

Americanization of the Russian Mennonites  
in Central Kansas.

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PART I.

Origin, Early History and  
Life of Russian Mennonites.

## Introduction.

A settlement of foreigners always is an important subject for a sociological study. Their manners, customs and habits are so different from ours and hence they are of interest to us. Still more interesting, it seems to me, is a study of such a settlement by one who comes from it and has been educated in an American environment and then notices the changes which his own people have undergone. Such is the case with the writer. Another reason for such a study in the present instance is the fact that the Mennonites are a unique people with a checkered history, where fire and sword played a large part. They are a religious party that held itself for centuries against the most merciless persecutions by Protestants and Catholics alike. On account of their refusal to bear arms they have been scattered over a number of countries, everywhere seeking exemption from such service. Then too, as a member of this religious party I am able to understand their ideals and habits of that and can see very plainly where the new environment has wrought changes that centuries of oppression and persecution were not able to do. Having lived among Americans during the larger part of my higher education I believe I am able to take the proper viewpoint in tracing social changes among my people. Finally, there are a good many of the early

settlers still living and they have told me many a story while still a boy, all of which has made it interesting and comparatively easy to get the necessary information for this thesis.

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## Chapter II.

## Origin of the Mennonites.

The origin of the Mennonites must be sought in the religious dissensions of the 12th and 13th centuries. In the Alpine mountain recesses of Savoyen, Switzerland and the Lombardy the followers of Petrus Waldus kept themselves from extermination thru Catholic persecutions. These people were very strict in religious matters, disavowing all obedience to the papacy, emphasizing the exercise of the early christian virtues, refusing the oath and military service and demanding baptism of adults only. They were generally known as Anabaptists and intensely hated by priesthood and layety.

By the time of the Reformation they had become a very quiet sect, being now persecuted not only by the Catholics but also by Lutherans and Calvinists as well. Their number had dwindled down to a small remnant of what they had been before and these were scattered over a wide territory.

The man who was to be their great leader in later times and after whom finally the greatest number of their followers were to be named was not of Waldensian but of Catholic origin. Menno Simons was born at Witmarsun, Holland, in 1492. He was well educated, a fluent speaker, a pious man and possessed of great ability. He became a priest in the Catholic church and remained as such for several years. Thru private readings in the Bible he became convinced

that many of the doctrines of the Catholic church were not right and that the people were not living as they ought to. The doctrine of infant baptism especially seemed to be based only on tradition and belief and not on scriptural grounds. In 1536 he renounced catholicism and was baptized by a Waldensian bishop. On account of his ability, learning and piety he was chosen as bishop of a small church in 1537. From then on he taught and preached incessantly for 22 years in Prussia, Holland and other countries. Persecution was very severe and in 1543 the Catholic clergy secured the bloody patent from the civil authorities, in which he was declared an outlaw, a heavy sum placed on his head, and anyone who would harbor him should suffer death, and any criminal or murderer who would turn him over to the executioner would have the emperor's pardon. To evade his enemies and spies he had to use various means. One might meet a solitary wanderer in the forest, an ax on his shoulder, presumably returning to his little hovel after a day's work, when in reality it was Menno Simons going to some church at a secret place.

Finally, when the persecution became so severe he withdrew from Holland and Prussia and took his family to Fresenburg, in Holstein, where Count Alefeld granted religious liberty to all oppressed Anabaptists. The count provided him with a printing press, free of expense, and here he

published his numerous works. His death occurred in 1559, at the age of 66.

Menno had caused the spirit of the Waldensians to flame up far and wide and his followers were numerous. He was very strict in his teachings, and quite as intolerant as Luther, Calvin and contemporaries. He taught that one should show no spirit of revenge toward enemies, but rather help them; that one should do his charitable deeds in quietness; he rejected infant baptism; refused the oath and military service; he opposed state religions, teaching that the state and the church ought to be separate; he opposed the holding of civil and military offices; but he was outrageously severe in the enforcement of the religious ban upon such members who had been excommunicated for any reason. Upon his death bed he regretted very bitterly to have been so severe. The direct result of Menno's severity in this regard was the appearance of schisms among the different churches which exist until today. When in 1680 and later the greater part of the Mennonites emigrated to America the differences remained.

## Chapter III.

## Direct Forefathers of the Russian Mennonites.

The real forefathers of the Russian Mennonites were Dutch "Taufgesinnte" who emigrated to Prussia in the 16th century, before and during the terrible Spanish-Jesuit inquisition under Philip II. They scattered over various parts of Prussia, but the real place of activity was West Prussia and the territory of the free city of Danzig. Here the people from different parts of Germany and Poland joined them and mixed with them. The mixture of Polish-Slavish elements is shown by the presence of such names as Rogalsky, Koslowsky, Ratzlaff, Savatsky, etc. The Dutch element is indicated by such names as Friesen (Van Riesen), Jansen (Janzen), Eidsen, Claassen and others. Further evidence are also the Dutch customs and mode of living, knowledge of the Dutch language, and Dutch religious books found among Prussian Mennonites. To quote from Friesen (Gesch. D. Atl-Evang. Menn. Br. in Russland): "Thus we are, as Mennonites, according to blood and spirit, the heirs of the Waldensians, of the Bohemian-Maehrian Brethren, of the South Germans and Swiss, and (by blood relationship) principally of the Dutch "Taufgesinnten".

These Hollanders were the first to be called Mennonites after their illustrious leader's first name. The principal reason that they were tolerated in West Prussia was because of their ability as farmers. The earliest ones seem

to have been called to Prussia on account of their thrift and their knowledge and skill in draining off swampy regions. The terrible swamps of the Vistula River were drained off by them and turned into rich agricultural land, making their owners rich and becoming well-to-do themselves. These owners protected them from persecutions and later on secured precious privileges for them.

Under Polish government the Mennonites had comparative peace. They built huge dams to check the disastrous overflows of the Vistula, showed themselves as sober, thrifty people and were tolerated as a great economic asset of the nation. From time to time there were enemies in the Polish parliament who would have turned them out, but the government never did so on account of their good reputation and general usefulness. They had their special privileges renewed from time to time and in return, as peaceful citizens helped the government with large sums of money.

When the warlike Hohenzollerns took possession of West Prussia the position of the Mennonites became more difficult, but even here they were tolerated for their great economic value. Frederick the Great was a great favorite with them. When his successor, his weak and pious nephew, Wilhelm II., came to the throne their difficulties began on account of the hostile policy he adopted toward them. They soon began

to emigrate, or rather to steal out of the country, since emigration was forbidden, going to America, to Polish Russia and to South Russia.

#### Religious Organization and Customs in Prussia.

The Mennonites had rather plain looking buildings for their churches. At the head of the local church was the elder who could perform all the duties of a bishop. As assistants he had a greater or smaller, according to the needs, of preachers, called "teachers", who took part in all the work that the elder did, except that they could not preside at baptism or the Holy Supper. Besides these there were one or more deacons who looked after the poor of the parish, having charge of the welfare work and assisting at baptism and at the communion services. These men together made up the church board or council. The ultimate authority, however, was with the brotherhood. They decided at their meetings, usually called at the discretion of their leader, about the church finances, excommunication or reception of members, acceptance or rejection of resolutions passed at the general conferences, etc. by majority vote. Only males over 21 were allowed to vote. The elder was always chosen from among the preachers, hence they may be said to have formed a class of "elder candidates". This church organization was afterwards taken bodily over to Russia and is the existing order there even now.

They had frequent weekly meetings in their homes at which they discussed the scriptures on the round table plan. The preachers generally read their sermons since they regarded it as a sign of self-exaltation to give a sermon off hand. The religious life was noted more for its rigidity and formality than for any great depth of spirituality. The traditions of the past played herein a great part. A church that has been mercilessly persecuted for generations, when peace and prosperity come, naturally falls asleep on the deeds and sufferings and the reputation of the forefathers.

## Chapter IV.

## 1. Emigration to Russia.

During the last few years of Frederick's reign the Mennonites had not received the same kind treatment as formerly. In 1780 they received an imperial order that upon payment of 5,000 Reichstaler they would be forever exempt from military service. Eight years later they were limited in the amount of land they could acquire, in addition to the above. This caused widespread pauperization. Emigration was at once thought of but it was forbidden so that they had to sneak out of the country.

Just about this time, 1786, Empress Catherine II. of Russia being desirous of populating her newly acquired province of Taurida with exemplary farmers, issued a special invitation to the Mennonites of Danzig, which was not under Prussian control. She sent Herr Trappe, a very capable and trustworthy man, to make a personal visit. The same year two deputies, Hoepfner and Bartsch, were sent by the Mennonites in answer to this invitation to investigate and inspect the land. They were courteously received by the empress, graciously presented to her official family, and shown over the land in the spring of 1787. No written agreement was entered in, but the Mennonites were promised religious freedom, exemption from military service for all times, complete local autonomy, 65 desjatines (about 180 acres) of land for each family and various other privileges.

The person responsible for inviting the Mennonites to come to Russia seems to have been a Russian general who became acquainted with them during the Seven Years' War when the Russian army had its winter quarters each year among the Mennonites. He saw their industry, sobriety, economic independence and well managed farms and was favorably impressed by them. Being a member of the imperial council at the time when the empress proposed to settle those provinces and civilize the Tartars he related his former experiences with these people.

## 2. First Settlement in South Russia.

The deputies brot a favorable report and in the fall of 1788 a train of 228 families started to the distant province. The poorer ones were the first to go. The following spring they arrived at the island of Chortiza, at the junction of the Dnjeper and Chortitza Rivers. the country was barren, treeless, seemingly waterless, with shallow stony soil, so that a mutiny broke out at once, but a retreat was impossible. They had received very ample help from the Russian government, but when they settled that stopped. Under such dreary and discouraging conditions they set to work to build homes in this wide wilderness among half civilized tribes, with nothing to protect them. The following years were fraught with much suffering and poverty. In 1797 a train of 118 families joined them, so that altogether around 400 families made up the first Mennonite colony in Russia. The first immigrants were in

such a rush to get to the new country that not even a preacher was among them. Somehow the lowest elements were the first to leave and they caused a great deal of the subsequent troubles. After untold sufferings and miseries on account of ignorance of the conditions, the unworthiness of many settlers, the dishonesty of many Russian colonial officers the colony seemed to go to utter ruin. Added to this were the internal dissensions of the colony itself. After some <sup>fr</sup>intiguing of the part of the discontented ones the deputies who were the treasurers for the imperial donations to the colony were arrested for alleged irregularities and brot to trial. Complaint had been sent even to the imperial council, and now to save themselves, the plaintiffs, twelve in number, had to give an oath that the complaints were true. One of the deputies upon asking forgiveness was accepted back into the church, but Hoepfner would not do so because he was not conscious of having done any wrong, nor could he have come back on account of the above complaint. He was tried, found guilty upon the above malicious evidence and put into prison. His property was confiscated and sold at auction by the government to make up the deficiency in the treasury. Since there was very little money in the colony the neighboring nobility and landowners were invited to attend the auction. When enuf property had been sold to make up the alleged discrepancy the sale was stopped. The buyers themselves showed more mercy than the Mennonites. They returned a large proportion of the property they had just

bot and gave it to the Hoepfner family. Hoepfner himself would have been sent to Siberia, but emperor Paul I. died and his successor, Alexander I., pardoned all criminals whose embezzlement did not exceed 2,000 rubles. Hoepfner came back, but being excommunicated, he did not have the right to own any land. His property fell to his son and with him he lived to a great age. There is no doubt but what the deputies were entirely innocent of the charges. At the centennial the colony placed a monument upon Hoepfner's grave. The colony was only saved from utter ruin by the coming of more wealthy immigrants in 1804 who stayed with them during the winter and paid in cash for all services.

#### Second Large Settlement.

The next larger settlement of Mennonites in Russia began in 1804 when the above mentioned families, 342 in number came from Prussia. This party had many wealthy farmers and thru their aid the Old Colony, as it is now called, received a new lease of life. The settlement was made about 60 werst(40 miles) or more down stream on the Molotchna River (Milk River). The territory was level, covered with plenty of grass, but devoid of timber except along the rivers. The soil was better and water was not so deep and of better quality than in the old colony. The Nogaiens who lived near by proved to be a great difficulty. The poor horses of the colonists they bot for meat during the day and the good ones

they got by night, without paying for them of course.

The colony was a success from the start. The experience with the soil that the first settlers had had helped them to avoid many costly errors. At the same time a Mr. Contenius, a senator, had been appointed as a special overseer of the immigrants and he went to work in a systematic way to make this settlement a success from the very beginning.

The second party of 99 families arrived in 1809, a third of 215 families in 1820 and a later one strung out from 1835 to 1840 brot 80 families. Of all immigrants these latter were the most educated and as such have had the greatest influence of all the settlers. All told there were about 750 families in the Molotschna district and about 400 families in the Chortitzza colony, a total of 1150 families or approximately 6,000 members, an average of 5.2 persons to the family. By 1824 the former colony had 40 villages, the latter 18; by 1860 the one had increased to 60, whereas the other had remained at 18. These 78 villages contained about 6,000 families, or about 36,000 people. The increase had been five-fold in 70 years.

## Chapter V.

## Life in Russia.

## 1. The Special Charter.

When the first settlers had been induced to come Russia they had received a promise of a special charter embodying all their special priveleges. Upon this verbal promise the first settlement was made in 188-89. It was not until 1798 that two deputies were sent to St. Petersburg to work for the charter. They were delayed two years at the Russian capitol, coming home in 1800 with the precious document in their possession. Its contents, in brief, are the following:

1. They were to be permitted to follow their own religious teachings undisturbed and should not be called upon to render an oath in case of litigation, but affirmation should be sufficient.
2. Every family should receive 65 desj. (180 acres) and have it forever. Sale or deeding it to a stranger could be done only upon express permission from proper authorities.
3. Freedom of trade and the right to build factories anywhere in the empire and also the right to join any trade guilds of the country.
4. The special right to brew beer, vinegar and brandy or whisky on their lands, as well as the sale thereof.
5. No stranger should have the right to erect a saloon upon any land of the Mennonites without their permission.
6. They were assured that neither they nor their followers

nor their offspring would be asked to do military or civil service without their consent.

7. Freedom from military garrisoning and work for the crown, but the duty to keep their bridges and roads in good order.
8. The land bot from private sources could be dealt with as the Mennonites pleased. In cases of inheritance and the care of the orphans they could follow their own rules.
9. They should be free from 10 to 15 years from all imperial taxes on account of their poverty.
10. All civil and military authorities, as well as the courts, were commanded to respect these special rights and to lesse<sup>r</sup> them in any way.

This "Privelegium", as it was known among the Mennonites was confirmed by succeeding emperors and thus they were protected from interferences by the government.

## 2. The Mir, or Village System.

The Mennonites settled in villages of from 13 to 50 families. A wide street ran thru the village, preferably from east to west and on both sides of this road were the houses located. Each house stood a little back from the street to allow for the trees and flower beds which were very common among these people. The barn was generally an extension of the house so that the whole structure was under one roof. The long side of this house-barn generally faced the street. Behind this were the lesser buildings, such as the needs

of each individual family would require. The piece of land connected with the dwelling place was small, containing about 8 acres.

Farther away from the village was the land "complex" of the village. Each family had its assigned 65 desj. and could always farm it. The distance of the land was never very great for the owners, but later on when the proletariat arose these had to drive as far as 12 miles to their fields. These had their land allotted each year and could not have their fields together. One piece of land would be given over to rye one year and each man had to put in his share of that grain. The next field was perhaps given over to oats and was under the same regulations.

In the center of the village was a great building, the village magazine. Each farmer had to make a report when the harvest was over and contribute a certain part to this magazine to provide for the poor of the village and also to have supplies for the village in hard times. The poor received the food gratis but were expected to work for it when they could and thus make a small return. The church was located near the center of the village, surrounded by beautiful shade trees. Sometimes several villages had one church together. The villages were from  $\frac{1}{2}$  to five werst (  $\frac{2}{3}$  to 3 miles ) apart. This gave many opportunities for social intercourse. Generally there was some sort of village rivalry and fights, jokes, etc. were not uncommon.

### 3. Mennonite Government.

The Mennonites had almost complete local autonomy. Only 3 officers were appointed by the crown minister from among the Mennonites, all the others were elected by the villagers themselves. At the head of the village was the "Schulz" or chief magistrate who generally had an assistant or two. He was appointed annually by the crown minister. He was mayor, justice of the peace, treasurer, paid the village teacher, the village herdsman, whipped criminals with the knout and performed other executive and judicial duties. Whenever something of importance arose he called the landowners together and discussed the matter with them. When some young fellow had committed a misdemeanor the Schulz decided what the punishment should be, whether prison, the knout or a fine. Such punishment with the knout was kept strictly secret so that no one in the village might know that So-and-So had been treated with the famous Russian knout. Above the village was the "Oberschulz", the chief magistrate of all the villages to whom all these men were directly responsible, and he in turn was responsible to the minister of the colonies and the interior.

When the Mennonites first came to Russia, being altogether unaccustomed to having the government in their own hands, this local autonomy caused a dispute at once. It was beyond the comprehension of many how "brethren" could "reign" over brethren in the sense that the "world" does. They believed the only way was the one of the church which they had followed for so

many years. Yet there were so many among the first settlers who needed thoro disciplining, even with the knout, that it did not take long until it was evident that only such a government could hope to maintain peace even among "brethren". This system has remained practically unaltered until today.

#### 4. Economic Development.

The first settlers were very poor and had a very difficult time to get a foothold on the land, but the second colony had many men of great wealth and this made such sufferings as the first colony had endured quite impossible. The territory upon which the Mennonites settled was a barren prairie, with no timber except along the rivers, with shallow, stony soil and with water deep underground. All this made it difficult in the rigorous climate of the country to prosper in the early years. Hard times were also caused by a failure of crops in the early years so that the imperial government had to help considerably.

The early agricultural tools which the settlers brot along were of a rather primitive type compared with our modern machinery of today. They still had the wooden plow, the wooden harrow, great heavy wagons with hubs 24 inches long, wide tireless fallows, wheels that could stand the wear and tear of a generation, even tho they turned on wooden axles. It was next to the impossible to turn around with those clumsy wagons. They could be lengthened out so that an immense amount of grain could

be loaded on them. They made their coming known for miles in advance unless the owner had plenty of grease with him. In the early 20ties iron axled, steel tired wagons came into use, since the old ones refused to do service any longer.

Up to the 40ties many a farmer mowed his own grass and grain with a hand scythe, woman and children following in the field and helping. Everything was bound at once in sheaves since it was that that anything left over night was lost. Boys and girls often put the mown grain into little heaps and the father would put the scythe away and bind the sheaves and put them into shocks of 15 bundles each.

Threshing was done with a flail and by treading out with horses. The grain was hauled from the field into the big granary and then the long and tedious process of separating the grains from the hulls began. It took nearly all winter to thresh the wheat, barley, oats and rye. Often the barley stacks would remain until the spring sowing had been done, "and then bore good interest for the mice" as Isaac puts it in his "Molotschna Menn." Fanning machines did not come into use until the 40ties, and then only here and there, and rather poorly equipped. Often, after threshing a few days with horses a farmer would have to wait a week or more for a favorable wind to clean the grain from the loose hulls. During the same time the thresh stone, a large stone running on a heavy axle, and constructed with ridges, came into use and slowly

displaced the treading out with horses and the flail, but the scythe remained until the early 70ties when reapers came in. In the decade before this the "bugger plow" and the 3 and 4 sheared gang plows, home made, came into use and displaced the wooden implements. Later on these plows were manufactured in the factories of the Mennonites.

At an early date there was a small number of factories at various places in the settlements which later on expanded into large steam factories in which most of the implements of the settlers were made. There was also a good deal of commerce with the Russians and other neighboring people.

The man who did perhaps most to make the Mennonite settlements in Russia a success was a Mennonite by the name of John Cornies. He came to Russia in 1805 as a youth of 16 and soon showed his marked abilities. At 27 he was appointed a kind of agricultural supervisor of the Mennonites. In 1830 the Agricultural Association (Landwirtschaftlicher Verein) was organized and he became its lifelong president. The association soon adopted a very inclusive program of activity. Cornies passed regulations in regard to servants who were becoming numerous in the colony, superintended the neglected children of the villages, put idle persons, whether married or single, to work applying the knout occasionally to obstinate ones, introduced more cultural habits among the rude boors, worked toward the improvement of the general moral standards, required that all buildings and

fences around the homes should be covered with a coat of white paint, ruled that blacksmith shops should be located on the main street of the villages, caused water reservoirs to be built for the irrigation of the meadows, built watering places for the great village herds, did away with the festivities that had always been held at the end of each year when the officers of the village struck a balance for the year and then celebrated the event in a hilarious fashion. Thus this great and strict man worked for 18 years and when he died in 1848 he left a permanent monument behind him in the form of beautiful villages, hundreds of streets lined with shade trees, and a general improvement in all lines. He insisted that the Mennonites should be a real example of thrift and industry to the neighboring Tartars as the Russian emperor wished them to be. He had many strong enemies who tried in various ways to have him removed from office, but he had the confidence of the government so completely that all these attempts failed. His influence extended far beyond the limits of the German settlements. He was also a supervisor and an advisor of the Nogaiens who lived in the neighborhood. When he died the storm broke loose.

##### 5. Class Struggle and Landdivision.

That a class struggle should take place among so religious a people as the Mennonites seems strange, but it is a fact. The reasons for this were several in number. After 1820 those who

could not pay traveling expenses were not allowed by the Russian government to come in any longer. As a result of this ruling the Mennonite churches of Prussia found it cheaper to give poor families enuf money to emigrate to Russia than to support them. In this way the weak settlements in Russia soon had a proletariat in their midst that could not be placed in any separate settlement on account of their poverty. Another reason was the rapid natural increase of the people, the population rising from 6,000 to 30,000 in less than 70 years. Connected with this was the failure to divide the land properly and in time, and the ignorance of the people in general that the land held by the Mennonite land barons was the property of all of them.

The early families had all acquired land without difficulty and the unoccupied land around each village had been rented to the wealthy who paid a pittance of about  $2/3$  cents an acre. When the families increased faster than they were taken care of by settlement in new villages the holders of full farms sold small patches of about  $1\ 1/2$  acres each to these poor people and there they built their homes and made a living as laborers or renters. During all this time the wealthy were holding the land which really belonged to the villages, still paying the pittance of former years and then renting the land out for \$1 to \$1.33 an acre to the poor.

Thus long before 1860 the problem of the landless

proletariat had become very acute. The 450,000 acres of crown-land were directly or indirectly in the possession of less than 1/3 of all families and this third deprived the landless majority of all such privileges with all the means and energies of a ruling class. Thus says Friesen in his "Gesch. d. Alt-Evang. Br. in Russland" : "The differences of these classes, the related with one another thru the closest ties of religion and blood relationship, where father and son, brother and brother, preacher and church member often opposed one another, whichever way fate had placed them, finally degenerated into a regular class hatred, playing itself out in the most pathetic way in the 60ties, 70ties and 80ties, but which also disappeared more or less thru the final landassignment and repeated emigrations to private or to village tracts which the mother colonies acquired!"

As long as Cornies lived the poor had been taken care of, altho not quite adequately. When he died and the men who had worked with him, the wealthy got control of the Agricultural Association. By this time, 1848, the Association had also control of the school system and otherwise exercised wide control. The president of the Association, Peter Schmidt, was of the wealthy class and worked very willingly against landdivision. He was very strongly opposed to giving the poor people any land at all. He had rented a large tract from the village plat at <sup>the</sup> rate of 1/3 cent an acre and charged these landless people \$1 or more for it, a profit of between 30,000% and

40,000%, " a rather comfortable income to live thus from the sweat of the poor", as Isaac puts it in his "Molotschnaer Menn." The chief magistrate of the district (Gebietsvorsteher) was David Friesen, also of the wealthy class. He was in office from 1848 to 1865. When the proletariat began to demand land he called them agitators and peace disturbers. Isaac claims that it was Friesen's intention to reduce the landless people to the condition of serfs, of which Russia had millions at that time. He argued that day laborers would be too scarce and high priced to the landowners if these people were permitted to own land.

In december of 1863 the agitation for land began in earnest. H. P. Wiebe, corresponding secretary of the "Learned Council of the Empire" petitioned the Guardianship Committee (Fuersorge Komitee) in behalf of these poor people. The inspector created a commission consisting of two representatives of the landless class from each colony to meet and formulate their demands. They met and issued a petition asking for land and telling of their wretched condition. They soon found out that they had a right to the village lands in the possession of the wealthy as well as the rights of citizens. The land in question had been due for distribution long ago. Heretofore only property owners of 65 desj. had the right to vote on municipal and civil affairs. This state of classes was altogether contrary to what the government had intended for the settlers. The

agitation lasted for several years. During the process David Friesen was deposed from the chief magistracy for irregularities in office and the way cleared for action. The propertied class, with the full knowledge of Friesen before he was deposed, sent two blacklist petitions to the imperial government in which the landless class was branded as agitators. This had no success, however. Wiebe was finally successful and a settlement arrived at. Those who owned a small place and were not in poverty thru their own fault could take up land. The land heretofore held by the land barons was surveyed and divided into half and quarter farms. They could retain their homes and farm the land at a distance. This ranged all the way from 6 to 12 miles. Often the land of a village was in several tracts so that a man's fields would be in different directions from his home.

The result of this land division was good. The class hatred gradually died out and class distinctions became less prominent. Even so there are millionaires among the Mennonites who live on immense estates, have titles, hereditary or granted, and otherwise live on the style of the nobility. The poor did not disappear altogether, but the situation was relieved and the later emigration of 12,000 to 15,000 brot more favorable conditions. The harm had, however, been done, and Russia has thousands of poor Mennonites as a result besides the few hundred wealthy ones. It is also noteworthy that hardly any of these rich people emigrated to Ameirca.

## 6. Religious Life in Russia:

The Mennonites have always been a religious party and as such the religious feature has been the strongest among them. It has tinged their lives more or less thru all the centuries of their existence. The religious life of the Russian Mennonites does not reveal any great striking characteristics except that of continual separations into separate churches. The people that immigrated to Russia were of two types, one of which was more conservative than the other. Soon after settlement disputes arose and it came to a break, a characteristic of Mennonites the world over. The first separation occurred in 1812 and was completed by 1820. Those that branched off called themselves "Die Kleine Gemeinde" (Little Parish) and were noted for their extreme narrowness in ideas of dress, conduct and religious teachings. They were utterly opposed to education, read nothing but the Bible, were temperate in drinking, demanded strict observance of Sundays and were noted for their simplicity of dress. Thru the efforts of the big church these people were deprived of all the rights of an independent church until 1843 when the Russian government recognized it and commanded the local authorities to do the same.

Later on some more disagreements occurred within the big church and more divisions resulted. The greatest excitement, however, was caused in the latter 40ties and the middle 50ties when Pastor Wuest, A lutheran Separatist, came into the settlement and began to preach everywhere and to every one,

whether at church, in the home or behind the plow. He would insist that the person then and there make sure of his eternal welfare. As a result of his enthusiastic work a great revival swept the Lutheran and Mennonite settlements. At the same time looser elements came in. The religious excitement grew and passed beyond the control of reason. The movement that had promised so much began to show signs of excessive emotionalism. At the meetings the people went into wild ecstasy and finally all sorts of sensuality crept in. Pastor Wuest had been warned and requested several times to organize a regular church so that these forces would not go beyond reasonable bounds. This was his special duty since the greater number of converts were among the Lutherans. He refused at first and when he tried at a big conference to stem the tide of emotionalism he was declared fallen from grace by the extreme emotionalists who were glorying in their newly found freedom. He died shortly after in 1858 and the whole thing broke up into separate factions.

#### Origin of the Mennonite Brethren Church.

The most lasting monument of Wuest's influence is the present Mennonite Brethren Church which is represented both in Russia and America. Soon after W.'s death there were gatherings of people who did not any longer believe in the formalism of the old church. For, altho the Mennonites had prospered immensely financially their religious life had not kept pace with it, but had degenerated in vitality. John Cornies had made the

beginning in bringing civil authority to bear upon those who differed widely in their views with him or with those who were in power. After Cornies' death when Friesen became chief magistrate he made various use of his office to bring political influence to bear upon religious matters.

On the 6th of Jan., 1860, a band of 18 family heads met in the village of Rueckenau and declared themselves a separate body from the big church because of the loose living at trade days and festivals, fearing that they would lose the special priveleges if this went on much longer. They believed in the sacraments, the Holy Supper, washing of feet, choosing of leaders from among the congregation by majority vote and later on they decided upon immersion as the proper form of baptism. They met very strong opposition from an elder convent of seven members that existed at that time. Any religious body to have legal existence and have the right to hold meetings must have the recognition of the imperial government. This the elders tried to prevent by all means. Friesen had several arrested and thrown into prison for meeting "secretly in their homes". It was but a furtherance of the spirit which Cornies had brot in and which seems to go very well with all puritanic sects, namely that of extreme narrowness and intolerance toward others. These newly separated people soon received the name of "jumpers" (Huepfer) for their demonstrations at the meetings. They would shout for joy, go into ecstasy, dance, lay the tamborine, and in other foolish ways manifest their

great "happiness in Christ". It was quite natural that some opposition should occur to such behavior. After several years of struggle and agitation the church was recognized by the government and its existence assured.

This , however, did not do away with the emotionalism. The tendency to utter "freedom" was checked by some scandalous behavior of a few members in the early part of 1862. Soon this spirit manifested itself in a sort of spiritual tyranny of a few. The real leaders had very little to say. Two of the foremost of this "strong" element indulged in all sorts of wild spiritual excesses. They used the ban freely and extensively. One of these men, W., would ban the other, B., and B. in turn would ban W., thus giving one another over to the "devil", according to St. Paul. Or, if they did agree between themselves they would excommunicate other members in the different villages who did not abide by their decisions or did not agree with them. Thus it came about that at one time over half were wither excommunicated or under the ban. This mad behavior in the latter part of 1864 and the early part of '65 is known as the "mad time". The more sensible men got together and denounced such wild\* fire activity. Accordingly, they met at a conference on June 27, 1865, formulated a protocoll and organized the church properly. All the high handed actions of a few irresponsible leaders were repudiated, the excommunicated received unconditionally, the wild leaders forced to apologize for their actions and the real leaders restricted in their activity so

that they could carry out only those measures which the congregation would vote to have done. All dancing, tamborining, shouting and excessive emotionalism which had caused so much disgust among decent people, was to cease and members of other churches were to be greeted with friendliness and not as outcasts as it had been done formerly. Thus after five years of storm and unrest the church entered upon a different career.

The effect of the June protocoll was greater than its mild wording would indicate. A reaction against emotionalism and instrumental music set in which has continued until today. During all this time of unrest the membership had increased continually so that from now on the personnel of the church became very different from what it had been before. Many came over from the old church, but at the same time they brot with them the old ideas of narrowness and intolerance. This narrowness showed itself in the following years especially in regard to musical instruments in the church and social intercourse among the young people of both sexes.

The religious life of the Russian Mennonites is thus marked by a tinge of intolerance, shown in the persecutions which the members of the various new churches experienced. In turn each new church was a little narrower than its mother church had been so that there was an all around occasion for misunderstanding. Each believed that it had THE correct way to get to the promised land.

## 7. Education in Russia.

In the early period when the people had to use all their efforts to make a living education received very little attention. In fact, there were no places where school could be taught nor any teachers for the children, so that the first generation received all of its schooling from their mothers. The Dutch Mennonites who emigrated to Prussia were well educated but education had fallen off in Prussia, and now in Russia the pioneer period was still more unfavorable to it. After some time little school houses were built, but there were no teachers. We can best illustrate the condition of the early schools by quoting from Isaac's "Molotschnaer Mennoniten": "But where were teachers to be obtained? There were none. The people had to help themselves the best they could. People were found to oversee such a profession, even though they really had no intellectual attainments according to present day ideas. If an invalid, no matter of what religious confession or how unfit for any physical work, could be found who was looking for his bread, if he could write legibly he was made the schoolmaster. A very different measure of a man was applied then than we do today. This had its reason not only in the fact that teaching was regarded as a low profession but also in the scarcity of men who came up to the standards of even that time. Whenever one was found who could read intelligently, could write quite legibly and perhaps knew also the four fundamental operations in arithmetic they were more than satisfied, in fact had to be.

That a school master needed any vigor of body or mind was at that time not generally comprehended. Old craftsmen who plied a trade on the side, not only after but also during school hours were the teachers. The joiner's bench stood beside the school desk at which the pupils sat. If a tailor was teacher the pupils had to make room for him at the upper end, since the teacher could observe from there even during his work whether they were keeping their eyes on their books steadily. And why shouldn't a school master ply a trade? They had to have something to do for a diversion, because they need only see to it that the children kept their eyes on the books continually and sat very quietly during their study period. And if the children were not willing to submit then the rod, kneeling upon peas, or the suspending of a board with a big ear drawn upon it (Langohr) did the necessary thing. Sometimes a man could not be found and then the children were sent to some old mother that they might learn the alphabet, and if possible a little more....Not only during the first years but for more than a quarter of a century the pupils were supplied with various kinds of books. One had a Mennonite Catechism, another a Lutheran, a third had a book of the gospels, etc. The school desk was generally two feet wide and as long as the room would permit. The boys sat on one side of it and the girls on the other while the teacher had the upper end. Each child after it had learned its lesson or had sat for a while had to come to the teacher and recite. Naturally the recitations were poor, and so it was nothing

uncommon that the child received a parting blow as it left the teacher. Many a pupil went to the teacher with fear and trembling." (pp. 273-4, translated freely)

Slowly better teachers took the place of these would-be teachers, and finally a preparatory school for teachers was opened. This work grew into greater proportions under the supervision of Cornies. The three pioneers of the Mennonite schools who achieved lasting fame were Tobias Voth I., Henry Heese, and Henry Franz I. These men gave the Russian Mennonite school system the stamp of idealism and piety. By the time of the middle 70ties there were a number of Central Schools very similar to the German Gymnasiums, and the teachers of these schools were Mennonites with university training.

## Chapter VI

## Social Life and Customs in Russia.

That Mennonite social life must have some aspects different from those of other people may well be expected. In this respect it might be well to quote some other authors besides Mennonites. Two Germans, Reiswitz and Wadsweck writing about 1820 give the following of the Mennonites: " It is rather difficult to give a general opinion of the character of a religious party so widely distributed and living among so many different nations as the Mennonites do. Yet it is clear that the peculiarities of the nations among which the Mennonites live must have some influence upon their customs and manners, so that the customs of the Russian Mennonites must be different from those of American and Swiss Mennonites, altho they may agree in doctrines of faith. In general it may be said that they have received favorable criticisms in early times. The Dutch ambassador in France in the 18. century said that they were the most honest and pleasing people of the world. They did not run after any offices of honor, nor need anyone fear a revolution from a sect which had for one of its articles of faith the one forbidding the bearing of arms. They paid all their taxes to the state and gave their neighbors a good example by their customs. They were strong patrons of art and trade and did not waste their inheritance or their acquired property. They never swore an oath, but that was so much better since the dignity of the court did not suffer any by this. They felt them-

selves obligated thru their promise to speak the truth as tho they had given an oath..... It is but natural that the teaching to avoid all vengeance, of subordination and obedience to church dignitaries and the entire parish, connected with their strict piety, their simple affirmation of the truth and their original simplicity and temperate habits must give the character of the individual Mennonite a peculiar gentleness and meekness. But also the treatment from their neighbors and the officials must have had a deciding influence upon the traits of their character, as some claim to have noticed. Thus some claim that the Mennonite is cunning, slow, reserved and distrustful. In older times the Mennonites were hated and shunned a great deal and thru that forced to rely upon themselves. The fear in which they were continuously held thus forced them to be cautious and deliberate. Their manners are simple and crimes and suicides are very rare among them. Simplicity, order, almost painful cleanliness and an absence of play and all noisy diversions are the principal characteristics of their family circle. In respect to progress in agriculture the Mennonites have not been equaled."

The different countries in which the Mennonites have lived have given the different branches different customs. The learning and art which they brot from Holland was all lost in Prussia and when they emigrated to Russia they underwent some more changes, altho these were not so great because of their practical isolation from outside influences.

The social life naturally centered in the village group.

The closeness of neighbors permitted a great deal of social intercourse. The neighboring villages were only a few miles away and that led to a great deal of friendly visiting as well as to rivalry. Occasionally the young<sup>men</sup> of one village went to the other to a dance which would often end up in a general fight. Or, if dances were not the occasion some boys might go for the express reason of picking a quarrel and then come home with bloody heads. The churches had their meetings in the forenoon only and then the afternoon was spent in singing, dancing and often<sup>times</sup> drinking. In some villages church attendance was required thru force of public opinion, in others it mattered less whether attendance was regular or not, just so the person led a clean moral life.

In the 50ties and 60ties when many of the Mennonites had become wealthy and had much land under cultivation they required a great number of helpers during the harvest time. The landless proletariat did not furnish a sufficient number of workers so that a large number of Russians were hired every year. For this purpose several men were sent to the neighboring Russian villages, preferably on Sunday. In this connection we might relate an incident which is supposed to be true. At a certain village one Sunday morning the preacher was giving out the hymn, saying "Lord God, we are all here" when one of the audience chimed in "and the rest are in Tokmack" ( a Russian village, hiring laborers). Wine and wodka (Russian whiskey) played an important part at harvest time. After harvest the

Russian laborers left for their homes again. Among many Mennonite families the hired hands and house servants ate at a special "servants' table" in the kitchen and many interesting stories are related concerning the treatment of servants. Many families, however, held their servants on a basis of social equality with themselves and permitted them to eat at the regular family table. The dismissal of a Russian servant always brot fear to the home, especially if the master and his servant had parted with hard feelings. Often robberies, fire or murder would result. The wealthy always employed, and still do, nightwatchmen to protect the home and yard. The thieveries of the Russians became rather bothersome at times. House and barn always had to be locked for the night. All windows were fastened securely before the family retired, not sure whether they would <sup>see</sup> wake up the next morning.

Children did not always have a rosy time of it either. The industry of the Mennonites is well known, but in this their little children often had to bear a heavy burden. Natural parents generally treated their children with kindness, altho they exacted a good deal of work from them, except the wealthy, but the children who lost their parents had a hard time. Many an old man has told the writer of his hard time as a small boy, when he had to rise at 4 a.m. in midwinter and do a lot of work, get poor food and then run to school at the last minute. Some boys had to work for food and clothing until they were 16, and then the things were given only grudgingly. The writer does not

mean to say that all foster children were treated in this way, but from all information that he was able to get the above seems to be the correct one. Step-children received a somewhat better treatment, varying with the different families.

The moral standard was everywhere the same for both sexes and pretty well lived up to. Anyone who committed an indiscretion was looked down upon, altho not entirely unforgivingly in case he reformed. Still, the stain went thru life and was a serious handicap in rising to any position of influence. The association of the young men and young women was quite free from restrictions. The striking characteristic about it was that friendships between young men and young women were not for the mere sake of friendship but always had possible matrimony as the ultimate end. Consequently the number of friendships between the youth was limited. The general opinion was that a friendship of this kind was only permissible if it ended in marriage, and that friendship without "love" was quite unthinkable.

The family was regarded as a divine institution, beginning with the presentation of Eve to Adam. It was a holy relation and anyone entering it could not willfully leave it without committing a gross wrong against God and perhaps cutting himself off from eternal happiness. Family life consequently was on a high plane. The husband was the head of the family, according to the teachings of St. Paul, and the wife his helpmate. No matter how they would get along with one another they

would not think of divorce nor even ask for it. A couple might separate for the time being but it would not break the ties by divorce even tho the separation proved lifelong. The families were on the average very large. The number of children per family was high with a high deathrate. Children were regarded as a gift of God, but their economic value was by no means lost sight of. Courtship never lasted very long. Generally the parents of the suitor or some other friend would speak for the young man. If the girl ~~was~~ reluctant in giving her consent she was often persuaded or sometimes even forced to accept the suitor, especially if he came from a wealthy family. The gen<sup>e</sup>ral policy was to "keep the property in the family" and as a result in some villages almost everyone was related to everybody else. This tended to increase the number of feebleminded and those of low mentality. By the above method young people were often married who had none of the qualities to form a reasonably happy union. In many families a troubled life was the result, but in others the wife, or sometimes the husband, submitted and accepted the lot as best they could. Sometimes such family life ended in the insane asylum or in suicide. Still, with the religious training of the home, with special emphasis upon Paul's teachings, the Mennonite family life was comparatively happy. "What God hath united let no man put asunder" was the central idea of this training. Weddings were preferably on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Generally a great number of people were invited and a social time enjoyed. The evening before the wedding the

young people would meet and enjoy a social time at the home of the bride. The rougher element would often express itself in the form of charivari. After the ceremony was over in the afternoon, singing, dancing and eating would fill the rest of the evening. The outdoor performance of the evening before was often reinstated with greater force. A certain amount of property was always given to the bride and groom from both parents. Among the wealthier this might be in the form of a home and land, among the poorer it consisted of some household articles or other movable property. Generally the young couple lived with one of the parents for a year or two and then "moved out" and others would perhaps take their place.

In the early years the village teacher was not exempt from acting as night herdsman in case he was not able to hire some one to take his place when his turn came. Thus Tobias Voth writes in his notes: "Sometimes the cattle ~~the cattle~~ of the village must be watered at the River Muschanlee. This several times a year devolves upon me. Also the herding of the horses at night as well as riding over the steppes to keep off strange cattle comes to be my turn several times a year. Since day-labourers are scarce up here I am not able to get anyone and then I get into such difficulties each time that my stay up here becomes very unpleasant." ( Friesen, Besch. d. A. u. E. M. in R.)

Doctors were scarce and house remedies were chiefly relied upon. There was a great distrust of educated doctors,

especially about their ability to set bones, a distrust which is still prevalent among the Mennonites who have lived in America for 38 years.

During the Crimean War of 1853-55 the Mennonites rendered great services to the Russian army by hauling food and war material to the seat of war and taking wounded soldiers back into their villages. The village magazines were turned into hospitals and several hundred Russian soldiers were nursed back to health. They did everything free of charge, asking only for medicine, nurses and doctors. Among Mennonites this time is known as the "Podwod tied". When the government offered to pay for the services they declined it upon the ground that they had only fulfilled their duty toward their government. As a recognition of this service the Emperor Alexander II? gave them several medals and documents of honor.

PART II

Life and Americanization  
of  
Russian Mennonites  
in  
Central Kansas.

Section I. Emigration to, and Settlement in  
America.

Chapter I. Introduction.

We have now shown the origin of the Mennonites, described their migrations, customs and beliefs and traced the development of their social life in Russia from 1788 to 1870. We shall now in Part II attempt to trace their social development in a new environment. We shall discuss the causes for emigration and then take three small communities of Marion County, Kans., and try to show their social development. The communities are only divided for the sake of treatment and according to the church which is dominant in each community. The territory is contiguous and in time the whole will form one closed community. The first of these, Gnadenau (Valley of Mercy) is located in Liberty Township, about 3 miles southeast of Hillsboro. The second, Ebenfeld (Level Field), is about two and a half miles south of the Gnadenau village. Our thesis will deal mainly with these two. The third and last is the one scattered around Hillsboro. The church at Ebenfeld is a branch of the same Conference and is practically the same in most respects, only it is older. The Mennonite Brethren Church (M. B. C.) is represented at Ebenfeld and Hillsboro. We have discussed its origin in Russia, in chapter V. The other church, The Crimean Mennonite Brethren, (C. M. B. C. Or simply C. C.) is represented at Gnadenau and is closely related to the first, as will be evident from the following pages.

We shall attempt to trace the rise and development of

association and show how Americanization has begun and is still going on in the religious, economic, political, cultural and social activities. We shall try to show how the process of Americanization is broadening out and changing some of the fundamental teachings of the Mennonites. The community we have chosen for our study is the most conservative of all the Mennonite settlements in Kansas.

The land upon which these people located is in the western part of Marion County, in the central part of the state of Kans. A branch of the Santa Fe rail road from Florence to Ellinwood goes thru the north part of the community. Several small streams wind thru the southern part, giving the land a rolling effect. The soil is mostly of a rich black loam, very good for wheat, but not quite so well adapted for corn. Water is found at various depths, from 20 to 70 feet, depending upon the location. It is generally hard on account of the underlying lime stone beds. The grass is said to have been almost three feet high when the settlers came in 1874 and '76. There were no trees anywhere except a few along the creeks. The whole country was a wild prairie in 1874, only here and there a settler's cabin breaking the monotony. The nearest towns were Marion, the county seat, about 10 miles east, and Peabody, about 14 miles south east. Hillsboro, 3 miles north of Gnadenau, sprang up in 1879 when the rail road was built.

## Chapter II. Emigration to America.

## 1. Causes and Steps.

In the latter part of 1870 the Russian government proposed to pass a general military law which would require military service of every nationality and every social class in the empire. The Mennonites heard of this change in the latter part of '70 and the early part of '71. According to Russian Mennonite authors the news came thru the newspapers, but these were very scarce at that time. According to American sources the first news came thru Consul Cornelius Jansen of Berdjansk. According to the latter, Russia and Prussia came to the following agreement during the Franco-Prussian War: Russia, which was very friendly to France agreed to remain neutral if Prussia would give up her guardianship of the three million German in Russia. To this Bismark made the counter demand that Russia give the settlers a ten year period during which they could leave Russia if they did not want to do military service. Russian sources do not mention this, but simply say that Alexander wished to extend military service to all classes of the empire. The ten year period, however, which the Germans received seems to corroborate the statement of American sources.

The proposed change caused great excitement among the Mennonites. They had been promised and it had been confirmed by succeeding emperors that their special priveleges were to be perpetual. Such news caused a rude awakening. Meetings were held at once and in the early part of 1871 several men delegated

to go to the imperial government and plead for further gracious suffrance and stipulation by law of the freedom from military service. The hatred of a few years ago, the narrowness and religious intolerance seemed all to have been forgotten. The men went to the governor-general and he intimated that they might be left free from direct military service, but not from sanitation and hospital service. They received a friendly reception from senators Hahn and Gerngrosz, the latter of whom was assistant to the minister of war and also a member of the commission drafting the new military law. The net result of ~~the~~ this deputation was that they were given to understand that the present generation would not be called upon to do such service but the next would, perhaps by 1894. The new law was not to go into effect until 1874.

A year later a second deputation went to St. Petersburg, but they learned nothing new except the striking news that the government was very well informed as to the activities of the Mennonites in regard to emigration. They resented the charge that they were trying to get better conditions than they were enjoying. As to emigration efforts, however, they said that such action was not the work of the settlements as a whole but that of individuals. A third and fourth deputation followed, but neither one was successful. In 1873 a fifth and last deputation was sent upon the request of senator Hahn, but it had no visible success. The law had been confirmed by the emperor and read as follows: "The Mennonites who are called in for

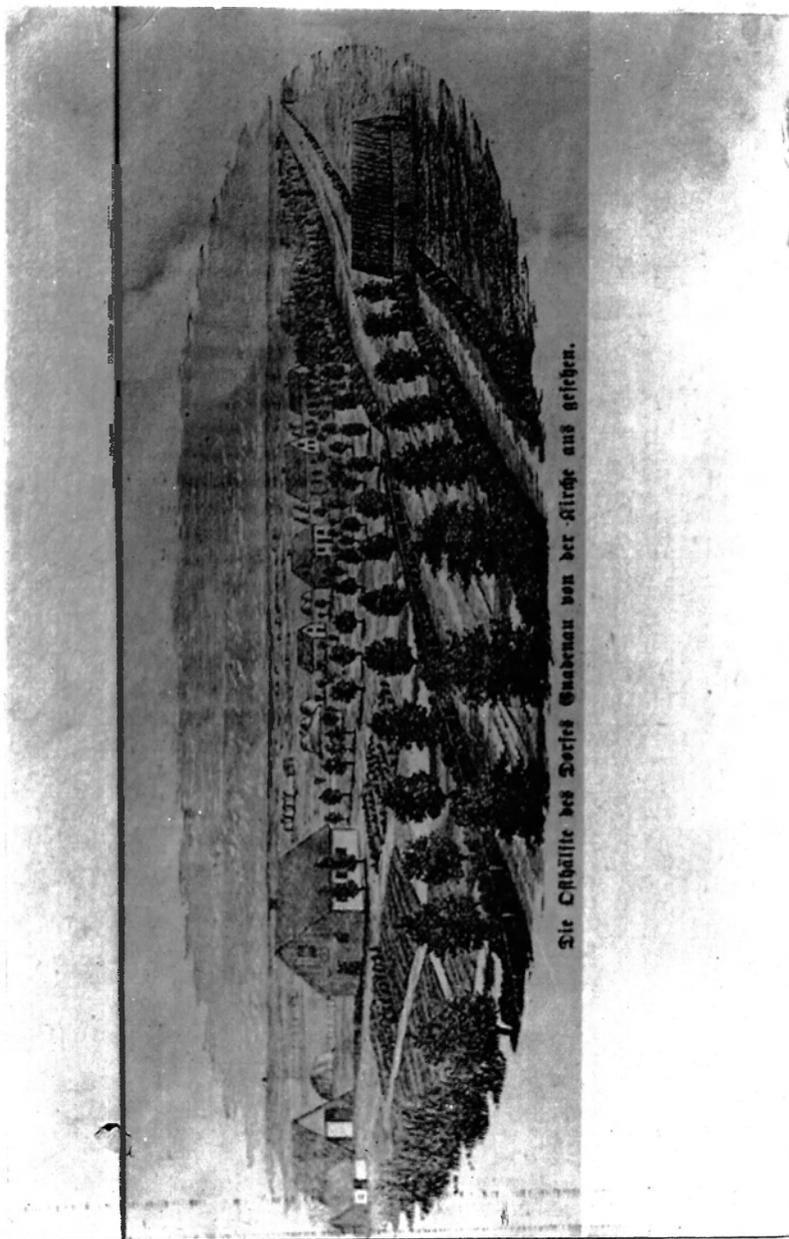
military service will not be employed at the front but only in hospitals and military workshops or similar establishments and are exempt from bearing arms. But this rule does not apply to such Mennonites who join the sect after the publication of the law concerning the general military service, nor those who immigrate from a foreign country." (Isaac, Molotsch. Menn. p. 302).

Meanwhile the Mennonites were considering the question of emigrating to another country. A committee of 12 was sent to Asia and America ~~and~~ <sup>to</sup> look for a suitable place for settlement. Asia was not suited for the purpose so they directed their attention to America. They made a survey of the country from Manitoba, Canada, to Texas. They found favorable soil in Manitoba, Minnesota, Nebraska and Kansas, of which the land in Marion, McPherson, Reno, Harvey and Butler counties, Kansas was preferred. They went home and reported the results to their respective villages. As a result the emigration fever seized a great many people.

## 2. Russian Efforts to Prevent Emigration.

A direct result of these efforts toward emigration and the petitions of the various deputies was the appointment and sending of a special confidant of the emperor, General Adjutant Totleben, in the early part of 1874. He was well known among the Germans and well liked. He called the civil and religious authorities of the Mennonites together and explained that he had come on a special mission to assure them of the emperor's

Plate I.



Die Ortschaft des Dorfes Gnadenuau von der Kirche aus gesehen.

East Half of Gnadenuau Village  
About 1878.

good will toward them. He said the emperor would deal tenderly with their conscience and their faith to keep them if possible from emigrating to America. They should be exempt even from indirect military service and would be required to do only such service as would not be contrary to their faith. They could keep the young men together in one or two places and have their own spiritual advisor. They were to have a special position in the state and would not be under the Minister of War. The Mennonites were to have the direction of their schools as heretofore and should educate their children as Christians. They had rendered valuable service in the Crimean War and that could not be forgotten. Then Tottleben pictured the danger of war in America and the necessity of military service on account of the scarcity of people. He also pointed out the kindness with which they had been treated and that they could not expect to find a better place than Russia.

The effect of Tottleben's visit and talks was a great change in the attitude of the Mennonites. A circular of thanks was sent to the emperor thru Tottleben in which they assured him of their allegiance. In most of the villages the people were instructed by their leaders to have faith in the imperial word, so that many of the leading men who had been in favor of emigration now began to work against it. A number of leaders, however, could not be won over to this viewpoint. Among these were Leonard Suderman, speaker of the first deputation, Isaac

Peters, Jacob Buhler, Diedrich Gaeddert, Henry Richert, Consul Jansen and Jacob A. Wiebe, all of whom were conservative men.

The Mennonites offered to do service in forestry in South Russia, since they thought they could do this most efficiently. This was accepted by the imperial government, confirmed in 1875 and published a few months later. The law then read: "The Mennonites are exempt from bearing arms and ... render ... service in workshops of the marine service, in the fire department, and in special mobile commands of the forest reserve according to special rules. This does not cover such Mennonites who have joined the sect after 1875 or who have immigrated from abroad". (Friesen, Gesch. d. A.-E. M. Br. in R.) According to this the first reserves were called out in 1880. In spite of this liberality of the imperial government the emigration began. Still it had the effect that less than a third of the Mennonites went to America, whereas they would have <sup>left</sup> almost entirely en masse.

### 3. Immigration Efforts of the Santa Fe.

In 1872 the Santa Fe rail road appointed C. B. Schmidt of Lawrence, Kansas, as head of its immigration department. Schmidt had come to America in 1864, had married in St. Louis, and come to Lawrence at the beginning of the 70ties. At this time the committee of 12 from Russia came over and inspected the land. Schmidt showed them the land in central Kansas and gave them strong inducements to settle in Marion, McPherson, Harvey, Reno and Butler counties. In 1874 Schmidt was ordered to make a trip to Russia right into the heart of the Mennonite settlements. The company was careful to fit him out with the right papers, passport, etc. so that in case of trouble he might call upon this government. He reached Russia in the early winter of '74 and stayed several months. He first went to Consul Claassen and told him of his mission. Claassen, however, standing high in the estimation of the government was rather conservative and uncommunicative and intimated that the people were not thinking of emigration. Schmidt saw he had struck the wrong man. So the next morning he told Claassen that he had a few letters to deliver in several villages and that he would depart for America after that. On the way to the next village he inquired of the driver concerning the emigration to America and this man was full of it. He told S. that there was great excitement and that many were going to leave Russia. Upon hearing this S. laid his plans carefully so that he would touch most of the Mennonite villages. He visited 56 villages giving speeches and describing

the land and the conditions of settlement. During the winter some four hundred families, 1900 people, left Russia as a direct result of this trip while S. continued his work. At various villages he was told that Russian officers were on his heels. One night he had to make a drive of some 60 miles in a lumber wagon while the temperature was around zero and the ground covered with several feet of snow. In one of the villages he met the magistrate who happened to have a son in America. He told this man Warkentin of his flight before the officers. "Your flight ends right here", said W., "no Russian officer is going to arrest you under my roof." Upon W.'s word Schmidt discontinued his flight, turned back and completed his trip. Shortly before this letters had gone to America stating that Schmidt was being pursued by the government and that he was fleeing. In America this was interpreted to mean, and later letters confirmed it, that Schmidt had been arrested and sent to Siberia. The company caused the U. S. government to demand his freedom at once. He returned to America in the spring of 1875, having won the name of "Moses of the Mennonites".

Consul Jansen who had advocated emigration rather strongly was expelled from Russia the year before Schmidt came and his property sold at ridiculously low prices. His family followed soon after and located in Nebraska where his son Peter Jansen rose to national prominence.

The four hundred families mentioned above arrived in Topeka, Kansas, in the early part of 1875. They remained at

the Santa Fe shops for ever a month. In their peculiar dress and with their strange tongue they were quite a novelty to the people of Topeka. They brot with them their little green wagons various household articles and \$2,000,000 in gold( according to F. W. Blackear's Hist: of Kans.). It was just the year of the grasshoppers and farmers as far as a hundred miles away came to Topeka to sell their horses and cattle to these Menno- nites since they were too poor to feed them. The governor gave a reception to these immigrants and they were impressed very greatly with his kindness. They were shown thru the state house and treated with great kindness. They bot sixty thousand acres of railroad land in central Kansas and settled on it in the spring of 1875. More immigrants continued to ar- rive for several years. Whole parishes came over and settled largely, tho not entirely, on the old village plan. In Marion county they settled Gnadenau (valley of mercy), Hoffnungstal ( hope valley), New Alexanderwohl (new Alexander's health), Hochfeld (high field), Steinbach (stony brook), Gruenfeld; in McPherson county they settled Sparta, Hoffnungsau (valley of hope), Ebenezer, Hebron, Zoar and other ~~other~~ communities. Some of these extended into Harvey and Reno counties. It is esti- mated that by 1883, ten years after the immigration began about 15,000 Mennonites had come from Russia, settling in Kansas, Nebraska, Minnesota and Manitoba. Even then this number com- prised less than one third of all Mennonites in Russia, so that the main body of Russian Mennonites is still on the other side of the ocean.

## Chapter III. The Gnadenau Village.

As we stated on page 29 the Kleine Gemeinde separated from the general Mennonite church in 1812 and formed a parish of its own. These people were very narrow, almost harsh along religious educational and social lives. As the years went by this church became more or less disrupted and a small body of its remnant moved to the Crimea about 1866 under the leadership of J. A. Wiebe. Altho the soil is very rich they had several crop failures during the first years and this brot the poor people to the starvation point. In addition to this the region was infested with little poisonous spiders. Their sting was almost always fatal. Death occurred within three days. All this caused a religious revival to break out, and as if in answer to their prayers heavy crops followed and soon most of the people were fairly prosperous. The Tartars were causing less trouble and all seemed to go well when the news of the proposed change of the military law became known. The whole body of settlers consisting of several villages decided to emigrate to America. Their property was sold at a very heavy loss since there were no buyers and the Tartars were not in a position to buy it.

About thirty five families came over under the leadership of J. A. Wiebe in 1874. After many difficulties on ship and in New York they arrived in Elkhart, Indiana. Here they left their families and sent a number of men to Kansas to look for a suitable location. They decided upon Marion County, Liberty Township.

They bot twelve sections of this rolling prairie land at \$3 an acre. The land belonging to the railroad was in alternate sections. As far as the eye could see there was nothing but tall grass and rolling prairie. Buffaloes and antelopes had not disappeared altogether and even a deer was seen by some of the settlers. Only here and there was a small cabin to be seen.

Upon the return of the committee to Elkhart the whole body of immigrants took train to Peabody, Kans. From here they were hauled over land to the present site of Gnadenu. On Aug. 17, 1874 the first settlement was made on section 11, Liberty Township. Section 1, 3, 13 and 15 were to belong to the village. Later settlers took the sections a little farther south and west. Section 11 was divided in the middle from east to west by a broad street. This was to be the main street of the village. The land on each side of this street was divided into twenty strips containing sixteen acres each. These strips were numbered from the west to the center and from the east to the center, thus making ten strips on each side of the road for each half of the village. The land on the other four sections was likewise divided into twenty strips, each containing 32 acres and numbered in the same order as those in the village. Thus number 1 on the north side of the street in the east half of the village was to have strips number 1 in section 1. Number 2 on the same side of the street and same half of the village had strips number 2 in section 1. Again number 5 on the north side west half of the village was to have strips no. 5

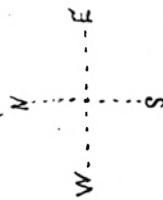


Plate II.

|                                 |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |                                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|----|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|----|-----|--|
| 3                               | 9                 | 10 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 1                                     | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 109 |  |
| 10                              | Blacksmith's Shop |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Blacksmith's Shop                     |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| School West half of Dist.       |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 1st English School East half of Dist. |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| 1882                            |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 1876-79                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| X Church                        |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | X Store                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| Homes J.A. Wier's place X Store |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Blacksmith Shop                       |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| Cottonwood Park                 |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 1874-76                               |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| Garden                          |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | Gnadenau (Valley of Grace)            |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| founded Aug. 17, 1874.          |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | by J.A. Wier.                         |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |
| 15                              |                   |    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   | 13                                    |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |    |     |  |

in section 3, so that when the distance of a farmer to his land was added and averaged up he would not be at a greater distance than anyone else.

The first settlement was made on the north side of the street. The people lived in tents, sod houses and in small wedge shaped buildings with nothing but a roof thatched with long prairie grass. A few who were better off built frame houses. A store was opened up on the south side of the street toward the center and later transferred to the north side of the street, but in either case it did not last long. The first store keeper was a Russian by the name of Dolgruky, a man fleeing from the Russian government. He was soon taken to the county seat for some kind of dishonesty or embezzlement and never returned. Another store opened up in 1876 about 1/4 of a mile to the south of the village as may be seen from Plate II. The church was on the south side of the street and was also of sod. The farm house was generally a little distance from the road and the barn and other buildings stood back of it. Between the house and the street there were flower beds of various kinds and sizes, and a small orchard to one side.

As we stated above the people that settled this village came from the strictest and most religious Mennonites, and after the religious awakening in Russia they were even more so. Religion became the dominating idea. Sunday meetings were in the forenoon, afternoon and evening. During the week prayer meetings were held in the different homes. No work of any kind was done

on Sunday. There was no dancing or drinking in the village. The church ban was not used as strictly as formerly, but anyone who did not live according to their standards was reproved and finally excommunicated if no improvement was shown. No one remained outside of the church very long, however, but soon came back. Baptism was by forward immersion, the candidate kneeling. It is said that the leading men baptized one another in Russia in the absence of ordained men and thus the church had a start. Mr. Wiebe was the leader, preacher and later elder. They called themselves the Crimean Mennonite Brethren. The religious services were of a simple impressive kind, no great oratory being displayed but a simple straight forward exhortation toward righteous living, faith and good works was made. Everywhere the Bible was the important book and every one was well read in it. Newspapers were not taken, and really could not on account of their poverty, distance from Russia and the dearth of German papers of a religious nature.

At the head of the village was the magistrate or "Schulz". Two other men helped him in the regulation of the village affairs. All disputes of any kind other than religious were settled by them. All the business of the village was done during the week and not on Sunday as some early American editors reported. No liquor or tobacco were permitted to be used in the village.

The village was divided into the west and the east half and each had its shepherd who looked after the cattle and the horses of the respective parts. Since all the neighboring land

was wild prairie they drove their herds sometimes to a great distance from their homes. For the night each man turned his horses out on the street and the village herder would take them out to the prairie and return them in the morning.

The principal trading places outside of the store at their village were Peabody and Marion, preferably the former since it had a railroad. When they came to town they would indicate to the dealer what article they wanted and give him money and he would return the change as nearly correct as his conscience or the ignorance of the immigrant would permit. Nearly all the grain was hauled to Peabody and implements and other things bought in return.

The settlers had brought with them a few Russian wagons, spades, forks, harnesses, etc., but these were soon discarded for the American which were far better and more serviceable. Other things they brought with them were silk worms, mulberry seeds, apricot seeds, cherry seeds, the Russian plum, sheep nose apple, several kinds of pears, gooseberries, the Russian sunflower and thirty or forty bushels of wheat. The silk industry was not tried very long but soon abandoned since the climate was not favorable to this industry.

Another thing they brought was the ability to build Russian ovens. This was a structure about 8 ft. long, 4 ft. wide and 6 or 8 ft. high, and made of sun dried bricks. It was either a part of the wall or next to one, <sup>or</sup> altho it was often right in the center of the room. It had a great firebox and in the

chimney was a large chamber for the smoking of meats and bologna. Such ovens were heated with straw, grass or wood and after once warm kept the room at a comfortable temperature all night long. The author himself had the privilege of being warmed by such an oven for the first eight or nine years of his life.

An interesting description of Gnadenu and the surrounding country is given by N. E. Prentiss in this Kansas Miscellanies. Prentiss visited the whole Mennonite settlement in 1875 and has the following to say: "We left the Reimer settlement for Gnadenu by way of Hoffnungstal. The Reimer settlement is called New Alexanderwohl, or New Alexander's health... A few miles further east along the south branch of the Cottonwood is a row of grass-thatched shanties called Hoffnungstal. The settlers here are poor, and the name of the town signifies "The Valley of Hope"... The settlers live in hope. Next in order comes the admirably located town of Gnadenu...."Valley of Grace"

"We drove across an immensity of newly broken prairie before we arrived at the acres of sod corn and watermelons which mark the corporation line of Gnadenu. The houses of Gnadenu present every variety of architecture, but each house is determined on one thing, to keep on the north side of the one street of the town and to face the south. Some of the houses are shaped like a "wedge" tent, the inclining sides consisting of a frame of wood, thatched with long prairie grass, the ends being sometimes of sod, at others of boards and others of sun-dried brick. Other houses resemble a wall tent, the sides being

of sod laid up as regularly as a mason lays brick, and the roof of grass. Some of these houses were in course of construction. Finally came substantial frame houses. At the east end of the street, in a red frame house with board window shutters painted green, lives Jacob Wiebe, the head man of Gnadenau. We found Mr. Wiebe a tall, powerfully built man, with a more martial appearance than his brethren. This may arise from the circumstance that the Mennonite church is divided on the question of shaving and Mr. Wiebe adheres to the bearded persuasion. (The difference in opinion is in regard to the mustache. Author)

Mr. Wiebe came to Kansas from the Crimea, where a Mennonite colony was established some thirteen years ago... Mr. Wiebe has built a house more nearly on the Russian model. He took us over the structure, a maze of small rooms and passages, the stable being under the same roof with the people and the granaries over all, the wheat stacks being located at the back door.

An immense straw pile was intended, as Mr. Wiebe said, for fuel for the winter. The Mennonites are economists in the way of fuel, and at the houses large piles of chopped straw mixed with barnyard manure were stacked up for "firewood". This kind of fuel destroys one's idea of the "cheerful fireside" and "blazing hearth".... In order to use it, however, the Mennonites discard stoves, and use a Russian oven built in the wall of the house, which, once thoroly heated with light straw, will retain its warmth longer than young love itself.

"Of course we visited the watermelon fields, which in the aggregate seemed about a quarter-section..... As we have mentioned three Mennonite villages, we may say that the Mennonite system contemplates that the landholder shall live in the town and in the country at the same time. The villagers of Gnadenau and Hoffnungstal own fourteen sections of land, yet all the farmers live in the two towns, each of a single street. Near are the gardens, and all around are the wide fields. Near each house were immense stacks of grain raised on ground rented from men who were driven out last year by the grasshoppers."

Gnadenau. 1914.

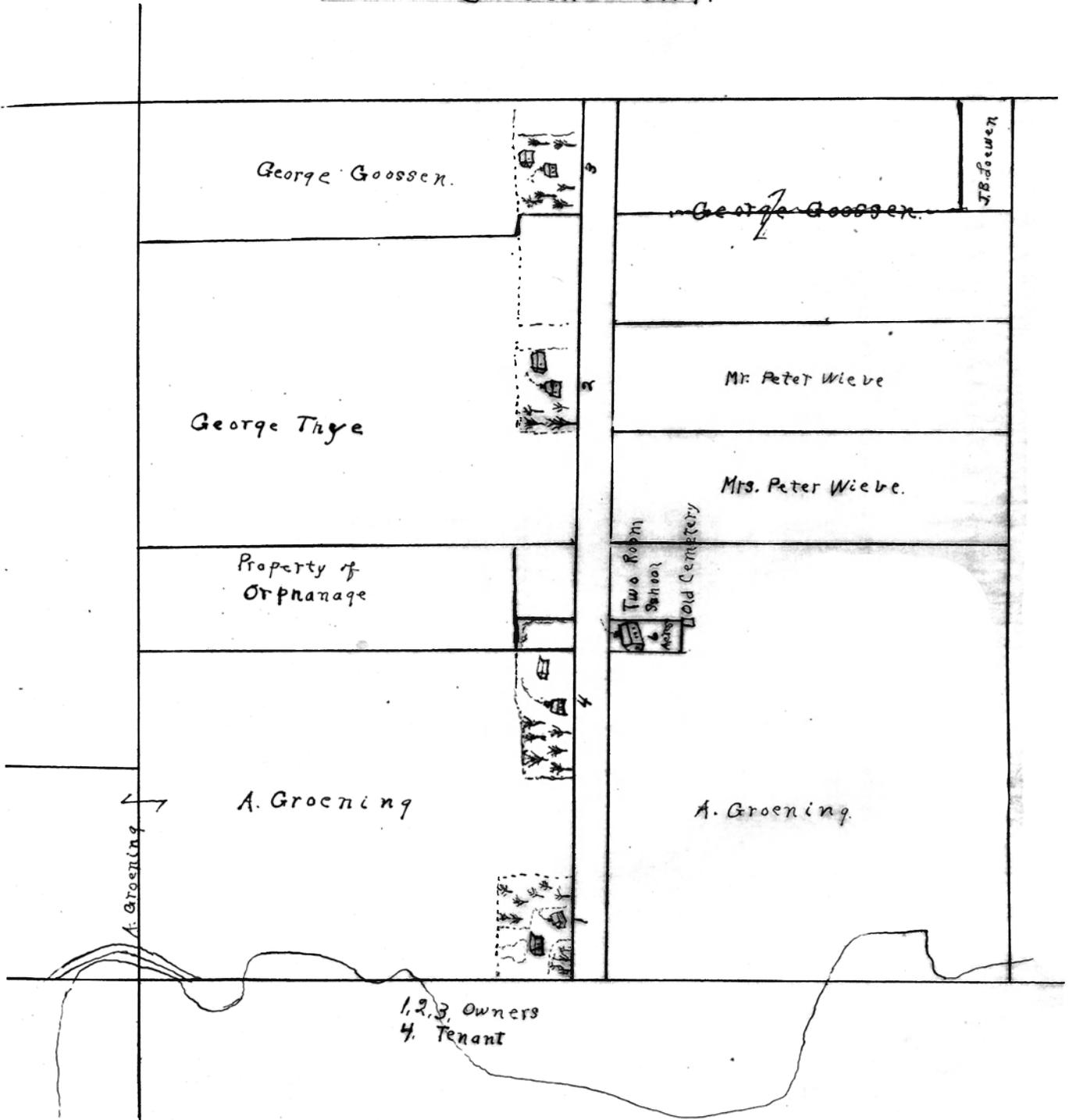


Plate III.

## Chapter IV. Ebenfeld.

In the early part of 1875 two families of the M. B. C. came to Ebenfeld, a few miles south of Gnadenau. They found the C. M. B. well established under J. A. Wiebe. It was a difficult matter for two families in a strange country to keep up in religious and other respects when alone, hence they tried to co-operate with the church at Gnadeanu. They would not join, however, since the latter people were much narrower. In the fall of the same year Peter Eckert came over with a number of families of Mennonite faith but of Lutheran extraction and joined these ~~to~~ families. They did not try the village plan since it was not satisfactory and those that were living ~~on~~ their own farms were strong advocates of the new system. The following year 75 more families came from Russia and in a few years a big settlement was located at Ebenfeld. All of these people lived by themselves in preference to the Russian system. After various difficulties which we shall consider in another place, the church was regulatly organized and when the present elder, Mr. J. Foth, came over in 1883 the organization worked smoothly. The meetings were held ~~at~~ first in the homes and then in a school house until someone caused trouble and it was stopped and then a church was built in 1883. This building was replaced by a larger and more commodious one about 9 years ago. Both buildings had a basement large enuf to permit several hundred at a time ~~to~~ take dinner. Such a basement is made use of at all of the festivals and most of the weddings when a little lunch is given to the guests. The services were generally

held in the forenoon and Sunday School followed in the afternoon. Since 1900 the membership has gone back a little. We shall give the reasons for this in another chapter. Ebenfeld is now noted for its extreme conservatism in the M. E. Conference. This may be due to the fact that several of the original leaders in Russia came here with a number of friends, lived and died here. They were in large enough numbers to inculcate in their children very strongly "the faith of their fathers".

## Chapter V. Hillsboro Church.

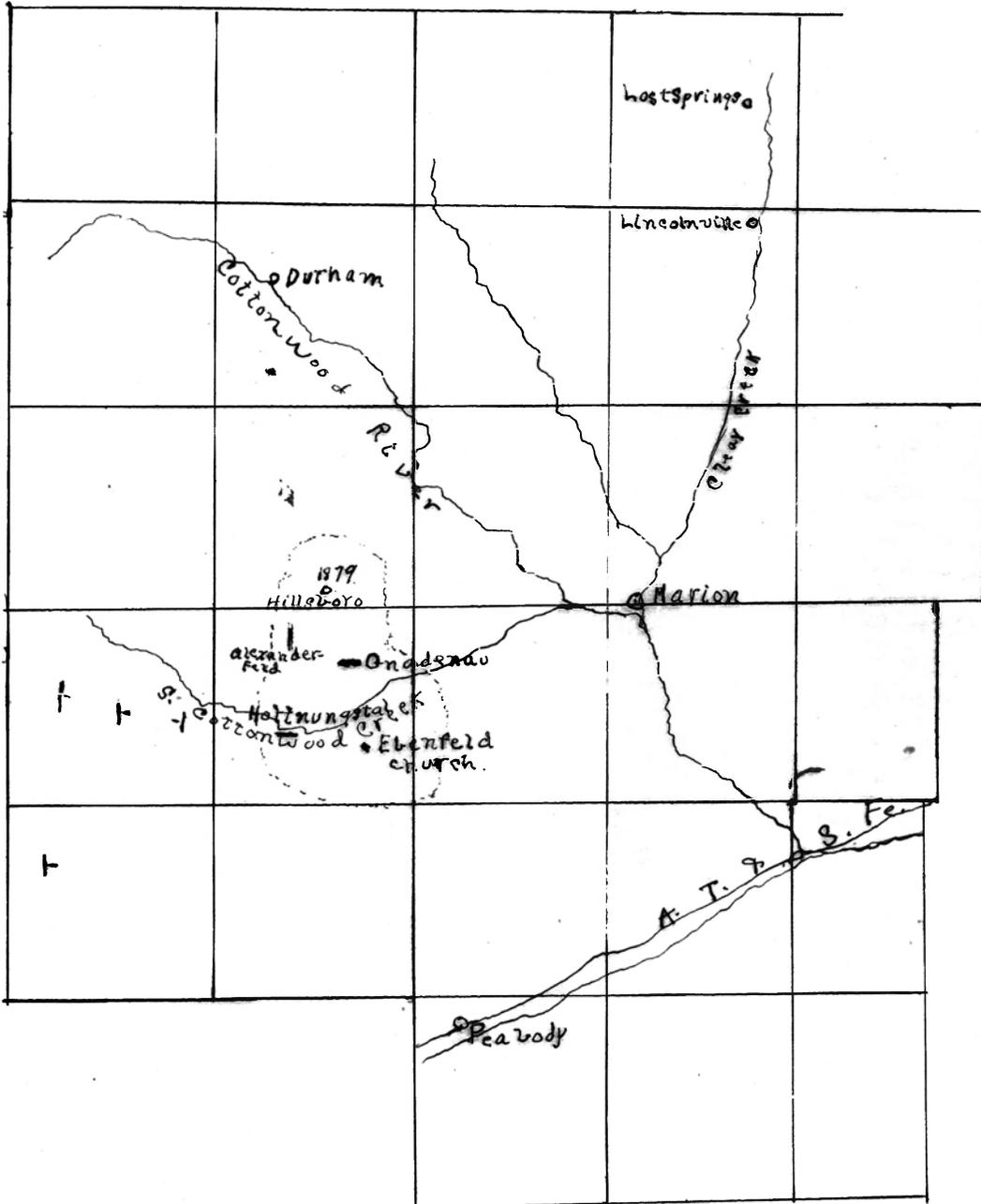
When we speak of Hillsboro in this chapter we mean only its biggest church. Hillsboro has a population of about 1100 and has six churches, of which the M. B. C. is by far the greatest. The members of this church live in and about town, those living south of it are right among the members of the Gnadenau church members and those living north of town are also scattered among other denominations, so that we cannot draw any hard and fast lines in defining the limits of this church membership.

The Hillsboro M. B. Church began about 1880. It began thru a revival among the "old Mennonites" living north of the town. These soon allied themselves with the general movement of the M. B. and had one of its elders come and organize their church. The early meetings were held in a red barn, a picture of which may be seen on Plate . Later on they built a small church in Hillsboro which served until 1910 when a big \$10,000 frame structure was erected. The growth of this church has been within the last six years and may be accounted for by the presence of Tabor College.

The members of this church came from a different part of Russia and consequently had somewhat different views on social life. The recent influx of other minded people has not been able to check this influence very much. In general this church has been noted for its comparative liberalism in contrast to other churches. We shall discuss it from on in connection with the other two churches.

# Marion County

1874-79.



- o Towns.
- Mennonite Villages.
- t Groups. 6-10 Families.
- ..... Community Described.

## Chapter V. Rise and Development of Association.

We have seen in another chapter how these settlements sprang up. The people came in such large numbers that they did not have to go thru all the hardships of isolation which so many an American community had to do. The population was a homogenous one by religion, nationality, occupation and social customs. The only separating influences that did enter in were those of doctrine, not of religion itself. For convenience we shall treat association in three phases, (1) neighborhood association, (2) inter-neighborhood association and (3) association with the outside world. These forms of association exist at all times but during certain stages of development the one or the other is the more prominent.

The early period was mainly one of neighborhood association. The people of this whole community were so much alike that association among themselves was quite natural. They were strangers in a strange land, without <sup>a</sup> knowledge of the language of the new country, so that they had to rely largely upon each other. The family visits at that time were largely tinged by religion. At the end of the visit a Bible passage was read and a few prayers offered. It was very common to treat visitors with a friendly glass of wine and nobody thought anything of it. The young people associated with one another quite freely, but the line of sex was observed quite generally. An elderly lady expressed her attitude of that time to the writer not so very long ago when she said "I would not speak to a man, if I did not have to,

even tho I worked for him or with him." This was the attitude of most of the young women. In the village, as we show at another place, there was much friendly visiting among the families, but always along the lines indicated above:

Poverty was the lot of nearly all and this had a strong influence for various co-operative activities among the neighbors. Perhaps the most striking one has been the annual "hog butchering" at which to the present time several neighbors come together and help gratis, expecting a return favor of course. Harvesting was done much along this "give and take" method. As the people prospered, however, this fell away and each became more independent and association became more selective. Families who acquired more wealth thru frugality, industry or opportune circumstances sometimes regarded themselves as a little better than the rest. This was never outspoken but a sort of an undercurrent of opinion. The families who have contributed most of the leaders have always been held in higher regard than others, especially if preachers and teachers came from them. Still, we would not say that any class distinctions have sprung up, but in a rural community one will find strong family preferences. And it is well that this is so, for in that way progress is possible. With the passing of the years the lines of neighborhood association have changed a great deal.

There was very little association with other communities in the early years, except with other Hennonite people of the same creed or doctrine. The line was drawn sharply between

those who had been immersed and those who had been sprinkled. As time has passed these lines have dropped away a good deal and today they are not noticeable to any extent. Of course association is still along church preference. The association with Americans was very limited on account of the strange language and also because of the difference in social customs. The few Americans who held claims among the Mennonites soon sold out and moved away.

Interest in the different communities was more of a personal nature at first and letters from distant friends would be read very eagerly. The first newspaper at Hillsboro was "The Phonograph", printed in the English language, but it ran only 35 issues and then was sold to another town. Evidently its appearance was premature in a German community, and very few read it. When the "Anzeiger" came out in the late 80ties it fulfilled a demand and consequently had a good number of subscribers. It contained many personal correspondences from different parts of Kansas as well as from other states. The political interest was never very strong until 1896 and from then on as we shall show in a later chapter it has increased in importance. The economic interest was local at first until the railroad came in in 1879, when all the townships voted heavy bonds. Trade with other parts of the county and the state became quite general after that and today it is thoroly American in this respect.

The association with the outside world in the early

times was mainly thru private letters that came from Russia or from other states or parts of the state. German newspapers printed in other states were the first to come in. Later on when the Anzeiger was published these received less attention and after the R. F. D. was established English papers began to take the place of German papers. The chief German papers that are read today are several sectarian papers, a local, and here and there a German weekly from another state, like the Germania or the Lincoln Freie Presse. In recent years travel has become a very important means of association with the outside world. Every year a great many go to other states or to Canada. Some visit Russia, but the instances are <sup>now</sup> not many. The rural telephone is in almost every house since a few years ago and it affords a great deal of friendly visiting of a new kind.

Section II

Social Development and Social  
Organization.

## Section II. Social Development and Organization.

## Chapter I. The Social Mind.

In speaking of the social mind we do not mean any completed thing, but something that is always developing. It is being influenced and altered constantly by the physical and social environment. It reacts to stimuli and these completed reactions in turn influence it again in other situations. To find out what the social mind of any given community is it is only necessary to study its activities along the different lines of endeavor. We will find that this differs from one community to another, according to what activity predominates. In the community which we have chosen for our study we shall take those activities first which have been the dominant ones and which have wielded the greatest influence in shaping the character of the people of the community. We shall consider the social activities under the following heads: (1) Religious activities, (2) economic activities, (3) political and regulative activities, (4) cultural activities and (5) the social activities in the narrower sense.

## Chapter II.

## Religious Activities.

In an earlier chapter we have shown that religion is the great moulding power of the Mennonites and that it goes beyond language and nationality in strength of influence. For it they have been willing to sacrifice a thousand times the dearest and best that they had. Neither wealth, friends nor country was considered whenever the religious side of their being was seriously threatened. This is what has given them a peculiar character. In the following chapter we shall describe the influence that religion has exerted in America on these people in the three parts of the community which we have chosen for this part of our treatise. We shall try to show how it has kept the people as such, intact from very rapid Americanization and how some of the fundamental teachings have undergone some marked changes.

From our discussion thus far it will be evident that among Mennonites the church is the center around which the whole community clusters. In every new settlement the church is on the spot too as soon as the settlement is made. There is always great concern that outlying or new communities have some sort of religious services all the time. Mennonites seldom settle in isolated places, but what others soon join them to form a strong church, and if such is not the case the settlers move to some other place. The settlements under consideration present the same phenomena.

In the early years the Gnadenu and Ebenfeld churches

were on rather friendly terms until each became well organized when the relations became more formal. They remained for a long time as independent as they could be, being practically strangers to one another. There was hardly any co-operation at all. Each followed its own course without much concern for the other. Gnadenu was the first to feel the tooth of time distinctly. Ebenfeld came next, but there the changes were far less rapid. During the days when these two churches were the strongest in the community the Hillsboro <sup>church</sup> was a very small affair and did not rise to any importance until 1908 when the college was built.

In Gnadenu the religious element was by far the strongest of the whole community. These people had become still more conservative after the revival in Russia. All the things that had been permitted before and which had an element of pleasure in them were either forbidden or considered dangerous. Their dress was simple and Quaker-like. When the young people began to be a little freer with their clothing there were church actions against it. When collars and ties came into use there was strong opposition, especially against the detachable collar. Bicycles met the same fate. Another local C. M. B. church went so far as ~~to~~ actually suspend two young men temporarily from membership for the crime of owning and riding a bicycle. Photographs were long considered as wrong according to the first commandment. For many years the ladies, young and old, had to wear an apron at church, no hats, but only a black shawl or

a small hood on the back of the head. Later on plain black hats came into use, but they went only as far as the ante-room of the church and then the black shawl had to take their place. Upon the hats were taken into the church also and then fitted out more stylishly and finally gave way to the reigning styles, altho not to the extremes. The above transition began about 1900 when the prosperous times came in. Instrumental music was long considered as wrong even tho the homes might have it. Even now there is no organ or piano in the Gnadenau church to help in the singing. Old hymns were lined and then sung. In the latter 90ties the German Gospel Hymns came into general use in all the three churches under consideration. Occasionally men took pride in their simplicity and meekness. It is related of a man who bot a new pair of shoes and then had the cobbler put a patch over the side of the shoe to show his humility. The new buggies, and later a few carriages also, were daubed over with a coat of cheap paint to show the owner's humility.

They have one - 1929

Revivals were conducted very quietly. No evangelist would be engaged, but a series of Bible meetings would be held where various subjects would be discussed, preferably those dealing with <sup>the</sup> life beyond, the punishment of the ungodly, and similar subjects. The young folks generally took part and often a quiet revival would break out, almost like a quiet rain stealing over the slumbering country. Regular meetings would then be held where little preaching would be done, but opportunity would be given to those who saw the need of a change in their

life. Singing and praying would interchage and thus others would be induced to join. The author remembers such a revival in a neighboring church in which he himself took an active part, altho he was very young at the time. A few weeks later baptism would follow, for which the nearby Cottonwood stream was available. In recent years, however, the church has realized the need of regular evangelistic work. The old church in the village became too small and new structure was erected about 1898 two miles southwest from the village, at a more centrally located place. On each church yard they had long sheds for the horses, since they always had afternoon meetings. The Sunday School is still held in the afternoon.

The elder, Mr. J. A. Wiebe, resigned in 1903 on account of ill health and his brother H. A. Wiebe took his place. Mr. Wiebe moved to Lehigh a few years later where he still lives as a good friend to all those who have been hurt in some kind of an accident. Hundreds of persons in Kansas and other states are indebted to him. As long as the new elder lived there was very little change in the church, but when the college was built a change was felt. The church members began attending other churches more and more and a greater spirit of co-operation sprang up. When Mr. Wiebe's sudden death occurred in the summer of 1910 the change was at hand. There was no strong leader to take his place and so the Hillsboro church began to attract large numbers. At one time it seemed as if the whole Gnadenu church would either be absorbed or would unite with the former

church. A period of quietness set in, however, when the members were refused certificates of membership, but the church is rather weak compared to what it was before.

We indicated at another place that the Ebenfeld church began in the early part of 1875. As soon as Eckert came over he made a strong effort to have his followers and the Gnadenau church united into one, but there were a number of difficulties that had to be overcome first. The first one was that of the form of baptism, the M. B. holding to backward immersion and the C.M.B. holding to forward immersion. The latter finally gave in on this point, but in return the former was forbidden to speak of the Millennium, even though anyone might believe in it. All instrumental music was declared as sinful and done away with. The most difficult point, however, was the "sister kiss", i. e. the practice of greeting men and women with a kiss publicly. Eckert's followers were very strong for this practice on Biblical (?) grounds. After much talking they gave in and a day was arranged for the union of both churches. But a new difficulty arose as to which one of the two elders should be the leading one, and this seemed so great an obstacle that Elder Wiebe withdrew with nearly all of his followers on the very day when the union was to take place.

The following year some 75 families came over from Russia and joined the Ebenfeld church. Since the majority of these came from the Volga (Lutheran extraction) the silly practice referred to above, began again. Even Eckert changed his ideas on

this end would have everyone live "according to his faith, especially in regard to the sister kiss and music" ( Friesen, p.8) The practice was kept up for several years altho continual efforts were made ~~were made~~ to throw it off. The advocates of the practice claimed scriptural grounds for it, but that there was another motive is evident from what ~~eye~~ witnesses have told the author. At times this particular kind of a greeting would be repeated several times in succession and then with discrimination as to age also.

Another man came two years later and tried to organize a church of his own, but he did not succeed, and finally he joined the C.M. B. Eckert himself sold his farm a few years later and left the pastorate to more capable men. When Mr. Foth came in 1883 he became the leader and then all the silly practices were done away with. Most of the advocates<sup>of</sup> these things later joined the Seven Day Advents and have since then left the community.

The church services were always very simple, similar to those in Gnadenau. Unlike this church Ebenfeld had always had some sort of evangelistic campaigns. The plea in the early years was to escape eternal punishment, and the picturing of how glorious the life beyond would be. Large baptisms would result and great crowds would come from far and wide. For this purpose a nearby creek was used. At such times of revivals a tense earnestness would be evident everywhere. The converts themselves and others would sing and pray at their occasional

visits and often when a few would be together they would kneel down in some secluded spot and pray. After the revival there generally was a let-up in the tense spirituality and everyone seemed to grow more-"cold" again, until another revival came along and warmed them up again. In more recent years the appeal is not so strong on the retributory side but there is more emphasis upon coming to Christ for His own sake. There is less emotion than formerly, and the old people say that conversions are not so thoro as they used to be. The candidates cannot show the fears and tears of being eternally lost as they did formerly and therefore the above conclusion. Everyone believes in a real hell, one with "fire and brimstone", and eternal punishment, not for the sins so much as for the unbelief in not accepting Christ. The Bible is studied less than formerly, especially among the young people, who seem more interested in secular things. At the Sunday and other meetings among young folks religious topics are left out altogether, unless it is a religious meeting. In its place we find more joy and good-natured fun. Often when such young men go home they feel the "small voice" reprimanding them for their light living, but at the next meeting the same old course is followed again. Nor are the young people the only ones to show this loosening up in religion. The older people are very much the same way. The truth is that materialism has made great inroads, and religion, tho still strong, is not nearly so dominant as formerly. Yet we must not say that the Ebenfeld church is liberal, but rather

*These do not figure to date - 1927*

the most conservative of the three. This is largely because the old people have been in control until now. Only last fall (1915) about thirty young folks were summoned before the church to apologize for the sin of taking buggy rides together. Only a few months ago a man had to drop his life insurance policy on which he had paid over \$200 if he did not wish to lose church membership. Anyone who marries outside of the M. E. or the C. M. B. automatically excommunicates himself thereby. This is the rule of all three churches in this community. Thru the influence of the younger members the Sunday School has been changed from the afternoon to the forenoon. They succeeded in this only last summer. The S. S. was kept in the afternoon so that the young boys and girls would not spend their Sunday afternoons in "running around". For years one of the older men always attended the rehearsals of the choir, or sang with them so that unnecessary conversation and harmless amusements would be prevented by his presence.

From time to time each year the different churches have great "harvest homes" and other large gatherings at which people come from far and wide, even from other states. In the early years there was very little visiting of preachers from one church to another but within the last fifteen years a feeling of friendship has sprung up and now preachers are exchanged quite commodi-ly at these festivals as well as at ordinary occasions. For these great festivals large tents with a seating capacity of 2,000 to 3,000 are put up and even then they are not able to

accommodate all the visitors. Several sermons are delivered in the fore and afternoon, but the one great thing is always a heavy mission offering. Generally the local church furnishes hot water for the dinner and often the eatables also. At such times the neighboring churches suspend most of their services and attend the festival. For the last thirteen years the churches of the M. E. Conference of the Kansas district have rendered a song festival each spring at which the local choirs compete in a friendly way. Altho no choir is recognized as having rendered the best music it is quite openly discussed which one did the best singing. These festivals have done much to develop a love for music and also to overcome the conservatism in regard to instrumental music in churches. Up to the present the Hillsboro choir is the only one which has the help of a good organ, the others still sing without one. In the Ebenfeld and Hillsboro churches the choir sings almost every Sunday morning, but at Gnadenau this is still rare.

Since the building of the college at Hillsboro the local church has grown so fast that a new building had to be erected a few years ago; one that has a seating capacity of almost a thousand. In the early part of 1910 members of the Gnadenau church began to leave their own church only two miles from town and joined the Hillsboro M. E. The death of their leader was the psychological moment. So many asked for membership certificates that out of self defense they were finally refused, whereupon the Hillsboro church received members into

6511 own property

ref.

its fold without certificates after they had inquired into the standing of these people at their home church. The reason for this change may be sought in the absence of a strong leader to hold the group together, the better preaching at Hillsboro, where an educated leader is pastor and uses the teachers of the college quite freely, the greater liberality of the church, but especially the college which has been a strong agent in bringing these two people together. Here the students of both denominations mingled freely and without any distinctions as to church membership. Gnadansu has always opposed higher education and its preachers, altho often old school teachers are relatively uneducated men and often very mediocre speakers. The whole present tandancy shows a desire for sermons that give the hearer food for thot. The old sermons of all preachers had no outline, no central thot; preaching was a sort of ramb-ling over a great part of the Bible, altho a certain passage had been chosen for a text. We do not mean to speak irreverent-ly of the old men who used to preach, but an educated mind needs something more than mere admonishings to better living. For their time those men performed their service, but with changed intellectual conditions methods of preaching must change too. This changed attitude is also felt by visiting preachers who come to Hillsboro. They are rather timid in coming before that audience claiming that they are not learned enuf to speak to college students.

The students are eagerly sought as teachers in the Sunday

School classes and for work on other programs that may be given in the church, but when it comes to voting on any question on the conduct of the church affairs, the students are treated rather slightly at times and it is put in a way as if the old men who gave most of the money for the building of the church ought to have the greater right to decide questions of importance. Privately people often say "Ah, he is from the college and it tries to run everything", when as a matter of fact the college is trying to work in harmony with the church. Many of the old people are very strongly opposed to the students' practice of clapping their hands when something is rendered at the college programs.

On the question of social intercourse between the young men and young women the Hillsboro church is more liberal than the one at Ebenfeld. The author does not remember any case in recent years where anyone has been called upon to apologize for friendly association with the opposite sex. It is sometimes deplored by the conservative old people, but the average man pays little attention to it. Still, buggy-riding and other public association is not yet considered proper. The number of retired farmers who have become members of the Hillsboro church give it a more conservative tinge than it would otherwise have. This is evidenced whenever a school event either of the college or of the high school is to be given in the church, since no other building is so large. At such occasions the younger members are generally in favor of it while the

older members oppose it, especially if an admittance fee is to be charged. The pastor has at times favored the old men in this since they gave so much toward the building of the church. A little incident may serve to illustrate the extreme to which some old men go at times. When the <sup>(1914)</sup> graduating class of the college asked for the use of the church for a lecture by Dr. Sheldon with the express understanding that an admission fee would be charged an old man was highly wrought up about it and said that he would go in without paying even if he would have to force his way in. The church agreed to let the man to go in free, but he did not have the courage when the lecture was given.

In Ebenfeld conservatism has been able to hold itself so long on account of its strong leader, elder J. Foth. Last New Year he resigned, however, and the man who is to take his place is a very open minded, liberal, thoroly christian man who by self-education has acquired a knowledge on a wide range of subjects and who can understand the young people most readily. He has the support of the young members who are now by far in the majority.

Having now discussed the three churches in detail we shall from now on in this chapter deal with all three of them in general. The Bible is taken as the exact word of God and anyone who attempts an interpretation which is different from that given to it by former leaders is looked at with

grave suspicion. Higher criticism is strongly opposed. Interpretations based on human experience or scientific standards are not sanctioned. In this respect the college is taking a very strong stand for the old doctrines. The theory of evolution is accepted only in so far as it does not conflict with the Bible. The people in general know very little about the theory, except that it is supposed to mean that man has come from the monkey. The teachers either attempt some kind of a correlating the theory and the report in Genesis, or they ignore the subject altogether. It would be dangerous for any of the teachers of the college to believe in evolution pure and simple and also profess it. In ~~this~~ regard the state university is regarded by the people of the whole community as a place of loose religion and anyone thinking of going there is dissuaded from it, unless he or she is of mature judgment.

The church membership includes the majority of the people of the community. The women are slightly in the majority. In recent years those who go to no church or attend irregularly are slowly increasing in number. Such people generally have various criticisms to make concerning some of the church members. Formerly such members who got into some kind of a trouble would withdraw from membership and then join a neighboring church, but that practice has been abolished. Now old differences must first be settled before such people are accepted.

Young People's Societies have sprung up within the last 10 or 12 years in all the three churches and hold bi-weekly or tri-weekly sessions. Those at Ebenfeld and Hillsboro support one or more native missionaries in India. The Gnadenau church has a mission of its own in North Carolina among the negroes. The meetings of these societies take up the whole evening and a number of the older members take part in them too. Regular programs are posted in advance and a good crowd attends whenever something special is given. Only the society in Hillsboro permits a lady to be secretary. The chairman and his secretary preside over the meeting and it is always a little disagreeable to the older people to see "a woman sitting with a man in front of the meeting".

The mission spirit is strong in this community. Missions in India and China are supported very strongly. The leading missionary of this denomination in India holds his membership at Hillsboro. One of the lady missionaries from Ebenfeld, a school mate of the author, died in India last summer and another young lady from Hillsboro goes to take her place this summer. The college is strengthening this spirit very materially by its missionary band which goes into the neighboring churches and gives missionary programs. The Y. M. C. A. and Y. W. C. A. are the all overshadowing organizations of the school. They enroll about 90%

of all the students. The Y. W. C. A. gives annual mission sales at which \$200 to \$300 are realized and forwarded to foreign fields. The city missions are supported also, but the foreign field holds the first place in the minds and hearts of these people.

Ministers have thus far received no salary, except when they traveled or conducted evangelistic campaigns. The Hillsboro congregation has begun with paying its minister a small salary but the old members are still strongly opposed to it. Some of them would rather have any kind of a preacher whom they need not support than have a good one and pay him a salary. Generally the minister is a farmer who has his farm to support him and does the ministerial work gratis. A change of attitude is slowly taking place because they begin to realize that it is not right to take a man's time and not pay him for it.

Sermons containing humorous stories were strongly condemned until recently. A sermon is a serious affair and humor is not in place. In this respect the Americans are often severely criticized. The members of the congregation are always seated according to sex. Each has one side of the church. Occasionally strangers come in with their lady friends, but they are always separated if the ushers can help it. When the M. B. church was dedicated in 1910 a prominent

business man of the town came in and sat down with his wife. The ushers at once made such urgent requests to separate that the man and his wife went home immediately rather insulted. Since then a slow change is noticeable and members of the church are beginning to do it too, especially in the evening meetings. It would be shocking beyond comprehension for a young unmarried man of good standing to come in with a lady friend and sit with her all evening. The above change has begun only in the Hillsboro church but it will soon spread to the others too.

Religion is not quite so serious an affair as it used to be. The author has heard frequent protests among the younger folks who objected to be held to such narrow lines. They argue that one can be religious and still be happy and show it too. The old belief was that of happiness "in the Lord" with no visible signs of the professed happiness. Everywhere there is a relaxation noticeable in this respect. The people one meets on the street are far more jolly than formerly and they indulge in harmless joking too, which was proscribed not so very long ago.

The religious customs in the home have changed only slightly. The Bible is still read every morning at the breakfast table by most of the families, and thanks are always returned before partaking of a meal. Many families are

beginning to do this without rising , but the majority has not yet adopted this practice. Some even kneel down at the morning meal and some few even sing a verse after the meal. The evening family prayer has passed away in many places and each one retires as he pleases. This is also noticeable in <sup>change</sup> their friendly visitings among one another. Occasionally one hears someone lament the times and praise the good old times when every one was a "brother".

The women have the right to speak at the informal meetings, at programs and so on, but they are not allowed to preach the gospel from the pulpit like the men, on account of the Paulinian admonition. The rule of covering the head during prayer is now seldom observed by the younger women, while the older ones still adhere to it from sheer habit. At the church meetings they are allowed to vote, but that right is very seldom used by the few who attend at all. The attitude of the men is not one of equality in this respect and so the women are timid about this. They are elected as Sunday School teachers just as the men and no difference is made.

Litigations are still under the ban, but here and there individuals go to court anyway, especially if it is against a corporation where no redress is possible without such a process of law. The Gnadenau church is the most conservative in this regard. The author does not know of any law suits

from among this denomination.

The standard of morality is the same as it was 38 years ago, and is the same for both sexes. Anyone who makes a misstep is bridged for life and any later advance in life is always hindered by such a youthful error. Even so a few cases of sexual immorality have occurred in this community but only one was taken to court a few years ago. Generally excommunication from church is the result and that carries such a stigma with it that such individuals soon come back repentant. The cases of immorality have been mostly between married men and their hired maid servants, and have stirred up a great deal of talk. Such an occurrence always causes a great moral shock. The church as a whole generally deals with such cases and so such a happening spreads far beyond the community in a very short time.

In the middle 90ties and for some time after the Gnadenau church imported a number of Chicago waifs and distributed them over a large territory. The education of these unfortunate children brot many disappointments with it. Very few have become anything near to the standard of their foster parents. Most of these boys and girls have long ago gone back to the city and have been lost. Only a few remained and have made good in a small degree: These children were too old when they were brot in and they were always looked down upon by the people. Then too the social envirkment was not

a favorable one. Coming out of the city life and being used to freedom they found it doubly hard to abide by the strict rules of these people. Almost every school had its "tough" in the person of one of these waifs. Mr. H. A. Wiebe had many painful experiences with boys whom he tried to educate according to the prevalent views. An orphanage was built just north of Gnadeanu and here many boys and girls were kept for some time. Recently it was changed into a home for the old. A few children remain with these old outworn remnants of humanity and the whole presents a pitiful spectacle. There is not proper supervision and cases of immorality happen now and then. There is no one to take these children so they must remain there. The people remember only too well the experiences of earlier years and so they are all unwilling to take them.

The teacher and the preacher is never separated very long among Mennonites. Whoever becomes a good school teacher has a good chance to become a preacher some day. This is also true of the community of which we have been speaking. Most of the preachers have been school teachers and a number of young men who are in that profession, especially those that are getting a college training are expected to fill the pulpit or go to some foreign field as missionaries. The teacher either develops, or is forced into this work by circumstances.

A change is coming, however, and within a generation or less only those with some theological training will be direct candidates. All the professors of the college were elected as preachers before they had completed the college course.

The religious atmosphere of this community is also very strongly expressed in their Christmas programs. Long elaborate programs are made up and carried out. The recitations center principally around the birth of the new King, altho occasionally a piece celebrating the Christmas tree is slipped in too. The Hillsboro church has its program always on the evening of the 24th of December and generally has beautiful decorations in connection with the tree. In the other two churches there is no tree nor are there any decorations made. They have their programs on the afternoon of the 25th and have far less drill connected with them. Besides the programs in the churches most of the schools have similar exercises. Here the decorations are very elaborate. Large crowds attend such evening programs. All these exercises are in German, altho occasionally an English piece is given in the schools, but it is not received very kindly. A characteristic remark is "Ah, that did not mean anything, that was English".

The Sunday School is a very strong ally of the churches. Young and old take part. In number of people attending it is

referred. 1127

considerably ahead of the American neighbors, but not in the amount of collections. The Hillsboro S. S. meets in the morning at 9.30 and lasts one hour. It has an enrolment of about 350. The Gnadenau S. S. meets in the afternoon and has as a result a small enrolment. The people stay for dinner at the church and meet shortly after. Ebenfeld had its S. S. in the afternoon until last <sup>(1913)</sup> summer when the heat of the afternoons became unbearable. When fall came they put it back to the afternoon, but only for one Sunday. The people liked the forenoon too well by this time and it has remained at that time since. Thus the great heat of last summer accomplished what the agitation of the young people for 15 years was unable to do. Since then the enrolment has nearly doubled.

The State Sunday School Conventions are generally attended by a delegate and a few others from each S. S. Afterwards a report is given and comment is made on the way the "Americans" conduct their S. S. The general attitude of these people toward the American methods is not the very friendliest, especially toward the social side of it. They want religious instruction in the Sunday School, not a mere social time.

The religious services of these three churches are the same. The manner of organization is similar to what it was a hundred years ago and which we described in chapter III, p. 10. Candidates for the pulpit are elected by majority.

vote and are known as "teachers", serving as assistants to the regular elder or leader. After some time they may be ordained and then they are preachers with full rank and all the rights of an elder in the ordinary church affairs. If a vacancy occurs for some reason these preachers are called upon to fill it. At an ordination people from a considerable distance attend. If an elder moves into another community the people there are at liberty whether they will permit him to preach or not, but usually <sup>he is</sup> (they are) accorded that right.

The pulpit of all these three churches is now open for men of other denominations, altho a certain hesitance is displayed at times. The fences have been lowered considerably and it is not so much a question anymore of how a person came to his religion. The preachers from other Mennonite churches are no longer barred from filling the pulpit occasionally. The M. B. and the C. M. B. now exchange speakers quite freely, a practice which they did not sanction formerly. The right which these churches denied one another was freely extended to the Baptists from the very beginning, and to the Methodists too if they could speak German. So it seems that rivalry more than anything else caused these rules to be made, so as to avoid absorption. On the whole, however, we must say that these churches are far more conservative

than the H. B. of Russia. That this should be so may have its cause in the fact that the most conservative people move to America and here lived mostly in closed communities, so that changes did not come very fast.

### Chapter III. Economic Activities.

In the preceding chapter we have shown the influence of religion in the community, in this chapter we shall try to show the developments along economic lines. The Memmonites have been known for centuries as a financially well situated people on account of their thrift and industry and hence it will be interesting to see how they prospered in the new country where there was all the freedom they might desire and where no oppressive government would limit them in their economic activities. For convenience we may divide the time from 1874 to the present into three periods, (1) from 1874 to 1892, the early period, (2) the middle period from 1892, and (3) the present period from 1900 to 1914. There are no hard and fast lines between these periods, but there is sufficient difference to warrant this division for the sake of a clear presentation.

(1) This pioneer period extended over almost twenty years. We have shown elsewhere that this was a time of equality and privation. The people that came over from Russia were not of the well-to-do classes, but rather mostly of the proletariat who had either very little land or none at all. The money they brot along generally did not last very long after settlement. Everyone who could possibly do so invested some money in land so that a permanent abode

would be secured. Up to 1878 the Russian rouble brot 74 cents in exchange, but after that it slumped in value until the immigrants could not get more than 48 cents for it. Coming here they found nothing but a wild prairie and it took courage to get started in those grasshopper years. An idea of the country may be gained from Plate I .

The settlers had various household articles as well as some implements along. Among the latter were the Russian wagon, "noticeable for its short coupling, narrow 'track', flaring bed painted green, and a profusion of blacksmith's work all over;" the hand scythe with which they intended to cut their grass and grain, spades, harnesses, etc. They found very soon, however, that the American implements were much better and so they discarded their old implements. Some few of these Russian wagons are still standing behind hedges as reminders of old days. In some places several families lived in one house for a year or more until there was enuf money or help to build a home of their own. The early houses were nearly all built of sod or sundried brick, with grass thatched roofs. The outside walls were whitewashed frequently so that such a house had a pretty, nice appearance. The houses were all of a long cracker box shape, with only one story. Some few lived in "wedge" shaped houses for a short time. Buildings of this kind may be seen in Plate I .

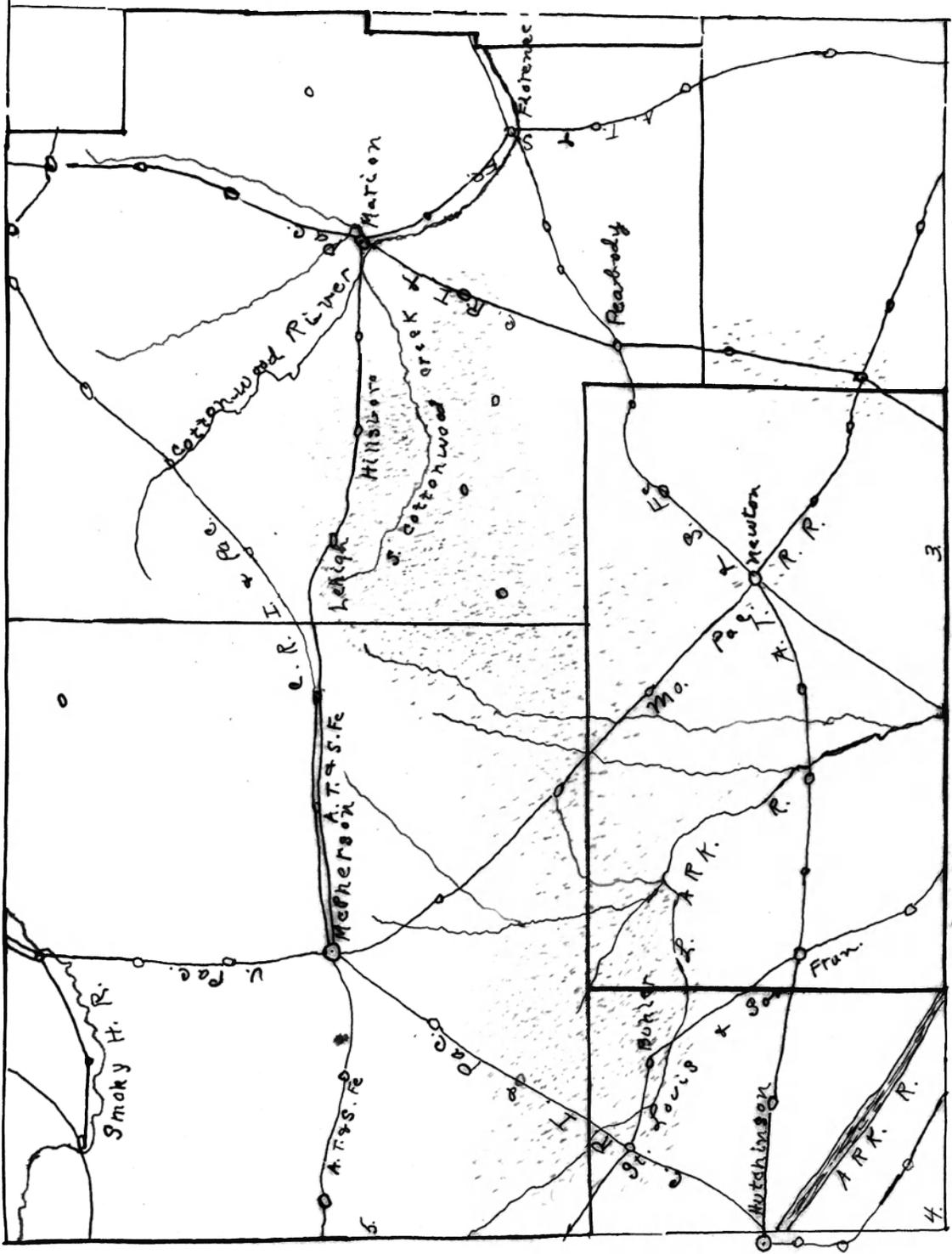
The people of Gnadenau, and those of other villages also, soon found out that their village system brot with it all kinds of unnecessary inconveniences and difficulties. They saw the Americans and a few Mennonites living separately on their own farms without the trouble of going a mile or two to the land or working a narrow strip of land along the whole section. There was no need of such close living together since there were not the dangers to which such families would have been exposed in Russia and so the village began to disintegrate two years after settlement. The farmers of the village began to exchange the small strips with one another and thus they finally got some of their land in one piece, or at least nearly so. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction during this process of disintegration<sup>and</sup> readjustment, since the land was not everywhere of the same value, and some individuals valued their land higher than it really was worth. The leaders generally took the short end of the bargain to avoid quarrels. Two of the men who have been lifelong leaders have very little land today compared with the rest of the village poeple. A few of the hedges on the different sections are the only things that indicate some of the smaller divisions.

The early trading was done largely at the store about a fourth of a mile south of the village, as shown in Plate II.

The store in the village itself went out of <sup>existence</sup> commission the first or second year. The one outside of the village lasted from '76 to '79, when the railroad came thru and the trading center moved to Hillsboro about three miles north. Close to the store was a blacksmith shop where the people came together to have their work done. The store was a sort of a news exchange altho not to the extent that it would have been in an American community. Another blacksmith shop was in the west part of the village, but we do not know how long it lasted. The remainder of the trading was done at Peabody, about 14 miles southeast. A little of the trade went to other towns, but it was not very important. The grain was hauled mostly to Peabody since it was the nearest town with a railroad, but some farmers drove as far as Newton, a distance of about 25 miles. The reason for this may have been the presence of a German flour mill at that place, and also that there were really better bargains to be made.

The sorghum mills performed a very important service in that time. One was located about two miles south of the village and here people came from a great distance with their cane. Some families made as much as hundred gallons a year "and it was all eaten up too", as one man told the writer. The fare consisted of syrup, salt, bread and pork. Limited tho this bill of fare was, a good many of the boys were

# Plate V.



Counties  
 1. Marion  
 2. Butler  
 3. Harvey  
 4. Reno  
 5. McPherson

Mennonite settlements  
 1914 A.D.

glad to have a chance to work for it and have a place to stay.

The silk industry did not prosper very long. It was kept up for a few years, but the climate was not favorable and the market not good enuf to make it profitable. Water-melons yielded better returns and large patches of this vegetable could be seen close to every home.

The change that these Mennonites brot about in a few years on this wild prarie is brot out quite strikingly in Mr. N. L. Prentis' "Southwestern Letter" of 1882 in which he tells of his second trip thru the Mennonite settlements in central Kansas. Everywhere he found thrift and frugal habits winning a living from the new soil. The barren praries with their people just as plain had given away to more scenic views. Trees were everhwhere growing lustily and the plain houses with their thatched roofs were being replaced by more American structures. Everywhere the people seemed to be happy.

The grasshoppers which came to Kansas the same year that these settlers did, troubled the new settlements considerable. A good deal of their work was rendered useless by this pest for a few years in succession.. The drouth that came along in the latter 70ties was also a hard blow, but thru it all they persevered. Good crops followed in due time

and the hard times disappeared slowly. Most of the people who had bot farms tried to pay off the debts as soon as possible, but it was<sup>d</sup> difficult task when they had to pay 24% and more for interest on money that they borrowed from local bankers-or agents. Implements and horses were very high. Many of the horses soon succumbed to the new country, perhaps as much as on account of the hard work. A good many used ox teams for a number of years.

During this period the neighbors helped one another at harvest time, men and women working in the field all day long. There was very little money in the settlement and so labor was the article of exchange. Many of the girls were employed at the threshing machines, being put on the straw stack often, the worst place at such a machine. Many girls were overworked during this pioneer period as their later ill health clearly showed. Girls did everything that boys could do in those days and the stories that the older ladies tell of their sufferings in the heat and dust speak very eloquently against this ~~form~~ of labor for women.

(2) By 1892 the whole settlement was on a solid footing. The pioneer period was over and relative prosperity began to spread thru the community. The old Russian implements and methods had all been discarded and replaced by the more modern American implements and ways of farming. The thatched roofs had disappeared and given <sup>place</sup> to houses of

a better appearance. Many of the old sod houses were used as sheds or barns. The household industries such as spinning, knitting, and the making of men's clothes were beginning to disappear.

A good deal of speculation was engaged in at this time and when the panic came in 1893 it struck some very hard. Some were living beyond their means, or had incurred debts and were therefore the ones to feel the the panic most strongly. Farm products became almost valueless. Corn sold at 12 cents a bushel, and even then there was no good demand for it. In a few exceptional cases, we have heard, it was used for fuel. Wheat sold at 25 cents per bushel. The period of depression lasted for several years. The opening of the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma gave many a new opportunity. A good many moved to Oklahoma during that time.

Another reason that contributed to failures in a number of cases was the fact that religion interfered with sound business methods. Often some fellows had gotten into debt thru some fault of their own and then they would go to the "brethren" for help. "Brother help" was interpreted to mean that one had to risk his own financial standing to get someone else out of trouble. Since every one who belonged to church was a "brother" it was one's duty to help. With such motives men became security for other people's debts

with the result that in some cases the farm and almost everything else had to be sold in order to pay some "brother's" debts. This taught the people a good lesson in "religion applied to business".

By the time of the Spanish American War the community had recovered almost entirely from the hard times. Good crops followed, creameries were opened and a period of general prosperity began to dawn. The war itself tended to raise the prices of farm products and thus helped in this artificial way.

(3) The present period is a fuller development of the prosperity that began during the last few years of the previous period. Farm values rose from \$4,000 to \$16,000 and more in less than ten years. The continued high prices of farm products brot in a high degree of prosperity. Many farms were bot, old mortgages were paid off and numerous improvements made. The homes that once had earth floors, thatched roofs, sod walls, and few and scanty furniture have been replaced by big two story buildings with carpets, rugs, organs, pianos, pictures and high priced furniture. The farm buildings are enormous in size compared with the little she s of 35 years ago. Silos, elevators, and big feed barns are taking the place of the old buildings. The feed is not pitched into the hay loft with forks anymore, but most of the farmers haul it up with "nets". The implements

are of the best and latest make. In the home the modern cream separator has replaced the old tedious methods of gathering cream. The walking plow was relegated to the scrap heap fifteen or more years ago. Sulky and gang plows have taken its place. The riding corn plow is fast taking the place of walking <sup>the</sup> corn plow. Carriages came in about 20 years ago and today the automobile is beginning to take their place. One dealer of Hillsboro said over forty cars last year and a good number since, of which several found their way into this community. The bicycle, once very common is being replaced by the motor-cycle. The telephone was introduced in 1905 and since 1909 there is scarcely a home without it.

Moreover there has begun a movement of old farmers to the town. The movement was enhanced by the building of the college. This has introduced a system of absentee landlordism to some extent. In most places the son or the daughter lives on the parental place. Scientific farming has not made very much of a start yet. The reason may be perhaps in the fact that Mennonites have always regarded themselves as good farmers. The soil has been depleted considerably, however, and since farms are so high the owners are of necessity forced to look around for better methods of farming. The increase in the number of farming papers is good evidence of this. The farmer institutes are being better attended than formerly and everything points to the

conclusion that scientific farming will shortly take a hold in the community. All that is needed just now is a good leader to take the initiative.

The women seldom work on the land anymore. In the early years it was a necessity and they did it cheerfully, but at present the economic conditions do not require their presence on the field. There is a growing sentiment against the practice, so that a farmer who still adheres to it out of penury meets with strong disapproval, especially if he is well situated. The boys are generally the most strongly opposed to seeing their sisters do such hard work.

Good roads are coming in too. Increasingly the farm products are stored and sold when the market is favorable. The former argument against good roads that they would serve only the pesky automobiles (as they were regarded before the farmers could afford one of their own) is hardly ever heard anymore.

A good deal of trading is done with mail order houses. The farmers claim they can get better goods at cheaper prices than at the local stores. This may be true in some instances, but not entirely. The business men are awakening to their task and trying to keep the trade at home. The two big department stores at Hillsboro are doing much in this line by their extensive advertising as well as by their reasonable

prices for articles of good quality. That the standard of living has risen is shown by the fact that these merchants are carrying a higher grade of goods than formerly, as one of them told the writer.

The household industries, such as spinning, knitting, crocheting, making of men's clothes have disappeared almost completely, and women's clothing are increasingly tailor made. Whatever is left of the first named industries is done only here and there by some old grandma more for a diversion than anything else. All this has freed the women to a large extent and has given them more time for refinement.

The Mennonites migrate just as much as ever, but at present the motives are very different. Formerly it was on account of religion that they wandered from one country to another, but now it is because of the desire for land. In German it is called "landhunger". The population of the community has gone back during the past 15 years for this very reason. Its members have migrated to a number of different states of the Union, or to Canada. This desire for land was fostered greatly by a certain landagent during the years of 1907 and 1910. At first he conducted a campaign for Hamilton County, Kansas, and hundreds of Mennonites bot land. Quite a few moved to that county too. When the bankers' panic of 1907 came the whole thing went to pieces. The land had

been bot at speculative prices and hence a great loss happened to the last buyers. There are several of this community who are still paying for land, or have sold it at a heavy loss. That affair was scarcely over when this same gentleman began to conduct a more vigorous campaign for California land. He intended to make a large settlement close to Eakersfield, Cal. The bare land, without water, wells, irrigation ditches or anything else was finally sold as high as \$150 an acre. A great many of Kansas, but especially of Okla., bot large portions of the precious land. At the end of 1910 the bubble broke. It turned out that the agent had nothing but a contract for the land for which the people had been deeding their farms away. A great many were plunged in to the meanest poverty and many others lost heavily. The agent was sought by several Okla. sheriffs but he was aided and thus made his escape. Since then he has not been seen publicly. This man was a member of the Hillsboro church until shortly before his flight. The fact that he belonged to the M. B. church was worth thousands to him, for the people thot that such a man surely could not be crooked.

If we take a look back to 1874 and compare the Mennonites of that day with those of today we notice a great change along economic lines. Only some old buildings

or ruins of them , some scattered, rusting implements, some isolated threshstones, a few old household articles here and there are the only visible reminders of the past. The young Mennonite listens with interest to the description of things that were used only such a short time ago, and contrasting what he hears with what he sees he smiles and is glad that "he is an American".

Chapter IV. Regulative and Political  
Activities.

In Russia the Mennonites had complete local autonomy and all their affairs were dealt with in their own peculiar way. When they came to America the situation was quite different. Here everyone was said to be free and a local government as it had existed in Russia was not possible. Gnadenau tried the old village government but that broke down in two or three years. The other parts of this community did not try it at all. The stories of the pioneer methods of dealing with offenders and evil-doers found their way into the settlement quite early. It had <sup>a</sup> queer influence on these people. The exaggerated ideas of what American freedom really meant acted as strong checks upon their political activities. Hanging of horse thieves was not so very uncommon at that time and even tho these things happened ~~at~~ <sup>in</sup> remote settlements they did not fail to leave a strong impression upon their minds. Such things served as a check upon such of the young fellows as would otherwise have been more reckless than they were. In the villages of Gnadenau and Hoffnungstal where the association between the people was a very close one they soon had a gang of toughs who played various tricks of the village people. For about five years the gang stayed together and

then those that remained changed their methods. These boys were a real problem to the settlers. The customary way of dealing with offenders was thru the church authority or thru the village magistrate, but since the boys did not belong to the church, <sup>and</sup> because they knew the magistrate, as long as they had one, had no power they were comparatively safe. No one dared to take such a matter to court and so the immunity of the boys was rather pronounced. The parents generally did not believe that their boys were so mean as their neighbors reported them to be.

Ebenfeld had a gang similar to the Hope Valley (Hoffnungstal) gang, but much later. They showed their worst tricks at the weddings at which they were the terror of the people. At the charivaris they made a scandalous noise with tinpans, tanks, old rusty muzzle loaders, and anything else that they were able to find. They generally left after they had seen the groom and his bride and had received something to <sup>eat</sup> or preferably to "drink". At one time the father of the bride came out instead of the groom and since the boys had it in for the old man they greeted him with a volley from their guns. One of the fellows aimed low enuf to shoot the cap from the old man's head. His fear and terror can be imagined. At another instance the fathers of the couple came out with whips and chased the boys a half mile or more.

No one got caught, but it was close enuf to afford them the excitement they were after. Such gangs were generally broken up when a big revival broke out at which the leaders were often the first ones to change their life. Now and then one or two fellows would not join, and being out of harmony with their comrades and the rest of the community they left or sought other companions. It is significant, however, that of those who refused to join the church not a one has risen to any prominence anywhere, whereas many of the others who did change their ways are highly respected men today.

Since that time the people have changed their ideas of long suffering with such fellows. If anyone attempts anything like that today he is very promptly reported to the county seat and placed under arrest and fined. Several such incidents have happened only two or three years ago. Now no gang exists and no one goes over the country playing rude horse jokes on people while they are at church or at some other place.

Politics were left entirely alone during the early years. Only the school and township affairs were attended to. The Gnadenau church as late as 1907 opposed the holding of any offices, or even voting at the general elections. In Ebenfeld and Hillsboro the change has been much more

rapid. Here men have voted for a good number of years, and the church has not taken any action against voting or the holding of offices.

As early as 1874 or ~~1875~~ the state legislature passed a law exempting the Mennonites from any military service, as other states had done previously in regard to the Quakers. Accordingly many registered in the respective county seats and took out these ~~exemption~~ licenses. Now, whether the legislature passed this law in good faith or only to make the Mennonites feel safe in coming here, is a question that the writer cannot decide definitely. But <sup>that</sup> it is his opinion the law was passed only so as to get these people to come here, for it seems to him that no state legislature has the constitutional right to pass such laws. It certainly had the desired effect in attracting the greatest number of Mennonites to Kansas.

The Mennonites of our community took very little part in politics before 1896. Here and there the younger men who had received a part or all of their schooling in this country voted and some few held offices. It was the custom of the Republican Party to have one Mennonite in office at the county seat of Marion altho their voting strength would have entitled them to a better representation. The great change came in 1896 when W. J. Bryan was candidate for the presidency. The election of Cleveland had not

effected these people very much, but the following panic had impressed them very strongly. The Democrats were blamed for the hard times and the new policies of Bryan were regarded as visionary. Republican stump speakers were at hand to give the darkest coloring to what would happen if another Democrat was elected president. Some even feared slavery would come, altho it is not clear why they did not fear the same thing when Cleveland was elected. The strongest factor, however, was the economic feature. The Mennonites have always been very sensitive on this side and anything which hurts their economic interests, or might do so, is resented at once. The election had the result to bring out many who had never voted before. Quite a few of the Gnadenau and Ebenfeld people laid their religious scruples aside and went to the polls to register their protest against cheap money and hard times. The money plank of the Democrats was not understood at all by the great majority.

The next great event that stirred the community was the Spanish American War. Many who had permitted their exemption licenses to lapse went to Marion and registered again as people who are opposed to war. The more enlightened majority, however, we would venture to say, ridiculed the idea of such a thing as that they would be called upon to do any military service in that war. The keenest interest

was manifested everywhere thruout all Mennonite settlements. The reports of how our navy was taking one Spanish ship after another were received with gladness and pride. It was with them now as Jacob A. Riis says in his "The Making of an American" they had found out that they were Americans. In some churches the people prayed for the victory of the American arms and for a speedy cessation of hostilities. No boys enlisted from this community, but there were a number from other Mennonite settlements who went to the Philippine Islands. Most of the old people were acquainted with scenes of war from their services in the Crimean War and many a story of long ago was revived when friends met. As a whole the Spanish American War has served to arouse in this community a consciousness that it is American and that our flag stands for freedom. Just as the war cemented the North and South together so it has fastened these Mennonite people to our country. They have become proud of a country that can whip almost any power and at the same time make good its word of honor which it chooses to give at any time.

Since that time several young men have joined either the Kans. Nat. Guard or the U. S. Army. One of these boys is the son of a preacher. War is still opposed, but there is not such pronounced opposition to it as formerly. The

boys who have joined have been such who did not stand very high in the estimation of the community.

Since 1900 the Americanization of the Mennonites in this community in political respects has been almost entirely completed. All parties are represented. The Republicans were always far in the majority until the break in 1912, when the Progressives took the lead with the Democrats a close second. Hillsboro has always been a progressive town. It gave Stubbs great majorities at all elections. When in 1910 the candidate on the Republican ticket for the county attorney's office was found out to have given secret aid to the notorious landagent M. whom we have mentioned in the preceding chapter, and had also received financial returns for it, a wave of antagonism set in. Altho he was a resident of the town at the time, a petition for an independent man was circulated just in time to permit the new man's name to appear on the ballot. The independent man was elected by a good majority. This all goes to show that the Mennonites of this community are not "straight party" voters anymore. The candidates are discussed in their paper and also in private circles and if they are not good in their estimation they are not supported. Some vote on every ticket, picking the men which they think are most able to fill the office. Formerly the Republicans

gave the Germans one county office and had the rest of the spoils to themselves, but that is changing too. They demand better representation, and holding the balance of power they are getting it too. In 1912 the community went Democratic for the first time in its history. The great argument was the reduction of taxes which Mr. Hodges promised and the failure of the Republicans to make good on the tariff revision under Taft. Pres. Taft was very unpopular in this community, but men like Roosevelt and Wilson who have shown themselves to be on the side of the people get strong support. It does not matter so much to which party the man belongs, but if he is a man of the "people" he can count on their support.

On the question of woman suffrage the community took a conservative attitude. A woman's place is in the home, according to German ideals. Consequently the vote on the suffrage amendment in 1912 was about 7 to 1 opposed to the adoption of the amendment. The educated of the community voted for the amendment. It was not uncommon to see a father vote against the amendment and his son for it.

During the last few years the women occasionally take part in municipal elections too, but generally only when the race is rather close and each candidate hopes to win. The author knows women who voted at such an election

a year ago who had never seen a voting booth before altho they had lived in this country for 37 years.

Quite a few of the immigrants did not take out the naturalization papers during the early years and so when the new naturalization law was passed a few years ago hundreds of Mennonites from the various parts of the state rushed to the district courts to get their papers. There<sup>^</sup> some who had lived here 30 years or more but had not taken out any papers at all. And we venture to say that quite a few of the Russian Mennonites died expatriated prior to 1907. It would be difficult to say how many there are who have not yet taken out their papers, but their number must<sup>^</sup> be very small. Russia gave emigration passes only till 1880 and after that only traveling passes, so that any family that comes over now is really only on a visit. It has the effect of causing each newcomer to take out the papers soon after arrival, so that they may go back to Russia on a visit sometime and not be molested by that government. The new law requiring a knowledge of the English and an understanding of the Constitution has had the result that those who become citizens now know more about the workings of our government and can speak a better English than many of those who came over 38 years ago. This one factor alone has served to a great extent to keep this community so thoroly German until today.

At present we may say that the Mennonites are no longer opposed to holding office. Their newspapers work very strongly against such narrow views. At election day the keenest interest is manifested in the results of the day. At a recent German Teachers' Association ~~two~~ of the leading men made the statement that they would have their boys hold any office except that of a governor or a president, since these men are at the head of our armed forces, theoretically at least. The majority hold this view, we believe, but there are a good many already who would take even the excepted offices without any scruples of conscience. So we see that a religious belief which could not be influenced to any extent for 300 years in Europe has been completely changed in America in less than 40 years, and this mainly because here they were obliged to take a part in governmental affairs. Then too the education had some to do with this, but of this we shall speak in another chapter.

## Chapter V. Cultural Activities.

At the time of settlement in 1874 there were only here and there a few school houses. Coming from a foreign country they were in great need of the English and hence small evening schools for the adults sprang up very soon after settlement, in which most of the older men acquired enuf of the new language to enable them to deal with their neighbors. After a few years, however, when the population had increased a good deal and the Americans had nearly all left the community and the stores in the trading centers employed German clerks the need for these schools disappeared. Consequently the schools<sup>was</sup> discontinued.

The village of Gnadenu was almost in the center of a large school district and one of the school houses was just east of the village. Later another building was erected some distance west of the village, as may be seen from Plate II. The district was never divided, however, even tho there was school in two separate<sup>buildings</sup> for several years. During the first two winters the children of Gnadenu were not sent to the public school since it was thot wrong to do that, but they were taught in a private German school in the village itself. After the second winter the children were permitted to attend the district school to learn some English. The school term was about 4 months of the English and 3 of German.

The schools in the remainder of the community were of about the same length. It was the purpose of these people to have their children learn some English because it was required, but by all means were they to have a good knowledge of the German, because only in that way could old customs and beliefs be preserved. The benches of those early schools were made without any special regard to the size and form of the children's bodies, and thus were regular instruments of torture. As late as 1900 there were some schools yet that had not discarded all of the old benches. Those old benches were so substantially built that they could last a generation or more.

The wages of the early teacher was about \$20 a month. Boarding around of the teacher has never been practiced in this community. As soon as it was possible German teachers were employed to teach both languages. The efficiency of these country schools was necessarily low for years. As late as 1898 many schools had pupils who were 21 or over and were doing only 6th or 7th grade work. It was indeed difficult to get very far in four months with irregular attendance. Boys and girls were kept at home a good deal to help in the work on the farm.

The curriculum of the German schools was quite inclusive during the early years. Such subjects as Geography,

Arithmetic, Reading, Grammar and Composition, Church History, and the Bible were taught. Of these the last one was the principal study. As time has passed some have been dropped and present only Reading, Grammar and the Bible are taught; once in a while church history also. In some of the schools it is difficult now to have even these few branches.

The compulsory school law of 1903 has raised the efficiency of the country schools greatly. Formerly it was a hopeless thing to expect any pupil to finish the course, but after 1903 the number of such pupils began to increase. When the school law of 1909 was passed providing a term of 7 months of English there was a good <sup>deal of</sup> dissatisfaction. With the former 5 month's term there had always been 2 months of German yet, but now that was impossible if they wanted to adhere to the old policy of having only 7 months for the whole year. Consequently, in order to "save the German language" ways were sought to get around the law. For several school boards had agreements with the county superintendent that they could run their school on the old plan. A number of schools have been running in exact contravention of the law, while others put German in as a part of each day's work, to which the state superintendent did not make any serious objection. There are still a few schools in this community that do not live up to the spirit of the law. The leading German teachers of the state call such methods of securing the German out-

right dishonesty. They claim that any community can afford to have 9 months of school each year.

It is becoming more difficult to get teachers who are willing to teach both languages since the English pays often twice as much as the German. They also say that it is much easier to teach the English since there is a definite system, modern books, plenty of work, and more time to do real work, whereas in the German school books are used that were written 40 years ago, so few studies are taught that the work is monotonous, and with only two months each year the pupils get no working knowledge of the German to do anything beyond reading or composition.

The enrolment in the district schools is less than it was 15 years ago since the rural population has gone back. There are no consolidated schools in the community, but the Gnadenau district is large enuf to have two teachers. A number of years ago the two buildings were moved and another structure erected on the site where the old church stood. This is centrally located for the district and allows a two room school. The play ground contains about 6 acres. The playground of the other schools is rather small. The Gnadenau district has turned out more teachers, professors, preachers, and educated people than any other district of its size among Mennonite settlements of Kansas, so one of the men who comes from that district told the author. It

is true that more than 40 teachers have come from there, of whom almost a third have received higher degrees. Most of the teachers, however, have not had much more than one or two years of schooling above the the common school, so that ~~that~~ the above figure is not so very surprising after it has been properly evaluated. All the teachers of the college except a few come from this community, so that the college, altho representative of the M. B. Conference, is directly a product of this community. The rural school buildings are in fair condition of repair, but they are all old . None of them are used as socializing centers in the large sense. In fact anything which sounds like social or socializing is religiously tabooed.

Higher education received no attention for years. It was always opposed more or less as unnecessary. A common school education with a good knowledge of the Bible was deemed a sufficient preparation for life. Slowly, however, in spite of this attitude of the community young men began to go to higher institutions of learning and soon more followed. From 1899 to 1905 the General Conference of the M. B. maintained a small German Department at McPherson College and a number of young men and young women from this community attended there. The department was dropped in 1905 for lack of financial support and for several <sup>years</sup> there was no special place to attract the students, so they went wherever they pleased.

The need of a higher education was beginning to be felt and in order to keep the young men and women from going to other schools and leaving their church two men from Ebenfeld began to work for a school association which was to last (for) five years, after which they hoped to have the school well launched. The support was good and by the fall of 1908 the present building of Tabor College was erected. The enrolment of the first year was about 90. <sup>From then on</sup> it has been increasing slowly and this year they reported an enrollment of about 170. The constitution of the association provided that only members of the M. E. and the C. M. B. could belong to the association and this cut off a large local support. The constitution further provides that all teachers shall belong <sup>to</sup> of the above named denominations. It soon appeared that <sup>there</sup> were not sufficient men to be obtained from among the members of these denominations and so men <sup>from other</sup> religious bodies were hired. This caused a great deal of trouble. The people were really dissatisfied with the course which <sup>the</sup> school took. They had expected that it would be only a Bible school and now the other branches seemed to be the more important part of the curriculum. Many people refused to pay their pledged sums on account of the above. The financial difficulties of the college have been great. The salaries of the teachers are very low, but they "work for their people" and decline better offers from bigger schools. There are several

small colleges nearby and it would seem that this last one would not be needed, but each denomination wishes to remain intact and to keep its youth and thus the "need" arises. The college has been the greatest factor in bringing the two denominations together. The attitude of the churches of the community toward the college was not the very best for a few years, because the college was "too liberal". This attitude was not justified, however. It is true the students tried to be more liberal in social intercourse during the first years, but latterly this has been checked. The reason for the former freedom was the presence of several students who had been away to other colleges and who did not like the conservative atmosphere of the school. Such things as clapping of hands, yells, parties, and other social amusements are still opposed. The students, however, indulge in clapping of hands whenever it suits them, but the yelling has not made any progress yet. With the passing of the first liberal students a more religious element has come in and being carefully nurtured by the different religious organizations the college has now a strong religious tendency. A considerable per cent of the students are preparing either for the ministry or for some other missionary work. The largest per cent, however, prepare for the teaching profession.

The ideal of the college is to fit students out for

"service". Hence religious devotion and moral rectitude are strongly upheld. The teachers are also almost without exception preachers. Intellectual ability is regarded as highly desirable, but without religion it is deemed insufficient. The religious life fostered is not a critically intellectual one, but rather one of unswerving belief in the religious teachings. Truth is considered as unchanging and the views of modern science are strongly combatted wherever they conflict with the religious teachings, or they are quietly passed over. The sending out of one of the graduates to the foreign field this summer is having a strong influence upon others to fit ~~themselves~~ themselves for the same work.

Democracy is strongly entrenched, and everyone is given a fair chance. The atmosphere among the students is one of good <sup>natural</sup> ~~natural~~ comradeship. There are no fraternities or other exclusive organizations. There is only one literary society and it has always been a great success. During the second and third years of its existence people came from as far as 8 and 10 miles to "take in" the programs. At present such is not the case, however, and only the young people of the immediate neighborhood come to the programs. Lecture courses were given for two years, but the directors of the college prohibited them, since a few of the numbers were "too worldly" and had too much fun.

The college is in a somewhat difficult position. Its students are constantly demanding more liberty in social lines. The supporters, however, think that the school is already too liberal and going "too fast". It is something of a problem to keep the good will of the students and the people too. This also explains the efforts of the faculty to direct the energies of the students into the field of religious activity. Athletics are encouraged in a moderate way. An effort of the students a year ago to raise funds for a small gymnasium was dealt with summarily, by the directors, altho over half of the amount had been pledged already. They argued if the students were so enthusiastic about raising money they might help a little toward paying the debt which still rested on the college, altho it is only a small amount.

The local students make up over 40% of the enrollment. By "local" we include this whole community. Of this number Ebenfeld contributes a small, altho a growing, part. The people at Ebenfeld are somewhat antagonistic toward the college. The wife of one of the preachers remarked a year ago that she thanked God that her children did not go to such a school. The students that have left and gone to larger institutions have made very good records at the new places. The instruction is good and the work done of a high quality. The crying need of the school, as that of every other small college, is a greater amount of financial

support. It goes without saying that the school could have a great deal more of wholesome social life.

The college has quickened the intellectual life of the community wonderfully. A general desire for higher education is making itself manifest. For men it is very favorable and for women it is fast becoming so. The young women make up about 40% of the students of the college. Board and tuition are low and so many attend who would otherwise be barred. There are students from Kans., Okla., Neb., Minn., Colo., Calif., the Dakotas, and Saskatchewan, representing the various local churches of the M. E. and C. M. B. of North America.

The first newspapers of this community were mostly sectarian and printed in other states. In later years the common weeklies, nearly all German, found their way into the community. In the later 80ties a German weekly, the Anzeiger, was published at Hillsboro for about 8 or 10 years. The Zions-Bote, the official paper of the M. E. Conference, was also published here and had a good circulation. When the Anzeiger was sold to another town another weekly sprang up and it has continued until the present under different names, varying with the owner and editor. The policy of the paper has always been thoroly German, always a little questioning as to the social customs of the Americans, if

not positively critical. In fact, it cannot be denied that the editorial policy has been rather narrow for the last few years, especially so the last two or three. Young men who go to other institutions of learning, especially since the erection of the college, are often belittled, sarcastically reported or ignored altogether. This, however, has reference only to young men whose parents belong to either one of the denominations supporting the school. Community shaping persons seldom get the publicity that their work merits, but such things as bare elbows of ladies in church and similar personalities are faithfully reported and duly(?) criticized. The C. M. E. church published a little paper of its own for a few years, but it was discontinued several years ago. There was too little demand for it.

The M. E. Publishing House is located at Hillsboro and is contemplating the erection of a \$7,000 structure this summer. A socialist paper appeared a few times this year and then was discontinued. The number of English papers is growing, especially is this true of the dailies. The people are taking more and more interest in the outside world and read more accordingly. In general we may say that the people of this community are fairly well read on the great issues of the day. In this way the newspaper is acting as a great agency toward acquainting these people with the American customs, standards and ideals.

Chapter VI. Social Life: Customs, Standards,  
Changes.

In his thesis on "The Development of an American Town" Mr. H. W. Thompson has this to say when comparing the German and the Swedish immigrants: "Of the different elements the American has been the most initiative, the Swede has been the most assimilative, and the Mennonite the least imitative and amenable to socialization. While the Swedes have been exceedingly clannish they have adopted the American customs within the clan. The Mennonites, on the other hand, have had a very strong tendency to retain their national 'Sitten and Gebräuche'. As a result of this the second generation of the Swedes have become so Americanized that there is often a serious gulf between their attitudes and the attitudes of their parents, while the second generation of the Mennonites assume an attitude which is a happy medium between the attitude of their parents and the American mode of thinking. The second generation of the Swedes are really Americans while the second generation of the Mennonites retain their national traits." The above gives in short the character of the second generation of the Mennonites quite correctly. American customs began to come in slowly from the earliest times on, but the greatest change was mainly economic and not so

much social. Wherever the American customs were better in this respect they were immediately adopted, but beyond that they did not go. These people came here with the firm intention of remaining German Mennonites and of living according to the faith of their fathers. Accordingly, they have resisted by various methods quite effectually any great changes along social lines. The principal method has been that of religious coercion thru the church, and the other methods have sprung from the desire to retain the old and tried and has found its strongest expression in the schools.

Perhaps the most interesting change has been in the matter of social intercourse between the young men and the young women, as well as in the matter of courtship. During the early years there was almost nothing of social intercourse between the youth of both sexes. It was forbidden because it was thought wrong. Such association, it was assumed, led almost invariably to sexual immorality, since the "flesh was weak", and therefore a christian had no right to subject himself to such temptation. The few missteps that happened occasionally were cited as strong cases to prove the argument. Then too it was considered worldly and Paul's admonition in this regard was cited. With the passing of time there has been a general "loosening up" in this regard. Association is becoming freer and more common, and is more on the basis

of friendship. If one inquires of the older people what they think of such association they say that the church is against it, and that it is not right. If one asks the younger people, however, they say quite the opposite, and if one notices the children of such people ~~even~~ who are opposed to it one sees that paternal doctrine and filial practice do not agree. Since the younger generation is everywhere coming into control there is a growth in liberty. Still, we must not think that the freedom of Americans prevails already. Far from it. Visiting is generally permitted only in the homes of the parents and evening walks and rides are still tabooed, altho there is<sup>a</sup> beginning of this too.

In the matter of courtship there has been a ~~g~~ greater change, altho it goes hand in hand with the above. In former times the father, a friend, or some acquaintance was generally the go-between for the young man, and marriage was proposed upon the first visit to the young woman. If accepted, the wedding occurred within a week or two. If the reply was unfavorable he might try at another place the same day and so on, until ~~he~~ either ~~the~~ object sought was obtained, or he lost heart and went home, to go out some other time. This manner of courtship has passed away almost completely. Now the young man gets acquainted

with the young woman at least to a limited extent. Courtship may last from a few months to two or three years, altho the latter is not favored very much. The young man does not get to see his fiancée so very often even in a protracted courtship. Public rides in car or buggy are seldom indulged in, but visits to her home may be made several times a month. In Ebenfeld there is still strong opposition to this, but it is only from the old people who cannot adjust themselves to the changed conditions. In the case of widowers, however, the old method is largely adhered to even now. As a result second marriage is seldom happy among these people. There is too little regard for the characteristics of the prospective bride and groom, and shortly after marriage the life-long difficulties begin. Second marriage follows often very soon after the funeral. It has happened that elderly people married three weeks after the funeral of the other partner, but this practice is condemned very strongly. The average time between first and second marriage is close to a year. The old men are the principal sinners in this respect. It is not so very uncommon to see some undesirable old widower going from one settlement to another looking for suitable widows or spinsters, gathering refusals as he sojourns, but perhaps finally successful. The resulting domestic infelicity is easily

imaginable.

The families are still very large. There are still families with 10 to 15 children and a few with even a greater number than that. The deathrate, however, is "pretty" high so that the average family is not much above six persons. There is at present a tendency toward smaller families, and "race suicide" is often heard of, but the size of the families does not warrant that expression.

The children are trained to respect parents, teachers and older people. The forwardness of the young American is not noticeable yet, altho there are slight beginnings here and there. The children are generally backward until they are about 15 of age, after which they become a little bolder.

Theaters, dances, and operas are still under the ban among the ordinary people, altho the educated young people have no scruples whatever in going to see a good play. They do that away from home, of course. The moving picture show in Hillsboro is not patronized to any extent by members of the churches which we have discussed. A few go, but no action is taken against them. Still, any person of influence will not go there just to keep his reputation. Shows are being better attended than formerly. There have been church actions against such offenders, but it is of no

avail. Ebenfeld has been the severest in this matter. It is only a few years ago that a number of young men were called upon to apologize for riding on the merry-go-round. There is a strong reaction against this narrowness, however, and these church actions are generally ridiculed. Picnics are steadily increasing in number. In this the students are taking the lead. Ice cream parties are becoming quite common and afford a good deal of amusement in summer. The number of social parties has decreased in the college since the religious wave has been ushered in. During the first years they were quite numerous, but the faculty went pretty strongly after such offenders and so they are less frequent. Surprise parties play a very important role just now, but that form of amusement has been almost overworked already. The Y. M. and Y. W. C. A. give several joint socials during the school year, but these gatherings go by other innocent names. In the past the old people have taken great offense at these gatherings, altho there was nothing harmful about any of them. Ignorance and misunderstanding are at <sup>the</sup> bottom of much of the criticism to which the college has been subjected.

The Mennonites are known for their honesty in their business dealings, but also for their propensity to drive close and shrewd bargains. The farmers are still largely

in the habit of doing credit business at the local stores. Any store of Hillsboro that would attempt to sell for cash only would not run very long. There is a slow change, however, and people are beginning to pay as they go. It is only in extreme cases that a farmer will let the merchant wait for months for his money while he has a bank account bearing interest.

In many of the homes there are firearms of some kind. In former years it was forbidden but at present one may find guns and rifles in the homes of preachers as well as in those of laymen. A few accidents have happened which caused an anti-weapon wave in to set for a short while, but soon people had their arms again. Hunting used to be quite popular, but the present game laws have spoiled the sport quite effectually.

## Chapter VII. Summary.

We have now come to a close of our study of the Russian Mennonites who settled in Marion County during the latter 70ties and later. In summarizing this study we may note the following facts. The people that came to this community were of the same nationality and the same interests. They were a very religious people and have<sup>been</sup> such for centuries. They are a peculiar people in respect to their attitude toward the holding of offices, and the bearing of arms. They settled in closed communities and tried to retain their national customs and habits thru German schools, thru religious instruction and by repression of association of the youth with Americans. The first settlers tried the village system, but that broke down in two or three years. These people were industrious, and frugal and as a result have become well-to-do and prosperous. The changes noticeable are greatest in economic and political lines. They have dropped their narrow views on politics thru intercommunication with their American neighbors and thru the press and are taking an active part in them. In social customs they are still quite different from their American neighbors and even pride themselves on that. They still regard intermarriage with English speaking peoples as undesirable and anyone who does so passes out of the social group. Higher

education has gained a firm hold upon the community and in order to keep the youth of the churches a college has been built. The social energies of the students are directed into religious channels and the too free social intercourse of the sexes is still repressed, "for the sake of those who made the school possible". There is a broadening out among the people and they have become real<sup>ly</sup> proud of our nation. Anyone who has resided here any length of time returns again to this country after he has given Russia a second trial. The general social atmosphere is such that "once an American" comes to mean "always an American". The visitors from Russia notice the great changes in customs, habits, mode of living and even in the language. Many English words have been taken up into the everyday life of the people and in time all will be English speaking. It is only a question of time. The educated people realize this and try to push this as far into the future as possible. The old immigrants view the future with gloomy forebodings, but the young people look to it with more or less of interest and think that day is still quite distant.

In concluding, it seems to ~~be~~ the writer that it is correct to say that the community is beginning to realize that the changes will go on until the people have been entirely Americanized in habits, customs and language.

Since this settlement is a closed one it may take a generation or so, but in outlying settlements it is happening already. The efforts of the community are therefore to accept the good of the American and combine it with the good of the German Mennonite, but discard the useless things of the past and avoid the "light and undesirable" of the American.

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