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the Peter P. Karber family moved to Vola Vodzinska around this time, as David Karber's older brother Henry was born there in 1843. David himself was born in this village on November 26, 1848, the youngest of eight children. By all accounts his family was very poor, and even before his father's death when David was six or seven, he was often loaned out to neighbors to help support himself. In his teens he worked as a coachman, and on at least one occasion may have helped mix mortar for Benjamin Penner, Henrietta Penner's father. The two families thus appear to have been acquainted, which may be one reason the Penners first settled near Julius Karber after their arrival in America. (In fact, Mennonites at Kicin were members of the Vola Vodzinska congregation.) David himself came to the United States (aboard the "Twins" via Hamburg, Germany to New York) on his own in 1870 in order to avoid being drafted into the army. After working in Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois, [See Map 4] he learned that the Benjamin Penners had immigrated and settled in Marion County, Kansas. [See Map 5] Recalling that they had a daughter, Henrietta, he set out in early 1877 to locate them. He succeeded in doing so, and the two were married on August 26 of that year by Elder Jacob Stucky in the Swiss Mennonite Church at Moundridge, Kansas. (David was 28 years old, Henrietta was 20).

Little is known about David Karber's family, except that he had five older brothers and two older sisters. The oldest brother, Stephen, died in Poland. The second and third children were girls -- Sarah and Bena -- about which little is known. The fourth child, Henry, moved to the Mennonite colonies in the southern Ukraine of Russia, and lived in the Crimea area near the Black Sea. He was married three times, and fathered nineteen children:

first wife: Wilhelmina Dirks

children: Katharina, Sarah, Henrietta, Henry, Peter, David, David, Wilhelm, Eva

second wife: Maria Voth

children: Anna, Maria, Abraham, Lisa, Agatha, Helen

third wife: Maria Dick

children: Laura, Peter, Jakob, Frank

Henry died in Russia in 1922, but some of his children immigrated to North America. The fifth child, Peter, was taken by a German family to Berlin where David visited him on the way to America. The sixth child was Julius Karber, who seems to have immigrated to America early in 1874.

wife: Maria Kliewer

children: Minnie, Peter, Henry, Peter, Pauline, David, Jacob, Mary, Henrietta, Samuel, Sarah

A seventh child, Frank, died in infancy, and David was the eighth.

This brief historical sketch provides some indication as to the possible origins of the David and Henrietta (Penner) Karber family. Precise and accurate information is largely lacking, and what is available has often been passed down in somewhat differing versions. As a result, this sketch attempts to reconstruct the family's early history by piecing together what is known, and using that to uncover other information that might fill in the story. The story is that of a family and of a people -- ever searching for a place to live where their religious heritage could be freely practiced and passed on to succeeding generations.

Submitted by Richard Unruh