

CHAPTER FIVE

JOHAN HARDER GENEALOGY 1764-1826

Section One. Johan Harder (1764-1826).

The patriarch of the Kleine Gemeinde Harder family was **Johan Harder (1764-1826)** born in Halbstadt, West Prussia. He will sometimes be referred to herein Johan Harder III. His father was Johan Harder (1733-1803) born in Polnisch Huben and died in Sandhof. He was a Hofbesitzer. His paternal grandparents were Johan Harder and Gertrude Classen, Hofbesitzer. The father of Gertrude Classen was Jakob Classen, a Hofbesitzer in Polnisch Huben.¹ A Hofbesitzer was a farmer who owned his own farmyard or "Hof" in one of the Grosswerder villages. On January 11, 1761, Johan Harder (1733-1803) married for the second time to Sara Classen who was born January 1, 1731, and died February 2, 1769.²

There is record of a Johan Harder, or Hans Harder, living in Polnisch Huben as early as 1658 and again in 1665 and 1688.³ It is possible that these Harders were ancestors of the family patriarch. Further record is found of a Johan Harder living in Einlage an der Nogat as well as a Johan and Isaac Harder living in Halbstadt in 1772. It seems likely that one of the latter was the father of Johan Harder (1764-1826) since he was born in Halbstadt only 8 years earlier in 1764.

Johan Harder III married Helena Stees in Heuboden in 1786. Only one Stees, or Stoesz family is listed in the **Konsignations Liste** of 1776, namely, the family of a Cornelius Stees, living in the village of Krebsfeld, about five miles due north of Halbstadt.⁴ He is the forefather of the Stoesz family some of whose descendants emigrated to the Chortitza Colony in the late 1700s and came to Manitoba during the 1870s with the Bergthaler Mennonites. A list of the children of ~~his~~ Cornelius Stoesz (1731-1811) does not include a daughter Helena born in 1781, and therefore ~~the~~ Helena Stees, wife of Johan Harder III, must come from a different family.⁵

*Cornelius
(1731-1811)*

It appears that the Johan Harder family was associated with the Heuboden Flemish Gemeinde during its Prussian period. Most of the members of this Gemeinde lived in the southern part of the Grosswerder, a smaller part in Marienburg and east of the Nogat in former West Prussia, and several at Dirschau (Tczew) west of the Vistula on Polish territory. The Gemeinde had its meeting place in the village of Heuboden located several miles north-west of Marienburg.⁶ The Flemish Mennonites in the villages of Sandhof, where Johan Harder II died in 1803; Halbstadt, where Johan Harder III was born in 1764; and Heuboden, where he married; all belonged to the Heuboden Gemeinde.⁷

Halbstadt, the village where Johan Harder III was born in 1764, was located along the Nogat River about five miles north-east of Marienburg and some 10 miles south of Petershagen, where Klaas Reimer, founding Aeltester of the Kleine Gemeinde was born in 1770. The 1776 **Konsignations Liste** shows three Johan Harders, living in Heuboden, Sandhof and Einlage, respectively.⁸ Since Johan Harder II was married in Heuboden in 1786 it is possible that the family had moved from Halbstadt to Heuboden sometime between 1764 and 1786. Koldau, (also referred to as Kalthof),⁹ Amt Marienburg, the village of residence listed for the Johan Harder (1764-1826) family in the emigration records, was located on the north west outskirts of Marienburg, only a few miles from Heuboden.

The Johan Harder (1764-1826) family emigrated to Russia from Koldau in 1803. The family arrived in the Molotschna Colony on June 6, 1804 and settled on Wirtschaft 16 in the village of Blumstein.¹⁰ Two other Harder families giving their destination as Blumstein emigrated at the same time, namely, Abraham Harder, age 38, from Neulanghorst, Prussia, and Franz Harder, age 33, from the castle Kalthof, Prussia.¹¹ Since Franz Harder and Johan Harder III came from the same area in Prussia it is possible that they were brothers or otherwise related.

The following information is recorded for the family in the 1808 **Revisions Liste**: "Johan Harder, 44 from Koldau, Amt Marienburg, linen maker, wife Helena 52, Children Abraham 21, Johan 18, Isbrandt 16, Maria 12 and Elizabeth 8. Property, 1 wagon, 1 plow, 1 harrows, 3 horses, 10 cattle, 2 sheep, 20 loads of hay." The family of Franz Harder settled on Wirtschaft 4 in Blumstein but the family of Abraham Harder is not listed.¹²

Johan Harder III farmed in Blumstein with his family. He was known as a horse lover. The date of death of his wife, nee Helena Stoesz, is not known. It appears that he remained relatively active until his accident in 1826 from which he died a short time later.¹³ In his book **Das Wachsame Auge Gottes**, son-in-law Johan Toews has provided a detailed account of the fateful journey during which Johan Harder III was mortally injured.¹⁴ He recalls that "In the fall of 1827 (sic), I went in company with my father in law Johan Harder, to Melitopol, to buy