

A History of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church of  
Manitoba 1874-1914

by Dennis E. Stoesz

A Thesis submitted to the  
Department of History, University of Manitoba,  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements of a  
Master of Arts Degree

8 September 1987  
Winnipeg, Manitoba

Permission has been granted to the National Library of Canada to microfilm this thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film.

The author (copyright owner) has reserved other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without his/her written permission.

L'autorisation a été accordée à la Bibliothèque nationale du Canada de microfilmer cette thèse et de prêter ou de vendre des exemplaires du film.

L'auteur (titulaire du droit d'auteur) se réserve les autres droits de publication; ni la thèse ni de longs extraits de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation écrite.

ISBN 0-315-44182-8

A HISTORY OF THE CHORTITZER MENNONITE  
CHURCH OF MANITOBA, 1874-1914

BY

DENNIS E. STOESZ

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

© 1987

Permission has been granted to the LIBRARY OF THE UNIVER-  
SITY OF MANITOBA to lend or sell copies of this thesis, to  
the NATIONAL LIBRARY OF CANADA to microfilm this  
thesis and to lend or sell copies of the film, and UNIVERSITY  
MICROFILMS to publish an abstract of this thesis.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the  
thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or other-  
wise reproduced without the author's written permission.

## ABSTRACT

This study examines the Chortitzer Mennonite Church from the time of the emigration of most of its members from the Bergthal Colony, Russia to the East Reserve, Manitoba in 1874-76 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. It first responded to the establishment of several sister and satellite communities in the West Reserve, Manitoba, and in Minnesota, North Dakota and Saskatchewan. The church further outlined its boundaries through its worship centres on the East Reserve, called meetingplaces. The Ministerial's involvement in various economic, social and political organizations led it to reflect on its role in the community and its adaptation to the Canadian setting: these involvements included borrowing large sums of money from its Swiss brethren and the Canadian government, maintaining schools for the community, and cooperating with the municipal government. A review of the religious leaders helped define the major periods of change and continuity for the church. The ministers were also forced to make some doctrinal decisions as various evangelical and conservative influences were exerted on the community. The theological position of the church was more fully defined by its use of several religious books and its interpretation of some common Mennonite tenets of faith. Religious boundaries became

Abstract

clearer as a result of these struggles and geographic and ethnic definitions of the Chortitzer community declined. The result was a sharper denominational identity of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church by 1914.

## PREFACE

This paper was started at the uncovering of Bishop David Stoesz's diary in 1973. Although it mostly recorded information on agriculture, on social visits with relatives and friends, and on the weather, it offered major clues to the history of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. I had very little previous knowledge about this church since I grew up in the Altona Bergthaler Mennonite Church, located across the Red River. The discovery of the diary prompted me to write a short biography of Stoesz and to transliterate a quarter of it. Soon after, Lawrence Klippenstein published an article on David Stoesz and his diary. The next few years were filled with piecing together more of the early history of this Mennonite church in Manitoba. The Chortitzer Church registers became available on microfilm, more sermons and documents were brought to light, visits to the Chortitzer Waisen Vorsteher pointed to the wealth of the Waisenamt documents, and trips to North Newton, Goshen and Ottawa proved successful. Finally, after some struggle, the narrative of this church was turned into a thesis.

I need first to thank the David A. Stoesz family, particularly Trudie (Stoesz) and William Harms, and Henry Stoesz, for the preservation of the Stoesz manuscript and for translating the diary. Secondly, I want to thank the

## Preface

Chortitzer Mennonite Church for the opportunity to write some things about their early history in Manitoba, and for making available valuable research materials. More specifically, I want to mention the assistance of former Bishop Henry K. Schellenberg, Bishop William Hildebrandt, Waisen Vorsteher D. M. Friesen and D. F. Wiebe, and Gus Dueck. Thirdly, I am grateful to Lawrence Klippenstein of the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives for his support in this project. I also want to acknowledge the gracious help I received from Margaret Franz, Mennonite Historical Library, from the staff at various libraries and archives, including the Mennonite Library and Archives, the Archives of the Mennonite Church, the Public Archives of Canada, and from individuals like Ed Wiebe and Henry Fast. Fourthly, I would like to thank my colleagues for their suggestions, criticisms, patience and support at various stages of this paper. Included among the list of names is Jake Peters, Adolf Ens, Leonard Doell, John Friesen, Royden Loewen and Reg Good. I also want to say a thank-you to my advisor, Professor Gerald Friesen, for turning this narrative into a thesis and for his patience while doing so. Finally, I am deeply appreciative of Rhoda (Lehman) Stoesz, my friend, companion and wife, for her support and understanding throughout this project. She also provided the main maps for this thesis and helped edit the final manuscript. I take all responsibilities for any errors in fact or interpretation in this paper, and would appreciate

Preface

if they were pointed out to me.

Dennis E. Stoesz



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

APPROVAL FORM . . . . .	iii
COPYRIGHT PAGE. . . . .	iv
ABSTRACT. . . . .	v
PREFACE . . . . .	vii
MAPS AND TABLES . . . . .	xiii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	14
CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITY . . . . .	29
A. Migration and Settlement, 1874-82 . . . . .	29
B. Migration and Settlement, 1882-1914 . . . . .	36
C. Disintegration of Villages . . . . .	44
D. Conclusion . . . . .	47
CHAPTER 2: BOUNDARIES . . . . .	48
A. Mountain Lake, Minnesota . . . . .	48
B. Fargo, North Dakota . . . . .	54
C. Contacts in Russia . . . . .	55
D. Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1882-92 . . . . .	57
E. Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, 1894 . . . . .	62
F. Chortitzer Mennonite Church . . . . .	67
G. Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Saskatchewan . . . . .	70
H. Herbert, Saskatchewan . . . . .	75
I. Conclusion . . . . .	76
CHAPTER 3: MEETINGPLACES . . . . .	79
A. Central Places, 1874-82 . . . . .	79
B. Changing Settlement Patterns, 1883 . . . . .	85
C. Central Places, 1882-1900 . . . . .	88
D. Changing Settlement Patterns, 1882-1900 . . . . .	93
E. Central Places, 1900-14 . . . . .	97
F. Conclusion . . . . .	100

## Table of Contents

CHAPTER 4: WAISENAMT . . . . .	103
A. Emigration . . . . .	103
B. Loan from the Ontario Swiss Mennonites, 1874 . . . . .	108
C. Loan from the Canadian Government, 1875 . . . . .	115
D. Repayment of the Loans, 1878-94 . . . . .	119
E. Response to Receiving Help . . . . .	125
F. Conclusion . . . . .	128
CHAPTER 5: EDUCATION . . . . .	131
A. Establishment of Schools, 1875-79 . . . . .	131
B. Joining the Manitoba Public School System, 1878 . . . . .	134
C. Withdrawal from the Public School System, 1878-81 . . . . .	136
D. Private Schools, 1881-1914 . . . . .	141
E. Pressures to form Public School Districts . . . . .	145
F. Conclusion . . . . .	150
CHAPTER 6: POLITICS . . . . .	153
A. Volost . . . . .	153
B. Municipal Government . . . . .	155
C. Relationship between the Chortitzer Church and Local Government . . . . .	160
D. Citizenship and Federal Elections . . . . .	161
E. Status of the East Reserve . . . . .	166
F. Conclusion . . . . .	176
CHAPTER 7: LEADERSHIP . . . . .	178
A. Office of Bishop, Minister and Deacon . . . . .	178
B. The Role of the Minister in the Community . . . . .	186
C. The Wiebe Years, 1874-82 . . . . .	188
D. The Stoesz Years, 1882-1903 . . . . .	196
E. The Toews Years, 1903-15 . . . . .	202
F. Conclusion . . . . .	204
CHAPTER 8: IDENTITY . . . . .	206
A. Evangelical Influences, 1887-1892 . . . . .	206
B. Conservative Influences: Reinlaender Mennonite Church . . . . .	218
C. Conclusion . . . . .	226
CHAPTER 9: THEOLOGY . . . . .	228
A. The Use of Four Religious Books . . . . .	228
B. General Theology . . . . .	241
C. Conclusion . . . . .	250
CONCLUSION . . . . .	253

Table of Contents

BIBLIOGRAPHY . . . . . 261  
APPENDICES . . . . . 278

## MAPS AND TABLES

### MAPS

1. Mennonite Reserves in Manitoba . . . . .	38
2. Chortitzer Mennonite Villages and Meetingplaces, 1874-82 . . . . .	80
3. Chortitzer Mennonite Villages and Meetingplaces, 1883-1900 . . . . .	87
4. Chortitzer Mennonite Meetingplaces, 1926 . . . . .	98

### TABLES

1. Voting Patterns on the East Reserve, Manitoba for Federal Elections, 1887-1911 . . . . .	164
2. Summary of Ministers for Years 1876, 1882, 1903 and 1915 . . . . .	189
3. Chronology of Ministerial Elections, Resignations and Deaths, 1876-1915 . . . . .	195

## INTRODUCTION

This study examines the Chortitzer Mennonite Church, Manitoba, from the time of the emigration of most of its members from Russia to Manitoba in 1874-76 to the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The main thesis is that the church underwent an important transition in identity from an ethnic community to a religious denomination during these forty years. The first chapter describes the migration of this community and its settlement on the East Reserve, located in the vicinity of Steinbach. The next two chapters examine how the church established its boundaries in the wider Bergthaler community and on the East Reserve. The church's involvement in the Waisenamt, schools and politics are documented in chapters four through six. A specific study of the religious leaders in chapter seven clarifies their role in the community, and provides a summary of the continuity and changes in the church. The last two chapters discuss the religious identity of the Chortitzer Church and begin to define its theological place within the wider Mennonite world.

The thesis is developed within the framework of four main themes. First, it explores the boundaries of the church community. Recent studies have begun to delineate the various Mennonite churches. Royden Loewen describes the

Kleine Gemeinde and Holdeman churches in the East Reserve village of Blumenort.<sup>1</sup> Peter D. Zacharias, in Reinland, mentions the Reinlaender and Sommerfelder churches in this western West Reserve village.<sup>2</sup> Esther Epp-Thiessen, in the history of the prairie town of Altona, and Gerhard Ens, in the Rhineland Municipality, describe the Bergthaler and Sommerfelder churches within the eastern part of the West Reserve.<sup>3</sup> Frank H. Epp has described all the Mennonite church groups in his book, Mennonites in Canada.<sup>4</sup> These works, despite their strengths as local histories, were of limited value as analyses of particular churches because their primary focus was a village, town, or municipality, or in Epp's case, the nation. This study, by contrast, identifies the boundaries of the church and attempts to

---

<sup>1</sup>Royden Loewen, Blumenort: A Mennonite Community in Transition, 1874-1982 (Steinbach, Manitoba: Blumenort Mennonite Historical Society, 1983). Hereafter referred to as Loewen, Blumenort. See Appendix No. 5 for list of footnote abbreviations used throughout this paper.

<sup>2</sup>Peter D. Zacharias, Reinland: An Experience in Community (Reinland, Manitoba: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976). Hereafter referred to as Zacharias, Reinland.

<sup>3</sup>Esther Epp-Tiessen, Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen and Son Ltd., 1982). Hereafter referred to as Epp-Tiessen, Altona. Gerhard J. Ens, Volost and Municipality: The Rural Municipality of Rhineland, 1884-1984 (Altona, Manitoba: Rural Municipality of Rhineland, 1984). Hereafter referred to as Ens, Rhineland Municipality.

<sup>4</sup>Frank H. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People, [vol. 1] (Toronto, Ontario: Macmillan of Canada, 1974). Hereafter referred to as Epp, Mennonites in Canada.

outline how the boundaries changed and were maintained.

Several scholars have written church histories. H. J. Gerbrandt narrates the story of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba from its beginnings on the West Reserve in 1892 to 1972.<sup>5</sup> A recent book on the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan, 1893-1975, was written by Leonard Doell.<sup>6</sup> Other examples include those histories of the large General Conference, (Old) Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches.<sup>7</sup> They provide a church or institutional framework in which to explore the history of Mennonites. Although many

---

<sup>5</sup>Gerbrandt has opened up the study of the early history of the Chortitzer and Bergthaler Mennonite churches in Manitoba, 1874-92. His main focus, however, is on the Bergthaler church that continued with Bishop Johann Funk in the church division of 1892. A study of the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church is still needed. H. J. Gerbrandt, Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba (Altona, Manitoba: The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1970). Hereafter referred to as Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church.

<sup>6</sup>Doell tells the story of this church which had its roots in the Bergthaler settlements in Manitoba, but started its own church in Saskatchewan in 1893. Leonard Doell, The History of the Saskatchewan Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1893-1975 Bergthal Historical Series No. 2 (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1987). Hereafter referred to as Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church.

<sup>7</sup>Samuel Floyd Pannabecker, Open Doors: A History of General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Historical Series (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1975). Hereafter referred to as Pannabecker, General Conference Mennonite Church; J. C. Wenger, The Mennonite Church in America, Sometimes Called Old Mennonites (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1966); J. A. Toews, A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers (Fresno, California: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches, 1975).

works mention the Chortitzer Mennonite Church, none have concentrated on it. The one exception is Peter Peters' essay on the Chortitzer Silberfeld congregation near New Bothwell, Manitoba.<sup>8</sup>

Second, this paper examines the relationship between the church and the Mennonite community. Many studies of Mennonites in Manitoba include the social, political, economic, educational and religious life of the community.<sup>9</sup> Although they have started to describe the church as a separate entity, they have not always clarified its position within the Mennonite society. As Francis, the sociologist, has so aptly indicated this problem in his study of the Mennonites in Manitoba:

It was difficult to make a clear distinction between those elements of their social organization which were essentially an expression of their religion, and others

---

<sup>8</sup>Most of the books already mentioned take note of the Bergthaler and Chortitzer churches since they represented a sizeable Mennonite community in Manitoba from 1874 to 1920s. There is, however, a general lack of clarity on the boundaries and names of the church groups. Peter Peters has focussed on the one congregation of the Chortitzer Church called Silberfeld. A church building was built about one and a half miles south of Silberfeld in 1944 and people from the areas of New Bothwell, Blumengard, Hochfeld, Schoenthal, Reinfeld and Bergthal attended it. Peter Peters, "History of Silberfeld (Chortitzer Mennonite Conference)" (Steinbach Bible Institute, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1974), p. 42. Hereafter referred to as Peters, "Silberfeld."

<sup>9</sup>Examples include the previously mentioned scholars: Zacharias, Reinland, Epp-Tiessen, Altona, Loewen, Blumenort, Ens, Rhineland Municipality. It also includes the important work by E. K. Francis, In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba (Altona, Manitoba: D. W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., 1955). Hereafter referred to as Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba.



which pertained to purely secular matters and civil government.<sup>10</sup>

This paper will specifically examine the religious leadership and will try to articulate aspects of the church's role in the community.

Third, this study analyses the adaptation of Mennonites to Canadian society. Mennonites established a homogeneous social and cultural settlement on two reserves in Manitoba in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. They formed village communes, had their own form of government and were in charge of their schools. Their European heritage was altered, however, as they responded to the quality of the land, the commercial agricultural economy, the railways, municipal government, settlement of non-Mennonites in reserves, and the public school system. Three scholars have developed this theme in important works. E.K. Francis, who paints with a broad brush in his Mennonites in Manitoba, covers most of these topics.<sup>11</sup> John Warkentin focusses on the agricultural aspects of the village, and illustrates the

---

<sup>10</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 83. In studying the village of Reinland, Zacharias has noted the close working relationship between church and civic government: "In general the [Reinlaender Church] ministry, led by Elder Wiebe, was more closely involved in colony administration than had been the case in the Russian Mennonite colonies... Although the day to day administration of village and colony affairs was left to the Schulzen and the colony executive, major directions were under clerical influence from the start..." Zacharias, Reinland, p. 58.

<sup>11</sup>Francis is a sociologist by profession. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba.

changing Mennonite settlement patterns on both East and West Reserves.<sup>12</sup> Adolf Ens, whose interest is church and state relations, concentrates on the issues of block settlement, education, and municipal government.<sup>13</sup> This thesis will attempt to refine some of the insights of these scholars by examining one church within the Manitoba Mennonite community.<sup>14</sup>

Fourth, the thesis postulates a theological and intellectual context in which to examine Mennonites. A number of scholars have outlined some basic Mennonite beliefs: the concept of the church, nonresistance, nonconformity, community and missions. They use these tenets of faith to examine the history of the Mennonites. Theron Schlabach examines the outreach of the Mennonite Church,

---

<sup>12</sup>Warkentin is an historical geographer. John H. Warkentin, "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba," 2 vols. (Ph. D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1960). Hereafter referred to as Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba."

<sup>13</sup>Ens is a Canadian historian. Adolf Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments: Western Canada, 1870-1936" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1978). Hereafter referred to as Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments."

<sup>14</sup>The denominational approach also allows one to compare the Chortitzer Church with other Mennonite church groups, to see how it responded similarly or differently to the various economic, political, religious and social forces at work in the community. John H. Warkentin, for example, has recognized the church differences in attitudes toward settlement patterns, education and the outside world. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 42. Another example is Adolf Ens, who takes note of the different responses of the Chortitzer and Reinlaender to municipal government. Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 116-36.

1863-1944, from the peace perspective.<sup>15</sup> James Juhnke examines the overseas mission of the General Conference Mennonite Church.<sup>16</sup> The concept of community has been specifically developed by Zacharias, in Reinland: An Experience in Community, Calvin Redekop, in Old Colony Mennonites, and in the recent book by Richard MacMaster, Land, Piety, Peoplehood.<sup>17</sup> Frank H. Epp's emphasis on the separation of the Mennonites in his first volume of Mennonites in Canada comes close to defining nonconformity. Amos Hoover, within the Old Order Mennonite tradition, adds to that definition in his Jonas Martin Era.<sup>18</sup> These five

---

<sup>15</sup>Schlabach also articulates three of the five main beliefs of the Mennonites: church, mission and peace. Theron Schlabach, Gospel versus Gospel: Mission and the Mennonite Church, 1863-1944, Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History No. 21 (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1980), p. 16, 24-25. Hereafter referred to as Schlabach, Mission and the Mennonite Church.

<sup>16</sup>James C. Juhnke, A People of Mission: A History of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions, Mennonite Historical Series (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1979). Hereafter referred to as Juhnke, General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions.

<sup>17</sup>Zacharias, Reinland; Calvin W. Redekop, The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life (Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins Press, 1969). Hereafter referred to as Redekop, Old Colony Mennonites. And Richard K. MacMaster, Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790 vol. 1 (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1985) in The Mennonite Experience in America 4 vols., gen ed. Theron F. Schlabach.

<sup>18</sup>Epp, Mennonites in Canada; Amos B. Hoover, The Jonas Martin Era: Presented in a Collection of Essays, Letters and Documents that Shed Light on the Mennonite Churches During the 50 Year Ministry (1875-1925) of Bishop Jonas H. Martin, (Denver, Pennsylvania: Amos B. Hoover, 1982). Jonas Martin was a bishop of the Weaverland Old Order Mennonite Church.

Mennonite beliefs can be used as a backdrop for interpreting the church's response to various events. Nonresistance, for example, was one reason for three Mennonite churches to emigrate out of Russia. Thus, there is considerable reason to study the theology of the Chortitzer church.

This work relies heavily on primary sources which are located mainly in Manitoba. Since the minutes of the church, as far as one knows, do not exist for this period, the narrative had to be reconstructed from a variety of other materials. The collection of Bishop David Stoesz in the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, proved to be the best single source. His diary, 1872-96, was invaluable for defining major events and his sermons for documenting the evolution of meetingplaces. The official communion and baptism sermons, 1881-1902, provided membership statistics as well as data on visits to the West Reserve, Fargo, and Rosthern. The School Constitution of ca. 1878 was found in the Stoesz papers as well. The Chortitzer Church Register books, which are kept by the church at Steinbach, provided basic information on the ministers: who they were, when they served, and their age. The registers also provided demographic data on migrations out of Russia and on the growth of the community in Manitoba. The Waisenamt documents were also useful. They are in the care of the Chortitzer Waisen Vorsteher at Ste. Anne. Articles from newspapers, 

---

 Hereafter referred to as Hoover, Jonas Martin Era.

particularly those of the Mennonitische Rundschau and Herald der Wahrheit, provided further information on migration, visiting ministers, the leaders of the Chortitzer church, and the establishment of schools. Several smaller original collections included such things as the Peter Elias memoirs, correspondence from Cornelius Epp, the Cornelius Stoesz collection, the circa 1903 School Rules and Constitution, and certain Department of Interior files. Some of them were found in such places as Warman, Saskatchewan; Waterloo and Ottawa, Ontario; North Newton, Kansas; and Goshen, Indiana.

An explanation of the Mennonite situation in western Canada and Ontario may be useful because many of the different Mennonite churches and communities will be discussed throughout this paper. The three major groups who emigrated to Manitoba between 1874-80 were the Bergthal, Kleine Gemeinde and Reinlaender groups. They were identified in several ways: by their place of origin in Russia, by local geographic names and areas in Manitoba, and by their religious affiliation.

The families who migrated from the Bergthal Colony, Russia, to the East Reserve, Manitoba, in 1874-76, were popularly referred to as Bergthaler. Their church in Russia went by the same name, the Bergthal Mennonite Church.<sup>19</sup> The

---

<sup>19</sup>A history of this Bergthal Colony has been written by

designation "Bergthaler" is useful, and will be used in this paper to describe any person or group originating in the Russian Bergthal Colony.

Half of the Bergthaler community on the East Reserve moved to the West Reserve, also located in Manitoba, between 1878-90. The Bergthaler community on the East Reserve became known as the Chortitz, or Chortitzer, Mennonite Church.<sup>20</sup> This church is the subject of this paper. The Bergthaler community on the West Reserve was known as the Bergthaler Church.<sup>21</sup> There was a split in this church on the West Reserve in 1892-94. The smaller group took the name

---

William Schroeder. William Schroeder, The Bergthal Colony 2nd edition, Bergthal Historical Series No. 1 (Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1986). Hereafter referred to as Schroeder, Bergthal Colony.

<sup>20</sup>The title page for the 1887 Church Register identifies the East Reserve Bergthaler group as the Chortitzer Church: "Kirchenbuch den Gemeine zu Chortitz." It literally means "Church Register of the Church at [the village of] Chortitz." It is found in the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference Record Group, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hereafter referred to as Chortitzer RG, MHCA. Gerhard Wiebe, bishop of the church from 1866-82, lived in this village of Chortitz, from which the name was taken, and the village became the main centre for the church. It was located west of Steinbach, Manitoba. The name "Chortitz" is also rooted in the name of the oldest Mennonite colony in Russia, the Chortitza Colony, 1789-1942, from which the Mennonites in the Bergthal Colony had migrated in 1836.

<sup>21</sup>An 1888 article names the church on the West Reserve "The Bergthaler Church." It also refers to its sister church on the East Reserve as "A different Church in Bergthal," because Bishop Stoesz lived in the village of Bergthal. See "Gemeinden in Manitoba, Canada," in Herold der Wahrheit (1 Mai 1888), p. 130. Hereafter referred to as "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888.

"Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba."<sup>22</sup> The other larger group became officially known as the Sommerfeld, or Sommerfelder, Mennonite Church.<sup>23</sup>

There were also a number of branches of the Bergthaler group. They included, first, the people from the Bergthal Colony who moved to Minnesota in the 1870s. Second, the move of several Bergthaler people from the West Reserve to the Rosthern area in the early 1890s resulted in the beginnings of a Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Saskatchewan.<sup>24</sup> Third, members of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba also moved to Saskatchewan during this same time. They started a church at Herbert and joined the Rosenorter Mennonite Church around Rosthern. Fourth, members of the Sommerfelder Church, including some Chortitzers, moved to the Swift Current and Herbert areas in Saskatchewan in the early 1900s. They were affiliates of the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church of Manitoba.

The other two Russian Mennonite emigrant groups who

---

<sup>22</sup>Several reasons why this group took on the name "Bergthaler" are provided by Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 94-95. His book is a history of this church group, 1892-1970.

<sup>23</sup>A 1914 statistical report identifies this group as "Sommerfeld Gemeinde." "Statistik der Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbien fuer das Jahr 1914," in Der Mitarbeiter (January 1915), p. 32. Hereafter referred to as "Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter. The first bishop of the church, Abraham Doerksen 1894-1929, lived in the village of Sommerfeld, thus the name chosen for the church.

<sup>24</sup>See the denominational history of this church by Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church.

came to Manitoba between 1874-80 were identified slightly differently than the Bergthal group. The Kleine Gemeinde community were not identified primarily by their geographic origin in the Borosenko and Molotschna Colonies, Russia, but by their religious designation--Kleine Gemeinde.<sup>25</sup> The other group, Reinlaender Mennonite Church, were named after a central village of the community in Manitoba--Reinland. This latter group emigrated from the Fuerstenland and Chortitza Colonies in Russia and were popularly identified as the Old Colony Mennonites.<sup>26</sup>

There were several church splits in and migrations out of these two Mennonite church communities. The Kleine Gemeinde community was divided between two geographic areas in Manitoba in 1874: the East Reserve and the Scratching River settlement near Morris. An 1882 church split resulted in two religious communities: the Kleine Gemeinde and the Holdeman (Church of God in Christ, Mennonite). They were found at both settlements. A later 1898 Kleine Gemeinde split in the Steinbach, East Reserve, area created a third church group, the Bruderthaler (Evangelical Mennonite

---

<sup>25</sup>The history of this group was published in 1962. The change of name from Kleine Gemeinde to Evangelical Mennonite Conference occurred in 1952. Evangelical Mennonite Conference, The Sesquicentennial Jubilee: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1812-1962 (Steinbach, Manitoba: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1962). Hereafter referred to as Evangelical Mennonite Conference.

<sup>26</sup>A history of this church group in Manitoba is found in Zacharias, Reinland.



Brethren). These three church groups will sometimes be referred to as the Molotschner Mennonites in this paper.<sup>27</sup>

There was no church split in the Reinlaender Mennonite Church during this period. It did, however, excommunicate members. These excommunicated members joined the Bergthaler Church as early as 1884 and began the Mennonite Brethren Church in the Winkler area in 1888.<sup>28</sup> The Reinlaender community was geographically divided in the 1890s and 1900s as many moved to the Hague-Osler and Swift Current Reserves in Saskatchewan.

There were several migrations of Mennonites to western Canada from the 1880s to the 1920s. They included the migration out of the United States into several Saskatchewan areas, the Rosenorter Mennonite Church emigration from Prussia to Saskatchewan in the 1890s, and the movement of several Mennonites from Russia to Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta throughout this time period.<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup>It is a little easier to mention all three church groups in this way. The Kleine Gemeinde emigrant group to Manitoba originated from the Molotschna Colony, Russia.

<sup>28</sup>A short history of the Mennonite Brethren Church at Winkler is provided by Frank Brown, Mennonite Brethren Church, Winkler, Manitoba, 1888-1963, by faith, 75th (Altona, Manitoba: Printed by D. W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., [1963]). Hereafter referred to as Brown, Winkler Mennonite Brethren.

<sup>29</sup>The Rosenorter story is told in J. G. Rempel, Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan in Wort und Bild (Rosthern, Saskatchewan: D. H. Epp, 1950). Hereafter referred to as Rempel, Rosenorter. The emigration of Mennonites to Canada from 1880s to 1920s has been documented by Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 303-18. A study of emigrants out of Fuerstenland, Russia, to Canada has been

The Mennonites in Ontario did not originate from Russia and had come to Canada already in the 1790s. Their origin was in Pennsylvania and before that, i.e. 1683, in Switzerland, hence the popular name "Swiss Mennonites." They had come to Canada for economic and religious reasons following the War of Independence in the United States, and had settled in the districts of Niagara, Waterloo and York County. Their church was known as the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, but had had splits caused by reformers in 1849 and 1872-73, and caused by conservatives in 1889.<sup>30</sup>

This paper is a study of the Mennonite community which originated in the Bergthal Colony, Russia, and settled in the East Reserve, Manitoba, in 1874-76. The focus is on the experience of their first two generations in Manitoba, 1874-1914. The main thesis is that in these forty years the church became defined by its religious rather than its ethnic identity.<sup>31</sup> The Chortitzer church first responded to the

---

made by Jake Peters, "The Determinants of Mennonite Migration: A Case Study of the Fuerstenland Colony, 1889-1914" (University of Manitoba, 1987). Hereafter referred to as Peters, "Fuerstenland Migration, 1889-1914."

<sup>30</sup>A comprehensive book written on the Mennonite situation in Ontario is one published in 1935. L. J. Burkholder, A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario, (Markham, Ontario: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935; reprint ed., Altona, Manitoba: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1986). Epp, in Mennonites in Canada, has added significantly to this Ontario Swiss Mennonite history.

<sup>31</sup>Partial credit for the wording of this thesis goes to Francis. His first chapter is entitled "From Religious Movement to Ethnic Group." In it he describes the history of Mennonites from their sixteenth-century Anabaptist roots to

establishment of several sister and satellite communities in the West Reserve, Manitoba, in Minnesota, North Dakota and Saskatchewan. Then, through its worship centres called meetingplaces, it outlined its boundaries on the East Reserve. The Ministerial's involvement in various economic, social and political organizations led them to reflect on its role in the community and its adaptation to the Canadian setting: these involvements included borrowing large amounts of money from its Swiss brethren and the Canadian government, maintaining schools for the community, and cooperating with the municipal government. A review of the church leaders helped define the major periods of change and continuity for the church. The conservative and evangelical influences exerted on the community also forced the leaders of the church to make some doctrinal decisions. The church's theological position was more fully defined by its use of several religious books and its interpretation of some common Mennonite tenets of faith. Religious boundaries became clearer as a result of these struggles and geographic and ethnic definitions of the Chortitzer community declined. The result was a sharper denominational identity of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church by 1914. This will be the focus of our concern.

---

their commonwealth in Russia. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 9-27.

## CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITY

This chapter will document the migration, demography and settlement of the Chortitzer community. The two major migrations, the one in 1874-76 and the one to the West Reserve in 1878-90, had an effect on the population and settlement of this Mennonite group.

### A. Migration and Settlement, 1874-82

In spring 1874 the population of the Bergthal Colony, Russia, consisted of about 527 Mennonite families.<sup>32</sup> From 1874-76, about 440 of these families moved to the East Reserve, Manitoba. They travelled over the Atlantic Ocean on nine ships.<sup>33</sup> This was a major migration of almost an entire Mennonite colony to Manitoba and was the beginning of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. The emigrants represented 83%

---

<sup>32</sup>The figure "527 families," or 3,000 immigrants, comes from Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68. The Bergthal Colony Church Registers are Gerbrandt's source for both figures. The term "family" or "household" was used to count the population because the church registers list members by family units. These registers are contained in the Chortitzer RG, MHCA. See Appendix No. 1 for the difficulty in determining the 1874 Bergthal Colony population and the 1874-76 emigrant population.

<sup>33</sup>The figure of "440" emigrant families comes from Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68. Analysis of the name and number of the ships, number of people on each boat, dates of arrival in Quebec, and leader and group identification is available in Adolf Ens and Rita Penner "Quebec Passenger Lists of the Russian Mennonite Immigration, 1874-1880," in Mennonite Quarterly Review 48 (October 1974):527-31. Hereafter referred to as Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists."

of the total population of the Bergthal Colony in Russia. Of the remaining 17%, 34 families stayed in Russia and 55 families moved to the United States.<sup>34</sup>

The Chortitzer Ministerial regarded the decision to migrate out of Russia as a religious one. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, who assumed leadership of this migration, explained that the introduction of compulsory military service and the requirement to use the Russian language in the schools led the church to look for another place to settle:

Even if we don't get the best land, as long as we can get a spot where we can feed ourselves and our children, and above all where we can follow our religion according to God's Word; and above all that we could have our own schools in order to teach the children according to God's Word and commandments.<sup>35</sup>

---

<sup>34</sup>Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68, provides the figure of "53" families to the United States, the 1887 Church Register, p. 199, lists "55 families". Gerbrandt does not mention the "13" families who went to North Dakota. This figure comes from counting the number of family registers which had the words "Dakota" written at the bottom of the page. They are included in the figure of 55 families who moved to the United States. Litter A and B, 1843, and the 1887 church registers are found in Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>35</sup>Gerhard Wiebe, Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America, Documents in Manitoba Mennonite History no. 1, translated by Helen Janzen (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981), p.33. Hereafter referred to as Wiebe, History of the Emigration. The original was published in German in 1900: Gerhard Wiebe, Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika, (Winnipeg, [Manitoba]: Nordwesten, 1900). This book was published in 1900, just after Gerhard Wiebe's death, and explains the events leading up to the migration and comments about the early years of settlement as well. It gives one a good idea of the theology of the Chortitzer church in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

Reverend David Stoesz started a diary two years before the emigration with a warning:

1872, on the evening of January 23, we saw a sign in the heavens, of which the Prophet Joel had prophesied, that God would show signs and omens in the heavens of the coming day of judgement. It was as the prophet foretold, in colors of blood and fire. These colors came and went as clouds rolling in great speed from the north and moving overhead with many bright areas interspersed, which seemed to tell us that God was showing us that in some areas the light of Evangelism was still alive, though in most places where the light still shone a few years ago among those Christians, it is now cold and dark.<sup>36</sup>

After the negotiations with the Russian government concerning military exemption failed, the church members "seemed that they were unanimously in favor of emigration," reported Bishop Wiebe.<sup>37</sup> Eighty-three percent (3,000 people) of the Bergthal Colony emigrated to Manitoba over three years, 1874-76.

There were also some economic motives for this almost complete relocation of a community from Russia to Manitoba.<sup>38</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup>Noted by David Stoesz in "David Stoesz Diary, 1872-1896," translated by Henry Stoesz (Altona, Manitoba, 1985), p. 1. Hereafter referred to as "David Stoesz Diary." The diary was transliterated from the Gothic to Latin script by Trudie (Stoesz) and William Harms (Altona, Manitoba, 1985). The original diary is part of the David M. Stoesz Collection, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hereafter referred to as Stoesz MSS, MHCA. Copies of the transliteration and translation are available at the Archives.

<sup>37</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 33.

<sup>38</sup>Several authors have studied the economic aspect of the migration. Schroeder, Bergthal Colony; Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church; P. Albert Koop, "Some Economic Aspects of Mennonite Migration: With Special Emphasis on the 1870s Migration from Russia to North America," Mennonite

Seventy-one percent (354 of the 500 families) of the Bergthal farmers did not own any land in the colony in 1874.<sup>39</sup> "It is not surprising that, when the delegates reported that there was free land available in Manitoba, many...were interested in migrating."<sup>40</sup> Whatever the motivations, the Ministerial were among the main leaders pushing for migration.

After some two years of negotiations between the Mennonites and the Canadian government, an Order in Council was passed on August 13, 1873. It outlined the immigration and settlement arrangements. Items 1, 10 and 11 addressed the religious issues of exemption from military duty and the freedom to exercise religious principles, to educate their children in their own schools and to affirm rather than swear in court. The economic issues of land grants and the opportunity to settle in block settlements were spoken to in items 2 through 9. Items 12 through 15 outlined the costs of

---

Quarterly Review 55 (April 1981): 143-56; and Jake Peters "A Survey of Historical Writing about Mennonite Migrations to North America during the Years 1870-1914," (University of Manitoba, 1987). Koop says that "the traditional Mennonite historiography places too much emphasis on religious motives." (page 143). Peters notes that there have been three major approaches to explain migrations: religious, cultural and economic, or a mixture of these. He suggests that a more detailed social study be done of the population and migration patterns of Mennonites out of Russia from 1870-1914. This has become possible through the availability of church registers.

<sup>39</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 35, says there were 500 emigrant families and "145 or 146 farm owners," thus the figure of 354 (71%) landless farmers in Bergthal in 1874.

<sup>40</sup>Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 59.

travel.<sup>41</sup> The four Mennonite delegates who visited Ottawa in 1873 and helped forge this document represented three groups in Russia. Jacob Peters, the mayor, and Reverend Heinrich Wiebe represented the Bergthal Colony and Church, and also spoke on behalf of Bishop Johann Wiebe of the Fuerstenland Colony. Cornelius Toews, elected from the Gruenfeld Church, and David Klassen, who represented the Heuboden Church, spoke for the Kleine Gemeinde Church in the Borosenko Colony.<sup>42</sup> Some of the principal actors representing the Canadian government were John Lowe, Secretary of Agriculture, William Hespeler, Immigration Agent, and Jacob Y. Schantz, tour guide for the Mennonite delegates.<sup>43</sup>

Besides the 3,000 Bergthalers, about 686 Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites from the Borosenko Colony and 3,240 Mennonites from the Chortitza and Fuerstenland Colonies in Russia also migrated to Manitoba. This made a total emigration of 6,926 Mennonites to Manitoba in 1874-80.<sup>44</sup> The

---

<sup>41</sup>A copy of this Order in Council, "P.C. 957", is reproduced in Zacharias, Reinland, p. 30-32.

<sup>42</sup>Bishop Peter Toews, "Anhang Number One," in Delbert F. Plett, History and Events: Writings and Maps pertaining to the history of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from 1866 to 1876 (Steinbach, Manitoba: D.F. Plett Farms Ltd., 1982), p. 66. Hereafter referred to as Plett, History and Events.

<sup>43</sup>Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 183-206.

<sup>44</sup>Individual population statistics have been used for comparison purposes. This study has used Gerbrandt's figures of 3,000 for the Bergthal Colony group, as found in Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68. The other emigration figures are taken from Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 531. Ens tries to correlate emigration figures,



Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites settled on the East Reserve and at Scratching River, near Morris. The Fuerstenland and Chortitza Colony Mennonites settled on the west part of the West Reserve. Mention should also be made of the emigration of some 10,000 Russian Mennonites to the United States during this time, 1873-84. They settled in the central states of Kansas, Minnesota, South and North Dakota, Nebraska and Iowa.<sup>45</sup> This brought the total number of Russian Mennonite emigrants in North America to about 17,000. Around 1876, the demographic picture from the Chortitzer perspective looked like this: they represented about 80% of the Mennonite population on the East Reserve, 40% of the Mennonites in Manitoba, and 18% of the Russian Mennonites in North America.

From 1874 to about 1882, the Chortitzer community founded 44 villages on the East Reserve. They established 26 villages in the three immigration years, 1874-76, and by 1882 had started 18 more. The expansion was probably due to natural population increase. One hundred and forty-three new families had been founded in the community within eight

---

taken from secondary sources, with the passenger lists. By using other secondary sources to identify religious affiliation, he also establishes "a little bit more precisely the question of the relative strengths of the three groups emigrating." (p.531)

<sup>45</sup>Taken from Cornelius J. Dyck, ed., An Introduction to Mennonite History: A popular history of the Anabaptists and the Mennonites (Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1967), p. 154-55.

years.<sup>46</sup> The Kleine Gemeinde established 15 villages during this same period. This made for a total of 59 villages on the East Reserve during the period 1874-82.<sup>47</sup>

The nature, structure and size of each of these villages is not readily available. John H. Warkentin and E.K. Francis, however, have provided general descriptions of the administration and agricultural practices of the

---

<sup>46</sup>In 1881 the population was 583, as calculated by Reverend Franz Dyck in January 1881, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 15. Subtracting the 440 emigrant population figure from 583 results in 143 new families within eight years. The 440 figure comes from Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68.

<sup>47</sup>The primary source used for establishing the number of villages was Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59. He has also provided founding dates of villages for the years 1874-78, and stated which ones were founded after 1878. There is very little agreement on villages, so see Appendix No. 2 for more extensive explanations on names, locations and religious identification of these villages.

Warkentin does not distinguish between Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde villages, so they are listed here. While distinguishing villages by their religious affiliation has not been done before, it provides a better understanding of how each group operated. The Chortitzer, for example, moved to the West Reserve while the Kleine Gemeinde did not. The 44 Chortitzer villages were: (in alphabetical order) Altona, Bergfeld, Bergthal, Blumengard, Blumstein, Burwalde, Chortitz, Ebenfeld, Eigenfeld, Eigengrund, Eigenhof, Felsenton, Friedensfeld, Friedrichsthal, Gnadenfeld, Grossweide, Gruenthal, Halbstadt, Hamberg, Hochfeld, Hoffnungsfeld, Kronsgard, Kronsthal, Landskron, Neubergfeld, Neuenburg, Neuendorf, Neuhoffnung, Osterwick, Pastwa, Reichenbach, Reinfeld, Rosengard, Rosenthal, Schanzenberg, Schoenberg, Schoenfeld, Schoenhorst, Schoensee, Schoenthal, Schoenwiese, Strassberg, Tannau, Vollwerk. The 15 Kleine Gemeinde villages were Blumenfeld, Blumenhof, Blumenort, Fischau, Friedenshoff, Gnadenort, Gruenfeld, Heuboden, Hochstadt, Lichtenau, Neuanlage, Rosenfeld, Schoneau, Steinbach, Steinreich. See Map No.'s 2-4 for location and list of the Chortitzer villages on the East Reserve.

Mennonite villages.<sup>48</sup> The Chortitzer settlements were naturally of various sizes from a few to 20 farmers. Francis indicates that nine of them were only hamlets.<sup>49</sup> Through an analysis of attendance at communion services, one can estimate that two thirds of the Chortitzer membership was concentrated in the northern and one third in the southern part of the reserve.<sup>50</sup>

B. Migration and Settlement, 1882-1914

The population of the Chortitzer community increased from 440 to 583 families during 1874-81.<sup>51</sup> In 1878, however, a migration began to the West Reserve.<sup>52</sup> By 1881 over half

---

<sup>48</sup>Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 81-146, 177-204; Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 61-70, 97-100.

<sup>49</sup>The size of villages taken from Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59, who records how many farm-operators there were in each village on the East Reserve in 1891. Francis lists the following as hamlets: Ebenfeld, Eigengrund, Eigenhof, Landskron, Pastwa, Schanzenberg, Strassberg, Tannau and Vollwerk. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 66.

<sup>50</sup>Based on attendance of church members at spring and fall communion services at Chortitz and Gruenthal for the years 1881-82: average of 171 persons at Chortitz and 85 persons at Gruenthal. Although these figures are not for the entire population and do not represent 100% of the members since all were not present at these communions, they do give a rough indication of distribution in the north and south part of the reserve. Sermon in File No. 18, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>51</sup>The 440 figure taken from Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68, and the 583 figure taken from "David Stoesz Diary," p. 18.

<sup>52</sup>See Map No. 1 for the relation of East and West Reserves to Manitoba. Map was used by permission; it was drawn by Gerald Loewen and appeared in Mennonite Memories:

of the Chortitzer people had moved there:

1881 in January Ehrs: Frank Dueck travelled through the congregation, with the church books, to survey how many families on this Reserve plan to stay here, and how many families moved to Pembina [West Reserve], and how many still intend to go. It has been established that 268 families think of staying here and 315 families have gone or are contemplating the move, so 47 more plan to move than stay.<sup>53</sup>

Stoesz writes in his diary in 1882:

"the 24th of Nov. several people from this village [Bergthal] left for the West Reserve among them: Jacob Funk and Peter Hamm with their wives. Also K. Sawatzky, J. Doerksen and Peter Toews [but are] leaving their wives at home.<sup>54</sup>

The poor quality of land, the growing Chortitzer population and the opportunity to obtain better land on the West Reserve led to the migration. The recent uprooting from Russia just

---

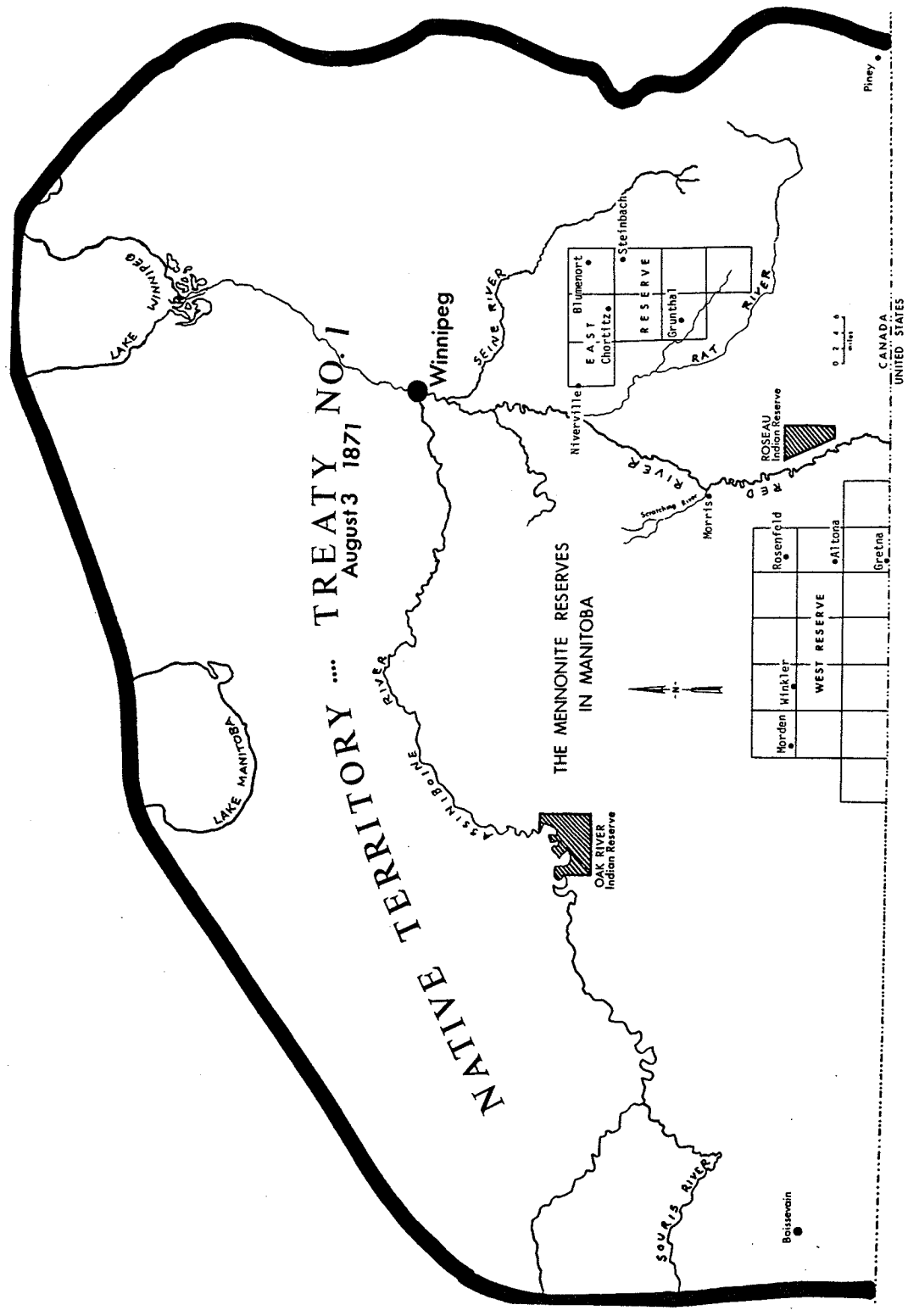
Settling in Western Canada, ed. by Lawrence Klippenstein and Julius G. Toews, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Centennial Publications, 1977), p. 46. Hereafter referred to as Klippenstein, Mennonite Memories.

<sup>53</sup>"David Stoesz Diary, 1872-1896," p.15. A comparison between the Chortitzer Church and Sommerfelder Church Register Books would provide a list of actual names of families who moved to the West Reserve and those who stayed on the East Reserve. Copies of the Sommerfelder Church Books are in the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, Manitoba, Record Group, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Hereafter referred to as Manitoba Sommerfelder RG, MHCA. Copies of the Chortitzer Books are in the Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

Comparing the list of people who stayed on the East Reserve with homestead entries would provide a good indication of the villages which were affected by the move. Comparing homestead entries with those who moved to the West Reserve would indicate where they settled. Homestead records are available at Crown Land Records and Registry, Lands, Department of Natural Resources, Government of Manitoba, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hereafter referred to as Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba.

<sup>54</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 18.

MAP NO. 1:  
Mennonite Reserves in Manitoba<sup>52</sup>



TREATY NO. 1  
August 3 1871

NATIVE TERRITORY

THE MENNONITE RESERVES  
IN MANITOBA

Blumentort	EAST RESERVE
Chartitz	
Grunthal	

Winkler	Rosenfeld	WEST RESERVE
	Altona	
	Gretna	

0 2 4 8  
miles

CANADA  
UNITED STATES

eight years earlier probably made it easier to move again.<sup>55</sup>

The migration to the West Reserve, which had reduced the population of the church from 583 to 268 families by 1881, had slowed by the mid 1880s. From 1881 to 1886 the number of Chortitzer families living on the East Reserve only dropped from 268 to 246.<sup>56</sup> In 1889 the population had increased by 22 families but then decreased by the same amount in 1890, perhaps because more people moved to the West Reserve.<sup>57</sup>

The population increased after 1890, and by 1914 had climbed from 1,259 to 2,149.<sup>58</sup> Most of the increase was

---

<sup>55</sup>It is not known if there were leaders for the migration, or if the church at any time discouraged people from moving to the West Reserve. It is also not known who moved. Was it the younger people, the wealthier or the landless? More research needs to be done on this subject. Historians generally consider that this migration was based on economics, with the East Reserve land not being of as good agricultural quality as the West Reserve. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 140-41.

<sup>56</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 15 for the 1881 figure and Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 288, Chortitzer RG, MHCA, for the 1886 figure. In January 1887, Reverend Franz Dueck started a new church book which did not include those families which had moved to the West Reserve.

<sup>57</sup>Statistics taken from Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 288, Chortitzer RG, MHCA. Cornelius W. Stoesz (1869-1925), for example, moved to the Bergfeld area in the West Reserve in the early 1890s, and probably was indicative of others moving at the same time. Information from Cornelius W. Stoesz Collection, Dennis Stoesz, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>58</sup>Statistics are given in individual population figures because the sources now start to provide them. The figure of "1,259" comes from the 1886-99 statistics available in Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 288, Chortitzer RG, MHCA. The 1914 population figure, "2,149" is taken from

probably due to births. An 1886-99 statistical record of the Chortitzer community reveals that births averaged 71 a year, marriages averaged 12 a year and deaths 26 a year.<sup>59</sup> The migration of a large number of Mennonites from the West Reserve to the Rosthern area in the Northwest Territories from 1893-95 seemingly did not affect the Chortitzer group. There was some migration of persons into Manitoba from Russia from the latter part of the 1880s to 1914 and some of these may have joined the Chortitzer Church. In January 1887, for example, Stoesz and Reverend Peter Toews "met two unmarried persons who arrived from Russia:"

They had used up all their money on the way. It was on the 12th when we were already at the station waiting to take the train home when luckily we met them and took them along....on the 13th [of January] they wrote letters and mailed them to Russia.<sup>60</sup>

On October 29, 1891 "Thursday, we learned that Gerhard Neufeld and his wife had arrived from Russia and they had been taken to the [East] Reserve." Stoesz had had earlier correspondence with him.<sup>61</sup> A number of Chortitzer members also moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan, in the late 1900s and

---

"Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter.

<sup>59</sup>Statistics taken from page 288 of Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, Chortitzer RG, MHCA, for the 1886 figure.

<sup>60</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 25 and 26. Jake Peters has noted the migration from the Fuerstenland Colony to western Canada from 1889-1914, Peters, "Fuerstenland Migration, 1889-1914."

<sup>61</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 39.

early 1910s.<sup>62</sup> The effect of these migrations on the population figure however, seemed small compared with the result of births in the community.

By 1914, the Chortitzer Church represented 61% (2,149 persons) of the Mennonite population on the East Reserve. This decrease from 80% in 1876 was due to the heavy migration to the West Reserve. The Molotschner Mennonite community on the East Reserve had doubled their representation from 20% to 39% (1,362 persons) in forty years, but now divided it between three groups. The Kleine Gemeinde church proper represented 23% (802). This small increase of 3% from 1876 was due to an early migration of a group to the Scratching River area and to an 1882 and an 1898 split in the church. Now the two new church groups, Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman) group and the Bruderthaler (Evangelical Mennonite Brethren), made up the rest of the Mennonite population at 12% (410 persons) and 4% (150) respectively.<sup>63</sup>

Within the Manitoba Mennonite context, the Chortitzer represented 14% (2,149 persons) of the population in 1914.

---

<sup>62</sup>The word "Herbert" is written across a number of family registers in the 1887 and 1907 Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA. The Herbert Sommerfelder Church Registers also indicate that some members originated from the Chortitzer Church. See Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, Herbert, Record Group, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Hereafter referred to as Herbert Sommerfelder RG, MHCA.

<sup>63</sup>Based on total population figures of the community: Chortitzer 2,149, Kleine Gemeinde on East Reserve 802, Gem. Gottes on East Reserve (Holdeman) 410 and Bruderthal (EMB) 150. "Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter, p. 32.



This was a drop from the 40% in 1876 and was due to the migration to and the large natural increase of the population on the West Reserve. By 1914 there were 11,542 Mennonites on the West Reserve compared with 3,511 on the East Reserve.<sup>64</sup> Within North America, the Chortitzer made up 1% of the Mennonite church membership.<sup>65</sup>

The migration of the Chortitzer population to the West Reserve from 1878 to 1890 affected the settlement patterns on the East Reserve. A quarter of the 44 Chortitzer villages were no longer in existence by 1891.<sup>66</sup> Francis specifically

---

<sup>64</sup>"Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter. There were also 409 Mennonites at the Scratching River settlement.

<sup>65</sup>The comparison with only the Russian Mennonite community in North America, as was indicated earlier for 1876, is unavailable. Total Mennonite church membership in 1909 was 73,746. Based on H.P. Krehbiel, Mennonite Churches of North America: A Statistical Compilation, Collected and Arranged under the Auspices of the Mennonite General Conference of North America (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1911), p. [93].

<sup>66</sup>Whereas Warkentin lists 44 Chortitzer villages in about 1882, he lists 33 in 1891: he suggests eleven villages were disbanded. Those eleven villages were: Eigengrund, Felsenton, Friedrichsthal, Grossweide, Halbstadt, Hamberg, Kronsgard, Neuenburg, Schoenberg, Schoenhorst and Vollwerk. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59. The source Warkentin used was the 1891 Hanover Municipality Assessment Roll. It is not clearly identified in his dissertation. From footnote No. 15 on page 219 one is left with the impression that only a total of 25 villages were in existence in 1891. His article "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements of Southern Manitoba," in Geographical Review 49 (July 1959), p. 347 clearly identifies that Warkentin used the Assessment Rolls to arrive at the figure of 45 [33 Chortitzer and 12 Kleine Gemeinde] villages in 1891: he says that "45 villages were paying taxes in the East Reserve," and identifies the assessment rolls in the footnote. Hereafter referred to as Warkentin, Geographical Review.

The 33 Chortitzer villages existing in 1891 are listed

lists four villages which were affected by the emigration, though there were probably many more: Burwalde, Neuendorf, Pastwa, and Strassberg.<sup>67</sup> Whereas an average of 14 families lived in a Chortitzer village in 1882, now there was only an average of 8 families per village. In 1891, nineteen of them (58%) were small villages containing 1-5 farm operators, nine of them (27%) were medium size villages containing 6-10 farm operators, and five (15%) were large villages containing 11-15 farm operators.<sup>68</sup>

---

here because Warkentin does not distinguish Chortitzer from Kleine Gemeinde villages: Altona, Bergfeld, Bergthal, Blumengard, Blumstein, Burwalde, Chortitz, Ebenfeld, Eigenfeld, Eigenhof, Friedensfeld, Gnadenfeld, Gruenthal, Hochfeld, Hoffnungsfeld, Kronsthal, Landskron, Neubergfeld, Neuendorf, Neuhoffnung, Osterwick, Pastwa, Reichenbach, Reinfeld, Rosengard, Rosenthal, Schanzenberg, Schoenfeld, Schoenthal, Schoenwiese, Schoensee, Strassberg, Tannau. These villages are on Map No. 3.

<sup>67</sup>Francis mentions eight villages which were affected by the migration, but Warkentin includes four of them: Felsenton, Hamberg, Schoenenberg and Schoenhorst. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 66; Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59.

<sup>68</sup>The average of 14 families per village was based on 583 families inhabiting 43 villages in 1882. The figures of "583" and "43" taken from "David Stoesz Diary," p. 18 and from Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59, respectively. The average of 8 families per village was based on 247 families occupying 33 villages in 1891. The figures of "247" and "33" taken from 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 288, Chortitzer RG, MHCA, and Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59, respectively.

Size of villages based on the map of Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59. Nineteen villages contained 1-5 farm operators: Altona, Blumstein, Ebenfeld, Eigenfeld, Eigenhof, Friedensfeld, Hoffnungsfeld, Landskron, Neuendorf, Pastwa, Reichenbach, Reinfeld, Rosenthal, Schanzenberg, Schoenfeld, Schoenwiese, Schoensee, Strassberg and Tannau. Nine villages contained 6-10 operators: Blumengard, Burwalde, Chortitz, Gruenthal,

Eleven out of the fifteen Molotschner Mennonite villages existed in 1891.<sup>69</sup> Fischau, Gnadenort, Schoneau and Steinreich were no longer in existence. There was, however, expansion. Loewen mentions movement into five new areas started between 1892 and 1905.<sup>70</sup> The two church groups which emerged in 1882, the Kleine Gemeinde and the Church of God in Christ, Mennonite (Holdeman), shared some villages and had exclusive possession of others. On the average this community had larger villages than the Chortitzers because they were not affected by the migration to the West Reserve.<sup>71</sup> In 1891, five of the villages (45%) were large or very large villages, with three containing 11-15 farm operators and two with over 16 farm operators. Two (18%) were medium villages containing 6-10 farm operators, and four (36%) were small villages containing 1-5 farm operators.<sup>72</sup>

### C. Disintegration of Villages

Francis and Warkentin have fully developed the theme

---

Kronsthal, Neubergfeld, Neuhoffnung, Osterwick, and Schoenthal. Five villages contained 11-15 farm operators: Bergfeld, Bergthal, Gnadenfeld, Hochfeld and Rosengard.

<sup>69</sup>The villages were: Blumenfeld, Blumenhof, Blumenort, Friedenshoff, Gruenfeld, Heuboden, Hochstadt, Lichtenau, Neuanlage, Rosenfeld and Steinbach. Taken from Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59.

<sup>70</sup>Loewen, Blumenort, p. 242-64.

<sup>71</sup>There was a small group of Kleine Gemeinde immigrants who settled at Scratching River, Manitoba, in 1874.

<sup>72</sup>Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59.

that Mennonites formed and then abandoned distinctive agricultural settlement patterns in Manitoba between 1874 and 1945.<sup>73</sup> The major reason for the disintegration of the villages was that its traditional agricultural practises were economically unproductive. Warkentin has remarked on the dissolution processes:

By 1881 the village lands were just beginning to be dispersed...and by 1891 the dispersion was very marked....There probably were not more than 25 Gewanne villages functioning in the East Reserve by 1891.<sup>74</sup>

He concludes that by 1924 all agricultural villages had either broken up or been abandoned, and that the Strassendoerfer and the Gewanne gradually disappeared.<sup>75</sup> One problem lies in the fact that it is hard to discover the stages of a village's disintegration. Francis has articulated three successive steps: first, the end of the

---

<sup>73</sup>Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 81-146, 177-204; Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 61-70, 97-100. Francis develops this theme in his section entitled "From Subsistence to Commercial Farming," p. 110-25. Warkentin describes in detail how the agricultural village worked and how it could not survive in the Canadian environment.

<sup>74</sup>Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 213, 214. It is hard to know on what Warkentin bases his figure of 25 villages in 1891 since he used the same Assessment Rolls to establish that there were 45 villages in existence in 1891. Adding up the medium to very large villages, for example, totals 22, near the figure 25. He has remarked that "the village name was just a convenience for designating certain localities, though even then they had a certain municipal standing because taxes were collected on that basis." This shows how hard it is to document the disintegration of villages; the chapter on meetingplaces offers further insights on this theme.

<sup>75</sup>Warkentin, Geographical Review, p. 365.

Gewann open field agricultural system; second, the movement of farmers onto their own land; and third, the giving up of village self-government.<sup>76</sup> Francis has also concluded that the Bergthal group gave up the open-field agricultural system quite early, "while the Kleine Gemeinde people retained the field community many years longer."<sup>77</sup> A contributing factor may have been the Chortitzer migration to the West Reserve.

Royden Loewen shows that this disintegration occurred in a number of Kleine Gemeinde and Holdeman settlements from 1889 to 1910. Loewen traces the movement of farmers from the village to individual quarter sections for Blumenhof in 1889 and for Neuanlage in 1890. The movement of farmers into other areas was always onto individual homesteads: first in the De Krim and Ridgewood areas in 1892, then the Greenland settlement in 1893, the Clearsprings area in 1899, and to Ekron in 1904-05. The village of Blumenort disintegrated in 1910.<sup>78</sup> This analysis shows the complex development of the settlement patterns for a number of Kleine Gemeinde and Holdeman communities.

How did this dissolution of the villages affect the

---

<sup>76</sup>Francis gives the date 1905 as the end of the open-field system. See Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 101-04.

<sup>77</sup>Although Francis says the Bergthal group gave up the agricultural system quite early, he also notes that the villages of Bergfeld and Neubergfeld retained it until the 1920s. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 100-04.

<sup>78</sup>Loewen, Blumenort, p. 242-64.

Chortitzer community? An examination of the places where the church met for worship will address this question in chapter three. It will point to the villages which became central for the community and offer some further insights into the disintegration of villages and changing settlement patterns.

D. Conclusion

The first chapter sets a base from which to discuss the outlines of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. While the boundaries of the community conformed to the borders of the Bergthal Colony, Russia, in 1874, they were altered by the 1874-76 migration to Canada and severely broken up by the 1878-90 migration to the West Reserve, Manitoba. The East Reserve Chortitzer maintained continuity with the Russian Bergthal Colony because they moved almost en masse, 83% (440 families), from Europe to Manitoba. The group was significantly affected, however, by the move of 54% of their number (315 families) to the West Reserve. The Chortitzer Church became defined as the community on the East Reserve that had originated in the Russian Bergthal Colony. By 1914 the Chortitzer church had only reached 70% (2,149) of its 1876 immigrant population (3,000), despite a steady increase of population. And their representation among the Mennonites of Manitoba dropped from 40% to 14% in this forty year span.

## CHAPTER 2: BOUNDARIES

The migrations of the Bergthal Mennonites had serious effects on the boundaries of the Chortitzer Church. While the Chortitzers formed a large portion of the Bergthal group, other Bergthalers remained in Russia, and still others settled at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, and Fargo, North Dakota. In the late 1870s, a large number of Chortitzers moved to the West Reserve, Manitoba. In the early twentieth century, a few Chortitzer settled at Herbert, Saskatchewan. How did the church respond to these migrations?

The church also faced a serious division in the West Reserve Bergthaler Church in the early 1890s, and reached out to a new community being formed in Saskatchewan. These contacts forced the church to define itself theologically. This chapter will examine the Chortitzers' relationship with these communities and churches to determine how the boundaries of the Chortitzer church were changed and maintained.

### A. Mountain Lake, Minnesota

Several families from the Bergthal Colony, Russia, emigrated to Minnesota, United States, in the 1870s.<sup>79</sup> The

---

<sup>79</sup>It is hard to determine how many people went directly from the Bergthal Colony, Russia, to Minnesota. The Johann Stoesz family, for example, arrived in Philadelphia on July 31, 1877, and Mountain Lake on August 7. Information taken from A.D. Stoesz, A Stoesz Genealogy, 1731-1972 (Lincoln,

relationship between this group and those emigrating to Manitoba seemed cordial, although it meant breaking formal ties with the Bergthal Church. For example, Reverend Franz Dyck, who was still living in the Bergthal Colony, wrote up church certificates for Cornelius Penner and Johann Stoesz in 1876. The letters of transfer stated that Penner and Stoesz were upstanding members of the Bergthal Church and recommended that they be accepted for membership in the church of this faith in America.<sup>80</sup>

The settlement which the Bergthaler people established north of Mountain Lake, Minnesota, in the later 1870s was known as Bergthal. The name showed that the group identified with their roots in Russia.<sup>81</sup> They affiliated with Bishop Gerhard Neufeld and his First Mennonite Church in Mountain

---

Nebraska: A.D. Stoesz, 1973), p.45, 46, 49 and 53. Hereafter referred to as Stoesz, Stoesz Genealogy. The early Chortitzer Church Books indicate 31 families moved to Minnesota: the word "Minnesota" is written across the family register; source is Litter A and B 1843 Chortitzer Church Registers. A list of 55 families who emigrated to the United States is found in Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 199. The list, however, does not distinguish between those who went to Minnesota and to North Dakota. All these church registers are part of the Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>80</sup>The certificate for Cornelius Penner is entitled "Atteste fuer Cornelius Penner," is stamped with the Bergthal Colony Church seal and is found in File No. 2 in the Gerhard Neufeld Collection, Mennonite Library and Archives, Newton, Kansas. Hereafter referred to as the Neufeld MSS, MLA. The certificate to Johann Stoesz is dated 14 May, 1876, and is mentioned in Stoesz, Stoesz Genealogy, p. 36.

<sup>81</sup>Stoesz, Stoesz Genealogy, p. 53. Their meetingplace was also called Bergthal and was located seven miles east of Mountain Lake and four miles north of Butterfield.



Lake.<sup>82</sup>

Elder Neufeld and his co-ministers David Loewen, Johann Schultz, Gerhard Fast, Peter Voth, and Cornelius Enns served the two parishes of the one congregation at Mountain Lake and [Bergthal] near Butterfield.<sup>83</sup>

Seemingly the Bergthalers felt they were theologically closer to this group than to any other Mennonite churches in the Minnesota area.<sup>84</sup>

---

<sup>82</sup>Neufeld originated from the village of Furstenau, Molotschna Colony, Russia. Information on the First Mennonite Church and on Gerhard Neufeld is taken from Pannabecker, General Conference Mennonite Church, p. 104-110. Further information on Neufeld is found in David A. Haury, A Guide to the Mennonite Library and Archives (North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College, 1981), Collection No. 40. Hereafter referred to as Haury, Guide to Archives.

<sup>83</sup>Mennonite Encyclopedia, s.v., "First Mennonite Church (GCM) of Butterfield, Minn." by J.J. Friesen. More information on Neufeld's church is contained in the article "Mountain Lake (Minn.) First Mennonite Church (GCM)" by I.J. Dick, Mennonite Encyclopedia. In 1892 the local Minnesota Bergthaler group elected one of their own ministers, David Harder, to the First Mennonite Church, and in 1900 Jacob Stoesz was also elected.

<sup>84</sup>Information on the origin of Neufeld's church is taken from notes on the Gerhard Neufeld Collection in Haury, Guide to Archives, and Pannabecker, General Conference Mennonite Church, p. 104-5. Other options for the Bergthalers were Aaron Wall's large church or the Mennonite Brethren Church. Both also originated from the Molotschna Colony. Information on the other churches in the area is gleaned from other articles in the Mennonite Encyclopedia: "Bethel Mennonite Church (GCM)" by Walter Gering; "Gospel Mennonite Church" by A.A. Penner; "Mountain Lake (Minn.) Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church" by D.A. Regier; and "Mennonite Brethren Church" by J.H. Lohrenz. Bethel, Gospel and the EMB church were originally part of Wall's group, but a split in 1889 resulted in three churches. It is interesting to note that Wall and Neufeld both originated in Furstenau, Molotschna Colony, Russia. Other general information of the area is taken from "Mountain Lake, Minn." and "Mountain Lake Bible School," both by Cornelius Krahn and found in Mennonite Encyclopedia.

There were also 28 families who moved from Manitoba to Minnesota in the later 1870s. This caused some tension for the Manitoba Chortitzer community, as Bishop Gerhard Wiebe's comments indicate:

About twenty-eight families left here, after having received all the benefits from the Canadian government and the Canadian [Ontario] brethren, to go to Minnesota. In spite of the fact that almost all of them were well-to-do, they repaid nothing, and thereby cheated both the government and the brethren, which hurt us very much, because thereby they cast a very bad reflection.<sup>85</sup>

Unlike persons like Johann Stoesz, who travelled directly from Russia to Minnesota, these persons went to Manitoba, and then decided to settle in Minnesota.<sup>86</sup>

There were religious and social contacts between the Mountain Lake and Manitoba communities. Bishop Gerhard and Justina Neufeld visited Bishop Stoesz on January 26, 1884, and the next day Neufeld preached the sermon at Chortitz.<sup>87</sup>

---

<sup>85</sup>Wiebe History of the Emigration, p. 54. Pannabecker reports that they moved in the 1870's because they found Manitoba too cold. Pannabecker, General Conference Mennonite Church, p. 105, 106. This report of 28 families moving to Minnesota complicates matters in that the total number who went was only 33. This leads one to the unlikely conclusion that only 5 families moved directly to Minnesota. More research needs to be done on this matter.

<sup>86</sup>The Johann Stoesz family arrived at Philadelphia on July 26 and in Minnesota on August 7, 1877. The route they took from Russia is also described. Stoesz, Stoesz Genealogy, p. 48-53.

<sup>87</sup>Haury, Guide to Archives; "David Stoesz Diary," p. 20; Sermon in File No. 13, Neufeld MSS, MLA. This sermon also indicates that Neufeld preached in the Bergthaler Mennonite Church at Reinland on the West Reserve during this visit. Stoesz corresponded with Neufeld in 1884 as well, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 20.

Neufeld visited the Chortitzer Church again several years later, in 1890, and preached at Chortitz on December 17 and visited former Bishop Gerhard Wiebe for the noon meal.<sup>88</sup> These visits may have included some formal church business as well. The acceptance of Neufeld meant that the Chortitzer Church seemingly condoned his leadership of their former members. Neufeld and his First Mennonite Church were to go through some of the same theological questions in Minnesota as the Chortitzer church were going to deal with in Manitoba. Their response paralleled that of the Chortitzer's, and indicated some theological similarities between the two church groups.<sup>89</sup>

The religious connection between the Bergthaler Church of the West Reserve and Minnesota seemed even stronger. The Bergthaler, and then Sommerfelder, minister from the West Reserve, Peter Dyck, preached three times at the Mountain

---

<sup>88</sup>Sermon found in File No. 15, Neufeld MSS, MLA. Neufeld also visited the Bergthaler Church on the West Reserve during this 1890 visit, preaching at Reinland and Edenburg. Sermons in File No.'s 15 and 45. Other sermons in File No.'s 8, 9, 11, and 20 show that he also visited the Dakotas in 1886 and 1890 and was in Winkler in 1895. Visit to Wiebe mentioned in "David Stoesz Diary," p. 34.

<sup>89</sup>Churches in both places had to respond to the emphasis on evangelism, revival meetings, bible studies and education. Gerhard Neufeld's church was influenced by the General Conference Mennonite Church in the 1890s. They hosted two district meetings of that Church in 1891 and 1892. The meetings were organized to push for a program of missions and outreach to young people. A northern district was also organized in 1894, but Neufeld's First Mennonite Church did not join the General Conference until 1917 and the Bergthaler church in Minnesota until 1923. Pannabecker, Open Doors, p. 104-10.

Lake First Mennonite Church and preached seven times at the Bergthal church near Butterfield between 1889 and 1899.<sup>90</sup>

There were several social contacts between the Chortitzer and Minnesota communities. Mr. and Mrs. Abraham Friesen and Mrs. David Harder came visiting from Minnesota in 1884:

1884 Tuesday October 14...During this time there were guests here [Bergthal, East Reserve] from Minnesota. Namely A. Friesens and Mrs. David Harder. Mrs. Harder today October 18, made her tearful departure for home. Friesens expect to stay here till tomorrow afternoon Sunday the 19th when they will leave here for the West Reserve, where they expect to stay 14 days visiting friends and acquaintances.<sup>91</sup>

Two women from the East Reserve, Mrs. Harder and Mrs. Ens, went to Minnesota in 1888 and more persons came to visit Manitoba again in 1890 and 1895.<sup>92</sup>

The Minnesota group was not very large, representing 6% (33 out of 527 families) of the original Russian Bergthal Colony, but it had its effect on the Chortitzer Church.<sup>93</sup> The Church wrote up certificates for their Russian brethren destined for Minnesota, which both broke formal church ties with them and recommended them for membership in another

---

<sup>90</sup>Sermons No. 2, 3, and 5 in the Peter Dyck Sermon Collection, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Hereafter referred to as Dyck Sermon MSS, MHCA.

<sup>91</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 22.

<sup>92</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 29, 33 and 52. A. Friesens came in 1890 and Johann Stoesz, a brother to David Stoesz, in 1895.

<sup>93</sup>Percentage based on 31 out of 527 families.

church. Bishop Wiebe's comments on those who left for Minnesota from Manitoba, however, indicate that these members did not have the same good standing in the Chortitzer Church. The Church had to pick up the emigration debts for these emigrants. Bishop Neufeld's visits and the continuation of social connections showed an ongoing amiable relationship between the two communities. It was based on a common origin in the Russian Bergthal Colony, family ties and some theological agreements.

B. Fargo, North Dakota

From 1882 to 1887, Bishop David Stoesz baptized seven people and served communion to an average of thirty persons at Fargo, North Dakota.<sup>94</sup> These baptisms and communions reveal a stronger church link with this group than to the Minnesota community. Fargo could actually be seen as another meetingplace of the Church during these years. This group also had a minister in their midst, namely Abraham Klassen. He may have been the one elected by the Bergthaler Mennonite Church on the West Reserve in 1880.<sup>95</sup> Stoesz writes about

---

<sup>94</sup>Stoesz's baptism and communion sermons, File No. 8 & 18, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. Stoesz does not indicate how many he baptized in 1882; he baptized four people in 1884 and three in 1886. Stoesz did not serve communion to them in 1885, and the number of people served in each of the five years was 24, 31, 32, 32, and 30. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe may have travelled there earlier. Thirteen of the families which moved to North Dakota can be identified from the 1843 Litter A and B Chortitzer Church Registers. The word "Dakota" is written across the family register. Registers found in Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>95</sup>Election records for Abraham Klassen taken from the

his second visit to Fargo in 1883:

On Wednesday, the 28 [March 1883] I arrived in Glindon [Minnesota, just east of Fargo] where Ohm Klassen joined me. On Thursday the 29th we drove to Fargo where we met Jacob Falk, the Peter Harders, Johann Harders and Johann Sawatzky and went with them to visit the aged Mrs. Sawatzky, going to Klassen for the night.<sup>96</sup>

For some reason, Stoesz discontinued serving these Mennonites after 1887. There is not much known about this community.

Did they emigrate to North Dakota directly from Russia or from Manitoba? The thirteen families that can be identified represented 2 1/2% of the Bergthal Colony population in 1874.

Official church contact with this small group indicates that the Chortitzer Church was not limited by the boundaries of its East Reserve settlement. The church responded to its members even though they lived over 200 miles away, although this lasted only until 1887.

C. Contacts in Russia

The Chortitzer Church had some contact with the 34 families from the Bergthal Colony who remained in Russia.<sup>97</sup> It was significant that one of the persons who went along with the immigration delegation to Canada in 1873, Cornelius Buhr, remained in Russia. He owned his own estate near the

---

Abraham Doerksen Collection, MHCA. Hereafter referred to as Doerksen MSS, MHCA. Stoesz wrote Reverend A. Klassen at Fargo on April 21, 1884. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 20.

<sup>96</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 18. An 1887 reference is found on page 26.

<sup>97</sup>The Chortitzer Church books list the people who remained behind.

Colony, and probably decided life in Russia looked better than in Manitoba. Two other men, both named Erdmann Buhr, also remained on estates in the Bergthal Colony. After 1876, one of these men was to collect money still owing from the land sales of the departed Bergthaler emigrants.<sup>98</sup>

Two other interesting cases are Peter Schroeder, a teacher, and Peter Stoesz, a government secretary. While both left the Bergthal Colony sometime before the emigration, they had strong ties in Manitoba. Peter Schroeder's father moved to Manitoba, and his son, Peter, kept in touch. Peter Stoesz was a secretary and clerk for the Russian government and a brother to Bishop David Stoesz. He was the only one of the eight members of the Stoesz family who did not emigrate. Bishop Stoesz tried numerous times to get in touch with him, but probably to no avail.<sup>99</sup> These contacts show that a social link continued between the Russian and Manitoba brethren. There were, however, no church connections.

---

<sup>98</sup>The story is that no money ever reached Manitoba. Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 63, 114-15, 117.

<sup>99</sup>Peter had been living at Saratov near the Am Trakt settlement, but then moved north to Alexanderthal in the Samara Colony. In 1884 Stoesz wrote Cornelius Jansen, Beatrice, Nebraska, for an address in the Volga, Russia, where his brother Peter was living. Presumably, Stoesz received from Jansen the address of Johannes Quiring, Elder of the Koeppenthal congregation, Orloff, in the Am Trakt settlement. In 1887 Stoesz advertised in Die Mennonitische Rundschau for Peter's address because he did not answer any letters. David Stoesz Diary," p. 20, 40; Stoesz, Genealogy, p. 26; [Advertisement for Peter Stoesz's address in Russia] Die Mennonitische Rundschau 24 August 1887.

D. Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1882-92

The election of Johann Funk as bishop in November 1881 marked the beginning of an organized Bergthaler church on the West Reserve.<sup>100</sup> This was the response of the Chortitzer Church to the migration of 54% of their community to the West Reserve from 1878 to 1881.<sup>101</sup> Three Chortitzer ministers besides Reverend Funk had also moved there: Abraham Bergen who was living in Schoenthal; and Heinrich Wiebe and Deacon Jacob Hamm who were both living in Edenburg.<sup>102</sup>

There was a church organizational meeting at Rudnerweide, West Reserve, in January 1881, with Bishop Gerhard Wiebe and Reverend Johann Funk present.<sup>103</sup> Three

---

<sup>100</sup>The election and ordination of a bishop in an area where there is none usually marks the beginning of an independent church. Only the bishop could serve communions and baptize people. The church who ordained this new bishop was seen as a mother or sister church. Funk's election date taken from "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888.

<sup>101</sup>315 people moved and 268 people remained on the East Reserve, making for a 583 Chortitzer population figure in 1881. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 15.

<sup>102</sup>"Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. Exact dates for migration from East to West Reserve can be obtained through land records, Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba. This, however, would take a considerable amount of time partly because many Mennonite first and last names were the same.

<sup>103</sup>The meeting may have occurred in January of 1881, when Stoesz writes in his diary, "Ohm Gerhard Wiebe left of Pembina [West Reserve] on the 25th of Jan. [1881]" and returned to the East Reserve February 8. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 15. Another source says it occurred in 1880 and indicates Johann Funk was present. Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 82, 149-50, and notes on pages 369-70. Gerbrandt's source is the recollections of Henry D. Penner, 99 year-old resident of Salem Home of the Aged, Winkler,



more ministers were elected locally on the West Reserve to serve this church: Abraham Klassen in 1880 and Isaac Giesbrecht of Neuhoffnung and Abraham Schroeder of Bergthal in 1881.<sup>104</sup> Then on November 27, 1881, Reverend Johann Funk of Bergthal was elected as bishop, and on April 11, 1882, Bishop David Stoesz of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church ordained him.<sup>105</sup> Stoesz writes in his diary:

1882, on Good Friday April 7th, I and Ehrst: Franz Dueck drove to the West Reserve to confirm an Elder there, which we did, with God's help and in the midst of a great gathering, on the last day of Easter.<sup>106</sup>

The name of this church was the Bergthaler Mennonite Church since Bishop Funk lived in the village of Bergthal, West

---

Manitoba.

<sup>104</sup>Election of Klassen mentioned by Bishop Abraham Doerksen of the Sommerfeld Church in his church record book as found in the Doerksen MSS, MHCA. Elections of Giesbrecht and Schroeder mentioned in "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. All of these ministers could have been elected on the East Reserve, but there is no mention of them in the minister lists found in the Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>105</sup>Ordination date taken from notations at the back of David Stoesz's sermon entitled "Zur befestigung Eines Aeltesten," File No. 3, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. This sermon has been transliterated by William J. Kehler, Altona, Manitoba, and translated into English by William and Trudie (Stoesz) Harms, Altona, Manitoba, 1987. The title reads "At the Ordination of a Bishop: The Text according to 1 Peter 5: 2-5." Hereafter referred to as Stoesz, "Ordination of a Bishop."

Johann Funk is listed as from "Bergthal" on the West Reserve in "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888, although maps generally refer to it as "Alt-Bergthal." A short biography on him was written by Esther Epp and is contained in Aeltester Johann Funk: A Family Tree, with Notes on His Life and Work, ed. by Mary Dueck Jeffrey, (Winnipeg, Manitoba: By the author, 1980), p. 1-8.

<sup>106</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 17.

Reserve.<sup>107</sup> By the end of 1882, it consisted of seven ministers, four of whom had come from the East Reserve.

The Chortitzer kept in contact with their sister church even after it had been formally organized as an independent church. An early meeting of religious and political leaders from both church communities occurred on January 18, 1883, at Chortitz on the East Reserve. The agenda included dividing up the school accounts and the Waisenamt. Representing the East Reserve were Bishop David Stoesz, municipal councillor Peter Toews, the unofficial "reeve" Jacob Peters, and Waisenamt administrators Cornelius Friesen and Cornelius Epp. Peter Klippenstein, who was the

---

<sup>107</sup>The name of this church is somewhat problematic because of the split that occurred in 1892. One therefore must talk about the church as it existed from 1882-92 and the churches which existed after 1892.

The earliest record of the 1882-92 Bergthaler Church is an 1881 Church Register. It identifies the church as the West Lynne Church, "Kirchenbuch A fuer den Gemeine bei West Linne", after the name of the railway town located 4 miles east of the West Reserve border. This register was started by Reverend Franz Dyck of the Chortitzer Church, and he used a geographic designation for the name of the church. Taken from title page of 1881 Church Register, as found in the Manitoba Sommerfelder RG, MHCA. See also Otto Gaube's 1898 map, as published in Epp-Tiessen, Altona, p. 16, and Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 84-85, for more some documentation on West Lynne.

The name Bergthaler, however, was often used to identify the church on the West Reserve. An 1888 article first mentions the Bergthaler church on the West Reserve, and then only talks about a "Bergthal" church on the East Reserve. The article also notes that Bishop Johann Funk lived in the village of Bergthal on the West Reserve, and it may have been another reason why the name Bergthaler was used. See "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. More research needs to be done on the Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 1882-92, to see its complex development up to the 1892 division.

secretary of the municipality and kept the Waisenamt books, was also there. The West Reserve representatives included Bishop Johann Funk, Reverend Heinrich Wiebe, municipal councillor Heinrich Wiebe, and Waisenamt administrators Johann Schwartz and Jacob Dyck.<sup>108</sup>

In November 1884 Bishop Stoesz, together with deacon Johann Wiebe, paid a visit to the West Reserve church. Stoesz talked to Bishop Johann Funk, AltBergthal, and Reverend Heinrich Wiebe at Edenburg. He also visited various other people, but unfortunately it is not known what subjects were talked about.<sup>109</sup> The next visit took place six years later, in 1891. This time it was under very different circumstances because a major division was developing in the Bergthaler church.

---

<sup>108</sup>Document entitled "Beschluss, 1883 am 18 Januar ist auf..." and found in the Chortitzer Waisenamt material, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference Waisenamt, Manitoba, Record Group, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Hereafter referred to as the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. The division of names by East and West Reserves is not given, but has been done by the author on the basis of knowing the leadership on the East Reserve. The other names were seen to be from the West Reserve. Another document also mentions a Jacob Hiebert as the Bergthaler Waisenamt administrator on the West Reserve, dated 14 March 1883: "Verzeichniss wie viel die Bergthal Gemeinde an die Regierung Schuldig." Found in the same collection. David Stoesz mentions that they talked about school accounts in his diary, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 18.

<sup>109</sup>Other persons he visited were P. Heppner, H. Duecks, Bernhard Wiebe, K. Sawatzky, P. Wiebes as well as his brother-in-law, Peter Penner and sister and her husband, the Franz Harders. He spent a week in the area also visiting the villages of Silberfeld, Kronsgard, Rudnerweide, Schoenthal, and Sommerfeld. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 22 and 23.

The Chortitzer church had been able to respond effectively to the move of their membership to the West Reserve. They maintained organizational continuity by guiding the church's new beginnings and ordaining their bishop. They had also solved various economic, social and political problems by having a meeting of religious and political leaders from both church communities in 1883.

The migration, however, was a major crisis for the Church and affected its identity and development. This community had not gone through a major division since the Bergthal Colony had started in 1836 in Russia. Even when the community was weakened by the migration of some to Minnesota and North Dakota, and the refusal of some to leave Russia, a full 80% set up new homes in Manitoba. Unlike the Kleine Gemeinde, which maintained one church between its two settlements on the East Reserve and Scratching River, the Chortitzer Church had divided into two independent church organizations because of the distance. Now there were two church groups and neither exclusively represented continuity with the Bergthal Colony; the Chortitzer Church retained its bishop but the Bergthaler Church included more members. In 1887 the Chortitzer Church included only 1,300 people while the Bergthaler were at 3,111: respectively representing 30% and 70% of the Bergthaler community in Manitoba.<sup>110</sup>

---

<sup>110</sup>Statistics from "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. In January 1881, the difference had been only 268 to 315 families (45% and 55%). "David Stoesz Diary," p. 15.

E. Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, 1894

Bishop David Stoesz of the East Reserve Chortitzer Church became the bishop for one of the Bergthaler groups on the West Reserve when that church divided into two factions in 1892. Stoesz served communion and administered baptisms from spring 1892 until March 1894 when Abraham Doerksen was ordained bishop of this group. It became known as the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church.

The first indication of trouble among the West Reserve Bergthalers was when Reverend Abraham Klassen of that church came to visit Bishop Stoesz in January 1891. Stoesz met him at Schanzenberg, and Klassen stayed several days at Stoesz's place in Bergthal.<sup>111</sup> Two more Bergthaler ministers, Peter Zacharias and Isaac Giesbrecht, visited the East Reserve two weeks later, January 14-19, 1891. They met with Bishop Stoesz, Chortitzer ministers Peter Giesbrecht, Cornelius Friesen and Heinrich Doerksen, and with former bishop Gerhard Wiebe. Reverend Peter Zacharias also preached at the Chortitz church on Sunday.<sup>112</sup>

A month and a half later, Stoesz along with Chortitzer minister Peter Toews and deacon Johann Wiebe, visited the West Reserve for over a week, March 2-13, 1891. They went "to look into the problems about the school," and reported that "it was truly a sad story we heard about the divisions

---

<sup>111</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 34.

<sup>112</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 34 and 35.

among the people."<sup>113</sup> Three more visits were made to the West Reserve by Chortitzer ministers Cornelius Stoesz, Cornelius Friesen and Peter Toews, and Bishop David Stoesz over the next year, March 1891 to February 1892.<sup>114</sup> It did not bring about a reconciliation of differences.

In the fall of 1891, two Bergthaler ministers opposed Bishop Funk by refusing to accept the Preaching List. Presumably they were Peter Zacharias and Isaac Giesbrecht. They began selecting their own places and times to preach, and no longer attended Ministerial meetings. This was the first indication of a serious division in the Bergthaler Church. Bishop Funk called a general brotherhood meeting in January 1892, and meetings were held at Edenburg, Rudnerweide, Schoenthal and Hoffnungsfeld. Here Funk outlined his position. He called for a greater emphasis on "the awakening and development of spiritual life," for support of the new teacher training school in Gretna, and for participation in missions.<sup>115</sup> The last attempt by the

---

<sup>113</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 35. The school Stoesz is referring to is the recently opened Mennonite Educational Institute in Gretna, 1889 and 1891- , which was supported heavily by Bishop Johann Funk of the Bergthaler Church.

<sup>114</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 36 and 40.

<sup>115</sup>Three other points Funk made were that they were not teaching a new confession, that one should not only preach and teach but live the faith, and they did not consider it wrong for ministers from other churches to preach in their pulpits. The information on the Bergthaler ministers and Funk's proposals comes from the article entitled "Erklaerung des Aeltesten Johann Funk und der zu ihm haltenden Prediger an die Gemeinde," Christlicher Bundesbote 11 (5 Mai 1892), p.

Chortitzer Church to resolve the split was made in February 1892. Stoesz and Toews "went to the West Reserve to see if we could not restore the peace there, but had no success and so returned home."<sup>116</sup>

The one group was led by Bishop Johann Funk (1877- ) of Altbergthal, and was supported by ministers Heinrich Wiebe (1864- ) of Edenburg, Wilhelm Harms (1883- ), Franz Sawatzky (1885- ), Jacob Hoepfner (1887- ) and deacon Jacob Toews (1885- ). Funk and Wiebe had been Chortitzer ministers, while the rest had been elected by the Bergthaler Church on the West Reserve.<sup>117</sup> This church became known as the Bergthal, or Bergthaler, Mennonite Church of Manitoba and consisted of some 60 families.<sup>118</sup>

The other group, which was without a bishop and re-established ties with the East Reserve Chortitzer, consisted

---

5. Parts of this article are translated in Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 88-89.

<sup>116</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 40.

<sup>117</sup>Information on ministers taken from a variety of sources including 1) Chortitzer Mennonite Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA, 2) "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888, and 3) Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church. This list may not be complete. This story needs to be more fully researched because of the complex developments of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church from 1882-92.

<sup>118</sup>Gerbrandt lists the 60 families who were part of this church. The name "Bergthal Gemeinde" was used by H. H. Ewert in the December 27, 1893, minute book, and the name "Bergthal Mennonite Church of Manitoba," was used in the April 3, 1906, minute book. Gerbrandt also discusses the use of this name, and says that "the term 'Bergthaler' had evolved into a Manitoba Mennonite concept of progressiveness." Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 93-95.

of 441 families and represented the majority of the people.<sup>119</sup> Their ministers included Abraham Bergen (1869- ), Jacob Hamm (1876- ) of Edenburg, Abraham Klassen (1880- ), Isaac Giesbrecht (1881- ) of Neuhoffnung, Abraham Schroeder (1881- ) of NeuBergthal, Heinrich Bergen (1882- ) from Bergfeld, Peter Zacharias (1885- ) of Schoenwiese, Isaac Bergen (1885- ) from Lichtnau, and Peter Dyck (1888- ).<sup>120</sup> Abraham Bergen and Jacob Hamm had been Chortitzer ministers on the East Reserve, while the other six had been elected on the West Reserve.

Bishop David Stoesz became the bishop for this latter group from the time of the split in early 1892 until March 1894. Stoesz baptized 80 persons and served communion to 477 people at Rudnerweide and Schoenthal in June 1892. In November, Stoesz together with Reverend Cornelius Friesen held communion for 429 people at six meetingplaces: Rudnerweide, Neubergthal, Plum Coulee, Reinland, Rosenbach and Schoenthal.<sup>121</sup>

---

<sup>119</sup>Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 93.

<sup>120</sup>The brackets indicate the year that the person was elected into the ministry. Information on ministers taken from a variety of sources including 1) Chortitzer Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA, 2) "Gemeinden in Manitoba" Herold 1888, 3) Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, 4) Doerksen MSS, MHCA, 5) Dyck Sermon MSS, MHCA, 6) "David Stoesz Diary," and 7) Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church, p. 92. The list may not be complete.

<sup>121</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p.43. All information on communions and baptisms come from the Communion and Baptism Sermons, File No.'s 18 and 8, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.



In March 1893 Stoesz and Reverend Peter Toews went to assist in electing more ministers for the new West Reserve church: "we held an election for ministers in Neubergthal. Abraham Doerksen, Sommerfeld, was elected by a majority of votes."<sup>122</sup> These elections were probably held in order to replace some of the six ministers who went with the Bergthaler church.

In spring 1893, Stoesz held communion for 502 West Reserve people at three meetingplaces: Rudnerweide, Rosenbach and Schoenthal. In late fall he and Reverend Heinrich Friesen served 279 people at four villages: Rudnerweide, Reinland, Schoenthal and Sommerfeld, and conducted 47 baptisms at Schoenthal and Rudnerweide. They also made this visit for another reason:

[We went to] help them elect a Bishop for the Mennonite congregation there. The election was held in the church at Rudnerweide on Saturday, November 18, and Abraham Doerksen was elected by a majority vote.<sup>123</sup>

Doerksen then took over the leadership of this group. He probably attended a Chortitzer Ministerial meeting at Bishop Stoesz's place, Bergthal, East Reserve, in January 1894, in order to seek some guidance. He was then ordained bishop by Bishop Stoesz on March 18, 1894.<sup>124</sup> This church became known

---

<sup>122</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 43.

<sup>123</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 45.

<sup>124</sup>Stoesz used the same sermon to ordain Doerksen as he had used to ordain Johann Funk as bishop in 1882: Stoesz, "Ordination of a Bishop." Ordination date comes from this sermon. The original is found in File No. 3, Stoesz MSS,

as the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, but only after Doerksen pleaded many years later "that a name [Bergthaler] was not important enough to continue such feeling of bitterness."<sup>125</sup>

Whereas the earlier migration to the West Reserve had meant an organizational division for the Chortitzer Church, the support of the leaderless Bergthaler group meant taking a theological stance. The Bergthaler dissenters on the West Reserve had decided not to follow Bishop Funk's proposals for higher education, for an acceptance of missions and for an emphasis on personal conversion. The Chortitzers made their decision by supporting the Sommerfelder Church, and by rejecting Funk's proposals. It is not clear, however, which of these issues were most contentious for the Chortitzer. Bishop Stoesz's only personal reflection on the division states that it was a problem over higher education, i.e. the teacher training school in Gretna. By siding with this one group, the Chortitzers took a step toward denominationalism and away from a continuity with the original Russian Bergthal community.

F. Chortitzer Mennonite Church

The naming of the three new churches on the West Reserve between 1882 and 1894 had left the Chortitzer Church

---

MHCA. Stoesz mentions a visit to the West Reserve during this time but does not specifically refer to the ordination in his diary, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 46.

<sup>125</sup>Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 90. The meeting was held in 1903 at a brotherhood meeting at Sommerfeld.

to ponder their own name. The name given to the 1882 West Reserve church, "West Lynn," by Chortitzer minister Franz Dueck had not stuck.<sup>126</sup> Instead the literature referred to them as the Bergthaler Church probably because Bishop Funk lived at Bergthal and because this group was larger than their East Reserve counterpart.<sup>127</sup> In 1892, Bishop Funk continued to call his church the Bergthaler Church probably because he saw it as the continuation of the 1882 church. The fact that it included only a fraction of the original church did not seem to matter. The dissatisfaction of Sommerfelder members in not being able to use the Bergthaler name confirms that it was used by the 1882-92 Bergthaler Church and that it still held quite a bit of meaning.

All of this naming, however, seems not to have affected the Chortitzer Church. It was registered with the government in 1878 as the "Mennonite Church of Chortitz:"

Seemingly much hardship had come their way in the Bergthal colony in Russia and Elder [Gerhard] Wiebe was not too fond of their name so he chose the name Mennonite Church of Chortitz, as it was registered with the government in 1878.<sup>128</sup>

This is verified in 1887 when Reverend Franz Dueck starts a

---

<sup>126</sup>1881 Church Register Books, Manitoba Sommerfelder RG, MHCA.

<sup>127</sup>"Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888.

<sup>128</sup>John M. Wiebe, "A Brief History of the Chortitz Church," in Grunthal History Book Committee, Grunthal History, 1874-1974 (Grunthal, Manitoba: Grunthal History Book Committee, 1974), p. 68. The book is hereafter referred to as Wiebe, "Chortitz Church."

new church book and calls it "Church Register of the Church at Chortitz."<sup>129</sup> The identification of a church by a local geographic name, such as the name of the village in which the bishop lived, probably played into the naming of the Chortitzer Church as well. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe lived in Chortitz, and the name stuck even after David Stoesz from the village of Bergthal assumed the office of bishop in 1882.<sup>130</sup> One source has argued that it choose its name after the Chortitza Colony, Russia, to set it a part from Funk's Bergthaler Church of 1892.<sup>131</sup> A 1914 statistical report identifies the church as "Chortitz Gemeinde."<sup>132</sup> Although this East Reserve group were popularly referred to as

---

<sup>129</sup>"Kirchenbuch den Gemeine zu Chortitz," 1887 Church Register, Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>130</sup>The use of local geographic names was evidenced when Reverend Franz Dueck called the new 1881 West Reserve Church as "West Lynn." One 1888 article identifies the East Reserve Church as the "Bergthal" Church, i.e. by the village in which Bishop Stoesz resided. "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. Gerbrandt has developed this idea of naming a church by the village in which the bishop lived. He also states that identity with the Bergthal Colony helped continue the name in Manitoba. Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 70. The Chortitzer Church may have wanted to identify with the Chortitza Colony in Russia.

<sup>131</sup>Martin W. Friesen, "Der Name `Chortitzer,'" Die Mennonitische Post, 21 Januar 1983, p. 1, 18. Friesen's father, Martin C. Friesen, was bishop of the Chortitzer Church in the 1920s. An interesting 1983 article by former Bishop Henry K. Schellenberg points to the importance of names, but wonders if `Chortitzer' is the most appropriate for the Chortitzer Church. H.[enry] K. S.[chellenberg], "From the Bishop's Desk: What's in a Name," CMC Chronicle, (January 1983), p. 3.

<sup>132</sup>"Statistics, 1914" Mitarbeiter.

Bergthaler because they emigrated from the Russian Bergthal Colony, the name Chortitzer Church seemed to have been used almost from the beginning. The greater problem was identifying the geographic and theological boundaries of this church.

G. Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Saskatchewan

The Chortitzer Church also helped a Bergthaler church get started in Saskatchewan between 1893 to 1895. This story is complicated by the number of Mennonite groups involved, but it brings into focus the religious and social influences at work within the communities.

A group of people from the Manitoba West Reserve had settled in the Rosthern, Saskatchewan area in the spring of 1892.<sup>133</sup> Among them were Deacon Heinrich Bergen, of the Bergthaler/ Sommerfelder Mennonite church, and Cornelius Epp, who had come from Russia in 1891.<sup>134</sup> During this group's

---

<sup>133</sup>It is interesting to note that Stoesz had met with William Hespeler about a reserve in Saskatchewan in 1891, although few Chortitzer members were to move there: "Myself and David [Jr. Stoesz] and [Reverend] Peter Toews from here, went to Winnipeg to confer with Hespeler about a new area, reserve, for Mennonites being opened up." "David Stoesz Diary," p. 35.

<sup>134</sup>Heinrich Bergen had been elected as a deacon on July 24, 1882. It is uncertain if he was elected by the Manitoba Chortitzer or Bergthaler Church, although Doell states it was the Chortitzer Church. Bergen is not on the Chortitzer Minister lists. It is also hard to tell if Bergen sided with the Sommerfelder or Bergthaler group in Manitoba in early 1892. He moved to Rosthern in spring 1892, and was to spend some time in Manitoba again around 1895. The basis for this information, as well as for much of this section, is credited to Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church, p. 6-13, 92. Bergen was living at Bergfeld, West Reserve, and was part of

first year in Saskatchewan, they discussed which bishop should be asked to serve them communion and to conduct baptisms. Deacon Bergen suggested asking Bishop Johann Funk, who had just formed the new Bergthaler Mennonite Church on the West Reserve in early 1892. Cornelius Epp, however, favoured Bishop David Stoesz, who was serving the Sommerfelder Church on the West Reserve at this time.<sup>135</sup>

Part of this decision also depended on the seventeen families within this group who were excommunicated members of the Manitoba Reinlaender Church. They probably made up the majority of this Rosthern group, and had come there instead of following the lead of their minister, Reverend Gerhard Petkau, who had settled in Gleichen, Alberta. Being without a minister they decided to write Bishop Heinrich Epp of the Chortitza Colony, Russia, for advice to start a church and to help elect leaders.<sup>136</sup> Epp replied that he was ill and could not come. He advised, however, to steer clear of Bishop Johann Wiebe of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church, Manitoba,

---

the Bergthaler Church by 1888, as taken from "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. Although it gives ordination dates for other ministers it only records that Bergen was elected in Manitoba.

<sup>135</sup>Letter to Peter Elias from Cornelius Epp, p. 1. Cornelius Epp Collection, John B. Epp, Carrot River, Saskatchewan. Hereafter referred to as Epp MSS, Carrot River. A translation of the letter was obtained courtesy of Leonard Doell, Warman, Saskatchewan.

<sup>136</sup>Epp had been elected bishop in 1885 and died in 1896. See "Heinrich Epp," by A. Braun, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

and, rather, to write Bishop Stoesz for assistance.<sup>137</sup>

What transpired was that two letters were written to Manitoba, the first to the Bergthaler group on the West Reserve to request ministers. The second was an anonymous letter written to Bishop Stoesz by another portion of the Rosthern group who did not approve of the first action. In it they asked Stoesz to come and assist them.<sup>138</sup> Cornelius Epp recalls that Deacon Heinrich Bergen was to have written Stoesz, but didn't.<sup>139</sup> The result was that in June 1893 Stoesz, together with two Sommerfelder ministers Peter Zacharias and Isaac Bergen, went to Rosthern. They were also accompanied by some settlers looking for land.<sup>140</sup> Peter Zacharias had had previous contact with the excommunicated Reinlaender members in Manitoba.<sup>141</sup> On this 1893 trip Stoesz preached several times, instructed the young people, conducted four baptisms and held communion for 52 people. He also conducted an election to choose a minister for this group, which fell on Cornelius Epp.<sup>142</sup>

---

<sup>137</sup>This information comes from Peter Elias, a Reinlaender Church member who lived in Manitoba. Peter Elias Collection, p. 36-37, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Hereafter referred to as Elias MSS, MHCA.

<sup>138</sup>Source was from [Peter Klassen], "Homesteading at Rosthern," in Klippenstein, Mennonite Memories, p. 175.

<sup>139</sup>Epp MSS, Carrot River, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 45.

<sup>141</sup>Elias MSS, MHCA, p. 36.

<sup>142</sup>Epp MSS, Carrot River; Communion and Baptism Sermons,

Stoesz went back to Rosthern in 1894 with a Chortitzer minister Johann Neufeld and alone in 1895.

1894 ...On Sunday afternoon the 10th [June] we conducted church service and in the afternoon, seven baptismal candidates were baptized. On Thursday the 14th preparation services were conducted, at two places and on Sunday the 17th we served them with Holy Communion and Devotional Service in the afternoon.

1895 I visited with [Deacon] H. Bergen and [Reverend] K. Epps on Wednesday the 10th [of July]. We held baptismal rites on Thursday and five souls were added to the Church through baptism. In the afternoon we went to Derk Rempels, and to Epps for the night. Friday the 12th we had preparation service and went to Klaus Penners in the afternoon, going to [deacon] H. Bergens for the night. Saturday the 13th I visited the Bergens, the [Reverend] Epps, Zacharias and H. Walls. On Sunday we served with Holy Communion and to Gerhard Rempel in the afternoon. Spent the night at Peter Siemens.<sup>143</sup>

It seems likely that it was the July 1895 visit when Deacon Heinrich Bergen told Stoesz that he would no longer be needed. The group could, instead, be served by the local bishop, Peter Regier, from the Rosenorter Mennonite Church. This church community had arrived in the area from Prussia in 1893. Bishop Stoesz then went home and wrote Reverend Cornelius Epp that he would not be going to Rosthern anymore. They could contact another bishop to serve them. When Epp wrote back to see if Stoesz would reconsider, Stoesz wrote that the Chortitzer Church Ministerial "were firm in their opinion that he shouldn't come."<sup>144</sup> This confirmed the

---

File No. 18 and 8, Stoesz MSS, MHCA; and from "David Stoesz Diary," p. 45.

<sup>143</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 48 and 51.

<sup>144</sup>Epp MSS, Carrot River, p. 2.



earlier tension in this group which favoured the more liberal Bergthaler and Rosenorter churches over the more conservative Chortitzer Church.

By this time, the influx of a large group of Reinlaender members and leadership in May 1895 had also brought new influences to bear upon the situation.<sup>145</sup> After deciding not to return to Rosthern again, Bishop Stoesz wrote Bishop Johann Wiebe of the Reinlaender Church. Stoesz asked Wiebe if he would want to take this Rosthern group under his wing since they were without an elder. Stoesz probably felt that the Bergthaler group at Rosthern could join the large Reinlaender group there. He seemed to prefer them over the more liberal Rosenorter Church. Bishop Johann Wiebe, however, did nothing about this situation before 1897, and the excommunicated Reinlaender members at Rosthern joined the Rosenorter church.<sup>146</sup> In 1902, the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba recommended that its members at Rosthern also join the Rosenorter church.<sup>147</sup>

Despite the disagreements over church affiliation, there was cooperation between the Bergthaler, Rosenorter and Reinlaender (Old Colony) churches. Doell concludes that "it is fairly safe to assume that there was a good working

---

<sup>145</sup>Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 313.

<sup>146</sup>Information on this story about Stoesz's communication with Wiebe is taken from Elias MSS, MHCA, p. 37.

<sup>147</sup>Rempel, Rosenorter, p. 21, 22.

relationship between the various Mennonite church groups in these early years."<sup>148</sup> The small emerging group of Bergthalers attended the Reinlaender and Rosenorter churches from 1896-99. When more Sommerfelder people moved into the area, Bishop Abraham Doerksen from the Manitoba Sommerfelder Church began conducting baptisms and serving communion for them in 1900. The Bergthaler Church of Saskatchewan had its official beginning in 1902 when Cornelius Epp was ordained bishop of this group by Bishop Doerksen.<sup>149</sup>

The Chortitzer Church had responded affirmatively to a request to serve Bergthaler, Sommerfelder and excommunicated Reinlaender members in Saskatchewan, even though no Chortitzer members had moved there. The request came at a time when Stoesz was also assisting the West Reserve Sommerfelder church. He may have felt it would not be too difficult to extend the efforts of the Chortitzer Church still further. The election and ordination of Cornelius Epp by Stoesz in 1893 resulted in an unofficial beginning of the Bergthaler Church in Saskatchewan. Stoesz found, however, that with the presence of strong Rosenorter, Reinlaender and Manitoba Bergthaler influence and support, it was not easy to establish a Bergthaler church.

H. Herbert, Saskatchewan

There were also a number of Chortitzer members who

---

<sup>148</sup>Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church, p. 9.

<sup>149</sup>Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church, p. 9, 12, 13.

moved to Herbert in the late 1900s and early 1910s.<sup>150</sup> They joined their sister Sommerfelder church there, which by 1911 had its own bishop, David F. Doerksen. Doerksen was the youngest brother of Reverend Heinrich Doerksen of the Chortitzer Church, and of Bishop Abraham Doerksen of the Manitoba Sommerfelder Mennonite Church. David F. had moved to Saskatchewan around 1900.<sup>151</sup> This showed the official connections between the Chortitzer and Sommerfelder churches, as well as the family ties within these communities.

I. Conclusion

The chapter has surveyed the Chortitzer Church's contact with some six communities, and found that its boundaries were defined on the basis of origin, geography and theology. First, the Chortitzers continued their relationships with some communities on the basis of their common kinship and origin in the Russian Bergthal Colony. The church continued to have social contact with its brethren in Minnesota and Russia. It had official religious

---

<sup>150</sup>The word "Herbert" is written across a number of family registers in the 1887 and 1907 Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA. The Herbert Sommerfelder Church Registers also indicate that some members originated from the Chortitzer Church, Herbert Sommerfelder RG, MHCA.

<sup>151</sup>Another important source for the Herbert Sommerfelder group is the David F. Doerksen Sermon Collection, found on microfilm at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hereafter referred to as Doerksen Sermon MSS, MHCA. Genealogical information comes Bernhard Doerksen, Stammbaum des Abraham Doerksen, Regina Hoepfner und Nachkommenschaft, 1804-1960 (Regina, Saskatchewan: B. Doerksen, 1960), p. 15 and 91.

connections with the groups at Fargo, North Dakota and Herbert, Saskatchewan, and had even broader institutional relationships with the West Reserve Bergthaler community.

The church, however, had made theological decisions about the level of the relationships. It gave some of its members moving to Minnesota a blessing, and others it did not. Stoesz served the Fargo community only until 1887. Although the Chortitzers seemingly could not stop their members from moving to the West Reserve, they could help them organize. The organization of a church in 1881, the ordination of a bishop in 1882 and the meeting of major leaders from both communities in 1883 revealed how strong the communication was between the Chortitzers and West Reserve Bergthalers. Lastly, the church seemed to approve of its members joining the Sommerfelder Church at Herbert.

The effect of the many migrations out of the Bergthal Colony, however, was that the Chortitzer Church became defined by the geographical boundaries of the East Reserve. More specifically, it became identified as the "Church at Chortitz." The following chapter will more fully outline the geographical boundaries of the Chortitzers.

Thirdly, the boundaries of the church were also defined on the basis of theology. When the West Reserve church divided in 1892, the Chortitzer Church severed its relationship with the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba. Bishop Stoesz then served the group which had

resisted Funk's proposals, and ordained Abraham Doerksen as bishop of the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church. The Chortitzer Church had also made a new alliance when accepting Bishop Gerhard Neufeld of Mountain Lake into its midst. He originated from the Molotschna Colony, Russia, and led the First Mennonite Church in Mountain Lake. The Ministerial had also forged the beginnings of a new church at Rosthern, Saskatchewan. The bulk of this group was excommunicated Reinlaenders, not Bergthalers, and the minister that Stoesz ordained, Cornelius Epp, was a new Russian immigrant. This venture, however, proved only partly successful because the Rosthern group was not fully agreed on its religious associations.

These definitions of origin, geography and theology have helped outline how the boundaries of the Chortitzer Church changed and were maintained. Thus, it is possible to conclude that by the beginning of the twentieth century, the Chortitzers were constrained by the borders of Manitoba's East Reserve settlement, had some kinship and institutional ties with other Mennonite communities in the North American prairies, and were beginning to define themselves as a Mennonite denomination with certain theological foci.

### CHAPTER 3: MEETINGPLACES

This chapter will outline the places in which the Chortitzer church met for worship services. Charting these meetingplaces within three time periods enables one to point to the villages which became central for this East Reserve community. It will also offer additional insights into the changing settlement patterns and the disintegration of villages.

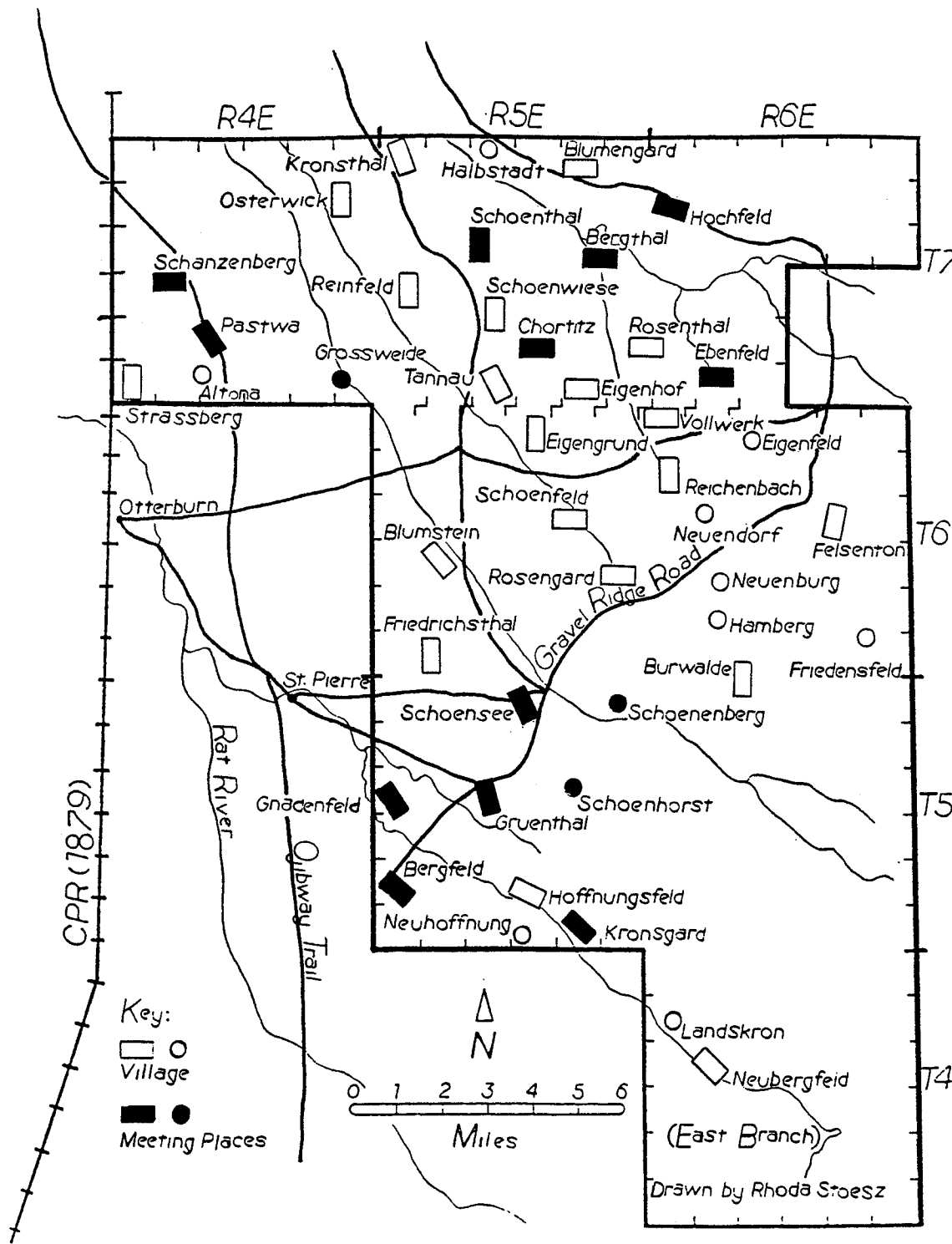
#### A. Central Places, 1874-82

The Chortitzer congregation met in some 15 villages in the early settlement period, 1874-82.<sup>152</sup> (See Map No. 2, Chortitzer Mennonite Villages and Meetingplaces, 1874-82)

---

<sup>152</sup>With the use of sermon material, one can identify the meetingplaces of the church for this first forty year period. Ministers would usually jot down where and when they preached their sermons. Since a sermon was used several times over the course of their ministry, it provides a good source for establishing meetingplaces of the church. This information has been charted on Maps No.'s 2-4 within three time periods. The first period, 1874-82, represents the Chortitzer community before the exodus to the West Reserve. The latter two periods were chosen on the basis of source material. The sermons for Bishop Stoesz and Reverend Cornelius Stoesz end in 1903 and 1900 respectively, thus the reason for the period 1882-1900. The only available source for the period after 1900 was a 1926 Schedule, and it was used for the developments from 1900-14. Bishop Stoesz's sermons are found in Stoesz MSS, MHCA. Cornelius Stoesz's sermon in the Bernhard Neufeld Sermon Collection, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Hereafter referred to as Neufeld Sermon MSS, MHCA. The 1926 preaching list was found in Wiebe, "Chortitz Church." See Appendix No. 3 for a list of the dates and places of the worship services, as well as a fuller description of the sources. See both Appendix No's. 2 and 3 for sources and explanation of Map No. 2.

MAP NO. 2:  
**Chortitzer Mennonite**  
**Villages and Meetingplaces, 1874-82<sup>152</sup>**



They generally met in the school in each village.<sup>153</sup> It seems likely that the church did not often meet in homes in these early years.<sup>154</sup> One source reports the development of these meetingplaces:

In the beginning of the settlement, church services were held in homes. Later, the private school was used on Sunday morning for this purpose. The congregation was only small in number. Each area was served with a service about once every two or three weeks, since the people were spread far apart; thus resulting in many church areas.<sup>155</sup>

---

<sup>153</sup>List of villages which had schools in 1878 is found in the article entitled "Board of Education" in Manitoba Weekly Free Press (23 November 1878), p. 3. Although the article does not mention if the villages had school buildings, it is assumed by the author of this thesis. Confirmation of a school building in Hochfeld is found on a 1874-80 map of Hochfeld in Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 21. Stoesz also makes an 1881 reference to Schoenthal: "In Schoenthal two utility buildings...and the school had their roofs badly damaged," "David Stoesz Diary," p. 17. The meetingplaces of Pastwa and Grossweide, which are not included on the above 1878 village list, probably did not contain schools.

<sup>154</sup>Stoesz only makes 6 references to meeting in homes: Abraham Doerksen (1875), Franz Dyck (1883), Johann Kehler (1875), Gerhard Kliever (1880), Cornelius Sawatzky (1874-75) and Abraham Wiebe (1882-84). Stoesz also mentions another worship service at an A. Wiebe in 1884: "Satur. evening myself and Derk Klassen...went to the aged A. Wiebes' where we had devotions." "David Stoesz Diary," p. 20. When Stoesz records the name of the person at the back of the sermon, he does not list any village name. Three of the references to homes are dated 1874 and 1875 and could have been made because no school building had yet been erected in the village. Three of the references are dated 1880, 1882 and 1883; maybe these persons were too old to walk to the school and the service was held in the home. See sermons in File Numbers 13, 15 and 21B, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. See Appendix No. 3 for a description of the location of the six homes.

<sup>155</sup>Peters is writing about the village of Blumengard. His comments reflect the difficulty in reconstructing the chronological history of the various areas of the meetingplaces. Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 21.



The 15 meetingplaces represented 34% of the 44 Chortitzer villages in the reserve. It is not clear why certain villages were meetingplaces and others were not, but the meetingplaces suggest which were the main centres of the community in these early years.<sup>156</sup>

The church met at eight places in the upper portions of the East Reserve: Bergthal, Chortitz, Ebenfeld, Hochfeld and Schoenthal in the north and Grossweide, Pastwa and Schanzenberg in the northwest. All of these villages, except for Schanzenberg, had been established in the first year of settlement, 1874.<sup>157</sup> The Chortitzer Church met at seven villages in the south part of the reserve: Bergfeld, Gnadenfeld, Grunthal, Kronsgard, Schoenberg, Schoenhorst

---

<sup>156</sup>The idea of central places is attributed to the historical geographer, John H. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba." Two other geographers have also studied the significance of geography for a community. After James Lemon correlated the patterns of landscape with the economic and political structures in the area, he concluded that there was a weakness of place and community in early Pennsylvania. D. Aiden McQuillan has studied the relationship between land and ethnic groups in Kansas, and concluded that the survival of a territory reflected strong group loyalty. James Lemon, "The weakness of place and community in early Pennsylvania," and D. Aiden McQuillan, "Territory and ethnic identity: some new measures of an old theme in the cultural geography of the United States," European Settlement and Development in North America: Essays on geographic change in honour and memory of Andrew Hill Clark, ed. by James R. Gibson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 190-207, and 136-69 respectively.

<sup>157</sup>Founding dates of villages taken from Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59. All future references to founding dates and size of villages comes from Warkentin, unless otherwise indicated, and will not be noted hereafter.

and Schoensee. These villages had been settled later than those in the north and all happened to be located within one township, Township 5, Range 5 East. Three had been founded in 1875, and two each in 1876 and 1878.

By 1882, the villages of Chortitz and Gruenthal had become the main meetingplaces. They were centrally situated in their respective northern and southern parts of the reserve; the other meetingplaces were located within an eight mile radius in the north and a three mile radius, in the south. Regular communion and baptism services were conducted almost exclusively at these two villages. People from other villages had to travel to these places in spring and fall in order to attend these services.<sup>158</sup> A separate church building was built at Chortitz in 1876 and at Grunthal in 1886 because they had become the main church centres for the community.<sup>159</sup>

Chortitz was quite a large village, boasting 18 homesteads by 1882.<sup>160</sup> The bishop of the Chortitzer Church,

---

<sup>158</sup>One communion service at Chortitz in 1877 is recorded in "David Stoesz Diary," p. 11. Stoesz's communion and baptism records start only in 1881, when he assumed the duties of bishop.

<sup>159</sup>"Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. "It likely was a building with a hay thatched roof," as cited in Wiebe, "Chortitz Church."

<sup>160</sup>The reference to 18 homesteads comes from the municipal minutes, as reported in Abe Warkentin, Reflections on our Heritage: A History of Steinbach and the R.M. of Hanover from 1874 (Steinbach, Manitoba: Derksen Printers Ltd., 1971), p. 67. Hereafter referred to as Warkentin, Steinbach. Further research on the Chortitz village has been

Gerhard Wiebe, had settled here in 1875, and Deacon Johann Wiebe (elected 1881) was also from this village. Reverend David Stoesz records that he held 11 worship services there between 1875 and 1882. Chortitz was also a popular location for business meetings. Four church meetings were held between 1878 and 1882.<sup>161</sup> The school teachers were to gather at Chortitz on January 20 of each year, and a general teacher's conference had been held there on March 10, 1879.<sup>162</sup> The Hespeler Municipal Council met at the home of Peter Klippenstein in Chortitz from 1880 to 1883. The council had decided to meet at the secretary's home and Klippenstein held that position during this time.<sup>163</sup>

---

done by Orlando Hiebert, see article by Dennis Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages Symposium," Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter (June 1987), p. 2-3. Hereafter referred to as Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages."

<sup>161</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 12 mentions the 1878 meeting which probably concerned the Waisenamt; an invitation by Reverend Cornelius Stoesz to a similar Waisenamt meeting in 1879 is found in the Menno Colony Archives, Paraguay, Manuscript Collection, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives. Hereafter referred to as Menno Colony MSS, MHCA. The 1881 and 1882 brotherhood meetings are mentioned in the "David Stoesz Diary," p. 14, 17.

<sup>162</sup>The regular teacher meetings at Chortitz are mentioned in the "General School Decree." This school constitution was written and signed by Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, and ministers Cornelius Stoesz, David Stoesz and Heinrich Wiebe circa 1878. It was translated by Wilhelm J. Kehler, Altona, Manitoba, 1985, and hereafter will be referred to as "General School Decree." It was transliterated by Dennis Stoesz, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1985. The original document is entitled "Allgemeine Schulverordnung!" and found in the Stoesz MSS, MHCA. See Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 25 for the report of the 1879 meeting.

<sup>163</sup>See the May 8, 1880 minutes for the decision to meet

Grunthal was probably the central meetingplace for the south. It was only a medium size village of 6-10 farm operators as compared to the 10-15 farmers living in the other two meetingplaces, Bergfeld and Gnadenfeld, but its central location in the area may have contributed to its prominence as a meetingplace.<sup>164</sup> The first reference to Grunthal as a meetingplace occurs when Stoesz wrote: "There was a meeting of the Brethren in Grunthal on Thursday the 27th of Jan. [1881]"<sup>165</sup> Stoesz conducted three communion services and performed baptisms at Grunthal in 1881 and 1882. There is no record of Stoesz conducting a worship service there until after the church building had been built in 1886.

B. Changing Settlement Patterns, 1883

The effect of the migration to the West Reserve was

---

at the secretary's place. A minute and a letter also indicate that Chortitz was the meeting place on May 8, 1880 and April 21, 1882. Lydia Penner, Hanover: One Hundred Years, (Steinbach, Manitoba: Rural Municipality of Hanover, 1982), p. 8, 10. Hereafter referred to as Penner, Hanover.

<sup>164</sup>The prominence of Bergfeld and Gnadenfeld is substantiated by Stoesz in his diary. When he came to serve in this area he usually stayed in Bergfeld or Gnadenfeld, even though he had to go through Grunthal to get there. See the diary entries for 1890 and 1895: "I intend to drive as far as Bergfeld in order to serve Holy Communion in Grunthal on Sunday, the 26 [October 1890]," and "1895 on Saturday October 26, I went to Gnadenfeld [and served communion the next day at Grunthal]." Found in "David Stoesz Diary," p. 33 and 52, respectively. For more information on Grunthal, see Grunthal History Book Committee, Grunthal History, 1874-1974, (Grunthal, Manitoba: Grunthal History Book Committee, 1974). Hereafter referred to as Grunthal.

<sup>165</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 15.

illustrated in the changing pattern of meetingplaces.<sup>166</sup> By 1883, the church was meeting in only seven of its fifteen original worship centres.<sup>167</sup> (See Map No. 3 Chortitzer Mennonite Villages and Meetingplaces, 1883-1900) The villages of Ebenfeld, Bergthal, Grossweide and Pastwa in the north and northwest parts of the reserve were no longer meetingplaces. Grossweide had disintegrated completely. There was an exodus out of Pastwa, and it and Ebenfeld remained small villages.<sup>168</sup> Bergthal was a large village of 11-15 farmers and was not greatly affected by the migration.<sup>169</sup> The close proximity to three other meetingplaces, however, meant the church could not afford to meet in Bergthal.

---

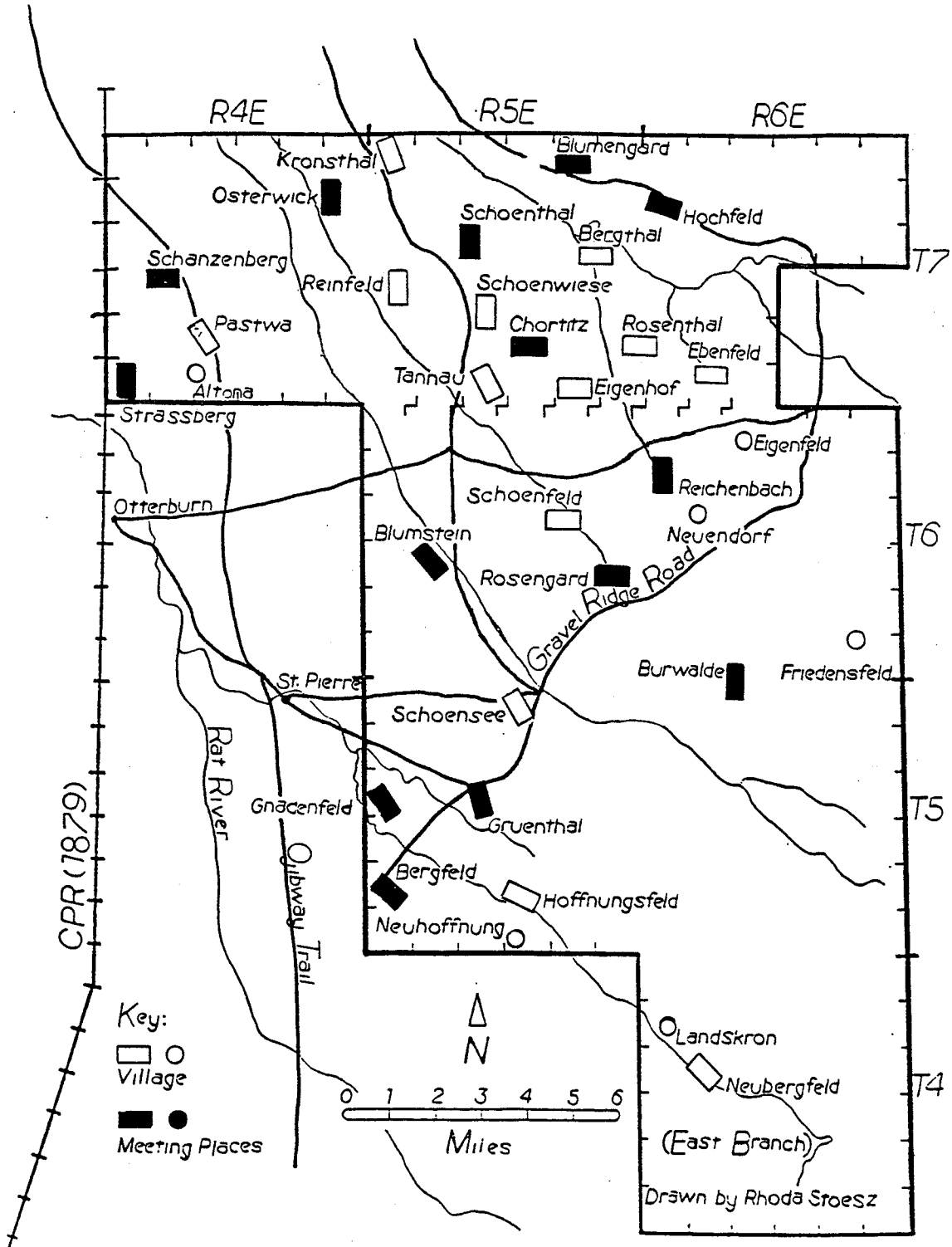
<sup>166</sup>The idea of changing settlement patterns is attributed to Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba." A comparison of Map No's. 2 and 3 illustrates the changing patterns of meetingplaces. The change was probably due to the exodus of people to the West Reserve.

<sup>167</sup>A village is no longer considered a meetingplace when there are no more references to it in the lists provided at the back of the sermons. With the use of secondary sources and some conjecture, an attempt will be made to explain why the church no longer met in a village. The specific dates when sermons were preached in the villages which no longer were meetingplaces is not mentioned here, but is available in Appendix No. 3. See Appendix No's. 2 and 3 for sources and explanation of Map No. 3.

<sup>168</sup>A small village means 1-5 farm operators. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," and Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, do not mention the effect of migration on the village of Ebenfeld. Information on exodus from Pastwa from Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 66.

<sup>169</sup>David Stoesz, who lived in this village, does mention that five families moved from Bergthal to the West Reserve in 1882, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 18.

MAP NO. 3:  
 Chortitzer Mennonite  
 Villages and Meetingplaces, 1883-1900<sup>167</sup>



In the south, Schoenenberg, Schoenhorst, Schoensee and Kronsgard discontinued as meetingplaces by 1883. There was an exodus of people from Schoenenberg and Schoenhorst probably because of their location among the marsh lands in the east part of the reserve.<sup>170</sup> Schoensee remained a small village of 1-5 farm operators despite its location along a major traffic route.<sup>171</sup> It probably was also overshadowed by the main meeting centre of Grunthal. People continued to settle in the Kronsgard area along the East Branch of the Rat River, and it is surprising why it no longer was a meetingplace.<sup>172</sup>

C. Central Places, 1882-1900

The seven villages which remained meetingplaces after the early settlement years can be seen as central for the

---

<sup>170</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 66. People continued to settle in these areas and to use the name of Schoenenberg. See Grunthal, p. 50-54.

<sup>171</sup>One communion service for 21 people was held at the home of senior minister Franz Dueck on June 17, 1883, who lived in Schoensee. This, however, was the last record of Schoensee as a meetingplace. Communion Sermon, File No. 18, Stoesz RG, MHCA. Mention of this village is also made in Grunthal, p. 58-61.

<sup>172</sup>Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59 indicates there were no farmers in Kronsgard in 1891, but lists neighboring villages of Hoffnung and Neuhoffnung as having 1-10 farmers in them. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 51, and John C. Reimer, in Grunthal, p. 20 list Kronsgard on their maps. They both list Neuhoffnung but do not give that village a specific location. Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p.100 lists Kronsgard and Hoffnung on his map. Francis, Reimer and Schroeder were used as the authority that Kronsgard was an active village, and had people living in the area. The village of Neubergfeld southeast of Landskron was also started in this area in 1878. See also the information on Kronsgard in Grunthal, p. 64-67.

Chortitzer community in the late nineteenth century. The two northern villages of Hochfeld and Schoenthal can now be listed alongside Chortitz, which has been mentioned earlier. Hochfeld was located near the Steinbach-Winnipeg road and was a large village of 20 families by 1889.<sup>173</sup> Stoesz attended a wedding here in 1877 and performed a funeral in 1880:

[1877] On Wed. we drove to Ebenfeld and Thur. Dec 6th went to Hochfeld to attend a wedding, on Fri. the two Stoesz families dropped in on their way home...

[1880] Jul 6th...Some people from here drove to Winnipeg, and I sent along a cow to be sold...I would have gone along with them, but for a funeral at the David Hueberts, Hochfeld, and thus had to leave the purchase [of a plow] to others.<sup>174</sup>

Deacon Heinrich Friesen (elected 1881) lived in this village and Stoesz preached sermons there in 1879 and 1883. In 1901 Stoesz also held communion for 32 people at Hochfeld.<sup>175</sup>

---

<sup>173</sup>The size of the village comes from Francis. He also says the village is to have relocated to the road from Steinbach to Winnipeg, one mile west of the original village. No date is given for the move. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, footnote on p. 107, 108. Hochfeld is also mentioned in Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 18. Peters also includes a map of this village for the period 1874-80 and lists the farmers in it. Peter Peters reported his research on Hochfeld at a symposium, see Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages."

<sup>174</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 11, 14.

<sup>175</sup>Deacon Heinrich Friesen's homestead was located in the NW quarter of section 20, T7, R6E, though he lived in the village. A map of Hochfeld, 1874-1880, with Friesen's house on it, is found in Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 21. Information on Friesen's homestead is from Loewen, Blumenort, p. 254. The gap between when Stoesz preached here may be a result of Reverend Heinrich Friesen preaching here more often. The Doerksen Sermon MSS, MHCA, contains some Heinrich Friesen sermons. It is interesting that Stoesz served communion here in 1901. This may indicate that people were moving northward



Schoenthal, located just three miles northwest of Chortitz, remained a meetingplace from the early settlement period to at least 1889. Ministers Cornelius Friesen (elected 1869) and Heinrich Doerksen (elected 1887) lived there and may have taken over preaching duties for the village after 1889. At least three minister's meetings were held there in 1887, 1891 and 1894.<sup>176</sup> Since local resident Cornelius Epp was the secretary for the municipality, municipal meetings were held in Schoenthal from 1884 to 1895.<sup>177</sup> By 1891 it was a medium village containing 6-10 farm operators, and had its own grist mill.<sup>178</sup>

The final northern meetingplace which had remained from the early years was Schanzenberg. Its role as a central place for the community is somewhat enigmatic. It was located in the northwest part of the reserve on the original site of the immigration sheds, 1874-76, two miles south east of Hespeler (later Niverville).<sup>179</sup> Schanzenberg was

---

and Hochfeld may have been central for that area.

<sup>176</sup>The meetings were informal and occurred when Bergthaler ministers Peter Zacharias and Abraham Doerksen from the West Reserve and school teacher Jacob Wiens from the West Reserve and a lay minister from Pennsylvania visited the East Reserve. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 22, 27, 35 and 46 respectively.

<sup>177</sup>Penner, Hanover, p. 178. Cornelius Epp was also a former Waisen Vorsteher, 1880-83.

<sup>178</sup>David Stoesz brought some flour back to Bergthal from there in 1893. He says Doerksen owned the mill. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 44.

<sup>179</sup>There were four immigration sheds, measuring 7 X 30

considered a hamlet and had only 1-5 farmers by 1891. Stoesz records that he baptized several people and held a communion service for 70 people there in 1882. It is curious why such important events were held there when similar services had been held at Chortitz just days earlier. Perhaps this northwestern part of the reserve was developing into a distinct church area like the areas around Chortitz and Gruenthal. In 1884, Stoesz again performed baptisms there, but that was the last record of it as a meetingplace.<sup>180</sup> In 1891, Bergthaler minister Abraham Klassen preached at Strassberg, located 3 miles south, rather than at

---

metres each, and they housed the immigrants until they built their own homes in the villages. These sheds were arranged for by Jacob Y. Shantz in 1874. See Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 83, 84. There is not total agreement on the location of Schanzenberg. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59 and Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 100 have been used for the location of the village. Reimer places it one mile south east and Francis just gives a general reference to its location, Grunthal, p. 20 and Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 51.

<sup>180</sup>There are several references to this village as Schanzenfeld, and not Schanzenberg. Stoesz makes three such references in his communion and baptism sermons, Stoesz RG, Collection, MHCA, and once in his diary, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 34. The name "Schanzenfeld" also appears on the list of villages which had schools in 1878, "Board of Education," Manitoba Weekly Free Press, 23 November 1878, p. 3. This study, however, will use the name Schanzenberg, and not Schanzenfeld, because all maps use the former name. Reimer, in his map in Grunthal, p. 20 and Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 51, Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 100, and Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59. It is interesting to note that a worship centre near this village was later called Schanzenfeld (1926). It was located southeast of Schanzenberg. The meetings took place in a school located 2 miles east and 4 miles south of Niverville. Grunthal, p. 68.

Schanzenberg where he was staying.<sup>181</sup>

The only southern villages besides Grunthal which remained meetingplaces after the early settlement years were Bergfeld and Gnadenenthal. Bergfeld was located on the ridge road in the extreme southwest corner of the reserve.<sup>182</sup> It was a large village and had 23 farmers by 1877.<sup>183</sup> Reverend Cornelius Stoesz from Blumstein preached there in 1882, and Bishop David Stoesz in 1883 and 1885. Local minister Peter T. Toews, who had been elected as deacon in 1885 and minister in 1887, may have taken over the preaching duties from Stoesz there after 1887.<sup>184</sup> It is interesting to note that when Stoesz came to Grunthal for communion and baptism services, he usually stayed in Bergfeld or Gnadenfeld, even though he had to go through Grunthal to get there.<sup>185</sup>

---

<sup>181</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 34.

<sup>182</sup>See map done by John C. Reimer in Grunthal, p. 20 and map in Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 51 for location of roads.

<sup>183</sup>Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 239. Warkentin extensively documents this village because it retained its Gewann agricultural village until the 1920s, when it moved enmass to Paraguay. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 236-43. Other sources of information include Grunthal, p. 43-49, and Roy Vogt, "Bergfeld: An original East Reserve village," Mennonite Mirror (January/February 1974), p. 40-44.

<sup>184</sup>Toews's place of residence was taken from "Liste der Prediger der mennonitischen Gemeinschaften (Soweit sie eingesandt wurden und ihre Namen und Adressen bekannt sind)," Bundesbote Kalendar fuer 1898, p. 49-[54].

<sup>185</sup>See references in "David Stoesz Diary," p. 33, 52 and 53.

Gnadenfeld was the other major worship centre for this southern community. It had become quite a large village by 1891 although it was not on a main road like Gruenthal and Bergfeld. Bishop Stoesz preached at Gnadenfeld four times between 1880 and 1882, and held five communion and baptismal services there in 1885 and 1886 while the church building was being constructed in Grunthal. Local resident Reverend Peter Giesbrecht (elected 1877) may have taken over preaching duties there after 1882. Two Bergthaler Church ministers from the West Reserve visited Reverend Giesbrecht in 1891. Stoesz records that he also visited Giesbrecht as well as the aged Jacob Braun in the early 1890s.<sup>186</sup>

D. Changing Settlement Patterns, 1882-1900

The church also met in seven new meetingplaces after 1882. In the north, three more villages became worship centres. The probable reason for these additions was the Chortitzer movement into the northern areas beyond the reserve boundaries.<sup>187</sup> While no new meetingplaces were added in the south, four villages in the centre of the reserve were added to the worship schedule. This may have been prompted by a migration of some into the eastern parts of the reserve, and by the assertion of others that a meetingplace in the

---

<sup>186</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 34, 35, 46. Stoesz also visited Gnadenfeld in 1885, p. 34.

<sup>187</sup>Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," shows this northward movement in a 1922 map, p. 575. It was also located along the main road from Steinbach to Winnipeg.

centre of the reserve was warranted.

The northern three meetingplaces were Blumengard, Osterwick and Strassberg. Although Stoesz preached at Blumengard for the first time only in 1900, it probably was a prominent church centre by the 1880s.<sup>188</sup> It had been established in 1874 and was a medium size village of 6-10 farmers by 1891. Stoesz makes numerous references to Blumengard in his diary because his land reached the borders of that village, and because his daughter Aganetha moved there after marrying local resident John Funk in 1888.<sup>189</sup>

Movement into the northwest part of the reserve was indicated by worship services at Osterwick.<sup>190</sup> It had been

---

<sup>188</sup>Peter Peters, who has written about this village, states that worship services were first held in homes and then in the private school. He intimates that Blumengard was a meetingplace from the early years, 1874-80. His map, 1874-80, shows a fairly large village. Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 21. It is interesting, however, that Bishop Stoesz only preached here in 1900 and 1901. His village of Bergthal was only located a few miles south of Blumengard. One could therefore conclude that it was a worship centre from the beginning but only became prominent as Chortitzers moved further north.

<sup>189</sup>Information taken from "David Stoesz Diary," p. 32, 36, 38, 40, 45, 47, 49 and 53, and from genealogical information appended to the diary by William and Trudy Harms, Altona, Manitoba. These references break the ground toward understanding to what extent Blumengard and Bergthal still functioned as villages in the 1890s. Francis says Blumengard was established later than other villages, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 66. He is probably referring to the establishment of a new location of Blumengard next to the main road. Warkentin claims Blumengard was established in 1874, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59.

<sup>190</sup>Warkentin's 1922 map shows expansion into the northwest part of the reserve. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 575. Peter Wiebe, New Bothwell,

established in 1876 and became a medium size village of 6-10 farmers by 1891. It had become a regular meetingplace by 1887.<sup>191</sup> Two communion services were held here in 1897 and 1899, with groups of 28 and 23 in attendance, respectively.

The other northwestern village which became a regular meetingplace was Strassberg. It had been established in 1875, but was affected by the migration to the West Reserve.<sup>192</sup> While Schanzenberg acted as the meetingplace for these villagers in the earlier years, by 1884 Strassberg had become a centre in its own right.<sup>193</sup> Three more sermons were preached there in 1891, 1893 and 1894. It is not known exactly why this village became a meetingplace. It was located in the extreme corner of the reserve, and there had been no expansion beyond the reserve boundaries.<sup>194</sup> By 1891 it was still only a small village containing 1-5 farm operators.

There were seemingly no new meetingplaces added in the southern part of the reserve during these years, 1882-1900.

---

has done research on Osterwick, see Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages."

<sup>191</sup>The records show three services there between 1887 and 1894.

<sup>192</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 66. A communion and baptisms were held at Schanzenberg between 1882-84.

<sup>193</sup>Stoesz's first preaching reference to Strassberg is 1884.

<sup>194</sup>See Warkentin's 1922 expansion map. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 575.

The three meetingplaces of Bergfeld, Gnadenfeld and Grunthal continued to act as worship centres for the community.<sup>195</sup>

The unusual development during this time was the addition of the four new meetingplaces in the centre of the reserve: Blumstein, Burwalde, Reichenbach and Rosengard.<sup>196</sup> Rosengard was the largest village in this area. It had been established in 1875, was located right in the middle of the reserve with the ridge road running just south of it, and contained 11-15 farm operators by 1891. It is uncertain why Stoesz only started preaching there in 1885. The records of worship services held at Rosengard in 1892 and 1898 confirm that it had become a regular meetingplace.

Regular church services at Burwalde reveal some movement into the southeast part of the reserve. This village had been established after 1878 and was a fairly large village of 6-10 farmers by 1891. The first record of it as a meetingplace is in 1887. Stoesz conducted "a funeral service at the home of Abraham Penners" there in 1892 and preached there again in 1893 and 1896.<sup>197</sup>

There is inconclusive evidence on the two smaller

---

<sup>195</sup>Note has also been made of possible worship services at Kronsgard. By 1926, there were also several new meetingplaces at Neubergfeld and Sommerfeld.

<sup>196</sup>Maybe the sermon literature did not adequately reflect worship services in this area in the early period, 1874-82.

<sup>197</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 40 for the funeral reference.

villages of Blumstein and Reichenbach. Reverend Cornelius Stoesz lived in Blumstein and preached there in 1887—the only reference to it as a meetingplace. It had been established in 1874 and contained four farmers by 1881. The only two times Bishop David Stoesz preached at Reichenbach was in 1884 and 1886. It had been established as a village in 1876 and contained only 1-5 farm operators by 1891.<sup>198</sup> Why earlier or later services are not recorded at these two places is uncertain. The villagers may have gone to Rosengard for services. While there seemed to be some expansion into the central part of the reserve, there were no communions or baptisms recorded at these meetingplaces. It did not develop into a separate area like the south and north.

E. Central Places, 1900-14

By 1926 there were both a continuation and deletion of meetingplaces.<sup>199</sup> (See Map No. 4 Chortitzer Mennonite Meetingplaces, 1926) The biggest changes were the movement of people into the trade centres of Steinbach and Niverville,

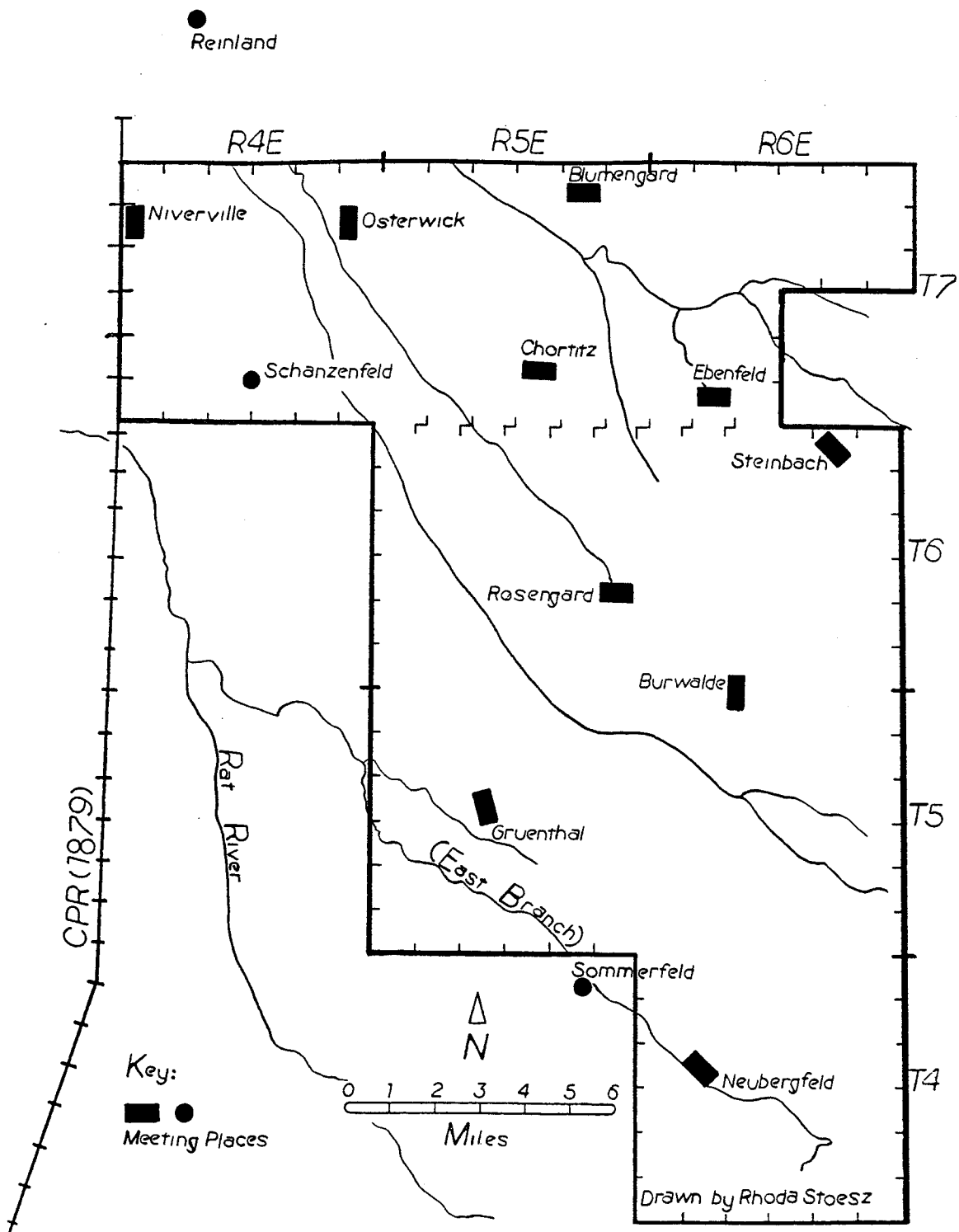
---

<sup>198</sup>Research into homestead records reveals that the four farm operators at Blumstein were Cornelius Stoesz, Jacob Stoesz, Daniel Blatz and Johann Reimer. Jacob Stoesz died in 1892, Reimer died in 1894, as found in "David Stoesz Diary," p. 46, Cornelius Stoesz died in 1900. Dates from Chortitzer Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA. Further research into Reichenbach has been completed by John Dyck, see Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages."

<sup>199</sup>The source of meetingplaces is from a 1926 "Ministers' Circulating List," as found in Grunthal, p. 69. See also the list included in Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 39. The meetingplaces have been placed on Map No. 4. See Appendices No.'s 2 and 3 for general sources and explanations on Map No. 4.



MAP NO. 4:  
Chortitzer Mennonite Meetingplaces, 1926-1999



and into the northern and southern areas.<sup>200</sup> In the north, Chortitz, Hochfeld, Blumengard, and Osterwick continued as worship centres. Ebenfeld in the east probably became a new meetingplace to meet the needs of people working and living in Steinbach. It was located three miles east of Steinbach. In Niverville, meetings were conducted in a private home. Regular worship services in this northwest section continued in the country at a schoolhouse at Schanzenfeld. There were no more meetings at the earlier settlements of Strassberg and Schanzenberg. Another meetingplace was added three miles north of the reserve boundary at a place called Reinland. It was in response to further movement into that area.<sup>201</sup>

In the south Grunthal and Bergfeld remained central meetingplaces.<sup>202</sup> New meetingplaces at Neubergfeld and Sommerfeld filled the needs of people moving into the very southern part of the reserve. Rosengard remained as the

---

<sup>200</sup>Warkentin has shown this expansion in his 1922 map, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 575.

<sup>201</sup>The location of the Reinland school is given as "3 miles east and 2 miles north of Niverville," in Grunthal, p. 69. This is along the Highway No. 59. There is, however, a reference to another site, which presumably was an earlier location: 2 miles east and 4 miles north of Niverville on the northwest side of the intersection. See map in LeBlanc Reflections, comp. by Anne Neufeld and Kaye Pauls, n.p. [ca. 1983], p. 29. Hereafter referred to as LeBlanc. This later location has been used for the meetingplace map.

<sup>202</sup>Bergfeld is not listed on the 1926 list, however, it existed as an open-field agricultural village until the 1920s. A 1912 map of the village is provided in Grunthal, p. 45. The status of the village of Gnadenfeld is uncertain for this time period. It is not on the 1926 list.

meetingplace in the centre of the reserve, with some meetings also taking place in homes at Burwalde.

F. Conclusion

This chapter has added to the discussion raised earlier in chapter one on the formation and disintegration of villages. E. K. Francis and John H. Warkentin have pointed to the effect of the agricultural economy on the Mennonite villages, and documented the stages of its dissolution from the 1870s to the 1920s. Warkentin, particularly, outlined the changing settlement patterns and listed which places became central for the East Reserve community. The study of meetingplaces has added some insights to these themes.

First, the survey of meetingplaces has added to the discussion on the changing settlement patterns. It has heightened the importance of the Chortitzer migration to the West Reserve. The decrease in population was illustrated by the eight villages which no longer acted as meetingplaces after 1882. Although the migration has been seen as a factor in the abandonment of villages on the East Reserve, its importance for the Chortitzer community has not been highlighted. Francis hinted at it when he remarked that the open-field agricultural system was given up quite early by the Bergthal group and retained many years longer by the Kleine Gemeinde.

The sermon material has also provided specific dates when the church met at a certain village. Although the

information was restricted to the villages which were meetingplaces, and to the church's involvement in those villages, it was a start toward articulating the specific processes and times of change. The patterns have confirmed Warkentin's description of the northern, northwestern and southern migrations beyond the reserve boundaries and the movement into the towns. The study has also postulated that there was movement to the central and eastern parts of the reserve.

Second, this study has identified at least ten central places of the Chortitzer community. There were six meetingplaces that remained after the migration to the West Reserve: Chortitz, Hochfeld and Schoenthal in the north, and Gruenthal, Gnadenfeld and Bergfeld in the south. Four more major centres were solidified as people began moving within the reserve and beyond its borders. Osterwick became a meetingplace in the northwest, Blumengard in the north, Rosengard in the centre and Burwalde in the east. This list adds to the villages which Warkentin considered as central for the East Reserve community. Warkentin mentioned the important roles of Chortitz and Gruenthal, but considered Steinbach and Niverville as the major centres. Although his conclusions were based on the East Reserve as a whole and on the economic influences on the villages, this list of ten meetingplaces adds considerably to ones understanding of the places important for the Chortitzer community.

Thus the Chortitzer church adapted to the disintegration of villages by maintaining worship centres for the community. The church maintained Chortitz and Gruenthal as the key villages and changed their other meetingplace locations when necessary. They kept track of the areas which remained central to their members and maintained regular worship services in those settlements. The Chortitzer Ministerial could easily do that because the church was centrally organized in the community, much like the Municipal Council. It was not based at the congregational level nor tied to any one village. The church thus provided some continuity in the midst of the changing settlement patterns.

## CHAPTER 4: WAISENAMT

The next three chapters in this thesis will focus on the Chortitzer Church's involvement in various economic, social and political affairs of the community. This chapter will outline the economic role the Waisenamt played in the 1870s' migration, and in the establishment of the Bergthal community on the East Reserve. It enabled both rich and poor to emigrate and it became the institution through which major loans could be made from the Ontario Swiss Mennonites and the Canadian government. These loans were to have a profound effect on the Chortitzer Church.

### A. Emigration

The Waisenamt was set up by Mennonites in Prussia around 1785 to take care of widows and orphans.<sup>203</sup> This

---

<sup>203</sup>Date of 1785 taken from Allgemeine Waisen-Verordnung der Gemeinde Chortitz, Oestliche Reserve, Manitoba (Winnipeg, Manitoba: Rundschau Publishing House, 1930), p.3. Hereafter referred to as Waisen-Verordnung 1930. The main source for this chapter on the Waisenamt is the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. This collection contains a small number of copied documents from the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference Waisenamt. Hereafter referred to as the Chortitzer Waisenamt. Interviews were conducted by Dennis Stoesz with Waisen Vorsteher D. M. Friesen, New Bothwell, Manitoba, 8 & 20 December 1983, and Waisen Vorsteher D. F. Wiebe, Ste. Anne, Manitoba, 15 January 1984. Hereafter referred to as Interview with Waisen Vorsteher Friesen [or Wiebe].

A complete description of the historical origins of the Waisenamt is available in Jake Peters, The Waisenamt: A History of Mennonite Inheritance Custom Mennonite Village Museum Historical Series I (Steinbach, Manitoba: Mennonite Village Museum, 1985), p.4-8. Hereafter referred to as Peters, Waisenamt.

institution made sure all their financial matters were properly administered and that they received a fair portion of the estate when a spouse or parent died. The Waisenamt also became a bank. It allowed church members to invest in it at 5% and borrow money from it at 6%. This institution was run by two men who were elected and ordained by the church. They were elected for a three year term, and were known as Waisen Vorsteher.<sup>204</sup>

It was the capital held by the Waisenamt and this institution's mediating role in the community which made possible the emigration from the Bergthal Colony, Russia, in the 1870s. This did not happen, however, without its difficulties. On January 1, 1873, a general accounting of the Waisenamt was conducted as usual. The financial statement listed the orphan's and widow's accounts, the private money invested in the Amt and the capital set aside to buy more land for the colony.<sup>205</sup> The two administrators of the Amt were Peter Friesen and Peter Funk.<sup>206</sup> Peter Friesen had been elected in 1858, and served consecutively

---

<sup>204</sup>Peters, Waisenamt, p. 9-14.

<sup>205</sup>Document entitled "Zum Jahr 1873 von 1sten Januar," 4 pages, Chortitzer Waisenamt.

<sup>206</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 36, mentions the names of [Peter] Friesen and Peter Funk. The identification of the given name of Friesen, i.e. Peter, is found in a package marked "Gerhard Toewsen Erben ihre Rechnung Sumen," and found among the documents in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. It gives the death date of Peter Friesen as June 16, 1875, in the Bergthal Colony, Russia. His son, Cornelius Friesen, was then elected to take his father's place.

thereafter until June 16, 1875; it is not known how long Peter Funk had held this position.<sup>207</sup>

After the decision had been made to emigrate in the summer of 1873, Waisenamt administrators devised a way in which the capital in the Amt could be used in such a way to ensure that all 150 farmers and 350 landless families could emigrate.<sup>208</sup> There was \$100,000. [50,000 rubles] in the Amt. A portion of it belonged to the widows and orphans. Another sum belonged to the retired farmers who had sold their lands and deposited it as inheritance money for their children. It was decided that the money deposited by the retired farmers would be returned to them since they would be too poor to emigrate with their children without it. The rest of the \$100,000. would be used as loans to people who needed it and as outright assistance to the poor, who had practically nothing.

To use the money as loans for emigration purposes, however, was a departure from the rules of the Waisenamt. The money belonged to the widows, orphans, and children who were to receive an inheritance, and the Waisenamt had strict rules regarding disposal of estates. It was therefore agreed

---

<sup>207</sup>Interview with Waisen Vorsteher Friesen; Chortitzer Waisenamt; and envelope marked "Gerhard Toewsen Erben..." in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

<sup>208</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 35-37, tells the full story of this plan and is the basis of information here. Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 53-55 basically recounts Wiebe's story.



that the money loaned out would have to be repaid as soon as possible in America. A precedent on lending money to families had already been made. In 1873, there were \$200,000. [100,000 rubles] outstanding in the Amt because it had been loaned out to the landless families so they could survive. It was decided that these people would not have to pay back their debts now, but could take them to America.

This solved part of the problem, but more money was needed. Three additional steps were taken: first, the well-to-do farmers would be asked to give up a quarter of their surplus for the poor (25 rubles out of a 100). Second, \$10,000 [5,000 rubles] which had been set aside to purchase additional land in Russia was added to the capital in the Amt. Third, money in the orphan accounts was not to receive interest for 4 or 5 years-until 1878.

The administrators put this plan first to the ministers of the church, who readily agreed to it. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe had already promised to lend people money he didn't have:

This writer had given so many guarantees and most of all for the poor, that should he have had to pay, ...neither he himself, nor those for whom he had guaranteed, would have been able to emigrate.<sup>209</sup>

Waisen Vorsteher Friesen and Funk, together with the ministers, then had a meeting with the financially secure farmers who would be most affected by this plan. They

---

<sup>209</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 36.

probably were among the 145 farmers who owned land. Wiebe reported their response:

To our astonishment they answered, 'Yes, we are prepared to do everything possible so that our poor brothers with their children can emigrate together with us; otherwise the emigration would not seem right to us.' There were a few who found it difficult, but they soon assented, because the Lord had touched their hearts and made them willing to give.<sup>210</sup>

The financial arrangements for emigration were complex, but it seemed the Waisenamt could mediate more fairly between the rich and poor than if pledges would be made directly between families.<sup>211</sup> Now, however, the responsibility to keep accurate accounts lay with the Waisenamt.<sup>212</sup>

The use of the Waisenamt for financing the emigration proved successful. Eighty-three percent of the Bergthal Colony community emigrated to Manitoba. There were, however, more economic difficulties ahead. Two major loans from the Swiss Mennonites in Ontario and the Canadian government were negotiated by the Chortitzer Ministerial in 1874 and 1875, respectively.

---

<sup>210</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 36.

<sup>211</sup>Wiebe points to this conclusion, History of the Emigration, p. 36-7.

<sup>212</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 54, examined the Chortitzer Waisenamt records in the 1940s and says "The account books of the Bergthal congregation, still preserved in the archives of the Chortitz Waisenamt in Manitoba, give evidence of the efficiency, honesty and charity with which debtors, creditors, and church officials cooperated in order to do justice to everybody concerned."

B. Loan from the Ontario Swiss Mennonites, 1874

A Mennonite Board of Guardians had been formed in the United States in the fall of 1873 to provide assistance to Mennonite immigrants. They outlined their terms of aid to Mennonite immigrants from West Prussia, Poland and south Russia in lengthy circulars in the February 1874 issue of Herold der Wahrheit.<sup>213</sup> A similar Russian Mennonite Aid Committee had been started in Ontario in December of that year.<sup>214</sup> On December 2, 1873, fifty-six Ontario Swiss Mennonites agreed to loan \$817. to their Russian Brethren.<sup>215</sup>

---

<sup>213</sup>"Circular Nr. 1. An die Mennoniten-Gemeinden in West-preussen, Poland und Sued-Russland...Mennonite Board of Guardians," and "Circular Nr. 2...", Herold der Wahrheit (Februar 1874): 17-21.

<sup>214</sup>Information taken from Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1955-59, s.v. "Mennonite Board of Guardians," by Harold S. Bender, and s.v. "Jacob Yost Shantz," by Melvin Gingerich. Further documentation of the Canadian organization is found in "A Record of Russian Mennonite Aid Committee for Lincoln County, Ontario, 1873-1880, by Philip Wismer, Deacon," Russian Aid Committee Record Group, 7 pages in Conrad Grebel Archives, Waterloo, Ontario. This is a typed copy of information taken from a record book. Hereafter referred to as "Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA. All specific references to this committee come from this document. Unfortunately this record is only for Lincoln County and references to loans and payments are restricted to reports from this county; complete records are not available for this Aid Committee.

<sup>215</sup>Information taken from Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1955-59, s.v. "Mennonite Board of Guardians," by Harold S. Bender, and s.v. "Jacob Yost Shantz," by Melvin Gingerich. Further documentation of the Canadian organization is found in "A Record of Russian Mennonite Aid Committee for Lincoln County, Ontario, 1873-1880, by Philip Wismer, Deacon," Russian Aid Committee Record Group, 7 pages in Conrad Grebel Archives, Waterloo, Ontario. This is a typed copy of information taken from a record book. Hereafter referred to as "Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA. All specific references to this committee come from this document. Unfortunately this record is only for

The Bergthaler delegates, Reverend Heinrich Wiebe and Oberschulze Jacob Peters, had met the main leaders of these aid organizations in the summer of 1873, John F. Funk of Elkhart and Jacob Y. Shantz of Ontario. It was to them that Reverend Heinrich Wiebe appealed for money.

On January 23, 1874, Shantz wrote delegate Wiebe that money could be loaned from the Aid Committee in order that the poor could emigrate. Wiebe responded on February 16, thanking him for the letter, and saying the money would be seen as a loan and not a gift.<sup>216</sup> On March 24 and April 20, 1874, Shantz paid out \$778. and \$39, respectively to Russian Mennonites, and it may have gone to the Bergthal group.<sup>217</sup>

In June 1874, the first Bergthaler group of 804 persons (162 families) left for Manitoba. Chortitzer ministers Heinrich Wiebe, David and Cornelius Stoesz and

---

Lincoln County and references to loans and payments are restricted to reports from this county; complete records are not available for this Aid Committee.

<sup>216</sup>Reference to the Shantz letter and its contents is made in Heinrich Wiebe's published letter of February 16, 1874 in "Letter from Russia to Jacob Y. Schantz, Berlin, Ont...Henry Wiebe, Schoenfeld, 16 February 1874," Herald of Truth (May 1874): 89, 90. The same letter is published in German in Herold der Wahrheit (Mai 1874): 89, 90. The original letter and a transliteration of it is found in the John F. Funk Collection, the Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana. Hereafter referred to as Funk MSS, AMC. The letter was sent to Funk by Shantz to publish in his newspapers, Herald of Truth and Herold der Wahrheit. Shantz played a central role in the immigration of Mennonites to Manitoba.

<sup>217</sup>"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA.

Cornelius Friesen were their leaders.<sup>218</sup> Some people in this group had loaned money to others directly, and others had outright paid for their poor friends from their own pockets.<sup>219</sup> While passing through Toronto, Ontario, on July 30 and 31, this group of immigrants asked Shantz for a \$20,000 loan. Shantz directed them to the American organization, the Mennonite Board of Guardians, probably because it was a bigger organization and would be able to handle the large sum of money. Shantz also reported this request for a loan in his August 4 letter to Herold der Wahrheit, and made a general appeal to the American brethren to help the Bergthaler group. He said the people were quite poor. They had not been able to sell any of their land in Russia and their goods went for less than half their value. The Bergthaler group had brought along \$30,000 but this together with a \$20,000 loan would only leave \$62.50 a person. Meanwhile they needed houses, horses, oxen and

---

<sup>218</sup>The overall emigration has been discussed earlier, however, information on specific immigrant and denominational groups during the emigration years provides valuable insights into their economic, religious, and social developments. For example, it was this first Bergthaler group who asked the Ontario Mennonites for a loan. The number of persons and the names of some of the leaders for the various groups is taken from Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 528. The number of families is taken from "Aus Canada. Berlin...4 Aug. 1874...J. Y. Shantz," Herold der Wahrheit (Sept. 1874): 153. Hereafter referred to as "Shantz letter, 4 August 1874." He also mentions that eight families stayed in Liverpool because of sickness. Wismer reports 185 families, in "Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA. Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 37, 41, mentions there were 160 families and names the four leaders.

<sup>219</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 37.

plows. This \$20,000. loan was not too great a request, wrote Shantz.<sup>220</sup>

On August 7, 1874, while sailing on the Great Lakes toward Duluth, ministers Heinrich Wiebe and David and Cornelius Stoesz put their request into writing. Stoesz comments in his diary, "we are sitting between decks at the back of the ship, writing a letter to the Canadian [sic] brethren asking for a loan." This letter was sent to Shantz, but it was subsequently published as "An die amerikanischen Bruedern!" in the September 1874 issue of Herold der Wahrheit.<sup>221</sup> The request is couched in religious language and reflects the desperate financial straits in which this first group of immigrants found themselves. Records from one individual who migrated with this group, Reverend Cornelius Stoesz, reveal that he borrowed a total of \$112 from friends between August 1874 and the end of 1875. He borrowed from

---

<sup>220</sup>Shantz also reports on the arrival of the Kleine Gemeinde group on July 20, and on how the Mennonites from Markham and the Twenty supplied them with provisions. "Shantz letter, 4 August 1874." Wismer in "Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA, reports that the two groups which arrived on July 30 and July 31 brought with them \$38,000.

<sup>221</sup>It is interesting that Stoesz says they were writing the Canadian brethren, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 8. Shantz, in "Shantz letter, August 4, 1874," says they appealed to the American brethren and his letter appears right next to the formal letter from the Bergthaler leaders. The formal letter is published under the heading of "Aus Manitoba," and is entitled "An die amerikanischen Bruedern...Heinrich Wiebe, Kornelius Stoesz, David Stoesz," Herold der Wahrheit (Sept. 1874): 153-54. It is not known why Reverend Cornelius Friesen, who was reported with this group, did not sign the document.

his mother, businessman Erdman Penner, Peter Froese and Jacob Peters-presumably the Oberschulze.<sup>222</sup>

Shantz's referral of the Bergthaler Mennonites to the Mennonite Board of Guardians is curious, however, in light of the fact that the Ontario Mennonites lent the Bergthalers \$23,638.52 sometime in the fall of 1874. The terms were that the loan was repayable in eight years at 6% simple interest annually. The date of August 1, 1874, found on the loan documents, happens to coincide with the day the first immigrant group met Shantz in Ontario, and is several days before the group wrote the formal letter to request such a loan. The August 1 date probably only reflects the beginning of the loan, and not the day the loan was transacted. Although Chortitzer ministers asked for the loan, it was handled through the Waisenamt.<sup>223</sup>

---

<sup>222</sup>Cornelius Stoesz Collection, in care of Ed Wiebe, Landmark, Manitoba. Hereafter referred to as Stoesz MSS, Landmark.

<sup>223</sup>Three documents in the Chortitzer Waisenamt refer to this loan. The figure of 6% interest can be determined from the documents. The date when the first payment was to be made is uncertain, maybe within four years-1878. The three documents are entitled a) "1874 am 1 August an die Kanadische Brueder Schuldig ..... \$23,638.52." Calculations on interest payments were done in 1878 and on 1 April 1883; b) "Verzeichnis wie viel Geld diese Gemeinde von die Kanadische Brueder." Calculations on interest were done on 1 April 1880, 1 April 1882 and 1 April 1883; c) "\$35,329.83 ...Jacob Y. Shantz." While this document calculates the Canadian government loan, it also refers to the sum of \$23,638.52 and includes calculations of interest payments every year from 1878 to 1883. Material found in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. Information on the eight year period taken from Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 226.

In September, 1874, a second group consisting of 120 persons left the Russian Bergthal Colony for Manitoba.<sup>224</sup> Some of them were very poor and had to seek help from others in the group to pay their ship fare. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, who accompanied them to Hamburg, Germany, wrote a letter to Shantz, asking if the Swiss Mennonites would provide for this second group for the winter of 1874-75:

God will reward you in the great day in which the Saviour shall say "Whatsoever ye have done unto the least of one of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me."<sup>225</sup>

This group arrived in Quebec on October 22, but it is not known if they stayed in Ontario.

On January 1, 1875, thirteen Bergthalers borrowed a total of \$1,406.02 from the Ontario Aid Committee. The amount ranged from \$1.08 to \$799.98. The promissory notes were signed by two ministers of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. The arrangements were to pay the money back at 6% interest with the first payment being made in eight years-1 January 1883.<sup>226</sup> This loan could have been part of the

---

<sup>224</sup>Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 528; Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 42 says this group included "my brother Johann Wiebe and my dear old mother and also the esteemed John Neufeld."

<sup>225</sup>"Letter from Hamburg...2 October 1874...Gerhard Wiebe," Herald of Truth (December 1874): 202-03. The same letter appeared in German in Herald der Wahrheit (December 1874): 202-03.

<sup>226</sup>These thirteen promissory notes were attached to a document entitled "\$34,418.10 Manitoba den 1 April 1875...", found in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. It is curious that some of these notes are signed by Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, who was still in Russia at the time. Maybe they were mailed



\$23,638.52 borrowed on August 1, 1874.

In Ontario, the Russian Aid Committee was busy collecting money. Deacon Philip Wismer reported that as of November 2, 1874, another twenty-five persons from Lincoln County, Ontario, had loaned a total of \$685.<sup>227</sup> On January 18, 1875, Jacob Y. Shantz wrote to Bishop Gerhard Wiebe in Russia. How many of the people coming to Canada this spring would still need financial help? Would the Bergthal Church be able to get them to Quebec? Wiebe replied on February 24 that about 1,000 persons would still need help. This included a little less than half the people still remaining in the Bergthal Colony.<sup>228</sup>

In March, 1875, John Schwartz responded to a request from the Aid Committee for a report on the condition of the East Reserve Bergthaler Mennonites. Schwartz wrote: there was plenty of fuel and enough provisions, the cows had enough fodder to last through the summer, the winters were dry and no major sickness had broken out among them. He, however,

---

to him, or the date, January 1, 1875, does not reflect when the transaction was made.

<sup>227</sup>Shantz paid out this money in April, May and June of 1875, but the source does not indicate to whom it went. "Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA.

<sup>228</sup>Shantz's letter is not available but is referred to in Gerhard Wiebe's letter: "Ein Brief aus Russland. Heubuden, 24 Februar 1875, Gerhard Wiebe," Herold der Wahrheit (Juni 1875): 84-85. The statement that 1,000 was a little less than half the people remaining in Bergthal comes from these calculations: 3,000 emigrants minus 924 persons who came in 1874 = 2,076. Source of figures is Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 528.

also wrote that the frost was a bit more severe than in Russia, more provisions would be needed by summer, and some cattle had died because the hay was not the best quality. He added, "If our souls were in as healthy a condition as our bodies, less grumbling and complaining would be heard." The report contained mixed messages for the Swiss Mennonites.<sup>229</sup>

This then tells the story of the first major loan made by the Chortitzer Church. Its arrangements had been started by the Bergthaler delegates in Ontario and Elkhart in the summer of 1873, had been finalized by four Chortitzer ministers in 1874, and was being used by the immigrants in March 1875. In April 1875 the Chortitzer Ministerial negotiated a second loan.

C. Loan from the Canadian Government, 1875

On April 1, 1875, eight Chortitzer ministers signed an agreement to borrow another \$34,418.10. This loan was a portion of a larger \$100,000 loan promised to the Mennonites by the Canadian government. It was approved on April 8, 1875, and was guaranteed and administered by the Russian Aid Committee.<sup>230</sup> Wismer, for example, reports that the Lincoln

---

<sup>229</sup>The request came from Elias Schneider of the Russian Aid Committee and was sent to Reverend Heinrich Wiebe. Wiebe did not respond because at the moment he had taken on too many duties, as reported by Schwartz. Letter entitled "Mennonite Reserve, Winnepeg, [sic] March 30th, 1875," Herald of Truth (June 1875): 90. It appeared in German in Herold der Wahrheit (Juni 1875): 89-90.

<sup>230</sup>This Canadian loan to the Mennonites has received quite a lot of consideration in historical works. Two sources are Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p.

County Mennonites in Ontario raised \$3,650 in 1875 as security against this loan.<sup>231</sup> The financial arrangements with the Bergthalers were to borrow the money at 6% interest and to make the first payment within five years, April 1, 1880. The sum of \$911.73 was later added to the original amount, raising the total to \$35,329.83.<sup>232</sup> Although the Chortitzers received the loan and administered it through their Waisenamt, it was also intended for the Kleine Gemeinde group on the East Reserve.<sup>233</sup>

The summer of 1875 brought with it another 1,587 Bergthaler immigrants.<sup>234</sup> They brought with them about \$110,000.<sup>235</sup> Bishop Gerhard Wiebe was with the first group

---

49-56 and Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 55-60.

<sup>231</sup>"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA.

<sup>232</sup>It is uncertain why the \$911.73 was added. The figure of \$34,418.10 and \$35,329.83 is taken from a document entitled "\$34,418.10 Manitoba den 1 April 1875" which is found in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. It is curious that besides the eight ministers, two future ministers, Johann Funk and Jacob Hamm, also signed the document. It could mean that the document was drawn up after October 23, 1877: the date of Funk's election. Hamm had been elected in 1876.

<sup>233</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 58. More research needs to be done on how the Chortitzers handled this loan for the Kleine Gemeinde community.

<sup>234</sup>Number of immigrants based on subtracting the total for 1874 and 1876 from 3,000. Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 528. The 1875 immigrant figures from the ship lists are do not list the Bergthalers separately because they travelled with other Mennonite groups. In 1874 and 1876, they had travelled on the ships separately.

<sup>235</sup>"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA, provides the figure of \$219,000. brought by a total number of 3,059 people in 1875.

who emigrated from the Russian Bergthal Colony in that year, and he writes about the financial situation they faced upon arrival in Ontario and Manitoba in spring 1875:

The brethren [in Ontario] informed us about the food situation in Manitoba, that grasshoppers had devoured what little they had been able to sow and plant. They advised that we should leave the poor there [in Ontario], they would provide for them. Also they might be able to earn something and wouldn't need to incur debt....

[In Manitoba] we were received by ministers together with the brethren from whom we had been separated for a whole year.... Together the 160 families had struggled in poverty, and hand in hand and with mutual affection had triumphed over all the difficulties and burdens which beset them...<sup>236</sup>

Wiebe also mentions the two loans which the Bergthal community had received:

But we had to struggle through another year [1875-76], because, as already stated, the grasshoppers had destroyed everything, and even those somewhat better off had used up all their money. We did not bring them any money yet our own properties were still unsold...

Yes, the heavenly Father touched the hearts of the Ontario brethren towards us and also the dear government did everything possible to alleviate our distress.<sup>237</sup>

It was probably the money from the government that was being used to buy provisions for the people in the winter of 1875-76. Two men elected to give leadership to the buying and distribution of food were Abraham Doerksen senior from

---

Assuming that there were 1,587 Bergthalers in this group (52%), one comes up with the figure of \$113,880. This figure may be inflated because the Bergthaler group may have been poorer than their fellow travellers who came from the Chortitza and Fuerstenland Colonies.

<sup>236</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 52.

<sup>237</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 52.

Schoenthal and Johann Schwartz. These men "together with the ministers fulfilled their duties faithfully and with integrity for three years [until 1878] and that without any selfishness."<sup>238</sup> In May of 1876 ministers Gerhard and Heinrich Wiebe and Johann Braun bought potatoes and flour from Penner and Schultz. By August a bill of \$7,716.40 had been run up, but the community had also raised \$5,842.39. This left a debt of \$1,874.01.<sup>239</sup> These two major loans from the Swiss Mennonites became known as the Bread Debt because the money was used to buy emergency food provisions.

Some Mennonites had also wintered in Ontario in 1875-76. Peter and Maria Penner, for example, had apparently stayed at Peter G. Martin's place near St. Jacobs, Ontario. They travelled to Manitoba in May of 1876 and settled at Rosengard. The Penners had promised the Martin family that they would write them about the progress they were making in Manitoba. They had been able to plant a crop in 1876 and by 1878 were living at Burwalde.<sup>240</sup>

---

<sup>238</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 52-53.

<sup>239</sup>Information taken from four documents in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA: a) "Rat River Reserve, Nov. 9, 1876, Den Herrn Vorstehern den Bergthal Gemeinde!", b) "Rat Reserve Nov. 9 1876...Herrn Johann Braun und Gerh. Wiebe kauften von Penner & Schultz", c) "Rat River Reserve Nov. 9, 1876...Johann Braun bought for the Gemeinde from Penner and Schultz", and d) "Rat River Reserve Nov. 9...Johann Braun and H. Wiebe bought from Penner and Schultz."

<sup>240</sup>It is not clear if these Penners were Bergthalers. Nevertheless their letters to Peter G. Martin indicate the communication between the Ontario and Manitoba Mennonites. Onias F. Weber, Isaac R. Horst and Amos B. Hoover, Peter G.

In August 1876 the last group of 509 Bergthalers arrived in Manitoba, led by Oberschulze Jacob Peters, Peter Klippenstein and Reverend Franz Dyck. They brought \$58,000.<sup>241</sup> In December 1876 the Russian Aid Committee met in Ontario to secure more money from what remained of the \$100,000 government loan. Six people signed for a total of \$29,000; for some it meant mortgaging property.<sup>242</sup> It is not known if this money was destined for the Bergthaler community. This then is the story of the second loan. Again it was the Chortitzer Ministerial who had made the arrangements for the loan, and the Waisenamt's Waisen Vorsteher who handled its administration.<sup>243</sup>

D. Repayment of the Loans, 1878-94

The Chortitzer Church had borrowed a total of \$58,968.35 on two separate occasions in 1874 and 1875. By 1878, the interest on the Swiss Mennonite loan stood at \$5,673.24; by 1879 the interest on the Canadian government's loan was \$8,479.16. By 1883, the total debt had reached \$93,793.48.<sup>244</sup> This included the principal and interest of

---

Martin, German Letters ( [Elmira, Ontario], 1980, mimeographed 156 pages), p. 24-30. The book contains six letters written by the Penners to the Martin family, 1876-78.

<sup>241</sup>"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA.

<sup>242</sup>"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA.

<sup>243</sup>Further research needs to be done on the exact relationships between the church and Waisenamt and between the Waisenamt and the community.

<sup>244</sup>Figures taken from a document entitled \$35,329.83

both loans.

The Chortitzer church made several attempts to start paying off the debt. Accounts were kept of the Brot Schuld (Bread Debt) for some 25 villages from 1874 to 1878. On February 17, 1879, a list of people without property was made and their debt put in the Waisenamt. A second list was made the following year in February 1880.<sup>245</sup>

The first payment to the Canadian government was due April 1, 1880, and to the Ontario Mennonites on August 1, 1882.<sup>246</sup> From March 6 to 24, 1881, Bishop Gerhard Wiebe made a trip to Berlin, Ontario, to discuss the repayment of both loans with the Russian Aid Committee.<sup>247</sup> By now the two loans were treated as a package, although interest calculations continued to be done separately until 1883.<sup>248</sup>

---

...Jacob Y. Shantz," 4 pages. It includes calculations of the Ontario Mennonite loan as well, and makes mention of the 1881-82 collections taken to pay off the loan. Another document which is very similar to the above one is entitled "1874 am 1 August an die Kanadische Brueder Schuldig...\$23,638.52," 4 pages. It also includes calculations of the government loan, and also mentions the collections of 1881-82. Both documents found in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. All further calculations are based on these two documents, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>245</sup>Interview with Waisen Vorsteher Friesen.

<sup>246</sup>There is no specific reference to a payment to the Canadian government in 1880 in the Waisenamt records.

<sup>247</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 16. Epp states that the balance of the interest on the Swiss Mennonite loan was cancelled in 1880 and the principal reduced by 60 percent. Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 226.

<sup>248</sup>It is also not quite clear how the loan was divided between the Swiss Mennonites and the government. The

Wiebe records what happened on that 1881 trip:

[I went] in order to ask those brethren to have patience with us, because the time of repayment was close at hand. Our debt amounted to about \$80,000 [sic] dollars, and specifically we were to ask them to reduce part of the interest; however, they did not agree to this, though they agreed to grant us a few more years to repay our debt. In conclusion, they said, they would see how we would pay and then they would try to deal with us in a brotherly fashion.<sup>249</sup>

Soon after Wiebe's visit, the Chortitzer Church paid out \$2,850, April 19, 1881, and by April 1, 1883, had paid out a total of \$11,123.69 on the loan. This left a debt to the Ontario Mennonites of \$82,669.79 on April 1, 1883.<sup>250</sup>

The migration of Chortitzer members to the West Reserve from 1878 onward meant additional difficulties for the Chortitzer Church. In 1882 there was talk of collecting debt payments from both the East and West reserves. On January 18, 1883, a meeting was held on the East Reserve to divide the Waisenamt into two organizations.<sup>251</sup> It was

---

documentation clearly reveals that \$38,485.64 was owed the Swiss and \$55,307.84 was owed the government by April 1, 1883, and that \$11,123.69 had been paid back. Document "\$35,329.83...Jacob Y. Shantz," Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

<sup>249</sup>Wiebe's figure of \$80,000. is very close. Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 56. Although the Waisenamt documents do not provide the total amount due as of April 1, 1881, the author has arrived at the figure of \$81,147.21. This is assuming that no money had been paid back yet. It also takes into account that the two loans were due annually at different times of the year, April 1 and August 1.

<sup>250</sup>Document entitled "\$35,329.83...Jacob Y. Shantz." Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

<sup>251</sup>Document entitled "Beschluss, 1883 am 18 Januar ist auf..." and found in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.



decided to have each group be responsible for their own payment of the Bread debt, but that they would carry the outstanding debt together until all was paid. There was a substantial difference between the debts owing: the West Reserve debt was \$56,574.12 and the East Side \$24,056.40.<sup>252</sup> It illustrated the Bergthaler population difference between reserves.

On May 4, 1883, Waisenamt administrator, Cornelius Friesen, finally wrote Elias Schneider of the Ontario Aid Committee concerning a certain debt of \$1,359.94.<sup>253</sup> In October 1885, Philip Wismer closed his financial records. He stated that the 59 Swiss Mennonites from Lincoln County, Ontario, received a 40% return on the money they had loaned to their Russian Brethren. They had loaned \$1,500 and had been repaid a total of \$600.80.<sup>254</sup>

In 1889 the Canadian government passed a bill which dropped the interest rate from 6% to 4%. At this time it

---

<sup>252</sup>The figures were taken from "Verzeichniss wie viel die Bergthal Gemeinde an die Regierung Schuldig," 2 pages. Figures from this and two other documents give slightly different totals than the ones used earlier, and so are not mentioned in detail here. Two are documents which mention the debt of both reserves are: a) "Sumen der huelfs=Geldner zur Reise von Russland," 28 pages; c) "Verzeichniss wie viel Geld diese Gemeinde von die Kanadische Brueder," 1 page. All are part of the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

<sup>253</sup>Information from document entitled "Canada, Man., Osterwick am 4 May 1883, Werther Freund Elias Schneider..." Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

<sup>254</sup>"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA, p. 4 and 5. There is a discrepancy on dates; on one page he writes 1885 and on the next 1883.

also accepted \$33,986.53 "as full payment of interest." The Minister of Interior, Lowe, commented that the repayment of the loan was commencing as stipulated.<sup>255</sup> Jacob Y. Shantz, of Berlin, Ontario, visited the East Reserve in October 1890. Quite likely it included business about the loan's repayment.<sup>256</sup> In 1892, the Minister of the Interior stated that all obligations had been fulfilled.<sup>257</sup> A total of \$90,000 of the government loan had been used and \$24,000 of this had been rebated in consideration of the poorer elements.<sup>258</sup> On March 5, 1894, Bergthaler minister, Heinrich Wiebe, wrote "an open thank-you letter from the brethren in Manitoba to the brethren in Ontario." He profusely thanked the Swiss Mennonites for their aid to the Bergthal Mennonites in 1874 and 1875.<sup>259</sup> This 1894 letter thus ended the story of the repayment of the Bread Debt.

Brief mention should also be made of several Waisenamt

---

<sup>255</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Canada, p. 56-57.

<sup>256</sup>Reference to Shantz in "David Stoesz Diary," p. 33.

<sup>257</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 57.

<sup>258</sup>Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 226.

<sup>259</sup>Article entitled "Ein offenes Dankschreiben der Brueder in Manitoba an die Brueder in Ontario...Heinrich Wiebe, Gretna, 5 March 1894," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 18 April 1894. The Rundschau had taken the article from Herold der Wahrheit. Wiebe mentions that the total sum amounted to \$100,000. and that they had been able to pay it back in 1885 and 1886. His reference is not quite clear.

The Waisenamt materials that the author of this thesis looked at did not mention how the loans were paid back from 1883 to 1894. Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. Thus the reliance on secondary source materials.

developments during these years. In 1880 new regulations for the Waisenamt were drawn up by Reverend Franz Dyck. It was entitled Allgemeine Waisen-Verordnung der von Russland in Manitoba eingewanderten und angesiedelten Mennoniten. It was signed by Bishop Gerhard Wiebe and Assistant Bishop David Stoesz, four ministers and the two Waisenamt administrators, Cornelius Friesen and Cornelius Epp.<sup>260</sup> A long standing Waisenamt administrator during these years was Cornelius Friesen of Osterwick. He had started this position in Russia on June 16, 1875, as a replacement for his father, Peter Friesen. Every three years after that, the church reelected him as one of the Waisen Vorsteher until he stepped down on January 3, 1896.<sup>261</sup> He gave consistent and stable leadership to the institution. Mention has also been made of Peter Funk, who acted as a Waisen Vorsteher during the emigration. Cornelius Epp of Schoenthal was another person who served as administrator. He served a long side Cornelius Friesen from 1880-83.<sup>262</sup> In 1900, Cornelius Dueck, and Cornelius T. Friesen, Osterwick, were the administrators and by 1905 a

---

<sup>260</sup>Waisen-Verordnung 1930, 31 pages. This is a printed booklet which includes the original 1880 edition of the regulations and adds some notations done in 1903, 1905 and 1929.

<sup>261</sup>Information from envelope marked "Gerhard Toewsen Erben..." in the Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

<sup>262</sup>Epp is listed on a documented dated February 1880, in Waisen-Verordnung 1930, p. 26. Epp is also listed on a document entitled "Beschluss, 1883 am 18 Januar...", Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

Diedrich Wiebe had replaced Dueck.<sup>263</sup> On January 28, 1903, Cornelius T. Friesen copied the Waisenamt rules from the 1880 edition. The Chortitzer Ministerial accepted the revised rules along with the changed form of the inheritance contract on April 25, 1905.<sup>264</sup> Although the Waisenamt's main task was to look after the widows and orphans in the community, and stood at arms length from the church, this institution had been in the centre of the migration to Canada and the repayment of the Bread Debt.

E. Response to Receiving Help

The effect of receiving financial aid from their Swiss brethren and from the Canadian government was that the Chortitzer church was willing to give other people help. In 1884, the church gave \$252 toward needy brethren in Asia.<sup>265</sup> In 1892, Bishop Stoesz personally handed John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana, \$166: it was "collected for the relief of hunger in Russia."<sup>266</sup> In 1895, \$1,294.34 was distributed to financially needy Mennonites in Russia who wanted to

---

<sup>263</sup>Information from document entitled "13 Februar 1900, An die beiden Maenner Als Johann Neufeld," Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA, and from Waisen=Verordnung 1930, p. 26 and 29.

<sup>264</sup>Waisen=Verordnung 1930, p. 26-29.

<sup>265</sup>"Brethren in Asia," Herald of Truth 1 July 1884. It is uncertain what the money was used for: aid of suffering people or specifically for financially poor persons who wanted to emigrate.

<sup>266</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 42.

emigrate.<sup>267</sup> The Chortitzer Church heard about the needs of others from three Mennonite newspapers: Herald of Truth, Herald der Wahrheit, and Die Mennonitische Rundschau. They were published by John F. Funk in Elkhart, Indiana, and had wide circulation among the Mennonites in Prussia, Russia and North America.

John F. Funk and Elkhart, Indiana, were no strangers to the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. In 1873, the Bergthal Colony delegates Reverend Heinrich Wiebe and Oberschulze Jacob Peters had bumped into Funk because he was a prominent leader in aiding the Russian Mennonites. As early as 1876, Bishop David Stoesz had ordered a calendar from Elkhart.<sup>268</sup> That was also where the Chortitzer catechism, confession of faith, hymnbook and choralbook were published. In 1885, several Chortitzer members from Gnadenfeld, Schoensee, Hochfeld, Schoenfeld and Eigenhof had ordered choralbooks through Peter L. Dueck of Gruenfeld.<sup>269</sup> Reverend Franz Dyck also had an 1885 subscription to Die Mennonitische Rundschau

---

<sup>267</sup>Letter "Hochstadt, 30 Dezember 1895...Cornelius Stoesz and David Loewen," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 15 Januar 1896. A plea from Asia had come in 1886 already and the church had appointed a committee to collect the money. It is hard to say how this money was handled. It seems to have been collected by the newspaper publishers. It also may have gone into the Mennonite Board of Guardians or into a relief agency that John F. Funk started in 1897.

<sup>268</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 10.

<sup>269</sup>"Hochstadt, P.O., Manitoba, Gruenfeld, 31 Dez. 1885. Menn. Publ. Co., Elkhart. L. Br. Funk....P. L. Dueck," letter found in the Funk MSS, AMC.

and wrote Editor John Harms that he wanted to renew for 1886.<sup>270</sup> Funk, together with Isaac Peters, personally visited the Mennonites in Manitoba in 1892, and had visited Bishop David Stoesz. Although Funk was a controversial figure in the (Old) Mennonite Church and has been described as a man with "progressive ideas in Sunday School, evangelism, and religious publication," he helped Mennonite churches, like the Chortitzers, stay in touch with the wider Mennonite world.<sup>271</sup>

In 1895, the Chortitzer Church helped an immigrant group settle in Canada. Bishop Andreas Lilge and his Stundist group had settled as a colony at Fort Saskatchewan, near Edmonton, in 1894, and needed both financial and material aid.<sup>272</sup> They were thinking of buying some cattle from the government, and for some reason, Lilge travelled to the East Reserve in November 1894. By April 18, 1895, Stoesz writes in his diary:

People from Fort Saskatchewan under leadership of Bishop Andreas Lilge herded cattle to the train, that they had borrowed here, and intend to ship cattle to Edmonton, hoping to arrive there by the 23rd.<sup>273</sup>

---

<sup>270</sup>Correspondence "Lieber Freund Harms...Franz Dyck, Schoensee, P.O. Hochstadt, Manitoba, Dezember 12, 1885," Funk MSS, AMC.

<sup>271</sup>Information from "John Fretz Funk" by Harold S. Bender, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>272</sup>Report on this group found in article entitled "A. Lilge...(Ndwst.)," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 14 November 1894.

<sup>273</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 50. There is also a letter

Stundism was a pietistic religious movement in Russia which emphasized the practice of private devotional meetings and bible study. Their name comes from these Stunde "hour" meetings.<sup>274</sup> It is curious that the Chortitzer Church helped out a non-Mennonite religious group. The differences in theology, however, were quickly overridden by the awareness that this group needed help.

The Chortitzer church had received help from the Ontario Swiss Brethren and the Canadian government, and were passing on their gratitude by helping others. Now, this mutual aid also reached beyond the boundaries of the Chortitzer community.

#### F. Conclusion

The Waisenamt played a significant economic role in the emigration and settlement of the Chortitzer community. It had been achieved at the initiative of the Waisenamt administrators and the Chortitzer ministers, and through the cooperation of the community. First, it was the Waisenamt Waisen Vorsteher who took leadership in finding a financial solution for the emigration to Manitoba. They came up with a plan and acted as mediators between the rich and poor. The

---

extant to Bishop Lilge, dated 25 April 1895, in the Menno Colony MSS, MHCA. It was signed by Ministers David Stoesz, Cornelius Friesen, Johann Neufeld and Johann Wiebe, as well as by Gerhard Kehler, Peter Toews, Gerhard Schroeder and Heinrich Harder.

<sup>274</sup>Information from "Stundism" by Cornelius Krahn, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

Waisenamt was also transferred intact to the Manitoba setting.

Secondly, the Chortitzer ministers were the leaders in negotiating the loans from the Ontario Swiss Mennonites and the Canadian government. These loans proved crucial to the survival of the prairie community. The ministers were also able to have the Waisenamt manage the debt, even though it was an organization which stood at arms length from the church.

Thirdly, the success of the emigration and the loan repayments hinged on the cooperation of the community. The well-to-do farmers agreed to subsidize the poorer elements of the colony, the orphans did not receive interest payments on their monies, and internal debts were transferred to Manitoba. When a portion of the group moved to the West Reserve, the repayments were equally divided.

The Chortitzer church, however, had had to depend on outside resources. The Chortitzer Ministerial were in a desperate financial situation during the emigration and the first years in Manitoba. They had looked for help from their Swiss Mennonite brethren and the Canadian government, and both proved quite helpful, patient and forgiving. Not only did the Swiss house and employ the first immigrants, but loaned the Bergthaler over \$20,000. The Canadian government provided further funding of \$35,000. The Ontario Aid Committee then was generous to Bishop Gerhard Wiebe in 1881,



and forgiving when they lost 60 cents on a dollar on their loans. The Canadian government had reduced its interest rates and then rebated \$24,000. The Chortitzer community would not have been able to survive as it did without this help. The effect of this assistance was a willingness in the Chortitzer church to aid persons outside their community. They sent money to Russia for the hungry and for the needy emigrants, and loaned cattle to a Stundist immigrant group in Alberta.

The Chortitzers' reliance on the Waisenamt helped maintain and reinforce their community. They chose its leadership, arranged debts, collected funds for the Bread Debt, and paid out benefits solely within the boundaries of the Chortitzer church. The Ministerial, however, was forced to look for economic assistance from outside their community. These financial obligations proved beneficial for the Chortitzers and helped them remain apart from and yet a part of the wider community.

## CHAPTER 5: EDUCATION

The Chortitzer ministers played a significant role in the maintenance of schools in the Chortitzer community. This chapter outlines the development of these schools and the ensuing debate on private versus public education. This also raises the issue of Chortitzer adaptation to Canadian society.

### A. Establishment of Schools, 1875-79

Sometime between 1875 and 1879, four Chortitzer ministers drew up a school constitution. This document became the basis of the educational program for the Chortitzer community.<sup>275</sup> The school was to run from October 1 to April 1 and from May 1 to July 1 of each year. All female children between the ages of 6 and 12 and males between 6 and 14 were required to go to school.

The curriculum was organized around four classes instead of grades: Fibler (primary class), Katechismer (Catechism class), Testamentler (New Testament class) and Bibler (Old Testament class). The children were taught reading, pronunciation, writing, penmanship, spelling, and

---

<sup>275</sup>"General School Decree," There is no date on this document, but from the signatures of Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, and ministers David Stoesz, Cornelius Stoesz and Heinrich Wiebe, we can ascertain it was after Wiebe came to Manitoba in summer 1875 and before David Stoesz was ordained as assistant bishop in April 1879.

arithmetic. Arithmetic was included so that the students would be able to manage as village farmers. The textbooks were religious in nature to help the children read and understand the Bible, the catechism and the hymnbook. Each day opened and ended with a song and prayer. Fraktur was sometimes encouraged; it enhanced the beauty of penmanship, arithmetic problems, the flyleaf of books, and Christmas and New Year's cards.<sup>276</sup>

The administration of each school was done by the village council or by school trustees. The expenses were to be met by a levy on each student, and were to be paid in cash or kind. Accurate attendance records were to be kept for this reason, and were to be presented to the school trustees on the first day of each month. Added to the student levy was an additional cash payment based on the number of children in each family. The villagers were also to provide the teacher with food provisions and fuel. The church appointed two ministers each year to inspect the schools.

Teachers were to be in good standing with the church,

---

<sup>276</sup>Description of the school program taken from "General School Decree," and from Jake Peters, Mennonite Private Schools: In Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1874-1925, Mennonite Village Museum Historical Series II (Steinbach, Manitoba: Mennonite Village Museum, 1985) p. 13-16, 29-30. Hereafter referred to as Peters, Mennonite Private Schools. There are some samples of fraktur from the Bergthal Colony, 1846-49 are included in Peters' book. Samples of arithmetic problems and penmanship are contained in the "David Stoesz Diary." This was probably a reflection of Stoesz' teaching days in Friedrichsthal, Russia: "Gretna, 26 August 1895... Klaas Peters, Die Mennonitische Rundschau 4 September 1895.

have a reputable character, be well-behaved and be a good example to the children. They also were to settle all arguments and punish laziness at school. The plan was to hold regular teacher meetings three times a year, in order to discuss mutual problems and allow less proficient teachers to obtain a better education. The schedule of meetings was: December 20 in Pastwa, January 20 in Chortitz and February 20 in Grunthal, with March 20 reserved for an extra meeting, if necessary.

The constitution of the school was important for the Chortitzer Church. One of the emigrants' concerns had been the right to establish and organize their own schools. This privilege was written up in the 1873 Order in Council:

10th That the Mennonites will have the fullest privilege of exercising their religious principles, and educating their children in schools, as provided by law, without any kind of molestation or restriction whatever.<sup>277</sup>

Chortitzer schools had been established on the East Reserve by about fall 1875. Stoesz writes about the Bergthal school:

On Oct 28th [1875] myself and my wife accompanied by Bernhard Klippenstein on another sleigh, drove on a sleigh, to pick up teacher Heinrich Wiens and his family.<sup>278</sup>

H. Harder taught at Bergfeld in 1875-76, and Jacob Hiebert, followed him, 1876-ca. 1880. Johann Rempel taught at Tannau from 1876-78.<sup>279</sup>

---

<sup>277</sup>Zacharias, Reinland, p. 31.

<sup>278</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 9.

<sup>279</sup>Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 9, 26.

B. Joining the Manitoba Public School System, 1878

On October 17, 1878 the Protestant School Board wrote a letter to the Mennonite churches in Manitoba. The board wanted to make sure Mennonites were aware of the availability of financial support, since there were some 1,600 Mennonite students in the province. The grant amounted to \$80-100 for each school listed with the government. This letter also stated that Mennonites could choose their own teachers, curriculum, and language of instruction: "your rights and privileges shall in no respect be interfered with." It also informed the Mennonites of a meeting slated for November 6 in Mr. Hespeler's office to answer any questions.<sup>280</sup>

This November 6, 1878, meeting was reported in the Manitoba Weekly Free Press:

A deputation of Mennonites met the Protestant section of the Board of Education Wednesday, by appointment, in reference to the introduction of the public school system amongst them. The result of the conference was that the Mennonites are to petition the Board to be admitted to the privileges of the system...under the working of the School Act.<sup>281</sup>

It is not known who attended. Chortitzer Bishop, Gerhard

---

<sup>280</sup>The letter has been reproduced, in its original German language, in Festkomitee der Mennonitischen Ostreserve, Gedenkfeier der Mennoniten Einwanderung in Manitoba, Canada. 1874:75:1949, Abgehalten am 8. Juli 1949 in Steinbach, Manitoba (North Kildonan, Manitoba: J. Regehr), p. 78-79. Hereafter referred to as Gedenkfeier. The copy in English translation is in Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 160-61. John C. Reimer, the author of these books, does not say where the original is located.

<sup>281</sup>Article entitled "Local and Provincial," Manitoba Weekly Free Press (9 November 1878), p. 5.

Wiebe, however, reflected upon this meeting in his book:

We had been here only a few years when we were offered money for the assistance and support of our schools, which seemed very risky to us because we feared it might cause us to lose the educational independence which the government had guaranteed us. Hespeler said there was no danger of that. We agreed among ourselves to accept this offer.<sup>282</sup>

A week and a half later, the Board of Education read two petitions by Mennonite Bishops Gerhard Wiebe of the Chortitzer Church and Peter Toews of the Kleine Gemeinde, "in which they asked the board to erect the following villages into school districts."<sup>283</sup> The motion to accept these schools as districts was moved by W.N. Kennedy and seconded by Rev. Prof. Hart, and was carried. At this meeting, William Hespeler was also appointed a member of the Board of Education. He was able to communicate with the German speaking Mennonites and could act as a mediator.<sup>284</sup> Thus, on

---

<sup>282</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 54.

<sup>283</sup>Information taken from article entitled "Board of Education," Manitoba Weekly Free Press (23 November 1878), p. 3. The Mennonite bishops are not named in the article but are mentioned by Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 107. It would be interesting to find the original petitions and obtain the arguments used by the two bishops. The villages mentioned in the article were: [Chortitzer]: Bergfeld, Bergthal, Blumengard, Blumstein, Chortitz, Ebenfeld, Felsenton, Friedrichsthal, Gnadenfeld, Gruenthal, Hochfeld, Kronsgart, Kronsthal, Osterwick, Reichenbach, Reinfeld, Rosengart, Rosenthal, Schanzenfeld, Schoenberg, Schoenfeld, Schoenhorst, Schoensee, Schoenthal, Schoenwiese, Silberfeld, Strasberg, and Tannau; [Kleine Gemeinde]: Blumenhof, Blumenort, Gruenfeld, Heuboden, Hochstadt, Rosenhof, Rosenort, Steinbach.

<sup>284</sup>Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 105-16.

November 18, 1878, 28 Chortitzer and 8 Kleine Gemeinde public schools were established on the East Reserve.

From January 7 to 15, 1879, Bishop Gerhard Wiebe and Reverend David Stoesz inspected the Chortitzer schools.<sup>285</sup> On March 10, a general teachers' conference was held at Chortitz. Present were 36 teachers from both Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde communities. They were examined by German consul William Hespeler, and Mennonite teachers Abram Isaac from Schoenau and Jacob Friesen from Tannau. Also present were the two bishops, Gerhard Wiebe and Peter Toews.<sup>286</sup>

C. Withdrawal from the Public School System, 1878-81

Sometime after 1878, the Chortitzer church declined all financial support from the Manitoba Protestant School Board and withdrew from the public school system. After reconstructing this story from skeleton references and vague remarks, one can conclude the withdrawal occurred on March 15, 1881. An early indication of tension was an interchange between Bishop Gerhard Wiebe and William Hespeler, the school inspector for the Mennonite teachers.<sup>287</sup> When the ministers handed in the names of the school teachers for inspection,

---

<sup>285</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 13.

<sup>286</sup>Taken from John C. Reimer's articles in Gedenkfeier, p. 83 and Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 25. The source of information on this meeting comes from G.G. Kornelson's writings.

<sup>287</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 54, 55. The account is taken from Gerhard Wiebe's report and all quotations are from his book.

William Hespeler asked them to list the teachers in three categories. Teachers were given certificates for one, two or three terms, depending on their experience.<sup>288</sup> The Chortitzer ministers, however, were offended by this question because they assumed it meant their teachers did not meet certain standards. One of the tenets of the Mennonite philosophy of education was that it should be simple and geared to a Mennonite agricultural village.<sup>289</sup> Higher education was equated with arrogance and pride. When Hespeler asked the ministers to list their teachers in different groups, they asked "Why?." Hespeler replied:

Well,...you don't think that the government would pay money to those who are cowherds [sic] in summer and school teachers in winter?

This brought a reaction from Bishop Gerhard Wiebe. He had already been suspicious of the earlier offer of financial support. He feared the church would lose its independent control over the schools. Although Hespeler had then said there would be no fear of that, he was still operating from a different educational philosophy than the Chortitzers.

Bishop Wiebe therefore responded to Hespeler's accusation:

Then this writer gathered his papers together and said, 'Mr. Hespeler, we now understand; we will stay with the arrangements made by our delegates.'

Wiebe was willing to withdraw from the public school system over this issue of higher education. He would go back to the

---

<sup>288</sup>Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 108.

<sup>289</sup>Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 8.



earlier arrangements of complete independence of the Mennonite schools. Hespeler's response to Wiebe reveals that he wanted the Mennonites within the Manitoba school system.

He [Hespeler] quickly reversed matters and said, raising his hand, 'We will look the other way at first, until you are able to do better.'

Bishop Wiebe accepted Hespeler's retraction perhaps because the Chortitzer church needed the financial assistance. The Chortitzer ministers then gave Hespeler the names of their school teachers.

Then we gave the names of our teachers, but his words had made so deep impression on us so that we didn't trust them.

It is not known exactly when this interchange between the Chortitzer ministers and Hespeler took place. It was probably after the first November 6, 1878, meeting with Hespeler in Winnipeg, when the public school system was explained to the Mennonites, and before March 10, 1879, when Hespeler and two Mennonite teachers inspected the Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde teachers at Chortitz.<sup>290</sup>

The tension between Hespeler and the Chortitzer ministers may also have stemmed from the fact that Hespeler was the examiner of the Mennonite teachers. The Chortitzer

---

<sup>290</sup>It was at the November 6, 1878, meeting where Wiebe became suspicious, and Hespeler said there was no danger. Wiebe then writes: "We agreed among ourselves to accept this offer." This statement probably refers to the petition sent to the School Board which asked if the Chortitzer schools could join the school system. After that Wiebe writes: "Then we drove down with the names of our teachers...." It is this trip to Winnipeg which is undated, and which included the exchange between the Chortitzer ministers and Hespeler.

ministers may have felt threatened that their role as school inspectors was not being recognized. This was remedied in 1880 when the two bishops, Gerhard Wiebe and Peter Toews, were appointed to the Committee of Examiners, along with Hespeler. In this 1879-80 year, they inspected 22 teachers and gave them each a one year certificate.<sup>291</sup>

It was sometime during the next school year that the Chortitzer Church decided to withdraw from the public school system. Although they continued to accept government assistance through this 1880-81 school year, tension seemed to mount and result in a formal March 1881 break. On November 12, 1880, Stoesz writes, "I intend to drive to Niverville in regard to the school teachers, and Hespeler." Presumably there was a falling out between Hespeler and Stoesz. Stoesz's reference to the school situation half a year later seems to indicate that he went to the Protestant School Board and formally withdrew the Chortitzer Church from the public school system on March 15, 1881. Seemingly, no agreement on an educational philosophy could be reached. Stoesz writes: "on [Tuesday] the 15th of March [1881] I went to Winnipeg, by train, in regards to the schools." The Chortitzer Ministerial were probably anticipating the annual inspections of their teachers, and decided this was the best time to make the withdrawal. Only six teachers were examined

---

<sup>291</sup>Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 105-16.

and given one year certificates in 1881; these six reflected the Kleine Gemeinde's continued participation in the public school system.<sup>292</sup> Bishop Gerhard Wiebe wrote his own summary of these events:

It didn't take long until we discovered where the matter was leading and so we quickly backed out and accepted no more money.<sup>293</sup>

Although the Chortitzer Church had withdrawn, they received one last payment for their teachers on the Saturday following Stoesz's meeting in Winnipeg. It was Hespeler who delivered the money, but Stoesz did not go and meet him. Stoesz writes: "Saturday [19 March 1881] Hespeler was in Niverville to pay out the teacher salaries which were delivered to me."<sup>294</sup> Presumably it was also at this time that Hespeler inspected the Mennonite teachers. This time, however, he did not need to examine the Chortitzer teachers nor give them certificates for the 1881-82 year.

The position taken by the Chortitzers was not followed by the Kleine Gemeinde community. They stayed with the district schools. This is lamented by Bishop Gerhard Wiebe in his reflections in 1898:

Oh, how much we would have liked to see the Kleine Gemeinde do likewise and support us in this matter. How

---

<sup>292</sup>Information that six teachers were examined in 1881 and that each received a one year certificate is found in Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 105-16.

<sup>293</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 54, 55.

<sup>294</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 14, 16. The page numbers refer to diary quotations on this and the previous page.

much stronger the churches would have been!...But the money has so dazzled their eyes, that they no longer see the false teaching in the schools.<sup>295</sup>

A corollary note summarizes the complexity in trying to reconstruct the story of the Chortitzer's withdrawal from the public school system from skeleton remarks. It is a reference to the two Chortitzer schools at Bergthal and Kronsthal. These two schools had been registered with the government in 1878 along with the other 28 Chortitzer schools. Unlike all other Chortitzer schools, however, they were given public school district numbers and identified as School District No. 67 and 68, respectively. Reportedly, these communities had their schools listed, but then withdrew their names soon after.<sup>296</sup>

#### D. Private Schools, 1881-1914

The Chortitzer church maintained private schools for their community between 1881 and 1914. They were operating no more than 16 private schools in the 1881-82 school year.<sup>297</sup> This considerable decline from the original number of 28 in 1878 was because over half of the Chortitzer membership had moved or was intending to move to the West Reserve by January of 1881. This migration drastically

---

<sup>295</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 55.

<sup>296</sup>Note on these two schools found in Gedenkfeier, p. 79, and Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 161.

<sup>297</sup>Ens indicates that the Chortitzer had operated 16 schools in the 1879-80 school year. Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 105-16.

reduced the enrollment in the schools and took out a large portion of its financial base.

A meeting was held on January 18, 1883, to deal with the emigration problem. Present were the Bergthaler ministers, Waisenamt administrators and reeves of both East and West Reserves. Although the meeting dealt with a large number of topics, the school situation seemed to be the central issue for Bishop David Stoesz. The purpose of this meeting, he wrote, was "to mediate a matter in the school accounts of the church groups."<sup>298</sup> The Bergthaler church probably wanted capital to build their own schools on the West Reserve, while the Chortitzer were feeling the loss of a solid financial base on the East Reserve.

By 1891 there were probably 10 to 15 schools operating in the Chortitzer community.<sup>299</sup> The church regularly held worship services at some nine villages. Presumably if a village was a regular meetingplace for the church, it also contained a school.<sup>300</sup> Bishop Stoesz makes some passing

---

<sup>298</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 18. This meeting had been previously mentioned in the context of church organization and the division of the Waisenamt.

<sup>299</sup>There were 33 Chortitzer villages on the East Reserve in 1891. Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59.

<sup>300</sup>Regular meetings were held at Strassberg, Osterwick, Schoenthal, Hochfeld, Chortitz, Rosengard, Burwalde, Gruenthal, and Bergfeld. There is inconclusive evidence on the other five meetingplaces: Blumengard, Blumstein, Gnadenfeld, Reichenbach and Schanzenberg. See Map No. 2. in chapter three for the location of these meetingplaces, and Appendix No. 2 for more details on meetingplaces. Note that

references to the schools. Stoesz mentions a school teacher at Bergthal in August 8, 1886, and records that teacher Abraham Friesen was a guest for dinner on December 18, 1891. Quite likely, the large village of Bergthal had a school, even though it was not a church meetingplace.<sup>301</sup> At one point, Stoesz reports that "Gerhard Schroeder brought his school children here [Bergthal]" in November 1889. There probably was no school near Schroeder's place.<sup>302</sup> Stoesz also records that he gave the school teacher 3-4 bushels of wheat each year, from 1892-95.<sup>303</sup> By 1914, there were approximately ten private schools in operation.<sup>304</sup>

The church's general philosophy throughout this time was that every child should attend school and that education should be simple and geared to Mennonite village society. It also assumed that the school was primarily the responsibility of the church and not the state.<sup>305</sup>

---

there is a photograph of the Bergfeld school in Gedenkfeir, p. 84.

301 "David Stoesz Diary," p. 25, 39.

302 "David Stoesz Diary," p. 29.

303 "David Stoesz Diary," p. 43 and 54.

304 They included Reinland, Schanzenfeld, Osterwick, Blumengard, Chortitz, Ebenfeld, Hochfeld, Gruenthal, Neubergfeld and Rosengard. See Map No. 3; the source of this information is a 1926 list of meetingplaces. School buildings are mentioned in eight of the ten cases, and it is assumed that Chortitz and Gruenthal, which had church buildings, also had schools. Grunthal, p. 69.

305 Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 8. This statement is for the pre-World War I era, 1874-1914. Not

The church controlled curriculum development, set operational guidelines, and was responsible for conducting inspections. The village council (Dorfsamt) directed the daily operation of the school.<sup>306</sup>

An 1882 notebook from the Blumstein school provides a glimpse into one of the private schools. There were six students in the school, ranging from the ages of 9 to 13. They came from the four families who lived in the village: Reimer, Blatz and two Stoesz families. It is not certain if there was a school building or if the students met in a home. The notebook also provides examples of penmanship exercises and the religious instruction taught in the schools. Each student had to copy out a saying provided by the teacher. One 11 year old boy named Heinrich Stoesz wrote:

Humility thinks often and gladly on those who are weak; never boasting of its own merit, it makes itself fair and reasonable against others. Blumstein 4 December 1882  
Heinrich Stoesz.<sup>307</sup>

By 1903 only a few changes had occurred in the private school program.<sup>308</sup> The school term had been reduced from

---

much is known about the Chortitzer private schools from 1874-1919 because there is a lack of original source material. Peters has written the most comprehensive paper to date on Mennonite private schools in Manitoba, 1874-1925.

<sup>306</sup>Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 29.

<sup>307</sup>Booklet entitled "Probe Schriften Geschrieben zu Blumstein d. 4ten December 1882," and found in the Stoesz MSS, Landmark. Information on the families comes from the Chortitzer Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>308</sup>Bishop Peter Toews recopied and edited the ca. 1878 "General School Decree" after he became bishop in 1903. A copy of this ca. 1903 school constitution is entitled "Allgemeine Schulerordnung...So gegeben vom Kirchen Lehrdienst, der Gemeinde zu Chortitz, Aeltester Peter Toews,"

eight to seven months. After spring seeding, there was now only one month of school instead of two. There was also the added religious emphasis on one's assurance of salvation. The Bible verse, John 3:16b, "that whosoever believeth in...[Jesus] should not perish, but have everlasting life" was included in the teacher's list of objectives in instructing the pupils. The Chortitzer Ministerial had also written up some School Regulations. The children began reciting them every morning, and the first couple of lines went as follows:

Das Erste was du thust, Wenn du erwachest frueh;  
Sei ein Gebet zu Gott, Kind das versaeume nie!  
Dann stehe schleunig auf, Und biete Gutenmorgen  
Den Eltern die fuer dich, Mit treuer Liebe sorgen.

The first thing you do when you wake up early,  
Never to neglect to say a prayer to God!  
Then get up promptly and offer a "good morning"  
To your parents who care for you with devout love.<sup>309</sup>

E. Pressures to form Public School Districts

There was continual internal and external pressures on the Chortitzer Ministerial to start public school districts. The internal pressure came from the emergence of a number of district schools in and around the Chortitzer community. The

---

and is found in the Gerhard Ens Collection, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hereafter referred to as Ens MSS, MHCA. A comparison of these two constitutions revealed some changes in the school program.

<sup>309</sup>"Schul=Regeln. So gegeben von [sic] Kirchen Lehrdienst der Gemeinde zu Chortitz. Aeltester Peter T. Toews," Mennonite Village Museum, Steinbach, Manitoba. Translation is by Dennis Stoesz. These rules are mentioned by Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 13. A reproduction of the rules are on page 14.



external pressure came from the Board of Education school inspectors and the school legislation of 1890 and 1896. First, there was the Niverville School District No. 315 which started in 1884. Although its trustees were mostly English and Scottish people, Mennonite members included G. Hiebert, Gerhard Kliewer and Penner. Quite likely all were Chortitzers. Gerhard Kliewer had been the Reeve of the municipality from 1880 to 1883, and lived on his own homestead just south of Niverville.<sup>310</sup> Second, the neighboring Kleine Gemeinde church had started six district schools in 1878, and had not pulled out of the public school system in 1881.<sup>311</sup> Although this community was sharply

---

<sup>310</sup>John Schellenberg, Schools-Our Heritage: From the School Districts to Hanover Unitary School Division, 1878-1968 (Steinbach, Manitoba: The Board of the Hanover School Division No. 15, 1985), p. 148-55. Hereafter referred to as Schellenberg, Schools-Our Heritage. See also reference to Gerhard Kliewer in "Kliewer-Klan," by Barbara Froese, Niverville: A History, 1878-1986, by Fred Kaita, Norman A. Wittick, Irene Grant, Peter D. Enns and Peter Bueckert, ed., ( [Niverville, Manitoba]: Niverville and District Historical Society, 1986), p. 137-39. Hereafter referred to as Niverville.

<sup>311</sup>Schools included Blumenort, Blumenhof, Gruenfeld, Heuboden, Hochstadt and Steinbach. Information from "Board of Education" 1878. A school inspector's report does not include Heuboden in 1886. See Zacharias, Reinland, p. 248. The schools of Rosenort and Rosenhof are not included here because they fall outside the East Reserve, i.e. at Scratching River west of Morris. One report mentions the Hochstadt school in 1887. See teacher Heinrich Rempel's articles, "Hochstadt P. O., 18 November...Heinrich Rempel," and "Hochstadt, 17 December...Heinrich Rempel," in Die Mennonitische Rundschau 7 December 1887 and 31 December 1890, respectively. A school building was built at Neuanlage in 1893 and a private school in the area of the Ekron School District was started in 1914. See Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 170.

distinguished from the Chortitzers by their church affiliations, there must have been some communication between them. For example, Kleine Gemeinde teachers were to have taught at the Chortitzer schools at Ebenfeld and Schanzenberg.<sup>312</sup>

Thirdly, there was the influence of the Anglo-Saxon, German, Ukrainian and French neighbors. They had started a number of school districts throughout this period. Anglo-Saxons had established Clearsprings School District No. 85 in 1878. They started Ridgewood District No. 274, which was in the centre of the reserve, in 1884, and Giroux District No. 1742, which was further east, in 1914.

German and Ukrainian communities had moved into the East Reserve in the 1890s and 1900s and started district schools as well. The German Lutherans established Friedensfeld District No. 1572 in 1911.<sup>313</sup> The Ukrainians started three schools between 1910 and 1912: Sarto District No. 1539, Willow Plains No. 1588, and Slawna No. 1624.<sup>314</sup>

---

<sup>312</sup>Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 25.

<sup>313</sup>Information on various communities found in Penner, Hanover, p. 29-31, 33-39 and 41. School districts of Clearsprings and Ridgewood found in Schellenberg, Schools-Our Heritage, p. 46-49 and 170-79. Ridgewood seemed to have trustees with English names such as Steels, Cohoe and Mathews, though the school was located in the centre of the reserve, where presumably German and Ukrainian people settled: SW19-T7-R7, just northeast of the prominent village of Rosengard.

<sup>314</sup>Schellenberg, Schools-Our Heritage, p. 192-95, 205-08, and 234-37.

As Mennonites moved in a northwesterly direction beyond the East Reserve boundaries, they also came in contact with their French neighbors. The French had started LeBlanc District No. 1574 in 1911.<sup>315</sup> The influence of these English, German, Ukrainian and French school districts, however, seems not to have been felt until 1919. This was when the provincial government implemented its legislation which made it mandatory for children to attend public schools.<sup>316</sup>

Fourthly, the pressure for the Chortitzer members to participate in district schools also came from the three Mennonite school inspectors who periodically visited the district schools in the East Reserve during this period. As employees of the Manitoba School Board, they naturally pushed for establishing more district schools. The inspectors were also critical of the Chortitzer private school system. In 1885, H.H. Ewert reported that the salaries of the Chortitzer teachers were incapable of supporting them or of allowing them to obtain more education.<sup>317</sup> It is noteworthy that

---

<sup>315</sup>Schellenberg, Schools-Our Heritage, p. 113-16.  
LeBlanc.

<sup>316</sup>Schellenberg, Schools-Our Heritage. Mennonite names do not start appearing in these school districts until the 1920s onward. Many of the school districts described in this book were started in 1919.

<sup>317</sup>H. H. Ewert's inspector's report entitled "Die District=Schulen in der Mennoniten=Reserve in Sued=Manitoba," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 24 April 1895. Inspectors were Jacob Friesen 1882-84, Wilhelm Rempel December 1884-January 1888, W. Thiem-White February 1, 1888-June 1889, H.H. Ewert

between 1895 and 1915, the number of Mennonite district schools in Manitoba jumped dramatically from 24 to 63. Many of these schools may have been on the West Reserve.<sup>318</sup> The School Act of 1890 and compromise of 1896 may have opened the door for some Chortitzer members to accept district schools. If there were ten children in a school district who spoke a language other than English, the public school could be bilingual.

The position of the Chortitzer ministerial was to continue their private schools despite the various internal and external pressures to start public school districts. Former bishop Gerhard Wiebe could not understand the position of the government and regretted the move of some to public schools. He wrote in 1898:

The government still says: You have the freedom to retain your teaching, but at the same time it supports those who strive after district schools. For example, there may be two or three who want such a school, and ten who oppose it, who wish to retain our own methods, that is, to teach the pure gospel; yet the few win out, and yet it is said, you still have the liberty to retain your own schools, but these you have to finance entirely, and to comply with what is expected of you.<sup>319</sup>

In 1887, a Chortitzer correspondent in Die Mennonitische Rundschau wrote that he enjoyed the magazine, but was saddened to read the many articles which so strongly defended

---

September 1, 1891-1903, Johann M. Friesen. See Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments," p. 111-16; Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 259.

<sup>318</sup>Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 31-34.

<sup>319</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 55.

the district school. He wanted to retain a defenseless Christianity, and feared that this was not being upheld in the public schools. It was true, he wrote, that the government wanted to maintain a good educational system, but it did not matter to them if religion, moral philosophy or worldly knowledge was being taught. In concluding the article, he applied the proverb "I sing the song of whose bread I eat" to accepting money from the government.<sup>320</sup> This summed up arguments for the Chortitzer position on the continuation of the private schools.

It is also interesting to note that the Kleine Gemeinde went back to running private schools in 1907. The Roblin government required all schools to fly the Union Jack and the church felt it had too many militaristic implications. They withdrew from the public schools' system and operated private schools until 1919.<sup>321</sup>

#### F. Conclusion

The ministers of the Chortitzer Church had played a central role in maintaining schools for the Chortitzer

---

<sup>320</sup>Letter entitled "P.O. Chortitz, 28 Marz...Corr[espondent]" Die Mennonitische Rundschau 27 April 1887.

<sup>321</sup>Peters, Mennonite Private Schools, p. 32; John C. Reimer's articles in Gedenkfeier, p. 89, and Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 165, 170. Steinbach withdrew until 1911, although the private school in Steinbach continued to stay open until 1919; Hochstadt until 1913; and Blumenort, Blumenhof and Gruenfeld until 1919. There also was a school at Neuanlage and a private school was started in the area of the Ekron School district in 1914.

community. They drew up a school constitution in 1875-79, were in charge of school and teacher inspections, and ensured that schools were sustained throughout the scattered community. There had been some major developments. The migration of a large group to the West Reserve resulted in a radical decline in the number of schools and in student population. The 1883 meeting had mediated the financial arrangements between the two Bergthaler settlements. The locations of the schools also began marking the meetingplaces of the church, and viceversa. This was an important association because it helped solidify and identify major centres for the Chortitzer community.

Finally, the theme of adaptation has been addressed. The Chortitzer ministers had been confronted with an unexpected situation just two years after settling in Manitoba. While they were under the impression that they had left the pressures to change their schools in Russia and were establishing independent schools in Manitoba, the Manitoba School Board offered them financial assistance. This aid looked promising for the struggling Chortitzers, but also raised suspicions in their minds. After agreeing to join the public school system, they were then confronted by a different philosophy of education. The working arrangements with Hespeler and the School Board soured and the ministers decided to reestablish their private schools. For them it was a continuity with their earlier position on education.

The situation, however, became complicated as both internal and external pressures were exerted on the Chortitzers to start public school districts. The different philosophies of education intensified into a theological issue. The Chortitzer began to equate higher education and public schools with pride, worldliness and sin. Some tension was relieved when the Kleine Gemeinde began operating private schools in 1907.

The private schools had reinforced the cohesiveness of the Chortitzer community at a time when over half the group was moving to the West Reserve. And while these schools represented a stand against adaptation to the Manitoba school system, they were reminiscent of the Roman Catholic and French queries over the Manitoba Schools acts of 1890.

## CHAPTER 6: POLITICS

This chapter will study the Chortitzers' involvement in politics. First, how was the church connected with the developments of the Volost and municipality on the East Reserve? Second, did the Chortitzers become Canadian citizens, and what were their voting patterns in the federal elections? Finally, who was involved in the issue of exclusive Mennonite settlement on the East Reserve?

### A. Volost

The government of the Russian Bergthal Colony was transferred to Manitoba intact. Jacob Peters had been elected mayor, Oberschulze, of the colony around 1850 and he had remained mayor of the 44 Chortitzer villages in Manitoba.<sup>322</sup> He remained in Russia until 1876 when he, together with senior Peter Klippenstein who was to become secretary of the municipality in 1880, led the last group of Bergthalers to Manitoba.<sup>323</sup> On August 21, 1877, at the age of 63, Peters addressed the Governor General of Canada on behalf of the Mennonites on the East Reserve. He signed the speech as Oberschulze. Jacob Friesen, who also signed the address, was probably the former secretary of the Volost in

---

<sup>322</sup>For a description of how the government operated in Russia and a short biography of Jacob Peters, see Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p.29-32 and 129 respectively.

<sup>323</sup>Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 528.



the Bergthal Colony, 1855-76. It was also signed by Bishop Gerhard Wiebe of the Chortitzer Church, Bishop Peter Toews of the Kleine Gemeinde, and two 1873 immigration delegates, Reverend Heinrich Wiebe of the Chortitzer Church and Cornelius Toews of the Kleine Gemeinde.<sup>324</sup>

Each East Reserve village probably had a mayor, Schulze. They looked after "the collection of taxes and supervised the building and repairing of roads, bridges and canals." In June of 1880 these mayors met with the recently formed Hespeler Municipal Council to organize roadwork.<sup>325</sup> There seems to be little more information about this government of the early years, 1874-1880.

In May 1884, the long-time head of the government in Bergthal and Manitoba, Jacob Peters, died.<sup>326</sup> By this time the smooth transition from Volost to municipality had taken place on the East Reserve. These developments were in sharp contrast with the establishment of municipal government on the West Reserve. There the Reinlaender were rejecting its introduction into their community, while the Bergthaler were accepting it.<sup>327</sup>

---

<sup>324</sup>Document is reproduced in Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p.102-04.

<sup>325</sup>Penner, Hanover, p.157.

<sup>326</sup>Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 129.

<sup>327</sup>This theme of Volost to municipality has been developed by Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 90-96. He concludes it was a smooth transition. Peter D. Zacharias and Gerhard Ens have documented the history of the change from

B. Municipal Government

It was on February 14, 1880 that the municipality of Hespeler came into being.<sup>328</sup> It included the three northern townships of the East Reserve: Range 4, 5 and 6 East of Township 7. Six meetings were held that first year, including one with the village mayors. Gerhard Kliewer from Niverville was the Reeve (1880-82) and senior member Peter Klippenstein from Chortitz the secretary and clerk (1880-83). John Hiebert took care of correspondence and mailing.<sup>329</sup> Another six meetings were held in 1881. A decision at one of the meetings was to require statute labour for all males between the ages of 18 and 60. They had to work on roads, canals and bridges for two days a year; persons who owned homesteads only had to work one day.

---

Volost to municipality on the West Reserve. The Bergthaler church accepted the municipal government while the Reinlaender church and colony on the western part of the West Reserve did not. See Zacharias, Reinland, p. 75-82; and Ens, Rhineland Municipality, p. 15-52.

<sup>328</sup>All the information on the Hespeler and Hanover Municipal governments comes from Penner, Hanover, p.7-13, 157-79, unless otherwise stated.

<sup>329</sup>There is a reference to a worship service held at Gerhard Kliewer's house on September 19, 1880. Kliewer had bought his 160 acre homestead, and it was located one mile south of Niverville, NW19-7-4. He also served as a school trustee on the Niverville Public School. Taken from David Stoesz's sermon File no. 13, in the David M. Stoesz Collection, MHCA; homestead diagrams as provided by Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba; and Niverville, p. 137-39.

Peter Klippenstein is mentioned by Bishop Gerhard Wiebe as a senior member who stayed in Russia until 1876 and helped carry "the last heavy struggle in Russia." He died "a few years later." Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 54.

A year after the introduction of the municipality, a second one was organized, May 25, 1881. This Hanover Municipality included the southern five townships of the Reserve: Townships 4, 5, and 6 of Range 6 East, and Townships 5 and 6 of Range 5 East. The two municipalities, however, worked together as one unit under one reeve and six councillors, and were legally united in 1890.

In 1882, the administrators of the Waisenamt sat in a few meetings when the council discussed the immigration debt. Secretary Peter Klippenstein kept the books of the Bread Debt for the Waisenamt that year. In 1883, the municipality resolved that another administrator of the Waisenamt should be elected by the church to take over this responsibility. The reason for this decision was that the Waisenamt administrator, Cornelius Epp, had been elected as secretary for the council. Debtors from this Bread Debt were invited to these municipality meetings well into the 1890s.

The administrators of the fire insurance sometimes also attended council meetings. In 1892 the council repeated to them the fire regulations concerning steam engines that they had been given in 1882.<sup>330</sup>

Kleine Gemeinde members did not participate in municipal affairs and abstained from voting in the

---

<sup>330</sup>In 1891, the Chortitzer Church assumed losses on this institution. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 39.

elections.<sup>331</sup> They let the Chortitzer run their affairs. An 1883 minute mentions that "all except the 'Kleine Gemeinde' were present." In Russia the Kleine Gemeinde had "considered it wrong to become involved in a government backed by temporal power," and they maintained that position in Manitoba. They did, however, operate their own government at the village level.<sup>332</sup>

In 1883, Peter Toews from Bergthal replaced Gerhard Kliewer of Niverville as reeve. Toews' election marked the beginning of stable leadership for the municipality. Toews was to hold that position for fifteen years, 1883 to 1893, and then again from 1896 to 1900. He lost out to Jacob Peters of Vollwerk-son of Jacob Peters, in 1893, but then was reelected in 1896. In 1900 the council asked him not to run again. Gerhard Schroeder, Chortitz, served for six years, 1901-07, and Johann Braun, Grunthal, served nine, 1907-16.

The secretary of the council for eleven years was Cornelius Epp, Schoenthal, 1884 to 1895. Epp had been one of the Waisenamt administrators from 1880-83. He and Reeve Peter Toews each served long terms. After Epp's long term, the secretaries turned over every three years from 1894-1904: Jacob Hiebert, Bergthal, Diedrich Dueck, Schoenfeld, and then John S. Rempel, Chortitz. After 1904, Diedrich

---

<sup>331</sup>Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 92.

<sup>332</sup>The latter quotation comes from Loewen, Blumenort, p. 90.

Dueck held it again for one year and later for two years, A.R. Friesen for one year, Jacob K. Dueck for three years, and back to Johann S. Rempel who held it in 1913-16.

The warm contests in the municipal elections in 1892 and 1893 show that the council was becoming an important part of community life.<sup>333</sup> The council did not pass their first by-law until 1895 because they wanted to avoid the Canadian legal system. A by-law needed to be signed by a Municipal Commissioner or the appropriate Minister of the Manitoba Government. The council also handled disputes in the community and did not often confer with the courts of law. The reasons behind these actions were rooted in the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. Chortitzers were hampered in communicating with the officials because of the language barrier. Moreover, they wanted to avoid non-Mennonite influence and, like all Chortitzer Mennonites, followed the teaching not to take a fellow believer to court, as based on I Corinthians 6.

The municipality was also involved with the issue of exclusive Mennonite settlement on the East Reserve. Its

---

<sup>333</sup>The first Anglo-Saxon to sit on council, Hugh Street, won over two Mennonites Aron Friesen, Strassberg, and Martin Friesen in 1892. Street represented the Niverville area for 1893. Information on Aaron Friesen (1848-1923), of Strassberg, can be found in article "Pioneer couple raised seven children on early farm site" by Dr. Rhinehart Friesen, Carillon 23 October 1985, p. section B-1.

In 1893, Jacob Peters, Vollwerk, was elected reeve over long standing incumbent Reeve Peter Toews, Bergthal, and former reeve Gerhard Kliever, Niverville.

boundaries were coterminous with the borders of the reserve. In 1883, the council, together with the Chortitzer ministers, wrote the Prime Minister about their fear of losing some East Reserve land. When the Canadian government became determined in 1896 to open the reserve to the public for homesteading, Reeve Peter Toews and Bishop David Stoesz lobbied for the continuation of exclusive settlement. The issue was important for the municipality and the church because they wanted to ensure that there was enough land for the growing Mennonite population.

In 1890, the Clearsprings district was added to the municipality, and the boundaries of the two municipalities (Hespeler and Hanover) were formally combined into one municipality called Hanover. By 1900 the municipality had divided itself into six wards, which followed township lines: Wards 1, 2 and 3 encompassed each one of the three northern townships in Range 4, 5 and 6. Ward 4 included the two middle eastern townships, 6-6 and 5-6, which were settled by some Mennonites but included mostly Anglo-Saxons, Ukrainians and German Lutherans. Ward 5 included the prominent Chortitzer village of Rosengard and the Kleine Gemeinde/ Holdeman village of Gruenfeld, and was in the middle western part of the reserve. Ward 6, then included the prominent villages of Bergfeld, Gnadenfeld and Gruenthal, in township 5-5, plus the sparsely populated south-eastern township 4-6.

C. Relationship between the Chortitzer Church and Local Government

What connections did the Chortitzer Church have with the local government?<sup>334</sup> It seems that the Ministerial worked in cooperation with the Bergthal Colony government, the Volost, and with the municipality which emerged on the East Reserve. The involvement of Oberschulze Jacob Peters in the immigration to Manitoba reveals that the ministers were working together with the community's political leaders. The names of Bishop Gerhard Wiebe and delegate Reverend Heinrich Wiebe appeared together with "Reeve" Peters on the 1877 address to the Governor General. The first and subsequent leaders of the municipality were almost all Chortitzer members; most of them, except for Gerhard Kliever of Niverville, lived in Chortitzer villages. This cooperation seemed to suit the purpose of both the religious and political leaders of the Chortitzer community. The two groups worked together, for example, on lobbying the government to continue exclusive Mennonite settlement on the reserve. The Chortitzer acceptance of the municipal government contrasted sharply with the attitude of the Reinlaender and Kleine Gemeinde. The former wanted to continue their Volost form of government and the latter refused to participate in secular politics for religious

---

<sup>334</sup>The general subject of the relationship between the Mennonites and various levels of governments is fully developed in Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments."

reasons. The smooth transition to municipal government was aided by the assumption that the municipal boundaries were the same as the borders of the Reserve. When the Kleine Gemeinde refused to vote in municipal elections, local politics were left squarely in the hands of the Chortitzers.

The intertwining of the religious and political was evident at a number of other points. The Bread Debt was discussed at council meetings, and Waisenamt administrators sat in on meetings. One Waisenamt administrator, Cornelius Epp, was elected as secretary in the council and stayed in that position for 10 years. Fire insurance officials also attended municipal meetings. The influence of the church on the municipality was seen when the council did not pass any bylaws from 1880-95. The matters of not taking any one to court and avoiding non-Mennonites were based on the need to maintain community boundaries.

D. Citizenship and Federal Elections

While municipal government seemed firmly rooted and accepted in the East Reserve, government at the national level was almost totally ignored. It is significant that Chortitzer members became naturalized British subjects. Reverend David and Cornelius Stoesz both became naturalized citizens on March 17, 1884, probably for economic reasons: that is, to obtain patent for their homesteads.<sup>335</sup> However,

---

<sup>335</sup>Listed on their application for homestead patent, Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba.



there had been a warning of the responsibilities of citizenship in an 1877 newspaper article. The article was unsigned and originated from Winnipeg. Although it mainly offered a friendly warning about politicians trying to get votes by encouraging people to become citizens, it raised relevant questions for the Mennonites. It wondered if Mennonites were fully aware of the political implications of becoming citizens. They would have to abide by British laws and be subject to the government they elected. If any Mennonites cast votes, they would be obligated to serve as jurors. They would have to pay school taxes and organize school districts under the Board of Education. Regional government authorities could also collect taxes for roads and bridges, and they would not necessarily accept the Mennonite village organization.<sup>336</sup> The article appeared while the federal government was holding their election in 1878. It reappeared in 1890 in Die Mennonitische Rundschau just as the government was heading for its 1891 election. The fact was that Mennonites did become Canadian citizens but did not vote in federal elections.

In the six federal elections between 1887 and 1911, an

---

<sup>336</sup>Article entitled "Sollten die Mennoniten in Manitoba ihre Naturalisations-Papiere herausnehmen und Buerger der Provinz werden...Ein Leser," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 30 April 1890. It states that it originally appeared in Herold der Wahrheit 1878, p. 9. The author is unknown, though maybe it was William Hespeler, the immigration agent, of Winnipeg.

average of 90 persons voted in the East Reserve, Manitoba.<sup>337</sup> (See Table No. 1 Voting Patterns) They represented about 12% (90) of the eligible voter population on the Reserve (724).<sup>338</sup> Although the Chortitzers made up over half of the East Reserve population, only a few voted. If one assumes that a high percentage (60%) of the 114 Anglo-Saxon, Ukrainian and German males voted, and that the Molotschner Mennonites did not participate in politics, one can conclude that an average of 22 Chortitzers voted (3%) in these six federal elections, 1887-1911.<sup>339</sup> This turnout was very low and reflected the Chortitzers' involvement in federal elections.

It is important to note, however, that many Chortitzer

---

<sup>337</sup>Information on this section taken primarily from Don Harms, "Mennonite Participation in Federal Elections in the Manitoba East Reserve in the Federal Constituency of Provencher," (Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1979). Information on Mennonite voting patterns for the provincial elections was not included because of lack of secondary source material.

<sup>338</sup>Statistics based on average Chortitzer adult male population (350), Molotschner adult male population (260); and Ukrainian, Anglo-Saxon and German total population (683) divided by 6 (assuming families averaged 6 per family) which equals 114. Total of three groups equals 724 adult males. Sources of non-Mennonite populations based on 1901, Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 565. The Chortitzer figure is taken from church membership statistics, 1886-1900, found in the 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, Chortitzer RG, MHCA and the figure for 1914, from "Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter. The latter source is also from where the Molotschner figure was taken.

<sup>339</sup>Percentage of voter turnout based on figures for the Provencher riding in 1900. One would need to examine voter's lists to determine the number of Mennonites who voted.

Voting Patterns on the East Reserve, Manitoba  
for Federal Elections, 1887-1911

	1887	1891	1900	1904	1908	1911
A. Voters	3	35	117	108	160	115
B. Registered Voters	86	375	454	171	223	181
C. Chortitzer Adult Pop. div. by 2	281	302	328			441
D. Molotschner Adult Pop. div. by 2						260
E. Ukrainian Pop. div. by 6			50			
F. Anglo-Saxon Pop. div. by 6			25			
G. German Pop. div. by 6			39			
H. Liberal	1	23	92	78	96	93
I. Conservative	2	12	25	30	64	22
J. Provencher Riding Voters	1,859	2,286	3,012	3,768	4,978	5,725
K. Provencher Riding Reg. Voters	4,994	4,703	4,985	5,073	6,343	7,494

SOURCES: Don Harms, "Mennonite Participation in Federal Elections in the Manitoba East Reserve in the Federal Constituency of Provencher," (Canadian Mennonite Bible College, 1979); Chortitzer Statistics, 1886-1899, Chortitzer RG, MHCA; Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 565; "Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter. The polling stations for 1887 were Hanover and Hespeler; for 1891, Steinbach, Niverville and Gruenthal; for 1900, Niverville and Wards 4, 5 and 6; for 1904, Wards 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6; for 1908, Steinbach, Niverville and Gruenthal; for 1911, Steinbach and Niverville.

were registered as voters in the 1900 election. The total number of registered voters (454) represented about 63% (724) of the East Reserve population. Although the voter turnout was still a low 26% (117 of 454) as compared to the 60% (3,012 of 4,985) recorded in the rest of the Provencher riding, it revealed a concerted effort by the officials to at least list the Mennonite voters. From 1900-14, the registered voters only averaged about 200, but it reflected a more accurate number of politically active persons on the East Reserve. Voter turnouts again averaged 64% (128 of 200) instead of the low 26% (117 of 454) recorded in 1900, when the number of registered voters had peaked. The persons who voted in each of the 1900, 1904, 1908 and 1911 elections were probably Anglo-Saxons, Germans and Ukrainians. And four out of every five of these voters would vote for the Liberal candidate. Only in the 1908 election did a large number vote Conservative.

The federal elections, which had seen the reign of John A. Macdonald and the Conservatives in 1878-96, the decisive change to the Liberal government in 1896, and the Conservatives' win over the issue of reciprocity in 1911, were lost on the Chortitzer Mennonites.<sup>340</sup> Internal municipal government was being used to its fullest extent, but participation in federal politics was almost non-

---

<sup>340</sup>For a general overview see, J.M.S. Careless, Canada: A Story of Challenge Revised Edition, Laurentian Library 30, (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974), p. 276-326.

existent.

E. Status of the East Reserve

There were some political matters, however, that did extend beyond the reserve for the Chortitzer Church and the Hanover municipal government. One of those concerned the special status of the East Reserve. In 1873, the Canadian government had reserved eight townships which were "to be for the exclusive use of the Mennonite settlers."<sup>341</sup> The statement also implied that this status lasted for five years. This land agreement was to become quite complex in the ensuing years. It included questions about the Homestead Act, the meaning of "exclusive use," about the privilege of maintaining hamlets, about who owned the odd and even numbered sections, and what the arrangements were for the lands set aside for the Hudson Bay Company, Canadian Pacific Railway, and schools. The end result was that Mennonites no longer had exclusive use of the reserve, and that it was thrown open to all settlers for homesteading.

Sometime in fall 1883, the Chortitzer Ministerial and Municipal Council wrote Prime Minister John A. Macdonald about the status of the Reserve. They feared that they no

---

<sup>341</sup>Order in Council dated 13 August 1873. See copy in Zacharias, Reinland, p. 30-32. Points no. 2 through 9 dealt with the details of the land agreement. Most of it was similar to the Dominion Lands Act of 1872. The granting of a reserve to one particular group was not new in the 1870s when the government was placing Indians on reserves and was giving several reserves to Icelandic and English settlers. The grant of block settlements was later frowned upon by the government.

longer had rights to the land because many Chortitzers had relinquished their homestead privilege when they moved to the West Reserve. Although these Chortitzer leaders recognized that the land was of poor quality, they wrote:

Those of us who have stayed fortunate [on the East Reserve], will with diligence succeed in the future. We are already in the present and not really far in the future, limited in amount of land because of the growing of our children.<sup>342</sup>

They asked that the land that had been relinquished be granted back to them, and the land which contained natural habitat be included as well.

In May 1885 an Order in Council was passed to abolish the "exclusive privilege" of Mennonite settlement in the East Reserve. The deadline for homesteading any of the even-numbered sections or buying the odd-numbered sections for \$2.50 per acre was October 1. The privilege of hamlets, which meant living in villages, was to be continued for those who wanted to begin a homestead. After October 1, anyone would be able to homestead or buy land in the Reserve.<sup>343</sup> A

---

<sup>342</sup>Petition to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald from Chortitzer Church and Hanover Municipality, Received Dept. of Interior, 10 December 1883. It was signed by Bishop David Stoesz, ministers Franz Dyck and Cornelius Friesen, Reeve Peter Toews, and Municipal council members Franz Dueck and Peter Klippenstein. Government of Canada, Department of Interior, RG 15, vol. 246, File #27630. Transliteration by Adolf Ens and translation by Dennis Stoesz, both of Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>343</sup>Almost all of the information on the issue of "exclusive settlement" is taken from two files: Government of Canada, Department of the Interior, RG 15, vol. 577, File #179925, part 1, and vol. 578, File #179925, part 2. Hereafter referred to as "RG 15," PAC. A copy of these two

similar announcement was made a year and a half later. After January 1, 1887, even-numbered sections remaining were to be thrown open to all for homesteading or pre-exemption entry.<sup>344</sup> Seemingly both of these Orders in Council were rescinded.

In 1889, a federal government intelligence officer, Henry C. Jacobsen, went to the East Reserve to investigate the twelve or fourteen families who were thinking of moving to California. He was to visit them and encourage them to inspect lands at the German Colony at Dunmore.<sup>345</sup> From August 29-September 3, 1889, he visited 15 villages and 33 individuals, among them Reeve Peter Toews and Chortitzer Bishop David Stoesz in Bergthal. Jacobsen reported that he found only a few grumblers who wanted to emigrate. They were Molotschner Mennonites who talked about moving to their friends living in the Mennonite settlements in Kansas, Nebraska, Idaho and Oregon.<sup>346</sup> Jacobsen reported, however,

---

files are available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba. 1885 Order in Council from pt. 2, "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>344</sup>Article entitled "Mennonite Reserves" The Emigrant Volume 2, No. 2 (1 July 1887): p. 20. Newspaper published monthly by J.A. Carman in Winnipeg for the interests of emigrants to Canada. Available at Legislative Library, Winnipeg.

<sup>345</sup>The title Jacobsen gave for himself, "Dominion Government Intelligence Officer," is unclear. The location of Dunmore is also unknown, presumably western Canada.

<sup>346</sup>Letters dated 7, 11, and 14 September 1889, pt. 1 "RG 15," PAC. Jacobsen is not clear on the exact number of people wanting to move south. He could be referring to

that the main grievance of the Mennonites was the shortage of land:

They have not land enough for their fast increasing families in their Reserves here, and that even some of the land which they possess, is in many places too stony and sandy for proper and advantageous cultivation. This I especially observed to be the case near the villages of Gnadenfeld, Gruenthal and Bergfeld.<sup>347</sup>

These three villages were in the southern parts of the reserve and contained mostly Chortitzer members. Jacobsen, also reported that people were thinking of moving west:

[I] found a general desire on the part of the younger Mennonites to see and hear about Dominion Government lands in Southern Assiniboia or Alberta.<sup>348</sup>

He had therefore encouraged those Mennonites he visited to send a delegation to inspect the land in the Northwest Territories. He noted, however, that the East Reserve already knew about the West Reserve delegations inspecting the lands out west. They had paid little attention because the delegations were sent by the Reinlaender Church.<sup>349</sup>

---

Kleine Gemeinde and Holdeman settlements in Kansas and Nebraska. He does, though, mention Oregon where some Bergthaler Mennonites from the West Reserve moved in the 1890s. The move of Mennonites to Oregon has been recently researched by John Dyck. He concludes most of the people were from the West Reserve. See "MMHS Annual Meeting Notes," by Royden Loewen and Dennis Stoesz in Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter (June 1986).

<sup>347</sup>Letter dated 7 September 1889, "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>348</sup>Letter dated 14 September 1889, pt.1 "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>349</sup>Letter dated 11 September 1889, pt. 1 "RG 15," PAC. Bishop David Stoesz did visit Hespeler about a new reserve in 1891, and did go out to Rosthern three times between 1893-95, but it is not known how much pressure there was on the Chortitzers to search for additional lands. "David Stoesz



Jacobsen's reports indicate that the Chortitzer Ministerial and Hanover Municipality wanted more land but were not willing to go beyond the boundaries of the East Reserve.

An 1889 report indicated that 5% of the land in the concentrated areas of the East Reserve was vacant, and that almost all of the land in the southeast was empty--Townships 4 and 5, Range 6E.<sup>350</sup> These figures presumably did not include the swamp lands which comprised 11% of the reserve, nor the school and Hudson Bay Co. lands which added another 11%.<sup>351</sup> Another Order in Council was passed in May 1891. It extended the exclusive homestead rights of Mennonites until June 1 of that year.<sup>352</sup> Probably it was rescinded. An 1894 report commented favorably on various kinds of commerce on the East Reserve. The farmers, however, admitted their land was not the best: it contained too many trees and stones, and was subject to flooding.<sup>353</sup>

---

Diary," p. 35, 45-51.

<sup>350</sup>Letter dated 31 May 1889, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC. 39 quarter sections were vacant (excluding 4-6 and 5-6) and 12 quarter sections were taken up in 4-6 and 10 quarter sections in 5-6.

<sup>351</sup>Statistics on swamp lands taken from map included with letter dated 20 January 1897, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC. The School and Hudson Bay Co. land included 4 sections out of each township-36 sections. More research needs to be done on the disposal of these lands.

<sup>352</sup>Order in Council dated 18 May 1891, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>353</sup>"Die oestliche Mennoniten-Reserve in Manitoba...(H.B. in Ndwst)," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 27 June 1894.

An 1896 petition from eight German-Lutheran families was the beginning of the end of exclusive rights of Mennonites to homestead the East Reserve. These German families wrote to the Minister of the Interior that they had emigrated to the Hanover municipality four years ago and "would now like to take up free homesteads." German Lutherans from the Ukraine had emigrated to the area in 1892, and a large number settled at Friedensfeld. This group had worked for local Mennonites in Steinbach for several years, and eventually bought land. One John Oswald, had lived in Ebenfeld in 1893-96 before buying land at Friedensfeld.<sup>354</sup> The Mennonites, the petition stated, had told the German settlers that they could not have free homesteads and refused to give them that privilege. The Mennonites, however, "are pleased to see the Lutherans buy the farms from them and give good money for them, which many Lutherans have already done."<sup>355</sup> Six of the Germans who wrote the petition came from the Hochstadt area, with one each coming from Kleefeld and Steinbach.

This July 1896 petition did not fall on deaf ears. John Allison, a Homestead Inspector for the Department of the

---

<sup>354</sup>Warkentin, Steinbach, p.320-23 and Penner, Hanover, p. 41.

<sup>355</sup>Letter dated 14 July 1896, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC. Mennonites had sold three quarter-sections around Friedensfeld to the German-Lutherans Gottlieb Pied, Salonie Pied and Ferd. Nierenberg in 1895 and 1896. Information from letter, 25 September 1896, pt. 2, "RG 15," PAC.

Interior, researched the East Reserve land sales and found that between 1889 and 1896 Mennonites had sold a total of 12 parcels of land to "parties of other religious belief than their own": three quarter-sections to Germans by Friedensfeld, one quarter-section to a German northeast of Blumstein, one quarter-section to a Jew at Tannau, and a total of 7 quarter-sections to a German and six Canadians in and around Niverville.<sup>356</sup> After receiving Allison's report, the Secretary of Dominion Lands in Winnipeg, Burpee, wrote Hanover Reeve Jacob Peters on October 29, 1896. He informed him that the right of "exclusive settlement" on the East Reserve was being reviewed. His office had received a petition which requested that non-Mennonites obtain the privilege to homestead on the Reserve, and which stated that Mennonites had themselves sold land to outsiders.<sup>357</sup>

A petition from the Chortitzer Ministerial soon followed, dated November 7, 1896. They regretted "that some of our people have abused their privilege by selling some of their homesteads to others." They asked, however, that the vacant uneven sections owned by the railroad be opened up for homesteads "so that those who are in need of lands will be

---

<sup>356</sup>Letter 25 September 1896, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC. Allison obtained the information from Abraham F. Friesen, the postmaster at Steinbach, and Jacob Hiebert, secretary/treasurer for Hanover.

<sup>357</sup>Letter 29 October 1896, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC.

able to get homesteads."<sup>358</sup> These sections were reserved exclusively for the Mennonites but cost \$2.50 an acre.<sup>359</sup>

In November 1896, Winnipeg based Secretary of Dominion Lands, Burpee, informed Secretary Burgess, from the Department of the Interior in Ottawa, of these developments. Burgess in turn wrote a memorandum to the new Liberal Minister of the Interior, Clifford Sifton, in December 1896. Burgess wrote:

The theory on which the [East] reserve has been, so far as the Government is concerned, preserved inviolate (with the exception of one or two mistakes, in respect of which the Mennonites have made a great deal of complaint) has been that Mennonites desired to have their settlement entirely to themselves, and that their religious system did not permit outsiders to live among them. The spirit of the contract between them and the Government of Canada, made somewhat over twenty years ago, would appear to require that we should continue to refuse to dispose of these lands to outsiders.<sup>360</sup>

He, however, had thought it desirable to write Sifton about this matter because "the practice of the Mennonites themselves is so contrary to what they have been insisting upon on the part of the Government." He also mentioned the matter of opening up the uneven-numbered sections on the reserve for homestead purposes. Burgess was surprised to learn soon after that Sifton already had made his decision

---

<sup>358</sup>Letter entitled "Bergthal, 7 November 1896....[signed by] Bishop David Stoesz, [and ministers] Peter T. Toews, Johan Neufeld, Heinrich Friesen, Heinrich Doerksen, Johan Wiebe, [and] Cornelius Friesen," pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>359</sup>Reference to price is found in letter 21 December 1896, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>360</sup>Letter 21 December 1896, pt.2, "RG 15," PAC.

while in Winnipeg:

[Sifton] has decided to open for entry all available lands within the Eastern and Western Reserves, odd and even-numbered Sections, and to give Mennonites prior right of entry for six months."<sup>361</sup>

Ottawa based Burgess received another letter from Burpee in Winnipeg in January 1897. The Reeve and Secretary/Treasurer of Hanover had called on the Commissioner of Dominion Lands in Winnipeg, H.H. Smith, to protest the lands being opened to outsiders. They argued that "the sales were made by persons over whom the Mennonite community could exercise no control."<sup>362</sup> The municipal leaders also wondered about the swamp lands which had been transferred to the Province of Manitoba. These lands made up 11% of the reserve. They argued that the Swamp Lands Act did not take into account their earlier 1873 land agreement with the Federal Government. In his letter to Ottawa, Burpee suggested the question of swamp lands be turned over to the Department of Justice.

Commissioner H.H. Smith in Winnipeg received another petition from the Mennonites in February 1897. It was signed by Reeve Peter Toews and Chortitzer Bishop David Stoesz. It

---

<sup>361</sup>All information from memorandum dated 21 December 1896, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>362</sup>This line of argument was not used in the petition from the Chortitzer Ministerial, November 7, 1896, and the later one from the Bishop and Reeve, February 18, 1897. Both say only that they regret that Mennonites sold the land. When this meeting with H. H. Smith occurred is not stated. Letter 20 January 1897, "RG 15," PAC.

was a response to the October 29, 1896, letter which had informed Reeve Jacob Peters on the review being carried out on the East Reserve's status of "exclusive settlement." Toews and Stoesz again apologized that "some of the Mennonites have disposed of their own lands to persons of other nationalities," and had "positive expectation that the Government of Canada will give careful attention to this matter."<sup>363</sup>

Over a year later, an Order in Council ended "exclusive settlement" on the East Reserve. The two southeastern parts of the reserve, Townships 4 and 5 in Range 6, excluding reserved woodlands, would be open for homesteading to all settlers on August 1, 1898. The rest of the East Reserve would be opened on November 1, 1898.<sup>364</sup>

The German community, however, was resentful of the Mennonites' double standards. A sarcastic article appeared in the Nordwesten in 1898. It announced that although the land was in very poor if not worthless condition, the reserve would soon be open to non-Mennonites. It blamed the government for refusing to deal with the issue. For many years, it had just pushed ahead the date of opening the reserves.<sup>365</sup>

---

<sup>363</sup>Letter dated 18 February 1897, pt. 2 "RG 15," PAC.

<sup>364</sup>"Die Mennoniten-Reserven nicht laenger fuer Mennoniten reserviert...(Nordwesten)," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 24 August 1898.

<sup>365</sup>"Die Mennoniten-Reserven nicht laenger fuer

The 1898 Order in Council ended an intense three year discussion on the matter. The issue of "exclusive settlement" had cropped up numerous times between 1883 and 1898, but it was the 1896 petition from the German-Lutheran families and the sale of land to non-Mennonites which brought matters to a head. The election of the Liberal government in 1896 and Sifton's appointment as Minister of the Interior responsible for immigration helped end the right of exclusive settlement. The response of the Chortitzer church and the municipality revealed that they worked together on the matter and that they saw the land within the reserve as the base for their young people. They, however, had to come to terms with three other non-Mennonite communities on the East Reserve. It had meant some adaptation to Canadian society for them.

#### F. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to study the Chortitzers' involvement in politics. Of necessity, this included an examination of the political, social and religious leaders of the Chortitzer community, as well as its members. It revealed that the Ministerial seemingly had no direct participation in political affairs, except for its lobby for extending exclusive East Reserve settlement. By inference, however, one can conclude that the church fully accepted and cooperated with the Volost and municipal

---

Mennoniten reserviert...(Nordwesten)," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 24 August 1898.

government. One reason may have been that the municipal and Chortitzer church boundaries were almost the same, just as they had been in the Russian Bergthal Colony. By inference, one can also conclude that it was the church that influenced the council's unwillingness to pass bylaws and disposed most church members not to vote in federal elections.

The church, however, became involved in politics when it lobbied the government to continue exclusive Mennonite settlement. The Ministerial argued that they wanted enough land for the growing Chortitzer population. Although this was consistent with the idea of maintaining a strong church community, it ran counter to the democratic rules of municipal government. Although the contradiction of accepting local government and wanting exclusive settlement was not at first evident, it was made plain by the German Lutherans. The particularly sore spot was the fact that Mennonites had been willing to sell the land. The Chortitzers were caught in another contradictory position when they accepted citizenship but did not vote. The citizenship papers helped them obtain the land, but they seemingly found no benefit in voting in federal elections. It was a struggle for the Chortitzer Ministerial to separate church and state affairs. The church had to face the democratic political processes it had accepted along with municipal government. The needs of other ethnic groups were just as important as those of the Chortitzers.



## CHAPTER 7: LEADERSHIP

This chapter will examine the leadership of the Chortitzer Church to better understand the relationship between the church and its community. First, there will be a discussion of the office of bishop, minister and deacon. Then, the specific question of the minister's role in the community will be addressed. It will include an outline of who the ministers were, a description of the leadership patterns of continuity and change, and a review of these men's ideas and actions.

### A. Office of Bishop, Minister and Deacon

The leadership of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church consisted of a bishop and several ministers and deacons.<sup>366</sup> The bishop was the leader of this Ministerial. He alone could baptize people and serve the membership communion. On May 30 and 31, 1887, for example, Bishop David Stoesz baptized fifteen people at Chortitz and eleven people at Gruenthal. The services took place on Monday and Tuesday, the second and third days of observing Pentecost. Ministers would usually help the bishop with baptisms and communion. Reverend Heinrich Doerksen helped Bishop Stoesz baptize youth

---

<sup>366</sup>Information on church polity can be found in "Ministry (of Mennonites of Prusso-Russian Background)," by Cornelius Krahn, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

at Grunthal in spring 1896.<sup>367</sup> Bishop Stoesz' baptism sermon reveals that an average of 28 persons were baptized each year between 1882 and 1902.<sup>368</sup>

Communion was usually served two weeks after baptism in spring and observed again in fall. On June 12, Sunday, 1887, communion was served to 205 people at Chortitz and one week later to 87 people at Gruenthal. In fall a group of 132 and a smaller group of 80 were served at these two central meetingplaces.<sup>369</sup> In November 1893, Reverend Heinrich Friesen helped Stoesz serve communion at four meetingplaces of the emerging Sommerfelder Mennonite Church on the West Reserve.<sup>370</sup> Average attendance at communions in spring was 301 people, which was about half of the adult membership. It is not known why this figure was so low. There were even fewer people at the fall communion service.<sup>371</sup>

Special duties for the bishop included conducting elections for ministers and ordaining them. Bishop Stoesz wrote one sermon especially for the 1882 ordination of Bishop

---

<sup>367</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 53.

<sup>368</sup>Statistics taken from David Stoesz's baptism sermon, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>369</sup>Information from Baptism and Communion sermons of Bishop Stoesz, File No. 8 and 18, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. Information on Pentecost holidays taken from Reverend Peter Giesbrecht, "Hochstadt P.O., 5 Juli...[Reverend] Peter Giesbrecht," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 20 Juli 1887.

<sup>370</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 45.

<sup>371</sup>Statistics taken from David Stoesz communion sermon, File No. 18, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

Johann Funk of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church. He used the same sermon again in 1894 when he ordained Abraham Doerksen as bishop of the Sommerfelder Mennonite Church.<sup>372</sup> Another special duty was the dedication of church buildings. Stoesz preached at such a service in Gruenthal in 1886 and again at Chortitz in 1897.<sup>373</sup>

The regular duties of ministers included preaching Sunday morning, performing marriages and conducting funerals. Preaching at the various meetingplaces was done on a rotating basis.<sup>374</sup> Over a seventeen year period, 1877-94, Reverend Cornelius Stoesz preached one of his sermons ten times at eight different meetingplaces: Schoenhorst, Bergthal, Bergfeld, Gruenthal, Chortitz, Blumstein, Rosengard and Osterwick.<sup>375</sup> The sermons were written out and read.<sup>376</sup> Usually there were two ministers who spoke at each worship

---

<sup>372</sup>Stoesz, "Ordination of a Bishop." Original sermon is found in File No. 3, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>373</sup>Sermon found in File No. 12, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>374</sup>The earliest Worship Schedule available is dated 1926: Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 39. A compilation of dates and places of sermons preached by Reverend David Stoesz would provide an earlier rotation of meetingplaces. This is possible because of the completeness of Stoesz's sermon collection, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>375</sup>Neufeld Sermon MSS, MHCA.

<sup>376</sup>Written sermons seem to have also been a source of theological disagreement, with some maintaining that preaching without having to read the sermon was better. An 1888 article in Die Mennonitische Rundschau defends the use of written sermons: "Chortitz P.O., 20 Februar...W.H.," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 7 March 1888.

service:

They both addressed us at Chortitz, with [Jacob] Hoepner making the introduction and [Heinrich] Richert giving the lesson on the text.<sup>377</sup>

In 1887, Reverend Peter Giesbrecht had the introduction at the afternoon service at Grunthal, and visiting minister J. B. Baer had the main message.<sup>378</sup>

Performing marriages and conducting funerals were also important duties of a minister. Reverend David Stoesz notes in his diary: on October 16, 1882, "we also had a bridal pair here as guests;" on July 26, 1887, "Johann Wiebes from Steinbach were here in the evening in regard to their bridal couple."<sup>379</sup> Stoesz also performed a golden wedding for Johann Klaassen on February 21, 1893.<sup>380</sup> The church did not marry persons unless they were baptized or recognized members of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. One of the three questions asked at baptism tried to guard against people getting baptized only because they wanted to get married. "Are you free of any marriage engagement?;" the assumed

---

<sup>377</sup>The reference here is to guest ministers, but the same would hold true for regular Chortitzer services, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 29.

<sup>378</sup>"Schanzenfeld P.O. (Hoffnungsfeld, 12 August)...Jacob Wiens Sr.," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 24 August 1887. Hereafter referred to as "Baer's Visit," Rundschau 24 August 1887.

<sup>379</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 18 and 27. One marriage sermon, found in File No. 36, Stoesz MSS, MHCA, mentions marriages performed between 3 July 1887 and 24 October 1893.

<sup>380</sup>Sermon found in File No. 26, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

answer was "yes".<sup>381</sup> A statistical record from 1886-99 reveals that marriages averaged 12 a year in the Chortitzer community. Deaths averaged 26 a year, and kept the ministers very busy.<sup>382</sup> Many of these deaths were children: "On Sunday, April 3, [1892], I [Reverend David Stoesz] drove to Burwalde, to conduct a funeral at the home of the Abraham Penners. Their 13 year 9 month old son, Johann had passed away after a 14 day illness."<sup>383</sup>

Other duties of ministers included visiting the sick, teaching catechism, and looking after the church books. On April 11, 1876, "our Bishop Gerhard Wiebe was here [Bergthall] to visit our neighbor Mrs. Peter Wiebe who is very sick."<sup>384</sup> Reverend Franz Dyck started a new church register in January 1887 and gave catechetical instruction to the young people in spring of that year.<sup>385</sup> Reverend Cornelius Friesen's sermon on the acceptance of youth after baptism has been

---

<sup>381</sup>Question found among papers found in File No. 21, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. Evidence that the church only married people if they were members of the Chortitzer Church is hard to substantiate, and is assumed here.

<sup>382</sup>Statistics for 1886 taken from page 288 of Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>383</sup>Reference from "David Stoesz Diary," p. 40. Bishop Stoesz's funeral sermons found in File No.'s 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 37, 39, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>384</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 3.

<sup>385</sup>See title page for Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

preserved.<sup>386</sup>

Ministers were residents of widely-separated villages on the reserve. Whether this was by design or coincidence is not known. In 1887 the nine ministers lived in Bergfeld, Bergthal (two), Blumstein, Chortitz, Gnadenfeld, Hochfeld and Schoenthal (two).<sup>387</sup>

The role of the deacons is somewhat harder to determine. They may have been in charge of the welfare system of the community. On July 26, 1884, Deacon Heinrich Friesen accompanied Stoesz to Winnipeg.<sup>388</sup> In November of the same year, Deacon Johann Wiebe, Chortitz, went along with Stoesz for an inspection of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in the West Reserve in November 1884.<sup>389</sup> There was at least one deacon in the Ministerial at any given time. It is curious, however, that Johann Wiebe served as the only deacon of the church from 1887-1900. Heinrich Friesen helped him from 1881-85 and Peter T. Toews from 1885-87, but both were elected as ministers. In 1900, another deacon, Johann Dueck,

---

<sup>386</sup>Description of catechism classes found in an article entitled, "Hochstadt P.O. 5. Juli...[Reverend] Peter Giesbrecht," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 20 July 1887. Reverend Peter Giesbrecht describes them in more detail in his article entitled "Von Hochstadt, Manitoba...[Reverend] P[eter] G[iesbrecht]," Herold der Wahrheit 1 Juli 1888, p. 201. Sermon from Cornelius Friesen, entitled "The Second Acceptance of the Youth... Beim 2ten aufnehmen der Jugend..." found in File No. 40, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>387</sup>"Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888.

<sup>388</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 21.

<sup>389</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 22.

was elected to help Johann Wiebe.

Various names were used to address a bishop, minister or deacon. They included Ehrsamer--the honorable, Ohm--uncle, Aeltester--bishop, Lehrer--translated as "teacher" but meaning minister or deacon, Kirchenlehrer--church teacher, or Deacon--deacon. It showed that the church leader was respected within the Mennonite community. The ordinary citizen was addressed as Achtbarer, or respected, when formality was needed, as in the case of wedding invitations.<sup>390</sup> When a minister died, the obituary usually told how many years the minister served.<sup>391</sup> This is how Reverend Peter Giesbrecht reports Reverend Franz Dyck's death in Die Mennonitische Rundschau in 1887:

[He was the] oldest servant of the Word of God in our Church. He served his office faithfully for 32 years and 6 months with the skill God had loaned to him.... His belief was grounded in God and Jesus the servant.... He died June 8 at the age of 64 years, 6 months and 13 days.<sup>392</sup>

The Chortitzer ministers were called and elected from

---

<sup>390</sup>In his diary, Reverend Stoesz uses the terms Ehrsamer, Aeltester, Ohm, and Lehrer to refer to fellow ministers. Sometimes, although not often, he just uses the name. Information also taken from Maria Wiebe and David Stoesz wedding invitation, 1862, as found in Stoesz MSS, MHCA, with accompanying analysis provided by Gerhard Ens Sr., Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>391</sup>Information from Abraham Doerksen's notes on Abraham Bergen's death in 1916, p. 294. Doerksen MSS, MHCA.

<sup>392</sup>This article reports on Dyck's instruction of the youth just before his death. "Hochstadt P.O. 5. Juli... [Reverend] Peter Giesbrecht," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 20 Juli 1887.

within the church. A total of 151 men voted for twenty persons in the ministerial election of November 8, 1900.<sup>393</sup> Peter Wiebe received 47 votes, Johann Dueck 44 votes, six others received between 4-11 votes, and the rest from 1-3 votes. The one with the most votes, Peter Wiebe, became minister and the person with the second highest number, Johann Dueck, was elected deacon. The word used to describe the election of a minister was usually berufen, being called, although sometimes the word erwaelt, elected, was also used.<sup>394</sup> Reverend Stoesz remarks about his own election:

1869, in November I was, by a majority of the church members, called as minister in the church and I entered into this on January 11, 1870, when I preached my first sermon.<sup>395</sup>

This first sermon was called the Eintritts Predigt, sermon of entry.

It is not easy to determine what kind of person was elected as minister. Sometimes they were chosen from the teaching profession; Bishop Stoesz, for example, had been a teacher in Russia.<sup>396</sup> At times, the person elected was

---

<sup>393</sup>Election slip found in Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>394</sup>Information taken from the notes found on the minister's family register in the Chortitzer Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA. More information can be found in "Ministry, Call to the," Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>395</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 58.

<sup>396</sup>Reference from "Gretna, 26 August 1895...Klaas Peters," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 4 September 1895. Peters reports that he stayed overnight at Bishop Stoesz's place and says that Stoesz was his school teacher for five years in [Friedrichsthal] Russia.



incapable of serving for some reason, unfaehig, and declined. Two cases included Peter Hamm, elected minister in 1885, and Abraham Giesbrecht, elected bishop in 1915. Being a minister was a heavy responsibility and these men may have felt they were not able to take on the load.<sup>397</sup> A resignation by a minister was described as abgetreten, or resigned; an example is Bishop Gerhard Wiebe's resignation in 1882. The word ausgesiedelt, which means "moved away," is used to describe the ministers who moved to the West Reserve.<sup>398</sup>

B. The Role of the Minister in the Community

The involvement of ministers in the Mennonite community has not been adequately clarified. As Francis indicated earlier, it was hard to separate the religious and secular matters from one another. It is no coincidence that Francis used several terms to refer to the Mennonites in Manitoba. He sometimes used the term "Mennonites" to refer to the whole group, at other times mentioned specific Mennonite groups by name, for example "Bergthal group," and at still other points talked about ecclesiastical or civic leaders.<sup>399</sup> Another scholar, John H. Warkentin, wrote about

---

<sup>397</sup>Interpretation taken from Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church, p. 91.

<sup>398</sup>These two words are used, for example, in two minister lists: "Namenslistes Verzeigens...." as written by Reverend Heinrich Doerksen in the 1920s, and found in the Doerksen MSS, MHCA; "Prediger gestorben seit 1838-1923," as provided by former Bishop Henry K. Schellenberg, Steinbach, Manitoba.

<sup>399</sup>See Chapter IV, "The Challenge to Tradition,"

"Mennonite leaders" in general and did not specify whether they were religious, political or social leaders:

The Mennonite leaders were fully aware that the insular life in the agricultural villages was the best safeguard their people possessed against the 'outside world,' and they fought to maintain the villages for that reason."<sup>400</sup>

More recent works have begun to remedy this situation by digging out specific names, places and events, but they have not focussed on the Chortitzer church or community.<sup>401</sup> The next sections will therefore outline who the Chortitzer ministers were and when the changes in leadership occurred. It will also review the actions and ideas of the Chortitzer ministers. Often it is the signature on a petition or the newspaper article which provide the clues to their role in the community.

A total of twenty ministers served the Chortitzer church in this forty-year span, 1874 to 1914.<sup>402</sup> (See Table No. 2, Summary of Ministers) On the average, nine persons made up the Ministerial at any given time. Since the bishop was the leader of the Ministerial and the Church, his years

---

Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 80-109.

<sup>400</sup>Warkentin, Geographical Review, p. 361.

<sup>401</sup>Examples include, Zacharias, Reinland, Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, Epp-Tiessen, Altona, Loewen, Blumenort, Ens, Rhineland Municipality, and Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments."

<sup>402</sup>Most of the information on ministers come from the eight Chortitzer Mennonite Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA. They provide family registers for each minister and mention election dates as well. See Table No's. 2 and 3, and Appendix No. 4 for a detailed list of ministers and sources.

of service marked significant time periods for the community. Gerhard Wiebe was bishop at the time of emigration and served until 1882; David Stoesz served until his death in 1903; and Peter T. Toews served until his death in 1915.

There were numerous changes of leadership. A total of twenty-three elections were held for deacons, ministers or bishops. (See Table No. 3, Chronology of Elections) New church leaders were usually called in response to the migrations, resignations or deaths of ministers. Some patterns of continuity and change become evident in this chronological description.

The ideas and actions of the ministers have been documented throughout this paper. Those events will be reviewed in the next sections within three time frames and will more clearly identify the relationship between the Chortitzer church and its community.

C. The Wiebe Years, 1874-82

The total number of Chortitzer ministers by August 1876, when the last emigrant group of Bergthalers arrived in Manitoba, was ten: one bishop, six ministers and three deacons. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe of Chortitz and Reverend Franz Dyck of Schoensee were senior leaders at the age of 49 and 53 respectively. They had both served the church for 21 years. The other five ministers were Heinrich Wiebe of Schoenthal, Cornelius Stoesz of Blumstein, Abraham Bergen, Cornelius Friesen of Schoenthal and David Stoesz of Bergthal. They

Name                      Age   Years of Service   Deacon Election   Minister Elect   Bishop Election

SUMMARY, September 1876 (First Year of Settlement)

1. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe	49	21	25 Nov. 1854	23 Nov. 1861	29 Mar. 1866
2. Rev. Franz Dyck	53	21		25 Nov. 1854	
3. Rev. Heinrich Wiebe	37	12	23 Apr. 1864	28 Feb. 1865	
4. Rev. Cornelius Stoesz	40	12		23 Apr. 1864	
5. Rev. David Stoesz	33	6		3 Nov. 1869	
6. Rev. Abraham Bergen	32	6		20 Nov. 1869	
7. Rev. Cornelius Friesen	37	6	20 Nov. 1869	26 Nov. 1871	
8. Deacon Johan Klippenstein	66	38	7 Sept. 1838		
9. Deacon Peter Wiebe	58	15	23 Nov. 1861		
10. Deacon Johann Neufeld	33	6	20 Nov. 1869		

SUMMARY, December 1882 (New Bishop)

1. Bishop David Stoesz	40	13		3 Nov. 1869	4 Apr. 1879
2. Rev. Franz Dyck	60	28		25 Nov. 1854	
3. Rev. Cornelius Stoesz	46	18		23 Apr. 1864	
4. Rev. Cornelius Friesen	44	13	20 Nov. 1869	26 Nov. 1871	
5. Rev. Johann Neufeld	39	13	20 Nov. 1869	26 Oct. 1876	
6. Rev. Peter Giesbrecht	37	5		23 Oct. 1877	
7. Deacon Peter Wiebe	64	21	23 Nov. 1861		
8. Deacon Heinrich Friesen	40	1	15 Dec. 1881		
9. Deacon Johann Wiebe	31	1	15 Dec. 1881		

SUMMARY, March 1903 (New Bishop)

1. Bishop Peter T. Toews	56	17	3 Dec. 1885	8 Dec. 1887	3 Feb. 1903
2. Rev. Cornelius Friesen	63	33	20 Nov. 1869	26 Nov. 1871	
3. Rev. Johann Neufeld	59	33	20 Nov. 1869	26 Oct. 1876	
4. Rev. Peter Giesbrecht	57	25		23 Oct. 1877	
5. Rev. Heinrich Friesen	60	21	15 Dec. 1881	3 Dec. 1885	
6. Rev. Heinrich Doerksen	47	15		8 Dec. 1887	
7. Rev. Peter Wiebe	35	3		1900	
8. Deacon Johann Wiebe	52	21	15 Dec. 1881		
9. Deacon Johann Dueck	36	2	8 Nov. 1900		

SUMMARY, May 1915 (New Bishop)

1. Bishop Johann Dueck	48	14	8 Nov. 1900	20 July 1907	27 Apr. 1915
2. Rev. Cornelius Friesen	76	45	20 Nov. 1869	26 Nov. 1871	
3. Rev. Peter Giesbrecht	69	37		23 Oct. 1877	
4. Rev. Heinrich Friesen	72	33	15 Dec. 1881	3 Dec. 1885	
5. Rev. Heinrich Doerksen	59	27		8 Dec. 1887	
6. Rev. David Friesen	43	4		24 Nov. 1910	
7. Rev. Johann Schroeder	44	4		24 Nov. 1910	
8. Deacon Peter K. Toews	45	7	20 June 1907		

ranged in age between 32 and 40, and had served the church from 6 to 12 years. Two senior deacons, Johann Klippenstein and Peter Wiebe who were 58 and 66 years of age respectively. One younger deacon, Johann Neufeld, completed this leadership team. They had served from 6 to 31 years.

The ministers had participated in several major events from 1874 to 1882 when Gerhard Wiebe resigned his post as bishop. In the early 1870s, the thoughts of Bishop Gerhard Wiebe and Reverend David Stoesz centred on the need to find another setting in which to follow their faith. In July 1873, Reverend Heinrich Wiebe, the political head of the Russian Bergthal government, Jacob Peters, and two Kleine Gemeinde ministers settled the emigration arrangements with the Canadian government.<sup>403</sup> Four ministers acted as leaders of the first group which emigrated to Canada in 1874: Heinrich Wiebe, David Stoesz, Cornelius Stoesz and Cornelius Friesen. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe was the guide on the first migration in 1875.<sup>404</sup> Only one of the leaders of the other six migrant groups can be identified according to the office they held in the community.<sup>405</sup> Jacob Peters was the mayor

---

<sup>403</sup>Document found in Zacharias, Reinland, p. 30-32.

<sup>404</sup>Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 528; Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 41.

<sup>405</sup>The other names of leaders included John Klippenstein, John Gerbrand, Johan Ens, Cornelius Epp, J. Loeppky, J. Abrahams, Daniel Blatz and Peter Klippenstein. Names come from Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists," p. 528. Cornelius Epp was to hold the position of Waisenamt administrator for three years and municipal secretary for

(Oberschulze) for the Bergthal community, and led the last group in 1876. The ministers with the first emigrant group negotiated a major loan with Jacob Y. Schantz and the Ontario Swiss brethren while travelling through Ontario. Later, eight Chortitzer ministers took responsibility for the major loan from the Canadian government. In 1881, Bishop Gerhard Wiebe travelled to Ontario to settle the repayment of these loans.

A school constitution was drawn up by Bishop Wiebe, and ministers Cornelius Stoesz, David Stoesz and Heinrich Wiebe around 1878. The ministers were responsible for the annual inspections of the schools. They had petitioned the Manitoba Board of Education to accept the Chortitzer schools into the public school system in 1878 but soon after withdrew. When church members moved to Fargo, North Dakota, Bishop Stoesz served them there. When many moved to the West Reserve, Manitoba, senior minister Franz Dueck went through the community with the church books to note who exactly was planning on going and staying. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe helped organize a church on the West Reserve and Bishop Stoesz ordained their new bishop in 1882. In 1880, Reverend Franz Dyck wrote up a new edition of the Waisenamt rules. And finally, there was the question of using the Choralbook. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe accepted its use in Manitoba, while

---

eleven years, and Peter Klippenstein was to be secretary of the municipality for three years.

Bishop Johann Wiebe discontinued its use in the Reinlaender Church.<sup>406</sup>

The Chortitzer Ministerial and membership had to deal with a major crisis when Bishop Gerhard Wiebe resigned in 1882. Stoesz wrote in spring 1882 that "Ohm Gerhard Wiebe was sick when he returned from the West Reserve on the 15 or 16th [of March] and has neither attended or officiated at a Church Service."<sup>407</sup> Assistant Bishop Stoesz had taken up the major duties of a bishop in June 1881 by conducting baptisms and communion services for the Chortitzer Church.<sup>408</sup> Bishop Stoesz, who often does not write about his feelings, seemed to make reference to this resignation and his own increased responsibilities when he wrote:

1881 Since the 3rd of Feb we have had snow falling just about every day, though. It isn't very cold or we would have become very depressed. God knows how to keep things in their proper order and will not put a heavier load on

---

<sup>406</sup>The relationship with Bishop Johann Wiebe and the use of the Choralbook will be covered in more detail in the next two chapters, respectively.

<sup>407</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 17. References to his resignation are made in Heinrich Doerksen's minister list, "1882 im Fruehjahr ist Aeltester Gerh Wiebe vom Amt abgetreten." Correspondence found in Doerksen MSS, MHCA. The same word "abgetreten" which is defined as "resign" is written in Gerhard Wiebe's family record, Litter B 1843 and Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>408</sup>David Stoesz records that he finished writing his baptism sermon on May 31 and baptized persons for the first time on June 6, 1881. He finished his communion sermon on June 15 and served communion for the first time on June 19 at Chortitz. "Tauf Predigt," File No. 8, and "[untitled communion sermon] J.N.J. Die Gnade unsers...," File No. 18, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

us than we can bear as long as we will trust His word. Today is already the 11th and still snowing. There is so much loose snow on the ground that if God loosed the wind we might have a storm the likes of which we had never experienced before.<sup>409</sup>

The resignation was probably due to a sin that Wiebe committed. After describing his trip to Berlin, Ontario, in March 1881, Bishop Gerhard Wiebe wrote: "at this point the writer withdrew from the field of battle because now the words were fulfilled....You will become a rejected and despised man." He admitted he relapsed in his Christian faith and pursued "the lusts of this world," and feared "there is little hope for attaining God's mercy." Wiebe said he contemplated suicide but then experienced God's grace. "He lives in the certain hope that through grace he will stand at the right hand of Jesus but only by grace through Jesus Christ, Amen." Wiebe also wrote that "the church is not to blame for my fall."<sup>410</sup>

Wiebe continued to be held in high regard by the church. His family register was listed first in the 1887 Chortitzer Church book. He was also often consulted by visiting ministers from 1882 until his death in 1900. Bishop J.B. Baer, Pennsylvania, visited him in 1887, and his driver Jacob Wiens Sr., Schanzenfeld, also spent considerable time with him.<sup>411</sup> Bishop Gerhard Neufeld, Minnesota, and Bishop

---

<sup>409</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 15.

<sup>410</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p.57, 58.

<sup>411</sup>"Baer's Visit," Rundschau 24 August 1887.



Isaak Peters, Nebraska, both visited Gerhard Wiebe in 1890. Wiebe accompanied Peters to the West Reserve at this time and had a good discussion with him.<sup>412</sup> When two Bergthaler ministers from the West Reserve came to the Chortitzer Ministerial for advice on the troubles in their church, they, together with Bishop Stoesz and Reverend Giesbrecht, visited Gerhard Wiebe and spent the night there.<sup>413</sup> Wiebe's book on the Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America was published by the Nordwesten, Winnipeg, after his death in 1900. Wiebe had started to write the book on January 14, 1898, and his son Diedrich Wiebe copied it on January 17, 1900, just before his death.<sup>414</sup> The Chortitzer Church and Bishop David Stoesz, however, must have gone through some trials over how to handle his resignation.

At the end of 1882, the Chortitzer Ministerial looked quite different than it had in 1876. It had lost six ministers: two of them were the major religious leaders of the emigration, Gerhard Wiebe and Heinrich Wiebe; three others, including Heinrich Wiebe, migrated to the West Reserve and one died. The church had fortunately elected

---

<sup>412</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 34, "Reisebericht des Bischofs Isaac Peters, Henderson, Nebraska," [Part I] Die Mennonitische Rundschau 15 October 1890.

<sup>413</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 35.

<sup>414</sup>Information taken from Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. ii, 4, 73.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Deacon Election</u>	<u>Minister Elect</u>	<u>Bishop Election</u>	<u>Resign/ Other</u>	<u>Death</u>	<u>Age</u>
<u>1876-82</u>						
1. Deacon Johann Neufeld		26 Oct. 1876				33
2. Jacob Hamm	26 Oct. 1876					
3. Deacon Johann Klippenstein					13 July 1877	67
4. Johann Funk		23 Oct. 1877				40
5. Peter Giesbrecht		23 Oct. 1877				31
6. Reverend David Stoesz			4 Apr. 1879			
7. Johann Wiebe	15 Dec. 1881					30
8. Heinrich Friesen	15 Dec. 1881					39
9. Reverend Johann Funk				27 Nov. 1881 elected W.R. Bishop		44
10. Deacon Jacob Hamm				1882 move to W.R.		
11. Reverend Heinrich Wiebe				1882 move to W.R.		43
12. Reverend Abraham Bergen				1882 move to W.R.		39
13. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe				March 1882 resigned		54
<u>1883-1903</u>						
14. Deacon Peter Wiebe				1885 Reinlaender Church		67
15. Peter Hamm		3 Dec. 1885				35
16. Peter Hamm				3 Dec. 1885 incapable		35
17. Deacon Heinrich Friesen		3 Dec. 1885				43
18. Peter T. Toews	3 Dec. 1885					39
19. Heinrich Doerksen		8 Dec. 1887				32
20. Deacon Peter T. Toews		8 Dec. 1887				41
21. Reverend Franz Dyck					8 June 1887	64
22. Gerhard Wiebe					3 May 1900	72
23. Reverend Cornelius Stoesz					9 May 1900	63
24. Peter Wiebe		8 Nov. 1900				33
25. Johann Dueck	8 Nov. 1900					34
26. Bishop David Stoesz					16 Jan. 1903	60
27. Reverend Peter T. Toews			3 Feb. 1903 (53 votes)			56
<u>1904-15</u>						
28. Deacon Johann Dueck		20 July 1907				41
29. Peter K. Toews	20 June 1907					38
30. Deacon Johann Wiebe					9 Jan. 1908	57
31. Abram Giesbrecht		24 Nov. 1910				28
32. Reverend Peter Wiebe					22 May 1910	43
33. David Friesen		24 Nov. 1910				39
34. Johann Schroeder		24 Nov. 1910				40
35. Reverend Johann Neufeld					15 July 1911	68
36. Bishop Peter T. Toews					11 Jan. 1915	68
37. Reverend Abram Giesbrecht			2&3 Feb. 1915			32
38. Reverend Abram Giesbrecht				2&3 Feb. 1915 incapable		32
39. Reverend Johann Dueck			27 Apr. 1915 (127 votes)			49

TABLE NO. 3:  
Chronology of Ministerial Elections,  
Resignations and Deaths, 1876-1915

Bishop David Stoesz as assistant bishop in 1879. He was in a position to provide some continuity when Bishop Gerhard Wieberesigned in 1882. Five new ministers had also been added, and two elevated, to the Ministerial in these early years. They had been elected in response to their new beginnings in Manitoba and to the loss of some of their leaders.

The first eight years, 1874-82, had been quite intense for the Chortitzer ministers. Besides their regular religious duties, they had taken on various economic, political, social and educational responsibilities in the community. They had been part of the migration to Canada and settlement process on the East Reserve, and had responded to the migration of over half of their membership to the West Reserve and the loss of their senior bishop.

D. The Stoesz Years, 1882-1903

The next twenty years was a fairly stable period for church leadership. The Ministerial only lost four ministers, with two of the losses, by death, occurring late in this time period. Three church leaders were added in the 1880s to make up for those who had moved to the West Reserve, and three were elected in 1900 and 1903 to replace ministers who had died.<sup>415</sup> The average age of the ministers gradually

---

<sup>415</sup>These additions include both new ministers and those elevated to minister or bishop. In the 1880s, two new ministers were added to the Ministerial, and two were elevated from deacon to minister. In 1900, two new ministers were elected and in 1903 one was elevated from minister to

increased from 44 to 52 between 1890 to 1903. This made for a more mature and experienced group.<sup>416</sup> The church membership also increased during this time from 562 to 657; this contrasted with the decrease by over half in the early settlement period.<sup>417</sup>

The ministers were again involved in several major community events from 1882 to the death of Bishop David Stoesz in 1903. The 1883 meeting of political, social and religious leaders led to decisions about how the schools, Waisenamt and civic government were going to be divided between the two Bergthal communities. It took place at Chortitz on the East Reserve and included the bishops, Waisenamt administrators and reeves of the Municipalities. The Ministerial maintained private schools throughout this period. Bishop Stoesz discontinued his annual trips to the Fargo brethren after 1887, but kept in touch with the Minnesota brethren through their bishop's visit, Gerhard

---

bishop.

<sup>416</sup>The average age was 44, 46, 44, 51, and 57 for the years 1876, 1882, 1890, 1903 and 1914. These years were chosen for the change in bishop; 1876 was chosen for the beginning of the community on the East Reserve and 1890 was chosen as a mid-point between 1882 and 1903. The average years of service for ministers were 13, 12, 14, 19 and 21 for the years 1876, 1882, 1890 1903 and 1914 respectively.

<sup>417</sup>Church membership figures taken from years 1886-562 and 1899-657, and only include those who have been baptized, i.e. adults, and are in good standing with the church. The term used for church membership was "Those entitled to take communion." There are found on page 288 of Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

Neufeld, to the East Reserve. The Chortitzer Ministerial also began hosting various visiting evangelists and ministers from 1887 to 1892.<sup>418</sup> J. B. Baer, Heinrich Richert and Isaac Peters visited ministers Peter Giesbrecht, Cornelius Stoesz, Peter Toews, and former bishop Gerhard Wiebe. Almost all the ministers were also involved in trying to heal the rift that developed in the West Reserve Bergthaler Church in 1891-92. Ministers Peter Giesbrecht, Cornelius Friesen, Heinrich Doerksen, Peter Toews, Cornelius Stoesz, Deacon Johann Wiebe, former bishop Gerhard Wiebe and Bishop David Stoesz were all in discussion with West Reserve ministers:

On Saturday March 21st, [1891], my brother [Reverend] Cornelius Stoesz and Ohm Cornelius Friesen left for the West Reserve to try to find the reasons for the upheaval in the congregation there, and to see if they cannot find a way to restore the peace.<sup>419</sup>

When the church split, the Chortitzer Ministerial served the group which had no bishop for two years and Bishop Stoesz ordained Abraham Doerksen as bishop for the Sommerfelder Church in 1894.

The 1890s brought many other events. Bishop Stoesz did not recognize the Reinlaender's excommunication of its members and instead served them communion.<sup>420</sup> This issue was also present in Rosthern, Saskatchewan. Stoesz made three

---

<sup>418</sup>These visits are covered in more detail in the next chapter.

<sup>419</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 36.

<sup>420</sup>This will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

trips there between 1893-95, and was accompanied with Reverend Johann Neufeld on one of them. When Stoesz had trouble continuing his involvement there, Stoesz asked Reinlaender Bishop Johann Wiebe if he would assist the Saskatchewan group. The Bread Debt to the Swiss brethren and Canadian government was paid off by 1894. These loans had united the Bergthal communities in Manitoba, and had triggered the Chortitzer church to help others. The Ministerial sent money to relieve the hungry and assist emigrants in Russia, and loaned some cattle to a Stundist group in Alberta in 1895. A few years later, the ministers were petitioning the Canadian government to continue its policy of making the East Reserve an exclusive settlement for Mennonites. Here the local Hanover Municipality was also involved. The Reserve was opened up in 1898 and gave the Ukrainain and German settlers the opportunity to homestead on the land.

Mention should also be made of several ministerial and membership meetings. They give some indication of the inner workings of the church leadership and community. As far as is known, these meetings were held regularly. Bishop David Stoesz usually called the Ministerial for a Tuesday or Thursday meeting at his home in Bergthal. Stoesz records nine such meetings between 1884 and 1896.<sup>421</sup>

---

<sup>421</sup>All nine meetings were either on Tuesday or Thursday. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 20, 28, 33, 34, 42, 46 (2 meetings mentioned), 49 and 52. Stoesz writes at one point, "I had

The bishop mentions two brotherhood meetings held in the central meetingplaces of Chortitz and Gruenthal in 1881:

1881 on the 23rd of Jan. we held a meeting of the brethren in Chortitz.... There was a meeting of the Brethren in Gruenthal on Thursday the 27th of Jan.<sup>422</sup>

Stoesz does not say what issue was discussed. In summer 1882 Stoesz writes about another meeting: "1882 on the 23rd of July we had a general meeting of all the Brethren in the Church at Chortitz to treat a very important subject."<sup>423</sup> Again Stoesz does not say what that important matter was.

An important meeting took place on January 18, 1883, at the church in Chortitz. It included the Ministerial, the Waisenamt administrators and the Reeves, Vorsteher, of both East (Chortitzer) and West (Bergthaler) reserves. Stoesz records that they met "to mediate a matter in the school accounts of the [two] church groups." The Waisenamt administrators record that the meeting also decided the division of the church moneys, including the debts. The debts to the church and to the Canadian government were to be split and taken care of separately by the two church groups. The responsibility for all outstanding debt, however, was to be shared until all was paid.<sup>424</sup> A general brotherhood

---

asked the Ohms to meet here today," p. 42, which indicates he called the meetings when he found it necessary.

<sup>422</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 14, 15.

<sup>423</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 17.

<sup>424</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 18; document entitled "Beschluss, 1883 am 18 Januar ist auf..." and found in

meeting was held two months after this meeting. It was held at Chortitz on March 27, 1883, and probably dealt with the decisions made at the earlier January 18th meeting.<sup>425</sup>

On December 11, 1890 the Ministerial met to discuss the expenses of the two church buildings at Chortitz and Grunthal. At general Brotherhood meetings in November 1891, it was decided that the church caretaker would get 40 bushels of wheat a year, that interest arrears of the fire insurance dues would be paid by the whole Brotherhood, and for welfare purposes, each family should deliver to the congregation one bushel of wheat. If they could not meet this requirement they could pay 50 cents per member in good standing with the church.<sup>426</sup> In 1896 a special building committee met with the Ministerial about the new church being built at Chortitz. They had collected \$600. - "a tidy sum" as Stoesz records it.<sup>427</sup> The new building replaced the one built during the early settlement in 1876.

In summary, the years from 1882 to 1903 had been long and stable, but eventful for the Ministerial. They had to respond to various evangelical and conservative forces, but

---

Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA.

<sup>425</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 18.

<sup>426</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 39. General information on the Mennonite fire insurance in Manitoba is contained in a constitution booklet published in 1883 by Elkhart, Indiana, and entitled Brand=Ordnung der eingewanderten Mennoniten in Manitoba (original found at Mennonite Village Museum).

<sup>427</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 52.



emerged relatively unscathed.<sup>428</sup> In addition, the division of the West Reserve Bergthaler Church placed the Chortitzer in the prestigious position of helping its bigger but weaker sister church. The final payment on the Bread Debt also seemed to spur, rather than discourage, the Chortitzers to help others. From 1900 to 1903, three senior Chortitzer ministers died, including Bishop David Stoesz and former bishop Gerhard Wiebe. It marked the end of the era of the old guard who had been elected ministers in Russia. In 1903, the youngest of the senior ministers, Peter T. Toews, was elected bishop. Since he was elected as a deacon only in 1885, Toews had not experienced the migrations to Manitoba and the West Reserve as a leader of the church. He was elected minister in 1887 and as a bishop fourteen years later.

#### E. The Toews Years, 1903-15

The years that Peter Toews served as bishop, 1903 to 1915, were marked by a few changes and significant events. Four ministers died and six were added to the Ministerial. The average age and years of service of the ministers increased only because of the presence of three senior members, aged 69, 72 and 76.

Soon after his election in 1903, Bishop Toews, and his Ministerial, revised the original School Constitution. The school teachers were now to emphasize to their students that

---

<sup>428</sup>This will be the subject of the next chapter.

there was also an assurance of salvation. Some regulations were also drawn up for the private schools. In the late 1900s, some members moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan, and joined the sister Sommerfelder Church there. It is not known if the ministers voiced their opinions on members moving onto their own homesteads and on the general dispersal of villages. The Ministerial responded to the movement of members northward and southward, and into the towns, by establishing new worship centres in those areas. At the start of the twentieth century, Mennonites in Prussia, Russia and North America were beginning to use new catechisms and hymnbooks. The Chortitzers, however, continued using their eighteenth century editions. On the other hand, their 1881 confession was becoming identified as one belonging to several major Mennonite church groups in Manitoba.<sup>429</sup>

Another election for a bishop was held after Bishop Peter Toews died on January 11, 1915. Johann Dueck, who had served as both deacon and minister, was elected on April 27, 1915.<sup>430</sup> He and his Ministerial were to take the Chortitzer Church through World War I and the issues of military exemption and mandatory attendance at public schools.

---

<sup>429</sup>The subjects of the catechism, hymnbook and confession will be covered in more detail in the final chapter on theology.

<sup>430</sup>Election accounts from Doerksen MSS, MHCA. Abram Giesbrecht was first elected as bishop on February 2 and 3 but he was incapable of taking it on.

F. Conclusion

This chapter has focussed on the leaders of the Chortitzer Church in order to better understand their role in the community. First, the ministers were responsible for the many ceremonial and liturgical events of the religious calendar. The ministers devoted much time to preaching and teaching the Word of God to their members. They prepared the young people to join the Chortitzer church by having them learn the catechism and confession of faith. When a person was ready to join, they were baptized. The community of faith met regularly twice a year at communion to renew their commitment to God and to one another. The minister's social role in the community was evidenced in their performance of marriage services and funerals, visits to the sick and supervision of the welfare system.

Second, it is clear that the ministers were involved in various religious, social, economic and political affairs in the community. Five key activities of the Chortitzer ministers over this forty year span can be identified: the migration to Manitoba, the negotiation of loans to finance the settlement, the establishment of schools, the institutional church continuity with the West Reserve community and the establishment of certain tenets of faith. It is also noteworthy that the Ministerial seemed quiet over three significant situations: the move of over half their membership to the West Reserve, the introduction of municipal

government, and the dispersal of villages. At times the Ministerial seemed to have a lot of influence on the thought and actions of the community, and other times, it seemed to be completely disregarded. Thus the identification of the relationship between the church in the community in this study has been limited to clarifying the role of the minister in that community. Further research may uncover what was going on in the minds of the average member of this Chortitzer church and community.

Third, the review of the elections and actions of the ministers within the three bishop eras has pointed to some significant times of change and continuity for the community. The summary of the significant events has also provided a skeleton denominational history of the Chortitzer Church. The early period was marked by times of intense internal pressure. While the migration and establishment of a viable community in Manitoba seemed exciting, the outmigration and the resignation of Bishop Gerhard Wiebe left everyone reeling. The 1880s and 1890s was a time for reestablishing some priorities and boundaries for the community. Most of the crises seemed to be happening on the West Reserve. The election of Peter T. Toews marked the end of a generation of Russian leaders. Now, some new ideas were presented in the private schools and migration went beyond the borders of the East Reserve and into Saskatchewan.

## CHAPTER 8: IDENTITY

The Chortitzer church was visited by several Mennonite ministers, evangelists and lay people in the 1880s and 1890s. They came from Pennsylvania, Kansas, Nebraska and the West Reserve, Manitoba, and represented both evangelical and conservative influences. The response to these individuals will help to define the religious identity of the Chortitzer Church.

### A. Evangelical Influences, 1887-1892

The Chortitzer Church was visited by two General Conference ministers, J.B. Baer and Heinrich Richert, in 1887, 1888 and 1891. The General Conference Mennonite Church had been organized in 1860, and by 1896 included 66 churches across the United States and Canada.<sup>431</sup> Its main programs included missions, publications, higher education and Sunday Schools. In 1887 the General Conference began supporting its first full-time home missionary and travelling minister.<sup>432</sup> That man was the young minister, John B. Baer, from Quakertown, Pennsylvania. His "first work as home missionary

---

<sup>431</sup>H. P. Krehbiel, The History of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America, vol. II (Newton, Kansas: Published by the author, 1938), p. 6. Further information on Baer is available from C. Henry Smith's article "John B. Baer," Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>432</sup>H. P. Krehbiel, The History of the General Conference of the Mennonites of North America, [vol. 1] (Canton, Ohio: Published by the author, 1898), p. 344-52..

was carried out in Manitoba, where he spent two months awakening new life among the Mennonites."<sup>433</sup>

In July 1887 Baer spent eleven days on the East Reserve.<sup>434</sup> On the first Sunday, he preached twice at Gruenthal. Bishop David Stoesz gave the introduction in the morning worship service, probably because Baer was a new minister.<sup>435</sup> Reverend Baer preached the main sermon and spoke on enriching the Christian pilgrimage by fighting against Satan, vanity and the world. In this way, the Christian could capture the treasured crown of eternal life. In the afternoon worship service, Chortitzer minister Peter Giesbrecht had the introduction. Baer's sermon focussed on the question "What must I do to be saved?" John B. Baer and his driver, Jacob Wiens, then stayed with Reverend Peter Giesbrecht, Gnadenfeld, for several days.

On their way to the northern part of the reserve, they visited the widow of Reverend Franz Dyck's at Schoensee, travelled through to Hochstadt, and then went on to former

---

<sup>433</sup>Edmund G. Kaufman, comp. General Conference Mennonite Pioneers (North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College, 1973) p. 3 and 4. Hereafter referred to as Kaufman, GCM Pioneers. There is a full article devoted to him in this book. Information that Baer came from Quakertown is taken from "Liste der Prediger der Allgemeinen Conferenz," Der Bundesbote Kalendar fuer 1888, p. 42.

<sup>434</sup>A full report to Baer's visit to Manitoba is reported by Jacob Wiens Sr., "Baer's Visit," Rundschau 24 August 1887.

<sup>435</sup>Two sermons were usually preached at a worship service. The first one, which was the shorter of the two, was called the "introduction."

bishop Gerhard Wiebe's place at Chortitz. The next stop was Bishop Stoesz's place at Bergthal, where Baer and Wiens were well received, as Wiens reports it. Bishop Stoesz records in his diary, "1887 Tuesday the 26th, we had guests here for dinner, namely: an old School teacher from the West Reserve Mr. Jacob Wiens and a lay Preacher from Pennsylvania."<sup>436</sup> Baer preached at the Chortitz meetingplace the following Sunday: Stoesz again gave the introduction and Baer's sermon was on letting the weeds grow until the harvest. Baer and Wiens then visited the Bishop Gerhard Wiebe family for the Sunday noon meal and received a big farewell from them in the afternoon. In the afternoon Baer preached again in the southern part of the reserve with Peter Giesbrecht giving the introduction. The school house at Bergfeld was full as was Peter Klassen's place after the service.

John B. Baer returned to southern Manitoba in 1889, 1890, 1891 and 1899. He was, however, in the East Reserve only in 1891, when he preached at Chortitz. Bishop Stoesz records in his diary, "1891, June 21st, Preacher Baer from Pennsylvania was here in the church."<sup>437</sup> Baer's employment as a traveling minister for the Home Mission Board allowed him to make these trips. He served in this capacity until 1900.<sup>438</sup>

---

<sup>436</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 27.

<sup>437</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 37.

<sup>438</sup>Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 168, 256,

The Chortitzer Church's response to Baer seemed to be one of acceptance.<sup>439</sup> He was allowed to preach four times on his first visit and again in 1891. Wiens and Baer were also well received by Bishop Stoesz, as Wiens reports it, and Baer had preached to a packed audience in Bergfeld. It did not seem to matter that Baer's sermons, particularly those he preached at Gruenthal and Bergfeld in the southern part of the reserve, were evangelical in nature.

In 1888, a second General Conference minister visited the East Reserve, Heinrich Richert.<sup>440</sup> At 57 years old, Richert was a senior minister of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church in Kansas and was active in promoting education and missions. He had been elected to the General Conference mission board in 1876 and was elected to the committee for itinerant preaching in 1880. He had come to Manitoba in 1888 to collect money and support for the mission efforts among the American Indians.<sup>441</sup> He visited both the Kleine Gemeinde

---

303; Kaufman, GCM Pioneers, p. 315.

<sup>439</sup>There is limited documentation on the Chortitzer's response to all the visiting ministers.

<sup>440</sup>Information on Richert from Kaufman, Pioneers, p. 60, 74 and 329; "Conferenz-Kalendar," Der Bundesbote Kalendar fuer 1888, p. 41; David Haury, Prairie People: A History of the Western District Conference, Mennonite Historical Series (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981) p. 112, hereafter referred to as Haury, Western District Conference; Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church p. 86 and 256; "Heinrich Richert," by Cornelius Krahn, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>441</sup>This information is taken from a report by R. Rempel, who is presumably from the Kleine Gemeinde. "Hochstadt, 19



and the Chortitzer churches. Bishop Stoesz notes his visit in his diary:

Sunday the 7th [of October] we had guests, minister by the name of Heinrich Richert from Kansas, and my wife's cousin Jacob Hoepfner from the West Reserve. They both addressed us in the Church at Chortitz, with Hoepfner making the introduction and Richert giving the lesson on the text.<sup>442</sup>

Richert came back to Manitoba in 1890, though Stoesz does not mention if he visited the East Reserve.

In allowing Richert to preach, Stoesz showed acceptance of Richert as a fellow minister. It may have helped Richert to be accompanied by Reverend Jacob Hoepfner, a Bergthaler minister and cousin of Mrs. Maria Stoesz. Other General Conference evangelists who came to Manitoba in the 1890s included N. F. Toews and J. R. Toews. While the effect of these General Conference ministers on the East Reserve Chortitzer Church did not seem to be very great, they did contribute to the split of the West Reserve Bergthaler Church in 1892. The divisive issues of missions and higher education were central to the program of the General Conference Mennonite Church.<sup>443</sup>

The evangelical trend among the Mennonites in Manitoba

---

November...R. Rempel," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 5 December 1888.

<sup>442</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 29.

<sup>443</sup>The story of these evangelists and the themes of missions and higher education in Manitoba can be found in Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church. See Krehbiel, General Conference Mennonite Church I, for the missionary mood in 1898, when the book was written.

was also reflected strongly in the persons who accompanied ministers Baer and Richert to the East Reserve: Jacob Wiens Sr. from Hoffnungsfeld and Reverend Jacob Hoepfner from Schanzenfeld. There was also Wilhelm Esau from Reinland, who drove Reverend Isaac Peters of Nebraska to the East Reserve in 1890. Peters' visit is covered below. These three drivers all lived in the western part of the West Reserve, and seemed representative of the evangelical wing of the Bergthaler Church, 1882-92. Wiens, Hoepfner and Esau had been members of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church, but left it to join the Bergthaler group. All sided with Bishop Funk and the Bergthaler Church in the 1892 division.

Jacob Wiens' comments about his East Reserve visit with Baer reveal Wiens' strong evangelical leanings. After visiting Mrs. Reverend Heinrich Friesen of Hochfeld, he writes:

[She was] concerned about her spiritual welfare. Oh that it gave more of these people-Jesus calls to himself those who are in difficulty and heavy laden so that he can refresh them-Matthew 11:28-29.<sup>444</sup>

Wiens also wrote that he hoped Baer's sermons bore fruit by bringing hearts to eternal life.

---

<sup>444</sup>"Baer's Visit," Rundschau 24 August 1887. There is very little known about Jacob Wiens Sr. From Wiens' report of Baer's visit, it seems that Wiens originated from Neuosterwick, Chortitza Colony, Russia. This would lead one to believe that he was part of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church in Manitoba. Stoesz refers to him as an old School Teacher; maybe they knew each other from Russia or maybe Wiens used to teach on the East Reserve. "David Stoesz Diary," p. 27.

Reverend Jacob Hoepfner, who accompanied Richert to the East Reserve in 1888, had been elected a minister in the Bergthaler Mennonite Church in 1887.<sup>445</sup> He had gotten into trouble with the Reinlaender Church in the early 1880s because he used newer song melodies.<sup>446</sup> In January 1889 Hoepfner wrote Richert that the bible study in Schanzenfeld had caused some trouble because it had been so successful. Bishop Johann Funk and some other Bergthaler ministers, including Reverend Heinrich Wiebe, had heard about these bible studies and had attended a meeting to examine what was going on. They did not indicate that Hoepfner was to discontinue. Hoepfner, however, hints that not all Bergthaler ministers were satisfied with the existence of bible studies and that some wanted scriptural proof.<sup>447</sup> Ministers Wilhelm Harms and Franz Sawatzky, both of Hoffnungsfeld, were also involved in the bible study endeavour. Bishop Stoesz's only comments when Hoepfner and Richert visited Stoesz in 1888, were that Hoepfner was "my

---

<sup>445</sup>Exact date of election in 1887 is not known. Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 79 and 80. The year is confirmed in "Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888, and it also provides the place of residence.

<sup>446</sup>See Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p.79 and 80 for the story on Hoepfner, and Zacharias, Reinland, p. 191 and 204 about the issue of singing.

<sup>447</sup>Letter from Jacob Hoepfner, Schanzenfeld, Manitoba, to Heinrich Richert, Newton, Kansas, 16 January 1889, as found in the P.H. Richert Collection, MSS 16, Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas. Hereafter referred to as Richert MSS, MLA.

wife's cousin," and that Hoepfner gave the introduction in the morning worship service at Chortitz.<sup>448</sup>

The third driver to the East Reserve was Wilhelm Esau from Reinland. He had agreed to take Isaac Peters along with him in 1890 because Esau wanted to visit his mother and sisters there. Esau had been excommunicated from the Reinlaender Church for his unwillingness to accept the strictures of that church. He and several others began a Bergthaler church in Reinland as early as 1884.<sup>449</sup> While one does not know Esau's comments about the Chortitzer Church, his theological position is quite evident in a letter he wrote Heinrich Richert of the General Conference Mennonite Church in February 1889. He wrote that the bible studies had caused many people to be charged and some even to be excommunicated. Esau indicated that it was hard for Jacob Hoepfner and Sawatzky to preach, but that they needed to stay strong despite the opposition.<sup>450</sup> Wiens, Hoepfner and Esau were representative of the evangelical wing of the West Reserve Bergthaler Church of the 1880s and 1890s.

This milieu of renewed emphases on personal conversion, bible studies and missions on the West Reserve is also partly explained by the influence of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

---

<sup>448</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 29.

<sup>449</sup>Zacharias, Reinland, p. 205.

<sup>450</sup>Letter from Wilhelm and Barbara Esau, Reinland, Manitoba, to H. Richert, 15 February 1889, as found in File No. 2 of the Richert MSS, MLA.

This church had its beginnings in Russia in 1860 and some of its members had migrated to the United States in the 1870s. In 1883, Reverend Henry Voth of Bingham Lake, Minnesota, and Reverend David Dyck of Kansas visited the Mennonites in Manitoba because there were "reports of believers and souls hungry for the gospel." By 1886, Voth had baptized eight candidates, and by 1888 the first Mennonite Brethren church in Canada was organized at Burwalde.<sup>451</sup> The church regularly conducted revival and evangelistic services on the West Reserve. By 1914, it had 235 members.<sup>452</sup> While the Chortitzer Church was removed from these events happening on the West Reserve, they did feel its effects as some of the visiting American preachers also spilled over to the East Reserve.

A third minister to visit the Chortitzer Church was Isaac Peters from Henderson, Nebraska. He had emigrated to the United States in 1874, and had been involved in the organization and dissolution of a number of churches.<sup>453</sup> He founded the Ebenezer Mennonite Church in Henderson in 1882. In 1889 it joined the newly formed Bruderthaler Mennonite Church at Mountain Lake, Minnesota, to form a Conference of

---

<sup>451</sup>Brown, Mennonite Brethren Church, p. 3-6.

<sup>452</sup>"Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter.

<sup>453</sup>"Isaak Peters," by H.F. Epp, Mennonite Encyclopedia; Haury, Western District Conference, p. 41 mentions a split in the Bethel Church where Peters organized the Ebenezer Mennonite Church, near Inman, Kansas.

United Mennonite Brethren of North America. They emphasized the new birth and church discipline which resulted in living a life separated from the world.<sup>454</sup>

For Peters, this 1890 Manitoba visit was a "church mission trip."<sup>455</sup> Peters first visited the Reinlaender Bishop Johann Wiebe and Bergthaler Bishop Johann Funk on the West Reserve. Then Peters was driven to the East Reserve by Wilhelm Esau. At Blumstein, Peters visited Reverend Cornelius Stoesz, who Peters said he had known from Russia. Stoesz, however, did not remember him. They had a long discussion on how one knows God. Peters also visited Bishop David Stoesz at Bergthal and talked with former Bishop Gerhard Wiebe at Chortitz. Bishop Wiebe accompanied Peters back to the West Reserve and had "a good discussion" with him. Peters did not have an opportunity to preach at any of the Chortitzer churches because his visit was during the week.

Isaac Peters returned to the East Reserve in June 1892. This time he was accompanied by Bishop John F. Funk of Elkhart, Indiana. They first visited former reeve Gerhard Kliewer, Niverville, whom Peters knew from Russia. Then they

---

<sup>454</sup>Information from "Aaron Wall" by H.H. Dick, "Ebenezer Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church" by H.C. Quiring, and "Evangelical Mennonite Brethren" by H.F. Epp in Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>455</sup>Description of trip was written by Peters in an article entitled "Reisebericht des Bischofs Isaac Peters, Henderson, Nebraska," Part I and II, Die Mennonitische Rundschau 15 and 22 October 1890.

passed through Osterwick and Peters did some preaching in the Kleine Gemeinde and Holdeman communities. At Gruenfeld they had three listeners but at Steinbach the school house had been quite full both times.<sup>456</sup>

Peters and Funk then visited Bishop David Stoesz, who had arranged for both of them to preach at Chortitz the next day. Stoesz had to serve communion at Gruenthal and would not be able to accompany them. Peters and Funk went to former bishop Gerhard Wiebe's place in Chortitz for Sunday dinner and in the afternoon travelled to Gruenthal, where they preached to a packed church. Stoesz writes "The two Elders, Isaac Peters, Nebraska, and Johann Funk, Elkhart, were here and led devotions in our two churches."<sup>457</sup> Over the next few days they stayed in the southern part of the reserve and were hosted by Reverend Cornelius Stoesz of Blumstein, Reverend Peter Toews of Bergfeld and Reverend Peter Giesbrecht of Gnadenfeld.

There seemed to be an open acceptance of Isaac Peters among the Chortitzer Ministerial.<sup>458</sup> He was allowed to

---

<sup>456</sup>Report by Peters, "Reisebericht...Isaac Peters, Henderson, Neb.," Parts I and II, Herold der Wahrheit 1 and 15 September 1892; same report found in Die Mennonitische Rundschau 17 August 1892. This time they had no driver from the West Reserve; they took the train from Emerson to Niverville. Peters had not made contact with the Molotschner Mennonite community in his earlier 1890 visit.

<sup>457</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 42.

<sup>458</sup>Stoesz does not record Peters' first visit of 1890 in his diary. Peters and Funk had spent a lot of their time with Funk's Bergthaler Church, although they were permitted

preach even though he came at a time when the Chortitzer church was responding to the division of the West Reserve Church. It may have helped that Peters' theology, which emphasized both the new birth and church discipline, was different than that of the General Conference preachers. Peters' effect was to be felt on the East Reserve when a small group of four families separated from the Kleine Gemeinde in 1898. They affiliated themselves with the Bruderthaler Church at Mountain Lake, Minnesota.<sup>459</sup>

What was the effect of these three ministers, Baer, Richert and Peters, on the Chortitzer Church? All had an evangelical emphasis and had been involved in the events on the West Reserve. For one, the Chortitzer Church did not reject the ministers or their message outright. All were allowed to preach in the Chortitzer Churches and were received in the ministers' homes. Their influence was evidenced when Bishop Peter T. Toews inserted John 3:16 into the revised 1903 School Constitution.<sup>460</sup> Toews felt the

---

to and did preach at the Sommerfelder meetingplaces at Rudnerweide and Sommerfeld as well.

<sup>459</sup>The beginnings of the Steinbach church occurred when ministers Henry C. Fast, Minnesota, and Cornelius Wall, Nebraska, came to Steinbach in 1897. See Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 291 and 323; Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 26. The Bruderthaler name came from the name of Aaron Wall's church in Mountain Lake, Minnesota. This church, however, was also affiliated with Isaac Peters' church in a wider conference.

<sup>460</sup>A copy of this ca. 1903 school constitution is entitled "Allgemeine Schulverordnung...So gegeben vom Kirchen Lehrdienst, der Gemeinde zu Chortitz, Aeltester Peter Toews,"



school teachers needed to emphasize personal conversion and the assurance of salvation a little more. Second, these travelling ministers did not cause a split within the Chortitzer Church nor cause some members to start another church, as had happened in the Kleine Gemeinde in 1898 and among the West Reserve church communities. Lastly, the Chortitzer Church did take their stand in the division of the West Reserve Bergthaler Church in 1892. They did not go along with Bishop Funk's positions on higher education and missions. This split had been partly due to the evangelical influences from the American travelling ministers.

B. Conservative Influences: Reinlaender Mennonite Church

Contact with the Reinlaender Mennonite Church of the West Reserve created other dilemmas for the Chortitzer Church. It made them reflect on their use of Choralbooks and on their interpretation of church discipline. It also helped define the differences between these two churches.

The relationship between the Chortitzer and Reinlaender church dated back to the early 1870s. Chortitzer Bishop Gerhard Wiebe had agreed that their 1873 delegates to America would represent Bishop Johann Wiebe and his group in the Fuerstenland Colony. Gerhard Wiebe recounts this arrangement in his book History of the Emigration:

I [Gerhard Wiebe] must add here, that the brethren of our mother colony [Chortitza] - and Fuerstenland [Johann Wiebe] at that time turned to us, in order to emigrate

---

and is found in the Ens MSS, MHCA.

together with us and asked us that our delegates should also negotiate land for them, particularly where they could enjoy freedom of conscience the same as we. In short, they wanted to live together with us as brothers and sisters. We were also closely related [i.e. Gerhard Wiebe and Johann Wiebe were cousins], practically flesh and blood, and spiritually were also united.

This mandate our delegates tried to fulfill in good faith. Because when they returned home, they said they had provided for them on the same basis as for ourselves; and this they had done, because thank God, we had not elected selfish men.<sup>461</sup>

Gerhard Wiebe had also asked for a loan from Jacob Schantz on behalf of Johann Wiebe in October 1874.<sup>462</sup> A total of 3,240 persons from the Fuerstenland and Chortitza Colonies did emigrate to Manitoba between 1875-80. They settled on the western portion of the West Reserve, and by 1880 represented about 47% (3,240) of Mennonites in Manitoba. This group was organized in July 1875, and were guided by the strong leadership of Bishop Johann Wiebe and Vorsteher Isaak Mueller. They maintained their own government and private schools throughout this period and by 1914 represented 26% (4,084) of the Manitoba Mennonite population.<sup>463</sup>

Tension, however, developed between the Chortitzer and Reinlaender Churches in Manitoba over the use of written melodies, as published in the Choralbook. Bishop Johann

---

<sup>461</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 72 and 73.

<sup>462</sup>Letter from Gerhard Wiebe to J. Y. Schantz, dated 2 October 1874, as found in "Brief von Hamburg...2 October 1874...Gerhard Wiebe," Herold der Wahrheit December 1874.

<sup>463</sup>Zacharias gives a good account of this Church and community. Zacharias, Reinland. Statistics taken from "Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter.

Wiebe and his church had used the Choralbook in the Fuerstenland Colony but returned to the traditional way of singing in Manitoba as part of a church renewal: that is, they again passed down melodies through song leaders rather than learning them from the Choralbook. On the other hand, Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, whose church had not used the Choralbook in the Bergthal Colony, introduced it in Manitoba. According to Johann Wiebe, both of them had agreed not to use the melody book in Manitoba.<sup>464</sup>

This caused a serious rift between the two men.

Gerhard Wiebe's conclusions in his book are directed at Bishop Johann Wiebe:

Oh, how sad it is that we have not remained in this unity. Aeltester Johann Wiebe has forgotten everything that we discussed together in Russia; and now I carry all the blame, and I am not free from it, but let it be. I have deserved all I am receiving, because I have become a despised and rejected man. I have sinned more against Father and Son and Spirit than against Aeltester Johann Wiebe, and yet I hope to obtain mercy from God.<sup>465</sup>

Former Chortitzer Bishop Gerhard Wiebe, however, continued to hold Johann Wiebe in high regard: "And for Aeltester Wiebe the writer wishes on that day, an unperishable bishop's crown, through Jesus Christ. Amen."<sup>466</sup> Johann Wiebe did not

---

<sup>464</sup>Original source of this information is not clear. Cornelius Krahn develops this line of thought in his article on "Johann Wiebe" in Mennonite Encyclopedia. The tension over singing is also developed in Zacharias, Reinland, p. 191, 204 and 205.

<sup>465</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 73. This book was published after Wiebe died in 1900.

<sup>466</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 73. At one

have the same feelings. In a letter to Gerhard Wiebe, Johann Wiebe writes that he believed Gerhard had gone astray and needed to repent before God, Jesus Christ and the Church. The former Chortitzer bishop needed to learn from the ways of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church by seeking the truth by being open to the Spirit and by following God's and not man's ways.<sup>467</sup> Perhaps one effect of this tension over the Choralbook was seen in the defection of a Chortitzer minister to the Reinlaender community:

The Old [Chortitzer] Deacon, Peter Wiebe, left the East Reserve during the 1880s and moved under the wing of the Old Colonists. And also died there.<sup>468</sup>

Deacon Peter Wiebe had served the church since he had been elected deacon in Russia in 1861 and by 1880 was a senior minister at 62 years of age. The reasons for leaving the Chortitzer are not given, but it may have been over some of the disagreements between the Chortitzer and Reinlaender

---

point in Wiebe's book, he writes that only three bishops are opposing higher education and its teaching of arrogance: Chortitzer David Stoesz, Sommerfelder Abraham Doerksen and Reinlaender Johann Wiebe, p. 63.

<sup>467</sup>This letter, undated, is entitled "Ein Brief vom Aelt. Johan Wiebe, an der sehr liebgewesenen, aber nicht mehr an der Gemeine dienenden Aeltesten zu Bergthal. Gerhard Wiebe," and published Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada, 1875, in Form einer Predigt von unseren verstorbenen Aeltesten Johann Wiebe mit einem Zusatz vom verstorbenen Aeltesten Johann Friesen und andere alte Schriften, by Johann Wiebe, Johann Friesen and [Peter Friesen], (Cauchtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico: Campo 6 1/2, Apartado 297, 1972), p. 75-78.

<sup>468</sup>Letter of Chortitzer Reverend Heinrich Doerksen to Bishop Abraham Doerksen, ca. 1920s, and found in the Doerksen MSS, MHCA.

churches.

A second contact with the Reinlaender church came in the wake of Bishop Stoesz's assistance to the emerging West Reserve Sommerfelder group from 1892-94. In late summer 1892, Reinlaender Bishop Johann Wiebe and ministers Abraham Wiebe and Franz Dueck visited Bishop Stoesz. Stoesz wrote that they were his guests on Wednesday, August 10:

They left for home on the morning of the Thursday, August 11th. I tried to keep them here for the day, as I had asked the Ohms [ministers] to meet here today, but they could not be held. I was delayed two days in the haying by all this.<sup>469</sup>

The problem was that when Stoesz had served communion to the Sommerfelder group in June of 1892, it had included excommunicated members from the Reinlaender Church.<sup>470</sup> By serving these members communion, he was accepting them as brethren and nullifying the effects of the Reinlaender excommunication.

The issue dated back to the late 1870s and early 1880s when a number of Reinlaender members refused to return to singing the hymns without the Choralbook. They also refused to register with the Reinlaender church on October 5, 1880, and were not willing to accept its strictures.<sup>471</sup> A number

---

<sup>469</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 42.

<sup>470</sup>The information on the tension between Stoesz and Wiebe comes from the Elias MSS, MHCA, p. 33-37. Though Elias does not make any specific reference to what was said at this August 1892 meeting, he does explain the general problem.

<sup>471</sup>A good explanation is provided in Zacharias, Reinland, p. 205.

of people were therefore excommunicated from the church and many joined the Bergthaler Church. Some of these former Reinlaender members stayed with the Sommerfelder group in the 1892 church division, and it was to these persons that Stoesz served communion.

Stoesz continued to serve communions to and conduct baptisms for the Sommerfelder group, despite the fall 1892 meeting with the Reinlaender bishop. He served 45 persons in Reinland and 55 persons in Rosenbach on December 1, 1892.<sup>472</sup> Both these villages were in Reinlaender church territory. It was probably at this time that Stoesz together with Chortitzer minister, Cornelius Friesen, and Sommerfelder minister, Abraham Klassen, visited Bishop Johann Wiebe. The purpose of the meeting was to remove any discord between them. When Johann Wiebe wondered how this was going to be achieved, Stoesz replied that both Wiebe and himself should compromise a bit. Wiebe answered that if it was a human affair, he would, but not if it was a Godly affair. Stoesz was then allowed to come to his own conclusions.<sup>473</sup>

Stoesz served 50 persons at Rosenbach again on June 15, 1893, and 33 people at Reinland on November 12 of the same year. In April 1894 Bishop Abraham Doerksen became the leader of the Sommerfelder Church and inherited this

---

<sup>472</sup>Information on communions services taken from Stoesz's Communion Sermon, found in File No. 18, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>473</sup>Conversation reported in Elias MSS, MHCA, p. 34-5.

disagreement with the Reinlaender Church. When Stoesz agreed to act as the bishop of the Sommerfelder group in 1892, he probably did not anticipate the problems he would have with the Reinlaender church. He did not back down on his position on church discipline but was willing to discuss it with the Reinlaender Bishop.

It must also be remembered that Bishop Stoesz was assisting the Bergthaler group at Rosthern, Saskatchewan, during this same time, 1893-95. A large portion of this community were excommunicated Reinlaender, with whom Sommerfelder minister Peter Zacharias had had prior contact in Manitoba.<sup>474</sup> Stoesz did not seem to have any hesitation in assisting this Rosthern group. Reinlaender member, Peter Elias, however, criticized Stoesz for leading a minister election and ordaining Cornelius Epp for this group in 1893:

The result was that a minister was elected who was not a member nor leader of Bishop David Stoesz's church, but now who belonged to that [Chortitzer Mennonite] church.<sup>475</sup>

Stoesz changed his mind about his role in Rosthern when asked not to return in 1895. He now asked Reinlaender Bishop Johann Wiebe if he would assist the Rosthern group. Stoesz would rather have Wiebe in Rosthern than accept Heinrich Bergen's suggestion that the Rosenorter Bishop Regier serve

---

<sup>474</sup>Elias MSS, MHCA, p. 37.

<sup>475</sup>Elias MSS, MHCA, p. 37. "So wurde da ein Lehrer Gewaelt welcher auch nicht von dem oder dem seine Glieder war, aber dann zu Aelteste D: Staess seine Gemeinde Gehoerten."

that group. It showed that Stoesz had respect for the Reinlaender bishop, even though he disagreed with him.

It is also interesting to make note of some visits to the East Reserve by persons who originated in the Fuerstenland or Chortitza Colonies and who were or had been Reinlaender members. As already noted, Jacob Wiens of Schanzenfeld, had visited Bishop David Stoesz in 1887. Stoesz referred to Wiens as the "old School Teacher," and perhaps knew him from before. Wiens, who seemingly came from the Kronsthal village in the Russian Chortitza Colony, made several references to people whom he had known in Russia.<sup>476</sup> Wiens visited these former acquaintances and also spent a week with former Bishop Gerhard Wiebe. In June 1894 Bishop Stoesz had prominent visitors from Reinland: Jacob and Klaus Kroeker and Wilhelm Hiebert. Klaus Kroeker had started a store in Reinland in 1887 and Jacob, who was fairly well to do, travelled to Russia in 1900. Stoesz notes that the Mr. and Mrs. Klaus Kroeker stayed overnight at his place.<sup>477</sup> It is not known if they were Reinlaender, Sommerfelder or

---

<sup>476</sup>Jacob Braun of Gnadenfeld, East Reserve, was step-son of Wiens' neighbor, Peter Dyck, in Kronsthal, Chortitza Colony, Russia. Mrs. Peter Loewen of Hochstadt was Mrs. Wilhelm Esau of Neuosterwick, Chortitza Colony, Russia. Wiens was a old school mate of Aganetha Ens, who was now Mrs. Peter Klippenstein of Chortitz. The school was presumably in the Chortitza Colony. Wiens visited old acquaintances Peter and Margaretha Friesen at Rosenthal. Margaretha was a Bergen born in Neuosterwick, Chortitza Colony, Russia. "Baer's Visit," Rundschau 24 August 1887.

<sup>477</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 48. Information on the Kroeker reference from Zacharias, Reinland, p. 125, 130-31.



Bergthaler church members. These social connections show the complex religious and social milieu of the Chortitzer and Reinlaender Churches.

The relationship between the the Chortitzer and Reinlaender churches was filled with some tension from 1874 to 1900. While there had been initial cooperation between the groups, this soured as the Chortitzer introduced the Choral Books and the Reinlaender called for stronger discipline in the church. Although the problems were not resolved since both refused to compromise, Bishops Gerhard Wiebe and David Stoesz continued to respect Reinlaender Bishop Johann Wiebe. The Reinlaender Church had also made the Chortitzer Church reexamine its theological position on church discipline. When faced with the complex church situation in Rosthern, Stoesz finally turned to Bishop Johann Wiebe for help.

### C. Conclusion

The Chortitzer Mennonite Church responded to the wider Mennonite world by partially accepting the evangelical thrust and by disregarding the conservative arguments of the Reinlaender Church. The Chortitzers seemed to accept the visiting ministers' call for a greater emphasis on conversion. Baer, Richert and Peters were allowed to preach whenever they came to the East Reserve. Their influence was illustrated by Bishop Toews' insertion of John 3:16 into the school constitution in 1903. These evangelical emphases also

did not seem to generate divisions among the East Reserve Chortitzer as they had among the West Reserve Bergthaler and Reinlaender churches. The Reinlaender excommunications in the 1880s, the start of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1888 and the Bergthaler divisions in 1892 seemed foreign to the Chortitzer Church. The geographical distance from the West Reserve probably buffered the strong and heated debates that took place there. The Chortitzers did make their stand over the 1892 church division by supporting the Sommerfelder Church, and by rejecting Funk's proposals on higher education, missions and personal conversion. It is not clear, however, which of these issues was most contentious for the Chortitzer. Bishop Stoesz's only personal reflection on the division states that it was a problem over higher education, i.e. the teacher training school in Gretna.

Secondly, the Chortitzer did not support the Reinlaender's push to discontinue using the Choralbook and call for a stronger discipline in the church. Bishop Gerhard Wiebe introduced the Choralbook to his East Reserve flock, and Bishop Stoesz condoned a milder form of church discipline when he continued serving communion to Reinlaender excommunicated members. Both Chortitzer Bishops Wiebe and Stoesz, however, continued to have a high regard for Bishop Johann Wiebe and his Reinlaender Church.

## CHAPTER 9: THEOLOGY

The previous chapter has opened up the discussion on the religious identity of the Chortitzer Church. This chapter will continue this theme by examining four religious books used by the Chortitzers. It will enable one to compare the Chortitzer Church with other Mennonite denominations in Prussia, Russia and North America. A general theology of Mennonites will then be outlined in the last section. This summary will offer one approach for defining the Chortitzer Church and understanding their responses to the world around them.

### A. The Use of Four Religious Books

The Chortitzer Church used various books as a basis of their faith. They included a catechism, confession of faith, hymnbook and Choralbook. This section will briefly mention how they were used by the ministers, teachers and song leaders.<sup>478</sup> Secondly, a study of the printing history of these materials will help link and differentiate the Chortitzer church with and from other Mennonites. It will thus place them theologically within the wider Mennonite world.

---

<sup>478</sup>An analysis of the sermons of the Chortitzer ministers would provide further clues on the theological beliefs of the church. There are some 38 sermons among Bishop David Stoesz's sermons, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. They, however, need to be transliterated and translated.

The catechism used by the church was originally written and published in Elbing, Prussia, in 1778. It was called the Catechism, or a brief and simple instruction from the Holy Scriptures, in the form of questions and answers, for the children, for use in the schools.<sup>479</sup> It, no doubt, reflected Lutheran and Pietistic influences, as had other Mennonite catechisms written in the eighteenth century.<sup>480</sup> It was sixty-two pages in length and contained 122 questions about creation, the fall of man, and the redemption of man through Jesus Christ.

The church required that the catechism be used as one of the main textbooks in the school. It could thereby teach the children the Christian beliefs of the Mennonites:

---

<sup>479</sup>The catechism used for this study was published in Elkhart, Indiana, in 1889 and purchased by Bishop David Stoesz in 1891. Entitled Katechismus, oder kurze und einfaeltige Unterweisung aus der heiligen Schrift, in Fragen und Antworten, fuer die Kinder zum Gebrauch in den Schulen. Nebst Glaubens-Bekenntnis der Mennoniten in Manitoba. Einen andern Grund kann zwar niemand legen, ausser dem, der gelegt ist, welcher ist Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. 3:11. Herausgegeben von der christlichen taufgesinnten Gemeinde, Mennoniten genannt (Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1889. 68 p. and 37 p.). It is found as Accession No. 27587 in the Mennonite Historical Library, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba. Hereafter referred to as Katechismus 1889, MHL. A handwritten copy of the catechism is also found among Stoesz's sermon collection. It is not complete, ending with Part 3, Chapter 2. See File No. 22, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>480</sup>These are the general conclusions reached by Robert Friedman, Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries: Its Genius and its Literature, (Sugarcreek, Ohio: Schlabach Printers, 1980). A study of this catechism is included on pages 134-37 of Friedman's book. Hereafter referred to as Friedman, Piety.

The textbooks to be used are the Bible Stories and our Catechism from which the downfall of man, the birth, death and resurrection of Christ for our redemption, should be explained according to the pupil's capacity to grasp its meaning.<sup>481</sup>

When a person decided to join the church, two out of the six catechetical instruction classes were devoted to the catechism. At baptism the candidates were asked if they were in agreement with all parts of the fundamental truths of the Christian teaching as had so often been proclaimed to them; and their answer had to be affirmative.<sup>482</sup>

The use of this particular 1778 Elbing catechism shows that the Chortitzer Church stood within a large group of Mennonite churches. It had gone through sixteen printings in Prussia from 1797 to 1890 and had been printed ten times in Russia between 1851 and 1898. The Chortitzer Church took this catechism with them to North America, only to find that it had been brought there earlier by the Amish. It had been printed in 1824 to serve the Mennonites in Ontario and had been reprinted seven times by the time the Chortitzers arrived in 1874.<sup>483</sup> By the late nineteenth century this

---

<sup>481</sup>Taken from point no. 4 in the "General School Decree."

<sup>482</sup>Description of catechism instruction classes found in an article by Reverend Peter Giesbrecht, "Von Hochstadt, Manitoba...[Reverend] P[eter] G[iesbrecht]," Herold der Wahrheit 1 Juli 1888, p. 201.

<sup>483</sup>A history of the print editions of the catechism can be compiled by the lists found in Mennonite Bibliography, 1631-1961, 2 volumes, comp. by Nelson P. Springer and A.J. Klassen (Kitchener, Ontario: Kitchener, Ontario, 1977). Hereafter referred to as Mennonite Bibliography. Section on

catechism was being used by the two largest groups in North America, the Old Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church, and by such groups as the Evangelical Mennonite Brethren, Kleine Gemeinde and the Amish. Two historians have remarked on the significance of this catechism:

It is nothing short of astounding to discover that the Elbing-Waldeck catechism became a standard source of doctrinal, prebaptismal instruction for such widespread groups as the American groups just listed, the Mennonites of Russia (except the M[ennonite] B[rethren] group 1860ff), those of West Prussia, and those of France;...Does this not explain, in part at least, the widespread doctrinal agreement among these groups?<sup>484</sup>

Mennonites in Prussia and Russia discontinued printing this catechism in the twentieth century but it went through at least 17 printings in North America from 1874 to 1914.<sup>485</sup> The Chortitzer Church therefore stood within a long tradition of doctrinal teaching within the Mennonite communities in Prussia, Russia and North America in the later half of the nineteenth century. By the twentieth century, however, its use was more a North American than a European phenomenon.

A second item of doctrinal literature used by the Chortitzer church was the Confession of Faith of the

---

Prussia, 1:400, #11620 etc.; on Russia, 1: 473, #13950 etc.; on North America, 2: 215-16, #21344 etc.

<sup>484</sup>"Catechism" by Christian Neff and Harold S. Bender, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>485</sup>The last edition in Prussia was 1890 and in Russia 1898. The North American editions, 1874-1914 are found in Mennonite Bibliography, 2: 215-16. Listed as No.'s 21350-56 and 21367-76.

Mennonites in Reinland, Manitoba, North America.<sup>486</sup> It was 37 pages in length and contained 18 articles of faith. It had been published in 1881 by Bishop Johann Wiebe of the Reinlaender Mennonite Church:

For a long time already several members of the church have felt the need not only to hear the confession once a year in a worship service...but to have it in their hands so they can read it and compare it with the Word of God.

I wrote down our confession as we instruct it every year to the youth who are preparing for baptism.<sup>487</sup>

The origin of the confession is not known. It may have been used in Russia before the emigration in the 1870s.<sup>488</sup>

The confession had more of a specific purpose than the catechism. It focused on such church issues as baptism, communion, footwashing, excommunication, relationship to the government, election of ministers, swearing of oaths, and non-resistance, as well as outlining more general theological concepts. The Anabaptists used confessions as a witness to

---

<sup>486</sup>The title of the first 1881 edition of the Confession is Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Reinland, Manitoba, Nord Amerika (Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitische Verlags-handlung, 1881, 37 pages). Hereafter referred to as Confession 1881 1889, MHL. Listed as No. 21525 in Mennonite Bibliography. The entry leads one to believe that this first 1881 edition of the confession was printed as a separate book. Later editions usually are found at the back of the catechism. A handwritten copy of the confession is found among Stoesz's sermons, File No. 23, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>487</sup>Confession 1881 1889, p. [iii], iv.

<sup>488</sup>One would need to compare it with the many other confessions of the Mennonites. Sources for this would be Friedman, Piety, or Howard John Loewen, One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith, An Introduction Text-Reader Series No. 2 (Elkhart, Indiana: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985).

their faith and as a means for better understanding the differences between groups.<sup>489</sup> Bishop Johann Wiebe, who was working for a reform in the Reinlaender church, may have published the confession in 1881 to emphasize the articles of church discipline and the separation of church and state.<sup>490</sup> It is not known which of the eighteen articles the Chortitzer Church especially emphasized during the late nineteenth century. Bishop Stoesz mentioned that he was in Pastwa on May 12, 1878, "because of the Articles of Faith," but did not elaborate.<sup>491</sup>

The Chortitzer Ministerial used the confession as the basis of instruction to youth who wanted to join the church. The first four sessions held on successive Sundays after Easter used the book. The sermon preached on the Sunday before Pentecost was also devoted to it.<sup>492</sup> At this time they were specifically asked:

Do you agree to the articles of confession that have been taught you, and are you in agreement with the church on

---

<sup>489</sup>"Confessions of Faith" by Christian Neff, John C. Wenger and Harold S. Bender, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>490</sup>The theme that Bishop Wiebe was leading a reform in the church is developed by Zacharias, Reinland, p. 185-7.

<sup>491</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 12.

<sup>492</sup>A four page sermon entitled "Conclusion to the Articles" is found among Stoesz's sermons, File No. 21, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. It may have been used on that Sunday. A description of the format is found in an article entitled, "Von Hochstadt, Manitoba...[Reverend] P[eter] G[iesbrecht]," Herold der Wahrheit 1 Juli 1888, p. 201.



all points?<sup>493</sup>

The Chortitzer Church had either used this confession in Russia or adopted it as their own in Manitoba. In 1891, Stoesz purchased the published confession of faith, which was appended to the end of the catechism. This 1889 printing is believed to be its second publication.<sup>494</sup> By 1900, its title indicated that it was a confession of all the Mennonites in Manitoba, and not only of the Reinlaender Mennonites.<sup>495</sup> This suggests general theological agreement between the three

---

<sup>493</sup>Taken from a document found in File No. 21, Stoesz MSS, MHCA. The second question asked was "Are you free of any marriage engagement?" and thirdly "Have you been taught the beliefs in conjunction with God's word, so that Jesus Christ is the cornerstone, on which the Spirit and Living Word are also a part, and will you remain in the church in love, peace and everlasting, in obedience according with God and the Church in holiness and righteousness, and which is pleasing, and thereupon desire baptism?" Questions also mentioned in article "Von Hochstadt, Manitoba...[Reverend] P[eter] G[iesbrecht]," Herold der Wahrheit 1 Juli 1888, p. 201.

<sup>494</sup>Bishop David Stoesz bought the confession in 1891; it was bound with the Katechismus 1889. It is found as Accession No. 27587 in the Mennonite Historical Library, Canadian Mennonite Bible College.

<sup>495</sup>It, however, was not used by the Kleine Gemeinde and Holdeman groups. The title page of the 1900 edition reads "Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Manitoba, Nordamerika," (Elkart, Indiana: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1900). It was found at the back of the 1900 edition of the catechism. A copy of this 1900 catechism and confession is in the author's possession; it is not listed in Mennonite Bibliography. The printing history of this confession is not fully documented: "the exact nature of this confession as a bibliographic entity is not clear....Because of the uncertainties, there is no attempt to list these reprints in this bibliography," Mennonite Bibliography, 2:224, under bibliographic reference No. 21592. The printings of the confession after 1900 are dated 1922 and 1924.

largest Manitoba Mennonite churches: Reinlaender, Sommerfelder and Chortitzer. While the catechism had placed the Chortitzer within a world wide group of Mennonites, the confession defined them within the boundaries of Manitoba.

A third item of devotional literature used by the church was the Hymnbook, a collection of spiritual songs published for general edification and the praise of God.<sup>496</sup> It was originally published in Prussia in 1767, and went through several editions by the latter half of the nineteenth century. It contained 726 hymns but did not include scores for the melodies. The scores were published in a separate Choralbook, which will be reviewed below.

The Chortitzers used the hymnbook in the school and worship service: "school is to be opened and concluded with song and prayer. The songs are to be selected from our church hymnary."<sup>497</sup> Usually two songs were sung at the beginning of each worship service, and one at the end. The persons in charge of singing were called the Vorsaenger, or song leaders. These were elected positions and the incumbents were responsible to teach and lead the

---

<sup>496</sup>Edition used for research was the first American edition, circa 1880, Gesangbuch in welchem eine Sammlung geistreicher Lieder befindlich. Zur allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes herausgegeben (Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitischen Verlagshandlung, [1880], 24, 877, and 11 pages. Listed as No. 23545 in Mennonite Bibliography.

<sup>497</sup>Point No. 2 in the "General School Decree," Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

congregation in the melodies.<sup>498</sup>

The printing history of this hymnbook reveals that it was used by Mennonites in Prussia from 1767 to 1864 and in Russia from 1844 to the 1890s. The hymnbook was published for the first time in North America in 1880 to serve the recently immigrated Russian Mennonites. It subsequently went through five editions from 1880 to 1903, and was published numerous times in the twentieth century.<sup>499</sup>

The use of the hymnbook in the latter part of the nineteenth century illustrated that the Chortitzer stood together with their Prussian, Russian and North American brethren in a long tradition of hymn singing. Unlike the catechism, however, the hymnbook was not used by the Swiss Mennonites. While the Russian Mennonites in North America continued using this 1767 hymnbook in the twentieth century, Mennonites in Prussia and Russia were switching to new hymnbooks, in 1869 and 1892, respectively.<sup>500</sup> The

---

<sup>498</sup>Information on the morning worship service and on the song leaders taken from Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 54-57. This paper was written in 1974 and the observations may have been different in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Peters also mentions some early song leaders, Henry A. Hiebert of Osterwick and George U. Kehler of Bergthal, and describes their responsibilities in a morning worship service.

<sup>499</sup>Information on the Prussia period 1767-1864, No. 11872-11883; on the Russian period 1844-n.d., No. 14020-14025; and the North American period 1880-1957, No. 23545-23556 from Mennonite Bibliography. An 1884 edition available at the Mennonite Historical Library, CMBC, is not listed.

<sup>500</sup>The 1869 Prussian hymnbook is listed as No. 11913 and the 1892 Russian hymnbook as No. 14040 in Mennonite

Chortitzers now stood only with their North American brethren.

A fourth religious book used by the Chortitzer church was the book of melodies. It was called the Choralbook, above all to be used in the Mennonite schools in south Russia.<sup>501</sup> It had been written by Heinrich Franz of Russia, and published in Leipzig, Germany, in 1865.<sup>502</sup> The Choralbook was 120 pages long and contained 163 melody lines to which all the 726 hymns in the Hymnbook were sung. The notations used to indicate the melody were numbers ranging between one and seven, instead of round notes.

This Choralbook was used mainly by the school teachers and by the song leaders of the church. The teachers were to learn the melodies and in turn teach them to the children:

The teacher, however, is further obliged to instruct singing at a time convenient to him. It is desirable that instruction in singing should conform to the long established practice of our church....It should, however, be in simple form; other than unison singing is strictly

---

Bibliography.

<sup>501</sup>The title is taken from the first edition of book published in North America: H[einrich] Franz, Choralbuch; Zunaechst zum Gebrauch in den Mennonitischen Schulen Suedrusslands (Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1878, 120 pages). Hereafter referred to as Franz, Choralbook. Listed as No. 23538 in Mennonite Bibliography. Further information on this choralbook is found in "Choralbuch, zunaechst..." by D.H. Epp, and a general article entitled "Choral-Books" by Christian Neff, both in Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>502</sup>This 1865 edition is listed as No. 14028 in Mennonite Bibliography.

prohibited.<sup>503</sup>

The three or four song leaders of the church in each service learned the melodies and led the singing in the congregation. "The mood and manner in which the Vorsaenger announced and started the hymns could affect the spirit and quality of the singing considerably."<sup>504</sup> They also took turns choosing the hymns, and tried to make the concluding hymn an appropriate response to the minister's message.

The Choralbook was originally published in 1860 and contained notations not only for the melody lines, but for four part singing. Franz's specific purpose was to develop a unity out of the many versions of songs which had developed out of the different oral traditions. He tried to get the original melody for each song and thus enhance the beauty of singing to God in a purified and conformed version.<sup>505</sup> It found increasing acceptance among the Russian Mennonite churches and was republished in 1880.<sup>506</sup> Franz, however, published a Choralbook which contained only the melody lines

---

<sup>503</sup>A portion of point No. 5 in "General School Decree," Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>504</sup>George Wiebe, "The Hymnody of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada," (M. Music thesis, University of Southern California, 1962," p. 70. Some information on song leaders also available in Peters, "Silberfeld," p.54-57, and in "Chorister" by J.G. Rempel in Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>505</sup>Taken from introduction to Franz, Choralbook, 1860 edition.

<sup>506</sup>It contained 223 rather than the 120 pages. 1860 and 1880 editions listed as No.'s 14027 and 14029 respectively in Mennonite Bibliography.

in 1865 because a portion of the churches did not accept four part singing. It was this edition that the Chortitzer Church used and had republished in North America. It went through three North American reprintings from 1878 to 1918; the 1902 edition was printed in Steinbach, Manitoba.<sup>507</sup>

The Chortitzer Church had not used Franz's 1865 melody book in Russia but decided to do so in Manitoba. Its use, however, created its own problems:

Many teachers claim to be incapable of carrying this out [instructing the children in singing from the Choralbook], which is probably true. In order so as not to impede progress of any school, the teacher shall instruct according to his capability.<sup>508</sup>

The Chortitzers' use of this Choralbook is contrasted with the Reinlaender Church who discontinued using this book in Manitoba. On January 12, 1876, Bishop Johann Wiebe and Reverend Jacob Wiens visited all the villages and held a consultation on singing. It was decided to go back to the older tunes which had been orally passed on from one song leader to the next.<sup>509</sup> The Reinlaender saw the Choralbook as

---

<sup>507</sup>Listed as No.'s 23538-40 in Mennonite Bibliography. The 1878 and 1918 editions were published from Elkhart, Indiana. The 1902 edition was published by H.W. Reimer, Steinbach. One source also claims "it was further reprinted...by a group of four men from the Chortitz Mennonite congregation at Steinbach, Manitoba," in "Hymnology of the American Mennonites," by Harold S. Bender, Mennonite Encyclopedia. No information is available on this edition.

<sup>508</sup>portion of Point No. 5 of "General School Decree," Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

<sup>509</sup>Zacharias, Reinland, p. 191-93. Abram Janzen (1876-?) describes the conflict between the Chortitzer and Reinlaender (Old Colony) in his memoirs, Klippenstein,

an unhealthy innovation; it standardized the melodies. This also caused tension for the Chortitzer Church. Reinlaender Bishop Wiebe was under the impression that Chortitzer Bishop Gerhard Wiebe had agreed with him about not using the Choralbook in Manitoba.<sup>510</sup>

The use of this Choralbook put the Chortitzer within a particular segment of the Russian Mennonites in the latter part of the nineteenth century. After 1897, when a revised Choralbook was published in Russia, many were probably singing four part harmony.<sup>511</sup> This Choralbook also associated the Chortitzer with a large group of Russian Mennonites in North America.<sup>512</sup> It, however, set them apart from the Reinlaender, and illustrated that the Chortitzer were open to certain innovations.

The Chortitzer church probably used other pieces of religious literature as well. In 1887 Bishop David Stoesz purchased a book entitled Christian Spiritual Conversation on Saving Faith... It had been published at Elkhart, Indiana, Mennonite Memories, p. 86-90.

<sup>510</sup>Information from Charles Burkhart, "Music of the Old Colony Mennonites," Mennonite Life 7 (January 1952): 20-21, 47; Zacharias, Reinland, p. 204; and "Johann Wiebe" by Cornelius Krahn in Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>511</sup>"Choralbuch zunaechst..." by D.H. Epp in Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>512</sup>"Hymnology of the American Mennonites," by Harold S. Bender, Mennonite Encyclopedia. The General Conference Mennonite Church, which included many Russian Mennonites, published their own Hymnbook with Notes in 1890.

in 1873. Stoesz wrote at the back of it, "I judge this book as worthwhile and useful; it gives fairly good and correct principles for Christian conduct."<sup>513</sup> Published originally in 1702, it contained a catechism, a confession of faith and two articles on salvation. It was widely accepted among the Mennonites in Europe and North America.<sup>514</sup>

A second item was Johann Friedrich Stark's Daily Handbook.<sup>515</sup> It was a devotional book, and like the catechism and hymnbook, was published originally in the eighteenth century--1727. It was used extensively by Mennonites in North America and reflected their embrace of piety.<sup>516</sup> These two items undoubtedly supplemented the four basic religious texts in many of the Chortitzer homes in Manitoba.

#### B. General Theology

It is not easy to summarize the theology of Mennonites

---

<sup>513</sup>Christliches Gemuethsgespraech vom Seligmachenden Glauben, fuer die Jugend, in Fragen und Antworten; und ein Glaubens=Bekenntnis der Mennoniten (Elkhart, Indiana: J. F. Funk u. Brud., 1873) and found as book accession #24443 in the Mennonite Historical Library, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

<sup>514</sup>Friedman, Piety, p. 145-48.

<sup>515</sup>Copy in possession of author had inscription "This book belongs to Johann Friesen in Bergthal, 1874." probably Russia. Thus it was used by Chortitzer membership, although how wide spread its use was is unknown. Date of publication is unknown, but Stark lived from 1680-1756. Title in part reads Taegliches Handbuch in guten und boesen Tagen, by Johann Friedrich Stark, (Stuttgart: J.F. Steinkopfschen, n.d.)

<sup>516</sup>Reference to it is in Friedman, Piety, p. 206.



since they do not have a common catechism, confession of faith or doctrinal statement. In 1875, an article in the Manitoba Daily Free Press summarized Mennonite beliefs thus:

The Mennonite religion is a mixture of Quaker, Lutheran and Baptist creeds, and more practical than abstract in its teachings. One of its leading teachers observes "it is a religion for every day in the week," and its precepts and observance are made to touch every relation in ordinary life.<sup>517</sup>

While many doctrines are similar to other Christians, certain ones distinguish Mennonites. These tenets of faith include: the role of the church, the practice of nonresistance, the belief in nonconformity to the world, the approach to community, and the value attached to missions.<sup>518</sup> Although this Mennonite theology has sprung out of sixteenth century Anabaptism, there is a relationship between the two:

The doctrines of the sixteenth-century Anabaptists do not necessarily coincide with twentieth-century Mennonite beliefs. Yet a correlation between Anabaptist and Mennonite precepts exists, and the study and use of history in order to explain or legitimate a tradition is unavoidable.<sup>519</sup>

---

<sup>517</sup>"More About the Mennonites," The Daily Free Press 31 August 1875.

<sup>518</sup>These five tenets of faith come from two Mennonite historians and were used because they are concise summary descriptions. David Haury lists four beliefs: community, nonconformity, nonresistance and evangelical mission in Western District Conference, p. 5-7. Theron Schlabach names four beliefs as well: baptism only of believers, concept of the church, ethic of love and serious acceptance of the Great Commission in Mission and the Mennonite Church, p. 24-5.

<sup>519</sup>Haury, Western District Conference, p. 5. The resurgence into studying Anabaptism is generally attributed to Harold S. Bender. Bender's presidential address to the American Society of Church History in December 1943 was entitled "The Anabaptist Vision." Found in Guy F.

Like other Mennonites, the Chortitzers saw the church as a voluntary organization made up of committed believers.<sup>520</sup> When people decided to join it, they had to make a profession of faith, attend catechetical classes, and be baptized and accepted into the church. This adult believer's church was a new concept during the Reformation of the sixteenth century. Those who practiced it were called Anabaptists, "rebaptizers". They did not recognize infant baptism and only baptized adults upon their confession of faith. The lines between the church and the community became blurred, however, when Mennonites began forming their own colonies separate from society. The boundaries of the Russian Bergthal Church and Colony, for example, were the

---

Hershberger, The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1957), p. 29-54. His influence is seen in many studies of Anabaptism and the Mennonite church. The best summary of Anabaptist beliefs is Walter Klaassen, ed., Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, 1981). One person who has written a theology of Mennonites is John C. Wenger. One of his first books written on the subject is Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine (Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949), p. 137-82.

<sup>520</sup>See "Church," by Harold S. Bender, Mennonite Encyclopedia. One author who deals particularly with this theme in Anabaptism is Franklin H. Littell, The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: a study of the Anabaptist View of the Church (New York, New York: Macmillan Company, 1964).

E. K. Francis, a sociologist interested in the dynamics of a society, has explained how the Mennonites moved from a religious movement to an ethnic group. He, however, still does make a distinction between church and community, Mennonites in Manitoba, p.9-27, 246-63. Another sociologist, Calvin W. Redekop has also used religious beliefs to help explain the Mennonites, Old Colony Mennonites.

same, and the Chortitzer Church took this problem with them to Manitoba. Two incidents in 1905 and 1906 provide exceptions to the rule for a homogeneous and endogamous church. On June 13, 1905, Henry Coote from the English community "stepped into our church" and was baptized into the Chortitzer Church. A little over a week later he married a Chortitzer woman. In 1906, Edward Dudman also joined the Chortitzer Church. He had also come from the English community and had previously been a Pentecostal. He married a woman from the Chortitzer community a year later.<sup>521</sup>

A second belief of the Mennonites was nonresistance. A portion of the Anabaptists were pacifist in the sixteenth century, while others were involved in the Peasant's War in the 1520s and the massacre at Muenster, Westphalia, in 1535.<sup>522</sup> A concrete example of the nonresistant position was the refusal of Mennonites to participate in the military. The threat of losing this privilege in Russia prompted a third of them to move to North America in the 1870s.<sup>523</sup>

---

<sup>521</sup>Documentation found in Family Register #5, 1887 Church Register, and Family Register #223, 1907 Church Register A. Both are part of the Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

<sup>522</sup>See "Nonresistance," by Ernst Crous, Mennonite Encyclopedia. There has been much recent debate about the Anabaptist position on nonresistance. A good addition to this debate is James M. Stayer, Anabaptists and the Sword Second Edition, (Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976).

<sup>523</sup>See Lawrence Klippenstein, "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church-State Relations, 1789-1936" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1984) for the full story of Mennonite nonresistance in Russia and the Soviet Union.

Bishop Gerhard Wiebe of the Chortitzer Church wrote a book on the emigration in order to tell the story of how and why they left:

how much work and effort it cost, yes, how many prayers and tears were caused by the many hindrances, to protect and save our children from military service and ruin, and how the Lord God led us out of Russia with a strong hand and mighty arm.<sup>524</sup>

The Canadian government had given exemption from military duty to the Swiss Mennonites in the early nineteenth century, and extended the privilege to the Russian Mennonites who settled in Manitoba in the 1870s.<sup>525</sup> The right to affirm rather than to swear the oath could also be seen as part of the nonresistance stance. When Cornelius Stoesz applied for a homestead patent in 1885, the word "swear" was stroked out and "affirm" inserted on the application form.<sup>526</sup> This pacifist belief was also evident when the Hanover Municipality balked at passing by-laws: it might mean having to take a fellow believer to court.<sup>527</sup> During this forty year period in Manitoba, however, the Mennonites did not have

---

<sup>524</sup>Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 1.

<sup>525</sup>It was included as point no.1 in the Order in Council, P.C. 957, 13 August 1873. Reproduced in Zacharias, Reinland, p. 30-32. This privilege has been studied by Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments."

<sup>526</sup>This issue is addressed in Point no. 11 of the 1873 Order in Council, P.C. 957. Document reproduced in Zacharias, Reinland, p. 30-32. Homestead patents come from Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba.

<sup>527</sup>Penner, Hanover, p. 175.

to test their exemption from military duty.<sup>528</sup>

A third tenet of faith was nonconformity to the world. As Mennonites were persecuted for their faith and were not considered citizens, nonconformity meant living a life of suffering. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, this concept has been especially emphasized by conservative Mennonite groups in North America.<sup>529</sup> For them, this belief included the ideas of humility, a simple life, and submission.<sup>530</sup> For one historian writing the early history of Mennonites in Canada, it was defined by a theological,

---

<sup>528</sup>Mennonites in western Canada were given military exemption in World War I. See J. H. Doerksen, Geschichte und Wichtige Dokumente der Mennoniten von Russland, Canada, Paraguay und Mexico (n.p., 1923). A copy of this book is in the Mennonite Historical Library, Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba. The Mennonites responded to World War II by participating in alternative service projects and by starting relief organizations. See [David P. Reimer], Experiences of Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War, 1939-1945 (Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd, [1946]). Esther Epp, "The Origins of Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)," (M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980).

<sup>529</sup>See "Nonconformity," by Harold S. Bender, et.al, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>530</sup>These concepts could be treated separately but are placed under the belief of nonconformity because of their appropriateness for describing the conservative Mennonite viewpoint. Amos B. Hoover, who describes the ministry of Old Order Mennonite Bishop Jonas Martin, 1875-1925, in Pennsylvania, summarizes these beliefs: "[This book is dedicated] in memory of those faithful ancestors of the 19th century who labored so hard to defend the old Mennonite ground and faith, and all those that held Demut [humility], Einfachheit [simplicity] and Gelassenheit [yieldedness] as the highest ideals in their Christian life," Jonas Martin Era, p. [3]. Gelassenheit has been translated as "submission" for use in this paper. It also means self-surrender.

geographic, psychological and social separation from the world.<sup>531</sup>

Evidence of nonconformity for the Chortitzers was seen in their support of private schools and maintenance of a closed settlement on the East Reserve. It was also demonstrated in their emphasis on discipleship:

The spiritual life of the Chortitzer people...was a quiet one. Many of them were born again, but most of these did not have or know the real joy of the Lord. There was no talk about rebirth among the conversation of every-day life. Repentance and discipleship were stressed in the messages read off by the ministers Sunday morning.<sup>532</sup>

In his book History of the Emigration, Gerhard Wiebe continually stressed humility and the simple life. Arrogance, which was a sin, was expressed in fashionable dress, election to government positions, promotion of higher education and the acceptance of government laws over against the discipline of the church. "Opposing this teaching of arrogance," Wiebe wrote, "there remain basically only three Aelteste, Stoesz, Doerksen and Johann Wiebe."<sup>533</sup>

The use of alcohol became part of this issue of nonconformity with the world. In an article in Die Mennonitische Rundschau, Klaas Peters from the West Reserve accused the Chortitzer members of drinking at their municipal

---

<sup>531</sup>Epp, Mennonites in Canada, p. 19-20.

<sup>532</sup>Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 20.

<sup>533</sup>These themes are developed in the last chapter, XXIII, in his book, Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 63-73. Quotation from page 63.

meetings. Chortitzer minister, Johann Neufeld, wrote back in May 1890 and said that it was not true. Peters should read the passage in the bible, wrote Neufeld, about picking a log out of one's own eye before pointing out the splinter in someone else's.<sup>534</sup> In general, Chortitzer members did drink, but the practice became an issue for the Municipality in the 1890s and 1900s. In October 1905 the council refused to give a license in Niverville because "such a thing would only harm the constituency."<sup>535</sup>

The fourth religious belief of Mennonites was community. Its definition is very close to that of the concept of the church; the terms "Mennonite community" and "Mennonite church" are often used interchangeably.<sup>536</sup> The idea of community, however, focusses also on the social, economic and political realities of the Mennonite experience. The Chortitzer Church encompassed an ethnic community which had its own political, educational, welfare, inheritance, and

---

<sup>534</sup>"Chortitz (Schoenthal), 5 April... [Reverend] Johann Neufeld," Die Mennonitische Rundschau 7 May 1890.

<sup>535</sup>Bishop David Stoesz had included a beer recipe in his diary, "David Stoesz Diary," p. 44. That it became an issue is developed by Penner, Hanover, p. 43 and 47.

<sup>536</sup>This belief could be subsumed under church but is used here because the Mennonites of Russia had particularly wrestled with the distinction between church and community. See "Community," by J. W. Fretz, Mennonite Encyclopedia. Haury, Western District Conference, only uses "community", and not "church," to describe Mennonite tenets of faith, p. 6. The two sociological studies mentioned earlier, Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, and Redekop, Old Colony Mennonites, focus on the ethnic aspect of the Mennonite experience in Manitoba.

fire insurance organizations. It was not coincidental that both a political and religious leader were chosen as delegates to Canada in 1873. The Chortitzer Church continued to be closely linked with village and municipal political authorities throughout this period.<sup>537</sup> Mutual aid was part of this definition of community.<sup>538</sup> The deacons looked after the poor, and the Waisenamt administrators took care of the orphans and widows. The Chortitzer Church also reached out to others beyond their own community. In 1892, for example, Stoesz gave John F. Funk \$166. to help relieve hunger in Russia.<sup>539</sup>

The fifth tenet of Mennonite faith was missions. The Anabaptists took Jesus's Great Commission literally and went out to all the world to make disciples, baptize and teach all the things that Jesus commanded them. This aspect of the faith declined, however, as Mennonites retreated into homogeneous communities.<sup>540</sup> Although the Chortitzer Church did not actively promote missions in their first forty years

---

<sup>537</sup>Adolf Ens has examined the relationship between Mennonites in western Canada and the Canadian government in his dissertation, "Mennonite Relations with Governments." Another good source for describing the Mennonite response and involvement in politics is James C. Juhnke, A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites (Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1975).

<sup>538</sup>"Mutual Aid," by J. W. Fretz and Harold S. Bender, Mennonite Encyclopedia.

<sup>539</sup>"David Stoesz Diary," p. 41.

<sup>540</sup>See "Missions, Foreign Mennonite," by Samuel F. Pannabecker, Mennonite Encyclopedia.



in Manitoba, they did have to take a stand on it.<sup>541</sup> The missionaries to Manitoba Mennonites introduced new ideas on missions, evangelism, personal conversion, bible studies and higher education. The concept of missions was accepted by the 1892 Bergthaler Mennonite Church and by the Mennonite Brethren Church, but not by the Chortitzer Church.<sup>542</sup> The Chortitzers instead stressed humility, discipleship and nonconformity to the world.

### C. Conclusion

The examination of four theological books has placed the Chortitzer church within the wider Mennonite world. While two earlier chapters have focussed on the boundaries of the Bergthal community and the identity of the Chortitzer Church within the Mennonites in Manitoba, this chapter outlined the relationships between the Prussian, Russian and North American Mennonite communities. The Chortitzer use of the catechism and hymnbook showed that they stood squarely within this large group. By the twentieth century, however, the Chortitzer Church seemed to lag behind as others began

---

<sup>541</sup>Although the concept of missions was not part of the beliefs of the Chortitzer Church, it had to respond to this doctrine. This theme is also useful for distinguishing the various Mennonite groups from each other.

<sup>542</sup>Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church has documented this theme in the history of the Bergthaler Church. Brown, Winkler Mennonite Brethren tells their story. Schlabach, Mission and the Mennonite Church and Juhnke, General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions, have told the mission stories of the Mennonite Church and the General Conference Mennonite Church.

using newer editions. The use of the Choralbook was an innovation for the Chortitzers, but it still placed them among the more conservative Mennonite groups in Russia and North America. Finally the use of the confession revealed a unity among the Reinlaender, Sommerfelder and Chortitzer in Manitoba; it puts into perspective the differences among these churches documented in the previous chapter.

An outline of five theological concepts for Mennonites has provided a setting in which to explain the beliefs and actions of the Chortitzer Church. First, the Chortitzers did not hold as rigidly to the concept of the church as the Anabaptists had done. The lines between church and community were often quite blurred. The Chortitzers began to define their church identity when confronted with the Bergthaler split of 1892, and with various evangelical and conservative forces. For the most part, however, they seemed to stay an ethnic community defined by their origin in the Russian Bergthal Colony and limited by their East Reserve settlement. Second, nonresistance and nonconformity summarized some of their key theological beliefs. The loss of exemption from military service was a major reason for the Chortitzers to migrate to Canada. This issue unified all Manitoba Mennonite groups. Their stand against the Bergthaler Church on the issue of higher education, their maintenance of private schools and their belief in humility defined their nonconformity to the world. Fourthly, the Chortitzer church

did not accept the General Conference and Bergthaler churches' emphasis on missions. Thus, the five tenets of faith provides a context to begin outlining the Chortitzer theological positions, comparing them with the other Mennonite groups and explaining the church's actions in and responses to the events around them.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has examined the history of forty years in one Mennonite church community in Manitoba, 1874-1914. It has shown that an important transition for the church was the shift from an ethnic to a religious identity. The four themes mentioned in the introduction help clarify this thesis: boundaries of the church community, distinction between church and community, adaptation to Canadian society and a theological framework for the church. First, there were major changes in the boundaries of the Chortitzer community. For most of the group, the borders of the Russian Bergthal Colony were replaced with those of the East Reserve in Manitoba in 1874-76. A smaller portion, however, stayed in Russia, moved to Minnesota or settled at Fargo, North Dakota. After settling on the reserve for only a few years, over half of the Chortitzer community moved to the new Manitoba West Reserve located just across the Red River. Migrations continued for the East Reserve church members as they expanded beyond the reserve's borders, and as some moved to Herbert, Saskatchewan in the twentieth century. Whereas the Chortitzer Church had made up 40% (3,000) of the Mennonite population in Manitoba in 1876, they stood at a low 14% (2,149) in 1914.

The effect of these migrations on the Chortitzer

community was that its boundaries became identified by its origin in the Russian Bergthal Colony, by its geographic location in and around the East Reserve, and by its religious tenets of faith. On the basis of a common origin in the Bergthal Colony, Russia, Chortitzers continued their communications with Bergthaler friends in Russia and Minnesota. The community also maintained official religious ties with former members at Fargo, North Dakota, and Herbert, Saskatchewan, and broader institutional connections with the Bergthalers living on the West Reserve, Manitoba.

More specifically, however, the boundaries of the Chortitzers became defined by their geographical location on the East Reserve. Their name, "Church at Chortitz," well illustrated their identity. The village of Chortitz was where Bishop Gerhard Wiebe lived and was the centre of church life for this community. The members of this Chortitzer Church were those who had joined the church, regularly attended worship services at one of the many meetingplaces, and travelled to Chortitz or Grunthal for baptisms and communion. Even though members of the community moved beyond the reserve's borders and into the towns, the church maintained their identity by establishing meetingplaces in those communities. The name "Chortitzer Church" had also set them apart from the Molotschner communities and churches in and around the East Reserve.

At a number of points, the Ministerial also defined

the theological boundaries of the church. In 1874-76, the Chortitzer ministers had broken religious ties with the Minnesota and Russian brethren. Later, they had accepted the Minnesota bishop, Gerhard Neufeld, into their church. In 1891-92, the Chortitzer Church made a theological decision to support the emerging Sommerfelder Mennonite Church and reject the directions of the Bergthaler Church. In these years, the church had also reached out and assisted the immigrant group at Rosthern, Saskatchewan. It resulted in the beginnings of the Bergthaler Church at Rosthern. These church alliances were not based on origin or geography, but theology. The result of the changing boundaries was that the community was emerging as a Mennonite denomination known as the Chortitzer Mennonite Church.

The second theme is the distinction between the church and its community. The religious leaders played an important religious, economic, social and political role in the events of this Chortitzer community. Their religious duties included continuing relations with sister churches, maintaining worship centres and performing their liturgical duties. The Ministerial, however, had also pushed for emigration to Canada, negotiated large loans so the settlement could survive, established schools for the group and ensured there was enough land for their young people by lobbying for the continuation of exclusive settlement on the reserve.

These events, however, also uncovered the significance of other members in the community and revealed a complex network of relationships. It was the Waisenamt administrators who solved the economic arrangements for emigration and later carried the responsibilities of keeping track of the bread debts. The school trustees looked after the day to day operations of the public, and then private schools. The village council also must have had something to say about where the school was to be put, where the church was to be built and which were to be the major centres for the community. The role of Oberschulze Jacob Peters as a powerful political leader in the community, as well as the municipal councilors, also hinted at limits to the power of the church in the community.

These distinctions between the church and the community helps one understand at what points the church was involved with and influential among its members. Community members who stayed in Russia or moved to Minnesota and Fargo, seemed to completely disregard the church's wishes to move to Manitoba. The church seemed relatively silent when over half of its members decided to move to the West Reserve. But what could it do? Only about half of the church members were at any given communion service, and belonging to the church did not always mean that one was in good standing with it. The disintegration of the villages was a major shift for the farmers and village officials, and there too the church

seemed uninvolved.

At other times, the church and community seemed headed in the same direction. The majority of the persons in the Bergthal Colony was in favour of emigration to Manitoba. The community also seemed to support the church's decision to maintain private and not public schools, and to refrain from voting in political elections outside the municipality. The question of ensuring there was enough land for the young people concerned everyone, and seemingly all members did not oppose the continuation of exclusive settlement.

Thus, the conclusions to the Chortitzer community's adaptation to Canadian society is restricted to its church and its Ministerial. The ideas and actions of the ministers were identified, and they pointed to how the church adapted to the economic, political, social and religious forces at work in their community. The Ministerial had had to ask the Swiss Mennonites and the Canadian government for major loans in order to survive as an immigrant community in Manitoba. One effect of this was their willingness to assist others in need. Although the church seemingly did not have much to say about the migration to the West Reserve and the disintegration of East Reserve villages, it did establish and maintain at least ten central places for the Chortitzer community. The issue of private versus public education was a sensitive one for Bishop Gerhard Wiebe and the Ministerial. In the end, the church resisted any adaptation to the public



school system, and reinforced its community boundaries by maintaining private schools. This opposition was in contrast with the church's acceptance of municipal government. But here too, the church had to respond to the democratic principles of local government, and accept the end to exclusive settlement on the East Reserve.

Fourth, the theological framework for explaining the church's responses to the world around them also came into focus. The emigration to Canada had been based on its stand on nonresistance. Although not seriously tested in Manitoba, this tenet of faith was reflected in the municipal council's unwillingness to pass by-laws and take its own church members to court. In the Bergthaler Church division of 1892, the Chortitzers had rejected Funk's proposals for higher education, missions and an emphasis on personal conversion. The doctrine of nonconformity to the world was evident in the church's maintenance of private schools and their lobbying for exclusive settlement. At one point the Chortitzer Church reached beyond their community boundaries and helped out the hungry and needy in Russia and the Stundist group in Alberta. Their definition of mutual aid now included not only a fellow Chortitzer, but others in need. By accepting municipal government, the Chortitzers had a double standard in separating the spheres of church and state; on this point they were distinguished from their neighboring Kleine Gemeinde and Church of God in Christ, Mennonite, churches.

Church members had listened with open ears to the evangelical preaching of the visiting ministers and came to accept some assurance of salvation for themselves and their children. In accepting excommunicated Reinlaenders, the Ministerial had also rejected the conservative demands for stronger discipline and for maintaining the traditional forms of singing. The survey of several religious books revealed various degrees of theological unity between the Chortitzers and the broader Mennonite churches in Prussia, Russia, and North America. The catechism and the hymnbook put the Chortitzer Church squarely within this tradition. When the Chortitzers continued using these two books when others switched to newer ones, it moved them into a more restrictive conservative Mennonite group. The use of the 1881 Confession showed a basic agreement on doctrines between the Reinlaender Church and the Chortitzer and Sommerfelder churches.

Thus the five major tenets of the Mennonite faith explained the religious identity of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church. The concepts of nonresistance and nonconformity described the key theological tenets of the church. Missions, however, was rejected. And the Chortitzers had difficulty separating the other two religious concepts, the idea of the church and the community. While this problem indicated that the church was a strong ethnic community, it also limited the Chortitzers' ability to define the religious identity of the church.

Thus this study concludes that the Chortitzer Church went through an important shift in identity. It was a Mennonite ethnic group in Manitoba that originated in the Bergthal Colony and lived on the East Reserve, Manitoba. The community's boundaries were reinforced through the role of the meetingplaces, the Waisenamt, the private schools and the municipal government. Its members, however, began to be defined by the denominational lines of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church as their theological identity began outweighing their place of origin and their geographic residence. The church members' relationships with other Mennonite churches were based on common theological tenets of faith like nonresistance, nonconformity to the world and humility. Although this shift in identity was especially dependent on the religious leaders' involvement in the community, a sharper denominational identity of the Chortitzer Mennonite Church had emerged.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

A. PRIMARY SOURCES . . . . .	262
1. Record Groups and Manuscript Groups . . . . .	262
2. Articles in Newspapers . . . . .	264
3. Books, Papers and Published Documents . . . . .	267
4. Interviews . . . . .	269
B. SECONDARY SOURCES . . . . .	269
1. Books and Articles in Journals . . . . .	269
2. Theses and Papers . . . . .	274
3. Newspaper Articles . . . . .	275

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### A. PRIMARY SOURCES

#### 1. Record Groups and Manuscript Groups

Goshen, Indiana, Archives of the Mennonite Church (AMC)

Funk, John F., Collection. Correspondence from Heinrich Wiebe to [J. Y. Schantz], 16 February 1874.

Landmark, Manitoba, Ed Wiebe

Stoesz, Cornelius, Collection. The Blumstein school writing book, 1882.

North Newton, Kansas, Mennonite Library and Archives (MLA)

Neufeld, Gerhard, Collection. MSS 40. Certificate, File No. 2; Sermons in File No.'s 2, 8, 9, 11, 13, 15, 20 and 45.

Richert, P. H., Collection. MSS 16. Letter from Jacob Hoepfner, Schanzenfeld, Manitoba, to Heinrich Richert, Newton, Kansas, 16 January 1889; Letter from Wilhelm and Barbara Esau, Reinland, Manitoba to H. Richert, 15 February 1889.

Ottawa, Ontario, Public Archives of Canada (PAC)

Government of Canada, Department of Interior, RG 15, Vol. 577, File #179925, part 1, and Vol. 578, File #179925, part 2. Correspondence regarding the end of exclusive Mennonite settlement on the East Reserve.

Government of Canada, Department of Interior, RG 15, Vol. 246, File #27630. Petition to Prime Minister John A. Macdonald from Chortitzer Church and Hanover Municipality, Received Dept. of Interior, 10 December 1883.

Steinbach, Manitoba, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference

Chortitzer Waisenamt Record Group. Records of the Waisenamt, ca. 1860s to 1987. Waisenvorsteher Diedrich F. Wiebe, Ste. Anne, Manitoba. [Titles of documents used have been listed in the footnotes.]

Minister List, 1838-1923. Courtesy of former Bishop  
Henry K. Schellenberg, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Steinbach, Manitoba, Henry Fast

Molotschner Mennonite Fire Insurance Record Group.

Steinbach, Manitoba, Mennonite Village Museum

"Schul=Regeln. So gegeben von Kirchen Lehrdienst der  
Gemeinde zu Chortitz. Aeltester Peter T. Toews."  
[ca. 1903]

Waterloo, Ontario, Conrad Grebel College Archives (CGCA)

Russian Mennonite Aid Committee Record Group. "A Record  
of Russian Mennonite Aid Committee for Lincoln County,  
Ontario, 1873-1880, by Philip Wismer, Deacon," 7  
pages.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Dennis Stoesz

Stoesz, Cornelius W., Collection.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Government of Manitoba

Land Records. Crown Land Records and Registry, Lands,  
Department of Natural Resources, Government of  
Manitoba.

Winnipeg, Manitoba, Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives (MHCA)

Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, Manitoba, Record Group.  
Church registers, 1843-1907, and copies of some  
Waisenamt materials. [Titles of Waisenamt documents  
used have been listed in the footnotes.]

Chortitzer Mennonite Conference Waisenamt, Manitoba,  
Record Group. Copies of materials from the Chortitzer  
Mennonite Conference Waisenamt. [Titles of Waisenamt  
documents used have been listed in the footnotes.]

Doerksen, Abraham, Collection.

Doerksen, David F., Collection. Heinrich Friesen  
sermons.

Dyck, Peter, Sermon Collection. Sermons in File No.'s 2,  
3 and 5.

Elias, Peter, Collection.

Ens, Gerhard, Collection. Copy of Bishop Peter T. Toews' edited 1878 "Allgemeine Schulverordnung," ca. 1903.

Menno Colony Archives, Paraguay, Collection. Reverend Cornelius Stoesz's 1879 invitation to a meeting, and letter to A. Lilge.

Neufeld, Bernhard, Collection. Cornelius Stoesz's sermon.

Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, Herbert, Record Group. Contains Church Registers.

Sommerfelder Mennonite Church, Manitoba, Record Group. Contains Church Registers.

Stoesz, David M., Collection. Bishop David Stoesz Diary, 1872-1896, his sermon material, a sermon from Cornelius Friesen, a record of a minister election, General School Decree, an 1862 wedding invitation, some books, etc. The sermons particularly relevant were found in File No. 3, ordination of bishops, 8, baptism, 12, dedication of church buildings, 18, communion, 21, conclusion to articles and questions to youth, 22, catechism, and 23, confession of faith. Sermons used to establish meetingplaces included those found in File No.'s 4, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21A and 21B. Cornelius Friesen's sermon is found in File No. 40.

Carrot River, Saskatchewan, John B. Epp.

Epp, Cornelius, Collection. "A description of how our church split many years ago, in 1908." Letter written by Bishop Cornelius Epp to Peter Elias, Reinland, Manitoba. Translation by Ingrid Lamp, Swift Current, Saskatchewan, 1986. Material courtesy of Leonard Doell, Warman, Saskatchewan.

## 2. Articles in Newspapers

### Bundesbote Kalender

"Liste der Prediger der Allgemeine Conferenz." 1888, p. 42.

"Conferenz-Kalendar." 1888, p. 41.

"Liste der Prediger der mennonitischen Gemeinschaften (Soweit sie eingesandt wurden und ihre Namen und Adressen bekannt sind)." 1898, p. 49-[54]

Christliches Bundesbote

"Erklaerung des Aeltesten Johann Funk und der zu ihm haltenden Prediger an die Gemeinde." 5 Mai 1892, p. 5.

Emigrant, The

"Mennonite Reserves." 1 July 1887.

Herold der Wahrheit

"Circular Nr. 1. An die Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Westpreussen, Poland und Sued-Russland....Mennonite Board of Guardians."; "Circular Nr. 2...." Februar 1874, p. 17-19.

"Ein Brief aus Russland. Geschrieben an J. Y. Schantz in Berlin, Ontario,....Heinrich Wiebe, Schoenfeld, 16 Feb. 1874." Mai 1874, p. 89-90.

"Aus Canada. Berlin...4 Aug. 1874....J. Y. Shantz." September 1874, p. 153.

"Aus Manitoba. An die amerikanischen Bruedern.... Heinrich Wiebe, Kornelius Stoesz, David Stoesz." September 1874, p. 153-54.

"Brief von Hamburg...2 October 1874....Gerhard Wiebe." Sent to J. Y. Schantz. December 1874, p. 202-03.

"Ein Brief aus Russland. Heubuden, 24 Februar 1875, Gerhard Wiebe." Sent to J. Y. Schantz. Juni 1875, p. 84-85.

"Mennonite Reserve, Winnepeg [sic], March 30th, 1875." Letter to Elias Schneider from John Schwartz. Juni 1875, p. 89-90.

"Gemeinden in Manitoba, Canada." 1 Mai 1888, p. 130.

"Von Hochstadt, Manitoba....[Reverend] P[eter] G[iesbrecht]." 1 Juli 1888.

"Reisebericht....Isaac Peters, Henderson, Neb." Parts I and II. 1 & 15 September 1892, p. 265-66, 282-83.

Herald of Truth

"Letter from Russia to Jacob Y. Schantz, Berlin, Ont....Henry Wiebe, Schoenfeld, 16 February 1874."



May 1874, p. 89-90.

"Letter from Hamburg...2 October 1874....Gerhard Wiebe.  
December 1874, p. 202-03.

"Mennonite Reserve, Winnepeg [sic], March 30th, 1875."  
Letter to Elias Schneider from John Schwartz. June  
1875, p. 90.

"Brethren in Asia." [Chortitzer donation]. 1 July 1884.

Manitoba (Weekly) (Daily) Free Press

"More About the Mennonites." The Daily Free Press, 31  
August 1875.

"Local and Provincial." Manitoba Weekly Free Press, 9  
November 1878, p. 5.

"Board of Education." Manitoba Weekly Free Press, 23  
November 1878, p. 3.

Mennonitische Rundschau, Die

"Chortitz P.O., 28 Maerz....Corr." Article on the danger  
of district schools. 27 April 1887.

"Hochstadt P.O., 5 Juli....[Reverend] Peter Giesbrecht."  
Obituary of Reverend Franz Dyck. 20 Juli 1887.

"Schanzenfeld P.O. (Hoffnungsfeld, 12 August)....Jacob  
Wiens Sr." Visit of J. B. Baer to Manitoba. 24  
August 1887.

[No title] Advertisement for Peter Stoesz's address in  
Russia. 24 August 1887.

"Hochstadt P.O., 18 November....[teacher] Heinrich  
Rempel." 7 Dezember 1887.

"Chortitz P.O., 20 Februar....W. H." 7 March 1888.  
Article on use of written sermons.

"Hochstadt, 19 November....R. Rempel." Report of H.  
Richert's visit. 5 December 1888.

"Sollten die Mennoniten in Manitoba ihre Naturalisations-  
Papiere herausnehmen und Buerger der Provinz  
werden....Ein Leser." 30 April 1890.

"Chortitz (Schoenthal), 5 April,....[Reverend] Johann  
Neufeld." 7 Mai 1890.

- "Reisebericht des Bischofs Isaac Peters, Henderson, Nebraska." Part I and II. 15 and 22 October 1890.
- "Hochstadt, 17 December,....[teacher] Heinrich Rempel." 31 Dezember 1890.
- "Reisebericht....Isaac Peters, Henderson, Neb." 17 August 1892.
- "Ein offenes Dankschreiben der Bruder in Manitoba an die Brueder in Ontario....Heinrich Wiebe, Gretna, 5 March 1894." 18 April 1894.
- "Die oestliche Mennoniten-Reserve in Manitoba....(H. B. in Ndwst)." 27 June 1894.
- "A. Lilge....(Ndwst)." Report on Stundist group in Alberta. 14 November 1894.
- "Die District=Schulen in der Mennoniten=Reserve in Sued=Manitoba." H. H. Ewert School Inspector's Report. 24 April 1895.
- "Gretna, 26 August 1895....Klaas Peters." Reference to Stoesz as a school teacher. 4 September 1895.
- "Hochstadt, 20 Dezember 1895....Cornelius Stoesz, David Loewen." In regards to money sent to Asia. 15 Januar 1896.
- "Die Mennoniten-Reserven nich laenger fuer Mennoniten reserviert....(Nordwesten)." 24 August 1898.

Mitarbeiter, Der

- "Statistik der Mennoniten-Gemeinden in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbien fuer das Jahr 1914." January 1915, p. 32.

3. Books, Papers and Published Documents

Allgemeine Waisen-Verordnung der von Russland in Manitoba eingewanderten und angesiedelten Mennoniten. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Rundschau Publishing, 1930.

Brand=Ordnung der eingewanderten Mennoniten in Manitoba. Elkhart, Indiana, 1883.

Christliches Gemuethsgespraech vom Seligmachenden Glauben, fuer die Jugend, in Fragen un Antworten; und ein Glaubens=Bekennniss der Mennoniten. Elkhart, Indiana:

J.F. Funk u. Brud., 1873.

Glaubensbekenntnis der Mennoniten in Reinland, Manitoba, Nord Amerika. Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitische Verlags- handlung, 1881.

Franz, H[einrich]. Choralbuch; Zunaechst zum Gebrauch in den Mennonitischen Schulen Suedrusslands. Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1878.

Gesangbuch in welchem eine Sammlung geistreicher Lieder befindlich. Zur allgemeinen Erbauung und zum Lobe Gottes herausgegeben. Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitischen Verlagshandlung, [1880].

Katechismus, oder kurze und einfaeltige Unterweisung aus der heiligen Schrift, in Fragen und Antwoerten, fuer die Kinder zum Gebrauch in den Schulen. Nebst Glaubens- Bekenntnis der Mennoniten in Manitoba. Herausgegeben von der christlicher taufgesinnten Gemeinde, Mennoniten genannt. Elkhart, Indiana: Mennonitische Verlagshandlung, 1889.

Krehbiel, H. P. Mennonite Churches of North America: A Statistical Compilation, Collected and Arranged under the Auspices of the Mennonite General Conference of North America. Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1911.

Krehbiel, H. P. The History of the General Conference of the Mennonites of North America. [Vol. I] Canton, Ohio: Published by the author, 1898.

Stark, Johann Friedrich. Taegliches Handbuch in guten und boesen Tagen. Stuttgart: J.F. Steinkopfschen, n.d.

Stoesz, David. "David Stoesz Diary, 1872-1896." Transliteration by Trudie (Stoesz) and William Harms, Altona, Manitoba, 1985, 65 pages. Translation by Henry Stoesz, Altona, Manitoba, 1985, 59 pages.

Stoesz, David. "At the Ordination of a Bishop: The Text according to 1 Peter 5: 2-5." Transliteration by William J. Kehler, Altona, Manitoba, 1987. Translation by William and Trudie (Stoesz) Harms, Altona, Manitoba, 1987, 13 pages.

Weber, Onias; Horst, Isaac R.; and Hoover, Amos, ed. Peter G. Martin, German Letters. [Elmira, Ontario]: mimeographed pages, 1980.

Wiebe, Gerhard; Stoesz, Cornelius; Stoesz, David; and Wiebe, Heinrich. "General School Decree." Transliteration by

Dennis Stoesz, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1985, 5 pages.  
Translated by William J. Kehler, Altona, Manitoba, 1985,  
4 pages.

Wiebe, Gerhard. Causes and History of the Emigration of the Mennonites from Russia to America. Documents in Manitoba Mennonite History no. 1. Translated by Helen Janzen. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society, 1981.

Wiebe, Gerhard. Ursachen und Geschichte der Auswanderung der Mennoniten aus Russland nach Amerika. Winnipeg, [Manitoba]: Nordwesten, 1900.

Wiebe, Johann; Friesen, Johann; and [Friesen, Peter]. Die Auswanderung von Russland nach Kanada, 1875, in Form einer Predigt von unseren verstorbenen Aeltesten Johann Wiebe mit einem Zusatz vom verstorbenen Aeltesten Johann Friesen und andere alte Schriften. Cauchtemoc, Chihuahua, Mexico: Campo 6 1/2, Apartado 297, 1972.

#### 4. Interviews

Friesen, D. M. Waisen Vorsteher, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, New Bothwell, Manitoba. Interviews, 8 & 20 December 1983.

Wiebe, D. F. Waisen Vorsteher, Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, Ste. Anne, Manitoba. Interview, 15 January 1984.

### B. SECONDARY SOURCES

#### 1. Books and Articles in Journals

Brown, Frank. Mennonite Brethren Church, Winkler, Manitoba, 1888-1963. Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen & sons Ltd., [1963].

Burkhart, Charles. "Music of the Old Colony Mennonites." Mennonite Life 7 (January 1952): 20-21, 47.

Burkholder, L. J. A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario. Markham, Ontario: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935. Reprint ed., Altona, Manitoba: Mennonite Historical Society of Ontario, 1986.

Careless, J.M.S. Canada: A Story of Challenge. Revised ed. Laurentian Library 30. Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1974.

Doell, Leonard. The History of the Saskatchewan Bergthaler

- Mennonite Church, 1893-1975. Bergthal Historical Series No. 2. Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1987.
- Doerksen, Bernhard. Stammbaum des Abraham Doerksen, Regina Hoepfner und Nachkommenschaft, 1804-1960. Regina, Saskatchewan: B. Doerksen, 1960.
- Doerksen, J. H. Geschichte und Wichtige Dokumente der Mennoniten von Russland, Canada, Paraguay und Mexico. N.p., 1923.
- Dyck, Cornelius J., ed. An Introduction to Mennonite History: A popular history of the Anabaptists and the Mennonites. Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1967.
- Ens, Adolf and Penner, Rita. "Quebec Passenger Lists of the Russian Mennonite Immigration, 1874-1880." Mennonite Quarterly Review 48 (October 1974):527-31.
- Ens, Gerhard J. Volost and Municipality: The Rural Municipality of Rhineland, 1884-1984. Altona, Manitoba: Rural Municipality of Rhineland, 1984.
- Epp, Frank H. Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920: The History of a Separate People. Toronto, Ontario: Macmillan of Canada, 1974.
- Epp-Tiessen, Esther. Altona: The Story of a Prairie Town. Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen and Son Ltd., 1982.
- Evangelical Mennonite Conference. The Sesquicentennial Jubilee: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1812-1962. Steinbach, Manitoba: Evangelical Mennonite Conference, 1962.
- Festkomitee der Mennonitischen Ostreserve. Gedenkfeier der Mennoniten Einwanderung in Manitoba, Canada. 1874: 75: 1949, Abgehalten am 8. Juli 1949 in Steinbach, Manitoba. North Kildonan, Manitoba: J. Regehr, [1949].
- Francis, E. K. In Search of Utopia: The Mennonites in Manitoba. Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen and Sons Ltd., 1955.
- Friedman, Robert. Mennonite Piety Through the Centuries: Its Genius and its Literature. Sugarcreek, Ohio: Schlabach Printers, 1980.
- Gerbrandt, H. J. Adventure in Faith: The Background in Europe and the Development in Canada of the Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba. Altona, Manitoba: The Bergthaler Mennonite Church of Manitoba, 1970.

- Grunthal History Book Committee. Grunthal History, 1874-1974. Grunthal, Manitoba: Grunthal History Book Committee, 1974.
- Haury, David A. A Guide to the Mennonite Library and Archives. North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College, 1981.
- Haury, David A. Prairie People: A History of the Western District Conference. Mennonite Historical Series. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1981.
- Hershberger, Guy F. The Recovery of the Anabaptist Vision: A Sixtieth Anniversary Tribute to Harold S. Bender. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1957.
- Hoover, Amos B. The Jonas Martin Era: Presented in a Collection of Essays, Letters and Documents that Shed Light on the Mennonite Churches During the 50 Year Ministry (1875-1925) of Bishop Jonas H. Martin. Denver, Pennsylvania: Amos B. Hoover, 1982.
- Jeffery, Mary Dueck. Aeltester Johann Funk: A Family Tree with notes on his Life and Work. Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1980.
- Juhnke, James C. A People of Two Kingdoms: The Political Acculturation of the Kansas Mennonites. Mennonite Historical Series. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1975.
- Juhnke, James C. A People of Mission: A History of General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions. Mennonite Historical Series. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1979.
- Kaita, Fred; Wittick, Norman A.; Grant, Irene; Enns, Peter D.; and Bueckert, Peter, ed. Niverville: A History, 1878-1986. [Niverville, Manitoba]: Niverville and District Historical Society, 1986.
- Kaufman, Edmund G., comp. General Conference Mennonite Pioneers. North Newton, Kansas: Bethel College, 1973.
- Klaassen, Walter, ed. Anabaptism in Outline: Selected Primary Sources. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1981.
- Klippenstein, Lawrence and Toews, Julius G. Mennonite Memories: Settling in Western Canada. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Centennial Publications, 1977.

- Koop, P. Albert. "Some Economic Aspects of Mennonite Migration: With Special Emphasis on the 1870s Migration from Russia to North America." Mennonite Quarterly Review 55 (April 1981): 143-56.
- Krehbiel, H. P. The History of the General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America. Vol. II. Newton, Kansas: Published by the author, 1938.
- Lemon, James. "The weakness of place and community in early Pennsylvania." European Settlement and Development in North America: Essays on geographic change in honour and memory of Andrew Hill Clark. Ed. by James R. Gibson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978. Pp. 190-207.
- Littell, Franklin H. The Origins of Sectarian Protestantism: a study of the Anabaptist View of the Church. New York, New York: Macmillan Company, 1964.
- Loewen, Howard John. One Lord, One Church, One Hope, and One God: Mennonite Confessions of Faith, An Introduction. Text-Reader Series No. 2. Elkhart, Indiana: Institute of Mennonite Studies, 1985.
- Loewen, Royden. Blumenort: A Mennonite Community in Transition, 1874-1982. Steinbach, Manitoba: Blumenort Mennonite Historical Society, 1983.
- MacMaster, Richard K. Land, Piety, Peoplehood: The Establishment of Mennonite Communities in America, 1683-1790. The Mennonite Experience in America, Volume 1, ed. by Theron F. Schlabach. Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1985.
- McQuillan, D. Aiden. "Territory and ethnic identity: some new measures of an old theme in the cultural geography of the United States." European Settlement and Development in North America: Essays on geographic change in honour and memory of Andrew Hill Clark. Ed. by James R. Gibson. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978. Pp. 136-669.
- Neufeld, Anne and Pauls, Kaye. LeBlanc Reflections. n.p. [ca. 1983].
- Pannabecker, Samuel Floyd. Open Doors: A History of General Conference Mennonite Church. Mennonite Historical Series. Newton, Kansas: Faith and Life Press, 1975.
- Penner, Lydia. Hanover: One Hundred Years. Steinbach, Manitoba: Rural Municipality of Hanover, 1982.
- Peters, Jake. Mennonite Private Schools: In Manitoba and

- Saskatchewan, 1874-1925. Mennonite Village Museum Historical Series II. Steinbach, Manitoba: Mennonite Village Museum, 1985.
- Peters, Jake. The Waisenamt: A History of Mennonite Inheritance Custom. Mennonite Village Museum Historical Series I. Steinbach, Manitoba: Mennonite Village Museum, 1985.
- Plett, Delbert F., ed. History and Events: Writings and Maps pertaining to the history of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde from 1866 to 1876. Steinbach, Manitoba: D. F. Plett Farms Ltd., 1982.
- Redekop, Calvin W. The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life. Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins Press, 1969.
- [Reimer, David P.] Experiences of Mennonites in Canada during the Second World War, 1939-1945. Altona, Manitoba: D.W. Friesen & Sons Ltd, [1946].
- Rempel, J. G. Die Rosenorter Gemeinde in Saskatchewan in Wort und Bild. Rosthern, Saskatchewan: D.H. Epp, 1950.
- Schellenberg, John. Schools-Our Heritage: From the School Districts to Hanover Unitary School Division, 1878-1968. Steinbach, Manitoba: The Board of the Hanover School Division No. 15, 1985.
- Schlabach Theron. Gospel versus Gospel: Mission and the Mennonite Church, 1863-1944. Studies in Anabaptist and Mennonite History No. 21. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1980.
- Schroeder, William. The Bergthal Colony. 2nd ed. Bergthal Historical Series No. 1. Winnipeg, Manitoba: CMBC Publications, 1986.
- Springer, Nelson P. and Klassen A. J., comp. Mennonite Bibliography, 1631-1961. 2 vols. Kitchener, Ontario: Herald Press, 1977.
- Stayer, James M. Anabaptists and the Sword. 2nd ed. Lawrence, Kansas: Coronado Press, 1976.
- Stoesz, A. D. A Stoesz Genealogy, 1731-1972. Lincoln, Nebraska: A.D. Stoesz, 1973.
- Toews, John A. A History of the Mennonite Brethren Church: Pilgrims and Pioneers. Fresno, California: Board of Christian Literature, General Conference of Mennonite



- Brethren Churches, 1975.
- Warkentin, Abe. Reflections on our Heritage: A History of Steinbach and the R.M. of Hanover from 1874. Steinbach, Manitoba: Derksen Printers Ltd., 1971.
- Warkentin, John W. "Mennonite Agricultural Settlements of Southern Manitoba." The Geographical Review 49 (July 1959): 342-68.
- Wenger, J. C. Glimpses of Mennonite History and Doctrine. Scottdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1949.
- Wenger, J. C. The Mennonite Church in America, Sometimes Called Old Mennonites. Mennonite History Vol. II. Scottdale, Pennsylvania, 1966.
- Wiebe, John M. "A Brief History of the Chortitz Church." In Grunthal History, 1874-1974. Grunthal, Manitoba: Grunthal History Book Committee, 1974. Pp. 68-69.
- Zacharias, Peter D. Reinland: An Experience in Community. Reinland, Manitoba: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976.

## 2. Theses and Papers

- Ens, Adolf. "Mennonite Relations with Governments: Western Canada, 1870-1925." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Ottawa, 1978.
- Epp, Esther. "The Origins of Mennonite Central Committee (Canada)." M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1980.
- Harms, Don. "Mennonite Participation in Federal Elections in the Manitoba East Reserve in the Federal Constituency of Provencher." Canadian Mennonite Bible College, Winnipeg, Manitoba, 1979.
- Klippenstein, Lawrence. "Mennonite Pacifism and State Service in Russia: A Case Study in Church-State Relations, 1789-1936." Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 1984.
- Peters, Jake. "The Determinants of Mennonite Migration: A Case Study of the Fuerstenland Colony, 1889-1914." University of Manitoba, 1987.
- Peters, Jake. "A Survey of Historical Writing about Mennonite Migrations to North America during the Years 1870-1914." University of Manitoba, 1987.
- Peters, Peter. "History of Silberfeld (Chortitzer Mennonite

Conference)." Steinbach Bible Institute, Steinbach, Manitoba, 1974.

Warkentin, John H. "The Mennonite Settlements of Southern Manitoba." 2 vols. Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1960.

Wiebe, George. "The Hymnody of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada." M. Music thesis, University of Southern California, 1962.

3. Newspaper Articles

Carillon

"Pioneer couple raised seven children on early farm site," by Dr. Rhinehart Friesen. 23 October 1985.

CMC Chronicle

"From the Bishop's Desk: What's in a Name," by Bishop H.[enry] K. S.[chellenberg. January 1983, p. 3.

Manitoba Mennonite Historical Society Newsletter

"East Reserve Villages Symposium," by Dennis Stoesz. Reports of research by John Dyck on Reichenbach and Vollwerk, by Orlando Hiebert on Chortitz (Randolph), by Peter Wiebe on Osterwick, by Peter Peters on Hochfeld, and Henry Fast on Hochstadt. June 1987.

"MMHS Annual Meeting Notes," by Royden Loewen and Dennis Stoesz. June 1986.

Mennonite Encyclopedia, 1954-59.

"Baer, John B.," by C. Henry Smith.

"Bethel Mennonite Church (GCM)," by Walter Gering.

"Catechism," by Christian Neff and Harold S. Bender.

"Choral-Books," by Christian Neff.

"Choralbuch," by D. H. Epp.

"Chorister," by J. G. Rempel.

"Church," by Harold S. Bender.

"Community," by J. W. Fretz.

- "Confessions of Faith," by Christian Neff, John C. Wenger and Harold S. Bender.
- "Ebenezer Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church," by H. C. Quiring.
- "Epp, Heinrich," by A. Braun.
- "Evangelical Mennonite Brethren," by H. F. Epp.
- "First Mennonite Church (GCM) of Butterfield, Minn." by J.J. Friesen.
- "Funk, John Fretz," by Harold S. Bender.
- "Gospel Mennonite Church [Minnesota]," by A.A. Penner.
- "Hymnology of the American Mennonites," by Harold S. Bender.
- "Mennonite Board of Guardians," by Harold S. Bender
- "Mennonite Brethren Church," by J.H. Lohrenz.
- "Ministry, Call to the," by Christian Neff, Harold S. Bender and N. van der Zijpp.
- "Missions, Foreign Mennonite," by Samuel F. Pannabecker.
- "Mountain Lake Bible School," by Cornelius Krahn.
- "Mountain Lake, Minn.," by Cornelius Krahn.
- "Mountain Lake (Minn.) Evangelical Mennonite Brethren Church," by D.A. Regier.
- "Mountain Lake (Minn.) First Mennonite Church (GCM)" by I.J. Dick.
- "Mutual Aid," by J. W. Fretz.
- "Nonconformity," by Harold S. Bender, et. al.
- "Nonresistance," by Ernst Crous.
- "Peters, Isaak," by H. F. Epp.
- "Richert, Heinrich," by Cornelius Krahn.
- "Shantz, Jacob Yost, " by Melvin Gingerich.
- "Stundism," by Cornelius Krahn.

"Wall, Aaron," by H. H. Dick.

"Wiebe, Johann," by Cornelius Krahn.

Mennonite Mirror

"Bergfeld: An original East Reserve village," by Roy  
Vogt. January/February, 1974.

Mennonitische Post, Die

"Der Name `Chortitzer," by Martin W. Friesen. 21 Januar  
1983.

APPENDICES

1. Sources Used for Establishing the Bergthal Colony  
1874 Population and the 1874-76 Emigrant Population . 279
2. Sources Used for Establishing the Names and  
Locations of the Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde  
Villages, and for the Chortitzer Meetingplaces on  
the East Reserve. . . . . 281
3. List of the Dates and Places where Worship Services  
were held by the Chortitzer Mennonite Church, 1874-  
1926, as well as a Description of the Sources . . . . 284
4. Sources of Information on Chortitzer Ministers . . . . 287
5. Abbreviations used for Archival Centres and in  
Footnote Citations, the Latter which is listed in  
Alphabetical and Numerical Order. . . . . 288

## APPENDIX NO. 1:

### Sources Used for Establishing Bergthal Colony 1874 Population and the 1874-76 Emigrant Population

#### 1. Population of the Bergthal Colony, Russia, in 1874

The population of the Bergthal Colony, Russia, in 1874 is not easy to ascertain. Gerbrandt provides the figure of "527 families"; Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68. Francis gives the figure of "540 families" in Bergthal at the time of emigration; Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 69. The discrepancy of "13 families" between the two is probably due to the complexity of trying to count the population from the Bergthal Colony Church Registers, the source of both figures. The term "family" or "household" was used to count the population because the church registers list members by family units.

These three Bergthal Colony Church Registers are contained in two books, were started in 1843 and 1853, and are the best means by which to get an accurate population count in the colony prior to the emigration in 1874-76. They record marriages, births, baptisms and deaths of the complete population of the Bergthal Colony. It would take some time to analyze these registers. The original registers are in the care of the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference which took the registers with them in the emigration, 1874-76. Copies of these registers are part of the Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

#### 2. Size of the Emigrant Group who Migrated from the Bergthal Colony, Russia, to the East Reserve, Manitoba.

The second problem is to determine the number of emigrants who migrated from the Bergthal Colony, Russia, to the East Reserve, Manitoba. Gerbrandt uses the figure of "440" emigrant families; Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68. Francis gives the figure of "453"; Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 69. Gerbrandt and Francis again differ on the number who emigrated, but it is by the same amount as the difference on their 1874 population figures. A third source, Gerhard Wiebe, says there were about 500 emigrants; Wiebe, History of the Emigration, p. 35.

Gerbrandt also provides an emigrant population figure by the number of souls: 3,000 immigrants. Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68. This "3,000" figure has been taken as authoritative by several historians; see, for example, Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists."

Three more Church Registers of the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference may be useful in establishing a migration population figure. They are labelled "A", "2nd A" and "B", but no starting date of the books are given. These

books contain some 478 family registers and may refer to the families who migrated. The purpose of these books and how they were used, however, is not clear. They only contain information up to 1876 and seem not to be used after that. A comparison of these registers with the earlier Bergthal Colony registers might provide some more data on the emigration population figure as well as provide more information on the exact date and use of these three registers.

The next Church Register, "Litter A" is dated 1887 and, though it provides some useful information about the number of people who stayed in Russia and those who migrated to Minnesota, it was started too late for a useful comparison with earlier books. By then half of the Chortitzer population had moved to the West Reserve. All these registers are part of the Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

Lists of the 3,975 passengers on the nine ships also provide an opportunity to obtain an accurate number of Bergthal Colony people who migrated to Canada. The problem is that other Mennonites from the Chortitza Colony also travelled on some of these nine ships. Only a comparison of these passenger lists with the Bergthal Colony Church Registers would give an accurate count. Analysis of these Quebec Passenger Lists as well as name and number of the ships, number of people on each boat, dates of arrival in Quebec, and leader and group identification is available in Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists." Typed copies and a microfilm of the lists are available at the Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

### 3. Size of the Emigrant Groups who Migrated to Minnesota and North Dakota.

Both Francis and Gerbrandt agree on the number of people who stayed in Russia and who went to Minnesota. Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church, p. 68, and Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 69. While they give the figure of "53" families to the United States, the 1887 Church Register, p. 199, indicates 55 families. Neither Francis nor Gerbrandt mention the "13" families who went to North Dakota. This figure comes from counting the number of family registers which had the words "Dakota" written at the bottom of the page. They are included in the figure of 55 families who moved to the United States. Litter A and B, 1843, Registers, Chortitzer RG, MHCA.

## APPENDIX NO. 2:

### Sources Used for Establishing the Names and Locations of the Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde Villages, and for the Chortitzer Meetingplaces on the East Reserve

#### 1. Villages

One problem in listing the villages is there is no common agreement on the exact names and number of villages. A good number of villages only lasted a few years. The following five maps of the East Reserve have been used to arrive at the 44 Chortitzer village names and place them on Map No.'s 2 and 3.

- a) John H. Warkentin lists 59 villages in "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 59. He has been used the most extensively. Warkentin also provides founding dates of villages for the years 1874-78, and after 1878.
- b) Schroeder lists 37 villages in Bergthal Colony, p. 100,
- c) An 1878 map lists 39 villages. Map has been redrawn by Bev Plett and included in Penner, Hanover, p. 12.
- d) E.K. Francis lists 47 Mennonite villages in Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 51,
- e) John C. Reimer lists 51 Mennonite villages in his map as found in Grunthal, p. 20.

Only the Chortitzer villages are listed on the map in order to provide a comparison with the meetingplaces. The sources do not distinguish between Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde villages, so they are listed here. The 44 Chortitzer villages were: (in alphabetical order) Altona, Bergfeld, Bergthal, Blumengard, Blumstein, Burwalde, Chortitz, Ebenfeld, Eigenfeld, Eigengrund, Eigenhof, Felsenton, Friedensfeld, Friedrichsthal, Gnadenfeld, Grossweide, Gruenthal, Halbstadt, Hamberg, Hochfeld, Hoffnungsfeld, Kronsgard, Kronsthal, Landskron, Neubergfeld, Neuenburg, Neuendorf, Neuhoffnung, Osterwick, Pastwa, Reichenbach, Reinfeld, Rosengard, Rosenthal, Schanzenberg, Schoenberg, Schoenfeld, Schoenhorst, Schoensee, Schoenthal, Schoenwiese, Strassberg, Tannau, Vollwerk.

The 15 Kleine Gemeinde villages were Blumenfeld, Blumenhof, Blumenort, Fischau, Friedenshoff, Gnadenort, Gruenfeld, Heuboden, Hochstadt, Lichtenau, Neuanlage, Rosenfeld, Schoneau, Steinbach, Steinreich.

The villages of Neuhorst and Schoendorf were not included because only Francis mentions them and only includes Schoendorf on his map. Kleefeld as a separate entity from Gruenfeld is only mentioned by Warkentin, and is not considered separate from the location of Gruenfeld.



Eigengrund was only mentioned by Francis and Reimer, but it is included on the map. The location of Altona was based on Warkentin and not Reimer. The location of Bergthal was based on Reimer, Francis and Schroeder; Warkentin and Hanover had it one mile north. Location of Gruenthal based on all but Warkentin, who had it on the west side of the road. Location of Kronsthal based on Warkentin and Hanover; Schroeder and Reimer had it one mile north and Francis one mile south.

## 2. Distinguishing Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde Villages

One problem in trying to list the villages is that it is not easy to tell which are Chortitzer and which are Kleine Gemeinde villages. The sources used to establish 26 of the 43 Chortitzer villages were:

- a) The lists found at the back of the sermons of Reverend David and Cornelius Stoesz which record when and in which village each sermon was preached. The sermon material can be found in the Stoesz MSS and Neufeld Sermon MSS, respectively, MHCA.
- b) The financial records of the villages who needed to pay the "Bread Debt," as listed by the Chortitzer Waisenamt. The village records are found in the Chortitzer Waisenamt.

The remaining 17 of the 43 Chortitzer villages were added to this list on the basis of their proximity to the 26 aforementioned villages and of allusions to Chortitzer Church residents in the secondary literature (see footnote no. 10) The villages were: Altona, Burwalde, Eigenfeld, Eigengrund, Eigenhof, Felsenton, Friedensfeld, Halbstadt, Hamberg, Hoffnungsfeld, Landskron, Neuendorf, Neuhoffnung, Osterwick, Strassberg, Tannau, and Vollwerk. Some villages may have been made up of both Chortitzer and Kleine Gemeinde people.

Sources used to establish the Kleine Gemeinde villages were:

- a) J.W. Dueck references in his "History and Events of Earlier Times," and in Plett's map in Plett, History and Events, p. 121 and 150 respectively,
- b) Evangelical Mennonite Conference, p. 11.
- c) Henry Fast's notes from the Molotschna Mennonite Fire Insurance records, Henry Fast, Steinbach, Manitoba. Fischau and Friedenshoff were included as Kleine Gemeinde villages on the basis of their proximity to Steinbach and Blumenort, respectively.

## 3. Writings on Chortitzer Villages

No extensive writing on any Chortitzer village has

been done. Francis intimates that he has seen "the old records and account books of various villages," Mennonites in Manitoba, p. 97. A symposium on East Reserve villages uncovered some information on Reichenbach, Vollwerk, Chortitz, Osterwick and Hochfeld; see Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages."

Warkentin, "Settlements," has used homestead maps to reconstruct which land belonged to which villages in 1880-81. These land records help in reconstructing village life. For example, from an "Application for Homestead Patent" made by Cornelius Stoesz, one learns that he lived in a shanty in Blumstein in the winter of 1874-75, built a house 24'X41' in summer 1875, built a stable 20'X35' in 1877, and had 25 acres under cultivation by 1885. He also reports that he resided "in the Village of Blumstein, to which said homestead is appartment and cultivated my portion of the land belonging to said Village." Records from Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba.

For some information on specific villages see: the village of Bergfeld has been documented by Warkentin in "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p.236-43, and the description has been picked up Roy Vogt, "Bergfeld: An original East Reserve village," Mennonite Mirror January/February 1974, p. 40-44. The Chortitzer Waisenamt has some information on the bread debt of several villages. The villages of Bergfeld, Gnadenfeld, Grunthal, Kronsgard, Schoenberg and Schoensee are mentioned in Grunthal. The village of Grunthal is also mentioned in Warkentin, Steinbach, p. 325-35. The villages of Blumengard and Hochfeld are mentioned in a paper by Peters, "Silberfeld," p. 18-25.

#### 4. Meetingplaces

See Appendix No. 3 for a complete description of meetingplaces.

#### 5. Sources on Other Portions of the Map No.'s 2-4

The source for the roads were taken from Reimer and Francis, who include it on their maps, and from Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 152 and Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 66. The source for the railway was taken from Schroeder, Bergthal Colony, p. 66. The source for the rivers, creeks and marshlands were taken from all above sources and Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba," p. 17 for marshes, and homestead diagrams from Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba.

### APPENDIX NO. 3:

#### List of the Dates and Places where Worship Services were held by the Chortitzer Mennonite Church, 1874-1926, as well as a Description of the Sources

With the use of sermon material, one can identify the meetingplaces of the church for this first forty year period. Ministers would usually jot down where and when they preached their sermons. Since a sermon was used several times over the course of their ministry, it provides a good source for establishing meetingplaces of the church. This information has been charted on Maps No.'s 2-4 within three time periods. The first period, 1874-82, represents the Chortitzer community before the exodus to the West Reserve. The latter two periods were chosen on the basis of source material. The sermons for Bishop Stoesz and Reverend Cornelius Stoesz end in 1900-03, thus the reason for the period 1882-1900. The only available source for the period after 1900 was a 1926 Schedule, and it was used for the developments from 1900-14.

A total of nine sermons with 43 references to villages or homes, and a diary were used for this analysis. One needs to keep in mind that the 43 references to villages in the sermons may not be enough of a sample to make definite conclusions on where and when the church met for worship. It does, however, begin to pattern some central places and settlement changes. Sources of material were: eight sermons of Bishop David Stoesz were used: see sermons in file No.'s 4, 11, 13, 15, 18, 19, 21A, 21B found in the Stoesz MSS, MHCA. The "David Stoesz Diary," was used for a few references to worship services held in villages. One Cornelius Stoesz sermon was used, as found in the Neufeld Sermon MSS, MHCA. The 1926 Meetingplace list was taken from Grunthal, p. 69.

Reverend David Stoesz was elected a minister on November 1, 1869. He was elected assistant bishop on April 4, 1879, and started conducting baptisms and communions in spring 1881. He lived in Bergthal and died January 16, 1903. Reverend Cornelius Stoesz was elected a minister on April 23, 1864. He lived in Blumstein and died on May 9, 1900.

All dates are from David Stoesz sermons unless marked (D) for diary of David Stoesz or (C) for the Palm Sunday sermon from Cornelius Stoesz or (1926) for the 1926 source.

#### Bergfeld

2 April 1882 (C)  
21 July 1883  
25 January 1885

#### Bergthal

October 1875  
29 April 1877  
29 August 1880

Blumengard

13 August 1900  
13 January 1901

Blumstein

2 March 1887 (C)

Burwalde

6 February 1887  
1 October 1893  
9 August 1896

Chortitz

34 worship services between  
7 November 1875 and 1  
January 1902

(The sermon preached 19 June  
1897 was for the dedication  
of the new church building.)

21 baptism services between  
6 June 1881 and 19 May 1902  
41 communion services  
between 19 June 1881 and 20  
October 1901

(Communion held on 5 August  
1877, noted in diary)

Chortitz (continued)

6 April 1884 (C)  
29 March 1885 (C)

Ebenfeld

21 March 1880

Gnadenfeld

15 February 1880  
3 October 1880  
5 March 1882  
1 October 1882  
4 communion services between  
22 June 1884 and 25 October  
1885, while the church was  
being built at Gruenthal.  
1 baptism service held 3  
June 1884

Grossweide

2 December 1877 (D)

Gruenthal

20 worship services between  
17 August 1884 and 1 January  
1901

(The sermon preached on 18  
April 1886 was for the  
dedication of the new  
church building.)

18 baptism services between  
29 May 1882 and 27 May 1901  
39 communion services  
between 26 June 1881 and 27  
October 1901  
18 March 1883 (C)  
25 March 1888 (C)

Hochfeld

5 October 1879  
30 September 1883  
Communion service on 9 June  
1901

Kronsgart

4 July 1880

Osterwick

13 November 1887  
30 October 1894  
2 communion services, 20  
June 1897 and 4 June 1899  
18 March 1894 (C)

Pastwa

6 February 1876  
26 March 1880

Reichenbach

5 October 1884  
23 April 1886

Rosengard

20 September 1885  
10 March 1892 (C)  
1 January 1898

Schanzenfeld (Schanzenberg)

Stoesz records it as  
Schanzenfeld  
2 baptism services, 1882  
and 4 June 1884  
A communion service, 13  
June 1882

Schoenenberg

30 March 1877

24 August 1879

Schoenhorst  
25 March 1877Schoensee  
15 August 1880Schoenthal  
November 1876  
19 April 1878  
15 April 1881  
6 October 1889Strassberg  
17 February 1884  
6 August 1893  
1 January 1894In Homes  
Abraham Doerksen, 1875,  
(Schoenthal?)Franz Dueck, communion on  
17 June 1883 (Schoensee)

Johan Kehler, July 1875

Gerhard Kliever, 19  
September 1880Kornelius Sawatzky, 15  
September 1874 and January  
1875Abraham Wiebe, 20 August  
1882 and 13 January 1884  
(D)

Stoesz only makes 6 references to meeting in homes: Abraham Doerksen (1875), Franz Dyck (1883), Johann Kehler (1875), Gerhard Kliever (1880), Cornelius Sawatzky (1874-75) and Abraham Wiebe (1882-84). Stoesz also mentions another worship service at an A. Wiebe in 1884: "Satur. evening myself and Derk Klassen...went to the aged A. Wiebes' where we had devotions." "David Stoesz Diary," p. 20. When Stoesz records the name of the person at the back of the sermon, he does not list any village name. Three of the references to homes are dated 1874 and 1875 and could have been made because no school building had yet been erected in the village. Three of the references are dated 1880, 1882 and 1883; maybe these persons were too old to walk to the school and the service was held in the home. See sermons in File Numbers 13, 15 and 21B, Stoesz MSS, MHCA.

Location of these six people are not easy to establish because of similar Mennonite names on the homestead diagrams. Abraham Wiebe's homestead was SE21-6-6 around the Neuendorf area; Gerhard Kliever, either the Reeve of his father, was located at SE-29-7-4 and NW19-7-4 around the Niverville area; Abraham Doerksen's land was probably SW and SE21-7-5 and not SW15-4-6, and around the Schoenthal area; Cornelius Sawatzky's land was probably SE24-7-5 around Bergthal and not SW23-5-5; Johann Kehler was either SE6-7-6, NW9-7-5 or SE14-7-5; Franz Dyck lived in the village of Schoensee. Information taken from Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba.

#### APPENDIX NO. 4:

##### Sources of Information on Chortitzer Ministers

Most of the information on ministers come from the eight Chortitzer Mennonite Church Registers. The family registers for each minister mention birth, death as well as election dates. Microfilm copies of the Chortitzer registers are in the Chortitzer RG, MHCA. The originals are in possession of the Chortitzer Mennonite Conference, Steinbach, Manitoba.

Several ministers lists have also been consulted from these church registers:

- a) "Register den Verstorbenen Kirchenlehrer..." List includes ministers called between 1838-1907 and is found in Litter A 1843 Chortitzer Church Register, p. [210].
- b) "Lehrer der Gemeinde Bergthal Gegrundet 1836 bis 1839." This list includes ministers called from 1824-1915 and is found in Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 241.
- c) "Verzeichnis der Verstorbenen Kirchenlehrer..." This list includes ministers called from 1854-1904 and is found in Litter A 1887 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 287.
- d) "Aeltester, Lehrer und Diakonen gestorben seit 1838 bis 1923" This list includes ministers called between 1824-1924 and is found in Kirchenbuch A 1907 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 398.
- e) "Nahmen der Kirchenlehrer..." List includes ministers called from 1854-1931 and is found in Kirchenbuch A 1907 Chortitzer Church Register, p. 399.

Two ministers lists consulted from other sources are:

- a) "Prediger gestorben seit 1838-1923" List includes ministers called from 1824-1915. A copy of it was provided by former Bishop Henry K. Schellenberg, Steinbach, Manitoba.
- b) "Namenslistes Verzeigens der Verstorbenen Prediger..." List includes ministers called from 1824-1915 and was made up by Reverend Heinrich Doerksen in the 1920s. It is found in the Doerksen MSS, MHCA.

APPENDIX NO. 5:

Abbreviations used for  
Archival Centres and in Footnote Citations, the  
Latter which is listed in Alphabetical and Numerical Order

1. Abbreviations used for Archival Centres, and for  
Manuscript Collections and Record Groups.

AMC Archives of the Mennonite Church, Goshen, Indiana  
CGA Conrad Grebel College Archives, Waterloo, Ontario  
MHCA Mennonite Heritage Centre Archives, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
MHL Mennonite Historical Library, Canadian Mennonite Bible  
College, Winnipeg, Manitoba  
MLA Mennonite Library and Archives, North Newton, Kansas  
MSS Manuscript Collection  
PAC Public Archives of Canada, Ottawa, Ontario  
RG Record Group

2. Abbreviations used in Footnote Citations, in Alphabetical  
Order.

"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA. 214  
"Baer's Visit," Rundschau 24 August 1887. 378  
Brown, Winkler Mennonite Brethren. 28  
Chortitzer RG, MHCA. 20  
Chortitzer Waisenamt RG, MHCA. 108  
Chortitzer Waisenamt. 203  
Confession 1881 1889, MHL. 486  
Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba. 53  
"David Stoesz Diary." 36  
Doell, Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church. 6  
Doerksen MSS, MHCA. 95  
Doerksen Sermon MSS, MHCA. 151  
Dyck Sermon MSS, MHCA. 90  
Elias MSS, MHCA. 137  
Ens, "Mennonite Relations with Governments." 13  
Ens, "Quebec Passenger Lists." 33  
Ens MSS, MHCA. 308  
Ens, Rhineland Municipality. 3  
Epp, Mennonites in Canada. 4  
Epp MSS, Carrot River. 135  
Epp-Tiessen, Altona. 3  
Evangelical Mennonite Conference. 26  
Francis, Mennonites in Manitoba. 9  
Franz, Choralbook. 501  
Friedman, Piety. 480  
Funk MSS, AMC. 216  
Gedenkfeier. 280  
"Gemeinden in Manitoba," Herold 1888. 21  
"General School Decree." 162

- Gerbrandt, Bergthaler Mennonite Church. 5  
Grunthal. 164  
Haury, Guide to Archives. 82  
Haury, Western District Conference. 440  
Herbert Sommerfelder RG, MHCA. 62  
Hoover, Jonas Martin Era. 18  
Interview with Waisen Vorsteher Friesen [or Wiebel]. 203  
Juhnke, General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions. 16  
Katechismus 1889, MHL. 479  
Kaufman, GCM Pioneers. 433  
Klippenstein, Mennonite Memories. 52  
Krehbiel, General Conference Mennonite Church, I. 432  
LeBlanc. 201  
Loewen, Blumenort. 1  
Manitoba Sommerfelder RG, MHCA. 53  
Menno Colony MSS, MHCA. 161  
Mennonite Bibliography. 483  
Neufeld MSS, MLA. 80  
Neufeld Sermon MSS, MHCA. 152  
Niverville. 310  
Pannabecker, General Conference Mennonite Church. 7  
Penner, Hanover. 163  
Peters, "Fuerstenland Migration, 1889-1914." 29  
Peters, "Silberfeld." 8  
Peters, Mennonite Private Schools. 276  
Peters, Waisenamt. 203  
Plett, History and Events. 42  
Redekop, Old Colony Mennonites. 17  
Rempel, Rosenorter. 29  
"RG 15," PAC. 343  
Richert MSS, MLA. 447  
Schellenberg, Schools-Our Heritage. 310  
Schlabach, Mission and the Mennonite Church. 15  
Schroeder, Bergthal Colony. 19  
"Shantz letter, 4 August 1874." 218  
"Statistics, 1914," Mitarbeiter. 23  
Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages." 160  
Stoesz, "Ordination of a Bishop." 105  
Stoesz MSS, Landmark. 222  
Stoesz MSS, MHCA. 36  
Stoesz, Stoesz Genealogy. 79  
Waisen=Verordnung 1930. 203  
Warkentin, "Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba." 12  
Warkentin, Geographical Review. 66  
Warkentin, Steinbach. 160  
Wiebe, "Chortitz Church." 128  
Wiebe, History of the Emigration. 35  
Zacharias, Reinland. 2



### 3. Abbreviations used in Footnote Citations, in Numerical Order.

#### INTRODUCTION

Loewen, <u>Blumenort.</u>	1
Zacharias, <u>Reinland.</u>	2
Epp-Tiessen, <u>Altona.</u>	3
Ens, <u>Rhineland Municipality.</u>	3
Epp, <u>Mennonites in Canada.</u>	4
Gerbrandt, <u>Bergthaler Mennonite Church.</u>	5
Doell, <u>Saskatchewan Bergthaler Church.</u>	6
Pannabecker, <u>General Conference Mennonite Church.</u>	7
Peters, " <u>Silberfeld.</u> "	8
Francis, <u>Mennonites in Manitoba.</u>	9
Warkentin, " <u>Mennonite Settlements in Manitoba.</u> "	12
Ens, " <u>Mennonite Relations with Governments.</u> "	13
Schlabach, <u>Mission and the Mennonite Church.</u>	15
Juhnke, <u>General Conference Mennonite Overseas Missions.</u>	16
Redekop, <u>Old Colony Mennonites.</u>	17
Hoover, <u>Jonas Martin Era.</u>	18
Schroeder, <u>Bergthal Colony.</u>	19
Chortitzer RG, MHCA.	20
"Gemeinden in Manitoba," <u>Herold</u> 1888.	21
"Statistics, 1914," <u>Mitarbeiter.</u>	23
<u>Evangelical Mennonite Conference.</u>	25
Brown, <u>Winkler Mennonite Brethren.</u>	28
Rempel, <u>Rosenorter.</u>	29
Peters, " <u>Fuerstenland Migration, 1889-1914.</u> "	29

#### CHAPTER 1: COMMUNITY

Ens, " <u>Quebec Passenger Lists.</u> "	33
Wiebe, <u>History of the Emigration.</u>	35
" <u>David Stoesz Diary.</u> "	36
Stoesz MSS, MHCA.	36
Plett, <u>History and Events.</u>	42
Klippenstein, <u>Mennonite Memories.</u>	52
Manitoba Sommerfelder RG, MHCA.	53
Crown Land Records, Government of Manitoba.	53
Herbert Sommerfelder RG, MHCA.	62
Warkentin, <u>Geographical Review.</u>	66

#### CHAPTER 2: BOUNDARIES

Stoesz, <u>Stoesz Genealogy.</u>	79
Neufeld MSS, MLA.	80
Haury, <u>Guide to Archives.</u>	82
Dyck Sermon MSS, MHCA.	90
Doerksen MSS, MHCA.	95
Stoesz, " <u>Ordination of a Bishop.</u> "	105
Chortitzer <u>Waisenamt</u> RG, MHCA.	108

Wiebe, "Chortitz Church."	128
Epp MSS, Carrot River.	135
Elias MSS, MHCA.	137
Doerksen Sermon MSS, MHCA.	151

## CHAPTER 3: MEETINGPLACES

Neufeld Sermon MSS, MHCA.	152
Warkentin, <u>Steinbach</u> .	160
Stoesz, "East Reserve Villages."	160
Menno Colony MSS, MHCA.	161
"General School Decree."	162
Penner, <u>Hanover</u> .	163
<u>Grunthal</u> .	164
<u>LeBlanc</u> .	201

## CHAPTER 4: WAISENAMT

<u>Waisen=Verordnung</u> 1930.	203
<u>Chortitzer Waisenamt</u> .	203
Interview with <u>Waisen Vorsteher</u> Friesen [or Wiebe].	203
Peters, <u>Waisenamt</u> .	203
"Aid Committee, Wismer," CGA.	214
Funk MSS, AMC.	216
"Shantz letter, 4 August 1874."	218
Stoesz MSS, Landmark.	222

## CHAPTER 5: EDUCATION

Peters, <u>Mennonite Private Schools</u> .	276
<u>Gedenkfeier</u> .	280
Ens MSS, MHCA.	308
Schellenberg, <u>Schools-Our Heritage</u> .	310
<u>Niverville</u> .	310

## CHAPTER 6: POLITICS

"RG 15," PAC.	343
---------------	-----

## CHAPTER 7: LEADERSHIP

"Baer's Visit," <u>Rundschau</u> 24 August 1887.	378
--	-----

## CHAPTER 8: IDENTITY

Krehbiel, <u>General Conference Mennonite Church, I</u> .	432
Kaufman, <u>GCM Pioneers</u> .	433
Haury, <u>Western District Conference</u> .	440
Richert MSS, MLA.	447

CHAPTER 9: THEOLOGY

<u>Katechismus</u> 1889, MHL.	479
Friedman, <u>Piety</u> .	480
<u>Mennonite Bibliography</u> .	483
<u>Confession</u> 1881 1889, MHL.	486
Franz, <u>Choralbook</u> .	501