

Sacramento Valley Chapter

American Historical Society of Germans from Russia – International

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Alton Sissell & Lee Macklin, Editors

President's Message

Thank you Chapter members, for attending the Lodi Heritage Fest. The programs presented were very interesting. I took our "For Sale" books there and sold 6 books, mostly cookbooks. Alton Sissell won the Quilt drawing. Our Chapter still needs someone to volunteer for Secretary.

The June meeting program will be a presentation by Jim Weibert about AHSGR Headquarters projects for translating records from Russian Village records that we have purchased. Lee Macklin will be presenting a program about using DNA for finding families.

Lillie Coad will bring a birthday cake to celebrate our 44th birthday. She has asked chapter members to bring salads for after meeting refreshments. Deanne Ellsworth is back home after her stay in a Convalescent Hospital, while recovering from back surgery. Our prayers are for her to continue to improve her health and well being. Our thoughts are also with Alan Geiken and his health concerns. Best wishes to all of you.

Eleanor Sissell, Chapter President

Voices out of the Past – Our Ancestor's Speak Again by Jim Weibert

The presentation is about an original 1827 Russian **Archive Family Record**, seen only by a very few over the past 191-years. The original will be compared to a recent translated version that is nearing publication by AHSGR, Int. Jim will show you both the originals and various sections he is now formatting and indexing to create the translated document. The document will contain 55

Dinkel, Russia Family Lists. The **Gerlach** family records are used to create a narrative of the **Record-Taker** interviewing the family. Using your imagination and the real records, you may just hear our Ancestors speak again as they sit at a table for the interview in 1827. Interesting, educational and fun!

Sacramento Valley Chapter Meeting

**Sunday, June 10, 2018
2:00 PM**

**American River Community Church,
3300 Walnut Ave., Carmichael, CA**

Program Happy 44th Birthday SVC

Translating Records from Russian Villages by Jim Weibert

DNA: Predicted versus Actual Relationships by Lee Macklin

Refreshments: Cake and salads provided by the Board members

Bring another German from Russia

DNA: Predicted versus Actual Relationships

by Lee Macklin

One question I often get is why do some of your *actual* relationships turn out to be different from your DNA *predicted* relationships? For example, your AncestryDNA (or 23andMe) match predicts your relationship is 3rd Cousin. However, after further investigation you discover this person is actually your 2nd Cousin 1x Removed. So, I decided to write an article detailing the answer to this question which includes many examples illustrating the various scenarios. **Print attached file for further explanation.**

SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER

Chapter Membership Report - Count by year:

2017 = 28 Members 2018 = 40 Members

Yes, we are growing again, when we all strive to recruit new or former members. Remember, each Chapter member is also a member of the **California District Council (CDC)**.

♫ HAPPY BIRTHDAY ♫

Sacramento Valley Chapter Members

**Cathy Kreutzer May 12
Loretta Linebaugh May 16**

**Thomas L. Horst June 9
Sacramento Valley Chapter June 22, 1974**



[If your Birthday announcement was missed, please contact Jim Weibert on 916/783-2453 - or - e-mail to bjweib@surewest.net to update your member record]

"The Storm"

Theme of 2018 AHSGR Convention

Plans are underway for the 49th **2018 AHSGR Convention**, to be held at Fort Hays State University, 600 Park Street, Hays, Kansas, from July 30-August 2, 2018.

Welcome night will be Monday, July 30th from 7-8:30 PM. Opening session is Tuesday, July 31.

Early registration ends June 15, 2018.

The Russian Mennonites

The Russian Mennonites (German: "Russlandmennoniten" occasionally Ukrainian [1][2][3] Mennonites) are a group of Mennonites of German language, tradition and ethnicity, who are descendants of German-Dutch Anabaptists who settled for about 50 years in West Prussia and established colonies in the south west of the Russian Empire (present-day Ukraine) beginning in 1789. Since the late 19th century, many of them have come to countries throughout the Western Hemisphere. The rest were forcibly relocated, so that few of their descendants now live at the location of the original colonies. Russian Mennonites are traditionally multilingual with Plautdietsch (Mennonite Low German) as their first language and lingua franca.

The term "Russian Mennonite" refers to the country where they resided after the split from Germany and not to their ethnic heritage. In 2014 there are several hundred thousand Russian Mennonites: about 200,000 in Germany, 100,000 in Mexico, 70,000 in Bolivia, 40,000 in Paraguay, 10,000 in Belize and tens of thousands in Canada and the US and a few thousand in Argentina, Uruguay and Brazil.

Origins in the Vistula Delta

In the early-to-mid 16th century, Mennonites began to move from the Low Countries (especially Friesland) and Flanders to the Vistula delta region,

seeking religious freedom and exemption from military service. They gradually replaced their Dutch and Frisian languages with the Plautdietsch dialect spoken in the area, blending into it elements of their native tongues.

Today Plautdietsch is the distinct Mennonite language which developed over a period of 300 years in the Vistula delta region and south Russia. The Mennonites of Dutch origin were joined by Mennonites from other parts of Germany, including the German-speaking parts of what is today Switzerland.

Some few Poles became Mennonites and were assimilated into the Vistula delta Mennonites. In 1772, most of the West-Prussian Mennonites' land in the Vistula area became part of the Kingdom of Prussia in the first of the Partitions of Poland. Frederick William II of Prussia ascended the throne in 1786 and imposed heavy fees on the Mennonites in exchange for continued military exemption.

Migration to Russia

Catherine the Great of Russia issued a manifesto in 1763 inviting all Europeans to come and settle various pieces of land within Russia, especially in the Volga River region. For a variety of reasons, Germans responded to this in large numbers. Mennonites from the Vistula delta region of Prussia later sent delegates to negotiate an extension of this manifesto and, in 1789, Crown Prince Paul signed a new agreement with them. The Mennonite migration to Russia from Prussia was led by Jacob Hoeppner and Johann Bartsch.

Their settlement territory was northwest of the Sea of Azov, and had just been acquired from the Ottoman Empire in the Russo-Turkish War, 1768–1774. Many of the Mennonites in Prussia accepted this invitation, establishing Chortitza on the Dnieper River as their first colony in 1789.

A second larger colony, Molotschna, was founded in 1803. Mennonites lived alongside Nogais (semi-nomadic pastoralists) in the Molotschna region of southern Ukraine starting from 1803, when Mennonites first arrived, until 1860, when the Nogai Tatars departed. Mennonites provided

agricultural jobs to Nogais and rented pasture from them. Nogai raids on Mennonite herds were a constant problem in the first two decades of settlement.

Two Mennonite settlements on the Vistula near Warsaw, Deutsch-Kazun and Deutsch-Wymysle, came under Russian control when the border was readjusted at the Congress of Vienna. Some of these families emigrated to the Molotschna settlement after it was established. Deutsch-Michalin near Machnovka was founded in 1787. Many families from this settlement moved to nearby Volhynia in 1802. Swiss Mennonites of Amish descent from Galicia settled near Dubno, Volhynia province in 1815. Other Galician Mennonites lived near Lviv.

When the Prussian government eliminated exemption from military service on religious grounds, the remaining Mennonites were eager to emigrate to Russia. They were offered land along the Volga River in Samara and exemption from military service for twenty years, after which they could pay a special exemption tax. Two settlements, Trakt and Alt-Samara (to distinguish it from Neu Samara Colony), were founded in 1853 and 1861 respectively.

By 1870 about 9000 individuals had immigrated to Russia, mostly to the Chortitza and Molotschna settlements which, with population increase, numbered about 45,000. Forty daughter colonies were established by 1914, occupying nearly 12,000 square kilometres (4,600 sq mi), with a total population of 100,000.

Economy

The colonists formed villages of fifteen to thirty families, each with 70 ha (175 acres) of land. The settlements retained some communal land and a common granary for use by the poor in lean years. Income from communal property provided funding for large projects, such as forming daughter colonies for the growing population. Insurance was also organized separately and outside of the control of the Russian government.

Initially the settlers raised cattle, sheep and general

crops to provide for their household. The barren steppes were much drier than their Vistula delta homeland and it took years to work out the proper dry-land farming practices. They grew mulberries for the silk industry, produced honey, flax and tobacco, and marketed fruits and vegetables for city markets. By the 1830s wheat became the dominant crop.

Expanding population and the associated pressure for more farmland became a problem by 1860. The terms of the settlement agreement prevented farms from being divided; they were required to pass intact from one generation to the next. Since agriculture was the main economic activity, an expanding class of discontented, landless poor arose. Their problems tended to be ignored by the village assembly, which consisted of voting landowners.

By the early 1860s the problem became so acute that the landless organized a party that petitioned the Russian government for relief. A combination of factors relieved their plight. The Russian government permitted farms to be divided in half or quarters and ordered release of the village's communal land. The colonies themselves purchased land and formed daughter colonies on the eastern frontier extending into Siberia and Turkestan. These new colonies included Bergtal, Neu Samara Colony and the Mennonite settlements of Altai.

As wheat farming expanded, the demand for mills and farm equipment grew. The first large foundry was established in Chortitzia in 1860 and other firms followed. By 1911 the eight largest Mennonite-owned factories produced 6% of the total Russian output (over 3 million rubles), shipped machinery to all parts of the empire and employed 1744 workers.

The annual output of Lepp and Wallman of Schönwiese was 50,000 mowers, 3000 threshing machines, thousands of gangplows in addition to other farm equipment. Flour and feed mills were originally wind-powered, a skill transplanted from Prussia. These were eventually replaced with motor-and steam-driven mills. Milling and its supporting industries grew to dominate the industrial economy of the colonies and nearby

communities.

Local government

Mennonite colonies were self-governing with little intervention from the Russian authorities. The village, the basic unit of government, was headed by an elected magistrate who oversaw village affairs. Each village controlled its own school, roads and cared for the poor. Male landowners decided local matters at village assemblies.

Villages were grouped into districts. All of the Chortitzia villages formed one district; Molotschna was divided into two districts: Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld. A district superintendent headed a regional bureau that could administer corporal punishment and handle other matters affecting the villages in common. Insurance and fire protection were handled at the regional level, as well as dealing with delinquents and other social problems.

The Mennonite colonies functioned as a democratic state, enjoying freedoms beyond those of ordinary Russian peasants. In addition to village schools, the Mennonite colonies established their own hospitals, a mental hospital and a school for the deaf. They cared for orphans and elderly and provided an insurance program. By being largely self-sufficient in these local matters, they were able to minimize their burden on and contact with the Russian government.

Mennonites stayed out of Russian politics and social movements that preceded the Russian revolution. After the Russian Revolution of 1905 they did exercise their right to vote. Most aligned themselves with the Octobrist Party because of its guarantee of religious freedoms and freedom of the press for minority groups. Hermann Bergmann was an Octobrist member of the Third and Fourth State Dumas; Peter Schröder, a Constitutional Democratic party member from Crimea, was a member of the fourth Duma.

Education

At a time when compulsory education was unknown in Europe, the Mennonite colonies formed an elementary school in each village. Students learned practical skills such as reading and

writing German and arithmetic. Religion was included as was singing in many schools. The teacher was typically a craftsperson or herder, untrained in teaching, who fit class time around his occupation.

In 1820 the Molotschna colony started a secondary school at Ohrloff, bringing a trained teacher from Prussia. The Central School was started in Chortitza in 1842. Over three thousand pupils attended the Central School with up to 8% of the colonists receiving a secondary education. A school of commerce was started in Halbstadt employing a faculty with full graduate education. Those who wanted to pursue post-secondary education attended universities in Switzerland, Germany as well as Russia.

Religious life

Typically each village or group of villages organized an independent congregation. Cultural and traditional differences between Frisian, Flemish and West Prussian Mennonites were also reflected in those of their churches. They all agreed on fundamental Mennonite beliefs such as believer's baptism, nonresistance and avoidance of oaths. Pastors of Flemish congregations read sermons from a book while seated at a table. Frisian pastors stood while delivering the sermon.

Pastors were untrained and chosen from within the congregation. Unpaid pastors were selected from among the wealthier members (large landowners, sometimes teachers) allowing them to make a living while serving the congregation. The combined effect of respect for their position and material wealth gave them substantial influence over the community. The religious and secular leadership within a village often colluded against the poorer members.

Church discipline was exercised in the form of excommunication against those committing gross sins. The most conservative congregations practiced "avoidance", which entailed cutting all business and social ties with an unrepentant member. Because being part of a Mennonite congregation was required to enjoy the special

benefits the Russian government provided to colonists, excommunication had broader implications. This was softened by the various internal factions, which allowed a person banned from one congregation to join another.

Kleine Gemeinde

Klaas Reimer and a group of eighteen followers broke from the main group and formed the Kleine Gemeinde. Reimer's main complaint was that Mennonite leaders were straying from their traditional nonresistant stance when they turned lawbreakers over to the government for punishment while at the same time church leaders were lax in enforcing spiritual discipline. In 1860 a portion of this group moved to Crimea, adopted baptism by immersion and became known as the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren.

Mennonite Brethren

Pietistic influences, introduced earlier among the West Prussian Mennonites, were transplanted to the Molotschna colony. The pastor of a neighboring congregation, Eduard Wüst, reinforced this pietism. Wüst was a revivalist who stressed repentance and Christ as a personal savior, influencing Catholics, Lutherans and Mennonites in the area. He associated with many Mennonite leaders, including Leonhard Sudermann.

In 1859, Joseph Höttmann, a former associate of Wüst met with a group of Mennonites to discuss problems within the main Mennonite body. Their discussion centered on participating in closed communion with church members who were unholy or not converted and baptism of adults by immersion.

The Mennonite Brethren Church formally broke with the main church on January 6, 1860 when this growing group of dissenters presented a document to the elders of the Molotschna Mennonite Churches which indicated "that the total Mennonite brotherhood has decayed to the extent that we can no more be part of it" and fear the "approach of an unavoidable judgment of God." The Mennonite Brethren movement spread throughout the

Mennonite colonies and produced many distinguished leaders, particularly in Molotschna. By breaking religious and cultural patterns that had become a hindrance to Mennonite society, the contribution of the Mennonite Brethren allowed all Mennonites groups to pursue a more wholesome Christian life.

General Conference

The main body of Mennonites continued to be congregational in organization until 1882 when the General Conference of Mennonite Congregations in Russia was formed. Cooperation among Mennonite congregations throughout the empire became necessary for dealing with common interests such as publishing a hymnal, adopting a confession of faith, preserving the German language, education and running the forestry service, an alternative to military service. The conference adopted the motto Unity in essentials, tolerance in non-essentials, moderation in all things.

The Russianization program of Stolypin required the conference to publish its proceedings in Russian, certify all delegates with the imperial government and allow a government representative to attend all sessions. The conference found itself devoting more time to dealing with changing government policies and protecting the special privileges of Mennonites. An important task was to convince the government that Mennonitism was an established religion and not a sect, a label applied to small religious groups who were regularly mistreated within the Russian empire.

First wave of emigration

As nationalism grew in central Europe, the Russian government could no longer justify the special status of its German colonists. In 1870 they announced a Russification plan that would end all special privileges by 1880. Mennonites were particularly alarmed at the possibility of losing their exemption from military service and their right for schools to use the German language, which they believed was necessary to maintain their cultural and religious life.

Delegates were sent to Petersburg in 1871 to meet with the czar and appeal for relief on religious grounds. They met with high officials, but failed to present the czar with their petition. A similar attempt the next year was also unsuccessful, but were assured by the Tsar's brother Grand Duke Konstantin that the new law would provide a way to address the concerns of the Mennonites in the form of noncombatant military service.

The most conscientious Mennonites could not accept any form of service that supported making war, prompting their community leaders to seek immigration options. In 1873 a delegation of twelve explored North America, seeking large tracts of fertile farmland. This group consisted of Leonhard Sudermann and Jacob Buller of the Alexanderwohl congregation representing the Molotschna settlement; Tobias Unruh from Volhynia settlements; Andreas Schrag of the Swiss Volhynia congregations; Heinrich Wiebe, Jacob Peters and Cornelius Buhr from the Bergthal Colony; William Ewert from West Prussia; Cornelius Toews and David Klassen of the Kleine Gemeinde and Paul and Lorenz Tschetter representing the Hutterites.

This group returned with positive reports of good land available in Manitoba, Minnesota, South Dakota, Nebraska and Kansas. The more conservative groups—those from Kleine Gemeinde, Bergthal and Chortitz—chose Canada, which promised privileges equal to those previously held in Russia and a large tract of land to reestablish colonies in Manitoba. The more liberal groups(those from Molotschna) and the Hutterites chose the United States.

Entire communities such as Alexanderwohl and Bergtal prepared to move as a unit as well as many individual families from among the other Mennonite villages. They sold their property, often at reduced prices and worked through the red tape and high fees of procuring passports.

Realizing that 40,000 of Russia's most industrious farmers were preparing to leave for North America, the Russian government sent Eduard Totleben to the colonies in May 1874. Meeting with community leaders, he exaggerated the difficulties that would be encountered in North America and offered an

alternative national service that would not be connected in any way to the military. His intervention convinced the more liberal Mennonites to stay.

Between 1874 and 1880, of the approximately 45,000 Mennonites in South Russia, ten thousand departed for the United States and eight thousand for Manitoba. The settlement of Mennonites, primarily in the central United States, where available cropland had similarity to that in the Crimean Peninsula, coincided with the completion of the Transcontinental Railroad in 1869.

Others looked east, and in one of the strangest chapters of Mennonite history, Claas Epp, Jr., Abraham Peters and other leaders led hundreds of Mennonites to Central Asia in the 1880s, where they expected Christ's imminent return. They settled in the Talas Valley of Turkestan and in the Khanate of Khiva. For those who remained in Russia, the military service question was resolved by 1880 with a substitute four-year forestry service program for men of military age.

Source and Footnotes:: Wikipedia
3/21/2018

SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER 2018 CALENDAR MEETING NOTICES and SPECIAL EVENTS

DATE & DAY	TIME	MEETINGS and EVENTS
June 10 Sunday	2:00 pm	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER MEETING Location: American River Community Church, 3300 Walnut Ave., Carmichael, CA Program: Current Project to Translate GR Records from Russian Archives by Jim Weibert; DNA: Predicted vs Actual Relationships by Lee Macklin Refreshments: Cake and salads provided by the SVC BoardChapters members
July 12 Thursday	10:00 am	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER - BOARD MEETING Host: Eleanor Sissell, 9491 Lake Natoma Drive, Orangevale, CA 95662
July 30 – Aug 2		CONVENTION: FORT HAYS STATE UNIVERSITY Hays, Kansas
August 12 Sunday	2:00 pm	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER MEETING Possible Summer Picnic, Location: (TBD) Program: (TBD)
September 13 Thursday	10:00 am	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER - BOARD MEETING Host: Eleanor Sissell, 9491 Lake Natoma Drive, Orangevale, CA 95662
October 14 Sunday	2:00 pm	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER OKTOBERFEST Host: POT LUCK, food provided by members Location: American River Community Church, 3300 Walnut Ave., Carmichael, CA Program: Short Business Meeting, German Music, German Food, Good Fellowship
November 8 Thursday	10:00 am	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER - BOARD MEETING Host: Deanne Ellsworth, 4925 Arboleda Drive, Fair Oaks, CA 95628
December 3 Sunday	1:00 pm	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER CHRISTMAS SOCIAL (RSVP) Host: (TBD) Program: Chapter Officer Elections, Annual Report, German Music, and CHRISTMAS DINNER – RSVP/Regrets by Dec (TBD):
January 10,2019 Thursday	10:00 am	SACRAMENTO VALLEY CHAPTER - BOARD MEETING Host: Eleanor Sissell, 9491 Lake Natoma Drive, Orangevale, CA 95662

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ADDRESS CORRECTION REQUESTED

«Member_Address_Name»
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