A Short History

of the

Swiss Mennonites

(*Schweizer-Mennoniten*)

Who Migrated

from

Wolhynien, Russia to America

and

Settled in Kansas

in 1874

A Short History

of the

Swiss Mennonites

(*Schweizer-Mennoniten*)

Who Migrated

from

Wolhynien, Russia to America

and

Settled in Kansas

in 1874

Published by Mr. and Mrs. Benj. B. J. Goering
1960
Second Printing 1970

Printed in U.S.A. Mennonite Press
North Newton, Kansas 67117

PREFACE

In the fall of 1924, the Swiss Mennonites celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of their immigration to Kansas from Russia. At this time a committee was appointed to write a short story of this group for publication. The following were to serve: P. A. Flickner, J. J. Krehbiel, and P. P. Wedel. They agreed that Flickner and Krehbiel should gather the material and P. P. Wedel would do the writing. In the meantime Brother Flickner died, but had already gathered material from others and had written much worthwhile information from his own memory before he died. Others helped with the gathering of material, also the reports given at the fiftieth jubilee were made available to us and contributed much for this cause. Because of so many other things to do, it took a long time till this piece of work was done. Finally it is finished. We hope this little book will be gladly received by our brothers and sisters. May it especially be an inspiration to us, the younger generation, to serve our God more faithfully. How much have the forefathers sacrificed for their own and their children's faith! We reap the blessings today.

Regarding the pictures, the plan was to have a picture of the five churches as they are today. It would have been interesting to have pictures of the older churches but these are not available. We have a picture of all the ministers from the Swiss families who served these churches. Elder Valentine Krehbiel is not from our Swiss Mennonites, but since he was the founder of the First Mennonite Church of Christian, we bring his picture also. Six couples who were married in Russia before the immigration, were still living at the time of the celebration of the fiftieth jubilee and we bring their picture also. May this little book be a blessing to many.

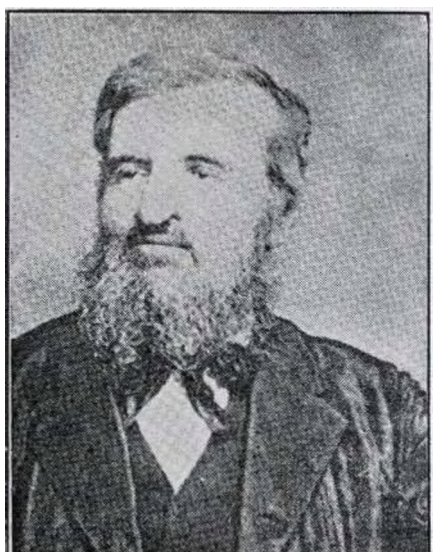
Written by Rev. P. P. Wedel in the spring of 1929.

We have tried to translate this short history of our forefathers, with the younger generations in mind. Since they do not read the German language they should have an opportunity to read it in the English language. Some of the pictures as stated in the preface are not found in this booklet. Though there are mistakes and it is not translated in the best English, we tried to put the story and thoughts of the German writer into this English translation. We hope the young people (descendants of the pioneers that settled here in Kansas), will avail themselves of the

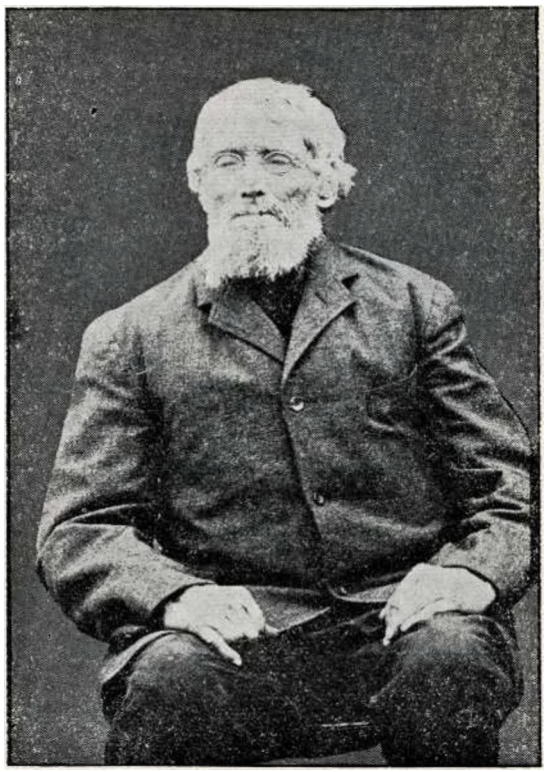
opportunity to read this and be reminded what it cost our ancestors to come to this country, so that we can enjoy the many privileges and blessings in this country, such as freedom of religion, to live as we are taught and understand the Bible. May we study and appreciate the heritage of our ancestors.

The translation of this booklet is dedicated to the descendants of the Swiss Mennonite pioneers, who for conscience sake, migrated from Wolhynien, Russia, and settled in Kansas in 1874.

Translated by Mr. and Mrs. Benj. B. J. Goering and published in the spring of 1960.



JACOB STUCKY, Pastor of the Congregation in Kotosufka, Russia,
and its leader during the Immigration



JACOB D. GOERING, Assistant Minister in the Congregation in Kotosufka, Russia, and also in this country

CHAPTER I

Who Are We?

We are called Mennonites. To explain who the Mennonites are would be a long story. In this booklet we only mention the following: When Martin Luther in Germany and Ulrich Zwingli in Switzerland separated from the Catholic church and ushered in the Reformation, there were many quiet people who welcomed this Reformation and expected much of it. They were soon aware that both of these reformers did not reform thoroughly enough; i.e. they did not cast aside all of the Catholic abuses. Evangelical Christians objected to child baptism and that Zwingli as well as Martin Luther established a state church; these Christians believed that according to the Holy scriptures, church and state should be separated. In Switzerland the leaders of this movement met Zwingli, but they soon saw that they could not agree with his doctrine. They went their own way. He therefore took a stand against them.

On January 17, 1525, they had to appear in a Zurich court for a disputation with Zwingli concerning the question of baptism. The decision of the court was against them and already on the next day a decree was given that all unbaptized children must be brought in to be baptized within eight days and that the leaders of these Evangelical Christians should leave the city. They did not bring their children to be baptized. On January 25, they came together once more, before leaving the city, to study God's word on this question and unite in prayer, not wanting to do anything that is not in God's will. After the prayer, Georg Blaurock, one of the well educated leaders came to Conrad Grebel, who also was well educated, and asked that he should baptize him. Grebel did so. As soon as this was done the others surrounded Blaurock and

also requested baptism. He granted their request. They then confirmed each other to the service of the Lord and agreed to remain true to this simple Bible truth. With the introduction of adult baptism, i.e. baptism on confession of faith, these simple Evangelical Christians broke away, not only from the Roman church, but also from the Lutheran and the Reformed church, and January 25, 1525, can well be named the birthday of the Mennonite Church.

Of course, they were not called Mennonites right away. They were called Rebaptizers or Anabaptists (those that baptize again). They named themselves Brethren, and soon Baptists. The movement spread. Soon there were many Baptists (Baptizers) not only in Switzerland but also in Germany and Holland. In this last named country, a Catholic priest named Menno Simons joined this group on January 12, 1536. Since he was well educated, he was well qualified to defend the doctrine of these baptizers. This he also did in his writings. Soon their enemies began to oppose the Mennonites. It seems that in the year 1550 they were generally called by this name and by this time they themselves had accepted this name. In reality they did not pick this name, but they accepted it and were happy to be called by this name.

Well, who are we? Swiss Mennonites we are called. In McPherson, Harvey, Reno and Kingman counties in Kansas over 2,500 lived (in 1924) and we and others speak of us as the Swiss Mennonites. Still none of us talk the Swiss dialect, but speak a dialect similar to the south Germans. Why? Aren't we Swiss Mennonites? Who are we? Where do we come from? What is our previous history? The Krehbiels and the Stuckys, the Flickingers and the Grabers, the Goerings and the Kaufmans, the Vorans and the Swartzes, the Wedels and what other names we have, where is our cradle? Who are our ancestors? What is our history?

Sorry that we do not have the exact data to fully answer all

of these questions. We do not have records, except what is found in the church books. Fortunately, there still are three of the oldest church books, from which we can get some information. Also through verbal tradition much valuable material has been verified. Fathers and mothers have related their previous history to their children time and again, that it is so impressed in their memory, not to be forgotten. By so much reading material as we have today remembering it is not so important any more. Some of our aged still have a rich treasure in their memories of our previous history; and besides what we received in our church records, we gathered mostly from the reminiscence of our old people.

Well, who are we according to what we get from these sources? Our ancestors, at least the greatest majority of them, came from the Canton Bern in Switzerland. There is our cradle, so we are Swiss Mennonites anyway, even if we have lost the Swiss dialect. We need not be surprised that we lost it, since it is 275 years that our ancestors left Switzerland.

When the Baptist movement in 1525 had its beginning in Switzerland and spread quite rapidly, their daily lot had been persecution from the very beginning. To describe this persecution would be a book in itself. We can inform ourselves in any Mennonite history about their persecution. They were beaten, exiled from the country, put in dirty prisons, and many were sentenced to death for their faith. They were persecuted by the church as well as by the state. At times, when the Baptists became fewer, the persecution abated some; at times, it began anew again.

Not all citizens of Switzerland approved of the persecution. From other countries came expression for more benevolent feelings towards the Mennonites. So did the Baptist brethren in Holland, and later influenced the government of Holland, to ask the Swiss government to show more leniency toward the Brethren in their country. But it did not do any good. In the year 1670, the Count Karl August reigned in the Palatinate, also Reinpfalz, a province in

south Germany, at Nassau. The Thirty Years War devastated the Palatinate. The famine depopulated whole villages. The Prince was much concerned about getting his domain populated again. He knew of the plight of the Swiss Mennonites; he also knew of their ability and efficiency in building up the agriculture of the country. He invited them to come and settle in his land. He promised them religious freedom and other privileges. Approximately 100 families answered the call and left Switzerland and settled in the Reinpfalz. This was in the year 1671. Later others joined them. Group after group moved from Switzerland to different regions, many more of these came to Reinpfalz. They came there poor and destitute. Men, women, aged 80-90, who had lost all their possessions as a result of the persecution, they came on foot, fatigued by misery and want to the Palatinate. In this time of great need, much help was received from the relief organization of the Holland Mennonites.

Among the 100 families that came to the Palatinate in 1671 we also find one of our ancestors, Jost Kreyenbuhl. He lived in the Canton Bern where he was leader in the Mennonite Church. He also was cast into prison because of his religious beliefs; here he suffered for a long time. Through God's wonderful leading, he was freed from his imprisonment, but suffering was the cause of an ailment which eventually ended in death. He had three sons, Jost, Peter, and Michael, who also belonged to the 100 families that left Switzerland for the Reinpfalz. Here the name of Kreyenbuhl was changed to Krehbiel. Here these families lived for about 100 years. What is true of the Krehbiel family, could be said of many of our ancestors. Many more Swiss Mennonite families are descendants of these 100 families or of later groups that came to the Palatinate. Many of these family registers are not available. It is not surprising that living in this country for a century, they slowly lost the Swiss dialect, and replaced it with the south German dialect. The Swiss dialect is a dialect based on the German language. No reason to make effort to keep it as

it did not involve the losing of a mother tongue to a different language.

Not all of our ancestors went from Switzerland to the Palatinate. A few years after the Krehbiels had come to the Palatinate a group of Mennonites fled from Bern, Switzerland to France, to escape the persecution. In this group we find the family names of Graber, Kaufman, Stucky, et al. They settled at Montbeliard, where we still find these names today. Certainly these French Mennonites are our distant relatives. These families also lived approximately 100 years in France. It's interesting that these families seemingly retained more of the Swiss dialect.

We find that in families that bear these names, off and on the Swiss still is spoken here in America 200 years after they left Switzerland. That they did not lose it in France can easily be explained, since they lived amongst the French it meant to lose the mother tongue and not only a dialect, if they would have accepted the French language. When they later came together with the south Germans in Russia, it seems that the Swiss dialect more and more gave way to the south German, till today after living in America for more than 50 years you only once in a great while hear the Swiss dialect spoken, while the German dialect (1924) is still widely used, but is rapidly losing to the English language.

In 1762, Catherine II ascended to the throne in Russia. Through victorious wars with Turkey at this time the borders of Russia were extended to the Black and Caspian seas. The newly won territory was only sparsely inhabited by half-civilized Turks and Tartars. The whole area was therefore very much neglected and deserted. Catherine was very much concerned to improve this newly acquired land. She knew of the ability of the Germans as she was partly German herself. She also knew of the thrifty Mennonite farmers. She sent a special invitation to them to come and settle in her country. She promised them religious freedom, military exemption, tax exemption for 10 years, ownership rights, etc. From

Holland, Prussia, and other countries the Mennonites flocked into Russia. Also our ancestors who had gone to Germany and France from Switzerland heard the call and moved in that direction. It was in 1773 when some families of our ancestors left the Palatinate, where they had lived approximately 100 years, to settle in Russia. We mention again the Krehbiel family, since we know their history best. Peter Krehbiel, a grandson of Jost Kreyenbuhl, who came to the Palatinate from Switzerland, was among those who hoped, with God's blessing, to make a successful living in Russia. This Peter Krehbiel, is the great-great-grandfather of the Krehbiels who were young men when they came to America. Others of our ancestors were also in this emigration group from the Palatinate. To begin with they only came as far as Austria, where they lived near Lehmberg for 15 years, till 1787. Here Peter Krehbiel and Joseph Mundelein were leaders of the congregation. The last named was one of noble birth. His parents were Catholic and educated him to become a priest. While studying he was convinced by the doctrine of the Protestants and renounced Catholicism. He was then expelled by his parents and driven away. He came in contact with the Mennonites and joined them. He did not have any male descendants, so this name is not found among the Swiss Mennonites today.

As has already been mentioned Russia was the destination of these wandering ancestors, hence they lived in Austria only fifteen years. In 1787, the families Krehbiel, Miller, Schrag, and Zerger went further east until they reached the colony Reditschoff, where they resided till 1791. However, Joseph Mundelein with others, remained in Austria. The Zerger family came from Palatinate to Austria; Miller and Schrag families lived at Reditschoff; one of the Schrag sisters was married to an Andreas Waldner and remained in the colony.

In 1791 these four families were on the move again and settled in Michalin. Here also people of a different background were added to these Swiss Mennonites. A certain Johann Krehbiel was united in marriage to Anna Nickel. Also the Wedel family came to them here, and later Johann Wedel was married to Anna Schrag. Very likely the Nichels and Wedels

were not of the Swiss. It is almost certain that the Wedels came from Prussia. Here in Michalin they got acquainted with our ancestors and intermarried and from now on the Wedels belonged to our group.

After a three year stay, these families moved farther to Beresina near Dubno, where they lived till 1801. Here the Prince Luboninsky built a papermill. The dam that he needed for this project caused their lands to be flooded. So the Prince gave them other land close to Wignansky. There they lived till 1817. Here we have the following families: Krehbiel, Miller, Schrag, Wedel, and probably some others. In the course of time, still others came. Some of the families that went from Switzerland to France made contacts with these at Wignansky at this time, and we will direct our attention to these families again.

As has been mentioned, soon after some of our ancestors had migrated from Switzerland to the Palatinate, others of our ancestors went to Mempelgard, France. Among these we find these family names: Graber, Kaufman, Stucky. After a 100 year stay, a number of these families migrated in the year 1790, on the invitation of Catherine II of Russia, from France to Poland. Some went as far as Urschulin, some as far as Einsiedel, Austria. Here we have a few Schrag, Albrecht, Stucky, Graber, Sutter, et. al. Some of these had communications with the Wignansky group. Joseph Mundelein, who had already been mentioned joined the group here in Urschulin and was their elder till his death in 1810. In 1797, the group from Einsiedel and a few years later those from Urschulin migrated and settled at Michelsdorf, Poland, near Warsaw. On May 31, 1807, Joseph Schrag, and on July 16, 1809, Johann Albrecht, were elected to the ministry. After the death of Mundelein, the elder, he was followed by Christian Stucky, next Jacob Graber and later Johann Graber. In Urschulin and Michels-

dorf we have these family names: Albrecht, Bertold, Flickinger, Graber, Goering, Gordia, Hubin, Hettinger, Kaufman, Mauer, Mundelein, Ratzlaff, Roth, Rupp, Schrag, Stucky, Sutter, and Zuck. We would be glad to establish the origin of each of these families, however we do not have the necessary information. Here a few families of the Lutheran denomination joined the Swiss Mennonites. Among these we find the names: Senner, Schwarz, and Wolbert, so we also have these names in our ranks, also the Voran family came to us here. An orphan boy, whose name was Paul Voran, was adopted and reared by Joseph Mundelein. All the Vorans here are his descendants. Our ancestors lived 40 years in Michelsdorf. Some family names became extinct, since there were no male descendants.

In the years 1815 to 1817 some brethren from Michelsdorf came to the estate of Prince Luboninsky. Among them were the previously mentioned ministers, Joseph Schrag and Johann Albrecht. They purchased and leased some of his land and founded the Edwardsdorf congregation. The previously mentioned families of Wignansky joined this congregation, also the Krehbiel, Miller, Schrag, and Zerger families. Here the Swiss Mennonites who went from Switzerland to South Germany (Reinpfalz and Palatinate) and those that migrated from Switzerland to Mempelgard, France were once more united after being separated for nearly 150 years.

In the year 1837, the congregation at Michelsdorf was dissolved, as the families living there moved to Horodischt and there organized a new congregation. Elders there were Jacob Graber and later Joseph Graber, and P. Kaufman was a minister. Shortly after, probably in the same year, the little congregation in Waldheim was also organized with Joseph Schrag as elder and later Johann Schrag and Christian Graber as minister. In Edwardsdorf we have these family names: Albrecht, Flickinger, Goering, Krehbiel, Miller, Preheim, Ries, Schrag, Stucky, Sutter, Voran, Waldner, Wedel and Zerger. Here also a few Lutheran families joined the Swiss Mennonites and we received the following

names: Orchelan and Strausz. Also the widow of Andreas Waldner from Reditschoff came with her three sons here to Edwardsdorf and was again united with her relatives. Their name was later written Waltner, and no doubt they are the original family of all the Waltners of the Swiss Mennonites. In the congregation at Edwardsdorf we have these elders: Johann Albrecht and Joseph Schrag; ministers Johann Miller, 1825; Johann Goering, 1834; Johann Schrag, 1843, who was elected as elder in 1848. Jacob Stucky was elected as elder in 1862. The Edwardsdorf community continued for 43 years, then the congregation was dissolved in 1861, since most of them moved 160 miles further east, where the Kotosufka congregations was founded in the Schitomir district of the province of Wolhynien. Here the congregation purchased two villages with a tract of land. The two villages were approximately three miles to four miles apart and were named Kotosufka and, Neumanufka. Since this was not only leased ground, but also purchased property it was distributed (sold ?) to the respective families, so that each family had their own ground. This was a wooded area that had to be cleared so it could be tilled. The families that had their land between these two villages, moved on it and brought it under cultivation. Though the area between these small villages was not as closely settled, yet in time the two small villages were considered as one large village called Kotosufka and the name Neumanufka was dropped. The church was built in the middle between the two original villages, or in the center of the large village. Jacob Stucky served this congregation as Elder, and it was often called, The Stucky Church. The ministers serving here were Jacob D. Goering and Johann Goering. Here David Dirks joined the congregation and Fredrick Ortman and his wife Julia also were received into the church on April 18, 1871.

We find that in the seventies of the nineteenth century in the province of Wohlynien, Russian Poland, we had these four congregations of Swiss Mennonites: Sahorez, Horodischt, Waldheim and Kotosufka.

CHAPTER II

The Land Where Our Ancestors Lived A Hundred Years

It should interest us, to study a little of the country and its history in which our forefathers lived for a century. The province, Wolhynien, is in West Russia just east of Galitia. The northern part of Wolhynien is covered with forests and is partly swampy. The southern part where our ancestors lived had much forest too. This was very fertile soil, well adapted for agriculture. The province is about 240 miles east to west, about 120 miles wide north to south. The capital city was Schitomir and is located in the southwest part of the province. We could compare such a province (government) to one of our states. It was further subdivided, similar to our counties.

As far as the history of Wolhynien is concerned we want to make a short report. Little is known of its early history, except that it belonged to the Russian kingdom and was inhabited by Slavonian people. In the fourteenth century, the province was consolidated with Lithuania and in the year 1569 Lithuania and Wolhynien consolidated with Poland. Wolhynien belonged to Poland for many years. But the big powers, Poland's neighbors, from time to time waged war against this small country, and it was divided to Austria, Prussia, and Russia. By the last division in 1795, Wolhynien was made a part of the Russian kingdom and remained a Russian province as long as our people resided there. In the last years of their residence in Wolhynien they were divided into four settlements and also comprised four congregations. Just how these congregations and villages were located, cannot be ac-

curately determined since those who could give this information are not with us any more, but have gone to their heavenly home. These who are still with us (in 1928) can still describe the villages in which they lived, but to say just where they were located, how far apart they were, etc. they cannot tell any more. Opinions differ in which directions the villages were one from the other. One thing is definite, we know the names of these four villages or congregations.

I. Sahorez: This was a small village close to Dubno. In the vicinity there were a few small villages that belonged to this congregation, namely Goritt, Futter, Hecker, and others. This congregation did not have a church so they had their meetings in the different homes. The worship services were held every Sunday, one Sunday in Sahorez and the other in Futter. Johann Schrag was the Elder. He did not emigrate but remained in Russia with his family. These small villages were founded by families that came from Edwardsdorf (Botschi). When Edwardsdorf was dissolved, the majority of the families went to Kotosufka.

II. Horodischt: As we said previously, this congregation was organized in 1837. Beresina, a small hamlet about three miles from Horodischt also belonged to this congregation. Here only a few families resided, while Horodischt was a considerably larger village. Probably other villages of three or four families belonged to Horodischt. This congregation had a church.

III. Waldheim: This was a small hamlet, composed of twelve families, coming from Horodischt. A few families may also have come from other villages. The Waldheim congregation was a small one. A small hamlet close by also belonged to this congregation.

IV. Kotosufka: We had said before Kotosufka and Neumanufka were combined into a large village. It was the largest of the four congregations. The church was in the middle of the colony. A few small villages belonged to this congregation, maybe we should say a few small hamlets of courtyards where only a few families lived,

such as Lindental. It so happened that some families had the opportunity to buy large farms or to lease them, so in reality they did not live in the village, but in a little hamlet of their own, but still belonged to the larger village and the congregation. If a person takes a good map of Russia, a person can pretty well tell the location of these four churches or villages. Most maps show the cities of Dubno and Schitomir. Dubno in the southwestern part and Schitomir in the southeastern part of Wolhynien. These two cities were 140 to 150 miles apart. It is certain that the Sahorez colony was close to Dubno. On the other hand, our elderly people are agreed that Kotosufka was near Schitomir, but how far and in what direction from Schitomir, on this they differ. Probably Kotosufka was between twenty and forty miles to the northwest of Schitomir while Sahorez was only a few miles from Dubno. According to this information they were one hundred miles apart. The colonies of Horodischt and Waldheim were between the two. Horodischt or Waldeim were a day's journey from Kotosufka. Some are of the opinion it was a day and a half journey. All four were located between Dubno and Schitomir in the southern part of Wolhynien. Schitomir was about 200 miles straight east of Lemberg. Dubno was 75 miles northeast of Lemberg. The town Ostrog was between Dubno and Schitomir. In this vicinity there was also a Mennonite colony. Our ministers were acquainted with the ministers of the Ostrog church and visited together since some of our villages were not far away from some of their villages. Yes, our village which was farthest away could not have been more than 70 miles from Ostrog. From where our ancestors lived in Wolhynien to the great settlements in South Russia (Chortisza and Molotschna) was a distance of 400 ***to*** 500 miles in a southeasterly direction.

CHAPTER III

The Century In Russia

To preserve their faith, our ancestors left their old home and came to Russia to establish a new home, where they could live as they had been convinced by the Word of God. Not riches, nor special preferences, nor better economic conditions was their aim, just a place where they would be permitted to quietly live, where their life was not in danger, and where they would not have to suffer daily persecution for their beliefs. Then they would be thankful and satisfied. A loving God prospered this venture and they were successful. Nevertheless, to dwell in Russia was not easy, but they were happy and content.

In this chapter we want to briefly describe the stay of our ancestors in Russia. We want to mention, to begin with, that living conditions had changed in many respects toward the end of the century, as compared to the beginning. Even in the different villages we have different customs due to circumstances. Even in the same village we cannot treat or judge all persons or families alike. This or that, which is described here may not apply to every village or colony.

As has been repeatedly mentioned, most of our people in Russia lived in villages. Through the middle of the village was a street called the village street. Usually the houses were built on both sides of the street but not always. Each larger colony had a church, at least the last years the church was usually in the center of the village, also the schoolhouse. In Kotosufka they had two schoolhouses since the colony was so large, one was in Kotosufka, the other was in Neumanufka. In the first few years in Russia they did not have any churches, so they had their worship services in

the homes. After a few years a change was seen in the building of their houses. In the very beginning the house and barn were under one roof divided by a gangway. From time to time this type of building was more and more discarded, so that in later years very few such buildings were being erected. Often two families built a house together, one family living at one end and the other family at the other, so that each had their own apartment with a hall between them. The buildings were built of lumber. They went to the woods, felled the tress, split the logs into beams, and used them for the walls. The roofs were made of straw. A house, barn, and granary were built by nearly every family.

The land on which our ancestors lived and farmed was leased or rented. Wolhynien had many lords, who had large estates. Sometimes a congregation leased such an estate from one lord. The land was then divided among the different families, each receiving three or four parcels of ground, which was rather inconvenient. The pasture land was not divided but held in common except in Kotosufka where each family owned their land. Often this pasture land was leased on a different estate, usually in the woods. Since the colony that came to Kansas lived in Edwardsdorf and later in Kotosufka it would be interesting to mention a little more about this colony. In Edwardsdorf (Botschi) they lived on leased land. The land was leased for a 24 year term. After this lease expired it was renewed for another 24 year term. In the eighteen sixties, the czar issued a decree, that one person could only own a certain amount of land. If he had more than this specified amount, he had to sell the remainder or else the government took it. For this reason land was for sale, cheap. The colony at Edwardsdorf took advantage of this. They went further inland and there purchased the two estates of Kotosufka and Neumanufka with the forest situated between these two. This happened in 1861. Here each family purchased their own ground and had all their land together. Here our forefathers worked hard so they could be more independent.

The woods were cleared and made into tillable fields, which was a gigantic piece of work. But they could not enjoy the fruits of their labor very long since they emigrated in 1874. In this comparatively short time some became fairly well-to-do. If he owned two hides of land he was rich. Only here and there was a family that had three hides. A hide was fifty acres.

Most of our Swiss Mennonites in Wolhynien were farmers. There were a few that followed certain trades such as blacksmiths, cabinetmakers, weavers, etc. Farming was in a rather primitive stage. The implements used were plow, harrow, wagon, scythe, and sickle. In the beginning the plows were made of wood, even the mould board, with the exception of the point. The landlord made his own plow. In later years, the blacksmiths already made a few steel plows. About the harrow we can say the same. The owners made their own. In the beginning they were made of wood, also the teeth, later iron teeth were used. The harrows were narrow in front, a little wider in the rear, and one horse was hitched in front of each section.

The horse was the animal used for work. All field work was done by horses or by hand. The small farmers had two or three horses, the average farmer about four and only the largest farmers had more than four horses. The same is also true of cattle. The average family had from two to five cows. The more well-to-do families milked as many as twelve cows. As a rule, dairying yielded the best income, as there always was a good demand for butter. The price was generally good, over forty cents per pound. They had a community pasture for all the cattle of the village. The rangeland was not fenced, so cattle had to be watched by a herdsman, who usually was hired for this job. Mornings he started at one end of the village street and gathered all the cattle and took them to the community pasture. Each family had to have their cattle ready to go when he came by. In the evening the herdsman brought the cattle home and the owners took care of them for the night. With the horses

it was different as they were used for work during the day. They were taken to pasture for the night. A few young men watched the horses during the night. The horses were hobbled, but still had to be watched so they would not stray away. The young men took turns in taking care of the horses on pasture during the night.

When we bear in mind that farm implements were very primitive, that all grain was seeded by hand (broadcast) and harvested with scythe and sickle, it can be readily seen, that big farming was not the general rule. They raised grain mostly for their own use, some also to be marketed. The good Lord that blesses our fields so abundantly with good harvest, also granted His material blessings to our ancestors in Russia. Generally, their fields produced nearly as good as here. Some soil was inferior and therefore was not productive. Their principal crops were rye, wheat, much buckwheat, oats, millet, barley, lentils, peas, potatoes, etc. Markets, like we have in America, they did not have. At their regular market places they usually could sell a few bushels of grain, or if they took grain to the mill to be ground and to get some flour, they usually could sell some of the grain also. Often they took wagonloads of potatoes to the surrounding towns and peddled them from house to house or sometimes to small Russian stores, even Jewish stores purchased them. There also were breweries, that at times bought much grain and potatoes. The towns were not very close to the villages, especially not the larger ones. But they could get rid of some of the products there and could purchase what was needed, which was very little.

Before you could sell the grain it had to be harvested and threshed. Since this was an altogether different operation in Russia than here, it is proper to say something about it. It was harvested with sickle and cradle. Wheat and rye were cut with the sickle, to save the straw as that was needed in making their roofs. The other crops were cut with the scythe. That was hard work to swing a scythe from morning till evening. Husband and wife, son and

daughter, were kept busy at it. The grain was tied into bundles, shocked, and after harvest hauled into the barn or shed. Their hay was cut with a scythe also. The men cut it and the women raked it with hand rakes and hauled it away.

Most of our people, especially the poorer ones, did not only harvest their own crops, but went to the Russians and sometimes to the Jewish landlords to work in the harvest, for wages. Where a family only had half a hide of land, the wife and daughters took care of the harvest and the father and sons went out for wages. The daily wage was very small, a half a ruble per day, depending on how much a person could cut with a scythe in a day, but the money lasted for a longer period of time than now. Many women and maidens also went to the Russian landlords to earn a little money in the harvest. Their climate being different their grain stood a lot longer then here and their harvest lasted for weeks.

Not only did some of our people work in harvest for wages, but served as servants and maid servants throughout the year. A farm laborer worked hard summer and winter. This is true also of those who worked for themselves. A servant did any kind of work. His pay was twelve rubles per year. A maid servant received a salary of six rubles. She milked the cows, fed the cattle, worked in the harvest, etc.

Not only in summer but also in winter they worked hard. After the grain was garnered in, in the fall and the frost began at night, they began with the threshing of the grain. They threshed their grain with a flail. The work was done in the shed. A poor farmer did the work himself, or with his sons if he had any. The more well-to-do farmer did the work also, but if he did not have any sons, he hired some extra help, so that about four men worked with the flail in the shed. They had to hurry along to complete this work by Christmas. Many did not even finish by Christmas. It wasn't child's play to swing the flail all day. Even in the coldest weather they kept at it. In the shed a person usually

could keep warm by working, except hands and feet sometimes were bitterly cold.

By the time threshing was finished, plenty other work had piled up. Cattle needed much attention. Through the winter they were kept in the barn on a halter. Hay had to be hauled in, manure had to be hauled to the fields. This was done with sleds. As soon as the first snow fell, the wagon was put in the shed until spring. It was replaced by the sled, since snow lay on the ground all winter. The sled was also used to get wood out of the woodland. This was another job that kept young and old busy during the winter months. They drove to the woods, felled the tress, worked them up for building material and fuel.

Another chore, mostly for the women, was spinning. Flax and hemp were raised so they could make their own cloth. The flax had to be plucked, the seed stripped, then it was laid outside where it was exposed to dew and rain and dried by the sun. This separated the threads from the stalk. Hemp was treated in a similar way. It was put in the pond or river for two weeks and then dried by the sun. After this the processing of hemp or flax was the same. First the stems had to be broken and swung so the threads were loosened from the stem. Then the women took these fine threads and with the spinning wheel made them into a heavier thread. This thread was taken to the weaver who wove it into cloth. In later years, they had their own weavers in the villages. The wool was prepared in a somewhat similar way. After the sheep had been shorn, the wool was thoroughly cleaned, then dangled, spun into thread, and finally woven, after which it was taken to the fuller, who pressed it into cloth with a fulling machine.

Men's clothing was all made from homespun cloth. Every colony had a tailor who usually was a Jew. He came into the homes and made the garments which the men and boys needed, then he went to the next home. By the time he got through the colony he could start at the beginning again, in that way he was continually em

ployed. The women's and children's clothing was also made from homespun cloth. In the later years in Russia they had already begun to buy calico and better cloth in the stores for women's and children's clothing.

Generally, most of the things in the home and farm were homemade, such as homemade clothes and furniture, implements, etc. Of course they had workmen who could do this better and make a neater job. With a few exceptions, most of these workmen were our own people. Our people had their own carpenters and cabinet makers. Many of us still living, had a father or a grandfather who worked at the carpenter's bench. They made furniture and sold it in the colony. Some earned a livelihood this way. They even hauled their furniture, etc. to the towns and sold it. Most every householder made furniture as needed by the family; he also made buckets, tubs, spoons, etc. out of wood.

Schools

In our time when so much emphasis is placed on education it is only natural that we should be interested in the schools and educational system of our ancestors in Russia. In comparison to our school facilities, theirs were very primitive. Naturally this had its causes. Partly because of the nomadic life that was their lot, due to the persecution on account of their faith and beliefs, which drove them from their native soil. They did not have the qualified personnel in the churches in Wolhynien, who would promote a good school system. On the average, our people were mostly poor, so both old and young had to work hard for their subsistence. One can also say, that they were not enough educationally minded to promote good schools.

The schools remained in the realm of the primary and elementary schools. Reading and writing and arithmetic were the main studies that were taught. To these they added Bible history. Good penmanship was very important, more so than correct spelling. Usually the preachers were the teachers, or some one that could read and

write and do a little figuring. If a child was ready for school, it was given a primer, slate, and chalk, sometimes not even a primer. If so, the ABC's were written on a slate and the child learned it from the slate instead of the book. For writing and arithmetic the slate and chalk were used. Plenty of chalk could be obtained from the hills that were close by, and the pupils themselves provided it. Slates were made by the father, on a board 12 inches by 24 inches. To teach a beginner to write, the teacher made a few strokes on the slate and the pupils would copy them. The older pupils were given longer sentences from which they were to make copies. For penmanship, the larger pupils used real pens, goose quill or feather. This pen was made by the schoolteacher, cut with his penknife so that you could write the finest script with it. Besides the primer, the Bible was used as a reader very often. As soon as a pupil could read somewhat, the primer was discarded and the Bible was used as a guide to study the art of reading.

Strict discipline reigned in school. The rod was not spared. It was not unusual when the idler or the disobedient received a good thrashing with a birch switch. It was quite a problem for some teachers to keep good order, especially with the older pupils. Each pupil had his assigned place, and if he made good progress in his reading he was recognized by being advanced from his position. If he did not show any progress he was set back from his position as punishment. Every Wednesday was regarded as examination day. During the week every mistake a pupil made in reading was recorded. The one with the most mistakes was set back and the one with the fewest or no mistakes was advanced. This brought about some comic incidents. It so happened that a small, studious, honest, pupil was seated ahead of some bigger and older ones. It also happened that a big, lazy, pupil was indifferent and wasted his time and let one by one get ahead of him, till he was at the foot of the class, so to his disgrace and shame had to sit on the last bench by the door.

Each pupil had to study for himself as there was no division into classes as we have them today. There were no grades in the school as first, second, etc. As soon as the boys and girls were big enough to help along with the work at home, their school days were ended. Since there was much work during the winter months also, the children didn't have many years in school. Even then some received considerable knowledge of history and geography. However, they did not get this in school, but by reading and studying books and pamphlets in later years. Little was known about newspapers at that time.

School dues, including teachers' salary, were equally divided to the families in the village. Whether a family had many children or none at all, did not matter. We dealt according to the principle, "Bear ye one another's burden," Galatians 6:2. These levies were evidently not very high, at least not in comparison with the taxes today.

Church Life

In church affairs considerable changes took place during the century they stayed in Russia. When the Swiss Mennonites came to Wolhynien, all the worship services were held in the home. Later, when the congregations were larger, they built churches, in which they could have their worship services. Things that in the earlier years were forbidden, were later permitted and generally used. On the whole, they did not make any revolutionary changes.

At the head of each church was a church board, consisting of the elder, ministers, the deacon, and the song leader. All these positions were filled by election and all church members, male and female, were entitled to vote. In their elections they did not have any nominations. Every voter voted for the person he wanted for the office. Therefore they sometimes had many candidates for an office in their elections. From all those receiving votes at an election one or more (as many as were needed) were chosen by lot. So it was possible for a person who only received one vote, to be chosen

by lot, while the one who had many votes, was freed by lot. An elder was elected from the ministers. No one was elected as an elder who had not served as a minister for quite some time.

The worship services were alternately led by the ministers, since each congregation had several ministers. In choosing a text, they generally picked one from the scripture passages from the gospels and epistles which the church of that day had designated for the Sundays and various church holidays. Sunday schools and Christian Endeavor societies were not known at that time. On the other hand, their services lasted for two or three hours. The song service lasted about an hour. Since they had only a few song books, verse by verse was read by the songleader and sung by the audience. The songs were long, from six to fifteen verses or more. Usually they sang the whole song, no matter how many verses it had. They sang in a kind of dragging tone, simply following the song leader. The remainder of the time of the service was filled out by prayer, preaching, confession, and testimony. The sermon was long. After the sermon the minister called for testimonies or confessions. This made their services rather lengthy. We can easily imagine one or the other asleep during the service, still it is doubtful if they had more sleeping during the services then than we have today. During the time from Ash Wednesday to Good Friday, each Friday was considered a day of prayer and fasting. They held Communion on Good Friday and also practiced the rite of footwashing. This was preceded by a preparatory service on Thursday at which their grievances and differences should be condoned, so that every member could take part in the Communion Service.

Generally, they were very strict in their way of living. All wordly affairs were to be shunned. Fashions and finery in dress were strictly forbidden. The wearing of buttons on clothing was often a much discussed question. At first, only hooks and eyes were permitted. Whether women should be permitted to wear shawls over their shoulders? Whether men should wear knickerbockers or

if they should wear the trousers over the boots or inside the boots? If the men could wear neckties? Such and many similar questions were the cause for many a meeting of the brotherhood. It shows us though, how earnest they were in their living, and did not want anything, which the Word of God did not sanction. This is the reason that they practiced strict church discipline. If a member sinned, he was called to the church board to give an account and reprimanded and admonished; if no change was evident, he was brought before the congregation to ask God and the church for forgiveness. If the member continued in sin, he was excluded from communion; if there was still no improvement, the member was put in the Bann, completely excluded from the brotherhood, according to 1 Corinthians 5:11. In most cases this produced the desired result and led to repentance and return of the member. Very seldom did an excluded member remain in the Bann, because no one wanted to be outside the fellowship. Generally, this punishment was dreaded and they respected church regulations and church discipline. The churches did not have any constitution, but the Bible was their guide and rule of conduct and they made every effort to follow its teaching. Didn't our fathers set a standard for us in this respect? Though we have church rules and regulations, it is extremely difficult to practice church discipline.

Besides the church board, each colony had a mayor (Schulze) who had to administer the civil affairs. He had the custody of the church treasury, made the necessary levy for the church expenses, for the school, etc., and ordered the performance of necessary work in the village, keeping the street in shape, repairs to be made at the school or church, etc. It was his duty to see that the villagers did this work. It also was his duty to issue a notice for the special congregational meetings. This as well as a call for work was made in this way: He wrote a note on a piece of paper, or if he lived in the middle of the village on two pieces of paper, containing the following information: "This is to let you

know that everyone is to appear before the mayor at a specified time." One of these he gave to the neighbor on his right and one to the neighbor on his left and each handed it to his next neighbor so the notices were taken till they reached the last house in the village. If one failed to pass this notice to his neighbor, he had to pay a fine of one florin (about forty-two cents).

Social Life

Since they lived in villages or hamlets, they had plenty of opportunity to keep company with each other. They were very sociable. Especially did they enjoy working together. In the harvest fields they often worked in groups. In the winter, when they worked in the woods, or if they made longer journeys, to get freight or so, they enjoyed going in a group. Even if the villages where our Swiss Mennonites lived were a considerable distance apart, they visited each other, to keep their friendship. It often happened that marriages took place between persons of different villages, which always gave occasion for much visiting. Occasionally families moved from one Swiss village into a different one, which always was an inducement for a closer social relationship. Weddings were a special occasion for such social gatherings. The celebration usually lasted two or three days. The whole village participated in the celebration. Often there were visitors from other villages in attendance. Sometimes they went a little too far in their merrymaking at weddings, especially after the ministers had left. In the villages, they often gathered together evenings and Sundays after dinner. The old folks visited and the youngsters played. The young people often met on Sunday afternoons. The boys played ball. Two sides were chosen, and they tried to hit one on the opposite side with the ball and if hit he wast out of the game. The side which got their opponents out of the game first was declared the winner. On winter evenings the girls and young women enjoyed to meet in groups to do some spinning. That was not as

lonesome, as to do it at home alone. Since the girls met to spin, the boys came there also, not to spin, but to cheer them up a little with their stories, jokes, farces, etc., while they were busy spinning. This was another opportunity to cultivate more intimate friendships. In some of the larger families the evenings were spent somewhat differently while spinning. Mother, daughters, and grandmother sat at the spinning wheels, the father of the house read a story to which all listened, or related some of the old traditions. Taking care of the horses at night while on pasture gave much opportunity for company. About fifteen boys and young men were watching the horses at night; that was a jolly group. We can readily see that these lively dispositions ended up in excessive joy and merriment, and they did things those nights, which would not have been done in the daytime. Some of the jokes and tricks were overdone. If the cucumber and watermelon patches could talk, they might have many stories to tell.

From what is written in this chapter we can see that our ancestors in Russia led not an extraordinary but a quiet, simple, life and on the whole a devout, modest, and well behaved life. Their mode of life was very simple: simple dress, simple homes, simple furniture, simple maintenance, simple diet, a life not absorbed in organizations, banquets, programs, and the like, but simple in every respect, adorned the life of our ancestors. Hard work was their lot by day and refreshing sleep their delight at night. Due to this simple life the status of their health was very good. Very little was known about doctors. In case of sickness, the ordinary household medicines were applied. Once in a while superstitious medicines were used. They lived on a simple diet. Rye bread, milk, potatoes, vegetables, were their main foods. Only on holidays did they have baked foods made from wheat flour. Fruit trees produced well and therefore fruit was used a lot in their menu. Often the meals were very simple. A large bowl of soup or milk was set on the table, surrounded by the whole family, each one had

a wooden spoon and ate out of the same dish. Forks and knives were not used very much. As simple as everything was in the home, the same is true of the school and the church.

In our complicated age we have many problems unknown to our ancestors, yet they also had their difficulties. Most of them had to contend with poverty. It is but natural that sometimes it was very hard for the parents to feed and clothe their children. But they confided in the One who said, "Be not anxious for your life." They had some trouble with their Russian neighbors of neighboring villages, as some of these helped themselves to some of their goods. Often the Jews also stole of their property and some came from quite a distance. Horses were often stolen. It happened quite often that a horse was stolen out of the barn or when they were at pasture during the night. Usually the best horses were taken. Other goods were taken also, such as fruit, vegetables, etc. During the potato harvest, they sometimes dug a hole in the field and buried the potatoes in it. Time and again, when the family went to the field to get the potatoes, they found an empty hole, for someone else had helped himself to the potatoes.

Emigration Song

Composed on July 30, 1874, by Elder Jacob Stucky of the Mennonite Church at Kotosufka, Wolhynien, Russia. Translated in May, 1959.

Our journey to an unknown land
We start, with God's almighty hand.
Have mercy Lord, to Thee we pray
Show us Thy goodness on our way.

Thou hast, Oh Lord, through all these years
Saved us from many anxious fears
From swords and wars and evil ways
Protected us through nights and days.

If by Thy wisdom Thou willst show
What seemeth best, where we shall go.
For this we too shall bring Thee praise
In thankfulness our voices raise.

Is it Thy will? Shall it so be?
To leave, and go across the sea?
So Lord, our will shall be Thine own
We'll go the way which Thou hast shown.

For conscience sake we go from here
Leave house and land, possessions dear,
Where by Thy grace we all were fed
For daily need Thou gavest bread.

From fire, pestilence, and flood
Thou hast protected us, Oh God.
From early death hast saved us too;
Thy grace was every morning new.

In this we see Thy bounteous grace,
If Thou willst lead us from this place.
From Russia's Empire make us free
This our desire, we bring to Thee.

The Russian leaders were not close
And dealt according as they chose;
If they advantage only get
It was to them the least regret.

'Tis then when truth has been left out
The poor are wronged without a doubt;
Since oft declined the rights and laws
It only can much hardship cause.

For the officials we do pray
That they may learn to know Thy way;
Oh give them grace that they may see
Thee as their judge, this is our plea.

Thee, precious Saviour, we adore;
We praise and thank Thee evermore.
We know against Your mighty arm,
No enemy can do us harm.

What Thou hast planned, so will it be,
In spite of foes opposing Thee;
All mockery, ridicule, deceit
Can never cause Thy work defeat.

For friends like these, we pray to You,
Who wished us well, who helped us through,
As long as we, yes, every day
We were permitted, here to stay.

Show them Thy mercy constantly;
Let them each day Thy blessings see,
Until their earthly journey's o'er
And dwell with Thee for evermore.

Should there be those who have not heard
The saving message in Thy Word;
Give them the joy, show them the way
That they may serve Thee every day.

Hypocrisy is wrong to Thee,
However nice their words might be;
To love their neighbor is unknown;
The holier things they will disown.

Now, Lord, lead Thou us by Thy hand
To the already chosen land;
While traveling, our companion be,
Until America we see.

Also, while on the sea we sail,
Thy grace and mercy shall not fail;
Lead safely us; our families too;
Keep us until our journey's through.

Should storms arise or waves beat high,
We know our God is always nigh;
At Thy command the wind is still
And naught can rise against Thy will.

Thy rod and staff will comfort give,
In the new land, while we yet live;
So lead us on till life is o'er
Where we will praise Thee evermore.

CHAPTER IV

Times Of Unrest

Into the simple and quiet life of our ancestors in Wolhynien, a life which on the one hand was rather hard and many things were dispensed with, and on the other hand was quiet, satisfied, and modest, there came suddenly something that was the cause of much unrest and worry. We can therefore characterize the years 1871-1874 as years of unrest and anxiety, years in which the minds and hearts of the people were much disturbed.

To preserve their faith and religious liberty, they had come to Russia. Here they expected to have religious liberty, as the Empress Catherine II granted the Mennonites certain privileges, including exemption from military service. This was in the year 1773. Since they were granted these privileges, many Mennonites immigrated into Russia. Among these were our ancestors. They were sincere and conscientious with these privileges, and Paul I, son of Catherine II, in the year 1800 renewed these special privileges in a goodwill letter printed in gold. By this time the Mennonites had lived more than 20 years in the land, and their work must have been appreciated; for we read in this goodwill letter "Special recognition is extended to you as the overseer's report shows that you are thrifty and diligent in your work, and that your conduct is becoming to Christians, which sets a fine example for the colonists that are settled in that region."

For a century the Russian government faithfully kept the promise, which they had given to the Mennonites. Then a new era began. As it was in the history of Israel "Now there arose a new king over Egypt, who did not know Joseph," so maybe we could say that there arose a new czar over Russia who did not know the

Mennonites. Anyway, Alexander II (so the czar was named) took a different attitude toward them than did his predecessors. His aim was to make fullfledged Russians out of all Germans in the Empire. He appeared to be more gentle in his behavior than this decree seemed to indicate. Though he was the monarch, he was unable to do anything contrary to his advisors. He must have known the Mennonites though, since it is reported that his eyes filled with tears, when he was informed that the Mennonites had decided to leave the country.

Already in the year 1871 our people began to notice the difference of opinion among the Russian diplomats, as well as the Russian folk in general, in behalf of the position of the Mennonites toward military duty. More and more it became evident that the privileges of the Mennonites had been revoked by Alexander II. This caused quite an excitement among our forefathers. It concerned their faith, their conscience, and their relationship toward God. It was the same concern as for which their ancestors left hearth and home to acquire a new home in Russia. Sacred principles of our faith were here at stake.

What is to be done under the circumstances? First make sure how things stand. Is it actually so, as has been rumored? Are the privileges really revoked? To make sure, someone should be sent to St. Petersburg, the capital of Russia, for information. Mutual concerns demand mutual consideration, therefore the Swiss Mennonites joined with the Mennonites at Ostrog in this matter. Those at Ostrog elected Elder Tobias Unruh as their representative, and those at Kotosufka elected Elder Jacob Stucky. These went as delegates to St. Petersburg, to learn more about this matter, and in case the privileges have really been revoked, to try to get a more lenient mandate established. They put forth much effort, but they could not accomplish much in this matter. They did not receive a definite answer; however, one thing was certain, the original privileges would be changed. What our position would be

under the new decree, could not be ascertained. Though the authorities in St. Petersburg tried to console them, they left with the feeling that they did not fulfill their mission, and that the continuation of religious liberty was in question. When they were nearly home already, they met a government official of high standing in the city of Ostrog from whom they received more information. He explained to them that the old privileges had been revoked and that universal military duty would be instituted, which did not necessarily mean military service. Those who could not submit to this mandate would have a few years' time to emigrate from the country.

With this information the delegates came home. We can imagine how this report pierced their hearts. That their spirits were stirred, we can well imagine. What is to be done about it? "Emigration" is the answer. Such an answer was not easily accepted. However from day to day the answer became more definite, and from time to time the resolution became more acceptable, that "our stay in Russia must end; we must get away, away into a different country." But where? Some spoke of Turkey in Asia; some mentioned Australia; still others suggested South America; but most of them thought North America should be our future home. However, they did not have a true picture of any of these countries. Many questions came to their minds, such as: Where are these places? How far away are they? What kind of countries are they? Very little was known about any of them. It took a great deal of trust in God to decide on any of these places.

Fully trusting in God, they still wanted to exercise a little foresight for their future. It was learned that from South Russia, a delegation of Mennonites was planning to go to America in the near future as emissaries to study conditions and inspect the new land. It was decided to also send a representative with this group. The Mennonites at Ostrog decided to do the same, and they selected Tobias Unruh to go. The Swiss Mennonites selected

Andreas Schrag, an older, experienced man, who was willing to undertake this assignment. As interesting as this deputation story would be, we cannot go into detail now. It can be read in any good Mennonite history. There were twelve members in this deputation group who made the tour. They traveled in three different groups. The group in which our representative, Andreas Schrag, was, consisted of Jacob Buller and Leonhard Suderman from South Russia, Tobias Unruh and Andreas Schrag from Wolhynien, and Wilhelm Evert from Prussia. In April, 1873 they left Russia and landed in New York on May 22, 1873. They spent about three months in America and explored the country from Canada to Texas. Dakota, Nebraska, Minnesota, and Kansas were the states where they made special investigations. Part of the time all twelve traveled together, and part of the time they traveled in separate groups to visit different areas. They also examined the laws of the land, and particularly the position the government took toward military duty and religious liberty. They were welcomed by the Mennonites in the East (Pennsylvania), and they also helped them in obtaining information. After finishing their task, they boarded a ship on the twentieth day of August, 1873, in New York for their return journey, and they arrived at home during the first days of September.

Now stirring days lay ahead. The representatives reported favorably on the possibilities in America, and soon, though fainthearted and hesitant, the decision was "America, the land of the free, shall become our home. If it be God's will, we will emigrate." Each congregation decided for themselves. All four Swiss congregations came to the same conclusion. Naturally, the whole matter was earnestly and prayerfully considered, this being no small undertaking. A general day of prayer was announced to be held in the church; and many heart-warming prayers ascended to the Throne of Grace, pleading that God should lead us in the things that we were planning, and that we might feel His presence near.

Also many family prayers and private prayers ascended to the Lord Jesus and laid the matter to the Redeemer's heart.

But, emigration brings many problems. Furniture and household goods must be sold. Land, houses, and personal belongings must be sold. Those who lived on leased ground and built houses and other buildings on it, had to find some one to lease the ground and buy the buildings. By word and by mail it was announced far and wide, even into Poland and Austria, that in Wolhynien, between Dubno and Schitomir, whole villages with good households were for sale. The Lord added His blessing so that in the fall, and in winter, and then in spring many buyers came; and all could sell by July, 1874. Mostly German colonists bought the villages. Naturally they had to sell cheap, but they were willing to sacrifice for the sake of their faith. Some things were given away very cheap, but everyone wanted to go along to America, and therefore took whatever he could get.

Then you must reckon with the fact, that each one who wants to emigrate must have a passport. A committee was elected to secure the passports. Jacob Wedel, Andreas Goering, and Julius Fosz were elected. The latter belonged to the Lutheran denomination, and was elected because he could speak the Russian language fluently, and also was acquainted with legal procedures. It soon became necessary to acquire the services of a lawyer, anyway. One was found who was ready to bring this matter to the governor. The governor asked for a petition from the Mennonites. In it they should state when they came to Russia and why, what kind of a religion they had, what privileges they had to date, and why they wanted to leave at this time. Further, this petition should give an enumeration, and the name and address of all who wished to emigrate. This document was prepared and sent to St. Petersburg; and not without result, for in the spring of 1874, the passports came. These cost 50 rubels ($50) per family. These passports were releases to get out of Russia, for

without passport no one could cross the border. Besides the passport, each person had to be supplied with a ticket. This ticket cost $80 per person. Some of the poorer families did not have enough money to pay for their tickets. They were taken care of since the Mennonites in America advanced money for them. They came to America on free passes; however, they had to pay back this journey-debt to the Mennonites in Illinois, Ohio, etc. with labor.

As was previously mentioned each congregation decided and cared for their own. For that reason the Swiss Mennonites of Wolhynien did not all come at the same time, but came in four different groups. The Sahorez congregation came in two groups. Two villages comprised the first group. They were ten families. They began the journey on April 10, 1874, headed by the deputy member of the emissaries, Andreas Schrag. This group settled in South Dakota. Soon the next group of this congregation, consisting of two villages again, came and also settled in South Dakota.

The third group to set out to go abroad came from the two congregations, Horodischt and Waldheim. Waldheim was a sister church of Horodischt, as this village was established by residents of Horodischt. This group was considerably larger than the first two. It consisted of 53 families. Rev. Peter Kaufman, Chr. Schrag, and Chr. Kaufman were chosen as leaders of this group. They began their journey in July, 1874 and settled in Hutchinson and Turner counties in South Dakota. On August 6, 1874, the fourth and last and largest group from the congregation of Kotosufka began the long journey to America. There were 73 families in this group. This was the entire congregation with exception of two persons, one unmarried man, Voran by name, and one married man, Sutter by name, but his family was in the group. In the other congregations a few more remained. In all about seven families out of the four congregations remained in Russia. In Kotosufka, however, only the two persons already named stayed behind. This

congregation settled in Kansas, with the exception of a few families who went to South Dakota, since some of their close relatives had settled there. The Kansas settlement was in the southeastern part of McPherson County, but soon reached into Harvey County. Later also settlements were started in Reno and Kingman counties. From this Kotosukfa congregation, as time passed, the following congregations were founded in Kansas: Hopefield, Eden, Pretty Prairie, Bethany in Kingman County, and about two-thirds of the membership of the First Mennonite Church of Christian, Kansas.

We named this chapter "Times of Unrest." One of our Swiss Mennonite brethren composed a poem, which was published in **Post und Volksbatt** (now ***Mennonite Review).*** It gives somewhat of a glance into this time of unrest. It is written in the Swiss dialect. The writer, as a young man, lived through these times of unrest, which made a great impression on his life. May we close this chapter with it.

Vun Russland uf America

(Aus "Post und Volksblatt" Nov. 27, 1902)

Translated, 1959

I will a story now relate
Which happened at an early date
In Russia, our Fatherland,
We had the freedom, how to stand.

As Mennonites we defenseless are
And did not have to go to war.
From military duty free

Soldiers, we were not asked to be.

But, almost thirty years ago
Misfortune struck, 'twas a hard blow.
"Your freedom to an end has come,
Now take the gun, or seek a home!"

While pondering, what we could do
At first it did not seem as true.
We searched the law what it would say.
'Tis so, "Your freedom ends this day."

"Now to conscript, your lot will be
Or if to this you won't agree;
Then this is not the place for you,
Just leave, there's nothing else to do!"

While wondering where a home to find,
America came to our mind.
Just then to them the land seemed new,
While it is home to me and you.

Ere long the women heard of it,
Which spread the rumors quite a bit;
They, Fannie, Phoebe, also Sue
Argued, you wouldn't think it's true.

Now we must leave, just what is this?
Whatever else, no joke it is.
House, barn, and also cow is here,
And other things which we hold dear.

Joki now comes to Greet to see,
How things by now with her agree;
Of his intent she's well aware,
And did not for his comment care.

"Just think of this, what do you say,
The children might die on the way—
Or when we'll be up on the sea
All this is very hard for me."

"The ship is tossed about in storm
Swings back and forth, just like a worm;
And you might fall into the sea,
Then I a widow have to be."

"Do what you please, say what you may;
I only know, I'm going to stay.
I'm staying home, and you with me
This, I think, is as it should be."

Kathryn, as happy as can be
Exclaimed, "Things seem confused to me;
If Joki should not have say so
What kind of order does it show."

"Yes, let the men do as they say,
And we will not stand in the way;
But rather follow them all through
And surely take the children too."

America, where does it lay?
I have quite often heard them say
It's over there supposed to be;
Some forty miles from the big sea.

Lena's convinced, of it I know
"It's close to Oregon we go."
While Mary said, "It seems to me
In Pennsylvania it will be."

Here come old Liz, explains a bit
About this thing "I'm sure of it."
She laughs and says, "It is not so,
It is in old New Mexico."

The women seemed to disagree.
This, Michel didn't think should be;
"I'm positive," said he, "Ha! Ha!
It's over in America."

Now everybody up and flee,
To the new land we soon shall see;
All who are able now to start
We from our old home must depart.

By train we go up to the sea.
Where on the ship we soon will be;
It takes us in and moves not slow,
As fast as bow and arrow go.

And though it often caused us fear,
We did not know of danger near.
The ship sailed to the other side,
None drowned, all safe in it abide.

Now when the ship had docked that day,
Here Uncle Sam comes right away;
And friendly takes and shakes our hand,
Welcoming us into this land.

"In Kansas is the place to be,
Where treasures are for you and me.
There is a farm and more land too
For both, your oldest boy and you.

"And when the youngest is of age,
Also in farming would engage,
A quarter then he shall have too
To get a start like others do."

For Kansas we are bound to leave,
At last we hope rest to receive;
A quarter section we expect
With eagerness, from Sam direct.

Of things we now complain the most
Is that, the journey so much cost;
Our money is completely gone,
We can not possibly go on.

We now procede by oxen fare,
The journey over land so rare,
We travel over hill and dale
To stay alive, we almost fail.

Not like the train ride was our speed,
Nor with electricity did compete
'Twas different than with horses' power
Three-quarter mile in seven hour.

By now the oxen thirsty were,
And looked for water here and there;
Close by there even was a brook,
For oxen it was really luck.

The water was not very deep,
But still the shore was plenty steep.
That's where the oxen turned around
And tipped the wagon to the ground.

This evidently you will know
The upper things now were below.
Again we put the things back on,
By then, the oxen too were done.

A place for home we soon had found,
And no more had to look around;
We built a house for us to stay,
Where we go in and out each day.

Now we are here and here we stay,
With happy hearts our thanks we say;
And gladly sing and shout hurrah—
From Russia to America.

CHAPTER V

Russia Adieu

Separation brings pain. That can also be said of the departing of our forefathers from Russia after they decided to immigrate to America. Preparations were made for the long journey. The common, necessary arrangements we have already mentioned. The time was now come to pack the belongings which they took along. You can imagine the many tears, anxious fears, unsolved problems, and many questions they had to contend with. The poor had to worry that because of lack of money they might not be able to go along but that was taken care of. Then there was the question about the conditions in the New World, as no one could imagine since they were not acquainted with geography, and how will it be to start again in that far away America? The thought, to leave the old home forever, was almost unbearable. Some could not think of it without fear. It was almost impossible to comfort them. They could almost not decide to go along, but to stay there alone, no, that would be still worse, so they surrendered to the unavoidable.

The matter was considered very serious. A day of prayer and fasting was announced at which time they gathered in the church, to entreat the Lord for grace and protection, for the journey, and in the new home. Finally the last preparations were finished. Everything was packed. The bread basket was filled to the brim with dark bread and other provisions for the journey. On August 6, 1874, the solemn and very difficult and unforgettable hour (for those who experienced it) to leave had come. People from the community and neighboring villages were hired to take them to the railroad station. The wagons were loaded. The movement

began. How the hearts beat and the tears rolled. Yes, separation brings pain.

Now they leave the village. "Dear Homeland Adieu." Before they left they stopped to look back once more. There was the beautiful village Kotosufka. Can it be that we leave it forever? or Is it a dream? No, it's an unmerciful reality. Here they said farewell to a large number of people, neighbors, friends, and Russian farmers who came to wish them a safe journey and God's blessing in their new home. With more tears they also had to part from these people, but not without singing a farewell song. Of this impressive song we have the following four verses.

The time has come for us to part.
The journey to America start
Where thousands are content to stay,
This gives us courage on our way.

To you dear relatives and friends
We reach to clasp, once more your hands
And though we will not meet again
Our hearts and minds must calm remain.

Be steadfast happy and be strong.
Yes, let us join the farewell song.
We will not go beyond God's care
No, He is there, He's everywhere.

Farewell dear Fatherland to thee.
Farewell to friends we'll never see
Until we reach that glorious shore
Where we will meet to part no more.

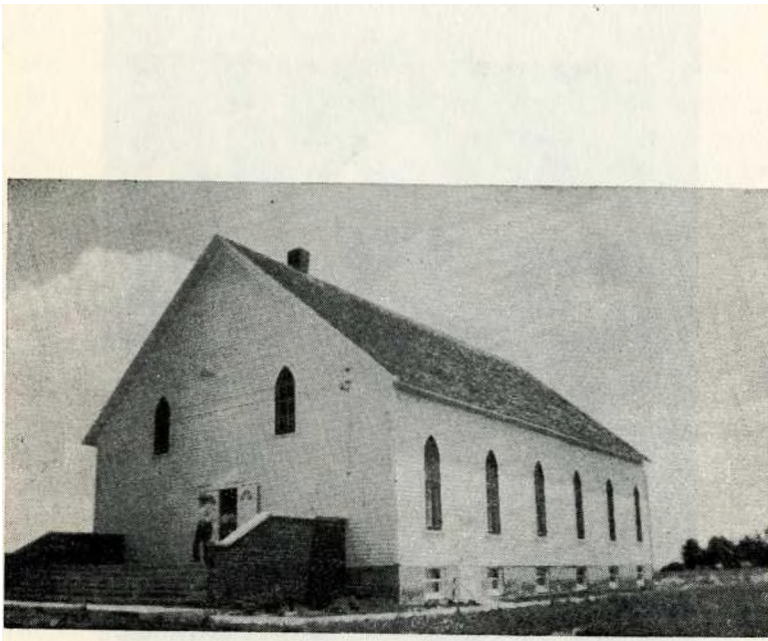
The song ended and the caravans started rolling. The caravan of seventy-three families started to leave the dear home land.

A two days' journey to the railroad station, still looking back to the village as though we would want to take it with us. Russia adieu, surely separation brings pain.

The pen stops; to describe such a farewell scene mostly because the writer was not an eyewitness of the same. We share the experience of a sixteen-year-old youth as he relates it. "I well remember when all our possessions were loaded high on the wagon and my dear mother with the little children sat on top of it and wept and father stepped to the side and looked back. The feeling of such moments you can imagine. The same holds true for other parents. At the end of the village where a large company of people had gathered they stopped and said farewell with many tears by those who left and by those who stayed, and after the last farewell wish 'Farewell dear fatherland, Farewell to all we know, etc.,' a two day journey by wagon began to Stolbanow where the closest railroad station was."

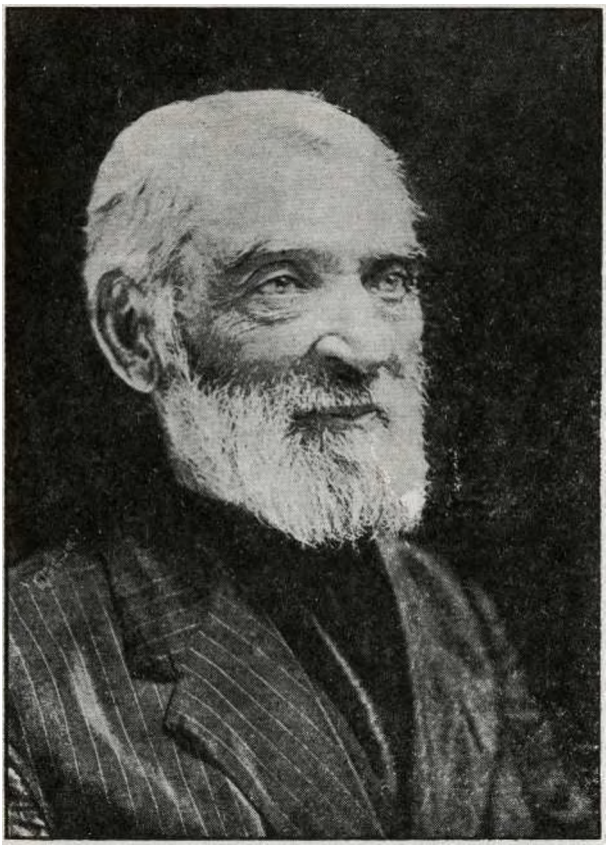
Now why were our parents and grandparents willing to endure such pain of separation? Because of their faith. They would under no condition compromise. Would we today make such sacrifices for our faith? Would a whole congregation today, for the sake of preserving the real faith, the faith of the Bible, be ready to leave the home land?

CHAPTER VI



HOPEFIELD CHURCH

N. R. KAUFMAN, Pastor of the Hopefield Church



J. J. STUCKY, Minister of Hopefield Church

The Journey

On August 6, 1874, our forefathers started the journey from Kotosufka to America. Jacob Stucky, the elder of the congregation, was the leader of the group. It took two days by wagon to reach the railroad station at Stolbanow. Most of these had never seen a station, so with anxiety and curiosity they waited for the train. It arrived and they went in and soon left for a far and unknown place. Arriving at the Austrian border at Brady the visas and luggage were checked and found all right. From here the journey continued, and again their hearts became heavy when crossing the border, saying "Farewell Russia." Although still glancing back to their fatherland the pains of separation began to lessen. At Lehmburg they stayed two days during which time they saw the interesting sights of the town. From here they went through Austria into Germany towards Hamburg. During longer train stops, those traveling stepped out to see people and enjoy the outdoors. And so it also happened that some risked going too far and the train left leaving some behind. This, of course, made their relatives very uneasy as well as those who stayed behind. But it was possible for them to come with the next train and all were happy again.

Because of the crowded condition the trip by train was not exactly comfortable. Often there was not enough room to sit. Often it became necessary to change trains. Men, women, and children and the aged had to walk through the streets with their children on their arms and other belongings on their backs and under their arms. The town people had never seen such a move so it provided much amusement for them. Parents calling for their children, children calling for their parents, all were concerned that

none stay behind. It is only natural that sometimes there was also dissatisfaction, grumbling, and quarreling.

Finally they arrived at the harbor of Hamburg. Here they had to wait four days before they could go on board. They made use of this time in various ways. They arranged for meetings with a preacher from the town who would change off with Elder Jacob Stucky, to preach to them. They also took time to see places of interest in the town. Some of the youngsters were especially curious to see the ships. Without telling others about it they left one afternoon to look for the harbor. They walked and walked but did not find the harbor. Soon they were aware it was getting late and hurried back, but it wasn't easy to find their lodging place. The families were very much alarmed what might have happened to the boys. At last they came, and of course received the much needed admonition which still lingers in the minds of these youths. Youths? No, they are great-grandfathers now, still remembering it. Here they met many curious people who wanted to know "Where do you go?" About the answer "To America," people expressed different opinions. Some expressed envy though most of them sympathized with them implying the destiny is insecure. "What do you want in America?" they said. "There is only the scum of society, robbers, etc. The Indians are there. They will scalp and kill you." This, of course, was not encouraging. Like the Israelites in the wilderness, so, too, the emigrants murmured now and then. Would we had rather died in Russia, than to be murdered in America. But because of faith in God they again and again received new courage.

The time of waiting was over. The fourth day the emigrants went into the ship leaving Hamburg sailing towards England. Here again they had to change and go by train. Again they had to walk a long way to a barn with an outer court where they stayed till a train was ready for them. With it they traveled from east to west through England to Liverpool. Three days' stop at Liverpool

gave opportunity to see new things. Here they had interesting as well as unpleasant experiences, especially for those who risked going too far from the camp.

The third day it was announced that everything was ready to embark. The big ship "City of Richmond" from the Inman Line was ready to take them to America. It anchored some distance from the land and the people had to be taken in by boat. It, of course, could not take all at one time, so it happened that some of a family went and others had to wait for the next trip. Also baggage was handled carelessly. Some were not able to see any of their belongings which again caused anxiety, complaining, and tears, until the whole congregation and all the belongings were on the ship.

As a whole, the voyage was pleasant. It was stormy only one day on the sea. The German captain was real friendly and accommodating. They lived in somewhat crowded conditions in the lowest cabins, since they were traveling third class. Three or four families had to share one cabin. Most of these were acquainted and related so it wasn't so hard to do. There were many other passengers on the ship who evidently didn't make the trip for the first time. There were experiences which helped do away with the monotony of travel, such as to look and admire the ship from the lowest cabins to the deck. Different classes of peoples were on the ship and their company was enjoyed. There was the struggle with seasickness although it was not as bad here as on the little ship going from Hamburg to Hull. One time the shout was heard, "Man overboard." Immediately a lifeboat was let down and rushed to the scene where the man fell in. He was seen once but sank and was never seen again. Whether he was a criminal and tried to swim to a close island to escape judgment, or if he, like some thought, was tired of living and this way tried to make an end to it, or what could have been the reason for it could not be determined.

Another time a fire alarm was heard. Fortunately, most lay fast asleep. It might have resulted in a tumultuous scene. They were spared of this terror. Can we think of something more tragic than fire on a ship, on the open sea? But there was no fire, either someone cried in his sleep or imagined seeing it.

There were also sad experiences for some on this journey. A child died, and the body had to be buried in the ocean. It was especially heartbreaking for the parents.

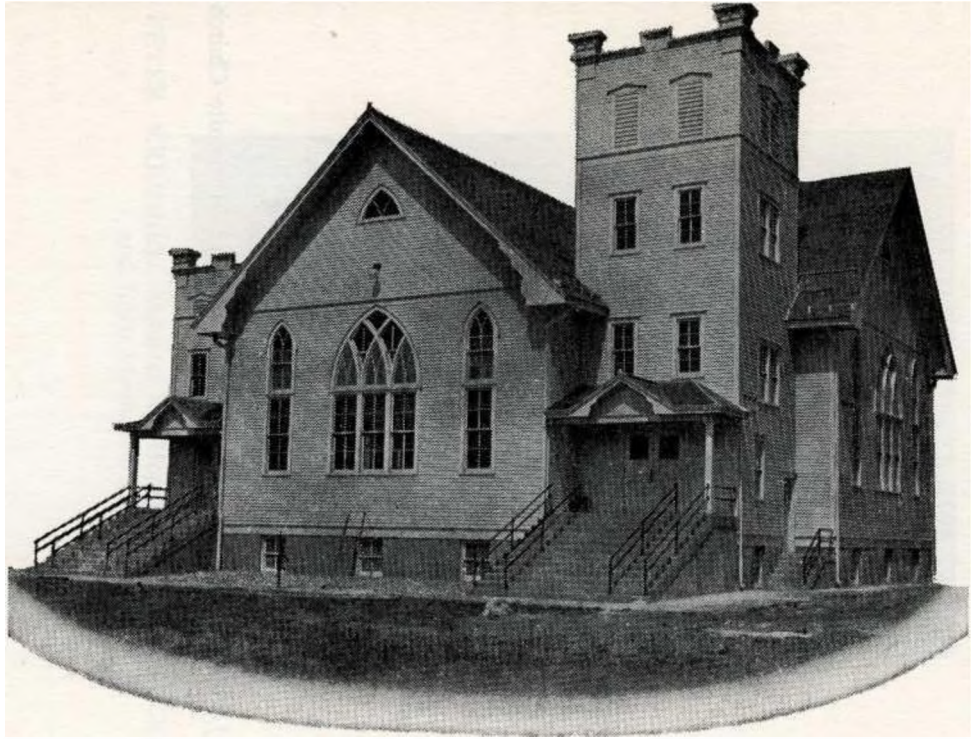
After ten days' journey they heard a sudden shout, "Land!" Naturally everyone hurried on deck, with watchful eye, to get a glimpse of America. On the third day of September, 1874, the ship entered the harbor of New York. It was necessary to stay a few days in Castle Garden. How comfortable it was to find such good shelter! How friendly and courteous the Americans seemed to be. How gratifying that the American Tract Society distributed a few copies of the American Messenger, and also New Testaments. So there were not only thieves and robbers and Indians in America. There were also people who showed respect and welcomed the immigrants.

Now we are in America, but America is a large country. Now where do we go? That was the question that had to be answered. Representatives from different states were in New York to induce the newcomers to come to their respective states. A few weeks before those from the villages of Horodischt and Waldheim arrived in New York, they decided to make their homes in Turner County, Dakota (now South Dakota). Some of the people from Schitomir were in the group and had close relatives who were in the Waldheim and Horodischt group who went to Dakota, so they naturally wanted to go there also, so a few families went to Dakota. From Kansas the brethren, David Goertz and William Ewert, had come to New York to interest our forefathers to come to Kansas. Most of them decided to go to Kansas but not all were permitted to go. Some came on free passes which the Board

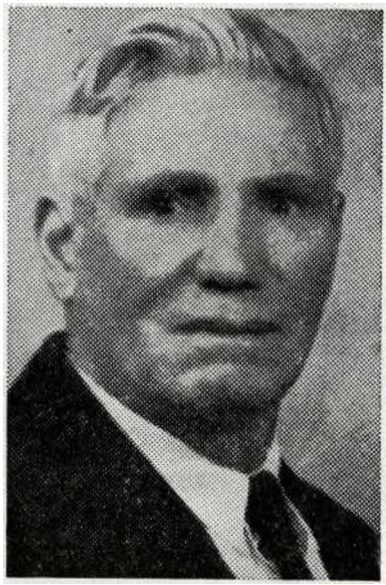
of Guardians (a Mennonite society for this purpose) advanced the money to them and also donated some of it. This Board obtained this money from Mennonites in the states. Those who made the journey on loaned money were to pay back this money or to pay for it by working. For this reason some families had to go to Pennsylvania, Indiana, Illinois, and Ohio in order to clear their debts before they came to Kansas. This caused a lot of anxiety for fear these had been sold as slaves, but they soon found out differently. Things went well with these families and later all came to their relatives in Kansas.

After the majority decided to go to Kansas they left New York and traveled by rail towards Kansas. How they watched the panorama while traveling. Towns, factories, fields, gardens, everything was interesting. Trying to see what the new home will look like. Much of the land was cultivated, civilization was evident everywhere. It did not seem new. Soon the scene changed. The towns were smaller and far between, less farm homes, and soon they saw mostly a wide, wild, prairie. Now they were in the land. They came to Peabody, Kansas. Here they stopped; it was their temporary destination. Here they tried to arrange for temporary living quarters as much as was possible. From here they went to look at the land where they wanted to settle. This, of course, meant camping here for some time. They were offered free houses, sheds, etc., where they could stay.

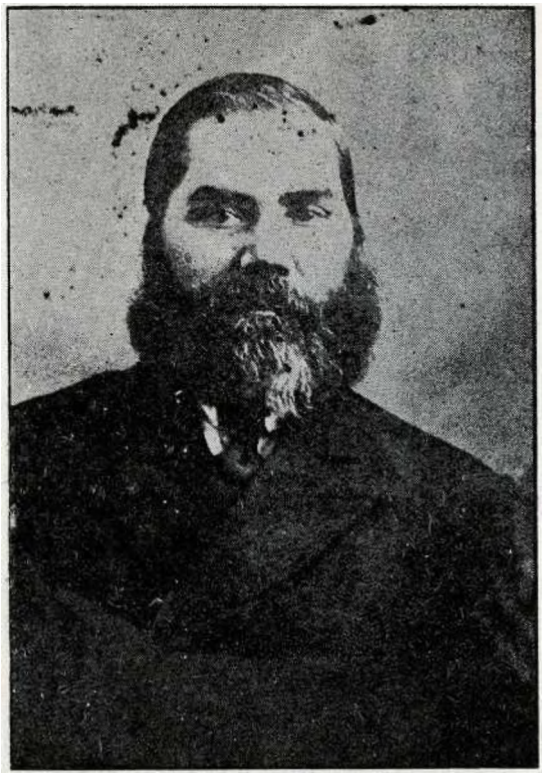
Although they still were not on their own land they considered arriving at Peabody as the end of the journey from Russia to America. Two days they traveled by wagon, twelve by train, and twelve on the ship. In between there were delays so in all it took over a month from Kotosufka in Russia to Peabody in Kansas. The Lord had marvelously guided and protected them. There were many unsolved problems ahead, but they had confidence in God, who had thus far so wondrously blessed us, protected so graciously, helped, and would also continue to do so. With this they comforted themselves.



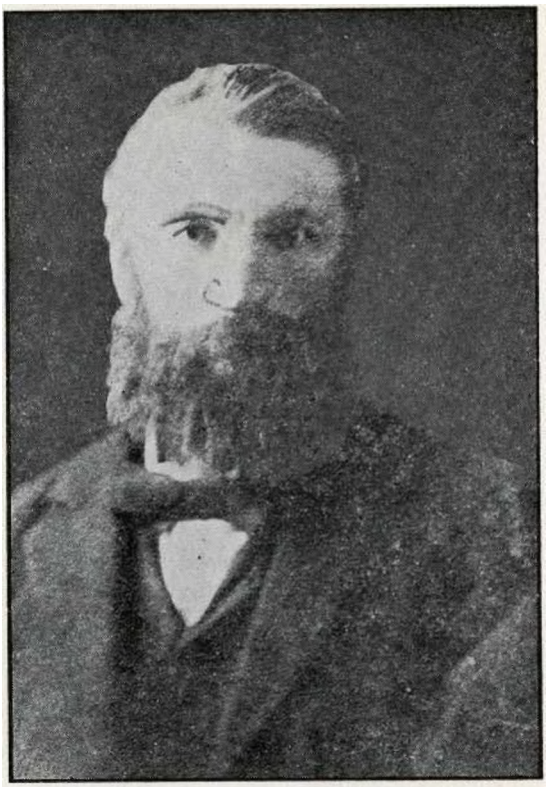
EDEN MENNONITE CHURCH



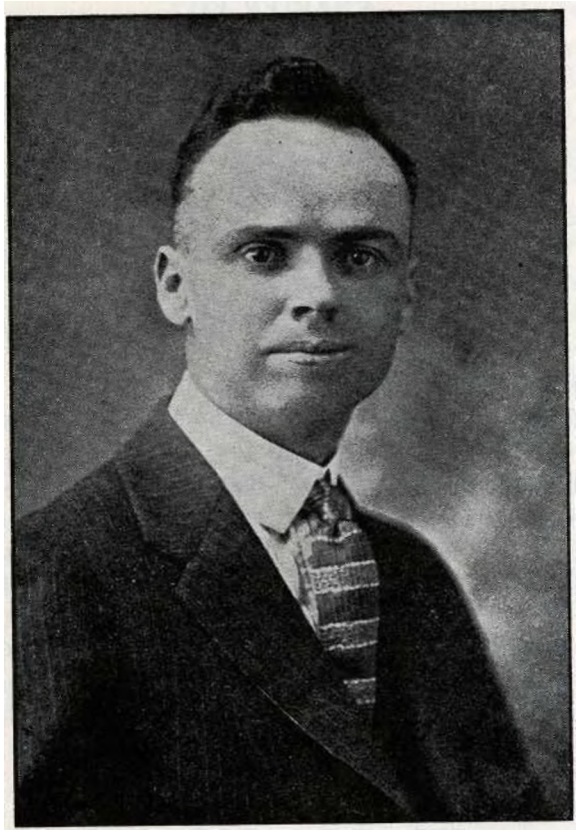
C. J. GOERING, Minister and Pastor of Eden Mennonite Church



PETER KREHBIEL, Minister of Hopefield Mennonite Church
and Eden Mennonite Church



PETER STUCKY, Minister of Eden Mennonite Church



PHILIP A. WEDEL, Minister of Eden Mennonite Church

CHAPTER VII

At Home In America

In our minds we followed our fathers from Russia to Peabody, Kansas. They were now in America but not really at home. Now it was necessary to find a place to stay and establish the new home. Some of the forefathers started out on foot to look for a suitable place for a community. They traveled through Marion, McPherson, and Harvey counties. Others helped with this undertaking, especially we want to mention the representatives of the A. T. & Santa Fe Railroad Company, C. B. Schmidt, and other brethren in the faith who came about a year earlier from Iowa to Kansas and settled at Halstead and Christian. At that time the Missouri-Pacific Railroad Company had not yet built the railroad from El Dorado to McPherson. Moundridge was not built at this time, but one mile south of Moundridge there was a small hamlet with a store, a blacksmith shop, and a post office in the store. The place was called Christian. This place was discontinued in 1886 when the railroad branch was built and Moundridge became a town. The first train that brought passengers came to Moundridge the first week in September, 1886. Here is where some of the south German Mennonite families lived, who came from Iowa and helped our forefathers select the place for their settlement.

After a three week investigation tour, to select land, they returned to Peabody. They reported that they were agreed on Mound and Turkey Creek townships in McPherson County as a promising place for a settlement. During their absence, those who stayed in Peabody went through hard experiences when almost all the children became sick, which may have been caused by a change in climate. Some children died. The town had no cemetery at this

time. A few miles north there was a place with a few graves. Since there was no other way of transportation, the bodies were carried there and buried. Three weeks they camped in Peabody, while the men were on a tour to search for a place to settle. When they returned everyone was glad to proceed with the journey, and as soon as possible get to his permanent home. In order to get to their permanent home and get as close as possible to the determined place to settle, some went by train to Halstead. Here they were delayed again. Friends put up a lodging place, close to the Warkentin mill, for temporary shelter. Their stay here was not for long, for some a few days and for most of them a week and for a few several weeks. Here also some children died and were buried 1/2 mile west and $3^1/_2$ miles north of Halstead.

At this time each family head had to choose the place where he and his family wanted to live. The location for the settlement was previously decided but every family had to choose its own place in this reserved area. Some made quick decisions while for others it took more time to decide and for that reason some stayed longer in Halstead. The fathers who went from Peabody to select the land, made an agreement with the railroad company. The railroad company promised that the chosen place would be reserved for a Mennonite settlement and if a certain amount of land would be bought with a specified payment made, they would give free a one-quarter section of land for church and school purposes. They would also build a temporary house large enough for a number of families to live in, till they would be able to build a house on their own land. They also promised to deliver building material, food, coal, etc., freight free for one year. The cost of the land was from $3.00 to $6.00 per acre, most of it $3.60. Some families did not think they could risk it for $3.00 per acre, and looked around for a better chance. Only half the land belonged to the railroad company. The Government gave to the railroad company a strip of land twenty miles wide along the right of way, half of it as

a gift, to encourage the building of the railroad. Every other section of this tract still belonged to the Government, but most of this land had already been homesteaded. Some places the Homestead Right could be bought quite cheap. Some families bought such homesteads and paid $50.00 for eighty acres and $200 - $500 for 160 acres depending on how well it was improved. Some families were satisfied to rent a tract of ground to begin with. Most of them bought railroad land with a small down payment. Some were not able to continue to make the payments and later lost the land and had to start anew.

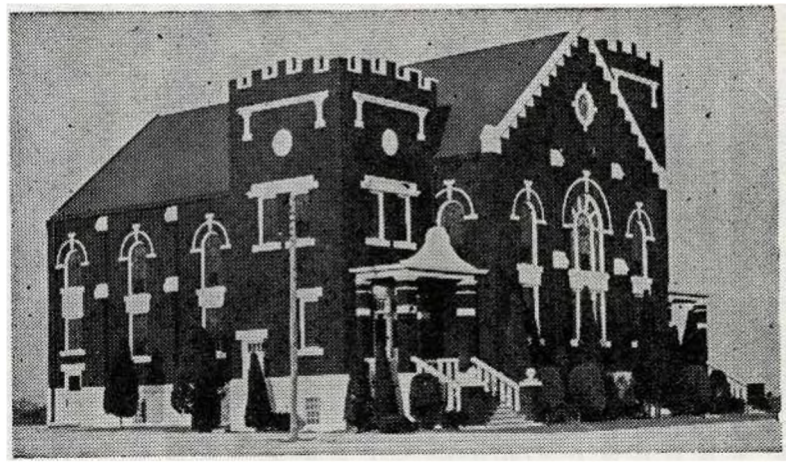
When the places were decided on, the fathers hurried back to Halstead after their families. In the meantime they had bought dairy cattle and especially draft animals. It was much cheaper to buy oxen than horses so most of them used oxen instead. They also bought wagons and on these they loaded their belongings, hitched the oxen to it, and started on the last journey to their chosen place which they hoped to call their home. Though the distance was only 15-20 miles, it took two days to make the journey as the oxen did not make much headway in a day. Finally they were not only in America, but at home in America. Even if the home was not permanent for everyone, they at least were in the settlement. About the middle of October the congregation gathered in the so-called Immigrant House, to join in praise and thanksgiving to God for His protection, His blessing, and His leading on this journey.

It was October, close to winter. A building had to be erected. The railroad company kept its promise and built a temporary building 20 feet by 120 feet on the land given for church and school purposes on section 19 in Mound Township. It was a simple building, a shed with a roof, board walls, without floor or ceiling. Fifteen to twenty families moved into this Immigrant House for the winter. They arranged to get along with one stove. For table and chairs they used their baggage and temporary arrangement with boards.

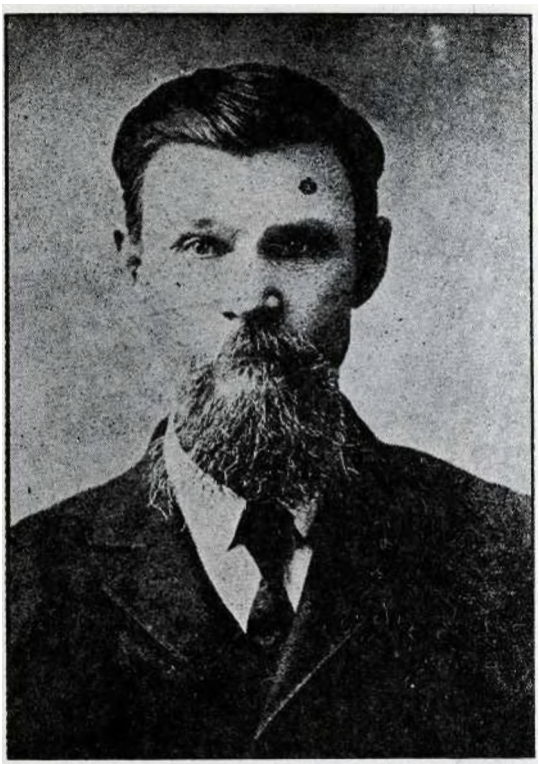
For their beds they laid prairie hay on the floor. When it was cold the parents had little rest and wished for daybreak. But they made the winter and in spring they went on their own land. Those who were in their own homes for winter didn't have a palace either, rather mostly huts of boards and some had dugouts.

Their concern was not only for food and shelter but also they hurried to get some wheat sowed. Some farms had land broke out. About four or five families rented the Nichol farm one mile south and two miles east of Moundridge. Most of this quarter section was broke out and part they plowed and part was com land. They bought seed wheat for $1.50 per bushel, sowed by hand, harvested it, and with God's blessing, they had a fairly good harvest. They had bread and seed for the next year and some extra money. This gave them a start. This was the experience of some families, others had similar experiences, while some helped themselves otherwise.

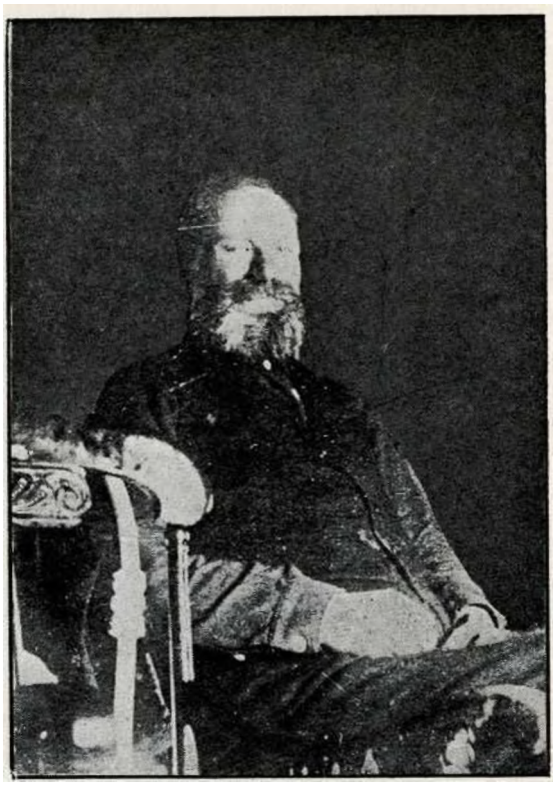
A twenty-one year old youth who knows what pioneering is, since he was one of the group, relates the following: "It did not take long till we found a place where we could settle as renters. A dugout was there. A small field we plowed and sowed with wheat. One day Father Rupp (one who came from Iowa) came to my father and said, 'Brother, don't you want to buy a homestead for $50.00?' Father said, 'Yes, but where can I get the money?' Father Rupp said he knew of someone who would loan the money. So it happened and the land was bought. It was wild prairie with only a dugout on it. It was twelve by fourteen dug into the ground, covered with prairie hay, some ground over it. A small door and a small window were the only openings. This is the palace where six members of a family made themselves comfortable."



PRETTY PRAIRIE MENNONITE CHURCH



J. J. FLIKINGER, Pastor of Pretty Prairie Mennonite Church



JOHN GRABER, Minister of Pretty Prairie Mennonite Church

CHAPTER VIII

Obtaining A Home

Beginnings are difficult. This proverb was experienced by our forefathers when they tried to acquire a home in the new land. Was it really a conquest? Did it cost a struggle? Yes, the pioneers experienced a real struggle against such things as poverty, cold, drought, insects, and many other hardships which seemed to be against establishing the new home. We, the descendants of these pioneers, hardly realize how much effort it cost them to make it possible for us to enjoy the many blessings today.

Naturally, the first concern was to provide for a roof for shelter. As mentioned before, the so-called Immigrant House solved this problem for a number of families for the first winter. Those who bought homestead rights, also had this taken care of for the time being. All of these homesteads had a house, some of course very poor. The houses which our forefathers built were also very simple, (not sod houses like the other pioneers) they built with rough boards for the walls. If a person could build a house sixteen feet long by fourteen feet wide it was considered an attractive dwelling. If some found it possible to add a fourteen foot long and eight foot wide addition to it, that was considered a real home. If some built still a little larger, it was a palace. The inside of the houses were laid out with homemade bricks, this made it warmer.

As simple as the houses were, so were also their furniture and accommodations. The light in the house was a candle or a wick soaked with oil. The heating as well as cook stoves were homemade, mortared with loam and stone (somewhat similar to a fireplace). All the furniture was homemade of lumber. They made

tables, chairs, benches, cupboards, beds, etc. after their own pattern. It was the simple life. If they had a few of the most needed things, they were satisfied. They were thankful for clothing and enough to eat.

Besides a dwelling place, they were concerned about food and clothing and ate the simplest food. To get by cheaper, they mixed shorts into the flour which of course did not make bread as tasty as we have it today, but people were not as particular then. The first winter (1874-1875) corn and cornbread were the main foods. For coffee the women roasted barley or wheat and made delicious coffee from it, also chicory was often used instead of coffee. The men and older boys were responsible for providing meat. There was much game in the area. In the streams were plenty of fish. In the fields rabbits and prairie chicken. Wild turkeys were not so plentiful. Once in a while they could get an antelope. Especially in the spring and fall there were plenty of wild ducks and geese. Cake, cookies, etc. were not served very often, sometimes on holidays, sugar was seldom on the table.

Clothing was very simple. They at first tried to do as they were used to doing in Russia. They sowed hemp and flax and so through spinning and weaving made their cloth, of which their clothing was made. This was a difficult and toilsome task because they lacked the necessary lumber to make the necessary tools which were needed. Soon they were aware it was just as cheap to buy as to make it themselves, and spinning and weaving were soon discontinued. Their costume was very simple. The women did not ask about fashion, but did as they were used to making them for themselves, the men, and the children.

Food, shelter, and clothing, what more could you ask for? O yes, they needed fuel to prepare meals and to have a comfortable warm home in the winter. Coal was high priced and far to get. There was no wood in the open prairie like they had in Russia, so they tried other things such as prairie hay, which was not easy

to handle, also dangerous. Cornstalks were used after they had raised corn, and they also used much buffalo dung.

Simple, unassuming, thrifty, economical, describes the life of our forefathers at this time. This was not so hard for them to do, since they learned to do that in Russia. Besides the help of God (help received from the good people) the mothers deserve much credit for their foresight and thrift, to manage so no one had to go hungry. A youth who experienced pioneering writes, "If our forefathers had not led such a simple and thrifty life, they would have never accomplished what they in later years enjoyed. Of course it always depends on God's blessings. God loves diligence and economy, if these are performed in the fear of God, this He will bless."

We say our forefathers were content, they were also industrious and ambitious and tried to expand in different ways, with horses, cattle, milk cows, chickens, later also ducks, geese, and turkeys. This provided for their milk, butter, eggs and meat, and their tables were filled. Soon they had more than for their own use, also had some to sell. This they gladly took to town to trade for cloth, food, etc. Soon they also had young cattle or cows to sell which helped them financially.

The main income was from the farm. The other possessions were more a sideline and were taken care of by the women. From the harvest of the fields they hoped to have enough income so they gave most attention to that. Here again it was proved "A beginning is not easy." As mentioned before, they sowed some wheat in the fall of 1874, which was possible only on the fields which were prepared, but there were not many like that and not much wheat was sowed. In the spring they started to break out prairie which was hard work and went very slowly with walking plows to which they hitched three horses or one yoke of oxen. The horses were small and not strong, oxen walked slowly, the accomplishment for one day was two acres. To work with oxen

had its difficulties; they were guided with ropes fastened to their horns. When they were warm from work, and a stream was close, it often happened that the oxen headed for the water to cool off—- so off they went. The driver pulled and jerked on the reins all he was able to, even threw himself on the ground putting forth every effort to hold them, but he was only dragged along till he was tired. The oxen did not stop until they were in the water. They had power in their horns and made use of it and went into the water with plow, yoke, rope, and it was impossible to keep them from doing that. To get them back out was quite something, too.

When they had quite a field plowed, they planted com. They had no planter, so it was done by hand with different tools such as hatchet, cornknife, garden hoe, etc. to make a hole in the ground, they put two or three kernels into it and closed it. They grew some corn, once in a while they used hand planters. Sugar cane was planted the same way. It was used to make syrup. Syrup on bread with milk or coffee was doubly good.

After the spring crops were in, more prairie was plowed to sow wheat in fall. It was hard to prepare the sod since they did not have the implements we have, only light harrows to make the fields fine, no drill, so they sowed by hand (broadcast) then harrowed it in and harvested wheat. God gave fertility and increase. At first they harvested with scythe and sickle, later came the so- called "reaper," which was something like our mower; next was a "harvester." This machine cut the grain and brought it on the platform. Here two people stood and tied it into bundles. The bundles were set up later. One person handled the horses and the other two got so good at it they almost kept up with the cutting, if not, the machine had to wait. Women and children often helped. After some time, the "header" was on the market; it elevated the grain on the hay rack so it could be hauled to the stack. At last came the "binder"; it cut and tied the

bundles. The first ones tied with wire, but this was not very satisfactory, so they soon used twine. Today we set all these aside and use the "harvester thresher" which does it all in one operation. How long this will be the best, time will tell.

Not only bread, but also water is of major importance in the life of man. Therefore everyone who settled here was concerned about making a well. Till it was done they had to haul water either from a stream or from a well in the neighborhood, if there was one. No one knew about drilling a well, so they were digging it which was much work and sometimes hard luck. The water wells were five feet in diameter and thirty to sixty feet deep. While digging the ground was taken out with a winch. When the well was done they used the same winch to let the stones down to lay out the walls of the well. When they struck water, they had to quickly plaster out the well lest it would cave in. Even though they used extreme caution, it happened sometimes. One family had finished digging, sixty feet deep; they already had ten loads of stone laid in it. The family was so happy to have their own water, then suddenly it caved in and they had to start all over. It was also a dangerous situation. Another family had their well done, also. The daughter was operating the winch to let the stones in to plaster out the well. The father was in the well to lay the stones. While letting the stones down, the winch slipped and the stones dropped into the deep at a terrific speed. But God's protecting hand directed it so the big bucket fell beside the father so he was spared from death. After some time every family had its own well and was thankful to God for it. It's easy to understand that to haul water is not convenient at any time.

To their advantage, there was plenty of pasture all over for their cattle and for the winter they cut prairie hay. Many did not have the money to fence their pasture, so they had to watch their cattle. Some bought rope, cut it into fifty to sixty foot lengths and tied

cattle and horses to a pole. Of course, these had to be led to water and different places to graze. As soon as possible they fenced their pasture.

Besides the many hardships which our forefathers experienced, was the inconvenience of being so far from the railroad station. Whenever they had grain for the market or needed building material, etc., or had to grind wheat for flour this always meant a long drive to Newton or Halstead. At first they went to Sedgwick to the watermill. Whoever had horses, found it possible to come back the same day, if he did not load too heavy and started at 4:00 o'clock in the morning. Those who drove oxen had to figure it would take two days. The roads were not good, leading mostly over the fields. Bridges were only close to town. As long as the weather was dry it was possible, but during a rain or snowstorm, it was very uncomfortable, especially when they had to sleep out in the open, which sometimes happened. Because of this they seldom went alone but tried to arrange so a few of the neighbors went together and in this way helped each other in case of emergency. In winter the Russian fur coats were of good service for these trips; still some endured much misery on account of the severe cold.

The struggle for their living was hard, but by the grace of God they were at least spared of the grasshopper plague. The severe grasshopper year was in 1873, one year before they came. It would have been real bad if this plague had hit them the first years. At different times the grasshoppers came in big swarms, but they did not stay, or it was at a time when they could not do so much damage. It nevertheless, caused some concern.

Another menace which they feared was the prairie fire. To prevent this they plowed around a building site and burned off the grass in it before they built on it. In case of strong wind, the fire sometimes jumped the fireguard and caused a lot of anxiety. In that case everyone came and helped put out the fire. Somehow

they quickly hitched to the plow and quickly made a few furrows to control it. It is easy to believe that some received burns.

The pioneers were not afraid of animals here. In Russia they were afraid of the wolves. These little prairie wolves did not seem dangerous to them. Here it was the reptiles, especially the rattlesnakes, of which they were afraid and not without reason for a number of persons were bitten by these poisonous snakes. Most of them were saved by applying homemade remedies. One person died of snake bites.

How much it meant to acquire a home can maybe best be illustrated by telling certain experiences which happened the first years, when they started from Halstead to their chosen place for settlement. The following was the experience of one family. In Halstead they loaded their belongings on the wagon, the oxen hitched to it, and started out for home. The second day it was hot and no water since no well or stream was close. Coming closer to the settlement, they had to cross a brook which had water in places. This the oxen noticed and headed for it. Nothing could hold them back. They went faster, turning by a steep place and so the wagon tipped and all the belongings fell out. What could they do? They let them drink, set the wagon up, loaded the things again, hitched the oxen to the wagon, and happily resumed their journey.

Another experience happened at a stream called Sand Creek. One morning people drove to church. It rained much during the night; so much that the water was high. There were no bridges between Halstead and McPherson, only close to Halstead. One family drove a wagon into high water. It raised the wagon box off the running gear and the horses swam to shore with the lower part. This gave the family an unexpected and undesirable boat ride which could have been dangerous for them. But God saved them from harm. The wagon box sailed to shore but to the opposite side of which the horses and wagon were.

One day a father went to town (maybe Christian). Going home he came to this stream and was aware the water came up high in the meantime, so high it was not possible to walk through. What now? By all means he wanted to go home because the family would be anxiously looking for him. He asked for a horse so he could swim over the stream. The water was deep. Only the head of the horse and some of the rider could be seen. But the horse safely brought him over and the rest of the way (3 1/2 miles) he gladly made on foot.

Anything could be expected the first years when they went to town which was fifteen to twenty miles away such as the following incident. One day a few neighbors went to town to get stone. While on the way suddenly the weather changed. A big snowstorm started raging. It was getting close to nightfall. The oxen were hungry and tired. The only thing to do was to arrange for lodging on the open prairie. They built a wall with the stone for some protection against the cold wind and lay down for the night, not expecting much rest, but longing for daybreak so they could proceed with the trip to get home that day.

Again a group of neighbors left home when the weather was nice but a rain came up which later turned to sleet. It was evening and they stopped for the night. The next morning they wanted to start, but the wheels of the wagon froze to the ground so hard it wasn't possible to pull it off. The only thing left to do was to chop it loose with an axe. After that they continued the trip.

One time in summer a few men went to town after building material. They left early and the weather was nice. While there it started to rain. To leave for home without doing their business didn't appeal to them, so they quickly loaded lumber and started for home. The rain came down faster with much lightning and thunder. The night overtook them. What should they do? Stop for the night wasn't safe for fear if the rains continued; the water

would come up so they could not cross the streams the next day. So they drove on; pitch dark was the night; only during lightning they were able to see the road ahead. So they depended on the horses to find the way. When they came to a stream they waited till they could see by lightning where to cross. Toward morning the rain and thunderstorm let up, the sun shone and soon they were at home with their loved ones.

One more of this kind of experience. Again a few neighbors went to town twenty miles after stone. Before they got to town it started to rain, but they loaded and started for home. They could only drive slowly because of muddy roads and so it was evening before they could get home. They discussed what to do. It wouldn't do to stop for the night, for their clothes were soaked through and through. What made it worse, it started freezing and the wet clothes froze to their bodies. All they could do was to continue driving and walk beside the wagon, trying to keep warm to some extent. By morning they were home safely. The fact that such hardships did not prove fatal can only be understood as God's merciful protection.

Although none of our Kansas Swiss Mennonites had to starve, we do not want to say none were ever in want. They were all poor, some families especially poor. An example; one family lived more to the side of the settlement. One Sunday another family drove to see this family. Toward evening the guests wanted to leave for home, but no, these people did not want them to leave without eating. They consented to stay. But this family did not have anything to eat in the house except corn. They quickly built a fire, roasted the corn, sat at the table eating the corn for the evening meal. After that they visited a while longer, thanking them for their hospitality, the host thanking them for the visit, after which they went home.

BETHANY MENNONITE CHURCH

C. J. VORAN, Minister of Hopefield Mennonite Church. Established 1907 the Bethany Mennonite Church and served as minister and pastor

CHAPTER IX

Development Of Church In The New Home

To be able to live according to their faith and belief our forefathers came to this country. Therefore it is natural that they placed special emphasis on their religious and church life right away. It was of great importance that the church was supplied with a teaching ministry. The whole congregation migrated from Russia. Elder Jacob Stucky, who had in custody the spiritual welfare of the congregation in Russia and who was the leader on the long journey to this country, especially their spiritual leader, further carried on the spiritual affairs of the congregation in this country. Minister Jacob D. Goering stood by his side as his helper and substituted for the Elder when he was absent, which was quite often during the first years. Naturally, on the journey much had to be discontinued and the leaders took great pains to regain some of it and tried to establish the church here and make arrangement to promote their spiritual welfare.

It was unnecessary to form a church organization since it was already organized. Still it was necessary to do some reorganizing. Later the congregation was incorporated under the name Hoffnungsfeld. First of all, it was necessary to make the arrangements for the much needed worship services for a church without regular meetings is not conceivable; a church without regular worship services could not last, much less would it grow and prosper.

Before definite arrangements had been made, two persons died, a young man, Peter Voran, and a small child of the Tobias Stucky family. Since there had not been a cemetery laid out yet, it was

decided by lot that the cemetery should be on the land which the railroad company had donated for school and church purposes, in Mound Township, Sec. 19-21-2 W. Boards were used to make the simple coffins and the bodies were laid to rest in a grave. The funeral service was held in the home of Elder Jacob Stucky. Very likely this was the first worship service of our ancestors in this country.

The meeting place for church and worship services was in the Immigrant House. It also served as living quarters for fifteen or twenty families for the first winter as was previously mentioned. It was also to be used as a place to stay, for a few families, who were to come later from the east, till they would be ready to settle on their own land. A part of this building was to be reserved for worship services. One part of this Immigrant House was so arranged, that it could be used as a church. This part of the building was considered a sacred place. Even children showed respect and reverence in it. For eight years the congregation met Sunday after Sunday in this place, and on special occasions for their worship services. These were well attended. They sacrificed much to attend the services. Often, fathers and sons, mothers and daughters, walked four to six miles to attend these devotional services. How conscientious they were can be seen from what one of the pioneers said, "If we go back in our minds to those days it will seem that the difficulties were not as great, or the hindrances easier to overcome. I do not remember that ever a worship service was called off for any reason whatsoever even though the people were scattered six to seven miles in every direction from the church. We went to church, either on foot, or with oxen, or with horses hitched to the grain wagon, in harvest time with the hay rack, and in winter, if there was snow, with homemade sleds. In this respect, either the weather was more favorable, or we had more heart and mind for prayer and worship than today.

The area of work of the church leaders, as well as the congre-

gation, was not confined exclusively to the immediate vicinity. Especially the Elder was called away quite frequently to serve in other congregations. At the same time when our ancestors immigrated to this country, many other Mennonites did likewise. Not all groups were as fortunate as our Swiss Mennonites that they also had their minister. Even if they had a minister, there was no Elder with them. Consequently, Elder Stucky was frequently invited, not only to preach, but to officiate at rites and ordinances. So Rev. Jacob D. Goering substituted for him at home. Sometimes he went with him, to assist the Elder on his journeys. In 1876 the minister, Valentine Krehbiel, was ordained as Elder in the Halstead Church, at which ordination Elder Stucky officiated. In 1878 he had charge of a ministerial election in Pawnee Rock and ordained the three that were elected, the brethren Henry Siebert, Jacob Koehn, and Tobias Dirks. In the first six years he baptized 142 souls after he had given them catechetical instruction; sixty were in his home church, fifty-six in the Canton congregation, twenty from Pawnee Rock, and six from Hartford, Kansas. He also officiated at Communion Services in these churches, also at wedding ceremonies, funerals, as well as on other occasions. This was quite a sacrifice on the part of the Elder, when we remember that the trips were made with horses, in many places no roads had been laid out, so they drove across the prairies, with very few bridges, often the night fell upon them before they reached their destination, sometimes in the country that had not been settled yet, and no houses in sight for long distances. For this reason the assistant minister often went along to lessen the dangers on such a journey, and all this they did without any remuneration. It was a service dedicated to the Lord.

But the congregation did not want its area of activity limited to its immediate community. For already, in the year 1880, they were host to the Kansas Conference. On the sixteenth to the eighteenth day of November of this same year, the Conference held its sessions in the Immigrant House, which at that time was still 84

used as its church. One of our older brethren who attended had this to say, "No reception committee, no eats committee, no committee of any kind had been assigned, yet everything worked in harmony. The guests, where they did not have anything better to offer, were bedded on the floor, and most of the congregations had to deal with similar circumstances, therefore such a reception was readily accepted by the conference visitors and such difficulties were not as great a dilemma as we are inclined to believe.

For eight years the Immigrant House was used for public worship and other church purposes. In 1882, a church was built close to the Immigrant House. This church has served as a meeting place for the Hoffnungsfeld congregation for the past 47 years.

Throughout these years, Christ has been proclaimed as the Savior. The building is still in good condition since it has been kept in good repair. It is located three and one-half miles west and one- half mile north of Moundridge.

Generally, in the beginning, the worship services were conducted after the pattern, similar to that used in Russia. Song, prayer, sermon, and testimony were constituent parts of their devotional meetings. In course of time new things were introduced. One of these was the Sunday school. This suggestion came from their English neighbors. Not Indians or wild people, but from really Christian minded people, although there were some also that really tried to take advantage of the "Dutchman." Some English families lived in the community or close to our community. Most of these were Christians, belonging to the Baptist denomination. They met Sunday after Sunday in a schoolhouse in the community to have their Sunday school. This example induced our congregation, to also make arrangements for a Sunday school, which has proved a great blessing through the years. In course of time they also arranged for weekly Bible study and prayer meetings, which for a long time were held evenings in the different homes. Mostly they walked to these meetings, which have proved to be a great blessing to those attending.

The religion of our forefathers was not only a Sunday garment, but a life of faith, daily shown by word and deed. In their daily walk, their faith was manifested in their deeds. They lived a simple, satisfied life true to their faith. Even though some unrighteous things happened, their Christianity showed itself in their diligence, economy, and veracity. Especially did they hold to the principle of nonresistance. By law they were required to appear in the county court, every year before the first day of May, to procure a license granting them exemption from military duty for one year. This was done very conscientiously. Even if they had to contend with all kinds of difficulties, or perhaps dangers of high water, every effort was made to discharge this duty before the first of May.

Their piety was also disclosed in their daily intercourse with others. When a group of persons had a mutual get-together, they did not only discuss the weather, crops, products, daily work, etc., but they also discussed passages from the scriptures. Of course, it sometimes came to arguing and strife on questions pertaining to their faith, however, it shows their interest in the Word of God and truths contained therein. Honesty and truth received special emphasis, a promise they always tried to keep. Debts were not only to be made but also to be paid. Generally, they were very conscientious in meeting their financial obligations. Our loving God must have recognized that, and let our people as a whole obtain a fair amount of this world's goods. Will by the losing of these virtues, maybe our riches also vanish?

The English neighbors and the business world in general were soon aware that our forefathers tried to live in accordance with their faith. Generally, the Mennonites enjoyed the full confidence of their neighbors. Although some of our ancestors were poor as church mice, they could in many instances borrow money even from strangers, without any security. Here is an example as related by a father who is not with us any more: "Once when calamity

had befallen me, I asked one for help. A bystander (with whom I was not acquainted) heard it, and asked 'How much money do you need?' I named the amount I needed and told him I would pay it back as soon as I had a chance to earn it. He handed me the money. I wanted to give him a note, but he said that was not necessary. When I asked him who he was all he had to say was that at a certain place I could pay back the money. His name I have not learned. Both of us did not know each other and he didn't even live in the immediate community, yet he had full confidence in me."

In a different area, which played an important part in our church life was the church school. It was maintained from the very beginning. At first it was held in the Immigrant House. Later it was held in the district schoolhouses. In these schools the German language was used, and Bible instruction given. But now since the school term in our public schools has been lengthened to eight or nine months, not much time is left for the vacation Bible schools, and in some places dropped altogether. If some sort of a replacement is not offered, we will be deprived of a great blessing. Our church life will suffer by this, for a church that does not know the Bible cannot prosper. How many blessings flowed into our communities through our church schools, yes beyond our communities into the world, cannot be ascertained; that the church schools were a great blessing, no one will deny.

As the Lord has blessed us in a material way, no less did He bless us spiritually. It was one congregation of fifty-three families that in 1874, settled in southern McPherson County, Kansas. In course of time, five churches in Kansas originated from this one, of which two are considerably larger than the mother church was. Of course it is to be regretted, that things happened among our Mennonites as they often do, also among our people dissension was so great that the church was divided, and therefore we probably have more congregations than necessary. All the more we should praise the

Lord for His grace and that He has not withdrawn His hand from us.

When Elder Jacob Stucky was still living, Peter M. Krehbiel was elected as minister and Daniel Schrag as deacon. In 1895 the church divided. One of the two was the Hoffnungsfeld Salem Church, the other the Hoffnungsfeld Eden. Hoffnungsfeld Salem kept the church building, but they soon dropped Salem from their name and called themselves the Hoffnungsfeld Church. A few years ago the latter named church also changed its name from Hoffnungsfeld Eden, to Eden. After they had divided, both congregations held an election for ministers. The Hoffnungsfeld Salem elected N. R. Kaufman, John J. Stucky, and Chr. J. Voran to this office. The first named was later elected as elder. In 1918, this congregation called Gustav Ensz to be their elder, who served till September, 1927. At present (spring, 1929) this congregation is without a minister. The church had approximately one hundred members at this time.

In the Hoffnungsfeld Eden Church the brethren Chr J. Goering and Peter Stucky were elected as ministers. This election was held in 1895. The following brethren served as ministers in this congregation: Chr J. Goering, who later was elected as elder, Peter M. Krehbiel, and Peter Stucky. In 1927, Philip Wedel was ordained as minister, and at present (1929) is serving as minister, and Chr J. Goering still is the elder. For some time, both congregations used the same sanctuary. In 1899, the Hoffnungsfeld Eden congregation built a church four miles west and one-fourth mile north of Moundridge. In 1924, this building was torn down, as there was not sufficient room for the congregation, and they built a considerably larger church building four miles west and two miles north of Moundridge. This church was dedicated in September, 1924, and on the 19th day of October of that year the celebration of the Fifty Year Jubilee festival of the immigration of the Swiss Mennonites into Kansas from Russian Poland was held in this church with a very good participation. At this festival it was decided that the story of the Kansas Swiss Mennonites should be published. The Eden Church had approximately four hundred members (1929).

In 1884, the Pretty Prairie Church in Reno County was organized. Here the land was cheaper. Consequently, a few families from McPherson County (Hoffnungsfeld) moved there also. Several families from South Dakota came and settled there also. When the church was organized on November 11, 1884, they had eighty-eight members. To begin with they had their worship services in the homes of the members. In 1886, they moved a store building from Kingman, to a place three miles east of Pretty Prairie and remodeled it into a church. In 1890, they built a new church. In 1895, this church was destroyed by a storm, so they built a new church on the same foundation. In May, 1897, this church was destroyed by fire. The congregation erected a new church again, somewhat larger. But in the course of time this church was too small. They wrecked this building in February, 1927, and built a new, modern, brick building, which was dedicated on the fifth day of February, 1928. It has a seating capacity for twelve hundred persons. This is the largest of the Swiss Mennonite congregations in Kansas at this time (1929) about four hundred and fifty members. After this church had been organized, they elected J. J. Flickinger as their minister. He served the church as elder for many years. In 1887, they elected John G. Graber as assistant minister. Since 1919, they called their ministers from outside their own ranks, J. B. Epp served the church from 1919 to 1922, N. W. Bahnman from 1922 to 1925. At present (1929), J. W. Lohrenz is their church elder.

In course of time, some families from Reno County and McPherson County went further south into Kingman County, since the land could be bought cheaper there. So a new church was founded there in 1907, the Bethany Church of Kingman County. A church building was erected and dedicated on the ninth day of June of that same year. Here, Rev. C. J. Voran, who had come from Hoffnungsfeld to Kingman County, served as minister from the very beginning and later as elder of the church. This congregation also called an elder from outside ranks a few years ago. Since 1924, Rev. Solomon

Mouttet served the church as elder and still is (1929). The congregation has one hundred and fifty members.

The First Mennonite Church of Christian, Kansas, was not founded by our Swiss Mennonites, but mostly by the South German Mennonites, who came here from Iowa and Illinois. To begin with this congregation was a part of the Halstead Church. In 1778, it was organized as an independent church under the above name. The present building which was built in 1884 at the previously mentioned hamlet, Christian, a mile south of Moundridge, was moved to Moundridge in 1908. Since some of the Swiss Mennonites lived in the vicinity of this church, they later joined this church also. Later, as the community expanded, more of our Swiss people bought farms south of Moundridge, and more and more joined the Mennonite Church of Christian, so that today the greater part of the membership is Russian Mennonite or their descendants. Elder Valentine Krehbiel served the church from the time it was organized till his death in 1902. For a time Johann Rupp and Wilhelm Galle were assistant ministers. Since 1888, till his death in 1902 Elder Valentine Krehbiel served the church alone, faithfully and sacrificially. In the fall of 1902 the congregation elected John C. Goering as its minister and later as its elder. In November, 1903, to satisfy Brother Goering's wish, a ministerial election was held, so he could have an assistant. Brother P. P. Wedel was elected. In 1917, he was ordained as elder of the church and today (1929) serves the congregation in this capacity. The church has two hundred eighty members (in 1929), about two-thirds of whom are Swiss Mennonites from Russia or their descendants.

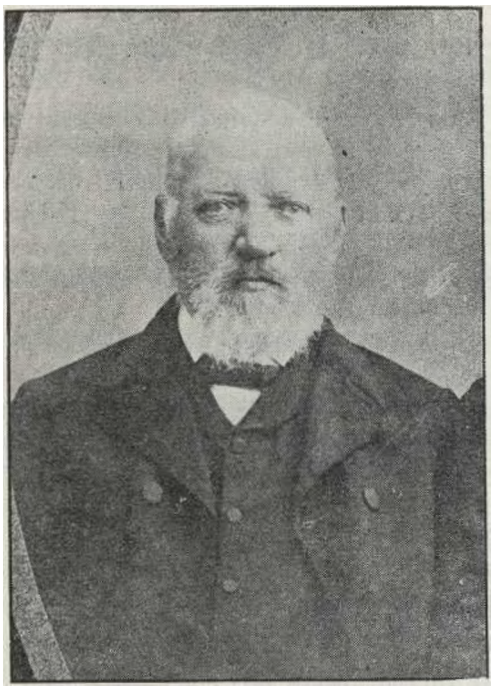
We have in a few short paragraphs described the development of church life till to the present (1929). Must we not also admit with Jacob, "I am not worthy of the least of all the steadfast love and all the faithfulness, which thou hast shown to thy servant," Gen. 32:10? Wonderfully, has the Lord blessed our people in the development of church life in this country. Mercifully, He has borne

our mistakes and shortcomings, graciously, He promoted what was done to glorify His name and to the salvation of immortal souls. We close this chapter with two verses from the pen of Brother P. A. Flickner, a member of the committee, who passed on to his reward before the work of this booklet had been finished. However, he had compiled much of the information contained in it.

"O lasz uns nicht das Kleinod rauben
Das unsere Vater geliebt
Wir stehen fest im wahren Glauben
Worinnen sie sich treu geiibt
Lasz uns von Gottes Geiste leiten
Zu wandeln auf der schmalen Bahn
Er will uns herrlich zu bereiten
Und fuhrt uns sicher himmelan."

"Der Geist des Glaubens und der Starke
Erfulle uns mit neuem Mut
Er gib uns Kraft zu seinem Werke
Er schenke uns das hochste Gut
Wir lassen uns nicht von Ihm trennen
Was unser Glaubens Grundsatz ist
Das wollen wir ganz frei bekennen
Es ist der Heiland Jesus Christ."

FIRST MENNONITE CHURCH OF CHRISTIAN



VALENTINE KREHBIEL, Founder and pastor of First Mennonite Church of Christian

CHAPTER X

Social Life In The Pioneer Days

We have, to some extent, described the domestic and economic life of the pioneer days, and also the church life. Perhaps we should also say a few words about the social life. Not much emphasis was laid on formalities. Our social life did not show itself in banquets, clubs, or socials. Neither did it fit into aristocratic circles or high society. It showed itself mostly in doing their work together and by visiting each other.

They were dependent on each other. The independent spirit of our day was not evident at that time. Such a spirit was compelled to flee. To hire carpenters, masons, menservants, maidservants, harvest hands, etc., was not possible for our ancestors during the first years in this country. They were too poor to do that. They had to do most of the work themselves. However, for some work they needed outside help. Where should they get it? They helped each other. Neighbors or friends or relatives came to help with the job.

If a family needed to build a house or hut to live in (made of lumber; that is all they could afford), a few neighbors and friends came and with several wagons they went together to town, usually 15 or 20 miles away, to get lumber and stone. When they came back they helped their neighbor in erecting the building. This they did for most any kind of building or work. They helped each other dig wells, make hay, butcher, etc. We have mentioned already, that they often went to town in groups to haul grain to market or to haul needed items, such as coal, stone, lumber, etc., from town. A few neighbors usually went at the same time. In case it became necessary, they would help each other on the way. Quite often they had to spend the night under the open sky. Sometimes they

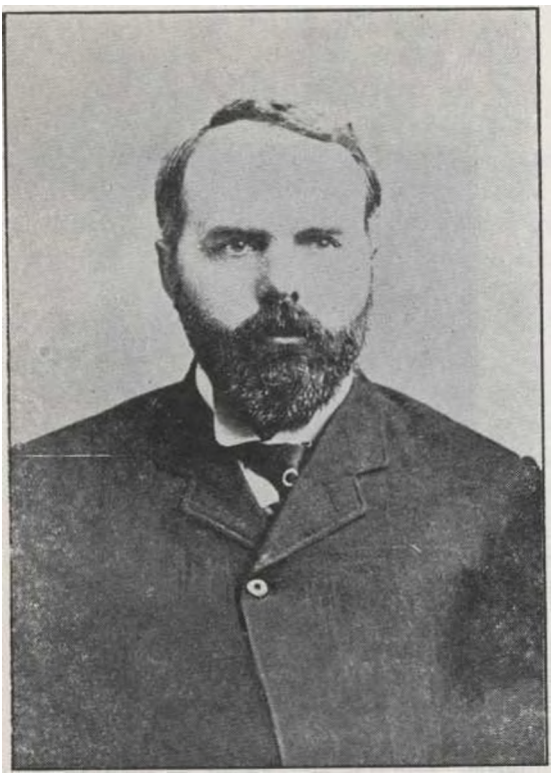
were caught in a rain or snowstorm on the way, and thus they had to endure many hardships. Whenever the menfolks were on these trips, the women usually stayed together in one home also, affording opportunity for companionship, visiting, etc.

Especially did they help one another during harvest. They did much of the work together when they started using the reaper. It took three to five men to keep it going continually. Later, when the header made its appearance, usually 2 or 3 of the neighbors bought the machine and harvested their grain together. With threshing they did likewise. All the grain was put up in stacks, and threshing was started in the fall, after most of the other work was done. Often the threshing was not finished until Christmas. The threshing machine was not run by steam engine, but by horse power. They did not hire help, instead neighbors helped each other. They often walked 3 to 4 miles to work each morning and back again each evening, and besides they took care of their chores morning and evening. No one asked, "Did I help my neighbor more than he helped me?" No record was kept, for they were dependent upon each other. Had they not worked together so co-operatively the first years, they would have never attained the economic welfare which they enjoyed in later years.

It also happened that two or three families lived for a time in the same house, if such had two or three rooms. This gave opportunity for social gatherings, not only among those living in the same house, but since more families lived there, also more came to visit. They visited together often, as had been their custom in Russia, where they lived in villages. There they were together often; and therefore they felt the need for it here too.

Certainly in this new land, with new and strange situations, one became homesick. Unexplained yearnings were felt. By visiting with others, it was possible to overcome such difficulties. New questions and problems arose, also difficulties and struggles. How comforting it was when these could be discussed together! They were very glad

to receive visitors. They could not offer them beautiful rooms, comfortable rocking chairs, or fine and delicate food, but a dearly beloved and friendly heart meant more. Visitors were very welcome. There may have been exceptions, and things happened which were not ideal, but they were very hospitable. For example, if a family living in the Immigrant House had visitors, often a mother living in another part of the house would say to the visitors, "Come now and sit for a while on my trunk." She, also, wanted to show hospitality to the visitors, even if it was only for a short visit.



JOHN C. GOERING, Minister and Pastor of First Mennonite Church of Christian

P. P. Wedel, Minister and Pastor of First Mennonite Church of Christian

CHAPTER XI

Achievements

It must be interesting to know what our people accomplished in these fifty years in this land. Did we Swiss Mennonites, who emigrated from Russia to Kansas, in any way contribute to our community or state? Did we offer anything worthy to the uplifting of our fellow men? Did our good influence reach out beyond our boundaries? Did specially qualified men come out of our ranks? What are our achievements?

On the whole, we are an agricultural people. In Russia, with very few exceptions, our forefathers were farmers. Of course, most of them are farmers here also. The occupation of their descendants is also mostly farming, and this is commendable. When one has a parcel of ground on which to live and rule and manage his affairs, he is considered fortunate; even if there is still much to be desired. All the more so, since farming is a fundamental occupation. The farmer feeds the world; of course, with the blessing of the Lord, who prospers and gives the increase. If we could look back 54 years and see again the regions where these five congregations now are, then there would be no doubt that our people made good progress, agriculturally and economically. These regions were changed from wild prairies to blossoming gardens and productive fields. It cost much sweat and toil; but the Lord added His blessing wherever there were willing hearts and hands to work. Today many of our farms are recognized as model farms. These are characterized by modem machinery, magnificent houses, barns, and other buildings, high grade cattle, and large wheat fields. The farming enterprise is continually put on a larger scale, and the small farmer finds he cannot compete. This brings about a demand for more land.

The community is rich. It is a pleasure to drive through it. With a certain amount of pride, we can say that our forefathers and their descendants have contributed to the wealth of our country, especially in the agricultural area.

The Lord gives to man different talents and abilities and desires for different vocations; so, naturally, not all were farmers. We have a nice number of businessmen among us; some of whom are very prosperous. We have bankers; also grocery, clothing, hardware, machinery, and furniture store operators, as well as harness makers, cobblers, and automobile dealers. So far most of our young people still live in the country (which is very commendable). The modem trend to move to town has not affected our people so much yet. More and more are engaging in business. Because of lack of land and money to begin a costly farm operation, many were compelled to make a living some other way. Because of this there were more and more business people, and we have more kinds of businesses also.

We have different kinds of vocations: smiths, a dentist, a medical doctor, and a lawyer. There are not many of these. However, there were about 50 teachers, of which about half are still teaching. At least two have taught in our colleges, and one in a state university.

One thing with which we had very little to do was politics. Consequently we had no statesmen. A few served in local and county offices. We had at least two who served in the State Legislature of Kansas.

In the field of education we were not as concerned as we should have been. The intellectual development was not uppermost in the minds of our forefathers. However, they approved of church schools, and also were concerned that the children should learn the English language. The public schools were often neglected. Later, by law, the public school terms were lengthened and the children were required to attend. This created more interest and today the district schools in our community belong in the top ranks, scholastically. We have made noticeable progress in this respect. This we can con-

clude, if we consider how large a number are not satisfied with a grade school education. Almost all of our young people go to high school now. Very seldom did we find one of our number attending an institution of higher learning 30 years ago. Today more and more attend. It would be interesting to know how many of our young people received higher education. It is not easy to give an exact number. It should not be far from correct if we say 150. This is really not a large number for our group. As was mentioned before, we were not concerned enough in this respect. Many of our young people who received higher education, again settled in the rural areas. This is commendable. The churches benefited, because they were good workers in Sunday school, etc. Some, of course, took up other vocations. We find that some went into business, others took up the teaching profession, and still others became preachers and missionaries. Of those who attended colleges and universities, we have about 20 graduates. A few, about six, received their master's degree, and at least two received their doctor's degree.

Continuous progress was seen in our church life. In the course of time, Sunday schools were organized, and also prayer and devotional hours were introduced. Since about 1890 we have had young people's societies. At least three churches have sewing societies, and one has a children's and young people's mission society. Later it became customary to have revival meetings. These proved to be a blessing. The church schools also contributed to our spiritual upbuilding.

Not only did we work in the home church, but also joined with the other churches in conference activities. At the first Kansas Conference in 1877, the Hoffnungsfeld Church was represented by delegates, as was also the Halstead Church, of which the Christian Church was a part. The following year, 1878, the Christian Church was organized and was represented at both the Kansas Conference and the General Conference. The Hoffnungsfeld Church was represented at the General Conference in 1881. The Pretty Prairie Church

joined the Western District Conference in 1891, Hoffnungsfeld Eden joined in 1895, and Bethany joined in 1908. These churches joined the General Conference in the following years: Pretty Prairie in 1890 (perhaps already in 1887), Hoffnungsfeld Eden in 1896, and Bethany in 1908. These congregations took part in all conference activities. The conference reports show that our churches contributed to the conference treasuries, especially for the mission and relief treasuries. Bethel College also received sizable gifts, as did other schools and educational institutions. Would our five churches have suddenly withheld their contributions, the conference treasury, as well as Bethel College, would have felt the effect. By this we do not mean to say that we did our best, but progress was evident.

Money was not the only support necessary for the conference. It also required work and prayer. Our members served as conference trustees on committees, such as home missions, charity, education, and special committees, as directors of Bethel College, and as officers in the General Conference. Our ministers served not only in their own churches, but at times served in other conference churches, in home mission work, conducted revival meetings, and upon request served at ordinations in other churches, as was already mentioned of Elder Jacob Stucky.

As laborers in God's vineyard from our five Swiss Mennonite churches we have: two missionaries, fifteen ordained preachers, and many teachers in church schools and schools of higher learning, also two serve at Bethel College. We should also mention Sunday school workers, as well as other workers in our churches who help in the upbuilding of the Kingdom of God.

Who will not humbly confess that we should have accomplished more? Or who doesn't feel we have no reason for self glory? Again and again we have felt our shortcomings, especially in our church life. Many things happened of which we are ashamed. Who will not humble himself and wish some things would not have happened? How much was neglected! If we can tell of progress, it is by the Grace of God. To Him be the honor and glory!

CHAPTER XII

Then And Now

It's fifty-four years since our forefathers settled in McPherson County. Where are they? The fathers and mothers who made the start here? Only a few are among us. Even those who were in the prime of life when they immigrated are old now. How the people have changed, a new generation has grown up.

A change has come about, not only with people, but in every other respect as well. At the fiftieth jubilee celebration of the immigration, the following report was given: "Today our automobiles, and not all Fords, race along the highways, as fast as the wind, where we formerly walked or drove slowly by horse and wagon. Today tractors puff on our fields where oxen, mules, and horses were used before. We used a rope and bucket to pull up the water from the well. Today we use a windmill or gas engine to do it for us. Our homes were very simple. Where we formerly had to be content in a very modest hut, we today call palace-like houses our home. And how much different are the insides of our homes than thirty years ago. Where one had to be satisfied with the simplest furnishings; where tables, chairs, benches, cupboards, bedsteads, etc., were of the simplest kind, often handmade out of cheap lumber, today are replaced by expensive, fancy, furniture. Where we were satisfied with simple wooden floors, even the bare earth was used as a floor, today we walk on expensive carpets. In place of candlelight or oil lamps to spend our evening hours, we push a button and have an abundance of light as bright as day, to illuminate our living rooms. In the earlier years, the only music in the home was the purr of the house cat, the laughter of children, or the humming of devotional songs. Today we have expensive instruments and some

of our children perform commendably well on them. The small simple buildings used for churches are replaced by nice large churches. Things are different today than thirty to forty years ago. We travel differently, we eat differently, we sleep differently, we dress differently, we have other amusements.

Yes, it is so. The speaker was right. Forty or fifty acres used to be a big wheat harvest. Today, if one does not have 120-200 acres, he is considered lagging behind and in danger of being run off the farm because of competition. We used to sow by hand. Now we use a big drill, two or three to a tractor, and sow fifty acres a day. Then they used to cut the grain with a scythe, now with a harvester thresher, which cuts and threshes. They used to plow two or three acres a day, now ten or twenty and also thirty if the tractor is large enough. Then they used to be satisfied with corn bread or dark rye bread and some meat, etc. Now it takes dainty tidbits and delicious eats. The rich used to live in poorer homes than the poor do today. The clothing used to be the simplest, now it has to be of the newest fashion. Most of the work was done by hand which today is replaced by steam, gas, and electric power.

It used to be possible to listen to an hour long sermon, today thirty minutes is too long. The House of God was held in reverence. How today? Sunday was a holy day. How today? While visiting, the Word of God was discussed. How today? The church services used to be very simple; today it is expanding constantly. Don't we lose some things which our forefathers possessed? Maybe in some things we made improvements. It is especially encouraging that our youth has the opportunity to take part in Christian Endeavor and Sunday school.

Who will deny that we today are in the midst of many dangers such as materialism which threatens to devour us? More and more among us is the aim to become rich in a hurry. How much money has been squandered through speculation? Of how much better use would it have been if it would have been used for the furtherance

of God's kingdom! The desire to get rich brings about many questionable and sinful deeds. There is the desire for pleasure and luxury. Some slave for it till they have no time for anything else. There are some pleasures of questionable nature. How much time and money is spent there! Then there is the spirit of independence, that emphasizes personal freedom till it enslaves the one who worships it. We much rather live for ourselves, than to have the joy of service in making others happy. Then there is indifference. Indifference in our relationship to God, the danger of unbelief. May God protect us, that we do not fall as prey to it.

Will we be as faithful in the use of our opportunities, possibilities, preparations, etc., as our forefathers were? Will we render more than they did, since we have greater possibilities? Should we not remind ourselves to return to the faith, the sufficiency, to the uprightness and honesty of our ancestors? They also had their weaknesses. They were not angels either, but we have much to learn from them. To follow them in their good deeds would surely be a blessing for us. They built well. They stood on the rock, Jesus Christ. On this rock we want to continue. We want to show ourselves worthy of our forefathers. We should put forth every effort to live to glorify our God and strive for the salvation of our fellow man. We thank God for all He did for our people. He will continue to help us also, if we remain faithful. Him and Him only will we trust, who has bought us through the death of Christ on the cross. We close with a few verses written by brother P. A. Flickner, a member of the committee, whose assistance in composing this booklet we appreciated very much.

It is the Lord who gave this life of ours,
Love, faithfulness, and mercy on us showers.
He, wonderfully led us to this day;
Of this, we often in our life could say.

It is the Lord who in the days gone by,
With love and patience, He was always nigh,
Not for a moment we'd forsaken been,
Oh who can grasp, who hath such wonder seen?

It is the Lord, to Him we would be true,
As in the past we will serve Him anew;
Who shed His blood and gave His life that we
Be saved, and everlasting life can see.

It is the Lord who daily for us cared,
Us for our home in heaven hath prepared,
Whose constant love hath helped through all our ways
In all the good, as well as evil days.

It is the Lord, How marvelous reigneth He?
Who safely brought us over land and sea,
Here He secured a home where we shall live,
In perfect peace to Him our service give.

It is the Lord who blessed us to this day,
These fifty years, permitted us to stay,
And to our toil and labor increase gave,
To the extent that we abundance have.

It is the Lord who in the dark days too,
Has with our cares and burdens helped us through;
To Him we've constantly committed been,
Until His providential help we've seen.

It is the Lord, He hath given us this day,
Our offerings to bring, To Him our praises say,
Some day in heaven all together we,
Shall join in praises through eternity.

TABLE OF CONTENTS