Personal Stories of Mennonite Migration:
A Journey from Ukraine to Canada

An Honors Thesis (HONRS 499)

by

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Abstract

Without a doubt, the Bolshevik Revolution altered the course of world history. Millions of lives were affected by the policies enacted by the communist leadership. German-speaking Mennonites living in Ukraine were one group that was particularly affected by Bolshevik policies, and more than 22,000 Mennonites would emigrate during the 1920s from the Soviet Union to Canada and other Western countries to escape persecution. Among those who fled the rapidly deteriorating conditions in the Ukrainian countryside were my paternal grandmother’s parents, Henry Koop and Margaret Enns. This thesis will discuss this major wave of Mennonite immigration, focusing on how Mennonites were targeted for persecution because of their German heritage and their relative wealth. Using the stories and accounts of my great grandparents and their families’ struggle to escape, I hope to place my family in larger historical context and illustrate through their experience the danger and uncertainty faced by Mennonites trying to escape the Soviet Union during the 1920s.

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Personal Stories of Mennonite Migration:

A Journey from Ukraine to Canada

Why should we concern ourselves with the stories of immigrants of the past? What relevance do those stories have in today’s society? In nations of the Western Hemisphere, the journeys of immigrants have always played an important role. Without the mass migration of people over time from Europe, Asia, and Africa, the West would be completely different. The stories of many of these immigrants naturally become lost overtime, but that does not negate their importance or their influence. All individuals come from somewhere, and investigation into the histories of individual families or small groups can lead to greater discoveries about the time in which those ancestors lived. The circumstances under which immigrants decided to leave their native homelands have residual effects and could easily have impacted their decisions and actions in their new homes.

The circumstances in which two of my great-grandparents, Henry and Margaret Koop, emigrated with their families from Ukraine to Canada in the 1920s were not quickly forgotten and would have consequences that I feel even now, three generations later. They were among nearly 22,000 Russian Mennonites who fled Russia after 1917.¹ Henry Koop came from a wealthy family that lived in the Molotshna settlement and would emigrate to Canada in 1924. In Canada, he would meet Margaret Enns, my great-grandmother, who came from a poor family from Schröenfeld, Ukraine in 1926. Despite being forced to flee their homelands with their families because of their Mennonite beliefs, Henry and Margaret were practicing Mennonites until their deaths in 2000 and 2001, respectively. Even though the Mennonite tradition was the

¹ (Loewen, et al. 1996, 251)
circumstance that forced them to leave Ukraine or face continued persecution, they did not abandon their faith when they arrived in Canada, despite the uncertainty that they and many other families faced as “the golden age” of Mennonites came to an end in 1917.²

The golden age for Mennonites had its beginnings in the 1780s, when Empress Catherine the Great of Russia “invited Europeans to settle in Russia” in exchange for “165 acres of farm land, religious freedom, and freedom from military service ‘forever’”.³ The Mennonites are a religious group of people that follow the teachings of Jesus Christ, believe in Anabaptism or adult baptism, and practice non-violence. Derived from Anabaptist groups that emerged during the Protestant Reformation, Mennonites are named for their leader, Menno Simons. Simons was a Dutch preacher who converted from Catholicism to Anabaptist beliefs in 1536, but unlike other Anabaptist groups, believed in pacifism.⁴ Persecuted by European rulers for their religious beliefs, Mennonites began to spread out from Switzerland to other parts of Europe, settling in areas where state leaders were more tolerant of their religious beliefs, particularly their need for military exemption. Many Mennonites would eventually settle in Prussia, cementing their ties with the German language and culture.

After persecution in Western Europe, Catherine’s promise of allowing Mennonites to have both land and practice their religion without state interference was seen by many as a “gift from God”.⁵ Their hard working nature had benefited them economically in Europe and was what had prompted Catherine’s invitation for them to migrate⁶, and for many who migrated to Russia to settle present-day Ukraine, they continued to prosper. Living in their own settlements,

² (Marrow 1983)
³ (Loewen, et al. 1996, 213)
⁴ (Loewen, et al. 1996, 111)
⁵ (Marrow 1983)
⁶ (Zhuk 2004, 40-41)
like Choritza and Molotshna, continued to maintain their German language and culture. Focused on their work, Mennonite families that prospered were able to create large farms and even factories that produced technologically advanced farm equipment. With their increased wealth, they were able to hire their Russian neighbors as workers, farmhands, and house workers.

The Mennonite experience in Russia also brought about ideological religious changes, which would eventually lead to a split between the Mennonites and lead to the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church. As groups of Mennonites came under the influence of Pietistic settlers from Europe, they distanced themselves from the "conservers" or the traditionalist Mennonites. This division within the Mennonite community called into question the Mennonite identity and led to a religious awakening, forcing all Mennonites to examine their beliefs. 7

The first wave of Mennonite emigration from Russia and another split within the community was prompted by events that occurred in 1871, when the government of Tsar Alexander II announced that the Mennonite colonists would lose their right to military exemption. Despite being given the option to participate in non-combatant roles such as in forestry or the health corps, nearly 18,000 Mennonites left Russia for the United States and Canada during the 1870s and 1880s, unwilling to compromise their faith and commitment to pacifism. 8 The Koop and Enns families were among the families who made the decision to stay, despite their men being conscripted to participate in the military. Cornelius Enns, Margaret’s father, was one such individual – he was conscripted to work as a secretary for the Army during World War I. 9

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7 For detailed information on the Mennonite revival and its impact on other groups, see (Zhuk 2004, 153-163)
8 (Loewen, et al. 1996, 240)
9 (Adelaide Fransen 2013)
The end of peace for the Mennonites, however, came after the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917. As all of Russia was plunged into a Civil War between the Reds, the Whites, and anarchist groups, Mennonites in particular found themselves as targets in the chaos. Their use of the German language and their distinctiveness from other groups made them suspicious in the eyes of the state. Their relative wealth in comparison to their Russian neighbors made them targets, because they were considered members of the bourgeois. As life became increasingly more difficult throughout the 1920s, many Mennonites desperately tried to escape what had become a living hell.

During the 1870s, Mennonites left Russia because they felt that the principles of their faith were being threatened. The families of my great grandparents decided to stay in Russia, despite the loss of their military exemption, because “things were going well there, so why would they leave?”\(^{10}\) However, when faced with the crises of the Civil War and its aftermath, they were unable to remain and were fortunate enough to be able to leave. Their stories help to illustrate that although many of those leaving Russia in the 1920s also left because they felt that their religious beliefs were being persecuted, many Mennonites had no other option but to try and emigrate. Unlike the mass immigration that took place during the 1870s, many Mennonites in the 1920s left because their physical survival was no longer secure in Revolutionary Russia.

**Historiography of Ukrainian/Russian Mennonite Migration**

The waves of immigration of the Russian Mennonites have been the subject of much research. Mennonites themselves have published numerous books and articles regarding immigration; the cultural identity for many Mennonites was shaped by their experience in Russia and the waves of emigration in the 1870s and the 1920s were significant to the identity of the

\(^{10}\) (Adelaide Fransen 2013)
whole group. Overviews of Mennonite history emphasize the Russian experience as a significant contributor to the Mennonite identity today. “Through Fire & Water: An Overview of Mennonite History” by Harry Loewen and Steven Nolt is the overview of Mennonite history that I used as the backdrop for my study on the Mennonite experience specifically from 1917-1929. “In Defense of Privilege: Russian Mennonites and the State Before and During World War I” by Abraham Friesen discusses the Mennonite identity in relation to the state, and how it came into question as Mennonites found themselves as an isolated minority in danger of losing their privileges.\(^\text{11}\)

Interviews and diaries from Mennonites who lived through these periods of change and their families are also valuable to research on this topic, providing an insight into the thoughts and feelings of individuals. I used several of these personal sources that focused on the lives of my great grandparents and their families, including a journal account of emigration written by Margaret’s younger sister, and notes from an oral interview I conducted with my grandmother and her siblings about their parents’ experiences. Oral histories are a valuable way to gain information about past events, and certainly are valuable in that they provide a personal perspective and reflection on those events. In addition to taking notes during the interview, the process should also be recorded. Appropriate research should be done beforehand and the questions asked focused but open-ended to “encourage the fullest response possible to each question.”\(^\text{12}\) Individual interviews are preferred, but for this project I interviewed my grandmother and seven of her siblings, with three additional family members also present at the

\(^{11}\) Abraham Friesen *In Defense of Privilege: Russian Mennonites and the State Before and During World War I (Perspectives on Mennonite Life and Thought)* (Kindred Productions, 2006)

\(^{12}\) For additional information on conducting oral interviews and resources, see Barbara Truesdell, “Oral History Techniques: How to Organize and Conduct Oral History Interviews,” Center for the Study of History and Memory, Indiana University, http://indiana.edu/~cshm/oral_history_techniques.pdf.
interview. The primary speaker during the interview was the oldest sibling, Adelaide Fransen. Throughout the interview, she spoke from notes she had about her parents’ lives.

Non-Mennonites have also done significant research on the Russian Mennonites, their research a testament to the influence that the Mennonite communities had in the settling of Southern Russia and the formation of Russian identity. Dr. Sergei Zhuk in his book “Russia’s Lost Reformation: A Story of Mennonite and German colonization in Russia and Ukraine” and in additional essays, explores the impact the Mennonites had on their Ukrainian peasant neighbors in both the areas of religion and economics by using their own successful lifestyle as an example.13 The work of James Urry, “None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789-1889” chronicles the Mennonite experience in Russia and explores the changes that the Mennonites as a community underwent as a result of their colonization of Ukraine, including the division within the group as a result of economic success.14 This economic success was analyzed by Natalia Venger in her book, “Mennonites as ‘the Russian Americans,’ or Problems of Colonization and Modernization in the South of the Russian Empire”, in which she attributes much of the Mennonite success in the region to their entrepreneurial spirit and well known “Protestant work ethic”.15


14 James Urry None But Saints: The Transformation of Mennonite Life in Russia, 1789-1889 (Pandora Press, 2007)

15 For a review of Venger’s work, see Sergei Zhuk, “Mennonites as ‘the Russian Americans,’ or Problems of Colonization and Modernization in the South of the Russian Empire,” Ab Imperio 3 (2011) 30-40; For additional research on Mennonite emigration from Russia to Kansas refer to Norman E. Saul, “The Migration of the Russian-Germans to Kansas,” Kansas Historical Quarterly 40 (Spring 1974) 38-62 and for additional research on the experience of Mennonites living in the Soviet Union in the 1920s Oksana Beznosova and Aleksandr Beznosova, “The Religious Life of Mennonites in the mid-1920s through the Eyes of the Soviet Political Police: the Case of the Fuerstenland Settlement,” in History and Mission in Europe: Continuing the Conversation, ed. Mary Raber and Peter F. Penner (Schwarzenfeld: Neufeld Verlag 2011)
My research also addresses these issues of economic prosperity and cultural identity, and how the chaos of the Russian Civil War and the following years convinced many Mennonite families that emigration was the only viable option. Using the stories of Henry and Margaret, I hope to demonstrate how these larger events impacted individuals and motivated them to uproot their families in an attempt to migrate. Specifically, the discrimination the Mennonites encountered as a result of their German heritage, the negative consequences of their economic success, and their being singled out as targets for anarchy during the Civil War all led to threats for their physical survival, and it was because of their concern for physical survival as opposed to spiritual survival, many Mennonites tried to emigrate from Ukraine during the 1920s.

**Cultural Discrimination**

Mennonites brought their German heritage with them to Russia. The commitment to their culture even after migrating to Russia helped to keep the Mennonite colonists isolated and naturally distinctive from native Russians and other ethnic groups. "The German language kept them separate within a country", is how my grandmother described her parents’ experience growing up in Russia but speaking German on a daily basis.\(^{16}\) One Mennonite woman growing up in revolutionary Russia recalled that, “We were taught one hour of Russian every week, otherwise all teaching was done in the German language.”\(^{17}\) This insistence on maintaining their language would have helped to contribute to the widening gap between the Mennonites and their Russian neighbors – unwilling to “Russianize” themselves, the Mennonites would have been considered foreigners, despite the fact that they had lived in Russia for generations.

\(^{16}\) (Adelaide Fransen 2013)  
\(^{17}\) (Dyck 1998, 14)
It was their language that had naturally kept them isolated from their Russian neighbors and it became a means of discrimination in the years leading up to and during World War I. Since the Germans were the enemy of Russia, all German colonists were viewed with suspicion by the Russian government and the Russian people. On November 3rd, 1914, a policy decision “prohibited the use of the German language in either public assembly or press”. The following year, another anti-German policy was declared, this time calling for German property owners to “sell their holdings within eight months”. Although neither of these laws were truly enforced because of the government’s preoccupation with the war itself, the fact that anti-German sentiment was turned into official, government policy with the goal of blatantly discriminating against its own people demonstrates just how isolated the Mennonites and other German speaking colonists were. Even though many Mennonite men served in noncombatant roles for the Russian military during World War I, including Cornelius Enns, they were not seen as heroes of war precisely because of the widespread hatred of anything German.

The German occupation of 1918 was a double-edged sword for the Mennonites. The anarchy that had begun to erupt in the region as a result of the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 had already begun to wreak havoc on Mennonite households. When the Germans occupied Ukraine as a part of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk in 1918, they brought with them some semblance of stability and peace by helping to reduce the anarchy in Ukraine. German soldiers shared the same language and culture as the Mennonite colonists, and as a result, some soldiers were housed and provided for by Mennonite families. This familiarity between the Mennonites and the soldiers was considered a betrayal of Russia by the Bolshevik government after the Civil War.

18 (Toews 1967, 28)
19 (Toews 1967, 28)
20 (Marrow 1983)
ended; in the minds of many, the Mennonites had aligned themselves with the occupiers against the Russian government. 21

This feeling that the Mennonites had betrayed Russia was not completely unfounded. Anarchy in Ukraine and the presence of the German Army had contributed to the creation of an organization known as Selbstschutz, or self-protection. 22 The very existence of this organization caused a split within the Mennonite communities of Ukraine, because the creation of a group of armed Mennonite men, even with the purpose of self-defense against bandits and invaders, was a violation of the Mennonite belief and commitment to nonviolence. “It’s very controversial. It’s the position of Mennonites who are peaceful pacifists and it became a big issue.” 23 The existence of the Selbstschutz during the war would lead to additional problems when the war had ended. When Mennonite leaders appealed to the Bolsheviks after the war that Mennonites were a peace-loving group, the existence of the Selbstschutz was brought up as evidence against that claim. But even more of an issue was that in late 1918 and throughout 1919, parts of the Selbstschutz had allied themselves with the White Army, which had taken control of the region. 24 They practiced military drills together and the Mennonite fighters were able to use White Army munitions and supplies. The presence of the Selbstschutz, in the eyes of the Bolshevik government, represented not only the Mennonite ties with the German Army, but also with the White Army resistance. Though many families did not participate in the Selbstschutz nor condone its actions, “in the eyes of the government this association implicated the entire Mennonite constituency of the South.” 25

21 (Toews 1967, 42)
22 (Toews 1967, 26)
23 (Adelaide Fransen 2013)
24 (Toews 1967, 32)
25 (Toews 1967, 32)
Once the Civil War ended, it became increasingly beneficial for Mennonites to distance themselves from their German heritage. To help Mennonite communities recover from the devastation of the Civil War and the famine that followed, an organization called the Verband der Mennoniten Süd-Russlands (Union of South Russian Mennonites) was created. Specifically, one of their goals was to take advantage of a decree issued by Lenin on January 4, 1919, which allowed committees to be formed to advocate for "anyone desiring exemption from military service for religious reasons." The existence of the Selbstschutz during the Civil War would make this feat incredibly difficult, but so would the task of making the VMSR a legal organization with rights. It was suggested to the chairman of the VMSR, B.B. Janz, by the head of the Ukrainian Cheka, Comrad Manzev, that the Mennonites could "consider [themselves] of Dutch descent", despite the fact that they spoke German. The VMSR became the Verband der Bürger Holländischer Herkunft (Union of the Citizens of the Dutch Lineage) on April 25th, 1922, obtaining legal status as an economic association that would allow the organization to communicate with the government in regards to reconstruction of the Mennonite communities and breach the topic of emigration. Ironically, with the introduction of the indigenization policy by the Bolshevik government in 1923, each national group was “to develop its culture and use its language in government institutions within the group’s national territory.” However, by that point the damage had been done, and while Mennonites were free to embrace their German heritage, they were not permitted to express their religious beliefs.

The German language helped Mennonites stay connected to one another and their faith when they migrated from Prussia to southern Russia. But their continued use of the German

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26 (Toews 1967, 53)
27 (Toews 1967, 76)
28 (Neufeldt 2009, 227)
language contributed to a divide between them and their Russian neighbors. In the case of the Mennonites, that alienation led to resentment which manifested itself in discriminatory policies and behaviors during World War I and the Civil War. The native Russians "were angry that [the Mennonites] were still speaking German. As a result those people thought the Mennonites put themselves above them and so they entered their homes and wanted to kill them." 29 Even though the Bolshevik government eventually allowed ethnic groups to maintain their own culture, the memories of persecution as a result of their German heritage was one of the key contributors that led to the families of Henry and Margaret to emigrate. Though they would continue to speak German at home and in their churches, they did not remain as alienated in Canada as they had in Russia, and like many other families, they pushed themselves to learn English so they could communicate with their new communities.

**Economic Conditions**

Beyond being separated from their Ukrainian and Russian neighbors because of their German language and culture, as a whole Mennonites were also separated due to their economic status. Mennonites and other German speaking groups were invited to settle southern Russia precisely because the Russian government wanted them to set the example for economic development in these unsettled provinces. 30 The "Protestant work ethic" that attracted the Russian government to the Mennonite people and the entrepreneurial spirit that Venger attributes to the Mennonites resulted in significant economic success, so much that Mennonites have been noted as "the most active participants" in bringing capitalism to southern Russia. 31 Certainly, the efforts of the Mennonites helped many parts of the region, extending beyond just their own

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29 (Adelaide Fransen 2013)
30 (Zhuk 2004, 41)
31 (S. Zhuk 2011); (Zhuk 2004, 45)
communities, but their wealth in comparison to their neighbors created the opportunity for resentment to build. During the Civil War, this resentment came to the forefront of relations between the Mennonites and their neighbors, their wealth making them targets.

Mennonites and other German speaking colonists had been invited to settle Southern Russia specifically because their industrious nature had caught the attention of the Russian government. Despite being colonizers of an unsettled area, these communities were able to create and maintain a thriving economy. Mennonite businessmen were largely successful, bringing to the region several useful industries that allowed the communities to grow and spread out, developing more land as they went. They built their own agricultural machine factories, the first in Southern Russia, which not only increased the productivity of the Mennonite community, but the productivity of the entire region and the rest of the Russian Empire.32

This success was a direct result from the Mennonite work ethic, which contrasted greatly with that of the stereotypical peasant Ukrainian and Russian workers. Mennonites were perceived to be determined, sober, and sensible. This hard-working culture set their communities apart from those of their Ukrainian neighbors; their villages were described as “dirty, impoverished, [and] ill-kept”.33 So beyond setting the business example for the native peasants, the Mennonites also set the example for cultural behavior that would lead to economic prosperity. Those peasants who worked as laborers for the Mennonites and in their homes and

32 (S. Zhuk 2011, 36); One of the first families to own a machine plant was that of Abraham Koop. It is unknown if he was a relation to Henry Koop’s family.
33 (S. Zhuk 2011, 37)
settlements were exposed to and influenced by this work ethic, and through that influence aspects of the Mennonite culture began to spread and mix with other cultures in the region.\textsuperscript{34}

The importance of land cannot be overlooked when examining the conflict that would arise between Mennonites and their neighbors; certainly the acquisition of large amounts of fertile land contributed to the wealth of the Mennonite community. Most peasants who lived in the countryside in imperial Russia did not have their own land, and the possession of land was one of the indicators of a higher legal status. German speaking colonists formed a minority of the population, but in the Ukrainian province of Ekaterinoslav, they “owned 12 percent of the ‘productive’ land” in 1890 and were given almost four times as much land as a Ukrainian or Russian peasant was given.\textsuperscript{35} However, it is important to note that while as whole Mennonite communities were wealthier than other ethnic groups in the region, not all Mennonites were equally wealthy. Land was not an infinite resource, and in 1865, approximately one third of the Mennonite colonists were without their own land and were considered to be poor.\textsuperscript{36}

Henry and Margaret’s two families represent the various levels of wealth within the Mennonite community very well. Henry Koop grew up in a family that was very well off – “his father owned a brick factory which employed a number of workers” and the farm that he grew up on produced a wide variety of food.\textsuperscript{37} Their true symbol of wealth, however, was the fact that they owned a McCormick binder, an American piece of farming equipment. When the famine struck Ukraine in 1921-1922, the Koop family was able to feed themselves, unlike so many

\textsuperscript{35} (Zhuk 2004, 45)
\textsuperscript{36} (Saul 1974); The lack of available land would have also been a contributor to the emigration of the 1870s and 1880s.
\textsuperscript{37} (Adelaide Fransen 2013)
others. Margaret Enns was not so fortunate. Her family did not have their own land, and as a consequence, they moved several times throughout Margaret’s childhood, going wherever they could get leftover land from relatives. Given the severity of the famine, without help from Mennonite Central Committee, it is likely that their hunger could have become fatal.\(^{38}\)

Despite the variance in wealth levels between Mennonite families, even the poorest Mennonite families were still able to hire native workers. Factories like the one owned by the Koop family employed Russian laborers, and large farms also required peasant labor. Henry’s father employed several workers in his brick factories and even Russian natives to shake the trees on his farm.\(^{39}\) Even Margaret’s poor family “had a cook, numerous housemaids to do the housework, and nursemaids to look after the children”, at least for a time.\(^{40}\) The difference between an employer and a worker would have been difficult to overlook, and there are stories of how the Mennonites “mistreated the Russians” that they employed and anecdotes suggest a sense of Mennonite superiority over the uneducated peasants.\(^{41}\) Research by scholars has also attributed some of the conflict between peasants and the Mennonites to the “real economic exploitation” that occurred.\(^{42}\)

When anarchy erupted in much of the countryside during the Russian Civil War, the wealth of the Mennonites made them targets. Already targets because of their German culture and language, their wealth made Mennonites the exact group that the Bolsheviks were trying to

\(^{38}\) Margaret mentioned having to pick weeds out in the woods to make a soup because of the severity of the famine. The Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) was created by North American Mennonites specifically to coordinate relief efforts to the conditions in Ukraine during the early 1920s. For additional information about the formation of MCC, refer to Harry Loewen et al., Through Fire & Water: An Overview of Mennonite History (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press 1996) 249-250 and John Towes Lost Fatherland: The Story of the Mennonite Emigration from Soviet Russia, 1921-1927 (Herald Press, 1967) 51.

\(^{39}\) (Adelaide Fransen 2013)

\(^{40}\) (Enns 1990)

\(^{41}\) (Enns 1990, 3)

\(^{42}\) (S. Zhuk 2011, 39)
overthrow. Many were categorized by the government as either kulaks, “better-off peasants who exploited poorer peasants”, or byvshie, members of the old privileged classes who owned land or had a higher social status. Committees of the Poor confiscated land, animals, and machinery belonging to Mennonites, and anarchist bands raided Mennonite settlements without mercy. Letters written by Mennonites in 1922 revealed that these economic and material concerns were one of their primary causes for emigration. Living in a land that no longer wanted them, unable to restore their agriculture because of their lost property, for many, “there were no prospects for future economic reconstruction.”

The deterioration of the Mennonite’s economic situation led the Mennonite leadership to approach the Bolshevik government, with the hopes of trying to rebuild relations and reestablish certain privileges that the Mennonites had held under the Tsar. Recognized as an economic association by the government, the VBHH, under the leadership of B.B. Janz, was able to ease some of the economic hardships faced by the Mennonite communities. However, given their experiences during the Civil War, many Mennonites wanted to explore the emigration option rather than focus on rebuilding their settlements. Until it was shut down by the Soviet government in 1926, the VBHH lobbied the government in order to secure exit visas. They also worked with Canadian Mennonites, and who were then able to put pressure on the Canadian government to open their borders to the Mennonites and worked out a deal with the Canadian Pacific Railroad to pay for the passage.

43 (Neufeldt 2009, 223)  
44 (Toews 1967, 84)  
"The Golden Age" for Mennonites was named as such in part because of the economic prosperity that they experienced upon migrating to Russia. Dedication, hard work, and a knack for innovation were profitable for the Mennonite communities. Even though the wealth was not spread equally among the different settlements, the Russian perception of the Mennonites was one of a well-off land owner with plenty of animals, machinery, and other material possessions. This stark contrast between the Mennonites and the peasants was enough to create a divide between the two groups. The anarchy of the Civil War, coupled with an increased dislike of the Mennonites as a result of the German occupation and the Bolshevik cause against them, was the catalyst for some poor peasants to turn against their neighbors. Certainly, some peasants had been exploited by their Mennonite bosses and their resentment against the community as a whole is rational; that built up resentment combined with a lack of land and food logically resulted in the looting of property. Having been looted or their property destroyed, the lack of an economic means to provide for themselves would have been one of the primary reasons for emigration.

The Anarchy of Civil War

During the Russian Civil War, the region in which many Mennonites lived was highly disputed territory. The areas in which the Mennonites lived switched sides numerous times, but not just between the two armies. As the Reds and the Whites struggled for control over the area, anarchist groups also fought to establish control, terrorizing the countryside. These anarchists fought against the Reds and the Whites, against each other, against the invading German army, and against the people. Mennonites, with their wealth and German heritage, were targeted by raids from all of these groups. The destruction of their settlements and communities was so great during the Civil War, that many doubted that they would be able to recover, and so prompted them to pursue emigration.
Although Mennonites suffered at the hands of both the Red and White armies, it is the anarchist Nestor Makhno that stands out in Russian Mennonite history as the "devil". Born in 1889 in a village north of the Molotshna colony, Gulyaypole, Makhno worked for Mennonite landowners. Like other native peasants who worked for Mennonite landholders, he became resentful of them as a result of feeling exploited. In 1908, Makhno was sentenced to life-imprisonment because of his involvement in revolutionary activities. His return came in 1917, when the Bolshevik Revolution resulted in his being set free from prison. Upon returning to Ukraine, he built up an army of peasants and bandits, waging war against the German army and the wealthy, including the Mennonites until he was defeated by the Bolsheviks in 1920.

The presence of Makhno’s army roaming the countryside was a major source of concern for the Mennonite communities, for several reasons. Most obviously, their physical wellbeing was in danger. Makhno’s men looted and plundered Mennonite farms and houses, taking food and valuables. The frequent occurrences of assault, murder, and rape were devastating – entire villages were destroyed and abandoned as people fled for safety. Disease also took its toll in the form of a typhus epidemic, which hit the Chortitza colony especially hard. According to some estimates, between 1,000 and 1,200 people died in the epidemic of 1919-20. Margaret’s family was threatened several times during these years. Her mother, Katherine, “was beaten with a revolver when she refused to say where Cornelius [Margaret’s father] was hiding.” For the Enns family, this threat of violence was the breaking point, and they fled their home and moved to the larger village in the Molotshna colony for safety.

46 (Marrow 1983)
47 (Toews 1967, 30-31)
48 (Loewen, et al. 1996, 248); (Toews 1967, 39)
49 (Enns 1990, 4)
Although the physical damage caused by Makhno’s armies was tragic, his raiding of the Mennonite settlements also caused an ideological break within the Mennonite community. Since Mennonites practice pacifism, they were easy targets for raiders because they were, in essence, defenseless. But the damage being caused by the various armies and groups was too great for many families to bear, and they gave up nonresistance with the intention of fighting in self-defense. The Selbstschutz guard was created to help fend off attacks from the anarchists. Aided as they were by the White Army, this guard was able to provide some form of defense for their families. However, the one of the characteristics of the Mennonite identity is pacifism, and the creation of this guard, even in self-defense, created a split within the Mennonite communities themselves, never mind the consequences that they would suffer later as a result of the Selbstschutz’s creation.\(^{50}\)

Since the Ukraine was such disputed territory during the Civil War, the damage caused by the Red and White armies also contributed to the destruction of Mennonite communities. Just like the Makhnovists, members of the two armies raided and looted the villages, and houses and other buildings were damaged during the fighting.\(^{51}\) The famine that occurred in 1921-22 was in part caused by the actions of these various armies and bands. Not only did they requisition food stuffs, but there are accounts of the Bolsheviks attempting to set up communal farms in the areas they had under their control. According to the family interview, at one point Margaret’s family were forced into a communal lifestyle by the government, but that failed and her father was

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\(^{50}\) When asked if Henry or Margaret’s families participated in the Selbstschutz, their children said that they had not. However, one of Margaret’s younger brothers was shot in a gun accident. The gun was given to Katherine Enns for protection, and it is possible it was given to the family by a Selbstschutz member.

\(^{51}\) (Toews 1967, 34)
jailed three times because he was unable to “raise the quota of wheat or money that was required.” 52

Additionally, a major concern was that young Mennonite men were being conscripted into the army and forced to fight. One of the major goals of the Union of South Russian Mennonites (what would become the VBHH) was to try and recover the Mennonite men who had been forced into the Army. Margaret’s older brother, Abram, was conscripted into the army and as a result was not allowed to emigrate with the rest of the family after the Civil War was over. 53 Henry Koop was also in danger of being pulled into the war. He was 13 or 14 when a Red Army officer commandeered Henry’s horse and wagon. Forced to transport the officer to an army outpost, “he knew that he would probably lose the wagon and the horse if he didn’t do anything”. Sneaking away with his horse and wagon, Henry hurried back to his village, keeping to the woods so that he would not lose his two valuable possessions and potentially his life. 54

The chaos of the Russian Civil war hit the Mennonite communities especially hard. Many families lost everything they had, and in the period of transition that followed the war, had no way of rebuilding their lives. The banditry that occurred forced many people, Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike, out of their homes, creating a refugee situation in a region that could no longer support them. The Civil War was the breaking point for the Mennonite community. It had tested not only their faith and their commitment to the practice of nonviolence, calling into question their identity as Mennonites, but it had put them in very real physical danger that cost hundreds of people their lives. Even when the Civil War finally ended and order was restored in

52 (Adelaide Fransen 2013)
53 (Enns 1990, 6) Contact was lost with Abram’s family in Russia after 1932, when the family learned that Abram had tried to escape to China and been captured.
54 (Adelaide Fransen 2013)
Ukraine, the violence that they had experienced was enough to convince numerous families, including the Koop and Enns family, that it was time to leave while they still could.

Conclusion

World War I marked a clear turning point in the lives of the Russian Mennonites. These were people who had been invited by the Russian government to help develop the Russian economy more than a century before, and they were incredibly successful in doing so. That success would contribute to their persecution beginning during the war and continuing as the Bolsheviks targeted them as “land-owning exploiters”. By the end of the Russian Civil War, the entire Mennonite way of life had been broken or completely destroyed. The farms and businesses that had kept their economy thriving had been ravaged by two armies and numerous anarchist groups and bandits. Their homes had been destroyed and their valuables taken. Disease and famine had taken the lives of many, weakening the community even further. Their identity as pacifists had been challenged over the question of whether or not they should fight back in self-defense. For the majority of the Mennonites, the golden age of prosperity that they had once known had simply ceased to exist.

The process of emigration itself was not an easy task, and required just as many hurdles to jump through. Limited visas were available, and large family groups wanting to emigrate together were often delayed due to those visas expiring and the strict health requirements of the Canadian government. Many, like Henry, were delayed in Moscow for several weeks while they advocated for themselves in order to obtain the visas. Even having a visa was not enough to secure their safe passage from Russia to Latvia – the heavily cramped trains were frequently
stopped before they had reached the "Red Gate". The authorities that searched these trains would look through and confiscate property, and even remove a passenger from the train, preventing them from leaving the country. From there, they left from Riga to England, where they were sometimes forced to stay for up to a year, waiting to be able to finish their journey to Canada. As perilous as the journey was, conditions worsened for those Mennonites unable to emigrate – the number of exit visas available to them dropped significantly in 1927 and was near impossible after 1929. Those unable to emigrate and who had not helped the Communist Party became targets for Stalin’s dekulakization plans, and many more Mennonites were killed or imprisoned during this campaign to liquidate the kulak class.

Henry and Margaret were fortunate to obtain exit visas with their families. Henry left Russia in 1924 and Margaret in 1926. Both would stay in South Hampton, England for a time before finally boarding a ship that would take them to Canada. Margaret’s family traveled aboard “The Empress of Scotland”, and began working the day after they arrived in Canada to begin paying off their debts. The Koops wealth had allowed them to pay their own way, but they too looked quickly to find work and a new community. Henry and Margaret met while participating in a church choir in Kingsville, Ontario in 1928, and were married soon after. My paternal grandmother, Ericka “Rickey” Schrag, is their fourth child of nine and was born in St. Catharine’s, Ontario in 1939.

55 The “Red Gate” was a gate on the border between Russia and Latvia. It became a symbol of freedom for the Mennonites. (Marrow 1983)
56 (Neufeldt 2009, 231)
57 For additional information about the Mennonite situation after the Civil War, including information about Mennonites participating in the dekulakization process, see Colin P. Neufeldt, “Separating the Sheep from the Goats: The Role of Mennonites and non-Mennonites in the Dekulakization of Khortitsa, Ukraine (1928-1930),” Mennonite Quarterly Review 83.2 (April 2009) 221 and Colin P. Neufeldt, “‘Liquidating’ Mennonite Kulaks (1929-1930),” Mennonite Quarterly Review 83.2 (April 2009) 259
The events of 1914-1922 were the catalyst that forced my great-grandparents and their families to emigrate, along with nearly 22,000 other Mennonite families escaping persecution. The Mennonite community had faced the consequences of their continued use of the German language and their culture, and they had much of their economic wealth taken or destroyed. The anarchy that was rampant in Ukraine during the Civil War aggravated the situation even further, making life in the newly established Soviet Union near impossible. A large part of their identity had been attacked, both from inside and outside forces. With everything they had ever known destroyed, it should not be surprising that many Mennonites held on to their faith, using it to derive hope that their situation could improve. Despite that hope, the threat against their physical lives had been too great to ignore, and it was to save their lives with the hope of rebuilding it somewhere new, that many Mennonites took a risk and immigrated to Canada.

The events that took place in Russia were clearly crucial to the history and identity of the Mennonite community, contributing to the strength of Mennonite presence in Canada and the United States. Their plight brought together separate groups of Mennonites to form the Mennonite Central Committee, which continues to aide and provide relief around the world. The migration of so many people would have an impact on their new communities, their presence impacting everything from the economy to the culture. More than their influence in Canada and the United States as a result of their migration, the Mennonite story demonstrates the question of identity that is relatable to all immigrants. Their identity was threatened by their experience, but its survival suggests the strong ties to core values and a sense of community is not easily destroyed. The Mennonites have shown that emigration is not about losing one’s identity or culture, but about its preservation and development, even in the face of tragic events.
Appendix A: Family Trees

The Heinrich Koop Line

Helena Heinrich Koop
b. Jan. 1872
m. Aug. 1891
Helena Ediger
b. Oct. 1974
d. Jan. 1952

Katharine
b. Oct. 1892
d. Jul. 1962

Anganetha
b. May 1894
d. Dec. 1976

Sara
b. May 1896
d. May 1971

Anna
b. Jul. 1898
d. May 1971

Susanna
b. Jul. 1898
d. Mar. 1986

Heinrich Heinrich Koop
b. Aug. 1869
d. Mar. 1949

Sarah Klassen
b. Jan. 1881
d. Aug. 1988

Heinrich Margaret Enns
b. Feb. 1906
d. Mar. 2000

Margaretha
b. Sep. 1903
d. Feb. 1998

Jakob
b. Jun. 1914
d. Apr. 1982

Lydia
b. May 1917
d. Nov. 2001
Appendix B: Interview Questions and Transcription

Date of Interview: February 23, 2013

Interviewees: Adelaide Fransen, Ester Nuefeldt, Pete & Fritz Funk, Rickey Schrag, Henry Koop, Helen Koop, Ann & Moe Hunsberger, Alf & Liz Koop, Mark Schrag

Interview Questions:

1. Biographical Information
   a. What were their (Henry and Margaret) legal names?
   b. When were they born?
   c. Where were they born?
   d. The names of their parents and their birthdates
   e. Dates of death

2. Logistical Questions about Journey
   a. When did they leave Russia?
   b. Where did they leave from?
   c. When did they arrive?
   d. Where did they arrive?

3. Under what circumstances did they leave Russia? Did they plan well in advanced or did they leave in a hurry?

4. What were their causes for wanting to leave?
   a. How did they and their families react to the Russian Civil War? Were they affected by it?

58 Adelaide was the primary speaker during the interview. Throughout, she referenced notes she had from talking with her parents in 1996.
b. Did they leave as a reaction to the Civil War?

5. What kind of life were they leaving behind?
   a. Were they peasants or land owners?
   b. What was their social status in terms of wealth?
   c. Were they connected to the community?

6. Why did they leave when they did and not sooner?
   a. The first wave of emigration happened during the 1870s, why did they not leave then?

7. Did their reasons for leaving relate to their Mennonite faith?
   a. Did they feel safe practicing their religion?

Interview Transcription:\[59\]

Jacque: This is for my history capstone and my honors thesis that I need to have done to graduate. What I'm doing is looking at my great-grandparents, your guys' parents, emigration from Ukraine to Canada. The questions that I have are focused on that. What I'm doing with that information is putting it into broad historical context because there's quite a bit of research already done on the general reasons why Mennonites emigrated during this particularly time. So that's what I'm doing. So to start with, I have biographical information questions: legal names, birth dates, birth place.

Adelaide: I have some of that yes. Are you talking about your great-grandparents?

Jacque: Yes.

Adelaide: Henry H. Koop was born in Alexanderkrone, South Russia or you could say the Ukraine. Molotshna. I don't know if you need that.

Jacque: I'd rather have more information than not enough.

Adelaide: Henry H. Koop was born in Alexanderkrone, South Russia or you could say the Ukraine. Molotschna. That's where he was born. Your great-grandmother, Margaret Enns, was her name, her maiden name. E-n-n-s, was born in the village of Schröebrun.

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59 Given the number of people present during the interview, interjections to ask questions, clarify points, or spelling were frequent. These were left out of the transcription of the interview, as were small side discussions that took place that were irrelevant to the topic. When large sections have been removed, it is indicated by [...]
Mark: What year?

Ester: Her name was Margaret, not Margareta.

Adelaide: 1908. Henry was 1906. Was else did you need? She moved around a lot. Do you want me to say some of the notes that I have on her? A little bit more about her?

Jacque: Yeah!

Adelaide: Her grandparents lived in the middle of a 6 farm village. Mom's parents lived across from the school. When Mom was three years old, she moved to Dovilyoucanava, where her father bought a general store, a thousand miles by train from where she was born, from Schroebrun. She moved within the city, I guess several times, across the tracks she says. And then in 1915-1916, she moved to Schrenfeld and she started school at the age of 7. But anyway, you don't have to write this down but let me clarify what happened. He actually went broke. He and a friend started this general store. They just went broke. Okay. 1915 moved to Schrenfeld. Her father took over a farm. I think he farmed, but he didn't own the farm, but I think he ran the farm. In 1917 they moved to Blumenfeld and moved in with their grandparents, the Jansens. They lived there for a few months until her father came home from the Caucasian mountains. He had been conscripted and he worked as a secretary in the Army, I guess.

They moved back to Schrenfeld to grandfather's farm until 1920. Government ordered a communal lifestyle. And they lived with Russian peasants in the same house and farmed together. This experiment did not turn out well and so it was disbanded. So at that time, I guess for a very short time, there was some kind of experiment going on.

Bolshevik bands came and plundered houses and villages. These were difficult times. Now, this was an interview I had with my mother, so these are the things I'm telling you now from my notes. I just made notes; I didn't write them out in full sentences. Bolshevik bands came and plundered houses and villages. These were difficult times. They were forced to flee to Petershager. Where, and you don't have to write this down, Uncle Pete was born and they lived on a farm which had belonged to her great grandfather. Her father was elected as a mayor which was not always a glamorous position. Are you keeping up with me?

Jacque: Yes. It is being recorded so you don't have to worry about the notes too much.

Adelaide: Again I'll talk about my mother, your great-grandmother. Her father had to go to jail 3 times because he could not raise the quota of wheat or money that was required.

From 1920-24 they lived in Ladekopp where they had an auction and October 1926 they left Russia. They spent 6 and a half months in England at Atlantic Park which was South Hampton, because of health reasons. This had to do with eyes.

On May 28th, 1927 they arrived in Canada.

Ester: They arrived in Quebec City.

Adelaide: From Montreal to Kingsville they took to train. How they got to Montreal, I don't know. They took the train and they were taken in by the John Dyck family, which was a relative of theirs. The next day, and there was no time to recuperate from jetlag, mother began her first
job in the Cowan household. She spent two years there. She knew no English when she started there, except for "Yes" and "no" and "good day". And she also worked in Limington at Diana Sweets, which is a restaurant. She also worked at Kimberley's for 8 dollars a week. Which helped pay off the "reiseschuld", travelling debt. I don't know how much you know about the Mennonite immigration during the twenties. The CPR, Canadian Pacific Railway Company, sponsored our Mennonite people, which they later had to pay off. Difficult time that they, the people who were assigned to collect this money, often had doors slammed on them for some reason or other. A lot of them didn't have the money. They came around close to Depression times and they had a hard time finding jobs.

Fritz: Mother still had a debt when they got married and that was two years later, right?

Ester: The CPR got involved because there were Mennonites in Canada already from the 1870s immigration.

Adelaide: In 1928, Henry Koop arrived in Kingsville from the West. They both sang in the choir. They remember meeting at a wedding and they were the winners of a circle game and were lifted high up on chairs. Their first child was born on September 25, 1931 and was buried in Ruthorn. They moved to Jordan and then to Khris Fretzed. That was a farm where they worked and then they went back to Jordan. They worked at Whispers for three winters and earned $25 a month. Adelaide and Lydia were born during this time 1933 to 1935. In 1936 they moved to a farm in St. Catherine's, which is where they stayed. So that's all I have up to that point, but we can give you more details up to that point.

Jacque: Can I get her parents' names?

Adelaide: Cornelius and Katherine.

Jacque: What was the last name?

Ester: Enns.

Fritz: Her maiden name was Janzen.

Adelaide: I can give you more genealogy later.

Ester: If it would be on value to you, I didn't think about bringing it, but I can scan their papers, the log of the ship that mom came on.

Jacque: That would be helpful.

Adelaide: What was the name of the ship?

Liz: The Empress of Scotland.

Ester: Yes, the Empress of Scotland. I'm pretty sure, it will say on the information that I send you.

Adelaide: Do you have anything to add about what mom might have said about their journey or their time in Russia?
Rickey: Well you didn't talk at all about the famine.

Adelaide: That's right, I didn't. I do have those notes somewhere else.

Rickey: First of all, and you didn't say this, my mother's family were always the poorer family because my grandfather was not a land owner. And in villages that family always got left over land or he was a storekeeper and didn't make a good go of it. He wasn't a good businessman. He was a real people person. He led choirs in church, later on he was on this committee that helped Mennonites come to Canada, but he was not a business person or a farmer.

Adelaide: He was not a farmer.

Rickey: He was not a farmer. And yet it was a large family. My mother's family was a poor family. Anyways I was going to start in on the famine. What years were that? That's what I don't know.

Jacque: Which one?

Adelaide: Early 1920s.

Rickey: Because they didn't own, my dad's family would have had a lot of chickens they could kill, but mom's family was very poor and very hungry. Mom talks about going out into the woods and getting weeds to make a soup. Mom talked about that kind of stuff to me.

Adelaide: They had their last piece of bread and then the MCC moved into the Ukraine and helped out with a soup kitchen. So that really kept them, now Dad's family was not affected.

Ester: It was quite a different lifestyle. The Famine was in Russia, you'd be able to look up, because it was all of Russia.

Rickey: This would have helped prompt the Ennses to move to Canada, to emigrate. Not just the famine, the persecution, but also the fact that grandpa didn't have land and didn't have anything. Those are the things that prompted that family to want to move

Alf: Yes. The famine was partly government induced. It was partly because of the government's policy that were being introduce into communal practices, and it was because of these the famine actually started. It wasn't only the conditions of the

Alf: Absolute yes. The famine was partly government induced. It was partly because of the government's policies that were being introduced to communism, to communal practices, that the famine actually started. It wasn't only the conditions of the war, but it was the introducing of the communal styles. It was also because of the anarchy that was rampant there. I guess that's where Adelaide said that the Bolsheviks were a part of the problem. It was mostly anarchy and the bandits that were roaming the country. And all of these conditions were the reasons that the folks that wanted to emigrate, because of the banditry and the lawlessness, and Wild West conditions that were going on. The other thing would have been because of their faith was being tested and their religion was being restricted because what they could do and teach and preach in their churches and schools.
Adelaide: The Russian peasants were jealous of the Mennonites because the Mennonites had done so well on their land, and maybe replaced them [the Russian peasants] and they were doing well. That was a big part of why they left.

Adelaide: You will read about the red army and the white army, and all of that, we don't need to tell you about all of them.

Jacque: I know the historical background, but were they affected by it?

Rickey: Oh yeah.

Jacque: And in what way?

Adelaide: They were forced to give their best horses. They were forced to bring provisions to the front. Dad, as a 16-17 year old, took a team of horses to the front with provisions for the Army. That was quite an adventure.

Jacque: Which one, because there was also Makhno? You have the red army, the white, and him. Which one did they have to help?

Rita: They didn't have to provide any provisions for Makno, because he just took whatever he wanted from whomever.

Rickey: He raided.

Rita: When the Red Army went through, then they had to provide food for them. When the front changed and the White Army went through, they had to do the same thing for them. It could have been either one because the front changed many number of times right through that area where they lived.

Adelaide: Henry H Koop, and there was a whole long line of them.

Ester: Heinrich Heinz, wasn't that his name, really?

Adelaide: Was born in January 28th, 1906 and Alexanderchron, Molochyna Ukraine. His parents were Heinrich Heinrich Koop and Helena Adelaidega. He had a happy childhood. His mother decided that he was ready for school and so he went to school at age 6 only to be sent home because he was too young. She only had two boys and she was the second woman in the family.

Ester: The heir and the spare

Adelaide: He spent 6 years in elementary school, Dorfschule,

Ester: Which would be like a village school.

Adelaide: After which his ambitious mother pushed him to get to high school. He failed his first year because of lack of preparation. He was not ready for the challenges of a higher course. His bout with typhoid fever and the fact that he had to miss 6 weeks of school could also have contributed to this. It was rampant in these families and many people died in those years. Dad confessed that he resorted to a little cheating by copying the work of his good chum, a very clever student who sat next to him.
Dad's favorite subjects were math and geography. He enjoyed playing ball and especially swimming. He had skating on the river. He was fortunate enough to have a very good pair of skates. They were very well off. Alexanderchron had 40 full farms. It had a church, a drugstore, a mill for grinding wheat, and a doctor.

Rickey: The church is still there. I've been there. It's now Ukrainian Greek orthodox. But it is being used a church.

Adelaide: His father owned a brick factory which employed a number of workers. Dad grew up on a large farm which grew wheat, hay, oats, barley, corn, and sunflowers. There were fruit trees such as plums, grapes, which were dried for the winter. They employed Russian natives to shake the trees. Dad and friend, Herman Dyck, built a tent and stayed and slept there to prevent thievery of the plums. Other workers were employed to help with the harvest. His father was a progressive, prosperous farmer. They owned two blinders, one of which was a McCormick binder from the US and was pulled by horses. One person drove the horse, while the other looked after the binder.

Rickey: That spoke about their wealth; that they could bring American machinery to Ukraine.

Adelaide: As conditions worsened more primitive methods were used. Dad talks about his father having remarried. The family was not spared illness. Dad remembers how ill he and other members of the family were during the typhoid epidemic. Sarah was a nurse and came to nurse the family. They were not allowed to eat and became very weak. [...] During the later years, Dad remembers the condition economic and politic deteriorated and many people suffered illness, starvation, and violence. Even to the point of being killed and dying. The Koop family was spared. MCC brought food for distribution to the needy but the Koops were able to look after themselves.

Ester: What were the circumstances when dad took the horse, when Makhno was in the village?

Alf: Dad kept the horse, and I'm not sure what he was actually transporting. But he had to transport and officer, I think it was for the Red Army, 6 or 8 hours away from the village and he was supposed to take this officer to this outpost or whatever. When he got there he knew that he would probably lose the wagon and the horse if he didn't do anything. So when the officer went into the outpost and left his briefcase or his papers on the cart, and your grandfather threw them on the ground and got out with the horse back to his village. That way he saved his horse, his wagon.

Rickey: And his life.

Ester: I think that's the same story and they went after him. So he was hiding in the woods or the forest on his way back.

Rickey: I heard that he rode back all night to get back with these horses. I thought he was 15 or 16.

Alf: It probably would have been about 1918 or 1919, those were the worst years. Anarchy was worse in 1919, the revolution was in 1917, and all of that took place in the next years. So he was 13 or 14 when this happened.
Adelaide: As far as their emigration is concerned.

Rickey: Why did that family decide to go?

Adelaide: I don't have that. Maybe you people can help you out here. I remember some stories.

Ann: Didn't they take over the farm? They took over their farm and they had to leave, right? The communists took.

Alf: They actually sold their farm. We know the people that actually lived in that place after they left. [...] They had bought it for very little. They had practically left without getting any money for it. I don't know they left. It was probably an accumulation of circumstances, and I think I talked to Dad or grandpa many times and got the sense that it was as much for the religious persecution as it was for their faith, their church, and school, as much as it was for the economic conditions. Economic conditions were very poor. Communism was coming in. The economic conditions were one thing, but it was equally as much because of the persecution of their faith.

Adelaide: Do you know the story of them having an auction? And I think they all went towards Moscow and dad stayed in Moscow... why, exactly? Was it because of health or...?

Ester: Dad stayed behind in England for a year, not in Russia. He had to go to Moscow by himself for medical reasons.

Adelaide: in Moscow, he did talk about going to see the Circus and I want to say Opera.

Rickey: He was there by himself.

Adelaide: By himself. And he was what? Does anybody have the date of emigration?

Rickey: 1926

Alf: He was advocating. 1925.

Ester: '26 when mom moved.

Alf: December of '24 when he was in England for Christmas. So it was in January '25, so he wasn't quite 18 yet.

Adelaide: Can you imagine then the large city of Moscow? And he had time to spare there. I guess he was there because of his eyes.

Rickey: I think so. Well, no, just a minute. He had this spot in his lung, and I'm thinking now that it was part of his typhoid. That's why he wasn't conscripted into the army. Otherwise he would have been.

Adelaide: But he was too young for the army.

Ester: Would that have been part of it, Alf? Being conscripted.

Alf: Yeah, definitely. I think that's why they got him out.

Adelaide: Why was he in Moscow?
Rickey: To get special papers.

Alf: I know it was to register for his papers. His papers weren't in order. He needed to get it straightened out and in order. It wasn't nearly as long as he was in England. It was only a few months, in England it was that whole year.

Adelaide: So after he was released in Moscow and got as far as England, he was in England because of his eyes?

Rickey: Canada wouldn't let them come if they weren't healthy.

Adelaide: Dr. Durry, a Canadian doctor, would come to Russia and examine people before they even left.

Rickey: Canada was not going to take anybody sick.

Adelaide: That information is in other places.

Ester: Most Mennonites talk about the Red Gate.

Adelaide: that's the boundary.

Rickey: In Riga, Latvia.

Ester: They would have passed through there on the train. When they first crossed into Latvia.

Adelaide: They would go as far as the port and where was the port where they took off from?

Anne: Riga.

[...]

Adelaide: It's the capital of Latvia. What's the name of the Port? I forgot.

Alf: It was Riga. The border had no city. The border between Latvia and Russia was where the Red Gate was, there was no real city there.

Adelaide: Riga is where many people were detained as well because of health reasons. All the way along, they talk about delousing. I can't say that about our parents, but a lot of people were deloused.

Rickey: They were living in box cars; they were living in terrible conditions. They picked up all kinds of germs and diseases.

Adelaide: Do you know zwieback are? They would take those on their long journey. That journey would take months sometimes.

Alf: We just googled Riga and it says right here that Riga is a sea port and a major industrial and cultural city on the Baltic Sea region. It's a large sea port.

Rickey: From there they went to South Hampton, England. And this is all because of the Canadian government not wanting to take sick people.
Ester: here's a source of history stuff, if you've got two hours to watch "and when they shall ask". That will give pretty accurate historical information in terms of the general.

Adelaide: Where are we now?

Jacque: I have a couple of other, additional questions.

Adelaide: I was just saying that before many of our immigrants left their country, the provisions that would keep for many days, weeks, and months, were these zwiebach that had been roasted or whatever. Toasted. And they would take bags and bags of those. Anything else you can add to this whole journey from Russia to Canada?

Jacque: We talked about the reasons that were a kind of accumulation. What kind of circumstances did they leave in? Was it a well-planned, we have to go a-b-c to do this? Was it in a hurry? Was it secretive? What kind of circumstances was it, if we know?

Mark: And how big of a group? Was it just their family that went or was it the whole community that went together?

Jacque: Because during these years, there was like 20,000 Mennonites who left. I want to know how they left.

Rickey: They both left in groups, but I don't know how big of groups.

Adelaide: The Ennes and Koops left in different groups at different times.

Ester: Definitely different circumstances.

Anne: See mom's family went with the Janzen's that I know.

Ester: The ship's log has a lot of Mennos on it. They were definitely in a pretty big group coming from England.

Rickey: Different ones left Ukraine at different times. By the time they got to South Hampton, they were already. Some of those Ukraine people were able to go right away to Canada, and some had to stay in England. They left as, most were families. But because our families are so large.

Ester: But neither family was in the dark of the night rushing out and hiding. We would have heard that.

Rickey: They were not refugees, either family really.

Adelaide: But they did have to have permission from the Russian/Ukraine government to emigrate.

Ester: And that's why mum's oldest brother was in the Army and didn't come. He wasn't allowed to come.

Adelaide: I've given Rickey a translation of letters that were written during the '30s, I guess, of this Abram that was not allowed to come. He tried so hard to come to Canada. Many, many
times he tried to come to Canada and was denied. These letters tell you of the conditions that he lived through and their terrible, terrible conditions. Those letters are so sad. Everybody should read them.

Rickey: I do think it wasn't just mom's siblings and her parents. It was them and maybe her father's brother and his family. They were all relatives, I think. But I would guess 50-60 people in groups would come.

Jacque: Okay, so, do you know how soon in advance they were planning on leaving?

Rickey: Don't know.

Alf: It could have been as much as 6 months or a year when they were starting plans. It took a long time to get documents in order.

Adelaide: Are you going to be doing the '40s' immigration as well?

Jacque: No

Adelaide: okay, because I keep thinking of those things too.

Ester: They came legally. They never snuck out of the country, but, you'll see in the movie. Even though they had all the legal papers, on that train, until they got through that Gate, they could have all, the train would be stopped sometimes, and they would just arbitrarily, it appeared, take people off the train and no one is sure what happened to those people.

Adelaide: And mom's brother, like your great grandmother's brother, we just talked about, he was of Army age, conscripted to the Army, and later on tried, the family thought he was going to serve his time and then come over. He was never given permission. After our family, the Enns came over, the gates were kind of closed and the Russian government would not allow people to emigrate. I often wonder what happened to him. We think we have family there now. He had a wife. We have a picture of her; a Russian wife.

Jacque: So would Henry's family be considered kulaks? Like wealthy landowners?

Ester: They were pretty wealthy.

[...]

Jacque: It was a label that was applied to peasants by Stalin so he could target them later.

Alf: It was any one who owned land was a kulak, so most of the Mennonites and all of our parents. The Enn's may not have been as much because they were without land. Being a kulak meant you owned land.

Adelaide: Land was getting scarcer all time, as children of these originals came along; there was less and less land. They did start new colonies in other parts. What I was going to say was Mennonites, a lot of them became very rich and owned factories and yeah.

Ester: There are certainly stories of that wealth and how they mistreated the Russian.
Adelaide: Some did, I wouldn't say everybody did.

Ester: No, but Mennonites were not perfect in that regard.

Rickey: That's what part of the anarchy was.

Adelaide: Our families all had Russian employees, even people who were relatively poor like the Ennses. They had nannies. You could hire people for very little money, but it would give them a job. I think part of it was it gave them a job and it helped them out because they had large families. They had help.

Alf: The definition for kulak was peasant farmers who owned land. So basically the Mennonites came as farmers and they were given this land by Catherine the Great. So they were considered kulaks. And they were the ones the Revolution was trying to destroy.

Ester: We tend to glorify how good we were as Mennonites and I'm not sure we all were.

Jacque: One of the articles I'm using for research actually says quite the opposite because they took advantage of the situation to avoid being persecuted.

Rickey: There are definitely two sides to that story.

Jacque: Okay, another question, so the first kind of wave of immigrants happened during the 1870s. Why did they not leave then?

Ester: Why did they wait?

Adelaide: Because things were going so well and they did become very well. Certain circumstances. People got rich. Things were going well there, so why would they leave? By then it was their country?

Ester: Wouldn't the 1870s emigration be mostly, um, more went to the US and then through the US into Canada?

Adelaide: Some went directly to Canada.

Ester: Far more, a lot more in the US than in Canada from the 1870s.

[...]

Ester: The Selbstshutz army. We haven’t talked about it.

Adelaide: Oh yes. Who’s going to say something?

Rickey: Tell her what that is.

Ester: Do you know something about that?

Jacque: That was the army that made themselves to protect themselves, right?

Ester: It's very controversial. It's the position of Mennonites who are peaceful pacifists and it became a big issue. They did and they didn't. The finger wagging that went with it.
Adelaide: Books have been written about that too.

Ester: To our knowledge nobody in either of our parents' families was involved in that.

Rickey: I've never heard that.

Ester: You've done a lot of research on this already.

Adelaide: That's good.

Jacque: All the questions I have you guys have answered.

Adelaide: If you want a little more detail, pooling our heads together here. Just ask.

Jacque: I guess I'm most interested in how they were affected by the Civil War and that transition, and how that would influence their reason to move, but I think we covered that unless you have more details to share.

Adelaide: One thing that I think we could say. There were about three major immigrations: 1870s, 1920s, and by the way, 1930, and you've probably read this, the door closed. Those who went to Moscow were sent back. And then the 1940s. Those people will have some terrible, much more terrible stories. Had a much more people involved in that than we did. If you want to hear about bad stories, that would be it.

[...]

Liz: I have a story that mom used to tell about Mrs. Peter Janzen. How I recall it, mom was telling the story of how this happened to Mrs. Peter Janzen when she was just a child. The bandits, I believe it was either one of the armies or the bandits and came into the house. They were going to threaten or take stuff or kill people, they didn't know what, the little girl, Mrs. Janzen, was I guess sang a song or did something and they were taken in by this little girl and how sweet she was and they didn't kill anybody in the household and then they left. I think it's written up in a book that Cornelia Lane wrote. Do you remember that? She wrote a couple of books about people who lived out a peaceful life. This story is in there. They came away through that episode with their lives and were because of how the military reacted to this little girl.

Ester: Another story about Mrs. Peter Janzen. This would have been her good friend when they were in elementary school, they would have been in grade two or something like that. They had this little contest. She would put her finger in Mrs. Janzen's mouth and Mrs. Janzen would put her finger in her mouth and they would see who would cry first and they would bite. They would see who would cry first. Just a little tidbit.

Jacque: According to my research there was an organization called, I think the English translation is, Union Citizens of Dutch Lineage (VBHH), who advocated the Mennonite cause to the Bolsheviks to try and get them out. Did they interact at all with the People of Dutch lineage?

Adelaide: There was a time when Germany and the Mennonites in Germany and in Holland, they were aware of some of the conditions in Russia and they did try to get help them. But I don't think that ever worked out. I don't know if that's what you're talking about.
Jacque: It's an organization under the leadership of BB Janz and Philip Cornies. I know they were important. Did they help them?

Ester: But BB Janz was involved with MCC?

Adelaide: Who was it that helped with immigration? There were three or four important people who got together and helped people get out.

Jacque: What I'm asking is if they helped Henry and Margaret?

Rickey: They helped in that they helped our families get the loans that they needed to make the trip. They did the negotiations with the CPR.

Ester: This would have been, it was out of this that Mennonite Central Committee was born, wasn't it? Feeding and helping the refugees?

Adelaide: This was an organization in Russia, wasn't it?

Jacque: This is one in Russia, yes.

Adelaide: It was exactly was Rickey was saying. They also negotiated with Moscow.

Jacque: I just want to make sure I have the right organization.

Adelaide: They had 3 or 4 goals. They had to get permission to leave the country, they had to find a country that would take them, like Canada; and they had to be able to pay for this journey. So those are at least three things that this group looked after.

Mark: Was it an expensive journey? You talked about loans.

Adelaide: I guess that's relative. It took a long time. Some people could pay their own way, the Koops pretty much paid their own way. But the Ennses had debts for a long time. They had to work, all of the children worked. Mom worked the next day to start to pay off the debt.

Rickey: Somebody had already set up jobs for them.

Alf: It was opportunist. The First World War was still going from 1914-1918. And guess who the bad people were? The Germans. It was prudent for the Mennonites to claim Dutch lineage during that First World War.

Adelaide: You wonder why in this acronym, they don't have the word Mennonite instead of a country? It was must have been opportunist reason for this to not be affiliated with religious organizations.

Rickey: There were not just Mennonites leaving, there were lots of other groups leaving.

Jacque: Another question I had was Mennonites in general were being discriminated against because of German heritage. They were being persecuted not just because they were wealthier than their Ukrainian neighbors, but because of the German occupation. How did that affect them at all?
Rickey: Well yeah. These anarchists especially.

Adelaide: It would have been one more reason for being despised. Because they’re foreigners.

Ester: They kept their language after all those years.

Jacque: yes, I know that. I'm aware of the general; I want to know if there are specific instances. If it affected them and would have been a part of their decision to leave?

Rickey: I've said, the anarchists were made up of even people who had been servants of the Mennonites. Those people were angry that they were still speaking German. As a result, those people though the Mennonites put themselves above them and so then they entered their home and wanted to kill them. That's what started happening with this anarchy. They raped women and it was because of the German language, also. There were so many more than one reason.

Ester: It's hard to know which specific reason. It's an accumulation of circumstances.

Rickey: The German language made them separate within a country
Appendix C: A Pilgrimage – The Story of Katharine Janzen and Cornelius Enns

The following are scanned images from an account compiled by Justina “Jessie” Enns, Margaret’s youngest sister. This account discusses the Enns’ family way of life and their journey of emigration.

A PILGRIMAGE

THE STORY OF
KATHARINE (JANZEN) (1880 - 1948)
AND
CORNELIUS ENNS (1880 - 1934)

circa 1903
During the 18th century, Catherine the Great invited people from other countries to settle in Russia to clear the land. She promised them the right to retain their own language and culture as well as freedom of religion. This was of particular importance to Mennonite people living in Europe at that time. They were nonresistant. Their religion was against warfare and the bearing of arms. Consequently, there was an influx of Mennonite people from neighbouring countries such as Holland and Prussia into Russia. They formed their own communities and built their own schools and churches. (Some of these privileges were later rescinded under Tsar Alexander II in 1870 making Mennonites no longer exempt from military service. They did have the option to choose an alternative service in “forestry” for three years, or as a medical orderly, or as an office administrator in the army service.)

Our earliest known ancestor was great-grandfather, Herman Enns, of Schoenfeld, Russia, born on March 8, 1818. He married Justina Groenig of Prussia when he was twenty-three years of age and they had five children, the youngest son being Cornelius (our grandfather). In 1855 Herman Enns died and his widow, Justina married a widower of that village, named Peter Dueck. Peter Dueck had three sons by his previous marriage, one of whom was called Johann.

In 1876, our grandfather, Cornelius Enns married Katharine Driedger who bore three sons - Cornelius (our father), and his brothers, Peter and Herman (both later of Waterloo). Johann Dueck married Anna Driedger, the sister of Katharine. They also had three sons, but only one survived.

In 1885 the Cornelius Ennsses and the Johann Duecks were two of six pioneering families to establish a new community not far from Schoenfeld called Schoenbrunn. Not only were these two families closely related, but they were close friends and lived on adjacent farms.

In 1891 a one room school was built in Schoenbrunn, and the following year a brick plant was built. From then on all of the houses and barns were built of bricks made in that plant. Orchards were planted, and forests were planted across the road from each farm. A blacksmith’s shop was built with living quarters attached where a blacksmith could live rent-free. He was paid by whoever used his services. The village herdsman, a Russian, had the same privileges. Thus making eight families in all.

At the lower end of the village a small creek had been dammed to form a three or four acre pond which was stacked with fish. The villagers owned one large Gill net, which was pulled periodically by horses for a catch. The catch was then divided equally among the eight families. At the overflow-end of the pond was a partially submerged perforated wooden box with eight sections used to hold the surplus catch for each family. (This information was told to John C. Enns by Mr. John Hathies, formerly a neighbour. Mr. Hathies was born in 1880.)

When first Katharine and then Cornelius died of tuberculosis in 1889, the three boys were separated, and went to live with different families. Cornelius Jr., was taken in next door to live with his Aunt Anna and Uncle Johann Dueck. When Aunt Anna also died a few months later, Cornelius continued to live on in the Dueck home. When Uncle Johann remarried a year or so later, his new bride, Margareta, said that she wanted Cornelius to stay. So he was accepted as a son in that family (with eleven other children) and lived with them until he himself married. He always considered the children of Aunt Margareta and Uncle Johann to be his dear brothers and sisters: "meine liebe Geschwister."
After the death of their parents the Enns homestead was divided equally among the three boys and held in trust for them until they reached their age of majority. Although the land was rented, it was kept under the supervision of Uncle Johann.

Cornelius was sent to Ohrloff Centralschule to complete his education where he studied business administration. After his graduation he returned to Schoenbrunn to help his uncle manage the Duerck estate.

In 1903 Cornelius married Katharine Jansen from Blumenfeld. Katharine’s parents Abram and Maria Jansen (nee Loewen) were farmers. Abram was the first farmer in Blumenfeld to own a McCormack Deering binder which had been imported from the U.S.A. When the binder was first assembled and started all of the Russian help became frightened and ran away because they thought that it was the devil. They did not go back for two weeks.

Katharine’s maternal grandfather Loewen was a herbalist. After Katharine had completed all of the schooling that was available in Blumenfeld, she would often go with her grandfather in his horse and buggy as he made his rounds to visit the sick. She continued to use this medication in her own household after she married and even brought a small chest containing test tubes filled with medicine with her to Canada.

Katherine and Cornelius met and fell in love at a wedding of mutual relatives in 1902 and were married a year later. They moved onto the Enns homestead after they were married where they remained until 1910. Six of their children were born during this time. Help was extremely cheap, and Katharine had a cook, numerous housemaids to do the housework, and nursemaids to look after the children.

In 1910 Cornelius sold his share of the homestead to his brother Herman and moved his family north to Doylekano in the Ufa district to enter into a business partnership with a friend, a Mr. Neufeld. Together they bought and ran a general merchandise store. This was probably the happiest of times for Katharine. However, economic conditions were beginning to worsen and many families were buying on credit. In the end the venture was unsuccessful.

In 1915 they returned to Schoenfeld where Cornelius became overseer of a farm belonging to Peter Heidebrecht.

In 1916 Cornelius was conscripted into army service for two years to serve as secretary at the army headquarters in Tiflis in the Georgian area. Katharine and children moved to Blumenfeld to live with her parents for a short period. When Cornelius returned from his war service his aunt asked him to manage both the Enns and Duerck estates. (Uncle Johann had died in 1918.) So Cornelius and Katharine again lived on the Enns homestead.

It was 1919-1920. A time of terror and great unrest. Like so many others during that time, they suffered terrible persecution at the hands of roving bandits. Katharine was punched and beaten with a revolver when she refused to say where Cornelius was hiding. Several times they came to kill him. Finally, it became imperative that they abandon the homesteads and flee north for their own safety. On a horse-drawn wagon, taking only the essential bedding, clothing, food and utensils (plus one cow, two heifers, and seven children), they began the two day journey to the Molotshna.

They found temporary accommodation in Petershagen and then settled in the neighbouring village of Ladekopp.

Conditions improved for a time. Cornelius was "Presadatel" or head of the village council. The family made their own syrup from watermelons, and oil was made from sunflower seeds. They had their own chickens and meat and there was even a windmill so that they could grind fresh flour each week. Katharine also made her own butter, some of which she would barter for needles, thread, pencils, etc. from travelling peddlers.

But then conditions changed again. Many people died during a typhus epidemic. Katharine and several of the children also contracted the disease. Chickens and hens died of "pest." Bonfires were burned to kill the germs. Two years later Katharine and several children became ill with malaria which was cured by quinine sent from England.

By 1924 life had become very difficult. Food was extremely scarce. During this time a field of grain was harvested two and three times in order to get the last kernel of grain. One day Katharine told her family that they were eating the last piece of bread. There was no other food. Miraculously a "kitchen" was opened in the village the following day by the Mennonite Central Committee. The family was able to obtain flour, rice, and Carnation milk.

Always trying to improve their lot, the family moved back to Petershagen where Cornelius was again Presadatel. But conditions were no better. Many families had previously emigrated to Canada, and Katharine and Cornelius finally decided that they should also emigrate. Deciding to leave was one thing, but actually going was another matter entirely.

They were determined that they must travel as a whole family - no member should travel alone. This meant that all must be given a clean bill of health at the same time, and that proved to be difficult, as one or the other member of the family was always afflicted with trachoma. So it was a great day indeed when on
May 26, 1926, Dr. Drury of Canada examined them and pronounced the whole family well and able to go to Canada.

Cornelius was one of four men who were "elected and empowered" to secure the necessary documents, visas, passports, and travel arrangements from the government - not only for their own families, but also for others who wished to emigrate to Canada. They were given endorsement for 168 signatures, all of whom would be able to travel on credit via the CPR.

Travel expenses were reduced by members banding together and by having paying emigrants join them, but each new group meant that new passports must be applied for, which in turn, frequently caused earlier permits to expire. Those people must then apply for an extension of their visas, or even new passports which caused further delay.

As time drew nearer, Katharine was understandably concerned about travelling with her large family in such confined quarters for such a long time. There was one member who was particularly known for his extracurricular activities. It was the week before they were to leave and Katharine was doing one last washing for the family in the summer kitchen. It was Herman's job to keep the fire stoked under the huge caldron of boiling water. For some reason Herman stepped on the edge of the caldron and slipped, severely scalding one leg in the boiling water. Surely Katharine offered a prayer of thanks that Herman was not seriously injured and that he had to be bandaged and immobile for the entire trip. (Some even wonder if he was bandaged longer than was really necessary.)

Finally, on October 27, 1926, "467 souls" boarded a total of twenty-two freight cars (which had been reserved for them by an agency in Moscow) to begin the arduous journey. The food during this trip consisted mainly of roasted swiisbacht, which they dipped into sweetened tea. Some people also had dried sausage.

At Feodorovka, after about one hour of travel, Cornelius and Peter Froese took an express train to Moscow, which enabled them to arrive there within eighteen hours and begin procurement for the visas to enter into Latvia, but also, more importantly, to change the border crossing on the passports from ACKERBAG to UEBESB (Sebesb).

The main group arrived in Moscow five days later and then was able to depart for Latvia in two days, all of the documents having been processed. Cornelius and a committee stayed behind in order to exchange rubles to pound sterling and U.S. dollars. After the money was sent by telegram across the border, they too departed from Moscow to join the others.

At the Sebesb border station only one freight car was "minutely" inspected without any reason given. It was the car which contained Katharine and the family. Cornelius, too, was closely inspected. There was no abuse. The briefcase containing all the documents for the group did not receive special attention. Could it be that they were searching for the money that had been telegraphed ahead? Finally they were permitted to board the train and to cross the border. (A favourite family "story" tells that when Cornelius noticed the men entering the front of the train car, aware that they were searching for him, he quickly slipped out the back door, crept along the side of the train and entered it again by the front door just as the men were going out the back door, thus avoiding confrontation.)

The decision to emigrate to Canada had not been made lightly. Cornelius wrote in his diary, "The night of November 9, 1926 we left the homeland we loved, following relatives who had gone before us into an unknown land, Canada... I did not actually see the "gate" through which our train passed as we crossed the border. I was in deep prayerful concentration until our train reached the first station, Salupe, in Latvia and I was being paged by the CPR agent from Riga."

There was one incident on the journey to Moscow which was of major importance to Katharine and Cornelius. Their eldest son, Abram (born 1904), was of military age and had not been granted permission to emigrate. Abram accompanied the family as far as Sinevnikov, where he left them. That was the last time he was seen by them. (The family last heard from him in 1932 when he wrote that he had tried to escape to China, but had been caught. His treatment in captivity was so bad that he would not try to escape again. The family was asked, for his sake, not to write to him again.)

In Salupe the group left the freight cars and immediately boarded a Latvian train which was waiting to take them to Riga. There they were quarantined for five days while the people and all of their baggage were completely disinfected and disinfected.

The journey continued by boat through the Baltic and North Seas to London, England, and then by train to Atlantic Park in Southampton, which was a waiting station for all immigrants on their way to Canada.

Tired and weary, they were herded into huge hangars with one small washroom for each building. There was no privacy and each family was confined to its own little space. They accepted these inconveniences because the authorities told them that they were only temporary - they would soon sail. But this was not the case. Although most of the group who had travelled together left the following day to sail for Canada, Katharine and Cornelius and the
children were not allowed to leave for health reasons. Some members had contracted trachoma again. It was a severe blow.

Their lengthy sojourn in Southampton was fraught with humiliation, frustration, and dismay. They felt abused. The English didn't like them because they were German. The Germans didn't like them because they were pacifists. When there was a threat of measles, all children under sixteen years of age were isolated and quarantined for three weeks. The parents could only go within six feet of the children when they wished to talk with them. It was particularly difficult for mothers with young children. Perhaps even worse was the fact that each day that they were detained, their debt increased. Cornelius felt that politics and economics played a major role in this detention. He wrote in his diary: "I noticed that CPR systematically held back about ten per cent of its passengers. These contributions would help to defray the operating costs of the hostels. This is no exaggeration, but a weekly observation of mine."

Urgent letters were written to the Mennonite Board of Colonization in Toronto, Saskatchewan, cataloging details and incidents. Finally, the beginning of May, 1927, they were given clearance to sail.

Perhaps the highlight of those difficult days, what was long remembered with joy by all who were present, was the concert presented that Christmas in Southampton. Cornelius had formed a large choir to sing at the concert. Their music eased the tensions of the community during those trying days. It was a wonderful occasion. After the concert each child received an orange and one toy. Peter got a mouth organ, but his friend got a wind-up locomotive, with a head lamp that glowed in the dark.

All of the family except Neil who arrived one month later, sailed on the Empress of Scotland, landing at Quebec Harbour on May 23, 1927. From there they travelled by train to Kingsville, Ontario, arriving on Ascension Day. It had taken one year to the day for the family to emigrate, from May 26, 1926 to May 26, 1927. Cornelius had 47 cents in his pocket.

On foot, and looking like a band of gypsies, they arrived at the home of John and Maria Dick (son of Uncle Johann), where they stayed, living rent-free for almost six months, until they were able to manage on their own.

The older members of the family immediately began working on farms, and doing housework. All of the money was given to the parents to buy essentials such as food and clothing, and utensils required to set up housekeeping. In the fall they moved to Sutcov, and in the spring of the following year, 1928, upon the advice of land agents, they purchased a fifty-six acre farm, with no down payment, at Ridford in Essex County.

Cornelius and the two older sons, Neil and John, ran the farm while the two older daughters, Mary and Margaret, continued to do housework, always giving their earnings home. The farm crops consisted of sugar beets, mangels, grain, corn, and tobacco. There was no electricity, running water, or inside plumbing, but they did have a telephone, and a car so that the girls could call when they were ready to come home on their days off, and the family could go to church in Kingsville on Sundays.

Home furnishings and farm equipment were bought at auctions. Katharine had a manual washing machine with a fly wheel and a long handle which had to be pushed back and forth by hand in order to rotate the agitator. There was a separate mangle, also operated by hand. Through which the clothes were wrung. The clothes were rinsed twice in large galvanized tubs, each time going through the mangle to remove the water. All water had to be carried in manually by pails and heated in a larger boiler set on the stove. When it was extremely hot, it was transferred to the washing machine. She preferred to use rain water when it was available which was collected under down spouts in large rain barrels and had to be strained before using. Katharine made her own soap from rendered animal fat and lye.

A year or so later Katharine did have a new black and chrome stove where she could bake bread and swabback, and cook for her large family.

Katharine grew her own vegetables, but she also had a large beautiful flower garden. She designed the ornate geometric pattern herself, and started all the flowers from seeds. Her garden contained such favourites as verbena, portulaca, alyssum, and it had a fragrant tea bush at the very centre.

On May 28, 1928, they celebrated their 25th wedding anniversary at the farm, with the entire Kingsville Mennonite congregation present.

Two years later all were invited to celebrate Cornelius' 30th birthday. The real surprise occurred when their daughter, Margaret, and Henry Koop announced their engagement. The wedding took place that summer.
The Sweetman farm next door was for sale, so they bought it as well, and moved into that house. Life was good. Cornelius was choir director in Kingsville. While the choir was presenting a program in the Methodist church in Kingsville, he suffered a stroke, from this he never fully recovered. The choir was singing "Peace be still".

Further disaster occurred a few months later, when a new chicken house filled with baby chicks burned to the ground. Economic conditions worsened everywhere. Prices for crops began to drop drastically. During the past years the family had seen some good crops, but the money had been put back into the land. In four and a half years, the family had improved both farms. They had built a new chicken house on each farm, as well as a new tool shed and machinery building. Originally they had used a horse and plough to cultivate the land, but now they had a tractor with all of the accessories, as well as a two ton truck. They had eight milking cows, turkeys, and geese.

But the principal on the mortgage had not been reduced by one cent, and now they could not even meet the interest payments.

Neil saw a lawyer, who advised him that the wording of the contract was such that the principal would never be paid off. Cornelius was no longer able to cope with such problems, so Neil and John persuaded Katharine to write off the four and a half years to "experience." All they had gained was one cow which belonged to Katharine personally.

In April 1932, they once again packed all of their belongings, including the cow, into a truck, and moved to a small fruit farm at Jordan Station because "things were much better there." Henry and Margaret were already living in Vineland; this time it was Mary who stayed behind in Essex.

However, conditions did not change. The depression was at its height, and the little farm was not self-sustaining. During the summer the boys were able to get odd jobs on the farms, but pay was exceedingly low. Katie got a job in Chris Friet's greenhouse. She had to walk two and a half miles each way along the train tracks, including the half mile trestle bridge at Jordan, which alone was a harrowing experience, in order to work from 8am to 6pm, six days a week, for 8 cents an hour.

On March 7, 1933, Cornelius and Katharine and the children became naturalized citizens of Canada. It was a truly happy event for them. The greatest fear during the last few years had been that they might inadvertently do something which would cause them to be sent back to Russia. It was a great relief when they finally got their citizenship papers.

In the fall of 1933 they left the farm, and rented a house in Vineland Station. On February 4th, 1934, Cornelius suffered a heart attack and died. He was in his fifty-fourth year. He was the first member of the Mennonite congregation to be interred using the Vineland burial society, which he had been instrumental in organizing during the winter months.

There had been difficult times before; economic conditions in Canada were almost as bad as they had been in Russia, but now Katharine was alone, with the Reisseshult still to pay (the debt incurred from their emigration) and young children still to raise. It was decided, after family consultation, that the debt should be divided equally among the older children and Katharine and Margaret. Henry (Katharine and the four youngest children owing one share). She and the children moved to a farmhouse at Jordan Station, where rent was cheaper, and each of the
working members gave what they could spare. Somehow she was able to manage with very little. It was not even considered to ask for welfare assistance which was available from the government. To do so would have been a disgrace.

Slowly economic conditions improved. Mary and Henry Kornelsen were married in 1934, and Katie and Arthur Wiederbrandt were married in 1936, as were Neil and Anna Lepp. Each paid off their share of the "debt" before they married. John had been working for the Bray Chick Hatchery (at one point all five brothers were working there.) When John was made manager of the Dunnville Branch, he took Katharine and the two youngest children, Peter and Jessie with him. A year later, in 1937, John married Katharine Toews, and was transferred to Ft. William (now Thunder Bay.) Katharine and the two youngest children returned to Vineland.

During that summer of 1937, Katharine, with her sons Herman, Jake and Peter, worked on the Grant Fox peach farm near Delhi. They earned enough money to completely pay off their Riesenschuld. It was as if a great weight had been lifted from her shoulders.

Katharine and the children rented three rooms in a private home for almost a year, but then found a small house in Vineland Station, where she lived quietly until the younger children grew up and married. During this time the unmarried boys regularly contributed for all of her needs, and when Jessie reached sixteen years of age, she did the same.

Jake married Susan Swetksky in 1941, and Herman married Elaine Carligde in 1943. That was also the year that Peter joined the Armed Forces and served overseas during World War II. After his return in 1946, he again lived with Katharine. Jessie married Harold Pettiifer that summer. In 1947 Katharine found that she was unable to manage on her own. She sold her possessions, and lived with Katie and Arthur for a while, and then moved in with Margaret and Henry, where she died on December 27, 1948 at the age of sixty-eight.

Although Katharine and Cornelius had few worldly possessions to leave to their children, they left a rich legacy behind. Cornelius was loved and respected by all men. His word was his bond. Katharine was his true helpmate. She bore twelve children in all, two of whom died in childhood. "Mine came to Canada." We should always remember that but for their courage and determination we could still be in Russia. Instead, we have prospered. We are free to work and travel where we like, to express our own opinions, and to worship in our own way. Most important of all, is the example they set by their deep abiding faith, which sustained them throughout their lives. No matter how great their difficulties, they never wavered in their trust in God. They relied upon Him completely. If each of us has inherited a little of their indomitable spirit and faith, then we have received a wonderful legacy indeed.

*Perhaps a bit more should have been said about the two children who died in childhood.

A daughter named Katharine was born in 1909 and died of diphtheria and scarlet fever at the age of four.

A son named Peter was born in 1911 and was accidentally killed by a gunshot at the age of seven, during the terrible years 1918-1919. Katharine could never forget that she herself was responsible for the gun being in the house. Cornelius was away from home when government officials came to the door, and said that they had six guns, one of which could be had by their village for protection, but they must have an immediate answer. Reluctantly Katharine accepted the gun. A few days later some teenagers were practising target shooting with the gun, and Peter, who was one of several children...
watching, was accidentally shot. They carried the dead child in to Katharine, who was too stunned to weep. She never wept tears again. She was seven months pregnant at the time, and that child was stillborn a few days later. She felt absolutely that God had punished her for accepting the gun, when everything that she believed was against warfare. Our family has always been reluctant to speak of this tragedy because it was Jake Dick, a son of Uncle Johann, who was holding the gun at the time and someone else tried to take it away from him, and in the scuffle the gun went off. This Jake Dick was later a missionary in India for twenty-five years.

** Kornelius (Neil) 1905 - 1979
Mary 1906 -
Margaret 1908 -
John 1910 -
Katharine (Katie) 1914 -
Herman 1915 -
Jacob (Jake) 1917 -
Peter 1920 -
Justina (Jessie) 1924 -

THE DRIEDGER LINE OF KATHARINE AND CORNELIUS ENNS

CHART 1

ENNS/DICK RELATIONSHIP

CHART 2
Appendix D: Passenger List

Below are photographs from the pages of *The Empress of Scotland*’s passenger list showing the Enns family listed as passengers.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
<th>DESTINATION</th>
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Personal Artifacts and Interviews

Adelaide Fransen, Pete & Fritz Funk, Rickey Schrag, Henry Koop, Helen Koop, Ann & Moe Hunsberger, Alf & Liz Koop, Mark Schrag, Ester Neufeldt, interview by Jacque Schrag.

*Koop Family History* (February 23, 2013).


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