of the winter in boxcars in Pawnee Rock.<sup>51</sup>

Apparently they chose the location of their new settlement from the area to which they had become familiar that winter and became the most western of the initial Mennonite communities.

### The Settlement at Dundee

Initially the majority of the Mennonites of Barton County chose to duplicate the village style of South Russia. Andreas and Helena joined this settlement. Helena's parents did not.

The members of the settlement obtained two sections of land. Section 9 was purchased



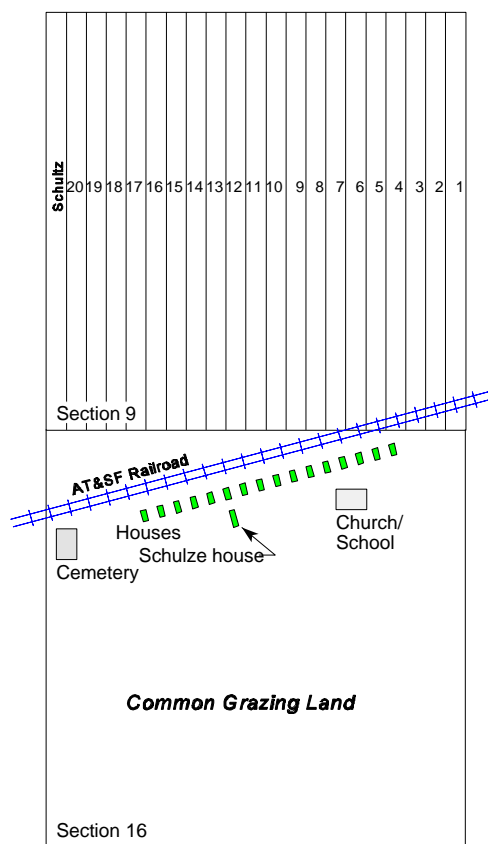
Map of the SW corner of Barton County, Kansas. Each township is 6 miles by 6 miles. Andreas and Helena Unruh made their home on section 16 of Liberty Township; Heinrich J. and Susannah Dirks homesteaded on section 6 of Pawnee Rock Township. (Map based on an 1886 Atlas of Kansas; in 1874, Liberty Township was part of Buffalo Township).

from the Santa Fe Railroad whose holdings were arranged in alternate square miles. An adjacent piece of land was needed, and they obtained section 16 under the Homestead Act.<sup>50</sup> The latter lay just east of the town of Dundee, and several miles northeast of Pawnee Rock. As has been noted in other chapters, homesteading was unusual for South Russian immigrants who were wary of arrangements with the government and the possible obligations that could result.

Section 9 was divided into 32-acre strips as shown in the accompanying figure that is based on a drawing by Victor Siebert, grandson of an original settler.<sup>52</sup> Section 16 was not divided but was used for common grazing land.

Andreas was selected as the leader or *Schulze* of the village. Consequently Andreas and Helena's house was not in the same line as the others. Though not well off, he was somewhat better situated than the others. Records indicate that at the end of the winter, Andreas and Helena had \$1,654 while her parents had only \$130. Only one other family had over \$1,000, and the average was about \$360.<sup>51</sup>

Finding themselves in difficult straits, the community again appealed to the Board of Guardians who had aided their travel. In August of 1875, the board reported what they had provided for each family:



The layout of the original settlement at Dundee, Kansas, consisting of two sections of land (each one-mile square). This figure is based on a drawing by Victor Siebert.

Lumber for 1 house--\$40.35; stove--\$25; milch cow--\$25; 1 yoke of oxen--\$100; 1 breaking plow--\$21.50; 1 bushel of seed wheat--\$1; 1 bushel of rye--65¢; 1 scythe--\$1.50; 1 grindstone--\$2; 1 garden rake--25¢; 1 pitchfork....At the present the supply of the livelihood has exhausted up to a few kegs of salt and several 100 lbs. of flour, and we woefully look forward to the time when these poor people will be out of flour; when we will have to say to these poor people, it is all, help yourselves now...There may be exceptions, but indications are that the best among them are not in a position to make their own living till after harvest. The new potatoes, beans, corn, pumpkins etc. which are now being planted in the new sod, can hardly meet the requirements this year, and assistance will have to be offered to them in a certain measure.

For a close I would like to say yet, since most of them cannot read nor write which is a large hindrance to them, they have no pep or get away, which no doubt their poverty-stricken condition and their dark future bring with it and makes their lot like it is. The sooner we can get schoolhouses here, the better it will be...

Signed: the Committee, Halstead, Kansas<sup>51</sup>

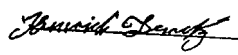
Survive they did. During the first year, they shared their yields communally. Using the lumber that the committee provided they built Russian-style house/barns using pegs instead of nails so that in the future the buildings could be dismantled. When they built their houses, they were also able to contract for a stone building that served as house and church, the Bergthal Mennonite Church. Helena's brother, Peter, served as the minister.

The Kansas census of 1875 indicates that Andreas had only a pair of horses and no draft oxen plus he had two milk cows. They were able to get in some corn, oats, and potatoes that summer.

The Dundee Mennonite village did not last but about three years. These small farms were insufficient, so the settlers adopted the American style of living on their farms. Section 16 was abandoned, and the terms of the Homestead Act were never satisfied. Section 9 was sold.

The location of Andreas and Helena's farm has not yet been determined. Most members of the group settled in Liberty and Pawnee Rock Townships and in Rush County to the west. Andreas' family, as well as most of the Dirks families, settled in Pawnee Rock Township, probably north of the present town of Pawnee Rock.

Meanwhile, Helena's parents, Heinrich and Susanna Dirks, settled in March of 1875 on about 80 acres in the southeast quarter of section 6, northwest of the town of Pawnee Rock. This piece was also acquired under the Homestead Act. In their homestead application, they described their home: a "House 16 by 16 feet, shingle roof, one door and 2 windows, stable 10 x 15, chicken house, etc."<sup>53</sup>

 Heinrich Dirks' signature  
as found on the  
Homestead Proof.

They also applied for citizenship unusually quickly, and it was granted in March, 1880.

It is interesting to note that Heinrich Dirks and his family were entered on ships' records as "Dierks," a spelling which correlates with the signature found on homestead records. Documents prepared in other hands appear to always spell the name "Dirks."

Immediately after the homestead claim was granted in 1880, Heinrich, who was already 72, sold his land; where they lived out their days or were buried is unknown, but it is likely that they lived with children.



A picturesque tree in the Dundee cemetery. Andreas Unruh's grave is possibly marked by one of the broken stones behind the tree.

In 1881, Andreas Unruh died, leaving Helena and two children: Jacob, now 21 and ready to strike out on his own, and Marie who was 8.

Andreas was probably buried in the cemetery at Dundee, just northeast of the town of the present village of Dundee, adjacent to the railroad and commercial sand pits. Just behind a solitary tree lie four very old markers. Two are broken off near the ground, but the others bear dates of 1880 and 1883. That the remains of Andreas lie beneath one of the other two is a reasonable speculation.

Helena's mother, Susanna Dirks, died on April 26, 1887. According to a family story, she died from injuries incurred when she stepped off a moving train. She and Heinrich had been married 60 years. Several sources attribute the same death date for Heinrich, but family information indicates that he lived significantly longer and continued to visit his children and grandchildren.<sup>53</sup>

Heinrich Dirks' grandson, Jacob Unruh, left the area and went to Marion County, where he farmed and achieved some influence in county government. Helena and Marie went to the Hoffnungsau community where she married the widower, Rev. Peter Ratzlaff of chapter 5. Elder Dietrich Gaeddert of Hoffnungsau had just made a visit to Dundee and quite likely brokered this marriage. Upon the death of Peter Ratzlaff in 1891, she married Abraham Richert, also of Hoffnungsau.

When Richert died, Helena moved to Hillsboro where, by this time, both of her children lived. She was said to be very quiet and spent much of her time reading her German Bible.

Jacob's family provided most of her care until she died in 1926 and was buried in the Johannel Cemetery under the marker "Helena Unruh Richert." A note in the local paper stated that she had lived with her daughter Marie, but the following issue included a correction



Helena Dirks Unruh (Richert). This photo was made while Helena was married to Abraham Richert.

indicating that she had, in fact, been cared for by her son. Credit was carefully given where credit was due.

Meanwhile, Helena's mother, Susanna, died in 1887. According to family information, she died a short while after receiving injuries when she stepped off a train while it was still moving.<sup>53</sup> A number of genealogies state that Heinrich's date of death was the same day; however, family members also report that he lived as a widower after Susanna's death. Searches for the date and location have been unsuccessful.

Many other Unruh and Dirks families stayed on in Pawnee Rock as farmers. Although the church experienced some substantial turmoil over the next decades, the Bergthal Mennonite



Gravestone of Helena Dirks Unruh in the Johannestal cemetery, Hillsboro, Kansas.

Church a few miles north of Pawnee Rock is still going strong. However, our family experience in Barton County was a short one.





## 7 The First of Two Harms Cousins

We return once again to that pivotal time for South Russian Mennonites, the early 1870s. The government of Russia had announced far-reaching changes in the rights of the Mennonites to practice their faith as God had led them for several centuries.

Cousins Isaak J. Harms (born in 1833) and Cornelius Harms (born in 1835) both ended up moving to North America, but their paths differed. In this and the following chapter, we will try to understand what led these families to their destinations.

A Prussian/Russian Mennonite tradition adds confusion to our attempt to keep all the Harmses organized who appear in our story. A South Russian Mennonite family customarily gave to their newborn child the name of the parent, an aunt, or an uncle. Many of the children died, and if that happened, the next child of the same gender often was given the same name as the one that died. The result is many occurrences of people with identical names.

When we read about our Harms families, we find many Isaacs and Isaaks. In fact, there are at least four Isaacs and Isaaks who are our direct ancestors, and many more who are the brothers and cousins of these ancestors; many can be found on the family ancestor tree on page 243. This chapter tells the story of the Harms branch that includes an Isaak born in 1833. In the story of Cornelius, written in the following chapter, we see that his father was also Isaak. So was one of Cornelius' sons. To tell them apart, we will sometimes note the year that an individual was born. The Isaak Harms about whom we start this story then could be designated Isaak J. Harms (1833).

### The Origin of the Name “Harms” among South Russian Mennonites.

We do not have a direct path back to someone who was the first Mennonite Harms, but there is a story of the conversion of someone by that name who later came to Prussia.

In the city of Jever in Holland on February 13-14, 1572, six people were converted and became Anabaptists.<sup>54</sup> The names recorded were Hermann Brunsfeld, a scholar, Johann Gerdes from Hohenkirchen, Nicolaus Hermanni from Alternburg, Henricus Henrici from Wüppels, Jankenius from Stillenstede, and Sara, a pregnant woman. These Anabaptists were driven out of the country. Their trails were lost except for that of Nicolaus Hermanni; his path led to Elbing in Prussia. In the Low German

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Eva Janzen  
 +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
 \* . )) Maria Unruh  
 \* . )) Helena Dirks  
 +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Bartel  
 \* . )) Marie Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Bena Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Anna Wilms  
 +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
 \* \* \* . )) Justina Wiens  
 \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
 \* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Koop  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Fast  
 \* . )) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
 \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
 \* \* \* . )) Katharina Thiessen  
 \* . )) Margaret Harms  
 \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
 \* . )) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
 \* . )) Anna Günther  
 /)) Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,  
 \* Rebekah Margaret  
 \* +)) **Isaak J. Harms**  
 \* +)) David Harms  
 \* \* . )) **Katharina Fröse**  
 \* +)) Isaac Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
 \* \* . )) Eva Unruh  
 \* \* . )) Eva Schroeder  
 \* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
 \* \* \* \* . )) Marie Unruh  
 \* \* . )) Emma Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
 \* \* . )) Katharina Claassen  
 \* \* . )) Katharina Schmidt  
 . )) Virginia Louise Harms



Engraving of the old walled city of Elbing from approximately the 1680s.

spoken by Prussian Mennonites, Nicolaus Hermanni became Claas Harmes.

Over the years, the Harms' families settled in the Kleine Werder region, the area between Elbing and the Nogat River (see the map on page 30). They joined the local Friesian Mennonite Church where, for example, in 1709 a man named Hans Harmiß became a deacon.

### **The Kleine Werder Mennonites**

The Kleine Werder Mennonites in Prussia Anabaptists began coming to Elbing in the mid-1500s. Elbing was a walled city illustrated by an old engraving.<sup>55</sup> The political leaders of Elbing had expressed concern about “heretics from the Low Countries”, but in the wake of a recent war, settlers were needed to re-populate the countryside. Some of the Anabaptist families pursued non-farming crafts and lived within the walled city. Threats were made to expel them, but as far as we know, they were not carried out.

In the 1560s, the Ellerwald lowlands were made available to the Mennonites. The leaders of Elbing had described Ellerwald as “unusable”; the swamp, brush, and forest could not be farmed by the local population. Using their Hollander skills, the Mennonites drained the swamp using canals, dikes, ditches and windmills. The Mennonite settler community built and maintained the entire system.<sup>14</sup>

Mennonite skills in farming and reclaiming land earned them some protection from those who would have preferred to banish them for their “heresies”. By the 1770s there were 329 Mennonite families in the lowlands around Elbing.

In 1772, the country of Poland was partitioned. The delta, including the Ellerwald area, went to Prussia. This new government placed severe restrictions on the Mennonites' acquisition of land. The Prussian government reasoned that since military duty was tied to land ownership, and the Mennonites could not in good conscience participate in the military, they should be restricted from owning land.



The Famous 700-year-old Chortitza oak tree.

The new restrictions coincided with Czarina Catherine II's offer of land in South Russia. The Mennonites had only recently switched from speaking Dutch to speaking German, but the combination of the German language and their demonstrated farming skills were enough for Catherine to make special entreaty to the Mennonites as part of her recruitment of Germans. In one move in 1788, a group of 919 Mennonites left the Elbing area for South Russia.

Hans Harms was born and raised in the Ellerwald community. He was known by his Dutch name, Hans, having been born during the period in which Prussian Mennonites used the Dutch language. After he moved, he became known by the German equivalent, Johann. Linen-weaving was a common occupation among Mennonites in this area, and Hans practiced this trade.<sup>56</sup> The weaving of linen also entailed farming since the flax usually was grown, treated, spun and woven by the same family. Without more land, however, their prospects were limited.

### **Hans Harms and a New Life in South Russia**

Having both a religious and an economic impetus, Hans moved to South Russia in 1796. He and his bride of two years, Maria Fast, placed all their belongings in a wheelbarrow and pushed them to the border with Russia.<sup>57</sup> Once on the Russian side, transportation was provided by the Russian government which took them to a settlement area or colony designated only for Mennonites.

The first Mennonite colony in South Russia was Chortitza (Khor'-tit-za), on the west bank of the Dnieper River, the largest river in South Russia, in an area that included the large Chortitza island shown on page 34. The name came from a tributary, the Chortitza River. The island was once the location of the largest Cossack population in Russia, and after the Russians defeated the Turks, it became the estate of G.A. Potemkin, a famous advisor to the Czarina.

The Chortitza colony got off to a rocky start: the land was not as good as that originally promised by the Russian government; the settlers' possessions had been pilfered, and the government aid did not arrive in a timely fashion.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, their leaders and ministers were denied passports by the Prussian government since they tended to own property, so the group was without the leadership to which they were accustomed.

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| <b>Hans (Johan) Harms</b><br>(b. 1771) | 0) 1) ) Katharina Harms (1796-1883)      | 0) ))) Johan Harms (1823-1865)            |
| m. <b>Maria Fast</b><br>(1769-1804)    | /) 1) ) <b>Johann Harms</b> (1798-1887)  | /) ))) Bernhard Harms (1824-1896)         |
| m. <b>Anna Neudorf</b><br>(1784-1805)  | * m. <b>Maria Giesbrecht</b> (1802-1877) | /) ))) Jakob Harms (1826-1898)            |
|  | *  | * m. Anna Foth                            |
|  | *  | /) ))) Peter Harms (1828-1911)            |
|  | *  | /) ))) <b>Isaak Harms</b> (1833-1888)     |
|  | *  | * m. <b>Katharina Fröse</b> (1836-1905)   |
|  | *  | /) ))) Abraham Harms (1837-1908)          |
|  | *  | /) ))) William Harms (1839-1915)          |
|  | *  | /) ))) Maria Harms (1842-1919)            |
|  | *  | /) ))) Susanna Harms (b. 1844)            |
|  | *  | .) ))) Heinrich Harms (1845-1886)         |
|  | /) 2) ) Peter Harms (1806-1870)          | 0) ))) Cornelius Harms (1833-1834)        |
|  | /) 2) ) <b>Isaak Harms</b> (1811-1891)   | /) ))) <b>Cornelius Harms</b> (1835-1928) |
|  | * m. <b>Anna Sawatzky</b> (1809-1877)    | * m. <b>K. Thiessen</b> (1836-1865)       |
|  | * m. Karolina Plett (1823-1887)          | * m. Anna Hildebrandt (d. 1878)           |
|  | * m. Maria Fast (1851-1936)              | * m. E. Goossen (1854-1935)               |
|  | *  | /) ))) Isaak Harms (1837-1865)            |
|  | *  | * m. M. Friesen (b. 1838)                 |
|  | *  | /) ))) Johann Harms (1839-1887)           |
|  | *  | * m. M. Loewen (1841-1878)                |
|  | *  | /) ))) Peter Harms (1841-1843)            |
|  | *  | /) ))) Anna Harms (1844-1919)             |
|  | *  | * m. Klaas Wiebe (1842-1925)              |
|  | *  | /) ))) Margareta Harms (1846-1847)        |
|  | *  | .) ))) Peter S. Harms (1849-1924)         |
|  | *  | m. Anna Friesen (1849-1918)               |
|  | /) 2) ) Maria Harms (1813-1890)          |   |
|  | /) 2) ) Abraham Harms (1813-1830)        |   |
|  | /) 2) ) Jakob Harms (1815-1881)          |   |
|  | .) 2) ) Margaret Harms (1818-1846)       |   |

Partial List of the Descendants of Hans Harms (1771).

The group dug in for a cold winter, camping at first under an oak tree which was at that time already at least 500 years old. This tree, sacred to the Cossacks, became famous throughout Russia, and in the 20th century when the Dnieper was dammed, special drainage was installed to protect the tree. It survived until 1995 when the drainage system broke.<sup>58</sup>

The settlers had to make a major adjustment from the swampy lowlands of Prussia to the dry, treeless steppes of South Russia. The land was difficult to plow with their primitive tools, and the rainfall was not reliable. They turned to raising stock, sheep and cattle, growing crops for their own use. It would be several decades before this area became the breadbasket of all Europe.

Here the Mennonites developed the village-style farm which became typical of South Russian Mennonite colonies. This area had been represented as being unpopulated, but bands of marauders led the colonists to choose carefully planned villages. Each day they had to walk to their crop land. The grazing land was held in common, and they hired herders to watch their stock.

According to family information, Hans settled his family in Österwick<sup>59</sup> where two children were born to Maria and him: Katharina and Johann. The children received the first part of their education in Chortitza.

A few years later, in 1804, they moved to the second colony for the Mennonites in South Russia, Molotschna, shown in the map on page 35. The Molotschna colony lay on the east side of the Molotschna or Molotschnaia (in English, "Milk") River.

On June 20, they took up farm number 12 in the village of Blumstein. It was a standard full-sized farm of 65 dessiatina, about 165 acres. Maria died soon thereafter, leaving Hans with two children.

By 1808, Hans had remarried to Anna Neudorf. She became the grandmother of Cornelius Harms, our other Harms ancestor of that generation, but we will save the account of Hans and Anna for the story of Cornelius in the next chapter.

The 1808 census lists the family of Hans and his property that indicated that he was off to a reasonable start: he had a wagon, plow, harrow, 6 horses and 12 cattle plus a substantial supply of grain (200 tschwert or 4800 bushels) and 30 loads of hay.

### **Johann Harms and Maria Giesbrecht, Successful Pioneer Farmers**

Johann Harms (1798), the son of Hans and the father of Isaak J., grew up in Blumstein and was married at the age of 24 to Maria Giesbrecht, a 20-year-old neighbor. Some of the records say that Maria was a first cousin, but the relationship is not available.

Maria was the daughter of Jakob Giesbrecht and Helena Reimer. The only information that we have on the Giesbrechts comes from census and migration information. Maria's father, Jacob, came from Pletzendorf, east of Tiegenhof in the GrosseWerder of Prussia. Maria's mother, Helena Reimer, came with her parents from Tiegenhagen in Prussia and settled in Blumstein.

Johann and Maria lived with his parents, Hans and Maria, for a short time and then moved to the village of Marienthal. He was a schoolteacher in a village school for awhile.

Between 1826 and 1828, they finally secured a full farm of their own, located in the village of Margenau. Here they raised their 10 children. In Margenau Johann was known to be an aggressive farmer, so much so that his sons lamented that there was not enough time for their education.<sup>60</sup> Johann's family is listed in the section on page 243.

Johann served as the Margenau *Schulze* or mayor at various times. As a friend of the very influential and progressive Mennonite agricultural leader, Johann Cornies of Orloff, he maintained very strict regulations enacted by Cornies' "Agricultural Improvement Committee". This committee enacted requirements on all landowners regulating the upkeep of yards and houses, requiring the planting of trees, and implementing progressive farming methods.

In his memoirs, grandson J.F. Harms wrote further about his Grandfather Johann Harms, that

he was vitally interested in all matters of daily life and provided abundant advice in that regard. He would discuss matters in a masterful way, speaking in a suspenseful and persuasive tone of voice. Grandmother Maria was known for her cooking of tremendous goose and ham roasts and *plumenmaus* [a delicious "fruit soup" frequently made with plums].<sup>57</sup>

Both Johann and Maria were alive at the time that the migration to North America took place, but they stayed in South Russia and each died there in 1887.<sup>a</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> A family source, Tim Klassen, has reported that they died in Kansas while historian Delbert Plett reports that they died in South Russia. No ship record can be found. They are not listed in any U.S. or Kansas census searched so far, and they do not appear in appropriate church records. While this is not proof, I accept that they stayed in South Russia. John F. Harms probably reports it.



S.S. *State of Nevada*. This ship carried the Isaak J. Harms family to America. Courtesy, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.

### **Isaak J. Harms of Margenau and Grossweide**

Isaak was born to Johann and Maria in Margenau, one of 8 sons and two daughters. In 1856, when he was 22, he married Katharina Fröse. Her family had come from the Vistula delta as well, in about 1818. Isaak and Katharina first farmed in Grossweide, Molotschna, where 6 children were born; later they moved to Rudnerweide.<sup>61</sup>

The extended Harms family had a lot of contact with a small and separate group of Mennonites, the *Kleine Gemeinde*. The other Harms family in our ancestry, that of Isaak J.'s cousin, Cornelius, was very involved with this group; Hans Harms may have joined the *Kleine Gemeinde* after his second marriage. In any case, Isaak J.'s family was apparently part of one of the "mainline" Mennonite congregations, often called "kirchliche" Mennonites.

In August of 1875, Isaak J. and Katharina migrated to North America on the ship *S.S. State of Nevada*. They brought eight children, ranging in age from under a year to 18. As far as we know, they were not a part of a migrating congregation as were our relatives in the Alexanderwohl, the *Kleine Gemeinde*, the Volhynian, or the Krimmer groups. Although several of Isaak's siblings came the same year, none of them were on the *Nevada*.

They settled in the area known as the French Creek district, north of Hillsboro, Kansas, a part of Liberty township; an early settler named French gave the name to the creek and to the community. The area was known to Mennonites as the Johannestal area, named for an important elder and our ancestor in the Warsaw District of Polish Russia, *Ältester* Johann Bartel.

Not far from Isaak and Eva's place lived the family of Isaak's brother, Peter, and Peter's oldest son's family.<sup>62</sup> Two brothers, Abram and William, lived southwest of Hillsboro, in the Alexanderfeld community; he joined the Gnadenu Krimmer M.B. Church. Isaak's sister, Susanna, married and stayed in Russia. She and her family were said to have suffered horribly during the Revolution, and some of their children were among those who made a daring escape through and eventually to Paraguay. The Harbin story appears in another chapter.

## Life on the Kansas Prairie

The first couple of years were extremely difficult.<sup>63</sup> The Harms family was very poor after the trip, could not purchase land, and was forced to rent land 10 miles away from their home. In November of 1875, Isaak and 6 of the children contracted a contagious disease; the youngest daughter, Maria, died on November 16.

In spring, Isaak J. was able to buy two big workhorses, and one two-year-old which promptly ran away and was not located for six months, nearly starved to death. Cash for feed and seed was difficult to find, so three of the boys would work wherever they could, working long days for a total of \$6 per day. They broke virgin prairie that spring and received an encouraging corn harvest, though the wheat did not do as well. In the spring, Peter was added to the household, born in May.

Isaak's oldest son, John, taught in the local German-English school. He married in 1877 and soon moved to Newton where he learned both the lumbering business and the English language.

Isaak's other sons provided a substantial work force. In 1878 they were able to build a more substantial home. The boys made adobe bricks, sun-dried mud blocks, from the building material around them. Isaak's son, David, recalled mixing the mud with his feet until it was the right consistency, a job that he found very hard.

Tragedy returned that year, however. Isaak and Katharina's remaining daughter, six-year-old Katharina, suddenly became sick and died in October.

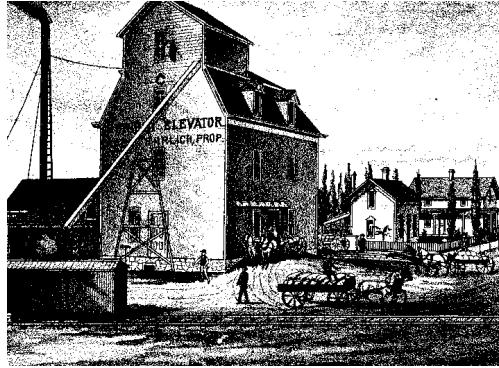
The family participated in the Johannestal Mennonite Church, north of French Creek. John, who had returned from Newton, was an imposing man and an effective preacher. The Johannestal congregation soon chose him as minister of the fledgling congregation.

In 1880, a major spiritual revival spread through the French Creek district. At first this movement developed independently of the various Mennonite churches, but soon the influence of the Mennonite Brethren was felt. The origins of the Mennonite Brethren are part of the story in Chapter 13; they are the most pietistic of the major Mennonite denominations and place very great importance on adult baptism by immersion. Tension between the M.B.s and the *kirchliche* exists to this day. Abraham Schellenberg, the powerful elder of the Ebenezer Mennonite Brethren Church of Buhler, came to the French Creek district and held a baptism in 1881.

Isaak J.'s son, 20-year-old David, was one of the first to be baptized; he was very enthusiastic about the changes but rather concerned that his parents would not understand.<sup>63</sup> John followed soon thereafter. This revival will be described later when we learn more of Isaak's son, David.

Within a few years, John led a new church, the Johannestal Mennonite Brethren Church. That church eventually became the Hillsboro Mennonite Brethren Church, known locally as the "Big M.B. Church".<sup>64</sup> Joining John as pastor, his brother, Isaac, was a leader. Katharina was eventually re-baptized in May of 1889 and joined the Lehigh M.B. Church after her husband's death, but the senior Isaak was never re-baptized or joined the new movement.





A view of Lehigh, Kansas, in 1887 where Isaak Harms had his lumber business. (Atlas of Kansas, 1887).

After several years of farming, Isaak J. moved a few miles west to Lehigh where he ran a lumber yard. Isaak died very suddenly of a heart attack while eating breakfast, Sunday, August 29, 1886.<sup>61</sup> His grave has not been located. Katharina remarried a few years later in March of 1890 to a widower, Jakob Duerksen.<sup>64</sup> In 1903, they moved to Hillsboro, but only a year later, Jakob died. Katharina was very healthy and lively until she experienced a stroke while sitting in her rocking chair on April 12, 1905. The stroke took her speech and strength, and she died April 21.<sup>65</sup> Her grave has not been located.

### **Our Family After Isaak J. and Katharina**

Isaak and Katharina's son, David, married Eva Unruh, from Polish Russia. Both were among the first to be baptized in the French Creek Revival, and they became founding members of the Johannestal M.B. Church. David and Eva farmed northwest of Lehigh where our ancestor, Isaac, was born.

Times were difficult on their small farm, so David participated in the rush for land in



Katharina Fröse Harms





David Harms family, photographed in late 1903. Back row: Mary, Tina, Isaac, Eva, David, Bertha; front row: Helen, Arnold, Edward, David, Herman, Eva, Martha, Emelia.

Oklahoma, winning a quarter-section near Medford. His oldest son, Isaac, went on his own to Balko, Oklahoma, but David and Eva made another move to Saskatchewan where they lived out their days.

Isaac married Emma Neufeld in Balko, Oklahoma, and later moved to Ulysses, Kansas where he both farmed and led the Mennonite Brethren congregation.

It is interesting to note that each succeeding generation in our Harms story ploughed virgin land in either Russia or America:

Hans Harms in Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia;

Johann Harms in Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia;

Isaak J. Harms in Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia and then again in Hillsboro, Kansas;

David Harms in Kansas and in Medford, Oklahoma;

Rev. Isaac Harms in Balko, Oklahoma and in Ulysses, Kansas;

Isaac N. Harms in Ulysses, Kansas.

The stories of David and Eva and of Reverend Isaac Harms will pick up again in Volume II.



## 8 Leadership in a Reform Movement: a Harms Family Endeavor

Like other chapters, this one also tells the story of a young family from our heritage and the decisions that they made in the early 1870s. Each family described so far chose the challenge of pioneering in North America rather than the immediate security of life in South Russia. In this chapter we meet the Cornelius S. Harms family who did not join the emigration movement of the period; only when both Cornelius' extended family had settled in America did he follow.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
 \* .)) Eva Janzen  
 +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
 \* .)) Maria Unruh  
 \* .)) Helena Dirks  
 +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
 \* \* \* .)) Anna Bartel  
 \* .)) Marie Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
 \* .)) Bena Ratzlaff  
 \* .)) Anna Wilms  
 +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
 \* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens  
 \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
 \* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
 \* \* \* .)) Anna Koop  
 \* \* \* .)) Anna Fast  
 \* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
 \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
 \* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen  
 \* .)) Margaret Harms  
 \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
 \* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
 \* .)) Anna Günther  
 /)) Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,  
 \* Rebekah Margaret  
 \* +)) Isaac J. Harms  
 \* +)) David Harms  
 \* \* .)) Kathrina Fröse  
 \* +)) Isaac Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
 \* \* .)) Eva Unruh  
 \* \* .)) Eva Schroeder  
 \* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
 \* \* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh  
 \* \* .)) Emma Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
 \* \* .)) Katharina Claassen  
 \* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt  
 .)) Virginia Louise Harms

Cornelius was the grandson of the Hans Harms of the previous chapter who moved to Blumstein, Molotschna, in the early 1800s. He was first cousin to Isaak J. Harms who descended from Hans' first wife. The data on the families in this chapter can be found starting on page 229.

Cornelius' father, Isaak Harms (not to be confused with his nephew Isaak J. of the previous chapter), was the son of Hans' second wife, Anna Neudorf. Anna was formerly of Tiegenhagen in the Vistula delta (see the map on page 30). Her father was Isbrand Neudorf who was, like Hans, a linen weaver. The Neudorfs had moved to Molotschna in 1803.

An event took place in the life of Hans that led to a direction for his later offspring different from that of his older children. Hans was caught up in the development of a separate Mennonite denomination known as the *Kleine Gemeinde*.

### Beginnings of the *Kleine Gemeinde*

To understand the *Kleine Gemeinde* movement, we first must understand the challenge for the Mennonite Church in South Russia. For the previous centuries, the Mennonites living along the Vistula River and in the Vistula delta had lived as an oppressed minority amidst other churches, mostly Lutheran and Catholic. Leaving the Mennonite Church for the church of the majority was always an option, so a conscious choice was required of each individual if he or she was to make the commitment to stay on a narrower path as a Mennonite Christian.

In South Russia, it was different. According to terms of the privileges from the Russian government, all members of the Mennonite colonies had to be Mennonites. The only alternative in the early decades would have been to leave South Russia or at least to leave the colony. The Mennonite identity had become based on birth, not simply choice and commitment.

Another challenge in South Russia for which Mennonites were poorly prepared was civil government. It fell to Mennonites to provide their own local government. Could a Christian community that rejects all violence engage in civil discipline? Previously the government and the power that lay within the government had always lain in the hands of non-Mennonites, and never had these Mennonites been saddled with this responsibility before.

With the assumption that everyone in the colony was a Mennonite Christian and with the power of government came problems. Church discipline was often lax. Civil authority was sometimes used inappropriately for fellow church members, at least in the eyes of one Klaas Reimer, a minister who had immigrated from Prussia.

In 1812, a group led by Reimer began to meet separately from the established congregations. They called for a pure church and a closer return to principles and doctrines of early Anabaptists, particularly those expressed by Menno Simons and Dirk Philips. In addition to increased attention to church discipline, they opposed any violence that Mennonite local government might be tempted to use in punishment.

Reimer's group also resisted the German pietist influences that were beginning to develop in the South Russian Mennonite circle. Mennonite tradition had long placed emphasis on the local congregation or fellowship, the *Gemeinde*. It was through the *Gemeinde* that God was seen to work in the world. The pietists espoused a much more individualistic approach to faith and relationship with God. Also of significant concern was the pietist tendency to define in absolute terms who is in and who is out of "the saved." What was even more difficult for Reimer, that definition was not closely related to behavior. To Reimer, that smacked of great pride.

So Reimer's followers placed emphasis on living a devout and simple life as part of a church "without spot or wrinkle," using the wording of the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 5.

Initially they met substantial opposition. Klaas Reimer, who the group chose as *Ältester*, was not initially recognized as such by the majority Mennonite Church since he had not been ordained by another *Ältester*. Similarly, the ministers ordained by *Ältester* Reimer were not recognized. This lack of recognition had practical ramifications: the elders and ministers in this breakaway fellowship did not receive civil privileges afforded others; in recognition of their ecclesiastical duties, the unpaid Mennonite ministers normally were relieved of assignments to work on roads and village infrastructure.

Reimer's congregation became known, in some derision, as the "little church." Later they formally adopted that name, *Kleine Gemeinde*, or KG. Eventually, with the aid of the powerful agricultural reformer, Johann Cornies, they were recognized as a separate but legitimate Mennonite group. Since they refrained from overt condemnation of others, they managed to achieve that recognition without a great deal of confrontation.

The KG were different from the larger church both in matters of theological emphasis and in appearance. Some of the features included severity in dress, furnishings, and discipline. They gained exemption from colony rules on how houses and fences should be painted; KG houses were painted a simple blue rather than a more practical but flamboyant red. They avoided all trappings that could be considered prideful.

The concept of *Gemeinde* had another far-reaching ramification: their responsibility for each other. Like all Mennonites, they felt compelled to help those deep in poverty, but in

addition, they helped ensure that families could maintain the means of a moderate standard of living. Several examples will be important to this story--helping those without land and helping the poorer of their number who wished to emigrate.

Cornelius' grandfather, Hans Harms, seems to have been among the founders of the KG in Blumstein.<sup>60</sup> He probably began his involvement after the death of his first wife. Consequently Hans' son, Isaak, was brought up in a KG congregation, and there he later played a leadership role. In recognition of his leadership, this Isaak was often given the title of respect, *Ohm*. It was not unique, but in this volume, we will use that title to distinguish him from the many other Isaak Harmses throughout our history.

### **Ohm Isaak Harms in South Russia**

Isaak grew up in Blumstein and married Anna Sawatzky, the daughter of Cornelius Sawatzky of Orloff, another KG family. The Sawatzky family had its own interesting history in the KG, described a bit later. Isaak and Anna lived in the village of Alexanderkrone in the Molotschna colony where they owned a full-sized farm. According to Isaak's great-nephew, John F. Harms, their farm had fine buildings worth noting.<sup>60</sup>

Ohm Isaak was committed to the *Gemeinde* as a body of believers responsible for each other. Although he was a secure landowner himself, he took a particular interest in one of the more severe social problems of the day: landlessness. The amount of land available in a given colony was limited by fixed boundaries, and the conditions of the Russian government privileges precluded dividing farms. Families were large, so how were the sons of the landowners to be able to continue farming in the next generation? A large landless class was developing with few alternatives. Non-farm cottage occupations did not provide a secure income. The Mennonite culture and religious tradition appeared to require that they remain an agrarian society. In addition, political power was vested in those with land, as in most of the European world. Unfortunately, the plight of the landless was being ignored by the landed leaders of the colonies.

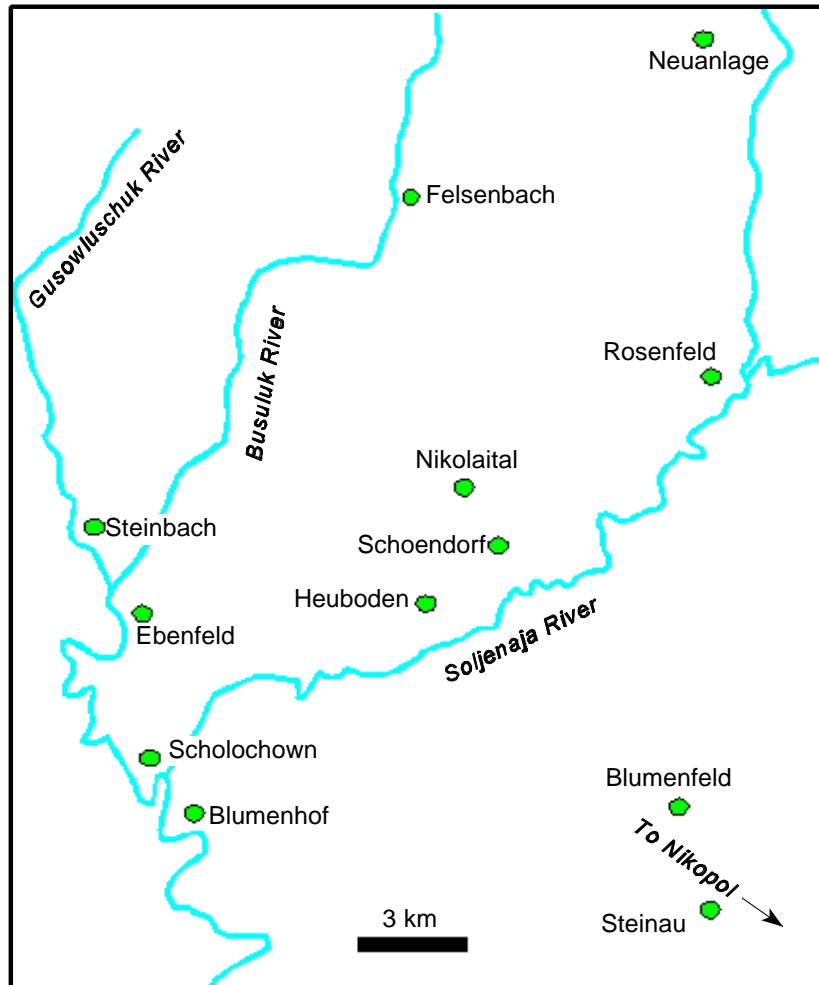
In 1863, Ohm Isaak set out to find a new area in which all members of the KG could farm. He brought his married son, Cornelius, and a young friend on the trip; the event was described in 1913 by the friend who grew up to become KG *Ältester* Toews:

Fifty years ago this summer, I a youth, was allowed to make my first extended trip by my parents...The mentioned journey was made in the accompaniment of old Mr. Isaac Harms and his son Cornelius. The latter is still living as an 80-year-old in California. The purpose of this trip was to look for land.

At first we were interested in the newly available land of Furstenland near the village Snamenka on the Dnieper River...At Nikopol we crossed the Dnieper River, then on to the Old Colony [Chortitza]. We found night lodging in the village of Schönberg at the 'Vorsteher der Landwirtschaft', who was also in charge of the new Furstenland settlement. While Father Harms stayed in the good room at the friendly folks, the younger Harms and I made our bed on the hay in the barn. We slept well, never dreaming of all the experiences of the next fifty years...

At Einlage we again crossed the Dnieper River and continued to the so-called Markuslandt. There, Harms and the nobleman, Markus, agreed on a rent contract that was to be in effect for six years. That same fall the village Friedrichsthal was settled and the following spring Andreasfeld.<sup>66</sup>

Ohm Isaak paid the rent contract from his own funds,<sup>67</sup> and he moved his family to Markuslandt that year together with much of the KG congregation. By this time, two of his



The Borosenko Colony from which Ohm Isaak Harms and other Kleine Gemeinde left for North America. Ohm Isaak's family probably lived in Heuboden. Borosenko can be located in South Russia on the map on page 32. (Adapted from a map from reference 67.)

sons, Cornelius S. and Isaak S., were married; they and their families of remained in the Molotschna.

A few years later, in 1865, the Mennonite colonies were given the opportunity to purchase rather than rent large portions of the estate of a Russian nobleman, Borso. The availability of this land resulted from a sweeping change in Russian society in 1861. That year, Czar Alexander II had released the serfs who had been in virtual slavery. Without free labor, many noblemen sold their land. The *Kleine Gemeinde* acted as a congregation to obtain land both for their young landless families and for their established KG farmers in order to form complete KG communities. From Borso, they purchased over 16,500 acres. At least 120 KG families moved to Borosenko.<sup>67</sup>

Those of Ohm Isaak's married sons who had remained in the KG, Isaak S. and Johann S., moved to Heuboden in Borosenko before Ohm Isaak. They were followed by his daughter, Anna, who was married to Klaas Wiebe. Our ancestor, Cornelius S. Harms, had by this time left the KG and was the only family member not to settle in Borosenko.

Royden Loewen has written an engaging description of daily life in Borosenko.<sup>67</sup> The extremes of the weather made life difficult, but the good soil and hard work led to economic success. Winter wheat was the mainstay, with crops of barley, rye, and hay in rotation. With cheap labor by the emancipated serfs, they threshed the wheat by primitive means, and it was ground by a Holland-type windmill.

Cattle, sheep, and hogs were raised for local consumption and cheese production. In October and November, neighbors took turns butchering hogs. When they recorded their yield, the lard was the most important product, since it was used both for making soap and for cooking.

While in Borosenko, Ohm Isaak and Anna saw their older son, Isaak, pass away in 1866, and they witnessed their youngest son, Peter S. Harms, marry within the KG in 1869.

At this point in the story, we will leave Ohm Isaak in Borosenko before the emigration decision, a successful farmer involved in his congregation with most of his family around him. The families of the various "in-laws" have their own important stories.

## The Sawatzky Contribution

Ohm Isaak's wife, Anna, was the daughter of Cornelius Sawatzky and Anna Friesen. Cornelius had come in 1804 from Heuboden in the Vistula delta; his father, Johann, came from the Elbing area (page 30). In 1805, Cornelius settled a full farm, number three in Orloff, Molotschna. Then the following year, he married Anna from the very influential von Riesen family.<sup>66</sup>

According to the census of 1808, the Sawatzkys were reasonably well off for a young family, owning a wagon, plow, 2 harrows, 6 horses, 8 cattle, 3 sheep, plus grain and hay.<sup>56</sup>

The Sawatzkys were probably one of the charter KG families of 1812, but Cornelius later left the group after a disagreement over a church discipline issue involving his daughter, Anna's sister. The issue was described by his antagonist in the matter, the KG founding elder *Ältester* Klaas Reimer, in his autobiography:

God now directed matters so that the great shame of Heinrich, the son of Abraham Friesen, was instantaneously brought to light...This occurred through a marriage which was to occur with the daughter of Sawatzky, for he had slept with her. But when this was revealed, it came to light that he had slept with two women of whom he had taken one. When this became manifest, we ministers came together in order to discuss the matter. I asked them whether they could perceive the wonderful leading of God in this? They acknowledged everything and a great sorrow fell upon my brother-in-law Abraham Friesen...

This is exactly what happened here to my brother-in-law Sawatzky. We summoned his daughter before us two times and asked here whether or not she had consented to the shame. She replied, 'yes.' But her father did not want her to acknowledge so much guilt and stated before all the brethren that his daughter was not supposed to be the scapegoat upon whom all the sin was to be cast. As a result, he went away from us. We waited for some time for him to come back in order to confess that this was not so. When he did not do so, we held a brotherhood meeting and he was separated from the *Gemeinde*...

Therefore, beloved reader, do not be proud. For whoever believes that he stands would do very well to pay heed lest he fall. Consequently our brother-in-law Sawatzky earnestly opposed us, which has given us much occasion to look out for ourselves. And so we always have a good reason to watch and pray for

ourselves and also for our small flock, for Satan seeks to draw us away from God with much cunning and deceptions.<sup>68</sup>

Cornelius Sawatzky left the KG, but the rest of his family continued to be a part of that *Gemeinde*.

### **The von Riesen (Friesen) Family**

Anna Friesen, Ohm Isaak's mother-in-law, was the daughter of Abraham von Riesen who lived four miles north of Tiegenhagen, Prussia, in the Vistula delta near the Baltic Sea. He grew up within a few miles of Klaas Reimer, founder of the KG.

Abraham was married to Margaretha Wiebe in Tiegenhagen and pursued both the business of grist-milling and farming.<sup>66</sup> In 1805, the von Riesen moved with their family to Orloff in the Molotschna colony. The 1808 census<sup>56</sup> suggests that they were quite wealthy: 4 wagons, 7 horses, and 14 cattle, well over the average.

That they were a devout family is suggested by the fact that most of his children remained active in the demanding KG congregation. Both Abraham and his wife died in 1810 in the Molotschna.

The von Riesen's second son, Abraham Friesen, became the second elder of the KG in 1838. He began with controversy since, in Prussian/Russian Mennonite tradition, an elder had to have been ordained by another elder, and the KG's only elder had died. A disagreement with the elders of the larger Mennonite church kept that ordination from taking place, but in 1843, Johann Cornies used his enormous power to decree Abraham to be an elder. This was probably an indication of the favorable position of the KG with Cornies who appreciated orderliness and successful farmers. *Ältester* Friesen left a substantial collection of writings, some of which have been translated and have provided much of the basis for the contemporary understanding of the *Kleine Gemeinde*.<sup>68</sup>

The von Riesen name became Friesen in South Russia for reasons which are not clear. The older Abraham entered his name as von Riesen as did his oldest son, Peter, but the remainder of his descendants chose to be known as Friesen. The name came originally to the Vistula delta from Holland.

### **The Family of Cornelius S. Harms in South Russia**

Our forebear, Cornelius S., was Ohm Isaak's oldest surviving son; an earlier Cornelius had died at one year. During the period in which his father was taking a leadership role in the KG community, Cornelius married young and started a family on his own. He married Katharina Thiessen in 1856 in a *Kleine Gemeinde* wedding officiated by KG minister Klaas Friesen.<sup>68</sup> Her family story follows shortly.

They settled in Rückenau, Molotschna, where their first children were born. Later, they moved to Schönau, Molotschna. Separating from the KG, they became part of the Orloff congregation, a relatively progressive, mainline Mennonite congregation.

We will leave this story in Schönau since Cornelius and Katharina, at the time of the main migration to North America, elected not to go.



## **The Thiessen Family, In and Out of the KG**

To keep track of yet another branch of Cornelius' tree, it might be useful to again consult the ancestor charts for Cornelius and Katharina on page 229.

Katharina's parents were Peter Thiessen, a minister of the KG, and Margaretha Friesen. Margaretha was also a von Riesen descendent, the daughter of the *Ältester* Abraham Friesen, introduced on the previous pages.

Rev. Peter Thiessen was a descendent of Martin Thiessen of Lakenwald, Tiegenhagen, in Prussia.<sup>69</sup> This was the same region that produced most of the other founding KG participants. Peter Thiessen, the father of Rev. Peter, moved to Rosenort, Molotschna, in 1804,<sup>68</sup> and Rosenort was home to several KG participants.

The younger Peter was elected minister of the KG in 1849. Later that same year, however, on Christmas, he read a mysterious but provocative statement to the *Gemeinde* stating differences with them. The contents remain unknown, but as a result, he was voted not only out of office but also completely out of the fellowship. Reinstatement came in less than a year, on November 5, 1850.

It was not long before Rev. Peter Thiessen's family was again involved in a major dispute, this time not only within the *Gemeinde* but also with the czar. The dispute within the KG involved the activities of his son, Katharina's brother: Abraham Thiessen.

Abraham, probably having observed the regard for the landless shown by Ohm Isaak and others in the KG, developed a consuming concern. In the 1860s he began to organize the landless. Abraham sent petitions to the czar in Petersburg on their behalf, and he uncovered malfeasance on the part of the wealthiest landowners who were renting land that should have been distributed for the poor.

The KG reacted strongly to Thiessen's involvement with the landless, probably because of his high-profile rather than his intent. In addition, there were problems with Abraham's handling of a contract dispute and may have been other personal shortcomings. Abraham was excommunicated. However, he was given the wrong date for his KG hearing, so he returned several times on Sundays in forceful defiance of his excommunication. Quite possibly, some of the members were concerned about the improper procedure, so he was reinstated. However, even the reconciliation caused problems; it led to questions of leadership within the KG, and a split occurred within the KG that did not heal for nearly two decades.

Meanwhile, Abraham forcefully represented the landless in the capital of Russia, Petersburg, and in Odessa, the administrative center of the region. On one of these occasions, he was accompanied to Petersburg by his brother-in-law and our forebear, Cornelius S. Harms, who at that time was a successful landowner in Schönau. Upon finding evidence of corruption in Odessa in 1873, he intended to return to Petersburg only to be arrested and imprisoned for two years without charge. In confinement, he languished while the KG pondered emigration.

## **The Decision for America**

In the early 1870s, most of this Harms family lived in the KG enclave within Borosenko. The lone exception, as was noted before, was Cornelius.

The *Kleine Gemeinde* made the emigration decision, like so many others, as a group, *i.e.*, within the *Gemeinde*.<sup>70</sup> The reasoning was simple. A letter from *Ältester* Peter Toews to the Russian authorities declared the only reason for the migration:

...it is our Holy duty to preserve and cling to the faith of our fathers...by walking in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>67</sup>

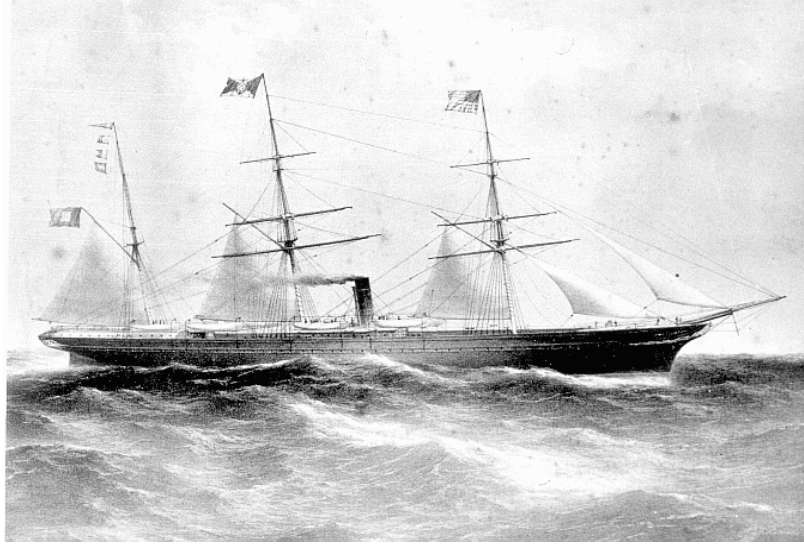
The KG chose two representatives to travel to America and search for a new location. David Klassen and Cornelius Toews left on April 14, 1873. Their travel took them by ship from Nikopol to Odessa on the Black Sea, from there by rail to Hamburg, Germany, where they boarded a steamship to New York. By rail they finally reached Fargo, North Dakota. In Fargo they met other delegates from South Russia and Volhynia, and together they toured Manitoba and the prairie states. Klassen and Toews agreed on Manitoba, the site of the greatest freedom and cheapest land, as the future home for the KG, and they returned to Borosenko.

After the report by their representatives, one of the KG congregations in Borosenko experienced a change of mind, and they chose a U.S. destination. The reasons for a change are not clear. It could have been friction between subdivisions of the KG, or concern about the weather; the persuasion of a recent emigrant, Cornelius Jansen, is more likely.

In any case, the rivalry between recruiters for Canada and those for the U.S. was intense. A letter from a Canadian immigration agent to his superiors complains of the competition from U.S. agents:

These agents, whoever they are, are so base and impious as to tell the Mennonites that the English Govt. has never yet kept their word...They are also made to believe that the main features of the route through Canada to Manitoba and of Manitoba itself are privation, starvation and great bodily danger on account of Indians...<sup>70</sup>

Cornelius Jansen probably had greater influence than the recruiters. Cornelius was a former Mennonite grain merchant from the port of Berdiansk, southeast of Molotschna, who had been exiled by the czar in 1873 for his active promotion of emigration.<sup>71</sup> After initially taking his family to Canada, he settled in Iowa. Some of his influence with the KG may have arisen from the fact that his wife was related to the Friesen families in the KG.



The S.S. Hammonia which carried Ohm Isaak and Anna Harms to America. (Courtesy Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas).

After the decision, preparations began in earnest. The congregation again demonstrated its commitment to their concept of the *Gemeinde*. They worked together to liquidate the debts of members to persons outside their group. They immediately sold their land and household goods, often at very low prices since a glut was created on the market. In 1874, as soon as the passports arrived in the middle of June, the group that was bound for the U.S. left for Nikopol on the Dnieper River.

The route took them by river boat from Nikopol to Kherson. A larger ship ferried them to through the Black Sea to Odessa. By rail they traveled to Hamburg, Germany, where about 30 KG families took passage on the S.S. *Hammonia*. Their proceeds, after purchasing passage, were pooled, and they held a substantial \$80,000. The congregation arrived in New York City on July 17, 1874.

Isaak and Anna were part of the contingent on the *Hammonia*, but the families of their children, Johann, Peter, and Anna, had decided on Manitoba. That decision was later reversed as well.

Cornelius Jansen and his son, Peter, met the immigrants in New York and took them to Clarence Center, a small community of “old” Mennonites east of Buffalo, New York. From there a small group of delegates traveled with Jansen to search for land while the remainder, including Anna and the elderly Isaak, helped with the summer harvest in New York.

Jansen secured railroad passes, and the delegates went west, touring the Dakota Territory, Kansas, Minnesota, and Nebraska.<sup>72</sup> They arrived in Beatrice near the Kansas border on August 3. The Burlington and Missouri River Railroad provided a guide who showed them a unique tract of railroad land. Almost all of the railroad’s land was on alternate sections, like a checkerboard. The B&MR railroad also owned a small amount land outside the twenty-mile limit to fill out its allotted acreage, and this land was a single tract rather than alternating

sections. Consequently these immigrants could purchase sections from the railroad that directly faced each other; here their Russian village style could be preserved.

The delegates also inspected Santa Fe Railroad land in Butler County, Kansas.<sup>72</sup> A principal question was the availability of water; it was this concern that other Mennonite immigrants cited for choosing Kansas over Nebraska. A.E. Touzolin, the railroad representative, brought in drillers who drilled twelve wells at 100 to 150 feet. That clinched the decision, and they selected land near the village of Fairbury, Nebraska, in Jefferson County, not far from the town of Beatrice.

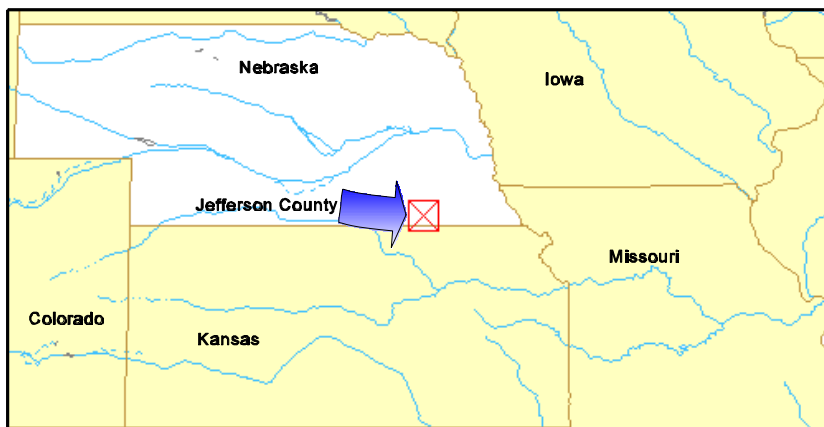
### Pioneer Life in Jefferson County, Nebraska

The group purchased about 15,000 acres of rolling prairie for \$3.75 an acre payable in six annual installments at 6% interest; for cash, it was \$3.51. This purchase price was 40% lower than the railroad's usual cash rate. A memorandum of agreement included special rates for railroad passage, temporary housing in a school and the fairgrounds, and further options.<sup>70</sup>

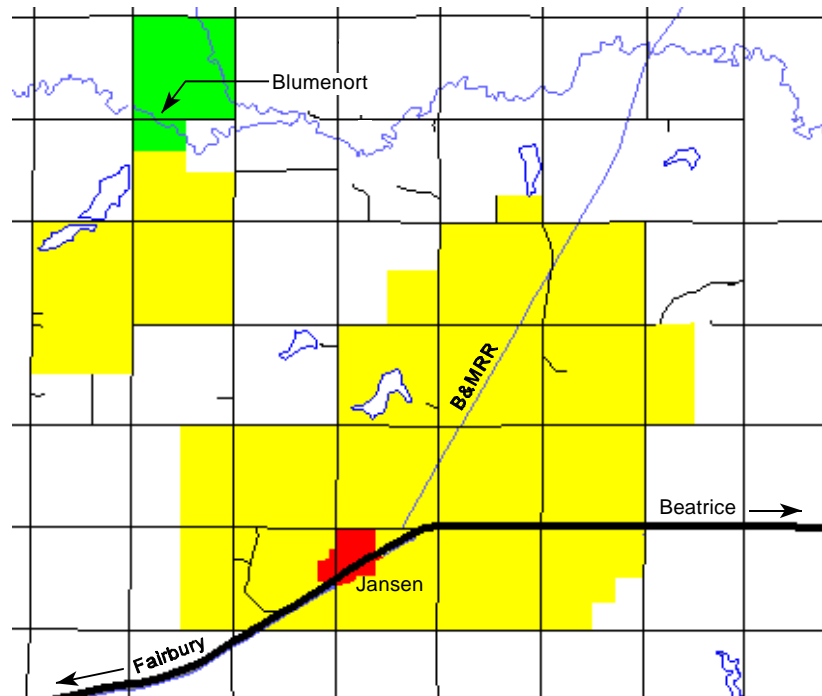
The full group came to Beatrice, Nebraska, on August 23 and lived in the fair building for about a month. On September 10, 1874, the local paper published a description.

The colony here, which consists of 28 families, comprising about 120 souls, are now busily at work preparing to build on their lands in Jefferson County. A few days ago Mr. Jansen went to St. Joe with a few of them and bought material, implements, horses and cattle for the whole outfit. They will build frame barns this fall, which they will use for dwellings through the winter, and next season will build substantial dwelling of brick and stone. They bought at St. Joe about 5,000 feet of lumber, 53 horses, 87 head of oxen, 20 Studebaker wagons and a few other farming implements. The most of their smaller utensils, as well as supplies, they buy of Beatrice merchants...Their horses are a fair lot, though rather small for heavy work...

The lands, which are south of Cub Creek, have been described to us by residents of Jefferson County as first-class in soil and location; and the Russians themselves are entirely pleased with them. The grasshopper business does not discourage them in the least, which is a fact American newcomers should consider and ponder upon. They bring some money with them, which helps to make a good start, but they are a hardworking, frugal class, and can manage to live and prosper under circumstances that would seem discouraging to our farmers.<sup>73</sup>



Jefferson County, Nebraska, was the site of the original *Kleine Gemeinde* settlement in the United States.



Cub Creek Township, Jefferson County, Nebraska. Each of the squares is a section, one mile square. The shaded area was purchased by *Kleine Gemeinde* Mennonites and organized into villages. Blumenort was organized by Ohm Isaak Harms. Peter Jansen founded the town of Jansen in 1886. (Based in part on figures in references 67 and 74.)

The *Kleine Gemeinde*, in keeping with their view of the congregation as a community, maintained the “line village” or “Strassendorf” (street village) style, typically consisting of farms that were long, narrow strips one to four miles long. The largest such village was “Russian Lane,” stretching for four miles on the east-west road at the north end of the village of Jansen. As many as 42 houses were once located on this stretch. The line village allowed the houses to be built close together, and the crop land was located immediately behind the yard. Farther out, the grazing land could be used in common. Scholars who have studied Mennonite immigrants have attributed part of the success of their transplant to this community style of agrarian life.<sup>67</sup>

Ohm Isaak and Anna, now far from their children, bought a full section (one square mile) of land at the north end of the colony.<sup>74,75</sup> They called their farm Blumenort (*blumen*: “flowering”-*ort*: “place”.) Within a year, their children and their families moved down from Manitoba and took up farms in Blumenort: Johann and Margaretha (Loewen) Harms, Klaas and Anna (Harms) Wiebe, and Peter and Anna (Friesen) Harms. The family of Heinrich Ratzlaff and Heinrich’s wife, Aganetha, came with them; Aganetha was the daughter of Ohm Isaak’s older sister, Anna.

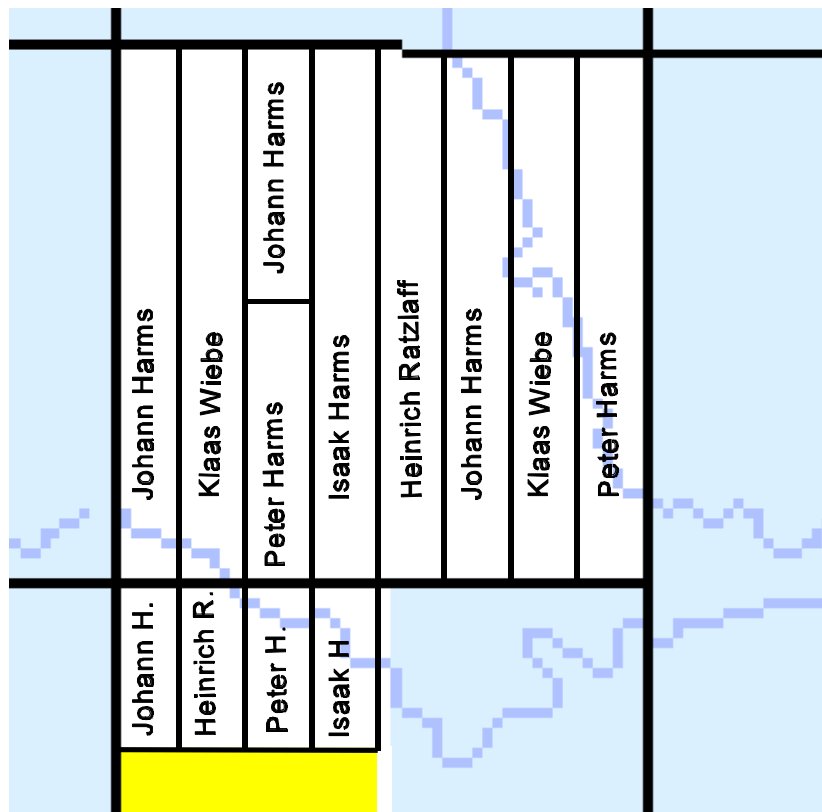
Heinrich Ratzlaff described the decision to come from Manitoba and to live in Nebraska in his memoirs. The mosquitoes, the cold, and the late spring convinced them:

...With nightfall we were joined by a million observers who did not spare themselves to attack us and bite us without mercy. At the same time they sang without stopping for breath...

That winter many made the decision to move from Manitoba to Nebraska where it was not regarded as an offense to write us inviting letters describing how nice it was there and in Kansas. When they wrote that they were already seeding we still had the cold winter and much snow...Klaas Wiebes, Johann Harms, Peter Harms and ourselves wanted to be on our way as soon as possible...and so it was.<sup>66</sup>

The families of Isaak and Anna's three children settled with them immediately. When Johann's wife threatened to return to Manitoba if not joined by the Ratzlaffs, Heinrich and Aganetha purchased 80 acres in Blumenort.

Johann purchased an additional 80 acres on the south side of the road which he divided into 20-acre yards. Here the extended Harms family formed a line village of their own in Blumenort; English-speakers in the area called it "Harms Village."



Blumenort in the early 1880s. Each parcel is 220 yards wide. (Based on information in reference 75.)



The location of Harms Village/Blumenort, north of Jansen, Nebraska. The photo is taken from the approximate center of the Blumenort section road facing west.

Life in Nebraska was in many respects a transplant of life in South Russia. As in the old country, the farms had a reputation for being well-kept; a priority was placed on tree-planting and the cultivation of flowers, even in the early days. The house-barn, standard in Mennonite South Russia, was the usual style. Heat for both cooking and heating the home came from the Russian grass-burner design superbly suited for these treeless plains. In most cases the barn was built first, and many settlers spent their first winter in sod houses.

The KG community, together with Mennonites in Henderson, Nebraska, started their own German-language schools and organized the “Brandverordnung”, a 200-year-old Mennonite fire-insurance system. Church services rotated between the villages, but the brotherhood meetings (still for the men only) were the center of the community organization.

There were still the difficult times including the deaths of children and spouses. Ohm Isaak’s wife, Anna, died in the spring of 1877. That fall, he made the long trip to Manitoba and remarried, taking Karolina Plett, the widow of Anna’s uncle, Klaas Friesen. A few years later in 1884, his son, Johann, died.

Even with most of the family together, they experienced isolation, particularly from family back in Russia. With Isaak’s oldest son, Cornelius, still in Molotschna, Johann once remarked before he died that communication with his brother “seems to die out.”

Karolina died in 1887. Though in his old age, Ohm Isaak married for the third time, taking the much younger widow, Maria Fast. A letter from Manitoba was received by Isaak’s son, Peter, expressing disapproval:

How he finds such a marriage in his old age, in his 80th year with a wife of 38 years. That it is often not good when this happens; that such a thing should rather not happen, as the consequences are seldom good.<sup>60</sup>



Location of Steinbach, Manitoba, the center of the Mennonite East Reserve which was the final resting place of Ohm Isaak Harms.

Soon thereafter, the couple moved to Manitoba. There was no firm explanation, but the implication that Maria required the move seemed widely held. Away from his family, Isaak apparently incurred debts and, after caring for the church for so many years, finally had to be cared for by the church.<sup>66</sup> Ohm Isaak died in 1891 in Steinbach, Manitoba after being bedridden for 15 weeks; he was probably buried in Pioneer Cemetery, in the middle of Steinbach, in one of the graves that are now unmarked.<sup>76</sup>

Back in Nebraska, the KG community experienced further difficulty, mostly of a non-economic nature. Two other small denominations of Mennonites successfully recruited their members: the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren and the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (often known as Holdeman Mennonites). Many recruits left the area. Peter Harms moved to Inman, Kansas, in 1901, to Meade, Kansas, in 1908, and to Montezuma, Kansas, in 1916; he had by that time joined the Holdeman church. The Klaas and Anna Wiebe family moved to the area around Meade, Kansas.

We should return to Cornelius' brother-in-law, the land-reform activist Abraham Thiessen, who was in prison at the time of the migration. His extended family emigrated in 1874, so Abraham sent his son with his brothers. In 1876, Abraham escaped to Switzerland. Here he published pamphlets and attempted to return to Russia, to no avail. Consequently, he joined the KG community in Nebraska, concentrating on the production of silk fiber. Abraham married Anna Heidebrecht, and they produced three more sons.

Abraham's activist commitment still did not waver. In summer, 1887, now an American citizen, he went back to Russia, again to work on behalf of the landless. Expulsion followed almost immediately. Upon his return, he worked for awhile as manager of a silk station in Peabody, Kansas, but it soon closed. He died May 7, 1889, in Nebraska.<sup>66,77</sup>

### **The Story of Cornelius S., Continued**

We are left with little information about Cornelius back in South Russia. His first wife, Katharina Thiessen, had died in 1865 at the age of only 28, having given birth to four children.

Only two survived: Margaretha and our direct ancestor, Peter. In 1867, Cornelius married



a widow, Anna Hildebrandt; she was already about 57 and died after about ten years with no additional children. Then in 1878, at the age of 42, he married 23-year-old Elizabeth Goossen who bore eight children, at least six of whom survived. As mentioned earlier, they lived in Schönau, Molotschna, and were part of the nearby Halbstadt church.<sup>78</sup> This church was related to the Orloff congregation which was in the progressive wing of the Mennonite Church in Russia.

Cornelius' pattern of marriage was not at all unusual for South Russian Mennonites. His first wife was close to his age, but when she died, he had young children and possibly no land. The widow, Anna Hildebrandt, may have had land but no husband to manage it, but she was still young enough to care for four-year-old Peter and seven-year-old Margaretha. Finally, the younger Elizabeth Goossen had the good fortune of marrying someone with a full farm, though he was significantly older. She was not that much older than Cornelius' teenagers.

The next two decades have often been known as the cultural "golden age" for Russian Mennonites. Interest in the arts developed, particularly in choral singing. (Mennonites, now well-known for their tradition of 4-part singing, were miserable though enthusiastic singers before the second half of the nineteenth century.) In part because of the success of winter wheat but also because of the inexpensive labor of recently freed serfs, agriculture was increasingly profitable. Even some of the conflict between the Mennonite Brethren and the "kirchliche" or mainline Mennonite Church experienced some healing in Russia.

One might guess that Cornelius and Elizabeth shared in that wealth. They had a large family, listed in the group sheet on page 229.

In 1892, Cornelius' oldest son, Peter T., took his wife, Katharina Epp Harms, and their family to Jansen, Nebraska. With them came an ethnic Russian maid, variously known as Matrona Hubenka and Mathilde Lepp. Soon after their arrival, they settled in Henderson, Nebraska. After the death of Katharina, Peter T. married the maid and became one of the first Mennonites to move to the central valley of California, now a major center for Mennonites. Another of Cornelius' sons was living in Minneola, Kansas, near Meade in the southwest of the state; several families from the Jansen community including Cornelius' brother had re-settled near Meade. We do not know how many of the other children had already emigrated.



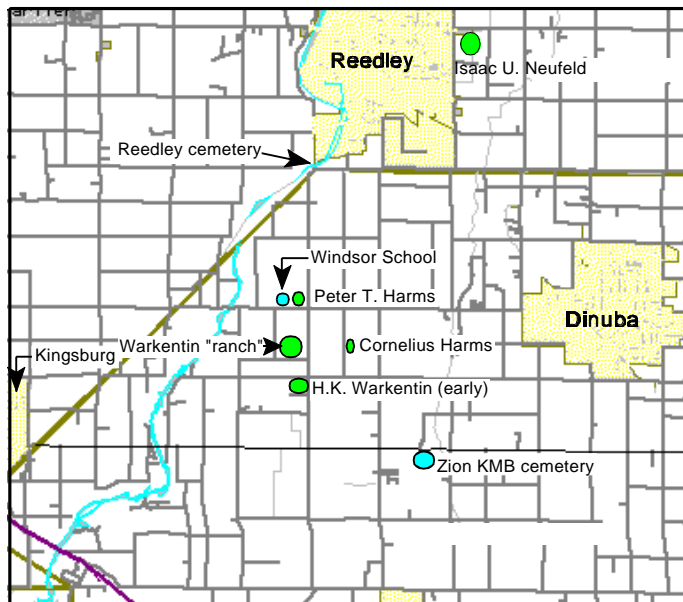
Location of the Reedley/Dinuba area in central California.

In 1906, 70-year-old Cornelius Harms and Elizabeth decided to leave South Russia in the company of some of their daughters, Anna, Catarina, and probably Elizabeth. They sensed that “things were becoming unsettled in Russia.”<sup>78</sup> Russia had gone to war with Japan in 1905, and in October of that year, serious and sometimes violent strikes took place in factories all over Russia including those owned by Mennonites that utilized the non-Mennonite labor force.<sup>31</sup> Probably the Thiessen farm implement factory in their home village of Schönau was affected. All of Cornelius’ living siblings and several sons were in America, so that is where they headed.

They went first to Jansen where Cornelius’ sister, Anna Harms Wiebe, still lived.<sup>78</sup> Then they visited Minneola, Kansas, joining Cornelius’ son, Johann C., and his brother, Peter.<sup>79</sup> By the fall, however, they were attracted to the sunny climes of central California with Cornelius’ eldest son, Peter T.



Cornelius S. Harms in California with his third wife, Elizabeth Goossen Harms.



Dinuba/Reedley, California, area

Cornelius and Elizabeth initially moved in with Peter T., who had an orchard near Reedley, but soon they purchased a small farm of their own and established themselves south of Reedley.

By this time, Peter T. Harms was an active leader of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Reedley. It was not long before Cornelius and Elizabeth made the move to join the MBs as well, experiencing baptism by immersion in the Kings River on August 1, 1909.

Cornelius and Elizabeth spent a couple of decades of their old age in the presence of children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. He died after an eight-day illness on



Headstone for Cornelius S. and Elizabeth Goossen Harms in the Zion KMB Cemetery, south of Dinuba, California.



Peter T. and Katharina Epp Harms and their family in Henderson, Nebraska. The children, from left to right, are Katherine, Margaret, Anna, Agnes, and Cornelius.

December 9, 1928, at the age of 93. Elizabeth had a stroke a few years later and lived until 1935. They are buried together in the cemetery of the Zion Krimmer Mennonite Church, several miles south of Reedley. One cannot help but wonder whether the relationship of the KMBs to Cornelius' own KG heritage led to that choice or whether the spare beauty of that bare dirt cemetery may have reminded them or their family of their South Russian homeland.

### **The Legacy of Ohm Isaak and Cornelius**

The commitment to defining the church continued in the Harms family in California. Ohm Isaak Harms displayed a lifetime of commitment to the *Kleine Gemeinde*, a group that struggled to create a church that they thought was modeled on both the early church and the early Anabaptist movement. A positive outgrowth was Ohm Isaak's commitment to the community and to helping each other. However, another of their emphases tended to place purity as the most important definition of the fellowship, and as a result, they were very severe and legalistic in outlook.

Cornelius' son, Peter T. Harms, while not a member of the KG, displayed some of the same features. He continued to support the Epp family in Russia through the post-war, post-revolution famine. On the other hand, after being a founder of the Reedley (California) Mennonite Brethren Church, his Harms clan was the prime force in the split to form the much more conservative Dinuba (California) Mennonite Brethren Church.

The fascinating account of Peter T. Harms and his family will pick up again in Volume II.



## 9 Warkentins, from Crimea to the Valley of Hope

**P**eter P. and Justina Wiens Warkentin lived in yet another part of South Russia, the Crimea, when they heard the call to emigrate. The Crimean peninsula lies not far to the south of Molotschna and Chortitza, and it is visible on the maps on pages 27 and 31.

In 1874, the Warkentin family chose to leave Russia. They joined the traveling party of a nearby congregation and located in America with that group in the midst of the best known of the Russian-American Mennonite settlements, Gnadenu and Hoffnungstal.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
+) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Eva Janzen  
+) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
\* .)) Maria Unruh  
\* .)) Helena Dirks  
+) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
\* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
\* \* .)) Anna Bartel  
\* .)) Marie Plenert  
\* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Bena Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Anna Wilms  
+) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) **Peter P. Warkentin**  
\* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
\* \* \* .)) **Justina Wiens**  
\* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
\* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Fast  
\* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
\* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
\* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
\* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen  
\* .)) Margaret Harms  
\* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
\* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
\* .)) Anna Günther  
/)) Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,  
\* Rebekah Margaret  
\* +)) Isaac J. Harms  
\* +)) David Harms  
\* .)) Kathrina Fröse  
\* +)) Isaac Harms  
\* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
\* .)) Eva Unruh  
\* \* .)) Eva Schroeder  
\* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
\* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
\* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
\* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh  
\* \* .)) Emma Neufeld  
\* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt  
\* .)) Virginia Louise Harms

### The Warkentin Name and Early History

Two theories have been suggested for the origin of the name, Warkentin, but neither is very certain. The first has a Dutch association: it may have been the diminutive of a Dutch first name, Warrekin.<sup>39</sup> The second and more likely possibility is that Warkentin is based on a German place name, Perkontin in Mecklenburg, the area that is now northeast Germany.<sup>27</sup> A similar name, Parchentin, seems to have been changed to Warkentin under the influence of the Low German dialect spoken by Prussian Mennonites.

In any case, Warkentin was a typical Mennonite surname by the middle 1600s. For example, Danzig Mennonite records listed the marriage of Arend Warckentyn in 1667.<sup>80</sup> By 1800 Warkentin was quite common in the Elbing area and in the GrosseWerder of Prussia.

In Russia, this name was usually spelled Warkentin, but sometimes it was spelled Warckentin. In America, there are some descendants with the spelling *Warkentine* which could have never been found among Low-German speakers. That family suggests that the -e on the end came from Peter P. Warkentin's son, Heinrich, who signed his name with a flourish at the end. His children interpreted that flourish as an -e.

The earliest known Warkentin in our family was Arendt Warkentin who lived in the Marienburg district of Prussia. Arendt is the Dutch form of the English Aaron. By piecing together immigration records, census records, and some family correspondence, we find how they came to South Russia. Two of Arendt's sons, Johann A., who was about 21, and Peter A. Warkentin, who was about 16, must have been very enterprising young men who left the Marienburg district together, but without other family, in 1803. Tiegenhagen, in the Molotschna, became their new home.<sup>81</sup> Peter A. must have done well; at the age of

only about 17, he acquired a farm of his own, farm number 1 in the village of Rosenort.<sup>82</sup> In Rosenort, Peter A. and his wife, Justina, raised a large family that included a son, Peter, who was born in 1817. This Peter Warkentin later married a neighbor's daughter, Margaretha Schellenberg.

### **The Schellenberg Heritage and the *Kleine Gemeinde***

Margaretha Schellenberg's background is much clearer since she came from an established *Kleine Gemeinde* family, and they brought some of their records to America. (The *Kleine Gemeinde*, or K.G., were introduced in Chapter 8.)

We have two suggestions for the origin of the Schellenberg family. The most likely suggests that they descended from Hans Schellenberg who was with a group of Swiss Anabaptists that was expelled from Switzerland in 1538 and subsequently made their way to the Vistula Delta.<sup>27</sup>

Margaretha's great-great grandfather, Jakob Schellenberg, was born in 1687. Jakob lived in the Vistula delta, in Altendorf near Tiegenhof.<sup>60</sup>

Gerhardt Schellenberg (1725-1802), Jakob's son, was a poor laborer in Tiegenhof, east of Danzig.<sup>66</sup> A son of that Gerhardt, also named Gerhardt (1759-1813), married Helena Günther. They lived with her parents for a few years where their first son was born. According to the census of 1808, this Gerhardt emigrated together with his wife's family to the village of Blumstein, in Molotschna, South Russia, in 1803.<sup>56</sup> He was a bricklayer as well as a farmer and was doing comparatively quite well, at least as indicated by the census data; they owned six horses, twelve cattle, a wagon, a plow, a harrow, and a good supply of hay and grain.

Blumstein was the center of a concentration of the founding *Kleine Gemeinde*, and here members of this Schellenberg family are recorded as being important early participants.

Jakob G. Schellenberg, the son of the immigrants, Gerhardt and Helena, married Elizabeth Hamm. She had immigrated from the Marienburg region of the delta (map on page 30). Jakob G. and Elizabeth lived with his parents in Blumstein, and that was where Margaretha was born. In 1827, when Margaretha was ten, they left the home of Jakob G.'s parents and purchased a farm in Rosenort where they raised their family nearby the Warkentin family.

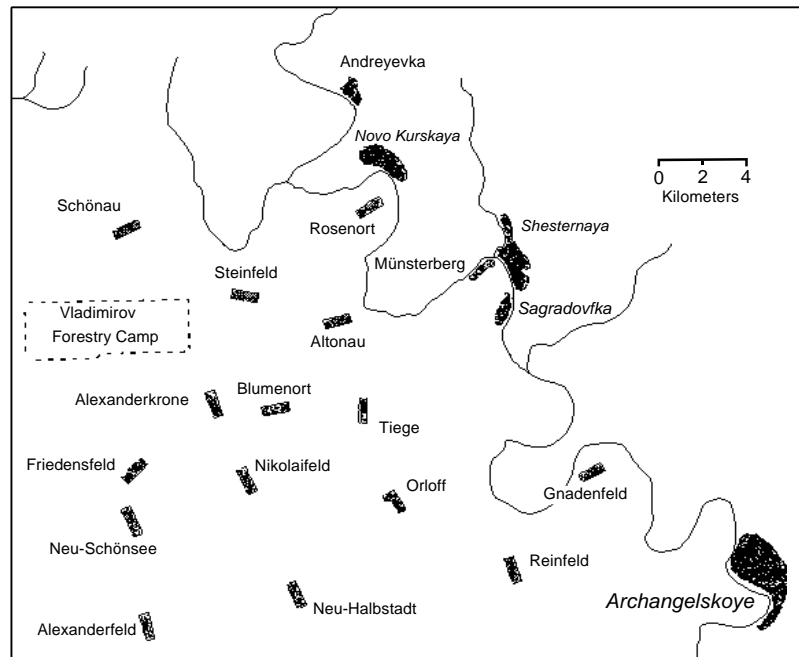
### **Peter Warkentin and Margaretha Schellenberg Warkentin**

In 1835, Peter Warkentin and Margaretha Schellenberg married. They were fortunate to find a farm in the village of Neukirch, Molotschna, where they produced seven children including our forebear, Peter P. Warkentin. With their move, they left the *Kleine Gemeinde*, but Margaretha's relatives remained prominent in that congregation, so the influence must have remained.

Margaretha Schellenberg Warkentin died rather young, at the age of only 38, while Peter P. was but a teenager. Peter remarried, to the widow Kröker,<sup>a</sup> bringing a step-brother of about Peter P.'s age, Johann Kröker, into the household. Though Johann never emigrated, they remained lifelong friends.

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<sup>a</sup> We have no primary record of the remarriage, only that Peter P. referred regularly to his parents in the plural and that he had a dear step-brother by the name of Peter Kröker.



Map of the Sagradovfka colony. Non-Mennonite (ethnic Russian) villages are denoted in italics. Sagradovfka can be located in South Russia on the map on page 32. The Forestry Camp was built for young men inducted into alternate service. Adapted from a map in reference 6.

At this point, it is interesting to digress and follow the history of the rest of Peter P.'s family. After Peter P. married and left the household, the elder Peter and his wife moved to the village of Altona in Molotschna. Two of Peter P.'s younger brothers, Heinrich and Johann, settled in the colony of Sagradovfka: Heinrich in Orloff and Johann in Tiede.<sup>83</sup> Their parents, Peter and his wife, finally lived out their days in Sagradovfka as well.

Sogradovfka was created as a daughter of Molotschna. The Molotschna colony purchased land in 1871 to help alleviate the problem of the landless. This purchase followed a different pattern than was the case for the founding of Chortitza and Molotschna which were granted to the settlers by the Czar; Sagradovfka was purchased outright, obtained from a nobleman, Count Leo Kochubei.

This tract of land that comprised Sagradovfka lay west of the Dnieper River. The region had not been in agricultural use because the local population thought it too barren, even by South Russian standards, to support agriculture. The Mennonite leaders divided villages in the Sagradovfka colony, except for one, into half-size farms of 32.5 dessiatines (about 88 acres), and they were sold to Mennonite settlers by the Molotschna colony on terms that were generous. Eventually Sagradovfka flourished, both in agriculture and in industry.

Another brother of Peter P., Aron, went to a new settlement about 700 kilometers to the east on the Don River. Later Heinrich would search for another opportunity much farther away still, near Omsk, Siberia.<sup>84</sup>

We can only speculate about how the descendants of Peter P.'s brothers fared after World War I and the revolution. In the anarchy that existed, Sagradovfka bore the brunt of some of the worst of the terrorism that rained down on German settlements.<sup>6</sup> At least 206 people were murdered and many more maimed or raped by bandits. Then, after private property and food stocks were confiscated by the communists, 329 more starved to death; 448 were sent to Siberia. All churches were closed, and ministers were prohibited from taking any employment. Later, during World War II, another 300 simply disappeared. In 1943, the remaining 3500 attempted to escape the communists by leaving with retreating German troops. As part of the Yalta agreement by the allies at the end of the war, the refugees were returned to the Russians who shipped them to the Asian republics or to Siberia.

Our ancestors, Peter P. Warkentin and his wife, Justina Wiens, escaped those tragedies by taking a different path that we will follow shortly.

### **The Wiens Family**

Justina Wiens had immigrated with her parents to South Russia from Petershagen in the Vistula delta among the later immigrants from Prussia. We have little Wiens history for this family other than their place of origin.

The Wiens family name may originate among Anabaptists as early as the time of the martyrs.<sup>39</sup> In Holland, the execution of Jakob van Wynssen was recorded in Deventer in 1535; Maeyken Wens was burned at the stake as a martyr in Antwerp. A Harems (Hermann) Wines fled to Danzig from Cologne in 1561, and he is thought to be the father of the Mennonite Wiens families.

Our forebear, Johann Wiens, was born near Tiegenhof, in Krebsfeld. In 1839, Johann married Katharina Wiebe, and they lived in Petershagen. Justina was born there in 1840, followed a few years later by a sister, Helena.

In 1846, the Wiens family moved to Molotschna, taking up residence in the village of Gnadenheim on June 6.<sup>85</sup> They managed to purchase a "small farm" (*Kleinwirtschaft*), about 40 acres, and lived there for 15 years. A *Kleinwirtschaft* was about the minimum size that would allow a small family to subsist.

At the end of this period, Justina married Peter P. Warkentin of Neukirch. The wedding was officiated on March 7, 1861 by Ältester Bernhard Peters<sup>86</sup> who led the large and progressive Margenau congregation.

The Warkentin couple immediately faced the challenge of finding a place to farm. Joining either set of parents was not a strong option. Peter P.'s father still had a large family at home, and legally his farm could not be divided. Justina's parents owned only a small farm, insufficient for both them and the newlyweds. Peter P. and Justina were among the landless *anwohner* of Mennonite Russia, and they were ready to take risks for a better life.

The option that emerged carried them to the Crimean peninsula, in German called the *Krim*, and in Russian, the *Krym*.



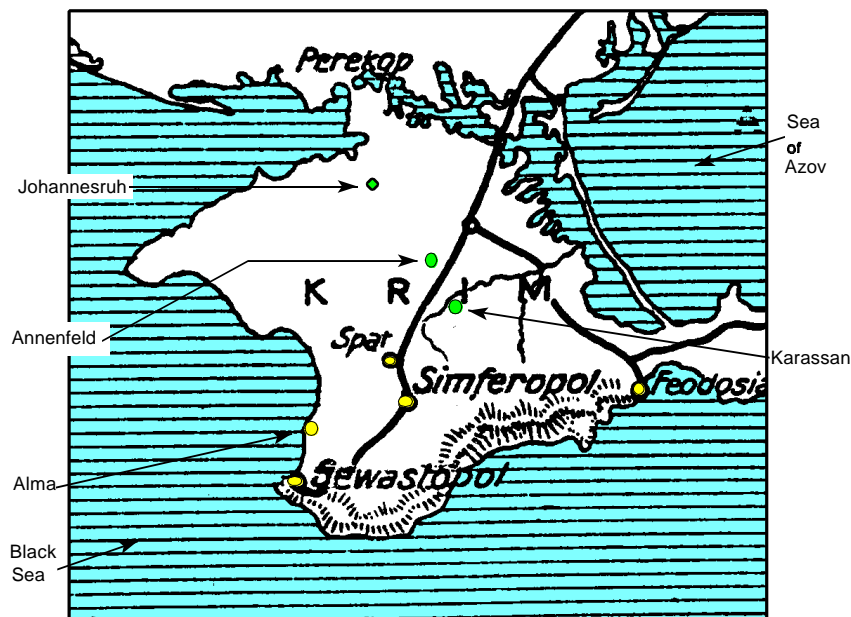
## The Crimea

The Crimean peninsula (about 200 km from north to south and 240 km from east to west) has three connections with the mainland, one of which was solid in the 1860s. A four-kilometer wide strip connects the Crimea with the mainland at Perekop. A narrow straight is located nearer Molotschna, and the main road to Simferopol on the south coast crossed that straight. At that time, a ferry transported wagons across the straight while the horses would swim. On the east, another narrow straight east of Feodosia divides the Crimea and the Caucasus.

The northern part of the peninsula is flat steppe (prairie) much like that of the mainland in the vicinity of Molotschna; the summers are hot and dry, and the winters are cold.<sup>87</sup> In the southeast lie the Taurida Mountains which are pleasantly temperate, and along the coast, the protected mountain valleys are nearly Mediterranean. The coast and nearby mountains are known as the “Russian Riviera”, a resort area featuring spas such as the ones at Yalta where Franklin Roosevelt, Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill, and others met to settle Germany’s fate at the end of World War II.

The Crimea has long been a multi-cultural region. The Greeks established colonies on the south coast as early as the fifth century B.C.; ruins are still evident near Sevastopol. Later the Crimea was controlled by Rome and then became part of the Byzantine Empire.

In the 1400s, Mongolian Tatars, known as the “Golden Horde”, invaded Crimea, and some settled to form the Crimean khanate from 1443 to 1783. After the Turks conquered Constantinople in the fifteenth century, the Tatars continued to govern the peninsula as vassals of Turkey. Russia tried several times to take Crimea but failed until the reign of Czarina Catherine the Great. Then in 1783, the Crimea came under Russian rule.



A 19th century German map of the Crimea, annotated with the locations of two of the Mennonite villages. Karassan was the first and one of the larger; Annenfeld was the home of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren and later to Johann and Katharina Wiens. Schwesterthal lay 18 km from Annenfeld.

During the 1850s, the Crimea became the site on which the great powers played out their rivalry. The Russians demanded to exercise protection of the Orthodox subjects of the Ottoman sultan, wherever they lived. That created conflict with Turkey. Russia and France disputed with Russia over holy places in Palestine, and Britain was concerned by Russia's continued expansionism. The resulting Crimean War of 1853-1856 was devastating. War in this tiny area produced over a half-million casualties, the majority a result of disease, before a year-long siege brought down the Russian port of Sevastopol. Russia accepted terms of peace from Turkey, Britain, and France which stopped Russia's expansion into Turkey.

The peninsula became familiar to Mennonites during this war. Although exempt from fighting in the military, Mennonites were required under the terms of the *Priviglium* to be part of the *Podwod*,<sup>a</sup> the system of wagons bringing supplies to the front and bringing back wounded, some of whom convalesced in Mennonite homes. In the fall of 1854 alone, 4,000 wagons from Molotschna traveled to Crimea to bring supplies.<sup>88</sup> Some of these trips on the bad roads took as long as fifty days; thirty was typical. During these trips, the young men who drove these wagons must have noticed the fertility of the untilled steppes occupied by the nomadic Tatars. Peter P. Warkentin, growing up in Rosenort, was one of those young men.

Even before the war, the great Russian Mennonite leader, Johann Cornies, got a start in his ambitious career taking produce from Molotschna to cities in the Crimea. He made many trips, buying eggs, butter, and cheese in Molotschna and selling them at a good profit in Sevastopol, Simferopol, and Feodosia.

In 1860, Mennonites began to buy land that had never been ploughed from the Tatars. These Moslem nomads lived in tent villages and grazed their livestock on the steppes, but after the war, some left for Turkey. The Crimean pattern of land purchase was quite different from Chortitza and Molotschna. These Mennonite settlements consisted of individual villages rather than the colonies of many villages that had been founded on the mainland. One of the first such villages was Karassan.

Shortly thereafter, a village was founded by a group with contacts with the Kleine Gemeinde from Orloff, Molotschna.<sup>68</sup> This former Tatar village of Schuscha was renamed Annenfeld (and later Annovka). It was here that a new Mennonite denomination, the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren (or K.M.B.), was born out of a *Kleine Gemeinde* congregation.

Shortly after the founding of Annenfeld, a block of land consisting of 4700 dessiatines (about 12,700 acres), was purchased in an area known as "Karatebell" about 18 km from Annenfeld (in which direction, we do not yet know.)<sup>68</sup> Here, two villages were founded, Schwesterthal and Bruderfeld. One of the prominent residents of Schwesterthal was Ältester Peter Baerg, who was a minister in the Bruderfeld congregation, but left to become leader of the small *Kleine Gemeinde* congregation in the region.

### **Life for the Warkentin Family in the Crimea**

Peter P. and Justina, together with her parents, Johann and Katharina Wiens, settled in Schwesterthal, and there they farmed. Peter P. told his descendants that they were quite poor,<sup>86</sup> and Justina later wrote in Peter P.'s obituary that

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<sup>a</sup> *Podwod* is the German variant of the Russian word, *podvod*, meaning "supplies".

we lived 13 years in great poverty, and we sent up many groans to the heavenly Father in our struggle for daily bread.<sup>89</sup>

Indeed most of the Crimean settlers found the early going difficult. Relations with the remaining Tatars, though usually good, were sometimes difficult, and their agricultural efforts did not yield immediate success. The Krimmer Mennonite Brethren leader in nearby Annenfeld, Ältester Jakob A. Wiebe, reported:

...Instead of getting rich, we became poor. [God] allowed us to come to dire need through droughts, grasshoppers, and beetles that ruined our crops. The Lord even sent large poisonous spiders whose bite gave people terrible agony. Some even died from it...<sup>68</sup>

After four years, Peter P. and his family were able to go on their own and settled in the new village of Johannesruh, known in Russian as Tukulchak, in the northwest part of the Crimean peninsula.<sup>84</sup> The soil was good, but the pioneer years were still difficult; water had to be hauled in barrels for the early years.<sup>87</sup> This village was eventually quite prosperous and was known for the trees planted by Peter P. and the other early settlers.

In about 1870, they sought yet another opportunity. A parcel of Crown land, Kajutatanän, became available, and a village of five farms was formed which they called Alexanderfeld.<sup>84</sup> We have not yet been able to locate this village. Here Peter P. and Justina found the home which they were sure would be permanent.

Meanwhile, in 1871, Johann and Katharina Wiens moved the eighteen kilometers from Schwesterthal to Annenfeld, the home of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren, where they bought a business: a windmill. This mill would have been of the Dutch type that we now find picturesque; it was used to grind grain.

Peter P.'s mother came from K.G. background, and both Schwesterthal and Annenfeld had strong K.G. and K.M.B. presence through Ältester Baerg in the former and Ältester Wiebe in the latter. However, neither the Warkentins nor the Wiens' actually joined the K.M.B. or the



A windmill in Johannesruh, used for grinding grain. It was probably quite similar to the one owned by Johann Wiens. From Reference 19.

K.G. Peter P. and Justina were members of the Crimean Mennonite church which probably met as several different congregations. Nevertheless, with the Warkentins living in Schwesterthal and the Wiens' in Annenfeld, they had contact with these other two groups. With these contacts, they faced making the decision about whether to leave for America.

In 1874, as was described in Chapter 8, the *Kleine Gemeinde* sent representatives to investigate emigration to North America in response to the revocation of the historic Mennonite privileges. Although the K.M.B. in the Crimea did not send a delegate to North America, Ältester Wiebe attended a K.G. planning meeting in Heuboden, Borosenko, in which the delegates made their report.<sup>68</sup> As a result of the information that Wiebe obtained, the K.M.B. decided to make the move and to do so together, as an entire congregation. They made plans for the U.S. while the K.G. split between the U.S. and Canada. Funds were short, so in order to make it possible for all to emigrate who wished to do so, the Mennonite Board of Guardians in America paid for 28½ of the tickets for residents of Annenfeld.<sup>90</sup>

This same decision faced Peter P. and Justina Warkentin. Peter movingly described the dilemma that faced them in Alexanderfeld:

We thought then, we would not move again and established our farm [in Alexanderfeld] as well as we could.

Then, all of a sudden, we received the message that the Mennonite youth had to serve in the army. We were thinking about that quite seriously because we had children ourselves, and we asked the Lord very often, "what should we do?" We could not send our boy to the army, because I had already seen too much of the terrible Crimean war where so much innocent blood was shed. I and my compatriots had wandered through a place of slaughter that had just been evacuated by the enemy. There we had, on the so-called *Podwod* on the Alina [sic], our feed-crib [to feed our animals]. Anyone, who has not seen something like that, cannot imagine how terrible it looks. (Thanks be to the Lord, matters didn't turn out as bad as we thought then: The youth [in alternate service] are still under Mennonite supervision.)

Then we heard that the government allowed the Mennonites 10 years to emigrate. When we finally heard that we would not have to serve in the army in America, we emigrated to America in 1874. Our good Lord carried us over; happy and in good health. We have already been living here under the Lord's blessing and protection for 26 years. To Him be the honor for all the love and kindness He spread on us.<sup>84</sup>

In September of 1854, Mennonite drivers went to the site of the first major battle of the war, at the Alma River. Here the Russians suffered 6,000 casualties and learned how inadequate their medical services were; the dead and wounded lay unattended for several days.<sup>88</sup>

Peter P. was among those pressed into the non-combatant *Podwod* transport service in his youth. As a boy of only 15, he went to Alma (Alina probably represents a transcription error) and probably arrived to see wounded still uncared for. He certainly saw the huge numbers of dead bodies that the Russians were not prepared to bury until some time later. The horrible and indelible image of feeding his draft animals among the bodies left from the battle left a powerful impact.

With memories of the carnage of war, he and Justina pondered emigration. They had sons at home, the oldest of which was eleven-year-old Peter J.. With him in mind, they made the decision for America where they would not be pressed into military service.

The Warkentin and Wiens families both made plans to go to America, and they arranged to travel with the K.M.B. contingent under the leadership of Ältester Jakob A. Wiebe. Unfortunately, Peter P. later wrote,

...the dear parents had to remain behind, because they had not yet sold their business. When it became possible for them, they arrived here in Kansas in America, happy and well, thanks to God's gracious leading, whereupon a happy reunion took place.<sup>85</sup>

## Traveling to America with Ältester Jakob A. Wiebe's *Gemeinde*

The trip of the Krimmer congregation to Kansas was recorded in the memoirs of a member of that group, Peter M. Barkman. Here he described the trip that included Peter P., Justina, then seven months pregnant, and their six children including Peter J.

On May 29, 1874, we left Annenfeld...We traveled on a vehicle owned by the Tatars the distance to the Black Sea where we arrived happy and well with our children and our baggage the evening of the 29th of May. Towards evening of June 1, 1874, we boarded a ship to Odessa...After an eighteen-hour trip we arrived safely in Odessa...In Odessa we were housed in a large tin shed. At 5:30 o'clock that evening we boarded a train and traveled all night and through a dark forest the next day, June 4, arriving at 6 o'clock the next morning in the city of Pidwollowsk, where passports were checked and new tickets purchased to travel through Austria.

However, we didn't leave until 8 o'clock in the evening and arrived in Krakow where we were told that during the night a daughter had been born to the Esaus. At 9 in the evening we arrived in Oswiecin, the city on the boundary of Austria and Prussia where we spent the night and left there at 9 o'clock the next morning, June 7. We arrived in Breslau at 4 o'clock in the afternoon where we changed from the Julian calendar time to the Gregorian calendar<sup>a</sup>...

We left at 4 o'clock in the morning on June 20 and arrived in Berlin where we were badly mistreated. We left Berlin at noon and arrived in Hamburg on Saturday, June 20, at 9 o'clock in the evening. Here we had a friendly welcome from Heinrich Shuett who met us, took us to a place where we could stay and generally took good care of us. On Sunday, the 21st day of June, our group had a Sunday morning service...

We spent four days in Hamburg resting from our train trip. Tuesday we visited the Zoological Gardens and were amazed at the many different animals housed there including lions we had never seen before. We were astounded at the beautiful buildings made of precious stones plated with silver.

On Wednesday we got ready for our sea voyage across the North Sea to England. On June 24 at 8 o'clock in the evening we boarded the ship *Halenama Nnragor* from the bridge at Hamburg and sailed along the Elbe River to the North Sea. The sea was calm, and we had a restful night. In the morning we saw fishermen on small boats taking their catch to Hamburg. The waves splashed playfully against our ship, and we could sit peacefully on deck and read the tracts which had been given to us by Bible colporteurs.

On June 25, around noon a small rain fell which stirred up a wind rocking our ship to the point where many of us suffered from seasickness, and we were in a pitiful state from Thursday noon until Friday noon. However, the wind calmed Friday afternoon, and many of us ventured out on deck again to sing, to pray and to praise and thank God. We sailed along the 'Nava Flusz' and arrived at Hull, England, at 7 o'clock that evening. We remained on the ship for the night, leaving it on June 27 and packed all our belongings into a wagon and walked several blocks to a place where we all had breakfast. We walked several more blocks to the train depot and procured tickets for Liverpool.

We left Hull at 10 o'clock in the morning, June 27, and arrived in Liverpool Saturday evening at 5 o'clock. Our train ride had been quite scary for we traveled through fifteen mountain tunnels, passed over seventeen bridges and at one place the train stopped for awhile, because the train had hit and killed a man. We all were very tired from our trip. Sunday, June 28, we had our church service in the room where we had our meals, and had a service for the children in the afternoon. Monday the people who were emigrating to Manitoba and who had spent the night with us got ready to leave for Canada on Tuesday, June 30. On June 30 as we walked around in the harbor, we were amazed at the stone buildings and also the many sturdy bridges under which huge ships could pass, and which had been so securely built it seemed they would last forever.

<sup>a</sup> There is a 12-day difference between the Julian and Gregorian calendars, so the dates advance by 12.

On July 1, we were taken by tugboat to our ship, *The City of Brooklyn*, which would take us across the Atlantic Ocean. We boarded the ship at 2 o'clock in the afternoon, and we spent a fairly restful night on the ship anchored in the harbor. Thursday, July 2, at noon our ship and two other large ships left the harbor at Liverpool. A strong wind came up which rocked our ship considerably and we were all seasick until we anchored in Ireland on July 3 at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. Soon we all were feeling better for which we praised the Lord. At 5 o'clock that afternoon we left Ireland, and soon we were out on the wide open waters of the Atlantic.

Many of the people on the ship became violently seasick and for the next two days were suffering severely. Sunday, July 5, our stomachs began to feel better, but many felt very dizzy, including my wife and me, and we remained in bed. On Tuesday a fierce storm came up and continued all night, increasing to such force by Wednesday noon, July 8, that it violently rocked the ship, scooting our Russian chests back and forth across the floors of our cabins. As we experienced the ocean storm in its full fury, we thanked the Lord that He was our comfort and guide. By Wednesday evening the storm had subsided and the ship glided along peacefully again. But by 9 o'clock Thursday morning the wind increased and soon we were battered by another storm. However, we were beginning to get used to the storms so they didn't bother us quite so much anymore...

Friday the 10th of July the weather turned very cold so that we had to don our heavy fur coats to go out on deck. By Saturday the 11th, we had warmer weather and the wind calmed down. By Sunday, July 12, it was so warm we didn't need our heavy coats. A good number of us were well again, and we were able to have a church service to praise and thank the Lord. Brother Jakob A. Wiebe read and commented on Psalm 32. By Monday, July 13, it was colder again. That morning a deck hand died. Immediately a coffin was made for the body and lowered into the ocean. In the afternoon we were notified to give written thank you notes showing our appreciation and satisfaction with the ship's services.

Tuesday morning, July 14, at 10:30, land was sighted and a coast pilot boarded the ship. At 5:30 in the afternoon we entered the Hudson River, and the ship came to a standstill. We all needed to be examined by a doctor who came on board about an hour later. By 7 o'clock that evening our ship was at the New York Harbor in the Hudson River. Immediately an official boarded the ship to instruct us how to leave the ship the next day, and we spent an uncomfortable warm night on the ship. Early Wednesday, July 15, a very hot morning, we disembarked with all our luggage which was loaded on to a cart, and by noon we were at Castle Garden.<sup>91</sup>

The *City of Brooklyn* was part of the Inman Line of Royal Mail Steamers, built in 1869 in Scotland. Ship's records reported that it measured 354' by 43' with a tonnage of 2,911. The *Brooklyn* wrecked in 1885.<sup>92</sup>

Castle Garden, then the immigration point, lies in Battery Park at the south end of



The S.S. *City of Brooklyn* which carried the Peter P. Warkentin family to America. (Photograph courtesy of the Steamship Historical Society Collection, Univ of Baltimore Library.)

Manhattan, New York City. There they were met by Bernard Warkentin (no known relationship to the family of Peter P. Warkentin) who had come only a few years earlier as a young man from South Russia.<sup>20</sup> He had built a successful flour mill in Halstead, Kansas, and played a large role in the migration from South Russia. Together with John F. Funk, the editor of a Mennonite newspaper, *Herald of Truth*, he helped form the Mennonite Board of Guardians to assist Russian Mennonites wishing to emigrate. Bernard urged these immigrants to head for Elkhart, Indiana, where they would find Funk, and there they would receive further assistance in their move.

John F. Funk had already contributed greatly to the success of the migration. Through the *Herald of Truth* (and its German language version, *Herold der Wahrheit*), the needs of the immigrants were publicized throughout the communities of American Mennonites. The previous year, he helped the deputies from Russia who had scouted the land, and on another occasion, he had traveled to Kansas and other prospective sites himself on behalf of the Russians.

On Thursday, the group purchased tickets for Indiana, crossed the Hudson River, and boarded the train. Traveling day and night, they reached Cleveland, Ohio, on Saturday. Traveling overnight again, this group of about 150 Crimean Mennonites reached Elkhart and John F. Funk before dawn on Sunday, July 19.<sup>91</sup>

It could not have been a worse time for Funk. His daughter, sick for several days, had died during the night.<sup>93</sup> In grief and exhausted, he searched for a place for his wards to stay and was able to open a vacant house. After getting the luggage hauled, he asked a grocer to open his store to sell them bread, meat, coffee and tea. They immediately moved in, washed up, and made dinner before a service of Thanksgiving at 2 that very afternoon.

The travelers made a temporary home in that house and in Funk's church for almost a month while congregational leaders scouted for a new home. In these crowded Elkhart quarters, before they could find that new home, Justina Warkentin gave birth to their first child in the new world, Heinrich, born August 5.

### **The Search for a New Homes**

Ältester Wiebe left with another leader, Franz Janzen, to scout the west on behalf of the entire contingent. They looked at the land in South Dakota. A Russian Mennonite settlement was beginning at Yankton in the southeast, but they moved on because "we were used to a warmer climate than that of Dakota."<sup>93</sup>

From there they went to Nebraska. In New York they had talked with Cornelius Jansen, who also played a major role in facilitating the migration, both from his home in Berdiansk, South Russia, and in America after he was exiled by the czar. Jansen promoted Nebraska, so Ältester Wiebe and Franz Janzen traveled throughout the state.<sup>72</sup> In the end, they rejected Nebraska because Wiebe was concerned that water was too scarce and the cost of drilling wells would be too great. Ironically, the area in which lies the largest Mennonite settlement in Nebraska, Henderson, overlies the Ogallala aquifer, the richest source of irrigation water in the prairie states.

From there the two scouts went to Kansas where they were guided by a Santa Fe Railroad land agent, C.B. Schmidt.<sup>93</sup> They traveled west as far as Great Bend where they saw evidence of the massive grasshopper invasion earlier that year. All over Kansas they saw abandoned homesteads and experienced the intense August heat, but they never lost confidence in their own ability to farm and in God's grace. They were attracted to Marion County; Wiebe cited the presence of streams and rolling terrain plus the encouragement of the Mennonites who had come within the last year.

Wiebe and Janzen contracted with the railroad for twelve sections (square miles) of Santa Fe land about ten miles west of Marion Center, the county seat, and fourteen miles north of Peabody, the nearest railway station. Through this land flowed a creek, the South Cottonwood. Initially land was purchased only from the railroad; like other Mennonite immigrant groups, they did not take advantage of homestead land, fearing that acceptance of the government's largess could lead to military obligation. The railroad land was available only on alternate

**FREE HOMES IN KANSAS**  
Along the Line of the ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE RAILROAD.

**30,000 FREE HOMES**  
In one of the Richest Valleys in AMERICA are WAITING for OCCUPANTS.

**1,500,000 ACRES**  
Subject to Homestead and Pre-emption in the Great Arkansas Valley along the line of the Railroad.

The ATCHISON, TOPEKA & SANTA FE R.R. COMPANY has **3,000,000** Acres of Land in KANSAS which are now offered on ELEVEN YEARS TIME. **7 PER CENT.** on DEFERRED PAYMENTS.

Map of Kansas showing the land given to the Santa Fe Railroad which the railroad, in turn, was selling to settlers. The railway received from the government alternate sections twenty miles on either side of their tracks.



sections like a checkerboard, so the new colony was interleaved with the farms of “English”<sup>a</sup> homesteaders. The two scouts went to Peabody and notified their contingent to come from Elkhart.

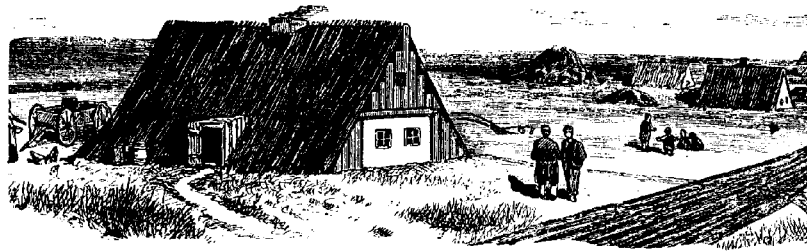
Peter P. and Justina, with the rest of the Crimean contingent, arrived in Peabody early on Sunday, August 16, 1874. With the help of the ox carts and horse teams of some Mennonites who had previously arrived in Marion County they headed the thirteen miles north to the locations of their new homes. That afternoon they held their first “Love Feast” and Thanksgiving service in the barn of one of their hosts.

The next day, the Crimean immigrants who were part of the K.M.B. congregation proceeded to set up two villages on the South Russian *Strassendorf* or “line-village” model: Gnadenau and Hoffnungstal. The name Gnadenau means “Grace Meadow”, and Hoffnungstal is the “Valley of Hope”. Each family farm was initially 40 acres, in a strip one-half mile long so that the houses could be placed close to each other; sixteen families could live on a one-mile road. These two villages attracted visitors from as far as Topeka for the first several years, leaving fascinating descriptions and studies.<sup>21</sup>

On the open prairie and without homes at first, some of these immigrants lived with earlier Mennonite settlers, others in tents, and others under their wagons. They then proceeded to build A-frame houses, the gable ends built of sun-dried bricks and the roofs of thatch. A visit by newspaperman Noble Prentis of Topeka gave an impressive description of the quick progress made in Gnadenau and Hoffnungstal.<sup>94</sup>

### **Beginnings in Kansas’ Gnadenau-Hoffnungstal Community**

Where Peter P. and Justina spent that first fall and winter we do not know. Since they were not part of the K.M.B. congregation of Ältester Wiebe, they did not purchase land in either of the two *strassendorfs*. Justina’s parents, Johann and Katharina Wiens arrived in November, traveling on the S.S. Switzerland, and the two families planned to live together.



A visitor's sketch of thatched homes in which many residents of Hoffnungstal and Gnadenau spent their first year.

<sup>a</sup> Anyone who was not German-speaking was considered to be “English” by the Mennonites.



S.S. *Switzerland* which carried Johann and Kathrina Wiens to America in 1874. The ship was built that same year. (Courtesy, Peabody Essex Museum, Salem, MA.)

In December, Peter P. reached an agreement to purchase a farm from homesteaders, and he put down \$512 on a quarter-section (160 acres) of land about three miles south of Hillsboro, less than a mile from the Hoffnungstal village and two miles from the Gnadenu village. This parcel originally had been homesteaded by a James Steele who apparently decided against Kansas farming after that disastrous summer and moved to Ohio.

Building a permanent home presented a challenge. Supplies for building homes were not easy to get. The nearest stone quarry was at Marion Center (now Marion), too far for ready access. Trees were in short supply; there were only a few cottonwoods found along the banks of the Cottonwood Creek. Lumber had to be shipped in from Topeka by rail, and the rail station was still fourteen miles away in Peabody. Consequently, most homes were built of sod or of adobe: sun-dried earth/straw bricks about four inches by six inches by twelve inches.

The dwelling in which the Warkentin family lived originally was made of sod.<sup>95</sup> A sod house was the least expensive that they could build, though it had distinct disadvantages. Under the virgin Kansas prairie lay a tight tangle of grass roots that held the soil together. Although it made plowing very difficult, the sod could be cut into blocks and stacked for construction. These walls could be durable, though it was difficult to keep the house clean and free of vermin. On the other hand, it was wonderfully energy-efficient.

The Cottonwood Creek that flowed through a corner of the quarter-section of land was the



Sketch of the post office at Gnadenu made in the 1870s.  
(Reference 94.)

source of both

## Pioneer Life for the Warkentins

Peter P. Warkentin and Justina arrived with their children in the Crimea as infantry. With Justina's parents, they were a successful family, but life did not come without

After less than a year in America, in October of 1875, Katharina Wiebe Wiens died after six-day, painful illness. We do not know where she was buried, but it may well have been in the northwest corner of their farm where a family burial plot was located. If so, that grave is no longer marked.

A daughter, Elisabeth (they called her "Liese"), was born in 1877. In 1878, Justina gave birth to twins, Maria and Margaretha, both of whom died. Aaron was born in 1879, followed by another child named Margaretha in 1881; he died at the age of two. Justina's last baby was Jakob, born in 1883; he died that same year. Only two of six Kansas-born infants lived to be adults, and although we do not have the causes of death, it may well have been diphtheria which raged through the community on several occasions. Four times the Warkentin family gathered to bury their children in the family plot. Their graves were later marked together with that of their grandfather, Johann Wiens, by the marker shown in the photograph.

In 1881, Peter P. began to write contributions to an international Mennonite newspaper, the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. The *Rundschau* was an important medium of communication between Mennonites in America and those in Russia. His first letter, in 1881, mentioned occurrences of eye diseases, a serious farm accident, and the deaths of four children in the neighborhood as a result of diphtheria.<sup>96</sup> Life was often tenuous for children, and suffering was common. Peter P. added a personal comment on these times of suffering:

Our dear God very tangibly approaches every human heart and desires that everyone should repent and live.

A farmer had to be a physician as well, and the diagnoses and remedies appeared much differently than those today. For example, Peter P. reported on the treatment of his son, Johann, who

contracted rheumatism through a bad cold six weeks ago and suffered unbelievable pain, so that he could not move a limb. I immediately took my small black doctor in hand and dressed almost the entire body according to John Linden's prescription, greased the place well with oleum [sulphuric acid] and wrapped him almost entirely with wadding, and the great pain disappeared almost in a moment. After four repeated treatments, he was again restored [to health]; thank the Lord that he blessed it.<sup>97</sup>

In the years 1884-1886, the three oldest children of Peter P. and Justina were married; the second was Peter J. Warkentin, our forebear, who married Anna Koop. They shortly bought a neighboring farm. The story of the Peter J. Warkentin family will appear in the second volume.

## Religious Life for the Warkentins

After they settled on their farm, Peter P. and Justina joined the Neu-Alexanderwohl congregation near Goessel. (The location is shown on a map on page 43). This group was part of the Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, congregation that emigrated from South Russia as an entire congregation, described in chapter 5. In early 1875, Alexanderwohl was the nearest South Russian Mennonite congregation. The lovely building constructed shortly thereafter remains in use today, a mile north of Goessel.

Justina's parents, Johann and Katharina Wiens, identified with the Mennonites of the land of their birth and joined the Brudertal Mennonite Church which was comprised largely of Prussian Mennonites. This church was located northeast of Hillsboro (see the map on page 43) until Marion Lake was built in the late 1960s.

Later a new Mennonite church opened in the city of Hillsboro, and in 1903 Peter P. and Justina joined the Hillsboro Mennonite Church by certificate from Alexanderwohl.

Many of their children had married into Alexanderwohl families, and they stayed with Alexanderwohl into succeeding generations. However, their oldest son and our forebear, Peter J. Warkentin, went another direction. Under the initial influence of a revival held at the Ebenfeld Mennonite Brethren Church, he chose to be baptized into the more severe Gnadenu congregation led by Ältester Jakob Wiebe.

While elsewhere petty disputes between Mennonite denominations held sway, Peter P. was ecumenical in his outlook. He encouraged his son's choice.<sup>95</sup> Earlier, in 1880, he had attended baptisms at both the Brudertal Mennonite Church and the Gnadenu K.M.B. Church. After reporting the peculiar fashion of the K.M.B.s (three times forward while kneeling in a flowing stream), he reported that he was "in both places blessed through the Word of God."<sup>98</sup>

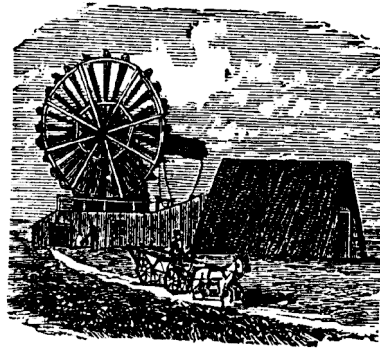
Reports of the day-to-day events spoke of the intimate relationship between Peter P.'s daily and spiritual lives. Once, right after Christmas, he wrote of the joy of the coming of Christ, tracing the precursors from Abraham through the prophets. There was no attention paid to seasonal gift-giving, only an appreciation for the natural beauty of glistening trees, coated by ice in a light freezing rain.

One cannot help noting that accounts of their farm, travels, health, illnesses, and tragedies are repeatedly seasoned with comments about the care of God in their lives.

## **Farm Life**

Peter P. and Justina, no strangers to struggle and poverty, had embarked on a major endeavor, developing a farm that would support their family including seven children. Not only did they wish to supply their own daily needs, they had hopes of seeing their children successfully established on their own farms.

They began with the resources of two horses, a milk cow, and 160 acres. A diverse selection of crops were sown that first year: mostly the Turkey-red wheat that came from South Russia, but also rye, corn, oats and potatoes.



The Friesen Mill, located north of the Warkentin farm.

The family worked hard to break new ground, and they worked together with neighbors at harvest times and in the fall hog-slaughtering tradition. Their efforts were subject to the weather, dangers inherent in farming, and the prices for their commodities. For example, in 1893 wheat brought only 46 cents per bushel, down from 50-72 cents in 1884<sup>99</sup>; butter fetched 15 cents a pound, and eggs sold for 27 cents a dozen.

A letter to the *Rundschau* told of a grisly accident on his farm.<sup>96</sup> Power for hoists or for grinding corn was supplied by horses who pulled a bar that turned a large set of unprotected gears which they called a “horsepower”.<sup>a</sup> The son of a neighbor, Franz Janzen, was caught in the machine, and his arm was severely mangled.

The vagaries of Kansas weather were taken in stride. In 1907, just before the winter wheat harvest, an eight-hour rain brought the South Cottonwood River that runs through a corner of the farm up out of its banks. Cropland was covered in water two to five feet deep. The corn rotted and then was hit by hail; he was grateful for 20 bushels to the acre. Another year it was infested with the Hessian fly and hit with hail, “but praise to the Lord, we make a good living.”<sup>100</sup>

After about ten years, they became sufficiently successful to acquire another 80 acres to the southwest and worked their farm with 5 horses. The yard was greatly improved by planting many fruit trees: 100 apple, 20 peach, 15 plum, 30 cherry.

By 1902, Peter P. reported that they made “a decent living.”<sup>101</sup> He owned 520 acres and 8 horses, but with few sons at home, they could not work all of it and had to rent out much of the farm. Children Katharine, Peter J., Johann, Justina, Helena, and Susanna were all married. Katharine’s husband, Gerhard Friesen, had died of pneumonia in 1893, and in 1900, two young grandsons, Peter and Dietrich Friesen, now lived in the Warkentin household.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>a</sup> Machines of this type can be seen at the Adobe House Historical Museum in Hillsboro, Kansas.



Peter P. and Justina Wiens Warkentin in Kansas in approximately 1914. (Original located in the Adobe House Museum, Hillsboro, Kansas.)

By the time they left their farm in 1911, they were economically successful. They owned a substantial amount of land, and county land records show that Peter P. aided other farmers by investing in mortgages.

## Ever-Present Longing

The migration separated families over a very large distance. Although there are few accounts of Mennonite immigrants in America returning to Russia permanently, their homesickness did lead to return visits.

In 1883, Peter P. reported on his father-in-law:

Our dear father is now 71 years old but still hale and hearty. Because he has nothing to occupy him now, he intends once more to visit his dear siblings in Prussia that he may wish them a final “live well.”<sup>85</sup>

Johann traveled for six months that year to Prussia, his birthplace. Peter P. once again reported to the *Rundschau*:

As our father relates it, it was a joyful event in the old homeland, that brethren could greet one another after a thirty-six-year separation and share from the past and the present. It is very important to me as well; what a joy it will be there, where we can altogether be united with our greatest Brother.<sup>103</sup>

Johann Wiens died in 1892, a few days short of 80 years old after a “six-day painful illness”. At his funeral, the minister of the Brudertal church, Jakob Penner, delivered a message followed by a message from the elder of the nearby Gnadenau K.M.B. congregation, Ältester Jakob Wiebe. The texts for the two reflects their differing outlooks: Penner used John 10:9; “I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.” Wiebe’s message came from Luke 13:24; “Strive to enter in at the narrow gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.”<sup>104</sup> Johann was buried in the family plot on the farm with his granddaughters.

Peter P.’s letters often contained references to his parents and his brothers back in Sagradovfka: Heinrich, Aron, and Johann. The *Rundschau* was often a vehicle for carrying personal news since, though the mail might be unreliable, some copies of the newspaper were bound to arrive. For example, in 1892, he wrote:

I would like to learn through the *Rundschau* or by letter, whether my parents and siblings in Russia are still living, because we have received no letter from our parents the Peter Warkentins since the spring of 1891, and we have received no life account of our siblings at Sagradovfka: Heinrich, Aron and Johann, for several years. Last year we sent six photographs to my dear parents in Altona, which they were supposed to distribute there, and two letters; we have also sent letters to Sagradovfka, but we have received no answer from there. Consequently I am turning to those who read the *Rundschau* in Russia to report to us regarding my request, whether they are still living. As we have heard, my parents sold the farmstead in Altona and have moved to Sagradovfka.<sup>104</sup>

Contributions to the *Rundschau* later in 1892 and 1893 confirmed that he had received letters from his brother, Heinrich, and from his parents.

On September 26, 1893, Peter P. left on his dream trip, going back to Russia to visit his family. Upon his return to Kansas, he prepared a detailed account of his trip for the *Rundschau*.<sup>83</sup>

Peter left in the company of a Dr. Cornelius Hiebert, traveling by train first to Chicago where they bought round-trip tickets to Bremen, Germany (\$87.50 per person). They went on to New York where they were to receive their passports. The passports had not arrived, and they were required to leave on an express steamship, the *Elbe*, with the promise of receiving them in Germany. After sightseeing for two days (“the splendor reminded me of Solomon’s Temple”), they went on to Berlin where a wire from New York advised them that the passports were on their way. They arranged with an agent to receive their passports at the border. After narrowly avoiding imposters pretending to represent their agent, they finally received their passports and proceeded by rail to Odessa and from there by ship to Kherson at the mouth of the Dnieper River.

In Kherson, Peter was met by his brother, Heinrich, after a separation of 20 years. Together they traveled further by boat, then 70 kilometers by wagon, and reached Orloff, Sagradovfka, the homes of Heinrich and of his parents.

A happy reunion and greeting took place after such a long separation and tears of happiness were flowing. As that reunion is already a great joy, how much greater will be our joy when, one day, we will meet each other in a distant, happy eternity, where there will be no separation, where we will praise the Lord who saved us for all the grace and love he has shown us.<sup>83</sup>

From Orloff they went on to Tiege, Sagradovfka, the home of his brother, Johann. After spending time there, they arranged for Heinrich and Peter P. to visit their brother, Aron, who lived near the Don River. This trip required a wagon ride of about 50 kilometers, followed by another 800 kilometers “which takes a lot of patient traveling on Russian railways, because one travels so slowly.”<sup>83</sup> Aron met them on the last stop of that particular line. During their stay, Peter P. took careful note of the state of agriculture there and discussed emigration with Aron.

From there, they traveled to Molotschna. Peter P. and Heinrich visited an uncle, Peter Regehr, and other relation in the village of Rückenau. In Margenau, they visited the Mennonite Brethren church, and in Prangenau, they went

to the home of our old aunt Peter Kröker. I brought her news from her children in America which made her very happy.<sup>83</sup>

From there, to Neukirch, his birthplace.

When we arrived at my parents’ farm, we stood still for awhile and looked at the buildings and the garden; very little had changed.<sup>83</sup>

From Molotschna, they returned to Sagradovfka, and on December 7, he said good-bye. This occasion was commemorated by poems written by a brother and by nephews; these poems were later printed in the *Rundschau*.<sup>105</sup> The following are translations of those poems (no attempt was made to preserve the meter of the poetry.)





Locations of colonies in which Peter P.'s brothers lived at various times: Sagradovka, the Don settlement, and the Omsk settlement. (Note that this map of Russia is drawn on polar coordinates.)

*Mennonitische Rundschau*, November 27, 1895

16 November, Hillsboro, Kansas. Worthy "Rundschau",  
Because I have read quite a few beautiful poems of the emigrants published by you, I thought that I would send a couple of poems that were written by my brother and nephews as well-wishes, when I visited Russia two years ago.

Peter P. Warkentin

*Your extended trip, brother, uncle, friend,  
Will be lamented by many, silently and also loudly.*

*He will faithfully guide you on your journey of life.*

*Many eyes filled with tears, many a happy glance,  
Much fearful longing calls: come back soon.*

*And how he directs will be your salvation  
Whether he gives sadness or sweet wine.*

*In the pain of separation, anxiety and depression,  
Many a dear heart asks: Will you return?*

*Because all his purpose is to lead the pilgrimage of  
His children toward heaven.*

*Or will your end be on this journey?  
Will strange hands lower you into the grave?*

*He will bring you happily and safely home,  
It will sound through all laments, Now he is healed.*

*But in full trust, let us look toward heaven,  
Look to the Father, who is always able to help.*

*Now we will meet again, where we will be free of  
pain,  
Where we stand with the Saviour, our hearts  
rejoicing.*

*Let us prayerfully make haste to the advocate's  
throne.*

*He can heal wounds, and has already healed many.*

*Now indeed you know Him, you found Him in your  
need;*

*He will accompany you, only follow him as a child;*

*Now you need not fear tribulation, pain and death.*

*And I will commit you to His heart in farewell;  
This is my blessing with my parting kiss.*

Dedicated to our beloved uncle Peter Warkentin at his departure because he was a guest in Russia from America.

*Melody: Jesus Christ Reigns.*

*When we received the message that this dear uncle  
had come  
From far away America, how much we rejoiced.*

*But the time has quickly hurried by since we  
experienced this joy--  
Seeing our guest with us, and now he wants to leave  
us!*

*Many questions were asked, he told us much;  
What we heard from him was precious, dear and  
valuable.*

*When the waves carry him away from us, one will*

*say*

*Much still in the circle of friendship, each one, what  
he knows.*

*And his picture will float before us in his letters,  
which he sends*

*To us after his is at home, as if one sees him.*

*The nephews and all the nieces also will long remind  
each other*

*Of their dear and worthy uncle, who once lodged  
here as their guest.*

*The entire host of nieces and nephews wish [him] the  
love and blessing*

*Of the Savior over land and ocean, here and forever.*

*Many greetings to the loved ones who have remained  
at home,*

*All of whom the Lord accepts and saves, whom he  
can.*

Orloff, 24 November 1893

After quarantine in Bremen and a slow ship ride that took 15 days when it should have taken 10, Peter P. arrived in Hillsboro on January 1, in good health.

## **A Long Journey Comes to an End**

In 1911, when Peter P. and Justina were in their early 70s, they retired and left their beloved home and farm, and a house on West Grand in the town of Hillsboro became their home. The farm was turned over to their daughter and son-in-law, Susanna and Isaak Gräves.

The Warkentins celebrated their 60th wedding anniversary in 1921. By this time enfeebled, they prepared a message for their family:

Now we are both old and feeble and desire rest. We have reached the years the Psalmist says, "by reason of strength four-score years." Dear children, let us live as to the Lord, because He does not want any of us to perish. Let us always count ourselves among the saved. This is our prayer and wish,

Your loving Parents and Grandparents,

*Peter P. Warkentin*

P.P. and Justina Warkentin.<sup>86</sup>

Two years later, at the age of 82, Peter had a heart attack; five days later, a stroke followed, and the next day he died.<sup>89</sup> The funeral, with five ministers participating from several churches, took place in the First Mennonite Church of Hillsboro, and he was buried in the Gnadenuau K.M.B. Church Cemetery, one mile north of their farm.

A poem was included in the obituary, the translation of which follows:



Peter P. and Justina Warkentin at their retirement home in Hillsboro, Kansas.

Many of our loved ones are already in Canaan above,  
They have overcome and now rest from this time on.  
We still have to struggle, as it has been ordained for us,  
Yet we will also have victory as they, through Jesus Christ.

The great Lord and King goes ahead of us in the battle.  
He leads through the cross to the throne, through the night to splendor.



Marker for the graves of Peter P. and Justina Warkentin in the Gadenau Cemetery, south of Hillsboro.



The Peter J. Warkentin family on the occasion of the death of his first wife, Anna Koop Warkentin. Henry K. Warkentin with his eldest child, Herman, is second from the right, back row; Margaret Harms Warkentin is second from the right, front row.

O let us look at him, with all vigilance and entreaties,  
Until we also enter Zion as overcomers.<sup>89</sup>

Justina followed Peter in death eight months later. During the intervening period, she lived with her daughter's family on the original Warkentin farm. Justina developed heart trouble, and her obituary describes her longing "to go home to her redeemer."<sup>106</sup> On March 17th, "at 12 o'clock noon, she died gently in the Lord."

The obituary adds some statistics which illustrate the progress that the family experienced, in the lives of her offspring. Justina gave birth to either 15 or 16 children, of whom only eight survived into childhood. She was grandmother to 56 of which 50 had thus far survived and great-grandmother to 67 of which 63 still survived.

Justina had spent the first half of her life moving from place to place with her family trying to find a fixed dwelling. She was born in Prussia, matured in Molotschna, and lived in Crimea "in great poverty" before finally thriving on the prairies of Kansas.

## The Legacy

Three features of the life of Peter P. and Justina Warkentin stand out: their economic success, their interest in the community, and the depth of their spirituality.

Besides the modest statements that Peter P. made in the *Rundschau* concerning his success, the records of his land investments show a successful farmer and businessman. He held nearly a section of land at one time, and the county records show that he invested in mortgages for many other Marion County settlers. His eldest son, Peter J., settled on the section to the southwest, and in a short time, he was well enough off that he was providing investment capital

for others. Peter J.'s son, Henry K. moved to California as a young single man where he also became a successful businessman.

Peter J. picked up the interest in the community by being a member of the school board.

Finally, at a time when the various streams of Mennonites in the Hillsboro area could be unaccepting of each other, Peter P. could participate comfortably with all of them. Peter J. joined the Gnadenau K.M.B. church and later the Zion K.M.B. church in California. His son, Henry K. Warkentin, became a leader in the Mennonite Brethren with whom the K.M.B. eventually merged.

The contribution that Peter P. and Justina made can be traced through many generations. That legacy will be traced in Volume II.



## 10 From the Vistula valley in Russian Poland: The Kornelius and Anna Plenert Family

**K**ornelius and Anna Bartel Plenert lived far from the South Russian steppes that were the home of the immigrants in the earlier chapters. Deutsch-Kazuń was a village near Warsaw in present-day Poland. At that time, Russia controlled that area. The upper Vistula River valley had three main Mennonite settlements that can be located on the map on page 29: Deutsch-Kazuń, Deutsch-Wymysle, and Wola-Wodzyńska. Kornelius came to Kazuń as a young man, but Anna Bartel was born there, part of a leading established family.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
 \* .)) Eva Janzen  
 +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
 \* .)) Maria Unruh  
 \* .)) Helena Dirks  
 +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) **Kornelius Plenert**  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
 \* \* \* .)) **Anna Bartel**  
 \* .)) Marie Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
 \* .)) Bena Ratzlaff  
 \* .)) Anna Wilms  
 +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
 \* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens  
 \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
 \* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
 \* \* \* .)) Anna Koop  
 \* \* \* .)) Anna Fast  
 \* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
 \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
 \* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen  
 \* .)) Margaret Harms  
 \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
 \* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
 \* .)) Anna Günther  
 /)) Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,  
 \* Rebekah Margaret  
 \* +)) Isaac J. Harms  
 \* +)) David Harms  
 \* \* .)) Kathrina Fröse  
 \* +)) Isaac Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
 \* \* .)) Eva Unruh  
 \* \* .)) Eva Schroeder  
 \* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
 \* \* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh  
 \* \* .)) Emma Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
 \* \* .)) Katharina Claassen  
 \* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt  
 .)) Virginia Louise Harms

### The History and Origin of the Plenert Name

Plenert is a less common Mennonite name. It does not even appear in Mennonite ship list collections or in some of the Mennonite census lists. However, it is thought to have a very early origin among Anabaptists. Plenert families migrated to the Vistula valley, not through northern Europe like the Dutch, but through central Europe.

The first Anabaptist Plenert is thought to have been Philipp Plener of Strasbourg.<sup>27</sup> One speculation suggests that the name derives from “Blenner”, “one who blends, especially in the manufacture and coloring of cloth.”<sup>39</sup> Philipp Plener was also called *Blauärmel* (blue sleeves) as he was a dyer of cloth.<sup>107</sup>

Philip joined the Mennonites in 1526 or 1527. He helped to set up new Anabaptist congregations in several cities and then ended up in Moravia. As many as 2,000 Anabaptists established a community of goods there and were commonly known as the Philippites; nearby, the followers of Jakob Hutter, still known as Hutterites, established their community.

By 1535, some persecution began in Moravia, and many of the Philippites headed for the Vistula delta. Here Plener seems to have ended up in the vicinity of Danzig where a number of names that ended in -er were extended to -ert.

Later, Plenert families moved to the area around Kulm, south of the delta. Kulm is not far from Schwetz; the area is shown on the map. The conditions of the move were listed in a lease agreement between Mennonite settlers and the city council of Kulm in 1565.<sup>14</sup> They could not buy the land and were required to sell their agricultural produce in the city of Kulm unless there was surplus. However, they could not practice trades in the city. Later, although they were not permitted to build a church, they were permitted to build a school. Until the area was seized by

Prussia in 1772, they lived and practiced their faith without excessive physical persecution, though they never gained any political power.

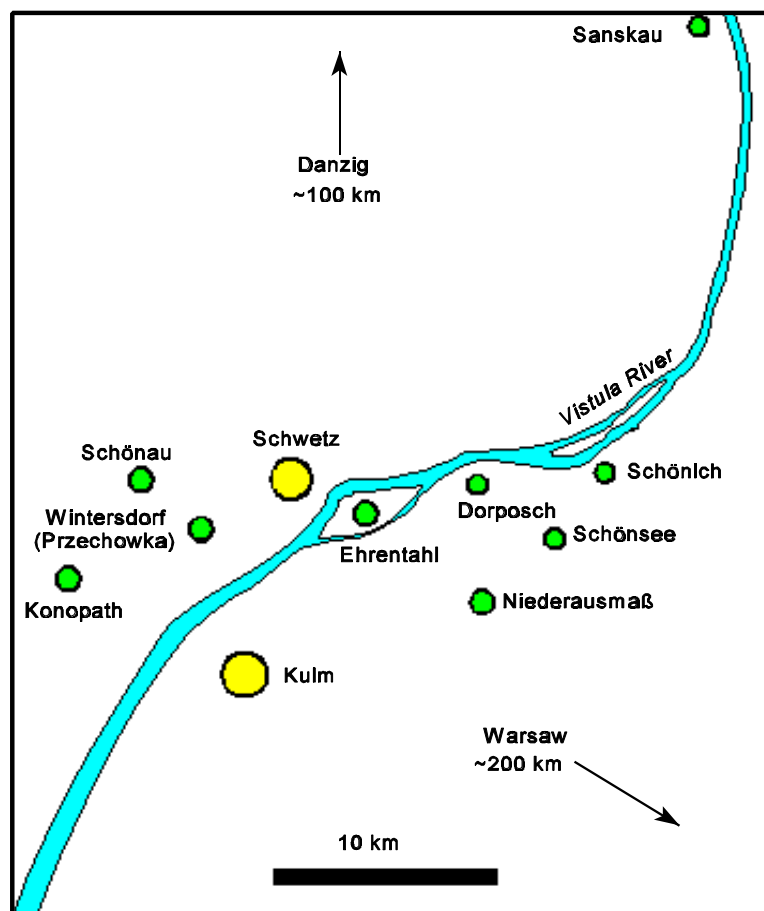
### The Story of Kornelius Plenert

Kornelius left a single handwritten paragraph about his life in the flyleaf of a German songbook. In the following translation he described his early years:

I was born the 6th of January, 1815 at Niederauturas near Culm, West Prussia. At the age of twelve I had to stay with strangers. In 1830 I was baptized by Elder Simon Goertz. For three years I worked for my half brother. Then I worked for Elder Tobias Janz for seven years where I learned the trade of weaving...<sup>108</sup>

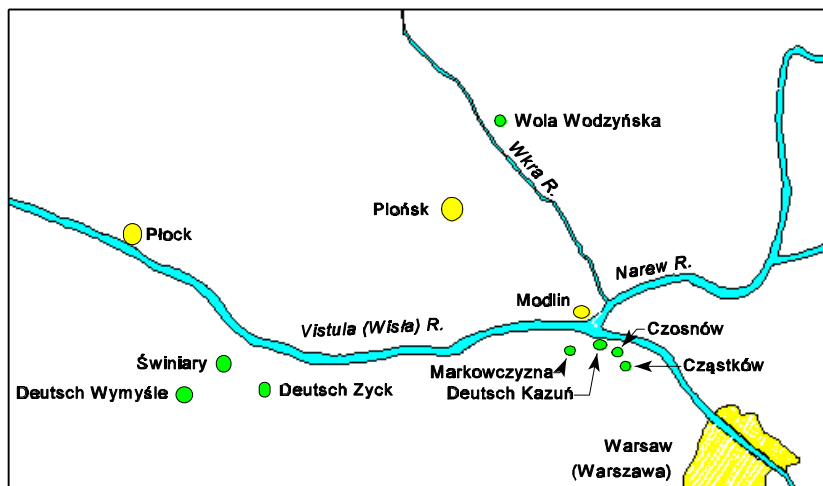
The village referred to as “Niederauturas” should probably have been transcribed as Niederausmaß, a village just north of Kulm, not far from Schwetz (see the map). It was part of the Kulm congregation rather than the Przechowka congregation. Tobias Janz was an elder in the Kulm congregation.<sup>109</sup>

Kornelius Plenert left Niederausmaß and settled in the community of Deutsch-Kazuń,



The region around Schwetz and Kulm in Poland. Niederausmaß, the birthplace of Kornelius Plenert, was associated with the Kulm congregation.





Map of the Mennonite settlements in the vicinity of Warsaw.

probably in his late 20s. He married Eva Foth, the widow of Jacob Goertzen, in 1848, and they had two children, Agnetha and Peter; Eva died of a stroke in about 1855. Kornelius did not remarry for another seven years.<sup>108</sup>

### **The Community and Congregation of Deutsch-Kazuń**

The community of Deutsch-(German) Kazuń was located near the Polish village of Kazuń, downstream from Warsaw and very close to the Vistula. Like the land available in so many other Mennonite settlements, it was a swampy, flood-prone area which had to be re-claimed by the settlers. The village is thought to have been founded in 1762, largely with Mennonites from the Kulm area, and a congregation formed in 1776.<sup>110</sup> The original land was purchased from the Polish General Czosnów by a group of six families.<sup>109</sup>

The majority of the members lived in Deutsch-Kazuń, but later other villages were founded beginning with Czastków in 1803. In 1823, a church meetinghouse was built in Deutsch-Kazuń.

If we jump ahead in the village's history, we find that this congregation later grew to a membership of over 500, but it is no more. Anti-German feeling after World War I, and particularly after Hitler invaded Poland, took a great toll. Male members of the congregation were shot or interned by the Poles, and survivors fled by 1945.

In the 1890s, the original meetinghouse in which the Plenert family had worshiped was torn down and replaced by a new structure on higher ground. That building still stands, as of 1989, and is in use as a farm house. The congregation's cemetery, in which probably would have been buried the remains of Anna's parents, is heavily overgrown with brush, close to a levee protecting the area from the Vistula River. The few remaining stones are unreadable, and only rectangular depressions in the ground mark most grave sites.<sup>111</sup>

### **The Bartel Family of Deutsch-Kazuń.**

Kornelius' second wife was Anna Bartel, the daughter of long-time elder of the congregation, *Ältester* Johann Bartel.

The Bartel family has a long history among Anabaptists. The *Martyr's Mirror* records the martyrdom of two persons by the name of Bartel. In 1537, a weaver named Hans Bartel was apprehended as an Anabaptist in Bavaria.<sup>7</sup> He and another were questioned and tortured repeatedly, twice on the rack, without recanting.

The eighth time the Judge came to them, together with three others. After maltreating them fearfully, he sentenced them to be burned; but they hoped in the Lord, to remain faithful and steadfast unto the end, in the divine truth, through the unspeakable riches and power of God. They were then burned for the faith, valiantly testified to the truth, and obtained the crown of the martyrs of Christ.<sup>7</sup>

Early in the following century, Bartel families were noted in the area of Kulm. The recorded birthplace of Anna's father in 1797 was Deutsch-Kazuń, so Anna's grandfather may have been one of the founders of the community, Franz Bartel.

*Ältester* Johann Bartel began his service to the congregation as a minister (*Lehrer*) in 1832 at the age of 35. Shortly thereafter in 1833, ordination as elder (*Ältester*) took place. He served the congregation at Deutsch-Kazuń for 30 years until his death in February, 1862.

Anna was born in the village of Markowczyzna, just west of Deutsch-Kazuń. She grew up and was baptized in that congregation. Anna married Kornelius in 1862, the year of her father's death, and become mother to Kornelius' two small children.

### **Life in Deutsch-Kazuń for the Plenert Family**

Information about their life in the Kazuń area is sketchy. Their first children were born in Cz stków, but the records of later children indicate that they lived in Neuhof, a village that has not been located.

In 1879, they came to the United States: Kornelius, Anna, at least their four youngest children and Anna's unmarried sister, Eva. (Agnetha and Peter also came to the U.S. at some time, but they did not immediately live with their father.) Kornelius gave the arrival date as July 4, 1879. No ship record has been located, so we cannot determine whether they were part of a larger group of migrating Mennonites.

### **Settling in the United States**

The Plenert family came immediately to Marion County, Kansas, and settled north of Hillsboro. The region was usually called the "French Creek" district, but the Mennonites from Russian Poland named it Johannestal, after Anna Bartel Plenert's father, the beloved *Ältester* Johann Bartel. Kornelius purchased 160 acres, but he followed the old-world style of a long, narrow plot rather than a square quarter-section. The location is shown on the map on page 43.

They immediately built a frame home, but just before their eldest daughter, Maria, was to be married, it burned. The fire delayed the wedding.

Members of the Plenert family became members of the local Johannestal Mennonite Church which had many members who had come from Polish Russia -- from Deutsch-Kazuń and the neighboring Mennonite settlements of Deutsch-Wymysle and Wola-Wodzyńska. The years of separation from the South Russian Mennonites of Chortitza and Molotschna had produced a greatly different sound in their Low German, and there were probably other cultural variations. Difficulties sometimes cropped up in completely integrating with the South Russian



Agnetha Plenert Bartel, Anna Plenert Schroeder, Peter Plenert, Kornelius Plenert, John Plenert, Maria Plenert Kopper. Front row: Anna Bartel Plenert and Kornelius Plenert. About 1900. (Photo courtesy of Dorothy Schmidt.)

Mennonites. For a time, there were effectively two congregations within the Johannestal church who required a decade or more to integrate.<sup>112</sup>

As Kornelius and Anna grew older, their children married and left. Kornelius J. was married in 1892 to Bena Ratzlaff, also from Polish Russia, though not from Kuzuń. She was a neighbor in Kansas. The family of Kornelius J. and Bena lived at first with the elder Kornelius and Anna. By 1900, however, they were reporting to the census-taker that the younger Kornelius was the head of the household, and later that year Kornelius died.



Grave markers for Kornelius Plenert (foreground) and Anna Bartel Plenert in the French Creek Cemetery.



A photograph thought to be of the Cornelius Plenert (Sr.) farm, probably soon after his death in 1900 but before it was sold in 1901. (L-R) Cornelius J. Plenert, Bill, Arnold, Bena Ratzlaff Plenert, Annie, and Anna Bartel Plenert.

The widow, Anna, and the family sold that farm in 1901, and Anna lived with the Cornelius and Bena on their new farm. Anna died in 1907. She and Kornelius were buried side-by-side in French Creek Cemetery, just north of Hillsboro.

### **The Next Generation**

The family of Cornelius J. and Bena Plenert farmed to the west of the Johannestal church, but tuberculosis took Cornelius at the age of only 46. They were lifelong participants in the Johannestal Mennonite Church.

We will look again at Cornelius J. and Bena Plenert and their daughter, Marie, in Volume II.



The Cornelius J. Plenert family at his funeral in 1913. From left to right: Bena, Arlo, Marie, Edwin, Anna Arnold, Bena and William.



# 11 Our First American Mennonites: The Heinrich and Anna Ratzlaff Family

**H**einrich W. Ratzlaff and Anna Wilms Ratzlaff were the first of all of our Mennonite forebears to come to North America. The left in 1873, before Mennonites began leaving Prussia, Polish Russia, and South Russia in large numbers. As did the Plenert family, they lived in a Mennonite community near Warsaw.

- +)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff
- +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Eva Janzen
- +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh
- \* .)) Maria Unruh
- \* .)) Helena Dirks
- +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert
- \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Bartel
- \* .)) Marie Plenert
- \* \* +)) **Heinrich W. Ratzlaff**
- \* .)) Bena Ratzlaff
- \* .)) **Anna Wilms**
- +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin
- \* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens
- \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin
- \* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Koop
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Fast
- \* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms
- \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms
- \* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen
- \* .)) Margaret Harms
- \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp
- \* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp
- \* .)) Anna Günther
- /)) *Michael Mpho, Jonathan James, Rebekah Margaret*
- \* +)) Isaac J. Harms
- \* +)) David Harms
- \* \* .)) Katharina Fröse
- \* +)) Isaac Harms
- \* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh
- \* \* .)) Eva Unruh
- \* \* .)) Eva Schroeder
- \* +)) Isaac N. Harms
- \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld
- \* \* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh
- \* \* .)) Emma Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen
- \* \* .)) Katharina Claassen
- \* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt
- .)) Virginia Louise Harms

## The Pedigree of Heinrich W. Ratzlaff

Heinrich was born in 1829 on the island of Ostrower Kämpe in Prussia, across the river from Schwetz and Przechowka, the location of the congregation of the same name. The village of Ostrower Kämpe was part of the Przechowka congregation. Consequently the ancestry of Heinrich’s father, Andreas, was documented all the way to “the first Ratzlaff” of Chapter 5.<sup>26</sup> Heinrich’s mother was Elizabeth Drier, sometimes spelled “Dreher.”<sup>109</sup>

Heinrich’s mother died in Ostrower Kämpe, and in 1851 the family moved to Deutsch-Zyck, nearby the Mennonite village of Deutsch-Wymyśle in central Poland.<sup>109, 113</sup>

## Deutsch-Wymyśle, in the Vistula Valley

In 1762, emigrants from the Przechowka congregation near Schwetz (see Chapter 5) and from the congregation further downriver at Montau came upriver to found the village of Deutsch-Wymyśle. The village was near the Polish village of Płock, somewhat further north from Warsaw than Deutsch-Kazuń. As the community and congregation grew, they inhabited other villages in the region such as Deutsch-Zyck and Świniary. The “Deutsch” prefix on a name suggests to us that a Polish village already existed, and that this was a new German-speaking village founded nearby.

The congregation centered in Deutsch-Wymyśle built a church and school in the late 1700s which burned around 1860, destroying church records. The church was rebuilt of block with a tin roof and stood at least into the 1960s, some time after the congregation was driven out of Poland in January, 1945.

The congregation at Deutsch-Wymyśle maintained close contact with its mother and sister congregations: Przechowka (near Schwetz, Prussia) as well as Neumark to the west (Chapter 6), Karlswalde in Volhynia (Chapter 6), and Alexanderwohl in

Molotschna (Chapter 5), so it was natural that Andreas Ratzlaff would find a welcome in this congregation.

### **The Heinrich Ratzlaff Family in Deutsch-Wymyśle**

In 1852, at the age of 23, Heinrich married Anna Unruh,<sup>113</sup> and settled on farm number 21 in the village of Deutsch-Wymyśle.<sup>109</sup> This union was wrapped in sadness. Both of their children died as infants, and in 1857, Anna also died of a contagious disease.

Heinrich was married again, the following year, to Wilhelmine Ratzlaff. She gave birth to a daughter who died as an infant, and in 1859, Wilhelmine also died.

Barely over 30, childless, and already twice a widower, Heinrich married Anna Wilms who was 23 years old and raised in the neighboring Deutsch-Kazuń congregation.

### **Anna Wilms of Sanskau, near Montau.**

Anna Wilms was born in Sanskau, further downriver (north) than Schwetz, near Montau. Her parents, George Wilms and Anna Wolgamut, had come to Deutsch-Kazuń sometime around 1841.<sup>114</sup> *Ältester* Johann Bartel baptized Anna at age 14 as a member of the Deutsch-Kazuń church.

The Wilms name, more commonly spelled Willms, is the Dutch equivalent of the Low German Willems, son of William (English) or Wilhelm (German); the church records of Montau record the name as “Wilhelm.”<sup>115</sup> The story of Dirk Willems<sup>7</sup> remains the most famous of this family name and was told in Chapter 2. Another by that name fled to Prussia soon thereafter, and the name became common among Mennonites from Danzig.<sup>39</sup>

The area around Montau was settled upon an invitation to the Mennonites by Polish authorities and by a lease confirmed by King Sigismund Augustus in 1769.<sup>14</sup> The arrangement worked well, as the renewal agreement stated that “previously ‘the land and village Montau was desolate, and brought little or no profit’; now the land through the ‘industry, care and hard work’ of the settlers, had become productive.” They were granted a large measure of religious and economic freedom as a result of their value to their landlords.

The cooperative arrangement led to expansion of the Mennonite farming communities including the village of Sanskau. Soon thereafter, hard times arrived in the wake of the Swedish wars when homes and farms had been plundered. The Polish farmers of the region were sold into serfdom when they were unable to pay their rents, but the Mennonites banded together in mutual aid, made joint negotiation, and saved their homes and farms.

In the late 1700s, this atmosphere all changed. A law was passed in some of the Mennonite villages that the land could be owned only by Catholics, and many families began to move. Eventually, George and Anna Wolgamut Wilms took their family to Deutsch-Kazuń.

### **Heinrich and Anna's Young Family**

The location in which this family settled is unclear. Our primary source says “Wolla in German Hasan.”<sup>113</sup> Wolla does not exist on any current or historical maps and is a very unlikely Polish spelling. However, there was a nearby Mennonite settlement, Wola-Wodzyńska, that was a subsidiary congregation of Deutsch-Kazuń (could that be the source of “German Hasan”?);



although they held services locally in Wola-Wodzyńska, the group was subject to the Deutsch-Kazuń elder. We assume that this was where they farmed and produced seven children; six survived.

In the 1870s, the Deutsch-Kazuń/Deutsch-Wymyśle region came under Russian control. Like their brethren in South Russia, these congregations, now Polish Russian, also faced the threat of conscription into the military and the loss of other religious liberties. Russian and Prussian Mennonites everywhere were searching for alternatives by 1873.

For the Heinrich and Anna Ratzlaff family, the next few years are a puzzle. They left Russian Poland for the United States in March or April of 1873. It was in 1873 when the deputations of Prussian and Russian Mennonites went to North America for their initial study of the opportunities, but this Ratzlaff family had already left when William Ewert, the *Ältester* of nearby Thorn in Prussia, and Tobias Unruh, the *Ältester* of Karlswalde, Volhynia, gave their reports in Deutsch-Kazuń and in Deutsch-Wymyśle. No clue on Heinrich's motive has been found. Why did they leave when so little information on their destination was available? Where did they get the information that they had? The smallest baby, Bena, was only 11 weeks old, and the other children were 11, 9, 6, 4 and 2. Surely, it was a brave move to go alone.

A search of 17 volumes of immigrant ship lists<sup>116</sup> suggests that this could have been the first Ratzlaff family ever to come to the United States.<sup>117</sup> It should be noted, however, that although many later Ratzlaffs are included, Heinrich and Anna are not to be found in the listings either; the lists are

by no means complete. A further search of the passenger lists of ships arriving in New York that spring also failed to reveal their names.<sup>a</sup>

Upon arrival in New York, Heinrich took another interesting turn. They traveled to the Detroit area and spent three years in the city. Although a few decades later Mennonites were known to find work in the factories of Detroit, the circumstances of Heinrich's move there are unknown. In July of 1873, the *Herald of Truth*, an American Mennonite newspaper, reported that seven Russian Mennonite families had come thus far of which five were in Detroit.<sup>118</sup> By September of that year, the *Herald of Truth* reported that a total of only 36 Russian families had made the move to the U.S.<sup>119</sup> While Heinrich and Anna were in Detroit, a daughter, Emma, was born. She died at 6 weeks.

In 1876, they rejoined Mennonites, homesteading in Yankton, South Dakota. On May 15, 1876, Heinrich became a naturalized American citizen in Yankton. Two more children were born, Herman and Anna. However, for unknown reasons, they moved again in 1880, this time to Lansing, an industrial town and the capital of Michigan.

Whether they tired of Lansing or whether they were simply raising capital for a future farm we can only speculate, but in 1885 they made the final move, to Marion County, Kansas. Here they purchased a farm north of Hillsboro and joined other Mennonites of Russian/Polish origin in the Johannestal Mennonite Church.

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<sup>a</sup> The lists from late March, April, and early May were scanned. The search should not be considered exhaustive. Only names originating in Poland, Prussia, or Russia were examined, and many of the hand-written records are not easily deciphered.

Heinrich and Anna's son, David, became a minister. Daughters Amelia and Bena married two of the Plenert brothers, John and Cornelius; John Plenert became minister of the Johannestal church.

In 1902, when Heinrich was over 73 and Anna was 65, they retired from their farm and moved to the town of Hillsboro. According to the family, they loved gardening, kept a neat house, and were friendly and hospitable to all. In 1920, they celebrated 60 years of marriage together. Two years later, Heinrich and Anna died, four weeks apart, at the ages of 93 and 85. They were buried together in the Johannestal Church Cemetery.



Front row: Henry Ratzlaff, Mary Ratzlaff Janzen, Heinrich W. Ratzlaff, Anna Wilms Ratzlaff, John Ratzlaff, Rev. John Plenert; Back row: Katie (wife of Henry Ratzlaff), John H. Janzen, Agnes (wife of Herman Ratzlaff), Herman Ratzlaff, Bena Ratzlaff Plenert (wife of Cornelius Plenert), Cornelius Plenert, Lena Plenert Ratzlaff (wife of John Ratzlaff), Amelia Ratzlaff Plenert (wife of Rev. John Ratzlaff), Rev. David Ratzlaff, Mary (wife of David).



The grave marker for Heinrich and Anna Ratzlaff in the Johannestal cemetery.



## 12 From near Warsaw: The David M. and Eva Unruh Family

David Unruh and Eva Schröder Unruh lived near Warsaw in Polish Russia during the early 1870s, in the Mennonite village of Świniary. This village lay within the area of a Mennonite congregation based in Deutsch-Wymyśle, shown on the map on page 133. Like most members of that congregation, David and Eva's families came to this area from further down river, in the regions of Thorn and Kulm in the central Vistula valley, located on the map on page 29.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Eva Janzen  
 +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
 \* . )) Maria Unruh  
 \* . )) Helena Dirks  
 +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Bartel  
 \* . )) Marie Plenert  
 \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Bena Ratzlaff  
 \* . )) Anna Wilms  
 +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
 \* \* \* . )) Justina Wiens  
 \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
 \* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Koop  
 \* \* \* . )) Anna Fast  
 \* . )) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
 \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
 \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
 \* \* \* . )) Katharina Thiessen  
 \* . )) Margaret Harms  
 \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
 \* . )) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
 \* . )) Anna Günther  
 /)) Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,  
 \* Rebekah Margaret  
 \* +)) Isaac J. Harms  
 \* +)) David Harms  
 \* \* . )) Kathrina Froese  
 \* +)) Isaac Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) **David M. Unruh**  
 \* \* . )) Eva Unruh  
 \* \* . )) **Eva Schroeder**  
 \* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
 \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
 \* \* \* \* . )) Marie Unruh  
 \* \* . )) Emma Neufeld  
 \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
 \* \* . )) Katharina Claassen  
 \* \* . )) Katharina Schmidt  
 . )) Virginia Louise Harms

The region around Kulm and Schwetz had many Unruh families including the first Unruh family in our story (chapter 6). David's parents, Heinrich Unruh and Petronella Nickel Unruh, had lived in Schönich, across the Vistula River from Schwetz which was the home of the Przechowka congregation. The Mennonites of the village of Schönich were part of the Schönsee congregation which was itself a daughter congregation of Przechowka.

This Unruh family had not elected to go to Neumark or Volhynia or South Russia when so many others from the area had migrated, but when David was a boy, they moved south down the Vistula River. There they took up a farm at Świniary and joined the Deutsch-Wymyśle Mennonite congregation.

### The Schröder Family

Eva's family name, Schroeder (or Schröder), is a relatively common German name whose origin could be one who cuts clothes.<sup>39</sup> Mennonite church records in Prussia included this name by the year 1600.

Eva Schröder's family came from Nieschewken (in German it was called Obernessau) which lies across the Vistula from the city of Thorn. Thorn had for some time been receptive to Protestants and Anabaptists, and they granted long-term leases to Mennonite farmers on city land north of the Vistula. However, in 1605 Mennonite fortunes changed. The city council banished from city-owned land a disparate combination of religious minorities: "sectarians, religious counterfeiter, such as Arians and Anabaptists and others like them."<sup>14</sup>

On the other side of the Vistula, these Mennonites of Dutch descent were invited to develop flooded, marshy land. As had taken place in so many areas of the Vistula valley and delta, Mennonites built dikes to enable farming. Thereby they were able to maintain their agrarian lifestyle on land rejected by others. Unfortunately, they were less successful than were the Mennonites

in other areas, and repeated floods created hardships. Consequently the Nieschewken Mennonite community declined throughout the nineteenth century as residents emigrated to South Russia or to Polish Russia.

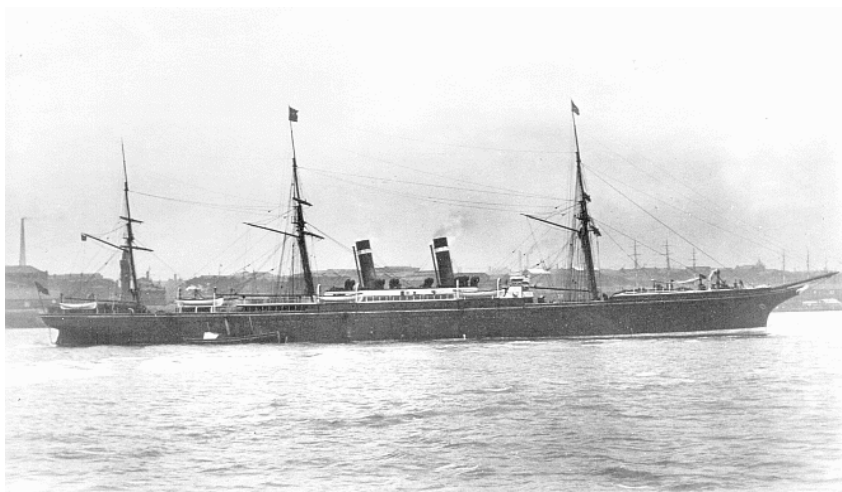
Finally Eva's parents, Kornelius Schröder and Maria Kliewer Schröder, took their family of seven south to better prospects in Świniary.

### **David and Eva in Świniary**

On September 22, 1859, Eva Schröder and her neighbor in Świniary, David Unruh, were married. In February, 1861, their first child, Eva, was born. Over the next 15 years, the daughter, Eva, was followed by sisters, Maria and Helena, then brothers, David and Wilhelm, and then two sisters, Juliana and Albertina. Świniary lies near the Vistula River. Near the river they farmed, raised silkworms, and spun silk.<sup>120</sup>

Later, daughter Eva recounted doing the laundry at the river and bleaching the family wash in the sun. Little Eva decided to use a tub as a boat on the Vistula River; the river's size makes it appear lazy and safe. She drifted into a whirlpool where she traveled round and round until she was rescued.<sup>63</sup> This Eva's story will continue in Volume II.

In 1877, the Unruh family also chose to emigrate and traveled with other members of the Schröder family. This contingent included Eva Schröder Unruh's sister, Maria Schröder Ekkert, and her family and the daughter of Eva's deceased older brother. The clan also brought with them Eva's 78-year-old mother, Maria Kliewer Schröder. The daughter Eva, the oldest Unruh child, was 12, and the youngest Unruh child was but one year old. Together with others from their community, they made their way to Liverpool, England, where they boarded the *S.S. City of Chester* for New York.<sup>45</sup> The *Chester* arrived in New York on June 4, 1877.



The *S.S. City of Chester* which carried the Unruh family to America. (Photo courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.)



David M. Unruh and Eva Schröder Unruh of rural Lehigh, Kansas.

### **Life in Kansas**

The Unruh family first settled in the French Creek/Johannestal community north of Hillsboro (see the map on page 43). This community was dominantly immigrants from central Poland like the Unruhs, and they lived less than a mile from Eva's sister, Maria Ekkert, and Eva's mother. Initially they had but 80 acres.<sup>37</sup>

Since the family had only a small farm and minimal means, the older children had to work for neighbors for a number of years. As was mentioned in an earlier chapter, their neighbor John Harms was economically quite successful, and he was hiring help for his wife. It was while working for John Harms that the daughter Eva Unruh, met David Harms, John's younger brother.

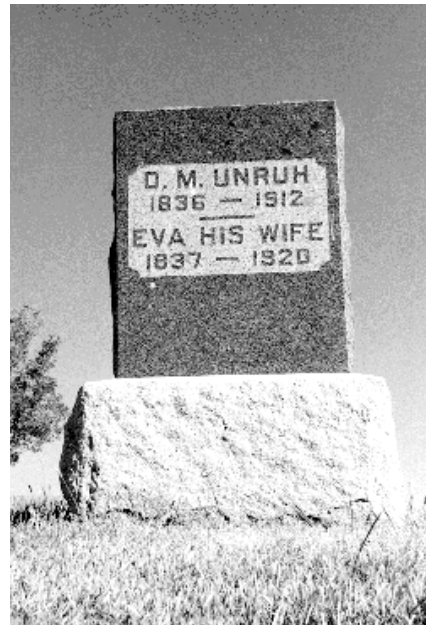
The French Creek revival was underway, and both daughter Eva and David Harms were caught up in it. They were among the first to be baptized by immersion. A crisis in the Unruh home resulted. To David Unruh, this second baptism was a repudiation of the spiritual tradition that had provided him strength. David Unruh reacted negatively to young Eva's decision, initially forbidding her to return home, though he soon forgave.<sup>63</sup>

Another family difficulty arose when David Harms and young Eva then decided to be married. Such a union provided Eva's parents with a new obstacle. The Polish Mennonites and the South Russian Mennonites had, over the years, developed some cultural differences; even their Low German dialects were sufficiently different to present some communication difficulties. The Unruhs' initial response to Eva's request for consent was "Na, Eva, waut wellst du met dem Russa Jung?"<sup>63</sup> (No, Eva, what do you want with a Russian boy?) Eventually, consent was given, however, and the wedding soon followed.

In the Unruh family, two boys were born in Kansas, Frank in 1878 and Henry in 1882, but this was followed by tragedy. Diphtheria struck shortly thereafter, taking the two young daughters, Albertina and Julianna.



Gravestone of Maria Kliewer Schröder and her daughter, Maria Schröder Ekkert. It stands at the north edge of the French Creek Cemetery.



Marker for the graves of David M. And Eva Schröder Unruh in the Lehigh M.B. Cemetery, west of Lehigh, Kansas.

Over the next decade, David Unruh continued farming. In 1893 or 1894, they moved to a larger farm near Lehigh,<sup>121</sup> but finances were always tight. Later they moved to the town of Lehigh. By this time, mother Eva was growing increasingly deaf.

Unruh church membership during this period remains a mystery; they cannot be found in the M.B. or K.M.B. churches of the area nor in the Lehigh Mennonite Church, but it is not clear that they continued in the Johannestal church either.

Maria Kliewer Schröder, Eva's mother, took her own special place in the history of the community. She lived with the Ekkert family just a mile or so east of the original David Unruh farm. During the French Creek Revival, at least two of her grand-daughters had been baptized, the younger Eva Unruh and Sarah Ekkert.

In 1881, Grandma followed; at over 80 years of age, Maria was also persuaded to be baptized by immersion. By this time, she was blind and unable to walk. It was a memorable event when Maria was carried into the creek on a chair for her baptism.<sup>64</sup>

Maria died in 1892 at the age of 92. She was buried at the north edge of the French Creek Cemetery, north of Hillsboro. The family erected a common gravestone for her and her daughter, Maria Schröder Ekkert, who died in 1894. The inscription reads "MARIA SCHROEDER, GEB. KLIEWER, GEB IN PREUSSEN, GEB 1MAI, 1799, GEST. 15 FEBR. 1892" (Maria Schroeder, born Kliewer, born in Prussia, born May 1, 1799, died February 15, 1892.) It is followed by Isaiah 57:2, "He shall enter into peace: they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his uprightness."



In time, David's health began to fail, and he died of dropsy<sup>a</sup> in 1912 at age 75.<sup>122</sup> David's funeral, held at the Lehigh Mennonite Church, was officiated by the well-known K.M.B. elder, Ältester Jakob Wiebe, together with a minister from the local M.B. Church, and the minister of the Lehigh Mennonite Church, an unusual combination considering that David had apparently not joined those churches. The family did give credit to the Lehigh Mennonite Church for its support during David's illness.<sup>122</sup>

Eva remained a widow; the family followed the tradition of sharing her care. She lived alternately with her sons Heinrich and Franz. Soon she became totally deaf and passed the time re-reading the Bible. When she became ill, she lived with her daughter, Lena Unruh Rogalsky, in McPherson County, but later she was moved to the hospital in Hillsboro. Eva died of a stroke at the age of 80, June 22, 1920, in the Hillsboro Hospital.<sup>123</sup>

According to her obituary, Eva bore twelve children of whom four died; we have no record at all of two of those. At the time of Eva's death, she was grandmother to 37. The graves of David and Eva are marked with a single stone in the Lehigh M.B. cemetery, northwest of Lehigh, Kansas.

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<sup>a</sup> According to the Random House Dictionary, dropsy is "an excessive accumulation of fluid in a body cavity or in the tissue."



## 13 Mennonite Brethren Leadership: Johann Claassen

Johann Claassen, of all the ancestry that we meet, was the only one who could have been called famous. Johann was famous enough that a biography has been published,<sup>124</sup> and there is an entry in the Mennonite Encyclopedia about him.<sup>125</sup> He committed his life to reform of the Mennonite Church, which for him led to the beginning of a separate Mennonite denomination, the Mennonite Brethren.

He bears another distinguishing factor: he was one of only two of our ancestral fathers of that generation who never emigrated from Russia to North America. However, his second wife and our ancestor, Katharina Schmidt, survived Johann, remarried, and finally moved to Kansas.

Johann was too busy in the early 1870s to think about moving to America. He had founded a new Mennonite colony and had persuaded hundreds of people to follow him there. Soon thereafter, however, he would succumb prematurely, leaving the migration to a young wife and children.

### The Claassen name

This name originated in the Netherlands, deriving from the Dutch version of Klaus. A Claassen appeared among Prussian Mennonites already in 1552, and the census of 1776 listed 107 families<sup>27</sup>, making it one of the most common of Mennonite names.

The spelling varies. In Prussia the name was always started with a C, but the earliest emigrants to Russia changed to the letter K, so that four spellings are the most common today: Claassen, Classes, Klaassen, and Klassen. Sometimes they were used interchangeably. (In one case, the Mennonite historian, P.M. Friesen, used both Claassen and Klaassen in the same paragraph when referring to Johann.)

### Family Background and Upbringing

Johann was born in the Tiege region of the GrosseWerder of the Vistula Delta. The location can be found in the map on page 30. Although attempts have been made to trace his ancestry,<sup>126</sup> they have not met with great success, and we do not know identities past that of his paternal grandfather.<sup>127</sup> On his mother's side, we have no background other than his mother's name.

Johann's parents, David Claassen and Agnetha Penner Classes, came from Prussia to South Russia in the 1820s. They were unable to obtain a farm, and then David died in 1827 when Johann

- +)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff
- +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Eva Janzen
- +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh
- \* .)) Maria Unruh
- \* .)) Helena Dirks
- +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert
- \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Bartel
- \* .)) Marie Plenert
- \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Bena Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Anna Wilms
- +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin
- \* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens
- \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin
- \* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Koop
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Fast
- \* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms
- \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms
- \* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen
- \* .)) Margaret Harms
- \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp
- \* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp
- \* .)) Anna Günther
- /)) *Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,*
- \* *Rebekah Margaret*
- \* +)) Isaak J. Harms
- \* +)) David Harms
- \* \* .)) Kathrina Froese
- \* +)) Isaac Harms
- \* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh
- \* \* .)) Eva Unruh
- \* \* .)) Eva Schroeder
- \* +)) Isaac N. Harms
- \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld
- \* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh
- \* \* .)) Emma Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) **Johann Claassen**
- \* \* .)) Katharina Claassen
- \* \* .)) **Katharina Schmidt**
- .)) Virginia Louise Harms

was only seven. Although the church had an organization to watch after the well-being of widows and orphans called the *Waisenamt*, a family without land had limited means. They lived in a small cottage at the end of the village reserved for the landless or *anwohner*.

Johann was ambitious and a good student.<sup>124</sup> He did well in primary school but faced a dilemma when choosing his next step. He would never inherit a farm; he could apprentice as a tradesman such as a shoemaker or blacksmith, or he could go to secondary school. The life of a tradesman was never secure; everyone would prefer to be a farmer, but there was not enough land to go around. Secondary school required funds that his family did not have.

The Claassen's congregation at Liebenau offered to pay the tuition for Johann but required that he be willing to teach or spend several years working in local government. He searched for another alternative. David Reimer, who the *Waisenamt* designated as a "substitute father", took him on a trip to Juschanlee, the experimental farm of the Mennonite agricultural leader, Johann Cornies. Claassen made a good impression, and Cornies offered him a job that would allow him to pay his own tuition.

At the age of only 14, Johann took the job of driving to Melitopol, 25 miles south, and Berdiansk, almost 70 miles southeast, to sell commodities and bring back other products. This experience yielded the benefits of invaluable experiences: He saw parts of the world that few others his age would see. He was exposed to the Russian language. He was required to keep very careful accounts. He had the example of the most successful and powerful Mennonite outside the church. He was permitted to borrow books of all sorts from Cornies' library which was very large by local standards.

After saving from his job, Johann attended and boarded at Halbstadt Central School. During the breaks he continued working for Cornies, taking on ever more responsibilities.

All of this prepared Johann for his first profession after finishing school. At the age of eighteen, he became partner with David Reimer's son, Kornelius, to open a general store in their village of Liebenau.

### **Difficult Beginnings for a Claassen Family**

In the 1850s, new influences came into the Mennonite church as a result from greater contact with the outside world, particularly the outside German world. Pietists from Germany had settled nearby bringing emphasis on individualistic aspects of faith and a demonstrative style of worship; their understanding of salvation was based on the experience as much as the commitment. This movement was bringing renewal into some of the churches which tended to stagnate; churches at Orloff, Waldheim, and especially Gnadefeld were experiencing change.

This new style appealed to Johann, and he began to attend small Bible study meetings of those who called themselves "Brethren". Here he met David Reimer's daughter, Katharina, and on January 31, 1847, when he was 26 and she was 20, they were married in the Reimer home by Ältester Lange of the Gnadefeld congregation.

Almost immediately, Katharina became pregnant, and David was born October 17; he died ten days later. In 1848, their second child was stillborn during a cholera epidemic. Maria, born February 26, 1850, died in May, and a second David, born in 1851, died at age six months.

Their next child arrived in July, 1852, and was named Jakob, the name of Katharina's brother, and the following child was again named David, born in 1855.<sup>a</sup>

### **Attempt at a New Style of Education**

The need for more and better schools was evident to Johann, and he worked to start a new one, the Gnadenfeld Brotherhood School. This school would not only be better academically, it would provide religious training better in tune with the desires of those in this burgeoning spiritual movement.

Starting a school meant not only raising money and organizing but also obtaining the proper certification. For this, he made his first trip to Petersburg, then the capital of Russia, in the fall of 1844 together with a friend who was an agent of the Russian Bible Society. They traveled by stage coach all the way to Moscow where they took a very slow but much more comfortable train to Petersburg. A German Pietist preacher, Edward Wüst, referred Johann to some influential people who could help him work within the bureaucracy.

Over the next couple of years they were able to raise the funds for the school, but the permit still had not come, so in spring of 1857, Claassen headed again for Petersburg, this time with Nikolai Schmidt. This time, one of his earlier contacts introduced Johann to Senator von Hahn, who had also been a friend of Johann's mentor, Johann Cornies; von Hahn gave valuable direction, and the application produced the necessary certification. While waiting for the wheels of the government to turn, Claassen and Schmidt visited schools in Reval and in Germany, observing how teachers were trained.

Upon their return, enthusiasm for the new school was high, and they began in fall, 1857. However, the student performance the first year was disappointing, and the teacher was dismissed. To Johann's greater disappointment, the new teacher that was appointed by the majority vote of the school's supporters, though an outstanding academic, lacked the religious interest and spiritual depth that Johann fervently wanted. He turned his attention to other matters.

### **Beginnings of the Brethren**

It was in the fall of 1859 when the separation of the Brethren from the established church began to take place. According to Mennonite church practice, communion was served only by the church elder, the *Ältester*, and by custom, that took place twice per year. A number of the Brethren meeting in smaller groups had two objections; they felt that communion should take place more often, and more importantly, they believed that it should be restricted to those who had experienced conversion as they understood it.

Intertwined with the reforms, the Brethren were experimenting with charismatic forms that would present difficulties for many. Meetings included not only singing, dancing and clapping of hands, but jumping and shouting. They were, in fact, referred to as the "huepfer" or "jumpers." It appears that Johann enjoyed this style though it bothered Katharina.

One evening a group of six couples, not including Johann and Katharina, served communion to each other, without a minister or elder present. Repercussions came quickly. *Ältester*

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<sup>a</sup>

This David was known both as David Johann Claassen and David Ivanovich Claassen.

Lenzmann of the Gnadenfeld congregation had been quite sympathetic up until then; now his spiritual authority was under attack. A few vocal members of his congregation were pushing their elder into a corner over this issue, and a number of villagers responded that the “brethren” displayed a “holier-than-thou” attitude. The civil authorities in the colony seem to have greatly over-reacted to what they charged was a threat to the status of the Mennonite colonies within Russia.

A meeting was held at the Gnadenfeld church calling the communion participants who were part of that congregation to account; Johann, who was acknowledged to be a Brethren leader, came as well. A few church members vociferously attacked the Brethren for their actions and their own elder for not delivering harsh discipline. Johann responded by leading the group out of the meeting, and they began to plan a new strategy.

The debate among Mennonites about whether a new denomination was necessary will doubtless go on for many more years. However, having challenged the Mennonite hierarchy and evoked an initial reactionary response, the Brethren felt they had no choice. On January 6, eighteen persons signed a statement of secession. Although they made it clear that they were still Mennonites (and consequently still qualified for the statutory Mennonite privileges), the statement was composed largely of stinging criticism of the existing church. The lines were being drawn sharply. There would be no chance of healing.

Johann began to recognize then that a struggle would be required for recognition as an independent Mennonite church. A new settlement might well be needed, he reasoned.

### **Interceding for the Brethren with the Czar**

In March, information came that Colony Administrator Friesen wanted to have Johann arrested, probably for violation of secret meetings regulations. In any case, the Brethren leadership wanted to get government recognition for their church before official negative reports arrived in Petersburg, so Johann made a hasty trip, over 1500 km to Petersburg.

This trip to Moscow was made by riding a “post-horse”. For a fee, he could swap for fresh mounts along the way as they became available. The last 560 km from Moscow went by train. In Petersburg, Johann met with Hahn again and worked on his petition to the government. Hahn recommended a strategy that would show that they were a church as their articles of secession stated; they should elect ministers before going further. Immediately Claassen headed back to Molotschna.

Over the next months, the Brethren organized further. As they were preparing to conduct their own baptisms, Johann suggested that they consider immersion; one of the Baptists in Petersburg had given him a booklet and urged him to consider this method. They made a hurried decision. Baptism by immersion would later become an identifying feature of the Mennonite Brethren.

After further confrontation with Administrator Friesen and the other authorities, Johann headed again for Petersburg, this time with a friend using post horses to pull his wagon to Moscow. From there they traveled again by train to Petersburg, arriving November 20, 1860.



Johann Claassen, photo taken in Petersburg.

The bureaucratic maze seemed interminable and led Claassen to the offices and homes of a senator, a baron, a countess, and countless functionaries and military officials. This lasted eighteen months; the details are recounted in his biography.<sup>124</sup> While there, he had a studio photograph taken. Katharina wrote him both of events in the life of the new church and of happenings in their family. Saddest of all, she had to inform Johann that his son, Johannes, had drowned in the river behind their house.

At home, the Brethren were continually struggling among themselves as well as with the authorities. One group placed increasing emphasis on emotional activities when they were together, and Johann sympathized with their desire to show their joyfulness. However, this movement made two wrong turns. First was their apparent lack of regard for traditional Mennonite sensibilities. They placed importance on a new practice, the “sister kiss” between believers, and they allowed men to wash the feet of women in foot-washing services. Incidents of immorality that occurred were thought to have arisen from the climate that emphasized these practices. For certain, the community was scandalized by these activities. Second, those who were uncomfortable with the emotional activities, dancing, jumping and playing tambourines, were ordered out of the church. These results bothered both Katharina at home and Johann in Petersburg.

On May 21, 1862, Johann presented his petition to a representative of the Czar in the beautiful summer palace. Claassen pointed out the harassment of the brethren and their need for a new church following the gospel and the teachings of Menno Simons. From the Czar, he recognition for a new church. He also requested new land for the landless as well; this would serve the economic needs of many in his group and would allow them to geographically separate themselves from those who would harass. He closed with these lines:

Most gracious Emperor! Incline your ear to the humble complaint of your faithful children, who, next to God, seek their aid from you. Their petition is that they be granted a just protection in the practice of their

evangelical worship and that they thereby be spared from all further persecution by local authorities and that they be assured legal freedom in the practice of their ecclesiastical and civil rights.

May 15, 1862

St. Petersburg

36 Galeeren Street

House of Domontowitsch, Room 7.<sup>128</sup>

Signed: Johann Classes, Mennonite, Liebenau

Taurien State, Berdjansk District

Molotschna Mennonite Colony

On June 30, 1862, Johann was back in Liebenau. The Brethren were given assurance from the czar that there should not be discrimination and received letters authorizing land in the Caucasus. He had been successful on each count.

### **The Caucasus in the 1860s**

The region known as the Caucasus lies between the Caspian Sea on the east and the Black Sea and Sea of Azov on the west. The North Caucasus is environmentally complex.<sup>129</sup> The highest mountain range in Europe separates the North Caucasus from the south. Mount Elbrus at 18,481 feet is the tallest of over one hundred peaks over 13,000 feet. Six are over 16,000 feet. The east, near the Caspian Sea, is the region of Chechnia which is near desert, but river valleys can be swampy. The deep valleys experience cycles of flooding and drought. "Here, the camel butts head with the ox, the buffalo with the mountain goat."<sup>129</sup>

The Caucasus had only recently been subdued by Russia after an effort begun by Czar Peter I in 1722. Several mountain tribes, Bashkirs, Tatars, Circassians, Chechens, and Nogaiens, grazed the fertile steppes and grew orchards in the valleys. The Russian occupation separated them from their grazing lands, and the narrow forest belt was completely obliterated.

Early attempts to settle the North Caucasus by outsiders were unsuccessful. Agricultural methods had to be adapted, and immigrants had to learn what the mountain peoples knew: certain areas were unhealthy during parts of the year. Early in the 19th century, death rates of 16 to 36% per year were common due to plague, malaria, typhus, scurvy and cholera.

The last uprising by the mountain peoples was put down in 1859, and the steppes of the Kuban area looked inviting. The different groups from the Armenians in the south to the Cossacks in the north were building an interdependent economy in which German colonies could prosper, side-by-side the mountain tribes, the Muslims, the Russian Orthodox, and Jews.

### **Founding the New Settlement in the Caucasus**

Claassen committed himself wholeheartedly to the beginning of a new settlement where the Mennonite Brethren could live separately. They now had a commitment for free land in the Caucasus, enough for full-size 165-acre farms for 150 families.<sup>128</sup> Representatives of the group needed to travel to Stavropol' where they could inspect the land and make the necessary arrangements. Even though local Molotschna authorities were under orders to oblige, these representatives were hassled, making repeated trips to Halbstadt and finding delays.

Finally in August, 1862, a party of five made the eleven-day, 660 kilometer, trip to the government offices in Stavropol' and from there to the designated land, on the "left bank" of the Kuban River. Compared with their homes in Molotschna, they found land that was more rugged, rivers that were dangerous, and neighbors that were less hospitable. Nevertheless, they

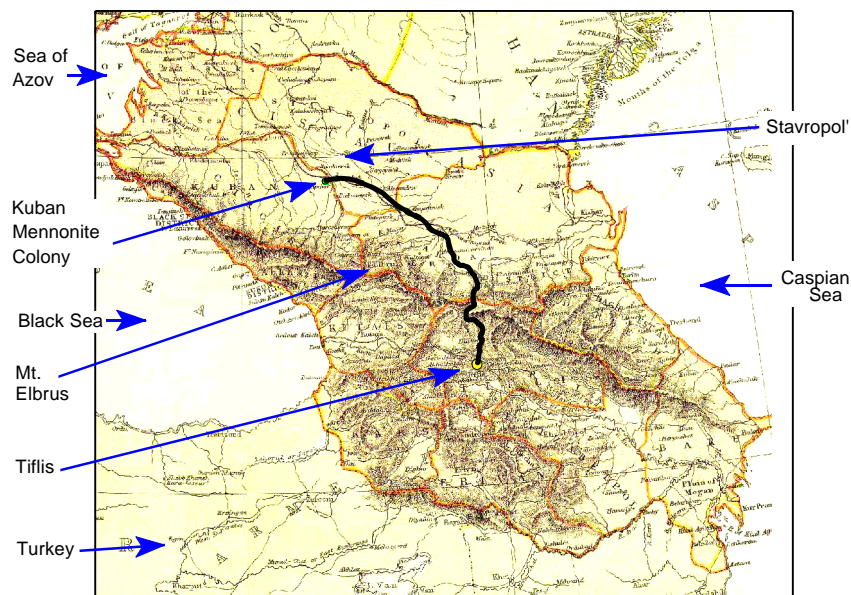


were encouraged. It was arable land, and it was free. It would be for Mennonite Brethren. They immediately returned home to make further arrangements.

By the following May when Johann returned, he found the paperwork still was not complete. He returned yet again in June, but this time he and his companion, Peter Baerg, traveled to Tiflis, the capital of the region (today T'blisi, the capital of the country of Georgia). This trip, in the company of a Cossack guide, led him over the Caucasus Mountains, through Krestovy Pass, and past 18,000-foot Mount Elbrus. A visit to the offices of the governor brought results and an occupation date of October 2, 1863, although the grant was scaled back to 100 farms. The way appeared open to start the Kuban Colony.

Molotschna that year was experiencing a drought, so four men were already on their way to the Kuban settlement in a covered wagon with their cattle and sheep. Johann and his traveling companion, Heinrich Nickel, met them, and they immediately set about beginning the settlement. They dug for water (the first wells were bitter) and built homes. Sod huts called *zemlins*, partially excavated into the hillside, formed their early homes. Straw was purchased from a nearby village for the roofs, and outdoor ovens were completed. With that done, Claassen and Nickel headed back for Molotschna.

Johann began recruiting settlers and negotiating for the paperwork to allow them to emigrate. Administrator Friesen was still able to snarl the process, and only 50 families had signed up. Recruiting families quickly was of great importance; free land was only for the settlers who came within a certain period of time. At the end of May, Johann loaded a wagon with supplies needed to start farming. With his 12-year-old son, Jakob, he headed for the



Map of the Caucasus an 1882 atlas. The heavy line marks the route from the Kuban to Tiflis. All territory north of Turkey was Russian territory. Although many features are difficult to read, the mountain range separating the northern Caucasus from Tiflis can be seen clearly. Most of the Russian territory south of the mountain range is today the country of Georgia.

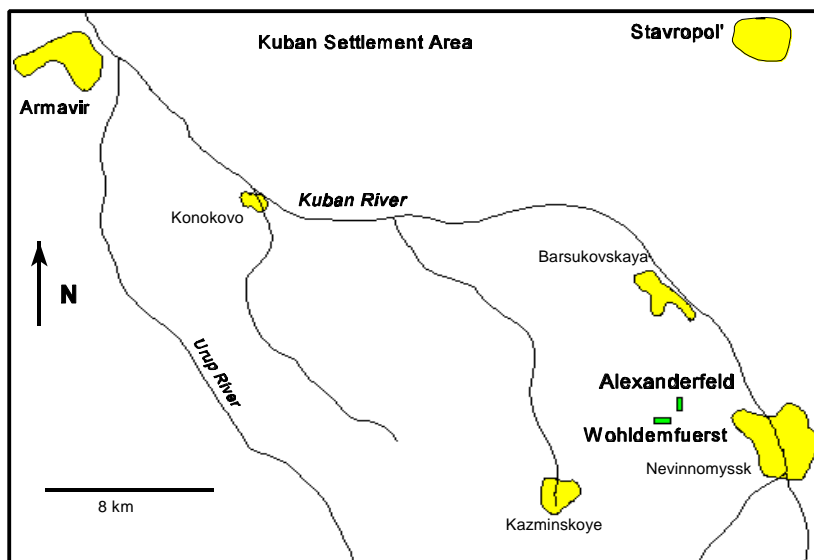
Kuban. On their arrival, they had their own sod house to build and virgin soil to plow. Johann was also the early administrator, and he marked off and assigned the village plots.

There were many disputes among the early settlers. One arose from the family of Abraham Schmidt and his daughter, Katharina, who had come from Chortitza; Abraham later became Johann's father-in-law. He was outspoken in his belief that shaving was rebellion against God.<sup>124</sup> (In the end, many began to grow beards believing that would help to gain respect from nearby tribesmen.) Others complained about who got the best land. However, they agreed on the name for their village, *Wohldemfürst*, or "Bless the Prince" in honor of the governor, Prince Michael, in Tiflis. The adjacent village was named *Alexanderfeld*, in honor of the Czar.

Disappointment plagued their agricultural ventures. The first grain crop looked promising but failed; it was some time before they learned to adapt their farming techniques for the area.<sup>128</sup> Even more difficult was finding a nearby market for the grain; Johann lost a large load when the wagon turned over in the river. However cattle did well, save for the danger from wolves and poisonous snakes; a successful butter industry was built. The wolves were also a severe menace to the sheep, and a hunt was organized.

Disease visited the colony. Several settlers were afflicted with malaria ("swamp fever") in the days before the link to mosquitoes was known. In September, Johann's brother-in-law, Jakob, quit the Kuban settlement, abandoned his farm and returned to Molotschna, citing the unhealthy environment. The rest of the group, though they had no idea of the root cause of the disease, reasoned that it would be healthier to move up the hill, away from the river. Johann, however, dreamed of a model farm like that of his mentor, Johann Cornies, and he set up his home and farm near a tributary of the Kuban.

In the midst of the greatest difficulties, Johann set about to restore fellowship by acting as a peacemaker, and in spite of increasing poverty, a spirit of trust developed.



Map of the Kuban settlement area showing the locations of Alexanderfeld and Wohldemfürst relative to Russian villages.

## Disputes in Molotschna

Not only were there disputes among the Brethren in the Kuban, things were worse in Molotschna and Chortitza. Benjamin Bekker and Gerhard Wieler declared themselves to be “apostles” and then proceeded to excommunicate anyone who disagreed. A strong but moderate leader was needed. In January of 1865, Katharina begged Johann to return, and other groups of the Mennonite Brethren “commanded” him to come back.

It was a bad time to leave. Disease had hit the cattle herd, and half the animals had to be destroyed. They were very short on funds as well. In spite of all the difficulties, the general who governed the territory gave more land to the colony; he had been impressed with their progress and with the plans for experimenting with new crops. The new land would be used for a wine vineyard and tree nursery.

After sheep-shearing in the spring, Johann did return to his wife and to the struggles of the Mennonite Brethren in Molotschna. He visited Chortitza where he found that the tyrannical Wieler was in prison for violating terms of the Mennonite charter of privileges from the Czar. In Wieler’s absence, Claassen was able to convince the “happy” element to give up drums, tambourines, and dancing and the others to join together.

Back in Molotschna, the hurts went deeper, and the “happy” crowd was less willing to give up their tambourines and drums. Johann’s father-in-law urged him to put a stop to the charismatic movement. According to P.M. Friesen,

Claassen continued to hold fast to the necessity for this sort of expression as one of the most naive amongst them all, “until things became to gross even for him” (Diary of Reimer, 1865), when he saw the influence of the timbrel and dance along with vivid recollections of spiritual and nervous demoralization and the “spiritual despotism” of the “mad year.”<sup>33</sup>

Achieving peace was more difficult in Molotschna, but Johann used his exceptional skills in communicating with both sides to lead them to reconciliation as well.

According to Friesen, the “June reform” ended the Mennonite Brethren experiment with radical charismatic practices:

In any case, after this even the M.B. Church in the Molotschna and in a few years’ time the whole M.B. Church in Russia and North America became more like the *Kleine Gemeinde* (more puritanical in attitude, somewhat melancholic and formalistically-ascetically pious) rather than like the “Huepfer.”<sup>33</sup>

In July, Johann and Katharina again separated, and Johann headed back to the fledgling settlement. Several new settler families made the trip with Johann, including that of the “happy” preacher, Benjamin Bekker. He arrived to find gardens and vineyards in good shape, but the grain doing poorly, and most disconcerting of all, they had been hit by a spate of horse thefts.



A scene from the Caucasus mountains.

### **Another Representation to the Government**

Johann still had unfinished business on behalf of the Kuban Colony. They had not received confirmation of Mennonite privileges from the governor of the Caucasus in Tiflis. At the beginning of November, 1865, he again left his young son in the Kuban and made his way over the mountains to Tiflis.

One delay after another cropped up. To add further disappointment, Claassen received a letter in which the settlers that he was representing complained to Claassen about his lack of success. It was a long and lonely period. The final certification was not granted until May, 1866, but it qualified as a major triumph. He received this charter:

In accordance with the decision of the assistant to the Commander-in-Chief of the army of the Caucasus, the civil authorities of the mountains affirm that the Mennonites of the administrative regions of Taurida and Ekaterinoslav, who have received permission from both local and Caucasus authorities to settle on the left bank of the Kuban opposite Staniza Nevinomysk, shall retain, in the exercise of their religion, all those rights which the authorities have granted them in their current places of residence. The authenticity of this is certified by signature and the affixing of the crown seal.<sup>128</sup>

Claassen headed back to the Kuban immediately, and the very next day, headed for Molotschna to move his family to the new settlement. He was quite ready to settle down.

### **Re-Uniting the Claassen Family**

When he arrived in Liebenau, he found Katharina in preparation for the move to the Kuban. Their fine brick, tile-roofed house and store were already sold. While there, Johann wanted to reach the quota of 100 families for the Kuban, but found that some recruits were backing out after hearing of the dissension in the settlement.

Another faction of Mennonites was starting to find themselves in circumstances similar to those of the Brethren. The “Templers” were followers of a movement from Germany whose goal it was to relocate in Jerusalem. Claassen agreed that Templers and Brethren could co-exist, and so a few more recruits were obtained. On August 1, he headed his wagon back to the Kuban, this time with Katharina and their children, David, Maria, Aganetha, and baby Katharina.

After the long 500 km trip, the Claassen family arrived at their dwelling of clay walls, dirt floor, and thatched roof. The nicer furnishings improved their home, but it was a much more

difficult life than they knew in Molotschna. Each day, the floor was raked lightly and sprinkled with white sand. The walls and roof required regular attention as well.

Fortunately, a good schoolteacher had been found, and David and Maria attended the Wohldemfürst school. David was a particularly gifted student and read everything he could get his hands on. In addition to farming, Johann joined his brother-in-law, Kornelius, to start a new store in the Kuban.

The following summer, Johann was informed that he still had charges to answer of starting a new sect. He brought his papers from Tiflis to Odessa, the administrative seat for the district that included Molotschna, together with two other Brethren from Kuban. In July, 1867, the last remaining hurdle for the Brethren was brought down.

They returned immediately to Wohldemfürst, and the Claassens brought in a good wheat crop, some flax, mustard, and grapes. Life was becoming stable, and they were optimistic about their future.

### **Tragedy Comes Again to the Claassen Home**

In September, both little Katharina and her mother got dysentery. The baby died and was buried in the village cemetery. For Johann's wife, who had been so very strong during all of the times of separation, the hardships were clearly getting her down. They hired a maid, the fifteen-year-old daughter of Abraham Schmidt, Katharina, for a few months. Other setbacks included the murder of an early settler, Abraham Dyck, by horse thieves.

In spring of 1869, crops were good, and plans were begun for a new home, this time possibly farther from the river with its mosquitos and closer to the other settlers. Tragedy struck again; Gertrude Reimer, the wife of Katharina's brother, Kornelius, became sick with malaria (swamp fever), and Katharina cared for her until she died in May.

Soon thereafter, Katharina also began to experience the fevers. Johann took her to Stavropol' to visit a physician who confirmed their fears of malaria and could prescribe only bed rest. They re-hired Katharina Schmidt to care for the children so that their mother could rest, but in July, Katharina died leaving Johann with four children and doubts about his move to the Kuban which had cost the life of his wife.

Johann and Katharina had agreed earlier that their son, David, should pursue his education back in Molotschna. He was clearly a gifted student who could go much farther than the village school in the Kuban could take him. In the fall, Johann took fourteen-year-old David to Halbstadt, Molotschna, and enrolled him in the same school that he had attended. It was on this trip that the first rumors about changes in the Mennonites' military exemption were heard.

On his return, he was elected to his first three-year term as *oberschulze*, the chief administrator for the colony. In addition to his demanding responsibilities, he had motherless children to care for. It would have been customary for a widower to find a widow to marry within a year, but widows were in short supply due to the swamp fever and other hardships of life in the Kuban. Fortunately, their housekeeper, Katharina Schmidt, was a loving caretaker for the children, and they loved her.

## **Katharina Claassen, II, and the Czar**

Johann found a solution. He spoke to the deacon, to Katharina Schmidt's parents, and finally to Katharina. Then fifty-year-old Johann married eighteen-year-old Katharina on March 1, 1870, in the home of Abraham Schmidt. In the months that followed, the Claassens were able to build a fine house of burnt brick and tile roofs with brick gateposts, and they left their humble dwelling by the river.

Nine months after the wedding, on December 6, young Katharina's first child was born. They named her Katharina as well, though she would be known as Tina.

In a few months, a meeting of colony representatives was held in Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, and Johann made the trip together with pastor Christian Schmidt. It was at this meeting that the first response to the legal changes was developed; a delegation was selected to go to Petersburg, but Claassen declined to be a part.

In the spring of 1873, David graduated from the school in Halbstadt and returned to teach in the Wohldemfürst school.

Later, back in the Kuban, Johann was summoned to a meeting of colony administrators in Stavropol'. They were told that Czar Alexander II would be visiting the region in the fall. The administrators would be introduced to the czar, with Claassen, representing the most successful and productive colony in the region, at the head of the line. When asked by Czar Alexander for a suggestion on how to support their efforts, he had a recommendation: the building of a railway to the region that would help them market their produce.

That meeting was followed the next spring by a package from the czar containing a silver medal on a scarlet ribbon. The medal had the czar's profile on one side and an engraved statement on the other commemorating the czar's visit.

## **A Maturing Colony**

The colony experienced a day of great excitement in the fall of 1873 when the prince, Grand Duke Michael Nikolayevitch, made a visit. Starting from the north end of the village of Alexanderfeld, there was a great deal to see: the Fast orchard, the Goertzen mill, the community wine cellar, several tree nurseries, a windmill, an oil press, a school with two teachers, a cheese factory, and many farms.

Two miles further they toured the Claassen's experimental farm where they saw experimental plots of flax and mustard and his vineyards. Katharina, quite pregnant, served the prince dinner of their local produce before he left. The visit was a great boost for morale in the Kuban colony.<sup>124</sup> Some time later, a package arrived from Tiflis from the prince: a crimson ribbon with a gold medal and a gold watch on a filigreed chain with the inscription:

Johann Claassen--1874--In recognition for meritorious service in horticulture and colonization for the Kuban Mennonite Settlement.

The baby, born in November of 1873, was a boy who they named Johann.

Indeed, the colony was showing signs of economic success. There were up to 67 families in the initial settlement period, well below the first estimate of 150. Each received a free grant

of 65 dessiatins (about 165 acres) of which 4 dessiatins were set aside for settlers who would not have full farms. Each farm family had 10 dessiatins within the village where they located large vegetable gardens, their homes and their barns. Nevertheless, by 1873, few had moved out of their *zemlins* and clay brick houses to solid houses as had the Claassens.

Although they continued to attempt to raise grain, it was some time before they were able to adapt their methods to the region, and the grain crops were poor. Flax and mustard were taken to the oil press in the community for oil that could be marketed in neighboring villages.

In 1865, Claassen and Kornelius Reimer had begun raising grapes for wine, having observed the success in other colonies. Soon this crop spread to many other farms. Planted at seven-foot intervals, each vine yielded 20 to 40 pounds of grapes. Although they could sell the early grapes easily, the market for later grapes was poor, so these early Mennonite Brethren organized a wine-growing society. Together they built a wine cellar capable of holding thousands of gallons of wine. In 1875, the new trans-Caucasian railroad was completed with a station only two kilometers away; marketing produce such as wine became much easier. Wine production saved the colony from economic ruin.<sup>129</sup>

Cheese and butter production were also successful except for episodes with disease. As had the winegrowers, the farmers of the village banded together to set up a cheese factory adjacent to the wine cellar. The village located their communal pasture adjacent to the factory and hired herdsmen. Twice daily the cows were driven to a pen near the factory; a flag was raised to signal the milkmaids to come, and the milking was completed in short order. A Swiss factory manager was hired, and dairying became quite profitable.<sup>129</sup>

There were other disappointments for Johann, to be sure. The Mennonite Brethren Church, though the largest, was never stable. Members went over to the Templers first; then more went to another small Mennonite group that was nicknamed the “breadbreakers”, and others were followers of charismatic preachers, both from Germany and also from within the colony. One such leader was Heinrich Neufeld, another ancestor who we meet in the following chapter.

## **Yet More Tragedy**

In the early 1870s, the settlement received news of the migrations to America. In Johann’s eyes, the colony seemed to have better prospects ahead, and, while some settlers left, he was reasonably satisfied with the proposed accommodations with the government. He bought two of the farms sold by those who did decide to go.

Dietrich Claassen, named for Johann’s brother, was born in October of 1875, but succumbed to dysentery the following summer.

Then in the fall of 1876, Johann began experiencing the fevers of swamp fever. Friends moved him into the village where they could help care for him more easily, but he died that winter at the age of only 56. He left behind four children born in Molotschna whose mother was Katharina Reimer Claassen: Jakob, David Ivanovich, Maria and Aganetha. Three more children born to Katharina Schmidt Claassen had survived: Katharina, Anna and Johann. His fourth surviving child born in the Kuban arrived after his death, in April of 1877, Dietrich J. Claassen.

Johann, for all his significance, was buried in a poorly marked grave, and a few years later it could not be found.

### **After Johann**

Katharina re-married two years later to Peter Thiessen. She bore four more children in the Kuban. In July, 1884, the Thiessen family emigrated to America. They purchased a quarter-section farm for \$1,440 in Durham Park Township of Marion County, north of Waldeck, Kansas, a now-extinct railroad village that had been located northwest of Lehigh, Kansas. Additional information has not yet been located except that Katharina died in Corn, Oklahoma, in 1915.

David Ivanovitch Claassen went on to have major influence in the South Russian Mennonite world.<sup>125</sup> He was an ordained Mennonite Brethren minister and served as *Oberschulze* of the Kuban settlement. He began a progressive high school in the Kuban and served as principal until 1902. In 1906, he moved to Molotschna to teach in Halbstadt, and was elected president of the educational board. Later, and through World War I, he served as chief director of Alternative Service for Mennonites in Russia. After the revolution in 1917, he returned to the Kuban where he was arrested, his property was confiscated, and he was imprisoned for over a decade. His son and daughter-in-law were shot by Bolsheviks. He died in Wohldemfürst in 1932.

The Kuban colony prospered until the Russian revolution. The villages were given Russian names: Velikokniazhesk for Wohldemfürst, and Alexandrodar for Alexanderfeld. After the revolution, the colony met an end similar to that of other South Russian Mennonite colonies: property was confiscated, there was famine, and many, particularly the men, were sent to Siberia. In the 1930s it ceased to exist.

In Mennonite history, Johann Claassen's legacy is recorded in P.M. Friesen's history of the Mennonites in Russia:

In my opinion, the greatest men in our society (if we can speak of greatness in our microscopic Mennonite world) are Johann Cornies, Johann Claassen, and Bernard Harder [elder of the Orloff Mennonite congregation]. Cornies' work was Mennonite agriculture and education; Harder's the contemporary Mennonite pulpit, and Claassen's our Mennonite Brethren Church...<sup>33</sup>



## 14 Mennonite Brethren Gadfly: Heinrich Neufeld

**H**einrich Neufeld must have been one of the most colorful characters in our history. He took on a variety of ideas and lived in a variety of places in Russia and the United States, leaving behind both colorful history and a lot of questions. The ancestry and their family data are provided starting on page 250.

Heinrich's parents, Abraham Neufeld and Helena Teichgraf, came to Schönhorst, Chortitza where they occupied a full farm, number 15.<sup>56</sup> Abraham, the son of Abraham Neufeld and Katarina Friesen, was born and raised in Heubuden in the Marienburg district of the Vistula River delta, shown on the map on page 30. The Teichgraf family also came from that region, and Abraham and Katarina were married there in 1798. They and their two small children, Anna and Abraham, left Heubuden in 1803 for the Russian colony which was by this time well established.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
+) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Eva Janzen  
+) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
\* .)) Maria Unruh  
\* .)) Helena Dirks  
+) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
\* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Bartel  
\* .)) Marie Plenert  
\* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Bena Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Anna Wilms  
+) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
\* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
\* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens  
\* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
\* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Fast  
\* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
\* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
\* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
\* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen  
\* .)) Margaret Harms  
\* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
\* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
\* .)) Anna Günther  
/)) Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,  
\* Rebekah Margaret  
\* +)) Isaak J. Harms  
\* +)) David Harms  
\* \* .)) Katharina Fröse  
\* +)) Isaac Harms  
\* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
\* \* .)) Eva Unruh  
\* \* .)) Eva Schroeder  
\* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
\* \* \* +)) **Heinrich Neufeld**  
\* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
\* \* \* \* .)) **Marie Unruh**  
\* \* .)) Emma Neufeld  
\* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt  
\* .)) Virginia Louise Harms

### The Neufeld Name: “New Field”

Neufeld seems to be of Dutch origin, the “new field” referring to land claimed from the sea. Although it did not appear in Prussia among Mennonites until 1694, Neufeld rapidly became very common.

### Abraham and Helena in Chortitza

During the trying early decades in South Russia before winter wheat was established, other crops were unreliable, and new enterprises were needed. Early in the 1800s, an extraordinary farmer, Johann Cornies of Molotschna, became very successful in all phases of agriculture and developed his estate as an experimental farm. One of the new ventures that he suggested was the manufacture of silk. Families could raise the silkworms on the leaves of the mulberry trees that they already used as hedges. Cages of silkworms were set up in homes, and large quantities of leaves were brought to them. From the silkworm cocoons silk fiber was spun.

In the village of Einlage, Abraham and Helena Neufeld set up a family silk factory where they processed and wove the silk from family producers in the Chortitza colony.

A delightful description of life at Abraham and Helena Neufeld's home and factory has come to us from Cornelius Hildebrand, son of Jacob Hildebrand who was a long-time elder of the Kronsweide, Chortitza church.<sup>130</sup> This excerpt describes the

visit that he made as a boy with his father to Einlage; it is quoted at length since it describes both the Neufeld family and life in the colony in a captivating style.

Cornelius' father was to preach the next day at Neu-Kronsweide, and they lived on the island, Insel Chortitza. They walked because

...He was considerate of his stock, as a righteous man should be. He would not deprive his horses, which pulled the plow and harrow all week, of their Sabbath rest...<sup>130</sup>

After delightfully describing the area of the trek, he describes the approach to Einlage:

As we approached the high and steep Einlage mountain, something like lead weights were beginning to settle in my feet. As my father's stride grew longer, mine became shorter and shorter. Because of the many detours I had made at the beginning of our journey, I was now so tired that I could only with great effort follow the steadily pacing man.

At first father seemed not to realize that I was staying behind, for in his customary way he was conversing with the holy men of the Bible on these long, lonely walks. From Moses, the leader of Israel, to John, the visionary of divine things—they were all father's intimate friends. He had so many things to discuss with them and ask them that he forgot everything around him and heard and saw nothing. Furthermore, if, as was the case today, he was preparing his Sunday sermon and was in conversation with the beloved Lord, he was totally preoccupied. After all, he had to have direction from on high before he could stand before the people and declare to them the will of the Most High. Nevertheless, from time to time he awoke from his visions and cast a searching glance for his boy who, like an exhausted old horse, was following him at a distance.

"Come, come; we'll soon be in Einlage at the silk-Neufelds and there we'll have some coffee."

These words, spoken in a loving tone, were like music to my ears and brought new strength to my tired limbs. Hurrah! Coffee at the Neufelds! I knew how good that would taste from earlier occasions. Also at the Neufelds there were still some looms to look at, which produced that beautiful silk cloth. What a clattering, rustling and humming there was in that small factory! Each time my searching eye could find so many new things. How kind was Heinrich, Neufeld's oldest grown-up son. Last time he explained to me, a small boy, the movements of the many spindles and the nimble handling of the gracefully working shuttles. Last time the many threads had so thoroughly confused me that I actually understood nothing, but this time I was going to pay better attention. I naturally assumed that Uncle Heinrich would again have time for me.

I summoned my last energies and with some effort caught up with my father, took his outstretched hand and kept pace with him until we were down the mountain and arrived at Neufeld yard. They were expecting my father. The Neufelds were pious, Christian people and good members of the Kronsweide congregation at that, who held their elder in high esteem and were especially glad to receive him and provide hospitality. They knew he was to preach in Kronsweide on the morrow and thus were expecting his arrival today.

Coffee was on, and we were invited to the table without further ado. Father, everywhere, received the place of honor and old "Uncle" [Abraham] Neufeld sat next to him. Grandmother [Helena] presided over the coffee-pouring in her big blue apron with a wide flowered border. The colored kerchief around her neck was pinned crosswise on her chest. Her pale old face was framed by a well-worn wool cap (*Haube*). Heinrich and the grown-up daughters also came from the workroom, the latter still drying their large, well-washed red hands on their weaver aprons as they entered. They then took off their aprons and put them on an empty chair. After courteously greeting my father and me, they also sat down. As a newly arrived guest I too was expected to eat with the grownups, especially since the Neufelds had no small children for my companionship.

Following a silent table prayer Grandma Neufeld poured the brown barley brew from the copper kettle into our small flowered cups. Coffee was her particular weakness and specialty. After the death of her husband [a year or two later] it was said that in her widow's sorrow she drank her coffee six times a day, and later, when she died, they even said it was the cause of her death; but that chatter was not meant to be taken as criticism.

After father and uncle had stilled the first pangs of hunger, the conversation began. For me it proved a memorable talk. A solemn Sabbath calm seemed to rest upon the group. It was something of that heavenly

morning peace at the lake of Tiberias when in the hidden crevasses of the shore the Master had breakfast with his disciples after his resurrection and questioned Peter about his love.

In spirit our elders were in the Millenium and were seeing and experiencing marvelous things for which I had no understanding, yet they inspired my lively fantasy to the utmost. Heinrich joined in the talk now and then while the girls followed the conversation in quiet reverence. Mother Neufeld had a sense for things on this side [of heaven] and carefully watched the cups of her guest and her husband, filling them as soon as they were empty.

I sipped my brown drink, well diluted with milk, and ate my large bun (*Zwieback*) which I, also being considered an honored guest, had the privilege of dipping into the deep red watermelon syrup. It was the last bit of the ample winter supply and therefore tasted all the sweeter. All the while I perked up my ears, like a rabbit sensing his enemy, in order to miss nothing of the conversation of my elders. What I perceived were, to be sure, hidden yet holy mysteries which filled me with amazement and awe, not only for the future but also for my omniscient Father. My head, of course, did not retain much of that, but my heart put forth its first feelers toward the great wondrous things of God, whose fulness I now, as an eighty-year-old, will soon receive from my Lord through God's grace...

Father finally interrupted the conversation which was apparently never coming to an end: "Now I must leave in order to get to my brother-in-law Friesen before nightfall."

With a "To your health," "Uncle" Neufeld ended the meal.

Father took his walking stick and cap and shook hands with those around him. Quickly wiping the last traces of syrup and coffee from my cheeks and lips with my left sleeve, I awkwardly followed his example.

"Well, goodbye all!"

"Goodbye, *Ohm Jakob*. Come soon again."

"We'll see each other tomorrow."

"If God wills and we're well."

With renewed strength we continued our walk. It was not far to Alt-Kronsweide.<sup>130</sup>

This episode occurred in the early 1840s. By this account, Heinrich seems to have been a delightful person. The historian, P.M. Friesen, said he was also "highly regarded and clearly a gifted man."<sup>33</sup>

Our Heinrich was the youngest of the Neufeld children and was in fact the second Heinrich child in the family. The custom of giving the same name to another baby when one had died in infancy was a very common practice. Heinrich was then about 24, soon to be married to the widow, Marie Isaak Neufeld, but now he lived at home, participating in the family enterprise together with his older sisters. In yet a couple more years, old Abraham died, leaving Heinrich to continue the business.

Marie Isaak was the widow of Heinrich's older brother, Peter, who had died in June, 1843; Heinrich and Marie married on November 17 of that same year. To this union were born four children, the last of which died in infancy. They possibly maintained their home in Schönhorst, but they continued the business in Einlage. Marie died sometime after 1852.

### **Heinrich and the Beginnings of the Mennonite Brethren in Chortitza**

During the 1850s, a Pietist movement began to sweep Chortitza, as it had Molotschna, but independently. One source of their inspiration was a periodical from the Baptists in Hamburg, Germany. The nature of the movement was complex, but its features included emphasis on a deep and personal experience of grace and conversion, added to the Mennonite traditions of Christian community and discipleship. According to Cornelius Hildebrand, this influence "illuminated the churches like the dawn of a new day."<sup>130</sup>

We have only a sketchy view of the beginnings of the movement, but recently, a letter written in 1855 was discovered in the St. Petersburg Imperial Archives mentioning these beginnings.<sup>131</sup> The writer is unknown.

My dear friend and brother in the Lord!

My heartfelt thanks for your kind letter of April 15, which I received recently. It naturally made me sad and I prayed. "Remember, O Lord, what has happened to us, look and see our disgrace." Lamentations 5:1 (NIV)

How I wish that dear brother Neufeld had not allowed himself to be so completely drawn into the matter. We disciples of Christ have been shown and taught another way in Matthew 5:39 and Romans 13:2. If brother Neufeld were an elected and ordained Mennonite elder and leader his office would have demanded that he uphold Mennonite order against the dissidents. Since he is a subordinate he should not have rebelled against the elders and leaders, but remained quiet and submissive. If attempts at reconciliation can't accomplish anything, if his conscience finds it impossible to submit to the directives of the ruling elders - then he should think of separating from the Mennonites and joining another group. If he wishes to remain a Mennonite it is his civic duty to submit to the rules and regulations of the elders and leaders. He should not oppose the laws, arrangements and conventions of the Mennonites as well as the established order of faith, but declare his approval. Should his conscience not allow this, he is free to leave this society/community (*Gesellschaft*) with its regulations, teachings and customs.

As a reformer he does not have the right to rebel and resist the elder in charge or to organize a group against him - even if the elders were dealing more severely with them. Whoever wants to remain a Mennonite must submit to the elders and obediently do their bidding. After all everyone is free to select whatever order he wishes. Once he has made the choice he must live with it. Our Lord took upon himself the human condition. Matthew 11:29-30 tells us that our Lord also offers us a yoke. As long as our dear Neufeld wants to remain among the Mennonites he must [be] like one of the quiet in the land [and] submit himself to human regulations in all he does...

In 1859 and 1860, Heinrich founded a series of mission and prayer meetings together with his friend, Abraham Unger. They had the approval of the church elders of the Mennonite congregations in Chortitza who were pleased to observe the interest, even excitement, in spiritual matters.<sup>33</sup>

Soon some of the participants began to react to the established church, perceiving it as ineffectual and spiritually dead. Even the church's own elders were greatly concerned about the lack of spiritual commitment on the part of many Mennonites. Many of these dissenters left the participation in the established church for the new fellowship, but Heinrich did not immediately follow. Again Cornelius Hildebrandt described an event in Heinrich's life in which Heinrich effectively acted as a *Vorsänger* or song leader, a very important office in the Russian Mennonite church. It took place at a communion service, one of the most significant events of the Mennonite church calendar.

It was 1859/60. As was customary, on the second Sunday after Pentecost the Lord's Supper was to be held in the Kronsweide church. The relationship of the separatists to the church had by no means been clarified. Already a number of brethren stayed away from the Lord's Supper, including the song leaders. The worship service was about to begin and there was no one to lead the singing. Father stepped before the congregation and asked in a voice filled with inward emotion if someone among the brethren present could and would take over the singing. Heinrich Neufeld, of Einlage, my old friend from the days of the looms, did so. I was present with my wife and clearly recall that deeply moving celebration for the Lord's Supper.

When during the breaking of bread the song, "Here the Lord is present, here are the gates of heaven" (Hier is der Herr zugegen, hier ist di Himmelsport), was being sung, it gripped the stirred hearts and like a

spiritual force spread throughout the congregation. It was, in addition, a beautiful Sunday morning. The sun streamed into our small house of worship so kindly that our hearts involuntarily opened to the light. Nevertheless the spirit of the schism even made itself perceptible at the consecrated place and at this holy meal...What father experienced inwardly that hour was terrible. But with God's help he conquered it, and, outwardly calm, he performed the high office which that day demanded a double high priestly spirit of him. Yet the discontented did not always perceive what was in the hearts of their spiritual leaders.<sup>130</sup>

After further study of the Baptist and other materials, the participants came to believe that the only true baptism was by immersion, and soon it became an additional test of one's spirituality. In February, 1862, Heinrich went with Abraham Unger and a few others to be baptized again in Molotschna, this time by immersion in a river, a severe blow to Elder Hildebrandt.

It was not long before problems began to crop up among the dissidents. It was reported that these converts refused to associate with those that they deemed unconverted, and a doctrine appeared whereby some considered themselves now sinless. In response to the sometimes lax discipline of the Chortitza congregations, some very strong terms were used to describe the existing church. At the very least, some of the colony leadership considered this group to be a threat.

The administration of the colony responded with extreme measures. According to the view of the colony administrator, changes in doctrine meant that the new converts were no longer Mennonite. The colony and the governmental privileges were only for Mennonites. Consequently, he argued, the new teachings must either stop, or the group would have to be ejected from the colony. One man was beaten and jailed under quite inhumane circumstances.

In spite of the reaction, two ministers were elected, Abraham Unger and Heinrich Neufeld. Baptisms were held in the Dnieper River outside Einlage on March 11 and 17. Still late winter, the ice had to be pushed aside, and both Unger and Neufeld baptized as quickly as possible.<sup>132</sup> This event can be considered the beginning of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Chortitza, the Einlage congregation.

The following week, 27 heads of families were arraigned by civil authorities who had judged that they no longer qualified as Mennonites; they still refused to renounce their position.

A week later, on April 10, 1862, Heinrich took his second wife, Marie Unruh, daughter of David Unrau and Katharina Funk. He was 43, and she was 25. Marie Isaak Neufeld had died the year before in March. There is circumstantial evidence that connects David Unrau with Heinrich Wilhelm Unrau. Heinrich moved from Chortitza to Schardau, Molotschna in the 1830s; if he was Marie's grandfather, a connection between the Neufeld family of Chortitza and the Unrau family of Molotschna may have facilitated the union.

On May 7, ministers Heinrich Neufeld and Abraham Unger were taken to the province capitol, Ekaterinoslav, and questioned before the Russian authorities as well as the Chortitza colony administrator. Heinrich's replies were recorded in detail, the beginning of which help in understanding his position:

I, the Mennonite Heinrich Neufeld, son of Abraham, am 43 years old, was born in the colony of Schönhorst into the Mennonite religion, raised in the colony of Einlage, am able to read and write German, and am married for the second time; I have three children from my first marriage...I have never been judged nor brought before a court of law.

I, the Mennonite Heinrich Neufeld, have in no way renounced the Mennonite religion; rather I confess that the reformer Menno Simons instituted baptism and the Lord's Supper in accordance with the Word of God. In the course of time, however, these ordinances were corrupted to such an extent that they were no longer observed in accordance with the Word of God. Since a number of us Mennonites have, through the Spirit of God, come to this realization, we, that is, Abraham Unger and I, have been confirmed by our fellow brothers, and the Holy Spirit gives us this testimony, that we are to serve this congregation in accordance with the Word of God...<sup>33</sup>

Since it became apparent that their qualification as Mennonites was in question by the government, a leader was dispatched with Johann Claassen to Petersburg to request the privileges given to Mennonites be continued to this group.

On May 10, Heinrich and Abraham Unger were arrested and taken to a Russian village, Tschernyschevo, where they were placed under guard. There were allowed to freely move about the area, and many of their parishioners made the 50 kilometer trip to visit them and worship together. After seven weeks, they were released.

In July, they were imprisoned again, this time spending two weeks in an actual prison in Ekaterinoslav.<sup>33</sup>

### **Heinrich Takes a New Direction**

The next years brought a tale of discord within the movement that eventually led in the removal of Heinrich from that movement and his leaving the colony.

One of the leaders, Gerhard Wieler, took extreme positions, not countenanced by the three other leaders. However, according to historian P.M. Friesen,

Since Brother Wieler was eloquent and highly respected, he eventually won Brother Neufeld to his point of view. And since Neufeld too was highly regarded and clearly a gifted man, almost the entire congregation was won over to their side.<sup>33</sup>

The interpretation by another writer, based on a letter to Johann Claassen, was slightly different:

After Gerhard had intimidated preacher Heinrich Neufeld by cursing his home, Neufeld and most others 'stooped under the iron fist of Gerhard Wieler.'<sup>124</sup>

Wieler and Neufeld instituted a very severe set of rules, legislating the type of bonnets to be worn, eliminating pictures on the walls, and burning Christian books other than the Bible. Wieler, without dissent from Neufeld, then proceeded to excommunicate those who disagreed.

On the other hand, the word "exuberance" was repeatedly used to describe their gatherings. The meetings dwelt on Bible passages such as Jeremiah 31:3,4:

The LORD hath appeared of old unto me, [saying], Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee. Again I will build thee, and thou shalt be built, O virgin of Israel: thou shalt again be adorned with thy tabrets, and shalt go forth in the dances of them that make merry.

According to a report on their gathering by a visitor,

They did not allow any sermons, and yet they praised God and thanked Him...eventually their meetings were little more than a time of entertainment; they played and danced until they were soaked with sweat.

The “sister kiss” was instituted, and according to several accounts, a number of male leaders were sure not to neglect its practice with the single women of the group. This and other practices naturally challenged the sense of propriety of the Mennonite community.

To restore the balance, Johann Claassen (see chapter 13) was summoned to Einlage, and he pointed out the errors of their ways. Some of these excesses were earlier a problem in Molotschna, and knowledge of that experience helped lead Heinrich and most of his followers to repentance. In 1865, they confessed that their frenzied worship and their hostility to those with whom they differed was wrong.

For Heinrich’s part in this affair, P.M. Friesen reports that he

acknowledged and confessed in a most humble manner his error...and did his utmost to rectify matters again...He came to brethren who stuck stubbornly to their errors on his knees, even hunting up some of them in the fields, pleading with them to abandon their ideas and become reconciled...<sup>33</sup>

The “exuberant movement” had been discarded once and for all, but Heinrich remained; ministers were traditionally placed in their office for life. Later in 1865, a congregational meeting was held. P.M. Friesen writes his narrative with quotes from the 1884 report of Heinrich Epp (both were Mennonite Brethren) as follows:

Not everyone was disposed to accept Neufeld again as minister” [Epp]. The majority finally agreed to select a new minister by vote; but some were hesitant to do so, fearing that it was still too soon, “for the congregation was not yet on a good footing.” Nevertheless, the majority wished to vote. Br. Unger also consented to the election, on the condition that after the election the candidate would be tested according to I Tim. 3:7.<sup>a</sup> Then the vote was taken, with some abstentions. Neufeld was elected and was then to be examined, but this was now denied. It was now asserted that “the voice of the church is the voice of God.” Because Neufeld was a popular man with a very friendly manner (besides being rather imposing and handsome, with a natural flair for public speaking), “the brethren decided to ignore his tendency to waver at times, and did not heed the Word in I Tim. 3:7.” In the end it was decided to cast lots, to which they responded that “Neufeld’s case should not be decided by lot because that would be against the Word of God.” However, no attention was given to that idea, but they attempted once more to discern God’s will by lot and again Neufeld was chosen. At this point attention was drawn to Numbers 22:19-36 (the story of Balaam), but it too went unheeded. “Thereupon Neufeld threw himself upon the floor in the midst of the brethren and wept bitterly. He believed he had received his lot (office) from the Lord; the brethren (who disagreed with him), however, maintained he had received it from men.<sup>33</sup>

His remaining days in Chortitza were full of friction.

### **Heinrich and Marie’s Growing Family**

During this period, family life continued. A son, Abraham, was born in 1863 and survived; Heinrich’s first wife, Marie, had also given birth to an Abraham to take the name of Heinrich’s father, but that child died at one year. In 1865 and 1866, two sons were born, both living only

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<sup>a</sup> “Moreover he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” I Tim. 3:7.

a few months, and both named Isaac. In 1867, the next son was also named Isaac; he survived and would later take the middle initial U. for his mother's maiden name.

On May 26, when Isaac was but two weeks old, the family left the silk factory in Einlage and headed for the Caucasus region, shown on the map on page 31, and the city of Stavropol', identified on the map on page 158. His plan had been to join the Mennonite colony in the Kuban led by Johann Claassen (see chapter 13) but changed his mind without explanation.<sup>124</sup> Quite possibly, Heinrich was ready to separate himself from the controversies of the Chortitza colony. In Stavropol', he set up a flour mill and a new silk factory.<sup>133</sup>

They spent nine years in Stavropol', close to the end of which Marie Unruh Neufeld died.<sup>a</sup> During this period, three additional children were born, but only two survived.

### **Pioneer Life in the Kuban Colony**

Sometime during the mid-1870s, the Neufeld family moved to the Kuban colony (described in chapter 13), settling in Alexanderfeld. The family of Heinrich's daughter, Anna, and her husband, Benjamin Bekker lived here. Bekker had been a radical figure in the Chortitza "exuberance" movement and seems always to have been a close confidant of Heinrich. In Kuban, Heinrich, at the age of 56, took 18-year-old Agnes Kraus as his third wife.

Life in Kuban was not without new conflict. In one comment, P.M. Friesen points out that

while living in Stavropol, he again brought confusion into the church by reviving the old movement's ideas in the Kuban congregation.<sup>33</sup>

Johann Claassen was disappointed by the loss of Mennonite Brethren who joined Neufeld's "fellowship of saints".<sup>124</sup>

Elsewhere, it was recorded that Heinrich Neufeld was influential in the growth of yet another movement, the Friends of Jerusalem or "Templers".<sup>33</sup> The belief was espoused that they should move to Jerusalem, following teachings from Germany. A number of Mennonites did in fact make that move in the coming decades, but the Neufeld family apparently did not continue in that direction.

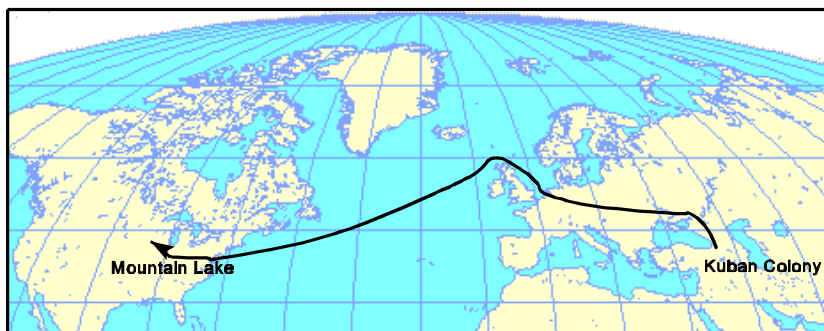
### **Migration to North America**

On July 17, 1877, Heinrich picked up and moved his family once again. Benjamin Bekker and his wife, Anna who was Heinrich's daughter, journeyed with them to America. Together with two other Mennonite families, they arrived on August 13 at Castle Garden in New York aboard the steamship, City of Chester.<sup>134</sup> A photograph of the ship is shown on page 146; it had carried another of our families to America just two months earlier. The Neufelds and Bekkers came to Mountain Lake, Minnesota, arriving August 27 at the home of Heinrich's older sister, the Peter and Maria Neufeld Penner family. Within a month, he purchased a farm for \$2700, six miles west of Mountain Lake. His daughter, Anna, and her husband, Benjamin Bekker, also farmed there having come at about the same time from the Kuban colony.

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<sup>a</sup> Actually, there is some confusion; Isaac U. suggests that they moved from Stavropol in 1876, but Marie's death has been reported as in 1874 in the Kuban Colony.





Heinrich Neufeld and his family migrated from Kuban in the Caucasus to Mountain Lake, Minnesota.

We might immediately speculate that Heinrich and Benjamin's bent for "exuberance" would manifest itself again in America, and so it did, at least for Benjamin. The records of the council meetings of the Carson M.B. Church of Delft/Mountain Lake, Minnesota, have the following entries that indicate an emotionalism which did not fit with the desires of the congregation:

February 7, 1880.

Since Bro. Becker often causes disturbances in the service, it was decided to inform him to refrain...

August, 1881.

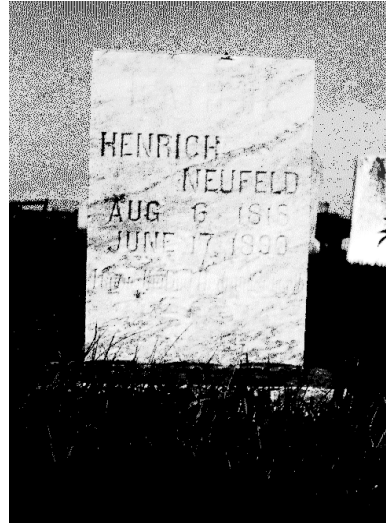
Resolved:

1. Brother B. Bekker should seek to be reconciled with the brethren.
2. He is also to be reconciled with his parents...
3. He shall obtain a certificate of reconciliation from Kansas.
4. He shall abstain from urging upon others his opinion against our teaching.<sup>135</sup>

On February 21, 1883, at the age of 65, Heinrich sold his farm in Minnesota, and both his and Bekker's families moved to Marion County, Kansas, where they prepared to start farming anew.



Mountain Lake is located on the prairie of southern Minnesota, in Cottonwood County. Heinrich Neufeld's family spent about five years farming west of the town of Mountain Lake.



Heinrich Neufeld's tombstone in the Ebenfeld M.B. Church cemetery: "Father--Henrich Neufeld"

### **The Kansas Neufeld Home**

The Neufeld family obtained a farm four miles south and two miles west of Hillsboro on the northeast quarter-section.<sup>126</sup> Heinrich, Agneta, and nine others were listed on the 1885 census. The family embraced his son, Abraham, and Abraham's wife, Anna. His other seven children at home included four born in the U.S. as Heinrich continued to bring children into the world when well into his sixties.<sup>136</sup> On their 240 acres, they raised winter wheat, corn, oats, and lots of potatoes using horses and mules. The Neufelds and Bekkers joined the Ebenfeld Mennonite Brethren Church, southeast of Hillsboro.

On June 17, 1890, Heinrich Neufeld died and was buried in the Ebenfeld Church cemetery. The stone stands on the north side, near the fence, without any other family nearby. As of this writing, we have no photo of the man or any of his wives, but the testimony of those who knew him leaves a vivid image.

### **After Heinrich**

Isaac U. Neufeld, Heinrich's second eldest son, married Tina Claassen, on February 23, 1890 in the Ebenfeld Church. She was the daughter of the Johann Claassen with whom Heinrich had generated so much struggle. Tina had come to America with her mother and step-father, Peter Thiessen. Though the Thiessens lived about ten miles northwest of Lehigh, their acquaintance and background from the Kuban must have drawn them together.

It is interesting to note Heinrich's legacy in the "exuberance" or charismatic movement. A number of his descendants tended toward charismatic movements. For example, one grandson spent many years working with Oral Roberts, and a granddaughter, Clara Neufeld Classen, was a traveling faith healer.

No doubt his experience lives on in the Mennonite Brethren Church, influencing styles of worship thought to be new as well as in his descendants today.



# 15 Other South Russian Immigrants: Heinrich and Anna Koop

**H**einrich Koop (1826-1896) lived with his wife, Anna, and children on a full-size farm in Landskrone in the Molotschna colony. For the Koops, the decision to emigrate must have been an individual and family affair as he left somewhat after the peak of migration.

- +)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff
- +)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Eva Janzen
- +)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh
- \* .)) Maria Unruh
- \* .)) Helena Dirks
- +)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert
- \* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert
- \* \* .)) Anna Bartel
- \* .)) Marie Plenert
- \* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Bena Ratzlaff
- \* .)) Anna Wilms
- +)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff
- \* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin
- \* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens
- \* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin
- \* \* \* +)) **Heinrich Koop**
- \* \* \* .)) Anna Koop
- \* \* \* .)) **Anna Fast**
- \* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin
- \* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms
- \* \* +)) Peter T. Harms
- \* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen
- \* .)) Margaret Harms
- \* \* +)) Gerhard Epp
- \* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp
- \* .)) Anna Günther
- /)) *Michael Mpho, Jonathan James, Rebekah Margaret*
- \* +)) Isaak J. Harms
- \* +)) David Harms
- \* \* .)) Katharina Fröse
- \* +)) Isaac Harms
- \* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh
- \* \* .)) Eva Unruh
- \* \* .)) Eva Schroeder
- \* +)) Isaac N. Harms
- \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld
- \* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh
- \* \* .)) Emma Neufeld
- \* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen
- \* \* .)) Katharina Claassen
- \* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt
- .)) Virginia Louise Harms

## History of the Koop Family Name

The origin of this name is uncertain.<sup>39</sup> Among the possibilities, it could have come from a Low German word meaning “to purchase”. It could also have been based on the name “Jacob”. Among the Anabaptist martyrs, there was a Jan Koopman, and a Dutch minister was named Koopmans; these could have been Koop forebears, although we have no evidence.

The pronunciation has varied, at least in twentieth-century America. For some, it sounds like “cope” while for others it sounds like “coop”. It appears that the most recent Koop in our family used the former pronunciation.

An alternate spelling was very common at one time. In the school records of 1862 and in the immigration ship lists, the name was spelled “Kopp.” That spelling became rare in American records.

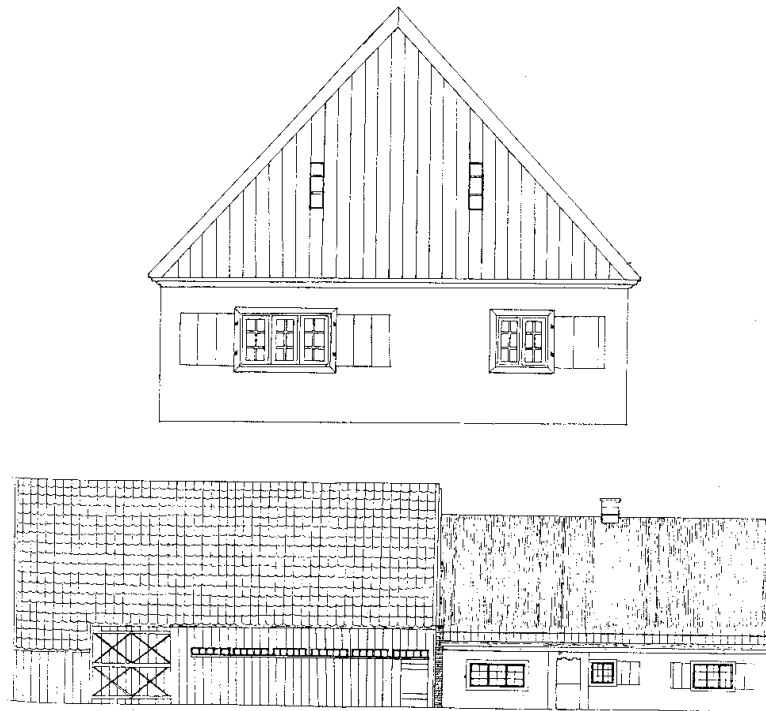
## Heinrich Koop’s Ancestry

The earliest ancestor that we record was Andreas, listed as a member of the Mennonite congregation at Ellerwald, Elbing district in Prussia. Andreas, together with his third wife, Katharina Epp, moved from Koldau, Prussia, to Molotschna in 1804.<sup>137</sup>

The son, Andreas, and his wife, Maria Wiesz, also moved their family from the Ellerwald area in 1804, coming to Muntau in Molotschna. Andreas died young, and his family was raised by Maria and her second husband, Daniel Loewen, followed by her third husband, Isbrandt Dück, in Muntau.<sup>137</sup>

Heinrich Koop, the son of Andreas and Maria, married in 1824 and began farming with his wife, Anna Friesen, in Muntau; his family is listed in the census of 1835.

Anna Friesen came from one of the Friesen families that had been part of the *Kleine Gemeinde*, described in chapter 8. Her parents, Klaas and Elisabeth Friesen, came from the Vistula delta in 1803 with their two small children, Helena and Elisabeth.<sup>66</sup> They were poor and could afford no horse and wagon;



Sketch of the traditional house-barn style brought from Prussia and found on farms in the Mennonite colonies of South Russia. (From Reference 17.)

consequently, they could not bring goods with them. When they arrived at the border, however, the Russian government provided them with a Russian horse and wagon. It took them thirteen weeks to reach Schönhorst in Chortitza where Klaas' brother lived, and while en route, little Helena died. They spent a year in Schönhorst, and while there, Elisabeth died as well after Anna was born.

In 1804, the family moved to Molotschna where they received farm number 13 in Lindenau. A house was built with lumber provided as part of the settlement package from the government. Among their children was our forebear, Heinrich, born in 1826.

The Koops shared in the ups and downs of the colony.<sup>66</sup> In 1824 the colony experienced a plague of "small grasshoppers" so severe that the farmers were forced to feed the hay and straw from their roofs to their animals. A plague of large grasshoppers came in 1827 which took nearly then entire crop of wheat and rye. A drought followed in 1830 so that spring crops did not germinate.

In 1839 they moved to the newly-opened village of Lanskrone. It was here that they must have become further involved with the *Kleine Gemeinde* as they were defended by the KG elder after some concern about their buildings which may have been considered "too ostentatious".<sup>137</sup>

The conflict over buildings arose because the community had specific rules about buildings and yards and their appearances. One of the rules was that many trees had to be

planted, and Mennonite villages were known for their trees and gardens. The fences and walls had to be painted annually, and even the color was regulated. These rules came about from a combination of tradition and the dictates of the agricultural reformer, Johann Cornies. Other chapters have described the contributions of Cornies to the development of Mennonite agriculture in South Russia.

House architecture followed a tradition that adapted itself to the harsh weather of the steppes. The house and barn were built together as one connected unit, the house-barn. While this seems distasteful to us today, we are told that the odors of the barn did not penetrate the house.

Cornies found that red and yellow paint could be manufactured inexpensively and weathered well. Consequently, the regulations required use of this paint for fences and gable ends of houses. These colors were much too bright for the *Kleine Gemeinde* view of humility, and finally an exemption had to be recognized for them to use muted blues and white.

The elder Heinrich appeared elsewhere in KG notes. In 1850, he asked for *re-acceptance* indicating that some type of dispute had previously taken place. He must have died sometime between being re-accepted in October, 1850, and when Anna remarried the following spring.<sup>137</sup>

### **The Move to North America**

The younger Heinrich married Anna Fast in 1849 and first lived in the village of Steinfeld.<sup>138</sup> Then, as noted earlier, they had a successful farm in Lanskrone in the early 1870s. It may have been a family decision to move to America. Heinrich and Anna traveled together with their three youngest children and the family of his older brother, Klaas. Their oldest son, Jakob, was already married and stayed behind for another two years.

Two additional sons remained in Russia permanently; Heinrich who settled in the Crimea and Johann, who settled in a new Russian Mennonite colony, Memrik.<sup>139</sup> Memrik was located about 200 kilometers northeast of Molotschna and was founded in 1885. None of Heinrich's other brothers or sisters emigrated; there was known to have been some friction within the extended family, quite probably over the issue of whether they would join the "kirchliche", the KG, or the Mennonite Brethren.<sup>137</sup>

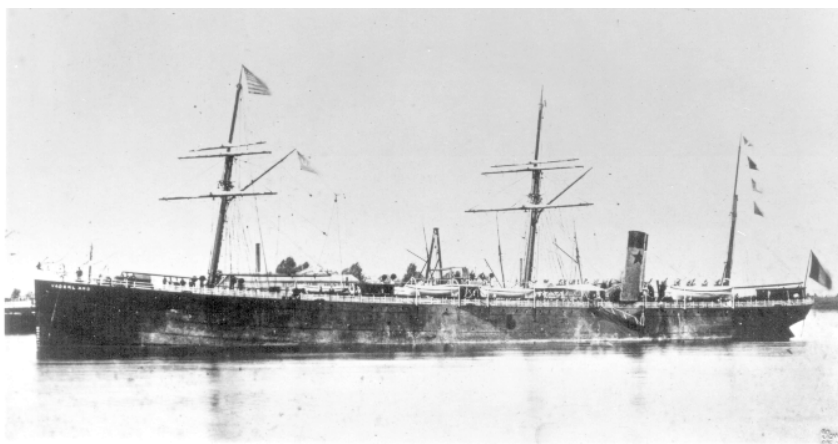
Leaving Molotschna in 1877, they traveled from Antwerp, Holland, on the *S.S. Vaderland*, which arrived in the port of Philadelphia on June 29. Klaas Koop and his family settled in the area of Jansen, Nebraska, in the *Kleine Gemeinde* colony, but Heinrich and Anna went to Marion County, Kansas. They had a small farm of 80 acres in Liberty Township, located just south of the city of Hillsboro, marked on the map on page 43. A school list includes their daughter, Anna, at the Hoffnungsthal school.<sup>140</sup>

By 1885, Anna had died, and Heinrich remarried.<sup>141</sup> His second wife was a widow, Sarah Block. She was a member of the Gnadenu K.M.B. Church, but Heinrich never joined that church. The leader of the Gnadenu congregation, Ältester Jakob Wiebe, makes that point forcefully in the Gnadenu *Gemeindebuch* where the family entry has a line drawn through the name of Heinrich Koop.

In March of 1891, Heinrich died. His daughter, Anna, had married the son of Peter P. Warkentin, Peter J., and Peter P. made a report in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*:

According to the request of the children of the deceased Heinrich Koop, I report to the children, Heinrich Koop in Crimea and Johann Koop in Memrik, that their father, Heinrich Koop, died on March 16 and was laid to rest on March 18. He had been sick very often this winter, and the last time he was sick for just four days. He was 64 years, 8 months, 22 days old, and leaves behind a deeply grieved widow and six children who grieve over his death. But thanks to the Lord, they are not allowed to grieve as those who do not have hope. He had lived in his first marriage for 36 years and in the second for 4 years and 10 months. He was the grandfather of 25 children. Blessed be he who did not just spend the time of his life with secular things but set out to seize the salvation in Jesus, in the faith. That salvation in Jesus I wish for every reader of the *Rundschau*.<sup>139</sup>

Elsewhere in that contribution, Peter P. suggests that the funeral was held on a snowy day in Gnadenu, but we do not yet know where either Heinrich or Anna were buried.



The *S.S. Vaderland* which carried the Koop family to North America. (Photo courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives, Bethel College, North Newton, Kansas.)



## 16 Narrow Escapes Amidst Tragedy: The Epp Family

Gerhard Epp and his wife, Anna, were two of only three of our Mennonite ancestors of this generation who elected not to emigrate. We don't know a lot about them, much of what we know about Gerhard is found in a good report in P.M. Friesen's monumental history.<sup>33</sup> They were residents of the village of Rückenau in Molotschna.

### Epp Family Name

As early as 1584, Epps could be found among Mennonites of the city of Danzig. The source of the first Mennonite Epps cannot be identified. The name was common from Switzerland to Friesland.<sup>39</sup> "Epp" developed as a shortened "Eberhard" which connotes "strong as a boar."

Our Epp family can be traced directly to Danzig. In fact, this is the only one of our families whose roots in that historic city are documented.

### The Epp Family's Mennonite Roots in Danzig

The Netherlands and the city-state of Danzig (today, Gdańsk in Poland) were close trading partners from well before the Reformation. In the middle 1500s, over a thousand Dutch ships came to Danzig each year. Consequently, when the word got out that relative religious freedom was available, many Mennonites experiencing the inquisition in the Netherlands came to Danzig (see the map on page 30 and the discussion in that chapter.)

The advantages were mutual. Land around the city was swampy, like the rest of the Vistula delta and the Vistula river valley. Dutch Mennonites came with the reclamation skills to exchange for their freedom. So successful were the Dutch immigrants that in 1547, the Danzig city council sent an emissary to the Netherlands to recruit more farmers for city-controlled farmlands between the Vistula and the city.<sup>14</sup>

Even though the arrangement was mutually beneficial, liberty did not last. It wasn't long before there surfaced objections to the presence of the "Mennists." Many of the settlers were in villages located in land reclaimed from swamp, just to the south and west of the city proper. In 1582, they appealed to the city for restoration of their eroding religious liberty, calling themselves "subjects who are derisively called Anabaptists or Mennonites."<sup>14</sup> The answer was liberty at a cost; a heavy tax was imposed on persons who wanted to remain Mennonite.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
+)) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Eva Janzen  
+)) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
\* .)) Maria Unruh  
\* .)) Helena Dirks  
+)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
\* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Bartel  
\* .)) Marie Plenert  
\* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Bena Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Anna Wilms  
+)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
\* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
\* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens  
\* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
\* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Fast  
\* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
\* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
\* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
\* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen  
\* .)) Margaret Harms  
\* \* +)) **Gerhard Epp**  
\* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
\* .)) **Anna Günther**  
/)) *Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,*  
\* *Rebekah Margaret*  
\* +)) Isaak J. Harms  
\* +)) David Harms  
\* \* .)) Katharina Fröse  
\* +)) Isaac Harms  
\* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
\* \* .)) Eva Unruh  
\* \* .)) Eva Schroeder  
\* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
\* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
\* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
\* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh  
\* \* .)) Emma Neufeld  
\* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt  
.)) Virginia Louise Harms

The tension between the economic value of the Mennonites and the perceived threat to the religious and political power structure remained for four centuries. Taxes were often heavy, and restriction were applied when the Mennonites were successful. For example, the guilds succeeded in banning Mennonites from many trades or from selling their wares and produce.

The first Mennonite Church in the city of Danzig was founded in 1569, but this followed earlier organizing work. Menno Simons was known to have gone to Danzig at least once, and after Simons' death, Dirk Philips came as Danzig's first elder. In spite of the opposition, the church in Danzig grew in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, even publishing a widely-used Dutch Bible translation.

In the mid-1700s, the protection tax became oppressive, and many previously prosperous Mennonites of Danzig were reduced to poverty. Also at this time, the word came that emigration to South Russia might be possible. Here we can pick up the Epp story.

### **Ältester Peter Epp and the Move to South Russia**

The first Epp of whom we have significant information was Ältester Peter Epp, born in 1725, a beloved elder of the Danzig congregation. Ältester Epp farmed in Neunhuben, one of the villages on land reclaimed from the swamp by the Dutch; he was moderately successful, which was necessary for one to be able to take the time for unpaid ecclesiastical office. At the age of 32, he became a deacon, and the following year he was elected a minister. Then, on September 26, 1779, he was elected elder.

This was a difficult time for Danzig Mennonites. The region was contested between the Polish and Prussian kingdoms, and for some time, the national border ran right through the region for which Ältester Epp was responsible.<sup>142</sup>

Ältester Epp was active in promoting the spiritual development of his flock. His writings were valued, recopied and handed down from generation to generation. They were held in high regard by succeeding leaders of both the mainstream Mennonite congregations and the *Kleine Gemeinde*.<sup>60</sup>

Early in Ältester Epp's period as elder, he began the switch from Dutch to German as the language of the church, and during his period in office, the invitation came from the czarina in Russia for "Germans" to settle in South Russia. The story of the beginnings of the migration are described on page 31 and following. Alt. Epp was eager to provide badly needed leadership for the emigration, but the Prussians were unwilling to provide travel documents to leaders, and death came while planning was underway. His death was a severe loss to the early emigrants.

Peter's son, Heinrich Peter Epp, did emigrate, leaving Danzig in 1795 while the Chortitza colony was still young. He probably settled in Rosenthal and became a minister of the Chortitzer Flemish Gemeinde in 1806.<sup>60</sup> Heinrich's cousin, David Epp, was Ältester of the congregation, and that family provided continued church leadership for over half a century.

When Heinrich's first wife died, he married David Epp's daughter, Margaret. When Margaret died, he married Susanna Bartsch, the daughter of Johann who had originally scouted the territory and negotiated it with the czarina.

The son of Heinrich Peter Epp who is our ancestor is also named Heinrich. Heinrich Heinrich Epp moved in about 1806 to the Molotschna colony and farmed in the village of Altonau, Wirtschaft number 9. It was here that Gerhard was born in 1829.

## The Family of Anna Günther Epp, Gerhard's Wife.

Anna Günther Epp's paternal heritage has not yet been located, although there are good candidate families from the Tiegenhagen area of the Vistula Delta in Prussia; although almost entirely speculative, a tie-in with a *Kleine Gemeinde* family is possible. On the other hand, Anna's maternal background, listed in the chart on page 237, has some interesting features.

Anna's great-grandmother, Aganetha Epp Jantzen, grew up in Danzig as well and was a sister to Alt. Epp who appeared earlier in this chapter. She was first married to a Reimer and gave birth to Klaas Reimer, the founding leader of the *Kleine Gemeinde* who featured prominently in chapter 8.

Aganetha married Abraham Jantzen of Petershagen, Prussia. In 1803, they emigrated to a new village in Molotschna; by the 1808 census, they were doing well. Abraham was a respected senior member of that community, and out of respect, the villagers named the village Petershagen at his request.

Another branch of Anna's tree descends from her grandparents Johann (b. 1782) and Anna Jantzen Jantzen. This family was also part of the *Kleine Gemeinde* movement including Johann's brother, Cornelius, who helped Klaas Reimer found the KG. They also migrated to Petershagen in Molotschna, living together with extended KG family.

Whether either Gerhard Epp or his wife, Anna Günther, were brought up in the *Kleine Gemeinde* or not we have no direct evidence. The absence of their parents from the group that moved to the Borosenko settlement suggests that neither Gerhard nor Anna were raised as KG, but the fact that their daughter married another with KG grandparents (see page 101 and following) shows that some influence remained.

## Gerhard's Contribution to Rückenau

We are without information about Gerhard's upbringing until the 1870s. Gerhard served as the village administrator, the *schulze* in Rückenau. Friesen describes him as "a serious and pious man."<sup>33</sup> He was probably a member of the Margenau congregation of the Mennonite church.

With his responsibility, Gerhard seems to have had a major concern in 1874; the village had a tavern. It is not at all clear who ran it, but it is true that beginning in the previous decade, a change in the Russian law allowed outsiders to set up business within the colony, and instances of excessive drinking began to appear as a community problem.

At this same time, the Mennonite Brethren were looking for a structure to remodel for their first church building. Friesen wrote:

Precisely on the day that Abraham Schellenberg, Philipp Isaak, and Johann Friesen[, leaders of the Mennonite Brethren,] came to him to request his consent for the project, Epp had cried to God from the depths of his soul for counsel and help because of this village plague, the tavern. The coming of the brethren with their plan was for him an answer to prayer and an indication of God's working. Because of Epp's influence in the village community and the people's opposition to the tavern, the permission of the Rückenau village council, allowing the establishment of a meeting house for the Mennonite Brethren in the Molotschna, though initially on a private basis, came through with unexpected ease.<sup>33</sup>

Later that year, Gerhard Epp left his "kirchliche" Mennonite Church moorings and joined the new Mennonite Brethren congregation in Rückenau. This congregation rapidly outgrew



the remodeled tavern, and the brethren chose Gerhard Epp as treasurer for the construction of a new building. The funds were raised by assessing members according to their landholdings. Epp was quite successful in this endeavor, and a beautiful building was built for the young church.

### Gerhard's Daughter to America

In 1874, Gerhard had two grown children and two at home, Gerhard (II), who was 18, and Katharina, who was 10. Katharina later married Peter T. Harms, and they stayed within the Mennonite Brethren and emigrated in 1892. Their photo is shown on page 104. That story will be told in Volume II. Gerhard (II) stayed in Russia for several more decades.<sup>143</sup>

### A Harrowing Escape and Survival in Paraguay

With Gerhard (II) Epp, a side trip can tell us a great deal about the lives of our relatives who elected to stay in South Russia. Like about two-thirds of the Mennonites, he must have expected prospects to be better if he stayed than they might have been in a foreign land. Indeed, for almost three decades, they were. The colonies expanded, finding land for the *anwohner* to farm, both in South Russia and as far away as southern Siberia. By 1911, entrepreneurs in Chortitza and Molotschna were manufacturing over six per-cent of all the agricultural machinery produced in all of Russia.<sup>18</sup>

All the while, the German-speaking colonists of South Russia (of which the Mennonites were a small minority) began to encounter increased resentment from the local population, many of whom were the immediate descendants of serfs. The prosperity of the Mennonites was interpreted as resulting from their privileges, which was in part true.

World War I and the Russian Revolution brought this period of prosperity to a screeching



Rückenau Mennonite Brethren Church, built under the leadership of Gerhard Epp.

halt. By 1915, laws were enacted prohibiting German-language publications and ownership of land by Germans; neither was actually enforced. After the Russian Revolution in 1917 and the resulting revolution, all law and order broke down. Uncontrolled Red Army bands and bandits plundered the colonies, executed dozens of leaders, extorted tens of thousands of rubles, and destroyed records.<sup>a</sup> Local Bolshevik councils levied even greater taxes of food and livestock.

The response of some of the colonists was both tactical and spiritual error. Many villages formed a “self-defense force”, the *Selbstschutz*.<sup>b</sup> In 1918, the German army captured the area. The response by many Mennonites to invaders who spoke their language and who evicted the Bolsheviks was to welcome the armies. The Germans in turn supported both the traditions of the colonies and the *Selbstschutz*.

In 1819, when the Germans retreated, violence and anarchy returned; South Russia was the last battleground of the Russian Revolution where the White Army made its last stand against the Red Army. *Selbstschutz* units fought with the White Army against the Reds; the bandits were sometimes independent, sometimes allied with an army. Interestingly, the villages who resisted the call to arms survived the best. On one hand the Red Army came, looking for traitors. On the other, bandits, including the most famous of all, Nestor Machno, repeatedly brought death and devastation to many of the colonies. Rape and murder were common. Eighty-four, less than half men, were murdered one night in a Mennonite village in Sagradovfka, and over eighty men were killed in another village. Homes and farms were emptied of livestock, food, and furnishings.

By 1921, some order was restored, but the colonies were devastated. Seed grain was gone; the numbers of draft animals, hogs and chickens and the grain harvest were down 90%. Crops could not be planted, much less harvested. Starvation was inevitable.

Gerhard (II) Epp and his family experienced this calamity with the others. According to his descendants, he believed that they would have perished but for aid packages.<sup>143</sup> The husband of his now-deceased sister, Peter T. Harms living in Reedley, California, sent aid packages to keep them alive.

It was in this calamity that the Mennonite Central Committee was born. Responding to the shortages, American Mennonites of every tradition banded together to provide relief. Fifty Ford tractors were sent, and American food kitchens fed up to 25,000 people daily. Aid was also provided to families wishing to emigrate. In the 1920s, about 21,000 Mennonites were able to move to Canada in spite of impediments at every turn.

As the decade progressed, life continued to deteriorate. Collectivization of farms began. Churches were banned. Ministers were nearly all banished to Siberia, and aid to their families was forbidden.

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<sup>a</sup> The preponderance of Mennonite records disappeared during this period. It is known that some were destroyed, but others, such as the 1835 census, have recently been found. More records, but not all, are expected to become available in the next few years.

<sup>b</sup> Canadian Mennonites have made a feature-length film, *And When They Shall Ask*, addressing this tragic period of Russian Mennonite history.



Location of the Amur region and Harbin, China. The Amur River forms the boundary between Russia and China.

### **Movement to the Amur Region of East Russia, China, and Paraguay**

In the east, roughly 700 kilometers from the Pacific Ocean, a new opportunity developed along the Amur River that separated the Soviet Union from China. The government allowed Mennonites to begin a new colony, starting in 1927. The land was fertile, and transportation was relatively easy since the region was traversed by the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Even more importantly, however, they believed that on this eastern outpost, Stalin's program of collectivization would come more slowly giving a measure of religious freedom. Dozens of families came; the first came from Slavgorod and many more came from the Omsk region, both in western Siberia. Gerhard and his family took advantage of the respite and moved to this region, from where we do not know.

By 1929, sooner than expected, collectivization did come to the Amur region. Almost immediately, families made plans to flee across the Amur River into China.

Exactly when the Epp family left we do not know, but the account of one large group of escapees has been well documented.<sup>18,144</sup> The chairman of the collective, Jakob Siemens, devised a scheme of unprecedented bravado. After his collective had exceeded their quota, he was able to obtain additional horses and sleighs for expansion. Two men crossed into China to make arrangements, but most families were unaware of the plans until shortly before they left. After midnight on December 16, 1930, with the temperature at about -40 °F, 217 people left on sixty sleighs, timing their escape to miss the machine guns of the border patrol. All arrived safely into China.

Being in China, though offering a measure of freedom, did not guarantee safety. Sleighs and horses were sold for whatever they could get in order to pay for the next stage, travel to the major city of Harbin, a trip of about 1500 kilometers<sup>a</sup> which took about two months.

In Harbin, they found themselves in dire straits, without funds, unable to find work, and worst of all, unable to obtain entry into Canada or the United States. By March, 1931, there were 554 Mennonites in Harbin.<sup>18</sup>

The Mennonite Central Committee and others worked with a local committee, arranging both their support in Harbin and their exodus to a new home. Unfortunately an anti-immigrant spirit held in North America in spite of the successes of previous immigrants including

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<sup>a</sup> A detailed map of the escape route can be found in reference 6.

Mennonites. Only about 150 were allowed in the U.S. After feverish efforts on their behalf, raising funds, and interceding with governments, MCC arranged evacuation to Paraguay.

*The Blue Mountains of China*,<sup>145</sup> a novel by Rudy Wiebe, includes a graphic and moving account of the trip. Wiebe is considered by many to be the greatest Mennonite writer; this book may be his greatest.

The descendants of Gerhard Epp have thrived, after a very difficult pioneer period, in the Chaco Valley of Paraguay. Today, one of his grandsons, Heinrich Ratzlaff Epp, is a congressman in the legislature of Paraguay. Nature Conservancy featured Heinrich for his work in preserving the Chaco Valley, referred to in the article and in many other places as the “Green Hell”.<sup>146</sup>

Of many others of our great-great uncles and aunts who stayed in Russia, there is no way to know. It is probable that many were swallowed up by the disasters and unspeakable oppression of the Stalinist period. They starved, were executed, were worked to death in Siberia, and in many other ways, simply disappeared. Thousands escaped to Germany at the end of World War II, only to be returned to the Soviet Union by the Allies on the insistence of Stalin.

The story of this Epp family is a reminder of the grace of God received by the descendants of the Mennonites who left South Russia in the nineteenth century. It is also a story of survival with the help of North American Mennonites.

### **Another Epp Story**

There is another person named Epp in Mennonite history who was sufficiently interesting (even bizarre) to merit a note that is slightly off our track: Claas Epp, who was born in the Vistula Delta and migrated with his parents to one of the later Mennonite settlements to the east along the Volga River, became a charismatic leader obsessed with the end of the world.<sup>3</sup>

When the rest of the Mennonites were considering North America as refuge, Claas preached that deliverance would take place in the east, an idea common among Europeans of the day. In 1880, a group of about 600 Mennonites formed what they called the “Bride Community” and prepared to meet Christ’s second coming, which Claas predicted for March 8, 1889. They headed into Central Asia, living among Turks, Kirghizes, and Uzbeks, not always successfully. The promise of the imminent return of Christ buoyed their spirits in spite of great hardship. Historical accounts have been written about this fascinating episode,<sup>147</sup> and a new novel on the experience written by Dallas Wiebe has been recommended.<sup>148,149</sup>

When the prediction of Christ’s return failed, Claas found an error in his reckoning and predicted 1891. Gradually, his followers left, many coming to North America, and in 1913, he died, nearly alone in Central Asia.

Whether Gerhard is at all related to Claas, we do not know; they have only their last name in common. The adventure remains a cautionary tale of Mennonites who were then willing to blindly follow a self-appointed leader. The story is also an exciting, though unsuccessful, adventure.





## 17 Epilogue: Personal Notes and Comments

To engage in a family history study and produce only lists of names, places and dates would give us little if it were not to teach us something of value. This study was begun as part of an attempt to learn to know who we are.

Looking back on the twelve immigrant families in this study, we can see certain traits in our families that go back for many generations.

Among all of this history, in all twelve families, we can take something from this common Mennonite heritage.

Finally, there is a wealth of further information. If one wishes to read more, a variety of well-written and general sources can be recommended.

### So, Who Are We?

Firstly, these twelve ancestral families were, as far back as we can determine, descended from Prussian Mennonites who lived in the Vistula valley of what is now Poland. The Prussian Mennonites were, in their ancestry and culture, mostly Dutch; the acquisition of the German language came relatively late in the history, just before the migration from Prussia to South Russia.

Secondly, our history is Mennonite. All of the migrations up through the migration to America were stimulated by the same two factors:

- the need to live as their understanding of the Gospel of Jesus Christ required, and
- the need for adequate land for farming, for it was in agricultural communities that they found the most protection for their faith.

Thirdly, Mennonites were not monolithic. We bring various specific parts of the Dutch/ Prussian/Russian experience with us, and the three branches of the tree, Ratzlaff, Warkentin, and Harms, were different from each other.

Fourthly, we share a heritage with those who suffered greatly, both for the faith and for their ethnicity. The stories of the Dutch martyrs in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and of those who suffered under Stalin in the 20<sup>th</sup> century should be an inspiration.

### The Ratzlaff Heritage.

+)) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
+) Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Eva Janzen  
+) Jonathan J Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Andreas B. Unruh  
\* .)) Maria Unruh  
\* .)) Helena Dirks  
+) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Kornelius Plenert  
\* \* +)) Cornelius J. Plenert  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Bartel  
\* .)) Marie Plenert  
\* \* +)) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Bena Ratzlaff  
\* .)) Anna Wilms  
+) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff  
\* \* +)) Peter P. Warkentin  
\* \* +)) Peter J. Warkentin  
\* \* \* .)) Justina Wiens  
\* \* +)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  
\* \* \* \* +)) Heinrich Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Koop  
\* \* \* .)) Anna Fast  
\* .)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin  
\* \* +)) Cornelius C. Harms  
\* \* +)) Peter T. Harms  
\* \* \* .)) Katharina Thiessen  
\* .)) Margaret Harms  
\* \* +)) Gerhard Epp  
\* .)) Katharina (Tina) Epp  
\* .)) Anna Günther  
/)) Michael Mpho, Jonathan James,  
\* Rebekah Margaret  
\* +)) Isaac J. Harms  
\* +)) David Harms  
\* \* .)) Katharina Fröse  
\* +)) Isaac Harms  
\* \* \* +)) David M. Unruh  
\* \* .)) Eva Unruh  
\* \* .)) Eva Schroeder  
\* +)) Isaac N. Harms  
\* \* \* +)) Heinrich Neufeld  
\* \* \* +)) Isaac U. Neufeld  
\* \* \* \* .)) Marie Unruh  
\* \* .)) Emma Neufeld  
\* \* \* +)) Johann Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Claassen  
\* \* .)) Katharina Schmidt  
\* .)) Virginia Louise Harms

These families who comprise the ancestral heritage of Kermit Ratzlaff share a connection in the middle Vistula Valley. Specifically, they sprang from the environs of the Przechowka Mennonite congregation. The Heinrich W. Ratzlaff family is documented back directly to that congregation, while the congregations which produced Peter Ratzlaff, Andreas Unruh, and Kornelius Plenert were daughter churches or descendants of the Przechowka congregation.

All four families, in their American congregational life, connected with their specific roots in South Russia.

- Peter Ratzlaff made his emigration decision and traveled to America together with his home Alexanderwohl church; he and his family settled in Hoffnungsau, the Alexanderwohl sister church.
- Andreas Unruh was part of his Volhynian congregation's decision. He continued in America with that same community as he helped lead the contingent that became congregation and community together in Barton County, Kansas.
- The families of Kornelius Plenert and Heinrich W. Ratzlaff of Polish Russia apparently traveled in smaller parties; we do not have enough information to know how they made the emigration decision. However when they settled, they chose the French Creek district north of Hillsboro which attracted a large population of Polish Russians; the Johannestal Mennonite Church was the result.

The mother Przechowka congregation had a reputation for conservatism that was described in the chapter for Peter Ratzlaff. However, it also had a progressive influence on the Mennonite Church, being the center of the Russian Bible Society in South Russia, for example.

### **The Warkentin Heritage**

While the four families of the Ratzlaff branch descended from the tradition of an established congregation with centuries of history, these four families were all touched by a reform movement, the *Kleine Gemeinde*. In Prussia, they were rooted in the northern Vistula Delta Mennonite community, but in South Russia they attempted reform and consequently they stayed socially separate. The KG took their vision of church purity very seriously, and consequently the severity of their faith was a major factor through to America. The other characteristic of the KG, however, was an extraordinarily strong commitment to the *gemeinde*, the congregational community.

We have record of two of the families' decision for emigration.

- From Peter P. Warkentin we read a powerful statement of his desire not to subject his descendants to conscripted participation in the military; we can be grateful for that commitment to this day.
- Isaak Harms made a similar decision in the context of the *gemeinde* to which he had made a powerful commitment. In America, continued to be a committed community, though their desire for purity and renewal eventually led to fracture.
- The Koop family's experience is less well known. Nevertheless we might infer from the fact that the family settled near and interacted with KMB families who bore a strong relationship to the KG that the Koops came with that influence and were open to pursuing it.

- The Epps as a family did not come to America; Katharina was the only member who did. Although not KG, she and her husband had joined themselves to another dissident Mennonite group. Then in America, after testing life in a KG community, they moved to Henderson, Nebraska, where they could be participants in a large Mennonite Brethren community.

For this branch of the family, the search for renewal through a dissident movement was a driving force in the move to America. They all became a part of the Mennonite Brethren or Krimmer Mennonite Brethren by the end of the nineteenth century and chose some of the stricter elements of the M.B. church.

### **The Harms Heritage**

This branch of the family showed the most individualism and were the least influenced by local *gemeinde*. All of the families were early Mennonite Brethren, either in Russia or in America. Each came to America independently of their community, and they showed the boldness to make a major change when it was difficult.

- The Isaak J. Harms family and David M. Unruh families moved independently to the French Creek communities north of Hillsboro, Kansas. Of all the patriarchs in our story, Isaak and David left the least evidence of religious commitment; we cannot even find record of church membership, an unusual characteristic for the time. Nevertheless, their children stepped out early in the French Creek revival, even in the absence of Isaak and David's support, to become part of the renewal movement that joined the Mennonite Brethren Church.
- Johann Claassen was one of only two of his generation in our family not to emigrate. He had given strong leadership to the Mennonite Brethren in the face of considerable personal sacrifice. As part of that movement, he had great sympathy for the charismatic elements, but was willing to put that aside for the sake of unity. As such he was a great leader.
- Heinrich Neufeld possessed even more of the personality of a leader, easily drawing followers. However, he was given more to following his passions than most leaders of the day, and that was his downfall. Direct evidence of his leadership legacy is hard to find in the Mennonite Brethren denomination, but the influence of that charismatic tendency and the M.B. ambivalence about it exists to this day.

Possibly, we would summarize this branch of the family as having much more independence and less loyalty to the *gemeinde* while retaining the fundamental understandings. We cannot overlook the charismatic influence that is probably present in a much greater part of the family than in most South Russian families.

### **Further Reading**

Although research for this volume has required searching obscure sources, readers may wish to learn more about the times and places in which our families lived. The list that follows provides a useful start. Many of the books will be found in major libraries, and one should expect that most can be obtained through inter-library loan services.

There are several histories of the Mennonites of which the following two provide different approaches. Harry Loewen's book is written for teenagers whereas the classic by C. Henry Smith is much more detailed. Smith is considered by some to under-emphasize the importance of the church as community. The history by Dyck is more than an introduction, shorter than Smith, and probably gives a better understanding of the ethos of Mennonite history.

Loewen, Harry **Through Fire and Water**<sup>3</sup>

Smith, C. Henry **Smith's Story of the Mennonites**<sup>4</sup>

Dyck, Cornelius J. **An Introduction to Mennonite History**<sup>150</sup>

A good reference on locations is very useful, and William Schroeder has produced a wonderful reference; the notes on the locations yield many interesting historical tidbits.

Schroeder, William **Mennonite Historical Atlas**<sup>6</sup>

Anyone wishing to understand the early Mennonites in Europe and the persecution that they faced *must* read in the Martyr's Mirror, an inspiring classic in many ways. It's a good one for the bookshelf as well. The recent volume by Visser and Sprunger is a beautiful "coffee-table" book, excellently illustrated and printed for the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Menno Simons' birth. Dostoevsky's classic is thrown in as a personal favorite that gives insight into the period of persecution.

Van Bracht, Thieleman J. **The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians**<sup>7</sup>

Visser and Sprunger **Menno Simons, Places, Portraits and Progeny**<sup>12</sup>

Dostoevsky, Fyodor **The Brothers Karamazov**<sup>10</sup>

Details on the life and times of Mennonites in Prussia are hard to find. This nicely illustrated little paperback fills that void.

Klassen, Peter J. **A Homeland for Strangers**<sup>14</sup>

What was everyday life like in South Russia and how was the society organized? If we want to understand our ancestors well, we might like to know. Those topics are not well described in this family history. The edited volume by John Friesen covers parts of that topic very well. James Urry and Royden Loewen are outstanding studies of South Russian Mennonites; both are scholars, and their books reflect that. Loewen does a wonderful job of placing the Mennonites in the larger national and world economic context; he uses the *Kleine Gemeinde* for his study which means that he focuses on some of our families. Life in Borosenko is detailed as nowhere else. Heinrich Goertz's book was actually written in 1950; over half the coverage is of the period after our families left for America.

Friesen, John, editor **Mennonites in Russia**<sup>151</sup>

Goertz, Heinrich **The Molotschna Settlement**<sup>16</sup>

Loewen, Royden **Family, Church and Market: a Mennonite Community in the Old and New Worlds, 1850-1930**<sup>67</sup>

Urry, James **None But Saints, The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia**<sup>17</sup>

Elizabeth Klassen's book is out of print and written almost as novel without adequate references; nevertheless, it is about our forebear and probably accurate about places and chronologies. Descendants should find a copy and read it if they can.

Klassen, Elizabeth Suderman **Trailblazer for the Brethren**<sup>124</sup>

Rudy Wiebe is considered by many to be the greatest Mennonite novelist, and the novel listed here is a wonderful and multi-faceted novel (or collection of related short stories). Read it to gain the flavor of life in those trying times. The book by Harry Loewen has wonderful and inspiring stories about Mennonites who did not leave when our families did, and the book by John B. Toews, now out of print, describes the most difficult of times.

Wiebe, Rudy **The Blue Mountains of China**<sup>145</sup>

Loewen, Harry **No Permanent City: Stories from Mennonite History and Life**<sup>144</sup>

Toews, John B. **Czars, Soviets and Mennonites**<sup>34</sup>

Clarence Hiebert assembled a fascinating scrapbook about the migration of the 1870s. It contains many ship lists and lots of reprints of news clippings. One could spend hours paging through his collection of original sources that would be almost impossible to find any other way. If a family was to buy only one book about the Prussian/Russian Mennonite experience besides *Martyr's Mirror*, this should be it.

Hiebert, Clarence **Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need**<sup>21</sup>

An interesting review list of novels and poetry that touch on the Mennonite experience can be found in reference 148.

## Current Plans

This volume is marked as Volume I. Information is being gathered for a volume about the authors' great-grandparents, grandparents, and parents. No date has been set.

Contributions (childhood memories, written material, etc. would be greatly appreciated concerning the following families:

Jacob P. and Marie Ratzlaff

Cornelius J. and Bena Plenert

Peter J. and Anna Warkentin

Peter T. and Katharina Harms

David and Eva Harms

Isaac U. and Tina Neufeld

Jonathan J. and Marie Ratzlaff

Henry K. and Margaret Warkentin

Isaac and Emma Harms

Kenneth Ratzlaff, November, 1998



# Appendices





## **Appendix XVIII Five-Generation Ancestor Charts**

The following Ancestor Charts are for five generations. The ancestry of each of the 2G-Grandparents (the right-hand column) in this chart is shown in the following appendix.

Ancestor Chart for Kenneth Ratzlaff

|                                  |                             |                              |                        |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------|
|                                  |                             |                              | +Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff |
|                                  |                             |                              | * Born 29-May-1829     |
|                                  |                             | +Jacob P. Ratzlaff))))))I    | Died 7-Sep-1891        |
|                                  |                             | * Born 15-Apr-1863           | * Marr Aug-1850        |
|                                  |                             | * in Waldheim, S. Russia     | . Eva Janzen           |
|                                  |                             | * Marr 11-Jan-1890           | Born Jan-1826          |
|                                  |                             |                              | Died 1-Apr-1879        |
|                                  | +Jonathan J Ratzlaff))))))I | in McPherson County          |                        |
|                                  | * Born 2-Jan-1893           | * Died 12-Dec-1928           |                        |
|                                  | *Hoffnung., McPherson, Ks   | *Hillsboro, Marion, KS       | +Andreas B. Unruh      |
|                                  | * Marr 21-May-1915          | *                            | * Born 1835            |
|                                  | *Hillsboro, Marion, KS      | . Maria Unruh))))))D         | Died 1881              |
|                                  | * Died 7-Nov-1980           | Born 11-Sep-1873             | *                      |
|                                  | *Hillsboro, Marion, KS      | in Karlsruale, So, Russia    | . Helena Dirks         |
|                                  | *                           | Died 1-Nov-1947              | Born 28-Dec-1837       |
|                                  | *                           | Hillsboro, Marion, KS        | Died 4-Dec-1926        |
| +Kermit Omer Ratzlaff))))I       |                             |                              |                        |
| * Born 26-Dec-1921               |                             |                              |                        |
| *Hillsboro, Marion, KS           |                             |                              | +Kornelius Plenert     |
| * Marr 11-Aug-1944               |                             |                              | * Born 6-Jan-1815      |
| *Los Angeles, CA                 |                             | +Cornelius J. Plenert))))I   | Died 1-Aug-1900        |
| *                                |                             | * Born 1-Apr-1867            | * Marr 1862            |
| *                                |                             | * in Dt. Kazun, Poland       | . Anna Bartel          |
| *                                |                             | * Marr 10-Nov-1892           | Born 26-Aug-1834       |
| *                                | . Marie Plenert))))))I      | Hillsboro, Marion, KS        | Died 30-Jun-1907       |
| *                                | Born 9-Aug-1893             | * Died 13-Mar-1913           |                        |
| *Hillsboro, Marion, KS           |                             | *Hillsboro, Marion, KS       | +Heinrich W. Ratzlaff  |
| * Died 22-Feb-1990               |                             | *                            | * Born 10-Nov-1829     |
| *Hillsboro, Marion, KS           |                             | . Bena Ratzlaff))))))I       | Died 30-Sep-1922       |
| *                                |                             | Born 29-Jan-1873             | * Marr 29-Aug-1860     |
| *                                |                             | in Wola Wodzinska, Pol.      | . Anna Wilms           |
| *                                |                             | Died 6-Jul-1957              | Born 5-Nov-1837        |
| *                                |                             | Hillsboro, Marion, KS        | Died 2-Sep-1922        |
| Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff           |                             | +Peter P. Warkentin          |                        |
| Born 20-Dec-1945                 |                             |                              | * Born 23-Dec-1838     |
| Altadena, Los Angeles County, CA |                             | +Peter J. Warkentin))))I     | Died 5-Jul-1923        |
| Marr 27-Jan-1968                 |                             | * Born 26-Jul-1863           | * Marr 7-Mar-1861      |
| Ulysses, Grant County, KS        |                             | *Karassan, Crimea, S. Russia | . Justina Wiens        |
| Spouse Virginia Louise Harms     |                             | * Marr 12-Oct-1885           | Born 6-Jul-1840        |
| *                                |                             | I Died 29-Jan-1937           | Died 17-Mar-1924       |
| *                                | +Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin  | *Dinuba, Tulare, CA          |                        |
| *                                | * Born 10-Dec-1891          | *                            | +Heinrich Koop         |
| *                                | *Hillsboro, Marion, KS      | *                            | * Born 22-Jun-1826     |
| *                                | * Marr 23-Mar-1916          | . Anna Koop))))))I           | Died 16-Mar-1891       |
| *Reedley, Fresno, CA             |                             | Born 6-Apr-1864              | * Marr 10-Oct-1849     |
| * Died 25-Jan-1977               |                             | Died 10-Jun-1917             | . Anna Fast            |
| *Reedley, Fresno, CA             |                             | Hillsboro, Marion, KS        | Born 29-Jan-1826       |
| *                                |                             |                              | Died 25-Apr-1885       |
| . Ruth Evelyn Warkentin))))I     |                             |                              |                        |
| Born 7-Nov-1921                  |                             |                              | +Cornelius Harms       |
| Tulare County, CA                |                             |                              | * Born 26-Aug-1835     |
| *                                |                             | +Peter T. Harms))))))I       | Died 9-Dec-1928        |
| *                                |                             | * Born 1-Jun-1863            | * Marr 14-Aug-1856     |
| *                                |                             | * in Schönau, South Russia   | . Katharina Thiessen   |
| *                                |                             | * Marr 28-Nov-1885           | Born 20-Feb-1836       |
| . Margaret Harms))))))I          |                             | in Rückenau, S. Russia       | Died 18-May-1865       |
| Born 26-May-1895                 |                             | * Died 15-Aug-1931           |                        |
| in Henderson, Nebraska           |                             | *Reedley, Fresno, CA         | +Gerhard Epp           |
| Died 31-Mar-1993                 |                             | *                            | * Born 26-Dec-1829     |
| Reedley, Fresno, CA              |                             | . Katharina (Tina) Epp))))I  | Died 8-Feb-1911        |
|                                  |                             | Born 30-Oct-1864,            | *                      |
|                                  |                             | in Rückenau, S. Russia       | . Anna Günther         |
|                                  |                             | Died 4-Mar-1898,             |                        |
|                                  |                             | in Henderson, Nebraska       |                        |

Ancestor Chart for Virginia Harms

|                               |                              |                               |                     |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------|
|                               |                              | +Isaac J. Harms               |                     |
|                               |                              | * Born 18-Dec-1833            |                     |
|                               | +David Harms)))))))))        | 1)Died 29-Aug-1886            |                     |
|                               | * Born 9-Feb-1861            | * Marr 3-Jan-1856             |                     |
|                               | * in Grossweide, S. Russia   | . Katharina Fröse             |                     |
|                               | * Marr 1-Aug-1881            | Born 31-Mar-1836              |                     |
| +Isaac Harms)))))))))         | Hillsboro, Marion, KS        | Died 21-Apr-1905              |                     |
| * Born 8-Dec-1884             | * Died 10-Sep-1931           |                               |                     |
| * Lehigh, Marion County, Ks   | * in Medicine Hat, Alberta   | +David M. Unruh               |                     |
| * Marr 11-Aug-1912            | *                            | * Born 12-Dec-1836            |                     |
| * in Fairview, Oklahoma       | . Eva Unruh)))))))))         | 1)Died 28-Mar-1912            |                     |
| * Died 31-Dec-1968            | Born 27-Feb-1862             | * Marr 22-Sep-1859            |                     |
| * Ulysses, Grant County, KS   | Swiniary,Dt.Wymysle,Pol.     | . Eva Schröder                |                     |
|                               | Died 24-Jan-1936             | Born 23-Aug-1837              |                     |
|                               | in Saskatchewan              | Died 1920                     |                     |
| +Isaac N. Harms)))))))))      |                              |                               |                     |
| * Born 27-Feb-1918            |                              |                               |                     |
| * Boyd, Beaver County, OK     |                              | +Heinrich Neufeld             |                     |
| * Marr 15-May-1946            |                              | * Born 6-Aug-1818             |                     |
| * in Gulfport, Mississippi    |                              | 1)Died 17-Jun-1890            |                     |
|                               | +Isaac U. Neufeld)))))))))   | * Marr 10-Apr-1862            |                     |
|                               | * Born 12-May-1867           |                               |                     |
|                               | * Schönhorst, South Russia   | . Marie Unruh                 |                     |
|                               | * Marr 23-Feb-1890           | Born 29-May-1836              |                     |
|                               | . Emma Neufeld)))))))))      | Hillsboro (KS) Ebenfeld       | Died 27-Dec-1874    |
|                               | Born 15-Mar-1892             | * Died 15-Feb-1954            |                     |
|                               | Walton, Harvey Cty, Ks       | * Reedley, Fresno, CA         |                     |
|                               | Died 10-Nov-1982             | *                             | +Johann Claassen    |
|                               | Ulysses, Grant County, KS    | . Katharina (Tina) Claassen)  | 1)Died 24-Dec-1876  |
|                               |                              | Born 18-Dec-1870              | * Marr 1-Mar-1870   |
|                               |                              | Wohldemfuerst, S. Russia      | . Katharina Schmidt |
|                               |                              | Died 10-Jul-1910              | Born 30-Jan-1852    |
|                               |                              | in Fairview, Oklahoma         | Died 26-Jun-1915    |
| Virginia Louise Harms         |                              |                               |                     |
| Born 1-Nov-1947               |                              |                               |                     |
| in Garden City, Finney ty, K  |                              | +Wm. Dudley Weaver            |                     |
| Marr 27-Jan-1968              |                              | * Died 16 Feb 1902            |                     |
| in Ulysses, Grant County, Ks  | +William Albert Weaver))     | 1)Marr 7 Jan 1857             |                     |
| Spouse Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff | * Born 1859                  | *                             |                     |
|                               |                              | * Marr 20-Oct-1885            | . Johanna A. Miller |
|                               |                              | * in New Orleans, La          | Died 31 Jan 1911    |
|                               | +William Dudley Weaver))     | 1)Died 2 Jun 1913             |                     |
|                               | * Born 17-Oct-1893           | * in New Orleans, Louisiana   |                     |
|                               | * in New Orleans, La.        | *                             | +Thomas J. Marshall |
|                               | * Marr 26-Nov-1916           | *                             | * Died 14 May 1887  |
|                               | * Died 1969or1970            | . Laura Jane Marshall))))))   | 1)Marr 14 Feb 1861  |
|                               | * in Gulfport, Mississippi   | Died 17 Mar 1899              | *                   |
|                               |                              |                               | . Ellen H. Thompson |
| . Annie Louise Weaver))))     | 1)                           |                               |                     |
| * Born 9-May-1921             |                              |                               |                     |
| in Gulfport, Mississippi      |                              |                               |                     |
|                               |                              | +Sidney Webster Conn          |                     |
|                               |                              | * Born 22-Aug-1867            |                     |
|                               |                              | * in Hattiesburg, Mississippi |                     |
|                               |                              | * Marr 21 Dec 1893            |                     |
| . Omenia Hamilton Conn))      | 1)                           | in Hansboro, Mississippi      |                     |
| Born 20 Jan 1895              | *                            |                               |                     |
| Died 1 Sep 1976               |                              | +Francis Marian Jenkins       |                     |
| in Gulfport, Mississippi      | *                            | * Born 26 Apr 1842            |                     |
|                               | . Azzalier Marantha Jenkins) | 1)Died 15 Apr 1927            |                     |
|                               | Born 1-Dec-1875              | *                             |                     |
|                               | in Hansboro, Mississippi     | . Annie Wilmuth Seal          |                     |
|                               | Died 13 Jul 1951             | Born 1849                     | Died 1901           |



## **Appendix XIX Ancestor Charts and Group Sheets**

Each section in this appendix contains the ancestor chart for the 2G-Grandparent in Appendix XVIII and the Group Sheet for each ancestor family. A Group Sheet contains the data for each family, limited to names, dates and places. Lists of children were not always fully transcribed from original sources.

Group sheets for descendants will be provided in Volume 2.

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Ancestor and Group Charts for Rev. Peter Ratzlaff and Eva Janzen Ratzlaff

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+) Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff                    b. 29-May-1829 d. 7-Sep-1891 m. Aug-1850  
 ))) 1  
 \*                    +) Peter Janzen  
 \*                    +) Peter Janzen                    b. ca. 1762  
 \*                    +) Peter Janzen                    b. 30 Nov 1793 d. 1-Mar-1862  
 \* \*                    .) Maria Unrau                    b. ca. 1773  
 .) Eva Janzen                    b. Jan-1826 d. 1-Apr-1879 m. Aug-1850  
 .) Eva Ratzlaff                    b. 1809 d. 1833

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|           |                       |   |
|-----------|-----------------------|---|
| Husband:  | Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff |   |
| Born:     | 29-May-1829           | in: Molotschna or Volhynia, South Russia    |
| Baptized: | 1844                  | in: Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 7-Sep-1891            | in: Hoffnungsau, McPherson County, Kansas   |
| Migr:     | 3-Sep-1874            | in: NYC; Teutonia                           |

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|           |              |   |
|-----------|--------------|---|
| Wife:     | Eva Janzen   |   |
| Married:  | Aug-1850     | in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia     |
| Born:     | 1-Jan-1826   | in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia     |
| Baptized: | 1843         | in: Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 1-Apr-1879   | in: Hoffnungsau, McPherson County, Kansas   |
| Migr:     | 3-Sep-1874   | in: NYC; Teutonia                           |
| Father:   | Peter Janzen |   |
| Mother:   | Eva Ratzlaff |   |

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F Child 1 Marie Ratzlaff

|           |                     |   |
|-----------|---------------------|---|
| Born:     | 25-Aug-1853         |   |
| Baptized: | 1873                | in: Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 20-Jul-1925         | in: Corn, Oklahoma                          |
| Spouse:   | Heinrich H. Kliewer |   |
| Married:  | 26-Oct-1876         |   |

---

M Child 2 Peter W. Ratzlaff

|           |                |   |
|-----------|----------------|---|
| Born:     | Aug-1854       | in: Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia    |
| Baptized: | 10-Oct-1875    | in: Hoffnungsau (KS)                      |
| Spouse:   | (widow) Harder |   |
| Married:  | Mar-1889       | in: Hoffnungsau, McPherson County, Kansas |
| Spouse:   | Maria Sawatzky |   |
| Married:  | 9-Sep-1880     |   |

---

F Child 3 Eva Ratzlaff

|           |                 |  |
|-----------|-----------------|--|
| Born:     | 22-Jun-1856     | in: Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Baptized: | 10-Oct-1875     | in: Hoffnungsau (KS)                   |
| Died:     | 21-Aug-1913     |  |
| Spouse:   | Heinrich Nikkel |  |
| Married:  | 17-Jun-1879     |  |

---

M Child 4 Benjamin Ratzlaff

|           |                |  |
|-----------|----------------|--|
| Born:     | 26-Oct-1858    | in: Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Baptized: | 15-Dec-1878    | in: Hoffnungsau (KS)                   |
| Died:     | 12-Aug-1927    |  |
| Spouse:   | Anna Flikinger |  |
| Married:  | 8-Feb-1883     |  |

---

M Child 5 Heinrich P. Ratzlaff

|           |             |  |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| Born:     | 9-Jan-1859  | in: Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia       |
| Baptized: | 26-Sep-1879 | in: Buhler (KS) Ebenezer M.B. (Schellenburg) |
| Died:     | 26-Aug-1916 |  |

---

F Child 6 Anna Ratzlaff

|           |             |  |
|-----------|-------------|--|
| Born:     | 3-Nov-1861  | in: Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia       |
| Baptized: | 11-May-1880 | in: Buhler (KS) Ebenezer M.B. (Schellenburg) |
| Died:     | 3-Jul-1932  |  |

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M Child 7 Jacob P. Ratzlaff

|           |             |   |
|-----------|-------------|---|
| Born:     | 15-Apr-1863 | in: Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia  |
| Baptized: | 27-Sep-1880 | in: Buhler (KS) Ebenezer M.B.           |
| Died:     | 12-Dec-1928 | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas    |
| Buried:   |             | in: Hillsboro (KS) M.B.                 |
| Migr:     | 3-Sep-1874  | in: NYC; Teutonia                       |
| Spouse:   | Maria Unruh |   |
| Married:  | 11-Jan-1890 | in: McPherson, McPherson County, Kansas |

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F Child 8 Katharina Ratzlaff

Born: Aug-1865 in: Waldheim, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 14-Dec-1884 in: Hoffnungsau (KS)  
 Died: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wife: Helena Dirks  
 Married: 30-Jan-1883 in: Hoffnungsau, McPherson County, Kansas  
 Born: 28-Dec-1837 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 4-Dec-1926 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal  
 Migr: 18-Nov-1874 in: NYC; City of London  
 Father: Heinrich J. Dirks  
 Mother: Susanna Isaak

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**PARENTS**


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Husband: Peter Janzen  
 Born: 30 Nov 1793 in: Rudnerweide, Prussia  
 Died: 1-Mar-1862 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Peter Janzen  
 Mother: Maria Unrau  
 Wife: Eva Ratzlaff <sup>a</sup>  
 Married: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Born: 1809 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 1833 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia

F Child 1 Elizabeth Janzen  
 Born: 22-Jul-1824 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 15-Nov-1911  
 Spouse: Heinrich Ratzlaff  
 Married: 1849

F Child 2 Eva Janzen  
 Born: Jan-1826 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1843 in: Alexanderwohl, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 1-Apr-1879 in: Hoffnungsau, McPherson County, Kansas  
 Migr: 3-Sep-1874 in: NYC; Teutonia  
 Spouse: Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 Married: Aug-1850 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia

F Child 3 Sarah Janzen  
 Born: 10-Apr-1828 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 2-Feb-1899  
 Spouse: Jacob Geddert  
 Married: 23-May-1854

F Child 4 Maria Janzen  
 Born: 3-Mar-1830 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 11-Jun-1893  
 Spouse: Johann Kliewer  
 Married: Dec-1854  
 Wife: Eva Nachtigal  
 Born: ca. 1812  
 Died: bef. 1851

F Child 1 Anna Janzen  
 Born: 20Aug-1835 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 12-Mar-1917  
 Spouse: Heinrich Kröker  
 Married: 25-Nov-1855

F Child 2 Katherine Janzen  
 Born: 16-Sep-1837 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 28-Jul-1905  
 Spouse: Franz Adrian  
 Married: 23-Feb-1860

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<sup>a</sup> There are some inconsistencies that could lead to believing that Eva Janzen's mother could have been Peter Janzen's first wife, and Eva Ratzlaff could have been a second wife. Eva Ratzlaff is listed as being born in 1809 which would make her a little young for a daughter born in 1826. This has been attributed to an incorrect birth date, but the recently discovered 1835 census seems to confirm the date and suggests that she may have been a second wife.

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M Child 3 Franz Janzen  
 Born: 9-Nov-1839 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 27-Feb-1872  
 Spouse: Eva Voth  
 Married: 1866

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F Child 4 Agnes Janzen  
 Born: 29-Apr-1841 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 15-Dec-1836  
 Spouse: David Schröder  
 Married: abt. 1858

---

Wife: Marie Kasper  
 Married: 7-Jun-1851  
 Born: 13-Sep-1823 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 3-Jan-1904 in: Inman, Kansas  
 Father: Heinrich Kasper  
 Mother: Maria Flaming

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## GRANDPARENTS

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Husband: Peter Janzen  
 Born: ca. 1762 in: Prussia  
 Died: in: Rudnerweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Peter Janzen

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Wife: Maria Unrau  
 Born: ca. 1773 in: Prussia  
 Died: in: Rudnerweide, Molotschna, South Russia

---

F Child 1 Maria Janzen  
 Born: 31-Jan-1792  
 Died: 23-Feb-1795

---

M Child 2 Peter Janzen  
 Born: 30 Nov 1793 in: Rudnerweide, Prussia  
 Died: 1-Mar-1862 in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Eva Ratzlaff  
 Spouse: Eva Nachtigal  
 Spouse: Marie Kasper  
 Married: 7-Jun-1851

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M Child 3 Heinrich Janzen  
 Born: 13-Feb-1796  
 Died: 3-Jan-1800

---

M Child 4 Franz Janzen  
 Born: 8-Mar-1798  
 Died: 22-Mar-1862  
 Spouse: Elizabeth Görtzen  
 Married: 14-Nov-1822

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M Child 5 Heinrich Janzen  
 Born: 17-Nov-1800  
 Died: 27-Apr-1812

---

F Child 6 Sarah Janzen  
 Born: 23-Jan-1803  
 Died: 17-Apr-1812

---

M Child 7 Jacob Janzen  
 Born: 17-Jan-1805  
 Died: 8-Feb-1896

---

F Child 7 Maria Janzen  
 Born: 5-Sep-1807

---

F Child 8 Anna Janzen  
 Born: 1-Sep-1810

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Ancestor and Group Charts for Andreas B. Unruh and Helena Dirks Unruh

+) \_\_\_\_\_ Unruh                      b. ca. 1720 d. 1738  
     +) Jeorgen Unruh                      b. ca. 1740 m. ca. 1779  
         +) Andreas Unruh                      b. 1781 d. 1857 m. ca. 1806  
             +) Benjamin Unruh                      b. ca. 1812 m. ca. 1834  
                 \*     .) Anna Koehn                      b. 1781 d. 1850 m. ca. 1806  
 +) Andreas B. Unruh                      b. 1835 d. 1881  
 \*     .) Maria Buller                      b. ca. 1814 d. ca. 1856 m. ca. 1834  
 ))) 1  
 \*                      +) David Dircks  
 \*                      +) Hans Dircks  
 \*                      \*     \*     +) \_\_\_\_\_ Schmidt  
 \*                      \*     \*     +) Casper Schmidt  
 \*                      \*     .) Sarcke Schmidt     b. 29-May-1701  
 \*                      +) Johann D. Dircks                      b. 1753 d. 1838  
 \*                      \*     \*     +) Godtlieb Schmidt  
 \*                      \*     .) Ancke Schmiten  
 \*     +) Heinrich J. Dirks                      b. 20-May-1808 d. 27-Apr-1887  
 \*     \*     \*                      +) \_\_\_\_\_ Unrau  
 \*     \*     \*                      +) Heinrich Unrau  
 \*     \*     \*                      +) Hinrich Unrau  
 \*     \*     \*     +) Hinrich Unrau  
 \*     \*     .) Ancke Unruh  
 .) Helena Dirks                              b. 28-Dec-1837 d. 4-Dec-1926  
     \*     +) Peter Isaak  
     .) Susanna Isaak                      b. 16-Sep-1808 d. 27-Apr-1887  
     .) Catherine \_\_\_\_\_

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Husband: Andreas B. Unruh  
     Born: 1835                              in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
     Died: 1881                              in: Pawnee Rock, Barton County, Kansas  
     Migr: 18-Nov-1874                      in: NYC; City of London  
 Father: Benjamin Unruh  
 Mother: Maria Buller

---

Wife: Helena Dirks  
     Born: 28-Dec-1837                      in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
     Died: 4-Dec-1926                      in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
     Buried:                                  in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal  
     Migr: 18-Nov-1874                      in: NYC; City of London  
     Father: Heinrich J. Dirks  
     Mother: Susanna Isaak

---

M Child 1 Jacob Andreas Unruh  
     Born: 23-Dec-1860                      in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
     Died: 24-Jul-1927                      in: Hillsboro, Kansas

---

F Child 2 Maria Unruh  
     Born: 11-Sep-1873                      in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
     Baptized: 3-Dec-1905                      in: Lehigh (KS) M.B.  
     Died: 1-Nov-1947                      in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
     Buried:                                  in: Hillsboro (KS) M.B.  
     Migr: 18-Nov-1874                      in: NYC; City of London  
     Spouse: Jacob P. Ratzlaff  
     Married: 11-Jan-1890                      in: McPherson, McPherson County, Kansas

**PARENTS**

---

Husband: Benjamin Unruh  
     Born: ca. 1812  
     Father: Andreas Unruh  
     Mother: Anna Koehn

---

Wife: Maria Buller  
     Married: ca. 1834  
     Born: ca. 1814  
     Died: ca. 1834

---

M Child 1 Andreas B. Unruh  
     Born: 1835                              in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia

Died: 1881 in: Pawnee Rock, Barton County, Kansas  
 Migr: 18-Nov-1874 in: NYC; City of London  
 Spouse: Helena Dirks

---

M Child 2 Benjamin Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1839

---

Husband: Heinrich J. Dirks  
 Born: 20-May-1808 in: Volhynia, Russia  
 Migr: 18 Nov 1874 in: NYC: S.S. City of London  
 Father: Johann D. Dircks  
 Mother: Ancke Unruh

---

Wife: Susanna Isaak  
 Born: 16-Sep-1808  
 Died: 27-Apr-1887 in: Kansas  
 Migr: 18 Nov 1874 in: NYC: City of London  
 Father: Peter Isaak  
 Mother: Catherine \_\_\_\_\_

---

F Child 1 Susanna Dirks  
 Born: 10-Mar-1828 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 1909 in: Pawnee Rock, Barton County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Peter Unruh  
 Married: 1846

---

M Child 2 Karl Dirks  
 Born: 21-Feb-1830 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 11-Nov-1864 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Spouse: Helena Isaak  
 Married: 30-Jun-1850  
 Spouse: Katherine Unruh

---

F Child 3 Anna Dirks  
 Born: 16-Mar-1831 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Spouse: Karl Jantz

---

M Child 4 Heinrich H. Dirks  
 Born: 4-Apr-1832 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 20-Jul-1894 in: Marion, South Dakota  
 Migr: in: NYC: City of London  
 Spouse: Aganetha H. Buller

---

M Child 5 Benjamin H. Dirks  
 Born: 29-Nov-1833 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 12-Mar-1917 in: Marion, South Dakota  
 Spouse: Aganetha Schnartner

---

M Child 6 John Dirks  
 Born: 26-Oct-1835 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Spouse: Eva Böse

---

F Child 7 Helena Dirks  
 Born: 28-Dec-1837 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 4-Dec-1926 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal  
 Migr: 18-Nov-1874 in: NYC; City of London  
 Spouse: Andreas B. Unruh  
 Spouse: Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 Married: 30-Jan-1883 in: Hoffnungsau, McPherson Cnty, Kansas  
 Spouse: Abraham Richert

---

F Child 8 Eva Dirks  
 Born: 9-Apr-1839 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 25-Sep-1841 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia

---

F Child 9 Elizabeth Dirks  
 Born: 3-Feb-1842 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Spouse: Benjamin A. Unruh

---

M Child 10 Jacob H. Dirks  
 Born: 6-Jan-1844 in: Jadwaninne, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 29-Mar-1919 in: Greensburg, Kansas  
 Spouse: Susanna Unruh  
 Married: 21-Oct-1865

---

M Child 11 Abraham Dirks  
 Born: 17-May-1846 in: Jadwaninne, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 3-Nov-1922

Spouse: Nettie Siebert

---

F Child 12 Maria Dirks  
 Born: 30-Apr-1849 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 17-Oct-1871  
 Spouse: Heinrich Jantz

---

M Child 13 Tobias Dirks  
 Born: 26-May-1850 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 1910 in: Durham, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Elizabeth Schmidt

---

M Child 14 Peter H. (Rev.) Dirks  
 Born: 20-Jul-1853 in: Karlswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 25-Jul-1924 in: Great Bend, Barton County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Susanna Schmidt

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## GRANDPARENTS

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---

Husband: Andreas Unruh  
 Born: 1781  
 Died: 1857  
 Father: Jeorgen Unruh

---

Wife: Anna Koehn  
 Married: ca. 1806  
 Born: 1781  
 Died: 1850

---

F Child 1 Marie Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1809  
 Spouse: Heinrich Isaak  
 Married: ca. 1833

---

M Child 2 Benjamin Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1812  
 Died: ca. 1834  
 Spouse: Maria Buller  
 Married: ca. 1834

---

M Child 3 Kornelius Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1816  
 Spouse: Mary Koehn  
 Married: 1838

---

M Child 4 Tobias A. Unruh  
 Born: 28-May-1819 in: Karolswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Died: 23-July-1875 in: Turner County, South Dakota  
 Spouse: Helena Thomas  
 Married: ca. 1838

---

F Child 5 Susanna A. Unruh  
 Born: 1821  
 Died: 1896  
 Spouse: Benjamin Unruh  
 Married: ca. 1836

---

F Child 6 Katharina Unruh  
 Born: 29-Mar-1823  
 Died: 6-Nov-1852 in: Karolswalde, Volhynia, South Russia  
 Spouse: Benjamin B. Dirks  
 Married: ca. 1837

---

F Child 7 Helena Unruh  
 Born: 1823  
 Died: 1885  
 Spouse: Heinrich H. Buller  
 Married: ca. 1843

---

Husband: Johann D. Dircks also known as Hans Dirks  
 Born: 1753 in: Jeziorka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Died: 1838  
 Father: Hans Dircks  
 Mother: Ancke Schmiten

---

Wife: Ancke Unruh  
 Father: Hinrich Unrau

---

M Child 1 Tobias Dirks

---

M Child 2 Karl Dirks

---

M Child 3 Benjamin J.(Alt.) Dirks  
 Born: 10-Jan-1781  
 Died: 3-Mar-1853  
 Spouse: Katharina Koehn

---

M Child 4 Heinrich J. Dirks  
 Born: 20-May-1808 in: Volhynia, Russia  
 Died: 27-Apr-1887 in: Kansas  
 Migr: 18 Nov 1874 in: NYC: S.S. City of London  
 Spouse: Susanna Isaak

---

F Child 5 Lische Dircks

---

Husband: Peter Isaak

---

Wife: Catherine \_\_\_\_\_

---

F Child 1 Susanna Isaak  
 Born: 16-Sep-1808  
 Died: 27-Apr-1887 in: Kansas  
 Migr: 18 Nov 1874 in: NYC: City of London  
 Spouse: Heinrich J. Dirks

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### GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

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---

Husband: Jeorgen Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1740  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Unruh

---

M Child 1 Andreas Unruh  
 Born: 1781  
 Died: 1857  
 Spouse: Anna Koehn  
 Married: ca. 1806

---

M Child 2 Heinrich Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1784

---

M Child 3 David G. Unruh  
 Born: 1788

---

Husband: Hans Dircks  
 Born: in: Klein Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: David Dircks  
 Mother: Sarcke Schmidt

---

Wife: Ancke Schmiten  
 Father: Godtlieb Schmidt

---

M Child 1 Johann D. Dircks  
 Born: 1753 in: Jeziorka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Died: 1838  
 Spouse: Ancke Unruh

---

M Child 2 Heinrich Dircks  
 Spouse: Efcke Ratzlaff

---

Husband: Hinrich Unrau  
 Father: Hinrich Unrau

---

F Child 1 Ancke Unruh  
 Spouse: Johann D. Dircks

---



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### 2G-GRANDPARENTS

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---

Husband: \_\_\_\_\_ Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1720  
 Died: 1738

---

M Child 1 Jeorgen Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1740

---

M Child 2 Andreas Unruh  
 Born: ca. 1745

---

---

Husband: David Dircks  
 Wife: Sarcke Schmidt  
 Born: 29-May-1701  
 Father: Casper Schmidt

---

M Child 1 Hans Dircks  
 Born: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Klein Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Spouse: Ancke Schmiten

---

M Child 2 Gehrath Dircks  
 M Child 3 David Dircks  
 F Child 4 ? Dircksen

---

Husband: Godtlieb Schmidt  
 Died: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---

F Child 1 Ancke Schmiten  
 Spouse: Hans Dircks

---

Husband: Hinrich Unrau  
 Father: Heinrich Unrau

---

M Child 1 Hinrich Unrau

---



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### 3G-GRANDPARENTS

---

Husband: Casper Schmidt  
 Born: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Schmidt

---

M Child 1 Michael Schmidt  
 Born: 29-Dec-1694  
 Spouse: Trudcke Bullers  
 Married: 6-Nov-1722

---

F Child 2 Sarcke Schmidt  
 Born: 29-May-1701  
 Spouse: David Dircks

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---

 Ancestor and Group Charts for Kornelius Plenert and Anna Bartel Plenert
 

---

+) Kornelius Plenert  
 +) Kornelius Plenert                      b. 6-Jan-1815 d. 1-Aug-1900  
 \*    .) Maria Unruh  
 ))) 1  
 \*    +) Johann (Ält.) Bartel              b. 1797 d. 18-Feb-1862  
      .) Anna Bartel                        b. 26-Aug-1834 d. 30-Jun-1907  
      .) Maria Ebert

---

Husband: Kornelius Plenert also known as Cornelius Plenert  
 Born: 6-Jan-1815                      in: Niederausmaas, Culm, Prussia  
 Died: 1-Aug-1900                      in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried:                                    in: French Creek Cemetery, Hillsboro  
 Migr: 4-Jul-1879  
 Father: Kornelius Plenert  
 Mother: Maria Unruh

---

Wife: Eva Foth  
 Married: 25-Aug-1842                    in: Prussia  
 Died: About 1861

---

F Child 1 Agnetha Plenert  
 Born: 20 Apr 1851                      in: Czastkow, Dt. Kazun, Poland  
 Died: 15-May-1915                      in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: John P. Bartel  
 Married: 16 Feb 1873

---

M Child 2 Peter Plenert  
 Born: 1854                                in: Czastkow, Deutsch Kazun, Poland  
 Spouse: Sylvia

---

Wife: Anna Bartel  
 Married: 1862                              in: Dt. Kazun, Poland  
 Born: 26-Aug-1834                      in: Dt. Kazun (Markoczysna), Poland  
 Died: 30-Jun-1907                      in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: 3-Jul-1907                      in: French Creek Cemetery, Hillsboro  
 Migr: 4-Jul-1879  
 Father: Johann (Ält.) Bartel  
 Mother: Maria Ebert

---

F Child 1 Maria Plenert  
 Born: 6-Feb-1863                      in: Dt. Kazun (Czastkow), Poland  
 Died: 7-Jul-1939  
 Spouse: David Kopper  
 Married: 24-11-1884

---

M Child 2 William Plenert  
 Born: 1863                                in: Dt. Kazun (Czastkow), Poland  
 Died: 1869

---

M Child 3 Johann Plenert also known as Rev. John Plenert  
 Born: 17-Nov-1864                      in: Dt. Kazun (Neuhof), Poland  
 Died: 26-Sep-1937  
 Spouse: Amelia Ratzlaff  
 Married: 11 Jul 1886

---

M Child 4 Cornelius J. Plenert  
 Born: 1-Apr-1867                      in: Dt. Kazun, Poland  
 Died: 13-Mar-1913                      in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried:                                    in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal  
 Migr: 4-Jul-1879  
 Spouse: Bena Ratzlaff  
 Married: 10-Nov-1892                    in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas

---

F Child 5 Anna Plenert  
 Born: 12-Jan-1869                      in: Dt. Kazun (Neuhof), Poland  
 Died: 1-May-1952  
 Spouse: Andrew Schröder  
 Married: 20 Nov 1889

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M Child 6 Paul Plenert  
 Born: 1870                                in: Dt. Kazun (Neuhof), Poland  
 Died: 1870 (8 mo.)

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**PARENTS**


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|                               |                                      |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Husband: Kornelius Plenert    |                                      |
| Wife: Maria Unruh             |                                      |
| M Child 1 Kornelius Plenert   |                                      |
| Born: 6-Jan-1815              | in: Niederausmaas, Culm, Prussia     |
| Died: 1-Aug-1900              | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Buried:                       | in: French Creek Cemetery, Hillsboro |
| Migr: 4-Jul-1879              |                                      |
| Spouse: Eva Foth              |                                      |
| Married: 25-Aug-1842          | in: Prussia                          |
| Spouse: Anna Bartel           |                                      |
| Married: 1862                 | in: Dt. Kazun, Poland                |
| M Child 2 Peter Plenert       |                                      |
| Born: Oct 1816                |                                      |
| Died: 11 Feb 1821             | in: Striowken                        |
| F Child 3 Maria Plenert       |                                      |
| Born: 16 Mar 1819             | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| F Child 4 Anna Plenert        |                                      |
| Born: 30 Oct 1821             | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| F Child 5 Eva Plenert         |                                      |
| Born: 17 Oct 1823             | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| M Child 6 Andreas Plenert     |                                      |
| Born: 10 Mar 1826             | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| M Child 7 David Plenert       |                                      |
| Born: 9 Feb 1828              | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| F Child 8 Catharina Plenert   |                                      |
| Born: 25 Jul 1829             | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| M Child 9 Johann Plenert      |                                      |
| Born: 7 Nov 1833              | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| Died: 1 Jan 1836              | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| F Child 10 Elisabeth Plenert  |                                      |
| Born: 25 Mar 1838             | in: Striowken, Culm, Prussia         |
| Husband: Johann (Ält.) Bartel |                                      |
| Born: 1797                    |                                      |
| Died: 18-Feb-1862             | in: Dt. Kazun, Poland                |
| Wife: Maria Ebert             |                                      |
| F Child 1 Anna Bartel         |                                      |
| Born: 26-Aug-1834             | in: Dt. Kazun (Markoczysna), Poland  |
| Died: 30-Jun-1907             | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Buried: 3-Jul-1907            | in: French Creek Cemetery, Hillsboro |
| Migr: 4-Jul-1879              |                                      |
| Spouse: Kornelius Plenert     |                                      |
| Married: 1862                 | in: Dt. Kazun, Poland                |
| F Child 2 Eva Bartel          |                                      |
| Born: 1834                    |                                      |
| Died: after 1880              | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| M Child 3 John D. Bartel      |                                      |
| Born: 20-Oct-1838             | in: Dt. Kazun (Markoczysna), Poland  |
| Died: 20-Aug-1904             | in: Cavalier County, North Dakota    |
| Spouse: Eva Vogt              |                                      |
| Married: 20-Oct-1858          |                                      |

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 Ancestor and Group Charts for Heinrich W. Ratzlaff and Anna Wilms Ratzlaff
 

---

+) "first" Ratzlaff  
 +) Hans Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +) Ält. Voht  
 \* .) \_\_\_\_\_ Vohten  
 +) Hans Ratzlaff b. 1-Jan-1661  
 +) Berent Ratzlaff b. 9-Sep-1681  
 +) Hans (Rev.) Ratzlaff b. 18-Jun-1727 d. 11-Jul-1788  
 +) Hinrich Ratzlaff b. 16-Feb-1768 d. 12-Aug-1851  
 \* \* +) Abraham Cornels  
 \* .) Ancke Cornels b. 7-Jul-1732  
 \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Nachtigahl  
 \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Nachtigahl  
 \* \* +) Jeorgen Nachtigahl d. 15-Jan-1727  
 \* .) Sarcke Nachtigahls  
 \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Sparling  
 \* .) Sarcke Sparling  
 +) Andreus Ratzlaff b. 31-Aug-1799 d. 9-Mar-1873  
 \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Unrau  
 \* \* +) Heinrich Unrau  
 \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Unrau  
 \* \* +) Hans Unrau  
 \* \* +) Hans Unrau b. 29-Sep-1722  
 \* \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Nachtigahl  
 \* \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Nachtigahl  
 \* \* \* +) Jeorgen Nachtigahl d. 15-Jan-1727  
 \* \* \* .) Ancke Nachtigahls  
 \* \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Sparling  
 \* \* \* .) Sarcke Sparling  
 \* .) Sarcke Unrauen b. 18-Nov-1762  
 \* \* +) \_\_\_\_\_ Sparling  
 \* \* +) Isaac Sparling  
 \* \* +) Tobias Sparling  
 \* .) Ancke Sparling b. 29-Mar-1725  
 \* \* +) "first" Ratzlaff  
 \* \* +) Hans Ratzlaff  
 \* \* \* +) Ält. Voht  
 \* \* \* .) \_\_\_\_\_ Vohten  
 \* .) Trincke Ratzlaff b. 11-Feb-1687  
 +) Heinrich W. Ratzlaff b. 10-Nov-1829 d. 30-Sep-1922  
 \* .) Elizabeth Drier b. ca. 1800 d. 9 Mar 1873  
 ))) 1  
 \* +) Georg Wilhelm b. 1800  
 .) Anna Wilms b. 5-Nov-1837 d. 2-Sep-1922  
 \* +) Peter Wohlgemuth b. 1779  
 .) Anna Wolgamut b. 22 Jan 1812  
 \* +) Abraham Ewert  
 .) Catharina Ewert b. 1778

---

|           |                      |  |
|-----------|----------------------|--|
| Husband:  | Heinrich W. Ratzlaff |  |
| Born:     | 10-Nov-1829          | in: Ehrentahl (Ostrower Kaempe), Schwetz, Pr |
| Baptized: | 1844                 | in: Prussia                                  |
| Died:     | 30-Sep-1922          | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas         |
| Buried:   |                      | in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal               |
| Migr:     | Apr-1973             |  |
| Father:   | Andreus Ratzlaff     |  |
| Mother:   | Elizabeth Drier      |  |

---

|          |             |                                  |
|----------|-------------|----------------------------------|
| Wife:    | Anna Unruh  |                                  |
| Married: | 1852        |                                  |
| Born:    | 4-Aug-1818  | in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia |
| Died:    | 30-Jan-1858 |                                  |

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|           |                 |  |
|-----------|-----------------|--|
| M Child 1 | Johann Ratzlaff |  |
| Born:     | 1-Nov-1844      | in: Ehrentahl (Ostrower Kaempe), Schwetz, Pr |
| Spouse:   | Maria Funk      |  |
| Married:  | 20-Nov-1873     | in: Deutsch Wymysle, Poland                  |
| Wife:     | Anna Wilms      |  |

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Married: 29-Aug-1860 in: Wola Wodzinska, Poland  
 Born: 5-Nov-1837 in: Sanskau, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Baptized: 1851 in: Dt. Kazun, Poland  
 Died: 2-Sep-1922 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal  
 Migr: Apr-1873  
 Father: Georg Wilhelm  
 Mother: Anna Wolgamut

---

M Child 1 Henry W. Ratzlaff

---

F Child 2 Paulina Ratzlaff

Born: 1862 in: Wola Wodzinska, Poland

---

M Child 3 John Henry Ratzlaff

Born: 20-Apr-1864 in: Wola Wodzinska, Poland  
 Died: 22-Feb-1931 in: Orienta, Major County, Oklahoma

---

F Child 4 Amelia Ratzlaff also known as Emilie Ratzlaff

Born: 23-Dec-1866 in: Dt. Kazun, Poland  
 Died: 3-May-1943 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Johann Plenert  
 Married: 11 Jul 1886

---

F Child 5 Marie Ratzlaff

Born: 25-Mar-1869 in: Dt. Hasan, Poland  
 Died: 10-Nov-1962 in: Anaheim, California

---

M Child 6 David F. Ratzlaff

Born: 9-Mar-1871 in: Wola Wodzinska, Poland  
 Died: 14-May-1957 in: Reedley, Fresno County, California

---

F Child 7 Bena Ratzlaff

Born: 29-Jan-1873 in: Wola-Wodzinska, Poland  
 Baptized: 19-Dec-1890 in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal  
 Died: 6-Jul-1957 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: 9-Jul-1957 in: Hillsboro (KS) Johannestal  
 Migr: 18-Apr-1873 in: Hillsboro, Kansas  
 Spouse: Cornelius J. Plenert  
 Married: 10-Nov-1892 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas

---

F Child 8 Emma Ratzlaff

Born: 15-Jun-1875 in: Detroit, Michigan  
 Died: 29-Jul-1875 in: Detroit, Michigan

---

M Child 9 Herman Ratzlaff

Born: Oct-1876 in: Yankton, South Dakota  
 Died: 27-Jul-1950 in: Meno, Oklahoma

---

F Child 10 Anna Ratzlaff

Born: 15-Mar-1879 in: Yankton, South Dakota  
 Died: 12-Dec-1887 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas

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**PARENTS**

---

Husband: Andreus Ratzlaff  
 Born: 31-Aug-1799 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Died: 9-Mar-1873 in: Wola Wodzinska, Poland  
 Father: Hinrich Ratzlaff  
 Mother: Sarcke Unrauen

---

Wife: Elizabeth Drier

Married: 1821 in: Ehrentahl, Prussia  
 Born: ca. 1800  
 Died: 9 Mar 1873 in: Wola Wodzinska, Poland

---

M Child 1 Andreas Ratzlaff

Born: 1 Aug 1822 in: Ehrentahl (Ostrower Kaempe), Schwetz, Pr  
 Died: 17 Mar 1915

---

M Child 2 Jacob Ratzlaff

Born: ca. 1824 in: Ehrentahl (Ostrower Kaempe), Schwetz, Pr

---

M Child 3 Peter Ratzlaff

Born: 22 Aug 1826 in: Ehrentahl (Ostrower Kaempe), Schwetz, Pr  
 Spouse: Eva Voth

---

F Child 4 Emilie Ratzlaff

Born: ca. 1828 in: Ehrentahl (Ostrower Kaempe), Schwetz, Pr

---

M Child 5 Heinrich W. Ratzlaff



---

Husband: Hinrich Ratzlaff  
 Born: 16-Feb-1768  
 Baptized: 21-Aug-1790  
 Died: 12-Aug-1851  
 Father: Hans (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 Mother: Ancke Cornels

---

Wife: Sarcke Unrauen  
 Married: 28-Mar-1790 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Born: 18-Nov-1762 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: Hans Unrau  
 Mother: Ancke Sparling

---

F Child 1 Ancke Ratzlaff  
 Born: 19-Jan-1791 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Spouse: Peter Pankratz  
 Married: 11-Jan-1810 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---

M Child 2 Andreus Ratzlaff  
 Born: 31-Aug-1799 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Died: 9-Mar-1873 in: Wola Wodzinska, Poland  
 Spouse: Elizabeth Drier  
 Married: 1821 in: Ehrentahl, Prussia

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M Child 3 Behrend Ratzlaff  
 Born: 14-Aug-1805 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

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---

Husband: Peter Wohlgemuth  
 Born: 1779  
 Died: in: Montau, Prussia

---

Wife: Catharina Ewert  
 Married: 20 Jun 1802 in: Montau, Prussia  
 Born: 1778 in: Montau, Prussia  
 Father: Abraham Ewert

---

M Child 1 Peter Wohlgemuth  
 Born: 17 Mar 1805 in: Parsken, Montau, Prussia

---

M Child 2 Wilhelm Wohlgemuth  
 Born: 10 Apr 1809 in: Montau, Prussia

---

F Child 3 Anna Wolgamut  
 Born: 22 Jan 1812 in: Montau, Prussia  
 Spouse: Georg Wilhelm  
 Married: 19 Nov 1835 in: Montau, Prussia

---

F Child 4 Catharina Wohlgemuth  
 Born: 4 May 1814 in: Montau, Prussia

---

M Child 5 Heinrich Wohlgemuth  
 Born: 3 Jan 1817 in: Montau, Prussia

---

F Child 6 Agnete Wohlgemuth  
 Born: 12 May 1820 in: Montau, Prussia

---

F Child 7 Helena Wohlgemuth  
 Born: 1 Nov 1822 in: Montau, Prussia

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### GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

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---

Husband: Hans (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 Born: 18-Jun-1727  
 Died: 11-Jul-1788 in: Konopat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: Berent Ratzlaff

---

Wife: Ancke Cornels  
 Married: Nov-1748 in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Born: 7-Jul-1732  
 Father: Abraham Cornels  
 Mother: Sarcke Nachtigahls

---

M Child 1 Hinrich Ratzlaff  
 Born: 16-Feb-1768  
 Baptized: 21-Aug-1790  
 Died: 12-Aug-1851  
 Spouse: Sarcke Unrauen  
 Married: 28-Mar-1790 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---

---

Husband: Hans Unrau  
 Born: 29-Sep-1722 in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: Hans Unrau  
 Mother: Ancke Nachtigahls

---

Wife: Ancke Sparling  
 Married: 1746  
 Born: 29-Mar-1725 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: Tobias Sparling  
 Mother: Trincke Ratzlaff

---

F Child 1 Sarcke Unrauen  
 Born: 18-Nov-1762 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Spouse: Hinrich Ratzlaff  
 Married: 28-Mar-1790 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---



---

Husband: Abraham Ewert  
 Died: in: Montau, Prussia

---

F Child 1 Catharina Ewert  
 Born: 1778 in: Montau, Prussia  
 Spouse: Peter Wohlgemuth  
 Married: 20 Jun 1802 in: Montau, Prussia

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## 2G-GRANDPARENTS

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---

Husband: Berent Ratzlaff  
 Born: 9-Sep-1681  
 Father: Hans Ratzlaff

---

M Child 1 Hans (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 Born: 18-Jun-1727  
 Died: 11-Jul-1788 in: Konopat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Spouse: Ancke Cornels  
 Married: Nov-1748 in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia

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---

Husband: Abraham Cornels  
 Wife: Sarcke Nachtigahls  
 Married: in: Dorposch, Culm, Prussia  
 Father: Jeorgen Nachtigahl  
 Mother: Sarcke Sparling

---

F Child 1 Ancke Cornels  
 Born: 7-Jul-1732  
 Died:  
 Spouse: Hans (Rev.) Ratzlaff  
 Married: Nov-1748 in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia

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---

Husband: Hans Unrau  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Unrau

---

Wife: Ancke Nachtigahls  
 Married: in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: Jeorgen Nachtigahl  
 Mother: Sarcke Sparling

---

M Child 1 Hans Unrau  
 Born: 29-Sep-1722 in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Spouse: Ancke Sparling  
 Married: 1746

---



---

Husband: Tobias Sparling  
 Born: in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Father: Isaac Sparling

---

Wife: Trincke Ratzlaff  
 Born: 11-Feb-1687  
 Father: Hans Ratzlaff

---

F Child 1 Ancke Sparling  
 Born: 29-Mar-1725 in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Spouse: Hans Unrau  
 Married: 1746

---

**3G-GRANDPARENTS**


---

Husband: Hans Ratzlaff  
 Born: 1-Jan-1661  
 Father: Hans Ratzlaff

---

M Child 1 Berent Ratzlaff  
 Born: 9-Sep-1681

---

Husband: Jeorgen Nachtigahl  
 Died: 15-Jan-1727  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Nachtigahl

---

Wife: Sarcke Sparling  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Sparling

---

F Child 1 Sarcke Nachtigahls  
 Spouse: Abraham Cornels  
 Married: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Dorposch, Culm, Prussia

---

F Child 2 Ancke Nachtigahls  
 Spouse: Hans Unrau  
 Married: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia

---

Husband: \_\_\_\_\_ Unrau  
 Father: Heinrich Unrau

---

M Child 1 Hans Unrau  
 Spouse: Ancke Nachtigahls  
 Married: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia

---

Husband: Jeorgen Nachtigahl  
 Died: 15-Jan-1727  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Nachtigahl

---

Wife: Sarcke Sparling  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Sparling

---

F Child 1 Sarcke Nachtigahls  
 Spouse: Abraham Cornels  
 Married: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Dorposch, Culm, Prussia

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F Child 2 Ancke Nachtigahls  
 Spouse: Hans Unrau  
 Married: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia

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Husband: Isaac Sparling  
 Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Sparling

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M Child 1 Tobias Sparling  
 Born: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Kunpat, Schwetz, Prussia  
 Spouse: Trincke Ratzlaff

**4G-GRANDPARENTS**


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Husband: Hans Ratzlaff  
 Born:  
 Died:  
 Father: "first" Ratzlaff  
 Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ Vohten

---

M Child 1 Berent (Ältester) Ratzlaff  
 Born:  
 Died: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---

M Child 2 Hans Ratzlaff  
 Born: 1-Jan-1661

---

F Child 3 Trincke Ratzlaff  
 Born: 11-Feb-1687  
 Spouse: Tobias Sparling  
 Spouse: Peter Janz  
 Married: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---

M Child 4 Tobias Ratzlaff  
 Born: 28-Aug-1692

F Child 5 Liske Ratzlaffen  
 F Child 6 Sarcke Ratzlaffen  
     Born: 3-May-1695  
 F Child 7 Ancke Ratzlaffen  
     Born: 11-Mar-1698  
 M Child 8 Adam Ratzlaff  
     Born: 19-Sep-1700  
 M Child 9 Jacob Ratzlaff  
     Born: 27-Nov-1704  
     Spouse: Elscke Schmiten

---

Husband: Hans Ratzlaff  
     Born:  
     Died:  
     Father: "first" Ratzlaff  
     Mother: \_\_\_\_\_ Vohten

---

M Child 1 Berent (Ältester) Ratzlaff  
     Born:  
     Died: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---

M Child 2 Hans Ratzlaff  
     Born: 1-Jan-1661

---

F Child 3 Trincke Ratzlaff  
     Born: 11-Feb-1687  
     Spouse: Tobias Sparling  
     Spouse: Peter Janz  
     Married: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Przechowka, Schwetz, Prussia

---

M Child 4 Tobias Ratzlaff  
     Born: 28-Aug-1692

---

F Child 5 Liske Ratzlaffen  
 F Child 6 Sarcke Ratzlaffen  
     Born: 3-May-1695  
 F Child 7 Ancke Ratzlaffen  
     Born: 11-Mar-1698  
 M Child 8 Adam Ratzlaff  
     Born: 19-Sep-1700  
 M Child 9 Jacob Ratzlaff  
     Born: 27-Nov-1704  
     Spouse: Elscke Schmiten

---

Husband: \_\_\_\_\_ Sparling

---

M Child 1 Isaac Sparling  
 F Child 2 Sarcke Sparling  
     Spouse: Jeorgen Nachtigahl

---

Husband: Heinrich Unrau  
     Father: \_\_\_\_\_ Unrau

---

M Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Unrau  
 M Child 2 Hinrich Unrau

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### 5G-GRANDPARENTS

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Husband: "first" Ratzlaff  
     Born:  
     Wife: \_\_\_\_\_ Vohten  
     Married:  
     Born: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Culm, Prussia  
     Father: Ält. Voht

---

M Child 1 Hans Ratzlaff  
     Born:  
     Died:

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Ancestor and Group Charts for Peter P. Warkentin and Justina Wiens Warkentin

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+) Arendt Warkentin  
 +) Peter Aron Warkentin b. 1787  
 +) Peter Warkentin b. 28-Oct-1817 d. 1895  
 +) Peter P. Warkentin b. 23-Dec-1838 d. 5-Jul-1923  
 \* \* +) Paul Schellenberg b. 1634 d. 7-Feb-1719  
 \* \* +) Jakob Schellenberg b. 1687 d. 30-Nov-1757  
 \* \* +) Gerhard Schellenberg b. 1725 d. 6-Jan-1802  
 \* \* \* .) Christina Loewen b. 1700 d. 1760  
 \* \* +) Gerhard Schellenberg b. 9-May-1759 d. 10-Feb-1813  
 \* \* \* .) Anna Klassen d. c.1760 m. 13-May-1753  
 \* \* +) Jakob G. Schellenberg b. 7-Sep-1792 d. 22-Dec-1872  
 \* \* \* \* +) Heinrich Günther b. 1730 d. 3-Feb-1806  
 \* \* \* .) Helena Günther b. 10-Dec-1757  
 \* \* \* .) Unknown b. 1727 d. 15-Dec-1800  
 \* .) Margaretha Schellenberg b. 9-Jun-1817 d. 13-Nov-1855  
 \* \* +) Heinrich Hamm d. bef. 1816  
 \* .) Elizabeth Hamm b. 2-May-1798 d. 13-Mar-1838  
 ))) 1  
 \* +) Peter Wiens d. ca 1839  
 \* +) Johann Wiens b. 14-Jan-1812 d. 11-Jan-1892  
 .) Justina Wiens b. 6-Jul-1840 d. 17-Mar-1924  
 \* +) Peter Wiebe d. bef. 1834  
 .) Katharina Wiebe b. 1822 d. 10-Oct-1875

---

Husband: Peter P. Warkentin  
 Born: 23-Dec-1838 in: Neukirch, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1859 in: South Russia  
 Died: 5-Jul-1923 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Hillsboro (KS) Gnadenu  
 Migr: 15-Jul-1874 in: NYC; City of Brooklyn  
 Father: Peter Warkentin  
 Mother: Margaretha Schellenberg

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Wife: Justina Wiens  
 Married: 7-Mar-1861 in: Molotschna, South Russia  
 Born: 6-Jul-1840 in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Baptized: 1859  
 Died: 17-Mar-1924 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Hillsboro (KS) Gnadenu  
 Migr: 15-Jul-1874 in: NYC; City of Brooklyn  
 Father: Johann Wiens  
 Mother: Katharina Wiebe

---

F Child 1 Katharina Warkentin  
 Born: 6-Feb-1862 in: Schwesterthal, Crimea, South Russia  
 Died: 13-Apr-1907 in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Bernhard Friesen  
 Married: 20-Mar-1884  
 Spouse: Jakob Konrath  
 Married: 20-Oct-1895

---

M Child 2 Peter J. Warkentin  
 Born: 26-Jul-1863 in: Schwesterthal, Crimea, South Russia  
 Baptized: 14-May-1880 in: Hillsboro (KS) Gnadenu  
 Died: 29-Jan-1937 in: Dinuba, Tulare County, California  
 Buried: in: Zion KMB Cem., Dinuba, California  
 Migr: 15-Jul-1874 in: NYC; City of Brooklyn  
 Spouse: Anna Koop  
 Married: 12-Oct-1885  
 Spouse: Susie Funk Krause  
 Married: Nov-1917

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M Child 3 Johann Warkentin  
 Born: 1864 in: Schwesterthal, Crimea  
 Died: 1864 in: Schwesterthal, Crimea

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M Child 4 Johann Peter Warkentin  
 Born: 29-Dec-1865 in: Johannesruh, Crimea, South Russia  
 Died: 30-Jun-1939

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|          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| Spouse:  | Agnes Krause Fast |
| Married: | 4-Apr-1886        |

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|--|
| M Child 5 Jacob Warkentin                        |
| Born: 1866 in: Johannesruh, Crimea, South Russia |
| Died: 1867 in: Johannesruh, Crimea, South Russia |

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| M Child 6 Jacob Warkentin                        |
| Born: 1868 in: Johannesruh, Crimea, South Russia |
| Died: 1868 in: Johannesruh, Crimea, South Russia |

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|--|
| F Child 7 Justina Warkentin                            |
| Born: 8-Jul-1869 in: Johannesruh, Crimea, South Russia |
| Died: 6-Dec-1943 in: Marion, South Dakota              |
| Spouse: George Kliewer                                 |
| Married: 23-Jun-1891                                   |

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| F Child 8 Helena Warkentin                               |
| Born: 4-Aug-1871 in: Alexanderfeld, Crimea, South Russia |
| Died: 5-Apr-1968 in: Medford, Oklahoma                   |
| Spouse: Jacob S. Janzen                                  |
| Married: 14-Jan-1897                                     |

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|  |
|--|
| F Child 9 Susanna Warkentin                              |
| Born: 4-Jan-1873 in: Alexanderfeld, Crimea, South Russia |
| Died: 4-Oct-1959 in: Marion County, Kansas               |
| Buried: in: Goessel (KS) Alexanderwohl                   |
| Spouse: Isaak Graves                                     |
| Married: 25-Jan-1898                                     |

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|   |
|---|
| M Child 10 Heinrich Warkentin                       |
| Born: 5-Aug-1874 in: Elkhart, Indiana               |
| Died: 21-Apr-1958 in: Marion, Marion County, Kansas |
| Spouse: Katharina Schmidt                           |
| Married: 1-Oct-1922                                 |

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|   |
|---|
| F Child 11 Elisabeth Warkentin                        |
| Born: 3-Mar-1877 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Died: 20-Dec-1966                                     |
| Spouse: Tobias Schmidt                                |
| Married: 8-Jul-1906                                   |

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|   |
|---|
| F Child 12 Maria Warkentin                      |
| Born: 1878 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Died: 1878 in: Marion County, Kansas            |
| Buried: in: Hoffnungstal, Marion County, Kansas |

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|---|
| F Child 13 Margaretha Warkentin                 |
| Born: 1878 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Died: 1878 in: Marion County, Kansas            |

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|   |
|---|
| M Child 14 Aaron Warkentin                            |
| Born: 1-Sep-1879 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Died: 18-Jan-1944 in: Goessel, Marion County, Kansas  |
| Buried: in: Goessel (KS) Alexanderwohl                |
| Spouse: Eva Schmidt                                   |
| Married: 28-Jul-1907                                  |

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|   |
|---|
| F Child 15 Margaretha Warkentin                 |
| Born: 1881 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Died: 1883 in: Marion County, Kansas            |

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|   |
|---|
| M Child 16 Jakob Warkentin                      |
| Born: 1883 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas |
| Died: 1883 in: Marion County, Kansas            |

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**PARENTS**


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|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Husband: | Peter Warkentin                                    |
| Born:    | 28-Oct-1817 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:    | 1895 in: Sagradovfka, South Russia                 |
| Father:  | Peter Aron Warkentin                               |

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|          |  |
|----------|--|
| Wife:    | Margaretha Schellenberg                            |
| Married: | 21-Sep-1835  |
| Born:    | 9-Jun-1817 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:    | 13-Nov-1855 in: Neukirch, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Father:  | Jakob G. Schellenberg                              |
| Mother:  | Elizabeth Hamm                                     |



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F Child 1 Elizabeth Warkentin  
 Born: 9-Mar-1837  
 Died: 16-Jan-1908 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Peter Wiens  
 Married: 16-Aug-1855

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M Child 2 Peter P. Warkentin  
 Born: 23-Dec-1838 in: Neukirch, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1859 in: South Russia  
 Died: 5-Jul-1923 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Hillsboro (KS) Gnadenu  
 Migr: 15-Jul-1874 in: NYC; City of Brooklyn  
 Spouse: Justina Wiens  
 Married: 7-Mar-1861 in: Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 3 Jakob Warkentin  
 Born: Mar-1840

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M Child 4 Heinrich Warkentin  
 Born: \_-May-1842  
 Died: in: Sagradovfka, South Russia  
 Spouse: Agatha ?

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F Child 5 Margaretha Warkentin  
 Born: \_-Jul-1845

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M Child 6 Aron Warkentin  
 Born: \_-Jul-1847  
 Died: in: Don River, Russia

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M Child 7 Johan Warkentin  
 Born: \_-Oct-1849  
 Died: in: Sagradovfka, South Russia

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Husband: Johann Wiens  
 Born: 14-Jan-1812 in: Krebsfeld, Tiegenhof, Prussia  
 Baptized: 1831 in: Tiegenhagen by Ält. Abr. Wiebe  
 Died: 11-Jan-1892 in: Hoffnungsthal, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Sec 9, Liberty Township, Marion cnty  
 Migr: 13-Nov-1874 in: NYC; Switzerland  
 Father: Peter Wiens

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Wife: Katharina Wiebe  
 Married: 1839  
 Born: 1822 in: Prussia  
 Died: 10-Oct-1875 in: Hoffnungsthal, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 13-Nov-1874 in: NYC; Switzerland  
 Father: Peter Wiebe

---

F Child 1 Justina Wiens  
 Born: 6-Jul-1840 in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: 17-Mar-1924 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Hillsboro (KS) Gnadenu  
 Migr: 15-Jul-1874 in: NYC; City of Brooklyn  
 Spouse: Peter P. Warkentin  
 Married: 7-Mar-1861 in: Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 2 Helena Wiens  
 Born: 13-Feb-1844  
 Spouse: Gerhard Schierling  
 Married: 14-Feb-1861

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## GRANDPARENTS

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Husband: Peter Aron Warkentin  
 Born: 1787 in: Neunbuden, Marienburg, Prussia  
 Died: in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Migr: 1803 in: Tiegenhagen, Molotschna  
 Father: Arendt Warkentin

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Wife: unknown

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M Child 1 Jakob Warkentin  
 Born: 14-Sep-1812 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 2 Peter Warkentin

---

Born: 28-Oct-1817 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 1895 in: Sagradovfka, South Russia  
 Spouse: Margaretha Schellenberg  
 Married: 21-Sep-1835

---

F Child 3 Anna Warkentin  
 Born: 1817 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 4 Aron Warkentin  
 Born: 1820 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 5 Heinrich Warkentin  
 Born: 1823 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 6 Johan Warkentin  
 Born: 1826 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Wife: Justina \_\_\_\_\_  
 Born: 1800  
 Died: in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

---

F Child 1 Justina Warkentin  
 Born: 1832 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 2 Gerhard Warkentin  
 Born: 1834 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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Husband: Jakob G. Schellenberg  
 Born: 7-Sep-1792 in: Stobbendorf, Prussia  
 Died: 22-Dec-1872 in: Klippenfeld, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Gerhardt Schellenberg  
 Mother: Helena Günther

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Wife: Elizabeth Hamm  
 Married: 21-Sep-1816  
 Born: 2-May-1798  
 Died: 13-Mar-1838 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Heinrich Hamm

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F Child 1 Margaretha Schellenberg  
 Born: 9-Jun-1817 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 13-Nov-1855 in: Neukirch, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Peter Warkentin  
 Married: 21-Sep-1835

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F Child 2 Helen Schellenberg  
 Born: 24-Aug-1820  
 Died: 21-Dec-1896

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F Child 3 Elizabeth Schellenberg  
 Born: 30-Sep-1822  
 Died: 26-Jan-1850

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F Child 4 Anna Schellenberg  
 Born: 7-May-1825  
 Died: 4-Nov-1883

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F Child 5 Katharina Schellenberg  
 Born: 28-May-1827  
 Died: 8-Mar-1887

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M Child 6 Heinrich Schellenberg  
 Born: 15-Nov-1833  
 Died: 26-Sep-1906 in: Orenburg, Russia

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F Child 7 Justina Schellenberg  
 Born: 27-Aug-1836  
 Died: 8-Dec-1915

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Husband: Peter Wiens  
 Died: ca 1839

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M Child 1 Johann Wiens  
 Born: 14-Jan-1812 in: Krebsfeld, Tiegenhof, Prussia  
 Baptized: 1831 in: Tiegenhagen by Ält. Abr. Wiebe  
 Died: 11-Jan-1892 in: Hoffnungsthal, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Sec 9, Liberty Township, Marion cnty  
 Migr: 13-Nov-1874 in: NYC; Switzerland  
 Spouse: Katharina Wiebe  
 Married: 1839

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Husband: Peter Wiebe  
 Died: bef. 1834

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F Child 1 Katharina Wiebe  
 Born: 1802 in: Prussia  
 Died: 10-Oct-1875 in: Hoffnungsthal, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 13-Nov-1874 in: NYC; Switzerland  
 Spouse: Johann Wiens  
 Married: 1839

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### GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

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Husband: Arend Warkentin

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M Child 1 Johann Warkentin  
 Born: 1782 in: Neunbuden, Marienburg, Prussia  
 Migr: 1803 in: Tiegenhagen, Molotschna

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M Child 2 Peter Aron Warkentin  
 Born: 1787 in: Neunbuden, Marienburg, Prussia  
 Died: in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Migr: 1803 in: Tiegenhagen, Molotschna  
 Spouse: Justina \_\_\_\_\_

---

Husband: Gerhard Schellenberg  
 Born: 9-May-1759 in: Altendorf, Prussia  
 Died: 10-Feb-1813 in: Tiegenhof, Prussia  
 Father: Gerhard Schellenberg  
 Mother: Anna Klassen

---

Wife: Helena Günther  
 Married: 14-Feb-1781  
 Born: 10-Dec-1757 in: Pletzendorf, GrosseWerder, Prussia  
 Died: in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Heinrich Günther  
 Mother: Unknown

---

F Child 1 Anna Schellenberg  
 Born: 8-Mar-1782

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M Child 2 Gerhard Schellenberg  
 Born: 14-Nov-1783

---

M Child 3 Heinrich Schellenberg  
 Born: 1-Jan-1785

---

F Child 4 Justina Schellenberg  
 Born: 5-Sep-1789

---

M Child 5 Jakob G. Schellenberg  
 Born: 7-Sep-1792 in: Stobbendorf, Prussia  
 Died: 22-Dec-1872 in: Klippenfeld, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Elizabeth Hamm  
 Married: 21-Sep-1816

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M Child 6 Peter Schellenberg  
 Born: 28-Oct-1794

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M Child 7 Davit Schellenberg  
 Born: 1-Aug-1800

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Husband: Heinrich Hamm  
 Died: bef. 1816 in: Koldau, Marienburg, Prussia

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F Child 1 Elizabeth Hamm  
 Born: 2-May-1798  
 Died: 13-Mar-1838 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Jakob G. Schellenberg  
 Married: 21-Sep-1816

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### 2G-GRANDPARENTS

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---

Husband: Gerhard Schellenberg  
 Born: 1725 in: Tiegenhof, Prussia  
 Died: 6-Jan-1802

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Father: Jakob Schellenberg

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Wife: Anna Klassen

Married: 13-May-1753

Died: c.1760

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F Child 1 Idkie Schellenberg

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Died: 1-Oct-1758

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M Child 2 Gerhard Schellenberg

Born: 9-May-1759 in: Altendorf, Prussia

Died: 10-Feb-1813 in: Tiegenhof, Prussia

Spouse: Helena Günther

Married: 14-Feb-1781

---

Wife: Christina Reimer

Born: 1736

Died: 5-Dec-1805 in: Tiegenhof, Prussia

Father: Anton Reimer

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F Child 1 Christina Schellenberg

---

Born: 8-Nov-1761

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M Child 2 Paul Schellenberg

---

Born: 18-Dec-1764

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M Child 3 Jakob Schellenberg

---

Born: 27-Mar-1772

---

M Child 4 Anton Schellenberg

---

Born: 24-Aug-1774

---

M Child 5 Aron Schellenberg

---

Born: 24-Aug-1774

---

F Child 6 Agatha Schellenberg

---

Born: 3-Jan-1778

Died: 19-Sep-1858

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M Child 7 David Schellenberg

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Born: 4-Apr-1780

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Husband: Heinrich Günther

Born: 1730 in: Pletzendorf, GrosseWerder, Prussia

Died: 1806

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Wife: Unknown

Born: 1727

Died: 15-Dec-1800

---

F Child 1 Helena Günther

Born: 10-Dec-1757 in: Pletzendorf, GrosseWerder, Prussia

Died: in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia

Spouse: Gerhard Schellenberg

Married: 14-Feb-1781

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M Child 2 Heinrich Günther

---

Born: 1766

Died: 15-Nov-1830

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### 3G-GRANDPARENTS

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---

Husband: Jakob Schellenberg

Born: 1687

Died: 30-Nov-1757

Father: Paul Schellenberg

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Wife: Christina Loewen

Born: 1700 in: Prussia

Died: 1760 in: Prussia

---

M Child 1 Jakob Schellenberg

---

Born: 1719

Died: 6-Jan-1795

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M Child 2 Gerhard Schellenberg

Born: 1725 in: Tiegenhof, Prussia

Died: 6-Jan-1802

Spouse: Anna Klassen

Married: 13-May-1753

Spouse: Christina Reimer

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Ancestor and Group Charts for Heinrich Koop and Anna Fast Koop

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+) Andreas Koop d. before 1816  
 +) Andreas Koop b. 1773 d. ca 1805  
 +) Heinrich Koop b. 1805 d. ca. 1850  
 \* .) Maria Wiesz b. 1771  
 +) Heinrich Koop b. 22-Jun-1826 d. 16-Mar-1891  
 \* \* +) Isbrand Friesen b. ca. 1750  
 \* \* +) Klaas P. Friesen b. 25-Jan-1774 d. 1835  
 \* \* \* .) Helena Penner b. ca. 1750  
 \* .) Anna Friesen b. Sep-1804 d. 16-Mar-1867  
 \* \* +) Cornelius Friesen b. ca. 1750  
 \* .) Elisabeth R. Friesen b. Sep-1776 d. 24-Oct-1839  
 \* .) Elisabeth Friesen

))) 1  
 \* +) Kornelius Fast  
 \* +) Gerhard K. Fast b. 1777  
 .) Anna Fast b. 29-Jan-1826 d. 25-Apr-1885

---

Husband: Heinrich Koop also known as Heinrich Kopp  
 Born: 22-Jun-1826 in: Steinbach, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 16-Mar-1891 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 29-Jun-1977 in: Philadelphia; Vaderland  
 Father: Heinrich Koop  
 Mother: Anna Friesen

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Wife: Anna Fast  
 Married: 10-Oct-1849  
 Born: 29-Jan-1826 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 25-Apr-1885 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 29-Jun-1877 in: Philadelphia; Vaderland  
 Father: Gerhard K. Fast

---

M Child 1 Heinrich Koop  
 Born: ca. 1850  
 Died: in: Crimea, South Russia

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M Child 2 Jakob Koop  
 Born: 1854  
 Died: in: Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 24-Jun-1879 in: NYC: Switzerland  
 Spouse: Anna Block

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M Child 3 Johann Koop  
 Born: ca. 1856  
 Died: in: Memrit Colony, Russia

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M Child 4 Peter H. Koop  
 Born: 18-Nov-1860 in: Steinfeld, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1881 in: Hillsboro (KS) Gnadenau  
 Died: 20-Oct-1934 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Helena Jost  
 Married: 28-Sep-1885

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F Child 5 Anna Koop  
 Born: 6-Apr-1864  
 Baptized: 15-May-1881  
 Died: 10-Jun-1917 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried: in: Hillsboro (KS) Gnadenau  
 Migr: 29-Jun-1877 in: Philadelphia; Vaderland  
 Spouse: Peter J. Warkentin  
 Married: 12-Oct-1885

---

F Child 6 Maria Koop  
 Born: 21-Feb-1870 in: Steinfeld, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 3-Jun-1925 in: Hillsboro, Marion, Kansas  
 Spouse: Jakob Klassen  
 Married: 1895

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Wife: Sarah Block  
 Married: 7-Nov-1886 in: Gnadenau, Kansas  
 Born: 7 Nov 1837

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**PARENTS**


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|          |               |   |
|----------|---------------|---|
| Husband: | Heinrich Koop |   |
| Born:    | 1805          |   |
| Died:    | ca. 1850      | in: Lanskrone, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Father:  | Andreas Koop  |   |
| Mother:  | Maria Wiesz   |   |

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|          |                      |   |
|----------|----------------------|---|
| Wife:    | Anna Friesen         |   |
| Married: | Fall, 1824           |   |
| Born:    | Sep-1804             | in: Schönhorst, Chortitza, South Russia |
| Died:    | 16-Mar-1867          |   |
| Father:  | Klaas P. Friesen     |   |
| Mother:  | Elisabeth R. Friesen |   |

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|                      |                   |                                      |
|----------------------|-------------------|--------------------------------------|
| M Child 1 Klaas Koop |                   |                                      |
| Born:                | 3-Aug-1825        | in: Muntau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:                | 21-Sep-1916       | in: Jansen, Nebraska?                |
| Migr:                | 29-Jan-1877       | in: Philadelphia; Vaterland          |
| Spouse:              | Katharina Barkman |                                      |
| Married:             | 16-Jan-1852       |                                      |

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|                         |             |   |
|-------------------------|-------------|---|
| M Child 2 Heinrich Koop |             |   |
| Born:                   | 22-Jun-1826 | in: Steinbach, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:                   | 16-Mar-1891 | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas    |
| Migr:                   | 29-Jun-1977 | in: Philadelphia; Vaterland             |
| Spouse:                 | Anna Fast   |   |
| Married:                | 10-Oct-1849 |   |
| Spouse:                 | Sarah Block |   |
| Married:                | 7-Nov-1886  | in: Gnadenau, Kansas                    |

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|                        |           |   |
|------------------------|-----------|---|
| M Child 3 Isbrand Koop |           |   |
| Born:                  | 1830      |   |
| Died:                  | -Dec-1909 | in: Gnadenheim, Schönfeld, Asian Russia |

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|                          |      |                            |
|--------------------------|------|----------------------------|
| M Child 4 Kornelius Koop |      |                            |
| Born:                    | 1832 |                            |
| Died:                    |      | in: Orenburg, Asian Russia |

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|                       |             |  |
|-----------------------|-------------|--|
| M Child 5 Johann Koop |             |  |
| Born:                 | 1836        |  |
| Died:                 | 21-Dec-1872 |  |

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|                      |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|
| M Child 6 Peter Koop |  |  |
|----------------------|--|--|

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|                     |              |   |
|---------------------|--------------|---|
| F Child 7 Anna Koop |              |   |
| Born:               | abt. 1841    | in: Lanskrone, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Spouse:             | Johann Dueck |   |

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|   |             |   |
|---|-------------|---|
| M Child 8 Jacob Koop also known as Jakob Kopp |             |   |
| Born:   | abt 1841    | in: Lanskrone, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:   | 12-Jun-1861 |   |

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|   |             |   |
|---|-------------|---|
| F Child 9 Maria Koop also known as Maria Copp |             |   |
| Born:   | abt. 1843   | in: Lanskrone, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Spouse:                                       | Peter Weiss |   |

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|          |                 |   |
|----------|-----------------|---|
| Husband: | Gerhard K. Fast |   |
| Born:    | 1777            | in: Broeske, GrosseWerder, Prussia        |
| Migr:    | 1805            | in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Father:  | Kornelius Fast  |   |

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|                     |               |   |
|---------------------|---------------|---|
| F Child 1 Anna Fast |               |   |
| Born:               | 29-Jan-1826   | in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:               | 25-Apr-1885   | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas      |
| Migr:               | 29-Jun-1877   | in: Philadelphia; Vaterland               |
| Spouse:             | Heinrich Koop |   |
| Married:            | 10-Oct-1849   |   |

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|                         |            |   |
|-------------------------|------------|---|
| F Child 2 Catarina Fast |            |   |
| Born:                   | 9 Aug 1813 | in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia |

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**GRANDPARENTS**

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|          |              |                                |
|----------|--------------|--------------------------------|
| Husband: | Andreas Koop |                                |
| Born:    | 1773         | in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia |
| Died:    | ca 1805      |                                |

Migr: 1804 in: Molotschna from Ellerwald  
 Father: Andreas Koop  
 Wife: Maria Wiesz also known as Maria Weiss  
 Born: 1771 in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia  
 F Child 1 Maria Koop  
 Born: 1799  
 F Child 2 Andreas Koop  
 Born: 1799 in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia  
 M Child 3 \_\_\_\_\_ Koop  
 Born: 1803  
 Died: before 1808  
 M Child 4 Heinrich Koop  
 Born: 1805 in: Lanskrone, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: ca. 1850  
 Spouse: Anna Friesen  
 Married: Fall, 1824

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Husband: Klaas P. Friesen  
 Born: 25-Jan-1774  
 Died: 1835 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Migr: 1805 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Isbrand Friesen  
 Mother: Helena Penner  
 Wife: Elisabeth R. Friesen  
 Married: 21-Sep-1800  
 Born: Sep-1776 in: Fuerstenauerweide, Prussia  
 Died: 24-Oct-1839 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Cornelius Friesen  
 Mother: Elisabeth Friesen  
 F Child 1 Helena Friesen  
 Born: BEF 1803 in: Lakendorf, Prussia  
 Died: 1803 in: on the migration to Russia  
 F Child 2 Elisabeth Friesen  
 Born: BEF 1803 in: Lakendorf, Prussia  
 Died: ABT 1804 in: Schönhorst, Chortitza, South Russia  
 F Child 3 Anna Friesen  
 Born: Sep-1804 in: Schönhorst, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 16-Mar-1867  
 Spouse: Heinrich Koop  
 Married: Fall, 1824  
 M Child 4 Klaas Friesen  
 Born: 1807 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 1807 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 F Child 5 Elisabeth Friesen  
 Born: 1808 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: Oct 1810 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 M Child 6 Cornelius F. Friesen  
 Born: 1810 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 1892  
 F Child 7 Justina Friesen  
 Born: 23 Feb 1816 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 3 Jan 1856 in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 F Child 8 Elisabeth Friesen  
 Born: Aug 1819 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 4 Jan 1849 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia

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### GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

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Husband: Andreas Koop  
 Died: before 1816 in: Koldau, Marienburg, Prussia  
 M Child 1 Andreas Koop  
 Born: 1773 in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia  
 Died: ca 1805  
 Migr: 1804 in: Molotschna from Ellerwald

Spouse: Maria Wiesz

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M Child 2 Johann Koop  
 Born: 1785

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Wife: Maria Janzen  
 Married: 22-Apr-1787

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F Child 1 Margaretha Koop

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Wife: Katharina Epp  
 Married: 22-May-1796 in: Koldau, Marienburg, Prussia

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M Child 1 Abraham Koop  
 Born: 1799

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F Child 2 Sara Koop  
 Born: 5-May-1799

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M Child 3 Gerhard Koop  
 Born: 1800

---

M Child 4 Heinrich Koop  
 Born: 20-Oct-1802

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F Child 5 Barbara Koop  
 Born: 1802

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F Child 6 Sara Koop  
 Born: 1-Mar-1804

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M Child 7 Dirk Koop  
 Born: 1805

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Husband: Isbrand Friesen  
 Born: ca. 1750

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Wife: Helena Penner  
 Born: ca. 1750

---

M Child 1 Klaas P. Friesen  
 Born: 25-Jan-1774  
 Died: 1835 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Migr: 1805 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Elisabeth R. Friesen  
 Married: 21-Sep-1800

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Husband: Cornelius Friesen  
 Born: ca. 1750

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Wife: Elisabeth Friesen

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F Child 1 Elisabeth R. Friesen  
 Born: Sep-1776 in: Fuerstenauerweide, Prussia  
 Died: 24-Oct-1839 in: Lindenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Klaas P. Friesen  
 Married: 21-Sep-1800

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 Ancestor and Group Charts for Cornelius S. Harms and Katharina Thiessen
 

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+) Hans Harms  
 +) Hans Harms b. 1771  
 +) Isaak (Ohm) Harms b. 10-Jan-1811 d. 4-Sep-1891  
 \* \* +) Isbrand Neudorf  
 \* .) Anna Neudorf b. 1784  
 +) Cornelius S. Harms b. 26-Aug-1835 d. 9-Dec-1928  
 \* \* +) Johann Sawatzky  
 \* \* +) Cornelius Sawatzky b. 23-Sep-1781 d. 7-Dec-1840  
 \* .) Anna Sawatzky b. 17-Sep-1809 d. 6-Apr-1877  
 \* \* +) Abraham von Riesen b. 28-Sep-1756 d. Mar-1810  
 \* .) Anna Friesen b. 12-Aug-1785 d. 4-Aug-1857  
 \* .) Margaretha Wiebe b. 1754 d. Jun-1810  
 ))) 1  
 \* +) Martin Thiessen b. ca. 1720  
 \* +) Martin Thiessen b. 25-Jul-1737 d. 6-Jul-1822  
 \* \* +) Claas Reimer  
 \* \* .) Marike Reimer  
 \* +) Peter Thiessen b. 23-Aug-1775 d. 28-Nov-1839  
 \* .) Elske Penner b. 13-Jan-1740 d. 6-Dec-1821  
 \* +) Peter (Rev.) Thiessen b. 8-Mar-1808 d. 26-Feb-1873  
 \* \* .) Gertruda Born b. 17-Mar-1774 d. 28-Jul-1816  
 .) Katharina Thiessen b. 20-Feb-1836 d. 18-May-1865  
 \* +) Abraham von Riesen b. 28-Sep-1756 d. Mar-1810  
 \* +) Abraham (Ält.) Friesen b. 13-Jul-1782 d. 1-Jul-1849  
 \* \* .) Margaretha Wiebe b. 1754 d. Jun-1810 m. Jan-1779  
 .) Margaretha Friesen b. 4-Nov-1810 d. 1-Sep-1877  
 \* +) Heinrich Wiebe d. before 1804  
 .) Katharina Wiebe b. 30-Oct-1781 d. 20-Oct-1854  
 .) Katharina Schierling d. 6-Oct-1812

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Husband: Cornelius S. Harms  
 Born: 26-Aug-1835 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1-Aug-1909 in: Reedley M.B.  
 Died: 9-Dec-1928 in: Reedley, Fresno County, California  
 Buried: in: Zion KMB Cemetery, Tulare Cty, Ca  
 Migr: 1906  
 Father: Isaak (Ohm) Harms  
 Mother: Anna Sawatzky

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Wife: Katharina Thiessen  
 Married: 14-Aug-1856 in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Born: 20-Feb-1836 in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 18-May-1865 in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Peter (Rev.) Thiessen  
 Mother: Margaretha Friesen

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F Child 1 Margaretha Harms  
 Born: 12-Mar-1860 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 24-Nov-1940 in: Reedley, California  
 Spouse: Heinrich Peters  
 Married: 10 Jan 1880

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F Child 2 Anna Harms  
 Born: 25-Aug-1861 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 30-Nov-1861 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 3 Peter T. Harms  
 Born: 1-Jun-1863 in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 11-Jun-1883 in: Rückenau M.B.  
 Died: 15-Aug-1931 in: Reedley, Fresno County, California  
 Buried: in: Reedley, California  
 Migr: 3-Jul-1892 in: Henderson, Nebraska  
 Spouse: Katharina Epp  
 Married: 28-Nov-1885 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Matrona Hubenka  
 Married: April 23, 1898 in: Henderson, Nebraska  
 Spouse: Louise Treszman  
 Married: 28-Jan-1931 in: Reedley, California

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|          |                  |  |
|----------|------------------|--|
| Wife:    | Anna Hildebrandt |  |
| Married: | 20-Jun-1867      |  |
| Born:    | 1810             |  |
| Died:    | 9-Dec-1877       |  |

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|           |                   |  |
|-----------|-------------------|--|
| Wife:     | Elizabeth Goossen |  |
| Married:  | 27-Apr-1878       | in: Schönsee, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Born:     | 1-Sep-1854        | in: Schönsee, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Baptized: | 1-Aug-1909        | in: Reedley M.B.                       |
| Died:     | 5-Sep-1935        | in: Reedley, Fresno County, California |
| Migr:     | 1906              |  |

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|           |                |                                       |
|-----------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| M Child 1 | John C. Harms  |                                       |
| Born:     | 18 Feb 1879    | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | bef. 1978      | in: Reedley, California               |
| Spouse:   | Katharina Dick |                                       |
| Married:  | 8 Jan 1905     |                                       |

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|           |                    |                                       |
|-----------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|
| M Child 2 | Cornelius C. Harms |                                       |
| Born:     | 26 Apr 1881        | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 3-Mar-1978         |                                       |
| Spouse:   | Anna Quiring       |                                       |
| Married:  | 3-Mar-1909         |                                       |

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|           |                |                                       |
|-----------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| M Child 3 | Isaak Harms    |                                       |
| Born:     | 25 Aug 1884    | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 1972           |                                       |
| Spouse:   | Maria Pankratz |                                       |
| Married:  | 13 Jul 1908    |                                       |

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|           |                |                                       |
|-----------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| F Child 4 | Barbara Harms  |                                       |
| Born:     | 7 Nov 1882     | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 29-Aug-1980    |                                       |
| Spouse:   | Peter Heinrich |                                       |
| Married:  | 1-Mar-1922     |                                       |

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|           |                     |                                       |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------------------------------|
| F Child 5 | Elisabeth Harms     |                                       |
| Born:     | 13 Aug 1884         | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 10-Oct-1978         |                                       |
| Spouse:   | Philipp C. Thiessen |                                       |
| Married:  | 13-Oct-1907         | in: Reedley, California               |

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|           |                 |                                       |
|-----------|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| F Child 6 | Anna Harms      |                                       |
| Born:     | 20 May 1890     | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 26-Mar-1935     | in: Reedley, California               |
| Spouse:   | Nikolai P. Enns |                                       |
| Married:  | 15-Jun-1911     | in: Reedley, California               |

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|           |                |                                       |
|-----------|----------------|---------------------------------------|
| F Child 7 | Catarina Harms |                                       |
| Born:     | 20 Jul 1893    | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:     | 13 Aug 1893    | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |

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|           |                          |                                       |
|-----------|--------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| F Child 8 | Catarina Harms           |                                       |
| Born:     | 10 Mar 1895              | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Spouse:   | George John Klippenstein |                                       |
| Married:  | 26-Sep-1937              |                                       |

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## PARENTS

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|          |  |   |
|----------|--|---|
| Husband: | Isaak (Ohm) Harms also known as Isaac Johann Harms |   |
| Born:    | 10-Jan-1811  | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:    | 4-Sep-1891   | in: Manitoba, Canada                    |
| Migr:    | 17-Jul-1874  | in: NYC; Hammonia                       |
| Father:  | Hans Harms   |   |
| Mother:  | Anna Neudorf                                       |   |

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|          |                    |                                      |
|----------|--------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Wife:    | Anna Sawatzky      |                                      |
| Married: | 19-Sep-1832        |                                      |
| Born:    | 17-Sep-1809        | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Died:    | 6-Apr-1877         | in: Jansen, Nebraska                 |
| Migr:    | 17-Jul-1874        | in: NYC; Hammonia                    |
| Father:  | Cornelius Sawatzky |                                      |
| Mother:  | Anna Friesen       |                                      |

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|           |                 |   |
|-----------|-----------------|---|
| M Child 1 | Cornelius Harms |   |
| Born:     | 14-Oct-1833     | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |

|                              |                                |   |
|------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
|                              | Died: 25-Oct-1834              | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| M Child 2 Cornelius S. Harms |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 26-Aug-1835              | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
|                              | Baptized: 1-Aug-1909           | in: Reedley M.B.                        |
|                              | Died: 9-Dec-1928               | in: Reedley, Fresno County, California  |
|                              | Buried:                        | in: Reedley, California                 |
|                              | Migr: 1906                     |   |
|                              | Spouse: Katharina Thiessen     |   |
|                              | Married: 14-Aug-1856           | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia   |
|                              | Spouse: Anna Hildebrandt       |   |
|                              | Married: 20-Jun-1867           |   |
|                              | Spouse: Elizabeth Goossen      |   |
|                              | Married: 27-Apr-1878           | in: Schönsee, Molotschna, South Russia  |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| M Child 3 Isaak Harms        |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 9-Sep-1837               | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
|                              | Died: 19-Jan-1865              | in: Borosenko, South Russia             |
|                              | Spouse: Margaretha Friesen     |   |
|                              | Married: 10-Aug-1858           |   |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| M Child 4 Johann Harms       |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 3-Dec-1839               | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
|                              | Died: 5-Dec-1887               | in: Jansen, Jefferson County, Nebraska  |
|                              | Spouse: Margaretha Loewen      |   |
|                              | Married: 12-Jun-1860           |   |
|                              | Spouse: Helena F. Friesen      |   |
|                              | Married: 1878                  | in: Jansen, Nebraska                    |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| M Child 5 Peter Harms        |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 30-Dec-1841              | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
|                              | Died: 25-Oct-1843              | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| F Child 6 Anna Harms         |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 6-Aug-1844               | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
|                              | Died: 19-May-1919              | in: Jansen, Jefferson County, Nebraska  |
|                              | Spouse: Klaas Wiebe            |   |
|                              | Married: 15-Sep-1863           |   |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| F Child 7 Margareta Harms    |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 2-Dec-1846               | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
|                              | Died: 20-May-1847              | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| M Child 8 Peter S. Harms     |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 24-Jun-1849              | in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia |
|                              | Died: 1-Nov-1924               | in: Montezuma, Kansas                   |
|                              | Spouse: Anna Friesen           |   |
|                              | Married: 19-Oct-1869           |   |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
|                              | Wife: Karolina Plett           |   |
|                              | Married: 21-Oct-1877           | in: Jansen, Nebraska                    |
|                              | Born: 7-Mar-1823               |   |
|                              | Died: 11-Feb-1887              | in: Jansen, Nebraska                    |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
|                              | Wife: Maria Fast               |   |
|                              | Married:                       | in: Jansen, Nebraska                    |
|                              | Born: 27-Jun-1851              |   |
|                              | Died: 15-Mar-1936              |   |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
|                              | Husband: Peter (Rev.) Thiessen |   |
|                              | Born: 8-Mar-1808               | in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  |
|                              | Died: 26-Feb-1873              | in: Neuanlage, Borosenko, South Russia  |
|                              | Father: Peter Thiessen         |   |
|                              | Mother: Gertruda Born          |   |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
|                              | Wife: Margaretha Friesen       |   |
|                              | Married: 17-Mar-1831           |   |
|                              | Born: 4-Nov-1810               | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia    |
|                              | Died: 1-Sep-1877               | in: South Russia                        |
|                              | Father: Abraham (Ält.) Friesen |   |
|                              | Mother: Katharina Wiebe        |   |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| M Child 1 Peter P. Thiessen  |                                |   |
|                              | Born: 7-Jun-1832               | in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia   |
|                              | Died: 27-Jul-1898              | in: Jansen, Nebraska                    |
| <hr/>                        |                                |   |
| F Child 2 Katharina Thiessen |                                |   |

Born: 20-Feb-1836                      in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 18-May-1865                      in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Cornelius S. Harms  
 Married: 14-Aug-1856                      in: Schönau, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 3 Abraham F. Thiessen

Born: 1-Nov-1838  
 Died: 7-May-1889                      in: Jansen, Nebraska

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M Child 4 Johan P. Thiessen

Born: 1849  
 Died: 1897

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**GRANDPARENTS**

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Husband: Hans Harms also known as Johann Johann Harms  
 Born: 1771                                  in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia  
 Died:    in: Molotschna, South Russia  
 Migr: 1795                                  in: Osterwick, Chortitsa fr. Dirschau, Pr.  
 Father: Hans Harms

Wife: Maria Fast  
 Married: ca 1794  
 Born: 1769                                  in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia  
 Died: 1804                                  in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 1 Katharina Harms

Born: 1796  
 Died: 1883  
 Spouse: Isaak Braun

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M Child 2 Johann Harms

Born: 16-Mar-1798                      in: Osterwick, Chortitsa, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1820                              in: Halbstadt, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 2-Feb-1887                      in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Maria Giesbrecht  
 Married: 7-Sep-1822

Wife: Anna Neudorf  
 Born: 1784  
 Died:    in: Molotschna, South Russia

Father: Isbrand Neudorf

---

M Child 1 Peter Harms

Born: 1806                                  in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 19-Jul-1870  
 Spouse: Gertruda ?

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F Child 2 Anna Harms

Born: 18-Jun-1808                      in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 25-Oct-1874  
 Spouse: Peter Dück  
 Spouse: Heinrich Ratzlaff

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M Child 3 Isaak (Ohm) Harms

Born: 10-Jan-1811                      in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 4-Sep-1891                      in: Manitoba, Canada  
 Migr: 17-Jul-1874                      in: NYC; Hammonia  
 Spouse: Anna Sawatzky  
 Married: 19-Sep-1832  
 Spouse: Karolina Plett  
 Married: 21-Oct-1877                      in: Jansen, Nebraska  
 Spouse: Maria Fast  
 Married:    in: Jansen, Nebraska

---

F Child 4 Maria Harms

Born: 6-Feb-1813                      in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 15-Jan-1890                      in: Heuboden, Manitoba, Canada  
 Spouse: Johann Peter Klassen

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M Child 5 Abraham Harms

Born: 6-Feb-1813                      in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 24-Jun-1830

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M Child 6 Jakob Harms

Born: 1815                                  in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia

Died: 1876/1881 in: Goessel, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Katharina Hamm

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F Child 7 Margaret Harms  
 Born: 14-Jun-1818 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 18-Dec-1846 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Peter Penner  
 Married: 7-Nov-1837

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Husband: Cornelius Sawatzky  
 Born: 23-Sep-1781 in: Heubuden, Marienburg, Prussia  
 Died: 7-Dec-1840 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Johann Sawatzky

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Wife: Anna Friesen  
 Married: 25-Jan-1806 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Born: 12-Aug-1785  
 Died: 4-Aug-1857 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Abraham von Riesen  
 Mother: Margaretha Wiebe

---

M Child 1 Abraham Sawatzky  
 Born: 9-Apr-1807 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 24-Jul-1882

---

F Child 2 Margaretha Sawatzky  
 Born: 18-Jul-1808 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 16-Oct-1893

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F Child 3 Anna Sawatzky  
 Born: 17-Sep-1809 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 6-Apr-1877 in: Jansen, Nebraska  
 Migr: 17-Jul-1874 in: NYC; Hammonia  
 Spouse: Isaak (Ohm) Harms  
 Married: 19-Sep-1832

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F Child 4 Sara Sawatzky  
 Born: 11-Mar-1816 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 27-Mar-1894

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M Child 5 Peter Sawatzky  
 Born: 5-Sep-1828 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 12-Mar-1898

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Husband: Peter Thiessen  
 Born: 23-Aug-1775 in: Lachenwald, Tiegenhagen, Prussia  
 Died: 28-Nov-1839 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Martin Thiessen  
 Mother: Elske Penner

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Wife: Gertruda Born  
 Married: 11-Mar-1806  
 Born: 17-Mar-1774 in: Prussia  
 Died: 28-Jul-1816 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 1 Peter (Rev.) Thiessen  
 Born: 8-Mar-1808 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 26-Feb-1873 in: Neuanlage, Borosenko, South Russia  
 Spouse: Margaretha Friesen  
 Married: 17-Mar-1831

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F Child 2 Elisabeth Thiessen  
 Born: 7-Sep-1809 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 6-Nov-1809 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 3 Elisabeth Thiessen  
 Born: 20-Aug-1810 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 4 Martin Thiessen  
 Born: 29-Jun-1812 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 12-Aug-1812 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 5 Gertruda Thiessen  
 Born: 11-Aug-1813 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 5-May-1813 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 6 Maria Thiessen  
 Born: 28-Jul-1816 in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia

|   |  |
|---|--|
| Died: 1-Aug-1816  | in: Rosenort, Molotschna, South Russia |
| <hr/>   |  |
| Husband: Abraham (Alt.) Friesen                           |  |
| Born: 13-Jul-1782   | in: Prussia                            |
| Died: 1-Jul-1849  | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Father: Abraham von Riesen                                |  |
| Mother: Margaretha Wiebe                                  |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| Wife: Katharina Wiebe                                     |  |
| Married: 10-Oct-1807                                      |  |
| Born: 30-Oct-1781   |  |
| Died: 20-Oct-1854   |  |
| Father: Heinrich Wiebe                                    |  |
| Mother: Katharina Schierling                              |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| M Child 1 Jacob W. Friesen                                |  |
| Born: 4-Oct-1808  | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Died: 17-Jun-1889   | in: Jansen, Nebraska                   |
| <hr/>   |  |
| F Child 2 Katharina W. Friesen                            |  |
| Born: 27-Oct-1809   |  |
| Died: 21-May-1812   |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| F Child 3 Margaretha Friesen                              |  |
| Born: 4-Nov-1810  | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Died: 1-Sep-1877  | in: South Russia                       |
| Spouse: Peter (Rev.) Thiessen                             |  |
| Married: 17-Mar-1831                                      |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| M Child 4 Abraham W. Friesen                              |  |
| Born: 20-Jul-1812   | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Died: 9-Sep-1889  | in: Jansen, Nebraska                   |
| <hr/>   |  |
| M Child 5 Heinrich W. Friesen                             |  |
| Born: 16-Feb-1814   | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Died: 11-Oct-1850   |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| M Child 6 Peter W. Friesen                                |  |
| Born: 15-Dec-1815   | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Died: 29-Dec-1892   | in: Jansen, Nebraska                   |
| <hr/>   |  |
| F Child 7 Katharina W. Friesen                            |  |
| Born: 7-Dec-1817  | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Died: 11-Oct-1864   |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| F Child 8 Elisabeth W. Friesen                            |  |
| Born: 7-Jun-1820  | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| <hr/>   |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| Husband: Isbrand Neudorf also known as Isbrecht Friesen   |  |
| Born:   | in: Tiegengagen, Prussia               |
| <hr/>   |  |
| F Child 1 Anna Neudorf                                    |  |
| Born: 1784  |  |
| Died:   | in: Molotschna, South Russia           |
| Spouse: Hans Harms  |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| <b>GREAT-GRANDPARENTS</b>                                 |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| Husband: Johann Sawatzky                                  |  |
| Died:   | in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia         |
| <hr/>   |  |
| M Child 1 Johann Sawatzky                                 |  |
| Born: 1765  |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| M Child 2 Isaac Sawatzky                                  |  |
| Born: 1772  | in: Tiegengagen, Prussia               |
| <hr/>   |  |
| M Child 3 Cornelius Sawatzky                              |  |
| Born: 23-Sep-1781   | in: Heubuden, Marienburg, Prussia      |
| Died: 7-Dec-1840  | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Spouse: Anna Friesen                                      |  |
| Married: 25-Jan-1806                                      | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| <hr/>   |  |
| <hr/>   |  |
| Husband: Abraham von Riesen also known as Abraham Friesen |  |
| Born: 28-Sep-1756   | in:                                    |
| Died: Mar-1810  | in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia   |
| Wife: Margaretha Wiebe                                    |  |



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**F Child 3** Margaretha Friesen

Born: 23-May-1784

Died: 5-Aug-1835

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**F Child 4** Anna Friesen

Born: 12-Aug-1785

Died: 4-Aug-1857 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia

Spouse: Cornelius Sawatzky

Married: 25-Jan-1806 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia

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**F Child 5** Helena Friesen

Born: 7-Sep-1787

Died: 22-Oct-1846

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**M Child 6** Johan Friesen

Born: 10-Feb-1789

Died: 15-Jan-1840

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**M Child 7** David Friesen

Born: 14-Sep-1790

Died: 12-Oct-1814

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**M Child 8** Klaas Friesen

Born: 6-Oct-1793

Died: 6-Oct-1870

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**F Child 9** Regina Friesen

Born: 4-Jan-1795

Died: 9-Dec-1852

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**Husband:** Heinrich WiebeDied: before 1804

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**Wife:** Katharina Schierling

Born: in: Neiteichterwald, Prussia

Died: 6-Oct-1812 in: Orloff, Molotschna, South Russia

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**F Child 1** Katharina Wiebe

Born: 30-Oct-1781

Died: 20-Oct-1854

Spouse: Abraham (Ält.) Friesen

Married: 10-Oct-1807

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**M Child 2** Heinrich Wiebe

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**M Child 3** Elizabeth Wiebe

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**2G-GRANDPARENTS**

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**Husband:** Martin ThiessenBorn: ca. 1720 in: Prussia

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**Wife:** Marike Reimer**Father:** Claas Reimer

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**M Child 1** Martin Thiessen

Born: 25-Jul-1737 in: Prussia

Died: 6-Jul-1822 in: Lachenwald, Tiegenhagen, Prussia

Spouse: Elske Penner

Married: 3-May-1762

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**Ancestor and Group Charts for Gerhard Epp**


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+) Peter Epp b. 1690  
 +) Peter Epp (Ält.) b. 23-Jan-1725 d. 12-Nov-1789 m. 24-Apr-1751  
 \* .) Anna Claassen  
 +) Heinrich Epp b. 9-Jan-1757 d. bef. 1808 m. 30-Oct-1775  
 \* \* +) Thomas Wiens  
 \* .) Catharina Wiens b. 12-Nov-1730 d. 6-Jan-1776 m. 24-Apr-1751  
 \* .) Anna Hildebrandt  
 +) Heinrich Epp b. 11-Jun-1784  
 \* \* +) Gerhard Penner  
 \* .) Anna Penner b. 19-Mar-1757 d. abt. 1798 m. 30-Oct-1775  
 \* .) Elisabeth Wölke  
 +) Gerhard Epp b. 26-Dec-1829 d. 8-Feb-1911  
 \* .) Anna ? b. abt. 1786  
 ))) 1  
 \* +)) Heinrich Günther  
 .) Anna Günther  
 \* +) Cornelius Jantzen b. 1724  
 \* +) Johann Jantzen b. 23-Feb-1752 d. 12-Apr-1823 m. 1779  
 \* +) Johann Jantzen b. 3-May-1782  
 \* \* .) Maria Bergmann b. 6-Jan-1758 d. 22-Dec-1808 m. 1779  
 .) Aganetha Jantzen d. abt. 1807  
 \* +) Cornelius Jantzen b. 1724  
 \* +) Abraham Jantzen b. abt. 1747 d. 1823  
 .) Anna Jantzen b. abt. 1782  
 \* +) Peter Epp b. 1690  
 .) Aganetha Epp b. abt. 1745  
 .) Anna Claassen

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**Husband: Gerhard Epp**

Born: 28 Dec 1829 in: Altonau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 8 Feb 1911 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Heinrich Epp  
 Mother: Anna \_\_\_\_\_

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**Wife: Aganetha Günther**

Born: \_\_\_\_\_ in: Tiegerweide

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**Wife: Anna Günther**

Father: Heinrich Günther  
 Mother: Aganetha Jantzen

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**F Child 1 Agnetha Epp**

Born: ca. 1853  
 Spouse: Gerhard Martens

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**F Child 2 Anna Epp**

Born: ca. 1855  
 Spouse: Abraham Dyck

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**M Child 3 Gerhard Epp**

Born: 8-Mar-1856 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 1-Oct-1932 in: Paraguay  
 Migrate: ca 1929 in: Paraguay  
 Spouse: Maria Barkmann

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**F Child 4 Katharina Epp**

Born: 30-Oct-1864 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 4-Mar-1898 in: Henderson, Nebraska  
 Buried: 1898 in: Henderson, Nebraska  
 Migrate: 3-Jul-1892  
 Spouse: Peter T. Harms  
 Married: 28-Nov-1885 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia

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**M Child 5 Heinrich Epp**

Spouse: Maria Loewen

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**F Child 6 Maria Epp**

Born: 1868  
 Spouse: Gerhard Hildebrandt

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**PARENTS**


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 Husband: Heinrich Epp

Born: 11 Jun 1784  
 Migrate: 1808 in: Danzig to Atonau  
 Father: Heinrich Epp  
 Mother: Anna Penner

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 Wife: Anna \_\_\_\_\_

Born: ca. 1786

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 M Child 1 Johann Epp

Born: bef. 1808 in: Danzig, Prussia  
 Spouse: Susanna ?

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 M Child 2 Heinrich Epp

Born: ca. 1811

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 F Child 3 Anna Epp

Born: ca. 1814

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 F Child 4 Agneta Epp

Born: ca. 1815

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 M Child 5 Kornelius Epp

Born: ca. 1819

---

 F Child 6 Katerina Epp

Born: ca. 1822

---

 M Child 7 Peter Epp

Born: ca. 1825

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 M Child 8 Gerhard Epp

Born: 28 Dec 1829 in: Altonau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 8 Feb 1911 in: Rückenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Aganetha Günther  
 Spouse: Anna Günther

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 Husband: Heinrich Günther

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 Wife: Aganetha Jantzen

Born: Ca. 1807  
 Father: Johann Johann Jantzen  
 Mother: Anna Jantzen

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 F Child 1 Anna Günther

Spouse: Gerhard Epp  
 Spouse: ? Nachtigal

**GRANDPARENTS**


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---

 Husband: Heinrich Epp

Born: 9 Jan 1757 in: Neunhuben, Amt Schwetz, Prussia  
 Died: bef. 1808  
 Father: Peter Epp  
 Mother: Catharina Wiens

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 Wife: Anna Penner

Married: 30 Oct 1775 in: Danzig, Prussia  
 Born: 19 Mar 1757  
 Died: Ca. 1798 in: Chortitza Colony, South Russia  
 Father: Gerhard Penner  
 Mother: Elisabeth Woelke

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 M Child 1 Peter Heinrich Epp

Born: 6 Feb 1777  
 Died: 23 Oct 1844

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 F Child 2 Christina H. Epp

Born: Sep 1778 in: Prussia  
 Died: 16 Oct 1779 in: Rosenthal, Chortitza, South Russia

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 M Child 3 Gerhard Epp

Born: Oct 1780  
 Died: 11 Apr 1851

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 M Child 4 Kornelius \_\_\_\_\_

Born: 18 Nov 1782 in: Prussia

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Died: 7 Jan 1787 in: Prussia

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M Child 5 Heinrich Epp  
 Born: 11 Jun 1784  
 Migrate: 1808 in: Danzig to Atonau  
 Spouse: Anna \_\_\_\_\_

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F Child 6 Anna H. Epp  
 Born: 23 Dec 1787 in: Prussia  
 Died: in: Altonau, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 7 Katharina Epp  
 Born: 19 May 1793  
 Died: 28 Feb 1818

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M Child 8 Kornelius Heinrich Epp  
 Born: 4 Feb 1796 in: Rosenthal, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 15 Aug 1872 in: Russia

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Wife: Margaretha Epp  
 Married: ca. 1798 in: Chortitza Colony, South Russia  
 Born: 13 Mar 1777  
 Died: 1800 in: Chortitza Colony, South Russia

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F Child 1 Margaretha Epp  
 Born: 20 Sep 1799  
 Died: 25 Jul 1873

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M Child 2 Jakob Heinrich Epp  
 Born: 1800 in: Rosenthal, Chortitza, South Russia

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Wife: Susanna Bartsch  
 Married: 1801  
 Born: 10 Feb 1782 in: Prussia  
 Died: Dec 1809 in: Chortitza Colony, South Russia

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M Child 1 Johann Epp  
 Born: 17 Oct 1804  
 Died: 31 Mar 1880

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Husband: Johann Johann Jantzen  
 Born: 3 May 1782 in: Schoensee, Grosswerder, Prussia  
 Father: Johann Cornelius Jantzen  
 Mother: Maria Bergmann

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Wife: Anna Jantzen  
 Born: ca. 1782

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M Child 1 Abraham Jantzen  
 Born: ca. 1805  
 Died: 1819 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 2 Aganetha Jantzen  
 Born: Ca. 1807  
 Spouse: Heinrich Günther

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M Child 3 Johann Johann Jantzen  
 Born: ca. 1810 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 4 Cornelius Jantzen  
 Born: ca. 1813 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: ca. 1824 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 5 Jacob Jantzen  
 Born: ca. 1816 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 6 Anna Jantzen  
 Born: 24 Aug 1820 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 31 Oct 1885

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Wife: Maria Willms

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#### GREAT-GRANDPARENTS

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Husband: Peter (Ält.) Epp  
 Born: 23 Jan 1725 in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: 12 Nov 1789 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Father: Peter Epp  
 Mother: Anna Claassen

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Wife: Catharina Wiens  
 Married: 24 Apr 1751  
 Born: 12 Nov 1730  
 Died: 6 Jan 1776 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Father: Thomas Wiens  
 Mother: Anna Hildebrandt

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F Child 1 Anna Epp  
 Born: 16 Jan 1752 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Died: 23 Jan 1754 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia

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F Child 2 Sara Epp  
 Born: 15 Dec 1753 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Died: 11 Oct 1779 in: Hochzeit, Danzig, Prussia

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M Child 3 Peter Epp  
 Born: 19 Mar 1755  
 Died: 15 Feb 1802 in: Rosenthal, Chortitza, South Russia

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M Child 4 Heinrich Epp  
 Born: 9 Jan 1757 in: Neunhuben, Prussia  
 Died: Bef. 1808 in:  
 Spouse: Anna Penner  
 Married: 30 Oct 1775 in: Danzig, Prussia  
 Spouse: Margaretha Epp  
 Married: Ca. 1798 in: Chortitza Colony, South Russia  
 Spouse: Susanna Bartsch  
 Married: 1801

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F Child 5 Anna Epp  
 Born: 13 Feb 1758 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Died: 21 Jan 1792 in: Prussia

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F Child 6 Maria Epp  
 Born: 13 Apr 1760 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Died: 6 Nov 1806 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 7 Catharina Epp  
 Born: 9 Feb 1764 in: Neunhuben, Amt Schwetz, Prussia  
 Died: in: Russia

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M Child 8 Cornelius Epp  
 Born: 26 Jun 1767 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Died: 1768 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia

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M Child 9 Jacob Epp  
 Born: 15 Feb 1769 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Died: 1 Mar 1769 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia

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M Child 10 Jacob Epp  
 Born: 25 Apr 1774 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Died:

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Husband: Gerhard Penner

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Wife: Elisabeth Woelke

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F Child 1 Anna Penner  
 Born: 19 Mar 1757  
 Died: Ca. 1798 in: Chortitza Colony, South Russia  
 Spouse: Heinrich Epp  
 Married: 30 Oct 1775 in: Danzig, Prussia

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F Child 2 Maria Penner  
 Born: 10 May 1759  
 Died: AFT 1894 in: Rosenthal, Chortitza, South Russia

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Husband: Johann Cornelius Jantzen  
 Born: 23 Feb 1752 in: Schoenseerfeld, Prussia  
 Died: 12 Apr 1823 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Cornelius Jantzen

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Wife: Maria Bergmann  
 Married: 1779  
 Born: 6 Jan 1758 in: Schoenseerfeld, Prussia  
 Died: 22 Dec 1808 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia

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|            |                               |   |  |
|------------|-------------------------------|---|--|
| M Child 1  | Cornelius Johann Jantzen      |   |  |
|            | Born: 9 Oct 1780              | in: Schoensee, Grosswerder, Prussia       |  |
|            | Died:                         | in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia |  |
| M Child 2  | Johann Johann Jantzen         |   |  |
|            | Born: 3 May 1782              | in: Schoensee, Grosswerder, Prussia       |  |
|            | Spouse: Anna Jantzen          |   |  |
|            | Spouse: Maria Willms          |   |  |
| M Child 3  | Jacob Johann Jantzen          |   |  |
|            | Born: 30 Oct 1784             | in: Schoensee, Grosswerder, Prussia       |  |
| M Child 4  | Peter Janzen                  |   |  |
|            | Born: 7 Jun 1786              | in: Schoensee, Grosswerder, Prussia       |  |
|            | Died: 1 Mar 1862              | in: Franzthal, Molotschna, South Russia   |  |
| M Child 5  | Abraham Jantzen               |   |  |
|            | Born: ca. 1788                |   |  |
| M Child 6  | Durck Johann Jantzen          |   |  |
|            | Born: 5 Sep 1790              |   |  |
| F Child 7  | Maria Janzen                  |   |  |
|            | Born: 23 Jul 1792             |   |  |
|            | Died: 23 Jul 1792             |   |  |
| F Child 8  | Maria Jantzen                 |   |  |
|            | Born: 22 Oct 1793             |   |  |
|            | Died: 13 Feb 1825             |   |  |
| M Child 9  | Franz Janzen                  |   |  |
|            | Born: 28 Jun 1795             |   |  |
|            | Died: 9 Aug 1796              |   |  |
| F Child 10 | Anna Jantzen                  |   |  |
|            | Born: 14 Jun 1797             |   |  |
| M Child 11 | Franz Jantzen                 |   |  |
|            | Born: 29 Jul 1798             |   |  |
|            | Died: 1816                    | in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia |  |
| M Child 12 | Heinrich Janzen               |   |  |
|            | Born: 8 Apr 1800              |   |  |
|            | Died: 19 Jun 1800             |   |  |
| F Child 13 | Catarina Jantzen              |   |  |
|            | Born: 22 Jul 1802             |   |  |
| Wife:      | Anna Fast                     |   |  |
|            | Married: 8 Jan 1809           |   |  |
| M Child 1  | Abraham Jantzen               |   |  |
|            | Born: 11 Apr 1810             | in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia |  |
| Husband:   | Abraham Cornelius Jantzen     |   |  |
|            | Born: abt. 1747               |   |  |
|            | Died: 1823                    | in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia |  |
|            | Father: Cornelius Jantzen     |   |  |
| Wife:      | Aganetha P. Epp               |   |  |
|            | Born: abt. 1745               | in: Petershagen, Prussia                  |  |
|            | Died: in:                     | Molotschna Colony, South Russia           |  |
|            | Father: Peter Epp             |   |  |
|            | Mother: Anna Claassen         |   |  |
| F Child 1  | Anna Jantzen                  |   |  |
|            | Born: Abt 1782                |   |  |
|            | Spouse: Johann Johann Jantzen |   |  |
| F Child 2  | Maria Jantzen                 |   |  |

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## 2G-GRANDPARENTS

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|-----------|----------------|--------------------------|--|
| Husband:  | Peter Epp      |                          |  |
|           | Born: 1690     | in: Prussia              |  |
| Wife:     | Anna Claassen  |                          |  |
|           | Born:          | in: Prussia              |  |
| M Child 1 | Wilhelm Epp    |                          |  |
|           | Born: ca. 1715 | in: Petershagen, Prussia |  |

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Died: 1781

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M Child 2 Heinrich Epp  
 Born: 1721 in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: 13 Jun 1780 in: Neumuensterberg, Prussia

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M Child 3 Peter (Alt.) Epp  
 Born: 23 Jan 1725 in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: 12 Nov 1789 in: Stadtgebiet, Danzig, Prussia  
 Spouse: Catharina Wiens  
 Married: 24 Apr 1751

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M Child 4 Kornelius Peter Epp  
 Born: 6 Aug 1728 in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: 19 Oct 1805 in: Molotschna Colony, South Russia

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F Child 5 Aganetha P. Epp  
 Born: ca. 1745 in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: in: Molotschna Colony, South Russia

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Husband: Cornelius Jantzen  
 Born: 1724

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M Child 1 Abraham Cornelius Jantzen  
 Born: ca. 1747  
 Died: 1823 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 2 Johann Cornelius Jantzen  
 Born: 23 Feb 1752 in: Schoenseerfeld, Prussia  
 Died: 12 Apr 1823 in: Petershagen, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Maria Bergmann  
 Married: 1779 in:

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Spouse: Anna Fast  
 Married: 8 Jan 1809 in:

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Ancestor and Group Charts for Isaak J. Harms and Katharina Fröse Harms

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+) Hans Harm  
 +) Hans Harms b. 1771  
 +) Johann Harms b. 16-Mar-1798 d. 2-Feb-1887  
 \* .) Maria Fast b. 1769 d. 1804  
 +) Isaak J. Harms b. 18-Dec-1833 d. 29-Aug-1886  
 \* \* +) Jakob Giesbrecht b. 1708 d. 1776  
 \* \* +) Jakob Giesbrecht b. 1763  
 \* .) Maria Giesbrecht b. 2-Aug-1802 d. 8-Aug-1877  
 \* \* +) Jakob Reimer b. 1752  
 \* .) Helena Reimer b. 1775  
 \* .) Helena \_\_\_\_\_ b. 1764  
 ))) 1  
 \* +) Franz Fröse  
 \* +) Kornelius Fröse d. 1834  
 \* +) Kornelius Fröse b. ca. 1799  
 .) Kathrina Fröse b. 31-Mar-1836 d. 21-Apr-1905  
 .) Eva ? b. About 1802

---

Husband: Isaak J. Harms also known as Isaac Harms  
 Born: 18-Dec-1833 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 29-Aug-1886 in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 5-Aug-1875 in: NYC; State of Nevada  
 Father: Johann Harms  
 Mother: Maria Giesbrecht

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Wife: Katharina Fröse  
 Married: 3-Jan-1856  
 Born: 31-Mar-1836 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 21-Apr-1905 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 5-Aug-1875 in: NYC; State of Nevada  
 Father: Kornelius Fröse  
 2nd Marr: to: Jakob Dürksen, Hillsboro

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M Child 1 John (Rev.) Harms  
 Born: 18-Dec-1856 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 2-Dec-1910 in: Hillsboro, Marion Cty, Kansas  
 Spouse: Jacobine Frantz  
 Married: 8-May-1877

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M Child 2 David Harms  
 Born: 9-Feb-1861 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 17-Apr-1881 in: French Creek, Marion County, Kansas  
 Died: 10-Sep-1931 in: Medicine Hat, Alberta  
 Buried: in: Brotherfield Cem., Waldheim, Sask.  
 Migr: 5-Aug-1875 in: NYC; State of Nevada  
 Spouse: Eva Unruh  
 Married: 1-Aug-1881 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas

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M Child 3 Isaac J. Harms  
 Born: 24-Feb-1863 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 11-Feb-1903 in: Corn, Oklahoma  
 Migr: 5-Aug-1875 in: NYC; State of Nevada  
 Spouse: Marie Deleski  
 Married: 1883 in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas

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M Child 4 Cornelius Harms  
 Born: 23 Sep 1866 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 13 May 1892  
 Migr: 5 Aug 1875  
 Spouse: Anna Duerksen  
 Married: 8 Nov 1887

---

M Child 5 Bernhard Harms  
 Born: 20 Oct 1867 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 28 Oct 1936 in: McPherson, Kansas  
 Spouse: Johanna Henrietta Boschman  
 Married: 11 Sep 1892 in: Inman, Kansas

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M Child 6 Jacob Harms  
 Born: 2 May 1870 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 11 Jan 1938 in: Hillsboro, Marion Cty., Kansas

Spouse: Bertha Bartels  
 Married: 22 Oct 1894 in: Inman, Kansas

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F Child 7 Kathrina Harms  
 Born: 1872 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 20 Oct 1878 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas

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F Child 8 Maria Harms  
 Born: 31 Dec 1874 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 16 Nov 1875 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas

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M Child 9 Peter Harms  
 Born: 30 May 1876 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Died: 21 Aug 1941  
 Spouse: Anna Kroeker  
 Married: 28 Jul 1900

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## PARENTS

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Husband: Johann Harms also known as Johann Johann Harms  
 Born: 16-Mar-1798 in: Osterwick, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1820 in: Halbstadt, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 2-Feb-1887 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Hans Harms  
 Mother: Maria Fast

---

Wife: Maria Giesbrecht  
 Married: 7-Sep-1822  
 Born: 2-Aug-1802 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1820 in: Halbstadt, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 8-Aug-1877 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Jakob Giesbrecht  
 Mother: Helena Reimer

---

M Child 1 Johann Harms  
 Born: Jun-1823 in: Marienthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: Jun-1865 in: Kleefeld, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 2 Bernhard Harms  
 Born: 24-Nov-1824 in: Marienthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 9-Apr-1896 in: South Russia  
 Spouse: Elizabeth Sch6nke

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M Child 3 Jakob Harms  
 Born: 12-Oct-1826 in: Marienthal, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 14-Aug-1898 in: Minnesota  
 Migr: 1878  
 Spouse: Anna Foth  
 Married: 1851  
 Spouse: Margaretha Wall  
 Married: 28-Aug-1892

---

M Child 4 Peter Harms  
 Born: 29-Jan-1828 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 26-Jun-1911 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 1875  
 Spouse: Katharina Voth  
 Married: 1851

---

M Child 5 Isaak J. Harms  
 Born: 18-Dec-1833 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 29-Aug-1886 in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 5-Aug-1875 in: NYC; State of Nevada  
 Spouse: Kathrina Fr6se  
 Married: 3-Jan-1856

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M Child 6 Abraham Harms  
 Born: 22-Dec-1837 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 10-Nov-1908 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 1875  
 Spouse: Katharina Hiebert  
 Married: 1858

---

M Child 7 William Harms  
 Born: 7-Oct-1839 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 23-Feb-1915 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Sarah Schulz



Married: 10 Jan 1861

---

F Child 8 Maria Harms  
 Born: 10-Mar-1842 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 24-Dec-1919 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Gerhard Friesen  
 Married: 8 Mar 1867

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F Child 9 Susanna Harms  
 Born: 1844  
 Spouse: Peter Enns

---

M Child 10 Heinrich Harms  
 Born: 27-Dec-1845  
 Died: 24-Jun-1886  
 Spouse: Katharina Thun

---

Husband: Kornelius Kornelius Fröse  
 Born: About 1799  
 Wife: Eva ?  
 Born: About 1802

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F Child 1 Elizabeth Fröse  
 Born: About 1826

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F Child 2 Maria Fröse  
 Born: 21-Mar-1828

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F Child 3 Anna Fröse  
 Born: About 1833

---

F Child 4 Katharina Fröse  
 Born: 31-Mar-1836 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 21-Apr-1905 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Migr: 5-Aug-1875 in: NYC; State of Nevada

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## GRANDPARENTS

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Husband: Hans Harms also known as Johann Johann Harms  
 Born: 1771 in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia  
 Died: in: Molotschna, South Russia  
 Migr: 1795 in: Osterwick, Chortitsa fr. Dirschau, Pr.  
 Father: Hans Harms

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Wife: Maria Fast  
 Married: ca 1794  
 Born: 1769 in: Ellerwald, Elbing, Prussia  
 Died: 1804 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 1 Katharina Harms  
 Born: 1796  
 Died: 1883  
 Spouse: Isaak Braun

---

M Child 2 Johann Harms  
 Born: 16-Mar-1798 in: Osterwick, Chortitz, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1820 in: Halbstadt, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 2-Feb-1887 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Maria Giesbrecht  
 Married: 7-Sep-1822

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Wife: Anna Neudorf  
 Born: 1784 in: Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: in: Molotschna, South Russia  
 Father: Isbrand Neudorf

---

M Child 1 Peter Harms  
 Born: 1806 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 19-Jul-1870  
 Spouse: Gertruda

---

F Child 2 Anna Harms  
 Born: 18-Jun-1808 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 25-Oct-1874  
 Spouse: Peter Dück

Spouse: Heinrich Ratzlaff

---

M Child 3 Isaak (Ohm) Harms

Born: 10-Jan-1811 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 4-Sep-1891 in: Manitoba, Canada  
 Migr: 17-Jul-1874 in: NYC; Hammonia  
 Spouse: Anna Sawatzky  
 Married: 19-Sep-1832  
 Spouse: Karolina Plett  
 Married: 21-Oct-1877 in: Jansen, Nebraska  
 Spouse: Maria Fast  
 Married: in: Jansen, Nebraska

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F Child 4 Maria Harms

Born: 6-Feb-1813 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 15-Jan-1890 in: Heuboden, Manitoba, Canada  
 Spouse: Johann Peter Klassen

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M Child 5 Abraham Harms

Born: 6-Feb-1813 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 24-Jun-1830

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M Child 6 Jakob Harms

Born: 1815 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 1876/1881 in: Goessel, Marion County, Kansas  
 Spouse: Katharina Hamm

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F Child 7 Margaret Harms

Born: 14-Jun-1818 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 18-Dec-1846 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Peter Penner  
 Married: 7-Nov-1837

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Husband: Jakob Giesbrecht

Born: 1763 in: Pletzendorf, GrosseWerder, Prussia  
 Died: in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia

Father: Jakob Giesbrecht

Wife: Helena Reimer

Born: 1775 in: Muntau, Schwetz, Prussia

Father: Jakob Reimer

Mother: Helena

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F Child 1 Maria Giesbrecht

Born: 2-Aug-1802 in: Blumstein, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Baptized: 1820 in: Halbstadt, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 8-Aug-1877 in: Margenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Johann Harms  
 Married: 7-Sep-1822

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Husband: Kornelius Franz Fröse

Died: 1834 in: Grossweide, Molotschna, South Russia

1<sup>st</sup> Wife: Unknown

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M Child 1 Kornelius Fröse

Born: About 1799

2<sup>nd</sup> Wife: Unknown

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M Child 1 Heinrich Fröse

Born: About 1816

3<sup>rd</sup> Wife: Unknown

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F Child 1 Anna Fröse

Born: About 1827

---

F Child 2 Sarah Fröse

Born: About 1829

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F Child 3 Katharina Fröse

Born: About 1832

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**GREAT-GRANDPARENTS**

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Husband: Jakob Giesbrecht

Born: 1708



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 Ancestor and Group Charts for David M. Unruh and Eva Schröder Unruh
 

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+) David Unruh  
 +) Heinrich Unruh  
 +) David M. Unruh                      b. 12-Dec-1836 d. 28-Mar-1912  
 \* \* +) Abraham Nickel  
 \* . ) Petronella Nickel                      m. 24 Feb 1828  
 ))) 1  
 \* +) Kornelius Schröder                      b. 1-Mar-1802 d. 20-Sep-1856  
 . ) Eva Schröder                              b. 23-Aug-1837 d. 22-Jun-1920  
 . ) Maria Kliewer                              b. 1-May-1799 d. 15-Feb-1892

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|          |                   |                                   |
|----------|-------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Husband: | David M. Unruh    |                                   |
| Born:    | 12-Dec-1836       | in: Schönich, Culm, Prussia       |
| Died:    | 28-Mar-1912       | in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas |
| Buried:  |                   | in: Lehigh (KS) M.B.              |
| Migr:    | 4-Jun-1877        | in: NYC; City of Chester          |
| Father:  | Heinrich Unruh    |                                   |
| Mother:  | Petronella Nickel |                                   |

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|          |                    |  |
|----------|--------------------|--|
| Wife:    | Eva Schröder       |  |
| Married: | 22-Sep-1859        |  |
| Born:    | 23-Aug-1837        | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Prussia |
| Died:    | 22-Jun-1920        | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas         |
| Buried:  |                    | in: Lehigh (KS) M.B.                         |
| Migr:    | 4-Jun-1877         | in: NYC; City of Chester                     |
| Father:  | Kornelius Schröder |  |
| Mother:  | Maria Kliewer      |  |

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F Child 1 Eva Unruh

|           |             |   |
|-----------|-------------|---|
| Born:     | 27-Feb-1862 | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland       |
| Baptized: | 17-Apr-1881 | in: French Creek, Marion County, Kansas |
| Died:     | 24-Jan-1936 | in: Saskatchewan                        |
| Buried:   | 24-Jan-1936 | in: Brotherfield Cem., Waldheim, Sask.  |
| Migr:     | 4-Jun-1877  |   |
| Spouse:   | David Harms |   |
| Married:  | 1-Aug-1881  | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas    |

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F Child 2 Mary Unruh

|       |             |                                   |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Born: | 26-Jul-1864 | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------------|

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F Child 3 Helena Unruh

|          |                 |                                   |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------------------------|
| Born:    | 23-Apr-1868     | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland |
| Died:    | 16-Mar-1950     | in: Reedley, California           |
| Spouse:  | Herman Rogalsky |                                   |
| Married: | 3-Apr-1887      | in: Buhler M.B., Kansas           |

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M Child 4 David Unruh

|         |             |                                   |
|---------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Born:   | 12-Mar-1870 | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland |
| Died:   | 18-Mar-1942 |                                   |
| Buried: |             | in: Lehigh, Kansas                |
| Spouse: | Anna Kasper |                                   |

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M Child 5 Wilhelm Unruh

|         |               |  |
|---------|---------------|--|
| Born:   | 11-Apr-1872   |  |
| Spouse: | Justina Loepp |  |

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F Child 6 Julianna Unruh

|       |             |                                   |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Born: | 21-Apr-1874 | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland |
| Died: | ca. 1882    | in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas |

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F Child 7 Bertha Unruh

|         |                   |                    |
|---------|-------------------|--------------------|
| Born:   | 26-Nov-1876       | in: Russian Poland |
| Died:   | 26-Nov-1965       |                    |
| Spouse: | Abraham A. Janzen |                    |

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F Child 8 Albertina Unruh

|       |             |                                   |
|-------|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| Born: | 26-Nov-1876 | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland |
| Died: | ca. 1882    | in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas |

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M Child 9 Frank Unruh

|       |      |                    |
|-------|------|--------------------|
| Born: | 1878 | in: Lehigh, Kansas |
|-------|------|--------------------|

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M Child 10 Henry Unruh

|       |      |                    |
|-------|------|--------------------|
| Born: | 1882 | in: Lehigh, Kansas |
|-------|------|--------------------|

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**PARENTS**

|                                     |                  |  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|--|
| <b>Husband: Heinrich Unruh</b>      |                  |  |
| Born:                               |                  | in: Schönich, Culm, Prussia                  |
| Died:                               |                  | in: Dt. Wymysle, Poland                      |
| <b>Father: David Unrauh</b>         |                  |  |
| <b>Wife: Petronella Nickel</b>      |                  |  |
| Married:                            | 24 Feb 1828      | in: Dorposch, Prussia                        |
| Born:                               |                  | in: Jamrau, Prussia                          |
| Died:                               |                  | in: Dt. Wymysle, Poland                      |
| <b>Father: Abraham Nickel</b>       |                  |  |
| <b>M Child 1 David M. Unruh</b>     |                  |  |
| Born:                               | 12-Dec-1836      | in: Schönich, Culm, Prussia                  |
| Died:                               | 28-Mar-1912      | in: Lehigh, Marion County, Kansas            |
| Buried:                             |                  | in: Lehigh (KS) M.B.                         |
| Migr:                               | 4-Jun-1877       | in: NYC; City of Chester                     |
| Spouse:                             | Eva Schröder     |  |
| Married:                            | 22-Sep-1859      |  |
| <b>Husband: Kornelius Schröder</b>  |                  |  |
| Born:                               | 1-Mar-1802       | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Pr.     |
| Died:                               | 20-Sep-1856      | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland            |
| <b>Wife: Maria Kliewer</b>          |                  |  |
| Married:                            | 19-Nov-1823      |  |
| Born:                               | 1-May-1799       | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Pr.     |
| Baptized:                           | 1880             | in: French Creek, Marion County, Kansas      |
| Died:                               | 15-Feb-1892      | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas         |
| Buried:                             |                  | in: French Creek Cem., Marion Cnty, Ks       |
| Migr:                               | 4-Jun-1877       | in: NYC; City of Chester                     |
| <b>M Child 1 Kornelius Schröder</b> |                  |  |
| Born:                               | 21-Sep-1824      | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Pr.     |
| Died:                               | 13-Dec-1852      |  |
| <b>F Child 2 Maria Schröder</b>     |                  |  |
| Born:                               | 27-Mar-1827      | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Pr.     |
| Died:                               | 13-Sep-1894      | in: Hillsboro, Kansas                        |
| Spouse:                             | Kornelius Eckert |  |
| Married:                            | 3-Jun-1852       |  |
| <b>F Child 3 Jakob Schröder</b>     |                  |  |
| Born:                               | 5-Sep-1833       | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Pr.     |
| <b>F Child 4 Eva Schröder</b>       |                  |  |
| Born:                               | 23-Aug-1837      | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Prussia |
| Died:                               | 22-Jun-1920      | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas         |
| Buried:                             |                  | in: Lehigh (KS) M.B.                         |
| Migr:                               | 4-Jun-1877       | in: NYC; City of Chester                     |
| Spouse:                             | David M. Unruh   |  |
| Married:                            | 22-Sep-1859      |  |
| <b>F Child 5 Anna Schröder</b>      |                  |  |
| Born:                               | 27-Sep-1839      | in: Obernessau (Nieschewken), Thorn, Prussia |
| Died:                               | 13-May-1849      | in: Swiniary, Dt. Wymysle, Poland            |

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 Ancestor and Group Charts for Heinrich Neufeld and Marie Unruh Neufeld
 

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+) Abraham Neufeld                      b. 1-Apr-1736 d. Nov-1815  
 +) Abraham Neufeld                      b. 23-Jul-1777 d. 13-Nov-1846  
 \*    .) Katarina Friesen                b. 1-May-1738 d. 1-Dec-1799  
 +) Heinrich Neufeld                      b. 6-Aug-1818 d. 17-Jun-1890  
 \*    \*    +) Michael Teichgraf            d. Bef. 1803  
 \*    .) Helena Teichgraf                b. 1-May-1779 d. 19-Jul-1866  
 \*    .) Aganetha \_\_\_\_\_            b. 1761  
 ))) 1  
 \*    +) David Unrau                        b. 16-Apr-1811 d. ca. 1843  
 .) Marie Unruh                            b. 29-May-1836 d. 27-Dec-1874  
 .) Katharina Funk                        b. 12-Jun-1805 d. 1-Mar-1874

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Husband: Heinrich Neufeld  
 Born: 6-Aug-1818                        in: Schönhorst, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 17-Jun-1890                        in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Buried:                                    in: Ebenfeld M.B., Hillsboro, Kansas  
 Migr: 13-Aug-1877                        in: NYC; City of Chester  
 Father: Abraham Neufeld  
 Mother: Helena Teichgraf

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Wife: Marie Isaak  
 Married: 17-Nov-1843                      in: Chortitza, South Russia  
 Born: 1811  
 Died: 8 Mar 1861                         in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia

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M Child 1 Henry Neufeld  
 Born: 27-Sep-1844                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 27-Aug-1925  
 Spouse: Elisabet \_\_\_\_\_  
 Married: 22 Mar 1864

---

F Child 2 Anna Neufeld  
 Born: 25-Dec-1846                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 28-Dec-1924                        in: Isabella, Oklahoma  
 Migr: 13-Aug-1877                        in: NYC; City of Chester  
 Spouse: Benjamin Bekker  
 Married: 7-Jun-1864

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F Child 3 Agnes Neufeld  
 Born: 14-May-1849                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 1890  
 Spouse: Barney Penner

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M Child 4 Abraham Neufeld  
 Born: 17-Mar-1852                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 19-Mar-1852                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Wife: Marie Unruh  
 Married: 10-Apr-1862                      in: Chortitza, South Russia  
 Born: 29-May-1836                        in: Schardau, Molotschna, South Russia?  
 Died: 27-Dec-1874                        in: Alexanderfeld, Kuban, South Russia  
 Father: David Unrau  
 Mother: Katharina Funk

---

M Child 1 Abraham Neufeld  
 Born: 8-Mar-1863                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 5-Jul-1940                        in: Shafter, California  
 Spouse: Anna Eitzen  
 Married: 29 Aug 1884

---

M Child 2 Isaac Neufeld  
 Born: 2-Jan-1865                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 17-Mar-1865                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia

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M Child 3 Isaac Neufeld  
 Born: 13-Feb-1866                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Died: 9-Aug-1866                        in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia

---

M Child 4 Isaac U. Neufeld  
 Born: 12-May-1867                        in: Schönhorst, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Baptized: 24-Feb-1884                      in: Ebenfeld, Marion County, Kansas  
 Died: 15-Feb-1954                        in: Reedley, Fresno County, California  
 Buried:                                    in: Reedley (CA)

Migr: 13-Aug-1877 in: NYC; City of Chester  
 Spouse: Katharina (Tina) Claassen  
 Married: 23-Feb-1890 in: Hillsboro (KS) Ebenfeld M.B.  
 Spouse: Nettie Wiens

---

F Child 5 Maria Neufeld  
 Born: 23-Oct-1868 in: Stavropol, Caucasus, South Russia  
 Died: 20-Jan-1891  
 Migr: 13-Aug-1877 in: NYC; City of Chester  
 Spouse: Abraham Janzen  
 Married: 1 Apr 1888

---

M Child 6 Jacob Neufeld  
 Born: 9-Dec-1870 in: Stavropol, Caucasus, South Russia  
 Died: 5-Aug-1871 in: Stavropol, Caucasus, South Russia

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M Child 7 John Neufeld  
 Born: 13-Mar-1872 in: Stavropol, Caucasus, South Russia  
 Died: 10-Dec-1934 in: Enid, Oklahoma  
 Migr: 13-Aug-1877 in: NYC; City of Chester  
 Spouse: Pauline Karber

---

F Child 8 Katrina Neufeld  
 Born: 10-Sep-1873 in: Stavropol, Caucasus, South Russia  
 Died: 23-Feb-1874 in: Stavropol, Caucasus, South Russia  
 Wife: Agnes Krause also known as Agatha Krause  
 Married: 17-Apr-1875 in: Alexanderfeld, Kuban, South Russia  
 Born: 12-Feb-1857  
 Died: 2-Mar-1939  
 Migr: 13-Aug-1877 in: NYC; City of Chester  
 Father: Heinrich Krause  
 Mother: Katharina Friesen

---

M Child 1 Jacob Neufeld  
 Born: 12-Mar-1877 in: Alexanderfeld, Kuban, South Russia  
 Died: 25-Mar-1877 in: Alexanderfeld, Kuban, South Russia

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M Child 2 Jacob Neufeld  
 Born: 24-Feb-1879 in: Mountain Lake, Minnesota  
 Died: 31-Jul-1963  
 Spouse: Lizzie Mehl  
 Married: 3-Oct-1904 in: Oklahoma

---

M Child 3 Daniel Neufeld  
 Born: 22-Oct-1880 in: Mountain Lake, Minnesota  
 Died: 27-May-1967  
 Spouse: Maria Gerts  
 Married: in: Fairview, Oklahoma

---

F Child 4 Helena Neufeld  
 Born: 5-Apr-1882 in: Mountain Lake, Minnesota  
 Died: 12-Jun-1967  
 Spouse: August Wahl  
 Married: 5 Dec 1901

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F Child 5 Katrina Neufeld  
 Born: 5-Jul-1884 in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas  
 Died: 24-Oct-1928  
 Spouse: George Hash

---

**PARENTS**

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Husband: Abraham Neufeld  
 Born: 23-Jul-1777 in: Heubuden, Marienburg, Prussia  
 Died: 13-Nov-1846 in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Migr: 1803 in: Chortitza, South Russia  
 Father: Abraham Neufeld  
 Mother: Katarina Friesen

---

Wife: Helena Teichgraf also known as Helena Teichgröb  
 Married: 15-May-1798  
 Born: 1-May-1779  
 Died: 19-Jul-1866  
 Father: Michael Teichgraf  
 Mother: Aganetha \_\_\_\_\_

---

? Child 1 \_\_\_\_\_ Neufeld

|                             |                  |   |
|-----------------------------|------------------|---|
| Born:                       | 24-Jan-1799      |   |
| Died:                       | 24-Jan-1799      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| F Child 2 Helena Neufeld    |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 24-Jan-1799      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| F Child 3 Anna Neufeld      |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 21-Oct-1800      | in: Prussia                             |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 4 Abraham Neufeld   |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 9-Dec-1802       | in: Prussia                             |
| Died:                       | _Nov-1881        |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 5 Johanis Neufeld   |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 29-Dec-1804      |   |
| Died:                       | 10-Jan-1805      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 6 Peter Neufeld     |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 29-Nov-1805      |   |
| Died:                       | 29-Nov-1805      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 7 Peter Neufeld     |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 14-Dec-1806      |   |
| Died:                       | Jun-1843         |   |
| Spouse:                     | Marie Isaak      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| F Child 8 Katarina Neufeld  |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 17-Sep-1808      | in: South Russia                        |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 9 Johannes Neufeld  |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 20-Dec-1810      | in: South Russia                        |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 10 Heinrich Neufeld |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 27-Aug-1813      | in: South Russia                        |
| Died:                       | 20-Apr-1814      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 11 Heinrich Neufeld |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 11-Feb-1815      | in: South Russia                        |
| Died:                       | 28-Feb-1815      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| F Child 12 Maria Neufeld    |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 17-Feb-1816      | in: South Russia                        |
| Died:                       | 21-Apr-1887      | in: Mt. Lake, Minnesota                 |
| Spouse:                     | Peter Penner     |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 13 Heinrich Neufeld |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 6-Aug-1818       | in: Schönhorst, Chortitza, South Russia |
| Died:                       | 17-Jun-1890      | in: Hillsboro, Marion County, Kansas    |
| Buried:                     |                  | in: Ebenfeld M.B., Hillsboro, Kansas    |
| Migr:                       | 13-Aug-1877      | in: NYC; City of Chester                |
| Spouse:                     | Marie Isaak      |   |
| Married:                    | 17-Nov-1843      | in: Chortitza, South Russia             |
| Spouse:                     | Marie Unruh      |   |
| Married:                    | 10-Apr-1862      | in: Chortitza, South Russia             |
| Spouse:                     | Agnes Krause     |   |
| Married:                    | 17-Apr-1875      | in: Alexanderfeld, Kuban, South Russia  |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| M Child 14 Franz Neufeld    |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 18-Nov-1820      |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| Husband:                    | David Unrau      |   |
| Born:                       | 16-Apr-1811      |   |
| Died:                       | ca. 1843         |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| Wife:                       | Katharina Funk   |   |
| Born:                       | 12-Jun-1805      |   |
| Died:                       | 1-Mar-1874       |   |
| <hr/>                       |                  |   |
| F Child 1 Marie Unruh       |                  |   |
| Born:                       | 29-May-1836      |   |
| Died:                       | 27-Dec-1874      | in: Alexanderfeld, Kuban, South Russia  |
| Spouse:                     | Heinrich Neufeld |   |
| Married:                    | 10-Apr-1862      | in: Chortitza, South Russia             |

**GRANDPARENTS**

|          |                  |
|----------|------------------|
| Husband: | Abraham Neufeld  |
| Born:    | 1-Apr-1736       |
| Died:    | Nov-1815         |
| Wife:    | Katarina Friesen |



Born: 1-May-1738  
 Died: 1-Dec-1799

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M Child 1 Abraham Neufeld  
 Born: 23-Jul-1777                      in: Heubuden, Marienburg, Prussia  
 Died: 13-Nov-1846                    in: Einlage, Chortitza, South Russia  
 Migr: 1803                                in: Chortitza, South Russia  
 Spouse: Helena Teichgraf  
 Married: 15-May-1798

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Husband: Michael Teichgraf also known as Michael Teichgröb  
 Died: bef. 1803

---

Wife: Aganetha \_\_\_\_\_  
 Born: 1761

---

F Child 1 Anna Teichgraf  
 Born: 1769

---

M Child 2 Kornelius Teichgraf  
 Born: 8-Oct-1778

---

M Child 3 Peter Techgraf  
 Died: 10-Aug-1777

---

F Child 4 Gertruda Teichgraf  
 Born: 8-Oct-1778

---

F Child 5 Helena Teichgraf  
 Born: 1-May-1779  
 Died: 19-Jul-1866  
 Spouse: Abraham Neufeld  
 Married: 15-May-1798

---

M Child 6 Heinrich Teichgraf  
 Born: 19-Feb-1783  
 Died: 28-Feb-1785

---

M Child 7 Daniel Teichgraf  
 Born: 1789

---

F Child 8 Aganetha Teichgraf  
 Born: 1791  
 Died: 10-Oct-1812

---

F Child 9 Agatha Teichgraf  
 Born: 1793

---

M Child 10 David Teichgraf  
 Born: 1796

---

M Child 11 Isaac Teichgraf  
 Born: 1799

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## Ancestor and Group Charts for Johann Claassen and Katharina Schmidt Claassen

+) Johann Klaassen b. bef. 1680  
 +) David Klaassen b. 13-Sep-1700 d. 16-Sep-1780  
 +) David Claassen b. 21-Oct-1760 d. 19-Apr-1827  
 \* \* +) Kornelius Andres  
 \* \* +) Kornelius Andres b. 23-Sep-1680 d. 1741  
 \* \* \* .) Euphrosine Görtzen b. Apr-1648 d. 12-Apr-1712  
 \* .) Anna Andres b. 29-Oct-1722 d. 9-Jun-1784  
 \* \* +) Behrend Klaassen b. ca. 1635  
 \* \* +) Hans Klaassen b. 1658 d. 8-Feb-1734  
 \* .) Ida Klaassen b. 11-Jul-1688 d. 28-Jun-1734  
 \* .) \_\_\_\_\_ d. 26-Apr-1716  
 +) Johann Claassen b. 27-Jul-1820 d. 24-Dec-1876  
 \* \* +) Peter Penner  
 \* .) Agnetha Penner  
 ))) 1  
 \* +) Abraham Schmidt  
 .) Katharina Schmidt b. 30-Jan-1852 d. 26-Jun-1915

---

Husband: Johann Claassen  
 Born: 27-Jul-1820 in: Morgenanerfeld, Tiege, Prussia  
 Died: 24-Dec-1876 in: Wohldemfuerst, Kuban, South Russia  
 Father: David Claassen  
 Mother: Agnetha Penner

---

Wife: Katharina Reimer  
 Married: 31-Jan-1847 in: Felsental, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Born: 1827 in: Felsental, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 25-Jul-1869 in: Kuban, South Russia  
 Buried: in: Kuban, South Russia  
 Father: David Reimer  
 Mother: Maria

---

M Child 1 Jakob Claassen  
 Born: 22 Feb 1843 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 22 Jul 1843 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia

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M Child 2 David Claassen  
 Born: 17-Oct-1847 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 27-Oct-1847 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia

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F Child 3 Maria Claassen  
 Born: 26-Feb-1850 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 12-May-1850 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia

---

M Child 4 David Claassen  
 Born: 20-Apr-1851 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 28-Oct-1851 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia

---

M Child 5 Jacob Claassen  
 Born: 29-Jul-1852 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Emilee Prochnau  
 Married: 17-Oct-1877

---

M Child 6 David Ivanovich Claassen  
 Born: 9-May-1855 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Anna Reimer  
 Married: 10-Apr-1882

---

M Child 7 Johann Claassen  
 Born: 13-Oct-1858 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 15-Apr-1862 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia

---

F Child 8 Maria Claassen  
 Born: 15-May-1860 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 31-Jan-1877 in: Kuban, South Russia

---

F Child 9 Aganetha Claassen  
 Born: 1-Apr-1863 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Spouse: Johann Berg

---

F Child 10 Katharina Claassen  
 Born: Jan-1866 in: Liebenau, Molotschna, South Russia  
 Died: 27-Sep-1867 in: Kuban, South Russia  
 Wife: Katharina Schmidt  
 Married: 1-Mar-1870 in: Kuban, South Russia

|                                     |                  |     |                                    |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|-----|------------------------------------|
| Born:                               | 30-Jan-1852      | in: | Chortitza, South Russia            |
| Died:                               | 26-Jun-1915      | in: | Corn, Oklahoma                     |
| Buried:                             |                  | in: | Corn, Oklahoma                     |
| Migr:                               | 4-Jul-1884       | in: | NYC (to Waldeck, Kansas)           |
| Father:                             | Abraham Schmidt  |     |                                    |
| <hr/>                               |                  |     |                                    |
| F Child 1 Katharina (Tina) Claassen |                  |     |                                    |
| Born:                               | 18-Dec-1870      | in: | Wohldemfuerst, Kuban, South Russia |
| Baptized:                           | 1886             | in: | Lehigh (KS) M.B.                   |
| Died:                               | 10-Jul-1910      | in: | Fairview, Oklahoma                 |
| Buried:                             |                  | in: | Fairview M.B. Cemetery             |
| Migr:                               | 4-Jul-1884       | in: | NYC (to Waldeck, Kansas)           |
| Spouse:                             | Isaac U. Neufeld |     |                                    |
| Married:                            | 23-Feb-1890      | in: | Hillsboro (KS) Ebenfeld M.B.       |
| <hr/>                               |                  |     |                                    |
| F Child 2 Anna Claassen             |                  |     |                                    |
| Born:                               | 20-Feb-1872      | in: | Kuban, South Russia                |
| Died:                               | 3-Jun-1906       | in: | Fairview, Oklahoma                 |
| Spouse:                             | John J. Flaming  |     |                                    |
| Married:                            | 30-Nov-1890      |     |                                    |
| <hr/>                               |                  |     |                                    |
| M Child 3 John Claassen             |                  |     |                                    |
| Born:                               | 11-Nov-1873      | in: | Kuban, South Russia                |
| Died:                               | 22-Dec-1907      | in: | Wichita, Sedgwick County, Kansas   |
| Spouse:                             | Maria Hiebert    |     |                                    |
| Married:                            | 21-Mar-1897      |     |                                    |
| <hr/>                               |                  |     |                                    |
| M Child 4 Dietrich Claassen         |                  |     |                                    |
| Born:                               | 12-Oct-1875      | in: | Kuban, South Russia                |
| Died:                               | summer, 1876     | in: | Kuban, South Russia                |
| <hr/>                               |                  |     |                                    |
| M Child 5 Dietrich J. Claassen      |                  |     |                                    |
| Born:                               | 20-Apr-1877      | in: | Kuban, South Russia                |
| Spouse:                             | Lena Duerksen    |     |                                    |
| Married:                            | 2-Aug-1901       |     |                                    |

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**PARENTS**

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|                             |                   |     |                                     |
|-----------------------------|-------------------|-----|-------------------------------------|
| <hr/>                       |                   |     |                                     |
| Husband:                    | David Claassen    |     |                                     |
| Born:                       | 21-Oct-1760       | in: | Fuerstenwerder, Prussia             |
| Died:                       | 19-Apr-1827       | in: | South Russia                        |
| Father:                     | David Klaassen    |     |                                     |
| Mother:                     | Anna Andres       |     |                                     |
| <hr/>                       |                   |     |                                     |
| Wife:                       | Agnetha Penner    |     |                                     |
| Father:                     | Peter Penner      |     |                                     |
| <hr/>                       |                   |     |                                     |
| M Child 1 Dietrich Klaassen |                   |     |                                     |
| Born:                       | 1808              |     |                                     |
| Spouse:                     | Maria Janzen      |     |                                     |
| <hr/>                       |                   |     |                                     |
| M Child 2 Johann Claassen   |                   |     |                                     |
| Born:                       | 27-Jul-1820       | in: | Morgenanerfeld, Tiege, Prussia      |
| Died:                       | 24-Dec-1876       | in: | Wohldemfuerst, Kuban, South Russia  |
| Spouse:                     | Katharina Reimer  |     |                                     |
| Married:                    | 31-Jan-1847       | in: | Felsental, Molotschna, South Russia |
| Spouse:                     | Katharina Schmidt |     |                                     |
| Married:                    | 1-Mar-1870        | in: | Kuban, South Russia                 |

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**GRANDPARENTS**

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|                          |   |     |                                       |
|--------------------------|---|-----|---------------------------------------|
| <hr/>                    |   |     |                                       |
| Husband:                 | David Klaassen also known as David Claassen |     |                                       |
| Born:                    | 13-Sep-1700                                 | in: | Schönberg, Prussia                    |
| Died:                    | 16-Sep-1780                                 |     |                                       |
| Father:                  | Johann Klaassen                             |     |                                       |
| <hr/>                    |   |     |                                       |
| Wife:                    | Anna Andres                                 |     |                                       |
| Married:                 | 27-Jan-1743                                 |     |                                       |
| Born:                    | 29-Oct-1722                                 | in: | Tiegerweide, Prussia                  |
| Died:                    | 9-Jun-1784                                  | in: | Fuerstenwerderfeld, GrosseWerder, Pr. |
| Father:                  | Kornelius Andres                            |     |                                       |
| Mother:                  | Ida Klaassen                                |     |                                       |
| <hr/>                    |   |     |                                       |
| M Child 1 David Claassen |   |     |                                       |

Born: 21-Oct-1760                      in: Fuerstenwerder, Prussia  
 Died: 19-Apr-1827                    in: South Russia  
 Spouse: Agnetha Penner  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wife: Agnetha ?  
 Married: 28-Oct-1730  
 Died: 20-Apr-1742  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**GREAT-GRANDPARENTS**


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Husband: Johann Klaassen  
 Born: bef. 1680  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 M Child 1 David Klaassen  
 Born: 13-Sep-1700                    in: Schönberg, Prussia  
 Died: 16-Sep-1780  
 Spouse: Anna Andres  
 Married: 27-Jan-1743  
 Spouse: Agnetha ?  
 Married: 28-Oct-1730  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Husband: Kornelius Andres  
 Born: 23-Sep-1680                    in: Freienhuben, Steegen, Prussia  
 Died: 1741  
 Father: Kornelius Andres  
 Mother: Euphrosine Görtzen  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wife: Ida Klaassen  
 Married: 5-Oct-1710  
 Born: 11-Jul-1688                    in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: 28-Jun-1734                    in: Tiegerweide, Prussia  
 Father: Hans Klaassen  
 Mother: \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 F Child 1 Anna Andres  
 Born: 29-Oct-1722                    in: Tiegerweide, Prussia  
 Died: 9-Jun-1784                    in: Fuerstenwerderfeld, GrosseWerder, Pr.  
 Spouse: David Klaassen  
 Married: 27-Jan-1743  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**2G-GRANDPARENTS**


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Husband: Kornelius Andres  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wife: Euphrosine Görtzen  
 Born: Apr-1648  
 Died: 12-Apr-1712  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 M Child 1 Kornelius Andres  
 Born: 23-Sep-1680                    in: Freienhuben, Steegen, Prussia  
 Died: 1741  
 Spouse: Ida Klaassen  
 Married: 5-Oct-1710  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Husband: Hans Klaassen  
 Born: 1658  
 Died: 8-Feb-1734  
 Father: Behrend Klaassen  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Wife: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Died: 26-Apr-1716  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 F Child 1 Ida Klaassen  
 Born: 11-Jul-1688                    in: Petershagen, Prussia  
 Died: 28-Jun-1734                    in: Tiegerweide, Prussia  
 Spouse: Kornelius Andres  
 Married: 5-Oct-1710  
 \_\_\_\_\_

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**3G-GRANDPARENTS**


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Behrend Klaassen also known as Behrend Claassen  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Born: ca. 1635                        in: Schönsee, Holland  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 M Child 1 Hans Klaassen  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Born: 1658  
Died: 8-Feb-1734

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## **Appendix XX Descendancy of our 2G-Grandparents**

The following descendancy charts contain a partial listing of the descendants of our 2G-grandparents. Only the children of our 2G-grandparents and great-grandparents are listed, but all known descendants of our grandparents are shown.

The family in these charts will be the subject of the planned Volume 2.

Any information to update these charts would be greatly appreciated.

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 Descendants of Rev. Peter Ratzlaff and Eva Janzen Ratzlaff
 

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Peter (Rev.) Ratzlaff b. 29-May-1829 d. 7-Sep-1891  
 \* m. Aug-1850 Eva Janzen b. Jan-1826 d. 1-Apr-1879  
 \* m. 30-Jan-1883 Helena Dirks b. 28-Dec-1837 d. 4-Dec-1926  
 . )) Jacob P. Ratzlaff b. 15-Apr-1863 d. 12-Dec-1928  
 \* m. 11-Jan-1890 Maria Unruh b. 11-Sep-1873 d. 1-Nov-1947  
 . )) Jonathan J Ratzlaff b. 2-Jan-1893 d. 7-Nov-1980  
 \* m. 21-May-1915 Marie Plenert b. 9-Aug-1893 d. 22-Feb-1990  
 /)) Harvey Earl Ratzlaff b. 27-Aug-1917  
 \* \* m. 28-Nov-1940 Betty Jane Schroeder b. 25-Dec-1923  
 \* /)) Sherwin H. Ratzlaff b. 25-Oct-1942  
 \* \* \* m. 28-May-1963 Carol Fay Loewen b. 16-Oct-1943  
 \* \* /)) Colleen Michelle Ratzlaff b. 2-Aug-1968  
 \* \* \* m. 7-Mar-1992 Craig Michael Squires b. 2-Mar-1967  
 \* \* /)) Cynthia LeAnn Ratzlaff b. 20-Jul-1970  
 \* \* . )) Douglas Wade Ratzlaff b. 15-Nov-1972  
 \* /)) Jolene B. Ratzlaff b. 9-Sep-1944  
 \* \* \* m. 7-Jun-1963 Harold Clyde Carroll b. 14-Feb-1943  
 \* \* /)) Shelli Jo Carroll b. 16-Dec-1970 d. 8-Apr-1973  
 \* \* /)) Kristin Leigh Carroll b. 11-Feb-1972  
 \* \* /)) Leslie Dyan Carroll b. 24-Nov-1974  
 \* \* . )) Courtney Jo Carroll b. 10-Nov-1978  
 \* /)) Sandra Gayle Ratzlaff b. 17-Aug-1949  
 \* \* \* m. 3-Aug-1973 Roy Rains b. 13-Dec-1948 (divorced)  
 \* \* \* m. 25-May-1985 Darwin E. Brown  
 \* \* . )) Chad Allen Rains b. 1-Apr-1974  
 \* . )) Myron Dale Ratzlaff b. 6-Mar-1951  
 \* \* m. 25-Nov-1984 Deborah Rudy  
 \* /)) Jonathon Ratzlaff b. 24-Jan-1987  
 \* /)) Andrea Michelle Ratzlaff b. 21-Mar-1990  
 \* . )) Christopher William Ratzlaff b. 6-Nov-1992  
 /)) Kermit Omer Ratzlaff b. 26-Dec-1921  
 \* \* m. 11-Aug-1944 Ruth Evelyn Warkentin b. 7-Nov-1921  
 \* /)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff b. 20-Dec-1945  
 \* \* \* m. 27-Jan-1968 Virginia Louise Harms b. 1-Nov-1947  
 \* \* /)) Michael Mpho Ratzlaff b. 19-Jun-1971  
 \* \* \* \* m. 2-May-1998 Rachal Williams b.  
 \* \* \* . )) Gypsy Marie Ratzlaff b. 2-Nov-1991  
 \* \* /)) Jonathan James Ratzlaff b. 13-Jul-1974  
 \* \* \* \* m. 6-Jun-1993 Samantha Marie Young b. 1-Jan-1975  
 \* \* \* . )) Kathryn Abigail Ratzlaff b. 19-Dec-1993  
 \* \* . )) Rebekah Margaret Harms Ratzlaff b. 16-Dec-1979  
 \* /)) Ronald Wayne Ratzlaff b. 11-Aug-1947  
 \* \* \* m. 14-Jul-1979 Nancy Knapp b. 9-Jun-1950  
 \* \* /)) Deborah Ruth Ratzlaff b. 17-Dec-1981  
 \* \* /)) Mark Andrew Ratzlaff b. 22-Sep-1983  
 \* \* . )) Stephen Paul Ratzlaff b. 4-Dec-1987  
 \* /)) David Kermit Ratzlaff b. 19-Oct-1948  
 \* \* \* m. 30-Aug-1975 Elizabeth Potter b. 12-Mar-1952  
 \* \* /)) Kristin Elizabeth Ratzlaff b. 19-Sep-1979  
 \* \* . )) Andrew David Ratzlaff b. 10-Oct-1983  
 \* /)) Marilyn Ruth Ratzlaff b. 27-Oct-1950  
 \* \* \* m. 11-Aug-1979 Warren Lovinger, Jr. b. 29-Aug-1952  
 \* \* /)) Sarah Beth Lovinger b. 12-Dec-1980  
 \* \* /)) Thomas Warren Lovinger b. 23-Sep-1983  
 \* \* /)) Laura Ruth Lovinger b. 27-Nov-1986  
 \* \* . )) Daniel William Lovinger b. 20-Sep-1989  
 \* . )) Eugene Henry Ratzlaff b. 12-Dec-1955  
 \* \* m. 3-Jul-1977 Jewell Sharon Geissinger b. 1-Nov-1955  
 \* /)) Caitlin Geissinger Ratzlaff b. 6-Jun-1991  
 \* . )) Lucas Geissinger Ratzlaff b. 15-Jun-1994  
 /)) Irma Lorena Ratzlaff b. 16-Jul-1926  
 \* \* m. 10-Jun-1951 Bennie Koop b. 22-Feb-1923  
 \* /)) Brenda Sue Koop b. 28-Oct-1952



- \* \* \* m. 1-Aug-1975 Leonard Coryea b. 20-Oct-1952
- \* \* .)) Christopher Brent Coryea b. 17-May-1980
- \* /)) Kim Michael Koop b. 25-Jan-1956
- \* .)) Dale Clark Koop b. 9-Feb-1959
- \* \* m. 9-Jun-1979 Mona Wedel b. 22-Sep-1959
- \* /)) Raelyn Koop b. 1-Nov-1984
- \* /)) Roxanne Noelle Koop b. 20-Jul-1989
- \* .)) Reed Benjamin Koop b. 15-Oct-1992
- .)) Merlie Ann Ratzlaff b. 30-Apr-1930
  - \* m. 10-Apr-1949 Leonard Friesen b. 6-Oct-1926
  - /)) Lynette Ann Friesen b. 21-Jul-1950
  - \* \* m. 10-Oct-1970 David Derstine b. 29-Jul-1948
  - \* /)) Joshua Derstine b. 4-Sep-1977
  - \* .)) Tiffany Derstine b. 14-Jan-1980
  - /)) Darla Jean Friesen b. 11-Nov-1951
  - \* \* m. 10-Oct-1970 Max Flickinger b. 14-Oct-1948
  - \* /)) Cory Flickinger b. 15-Mar-1973
  - \* .)) Kelli Flickinger b. 14-Jan-1975
  - .)) Lyle Keith Friesen b. 25-Jun-1957
    - \* m. 2-Apr-1978 Karen Wolf b. 23-Jul-1959
    - /)) Jeremy Friesen b. 7-Sep-1981
    - /)) Nichole Friesen b. 25-Apr-1983
    - /)) Stephanie Friesen b. 9-Aug-1984
    - .)) Erica Friesen b. 18-Apr-1985

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 Descendants of Peter P. Warkentin and Justina Wiens Warkentin
 

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Peter P. Warkentin b. 23-Dec-1838 d. 5-Jul-1923  
 \* m. 7-Mar-1861 Justina Wiens b. 6-Jul-1840 d. 17-Mar-1924  
 .)) Peter J. Warkentin b. 26-Jul-1863 d. 29-Jan-1937  
 \* m. 12-Oct-1885 Anna Koop b. 6-Apr-1864 d. 10-Jun-1917  
 \* m. Nov-1917 Susie Funk Krause b. 16-Dec-1877 d. 10-Jul-1950  
 .)) Henry K. (Rev.) Warkentin b. 10-Dec-1891 d. 25-Jan-1977  
 \* m. 23-Mar-1916 Margaret Harms b. 26-May-1895 d. 31-Mar-1993  
 /)) Herman Harms Warkentin b. 20-Jan-1916 d. 25-Mar-1953  
 \* \* m. 21-Sep-1941 Beatrice Rubena Koop b. 17-Nov-1922  
 \* /)) Sharon Beatrice Warkentin b. 24-Feb-1943  
 \* \* \* m. 27 Dec 1963 Eldon Fast b. 29 Jun 1942 d. 5 Jun 1983  
 \* \* \* m. 14-Apr-1989 Chuck Ewert b. 29-Jun-1941  
 \* \* /)) Michelle Colleen Fast b. 22-Sep-1967  
 \* \* \* \* m. 29 Dec 1986 Derek Hatt  
 \* \* \* /)) Zachariah Kolsar Hatt b. 15 Jan 1988  
 \* \* \* /)) Alex Derek Hatt b. 24 Dec 1989  
 \* \* \* .)) Brianna Michelle Hatt b. 14 Feb 1996  
 \* \* /)) Julie Ann Fast b. 29-Mar-1970  
 \* \* \* \* m. 13 Jul 1991 Robert Sandoval b. 28-Jun-1971  
 \* \* \* /)) Robert James Sandoval b. 29-Jul-1991  
 \* \* \* .)) Tatiana Joy Sandoval b. 3-Mar-1997  
 \* \* .)) Pamela Ruth Fast b. 5-Aug-1975  
 \* /)) Paul Henry Warkentin b. 4-Aug-1944 d. 24-Sep-1996  
 \* \* \* m. 12-Jun-1965 Bev Neufeld b. 2-Sep-1945  
 \* \* /)) Kristy Warkentin b. 29-Dec-1969  
 \* \* \* \* m. 3-Jul-1991 Mike Pletz  
 \* \* \* . Caleb Michael Pletz b. 30-Mar-1995  
 \* \* /)) Nikola Ruth Warkentin b. 17-Mar-1974  
 \* \* .)) Angela Dawn Warkentin b. 16-Apr-1980  
 \* /)) John Herman Warkentin b. 17-Feb-1947  
 \* \* \* m. 24-Aug-1968 Mardi Schatborn  
 \* \* /)) Kara Lindsay Warkentin b. 2-Dec-1977  
 \* \* /)) Mark David Warkentin b. 14-Nov-1979  
 \* \* .)) Paul David Warkentin b. 12-May-1982  
 \* /)) Henry Warkentin b. 10-Dec-1948 d. 5-Mar-1950  
 \* /)) Kenneth Leroy Warkentin b. 31-Aug-1950  
 \* \* \* m. 3-Aug-1974 Susan Cole  
 \* \* .)) Keri Irene Warkentin b. 8-Oct-1982  
 \* /)) Joel Arthur Warkentin b. 14-Feb-1952 d. 30-Jun-1975  
 \* \* m. 16-Jun-1973 Dorothy Ratzlaff b. 19-Oct-1951  
 \* .)) Robert Wayne Warkentin b. 23-Feb-1953  
 \* \* m. 21-Dec-1973 Holly Halverson b. 3-Aug-1955  
 \* /)) Joel Steven Warkentin b. 9-Apr-1985  
 \* .)) Brittany Alexia Warkentin b. 2-Sep-1989  
 /)) Clarence Warkentin b. 9-Feb-1919  
 \* \* m. 5-Apr-1946 Adina Sara Buhler b. 25-Apr-1919  
 \* /)) Gary Don Warkentin b. 21-Sep-1947  
 \* \* \* m. 7-Aug-1971 Janice Lisenbury b. 5-Jan-1950  
 \* \* /)) Erin Dawn Warkentin b. 16-Oct-1975  
 \* \* /)) Amy Janelle Warkentin b. 7-Jun-1979  
 \* \* .)) Nathan Ray Warkentin b. 15-Jan-1982  
 \* /)) James Leroy Warkentin b. 16-Feb-1951  
 \* \* \* m. 4-Feb-1978 Shirley Kathleen Nickel b. 30-Jun-1951  
 \* \* /)) Melissa Carol Warkentin b. 22-Mar-1980  
 \* \* .)) Matthew James Warkentin b. 10-Jun-1982  
 \* /)) Melvin Wayne Warkentin b. 11-Sep-1953  
 \* \* \* m. 28-Dec-1984 Gudrun Siemens b. 19-Jun-1956  
 \* \* /)) Carmen Nicole Warkentin b. 22-Sep-1988  
 \* \* /)) Claudia Miriam Warkentin b. 5-Jun-1990  
 \* \* .)) Delbert Jonathan Warkentin b. 25-Jan-1992  
 \* .)) Marvin Ray Warkentin b. 11-Sep-1953  
 \* \* m. 28-Oct-1978 Becky Isaac b. 6-Dec-1953  
 \* /)) Jill Suzanne Warkentin b. 15-Sep-1981

- \* . )) Jeremy Isaak Warkentin b. 7-Apr-1984
- /)) Ruth Evelyn Warkentin b. 7-Nov-1921
- \* \* m. 11-Aug-1944 Kermit Omer Ratzlaff b. 26-Dec-1921
- \* /)) Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff b. 20-Dec-1945
- \* \* \* m. 27-Jan-1968 Virginia Louise Harms b. 1-Nov-1947
- \* \* /)) Michael Mpho Ratzlaff b. 19-Jun-1971
- \* \* \* \* m. 2-May-1998 Rachal Williams b.
- \* \* \* . )) Gypsy Marie Ratzlaff b. 1991
- \* \* /)) Jonathan James Ratzlaff b. 13-Jul-1974
- \* \* \* \* m. 6-Jun-1993 Samantha Marie Young b. 1-Jan-1975
- \* \* \* . )) Kathryn Abigail Ratzlaff b. 19-Dec-1993
- \* \* . )) Rebekah Margaret Harms Ratzlaff b. 16-Dec-1979
- \* /)) Ronald Wayne Ratzlaff b. 11-Aug-1947
- \* \* \* m. 14-Jul-1979 Nancy Knapp b. 9-Jun-1950
- \* \* /)) Deborah Ruth Ratzlaff b. 17-Dec-1981
- \* \* /)) Mark Andrew Ratzlaff b. 22-Sep-1983
- \* \* . )) Stephen Paul Ratzlaff b. 4-Dec-1987
- \* /)) David Kermit Ratzlaff b. 19-Oct-1948
- \* \* \* m. 30-Aug-1975 Elizabeth Potter b. 12-Mar-1952
- \* \* /)) Kristin Elizabeth Ratzlaff b. 19-Sep-1979
- \* \* . )) Andrew David Ratzlaff b. 10-Oct-1983
- \* /)) Marilyn Ruth Ratzlaff b. 27-Oct-1950
- \* \* \* m. 11-Aug-1979 Warren Lovinger, Jr. b. 29-Aug-1952
- \* \* /)) Sarah Beth Lovinger b. 12-Dec-1980
- \* \* /)) Thomas Warren Lovinger b. 23-Sep-1983
- \* \* /)) Laura Ruth Lovinger b. 27-Nov-1986
- \* \* . )) Daniel William Lovinger b. 20-Sep-1989
- \* . )) Eugene Henry Ratzlaff b. 12-Dec-1955
- \* \* m. 3-Jul-1977 Jewell Sharon Geissinger b. 1-Nov-1955
- \* /)) Caitlin Geissinger Ratzlaff b. 6-Jun-1991
- \* . )) Lucas Geissinger Ratzlaff b. 15-Jun-1994
- /)) Arthur Warkentin
- . )) Daniel Reuben Warkentin b. 8-Jul-1926
- \* m. Mary Claudine Hampton b. 28-Oct-1930
- /)) Teresa Joyce Warkentin b. 21-Jan-1950
- \* \* m. 26-Jul-1976 William Henry Muldery b. 23-Jan-1948
- \* . )) Ryan Micheal Muldery b. 20-Apr-1980
- . )) Pamela Audrey Warkentin b. 3-Jul-1954
- \* m. 14-Feb-1982 Edward Kadlubek b. 1-Oct-1952
- . )) Amana Katheryn Kadlubek b. 14-Oct-1983

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 Descendants of Isaak J. Harms and Katharina Fröse Harms
 

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- Isaak J. Harms b. 18-Dec-1833 d. 29-Aug-1886  
 \* m. 3-Jan-1856 Katharina Fröse b. 31-Mar-1836 d. 21-Apr-1905  
 .)) David Harms b. 9-Feb-1861 d. 10-Sep-1931  
 \* m. 1-Aug-1881 Eva Unruh b. 27-Feb-1862 d. 24-Jan-1936  
 /)) Eva Harms b. 29-Sep-1882 d. 7-Nov-1920  
 .)) Isaac Harms b. 8-Dec-1884 d. 31-Dec-1968  
 \* m. 11-Aug-1912 Emma Neufeld b. 15-Mar-1892 d. 10-Nov-1982  
 /)) David N. Harms b. 12-Jun-1913 d. 23-Sep-1934  
 /)) Edna Harms b. 23-Dec-1914 d. 30-Jun-1993  
 \* \* m. 29-Jul-1937 Albert Kliewer b. 23-Dec-1914 d. 29-Jul-1987  
 \* /)) Larry Albert Kliewer b. 28-Feb-1940  
 \* \* \* m. 17-Aug-1962 Delores Ruth Schmidt b. 2-Apr-1943  
 \* \* /)) Stephanie Ruth Kliewer b. 17-Feb-1968  
 \* \* \* \* m. 11-Oct-1986 Richard Mohninger  
 \* \* \* .)) Zachary Kliewer  
 \* \* .)) Anastacia Ellen Kliewer b. 27-Jul-1970  
 \* /)) Carolyn Elaine Kliewer b. 6-Feb-1943  
 \* \* \* m. 16-Jul-1965 Dennis Buschman b. 16-Feb-1943  
 \* \* \* m. 26-May-1979 Fritz John Ashauer b. 17-Nov-1937  
 \* \* /)) Derek LeRoy Buschman b. 22-Sep-1969  
 \* \* \* \* m. 2- Jun 1993 Joan ?  
 \* \* \* \* m. Andria?  
 \* \* \* .)) Miaia Zade b. 3-May-1998  
 \* \* /)) Rhett Montgomery Buschman b. 24-Dec-1970  
 \* \* \* m. 4-23-95 Heidi Ann Fleming  
 \* \* /)) Lesil Jene Buschman b. 15-Sep-1972  
 \* \* \* \* m. 8-26-1995 Sean Pickins  
 \* \* \* .)) Vive Joan Buschman b. 30-May-1994  
 \* \* .)) Danny Ashauer b. 26-Sep-1968  
 \* /)) David Hubert Kliewer b. 9-Jul-1944  
 \* \* \* m. 27-Dec-1963 Emma Jean Keaton b. 15-Aug-1944  
 \* \* /)) Shari Lynn Kliewer b. 22-Aug-1965  
 \* \* \* \* m. 8-Jul-1989 Troy Hammons  
 \* \* \* /)) Takara Denise Hammons b. 23-Apr-1993  
 \* \* \* .)) TaiAnn Braun Hammons b. 26 Dec 1995  
 \* \* /)) Mandie Jean Kliewer b. 12-Jan-1971  
 \* \* /)) Reta Faye Kliewer b. 11-Feb-1975  
 \* \* .)) Samuel David Kliewer b. 28-Jan-1980  
 \* /)) Connie Ruth Kliewer b. 18-May-1952  
 \* \* \* m. 28-Dec-1974 Evan Vohs b. 27-Jan-1949  
 \* \* /)) Devin Peter Vohs b. 10-Jul-1978  
 \* \* .)) Darren Michael Vohs b. 28-Jul-1982  
 \* .)) Debora Janice Kliewer b. 29-Jan-1954  
 \* \* m. 16-May-1977 Ronald Francis Bate b. 16-May-1954  
 \* /)) Brandon Francis Bate b. 6-Oct-1981  
 \* /)) Christin Janice Bate b. 16-Jan-1984  
 \* /)) Carly Michele Bate b. 6-Mar-1987  
 \* /)) Rachel Catherine Bate b. 9-Feb-1990  
 \* .)) Amy Michaela Bate b. 18-Apr-1993  
 /)) Luella Harms b. 22-Jul-1916  
 \* \* m. 9-Jan-1943 Hubert P. Hampton b. 27-Apr-1919 d. 5-Jun-1943  
 \* \* m. 4-Feb-1950 Robert Schultz b. 7-Feb-1908 d. 13-Nov-1973  
 \* /)) Sandra Lee Schultz b. 17-Feb-1951  
 \* \* \* m. 15-Nov-1975 Merrill K. Schmidt  
 \* \* .)) Taylor Alexander Schmidt b. 14-Apr-1986  
 \* /)) Wallis Dean Schultz b. 26-Apr-1952  
 \* \* \* m. 12-Sep-1982 Beth Ann Miller b. 17-Aug-1950  
 \* \* /)) Nicandro Schultz b. 18-Jan-1986 d. 18-Jan-1986  
 \* \* /)) Chase Loring Schultz b. 22-Jul-1987  
 \* \* .)) Ian Lane Schultz b. 29-Aug-1989  
 \* .)) Lendell Craig Schultz b. 30-Jun-1954  
 \* \* m. 28-Feb-1981 Linda Sue Hartley  
 \* /)) Craig Randall Schultz b. 6-Jun-1981

- \* /)) Tara Sue Schultz b. 11-Jul-1984
- \* .)) Carissa Brittany Schultz b. 29-Mar-1986
- /)) Isaac N. Harms b. 27-Feb-1918
- \* \* m. 15-May-1946 Annie Louise Weaver b. 9-May-1921
- \* /)) Virginia Louise Harms b. 1-Nov-1947
- \* \* \* m. 27-Jan-1968 Kenneth Lloyd Ratzlaff b. 20-Dec-1945
- \* \* /)) Michael Mpho Ratzlaff b. 19-Jun-1971
- \* \* \* \* m. 2-May-1998 Rachal Williams b. 3-Dec-1971
- \* \* \* .)) Gypsy Marie Ratzlaff b. 1991
- \* \* /)) Jonathan James Ratzlaff b. 13-Jul-1974
- \* \* \* \* m. 6-Jun-1993 Samantha Marie Young b. 1-Jan-1975
- \* \* \* .)) Kathryn Abigail Ratzlaff b. 19-Dec-1993
- \* \* .)) Rebekah Margaret Harms Ratzlaff b. 16-Dec-1979
- \* /)) Miriam Jeanette Harms b. 8-Oct-1951
- \* \* \* m. 25-May-1974 Danny Pratt
- \* \* \* m. 21-Jun-1980 Steven Davis b. 2-Aug-1952
- \* \* /)) Zachery Stephen Davis b. 7-Apr-1983
- \* \* /)) Caleb Davis b. 21-May-1986
- \* \* .)) Corrie Marie Davis b. 10-May-1990
- \* /)) Ramona Faye Harms b. 18-Oct-1953
- \* \* \* m. 4-Oct-1975 Timothy Rudolph Hauck b. 17-Nov-1951
- \* \* /)) Kristen Rae Hauck b. 11-Apr-1978
- \* \* /)) Calli Ann Hauck b. 15-Oct-1982
- \* \* /)) Kaitlin Elise Hauck b. 29-Dec-1990
- \* \* /)) Kirk Isaac Hauck b. 10-Jul-1992
- \* \* .)) Carissa Joy Hauck b. 4-Dec-1993
- /)) Ruby Harms b. 24-Dec-1919
- \* \* m. 9-Jun-1950 Daniel Schmidt b. 6-Jul-1921 d. 5-Mar-1984
- \* /)) Melanie Elaine Schmidt b. 15-Feb-1954
- \* \* \* m. 23-Feb-1980 David Glenn Hawthorne b. 9-Sep-1952
- \* \* /)) Curtis Glenn Hawthorne b. 3-Mar-1985
- \* \* .)) Craig Daniel Hawthorne b. 13-May-1987
- \* .)) Garvie Dan Schmidt b. 30-Aug-1956
- \* \* m. 22-Jul-1978 Diane Sue Wiens b. 17-Sep-1955
- \* /)) Nathan Michael Schmidt b. 28-Apr-1983
- \* .)) Heidi Danelle Schmidt b. 17-Jan-1986
- /)) Alvin Harms b. 27-Feb-1922
- \* \* m. 31-Aug-1948 Ann Ruth Wiebe b. 9-Jul-1928
- \* /)) James Alvin Harms b. 21-May-1950 d. 27-Jun-1928
- \* \* \* m. 30-May-1976 Colleen Gillen b. 19-Nov-1951
- \* \* /)) Gregory James Harms b. 8-Jul-1977
- \* \* /)) Trisha Coleen Harms b. 29-Dec-1978
- \* \* /)) Melinda Coleen Harms b. 3-Sep-1983
- \* \* .)) Jeffrey James Harms b. 30-Apr-1985
- \* /)) Beverly Ann Harms b. 27-Jul-1951
- \* \* \* m. 12-Aug-1972 Timothy Schwartz b. 30-Aug-1951
- \* \* \* m. 14-Jun-1988 Harvey McElvain
- \* \* /)) Rebekah Joy Schwartz b. 20-Jun-1973
- \* \* /)) Isaac James Schwartz b. 8-Oct-1974
- \* \* .)) Natasha Marie Schwartz b. 30-Dec-1979
- \* /)) Clariece Elaine Harms b. 21-Sep-1954
- \* \* m. 9-Oct-1982 Carl E. Kohlhorst b. 6-Aug-1940
- \* /)) Rhonda Lou Harms b. 29-Sep-1957
- \* \* \* m. 22-May-1982 Marty D. Kimmel b. 28-Aug-1958
- \* \* /)) Victoria Rose Danielle Kimmel b. 10-Nov-1982
- \* \* /)) Chaston Drew Kimmel b. 14-Feb-1987
- \* \* .)) Griffin Jack-Dayne Kimmel b. 6-Aug-1994
- \* .)) Cindy Harms b. 16-Oct-1961
- \* m. 7-Jun-1980 Larry D. Martin b. 22-Jul-1961
- \* m. 23-Dec-1995 Scott R. Hogan b. 23-Mar-1971
- /)) Anna Mae Harms b. 30-May-1924 d. 28-Nov-1992
- \* \* m. 10-Jun-1943 Harry Goertzen b. 12-Apr-1921 d. 26-Apr-1993
- \* /)) Priscilla Mae Goertzen b. 18-Aug-1945
- \* \* \* m. 8-Apr-1966 Gary Dean Surls b. 29-Jan-1944
- \* \* /)) Darrin Dean Surls b. 6-Jun-1970
- \* \* \* m. Carrie ?

- \* \* /)) Raynetta Delight Surls b. 9-Sep-1973
- \* \* \* m. 5-25-96 Bill Newton
- \* \* /)) Dalen Todd Surls b. 31-Mar-1976
- \* \* .)) Devin Glynn Surls b. 18-May-1978
- \* /)) Theodore Harry Goertzen b. 7-Jun-1947
- \* \* \* m. 25-Nov-1966 Elvera Ann Loewen b. 2-Jan-1948
- \* \* /)) Rachelle D'Ann Goertzen b. 16-Sep-1969
- \* \* \* m. 25-May-1991 John Gaede
- \* \* /)) Shannon Goertzen b. 25-Oct-1971 d. 25-Oct-1971
- \* \* /)) Cayle Luane Goertzen b. 2-Dec-1972
- \* \* /)) Shonda Nicole Goertzen b. 24-Nov-1976
- \* \* .)) Shayla Janae Goertzen b. 22-Apr-1980
- \* /)) Rhoda Ann Goertzen b. 3-Dec-1949
- \* \* \* m. 20-Aug-1974 Douglas Ray McVey b. 14-Sep-1945
- \* \* /)) Raeanne Justina McVey b. 19-Apr-1977
- \* \* \* \* m. 11-Aug-1994 Lee Allen Wood
- \* \* \* .)) Lane Austin Wood b. 2-Feb-1995
- \* \* /)) Ashley Dawn McVey b. 26-Jul-1980
- \* \* .)) Trista Denise McVey b. 16-Oct-1984
- \* /)) ReNita Jane Goertzen b. 22-Dec-1952
- \* \* \* m. 11-Aug-1972 Frank DuWayne (II) Huebert b. 3-Apr-1951
- \* \* /)) Frank DuWayne (III) Huebert b. 1-Mar-1977
- \* \* /)) Jacob F. Huebert b. 13-Jun-1979
- \* \* .)) John Tyson Huebert b. 11-Apr-1981
- \* .)) Byron Harvey Goertzen b. 25-Nov-1954
- \* \* m. 28-Jul-1974 Michelle Ann Goddard b. 25-Jul-1956
- \* /)) April Renee Goertzen b. 1-Apr-1980
- \* /)) Lexi Ann Goertzen b. 15-Oct-1981
- \* /)) Andrea Mae Goertzen b. 7-Apr-1983
- \* .)) Brandon Harvey Goertzen b. 28-Sep-1986
- /)) John N. Harms b. 24-Oct-1927
- \* \* m. 29-Nov-1952 Lorraine Caffee b. 26-Apr-1935
- \* /)) Johnny Harms Jr. b. 13-Aug-1953
- \* \* \* m. 30-Jan-1976 Joy Cofield b. 21-Jul-1950
- \* \* /)) Jeremiah John Harms b. 30-Oct-1977
- \* \* /)) Jerusalem Dawn Harms b. 10-Jul-1979
- \* .)) Jacy Maureen Harms b. 22-Mar-1955
- \* \* m. 10-Oct-1975 Timothy Butterworth b. 15-Nov-1953
- \* \* m. 13-Oct-1980 Robert Johnson b. 21-Feb-1953
- \* /)) Joshua Joel Butterworth b. 5-Nov-1977
- \* .)) Justin Gabriel Johnson b. 18-Aug-1981
- /)) Emma Bernice Harms b. 5-Oct-1930
- \* \* m. Glen Allen Givan b. 14-Nov-1928
- \* /)) Jane Lynette Givan b. 28-Aug-1956
- \* \* \* m. 21-Dec-1974 Loyal David Schultes b. 22-May-1954
- \* \* /)) Eli David Schultes b. 23-Jan-1979
- \* \* /)) Jesse John Schultes b. 1-Jan-1981
- \* \* /)) Isaac David Schultes b. 4-Dec-1984
- \* \* /)) Andrew Allen Schultes b. 28-Aug-1989
- \* \* /)) David James Schultes b. 28-Jan-1992
- \* \* .)) Katrina Marie Schultes b. 14-Oct-1994
- \* /)) Timothy Glen Givan b. 19-Jul-1959
- \* \* \* m. 24-Aug-1985 Laurie A. Kinast
- \* \* /)) Katherine Michelle Givan b. 28-Oct-1988
- \* \* .)) Christopher Timothy Givan b. 15-Feb-1991
- \* .)) Judith Annette Givan b. 22-Sep-1965
- \* \* m. 11-Aug-1989 Steven Payne
- \* .)) Rachel Adele Payne b. 14-Mar-1995
- .)) Clarence Eugene Harms b. 22-Jan-1934
- \* m. 10-Aug-1954 Mary Ann Wall b. 13-Mar-1934
- /)) Douglas Eugene Harms b. 10-Jun-1957
- \* \* m. 7-Jun-1980 Mary Elizabeth Baker b. 7-Mar-1958
- \* /)) Rebecca Elizabeth Harms b. 22-Sep-1981
- \* /)) Gretchen Marie Harms b. 7-Jul-1984
- \* /)) Alisha Anne Harms b. 7-Apr-1989
- \* /)) Isaac William Harms b. 23-Jan-1995

- \* . )) Abigail Rachel Harms b. 30-May-1996
- /)) Duane Kevin Harms b. 17-Oct-1958
- \* \* m. 17-Oct-1981 Cheryl Lee Caldwell b. 9-May-1957
- \* /)) Emily Lynn Harms b. 10-Aug-1985
- \* . )) Anna June Harms b. 3-Jan-1990
- /)) David Neal Harms b. 6-Sep-1962
- \* \* m. 19-Aug-1989 Allison Church
- \* /)) Ian Tanner b. 22-Jan-1981
- \* . )) Emma Clare Harms b. 14-Feb-1996
- /)) Danette Renee Harms b. 2-Aug-1965
- \* \* m. 31-May-1997 Wendell Robinson b. 30-May-1960
- \* . )) Chance Andrew Robinson b. 30-Jan-1998
- . )) Debra Denee Harms b. 27-Jan-1969
- \* m. 2-May-1987 John Williams b. 30-Jan-1966
- /)) Carrie Lynn Williams b. 22-Jun-1987
- . )) Michael John Williams b. 9-Apr-1991





## Appendix XXI Glossary

### *Ältester* (Aeltester)

the Mennonite leader of a congregation or a group of congregations. This person supervises a group of ministers. Although our churches do not have bishops, that term is a reasonable translation.

*Anwohner* Landless Mennonites. Literally, it means “people who live beside” because the area of the village for those who did not have farms was at the side of the village.

*Dessiatine* a measure of land, about 2.7 acres. Also spelled *dessiatin*, *dessiatina*.

*Einwohner* People who leased land.

*Gebietsamt* The civil administrative offices for the colony in South Russia.

*kirchliche* Literally “churchly” but used to describe the mainstream Mennonite Church or “old church” after the separation of the Mennonite Brethren.

*Lehrer* One term used traditionally for a Mennonite minister.

*Oberschulze* The head of civic government, elected by the landowners.

### *Plattdeutsch*(*Plautdietsch*)

Low German. This language, a mix of Dutch and German spoken in the Vistula Delta, was used everyday in Prussia and South Russia. Dutch was spoken in church until about 1770, and “High” (or standard) German was used in church thereafter.

*pood* (*pud*) unit of weight; 16.4 kilograms or 36 pounds.

*Podwod* the wagon service transporting goods to the fronts and bringing back wounded soldiers during the Crimean War (1853-56).<sup>19</sup> This term is probably Russian in origin.

*Privilegium* The agreement between a group of Mennonites and the government. The best known was the list of privileges signed by Czar Paul in 1800, applying to settlers in South Russia.

*Schulze* The “mayor” of a South Russian village.

South Russia The area of “greater Russia” conquered by Russia and taken from Poland, Turkey, and others. It includes present-day Ukraine and the Russian Caucasus...also “New Russia”.

*Verst* Approximately a kilometer (1.0668 km).

Volhynia A region of what is now western Ukraine but was previously part of Poland.

*Volost* Administrative unit comprising several villages. Molotschna was divided into two volosts.

*Vorsänger* The song leader. This person would “line out” the song and the congregation followed. It was a very respected position in the congregation, following the *Ältester*, the *Lehrer*, and possibly the Deacon.

|                   |   |
|-------------------|---|
| <i>Waisenamt</i>  | The institution for caring for widows and orphans.  |
| <i>Wirte</i>      | Farmer who owned his own farm.  |
| <i>Wirtschaft</i> | Although properly translated “business”, it was used to mean a farm. A standard “full farm” was a <i>Vollwirt</i> , 65 dessiatina |

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