

HISTORY AND EVENTS

Delbert F. Plett

**HISTORY
AND
EVENTS**

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History and Events

**Writings and Maps pertaining to the history
of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from 1866
to 1876.**

**Edited, annotated, and translated by Delbert F. Plett,
Steinbach, Manitoba.**

He Who Would Follow Christ *

He who would follow Christ in life
Must scorn the world's insult and strife,
And bear his cross each day.
For this alone leads to the throne;
Christ is the only way.

Christ's servants follow Him to death,
And give their body, life and breath
On cross and rack, and pyre.
As gold is tried and purified
They stand the test of fire.

Renouncing all, they choose the cross,
And claiming it, count all as loss,
E'en home and child and wife.
Forsaking gain, forgetting pain,
They enter into life.

** Jörg Wagner in the Ausbund,
From The Mennonite Hymnal,
(Faith and Life Press,
Newton, Kansas: 1975),
Song No. 344.*

The Refiner *

By Aeltester Peter Toews, 1841-1922

The Master Refiner with quiet intentness
Is watching the silver and tending the fire—
Not a twitch of His eyelids! With hand sure and steady,
He knows just the heat that the process requires.

He bends to examine the purified silver,
His holy face mirrored—and now, is it clean?
His light He holds closer, but no, in the shimmer
Still speckles of dross on the surface are seen.

Again and again He the cauldron holds over
The flame—not of wrath, but a fire of love.
Molten the silver, the bubbling and boiling
Is jealously watched by the eye from above.

He bends yet again. Ah yes! Now His visage
Is perfectly mirrored, the dross burned at last,
Ready to mold to the form of His image,
To be stamped, to be used, to be poured in His cast.

Now if speech be of silver, and silence be golden,
Lord, stoke up the fires and purify me.
Help me discern what is sanctified silence
And, with equal discernment, speak gladly for Thee.

And even as Job, when affliction receded,
Put his hand on his mouth, learned at last to be still,
Help me to yield to Thy fires of discipline
Till, clean of all dross, I succumb to thy will.

O Master Refiner, I pray do not spare me!
Trusting Thy wisdom, I yield to the flame,
Till, pure of all dross, I reflect Thy bright image
And, molded for service, I'm stamped with Thy name.

Translated from the German by Margaret P. Toews.

* *From page 13 of Five Loaves and Two Small Fishes (Neilburg, Sask.; Milton and Margaret Toews, 1976) page 13. Used by Permission.*

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	IX
Part One	1
Remarks	3
Suggested Reading	5
Recent Developments	7
Introduction to Anhang No. One	9
Biography of Aeltester Peter Toews	13
Introduction to History and Events	15
The Cartography of the Kleinen Gemeinde	17
Footnotes to the Introduction	23
 Part Two. Anhang No. One	 35
Foreword	37
Noteworthy Gemeinde Events, 1866-1868	39
A Letter to the Gemeinde in the Molotschna	43
Noteworthy Events, 1869-1872	49
The Heubodner Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde	55
Non-resistance and the Imposition of Worldly Offices	57
Petition	63
Noteworthy Events and Emigration, 1872-1874	65
Letter of Thanksgiving and Petition	71
Footnotes to Anhang No. One	73
 Part Three. History and Events of Earlier Times	 83
The Johan Dueck (1801-1866) Family	85
The Jacob Wiebe (1799-1856) Family	89
Of Life in Friedensfeld, South Russia	93
Life in Blumenhof, South Russia	99
Non-resistance and the Military Draft	107
From Nikopol to Winnipeg	111
At the Immigration Houses	117
Gruenfeld, Establishing a Settlement	121
Footnotes to History and Events	127

Part Four. Maps	139
West Prussia	141
Origin and spread of the Mennonites	142
The Chortitza Colony	143
The Molotschnaer Mennoniten Bezirk	144
Kleinen Gemeinde Settlements in Russia, 1867	145
Borosenko	146
Kleine Gemeinde Divisions, 1866-1869	147
Mennonite Emigrations	148
Kleinen Gemeinde Settlements in America, 1880	149
Mennonite East Reserve	150
Village and Field Plan of Steinbach, Manitoba	151
Scratching River Settlement	152
Rosenort, Manitoba	153
Rosenhof, Manitoba	154
Cub Creek Precinct, Jansen, Nebraska	155
Land holdings in Jansen, Nebraska, 1900	156
Russian Lane, 1890	158
Liberty Township, Marion County, Kansas	159
Gnadenau Village, Kansas	160
Mennonite Churches in Central Kansas	161
Index	163

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I also gratefully acknowledge the continuing help of the following: Mr. John F. Schmidt, Mennonite Library and Archives, Newton Kansas; Mr. Dave Schellenberg, Evangelical Mennonite Conference Archives, Steinbach, Manitoba; Mr. Lawrence Klippenstein, Mennonite Heritage Centre, Winnipeg, Manitoba; and Mrs. Margaret Kroeker, Mennonite Genealogy Inc., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Of course, all errors are the sole responsibility of the writer.

Delbert F. Plett
September 25, 1982

Part One

Introduction To History and Events

Delbert F. Plett,
Steinbach,
Manitoba 1982

INTRODUCTION TO HISTORY AND EVENTS

Remarks

The book now before you is an annotated translation of two writings pertaining to the history of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.¹ It is the hope of this writer that the publication of these writings, in this format will allow the integrity of the source to remain intact, i.e. as an unabridged rendition; and at the same time provide comments and cross references to the reader by way of the footnotes. This format will also allow additional source material to be added in order to embellish or illustrate a particular point.

The writings included in this collection represent a unique view of Mennonite history. It is the viewpoint of those who of their own free will, chose a narrow and dedicated path of discipleship. Many writers in the past, to justify those who chose an easier road, have felt compelled to criticize the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, on the ground that such a life of discipleship could only be the result of a narrow, cold and uninspired Christianity. Nothing could be further from the truth, if one prefers to believe the writings of the Laymen and leadership of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia. In their own view they lived an "Existential Christianity"² with all non spiritual matters being totally subservient.

Hopefully, no one will be offended by this presentation. The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde also have a history as well as any other Russian Mennonite group. In the minds of some readers these writings will reflect unfavourably on the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. In the minds of other readers these writings will undoubtedly question certain conceptions of Russian Mennonite history. Nevertheless, the account deserves to be told. In these writings the reader will find a very small part of that record. Hopefully it will serve to be of interest to the reader, and be a contribution to Russian Mennonite historiography as well.

SUGGESTED READING

This writer would encourage the reader to establish some reading context to the subject at hand. It is impossible in a modest work of this nature to include background material to any meaningful degree. The reader is referred to the following material which deals with four areas relevant to the subject.

Firstly, and most important, the concept of an Anabaptist Theology is essential to this study. Without some consideration of this theme all study of Mennonite history is meaningless. Fortunately, there are at present three excellent books in print that deal with this topic. These are: Paul M. Lederach, **The Third Way** (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1980), 148 pages; Dr. Robert Friedman, **The Theology of Anabaptism** (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1973), 183 pages; and Dr. Robert Friedman, **Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries** (Sugarcreek, Ohio: Schlabach Printers, 1980), 287 pages. The first book referred to is an excellent introduction to the topic, while the latter two, in the order cited, are for the more advanced reader.³

Secondly, it would be helpful for the reader to at least develop a working knowledge of the various historical Mennonite streams; i.e. an overview of the various founding Anabaptist groups and the historical experience of their descendants. Two excellent books are available in this area, namely; Cornelius J. Dyck, Editor, **An Introduction to Mennonite History**, (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1979), 321 pages; and Dr. Cornelius Krahn, **Smith's Story of the Mennonites**, (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981), 587 pages.

Thirdly, the reader should develop some familiarity with the historiography of the Prussian—Russian Mennonites. Regrettably, no single adequate work is presently available for either topic. With respect to Prussia one could perhaps refer to Horst Penner, **Die ost-und westpreussischen Mennoniten** (Weierhof, Germany: Mennonitischer Geschichtsverein E.V., 1978), 500 pages. Regrettably this work is available only in German and therefore is of little help to many readers. With respect to Russian Mennonite history the most helpful work would probably be Franz Isaac, **Die Molotschnaer Mennoniten** (Halbstadt, Russia, 1908). But again there is no English translation of this work, and the German edition as well is not available. There is now an excellent translation of the study of the Mennonite Brethren Church in Russia, namely: Peter M. Friesen, **The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia** (Fresno, California: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), 1065 pages.

This work must be referred to with care as opinions are sometimes stated as facts, and sources are sometimes incompletely and incorrectly quoted, etc.⁴ Therefore the preferable introduction to this topic would likely be, Adam Giesinger, **From Catherine to Khrushchev** (Winnipeg, Manitoba; Self-published, 1974), 443 pages; particularly Chapter Ten, **The Mennonite Commonwealth** pages 183-199. Although this work contains a number of factual errors, it is relatively unbiased as between the different Mennonite groups in Russia and serves as an excellent short summary.

Fourthly, the reader should develop some familiarity with the writings pertaining particularly to the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. The single most important source in this area is; *Ältester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung von Briefen und Schriftliche Nachrichten zur Historie der Kleinen Gemeinde der Mennoniten an der Molotschna** (Blumenhof, Borosenko, South Russia: Unpublished, 1874), 475 pages. (Herein referred to as the "**Sammlung**". There is a German typed edition of this work available.⁵) In addition the **Mennonite Encyclopedia** (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Mennonite Publishing House, 1955), Four Volumes, contains much valuable material under various topics. Also, see David P. Reimer, and P.J.B. Reimer, Editors, **The Sesquicentennial Jubilee Evangelical Mennonite Conference 1812-1962** (Steinbach, Manitoba: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1962), 194 pages.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS

A number of important advances have been made in the field of Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde studies in recent years.⁶ The past five years have seen the publication of as many family genealogies and family studies. These include: John B. Toews, **Memoirs of Johan Barkman Toews** (Rosenort, Manitoba: PrairieView Press, 1978), 46 pages; John R. Goossen, et. al., **Gerhard Goossen Family Book (1811-1854)** (Rosenort, Manitoba: PrairieView Press, 1979), 187 pages; and Agnes Wiebe, et. al., **Family Record of Jakob Wiebe Toews (1836-1920)** (Hillsboro, Kansas: Self-published, 1979), 64 pages. 1980 saw the publication of an English translation of: Peter Isaac, **Stammbuch Meine Voreltern** (Stern, Alberta: 1915), 89 pages. The latter is probably the single most important genealogical source pertaining to the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. The foregoing publications are mainly the work of those descendants of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, who are currently members of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite.

In addition, 1981, saw the publication of the **Plett Picture Book** (Steinbach, Manitoba), 166 pages, by this writer. The latter work also contains reference to various source material which may be of interest to some readers. The Morris centennial book, Lenore Eidse, editor, **Furrows in the Valley** (Morris, Manitoba: R.M. of Morris, 1981), 891 pages, was also published in 1981 and contains a valuable section on the Rosenort—Rosenhof communities (pages 321-476) i.e. the former Scratching River Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.⁷

Probably the single most significant development in the area of Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde studies in recent years is the great progress that has been made in the gathering of primary source material in various archives and private collections, where it has become available for study. Foremost of these writings, without question, are those of Peter Toews, *Aeltester* of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from 1870-1881. Credit for the first work in this area must be given to Dr. Clarence Hiebert, who in the course of his research for his study of the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite⁸ came upon at least a portion of the Peter Toews writings. Although, not directly relevant to his topic, Dr. Hiebert made copies of this material and deposited it with the Mennonite Library and Archives, Newton, Kansas.

It is from here, and through the courtesy of Dr. Carl Bangs, that the writer and Mr. Victor Goossen, Rosenort, Manitoba were first able to obtain a copy of the **Sammlung**,⁹ by *Aeltester* Peter Toews, in 1980.

However, later the same year a further portion of the Peter Toews collection became available through the courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Toews, Neilburg, Saskatchewan. This included the original **Sammlung**, collections of letters received by *Aeltester* Peter Toews during the years 1866 to 1871, as well as a number of miscellaneous items. In 1981 a further portion of the Peter Toews collection became available for deposit at the Mennonite Heritage Centre through the courtesy of Mr. and Mrs. Milton Toews. These writings complemented the material at Mennonite Library and Archives, at Newton, Kansas, and number in excess of two thousand pages.

The greatest gratitude must be expressed to Mr. and Mrs. Milton Toews, and his father Rev. Isaac Toews, for having the foresight to carefully preserve this material for so many years. Similar gratitude must be expressed to many others for preserving this sort of material. Hopefully, in time, they will all be accorded proper recognition for their contribution, which is probably the most important in the process of writing history, as without such material the historian can only speculate.

The writer would again encourage any reader who may have historical writings, in the form of old diaries, letters, family records, old Bibles, and older editions of the writings of the Anabaptists, to bring this material forward to a Mennonite Church or Conference Archives, or at least to the attention of someone working in the field of Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* history. It should also be stated, that these papers do not have to be a large collection of writings in an impressive format, in order to be exceedingly valuable. Even a page or two of information in the hands of someone knowledgeable, can result in pages of history about an individual or event, or confirm or refute some theory or proposition otherwise not properly corroborated.

INTRODUCTION TO ANHANG NUMBER ONE

The Peter Toews writings and collection and other similar writings are of special importance, as they articulate the viewpoint of a small minority of the Russian Mennonites to whom the Anabaptist vision was still a very real and continuing experience. Also Peter Toews was seemingly a natural born historian, as his gathering and preservation of source material shows. Furthermore his writings and opinions, reveal a rather complete Biblical and historical knowledge. Perhaps the most important aspect of his work as an historian is his insistence on always presenting the complete source, notwithstanding that the source in whole or in part, reflected adversely on his own position, or that of his *Gemeinde*. He resisted the temptation, to which so many historians succumb, of assuming that their writing will be the last and conclusive word on a particular topic, and that their excerpting from a particular source document, or interpretation of events and historical movements, would be final and conclusive.

The first writing included in this collection is an excerpt from the *Sammlung* which Toews has simply called **Anhang Number One**. Since his election as *Aeltester* in 1870, Peter Toews had collected what he considered were the most significant documents and writings pertaining to the history of his *Gemeinde*. This material covered a period of history from approximately the commencement of the 19th Century to 1866, the time of a division in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. In his **Anhang Number One**, Toews sets out in overview, what he regards as the most significant occurrences and events relevant to his *Gemeinde* for the period from 1866 to 1874. This portion of his work was apparently written in 1874, after the first contingents of his *Gemeinde* had left for America. Toews had hoped that he would later be able to assemble a complete and exhaustive history of this period, but as the reader will be aware, this did not come to pass because of later events.

However as **Anhang Number One** covers a very eventful period of Russian Mennonite history it serves as an excellent introduction to the history of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. The greatest shortcoming of the published material pertaining to this history is that it deals almost entirely with a few negative incidents and events which this *Gemeinde* experienced. Even worse, usually no attempt has been made to reconcile these struggles and difficulties, to the history of the Russian Mennonites in general. Probably one of the best examples of this is the division which occurred in this *Gemeinde* in 1866. As **Anhang Number One** commences with the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde story in the aftermath of this divi-

sion, this writer will attempt to briefly set out some background to this event.

The division occurred during the third quarter of the 19th century, 1850-1875, which was undoubtedly the most turbulent since the founding of the Molotschna colony in 1804. The 1850's and 1860's saw repeated fighting and disputation between the various Mennonite *Gemeinde* in the Molotschna. Some of the issues which repeatedly tore apart the unity of this Colony were: The "Barley" dispute which developed out of an argument between two renters of the same field of barley; the "Church building" dispute was another emotionally loaded issue and developed over an argument between two *Gemeinde* over the ownership of a church building. The Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* viewed this infighting and hatred as continued evidence of the desolation and fall of the majority of the Russian Mennonites.¹⁰ Accordingly they remained aloof from these battles seeing themselves as a true Anabaptist *Gemeinde* with a mission to be a guiding light.

An excellent example of the position of the Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* and its application of Anabaptist principles, is seen in the case of the "landless" dispute. According to Franz Isaac and other historians, fully two-thirds of the Russian Mennonites during the 1850's and 1860's were landless, i.e. they lived as "*anwohner*" in the Mennonite villages eking out their existence from small plots of land, if they were lucky, or as labourers for their more well-to-do neighbours. The latter controlled all village and district government proceedings, as only landowners could vote and be elected to office. This dispute resulted in extreme animosity between the two opposing forces, and also in many delegations being sent before the Russian government authorities, requesting a ruling in favour of one side or the other. Eventually the matter was settled to an extent in favour of the "landless" with some land being granted to them in the two mother colonies, Chortitza and the Molotschna; and also with new settlements being started for the "landless" with the assistance of the mother colonies. In the meantime, however, the issue had raged for many years.

In contrast, the Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde*, although it apparently represented a greater than proportionate percentage of the landed "full" farmer class, remained aloof and did not involve itself nor take up the battle against the landless. Instead it solved the problem of its own "landless" in a quiet and unassuming manner. Pursuant to a request of a number of its poorer members this *Gemeinde* at first rented (1863) and then later purchased land (1865-1868) for its poorer members.¹¹ This was done in accordance with the Anabaptist concept of *Gemeinde* as having firstly, a total responsibility for the spiritual welfare of its members; and secondly, as being answerable for the physical well-being of its members and all their

problems. This meant that the more well-to-do in the *Gemeinde* were responsible to share of their wealth, including their capital, for the benefit of the less fortunate. Thus funds were assembled and land made available, i.e. presumably given to the landless.¹²

The “landless” dispute was also not resolved before it had seen the complete withdrawal of a portion of the population from the Mennonite Gemeinden. According to a number of historians the Secessionists, or Mennonite Brethren Church, as they styled themselves, came largely from the “landless” class and evolved as a movement to a great extent because of the animosity that had developed between the landowning and the landless factions.¹³ In any event, this turmoil will certainly have been a contributory factor, to the fertile ground which the German Baptist ideas found among the Russian Mennonite community, and upon which the Mennonite Brethren Church based its distinctive aspects.¹⁴

In any event, the Mennonite establishment, represented by the Kirchen-Covenant, (a Committee of the *Aeltesters* of the seven Mennonite Gemeinde in the Molotschna at the time) sided unequivocally against the Secessionists. Regretably, the conceited arrogance of the Kirchen-Covenant (the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde did not participate); contrasted with the selfrighteous indignation of the Secessionists; in the resulting war of Words and emotions; was continued evidence to the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde of a lack of Christian spirit in the Molotschna at the time.

The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde dealt with this issue in its usual manner, i.e. by references to Biblical authority guided by the writings of their Anabaptist ancestors. We see this very clearly, in just a single incident, which occurred after the Kirchen-Covenant had requested that the Area Administrative office, banish the Secessionists from the Colonies. Prior to making a disposition in the matter, the Area Administrator insisted that the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, which had not participated in this action by the Kirchen-Covenant, also give its opinion of the matter and a recommended disposition.

The reply of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde through its *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872) is as follows:

“Declaration to the Molotschna Mennonite Gebiets Amt at Halbstadt.”¹⁵

“We have been asked by Peter Schmidt, member of the (Agricultural) Society, for a declaration of our position, with respect to certain of the members of their *Gemeinde* who have seceded. We have little to advise and declare which would add to what we are taught by the Apostle, in 2 Thessalonians 3:14 'And if any man obey not our word by this epistle,

note that man, and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed'. Also see the further declaration of the Apostle in 1 Corinthians 11:32, where he states that such disobedient ones should be judged and proved by the *Gemeinde*, in order that they would ultimately not have to be condemned together with the world. Other similar references with respect to this matter could be brought forward from the Word of God."

"However, as in accordance with 1 Corinthians 5:12, we are not to judge those who are without us¹⁶ and as there are no members of our *Gemeinde* among these Secessionists, we do not wish to express ourselves further in this regard."

"We have also undertaken the labour of discussing this matter personally with them, and have tried to dissuade them from their intended action (namely to separate from the Mennonite *Gemeinde* and to establish an independent church), which however did not seem to have much effect on them. Therefore we request that you do not take offense if we gladly refrain from becoming involved in this matter, and not take part in a matter with which we are not totally familiar, and which is foreign to us.¹⁷ We would gladly be of service to you in any matter that is not contrary to the Word of God."

"In all other respects, please consider me to be your most subordinate friend.

Aeltester Johann Friesen,
Neukirch, on the 25th of March, 1860."

The foregoing document speaks for itself. This incident also serves to illustrate the respect and recognition which the Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* was accorded by the Russian Government authorities as well as the Mennonite secular leaders, such as Peter Schmidt,¹⁸ of the Agricultural Society. Johan Harder (1811-1876),¹⁹ *Aeltester* of the Orloff-Halbstaedt Mennonite *Gemeinde*, had no difficulty in working together with the Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* and in fact acted in alliance with Johan Friesen (1808-1872), the *Kleine Gemeinde Aeltester*, in the matter of the Secessionists.²⁰

It is not the purpose of this introduction to deal with these matters in detail but, rather to briefly present these matters to the reader, as a background against which the condition of the Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* in 1866 must be viewed. Compared to the general hatred and strife among the Russian Mennonites, the 1866 division in the Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* over spiritual and disciplinary matters seems instructive and preferable.

BIOGRAPHY OF AELTESTER PETER TOEWS

In consideration of the particular importance of *Aeltester* Peter Toews, both as leader and historian, we include here a brief biography. This seems particularly necessary in view of the fact that so little is generally known about him. Peter Plett Toews was born in the village of Fischau, Molotschna, on July 24, 1841. His parents were Johan Toews (1793-1873) and Maria Plett (1811-1896) who owned a village farm in Fischau. His father had joined the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde as a young single man in 1814.²¹

Even as a young lad Peter Toews was conscious that his parents and Gemeinde were set apart from the world around them. He himself writes that the witness of his parents was such that he had believed in the *Gemeinde* of God from an early age, and that the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, to which his parents belonged, was such a *Gemeinde*. He states further that the spiteful teasing of his school mates who belonged to other *Gemeinde*, strengthened his belief. i.e. When they called him "*Froamskotuks*", "The Godly One" or the "Pious One", because he was held back from; carrying on in mischief during the night, taking part in Godless Associations, use of tobacco, playing cards, swearing, etc.²²

Peter Toews was baptized and accepted in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde by *Aeltester* Johan Friesen on June 4, 1861.²³ "I believed that I was converted, even though I was not instructed, in the aspect of being consciously aware of the forgiveness of my sins through faith. The emphasis was more on the living of a life of discipleship. I overcame a special experience in the summer of 1863, through the reading of Menno Simons, **Meditation on the twenty-fifth Psalm,**²⁴ which at the time was my favorite devotional reading. A spurned proposal of marriage was the cause; and as I had followed the influence of friends instead of seeking the countenance, and counsel of God, I came into distress and temptation, and learnt what it was to be tried and tempted face to face by Satan; but much more so I also learnt to seek the Lord, and to experience his friendly countenance and to be secure for ones self; as the Savior says: I have prayed for you, etc. The experience was so wonderful, especially for a few days, that it was like bathing in the Peace of God. As the poet sings in the song: '*Fort, Fort, mein Herz, zum Himmel*', and so on. '*Hier kann dein Herz sich Baden, schnee weisz im Laemmeins Blut . . .*' When I married (in the knowledge of God's leading) later in fall my heart was still in this precious Peace."²⁵

On November 12, 1863, Peter Toews entered into the bonds of Matrimony with Anna Warkentin, the daughter of Johan Warkentin, who

was a prosperous Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde farmer at the time living in the village of Blumstein.²⁶ In 1866 he was elected a Minister of this *Gemeinde*, at the young age of 25, and 1870 he was elected as *Aeltester* of what was known as the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.²⁷ In 1866 he and his family moved to the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlement of Markusland where they farmed on rented land. A few years later they purchased a farm in the village of Blumenhof, in the Borosenko district, where they farmed until they left for America in 1875. In Manitoba the family settled in the Mennonite Eastern Reserve, at first in the village of Gruenfeld, later moving to the village of Hochstaedt. After retiring from active service in 1911 the family moved to Swalwell, Alberta, where he resided until his death in 1922.

Peter G. Hiebert, the biographer of Peter Toews, in the Mennonite Encyclopedia, states of him as follows: "He was instrumental in unifying three factions of this (Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde) denomination. In the early seventies he was sent to St. Petersburg and later to Jalta to interview the Czar, and was prominent in the emigration movement to Canada."

"Endowed with a keen craving for knowledge, Toews read and studied constantly and prayerfully, comparing the scriptures with the works of earlier writers. With a large part of his flock he joined the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, in 1882, and was ordained anew to the Ministry on January 11, 1882. His sermons were clear and sound, as were also his many articles of Scripture exposition published in the *Botschafter der Wahrheit*. For many years he was the editor of this publication, the official German language organ of the denomination."

"Many of his numerous poems and pamphlet articles were published in periodicals. Many of his hymns are contained in the **Liederbuch der Gemeinde Gottes**, the first two editions of which he edited. He translated several works from the Dutch into the German language. He corresponded with a number of the leaders of his day. He was a moderator of the General conference." ²⁸

Hopefully the foregoing will give the reader some idea of the talent and energy of the man, and a better understanding of the events described in **Anhang Number One**. Peter Toews must surely be ranked with *Aeltester* Johan Harder (1811-1875), Evangelist Bernhard Harder (1832-1884), Consul Cornelius Jansen (1822-1894), and secular leader, Johan Cornies (1789-1848), as one of the most significant Russian Mennonite leaders of the 19th Century.

INTRODUCTION TO HISTORY AND EVENTS OF EARLIER TIMES

The writing by John W. Dueck, entitled "History and Events"²⁹ is a most valuable companion to **Anhang Number One**. In the latter we see the unfolding of events through the eyes of the Leadership. In the former we see the occurrences remembered by a young boy. John W. Dueck was born in 1865 and so the period of which he can relate corresponds almost exactly with that dealt with by *Aeltester* Toews. Writings dealing with the secular life of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde are rare because of their complete emphasis on spiritual matters. Therefore, the reader is very fortunate that this writing is available.

The full title of Mr. Dueck's book is "History and events of earlier times, transcribed from letters and books, and also in part from my own experiences". The manuscript itself is divided into three parts. Firstly, a writing dealing with his remembrances and knowledge of historical events. This is the part which is translated and published here. Secondly, a transcription of the complete **Sammlung** written by *Aeltester* Peter Toews. Thus it appears that the first part of the manuscript was in fact written to complement the material gathered together by *Aeltester* Toews. The final portion of the manuscript is a collection of various writings, poems, etc. which deal with more current events.

The writing of Mr. John W. Dueck reveals a considerable talent in this description of the events of his childhood. This writer must confess to not being able to do proper justice to the translation of **History and Events** and **Anhang Number One**. However, an attempt has been made to preserve at least a part of the original flavour of these writings. The reader would be encouraged to refer to the original German in addition to this translation, particularly for the purpose of any serious study. Even here one encounters a difficulty as John W. Dueck, like other Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde writers, uses an extensive and beautiful Goethe era vocabulary, which will make the reading difficult for anyone who has studied only modern German. However, the present translation will at least make these valuable writings accessible to the general reader.

History and Events includes a section on the family of Johan Dueck (1801-1866) and the family of Jakob Wiebe (1799-1856). This will be a valuable addition to the already available histories and genealogies of these families. Mr. Dueck's accounts of everyday life are extremely fascinating, e.g. threshing, making watermelon syrup, a business trip to Nikopol, or Mr. Dueck's reflections of the philosophy of a Russian thief.

Also of considerable interest are his views and comments regarding the involvement of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in the implementation of the Russian Military draft, and the subsequent emigration movement. This writing, as well as that of Peter Toews, will be valuable additions to existing sources. Naturally they will be of special interest to the reader, as probably for the first time, a published account will present the matter from the viewpoint of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.

Mr. Dueck's account of the journey from Russia to America is probably the single most detailed account of this undertaking to be found among the writings of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. The account will be of special interest to the descendants of the 322 Mennonite passengers who arrived in Quebec City on the ship *S. S. Austrian*³⁰ on July 7, 1874, and who shared this experience with a nine year old lad by the name of Johan W. Dueck. The passengers were almost exclusively members of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde and were the first Mennonite settlers to set foot in Manitoba.

The reader may be interested in some additional information about Mr. John W. Dueck. The account of his early life is found in his writing published with this book. In his later life Mr. John W. Dueck became a school teacher, teaching in the Scratching River settlement for a total of 17 years. He was also an auctioneer and a song leader in the *Gemeinde*. In 1913 he started a country store in Rosenhof which he operated for 15 years. This store later became the present Riverside Co-op. He was married to Marie Kroecker, a daughter of *Aeltester* Jakob M. Kroecker also of Rosenhof. Mr. Dueck died on June 1, 1932.³¹

By this writing Mr. John W. Dueck has made a significant contribution to Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde historiography. Considered in its entirety, **History and Events**, is the single most valuable account of secular life in this *Gemeinde* pertaining to the later part of the 19th century. We trust that the presentation of this writing will be of interest and benefit to the reader.

THE CARTOGRAPHY OF THE MENNONITE KLEINE GEMEINDE

In Part Four of this book the reader will find a collection of twenty maps which pertain to the study of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in its Russian and American periods. Cartography is essential to any history and gives the reader the physical reference of one place to another, and a view of the terrain in which the historical event took place. This is particularly relevant to the history of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde as most of its member families experienced at least three major migrations between 1803 and 1875.

Without maps it is meaningless to tell a descendant of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde that his forefather lived in a certain village in West Prussia; and then, in 1804 or 1818 moved a thousand miles, to a certain village in the Molotschna, South Russia; and then, that a grandson of the forefather, assisted financially by a son of the forefather, in the 1850's moved to a new village in the Molotschna to take up a village farm; and then, in the 1860's moved to Friedensfeld, or Markuslandt, or one of the other Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde expansionary settlements to establish a new farm; and then, that in 1874 a great grandson moved to a new settlement in America and started all over again. Only by following the movements on a map does one achieve a realization of the magnitude of these endeavours.

Map No. One, West Prussia.³² One is always interested in obtaining as much information as possible about the ancestor. Identifying the village of origin in Prussia is a significant step. One of the most important sources for this purpose is the book by Benjamin H. Unruh³³ who has collected information and lists regarding the immigration of Mennonites to Russia. Identifying the village of origin in Prussia will assist in determining what further information, if any, can possibly be found in the Prussian Mennonite Gemeinde records, or in other sources.

Map No. Two, Origin and Spread of the Mennonites.³⁴ This map will give the reader an idea of the European movements of their ancestors; e.g. given the conditions in 1804, the trek from Prussia to Russia, by horse and wagon, was probably a bigger undertaking than the 1870's journey to America.³⁵

Map No. Three, The Chortitza Colony, 1833.³⁶ This was the first of the Mennonite settlements in Russia and was founded in 1789. It was from here that in 1836, a group of families left to establish the Bergthaler Colony, south-east of the Molotschna. In America the nearest Mennonite neighbours of the East Reserve Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde were the Chortitzer Mennonites who originated from this group of Bergthaler settlers.³⁷

Map No. Four, The Molotschna Mennoniten Bezirk. The layout of the various villages in a settlement can be of interest;³⁸ e.g. a look at this map of the Molotschna reveals that when Johan Warkentin (1817-1886), of Blumstein, married Anna Loewen (1819-1874) of Lindenau, he married the daughter of Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde farmer and deacon Isaac Loewen (1787-1873) of a neighbouring village some three miles distant.³⁹ In addition maps of each village, showing the separate village farms, as well as the names of the villagers would add valuable detail. Regrettably too little of this sort of information has been preserved.⁴⁰ However the **Gemeinde Berichte**⁴¹ provide a great deal of information as to the history and layout of the original Molotschna villages. Together with such other information as may be available, these sources can add a fascinating dimension to family history and particularly, the study of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde whose members lived scattered among all the Molotschna villages.

Map No. Five, Kleine Gemeinde and Other Mennonite Settlements in Russia, 1867. This map was prepared by the writer as there appeared to be no map available which provided this information. The location of the various Kleine Gemeinde settlements is based on information found in the writings of *Aeltester* Peter Toews.⁴² In addition Mr. William Schroeder, the expert on Russian Mennonite Cartography, has identified the location of the Kleine Gemeinde settlement of Gruenfeld.⁴³ This map was first published in the **Plett Picture Book** and is republished here with the foregoing additions and some corrections.⁴⁴ Hopefully it will be of assistance to the reader in visualizing the layout of the various settlements relative to each other and the difficulties involved in establishing these settlements and maintaining communications between them.

Map No. Six, The Borosenko Colony. The settlement of Borosenko with six villages, replaced the Molotschna as the heart of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde by the 1870's. This map was especially prepared for this book by Mr. William Schroeder, the Mennonite Cartographer. Although the original Borosenko map by Mr. Schroeder was first published in 1977,⁴⁵ the map published here for the first time has been revised so that it in-

cludes the relative location of the settlements of Gruenfeld and Friedensfeld. The latter were the nearest Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlements to Borosenko.⁴⁶

Map No. Seven, Chart of Divisions in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, 1866-1869. This chart summarizes in diagram form the main *Gemeinde* events of this period⁴⁷.

Map No. Eight, Mennonite Migrations. This map demonstrates in a simple format the various Mennonite emigrations from Russia to America.

Map No. Nine, Kleine Gemeinde and other Mennonite Settlements in America, 1874-1880. This map was especially prepared for this book by this writer as there seemed to be no map available that contained the necessary information. The map demonstrates the relative location of the various Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlements in Canada and the United States, and also the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren settlement at Gnadenu, Kansas. The map demonstrates the North-South orientation of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde and is of interest because of the amount of interaction between the various settlements, both by related individuals and also on a *Gemeinde* level.⁴⁸

Map No. Ten, The Mennonite East Reserve. This map by Mr. John C. Reimer, the Mennonite historian and founder of the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach, shows the original settlements of the Mennonite East Reserve.⁴⁹ It shows the location of seven of the eight original Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlements and is essential to the subject. In addition the map shows the location of settlements such as, Heuboden, Lichtenau, and Neuanlage, which were also established by the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in the first years.

Map No. Eleven, Village and Field Plan of Steinbach. Of course the detailed map of each individual village is important to a comprehensive study. We include here the map of the village of Steinbach, by Mr. John C. Reimer. According to Dr. John Warkentin, in his study on the Mennonite settlements in Southern Manitoba, this map is probably the only one of its kind in that it also shows the field plan of the village.⁵⁰ In addition maps are available of the villages of Blumenort,⁵¹ Blumenhof,⁵² and Gruenfeld.⁵³ Hopefully maps of the other Kleine Gemeinde villages and

settlements will become available so that a complete collection can be published in the near future. ⁵⁴

Map No. Twelve, The Scratching River Settlement (1874-1974). This map shows the outlines of the village plans of Rosenort and Rosenhof. The key to the map also identifies a number of sites of historical interest. ⁵⁵

Map No. Thirteen and Fourteen, The villages of Rosenort and Rosenhof. These maps were prepared by Mr. Peter W. Siemens and Mr. Peter E. Friesen, of Rosenort, Manitoba. They were first published in the R.M. of Morris Centennial book, ⁵⁶ and are of particular importance as they identify and locate the individual farmer and farmstead in each village. ⁵⁷

Map No. Fifteen, Cub Creek Precinct. This map shows the village outlines of the seven Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlements in the area of Jansen, Nebraska. ⁵⁸ These villages were: Rosenort, Rosenhof, Rosenfeld, Rosenthal, Heuboden, Neuanlage, and Blumenort. The largest settlements were Rosenort and Rosenhof with the other five smaller settlements grouped so that they appeared to be only three villages. ⁵⁹

Map No. Sixteen, Mennonite Land Holdings, Jansen, 1900. This map outlines the landholding in the area for the year 1900 and again may help some readers identify particular ancestors. Maps number fifteen, sixteen, and seventeen are taken from the study of D. Paul Miller on the Community of Jansen, Nebraska, which is essential reading for anyone interested in the North American period of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. ⁶¹

Map No. Seventeen, Russian Lane, 1890. The two largest settlements, Rosenort and Rosenhof, were built up along both sides of a village street laid out along the government road allowance and extended for a distance of five miles. This is an extremely interesting variation of the Russian Mennonite village plan especially when compared to a "pure" plan as in Steinbach, Manitoba. This settlement was given the name "Russian Lane" because the Mennonites here were generally known as "Russians". The map is particularly important because it identifies a number of the villagers. ⁶⁰

Map No. Eighteen, Liberty Township, Marion County, Kansas, ca 1900. This map shows the relative locations of the Gnadenau and Hoffnungstal villages of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren in Kansas.⁶² Although it was no longer a part of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren inherited some of its most distinctive characteristics from its Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde roots.⁶³ Although these two villages were originally settled by some 35-40 families,⁶⁴ it appears that they were joined by a number of additional families in 1875-1879.⁶⁵

Map No. Nineteen, Gnadenau Village at its zenith. Again an extremely valuable map as it identifies many of the early settlers in the community. Almost all of the surnames will seem familiar to the reader.⁶⁶

Map No. Twenty, Mennonite Churches in Central Kansas. A valuable supplement to map number nine as it sets out in more detail the Mennonite Churches in Central Kansas.⁶⁷

Regrettably no maps are presently available to the writer of the early settlement of the Meade, Kansas, Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. However, the maps included here should serve the reader for an introduction to Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde studies. They certainly demonstrate the geographical magnitude of this *Gemeinde* and the emigrations experienced by its members within three-quarters of a Century. Hopefully these maps are of interest to the reader and a worthwhile addition to these writings.

FOOTNOTES TO THE INTRODUCTION

1. Although the legal name as recognized by the Russian Government was Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* or *Kleine Gemeinde der Mennoniten*, their own writings frequently refer to Non-resistant Mennonite *Gemeinde* (*Gemeinde der Wehrlosen Mennoniten*) or simply to Non-resistant Christians (*Wehrlosen Christen*). As most Mennonite *Gemeinde* were usually centered around a certain place, this was usually the distinctive aspect of their name; e.g. *Bergthaler Mennoniten Gemeinde* or *Orloff—Halbstadt Mennoniten Gemeinde*. In the appropriate context, an abbreviation to *Bergthaler Gemeinde* or *Orloff—Halbstaedt Gemeinde* appears to be acceptable. Therefore the abbreviation of Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* to *Kleine Gemeinde*, (or *Kleinen Gemeinde*, after 1866), would also be acceptable in appropriate circumstances.

The homonyms "*Kleingemeinder*" or "*Kleingemeinsche*" seem to have their origin with the opponents of this movement, who used the low german play on these words as "small minded" to slander the group. The Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde* like every movement, will certainly have had members who were not equal to the call. However to so brand a whole movement, seems to exhibit a goodly portion of the attitude complained about.

2. The term "Existential Christianity" is used by Dr. Robert Friedman to characterize Anabaptist theology as distinguished from Catholicism and Protestantism. He particularly distinguishes Anabaptism from "Pietism", a forerunner of the American Baptists and Evangelicals. Dr. Cornelius Krahn, in the Mennonite Encyclopedia article on Pietism, (See Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume Four, pages 176-179) states that: "Robert Friedman who has delivered the only thorough theological comparison of the two movements, concludes that they are substantially different, and that when Pietism came into the Mennonite fold it, at the very least, blunted the essential thrust of Anabaptism as discipleship in conflict with the world, and at the most, substantially changed and redirected Anabaptist—Mennonite theology and piety from a sturdy movement to conquer the world by bringing men under the Lordship of Christ into a subjective emotionalized search for inner peace and godliness which lost its readiness to defy the world for the sake of its understanding of the Gospel and the Christian ethic. Pietistic Menonitism he claims, was much more ready to accommodate itself to the prevailing culture and abandon such characteristic Anabaptist teachings as nonresistance and nonconformity."

Thus even in facing death through torture, the Anabaptist had no need for the Doctrine of (Conscious) Assurance of Salvation, as by conversion he had become a part of God's Kingdom on Earth, and already existed in

Christ as a disciple of Christ. By virtue of this “existential” Christianity the Anabaptist had Faith and Trust in the Biblical assurances and accordingly a question as to his salvation did not arise. See Dr. Robert Friedman, **Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries** (Sugar Creek, Ohio: Schlabach Printers, 1980), 288 pages. Particularly note page 246: “But above all it is striking that there is no anxiety about ones salvation, but rather the good conscience of one who has surrendered his will to God in obedience to his word which was to be his guide in all situations in life.” See also Dr. Robert Friedman, **The Theology of Anabaptism** (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1973), 184 pages; and also Paul M. Lederach, **A Third Way** (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1980), 150 pages.

3. The writings of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde presuppose an exhaustive Biblical knowledge and an intimate knowledge of the early Anabaptist writings. Therefore it goes without saying that the truly interested reader should at least also be familiar with the following writings. e.g. Thieleman J. van Braght, **The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of the Defenseless Christians** (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1977), 1157 pages; J. C. Wenger, **The Complete Writings of Menno Simons** (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1978), 1092 pages; Dietrich Philips, **Enchiridion or Handbook of Christian Doctrine** (La Grange, Indiana: Pathway Publishing Corporation, 1966), 539 pages; J. P. Schabalie, **The Wandering Soul** (Elmira, Ontario: M. Sauder, 1975), 478 pages. A brief history from creation to A.D. 109.

In addition, the writings of Peter Peters probably most clearly represent the particular philosophical stance of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde but regrettably, to the knowledge of this writer, are not available in English. However a few copies of the last German publication of the writings of Peter Peters by the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Nebraska still seem to be in circulation, Namely; Peter Peters, **Ausgewahlte Schriften**, (Elkart, Indiana: Mennonitischen Verlagshandlung, 1901), 498 pages; and Peter Peters, **Die Himmlische Hochzeit**, (Elkart, Indiana: Mennonitischen Verlagshandlung, 1906), 212 pages.

4. See Abram Friesen, ed., **P. M. Friesen and his History** (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Christian Press, 1979), page 102. This writer can verify this only with respect to Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde writings. Nevertheless the Peter M. Friesen work is an invaluable source of information.

5. All references to this work are to the German typed edition completed by Mr. Cornelius L. Toews, Steinbach, Manitoba, and Mr. Peter A. Plett, Landmark, Manitoba, in 1980.

6. There are presently two very significant studies in progress which hopefully will see publication in the near future. Firstly, one would want to mention the work of Dr. Carl Bangs, Kansas City, Missouri, who, for a number of years, has studied the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, with par-

ticular reference to the family history of Abraham von Reisen (1752-1810), whose descendants probably constituted the single most significant family in this *Gemeinde*. In addition this family also provided many other Russian Mennonite leaders. Secondly, one would mention the work of Roy Loewen and Betty Plett, Blumenort, Manitoba, who are compiling a history of the community of Blumenort. Hopefully, both projects can shortly be completed, as they will undoubtedly be milestones in their respective fields.

7. Much information pertaining to the East Reserve Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde can be found in, Abe Warkentin, ed., **Reflections On Our Heritage** (Steinbach, Manitoba: Derksen Printers, 1971), 373 pages.

8. Dr. Clarence Hiebert, **The Holdeman People** (South Pasadena, California: The William Carey Library, 1973), 664 pages.

9. *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung von Briefen und Schriftliche Nachrichten zur Historie der Kleine Gemeinde der Mennoniten an der Molotschna** (Blumenhof, Borosenko, South Russia: Unpublished manuscript, 1874). Herein referred to as the "*Sammlung*".

10. See Peter M. Friesen, **The Mennonite Brotherhood in Russia (1789-1910)** (Fresno, California: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1978), pages 1025-1026.

11. See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung**, *op. cit.*, page 369.

12. There is no record of any assistance being sought or given to start any of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde expansionary settlements, as was the case with the daughter colonies of the Molotschna and Chortitza.

13. See Dr. Abram Friesen, *op. cit.*, page 119, for various references. See also Dr. Robert Friedman, **Mennonite Piety**, *op. cit.*, page 69. See also C. H. Smith, **The Story of the Mennonites**. (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1945), page 427-434.

14. Dr. E. K. Francis maintains that the only reason that the Secessionists did not join some non Mennonite Group such as the Baptists was because, "under the Russian legal system, renunciation of the Mennonite faith also carried with itself loss of important rights and privileges, including military exemption and the holding of property in the Mennonite settlements". See E. K. Francis, **In Search of Utopia** (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen & Sons, 1955), pages 258-259. See also C. H. Smith, *op.cit.*, 1945 edition, page 433.

15. *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung, op. cit.**, page 330. Compare with Peter M. Friesen, **op. cit.** page 238.

16. "For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? Do not ye judge them that are within?"

17. That is to say, in the sense that by 1 Corinthians 5:12 we are commanded to judge and discipline what is within and not what is outside the *Gemeinde*.

18. And earlier of course the great Johan Cornies who in 1843 obtained the official recognition of the Russian Government for the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.

19. *Aeltester* Johan Harder (1811-1876) was fondly remembered by both sides in this War of Words for his conciliatory leadership, gentleness, and kindness. He is generally recognized as being responsible for the peaceful outcome of this separation. See Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume Two, page 660. See also Peter M. Friesen, **op. cit.** page 253.

20. See Peter M. Friesen, **op. cit.** pages 244-262. *Aeltester* Johan Harder (1811-1876) was one of the few Mennonite religious leaders whose conduct during this period still bespoke of an Anabaptist spirit. In contrast see Peter M. Friesen, **op. cit.**, page 1001, where he reports that "At one time even the Orloff congregation, on the condition that each side recognize each other as a "church of God", would have been prepared to ordain Hiebert (the *Aeltester* of the Secessionists)". The Secessionists were apparently not prepared to extend this recognition as such an ordination did not take place.

Of course *Aeltester* Harder also had ties of kinship with the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde; e.g. *Aeltester* Peter Toews was his first cousin. See Peter Isaac, **Stammbuch Meine Voreltern** (Rosenort Manitoba: PrairieView Press, English Edition, 1980), page 55.

21. Johan Toews, **Die Wachsame Auge Gottes**, Unpublished manuscript, page 67. Thus it is probable that Cornelius Toews (1766-1831), the grandfather of *Aeltester* Peter Toews, was one of the founding members of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in 1812.

22. *Aeltester* Peter Toews **Sammlung, op.cit.**, page 460.

23. Johan Toews, **op.cit.**, page 79.

24. J. C. Wenger, **op.cit.**, pages 63-86.

25. *Aeltester Peter Toews Sammlung, op.cit.*, page 470.
26. For a listing of the descendants of *Aeltester Peter Toews* see, Dr. Solomon Loewen, **The descendants of Isaac Loewen** (Meade, Kansas: Peter E. Loewen, 1961), pages 46-54 of the Anna Loewen/Johan Warken-tin Section.
27. Sometimes also referred to as the Gruenfelder Mennonite Kleine Ge-meinde as Cornelius P. Toews, its delegate to America in 1873, lived in Gruenfeld, North of Borosenko. Also *Aeltester Peter Toews* settled in Gruenfeld, Manitoba, in 1875.
28. See Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume Four, page 736.
29. Johann W. Dueck, **Historie und Begebenheiten aus fruherer Zeit und der Gegenwart Abgesecriben aus Briefen, Buchern, und zum Theil selbserlebt** (Rosenort, Manitoba: Unpublished manuscript, 1904), 500 pages. (Courtesy of Mr. Frank K. Dueck and the Mennonite Heritage Cen-tre.).
30. For the account of the journey of the fourth contingent of the Men-nonite Kleine Gemeinde who crossed the ocean on the ship S. S. Prussian and arrived in Gruenfeld, Manitoba, on June 29, 1875, see **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.** pages 20-21. See also Peter Isaac, **op.cit.** pages 26-27, where Peter Isaac briefly describes the journey of seven Mennonite Kleine Ge-meinde families who came with a group of Bergthaler on the S. S. Peruvian and arrived two weeks after the first 1874 group. See also John B. Toews, **op.cit.**, pages 9-10, and 16.
31. Lenore Eidse, ed., **Furrows in the Valley** (Morris, Manitoba: R.M. of Morris, 1980), pages 400-404.
32. From the Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume Four, page 921.
33. B. H. Unruh, **Die Niederlaendisch-niederdeutschen hintergrunde der Mennonitischen Ostwanderung im 16., 18. und 19. Jahrhundert** (Karlsruhe-Rueppurr, Diakonissenstrass 20, Deutschland: Self-published, 1955), especially pages 304-391.
34. From Mennonite Life.
35. For an account of this journey see, Peter Epp, **Die Mennoniten in Russland** (Columbus, Ohio: Justina Epp, 1981), particularly pages 57-73.
36. Map by William Schroeder, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Used by permission.

37. See William Schroeder, **The Bergthal Colony** (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1974), 101 pages.

38. One interesting speculation inspired by a map of the Molotschna is that of the village of Kleefeld, which was located next to the Juschanlee. The latter was the estate and experimental farm of Johan Cornies, the great secular leader of the Russian Mennonites of the 19th century. The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde were the model farmers of Johan Cornies and his Agricultural Society. On the other hand Johan Cornies was the protector and benefactor of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde as he secured legal recognition from the Russian Government for them in 1843. Apparently he also amended the normally inflexible regulations of the Agricultural Society for them in matters of Conscience. (See Peter M. Friesen, **op.cit.**, page 198). A number of members of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde were farming in the village of Kleefeld and one queries as to whether there was a further connection given that Kleefeld was established next to the Juschanlee. Also, for a time a member of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, namely, Cornelius Plett (1820-1900), was the *Vorsteher*, (Mayor), of this village which was the second largest in the Molotschna with 37 full farms and 6 half farms. (See Gerhard J. Theilmann, ed., **Plettentag** (Blumenort, Manitoba, 1945), page 33.

39. **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, 10.

40. An example of such a map of a Molotschna village is that of Alexanderwohl as of 1874. A number of Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde families are known to have lived in this village; e.g. Johan Hiebert (1816-1890) moved to Alexanderwohl to take over the full farm of his wife's father, Martin Knelson. See Albert H. Hiebert, et.al., **The Family of Johan Hiebert 1818-1975** (Kansas: Self-published, 1975), pages 7 and 125. Another member of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde living in Alexanderwohl was Abraham Loewen (1833-1886). (**Plett Picture Book, op.cit.** page 10). Rev. Johan L. Dueck lived in Alexanderkron and not Alexanderwohl as was incorrectly stated in the **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 19 and 20.

41. M. Woltner, **Die Gemeinde Bericht von 1848 der Deutschen Siedlungen am Schwarzer Meer** (S. Hirzel, Leipzig, 1941), 231 pages; For the *Molotschnaer Mennoniten Gebiet* see pages 88-163.

42. *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung, op.cit.**, page 437. Also Johan Toews, **op.cit.**, page 79.

43. Therefore the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlement of Hochfeld (Home of Johan Warkentin,—See **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.** page 22) must have been several miles to the north of Gruenfeld. John W. Dueck, in

History and Events reports that they passed through Gruenfeld on their way to Hochfeld.

44. Plett Picture Book, op.cit., page 11. The name of the central village of the Crimean Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde is incorrectly given as Annafeld. This is wrong and the correct name is Annenfeld.

45. Lawrence Klippenstein, ed., Mennonite Memories (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Centennial Publications, 1977), page 20.

46. Borosenko Settlement. Care should be taken in the interpretation of this map for the purpose of Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde studies as the map shows the villages located in the area as of about 1935. Heuboden, Rosenfeld, Blumenhof, and Steinbach can be positively identified as four of the six original Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde villages of the Borosenko settlement. Mr. John W. Dueck in **History and Events** states that when his parents travelled to the Estate "Zawitzke" near Steinbach from Blumenhof, they passed through the village of Annafeld where Abram L. Duecks lived at the time. Therefore it had appeared to the writer that Ebenfeld on this map was formerly Annafeld. To the contrary John R. Dueck (1863-1937) reports that his parents, Abram L. Duecks, moved from the Molotschna village of Gnadenthal to the Borosenko village of Annafeld in the spring of 1870. They settled in the village of Annafeld which was laid out from North to South along the banks of the river Baseluk. He further reports that Steinbach where he went to school lay to the south-west of Annafeld. (See Peter H. Dueck, et.al., **Abraham L. und Elisabeth Dueck und ihre Nachkommen**, 1965, Self-published, Kleefeld, Manitoba, page 23.) (Incidentally should anyone still have copies of the writings of Mr. John R. Dueck (1863-1937) the writer would dearly like to hear about such material.) Thus it is possible that the location of Annafeld is not even given on this map. According to the description of Mr. John R. Dueck (1863-1937) Annafeld would have been to the west or north-west of Rosenfeld. Possibly the only road to Steinbach went through Annafeld although it would seem to be a long way around, or does John W. Dueck only refer to Steinbach as being near the estate "Zawitzke" and that they went through the village of Annafeld on the way to *Zawitzke*. This would appear to reconcile the two sources.

This writer, at the present time, believes that Nikolaithal was the sixth village of the original Borosenko settlement. It is the only one of the other villages shown on this map to which this writer has found reference in the writings of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. See John K. Esau, **The Esau Family Tree**, Self-published, pages 4 and 14; and also, Helena Jahnke, et.al., **Stammbuch der Groszeltern Klaus Friesens, Geboren in West Prussen, der Helena Jahnke, geborne Friesen**, Unpublished Manuscript, (Courtesy of Mr. Harry S. Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba) at page 4.

47. The published material dealing with this troubled time seemingly does not contain anywhere a clear statement and explanation of the various divisions, Ministerial and Aeltester elections, etc. Hopefully this chart will help the reader differentiate the references to the various groups, leaders, etc. which are found in the extant writings of this period. It should be noted that the correspondence of this period reveals a prayerful searching and proving, and a completely sincere and honest effort by the majority to restore peace in the *Gemeinde*.

48. For an important example of this interaction one would note the journey of *Aeltester* Peter Toews and his uncle Cornelius Plett, the Elder, in 1881. They left the Mennonite East Reserve on June 7, 1881, traveling to Kansas. *Aeltester* Toews returned to Manitoba on June 28, 1881. They will undoubtedly have visited Mrs. Johan Toews, living in Gnadenu, as she was the mother of *Aeltester* Toews and the sister to Cornelius Plett. Also Jakob Loewen living in Gnadenu was the brother of Mrs. Cornelius Plett and an uncle to the wife of *Aeltester* Peter Toews. Cornelius Plett also visited Jansen, Nebraska, where he had a sister, Mrs. Isaac Harms (formerly the wife of Rev. Klaas Friesen (1793-1870)), and returned home to Manitoba, on July 2, 1881. This journey was to have fateful consequences in the Scratching River and East Reserve Kleine Gemeinde. For additional information see **Plett Picture Book, op. cit.**, pages 24-25.

49. See Abe Warkentin, **op.cit.**, page 28.

50. For a detailed discussion of the Gewanne, Flur, Kagel, Schadenkagel, Feuerstaetten, and Hauskagel involved in the Steinbach village plan and the variations from other smaller villages see, Dr. John Warkentin, **The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba** (Toronto, Ontario: Unpublished Thesis, University of Toronto, 1960), pages 58-59 and 109. The village of Blumenort will be an interesting contrast to that of Steinbach because it was a larger village and one of only two on the East reserve to be settled on both sides of the street. The village of Blumenhof, on the other hand appears to have been a more typical Russian Mennonite village consisting of 14 farmers. However the latter appears to have been more well to do. (See **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, page 25.)

51. A number of variations exist of a map which was drawn by Mr. Martin K. Friesen (1881-1975). Mr. Friesen had also prepared a model of the village which is no longer extant. This map and other similiar material will be published in the forthcoming book on the Blumenort community by Roy Loewen and Betty Plett.

52. Apparently the village of Blumenhof was the first Mennonite village in the East reserve to be dissolved, with the villagers moving on to individual

farmsteads in 1889. (See Peter F. Unger, *Diary and Memoirs, Volume Two*. Courtesy of Rev. Abe Unger, Landmark, Manitoba.) Nevertheless an outline of the village has been recreated and is published in the **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.** pages 22-23.

53. A model of the Gruenfeld village is on display at the Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba.

54. Hopefully the present community of Kleefeld will see fit to complete a history of the community in the near future which of course would include a map of this model. This would also appear to be the proper setting to deal with the other Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde villages in that area; i.e. Heuboden, Rosenfeld, Schoenau, Hochstaedt, and Gnadenort. (Other settlements which should be considered are, Fischau, Friedensfeld, etc.)

55. This map was prepared by Mr. Peter W. Siemens and Mr. Peter E. Friesen, and is published here courtesy of Mr. Dick B. Eidse, Rosenort, Manitoba.

56. Lenore Eidse, **op.cit.**, pages 326-327.

57. For additional information on the Scratching River settlement see, Lenore Eidse, **ibid.**, pages 321-476. Also essential to any study of the Mennonites in Manitoba is, Dr. E. K. Francis, **op.cit.**

58. The figure commonly quoted for the number of original settlers in the seven Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde villages in the Jansen area is 36 families. This must refer only to the original group of settlers as the figure is too small in view of the size of the settlements and the latter population. Hopefully further studies can determine the number of settlers both here and in the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren settlements in Kansas with a greater degree of accuracy, as these figures are essential to a proper determination of the membership of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia. See **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 14-15.

59. See Dr. D. Paul Miller, **A Case Study of Jansen, Nabraska** (Lincoln, Nebraska: Unpublished Thesis, University of Nebraska, page 46. This thesis as well as that of Dr. John Warkentin, **op.cit.**, are essential reading to any study of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. See also Gustav Reimer, et.al., **Exiled by the Czar** (Newton Kansas: Mennonite Publication Office, 1956), 205 pages. The latter book is the biography and history of Consul Cornelius Jansen, founder of the village of Jansen. Jansen's wife was a daughter of Peter Von Reisen, who was a brother to Abraham Friesen, the second *Aeltester* of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, and also a brother-in-law to Klass Reimer, the founding *Aeltester* of the Mennonite Kleine

Gemeinde. Thus the history of the Jansen family is interwoven with that of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.

60. Dr. D. Paul Miller, *op.cit.*, page 70.

61. *Ibid*, pages 92, 95, and 98.

62. David V. Wiebe, **Grace Meadow** (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House), page 8, of the plates at the centre of the book.

63. Harold S. Bender, *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Volume Three, page 243. Also the many genealogical ties which existed make a consideration of this group essential to any study of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.

64. David V. Wiebe, *op.cit.*, page 36.

65. David V. Wiebe, *ibid.*, page 50-51. Here the Marion County Record of August 4, 1876, is quoted to the effect that "About three hundred persons are expected in Gnadenau this week". And on November 3, 1876, "One hundred and fifty or two hundred more Russian-Americans are expected in Gnadenau". If this is correct, then by dividing by five, (The average of family members usually allowed for the Russian Mennonites in this period), an additional 90 families would have settled here. A good number of these were former members or sympathizers of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. Also, at least one family, namely, Rev. Abraham Klassen (formerly of Pragenau, in the Molotschna) joined this settlement from the Scratching River settlement in Manitoba. (See *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, Volume Three, *op.cit.*, page 243.

66. David V. Wiebe, *op.cit.*, page 9 of plates. See also David V. Wiebe, **They Seek a Country** (Freeman, South Dakota: Pine Hill Press, 1974), 228 pages.

67. From David V. Wiebe, *ibid.*, page 123. This book also contains valuable introductions to the origin and founding of the various Russian Mennonite settlements in Kansas, Nebraska, and Minnesota.

Part Two

Anhang Number One

Anhang No. One to the **Sammlung von Briefe und Schriftliche Nachrichten zur Historie der Kleinen Gemeinden der Mennoniten.** (First Appendix to an "Anthology of Letters and written Advise-ments for the History of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde") An overview of the contents of the third book of the history of the Mennonite Kleinen Gemeinde.

Collected and assembled into an appendix to this history by Aeltester Peter Toews, Blumenhof, Borosenko, South Russia, in 1874.

FOREWORD

Dear Reader, if you by now have read the preceding two Books of this History; and if after 1874 (if it is God's will) you perhaps no longer find yourself in Southern Russia, whether in the Molotschna, or near Nikopol-Dnyper, or in the Crimea; and instead only remember isolated incidents—either experienced yourself—or related to you by your Elders; and with the flight of the sunrise, so to speak, you have been carried and led to the end of the furthest sea, where you now find yourself in the distant West of North America; nevertheless you will recognize with David, how the Hand of the Lord, here also has led you and his Goodness has kept you.

Having read the preceding two Books you will still be missing seven years of the history of the *Gemeinde* during its time in Russia i.e. from the year 1866 to the year 1874. Eagerly, you will wish to know of the occurrences in the *Gemeinde*, even if only from a historical viewpoint. No one, dear reader, can relate this to you better, and perhaps no one would be less factious in relating this history, than one of those who was appointed to the concerns and supervision of the *Gemeinde* during these fateful years. I do not have time in the present trouble filled period to set out a comprehensive account of this history. However, I will here append a short overview of the contents of the history of these seven years. And if I live, and if it is the will of the Lord, that in the service of the *Gemeinde* this work be completed, and if I have time for this undertaking; i.e. if the affairs of the *Gemeinde* are not so demanding of my time as has been the case at present, then an exhaustive history can be completed.

I hope also that such an undertaking, when I examine all the letters and other writings of this time, and review my own experiences, will be more for the furtherance of my watchfulness, and prayer, than being spiritually harmful. Because one must also say with the poet:

*Auf Berg und Thal zu Wandern,
Wo man her kam,
und wie es ging,
Das war ein Wunderding.*^{1a}

On Mountain and Vale to Wander,
From where one comes,
and where one goes,
That is a thing of Wonder.

Many and different experiences had occurred up to the end of the second Book. And yet it seemed as if through all the schisms and differences, the convictions and beliefs in the last year had drawn much closer together. Among other things, many matters had to be dealt with, which had never arisen before. Many matters seemed to have developed through the division in the *Gemeinde*, which had its origin on account of the Bann

and Shunning. And if one, for once, acknowledges that the Bann can also on occasion be incorrectly applied, then one raises the question as to whether one who has been wrongly put under the Bann, (if only he had not had to be put under the Bann in the first place), can definitely not be elected as a Minister. The result of this question is unforgettably forged into the fabric of this history. N.B. It resulted in much work.

The differences of opinion regarding the washing of feet of the Brethren coming in from a distance; the differences over 1 Corinthians 11 with respect to the Headcovering of the girls in the Worship Service, namely during instruction for Baptism, and during the betrothal. The question regarding the marriage of the second sister was brought into agitation by Peter Loewen.¹ And finally, especially, and above all, especially, the question regarding Baptism was brought into question by the secession of Jakob Wiebe (1837-1921) in the Crimea.

All this, and whatever developed in the wake; all the letters, declarations, and counter-declarations—and finally the threat of Military Service,—until the preparation for emigration to America; to bring these occurrences, one after the other, into an unbiased history, will have to remain undone until (if God wills and I am still alive) we will have time to do so. Until such a time, and should it perhaps also not occur—Dear Reader—let us not forget, that we are constantly developing in the present, with our life and conduct, the material for the future continuation of our history; **and that God is also, keeping a record, where everything—everything—where all— is more determinately entered; in which also our thoughts and the counsels and conceptions of our hearts have been recorded.**

*O Gott! schreib meinen Namen, In's Buch des Lebens ein,
Und lasz mit die zusammen, mich ewig seelig sein;
Die hier schon ueberwunde; und angeschrieben steh'n,
Im Lebensbuch gefunden. Ach! Lasz es doch gesch'n. Amen*

P. Toews

NOTEWORTHY GEMEINDE EVENTS, 1866-1868

State of the Gemeinde, 1866:

As the *Gemeinde* entered this important era, through the 1866 division, the Kleine Gemeinde was no longer living together in the colonies of the Molotschna Mennonite Bezirk. Instead, they were by now scattered in four different regions. One portion of the *Gemeinde*, since the fall of 1863, was living on rented land in the Alexandrowsk District, Ekatherinoslaw Government, on the Dnyper River. This was near the small market city of Alexandrowsk, which lay 100 *werst* distant from the Molotschna Colony. They were living on the land of the noble woman Marcus. Another portion of the *Gemeinde*, was also in the Ekatherinoslaw Government, but in the Ekatherinoslaw District, near Nikopol, where in 1865 ² they had purchased a parcel of land—Borosenko (later Blumenhof). Nikopol was 80 *werst* from the Brethren living on Marcus, and 100 *werst* away from the Molotschna. Borosenko later developed into the physical heart of the *Gemeinde*, as later almost everyone moved here and founded colonies on additional land purchased nearby. ³ A third portion in the Crimea, in the Feodosischen District, had assembled itself to the Kleine Gemeinde two years previously. This was the Colony Annenfeld, ⁴ where also the Minister Peter Baerg (1818-1901) lived. Annenfeld was about 250 *werst* distant from Blumenhof.

Aeltester and Ministerial Elections, on October 10, 1866

The Brethren from all the four regions were called together in Fischau,⁵ on October 10, 1866, in order to settle the calling of an *Aeltester* by a vote of the Brotherhood. The two candidates were the Ministers, Heinrich Enns (1808-1881),⁶ and Peter Baerg (1818-1901).⁷ The Brethren consisted of about one-half of the *Gemeinde*⁸ which had previously belonged to *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872).⁹ Enns was elected *Aeltester* by an overwhelming majority. Two Ministers and one deacon were also elected at this meeting. I, unworthy that I am, was here also called to the Ministry, through a majority of 49 votes. Gerhard Goossen,¹⁰ at that time living in Liebenau, was also elected as a Minister with 33 votes, and Abraham Loewen,¹¹ of Hierschau, as Deacon with 20 votes. The latter moved to Gruenfeld, near Blumenhof, in the month of February 1867.

Ministerial Election in the Crimea, 1867:

On my fourth journey from Blumenhof to the Molotschna, since my calling to the Ministry, Abraham Loewen and myself; accompanied Ohm Enns, Gerhard Goossen, and Abraham Klassen, on a journey to the Crimea. Through the Grace of God, by this time, trust in the *Aeltester*, and peace in the *Gemeinde*, had again come to pass.

On December 3, 1867, Jakob Wiebe (1837-1931)¹² was elected a Minister of the *Gemeinde* in Annenfeld by a majority of seven votes. On December 5, 1867, the baptism of two young men was performed. The number of the brothers and sisters was 22. On December 6, 1867, we left for home and by evening we arrived at Jirschik. In the morning we parted from the Molotschna Brethren and they left on their way to the Molotschna. On the morning of the 10th, Loewen and myself, came to the Dnyper, at Kamenka, but because of the drifting ice had to wait the whole day. But, we crossed over in the evening and arrived, at our home and our loved ones, during the night, safe and sound.

Ministerial Election in Gruenfeld, 1868

On January 4, 1868, Ohm Enns (1807-1881) and Gerhard Goossen (1836-1872) from the Molotschna, and J. Wiebe (1837-1921), together with a number of Brethren from the Crimea, came to Blumenhof. On the 5th Wiebe preached a sermon from the Text—1 John 3:21. On the 6th Gerhard Goossen presented the Word. On January 6th 1868, a Ministerial election was held in Gruenfeld. Through a majority of 17 votes, Cornelius Toews,¹³ was elected as a Deacon. Thereafter he was elected, as a Minister with 18 votes. Johan Goossen (1842-1904)¹⁴ had 6 votes. Much disagreement was to result as a consequence of this election.

Thereafter Communion Service was held on the 7th of January, 1868. There were 59 members at Borosenko for this purpose. Some Brethren had also wanted to visit the *Gemeinde* at Marcus, but were unable to do so, because of the spring thaw weather which was quickly setting in; accordingly they accelerated the date of their departure for home. They were accompanied by us to Nikopol, on the Dnyper. After they had reached home and presented the matter to the Brethren, the *Gemeinde* there was dissatisfied that Toews had been elected as Minister. It was still in the same month, January, when I, together with many others, was returning from a trip to Marcus, that this matter came into a serious discussion, with the Brethren from the Molotschna, by letter as well as in person.

The dissatisfaction had its origin in the fact that, through the instigation of a number of Brethren, the *Aeltester* and, we, Ministers, were persuaded to declare as invalid a number of earlier actions, namely, the excommunication of a number of Brethren. This had the consequence, that the votes for Minister now fell on one of these Brethren. In addition, the *Aeltester* had not put this matter to the Brethren prior to the election; i.e. the declaration of invalidity of the earlier actions. The confidence of many Brethren in the *Aeltester* was already very low, and as a result of this omission, he fell even more under suspicion than the others in the Ministerial. On account of this matter the Christian Love in the *Gemeinde* was very much weakened.

The matter had not come to the point that Toews had functioned as a Minister. Shortly after the vote he declared his voluntary renunciation of his office because of the discord caused by his election. However, the matter was not to be resolved for some time. It would require first a journey to the Molotschna, and consequent exchanges of letters, and finally one more journey in 1868.

Resignation of office by Heinrich Enns, 1868

The matter progressed more and more to a final resolution. Notwithstanding their stumbling, confidence in the Ministers was beginning to be restored. However for many, confidence in *Aeltester* Heinrich Enns (1807-1881) had completely disappeared. He himself, in the month of June, declared that, pursuant to his earnest prayers, he had come to the conclusion, that in the best interest of the *Gemeinde*, he would give up his office. On account of the instigation of a number of Brethren he later again wavered in this decision. But, at a Brotherhood meeting held in Kleefeld (Molotschna) on August 14, 1868, the collective decision was that the *Aeltester* should abide by the declaration he had already made.

One serious consequence that originated in the election in Blumenhof, or more correctly Gruenfeld, was that the *Aeltester* Heinrich Enns (1807-1881), developed a mistrust of the Minister Gerhard Goossen. The *Aeltester* made grave accusations against Minister Goossen, to which also some Brethren contributed a great deal. However, Ohm Enns, and also the Brethren, were not able to prove the matters alleged, which allegations, to a degree, also were unfounded. As the majority of the Brethren justified the actions of Rev. Goossen the matter finally resolved itself, and was supported in favour of the latter. The observation is also made that the Minister, Gerhard Goossen, since the month of November had been living in Gruenfeld (near Borosenko).

A LETTER TO THE GEMEINDE IN THE MOLOTSCHNA

Of all the letters which were exchanged regarding this matter, (namely, the fateful election of Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908) as Minister in 1868), the letter which sets out the final resolution of this matter is included here. Should the dear Reader wish to obtain more extensive information and background regarding this matter, it is noted that additional material pertaining thereto is to be found in the letter collections for the years 1868 and 1869.

A Letter to the Gemeinde in the Molotschna

“Blumenhof, December, 1868.”

“Chosen Brethren in the Lord, whom I love in the Truth.”

“You are, I assume, all aware that in consequence of our Ministerial election held last winter, I have felt compelled, in my innermost being, to put to myself, and as well, to some of you, the question: Do we have sufficient and real Scriptural Authority, to support the general proposition, without exception, that a Brother who has previously been under the Bann, or has previously been excommunicated, cannot be elected as a Minister.”

“This doubt on my part must also have been a contributing factor to weaken your confidence in me. And although it may have the appearance that by raising this question I wish to justify our matter, namely, the election of my brother (otherwise so dearly loved), I realize that you will believe that I did not have sufficient conviction in this matter.”

“But it is not for the purpose of justifying my actions or to justify this matter that I take up this question. The matter is raised, even less—because we should have a definite—not only inherited from our parents, sound Scriptural foundation in this matter. Rather! Will you also believe me, and in love forgive me, when I state that only too little faith for the Father in Heaven, is mirrored herein. Especially when you consider that;—I strive to have a good conscience, not only before you, but much more so before God—for God proves my heart and holds my life in his hands.”

“Also, Brothers and sisters! I too strongly defended the election during the previous winter mainly because of the following reason: I could not

other than believe that, Brethren who had been present when the earlier actions were taken; would still support them and I suppose, still declare that: The Bann on occasion had been too inconsiderately applied; But which was only now realized and revoked. Although, I myself had not been witness to this, I could not understand the change, and even less so when I think of the Love and Harmony that united us for this action.”

“I now comprehend this matter better than before. At this time we all more or less confess, that we were dealing with a matter which, if it should not in fact have been left completely, should at the least not have been dealt with just before the election, other than by all the Brethren together. I have already confessed this before the Brethren many times and have also acknowledged our blunder. I also feel obligated to ask you, dearly beloved, for forgiveness for myself, and as well, for all those who had a part in this matter. As this matter did not arise out of the pride or factiousness, do not hold it against us in the future. The Love and Patience, that you have until now held for me, and also for the others, who did not share your view on this matter, will be repaid to you by the Lord, not as carelessness, but as Love and Compassion.”

“All those who were already standing weakly in the *Gemeinde* before this matter, and in this matter found grounds to leave our fellowship, and for whom our acknowledgements, and confessions of our misdeeds, will never be sufficient, and who will never be able to forgive us for our shortcomings: those already recognized earlier, as well as the present ones; and notwithstanding (to say with the Apostle) will forever be grumbling; for these, also, may the Lord grant Mercy. I forgive them also, just as the Lord, has forgiven me through Jesus Christ.”

“Now dearly Beloved: We all truly wish to live in accordance with the Lord’s commandments; If in some matter our Fathers have not achieved this goal; Let us believe that they have failed because of human weakness—which only too much, clings also to us,—rather than with premeditation and self-confidence. Even had they done so purposely, we do not have to die for the sins of our fathers if, we follow the Lord’s commandments, and walk in his Righteousness. We would also do better if we could forget what is behind us. Let us have forgiveness to the fullest extent that God is within us. Let us pray to him, that none of us, who call ourselves Brothers and Sisters, by failing in this, will sin before God. So that God will not have to turn away one of his Heirs—One of his Firstborn children who are recorded in heaven; yes, one of his chosen people—and give them over to Satan. Oh, how terrible that would be!”

“Although we find many such sorrowful examples recorded in the New Testament of the Earliest Christian period, we find only one example of a

turning back and reacceptance, namely: that of the Unchaste Corinthians.”

“May the Lord, at all times, save all of us from self-assurance, so that Satan does not come and deceive any of us, and gently rock us to sleep. However, if at any time, we should have to experience such a sorrowful occurrence; that Satan should have contrived to be able to do so. Oh! would only that we others as children of God, would be worthy to throw the first stone, manly and strong, to speak out the curse, over such a child who is lost, in accordance with the Word of God. But then, through our harmonious and united prayers, to beseech the Father, to again tear such a one from the clutches of Satan.”

“Therefore, dearly Beloved! Let us see to it that no one of us neglects the Grace of God.—That no one will become a prostitute or, Godless, like Esau, who sold his Birthright for the sake of nourishment. Consider also that later when Esau wanted to inherit the Blessing, he was turned away, as he found no room for repentance and penitance, notwithstanding that he sought for them with tears. (Hebrews, Chapter 12).”

“Esau here was mourning over the loss of the Blessing voluntarily sold, the figurative Birth Right of the first born. How much more will not the loss of the Heavenly Blessing of being a child of God, in Christ, have to be bewailed for eternity. If, through fervent and earnest prayer, the *Gemeinde* should succeed (like the Apostle Paul with the Galatians), to receive such a lost one back into its womb; and Christ can again win a stature in his soul; how dearly will not such a pardoned sinner, wish to be the lowest of the servants in his Heavenly Father’s house; and, with how little shame and humiliation, will he have to consider himself, when the Lord will take him; although as one who has already wasted his inheritance; and restore him as His own child and to his inheritance, equal with his other children; whom he however does not put in authority over his servants.”

“Notwithstanding, through lengthy Proving and much reflection on the Scriptures, I find in the Word of God that he does not want such a one to be chosen for this purpose. For Timothy was not to allow widows (perhaps to look after the poor), to be elected who were under 60 years; Also he was not to elect those who had become wanton against Christ, and had the judgement that they had breached their first faith. Rather, they are to show evidence of good works. They are to have achieved all good works, not only in the present, but also in the past, (1 Timothy 5).”

“Thus these widows of whom there would be no question, as to whether they had ever been excommunicated from the *Gemeinde*, were not to be elected for any service in the *Gemeinde*, because on them lay the judgement, that they had cast off their first Faith. How little then do we have the

right to elect, as a Minister, a Brother who through his offensive conduct, as mentioned above, so much more has broken his first Faith, to the extent, that he had to be excommunicated from the *Gemeinde*. Would that God might allow that this would in mercy, be revealed to all those who are righteous minded and seek to follow his commandments; as he has allowed also me, unworthy sinner that I am, to find it, after a long search. To him alone be the Honour and Glory!"

"Yes, my Beloved, how unworthy I still feel and find myself to be for such a service. I can hardly write you without the sins of my earlier youth, and my still daily imperfection and weakness, pressing on my heart, so that I must cry out with the poet:"

*"Ich mein, es soll sich legen, doch bleib ich wie ich bin;
Ganz los in Tugendwegen, noch leider, immerhin;
Zwar hat mich die Gnade Gottes, groben Suenden laengst
entriszen;
Und ich habe auch schon nach seinen Rath, zu wandeln mich
befliszen;*

*Dasz veilleicht ein anderer wohl, mich fuer fromm schon halten
soll;
Aber sein genaues Licht, zeigt mir tiefer mein Verderben;
Und wie ich nach meiner Pflicht, soll mir selbst, und allem sterben,
Und in wahrer Heiligkeit, vor ihm leben allezeit.*

*Dies ist auch mein Willen wohl,
Aber ach! Es fehlt vollbringen;
Was ich noch verrichten soll, thu ich oft mit Last und Zwingen;
Seh' ich dann mein Bestes an, so ist's doch nicht rein gethan".*

"However may the God of Peace and Patience give us and you, who have also maintained patience, power to grow strong in accordance with the Riches of his Glory, through the working of his spirit on the Inward Man, so that the Kingdom of Christ will Reign in our hearts, and through Love become rooted and grounded in him. Also that we may comprehend with all Holiness, that which is the breadth and the length, and the depth, and the height; and also to recognize that to love Christ, is much better than to have all knowledge, so that we may be filled with all of God's fullness. Therefore to Him, who can do superabundantly above everything for which, we can ask or comprehend, in accordance with the power that worketh in us; to him be the honour in the *Gemeinde*, which is in Christ Jesus, for all time from Eternity to Eternity. AMEN" ¹⁵

“Dearly Beloved! Pray for me in all your requests; for my solace is that I strive to have a pure conscience, both before God and Man.”

“Finally, all my Brothers and Sisters; receive a heartfelt Greeting from your Brother who loves you dearly.”

“Peter Toews”

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS OF 1869-1872

Aeltester Election in Annenfeld (Crimea), 1869

Jakob Wiebe (1837-1921) in Annenfeld, Crimea, was elected as *Aeltester* in the beginning of the year 1869. Many letters were exchanged with respect to his Ordination, or establishment, as *Aeltester*. He was ordained to his office as *Aeltester* by Rev. Peter Baerg (1818-1901) in Annenfeld on Good Friday in the year 1869. The ordination consisted of an address by Rev. Baerg before the assembly present, which also included a number of Brethren from the Molotschna. There are many letters collected regarding this matter, from the year 1868 and 1869.

Reconciliation, 1869

Through the inducement of the Ministers; Abram Friesen (the Elder),¹⁶ Gerhard Schellenberg¹⁷ (who was elected in the year 1866), Isaac Friesen,¹⁸ and the deacon Peter Wiebe,¹⁹ with one part of the *Gemeinde*, formerly belonging to *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872); to be reunited with us, namely: *Aeltester* Jakob Wiebe (1837-1921), Peter Baerg (1818-1901), Peter Toews (1841-1922), Gerhard Goossen (1836 - 1872), (the latter three Ministers), and the deacon Abraham Loewen (1833-1886), who also represented a portion of the *Gemeinde*; a large gathering of the Brethren, including those from the Crimea and the Molotschna, took place at Borosenko (Blumenhof) on May 6, 1869. At the same time the *Gemeinde* was served with Communion, by *Aeltester* Wiebe, after he had also first baptized three young women. After the Brethren in the Molotschna had first also acknowledged the reconciliation, the same, namely: Baptism and Communion, also occurred there.

Ministerial and Deacon Election, 1869

Ministerial and deacon election was also held on the Molotschna, on May 20, 1869. The votes for deacon were: Abraham Klassen 11,²⁰ Johan L. Dueck 11,²¹ Johann Loewen 9,²² Abraham Hiebert 9,²³ Johan Esau

(Fischau) 5,¹⁸ Franz Kroeker 4,²⁴ Gerhard Kornelsen 2,²⁵ and Abram Friesen, Kleefeld 1.²⁶ On the next occasion the majority of votes fell on Abraham Klassen, for Minister, with 13 votes; and Johan L. Dueck, for deacon with 11 votes.

The Heubodner Gemeinde

It is noteworthy that at the exact time that this reconciliation was taking place at Blumenhof, another part of the *Gemeinde* of *Aeltester* Johan Friesen elected Abraham L. Friesen,²⁷ Heuboden, as *Aeltester*. Abram L. Friesen was then ordained by *Aeltester* Johan Harder (1811-1876). Consequently, *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872) was left with only few members.

Many of the Explanations and letters exchanged, both before and after, pertaining to the reconciliation, from the *Gemeinde* living in the Crimea, the Molotschna, and at Borosenko, are at hand and to be found in the letter collection of 1869.

Discord Regarding Baptism

Hardly had a number of weeks flown by since the reconciliation, when we received a letter from *Ohm* Peter Baerg. He advised us that after the presence there of a number of men, including the *Aeltester* of the Secessionists, Peter Hiebert, of Liebenau, our *Aeltester* Wiebe, and a number of other members wanted to change the baptism, and to have themselves rebaptized, and in fact wished to allow themselves to be dipped under water.

This also occurred on September 21, 1869. First the *Aeltester* was baptized by Cornelius Enns,²⁹ who had been elected for that purpose, and then the other 20 persons were baptized by the *Aeltester*.

Here see the detailed explanations and letters that have been written regarding this matter. Such as the letters from Peter Baerg, the declarations by *Aeltester* Wiebe and Cornelius Enns. There were also explanations and letters from our side, and also a long explanation from *Aeltester* Wiebe to the persons he had baptized.

Dear Reader: To put all this material together in an orderly manner would alone make up a book. It may also occur that, sooner or later, (if it is the Lord's Will), a collection of all noteworthy writings pertaining to this matter can be published.

Aeltester Election at Borosenko, 1870

Notwithstanding the many obstacles and the repeated dissension which had as their consequences the latter actions such as: the Reconciliation, the Ministerial election on the Molotschna, and particularly the *Aeltester* (Wiebe's) step of Baptism (submersion); among these could also be included and mentioned the differences in viewpoints, regarding 1 Corinthians Chapter 11, and respecting Footwashing while greeting and receiving visiting Brothers and Sisters from distant places. After once more, many letters had been written, from all parts of the *Gemeinde*, such as the Crimea, the Molotschna, and Borosenko another year had gone by before the *Gemeinde* again had united itself for the election of an *Aeltester*. This election was held on September 10, 1870, in Rosenfeld (Borosenko); The votes were recorded as follows: Peter Toews 65; Gerhard Schellenberg 8; Abraham Klassen 2; and Gerhard Goossen 2.

In addition to other letters the reader may wish to note my letter "An Admonition for Intercession" which I, unworthy one, wrote as a consequence of this calling in such a fateful time.

I was ordained by my beloved fellow servants on behalf of the whole *Gemeinde* on October 26, 1870. Particularly also by Rev. Peter Baerg, from the Crimea, who was in attendance and who had been summoned for this purpose. I took up this office of responsibility in my great weakness, with fear and trembling. My fellow Ministerial now consisted of: Abram Friesen, (the Elder), Gerhard Schellenberg, Gerhard Goossen, Peter Baerg, Abraham Klassen, who were all Ministers; and Peter Wiebe, Abraham Loewen, and Johan L. Dueck, as deacons.

Rev. Isaac Friesen removed from his office.²⁸

After many Brethren meetings, the Minister Isaac Friesen,²⁹ was removed from his office, in Blumenhof, on the 25th of April, 1870. The reason for this, in part, was carelessness in allowing his cattle to stray

unherded, and other similar incidents, so that confidence in him had diminished, and he could no longer be supported.

Johan Isaac ³⁰ and the Russian Idol:

A noteworthy episode which also deserves a brief mention is that of Johan Isaac, of Gruenfeld, regarding the picture on the graveyard of the Russians. Already in February, of 1868, the Russians had laid a complaint which in fact was false, that he had broken the picture, and had also said of the same that it was nothing more than ordinary wood and that it was not a God or Deity. Following this the affair dragged out until he was charged, to appear before the Judge in Ekatherinoslaw, for the 29th of December, 1869. Represented on behalf of the *Gemeinde* with a presentation we appeared there on the appointed day and he was given one month's arrest as his punishment. However this penalty was too light for his enemies, (which included the Russian Popes), who then laid a complaint in the matter in the Criminal court in Odessa. Again accompanied by a presentation on behalf of the *Gemeinde*, and accompanied by brother Gerhard Goossen, Isaac left Nikopol by Mail Stage on March 26, for Odessa, in order to appear before the said Court by which he had been subpoenaed on March 30. However the matter here was also adjudicated in the same manner as in Ekatherinoslaw. Further, at the request of Johan Isaac in Ekatharinoslaw, on June 17, he was able to postpone to October, his period of confinement under arrest in Ekatherinoslaw.

Removal from Office of Gerhard Schellenberg in 1870. ²⁸

After many Brethren meetings, the Minister Gerhard Schellenberg was removed from his office, on August 29, 1870, through a majority of votes. Grounds: Through a matter, already developing in the month of June, on account of the overstepping of a boundary while harvesting hay; and subsequently the inadequate acknowledgement. Through the frequent dealing with the matter by the *Gemeinde*, the confidence of the Brethren fell more and more.

Ministerial Election in 1872:

After various difficult labours and obstacles,* and severe losses, a deacon and Ministerial election was held in Rosenfeld (Borosenko) on January 23, 1872. The vote for deacon was in favour of Peter Kroeker (1840-1915)³¹ with 23 votes; The other votes were as follows: Jakob Barkman 16,⁵⁵ Peter Toews 7,³² Peter L. Dueck 7,³³ David Loewen 4,³⁴ Cornelius P. Goossen 4,³⁵ John Harms 4,¹⁸ Klaas Wiebe 3,³⁶ John Isaac 3,³⁰ Abram Reimer 2,³⁷ Heinrich Reimer Jr. 2,³⁸ Heinrich Wiebe 1,³⁹ John Hiebert 1,⁴⁰ John Esau 1,¹⁸ Franz Kroeker 1,²⁴ John P. Goossen 1,⁴¹ Gerhard Siemens Jr. 1;⁴² Total votes 81. The Votes for Minister were as follows: Abraham Loewen 38, Peter Kroeker 36, and Peter Wiebe 5. Loewen was ordained to his Ministry before the *Gemeinde* on Sunday, February 6.

*Among other labours and obstacles should be mentioned the differences regarding the marriage of the second sister. The matter consumed much time.

Rev. Abram Friesen

In consequence of an inquiry at the home of *Ohm* Abraham Friesen,⁴³ in Rosenfeld, (because of a failure to give a good example to children) he together with his wife became unfavourably disposed towards us, and renounced the *Gemeinde* on the 18th and 25th of May, 1872.

The Gemeinde of Aeltester Johan Friesen.

After they had prevailed upon us for a lengthy period of time, the members belonging to Johan Friesen (1808-1872), (10 families), were received into our *Gemeinde* in November and December, of 1871.

After the wife of *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872) had died, he had married a widow from the Orloff *Gemeinde*,⁴⁴ without her having come over to our *Gemeinde*. Also they had allowed the marriage ceremony to be performed by his brother, Peter Friesen, who had previously left our *Gemeinde*, and had later been elected as a Minister in the Grosze *Gemeinde*.⁴⁵ All of which made the already only few members, of his *Gemeinde* lose all confidence in him.

Later during his lengthy illness from dropsy *Aeltester* Friesen himself, in part, seemed to comprehend his fall, also from the earlier times. He had also seemed to gain confidence in us. He did not come to the point where he also joined our *Gemeinde*, although he declared himself in favour of so doing, and had also delivered over to us the documents and papers of the *Gemeinde** which had been preserved up until this time. This occurred on the 22nd day of February, 1872, after we had held Worship Service at his place, because he had been sick for a prolonged period. He died in Rosenfeld, on May 21, 1872. He had suffered from dropsy.

* I later gave the aforesaid writings⁴⁶ to Johan K. Friesen, a Minister of the Kleine Gemeinde here in Manitoba. He is a son of the referenced *Aeltester* Johan Friesen.

Construction of a House of Worship

As so many in the *Gemeinde* were now living near to each other, and as the *Gemeinde* was always getting larger, we were soon in need of more room in order that we could assemble for Worship Service. Even the largest residences no longer had sufficient room. Therefore the *Gemeinde* reached a decision to build a place of assembly. The same was constructed by way of the voluntary contributions of the Brethren (in Blumenhof, Borosenko).⁴⁷

THE HEUBODNER MENNONITE KLEINE GEMEINDE

Editors note: *In order to complete the record of the Ministerial of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in Russia an account of the Aeltester, Ministerial, and Deacon elections of the Heubodner Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde is inserted here. These records are taken from the **Wahlen-liste**⁴⁸ of Rev. Peter Friesen a Minister of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.*

Aeltester Election 1868

In the spring of the year of our Lord 1868 Aeltester Johann Friesen; together with Ministers Peter Friesen⁴⁹ and Abraham Friesen⁵⁰; and deacons Klaas Friesen⁵¹ and Jakob Friesen⁵²; resigned their association * with the Gemeinde because of differing viewpoints; And as a good number of Brethren were united with us, we could do not less than to receive them with us; Also an Aeltester Election was held. The votes were as follows:

Peter Friesen, Tiege	5 votes
Abraham L. Friesen, Heuboden	21 votes

This election was completed by 26 Brethren.

On the 4th of May, 1869, Aeltester Johann Harder of Blumstein ordained Abraham L. Friesen for service as our newly elected Aeltester.

* **Editors note:** *They resigned their association with the "Friesens" Gemeinde which since 1866 had been under the leadership of Aeltester Johann Friesen (1808-1872). The rest of the "Friesens" Gemeinde was reunited with the Blumenhof Gemeinde in 1869. Aeltester Johann Friesen continued as a separate Gemeinde until 1871 when his remaining ten families were reaccepted into the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.*

Ministerial Elections, 1869

On August 24, 1869, a Ministerial Election was held in order to elect a Minister. First a deacon was elected. The names are as follows:

Cornelius Friesen, Heuboden	19 votes
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Abraham Reimer, Heuboden 1 vote
 David Klassen, Heuboden 4 votes
 Jakob Kroeker, Heuboden 3 votes
 Gerhard Rempel, Rosenfeld 1 vote
 Peter Heidebrecht, Blumenhof 1 vote

On the same date Ministerial Election was held from among the three deacons, namely: Klaas Friesen, Rosenfeld, Jakob Friesen and Cornelius Friesen, Heuboden. The votes for Minister were as follows:

Klaas Friesen 1 vote
 Jakob Friesen 1 vote
 Cornelius Friesen, Heuboden 27 votes. Elected.

This election was completed by 29 Brethren.

Deacon Election, 1873

Deacon election was held on April 10, 1873. The votes were as follows:

Jakob Klassen, Steinbach 12 votes
 Cornelius Eidse, Neuanlage 3 votes
 Jakob Kroeker, Heuboden 17 votes
 David Klassen, Heuboden 1 vote

This election was carried out by 37 Brethren.

In 1874 Jakob Kroeker joined the group which was going to Canada and also became a member of the Gruenfelder (Blumenhof) Gemeinde. Later (1882) he rejoined our *Gemeinde* with many Brothers and Sisters.

Editors note: *The majority of Heuboden Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde under Aeltester Abraham L. Friesen settled in the area which became known as Jansen, Nebraska. Another part of this Gemeinde led by delegate, David Klassen (1813-1900), emigrated to Manitoba, where many of them settled in the Scratching River settlement near Morris, Manitoba.*

NON-RESISTANCE AND THE IMPOSITION OF WORLDLY OFFICES

Challenges to the Imposition of Offices of Authority: ⁵³

Already in the year 1871 the Minister of our *Gemeinde* on the Molotschna, Abraham Klassen, was imposed upon to give written undertakings, that he would serve as a member of a Jury; however, he had already, on many occasions, unequivocally refused this demand, verbally, as well as in writing. He was then threatened with an enormous pecuniary punishment. However in the long run the matter did not turn out all that badly for him. A letter which he wrote to Peter Schmidt, Honourary Justice of the Peace, in 1871, belongs to this history.

In 1872, we, at Borosenko (Blumenhof) were summoned to take steps to establish the organization of a Wollost District. We submitted a petition (this petition also belongs to this history) to the Governor in this regard, requesting that we would only be obligated to serve this office to the extent allowed by our Faith, and that this would be only in our *Gemeinde* alone, and not together with other confessions. Through the discussion on the vote regarding this matter held in the House of Assembly in Blumenhof, on November 15 and 16, 1872, we came to a definitive Declaration with respect to our opposition regarding the holding of positions of authority. This was in contrast to the position of the other Mennonites who had become indifferent in the matter of the swearing of Oaths. The latter also wanted to be involved in the election of the Judge which would also be required under the new law. We explained that this was contrary to the teachings of Christ.⁵⁴ The appearance of the Mediator—Judge brought the dispute of Words to a prompt end, as he decided the matter in our favour; consequently we were not compelled to take part in the election of Judge, and because of this decision the others were brought to shame, because they had believed that we would be compelled to vote. The following declaration is essential to this incident.

Declaration

“We, the undersigned, commissioned by our *Gemeinde*; and pursuant to the letter summoning us to assemble together in Blumenhof, before the District Peace-Mediator, in order to deliberate with respect to the establishment of a *Wollost Gebiets Amt* (District Government) among us; hereby give our Declaration: That we are and wish to remain true to God and the Czar. We wish to render unto the Czar all due honour, and to submit ourselves to all Human Authorities, including also the organization of a *Gebiets Amtes*, in so far as such matters as: roads, dams, bridges, boundaries, tax levies, duties, and dues, etc. are concerned; in so far, we can, and will dispose ourselves to the required election.”

“However, in as far as it does affect our conscience, and conflict with our Confession of Faith—which we have once made on our knees before God—In this we are obligated to give our undivided loyalty to God; and consequently we can only serve in an office among our own Mennonite Brotherhood, and only with respect to the above matters; we cannot serve an office where an individual, as a Judge, will be especially obligated to make decisions involving the use of force, arrest, and other similar decisions, and through which our Non-resistance would be compromised.”

“We, the undersigned, jointly subscribe to the foregoing, and also issue the attached plea: That we wish to allow our religious considerations to take priority.”

This declaration was signed by all the *Gemeinde* members, (also by those members of the Heubodner *Gemeinde* who were present), called together for this vote; the effect of the Declaration, and also our verbal presentations, was that at least for our part, the question of the organization of a *Wollost* District was put to rest.

The Threat of Universal Military Service: 1872

It had already been known for some time that a Universal Military Draft was to be implemented in Russia and also that the Mennonites in the future would not be able to remain unaffected by this law. Already in the winter of 1872, a Delegation from the Molotschna had been in St. Petersburg in this regard. We, (the Blümenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde) together with the Heubodner Gemeinde wrote a petition to Senator Hahn (Formerly the Fuersorger of the German Colonists in Russia) in Petersburg. We queried to whether he would, again, be able to make representations for us as he had in the year 1843. However, we did not receive an answer in time because, as he later told us himself, he had been out of the country. As many delegates of the different Mennonite Gemeinde were being sent to Petersburg in September of 1872, we namely: Rev. Abraham Klassen and I, and *Aeltester* Abram L. Friesen, the *Aeltester* of the Heubodner Gemeinde, also travelled to Petersburg. Our purpose was to bring to the attention of the Czar, even if only in writing, our concern and petition prior to the coming into effect of the new Military draft. The delegates (or Deputies) of the other *Gemeinde* together with us in the residence were: Bernard Peters, Peter Goertz, and Franz Isaac, from the Molotschna; two with the identical name Hofer from the Bruderhof near Orchow; Diedrich and David Hamm, from the Volga; and Tobias Unruh and Jakob Stuky, from Volhania.

During our 13 day stay in the residence we spoke with his Excellency, Senator von Hahn, who advised us that His Majesty, the Czar, already had sufficient information about our situation, and that we could expect to accomplish nothing by leaving a Petition, except that perhaps we might fall into disagreeable circumstances through the police. He closed the audience with the words: "Everyone must look after his own conscience".

On September 28, 1872, we spoke to the Baron Magendorf, General-Adjutant of his Majesty, the Czar, and were advised to speak to Count Wolujef. The latter had given the Molotschna and Volga delegations the following words—"My advice is simple. Remain completely calm about this matter and wait it out. The new military law has not yet been drafted and therefore, I refrain from making a definitive statement in that regard until it is completed. All the laws given by a Government are, to a greater or lessor degree, determined by the state of affairs at the time they are enacted. Only the laws which come from God are determinate and unchangeable. Also do not listen to any of the rumours that come into circulation regarding this matter, and also do not direct yourself to any other Advocate, as His Majesty, the Czar, is the Crowned Advocate of his loyal

subjects. Definitely, put your trust in His Majesty, the Czar, and his Ministers," etc. etc.

After we had been advised that the Czar might take up quarters at the Zarskoe Celo, some 30 miles away from our residence, when he returned from the south coast, we firstly drove there as well. But, as we did not find him there, and as it would take too long to wait for him, we made our way homewards. We arrived at home on October 5, 1872.

On September 10, 1872, we had left home travelling from Ekatherinoslaw to Krementschug by steam ship. From Krementschug we travelled to Petersburg by way of Poltowa, Karkow, Kursk, Twer, Moskau, Orel, and Tula. We took the same route on our return journey with the exception that, on account of the fall weather which was setting in, we travelled from Krementschug to Ekatherinoslaw by Post instead of by water. From Ekatherinoslaw, we were taken home by several Brethren who were waiting there for us.

We were hardly home from St. Petersburg, when we were notified from the Molotschna, that the Czar was still in residence on the South Coast in the Crimea, and that a delegation from the Molotschna was leaving for there. *Aeltester* Abram L. Friesen of Heuboden, and myself, then reached agreement to go there as well. We left Nikopol by Post on October 13, 1872, by way of Simperopal to Jalta. On account of a shortage of Post horses, we had a long drawn out journey through the mountains (Tschadurdugh) between Simperopal and Jalta. However, we would still have arrived in plenty of time to meet the Czar, as he was still in residence at Lohwadia, which was four *werst* from Jalta. But now the General Governor was sick, and we were presented to him and not the Czar.

We were told by the General Governor von Kotzebu, that we could not be granted an audience with the Czar as he was expecting to leave shortly. He stated further that he knew our situation, but that because of his illness, he would not be able to be of much help to us on this occasion. He also stated that it was impossible that we would be completely unaffected by the Military Draft, and that we would get off completely free. We would have to accept at least a less severe form of service. Further, that he could not determine what degree of Military Service this would involve, as this was a decision that only the Czar could make. "But" he said, "This I can guarantee you that you can rely on me as your representative, believe me" (October 21, 1872).

After this the other delegates presented a writing of thanks and a petition to the Governor. The other delegates were: Bernhard Peters and Peter Goertz, from the Molotschna; Jakob Friesen, from Berjansk; Jakob and

Gerhard Wiebe from Bergthal, Mariapol; Gerhard Dahl and David Epp from Chortitz; and Jakob Wiebe, from Karasan (Crimea).

In order that the reader may appreciate approximately how the *Gemeinde* felt about the Universal Military Draft which was looming ominously, I include here the petition which briefly sets out the grounds of belief of our delegates. This petition however was not actually presented. This Petition also was not written with the intention that it was on behalf of all Mennonites in general, but rather that it was only on behalf of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, as the others were not in agreement with the philosophy expressed in the Petition.

PETITION

“All Merciful Czar and Lord:”

“The undersigned Delegates of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde situated in the Government Districts of Ekatherinoslaw, Gerson, and Taurien, your loyal subjects, venture to leave at the feet of your Majesty, the Czar, our humble wishes and petition.”

“As your children we have trust in your paternal heart, your Majesty, which has given us the courage and determination to humbly present this petition. Uppermost are the wise Fundamental Laws of the Government, so that we have never had to fear that we would have to compromise our conscience. We pray that in the future, we will also be permitted to live out our beliefs undisturbed in this country, which has become our beloved Fatherland; as also our forefathers have already done for over half a century; they came under the protection of your Majesty’s most esteemed predecessors, just as we have had the blessing of living under the Scepter of your Majesty’s most Gracious Government.”

“We cannot adequately express our due thanks, for the generous Grace that has been bestowed on us, particularly when we consider that your Majesty also has in mind our conscience in the future. Nevertheless, at the present time a great fear has seriously troubled us, as to whether our conscience will also be attacked by the new law. Next only to God, we take our refuge in the paternal heart of the Czar, regarding our concerns in this matter, and humbly pray for grace!”

“For Grace! To have consideration for the conscience of a small Non-resistant Flock, in which every single member has solemnly promised his God and Saviour to dedicate every limb as a weapon of Righteousness. Romans 6:13. Not only that we are not to brandish the sword but also that the tongue, as a part of our body, will not take part in any expression of a Judgement of punishment. And also that we are not to bring before the authorities, whom we are to honour, fear, and obey, any charge or legal process. 1 Peter 2:13-25, and Romans 13, and 1 Corinthians 6.”

“However should we do such deeds, from that moment on, we would no longer be Mennonites, and as those who have broken a Holy Covenant, would rightly be deserving, if the disfavour and contempt of your Majesty would fall upon them. It is for us a priceless and Holy conviction to follow in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ and in the faith of our fathers,

founded on the Word of God, 1 Peter 2:21 and 23. To preserve this faith, we would gladly submit to all the restrictions, special conditions, and increased tribute money, which your Majesty would deem necessary, and as well to be the loyal subjects, and continue to be the loyal subjects, of the Czar, if only our Faith and our belief in Nonresistance might remain protected and preserved.”

“May the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords grant your Majesty much grace, peace, well-being and blessing.”

“We hope that, it will not be the wish of your Majesty, to want to overrule the conscience of a small, non-resistant—but loyal to your Majesty—and truly submitted *Gemeinde*; God and the Czar are still on the throne. Notwithstanding our deepest concern, this thought gives us heart, and with such a trust in God (without whom not even a sparrow can fall to the earth) we put ourselves at the mercy of the fatherly heart of your Majesty, whom we also constantly bring before God in our prayers in all our Gatherings; and who surely can not be indifferent, nor wish to impose upon the peaceful ones in the land, a restriction of their freedom of Conscience.”

“In the name of the *Gemeinde*, the hereunder subscribed, humbly implore your Gracious Majesty, to save us from all Civil and Military Service, and to strive for an arrangement, so that our freedom of faith and Conscience will continue in the future to be protected and preserved without disruption.”

“This we beseech you. And in the hope of a gracious decision we continue foremost as your most humble and loyal subjects.” “Signed” by the duly authorized representatives of the Mennonite *Kleine Gemeinde*.

NOTEWORTHY EVENTS AND EMIGRATION, 1872-1874

Death of Gerhard Goossen

On a Friday, September 1, 1872, the beloved fellow servant Gerhard Goossen died in Gruenfeld. He died after a very severe three week sickness at the age of 36 years.

Ministerial Election 1873

Saturday, January 20, 1873, a ministerial election was held in Blumenhof, in Borosenko. Firstly, two deacons were elected, and then out of the four deacons, two ministers were elected. The votes for deacon were recorded as follows:

Jacob Barkman , Friedensfeld ⁵⁵	35
Heinrich Wiebe , Rosenfeld ³⁹	19
Peter Toews, Rosenfeld ³² , ⁵⁶	18
David Loewen, Hochfeld ³⁴ , ⁵⁷	17
Johan Harms, Heuboden ¹⁸ , ⁵⁸	14
Heinrich Reimer, Jr., Blumenhof ³⁸ , ⁵⁹	13
Franz M. Kroeker, Steinbach ²⁴	12
Abraham R. Reimer, Blumenhof ³⁷ , ⁶⁰	10
Peter L. Dueck, Blumenhof ³³	8
Johan Loewen, Blumenhof ²² , ⁶¹	8
Cornelius P. Goossen, Annafeld ³⁵ , ⁶²	7
Peter R. Reimer, Steinbach ⁶³	6
Johan Esau, Rosenfeld ⁶⁵	5
Johan P. Isaac, Gruenfeld ⁶⁴ , ³⁰	3
Abraham M. Friesen, Blumenhof ²⁶ , ⁶⁶	3
Klaas Wiebe, Heuboden ⁶⁷ , ³⁶	3
Martin Warkentin, Heuboden ⁶⁸	2
Johan Goossen, ⁴¹ , ⁶⁹ D. Unger, ⁷⁰ A. Dueck ⁷¹ Franz Froese, ⁷² and K. Reimer ⁷³ each received one vote.	

Jakob Barkman and Heinrich Wiebe were elected as deacons. The votes for minister fell on Peter Kroeker—76 and Jakob Barkman—62. Both of these were ordained for service in the Worship House in Blumenhof, on February 14, 1873.

Ministerial of the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in 1873

The ministerial in the service of the *Gemeinde* (of course not including the ministerial of the Heubodner Gemeinde) now consisted of the following: In the Borosenko Congregation as Ministers: Abraham Loewen, Peter Kroeker, and Jakob Barkman; and as deacons: Henry and Peter Wiebe. In the Molotschna as Ministers: Abram Klassen and Johan L. Dueck; and in the Crimea as Minister: Peter Baerg. This is as of 1873.

Delegation to America

Notwithstanding the many journeys, which were made to St. Petersburg on behalf of the various *Gemeinde*, to further the cause of Freedom from Military Service, we were never granted an audience with the Czar. In addition, we were always given the information that we would not be given complete freedom from Military Service, and that we would have to accept some form of service in the Army Medical Service. Consequently, after a time, a concern for a new Homeland developed. We had already been given friendly invitations to come to America, by the North American Mennonites. Of these one should mention John F. Funk, Elkhart, Indiana, from whom we had already since 1872, ordered many books, particularly many **Martyrs Mirrors**. We also have to give him our thanks for his helpful service with advice and deeds, to our delegates, as for a time, one could say, he was their leader and interpreter on their journey. We had also received written invitations from the English government, as well as friendly personal invitations through the English—American envoy William Hespeller.

Consequently, our *Gemeinde* (February 4, 1873) reached a decision to send a delegate to America in order to search for a new Homeland, where we would have the privilege of Freedom of Faith. Cornelius Toews was chosen to be our delegate for this purpose with 62 votes. Provided with a fund of some 1,300 Rubel voluntarily contributed by the Brethren; and amidst prayers and tears, and commended to the goodness of God; the brother Cornelius Toews left Gruenfeld for America on April 14, 1873. Together with the delegate for the Heubodner Gemeinde, David Klassen,⁷⁴ and the two Hutterites, Cornelius Toews on April 15, 1873, embarked on the steamship Nacmorka, at Nikopol. He was accompanied by a number of Brethren up to Odessa. From here they travelled through Austria by rail to Hamburg. From here they took the steamship Celisia to

New York, where together with many other Delegates, they were received by William Hespeller, and taken to Canada and the Province of Manitoba.

It was on a Tuesday, August 7, 1873, that Toews and Klassen returned. They brought us the favourable news that, accompanied by Mr. Hespeller, they had looked over the land in the Province of Manitoba at the expense of the English Government. They also brought the news that the English government had reserved eight townships of land near the City of Winnipeg (or Fort Garry) for the Russian Mennonites. Of this land every family and every person over 21 years of age was to receive 160 acres as a gift. And what was more, and the most important, was that in Ottawa (the capital of the English Government) they had received written confirmation that in Manitoba we would have complete Freedom of Faith, and consequently we were also to have complete freedom from any form of Military Service. This in fact existed according to law in Canada.⁷⁵ In addition the Government had also concerned itself to the extent that they saw to it that the passage over the ocean would be relatively inexpensive. All this can be reviewed in the aforesaid written guarantee, which the Delegates had received from the Minister of Agriculture. The English Government also reimbursed us for the Delegates' portion of the travelling expense.

Proposal for Union

Pursuant to the many attempts of the Heubodner Gemeinde to unite with us and to amalgamate as one *Gemeinde*, a Conference was held in Blumenhof on September 20, 1873. All the Ministerial of the *Gemeinde* were in attendance, including the *Gemeinde* in the Crimea, and from the Molotschna, as well as the Heubodner Gemeinde. Many things were discussed regarding the differences between us with respect to prayer and edification. However the result still remains for the future.

Preparation for Emigration

Preparation for the emigration was started already in 1873, after our delegates returned with such favourable information, particularly with respect to our Freedom of Conscience. The preparations were started immediately because it took much time and trouble to obtain the Emigration Passes, as it had to be made known for a certain period ahead of time, in order that it could be determined if there were any outstanding claims

against us. And so it happened that a certain Jakob Braun and an Abraham Thiessen, who had at one time been members of our *Gemeinde*, but had left the *Gemeinde* because, (to put it briefly) they wished to walk a wider path, now made completely unfounded claims on the *Gemeinde*.

Braun put forward the claim that with the advice of his friends he had sold his farm very disadvantageously, and that he subsequently had waited in vain for the fulfilling of their promise to buy land for him. Thiessen on the other hand, wanted to be paid for the damage that he claimed to have suffered during the time that he was under the Bann. Braun entered a claim for 2,000 Rubel and Thiessen for 1,000 Rubel. But the Lord for this time made their onslaught to naught.

Later during the presence of the General-Adjutant, Lord von Todtleben, in Ekatherinoslaw, in April of 1874, he issued a decree banning Abraham Thiessen from the Molotschna Colony and as well from the whole of the Southern Russia. By virtue of this action the claims of Thiessen, as well as of Braun, were as good as dismissed.

The gathering of a fund (percentage) for the purpose of transportation was started already in 1873. By the time of the departure of the first group of our *Gemeinde*, the Brethren had already donated the sum of 1,182 Rubel 21 kopeken, with the result that the *Gemeinde* had the prospect that it would be able to transport its poor members as well.

Emigration of the Gemeinde to America, 1874

But before it actually came to leaving on the journey, and before the Brethren were able to obtain their Passes, all the Mennonite *Aeltesters* and Ministers were summoned to appear before General-Adjutant Lord von Todtleben, who had been sent by his Majesty. Saturday, on April 20, 1874, we were in Halbstadt before the General where he confided to us how his Majesty had personally sent him directly to the Mennonites, in order to persuade us not to emigrate. He was also to tell us, how his Majesty had considered our Faith, and how his heart was sorrowed that the Mennonites wanted to emigrate. Also that the Mennonites were to be given more consideration. The final draft of the Military Law was to be more favourable to the Mennonites; And that the Mennonites would not have to serve under the War Ministry but rather elsewhere. This was to include forestry work, fire fighting in the cities, working in technical establishments of manufacturing, and civilian medical work and service in hospitals. Therefore we

were not to emigrate. This was repeated to us by the General-Adjutant with many solemn words.

On Thursday, April 25, 1874, we were before the General for the second time in Chortitz, where he again made the same presentation to us.

On Monday, April 29th, I together with a number of Brethren who still had not sold their farms,⁷⁶ together with the Oberschulz, were summoned to appear before the General in Ekatharinoslaw. Here he advised us for the third time that it was to our advantage to stay in Russia, and that America would not be able to accommodate and protect our freedom of Faith. Finally I besought him, that those people that had already sold their property would receive their passes, as some of them would soon be without a place of residence, and also still had such a long journey ahead of them. I also requested of him that he give to his Majesty our letter of thanksgiving and petition (already given to the General in Chortitz on April 25). This he also promised to do.

LETTER OF THANKSGIVING AND PETITION

“Your highest Excellency, General-Adjutant Lord von Todtleben:”

“The Mennonites of the Kleinen Gemeinde, of the Heubodner, and Gruenfelder (Blumenhof) Church Districts of the Nikolaithaler Wollostbezirk, in the Ekatherinoslawschen Government District, express their thankfulness and petition.”

“Through the representation of your highest Excellency, we recognize the great goodwill and grace of his Majesty, our beloved Czar; and that it has never been the will of his Majesty, and still is not his wish, to rule against the conscience of a Non-resistant Gemeinde, nor to want to enact laws on account of which they would be in conflict with their faith.”

“It is our priceless and Holy duty to preserve and cling to the Faith of our fathers, which is grounded in the Word of God, by walking in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus Christ; and as for us, every requirement, even if only indirect, of Military or Civil Service, encroaches upon the deepest sense of our Confession of Faith, and makes us transgressors of our Covenant with God. Therefore, your highest Excellency, we cannot recognize that we are in error; notwithstanding that we have many important privileges and freedoms; and that notwithstanding our common Confession of Faith, many Mennonites do not find it objectionable to serve in a public office; which however, is a Sin and Crime against our people. Through the organization of the Wollost, and much more so, through the enactment of the new military laws, we find ourselves compelled (although not without great regrets) to take the Pilgrims Staff; this is the only way agreeable with our conscience, and also (thanks to his Majesty), is permitted by law. As we relied on the Regulations of June 4-6, 1871, which had received the highest confirmation, we have divested ourselves of the greatest portion of our homes and properties and made ourselves ready to travel in accordance with our planned emigration to America.”

“Filled with feelings of thankfulness and love for Russia and particularly towards our beloved Monarch and Czar, his highest Excellency, we submit our humble petition:

—To carry out the gracious provision that those who are already homeless, as well as those Mennonites who intend to emigrate in the future, will be granted their Emigration Passes.

—That his highest Excellency will sympathize with our present situation

of being without a country, and after consideration, will at the earliest opportunity, graciously grant permission for our people to leave.”

“We are not leaving with ingratitude; but rather, we take leave of Russia with heart rending tears and thankfulness, so that even our distant generations will remain filled with feelings of thankfulness for Russia and continue to pray to the King of Kings, for its Monarch; that the Ruler of Destiny will keep him worthy to be the Ruler of a land and a people whose borders are peaceful. We shall also pray that the Monarch himself, will finally come to the higher freedom which is prepared for us through the blood of our Lord Jesus.”

“May your highest Excellency, be good enough on behalf of the delegates of the *Gemeinde* we represent, to bring our thankfulness before his Majesty.”

Signed: “*Peter Toews*”, *Aeltester*
“*Abram L. Friesen*”, *Aeltester*
“*Peter Friesen*”, *Minister*
“*Abraham Loewen*”, *Minister*
“*Jakob Barkman*”, *Minister*
“*Peter Kroeker*”, *Minister*
“*Cornelius Friesen*”, *Minister* 77

Presented in Chortitz on April 25, 1874

FOOTNOTES TO ANHANG NO. ONE

1a. See verse 6, Song No. 450, *Altes Gesangbuch*.

1. Probably the son of Isaac Loewen (1787-1873). Dr. Solomon Loewen, *The Descendants of Isaac Loewen*, (Meade, Kansas: Peter E. Loewen, 1961), Peter Loewen Section. See also *Plett Picture Book*, *op.cit.*, pages 8-11 for brief biographies of the Loewen family. See Mark 6:18 and Leviticus 18:16.

2. The date of founding of the Borosenko Colony is incorrectly given as 1863 in the *Plett Picture Book*, *op.cit.*, page 12. The correct year of founding is 1865. This date also corresponds with the date given in J. J. Hildebrand, *Zeittafel* (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Self-published, 1945), page 222, who also gives the date of founding of Borosenko as 1865.

3. e.g. Friedensfeld, Gruenfeld, Hochfeld, and Neuanlage.

4. Incorrectly spelt as Annafeld in the *Plett Picture Book*, *op.cit.*, pages 9, 12, and 19.

5. Fischau, Molotschna.

6. He was the father of Rev. Johan T. Enns (1850-1917), deacon Jakob Enns (1856-1942), and teacher Heinrich Enns (1858-1934), who lived in the Scratching River settlement, near Morris. A daughter Sara T. Enns (1849-1872) was married to Rev. Cornelius L. Plett.

7. Rev. Peter Baerg (1818-1901) appears to have been a very influential Minister in the Kleine Gemeinde and was the leading minister of the Crimean Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in the 1870's. In 1874 he moved from Annenfeld, in the Crimea to America, where he settled in the village of Gruenfeld, in the Mennonite East Reserve. After the 1881 schism, Peter Baerg was the senior and leading minister of the East Reserve Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. Later, Rev. Peter R. Reimer (1845-1915) served as leader of this *Gemeinde* until the election of *Aeltester* Abram L. Dueck in 1896. Rev. Baerg later moved to the village of Blumenort where he resided until his death in 1901.

8. The other half of the *Gemeinde* which remained under *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872) could perhaps be referred to as the "Friesen" *Gemeinde* as its complete *Lehrdienst* or Ministerial at the time consisted of members of the Friesen family.

9. *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872) was the son of Margaretha Friesen (*Von-Reisen*) and Johan Friesen. See Peter Isaac, *op.cit.*, page 64. For a

listing of the descendants of *Aeltester* Friesen see, Frank K. Wiebe, Chairman. **The Family Book of David and Agannetha Klassen 1813-1900** (Rosenort, Manitoba: Self-published, 1974), 21-77.

10. Gerhard Goossen (1836-1864) was the son of school teacher Gerhard Goossen (1811-1854) and Minna Plett (1815-1864) of the village of Blumstein. For a listing of their descendants see John R. Goossen, **Gerhard Goossen Family Book** (Rosenort, Manitoba: PrairieView Press, 1980), 187 pages.

11. The son of Isaac Loewen (1787-1873). For a listing of his descendants see Dr. Solomon Loewen, **The Descendants of Isaac Loewen** (Meade, Kansas: Peter E. Loewen, 1961).

12. For a listing of his descendants see, Joel A. Wiebe, et.al. **The Groening/Wiebe Family 1768-1974** (Hillsboro, Kansas: Self-published, 1974), pages 52-63. See also David V. Wiebe, **Grace Meadow The Story of Gnadenu** (Hillsboro, Kansas: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1967), 96 pages.

13. The brother to *Aeltester* Peter Toews, For a listing of his descendants see, Mr. Cornelius L. Toews, and Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, **Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908)** (Steinbach, Manitoba: Self-published, 1973), 88 pages. See also *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **The Cornelius Toews (1737-1800) Genealogy**, as continued by Cornelius L. Toews, (Rosenort, Manitoba: Victor Goossen, 1980), 4 pages. See also **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, page 8.

14. The son of Gerhard Goossen (1811 - 1854). See John R. Goossen, **op.cit.**. See also **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, page 8.

15. Toews here quotes almost verbatim from Ephesians 5:16-21. It appears that at least in inter *Gemeinde* correspondence such quotes are frequently not referenced as apparently both the writer and readers had sufficient biblical knowledge to readily identify the same. In some instances this writer has been able to insert the reference in brackets in the text.

16. He was a brother to the *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872). (See John W. Dueck, History and Events, Unpublished manuscript, page 375). According to the Johan P. Friesen (1847-1920) **Genealogy Register**, Unpublished Manuscript, from the John E. Friesen Collection. (courtesy of Rev. Jac P. Friesen/Roy Loewen.), this Rev. Abram Friesen (1807-1891), married Helena Siemens (1812-1888) on August 19, 1830. They were the parents of Abraham S. Friesen (1848-1916), See Abe Warkentin, **op.cit.**, pages 82-84; and Elisabeth Friesen, (born November 8, 1849, and died in 1873), who married Rev. Peter R. Reimer (1845-1915). For a listing of their

descendants see, John C. Reimer, et.al., **Familien Register der Nachkommen von Klaas und Elizabeth Reimer** (Steinbach, Manitoba: Self-published, 1958), pages 215-232. See also **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 57-60, and 63-73.

17. Gerhard Schellenberg (1827-1908) See **Schellenberg Genealogy**, (author unknown), Unpublished manuscript, page 5 (courtesy of Rev. David K. Schellenberg) See also Jakob G. Friesen, et. al., **The Family of Jakob Regehr 1832-1906** (Kleefeld, Manitoba: 1960), pages 3-14, for a listing of descendants.

18. This writer will appreciate hearing from any reader who can indentify this family.

19. Son of Jakob Wiebe (1799-1856) For a listing of his descendants see Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, **Jakob Wiebe (1799-1856)** (Mount Lehman, B.C.: Self-published, 1966), pages 25-44.

20. This Abram Klassen moved to the Scratching River Settlement in 1874 and in 1875 to Kansas, where he joined the *Gemeinde* of *Aeltester* Jacob A. Wiebe. He appears to have been a highly influential Minister in the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde and a leading Minister of the 1870's Molotschna Gemeinde. Should any reader have additional information about this Abraham Klassen or his family, the writer would appreciate the reference.

21. For a listing of his descendants see, John D. Bartel, **Johan L. Dueck Genealogy** (Steinbach, Manitoba: Unpublished, 1980), 62 pages.

22. A son of Isaac Loewen (1787-1873). See Dr. Solomon Loewen, **op.cit.**, Johan Loewen Section.

23. Probably a son of Johan Hiebert (1816-1890). See Albert H. Hiebert, et.al., **op.cit.**, pages 15-29.

24. For a listing of Descendants see, *Aeltester* David P. Reimer, **Familien register der Nachkommen von Groszeltern Kornelius und Sarah Plett** (Blumenort, Manitoba: Self-published, 1953), pages 7-25; See also **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 33-44.

25. Probably Gerhard S. Kornelson (Born 1816). He was the father of Gerhard E. Kornelson who was the pioneer school teacher in Steinbach.

26. Probably Abraham M. Friesen (1834-1908). See Abram P. Friesen,

et.al., **The Von Reisen—Friesen Genealogy 1756-1966** (Blumenort, Manitoba: 1967), pages 131-164 for a listing of his descendants. See also Peter Isaac, **op.cit.**, pages 19-21.

27. He was a grandson of Abram Friesen (1782-1849), the second *Aeltester* of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. His father was Jakob W. Friesen (1808-1889). (Courtesy of Mr. Peter B. Dueck, Fisher Branch, Manitoba.) One brother, Heinrich L. Friesen, settled in Rosenhof in 1874.

28. The reader should note regarding these impeachments that the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde as a group or society considered as its uppermost goal (or mission), that it was to be a completely Christian Society or "*Gemeinde*". (In this regard it is noted that even the organizational structure and nomenclature of the *Gemeinde* was modeled on the early Christian "*Gemeinde*" as described in the New Testament.) Thus the wrong doings of individuals were also considered to be the wrong doings of the *Gemeinde* which then had to be dealt with and corrected by the *Gemeinde*. Naturally it was particularly important that the lives and conduct of the Ministerial (Lehrdienst) be without "spot or wrinkle". "Also at this time the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites still unitedly guaranteed the debts of their Brethren. For that reason no one was allowed arbitrarily to undertake new farming or business ventures without the consent of the *Gemeinde*". (see P. M. Friesen, **op.cit.**, page 993, Footnote 70). Thus the Mennonite Kleinen Gemeinde assumed collective responsibility for the promises, debts, or other actions of its members. That this frequently resulted in admonitions and discipline is understandable. Discipline would be applied with a view to right the wronged party and secondly to strengthen and renew the Christian life of the offender, and most frequently succeeded in its goals. (See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung**, **op.cit.**, various pages). The inward purification and preparation of each member of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde as a "missionary" makes an interesting contrast to that of many modern day North American Television style churches, where the moral and spiritual fibre of the membership outside of actual church services seems to diminish in direct proportion to increases in Mission Budgets.

29. If anyone has any information on the identity of this Cornelius Enns (or Rev. Isaac Friesen) this writer will very much appreciate the reference.

30. See Peter Isaac, **op.cit.**, pages 21-23. For a listing of his descendants see Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, **op.cit.**, pages 59-73.

31. For a listing of his descendants see Dr. Solomon Loewen, **op.cit.**, pages 3-13 of the Margaretha Loewen/Isaac Braun section. Peter M. Kroecker had married a granddaughter of Isaac Loewen (1787-1873).

32. Probably Peter W. Toews (born January 7, 1831) whose son John B. Toews (1865-1967) was a well known teacher in Steinbach area. See Abe Warkentin, **op.cit.**, pages 51-51. Peter W. Toews settled in the village of Blumenort in 1874.
33. Father of John W. Dueck, the author of **History and Events** which is the third part of this book.
34. Son of Isaac Loewen (1787-1873). For a listing of his descendants see Dr. Solomon Loewen, **op.cit.**, David Loewen Section.
35. Son of Gerhard Goossen (1811-1854). For a listing of his descendants see John R. Goossen, **op.cit.**, pages 8, 11-12, 105-106.
36. Son of Jakob Wiebe (1799-1856). For a listing of his descendants see Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, **op.cit.**, pages 45-50.
37. Probably Abraham R. Reimer (1841-1891). See John C. Reimer, et.al., **op.cit.**, pages 113-168, for a listing of his descendants.
38. The son of Heinrich Reimer (1818-1876) and his second wife Helen Friesen (1823-September 27, 1859). Helen Friesen (1823-1859) was the youngest sibling of Johan Friesen (1808-1872) the third *Aeltester* of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. (See Johan P. Friesen **Genealogy Register**, **op.cit.**).
39. Son of Jakob Wiebe (1799-1856). See Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, **op.cit.**, pages 73-93, for a listing of his descendants. See also part three of this book.
40. Probably Johan Hiebert (1816-1890). See Albert H. Hiebert, et.al., **op.cit.**, for a listing of his descendants.
41. Son of Gerhard Goossen (1811-1854). See John R. Goossen, **op.cit.**, pages 8, 12, and 107-113, for a listing of his descendants.
42. Probably Gerhard Siemens (1834-1908). See Frank K. Wiebe, et.al., **op.cit.**, pages 159-176, for a listing of his descendants. See also **Plett Picture Book**, **op.cit.**, pages 61-62. Also Mrs. John W. Loewen, **Family Tree of Peter Siemens (1867-1914)** (Fisher Branch, Manitoba: Self-published, 1974), 23 pages.
43. See footnote number 16.

44. This marriage was to Anna Isaac (1807-1873). See Peter Isaac, *op.cit.*, page 7.

45. The reference is to the Molotschna Flemish Gemeinde which by this time in fact really constituted three of the seven *Gemeinden* which made up the Molotschna Kirchen-Covenant.

46. If anyone has information pertaining to these writings this writer would appreciate the reference as these documents would probably be of the most important documents pertaining to the Kleine Gemeinde if they are still extant.

47. For an account of the planning and construction of this House of Worship see, **Plett Picture Book**, *op.cit.*, page 18.

48. Courtesy of Mennonite Library and Archives, Newton, Kansas.

49. Probably Peter W. Friesen (1815-1892) who was the son of Abram Friesen (1782-1849), the second *Aeltester* of the Kleine Gemeinde. He was married to Helena Reimer, who was the daughter of *Aeltester* Klaas Reimer (1770-1837). For a listing of their descendants see John C. Reimer, Chairman, *op.cit.*, pages 378-392. If any reader can verify this I will appreciate the reference.

50. Abraham L. Friesen (1831-1917). He was the son of Deacon Jakob W. Friesen (1808-1889), who was the son of *Aeltester* Abram Friesen (1782-1849).

51. Probably Klaas Friesen (1818-1871), who was the brother of Johan Friesen (1808-1872), the third *Aeltester* of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. For a listing of the descendants of this Klaas Friesen see, M. Goering, **The Descendants of Nikoli Friesen** (Burton, Kansas: Self-published, 1967), 145 pages. Again a confirmation of the above would be most appreciated.

52. Probably Jakob W. Friesen (1808-1889), who was the father of *Aeltester* Abraham L. Friesen.

53. For a time Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde members themselves served in village offices e.g. Cornelius Plett (1820-1900) as Mayor in Kleefeld, Molotschna. See Franz Isaac, *op.cit.* page 92, where he states that "Although this *Gemeinde* in the beginning refused to take part in elections, later they themselves served in village offices". Possibly the pressure on such offices as Mayor, brought on by the endless strife and bickering in the Molotschna during the 1850's and 1860's, caused the Mennonite Kleine Ge-

meinde to again consider the holding of such offices as being unsuitable for their members. e.g. Being called upon to enforce any punishment or fine in a civic office would have been against the conscience of a member of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. Should the reader have any doubts as to the Anabaptist position on these issues, he is referred to; Thielman von Braght, **The Bloody Theater or Martyrs Mirror of Defenceless Christians**, *op.cit.*, pages 402-403. Or perhaps some readers will prefer to say together with historian, Peter M. Friesen (*op.cit.*, page 18) that: "On the whole, Menno's (Simon) polemical (sic) writings do not belong to those that one reads with spiritual pleasure, indeed one cannot read them without a feeling of spiritual uneasiness." i.e. Be a Mennonite but ignore the message of absolute commitment of the Anabaptist writers?

54. Because by voting for and taking part in the election of an official who would be obligated to take actions contrary to the teachings of Christ the voter would also become responsible for such actions. e.g. The imposition of physical punishment or the use of police power, etc.

55. For a listing of his descendants see Waldon A. Barkman, chairman, **Genealogy of Jakob Barkman** (Steinbach, Manitoba: Self-published, 1975), 99 pages. He together with his father-in-law Jakob K. Friesen drowned in the Red River in 1875.

56. In his transcription John W. Dueck has noted that "Peter Toews is presently (1904) an elderly widower and lives in Greenland".

57. In his transcription John W. Dueck notes that, "David Loewen returned from a journey of visitation to Russia in the previous year. He is presently a widower and lives on the East Reserve with his children".

58. In his transcription John W. Dueck has noted that Johan Harms was a Minister in the Kleine Gemeinde and that he died about fifteen years ago. (From 1904). Two of his daughters are living in Steinbach, Manitoba, at the present time (1904). P. and G. Fr.

59. In his transcription Mr. John W. Dueck has noted that "Heinrich Reimer Jr. was also a Minister in the Kleine Gemeinde. He joined the Holdemans Gemeinde in 1882. He died several years ago in Gruenfeld, Manitoba". See also Peter Isaac, *op.cit.*, page 39. He was the son of Heinrich Reimer (1818-1876).

60. In his transcription John W. Dueck notes that, "Abraham R. Reimer was a deacon in the Kleine Gemeinde. He died about 13 years ago (from 1904)".

61. In his transcription John W. Dueck notes that "Johan Loewen was later a deacon in the Kleine Gemeinde near Morris and died in 1881".

62. John W. Dueck notes that, "C. Goossen lives in Steinbach and was baptized again by the Holdemans Gemeinde".

63. For a listing of descendants see John C. Reimer, *op.cit.*, pages 215-255. In his transcription John W. Dueck has noted that, "Peter R. Reimer is presently a Minister living in Blumenort, and is well advanced in years".

64. John W. Dueck notes that, "The husband of Aunt Elisabeth was also baptized by John Holdeman. They live in Gruenfeld. A few years ago a nail flew into his eye".

65. In his transcription Mr. John W. Dueck has noted that "Johan Esau had to endure much suffering on account of his leg, which was crippled by rheumatism. Esaus live on the yard of Abram Penners in Blumenort and are old".

66. John W. Dueck in his transcription notes that "Abraham M. Friesen is an aged *Vorsaenger* in the *Gemeinde and lives near Blumenort*".

67. John W. Dueck notes that "Klaas Wiebe and his family belong to the Kleine Gemeinde and live in Nebraska".

68. John W. Dueck notes that "This Martin Warkentin had died some 12 years ago (from 1904)".

69. John W. Dueck notes that "Johan Goossen was a member of Wiebes Gemeinde in Kansas, and has already died".

70. John W. Dueck, *ibid* notes that, "David Unger is again a member of the Holdemans Gemeinde after a number of incorrect starts".

71. For a listing of his descendants see, Peter H. Dueck, et.al. **Abraham L. and Elisabeth Dueck and their descendants** (Kleefeld, Manitoba: Self-published, 1965), 78 pages. John W. Dueck notes that "Abram Dueck, my Uncle, was *Vorsaenger* after my father's death. Shortly thereafter he became Minister and finally *Aeltester* of the Kleine Gemeinde. He died in 1899 after a very painful kidney disease".

72. For a listing of his descendants see, Dr. Solomon Loewen, *op.cit.* Margaretha Loewen/Jakob Braun Section, pages 13-39, John W. Dueck notes that "F. Froese is an old but still erect man, living in Rosenort".

73. For a listing of his descendants see John C. Reimer, *op.cit.*, pages 48-107. See also Abe Warkentin, *op.cit.*, pages 43-48, and 123-127. John W. Dueck mentions that Klaas Reimer is currently suffering from the dropsy and is a brother who has long since turned gray.

74. For a listing of his descendants see, Frank K. Wiebe, et.al. *op.cit.*, 357 pages.

75. The delegates had apparently been so advised by Canadian Government officials.

76. According to the *Aeltester Toews 1872-1878 Diary*, he was accompanied by Cornelius Plett, (1820-1900) and Heinrich Reimer (1818-1876). (See *Plett Picture Book, op.cit.*, page 20). The reference to Oberschultz is interesting. Rev. Isaac W. Toews (see John C. Reimer, Chairman, *75 Gedenkfeier* (Steinbach, Manitoba: Festkomitee der Mennonitischen Ostreserve, 1949), page 35.) felt that the reference was to the Bergthaler Oberschultz Jacob Peters. However in the *1872-1878 Diary* Toews refers to "our" Oberschultz. It is therefore also possible that the reference would be to the Oberschultz of the new Nikolaithaler Wollostbezirk or perhaps even the Oberschultz of the Borosenko settlement.

77. Probably Cornelius L. Friesen (1841-1923) a brother to *Aeltester* Abram L. Friesen. Again a confirmation by any reader will be appreciated.

Part Three

History and Events of Earlier Times

History and events of earlier times and the present, transcribed from letters and books, and also in part from my own experiences.

By Johan W. Dueck (1904)
Rosenort, Manitoba

THE JOHAN DUECK (1801 - 1866) FAMILY

Of my grandparents Johan Duecks,¹ I had come to know only the grandmother as I was not yet a year old when my grandfather (1801 - 1866) died. At that time they lived in the village of Muntau, in the Molotschna, Mennonite Colony, where they had a village farm. They originated from Prussia, but I do not know when they immigrated to Russia.² Grandfather was a Minister in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde³ which at that time was under the leadership of *Aeltester* Johann Friesen (1808 - 1872). Grandfather is said to have been a fairly large man with a big build. By comparison Grandmother was only a small person and was fairly plump.

Many of their numerous children died in their earliest childhood so that only five sons and two daughters ever married. The oldest son Johann Dueck⁴(1833-1894) was married four times, and died himself in 1894 in Gruenfeld, Kleefeld, P.O.. Then followed Uncle Bernhard Dueck (1837-1894) who was married to an Agatha Thielmann.⁵ They both died in Friedensfeld, Russia. First the Aunt, and then some years later the Uncle. The descendants of Uncle Bernhard Dueck are all in Russia. Then followed Uncle Jakob Dueck (1839-1893)⁶ who was married to Maria Rempel, of the Village of Paulsheim, Russia. This uncle also died in Gruenfeld in the year 1893. He was a Minister in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde for many years. Uncle Abraham Dueck (1841-1899)⁷ was *Aeltester* of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde for many years. He died in the year 1899 after a short but very painful sickness: namely bladder and kidney disease. He was married to Elisabeth Rempel, who was a sister to the Aunt Mrs. Jakob Dueck. Mrs. Abram Dueck also died a number of years ago, whereas Mrs. Jakob Dueck is still alive today.

The last of the five sons of my grandfather was my father Peter L. Dueck⁸ (the sons all used the initial "L" as the grandmother was born to a Loewen family) who was born in 1842, and died in January of 1887. He was the youngest of all his siblings and also had to die the first. He attained the age of 44 years, 3 months, and some days. By his death he left behind my step-mother, two brothers (brother Peter and myself) and five half-sisters; Susanna, Helena, Elisabeth, Anna, and Margaretha. However I will come to father's sickness and death later in this writing.

As mentioned above the grandparents also had two daughters Helena and Anna, who were both older than the sons. Aunt Helena (born 1828), who bore the name of my grandmother, was married to Jakob Penner. They later lived in the Village of Friedensfeld, Russia. They are both dead already, the uncle having died first and a few years later the aunt.

To the Penner family one could aptly apply the verse "These are simple things for God, to enrich the poor and impoverish the rich". Penners had a very large enterprise in Friedensfeld of which I myself still have many remembrances from when we lived in the village, even though I was only six or seven years old. I can still remember that they had a very large massive two story dwelling house, which was built of kilned bricks and a roof covered with plates of kilned clay. A fine carriage with glass windows drawn by three horses was their mode of transportation when they went visiting.

At the time we lived in Friedensfeld they at times had in excess of one hundred workers. It was not unusual for them to have draught animals consisting of one hundred pairs of oxen and one hundred pairs of horses. Through land dealings and efficient enterprise the Penners aspired more and more to a large empire. After we had been in America for about ten years they were at the highest point (of their prosperity) as their cash assets consisted of about one hundred and twenty thousand *Rubel*, in deposits at Banks and Loans owing to them. Then came the crash!

Uncle Penner bought many thousand *Desjatinen* of land, paying—according to what he himself wrote us in a letter—forty thousand *Rubel* down and signing promissory notes for the balance. From the balance of this sum they now had to purchase agricultural implements and hire thousands of workers, and so this money was soon all expended. Then what happened? Many bad years came one after the other so that there was barely enough production to maintain this impressive farming enterprise. The interest compounded by many thousand *Rubels* every year and could not be paid. The mortgage holders from whom uncle Penner had bought the land threatened to repossess it, if it was not paid for by a set deadline. Through all this trouble and worry it happened that uncle Penner died of a heart attack after he had lain speechless for three or four days.

After uncle Penner's death the mortgage holders took the land, livestock, equipment and so on, all of which had also been given as security. So the Penners were completely bankrupt and came into poverty. Aunt Penner died some years after this bankruptcy. Now we friends in America collected and donated money, and in this year—1903—have already helped three of the Penners' children to come here to America. These are: Johan D. Penners, B. Janzes (Penners' daughter Helena) and H. Siemens (Penners' daughter). Also there still is a Johann Siemens family that would dearly like to be helped over here.

Thus it can happen when one is not contented with little, but rather aspires with all one's might to become rich. It is not without good reason that the Apostle Paul in First Timothy Chapter 6 verse 9 says: "They that

will be rich fall into temptation and a snare . . ." And one has good reason to take to heart and consider the passage from Proverbs 23 verse 4 which states as follows: "Labour not to become rich, etc." Accordingly, dear Reader, if the Heavenly father has given sustenance and apparel, be content. For "To be content is the greatest empire". Of what gain is it to people who, even though they conquer the whole world thereby incur damage to their soul. We have brought nothing into the world and without question will take nothing with us when we leave.

If we poor humans could only be more conscious of the fact that we are only visitors and strangers on this earth. We have no continuing City here. Therefore we should in time seek the future City.⁹

I will also mention that Jakob Penners, as well as B. Duecks, and their families resident in Friedensfeld were members of the Mennonite Brethren Church.¹⁰

Uncle Bernhard Dueck and my father exchanged many letters during their lifetimes. Even though they were not of one mind in religious matters they mutually encouraged and enriched each other. My dear father who also had been a school teacher for many years, in Russia and as well in America, had thirty-two books containing copies of letters he had written.¹⁴ Needless to say he was an avid letter writer. In addition to his farm Uncle Bernhard Dueck also had a dye-works and was in good circumstances financially.

I must also mention Aunt Anna (1825-1887) who was the second daughter of the grandparents. She was the wife of John Loewen¹¹ and came to America with her family in 1875 or one year later than my parents. They settled here near Morris in the Village of Rosenhof. Uncle Loewen died in 1881 and the Aunt died in 1888. Uncle John Loewen was a deacon in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. The Loewens children: Peter, John, Abraham, and Cornelius still live in their paternal Village. However the daughters Anna and Helen have long since died and lie buried in the Rosenort graveyard. Helena was married to a Cornelius Eidse and Anna to a Peter Hiebert. Both of these families are presently living in Kansas.

After Grandfather John Dueck had died in 1866 grandmother was married again to a certain Heinrich Reimer (1792-1884)¹² who had also lived in the Village of Muntau. I knew these grandparents very well. Yes, how often have I not received *Marzipan* (candy), cookies and nuts from their loving hand especially at Christmas when all we grandchildren had to come and recite a Wish. This usually resulted in the receipt of some money from grandfather. The grandparents also moved to America in 1874. They made their home with various of their children usually at Jakob or Abram

Duecks in the summer kitchen. They always paid some money for their board, usually about one hundred dollars per year. Grandmother would spin wool for the various Dueck families in turn and then knit socks from the wool.

The dear grandfather sawed a lot of wood in his old age as he could hardly be without work. In spite of his age he was very robust and was only a small person physically. After it had finally become too hard for him to work grandfather busied himself very much with reading in the *Bible*, *Martyrs' Mirror* and other sacred writings. Often one found him sitting in tears by any one of a number of beneficial books.¹³ In his latter days he also spoke much about his "desire to part from here and to be with Christ". He said so especially after the dear grandmother had been dead for five or six years. Although grandfather's eyesight was quite good, so that he could almost always read without glasses, his hearing was so much worse that one had to speak very loud if he was to understand. He experimented with the ear trumpet but this also did not really seem to work. This occasioned great sadness for him especially as he could not longer hear God's word on Sunday. Finally after a Pilgrimage of ninety-three years, he was released from all his earthly suffering and cares, by the Lord who took him to be with him in his Heavenly Realm of Peace. More detail about Grandfather's death and burial can be found in one of my diaries.¹⁴

This concludes the writing about my paternal grandparents.

THE JAKOB WIEBE (1799 - 1856) FAMILY

I did not come to know either of my maternal grandparents. These grandparents were Jakob Wiebes¹⁵ who once lived in the Village of Schoenau in the Molotschna, Russia. They died within a week of each other during the years after the war between Russia and Turkey of the contagious disease spread through the country by the soldiers. At this time my dear mother, Justina Wiebe, was still only a school girl. And so the surviving children became orphans at an early age and were taken in by different families. My mother and her only sister Elisabeth, who is now a Mrs. John Isaac still living in Gruenfeld, Kleefeld, P.O., were taken in by Henry Reimers of Muntau, Russia, at that time a Minister of the Kleine Gemeinde.¹⁶ Where Uncle Cornelius,—who later died when still in Russia and whom I personally knew—and uncles Klaus Wiebe and Henry Wiebe were brought up I do not know. Uncle Klaus Wiebe is presently living in Nebraska and is in fairly good financial circumstances. My dear wife and I accompanied by the children Maria and Jakob visited this family and other friends in the year 1898.

Uncle Henry Wiebe was a Minister in the Kleine Gemeinde and died a tragic death in the first years of our settlement here. I here wish to record as much of this episode as has been related to me.¹⁷ As most of the Mennonite immigrants were more or less without means when they settled here in America, ie. Manitoba, they could not afford to buy the lumber available in Winnipeg, at the price which was asked for it.¹⁸ In addition, in the first years there were many forests with pine, spruce and other useful species near at hand. Thus in winter the villagers often went in groups, to the forest to get material for lumber, firewood, or for whatever other purpose it was required.

So it was on a beautiful morning in 1876 that a group of Blumenort villagers again were off to the forest for a load of wood. Among this group was uncle Henry Wiebe, and also his adopted son Peter Fast. As it was exceptionally nice weather, apparently not even freezing in the morning, the group thoughtlessly had brought little in the way of extra apparel or blankets. In the afternoon, after the sleighs were all loaded and preparations were being made for the journey home, a sharp northwind suddenly arose and it started to snow. The wind became stronger and stronger, and so also the drifting snow. Soon this became a terrible roaring blizzard, which swiftly advanced, to greet the men returning from the forest. As it was quickly becoming colder, they were also no longer able to keep warm in their thin clothes, and they were forced to walk on foot beside the oxen, or to follow along behind the sleighs which was difficult in the deep snow.

Things were made even worse because their clothes had earlier become quite soaked through, and now on account of the increasing cold had frozen stiff. However through holding together, encouraging, and calling to each other the procession slowly proceeded step by step. It was of concern to the married men to beat life into their limbs, fully conscious that their families were fearfully awaiting them at home, filled with concern and sorrow. The younger possibly unmarried men could no longer be helped by calling or encouraging them. Instead in their exhaustion they lay down on their loads in order to sleep, from which in all likelihood they would never awake. These in fact had to be encouraged a little and pushed onward by use of the switch.

Late in the evening the procession reached the vicinity of human habitation, and apparently in full complement passed through the village of Blumenhof, approximately a mile from Blumenort. It had now become fully dark and the snowstorm was still getting stronger, so that no one could see the other. Here now occurred what was to be the cause of Uncle Wiebe's death. As I have heard he was at the rear of the group, and before anyone of those ahead could realize it, his oxen had turned sideways into a small track. After the wind had died down and it had become clear at about one o'clock at night, an investigation was made to ensure that everybody had arrived at home safely. But! Horrors! When the above mentioned Peter Fast had arrived at home, his foster father, my beloved uncle Henry Wiebe, had not yet been seen. At first the wife, apparently had thought that he had stopped off somewhere at the nearest end of the village in order to wait out the storm. As soon as it was realized that Uncle Wiebe had not stopped off elsewhere, the inhabitants of the village immediately proceeded with a search. First the searchers went to Blumenhof, where however all the sleighs were accounted for and the missing one was not to be found. With the coming of dawn in the morning his vehicle was found close to Thomas Slater (an Englishman), approximately one and a half miles east ¹⁹ of Blumenhof and about the same distance from Blumenort, close to a gate made of rails. He himself lay frozen in the cold snow in front of his oxen in a bent together position, with his hands grasping the second last rail. After he had been brought home and cleaned of snow, a warm spot was apparently still found in the region of his heart. But the arms and legs were frozen solid. Perhaps someone experienced in such matters could have called him back to life, had a Doctor been in attendance so that his limbs would have been rubbed slowly with cold snow. That his life had not completely been erased was pointed out by the fact that a small opening remained in the icicle that had formed around his mouth. This then was the manner in which the beloved maternal uncle had to conclude his life, without once more having a chance to bid farewell to his dear ones. Exhausted and spent, he had fallen where he was found, only a few more

strides from the yard of the aforementioned neighbour towards whose light apparently he had been lured.

In addition to the abovementioned siblings my mother also had two half brothers, uncle Jakob and uncle Peter Wiebe. Both lived in the village of Blumenort and died some time ago having reached a good age. Uncle Peter Wiebe was sick for a long time and in his old age had himself baptised again by the Holdemans Gemeinde, as his wife since the division had belonged to this *Gemeinde*²⁰. In the earlier years uncle Peter Wiebe, had been a deacon in the Kleine Gemeinde. Because he could not be of one mind with his family in this regard, and this situation deeply disturbed him, he requested that the *Gemeinde* release him from this office. This also was finally granted by the *Gemeinde*, after repeated requests.

OF LIFE IN FRIEDENSFELD, SOUTH RUSSIA

I, John W. Dueck,²¹ was born on March 12 (Julien calander) 1865, in the village of Gnadenthal, Molotschna, South Russia. This is also where my cradle stood. My father was the school teacher in the aforementioned village for a number of years. However, I cannot say for how long we had lived in Gnadenthal. I can only remember that later when we were living in Friedensfeld,²² which was situated on the newly purchased land near Nikopol, we often drove to the Molotschna and also came to the Jakob Duecks who lived in Gnadenthal²³ for as long as they remained in Russia.

I can definitely remember more of Friedensfeld. My father also served here as a school teacher for a couple of years. The School was in our house in the small room (*kleine stube*). The house had a wall of mortared clay, approximately one and one half feet thick and had a roof covered with straw. As mentioned the school was in the rear room or so called small room. It was the door to this room that I occasionally softly opened and inserted my head inside, and when the students giggled, I would quickly pull back, and make myself scarce. I repeated this experimentation continually until my father came, and threatened me with his finger or shook his head. I quickly learned to understand this sign language, although I will not have known in the beginning why I was not to enter into this room.

Our house stood approximately in the middle of the village. Notwithstanding that the village had only one row of establishments, it still had a good number of inhabitants as it was quite long. On the other side of the street ran a small stream in which there were fish and crabs. By our front door lived a certain Fast, who took over the position of school teacher after my father had given it up. He was a very incompassionate teacher who sometimes punished the children so severely, that they had to lie in bed for a week. I have been told of especially one occasion—I did not have Fast as a teacher as I was only six years old when we moved away from Friedensfeld—that cousin John Penner, John G. Barkman, and someone else were beaten to the degree mentioned.

When my father gave up the position of school teacher he operated a grain farm. But as I have later heard, he apparently did not have much luck with this as in one or two years nine or so of his horses died. Even though the horses in Russia had a small price, compared to here in Manitoba, this must still have been a severe loss.

Father kept a servant, always a Russian, all year round and often also a Russian servant girl. During the harvest time an additional five or six

reapers were hired to cut the grain. The grass mowers or self binders that we now have here in America, were apparently not in existence there at the time. Everything was cut down with a scythe, bundled together, and bound by hand for which work Russian women were hired.

Threshing machines were a great rarity in Russia. I know however that uncle Jakob Penner had a horse powered threshing machine, but he was also considered one of the best farmers in Russia, among the Russian Landowners. For threshing grain in Russia one used a large round wooden floor or threshing floor on which the grain was spread. It was then threshed out with one or two threshing stones, each of which was pulled by a pair of horses. It is self-evident that it was essential to have dry weather for this kind of threshing. The large estate owners or land operators had especially built sheds for this purpose.

But those who could not have these, had a lot of work during the times when it rained. Before a rain cloud could approach the grain was forked together only to be spread out again, as soon as it became nice again. As soon as the wheat and chaff was driven out or trodden out, the straw was shaken, in order that the loose wheat would fall out. It was then raked into rows and carefully carried away with a long sharp pole, and put onto stacks in order to serve as cattle feed during the winter. Then the chaff and wheat was pushed together, and the whole process started over again. The chaff was later cleaned by throwing it up with a shovel during a wind. Then the wheat, which would still not be clean, was run through a fanning mill. Altogether it was a wearisome process, which required a lot of time. Sometimes it was already winter before all the grain was out of the straw. However when everything was threshed and cleaned, one also had something to show for one's trouble. ie. for those who had grain left over for sale. The price was much better than here in America—the price for wheat being from ten to twelve *Rubel* per *tschetwert* and sometimes also more. A *tschetwert* is equivalent to six bushels.

In Russia much rye was grown and much rye bread eaten. It had a sweet taste, was fairly solid, and according to what was always said, very healthy. I was never overjoyed to eat rye bread, always preferring white bread, which was dunked in the syrup we had made ourselves.

We cooked the syrup from watermelons that grew in abundance almost every year. We hauled uncounted loads of this wonderful fruit from the field, and were able to eat as many watermelons as we liked until Christmas time. In addition the melons were much sweeter and nicer than the melons we buy here in the city, and also did not have as thick a shell. Should there be one among them that was not quite ripe or sweet enough, it was given to the hogs and another one was cut open. At the time when the watermelons

were starting to ripen, every village had one or two watchmen positioned to stand guard. Although the watermelons at the time were so cheap that it did not pay to steal them, a true minded Russian with stealing on his mind, could not get it over his heart to leave behind what, with a little effort, he could take along. The watermelons at the time cost about three to four *kopeken* a piece and at the most fifteen *kopeken*.

Also the farm equipment in Russia could not be left outside the way it is done here in America. Indeed no! It would not have taken many nights and it would have disappeared. Everything had to be brought into the protection of roof and walls every night. Notwithstanding that barn and hayshed doors were well bolted, it still frequently happened that a team of horses, and a wagon, and also other goods, were stolen from a proprietor. Because of the light punishment of the thieves when they were caught, the thievery was always repeated again. The thieves seemingly had little to lose; perhaps a few months of arrest or twenty-five lashes . . . That was all. Had the Russian Regime had a more severe standard of punishment, eg. up to ten years of prison, the way it is here, the stealing would not have occurred so frequently. However if anything was ever stolen from my paternal home I cannot say.

That the punishment of wrongdoers has at all occurrences been so gentle, I cannot say. It seems that the laws were so weak and indifferent, that the punishments were meted out according to the prejudice of the police or Courts. Important lawbreakers or individuals that were in the way of the higher authorities were simply banned to Siberia. At one time this was an almost completely uninhabited frightfully cold region, where those who had the misfortune to be exiled there, lived a sorrowful and lonesome life. Here they were completely isolated from the civilized world, and many individuals sooner or later were completely crushed to the ground by the situation. However, since a railway has been built across Siberia things have completely changed, and to be exiled there can no longer be viewed as a punishment. Cities have been built, and many landless people, including Mennonites, have moved there voluntarily in order to cultivate the land and thereby to seek their advancement.

The Gypsies, a nomadic people of beggars, are found frequently in Russia. These people were even too lazy to work, and tried to make their way through life by numerous dishonourable means. Some of their occupations were; fortune-telling, stealing, trickery, and begging. Often up to five beggars a day came to our door, pleading for a little flour, gold, or pieces of clothing. Accordingly one can easily imagine that very little could be given to any particular beggar. If one had wanted to give to each beggar in the rich quantities that they often receive here, one would quickly have become poor. However each beggar wanted to receive something, and I

don't think that any beggar ever left our door empty-handed. Even though the gift was small, each would have received something; either an old piece of clothing, some *kopeken*, or some flour. The Gypsies however, were good copper and tinsmiths, whereby they were able to earn some money on the side. Also they were shrewd horse traders, so that frequently someone allowed himself to be tricked, and traded a better horse for a poorer one.

I always found it very interesting to hear the full toned lamenting music of the barrel-organ, that many professional beggars carried with them. Especially interesting were the blind ones, who were led by young boys, and who played for alms in front of the doors of the farmers. Because these more or less travelled through the land by foot, and therefore could not carry many gifts with them they usually received some money. Gladly I gave them as thanks, the *kopeken* that my father had given me, in order to once again hear a beautiful melody.

There was another custom that prevailed in Russia that was almost the **equal** of the begging. Around New Year's time, whole groups of Russian children went from their villages to neighbouring villages in order to "scatter". This was to represent a blessing of prosperity for the forthcoming year. These groups usually entered the bedrooms of the houses early in the morning and scattered several handfuls of grain around the room, which they took from a bag of mixed grain that they carried. They particularly enjoyed spreading grain on the beds, especially if someone was still lying in it. As they were doing this they raised their voices in a harmonious chorus, singing a "hos po die" which was not unpleasant to hear. In such a manner the group wandered from house to house, always in anticipation of receiving a small gift. At some places their entry was prohibited but in most cases the farmers allowed themselves to be given a New Year's Wish and Blessing.

On one occasion something occurred that was very interesting for us village children. Namely, many regiments of soldiers, on foot and by horse, passed through our village. Where they went or what the purpose of this was I do not know, but I do not think that they were on their way to a war. In any event their marshall music, and gleaming spears and swords, were a tremendous sight for us. Several or at least one of the officers, or soldiers, entered our house. I no longer remember, but perhaps this was to get a drink of water. As I apparently was very curious and looked at them in an astounded manner, one of the soldiers took me by the hand and showed me his polished to a mirror sword that he carried in his sheath, and allowed me to touch the handle of the sharp blade.

Until the fifth year of my life I was the only child in the house as my

other siblings, or I should say three brothers, died when they were a few days, or at the most several weeks old. It can be imagined that the parents will have thought very highly of their one and only child. Especially the dear mother loved me very much. However as a small boy I could never understand, why I was not allowed to play outside oftener in mud and rainy weather, which small children like so much to do. Of course in this, the dear mother will have had her good intentions.

In March of 1870, I received a small brother by the name of Peter. This was a great joy for me as I could rock him and also soon had someone to play with. However, as is normal for children, the cradle rocking soon became a burden for me, and when my mother had assigned me to this duty I quietly snuck out the back door and ran to the neighbours. For it was much more fun to play with (Isaac L.) Pletts son, Isaac, as he did not have to be rocked to sleep. When Mother then came to get me, or called me, I usually got a few slaps, when the settling of accounts took place. Although mother loved me, she still felt it necessary to punish me for such misdeeds, in one way or another. Sometimes I had to sit out my punishment on the small bench behind the stove. Oh how beneficial it is for children to undergo such testings of patience in their earliest years.

Well, brother Peter did not die in his childhood as had the other three brothers. Instead he is still living today with his wife, nee Margaretha Janzen, and their five small children: John, Peter, Elsie, Leonard, and Bernhard. They reside in the Town of Gretna, where he currently runs a General store and Book store. However, someone did die in the same year, on October 10, 1870, who was even more dear to me than a child. This was our beloved mother, nee Justina Wiebe. She became sick of Typhus of which she had to die after twelve or thirteen days. It must have happened during the night, as I remember that I was taken from my bed and held in the arms of Isaac L. Plett, the father of my aforementioned playing companion, and taken to be present at the death bed of my mother.²⁴ I am sure I will not have felt the parting from here of my mother as intensely as my father. As the people later told me, I always indicated that I was not sorry as I apparently assumed that I would now have more freedom to play outside. Later of course, I saw the matter in an entirely different light. Shortly after the death of my beloved mother, the aforementioned Isaac L. Plett also succumbed to the same disease, and followed my mother in death. And so the two neighbour children also had become orphans at the same time.

But through God's Grace and Leading I soon acquired a mother again, for during the New Year's Season 1871 my father married Susanna Loewen.²⁵ In the meantime, from my mother's death until my father's marriage, the grandparents were at our place and managed the household, with

respect I should say. And so the matter of me having my own way more often did not come to great fruition.

LIFE IN BLUMENHOF, SOUTH RUSSIA

One year thereafter my father sold his farm in Friedensfeld, and we moved to Blumenhof ²⁶ (in the Borosenko settlement), which was closer to my stepmother's home. Here again my father took up the position of schoolteacher. I believe that after this he did not have his own land in Russia, although in addition to teaching school he farmed on rented land with the help of a servant. This was also where I first attended school. We lived in a small house at the end of the village, near a depression or slough. However, as in the beginning, the school was in a private house more towards the middle of the village, I had a good distance to walk in order to get there. I had to pass by the grandparents ²⁷ and also by a treadmill which belonged to a certain John Wiebe. This mill had a large inclined disk which was perhaps twenty-five to thirty feet high. On this disk many horses were walking. I am not sure if it was three or four. These horses had to continually climb uphill, thereby bringing the mill into motion.

Later the Blumenhof villagers built a beautiful school house, with an adjoining Worship house. It was built, in the middle of the village, of kilned bricks and the roof was covered with plates made of kilned clay. The building also included a teacherage, into which my parents moved during the school term. In the adjoining room was the school and in front of both the teacherage and the school was the Worship Hall which was usually locked except on Sundays. ²⁸

I can not have been a slow learner in my youngest years in school as already in the first winter, I started to read the Testament. I also quickly mastered the art of memorization. I learnt much by hearing from the other school children. The students of the higher classes, who to me seemed to be very adultlike people, often utilized me as a messenger. I always had to go and ask if we could play outside and other similar requests.

Very amusing scenes sometimes occurred in the school, one of which I will relate here, although it is already deep in my subconscious. There was a student who was quite large, by the name of D. F.—he died several years ago—who was a very slow learner. Because he had not mastered his lesson, the teacher requested that he move further to the back and to sit on a bench with three or four other students. This he preferred not to do. Having made numerous requests and there still being no indications of any planned movement, the teacher took his yard stick and went to him. Life now came into his limbs but he still did not move in the right way. He took various articles and flung them around under benches and desks. However he had chosen this method of proceeding without considering all the con-

sequences, as one would say. "*Rechnung — gemacht*". He had to gather all the scattered items and in addition, every time he bent down to pick up something, his back felt the touch of the yard stick. And in spite of everything he still had to go to his appointed place. Such punishments here were always an excellent lesson for us younger classes.

One of the students of the higher classes, who distinguished himself in School, especially in Calligraphy (The art of beautiful handwriting) and in Drawing, was a certain John I. Friesen currently the accountant and part owner of the Flour Mill in Steinbach, Manitoba. I also recall another excellent Calligrapher by the name Jakob Giesbrecht who is still single and also living near Steinbach. He was a very neat person, this Jakob, and the teacher often used him as an example for the rest of us. Indeed during Calligraphy he never got his fingers black and he always had his fingernails trimmed and short. In fact his whole demeanour was very exemplary compared to mine. In addition there will have been other students who were able to demonstrate excellent abilities in the various school subjects.

A small stream by the name of "Sallone" (Solenaya River) lay behind the row of houses of Blumenhof. Blumenhof was a village of one and one-half rows of establishments, as a number of houses were built in a row perpendicular to the main street at the lower end of the village near the aforementioned depression or slough. Altogether there were as many houses and establishments as in a double rowed village. From inside the school one could see a high red bank, by the aforementioned "Sallone" which was redstone. There is said to have been iron-ore underneath it deep in the earth as later, when we were already in America, an iron mine was established there.

Sometimes father together with other neighbors drove out with a large net to catch fish or crabs. Quite some distance behind this river a high mountain could be seen from the village. We always had to drive over this mountain when we went to the City of Nikopol. Nikopol was also our Post Office. I believe the City was approximately twenty-eight *werst* or a little over twenty miles away. If we left early in the morning we were able to make the trip there and back in one day. I was sometimes able to go along with father which was a great joy for me. This was especially the case if it was the annual market day, for then one saw the streets filled with street walkers and other vendors who offered all sorts of articles for sale. Among other things, apples, grapes and other fruit, fish, crabs, pastry and all sorts of sweets. And oh, how cheap the fruit was! For a pair of *kopeken* one could have a whole cluster of grapes at least enough to satisfy one's appetite. If one then added a pair of Russian "*Kringel*" to the grapes one had a glorious repast. Men with large stone crocks on their shoulders walked

around on the streets calling out loudly "*Zachameniras*". This was something cool and somewhat similar to ice cream here.

We usually fed our horses by a large driveway to a yard, the owner of which was a low German colonist, by the name of Koslofsky. Here they served a wonderful Russian *borscht*, the taste of which I can still savor even today. This driveway "*auffahrt*" was near to the bank of the large and very wide Dnieper River. The river lay deep below, as there was at this spot a very high and steep bank. For this reason a very long path had been built, down which one led the horses in order to water them. The water was pulled up with a large pail with the help of a winch.

When one went to Nikopol with a load of wheat, one would be met by wheat dealers in large numbers, before one even was in the City. Each one of the wheat dealers wanted to buy the wheat and had to try to outbid the other. Whoever bid the highest, or else had a good reputation for giving the correct weight, became the owner of the wheat. Many times the wheat dealers came right to the villages and bought the wheat from the storage place of the proprietor. On such occasions, once the parties had reached agreement, a deposit was paid in order to validate the transaction. Later the wheat then only had to be delivered to the purchaser in order to receive the price agreed upon, without regard to whether the price had risen or fallen.

In Russia one did not travel to the City as frequently as here, except perhaps if one was shipping grain. Many Jewish traders travelled around the country selling the farmers all their necessities, or bartering with them for leather, eggs etc.. Also the necessities in Russia were not as great as here in America. Indeed the grandparents had still spun their own flax and made their own clothes with the yarn. Also this linencloth was extremely durable. The shirts we wore were made either of white or gray linencloth or of a thick bluegrayish cotton material. Peaked caps were worn on the heads of male persons and on their feet long boots or wooden shoes "*Korken*". Similarly with everything else. Almost no factory-made goods were available. Everything was made at home. Tables, benches, beds and chairs and other similar items by woodcraftsmen; Wagons, sleighs, plows, harrows, and the like by wheelwrights, lathers, and blacksmiths, etc.

Also finished clothes were not to be purchased in stores, or "*lafkes*", as they were known at the time. Whoever did not have the time to make his own had to hire a tailor. I still recall that for a time a tailor was boarding at our place and making clothes for people. His nickname was Tailor Simon, and he traveled from village to village tailoring clothes.

The wagons in Russia were built in a different style than here. The

wheels were very small and skirted so that with a load the wagons were hard to pull on a muddy road. The wagon box was built outward diagonally all around except in the rear. It was about fourteen inches high and well reinforced with iron plates. The undercarriage of the wagon was similarly constructed. A major mistake in the design of the wagon was that the tongue could not fall to the ground, instead remaining pointed straight out from the axle. Then again perhaps this was the most suitable for the situation, as the breast harness was still used for all vehicles in Russia. As a long strap was fastened around the tongue, and then around the neck of the horse, this may have helped so that the weight of the shaft will not have seemed as heavy around the necks of the horses. Notwithstanding the horses walked with their necks bent downward. Apparently no one had thought of the check rein that is almost too much in use here.

The light travelling wagon "*Spazierwagon*" was built in the same manner as the heavy utility wagon, with the exception that it was somewhat more refined in construction. The odd light or driving wagon, here and there, also had a top cover to protect the passengers from rain and sunshine. However no wagons were built with springs, which in fact was completely forbidden in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. One did not see as many kinds of small wagons and topbuggies in Russia as there are here. However I will not say that there were no coaches or wagons built with springs in Russia. Nobility and rich Mennonites that belonged to other Churches, especially in the Molotschna, already had quite expensive coaches and wagons with springs. Such well to do and prominent people drove with teams of three and four horses and always had a coachman. That such well to do "*nobility*" would drive themselves as is customary here was unheard of in Russia.²⁹ The coachman sat in front on a seat, the way the bus drivers do here in the City.

After we had immigrated to America and had seen the huge wagons here, our fathers almost lost heart at the thought of having to drive such cannons. They were built so high that one could hardly climb up and once on top, one became frightened for fear of falling off. The travelling wagons here were called "*spinnrader*", (buggies) and with which one would not have risked going on the road, without taking a chance of them breaking down sooner or later, and leaving its driver lying on the roadside.

No this would not be acceptable. So the people wrote to Russia to the ones who were to follow a year later with the request that, "when you come to America bring along your wagons", which also was duly carried out. However, after the American wagons had been used for a while, it was discovered that they were much more practical than the Russian wagons. The Russian wagons then fell into disuse, or at best were used for hauling manure, and fell considerably in value during the first years. Indeed the

horses could pull almost twice as much with the American wagon as with the Russian wagons. Also the prejudice against the aforementioned buggies gradually disappeared. These buggies were easier to pull for the horses than the small wagons, and there was in fact little danger of the falling apart on the road.

When we went from Blumenhof to Hochfeld to visit the old John Warkentins—Warkentins were my stepmother's foster parents—we had to drive by the place of a Russian nobleman who lived on a large farm (*chutor*) or country estate (*vollwerk*).

This nobleman had a considerable number of vicious shepherd dogs who approached us barking and yelping ferociously, as if they would literally tear the horses apart. Father then had his hands full, keeping the horses on the road and under control with the reins. On such occasions I usually sat in the rear on a sack of straw, full of fright, firmly clutching the front seat where my parents sat. At a full gallop we went forward, until the howling, and yelping left us. Sometimes we also got to see an interesting sight that was a great rarity, namely a group of camels. I found their distinctive humps, and otherwise unattractive physical appearance very interesting. For what purpose the nobleman kept these so-called "ships of the desert" I do not know. In the end he may have used them as draught animals to cultivate his land, for which purpose they were large enough.

On the aforementioned road we also drove through a village of which one part belonged to the Mennonites, and the other part to the Russians. Both parts had their own name; ie. Gruenfeld and Gerwerf. We also had to drive not far from a church yard on which many crosses indicated the burial places. In the middle of the graveyard was a small windowless building where perhaps a Pope lay buried. Inside the Russians had set up a number of Holy Pictures, which they greatly honoured once a year. A small door was used through which one could enter only if bent over.

How much value the Russians placed on their Holy Pictures is shown by the following episode involving my Uncle John Isaac, who was married to my aunt Elisabeth Wiebe (as has already been described earlier in this book). The account of this episode is quoted verbatim from the book of *Aeltester* Peter Toews.³⁰ "A noteworthy episode that also deserves a brief mention is that of John Isaac, of Gruenfeld, regarding the picture on the graveyard of the Russians. Already in February, of 1868, the Russians had laid a complaint, which in fact was false, that he had broken the picture and had also said of the same, that it was nothing more than ordinary wood, and that it was not God, or Deity. Following this the affair dragged out until he was charged to appear before the Judge in Ekatherinoslaw, for the 29th of December, 1869. Represented on behalf of the *Gemeinde* with

a presentation we appeared there on the appointed day, and he was given one month arrest as his punishment. However this punishment was too light for his enemies (which included the Russian Popes), who then laid a complaint in the matter in the Criminal Court in Odessa. Again accompanied by a presentation on behalf of the *Gemeinde*, and accompanied by brother Gerhard Goossen (also a Minister in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde and the father of Gerhard and Peter Goossen here), Isaac left Nikopol by Mail stage on March 26, for Odessa, in order to appear before the said Court, by which he had been subpoenaed on March 30. However the matter here was also adjudicated in the same manner as in Ekatherinoslaw. Further at the request of John Isaac in Ekatherinoslaw on June 17, he was able to postpone his time of confinement under arrest in Ekatherinoslaw, to October." Thus far from the book of Friend Toews.

There apparently were no more Mennonite settlements along this road behind Hochfeld, but the road continued further up to the villages of the Russians. The first of these villages, by the name of "*Scholach*" has remained in my memory. From this village we usually hired our reapers and I can recall that on one occasion when father had driven there, I had also gone along. The Russians were a crude and unclean people. Their humble clay huts with roofs of straw or clay indicated little taste or cleanliness. But then perhaps they were only constructed by the Russian women. Red spiders were crawling and wriggling here and there on the outside wall. On the inside, immediately to one's right, was a warm "*prietschen*"—a large warm oven that was heated during the winter—on which the Russians had their sleeping places. This area was swarming full of lice. Here and there, of course, there will have been exceptions to this description.

My stepmother's parents Peter Loewens, lived on a leasehold property on the estate of a Russian nobleman, behind the village of Steinbach near a river by the name of Baseluk. So it happened frequently that my parents would go there to visit. We, ie. brother Peter and I, then would frequently go along. The road went through the village of Annafeld where Abram Duecks were living. On the establishment of this nobleman were quite a number of buildings for the use of the servants and tenants. Surrounded by these homes and barns stood the manor of the nobleman, which was called "*Zawitzke*". "*Zawitzke*" then also was the name of the estate or establishment. On the yard a large swing was erected where we children would swing. The seats were pushed from the rear and brought into motion. As I never found particular joy in swinging I amused myself more by pushing those who were swinging. And so it happened that in a disconcerted eagerness I ran forward too quickly and was hit so severely by the swing, that I was thrown to the ground unconscious. However I soon recovered consciousness, and as I stood up I was completely covered with blood. The swing had hit me exactly on the right cheek, and had gone right through so

that the gums could be seen from the outside. It was noteworthy however that I felt no pain, other than the blunt blow that the seat of the swing had given me. With a smiling countenance I entered into the room where dinner was being eaten at the time, and where there was considerable horror regarding my appearance. I also had little pain even after and the wound healed relatively quickly. The only remaining evidence of this incident is a small scar that I still have today.

The banks of the river near "*Zawitzke*" were very rocky and there were also many boulders lying in the river. Accordingly there were many turtles that came to sun themselves on these huge rocks, on which they lay with their heads and necks stretched out. When we threw small stones or sticks at the turtles the sunning was over for them. They would then pull in their head and legs, or would clumsily plump into the water. Sometimes also one of the turtles was caught alive. The old creatures however, were not that easily put to death since, when they were in danger they concealed their vulnerable limbs under their backshell. As the backshell could withstand many blows it sometimes took a considerable time, before we were able to put an end to one of the turtles. As the turtles in fact were quite harmless creatures, I really don't know why we strove to end their life. Apparently we must have done this out of pure boredom.

It was much more dangerous with the snakes, as many of them were poisonous. They were not large reptiles like the ones that were often seen here during the first years, which were from five to six feet long. Instead, they were a small sort of viper or adder. I can still well remember one occasion when one of these snakes instilled such a fright in me, that I aborted a visit to the forest to gather crows' eggs, and ran home immediately with great speed. One Sunday many young lads had gone to the forest together, where countless crows had established their homes, in order to steal the young birds or the crows' eggs. As I had become aware of this too late, in order to go with them, I asked my parents for permission to follow them. The forest was only approximately one *werst* away from our house and so they gave me permission. After I had gone about one-half of the distance I suddenly heard something loudly hissing near the road. Before I could get nearer I became aware of a poisonous snake which had uprighted itself to a considerable height, and had extended its red tongue, hissing and gesticulating towards me. Without a moment's hesitation I about-faced and ran straight back home to mother where I arrived safe and sound although somewhat overexerted.

NON-RESISTANCE AND THE MILITARY DRAFT

The freedom from bearing arms of the Mennonites in Russia always seemed to become more questionable, and in the end it appeared as if this privilege would be completely lifted. This was the cause of much concern and worry on the part of the Mennonites in Russia as the dear Saviour had strictly commanded his followers, to sheath rather than to brandish the weapon, and instead to take up the sword of the faith. This concern very earnestly awakened the mind of the Mennonites, as to how they would now be able to live out their beliefs based on the Holy Scriptures, with respect to the matter of freedom from military service. What would happen now and what would the future bring? Yes, many prayers will have been sent up to the Heavenly Father. Many journeys were undertaken by the Deputies of the various *Gemeinden* in order to petition the Emperor, Alexander the Second, to continue full religious freedom. However the Ministers of the Crown cunningly arranged matters so that it was almost impossible for any of the deputation to attend personally with the Emperor, so that he in a soft hearted moment would not rule against them in favour of the "Quiet in the land". In fact the Ministers and nobility looked with envy on the right of the Mennonites to greater privileges than any other confession, and consequently most of the petitions probably were intercepted and possibly never came to the Emperor's personal attention.

Gerhard Wiebe, for many years *Aeltester* of the Bergthaler Gemeinde on the East Reserve, who died many years ago, writes about such a deputation to Petersburg in his book **Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten** ³¹ "It was in the beginning of the seventies that one began to read in the newspapers that the Mennonites were to be conscripted into the armed service; it was not yet explicitly spelled out, but we understood well enough that something was brewing. Soon after this we met in the Molotschna colony in order to take counsel with each other on the matter, for we were deeply disturbed and downcast of heart. We agreed to send some men from our midst to Petersburg, to obtain information from the highest authority, if possible from the Czar himself, regarding our status in relation to freedom from military service; and, if our freedom of conscience were in danger, to implore His Majesty to be as considerate as possible with respect to this matter."

"So *Aeltester* Gerhard Dueck from Rosenthal and Minister Epp, and two or three from the Molotschna (who those were I cannot quite recall) were authorized by the congregations and sent on their journey with a prayer for God's blessing. This writer remembers that we were of one heart and soul at this time, for we were deeply stirred, as already stated. After a

few weeks they returned, but they brought no definite word. They did not get to see the Czar, and his Minister told them to calm down their brethren, for the Czar would hold his hand over them, and he hoped our youths would not yet need to take the sword. Trust him for he is your best advocate. He had spoken in this fashion, but the churches were not satisfied with this. They wanted to know what they were actually to do. So a second trip was made to Petersburg . . .”

“When they returned they brought the same message as the first delegates, namely, we should calm down and trust the Czar. In this way the government kept us in the dark for three years. That was their intention, because during this time the majority became indifferent, which included me, for I thought to myself: the obligations which the other dear *Aeltesten* and their churches can assume, we can also. But God’s plan was different, because *Aeltester* Suderman and Consul Janzen from Berdiansk also came to Alexanderwohl to the conference. And Janzen had already procured many booklets from America, in which full freedom from military service was guaranteed to us. These books were distributed among us. At first I did not wish to take one, because I was at that time an adamant opponent of America. But, *Aeltester* Gerhard Dueck, entreated me to take one and when we returned home we circulated it to be read. And in a week or two there was a sizable group which wanted to emigrate.”

At the end of October, 1872, many *Aeltester*, Ministers, and Village Chairman (*Vorsteher*) were again assembled in a conference at Alexanderwohl, in the Molotschna, and when it was realized that Czar Alexander, the Second, was in the Crimea at the time, it was decided to again send a deputation in order to personally present to His Majesty the oppressed situation of the Mennonites. Among this deputation was also Peter Toews, our *Aeltester* at the time, and Abram L. Friesen, *Aeltester* of the then existing Heubodner Gemeinde. Further information about this can be found in the writings of *Aeltester* Peter Toews. However as can be seen in the writings of *Aeltester* Peter Toews, as well as Gerhard Wiebe, they were unfortunately able to accomplish little. They were again unable to at least personally, see the Czar. “General Kotzebu again gave them the promise that they would not have to bear arms, but they would have to take up some form of Alternative service. The General also deplored the fact that the deputation was not able to meet personally with the Czar because he was ill, and unable to receive any deputations.”

After several further travels and petitions had remained quite fruitless many of our *Gemeinde*, although with heavy and troubled hearts, decided to send a delegation to America from where, on a number of occasions, invitations had been given to Mennonites. The delegates were to search for land for the *Gemeinden* and their descendants, where more freedom from

Military service was offered, than what could be anticipated in Russia. One cannot but realize, that farewells will have been said to Russia with heavy hearts. Indeed Russia had been the home of our forefathers for almost one hundred years. And now everything had to be left behind in order to go to a new strange land, and to seek a new homeland.

Pursuant to a majority of votes at an election Cornelius Toews, brother of *Aeltester* Peter Toews, for our *Gemeinde* ³³ and David Klassen, for the Heubodner *Gemeinde*,³⁴ were elected as the Delegates. They embarked upon their journey to America in the spring of 1873, together with eight other delegates, and accompanied by well wishes and prayers. One can well imagine how they will have taken leave of their dear families with heavy hearts, particularly as such a journey was an almost unknown novelty at the time. Moreover they had to cross the huge ocean, where they would be in danger from the severe storms that could rage. However God's hand was also with them on the ocean and with them on their various travels. As far as I remember, William Hespeller, (at present German Consul in Winnipeg) and John F. Funk, President and part owner of the Mennonite Publishing house and book marketing firm in Elkart, Indiana, had come to meet them (perhaps already in Russia), and also were their escorts on their travels.

Naturally none of the delegates traveled from their own funds. They were well provisioned with a good sum of travelling money, of which each of them had a small amount left over when they returned.

Towards the end of September, after several months absence the delegates returned to their old homeland, safe and sound and healthy. They brought with them favourable written assurances and as they had travelled over and inspected the land in the United States and Canada, particularly Manitoba, had come to the conclusion, that if it was God's will, and with his help and support, we had found a good future for our descendants. However what was best and most important about the situation, was that full religious freedom was assured to the Non-resistant Mennonites. However, according to the written assurances, that of Canada seemed definitely preferable, as it completely excluded us from military service. This Privilegium, which is secured in the Archives of the German Consul at Winnipeg, reads as follows: "An entire exemption from any military service is by law and order-in-Council granted to the denomination of Christians called Mennonites". As the religious freedom set out by the document from which the above is extracted appeared to be somewhat more definite, most of the *Gemeinden* decided to emigrate from Russia to Manitoba, Canada. However the Molotschnaer *Gemeinden* decided in favour of the United States, and emigrated to the States of Nebraska, Kansas, Minnesota, and Dakota.

Thus after the delegates had returned home, diligent preparations were made for the emigration. The farms had to be sold as well as the farm goods. In fact there were Colonists to be found that would ordinarily purchase whole villages for some thirty or fifty *Rubel per desjatiën*.³⁵ Perhaps the price was a little higher in the Molotschna. The goods were sold by auction. As I recall, the father of my stepmother³⁶ was, to a large degree, constituted as the auctioneer or at least he functioned as such.

FROM NIKOPOL TO WINNIPEG

In the summer of 1874 the first part of the *Gemeinde* prepared itself for emigration to America. Among these were also my parents and their children, which then consisted of me, brother Peter, and a halfbrother by the name of Henry. I was only nine years old at the time and so only little about the journey has remained in my memory. I also do not have any writings at hand regarding the emigration, and so I cannot record even the approximate number of the first group of emigrants. However, I will describe the guidance of God on our journey as well as I can recall. Those who were remaining brought us to Nikopol by ox team. Here we boarded a ship. As I recall it was only a small steamship which even had a roof on top, but was open around all the sides. I had also almost forgotten to mention that every emigrant had to show a passport at the Russian border before he was allowed through. Obtaining this pass involved many difficulties, and had to be provided for by the spending of considerable monies. With the aforementioned steamship we travelled downstream on the Dnieper River into the Black Sea and after passing Cherson and other cities, we came to Odessa. Here we disembarked and stayed for a time. Each of the emigrants carried a travelling case or some other luggage and children had to be carried, as well as the weak and the sick.

In addition to hardships the journey apparently also provided many delights for the adults, as there were so many noteworthy things to see on the way. The younger ones, who did not yet show as much interest in the sights, will many times have found that such a "moving" caused more trouble than joy, especially if there was also luggage that had to be carried. ie. when one went from the ship or train to one's quarters, which was sometimes a considerable way. In Odessa we boarded a train for the first time, which was a change, as we had travelled by water for many days. How the Black Sea had acquired its name I do not know. Although it was said that the water was darker than in the Dnieper River, it was still far from being black. Many maintained that they had seen porpoises in the Black Sea. In spite of my best endeavors I myself did not see any. We now travelled by rail through Austria to Hamburg. Here we took quarter in a large house for a number of days, until a ship could take us over the North Sea to England. This house where we took quarter was located near a depression, where for the first time, we became somewhat aware of the ebb and tide of the sea. For as I recall the water at high tide reached up almost to the windows of the house. ie. at the rear. In the front of the house the ground was higher and remained completely dry. When the ebb-tide or low tide came there was no water at all in the gully and we children walked

around on the sandy bottom and looked for various shell-fish which the tide had carried there and left behind.

In Hamburg the emigrants were also treated with fine savory double buns and a warm soup, which tasted tremendous to us children. Many also took the opportunity and visited the Zoological gardens, and looked at the many animals there. However, (I confess that) actually I was unable to share this joy. From Hamburg we travelled by steamship over the turbulent North Sea. Apparently we also passed the beautiful Island of Helgaland. As our knowledge of geography acquired in the village schools, gave us only a weak acquaintance with the geographical features of this area, possibly no one will have known of or given consideration to this fact. However everyone took note of something about the North Sea, which was the manner that the ship was swung to and fro by the turbulent waves of the storm. Accordingly many stomachs were unable to digest the meal which had been enjoyed and which instead had to be given over to the Sea. I would not say that everyone was so affected, as there were always some who were spared the effects of seasickness for the whole journey.

In Hull we disembarked from the ship and were taken by railway, across the breadth of England to the seaport of Liverpool. Here we had to take quarter for a number of days before we could embark on the ship, which was to carry us over the Atlantic Ocean. At one of the two last mentioned cities we were seated at a series of long adjoined tables, and given a feast. Normally we ate from a huge supply of food with which we had provisioned ourself while still at home in Russia, namely; the Emigrants had supplied themselves with many bags full of toasted *zweibach*, of which some had enough left to serve as their food supply for a while even here in Manitoba. When the Emigrants in their quarters were honoured or served with a feast, which would be done by the Steamship Company by which we were travelling or by the city as a gift, we allowed ourselves to enjoy it, even though it may at times have included horsemeat. In Liverpool, as I recall, we had a very long stretch to walk from our quarters to the ship, so that the weak, and also the luggage was transported on freight wagons. For this purpose tremendously large horses were hitched in front of the wagons. On account of their hugeness, I have still not forgotten these horses, even after thirty-one years. This notwithstanding that I was only nine years old at the time.

The journey over the huge ocean, which at that time took from fourteen to seventeen days was, I believe, enjoyed by very few. And not many were spared from sea sickness. There was a groaning, lamenting and vomiting. On the ship we were to be fed by the steam ship line. However the peasoup and the so-called horseflesh, together with the hard cakes, which one might say had been dried out in the sun, were hard to stomach. In my opinion

these were cakes such as the hunters here cook for their dogs, having an approximate circumference of six to seven inches. However there was a daily ration of one fresh *zweibach* for every person. One senseless arrangement was that men and women and their children had to remain in segregated rooms. This also resulted, here and there, in small collisions with the cook or the ship's captain, as the men were so much needed by the sick women and children. For the women and children there were small partitions, with beds at the bottom, and then beds on top of the same, so that one family lived on top of the other. For the men in the men's quarters hammocks were hung up, in which everyone had to allow himself to be rocked to sleep whether appreciated or not. This certainly must also have further contributed to the sea sickness. One other difficult matter was that two or three times a week, the whole ship had to be cleaned from the inside with chloride of lime. For this purpose all the passengers were chased unto the foredeck. However in the end this was an almost impossible task for those who were suffering from a severe attack of sea sickness. Finally, after a declaration of intention to inform the steam ship line of his crudeness was made, the cook, or whoever else may have been behind it, had to adjust himself to allowing the sick to remain in their beds.

Otherwise I cannot say that interesting or pleasant things did not occur on the long trip. During calm weather we boys would sun ourselves on the deck near the large smoke stack. Now and then we saw large whales and sharks that sprayed water high into the air. The people said that sharks followed almost every ship in order to feed off the kitchen leftovers and, possibly also corpses which were sunk in the sea. As far as I recall there were no deaths of adults in our group. There may perhaps have been some small children who died.

That our spirits will soon have risen after the cry "land" echoed forth can easily be imagined. We landed in Halifax (from Halifax we first traveled a considerable distance by the St. Lawrence River) from where we went by railway to Lake Superior where we again embarked on a ship which took us to Duluth. Exactly where it was in America I cannot say, but at one place on account of shallow water, we had to pass through a man made water channel. A gate was closed in front of us and water allowed to flow in. Then the gate was opened, and the ship entered another compartment with this mass of water. Here again a gate was locked, and so on, until we again reached deeper navigable water. This water channel was lined with mortared stone. After we had entered a compartment, water was allowed in and we could clearly see on the side masonry, how the water level was rapidly going higher and raising our ship. From Duluth we went by railway to Moorehead, Minnesota, from where for the last time, we again embarked on a ship. That the travelling by ship and particularly the very long journey will have made many almost discontented can easily be imagined.

Still, the ship from Moorehead was to bring us down the Red River to the final goal of our journey. After we travelled for several days we finally arrived in Winnipeg, which had only acquired this name in the year of our arrival. Here we finally had the soil of Manitoba underneath our feet. However before we left the ship we had to pose along the sides of the ship and the flatboat, which was beside the ship, in order to be photographed. The Canadians apparently wanted to have a picture of the long awaited Mennonite Immigrants. So we stood there in our peaked flat caps and short jackets and with our trousers folded into our boots. However we were so small on the picture that very few individuals could be recognized.

The City of Winnipeg at the time of our arrival was very small. Formerly it had had the name of "Fort Garry". Apart from the Hudson Bay Co., which had its warehouse inside the wall enclosed Fort Garry, there were only a number of wooden dwelling houses or business premises here and there. In fact the warehouse of the Hudson Bay Co., itself was only a single story wooden structure. On each corner of the fortress wall stood a round tower with embrasures for riflemen. Years after all the buildings inside and the fortress walls themselves had been dismantled these towers stood as a memorial of the fort that had once existed there. By now however all signs of the Fortress have disappeared and in its place the largest chimney in Winnipeg reaches for the clouds. The chimney belongs to the electrical lighting works.

We stayed in Winnipeg for a good number of days. All sorts of necessary goods were purchased as well as various food stuffs. But everything was very expensive. Almost twice as expensive as today (1904). This was, to some extent, attributable to the very inefficient transportation system as everything had to be imported along the Red River by ship and flatboat. However this was not that easy as the River at the time was only narrow and did not have very deep water. In any event a further reason that everything was so expensive, was to lighten the money bags of the supposedly wealthy immigrants. Even though the purchases were only small—a bag of flour cost five dollars, potatoes from one dollar to two dollars and coffee was fifty cents a pound. It was a difficult beginning for those who were almost without means. Many had only a few hundred dollars when they arrived here. In fact a number of the poorest members had to be supported from Russia. However, the Government as well as the Old Mennonites living in Ontario were willing to give advances of money as well as necessities. This assistance was also accepted by many. In the first years this assistance from the Government and the Brothers in Ontario, was especially taken up among the Berghthaler Gemeinde, who had arrived in Manitoba a few days later. These apparently were poorer than the *Molotschnaer* immigrants as many had been unable to sell their

establishments at all because of the very poor market. The debt incurred for this assistance has long ago been repaid together with interest.

In Winnipeg the first group of immigrants divided into two groups. Grandfather David Klassen went with one group to the Scratching River, here near Morris, approximately forty miles from Winnipeg, while the larger group under the leadership of Cornelius Toews, had chosen the east side of the Red River as their future home. My parents also went with the larger group. However later many will have experienced that those on the East Reserve had not made the wisest choice.³⁷ Many of the *Bergthaler*, who had all taken their homesteads on the East Reserve left their first places of settlement in order to start over again near Gretna and Emerson. As we had lived in closed villages in Russia and were not accustomed to any other system, the settlement here again was all in villages. However I will deal with the question of the landholding system later.

After the necessities had been attended to and purchased in Winnipeg, those of us who wished to settle on the East Reserve, again had to embark on the ship in order to again travel a number of miles upstream. The Government had had four large wooden immigration houses constructed, approximately one mile south-east of where Niverville is today. These were to serve as the dwelling of the immigrants, until the new settlers had selected their homesteads and built their own dwellings. Some twenty miles from Winnipeg we again disembarked and covered the last portion of our journey of some seven or ten miles by foot. Some had also bought oxen and wagons on which their goods were loaded, and also the old and weak, who were unable to walk, were allowed to ride.

Those of us who were only small children at the time can only imagine, the sorrow and concern with which our parents will have started the new settlements. Frequently the experience of the Children of Israel moving from Egypt to Caanan will have entered their minds and thoughts. Also like the children of Israel they will often have thought of the fleshpots of Russia, when so many privations were encountered. They will also have thought of the watermelons and other tasteful fruits of that land. But we had not emigrated for the purpose of gratifying our senses.

AT THE IMMIGRATION HOUSES

At the immigration houses we were soon in need of water. As the year of our arrival apparently was a year of drought, water was not so easily found in the low grounds, where one would dig deep holes in which a little water had seeped together overnight. This water was then distributed by the kettle and used for the purpose of coffee or the most necessary washing. And so after several days a deep well was dug as a community, which however was still dry at a depth of forty feet. As the water in the aforementioned holes also dried up more and more, we were forced to haul the water from the Red River some five or six miles distant.

A serious accident occurred one day during the digging of this community well. A certain Reimer and a Hiebert's boy, from the Bergthaler Gemeinde, had climbed into the well in order to dig deeper. As the well at some depth had not yet been sheathed with boards, large chunks of earth instantaneously detached themselves from many places on the walls of the well, and plunged down burying these men so that no part of them could be seen. As the well had been dug across from the house in which we were living I was also witness to this accident. A crowd of onlookers quickly gathered but no one wanted to risk his life to enter into the well to save the pair or at least to retrieve them. Probably most of them will have thought that the two would be asphixiated, before their help could achieve anything. However there was no time for long deliberations and decision making as the matter required immediate action. How easily could not additional pieces of earth fall loose and bury the misfortunate ones even deeper. The lamentations of Mrs. Reimer for her husband, were heart-breaking and many times in desperation she tried to jump into the well. She had to be held back by force, and repeatedly became unconscious. Then a man by the name of Reddekopp announced that he would dare to attempt to free these men. He was lowered into the well on a rope, together with his equipment, and with God's help he was actually able to free both these men from their serious situation. Even though they were both unconscious they were still alive. The young man came to his senses shortly after he was brought into the light of day. However both had to experience a sick bed before they were completely recovered. Also I think one of them remained somewhat crippled. ³⁸

Thus the man who carried out this rescue quite appropriately was known by the right name. (In low german "Reddekopp" literally could be translated as "rescue head".) For quite some time the deepening of the well was postponed. Later they are to have made an artesian well there of some one hundred feet deep.

I will here mention another horror that the settlers had to experience. At least the experience seemed terrible to us at the time, as we were not accustomed to such things in Russia. Namely, the raging of a Prairie fire. Already for a number of nights we had notice of the reflection of a massive fire to the north-east of us which, as the wind was blowing in our direction, also came nearer and nearer to us. In the end we could clearly see the huge flames which we all prepared ourselves to battle. And so equipped with all manner of fire fighting apparatus, we pressed forward to engage the sea of fire. A number of settlers plowed with their oxen and so finally after great exertion, we were able to master this all-consuming element.

Brother Heinrich who already had been somewhat sickly during our journey became seriously ill while we were at the Immigration Houses and also died there. He was also buried here and was nearly one and a half years old.

Our fathers also made many reconnoissance tours by foot from the Emigration Houses, in order to locate suitable locations for the settlement of village entities. It seemed that those settlers who had lived in one and the same village in Russia also constituted themselves a group here.³⁹ After a location suitable for settlement had been found the group would travel to Winnipeg, and everyone in turn permitted a quarter section of land to be entered in their name, or also took an additional quarter, which at the time was to be had for a dollar an acre. This was all done without first inspecting one's land, it making no difference, as villages were to be established in Russian style. And so the land of one settler was all swampland, the next was all bush, and the third was all stony. At the time no one knew where his land was or what it looked like, and of course it wasn't necessary as all the land was utilized as a community. What was not good enough for cultivation was utilized for hayland or pasture. From other quarter sections, which were not usable for any of these purposes, as they were overgrown with thick trees, massive quantities of wood for heating or building material were obtained. Everything, everything, as a community in the way that our fathers were accustomed to in Russia. Every year a village *Schulze*, *Herd Schulze*, and *Branteschulze* was elected, who for a number of dollars a year would see to it that things ran properly.

And of course everything would have been quite in order, if "if" hadn't existed. There were a very few who had not settled in villages and who had all their cultivated land, hayland, or pasture land near to their yard, or at least, with the furthest not more than a half a mile away. These few made progress. For example they had all their cultivated land in one piece, which was not possible under the village system, which had to have their "*hauskagel, schadruthen*" and who knows how many other kind of "*ruthen*". Here a piece and there a piece. A piece there and a piece here.

To top it all off, it happened that some individuals pledged their land with Loan Companies, which was a very big error, as through the paying of the high interest they expended their resources and their land reverted to the Loan Companies, which of course took it out of the jurisdiction of the village system. This and possibly others were reasons why at first a few, and in time always more village communities, dissolved themselves in order for the villagers to move onto the land, which was actually registered to them. Everyone now had to accept the land which luck had given him during the process of registering for the land. Although some redistribution was done in some villages, the differences between the best and poorest land could not be compensated for, in spite of all adjustments.

GRUENFELD, ESTABLISHING A SETTLEMENT

In the preceding section I have advanced a number of years in this report and will now return to where we left off. And so by ox—for those who already had a vehicle—and journeying by foot various trips were made. As the fall was coming ever closer and the winter also did not wait for anyone, little was to be gained by a great deal of searching. The matter finally had to be brought to a head. Father and his party, apparently under the leadership of uncle Johan Isaac and Johan Toews, located a place of settlement for themselves approximately eight or nine miles directly east which they gave the name “Gruenfeld”.⁴⁰

At first they were twelve who settled there, ie. in a period of two years.³⁹ The other villages settled by the *Molotschnauer* were: Blumenort, Blumenhof, Steinbach, Hochstaedt, Gnadenort, Rosenfeld and Schoenau. In about the first or second week in August we left the Immigration Houses and settled in the various named villages. But, what appearance did our first homes have! They were built very primitively. Some settlers lived in earth huts. Most settlers lived in canvas tents somewhat covered with hay grass. We and Abraham Duecks lived together in one tent.

A number of weeks later the neighbours reached an agreement to settle somewhat nearer to the forest. This was partly for the reason that the bush would provide more protection from winter, and secondly one would be nearer to the firewood supply. And so we moved to the new location, approximately one half mile to the west, where the village community is still situated today, ie. our present so-called Kleefeld Post Office.

At this final settlement location father, together with Abraham Dueck, built a “*Zarrei*”, (a form of shed where one placed the rafters on the ground which were then cross braced and covered with straw). Herein we wanted to live in one end, and in the other end the livestock was to be wintered. My father and Duecks had already bought a pair of oxen and a number of cows.

As the whole project required a considerable time to complete we had to live in a tent together with Duecks until late fall. From the outside we had covered the tent by laying long roof material on it. From the inside it was very cramped so that when we were all settled in bed there was little square footage left unused. We also had to heat almost the whole night with an iron cook stove, which we had bought together with Abraham Duecks. Such an oven cooled off as quickly as one could make it red hot. And so we found very suitable, the many dry shrubs which were available in great

quantities near our dwelling places. It burned like kindling and we boys dragged big armfuls to the tent. When I say "we boys" I must explain that this was Johan R. Dueck, his brother Abram and myself.

One night we came within a hair of being burned down. Although we were spared this misfortune, nevertheless, a serious accident occurred. As the mother had been sickly for about a year we had hired a cook. As it was again so cold during the night she had to get up to feed the stove. She fired the stove so glowing red with the thin dry bush, that the tin around the chimney, where it passed through the roof of the tent, started to melt. Apparently I was the first to become conscious of this, as brother Peter and I had our places for the night right under this tin stove pipe. I was now struck in the hair near the forehead by a molten drop of tin, and awoke screaming as I was burned so badly that even today a small memorial of this can be seen in my forehead. All the sleeping occupants of the tent more or less awoke on account of these screams and just in time. A few minutes later the tent fabric started to smolder and also to flame up, from the glowing stove pipe. In his confusion father sprang up out of his bed and without further consideration put his knees on the stove in order to suffocate the fire with his hands. Uncle Dueck ran outside in order to extinguish the roof fabric. In as much as I can remember a little snow had fallen and he threw snow on the material. In part it had also gotten fairly wet through a heavy rain. To be sure it was enough that by great exertion, we were spared the misfortune of having the little we had go up in flames, but my father was badly hurt. He had severely burned his hands and legs so that he had to spend a long period in bed, and withstand severe pain as several large holes were burnt into his leg. After much nursing it had improved enough within a month so that he could leave his bed.

After we had completed it to the extent that it was more or less habitable we moved into one end of the house. Here we had made ourselves two rooms with boards. We had put the cattle into the other end. But, it seems that we had hardly believed that a Canadian winter could be so frightfully cold, as it was hardly possible to keep the two rooms warm enough with the aforementioned cook stove.

Our dear livestock had things even worse than we humans. Hay was harvested late, after the many frosts had made it completely gray. Thus it had already lost its best nourishment. Perhaps also not enough hay had been made as it all had to be cut with a hand scythe and so it had to be rationed out sparingly. Through this meager and sapless feeding, the livestock lost its strength. It was so cold for the livestock to stand covered only by a straw roof, that any little piece of manure was frozen rock hard in a short time. And so the livestock had much to endure to the extent that tails and ears were frozen and lost. The legs of at least one animal were

frozen so severely that it could no longer stand up, and we had to slaughter it. Thus against our will and in spite of the fact that cattle were very expensive we again had beef to eat. This was also experienced by others.

After the neighbours had first completed their habitations they also addressed themselves to the hiring of a teacher, who would establish an "*Alma Mater*" for the school age children. The first teacher in this new land, who allowed himself to be hired for this occupation, was a certain Dietrich Friesen (died 1901). In his time he had also been a teacher in Russia, in the village of Rosenfeld. School was held at the home of Uncle Johan Isaac in the "*kleine stube*". They were our next door neighbours. I was the second highest student in standing in class. We sat on each side of the long and wide cross-legged family table, facing each other. (This however was only the case the first winter. After this we sat on long school benches and tables.) We were about a dozen students in total. After this year I also attended school for many years with my father as teacher, until I was out of school years. I quit attending school at the age of fourteen.

I did not learn English during my school years. However when I was out of the school years the desire developed in me to learn English and I subscribed to an English magazine from which I learnt to read a little, as best I could. However I received most of my training in this regard later, when I was working at H. W. Reimers (Steinbach) in the store. Here I had the opportunity to learn the language from the English children, and to speak it more fluently and practically. But, I have now gotten many years ahead of myself and will again reach back to the beginning years of our settlement.

I must also mention that the school children were not taught as many subjects as today in the district school. Testament and Bible were our only subjects and textbooks. There was no geography. One learnt the rudiments of reading, writing and the first four rules of Arithmetic and fractions. But we studied Catechism, Bible Stories and other edifying material, which I also consider very beneficial, as such truths can serve as milestones to guide one on life's journey to the heavenly Jerusalem.

After my father had held the position of school teacher for a number of years, he gave it up shortly after I had finished my schooling. In addition we had also operated somewhat of a grain and cattle farm. But on account of his obesity father found this work somewhat hard. At the heaviest he weighed three hundred and fifty pounds and so we had a servant during my school years whom we paid a yearly salary of some ninety or one hundred dollars.

However grain farming at that time was possible only with difficulty. The

draught animals (generally only oxen) we had were often too few, and in addition often only of poor quality. Secondly, on account of settling in villages in the Russian style, we had all kinds of "kagel" (small surveyed pieces of land). Likely one would then have a piece here and a piece there of some two, six, ten, and fourteen acres, and each parcel a good distance from the other. So the loading and unloading of harrows and plows caused a bit of delay every time. Of course the implements were only simple and cheap. The breaking plow which we had bought new in the city was also used to plow stubble. The harrows were homemade from wood and had iron spikes or teeth. Everything, everything, went very slowly as almost all the landwork was done with the patient oxen.

As far as I can remember we had already been in America some six years before we bought our first horse. It was an old yellow gelding whose rear right leg was very lame. It always limped when we went at a slow trot. The price of this horse was also very low, I believe it was twenty-five dollars. But to go visiting it was indeed better than the lazy oxen. To plow the prairie sod we harnessed our team together with A. Duecks and plowed a few acres for us and then again a few acres for A. Duecks.

When it then got to the point that a trip had to be made to Winnipeg this took three full days. And then when the roads were quite bad, so that one got stuck to the axles in the deep mud puddles the whole load had to be carried out piece by piece. Sometimes even the wagon had to be taken apart. This occurred quite frequently at the time, particularly in wet years, in which case the aforementioned trip could not be completed even in the time mentioned. We harnessed the oxen into yokes, although later one utilized the oxen harness more often, which was more comfortable for the oxen when pulling. Off and on also, they were simply bridled and one drove with reins just like with horses. I still recall one of my first trips to Winnipeg of which I will relate here. I will also relate of the end to which this trip came.

The second large emigration group from Russia arrived one year later than ours, among whom were also our friends, the John and Jakob Dueck families⁴¹ as well as others. My dear father had come upon the fine idea of going to Winnipeg to greet them on the ship, and to accompany them on the final leg of their journey to here. But the journey to Winnipeg had to be made first, and of course, with the dear oxen. We teamed together with Abram Duecks who had a red dotted ox. We had a black ox. However, what was the nicest about the whole situation was that I, ten years old, and cousin Abram R. Dueck, one year younger, had the great, great joy of going along. To Winnipeg!! Soon we were finished with our odds and ends and one humid July or August morning we were on our way.

And so, as oxen still only move at an oxen pace, and the humid heat tired them very much, we were forced to stay overnight on the wild prairie approximately seven miles from the city. But oh! Those swarms of mosquitoes. So thick they were, almost like clouds buzzing around us and our wagon. The oxen were hungry and wanted to make themselves amicable with the grass. They snorted and stamped as if they were wild and off and on we had to speak to them to calm them somewhat. We made our den under the wagon, and hung blankets and tarps around the same as well as we could to shield ourselves from the shameless mosquitoes. In the early morning we again wanted to be on our way.

But all the hanging up of blankets and protection seeking seemed to have been in vain, as there was such a buzzing, bellowing, crawling and swarming that there could be no thought of falling asleep at first. But after some time we must have slumbered off somewhat, for when we two boys awoke, we heard the voices of our fathers speaking in excited tones outside our den. After we had made inquiries in this regard, we had to receive the tidings that our oxen had sought the open spaces, and were nowhere to be found. After we boys had been posted to guard the wagon and instructed not to budge from the same, our fathers now went out on the search. We boys waited and waited. First until sunrise, and then again hour after hour, until the water well-nigh came out of our eyes, until the beautiful midday. And still no father or oxen came, only uncle Abram Dueck all alone. No trace of the oxen had been found and our father had headed off to Winnipeg by foot. What a disappointment! Instead of having the joy of seeing the City of Winnipeg in a little while and if possible to eat some pepper cookies and candy, we were now forced to undertake our return journey by foot. After we had somewhat strengthened ourselves with a cold snack we were on our way. Of course the uncle went ahead and we two followed. I must now also confess that in my whole life I have never been a good walker. But nothing could help me here. Here I had to be a walker whether I wanted to or not. At the beginning everything was all right and there was no gap as it were, between us and our uncle.

But as hour after hour went by, and the distance according to our calculations in no way decreased enough—then oh!—our young legs and feet almost wanted to refuse to walk further. The lead of the uncle always became greater and all his encouragement and scolding seemed to be of no avail. By the time the first Mennonite Settlement came into view my legs and feet hurt so much that I allowed my more light footed cousin to take the lead. And so with sundown, and by now marching like geese and separated, we arrived at the home of certain Froeses. After uncle apparently had related our adventures we asked for lodging for the night, which was most willingly granted us. How we slept and whether on account of great exhaustion we immediately fell asleep I can no longer remember. But I do

know as much, that I felt little better the next morning than the day before, in that my feet had badly swollen from the pain that they had endured, and that setting out again was not without pain.

And yet by noon we had waddled the four miles to home and could relate our experiences about our journey to Winnipeg. The oxen were found later, first our "*Blackie*" and then some three months later "*Baditz*" belonging to the Duecks. The father returned together with the newly immigrated *Ruszlaender*. He had been able to go a considerable distance to meet them.

I experienced more of such adventures and experiences.

Off and on I later encountered additional adventurous experiences in which I did not fare much better than in the aforementioned episode. Only it occurred in a different manner and this time in the City of Winnipeg itself. By this time also I was a few years older.

FOOTNOTES

1. See Peter H. Dueck et.al., **Abraham L. and Elizabeth Dueck and their Descendants** (Kleefeld, Manitoba: Self-published, 1965), According to the writings of John R. Dueck (1863-1937) quoted at page 23, the father of Johan Dueck (1801-1866) was Klaas Dueck who emigrated from Prussia to Russia in 1817.

2. See also Benjamin H. Unruh, **op.cit.**, page 366, where he lists a Klaas Dueck moving to the Molotschna in 1819. This Klaas Dueck is listed as being 76 years of age in 1819, and is also listed as being the father of an Aron Dueck who is 36 years old and also moving to the Molotschna in the same year. Both are listed as being from the West Prussian village, of Furstenauerweide. See also John P. Dyck, **Klaas Dueck and his descendants (1743-1981)** (Springstein, Manitoba: Self-published, 1981), at pages 2-11 for a listing of some of the descendants of a Jakob Dueck (1800-1868) another brother to Johan Dueck (1801-1866). Of his grandfather's siblings, John R. Dueck (1863-1937) states only that his grandfather lived in the village of Muntau, Molotschna, for 40 years, as did two of his grandfather's brothers. (See Peter H. Dueck et.al. **op.cit.**, page 23).

3. See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **op.cit.**, pages 302 and 306. It is recorded that Johan Dueck (1801-1866) was elected a Deacon of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde on July 22, 1848, with 43 votes out of 90 cast. He was elected a Minister on June 12, 1849 with 62 out of 85 votes. Johan Dueck (1801-1866) was apparently quite interested in history as *Aeltester* Peter Toews reports in the **Sammlung**, **op.cit.** page 316, that he has used the writings and records of Johan Dueck (1801-1866) as one of his major sources for the compilation of **Book Two** of the **Sammlung**.

4. For a Genealogy of his descendants see John D. Bartel, **Johan L. Dueck Genealogy** (R. R. 1, Steinbach, Manitoba: Unpublished, 1981), 66 pages.

5. For a listing of their descendants see Alfred Redekopp, **Descendants of Jakob Thielmann**, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Unpublished study, Agatha Theilmann/Bernard L. Dueck Section. For an interesting incident involving Bernard L. Dueck, see Peter Isaac, **op.cit.**, page 16.

6. For a listing of his descendants see Bernard P. D. Reimer et.al., **Stamm-buch der Voreltern Jakob und Maria L. Dueck** (Kleefeld, Manitoba: Self-published, 1955), 78 pages.

7. For a listing of his descendants see Peter H. Dueck, **op.cit.**.

8. For a listing of his descendants by his first wife see Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, **Jakob Wiebe, 1799-1856** (Mount Lehman, B.C.: 1966), pages 51-58. For a record of the descendants of Peter L. Dueck by his second wife see Dr. Solomon Loewen, **op.cit.**, pages 12-27 of the Peter Loewen Section.

9. An excellent statement of the Kleine Gemeinde position on the accumulation of wealth and the pursuit of enterprise beyond what was reasonably required to provide maintenance, security, and employment for the family. To go beyond these requirements would have been considered as evidence of a lack of complete commitment. Rather a leveling process appears to have taken place as the more well to do *Gemeinde* members contributed of their resources in order that the poorer members could be established.

10. See Peter M. Friesen, **op.cit.**, pages 507-509 and pages 545-547, for a brief history of this village which originally was a Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlement.

11. See Dr. Solomon Loewen, **op.cit.**, Johan Loewen Section, for a listing of their descendants. See also Lenore Eidse, ed., **op.cit.**, pages 442-445.

12. He was the father of Heinrich Reimer (1818-1876) who died in Blumenhof, Manitoba, in 1876. (See **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 10, 14, 20, 21, 83, and 85). Maria Reimer (1847-1916), the daughter of the latter, married deacon Abraham R. Reimer (1841-1891) later of Blumenort, Manitoba.

13. An interesting writing of Heinrich Reimer (1792-1884) can be found written as a memorial inside a copy of the 1860, Stuttgart, edition of **Die Wandelnde Seele** which was published by the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde through the instigation of *Aeltester* Heinrich Enns (1808-1881). (See **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, page 15. It is noted in this regard that it was a fairly prevalent practice in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde for parents and grandparents to give their children and grandchildren Bibles and devotional books for Christmas, Birthdays and other important occasions. These books were invariably those written by prominent Anabaptist writers).

According to this memorial, Heinrich Reimer (1792-1884) is giving a copy of this book to his granddaughter, Maria Brandt (1843-1927), (see *Aeltester* David P. Reimer, et.al. **Brandt Reunion and Family Tree**, Self-published, Blumenort, Manitoba, pages 47-79), who in 1866 married Isaac L. Plett (1844-1871), (see **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 41-44). This copy of the **Wandelnde Seele** has in turn been preserved by their grandson Isaac D. Plett, (Courtesy of Frank F. Plett, Rosenort, Manitoba). This memorial reads as follows:

“To Maria Brandt, Kleefeld, Molotschna

From your loving Grandfather. I give this dear book, called the **Wandelnde Seele** to you as your very own, as a gift of love. It should serve you as a guide to an inspired study of the Holy Scripture, the "Menno Simon" Book, as well as the Peter Peters book, and the **Martyrs Mirror** by Tilman (sic) Jan von Bracht and other similar writings. Also it is my wish from the heart, that in addition to natural human intelligence, you would also beseech your beloved God, for Wisdom and the Gift of the Holy Spirit, in order that you may understand what has been read. For you must judge spiritually, in order that through your reading of the Holy Scripture you may be able to find a True Wandering Soul; (the reference is to the pilgrimage of an earnest Christian, the Wandering Soul, described in this book—see Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume 1, pages 884-885). And that you may walk through the desolation of this world, on the path of Truth, for which purpose Jesus has gone before us as an example in this world and has said: "I am the Way, the Truth and the Life, no one comes to the father, but through me".

Be on guard for the reading of books of other confessions; for as Solomon says: "By making many books there is no end," (Ecclesiastes 12:12). Although such books contain within them many natural and reasonable presentations of the Holy Scripture and are preserved as being Scriptural, they contain only sweet words to please ones nature, and splendid speech; as the Apostle Paul says: "That they mislead the innocent hearts". This Apostle Paul, in the third Chapter of the Second epistle to Timothy, mentions many virtueless and blasphemous persons; including those disobedient to their parents, all of who we are commanded to shun. (See The Luther Translation which uses the word "*meide*")

Therefore my advice and plea to you dearest child, is that you obey your parents, who fear the Lord and love you dearly, and who have raised you with many labours and great diligence; and that without the permission and blessing of your parents, you do not go forth and give yourself up to Worldly associations, and that you do not come into contact and associate yourself to attend at Yearly Exhibitions and Fairs or other idle (purposeless) assemblies; thus giving occasion for all manner of evil, such as Pride, Vanity, Lusts of the Flesh, and the like; all of which leads one on the wide road of Eternal Damnation.

Therefore, if you do not obey your parents, and do not heed God's Word, and finally, if you elect the Christianity of the World, where no spiritual order governs the salvation of Man; instead all Ungodly ways are given free rein; Oh! then for once to reconsider; what a desolation and heartbreak you create for your parents so that they will have to grieve for as long as they live; and with tears in their eyes,—if they have spiritual love for their child—have to witness their child participate in the wicked ways of the world, through taking part in the Holy Communion. Oh, what a great sorrow for concerned parents; who have to see their child fall among the Delusions of the Children of the World, and not be able to live in spiritual

Fellowship with their children. (Translators note: To the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, Holy Communion was a serious event. Much preparation, by way of prayer, meditation, and proving, took place well in advance. Confessions, reconciliations, and settling of accounts took place. Members who could not achieve a clear conscience refrained from attending. This reference means that individuals in churches where Holy Communion was taken less seriously were not complying with Scripture. 1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

And now in conclusion, I beseech you in fatherly love, and advise you, my beloved grandchild, that you will earnestly study the Holy scriptures, as it is the direction marker and guide to Eternal Life. With this in mind I trust that you will receive this small admonition as a gift of Love, and will accept it from me as an encouragement to seek out the Way to Salvation. This I wish from the heart. Your grandfather who loves you and who will not be present here much longer. Signed, "Heinrich Reimer", on September 17, 1861. Resident in turn with various of his loving children." (Transcription courtesy of Mr. Peter A. Plett, Landmark, Manitoba. The bracketed portions are those of the translator)

This memorial is of great significance. The author reveals a very high degree of literacy, considering the state of education in the early 1800's, and an extensive Biblical knowledge. This is a valuable insight into the makeup of a rank and file member of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, as the writer is not aware that this Heinrich Reimer (1792-1884) served in any particular office. Also of interest is his comment on the purpose of the reading of the early Anabaptists writings.

14. The translator would encourage any of the readers who are aware of writings of this nature, including diaries, sermons, genealogies, and old German-Mennonite books, to bring this material to the attention of the various Mennonite Church and Conference Archives, or to the writer. A Collection of 32 volumes of letters written by a community leader such as Peter L. Dueck would be a tremendously important source of material if it, or even a small part, is still extant. Even a few sheets which look relatively unimportant can result in pages of information about an individual or historical event, when in the hands of someone knowledgeable.

15. See Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, *op.cit.*, for genealogy listing of this family. Justina Friesen (1816-1856) the second wife of Jakob Wiebe (1799-1856) was a sister to Cornelius F. Friesen (1810-1892) who together with most of his children settled in the villages of Blumenort and Blumenhof in 1874-1875. See Helena Jahnke, **Stammbuch der Groszeltern Klaas Friesens, Geboren in Prieszen**, Unpublished, (Courtesy of Harry S. Friesen, Winnipeg, Manitoba). Also see Peter Isaac, *op.cit.*, pages 17-23 for additional information about the Wiebe family. The Jakob Wiebe family is known to have lived in the village of Schoenau. Benjamin H. Unruh,

op.cit., page 309, lists a Peter Wiebe family as settling in this village on June 3, 1805. This Peter Wiebe is 53 years of age in 1808 and is from Marienburg Fehen Stadtfelt, Amt Marienburg, and is married to Maria Siemens (see also Benjamin H. Unruh, **ibid** page 346) age 48. Their children are: Elizabeth 26, Maria 20, Peter 17, Heinrich 14, Johan 12, Jakob 9, and a grandchild Gerhard 5. After pioneering in the new settlement for three years the family is shown to own the following: 2 wagons, 1 plow, 2 harrows, 10 horses, 14 cattle, 8 sheep, 200 *tschwert* corn in unthreshed shocks, 20 wagon loads of hay. It can be determined from the information recorded by Dr. B. H. Unruh that this family was relatively well-to-do. This would appear to be the family of Jakob Wiebe (1799-1856) whose descendants are listed by Rev. Frank P. Wiebe, **op.cit.**

16. The translator believes that Mr. John W. Dueck has here confused father and son. It was Heinrich Reimer (1845-1900) at the time living in Blumenort, Manitoba who was elected a Minister on January 22, 1876, having first been elected a deacon the same day. This Heinrich Reimer would have been too young in 1856 to be the foster father of the two Wiebe girls. The foster parents were likely Heinrich Reimer (1818-1876) or possibly also the grandfather Heinrich Reimer (1792-1884). It seems to have been a frequent occurrence for Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde families to take in foster children of their own *Gemeinde*, as well of from other families.

17. For another account of this episode see also Klass J. B. Reimer, et.al. **Das 60 Jahrige Jubilaem der Mennonitischen Ost-Reserve** (Steinbach, Manitoba: Warte Verlag, 1935), by pioneer Mr. John B. Toews at pages 35-38.

18. Meaning the high cost of purchasing lumber compared to cutting their own.

19. The author must mean about 1½ miles south-east of Blumenort and about one mile south-west of Blumenhof; i.e. just north of where the Slater and later the Mooney buildings stood on section 14-7-6 East. See Klaas J. B. Reimer, **ibid** page 38.

20. In the German John W. Dueck uses the phrase "*und liesz sich im seinen hohen alter noch eimal . . . taufen*".

21. For pictures and a brief biography of Mr. John W. Dueck, the author, see Lenore Eidse, Editor, **op.cit.**; Lorraine Dueck at pages 400-401.

22. The village of Friedensfeld was founded by families of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from the Molotschna and consisted of 5400 acres of

land. It was situated about 30 miles north of Nikopol. (See Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume Two, page 400).

See also Peter M. Friesen, **op.cit.**, pages 507-509. "Three families belonging to the Mennonite Brethren Church . . . agreed in a spirit of trust in the Lord to settle on the land along with the others". When the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde had left the area by 1875 Friedensfeld became a Mennonite Brethren settlement. Regretfully this church, which a number of Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde families joined after deciding not to emigrate, had to endure tragic disputes and strife, hostility, within families and among its members. (See also P.M. Friesen, **ibid**, pages 545-547).

The establishment of the settlement of Friedensfeld appears to be part of an overall expansion out of the Molotschna by the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. By 1866 the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde consisted of four Gemeinde, namely: Molotschna, Borosenko, Markuslandt, and Annenfeld (Crimea), under the overall leadership of *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872). See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung, op.cit.**, page 437.

23. In error referred to as Gnadenfeld in the **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, page 15.

24. For a description of this episode in a letter by Isaac L. Plett dated October 28, 1870, see **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 41-42.

25. Daughter of Peter Loewen (1825-1887). See **Plett Picture Book, ibid**, page 10, for a brief biography. See also Dr. Solomon Loewen, **op.cit.**, for a listing of descendants.

26. The village of Blumenhof was situated in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlement of Borosenko, which was established in 1865. (See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung op.cit.**, page 437). 120 families of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from the Molotschna purchased Borosenko consisting of 6,137 *desjatinen* of land (about 18,000 acres) for the sum of 184,100.00 Rubels and settled there in six villages. (See J. J. Hildebrandt, **Zeittafel** (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Self-published, 1945, at page 222). This was the largest of the land blocks purchased by the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in the 1860's. Together with a number of smaller Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlements, such as, Gruenfeld, Friedensfeld, Hochfeld, Neuanlage, and others, established nearby, Borosenko by the 1870's had replaced the Molotschna as the heart of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. (See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung, ibid**, page 437). Interestingly the Mennonite Encyclopedia article does not mention the Kleine Gemeinde in Borosenko. Apparently when the Kleine Gemeinde left the settlement of 18,000 acres was occupied by people from the nearby Chortitz Colony and perhaps this is where the Mennonite Encyclopedia article begins. It lists the 1910 population as 120 families or 600 people. Thus the settlement

cannot have increased much in size or population since the Kleine Gemeinde had left in 1910.

The reader may find it of interest to compare the scope of the Borosenko settlement with that of the Kuban settlement, in the northern Caucasus. Kuban was the first settlement of the Mennonite Brethren Church, and also took place in 1865. The settlement consisted of 17,500 acres of wilderness land apparently given by the Russian Government to the members of the Mennonite Brethren Church, in order that they could move out of the Molotschna (See Dr. Adam Giesinger, *op.cit.*, page 188). Originally land was reserved for 100 families but in fact only 67 families took out their grants. The early settlement encountered serious difficulties with internal dissension and economic problems. (See P. M. Friesen, *op.cit.*, pages 401-416; and also see the Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume Three, page 251). It should be noted that according to Dr. Cornelius Krahn, (See Dr. Cornelius Krahn, *Smith's Story of the Mennonites* Newton Kansas: Faith and Life Press, page 303), a higher than proportionate percentage of the early members of the Mennonite Brethren Church, were drawn from the "landless class," which during the 1860's and 1870's, consisted of over two thirds of the Russian Mennonite population. (See also Dr. John A. Toews, *The History of the Mennonite Brethren Church* (Fresno, California: General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975), pages 51-52, where the point is made that the early membership also included some members of the comparatively well-to-do land owning class. A number of others such as Johan Klassen (1820-1876) apparently made their way upward from the landless class.

27. These grandparents would have been Heinrich Reimer (1792-1884), and his second wife, who was the widow of Johan Dueck (1801-1866), nee Helena Loewen.

28. See also *Plett Picture Book*, *op.cit.*, page 18, for a description of the meetings and planning, leading up to the construction of this building.

29. A well phrased pun regarding the class consciousness of some of the Mennonites who had stayed in Russia after 1876. Thus some of these *Ruszlaender* Farmers (who might be no more than average Farmers by North American standards) who had a coachman; or someone who possibly had a year or two of additional formal schooling; or someone who was able to emulate the current culture and language from Germany; would consider themselves quite superior.

30. *Aeltester* Peter Toews, *Sammlung*, *op.cit.*, page 451.

31. *Aeltester* Gerhard Wiebe (Chortitz, Manitoba: Self-published, 1900), 56 pages. Also an edition published in 1979 by Henry W. Wiebe, New

Bothwell, Manitoba, 60 pages at pages 20-21. Also English translation by Helen Janzen as **Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America** (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981), 73 pages at pages 24-25.

32. *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung**, *op.cit.*, page 458. In the John W. Dueck transcription of the **Sammlung** these events are described on page 384.

33. See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **1871-1878 Diary** page 51 for the following account of the election of a delegate by the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. "At Brethren Meeting after Worship Service on Sunday, February 4, 1873, we put to the Brethren the arrangements we had made in the Molotschna. After lengthy discussion we reached agreement to also send a delegate to America in order to there seek for a place to exercise freedom of our faith and a new Homeland. Through a majority vote, the responsibility fell on my brother, Cornelius Toews, with 62 votes. The other candidates were Peter Toews, Rosenfeld, with five votes, and Jakob Barkman, from Friedensfeld, with three votes. At the same time, everyone indicated what they were prepared to contribute for the cost of this journey."

34. Some readers may find it helpful to have a brief explanation of the term "Heubodner Gemeinde" and "our" *Gemeinde*. As is stated in footnote 22 the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, by 1866 consisted of four *Gemeinden*, each with their own Ministerial, under the overall leadership of *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872). By this time the membership in all four congregations likely consisted of about 250-300 families. (See **Plett Picture Book**, *op.cit.*, page 14). In 1866 this *Gemeinde* divided in two over spiritual and church policy matters. After this division Rev. Heinrich Enns (1807-1881) was elected, and served as *Aeltester*, of the group that in time became known as the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde, and initially consisted of about one-half of the former members, in all four regions where the *Gemeinde* had a congregation at the time. The other half of the *Gemeinde* remained under *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872) and could perhaps be called the "Friesens" *Gemeinde*, because its *Lehrdienst* (or Ministerial) in 1866 consisted entirely of Friesens. In 1869, as a reconciliation was effected between the Blumenhof Gemeinde and the majority of the Friesens Gemeinde, a small group under Rev. Abram L. Friesen, of the village of Heuboden, in Borosenko, broke away from the Friesens Gemeinde. Rev. Abram L. Friesen was elected as *Aeltester*, and ordained by *Aeltester* John Harder, of the Orloff-Halbstaedt Mennonite Gemeinde. At the same time some 10 families remained with *Aeltester* Johan Friesen (1808-1872) until 1871 when his remaining 10 families joined the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde. Also in 1869 a division had oc-

curred in the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in the Crimea. *Aeltester* Jakob A. Wiebe who had been elected as an *Aeltester* of this *Gemeinde*, only shortly before, left with about 20 families to form a separate Krimmer Mennonite Brethren *Gemeinde*. The remainder of the Mennonite Kleine *Gemeinde* in the Crimea then continued under the leadership of the senior Minister Peter Baerg. (See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Sammlung**, *op.cit.*, Book 2 and Anhang No. 1 and No. 2.) Thus during the 1870's the Mennonite Kleine *Gemeinde* consisted of two *Gemeinde* each with their own *Aeltester*, namely, the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine *Gemeinde*—*Aeltester* Peter Toews, and the Heubodner Mennonite Kleine *Gemeinde*—*Aeltester* Abram L. Friesen. The majority of the Heubodner Mennonite Kleine *Gemeinde* settled in Jansen, Nebraska, in 1874, and thereafter. A smaller portion together with delegate David Klassen, settled in the Scratching River settlement, near Morris, Manitoba. Rev. Jakob Kroeker who later became *Aeltester*, was originally elected as a Minister, by this *Gemeinde*. The majority of the Blumenhof Mennonite Kleine *Gemeinde* settled in the Mennonite Eastern Reserve in 1874, and thereafter.

35. Small wonder that many of these purchasers were able to become wealthy in a short time during the boom years, that followed the 1874 Emigration. They were able to purchase at "giveaway prices", land which even Peter M. Friesen, admits was "of the best in the Colonies". (P. M. Friesen, *op.cit.*, pages 93, 135 and 198). It should be noted that in 1865, the Mennonite Kleine *Gemeinde* had purchased the whole Borosenko complex as a block for 184,110.00 Rubel. At an 1874 exchange rate, of about 1 Rubel per 0.75 cents American, (See Clarence Hiebert, **Brothers in Deed, to Brothers in Need** (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1974, page 192) this worked out to a purchase price of 10 Rubel, or about \$7.50 per acre. Now, some 10 years later, after houses, barns, haysheds, roads, drains, and bridges have been built, yards, orchards, and windbreaks planted, and other land improvements made, the same property is being sold for what amounts to \$10.00 to \$15.00 per acre; eg. *Aeltester* Peter Toews reports that on June 21, 1874, he together with his aunt, the widow Klaas Friesen (nee Karolina Plett), sold their village farms, in Blumenhof, which together made up 100 *desjatinen*, (or about 280 acres) to Jakob S—, of Hochstaedt, for 3800 Rubel (or about \$2,850.00). (See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Die Wachsame Auge Gottes**, Unpublished Manuscript, page 64). Contemporary Newspaper reports indicate that many of the Russian Mennonite immigrants had been forced to dispose of properties worth \$7,000.00 to \$6,000.00 for a mere \$2,000.00 and even for as little as \$1,000.00. (See Clarence Hiebert, *op.cit.*, pages 98, and 103). And yet some immigrants brought \$1,000.00 or even \$2,000.00 and were considered to be well off, *ibid*, page 188. (See also **Plett Picture Book**, *op.cit.*, page 27) This land apparently appreciated to a value of 300 Rubel per *desjatinen* just before the outbreak of World War One. (See Peter Isaac, *op.cit.*, page 14).

Other factors which contributed to the rapid accumulation of wealth by some of the Russian Mennonites, (the great majority were wage earners and small farmers) in the post-emigration era were: good grain price (up to \$1.00 per bushel), combined with excellent access to markets as compared to the early years in Manitoba; labour was very inexpensive, "Farm Labourers in those Russian Provinces near the Black Sea are only paid about forty rubel per year, about \$2.50 per month . . ." (See Clarence Hiebert, *op.cit.*, page 188). Naturally the unskilled Russian workers will have been paid even less; horses (and purchased goods) were cheap, at least compared to the price of horses in Manitoba during the first decades. Seemingly, anyone with even a relatively small amount of capital could make rapid progress in Russia during this period. In contrast, the major asset in Manitoba during the first years was the settlers own labour.

In view of the land prices above referred to, the reader may also find of interest the amount of money that the members of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde were prepared to pay for their reading material; e.g. in August of 1872, they ordered 29 copies of the **Martyrs Mirror** from John F. Funk, in Elkart, Indiana, at a price of 10 Rubel each, i.e. equal to the price they received in 1874 for one acre of land. (See *Aeltester* Peter Toews, **Diary 1872-1878**, page 31).

36. Namely Peter Loewen (1825-1887). His sons Isaac E. Loewen (1850-1925), Jakob B. Loewen (1862-1919), and Peter B. Loewen (1864-1928) later moved from Hochstaedt, Manitoba to Nebraska, and Kansas. (See Dr. Solomon Loewen, *op.cit.*, Peter Loewen Section).

37. Although the settlers in the Scratching River settlement had less difficulty breaking their land, a major disadvantage was that they had settled on a flood plain, and would be subject to flooding every so many years. See Dr. John Warkentin, **The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba**, Unpublished Thesis, 1960, pages 1-80 for discussion of the various factors considered. According to Dr. Warkentin the East Reserve at the time was the preferable land according to the thinking of the Canadian Government and the settlers from Eastern Canada. In retrospect one could perhaps say that those Mennonites settling in the Winkler, Mordon and Altona area received the best land. This of course, was not necessarily the only consideration.

38. See also K.J.B. Reimer, *op.cit.*, page 52.

39. From various sources it can be established that at least seven of the original pioneers in Gruenfeld, Manitoba, had come from the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde settlement of the same name which was located north of the Borosenko settlement. These Gruenfeld pioneers are: Cornelius Loewen (1827-1893), Abram Loewen (1836-1886), Johan Isaac Jr.

(1836-1920), the widow of Johan Isaac, Sr. (nee Anna Plett), Johan Toews, Sr. (1829-1895), Johan Toews, Jr. (1853-1916), and delegate Cornelius P. Toews (1836-1908). However it should be noted that not all of the Menonite Kleine Gemeinde Villages consisted of such transplanted groups.

40. For considerable additional information about the pioneering years in Gruenfeld, Manitoba, see Klaus J. B. Reimer, et. la., **op.cit.**, at pages 17-24, where Johan R. Dueck, the son of Abram L. Dueck makes an excellent presentation regarding early developments in agriculture, construction, etc.

41. The John L. Dueck and Jakob L. Dueck families arrived in Quebec on June 18, 1875, having crossed the ocean on the Ship S. S. Prussian. (See Quebec Passenger Lists, Ship No. 9, Courtesy of Ed Schellenberg/Mennonite Heritage Center). For a description of their journey see, **Plett Picture Book, op.cit.**, pages 20-21.

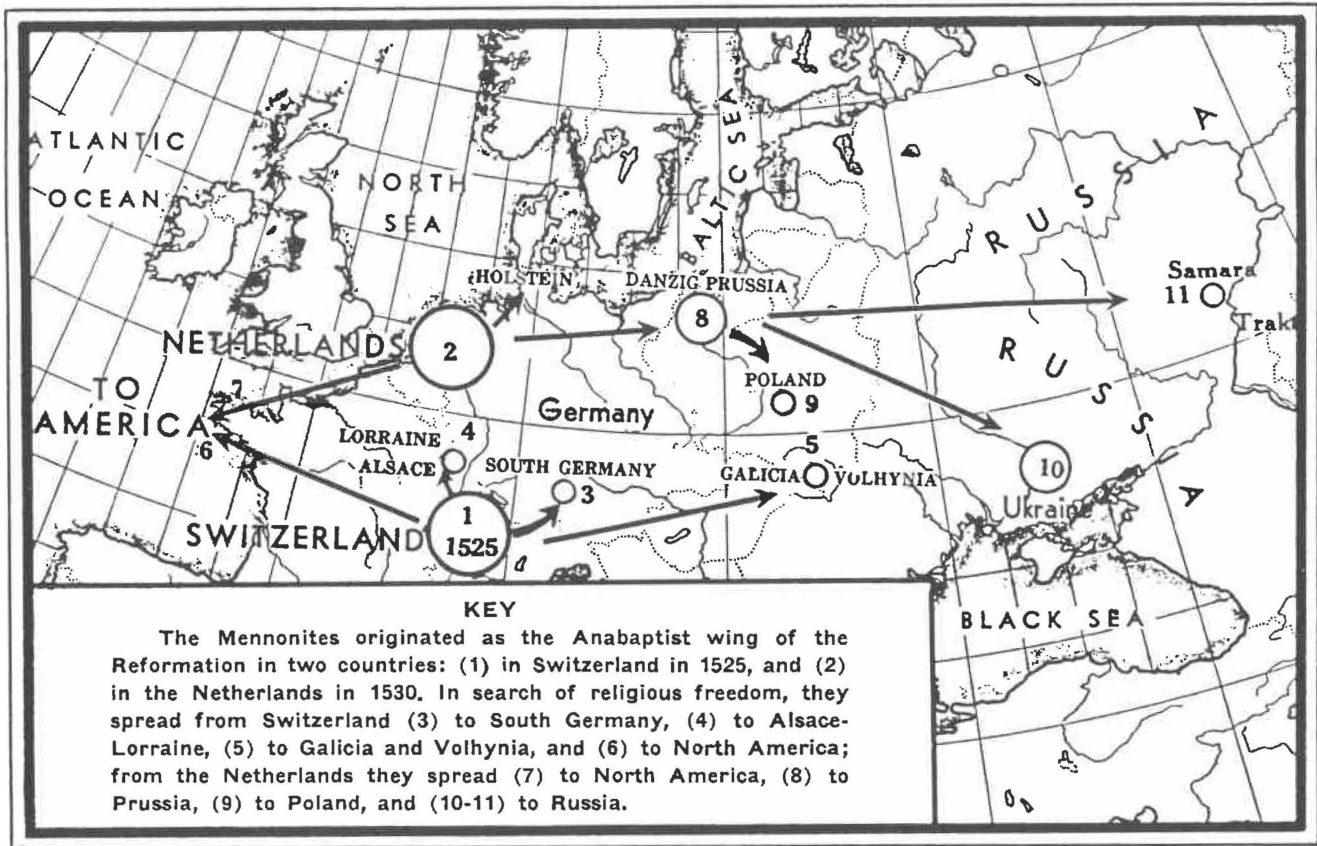
Part Four

**The Cartography of the
Mennonite Kleinen Gemeinde.**

**A Collection of Twenty Maps
pertaining to the history of the
Mennonite Kleinen Gemeinde.**

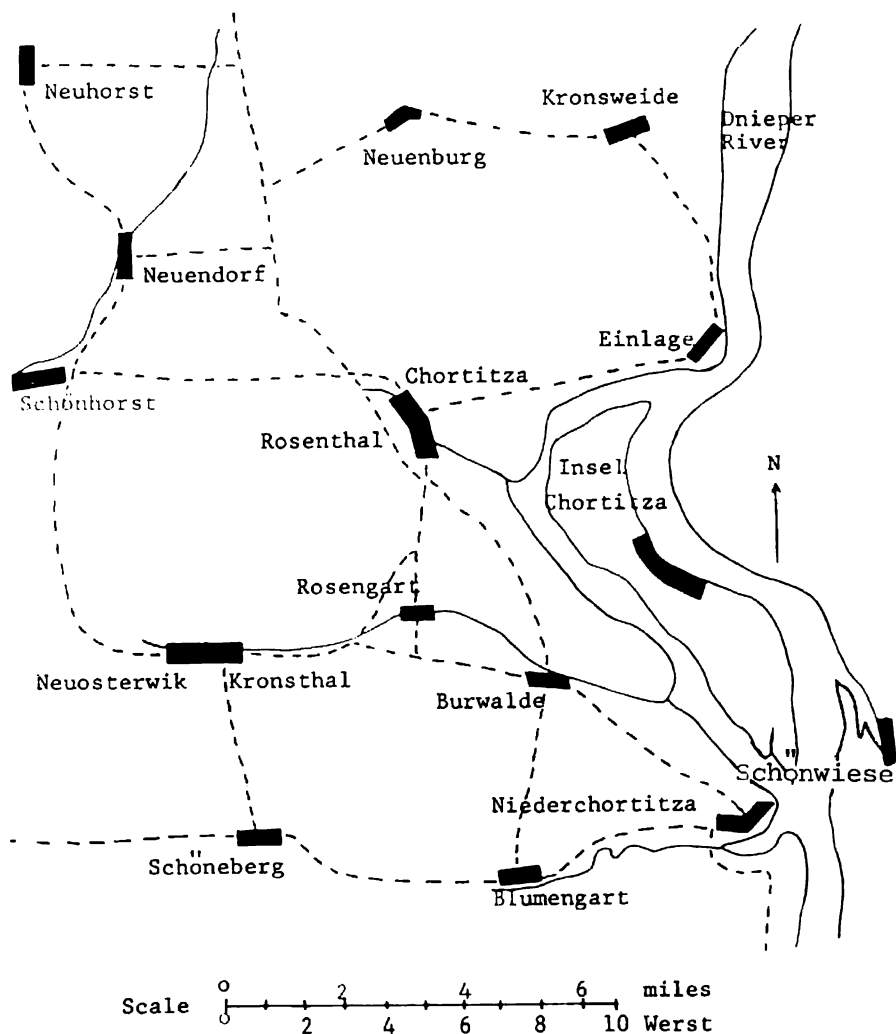
Map No. One: WEST PRUSSIA





Map No. Two: Origin and Spread of the Mennonites
From Mennonite Life

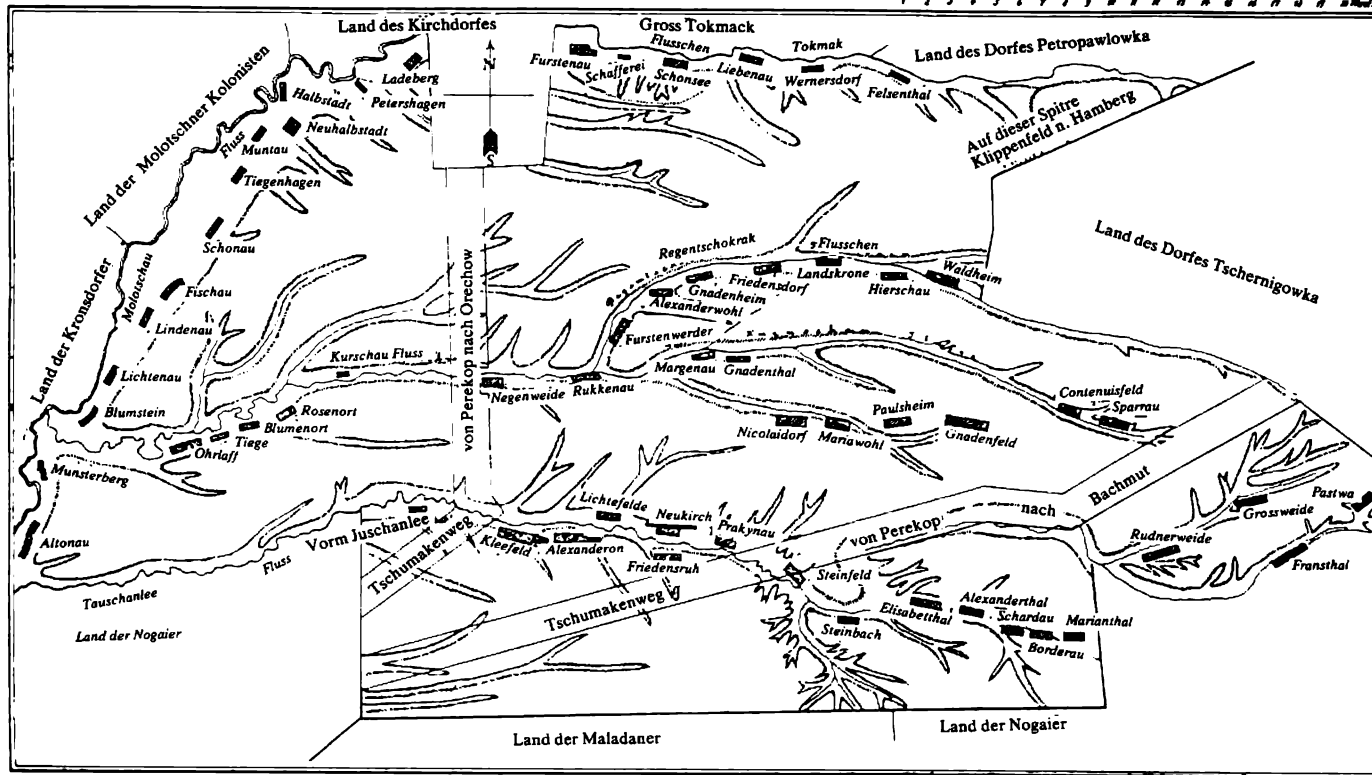
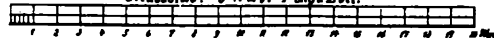
Map No. Three: The Chortitza Colony, 1833,
 By Mr. William Schroeder,
 Winnipeg, Manitoba
 Used by Permission.



The Chortitza Colony, consisting of eighteen villages, was established during the years 1789 - 1824. This is where many of the Molotschna settlers stayed over winter during their trek from Prussia to Russia.

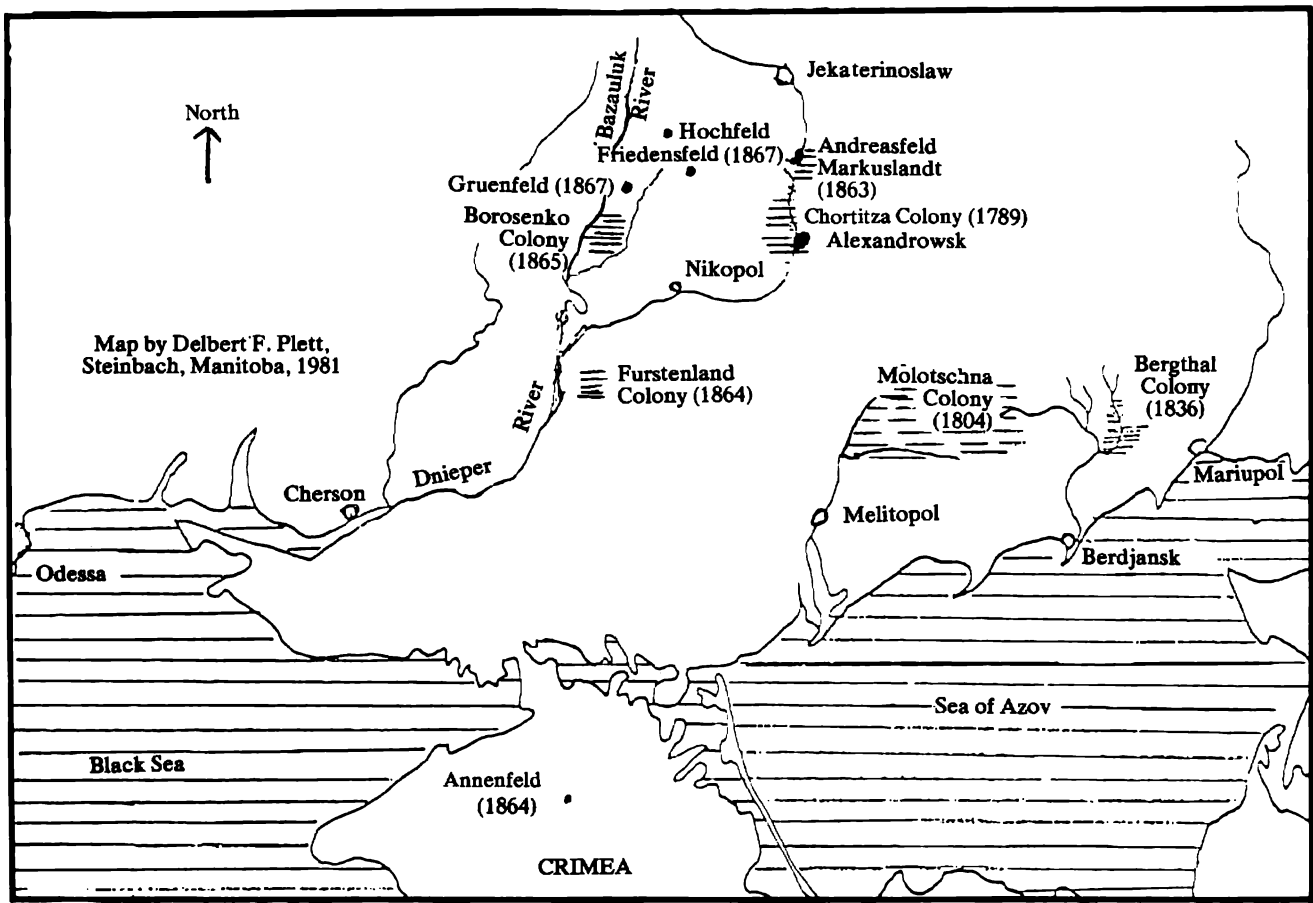
Karte des Molotschnaer Mennoniten—Bezirks nach Hippenmayer v.J. 1852

Maßstab: 5 Werst 1 engl. Zoll.

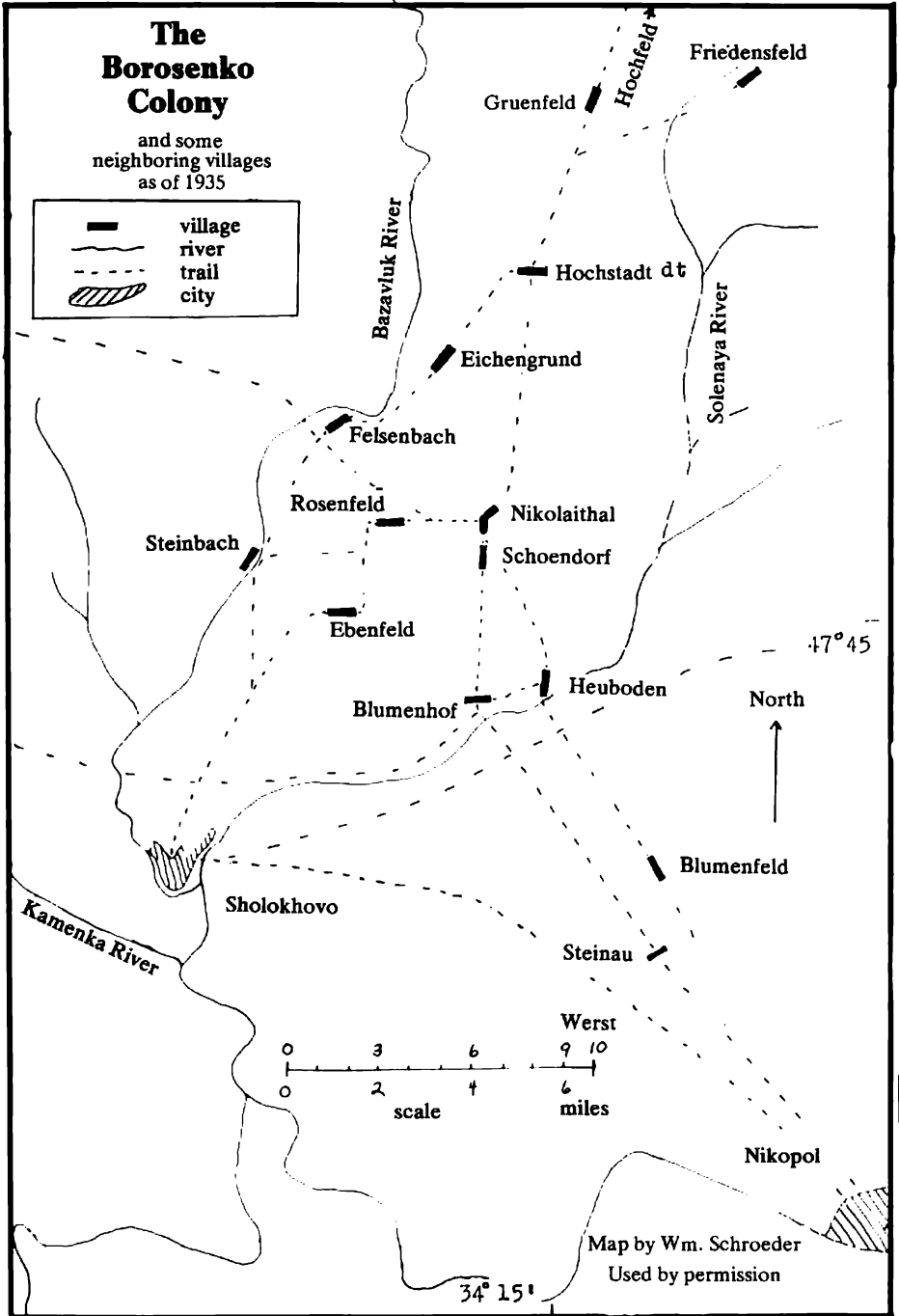


Map No. Four: The Molotschnaer Mennoniten Bezirk

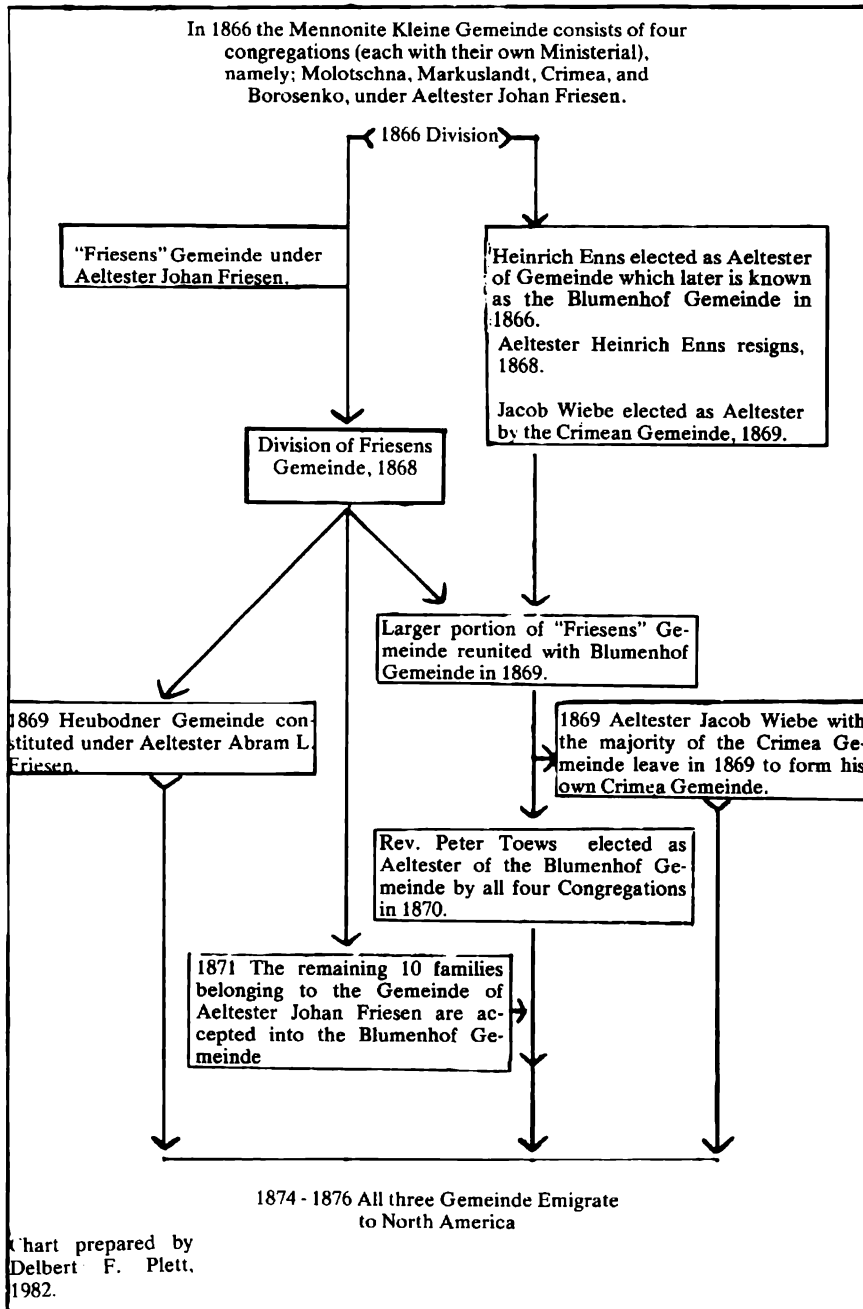
Map No. Five: Kleinen Gemeinde and other Mennonite Settlements in Russia, 1867

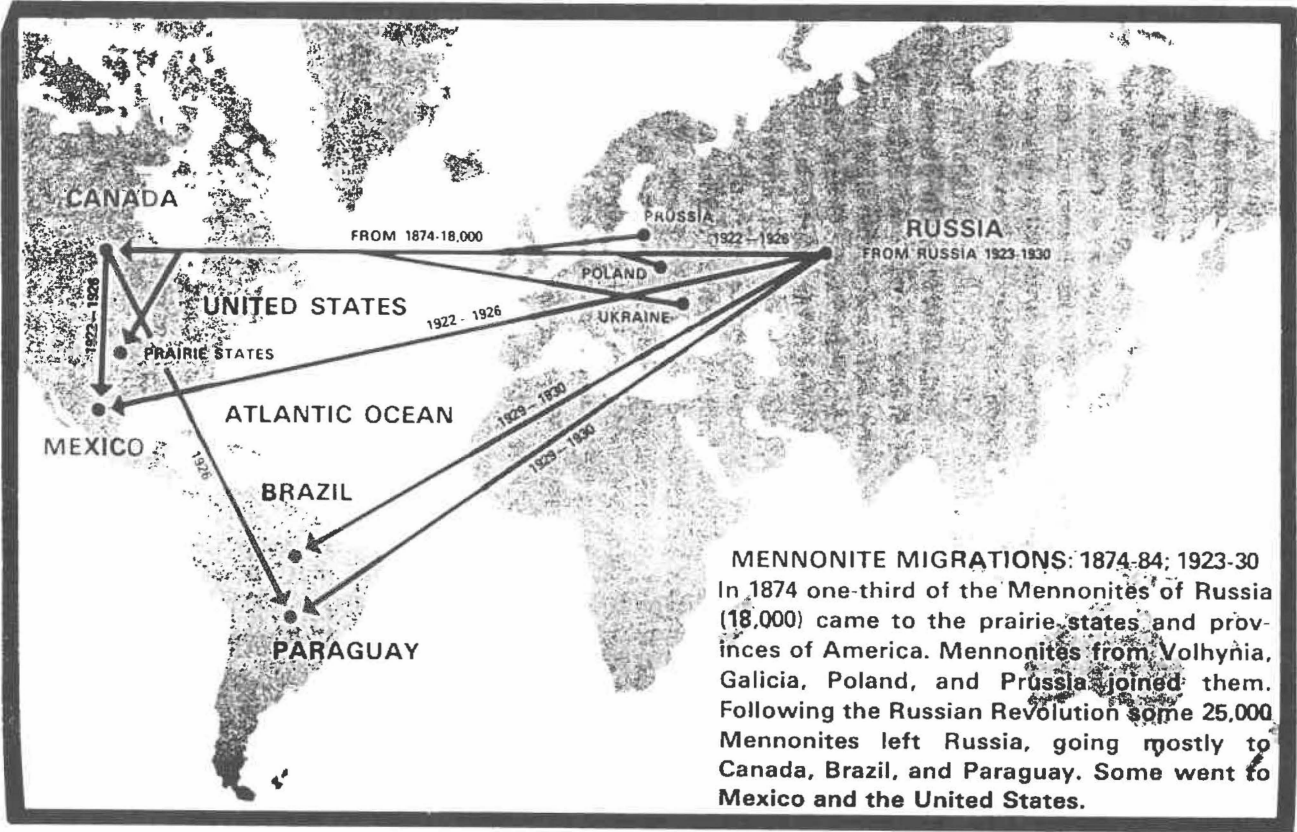


Map No. Six: Borosenko by William Schroeder

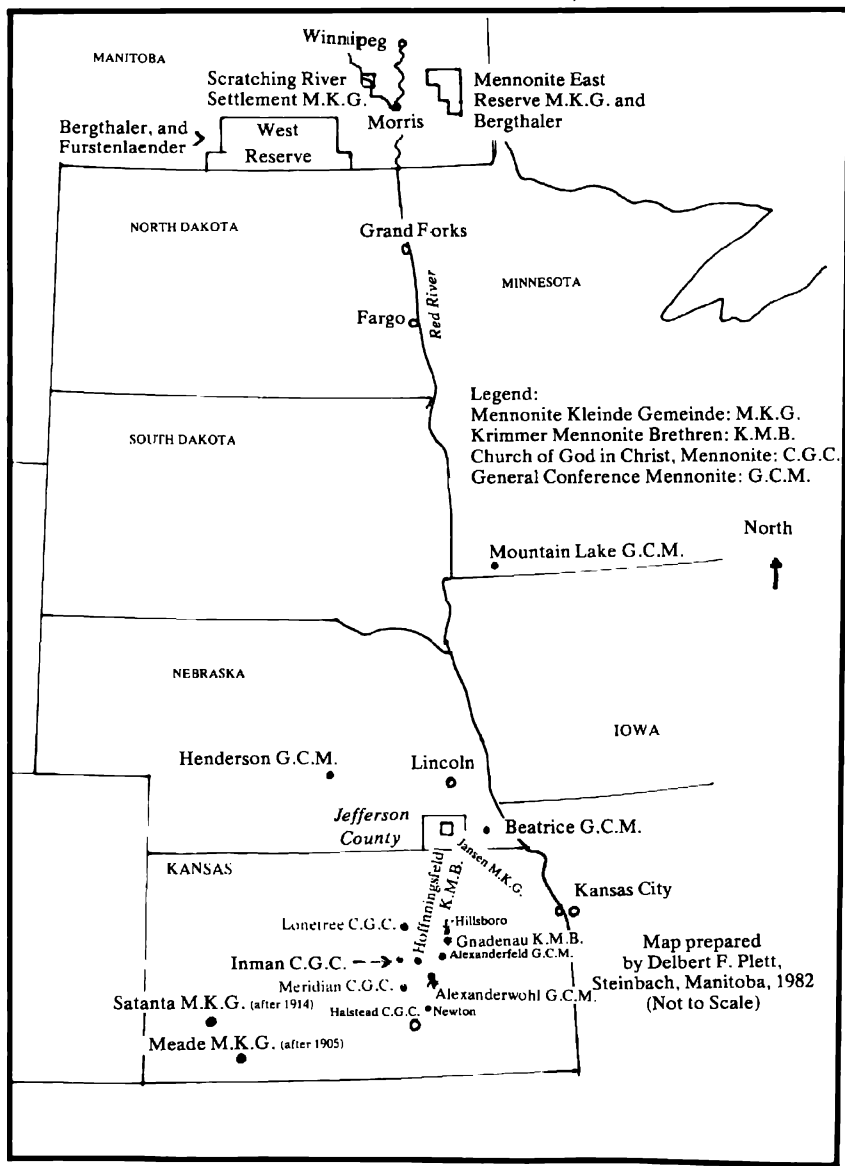


Map No. Seven: Chart of Divisions of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde 1866 - 1869

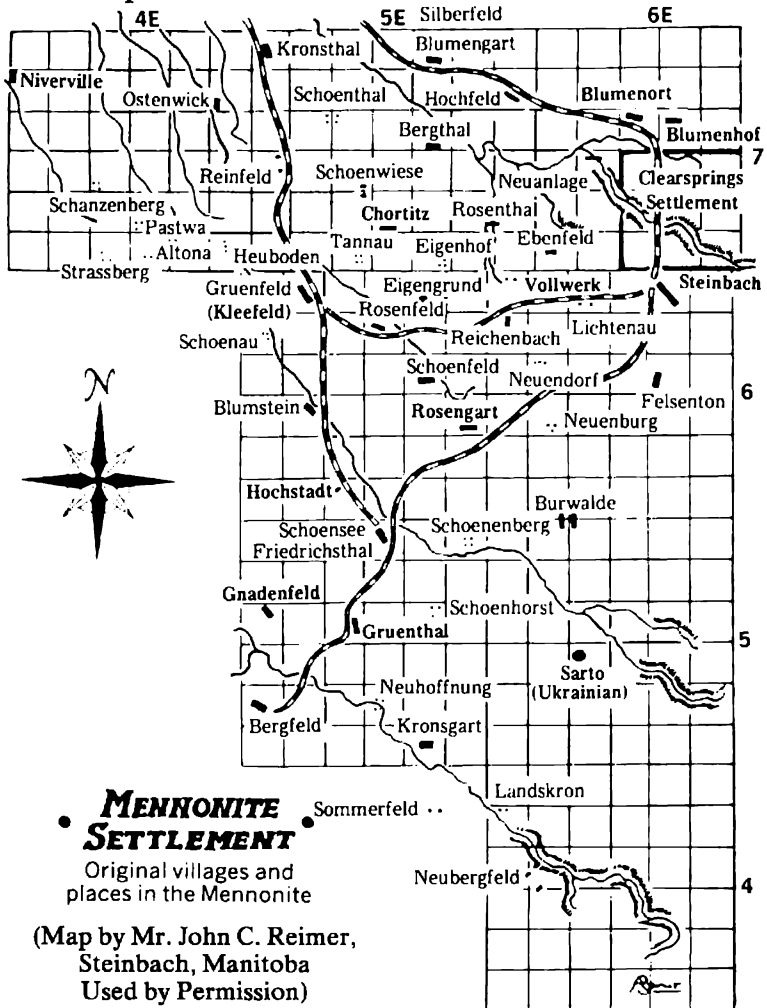




Map No. Nine: Kleinen Gemeinden and other Mennonite Settlements in America, 1874 - 1880



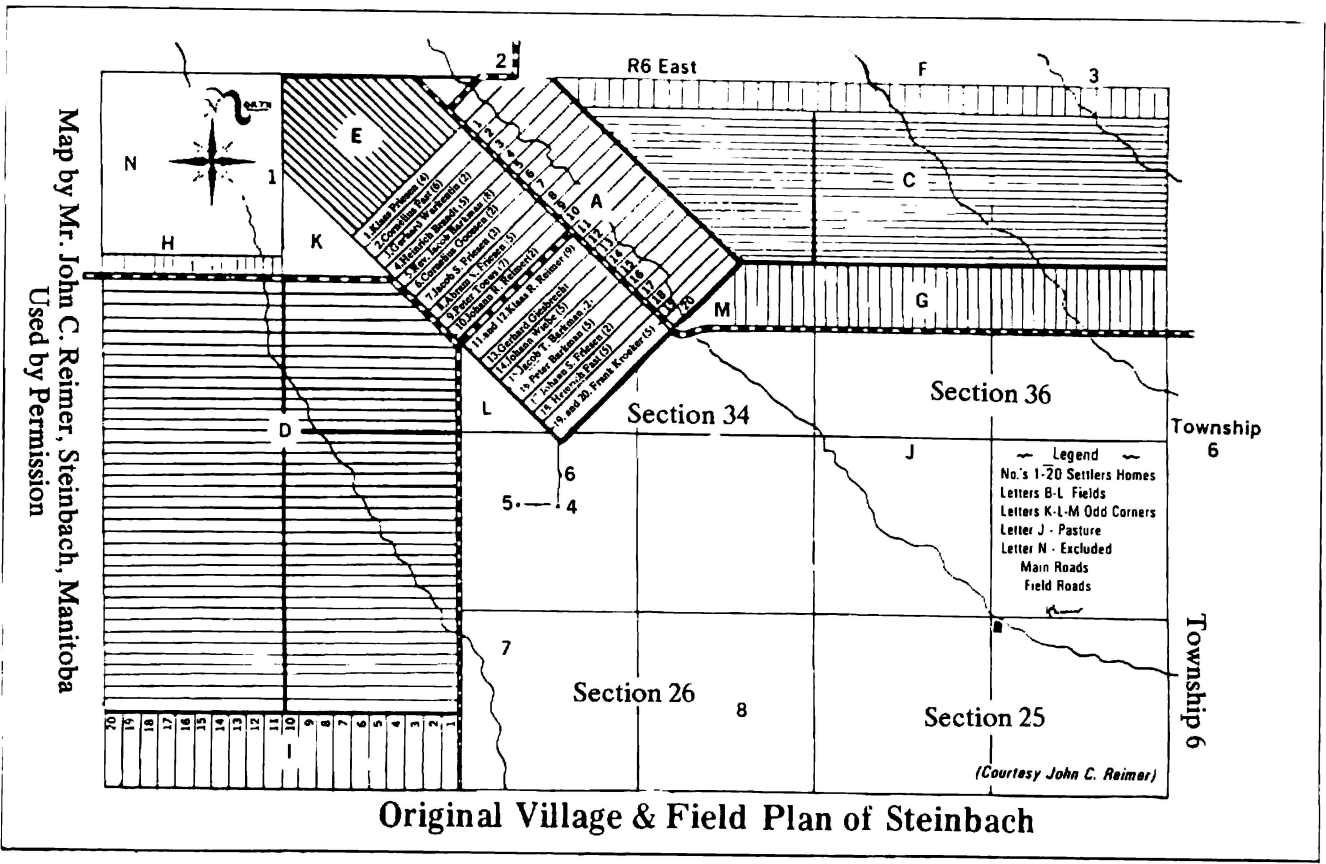
Map No. Ten: The Mennonite East Reserve



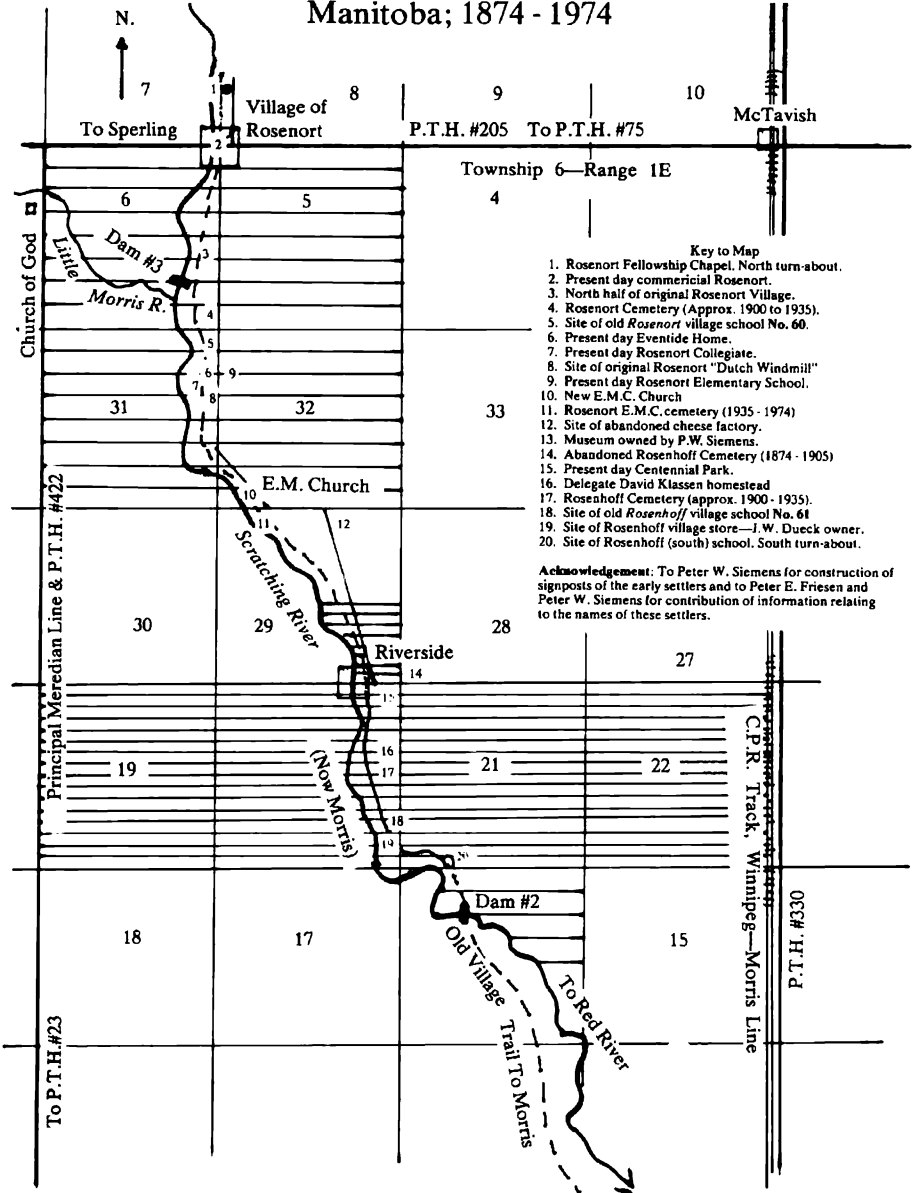
Though records indicate some 54 villages were settled by the Mennonites in the East Reserve, a fair number of these consisted of only a few farms and when these were abandoned, the village site sometimes disappeared without a trace. The names printed in bold type marks the towns, villages or areas which are still in existence today.

Mr. John W. Dueck in his book **History and Events**, identifies the villages established by the Molotschna (Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde) Settlers as: Blumenort, Blumenhof, Steinbach, Hochstadt, Gnadenort, Rosenfeld, Schoenau, and Gruenfeld. Only the village of Gnadenort is not located on this map. Heuboden, Neuanlage, and Lichtenau were also established by the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde in the first years.

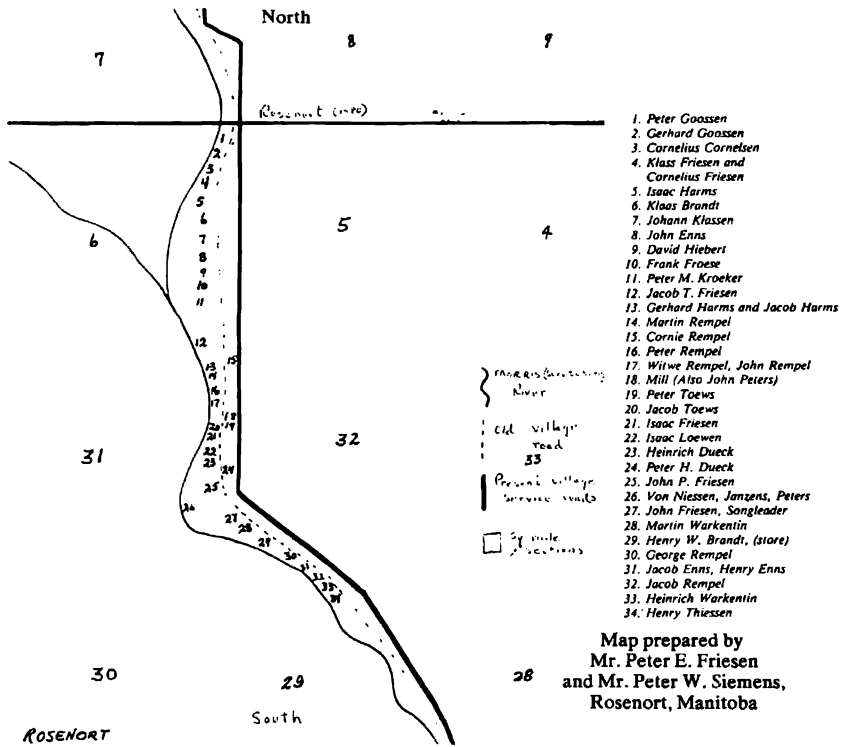
Map No. Eleven: Village and Field Plan of Steinbach



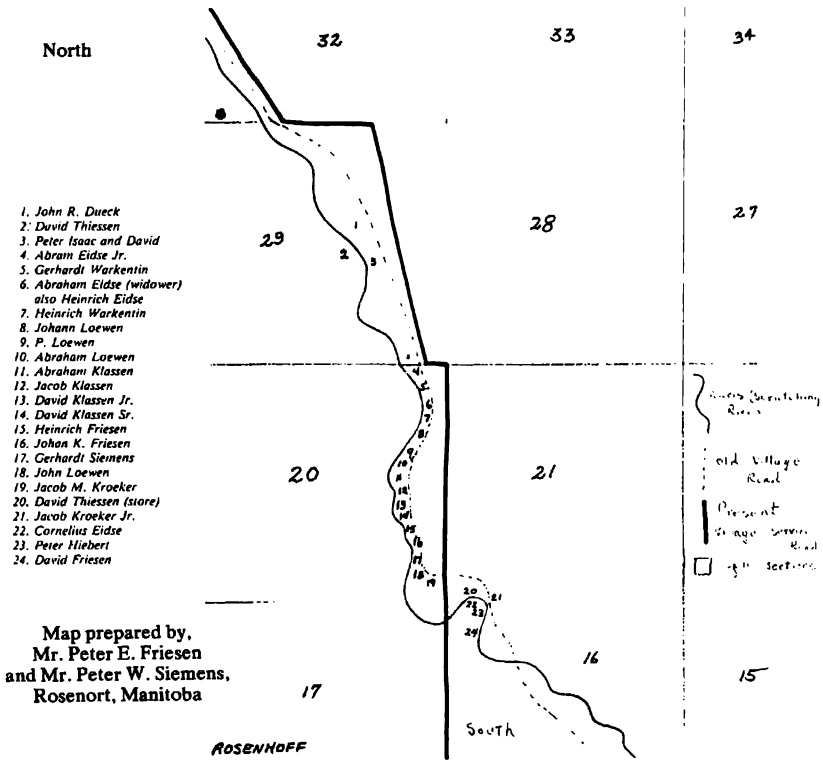
Map No. Twelve: Scratching River Settlement, Manitoba; 1874 - 1974



Map No. Thirteen: Rosenort, Manitoba.

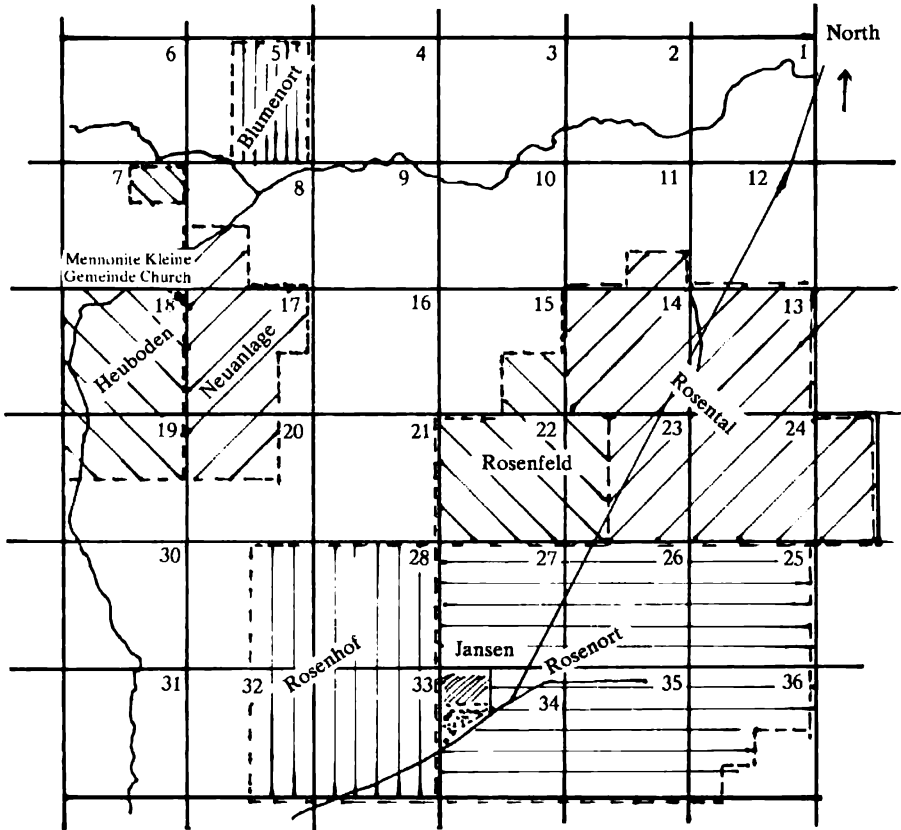


Map No. Fourteen: Rosenhoff, Manitoba.



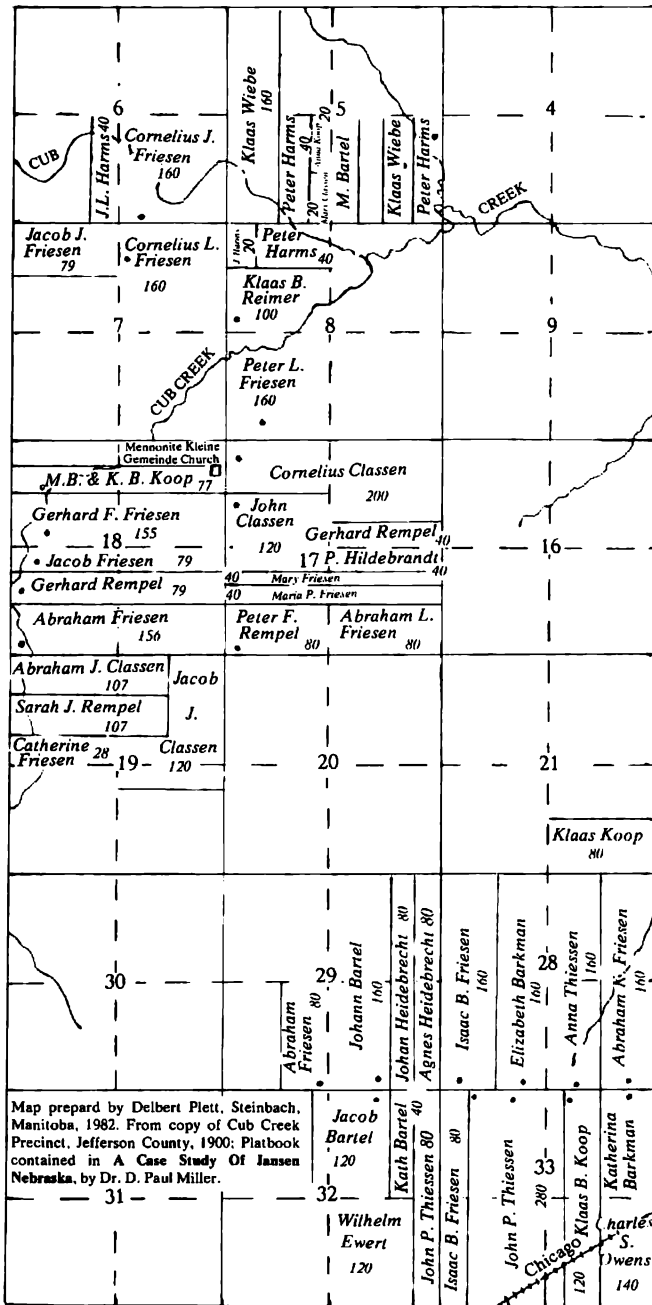
Map prepared by,
 Mr. Peter E. Friesen
 and Mr. Peter W. Siemens,
 Rosenort, Manitoba

**Map No. Fifteen: Cub Creek Precinct
The Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde Settlements,
Jansen, Nebraska**



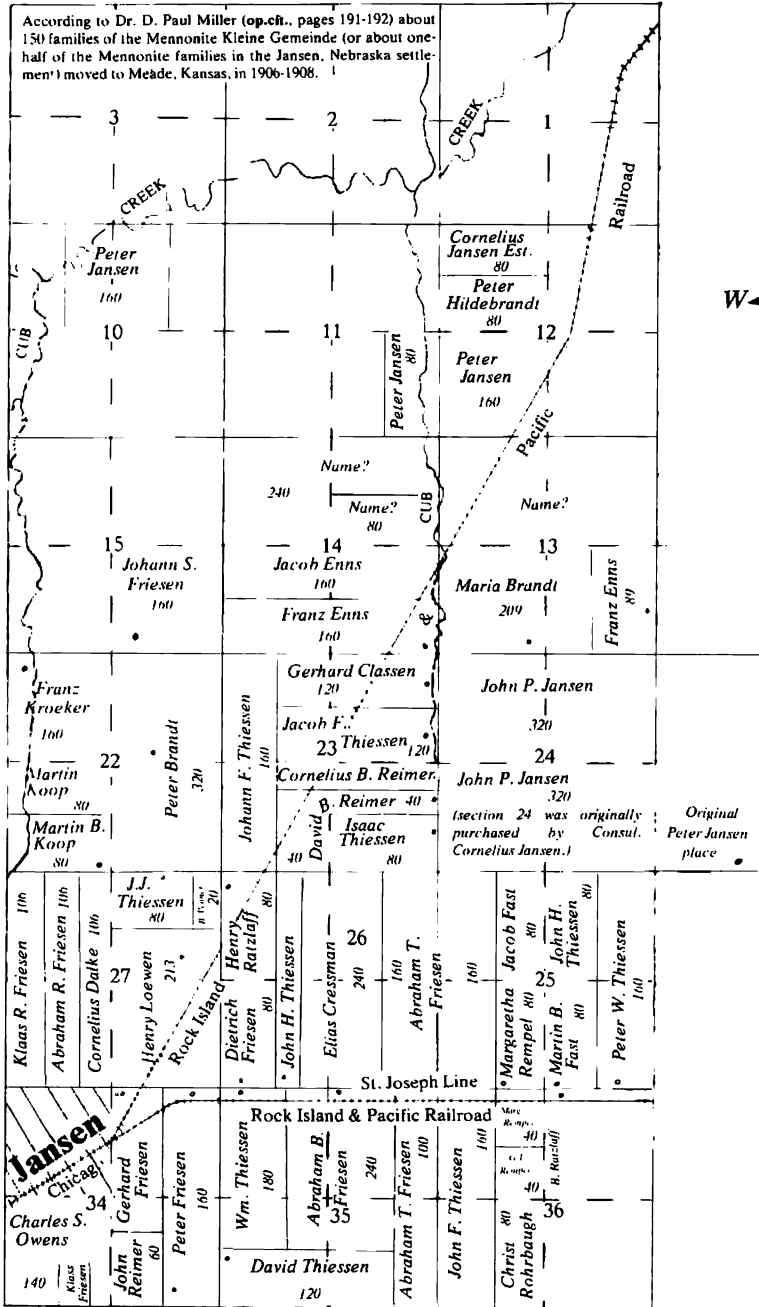
Showing the **Seven Settlements** as established by the first Mennonite Migrants, 1874 - 75. This map was worked out by Peter J. Thiessen of Jansen who was born in Russia and migrated to Jefferson County in 1874 with the first settlers. "Russian Lane" (map No. 17) was located on Sections 29-25, and 32-36 and its main road ran east and west. Rosental, Rosenfeld, Heuboden, and Neuanlage were laid out on an North - South axis.

Map No. Sixteen: Land Holdings In Jansen,
Nebraska; 1900
West half of Cub Creek Precinct.

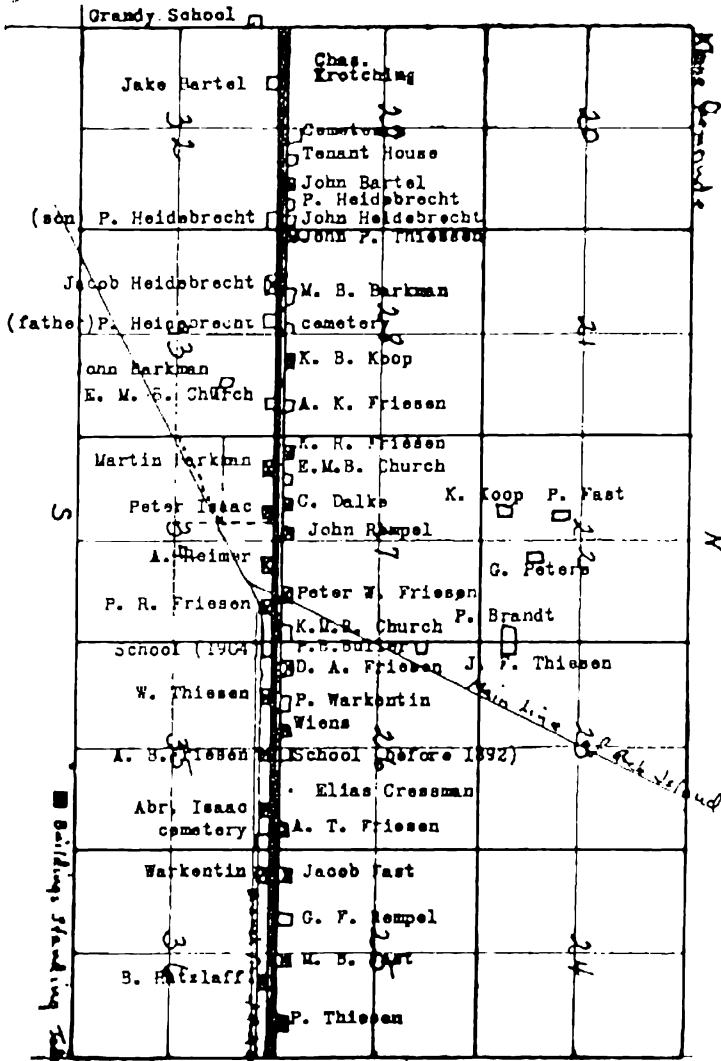


Map No. Sixteen: Land Holdings In Jansen, Nebraska; 1900

East half of Cub Creek Precinct.



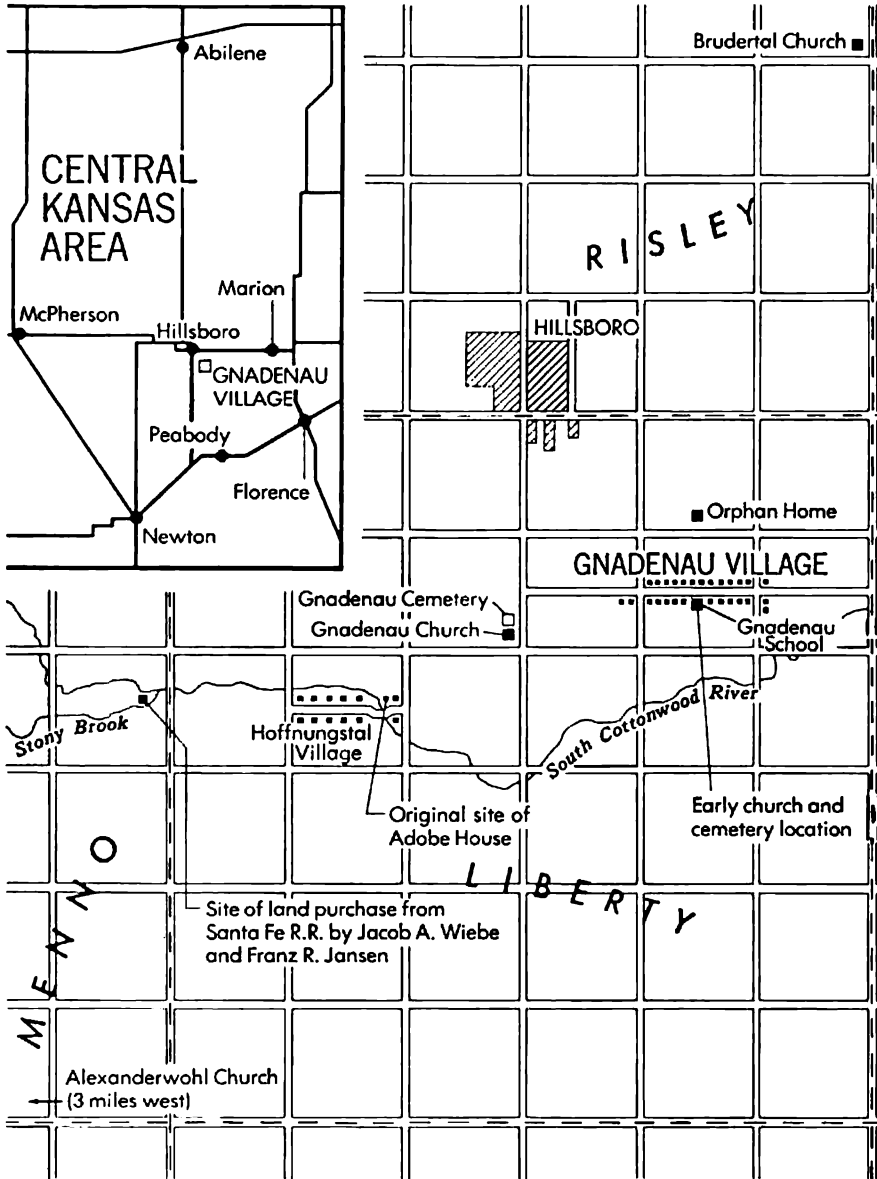
Map No. Seventeen: Russian Lane; 1890



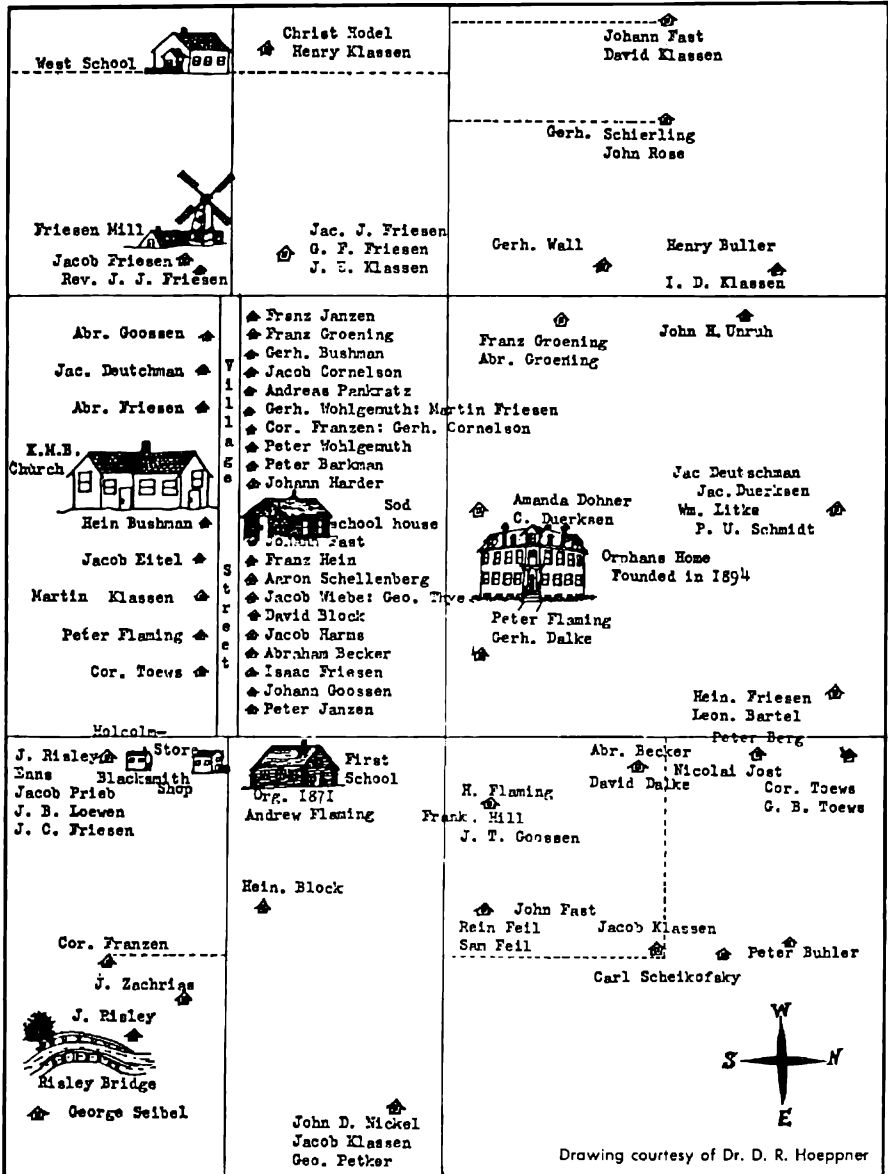
Map prepared by A.B. Friesen and Peter E. Friesen (brothers) who were life long residents of the community. Up to 37 dwelling houses, 3 churches, 2 schools, and 3 cemeteries were located along 4½ miles of section lane which acquired the name "Russian Lane". The farms on each side of this road were a mile deep and an eighth of a mile or even less in width.

Map No. Eighteen: Liberty Township, Marion County, Kansas, ca 1900

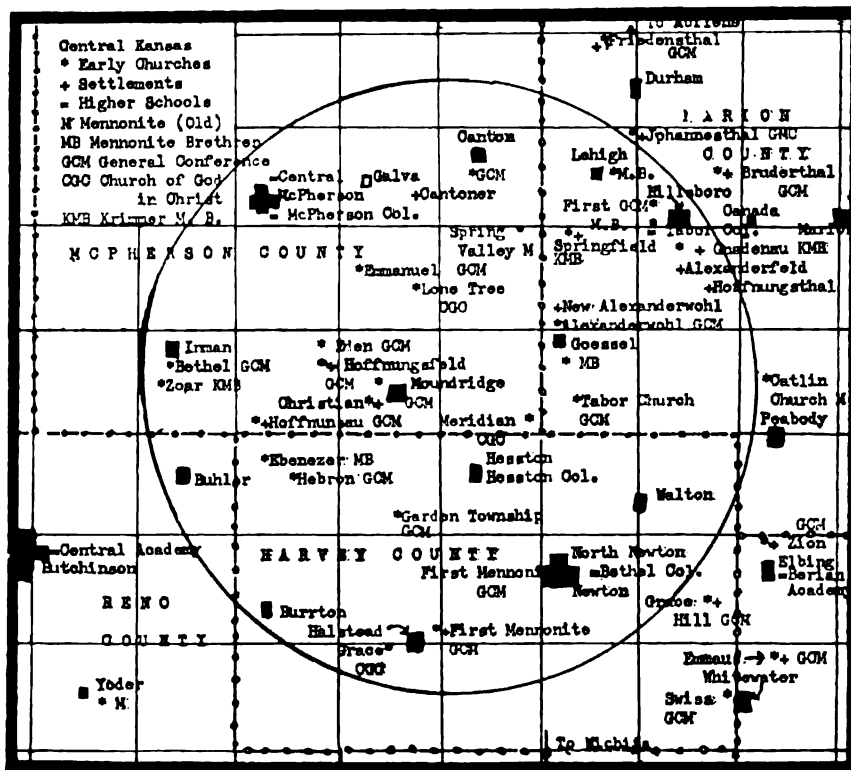
(with portions of Risley and Menno Townships)



Map No. Nineteen: Gnadenu Village at its Zenith



Map No. Twenty: Mennonite Churches in Central Kansas



According to the Mennonite Encyclopedia the total Mennonite church membership in Kansas in 1955 was 18,294 members.

Index

- Alexanderwohl, Molotschna 28, 108, 144.
Annafeld, Borosenko 29, 65, 146.
Annenfeld, Crimea 39, 40, 49, 73.
- Baerg, Rev. Peter 39, 40, 49, 51, 66, 73.
Barkman, Jacob 53, 65, 72, 79, 134, 151.
Bergthaler 18, 23, 115, 117, 149.
Blumenhof, Borosenko . 14, 35, 39, 41, 42, 43, 49, 54, 56-59, 65, 67, 99-101,
103, 132, 134, 146.
Blumenort, Manitoba 89-91.
Borosenko, Russia 14, 17, 29, 39, 41, 49, 51, 54, 132, 146.
Braun, Jacob 68.
- Crimea 39, 40, 49, 50, 60, 61, 66, 108, 145.
Czar 59-64, 66, 71, 72, 108.
- Dueck, Aeltester Abram L. 65, 73, 80, 85, 88, 121-122, 124-126.
Dueck, Abram R. 122, 124.
Dueck, Bernhard L. 85, 87, 127.
Dueck, Rev. Jacob L. 85, 87, 88, 93, 124, 137.
Dueck, Rev. Johan (1801-1806) 15, 85, 87, 127.
Dueck, Rev. John L. 28, 49, 51, 66, 75, 85, 124, 137.
Dueck, John R. 29, 122, 127, 137.
Dueck, John W. 15, 16, 93, 122-126.
Dueck, Peter L. 53, 65, 80, 85, 87, 93, 96-97, 99, 103, 121-126.
Dueck, Peter W. 97, 111.
- Eastern Mennonite Reserve 30, 115, 135, 136, 150.
Eidse, Cornelius 56.
Enns, Cornelius 50, 76.
Enns, Aeltester Heinrich (1807-1881) 40-42, 73, 134, 147.
Enns, Heinrich P. (1858-1934) 73, 153.
Enns, Jacob P. 73, 153.
Enns, Johan T. 73, 153.
Esau, John 49, 53, 65, 80.
- Fast, Peter 89.
Friedensfeld, Russia 19, 65, 85-86, 93, 131-132.
Friesen, Rev. Abram (1807-1891) 49, 51, 53, 74, 75.
Friesen, Aeltester Abram L. 50, 55-56, 59, 60, 72, 76, 108, 135, 156.
Friesen, Abram M. 50, 65, 75, 76, 78, 80.
Friesen, Rev. Cornelius 55-56, 71, 72, 81, 156.

Friesen, Dietrich (1849-1901)	123.
“Friesen” Gemeinde	55, 73, 134, 135.
Friesen, Rev. Isaac	49, 51-52.
Friesen, Jacob (1808-1889)	55, 76, 78.
Friesen, Aeltester Johan (1808-1872)	11, 12, 50, 53-55, 73-74, 85, 134, 147.
Friesen, Rev. Johan K.	54, 154.
Friesen, John I.	100.
Friesen, Klaas F. (1818-1871)	55, 78.
Friesen, Rev. Peter F.	53.
Friesen, Rev. Peter W. (1815-1892)	55, 71, 72, 76, 78, 158.
Froese, Franz	65, 80.
Funk John F.	66, 109, 136.
Giesbrecht, Jacob	98.
Gnadenau, Kansas	19, 21, 30, 32, 149, 159, 160.
Gnadenthal, Molotschna	93, 132.
Goossen, Cornelius P.	53, 65, 80, 151.
Goossen, Rev. Gerhard P. (1836-1872)	40, 41, 42, 49, 51, 65, 74.
Goossen, Johan P.	41, 53, 65, 80, 160.
Gruenfeld, Manitoba	14, 19, 31, 85, 121-126, 150.
Gruenfeld, Russia	18, 19, 29, 40, 42, 65, 66, 103, 145, 146.
Hahn, Senator	59.
Halbstadt, Molotschna	11, 68.
Harder, Aeltester Johan	12, 14, 26, 50, 55, 134.
Harms, John	53, 65, 79.
Heidebrecht, Peter	56, 158.
Hespeller, William	67, 109.
Heuboden, Borosenko	55, 56, 60, 65.
Heuboden Gemeinde	50, 55, 56, 58-60, 67, 108, 109, 134-135.
Hiebert, Abraham	49, 75.
Hiebert, Johan (1816-1890)	28, 53, 77.
Hiebert, Aeltester Peter	50.
Hochfeld, Russia	28, 29, 65, 103.
Isaac, Johan P.	52, 53, 65, 76 80, 89, 103-104, 121, 123, 136.
Jansen, Cornelius	14, 31, 108, 157.
Jansen, Nebraska	30-32, 56, 134-135, 149, 155-158.
Kirchen Covenant	11, 78.
Klassen, Rev. Abram	40, 49, 51, 57, 59, 66, 75.
Klassen, David	56, 66, 67, 109, 115, 135, 154.
Klassen, Jacob	56
Kleefeld, Molotschna	28, 42, 78.

Kleine Gemeinde	See Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde.
Kornelsen, Gerhard E.	75.
Kornelsen, Gerhard S.	50, 71, 75.
Krimmer Mennonite Brethern	19, 21, 80, 135, 149, 159-161.
Kroeker, Franz	50, 53, 65, 75, 151.
Kroeker, Jacob	56, 135, 154.
Kroeker, Peter	53, 65, 66, 72, 76, 153.
Loewen, Rev. Abram (1833-1886)	28, 40, 49, 51, 53, 66, 72, 136.
Loewen, Cornelius	136.
Loewen, David	53, 65, 77, 79.
Loewen, Johan	49, 65, 75, 80, 87, 154.
Loewen, Peter	38, 73, 104, 132.
Magendorf, Baron	59.
Markuslandt, Russia	14, 17, 39, 41, 145.
Mennonite Brethren Church	11, 87, 133.
Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde	3, 6-13, 23-24.
Muntau, Molotschna	85, 87, 127.
Nauanlage, Nebraska	155-158.
Nauanlage, Russia	56.
Nikolaithal, Borosenko	29, 146.
Nikopol, Russia	100-101, 145-146.
Orloff-Halbstaedt Mennonite Gemeinde	12, 23, 53.
Penner, Abram	80.
Penner, Jacob	85-87, 94.
Plett, Cornelius (1820-1900)	28, 30, 78-81.
Plett, Cornelius L.	73.
Plett, Isaac L.	97, 132.
Reimer, Abram R.	53, 65, 77, 79.
Reimer, Heinrich (1792-1884)	87-88, 128-130, 131.
Reimer, Heinrich (1818-1876)	77, 81, 89, 131.
Reimer, Heinrich (1845-1900)	53, 65, 77, 131.
Reimer, Klaas R.	65, 81, 151.
Reimer, Rev. Peter R.	65, 73, 80.
Rempel, Gerhard	56.
Rosenfeld, Borosenko	53, 54, 65, 134, 146.
Rosenhof, Manitoba	87, 152, 154.
Rosenhof, Nebraska	155-158.
Rosenort, Manitoba	80; 152-153.
Rosenort, Nebraska	155-158.

St. Petersburg	59, 60, 107.
Schellenberg, Gerhard (1827-1908)	49, 52, 75.
Schoenau, Molotschna	89, 130.
Scratching River Settlement	56, 115, 136, 152-154.
Siemens, Gerhard	53, 77.
Steinbach, Borosenko	29, 56, 65, 104, 146.
Steinbach, Manitoba	150-151.
Thiessen, Abraham	68.
Tiege, Molotschna	55.
Todtleben, Lord von Edward	68-69, 71-72.
Toews, Cornelius P. (1837-1908)	27, 41, 43-47, 66-67, 74, 109, 115, 136, 137.
Toews, Johan (1793-1873)	13, 26, 30.
Toews, Johan H. (1829-1885)	121, 136.
Toews, Aeltester Peter P.	7-9, 13-16, 26, 30, 37, 38, 40, 43-47, 49, 51, 52, 59, 60, 68, 69, 72, 108, 109.
Toews, Peter W.	53, 65, 77, 79, 134.
Unger, David	65, 80.
Von Kotzebu	60, 108.
Warkentin, Johan (1817-1884)	13, 14, 18, 103.
Warkentin, Martin	65, 80.
Wiebe, Aeltester Gerhard	61, 107-108, 133, 134.
Wiebe, Heinrich	53, 65, 66, 89-90.
Wiebe, Jacob (1799-1856)	15, 89, 130, 131.
Wiebe, Jacob (1827-1901)	89, 91.
Wiebe, Aeltester Jacob A. (1837-1921) ..	38, 40, 49-51, 61, 74, 134-135, 160.
Wiebe, Johan	99.
Wiebe, Klaas	53, 65, 80, 89, 156.
Wiebe, Peter	49, 53, 66, 91.