

The Story of the Schweitzers who stayed behind in Ukraine in 1874

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This talk was given in October 2006 in the First Mennonite Church, Hutchinson, Kansas to a meeting of the Swiss Russian Mennonite Cultural and Historical Association. This talk is here modified to conform to this medium.

The bibliography is given at the end of this document.

The number designations after the names come from the book *Swiss Russian Mennonite Families Before 1874* by James W. Krehbiel and is available in various Mennonite book stores, from the publisher Masthof Bookstore, 220 Mill Road, Morgantown, PA. 19543, (\$18.50 + \$3.00 S & H) or online at several book stores e.g., Mennolink Books at <http://www.mennolink.org/books/search.cgi?bk.jwk.03.txt>.

I shall begin with a brief rundown of the immigration of the four Swiss Volhynian Mennonite congregations to this country in 1874 so we can get some common background.

The decision was made by the Swiss Volhynian Mennonites in 1873 to immigrate to America and settle in the Dakota Territory.

So preparations were begun in 1873 to emigrate.

Ship 1. Docked in New York on 18 May 1874 with ½ of Zahoriz Congregation (to SD, 10 families)

The Zahoriz Congregation lived mostly in 4 small villages. These 4 villages were close together and the people from them met as one congregation in Ukraine. One half (about 10 families) of the Zahoriz Congregation (who were from 2 of the villages) left Russia and docked in New York on the 18th May 1874. They settled in Dakota Territory.

Ship 2. Docked in New York on 27 July 1874 with ½ of Zahoriz Congregation (to SD, 11 families)

The other half of the Zahoriz Congregation came to America landing in New York two months later on the 27th July 1874. This group consisted of about 11 families who also settled in Dakota Territory.

Ship 3. Docked in New York on 24 August 1874 with Horodyszczce/Waldheim Congregations (to SD, 53 families)

The third ship carried the Horodyszczce and Waldheim Congregations and consisted of about 53 families. They arrived in New York on 24th August 1874. They also settled in Dakota Territory as was originally planned.

Ship 4. Docked in NY on 31 August 1874 with Kutusovka Congregation (to KS, 73 families)

The fourth ship carried the Kutusovka Congregation and docked in New York on 31 August 1874 exactly 1 week after the previous ship. It consisted of about 73 families. They decided on the spur of the moment in New York to come to Kansas instead of Dakota Territory. Thus the four congregations immigrated to America arriving within the span of about 3 and one half months.

The whole scenario wasn't as neat as these statements make it seem. There were many cases where people from one congregation decided to join another congregation on the trip to America. And some people came by themselves as individuals or family units.

I'll continue now by talking about these individuals or family units case by case.

Peter A "Alter Bruderhof" Graber Gr2.56 (1816-1889) m. (II) 1854 Katharina Sehner Se2.41 (1838-1921) with 9 children, ages 20 years to 2 months. Docked in NY 22 July 1874.

The family of Peter Graber Gr2.56 and Katharina Sehner Se2.41 traveled with their 9 children and docked in New York on the 22 July 1874. This docking was just a week before the 2nd half of the Zahoriz Congregation arrived. They were members of the Zahoriz Congregation in Russia and I could not find out why they came on their own just a week before the 2nd ship containing members of their congregation arrived.

Jacob Wedel We1.2 (1825-1914) m. 1844 Katharina Gering Ge2.83 (1827-1890) with 6 children ages 23 to 4. Docked 8 November 1874

Jacob Wedel [We1.2] and Katharine Gering [Ge2.83] with 6 children docked in New York on 8 November 1874. Jacob and Katharine were my great great grandparents. I could not find out what delayed them as they docked over 2 months after the rest of the Kutusovka Congregation of which they were members. They came to Kansas.

Peter "Schlosser" Gering Ge3.315 (1839-1919) m. (II) 1864 Maria Riess Graber Rs2.23 (her II) (1830-1907) with perhaps 9 children (plus 3 spouses) and 4 grandchildren. Docked in NY 13 November 1874

Peter "Schlosser" Gering [Ge3.315] (my great uncle) and Maria Riess Graber [Rs2.23] with 6 children docked in New York on 13 November 1874. For both Peter and Maria this was a second marriage and Maria Riess Graber brought 6 Graber children with her from her first marriage. The 3 oldest of the Graber children were married in Russia and the other 3 were ages 17, 16 and 10 in the year 1874. They came with Peter and Maria Riess Graber on the ship along with 3 of their own Gering children with the ages of 9, 6 and 1. They docked 2 ½ months after the last of the 4 ships arrived. Peter and wife were members of the Waldheim Congregation and Peter was the son of a minister in that Congregation. Peter's father retired his ministerial obligations shortly before the emigration. That Waldheim congregation docked in New York on 24th August 1874 and went to Dakota Territory. Peter and Maria did not follow the rest of the family and go to Dakota Territory however. They settled near Halstead, KS. in Harvey Co. In 1886 Peter and his son Jacob built a water mill on the Ninnescah River southwest of Murdock, KS. in Kingman Co. Murdock is southeast of Pretty Prairie. The ship list information is from David A. Haury's book, *Index to Mennonite Immigrants on United States Passenger Lists 1872-1904* [HaDa 36].

Friedrich Ortmann Om2.44 [formerly Om2.21] (1834-1910) m. 1854 Wilhelmina Julianna "Jule" Ortmann Om2.33 [formerly Om2.12] with 8 children ages 18 to 1. Docked in NY 22 May 1878

Friderich Ortmann [Om2.21] and Wilhelmina "Jule" Ortmann [Om2.12] with 7 children were really late. They docked in New York on 22 May 1878. That was almost exactly 4 years after the first ship carrying our people docked in New York. What held them up in the village of Kutusovka? I again could not find out. This Ortmann family was the only Ortmanns who joined the Mennonite church in Russia. They moved to Kutusovka in 1871 and Friderich and "Jule" were baptized in April 1871 [see EdKu 107 & 527]. They arrived in Kansas and settled south of the Hopefield Church at Moundridge. All the other Ortmann families ended up in Dakota Territory.

There are several cases where I have been able to discover why delays took place.

Johann J "Jos" Waltner Wa2.42 m. 1852 Maria Krehbiel Kr2.63 (1837-1907) with 10 children. Docked in 1875

Son: Wa3.42a Joseph J N Waltner (1869-1947)

An incident happened to the family of Johann J "Jos" Waltner [Wa2.42] and Maria Krehbiel [Kr2.63] at the time of the emigration from Russia. As they were moving from their village to the railroad, their 10th child, a son Joseph Wa3.42a, jumped off the wagon... . Well, I'll just read the story as found in the obituary of their young son Joseph Waltner [Wa3.42a] in the Freeman Courier. It reads, "...Joseph, less than 6 years old jumped from the wagon and fractured a leg. This made it necessary for his oldest sister [Freni Waltner Wa3.423] to remain with him in Europe while the rest of the family continued the journey. In the following year 1875 the two took ship for America with other Mennonites, and rejoined the family... ." [FmCo 21-8-47] I presume that the family was living in Kutusovka and was leaving that village to come to Kansas when the

broken leg happened. Their family record is in the Kutusovka Church book. However, there is a problem with this story. None of the Johann J "Jos" Waltner [Wa2.42] and Maria Krehbiel [Kr2.63] family can be found in any of the 4 ship lists that carried the 4 congregations to America. Also, according to other Waltner family stories the entire family came to America in 1875 as is stated in *The John J. and Katharina (Mueller) Waltner Family Record* [WaJj 3] and *The Joseph Waltner Family* [WaJo 22]. So I presume that the entire family went back to the village and took care of the injured son. When they did come they did not follow their congregation to Kansas but settled in Dakota Territory.

Peter "Spitz" or "Spitzberger" Graber Gr3.821 (1843-1929) m. 1867 Freni "Jos" Waltner Wa2.4a (1850-1879) with 2 children ages 6 and 1

Peter "Spitz" or "Spitzberger" Graber [Gr3.821] and Freni "Jos" Waltner [Wa2.4a] with their family were leaving Russia with the Waldheim Congregation to come to America. This story is written in Peter Spitzberger's obituary in the Freeman Courier May 1929. "The long, difficult and perilous journey became even more painful to him because of an incident that was beyond his control. Just after the party had crossed the line into Austria an official came and ordered him to return to Russia for the purpose of acting as witness in some dispute. He could not have been forced back because he was beyond the Russian border, but he could not make up his mind to move on and leave anything unfinished behind him so he turned back while his wife and two children continued the journey with the party. The matter was promptly adjusted upon his return to Russia and he was permitted to journey on [i.e., to continue on to America]." [FmCo 16-4-29] Martin Schrag, in his book *The European History of the Swiss Mennonites*, states that this involved a real estate deal in which Peter "Spitzberger" was wrongly accused. After the court case was settled, he came by himself a week later with the Kutusovka Congregation. [SgMa 128] He can be found in that Kutusovka ship list with no other immediate family members. The marriage and family of Peter and Freni are listed in the Waldheim Church Book and they were undoubtedly emigrating with that Waldheim congregation at the time of this incident. There is a problem here, however. I could not find either the mother (Freni Waltner Graber [Wa2.4a]) or the 2 children on the ship list with the Waldheim congregation. Nor could I find them on any other ship list. But, they did immigrate.

So far I've dealt with people who didn't come with their respective congregations. Now, let's look at people who didn't come at all.

Maria Graber Gr3.623 (1834-) m. Siebert (-)

Not much is known of some women who married outside the church in Russia. For example, Maria Graber [Gr3.623] born in 1834 in Michelsdorf, West Galicia, Russia, married a man with the surname of Siebert. I could find nothing more about them. His given name could not be found.

Katharina Graber Gr3.624 m. 1860 Meyer (-)

Maria's younger sister Katharina Graber [Gr3.624] was married perhaps in 1860 to a man named Meyer. Presumably they married in Russia and went to his church as nothing more can be found about them in our records. And again, I could not find out his given name.

Joseph Kaufman Ka2.27 (1813-1896) m. Katharina Gering Ge2.51 (1811-1884)

Ka3.274 Freni Kaufman Ka3.274 (1833-) m. c.1870 Friederich Kind (-)

Ka3.276 Napoleon Robert Kaufman (1862-1929) m. 1883 Freni Stucky St4.628a (1864-1933)

Freni Kaufman [Ka3.274, formerly Ka3.374] was the 4th child of Joseph Kaufman [Ka2.27] and Katharina Gering [Ge2.51]. Freni was married about 1870 to a man named Friederich Kind. In the book *Elder N. R. and Fannie Kaufman Family Record* it is stated "Freni Kaufman Kind remained in Russia with her family." [KaNr vi] In another source it states that she and her husband "...may have immigrated to South America." [NsSI 107] There is little more than these meager bits of information about her. With regard to the parents of Freni Kaufman Kind and her brother Napoleon R. Kaufman it is stated in that Kaufman book, "In 1876, at the age of fourteen years, Napoleon R. Kaufman, and his mother, and somewhat later, his father, Joseph, emigrated [sic] to America. Limited financial means delayed the emigration [sic]... ." [KaNr 20] In the obituary of Napoleon Kaufman in the Moundridge Journal it states that Napoleon came to America when he was 15 with his parents. [MdJo 4-4-29] That would likely be in 1877. Napoleon R Kaufman became a

minister and then elder in the Hopefield Mennonite Church at Moundridge. I was unable to locate the parents Joseph Kaufman [Ka2.27] and Katharina Gering [Ge 2.51] or their child Napoleon Kaufman [Ka3.276] on any ship list.

Jacob K Schrag Sg3.822 (1836-1911) m. 1855 Freni Graber Gr3.616 (1841-1895)

Sg4.822a Peter R Schrag (1860-1934) m. 1891 Elisabeth Graber Gr4.8132 (1874-1964)

Sg4.8227 Jonathan J Schrag (1867-1921 m. 1897 Anna Sehner {Senner} Se3.426 (1877-1957)

Sg4.8228 Anna Schrag (1869-) m. Vladimir Schchikiritsky (-)

Sg4.8229 Katharina "Katie" Schrag (1873 -1956) m. 1894 Jonathan "Jonath" (or) "Schuster" Waltner Wa3.42b (1871-1925)

Sg4.822a Ludwig Schrag (1875-1955) m. 1898 Helena "Lena" Gering Ge4.3562 (1879-1952)

Sg4.822b Leonhard {Leon} J "Happy" Schrag (1877-1946) m. 1908 Ida Waltner Wa3.4d6 (1890-1992)

Sg4.822c Maria {Mary} Schrag (1879-1930) m. 1898 Peter J Kaufman Ka5.21161 (1872-1953)

Sg4.822d Mathilda "Tilda" Schrag (1881-1966) m. 1898 Jacob D Graber Gr4.7421 (1876-1961)

The Jacob K Schrag [Sg3.822] and Freni Graber [Gr3.616] family, it seems, were rather wealthy. Instead of immigrating to America in 1874 they apparently moved that year to just over the Russian border and settled in Austria. I have not been able to find out what city (or village) they lived in but it was not a Mennonite village. The family lived there until 1891 when they then immigrated to Dakota. It was a large family; they had 14 children of whom 6 died in infancy.

I'll begin by looking at one of their children, the 9th child Katharina "Katie" Schrag [Sg4.8229], who was born in 1873. The following information is from her obituary which appeared in the Freeman, South Dakota Courier and also in the Marion, South Dakota Record. "She was well educated, having had a private tutor until she was 9... [and] then attended a school for girls in Austria for three years. Her higher education was continued again with a private tutor. She could speak five languages fluently. Since the family did not live in a Mennonite community, she was sent to Lemberg [Austria] to study catechism under Mennonite Elder Mueller, where she was baptized... on May 20, 1889." [FmCo 5-7-56 & MaRe 28-6-56]

Seven of the 8 children listed above immigrated to America and all married in this country in the Freeman, SD. area. From the story of Katharina, we can perhaps conclude that the family was wealthy.

One child married in Europe. Anna Schrag [Sg4.8228], the 8th child, married Vladimir Schchikiritsky, a very Russian sounding name, and they remained in Russia. Peter Schrag [Sg4.8224], who was the oldest of the siblings who immigrated to America, died in 1934. In his obituary in the Christlicher Bundesbote it states that his survivors include 2 brothers, Levie (that must be the brother named Ludwig [Sg4.822a], the 10th child) who lived at Starkweather, ND., and Leon ([Sg4.822b], the 11th child) who lived in Milwaukee, WI.; 2 sisters, Mrs. J. D. Graber (that's Mathilda, the 13th child [Sg4.822d]), living in Marion, SD and "... a sister in Russia" [ChBo 19-6-34] (and that is, of course, Anna Schrag Schchikiritsky [Sg4.8228]. Anna was still living then in 1934. I have the obituary of Katharina [Sg4.8229] (the 9th child) who died in July 1956 in which is listed only 1 sister still living, that being Mathilda [Sg4.822d]. [FmCo 5-7-56] Anna Schrag Schchikiritsky therefore, probably died in Europe sometime between 1934 and 1956. The obituary of Mathilda (the 13th child [Sg4.822d]) who died in 1966 lists no surviving siblings [see FmCo 20-10-66].

Andreas Gering Ge2.38 (1824-1901) m. 1846 Freni Stucky St3.62a (1828-1874)

Ge3.381 Jacob Gering (1847-1915) m. Katharina Schrag Sg3.827 (1850-1938) (Russia)

Children of Jacob Gering Ge3.381 and Katharina Schrag Sge.827:

Ge4.3811 Peter Gering (1870-1939) m. Emma Mitchki (-)

Ge4.3812 Emilia Gering (before 1874-) m. a Pole

Ge4.3813 Adolph (or Johann) Gering (1878-) m. Wanda Lawicka (-)

Ge3.382 Katharina {Katrina} Gering (1852-1934) m. 1871 Johann {John} J D Graber Gr3.771 (1848-1926)

Ge3.383 Adolph Gering {Goering} (1854-1915) m. 1877 Maria {Mary} Gering {Goering} Ge4.3131 (1857-1933)

Ge3.384 Karolina {Caroline} Gering (1856-1922) m. (I) 1876 Johann {John} Wedel We2.23 (1851-1879) ∞ (II) 1887 Benjamin P B Unruh Ur0 (1866-1947)

Ge3.385 Maria {Mary} Gering {Goering} (1859-1889) m. 1879 Johann {John} H Wedel We2.62 (1857-1932)

Ge3.386 Johann {John} A Gering {Goering} (1861-1929) m. 1881 Anna Graber Gr3.774 (1857-1924)

Ge3.387 Joseph A Gering {Goering} (1863-1943) m. 1886 Maria {Mary} Wedel We2.28 (1866-1971)
Ge3.388 Anna Gering (1867-1921) m. 1886 Joseph G Graber Gr4.5122 (1865-)

The Andreas Gering [Ge2.38] and Freni Stucky [St3.62a] story represents a tragic incident which happened at a very eventful time in the lives of this family. The mother Freni Stucky Gering [St3.62a] may have been ill during the late summer of 1874 and the family decided to remain behind and not attempt the trip. How long her final illness lasted is not known; she died in Europe 6 days after the ship carrying the Kutusovka Congregation landed in New York. Her illness is one explanation of the delay of the family. Another possibility exists. According to the obituary of the 7th son Joseph, the mother in this family died in Austria (not Russia). The scenario could have been that the train took the congregation to the Russian-Austrian border where they changed trains and then resumed the journey through Austria. This makes it sound as if she may have taken sick during the trip; they stopped in Austria where she died and the family returned to Russia. That idea of crossing into Austria and then returning to Russia presents all sorts of visa or passport problems and I tend not to believe that the "death in Austria" is the correct version. The important fact for us here is that the family remained in Europe.

Freni Stucky [St3.62a] (the mother in this family) was a sister of Elder Jacob Stucky [St3.628]. She was 4 years younger than Elder Jacob. Elder Jacob Stucky, as the leader of the Kutusovka Congregation, led that group to America, and to Kansas.

This Gering family sort of disintegrated then. I could not find a single ship list entry of a member of this family. Much of the data about when they came to America comes from stories in the obituaries of the family members. As you can see there are 4 boys and 4 girls. The most complete detail of their immigration to America is in the obituary of Joseph (the 7th child) printed in the Moundridge Journal. It states that one boy and 4 girls came to this country in a group "a few months later", i.e., after the death of the mother. [MdJo 28-1-43] Apparently that one boy that came to America with his 4 sisters was Adolph [Ge3.383]. This trip was made probably at the beginning of the year 1875. This agrees with the statement in the obituaries of Adolph [Ge3.383], the 3rd child, in the Christlicher Bundesbote where it states that "in the year 1875 he came with his sisters to America" [ChBo 7-10-15]. However, in the obituary of Carolina [Ge3.384] in the Christlicher Bundesbote it states that she came to America in 1874 [ChBo 3-8-22]. The 2nd child in the family Katharina Gering [Ge3.382] was married in Russia in 1871 to John J D Graber [Gr3.771] and in her obituary in the Pretty Prairie Times it states that they (i.e., Katharina Gering [Ge3.382] and her husband John J D Graber [Gr3.771]) came to America in 1875 [PpTi 5-7-34] so Katharina's husband must also have accompanied his wife and the 3 unmarried sisters and one brother Adolph. Two brothers (John [Ge3.386] and Joseph [Ge3.387]) came to America together in 1877. As is stated in Joseph's obituary in the Moundridge Journal, "When he was eleven years old his mother died... . A few months later four of his sisters and one brother came to America. About three years after that the deceased [i.e., Joseph]... also ventured the journey to this country." [MdJo 28-1-43] The widowed father in this family Andreas Gering [Ge2.38] did not come to America until 1885 as is stated in his obituary. [ChBo 28-11-01] He probably stayed in Russia with his oldest son Jacob Gering [Ge3.381] and his wife Katharina Schrag [Sg3.827]. This oldest son and family remained in Russia.

The sources which come from the Gering Genealogy published in 1940 list 3 children in the family of Jacob Gering [Ge3.381] and Katharina Schrag [Sg3.827]: Peter Gering [Ge4.3811], Emilia Gering [Ge4.3812] and Adolph Gering [Ge4.3813]). The sources which come from the records of J J Krehbiel also list 3 children but have them named as Peter [Ge4.3811], Emilia [Ge4.3812] and John [Ge4.3813]. I think that the last child is listed in some places as Adolph and other places as John but it is the same 3rd son.

There undoubtedly was communication between the old country and those who came to America. In the Gering Genealogy published in 1940, this family of Jacob Gering [Ge3.381] and Katharina Schrag [Sg3.827] is listed and the death date of the oldest son Peter Gering [Ge4.3811] is given as 1 Jan. 1939 [see GeGe 84]. That is just the year before the Gering Genealogy was published. It also states that he died in Italy. He was a medical doctor and married Emma Mitchki. The second child in this family Emilia Gering [Ge4.3812] married a Pole (I was unable to find a record of his name). He was an attorney (an advocate) [SIJe 5]. The other member of the family of which we know something is Adolph (or John) [Ge4.3813] who married Wanda Lawicka. He was a supervisor. The records do not mention what he supervised. [GeGe 85] It is apparent that the children in the family of Jacob Gering [Ge3.381] and Katharina Schrag [Sg3.827] were probably rather well-to-do. Certainly, their children appear to have married and fared well as far as position is concerned and wealth probably accompanied those positions.

Benjamin Schrag Sg3.824 (1841-) m. 1865 Maria Graber Gr3.741 (1848-)

Sg4.824¹ Katharina Schrag (1869-) m. Stanislaw Sawitzky (-)

Sg4.824² Johann Schrag (1871-)

Sg4.824³ Julius Schrag (-)

Sg4.824⁴ Helena Schrag (-)

Sg4.824⁵ Anna Schrag (-)

Benjamin Schrag [Sg3.824] and Maria Graber [Gr3.741] with their family of 5 children remained in the old country. Little is known about them. The oldest daughter Katharina Schrag [Sg4.824¹] was born in 1869 and married Stanislaw Sawitzky. The second child, a son Johann Schrag [Sg4.824²], was born in 1871. The parents and the first 2 children (with only their birth dates) are the only ones listed in the Kutusovka Church Book. Since this church book was in village of Kutusovka in the 1870s this family must have been living there also. Of the next 3 children we know only names (Julius, Helena and Anna). The knowledge about the marriage of the oldest child Katharina Schrag [Sg4.824¹] to Stanislaw Sawitzky and the names of the youngest 3 children have come from 2 Schrag family trees and a Stucky family tree [see SgTg. SgTr. StTf]. Let's turn our attention to the mother in this family, Maria Graber [Gr3.741]. The parents of Maria came to America. Maria's [Gr3.741] mother was Katharina Schrag Graber [Sg2.78] and her obituary was published in the Christlicher Bundesbote in 1892. In this obituary it is stated "She leaves a grieving husband, 1 son and 2 daughters of which one is in Austria." [ChBo 8-12-92]. The "daughter in Austria" is the mother in this Schrag family (i.e., Maria Graber Schrag [Gr3.741]) so we can presume that this family did not remain in Russia but (by 1892) was living in Austria. Benjamin Schrag [Sg3.824], the father in this family, had a sister named Anna Schrag who died in 1928 and in her obituary, published in the Freeman Courier, it states "There remain[s]... one brother in the old country". [FmCo 1-11-28] That little bit of information is not very helpful, but we can presume that Benjamin was still living in 1928 when he was 67 years old. Notice that it does not state where he was living.

Peter "Pet" Graber Gr3.613 (1836-) m. 1856 Anna Gering Ge3.352 (1840-)

Gr4.613¹ Maria Graber (1858-)

Gr4.613² Jacob Graber (1860-)

Gr4.613³ Anna Graber (1863-)

Gr4.613⁴ Katharina Graber (1865-)

Gr4.613⁵ Susanna Graber (1869-) m. Rempel

Gr4.613⁶ Freni Graber (1871-)

Gr4.613⁷ Elisabeth Graber (1873-)

Gr4.613⁸ Peter "Pet" Graber (1874-1935) m. 1904 Helena "Lena" Ortman Om3.34c (1884-1905)

Gr4.613^x? Helena Graber (-) m. Peter Paul Janzen (-)

Children of Helena Graber Gr4.613^x? & Peter Paul Janzen:

Peter George Janzen (1901-1984) m. 1926 Tabea Schrag (1905-1992)

Elizabeth G Janzen (1902-2000) m. 1930 Henry P O Graber Gr3.84f (his II) (1887-1956)

It is difficult to pin down just why the Peter "Pet" Graber [Gr3.613] and Anna Gering [Ge3.352] family remained in Russia. But there are indications that this family was rather wealthy and it may be that they simply decided that things were going well in Russia; so, why move? Two daughters of Peter Graber [Gr3.613] and Anna Gering [Ge3.352] came to America in the 1920s. They were the 5th and the 7th children (Susanna [Gr4.613⁵] and Elisabeth [Gr4.613⁷]).

There were 8 children of Peter "Pet" Graber [Gr3.613] and Anna Gering [Ge3.352] recorded in the Kutusovka Church Book [EdKu 55b]. The 8th child was born in 1874 and there may have been more children born later as that is the year of the migration and the church book was brought to central Kansas so additional births would not be entered in the church book. Of the first 4 children (Maria [Gr4.613¹], Jacob [Gr4.613²], Anna [Gr4.613³] and Katharina [Gr4.613⁴]), I have not been able to find anything except their birth dates and the baptism date of Maria [Gr4.613¹] [see EdKu 55b]. The same lack of knowledge is true of the 6th child Freni [Gr4.613⁶]. However, we know quite a bit about the 5th, 7th and 8th children as they immigrated to Canada and America. Susanna [Gr4.613⁵] and Elisabeth [Gr4.613⁷] immigrated sometime after WWI and settled in Canada and Peter [Gr4.613⁸] (the 8th child) came to America in 1902.

Susanna [Gr4.613⁵] and Elisabeth [Gr4.613⁷] settled in Alberta, Canada. After a visit to North and South Dakota in 1928 they returned to Canada and lived in Manitoba in the city of Winnipeg. While in South Dakota they were involved in an auto accident being driven by their Uncle P. C Gering and Elisabeth was

injured rather seriously and lost an eye [see FmCo 8-3-28 & 31-5-28]. Elisabeth [Gr4.6137] remained single and Susanna [Gr4.6135] married a man named Rempel. I was unable to find his given name.

Much is known about Peter [Gr4.6148], the 8th child as he settled in South Dakota and married in 1904 Helena Ortmann [Om3.34c]. There is a very detailed account of the problems with this marriage given in *The F. Christian and Anna Eleanora (Zafft) Ortmann Family History*. I shall try to summarize that story. The first year of their marriage, they lived with Helena's parents, Karl Ortmann [Om2.3, formerly Om2.13] and Dorothea Zafft [Zf2.22, formerly Zf2.11]. Incidents happened which disrupted the marriage during the first year. The mother-in-law Dorothea Zafft Ortman gave Peter [Gr4.6138] \$80 to go into town and get some groceries and necessities. Peter [Gr4.6138], instead of spending the money on groceries, bought jewelry for his wife Helena [Om3.34c]. When he returned home, the in-laws were furious that the valued grocery money had been spent on adornments. Peter never had to work in Russia; the family's hired hands did the field work and maids worked in the home. So perhaps coming from that background Peter [Gr4.6138] did not have the normal frontier sense of the need to husband money carefully for necessities. This seemed to be true even though Peter had little money after he left his parents in Russia and immigrated to America. After another similar incident Peter [Gr4.6138] moved out of the house. Eleven months after the marriage (in Feb 1905) their child was born. Peter [Gr4.6138] returned to the Karl Ortmann [Om2.34] home to see his wife and new baby. He brought Rev. Joseph Kaufman [Ka4.2116, formerly Ka4.3116] of the Salem-Zion (North) Church with him to mediate. From the front porch Rev. Kaufman asked if Peter could see the baby, and (from within the house) Helena (the new mother) said "no", Peter's mother-in-law Dorothea Zafft Ortman [Zf2.22, formerly Zf2.11] said "no" and Peter's father-in-law Karl Ortmann "Om2.34" responded "no—you shouldn't have left if you cared". So Peter Graber [Gr4.6138] and Rev. Joseph Kaufman left without Peter seeing his baby. Peter went to Winnipeg, Canada. His sisters Susanna Graber Rempel [Gr4.6135] and Elisabeth Graber [Gr4.6137] eventually joined him there. He died in Winnipeg in 1935 and is buried in the Brookside Cemetery. His wife Helena Ortman Graber [Om3.34c] died 10 days after giving birth to their child. The child (named Helena Graber [Gr5.61381] after her mother) was raised by her grandparents Karl Ortmann [Om2.34, formerly Om2.13] and Dorothea Zafft [Zf2.22, formerly Zf2.11]. [see OmFc 310-311]

I could find no other Graber family who remained in Russia. There is more to the Graber family in Russia, however. Another Graber not listed in the Kutusovka Church book has come to light. Helena Graber married Peter Paul Janzen just around the turn of the century (about 1899 or 1900) in Russia. Records of two of their children who came to America have surfaced. The 2 children are Peter George Janzen and Elizabeth G Janzen.

Peter George Janzen was born 24 Oct. 1901 in Ignatjewska, Russia. He is the son of Peter Paul Janzen and Helena G Graber. If the mother of Peter George Janzen and Helena G Janzen were in her early 20s when Peter George Janzen was born, the mother Helena Graber [Gr4.613x?] would have been born from about 1881 to about 1886 and could easily fit as an additional child in the family of Peter "Pet" Graber [Gr3.613] and Anna Gering [Ge3.352]. Her birth would not have been recorded in the Kutusovka Church Book because the book was in America after 1874. I am taking the liberty of placing Helena as another child in this family even though I have no evidence of this.

Peter George Janzen, son of Helena Graber Janzen and apparently the oldest child in the family, immigrated to America in 1903 when he was 2 years old. It is probable then that he immigrated with his parents, Peter Paul Janzen and Helena Graber. He resided in Canada. He moved to America and became an American citizen in 1919 and lived in Windom, MN. He was baptized in the Bergfelder Mennonite Church, Mountain Lake, MN. He was living in Cottonwood County, Minnesota with his father and step mother in 1920. Note that I said father and step-mother. His mother, Helena Graber Janzen, must have died in Canada and his father remarried. Peter George Janzen moved to Chicago where he attended electrical and automotive schools. He married Tabea Lucille Schrag [Sg5.7511c] who lived near Marion, South Dakota and they lived near Freeman where he farmed for the first 9 years of their married lives. They then moved to Wichita, Kansas in 1935 where he worked for Santa Fe Trail Bus Line, and Yingling Chevrolet, and then from 1939 on at Beech Aircraft where he worked for 28 years. Peter and Tabea [Sg5.7511c] were founding members of the Lorraine Avenue Mennonite Church in Wichita. He died in 1984 and is buried in the White Chapel Memorial Cemetery in Wichita. [FmCo 8-2-84]

But there is another child of Peter Paul Janzen and Helena Graber. Her name is Elizabeth G Janzen and she was born 14 December 1902 in Ignatjewska, Russia just a little over a year after her brother Peter George Janzen was born. I could not find out when she immigrated to America but I suspect it was in 1903,

the same time her older brother did and probably did so with her parents. Elizabeth went through nurses training at Bethel Deaconess School of Nursing in Newton, Kansas and served as a nurse for 9 years before marrying Henry P O Graber [Gr3.84f] from Pretty Prairie, Kansas. The marriage took place in 1930 in Whitewater, Kansas. This was the second marriage of Henry P O. He had 7 children; the first 5 were born to Henry's first wife and the last 2 to Elizabeth Janzen. She was a nurse in Goessel, Kansas before her marriage and then served for more than 30 years in the Hutchinson, Kansas Hospital. She died 24 January 2000 in the Mennonite Friendship Manor, South Hutchinson. Elizabeth Janzen Graber had at the time of her death 3 surviving step sons living in this area of Kansas: Marvin Graber at Pretty Prairie, Kansas, LeRoy Graber, Inman, Kansas and Wilbur Graber in Hutchinson, Kansas. [HuNw 26-1-00]

It is likely that Peter George Janzen and Elizabeth G Janzen are the only children of Helena Graber Janzen from Russia. She died and her husband Peter Paul Janzen remarried and had 6 more children who all live in Minnesota as far as I can determine.

Jacob "Douhi" Gering Ge3.353 (1842-) m. 1860 Freni Schrag Kaufman Sg3.812 (her II) (1833-1909)
Ka4.2421 Elisabeth "Liesa" Kaufman (1850-1886) m. 1872 Peter P "Petric" Graber Gr3.742 (his I) (1850-1929)
Ka4.2422 Maria {Mary} Kaufman (1852-1900) m. 1872 Christian "Bulaar" Gering Ge3.356 (his I) (1850-1907)
__Ka4.2423 Jacob P Kaufman (1858-1934) m. 1879 Katharina Schrag Sg3.748 (1863-1949)
Ge4.3531 Joseph Gering (1861-) (Russia)
Ge4.3532 Anna Gering (1863-) (Russia)
Ge4.3533 Johann Gering (1866 -) (America)
Ge4.3534 Peter Gering (1869-1961) m. 1906 Paula Sikor (1863-1958) (Russia)
Child of Peter Gering Gr4.3534 and Paula Sikor:
Ge5.35341 Petronella "Petra" Gering {Göring} (1906-1968)
Ge4.3535 Jonathan Gering (1869-) (America-Canada)
Ge4.3536 Edward Gering (1873-) (Russia)

The Jacob "Douhi" Gering [Ge3.353] and Freni Schrag Kaufman [Sg3.812] family presented a somewhat difficult task. Jacob and Freni raised 9 children. Three of them were step children of Jacob as Freni was previously married to Peter Kaufman [Ka3.242, formerly Ka3.342], and she brought 3 Kaufman children to the marriage. The 2 eldest Kaufman children (Elisabeth [Ka4.2421, formerly Ka4.3421] and Maria [Ka4.2422, formerly Ka4.3422]) were married in Russia. The third Kaufman child Jacob [Ka4.2423, formerly Ka4.3423] came to America on his own in 1874. According to his obituary in the Freeman, South Dakota Courier "...at the age of 17 [in 1874], he departed from home and with two companions, both younger than he, headed for America. ...When they landed in New York he had to discontinue his journey because of lack of funds having only \$1.50 left. ...For about two years he remained in the East, in New York and Pennsylvania, working... . Having earned sufficient funds, he continued his interrupted journey to Dakota Territory, arriving there three years after... 1874 [i.e., in 1877]." [FmCo 29-11-34]

I don't know when Jacob "Douhi" Gering or Freni Schrag Kaufman or the Gering children immigrated to America. I could not find them on any ship list. Of the 6 Gering children in the family only 2 came to America. They were Johann [Ge4.3533] and Jonathan Gering [Ge4.3535], the 3rd child and the 5th child in the family. They were 8 and 5 years old at the time of the general immigration in 1874 so they must have come with an adult or they came much later as adults. The ages of the 4 children in 1874 who remained in Russia were 13, 11, 5 and 1.

Family legend has a story about Jacob "Douhi" Gering. It says that he was a "womanizer" and that his wife kicked him out of the house when she found him with the maid. If so this must have been after 1873 as that is the birth year of their last child and we presume that no more children would be born to them after that incident. But did this happen in Russia or America? Did some of the Gering children go with her and some lived with him?

What I suspect happened to this family is Jacob "Douhi" Gering [Ge3.353] and Freni Schrag Kaufman [Sg3.812] remained in Russia but separated there. Freni perhaps came to America maybe a few years before 1900 with 2 of her Gering sons: Johann [Ge4.3533] and Jonathan [Ge4.3535]. Jacob "Douhi" remained in Russia with 4 of his Gering children (Joseph [Ge4.3531], Anna [Ge4.3532], Peter [Ge4.3534] and Edward [Ge4.3536]).

According to an article published in the Freeman, South Dakota Courier, Jacob "Douhi" came to America in 1904 and settled in Midland, South Dakota. Midland is about 235 miles west of Freeman, SD. According to the Freeman Courier article, Jacob "Douhi" came to America after his wife (Freni) died in Russia. However, Arthur Graber has identified Freni's grave in the Salem-Zion cemetery at Freeman. She died in 1909. The article also states that Jacob "Douhi" Gering then married in Midland, South Dakota. I found a registration in Stanley county, South Dakota for 1 November 1910 which gives the following information: Jacob Gering; age 65; town of Midland; county of Stanley; a German widower; married Louise Brown; a German widow; (her age is not given). [the source is from Stanley County records on the internet] This 1910 marriage was 1 year after his first wife Freni Schrag [Sg3.748] died. The Freeman Courier article further states that when his new wife (i.e., Louise Brown) died Jacob "Douhi" Gering returned to Russia and during World War I ". . .was found dead in his cellar with a hole in his head when attacked by a burglar." [FmCo 28-7-49]

It seems there was some communication between the Gering family members here in South Dakota and in Russia. In the obituary of the third Kaufman son (Jacob P Kaufman [Ka4.2423]) which appears in the Freeman Courier, it states "He has no brothers nor [sic] sisters living here, but perhaps two half-brothers and one half-sister may still be living in Russia." [FmCo 29-11-34]

Of the 4 children who remained in Russia we have little information about 3 of them, that is, Joseph, Anna and Edward, the 1st, 2nd and 6th of the Gering children.

We know a great deal about Peter Gering [Ge4.3534], the 4th Gering child born in 1869.

Peter married a woman named Paula Sikor, born in 1883 in Pressburg, Czechoslovakia. Peter became a dentist and they moved to Vienna, Austria where he established a quite successful practice. Peter and Paula had one daughter Petronella Göring, born in 1906. Petronella, nicknamed "Petra", showed a talent for music and took piano lessons at an early age. She attended the Conservatory of Music in Vienna and had a career in piano solo performances and as an accompanist for soloists, apparently mostly for singers. She was also a prolific composer and wrote 9 symphonies. Some of her choral pieces were performed in the Salem-Zion (North) Mennonite Church in Freeman.

Petra's father developed a profitable dental practice in Vienna but most of his wealth was wiped out in World War I and the following inflation. Their home was bombed in World War II and they moved to a suburb of Vienna.

Most of the information about this Peter Gering and Paula Sikor and their daughter Petronella comes from Gary Waltner who traveled from Weierhof, Germany to Vienna for the funeral of Petronella in 1968. At that time he talked to friends and neighbors of Petra. He then wrote an extensive letter to the Freeman Courier [see FmCo 9-5-68].

In trying to come to some conclusions about why people remained in Russia, I can come to 4 of them.

1) Families may have been rather destitute and could not immediately afford the cost of the passports and transportation.

2) They were rather wealthy and didn't see a need to go to a frontier filled with "wild animals and Indians" where they would have to begin a new life all over again. The present life was fine with them.

3) Unfortunate circumstances occurred which held them up or delayed their coming to America.

4) Families or individuals might have lived away from the 4 congregations in Russia and did not prepare to obtain passports with them.

Looking back with 132 years of hindsight it seems that they really made a bad mistake by staying in Russia. If they could have looked ahead and seen the 1917 revolution in Russia, the mass starvation of the people of western Ukraine by Stalin in the 1930s to force them off the land so it could be collectivized into large farms, and the horrors of living through invading armies in World War II they undoubtedly would have done as our ancestors did and emigrate. I found the following article in the Pretty Prairie Times. This is an excerpt of a letter from Russia that best illustrates what it was like to live in the western Ukraine in the 1930s. This is a letter from a nephew of Jacob W Penner of Marion, Kansas. This nephew was living in Waldheim, Volhynia. "We find ourselves in desperate affliction as there is a great famine among us. Many people are dying of starvation. There is absolutely nothing to be had. Children are eating grass. ...I have been myself so nearly starved that I could no longer stand up, but the pangs of hunger hurt, and often forces people to do things like the following: We had a cowhide (leather [rug]) on the floor which had been there for three years, and now we were compelled to eat it. We scalded it so as to remove all hair and then cut off a little piece every day and cooked it, so we would not starve to death altogether." [PpTi 14-7-32]

There were not many of our people still living in that area in the 1930s but there were probably a few. Our ancestors who immigrated in the 19th century spent some very difficult years taming this land in America but the times were not as difficult as those experienced in the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s in Volhynia.

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