

INTRODUCTION

Daniel S. Thiesen has accomplished a big task in delving deep into the history of some families of the Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, tracing them as far back as Germany. There is no question that some of the families of this background came from German-speaking areas and from the Low Countries. During the early history the congregation which in Russia became known as Alexanderwohl must originally have spoken Dutch and had fraternal and conference relations to the Mennonites in the Netherlands even in the eighteenth century. The title of the church record, likely started after the middle of the seventeenth century, is in High German but implies the Dutch ties. It reads as follows: Die Erste Stamm Nahmen Unseres Bisher so genante Oude Vlamingen oder Groningersche Mennonisten Societaet alhier in Preussen. The Flemish or Groningen Conference had its roots and origin in the Netherlands.

Jacob A. Duerksen has done considerable research in this area and published a number of articles (see Mennonite Life, October 1949, April 1955, and July 1967). It appears that Mennonite refugee families from various places joined in the settlement and church at Przekhovka, West Prussia from where in 1820 most of them moved to the Molotschna Mennonite settlement in Russia which had been established earlier. They named the village Alexanderwohl which name was attached to the church, Alexanderwohl Mennonite Church, after their migration to Kansas. This is the mother church of the Goessel and Tabor churches. When the inhabitants of the Alexanderwohl village in Russia left they were joined by members from other Molotschna villages and congregations. Jacob Buller was the Moses to take them via Lincoln, Nebraska, to the present-day Goessel community, while Dietrich Gaeddert took some to the present-day Buhler community. Quite a number of families remained in Nebraska where Jacob Buller had stopped before going to Kansas. They joined the Henderson community. In spite of this scattering, family and spiritual ties have remained strong even to this day.

Bethel College

Cornelius Krahn