

MENNONITE LIFE

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MENNONITE LIFE

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FRONT COVER:

Topeka Railroad Station, courtesy Santa Fe Railway, Topeka, Kansas.

BACK COVER:

Map of Kansas, 1875. This is a part of a map which shows the sections, townships, and ranges in which the Santa Fe Railroad land was located and sold. Mennonite Library and Archives.

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C. B. SCHMIDT

C. B. Schmidt was born in Dippoldswalde, Saxony, Germany, in 1843, where his father was an architect. He attended a commercial school at Dresden and then obtained a position as a foreign correspondent in Hamburg. The following year he went to St. Louis, Missouri. In 1866, he married Marie Frahn and in 1868, he came to Lawrence, Kansas, where he established a grocery business. He also functioned as a correspondent for newspapers in Germany, which led to his appointment as Commissioner of Immigration for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company in Topeka. In 1880, he established a Santa Fe office in London, and in 1893, he became the manager of the Suburban Land and Investment Company in Pueblo, Colorado. He crossed the Atlantic thirty-seven times, mostly in the interests of railroad land settlements.

C. B. Schmidt influenced many Mennonites to settle on the Santa Fe land, starting in 1874. The files of the Mennonite Library and Archives at Bethel College contain much correspondence which C. B. Schmidt had with David Geiss, Christian Krebbel, and Bernard Warkentin, who were the main leaders of the Russian migration to Kansas. Later Schmidt became Commissioner of Immigration for the Rock Island Railroad and also an agent of the Wyoming Development Company (1914-1916). At this time he had an extensive correspondence with H. P. Krebbel in an endeavor to sell land in Wyoming to the Mennonites. ("Reminiscences of Foreign Immigration Work for Kansas" by C. B. Schmidt, *Transactions of the Kansas State Historical Society*, 1905-1906, Vol. 8, Topeka, 1906.)

Kansas Mennonite Settlements, 1877

By C. B. Schmidt

DURING OUR TRIP from Topeka, Kansas, to the next station west we want to share with you the following information. The Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company was begun in 1872. Similar to the other railroad companies of the West the A. T. & S. F. received a land grant of 3,200,000 acres from the U. S. government under the condition that the company would build a railroad of a definite length within a definite time period. Due to the vision, energy, and financial acumen of the founders, all conditions were met and the railroad assumed ownership of the land. During the last eight months of the year 1872, more than 360 miles of the railroad were completed and put to use. The total stretch of the main line and the two branches—from Florence to El Dorado and from Newton to Wichita—was nearly 800 miles in 1876.

In order to sell the acquired land, the railroad established land offices which had the task of selling the land and promoting its settlement. Within five years almost one million acres of land were sold and under cultivation. The company recognized the advantages of inviting German settlers, and consequently appointed a German General Agent to be in charge of the German Department of the Land Office in Topeka. Thus nearly 300,000 acres of land were sold to German settlers coming from various parts of America as well as from Europe. The interest of European Germans made it necessary to establish a general agency of the Land Office in Hamburg with branch agencies in a number of other large cities in Germany and Austria. Such agencies had already been established in America so that the inquiries and the sale of land could be handled more efficiently.

On our trip from Topeka westward we have arrived in Florence, passing up Emporia. The stone quarries of Florence serve the settlers with valuable construction materials. From here a thirty mile branch track goes to El Dorado in Butler County. We spent the

night in Florence in order to continue our trip next morning into the beautiful Cottonwood Valley.

A fast running team took us to Marion County in a few hours. Our road followed the Cottonwood River through a fruitful and scenic valley. When the German immigrants from Russia came to this place four years ago they said, "It is good to linger here. Let us build homes." And here they began during the same year to establish a number of blooming Mennonite settlements which we now want to visit. The following information is based on the reports of the settlers who will now be introduced to the reader. We now leave Marion Center in order to visit the first Mennonite settlement on the lands of the A. T. & S. F. Railroad in the Cottonwood Valley.

Bruderthal in Marion County

Following a tributary of the Cottonwood River we arrive at the farm of Jakob Funk. The large stone building with large sheds, sheep pens, machine sheds, and other buildings give the visitors the impression that we are on a large estate. We are warmly received and the lady of the house offers us a "cup of genuine German coffee." We learn the following from the Funks.

Mr. Funk belongs to the pioneers from Russia who came to America in 1874 in search of a new home. With others he visited Kansas and was convinced that the soil of the Cottonwood Valley was fertile and, consequently, bought some land. Funk favorably compares this valley with that of the fertile Molotschna Valley and expects one-third more in terms of crop production. In 1876, he received up to 39 bushels of wheat per acre, averaging 22 bushels. In 1877, the crop was not as large because of the locusts. He received only 12 bushels of wheat but raised 40 to 60 bushels of corn per acre. According to Funk, Kansas

bluestem grass was not quite as good for the sheep as the hay he had produced in Russia. Funk's neighbor, Johann Rempel, fed corn to his 600 sheep in addition to hay. He spends from 50 to 60 cents per sheep for feed during the winter. He averaged 4 pounds of wool per sheep, receiving 20 to 30 cents per pound for wool and \$1.50 to \$2.00 per lamb on the market.

Jakob Funk is farming one section of land. In addition, fourteen families are each renting eighty acres of his land. The latter belong to the Volga German group from Russia who came here without financial resources. Funk helped furnish them with lumber for eight houses which constitute a nice looking little village and helped them obtain horses and wagons. The houses consist of mud walls and straw roofs, but happiness is as abundant in these homes as it is in the palaces of the money kings of New York and other large cities.

After having seen Funk's estate and what capital and labor can accomplish, we bid him farewell in order to visit Wilhelm Ewert who is located a few miles northwest. He is the elder of the congregation known as the Bruderthal Mennonite Church.

The settlement consists of eighteen families who own 7,000 acres of land including that of Jakob Funk. Wilhelm Ewert comes from Thorn in West Prussia where he left behind a farm with rich soil. Ewert considers the valley of the Cottonwood River just as fertile, with the added advantage that it does not suffer from periodic floods. In 1876, his wheat yield averaged from 15 to 25 bushels per acre, and he received 50 bushels of corn. He was especially successful in raising sugar cane of which he received 100 bushels per acre. The seed was used to feed the pigs. He sold 150 gallons of molasses for 40 to 60 cents per gallon. (See Illustrations: Bruderthal settlement and the Wilhelm Ewert farm.)

Johannesthal

Our trip from Bruderthal takes us to a new settlement on French Creek consisting of about thirty families from Russian Poland known as the Johannesthal Mennonite Church and settlement. Most of the settlers came here under the leadership of Benjamin Unruh during the years 1875 to 1876. Mr. Unruh told us that in Poland they had primarily raised beets for the sugar factories. He further stated that the land on French Creek was just as fertile as the marsh land they had lived on in Poland. Since the farmers had just broken the prairie, they were not yet able to give a full report on the fertility of the soil. In 1877, they averaged from 8 to 17 bushels of wheat per acre while the yield of corn was from 40 to 65 bushels. The new settlement has already organized a school district, built a school, and employed a German teacher.

From the Johannesthal Mennonite settlement we continue our trip southeast passing Bruderthal once more. Here we arrive at a "Canadian" Mennonite settlement consisting of fifteen families who are expecting additional settlers to join them from Canada. The leader of this group is Samuel Burkholder who arrived here in Marion County in 1874. When asked why they had chosen to come from Ontario to Kansas, the response was that the land here is less expensive and the climate milder. The yields in 1875-1876 were approximately 25 bushels of wheat and 35 bushels of corn per acre.

Four to five miles west of the "Canadian" Mennonite settlement we approach an extension of the large Alexanderwohl settlement consisting of the villages of Rosenort and Alexanderfeld. More will be related about this settlement after a visit to the Gnadenau village.

Gnadenau Settlement

South of Alexanderfeld and Rosenort is the village of Gnadenau consisting of about 40 families who have come from the Crimea in South Russia. This group arrived here under the leadership of Elder Jakob Wiebe in 1874. They belong to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren group which was founded in Russia. The group stopped in Elkhart, Indiana, from where a delegation was sent to inspect the land in Nebraska and Kansas. After four weeks of travel they chose this place located on the South Cottonwood River for settlement and established a village named Gnadenau on the central section of the five sections of land acquired from the Santa Fe Railroad. The settlers were determined to retain the village tradition and pattern of land distribution they had had in Russia. This resulted in a deviation from the American practice that the farmer lives on the land he farms. All the Gnadenau farmers live adjacent to each other on a village street and have to go to their distant fields which are parceled out to them around the village. Thus, several must drive from one and a half to two miles out to their land. Some have already given up this practice by exchanging land with each other, making it possible for them to establish their homes on the land they farm. The writer, therefore, warns the late comers to avoid this costly experience.

The inspecting group find the Gnadenau farmers satisfied with their land. They need only three horses to plow the prairie while in the Crimea they had needed six. When they put a twig of a tree in the ground it grows immediately. The rainfall is more favorable in Kansas than in the Crimea. Their yield of wheat in 1875 was between 15 to 25 bushels per acre, while corn was 40 to 80 and oats 25 to 35. Fertilizer proved to increase the yield as did careful plowing and harrowing. During the third year the settlers experienced a grass-

hipper plague but this did not discourage them.

From here we proceed to the east side of the village to inspect the simple church building. All Mennonite churches are plain but when surrounded by trees they make a friendly and inviting impression on the passer-by. From the church building we have an interesting and beautiful view of the village. The houses are clean and the yards and gardens are well kept, which tells us that these people have an eye for beauty, comfort, and order. The building material of the houses consists of lumber and adobe, and straw roofs are common. In spite of the modesty of the homes, the big straw stacks and granaries behind the village and the green and prosperous gardens and orchards around the houses indicate what human industry can achieve in a short period of time. Naturally this is possible only because of the fertility of the soil and the favorable climate. A characteristic landmark of the village is a windmill for grinding flour and feed. (See Illustrations: Gnadenau village, church and windmill.)

Near Gnadenau is another village named Hoffnungsthal which consists of thirteen families and 1,280 acres. Soon families began to settle on their own land. (Note: See the illustrations on this page of one of the houses of Hoffnungsthal which was moved to Hillsboro and is now a museum.)

Adjacent to the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren is a so-called Eckert settlement made up of some thirty families and located six miles west of Gnadenau. Twenty families of this group live on part of Jakob Funk's estate as renters. These German settlers came from the Volga River in Russia. (Note: Some of these settlers became Baptists; others joined the Mennonite Brethren.)

Weidefeld is a small settlement of Mennonites that was established in 1874 on the South Cottonwood River. We visited the farm of Peter Harms which made a good impression. Among the trees on the South Cottonwood River we saw the big elm tree under which the delegates of 1874 rested and ate their meal while on a land inspection tour. Rosenort is another village that is part of the large Alexanderwohl settlement. (See Illustration: Weidefeld.)

Alexanderwohl Settlement

Now we approach the largest Mennonite settlement, known as Neu-Alexanderwohl. Alexanderwohl was the name given to one of the villages and congregations established at the Molotschna settlement in the Ukraine by Mennonites who came in 1821 from the Vistula River in Germany. A large number of them, under the leadership of Elder Jakob Buller and Dietrich Gaeddert, migrated to Kansas and established the settlement and congregation we are approaching, which consists of 165 families with 858 people located on

22,500 acres. The settlers aimed to preserve their way of life and communities by building their home adjacent to each other in village clusters as was the general practice in Russia and Europe. Each village received a name, some of which were identical with the places from which they had come. These were: Rosenort, Weidefeld, Hochfeld, Springfield, Gnadensthal, Gnadenfeld, Gruenfeld (Greenfield), Emmathal, and Blumenfeld. The plan of settlement is not uniform. Various groups have agreed on a land distribution of their own. Some live in villages similar to Gnadenau and have their land far away. Most, however, like to settle in clusters and have the land adjacent. In some instances, from two to eight families have established their homes on a section. The homes are located mostly on one side along the section road, which is practical for their social, church, and school activities. (See Illustrations: Hochfeld and Abraham Reimer farm.)

We have reached the elevated village of Hochfeld which permits us a panoramic view of the whole settlement and its land distribution. The owner of parcel number 1 of the land which runs from east to west and consists of one-half of the section, also owns parcel number 1 running from north to south on the other half of the section, etc. However, not all settlers have established villages. The more prosperous farmers who can purchase a whole section prefer living on their land like little estate owners. Such a farmer is Abraham Reimer.

Proceeding to the fourth village, Springfield, we notice the Americanization of the name. The villages of Gnadensthal and Gnadenfeld have typical and traditional Mennonite names, while Greenfield (Grünfeld) is wavering between this American spelling and the German form. Emmathal has derived its name from Emma Creek on which it is located. Here we meet the delegate and elder of the group, Jakob Buller. We call on him in order to obtain some statistical and general information about his settlement and congregation. In order to get our information from more than one source, we proceed with him to his ministerial colleague, Heinrich Richert, in the village of Blumenfeld, which constitutes the last one in this cluster of Alexanderwohl villages.

We notice that the inhabitants of Blumenfeld originally had distributed their land so that their houses would be adjacent to each other. The Mennonites from Russia are used to establishing semi-communal settlements. Here in Kansas they face the fact that American laws are based on private property. Consequently, problems arise when some prefer to move onto their own land. Another question arises when owners die and the land has to be distributed among the children. However, it must be stated that the inheritance laws of Kansas coincide closely with the traditional Mennonite inheritance regulations, so it has not been necessary to

have their own traditional rules confirmed through legal action.

The Coming of the Alexanderwohl Group

Joined by other Molotschna Mennonites, the Alexanderwohl group left Russia in 1874 under the leadership of Jakob Buller. Upon their arrival in New York they were confronted by many offers of places they could go in order to establish their homes and settlements. They accepted the offer of the Burlington-Missouri Railroad Co. and traveled to Lincoln, Nebraska. From here representatives investigated the land offered in Nebraska and Kansas. Ultimately, most of the group chose to move to Kansas and settle on the land of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad Company. The remaining settled at Henderson, Neb.

Those coming to Kansas found two large immigration houses erected by the Santa Fe for their temporary residence. At once the men went to work to erect their own homes so that they would be able to move into them as soon as possible. Ultimately, the two immigrant houses were made into one and thus became the first Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church building, located on the east side of Highway 15. (See Illustrations: Immigration Houses.)

The land occupied by the Alexanderwohl Mennonites covers parts of Marion, Harvey, and McPherson counties. This land is more level than that of the Branderthal and Gnadenau settlements. However, it has all the good qualities of a fertile valley land and is superior to the steppes of Russia because the droughts in Kansas are less severe. The spring rains help the winter wheat mature and ripen before the heat of the summer comes. During the last years, the grain has suffered more from an overabundance of rain than from a lack of moisture. Consequently, it is obvious that the settlers in Kansas will not have to fear the threat of drought. Even the grasshoppers have not discouraged the Russian Mennonite settlers, as has been the case with other farmers who have moved on farther west to escape the marauding insects. Previous experience in Russia made the Mennonites confident that the grasshopper plagues were temporary conditions that only came periodically. According to Heinrich Richert, the crop yields in Alexanderwohl were as follows: wheat, between 12 and 15 bushels per acre; barley, between 15 and 40 bushels; oats, between 20 and 30 bushels; and corn, between 20 and 40 bushels. In 1877, the yield was somewhat lower than had been the case in 1875 and 1876.

The West Prussian Mennonites

The major center of business for the Mennonite settlements is Newton, which is the Harvey County seat and has the strategic A. T. & S. F. train station.

The railroad connects Newton with the 30-mile-distant Wichita, the metropolis of Southwestern Kansas. The division agent of the Santa Fe has his office in Newton, and the locomotives and conductors change in Newton when trains come through. It is a lively town with good prospects for the future. Proceeding from Newton we turn southeast and arrive, after a three-mile trip, at Goldschar which is a Mennonite settlement of West Prussian immigrants. First we approach the farm of Hermann Sudermann, Sr., noticing also the farms in the background belonging to Wilhelm Quiring and Hermann Sudermann, Jr. They have only just recently established themselves here (1877). (See Illustration: Hermann Sudermann Farms.)

We continue from here in a southerly direction, and after a fifteen-mile trip we arrive at the newly established West Prussian Mennonite settlement in Butler County near Whitewater. It is noticeable that these immigrants had the capital necessary to build large and comfortable homes. We proceed to the home of the leader of the congregation, Elder Leonhard Sudermann, and his colleague and brother, Abraham Sudermann. The impressive dwelling we enter seems to imply "there is room also for you." (See Illustration: Abraham Sudermann Farm.) The trip and the fresh prairie air have created an appetite which is now being satisfied by a glass of milk and bread with Limburger cheese produced by their neighbor Gerhard Regier. It was indeed a practical plan which Regier realized by making use of the luscious pasture and establishing a dairy and cheese factory. Thus, the virgin prairie is put to use and the daughters of the home are not the kind of "ladies" who hesitate to join their mother in the tasks required by a dairy and cheese factory.

Here we discontinue the use of our rugged, springless wagon and mount an elegant spring buggy with an excellent team. Our gracious host has put this conveyance at our disposal, thus enabling us to make a few more calls. First we visit Dietrich Claassen, who has erected a two-story house already patterned after American architectural styles. (See Illustrations: Dietrich Claassen Farm.) We enter his home and find him willing to give us some desired information. The West Prussian settlement in Butler County consists of twenty-four families who have acquired 77,000 acres of land from the A. T. & S. F. Railroad Co. Although they come from the fertile Werder delta of the Vistula River in West Prussia, they find that the land of Butler County is just as productive. The settlers belonged to the Heubuden Mennonite Church of West Prussia. Their immigration was caused, in part, by the introduction of the Prussian Cabinet Order which made it obligatory for every citizen to do direct or indirect military service in Germany. The first group of these prosperous families arrived in America in 1876. Some went to Beatrice, Nebraska, and the others to Kansas.

Gerhard Penner, the elder of the Heubuden Mennonite Church, followed with additional families in 1877, and joined the Beatrice group. The settlers of Butler County consequently have chosen for their elder Leonhard Sudermann of Berdyansk, South Prussia, who originally came from West Prussia.

The prospects of the Prussian settlers in Butler County are good. They have chosen a favorable location and their financial resources and hired help will contribute considerably to their prosperity.

Gnadenberg (Grace Hill)

On our return to Newton we take the opportunity to visit the Gnadenberg Mennonites near Sheldon in Harvey County. They have come here numbering 33 families from a place called Michalin in Russian Poland. Twenty-seven families have already purchased land while six are still without. The total of their land holdings is over 3,500 acres. During their first summer (1875) they had a good crop. Even though the grasshoppers caused a decrease in yield during the last summer, they are hopeful and confident that the "farmers' efforts and work will be rewarded."

Settlements near Wichita

Our next trip from Newton is a train ride to Wichita which is a significant business town because it is the end of the line for the A. T. & S. F. Railroad. Consequently, the town is the storage place for goods to be shipped east or to be distributed to farmers coming in by wagon. Much wheat is annually transported from here to the east. The city is located on the Arkansas River which gives it a charm and beauty.

W. Greiffenstein, the present mayor of Wichita, is also considered founder of the city since he laid out the plan for it. The German element is strongly represented in the city: five of the councilmen are German. In addition the city has a German bank, brewery, and various other German enterprises. Wichita was formerly known for the rough character of its population when almost everybody walking through the streets carried a pistol with him. However, presently the population is changing so that Albert Hess assured us that the pistol is being replaced by more friendly instruments. Where there was formerly the sound of explosions, you can now hear the sound of pianos and organs.

In order to convince oneself of the fertility of the soil of this area, one must take an eight-mile trip westward to the German Catholic settlement of Germania which is spread over 20 to 25 miles and consists of 100 families. They have come here from Minnesota. The reasons for their transfer were the milder climate and the longer summer, as well as the greater fertility of the soil. Most of them raise wheat, all the way from 100 to 400 acres. They have already erected

one church and intend to build another. They are being joined by friends from Iowa and other states.

Nine miles south of Wichita is a German settlement, El Paso, consisting of 30 to 40 families who have come here from the east. A third German settlement is located six miles north of Wichita and consists of German Protestants. The first ten to twelve families came from Ohio, Indiana, and other eastern states.

Halstead

We take the train from Wichita and return to Newton in order to proceed from here to the next station westward. Halstead is located ten miles from Newton. We have heard about this place many times and are surprised to find it is not very large. However, we realize that four or five years ago it had only three houses. Now it has spread and grown. Formerly, few trains stopped here. Today there are two branch railroads, a depot with a telegraph office, and every train stops here. Of great significance is the flour mill of B. Warkentin and Company which draws many people to the town. In addition to this there are two successful business places and many smaller and larger stores and enterprises operated by English-speaking owners. Halstead has become a major center for the sale of wheat, drawing more and more farmers to the town. Prospective settlers, immigrants, and business people crowd the town which has two large hotels, one of which is German.

In closing our visit to Halstead, we proceed to the Western Publication Company. David Goerz is owner and manager of this busy enterprise. The print shop is so successful that even the Santa Fe Railroad publishes its brochures here, including this one. The large press prints 8,000 to 12,000 pages daily, using newspaper as well as the best quality of paper. In connection with the print shop there is a book bindery and a bookstore. In addition to various other jobs the Western Publication Company also publishes the semi-monthly Mennonite paper *Zur Heimath* and another small paper. Because of its central location Halstead is the logical place for this enterprise as well as for the establishment of a wool factory, a paper mill, and other industries. It has sufficient water in the Arkansas River.

The Mennonite settlers around Halstead have come primarily from Sommerfield, Illinois, and from Iowa. They, as well as some Mennonites from Russia, constitute the pioneers among the German Mennonites who began the purchase of land from the A. T. & S. F. Railroad. It was Christian Krehbiel and his group from Sommerfield, Illinois, who in the spring of 1874 purchased 18,000 acres and reserved an additional 30,000 acres. The settlers published a brochure about this Mennonite settlement. Ever since this purchase, the acquisition of land by Germans from the A. T. &

S. F. Railroad has continued uninterrupted to the present in the German Department of the Land Office in Topeka.

The choice of the land near Halstead for the establishment of a German settlement, as well as the other places mentioned, has proved to be a fortunate one. The land slopes sufficiently so that excess water will not kill the wheat. The Illinois farmers find that the winter wheat can more easily be raised in Kansas than in Illinois. The frost does not hurt the winter wheat as they experienced it in their home state.

Careful farmers such as John W. Roth and Daniel Hanry (three miles north of Halstead), who pay attention to the proper seeding season and the other chores of the farmer, find that the yields are as good as they were in southern Illinois. The same is said by the settlers from Iowa and Russia. The average yield in 1876 and 1877 was ten to twenty bushels of wheat per acre. In some cases, thirty bushels were harvested.

Some New York settlers, among whom was William Barkemeyer, established themselves on the land which originally had been reserved by the Halstead Mennonites. They were joined by other families from the state of New York and have organized the Methodist Church of Halstead.

The Mennonite settlement around Halstead stretches three miles to the south and twenty miles to the north where the border of the land grant of the A. T. & S. F. Railroad is reached. In our excursion ten miles to the northwest of Halstead, we reach the home of the elder of the Halstead Mennonite Church, Valentin Krehbiel. (See Illustration: Valentin Krehbiel Farm.) His house, near Turkey Creek and the Little Arkansas River, is elevated and makes a very good impression. From here we proceed to the north and after an eight mile trip, we arrive at the little Mennonite town of Christian, which derived its name from the first names of the founders—Christian Krehbiel, Christian Hirschler, and Christian Varan. Next we proceed to the Swiss settlement of Hoffnungsfeld.

Hoffnungsfeld (Hopefield), Moundridge

The settlement of the Swiss Volhynian Mennonites who have come from Russian Poland begins four miles from Christian. After their arrival in New York, one group went to South Dakota, while some sixty families under the leadership of Elder Jakob Stucky went to McPherson County, Kansas, by way of the Santa Fe Railroad. We are calling on Jakob Stucky to get some information about this settlement of 8,400 acres.

In Volhynia the Swiss Mennonites were used to sandy soil, while here in McPherson County they find the land producing larger yields than it had in Russia. However, they miss the Jewish merchants who came to buy their butter, eggs, and chickens for higher prices than they are getting here. Otherwise they are

well pleased since they are modest and frugal in their way of life. Prosperity will soon reward them for all the effort expended in transferring from Russia to America. They have attained the following yields during their three years in Kansas: wheat, from 10 to 25 bushels per acre; barley 25 to 45 bushels; oats, 30 to 50 bushels. (From the Hoffnungsfeld settlement and congregation later emerged the Eden, West Zion, and McPherson congregations.)

East and northeast of the Swiss Hoffnungsfeld settlement is the Canton Mennonite settlement consisting of more than a hundred families who were immigrants from Polish Russia. They came without any financial means and were aided by Mennonite aid committees. Their morale was very low when they arrived. During the first winter they had to be helped by the Santa Fe Railroad which granted them living quarters free of charge. The Mennonite aid societies furnished food and clothing. In the spring when they were to move onto the land, the Santa Fe Railroad made some of the land reserved by the Halstead Mennonites available to them. The generous conditions of this agreement enabled each family to acquire forty or eighty acres of land. In addition, the railroad made possible the free transport of lumber, machinery, and cattle. Financial aid amounting to \$20,000 was made available by the various Mennonite aid societies so that these settlers were able to purchase seed and food. Today it is a pleasure to make a trip through this community which is a monument to what can be achieved through mutual help. The settlement already has a school with 150 children. Some of the Polish Mennonites find work in the nearby Swedish settlement which produces broom corn that must be cut by hand. The raising of broom corn is also spreading into the neighboring settlements.

Hoffnungsau in Reno County

From here we proceed once again to the town of Christian. Traveling in a southeastern direction towards Turkey Creek, we reach the farms of Jakob and Heinrich Regier. (See Illustration: Heinrich and Jakob Regier Farms.) Seventeen stacks of wheat greet us as we arrive. The last harvest yielded 25 bushels per acre. Across the road they have fenced in a pasture and dug a watering hole for the cattle.

Going west from here we cross Turkey Creek and reach a large number of buildings which belong to the Hoffnungsau Mennonite settlement and church. Many of the settlers immigrated from the Franzthal village of the Molotschna settlement in Russia. Hence the name Franzthal. The illustration shows that an effort was made to establish a village as they had known it back in Russia, with a row of houses on both sides of the village street and with flower and vegetable gardens between the houses and the street. Back of the buildings are the fields and the grain stacks waiting

for the threshing machines. (See Illustration: Franzthal Village.)

Threshing Stones and Stoves

Speaking about threshing gives us an occasion to explain the cylinder-shaped stones which we see in most of the yards of the Mennonite settlements, but not found anywhere else. They are threshing stones that were used by the Mennonites in Russia by hitching horses to the stone and rolling it over the grain until the wheat was worked loose from the chaff. The settlers had these stones made after their arrival in Kansas. However, soon they found out that the American threshing machines operated by horses or steam engines were more advantageous. Consequently, the Russian threshing stones are lying in the yards unused and have become an agricultural antiquity.

What has been said about the threshing machines can also be said about the plows, hay racks, cultivators, drills, and most of the other machines, tools, and equipment. In many a corner of the yard we can see the idle plows and other equipment brought along from Russia. One should first examine the American machines before importing them from Europe. By doing so, you will soon find that America is fifty years ahead of Russia and several decades ahead of the rest of Europe.

However, it must be said that the Mennonites are practical, and have soon given up whatever prejudices they had. They are taking advantage of all improvements available. This progressive spirit and their expertise in agriculture make the Mennonites much desired settlers. The Santa Fe Railroad now has settled most of the Mennonites that have come on its land.

Many things have already been mentioned which the European settler finds to his advantage upon arrival in this country. On the other hand, the American must be ready to accept those advantages offered him by the European way of life. Let us refer to just one matter, namely the advantage of using brick or stone ovens instead of cast iron stoves. The latter must be heated with wood or coal. The coal can be obtained here for about four to six dollars per ton, the purchase of which usually requires a cash outlay. In this respect the American farmer can learn from the Russian Mennonite farmer.

The hearth is made of brick or stone on which the cooking is done. The big oven, also made of brick, is built into the partition wall between two rooms and, consequently, heats two, three, or even four rooms. This oven is stoked in the kitchen where the cooking hearth is located. The fuel consists of prairie hay or straw. Many American farmers consider it a joke when they hear that the Mennonite farmers are keeping warm and cooking their meals by the use of straw or prairie hay. Many make a trip for miles to satisfy their curiosity. The prejudice of the American

can only be shattered when he is convinced of the practical advantages through a direct confrontation. It does not take him very long to figure out that straw and hay are cheaper than the imported coal and that stone and brick are not as expensive as the purchase of an iron stove. Consequently, the Mennonite oven has conquered many an American home. (See Illustrations.)

After this detour, we continue our journey through the Hoffnungsau settlement. From the village of Franzthal we proceed five miles to the west and drive into the well-kept yard of Elder Dietrich Gaeddert. He lives in a large stone house that is identical to the architectural style of the homes in the Mennonite villages back in Russia. Although he has a large family, we find plenty of room and enjoy the hospitality. (See Illustration: Dietrich Gaeddert Farm.)

Gaeddert's Hoffnungsau group originally migrated from Russia as part of the Alexanderwohl group. Upon their arrival in Kansas, a group under Jakob Buller established the Alexanderwohl settlement in Marion County, while the Hoffnungsau group under Dietrich Gaeddert settled in Reno County. The total settlement, including a smaller group led by Jakob Klassen, consists of nearly 200 families with over 25,000 acres of land. (Editor's Note: The Hoffnungsau and Franzthal settlers as well as the Alexanderwohl group, had come to Russia from Brankenhofswalde-Franzthal, Brandenburg, Germany.)

Dietrich Gaeddert gives us the following orientation. The road which takes us from the farms of Jakob and Heinrich Regier (east of Turkey Creek) westward through Franzthal to Dietrich Gaeddert's farm is called "German Street" (*Deutsche Strasse*, later "Dutch Avenue"). It runs for twelve miles through the entire settlement and goes as far as the bridge across the Little Arkansas River. Along this road some forty Mennonite families live on land purchased from the Santa Fe Railroad or from homesteaders. Similarly, two roads run through the Hoffnungsau settlement from the south to the north, beginning at the Little Arkansas and stretching ten miles north. This eastern road is known as Schmidt's Line, named after C. B. Schmidt, the general agent of the Land Office of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad. The Mennonites owe him much and consequently express their gratitude in this way. Schmidt's Line leads past Franzthal and is the main road between the towns of Burton and McPherson. The former is a station of the A. T. & S.F. Railroad nine miles west of Halstead, and the latter is the county seat of McPherson County.

The second road running from the south to the north through the Hoffnungsau settlement is known as Johnson Street and is located three miles west of Schmidt's Line. It is named after another land agent for the A. T. & S. F. Railroad, A. S. Johnson.

Dietrich Gaeddert relates that the ground must be plowed somewhat deeper than they were used to in

South Russia, and is more sandy than the soil in Russia. The highest yield produced by Gaedert was 27 bushels per acre, while others harvested up to 35. The average yield in 1877 was between 15 and 25 bushels with a maximum of 40 bushels of wheat per acre. The yield of oats averaged between 30 and 45 with a maximum of 75 bushels per acre. Barley was 20 to 40 bushels and rye, 15 to 25 bushels. Welsh corn produced 40 to 75 bushels per acre.

The largest city near the Hoffnungsau settlement is Hutchinson, located on the Santa Fe Line in Reno County. Next to Newton, Hutchinson is the largest city west of Emporia.

South of Hutchinson is an Amish Mennonite settlement in the making. These settlers are coming in from the state of Indiana. It is expected that, because of over population, Amish from Ohio and Pennsylvania will come westward to join them.

From Hutchinson, the Santa Fe moves eighteen miles westward towards Sterling, which is located on the Arkansas River. Another twenty-three miles westward is Ellinwood in Barton County near the Big Arkansas River. This large German settlement is the center of the Germania colony where 300 German families have settled. Between this settlement and Great Bend some German Baptists and Methodists have established themselves.

Gnadenthal

Following the Walnut Valley for eighteen to twenty-five miles, we encounter the most beautiful scenery along the Walnut River with the luscious buffalo grass of the endless prairie and the fields awaiting the farmer's plough. Here we run into the village of Elder A. Hahnhart who moved from Gnadenau, Marion County to Rush County where he settled with 30 families on the Walnut River. Although the homes consist of temporary dugouts, they contain satisfied inhabitants since no one reaped less than twenty bushels of wheat per acre in 1877. Some ten miles northeast of Gnadenthal, Lutherans from the Volga River have settled, and twenty miles northwest of Great Bend we visit a group of Moravians from Austria who had followed the invitation of C. B. Schmidt to settle in Kansas. They named their settlement Triebenz after the place from which they had come.

Pawnee Rock

Returning to Great Bend we ride nine miles on the Santa Fe train until we reach Pawnee Rock. Thirty-seven Mennonite families have established a settlement two to ten miles from the town. They came from Russian Poland three years ago. Their wheat harvest ranged between 28 and 35 bushels. In addition to the buffalo grass, plenty of bluestem grass can be found. Consequently, few farmers make hay since the cattle can remain out in pasture through most of the winter. Hay is made only for the few cold winter days.

After a visit to Nettleton, Kinsley, and Offerle to see German settlers from Saxony, Alsace, and other places, we arrive in Dodge City and find a strong representation of German settlers in this area.

Agriculture

A considerable amount of winter wheat has been sown since the coming of the Mennonites. In 1877, 857,125 acres were planted and the following year, the figure was 1,243,315 acres. Some apple trees are being planted as well as peach, cherry, and pear trees.

When a European farmer hears about a wheat field consisting of 4,000 acres, he imagines that an army of field workers, horses, and oxen are necessary to work it. Kansas farmers have wheat fields of 1,000 to 4,000 acres, and they hire others to plant and reap their crops.

A general observation in regard to the price of the land needs to be made. The price of the land of the German settlements is rising rapidly because of the increase in population. Especially the Mennonites contribute to the increase in farm land prices because they like to settle next to their relatives and friends. This is understandable, but unfortunately, the landowners take advantage of this situation and raise their prices. The high land prices in "completed settlements" mislead some in their evaluation of land prices. The A. T. & S. F. Railroad still has 2,500,000 acres of the best land. Groups of ten to thirty families can still find land at reasonable prices some fifty to one hundred miles away from the large German settlements in Marion, Harvey, Butler, McPherson, and Reno counties.

(Translated by Cornelius Krahn)

Menno Simons Lectures Published

The January issue of *Mennonite Life* (1970) was devoted to the topic "Reformation and Revolution" presented by Alvin Beachy, James Juhnke, William Keeney, and Cornelius Krahn. Write for copies to *Mennonite Life*.

Kansas Mennonite Settlements, 1877

Part II—Illustrations

The German Settlement in Southwest Kansas on the Land of the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad Company is the translated title of the 48-page booklet by C. B. Schmidt, which is presented in abbreviated form in the article "Kansas Mennonite Settlements" in the beginning of this issue. Many of the following illustrations are taken from the above booklet by C. B. Schmidt. The artist who accompanied C. B. Schmidt is unknown. (See Photo Credits.)



IF YOU WANT A FARM OR HOME
"THE BEST THING IN THE WEST"
Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe
RAILROAD
LANDS
IN SOUTHWEST KANSAS.

The advertisement features a central illustration of a steam locomotive pulling a passenger car through a landscape. The car has a sign that says 'ATCHISON'. Above the locomotive, there are two smaller illustrations: one of a person on a horse and another of a person in a field. The text below the illustration reads: 'Temperate Climate. Excellent Health. Pure and Abundant Water. GOOD SOIL FOR WHEAT, CORN AND FRUIT. The Best Stock Country in the World.' At the bottom, it says 'For full information apply to Agent, LAND COMMISSIONER, A. T. & S. F. R. R., Topeka, Kan.' and 'Headquarters at C. B. Schmidt, Deutsche Westl. Hdt., Topeka, Kan.'

A typical railroad advertisement inducing land-seekers to acquire the alternate sections of land owned and offered by the railroad.

Reproduction of an early Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe train which brought the settlers to Kansas.



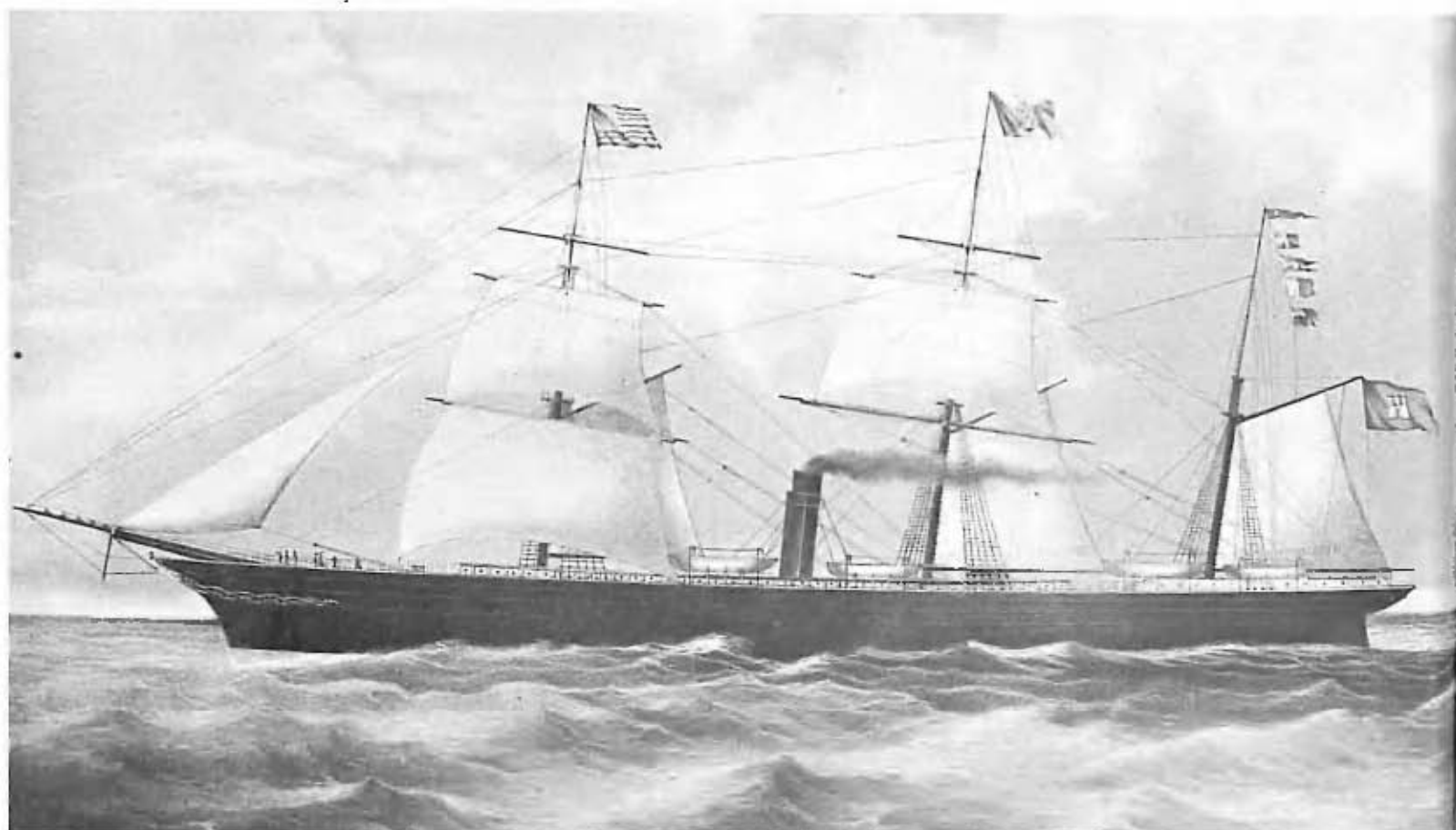


Paul Tschetter (1842-1919) was a delegate to St. Petersburg petitioning continued exemption from military service. He and his uncle, Lorenz Tschetter, were the Hutterite representatives of a delegation of twelve in search for land in the prairie states in 1873.

Leonhard Suderman (1821-1900) was a delegate to St. Petersburg and to the American frontier in 1873. Later he was elder of the Emmaus Mennonite Church at Whitewater.



The "Teutonic" was one of the ships which brought the Mennonites from Europe to New York or Philadelphia.



Elder Dietrich Gaeddert's "Application for Land" dated 1874. He paid \$1.65 per acre.

Wilhelm Ewert (1829-1887) of Thorn was joined by some members of his congregation in 1874 and became the Elder in the Bruderthal Church near Hillsboro, Kansas.



Richison, Topeka & Santa Fe R. R. Co.
 No. 2592 *Col. 2592 INT.*
Application for Land.
Wm. Gaeddert
 To A. E. TOUZALIN, Land Commissioner:
 The undersigned hereby applies to purchase the
North East 1/4
 Section *11*, Town *22* Range *11* *West*
Harvey County, *Mo.* Acres to *81.65*
 per acre, Total, \$ *134.72* under Terms No. *1*
 Make papers in name of
E. Dietrich Gaeddert
 Present post office address.
 County, State of
 Former Residence,
 County, State of
 Applicant.
RECEIVED, Topeka, Kansas, Col. 2592, 1874
 the sum of *26.11* Dollars,
 on the above application.
 After examination the record, this application is found correct and the fee is paid to the
A. E. Touzalin
 Commissioner and for Taxes.

G. N. Harms' "Affirmation of Non-Resistance" dated 1884.

Affirmation of Non-Resistant.

*I do solemnly, sincerely and truly declare and affirm that I am a resident of Harvey
 county, State of Kansas, and a member of the Religious Society or Church known and called
 by the name Mennonites, and that according to the creed and discipline of said Society, the
 bearing arms is forbidden, and this I do under the pains and penalties of perjury.*

G. N. Harms

Subscribed and affirmed to before me on this *30th* day of *April*

A. D. 188*4*

John C. Johnston
 County Clerk.



Early Atchison, Topeka, Santa Fe Railroad Station in Newton, Kansas. From here the Mennonites settled on the adjacent Santa Fe land.



Wilhelm Ewert's farm in the Bruderthal settlement near Hillsboro, Kansas (1877). The adjacent farm belonged to J. Funk.

View of the total Bruderthal settlement. The settlers came from various parts of West Prussia and Russia.





The Krimmer (Crimean) Mennonite Brethren Church of the settlement Gnadenau, 1877.

For decades the Friesen windmill of Gnadenau was a landmark of the community.

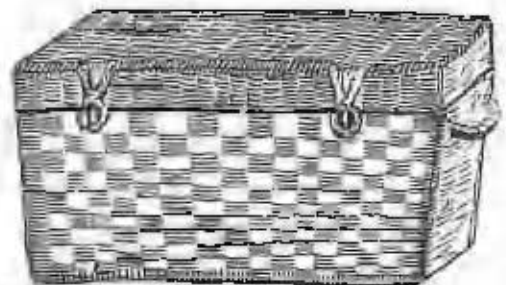


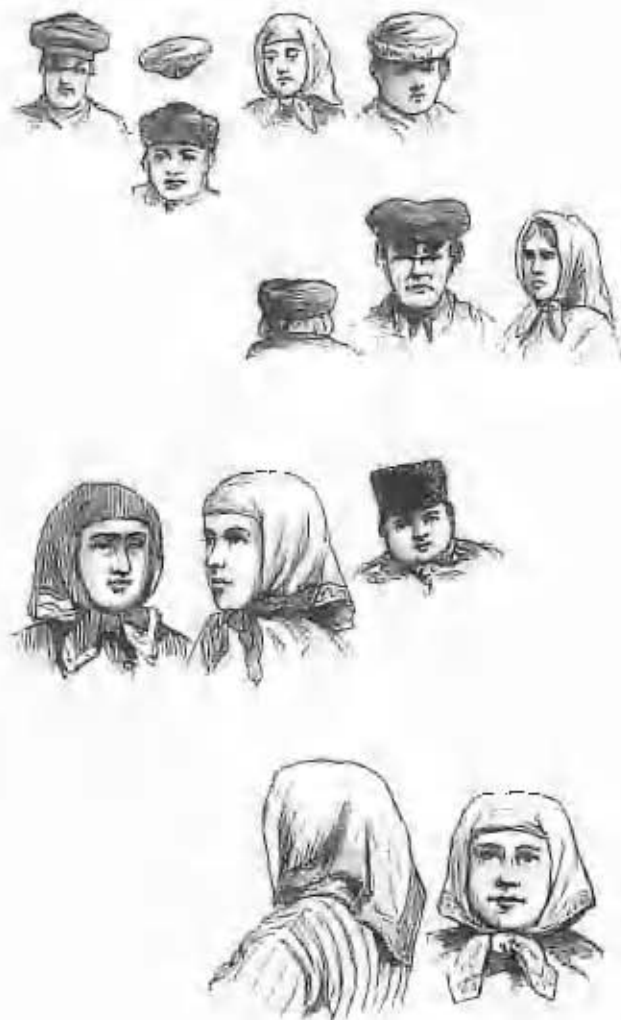
The Gnadenau village (1877) established by Krimmer Mennonite Brethren settlers under the leadership of Elder Jakob Wiebe.



The public well either at the Alexanderwohl Immigrant House or the Gnadenau village.

A Russian willow trunk. Most of the heirloom trunks were built of solid in-laid wood and are now precious antiques.





The Mennonites from Russia wore typical peasant kerchiefs, caps, aprons, and sandals (**Schlorren**) or high leather boots. These were also used by them in Russia and West Prussia.

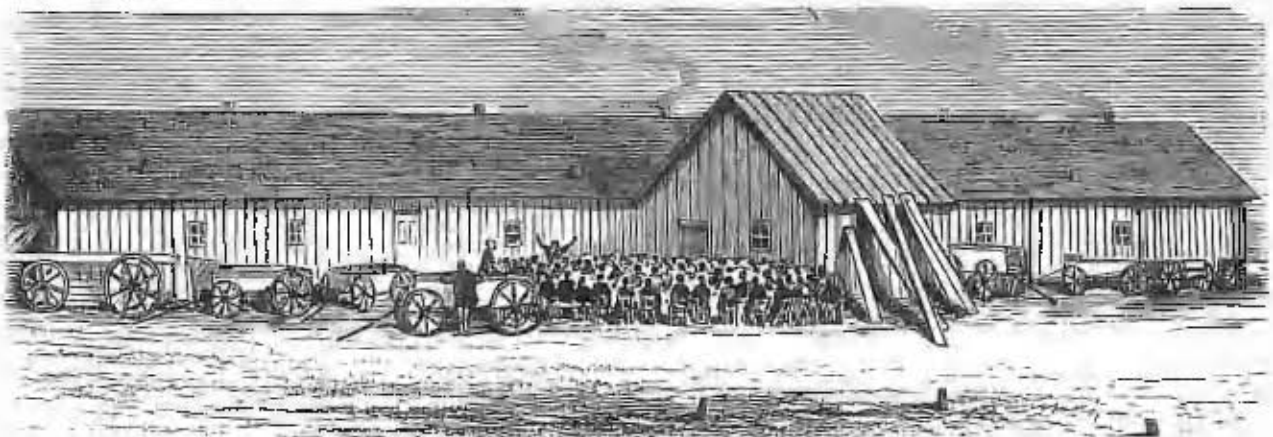
Distribution of mail at the Gnadenau "Post Office."



View of the inside of one of the Immigrant Houses featuring all of the activities taking place in such "communal living." The illustrations pp. 70-73 first appeared in Frank Leslie's *Illustrirte Zeitung*, New York, March 20, 1875, and were reprinted numerous times. (See Photo Credits.)



Outdoor Sunday worship at one of the Alexanderwohl Immigrant Houses in 1874.

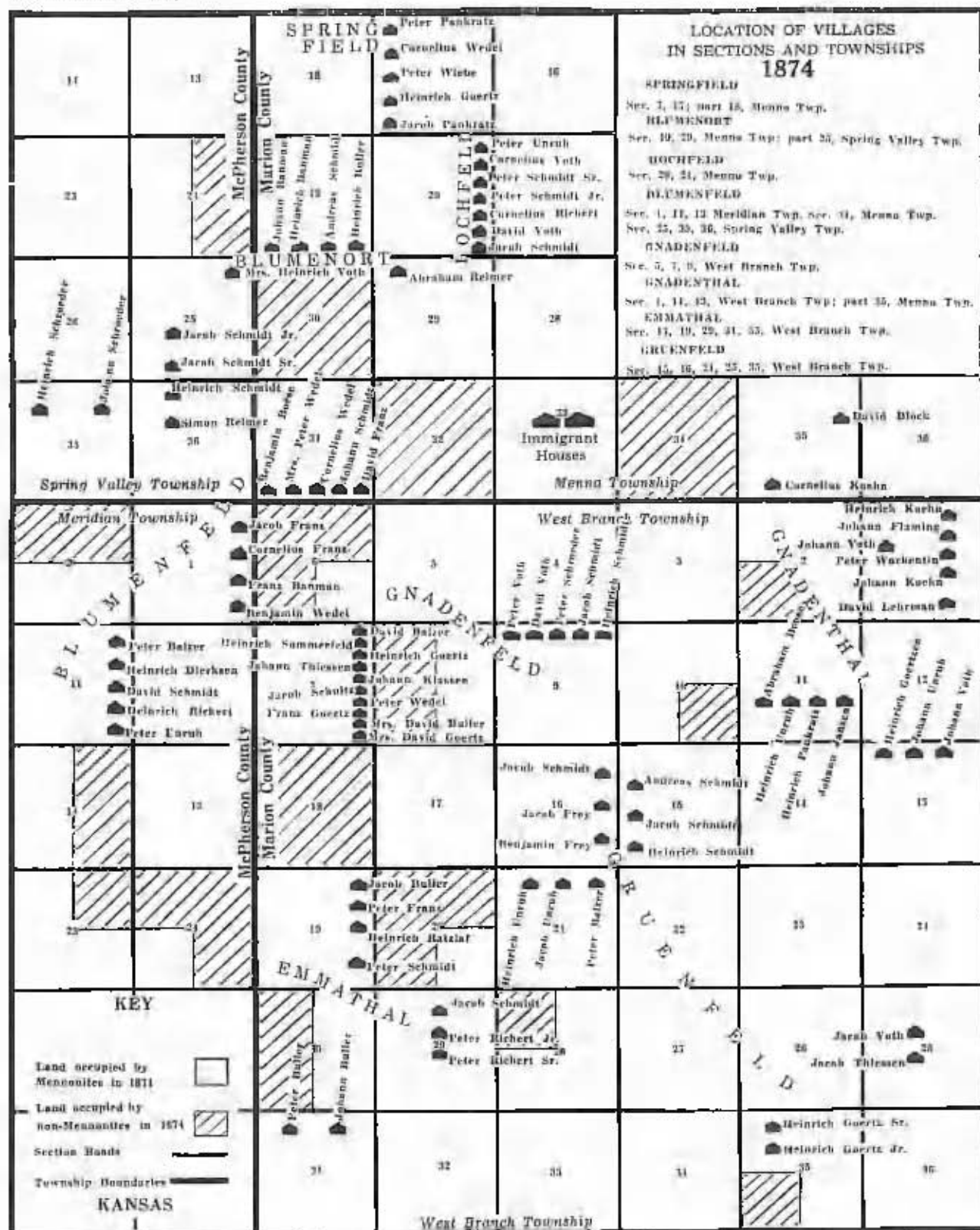




The Alexanderwohl Menranite Immigration Houses. The Santa Fe assisted the families in various communities in erecting five Temporary Houses.



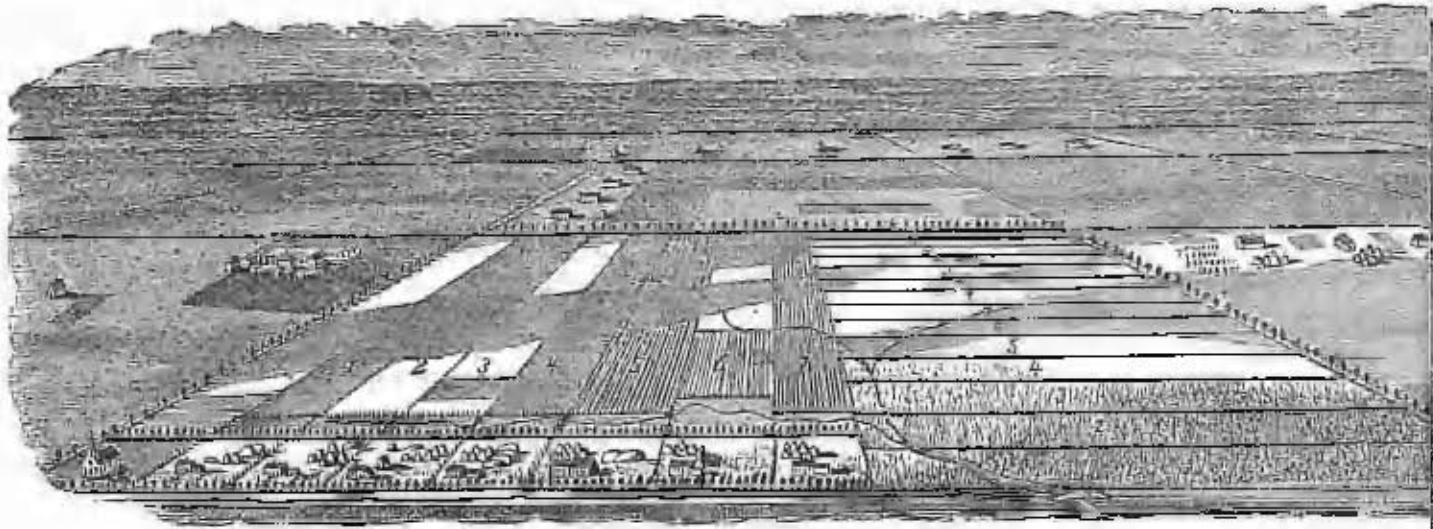
Alexanderwahl Villages in Kansas, 1874. The villages disintegrated gradually but traces of them are noticeable even today.





Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, Goessel, Kansas, entertaining the Western District of the General Conference Mennonite Church in 1886.

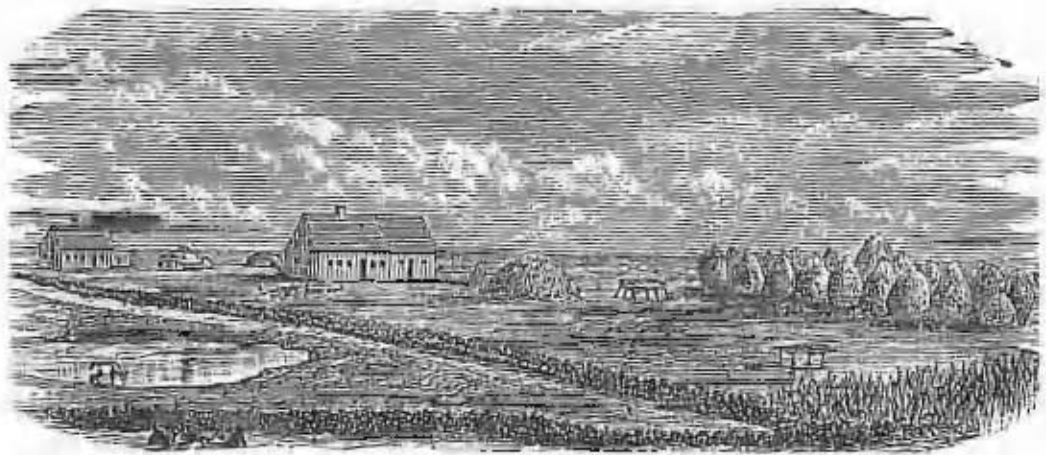
Hochfeld, one of the original nine villages of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite settlement, illustrating the early land distribution so that each farmer would get some land nearby and some farther away (see text for details).



The village Weidefeld was located on the South Cottonwood River. When the delegates inspected the land, they rested in the shade of the big elm tree and had their lunch. The farm belonged to Peter Harms.



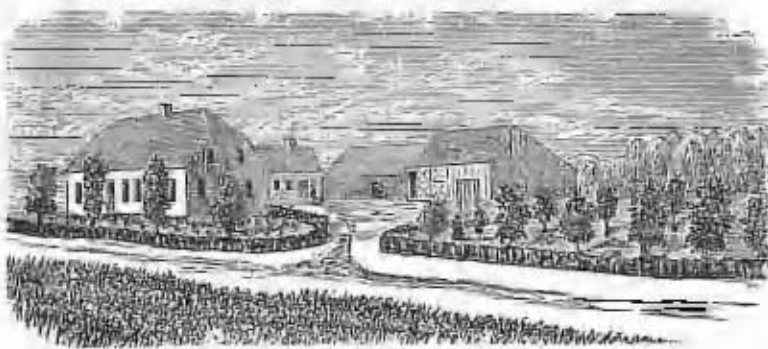
C. B. Schmidt visited the farm of Abraham Reimer near Hochfeld. He was also later visited by Noble L. Prentis.



The farms of Heinrich and Jakob Regier, southeast of Turkey Creek, constituted a part of the Hoffnungsau settlement.



The village of Franzthal of the Hoffnungsau settlement.



The farm of Elder Dietrich Gacident of the Hoffnungsau Church near Buhler, Kansas. These settlers were originally a part of the large Alexanderwohl group in Russia.

The farm at Elder Valentin Krehbiel ten miles northwest of Halstead. Krehbie was the first Elder of the Halstead Mennonite Church.



The Halstead Mennonite settlement was established on the Little Arkansas River primarily by Summerfield, Illinois, Mennonites. [Note names of early settlers.]

35	34	33	32	31	30	29	28
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4
21	20	19	18	17	16	15	14
31	30	29	28	27	26	25	24
41	40	39	38	37	36	35	34
51	50	49	48	47	46	45	44
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71	70	69	68	67	66	65	64
81	80	79	78	77	76	75	74
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271	270	269	268	267	266	265	264
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531	530	529	528	527	526	525	524
541	540	539	538	537	536	535	534
551	550	549	548	547	546	545	544
561	560	559	558	557	556	555	554
571	570	569	568	567	566	565	564
581	580	579	578	577	576	575	574
591	590	589	588	587	586	585	584
601	600	599	598	597	596	595	594
611	610	609	608	607	606	605	604
621	620	619	618	617	616	615	614
631	630	629	628	627	626	625	624
641	640	639	638	637	636	635	634
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671	670	669	668	667	666	665	664
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691	690	689	688	687	686	685	684
701	700	699	698	697	696	695	694
711	710	709	708	707	706	705	704
721	720	719	718	717	716	715	714
731	730	729	728	727	726	725	724
741	740	739	738	737	736	735	734
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761	760	759	758	757	756	755	754
771	770	769	768	767	766	765	764
781	780	779	778	777	776	775	774
791	790	789	788	787	786	785	784
801	800	799	798	797	796	795	794
811	810	809	808	807	806	805	804
821	820	819	818	817	816	815	814
831	830	829	828	827	826	825	824
841	840	839	838	837	836	835	834
851	850	849	848	847	846	845	844
861	860	859	858	857	856	855	854
871	870	869	868	867	866	865	864
881	880	879	878	877	876	875	874
891	890	889	888	887	886	885	884
901	900	899	898	897	896	895	894
911	910	909	908	907	906	905	904
921	920	919	918	917	916	915	914
931	930	929	928	927	926	925	924
941	940	939	938	937	936	935	934
951	950	949	948	947	946	945	944
961	960	959	958	957	956	955	954
971	970	969	968	967	966	965	964
981	980	979	978	977	976	975	974
991	990	989	988	987	986	985	984
1001	1000	999	998	997	996	995	994



Goldschar, a small West Prussian village located three miles south-east of Newton, was started in 1877 and occupied by Hermann Sudermann, Sr., Hermann Sudermann, Jr., and Wilhelm Quiring.

Abraham Sudermann home in Butler County, which he shared for a while with the elder and delegate Leonhard Sudermann.



Farm of Dietrich Claassen. Both farms were a part of the large West Prussian settlement near Whitewater and Elbing.



The railroad depot (1886) of Moundridge, Kansas, where the Swiss Volhynian Mennonites from Polish Russia settled on Santa Fe lands in 1874.





Mr. and Mrs. Joe C.
Goering.



Adolph and Maria
Goering.



Mr. and Mrs. Joe
Graber.



Jacob and Kathrina
Goering and son.

Early Swiss Volhynian Settlers of the Moundridge Area.

The Seventieth Anniversary of the Swiss Volhynian Mennonites at the Eden Mennonite Church, 1944. Many of them were born in Volhynia, Russia.

