

lence; wheat, their staple product was shipped out into the world market. Most of the Mennonites of the large Chortitza and Molotschna settlements were people of Dutch background whose families had fled religious oppression in The Netherlands, living next in Prussia before immigrating to South Russia. They had their own schools, own villages, own language and their own religion.

Everything went well until 1871 when the decision was made by the Alexandrian government to revoke their special privileges which they had originally been granted, particularly those of immunity from military service and control of their schools.

In 1873 the Mennonite colonies sent representatives from the settlements in Russia to inspect the government lands available to them in the United States and Canada, with a view to immigration, when their negotiations with the Russian government were unsuccessful. The governments of both Canada and the United States wanted the Mennonites to settle in their respective countries.

Thousands of the Mennonites left Russia, leaving behind the country they had transformed from a barren waste to a wealthy land and immigrated to North America. Some 8,000 chose Manitoba and some 10,000 went to the United States, settling in Kansas, Nebraska, Dakota and Minnesota. Those who wanted to duplicate their previous independent self-government and educational privileges chose Manitoba since the promises were more generous in Canada. Those interested in the same climatic conditions chose the prairie states.

Descendants of our Mennonite families who immigrated to the United States and Canada in the 1870's are now scattered all across the United States and Canada and some are now of different religious faiths. Where farming was formerly the way of making a living, they are now spread throughout all walks of life.

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