HALBSTADT | LIEBENAU | RUDNERWEIDE | MARGE NAU

WALDHEIM | GNADENFELD | PORDENAU | KLEEFELD | MUNTAU | SPARRAU

HIERSCHAU | PASTWA | LICHTENAU | STEINBACH | MARIAWOHL

MOLOTSCHNA HISTORICAL A.TLA.S

Helmut T. Huebert

LICHTFELDE | OHRLOFF | GROSSWEIDE | RUECKENAU

MOLOTSCHNA HISTORICAL ATLAS

J.A. Toews
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MOLOTSCHNA HISTORICAL ATLAS

HELMUT T. HUEBERT

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Some maps from the Mennonite Historical Atlas. A number of maps originally drawn by William Schroeder (marked with a WS in a lower corner). Other maps originally drawn by Helmut T. Huebert (marked with a HTH in a lower corner).

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MOLOTSCHNA HISTORICAL ATLAS
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DEDICATION

This atlas is dedicated to our parents, all of whom lived in the Molotschna.

Peter Rempel was born on Tiegenhof Estate, but then in the difficult times moved to Petershagen with his family. He was baptized in the Petershagen Mennonite Church. He completed his teacher training in Halbstadt, then taught in Rosenort.

Katharina Baerkmann was born and raised in Ladekopp. She attended the Neu-Halbstadt Maedchenschule, then completed the teacher training in Halbstadt. She taught a year in the same school in Ladekopp where she had been a pupil.

Peter and Katharina were married, and shortly after emigrated to Canada, in 1924.

Gerhard David Huebert was born in Margenau. Orphaned by age eleven, he subsequently lived with his brothers. He preached his first sermon at the Alexanderthal Mennonite Brethren Church, where he lived with brother Heinrich. He went to the Gnadenfeld Zentralschule, living with his half-brother, Kornelius Martens.

Katharina Willms was born and raised in Hierschau, and was extremely proud of her home village. After her mother died, she and her siblings planned to emigrate to Canada. Just prior to departure an attempted robbery at their house resulted in the murder of a friend.

Gerhard and Katharina emigrated to Canada in 1926 with their siblings. They met in Alberta, and were married in 1933.

This atlas is also dedicated to the thousands of Mennonites who did not manage to escape the terrors of what must have been one the most brutal regimes ever to have existed – both to those who lost their lives, usually after untold suffering, but but also to those who survived the long and dark night of barbaric cruelty.

FOREWORD

The Mennonite Molotschna settlement region has been an area of central interest for students of Mennonite history for two centuries, really ever since it was founded 200 years ago. The first settlers of the steppe area just to the east of the Molochnaya River actually did not reach the territory until 1804, although earlier Mennonite land scouts had been there in the initial period of investigation of New Russia nearly twenty years earlier. They were not the first to seek out these lands for settlement. Russian peasants had been around since 1783, well before the Mennonite Chortitza families founded their colony on the Dniepr River to the northwest of the Molotschna six years later.

A Mennonite grandmother once told her young grandchild about helping to begin the Mennonite village of Gnadenfeld in 1835: "They came to barren steppe...no tree, no bush, only tall dry bitter grass and prickly camel fodder grew on the dry, cracked ground." This volume has a great deal to say about the larger picture of which Gnadenfeld was a part, both in geographical terms, and in terms of people who founded not only that very important community, but many others as well. In all roughly 60 settlements were established along the Molochnaya River and its tributaries, the Juschanlee, the Kuruschan and the Tomak. The river then flowed south for 40 kilometres or so to the Molotschna Estuary and finally into the Sea of Azov.

This volume is a multidimensional presentation of a development which is still a remarkable feat of colonization whether viewed in its Russian context, or in any other country of the world. Dr. John Staples, author of a path breaking recent study, "Cross-Cultural Encounters on the Ukrainian Steppe: Settling the Molochna Basin, 1783-1861," put it this way: "By the mid-nineteenth century ploughed fields were replacing pastures, here and there villages had become towns, with textile mills, forges, and brick works to serve the bustling communities." The author of the atlas has done well to use this most valuable new source of information.

A series of general maps, some never published before, of the area as a whole, and then of most of the individual village communities help to recreate the format of the land and the larger regional interlock of Mennonite life and communal development of the settlement. It is not insignificant, although not stressed here, that neighbouring communities also had their role to play: the Orthodox Russian/Ukrainian peasants to the north and east, the Lutheran and Catholic Germans, as well as the Doukhobors to the west and southwest, and the Nogai nomadic tribespeople to the south. In due time the latter two groups would move on (or be moved on - the Doukhobors either converted or were moved) elsewhere, but they are naturally in some way also part of this story as well.

No one has ever attempted before the assembling of residence maps for the great majority of the Molotschna villages as this work has done. It will remain someone's challenge to find the remaining few; but the impetus for doing so is now in place. Establishments of villages of a certain style, with long streets, carefully laid out farmyards and house barn residences, self-sufficient in large measure with their mills and factories, schools and churches, large gardens, much admired groves of trees, community pastures, and of course land under vigorous cultivation all around, were the signature of these colonists. This was not only the

case in the Molotschna, but also in other similar colonies scattered across Russia, finally all the way to eastern Siberia, in the Amur region.

A series of brief village histories, or even histories of their beginnings, does not want to portray itself as a full blown history of the Mennonite settlement as a whole. It does, though, depict in a real sense, important embryonic segments of the larger story which Heinrich Goerz set out to do in his book "Die Molotschnaer Ansiedlung", published in 1951 as part of the Echo Verlag series edited by Arnold Dyck. This, and a number of other books of the series have now been translated into, and published in English. Almost unlimited amounts of new documentation have made possible a major enhancing of that pioneer account. This volume definitely contributes to this augmentation. An earlier work by the author "Hierschau: An Example of Russian Mennonite Life,"and his contribution of the two editions of "Mennonite Historical Atlas" are superb examples of what that must involve for mapping and discussing the other villages and territories.

It will most likely be the enviable privilege of this volume to become the premiere exhibit in the larger, several-day program of Molotschna 2004, an ambitious history conference of Mennonite and other scholars from various countries who hope to meet in Melitopol, Ukraine, next year. It is possible that small national gatherings may become the descendent meetings of the Melitopol event. Their focus will be the topic of this book, and the two will meet at the conjunction of this and other scholarly work which these conferences will undoubtedly produce.

Looking beyond the volume at hand, one can more easily conceptualize how future Mennonite and other Russian historical projects might emerge. Many Molotschna families became a part of the final frontier of Mennonite settlement in Siberia as it developed after 1900, even up to the 1940s. That story is awaiting the touch of a hand like the one that has been at work here. Settlements such as Arkadak and Central, and the entire Soviet Mennonite experience of 75 years need such a narrator and map maker as well. We hope that readers and students of this endeavor will not forget that dimension of the historical and community remembering task that is still ahead.

Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein
Mennonite Heritage Centre
November, 2003

INTRODUCTION

This atlas is produced to commemorate the bicentenary of the founding of the Molotschna Colony in South Russia in 1804. But this is not meant to be a dry collection of ancient maps and recounting of irrelevant history. This atlas has been published to honour those whose blood, sweat and tears initially established the Molotschna, rising up from the arid windswept steppes to become the keystone of the "Mennonite Commonwealth," all the way to those who suffered untold hardship and brutality under the communist regime, as this achievement was methodically dismantled.

I have used the name "Molotschna" on purpose, realizing that there are those who feel that it is more politically correct to call the colony Molotschnaya, or Molochna, or some other variant of the spelling. In the primary documentation that I have seen, by far the commonest usage by the inhabitants themselves, including reports of Johann Cornies and others, is the Germanized version of the name of the nearby river - Molotschna. The accompanying river, however, I have elected to spell as the surrounding population may have written it. There are also other variations to contend with. Is it Altona, Altonau or Altenau? The original administration called it Altona, and the villages named after it (e.g. Altona, Manitoba) are Altona. So that is how my official label reads. I have chosen to call the large neighbouring town Tokmak, although it is also called Bolshoi Tokmak or Gross Tokmak. One of the tributaries of the Molochnaya River is labeled Kurudujuschan on some maps, but the shorter Kuruschan on others. I have chose the shorter, if for no other reason than that it is easier to fit onto maps.

A choice has also been made to include more than the standard 57 villages. There are maps and descriptions of estates which are in the area, as well as other settlements, Fabrikerwiese and Kuruschan.

Historical research is very interesting, yet also frustrating. The maps presented are according to the best available information at this time. I recognize, however, that it is quite likely that much more is known somewhere in the world. Advertisements have been placed in the German Mennonite newspapers on a number of occasions asking for additional information, and some has indeed been sent; for this I am very thankful. I was looking for information on one village, and was both chagrined and delighted that the best source available was a lady who had sat in the pew immediately ahead of me the previous Sunday morning! I have used newspaper listings for refugee arrivals, but unfortunately a considerable number of the lists do not include village of origin.

With any history it is impossible to use all of the data available. You may wonder why I have included some of the information in the village histories; my general attitude was that if the people involved thought it was important, I should think it was important. The exact number of trees in each village, and the precise wheat yield for each year does not make exciting reading, but it was important enough to them to be published in the newspaper. They were into trees and wheat!

Maps of the villages from the early years of the last century (1910-1925), if not previously drawn, are now hard to come by, simply because of the aging and dying of those who remember. An increasing number of the relevant maps are now from the 1930s and 1940s

by people who survived the communist regime. In the few remaining villages where it was impossible to obtain specific maps, generic maps have been drawn, using a 1867 Molotschna map, and an aerial map from 1939. Where they existed, maps have been taken from the Mennonite Historical Atlas, but many have been added, and they have all been redrawn. Where specific people have given information this is mentioned on the map. Where no credit is given, the fine print is the clue; in one of the corners it will say either WS (William Schroeder) or HTH (Helmut T. Huebert), followed by the year in which the map was drawn. Cartography (the actual computer drawing of the map) is all by Helmut T. Huebert.

An index has been prepared of all the geographical names on the maps. To help people trace their ancestors all personal names in the descriptive text have been indexed, but not the personal names on the maps. Too many of the names on the maps are vague, for example family names only, and the work involved would have been daunting. We do, after all, have to leave some of the spadework of finding long lost relatives to the people themselves!

These are not dry, irrelevant scraps of paper. I hope the pages of this atlas will be of ongoing interest both to those who have directly experienced some of the episodes described, but also to those who are now experiencing them vicariously through research about their ancestors!

Helmut T. Huebert
November, 2003

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication.....v
Foreword.....vi
Introduction.....viii
Table of Contents.....x
Map of Mennonite Colonies in Ukraine and Russia.....xiii
Map of Mennonite Colonies in South Russia.....xiv

MAPS and TEXT

(First **bold** numbers are the maps, the following plain numbers are the descriptive text)

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY

Expansion of the Russian Empire.....**1**,99
Migration from the Vistula to South Russia.....**2**,99
The Moloschna River and adjacent Colonies - 1806.....**3**,99
German Colonies in the Molotschna in South Russia in 1836.....**4**,99
Provincial (Guberniia) Boundaries in 1850.....**5**,99
Molotschna Mennonite Colony according to Hippenmayer.....**6**,100
Molotschna Colony in 1871, Halbstadt and Gnadenfeld Volosts.....**7**,100
Molotschna Colony about 1910.....**8**,100
Molotschna Colony, Religious Affiliation.....**9**,100
Mennonite Church Buildings in the Molotschna Colony.....**10**,101
Mennonite Brethren Church Buildings in the Molotschna Colony.....**11**,101
Molotschna Colony about 1914.....**12**,101
Molotschna Battle, June 20, 1920.....**13**,102
Molotschna Colony, October 6, 1941.....**14**,102
Molotschna Colony Region in 1998.....**15**,104

MOLOTSCHNA VILLAGES and ESTATES

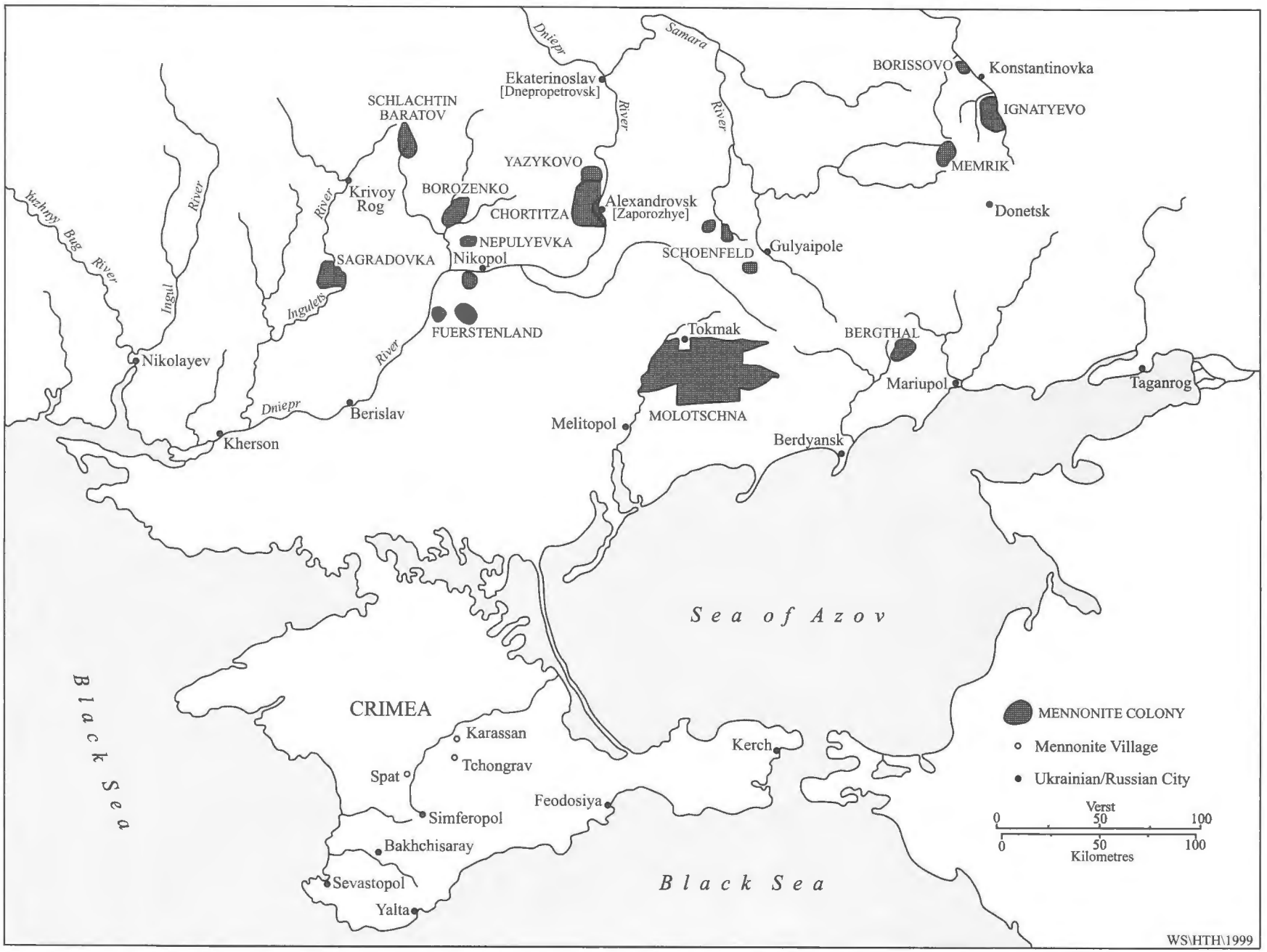
Alexanderkrone in 1914.....**16**,105
Alexanderthal in 1917.....**17**,106
Alexanderwohl in 1874,1920.....**18**,**19**,107
Altona before 1918.....**20**,109
Blumenort - Original Settlers in 1805, in 1914, 1930.....**21**,**22**,**23**,111
Blumstein in 1810, 1933.....**24**,**25**,113
Elisabetthal.....**26**,114
Esau Estate.....**27**,116
Fabrikerwiese in 1867, 1939.....**28**,116
Felsental Estate.....**29**,116
Fischau.....**30**,117
Franzthal in 1942.....**31**,118
Friedensdorf in 1923-1924.....**32**,120

Friedensruh....**33**,122
Fuerstenau in 1867,1939....**34**,123
Fuerstenwerder about 1930....**35**,124
Gnadenfeld in 1912....**36**,126
Gnadenheim 1936-1941....**37**,128
Gnadenthal in 1934-1943....**38**,130
Grossweide 1927-1928....**39**,131
Halbstadt and Neighbouring Villages....**40**,133
Halbstadt (Alt-Halbstadt) in 1913....**41**
Neu-Halbstadt in 1913....**42**
Molochansk - 1991....**43**
Hamberg 1928-1930....**44**,136
Hierschau - Original Settlers 1848 and 1849, about 1920....**45**,**46**,137
Juschanlee Estate - in 1852....**47**,139
Yard 1852 and 1998....**48**
Southwestern Molotschna Colony about 1912-1914....**49**
Kleefeld in 1922....**50**,139
Klippenfeld in the 1930s....**51**,141
Konteniusfeld in the 1930s....**52**,142
Kuruschan....**53**,143
Ladekopp in the 1920s....**54**,144
Landskrone in 1925....**55**,147
Lichtenau in the late 1920s, 2003....**56**,**57**,148
Lichtfelde in 1929....**58**,150
Liebenau....**59**,152
Lindenau - Original Settlers in 1804, 1923-1931,1941....**60**,**61**,**62**,154
Margenau about 1917....**63**,156
Mariawohl about 1914, 1940....**64**,**65**,158
Marienthal in 1941....**66**,159
Muensterberg about 1924....**67**,161
Muntau in 1918....**68**,162
Neu-Halbstadt (see Halbstadt)
Neukirch 1927-1940....**69**,164
Nikolaidorf in 1867, 1939....**70**,166
Ohrloff in 1918....**71**,167
Pastwa about 1927....**72**,168
Paulsheim in 1943....**73**,170
Petershagen in the 1920s....**74**,170
Pordenau in the late 1920s....**75**,172
Prangenau in 1910....**76**,174
Rosenort in 1914....**77**,175
Rudnerweide about 1920....**78**,177
Rueckenau in 1915....**79**,179

Schardau in 1867, 1939....**80**,180
Schoenau in 1924....**81**,181
Schoensee in 1925....**82**,183
Sparrau about 1940....**83**,185
Steinbach Estate, South Central Molotschna Colony about 1912-1914....**84**,187
Steinbach Estate 1912-1914....**85**
Steinbach Estate (estate buildings)....**86**
Steinfeld in the 1920s....**87**,188
Tiege in 1914....**88**,189
Tiegenhagen in 1916....**89**,191
Tiegerweide in 1924....**90**,192
Waldheim in 1916....**91**,194
Wernersdorf in 1942....**92**,196
Molotschna Colony - Brief History....93
Molotschna Village and Estate List....97

Weights and Measures....198
Dates and Calendars....199
Czars (Tsars) of Russia....200
Russo-Turkish Wars....200
Sources....201
Index....203

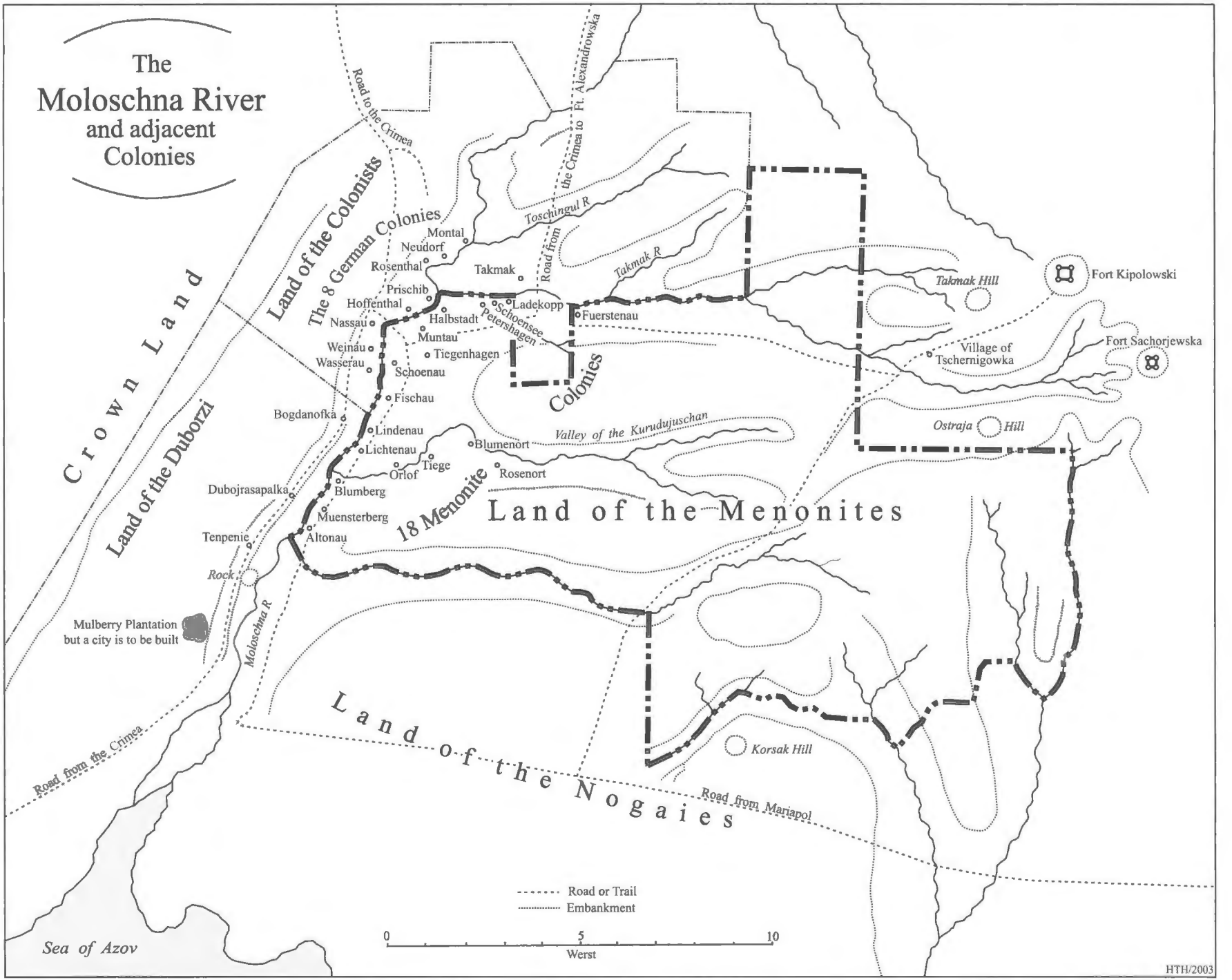
Mennonite Colonies in Ukraine and Russia
[Not all of the smaller colonies shown]



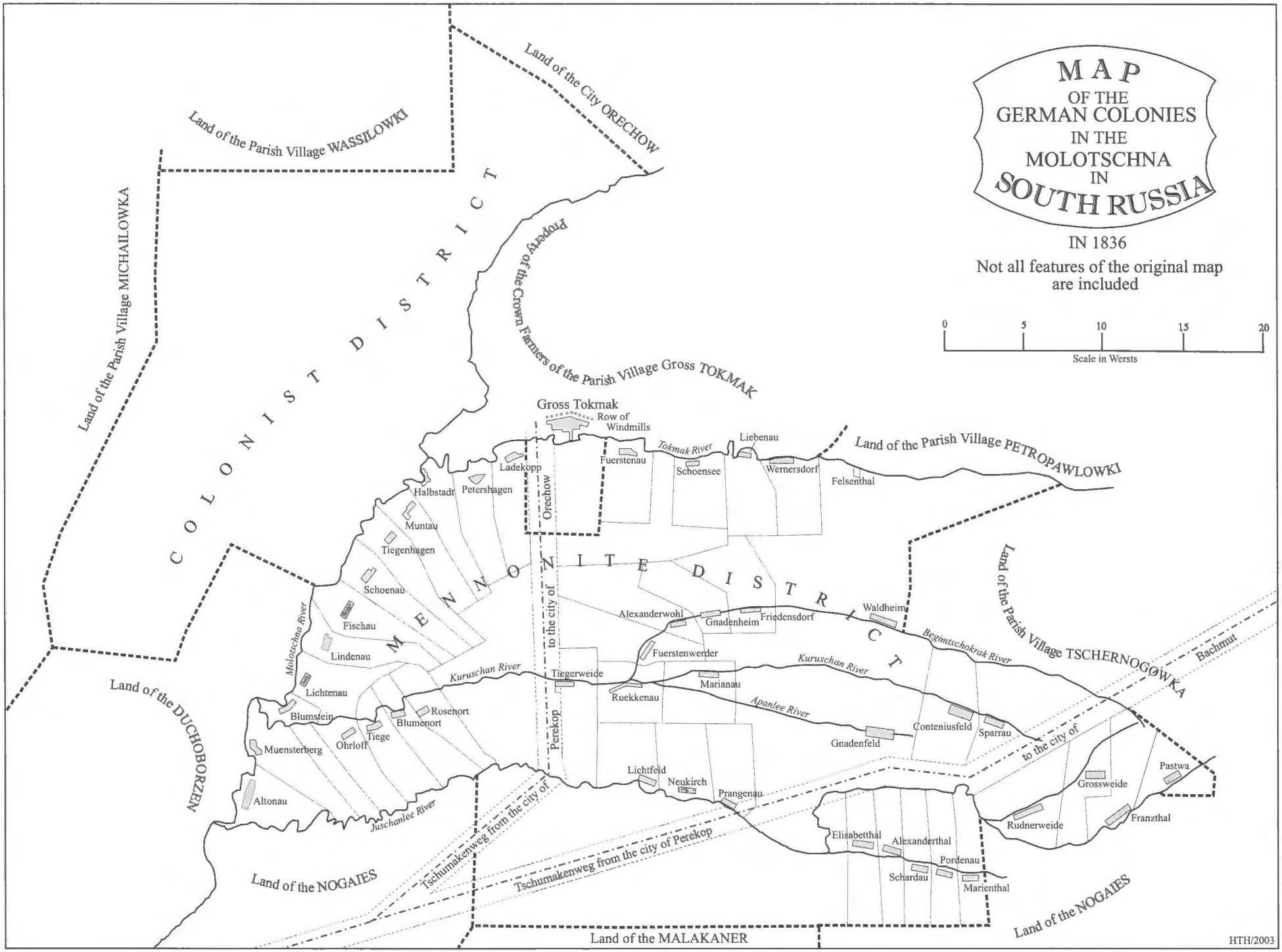
Mennonite Colonies in South Russia

EXPANSION OF THE
RUSSIAN EMPIRE
1774-1791
POLISH-LITHUANIAN
COMMONWEALTH
Dniepr River
Donets River
R U S S I A N E M P I R E
Ekaterinoslav
Yuzhnyy Bug River
Balta
ZAPOROZHIA
Stara Sich
Nova Sich
(Boh)
(1774)
Don River
Azov
(1791)
Dniestr River
(1783)
Nikolayev
Bendery
O T T O M A N E M P I R E
Kherson
Odessa
Sea of Azov
(1783)
CRIMEA
(1783)
Kuban River
CIRCASSIANS
Bakhchesaral
International Boundary
in 1750
Acquired in 1774
Acquired in 1783
Acquired in 1792
Black Sea

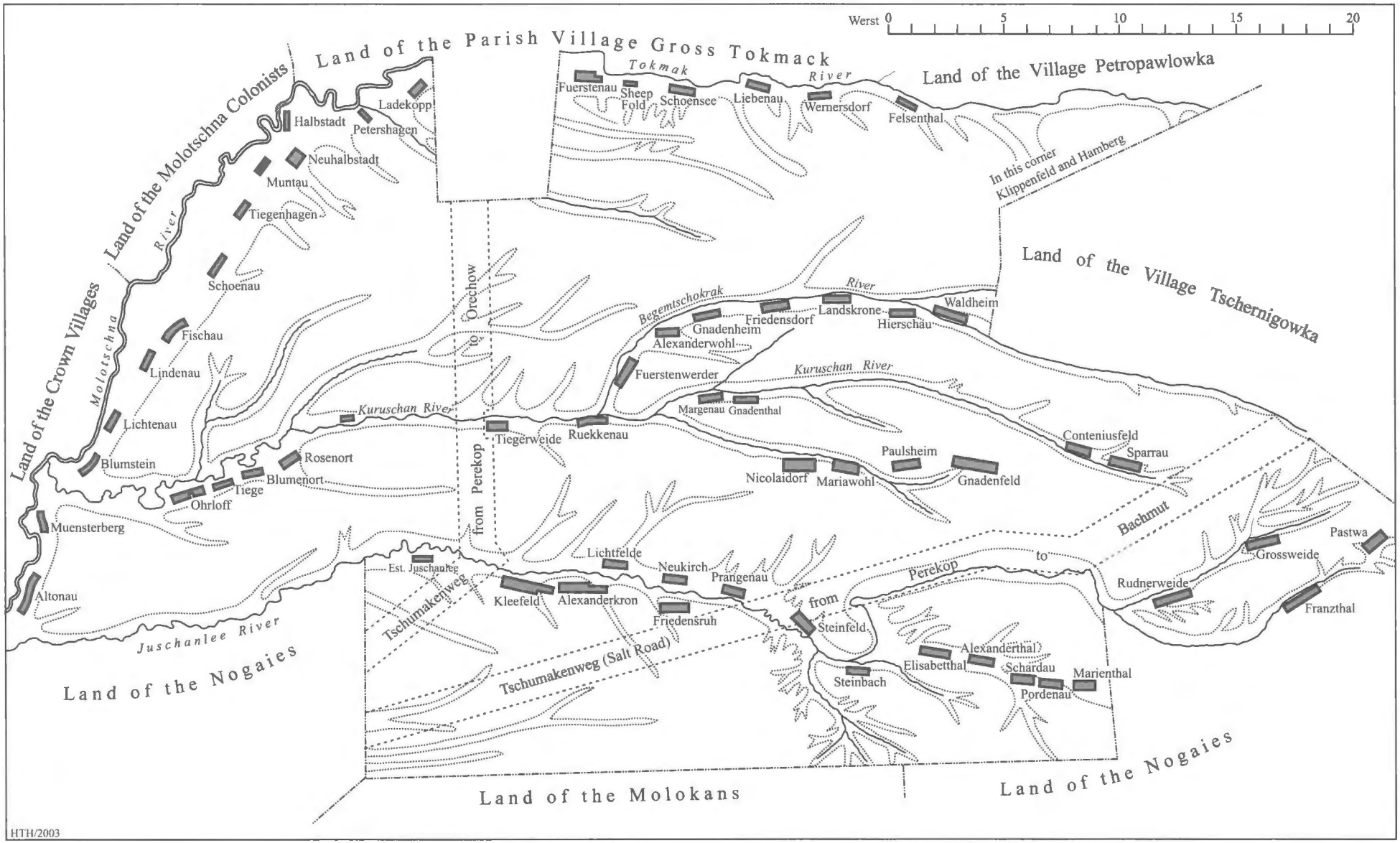
MIGRATION FROM the VISTULA to SOUTH RUSSIA
To Chortitza (1787-1789)
To the Molotschna (1803-1804)
Verst
0 100 200 300
0 100 200 300
Kilometres
Baltic Sea
Helsinki
St. Petersburg
Stockholm
Tallinn
Novgorod
Riga
Dvina River
Moscow
Danzig
Koenigsberg
Orsha
Dubrovno
Mogilev
Thorn
Pripet Marshes
Pripyat River
Dniepr
Gomel
Bug River
Warsaw
Chernigov
Vistula River
Kiev
Poltava
Kharkov
Kremenchug
Dniestr River
Ekaterinoslav
CHORTITZA
MOLOTSCHNA
Nikolayev
Kherson
Berislav
Odessa
Sea of Azov
Feodosiya
Danube
Belgrade
Bucharest
Sevastopol
River
Black Sea
WS/2003



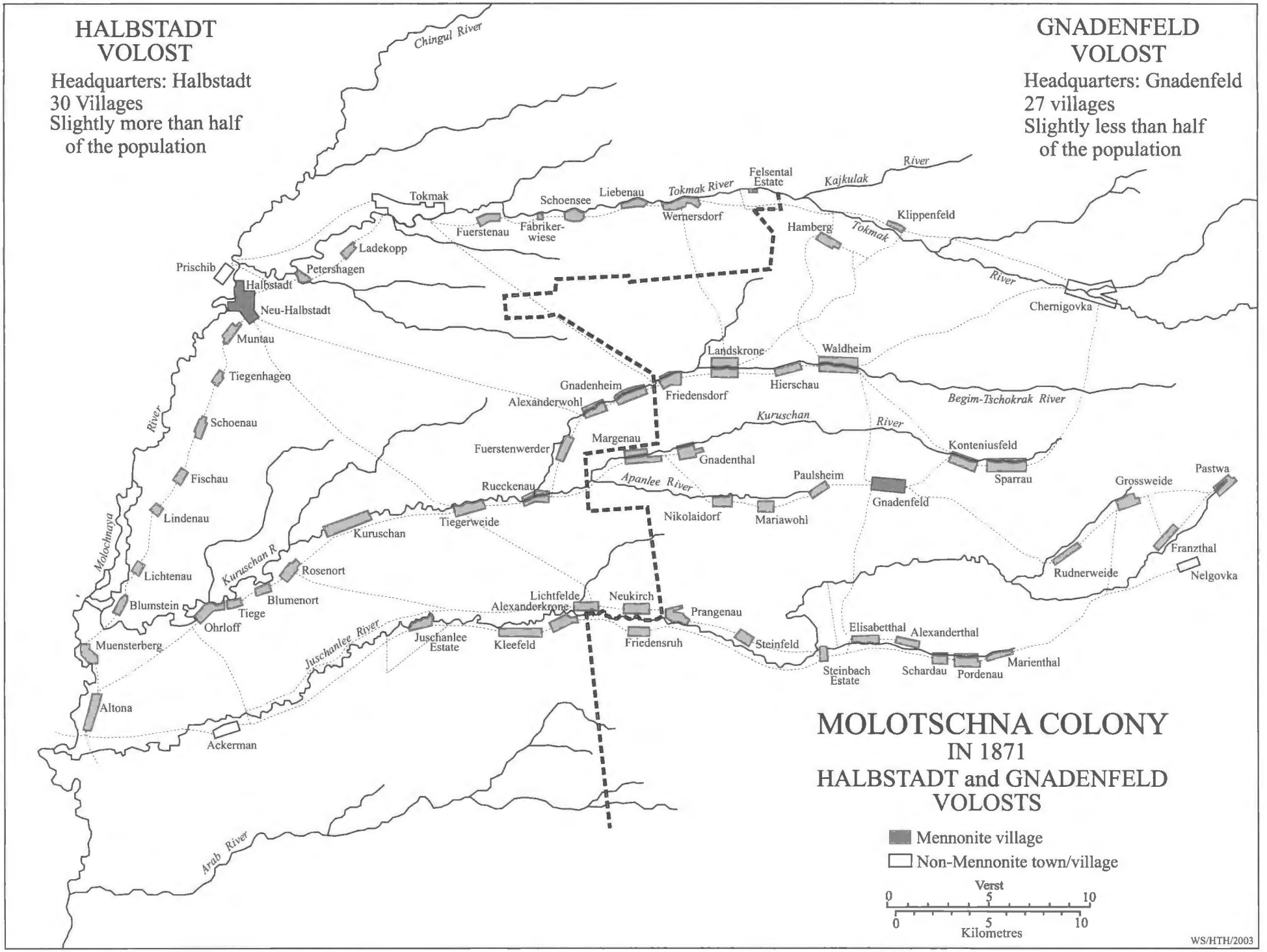
First known map of the Molotschna Colony, drawn by a travelling businessman in 1806

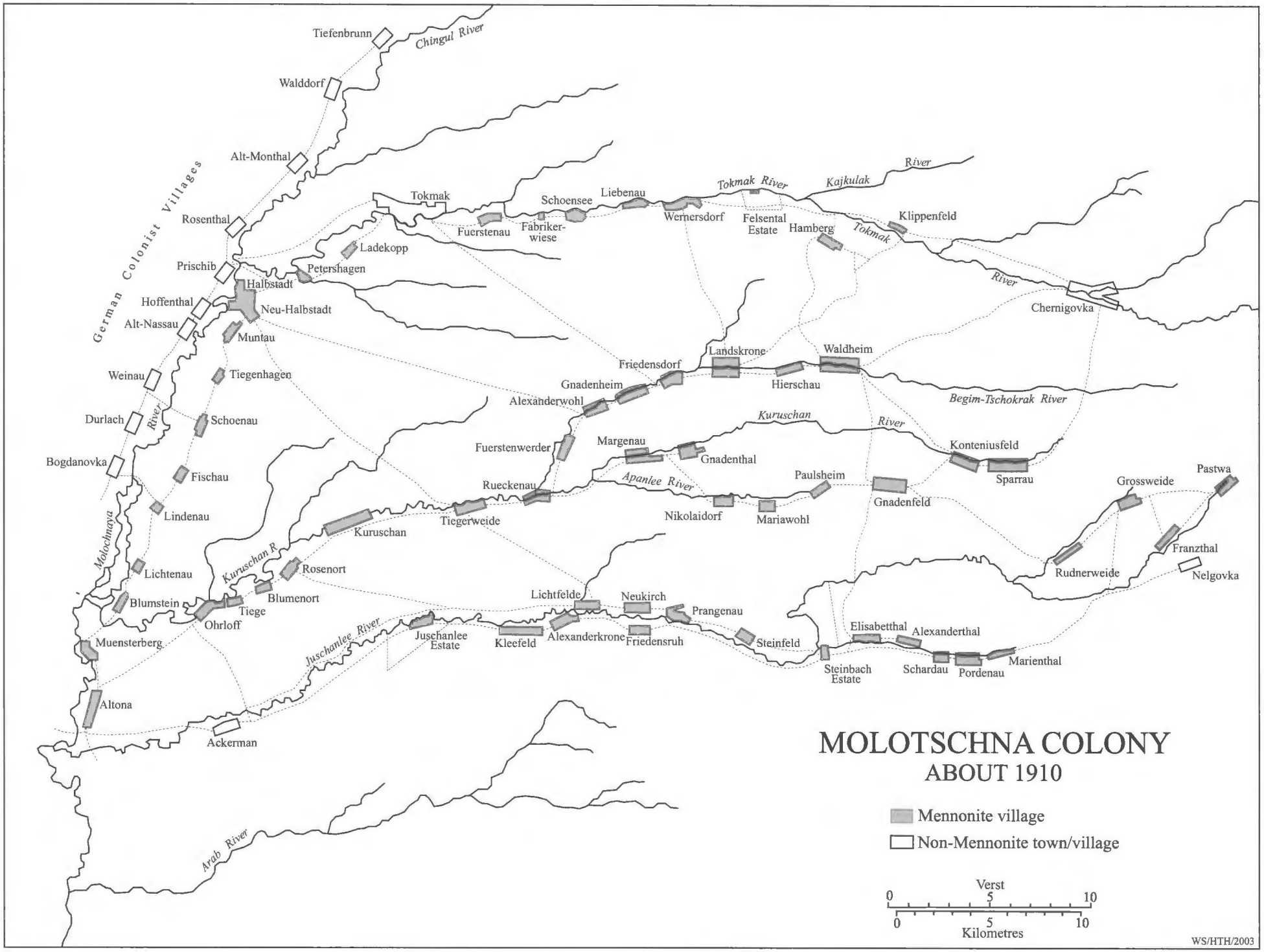

MAP
OF THE
GERMAN COLONIES
IN THE
MOLOTSCHNA
IN
SOUTH RUSSIA
IN 1836
Not all features of the original map are included
0 5 10 15 20
Scale in Wersts
Land of the City ORECHOW
Land of the Parish Village WASSILOWKI
Land of the Parish Village MICHAILOWKA
COLONIST DISTRICT
Property of the Crown Farmers of the Parish Village Gross TOKMAK
Gross Tokmak
Row of Windmills
Tokmak River
Liebenau
Fuerstenau
Schoensee
Wernersdorf
Felsenthal
Land of the Parish Village PETROPAWLOWKI
Ladekopp
Halbstadt
Petershagen
Orechow
Muntau
Tiegenhagen
Schoenau
Fischau
Lindenau
Lichtenau
Blumstein
Rosenort
Blumenort
Tiege
Ohrloff
Muensterberg
Altonau
Molotschna River
MENNONITE DISTRICT
to the city of
Alexanderwohl
Gnadenheim
Friedensdorf
Waldheim
Fuerstenwerder
Tiegerweide
Ruekkenau
Marianau
Kuruschan River
Begimtschokrak River
Apanlee River
Land of the Parish Village TSCHERNOGOWKA
Bachmut
Conteniusfeld
Sparrau
Gnadenfeld
to the city of
Perekop
Lichtfeld
Neukirch
Prangenau
Pastwa
Grossweide
Rudnerweide
Franzthal
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Pordenau
Schardau
Marienthal
Land of the DUCHOBORZEN
Land of the NOGAIES
Juschanlee River
Tschumakenweg from the city of
Tschumakenweg from the city of Perekop
Land of the MALAKANER
Land of the NOGAIES
HTH/2003

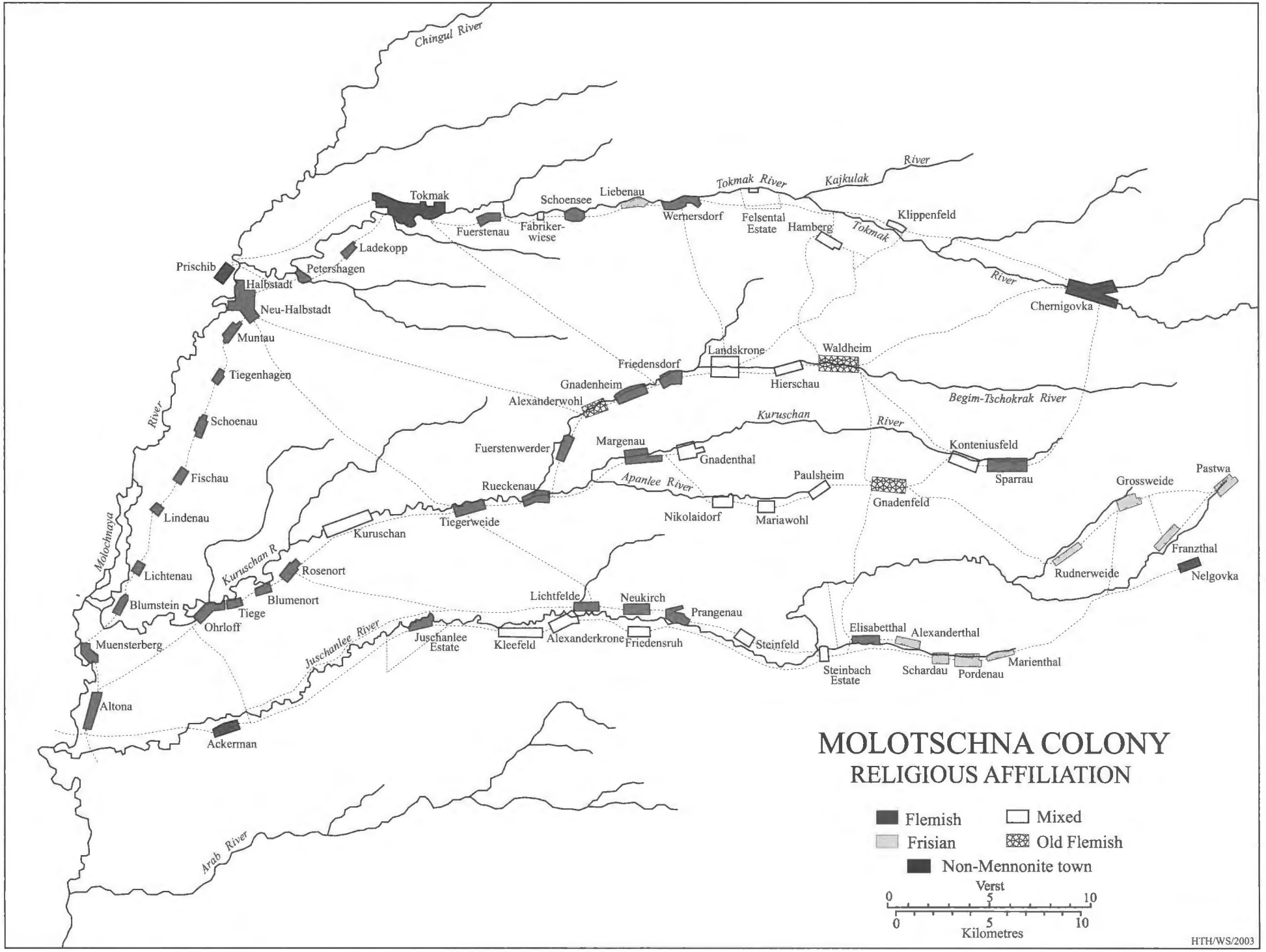
PROVINCIAL
(GUBERNIIA)
BOUNDARIES
IN 1850
Kremenchug
Donets River
Ekaterinoslav
EKATERINOSLAV
KHERSON
Chortitza
Alexandrovsk
River
Orechov
Taganrog
Rostov
Don River
Mariupol
MOLOTSCHNA
Dniepr
Dniestr River
Nikolayev
Berislav
Melitopol
Kherson
Berdyansk
Odessa
Perekop
TAURIDA
Sea of Azov
CRIMEA
Kertch
Simferopol
Sevastopol
Black Sea
HTH/2003

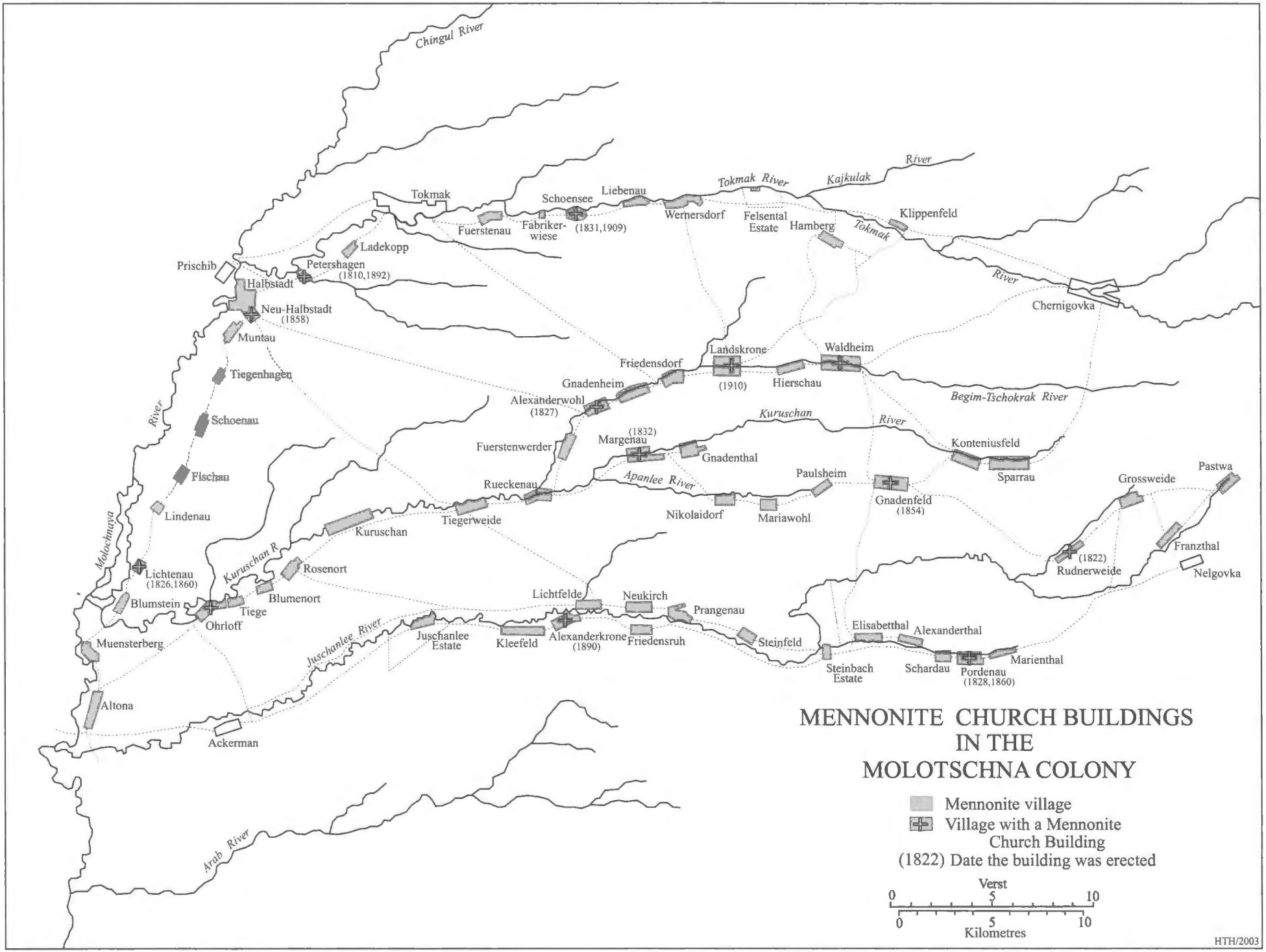


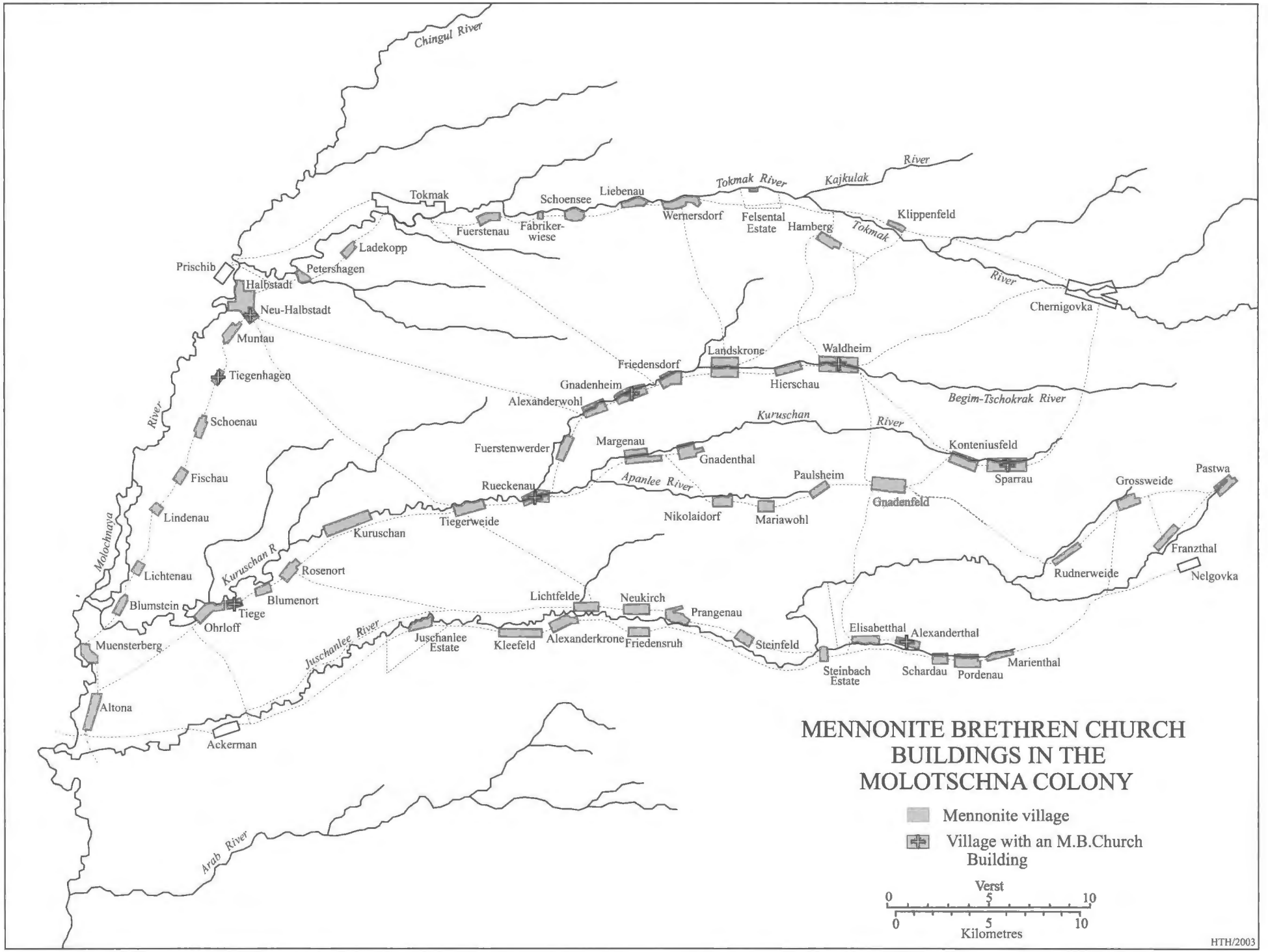
The Molotschna Mennonite Colony according to Hippenmayer, in 1852

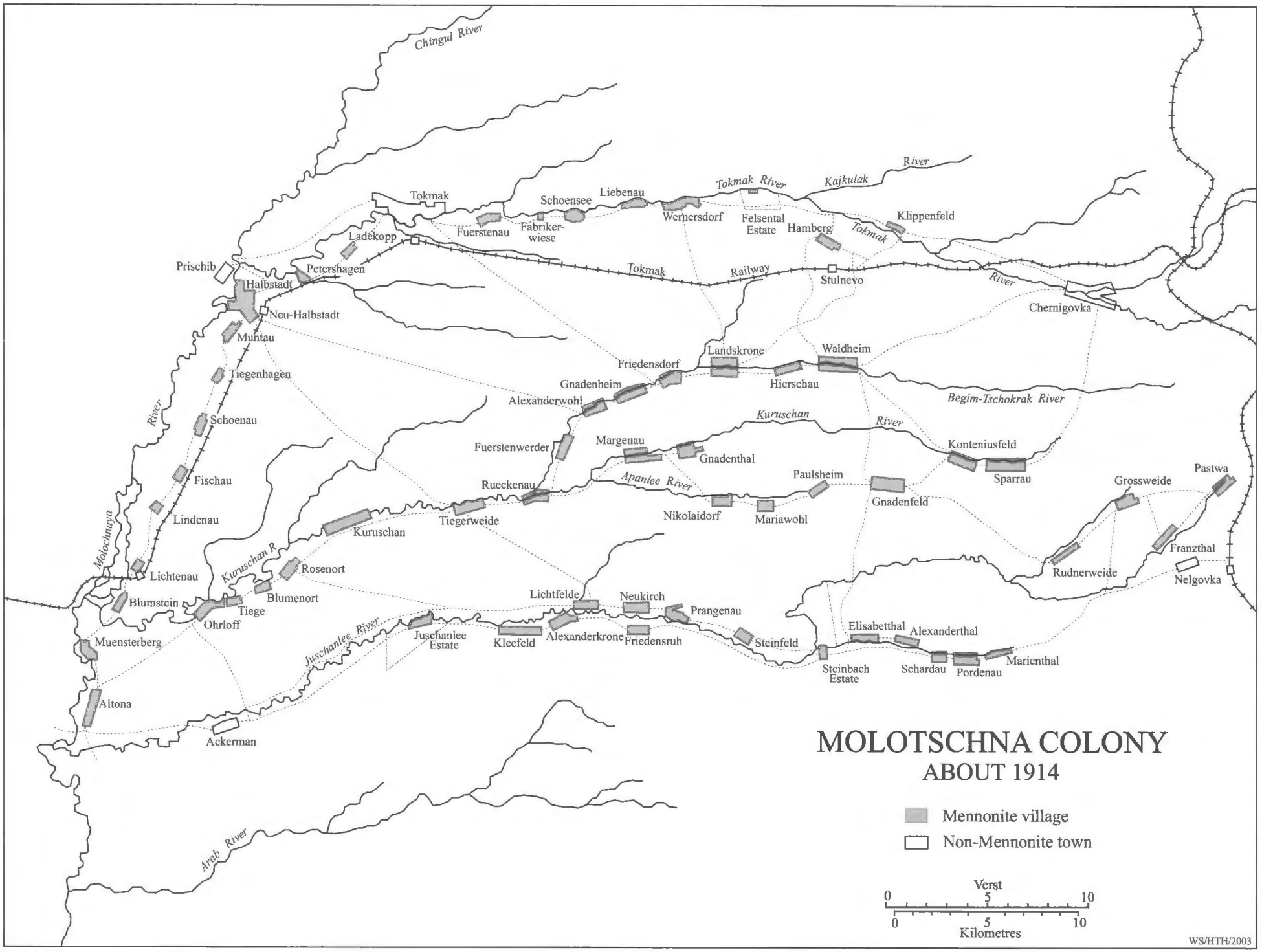

HALBSTADT VOLOST
Headquarters: Halbstadt
30 Villages
Slightly more than half of the population
GNADENFELD VOLOST
Headquarters: Gnadenfeld
27 villages
Slightly less than half of the population
Chingul River
Tokmak
Schoensee
Liebenau
Tokmak River
Felsental Estate
Kajkulak River
Fuerstenau
Fabriker-wiese
Wernersdorf
Hamberg
Klippenfeld
Tokmak River
Ladekopp
Prischib
Petershagen
Halbstadt
Neu-Halbstadt
Muntau
Chernigovka
Landskrone
Waldheim
Tiegenhagen
Gnadenheim
Alexanderwohl
Friedensdorf
Hierschau
Begim-Tschokrak River
Kuruschan River
Schoenau
Margenau
Fuerstenwerder
Gnadenthal
Konteniusfeld
Fischau
Rueckenau
Apanlee River
Paulsheim
Sparrau
Pastwa
Grossweide
Lindenau
Tiegerweide
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Gnadenfeld
Molochnaya
Kuruschan
Franzthal
Lichtenau
Kuruschan R
Rosenort
Rudnerweide
Nelgovka
Blumstein
Blumenort
Lichtfelde
Neukirch
Tiege
Alexanderkrone
Prangenau
Ohrloff
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Muensterberg
Juschanlee River
Juschanlee Estate
Kleefeld
Friedensruh
Steinfeld
Steinbach Estate
Schardau
Pordenau
Marienthal
Altona
Ackerman
Arab River
MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
IN 1871
HALBSTADT and GNADENFELD VOLOSTS
Mennonite village
Non-Mennonite town/village
Verst
0
5
10
0
5
10
Kilometres
WS/HTH/2003

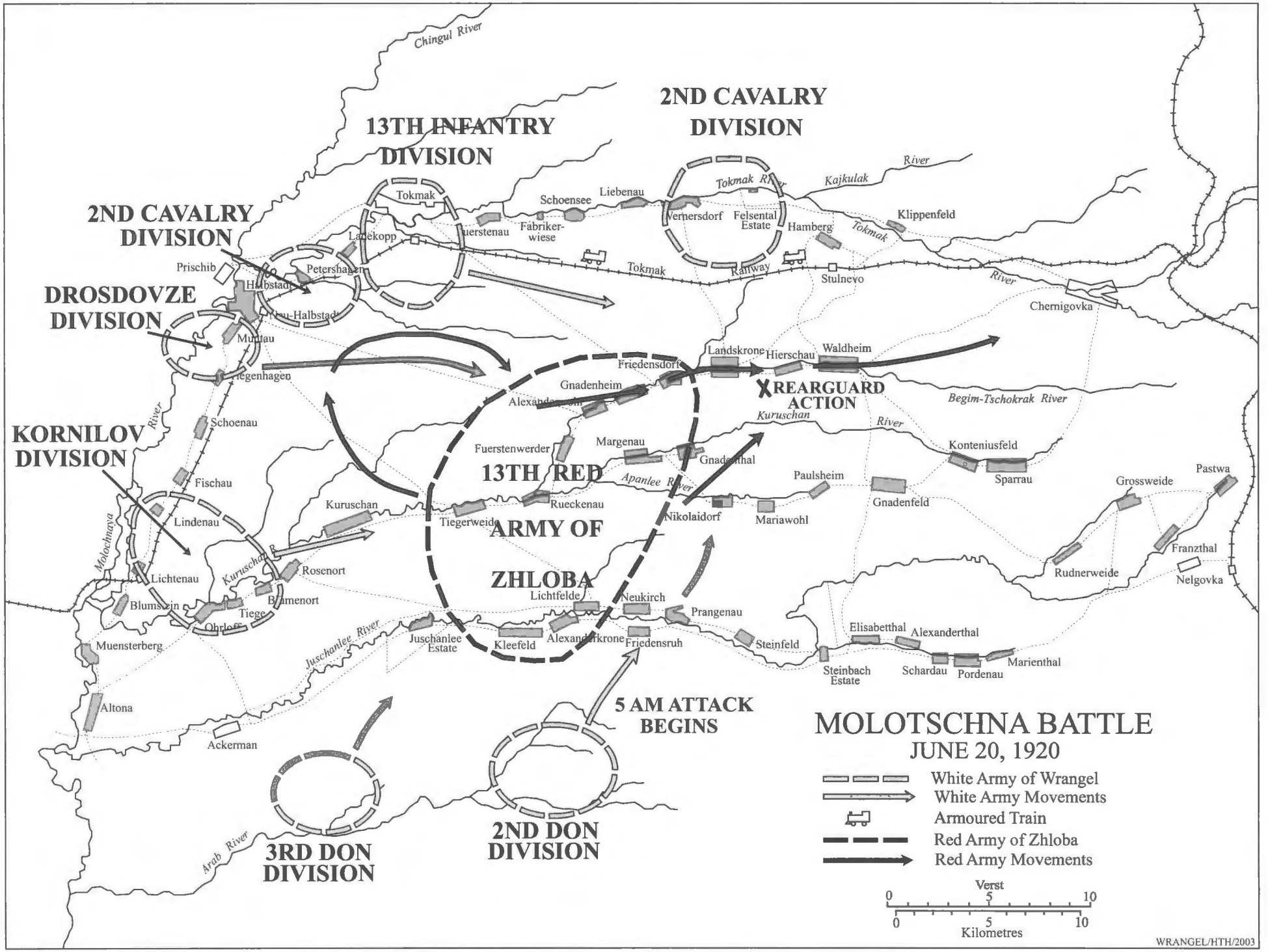

Tiefenbrunn
Chingul River
Walddorf
Alt-Monthal
German Colonist Villages
Rosenthal
Tokmak
Schoensee
Liebenau
Tokmak River
Kajkulak River
Fuerstenau
Fabriker-wiese
Wernersdorf
Felsental Estate
Hamberg
Klippenfeld
Tokmak River
Ladekopp
Prischib
Petershagen
Halbstadt
Hoffenthal
Neu-Halbstadt
Alt-Nassau
Muntau
Chernigovka
Landskrone
Waldheim
Friedensdorf
Weinau
Tiegenhagen
Gnadenheim
Hierschau
Alexanderwohl
Begim-Tschokrak River
Durlach
River
Schoenau
Kuruschan River
Fuerstenwerder
Margenau
Konteniusfeld
Gnadenthal
Bogdanovka
Fischau
Rueckenau
Apanlee River
Paulsheim
Sparrau
Grossweide
Pastwa
Lindenau
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Gnadenfeld
Molochnaya
Kuruschan
Tiegerweide
Kuruschan R
Rosenort
Rudnerweide
Franzthal
Lichtenau
Nelgovka
Blumstein
Blumenort
Tiege
Lichtfelde
Neukirch
Prangenau
Ohrloff
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Muensterberg
Juschanlee River
Juschanlee Estate
Kleefeld
Alexanderkrone
Friedensruh
Steinfeld
Marienthal
Steinbach Estate
Schardau
Pordenau
Altona
Ackerman
Arab River
MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
ABOUT 1910
Mennonite village
Non-Mennonite town/village
Verst
0
5
10
0
5
10
Kilometres
WS/HTH/2003

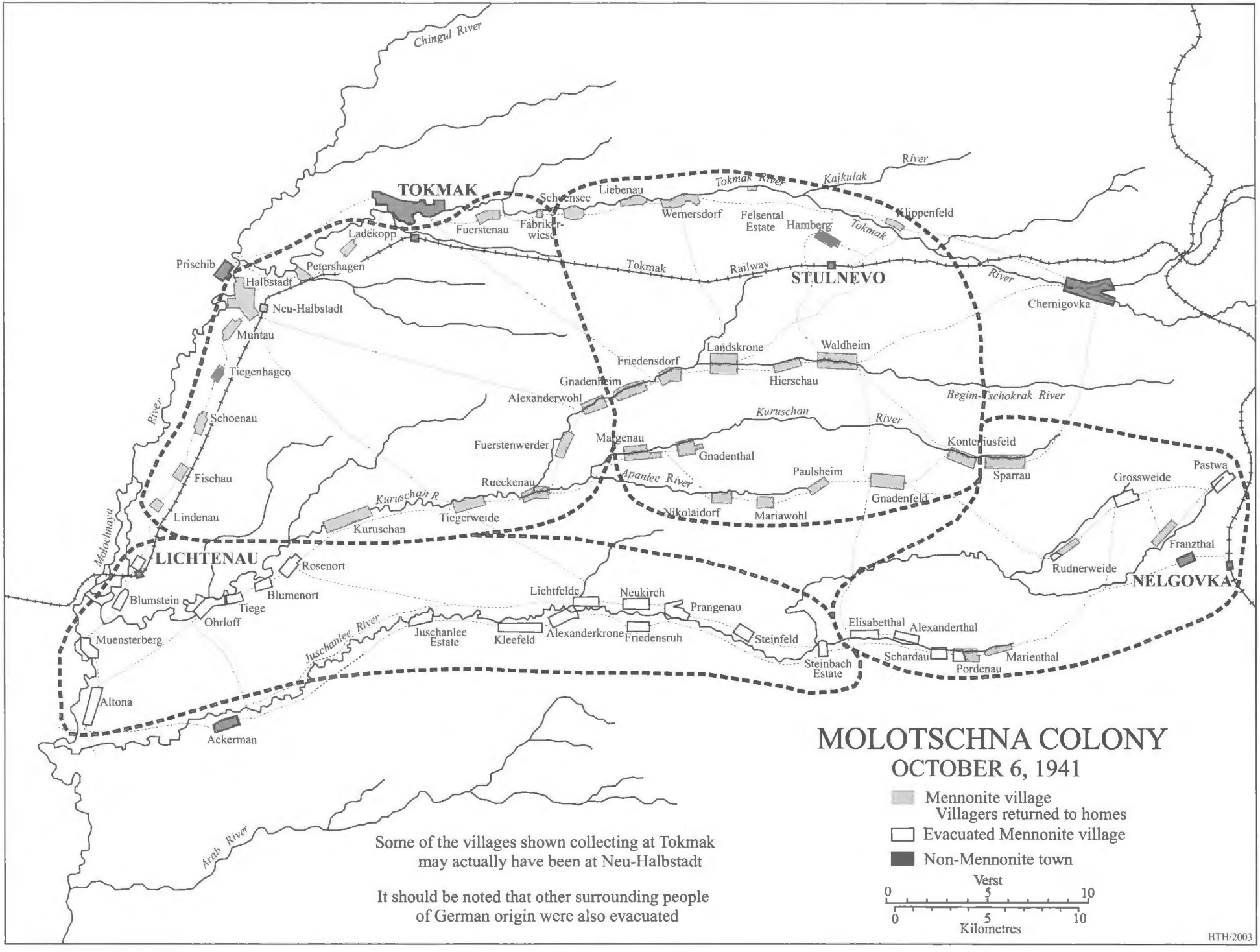

Chingul River
Tokmak
Schoensee
Liebenau
Tokmak River
Kajkulak River
Fuerstenau
Fabriker-wiese
Wernersdorf
Felsental Estate
Hamberg
Klippenfeld
Tokmak River
Ladekopp
Prischib
Petershagen
Halbstadt
Neu-Halbstadt
Chernigovka
Muntau
Landskrone
Waldheim
Friedensdorf
Tiegenhagen
Gnadenheim
Hierschau
Alexanderwohl
Begim-Tschokrak River
Kuruschan River
Schoenau
River
Fuerstenwerder
Margenau
Konteniusfeld
Gnadenthal
Fischau
Rueckenau
Apanlee River
Paulsheim
Sparrau
Pastwa
Grossweide
Gnadenfeld
Lindenau
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Tiegerweide
Kuruschan
Molochnaya
Kuruschan R
Franzthal
Rudnerweide
Nelgovka
Lichtenau
Rosenort
Blumstein
Blumenort
Lichtfelde
Neukirch
Prangenau
Tiege
Ohrloff
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Muensterberg
Juschanlee River
Juschanlee Estate
Kleefeld
Alexanderkrone
Friedensruh
Steinfeld
Marienthal
Steinbach Estate
Schardau
Pordenau
Altona
Ackerman
Arab River
MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
Flemish
Mixed
Frisian
Old Flemish
Non-Mennonite town
Verst
0
5
10
0
5
10
Kilometres
HTH/WS/2003


Chingul River
Tokmak
Schoensee
Liebenau
Tokmak River
Kajkulak River
Fuerstenau
Fabriker-wiese
(1831,1909)
Wernersdorf
Felsental Estate
Hamberg
Klippenfeld
Tokmak River
Ladekopp
Prischib
Petershagen (1810,1892)
Halbstadt
Neu-Halbstadt (1858)
Muntau
Tiegenhagen
Schoenau
Fischau
Lindenau
Melochnaya River
Chernigovka
Landskrone
Waldheim
Friedensdorf
(1910)
Hierschau
Gnadenheim
Alexanderwohl (1827)
Begim-Tschokrak River
Kuruschan River
Fuerstenwerder
Margenau (1832)
Gnadenthal
Konteniusfeld
Sparrau
Rueckenau
Apanlee River
Paulsheim
Gnadenfeld (1854)
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Tiegerweide
Kuruschan
Pastwa
Grossweide
Franzthal
Nelgovka
(1822)
Rudnerweide
Kuruschan R
Rosenort
Lichtenau (1826,1860)
Blumstein
Blumenort
Tiege
Ohrloff
Lichtfelde
Neukirch
Prangenau
Juschanlee River
Juschanlee Estate
Kleefeld
Alexanderkrone (1890)
Friedensruh
Steinfeld
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Muensterberg
Steinbach Estate
Schardau
Pordenau (1828,1860)
Marienthal
Altona
Ackerman
Arab River
MENNONITE CHURCH BUILDINGS
IN THE
MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
Mennonite village
Village with a Mennonite Church Building
(1822) Date the building was erected
Verst
0 5 10
0 5 10
Kilometres
HTH/2003


Chingul River
Tokmak
Schoensee
Liebenau
Tokmak River
Kajkulak River
Fuerstenau
Fabriker-wiese
Wernersdorf
Felsental Estate
Hamberg
Klippenfeld
Tokmak River
Ladekopp
Prischib
Petershagen
Halbstadt
Neu-Halbstadt
Chernigovka
Muntau
Tiegenhagen
Landskrone
Waldheim
Friedensdorf
Gnadenheim
Hierschau
Alexanderwohl
Begim-Tschokrak River
Kuruschan River
Schoenau
River
Fuerstenwerder
Margenau
Gnadenthal
Konteniusfeld
Sparrau
Fischau
Rueckenau
Apanlee River
Paulsheim
Grossweide
Pastwa
Gnadenfeld
Lindenau
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Tiegerweide
Kuruschan
Molochnaya
Kuruschan R
Franzthal
Lichtenau
Rosenort
Rudnerweide
Nelgovka
Blumstein
Blumenort
Lichtfelde
Neukirch
Prangenau
Tiege
Ohrloff
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Muensterberg
Juschanlee River
Juschanlee Estate
Kleefeld
Alexanderkrone
Friedensruh
Steinfeld
Marienthal
Steinbach Estate
Schardau
Pordenau
Altona
Ackerman
Arab River
MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
Mennonite village
Village with an M.B.Church Building
Verst
0 5 10
0 5 10
Kilometres
HTH/2003


Chingul River
Tokmak
Schoensee
Liebenau
Tokmak River
Kajkulak River
Fuerstenau
Fabriker-wiese
Wernersdorf
Felsental Estate
Hamberg
Klippenfeld
Tokmak
Ladekopp
Prischib
Petershagen
Tokmak Railway
Stulnevo
Halbstadt
Neu-Halbstadt
Chernigovka River
Chernigovka
Muntau
Landskrone
Waldheim
Friedensdorf
Tiegenhagen
Gnadenheim
Hierschau
Alexanderwohl
Begim-Tschokrak River
Schoenau
River
Kuruschan River
Fuerstenwerder
Margenau
Konteniusfeld
Gnadenthal
Sparrau
Fischau
Rueckenau
Apanlee River
Paulsheim
Grossweide
Pastwa
Gnadenfeld
Lindenau
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Tiegerweide
Molochnaya
Kuruschan
Kuruschan R
Franzthal
Rudnerweide
Nelgovka
Lichtenau
Rosenort
Blumenort
Lichtfelde
Neukirch
Blumstein
Tiege
Prangenau
Ohrloff
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Muensterberg
Juschanlee River
Juschanlee Estate
Kleefeld
Alexanderkrone
Friedensruh
Steinfeld
Marienthal
Steinbach Estate
Schardau
Pordenau
Altona
Ackerman
Arab River
MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
ABOUT 1914
Mennonite village
Non-Mennonite town
Verst
0
5
10
0
5
10
Kilometres
WS/HTH/2003


MOLOTSCHNA BATTLE
JUNE 20, 1920
White Army of Wrangel
White Army Movements
Armoured Train
Red Army of Zhloba
Red Army Movements
Verst
0
5
10
Kilometres
WRANGEL/HTH/2003
13TH INFANTRY DIVISION
2ND CAVALRY DIVISION
2ND CAVALRY DIVISION
DROSDOVZE DIVISION
KORNILOV DIVISION
13TH RED ARMY OF ZHLOBA
REARGUARD ACTION
5 AM ATTACK BEGINS
2ND DON DIVISION
3RD DON DIVISION
Chingul River
Kajkulak River
Tokmak River
Tokmak Railway
Begim-Tschokrak River
Kuruschan River
Apanlee River
Juschanlee River
Molochnaya River
Arab River
Tokmak
Schoensee
Liebenau
Vernersdorf
Felsental Estate
Hamberg
Klippenfeld
Stulnevo
Chernigovka
Prischib
Halbstadt
Petershagen
Ladekopp
Fuerstenau
Fabriker-wiese
Neu-Halbstadt
Muntau
Tiegenhagen
Schoenau
Fischau
Lindenau
Lichtenau
Blumstein
Ohrloff
Tiege
Blumenort
Rosenort
Kuruschan
Muensterberg
Altona
Ackerman
Friedensdorf
Gnadenheim
Alexanderstein
Fuerstenwerder
Margenau
Gnadenthal
Rueckenau
Tiegerweide
Nikolaidorf
Mariawohl
Paulsheim
Gnadenfeld
Konteniusfeld
Sparrau
Grossweide
Pastwa
Franzthal
Nelgovka
Rudnerweide
Lichtfelde
Neukirch
Prangenau
Steinfeld
Kleefeld
Alexanderkrone
Friedensruh
Juschanlee Estate
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Steinbach Estate
Schardau
Pordenau
Marienthal
Landskrone
Hierschau
Waldheim



MOLOTSCHNA COLONY

OCTOBER 6, 1941

Mennonite village
Villagers returned to homes

Evacuated Mennonite village

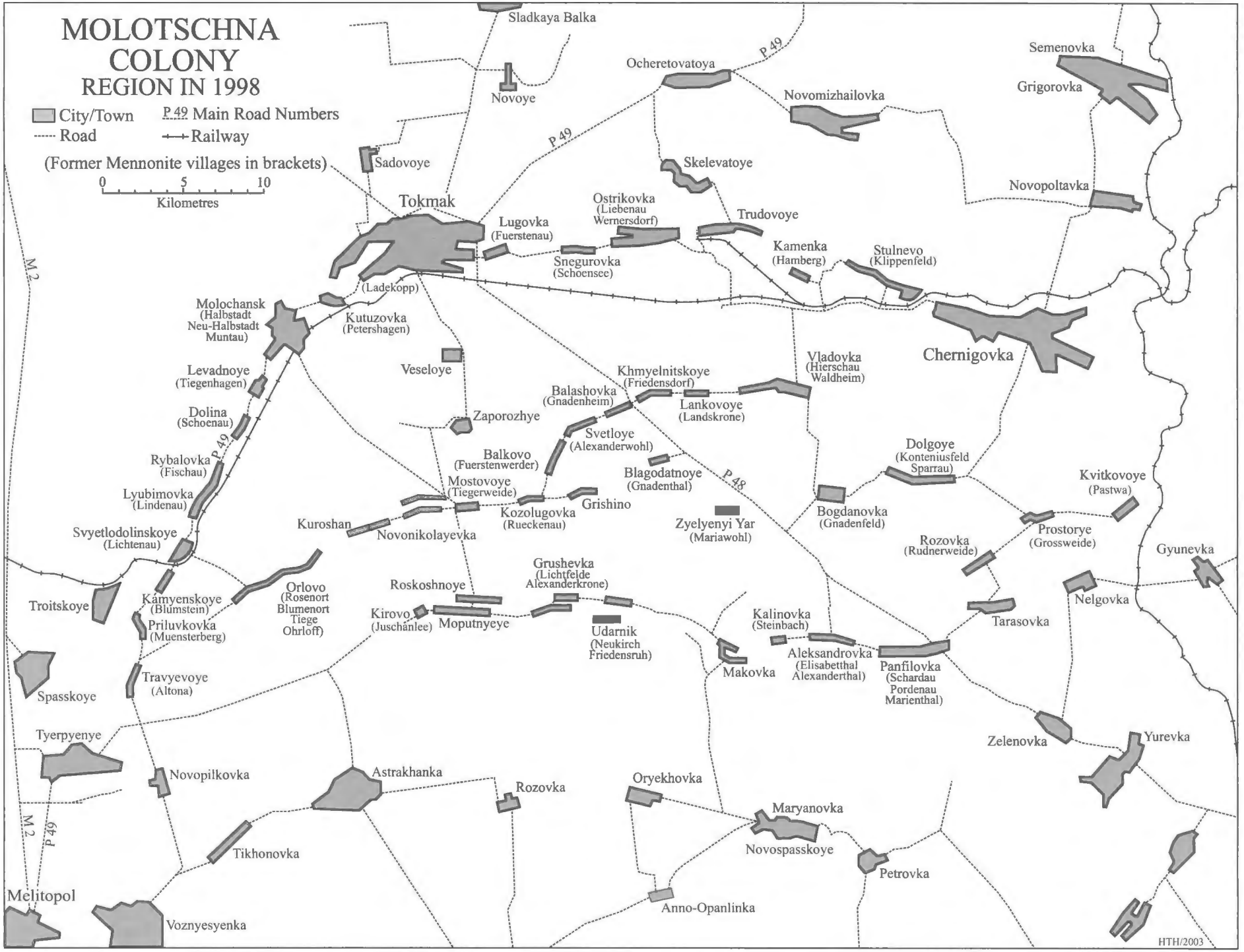
Non-Mennonite town

Verst
0 5 10
0 5 10
Kilometres

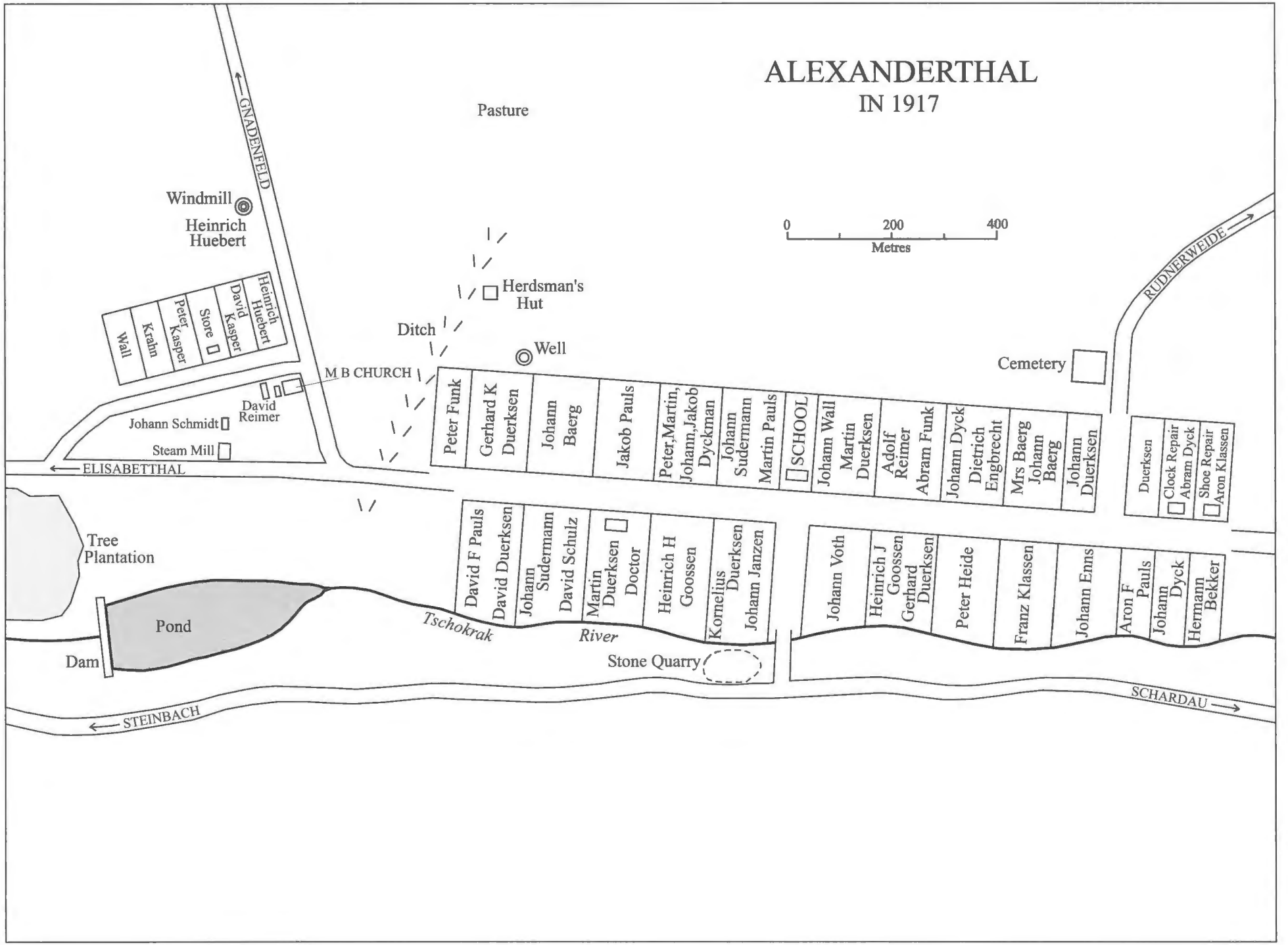
Some of the villages shown collecting at Tokmak may actually have been at Neu-Halbstadt

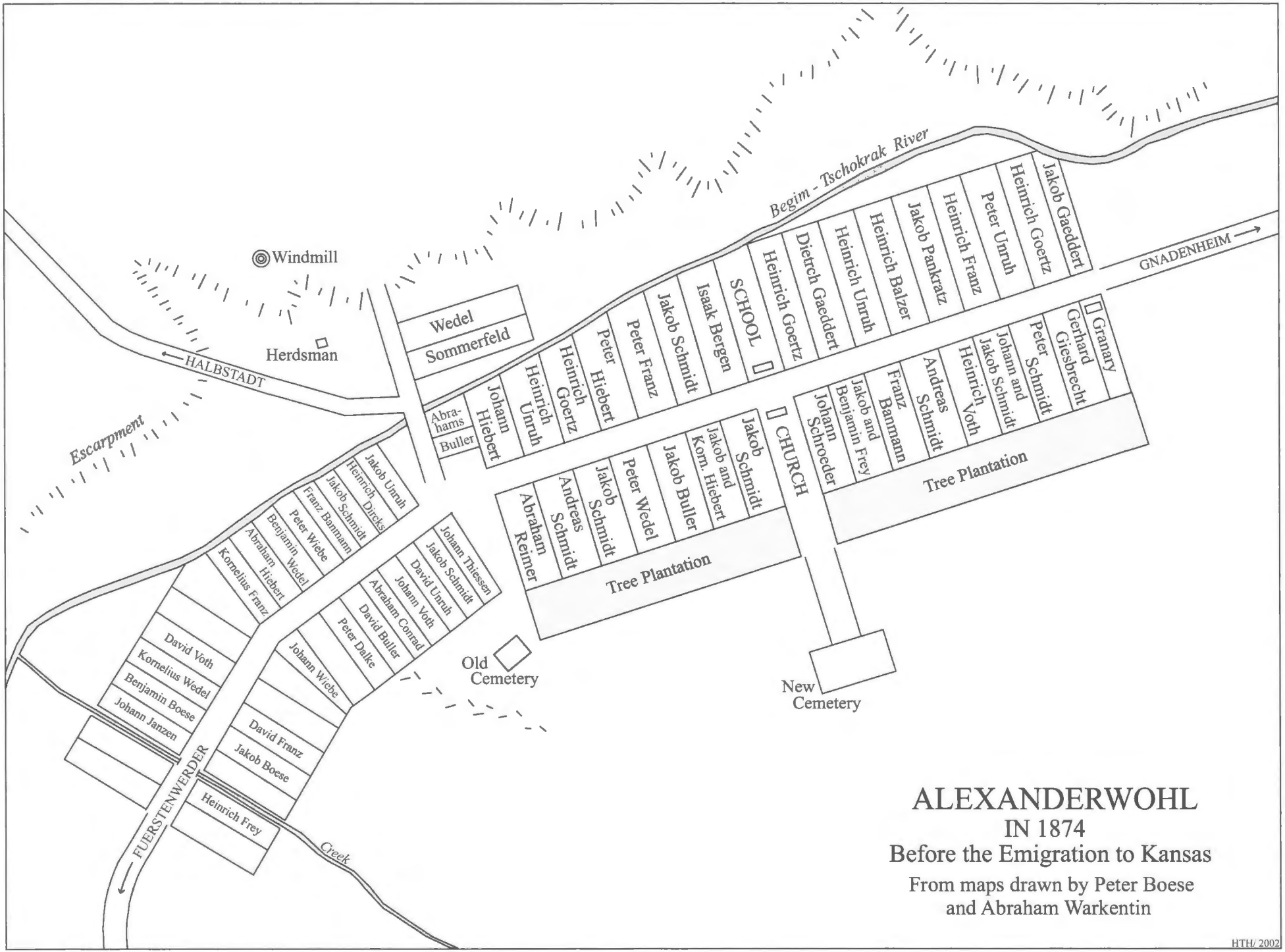
It should be noted that other surrounding people of German origin were also evacuated

HTH/2003


MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
REGION IN 1998
City/Town
Road
P 49 Main Road Numbers
Railway
(Former Mennonite villages in brackets)
0 5 10
Kilometres
Sladkaya Balka
Novoye
Ocheretovatoya
P 49
Semenovka
Grigorovka
Novomizhailovka
Sadovoye
Skelevatoye
Novopoltavka
Tokmak
Ostrikovka (Liebenau Wernersdorf)
Trudovoye
Lugovka (Fuerstenau)
Kamenka (Hamberg)
Stulnevo (Klippenfeld)
Snegurovka (Schoensee)
(Ladekopp)
M 2
Molochansk (Halbstadt Neu-Halbstadt Muntau)
Kutuzovka (Petershagen)
Chernigovka
Vladovka (Hierschau Waldheim)
Veseloye
Levadnoye (Tiegenhagen)
Khmyelnitskoye (Friedensdorf)
Balashovka (Gnadenheim)
Lankovoye (Landskrone)
Dolina (Schoenau)
Zaporozhye
Svetloye (Alexanderwohl)
Rybalovka (Fischau)
Balkovo (Fuerstenwerder)
Dolgoye (Konteniusfeld Sparrau)
Lyubimovka (Lindenau)
Mostovoye (Tiegerweide)
Blagodatnoye (Gnadenthal)
P 48
Kvitkovoye (Pastwa)
Grishino
Kozolugovka (Rueckenau)
Kuroshan
Novonikolayevka
Zyelyenyi Yar (Mariawohl)
Bogdanovka (Gnadenfeld)
Svyetlodolinskoye (Lichtenau)
Prostorye (Grossweide)
Rozovka (Rudnerweide)
Gyunevka
Grushevka (Lichtfelde Alexanderkrone)
Orlovo (Rosenort Blumenort Tiege Ohrloff)
Roskoshnoye
Nelgovka
Troitskoye
Kamyenskoye (Blumstein)
Kirovo (Juschanlee)
Moputnyeye
Tarasovka
Priluvkovka (Muensterberg)
Udarnik (Neukirch Friedensruh)
Kalinovka (Steinbach)
Spasskoye
Travyevoye (Altona)
Makovka
Aleksandrovka (Elisabetthal Alexanderthal)
Panfilovka (Schardau Pordenau Marienthal)
Zelenovka
Yurevka
Tyerpyenye
Novopilkovka
Astrakhanka
Rozovka
Oryekhovka
Maryanovka
Novospasskoye
Petrovka
Tikhonovka
Melitopol
Voznyesyenka
Anno-Opanlinka
HTH/2003

ALEXANDERKRONE
IN 1914
WS/2002
LICHTFELDE
LICHTFELDE
Brick Factory
FRIEDENSRUH
Windmill
Cowherd
Verst
Kilometres
Peter Pauls
Johann Penner
Jakob Schmall
Peter Huebner
Daniel P Enns
Martens
Johann Harder
Poetker
Isaak Braun
Steam Mill
Aron Rempel
Pharmacy
Dr Bittner
Isaak Block
CHURCH
Small Farms
(Kleinwirte)
ROSENORT
Gerhard Peters
BUSINESS SCHOOL
1 Principal I V Bykov
2 Heinrich Koop
3 Heinrich Koop
4 Aron Toews
5 Gerhard Braun
6 Heinrich Neumann
7 Johann Wall
8 Gerhard Braun
9 Abram Konrad
10 Jakob Thiessen
Coop Store
Kornelius Willms 40
Heinrich Kornelsen 39
Johann Koop 38
Jakob Fast 37
Jakob Fast 36
Aron Matthies 35
Peter Stobbe 34
Peter Peters 33
Jakob Berg 32
Peter Huebner 31
SCHOOL Ice Cellar
Old Cemetery
Juschanlee River
New Cemetery
11 Jakob Enns
12 Paul Poetker
13 Jakob Dueck
14 Jakob Thiessen
15 Heinrich Loewen
16 Nikolai Thiessen
17 Abram Fast
18 Heinrich Fast
19 Jakob Berg
20 Nikolai Goossen
Gerhard Dueck 30
Peter Schellenberg 29
Aron Driediger 28
Wilhelm Loewen 27
Johann Boldt 26
David Hildebrandt 25
Abram Nachtigal 24
Peter Pankratz 23
Jakob Letkemann 22
Heinrich Neufeld 21
Pasture
Jakob Dyck
Toews
Franz Pauls
Schellenberg
Fast
Hildebrand
Watchman
Landless Families
(Anwohner)
KLEEFELD


ALEXANDERTHAL
IN 1917
Pasture
0
200
400
Metres
GNADENFELD
RUDNERWEIDE
Windmill
Heinrich Huebert
Herdsman's Hut
Ditch
Well
Cemetery
M B CHURCH
David Reimer
Johann Schmidt
Steam Mill
ELISABETTHAL
Wall
Krahn
Peter Kasper
Store
David Kasper
Heinrich Huebert
Peter Funk
Gerhard K Duerksen
Johann Baerg
Jakob Pauls
Peter,Martin, Johann,Jakob Dyckman
Johann Sudermann
Martin Pauls
SCHOOL
Johann Wall
Martin Duerksen
Adolf Reimer
Abram Funk
Johann Dyck
Dietrich Engbrecht
Mrs Baerg
Johann Baerg
Johann Duerksen
Duerksen
Clock Repair
Abram Dyck
Shoe Repair
Aron Klassen
Tree Plantation
Pond
Dam
Tschokrak River
David F Pauls
David Duerksen
Johann Sudermann
David Schulz
Martin Duerksen
Doctor
Heinrich H Goossen
Kornelius Duerksen
Johann Janzen
Stone Quarry
Johann Voth
Heinrich J Goossen
Gerhard Duerksen
Peter Heide
Franz Klassen
Johann Enns
Aron F Pauls
Johann Dyck
Hermann Bekker
SCHARDAU
STEINBACH



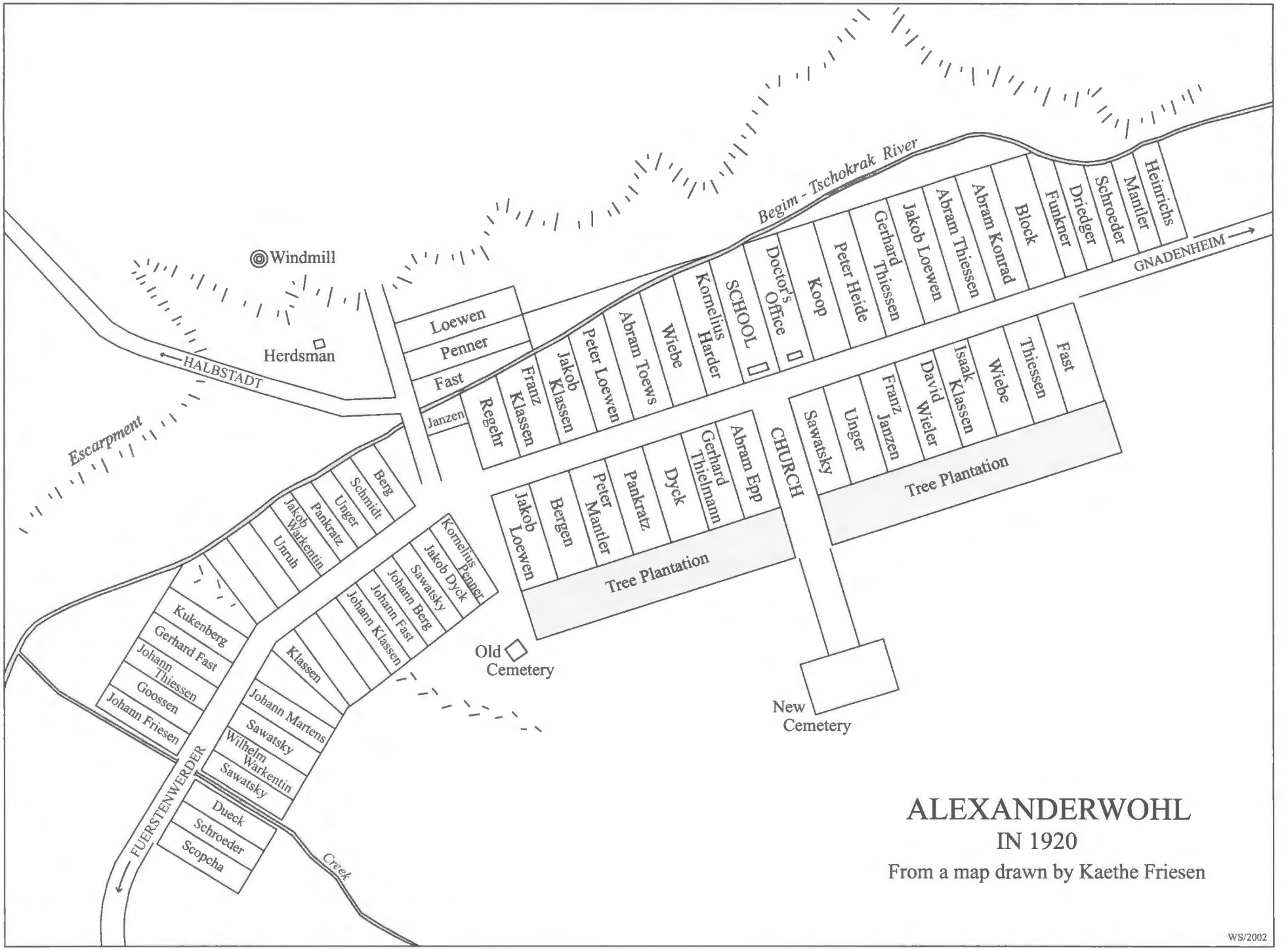
ALEXANDERWOHL

IN 1874

Before the Emigration to Kansas

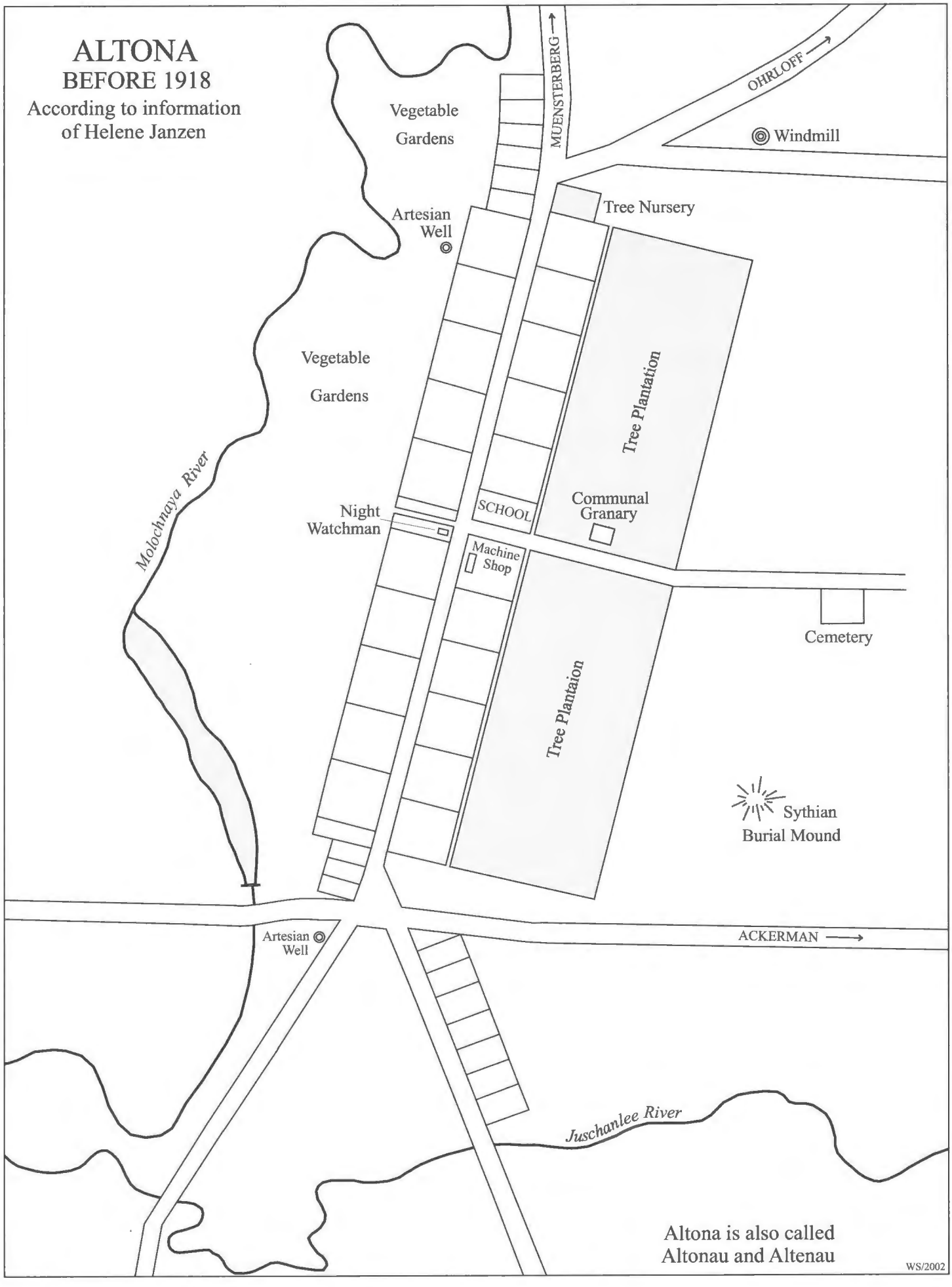
From maps drawn by Peter Boese
and Abraham Warkentin

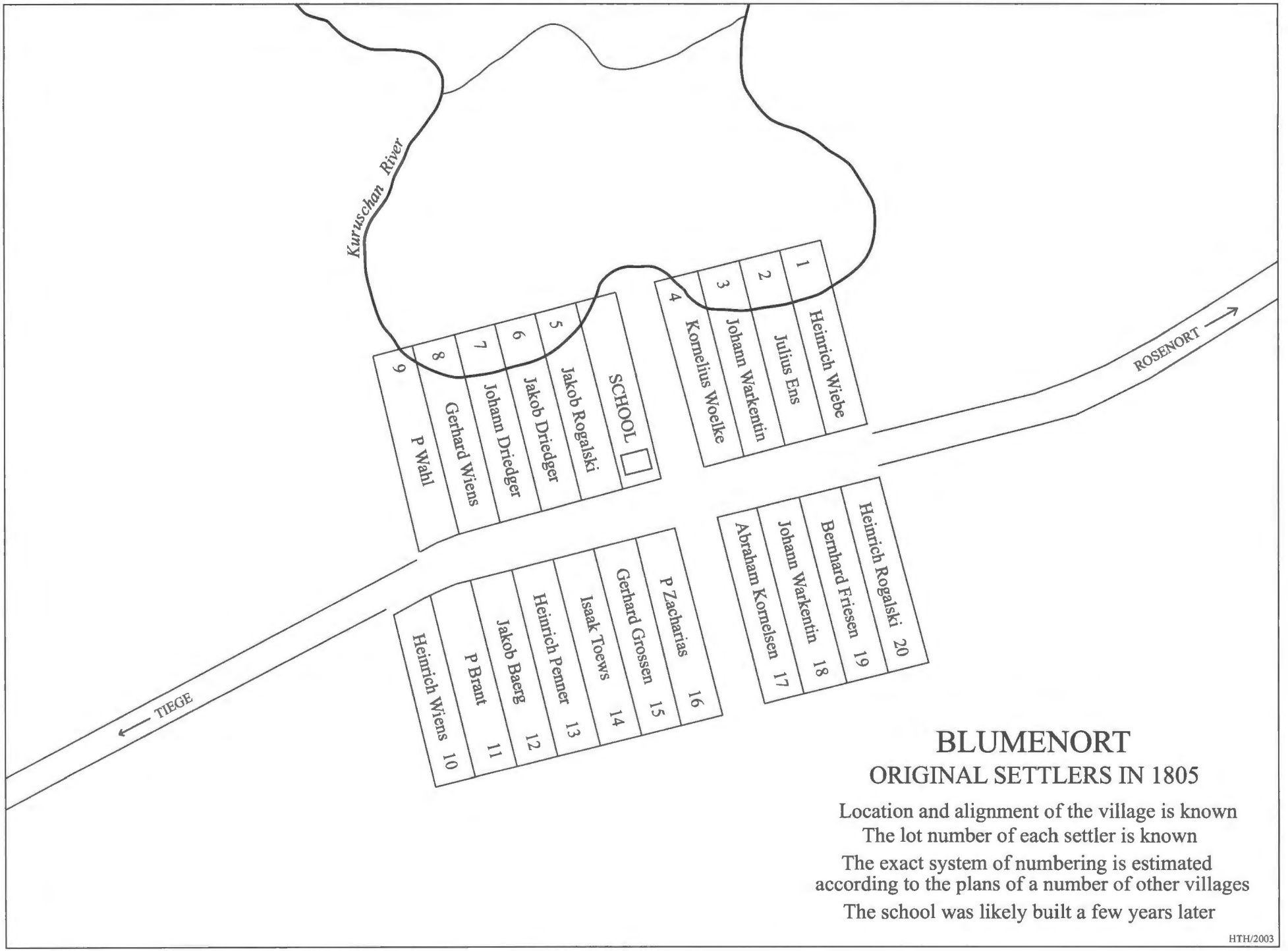
HTH/ 2002

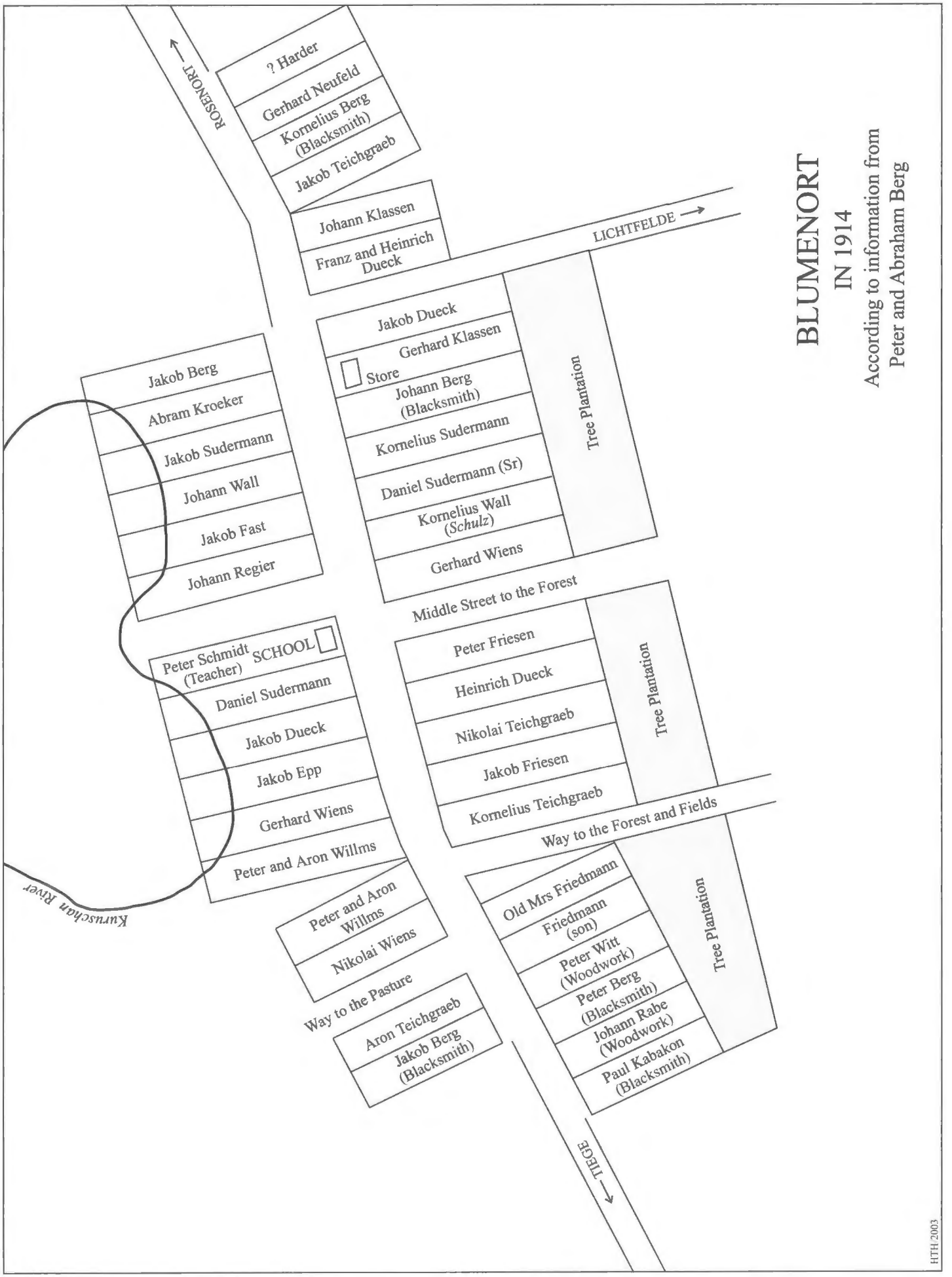


ALEXANDERWOHL
IN 1920
From a map drawn by Kaethe Friesen

WS/2002

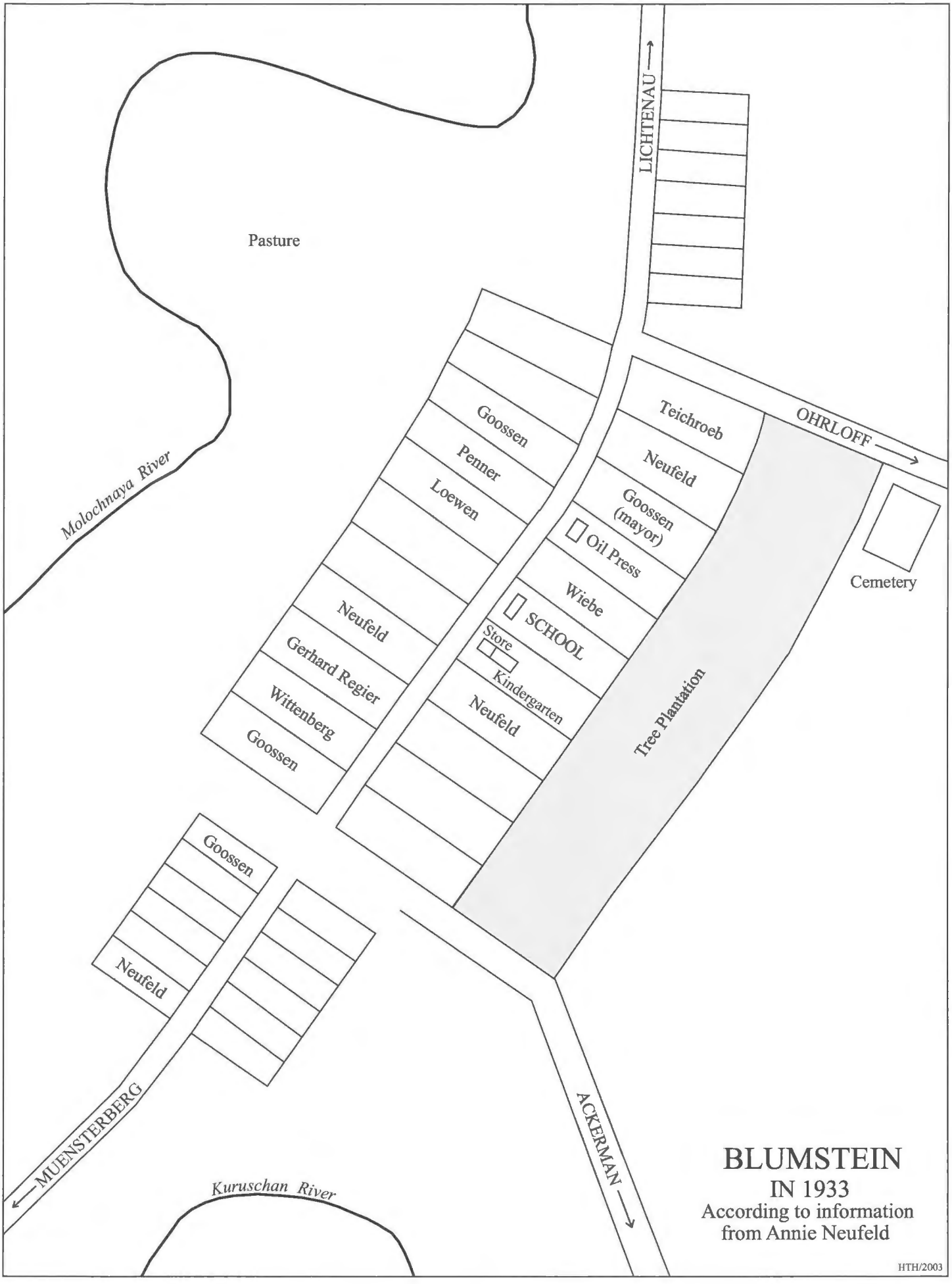

ALTONA
BEFORE 1918
According to information
of Helene Janzen
Vegetable
Gardens
MUENSTERBERG
OHRLOFF
Windmill
Artesian
Well
Tree Nursery
Vegetable
Gardens
Tree Plantation
Molochnaya River
Night
Watchman
SCHOOL
Communal
Granary
Machine
Shop
Cemetery
Tree Plantaion
Sythian
Burial Mound
Artesian
Well
ACKERMAN
Juschanlee River
Altona is also called
Altonau and Altenau
WS/2002


Kuruschan River
1 Heinrich Wiebe
2 Julius Ens
3 Johann Warkentin
4 Kornelius Woelke
5 Jakob Rogalski
SCHOOL
6 Jakob Driedger
7 Johann Driedger
8 Gerhard Wiens
9 P Wahl
ROSENORT
TIEGE
10 Heinrich Wiens
11 P Brant
12 Jakob Baerg
13 Heinrich Penner
14 Isaak Toews
15 Gerhard Grossen
16 P Zacharias
17 Abraham Kornelsen
18 Johann Warkentin
19 Bernhard Friesen
20 Heinrich Rogalski
BLUMENORT
ORIGINAL SETTLERS IN 1805
Location and alignment of the village is known
The lot number of each settler is known
The exact system of numbering is estimated according to the plans of a number of other villages
The school was likely built a few years later
HTH/2003


BLUMENORT
IN 1914
According to information from
Peter and Abraham Berg
ROSENORT
LICHTFELDE
? Harder
Gerhard Neufeld
Kornelius Berg (Blacksmith)
Jakob Teichgraeb
Johann Klassen
Franz and Heinrich Dueck
Jakob Dueck
Gerhard Klassen
Store
Johann Berg (Blacksmith)
Kornelius Sudermann
Daniel Sudermann (Sr)
Kornelius Wall (Schulz)
Gerhard Wiens
Tree Plantation
Jakob Berg
Abram Kroeker
Jakob Sudermann
Johann Wall
Jakob Fast
Johann Regier
Middle Street to the Forest
Peter Schmidt (Teacher)
SCHOOL
Daniel Sudermann
Jakob Dueck
Jakob Epp
Gerhard Wiens
Peter and Aron Willms
Peter Friesen
Heinrich Dueck
Nikolai Teichgraeb
Jakob Friesen
Kornelius Teichgraeb
Tree Plantation
Way to the Forest and Fields
Kuruschan River
Peter and Aron Willms
Nikolai Wiens
Way to the Pasture
Aron Teichgraeb
Jakob Berg (Blacksmith)
Old Mrs Friedmann
Friedmann (son)
Peter Witt (Woodwork)
Peter Berg (Blacksmith)
Johann Rabe (Woodwork)
Paul Kabakon (Blacksmith)
Tree Plantation
TIEGE
HTH 2003

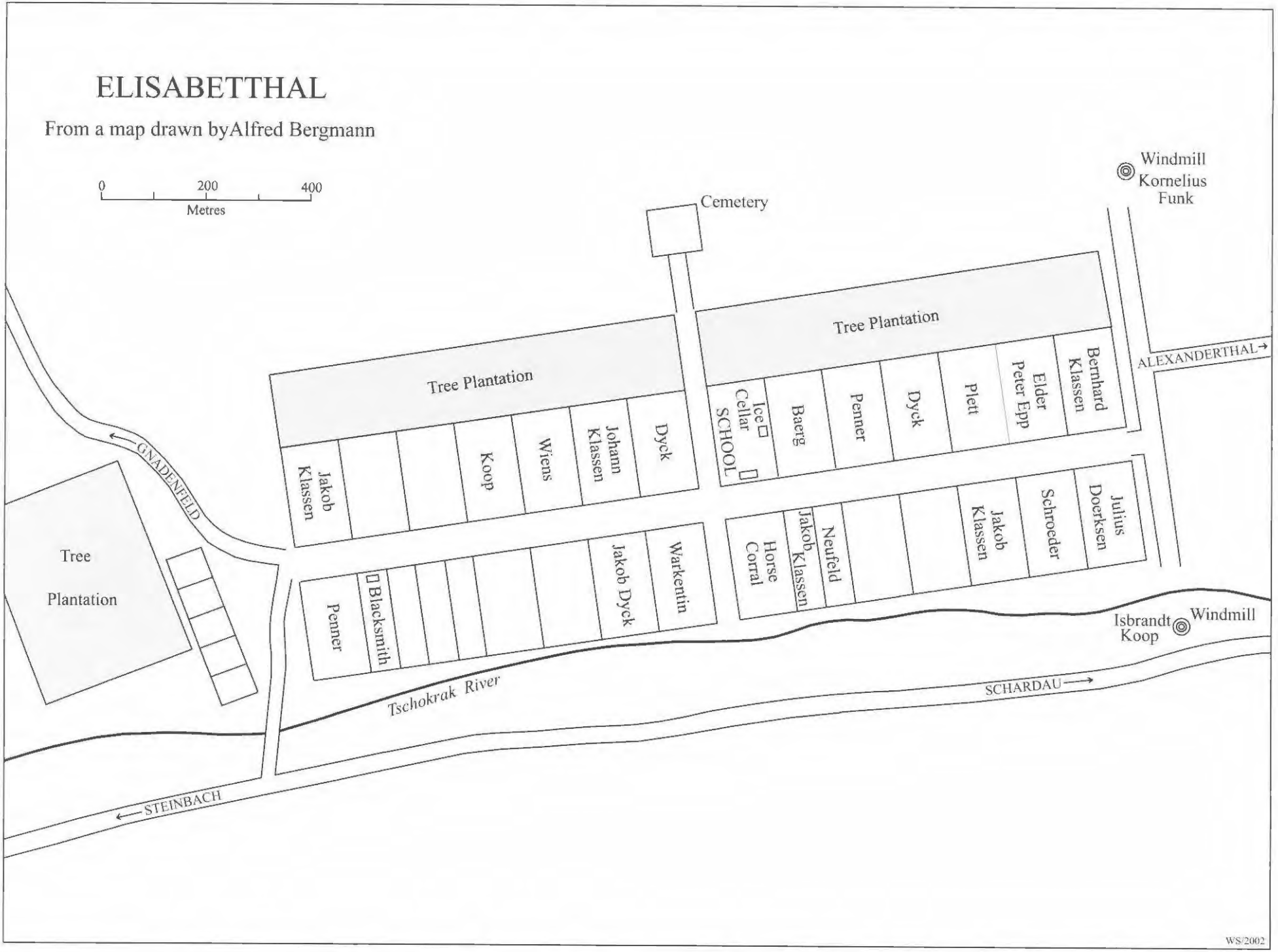
BLUMENORT
IN 1930
According to information from
Peter and Abraham Berg
* House burned down in 1919
Thereafter the people lived in the
outbuildings or summer kitchens
By 1930 not sure how much
forest was left
JUSCHANLEE
ROSENORT
LICHTFELDE
TIEGE
Kurusch'an River
Jakob Johann Rabe
Ballau
Neufeld
Jakob Prokopenko
Magdenko
Jakob Teichgraeb
Rempel
Gustav and Heinrich
Nass
H Dueck P J Neufeld
G Sereej Maslosavod
Samuil Dunajevskij
(later club)
Ivan Gavril Micheev
Ivan Scheveljov
Johann Johann Berg
(blacksmith)
Kornelius Sudermann
Warkentin Julius Friesen
(later cow barn)
Wall
(later a pig barn)
Wiens?
Peter Unruh
Heinrich Weiss
Isaak Isaak
Berg
Johann Isaak
Berg
Stepan
Karpovitsch
Maria Berg
Peter Schroeder *
Jakob Sudermann *
Tschub
Jakob Granz *
Heinrich Epp *
Abram Regier
Johann Braun Sawatzky
Fillip
Magdenko
Peter
Prokopenko
Efim
Prokopenko
Pravdivez
Bogdanov
Presumed location of Upper Street
Middle Street to the fields
* Old Mrs Friesen Esau
Heinrich Dueck
(later a kindergarten)
David Jakob Friesen
(later a store)
Jakob Teichgraeb
Fillip
Karpovitsch
Flerko
Meljnik
Grigorij
Micheev
Peter
Magdenko
Gavril
Lutschko
Abram Johann
Berg
Jakob
Sawatzky
Furmanscha
Penner and Johann SCHOOL
Pankratz (Teachers)
Kasper
(took care of horses)
Jakob Dueck
Franz Wiens
Jakob Fast
Jakob Rempel *
Mrs Wiens
Aron Ekaterinovitsch
Later Jakob Rabe
Nikolai Teichgraeb
Way to the Pasture
Jakob Jakob Berg
(blacksmith)
Franz I Berg
Way to the Fields
Abram Berg
Johann Jakob Berg
Peter Johann Berg
Johann Rabe (Sr)
Dueck Warkentin
HTH/2003

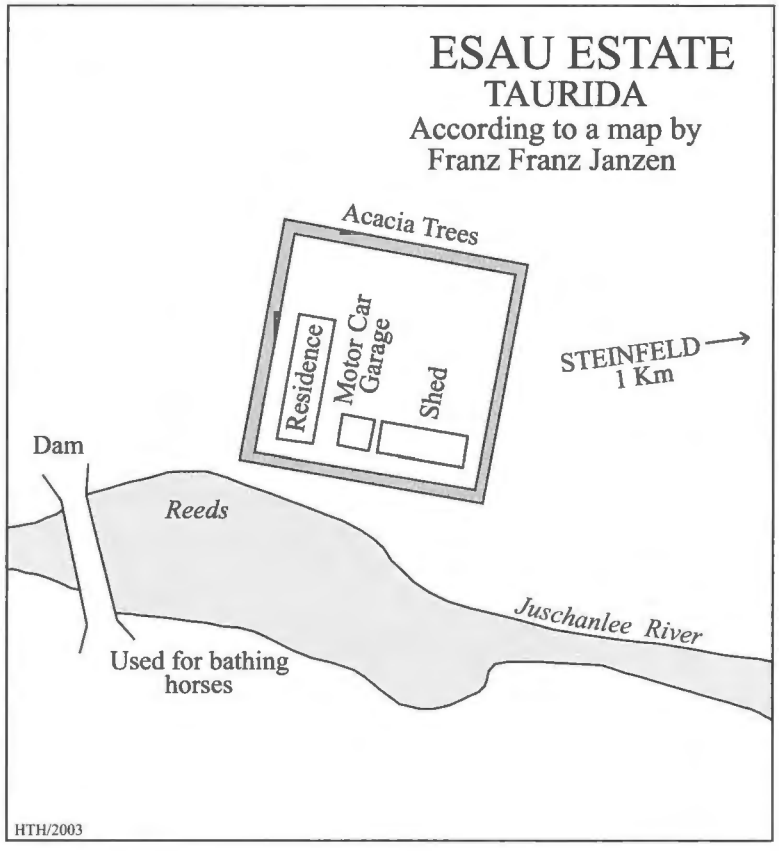
LICHTENAU
Pasture
Molochnaya River
Johann Fast 10
Peter Harms 9
Daniel Wiens 8
Peter Kastoff 7
Martin Warkentin 6
SCHOOL
Gerhard Schoellenberg 5
Franz Harder 4
Cornelius Loepp 3
Abraham Loewen 2
Peter Teichgraew 1
11 Johann Kroeker
12 Johann Harms
13 Jakob Wiebe
14 Isaak Goossen
Jakob Harder
15 Jakob Giesbrecht
16 Johann Harder
17 Johann Penner
18 Aron Schellenberg
19 Franz Reimer
20 Johann Neufeld
21 Heinrich Teichgraew
OHRLOFF
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
MUENSTERBERG
ACKERMAN
Kuruschan River
BLUMSTEIN
IN 1810
Later inhabitant says that the school was actually on the other (high) side of the street, and the cemetery near the Orloff road
WS/2002


LICHTENAU
Pasture
Molochnaya River
Goossen
Penner
Loewen
Neufeld
Gerhard Regier
Wittenberg
Goossen
Teichroeb
Neufeld
Goossen (mayor)
Oil Press
Wiebe
SCHOOL
Store
Kindergarten
Neufeld
OHRLOFF
Cemetery
Tree Plantation
Goossen
Neufeld
MUENSTERBERG
Kuruschan River
ACKERMAN
BLUMSTEIN
IN 1933
According to information
from Annie Neufeld
HTH/2003

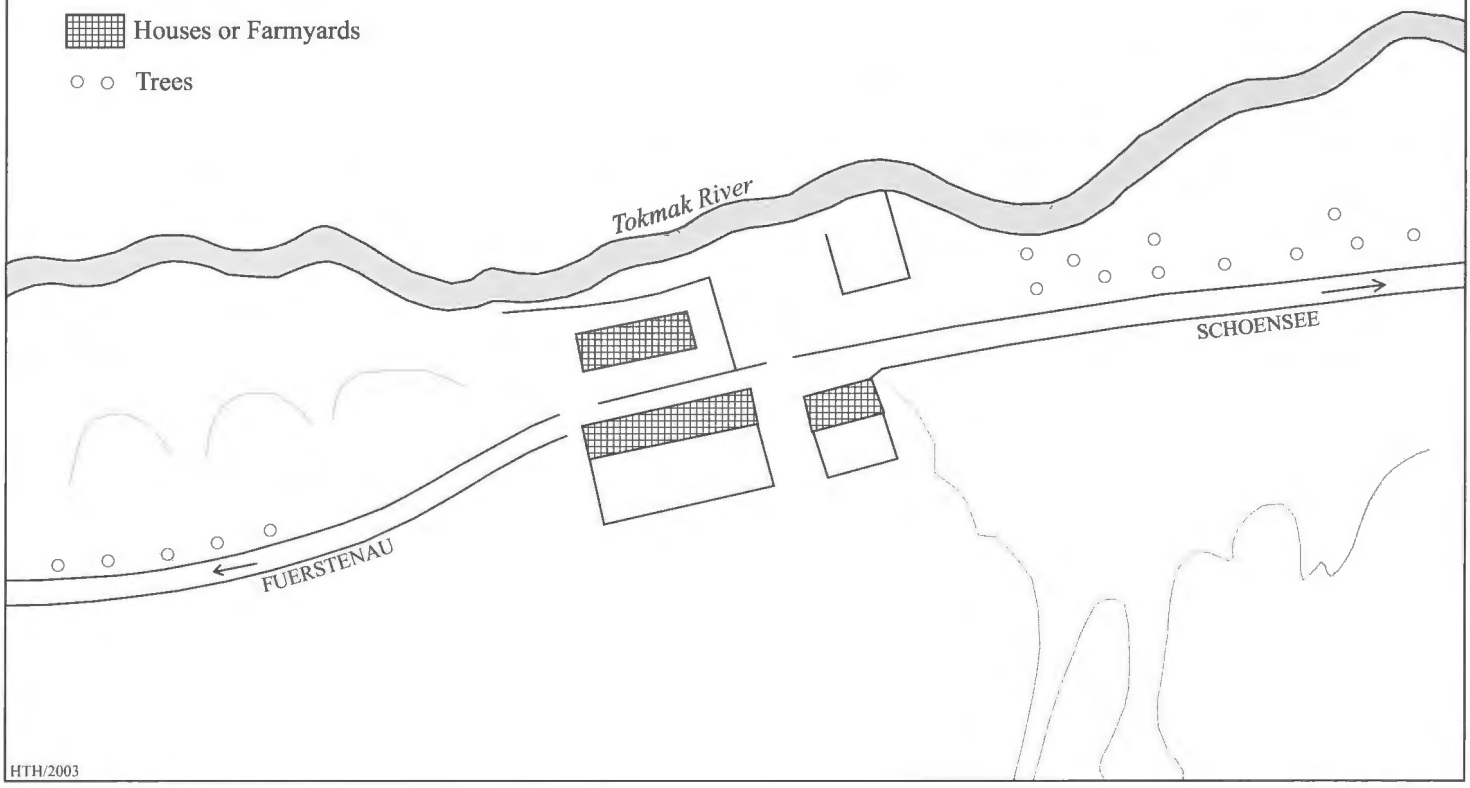
ELISABETTHAL

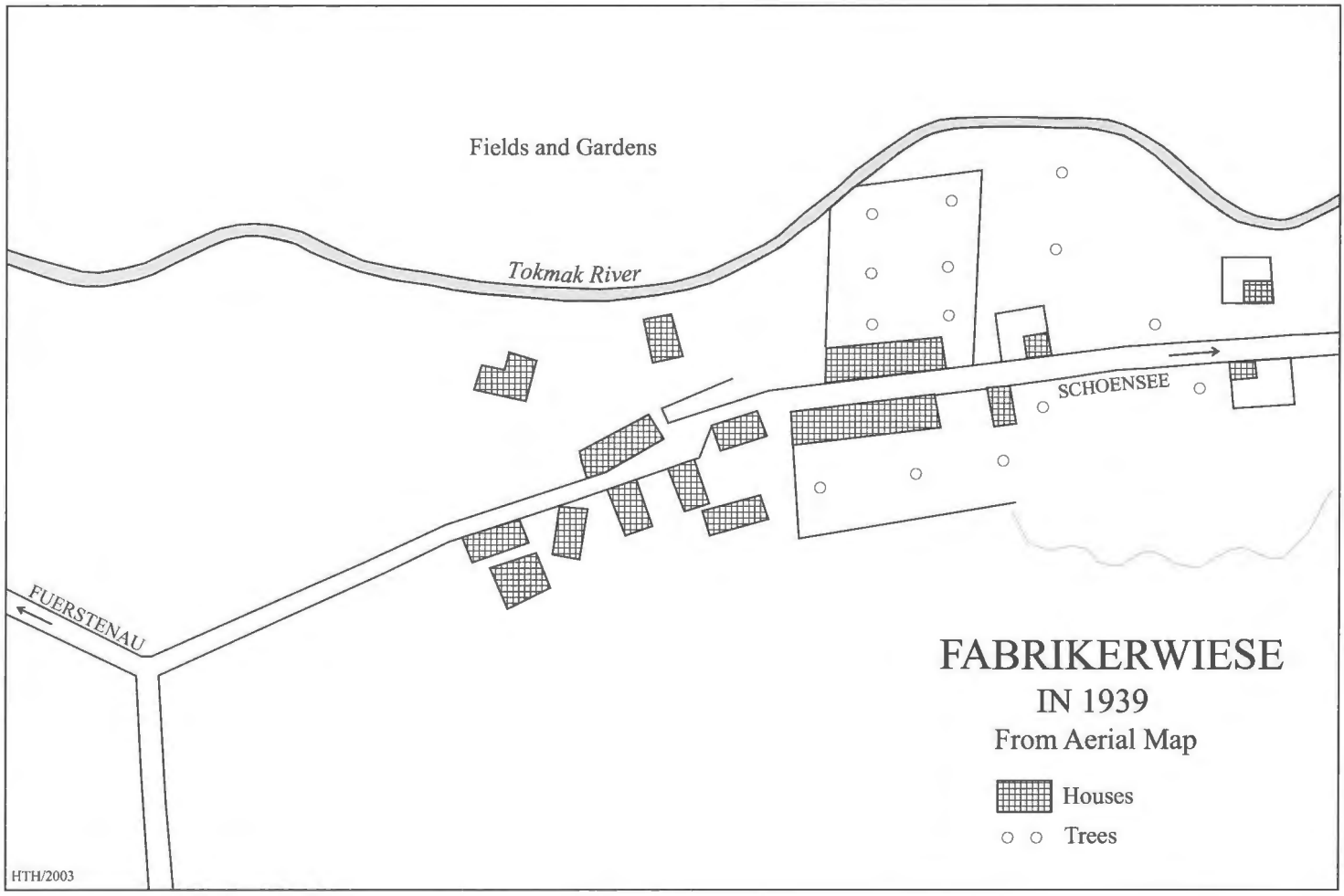
From a map drawn byAlfred Bergmann




ESAU ESTATE
TAURIDA
According to a map by
Franz Franz Janzen
Acacia Trees
Residence
Motor Car Garage
Shed
STEINFELD
1 Km
Dam
Reeds
Juschanlee River
Used for bathing horses
HTH/2003

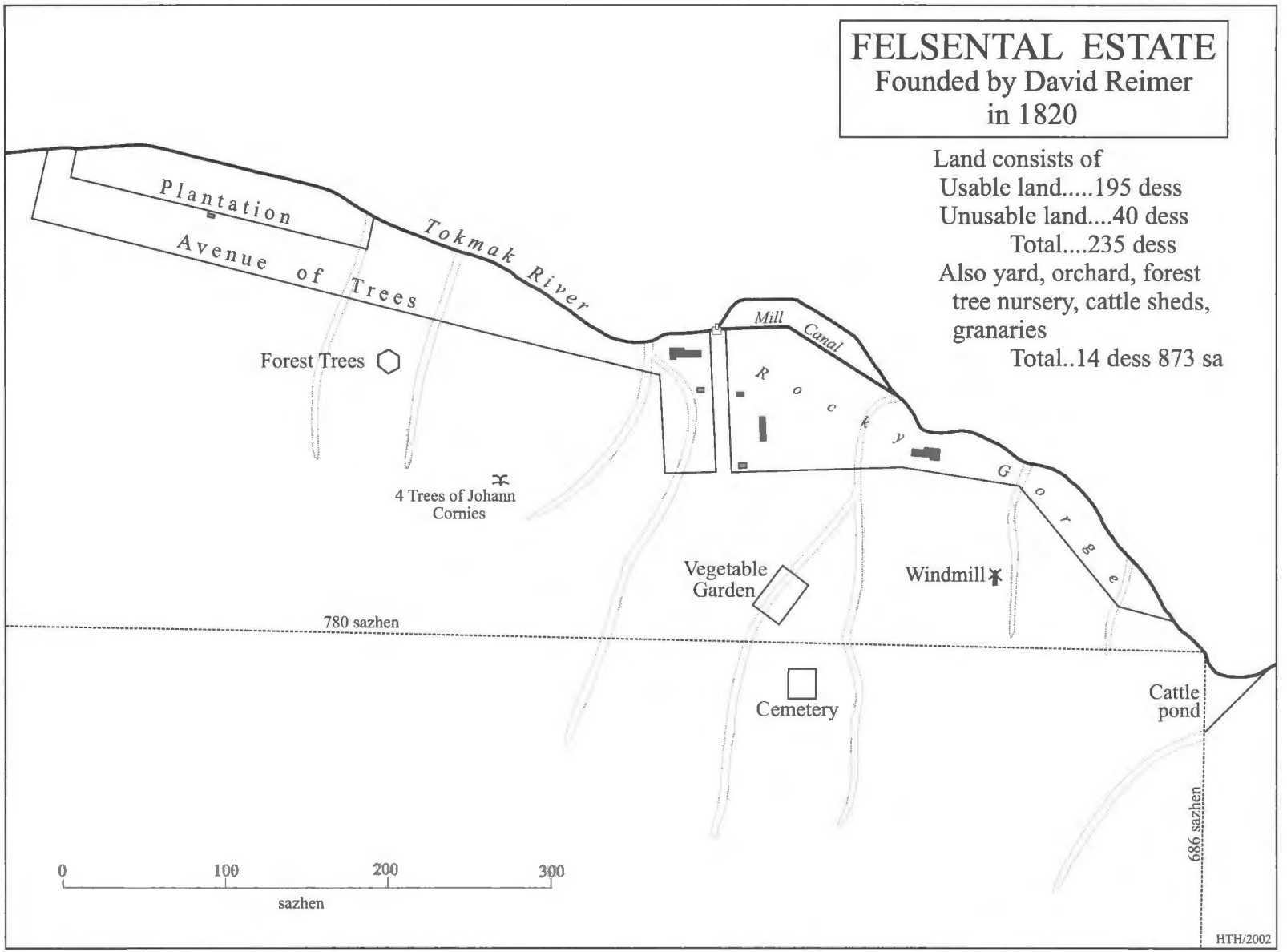
FABRIKERWIESE
IN 1867





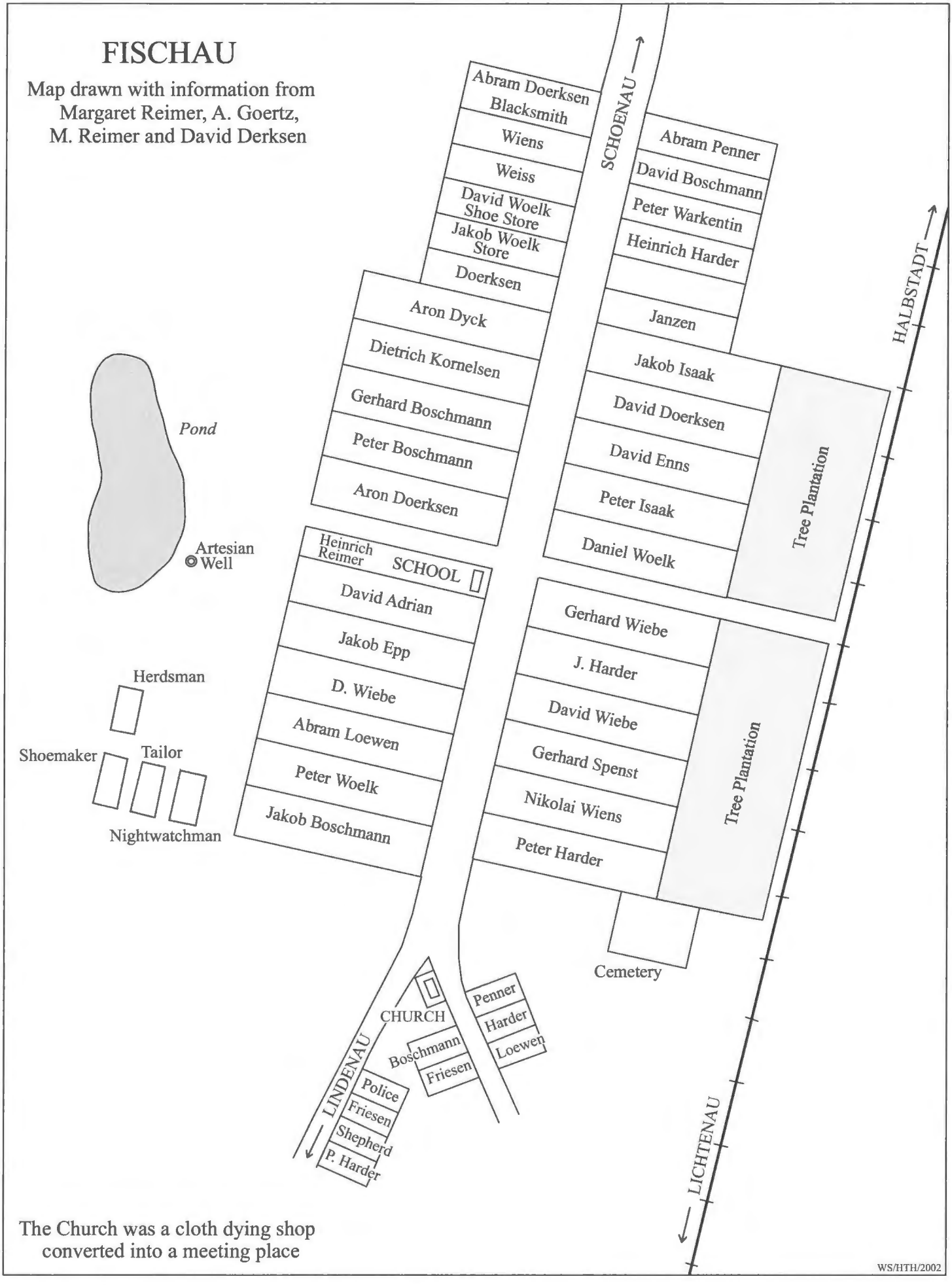
FABRIKERWIESE
IN 1939
From Aerial Map

Houses
Trees


FELSENTAL ESTATE
Founded by David Reimer
in 1820
Land consists of
Usable land.....195 dess
Unusable land....40 dess
Total....235 dess
Also yard, orchard, forest
tree nursery, cattle sheds,
granaries
Total..14 dess 873 sa
Plantation
Avenue of Trees
Tokmak River
Mill Canal
Forest Trees
4 Trees of Johann
Cornies
Rocky Gorge
Vegetable
Garden
Windmill
780 sazhen
Cemetery
Cattle
pond
686 sazhen
0
100
200
300
sazhen
HTH/2002

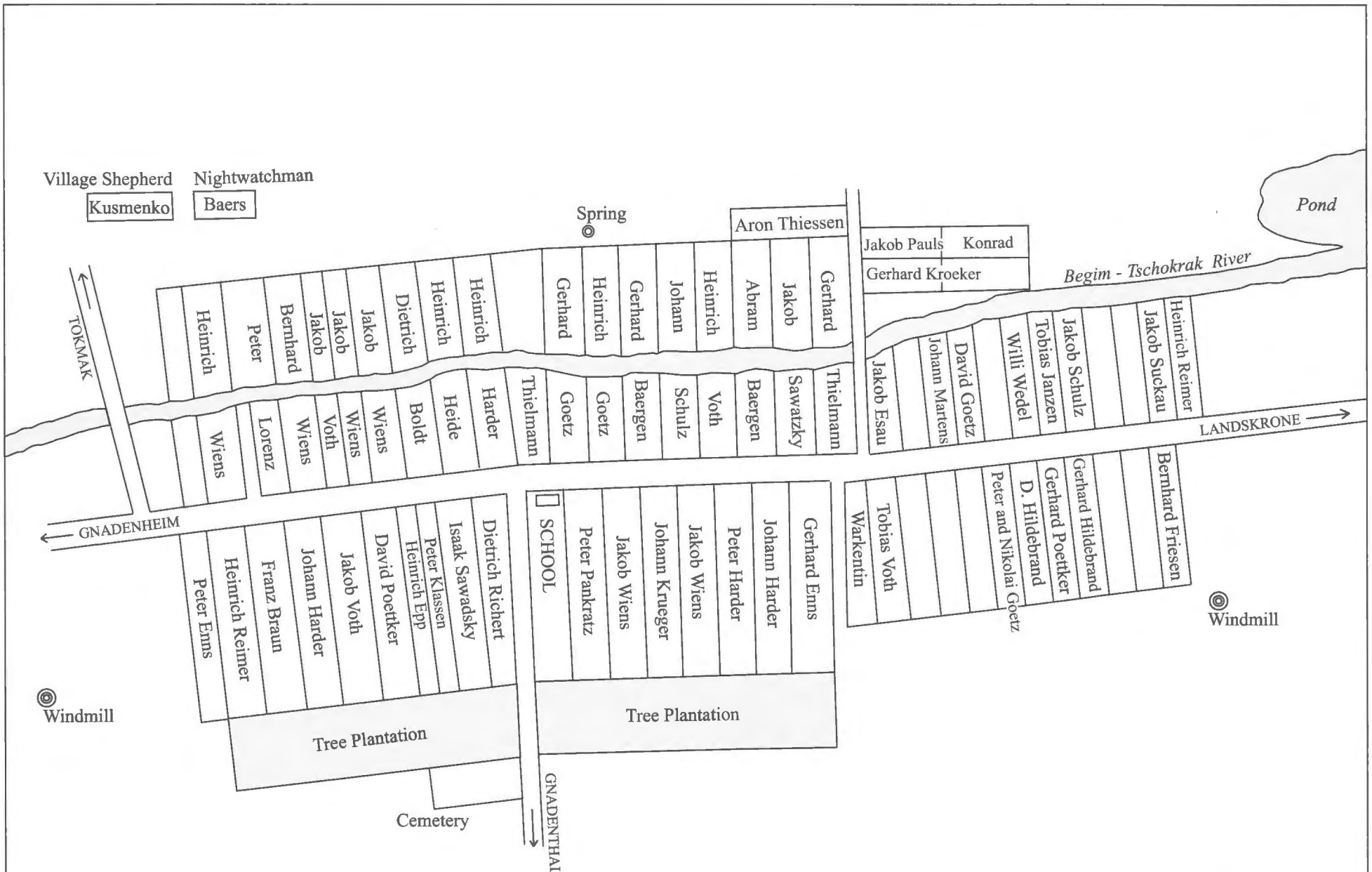
FISCHAU

Map drawn with information from
Margaret Reimer, A. Goertz,
M. Reimer and David Derksen



The Church was a cloth dying shop
converted into a meeting place

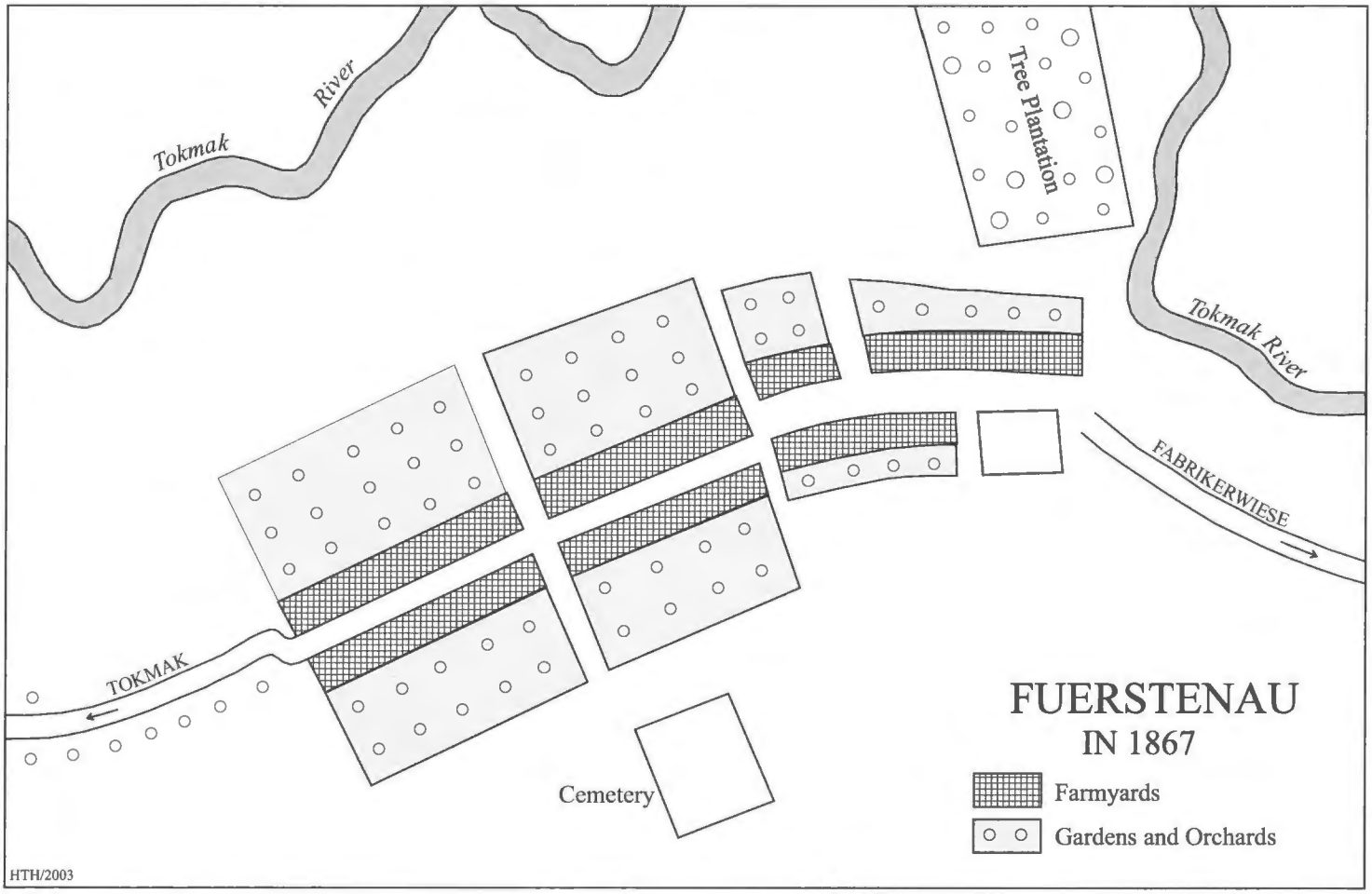
GROSSWEIDE
Tree Plantion
Spring
PASTWA
Janzen
Karl Pauls
Franz Ediger
Benjamin Pauls
Harms
Jakob Driedger
Papke
Heinrich Janzen
Giesbrecht
Abram Klassen
Pauls
Heinrichs
Teichrieb
Esau
Gerhard Baerg
Franz Pauls
Peter Hooge
Peter Janzen
Jakob Pauls
Pankratz
Cemetery
Tree Plantation
SCHOOL
Ice House
Janzen
Giesbrecht
Franz Ediger
Blacksmith
Johann Janzen
Dueckmann
Penner
Maria Janzen
Steam Mill
Spring
Windmill
Ditch
Peter Ediger
Becker
Heinrich Becker
Johann Brauer
Heinrich Voth
Peter Brauer
Jakob Loepke
Enns
Neumann
Abrams
Unruh
Penner
Steingart
Sudermann
Peter Klassen
Jakob Brauer
Goertzen
Bergen
Johann Janzen
Franz Klassen
Jakob Loepke
Juschanlee River
RUDNERWEIDE
Bridge over the
Apanlee River
and town of NELGOVKA
Ditch
FRANZTHAL
IN 1942
According to maps drawn by
Jacob Janzen and William Schroeder
HTH/2002

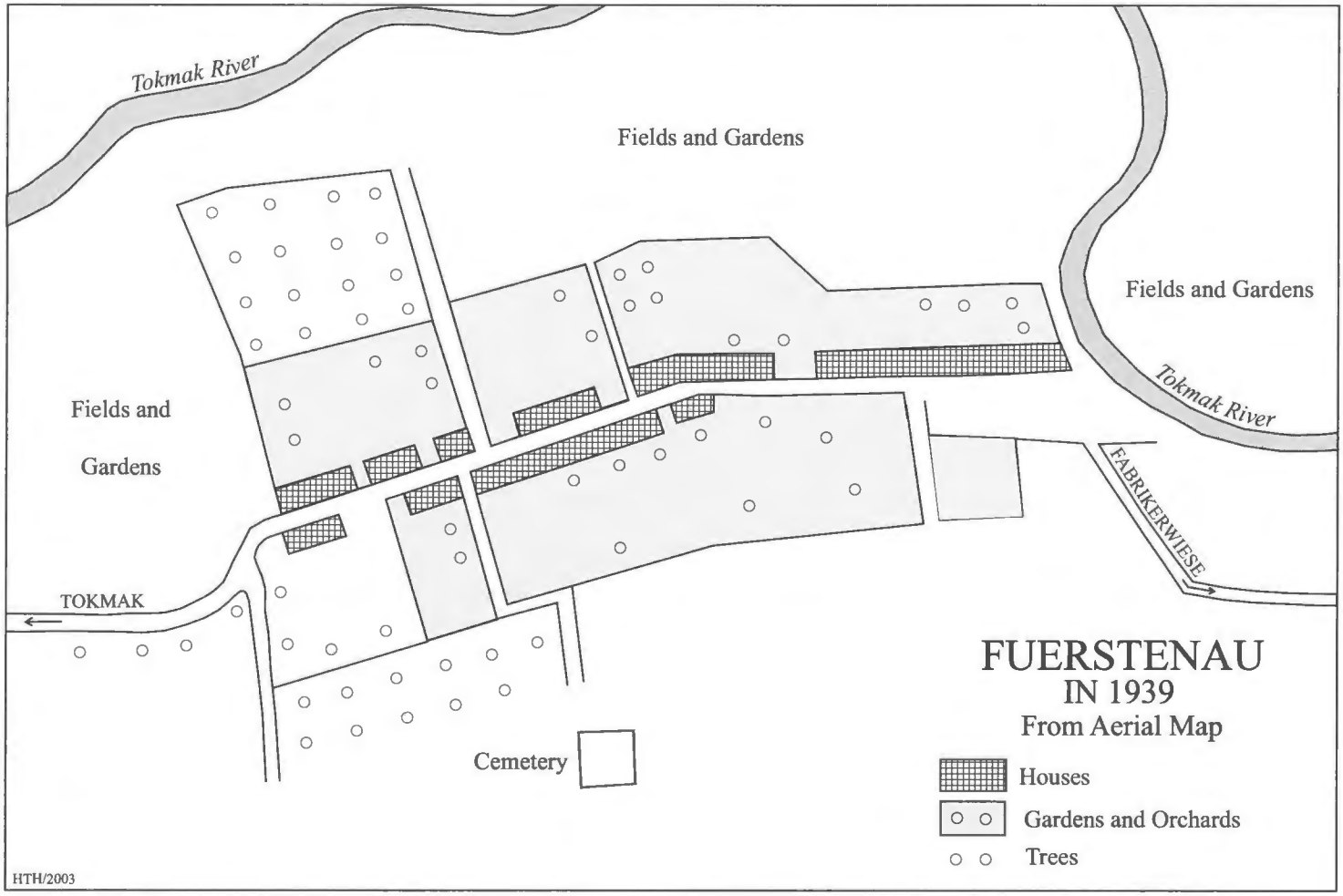


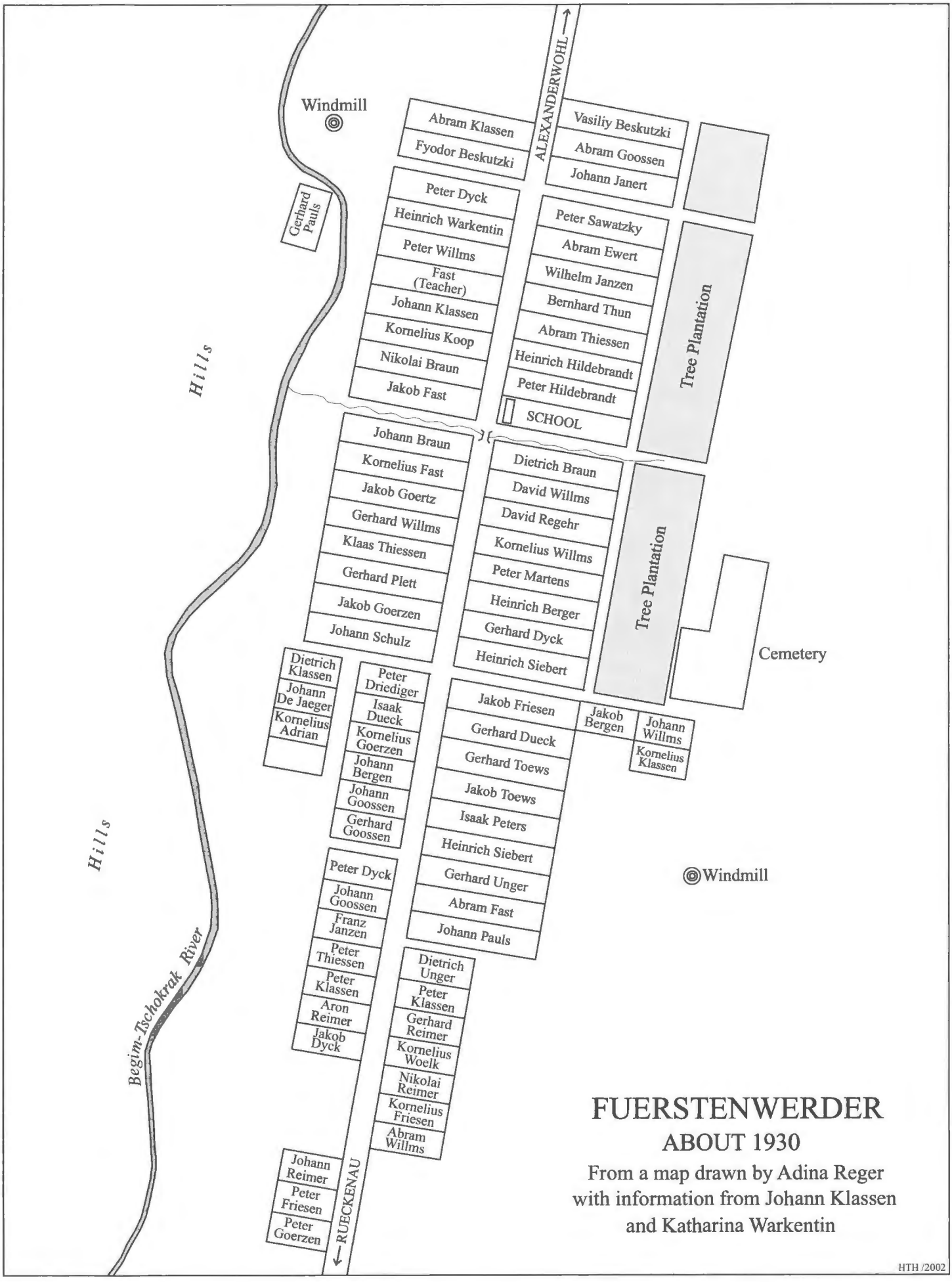
FRIEDENSDORF
IN 1923 - 1924

HTH/2002

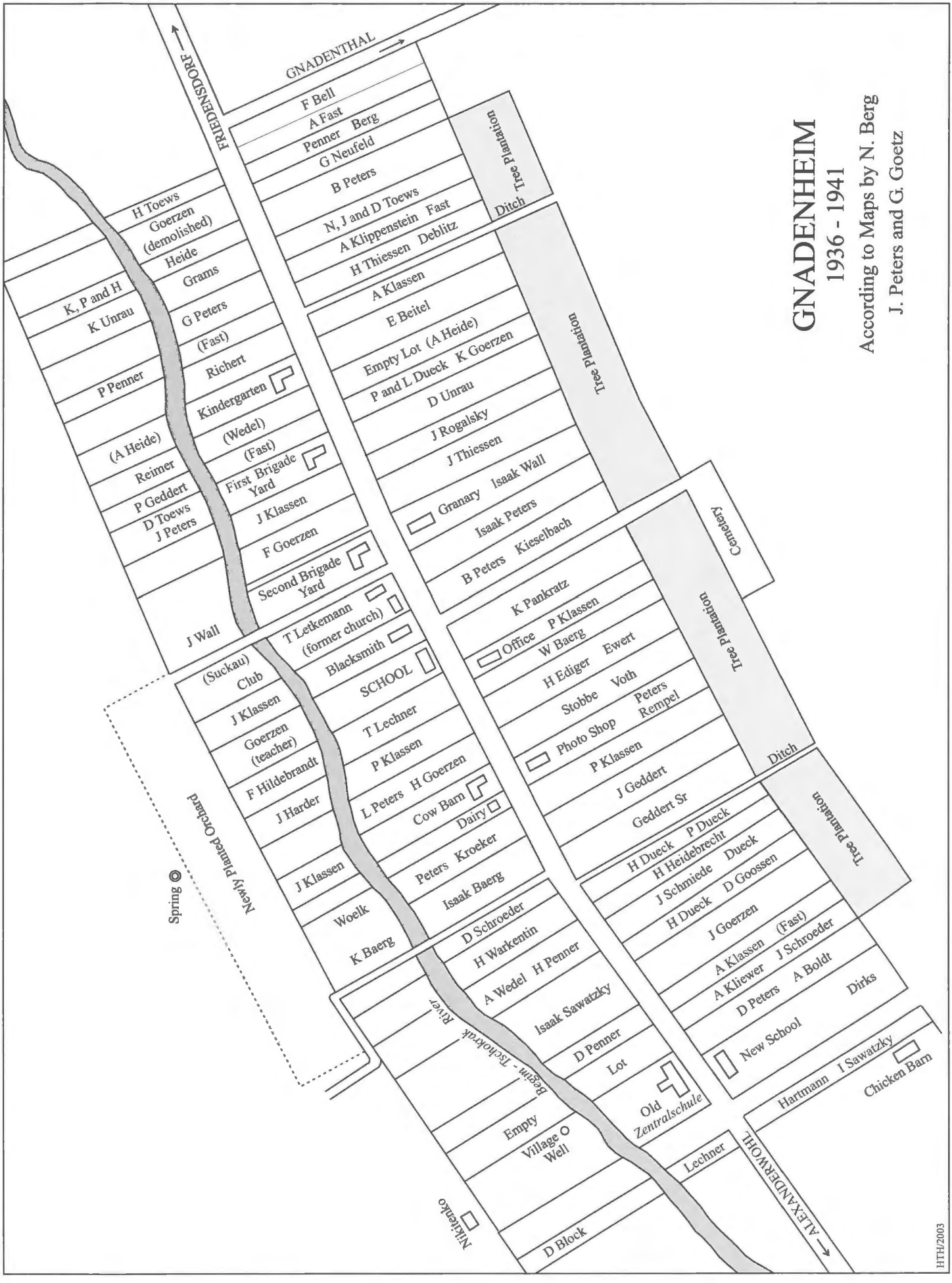
FRIEDENSRUH
NEUKIRCH
Juschanlee River
PRANGENAU
ALEXANDERKRONE
Cowherd and Night Watchman
Windmill
Ice Cellar, Fire Hall, Jail
Cemetery
Tree Plantation
Small Farms
Johann Epp
Johann Friesen
Peter Giesbrecht
Franz Peters
Blacksmith
Peter Janzen
Kornelsen
Isaak Thiessen
David Janzen
Abram Willems
Peter Mathies
Jakob Hooge
SCHOOL
H Delesky
Miller
Loewen
Johann, Peter, Neta, Kornelius Allets
Kornelius Isaak
Wilhelm Janzen
Gerhard Baerg
Abram Brandt
Esau
Jakob Mathies
Abram Mathies
Johann Harms Jr
Dietrich Friesen
Kornelsen
Reimer
Jakob Klassen
Abram Huebert
Klaas Dueck
Neufeld
Johann Isaak
Johann Warkentin
Siemens
Gerhard Berg
Johann Harms Sr
Abram Harder
Brandt
Jakob Baerg
Klaas Hiebert
Franz P Willems
David Hooge
Heinrich Boldt
Wilhelm Janzen
Peter Penner
Franz Braun
There were additional small farms and homes of the landless at the ends of the village

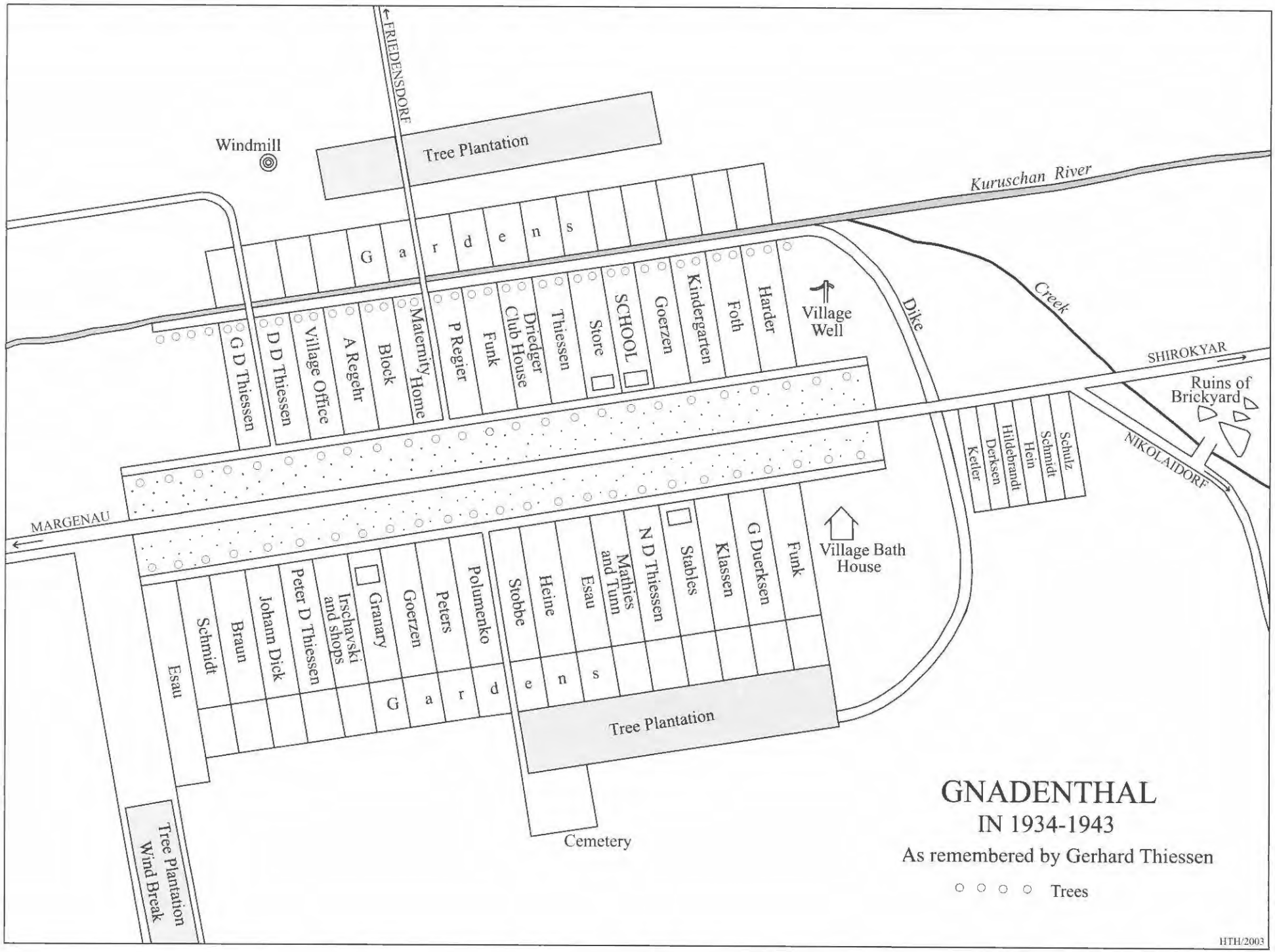

Tokmak River
Tree Plantation
Tokmak River
FABRIKERWIESE
TOKMAK
Cemetery
FUERSTENAU
IN 1867
Farmyards
Gardens and Orchards
HTH/2003

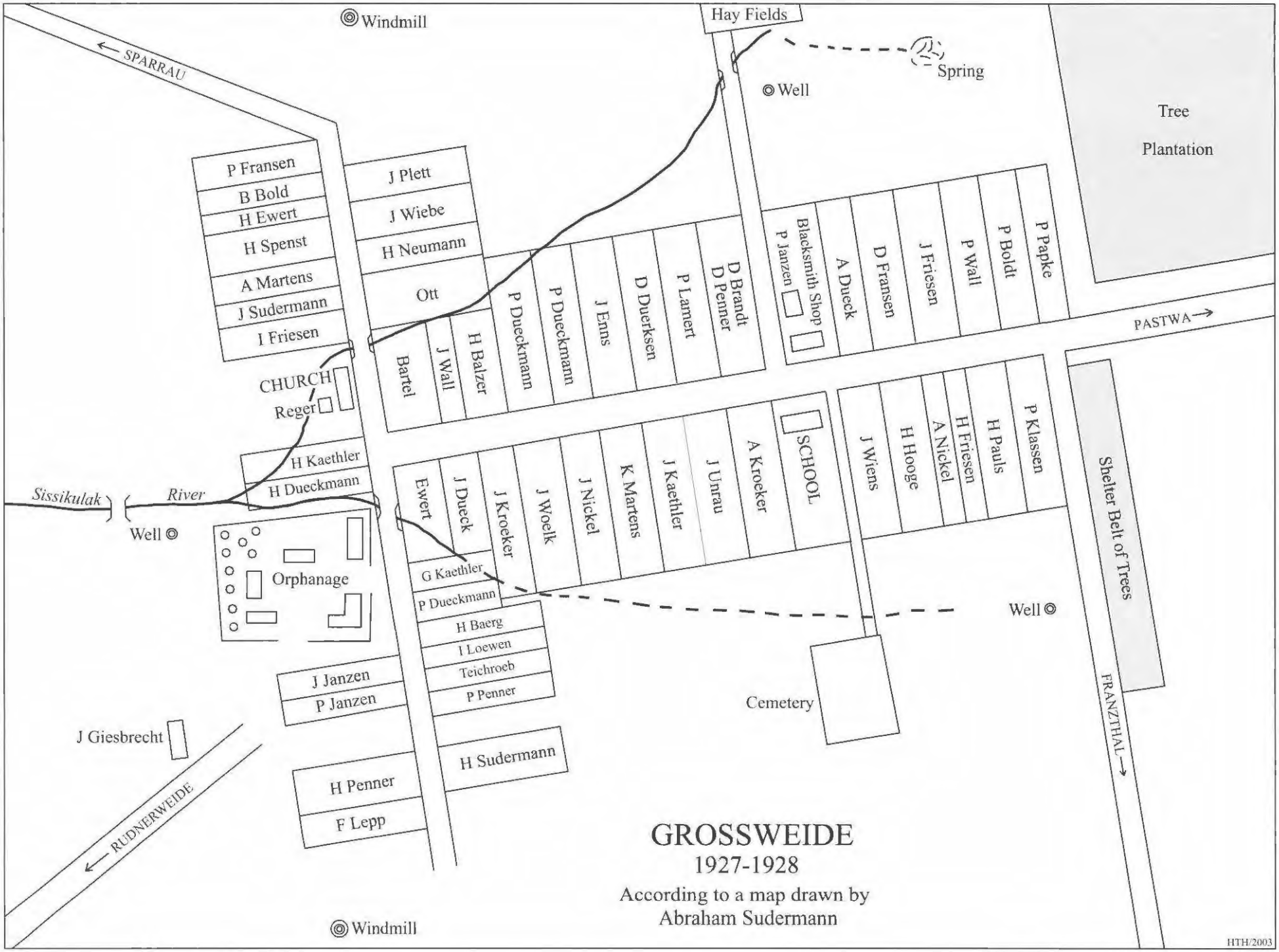

Tokmak River
Fields and Gardens
Fields and Gardens
Tokmak River
Fields and
Gardens
FABRIKERWIESE
TOKMAK
Cemetery
FUERSTENAU
IN 1939
From Aerial Map
Houses
Gardens and Orchards
Trees
HTH/2003

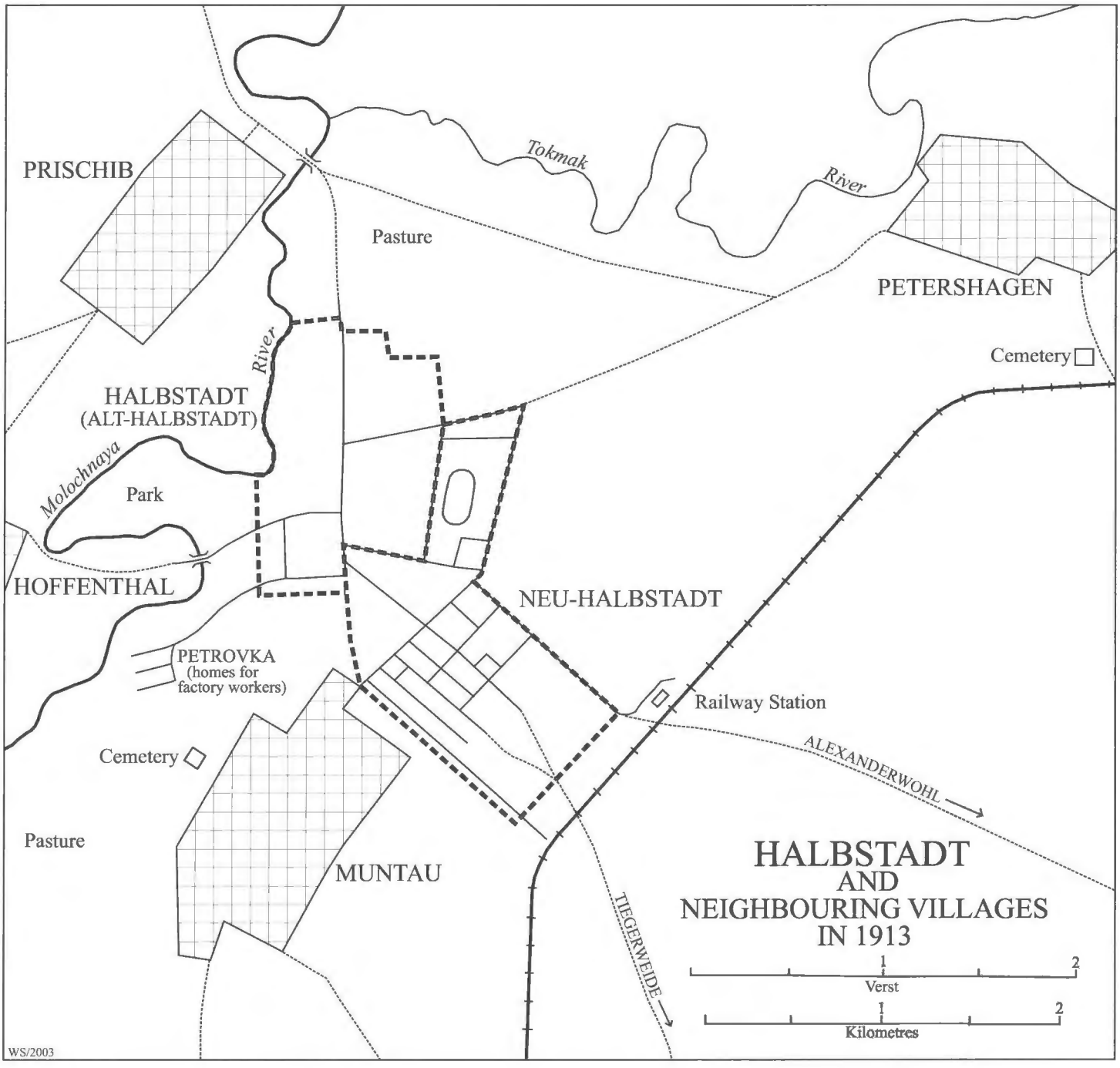

Windmill
Abram Klassen
Fyodor Beskutzki
ALEXANDERWOHL
Vasiliy Beskutzki
Abram Goossen
Johann Janert
Gerhard Pauls
Peter Dyck
Heinrich Warkentin
Peter Willms
Fast (Teacher)
Johann Klassen
Kornelius Koop
Nikolai Braun
Jakob Fast
Peter Sawatzky
Abram Ewert
Wilhelm Janzen
Bernhard Thun
Abram Thiessen
Heinrich Hildebrandt
Peter Hildebrandt
SCHOOL
Tree Plantation
Hills
Johann Braun
Kornelius Fast
Jakob Goertz
Gerhard Willms
Klaas Thiessen
Gerhard Plett
Jakob Goerzen
Johann Schulz
Dietrich Braun
David Willms
David Regehr
Kornelius Willms
Peter Martens
Heinrich Berger
Gerhard Dyck
Heinrich Siebert
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
Dietrich Klassen
Johann De Jaeger
Kornelius Adrian
Peter Driediger
Isaak Dueck
Kornelius Goerzen
Johann Bergen
Johann Goossen
Gerhard Goossen
Jakob Friesen
Gerhard Dueck
Gerhard Toews
Jakob Toews
Isaak Peters
Heinrich Siebert
Gerhard Unger
Abram Fast
Johann Pauls
Jakob Bergen
Johann Willms
Kornelius Klassen
Windmill
Hills
Begim-Tschokrak River
Peter Dyck
Johann Goossen
Franz Janzen
Peter Thiessen
Peter Klassen
Aron Reimer
Jakob Dyck
Dietrich Unger
Peter Klassen
Gerhard Reimer
Kornelius Woelk
Nikolai Reimer
Kornelius Friesen
Abram Willms
RUECKENAU
Johann Reimer
Peter Friesen
Peter Goerzen
FUERSTENWERDER
ABOUT 1930
From a map drawn by Adina Reger
with information from Johann Klassen
and Katharina Warkentin
HTH /2002

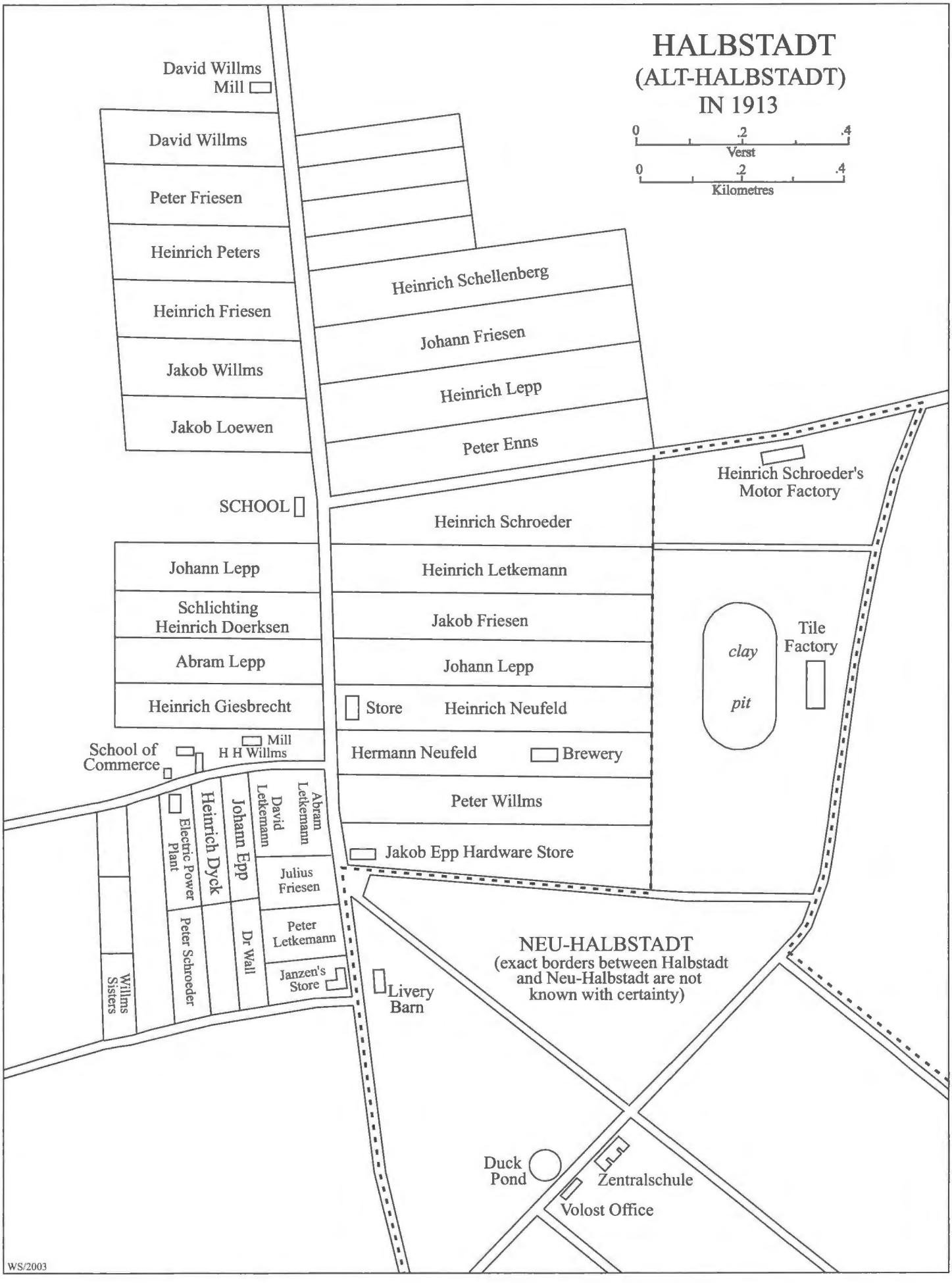
GNADENFELD
IN 1912
WS/2002
KONTENIUSFELD
RUDNERWEIDE
Old Cemetery
New Cemetery
Tree Plantation
Unruh
W Pankratz
Voth
Dirks
F Loewen
B Becker
David Bartel
D Janzen
K Fast
Johann Balzer
Johann Schmidt
K Schmidt
F Pankratz
B Unruh
S Edger
F Voth
S Edger
W Schmidt
P Nachtigal
K Klatt
Unruh
H Unruh
H Ratzlaff
Brusso
Wiens
Paul's
Store
H Goertz
H Block
F Janzen
K Schmidt
W Dirks
Fast
H Janzen
J Penner
Dosso
Tree Plantation
Windmill
SCHOOL
CHURCH
D Voth
B Unruh
A Edger
D Schmidt
Voth
Aron Rempel
Aron Rempel
F Rabsch
A Toews
B Unruh
B Ratzlaff
Jakob Toews
Abram Rempel
Jakob Rempel
K Reimer
GIRLS SCHOOL
W Schmidt
D Rempel
G Tomsen
F Goertz
David Unruh
(minister)
Voth
Doctor
Book Store
Post Office
Bakery
Gebietsamt
D Rempel
Raubsch
SECONDARY
SCHOOL
Lange
Braun
Nickel
Tree Plantation
Cowherd
WALDHEIM
LANDSKRONE
PAULSHEIM
ALEXANDERTHAL

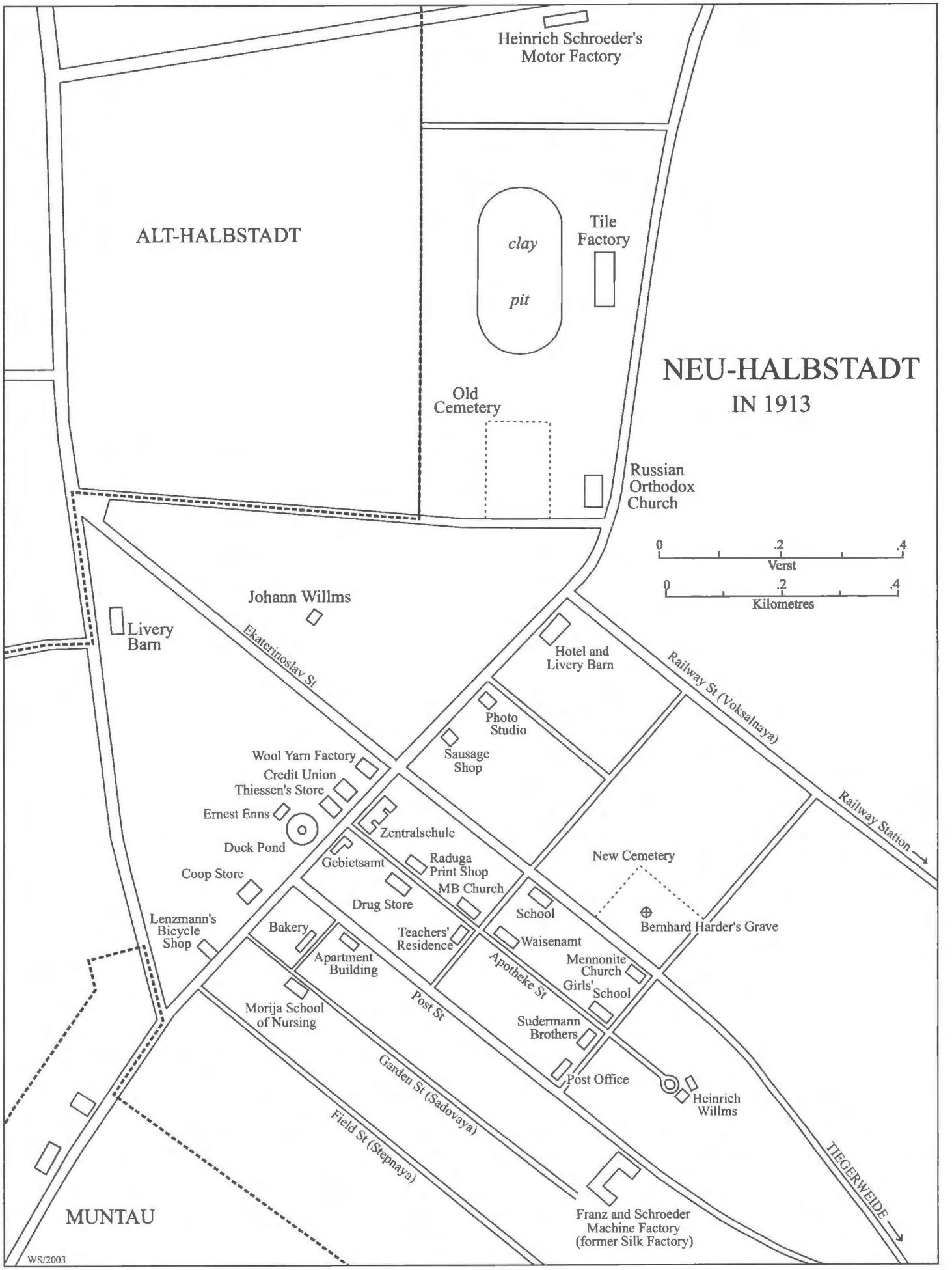

GNADENHEIM
1936 - 1941
According to Maps by N. Berg
J. Peters and G. Goetz
GNADENTHAL
FRIEDENSDORF
ALEXANDERWOHL
Tree Plantation
Ditch
Cemetery
Spring
Newly Planted Orchard
Begim - Tschokrak River
Nikitenko
F Bell
A Fast
Penner Berg
G Neufeld
B Peters
N, J and D Toews
A Klippenstein Fast
H Thiessen Deblitz
A Klassen
E Beitel
Empty Lot (A Heide)
P and L Dueck K Goerzen
D Unrau
J Rogalsky
J Thiessen
Granary Isaak Wall
Isaak Peters
B Peters Kieselbach
K Pankratz
Office P Klassen
W Baerg
H Ediger Ewert
Stobbe Voth
Photo Shop Peters Rempel
P Klassen
J Geddert
Geddert Sr
H Dueck P Dueck
H Heidebrecht
J Schmiede Dueck
H Dueck D Goossen
J Goerzen
A Klassen (Fast)
A Kliewer J Schroeder
D Peters A Boldt
New School Dirks
Hartmann I Sawatzky
Chicken Barn
Lechner
Old Zentralschule
Lot
D Penner
Isaak Sawatzky
A Wedel H Penner
H Warkentin
D Schroeder
Empty
Village Well
D Block
Woelk
K Baerg
J Klassen
J Harder
F Hildebrandt
Goerzen (teacher)
J Klassen
(Suckau) Club
J Wall
F Goerzen
Second Brigade Yard
J Klassen
First Brigade Yard
(Fast)
(Wedel)
Kindergarten
Richert
(Fast)
G Peters
Grams
Heide
Goerzen (demolished)
H Toews
K, P and H
K Unrau
P Penner
(A Heide)
Reimer
P Geddert
D Toews
J Peters
T Letkemann (former church)
Blacksmith
SCHOOL
T Lechner
P Klassen
L Peters H Goerzen
Cow Barn
Dairy
Peters Kroeker
Isaak Baerg
HTH/2003

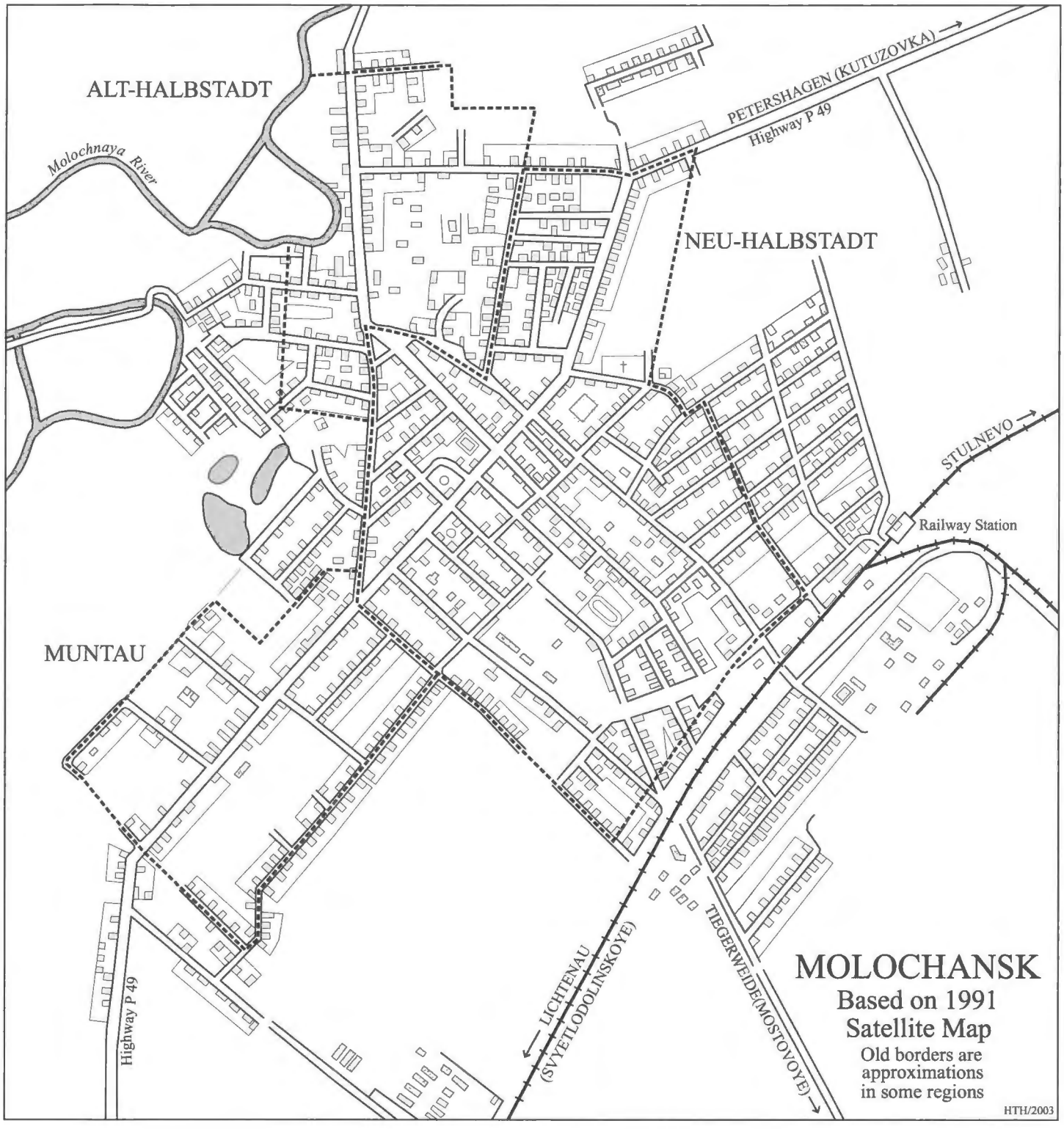

FRIEDENSDORF
Windmill
Tree Plantation
Kuruschan River
Gardens
G D Thiessen
D D Thiessen
Village Office
A Regehr
Block
Maternity Home
P Regier
Funk
Dredger Club House
Thiessen
Store
SCHOOL
Goerzen
Kindergarten
Foth
Harder
Village Well
Dike
Creek
SHIROKYAR
Ruins of Brickyard
NIKOLAIDORF
Schulz
Schmidt
Hein
Hildebrandt
Derksen
Ketler
MARGENAU
Village Bath House
Funk
G Duerksen
Klassen
Stables
N D Thiessen
Mathies and Tunn
Esau
Heine
Stobbe
Polumenko
Peters
Goerzen
Granary
Irschavski and shops
Peter D Thiessen
Johann Dick
Braun
Schmidt
Esau
Gardens
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
Tree Plantation Wind Break
GNADENTHAL
IN 1934-1943
As remembered by Gerhard Thiessen
Trees
HTH/2003

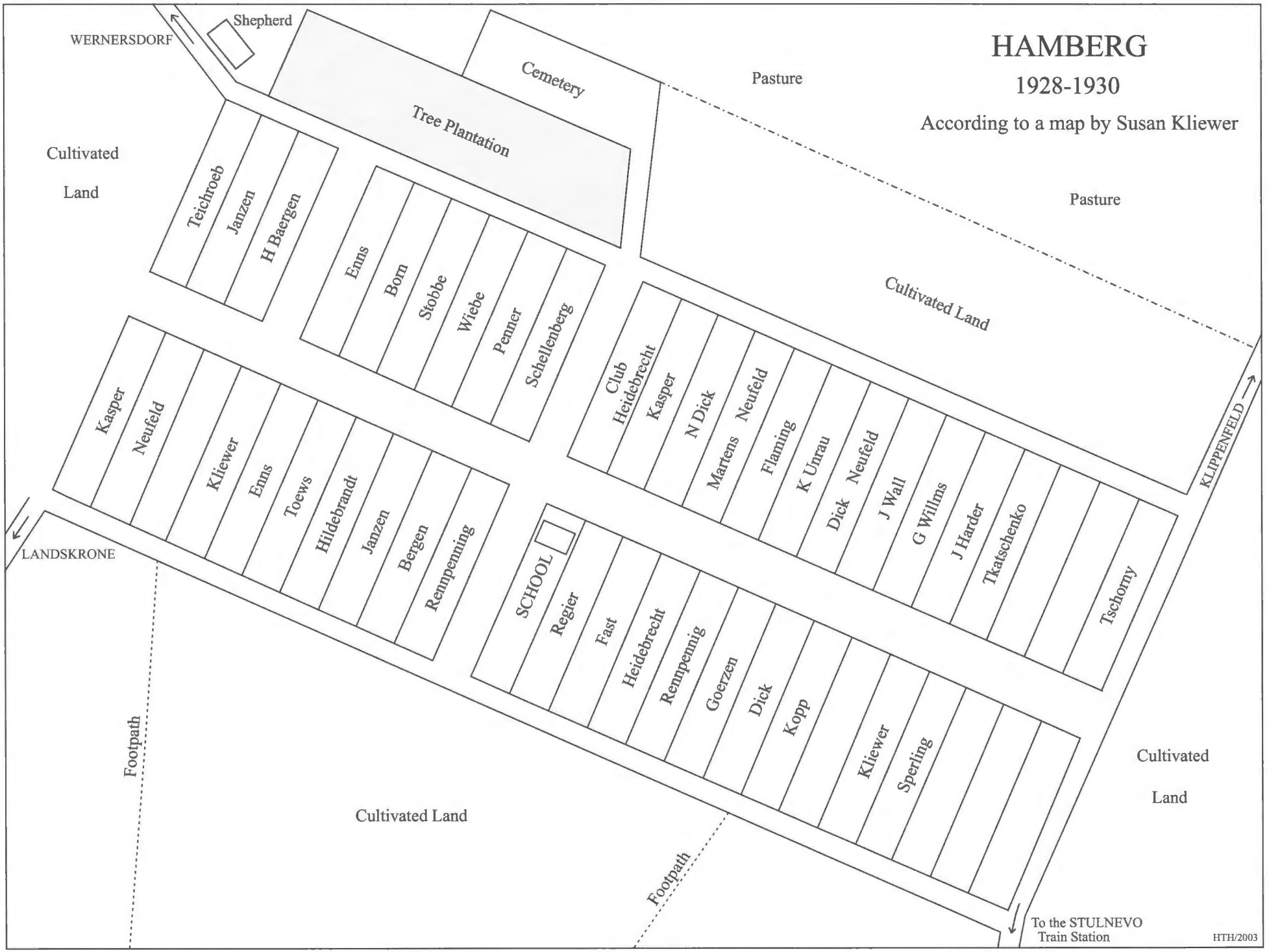

Windmill
SPARRAU
Hay Fields
Spring
Well
Tree
Plantation
P Fransen
B Bold
H Ewert
H Spenst
A Martens
J Sudermann
I Friesen
J Plett
J Wiebe
H Neumann
Ott
Bartel
J Wall
H Balzer
P Dueckmann
P Dueckmann
J Enns
D Duerksen
P Lamert
D Brandt
D Penner
Blacksmith Shop
P Janzen
A Dueck
D Fransen
J Friesen
P Wall
P Boldt
P Papke
PASTWA
CHURCH
Reger
H Kaethler
H Dueckmann
Sissikulak
River
Well
Orphanage
Ewert
J Dueck
J Kroeker
J Woelk
J Nickel
K Martens
J Kaethler
J Unrau
A Kroeker
SCHOOL
J Wiens
H Hooge
A Nickel
H Friesen
H Pauls
P Klassen
Shelter Belt of Trees
G Kaethler
P Dueckmann
H Baerg
I Loewen
Teichroeb
P Penner
Well
Cemetery
J Janzen
P Janzen
J Giesbrecht
H Penner
F Lepp
H Sudermann
RUDNERWEIDE
FRANZTHAL
Windmill
GROSSWEIDE
1927-1928
According to a map drawn by
Abraham Sudermann
HTH/2003


PRISCHIB
Tokmak
River
Pasture
PETERSHAGEN
Cemetery
River
HALBSTADT
(ALT-HALBSTADT)
Molochnaya
Park
HOFFENTHAL
NEU-HALBSTADT
PETROVKA
(homes for
factory workers)
Railway Station
ALEXANDERWOHL
Cemetery
Pasture
MUNTAU
TIEGERWEIDE
HALBSTADT
AND
NEIGHBOURING VILLAGES
IN 1913
1
2
Verst
1
2
Kilometres
WS/2003


HALBSTADT
(ALT-HALBSTADT)
IN 1913
0 .2 .4
Verst
0 .2 .4
Kilometres
David Willms Mill
David Willms
Peter Friesen
Heinrich Peters
Heinrich Friesen
Jakob Willms
Jakob Loewen
Heinrich Schellenberg
Johann Friesen
Heinrich Lepp
Peter Enns
Heinrich Schroeder's Motor Factory
SCHOOL
Heinrich Schroeder
Johann Lepp
Heinrich Letkemann
Schlichting Heinrich Doerksen
Jakob Friesen
Abram Lepp
Johann Lepp
Heinrich Giesbrecht
Store
Heinrich Neufeld
clay pit
Tile Factory
School of Commerce
Mill H H Willms
Hermann Neufeld
Brewery
Peter Willms
Jakob Epp Hardware Store
Abram Letkemann
David Letkemann
Johann Epp
Heinrich Dyck
Electric Power Plant
Julius Friesen
Peter Letkemann
Dr Wall
Peter Schroeder
Janzen's Store
Willms Sisters
Livery Barn
NEU-HALBSTADT
(exact borders between Halbstadt and Neu-Halbstadt are not known with certainty)
Duck Pond
Zentralschule
Volost Office
WS/2003

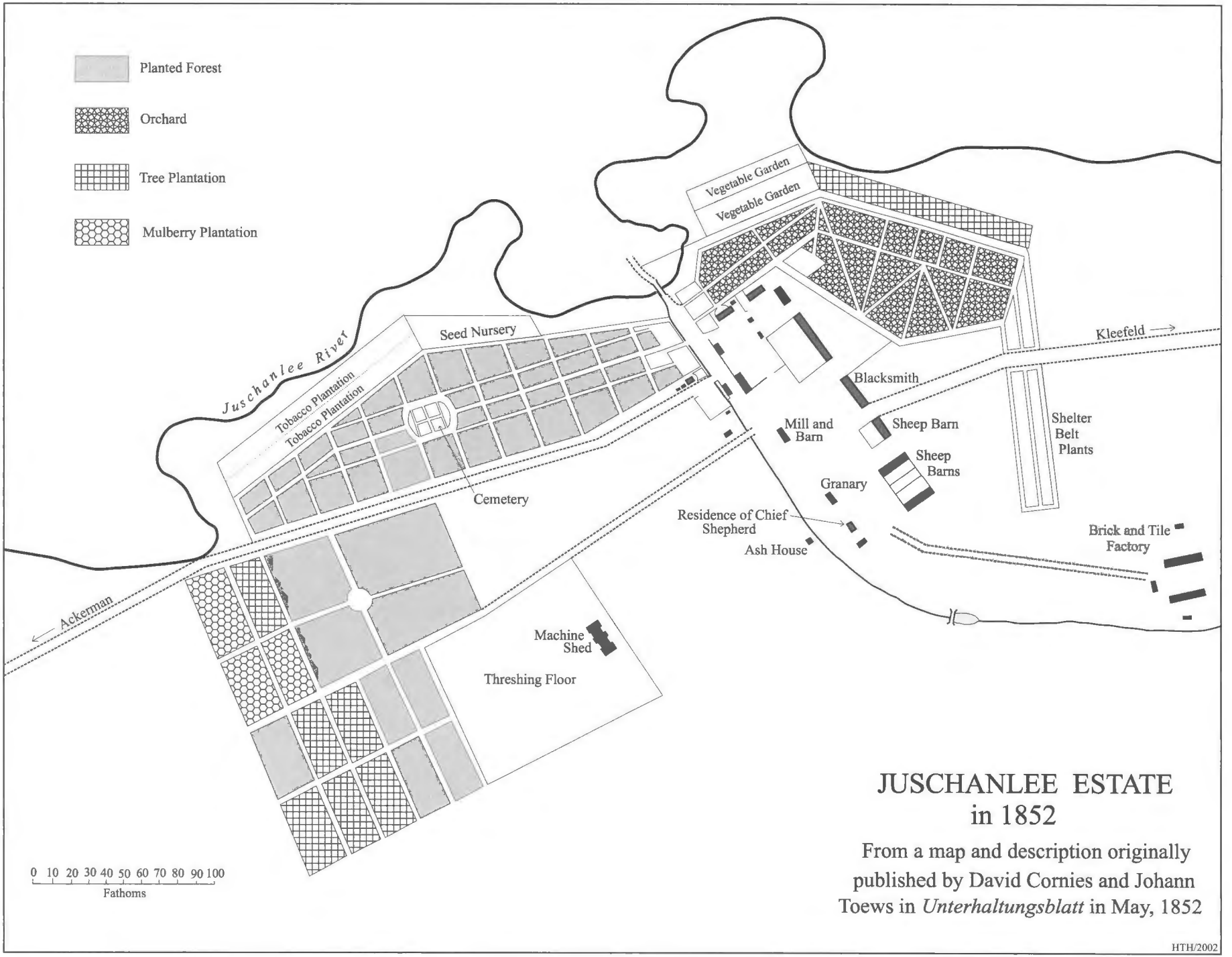

Heinrich Schroeder's Motor Factory
ALT-HALBSTADT
clay pit
Tile Factory
NEU-HALBSTADT
IN 1913
Old Cemetery
Russian Orthodox Church
0 .2 .4
Verst
0 .2 .4
Kilometres
Johann Willms
Livery Barn
Ekaterinoslav St
Hotel and Livery Barn
Railway St (Voksalnaya)
Photo Studio
Sausage Shop
Wool Yarn Factory
Credit Union
Thiessen's Store
Ernest Enns
Duck Pond
Zentralschule
Railway Station
Coop Store
Gebietsamt
Raduga Print Shop
MB Church
New Cemetery
Drug Store
School
Lenzmann's Bicycle Shop
Bakery
Teachers' Residence
Waisenamt
Bernhard Harder's Grave
Apartment Building
Apotheke St
Mennonite Church
Girls' School
Post St
Morija School of Nursing
Sudermann Brothers
Post Office
Heinrich Willms
Garden St (Sadovaya)
Field St (Stepnaya)
TIEGERWEIDE
MUNTAU
Franz and Schroeder Machine Factory (former Silk Factory)
WS/2003


ALT-HALBSTADT
Molochnaya River
PETERSHAGEN (KUTUZOVKA)
Highway P 49
NEU-HALBSTADT
STULNEVO
Railway Station
MUNTAU
Highway P 49
LICHTENAU
(SVYETLODOLINSKOYE)
TIEGERWEIDE(MOSTOVOYE)
MOLOCHANSK
Based on 1991
Satellite Map
Old borders are
approximations
in some regions
HTH/2003


HAMBERG
1928-1930
According to a map by Susan Kliewer
WERNERSDORF
Shepherd
Cemetery
Pasture
Tree Plantation
Cultivated Land
Pasture
Pasture
Teichroeb
Janzen
H Baergen
Enns
Born
Stobbe
Wiebe
Penner
Schellenberg
Cultivated Land
Club Heidebrecht
Kasper
N Dick
Martens Neufeld
Flaming
K Unrau
Dick Neufeld
J Wall
G Willms
J Harder
Tkatschenko
Tschorny
KLIPPENFELD
Kasper
Neufeld
Kliewer
Enns
Toews
Hildebrandt
Janzen
Bergen
Rennpenning
LANDSKRONE
SCHOOL
Regier
Fast
Heidebrecht
Rennpennig
Goerzen
Dick
Kopp
Kliewer
Sperling
Footpath
Cultivated Land
Footpath
Cultivated Land
To the STULNEVO Train Station
HTH/2003

HIERSCHAU
ORIGINAL SETTLERS
1848 and 1849
According to Michael Duerksen

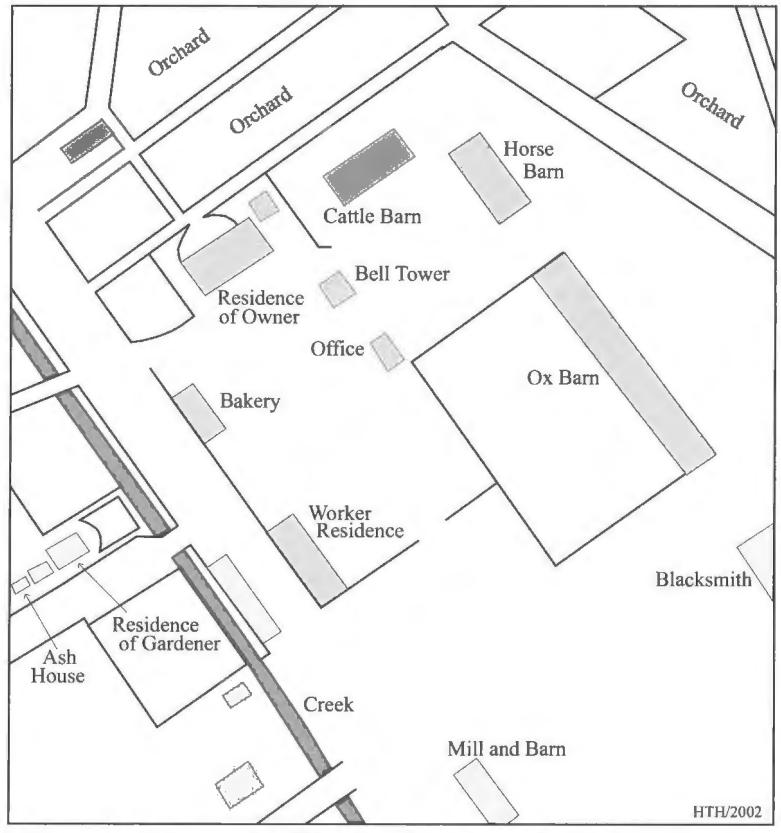
HIERSCHAU
ABOUT 1920
White Earth Pits
WALDHEIM
Jewish Shoemaker
Benjamin Duerksen
Neudorf
Abram Siemens
Peter Sperling
Peter Warkentin
Gerhard Warkentin
Kornelius Boschmann
Heinrich Derksen
KJLEENE UETJACHT
Dike and Footpath
David Hildebrandt 1
Julius Plett 2
Kornelius Stobbe 3
Jakob Stobbe 4
Peter Neufeld 5
Jakob Willms 6
Bernhard Plett 7
Jakob Stobbe 8
Johann Siemens
Jakob Hildebrandt 9
Heinrich Bergen 10
Isaak Janzen 11
Gerhard Plett 12
Kornelius Siemens 13
Johann Stobbe 14
Heinrich Kroeker 15
30 Johann Willms
29 Gerhard Wiebe
28 Peter Wolf
27 Peter Dyck
26 Jakob Duerksen
25 Franz Neufeld
24 Peter Goertzen
23 Johann Thiessen
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
SCHOOL
22 Heinrich Sukkau
21 Kornelius Peters
20 Bernhard Bergen
19 Gerhard Neufeld
18 Widow Dyck
17 Johann Fast
16 Kornelius Plett
Tree Plantation
Watermelon Fields
Begim - Tschokrak River
Windmill
Jakob Thiessen
Herdsman
GROOTE UETJACHT
Johann Hildebrandt
Jakob Janzen
Jakob Luetke
Boese
Wallmann
Johann Friesen
LANDSKRONE
Village Policeman
Abram Huebner
Luetke Sisters
Garden
Peter Wedel
Fathoms
Metres
0 30 60 90 120 150
0 64 128 192 256 320
HTH/2001



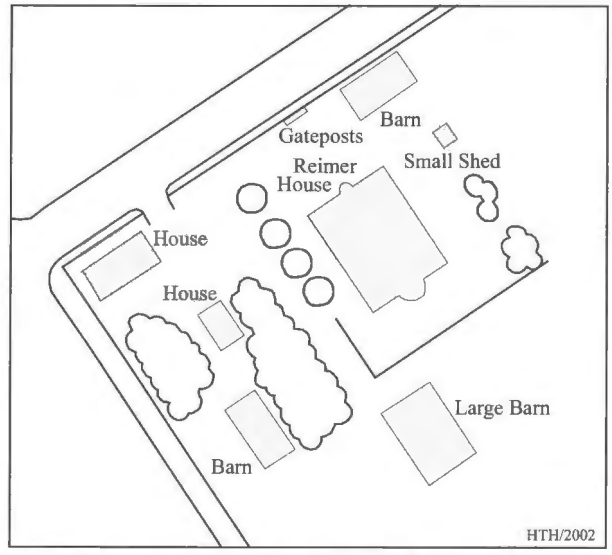
JUSCHANLEE ESTATE in 1852

From a map and description originally published by David Cornies and Johann Toews in *Unterhaltungsblatt* in May, 1852

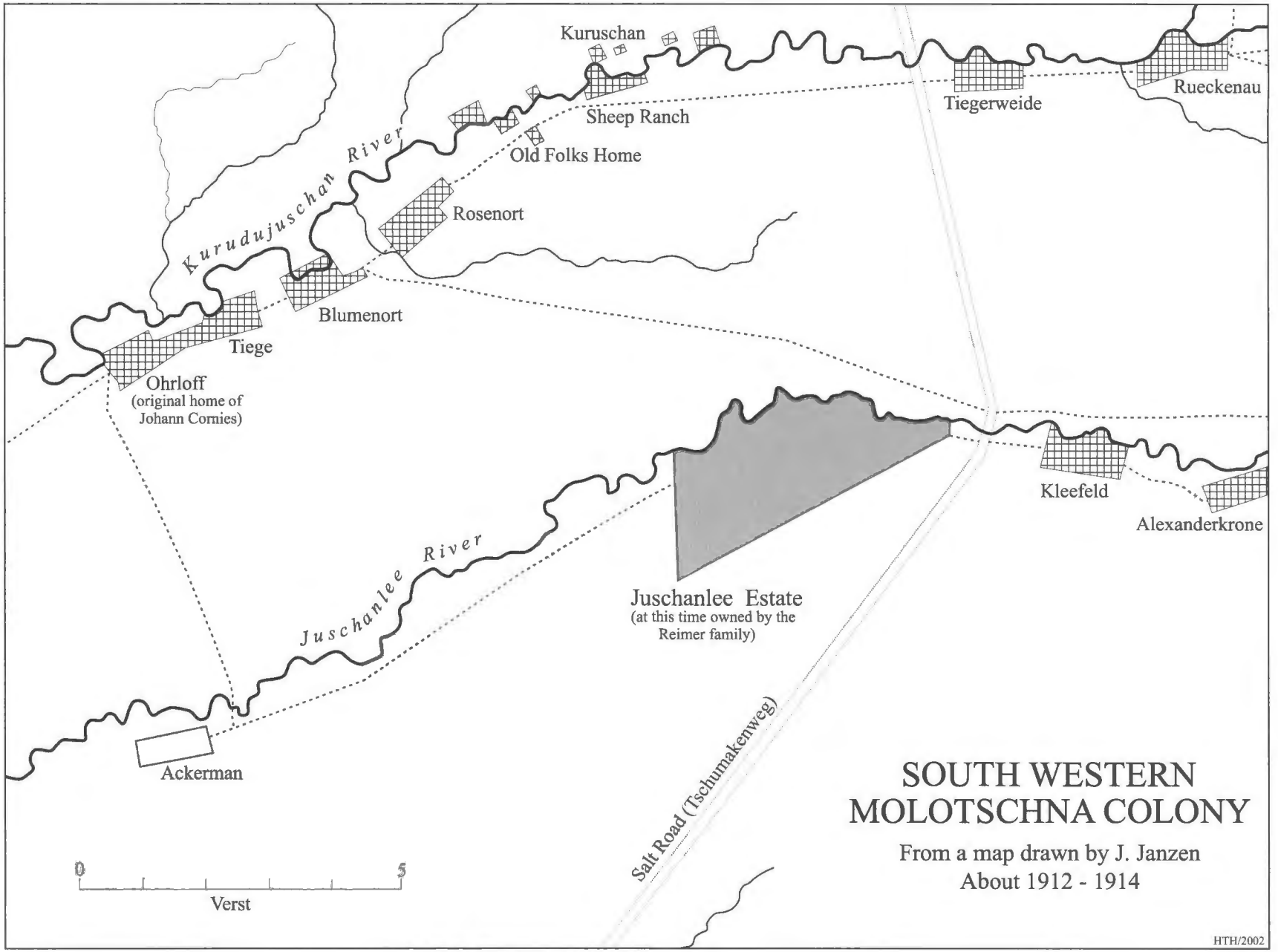
HTH/2002



The yard of Juschanlee Estate in 1852

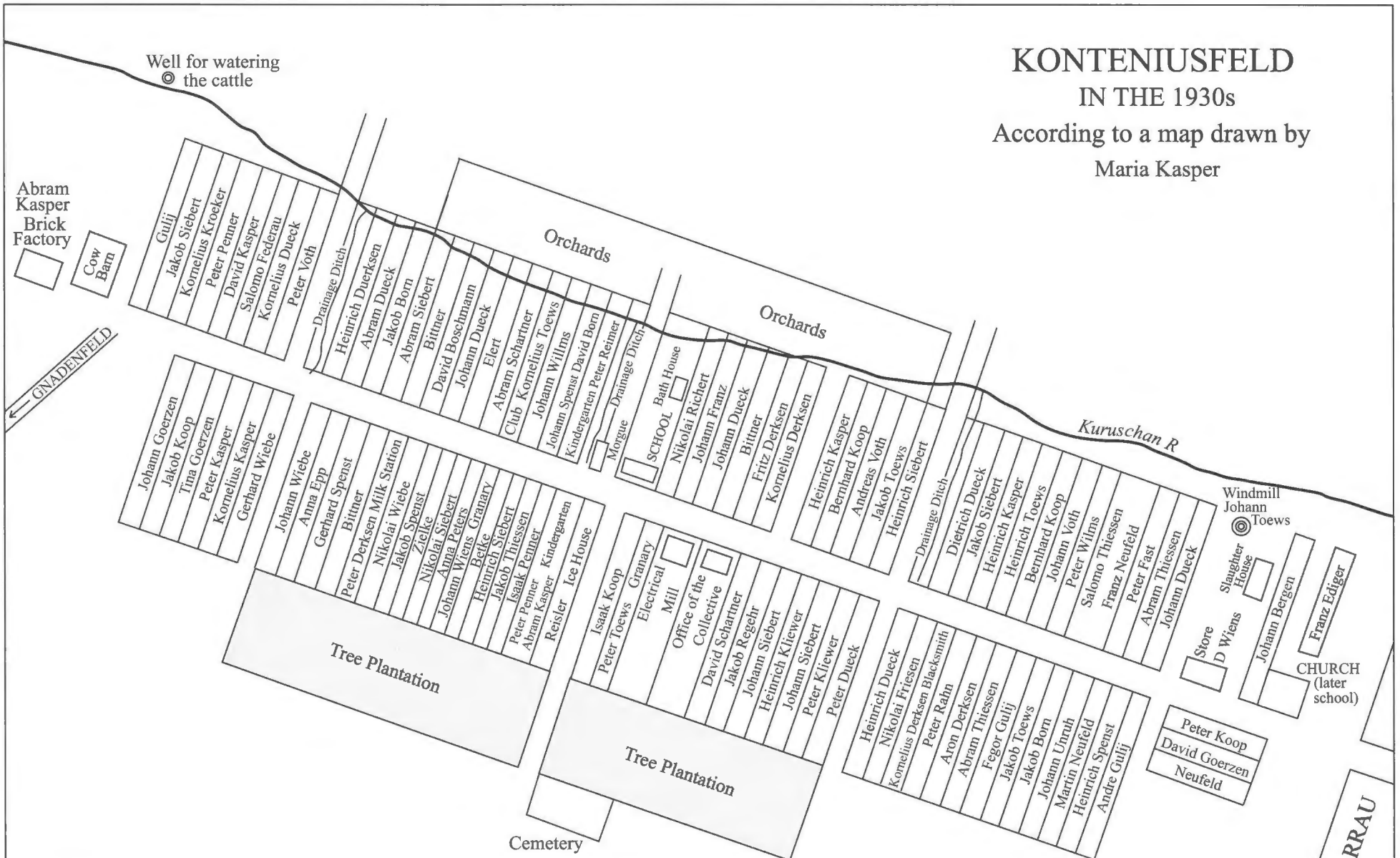


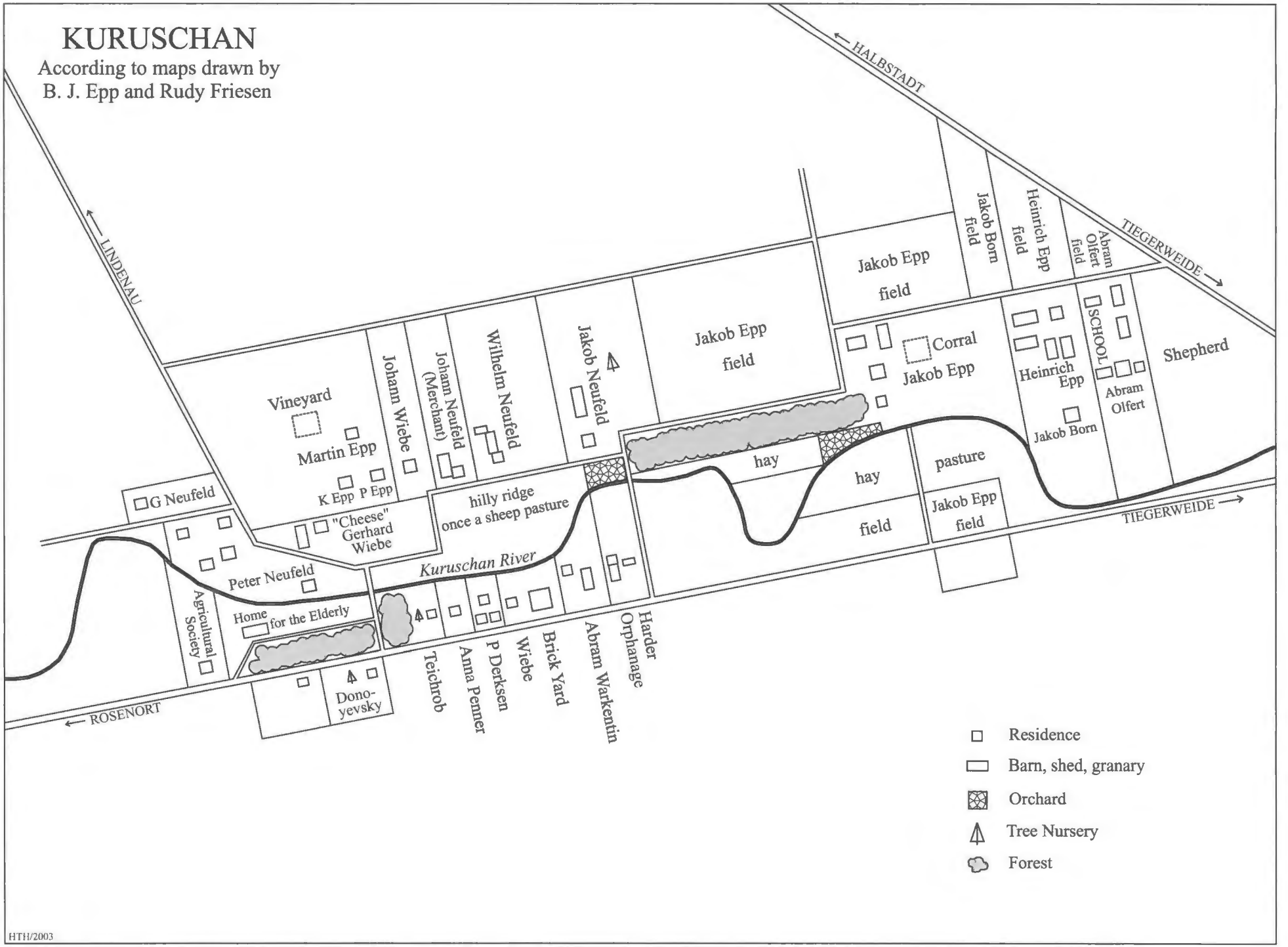
Present day Jschanlee yard (Friesen)

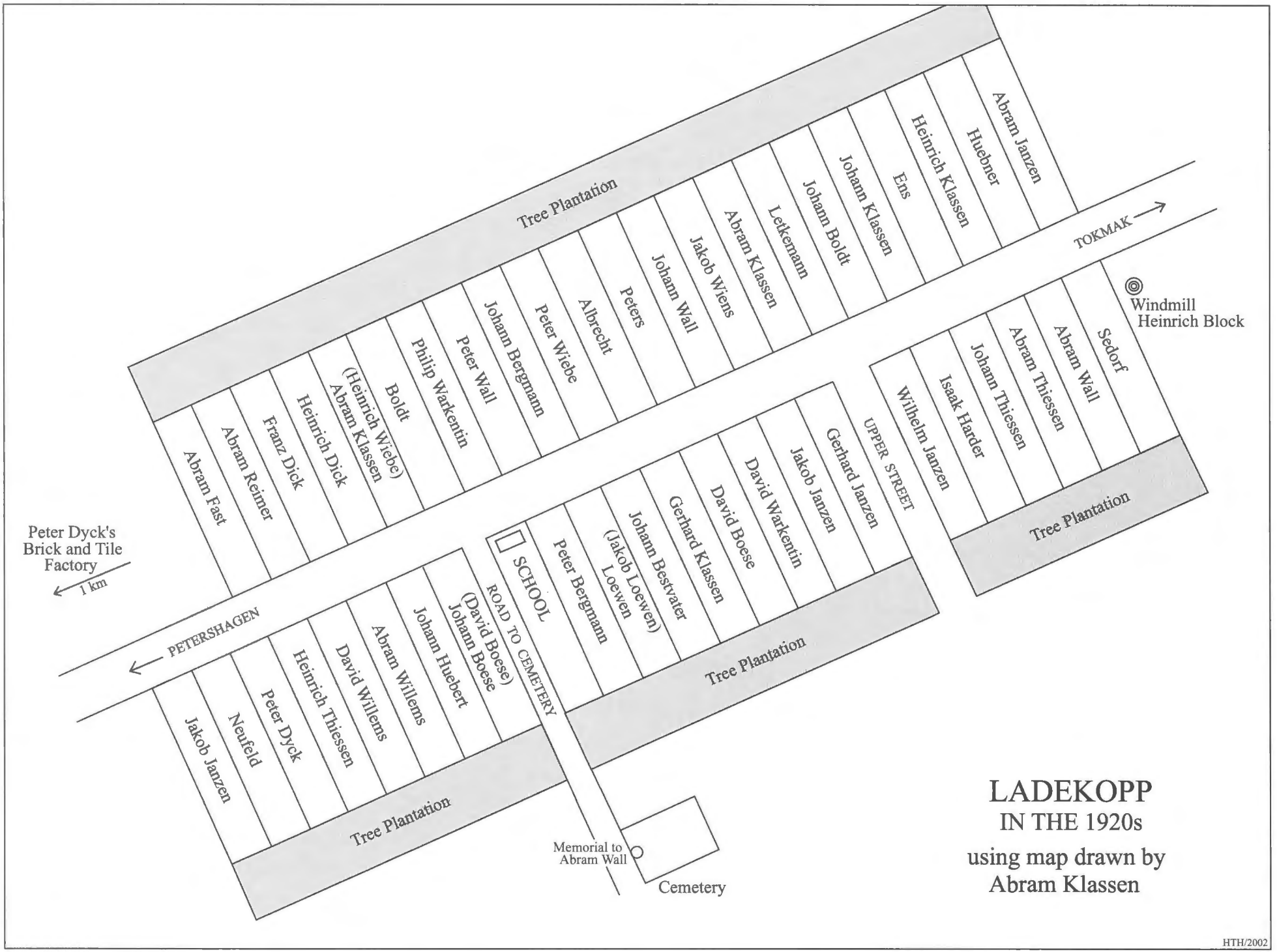

Kuruschan
Sheep Ranch
Old Folks Home
Tiegerweide
Rueckenau
Kuruduschan River
Rosenort
Blumenort
Tiege
Ohrloff
(original home of
Johann Cornies)
Kleefeld
Alexanderkrone
Juschanlee River
Juschanlee Estate
(at this time owned by the
Reimer family)
Ackerman
Salt Road (Tschumakenweg)
0
5
Verst
SOUTH WESTERN
MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
From a map drawn by J. Janzen
About 1912 - 1914
HTH/2002

KLEEFELD
IN 1922
According to maps by
William Schroeder
and Sara Helene Harder
HTH/2002
ALEXANDERKRONE
JUSCHANLEE
Jakob Goerzen
Isaak Berg
Johann Berg
Enns
Bernhard Martens
Stobbe Thiessen
Wedel Martens
Johann Thiessen
Jakob Isaak
Heinrichs (Miller)
Johann Neufeld
Johann Harder
Willms
Aron Willms
Hildebrand
Johann Goerzen
Riediger
Bernhard Heinrichs
Johann Huebert
Schulz
Heinrich Thiessen
Johann Warkentin
Bernhard Loewen
Unruh
Martens
Thiessen
Ditch
Herdsman
Windmill
Peter Willms
Quiring
Heinrich Unruh
Kornelius Friesen
Peter Enns
Braun
Johann Kliewer
Kornelius Warkentin
Klassen
Abram Harder
Abram Matthies
Johann Huebert
Tree Plantation
Franz Dueck
Fast (Blacksmith)
Wiens
Wiens (Miller)
Bernhard Derksen
Abrams
Heinrich Martens
Franz Warkentin
Isaak Wiens
Martens
Cemetery
Grandmother Harder
Peter Wiens
Aron Willms
Grete Thiessen
Willms
Klaus Wiens
Abram Martens
Peter Harder
Johann Dueck
Johann Pankratz
Tree Plantation
Juschanlee River
SCHOOL
Johann Regehr
Mrs Friesen
Franz Willms
Jakob Wall
Anna Martens
Thiessen (Minister)
Jakob Wiens
Peter Harder
Franz Voth
Heinrich Giesbrecht
Jakob Dueck
Peter Huebert
Windmill
Peter Wiens Brick and Tile Factory

Tree Plantation
Cultivated Fields
Cemetery
WERNERSDORF
Pipl
Isaak
Sarajuns
Kinas
Heinzelman
H Harder
Horse Barn
Jakob Dick
Tree Plantaion
Bernhard Wall
H Goertzen
Cow Barn
Kornelius Woelk
Rennpenning
SCHOOL
Windmill
Tree Plantation
Cowherd
HAMBERG and STULNEVO
Ruppel
Bartel
Bartel
Nasaz
Sukkau
Fieblich
H Neufeld
A Schellenberg
J Wiens
A Schellenberg
Granary and Office
Klassen
Asman
Cow Barn
Milk Delivery
Thiessen
OLD SCHOOL
Poetker
J Wiens
J Thiessen
F Balzer
H Klippenstein
Hog Barn
B Harder
D Geddert
Reuben Schulz
Kasper
Warkentin
H Spenst
Calf Barn
J Wall
Cattle Barn
Pauls
Lurje
Wall
Enns
Steam Mill
Sheep Barn
Neustaedter
Oil Pressing Mill
STULNEVO
KLIPPENFELD
IN THE 1930s
Built during the Communust time
HTH/2002


KONTENIUSFELD
IN THE 1930s
According to a map drawn by
Maria Kasper
Well for watering the cattle
Abram Kasper Brick Factory
Cow Barn
GNADENFELD
Gulij
Jakob Siebert
Kornelius Kroeker
Peter Penner
David Kasper
Salomo Federau
Kornelius Dueck
Peter Voth
Drainage Ditch
Heinrich Duerksen
Abram Dueck
Jakob Born
Abram Siebert
Bittner
David Boschmann
Johann Dueck
Elert
Abram Schartner
Club Kornelius Toews
Johann Willms
Johann Spenst David Born
Kindergarten Peter Reimer
Drainage Ditch
Morgue
Orchards
Orchards
SCHOOL
Bath House
Nikolai Richert
Johann Franz
Johann Dueck
Bittner
Fritz Derksen
Kornelius Derksen
Heinrich Kasper
Bernhard Koop
Andreas Voth
Jakob Toews
Heinrich Siebert
Drainage Ditch
Kuruschan R
Windmill Johann Toews
Dietrich Dueck
Jakob Siebert
Heinrich Kasper
Heinrich Toews
Bernhard Koop
Johann Voth
Peter Wiens
Salomo Thiessen
Franz Neufeld
Peter Fast
Abram Thiessen
Johann Dueck
Slaughter House
Store D Wiens
Johann Bergen
Franz Ediger
CHURCH (later school)
Johann Goerzen
Jakob Koop
Tina Goerzen
Peter Kasper
Kornelius Kasper
Gerhard Wiebe
Johann Wiebe
Anna Epp
Gerhard Spenst
Bittner
Peter Derksen Milk Station
Nikolai Wiebe
Jakob Spenst
Zielke
Nikolai Siebert
Anna Peters
Johann Wiens Granary
Betke
Heinrich Siebert
Jakob Thiessen
Isaak Penner
Peter Penner Kindergarten
Abram Kasper Reisler Ice House
Tree Plantation
Isaak Koop
Peter Toews Granary
Electrical Mill
Office of the Collective
David Schartner
Jakob Regehr
Johann Siebert
Heinrich Kliewer
Johann Siebert
Peter Kliewer
Peter Dueck
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
Heinrich Dueck
Nikolai Friesen
Komelius Derksen Blacksmith
Peter Rahn
Aron Derksen
Abram Thiessen
Fegor Gulij
Jakob Toews
Jakob Born
Johann Unruh
Martin Neufeld
Heinrich Spenst
Andre Gulij
Peter Koop
David Goerzen
Neufeld
SPARRAU
Brick Factory owned by Abram Kasper and Windmill owned by Johann Toews broken down during the time of the collective farm
HTH/2003


KURUSCHAN
According to maps drawn by
B. J. Epp and Rudy Friesen
← HALBSTADT
TIEGERWEIDE →
← LINDENAU
Jakob Born field
Heinrich Epp field
Abram Olfert field
SCHOOL
Shepherd
Jakob Epp field
Corral
Jakob Epp
Heinrich Epp
Jakob Born
Abram Olfert
Vineyard
Martin Epp
K Epp P Epp
Johann Wiebe
Johann Neufeld (Merchant)
Wilhelm Neufeld
Jakob Neufeld
Jakob Epp field
hay
hay
pasture
field
Jakob Epp field
G Neufeld
"Cheese" Gerhard Wiebe
hilly ridge once a sheep pasture
Kuruschan River
Peter Neufeld
Home for the Elderly
Agricultural Society
Dono-yevsky
Teichrob
Anna Penner
P Derksen
Wiebe
Brick Yard
Abram Warkentin
Harder Orphanage
TIEGERWEIDE →
← ROSENORT
Residence
Barn, shed, granary
Orchard
Tree Nursery
Forest
HTH/2003

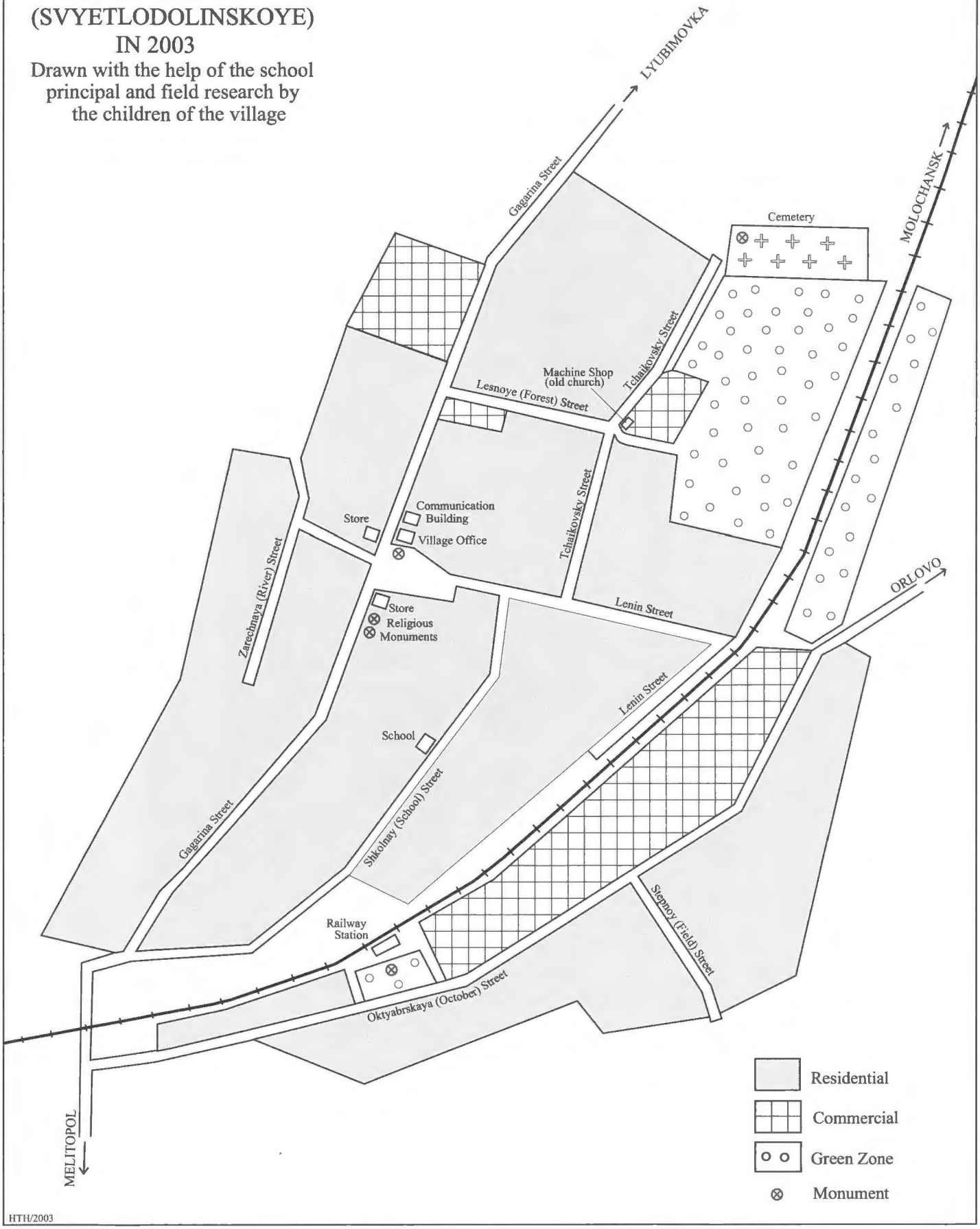

Tree Plantation
Abram Janzen
Huebner
Heinrich Klassen
Ens
Johann Klassen
Johann Boldt
Letkemann
Abram Klassen
Jakob Wiens
Johann Wall
Peters
Albrecht
Peter Wiebe
Johann Bergmann
Peter Wall
Philip Warkentin
Boldt
(Heinrich Wiebe)
Abram Klassen
Heinrich Dick
Franz Dick
Abram Reimer
Abram Fast
TOKMAK
Windmill
Heinrich Block
Sedorf
Abram Wall
Abram Thiessen
Johann Thiessen
Isaak Harder
Wilhelm Janzen
UPPER STREET
Gerhard Janzen
Jakob Janzen
David Warkentin
David Boese
Gerhard Klassen
Johann Bestvater
(Jakob Loewen)
Loewen
Peter Bergmann
SCHOOL
ROAD TO CEMETERY
Tree Plantation
Tree Plantation
Tree Plantation
Peter Dyck's
Brick and Tile
Factory
1 km
PETERSHAGEN
Jakob Janzen
Neufeld
Peter Dyck
Heinrich Thiessen
David Willems
Abram Willems
Johann Huebert
(David Boese)
Johann Boese
Memorial to
Abram Wall
Cemetery
LADEKOPP
IN THE 1920s
using map drawn by
Abram Klassen
HTH/2002

LANDSKRONE
IN 1925

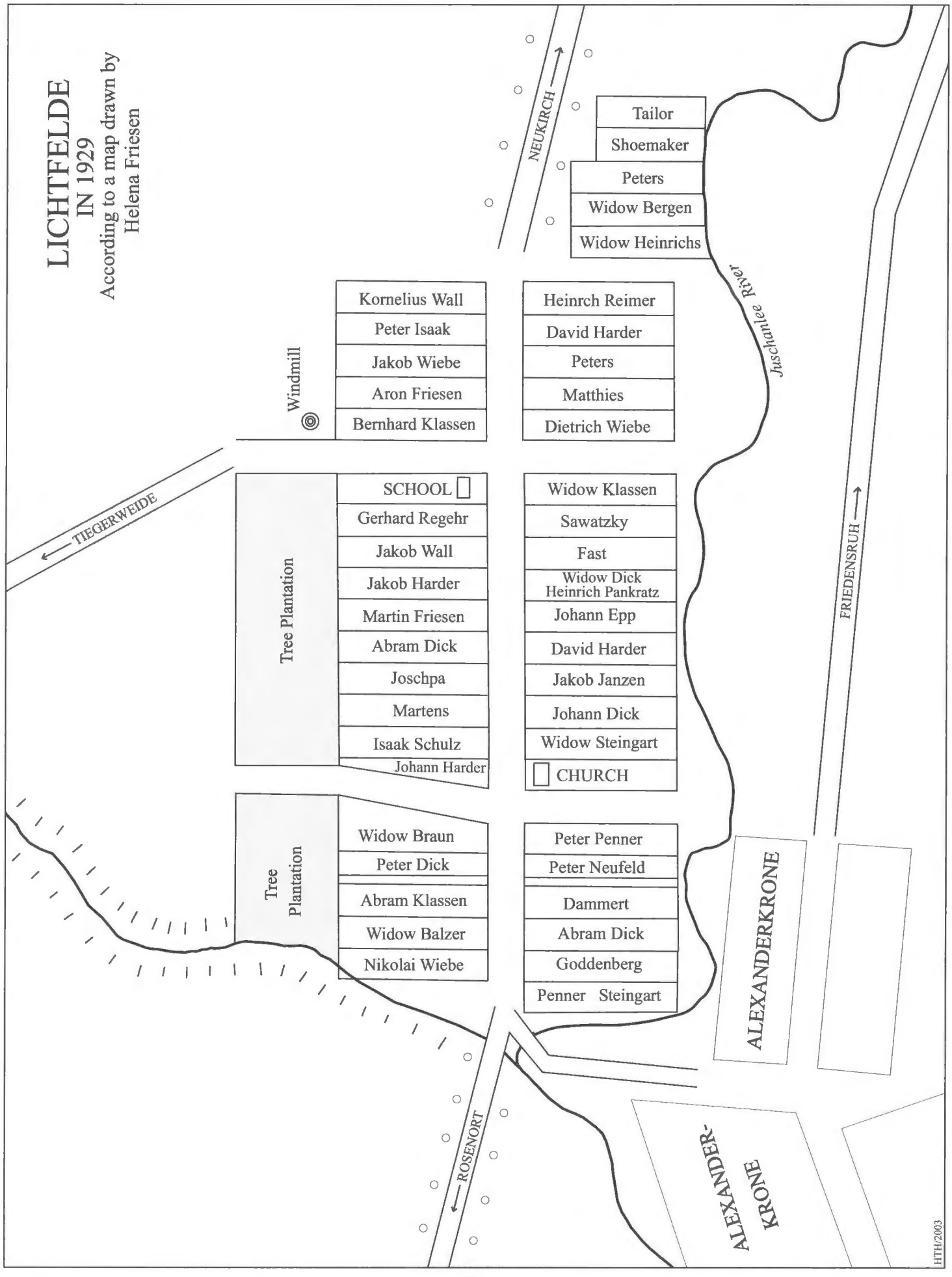
LICHTENAU
IN THE LATE 1920s
According to Aron A. Mandtler
Families sent off as "kulaks" in 1929-30
marked with an asterisk*
LINDENAU
Adolf Penner
Friedrich Penner
Johann Giesbrecht (banker)
J and P Riediger*
K Riediger
Klassen
N Wiebe
Enns Braun
Abram Riediger*
Federau
Mandtler
A Mandtler
A Koop
Peter Warkentin
Middle Street
Cemetery
Franz Hiebert*
Jakob Mierau*
SCHOOL
P Giesbrecht (teacher)
Johann Koop*
Warkentin
Dairy
Hamm
Lichtenauer Street
Peter Penner*
Isaak Reimer*
Johann Heidebrecht
Peter Regier*
Gerhard Giesbrecht*
Arthur Hamm*
Braun
H Hamm
H Dyck
CHURCH
Tree
Plantation
Landless Families
Mrs Motje
Empty Lot
Driediger
H Koop
Janzen
M Ballau
Komadjof
Wnykov
Bergen
K Dyck (Shoe Repair)
Fransen
Minister
J Mandtler
Penner
Wiens
Gloeckler Mill
Schulz
Bernhard Kornelsen
Hiebert
Koch
Wiens
K Heese
Water Tower
HALBSTADT
OHRLOFF
Brick Factory
BLUMSTEIN
Water Tower
Railway Station
FEDOROVKA
HTH/2003

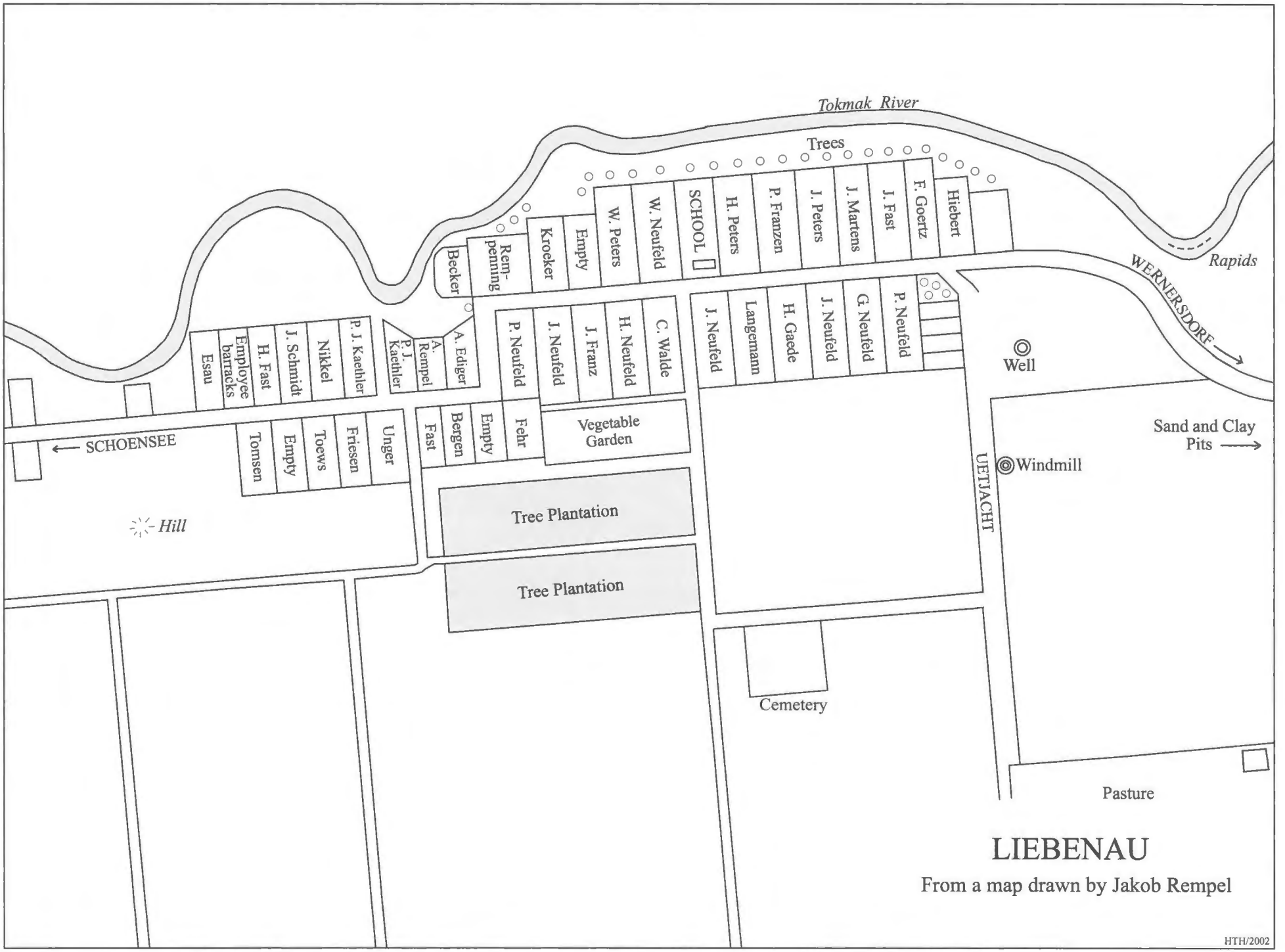
LICHTENAU
(SVYETLODOLINSKOYE)
IN 2003

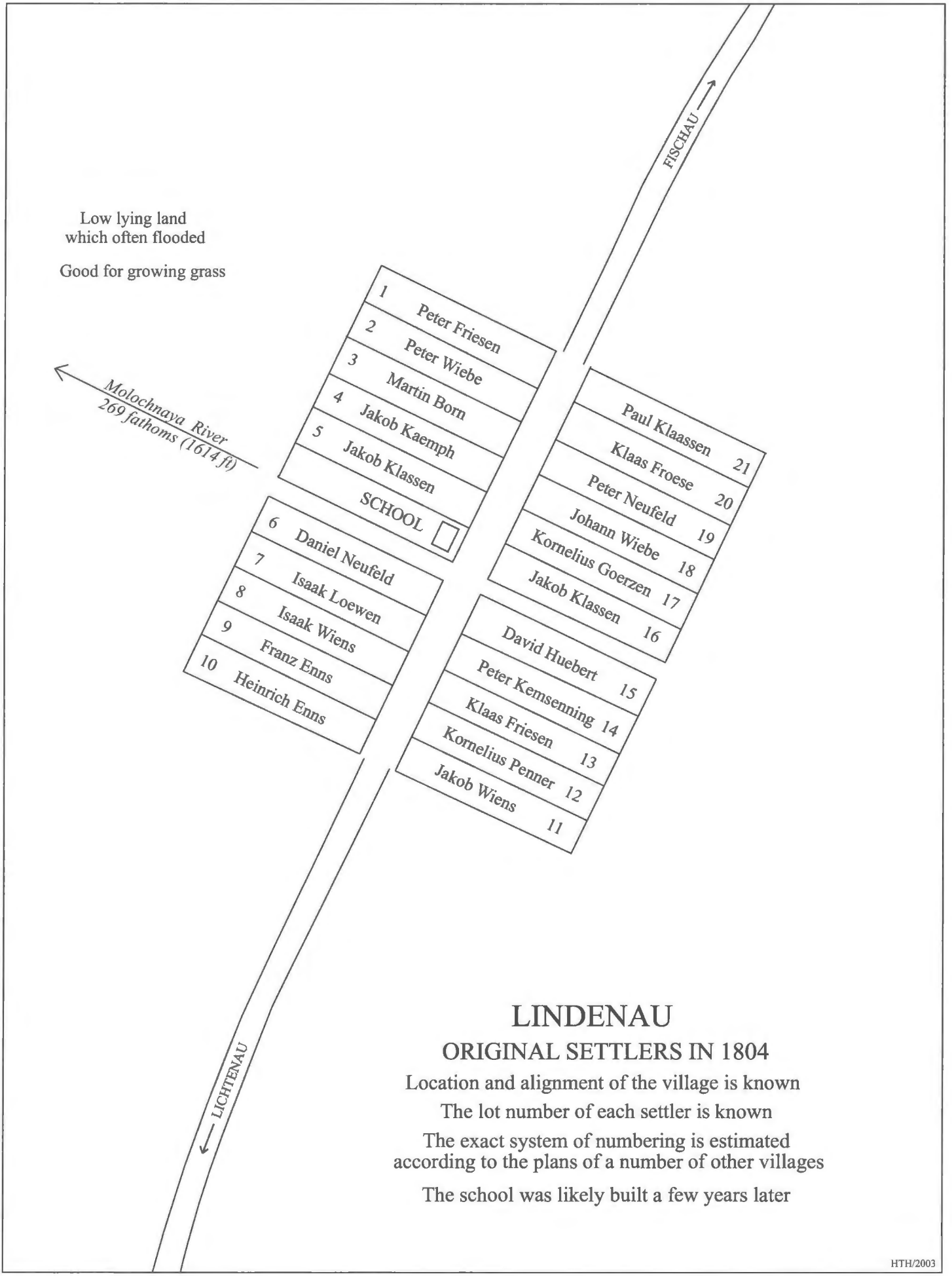
Drawn with the help of the school principal and field research by the children of the village



HTH/2003


LICHTFELDE
IN 1929
According to a map drawn by
Helena Friesen
NEUKIRCH
Tailor
Shoemaker
Peters
Widow Bergen
Widow Heinrichs
Juschanlee River
Windmill
Kornelius Wall
Peter Isaak
Jakob Wiebe
Aron Friesen
Bernhard Klassen
Heinrch Reimer
David Harder
Peters
Matthies
Dietrich Wiebe
TIEGERWEIDE
Tree Plantation
SCHOOL
Gerhard Regehr
Jakob Wall
Jakob Harder
Martin Friesen
Abram Dick
Joschpa
Martens
Isaak Schulz
Johann Harder
Widow Klassen
Sawatzky
Fast
Widow Dick
Heinrich Pankratz
Johann Epp
David Harder
Jakob Janzen
Johann Dick
Widow Steingart
CHURCH
FRIEDENSRUH
Tree Plantation
Widow Braun
Peter Dick
Abram Klassen
Widow Balzer
Nikolai Wiebe
Peter Penner
Peter Neufeld
Dammert
Abram Dick
Goddenberg
Penner Steingart
ALEXANDERKRONE
ROSENORT
ALEXANDER-
KRONE
HTH/2003


Tokmak River
Trees
Rapids
WERNERSDORF
SCHOOL
Becker
Rem-penning
Kroeker
Empty
W. Peters
W. Neufeld
H. Peters
P. Franzen
J. Peters
J. Martens
J. Fast
F. Goertz
Hiebert
Esau
Employee barracks
H. Fast
J. Schmidt
Nikkel
P. J. Kaethler
P. J. Kaethler
A. Rempel
A. Ediger
P. Neufeld
J. Neufeld
J. Franz
H. Neufeld
C. Walde
J. Neufeld
Langemann
H. Gaede
J. Neufeld
G. Neufeld
P. Neufeld
Well
SCHOENSEE
Tomsen
Empty
Toews
Friesen
Unger
Fast
Bergen
Empty
Fehr
Vegetable Garden
Sand and Clay Pits
Windmill
UETJACHT
Hill
Tree Plantation
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
Pasture
LIEBENAU
From a map drawn by Jakob Rempel
HTH/2002



LINDENAU

ORIGINAL SETTLERS IN 1804

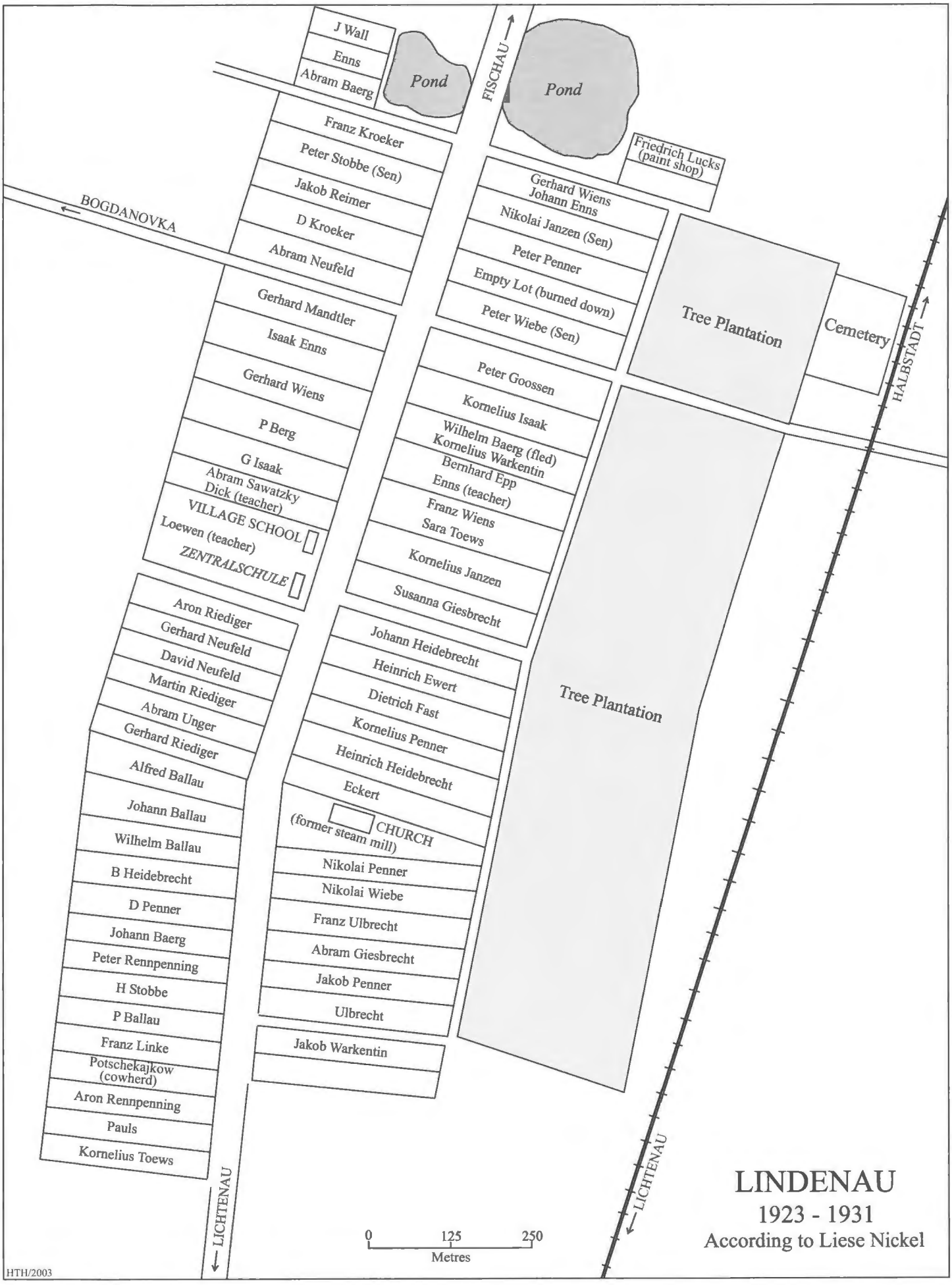
Location and alignment of the village is known

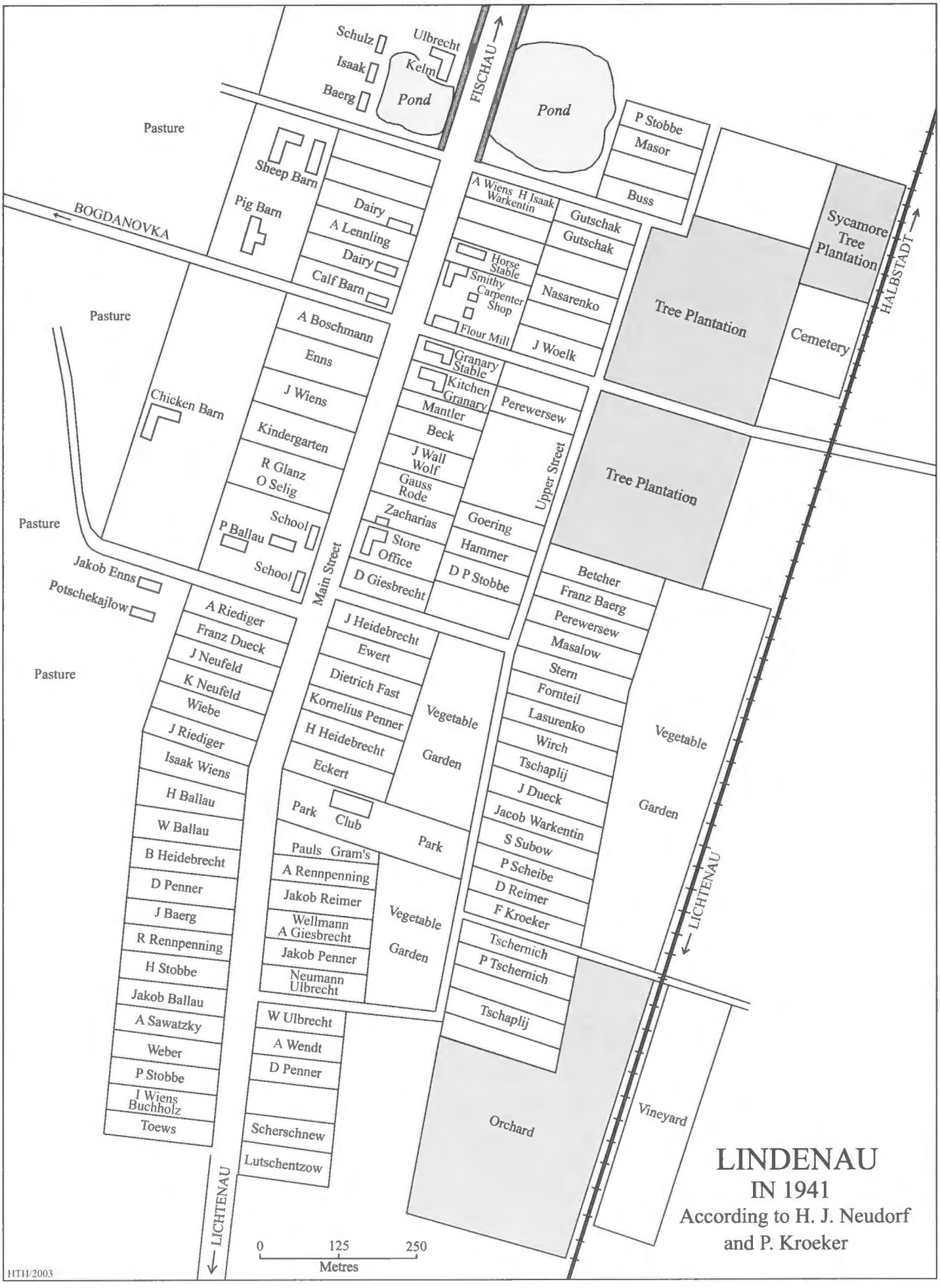
The lot number of each settler is known

The exact system of numbering is estimated according to the plans of a number of other villages

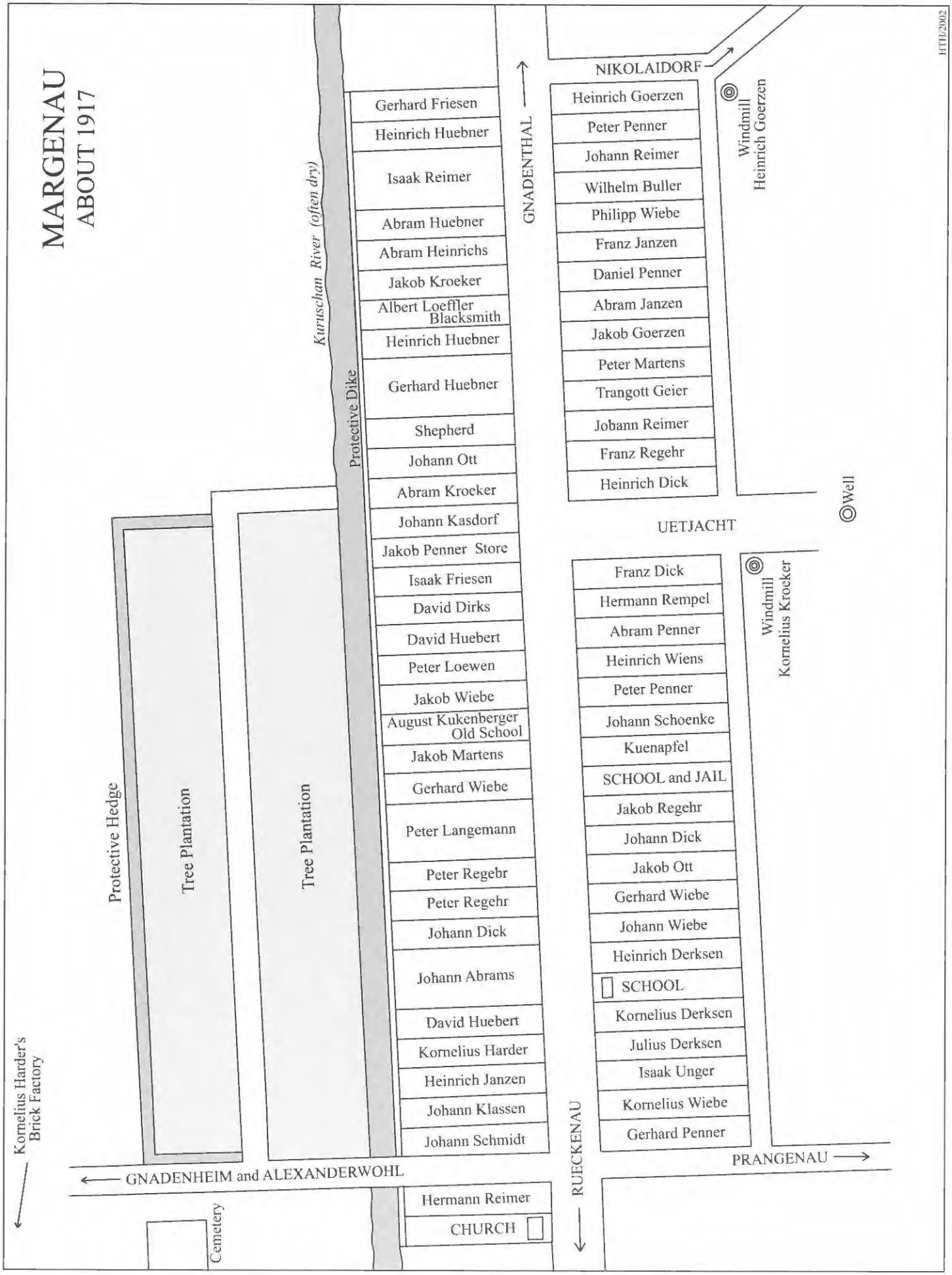
The school was likely built a few years later

HTH/2003

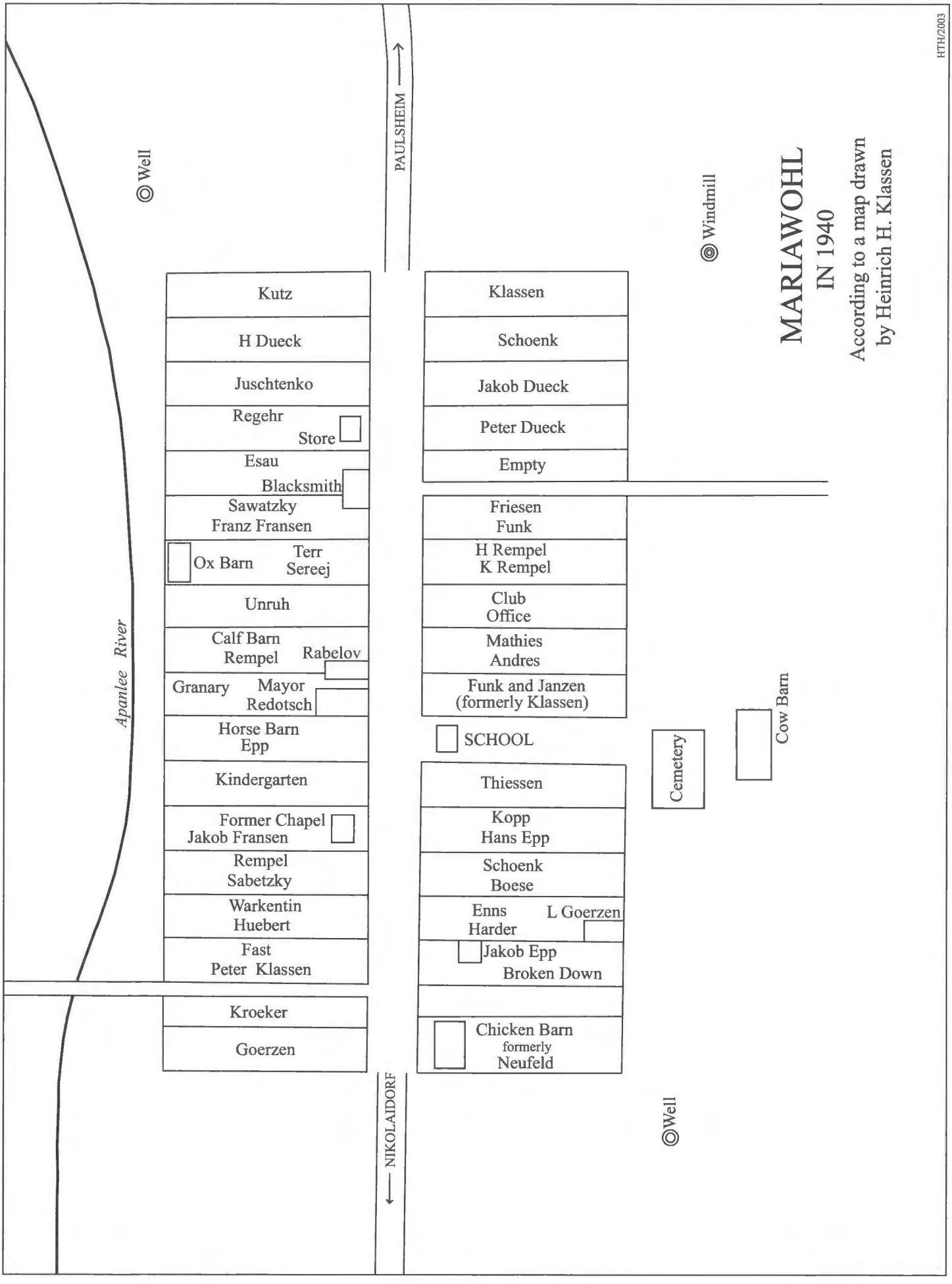

J Wall
Enns
Abram Baerg
Pond
FISCHAU
Pond
Friedrich Lucks (paint shop)
Franz Kroeker
Peter Stobbe (Sen)
Jakob Reimer
D Kroeker
Abram Neufeld
Gerhard Wiens
Johann Enns
Nikolai Janzen (Sen)
Peter Penner
Empty Lot (burned down)
Peter Wiebe (Sen)
BOGDANOVKA
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
HALBSTADT
Gerhard Mandtler
Isaak Enns
Gerhard Wiens
P Berg
G Isaak
Abram Sawatzky
Dick (teacher)
VILLAGE SCHOOL
Loewen (teacher)
ZENTRALSCHULE
Peter Goossen
Kornelius Isaak
Wilhelm Baerg (fled)
Kornelius Warkentin
Bernhard Epp
Enns (teacher)
Franz Wiens
Sara Toews
Kornelius Janzen
Susanna Giesbrecht
Tree Plantation
Aron Riediger
Gerhard Neufeld
David Neufeld
Martin Riediger
Abram Unger
Gerhard Riediger
Alfred Ballau
Johann Ballau
Wilhelm Ballau
B Heidebrecht
D Penner
Johann Baerg
Peter Rennpenning
H Stobbe
P Ballau
Franz Linke
Potschekajkow (cowherd)
Aron Rennpenning
Pauls
Kornelius Toews
Johann Heidebrecht
Heinrich Ewert
Dietrich Fast
Kornelius Penner
Heinrich Heidebrecht
Eckert
CHURCH
(former steam mill)
Nikolai Penner
Nikolai Wiebe
Franz Ulbrecht
Abram Giesbrecht
Jakob Penner
Ulbrecht
Jakob Warkentin
LICHTENAU
LICHTENAU
0
125
250
Metres
LINDENAU
1923 - 1931
According to Liese Nickel
HTH/2003



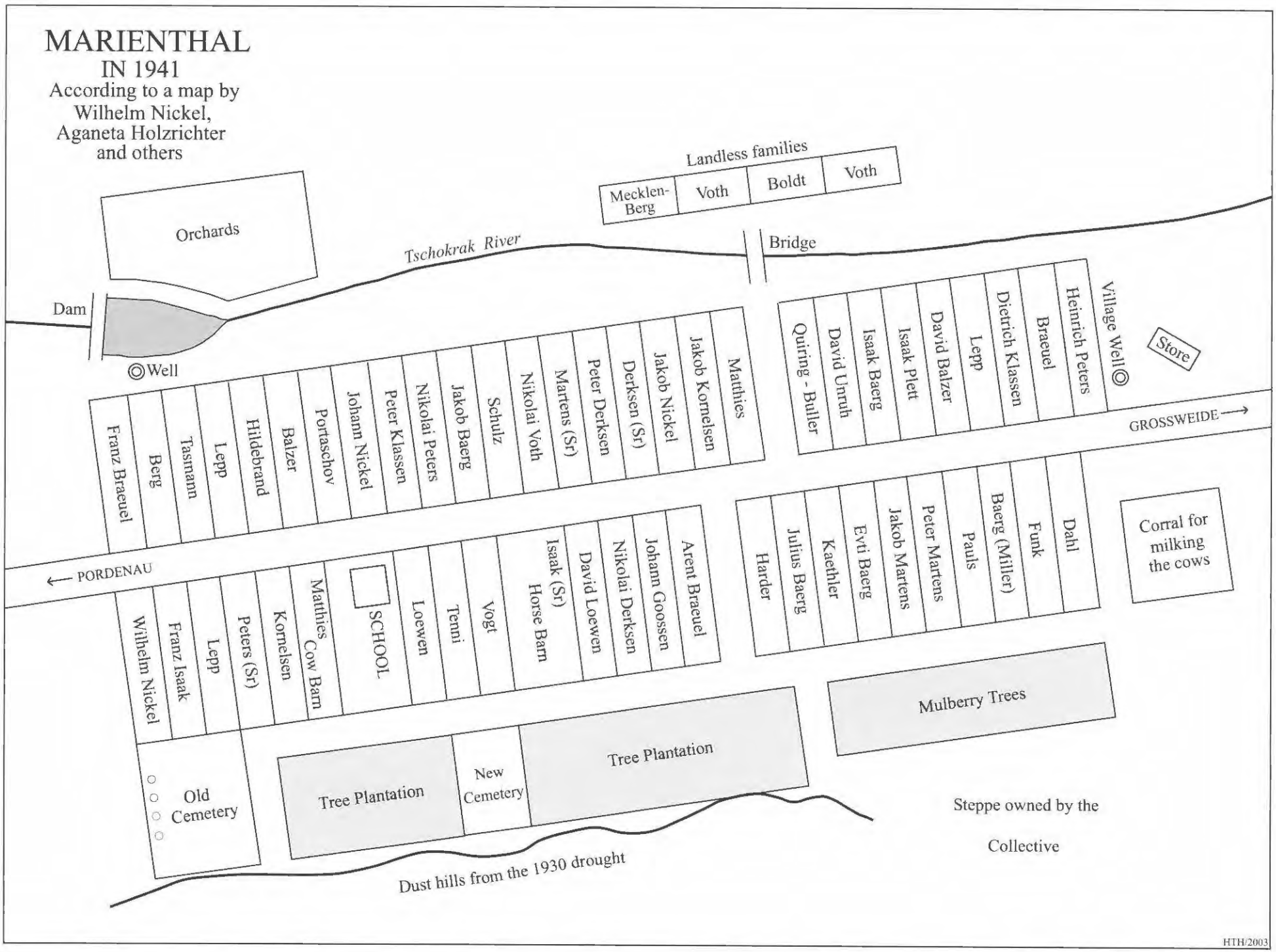
LINDENAU
IN 1941
According to H. J. Neudorf and P. Kroeker


MARGENAU
ABOUT 1917
HTH/2002
NIKOLAIDORF
GNADENTHAL
Kuruschan River (often dry)
Protective Dike
Windmill
Heinrich Goerzen
Heinrich Goerzen
Peter Penner
Johann Reimer
Wilhelm Buller
Philipp Wiebe
Franz Janzen
Daniel Penner
Abram Janzen
Jakob Goerzen
Peter Martens
Trangott Geier
Jobann Reimer
Franz Regehr
Heinrich Dick
Well
UETJACHT
Gerhard Friesen
Heinrich Huebner
Isaak Reimer
Abram Huebner
Abram Heinrichs
Jakob Kroeker
Albert Loeffler Blacksmith
Heinrich Huebner
Gerhard Huebner
Shepherd
Johann Ott
Abram Kroeker
Johann Kasdorf
Jakob Penner Store
Isaak Friesen
David Dirks
David Huebert
Peter Loewen
Jakob Wiebe
August Kukenberger Old School
Jakob Martens
Gerhard Wiebe
Peter Langemann
Peter Regebr
Peter Regehr
Johann Dick
Johann Abrams
David Huebert
Kornelius Harder
Heinrich Janzen
Johann Klassen
Johann Schmidt
Franz Dick
Hermann Rempel
Abram Penner
Heinrich Wiens
Peter Penner
Johann Schoenke
Kuenapfel
SCHOOL and JAIL
Jakob Regehr
Johann Dick
Jakob Ott
Gerhard Wiebe
Johann Wiebe
Heinrich Derksen
SCHOOL
Kornelius Derksen
Julius Derksen
Isaak Unger
Kornelius Wiebe
Gerhard Penner
Windmill
Kornelius Kroeker
Protective Hedge
Tree Plantation
Tree Plantation
Kornelius Harder's Brick Factory
GNADENHEIM and ALEXANDERWOHL
Cemetery
Hermann Reimer
CHURCH
RUECKENAU
PRANGENAU

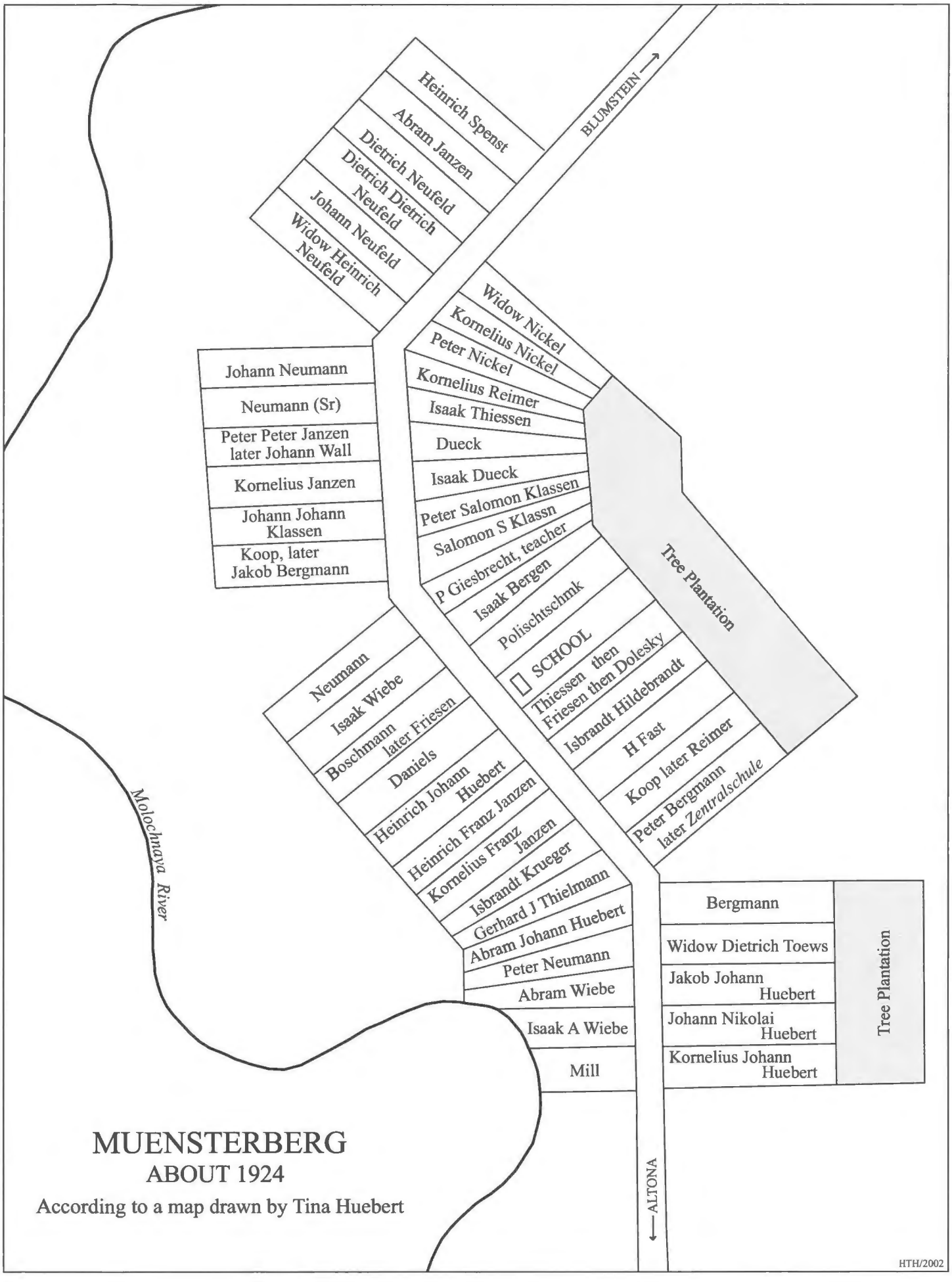
MARIAWOHL
ABOUT 1914
According to map of Mr. Wichert and Mr. Fransen
HTH/2003
PAULSHEIM
NIKOLAIDORF
Apanlee River
Windmill
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
SCHOOL
Kutzenko (Herdsman)
Vacant Lot
Vacant Lot
Sobetzki (Blacksmith)
Esau (Blacksmith)
Fransen Sr
Groening
Goerz
Warkentin
Regehr
Bergmann
Bergen
Fransen Jr
Schoenke
Flaming
Heidebrecht
Sobetzki
Wichert
Dick (Watchman)
Vacant Lot
Vacant Lot
Funk
Voth
Andres
Warkentin
Klassen
Lammert
Andres
Bergmann
Reimer
Funk

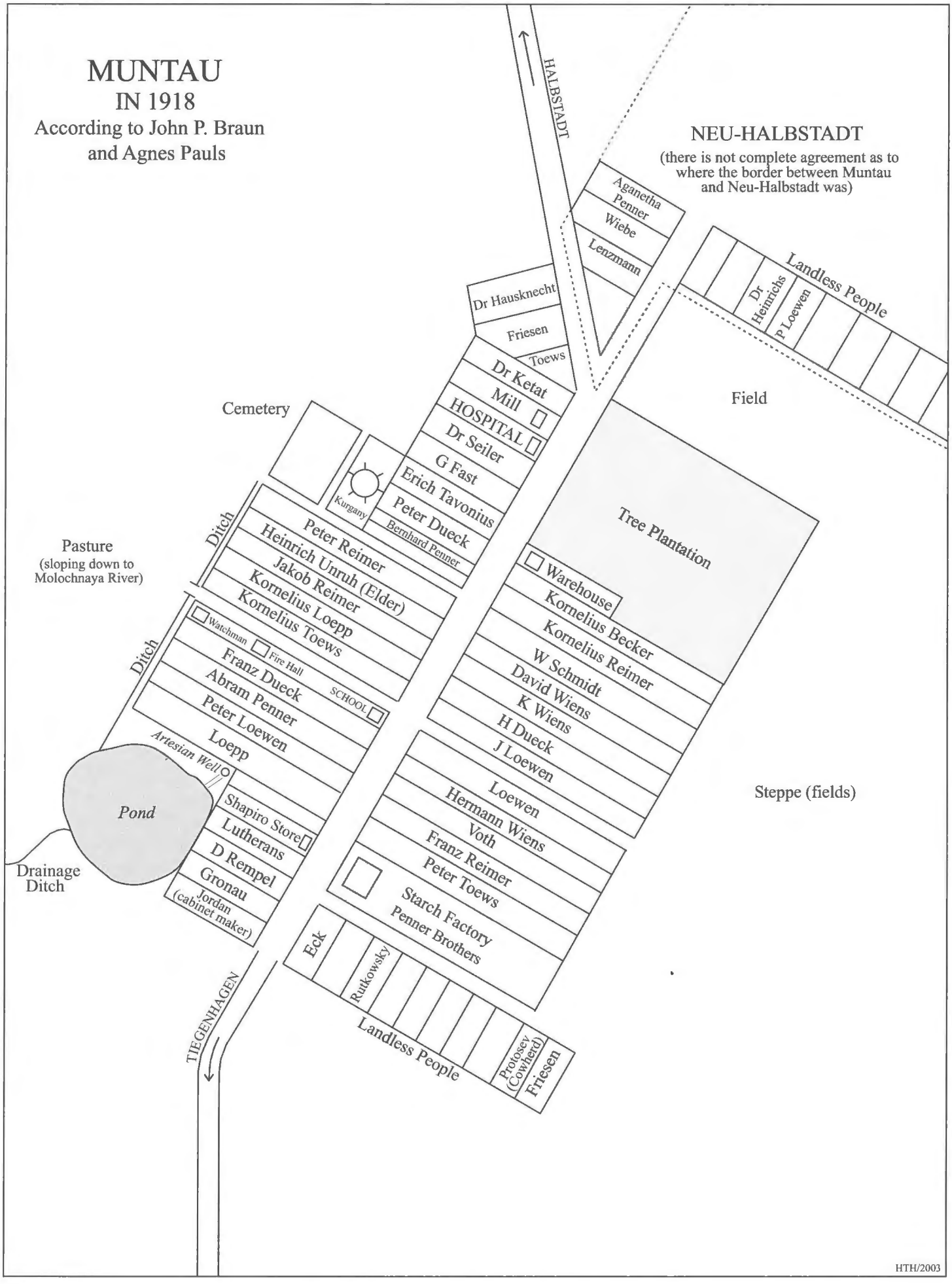

MARIAWOHL
IN 1940
According to a map drawn
by Heinrich H. Klassen
HTH/2003
Well
PAULSHEIM
Windmill
Apanlee River
Kutz
H Dueck
Juschtenko
Regehr
Store
Esau
Blacksmith
Sawatzky
Franz Fransen
Ox Barn
Terr
Sereej
Unruh
Calf Barn
Rempel
Rabelov
Granary
Mayor
Redotsch
Horse Barn
Epp
Kindergarten
Former Chapel
Jakob Fransen
Rempel
Sabetzky
Warkentin
Huebert
Fast
Peter Klassen
Kroeker
Goerzen
Klassen
Schoenk
Jakob Dueck
Peter Dueck
Empty
Friesen
Funk
H Rempel
K Rempel
Club
Office
Mathies
Andres
Funk and Janzen
(formerly Klassen)
SCHOOL
Thiessen
Kopp
Hans Epp
Schoenk
Boese
Enns
Harder
L Goerzen
Jakob Epp
Broken Down
Chicken Barn
formerly
Neufeld
Cemetery
Cow Barn
NIKOLAIDORF
Well

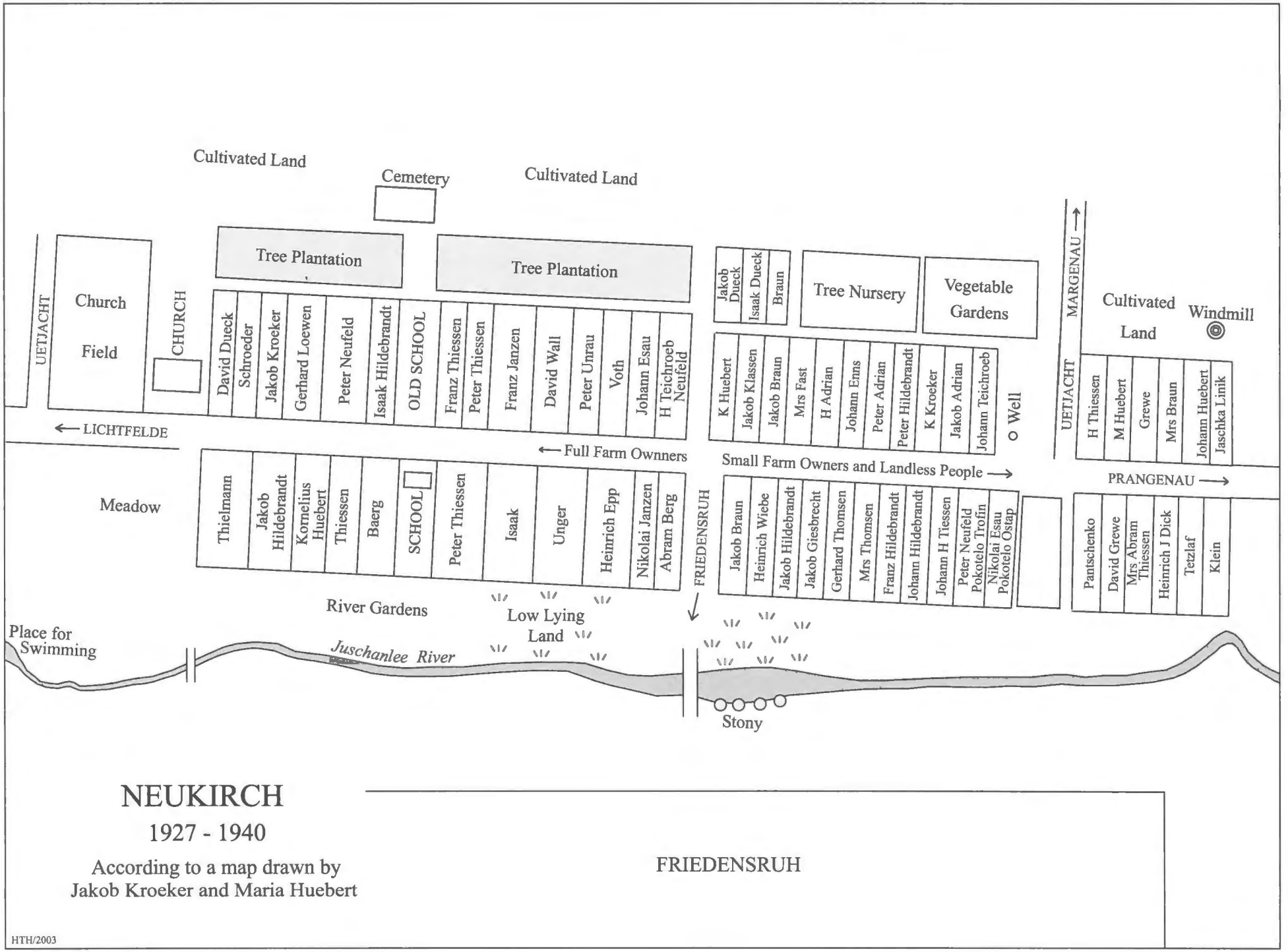
MARIENTHAL
IN 1941
According to a map by
Wilhelm Nickel,
Aganeta Holzrichter
and others



HTH/2003


Heinrich Spenst
Abram Janzen
Dietrich Neufeld
Dietrich Dietrich Neufeld
Johann Neufeld
Widow Heinrich Neufeld
BLUMSTEIN
Widow Nickel
Kornelius Nickel
Peter Nickel
Kornelius Reimer
Isaak Thiessen
Dueck
Isaak Dueck
Peter Salomon Klassen
Salomon S Klassn
P Giesbrecht, teacher
Isaak Bergen
Polischtschmk
SCHOOL
Thiessen then Friesen then Dolesky
Isbrandt Hildebrandt
H Fast
Koop later Reimer
Peter Bergmann later Zentralschule
Tree Plantation
Johann Neumann
Neumann (Sr)
Peter Peter Janzen later Johann Wall
Kornelius Janzen
Johann Johann Klassen
Koop, later Jakob Bergmann
Neumann
Isaak Wiebe
Boschmann later Friesen
Daniels
Heinrich Johann Huebert
Heinrich Franz Janzen
Kornelius Franz Janzen
Isbrandt Krueger
Gerhard J Thielmann
Abram Johann Huebert
Peter Neumann
Abram Wiebe
Isaak A Wiebe
Mill
Molochnaya River
Bergmann
Widow Dietrich Toews
Jakob Johann Huebert
Johann Nikolai Huebert
Kornelius Johann Huebert
Tree Plantation
ALTONA
MUENSTERBERG
ABOUT 1924
According to a map drawn by Tina Huebert
HTH/2002


MUNTAU
IN 1918
According to John P. Braun
and Agnes Pauls
HALBSTADT
NEU-HALBSTADT
(there is not complete agreement as to where the border between Muntau and Neu-Halbstadt was)
Aganetha Penner
Wiebe
Lenzmann
Dr Hausknecht
Friesen
Toews
Landless People
Dr Heinrichs
P Loewen
Dr Ketat
Mill
HOSPITAL
Dr Seiler
G Fast
Erich Tavonius
Peter Dueck
Bernhard Penner
Kurgany
Cemetery
Field
Tree Plantation
Ditch
Peter Reimer
Heinrich Unruh (Elder)
Jakob Reimer
Kornelius Loepp
Kornelius Toews
Pasture
(sloping down to
Molochnaya River)
Warehouse
Kornelius Becker
Kornelius Reimer
W Schmidt
David Wiens
K Wiens
H Dueck
J Loewen
Loewen
Hermann Wiens
Voth
Franz Reimer
Peter Toews
Starch Factory
Penner Brothers
Watchman
Fire Hall
SCHOOL
Franz Dueck
Abram Penner
Peter Loewen
Loepp
Artesian Well
Pond
Shapiro Store
Lutherans
D Rempel
Gronau
Jordan
(cabinet maker)
Drainage
Ditch
Steppe (fields)
Eck
Rutkowsky
Landless People
Protosev
(Cowherd)
Friesen
TIEGENHAGEN
HTH/2003



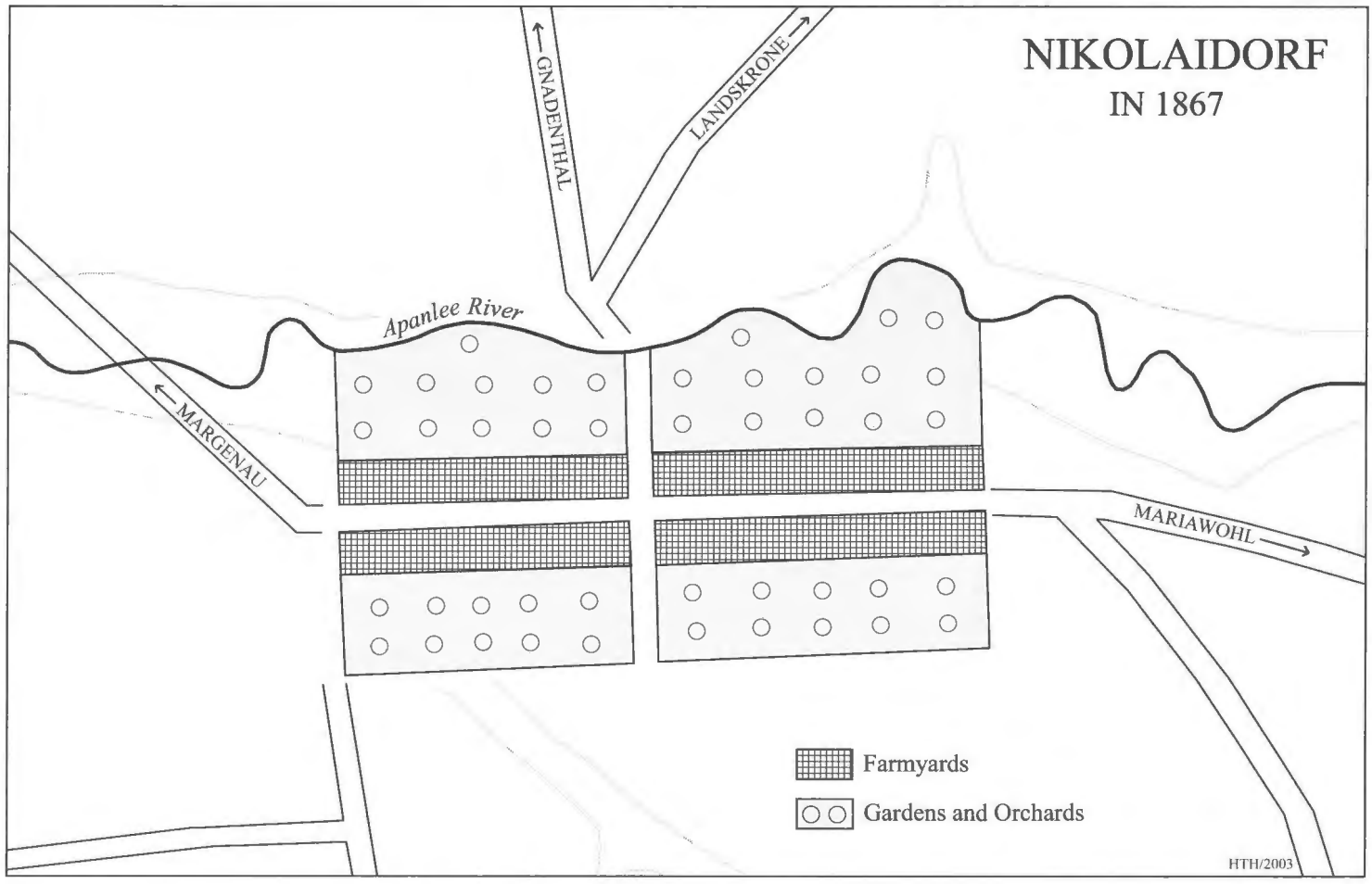
NEUKIRCH

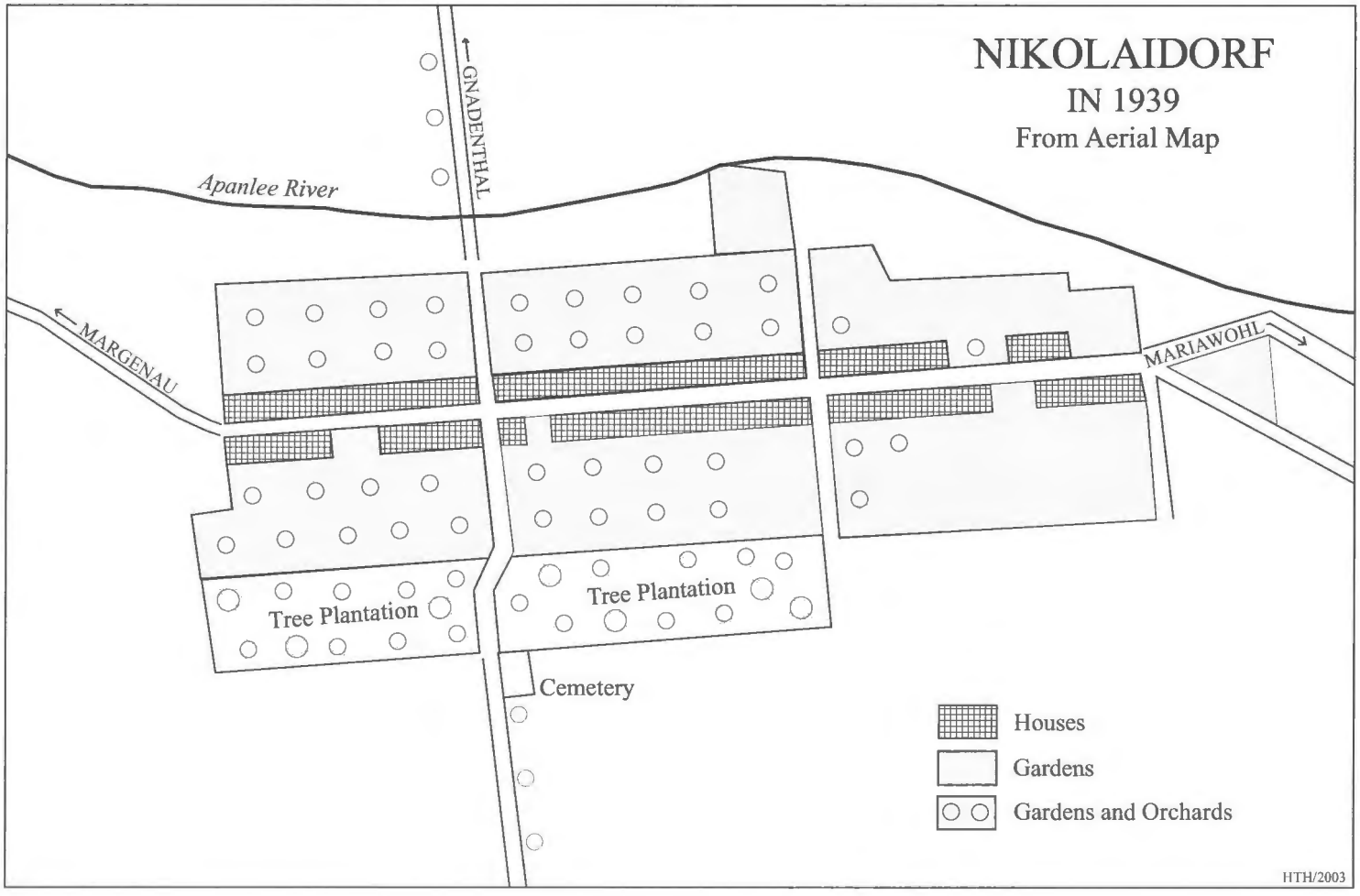
1927 - 1940

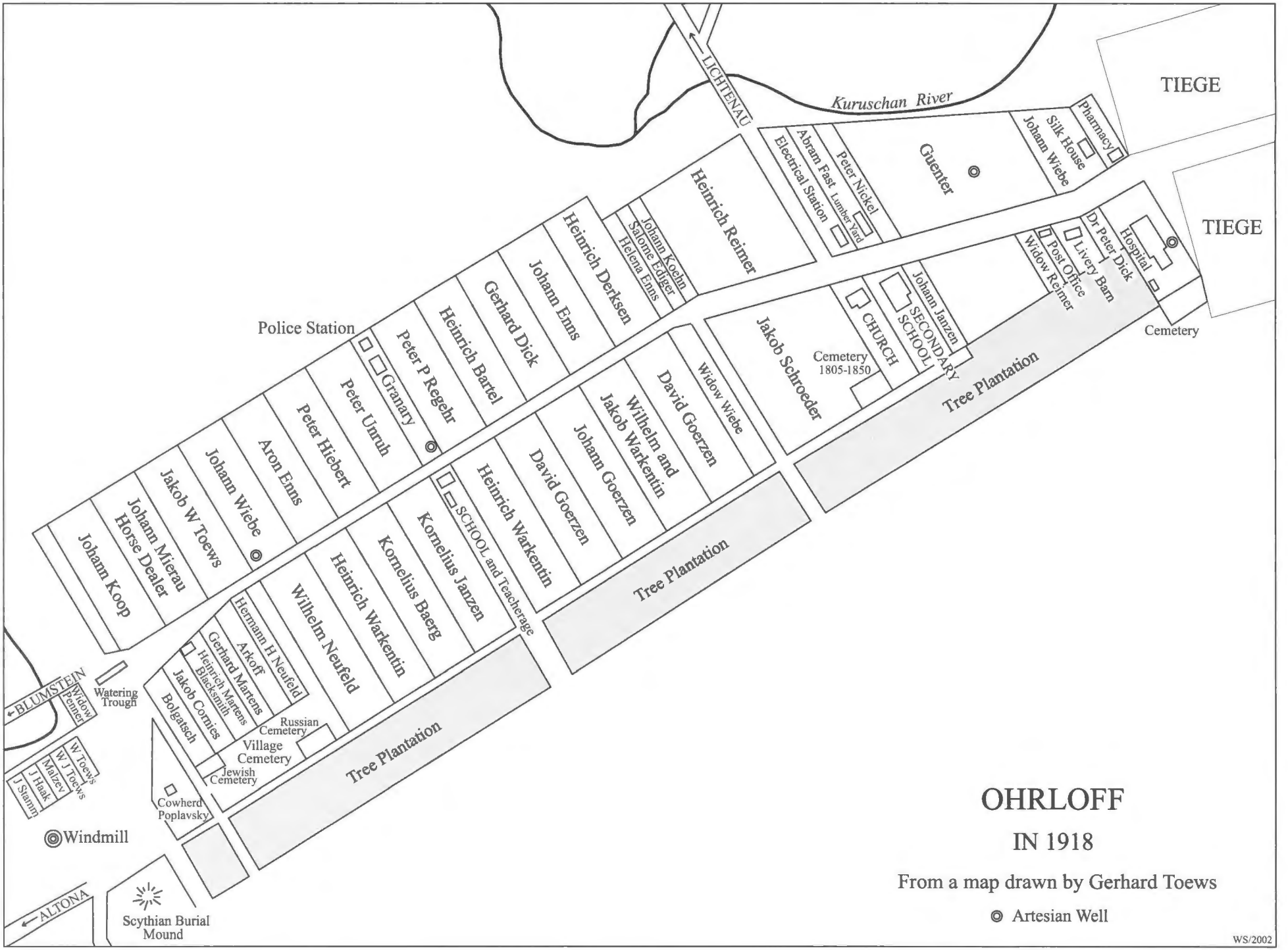
According to a map drawn by
Jakob Kroeker and Maria Huebert

FRIEDENSRUH

HTH/2003


NIKOLAIDORF
IN 1867
GNADENTHAL
LANDSKRONE
Apanlee River
MARGENAU
MARIAWOHL
Farmyards
Gardens and Orchards
HTH/2003


NIKOLAIDORF
IN 1939
From Aerial Map
GNADENTHAL
Apanlee River
MARGENAU
MARIAWOHL
Tree Plantation
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
Houses
Gardens
Gardens and Orchards
HTH/2003



OHRLOFF

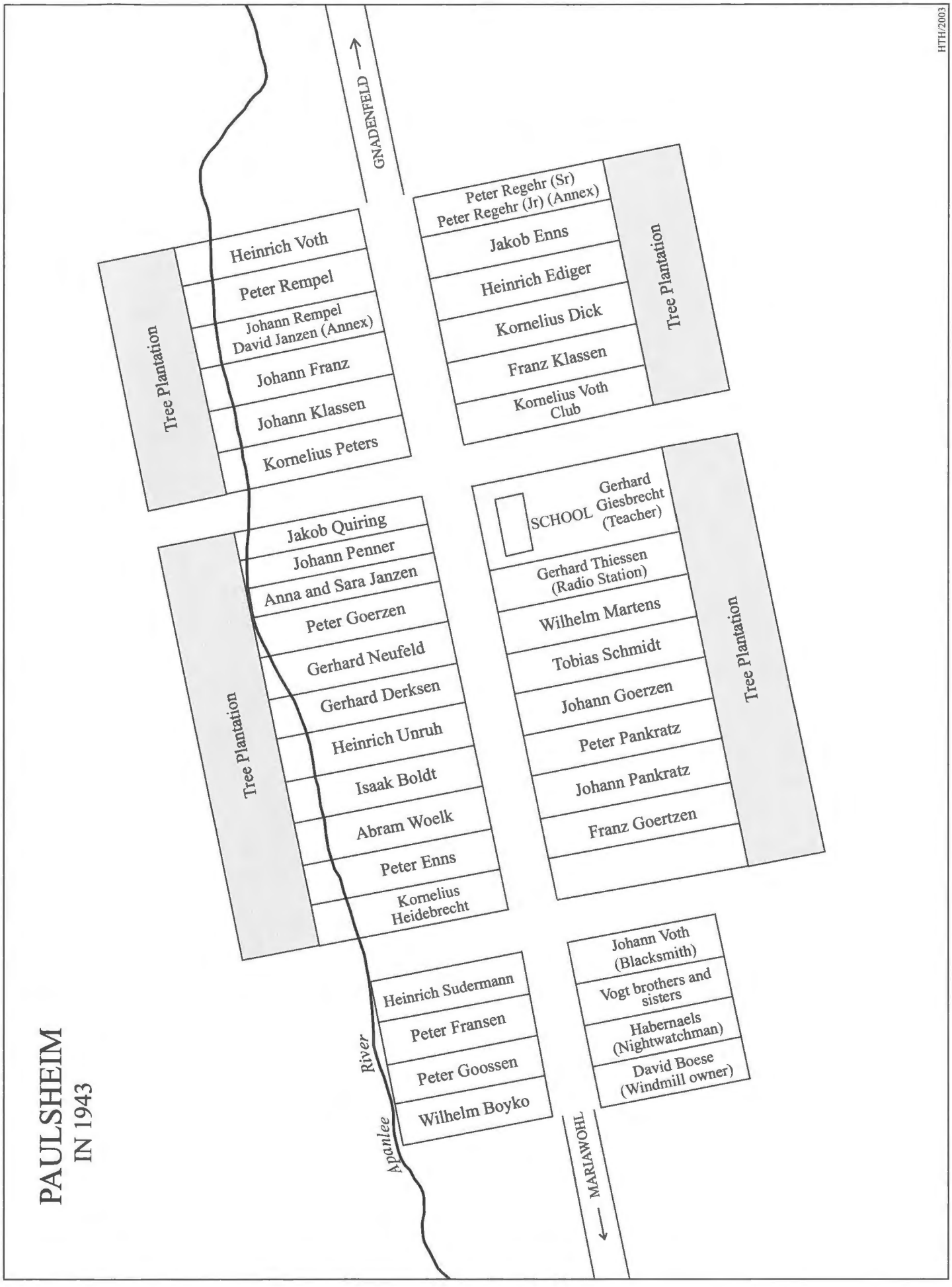
IN 1918

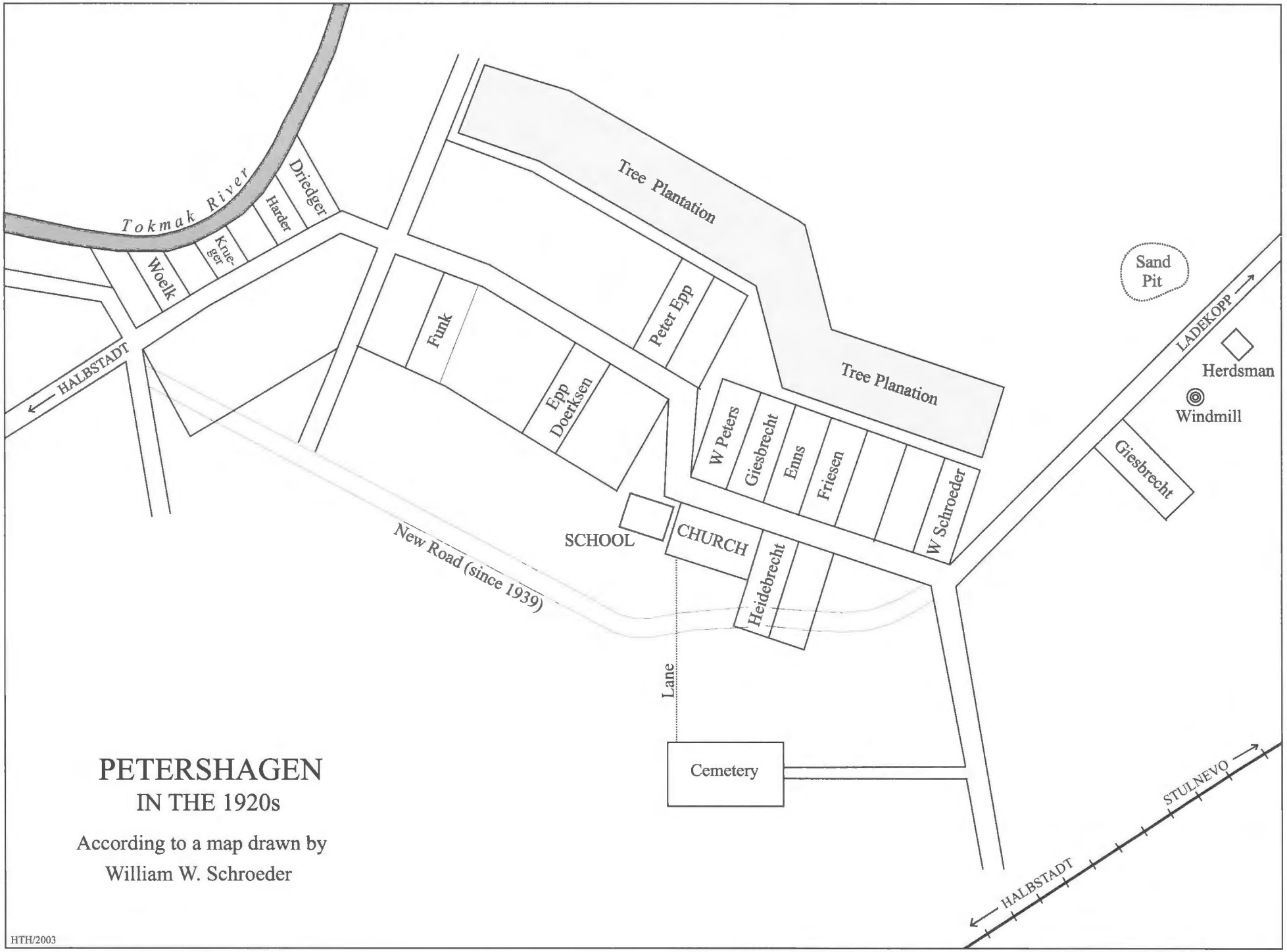
From a map drawn by Gerhard Toews

◎ Artesian Well

WS/2002

Cemetery
Windmill
J. Berg
G. Berg
Granary
D. Dick
Peter Harms
Creek
Windmill
Derksen
Heinrich Unruh
Woelk
Jakob Braun
SCHOOL
Blacksmith
Warehouse
Heinrich Wiens
Bernhard Dick
Nasar Opara
Johann Dick
Peters
Vogt
Peter Vogt
Peter Wall
Johann Dick
Peter Dick
Juschanlee River
Skripka
Franz Reimer
Kornelius Regehr
Andreas Block
Johann Schirr
Nikolai Thiessen
Vogt
Peter Penner
Peter Klassen
Jakob Dick
Heinrich Wiens
Eva Dick
Jakob Dick
GROSSWEIDE
FRANZTHAL
Franz Dick
Peter Epp
Heinrich Ewert
Philip Opara
Cowherd
Shelterbelt of Trees
Tree Plantation
PASTWA
ABOUT 1927
According to map of Johann Berg
as well as Maria Block
and Agatha Janzen
HTH/2002

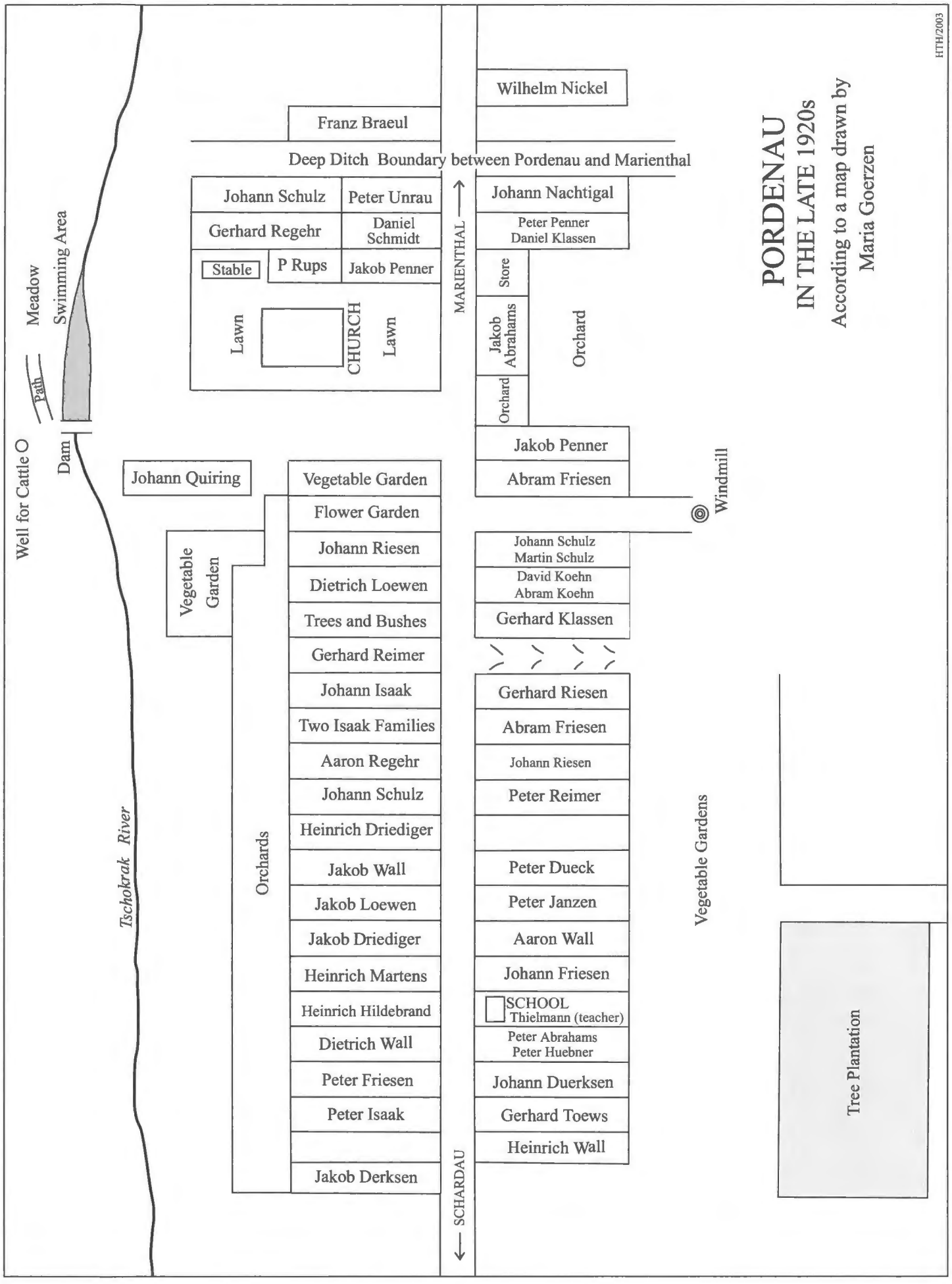

HTH/2003
GNADENFELD
Tree Plantation
Heinrich Voth
Peter Rempel
Johann Rempel
David Janzen (Annex)
Johann Franz
Johann Klassen
Kornelius Peters
Peter Regehr (Sr)
Peter Regehr (Jr) (Annex)
Jakob Enns
Heinrich Ediger
Kornelius Dick
Franz Klassen
Kornelius Voth
Club
Tree Plantation
Jakob Quiring
Johann Penner
Anna and Sara Janzen
Peter Goerzen
Gerhard Neufeld
Gerhard Derksen
Heinrich Unruh
Isaak Boldt
Abram Woelk
Peter Enns
Kornelius
Heidebrecht
SCHOOL
Gerhard
Giesbrecht
(Teacher)
Gerhard Thiessen
(Radio Station)
Wilhelm Martens
Tobias Schmidt
Johann Goerzen
Peter Pankratz
Johann Pankratz
Franz Goertzen
Tree Plantation
Heinrich Sudermann
Peter Fransen
Peter Goossen
Wilhelm Boyko
Johann Voth
(Blacksmith)
Vogt brothers and
sisters
Habernaels
(Nightwatchman)
David Boese
(Windmill owner)
River
Apanlee
MARIAWOHL
PAULSHEIM
IN 1943

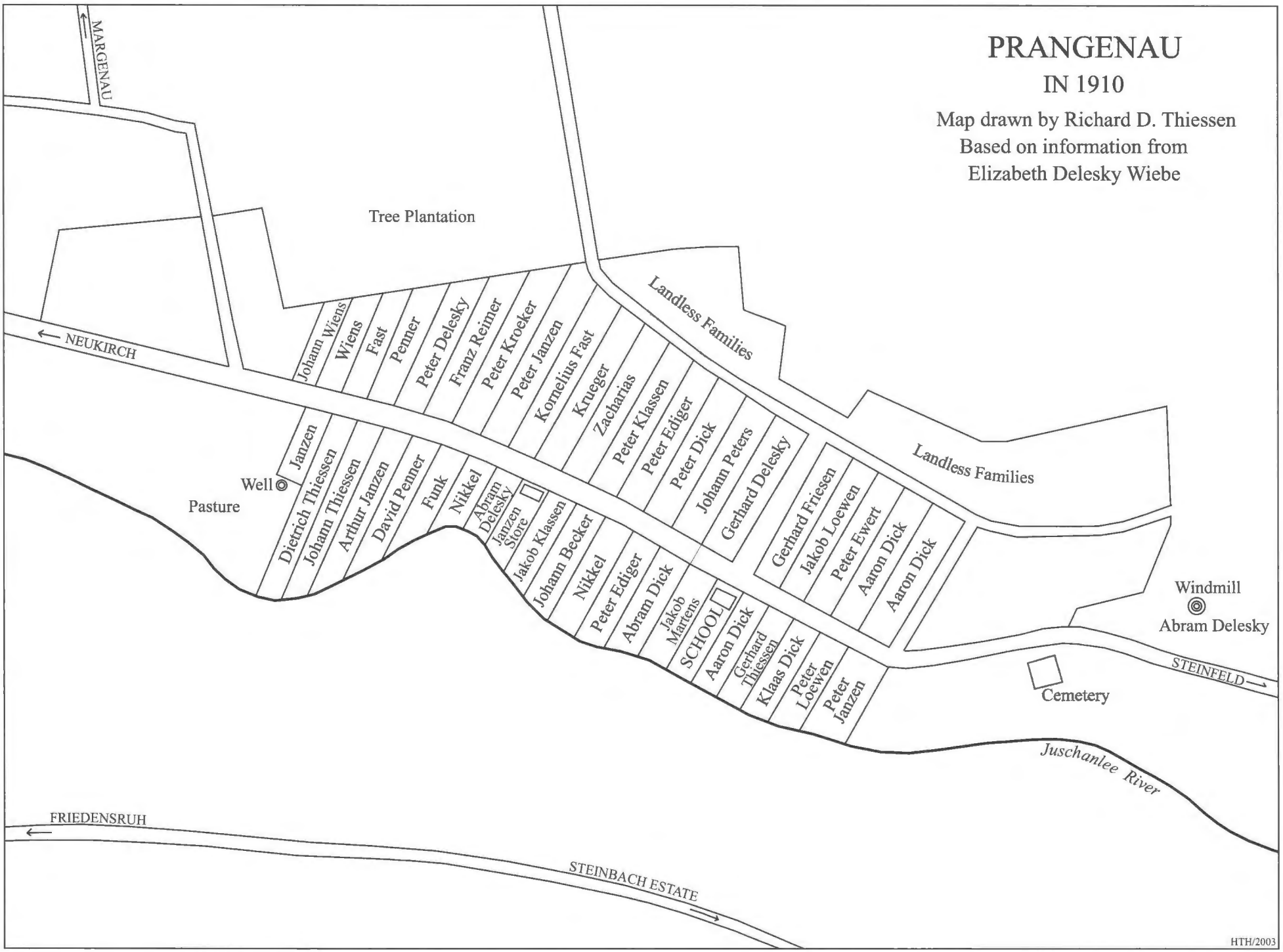


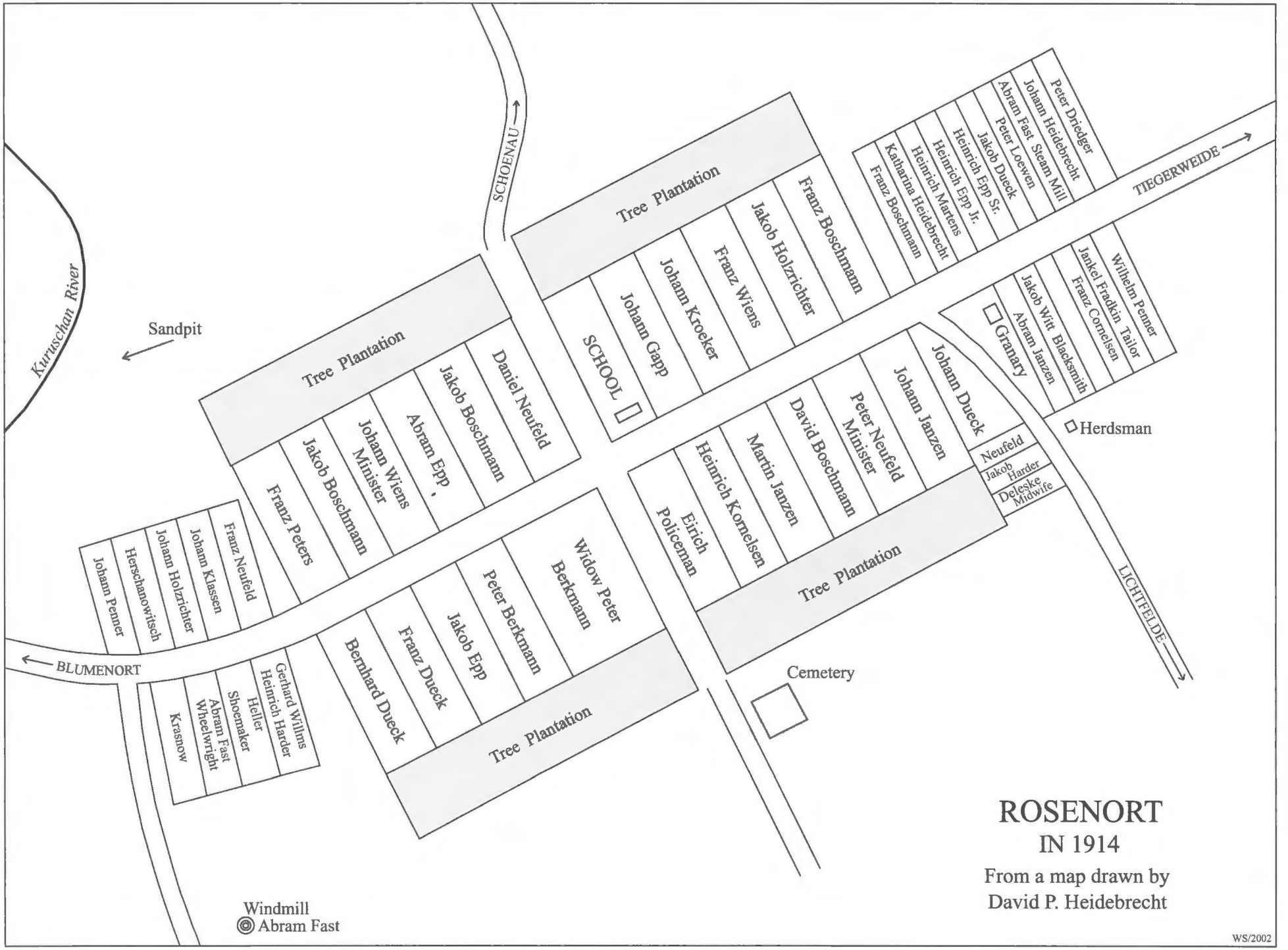
PETERSHAGEN
IN THE 1920s

According to a map drawn by
William W. Schroeder

HTH/2003


PORDENAU
IN THE LATE 1920s
According to a map drawn by
Maria Goerzen
HTH/2003
Wilhelm Nickel
Franz Braeul
Deep Ditch Boundary between Pordenau and Marienthal
MARIENTHAL
Johann Schulz
Peter Unrau
Gerhard Regehr
Daniel Schmidt
Stable
P Rups
Jakob Penner
Lawn
CHURCH
Lawn
Johann Nachtigal
Peter Penner
Daniel Klassen
Store
Jakob Abrahams
Orchard
Orchard
Meadow
Swimming Area
Path
Dam
Well for Cattle
Tschokrak River
Jakob Penner
Abram Friesen
Windmill
Johann Quiring
Vegetable Garden
Flower Garden
Johann Riesen
Dietrich Loewen
Trees and Bushes
Gerhard Reimer
Johann Isaak
Two Isaak Families
Aaron Regehr
Johann Schulz
Heinrich Driediger
Jakob Wall
Jakob Loewen
Jakob Driediger
Heinrich Martens
Heinrich Hildebrand
Dietrich Wall
Peter Friesen
Peter Isaak
Jakob Derksen
Vegetable Garden
Orchards
Johann Schulz
Martin Schulz
David Koehn
Abram Koehn
Gerhard Klassen
Gerhard Riesen
Abram Friesen
Johann Riesen
Peter Reimer
Peter Dueck
Peter Janzen
Aaron Wall
Johann Friesen
SCHOOL
Thielmann (teacher)
Peter Abrahams
Peter Huebner
Johann Duerksen
Gerhard Toews
Heinrich Wall
Vegetable Gardens
Tree Plantation
SCHARDAU


PRANGENAU
IN 1910
Map drawn by Richard D. Thiessen
Based on information from
Elizabeth Delesky Wiebe
MARGENAU
Tree Plantation
NEUKIRCH
Johann Wiens
Wiens
Fast
Penner
Peter Delesky
Franz Reimer
Peter Kroeker
Peter Janzen
Kornelius Fast
Krueger
Zacharias
Peter Klassen
Peter Ediger
Peter Dick
Johann Peters
Gerhard Delesky
Landless Families
Gerhard Friesen
Jakob Loewen
Peter Ewert
Aaron Dick
Aaron Dick
Landless Families
Janzen
Well
Pasture
Dietrich Thiessen
Johann Thiessen
Arthur Janzen
David Penner
Funk
Nikkel
Abram Delesky
Janzen Store
Jakob Klassen
Johann Becker
Nikkel
Peter Ediger
Abram Dick
Jakob Martens
SCHOOL
Aaron Dick
Gerhard Thiessen
Klaas Dick
Peter Loewen
Peter Janzen
Windmill
Abram Delesky
STEINFELD
Cemetery
Juschanlee River
FRIEDENSRUH
STEINBACH ESTATE
HTH/2003



ROSENORT
IN 1914

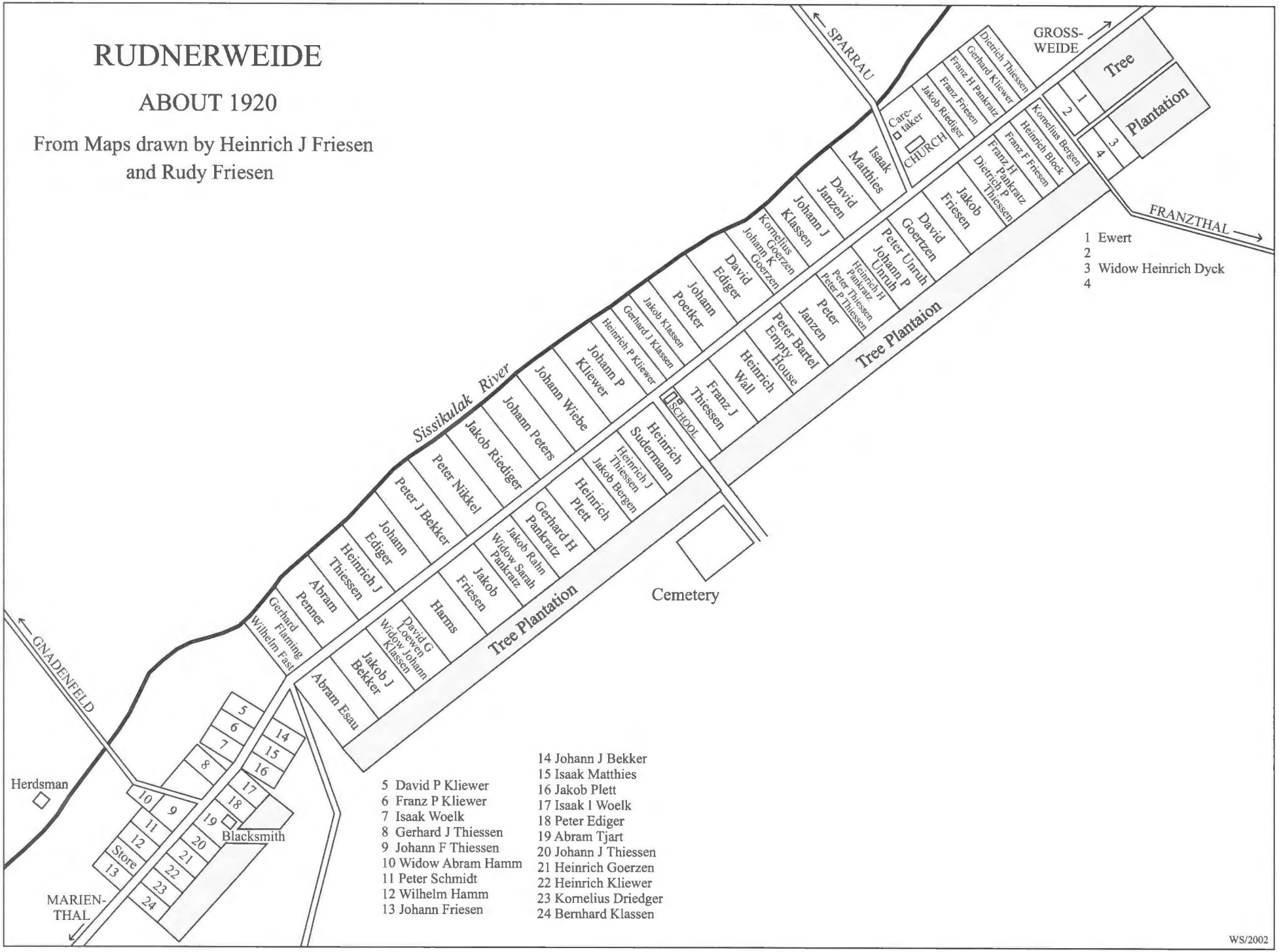
From a map drawn by
David P. Heidebrecht

WS/2002

RUDNERWEIDE

ABOUT 1920

From Maps drawn by Heinrich J Friesen
and Rudy Friesen

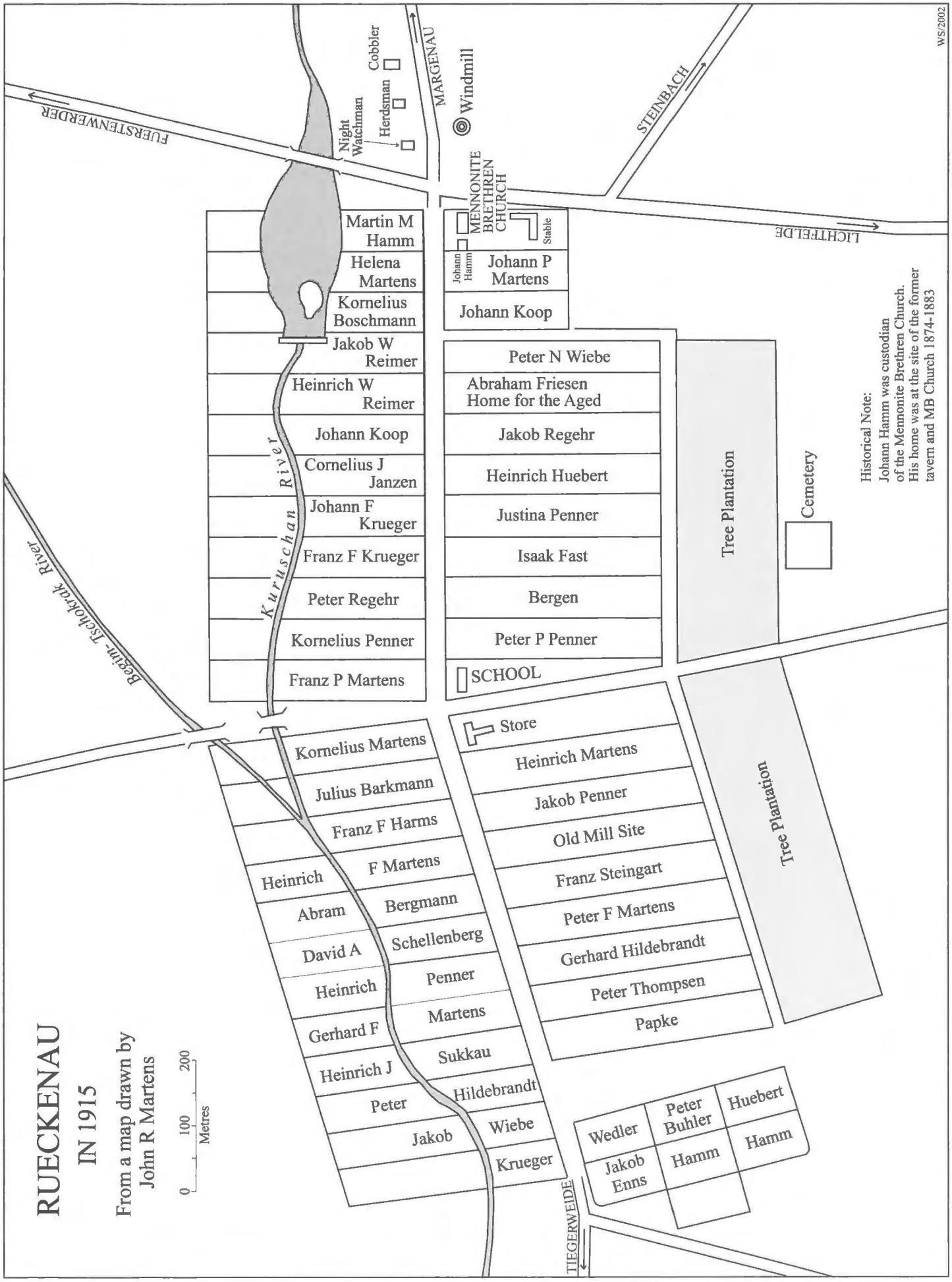


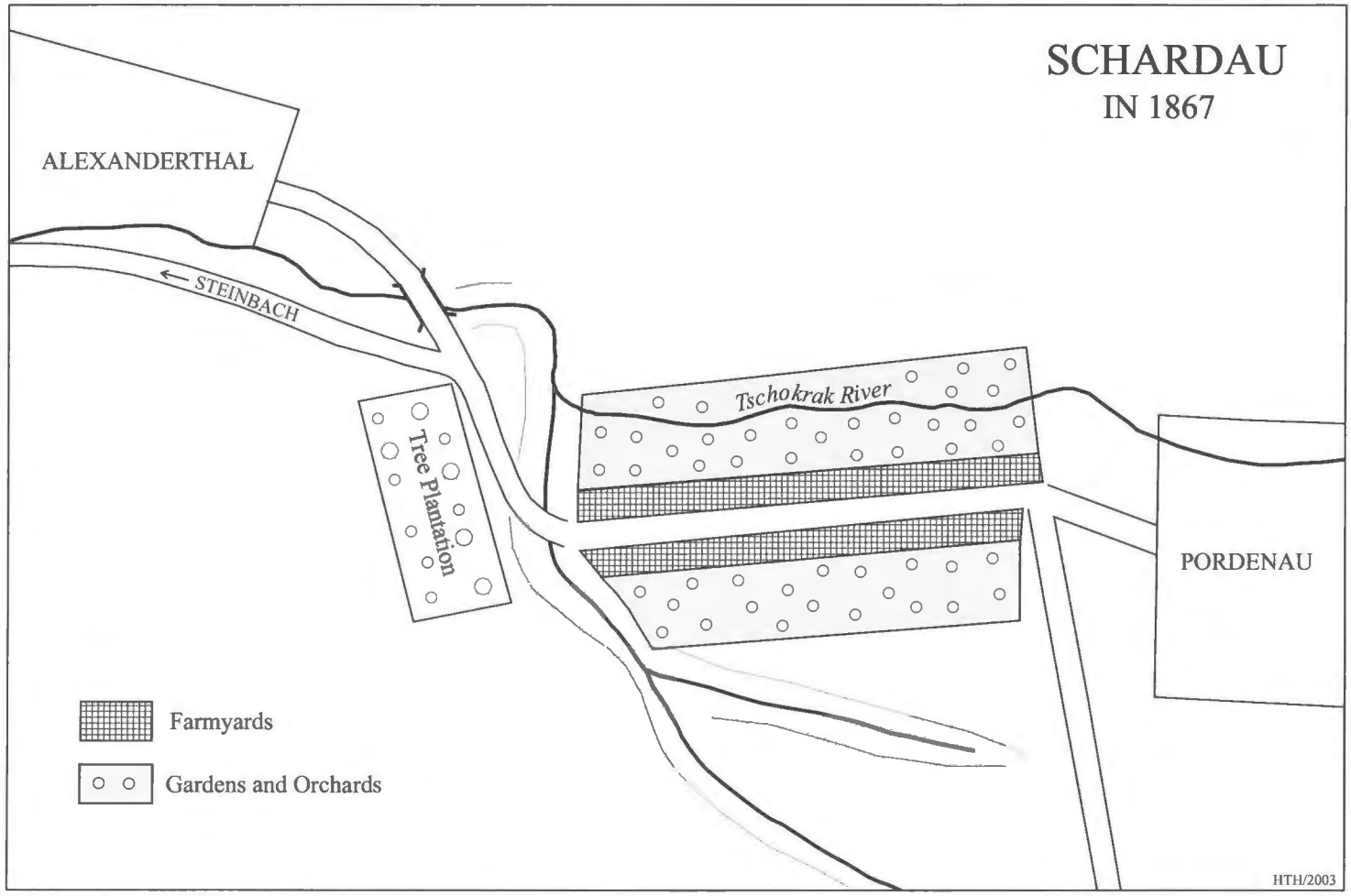
1 Ewert
2
3 Widow Heinrich Dyck
4

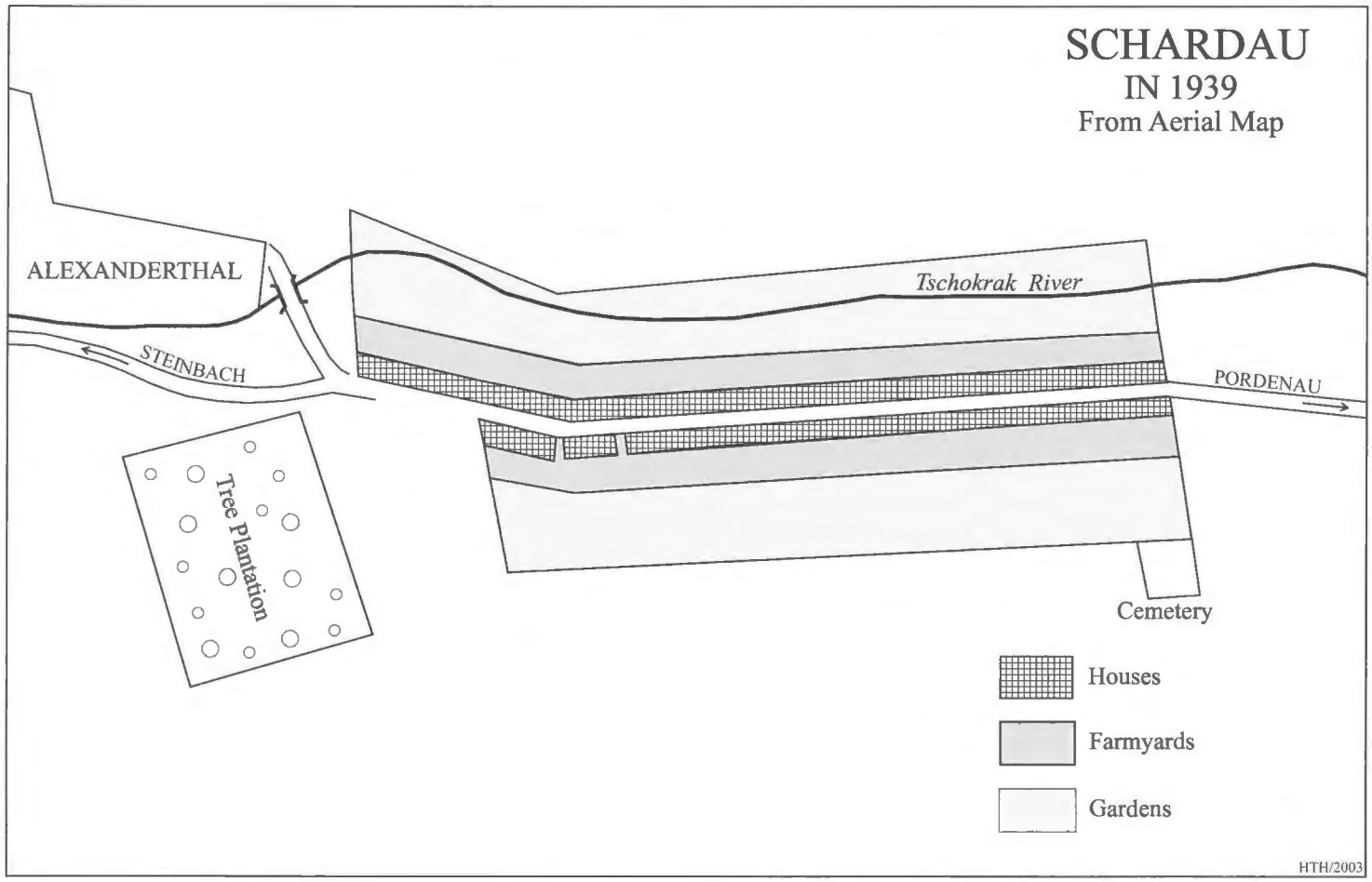
5 David P Kliewer
6 Franz P Kliewer
7 Isaak Woelk
8 Gerhard J Thiessen
9 Johann F Thiessen
10 Widow Abram Hamm
11 Peter Schmidt
12 Wilhelm Hamm
13 Johann Friesen

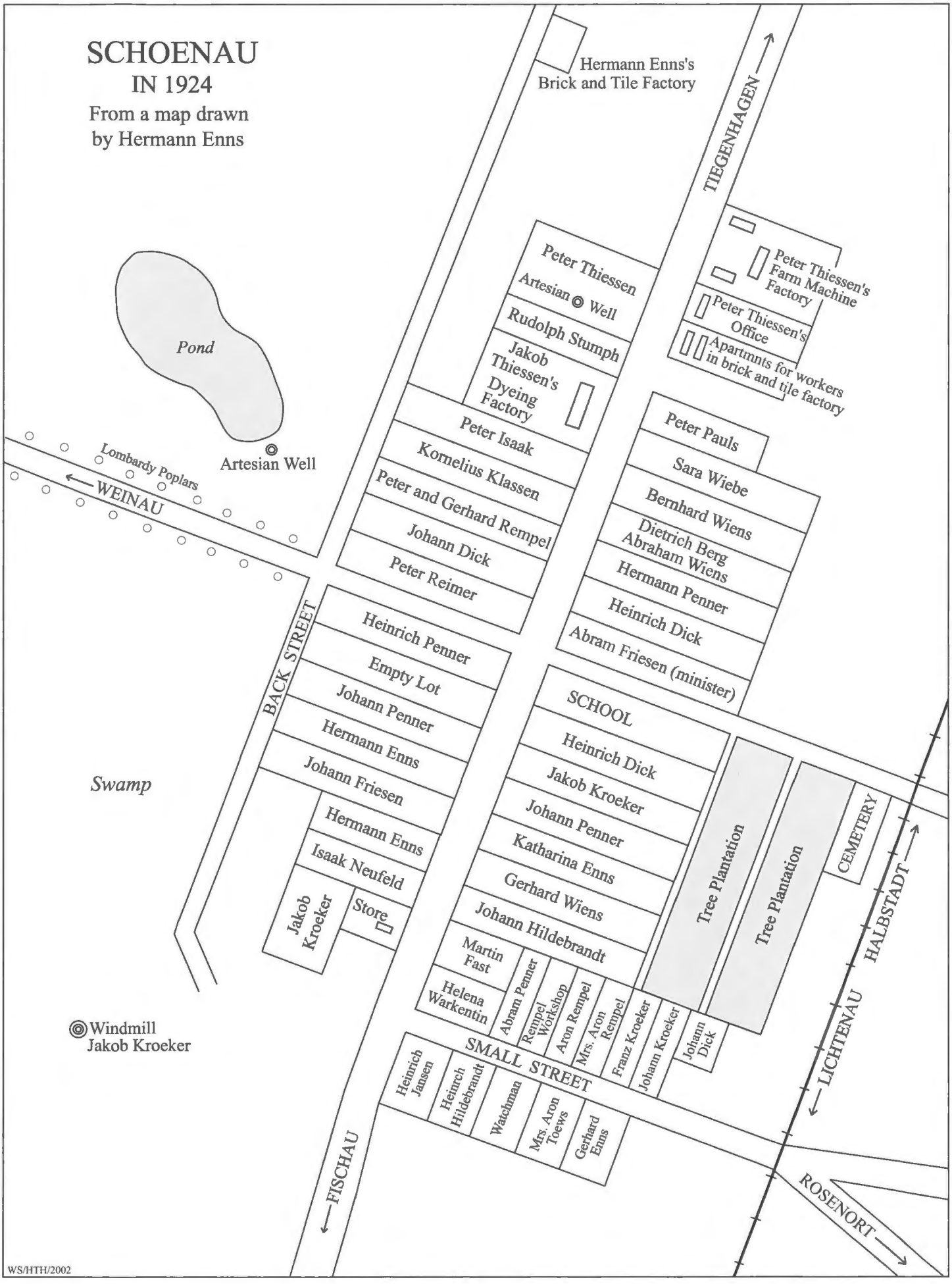
14 Johann J Bekker
15 Isaak Matthies
16 Jakob Plett
17 Isaak I Woelk
18 Peter Ediger
19 Abram Tjart
20 Johann J Thiessen
21 Heinrich Goerzen
22 Heinrich Kliewer
23 Kornelius Driedger
24 Bernhard Klassen

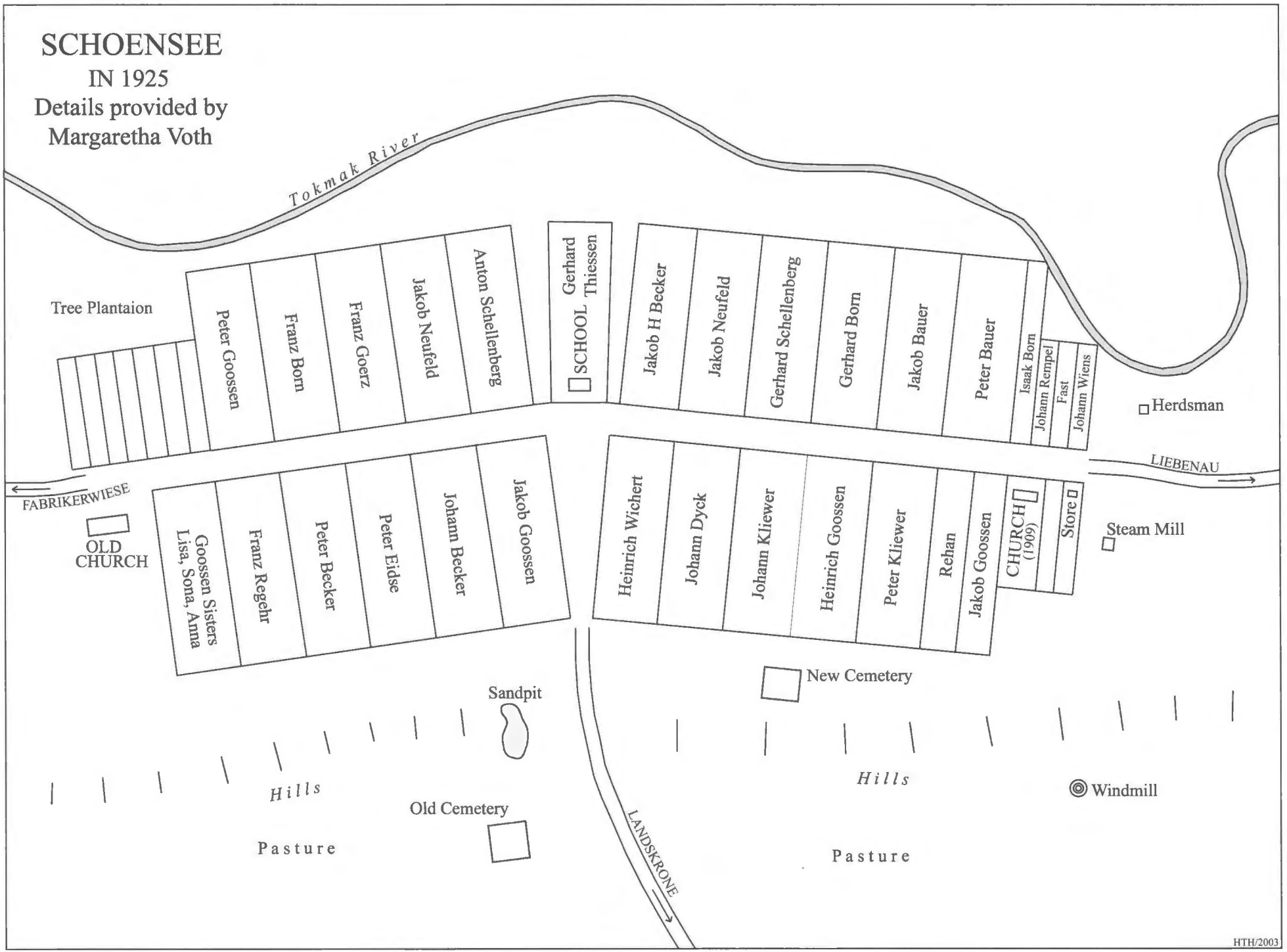
WS/2002

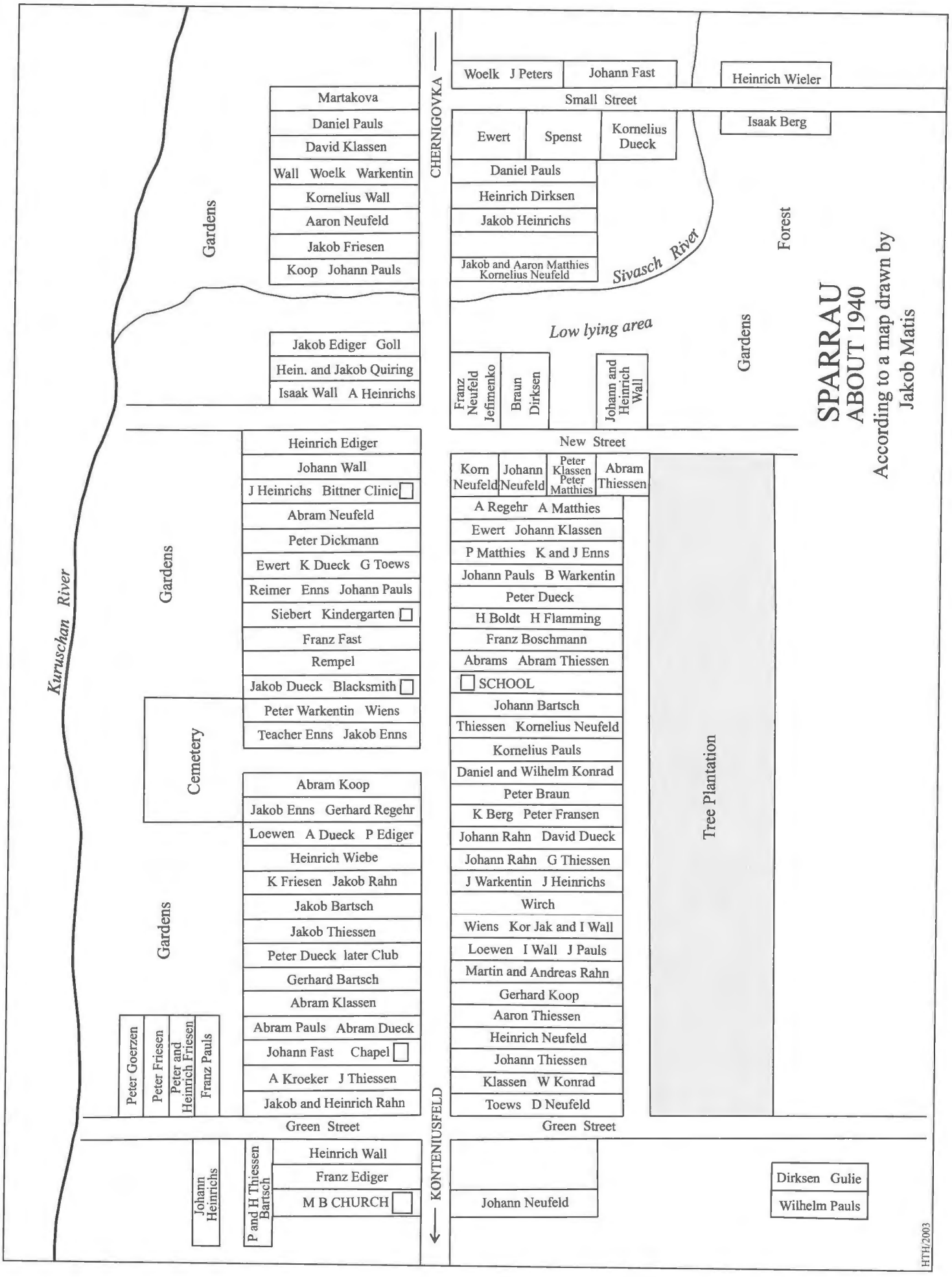

RUECKENAU
IN 1915
From a map drawn by
John R Martens
0 100 200
Metres
WS/2002
FUERSTENWERDER
MARGENAU
STEINBACH
LICHTFELDE
TIEGERWEIDE
Windmill
Cobbler
Herdsman
Night Watchman
MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH
Stable
Johann Hamm
Johann P Martens
Johann Koop
Martin M Hamm
Helena Martens
Kornelius Boschmann
Jakob W Reimer
Heinrich W Reimer
Johann Koop
Cornelius J Janzen
Johann F Krueger
Franz F Krueger
Peter Regehr
Kornelius Penner
Franz P Martens
Kuruschan River
Begim-Tschokrak River
Peter N Wiebe
Abraham Friesen Home for the Aged
Jakob Regehr
Heinrich Huebert
Justina Penner
Isaak Fast
Bergen
Peter P Penner
SCHOOL
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
Historical Note:
Johann Hamm was custodian of the Mennonite Brethren Church. His home was at the site of the former tavern and MB Church 1874-1883
Store
Heinrich Martens
Jakob Penner
Old Mill Site
Franz Steingart
Peter F Martens
Gerhard Hildebrandt
Peter Thompsen
Papke
Tree Plantation
Kornelius Martens
Julius Barkmann
Franz F Harms
Heinrich F Martens
Abram Bergmann
David A Schellenberg
Heinrich Penner
Gerhard F Martens
Heinrich J Sukkau
Peter Hildebrandt
Jakob Wiebe
Krueger
Wedler
Peter Buhler
Huebert
Jakob Enns
Hamm
Hamm

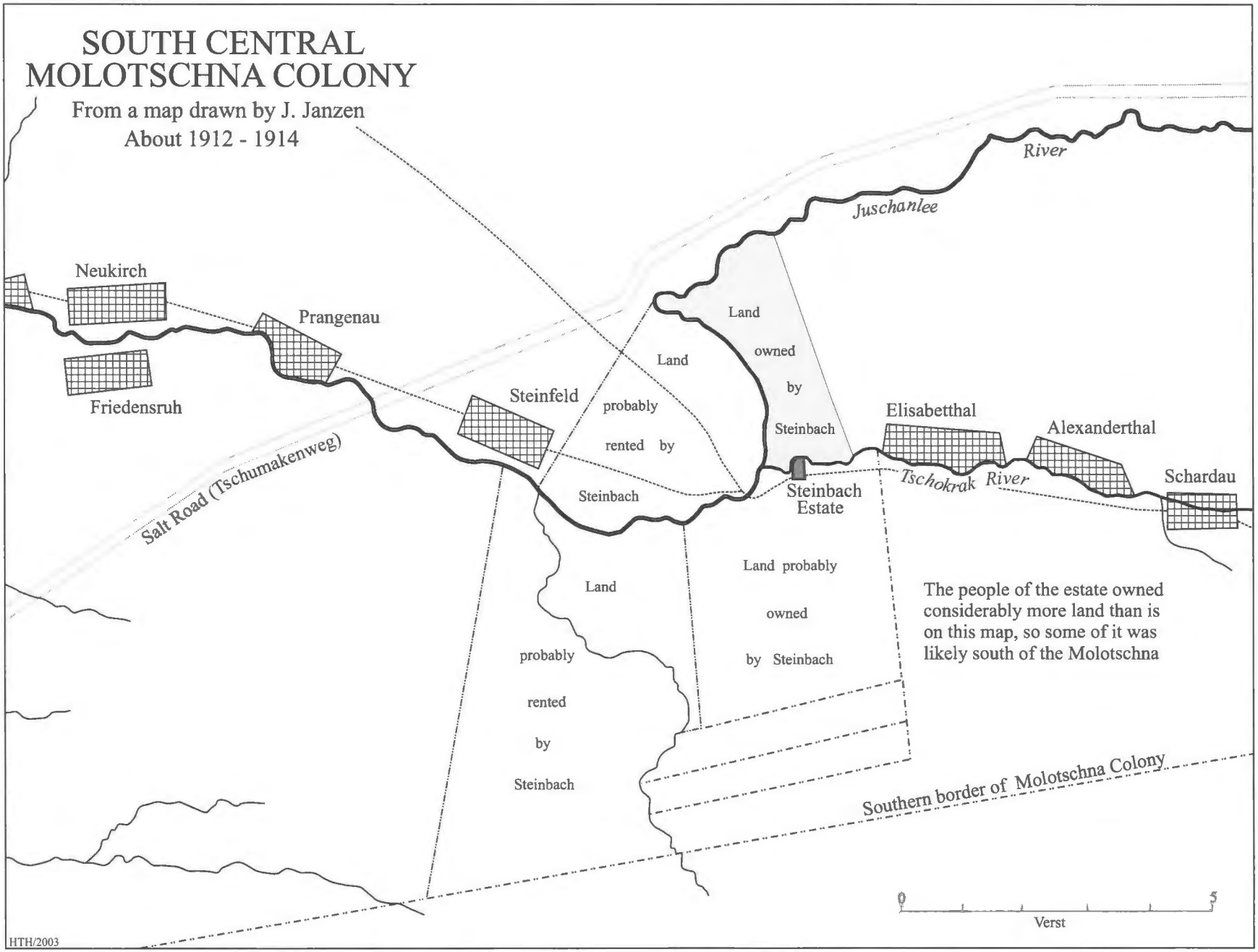

SCHARDAU
IN 1867
ALEXANDERTHAL
STEINBACH
Tschokrak River
Tree Plantation
PORDENAU
Farmyards
Gardens and Orchards
HTH/2003

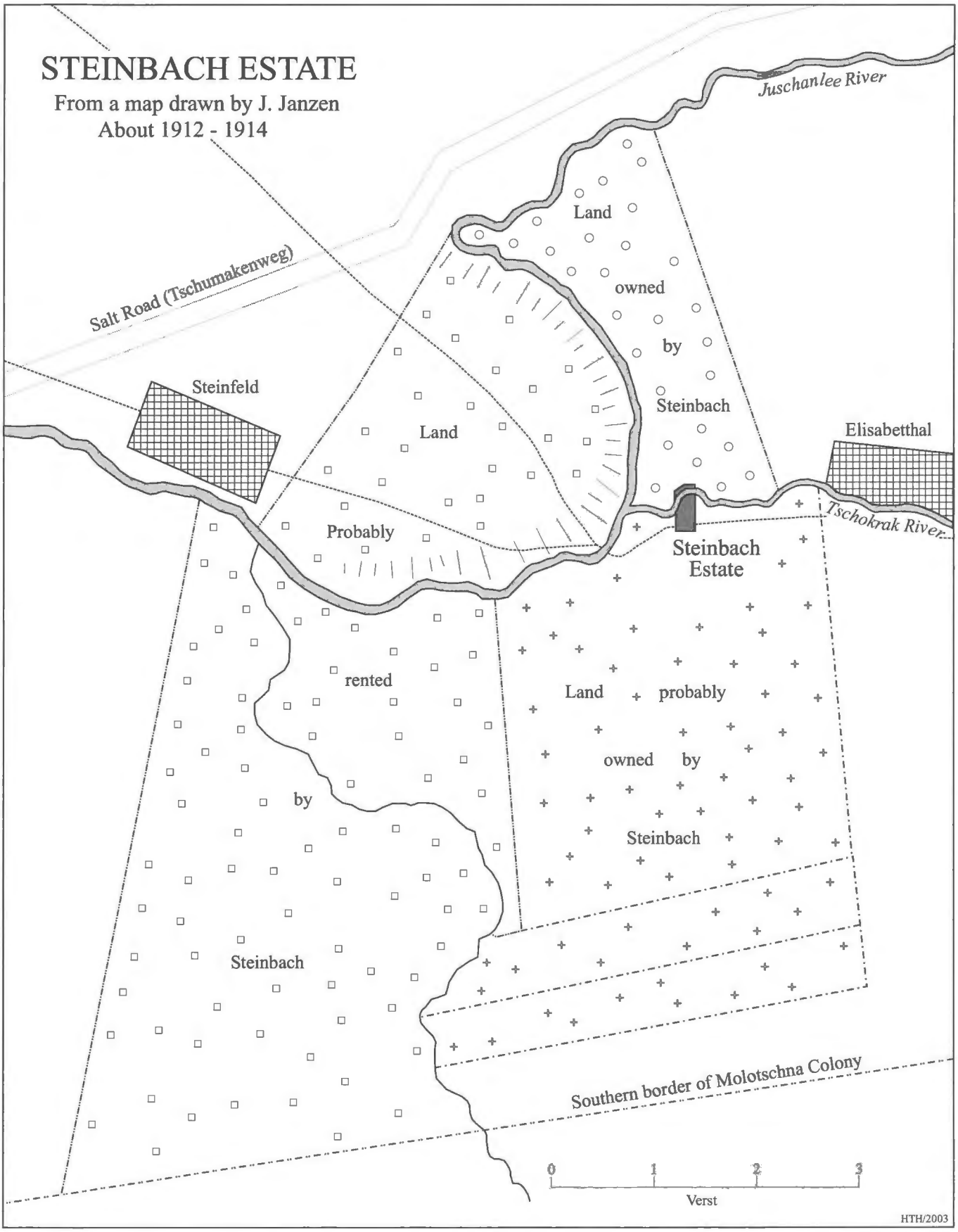

SCHARDAU
IN 1939
From Aerial Map
ALEXANDERTHAL
STEINBACH
Tschokrak River
PORDENAU
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
Houses
Farmyards
Gardens
HTH/2003

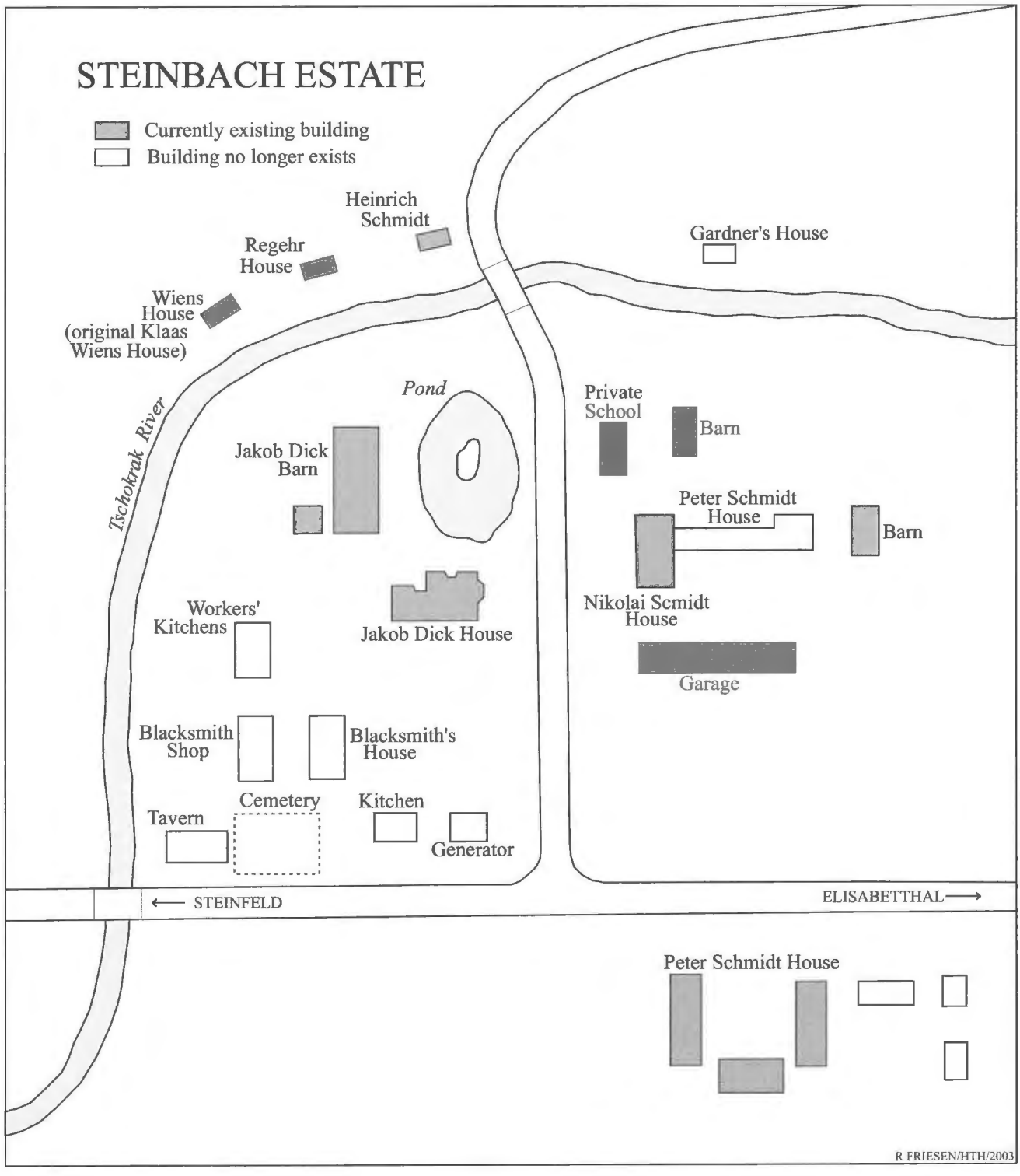

SCHOENAU
IN 1924
From a map drawn
by Hermann Enns
Hermann Enns's
Brick and Tile Factory
TIEGENHAGEN
Peter Thiessen's
Farm Machine
Factory
Peter Thiessen's
Office
Apartmnts for workers
in brick and tile factory
Peter Thiessen
Artesian Well
Rudolph Stumph
Jakob
Thiessen's
Dyeing
Factory
Pond
Peter Isaak
Kornelius Klassen
Peter and Gerhard Rempel
Johann Dick
Peter Reimer
Peter Pauls
Sara Wiebe
Bernhard Wiens
Dietrich Berg
Abraham Wiens
Hermann Penner
Heinrich Dick
Abram Friesen (minister)
Lombardy Poplars
Artesian Well
WEINAU
BACK STREET
Heinrich Penner
Empty Lot
Johann Penner
Hermann Enns
Johann Friesen
Hermann Enns
Isaak Neufeld
Jakob
Kroeker
Store
Swamp
SCHOOL
Heinrich Dick
Jakob Kroeker
Johann Penner
Katharina Enns
Gerhard Wiens
Johann Hildebrandt
Tree Plantation
Tree Plantation
CEMETERY
HALBSTADT
Martin
Fast
Helena
Warkentin
Abram Penner
Rempel
Workshop
Aron Rempel
Mrs. Aron
Rempel
Franz Kroeker
Johann Kroeker
Johann
Dick
Windmill
Jakob Kroeker
SMALL STREET
Heinrich
Jansen
Heinrich
Hildebrandt
Watchman
Mrs. Aron
Toews
Gerhard
Enns
LICHTENAU
FISCHAU
ROSENORT
WS/HTH/2002

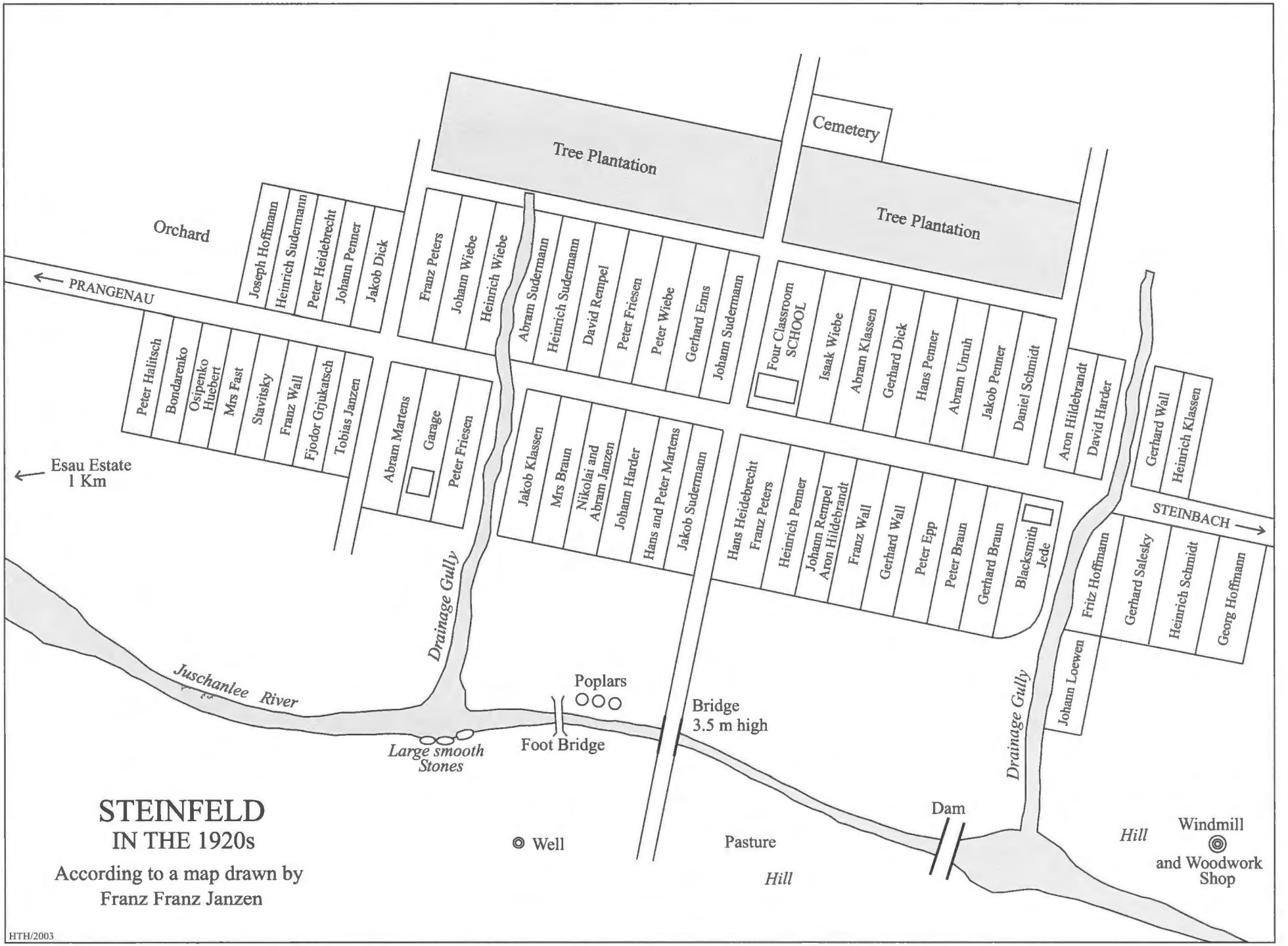

SCHOENSEE
IN 1925
Details provided by
Margaretha Voth
Tokmak River
Tree Plantaion
Peter Goossen
Franz Born
Franz Goerz
Jakob Neufeld
Anton Schellenberg
Gerhard Thiessen
SCHOOL
Jakob H Becker
Jakob Neufeld
Gerhard Schellenberg
Gerhard Born
Jakob Bauer
Peter Bauer
Isaak Born
Johann Rempel
Fast
Johann Wiens
Herdsman
LIEBENAU
FABRIKERWIESE
OLD CHURCH
Goossen Sisters Lisa, Sona, Anna
Franz Regehr
Peter Becker
Peter Eidse
Johann Becker
Jakob Goossen
Heinrich Wichert
Johann Dyck
Johann Kliewer
Heinrich Goossen
Peter Kliewer
Rehan
Jakob Goossen
CHURCH (1909)
Store
Steam Mill
New Cemetery
Sandpit
Hills
Old Cemetery
Pasture
LANDSKRONE
Hills
Windmill
Pasture
HTH/2003


SPARRAU
ABOUT 1940
According to a map drawn by
Jakob Matis
Kuruschan River
CHERNIGOVKA
KONTENIUSFELD
Sivasch River
Low lying area
Small Street
New Street
Green Street
Green Street
Gardens
Gardens
Gardens
Gardens
Forest
Cemetery
Tree Plantation
Martakova
Daniel Pauls
David Klassen
Wall Woelk Warkentin
Kornelius Wall
Aaron Neufeld
Jakob Friesen
Koop Johann Pauls
Jakob Ediger Goll
Hein. and Jakob Quiring
Isaak Wall A Heinrichs
Heinrich Ediger
Johann Wall
J Heinrichs Bittner Clinic
Abram Neufeld
Peter Dickmann
Ewert K Dueck G Toews
Reimer Enns Johann Pauls
Siebert Kindergarten
Franz Fast
Rempel
Jakob Dueck Blacksmith
Peter Warkentin Wiens
Teacher Enns Jakob Enns
Abram Koop
Jakob Enns Gerhard Regehr
Loewen A Dueck P Ediger
Heinrich Wiebe
K Friesen Jakob Rahn
Jakob Bartsch
Jakob Thiessen
Peter Dueck later Club
Gerhard Bartsch
Abram Klassen
Abram Pauls Abram Dueck
Johann Fast Chapel
A Kroeker J Thiessen
Jakob and Heinrich Rahn
Peter Goerzen
Peter Friesen
Peter and Heinrich Friesen
Franz Pauls
Johann Heinrichs
P and H Thiessen Bartsch
Heinrich Wall
Franz Ediger
M B CHURCH
Woelk J Peters
Johann Fast
Heinrich Wieler
Isaak Berg
Ewert
Spenst
Kornelius Dueck
Daniel Pauls
Heinrich Dirksen
Jakob Heinrichs
Jakob and Aaron Matthies
Kornelius Neufeld
Franz Neufeld Jefimenko
Braun Dirksen
Johann and Heinrich Wall
Korn Neufeld
Johann Neufeld
Peter Klassen Peter Matthies
Abram Thiessen
A Regehr A Matthies
Ewert Johann Klassen
P Matthies K and J Enns
Johann Pauls B Warkentin
Peter Dueck
H Boldt H Flamming
Franz Boschmann
Abrams Abram Thiessen
SCHOOL
Johann Bartsch
Thiessen Kornelius Neufeld
Kornelius Pauls
Daniel and Wilhelm Konrad
Peter Braun
K Berg Peter Fransen
Johann Rahn David Dueck
Johann Rahn G Thiessen
J Warkentin J Heinrichs
Wirch
Wiens Kor Jak and I Wall
Loewen I Wall J Pauls
Martin and Andreas Rahn
Gerhard Koop
Aaron Thiessen
Heinrich Neufeld
Johann Thiessen
Klassen W Konrad
Toews D Neufeld
Johann Neufeld
Dirksen Gulie
Wilhelm Pauls
HTH/2003


SOUTH CENTRAL
MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
From a map drawn by J. Janzen
About 1912 - 1914
Juschanlee River
Neukirch
Prangenau
Friedensruh
Steinfeld
Land probably rented by Steinbach
Land owned by Steinbach
Elisabetthal
Alexanderthal
Schardau
Tschokrak River
Steinbach Estate
Salt Road (Tschumakenweg)
Land probably owned by Steinbach
Land probably rented by Steinbach
The people of the estate owned considerably more land than is on this map, so some of it was likely south of the Molotschna
Southern border of Molotschna Colony
0
5
Verst
HTH/2003


STEINBACH ESTATE
From a map drawn by J. Janzen
About 1912 - 1914
Juschanlee River
Salt Road (Tschumakenweg)
Steinfeld
Land
owned
by
Steinbach
Land
Probably
Elisabetthal
Tschokrak River
Steinbach
Estate
rented
Land probably
owned by
Steinbach
by
Steinbach
Southern border of Molotschna Colony
0 1 2 3
Verst
HTH/2003

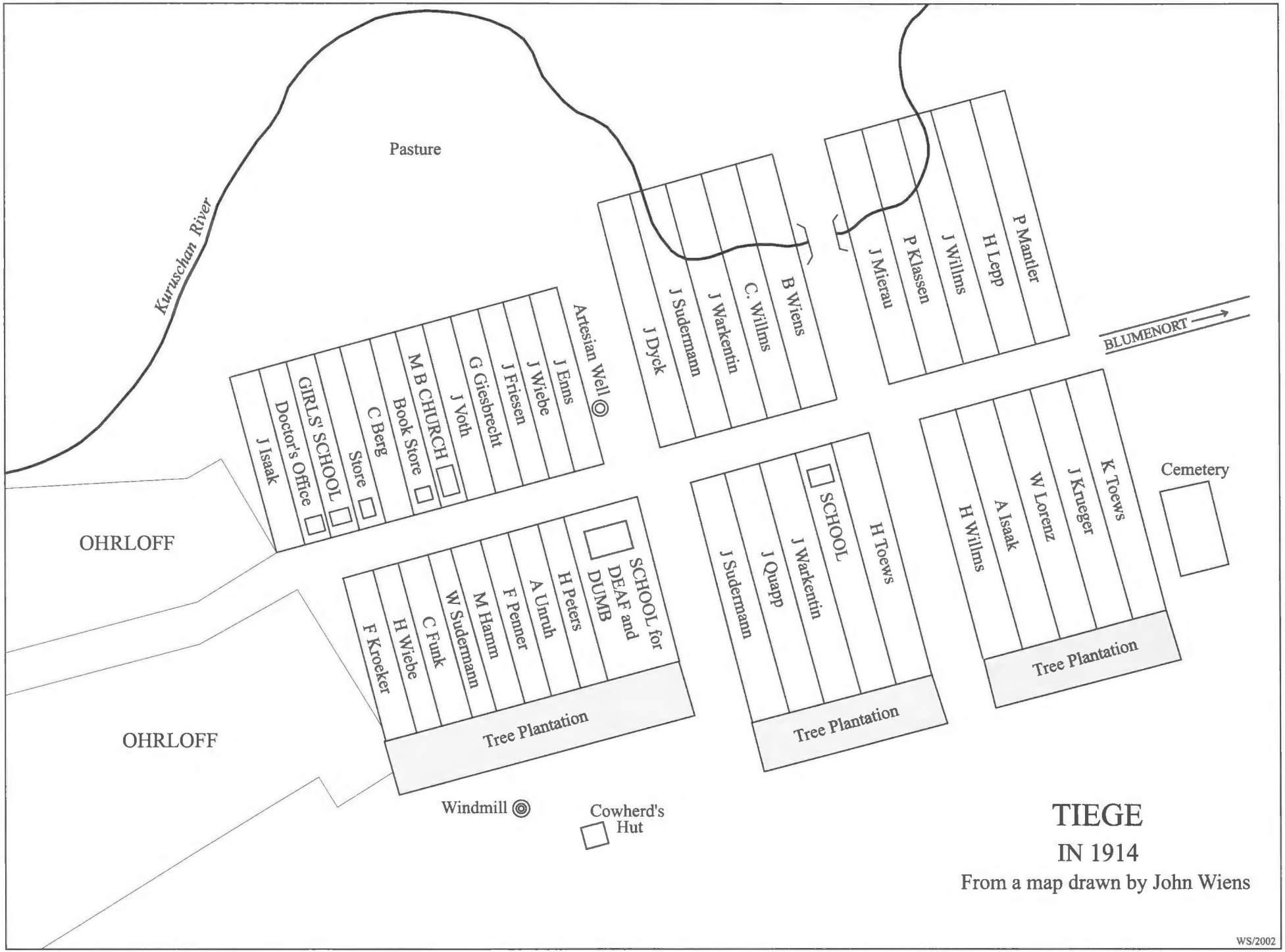

STEINBACH ESTATE
Currently existing building
Building no longer exists
Heinrich Schmidt
Regehr House
Wiens House (original Klaas Wiens House)
Gardner's House
Tschokrak River
Pond
Jakob Dick Barn
Private School
Barn
Peter Schmidt House
Barn
Nikolai Scmidt House
Garage
Jakob Dick House
Workers' Kitchens
Blacksmith Shop
Blacksmith's House
Cemetery
Kitchen
Tavern
Generator
STEINFELD
ELISABETTHAL
Peter Schmidt House
R FRIESEN/HTH/2003



STEINFELD
IN THE 1920s

According to a map drawn by
Franz Franz Janzen

HTH/2003

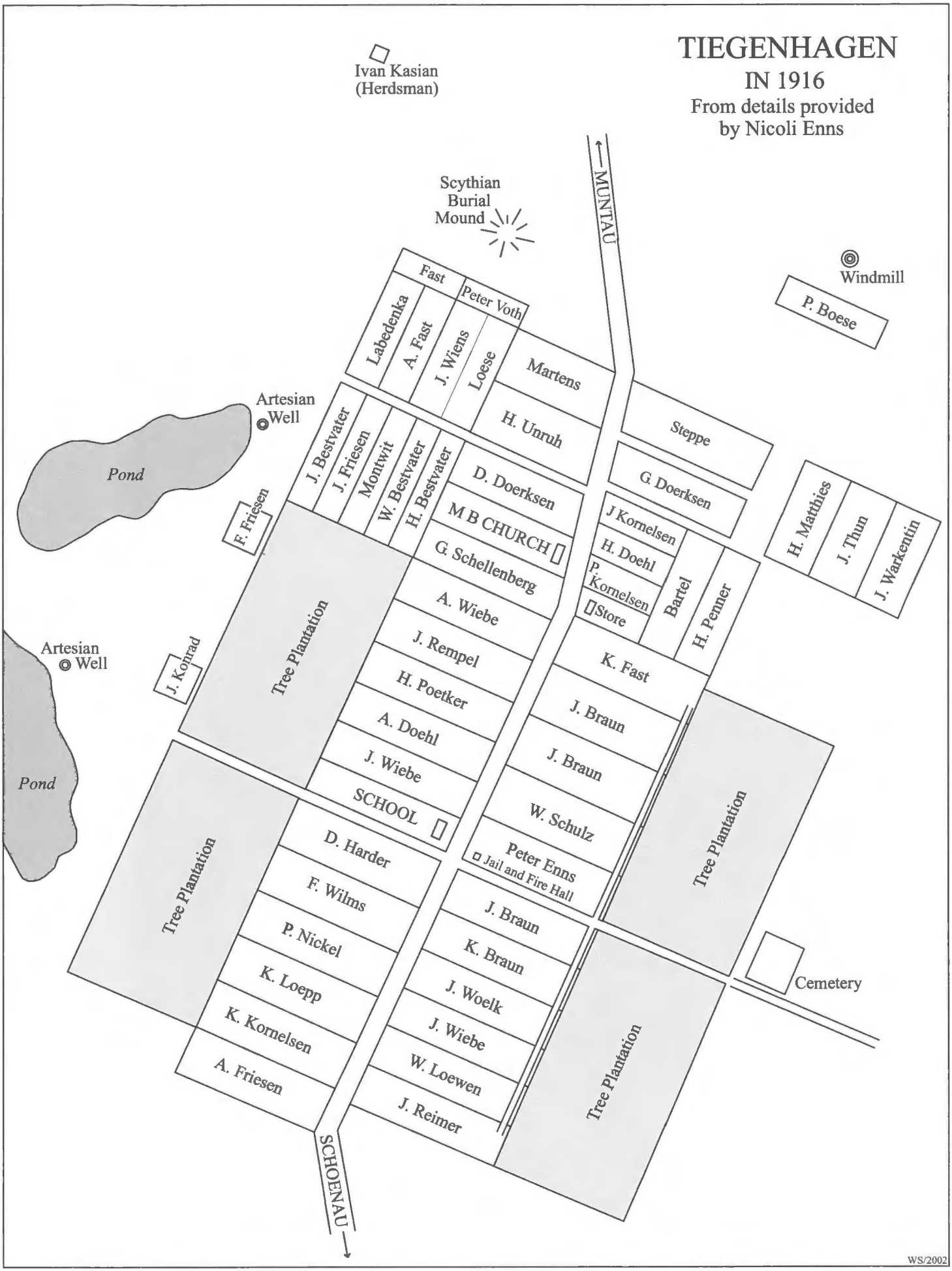


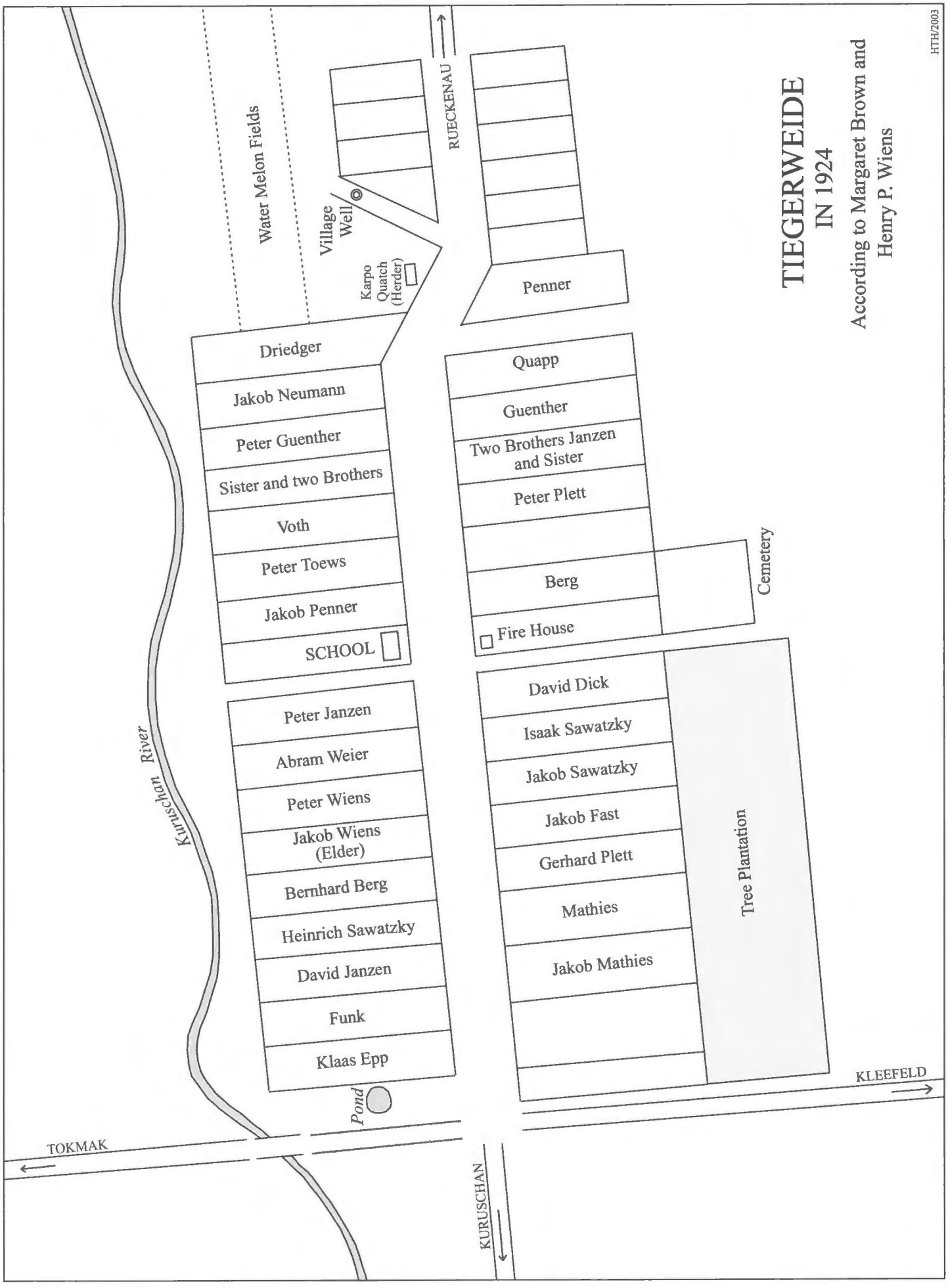
TIEGE

IN 1914

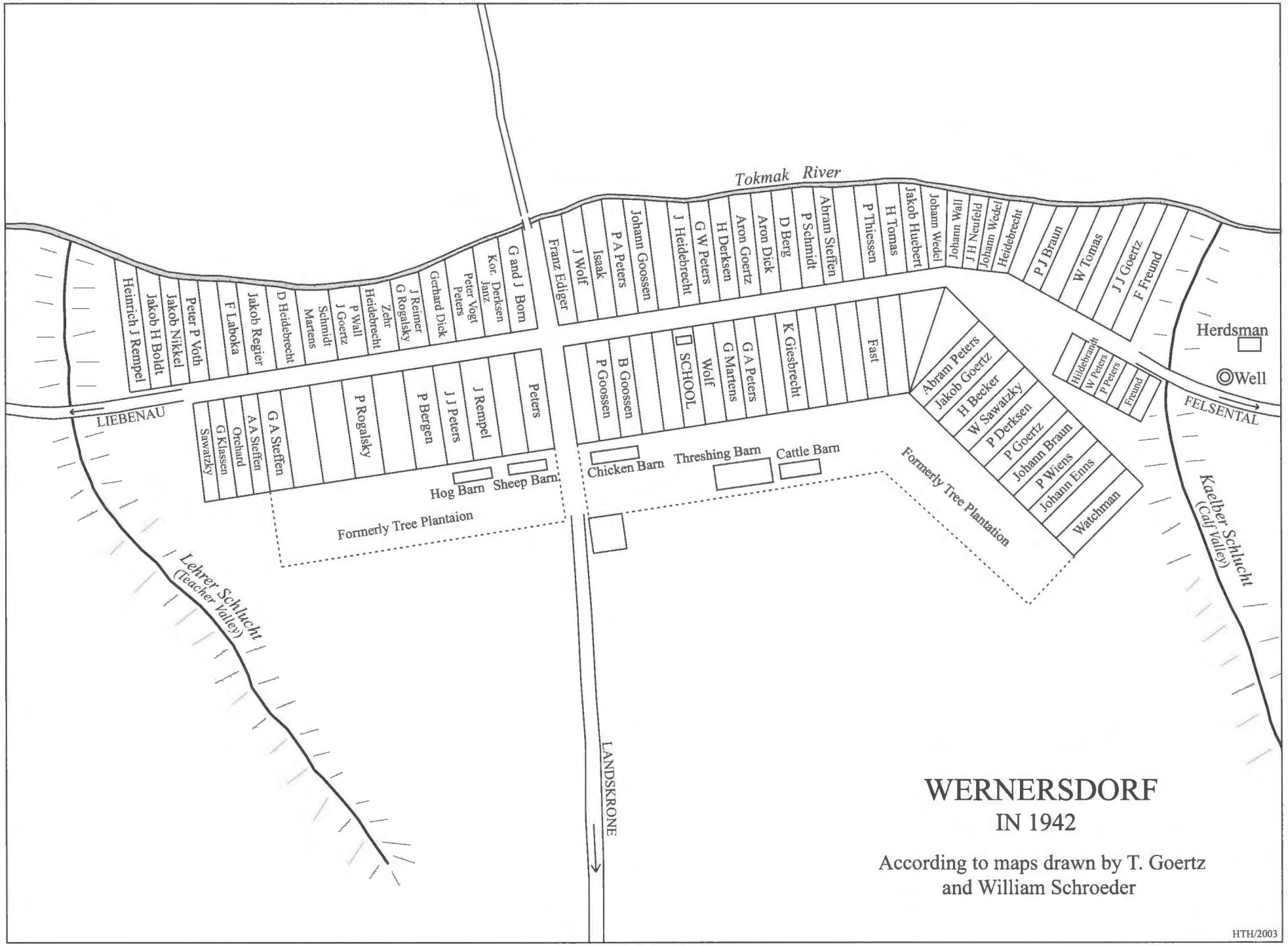
From a map drawn by John Wiens

WS/2002


TIEGENHAGEN
IN 1916
From details provided
by Nicoli Enns
Ivan Kasian
(Herdsman)
Scythian
Burial
Mound
MUNTAU
Windmill
P. Boese
Fast
Peter Voth
Labedenka
A. Fast
J. Wiens
Loese
Martens
H. Unruh
Steppe
G. Doerksen
Artesian
Well
Pond
J. Bestvater
J. Friesen
Montwit
W. Bestvater
H. Bestvater
D. Doerksen
M B CHURCH
G. Schellenberg
F. Friesen
J Kornelsen
H. Doehl
P. Kornelsen
Store
Bartel
H. Penner
H. Matthies
J. Thun
J. Warkentin
A. Wiebe
J. Rempel
H. Poetker
A. Doehl
J. Wiebe
SCHOOL
Tree Plantation
J. Konrad
Artesian
Well
Pond
K. Fast
J. Braun
J. Braun
W. Schulz
Peter Enns
Jail and Fire Hall
Tree Plantation
D. Harder
F. Wilms
P. Nickel
K. Loepp
K. Kornelsen
A. Friesen
J. Braun
K. Braun
J. Woelk
J. Wiebe
W. Loewen
J. Reimer
Tree Plantation
Cemetery
SCHOENAU
WS/2002


TIEGERWEIDE
IN 1924
According to Margaret Brown and
Henry P. Wiens
HTH/2003
Water Melon Fields
Village Well
RUECKENAU
Karpo Quatch (Herder)
Penner
Driedger
Jakob Neumann
Peter Guenther
Sister and two Brothers
Voth
Peter Toews
Jakob Penner
SCHOOL
Quapp
Guenther
Two Brothers Janzen and Sister
Peter Plett
Berg
Fire House
Cemetery
Peter Janzen
Abram Weier
Peter Wiens
Jakob Wiens (Elder)
Bernhard Berg
Heinrich Sawatzky
David Janzen
Funk
Klaas Epp
David Dick
Isaak Sawatzky
Jakob Sawatzky
Jakob Fast
Gerhard Plett
Mathies
Jakob Mathies
Tree Plantation
Kuruschan River
Pond
KLEEFELD
TOKMAK
KURUSCHAN

WALDHEIM
IN 1916
KLIPPENFELD
CHERNIGOVKA
KONTENIUSFELD
GNADENFELD
Windmill
Windmill
STREET
STREET
Neufeld Machine Factory
Koehn Machine Factory
LANDOWNERS'
FACTORY WORKERS'
Cemetery
Cowherd and Factory Workers
WERNERSDORF
HIERSCHAU
Steam Mill
Begim-Tschokrak River
Johann Thiessen
Isaak Goertzen
Johann Doerksen
Jakob Hiebert
Heinrich Hiebert
Heinrich Martens
Heinrich Voth
Black Smith
M B CHURCH
Johann Doerksen
Tobias Voth
Johann Siemens
Heinrich Goossen
Isaak Neufeld Jr
Steam Mill
Jakob Hiebert
Jakob Doerksen
Issak Neufeld Sr
Abram Voth
David Goertzen
Peter Warkentin
Peter Richert
Lohrenz's Store
Heinrich Neufeld
Post Office
Jakob Neufeld
SCHOOL
Johann Doerksen
Gerhard Schroeder
Jakob Goertzen
Andres Buller
Dietrich Martens
Jakob Richert
MENNONITE CHURCH
Claas Richert
Gerhard Unruh
Kornelius Martens
Benjamin Doerksen
Johann Stobbe
Benjamin Dirks
Franz Regehr Sr
Peter Toews Jail
Teacher's Residence
David Driedger
Heinrich Steingart
Jakob Huebert
Tobias Ewert
Johann Unger
Johann Doerksen
Abram Enns
Store
Rackos
Peter Wedel
Julius Friesen
Johann Richert
Hospital
Heinrich Fietz
Peter Ludwig
SCHOOL
Miller's Bakery
Hiebert
David Koehn
Tobias Unruh
Ratzlaff
Johann Friesen
Johann Pankratz
Heinrich Toews
Johann Richert
Franz Regehr Jr
Jakob Ewert
Friedrich Ewert
Hartmann Jantzen
Richert
Doctor's Office
Penner
Heinrich Voth
Johann Rahn
WS/2002


Tokmak River
Heimrich J Rempel
Jakob H Boldt
Jakob Nikkel
Peter P Voth
F Laboka
Jakob Regier
D Heidebrecht
Martens
Schmidt
J Goertz
P Wall
Heidebrecht
Zehr
G Rogalsky
J Reimer
Gerhard Dick
Peter Vogt
Peters
Kor. Derksen
Janz
G and J Born
Franz Ediger
J Wolf
Isaak
P A Peters
Johann Goossen
J Heidebrecht
G W Peters
H Derksen
Aron Goertz
Aron Dick
D Berg
P Schmidt
Abram Steffen
P Thiessen
H Tomas
Jakob Huebert
Johann Wedel
Johann Wall
J H Neufeld
Johann Wedel
Heidebrecht
P J Braun
W Tomas
J J Goertz
F Freund
Herdsman
Well
FELSENTAL
LIEBENAU
Hildebrandt
W Peters
P Peters
Freund
Abram Peters
Jakob Goertz
H Becker
W Sawatzky
P Derksen
P Goertz
Johann Braun
P Wiens
Johann Enns
Watchman
Fast
K Giesbrecht
G A Peters
G Martens
Wolf
SCHOOL
B Goossen
P Goossen
Peters
J Rempel
J J Peters
P Bergen
P Rogalsky
G A Steffen
A A Steffen
Orchard
G Klassen
Sawatzky
Hog Barn
Sheep Barn
Chicken Barn
Threshing Barn
Cattle Barn
Formerly Tree Plantaion
Formerly Tree Plantation
Lehrer Schlucht
(Teacher Valley)
Kaelber Schlucht
(Calf Valley)
LANDSKRONE
WERNERSDORF
IN 1942
According to maps drawn by T. Goertz
and William Schroeder
HTH/2003

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY

After the initial surge of Mennonite migration from the Vistula region to the Chortitza Colony in the late 1780s and 1790s, further restrictions imposed by Frederick William III of Prussia and extended privileges announced by Czar Paul I of Russia conspired to encourage further emigration. An area of 120,000 dessiatines east of the Molochnaya River was designated for further Mennonite development.

In 1803, 193 families consisting of 1,020 individuals left the Elbing and Marienburg districts of West Prussia. They stopped in the Chortitza Colony over the winter, then, together with an additional 162 families who had arrived in the spring, moved onto the tract of land to found the Molotschna Mennonite Colony in the spring of 1804. Some of these settlers had been able to sell their farms, and as a result had capital as well as large wagons and furniture. Others, particularly in later years, were not quite so well off. There are stories of a few actually walking the whole way, carrying their belongings on wheel barrows.

A number of the migrants were already organized before they arrived; Klaas Wiens, for example, was chosen *Oberschulze* prior to the actual settlement. In 1805 another 22 families arrived, followed by 15 in 1806. By 1810 well over 400 families had settled in the Molotschna Colony.

The first pioneers in 1804 founded a line of nine villages from Halbstadt in the north to Altona in the south, along the eastern bank of the Molochnaya River. The specific site of each village was chosen by lot. The place of each *Wirtschaft* within the village was also decided by lot. In 1805 another eight villages were laid out east of the original group, along the tributaries which flowed into the Molochnaya. Fuerstenau was added to the northern group in 1806 to complete the first burst of settlement at a total of 18 villages.

Immediately north of the Mennonite settlement, north of the Tokmak River, lay the land of the parish (Orthodox) state villages. Included in this territory was Bolshoi Tokmak (Gross Tokmak, or simply Tokmak), established in 1783. It actually also occupied a block of land south of the Tokmak River.

Starting in 1804 the area west of the Molochnaya River, north part, was occupied by German colonists, Lutherans and Catholics. The largest village and administrative centre was Prischib. Eventually there were 27 colonist villages.

Doukhobors settled on the west bank of the Molochnaya River, south of the German colonists, in 1802. In the early 1840s they were given the choice of recanting or being exiled to the Caucasus area. Almost all chose to move.

Nogai nomads used pasture land south of the Molotschna Colony. Johann Cornies tried to help them become sedentary by establishing a model village, Ackerman, just south of the Juschanlee River in 1835. But basically the Nogai still remained nomads. Cornies leased about 39,000 dessiatines of land along the Juschalee River, which he sublet to the Nogai. When land was required for further settlement in the Molotschna Colony, however, this area was then no longer available to the Nogai.

Sandwiched between the tracts of Nogai pasture land were settlements of Molokans. They probably arrived at the same time as the Doukhobors; they specialized in breeding horses.

When circumstances stabilized after the Napoleonic wars, further emigration from West Prussia continued. In 1819 a total of 75 families reached the Molotschna, founding Margenau, Lichtfelde and Neukirch. Most of the early settlers were Flemish Mennonites, but of the 179 families that arrived in 1820, more than 100 were Frisians, under the leadership of Elder Franz Goerz. They founded seven villages in 1820, centred around Rudnerweide, on the eastern end of the Molotschna. Despite government regulations forbidding further immigration, another 200 families settled in the Molotschna between 1821 and 1833, establishing a total of ten villages. In 1833 the government decided to admit no more foreign colonists, although exceptions were made. In 1834 forty families of Groningen Old Flemish led by Wilhelm Lange arrived from Brandenburg, founding Gnadenfeld in 1835, and in 1836 another group under the leadership of Kornelius Wedel established Waldheim.

After this time any villages established in the Molotschna were the result of internal population expansion. Konteniusfeld in 1832, Landskrone in 1839, Hierschau in 1848 were such villages, the latter specifically planned by Johann Cornies to be an example of Russian Mennonite life. A further ten villages were founded, the final ones being Klippenfeld and Hamberg in the north east corner of the Molotschna in 1863.

The early pioneering time of the Molotschna villages was not easy. The first years many settlers lived in sod huts or very simple wooden shacks. Quite often the barns were constructed first, so the families lived there until the house could be built. There were crop failures, often due to drought; and sometimes

when there were good crops, the grasshoppers helped themselves. The years 1833 and 1834 were particularly bad, when the drought was so severe that there was famine for both animals and people. The cattle were often afflicted with disease, villages sometimes losing hundreds of head in one year. The land on which some of the villages were established originally was used by Nogai as pasture, so the nomads felt that they could help themselves to the new settler's horses, which they frequently did. On January 11, 1838 an earthquake hit the region. Pictures rattled on the walls, but no one was injured. The water level changed in some of the wells.

Highlights for some of the early settlers were visits by royalty. Czar Alexander I traveled through the Molotschna on May 21, 1818, stopping for breakfast in Lindenau. He repeated this visit on October 22, 1925, even spending the night in the home of Elder Jakob Warkentin in Altona.

The Mennonite colonies of South Russia have been called a Commonwealth, of which the Molotschna was the showpiece. To a considerable degree this designation could be made because of the efforts of one man, Johann Cornies. He was originally born in Prussia, resided and worked in the Molotschna, at first living in Ohrloff. Having completed agricultural experiments on his own estate Juschanlee, he then proceeded to implement many innovations in the Molotschna region. He was appointed chairman of the Agricultural Society in 1830, using this position as a platform to proceed with reforms in agriculture, horticulture, but also of the educational system. Afforestation, with each village having its own little forest, and crop rotation were special projects of Johann Cornies. His interests in education included curriculum, the qualifications of teachers and even the school buildings. Cornies was also a master of fine detail. Reports generated under his jurisdiction included such minute specifics as the exact wheat yield of every village in the Molotschna each year, and the tree count for every village, including the type.

Initially the principal church in the colony was the Flemish, in its various configurations, as influence of various villages and elders changed. The first *Stammgemeinde* (Originating Church) was the Ohrloff-Petershagen-Halbstadt congregation, beginning in 1804. Thereafter there were re-organizations on a number of occasions, the principal ones in 1824 and 1842. In 1820 a number of Frisian villages were founded by new settlers from West Prussia. They had their principal church building in Rudnerweide.

The *Kleine Gemeinde*, under the leadership of Klaas Reimer, broke away from the main church in 1812, and was centred mainly in Petershagen and Muensterberg. In 1860 the Mennonite Brethren also separated from the *Grosse Gemeinde*, claiming that many in the older church were no longer living out their faith. Their principal house of worship was in Rueckenau. A number of Mennonite Brethren subsequently moved to the Kuban Settlement.

Farms, by government decree, could not be divided into smaller portions, so that in time an increasing number of people in the Molotschna were not able to own land. Of the 3,740 families in the Molotschna in 1865, 63% were of the landless group. After a number of confrontations, the government established a commission which studied the situation, and decided on a more equitable distribution of land. This was instituted in 1866, with final changes in 1869.

In 1870 there was a reorganization of many areas of Russia, including the Mennonite colonies. The Molotschna was divided into two municipalities. The Halbstadt Volost, headquarters in Halbstadt, included the western section, with 30 villages and slightly more than half of the population. The Gnadenfeld Volost, headquarters in Gnadenfeld, consisted of the remaining eastern Molotschna, with 27 villages. These changes received Imperial approval and were promulgated in 1871. The first *Oberschulze* for Halbstadt was Kornelius Toews, for Gnadenfeld Wilhelm Ewert.

With more intense Russification and a revamping of the criteria for drafting into the armed forces, a significant number of Mennonites felt it was again time to migrate. Eventually about 17,000 left Russia, roughly 10,000 to the United States and 7,000 to Canada. Approximately 20% of the almost 25,000 inhabitants of the Molotschna emigrated, most from 1874 to 1878. For those who remained the *Forstei Dienst* (Forestry Service) became a way of life, beginning in 1880.

Despite the emigration to North America there was a steady need for the formation of new colonies to accept the excess population from the older colonies. By this time free land was no longer available, so the mother colony had to purchase large blocks of land to allow its sons to resettle. Sagradovka (1872), Memrik (1885), Neu Samara (1891), Orenburg (1895) and Terek (1901) were daughter colonies established by the Molotschna.

The Molotschna became an educational centre for the Mennonites of South Russia. Well organized secondary schools were established in Halbstadt, Gnadenfeld and Ohrloff. An equivalent girls school was founded in Neu-Halbstadt. A two year Teachers

College had well qualified graduates which improved the educational standards of the schools. There were hospitals in Muntau, Waldheim and Ohrloff, the Muntau Hospital having an associated school of nursing. There were many other institutions to help the disadvantaged, possibly the best known being the Maria School for the Deaf and Dumb of Tiege.

Beginning in 1911 a railroad was built through the northern and western portions of the Molotschna . Train service began in December, 1913, with the run from Lichtenau to Halbstadt to Waldheim (Stulnevo) taking about four hours.

With the outbreak of World War I things changed. Many young men from the Molotschna served in the Forestry and the Medical Corps. In November, 1917, with the onset of the Bolshevik takeover, local soviets came to power. From February 5 to April 18 the region suffered in what was called the "Halbstadt Days of Terror." During this time there were many acts of violence; robbery and murder were common. Among the victims was Apanlee Estate owner Jakob Jakob Sudermann, who was shot in Halbstadt. When Russia lost the war to Germany, and Ukraine was about to be occupied by Austro-German forces, a number of marauding bands swept through the country-side, causing havoc as they went. In March of 1918 one such group forced Altona to pay 17,000 rubles before moving through Muensterberg, Blumstein and Lichtenau, where they got another 41,000 rubles.

The anarchy was followed by a more peaceful time of occupation by German troops. During this time a Mennonite *Selbstschutz* was organized, the first units being established in Halbstadt, Tiegenhagen, Tiege and Gnadenfeld. The Germans allowed the traditional form of volost government to reappear, but in the process some blunders were committed which later bore serious consequences. Four members of the Halbstadt village soviet and three men from the Lichtenau soviet were shot. The surrounding population did not forget.

When the German troops were withdrawn in November the situation became more confused, with the White Army of Denikin and the *Selbstschutz* trying to defend the area. By early 1919 the combined forces of Makhno and the Red Army defeated the *Selbstschutz* and advanced into the Molotschna, with the Red Army occupying Gnadenfeld on March 11. Then followed days of anarchy and terror, with intermittent occupation by White armies, first under General Denikin, then General Wrangel, but also the Bolsheviks and Makhno anarchists. In October of 1919 an army of Makhno overran a part of the Molotschna, and in revenge for fatalities they had suffered, marched through a number of villages, killing and destroying as they went. On November 11, 1919, twenty people were killed in Blumenort, 11 in Altona and six in Ohrloff. Eventually Wrangel retreated from the area in October, 1920, with the Communists taking over the region.

The Molotschna was affected by history as it unfolded. A serious typhus epidemic, brought in by Bolshevik soldiers, claimed a number of lives. The great famine of 1921-22 would have taken many more lives if the Mennonite Central Committee from North America had not helped. Feeding stations were set up in each Molotschna village, and thousands of people received daily meals.

Despite the terror and suffering experienced in the Molotschna, it was considered by most Mennonites to be safer than outlying colonies and estates. As a result many people moved into the colony as refugees, some even buying property. In Hierschau, for example, at least 12 families arrived between 1918 and 1922.

In the mid 1920s first the refugees and landless, but then also many landowners migrated to Canada, in all perhaps a quarter of the population. As circumstances became more desperate some went to Moscow in late 1929 to obtain exit visas, others tried to cross the Amur River ice in eastern Siberia. Some were successful in these escape attempts.

In the mid and late 1920s a number of "kulak" villages were established in the Molotschna area. Reinfeld, situated on Blumstein land, was settled by people expelled from Altona and Blumstein. Neuheim was established near Halbstadt in 1927, largely by Lutherans and Baptists from Volhynia, while Neuborn, also settled in 1927, was inhabited by Lutherans forced off their land, also from Volhynia. Neuhof was settled in 1929-30, 30-40 families from the Molotschna establishing the village about 20 kilometres from Petershagen. The exiles were allowed to bring along only one *Leiterwagen* with two horses, a cow and a few possessions. The wagons were covered with tin roofs, because the few huts available could not accommodate all the exiles.

With the implementation of Soviet policies in the early 1930s, the land was re-organized. A large number of landowners were displaced off their property as "kulaks," in Hierschau for example, at least 20 of the total of 30. All the churches were closed, usually by 1933, and the ministers were banished. Men were exiled throughout the 1930s, but this was intensified during the Purge of 1936-38, when at least 1,500 men from the Molotschna were imprisoned, many never to be seen again.

Germany invaded the Soviet Union on June

22, 1941. With German armies approaching, most men between the ages of 16 and 65 were sent to labour camps in northern Russia and Siberia. At least 1,547 men (probably more) were forced to leave the Molotschna during this time. As the invading forces came ever nearer, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. They succeeded in emptying out the south-western villages, and some from the south-east (likely six or seven thousand people), but simply did not have time to deport the rest. Relative tranquility followed the German occupation of the region on October 6, 1941. Law and order, German style, were instituted. Many aspects of life became much easier, even some church services were resumed. There were, however, special action teams which eliminated undesirable elements of society. Two page village cards were prepared for each German village in the Ukraine.

But the fortunes of war changed, and with the final capitulation of German forces in Stalingrad on February 2, 1943, a steady retreat followed. Distant rumble of cannons could be heard in the east when all Mennonites who were able to, evacuated the Molotschna on September 11 and 12, 1943, joining thousands of other Mennonites and ethnic Germans on the "Great Trek" westward. The long difficult journey eventually lead to the Warthegau area of Poland by late February, 1944, then further into Germany. Many columns of fleeing refugees were overrun by the advancing Soviet armies, others were recaptured or lured back from the Western zones of occupation by promises of return to their own villages. Very few returned to their original homes, most being sent to the far north or into the vast reaches of Siberia. In all about 35,000 Mennonites joined the "Great Trek;" only 12,000 escaped to the West. Of these most eventually settled in Canada or South America.

Before World War II and continuing on into the post-war time the Molotschna region was divided into a number of large collective farms. The Grossweide collective, for example supported 320 households, and occupied 10,200 acres of land.

Many former residents of the Molotschna have in recent years left the former Soviet Union and settled in Germany as *Aussiedler*. There have even been enough people from some of the villages to have special celebrations (*Treffen*).

Today there are very few Mennonites left in the Molotschna. The area is agricultural, but does not seem to be prosperous. Mennonites from North America have refurbished the church in Petershagen, and there is now a functioning congregation. The *Maedchenschule* of Neu-Halbstadt has also been repaired and serves as a resource centre to help the surrounding population. Since the old Mennonite Brethren church is in use as a feed mill, a new sanctuary is being built in Rueckenau.

MOLOTSCHNA VILLAGE AND ESTATE LIST

NAME OF VILLAGE	YEAR FOUNDED	RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
Alexanderkrone	1857	mixed
Alexanderthal	1820	Frisian
Alexanderwohl	1821	Groningen Old Flemish, after 1874 mixed
Altona	1804	Flemish
Blumenort	1805	Flemish
Blumstein	1804	Flemish
Elisabetthal	1823	Flemish
Esau Estate	?	
Fabrikerwiese	1807 as sheep farm about 1860 as village	mixed
Felsenthal Estate	1820	
Fischau	1804	Flemish
Franzthal	1820	Frisian
Friedensdorf	1824	Flemish
Friedensruh	1857	mixed
Fuerstenau	1807	Flemish
Fuerstenwerder	1821	Flemish
Gnadenfeld	1835	Groningen Old Flemish
Gnadenheim	1821	Flemish
Gnadenthal	1862	mixed
Grossweide	1820	Frisian
Halbstadt	1804	Flemish
Hamberg	1863	mixed
Hierschau	1848	mixed
Juschanlee Estate	1830	
Kleefeld	1854	mixed
Klippenfeld	1863	mixed
Konteniusfeld	1831	mixed
Kuruschan	by 1852 a community sheep farm, by 1900 a group of estates	
Ladekopp	1805	Flemish
Landskrone	1839	mixed
Lichtenau	1804	Flemish
Lichtfelde	1819	Flemish
Liebenau	1823	Frisian
Lindenau	1804	Flemish
Margenau	1819	Flemish
Mariawohl	1857	mixed
Marienthal	1820	Frisian
Muensterberg	1804	Flemish
Muntau	1804	Flemish
Neu-Halbstadt	1843	mixed
Neukirch	1820	Flemish
Nikolaidorf	1851	mixed
Ohrloff	1804	Flemish
Pastwa	1820	Frisian

Paulsheim	1852	mixed
Petershagen	1805	Flemish
Pordenau	1820	Frisian
Prangenau	1824	Flemish
Rosenort	1805	Flemish
Rudnerweide	1820	Frisian
Rueckenau	1811	Flemish
Schardau	1820	Frisian
Schoenau	1804	Flemish
Schoensee	1805	Flemish
Sparrau	1828	originally Flemish, later mixed
Steinbach Estate	1812	
Steinfeld	1857	mixed
Tiege	1805	Flemish
Tiegenhagen	1804	Flemish
Tiegerweide	1822	Flemish
Waldheim	1836	Groningen Old Flemish
Wernersdorf	1824	Flemish

MOLOTSCHNA MAPS

EXPANSION of the RUSSIAN EMPIRE 1774-1791

(Map page 1)

Russia fought a series of wars against the Ottoman Empire (Turks). In general these wars could be characterized as a gradual weakening and territorial loss by the Ottoman Empire. This was coupled with Russia's ambition to gain more territory in the south and around the Black Sea, to become the dominant power in the Balkans, to gain access first to the Black Sea, then to the Mediterranean Sea. These wars continued under the reign of Catherine the Great. As a result of the defeat of the Ottoman Empire in 1774, Russia gained a slice of territory between the mouths of the lower Yuzhnyy Bug (Boh) and Dniepr rivers. The same treaty granted the Crimea independence, however in 1783 Russia annexed the peninsula and the area north and east of the Sea of Azov. Russia once more defeated the Ottomans in 1791, gaining additional territory between the lower Dniestr and Yuzhnyy Bug rivers. These newly acquired territories became part of the province of New Russia. Catherine the Great's administration, under the direction of Grigorii Potemkin, invited immigrants, especially Germans, to settle in this area. Mennonites were among these "German" settlers.

MIGRATION from the VISTULA to SOUTH RUSSIA

(Map page 2)

The first migration of Mennonites to South Russia was in 1787-1789, to establish what came to be called the Chortitza Colony. The immigrants traveled either by sea or by land to Riga, then up the Dvina River and eventually down the Dniepr River. By 1797 a total of about 400 families had left their Prussian homeland to settle on the steppes of New(South) Russia.

Further restrictions imposed by Frederick William III of Prussia, and extended privileges announced by Czar Paul I of Russia conspired to encourage further emigration. An area of 120,000 dessiatines east of the Molochnaya River was designated for further Mennonite expansion.

In 1803, 193 families, consisting of 1,020 individuals, left the Elbing and Marienburg districts of Prussia. Many of these people had been able to sell their farms at good prices. They traveled across land with large canvas-upholstered wagons, drawn by four or six horses. Their journey led first to Thorn, then to Warsaw, then across the vast expanse of eastern Europe. Roads were primitive, so the journey took from five to seven weeks. To discourage these good farmers from leaving, the Prussian government imposed an exit tax amounting to 10% of their assets. The Russian government, on the other hand, lured settlers with financial help in the form of interest free loans.

The first group spent the winter in the Chortitza Colony, then together with new arrivals from Prussia moved onto its land on the east bank of the Molochnaya River in the spring of 1804.

Later groups of settlers were not always as well off as the original pioneers; some had to pull or push their carts the entire way! The Russian government did not continue its financial incentives beyond the first groups. After 1828 only those who could pay their own way were allowed to settle.

The Moloschna River and adjacent Colonies

(Map page 3)

This is the first known map of the Molotschna Colony drawn by a traveling salesman in 1806. Some names such as "Menonites" are misspelled. The position of Schoensee is accurate - it was later moved to the other side of Fuerstenau.

GERMAN COLONIES IN THE MOLOTSCHNA IN SOUTH RUSSIA IN 1836

(Map page 4)

The original map has more detail which, however, is hard to decipher. Of interest are the land allotments to the surrounding parish villages to the north and east, but also the land of the German colonists, the Doukhobors, the Nogai and the Molokans. Gnadenfeld has already been included (founded 1835), as well as Waldheim (founded in 1836).

A copy of the map was kindly provided by Lawrence Klippenstein, former archivist at the Mennonite Heritage Centre in Winnipeg; he had obtained it from Gerhard Walter of Ludwigsberg, Germany. He found it in the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin.

PROVINCIAL (GUBERNIIA) BOUNDARIES IN 1850

(Map page 5)

In 1802 the imperial province of New Russia, created in the late eighteenth century from Zaporozhia

and the land acquired from the Ottoman Empire by a series of wars, was divided into three provinces (guberniia). These were Ekaterinoslav, Kherson and Taurida (Tavria). Taurida in turn was divided into a number of counties (uezdy). The Molotschna Colony was in the territory of the Melitopol uezd. About 1842 the large Melitopol uezd was divided into two uezdy, Melitopol and Berdyansk, placing the Molotschna Colony in the Berdyansk uezd.

The geographical divisions, however, did not directly correspond to the actual political divisions. The Molotschna Colony was initially under the jurisdiction of the Guardian's Committee (*Fuersorgekomitee*), first to the office in Ekaterinoslav, then after 1836 to the main office in Odessa. When the country was reorganized in 1871, the Molotschna answered to local uzed or guberniia administrations.

The Molotschna Mennonite Colony
1852
(Map page 6)

The Molotschna Colony according to a map drawn by Hippenmayer in 1852.

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY IN 1871
HALBSTADT and GNADENFELD
VOLOSTS
(Map page 7)

Overall reform of the administrative structures occurred in Russia in 1871, with Imperial approval occurring on May 31, the law being promulgated on June 4. As part of this restructuring the Molotschna Colony was divided into two volosts (the new name for *Bezirk*).

The Halbstadt volost, with headquarters in Halbstadt, constisted of the western 30 villages, and had slightly more than half of the population. The larger portion of the industrial development was in this volost. Kornelius Toews of Tiege had been the *Oberschulze* of the Molotschna from 1868 to 1870, and continued as *Oberschulze* of the Halbstadt volost until 1873.

The Gnadenfeld volost, with headquarters in Gnadenfeld, consisted of the eastern 27 villages of the colony, and had slightly less than half of the population. There was less industry in this area, although a number of factories had been built in Waldheim. Wilhelm Ewert of Grossweide became the first *Oberschulze* in 1871.

Terms of reference of the village and volost assemblies remained virtually the same, although minutes of meetings and bookkeeping had to be in Russian. Both village and volost assemblies had representatives of the landless group.

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
ABOUT 1910
(Map page 8)

This map shows the fully developed Molotschna Colony just after the turn of the century, and includes the settlements which seemed to function as villages of Kuruschan and Fabrikerwiese as well as the three larger estates, Juschanlee, Steinbach and Felsental. Some of the surrounding non-Mennonite villages are shown, including those of the German colonists.

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION
(Map page 9)

Mennonites, while having coalesced as an ethnic group in the Vistula Delta, were still basically a religious group. As such they took their common religious and ethical principles with them into the new settlement, but they also brought their differences. The first groups to arrive, founding the first 19 villages from 1804 to 1811, were all Flemish Mennonites. More Flemish families arrived from 1818 onward, but in 1819-20 more than 100 families of Frisians arrived under the leadership of Franz Goerz. They founded seven villages in 1820, centered around Rudnerweide, on the eastern end of the Molotschna, well away from their more numerous Flemish brothers.

But even the Flemish came with a variety of stripes. Alexanderwohl was established in 1821 by a group of Groningen Old Flemish under Peter Wedel. The larger groups that established Gnadenfeld and Waldheim were also of the Old Flemish, originally the most conservative branch. In the decades just preceding their migration, however, they had experienced renewal; this became evident in their active participation in the religious life of the Molotschna.

Initially the differences between the Flemish and Frisians were strictly maintained, and even social life ran separate courses. There was, for example, as a rule no intermarriage between the two groups. With time the differences became mainly outward, and eventually even the labels of Flemish and Frisian were dropped. However, a few vestiges of variance remained almost into the twentieth century.

Many of the villages later established in the Molotschna, starting with Konteniusfeld in 1832, were settled by people from various parts of Prussia, some

from the Chortitza Colony and from various villages of the Molotschna itself. The main criteria for settlement appeared to be the need for land and not the religious affiliation of the pioneers, so these villages represented a religious mixture.

MENNONITE CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE MOLOTSCHNA COLONY

(Map page 10)

The villages in which the Flemish, Frisian, and Old Flemish had church buildings are shown. No attempt is made to explain the various changes in congregational organization throughout the years. The principal source of information is P. M. Friesen.

It should be noted that with inclement weather many people worshiped in their own villages, in schools, storage sheds, private homes or even in small designated chapels. Most often the various groups, whatever their specific adherence, worshiped together.

MENNONITE BRETHREN CHURCH BUILDINGS IN THE MOLOTSCHNA COLONY

(Map page 11)

The principle house of worship of the Mennonite Brethren was in Rueckenau, where the entire Molotschna congregation was based. There were a number of subsidiary congregations spread in various villages throughout the colony. Neu-Halbstadt and Gnadenheim became congregations after the time of P. M. Friesen (1910).

Mennonite Brethren commonly called their church buildings *Bethaus*, which is reflected in some of the translations into English, "prayer house."

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY ABOUT 1914

(Map page 12)

The principle addition to the colony in the prewar years was the construction of a railway.

A company, headed by brothers Gerhard and Johann Wall, financed mostly by Mennonites, planned to build a railway through the Molotschna. It was hoped that this railway would benefit both the industry and the agricultural developments of the colony.

A telegram arriving from St. Petersburg on June 8, 1910, informed the brothers Wall that the project had been accepted by the appropriate commission. Construction began soon thereafter. The railway ran from the Station Zarekonstantinovka on the Mariupol line westward through the northern part of the Molotschna to Tokmak and Halbstadt, then along the line of villages southwest to Lichtenau. It crossed the Molochnaya River via the Molotschna *Bruecke* (bridge) to reach Station Feodorovka on the southern line. Work on what was known as the *Tokmakbahn* (Tokmak Railway) proceeded rapidly, with track being laid first on the eastern end. When sections were completed trains brought in supplies for the remaining sections.

Construction of the rail bed required a considerable amount of sand, so when a ten dessiatine section of land which had excellent sand was discovered near Landskrone, a spur line was built to reach it. The upper layer of earth was taken away by workers with one-horse wagons, then a huge dredge picked up the sand in large buckets and poured it into waiting railway cars. Because of this spectacle Landskrone became a minor tourist attraction; school groups would go on outings to watch the machines in action. When the project was finished the tracks of the spur line were removed, and the dredge was sent back to Germany.

Work progressed well, and by July, 1913, rails had been laid up to the station in Lichtenau. Trains passed Halbstadt up to five times a day with supplies. One sour note during construction was a strike by 15 workers in Halbstadt, who demanded that even those who wanted to work should join them. They were arrested and taken to Tokmak. The eventual total cost of building the railway was thought to be 50,000 to 60,000 rubles per verst.

Construction was completed and trains began their scheduled runs on December 20, 1913, with two daily runs in each direction. Train No. 4, heading east, took a total of 11hours 20 minutes to complete its run. The section between Lichtenau and Stulnevo, with stops at Neu-Halbstadt and Tokmak, took three hours and 50 minutes.

The railway, like all new ventures, had its good and bad moments. A correspondent waxed eloquent about the beautiful vista to be seen from the Molotschna *Bruecke*, including the row of villages visible both to the right and to the left. Those living close to the station in Halbstadt considered their proximity to be a mixed blessing, since they received many house guests. It was noted, perhaps with a hint of resignation, that "Itinerant preachers are often guests, but it must be remembered that they are not paid much, and have families to support."

An accident was reported about a month after the train service began. A Russian farmer, perhaps slightly under the influence of alcohol, was going to pick up his wife from the hospital in Ohrloff. As he

tried to cross the railway embankment a runner of his sleigh caught in the track. Before he could get off the track his team was hit by a locomotive. One horse was killed, the other injured. The farmer survived, the locomotive was derailed and 15 fathoms of track was damaged. Service was disrupted for one day and two nights before the track was repaired.

MOLOTSCHNA BATTLE
JUNE 20, 1920

(Map page 13)

After the withdrawal of the German troops in late 1918, civil war raged in Ukraine. The Whites, the Reds, the Makhnovze and other partisans rampaged around the land in dizzying confusion. Sometimes one end of the village would be controlled by one group, the other end by their enemies!

In the spring of 1920 the White Army, under the command of General Wrangel, began a new offensive which started in the Crimea and reached the Molotschna by early June. For weeks the battles lines seesawed back and forth in the area, villages repeatedly changing hands.

On June 10, 1920 there was a lull in the fighting, the Whites consolidating their positions, the Red Army reorganizing and bringing in new recruits. On June 17 the White Army in the Waldheim area pulled back under pressure by the Red cavalry under General Zhloba, moving in a south-west direction. The White pull-back, likely a planned ruse to obtain a more strategic position, continued until June 19. By then the main forces of the Red cavalry occupied the south central portion of the Molotschna, including Friedensdorf, Margenau, Tiegerweide, Kleefeld and Alexanderkrone. The total forces of the 13th Red Army in the region were 25,000 infantry and 12,000 cavalry. Facing them in a semicircle were various elements of the White Army totaling 15,000 infantry and 6,500 cavalry.

At 6 PM on June 19 General Wrangel sent out directives to his generals ordering an offensive to begin against the enemy before dawn on June 20, in the direction of Gnadenfeld. At 5 AM the Second Don Division began the attack, joined by others by the time the light of dawn broke the horizon. Pressed on all sides, pounded by artillery, strafed by machine guns of the White aircraft, the Red Army started to panic. A large portion, at least two divisions under the command of Zhloba, broke through the lines in the direction of Halbstadt and Tokmak. Here they met the 13th Infantry Division and the armoured trains, so Zhloba again turned south, where his fleeing cavalry encountered the Drozdovze Division. Finally a full scale retreat of all Red units began in the direction of Chernigovka, with the White cavalry in hot pursuit. Around Hierschau they caught up with the Red rearguard and a battle resulted. After further losses the Red Army retreat continued. Many Red cavalrymen abandoned their exhausted horses and fled on foot, hiding where they could. In all the Whites captured 40 cannons, 200 machine guns, almost 3,000 horses, and took 2,000 prisoners.

Meanwhile General Wrangel and his staff, with headquarters in Melitopol, anxiously awaited news from the battlefield. The rumble of the unending artillery fire could easily be heard, yet there was no direct communication with the various units on the field. Finally a new sound appeared, the approaching drone of a propeller. An aircraft skimmed low over the railroad, and dropped a note which said "The enemy has been struck on the head, encircled by our warriors. General Tkechev reports a complete destruction of the enemy."

The following day, on June 21, a church service was held in Melitopol, thanking God for the glorious victory.

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY
OCTOBER 6, 1941

(Map page 14)

Early on the morning of June 22, 1941, Germany launched a surprise attack against the Soviet Union. One hundred and forty-two divisions advanced rapidly on all sectors. By July 9 the success of the German invasion was so dramatic that General Halder, Chief of the German Army General Staff, considered the war as good as won. In August German and Rumanian forces pushed deep into Ukraine, by the end of the month occupying all areas west of the Dniepr River. Here they halted for some time to regroup before pushing further eastward. They had overrun the Chortitza Colony prior to this pause, but had not quite reached the Molotschna.

It was the Soviet policy to evacuate as much industry as possible, together with the required labour force, away from the areas about to be occupied by the enemy. Between July and November of 1941a total of 1,523 industrial enterprises were moved east – to the Volga area, to the Urals, to Siberia as well as Kazakhstan. Wherever enough transport was available as much of the population as could be crammed onto trains was also shipped east. This applied particularly to minority groups which had been persecuted under the Soviet rule, the fear being that they would welcome

the advancing German armies. The Mennonites were, though a small and relatively insignificant group, one of these minorities.

With the invaders striking deeper into the Soviet Union, the young and able, ten to thirty from each Molotschna village, were drafted into a work force to dig defensive trenches and tank traps. One of the places where people from the south-east Molotschna worked was at Station Mirovaya, near Zaporozhye. One estimate is that 1,700 people from the Molotschna were involved in this backbreaking labour.

In early September more and more men were "taken." On September 4 and 5 all able bodied men between the ages of 16 and 60 (some say 65) were collected at various centres, and marched off on foot. At least some were taken to Station Pologi, then by train to Karkhov, and on to labour camps at Solikamsk in the central Urals. Some were sent to labour camps at Ivdellag, where a large portion of the men soon starved to death. About September 10 or 11 the next "shipment" of men was sent, this time including older and weaker men. Towards the end of September, 23 to as late as 28, the last contingent of men was taken, scraping the bottom of the barrel with teachers and village officials. It is known that 1,547 men were taken from 23 villages. Extrapolating for the whole Molotschna, it is likely that about 4,000 men were deported in September of 1941. Many of the older and weaker men died on the way to the camps. Very few were ever heard from again.

The German forces were coming ever closer to the Molotschna , so the Soviets prepared to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. Starting on September 28 all the remaining people, by now mostly women, children and the elderly, were taken to a number of railway stations. Few Mennonites had transportation by now, so they were taken with military vehicles or by wagons of neighbouring Russians or Ukrainians. At the stations some of the people, such as those from Altona, were cooped up in granaries, then loaded onto cattle cars. At Stulnevo they camped in the open near the station. It should be noted that not only Mennonites were collected; other ethnic Germans were also on the list for evacuation, and were also gathered at these railway stations.

The south-west villages of the Molotschna collected at Lichtenau were (with the number of people deported in brackets): Lichtenau (257), Blumstein (484), Muensterberg (371), Altona (420), Ohrloff (332), Tiege (484), Blumenort (235), Rosenort (434), Kleefeld (556), Alexanderkrone (321), Lichtfelde (332), Neukirch (355), Friedensruh (332), Prangenau (306) and Steinfeld (195), for a total of 5,414. Early in October, likely October 2-4, they were all loaded onto boxcars and evacuated. They seem to have headed along the Tokmak Railway, first north, then eastward. Some even called out to those waiting at the Stulnevo station as they rumbled by. From there they traveled farther and ever farther east, to Kazakhstan. There they were unloaded in places such as Kustanay, Aktyubinsk and Station Togusak. The journey had taken one month; by the time they got to their destinations it was cold and there was snow on the ground. Some people died on the way, a considerable number died of starvation within a few years.

The north-west villages collected at Tokmak (some probably actually at Neu-Halbstadt) were: Halbstadt, Neu-Halbstadt, Muntau, Tiegenhagen, Schoenau, Fischau, Lindenau, Kuruschan, Tiegerweide, Rueckenau, Fuerstenwerder, Alexanderwohl, Petershagen, Ladekopp, Fuerstenau and Fabrikerwiese. These people, apparently a total collection of about 10,000, patiently waited at the railway station . The Soviets were not able to get them onto trains before they retreated from the area on October 5. On October 6 German and Rumanian troops occupied the area, so the people simply returned to their homes.

The north-east villages collected at Stulnevo, near Waldheim, were: Schoensee, Liebenau, Wernersdorf, Hamberg, Klippenfeld, Gnadenheim, Friedensdorf, Landskrone, Hierschau, Waldheim, Margenau, Gnadenthal, Nikolaidorf, Mariawohl, Paulsheim, Gnadenfeld and Konteniusfeld. The Soviets were not able to get the 6,000 people gathered at Stulnevo onto trains either. The Red Army retreated from the area on October 5, blowing up the station and tracks before they left. They also blew up the factories in Waldheim, and set fire to the granaries; at night the flames could be seen far and wide. October 6 was clear and still; with the German and Rumanian troops occupying the region the people slowly returned to their homes.

The south-east villages collected at the Nelgovka Station were: Sparrau, Grossweide, Pastwa, Rudnerweide, Franzthal, Elisabetthal, Alexanderthal, Schardau, Pordenau and Marienthal. There are stories of the trains being full, not able to take all the people to be evacuated. The Germans also bombed the station and tracks, preventing further transportation. All the people of Grossweide (247), Pastwa (est. 250), Elisabetthal (265-275), Alexanderthal (350), Schardau (185), half of Pordenau (110), a third of Rudnerweide (110), totaling 1,522, were deported to Kazakhstan.

The train carrying the Alexanderthal people was bombed by the German Luftwaffe, and one car was totally destroyed, presumably killing most of the passengers. Remaining at Nelgovka were all of the people from Sparrau, Franzthal and Marienthal, and portions of Rudnerweide, and Pordenau. Two Russian brothers, Kosmenko, were the mayors of Franzthal and Rudnerweide. They conspired to slow the process of deportation as much as possible, accounting for the fact that few from these villages were actually evacuated. Those who were left at the station returned to their homes when the region was occupied by the German and Rumanian forces.

When the trench and tank trap diggers returned to the Molotschna they, if their village was among those that had been evacuated, returned to empty homes. The exception was Elisabetthal, where the workers were ordered to return to their homes on September 3, almost on an emergency basis, only to be exiled or evacuated in the next days or weeks with the rest of the villagers. Many of those who had been assigned to drive cattle eastward returned to their villages as well.

The trench and tank trap diggers, as well as those who had driven the cattle eastward, together with the other Mennonites that had been left, eventually joined the "Great Trek" westward when the German forces retreated from the area in September of 1943. About two thirds of these refugees were eventually overrun by the rapidly advancing Soviet forces, and were "repatriated" to the far north or Siberia.

MOLOTSCHNA COLONY REGION IN 1998

(Map page 15)

At the present time Tokmak is the largest town in the region, with Highway No. 8 obliquely crossing what was once the Molotschna Colony. Some of the villages are consolidated into larger towns, for example, Halbstadt, Neu-Halbstadt and Muntau are now combined as Molochansk; Rosenort, Blumenort, Tiege and Ohrloff are Orlovo. A number of villages such as Franzthal, Kleefeld, Margenau and Nikolaidorf no longer exist.

There are very few ethnic Mennonites living in the area. Margaretha Kravetz (nee Plett) in Vladovka (former Hierschau) and Rita Pankratz in Grushevka (former Alexanderkrone) have been identified and visited.

North American Mennonites have recently begun a number of projects in the Molotschna region. There is now an active church occupying the rebuilt Petershagen sanctuary. The former Neu-Halbstadt *Maedchenschule* is a centre from which various services are offered to help in the development of the area. Since the old Mennonite Brethren church is in use as a feed mill, a new sanctuary is being built in Rueckenau.

MOLOTSCHNA VILLAGE AND ESTATE MAPS

ALEXANDERKRONE

(Map page 16)

Alexanderkrone was founded in 1857, lying just south of the Juschanlee River, between Kleefeld and Lichtfelde. It was likely named after the recently crowned Czar Alexander II. The early settlers were from the various villages of the Molotschna, therefore Alexanderkrone was of mixed Flemish-Frisian derivation. The land was fertile, all of it lying to the south of the village, with several tributaries of the Arab River meandering across it. Originally consisting of 40 full farms, with the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, another 25 small farms were added. This brought the total to 65 farms, occupying 3,000 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Alexanderkrone was in the Halbstadt Volost.

The elementary school, located in the centre of the village, usually had two teachers and about 60 students. With a feeling that additional education was needed, especially to train teachers, a *Zentralschule* was established in Alexanderkrone in 1906 on a piece of land donated by the village. The organization, fund-raising and construction of the school were aided by the determined work of Jakob Esau and the financial support of the local estate owners, David Dick and Jakob Sudermann of Apanlee. The school's first teachers were Franz Thiessen (Russian, literature and history), Hermann Rempel (mathematics and science) and Isaak P. Regehr (German and religion). In 1913 the school was reclassified as a business school, then in 1922 it became a "United Labour School." After 1926 all religious instruction ceased and the school was in effect "sovietized." The last graduation of students from the school was in 1941.

Most Alexanderkrone residents were originally part of the Margenau Mennonite Church. There must, however, have been some variation of religious emphasis. From 1880 to 1884 a number of Mennonites followed Claas Epp Jr. to central Asia to be better prepared for Christ's second coming. A wagon train of about 80 families left Waldheim in the Molotschna on August 1, 1880, under the leadership of Minister Abraham Peters. Some of these people were from Alexanderkrone, since the list of persons dying on the trail had two from that village - Jakob Jantzen and Vallentin Braun.

In 1890 the Alexanderkrone members of the Mennonite Church founded their own congregation, that same year constructing a church building. Heinrich Koop was the elder, continuing in that position for more than 20 years. Drawing people from the neighbouring villages, by 1913 there were up to 1,700 adherents, including children.

In 1908 Alexanderkrone had 419 residents, occupying 2,887 dessiatines. Heinrich Reimer owned a Dutch style windmill, while the company of Wiens and Penner had a Dutch style windmill and a steam mill. Heinrich Fast dealt in metal products, Kornelius Neustaedter manufactured furniture, Dick and Co. produced bricks.

Alexanderkrone experienced the terrors of the revolution and the subsequent civil war, as did all the other Mennonite villages of the Molotschna. On June 20, 1920, a major battle was fought in the Tiegerweide-Alexanderkrone area, the White Army temporarily pushing back the Reds in the conflict. Two men, a Mr. Goossen and a Mr. Thiessen, were killed by aerial bombardment, probably in this battle. In the following famine of 1922 Alexanderkrone must have been hard hit. Thirty-eight families, representing 182 individuals, asked for food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. Migration fever hit Alexanderkrone in the mid 1920s. At least 57 families, totalling 231 people, fled the country and emigrated to Canada. Teachers had an increasingly difficult time in the 1920s, with the Soviet regime imposing its philosophy on the educational system. Some of the teachers of the Alexanderkrone *Zentralschule* chose to emigrate rather than to submit to the communist propaganda.

Dietrich Heinrich Koop represented the Alexanderkrone congregation at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches in Russia held in Moscow on January 13-18, 1925. His name is not on the list of people emigrating to Canada.

In 1929 many Mennonites travelled to Moscow in a desperate attempt to get exit visas. At least four families from Alexanderkrone were among the fortunate who did manage to escape. Jakob Martens, wife and four children and David Penner were in the Prenzlau refugee camp in Germany in 1930. The Dietrich Janzen and Jakob Bergen families, seven people in all, were on a ship bound for Paraguay in March, 1930. Others tried to leave across the Amur River in eastern Siberia. David Goerzen was a refugee in Harbin, China, in 1931, indicating that his attempt to escape had been successful.

In the early 1930s Alexanderkrone suffered the same atrocities under the Soviet regime as the other Mennonite villages in the Molotschna. As part of the

collectivization many Molotschna farmers were expelled from their farms and forced onto the open steppe just south of Alexanderkrone, there to establish whatever homes they could manage on their own. Teacher Johann Dietrich Dueck was arrested three times, 1932, 1933, and then even in Orenberg, where he had fled to. Between 1935 and 1938 at least 15 men from Alexanderkrone were exiled and another six drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages were taken to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, to the far north or central Asia. Alexanderkrone residents were in the group at Lichtenau, so virtually all of the Mennonite population, a total of 321, was evacuated to Solikamsk in the Ural Mountains. When the German Army took statistics on February 17, 1942, the 19 remaining Mennonites represented 11.4% of the total population of 167. There were seven Mennonite men, seven women and five children. Administratively the village was under the jurisdiction of Friedensruh, with the local representative being Eduard Janzen.

When the German Army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the few remaining stragglers presumably joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were likely recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army, but some did escape to the West. Heinrich Baerg reached Canada in 1947 and the Flamming family was on the way to Paraguay in 1948.

Today a number of buildings from the Mennonite era of Alexanderkrone still exist. The church again functions as a church – now Ukrainian Orthodox. The *Zentralschule* building is used as a dormitory for migrant workers. The doctor's office and pharmacy are also there, together with some elegant gate posts. The last existing windmill in the region, Dutch type, still stands in a somewhat dilapidated condition. Mrs. Rita Pankratz lives in the village and delights in feeding tourists strips of pork fat! Rita and her husband were actually on the "Great Trek," but were overrun by the Soviets and sent to Kazakhstan. Her husband died there, but she managed to return to Alexaderkrone in the 1970s.

The former Alexanderkrone and Lichtfelde are now combined to form the village of Grushevka.

ALEXANDERTHAL

(Map page 17)

Alexanderthal was founded in 1820; twenty farmsteads of 65 dessiatines each were laid out along a street which parallelled the Tschokrak River. Most of the original settlers, lead by Franz Goerz and Heinrich Balzer, came from Graudenz and Stuhm of the Vistula Lowlands, and were Frisians. Sixteen families of this group settled in 1820, the other four places were filled by additional immigrants from Prussia in 1821 and 1822. At the strong suggestion of *Oberschulze* Peter Toews the village was named Alexanderthal, in honour of the Czar, Alexander I. The two original leaders of the group actually settled in other villages; Stephan Kerber was elected the first *Schulze*. A number of families had some financial resources, totalling 5,872 rubles, but most of the families required government grants, which totalled 11,320 rubles. Many of the families spent the first winter in their new barns, but some lived in sod huts.

The first few years were extremely difficult, grasshoppers destroying the crops in 1822 and 1823, snowstorms depleting the livestock in 1824 and 1825. With the encouragement of Goerz and Balzer the settlers maintained their spirit, and in time the conditions improved. A quarry south of the village provided stones for good house foundations. A nice forest was planted just west of the village, and Stephan Kerber had a tree nursery on the east end of Alexanderthal. The usual school was built near the centre of the village. By census time in 1835 there were 177 people (89 males and 88 females) living in 27 establishments. In April of 1848 Johann Kliewer was *Schulze*, Abraham Kasper and Heinrich Funk were councillors, while Johann Janzen was teacher.

By mid century Alexanderthal was in the forefront of a number of agricultural developments, largely due to the diligence of Stephan Kerber. In 1846 he had the largest "tree for wood" nursery in the Molotschna, having 18,000 trees. That same year he had the third highest "planting of fruit trees from seeds" record. In 1848 he had by far the largest tree nursery of any farmer in the colony, 30,266 trees. In 1851 Kerber had the highest silk production of any farmer in Alexanderthal, and that year he represented his village on the Molotschna Mennonite Council. Also in 1851 the whole village had 79,588 trees, of which 22,633 were mulberry trees in hedges and 222 were pear trees.

In 1857 Alexanderthal had a total population of 294 (161 males and 133 females) living in 48 houses, occupying 1,435 dessiatines. There were 60

students, with teacher Cornelius Duerksen. That year Martin Dueckmann was elected *Schulze*, Wilhelm Unrau councillor. With redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869 Alexanderthal had 15 full farms, 12 half farms and 26 small farms, for a total of 53, occupying 1,781 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Alexanderthal was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

With the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860 there were likely some members of that persuasion living in Alexanderthal. In 1902-1903 the Mennonite Brethren built a sanctuary on the western edge of the village. J. A. Toews was a minister of this congregation when he and others were instrumental in bringing about a revival in the 1920s. Adolf A. Reimer, missionary and preacher, lived in Alexanderthal during the revolution and civil war. He preached to whole regiments of the White Army, and even spoke to Red troops. Both J. B. Toews and G. D. Huebert, later leading ministers of the M. B. Church in North America, preached their first sermons from the pulpit of the Alexanderthal church.

In 1908 Alexanderthal had 365 people and cultivated 1,695 dessiatines of land. Heinrich Huebert owned a windmill, Johann Willms a steam mill and Jakob Neufeld had a grocery and manufactured goods store.

Alexanderthal suffered the same disasters as the other Molotschna villages during the revolution, the civil war and the subsequent Communist takeover. There was a report of a poor crop in Alexanderthal in 1922, and the writer thought the whole village was hungry except for ten families. Yet even they had only a small supply of food. A total of at least ten requests were made for help through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 54 people. In the mid 1920s some families emigrated to Canada, at least four, totalling eight people.

In the 1930s Alexanderthal became part of a kolkhoz named *Deutscher Kollektivist*. It consisted of the villages Marienthal, Pordenau, Schardau, Alexanderthal and Elisabethtal, headquarters in Pordenau. A number of families in Alexanderthal were deprived of their property in 1930; the Berg and Klassen families were sent to Siberia. Kornelius Harder (5 persons), Abram Heide (4 persons), Peter Loewen (7 persons) as well as the Unger family were dispossessed. Minister Peter Schroeder was arrested and sent north. School director Johann Dietrich Dueck was arrested three times, the last time in March of 1938. Fifty one men were exiled from Alexanderthal in the Purge of the late 1930s.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets accelerated the arresting of men. On September 5, 1941, the last 40-50 men were headed off on foot to the railway station at Pologi, from there to a concentration camp in Solikamsk in the Urals. As the German forces came even closer the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to be collected at four railway stations. The south-west villages were sent to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, and send them to the far north or central Asia. Alexanderthal residents were taken to Nelgovka, and virtually the entire Mennonite population, 350 people, were sent eastward to Kustanay. Unfortunately their train, carrying mostly women and children, was bombed by the German Luftwaffe and one car was totally destroyed. Mrs. Daniel Reimer was one of the victims. When the German forces occupied the region the 22 remaining Mennonites represented 30% of the total population of 73. There were 12 men and ten women. Peter Kasper was the mayor.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September, 1943, even this small remnant likely joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Some will have been overrun by the advancing Soviet Army, but a considerable number must have reached the West. In 1947 and 1948 at least five groups, totalling ten people, sailed for Canada, while four groups with eight individuals were on ships headed for South America.

There are now a few remaining Mennonite buildings in Alexanderthal; the Mennonite Brethren church still stands, but is rapidly falling into decay. The village, together with Elisabethtal, is now called Aleksandrovka.

ALEXANDERWOHL

(Maps pages 18,19)

Alexanderwohl was founded in 1821 by 22 families who came to Russia under the leadership of Elder Peter Wedel. They met Czar Alexander I on the way, just south of Warsaw. He greeted them, wished them well, and sent along a greeting to their brothers in the Molotschna. So it was that Judge Fadeyev said "The Czar Alexander has wished you well (*wohl*)", making it "Alexanderwohl." Another seven families arrived in 1823, and one more in 1824. These 30 families all came from Przekhorka in the Swetz area of

the Marienwerder area of West Prussia, and were members of the same Groningen Old Flemish congregation. The land given the village had been rented by Johann Cornies and was used by Nogai nomads as pasture and Ukrainians for farming. Ten original families had their own resources, a total of 8,570 rubles, the other 20 required government grants totalling over 4,104 rubles.

Crops were meagre in 1821, only yielding back the seed. The next years the harvest was better, but there was grasshopper damage for seven years running. A severe long-lasting storm in the first months of 1825 caused considerable loss of livestock because no feed could be obtained; they even used straw from the thatched roofs in desperation. In 1828 cattle disease struck, but the drought and famine made 1833 by far the worst year. Eventually the excellent breeding of cattle, raising sheep and the four field rotation of crops brought the village to affluence. At the 1835 census there were 34 establishments in Alexanderwohl, with a population of 263 (126 males and 137 females).

Wheat production in Alexanderwohl was somewhat below average for the Molotschna, both in 1846 and 1847. In 1851 the village had 101,807 trees, with 38,022 mulberry trees being planted in hedges and 100 pear trees.

In 1848 the *Schulze* was Heinrich Voth, councillors were Heinrich Goerz and Johann Schmidt, while the teacher was Heinrich Buller. In 1857 Andreas Schmidt was elected *Schulze*, and Jakob Buller councillor. Also in 1857 the population was 377 (191 males and 186 females) living in 40 houses, occupying 2,240 dessiatines. There were 64 students, and Heinrich Buller remained teacher. Gerhard Gilbrecht represented the village on the Molotschna Mennonite Council in 1858. With the final land redistribution in the Molotschna in 1869, Alexanderwohl had 25 full farms, ten half farms and 26 small farms, totalling 61, on 2,366 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Alexanderwohl was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Alexanderwohl remained a distinct congregation throughout these years, first meeting in their local school; in 1865 they erected a church building near the centre of the village. Alexanderwohl members were conservative, yet exemplified a warm piety. Ministers preached instead of reading their sermons. Elder Wedel for a long time was chairman of the Molotschna branch of the St. Petersburg Bible Society.

The government of Russia was tightening up its conscription laws after the defeat of the Crimean War. As part of this plan the Mennonites would lose the right to forego military service. At least in part as a result of this legislation many Mennonites decided to emigrate to Canada and the United States. In 1873 a delegation of 12 was sent to "spy out" the land. Among these were two Molotschna representatives, Leonhard Sudermann of Berdyansk and Elder Jakob Buller of Alexanderwohl. Probably because of Buller's enthusiastic report the entire congregation at Alexanderwohl decided to emigrate, including some members of the congregation from the surrounding villages.

Under the leadership of Elder Jakob Buller a group of 303 adults and 172 children left Hamburg in July of 1874, aboard the S. S. Cimbria. They arrived in New York, travelled to Lincoln, Nebraska, then to Topeka, Kansas, eventually settling in Marion and McPherson counties in Kansas. They established the Alexanderwohl Church in 1874 with 265 members.

A second group under the leadership of Dietrich Gaeddert, consisting of 203 adults and 104 children, left Hamburg just a few days later aboard the *S. S. Teutonia.* They settled 20 miles west of Alexanderwohl, and organized the Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church.

New settlers to the virtually abandoned Alexanderwohl came from the surrounding Molotschna villages. The villagers seem to have functioned largely as members of the *Grosse Gemeinde*. They became members of the larger Margenau-Alexanderwohl-Landskrone church. David Loewen of Alexanderwohl was ordained minister of this congregation in 1875. Gerhard Plett of Hierschau became elder of the Margenau portion in 1907, then several years later, likely in 1910, of the Landskrone and Alexanderwohl segments as well. A number of men from Alexanderwohl were also ordained as ministers of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch congregation: Abram Harder (1883) and Jakob Thiessen. Before the onset of World War I, however, about one third of the residents of Alexanderwohl actually belonged to the Mennonite Brethren Church.

Possibly because the people were interested, but also possibly because of its central location, the Alexanderwohl church was used for meetings involving the whole Molotschna. On December 3 and 4, 1901, in Rueckenau, then the following two days in Alexanderwohl, Bible conferences were held. There were, however, severe difficulties. It was reported that the Lord did not provide the wished for weather, so the roads were very muddy; most participants came on foot

or on horseback.

On August 11, 1914 representatives from various Molotschna Mennonite churches met in Alexanderwohl to discuss the serious implications of the onset of World War I. During the difficult period of anarchy following the revolution most meetings were suspended, but when the Mennonite constituency caught its breath as circumstances stabilized, a conference was held in Alexanderwohl on February 19, 1921, when it was decided to create a new agency, the Union of South Russian Mennonites.

In 1908 Alexanderwohl had a population of 485, and occupied 2,295 dessiatines. There were only three commercial enterprises in the village. Jakob Penner and Peter Defer owned windmills and Gerhard Fast had a grocery store.

With the onset of the revolution and the following civil war Alexanderwohl presumably went through the same difficult times as the other Molotschna villages. As mentioned, the church was a meeting place for a number of Molotschna-wide conferences. With the subsequent famine at least ten requests for aid were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 57 people. Donated MCC tractors cultivated a total of 37 dessiatines for Alexanderwohl farmers in 1923. In the mid 1920s 17 family groups are recorded as having emigrated to Canada, totalling 67 individuals.

Alexanderwohl undoubtedly suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages in the 1930s, but the specific number of exiled men is not known. When the German forces approached the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. South-west villages were collected in Lichtenau , north-west in Tokmak, north-east in Stulnevo and south-east in Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. The Alexanderwohl residents were among the fortunate thousands at Tokmak. The German troops arrived in early October, 1941, before this group could be sent off, so they returned to their home villages.

The Mennonites of Alexanderwohl all joined the "Great Trek" westwards to Poland and Germany when the German Army retreated from the region in September of 1943. Four young men were drafted into the German Army. A considerable number were captured by the advancing Soviet Army; a minister Thiessen was shot by the Russians in 1945. Some did, however, escape to the West. In 1948 a total of nine family groups, totalling 17 people are listed as being on ships heading for South America.

Today the village is known as Svetloye. There are only a few buildings remaining from the Mennonite era. One of these is the church, which has been extensively altered, and another is the school.

ALTONA
(also called ALTONAU and ALTENAU)

(Map page 20)

Altona was one of the original nine villages founded in 1804 to begin the development of the Molotschna Colony. It was situated just east of the Molochnaya River, north of the Juschanlee tributary, the most southern of the line of villages. Under the leadership, encouragement and good example of Klaas Wiens, 13 Flemish families from the Marienburg area of Prussia settled to form Altona. Three families required government subsidy, receiving over 1,151 rubles; the other 22 families who eventually occupied farmsteads had sufficient means of their own, totalling 20,000 rubles. Only six families were able to build houses in the first summer because of the distance lumber had to be hauled, the rest over-wintered in earth huts. The following spring, however, the nearby Molochnaya River flooded, so a number of the farm plots had to be moved. Wells produced good drinking water; earth dams on the Molochnaya and Juschanlee Rivers provided control of the water by the formation of ponds. The low lying areas produced excellent growth of grass on which to feed the cattle.

Initially labelled No. 9, the settlers themselves called the village Altonau. *Oberschulze* Klaas Wiens and Councillor Aron Warkentin, however, changed it to Altona, meaning "*Alto*" (all to) "*na*" (close), the village being too close to the feared neighbouring nomadic Nogai. Despite the official pronouncement the inhabitants seem to have persisted in using the name Altonau. Klaas Wiens, the very diligent *Oberschulze* of the whole Molotschna Colony, continued to live in Altona until he moved to establish his own private estate Steinbach in 1812.

In the first years of settlement Altona went through the usual crop failures, grasshoppers and cattle diseases common to pioneering in that region. A highlight and, according to one correspondent, cause for great thanks to God, was the visit of Czar Alexander I. As he travelled from the Crimea to St. Petersburg his procession passed through the Molotschna. He stopped briefly at the farmstead of Elder Jakob Warkentin. An even greater honour occurred in 1825, when heading towards the Crimea, Alexander I again stopped in Altona and spent the

night in the home of Elder Warkentin.

In 1825 a group of four men, Johann Wiens from Altona, as well as representatives from three other villages, travelled to Poltava to sell their Spanish wool. On the way back they were murdered; the murderers were caught, but very little of the money was recovered.

The original Flemish *Grosse Gemeinde* in the Molotschna had divided in 1824. The Lichtenauer congregation separated from the Ohrloff - Petershagen *Gemeinde*; Jakob Warkentin of Altona was installed as elder of this congregation. Elder Warkentin and some of his parishioners seem to have had some difficulty in distinguishing between affairs of state and the matters of the church, so it is not surprising that eventually he would be at loggerheads with Johann Cornies. Finally Elder Warkentin and *Oberschulze* Klassen travelled to Odessa to demand that Cornies be banished to Siberia. After investigation the officials of the government did indeed feel that there was a need for change, but it was Warkentin who was relieved of his responsibilities in 1842.

At the time of the 1835 census there were 29 establishments in Altona, with a total population of 233 (119 males and 114 females). In mid century the village was near the forefront in agricultural developments. In 1846 Altona wheat production was 14⅓ fold, the Molotschna average being just over 11, but in 1847 there was a virtual crop failure, the yield being only eight fold. In 1846 Bernhard Warkentin was second highest in the Molotschna for growing trees from seed, 1,400; in 1850 Isaak Wiens was also second at 2,750. Altona was heavy into silk production; in 1850 a farmer from the village had the second highest yield in the Molotschna. In 1851 there were 120,563 trees in the village, third highest of all the colony villages.

In 1848 Johann Wiens was *Schulze* of Altona, councillors were Jakob Esau and Jakob Klassen, while the teacher was Johann Wiebe. In 1850 the Altona members of the Molotschna Mennonite Council were P. Loewen, Johann Wiens and Peter Regier; the latter two were still serving in 1853.

In 1857 Altona had a population of 402 (206 males and 196 females) living in 54 houses, occupying 1,646 dessiatines. There were 71 students, and the teacher remained Johann Wiebe. That year Kornelius Friesen was elected *Schulze*, councillor was Abraham Friesen. With the final Molotschna land redistribution of 1869, Altona had 21 full farms, two half farms and 31 small farms, occupying 1,926 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Altona was in the Halbstadt Volost.

There was no church building in Altona, so the residents worshipped with various congregations in nearby villages. Jakob Enns (1873) and Johannes Schmidt (1876) were ordained ministers of the Lichtenau-Petershagen Flemish congregation; Johann Wiens (1862) and Jakob Dyck (1873) were deacons.

In 1908 there were at least nine commercial enterprises in Altona. Johann Bergmann had a Dutch style windmill, Franz Huebert had a motor driven mill, while Peter Janzen also had a mill and sold flour. Bernhard Enns produced bricks and tiles, Dietrich Huebert manufactured furniture. Tobias Penner and Jakob Neumann were blacksmiths, the Matthies family dealt in manufactured goods and Johann Regier owned a soap factory. There was also a post office in the village. Population at the time was 704.

With the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war Altona suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages. When Russia lost the war to Germany, and Ukraine was about to be occupied by the Austro-German forces, a number of marauding bands swept through the countryside causing havoc as they went. In March of 1918 one such group forced Altona to pay 17,000 rubles before moving on through Muensterberg, Blumstein and Lichtenau, where they got another 41,000 rubles. In October of 1919 an army of Makhno terrorists overran a part of the Molotschna, and in revenge for fatalities that they had suffered, marched through some villages, killing and destroying as they went. On November 11, 1919, 20 people were killed in Blumenort, 11 in Altona and six in Ohrloff. Among those from Altona were Peter Janzen and Kornelius Woelk.

In the famine which followed there were five families that requested help through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 25 people.

At least 15 family groups emigrated to Canada in the mid 1920s, with 63 individuals. Kornelius Kornelius Enns of Altona represented the Lichtenau Mennonite Church at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches of Russia at the meeting held in Moscow on January 13-18, 1925. He may not have escaped from the Soviet Union. Some people from Altona collected in the Moscow suburbs in 1929 in a last desperate attempt to leave the Soviet Union. Heinrich Adrian, wife Katharina and two children were registered in the refugee camp in Prenzlau, Germany, in March of 1930, showing that they were among the 6,000 who did manage to get out.

Altona suffered through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s. From 1935 to 1940 at

least 35 men were exiled. With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the arresting of men was intensified. On September 3-4 all men and boys aged 15-60 were taken to Melitopol. As the German forces came ever closer all Mennonites were ordered to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages were taken to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, and sent them to the far north or to central Asia. On September 28 all women, children and the elderly of Altona were taken to Lichtenau. There they were held two days in granaries until cattle box cars arrived. They travelled for one month in the overcrowded cars to Station Togusak, Kazakhstan. Many of the older people died on the trip. They arrived at the destination at night; it was cold and there was snow on the ground. In the morning oxcarts came, and they were distributed throughout the neighbouring Kazakh villages. In all, 420 Altona Mennonites were exiled. When the German Army occupied the area, the 20 remaining Mennonites represented 18.5% of the total population of 108. There were seven men, five women and eight children. Mayor was Jakob Fast.

Presumably the few remaining Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" when the German forces retreated from the region in September, 1943, fleeing westward to Poland and Germany. Most were likely recaptured by the advancing Soviet forces, and sent into exile. The fate of these people is not known.

Today the village is called Travyevoye. There are a few buildings left from the Mennonite era; a number of gravestones have been found forming a windbreak along a road near the village.

BLUMENORT

(Maps pages 21,22,23)

Blumenort was founded in 1805 by the second wave of migrants from Prussia, and was laid out just south of the Kuruschan River. Tiege was established along the same river to the west, Rosenort to the east. The land occupied by Blumenort was in a narrow strip to the south-east, the Juschanlee River forming the southern border. The 20 settlers came from the Elbing, Marienwerder, Marienburg and Tiegenhof regions of West Prussia. Total number of settlers was 95: 42 males, 53 females. The initial establishment of Blumenort was supervised by *Oberschulze* Klaas Wiens of Altona. The name was chosen in memory of the home of one of the settlers, Johann Warkentin. Most of the pioneers were poor, total resources being less than 1,000 Prussian thaler; Crown grants totalled 11,173 rubles 59 kopeks, and varied from 250 rubles up to 939 rubles per family.

Blumenort experienced the usual difficulties of any pioneer Molotschna village. Additionally, on November 11, 1808 the farmstead of Gerhard Grossen burned, and in February of 1821 the school also burned down.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 26 establishments in Blumenort. *Schulze* was Gerhard Martens, councillors Franz Thiessen and Jakob Martens. By 1848 Reimer was *Schulze,* Dilleskij and Toews councillors, and Heinrich Warkentin the teacher.

Mid century Blumenort agriculture seems to have highlighted dairy products. In 1846 the village income from butter was the second highest in the colony, 872 rubles. Johann Sukkau had the second highest individual income from butter in the Molotschna, Peter Epp also second highest for cheese. In 1851 Jakob Martens had the second highest income from butter; this year Peter Epp topped the list for cheese at 55 rubles 71 kopeks. In 1851 the village had 90,307 trees, of which 33,815 were mulberry trees in hedges. Heinrich Siemens was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council. In 1853 "Master Blacksmith" Heinrich Wiens of Blumenort sold 1,750 rubles worth of goods.

In 1857 the Blumenort population was 275 (126 males, 149 females) living in 40 houses, occupying 1,454 dessiatines. Teacher Kornelius Isaak had 66 students. Gerhard Neufeldt was elected *Schulze* that year, Hermann Neufeldt councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Blumenort had 19 full farms, two half farms and 23 small farms, for a total of 44, occupying 1,668 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Blumenort was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Blumenort residents at first tended to be members of the Lichtenau-Petershagen congregation. Jakob Toews of Blumenort was ordained as minister in 1862, then as elder in 1869, serving until 1908. Other Blumenort ministers of this congregation were Peter Neufeld (1876), Jakob Dueck, Nikolai Schmidt (1909) and Nikolai Sudermann (1909). There was also a Mennonite Brethren presence, at first apparently accepted with some hostility. Teacher Daniel Fast joined the MB church in 1864, and promptly lost his

job. He subsequently moved to the Kuban, where he was ordained as elder in 1877. The first elder of the MB church, Heinrich Huebert, for some time lived in Blumenort in the home of his parents-in-law, Jakob Epps.

Blumenort seems to have been interested in education. Franz Dyck, *Oberschulze* of the Molotschna from 1865 to 1867, was also one of the original members of the Molotschna School Board. Gerhard Klassen, also a member of the school board, was as well a very progressive force on the board of the *Marien-Taubstummenschule* (a school for the deaf and dumb), where a nine year course of studies was available. Kornelius Benjamin Unruh taught in Blumenort for a few years and married Maria Epp from that village. He was later a teacher at the Halbstadt *Zentralschule.*

In 1908 the Blumenort population was 566, occupying 1,616 dessiatines. There were four business establishments in the village. Gerhard Klassen handled manufactured goods, Gerhard Dick metal goods. Jakob Boschmann and Johann Toews owned Dutch type windmills.

By this time the religious atmosphere in the village had changed. About half belonged to the Ohrloff-Petershagen Mennonite Church, half to the Mennonite Brethren Church of Rueckenau, with a few belonging to the Lichtenau congregation.

With the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war Blumenort suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages – but bore the terrible brunt of anarchy in one instance. In October of 1919 an army of Makhno terrorists overran a part of the Molotschna, and in revenge for a number of casualties they had suffered, marched through some villages, killing and destroying as they went. On November 11, 1919, twenty people were killed in Blumenort, 11 in Altona and six in Ohrloff. A contemporary account describes the events. "There had been a gruesome massacre in Blumenort. The "Konovalovites," the Asiatic Regiment, had perpetrated an unprecedented bloodbath there and in some neighbouring villages. The day before some Volunteers (White Army) who were holed up in Blumenort had shot several bandits. However, two managed to escape and informed their leader. Now the whole village had to pay for it. A bestial vengeance was taken against innocent villagers. Twenty Blumenorters were slaughtered in a gruesome manner, among them two ministers and the village teacher. Fourteen were thrown into a basement into which the fiends then first tossed hand grenades. Those victims who were not killed outright were hacked to pieces with sabres. The village was set on fire so that about half of the farmsteads burned down.

The bands then continued their slaughtering in the neighbouring villages..."

Schulze Johann Regehr and his two sons Peter and Jakob were among the victims who were killed, also Jakob Epp. At least eight *Vollwirtschaften* were burned down and one small farm. A number of sheds and straw stacks were burned as well as some cattle.

In the famine which followed the civil war five families, representing 24 individuals, asked for food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* At least 12 family units, 56 individuals, emigrated to Canada in the mid 1920s. Peter Berg reached Canada as late as 1928.

Blumenort suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s. At least two, probably more families were ordered off their land as kulaks. At least twenty-two men were exiled between 1936 and 1940. After most of the men were gone the authorities started arresting wives and sisters. The children were left with grandparents or taken to orphanages.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The western and southern villages went to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Blumenort residents were among the unfortunate thousands collected at Lichtenau, so 235 of them went into exile to the far north or central Asia.

When the German occupying forces took statistics in Blumenort on Febrary 6, 1942, the 10 Mennonites represented 5.2% of the total population of 192. There were: one man, six women, three children. Mayor was Wilhelm Fischer.

When the German Army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the few stragglers from Blumenort joined the other Mennonites on the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Many were overrun by the advancing Red Army, but a few did escape to the West. Katherine Berg and two daughters, Tina Giesbrecht with four children and Susanna Janzen with three children sailed for South America in 1948. Jakob Enns, wife and three children went to Canada.

The complex of Ohrloff, Tiege, Blumenort and Rosenort are now combined into one town called Orlovo.

BLUMSTEIN

(Maps pages 24,25)

Blumstein was founded in 1804 as one of the original nine villages to establish the Molotschna Colony. It was first settled by 21 Flemish families and located just east of the Molochnaya River, and north of its tributary, the Kuruschan River. The actual land of the village was nine verst long by 1½ verst wide, an area of about 2,170 dessiatines. A dam was built on the Kuruschan River to produce a pond for watering the cattle.

Eight of the original families came from the Marienburg area, seven from the Elbing region and six from the Tiegenhof jurisdiction in Prussia. They came to Russia under the leadership of Gerhard Hildebrand, who, however, settled in Schoenau. The village was named Blumstein by *Oberschulze* Klaas Wiens after a village in West Prussia. One of the initial settlers was Johann Harder from Koldau, of the Marienburg area. He, his wife Helena, and five children, moved onto Lot No.16. There the Harder family, each time represented by a Johann Harder, stayed for at least four generations. The third Johann Harder (1814 - 1875) became elder of the Ohrloff Mennonite Church.

In 1808 there were 66 males in Blumstein, 71 females, for a total population of 137. Besides having the usual difficulties suffered by the other pioneer villages in the Molotschna such as drought, grasshoppers and cattle disease, Blumstein had a major fire on September 4, 1817, when two thirds of the houses were reduced to ashes. This seems to have been mitigated, at least in part, by the fact that on May 21, 1818, Czar Alexander I stopped briefly in Blumstein on his trip north from the Crimea.

In 1825 a group of four men, Johann Willms from Blumstein as well as representatives from three other villages, travelled to Poltava to sell their Spanish wool. On the way back they were murdered; the murderers were caught, but very little of the money was recovered.

At the time of the Molotschna census in 1835 there were 37 establishments in Blumstein with 127 males and 146 females, totalling 273 people. In the mid century the village had reason to be proud of its agricultural achievements. Wheat production in 1846 was 14⅓ fold in Blumstein, while the Molotschna average was just over 11. In 1847 Franz Krueger had the highest income from fresh fruit of anyone in the Molotschna, receiving over 31 rubles. In 1850 the farmers of Blumstein were noteworthy for planting fruit trees, the highest number in the colony: Johann Warkentin planted 142, Peter Harms 135, Heinrich Teichgraew 129, Franz Krueger 124, Peter Hooge 120. In an 1851 milk products assessment the three cows of Johann Warkentin tested in Blumstein had the highest yield of any in the Molotschna. Also in 1851 the village had a total of 107,689 trees, of which 52,208 were mulberry trees in hedges, and 588 were pear trees. As well as being in the production forefront, a number of Blumstein farmers participated in Molotschna municipal activities.

In 1848 *Schulze* was Heinrich Teichgraew, councillors were Johann Kroeker and Johann Harder, while teacher was Bernhard Baerg. In 1857 the village population was 516 (264 males, 252 females) living in 66 houses, occupying 1,555 dessiatines. There were 67 students, with teacher Bernhard Harder. Harder became a well known minister, teacher and poet. He had two stints at teaching in Blumstein. *Schulze* at that time was Johann Kroeker, councillor Jakob Vogt. With the final land redistribution in the Molotschna of 1869, Blumstein had 20 full farms, two half farms and 51 small farms, for a total of 73, on 2,181 dessiatines. When the Molotschna Colony was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Blumstein was in the Halbstadt Volost.

There never was a church building in Blumstein, with most of the residents attending the neighbouring Lichtenau Mennonite Church. Johann Harder (1855) was a minister of the Ohrloff-Petershagen congregation, while Johann Braun (1876), Johann Penner (1885) and Kornelius Loewen were ordained ministers of the Lichtenau-Petershagen church. Some people joined the Ohrloff congregation and a few were members of the Rueckenau Mennonite Brethren Church.

In 1908 Blumstein had a number of business enterprises. Wilhelm Loewen owned a windmill, Jakob Riediger was an agent for manufactured goods. Kornelius Fast had a dyeing business, while David Krueger built wagons. Gerhard Thiessen also had a dye shop, Heinrich Goossen was a blacksmith. In 1911 the village population was over 600. The village school had two classrooms.

Blumstein undoubtedly suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages during the revolutionary period and the following civil war. Just before the Austro-German Army was to occupy Ukraine in April of 1918, a marauding group of bandits swept through the area using extortion as a last minute tactic. They forced Altona to pay 17,000 rubles, then went on to Muensterberg, Blumstein and Lichtenau for another 41,000 rubles. In the subsequent famine ten people sent requests for help through the pages of the

Mennonitische Rundschau, representing 52 people. When the opportunity for emigration to Canada opened up in the mid 1920s at least 21 family groups left, totalling 78 individuals. At least another four families went to the suburbs of Moscow in 1929 and were among the fortunate ones who escaped. These refugees, listed as being in the Prenzlau camp in Germany in March of 1930, totalled 18 individuals.

Blumstein suffered through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s. From 1935 to 1940 at least 33 men were exiled. Eighteen men were arrested in one night. The following morning the children just whispered on the way to school, for fear of being overheard. Among the men arrested were Jakob and Gerhard Neufeld.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets wanted to evacuate all Mennonites from the region. They ordered them all to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October 1941 the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, sending them to the far north or central Asia. Blumstein residents were among the unfortunate thousands at Lichtenau, so 484 were exiled. Ten men had been drafted into the Red Army. When the Germans occupied the area, the 20 remaining Mennonites represented 18.2% of the total population of 110. There were nine men, eight women and three children.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943 the few remaining Mennonites of Blumstein joined the "Great Trek," fleeing westward to Poland and Germany. Most were overrun by the advancing Soviet forces, but at least one person, Peter Kroeker, escaped to the West. In 1948 he was on the *S. S. Volendam* heading for South America.

The village is now known as Kamyenskoye. There are no Mennonite buildings left, although there are a few gravestones from the Mennonite era.

ELISABETTHAL

(Map page 26)

Elisabetthal was founded in 1823; laid out along the Tschokrak River, plans for the original 22 and finally 25 *Wirtschaften* were organized by *Oberschulze* Gerhard Ens of Altona and *Schulze* Peter Dick. Total area farmed measured eight by two verst. This land was bordered on the west by the Steinbach Estate, on the east by Alexanderthal. It extended from the Juschanlee River on the north, south onto the steppes. The land was originally rented by Klaas Wiens of Steinbach, who sublet it to the neighbouring Nogai nomads. Most of the land was suitable for growing grain; the low lying land close to the Tschokrak River was used for vegetable gardens.

The original settlers came from Marienburg and the Grosses Marienburger Werder of the Vistula Delta area, and were Flemish. The village was named in honour of Elisabeth, wife of Czar Alexander I. Of the initial settlers, 14 families received government grants totalling 10,826 rubles, the other eight had financial means of their own, about 14,300 rubles. The first homes were primitive board or earthen huts. Elisabetthal had the same early difficulties as the other villages in the Molotschna.

By the time of the census of March 2, 1835, there were 28 establishments in the village, with 179 people (91 males, 88 females). Klaas Dick was *Schulze*. In April of 1848 Peter Lohrenz was *Schulze*, Klaas Dick and Heinrich Barg were councillors and Heinrich Friesen the school teacher.

In 1846 the Elisabetthal wheat production was well below the Molotschna average, but in 1847 the yield rebounded to 14 3/5 fold compared to the Molotschna average of 13 1/3. In 1851 the village had 87,469 trees, of which 30,124 were mulberry trees in hedges and 541 were pear trees. Also in 1851 Jakob Siemens had the highest production of silk of any farmer in the colony.

In 1857 Elisabetthal had a population of 335 (180 males, 155 females) living in 58 houses, cultivating 1,777 dessiatines. There were 65 students, with teacher Abraham Cornelssen. Peter Klassen was elected *Schulze*, and Abraham Martens councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna of 1869, Elisabetthal cultivated 2,089 dessiatines, with 22 full farms, six half farms and 29 small farms, totalling 57. When the Molotschna Colony was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Elisabetthal was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Elisabetthal residents were apparently quite conservative, opposing for example, the merger of the Flemish and Frisian Mennonite churches, as well as the establishment of the Ohrloff *Zentralschule* and the formation of a Bible society. Many were members of the Pordenau Mennonite Church. By the mid 1800s, however, a number were active in the Gnadenfeld congregation, which at the time was under the leadership of Elder August Lenzmann. A small group

of believers met in late November, 1859, in the home of Kornelius Wiens of Elisabetthal, and observed communion. This was followed by sharp words, and a number of members leaving a Gnadenfeld church membership meeting in December of 1859. Abraham Cornelssen, school teacher in Elisabetthal, was asked to write a letter of secession from the Mennonite Church. A meeting was called for Epiphany, January 6, 1860, at the home of Isaak Koop of Elisabetthal. On this occasion 18 heads of families signed the document, marking the official founding of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Of these 18, five were from Elisabetthal: Abraham Cornelssen, Kornelius Wiens, Isaak Koop, Franz Klassen and Abraham Wiens. While there was obviously a strong Mennonite Brethren influence in the village, there was also very strong and ruthless opposition. That winter Abraham Cornelssen was fired from his job as teacher, and he and his family were driven from the village onto the cold barren steppe, where they tried to survive in a damp earth hut. Their lives were saved when a compassionate member of the Gnadenfeld church dared to help them. They tried to move elsewhere, but were refused passes. At the election of the first elder of the M. B. Church held on May 30, 1860, three of the 27 participants were from Elisabethtal; Franz Klassen, Kornelius Wiens and Abraham Wiens. Presumably, despite the initial opposition, Mennonite Brethren continued to be strongly represented in the village, in time worshipping at the sanctuary built in neighbouring Alexanderthal. There was still, however, some Mennonite Church influence, Elder Peter Epp of Elisabetthal leading the Pordenau congregation in the early 1900s.

The village grew slowly, in 1908 having a population of 398, and cultivating 2,013 dessiatines. There were two windmills, owned by Kornelius Funk and Isbrandt Koop and a brick factory owned by Johann Dirksen. By 1913 there were 436 inhabitants, with 52 children attending school.

Elisabetthal suffered a fate similar to other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. Peter Buhler was shot to death in a neighbour's yard in 1919; Kornelius Reimer was shot by Makhno bandits, also in 1919. Likely brought into the village by Bolshevik soldiers, a typhus epidemic broke out and many people died. Peter Epp died in 1922 while visiting the sick during this epidemic. There must have been severe starvation, since there were at least 22 requests for help published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 184 people.

One young man, Johann Unruh, escaped to Constantinople by 1920, but only a few villagers are recorded as having migrated to Canada in the mid 1920s. Jakob Peter Epp and presumably other members of his family did come to Canada in 1924. He was later ordained as a Mennonite Brethren minister and served in various capacities for many years. Deacon Heinrich Penner was among the thousands collected in Moscow in late 1929 in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. He was not successful, was arrested and sent back.

When the dekulakization program of the Soviets was implemented in 1930, at least three families were turned onto the steppes without any means of livelihood. A kolkhoz was established in the area, headquarters at Pordenau. A Ukrainian communist, Kovalenko, was chairman of Elisabethtal from 1934-1937, then was promoted as head of the whole five villages of the kolkhoz. During this time at least 16 men were arrested, and in some instances their wives as well. The children were put up in orphanages. Some of the wives and children were later allowed to go back to their homes. At least another three men were arrested in 1938.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets intensified the arresting of men. On September 4 all men age 16-60 were taken and deported. The next group was taken on September 11, the final group on September 23. With the German forces coming ever closer the Soviets ordered all Mennonites of the Molotschna to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages were sent to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, and sent them to the far north or central Asia. Elisabetthal residents were among those taken to Nelgovka, and were among the unfortunate ones to be evacuated. About 265-275 people were sent away, only 19 remaining in the village, likely people returning from digging tank traps.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943 the few remaining Mennonite stragglers joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most of these refugees were overrun by the advancing Soviet forces, but a few did manage to escape to the West. Eugenie Martens (nee Janzen) with two children was on the *S. S. Volendam* on the way to South America in 1948.

Today the villages of Elisabetthal and

Alexanderthal together are known as Aleksandrovka; only a few Mennonite buildings remain.

ESAU ESTATE

(Map page 27)

Just north of the Juschalee River, one kilometre west of Steinfeld was the Esau Estate. It consisted of a residence, a motor car garage and a shed (*Scheune*). The estate was surrounded by a quadrangle of acacia trees. It was near a dam on the Juschanlee River, where the water was deep enough to bathe horses, and in some spots deep enough that the horses could swim.

FABRIKERWIESE

(Maps page 28)

This village began existence as a communal sheep farm in 1807; it was on the south bank of the Tokmak River. Fuerstenau, also established in 1807, lay just to the west. Schoensee, initially near Ladekopp, was resettled to the area just east of Fabrikerwiese in 1812. It was not listed among the villages at the 1835 Molotschna census, and on the map of Hippenmayer from 1852 is still labelled a sheep farm. In some ways it must have been considered to be a village, because three cows from Fabrikerwiese were entered into a study of milk production in 1851. The amount produced by these cows was high average. In silk production, however, Fabrikerwiese was very low.

According to a map of 1867 there probably were a few farmsteads and a small street in the region. In 1869, with the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna, Fabrikerwiese had three full farms, no half farms and ten small farms, for a total of 13, occupying 355 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Fabrikerwiese was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Fabrikerwiese residents appear to have largely been members of the nearby Schoensee congregation. Johann Toews was a minister of that congregation, ordained in 1872; Jakob Rennpenning, the industrialist, was also a minister, ordained in 1892.

By 1908 a number of business people had settled in the "village." Jakob Rennpenning owned a large agricultural machinery factory which even had a dealership in Siberia. Abraham Rennpenning had a grain cleaning operation. Enns and Toews owned a brickyard. Total assessed value of the businesses was 21,000 rubles.

A map drawn in 1914 shows that the Fabrikerwiese land lay to the south of the village, with a rivulet crossing the mid point of the rectangle with the Tokmak Railway lying just south of that.

Fabrikerwiese undoubtedly suffered the same as other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. A total of ten families, representing 61 individuals, requested food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* Mennonite Central Committee tractors ploughed 17½ dessiatines of land for Fabrikerwiese farmers in 1923. With the possibility of emigration to Canada in the mid 1920s, the only specifically listed family is Abram Thiessen and his wife, who left for their new home in 1925.

Fabrikerwiese will have gone through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages in the 1930s and 1940s. Mennonites of Fabrikerwiese were taken to the railway station at Tokmak when the German forces were approaching the Molotschna in late September, 1941. The Soviets intended to evacuate the entire Mennonite population, but before this could be accomplished the area was overrun by the German invaders. The people will then have returned to their homes. Fabrikerwiese Mennonites likely joined the "Great Trek" westward when the German forces retreated from the area, but most were probably "repatriated." There is no specific record of anyone having escaped to the West.

FELSENTAL ESTATE

(Map page 29)

In 1820 David Peter Reimer from Kronsgarten of the Chortitza Colony established a large area of trees, especially fruit trees, on land on the northern border of the Molotschna. This became the Felsental Estate, located on the south bank of the Tokmak River. In 1824 Wernersdorf was established to the west, and in 1863 Hamberg to the east of the estate. It was named after a nearby beautiful rivulet, the Kajkulak, which began as a spring, and meandered through meadows and past huge boulders and gigantic trees before it flowed into the Tokmak. The Tokmak River itself on the eastern end of the estate ran through a rocky gorge. The estate was known for its orchards and tree nurseries, many of the trees in the Molotschna having started on Felsental as seedlings. Felsental had one of the three water mills in the Molotschna, although it also had a windmill. Probably about 1850 total land area of the estate was 235 dessiatines, of which 195 was usable.

Jakob David Reimer, one of the founders of

the Mennonite Brethren Church, was the son of David Reimer. He was born in Kronsgarten, but then from the age of three lived on Felsental. He went to the estate school where for a time he was taught by the well known Heinrich Franz I. He followed Franz to Gnadenfeld in 1835, and soon thereafter married and bought a farm in that village.

Felsental was, because of its extensive plantations, described as a "wonderful paradise" on the "monotonous Nogaier steppes." The estate was a favourite of Johann Cornies, and he himself planted four trees on the elevated steppe plateau. Besides being a source of seedlings, the owners of Felsental were also quietly very generous with their help in other ways.

After the death of David Peter Reimer in 1840 management of the estate was taken over by his brother, Jakob Peter Reimer. In 1848 the tree nursery on Felsental had 105,000 trees, of which 28,000 were mulberry trees. The estate itself had a total of 297,909 trees, of which 163,700 were forest trees. There were only 722 mulberry trees in hedges, the meager number being reflected in the very low silk production. In 1853 Jakob Reimer of Felsental was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

Jakob Peter Reimer died about 1860. A listing for that year mentions that the estate had "only 147 dessiatines." Apparently at the time there was no permanent resident. When the Molotschna Colony was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Felsental was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Upon the death of Jakob Peter Reimer, his daughter Gertruda took over the management of Felsental, although her two older sisters lived on the estate as well. Aganetha died there in 1899, Anna in 1901. Gertruda still lived on the estate in 1907, when there was an armed robbery the evening of August 23. Servant girls occupied the main floor, Gertruda and two friends the second floor. Manager of the estate was H. Neufeld. The bandits obtained money, and caused considerable damage by exploding a bomb, but nobody was killed.

Soon after the robbery the estate must have been taken over, likely purchased, by David Johann Klassen (Claassen), a nephew, who came from the Kuban. He was the son of Johann Claassen, one of the founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church; David was a minister in the Kuban congregation. In December of 1910 David Klassen of Felsental is listed as giving 25 rubles to help poor Siberian settlers. Also in 1910 he was chairman of the Molotschna Mennonite School Board, and chairman of the committee which assigned ministers to the alternate forestry service.

In the meantime Gertruda with her two friends continued to live on the estate in a smaller house near the official estate residence. Her little home was surrounded by flowers, especially roses, and was called "Little Felsental." *Tante Trudchen*, as she was affectionately called, died in 1915 at the age of 85.

Specific details are not known, but the estate was probably taken over by the communist government in the early or mid 1920s. David Johann Klassen died about 1925; it is unlikely that any of his children remained on the estate. Today nothing remains of Felsental.

FISCHAU

(Map page 30)

Fischau was founded in 1804 as one of the first nine villages of the Molotschna Colony. It was located east of the Molochnaya River, and initially settled by 22 Flemish families from the Danzig, Elbing and Tiegenhof areas of West Prussia. Some of the early leaders were Klaus Wiens, Jakob Neumann and Jakob Wiens.

Apparently the village was first known simply as No. 4, but later was named Fischau after a village in Prussia. It was moved to a better site in 1832 at the directions of Johann Cornies and the Agricultural Society. There was one street, houses on both sides. The low lying land near the Molochnaya River often flooded in springtime, but still provided excellent crops of hay. The higher land farther east was quite fertile and yielded good crops.

At the time of the 1835 census of Mennonite villages there were 26 establishments in Fischau, with a total population of 240 (128 males, 112 females). Abraham Isaak was *Schulze*. When the village reports were written in 1848 Daniel Boschmann was *Schulze*, Abraham Isaak and Abraham Goertzen were councillors, and Peter Doerksen was teacher.

Wheat production in Fischau in 1846 and 1847 was almost exactly the Molotschna Colony average. Farmers had planted 83,705 trees, of which 43,148 were in mulberry trees in hedges. Silk production was somewhat more that 5 pud per year. No Fischau farmer was lauded for exceptional merit.

In 1857 Jakob Penner was *Schulze*, with councillor Peter Loewen. Population of Fischau was 326 (162 males, 164 females), living in 54 houses and occupying 1,695 dessiatines. There were 65 students, with teacher Jakob Woelk. After the final redistribution in the Molotschna in 1869, Fischau got

a little more land, up to 1,798 dessiatines. There were 16 full farms, 12 half farms and 23 small farms, for a total of 51. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Fischau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

In 1908 there were a number of commercial enterprises in Fischau. Daniel Heidebrecht owned a windmill, Abraham Penner a cloth dyeing shop. Johann Wiens was a cabinet maker, Abraham Duerksen was a blacksmith and Jakob Woelk had a small wares business.

Most Fischau residents belonged to the Lichtenau-Petershagen Flemish church; N. Doerksen was a minister of that congregation. There were only a few Mennonite Brethren. In later years a cloth dyeing shop on the south end of the village was converted into a meeting place for church services during inclement weather. In 1918 Minister David Derksen held Bible studies for young people in his home.

When the railroad was built in 1912, the track skirted the east side of the village. The nearest station was two villages south, in Lichtenau. In the serious flood of the northern Molotschna of 1912 the Fischau outlook was optimistic. It was reported that inundation of the lowlands would ensure a good crop of hay!

Fischau undoubtedly suffered the difficulties of the other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the following civil war. Three young men from the village served as drivers for the Reds, helping to transport horses to a central collecting point. They were shot and killed. The girls of the village made wreaths to place on their common grave. The famine of 1922 may have been of moderate severity in the village, since only four requests for help were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, involving a total of 28 people. In the mid 1920s a considerable number of people did migrate to Canada, in all there were at least 16 family groups, with 63 individuals. In 1929 Mennonites collected in the suburbs of Moscow in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. At least one family group, Gerhard Isaak and four sisters did escape, since they were in the Prenzlau refugee camp in Germany in February, 1930. Margaretha Epp was among those who went to Moscow, but were not successful; she was sent back home. Others went to the far eastern part of Siberia, there to cross the Amur River ice to China. Peter Heinrich Fast was in Harbin, China in 1931, showing that he had made good his escape.

The village suffered the usual consequences of the implemented Soviet policies, such as men being "taken," and sent into exile in the 1930s. With the German invasion of Russia in June of 1941it is likely that more men were imprisoned. When the German forces were approaching the Molotschna, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-west to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Fischau residents were at Tokmak, so when the region was occupied by the invading army, they had not been exiled, and simply returned to their homes.

Statistics were taken in Fischau by the occupying German Army on January 28, 1942. The 306 "Germans" remaining represented 65% of the total population of 471; of these 65% were Mennonites. There were 102 women, but only 57 men, (so it is probable that about 50 men had been exiled), and 117 children. Farmers represented 97% of the population. Mayor was Peter Harder.

With the evacuation of the German troops in September of 1943 the whole Mennonite population of Fischau joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were likely overrun by the advancing Soviet forces, but a number did escape to the West At least four family groups, totalling eight people, were on ships heading to South America in 1948.

Fischau is now called Rybalovka; the school is the only remaining Mennonite building.

FRANZTHAL

(Map page 31)

Franzthal was established in 1820, being settled by 23 families from the Schwetz region near Kulm in West Prussia. The land on which they settled was given to them by the Crown, and had only been used in the summer time as pasture by Nogai nomads. The first location was on the bald steppe, in a slight depression. A trial well reached water at 8½ fathoms (51 feet) of difficult digging, so after six weeks the location of the village was moved to lie along the Juschanlee River. But no one wanted to live on the farmsteads on the side of the street away from the river. Eventually Judge Fadeyev allowed the farmers to settle in a single row along the river.

The first year only one house was completed, the others made arrangements for living in the parts of the barns that had been finished or lived in sod huts.

With the active help of the *Schulze* Peter Ratzlaff, all the houses were soon completed.

Franzthal was one of a cluster of villages which was established by Frisians from Prussia in 1820, all on the extreme eastern end of the southern Molotschna. Its land lay mostly to the north-west of the village. Rudnerweide was established to the west, Grossweide to the north and Pastwa to the east. The land was fertile black soil, suitable for growing trees, grain and pasture grass. A number of ancient burial grounds were found on the Franzthal land. Severe storms moving through the region sometimes destroyed entire crops.

At first the village was called Pschuchovka after their home in Prussia, but the authorities did not wish to have a Polish sounding name. Benjamin Ratzlaff, one of the founders, suggested the Prussian name Franzthal, which was then accepted. Eighteen of the families had no financial resources, receiving a total of 10,721 rubles government grant. The others had a total of 15,260 rubles of their own capital. The first three years the yields were meagre, and prices high; the next three years grasshoppers ruined the crops. The winter of 1825 was difficult, as was the drought year of 1833. There was an earthquake on January 11, 1838, which substantially raised the level of water in the wells. Also in 1838 the four field system of crop rotation was introduced. A severe winter storm from December 25, 1847 to January 16, 1848 caused considerable damage to many houses, bringing some to near collapse.

At the 1835 Molotschna census, Franzthal had 29 households, and a total population of 207 (111 males, 96 females). When the Molotschna Village Reports were written in 1848 Johann Flemming was *Schulze*, Heinrich Ediger and Andreas Becker councillors, and Kornelius Siemens the teacher.

According to colony records the Franzthal wheat crop was somewhat below average in 1846, but then rebounded to be above average in 1847. In 1851 the village had 60,400 trees, of which 21,416 were mulberry trees in hedges. Both were low numbers compared to other Molotschna villages.

By 1857 the total village population had risen considerably, to 337 (179 males, 158 females), living in 38 houses and occupying 1,663 dessiatines. There were 50 students, with Kornelius Siemens remaining the teacher. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869 Franzthal had 10 full farms, 28 half farms and 25 small farms, totaling 63, occupying 1,960 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Franzthal was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Throughout its history Franzthal seems to have been active in the Frisian Mennonite Church based in nearby Rudnerweide. A number of ministers of that congregation actually lived in Franzthal - Johann Becker (1853), Gerhard Dirks (1872), Heinrich Abrahams (1900) and Peter Dirks (1903). Kornelius Ruechert was a deacon.

In 1908 Franzthal had 448 people, occupying 1,862 dessiatines of land. There were four business establishments. Klaas Pauls, Jakob Becker and Kornelius Driediger owned motor driven mills, J. Driediger and J. Martens ran a brickyard.

Franzthal likely suffered the usual atrocities of Mennonite villages of the Molotschna during the revolution and the following civil war. The subsequent famine also affected the village, but there were only three requests for food packages printed in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 18 individuals. This was not nearly as great a number as came from the neighbouring village of Pastwa.

People from Fanzthal participated in the exodus of the mid 1920s. Widow Helena Becker with four children escaped to Constantinople by April of 1923. At least nine family groups, 27 individuals, are listed as having emigrated to Canada.

During the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s Franzthal undoubtedly suffered the usual fate of Mennonite villages in the Molotschna. There were likely many more, but it is known that a Pauls family was exiled to the Tomsk region in 1930. At least 30 of the men of Franzthal were exiled in the 1930s. With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets requisitioned work crews from the Mennonite villages to dig trenches and tank traps. There were 12 of the more fit from Franzthal involved in this work. Johann Janzen was the supervisor, some of the other people being Jakob Janzen, Peter Janzen, Maria Janzen and Elvira Klassen. They, as well as workers from the surrounding villages, were sent to Station Mirovaya, near Zaporozhye, for their work.

As the enemy forces came ever closer to the Molotschna, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west villages to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka (the station was actually 2½ kilometres west of the town). All those who were at the Lichtenau station were loaded onto trains in early October, 1941, and sent to the north or central Asia. Of the people who collected at Nelgovka some were

evacuated, others not. Those who were away digging trenches were overrun by the German forces near Zaporozhye, and were therefore not sent away. Two Russian brothers Kosmenko, one an official in Franzthal, the other in Rudnerweide, did all they could to delay the deportation from these villages. The railway was then damaged by bombing, so the people from Franzthal, and most from Rudnerweide could not be sent off, and returned to their homes. The Bergen family from Franzthal was unfortunate enough to be shipped off with some of the other villages. The mayor of Franzthal at that time was Franz Pauls. During the time of the German occupation church services were again held, locally, in the school.

When the German Army evacuated the region in September of 1943 the remaining Mennonite population fled with the troops, joining the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. The Mennonites of Franzthal were among these. Apparently after the people left their homes the village was burned to the ground by the retreating forces. Many of the fleeing Mennonites were unfortunately later recaptured by the advancing Soviets, but some from Franzthal did manage to make it to the West. Peter Ediger, Kornelius Pauls and his mother, Nikolai Pauls and Tina Pauls eventually made it to South America. Jakob and Peter Janzen, Johann Sudermann, and the Gerhard Baerg and Heinrich Unruh families, minus fathers, reached Canada.

With the large number of Mennonites that came to Germany as *Aussiedler* in the 1980s and 1990s were also a number of people from Franzthal. Among them were the Heinrich Ediger, Jakob Esau, Abram Hooge and Kornelius Janzen families.

Franzthal no longer exists. A residence has been built by a local man on the spot where the Baerg house stood at the north-east end of the village. The bridge over the Juschanlee River on the road to the neighbouring Nelgovka is still there. Nothing else.

FRIEDENSDORF

(Map page 32)

Friedensdorf was founded in 1824, south of and parallel to the Begim-Tschokrak River. The original settlement occurred under the jurisdiction of *Oberschulze* Johann Klassen, and Judge Fadeyev, of the Guardian's Committee (Office of Foreign Colonists). The land had been rented by Johann Cornies, but was sublet to neighbouring Russians and Nogai nomads as pastureland. The soil was fertile, more suited to growing crops than harvesting hay.

The 30 full farm sites were largely occupied by Flemish settlers from Prussia. Sixteen were taken in 1824, another 14 in 1825. Eight families, among them Heinrich Poettker and David Schmidt, came from Schwez. Seven families, including Franz Peters and Kornelius Fast, came from the Marienburg region. Kornelius Voth and Peter Voth were from Friedberg. Georg Schulz arrived from the city of Graudenz. A number of families moved in from the Chortitza Colony, and at least two of the original settlers were from Alexanderwohl, Andreas Johann Funk and Heinrich Heinrich Nachtigal. Seventeen families required government subsidy, 13 families were self sufficient. Several pioneers wanted to name the village Friedberg after their home town, but since there was no mountain (*Berg*) in the immediate vicinity, the colony administration settled on "Friedensdorf" as a compromise.

Friedensdorf was somewhat unusual in that the street had two small bends - one in the centre of the village at the school veered to the right, the other farther towards Landskrone angled slightly to the left. As a result the village was also called *Kriwoje*, which means crooked.

On the year of settlement the crops were very poor, and that which did grow was eaten by grasshoppers. The following winter was unusually harsh, so that many of the cattle died. Yet the year was not a total loss. It was brightened by the royal visit of Czar Alexander I "...whose friendly manner made a deep impression on the settlers."

Even the following year was difficult, and until 1828 grasshoppers continued to wreak havoc. That year disease broke out among the cattle. In 1831the Friedensdorf villagers lost their entire wool crop through fire - unfortunately not covered by insurance. Then in 1833 and 1834 came the severe drought in which they lost most of their horses, butchered some of the cattle because there was no feed and had to sell their sheep at half price. Credit extended by the colony administration prevented starvation deaths of the people, but could not prevent abject poverty and the loss of some of the farmsteads. Despite these circumstances a school and a community granary were built in 1830.

In the 1835 Molotschna census there were 42 establishments in Friedensdorf with a total population of 316 (159 men, 157 women). Possibly reflecting the need for expansion, at least four families moved to the neighbouring Landskrone when it was established in 1839. These were Franz Goossen, Johann Johann Poettker, Bernhard Bernhard Friesen and Thomas

Bernhard Friesen.

Agriculturally Friedensdorf seems to have been an average village; no farmers are recorded as being outstanding. In 1847 the average wheat production for the Molotschna was a 12¼ fold increase, Friedensdorf had 12½. By 1851 the village had planted a total of 81,407 trees, including 22,372 mulberry trees in hedges and 72 pear trees. The village produced somewhat over 4 pud of silk that year.

In 1848 the *Schulze* of Friedensdorf was Franz Wiens, councillors were Peter Buller and Peter Wiens, with teacher Jakob Wiebe. In 1857 the village occupied 2,063 dessiatines; population was 345 (178 males, 167 females) with 55 school age children living in 46 houses. Jakob Wiebe was still teacher, Franz Wiens remained *Schulze*, while councillor was Claas Enns. After the Molotschna land redistribution of 1869 Friedensdorf had 27 full farms, six half farms and 26 small farms with a total land area of 2,366 dessiatines. When the Molotschna Colony was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Friedensdorf was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Friedensdorf religious loyalties were divided. Johann Peters (1833) and Reinhard Hiebert(1847) were ministers of the Rudnerweide Frisian church. Isaak Sawatzky (1840) was a minster of the Lichtenau Flemish congregation. Gerhard Enns was ordained minister of the Margenau-Landskrone church, Heinrich Schulz a deacon. Gerhard Bergen (1848) was a minister of the Alexanderwohl congregation. Church attendance for the MBs was at first in Rueckenau, then later in Gnadenheim.

In 1908 there were a number of small business establishments in the village. Johann Thielmann had a small wares store, Jakob Berg and Heinrich Reimer had windmills, Abraham Schmidt owned a blacksmith shop and a small goods shop.

During the revolution and the subsequent civil war Friedensdorf suffered the same as the other Molotschna villages. Jakob Goetz, Johann Reimer and Johann Janzen were murdered by Makhno bandits in 1919. A considerable number of people died during the typhus epidemic brought to the area by the soldiers. During the famine of 1922-23 one of the Mennonite Central Committee feeding stations was in Friedensdorf. About half of the villagers received one hot meal a day from March 1922 into the summer of 1923. Clothes, and the later arrival of tractors and seed grain were appreciated. Only one request for food was published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*: Abraham Johann Baergen needed help for 21 people, presumably an extended family.

In the mid 1920s only a few families migrated to Canada. Jakob Voth, wife Maria and five children, Gertrude Willms and daughter Ida are the only ones listed among the immigrants. An additional seven families moved to the Amur area, likely hoping to escape via China.

As the Soviet programs were implemented in the 1930s, life in Friedensdorf became more difficult. Both the MB meeting place in the Suckau house, and the Mennonite gatherings at the Thielmann house were shut down. The ministers were either deprived of all their property or were imprisoned. The last Christmas program was held in the Thielmann house in 1930.

With the dekulakization between 1929 and 1931 a total of 20 families were disenfranchised, among them Dietrich Richert, Heinrich Reimer and Bernhard Harder. Around 1935 five men were imprisoned, a further 29 were "taken" during the Purge of 1937 and 1938. In 1941another 20 were imprisoned, and 28 were conscripted for hard labour.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. They ordered the south-west villages to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived they were able to ship off all at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, sending them to the far north or central Asia. Friedensdorf villagers were among the fortunate people gathered at Stulnevo. When the German forces overran the area, they simply returned to their homes.

When the occupying forces took statistics in Friedensdorf on December 28, 1941, the total population of the village was 351, of which 344, or 98% were Mennonite. There were 36 men, 136 women and 172 children under the age of 14 in the village. The vast majority, 98%, were involved with farming, 2% were officials. Land occupied was 1,323 dessiatines (1445 hectares), a considerable decrease from Czarist times. Mayor was Peter Klassen, assistants were Abraham Beir and Peter Koop.

On September 13, 1943, all of the Mennonites of Friedensdorf packed their belongings onto wagons, and joined the "Great Trek," fleeing with the retreating German Army. Unfortunately most were overrun by the Soviet Army in January of 1945, and were forced back to the Soviet Union, to the forests of the far north, Siberia or to central Asia. Very few escaped to the West. Gerhard Klassen, one of these few, was a passenger listed on the *S.S. Volendam*, bound for South America in 1948. Four families, G. Bergen, B. Wiens,

J. Wedel and H. Epp settled in Canada.

Today a number of people have come out of the former Soviet Union as *Aussiedler*, and now live in Germany. Among these is Katharina Krueger. There was even a *Friedensdorf Treffen* held in Espelkamp, so there must be a considerable number.

Friedensdorf is now called Khmyelnitskoye. No Mennonite buildings remain in the area; only a few gravestones can be found in the cemetery, with illegible inscriptions.

FRIEDENSRUH

(Map page 33)

Friedensruh was founded in 1857, an expansion village lying just south of and parallel to the Juschanlee River. Immediately north of the village, across the Juschanlee River, was Neukirch, founded in 1819. The land of Friedensruh lay entirely south of the river, and was crossed by a number of tributaries of the Arab River; it was part of the Molotschna Colony land which had been designated for expansion. Buildings were constructed according to the regulations of the Agricultural Society, so the houses had brick walls and clay tile roofs.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Friendensruh had 28 full farms, four half farms and 24 small farms, totaling 56, on 2,334 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Friedensruh was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Abram Peters of Friedensruh was somewhat of a free theological spirit. He had a following of his own, called *Abram Peters Brueder*. He participated in a faith conference held in the Molotschna in the late autumn of 1875. He later was the leader of a wagon train which left Waldheim on August 1, 1880, as part of the Claas Epp movement, travelling to central Asia, there to better meet the Lord at His second coming.

There must have been some Mennonite Brethren in the village, since Friedensruh was on the path of the circuit ministers as they travelled through the Molotschna 1876-77. Friedensruh of course had an elementary school, but had even more interest in education, Minister Jakob Esau being a member of the Molotschna School Board in 1910.

In 1907 a land complex of 420 dessiatines was bought seven verst north of Issyl Kul in Siberia. Some of the initial families that settled in the region were from Friedensruh: Aron Janzen, Aron Isaak, Peter Wiebe, Kornelius Willms and Heinrich Baerg. Not surprisingly, the Siberian village was also called Friedensruh.

In 1908 Friedensruh had a population of 475, occupying 2,180 dessiatines. There were only two business establishments in the village. Gerhard Harder had a windmill and A. Matthies and P. Klassen owned a brick yard.

Friedensruh undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. The typhus (possibly typhoid fever) epidemic brought to the village by Bolshevik soldiers resulted in a number of deaths. In the following famine Friedensruh must have suffered acutely. A total of 23 families, representing 153 people, requested food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. In the mid 1920s at least ten family groups, consisting of 45 individuals, emigrated to Canada. Having missed the chance in the mid 1920s, about 13,000 Mennonites collected in Moscow in late 1929 and 1930 in a last desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. Heinrich Andres, wife and four children made it to Germany, residing in the Prenzlau Refugee Camp in 1930. Abram Harder and wife, Anna Peters and six children went to Paraguay that same year.

With the implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s residents of Friedensruh were expelled from their homes as kulaks. Abram J. Fast and family were dispossessed and resettled in the kulak village of Oktoberfeld, then were sent to Chelyabinsk. Between 1935 and 1938 sixty men were exiled to various distant places in the Soviet Union. Six men were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate all Mennonites from the region. They ordered them to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages were sent to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship all those from Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka before the German troops arrived in early October. Friedensruh residents, 332 of them, were among the unfortunate ones at Lichtenau who were exiled to the far north or central Asia.

When the German occupying forces took statistics in Friedensruh on February 2, 1942, the 25 remaining Mennonites were 17.4% of the total population of 144. There were 11 men, nine women and five children. Eduard Janzen was the mayor.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, the few remaining Mennonites of Friedensruh joined the "Great Trek"

westward to Poland and Germany. Many of these were recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army, but a number did reach the West. Peter Friesen and David Isaak sailed for South America in 1948, and that same year Helene Spenst and the Hermann Krueger family reached Canada.

Today Friedensruh, together with Neukirch, the village across Juschanlee River, are called Udarnik. Little is left from the Mennonite era, only one recognizable gravestone in the cemetery south of where the village once stood.

FUERSTENAU

(Maps page 34)

Fuerstenau was founded in 1807 on the south bank of the Tokmak River. It was situated three verst east of the Russian village of Tokmak; a community sheep farm was established to the east, which in time became the village of Fabrikerwiese. The land of Fuerstenau lay to the south of the village.

The initial 12 Flemish families, some of whom had left Prussia as early as 1805, overwintered in the Chortitza Colony. The village was established in 1807 under the supervision of *Oberschulze* Klaas Wiens; additional nine families arrived, giving a full complement of 21 settlers by 1810. Most families were poor, altogether not having more than 2,000 rubles; grants by the Crown totalled 10,234 rubles, 63 kopeks. The original settlers came from the Tiegenhof, Marienburg, Elbing and Danzig areas of West Prussia. The settlement was named after a village in Prussia.

Chroniclers mention only that Fuerstenau experienced the usual difficulties of pioneering villages. An obvious highlight of the early years was a visit by Czar Alexander I on May 21, 1818. Having breakfasted with the David Huebert family in Lindenau, the Czar's entourage stopped in Fuerstenau that afternoon. The Czar got out of his coach in the middle of the village, and walked the last half. He stopped at two of the *Wirtschaften* and enquired about their welfare. "Out of extreme surprise, joy and shock they could hardly answer him." It was said that "he showed himself so loving and kind; no father is able to treat his own child in a more loving manner."

At the 1835 Molotschna census Fuerstenau had 29 households with a total population of 198 (103 males, 95 females). Hermann Neufeld was *Schulze*, Gerhard Gerhard Loewen and Jakob Enss were councillors. In 1848 Hermann Neufeld was still *Schulze,* councillors were Wilhelm Schroeter and Aron Toews.

Mid century Fuerstenau agriculture was roughly the Molotschna average. In 1846 and 1847 wheat production was almost exactly the norm. In 1851 Fuerstenau had 93,498 trees, of which 43,277 were mulberry trees in hedges. That same year silk production in the village was high.

In 1857 the Fuerstenau population was 309 (153 males, 156 females), living in 49 houses, occupying 1,561 dessiatines. Teacher Isaak Peters had 52 students. That same year Aron Toews was elected *Schulze*, Franz Goossen councillor. In 1858 Jakob Wieler was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869 Fuerstenau had 20 large farms, two half farms and 37 small farms, totaling 59, occupying 1,957 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Fuerstenau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Fuerstenau had considerable interest in the religious affairs of the Molotschna Colony. Peter Harder was ordained a deacon of the Schoensee Flemish congregation in 1851, Peter Toews a minister of the same church in 1889. Isaak Peters, later elder of the Pordenau congregation (1868-1874) had earlier been a school teacher in Fuerstenau and Sparrau.

Mennonite Brethren influence in Fuerstenau was quite strong. Peter Stobbe was one of the 27 who elected the first elder of the M. B. Church on May 30, 1860. He voted for Jakob Bekker and Andreas Voth. Jakob Jantz of Fuerstenau became a member of the church in 1864, then moved to help found a new congregation in Friedensfeld in 1866. He became the longstanding elder of that congregation. Johann Poettker was ordained a minister of the Rueckenau church in 1872. He was one of the ministers who migrated to the United States in 1879, together with Elder Abraham Schellenberg and one third of the congregation. Johann J. Fast was named representative of the elder in 1878, the leadership anticipating that the church in Rueckenau would need shepherding when the elder departed.

In 1882 the Rueckenau M. B. congregation decided that it needed a larger sanctuary. Construction began in 1883 under the supervision of Johann Koop of Fuerstenau. It was mentioned that the costs would have been much higher "if there had not been so much voluntary labour...and such prompt and careful control by the building supervisor and other brothers."

In 1873 Abraham Peters, former school teacher in Fuerstenau and Friedensruh, led some members of the Ohrloff-Neukirch congregation to form the *Abram Peters Brueder.* In 1880 he was one of the

leaders of the wagon train that left the Molotschna, heading to central Asia, there to be better prepared to meet the Lord at His second coming.

In 1908 the population of Fuerstenau was 444, living on 1,875 dessiatines. There were three business establishments in the village. Jakob Wiens and David Harder had windmills. Wilhelm Neufeld owned a brick yard.

Wilhelm and Maria Neufeld, owners of the brick factory, were also owners of a large estate at Ylinyanaya, 55 verst north of Liebenau. Apparently the Fuerstenau villagers were quite apprehensive about the value of their property, since it was so close to the town of Tokmak. Neufeld bought up the *Wirtschaften* at bargain prices, eventually owning 18 of the 20 farms in the village. He farmed the land as a unit, renting the rest out to other Mennonites. Wilhelm and Maria expanded and remodelled their home, which was located across the street from the village school, in time resulting in a rather impressive residence. It had a grand salon decorated in Victorian style, filled with works of art, as well as a gramophone and a record library. The grounds included large barns, sheds and storage buildings as well as a flower garden, a gazebo and a bowling lane. The Neufeld family had to abandon their home in 1921; it was subsequently incorporated into a collective farm.

The village school had a classroom at one end, and a residence for teachers at the other. Enrolment was usually 30-40 students. In 1921 the building was converted to a Russian school, with Mennonite students being sent elsewhere.

Fuerstenau seems to have had more than the usual difficulties of Molotschna villages with the revolution and the subsequent civil war. Gerhard Toews was murdered during the unrest. There was a serious typhus epidemic as a result of soldiers moving through the area. The following famine of 1922 must have hit hard. There were 22 requests for food drafts, representing 122 individuals, published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. As early as 1921 there were refugees from Fuerstenau in Constantinople, Aron and Peter Toews as well as Abraham Rennpenning. The latter two eventually reached the United States. When emigration to Canada became a possibility in the mid 1920s, at least 13 family groups, 42 individuals, left Fuerstenau.

When communist policies became more obvious in the late 1920s, thousands of Mennonites collected in Moscow in a desperate attempt to get exit visas. Abraham Rogalsky, wife Elenore and three children were among the fortunate people who managed to escape, landing in Canada on January 31, 1930. Other Mennonites moved to far eastern Siberia with the objective of crossing the Amur River ice to China. Anna Ratzlaff with three children (in 1931) and Franz Goossen with wife Katharina and one daughter (in 1934) were listed as refugees in Harbin, China, showing that they were successful.

After that time there is no specific information about Fuerstenau. It is presumed that the most successful farmers were exiled, and that additional men were banished in the 1930s. Mennonites of Fuerstenau were taken to the railway station at Tokmak when the German forces were approaching the Molotschna in late September, 1941. The Soviets intended to evacuate the entire Mennonite population, but before this could be accomplished the area was overrun by the German invaders. The people then will have returned to their homes. Fuerstenau Mennonites likely joined the "Great Trek" westward when the German forces retreated from the area, but most were probably "repatriated." There is no specific record of anyone having escaped to the West.

The name of Fuerstenau was changed to Dolinka in 1915, then likely back to Fuerstenau with the German occupation. Since 1945 it is known as Lugovka. A few Mennonite buildings remain, such as the Wilhelm Neufeld house and the school.

FUERSTENWERDER

(Map page 35)

Fuerstenwerder was founded in 1821 on the east bank of the Begim-Tschokrak River. Of the 30 original Flemish families, four were from within the Molotschna Colony, the others arrived in Russia between 1816 and 1819. The families who arrived from Prussia came from the Danzig, Marienburg, Stuhm and Marienwerder districts. Total crown grants for the settlers amounted to 19,919 rubles, 859 rubles per poor family, 280 rubles for those who had some means. Those families coming from the Molotschna itself were on their own.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 36 establishments in Fuerstenwerder with a total population of 248 (132 males, 116 females). In 1848, according to the Molotschna Village Report, there were 30 large farms, eight houses being built of burned clay bricks, 22 of air dried bricks. The population had expanded to 351 (175 males, 176 females). The village had 254 horses, 330 cattle and 1,825 sheep; there was one windmill. Johann Reimer was *Schulze*, Johann Jakob Goerzen councillor and

Johann Siemens the teacher.

Mid century agriculture was probably about average for the Molotschna, although wheat yields for 1846 and 1847 were below the norm. In 1851 the village had 106,107 trees, of which 44,319 were mulberry trees in hedges and there were 531 pear trees. Fuerstenwerder farmers participated in the overall governance of the colony: Peter Mierau and Daniel Loewen were members of the Molotschna Mennonite Council in 1853 and David Loewen in 1857.

In 1857 the Fuerstenwerder population was 385 (184 males, 201 females) living in 50 houses, occupying 2,230 dessiatines. Teacher Johann Siemens had 58 students. That same year Kornelius Claassen was elected *Schulze*, Abraham Schellenberg councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Fuerstenwerder had 18 full farms, four half farms and 33 small farms, for a total of 65, occupying 2,478 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Fuerstenwerder was in the Halbstadt Volost.

There was no church in Fuerstenwerder, but affiliation appears to have been with the Flemish Mennonite Church. Abraham Ewert was a minister in the Margenau-Landskrone Mennonite Church, ordained in 1889. Jakob Wittenberg was first a teacher, then a business man, but also a minister of the Lichtenau-Petershagen congregation, ordained in 1904. In later years Mennonite church members went to Alexanderwohl for services, Mennonite Brethren to Rueckenau.

In 1908 the Fuerstenwerder population had reached 701, occupying 2,309 dessiatines. Peter Willms and Isaak Berg had windmills, Widow Willms owned a brickyard, and David Fast operated a grocery store.

Fuerstenwerder suffered the common fate as the other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. Two young men, Jakob Willms and Jakob Bergen, active Bolsheviks, were arrested in the spring of 1918, and were locked up in the village office. They were tried in Halbstadt, and though others were executed, these two were allowed to go free. During the civil war men of the village were forced to provide transport for the Red and White armies, and soldiers of both armies were often quartered in the village. The people had to endure frequent house searches under the pretext of looking for weapons. Soldiers entered any house they wished, rummaged through drawers and closets, taking money, clothes, or anything else that caught their fancy.

In the famine of 1922 a Mennonite Central Committee kitchen was set up on a yard next to the school in Fuerstenwerder. Even so there were at least five requests for food packages published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, repesenting 38 individuals. There is no record of deaths from starvation in the village.

When the opportunity came to flee from Russia, Gerhard Warkentin, wife and three children escaped to Batum by July, 1922, and Johann Willms, wife and three children got to Constantinople in April, 1923. At least ten family groups, 40 people, emigrated to Canada in the mid 1920s. Abram Peter Willms of Fuerstenwerder represented the Rueckenau Mennonite Brethren Church at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches in Russia held in Moscow on January 13-18, 1925, in Moscow. It is not certain that he was able to emigrate.

In the late 1920s and 1930s Fuerstenwerder suffered the usual atrocities associated with implementation of the Soviet policies. Beginning in the winter of 1929-30 the village was reorganized as the Kolkhoz *Krasnii Armia* (Red Army Collective Farm). During the next two years about 20 families were labelled as kulaks. They were driven out of their homes and disenfranchised. At least three families were sent to Siberia: Nikolai Siebert, wife and four children, Kornelius Willms and wife, Peter Sawatzky, wife and three children. Another 16 families were evicted from their homes and forced to find work and living quarters wherever they could. Some fled to the Caucasus, to the Don area, into Russian villages or to larger urban centres. A few eventually returned to Fuerstenwerder, only to have the men arrested in 1937-1938. Even the children of kulaks were punished. They were not allowed to go to school, and could not eat in the collective's kitchen.

A total of 44 men were arrested in Fuerstenwerder in the Purge of 1937-38. Some of these were Kornelius Friesen, Jakob Dietrich Braun and Jakob Kornelius Goertzen.

After the German invasion of Russia in June of 1941, more than 40 persons were conscripted from Fuerstenwerder to dig tank traps in the region of Chortitza. Justina Warkentin was one of these people.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. They ordered all south-west villages to collect at the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west at Tokmak, the north-east at Stulnevo and the south-east at Nelgovka. Fuerstenwerder residents were ordered to evacuate the village on Septmber 28 to go to

Tokmak. There, on the open field, they waited for the train. After eight days the Russian forces withdrew, and the German army occupied the region. The people of Fuerstenwerder simply returned to their homes. Even though the village had been looted by the departing soldiers and the peasants of the area, the residents were happy to be back.

When the German army evacuated the region in September of 1943 the remaining Mennonite population fled with the troops, joining the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. The Mennonites of Fuerstenwerder were among these. Many were unfortunately later recaptured by the advancing Soviets, but some did manage to make it to the West. A group of 45 grandmothers, mothers and children from Fuerstenwerder and Alexanderwohl were in Russian occupied Germany near Mecklenburg at the end of the war. They said they were from "Fuerstenwerder," neglecting to add that it was the one in Russia! In 1946 they travelled by train to Berlin, and in time became part of the miraculous "Berlin Escape" story. Eventually at least seven family groups, 19 people, were bound for South America in 1948. Two families from Fuerstenwerder, four individuals, are recorded as arriving in Canada.

In 1915 the village name had been changed to Povorotnoye, then in 1917 back to Fuerstenwerder. Since 1945 it has been called Balkovo. The former school building still remains.

GNADENFELD

(Map page 36)

Gnadenfeld was founded in 1835 by a group of Groningen Old Flemish colonists from Brandenburg, led by Wilhelm Lange. Originally arriving in the Molotschna in the autumn of 1834, they wintered over in some of the existing villages, then moved out to the proposed area in the spring of 1835. Most of the original full farm sites were occupied in 1835, a few more were filled in 1836, and the final three in 1840. Two main streets were laid out, each with 20 full farms on one side, 40 smaller plots on the other side. A narrow and eventually well treed *Kirchensteg* (Church Path) separated the two rows of full farms. Johann Cornies named the village Gnadenfeld because the Czar had, in his mercy (*Gnade*) graciously bent the rules to allow emigration of the group to Russia, and field (*Feld*) because the site chosen was in the middle of the bald treeless steppe. Despite difficult early years, Gnadenfeld grew. In 1848 *Schulze* was Voth, councillors Jantzen and Goerz.

In the mid century Gnadenfeld appears to have been quite successful in agricultural ventures. In 1846 the flax production was described as exceptional. In 1847 the wheat yield exceeded the Molotschna average by four fold. In 1849 Bernhard Penner planted the most fruit trees of any farmer in the colony - 160. In 1851 there were 95,053 trees in Gnadenfeld, and in 1852 the village held the record for potato production, Christian Schlabbach and Tobias Schmidt being the farmers with the highest yield. Shelter belts of trees were planted all around the village.

In 1857 Heinrich Goertz was elected *Schulze*, August Rabsch councillor. The total population of Gnadenfeld was 590 (310 males, 280 females), living in 66 houses, occupying 2,729 dessiatines. There were 105 students, with Abram Ediger being the teacher. Wilhelm Dick, Peter Wall and Heinrich Goertz served on the Molotschna Mennonite Council. With final land redistribution in the Molotschna in 1869, Gnadenfeld had 34 full farms, 12 half farms and 38 small farms, for a total of 84 on 3,208 dessiatines. When the Molotschna Colony was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Gnadenfeld became the administrative centre of the Gnadenfeld Volost. This region consisted of the eastern part of the Molotschna, including 27 villages and slightly less than half of the population. Wilhelm Ewert of Grossweide was the first *Oberschulze*; David Unruh was a later *Oberschulze* who actually lived in Gnadenfeld.

Under the capable leadership of Wilhelm Lange the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church was, from the beginning, very active in the spiritual development of the Molotschna. Home Bible studies and fellowship groups as well as mission festivals attracted many people from the surrounding villages. Eduard Wuest, pastor of the Separatist Lutheran Church of Neuhoffnung, often preached in Gnadenfeld. August Lenzmann was ordained as elder in 1854, and although he was somewhat conservative in outlook, continued the progressive activities of the congregation. In 1857 a *Bruderschule* (Brotherhood School) was established in Gnadenfeld, the first teacher being David Hausknecht, later followed by Heinrich Franz and Friedrich Lange.

Not everyone was happy with the existing church. In December of 1859 a group of Gnadenfeld members, led by Johann Claassen and Jakob Reimer, left a church membership meeting after some calls for their departure were voiced. The following January 6, 1860, they helped found the Mennonite Brethren Church in an organizational meeting held in Elisabetthal. The group felt that by and large the

Mennonite Church in the Molotschna no longer had true spiritual life, and included many members who were nominal Christians only. Of the original 18 men who signed the document of secession, none actually lived in Gnadenfeld. At the election of the first elder of the M. B. Church, three of the 27 voters lived in Gnadenfeld: Jakob Reimer, Bernhard Penner and Heinrich Bartel.

Johann Lange, one of the teachers in the *Bruderschule*, had received training in a German school steeped in Zionism. When he then came to Gnadenfeld he brought this emphasis with him. Eventually a group called "Templars" or "Friends of Jerusalem" withdrew from the Gnadenfeld membership in 1863. They requested, and in time were granted, permission to resettle. In 1868 they established a number of villages in the Kuban area of the Caucasus.

After the separation of the Mennonite Brethren and the Templars the Gnadenfeld congregation no longer played the leading role it had occupied in the spiritual life of the Molotschna. There was, however, continued interest in education. The *Bruderschule* had closed down in 1863, but in 1873 a *Zentralschule* was established in the same building. This school served the region as the principal post secondary institution for many years, with excellent teachers such as Hermann Lenzmann, Benjamin Ratzlaff and Johann Unruh. Before World War I it changed to a school of commerce (*Kommerzschule*), largely to come under the jurisdiction of a different government department. In 1914 Kornelius Martens became inspector of schools in the Gnadenfeld Volost, and at the same time rector of the school. After the revolution the *Kommerzschule* was again modified, this time to become a seven grade vocational school. In 1907 Kornelius J. Reimer established a girls school, one of its long time teachers being Katharina Reimer, daughter of the founder.

In 1908 the Gnadenfeld population was 923, highest of any village in the volost, occupying 3,046 dessiatines. There were a considerable number of business enterprises in the village. Heinrich Becker sold flour; a cooperative dealt with manufactured goods. Aron Rempel and Johann Ediger sold agricultural equipment. Wilhelm Neufeld, Heinrich Unruh and Abraham Ediger had windmills. There were even two bookstores, operated by Franz Goossen and Johann Janzen. There was also an inn (*Gasthaus*), a post office and a doctor's clinic.

On September 1, 1914, following the announcement of the universal draft following the outbreak of World War I, 332 men of the Gnadenfeld Volost gathered in Gnadenfeld. From there they headed for the station at Stulnevo, then by train to Ekaterinoslav, where most were assigned to the medical corps.

Later, during the civil war following the revolution, after the defeat of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* on March 6-10, 1919, it was in Gnadenfeld, just outside the administrative offices (*Gebietsamt*) that two Mennonite representatives met General Dobenko to plead for Mennonite lives on March 11. The commander of the Red Army finally agreed that his troops would not kill, but were allowed to plunder for three days. One of the Mennonite representatives was Kornelius Kornelius Martens, rector of the School of Commerce. There were other episodes affecting the lives of the people of Gnadenfeld. Georg Rempel and Alexander Rempel were killed in a *Selbstschutz* battle. Jakob Hildebrandt was a casualty of White bombardment of the village when it was in Red hands. Jakob Neufeld and Jakob Willms were tried by a Soviet Troika in 1921, and executed.

Gnadenfeld certainly felt the effects of the famine which followed the civil war. At least 69 requests for food packages, representing 422 people, were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* This must have represented about half of the population. About 60 people are said to have died of starvation in the famine in the Gnadenfeld Volost. It is not certain how many of these were actually from the village of Gnadenfeld.

By 1923 a total of five families had fled to Constantinople, 21 individuals, with another five people being in Batum. At least 17 families with over 46 individuals emigrated to Canada in the mid 1920s. After the emigration the land holdings were reorganised. Many new families, especially Volhynian Germans, moved into Gnadenfeld, in time constituting 25% of the "German" population of 800. Apparently about 100 Ukrainians also moved into the village.

Gnadenfeld experienced the usual suffering of Mennonite villages caused by the application of Soviet policies in the 1920s and 1930s. The Karl Marx Collective Farm was formed, with headquarters in Gnadenfeld. Many families and individuals (about eight families, 54 individuals) fled Gnadenfeld to avoid exile, most often going to the Caucasus or the Crimea. At least 20 families, 82 individuals, were forced off their property as kulaks. Most were banished, and never heard from again. A total of 82 men were arrested in 1937-38; 15.8 % had been arrested earlier, and were re-arrested this time.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the arresting of men was accelerated. At least 159 were taken to labour camps. With the invaders coming ever closer, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stunevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived they were able to ship off all those at the Lichtenau station and some from Nelgovka. Gnadenfeld Mennonites were at the Stulnevo station, so when the German Army controlled the area they were able to return to their homes. One villager noted that they were happy to share their homes with the occupying German troops.

A considerable number of men from Gnadenfeld had been drafted into the Red Army. A total of 33 were killed or missing in action, while eight others were taken prisoner, and in time repatriated.

With the retreat of the German Army from the region in September, 1943, the entire Mennonite population joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. About 673 individuals left Gnadenfeld on September 12; of these 24 died on the trail. At least 284 were repatriated by the advancing Soviet forces, of which nine perished on the way back "home."

Of the Gnadenfeld residents who made it to the West, Jacob Rennpenning was on a ship to Canada in 1947, Agnes Voth and three children in 1948. Walter Loewen, first held in a prisoner of war camp for over three years, was the only member of his family to reach Canada, in 1949. Wilhelm Ratzlaff, likely a fellow prisoner, also emigrated in 1949. Altogether 15 family groups sailed for South America, totalling 36 people.

A number of Gnadenfeld people have now left Russia to settle in Germany as *Aussiedler*. Jakob Loewen (brother of Walter) with wife and ten children crossed the borders in 1990, sister Liesel Breivogel, also with ten children, came in 1993.

Gnadenfeld is now called Bogdanovka, situated in the Chernigov District, near the Zaporozhye-Berdyansk highway. Many of the original buildings are still there, such as the *Zentralschule*, the post office and the Doctor's clinic. The church building in which such serious discussions were held in 1859 is gone, its site now an empty field.

GNADENHEIM

(Map page 37)

Gnadenheim was founded in 1821, along the south bank of the Begim-Tschokrak River, just east of Alexanderwohl. In 1824 Friedensdorf was laid out along the same river, east of Gnadenheim. The land on which the village was built had previously been used by Nogai nomads as pasture.

The original 16 Flemish settlers came from the Danzig, Marienwerder and Marienburg regions of West Prussia. Four additional families arrived in 1822, then two more in 1844, and one each in 1845 and 1846, making up 24. They were poor; the original pioneers received from 560 to 854 rubles per family government grants. The name of the village determined by Johann Cornies. Neighbouring Alexanderwohl had been "blessed" by the Czar, so the adjacent village could share in this *Gnade des Landesvaters* (Mercy of the Father of the Land). Therefore it was "Gnadenheim."

In 1825 a school building was constructed, but because of increased student enrolment became too small. In 1844, under supervision of the Agricultural Society, a new larger building was constructed – using fired bricks and Dutch roof tiles. In 1829, at the suggestion of the Agricultural Society a community granary was built, and in 1836, again at the strong suggestion of the Agricultural Society, tree plantations and extensive orchards were begun.

Gnadenheim *Wirtschaften* seem to have had a strong propensity for burning down. In 1828 *Wirtschaft* No. 13 burned; in April of 1832 the house of No. 20 burned, and late one evening of March, 1842, three *Wirtschaften* burned down, No.s 7, 8 and 9.

In 1835, at the time of the Molotschna census, Gnadenheim had 23 households, with a total population of 166 (84 males, 82 females). *Schulze* was Abraham Weier, councillors were Gerhard Friesen and Peter Loewen.

Despite the early adversities, the village considered itself to be doing well by 1848. That year the *Schulze* was Reimer, the councillors Schultz and Peters, and the teacher Franz Isaak.

In 1846 and 1847 Gnadenheim wheat production was roughly the Molotschna average. In 1851 the village had 85,983 trees, of which 26,830 were mulberry trees planted in hedges. Silk production was low average for the colony. Johann Peters was interested in the affairs of the wider community, being on the Molotschna Mennonite Council in 1851 and 1853.

In 1857 Gnadenheim had a total population of 343 (185 males, 158 females) living in 48 houses,

occupying 1,680 dessiatines of land. There were 81 students with teacher Heinrich Friesen. Jakob Wiens was *Schulze,* Abraham Langermann a councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Gnadenheim had 22 full farms, four half farms and 29 small farms, for a total of 55, on 2,024 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Gnadenheim was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Gnadenheim was not at the centre of religious activity, but obviously there was considerable interest in various aspects of church life. Heinrich Wiens was ordained as minister of the Lichtenau-Petershagen Flemish congregation in 1825. Bernhard Peters was ordained as minister for the Margenau-Landskrone church in 1851, then as elder in 1861. He served in that capacity until he retired in 1887. Dietrich Klassen (1872) and Peter Schroeder (1900) were ministers of the Frisian Rudnerweide congregation. Isaak Friesen was ordained as minister of the Rueckenau Mennonite Brethren Church on July 6, 1886.

In 1908 the village had a population of 393, occupying 1,977 dessiatines. There were four business establishments. Goossen and Dirks sold manufactured goods. Johann Dick and Abraham Fast owned windmills, while Johann Goerzen had a brickyard. Total assessed value of the enterprises was 16,500 rubles.

The village of course had the usual village primary school, but likely after the turn of the century a *Zentralschule* was also established.

Gnadenheim undoubtedly suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages during the revolutionary period and the civil war. David Goertzen had fled to Germany by 1921. In the subsequent famine of 1922 there were three requests for food drafts published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau,* representing 22 people. With the possibility of emigration to Canada in the mid 1920s a total of at least 18 family groups, 75 individuals, left Gnadenheim.

A Mennonite Brethren Church was built in Gnadenheim, likely some time after 1910. It functioned as an affiliate of Rueckenau, with membership principally from Alexanderwohl, Gnadenheim and Friedensdorf. Heinrich Dueck had studied in Berlin, was first a minister of the Rueckenau Mennonite Brethren congregation, then moved to Gnadenheim as the elder of that congregation. Kornelius Heinrich Unrau, originally from Alexanderthal, also came to Gnadenheim as a preacher. Despite increasing suppression, religious life did continue in Gnadenheim into the late 1920s. There was a choir as late as 1927-1928, conductor Johann Peters. Johann Peters of Prangenau was the leader of the Gnadenheim congregation when he was dispossessed in September of 1931. He moved to Friedensdorf, neighbour village to Gnadenheim. He was arrested in 1932, tried in Gnadenthal by a Judge Dick, and sentenced to six years of hard labour. Last choir conductors were Jakob Harder and Isaak Sawatzky, both of Friedensdorf. They too were arrested. Presumably the church was closed after these arrests were made.

With the worsening of circumstances many Mennonites collected in the outskirts of Moscow in late 1929 in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. Peter Goerzen as well as Johann and Katharina Goerzen sailed for Canada in 1929; Heinrich Dick, wife and two children and Kornelius Dick and his wife were on a ship leaving Leningrad in 1930, both groups obviously having escaped.

In the early 1930s expulsion of kulaks began; at least 26 families were forced out of their homes. Seven actually remained in the village, two were sent to Siberia (among them David Dirks, businessman, who was expelled in 1931), seven moved to the Caucasus, four to the Crimea and six to other Molotschna villages. From 1935-1937 eleven families (45 people) of Volhynian Germans, previously deported to Siberia, moved into Gnadenheim. They remained until 1942. After the German occupation they moved into some of the other Molotschna villages, where all Mennonites had been deported.

Many men were exiled in the late 1930s, including Minister Heinrich Dueck, who was "taken" in 1937. At least 26 men were taken before 1941, another 83 in 1941.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship off all those at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. The Gnadenheim residents collected at Tokmak, and were not evacuated. When the German forces occupied the region in early October, 1941, the people of Gnadenheim simply returned to their homes.

The German occupying forces took statistics in Gnadenheim on January 29, 1942. The 444 "Germans" represented 99% of the total population of 448. Of these 80% were Mennonites, 20% Lutherans.

There were 45 men, 187 women and 212 children. Six men had been drafted into the Red Army. Mayor was Heinrich Ediger, his assistant Jakob Goerzen.

With the retreat of the German Army from the region in September of 1943, the Gnadenheim Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were overrun by the advancing Soviet Army, but a few did escape to the West. In 1948 Katharina Peters as well as Alfred and Katharina Klassen with five children were on their way to South America.

Gnadenheim is said to have been largely burned down in September of 1943, although there is now a village on the site called Balashovka. It is just off the main road, Highway P 48, connecting Tokmak and Berdyansk.

GNADENTHAL

(Map page 38)

Gnadenthal was founded in 1862 as an expansion village of the Molotschna Colony. It lay immediately to the south of, its street parallel to the Kuruschan River. Its land was both to the north and the south of the river. Margenau was the neighbour to the west.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869 Gnadenthal had 30 full farms, no half farms and nine small farms for a total of 39, on 2,094 dessiatines. Presumably the initial settlers in 1862 will have occupied 30 full farms. With the division of the Molotschna into two municipalities in 1871, Gnadenthal was in Gnadenfeld.

Gnadenthal had the usual tree plantation demanded of each village, and of course an elementary school.

Probably most of the people belonged to the Margenau-Schoensee Mennonite Church. Peter Friesen was ordained a minister for that congregation in 1880, then was an elder from 1901 until 1917, when he died. Aron Warkentin was also ordained as a minister in 1890. There must have been at least a few Mennonite Brethren, since Gnadenthal was on the list for Mennonite Brethren circuit ministers in 1876-77.

In 1908 Gnadenthal had a population of 262, occupying 2,021 dessiatines. There were three business establishments in the village. David Dirks had a brickyard, Kornelius Driediger a windmill, and Jakob Driediger a blacksmith shop.

Gnadenthal undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages during the revolution, the civil war and the subsequent communist take over. In the following famine Gnadenthal must have suffered considerably. At least 17 families requested food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 50 people. In the early 1920s Hermann Peter Dick, wife and two children escaped to Batum. In the mid 1920s at least 13 family groups, consisting of 34 individuals, emigrated to Canada. Bernhard Peters was a delegate at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches of Russia held in Moscow January 13-15, 1925. He is not listed as having emigrated to Canada.

With implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and early 1930s Gnadenthal suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages. Kornelius Martens and wife, Jakob Peters and family were forced off their property, but remained in the village. Minister Peter Kornelius Heidebrecht was arrested in 1929 and sent to Archangel. He returned to Gnadenthal in 1933 as a blacksmith, but fled to the Caucasus in 1934. In 1941 he was deported to Kazakhstan. Minister Bernhard Wiens was also arrested. People banished from other villages actually moved to Gnadenthal, the Friedrich Funkner family from Alexanderwohl and the Jakob Klassen family from Gnadenheim.

An additional 33 men were exiled before 1940, another 38 after the onset of war in June of 1941. Essentially all men aged 16-60 were "recruited" in three waves, by September leaving mostly women and children in the village.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna the Soviets tried to evacuate all Mennonites from the region. They ordered them to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship off all those from Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka before the German troops arrived in early October, but those at the other stations were spared the exile and returned to their homes. Gnadenthal residents were among the fortunate 6,000 at Stulnevo. When the German Army took statistics on January 29, 1942, the 323 Mennonites in Gnadenthal represented 88% of the total population of 367. There were only 36 men, with 135 women and 152 children. Heinrich Teichroeb was the mayor, Nikolai Reimer a councillor.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, all the Mennonites of Gnadenthal undoubtedly joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Many of these were recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army, but a number did reach the West. Heinrich Foth sailed for

South America in 1948; Peter Klassen, Heinrich Neudorf and Helene Penner plus two children arrived in Canada, also in 1948.

Gnadenthal is now a small village called Blagodatnoye just to the west of the Highway P 48.

GROSSWEIDE

(Map page 39)

Grossweide was founded in 1820 in the south-west corner of the Molotschna, street parallel to the Sissikulak River. A group of Frisian Mennonites came from West Prussia under the direction of Elder Franz Goerz, to found Grossweide, Rudnerweide, Pastwa and Franzthal.

Some of the initial 22 Grossweide families came in 1818, most in 1819, the rest in 1820. In all there were 28 adult males and 36 adult females. Most came from the Marienwerder region, a few from the Danzig area. Seven families had a total of 25,000 rubles, and therefore could build fairly good houses and obtain cattle. The other 15 families needed a total of 10,244 rubles 60 kopeks of government subsidy.

The land of Grossweide bordered the Crimea to Bachmut Salt Road on the north, the Juschanlee River on the south. Rudnerweide land was to the west, Franzthal to the east. It had previously been rented by Johann Cornies, who then let the Nogai nomads use it as pasture. This later presented a problem when the Nogai continued to graze their cattle in the area on the cultivated grain fields.

The Sissikulak River, to a considerable degree spring fed, supplied excellent drinking water, both for humans and cattle. Wells also produced good water, at first at a depth of seven to ten and a half arschin. This level was raised by three arschin after the earthquake of January, 1838; unfortunately some of the wells then produced bitter water.

The village was named after the West Prussian home of some of the settlers. The pioneers arrived on the land in May, and by autumn had built wooden cattle sheds – which served as homes for the people the first winter. Eventually the simple wooden structures were replaced by houses with fired bricks, using Dutch roof tiles. The village was especially proud of the large school (64 by 35 feet), and the home of the shopkeeper Heinrich Janzen (80 by 40 feet).

By 1835, at the time of the Molotschna census, Grossweide had 30 households, with a population of 188 (97 males, 91 females). *Schulze* was David Balzer. In 1848 Abraham Braun was *Schulze*, Wilhelm Ewert and Martin Block councillors and Peter Isaak the teacher.

In the mid century Grossweide agriculture seems to have been roughly the average for the Molotschna. In 1846 wheat production was below average, but in 1847 it was almost exactly the norm. In 1848 Heinrich Stobbe had the fourth largest tree nursery of any of the Molotschna villages, 10,000 trees. In 1851 the village itself had 84,716 trees, of which 37,448 were mulberry trees in hedges and 260 pear trees.

In 1857 the *Schulze* was Peter Isaak, a councillor Jakob Gerbrandt. Total population was 313 (158 males, 155 females), living in 42 houses, occupying 1,683 dessiatines. The 58 students were taught by David Hausknecht. Grossweide residents were avid readers. *Unterhaltungsblatt*, a Mennonite periodical, had 11 subscribers in Halbstadt, eight in Schoenau, and the third most, six, in Grossweide.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Grossweide had 21 full farms, six half farms, 31 small farms, totaling 58, occupying 2,056 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Grossweide was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Grossweide was not the centre of religious life of the Molotschna, but there certainly were people living there who did play a part. Abraham Braun and Benjamin Janz were interested in the reforms suggested by Eduard Wuest. While not listed as one of the original founders of the Mennonite Brethren Church, Braun did help Abraham Cornelssen when he lost his teaching job and was expelled from Elisabetthal to live on the bare steppe.

Johann Goerzen of Grossweide was ordained minister of the Pordenau congregation in 1851. There must have been considerable interest in the Rudnerweide Frisian Church; David Nickel was ordained a minister in 1882, then as elder September 29, 1891. Johann Janz was appointed minister of the same congregation in 1883. There does not seem to have been an official church building in Grossweide, but there was a fair sized hall (*Betsaal*) used for church services and celebrations.

Some residents of Grossweide were also interested in education. Peter Isaak, Heinrich Ediger and David Nickel at some time were members of the Molotschna School Board.

An institution exemplifying dedication and love for the disadvantaged was established by Abraham Harder and his wife. They founded a "family like" home for orphans in 1906. By 1910 it was described as "well established, well run, providing good training."

There were 27 children in the orphanage. Support for the enterprise was widespread. Handicrafts were also taught; a sale of goods produced was held on May 12, 1914. The guests were entertained with singing and presentations by the children.

In 1908 Grossweide had a population of 427, and occupied 1,833 dessiatines. There were three business establishments in the village. Peter Boldt and Jakob Klassen owned windmills, Heinrich Friesen a motor driven mill.

During the revolutionary period and the following civil war Grossweide likely suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages. In the subsequent famine 11 families, representing 31 individuals, requested food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. When emigration to Canada became a possibility at least 19 family groups, 53 individuals, departed. Heinrich David Unrau represented the Molotschna Rudnerweide congregation and Kornelius Kornelius Martens the Sparrau Mennonite Brethren at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches held in Moscow January 13-18, 1925. Unrau's name was not noted among those emigrating, and it is known that Martens died in exile.

In late 1929 many Mennonites gathered in Moscow in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. Peter Peter Janz, wife Mathilda and eight children were among the fortunate 6,000 who managed to escape. On March 15, 1930, they were on a ship headed for Paraguay.

Abraham Harder gave up the work at the orphanage in 1922, although he did not leave the village until 1924. By 1928 the facilities were too small, especially for the large number of Russian orphans that had arrived, so the institution was moved to Steinbach. For several years the buildings in Grossweide stood empty, then were used as a club. In 1934 they housed a seven grade school. One of the windmills burned down in 1927, the other was broken down in 1928.

The kulakization of farmers hit Grossweide with full force. In 1929 to 1930 seven families were resettled in the kulak village of Oktoberfeld – among them were Dueck, Ewert, Heinrich Unruh, and Peter Boldt. Three families were exiled to the north – Peter Enns, Jakob Thiessen and Gerhard Regehr. Ten families left all behind and fled before they could be shipped away.

Kornelius Kornelius Martens had been deposed as rector of the Gnadenfeld *Handelsschule* and was heavily taxed by the authorities. On January 6, 1922, he and his family moved to Grossweide. Here he started to farm, although he continued his church and other related activities. In the spring of 1922 he helped divide the fields in Grossweide; thereafter he was appointed the official land surveyor for the village.

On July 7, 1929, Kornelius and Sara Martens celebrated their silver wedding anniversary in the Grossweide *Betsaal*. It was mentioned that the entire Sparrau congregation and the whole village of Grossweide attended as well as people from neighbouring villages. The Sparrau church choir and the Grossweide village choir provided music. But the authorities caught up with Martens. In 1930 he was again taxed heavily and repeatedly. Before the Martens could sell their belongings at an auction to raise the money, an automobile was heard entering the village one Sunday morning while Kornelius was preaching. When the family reached their home they were given 24 hours to leave; they were to take nothing along.

In the Purge of 1937-38 at least 25 men were taken, as well as a number of women. The women actually returned from their imprisonment; their children, at first housed in orphanages, also eventually returned. September 4-5, 1941, additional men were sent into exile; the remainder between 16 and 60 were drafted into labour camps.

When the German forces approached the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. All those who were at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka were loaded onto trains in early October and sent to the north of Russia or to central Asia. The residents of Grossweide were among the unfortunate people at Nelgovka, so on October 4 the remaining Mennonites of the village, 247 in all, which included 8 men over 60, 84 women and 155 children, were deported to Kazakhstan. It was claimed that when the Russian troops left the region on October 6, they burned down the village ("*es brannte ganz nieder*").

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, the few remaining Mennonites of Grossweide will have joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. It is likely that the advancing Soviet Army recaptured most of them. There is no specific record of anyone having escaped to the West.

After the conclusion of the war the region was rebuilt. Grossweide became the centre of a large collective farm which was used as a showpiece for tourists in the communist era. The farm was reported

to support 320 households, with a total population of 1,300. The area of the collective was 10,200 acres, of which 9,000 acres were under cultivation.

After resettling in Germany became a possibility, especially in the early 1990s, a number of Grossweide citizens did come as *Aussiedler*. Among these were Abraham Sudermann, Peter Lammert and Heinrich Dueckmann.

Today there is very little left in Grossweide of the Mennonite era; the village where it once stood is called Prostorye.

HALBSTADT (ALT-HALBSTADT and NEU-HALBSTADT)

(Maps pages 40,41,42,43)

Halbstadt was founded in 1804, the most northern of the initial nine villages laid out just east of the Molochnaya River. *Oberschulze* Klaas Wiens chose the name, likely because some of the original settlers came from Halbstadt in West Prussia. It was situated ten verst west of Tokmak, which had been established in 1784, and just across the river from Prischib, headquarters of the German colony founded on the west bank of the Molchnaya River in 1805.

Initially 21 full farms were laid out, each consisting of 70 dessiatines, for a total land area of 1,470 dessiatines. The land occupied by the farmers was in a relatively narrow strip toward the south-west and had previously been used by people in Tokmak and Nogai nomads. Many settlers built their houses the first summer, with timber, clay and straw provided by the government. Each family also received an interest free loan of 125 rubles to purchase livestock and equipment.

Early pioneering years were difficult, with a number of crop failures and considerable loss of cattle from disease. The soil in the region, however, was fairly good, particularly suited to horticulture. The long distance to larger markets made delivery of produce very difficult; this distance also made it necessary that many required items had to be manufactured locally. Halbstadt slowly developed small shops to meet the local needs., then eventually an increasing number of larger industries. A brewery was built in 1809, a water mill in 1810, as well as two dye works and a cloth factory. With the help of Chairman Samuel Contenius sheep raising became a profitable business, and in time the port of Berdyansk was important in economic development of the region.

In 1816 the district office moved to Halbstadt. During the time of Johann Cornies there was a regional power struggle, since Cornies lived in Ohrloff, but the district office and many of the more reactionary land owners centred in Halbstadt. David Friesen (1848-1865) was the only resident of Halbstadt who actually became *Oberschulze* of the Molotschna Colony.

In 1821 many inhabitants died of a virulent typhoid epidemic. On January 11, 1838 at 9:30 PM a strong earthquake shook the area, but did little damage.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census Halbstadt had 33 establishments. The total population was 308 (160 males, 148 females). Johann Neufeld was *Schulze* of the village, Johann Friesen and Peter Groening were councillors.

In 1837 Johann Cornies, chairman of the Agricultural Society, requested permission from the *Oberschulze* Johann Regier and the *Schulze* of Halbstadt to found an industrial colony just east of the village. It was to be for 200 people, on 50 dessiatine of arable land, and with pasture for 200 cattle. The village agreed, then in 1841 also the Guardian's Committee, the overseers of foreign colonies. In 1843 the craftsman's village, Neu-Halbstadt, was established. From this point on it is most often impossible to separate the history of "Alt-Halbstadt" from that of "Neu-Halbstadt." It appears that Neu-Halbstadt did not have a separate administration.

In 1848 David Friesen was *Schulze* of Halbstadt. Councillors were Heinrich Nikkel and Johann Esau, while Andreas Voth was teacher.

Halbstadt was becoming an industrial centre, but agriculturally it was not above average. In 1851 it had 76,018 trees, of which 36,093 were mulberry trees in hedges. Silk production was average. Administratively Halbstadt was, if anything, over-represented by having 15 members on the Molotschna Mennonite Council in 1850, including the ubiquitous David Friesen, also Johann Neufeld, J. Wiens, Peter Reimer and D. Wiebe.

In 1857 Halbstadt had a total population of 581 (298 males, 283 females), living in 71 houses, occupying 1,605 dessiatines. David Friesen was re-elected *Oberschulze* of the colony on that year. Abraham Driedger was re-elected *Schulze* of the village, Peter Dueck as councillor. With final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Halbstadt had 21 full farms, no half farms, and 28 small farms, totaling 49, occupying 1,923 dessiatines. Neu-Halbstadt had no full or half farms, but 39 small farms occupying 837 dessiatines, an average of about 21½ dessiatines per household. Many of these people were industrial workers, and not all were Mennonites.

When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Halbstadt became the administrative centre of the Halbstadt Volost. This volost encompassed the western 30 villages of the colony, and slightly more than half of the population.

Through the years Halbstadt became an educational centre. It had, of course the usual elementary school, but in 1835 a *Zentralschule* was founded, the second in the Molotschna Colony. At first orphans and children of poor parents received free training, then having to serve the community for a number of years. Initially the school had a local administration, but in 1869 came under the jurisdiction of the Molotschna School Board. Originally there was a four year course of studies, later expanded to six years. In 1878 a two year teacher training course was added. Some of the outstanding teachers in the school were Gustav Rempel, Kornelius Unruh, P. M. Friesen, Abram Klassen and Peter J. Braun. Russian had originally been taught as a foreign language, but by 1890 all subjects except German and Bible were taught in Russian. The teacher training section, by 1922, had graduated 400 teachers. Over the years these institutions did much to raise the spiritual, cultural and economic level of the Mennonites in Russia.

In 1907 a private *Realschule* was established in Halbstadt. It later added some commercial subjects to the curriculum to become the School of Commerce. In 1910 the enrollment was 124. It was situated in a former starch factory and had a dormitory for students from distant communities. Jakob J. Sudermann of Apanlee was, in the early years, chairman of the executive council; among the teachers were A. A. Friesen and Benjamin H. Unruh. In 1923 it was changed to an agricultural school.

In 1874 Andreas Voth, a former village teacher and chairman of the Molotschna School Board, hosted a school for girls in his own home in Neu-Halbstadt. In 1882 the school was re-organized by Heinrich Franz Jr., and housed in a separate building. With construction of a larger building in 1905 further development of program was possible. There were four classrooms and additional library space. Eventually the school had seven classes, with students receiving two years credit when they entered the teacher training school in Halbstadt. The school probably closed at the end of the 1921-22 academic year, the Communist government feeling that the girls should go to the *Zentralschule.*

A hospital with Dr. Erich Tavonius as principal surgeon was situated in neighbouring Muntau, but *Morija,* the deaconess home and training school for nurses, was built in Neu-Halbstadt. There was first a one story building, dedicated in 1910, but then, possibly by 1914, a new expanded two story structure was constructed.

Members of the Mennonite Church (*Grosse Gemeinde*) who resided in Halbstadt were originally part of the Ohrloff-Petershagen congregation. Eventually, in 1858, a new building was erected in Neu-Halbstadt to replace the one in Petershagen. Stones from the Petershagen church were actually used as foundation for the new structure. Elders of the congregation were Bernhard Fast (1821-60), Johann Harder (1860-76), Abram Goerz (1876-95) and Heinrich Unruh (1895-1916). Bernhard Harder, well known preacher, teacher and poet, was a member from 1860 to 1884.

There were also Mennonite Brethren in Halbstadt. The centre of worship in the Molotschna was the Rueckenau church, but in time there was also a congregation meeting in Halbstadt. At first meetings were held in the *Vereinhaus* (community hall), but later an actual church building was constructed. Heinrich J. Braun, Jakob and Abram Jakob Kroeker and Benjamin H. Unruh were among the prominent Mennonite Brethren based in Halbstadt.

Peter Neufeld, having been a teacher for many years, established a print shop in 1886 in his own home in Neu-Halbstadt. It was purchased by Heinrich J. Braun in 1903, and in 1908 reorganized to be called "*Raduga*" (Rainbow). Among the directors and shareholders were Heinrich J. Braun, Abram J. Kroeker and J. S. Prochanov. The semi-weekly *Friedensstimme* was printed there as well as the devotional *Abreisskalender* published both in German and Russian. A number of books were also published, including the massive history of the Mennonite Brethren Church written by P. M. Friesen.

In 1908 the population of Halbstadt was 956, occupying 1,816 dessiatines. Neu-Halbstadt had 225 people, and only 206 dessiatines.

Industry flourished in the Halbstadt - Neu-Halbstadt region. In 1908 twelve business establishments were listed for Halbstadt, another ten for Neu-Halbstadt. Total assessed value was 506,500 rubles, varying from a 500 ruble photography shop to a 90,000 ruble factory. The Halbstadt area boasted three vinegar factories, two large steam power mills, a starch factory, a barley mill, two tile factories and two oil presses. Two large motor factories, Heinrich Schroeder and Franz and Schroeder, as well as the Sudermann Brothers auto dealership were located in Halbstadt. There was a credit union and a number of

retail outlets.

Halbstadt was subject to the upheavals connected with the Russian Revolution and the subsequent civil war. With the fledgling Communist government trying to establish itself, Halbstadt experienced the terror imposed by the newly found power. The "Halbstadt Days of Terror," February to April, 1918, ended when German troops occupied the area. Jakob J. Sudermann, wealthy estate owner and generous philanthropist, was executed in Halbstadt during this time.

After the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, which ended the war between Germany and Russia, German troops occupied Ukraine. During this occupation, likely realizing that this was not a permanent arrangement, a number of defense (*Selbstschutz*) units were established in the Molotschna. The villages of Halbstadt, Gnadenfeld, Tiege and Tiegenhagen were among the first to form units. Military drills, directed by German soldiers stationed in Halbstadt, continued through the summer of 1918.

The Germans allowed the traditional form of volost government to reappear, but in the process some blunders were committed which later bore serious consequences. Four members of the Halbstadt village soviet and three men from the Lichtenau village soviet were shot. The surrounding population did not forget.

When the *Selbstschutz* came to actually "defend" against the Red Army itself, it, of course, collapsed in March of 1919. Two men from Halbstadt were killed in action in the White Army; seven young men were executed in a sandpit near the brick factory after the Reds occupied Halbstadt in the spring of 1919. They were probably former *Selbstschutz* members.

With the famine which followed the civil war there were 40 requests for food drafts from Halbstadt, representing 80 individuals, printed in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* Another 21 requests, representing 69 individuals, came from the people of Neu-Halbstadt. When the MCC sent tractors to help the Mennonite farmers cultivate the land in 1923, they ploughed eight dessiatines for Halbstadt, eight and a half for Neu-Halbstadt.

Early escapees from the terrors to come were Johann Friesen and Johann Thiessen, who were in Constantinople in 1921. Five people were in Germany by February, 1921, including Jakob Kroeker and Benjamin H. Unruh. When the opportunity for migration to Canada became a reality, the flood gates opened. At least 62 family groups, 246 individuals, left Halbstadt; another 31 family groups, 119 individuals left Neu-Halbstadt. It is therefore no surprise that in 1925, half way through this migration, of the 1,455 inhabitants of Halbstadt, only a third were Mennonites.

Abram Aron Klassen was a delegate to the General Conference of Mennonite Churches in Russia held January 13-18, 1925 in Moscow, representing the Halbstadt Mennonite Church. Peter Isaak Braun represented the Pordenau Mennonite Church. It is unlikely that either of these men were able to emigrate.

When the Soviet policies began to take effect 13,000 Mennonites gathered in Moscow in 1929 in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. A number of Halbstadt people were among the fortunate 6,000 who were able to leave. David Baerg, wife and one child were on a ship heading out of Leningrad in 1930. Johann Peter Schmidt actually made it to Canada in November, 1929. Abram Bernhard Friesen, wife and three children were among those who reached Paraguay in March of 1930. Others tried to escape across the Amur River ice from eastern Siberia. Johann Johann Plett, wife and eight children actually made it to Harbin, China, by February, 1931.

In the 1930s Halbstadt and Neu-Halbstadt citizens suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages. All business owners lost their property, many of them fleeing from the area. Between 1930 and 1941 at least 122 men were exiled from the Halbstadt region, and another 367 in 1941; 51 were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. So it was that about 10,000 Mennonites gathered around the train station in Tokmak (some may actually have gathered at the Neu-Halbstadt station). Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. When the German forces overran those at Tokmak, all the villagers simply went back to their homes; this included those from Halbstadt and Neu-Halbstadt.

When the German occupying forces took statistics in Halbstadt (including Neu-Halbstadt) on February 10, 1942, the 1,984 Mennonites represented 27% of the total population of 7,348. There were 325 men, 963 women and 696 children. Emanual Prieb was the mayor, Johann Klassen a councillor.

When the German Army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the Mennonites of

Halbstadt and Neu-Halbstadt joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Many were overrun by the advancing Red Army, but a number did make it to the West. From Halbstadt Johann Franz was in an Austrian refugee camp in 1947. A total of at least six family groups, 12 people, set sail for South America by 1950. Heinrich Bestvater went to Canada. From Neu-Halbstadt Hermann Janzen and Aganetha Martens with one child sailed for Canada, while six family groups, 11 people, went to South America.

Today Halbstadt, Neu-Halbstadt and Muntau are amalgamated as part of Molochansk. Many of the buildings from the Mennonite era still stand, such as the *Zentralschule,* the *Morija* Deaconess Home, the Neu-Halbstadt *Maedchenschule*, the credit union building, as well as the six story Heinrich H. Willms mill and his elaborate house. The *Maedchenschule* building has recently been refurbished, and is now being used as a Mennonite Centre, providing various services to the local population.

HAMBERG

(Map page 44)

Hamberg was founded in 1863 as an expansion village of the Molotschna , by families from the older settlements. Hamberg and the neighbouring Klippenfeld were the last two villages established in the colony. The street was laid out according to the Agricultural Society regulations; there were 26 full farms and three small farms, occupying 1,734 dessiatines. With the final land redistribution in the Molotschna in 1869 there were 25 full farms, two half farms and five small farms, totaling 32, on 1,770 dessiatines. Hamberg had grown by 36 dessiatines! When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Hamberg was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

There was a village school, but no church building in Hamberg. Most villagers were members of the Schoensee Flemish Mennonite Church. Peter Fast of Hamberg was actually a member of the Margenau Flemish congregation.

In the 1870s Claas Epp Jr. was convinced that the Lord was coming soon, and that his followers should prepare to meet him in central Asia. A number of wagon caravans headed eastward. About 80 families left Waldheim, Molotschna, on August 1, 1880, under the leadership of Minister Abraham Peters. Johann Regehr of Hamberg was on this trek. He later became the elder of the Mennonite Brethren congregation at Aulie Ata.

In 1903 a new village was established near Issyl Kul, Siberia, just a few verst north of the Trans Siberian Railway. It was named Hamberg because one of the founders, Peter Fast, came from Hamberg in the Molotschna.

In 1908 the Hamberg population was 244, occupying 1,732 dessiatines. There were three business establishments in the village. Helena Enns owned a windmill, Peter Kasper a brickyard and Dietrich Huebert a garden centre.

Hamberg had soon achieved prosperity, but it suffered greatly in the unsettled times of the revolution and the following civil war. It lay within one verst of the Tokmak Railway and could quite easily be bombarded by the armoured trains. Over 300 shots fell into the village extensively damaging the buildings and killing cattle. Fortunately no human lives were lost. There were repeated raids by roving bandits, and at least five people were killed by this violence. Twenty-three adults died in a typhus epidemic during the civil war.

In the famine of 1922 a total of 14 families, representing 110 individuals, requested food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* Mennonite Central Committee tractors ploughed 39 dessiatines for Hamberg farmers in 1923. Johann Martens was listed as a refugee in Constantinople in 1921. When emigration to Canada became possible in the mid 1920s only five family groups, 14 individuals, are specifically listed as having left Hamberg. Gerhard Heinrich Willms represented the Landskrone church at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches of Russia held in Moscow on January 13-18, 1925. His name is not on the list of those having left Hamberg for Canada.

Hamberg suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the early 1930s. Some of the Mennonite kulaks who had been displaced off their land were replaced by Lutheran immigrants who in turn had been displaced from their own farms in Volhynia. Hamberg was part of a kolkhoz called *Komsomol.* About 46 people were arrested or exiled by 1940. Among these were Johann Kliewer, Cornelius Stobbe, Peter Penner, Johann Enns and Gerhard Janzen, who were taken in 1937. In 1941 another 40 were deported, including most men aged 16-60.

With the approach of the German forces to the region after the invasion of June, 1941, about 12 of the younger, more able people, both men and women, were drafted as labour to dig defensive trenches and tank traps near the Dniepr River. As the invaders came ever

closer another dozen people had to accompany the cattle which were being driven eastward to stay out of the reach of the Germans. When the invaders came ever closer to the Molotschna the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Hamberg residents were among the fortunate thousands gathered at Stulnevo. When the German forces occupied the area the people simply returned to their homes.

On December 28, 1941, the total German population, 227, represented 65% of the entire 349 inhabitants. Of these, 80% were Mennonites. Apparently there was some tension between the Mennonites and the Lutheran Volhynian immigrants. Mayor at the time was Otto Vols, his assistant being Jakob Fast. Of the German population there were 36 men, 96 women and 95 children. Two men had been drafted into the Red Army.

When the German forces retreated from the area in September of 1943, the Hamberg Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Some were overrun by the rapidly advancing Soviet Army. At least 29 persons were "repatriated." Peter Peter Teichroeb was not captured by the Soviets, but was conscripted into the German Army in 1945, and was killed in action. About 60-70 Hamberg Mennonites did escape to the West, a surprisingly high number. About half emigrated directly to Canada, starting in 1948. Among these were Susan Kliewer and her daughter, Maria Neufeld and Sara Willms with three children. The other half went to South America, most eventually the moving to Canada. A number of those originally recaptured and exiled have now settled in Germany as *Aussiedler*, Jakob Baergen being one of these.

The land of Hamberg was, after the war, part of the Gorki Collective Farm which was centred in Vladovka (Waldheim). Few Mennonite buildings remain, but the slightly rebuilt elementary school still exists. The village is now called Kamenka.

HIERSCHAU

(Maps pages 45,46)

Hierschau was founded in the spring of 1848 as an expansion village of the Molotschna Colony. Johann Cornies planned for it to be a model village, although he died before the plans could be implemented. Laid out according to Agricultural Society regulations, each of the original 30 farmyards measured 64 m wide by 256 m long. It was probably named by Cornies himself, meaning "here (hier), look (schau)". Likely 23 *Wirtschaften* were settled in 1848, the additional seven the following year. The original settlers came from a number of Molotschna villages, including Waldheim, Prangenau, Pordenau and Gnadenheim. Margaretha Hildebrand, daughter of Peter, was the first recorded child born in Hierschau, on June 11, 1848. At first school was held in individual homes until a school was built in 1852. Also by 1852 a total of 30,579 trees had been planted, including 22,540 mulberry trees, 3,275 mulberry trees in hedges and 810 fruit trees. There was in time a windmill on the east end of the village, north side of the street. A white earth pit, some distance north of Hierschau, provided considerable income for the village.

About 1862 at least six Hierschau families moved to the Crimea, most to the little village of Bruderfeld. In the 1870s almost all of these emigrated to the United States. With land redistribution in the Molotschna in 1866 and 1869 Hierschau was also involved; thereafter the village plan included 30 full farms and 30 small farms, having a total land area of 2,430 dessiatines. Migration fever also struck Hierschau in the 1870s. In all at least 26 family units consisting of 113 people emigrated, settling mainly in Henderson, Nebraska and Parker, South Dakota. With continued expansion people also moved to other colonies in Russia such as Sagradovka, Memrik, Alexanderpol, Neu Samara, Orenburg, Terek and Siberia.

Hierschau was never in the forefront of religious, educational or industrial development, although several prominent people lived in the village. Jakob G. Duerksen began as *Schulze* of Hierschau, then in 1905 became the *Oberschulze* of the whole Gnadenfeld Volost. The predominant church membership in Hierschau remained the *Grosse Gemeinde* (Mennonite Church), the church building being in the neighbouring Landskrone. Gerhard Plett of Hierschau was first a teacher, but in 1908 was ordained elder of the Margenau-Schoensee-Landskrone congregation, a position which he held until poor health forced him to resign in 1928. In the early 1920s there were some Mennonite Brethren in Hierschau; they attended services in Waldheim, immediately to the east.

In 1908 the population was 409, occupying a total of 2,309 dessiatines. There were three small business establishments in Hierschau. Franz Dick

dealt with flour, Jakob Thiessen had a wind and motor mill. Johann Hildebrandt sold manufactured goods, advertising sewing machines, irons and washing machines as "not the cheapest, but certainly the best."

Hierschau suffered a common fate with other Molotschna villages during the time of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. Heinrich Braun was in charge of the Hierschau and Waldheim *Selbstschutz* units during the time of the anarchy, later joining the White Army, then eventually escaping to the United States. A major rear-guard action between the temporarily fleeing Red and advancing White armies was fought near Hierschau on June 20, 1920. During this period there was actually only sporadic pillage and murder in the village. With the famine of 1921-22, one of the Mennonite Central Committee feeding stations was in Hierschau. Even so, there were 15 requests for food drafts, representing 65 individuals, published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* When the opportunity to emigrate came in the mid 1920s, at least 28 family units consisting of 118 people left for Canada.

In late 1929 a large number of Mennonites collected in the suburbs of Moscow in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. The Heinrich Franz and Jakob Fast families from Hierschau were among the fortunate who managed to escape, and were listed among the refugees staying at the Prenzlau camp in Germany in March of 1930.

In 1930-31 Hierschau was collectivized with at least 20 families evicted from their homes because they were kulaks. The David Hildebrandt, family, for example, was forced out of their home and off their land. David and Elisabeth Hildebrandt, children Elisabeth, Gerhard, Katharina, Jakob and Maria, also brother Heinrich Hildebrandt with wife Tina and three children, as well as Grandmother Hildebrandt and her daughter Sarah all had to stay in the very small herdsman's hut at the edge of the village. The land became part of the Gorki Collective farm with headquarters in Waldheim. During the Purge of 1936-38 at least 11 Hierschau men were imprisoned. In the 1930s, probably to enlarge the economic base, a creamery was established, north side of the street, Waldheim end. All of the surrounding region had to bring milk to the creamery, where butter and other milk products were prepared, largely for export. It continued to operate until the region was overrun by the German Army.

With the German invasion of the Soviet Union in June of 1941, most men between 16 and 65 were deported from the Molotschna, including 37 from Hierschau.

When the German Army came ever closer to the Molotschna, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were to go to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived they were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. On October 1, 1941all Hierschau citizens were collected at the Stulnevo railway station in preparation for deportation, but since the Soviets ran out of time, they were among the fortunate who were not deported. After the German forces occupied the region on October 6, everyone simply returned home.

The German occupying forces took statistics in Hierschau on January 29, 1942. The 175 remaining Mennonites were 38% of the total population of 460. There were 25 men, 81 women and 69 children. Two men had been drafted into the Red Army. Kornelius Boschmann was mayor, Gerhard Willms his assistant.

With the retreat of the German Army from the region in September of 1943, all Hierschau Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward on wagons. First it was to Warthegau in Poland, but by January, 1945, most people had reached Lower Saxony. After the conclusion of the war 28 Hierschau families either decided to or were forced to return to the Soviet Union. Only a few actually returned to their home village as had been promised. At least six families stayed in Germany or emigrated to North and South America.

After the war Hierschau was rebuilt, the Russian and Ukrainian population building the houses in the 1950s and 1960s. In 1982 there was only one of the old Mennonite buildings standing; the village was called Vladovka 2, was part of the collective farm and a suburb of Waldheim (Vladovka 1). The previously functioning creamery had not been rebuilt, there was no windmill and no school, although there was a small general store. By 2000 this business had closed its doors.

In 1993 a *Hierschauer Treffen* was held in Willingen, Germany, with 15 of the participants actually having been born in Hierschau. This shows that a significant number of *Aussiedler* from Hierschau have settled in Germany.

There are few remaining Mennonites in Hierschau. Andre and Margaretha (nee Plett) Kravetz also escaped on the "Great Trek" in 1943. When they were recaptured after the war Andre was imprisoned for five years for having been drafted into the German Army. Upon release they were able to return to Hierschau, and worked for the Gorki Collective Farm.

In 2000, they were retired, living in their modest home at the west end of the village, north side of the street. Their address is Number 78, Vladovka Village. Margaretha is the grand daughter of Elder Gerhard Plett. She and her husband had four sons, two of which unfortunately died as a result of the Chernobyl atomic disaster.

JUSCHANLEE ESTATE

(Maps pages 47,48,49)

Juschanlee was a large private estate founded on the southern border of the Molotschna Colony, on the southern bank of the Juschanlee River, about ten verst east of Ohrloff.

In 1830 Johann Cornies established an experimental farm on 500 dessiatines land he had rented from the government. He constructed a model farm, with a complex of out-buildings. He promoted stock breeding as well as plantations and gardens to grow trees and other plants. Tobacco, silk and honey were also produced. A tile factory helped finance some of the other enterprises.

In 1836, in recognition of his public work, Czar Nicholas I gave Cornies and his descendants the land as a private estate; Cornies then rented an additional 3,500 dessiatines. He developed many aspects of agriculture, first experimenting on his own land.

When Cornies died in March of 1848, the estate was inherited by his daughter, wife of Philipp Wiebe. In 1850 Wiebe established a school on the estate.

In 1848 Juschanlee had by far the largest tree nursery in the Molotschna, boasting a total of 438,707 trees, of which 39,996 were mulberry trees. In 1851 the estate itself had 296,433 trees, of which 142,009 were ordinary forest trees. That same year Juschalee had three cows in an experiment to measure milk production. Juschanlee cows produced the highest amount of milk of any village or estate of the Molotschna. Also in 1851 D. Hamm from Juschanlee was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Juschanlee was in the Halbstadt Volost.

In 1879, apparently against the wishes of some of the Cornies family members, the estate was purchased by Heinrich Reimer. Soon after many of the original buildings were demolished, and a large castle like residence was constructed. Statues of the owner, his wife and other family members apparently dotted the estate. The estate was later inherited by Heinrich Guenther, Reimer's son-in-law.

Juschanlee, Apanlee and Steinbach estates rotated the hosting of inspirational seminars in the early 1900s. Well known speakers from Russia, but also from other countries, were invited to participate.

Heinrich Dietrich Guenther of Ohrloff is listed as owning an estate of 2,000 dessiatines on the Forstei Taxation List of 1908. This is quite likely Juschanlee. Yet the Reimer family seems to have had continued involvement in the estate, since a Widow A. Reimer received word on January 7, 1918, that the estate had been taken over by "others." In time the estate was nationalized and became part of the collective farm Mogutsheye.

In the 1970s the estate was in a rather decrepit condition, many of the out-buildings having been taken down. None of the Reimer statues remained. It was used as a home for war veterans. The estate belonged to the collective Kirovo.

In 1997 the Reimer residence was part of a psychiatric hospital.

KLEEFELD

(Map page 50)

Kleefeld was founded in 1854 on the south bank of the Juschanlee River. The private estate Juschanlee was about 3 verst to the west, and in 1857 Alexanderkrone was established about one verst to the east. Forty families from various Molotschna villages settled on both sides of the street, which ran east to west. Land area cultivated was all to the south of the village. Near the southern end of this land the steppe was crossed by several tributaries of the Arab River. Religious affiliation of the settlers was a mixture, Flemish - Frisian.

In 1857 the population was 249 (116 males, 133 females), living in 42 houses, occupying 2,600 dessiatines. There were 68 students, with teacher Johann Doerksen. *Schulze* elected that year was Peter Toews, councillor Peter Abrahams. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Kleefeld had 37 full farms, six half farms and 38 small farms for a total of 81, occupying 3,208 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Kleefeld was in the Halbstadt Volost.

While no prominent leaders were resident, some Mennonite Brethren probably lived in Kleefeld , since it was on the list of villages visited by itinerant ministers in 1876 - 1877. Most people were likely

members of the large Ohrloff-Halbstadt Mennonite congregation. Jakob Letkemann was a minister of that church in 1868, although he later joined the Mennonite Brethren.

In the early 1880s Claas Epp Jr. led a trek to central Asia, there to better meet the Lord on his second coming. At least one of the total of 600 people was from Kleefeld. Heinrich H. Graewe was listed as one of four young men who died along the way.

In 1908 the population of Kleefeld was 590, living on 3,089 dessiatines. There were only two business establishments in the village. Jakob Heinrichs owned a Dutch type wind mill and a motor driven mill, while Peter Wiens had a brick yard.

There was no church building in Kleefeld, so its residents went to church in other villages, especially Alexanderkrone. From time to time services were held in the school, then later in a building converted to a meeting place on the yard of Johann Huebert. Obviously Kleefelders liked singing; there were three choirs in the village as late as 1929. Meetings continued in the Huebert building until at least 1930.

Kleefeld undoubtedly suffered the usual consequences of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In the famine which followed in 1922 there were nine requests for food packages published in pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 47 individuals. MCC tractors cultivated 38½ dessiatines of land for Kleefeld farmers in 1923. Before the start of World War I there had been 35 farms in Kleefeld with threshing motors. Through the loss of horses and livestock during the period of unrest and famine, many of these motors were traded for animals and food. Unfortunately the farmers were taken advantage of - a motor which originally cost 1,500 rubles was now traded for two small horses. A 10-12 horsepower motor was traded for 15 pud of rye, a loss of about 100 fold.

An early emigrant to Canada, Jakob Thiessen, sent a report about Kleefeld to the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, where it was published in June of 1924. The data was probably valid for 1922, the date of the map which has been drawn, and certainly predates the migration to Canada. There were 613 people, living in 90 households, averaging 6.8 per household. Twelve establishments were those of widows, one a widower. There were two teachers, Kroeker and Janzen, both landless, and at least one minister. A Russian shepherd had a family of ten. There were 29 full farms, 20 half farms and 12 small farms, with 20 families being landless. The full farms varied from the standard 64 dessiatines (24 were that size) up to 192 dessiatines. Total land cultivated by the village was 2,904 dessiatines.

The whole of Kleefeld had 75 horses at the time, less than one per household, and 135 cows, 1.5 per household. This should be compared to the complement considered necessary for a full farm before the difficult times: 10-12 horses and seven or eight cows. Yet the writer notes that Kleefeld was probably among the better supplied villages.

In the mid 1920s there was massive migration from Kleefeld to Canada. Peter Huebner was already in Germany in 1921. In the mid 1920s at least 47 family groups left for Canada, 175 people. In 1929 about 13,000 Mennonites gathered in the outskirts of Moscow in a last ditch attempt to obtain exit visas. Many were sent back to their homes or into exile, but at least two persons from Kleefeld escaped. Heinrich Willms and Heinrich Rosenfeld were in the Prenzlau refugee camp in Germany in February, 1930.

Kleefeld suffered the usual atrocities that had to be endured with implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s. Three families, owners of the largest farms, were banished to Siberia in 1928. An unsigned letter reported "You have no idea of the suffering we are enduring." Peter Abrams, Franz Warkentins and the H. Esaus were forced to vacate their homes, and to take with them only 30-35 pud per family. They were ordered to report to the Lichtenau railroad station, where they were loaded onto freight cars, 44-46 persons per car plus baggage and provisions. Then they were sent north, no one knows how far. Later additional persons were forced to leave, at least nine families, including *Schulze* Thiessen. By 1938 a total of at least 110 people, mostly men, had been exiled.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, to the far north or central Asia. Kleefeld residents were at Lichtenau, so virtually all of the Mennonite population, a total of 556, was evacuated.

When the German occupying forces took statistics in Kleefeld on February 17, 1942, the remaining 25 Mennonites represented 50% of the total population of 50. There were 12 men, eight women and five children. Eleven men had been drafted into the

Red Army. Administratively Kleefeld was under the jurisdiction of Friedensruh. Those who remained in the village had straggled in from various places. Gerhard Dyck, for example, had been in the Red Army, was captured by the German forces, and was used as an interpreter. A number of others had been driving livestock eastwards as part of the evacuation, then returned home.

When the German army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the few remaining Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were recaptured by the advancing Soviet army and sent back to the far north or to central Asia. At least three, Gerhard Dyck, wife Maria and her mother eventually went to Brazil. Maria Neustaedter and Helena Harder sailed for Canada.

In the 1990s a number of people settled in Germany as *Aussiedler*. The Johann Dyck, Peter Enns and Gerhard Enns families are among them.

In 1990 the only remaining structure in Kleefeld was the school building. Today even that is only a pile of rubble. The region is part of the village of Grushevka, which also includes Alexanderkrone and Lichtfelde.

KLIPPENFELD

(Map page 51)

Klippenfeld was founded in 1863 as an expansion village of the Molotschna, the same year as the neighbouring village Hamberg. It was established on the north bank of the Tokmak River, with its land extending north and east of the river, forming a triangle which was the extreme north-east corner of the Molotschna Colony. Hamberg lay about three verst to the south-west, and the Russian town of Chernigovka about nine verst to the east. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Klippenfeld had 27 full farms, no half farms and 14 small farms, for a total of 41, occupying 1,979 dessiatines. Presumably this was close to what had been its size when it was first established. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Klippenfeld was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Settlers in Klippenfeld came from various Molotschna villages, therefore were of mixed church affiliation. Johann J. Regier of Hierschau probably helped to establish Klippenfeld, he and his wife and two children moving there in 1863. He was followed by a number of other members of the Regier family - Gerhard Fast (wife Elisabeth Regier), Peter, Heinrich and Klaas Regier.

A revival must have swept through the area in 1870. Johann Regier and his wife Katharina were converted, were baptized and joined the Mennonite Brethren Church that year. Peter and his wife Katharina were also converted in 1870, but waited with baptism and church membership until 1873. That same year Johann J. Fast and Johann J. Regier were ordained as ministers. There must have been a considerable Mennonite Brethren presence in Klippenfeld, since the village was included on the circuit of itinerant Mennonite Brethren ministers in 1876-77. Other churches were also represented in the village. Abram Wall was a minister of the Pordenau Mennonite Church, being appointed in 1910.

All of the Regiers, those from Klippenfeld and those who had remained in Hierschau, emigrated to the United States in the 1870s. Most chose Henderson, Nebraska as the new home, and played an important part in the subsequent development of the community. Peter Regier was one of the organizers of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Henderson, and later wrote a history of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Johann J. Regier was asked to be the elder of the newly established church, a post he held for 20 years.

In 1908 the population of Klippenfeld was 315, occupying 1,855 dessiatines. There were five business establishments in the village. Jakob Braun had two windmills, F. Wedel and J. Neustaedter had a motor driven mill, as did the brothers Regehr. Heinrich Rennpenning owned a brick yard. When the Tokmak Railway was completed in 1912, the Stulnevo station was about four verst south-west of the village.

Klippenfeld suffered a common fate with the other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. During the time of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz* in 1918, Klippenfeld and Hamberg felt quite exposed to the roving bands of bandits. When danger approached they sent messages to the Hierschau-Waldheim unit, and help was then dispatched. One man, Bernhard Wall, was shot by Bolshevik troops. In the famine which followed the civil war it was reported that over 50% of the people were starving in Hamberg, Klippenfeld and Hierschau. One man actually died of starvation in Klippenfeld. Even so, only one person from the village is recorded as requesting food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, teacher Heinrich Dueck. Mennonite Central Committee tractors ploughed 45 dessiatines of land for Klippenfeld farmers in 1923.

With the massive migration of Mennonites in the mid 1920s at least four Klippenfeld families went to Canada, 14 individuals.

Klippenfeld undoubtedly suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages in the 1930s. Three families were exiled as kulaks, and were sent to Siberia: Heinrich Dueck, Franz Dueck, and Gerhard Klassen. Fourteen families moved away, some to other Molotschna villages. German colonists and Ukrainians or Russians moved in. At least 16 men were arrested and exiled before 1940. With the German invasion of Russia in June of 1941, the evacuation of men was accelerated. In September all the remaining men in Klippenfeld between the ages of 16 and 65 were "taken." At least 29 men were marched off to the east during this time.

With the invading forces coming ever closer to the Molotschna, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. South-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the German Army arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Klippenfeld residents were among the fortunate ones at Stulnevo. When the German troops arrived in early October, 1941, before this group could be sent off, they simply returned to their home villages.

When the German Army took statistics on January 29, 1942, the 130 "Germans" in Klippenfeld represented 57% of the total population of 228. Of these "Germans" 75% were Mennonite, 25% Lutheran. There were 13 men, 72 women and 45 children. Johann Wiens was the mayor. The Mennonites were 97% farmers. Land occupied by the village before the war was 1,800 hectares, by 1942 shrunk to 901 hectares (825 dessiatines).

When the German Army retreated from the region in September of 1943, the entire Mennonite population of Klippenfeld joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. One person, the elderly Karl Friedrich Ruppel, died on the trail. At least 25 families were "repatriated" by the rapidly advancing Soviet Army, but some did escape to the West. The widow of Karl Ruppel, as well as her daughter made it to Canada in 1948.

Klippenfeld is said to have been completely destroyed in 1943, likely when the German Army evacuated the area.

Today the region where Klippenfeld once stood is part of the town of Stulnevo.

KONTENIUSFELD
(also written CONTENIUSFELD)

(Maps page 52)

On March 24, 1831, the steppe was surveyed and a suitable spot for a new village designated. Konteniusfeld was settled that summer, specific site for each farmer decided by lot. The 30 settlers came from various Molotschna villages. Northern border of the land was the Begim-Tschokrak River, beyond which lay the land of the village Chernigovka. Waldheim and Gnadenfeld were established to the west in 1836. Sparrau lay to the east. The southern border was the Perekop-Bachmut Salt Road. Near this salt road an earth pit was developed which supplied various materials for building houses, especially for making bricks. The land was fairly flat, the black earth cover quite fertile. Wells had to be quite deep to obtain water.

The village was named after the well known and respected Samuel Contenius, member of the committee which regulated the affairs of foreign settlers in South Russia. He did much to help the development of the Mennonite colonies, especially the Molotschna.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census Konteniusfeld had 40 establishments, with a population of 245 (124 males, 121 females). Bernhard Bergen was *Schulze,* councillors were Aron Wall and Johann Willms. Also in 1835 a roomy school building was built, four by eight fathoms, housing 85 students. On January 11, 1838 an earthquake raised the level of the well water, but unfortunately made the water unsuitable for human consumption, and not even healthy for the horses. In 1844 the village lost most of its cattle to disease, however, by 1848 they again had 292 head.

In 1848 Andreas Voth was *Schulze*, Johann Thiessen and Abraham Dueck councillors and Isaak Penner the teacher. Mid century agriculture in Konteniusfeld was average for the Molotschna. Wheat production for 1846 and 1847 hovered around the norm. Butter profits were among the lowest, but in 1854 Johann Regehr had the highest profit for cheese of any farmer in the colony – 60 rubles, 7 kopeks. In 1851 Konteniusfeld had 78,137 trees, of which 40,288 were mulberry trees in hedges. These mulberry trees did not, however, translate into silk production, which was low. In 1853 the village had two representatives on the Molotschna Mennonite Council, Johann Regehr and Friederich Quiring.

In 1857 Konteniusfeld population was 450 (243 males, 207 females), living in 63 houses, occupying 2,029 dessiatines. Teacher Isaak Penner had

84 students. That same year Andreas Voth was re-elected *Schulze*, Franz Regehr elected as councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Konteniusfeld had 25 full farms, ten half farms and 33 small farms, totaling 68, occupying 2,478 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Konteniusfeld was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Konteniusfeld was very proud of its elementary school. Teacher Isaak Penner was a prominent figure in Molotschna teaching circles. It was said that his many years of service had left a deep impression on the people of the village. There was a friendly rivalry between the schools of Konteniusfeld and the neighbouring Sparrau. Peter Siemens, also a minister, was later a well known teacher at Konteniusfeld.

In 1877 Benjamin and Helene Janz purchased a small farm and windmill on the eastern end of Konteniusfeld. Their first son, Benjamin B. Janz, who later was instrumental in the emigration of thousands of Mennonites to Canada, was born there later that same year.

Although not at the centre of religious activity, Konteniusfeld did play a part. Most residents were likely members of the Pordenau Flemish church; Isaak Braun (1874), Peter Dyck (1884) and Gerhard Duerksen (1903) were ordained ministers of this congregation. There was also some Mennonite Brethren influence. Klaas Enns was a minister of the Rueckenau M. B. Church. Teacher Peter Siemens was a Wuest enthusiast, and joined the M. B. Church. He was elected as itinerant minister in 1876, although it is said that he did not formally accept the position. He did, however, preach from time to time.

Konteniusfeld also played a part in the administration of the area. Heinrich Siebert was the *Oberschulze* of the Gnadenfeld Volost after Gerhard Fast.

In 1908 the population of Konteniusfeld was 540, occupying 2,352 dessiatines. There were three business establishments in the village. Abraham Kasper owned a brick yard, Jakob Toews and Benjamin Janz operated windmills.

Konteniusfeld undoubtedly had the same difficulties as other villages in the Molotschna during the revolution and the following civil war. In the subsequent famine there were 12 requests for food drafts, representing 26 people, published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. A number of people left the region as soon as they could. Widow Agatha Wiens and three children as well as Hermann Gustav Rempel and his brother were refugees in Constantinople in 1923. When emigration to Canada became a possibility, there were only two family groups that were specifically listed as coming from Konteniusfeld: Franz Jakob Siebert, wife Agatha and four children, and Justina Janz. Dietrich Johann Wiens was a delegate representing the Pordenau Flemish congregation at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches of Russia held in Moscow January 13-18, 1925. His name is not on the list of those emigrating to Canada.

Konteniusfeld will have suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna Mennonite villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s. Between 1930 and 1937 at least 60 men were sent into exile, another 83 in 1941. Twelve men were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. Those in the south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were able to ship off all those gathered at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka before the invaders arrived. Konteniusfeld residents were among the fortunate ones at Stulnevo. After the region was occupied by the German forces they simply returned to their homes. When the German occupying forces took statistics in Konteniusfeld on February 6, 1942, the 483 Mennonites represented 94% of the total population of 514. There were 55 men, 212 women and 216 children. Heinrich Kliewer was mayor at the time, Franz Neufeld his deputy.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, the Konteniusfeld Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Teacher Heinrich Penner died on the trail; the daughter of Aron Wiens was shot by Russian partisans. Most of the people were probably "repatriated" by the rapidly advancing Soviet troops, but a number did escape to the West. Jakob Dueck and Walter Penner went to South America in 1948, Kaethe Schartner to Canada, also in 1948.

Today the former Konteniusfeld and Sparrau are combined to form the village of Dolgoye.

KURUSCHAN

(Map page 53)

Kuruschan began as a community sheep pasture and sheep fold operated by the Halbstadt

Volost. It was located along the Kuruschan (also called Kuruduyuschan) River north east of Rosenort, and about seven verst west of Tiegerweide.

In time a number of small estates were established north of the river, such as those of Peter Neufeld, Martin Epp, Wilhelm Neufeld and Jakob Epp. There was a school on the Abram Olfert yard. Johann Neufeld likely had a store. There were small farms south of the river, with owners such as Anna Penner, P. Derksen and Abram Warkentin. There was a brick yard (owned by Wiebe) south of the Kuruschan as well as an orphanage (at the Harders). There were at least three tree nurseries in the area.

A home for the elderly was established on the west end of Kuruschan, south of the river, on land previously occupied by the sheep fold. The Halbstadt Volost designated 35 dessiatines of land for the purpose; the project was initiated in 1903 in memory of the centennial of the Molotschna settlement. A building committee was appointed in 1904, and construction proceeded despite a shortage of bricks. The building, which cost 40,000 rubles, was officially dedicated on December 6, 1906. It was sponsored by the Halbstadt Volost with funds for the building raised partly through church collections, partly through a levy of three kopeks per dessiatine of land. Maintenance costs of about ten rubles per month were borne either by the patient's relatives or else by the patient's home village. In 1910 the home was administered by a committee chaired by Elder Heinrich Goerz. The facility accommodated about 60 residents. There were 18 rooms for residents and staff; a large dining room was also used for church services. A barn on the property had 12 cows and eight horses; there was a two dessiatine orchard and a one and a half dessiatine vegetable garden.

The home was first managed by Bernhard Epp and his wife. A later director, minister J. Willms of Tiegenhagen, was arrested in the middle of one night in 1925, and never heard from again. Quite possibly the home stopped functioning about that time.

While Kuruschan administratively was not a village, it did to some degree operate as a community. The various estates and farms undoubtedly suffered the problems common to the Molotschna with the onset of the revolution and the following civil war. In the subsequent famine of 1922 there were seven requests for food drafts published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. One of these was for the home for the elderly, asking for help for 55 people. When emigration to Canada became an option at least seven family groups totaling 28 people left Kuruschan. The fate of the remaining people of this region is not known.

The buildings of the home for the elderly have been destroyed. The house and barn of the Wilhelm Neufeld estate still stand, but very few other Mennonite structures still exist in Kuruschan. The village currently occupying that area is called Kuroshan.

LADEKOPP

(Map page 54)

Ladekopp was founded in 1805, in the second wave of settlers to reach the Molotschna. It was named after the village Ladekopp in the Vistula Delta area.

The original 16 families were Flemish, coming from West Prussia. Having spent the winter in the Chortitza Colony, they settled on their land in the spring of 1805.

The northern border of the Ladekopp land was the Tokmak River; to the east was the town of Tokmak; westward lay Petershagen, and to the south was some of the land of Halbstadt. The northern 120 dessiatines were part of the Tokmak River valley, and flooded every spring, allowing for an excellent crop of hay to be harvested. The southern part was slightly elevated steppe.

Six of the families were self sufficient, and as a result able to complete rough board houses before the onset of winter with lumber purchased in the city of Alexandrovsk. The other ten families depended on government loans totaling 4,975 rubles, 50 kopeks, so they constructed only earth huts the first year. Four of the families actually took two lots each, one for themselves and the other for their children. The 16 plus four therefore completed the initial allotment of 20 full farms.

At first cultivation of the land was difficult, most families having only two or three horses; four horses were required for ploughing. Besides this, the price of farm produce was low.

The village had to overcome a series of difficulties. In 1808 about 200 cattle died of disease, and in 1812 another 70. In 1816 and 1817 a new summer wheat was introduced which produced a better yield, but grasshoppers devoured much of the crop in 1822, 1823 and 1824. Then in 1827 the disease of cattle returned, claiming 180 animals. This was followed by severe drought and some starvation of both man and animal in 1833 and 1834.

After that circumstances improved, helped in part by the increased wheat trade through the port city of Berdyansk; the freight cost to port was lower, and

they were accepting various additional types of wheat. In 1839 cattle disease struck again taking 240 head of cattle, but the farmers could replenish their herds, since not all the villages of the region had been involved. Introduction of Spanish Merino sheep helped the economy while the wool market was good, although sheep were also subject to disease. Planting trees was encouraged (actually demanded), including mulberry trees in hedges. Mulberry leaves were used to feed the hungry silk worms which were necessary for the newly established silk industry.

In 1819 Peter Toews of Ladekopp was the *Oberschulze* of the whole Molotschna Colony; he played a part in the establishment of the village of Lichtfelde.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census Ladekopp had 27 establishments, with a total population of 203 (111 males, 93 females). *Schulze* was Gerhard Peters, councillors Johann Warkentin and Johann Janzen. By 1848 there was a complete change in the administration. Heinrich Kroeker was *Schulze*, councillors were Christian Schmidt and Jakob Klassen, with David Klassen the teacher.

In 1857 the total population of Ladekopp was 287 (160 males, 127 females) living in 41 buildings, occupying 1,530 dessiatines. Teacher Jakob Goossen had 54 students. There were 20 full farms and 15 landless families. New elections in 1858 brought in David Walde as *Schulze*, Aron Walde as a councillor. In 1856 Franz Klassen was a member of the Agricultural Society, and in 1859 Gerhard Loewen and Jakob Goerzen were representatives to the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

Mid century Ladekopp agriculture was above average for the Molotschna. The wheat yield in 1846 and 1847 was somewhat below the norm, but most other indices were higher. Friedrich Klassen had the highest income from fruit in 1846. Franz Klassen had the most weight of silk worm cocoon production, and the third highest silk production in 1849. He also had among the greatest production of fruit trees and income from fresh fruit. Not to be outdone, Peter Martens had the third largest tree nursery among the villages of the Molotschna in 1851, Jakob Wiebe the highest income from cheese that same year. Ladekopp had 107,908 trees in 1851, of which 35,893 were mulberry trees in hedges. In 1852 there was some industry in the village. Master blacksmith Jakob Klassen sold 1,590 rubles worth of equipment.

After the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Ladekopp had 20 full farms and 29 small farms, for a total of 49, occupying 1,764 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Ladekopp was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Ladekopp residents participated actively in the religious life of the Molotschna, although there was no church building in the village. There were a number of ministers ordained by the various configurations of the Flemish Mennonite Church. Johann Dyck (1833) and Franz Klassen were ministers of the Ohrloff-Petershagen congregation. Jakob Bergmann (1848), Johann Dyck (switched in 1858), Jakob Dyck (1869), Peter Fast (1880) and Johann Warkentin were ministers of the Lichtenau-Petershagen Church. Peter Bergmann (1880) started off in the Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch church, then became a Mennonite Brethren. Bernhard Fast (1885) served in the Schoensee Mennonite congregation.

There was also considerable Mennonite Brethren influence. Abraham Peters and Peter Stobbe were among the 16 who originally signed the declaration of secession, establishing the M. B. Church on January 6, 1860. Abraham Peters and David Claassen participated in the election of the first elder of the M. B. Church on May 30, 1860. Ladekopp was on the trail of itinerant ministers in 1876-77, showing that there were some Mennonite Brethren in the village at that time.

In 1908 the population of Ladekopp was 452, occupying 1,544 dessiatines. There were five business ventures in the village. Gerhard Warkentin owned a steam mill, Abraham Toews and Peter Fast had windmills. Jakob Bestvater dyed cloth blue in his business, while Dietrich Walde had a brick factory.

In 1910 Peter Johann Dyck moved from an estate, and bought a house in Ladekopp. Here he established a brick and tile factory; the building was erected about one kilometre outside the village. In the summer time the factory employed up to 30 men, often recruited from Kharkov, since Dyck did not feel that local Ukrainians were strong enough to do the work. Near the factory was a hill from which clay was obtained for the bricks; they just dug it straight out of the hill. Also nearby was a hill where beautiful white sand could be obtained. Pottery clay for tiles was obtained from the Tokmak area.

In 1912 Peter Wiens of Ladekopp advertised himself as successfully treating crooked spines with massage and Swedish exercises. With his treatment it was not necessary to wear corsets.

Heinrich Bernhard Tiessen recalls from his childhood that in addition to the industries already mentioned there was a wood shop and wagon plant as

well as a blacksmith. Since Ladekopp bordered on Tokmak, some of the villagers actually worked in manufacturing plants of that city.

Mid afternoon (*Vesperzeit*) on July 4, 1912, it started to rain heavily. By six o'clock the "sluice gates of heaven opened," and water started to collect in low lying areas of Ladekopp. Behind the gardens the protective dike could no longer hold the water, so it flowed over the gardens, through the hedges and sheds, across the yards and onto the street. Basements were flooded. A *droschke* (small buggy) which dared to go onto the street was only spared because of the strong horses pulling it. Many of the crops were damaged; potatoes were washed out, some were collected by neighbouring Russian women or were eaten by the crows. Wheat and corn plants were severely affected. When it was all over the reporter commented "God shows us his omnipotence and our weakness – we should not complain."

Mennonites gradually came to value education. Johann Cornies implemented both teaching standards and required adequate buildings. In the 1890s the Russian government also placed emphasis on education; included in this program were suggestions for providing adequate lighting, warmth and space in the schools. Ladekopp wanted to build a new school, but at first felt that the architectural plans for the proposed school were too expensive. In time they did purchase them, and proceeded with construction, completing it about 1908. There was one large classroom, often used as assembly hall, even for community events and church services. There was also a smaller classroom and two teacher residences. A Mr. Huebert was a teacher in Ladekopp for about 25 years. Katharina Baerkmann, born and raised in Ladekopp, was first a student in the new building, then a teacher just before she emigrated to Canada in 1924.

Ladekopp went through the usual difficulties of the Mennonite villages in the Molotschna during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. A number of people had typhus, brought in by the revolutionary soldiers. The famine of 1921-22 was quite severe. No Mennonites actually died, but several non-Mennonites died on the street. Despite the difficult circumstances only six requests for food drafts, representing 16 people, were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. In 1923 the Mennonite Central Committee tractors ploughed 15 dessiatines of land for Ladekopp farmers.

A number of people had fled to Germany by February, 1921, Johann Klassen and Abram Warkentin. When the opportunity to emigrate to Canada came in the mid 1920s, at least 15 family groups, 56 individuals left their home village.

With the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s Ladekopp suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages. A considerable number of families were forced off their property as kulaks in the early 1930s. Thirty-five men were exiled to Siberia from 1930-1941, another 34 were banished after the German invasion of June, 1941. Six men were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna the Soviets intended to move all possible enemies of the state to the east. They ordered all remaining Mennonites to be evacuated. The south-west villages were sent to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived they were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. The Ladekopp people were among the fortunate thousands gathered at Tokmak, so after the German forces overran the area, they simply returned to their homes.

The German Army took statistics in Ladekopp on February 5, 1942. The 176 Mennonites represented 33% of the total population of 528. Of the Mennonites, 92% were farmers. There were 23 men, with 81 women and 72 children. Johann Klassen was the mayor, Friedrich Wiens his assistant.

With the retreat of the German Army from the area in September of 1943, the remaining Mennonite population of Ladekopp joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. At least two escaped to the West; Heinz Reimer and Hans Huebert eventually landed in South America. Unfortunately many were overrun by the Soviet forces and "repatriated" against their own will. The Peter Wiebe family, for example, was within a few kilometres of freedom when they were recaptured and sent to the far north near Archangel. Some of those who survived the cruel conditions could, after many years, move further south. Many of those, such as the five Wiebe children and their families, have recently emigrated to Germany as *Aussiedler*.

Ladekopp is now part of the larger city of Tokmak, being a suburb on the western outskirts. Some of the original houses still exist; the school building still stands, and is being used as a vehicle registration office. A former farmhouse across the street from the school is now a drug rehabilitation centre.

LANDSKRONE

(Map page 55)

Landskrone was founded in 1839 along the Begim-Tschokrak River on land which was rented by Heinrich Janzen of Schoensee, who in turn had rented it from Johann Cornies. The village was laid out in two streets parallel to, and one on each side of the river, 220 fathoms apart. The south street was considered the main street, leading to Friedensdorf on the west, and in time to Hierschau on the east. Forty full farms were planned, families to come from various villages of the Molotschna. Buildings were erected according to the regulations of the Agricultural Society. At least four of the original 1839 settlers came from the neighbouring Friedensdorf: Franz Johann Goossen, Johann Johann Petker, Bernhard Bernhard Friesen and Thomas Bernhard Friesen.

Twenty-six families settled in Landskrone in 1839, 19 building red brick houses on the south street; seven families occupied sites on the north street, for some reason using white bricks for their construction. The following year another 11 families came, ten of them settling on the north street. The final three families arrived in 1842, completing the 40 full farms. The name "Landskrone" was dictated by Johann Cornies without any explanation for his choice. The red brick houses were quite attractive, so the local Russians called it "Red Village." In later times it was known as Lankove or Lankovoye.

In springtime the Begim-Tschokrak River flooded, doing considerable damage, so in 1844 a ten fathom wide "canal" was dug - straight as an arrow (*schnurgerade*). The meandering curves of the river were filled in and the area stabilized with trees. The rich black soil in the region was one foot thick, so crops were plentiful. In 1846 and 1847 there were bumper crops, so that all debts were paid off and the farm establishments improved. The 55 to 65 foot wells provided good water.

By 1848 a total of 5,500 fruit trees had been planted in the village. In 1849 Gerhard Goossen of Landskrone himself planted 115 fruit trees, third most of anyone in the Molotschna. Benjamin Buller planted 156 in 1851, the highest number in the whole colony. By 1852 Landskrone had a total of 104,905 planted trees, including mulberry trees, trees for wood and fruit trees. Other aspects of farm life were not ignored. In 1851 Landskrone had the highest income from butter among the colony villages, 938 rubles, 9 kopeks.

At the time of writing of the 1848 Molotschna village reports, Kornelius Enns was *Schulze*, councillors were Gerhard Peters and Kornelius Penner. Johann Kroeker wrote the report and was probably the teacher. In 1857 the *Schulze* was Jakob Wall, councillor Heinrich Thiessen and teacher Jakob Janzen.

In 1855 there were 40 full farms in Landskrone, with 47 additional *Anwohner* families, essentially landless people. In 1857 the population was 515 (252 males, 263 females), with 139 students, occupying 2,648 dessiatines. After the final land distribution of the Molotschna in 1869, Landskrone had 36 full farms, eight half farms and 34 small farms, occupying 3,144 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Landskrone became part of the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Church affiliation of Landskrone was largely Flemish Mennonite in its various congregational alignments. Ministers were Jakob Fast (1840), Jakob Voth (1875) and Johann Duerksen (1898). Johann Duerksen was also a member of the Molotschna School Board in 1910. There was considerable Landskrone participation in the Alexanderwohl congregation. Ministers were Peter Voth (1848), Tobias Janz (1876), David Pankratz (1882) and Gerhard Wiebe. Deacons were David Schroeder (1880) and Gerhard Brandt (1894). Gerhard Plett of neighbouring Hierschau became elder of the Margenau-Alexanderwohl-Landskrone congregation, being ordained in 1908. In 1910 a large beautiful sanctuary was constructed on the south side of the south street in Landskrone, serving as the focal point for the congregation in the area.

In 1908 the Landskrone population was 518, living on 3,017 dessiatines. There were five business establishments in the village. David Wiens owned a Dutch style windmill and a motor driven mill, Aganetha Deleski had a plain windmill. Johann Dirksen operated a brick yard, Peter Dick owned a store, and Peter Regehr sold flour.

The Tokmak Railway was constructed starting in the spring of 1911, and was completed by December of 1913. The track between Tokmak and Stulnevo ran through the northern Molotschna, just north of Landskrone. The rail bed required a considerable amount of sand, so when a ten dessiatine section of land which had excellent sand was discovered near Landskrone, a spur line was built to reach it. The upper layer of earth was taken away by workers with one horse wagons, then a huge dredge picked up the sand in large buckets and poured it into waiting railway cars. Because of the spectacle Landskrone became a minor tourist attraction; even school groups would go on outings to watch the machines in action. A news report concluded "For the company it is a productive sand pit,

for the people of Landskrone it is a golden pit. One speaks of 15,000 rubles per dessiatine." When the project was finished the tracks of the spur line were removed, and the dredge was sent back to Germany. The resultant gigantic sand pit was later used by the young people of Landskrone for picnics.

In 1913 the village had 600 inhabitants. There was a three room elementary school; after 1913 there was also a secondary school (*Fortbildungschule*). By 1918 the population had increased to 640.

Landskrone suffered the usual consequences of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. The time of the following famine must have been felt acutely, since at least 15 family units with 111 individuals requested food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* in 1922. A general meeting to discuss the situation was held in Landskrone in June of 1922. Conditions in the Gnadenfeld Volost, of which Landskrone was a part, were described as "...very critical, a number of deaths from starvation, the horses very weak, little has been sown, had help not arrived then half the population would have died." The situation was apparently thought to be most desperate in the larger villages of Landskrone and Waldheim.

Emigration to Canada in the mid 1920s was popular in some villages, but seemingly not in Landskrone. While a considerable number left neighbouring Hierschau, only Agatha Neufeld is listed as having left Landskrone in 1924, and the Heinrich H. Willms and the Heinrich Goerzens after that.

Landskrone presumably suffered through the various Soviet reorganization programs of the late 1920s and 1930s, the same as other Molotschna villages. It was reported in 1928 that the Landskrone cooperative store managed by Dietrich Janz was being liquidated. The deficit was 8,000 to 9,000 rubles, so each member had to contribute 30 rubles. Similar enterprises in Gnadenfeld and Pordenau had already been closed, and the one in Waldheim was in some trouble.

Elder Heinrich T. Janz was disenfranchised, moved to Tokmak; he, together with Isaak Poetker, Johann Koop and Nikolai Reimer were sentenced to death in 1937. The Johann Dueck family was exiled in 1929. Peter Bergmann was arrested in 1937. By 1941 a total of 131 people had been deported or imprisoned, with a further 64 men being "taken" from June to September, 1941.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. In late September those of the south-west villages were taken to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were able to ship off all those from Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka before the invaders arrived. The Landskrone villagers were among the fortunate ones collected at Stulnevo, and were not deported. When the German troops overran the region, they simply returned back to their homes.

When the occupying German Army collected statistics in Landskrone on December 22, 1941, the total population was 501, with 386 Mennonites (77%). There were only 52 men, with 175 women and 77 children. Seven men had been drafted into the Red Army. Heinrich Hildebrand was mayor, Johann Peters his assistant. Of the population 64% were farmers, 19% labourers, 6% tradesmen and a disproportionate 11% officials. Waldheim, the local administrative centre, had only 2%! The villagers cultivated 1,800 hectares (1,648 dessiatines) of land.

The Landskrone Mennonite population fled with the retreating German Army in September of 1943, joining the "Great Trek," westward to Poland and Germany. Most were overrun by the advancing Soviet Army, but at least one lady made it to the West. Margarethe Klassen was on a ship headed for Canada in 1948.

Most of the village was likely destroyed with the retreat of the German Army in 1943, and seems not to have been rebuilt after the war. In 1982 little was left of the village. The magnificent church still stood, in lonely isolation, being used as a granary. By 2000 even it had been dismantled, with only a few tiles buried in the rubble. The village is now called Lankovoye.

LICHTENAU

(Maps pages 56,57)

Lichtenau was founded in 1804, one of the initial nine villages laid out along the eastern bank of the Molochnaya River. The settlment was supervised by the first *Oberschulze,* Klaas Wiens. Specific location of the village groups along the river was decided by lot. The immediate neighbour to the north was Lindenau, with Blumstein to the south. The Lichtenau land near the river was flat and overgrown by reeds; the salty soil was good for growing grass. The higher steppe away from the river had considerable clay, but with crop rotation was capable of producing good grain yields. The south-east border was the Kuruschan River.

The initial 21 Flemish settlers received grants from the government totaling 10,400 rubles. The reeds near the river were useful in constructing the first houses. *Oberschulze* Klaas Wiens named the village Lichtenau after a village in West Prussia. The development of the village was helped by the fact that some of the early settlers, because of increasing age or too great a debt load, passed on their farms to younger, more energetic farmers.

At the 1835 Molotschna census there were 36 establishments in Lichtenau, with a total population of 261 (137 males, 124 females). Gerhard Dyck was *Schulze* at the time, Johann Kroeker and Peter Berg the councillors. By 1848 Kornelius Heidbrecht was *Schulze,* Peter Siemens and Peter Heide councillors and Gerhard Kornelsen the teacher.

In 1846 and 1847 the Lichtenau wheat production was almost exactly the Molotschna norm. In 1851 the village had 70,304 trees, of which 33,484 were mulberry trees in hedges. Silk production was average for the colony.

In 1857 the population of Lichtenau was 328 (163 males, 165 females) living in 52 houses, occupying 1,525 dessiatines. There were 53 students, with Gerhard Kornelsen still the teacher. That year Johann Rogalsky was *Schulze,* Jakob Heidebrecht a councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Lichtenau had 18 full farms, six half farms and 26 small farms for a total of 50, occupying 1,781 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Lichtenau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Throughout much of its development Lichtenau was closely associated with the organization of the Flemish division of the Mennonite church. When the Ohrloff-Petershagen congregation was split in 1824, the Lichtenau-Petershagen portion was by far the largest. Elder was Jakob Warkentin of Altona, who was deposed in 1842 as a result of a disagreement with Johann Cornies. The Lichtenau congregation was divided into three – Lichtenau-Petershagen, Margenau-Schoensee and Pordenau, each with its own elder. In total about 5,000 villagers stayed with Lichtenau. The first church building was erected in Lichtenau in 1826; this was replaced by a larger brick structure in 1860. In later years it was surrounded by a grove of chestnut trees.

Elders of the congregation were Dirk Warkentin (1842-69), Jakob Toews (1869-1908), Bernhard Epp (1908-22), David H. Epp (1922-26) and Peter Nickel (1926-31). Of the elders and ministers who served this congregation, very few actually lived in Lichtenau. In 1887 the total baptized membership was 2,388 with 2,496 children. In 1905 membership, including children, was 4,000, in 1926 it was about 5,000. The General Conference of the Mennonite Church met in the Lichtenau church in 1889, 1899 and 1918. In 1923 the congregation was somewhat divided about their elder, Bernhard Epp, who had resigned. David H. Epp of Chortitza was asked to be the "leading minister" to resolve the problems. This he did, preparing the congregation for the election of a new elder in 1924. In 1931 Elder Peter Nickel was compelled to leave by the authorities, and the church was closed.

In 1908 Lichtenau had seven business establishments. Hermann Hamm owned a large manufactured goods store, while Hamm and Huebert were a farm implement dealer. Hamm and Wiebe as well as Abraham Wiebe had brickyards, Johann Janzen had a cloth dying shop, while Bernhard Bergen and Jakob Kornelsen built wagons. Total assessed value of these businesses was 44,700 rubles.

There was likely a stimulus to business when the Tokmak Railway was completed. Construction began in 1911, with the first trains actually running in December of 1913. Lichtenau had a station which served the south-west corner of the Molotschna. To the west was the Fedorovka station, to the north-east was Halbstadt.

Lichtenau undoubtedly suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages during the revolutionary period and the following civil war. When Russia lost the war to Germany, and Ukraine was about to be occupied by the Austro-German forces, a number of marauding bands swept through the countryside causing havoc where they went. In March of 1918 one such group forced Altona to pay 17,000 rubles before going on to Muensterberg, Blumstein and Lichtenau, where they got another 41,000 rubles.

When the promised German troops actually came in mid April, 1918, they arrived at the Lichtenau railway station. They were treated as liberators, and were fed the traditional *Zwieback* and *Schinkenfleisch.* "*Deutschland, Deutschland ueber Alles*" was sung.

The Germans allowed the traditional form of volost government to reappear, but in the process some blunders were committed which later bore serious consequences. Four members of the Halbstadt village soviet and three men from the Lichtenau village soviet were shot. The surrounding population did not forget.

Some of the German occupying forces encouraged the Mennonites to prepare for "self defence," and a number of villages actually established

Selbstschutz units. Not all in the community, however, were willing to give up the principle of non-resistance. An All-Mennonite Conference was held in Lichtenau June 30-July 2, 1918, where the issue was hotly debated, then side-stepped. The conference adopted a resolution upholding the Mennonite belief in non-resistance, but recommended tolerance for those who disagreed with this position.

During the civil war typhus was brought into the village, likely by Bolshevik soldiers. The last recorded case was in 1921; no fatalities are mentioned.

In the famine which followed the civil war eight families, representing 42 individuals, requested food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.*

When emigration to Canada became a possibility in the mid 1920s, Lichtenau became the principal point of departure of most of the Molotschna Mennonites. The first trainload pulled out of the Lichtenau railway station on June 23, 1924. The scenes of parting were repeated many times as thousands left Russia for the new country. One participant wrote "Now it was time to bid adieu and to leave one's hearth, village, customs, relatives and friends...Even the strong wept, some sobbed. Perhaps not all were aware of the significance of this day, but a deep seriousness was written on all faces. Some of the people were going, the others staying behind." From Lichtenau itself at least 21 family groups, 69 individuals, emigrated to Canada.

Some people from Lichtenau collected in the Moscow suburbs in late 1929 in a last desperate attempt to obtain exit visas from the Soviet Union. Four families, 28 individuals, did make it to the Prenzlau refugee camp in Germany by February, 1930, showing that they were among the fortunate 6,000 who did manage to get out.

Lichtenau soon felt the oppressive nature of the communist regime. At least nine families were expelled from their land as kulaks in 1929-30; among them were R. Regier, P. Giesbrecht, Johann Koop, Franz Hiebert and J. Regier. Johann Giesbrecht, originally a banker, but now a traveling representative for a Dutch textile firm, was on a business trip to the Urals. On his return he was arrested in Zaporozhye in 1931; he was sentenced to five years of hard labour on the Baikal railway construction. The family was expelled from their home and moved to Nikopol. From 1935 to 1940 at least 23 men were arrested.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship off all those at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. The residents of Lichtenau, 257 individuals, were therefore among the unfortunate people who were evacuated to the far north or to central Asia. When the German occupation forces took statistics in Lichtenau on February 4, 1942, there were few Mennonites left. The 41 remaining "German" people were 18% of the 224 citizens. Of these half were Mennonites, half Lutherans. Therefore there were about five Mennonite men, seven women and eight children. Ten men had been drafted into the Red Army.

With the retreat of the German Army from the region in September of 1943, the Mennonites of Lichtenau joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were overrun by the advancing Soviet Army, but a number escaped to the West. Abraham Reimer was on a ship heading for Paraguay in 1948. Aron A. Mandtler eventually settled in Uruguay. Jakob and Heinrich Penner and the extended Giesbrecht family as well as a Riediger girl reached Canada. From Nikopol the Giesbrechts had joined the "Great Trek," and the whole family, except for two sons, escaped.

A number of people, for example Maria Reimer (nee Penner) and Andre (Heinrich) Giesbrecht have now settled in Germany as *Aussiedler.*

Today there are still some buildings in Lichtenau from the Mennonite era; there are a number of residential houses, and the old school building stands. The church now serves as a machine repair shop. There are bullet holes in the back wall of the church, reminders of the time when Mennonites were executed there! The original train station was blown up in September of 1943, likely by the retreating German troops. A new one has been built on the same site. On the platform is where emigrants to Canada said their last farewells, where people headed north or east to their places of exile. More recently Mennonite tourists have stood on the platform singing "*So nimm den meine Haende*," remembering the history that has occurred on that spot.

The village is now called Svetlodolinskoye.

LICHTFELDE

(Map page 58)

Lichtfelde was founded as part of the Molotschna Colony in 1819. It was laid out just north

of the Juschanlee River on land that had been rented by Johann Cornies, then sublet to neighbouring Nogai nomads as pasture. The 1,300 dessiatines, all north of the river, formed a rough square. Seventeen of the original settlers came from various localities in West Prussia: Elbing (8), Marienburg (4), Tiegenhof (2), Stuhm (2) and Moerr (1). The other three were single men from other Molotschna villages, giving a total of 20.

A number of the original pioneers had some resources, others did not. Eventually those without means received a government grant of 188 rubles, 75 kopeks each, those with means a lesser amount, 98 rubles, 28 kopeks. The Molotschna men did not receive grants. The name Lichtfelde was chosen by some who came from a Prussian village of that name.

Of the original 1,300 dessiatines (65 per farm), 34 dessiatines were planned as farmyards and gardens. The first year alternate farms built houses and barns, the following year this was reversed to complete the building program. In all, 438 dessiatines were cultivated land, divided into four sections. The 755 dessiatines of steppe were used as pasture, the relatively sparse growth of grass could graze 270 head of cattle. The village rented additional land to be able to raise sheep.

In 1824 a village school was built; before that the teaching was done in individual homes. A community granary was constructed in 1829. Three dams were built on the Juschanlee River to control the water and enable the efficient growth of hay. The 12 dessiatine tree plantation was begun in 1834 and completed in 1847.

Lichtfelde experienced the same difficulties as other pioneer villages in the Molotschna - crop failures, grasshoppers, cattle diseases, wind and snow storms. Original *Schulze* of Lichtfelde was Abraham Riediger. By the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 30 establishments in the village, with a total population of 212 (108 males, 104 females). *Schulze* was Dirk Wiebe. When the Molotschna village reports were written in 1848 David Goerzen was *Schulze*, Johann Wall and Heinrich Dick were councillors and Aron Penner the teacher.

Lichtfelde agriculture seems to have been average for a Molotschna village. No particular farmer is cited for any unusual production. In 1846 the Lichtfelde wheat yield was almost exactly the same as the Molotschna average, the following year it was a bit below. In 1851 Lichtfelde had 107,337 trees, of which 36,214 were mulberry trees in hedges and 266 were pear trees.

In 1857 Jakob Dueck was re-elected *Schulze*, Jakob Goerzen was elected as councillor. That same year the village population was 321 (166 males, 155 females) living in 40 houses, occupying 1,500 dessiatines. The 57 students had Daniel Hoppe as teacher. In 1859 David Goertzen and Jakob Neufeld were on the Molotschna Mennonite Council. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna of 1869 Lichtfelde had 16 full farms, eight half farms and 27 small farms, for a total of 51, occupying 1,732 dessiatines of land.

The first Lichtfelde settlers were Flemish in origin, so the Mennonite Church was likely predominant. Lichtfelde ministers of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch congregation were Heinrich Reimer (1883), Isaak Ediger (1884), Abram Dyck (1887) and Gerhard Epp (1889). Jakob Esau was a minister of the Alexanderkrone church, ordained in 1887. He was also a member of the Molotschna School Board. In 1860, however, many people felt that a revival was necessary, and that perhaps the only solution was to leave the old church. Of the 18 who signed the Mennonite Brethren document of secession on January 6, 1860, two were from Lichtfelde, Martin Klassen and Abram Wiens. The same two men were among the 27 who on May 30, 1860, elected the first elder of the M. B. Church. Presumably there continued to be a considerable Mennonite Brethren presence in the village.

Another religious revival occurred in a number of southern Molotschna villages at the turn of the century, with some of the influence coming from the Alliance movement of Blankenburg, Germany. Many of the people involved were from the Lichtenau Mennonite Church, although some were Mennonite Brethren. An organizational meeting to establish a new church was held on the estate of David Dick at Apanlee in 1906, leading to the formation of the Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood (*Allianz Gemeinde*). Peter Riediger was one of the founding members, as well as Jakob Reimer and estate owners Peter P. Schmidt of Steinbach, Heinrich Guenther of Juschanlee and David Dick and Jakob Sudermann of Apanlee. In time the new congregation built a sanctuary in Lichtfelde for its meetings in the Molotschna. A congregation was also organized in Altona, Sagradovka. For a time Abram Nachtigal was minister of the Lichtfelde group until he emigrated to Canada in 1922, after which Aron A. Toews accepted the leadership, until he too left for Canada in 1926.

In 1908 the population of Lichtfelde was 426, occupying 1,645 dessiatines. There were six business

establishments in the village. Abram Dick handled manufactured goods while Heinrich Wiens dealt in small wares, Peter Dick in wood products and Abraham Klassen in wines. Jakob Riediger had a windmill, Gerhard Klassen ran a small inn.

Lichtfelde undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as did all the other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In the famine of 1922 there were five requests for food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 37 people. Peter Isaak was in Germany as a refugee in 1921, a further 20 families emigrating to Canada in the mid 1920s, 78 individuals.

In a desperate attempt to leave, many Mennonites collected in Moscow in 1929, to get exit visas. A number of Lichtfelde residents were successful; the Nikolai Warkentin and Heinrich Pankratz families (six individuals) were in the Prenzlau refugee camp in Germany in 1930, showing that they were successful. Some Mennonites also tried to avoid communist policies by escaping across the Amur River ice in eastern Siberia. Johann Gerhard Enns was a refugee in Harbin, China, in 1930, showing that he too had succeeded.

In the 1930s Lichtfelde suffered the same atrocities under the Soviet regime as did the other Mennonite villages in the Molotschna. Lichtfelde had the first collective farm established in the Molotschna area, so perhaps its difficulties began at a slightly earlier time. In May of 1929 the first kulak farmers were told to leave the region. Kornelius Wall went to Memrik, then to Moscow, and was actually able to escape to Canada! Also driven from their properties were the families Dietrich Wiebe, Abram Dick, Martin Friesen and Matthies. Sixty men were exiled from 1935 to 1938 and another six drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, to the far north or central Asia. Lichtfelde residents were in the group collected at Lichtenau, so virtually all the Mennonite population, a total of 332, was evacuated.

When the German Army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the few remaining Mennonite stragglers presumably joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. The fate of these people is not known, but it is likely that most were recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army and sent back to the far north or central Asia.

Today there is nothing left of the Mennonite village of Lichtfelde. The current name of Grushevka includes Alexanderkrone and the Lichtfelde region.

LIEBENAU

(Map page 59)

Liebenau was founded in 1823 on the south bank of the Tokmak River, 12 verst east of the town of Tokmak. Because of the increasing restrictions placed on Mennonites, 13 families from the Marienburg region of West Prussia banded together under the leadership of teacher Peter Franz, and in 1822 headed for Russia. Nine of these families together with their leader combined with 11other families from the same region who had migrated to the Molotschna in earlier years, to founded the Frisian village of Liebenau in 1823. The land on which they built was basically clay, covered by a layer of black soil; near the river it tended to be sandy. Wells 12 to 15 feet deep gave good water. The village was named by the *Oberschulze* at the time, Gerhard Ens, who felt that this was a lovely pasture (*liebe Aue*).

People from the surrounding villages were very helpful to the new settlers, both in giving advice and helping out. Thirteen poor families received a total of 10,052 rubles in grants from the Russian government.

Liebenau was considered to be a beautiful village. The view from the steppes down into the Tokmak valley was breathtaking. The white and Italian poplars on the main street added to the impression. But Liebenau was not spared the difficulties of a pioneer settlement, such as crop failures, grasshoppers and disease among the cattle. While being in the Tokmak River valley allowed for pure drinking water, water for the cattle and excellent growth for trees, there were some disadvantages, such as periodic flooding.

At the time of the Molotschna census in 1835 there were 22 family units in Liebenau, with a total population of 158 (82 males, 76 females).

Agriculturally Liebenau appeared to have average development. Both for 1846 and 1847 the wheat yield was just a bit below the Molotschna norm. By 1851 the village had planted a total of 79,488 trees, of which 36,196 were mulberry trees in hedges and 89 were pear trees. That same year Heinrich Huebert had the highest income from fresh fruit of any farmer in the

whole colony, 72 rubles 62 kopeks.

In 1848 Heinrich Unrau was *Schulze*, with councillors being Schroeder and Heinrich Huebert and teacher Isaak Fast. In 1857 Franz Dueck was *Schulze* and Isbrand Rempel a councillor. In 1859 Abraham Kroeger was the Liebenau representative on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

In 1857 the total population was 274 (148 males, 126 females), living in 37 houses, occupying 1,435 dessiatines. There were 32 students, with teacher Heinrich Wedel. After the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Liebenau still had the original 20 full farms, with 22 small farms, occupying 1,652 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Liebenau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

There was considerable agitation for reform in the Mennonite Church in the mid nineteenth century, which led to the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church. Johann Claassen and Heinrich Huebert, both from Liebenau, signed the original document of secession on January 6, 1860. Heinrich Huebert and Simon Harms were two of the 27 who gathered to elect the first elder of the M.B.Church on May 30, 1860. Heinrich Huebert was chosen.

Johann Claassen with his mother and siblings came from Ohrlofferfelde in West Prussia and settled on a small farm in Liebenau, probably in 1828. In time he and Kornelius Penner opened up a shop in the village. But his main interest was spiritual; he felt that reform in the church was needed. After signing the document of secession on January 6, 1860, Johann continued as one of the leaders of the movement, legally paving the way for official recognition by negotiating with officials in St. Petersburg. He eventually moved to the largely Mennonite Brethren Kuban settlement, where he was elected *Schulze.*

Heinrich Huebert was born in Muensterberg, Molotschna. An early influence in his life was teacher Tobias Voth; Heinrich was an avid reader and very interested in nature. When he became economically independent he purchased a full farm in Liebenau, also owning and operating a treadmill. He seemed to be a prominent citizen of Liebenau, being elected a councillor, a position he held in 1848, and for some years was *Schulze*. Heinrich also became involved in the formation of the Mennonite Brethren Church, being perhaps the most theologically oriented of the original founders. He signed the initial document of secession on January 6, 1860, and was the first elder of the new denomination, the election occurring on May 30, 1860.

Not everybody in Liebenau, however, was Mennonite Brethren, indeed at first there was strong opposition. Heinrich Huebert was punished by the village council, even to the extent of being jailed. Eventually he moved to the Kuban, where he completed his days in relative peace and quiet.

There were members of other congregations in Liebenau, as attested by the fact that David Gaeddert was a minister of the Alexanderwohl congregation, being ordained in 1885.

In 1908 there were a number of commercial enterprises in Liebenau. Peter Esau, Gerhard Friesen and Johann Becker had windmills. Wilhelm Neufeld owned a brick factory, while Jakob Franz and Martin Hiebert had manufacturing plants.

There had been floods in the northern part of the Molotschna Colony on a number of occasions, notably in 1893 and 1909, but the flood of 1912 was the worst in living memory. The winter of 1911 to 1912 was mild, with very changeable weather. There was heavy snowfall, then warm temperatures February 24-26, 1912. This caused rapid melting and widespread flooding of the Molochnaya River and its tributaries, especially the Tokmak and Begim-Tschokrak Rivers. Liebenau was the hardest hit of all the villages, being right in the Tokmak valley. Heinrich Gaede reported the water rising very fast, possibly due to ice jams. There was soon a fast flowing stream down the main street, carrying straw, wood and ice flows up to 21 inches thick. A number of houses were flooded right up to the windows, and subsequently collapsed. Happily there was no recorded fatality from the flood, and the houses were eventually repaired or replaced.

Liebenau suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the following civil war. At least four men were shot during this time. A typhus epidemic was introduced by Bolshevik soldiers; twenty people died of the disease in Liebenau. In the subsequent famine only two families are listed as requesting food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* Donated Mennonite Central Committee tractors cultivated 69 dessiatines of land for Liebenau farmers in 1923. In the mid 1920s at least 11 family groups migrated to Canada, totalling 35 individuals.

Despite increasingly difficult times in the 1920s, church life continued in Liebenau. Alexander Ediger was born in Berdyansk in 1893. He completed the local *Gymnasium*, then studied history and philology in St. Petersburg. After that he taught in a *Gymnasium* near Simferopol. In 1922 he was ordained as a minister by his home Berdyansk congregation. In

1923 he received a call to be a teacher and preacher in Liebenau. Being a minister, he soon had to give up his teaching position, so he devoted his full energy to his duties as a preacher. He was ordained as elder of the Schoensee Mennonite congregation in 1925, by David H. Epp.

Ediger was an excellent preacher, but also an outstanding musician. He was an accomplished pianist, a composer and a choir director. On October 23, 1923, he and his choir performed "*Das Lied von der Glocke*" at the service celebrating the hundredth anniversary of the founding of Liebenau. At a *Menno-Feier* held on January 25, 1925 in the Schoensee church, Ediger chaired the proceedings. He preached the first of three sermons and made the concluding remarks. The Liebenau men's choir as well as a mixed choir joined the Schoensee choir in the service. It is quite possible that Ediger directed all three choirs.

Alexander Ediger was the editor of "*Unser Blatt*," the only periodical published by Russian Mennonites in the mid 1920s (1925-1928), and he was chairman of the KfK (*Kommission fuer Kirchenangelegenheiten*). He participated in the silver wedding celebrations of Kornelius K. Martens held on July 7, 1929 in Grossweide, delivering a sermon using I Chronicles 29:9 as his text. Likely in 1930 he fled to Memrik, then later to Stalino. There he was arrested in 1935 and exiled to the Bamlag Labour Camp. He has not been heard from since. His wife Katharina was sentence to five years, was released in 1940, and eventually reached Canada after World War II.

Liebenau suffered the same atrocities as other villages of the Molotschna with the implementation of Soviet policies in the early 1930s. Thirty men were imprisoned or exiled before 1941. After the German invasion of Russia in June of 1941, another 36 were banished.

As the invaders approached the Molotschna, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the German forces arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. Liebenau villagers were among the fortunate people at Stulnevo. When the German Army overran the area, the Liebenau residents simply returned to their homes.

The German occupying forces took statistics in Liebenau on January 30, 1942. There were 316 Mennonites in the village, representing 94% of the total population of 336. Six men had been drafted into the Red Army. Remaining were 55 men, 138 women and 123 children under the age of 14. Heinrich Neufeld was mayor, Jakob Fast his assistant. Farmers represented 96% of the population, 2% were craftsmen and 2% officials.

With the retreat of the German Army from the region in September of 1943 the entire Mennonite population of Liebenau, somewhat over 300 people, joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Eighteen people died on the way. A number of young men were drafted into the German Army, of which ten died in action. At least 178 people were overrun by the rapidly advancing Soviet Army and were "repatriated" to their homeland. One very frail and sick grandmother, Katharina Kaethler, died on the train on the way to Siberia. Some did, however, escape to the West. Two families, totalling six people made it to South America. Thirty six, including Jakob Rempel and his family and Katharina Ediger, eventually reached Canada. Today there are 36 *Aussiedler* originally from Liebenau, living in Germany.

The combination of Liebenau and Wernersdorf now constitute the village of Ostrikovka; there are still some Mennonite buildings remaining such as the Jakob Franz factory, at least one residence and some gateposts.

LINDENAU

(Maps pages 60,61,62)

Lindenau was founded in 1804, one of the initial nine villages laid out along the eastern banks of the Molochnaya River. The settlement was supervised by the first *Oberschulze,* Klaas Wiens. Specific location of the village groups along the river was decided by lot. The immediate neighbour to the north was Fischau, with Lichtenau to the south. The land cultivated by Lindenau lay in a narrow strip to the south-east of the village. It had previously been occupied by Nogai nomads.

The village was placed with street parallel to the Molochnaya River, 269 fathoms to the east. A part of the land near the river was quite low lying. While this made it prone to flooding, the soil was excellent for growing grass. The higher steppe to the east was better for growing grain and planting trees.

The original 21 Flemish settlers had a total of about 8,000 rubles; only David Huebert had enough resources to cover his expenses. The first year most settlers lived in earth huts. The situation was aggravated by the fact that wood for buildings could

only be found 85 verst away. The initial population of the village was 90, with 47 males and 43 females.

Lindenau likely had the usual difficulties of a pioneer village. In 1825 a group of four men, Peter Bauer from Lindenau, as well as representatives from three other villages, travelled to Poltava to sell their Spanish wool. On the way back they were murdered; the murderers were caught, but very little of the money was recovered.

Featured prominently in the village history were visits by royalty. Czar Alexander I visited on May 21, 1818, stopping at the home of David Huebert for breakfast. He apparently asked if any one had complaints. Mrs. Huebert replied "We have nothing to complain about, rather we are very thankful for the great mercy and gracious hospitality we have experienced in your empire." When the Czar left the house he presented Mrs. Huebert with a diamond ring. There were other royal visits, October 16, 1837, October 10, 1841 and April 20, 1845. On the last date Count Konstantin Nikolayevitsh had breakfast in the home of Gerhard Neufeld; Mrs. Neufeld received two diamond ear rings.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census the Lindenau population was 255 (128 males, 127 females), living in 30 establishments. Jakob Wiens was *Schulze*, Abraham Riediger and Martin Krieger councillors. In 1848 Daniel Boschmann was *Schulze,* councillors were Abraham Isaak and Abraham Goerzen, with teacher Peter Doerksen.

Lindenau farmers stood in the forefront of Molotschna agriculture. While wheat production showed an average yield, in 1846 Isaak Braun had the second largest tree nursery in the colony (12,970 trees), and was among the leaders in growing fruit trees. Isaak Loewen had the highest production of silk in the Molotschna in 1846, Jakob Wiens the second most in 1850. Lindenau had 126,182 trees in 1851, of which 61,706 were mulberry trees in hedges.

In 1857 Lindenau had a population of 345 (173 males, 172 females) living in 48 houses, occupying 1,575 dessiatines. The teacher Peter Schroeder had 63 students. That same year Johann Quapp was re-elected *Schulze,* Abraham Friesen was elected councillor. In 1858 Gerhard Neufeld was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869 Lindenau had 19 full farms, four half farms and 29 small farms, for a total of 52, on 1,829 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Lindenau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Most Lindenau residents were members of the Lichtenau Flemish church, then later the Lichtenau-Petershagen congregation. In the early years leader and minister, David Huebert, lived in Lindenau. It was his home that was visited by the Czar in 1818. Bernhard Epp was ordained a minister of the Lichtenau-Petershagen congregation in 1889, then as elder in 1908. He helped gather funds for the *"Hungerjahre"* (Years of Famine) in April of 1906. He died in Lindenau on August 16, 1926.

In 1908 the Lindenau population was 454, occupying 1,739 dessiatines. The village was a beehive of economic activity, there being 13 business establishments, although some were small. There were three blacksmith shops, owned by Heinrich Heidebrecht, Johann Enns and Martin Wiens. There were two wagon builders, David Fast and David Neufeld. Wilhelm Penner ran a steam mill, Gerhard Warkentin sold manufactured goods. Neufeld and Stobbe drilled wells while Heinrich Heidebrecht also owned a dyeing business. Nikolai Janzen operated a motor driven mill, Gerhard Mandtler was a locksmith, Heinrich Ewert an upholsterer and Heinrich Stobbe a tailor.

Lindenau had the usual village school, but for a time also a *Zentralschule.* In the communist era the secondary school was closed down and the teachers fled. When there was a particularly large class, all going to Ohrloff for their instruction, the school was reopened for a time.

Lindenau undoubtedly suffered the usual terrors of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. Six men are known to have been murdered during the civil war: Johann Hildebrand, Johann Gerhard Isaak, Jakob Gerhard Mandtler, Gerhard Gerhard Riediger, Abram Peter Wiebe and another Abram Peter Wiebe. In 1921 typhus was brought into Lindenau by Bolshevik soldiers, and there were a number of deaths. In the following famine at least 22 families, representing 34 individuals, requested food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* When migration to Canada became possible at least 15 family groups, totaling 71 individuals, left Lindenau. When conditions worsened in the late 1920s a number of Mennonites attempted to cross the Amur River ice from eastern Siberia to China. Three families (Janzen, Enns and Isaak), totaling 14 people, were listed as refugees in Harbin, China, in 1931, having been successful in their escape.

One of the consequences of government policy was that Wilhelm Penner, soon after the communist takeover, found it impossible to run his

steam mill. The machinery was taken out of the large building, it was refurbished, and used as a church! All villagers, regardless of specific affiliation, worshiped there, even some people from neighbouring Fischau. Jakob Eckert and Heinrich Ballau served as ministers; there was even a choir. Unfortunately both of the ministers were imprisoned early on. The church was closed down in 1931, and after standing empty for some time was used as a club. With the German occupation of the region from 1941-1943 the building again functioned as a church.

With implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s Lindenau had at least four families forced off the land as kulaks: Peter Goossen, Abram Neufeld, Peter Wiebe and Franz Wiens. Additional homes were built at the southern end of the village, as well as on the new "Upper Street." There were at least 35 new lots, settled by Ukrainians, Lutherans and some Mennonites. Twenty-five men were exiled between 1935 and 1938, another 37 people in 1941,including at least three women. Five men were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those collected at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Lindenau residents, although their village neighboured Lichtenau, were among the fortunate ones sent to Tokmak. When the German forces overran the area, Lindenauers simply returned to their homes.

When the German occupation forces took statistics in Lindenau on February 2, 1942, the 427 Mennonites represented 76% of the total population of 562. There were 103 men (a surprisingly high number), 183 women and 141 children. Johann Heidbrecht was the mayor, Peter Rennpenning his assistant.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, the Mennonites of Lindenau joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Five people died on the journey. Many were overrun by the advancing Red Army, but some did escape to the West. Former mayor Johann Heidebrecht and wife Barbara were in an Austrian refugee camp in 1947. Peter Neufeld and wife, Maria Ulbricht with three children and Wilhelm Stobbe sailed for South America in 1948, and Peter Kroeker in 1950. Heinrich Heidebrecht made it out, although his wife was not so fortunate and died of starvation in Siberia

Today Lindenau is named Lyubimovka. Only the two school buildings remain from the Mennonite era.

MARGENAU

(Map page 63)

Margenau was founded in 1819 under the jurisdiction of *Oberschulz*e Peter Toews and Judge Fadeyev of the Guardian's Committee. The village was laid out along the Kuruschan River and named after Margenau in West Prussia. The settlers were Flemish, and most came from the Elbing region and from the Marienburg and Tiegenhof areas of the Vistula Delta. The new arrivals were hosted for the winter of 1818 to 1819 in some of the older Molotschna villages. The land on which they settled had previously been rented and used by the Nogai nomads as pasture. The soil was good for growing grain, but only marginal for hay.

There were originally 24 founding families, of which 16 from Prussia had only their wagons, horses and household supplies. They received Russian government grants of 180 rubles 40 kopeks per family. The other eight previously migrated to the Molotschna and had acquired property, so they required no subsidy. Of these settlers Abraham Salomon Federau came from Ladekopp, Heinrich Heinrich Hensen from Rueckenau and Jakob Peter Penner from Ohrloff.

Margenau suffered the usual setbacks common to pioneering villages, but in time became wealthy through growing crops, from sheep, forest and garden as well as silk production. At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 47 family establishments with a total population of 327 (171 males, 156 females). Heinrich Huebner was *Schulze* at the time.

In 1848, when the Molotschna Village Reports were written, the *Schulze* was Johann Harms, councillors were Klaas Penner and Heinrich Dirksen, while the school teacher was Kornelius Isaak. Also in 1848 three families moved from Margenau to the newly established village of Hierschau, with another leaving in 1849.

Margenau was an average village agriculturally. Wheat production for 1846 and 1847 was slightly below the average. In 1851 the village had a total of 100,531 trees, of which 44,109 were mulberry trees in hedges and 732 were pear trees. Also in 1851 H. Neufeld was the Margenau representative on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

Village officials in 1857 were *Schulze* Jakob Hiebert and councillor Jakob Langemann. Teacher Kornelius Wedel had 78 students. Total population was 548 (279 males, 269 females). There were 24 full farm establishments, 24 landless families.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna of 1869, Margenau had 19 full farms, ten half farms and 31 small farms, for a total of 60, occupying 2,056 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Margenau was part of the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Church affiliation throughout the years was mostly Flemish *Grosse Gemeinde*, with specific organization taking various configurations. A church building was erected in Margenau in 1832, so while the congregation was centred there, it so happens that none of the elders actually lived in the village. Elder Heinrich Wiens of Gnadenheim (1842-1847) had a serious dispute with the colony administration, so he was deposed from his position and banned from Russia. From 1861-1887 Bernhard Peters, also of Gnadenheim, was the elder; he was a member of the delegation that went to St. Petersburg in 1873 to discuss the possibility of emigration to North America. By the turn of the century the principal church attended was the Margenau-Landskrone-Alexanderwohl congregation, with Gerhard Plett of Hierschau becoming elder of the Margenau section in 1907. Plett continued in this position as elder through all the difficult times. He, together with other leaders from the area, was incarcerated in a basement in Waldheim in January, 1922, but in time was released. He retired from his position on May 13, 1928, installing Heinrich T. Janz as his successor. Aron Dueck, a minister of the Margenau congregation, preached at the silver wedding anniversary of Kornelius K. Martens on July 7, 1929, in Grossweide. He was also the secretary of the *Kommission fuer Kirchenangelegenheiten* (KfK).

There was also considerable Mennonite Brethren influence in Margenau. David Duerksen was a school teacher and minister of the Margenau congregation. He soon demonstrated an independent, yet devout spirit in his sermons and prayers. In 1884 and 1885 a revival swept through the area; in the wave of this reawakening a number of people, including Duerksen, joined the M.B. Church. After this he continued to live in Margenau, but worshipped with the Rueckenau congregation. He stayed in Margenau until 1897, when he was asked to be the leader of the Spat-Schoental congregation in the Crimea. Peter P. Regehr was another Mennonite Brethren minister who lived in Margenau.

There was probably the usual emigration of people from Margenau to North America in the 1870s. Soon, however, there must have been a need for further expansion. In the autumn of 1902 Margenau sent a delegation to the region of Omsk, Siberia. They rented a total of 1,080 dessiatines from an officer Ljapin, half a kilometre south of the Trans Siberian Railway, just west of Station Gorkoye. Families moving from the Molotschna Margenau to the Siberian Margenau were Heinrich Teichgraef, Kornelius Klassen, Johann Meckelburger and three brothers Huebert, Jakob, Franz and Heinrich. In 1909 the land was actually sold to the settlement.

In 1908 the Margenau population was 636, occupying 1,948 dessiatines. There were five business establishments in the village. Peter Penner sold manufactured goods, Johann Kasdorf and Jakob Schulz sold small wares. Widow Kornelius Kroeker and Heinrich Goerzen had windmills. At some time after 1908 Kornelius Harder also owned a brick factory located to the north and west of the village.

Margenau suffered the same catastrophic events as the other Molotschna villages during the revolution and subsequent civil war. In the famine of 1922 at least five requests for food drafts were published in the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, for a total of 20 individuals. In 1923 donated Mennonite Central Committee tractors were used to plow 32 dessiatines of land for Margenau farmers.

With the opportunity for emigration in the mid 1920s at least eight family groups left for Canada, totalling 31 people. January 13-18, 1925 Minister Aron Aron Dueck participated in the General Conference of Mennonite Churches in Russia held in Moscow representing the Margenau church. This meeting was sometimes later referred to as the Second Martyrs' Synod, because most of the participants eventually died in prison or exile in the 1930s.

In the early 1930s a number of Mennonites escaped across the Amur River ice in eastern Siberia. Franz Heinrich Albrecht, wife Olga and two children reached Harbin, China in 1931, showing that they had been successful.

In the 1930s Margenau suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages when the Soviet policies were put into full force. Ministers in particular were targeted. Aron Dueck, wife and two children were exiled in 1931. Peter P. Regehr was banished in 1933. But others were also "taken." At least 30 men were imprisoned or exiled between 1930 and 1940.

With the onset of the war after the German invasion of June, 1941, a further 60 men were marched

off to dig defensive trenches. As the German forces approached the Molotschna the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. They ordered the south-west villages to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Margenau residents were among the fortunate ones at Stulnevo. When the German invaders overran the area in early October, the villagers simply returned to their homes.

When the German occupying forces took statistics in Margenau on March 9, 1942, the 291 "Germans" (Mennonites and Lutherans) represented 84% of the total population of 346. Six men had been drafted into the Red Army. Left in Margenau were 32 men, 148 women and 111 children under age 14. Johann Friesen was the mayor, Johann Ott his assistant. There is a comment that six families were Seventh Day Adventists, with an accompanying aside that the German officer in charge had disbanded the group, and declared it to be illegal.

With the German Army retreat from the area in September of 1943, Margenau Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. At least five people died on the trail. Most were recaptured by the advancing Red Army, although a number did make it to the West. Nikolas Thiessen, was on the *S. S. Volendam* on his way to South America in 1948. Kornelius Abrahams and Peter Klassen went first to Paraguay, then eventually emigrated to Canada. Gerhard Penner went directly to Canada.

In time a number of Margenau villagers were able to move to Germany as *Aussiedler*, for example Anna, Kaethe and Johann Abrahams.

It seems that no one has returned to rebuild, so there is now nothing left of the village of Margenau.

MARIAWOHL

(Maps pages 64,65)

Mariawohl was founded in 1857 as an expansion village of the Molotschna Colony. It was situated just south of and parallel to the Apanlee River. Nikolaidorf was its western, Paulsheim its eastern neighbour. It was named in honour of Wilhelmina Maria, wife of the recently crowned Czar Alexander II. The original complement was probably 20 or 21 full farms.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Mariawohl had 21 full farms, no half farms and four small farms, for a total of 25, on 1,429 dessiatines of land. Of the agricultural villages Mariawohl had the smallest number of farms in the Molotschna, and also the least land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Mariawohl was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Heinrich Unruh, later elder of the Halbstadt Mennonite Church, lived in Mariawohl while he was a minister of the Neukirch part of the congregation. He was the village teacher for six years, likely 1881 to 1887. Peter Bergmann of Mariawohl was chairman of the Agricultural Society for the Gnadenfeld Volost about 1890.

In 1908 Mariawohl had a population of 302, and occupied 1,393 dessiatines, still the smallest area of any village in the Molotschna. There were only two business establishments; Peter Andres had a wood business and Johann Friesen owned a windmill. Heinrich Janzen of Mariawohl owned a large steam mill, which was, however, located in the city of Orechov.

Mariawohl presumably suffered through the usual terrors of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In the following famine of 1922 at least six families, representing 27 individuals, requested food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.*

In 1923 Frieda Bergen, as a refugee, fled to Constantinople, Jakob Peter Dyck was in Batum. When emigration to Canada became possible at least 13 family groups, totaling 58 individuals, left Russia. When it became apparent that conditions were not improving in the Soviet Union, 13,000 Mennonites collected in Moscow in late 1929 and early 1930 in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. Some Mariawohl residents were successful. Heinrich Heinrich Epp and wife Maria sailed for Canada in 1930; Kornelius Regehr and the Wilhelm Andres family were in the Prenzlau refugee camp in Germany in February of 1930; Anna Peter Unger and three children sailed for Paraguay, also in 1930. Some Mennonites tried to escape across the Amur River ice to China from eastern Siberia. Mr. Funk was among those to reach Harbin, China.

For those who remained the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s made life ever more difficult. The Peter Andres and at least three other families were labelled kulaks and were forced off their land. Twenty eight men were exiled in 1937 and 1938, and in 1941 another 36. Two men were drafted into the Red Army.

In 1940 the village mayor and head of the collective in the area was Predsedatel Redotsch. Mariawohl had the usual barns for each type of livestock, a blacksmith shop, store, kindergarten, school and of course a club.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Mariawohl residents were among the fortunate ones at Stulnevo who were not sent away. After the German occupation they simply returned to their homes.

When the German Army took statistics in Mariawohl on February 6, 1942, the 199 Mennonites represented 85% of the total population of 234. There were 16 men, 86 women and 97 children. The mayor was Johann Epp, his assistant Peter Funk.

When the German Army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the Mennonites of Mariawohl joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. It was said that all of Mariawohl was in flames when the Germans left the village. Most of the people actually made it to the Warthegau region near Warsaw. In the final months of the war, however, many were overrun by the Soviet Army and sent to the far north or Siberia. A few did, however, make it to the West. Maria Klassen and son Johann eventually reached Canada.

Of those who were sent back a few families, it seems almost miraculously, were able to leave the USSR by the invitation of their mother, Maria Klassen. Heinrich Klassen, wife Rosa and four children arrived in Canada in 1972 after only three applications. Abram Klassen, wife Anna and six children came in 1974 having applied only once!

In the 1990s a considerable number of former Mariawohl residents reached Germany as *Aussiedler.* The extended Peter Klassen family, as well as the Katharina Fransen family are among these.

Today the Mennonite village of Mariawohl is called Zyelyenyi Yar; it is near P 48, the highway connecting Tokmak and Berdyansk.

MARIENTHAL

(Map page 66)

Marienthal was founded in 1820 in the south-west corner of the Molotschna Colony. The village was laid out along the Tschokrak River, which at that location must have been only a rivulet. The source of the river was 1½ verst to the east, and it flowed into the Juschanlee River nine verst to the west. Northern border of Marienthal land was the Juschanlee River, eastern and southern borders were open steppe. Pordenau was established to the west that same year. The land was flat, and had very little black topsoil. Hay yield was meager, but cereal crops did well. The land had originally been rented by Johann Cornies, then sublet to Nogai nomads as pasture.

The village was laid out by *Oberschulze* Peter Toews, together with the newly elected *Schulze* Jakob Giesbrecht. Specific plots were designated by ploughing the borders, and the site for each farmer decided by lot. The first year 17 settlers arrived, the following year another four; nine families came from the Marienwerder area of West Prussia, the others from the Elbing and Marienburg districts. Most were rather poor and altogether required a crown subsidy of 11,120 rubles. Total financial resources of those who had money was about 8,000 rubles. The group came to South Russia under the leadership of Frisian Elder Franz Goerz.

At a meeting called to discuss a number of items the question of name for the village came up. Since no one else had ideas, Elder Goerz suggested that it be named in honour of the mother of the Czar, Maria. So the village, by unanimous consent, was named Marienthal.

The first spring the families built wooden or sod huts, then did the planting, after which they constructed their houses. Marienthal survived many adversities in the first years. About 80% of the farmers had horses stolen, making farm work rather difficult. In 1823 grasshoppers destroyed the crops. The meagre crop of 1824 was followed by terrible winter storms, during which most of the cattle perished. In 1825 hail flattened the crops. Marienthal suffered severely in the great drought year of 1833.

On January 11, 1838, an earthquake caused a number of deep wells (35 to 45 feet) to collapse. Since that time, however, the water level changed; the wells could now reach water at a ten foot shallower level. The all pervasive east wind caused considerable damage; in 1842, for example, much of the seeded grain and topsoil was blown away.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census,

Marienthal had a population of 207 (105 males, 102 females). *Schulze* was Johann Wiebe and a councillor Franz Isaak. In 1848 Peter Schroeder was *Schulze*, Kornelius Friesen and Peter Wiebe councillors and Peter Friesen the school teacher.

Mid century Marienthal agriculture tended to be average. Wheat production for 1846 and 1847 was close to the Molotschna norm. In 1851 the village had 72,432 trees, of which 34,068 were mulberry trees in hedges. Silk production was low. That same year, however, Marienthal had the third highest potato crop in the Molotschna.

In 1857 the village population was 379 (197 males, 182 females), living in 53 houses, occupying 1,371 dessiatines. Teacher Peter Friesen had 64 students. That same year Franz Doerksen was elected *Schulze*, Jakob Dueck councillor. In 1858 Peter Reimer and Johann Friesen served on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Marienthal had 17 full farms, six half farms and 36 small farms, totaling 59, occupying 1,876 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Marienthal was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Many Marienthal residents were likely members of the Rudnerweide Frisian church, but over the years there was also representation of the Pordenau Flemish congregation. Johann Neufeld was ordained as minister in that church in 1874, Johann Toews in 1876. Heinrich Barg was a deacon appointed in 1874. There was also a Mennonite Brethren influence in the village. Dietrich Claassen of Marienthal (elder brother of Johann Claassen, one of the M. B. leaders) was one of the original 18 men who signed the document of secession on January 6, 1860. He was also one of the 27 who participated in the election of the first elder of the M. B. Church. He voted for Jakob Bekker and Heinrich Huebert.

In 1908 the population of Marienthal was 444, living on 1,760 dessiatines. There were only two business establishments in the village. Franz Klassen had a windmill and Peter Doerksen sold flour.

Marienthal undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the following civil war. The subsequent famine must have hit the village very hard. In 1922 there were 39 requests for food drafts, representing 289 individuals, published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. This represents a significant percentage of the population. When the opportunity to emigrate to Canada arose, however, there were only four family units, 23 individuals, specifically listed as leaving the village.

Marienthal suffered the same atrocities as other Mennonite villages in the Molotschna with the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s.

Not only was the government cruel, nature also conspired against Marienthal. In 1930 there was a severe drought in the region, then a terrible storm swept in off the steppes. As a result of the wind, sand and gravel were piled up on the southern edge of the tree plantations, remaining as a permanent feature of the landscape.

Marienthal became part of a kolkhoz named *Deutscher Kollektivist*. It consisted of the villages Marienthal, Pordenau, Schardau, Alexanderthal and Elisabetthal, headquarters in Pordenau. Families in Marienthal were displaced off the land as kulaks, presumably to allow the kolkhoz to organize.

At the western end of the village Franz Isaak built a dam on the Tschokrak River, but needed additional water from a well to keep a pond filled. There was also a motor driven mill in the village, and a school with four grades.

After the German invasion of June, 1941, able bodied men and women were drafted to work at digging trenches and tank traps near the Dniepr River. On September 4, 1941 all remaining men aged 16-65 were marched off on foot, 1,200 kilometres, then put on freight trains and shipped further north and east. Next the farm animals had to be driven further east by some of the villagers. In all at least 57 people were deported in September, including two Nickel brothers.

With the approaching German forces ever closer to the Molotschna, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire remaining Mennonite population. The south-west villages were taken to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those collected at Lichtenau.

By this time the Marienthal Mennonites had no horses or wagons, so people from the neighbouring Russian villages transported them the 18 kilometres to Nelgovka. The last overloaded train had departed, and soon the tracks and station were destroyed. The Marienthal citizens fled to the surrounding steppe or hid in straw stacks. The next evening German forces occupied the area, and everyone returned home, as well as they could manage under the circumstances.

Those returning home were soon joined by the people who had been digging trenches, and driving away the cattle. Mayor of the village during the

German occupation was Johann Nickel. Mennonite population at the time was about 200.

When the German forces retreated from the area in September of 1943, the entire Mennonite population of Marienthal joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. As they turned back for a last look at their homes, they saw the whole village in flames. Most people were eventually overrun by the advancing Soviet forces; a number were recaptured in the Warthegau region of Poland, and then banished to Kazakhstan in central Asia. Some did, however escape to the West. Jakob Sukkau and wife Maria were in an Austrian refugee camp in 1947. By 1948 at least six family groups, ten people, were on their way to South America.

A number of Marienthal villagers have now moved to Germany as *Aussiedler*. Among these are Wilhelm Nickel, Aganeta Holzrichter, Margaretha Isaak, Elisabeth Klett and Anna Boldt.

Today the complex of Schardau, Pordenau and Marienthal constitute the village of Panfilovka.

MUENSTERBERG

(Map page 67)

Muensterberg was one of the original nine villages founded in 1804 to begin the establishment of the Molotschna Colony. It was on the east bank of the Molochnaya River, street parallel to, and following the curve of the river. The 21 Flemish families came from West Prussia: nine from the Elbing area, seven from the Tiegenhof jurisdiction and five from the Marienburg region. Besides the necessary team and wagon for transportation, most of the settlers had very little else, so to help them the government provided grants totalling 12,387 rubles, 5 kopeks. At first the settlement was labelled No. 8, then later was named Muensterberg after a village of that name in West Prussia.

Muensterberg experienced the usual pioneering difficulties. There was serious disease among the cattle in 1805, 1829, 1833, 1844 and 1845; grasshoppers ruined the crops in 1821 and 1823, and drought in 1833 and 1834. Despite these difficulties, also helped to a considerable degree by government subsidies, the village gradually achieved prosperity.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 28 establishments in Muensterberg. Population was 212 (112 males, 100 females). The *Schulze* was Johann Klassen.

In 1848 Muensterberg wheat production was 13½ fold, the Molotschna average being just over 11. The village was known for its production of silk. In 1849 it was especially cited; 35 families were involved, producing over 338 tschetwerik (254 bushels) of cocoons. Leonhard Wiebe himself produced the largest amount of silk of any farmer in the colony. The following year another Muensterberg farmer, Heinrich Hildebrand, upheld the village reputation by again achieving the same record. In 1851 Muensterberg had 106,090 trees, of which 49,100 were mulberry trees in hedges, and 298 were pear trees.

In 1848, at the time of the Molotschna Village Reports, Johann Dueck was *Schulze*, councillors were Kornelius Toews and Johann Braun, while Peter Isaak was teacher. In 1857 Johann Fast was elected *Schulze*, Abraham Warkentin councillor. Also in 1857 the population was 302 (153 males , 149 females), living in 45 houses, occupying 1,668 dessiatines. There were 50 students, with Johann Kroeker the teacher. In 1853 Jakob Neumann was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council, in 1857 there were four Muensterberg representatives: Jakob Neumann, Dirk Neumann, Abraham Fast and Johann Wiens.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, the village had 22 full farms and 24 small farms, for a total of 46, on 1,814 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Muensterberg was in the Halbstadt Volost. Klaas Wiebe of Muensterberg was member of the executive of the volost when it was first organized.

Muensterberg did not play a leading role in religious development of the Molotschna, but certainly did have an interest. Throughout most of its existence it functioned within the Flemish Mennonite sphere, a majority of the villagers going to the Lichtenau church. There were, however, other significant influences. Klaas Reimer of Petershagen, starting in 1812, began the movement which resulted in the formation of the *Kleine Gemeinde*. Muensterberg was a secondary centre.

Heinrich Huebert, later the first elder of the Mennonite Brethren, was born here, and likely obtained his primary education in the village. In 1865 itinerant ministers travelling through the Molotschna found two Mennonite Brethren families in Muensterberg. One of these was Peter P. Siemens, a very skilled teacher, who was also well versed in Russian. When he joined the M.B. Church in 1872 he lost his position despite ten years of excellent service. One of the itinerant ministers appointed by the Mennonite Brethren in 1876 was Jakob Dirksen of Muensterberg. He was also asked to assist the acting elder when Elder Abraham

Schellenberg emigrated to the United States in 1879, soon becoming elder of the Ebenezer M.B. Church in Kansas. Minister Wilhelm Baerg, also an M.B. from Muensterberg, in time moved to Ufa.

In 1908 there were at least ten commercial enterprises in the village. Nikolai Daniels, Johann Huebert and Peter Schroeder had motor driven flour mills. Heinrich Bergmann sold wooden goods, Isaak Wiebe metal goods and Isaak Hildebrandt had a grocery store. Heinrich Nickel, Salomon Klassen and Heinrich Spenst built wagons, while Wiebe and Co. produced bricks. Total value of the businesses, for taxation purposes, was 55,750 rubles. Population of Muensterberg was 395, occupying 1,703 dessiatines.

Muensterberg undoubtedly suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the following civil war. Just before the Austro-German Army was to occupy Ukraine in April of 1918 one marauding group of bandits swept through the area using extortion as a last moment tactic. They forced Altona to pay 17,000 rubles, then went on to Muensterberg, Blumstein and Lichtenau, obtaining another 41,000 rubles. During the period of unrest Isaak Johann Huebert served in the Mennonite *Selbstschutz*. After the collapse of resistance he fled to the Crimea, but was eventually caught and executed.

In 1921-22 typhus was brought into the village by revolutionary soldiers. The disease, combined with the malnutrition of the subsequent famine, resulted in many deaths. Muensterberg was hard hit by the famine; there were 15 requests for food drafts published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau,* representing 90 people. In the mid 1920s, when emigration to Canada became possible, at least 15 family groups left, totalling 55 individuals.

Muensterberg suffered through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s. A substantial number of families were forced to leave as part of dekulakization to reorganize and form the Kolkhoz *Komintern*. Heinrich Johann Huebert was arrested in 1930 and exiled to Kotlas; he was released in 1933, then rearrested in 1937. From 1937 to 1940 at least 12 men were sent into exile.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets wanted to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka Muensterberg residents were among those at Lichtenau, so about 371 of them were evacuated. When the German occupying forces took statistics in Muensterberg on February 4, 1942, the 16 remaining Mennonites represented 8.1% of the total population of 198. There were six men, ten women and no children. Peter Penner was the mayor.

Presumably the few remaining Muensterberg Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" when the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, fleeing westward to Poland and Germany. Most were likely overrun by the advancing Soviet Army, but a few did escape to the West. Tina Huebert eventually sailed for Canada, and now lives in Vancouver. Franz Reimer, wife Fenja and four children were on a ship heading for South America in 1948.

Today the village in this area called Priluvkovka has virtually no buildings left from the Mennonite era; there are only a few identifiable gravestones in the cemetery.

MUNTAU

(Map page 68)

Muntau was founded in 1804, one of the initial nine villages laid out along the eastern bank of the Molochnaya River. The settlement was supervised by the first *Oberschulze,* Klaas Wiens. Specific location of the village groups along the river was decided by lot. The immediate neighbour of Muntau to the north was Halbstadt, with Schoenau to the south. In 1805 Tiegenhagen was squeezed between Muntau and Schoenau. The land occupied by Muntau lay in a narrow strip to the south-east of the village; it had previously been occupied by Nogai nomads. Much of the area was good for growing grain, although some regions were not suitable for growing grass. Construction of houses was delayed until 1805 and 1806. The original 21 families, together with *Oberschulze* Wiens decided on the name Muntau in memory of a village of the same name in their old homeland. Total government grants to the settlers were 12,640 rubles.

Every farmer started initially with two horses, but four were required for seeding, so two farmers had to combine forces. With the propensity of the neighbouring Nogai to steal horses, the complement per farm was reduced, so often three or four farmers had to work together to have teams of sufficient strength.

Muntau had the usual pioneering difficulties, with serious cattle disease in 1828, 1833 and 1839.

Grasshoppers destroyed crops in 1822 and 1827; drought and crop failures in 1833 and 1834 caused famine for man and animal. Noticeable earthquakes occurred on May 11, 1818 and January 11, 1838. In 1838 the farmers noted a rise in the water levels of the wells.

Despite the difficulties there was a gradual improvement in the condition of the village. In 1809 the planting of trees was initiated, both regular forest trees as well as mulberry trees. By 1847 there was, as a result of the mulberry trees, a substantial silk industry in the village. Raising sheep, growing fruit trees and the newly established market town and port of Berdyansk helped in the overall development.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 33 establishments in Muntau with a total population of 326 (173 males, 153 females). Andreas Kopp was the *Schulze*, Jakob Dyck and Johann Fiz the councillors. The village report of 1848 mentions Johann Langermann as *Schulze*, Kornelius Lopp and Jakob Dueck as councillors and Gerhard Goossen as teacher.

Mid century agriculture in Muntau was roughly average for the Molotschna. Wheat yield for 1846 and 1847 was roughly the norm, silk production high. The village had 92,761 trees, of which 54,882 were mulberry trees in hedges.

In 1857 the population of Muntau was 412 (224 males, 188 females), living in 70 houses, occupying 1,624 dessiatines. There were 54 students, with teacher Isaak Fast. That same year Heinrich Wiens was elected *Schulz*, Heinrich Epp councillor. Isbrandt Harder was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council in 1858. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Muntau had 17 full farms, eight half farms and 38 small farms, totaling 63, on 1,973 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Muntau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Although there was no church building in Muntau, the village was nevertheless involved in the religious affairs of the colony, largely within the sphere of the Flemish Mennonite Church. Johann Martens (1875) and Peter Loewen (1875) were ordained as ministers of the Ohrloff-Petershagen congregation. Jakob Loewen (1875) and Hermann Enns (1880) were appointed deacons of the Lichtenau-Petershagen Church. Heinrich Peter Unruh was born in 1845 and was ordained as minister of the Halbstadt congregation on July 5, 1870. For 13 years (1874-1887) he was active as minister in the Neukirch congregation, living in Mariawohl at the time. He was also an elementary school teacher in Mariawohl for six years, in Muntau for seven years. Presumably he moved back to Muntau in 1887. He was ordained as elder of the newly independent Halbstadt Mennonite Church on December 1, 1896. Elder Unruh exerted an influence well beyond the walls of his own church, participating in various conferences and discussions. He, for example, chaired an afternoon session at the General Conference of Mennonites held in Schoensee in 1910. Elder Unruh also played a role in other aspects of colony life. He was on the Molotschna School Board for 31 years, and was chairman of the board of the nursing school *Morija*.

A hospital was established in Muntau in 1889. Minister and land owner Franz Wall of the Crimea was inspired by the example of Georg Mueller of Bristol, England, to act in faith. The Muntau project, initially known as "Wall's House for the Sick", started with six beds for patients, an operating room and a washroom. The 1902 annual report recorded 80 operations, including 12 resections or straightening of bones, seven hernia repairs and four cataract operations. The hospital grew, and when the founder died in 1906, was taken over by his son Franz Wall Jr. In 1911 the hospital staff included 12 nurses and a seamstress. In 1913 over 9,500 patient care days were provided, with an average length of stay of 12 days. Shortly before World War I the facility was expanded to a capacity of 60 beds. For many years the Chief of Medical Staff and surgeon was the well known and widely respected Dr. Erich Tavonius. In 1913 additional doctors were Dr. Seil and Dr. Buettner.

The Muntau hospital also had an associated school of nursing and residence, *Morija*, established in 1896, but it remained small. An expanded program was begun in May, 1909, with a new, much larger facility which was built in nearby Halbstadt.

In 1908 the population of Muntau was 681, occupying 1,805 dessiatines. In many ways Muntau functioned as part of the Halbstadt-Neu-Halbstadt industrial complex. There were nine business establishments in the village with a total assessed taxation value of 49,800 rubles. Heinrich Willms owned a steam driven mill, Gerhard Fast a windmill and Mr. Dirksen a motor driven mill. Heinrich Penner ran a grocery store, Gerhard Wiebe produced cheese. Jakob Eck and Aron Friesen built wagons, Wilhelm Loewen had a cloth dying business. The brothers Penner (Abram and Heinrich) had a starch factory.

Muntau undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages in the revolution, the civil war and the subsequent communist

takeover. Neighbouring on Halbstadt, it likely felt the effects of incidents such as the "Halbstadt Days of Terror" (February-April, 1918) more acutely than the more distant villages. David Kornelius Loewen was murdered while traveling in September, 1918. Gerhard and Johann Fast of Muntau were shot in Gulyaipole in May of 1919. Abraham J. Reimer fled to the Crimea, where he was captured and murdered by the Reds.

The following famine was severe in Muntau. A total of 34 families, totaling 129 individuals, asked for food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. This does not count the special requests made by the administrator of the hospital, hoping to get food for his starving patients! The Mennonite Central Committee brought food, but also helped farmers with specially donated tractors to plough the land. Muntau farmers had 19 dessiatines cultivated.

By 1921 a number of people had managed to leave Russia. Heinrich Richter made it to the United States, and four people were in Germany by February, 1921. In the mid 1920s at least 17 family gronps, 89 individuals, emigrated to Canada. In a last desperate attempt to escape about 13,000 Mennonites collected in Moscow in late 1929 and 1930, trying to obtain exit visas. Agatha Dueck made it to Germany, residing in the Prenzlau Refugee Camp in 1930.

With implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s some residents of Muntau were expelled from their homes as kulaks. The Heinrich Unruh family was among these; they were resettled in Tomsk in 1930. Franz Wall Jr., director of the hospital, fled to Einlage, where he was arrested in 1936. Probably a considerable number of men were exiled during the purges.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate all Mennonites from the region. They ordered them to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were able to ship all those from Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka before the German troops arrived in early October. Muntau residents were among the fortunate 10,000 collected at nearby Tokmak. When the German Army occupied the region, the people simply went back to their homes.

When the German forces retreated from the Molotschna in September of 1943, all Mennonites, including those from Muntau, joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Many were recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army, but a number did reach the West. Four family groups from Muntau, 17 individuals, sailed for South America in 1948. One of these people was Erika Tavonius, daughter of the famed Erich Tavonius; she was also a physician.

Muntau is now part of the larger town complex, together with Halbstadt and Neu-Halbstadt, called Molochansk. The hospital still stands, and is being used as a children's sanatorium.

NEUKIRCH

(Map page 69)

Neukirch was founded in 1820 on the north bank of the Juschanlee, street parallel to the river. Lichtfelde had been established just to the west in 1819, and Prangenau was laid out to the east in 1824. The land was originally rented by Johann Cornies, then sublet to Johann and Jakob Klassen, to be used as pasture.

Twenty Flemish farmers and two craftsmen arrived from West Prussia, most the year before, bnt some as early as 1804. Six families came from the Elbing area, others from Marienburg, Marienwerder and Danzig. The settlers wanted to name their village Schoeneberg, but *Oberschulze* Toews objected, since there was a village of that name in the Chortitza Colony. *Schulze* Johann Enns suggested Neukirch, a well known name from Prussia, which was accepted unanimously. The poorer settlers received a total of 7,543 rubles government subsidy; total finances of those with some money was 4,000 rubles.

The settlement was carried out under the jurisdiction of *Oberschulze* Peter Toews. Sites were mapped off by ploughed furrows, and location of each farmer decided by lot. In the spring of 1820 some farmers built wooden structures, others made sod huts. By the autumn of 1821a total of 22 houses had been constructed, 20 by the farmers, two by the craftsmen.

The Neukirch land included the first large depression of the Juschanlee River valley, presumably making this area suitable for hay production, especially since a dam had been constructed assuring an adequate water supply. The higher steppe to the north had only a thin layer of black topsoil, on a base of clay; it was basically quite hard. The land was crossed diagonally by a rivulet which, however, only had water with the spring runoff. With meticulous preparation of the soil and ideal rainfall satisfactory grain crops could be harvested. Unfortunately quite often a strong east wind, coming soon after seeding time, blew away both topsoil and seed. In the early years horse rustling was

also a significant problem. In the first five years 18 farmers had all, or at least two or three of their best horses stolen.

A number of factors conspired to improve the circumstances in Neukirch. Samuel Contenius, official government overseer of the colonies, introduced a breed of Spanish Merino sheep. These did very well, and helped the economy. Some of the elderly or poorer farmers also turned their establishments over to younger, more energetic people. The building of the trade city of Berdyansk on the Sea of Azov certainly helped to market Molotschna produce. Increasing wheat prices made grain growing more profitable. Planting of large numbers of trees, first forced on unwilling farmers by the autocratic Agricultural Society, did in time prove its worth.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census Neukirch had 24 establishments. *Schulze* was Bernhard Wall, councillors Heinrich Siemens and Dirk Epp. The population was not given.

By 1848 Neukirch had developed to a considerable degree. The village had 540 dessiatines under direct cultivation, 60 dessiatines of grassland (for hay production) and 700 dessiatines of pasture. The grazing area, however, was not large enough for 500 head of cattle, so additional crown land was rented. Of the 48 houses, four were built of fired bricks. There was a large school, a dye works which did excellent work and a brick yard which had just been established. *Schulze* was Heinrich Siemens, councillors were Aron Warkentin and Kornelius Janzen, and teacher was Jakob Heidebrecht.

Mid century wheat production in Neukirch was about average, but in 1846 Klaas Friesen grew the largest number of cultured fruit trees of any farmer in the colony – 1,765. In 1851 Neukirch had 85,577 trees of all kinds, of which 40,567 were mulberry trees in hedges. But the people of Neukirch did more than grow trees. Peter Enns was a member of the Molotschna Mennonite Council in 1853, Johann Friesen was listed as *Seelsorger* (minister or elder) in 1857.

In 1857 total village population was 410 (203 males, 207 females), living in 53 houses, occupying 1,490 dessiatines. Jakob Heidebrecht was still teacher, having 62 students. That same year Aron Warkentin was re-elected *Schulze*; Kornelius Janzen was elected councillor. In 1859 *Unterhaltungsblatt* had two readers in Neukirch, Heinrich Siemens and Peter Enns.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Neukirch had 17 full farms, six half farms and 26 small farms, to total 49, occupying 1,716 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Neukirch was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Most of the people of Neukirch belonged to the Flemish Mennonite church. The original Ohrloff-Petershage-Halbstadt Church split in 1824. The Ohrloff-Petershagen portion became the Ohrloff-Halbstadt, and then in 1863 the Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch congregation. To help the function of the body of believers a church was built in Neukirch in 1865. While the building was in Neukirch, most of the officials actually lived in other villages. Heinrich Harder of Neukirch was ordained minister in 1888, Johann Janzen a deacon in 1864. After 1895 the congregation was again re-organized, the Ohrloff-Neukirch section was somewhat smaller than previously.

There was also a Mennonite Brethren presence in Neukirch, Kornelius Neufeld being a deacon of the Rueckenau congregation.

In the 1870s Claas Epp Jr. became convinced that the Lord was coming soon, and that his followers should prepare to meet him in central Asia. A number of wagon trains headed eastward. About 80 families left Waldheim in the Molotschna on August 1, 1880 under the leadership of Minister Abraham Peters. There were a number of people from Neukirch on the trek, some of whom died on the way. The wife of Isaak Koop (nee Kroeker) and a young man Abraham Kroeker were among those who died.

In 1908 the population of Neukirch was 513, occupying 1,630 dessiatines. There was considerable business activity in the village. Franz Janzen had a large dealership of manufactured goods, Johann Thomsen handled agricultural machinery. Johann Huebert had a windmill, Peter Enns a mill driven by horse power while Martens and Janzen ran a power driven mill. Jakob Kroeker had a cloth dying shop, Jakob Huebert a blacksmith shop and Jakob Hildebrandt built wagons.

Neukirch undoubtedly suffered the same difficulties as other villages in the Molotschna with the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In the following famine only one request for food drafts, representing 12 individuals, was published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. The Mennonite Central Committee tractors ploughed 36 dessiatines of land for Neukirch farmers in 1923.

Jakob Thiessen of Neukirch had already escaped to Germany by 1921. When the possibility of emigrating to Canada arose in the mid 1920s at least 17 family groups, 63 individuals, left their home village.

Nikolai Franz Janzen represented the Neukirch congregation at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches of Russia held in Moscow on January 13-18, 1925. His name is not among those listed as having emigrated from Neukirch.

Neukirch lived through the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the early 1930s. The Unger family was forced off the land in 1930. Minister Nikolai Franz Janzen was exiled in May of 1934 and died soon thereafter. Minister Abram Abram Baerg was arrested in 1937. Altogether at least 68 men were exiled between 1935 and 1938. Six men were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders actually arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those from Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Neukirch residents were among the unfortunate thousands at Lichtenau, so they were sent to the far north or central Asia. A total of 355 were sent, leaving only a few stragglers behind. When the German occupying forces took statistics on February 13, 1942, the remaining 22 Mennonites represented 21.1% of the total population of 104. There were ten men, six women and six children. Jakob Janzen was the mayor.

When the German Forces retreated from the region in 1943, the remaining Neukirch Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were "repatriated" by the advancing Soviet forces, but a few escaped to the West. Wilhelm Baerg eventually went to Brazil, Hermann C. Enns landed in Canada. A number of Neukirch residents have recently managed to make it to Germany as *Aussiedler*.

Today Neukirch, together with Friedensruh across the Juschalee River, are called Udarnik. Little is left of the buildings, but a number of gravestones have been found from the Mennonite era.

NIKOLAIDORF

(Maps page 70)

Nikolaidorf was founded in 1851, along the south bank of the Apanlee River. Mariawohl was established just to the east in 1857. Presumably the village was named in honour of Czar Nicholas I; the settlers were from various other Molotschna villages.

In 1857 the Nikolaidorf population was 169 (81 males, 88 females), living in 27 houses, occupying 1,438 dessiatines. Teacher Heinrich Richert had 37 students. That same year Kornelius Toews was elected *Schulze*, David Thiessen councillor.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Nikolaidorf had 22 full farms and eight small farms, for a total of 30, on 1,558 dessiatines. Likely the original complement of farms in 1851 had been 22 full farms. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Nikolaidorf was in the Gnadenfeld Volost. An extended Willms family seems to have been prominent in the village towards the end of the nineteenth century.

In 1908 the population of Nikolaidorf was 245, occupying 1,516 dessiatines. There were three business establishments in the village. Dietrich Boldt had a grocery store, Kornelius Goerzen and Tobias Janzen owned windmills.

Nikolaidorf undoubtedly suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. The following famine seems to have hit very hard. There were 32 requests for food drafts, representing 203 individuals, published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. This probably represented 80% of the population. Mennonite Central Committee tractors ploughed 57½ dessiatines of land for Nikolaidorf farmers in 1923. When emigration to Canada became a possibility in the mid 1920s there does not seem to have been a rush to depart. There were only five families, 18 individuals, specifically listed as going to Canada. When it became obvious that communist policies were not acceptable, thousands of Mennonites went to Moscow in late 1929 and early 1930 in a desperate attempt to obtain exit visas. Jakob Ewert was in the Prenzlau refugee camp in 1930, showing that he had succeeded in his bid for freedom.

After that time there is little specific information about Nikolaidorf. It is presumed that most successful farmers were banished as kulaks and that additional men were exiled in the 1930s. Nikolaidorf residents were among those who collected at the Stulnevo railway station when the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population in 1941, and then returned to their homes when this did not occur. They likely joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany when the German forces retreated in September of 1943. Probably the village was burned to the ground when the German troops left the area. Most people from Nikolaidorf were likely

recaptured by the rapidly advancing Red Army, but a number did escape to the West. Hans Janzen, wife Maria and child, Eva Harder and Helene Born arrived as refugees in Canada in 1948.

Today no trace of Nikolaidorf remains.

OHRLOFF

(Map page 71)

The Molotschna Colony was founded in 1804, with nine villages being established along the Molochnaya River. In 1805 another eight villages were laid out east of the original group, along the tributaries leading into the river. Ohrloff was one of the second group of villages, located south of the Kuruschan River, Tiege just to the north-east. Ohrloff was first settled by 12 families from Prussia in 1805, followed by eight further families in 1806, then likely a few more in 1807, all of Flemish origin. The land was six verst long by 1½ to three verst wide. The first year the pioneers had sufficient capital (29,700 rubles), but were unable to get enough building material for everyone, so when winter came, up to three families had to live together. Early years were difficult, with the neighbouring Nogai nomads helping themselves to horses and cattle. There were severe storms, grasshopper infestations and cattle disease epidemics, and in 1838 even an earthquake.

According to the Molotschna census of 1835 Ohrloff had 219 inhabitants (112 males, 107 females) living in 27 establishments. Klaas Reimer was the *Schulze*.

With time, particularly under the guidance of one of its leading citizens, Johann Cornies, Ohrloff prospered and became one of the leading villages of the Molotschna. The Cornies family emigrated to Russia in 1804, and after spending two years in the Chortitza Colony, settled in the newly established Ohrloff. In 1811 Johann married Agnes Klassen, and soon therafter bought his own *Wirtschaft* in the village. In time Cornies also owned the estate Juschanlee, 40 verst east of Ohrloff, where he did many of his experiments. Agriculture was vastly improved, with innovations such as four field rotation of crops, planting large numbers of trees, silk production and improving the breeds of cattle, horses and sheep. In 1846 Peter Cornies of Ohrloff was the second highest producer of silk in the Molotschna. That same year Ohrloff wheat production was 16¾ fold, with the Molotschna average being just over 11. Widow Wiens made the greatest profit selling cheese, also in 1846. Ohrloff residents took an active role in the organizational aspect of the community. Johann Cornies was the life-long chairman of the *Landwirtschaftliche Verein* (Agricultural Society). Even after Cornies' death in 1848 this leadership tendency continued. In 1849 D. Cornies, A. Claassen and H. Reimer were members of the Molotschna Mennonite Council; in 1851 there were four members, with Philipp Wiebe of Ohrloff being the chairman.

Cornies was also interested in education and brought reforms to all schools in the Molotschna, but was also pivotal in the founding of the Ohrloff *Zentralschule*. It was first established in 1822; the building burned down in 1847 and a new one was finally built in 1860. This was replaced by a beautiful and quite unique structure in 1913.

In 1857 Thomas Wiens was elected *Schulze* and Gerhard Fast councillor. The total population was 281 (138 males, 143 females), living in 42 houses, occupying 1,544 dessiatines. There were 42 students for teacher Johann Braeul. Elder Bernhard Fast lived in the village. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869 Ohrloff had 21 full farms and 26 small farms, for a total of 47, cultivating 1,781 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Ohrloff was in the Halbstadt Volost.

The Ohrloff-Petershagen-Halbstadt Mennonite Church was Flemish in origin, the area of congregational jurisdiction varying from time to time. In 1905 the Ohrloff church, with members also in Tiege, Rosenort and Blumenort, had 980 members, with 580 children. Abram Goerz was elder.

The 1908 Ohrloff population was 510, occupying 1,724 dessiatines. There were five business establishments: Helena Reimer had a vinegar brewery, Johann Goerzen owned a brick factory and windmill, Abram Fast sold flour and wood products and Kornelius Penner was a locksmith.

Educational emphasis continued with the opening of the Ohrloff Girls School in 1908, although the building was actually located in neighbouring Tiege. A 50 bed hospital started functioning in 1910, even having an isolation ward for patients with communicable diseases. In 1912 there were three doctors who performed a total of 325 operations. Total patient days for the year were over 6,000, with average length of stay being 13 days.

Ohrloff suffered the same fate as other Molotschna villages during the revolution and the civil war. In October of 1919 an army of Makhno terrorists overran part of the Molotschna; in revenge for a number of casualties they had suffered they marched through some villages killing and destroying as they

went. On November 11, 1919 twenty people were killed in Blumenort, 11 in Altona and six in Ohrloff. Those in Ohrloff included Kornelius Berg, Aron Enns, Peter Huebert, Kornelius Janzen and Abram Schellenberg.

In the subsequent famine there were ten requests for food drafts printed in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 21 people. Two young men escaped from the region before 1921, and four persons were in Germany by then. In the mid 1920s at least 40 family groups emigrated to Canada, 149 individuals. Philipp David Cornies worked with B.B. Janz to facilitate the emigration to Canada. He was arrested numerous times, the last time in 1927 or 1928. He was imprisoned in Ekaterinoslav, then exiled to Solovki. David David Koop represented the Ohrloff congregation at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches in Russia held in Moscow on January 13-18, 1925. His name is not on the list of people who emigrated to Canada.

Obviously not everyone escaped, but a number did go to Moscow in 1929 in a last desperate attempt to leave. At least three people did manage to exit, since they were in the Prenzlau camp in Germany in March of 1930, on the way to either Canada or South America. A Mr. Toews was not so fortunate. He was arrested in Moscow, and after 14 days in prison, was sent back home.

Ohrloff suffered the same atrocities under the Soviet regime in the 1930s as the other Mennonite villages of the Molotschna. It was reported that most of the original residents were exiled by "voluntary resettlement" in 1930-31. Seventeen men were exiled from 1936 to 1940, 20 were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka, to the far north or central Asia. Ohrloff residents were in the group at Lichtenau, so virtually all of the Mennonite population, a total of 332, was evacuated. When the German Army took statistics in Ohrloff on February 5, 1942, the 12 remaining Mennonites represented 4.3% of the total population of 279. There were three men, four women and five children. Aron Warkentin was the mayor.

When the German Army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the few Mennonite stragglers from Ohrloff joined the "Great Trek" westward into Poland and Germany. Most of these people were probably recaptured by the advancing Soviet troops, but some did escape to the West. Peter Klassen was on board the *S. S. Volendam* on the way to South America in 1948.

Today none of the major buildings of Ohrloff remain standing. The complex of Ohrloff, Tiege, Blumenort and Rosenort is combined into one town called Orlovo.

PASTWA

(Map page 72)

Pastwa was founded in 1820 on the most easterly projection of the Molotschna Colony territory. Neighbours to the south were Nogai nomads, to the east and north were Ukrainians. It was named "Pastwa," Polish dialect for "good pasture," by a number of the more prominent pioneers who came from a village of that name in West Prussia. The settlement was laid out near the source of the Juschanlee River, on land initially rented by Johann Cornies. Four houses had already been built when it was decided that because of the lack of water the village should be moved by one verst. The new location proved to be satisfactory, attested to by the subsequent excellent crops. A protective barrier of trees to the south of the village, and a tree plantation on the south-west corner were quite impressive. The surface soil was rich and black, although in areas there was some saltpetre.

The eighteen families first settling in Pastwa had arrived from the Marienwerder region of West Prussia in 1819 under the leadership of Elder Franz Goerz. Likely staying in the various Molotschna villages over the winter, they occupied their land in 1820. Seven families were of independent means, the others received a Russian government grant totalling 6,005 rubles. The people were of the Frisian branch of the Mennonite Church.

At the time of the Molotschna census of 1835 there were 22 establishments in the village, with a total population of 159 (73 males, 86 females). In 1848 there were 18 full farms in two rows, down each side of the street, with five landless families at both ends of the street. The *Schulze* was Heinrich Wiebe, while councillors were Jakob Loewen and Jakob Friesen, while teacher was Andreas Voth. It was noted that of the original 18 settlers, 28 years later, only six remained on their land; the others had died or moved away.

Agriculturally the wheat production of Pastwa in 1846 was slightly below average, in 1847 near average. There were 40,436 planted trees in 1851, with 12,498 mulberry trees in hedges and 228 pear trees.

In 1857 Pastwa cultivated 1,260 dessiatines of land. Population was 285 (138 males, 147 females), living in 32 houses. Andreas Voth was still the teacher with 43 students. By that time Jakob Regehr was *Schulze* and councillor was Peter Epp. Representatives to the Molotschna Mennonite Council were Reinhard Hiebert and David Fast. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna of 1869, Pastwa had 17 full farms, two half farms and 23 small farms, occupying 1,538 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities, Pastwa was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Most Pastwa residents were likely members of the Rudnerweide Frisian Mennonite Church, although only one was an official; David Fast (1848) was a deacon of that congregation. Peter Dyck (1849) was a minister of the Pordenau Mennonite Church, and Heinrich Schmidt of the Gnadenfeld congregation.

There was considerable dissatisfaction with the condition of the church in Pastwa. When the document of secession to form the Mennonite Brethren Church was signed on January 6, 1860, three of the eighteen who signed were from Pastwa: Isaak Regehr, Jakob Wall and teacher Andreas Voth. Isaak Regehr and Andreas Voth were two of the 27 present for the election of the first elder of the M.B. Church held on May 30, 1860. Andreas Voth was actually a candidate for the position, receiving 11 votes, the third most, behind Heinrich Huebert (24) and Jakob Bekker (16).

In 1908 the Pastwa population was 254, occupying 1,477 dessiatines. The village was not a beehive of commercial activity, but there were windmills owned by Johann Dick and Jakob Epp.

Pastwa likely suffered the usual atrocities of Mennonite villages of the Molotschna during the revolution and the following civil war. The subsequent famine seems to have been devastating, since at least 12 requests for help were printed in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 98 individuals.

Very few people were able to leave Pastwa for Canada in the 1920s. The Johann Berg family prepared to go, sold everything, but then did not receive permission. The Andreas Block family had sold some of their possessions in preparation for leaving, but had to reclaim them when they also were not able to leave.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s some Mennonites moved to the Amur region of eastern Siberia, from where they escaped across the river ice. Jakob Walde with wife and five children were among those who managed to get to Harbin, China, by 1931.

During the implementation of the Soviet policies in the 1930s Pastwa undoubtedly suffered. At least 13 men were "taken," including Heinrich Unruh, Peter Thiessen as well as Andreas Block and his son Franz. The Peter Wall and Heinrich Wiens families just "disappeared."

With the German invasion of Russia in June of 1941, the Russians often used civilian forced labour to dig trenches and tank traps to defend against the advancing armies. So it was that a considerable number, at least 17, of the younger, more able people from Pastwa were conscripted into this back breaking labour. With the rapid approach of the invaders, the Soviets wished to evacuate the entire Mennonite population from the Molotschna. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. All of those who were at the Lichtenau station and some from Nelgovka were loaded onto trains in early October, 1941, and sent to the far north or central Asia. The Pastwa residents were taken to the Nelgovka station and were among the unfortunate ones to be evacuated before the station and tracks were bombed. So it was that when the trench diggers returned home, they found an empty village. Among these were Johann Ewert, Jakob Epp, Agnes Block and Susanna Woelk.

When the German Army evacuated the region in September of 1943 the remaining Mennonite population fled with the retreating troops, joining the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Many, unfortunately, were later recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army; Tina Klassen, Agnes Block, the Kornelsen family and Lena Vogt were among these. Known to have made it to the West, and eventually settling in Canada were at least eight, among them were Jakob Berg, Johann Ewert, Peter Janzen, Maria Block, Jakob Janzen and his wife Agatha (nee Block). At least five settled in the USA, including Lena Sawatzky and Maria Vogt. The Peter Harms family as well as Sonja and Jakob Dyck went to Paraguay.

A number of Pastwa residents survived the Soviet Gulag experience and recently came out of Russia, settling as *Aussiedler* in Germany. Some of these are Johann and Heinrich Block, Benjamin and Anna Ewert (nee Friesen).

Pastwa is now known as Kvitkovoye. Pyotr Opara, of the family of cowherds who lived there in the Mennonite era, still resides in the village.

PAULSHEIM

(Map page 73)

Paulsheim was founded in 1852 as an expansion village of the Molotschna Colony. It was situated south of the Apanlee River, street parallel to the river. Gnadenfeld was the immediate neighbour to the east; in 1857 Mariawohl was established to the west.

In 1857 the Paulsheim *Schulze* was Kornelius Epp, a councillor Franz Balzer. Total population was 183 (98 males, 85 females), living in 26 houses, occupying 1,682 dessiatines. Teacher Gerhard Goossen had 32 students. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Paulsheim had 25 full farms, two half farms and ten small farms for a total of 37, on 1,850 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Paulsheim was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Paulsheim church membership was mixed. Gerhard Dirks (1892) was a minister of the Rudnerweide Frisian congregation. Isaak Boldt (1904) and Julius Thiessen (1904) were ordained ministers of the Margenau Flemish church.

In 1908 the population of Paulsheim was 280, occupying 1,747 dessiatines. There were two small stores in the village, owned by Isbrandt Rempel and Heinrich Flamming. David Boese had a windmill.

Paulsheim had the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In the following famine of 1922 there were only two requests for food drafts, representing 13 people, published in the pages of the *Mennonitisch Rundschau.* The Mennonite Central Committee sent tractors from North America to help the farmers cultivate their land. In 1923 they ploughed 53 dessiatines of land for Paulsheim farmers. When it became possible to emigrate to Canada in the mid 1920s only three family groups, five people, were recorded as coming from Paulsheim. When the situation became desperate some Mennonites fled to the far east, and tried to escape across the Amur River ice to China. Jakob Jakob Hildebrandt and his wife Katharina are recorded as being in Harbin, China, in 1931, having been successful in their escape.

Paulsheim suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the early 1930s. Minister Isaak Boldt was exiled to Archangel in 1931, his family to Chelyabinsk. Heinrich Ediger, wife and four sons were exiled to Siberia. He and his wife died there. Minister Johann Johann Andres and family first lived in Friedensruh, later moved to Paulsheim. There the family lost eight men; father, five sons and two sons-in-law. Between 1930 and 1940 at least 32 men were "taken." In 1941, likely after the German invasion of June, another 68 men were arrested.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. Those from the south-west villages were taken to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship off all from Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka.. Paulsheim residents were among the fortunate thousands gathered at Stulnevo, so when the German forces occupied the region, they simply returned to their homes.

When the German occupying forces took statistics on February 6, 1942, the 215 Mennonites of Paulsheim represented 85% of the total population of 253. There were 19 men, 108 women and 88 children. Ten men had been drafted into the Red Army. Mayor was Jakob Klassen, his assistant Abraham Quiring.

When the German army retreated from the region in September of 1943, the Mennonites of Paulsheim joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Of these, five men were drafted into the *Wehrmacht* (German Army). Eleven persons are known to have died or gone missing on the Trek. At least 65 people were "repatriated" when they were overrun by the rapidly advancing Soviet forces. Some did, however, make it to the West. Johann Rempel was on a ship headed for Canada in 1947.

Paulsheim was likely destroyed when the German forces retreated from the region in 1943, and has never been rebuilt.

PETERSHAGEN

(Map page 74)

Petershagen was founded in 1805 by the second wave of migrants from Prussia, and was laid out just south of the Tokmak River. The peculiar crooked configuration of the street was dictated by the presence, at that time, of a little rivulet flowing into the Tokmak.

The 20 original Flemish settlers had actually come from West Prussia in 1804, overwintering in the Chortitza Colony, then moving onto the land in the spring of 1805. One of the early leaders was Johann Janzen. Another 16 families joined Janzen, with his large family and three married sons, to found Petershagen. Most families were young; 12 had sufficient means, the other eight required a total of 4,541 rubles of government subsidy. The pioneers

came from the Danzig, Elbing and Marienburg areas of Prussia. The new village was named Petershagen in memory of the Prussian home of some of the settlers. It is strange that in the 1848 village report no mention is made of the *Kleine Gemeinde.* Many of the original settlers were actually a group from near Danzig, led by Klaas Reimer.

The land near the river was low lying, and in part because of the rich soil brought in by flooding, was excellent for growing grass. The higher steppe was better for grain and trees. The settlers had brought a German breed of cow with them; unfortunately most died of disease in the first year, with additional serious outbreaks in 1809 and 1827. The drought years of 1833 and 1834 were very difficult. Eventually, especially with the introduction of the Merino type, raising of sheep became an important activity. With the continued encouragement of Chairman Contenius, then later of the Agricultural Society, tree planting, the silk industry and four field crop rotation were introduced. The campaign was labelled as "praising those who worked hard, giving strong advice to those who were somewhat lazier." In 1825 the Czar himself suggested that each farmer should have at least a half dessiatine of forest, a suggestion which was incorporated into the regulations of the Agricultural Society. Of the trees, one third could be mulberry trees, a way of encouraging the silk industry. To accomplish the four field system of crop rotation some of the smaller fields in Petershagen had to be amalgamated.

At the 1835 Molotschna census Petershagen had 23 establishments with a total population of 158 (90 males, 68 females). Klaas Thiessen was *Schulze,* one of the councillors was Johann Martens. In 1848 the *Schulze* was Martens, councillors Martens and Fast, with Peter Neufeld the teacher.

Mid century agriculture in Petershagen was average for the Molotschna. There were 82,830 trees, with 41,637 mulberry trees in hedges (higher than the required amount). Silk production was average. In 1857 the Petershagen population was 288 (142 males, 146 females) living in 39 houses, occupying 1,460 dessiatines. Thirty students were taught by Tobias Nachtigal. That year Johann Klaassen was re-elected *Schulze,* and Johann Janzen elected as councillor. In 1858 Johann Epp, Johann Klaassen and Johann Janzen were on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Petershagen had17 full farms, six half farms and 19 small farms, totaling 42, on 1,604 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Petershagen was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Klaas Reimer led a group from near Danzig to the Chortitza Colony in 1804, then settled in the newly established village of Petershagen the following year. He played a pivotal role in the establishment of the *Kleine Gemeinde* - travelling widely, especially in the Molotschna. He lived in Petershagen until his death on December 29, 1837.

Although very few of the leaders of the Flemish Mennonite congregation actually lived in Petershagen, the village was intimately involved in its affairs, likely because of its central position in the early development of the Molotschna. The Flemish "*Stammgemeinde*" (founding church) in existence from 1804 to 1824 was the Ohrloff-Petershagen-Halbstadt congregation, with buildings in Ohrloff and Petershagen . A stone church was built in Petershagen in 1810 at the west end of the village. It was broken down in 1858, the stones used for the foundation of the large Halbstadt church.

In 1824 the large congregation was divided, the one section being called the Lichtenau-Petershagen-Schoensee-Margenau-Pordenau church (1824-1842). In 1842 there was another re-organization, the one portion being named the Lichtenau-Petershagen Church, which continued to function well into the twentieth century. Dirk Warkentin of Petershagen was a minister in the congregation, ordained in 1841, then was commissioned as elder on September 29, 1842. He eventually died in 1869, after years of service. Petershagen deacons of the congregation were Gerhard Fast (1852), Johann Klaassen (1852), Johann Martens (1889) and Abram Wiebe (1899).

In 1892 a beautiful new house of worship was built near the east end of the village. In 1905 the Lichtenau-Petershagen congregation had 4,000 members (not counting affiliate churches).

The church functioned into the 1920s, there being, for example, a baptism service in the sanctuary on Pentecost Sunday (May) 1924. Peter Rempel, one of the refugees from the Tiegenhof estate, was baptized that day.

The 1908 Petershagen population was 320, occupying 1,544 dessiatines. There were five business establishments. Jakob Wiens owned a brick factory, Gerhard Epp built wagons. Johann Harder had a windmill, Johann Neufeld a motor driven mill. Peter Langemann ran a grocery store. J. A. Wilms opened a brick and tile factory sometime before 1914.

Petershagen undoubtedly suffered the usual terrors of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. Compared to some other regions of southern Russia,

however, the Molotschna seemed to be reasonably safe. The Johann Driedger and Jakob Enns families, for example, fled from their estate Tiegenhof near Zaporozhye in October, 1918, and purchased property in Petershagen. In the following famine at least ten families, representing 36 individuals, requested food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* When migration to Canada became possible at least 27 family groups, 100 individuals, left Petershagen. In late 1929 many Mennonites went to Moscow in a desperate attempt to get exit visas. Johann Driedger, wife Liese and son Johann were successful, landing in Quebec, Canada in November of 1929.

With implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s Petershagen suffered the fate common to Molotschna Mennonite villages. The Jakob Klassen family had come to Petershagen as refugees in the early 1920s. In 1931 the family, as former estate owners, was branded as kulak and exiled for five years to the Chelyabinsk region. Abram Aron Friesen was also arrested in 1931, and his family dispossessed. Peter Epp, wife Anna and daughter and her husband were exiled to Siberia. Five men were exiled between 1935 and 1940, and 62 in 1941. Seven men were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those collected at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Petershagen residents were among the fortunate ones at Tokmak. When the German forces overran the area, Petershagen villagers simply returned to their homes.

When the German occupation forces took statistics in Petershagen on February 10, 1942 the 213 Mennonites represented 30% of the total population of 710. Obviously many Mennonites had been expelled over the last years, and other people moved onto their property. There were 41 Mennonite men, 88 women and 84 children. Abram Driediger was the mayor.

When the German forces retreated from the area in September of 1943, the Mennonites of Petershagen joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Many were overrun by the advancing Red Army, but some did escape to the West. Jakob Barkowsky, wife and three children were in a refugee camp in Austria in 1947. Peter Friesen sailed for Paraguay in 1948, and Margareta Giesbrecht reached Canada, also in 1948.

Today the village is called Kutuzovka.. Little is left of the original village of Petershagen, only the church building. For years it had been used as a granary, but in 1998 was taken over by a group of North American Mennonites led by George Schroeder, Frank Dyck and John Siemens. They renovated the church and began to organize a congregation. The church officially opened October 17, 1999, with over 300 people attending. Members are from the local area, with possibly only one person from a traditional Mennonite background. Currently (2003) the congregation is considered to be Mennonite Brethren, and its pastor is Helmut Epp.

PORDENAU

(Map page 75)

Pordenau was founded in 1820 in the south-west corner of the Molotschna Colony. It lay just south of, street parallel to the Tschokrak River. Both neighbouring villages were established the same year, Schardau to the west, Marienthal to the east. The Juschanlee River formed the north border of Pordenau land, the south was open steppe. The land had originally been rented by Johann Cornies, then sublet to Nogai nomads.

There were no particular low lying valleys in the area, so grass did not flourish; in the winter the cattle were fed straw. Black topsoil was about three feet deep, then came eight feet of clay, based on rock. This made it difficult to dig wells, since water was found at 25 to 35 feet.

The first 14 families, largely Frisian, came from the Marienburg area of West Prussia; a number came from a village named Pordenau, so they gave their new home the same name. They were initially joined by two families from the Molotschna. Later another two families arrived from Prussia, and two more from other villages of the Molotschna , giving a total of 20. Those who came from Prussia did not have sufficient capital, so they received a total of 6,268 rubles 74 kopeks government subsidy.

As was usual for the pioneering villages of the Molotschna, the barns were built first, the families living in the barns until they constructed proper houses. Pordenau had the same difficulties in the early development as the other villages. One additional event is mentioned -- a house was struck by lightning and burned down; its owner perished in the fire.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census

there were 23 establishments in Pordenau, total population being 151 (80 males, 71 females). Peter Dueck was *Schulze*, councillors were Heinrich Toews and Franz Janzen. In 1848 Johann Dick was *Schulze*, councillors were Jakob Epp and Isaak Barg, with teacher Wilhelm Martens.

Mid century Pordenau agriculture was unremarkable. In 1846 the wheat yield was well below the average, but in 1847 it was precisely the norm for the Molotschna. Peter Thiessen had three cows in a milk production experiment in 1851; among those tested his were high average. Also in 1851 Pordenau had 100,004 trees, of which 45,071 were mulberry trees in hedges.

In 1857 the village had a population of 292 (149 males, 143 females), living in 42 houses, occupying 1,390 dessiatines. Teacher Jakob Rempel had 52 students. Johann Loepp was elected *Schulze* that year, Johann Warkentin councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Pordenau had 19 full farms, two half farms and 27 small farms, totaling 48, on 1,732 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Pordenau was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

The original Flemish Mennonite Church was subdivided in 1824 into the Ohrloff congregation and the Lichtenau-Petershagen-Schoensee-Margenau-Pordenau congregation. The latter subdivided again in 1842, one of the subdivisions being the Pordenau Church. Heinrich Toews of Pordenau was the first elder. He was ordained minister in 1839, then elder in 1842, continuing in that position until he died in 1868. Other leading ministers of the congregation who actually lived in Pordenau were Franz Toews (1849) and Gerhard Regehr (1893). Daniel Janzen of Pordenau was ordained as elder in 1907, continuing in that position into the difficult times. Deacons from Pordenau were David Fast (1848), Aron Wall (1884) and Aron Matthies (1909).

The first church building was erected in Pordenau in 1828, followed by a larger two story structure in 1860. In 1887 Pordenau had 984 baptized members and 1,033 children. By 1905 the congregation had shrunk somewhat, there being 806 members, total congregational population being 1,771. The church continued to function through the revolution, the civil war and the communist takeover. There was a church choir in 1926 with Johann Abrahams the conductor. He was drafted into alternate military service that year, after which Johann Riesen took his place. Aaron Regehr was the last elder of the congregation. He and his family fled to the Caucasus region, where he was later arrested. For a short time two ministers from Marienthal, Jakob Vogt and Johann Martens served the congregation. Then, two weeks after Easter in 1933 the remaining ministers were "taken" and the church was closed down.

In 1908 the Pordenau population was 237, occupying 1,645 dessiatines. It is not known if there were any business establishments in the village.

Pordenau will have suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In the following famine if 1922 a total of 13 requests for food drafts, representing 76 people, were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. When emigration to Canada became a possibility there does not seem to have been great interest. Only ten family groups, 38 individuals, are listed as leaving from Pordenau.

In the early 1930s Pordenau suffered the same atrocities as other villages in the Molotschna. At least nine families were forced off their land as kulaks. The Walls moved to Rudnerweide, a Reimer and a Schulz family were sent to the far east, and starved to death. Most of the others actually stayed in the village, but not in their homes. In 1930 the population of the village was 332; by 1936 it was down to 250. At least 16 men were arrested in the 1930s, and eight were drafted into the Red Army.

Pordenau was the headquarters of a kolkhoz formed in the area, consisting of five villages, Marienthal, Pordenau, Schardau, Alexanderthal and Elisabetthal. It was called *Deutscher Kollektivist.* From 1934 to 1937 the chairman of the kolkhoz was a Ukrainian communist, Kovalenko, from Elisabetthal, then Johann Neufeld, also from Elisabetthal, until 1941.

After the church was closed down in 1933 the building was used as a club – theatre, movie house and dance hall. Late 1939 or early 1940 it was sold to a neighbouring village and broken down to build smaller homes.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets first intensified the exile of men. September 4, 1941, 31 of the more able men were "taken," then on September 10 even the older and the weaker were arrested. The latter included the teachers and the mayor. The last group was transported on foot and not carefully guarded, so some of them were able to escape and return to the village. With the invaders ever closer, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Molotschna Mennonite population. The south-west villages were

ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo, and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Pordenau residents were taken to Nelgovka; approximately half (about 110) were sent off, mostly to Kazakhstan or the Urals. Those who remained returned to their homes when the region was occupied by German forces. Of those who were sent into exile, at least 21 starved to death.

During the German occupation the 110 remaining Mennonites represented 46% of the total population of 238. Peter Becker was for a time the mayor during the occupation. Quite possibly he was one of the few remaining men because he had "reported' on so many of the other men. When he left A. Koehn became the mayor.

With the retreat of the German forces in September of 1943, the remaining Mennonites of Pordenau joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Of the 118 who set out, ten men were mobilized into the German Army, two people died in Poland. At least 84 were "repatriated," of which 24 died en route or starved to death within a few years. At least 22 escaped to the West, in time settling in Canada, Paraguay and Argentina. Heinrich Schulz was on a ship headed for Canada in 1947. Nine family groups, 21 individuals, went to South America.

At this time a considerable number of former residents of Pordenau are living in Germany as *Aussiedler*, among them are Maria Goerzen, Heinrich and Nikolai Klassen as well as Gertruda, Manya and Elisabeth Rups.

Today the complex of Schardau, Pordenau and Marienthal constitute the village of Panfilovka.

PRANGENAU

(Map page 76)

Prangenau was founded in 1824 on the north bank of the Juschanlee River. Most of the land was to the north of the village; a portion was also south of the Juschanlee, with the Salt Road running through it. Black topsoil was thin, with underlying clay.

Eleven of the original families came from the Chortitza Colony, eight came from the Marienburg region of West Prussia, four from the Tilsit area. The first *Schulze*, Gerhard Wall, suggested that the village be named after Prangenau in West Prussia; this was agreed to by *Oberschulze* Johann Klassen. The land had originally been rented by Johann Cornies, then sublet to Nogai nomads as pasture. The private resources of the settlers totalled 2,155 rubles; the added crown subsidy was 6,515 rubles.

In 1835 the population of Prangenau was 186 (94 males, 92 females). Gerhard Wall was still *Schulze*, councillors were Abraham Riediger and Peter Epp. In 1848 Peter Epp was the *Schulze*, Abraham Buehler and Gerhard Peters the councillors.

Mid century Prangenau agriculture was roughly the Molotschna average. Wheat production for 1846 and 1847 was about the colony norm. The village had 88,102 trees, of which 37,557 were mulberry trees in hedges. Silk production was low. The one remarkable farmer was Peter Penner, who was somewhat of a specialist in growing fruit trees.

In 1857 the Prangenau population was 361 (181 males, 180 females), in 50 houses, living on 1,414 dessiatines. Teacher Johann Voth had 74 students. Elected *Schulze* that same year was Peter Funk, Peter Kroeker councillor. In 1858 Jakob Peters was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Prangenau had 16 full farms, eight half farms and 33 small farms, totaling 57, occupying 1,828 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Prangenau was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Prangenau had no church building, but there was some interest in religious affairs. Abraham Riediger was a minister of the Frisian Rudnerweide Church, having been ordained in 1853. Kornelius Fast (1883) was a minister of the Flemish Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch congregation, and Peter Peters (1901) of the Alexanderkrone church.

In 1908 the population of Prangenau was 568, living on 1,717 dessiatines. There were three business establishments in the village. Peter Mandtler owned a brickyard, Jakob Delesky had a windmill and Jakob Janzen had a small goods store.

Prangenau undoubtedly suffered the usual difficulties of Molotschna villages with the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In the following famine of 1922 there were six requests for food drafts published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Runschau*. A Mrs. Kemnitzer (nee Dyck) had fled to Germany by February of 1921. When emigration to Canada became a possibility in the mid 1920s at least 10 family groups, 52 individuals, are recorded as leaving Prangenau.

In the early 1930s Prangenau suffered the same atrocities as other villages in the Molotschna. Leading minister Johann Peters of the Gnadenheim Mennonite Brethren congregation was dispossessed

from his home in Prangenau in September of 1931, moving to Friedensdorf. There he was arrested in 1932 and sentenced to six years of hard labour. His son Heinrich was exiled in 1932 to Khabarovsk, returned in 1935, then was re-arrested for the last time in 1937. Another son, Johann Johann Peters was arrested in 1930 and imprisoned in Melitopol. He was released, the re-arrested again in 1937, dying in exile. Johann Becker was arrested in 1934, sentenced to eight years in 1935, and died within three years. Altogether there were at least 14 arrests in the 1930s. Four men were drafted into the Red Army.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Prangenau residents were among the unfortunate thousands at Lichtenau. Virtually all of the Mennonites, 306, were deported. When the German occupying forces took statistics in Prangenau on February 18, 1942, the 34 remaining Mennonites represented 50% of the total population of 68. There were 14 men, ten women and ten children. Administratively the village belonged to Steinfeld, so Prangenau had no mayor. Heinrich Penner was the local administrative representative.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, the few remaining Prangenau Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were overrun by the rapidly advancing Soviet Army. Margaretha Peters, wife of the minister, with three children and a grandchild, were "repatriated." They had reached the Warthegau area of Poland, and were sent to the Koltas region in Russia. Susan Peters, wife of Heinrich, with four children, was also captured and sent back to the U.S.S.R. There is no specific record of people escaping to the West.

The village of Prangenau no longer exists.

ROSENORT

(Map page 77)

The Molotschna Colony was founded in 1804, with nine villages being established along the Molochnaya River. In 1805 another eight villages were laid out east of the original group, along the tributaries leading into the river. Rosenort was one of the second group of villages, located south of and parallel to the Kuruschan River, Blumenort just to the south-west. Much of the land was in the river valley; four dams controlled the water and assured good hay crops. North-west of the village were sand and gravel pits, very useful in the construction of buildings.

The 20 initial families came from various places in the Vistula Delta: Marienburg (9 families), Elbing (5 families), Tiegenhof (3 families). Actually 15 families settled in 1805, another three in 1807, and the other two in 1810 and 1813. All were Flemish. The village was named after the home of the founder, Johann Warkentin, who came from Rosenort of the Elbing region. Eleven of the families had financial resources, varying from 200 rubles up to as much as 9,000 rubles, while nine families required government subsidy totalling 4,858 rubles 9 kopeks.

Besides having the usual difficulties of pioneer villages, stark tragedy struck the night of April 19-20, 1811. Original settler Jakob Berg, who was a regional councillor, together with two others was on colony business when they were robbed and murdered by neighbouring Nogai nomads. Their bodies were found the next day on the steppe near Tiege.

On October 22,1825, Rosenort had the honour of being visited by Czar Alexander I; that same year Count Konstantin Nikolayevitsh also travelled through the village.

The 1848 Molotschna village report mentions that Rosenort produced a considerable amount of silk, giving an income of between 30 and 60 rubles to those farmers who were involved in its production. Peter Friesen and Johann Warkentin owned a brick factory which helped in the construction of houses.

In the mid century Rosenort agriculture seems to have been roughly average for Molotschna villages. Klaas Friesen produced the second most tobacco of any farmer in the colony in 1846. Wheat yield that same year was outstanding at over 16 fold with the Molotschna average slightly over 11, but the following year it was average. In 1851 there were 72,810 trees in Rosenort, low average for the Molotschna.

At the time of the census in 1835 there were 21 establishments in Rosenort with a population of 181 (86 males, 95 females). Jakob Schellenberg was *Schulze*. In 1848 a Mr. Wiens was *Schulze*, councillors were Fast and Friesen, with schoolteacher Bernhard Fast. By 1857 the village population had risen to 292 (143 males, 149 females), living in 44 houses and occupying 1,445 dessiatines. There were 54 students with teacher David Loewen. That same year Bernhard Friesen was re-elected *Schulze*, and Johann Dueck was

elected councillor. In 1859 Johann Friesen was on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Rosenort had 19 full farms, two half farms and 27 small farms for a total of 48, on 1,732 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Rosenort was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Throughout the years Rosenort residents were probably mostly members of the various configurations of the *Grosse* Flemish Mennonite Church. Peter Neufeld, Heinrich Neufeld (1830), Johann Wiens (1830) and another Johann Wiens (1904) were ministers of this congregation. Claas Friesen (1838) was a minister of the *Kleine Gemeinde*. There must have been some Mennonite Brethren in the village, since Rosenort was on the tour of itinerant ministers in the 1876-77 season.

Rosenort played a significant role in the administration of the Molotschna Colony. Johann Klassen was *Oberschulze* from 1806-09, and possibly again 1812-15. He, together with a Toews from Fabrikerwiese, established a cloth factory in Halbstadt.

The school was important in Rosenort. For years Peter Holzrichter was the well known and respected teacher. He was an excellent instructor in Russian, and participated actively in the educational reforms of the 1870s. Abraham Jakob Kroeker, later well known writer and newspaper publisher, was born in Rosenort and was Holzrichter's student. In 1895 a new beautiful school was built. One of the later teachers was Peter Rempel, 1923-24, shortly before he emigrated to Canada.

In 1908 the Rosenort population was 371, occupying 1,630 dessiatines. There was not much in the way of industry, but Johann Wiens had a windmill, Jakob Penner ran a grocery store and Abram Fast owned a brick factory, as well as a motor driven mill and a carpenter shop.

A home for the elderly was established in neighbouring Kuruschan in 1909. Bernhard Epp and his wife from Rosenort were the first managers. They rented out their farm in Rosenort during the time of their involvement.

With the revolution and the subsequent civil war, Rosenort suffered the same difficulties as all the other Molotschna villages. In 1921 there was an outbreak of typhus, brought in by revolutionary soldiers. There were two deaths. In the famine of 1922 only two families representing nine people requested food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. In the mid 1920s at least 12 family groups with 40 individuals emigrated to Canada. With the last desperate attempt to leave Russia many Mennonites collected in Moscow in late 1929 to obtain exit visas. At least one family, Gerhard Franz Willms, wife Agatha and two children did manage to escape, since they were in the Prenzlau refugee camp in Germany in 1930.

In the 1930s Rosenort suffered the same atrocities under the Soviet regime as the other Mennonite villages of the Molotschna. A kolkhoz *Karl Liebknecht* was formed, and to enable the reorganization, five families were labelled as kulaks and deported to Neuhof. These were Gerhard P. Neufeld, Franz Dick, Abram Epp, Nikolai Boschmann and Nikolai Wiens. By the winter of 1930-31, with very hard work, they finally had roofs over their heads. Then in May of 1931 the men were arrested and imprisoned, and finally loaded onto cattle cars and shipped to Chelyabinsk. Forty-three men were exiled between 1936 and 1940.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. Rosenort residents were in the group at Lichtenau, so virtually all of the Mennonite population, a total of 434, was evacuated. When the German Army took statistics on February 2, 1942 the 25 remaining Mennonites represented 25.1% of the total population of 99. There were five men, 11 women and nine children. The mayor was Johann Quapp.

When the German Army retreated from the area in September of 1943, the few Mennonite stragglers joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were overrun by the advancing Soviet troops, but some did make it to the West. Six family groups, nine individuals, sailed for South America in 1948, and at least two families totalling seven people went to Canada, also in 1948.

Today the complex of Ohrloff, Tiege, Blumenort and Rosenort is combined into one town called Orlovo.

RUDNERWEIDE

(Map page 78)

Rudnerweide was founded in 1820 in the south-east part of the Molotschna Colony, the street being parallel to the Sassikulak River. The land had been rented by Johann Cornies, then sublet to Nogai nomads as pasture. Many of the original 24 settlers were from the village of Rudnerweide, located near Stuhm in West Prussia. Most came from the church of Elder Franz Goerz I. He and teacher Heinrich Balzer led a substantial group which settled in the new Rudnerweide, but also in some of the neighbouring villages. In 1826 additional families arrived from the Marienburg and Marienwerder regions. Most of the settlers were very poor and received a total of 12,524 rubles 70 kopeks of government subsidy. A number, however, must have been quite wealthy, having about 30,000 rubles. In the first winter the settlers lived in newly constructed barns, moving into their residences when they were completed. Good clay was available to produce fired bricks; stones for the foundations were found along the Sassikulak River valley.

The majority of the settlers were Frisian Mennonites, and in 1822 erected a white two story church at the north-east end of the village. Construction was helped by a gift of 10,000rubles from Czar Alexander I. Rudnerweide became the church centre for the villages of Pastwa, Franztal and Grossweide. Franz Goerz I died in 1835 and was followed as elder by Benjamin Ratzlaff.

Early in its development a substantial tree plantation was begun on the eastern end of the village near the church, but eventually a shelter belt was also planted south of the village. The plantation area was 16½ dessiatines, providing each farmer with ½ dessiatine. A two story vinegar brewery was also built, as well as a one story beer brewery.

At the time of the Molotschna census of 1835 there were 43 establishments in Rudnerweide, with a total population of 303 (162 males, 141 females). Another 15 settlers arrived between 1833 and 1845, adding 30 males and 18 females. In 1848 Peter Kliewer was *Schulze*, Andreas Nachtigal and Gerhard Fast were councillors, with Jakob Braeul the teacher.

In mid century the Rudnerweide agriculture seems to have been average - no great records were set. Wheat production for 1846 and 1847 were roughly the Molotschna average. There were 91,270 trees in the village in 1851, 31,014 being mulberry trees in hedges. There was an active silk industry.

In 1857 Gerhard Fast was elected *Schulze,* Johann Thiessen councillor. The population was 514 (264 males, 250 females), living in 62 houses, occupying 2,348 dessiatines. There were 74 students, with Jakob Braeul remaining as teacher. In 1859 Rudnerweide had four representatives on the Molotschna Mennonite Council: Johann Regier, Heinrich Regier, David Nickel and Isaiah Matthias. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Rudnerweide had 28 full farms, ten half farms and 46 small farms, for a total of 84 establishments, on 2,881 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Rudnerweide was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

In late 1859 some members were asked to leave a church membership meeting in Gnadenfeld, in part because they had held a private communion. The following January 6, 1860, a meeting was held in Elisabetthal in which a document of secession of the Mennonite Brethren was signed. Of the 18 men who signed was Jakob P. Bekker of Rudnerweide; he was also considered to be one of the leaders of the group. He preserved all possible relevant documents and correspondence relating to the events. His material was eventually translated into English and published in 1973. Of the 27 who participated in the election of the first elder of the Mennonite Brethren on May 3, 1860, three were from Rudnerweide – Abraham Regehr, Jakob and Benjamin Bekker. All three voted for Heinrich Huebert.

The Rudnerweide Frisian Mennonite Church continued to function as an important element in the church life of the region. Benjamin Ratzlaff continued as elder until 1861, followed by Franz Goerz II, who remained in that position until 1891. He was followed by Abraham David Nickel until at least 1910. Elder Nickel had first been a teacher, and continued his interest in education, being a member of the Molotschna School Board. The church building was in Rudnerweide, but participation was much more widespread, many of the ministers actually living in a number of other surrounding villages. Examples would be Jakob Janzen (1833) from Schardau, Reinhard Hiebert (1847) from Friedensdorf, Johann Becker (1853) from Franthal, Heinrich Stobbe (1864) from Hierschau and Gerhard Dirks from Franzthal. In 1881 the church had 1,200 members, while in 1888 there were 1,410 baptized members, with 1,410 children. In 1909 there were over 1,300 baptized members. Elder Abraham David Nickel participated in the All Ukrainian Mennonite Union negotiations in July of 1929. On July 7, 1929 he was one of the speakers at the silver wedding celebration of Kornelius K. Martens held in Grossweide. The Rudnerweide church was

closed down in 1934. Elder Nickel fled to the Caucasus, where he died in 1935.

In 1908 Rudnerweide had a population of 698, occupying 2,663 dessiatines. Abraham Hamm and Heinrich Block had windmills, Abraham Schroeder a motor driven mill. Wilhelm Hamm owned a brickyard, Abraham Hamm had a wood business. Heinrich Bartel sold flour, and a cooperative sold manufactured goods.

Rudnerweide likely suffered the usual atrocities of Mennonite villages of the Molotschna during the revolution and the following civil war. The subsequent famine may not have been severe in Rudnerweide, since only two requests for food packages were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 11 individuals.

Very few people were able to leave Rudnerweide in the mid 1920s. Gerhard Becker had fled to Constantinople by February, 1921. Lists of those emigrating to Canada mention at least eight family groups, 29 individuals. This includes the extended Janzen family, four family units with 15 people. Gerhard Gerhard Nickel of Rudnerweide represented the Gnadenfeld Mennonite Church at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches held in Moscow January 13-18, 1925. His name is not on the list of those who emigrated to Canada.

In the late 1920s and early 1930s some Mennonites moved to the Amur region of eastern Siberia, from where they planned to escape across the Amur River ice to China. Dietrich Dietrich Loewen, wife Maria and one child were among those who managed to get to Harbin, China, by 1931.

During the implementation of the Soviet policies in the 1930s Rudnerweide suffered severely. On Monday, April 14, 1930, the news came that a number of people were to be resettled within 48 hours. Among them were the families Jakob Klassen, Gerhard Klassen, Johann Wiebe Sr., Johann Wiebe Jr., Wilhelm Hamm, as well as Mrs. Heinrich Klassen, Mrs. Abram Hamm, Jakob Willms, Franz F. Rempel with three children, also Peter Mandtler with son Jakob. For some peculiar reason Mrs. Mandtler was allowed to stay. According to a correspondent these people were taken to Oktoberfeld, a kulak village 10 verst from Prischib. "The refugees from Rudnerweide are in two small rooms. The furniture, the cattle and the men are under the open sky. They were able to take along some food and clothing, a little furniture and feed for the cattle..." In all at least 13 families were sent off as kulaks. Another 15 families or individuals fled the village about 1930 to escape exile. At least seven men were "taken" in the 1930s, including five Friesen brothers in 1937.

When the German forces approached the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. All those who were at the Lichtenau station and some from Nelgovka were loaded onto trains in early October and sent to the north of Russia or to central Asia. The inhabitants of Rudnerweide were among those at the Nelgovka station. Two Russian brothers Kosmenko, one an official in Franzthal, the other in Rudnerweide, did all they could to delay the departures. Nonetheless, about one third of the Rudnerweide population, 110 people from the southern end of the village, were deported on October 4, 1941. They were shipped to Kazakhstan on cattle cars; at least 24 died of starvation and disease during the first few years of exile.

With the German occupation , those who had not been deported returned to their own homes. During this time life stabilized to a considerable degree; in November of 1941 there was even a choir, consisting of a few men and a larger number of women, which sang at worship services.

When the German Army retreated from the region in September of 1943, the remaining Rudnerweide Mennonite population fled with the troops, going on the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. In total at least 265 people from Rudnerweide reached the Warthegau region of Poland. With the ever advancing Soviet Army most were eventually overrun and sent back, but 54 did make it to freedom in the West. Johann Becker and Emma Derksen were in a refugee camp in Austria in 1947. Johann Ediger and Heinrich Kliewer headed for South America in 1948. The Victor Kliewer family made it to Canada.

During the Soviet times the region of Rudnerweide was part of a large collective farm based in Grossweide. The church ceased to function in 1934, when it was converted to a club house. The building was later used as a granary, then in 1940 it was demolished, the bricks being used for the construction of other buildings.

Today Rudnerweide is known as Rozovka. The village is still identifiable, but only a few buildings from the Mennonite era are left at the southern end of the village.

RUECKENAU

(Map page 79)

Rueckenau was founded in 1811, the 20 farmyards being laid out along the Kuruschan River. In the middle of the village the Begim-Tschokrak River joined the Kuruschan, flowing in from the north-east. The flooding river fertilized the gardens every spring, assuring good vegetable crops and good yield from the fruit trees. The first year 11 families settled, eight of which had come from the Elbing area of West Prussia in 1810. Eventually another nine families arrived, also from Prussia, to complete the 20 households in 1819.

Early times were difficult. Just north of Rueckenau an estate had been established by people from Tokmak, and they did not allow the Rueckenau farmers to cultivate the land. Government authorities at the time were more concerned with the Napoleonic Wars, so the situation was not cleared up for a number of years. By 1815, however, the settlers were able to proceed with their agricultural pursuits, and the village began to flourish. A tree plantation was established along the southern border of the village, and in 1844 a new school building was erected.

At the Molotschna census of 1835 total population of Rueckenau was 217 (118 males, 99 females), living in 29 households. Kornelius Enns was *Schulze*, Jakob Warkentin and Martin Barkmann were councillors. In 1848 Jakob Harder was *Schulze,* Johann Loewen and Jakob Driedger were councillors and Jakob Unger the teacher.

While wheat production at mid century was somewhat below the average for the Molotschna, Aron Peters, with a yield of 15 pud had the highest production of tobacco of any farmer in the Molotschna. In both 1846 and 1847 income from butter in Rueckenau was the second highest of any village in the colony. Martin Barkmann planted the second most mulberry trees in hedges in 1848, at 10,000. In 1851 Rueckenau had 133,101 trees, the highest number of any village, while in 1852 Abraham Friesen had the second largest wood tree nursery in the Molotschna, having 16,000 trees.

In 1857 the Rueckenau population was 328 (165 males, 163 females), living in 46 houses, occupying 1,480 dessiatines. There were 48 students with teacher Johann Unger. *Schulze* that year was Jakob Warkentin, who apparently was appointed in place of the man who actually garnered the most votes, Johann Loewen. Councillor was Gerhard Epp. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869 Rueckenau had 14 full farms, 12 half farms and 34 small farms, for a total of 60, on 1,844 dessiatines of land. Probably some of the yards were never occupied, or were abandoned by 1915, since at that time there were only 47. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Rueckenau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

A tavern was built on the east end of Rueckenau, which apparently was an embarrassment to the village. Even though most of the inhabitants were members of the Flemish Mennonite Church at Margenau, they were happy when a consortium bought the building in 1874 and converted it into a Mennonite Brethren Church. Rueckenau was near the centre of the Molotschna, so it became the main meeting place for Mennonite Brethren in the colony. Large attendance forced removal of various partitions and even the addition of a new wing, but in time a new building was needed. On October 2, 1883 a new sanctuary, situated just east of the old one, was dedicated. Total cost was 8,500 rubles, much reduced by the large amount of work done gratis. Rueckenau continued to be the centre of Mennonite Brethren activities in the Molotschna for many years. On May 30, 1893, for example, there was a *Saengerfest* (Choral Festival) in Rueckenau with seven choirs, 120 singers and 2,000 guests. This was eclipsed the following year, when there were 11 choirs, 300 singers and 2,500 guests! Mennonite Brethren conventions were often held in Rueckenau - in 1877, 1882, 1887, 1890, 1895, 1906 and 1912.

In 1895 Martin Peter Friesen gave the Rueckenau M.B. congregation a house and garden to serve as a home for the elderly. Capacity for this family style institution was about 15 elderly or debilitated persons.

In 1904 catastrophe struck the village. On September 13, possibly spreading from the surrounding steppes, fire started on the first farm at the east end of the village. Despite all efforts to contain the blaze, it raced up the street. In all at least 35 homesteads were totally or partially destroyed. At first the refugees were housed in the church and school, but then had to find accommodations with relatives in neighbouring villages while their farmsteads were being rebuilt.

In 1908 there were 408 people living in Rueckenau, occupying 1,746 dessiatines. There were three business establishments. Peter Martens had a store handling groceries and manufactured goods, Martin Hamm owned a wind and motor mill, while Peter Hamm had a brass foundry.

Rueckenau went through the same trials and tribulations as other villages in the Molotschna during the revolution and the subsequent civil war. The

following famine must have hit hard. People sent at least 61 requests for food packages representing 343 individuals through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. A significant number of persons from Rueckenau emigrated to Canada in the mid 1920s, at least 58 family groups, totaling 209 people. Many of these left in three groups, in June, July and August of 1924. Probably this number represented half of the population!

The village and surrounding area suffered through the severe policies of the Soviets in the 1920s and 1930s. Displaced Ukrainian and Russian peasants founded two villages near Rueckenau, Novo-nikolayevka just east of Kuruschan, Grishino between Rueckenau and Margenau. In 1930 four Rueckenau families were driven from their property, being resettled on the open steppe 40 km away, west of Prischib. In all at least 11 families were forced out of the village, such as Peter Sukkau, Heinrich Voth and Kornelius Boschmann. A number of people fled to the Caucasus, but six former residents of Rueckenau were arrested even there. Expulsions continued, and in time many of the residences were pulled down to make way for cattle barns for the kolkhoz named *Ernst Thaelmann*. Exact numbers are not known, but more men were exiled in the Purge of !936-1938.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. South-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Rueckenau villagers were among the fortunate ones at Tokmak, so when the area was overrun by the German forces, they simply returned to their homes.

In September of 1943 Rueckenau Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" with the retreating German forces, heading westward to Poland and Germany. Almost 90 individuals left Rueckenau in the rain on September 12. Most of these eventually fell into Soviet hands, but a number escaped to the West. Johann Koop Sr. died in Germany, but his grandson Peter managed to depart via the "Berlin Escape" organized by Peter Dyck of the Mennonite Central Committee. Altogether at least seven people went to South America, and 13 eventually arrived in Canada.

With the possibility of repatriation of Soviet Germans to Germany, especially since the reunification of Germany in 1989, a flood of *Aussiedler* has crossed the border. At least 50 individuals who were born in Rueckenau are among these.

Today the village is known as Kozolugovka. The church and a few other Mennonite buildings remain. In the 1930s the church was used as a school, but then it was converted to a feed mill. North American Mennonites are now constructing a new church building in Rueckenau, presumably to plant a congregation in the village.

SCHARDAU

(Maps page 80)

Schardau was founded in 1820 in the south-west region of the Molotschna Colony. It was just south of, street parallel to the Tschokrak River. Pordenau was established the same year just to the east, Alexanderthal, also founded in 1820, was to the west. The Juschalee River formed the north boundary of Schardau land, providing excellent fresh water for the cattle. Southward was the open steppe. The land had previously been rented by Johann Cornies, then sublet to Nogai nomads as pasture.

The land itself was quite dry, and water for the village was initially brought in six verst from Steinbach, until a community well was dug. The land was hilly, with black earth one or two feet thick. The soil was not particularly good for growing grass, so in winter the cattle were fed straw.

The first settlers arrived from the Marienwerder region of West Prussia, coming to South Russia in 1819. A number had come from a village named Schardau, so that is the name they gave their new home. They were Frisians under the leadership of Elder Franz Goerz.

Of the total of 20, 17 pioneers settled on the land in May of 1820, the other three came in 1821. The first summer was spent building cattle sheds, the people living in the sheds until they constructed homes for themselves. The first three houses were built in 1824, the final ones being completed in 1828. Most settlers arrived with 300-500 rubles, requiring between 400 and 700 rubles additional government subsidy, the poorest family receiving 859 rubles.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 31 establishments in the village. Total population was 186 (101 males, 85 females).

In 1848 Lohrenz was *Schulze*, councillors were Kliewer and Wiebe, with teacher being David Penner. Schardau agriculture was not unusual, with wheat yields actually being below average for 1846 and 1847. The village had 77,331 trees, including 30,024

mulberry trees in hedges. Despite all the mulberry trees, silk production was under average.

In 1857 the total population of Schardau was 368 (194 males, 174 females), living in 47 houses, occupying 1,382 dessiatines of land. Daniel Penner was still the teacher, with 65 students. That year Kornelius Dyck was re-elected *Schulze*, Heinrich Franz was elected councillor. Schardau had one reader of *Unterhaltungsblatt* in 1859, Jakob Wiebe.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Schardau had 16 full farms, eight half farms, and 28 small farms for a total of 52, on 1,748 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Schardau was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

The original settlers being Frisian, they most likely related to the Frisian Mennonite congregation of Rudnerweide. With the organization of the Mennonite Brethren Church in 1860, however, there was considerable interest in that direction. Two of the original 18 men who signed the declaration of secession on January 6, 1860, were from Schardau – Daniel Hoppe and August Strauss. August Straus was later a candidate as first elder of the Mennonite Brethren in the election held for that position on May 30, 1860. Three of the electors at the meeting were from Schardau – August Strauss, Daniel Hoppe and Heinrich Flaming. Allowed two votes each, all three voted for Heinrich Huebert and Andreas Voth.

In 1908 the population of Schardau was 408, occupying 1,587 dessiatines of land. There were only two business establishments in the village, a windmill owned by Isaak Neufeld, and a motor driven mill operated by Heinrich Dick.

Schardau undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the onset of the revolution and the following civil war. In the subsequent famine of 1922 there were 16 requests for food drafts, representing 109 individuals, published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* When it became possible to emigrate to Canada only three family units, six people, are specifically listed as leaving Schardau.

The village suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages with the implementation of Soviet policies in the 1930s. Schardau became part of a kolkhoz named *Deutscher Kollektivist.* It consisted of the villages Marienthal, Pordenau, Schardau, Alexanderthal and Elisabethtal, headquarters in Pordenau.

With the approach of the German forces after the invasion of June, 1941, a group of the more able, men and women, was mobilized to dig trenches and tank traps. On September 4 all men between the ages of 16 and 60 were "taken" and sent to labour camps in the Urals. On September 7 a number of people had to drive the cattle eastward.

When the German invaders were coming ever closer the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Molotschna Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were actually able to ship off all those collected at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Schardau residents were among those at Nelgovka, and had the misfortune of being among those that were evacuated. Of the 200 Mennonite residents, 185 were deported on October 1, 1941. When those who had dug tank traps and those who drove away the cattle returned home, they came to an empty village.

When the German forces retreated from the area in September of 1943, the Mennonite stragglers from Schardau joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were likely overrun by the rapidly advancing Soviet forces and were "repatriated." A few, however, did reach the West. Peter Flamming, wife Anna and one child reached Canada in 1948.

A number of former Schardau residents have now settled in Germany as *Aussiedler.*

Today the complex of Schardau, Pordenau and Marienthal constitute the village of Panfilovka.

SCHOENAU

(Map page 81)

Schoenau was one of the first nine villages settled in 1804 to begin the Molotschna Colony. It was located along the Molochnaya River, with the street parallel to the river. The low lying land near the river was sandy, with saltpetre in some areas; higher on the steppe the land had more clay. With introduction of the four-field crop rotation in 1837 the crop yields improved considerably. The lowlands were not particularly good for hay until a number of earth dams had been constructed.

Originally there were 21 settlers of Flemish background. Gerhard Hildebrand occupied Lot No. 1, and had 1000 rubles, Peter Wiebe occupied the last site, Lot No. 21, and had 1,125 rubles. Presumably the other 19 settlers were not as well off. On April 23, 1811, Jakob Friesen was attacked by the neighbouring Nogai nomads and nearly killed. A constant problem in the early years was the theft of horses; one night in

April of 1813 ten of the best horses were stolen. Planting of tree forests was initiated in 1832, being completed by 1846; this took considerable effort, since the soil had to be ploughed with oxen before the trees could be put in.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 32 establishments in Schoenau, with 15 of the original settlers still living there. In 1848, when the Molotschna village reports were written, *Schulze* was Klaas Dick, councillors were Jakob Janzen and Peter Hildebrand, while teacher was Johann Fast. It should be noted that in 1850 the teachers in Franzthal and Schoenau "earned recognition for their efforts whereby they bring their schools up to a high rank in every way."

Agriculturally Schoenau was middle of the road. Wheat production in 1846 and 1847 was just below the Molotschna average. In 1849 Jakob Thiessen was tied with another farmer for having planted the fifth most fruit trees in the colony - 40. By 1851 Schoenau had a total of 104,828 trees, of which 63,724 were mulberry trees in hedges, and 420 were pear trees. Silk production was over seven pud per year.

In 1857 Schoenau had a population of 285 (155 males, 130 females), living in 45 houses, occupying 1,630 dessiatines. There were 56 students, still taught by the much praised Johann Fast. Peter Isaak was *Schulze*, with Franz Epp the councillor. After the final land redistribution in the Molotschna in 1869 the village had 19 full farms, four half farms and 24 small farms, totalling 47 establishments, occupying 1,749 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Schoenau was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Schoenau was not a centre of religious activity, but villagers did participate. The predominant church membership was likely Flemish *Grosse Gemeinde* in its various configurations. Abram Wiens (1867) and Klaas Isaak (1880) were ministers of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch congregation. Jakob Thiessen (1862) and Abram Friesen (1885) served the Lichtenau-Petershagen church. Johann Johann Fast was a Mennonite Brethren, and in 1878 was appointed acting elder of the Rueckenau congregation by Abraham Schellenberg. He was especially good at house visitations and direct one-on-one conversations. Bernhard Dueck, also a Mennonite Brethren, moved from Schoenau to help found the village of Friedensfeld in 1866. Abraham Thiessen began in the *Kleine Gemeinde*, but because of a gift to the Bible Society was excommunicated. He was a very strong advocate for the landless in the ongoing dispute with land owners. He also espoused emigration to North America in the 1870s. He apparently did not use the name of the Czar correctly in his discussions, was banished to Kaluga, but escaped to the United States.

In 1908 the population of Schoenau was 419, occupying 1,624 dessiatines. There were only four commercial enterprises in the village. Jakob Kroeker owned a Dutch type windmill, Jakob Thiessen had a cloth dyeing establishment and a grocery store, while Hermann Enns produced bricks and tiles in his factory. Peter Thiessen's farm machine factory must have been built after 1908, since it is not on the taxation list for that year. When the railway was completed in 1912 the track ran just to the east of the village, but the nearest station was to the north, in Halbstadt.

Schoenau undoubtedly experienced the difficulties and tragedies of the revolution and the civil war. Typhus was brought into the village by Bolshevik soldiers. The subsequent famine must have been severe in the village, since at least 16 people made requests for food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 68 people.

When the possibility for emigration opened in the mid 1920s, at least 19 family groups left for Canada, with 71 individuals. Heinrich Abram Friesen represented the Lichtenau Flemish Church at the General Conference of Mennonite Churches held in Moscow January 13-18, 1925. His name is not on the list of those having emigrated.

Schoenau suffered the same as other villages in the Molotschna when the Soviet policies were implemented in the late 1920s and 1930s. A kolkhoz *Rosa Luxembourg* was organized. At least three families were forced off their properties as kulaks, including Heinrich Penner with wife and ten children. Twenty men were exiled during the time of the Purge, and another 50 were imprisoned before the German invaders arrived in October of 1941.

As the German forces approached the Molotschna the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Schoenau residents were among the fortunate thousands at Tokmak, so when the German Army overran the area they simply returned to their homes.

The German occupying troops took statistics in Schoenau on February 2, 1942. There were 360

"Germans" in Schoenau, representing 78.9% of the 456 inhabitants. Of these 64% were Mennonite, the others Lutheran. There were 56 men, 117 women and 187 children under the age of 14. Eight men had been drafted into the Red Army. Mayor was Dietrich Baerg, assistant David Dick. Ninety-eight percent of the people were farmers, 2% craftsmen.

With the retreat of the German Army from the region in September, 1943, Schoenau Mennonites joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were probably overrun by the advancing Soviet troops, but a number did escape to the West. Members of three families were aboard the *S. S. Volendam* on the way to South America in 1948: Peter Koop, Franz Quiring as well as Helmut Dueck, wife Eugenie and three children.

The present name of the village is Dolina.

SCHOENSEE

(Map page 82)

Schoensee was founded in 1805, with the second wave of settlers to reach the Molotschna. Under the supervision of *Oberschulze* Klaas Wiens, the plot boundaries were ploughed three months after the hay harvest, then specific ownership decided by lot. Because of the late beginning nothing was seeded that year and only provisional homes were built. Some were above ground, some partially into the ground, but wood was obtained in anticipation of proceeding with construction the following spring. The years at this first location were difficult. Horse thieves were a continuing concern, and disease among the cattle was a problem. In June 19, 1811, from midnight to 1 AM, the entire crop was destroyed by a hail storm.

The first settlers were 19 Flemish families from the Marienburg region of West Prussia. The land on which they settled was used by Tokmak residents as pasture, with very little cultivation taking place. Total resources of the group were 5,000 rubles; the crown gave additional grants for the purchase of food and wood totaling 8,534 rubles. At a meeting called by *Oberschulze* Wiens in Altona regarding the distribution of land and choosing a name for the village, Jakob Regier, thinking of his birth place in West Prussia, suggested the name Schoensee. This was accepted by the majority of those present.

Until 1812 Schoensee was situated on the south bank of the Tokmak River between Petershagen and Ladekopp. It was found, however, that the villages were too close together, so Schoensee was moved about 10 verst up river (to the east), still on the south bank of the Tokmak River. The street was laid out in the shape of a lazy right angle. Only 10 of the original settlers participated in the move; the others had given up hope and turned their farms over to new arrivals.

The land was very good, but with little black top soil. The hills just south of the village, which could be used as pasture, made it necessary to have the cultivated land some distance away. The river was used to water the cattle. At the new site the winter of 1824-25 was particularly difficult due to a severe snow storm which struck on December 24, with snow lasting until the end of March.

At the 1835 Molotschna census there were 28 establishments in Schoensee, with a total population of 249 (121 males, 128 females). Johann Enns was the *Schulze*, Johann Goossen councillor. At the time of writing of the Molotschna Village Reports in 1848 Johann Goossen was *Schulze*, Gerhard Enns and Jakob Doerksen councillors and Jakob Wurms the teacher.

At mid century, Schoensee agriculture appeared to be roughly average for the Molotschna. Wheat production was slightly under average for 1846 and 1847. Johann Toews was one record holder with the highest income from fruit in the colony in 1846. In 1851 the village had 96,654 trees, of which 43,699 were mulberry trees in hedges, which then allowed the silk industry to flourish. Also in 1851 Peter Voth planted the most fruit trees of any farmer in the Molotschna – 60. Tobacco production in Schoensee was recorded as "exceptional" that same year. Schoensee citizens also participated in the administration of the colony. Johann Toews and Wilhelm Bonellis were on the Molotschna Mennonite Council in 1849, with Wilhelm Bonellis continuing in that position in 1853, and another three residents serving on the council in 1858.

In 1857 Johann Goossen was re-elected *Schulze*, Johann Willms elected councillor. Total population was 284 (147 males, 137 females) living in 39 houses, on 1,440 dessiatines of land. There were 38 pupils, the teacher still being Johann Wurms. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Schoensee had 19 full farms, two half farms and 26 small farms, for a total of 47, on 1,716 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Schoensee was in the Halbstadt Volost.

The residents of Schoensee were Flemish Mennonites, and initially were part of the Lichtenau congregation. In 1831 a wooden church building was erected on the western end of the village, in the old

Prussian style. Until 1842 the village remained a branch of the Lichtenau congregation, but from then on was part of the Margenau church. In 1903 Schoensee became totally independent. There was a series of very devoted ministers and elders. Heinrich Peters served as minister from 1885 until 1903, when he was appointed elder, a position he held until he died of typhoid in 1920. The greater part of the villages Fuerstenau, Fabrikerwiese, Schoensee, Liebenau, Wernersdorf, and about one quarter of Hamberg and Klippenfeld as well as a number of large estates were served by the congregation. There were about 1500 participants; the church had choirs, but allowed no musical instruments. The Schoensee choir participated in a "Menno Celebration" on January 25, 1925, in the Schoensee church.

In 1909 a new sanctuary was erected on the east end of Schoensee. It was generally considered to be the largest and most beautiful Mennonite church in Russia. Jakob Renpenning and Bernhard Wiens were also faithful ministers in the early years of the century. Alexander Ediger was called to the ministry in 1923, then was ordained as elder of the Schoensee congregation in 1925. He was not only a dedicated elder, but was also involved in the wider Mennonite constituency. In 1925 he was chairman of the Commission for Church Affairs, and also became the editor of the publication *Unser Blatt*. When religious persecution broke out Ediger was exiled in 1933, first to Murmansk, then to Siberia. Johann Goerz, a young minister, continued to conduct services for some time in private homes, but then he too was banished. The church building was first turned into a granary, then into a communist club. During the occupation by the German forces during World War II it was again briefly used as a church.

While there is no specific documentation of people from the village moving, it is likely that at least some of the residents of Neu-Schoensee, established in the Sagradovka Colony in 1872, came from Schoensee of the Molotschna. This would also be likely for the Schoensee founded in Siberia at the turn of the century.

In 1908 Schoensee had a population of 464, occupying 1,573 dessiatines. There were six business establishments in the village. Abraham Friesen, Jakob Dirksen and Jakob Goossen had windmills, while Johann Martens owned a steam mill. Peter Willms had a mill, but was also a locksmith. Abraham Goertzen ran a grocery store. Before World War I there was also a small factory manufacturing agricultural machinery, employing about 30 people. The school had two classrooms and employed two teachers.

With the revolution and the following civil war Schoensee seems to have been hit particularly hard. In 1919 the village was in the front line between the warring armies for some time, and suffered considerable damage. A number of residents of Schoensee were killed in the conflict. On June 16, 1919 a Mr. Neufeld and three sons were murdered by the retreating Red Army. In August of 1920 Erdmann Bauer and Heinrich Peters were killed by shrapnel during a battle. In 1921 some Wichert brothers were shot by the Red secret police (Cheka), suspected of being White soldiers.

The subsequent famine does not seem to have been severe in Schoensee. There are no recorded requests for food drafts in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, although Mennonite Central Committee tractors did plough 79 dessiatines for Schoensee farmers in 1923. Heinrich Kliewer escaped to Germany by 1921, and in the mid 1920s at least 11 family groups with 43 individuals emigrated to Canada. In the late 1920s some Mennonites moved to eastern Siberia, in order to cross the Amur River ice to China. Peter Siemens and one child were successful, having reached Harbin, China by 1931.

Schoensee suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages in the 1930s. Fifteen families were forced off their property, fleeing to various places such as the Memrik Colony, even Siberia. A few were later able to return to Schoensee. Forty-one men were exiled from the village, also some women. After the German invasion of June, 1941 an additional 46 men were arrested.

When the German forces approached the Molotschna the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. South-west villages were taken to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Schoensee residents were among those which were taken to Stulnevo. The German troops arrived in early October, 1941, before this group could be sent off, so they simply returned to their homes.

When the German Army took statistics in Schoensee on January 29, 1942, the 493 Mennonites represented 91% of the total population of 542. There were 97 men, 178 women and 218 children. Eight men had been drafted into the Red Army. Jakob Behann was mayor at the time, Heinrich Goossen his assistant. Principal occupation was farming at 96%; the village land area was 1,944 hectares.

The Mennonites of Schoensee joined the

"Great Trek" westwards to Poland and Germany when the German Army retreated from the region in September of 1943. At least 27 were "repatriated" by the advancing Soviet Army and sent to the Urals. Thirty-five were conscripted into the German Army, of whom 11 died in action. Some did escape to the West. Gerhard Eitzen was in a refugee camp in Austria in 1947. Eight family groups, 15 individuals, were on ships bound for South America between 1948 and 1950. At least two people were able to reach Canada.

Today the village is known as Snegurovka. Very few structures are left from the Mennonite era, except for the remains of the once beautiful Schoensee church building.

SPARRAU

(Map page 83)

Sparrau was founded in 1828 under the direction of Johann Klassen, *Oberschulze* of the Molotschna Colony. The village was established in the eastern part of the Molotschna on the south bank of the Kuruschan, street parallel to the river. The 28 original settlers were mostly from the Elbing region of West Prussia. Two years later they were joined by another eight families from various Molotschna villages. The land had been rented by Johann Cornies, who sublet it to Nogai nomads for use as pasture. Few of the first settlers had enough capital to start, requiring a total crown subsidy of 14,092 rubles. The first houses were built using air dried bricks. In 1832 Konteniusfeld was established to the west of Sparrau.

The village developed in a very organized fashion. There were excellent orchards and a planted forest of 17 dessiatines, half a dessiatine per farmer. Water could be obtained in wells at 25 to 40 feet. The pastures and cultivated fields on the steppes were fairly fertile.

In 1832, one autumn night, the people of Sparrau saw a huge fireball in the sky; this was followed by an "uncountable number of falling stars." It was undoubtedly a meteor followed by a meteor shower. This sign was taken by the people to be a portent of approaching disaster. So it was not a surprise that 1833 was called a terrible year – drought and near starvation for man and animals in South Russia.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census, Sparrau had 59 establishments. Total population was 371 (186 males, 185 females). In 1848 the *Schulze* was Heinrich Ewert, councillors were Gerhard Dueck and Jakob Ott; teacher was Peter Friesen.

Mid century Sparrau agriculture was not remarkable, wheat yields for 1846 and 1847 being slightly below the average for the Molotschna. The village had 113,334 trees in 1851, fourth highest in the colony. The 55,854 mulberry trees in hedges did not translate into silk production, which was low.

In 1857 Heinrich Ewert was re-elected *Schulze,* Elias Regehr was elected as councillor. That same year the population was 571 (302 males, 269 females), living in 63 houses, occupying 2,685 dessiatines. Teacher Jakob Loewen had 89 students. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Sparrau had 32 full farms, 16 half farms and 37 small farms, totaling 85, on 3,192 dessiatines. It was one of the larger villages of the Molotschna, occupying the fourth largest area and having the second largest number of farm establishments. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Sparrau was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Sparrau had a mixed church membership. The Frisian Rudnerweide congregation had two ministers who lived in Sparrau, Abram Unrau (1872) and Abram Boldt (1905). Isaak Peters, for a time school teacher in Sparrau, was ordained as minister of the Flemish Pordenau congregation in 1866, then as elder in 1868. He emigrated to the United States in 1874. Peter Ewert was ordained minister by the same congregation in 1884. Peter Martin Friesen was born in Sparrau on April 20, 1849. He attended elementary school in Sparrau, then after graduating from the *Zentralschule* in Halbstadt, studied in Switzerland, Odessa and Moscow. He joined the young Mennonite Brethren Church in 1866. In 1884 he was ordained as minister, and in 1902 wrote the M. B. Confession of Faith. He is best known for his massive, comprehensive history of the Mennonite Brethren published in 1911. He died on October 16, 1914, in Tiege, Molotschna. Some time before 1906 a Mennonite Brethren church was built in Sparrau; that year the congregation had 38 members.

The elementary school in Sparrau was important to the people of the village. Isaak Peters, minister, then elder, was one of the well known teachers; P. M. Friesen was one of his students. Apparently there was a friendly competition between the schools of Sparrau and Konteniusfeld.

Martin Friesen of Sparrau was a well known builder of windmills before the time of steam power. He built mills for the Mennonites of the Molotschna, but also for the surrounding Russian farms and for the gentry in the area. He built wooden threshing machines as well. Historian Peter Martin Friesen was his son.

In 1908 the population of Sparrau was 815,

occupying 3,002 dessiatines. There were only two business establishments in the village. Abram Wall owned a motor driven mill, Aron Welk a windmill.

Sparrau undoubtedly suffered the same difficulties as other villages with the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In March of 1919 the Red Army, with the assistance of Makhno, advanced south into the Molotschna villages. On March 7 they occupied Sparrau. They ate well, robbed and plundered under the guise of looking for weapons. Seven young men were arrested for having been members of the Mennonite *Selbstschutz*. All were later released. Peter Braun was killed by a bullet while driving a wagon for the White Army in June of 1919. Jakob Braun was forced to drive soldiers, but did not know who they were. Braun said "I support the Whites," and was instantly shot by the Reds he was transporting.

Sparrau seems to have been hit particularly hard by the following famine of 1922. A total of 73 requests for food drafts were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 292 people. This constituted over 80% of the entire population!

Jakob Thiessen of Kleefeld emigrated to Canada and published data about Kleefeld and Sparrau in the *Mennonitische Rundschau* in June of 1924. The information was likely for 1922. Apparently the conditions in the village were considered to be somewhat better than the average Molotschna situation. Thiessen recorded the land ownership as it had been before the Communists had taken over. There were 68 households in Sparrau, total population of 353. There were 15 widows and one widower. The village had 33 full farms (varying from 64 to 128 dessiatines) with 22 at exactly 64dessiatines. There were 15 half farms (28-48 dessiatines), one small farm and 19 establishments which owned no land. Horses were still the principal motive power, with four horses needed to cultivate the land. The whole village had 58 horses, with 38 establishments having no horses at all. Only three households had four horses. Cows were needed for nutrition. There were 84 cows in the village. Nine households had no cows, 39 had one cow, three had three cows and one had four cows. These numbers should be compared to the complement of animals considered to be standard before the civil war, 10-12 horses and seven or eight cows.

When the opportunity to emigrate to Canada arose in the mid 1920s the rush to leave does not seem to have been overpowering in Sparrau. Only 13 family units, representing 42 people, are specifically listed as coming out of the village. When it became apparent that further emigration was impossible, a number of Mennonites moved to the far east, there to cross the Amur River ice to China. Dietrich Loewen and wife Gertruda as well as Sara, Wilhelm, Isaak and Katharina Friesen were listed as refugees in Harbin, China, in 1934, showing that their escape had been successful.

In the early 1900s Nikolai Enns was elder of the Mennonite Brethren Church of Sparrau. When Kornelius Martens was appointed rector of the secondary school in Gnadenfeld in 1914 he joined the Sparrau congregation. He had previously been ordained as minister by the Rueckenau church, and now continued to function as minister in Sparrau. When Nikolai Enns died, Martens was chosen as elder. He first lived in Gnadenfeld, travelling the five verst east to Sparrau on Sundays. When he was expelled from his property in Gnadenfeld in 1922 he moved to Grossweide. He then travelled, again about five verst, but in the opposite direction, to reach the church in Sparrau. The congregation was still functioning in 1929, there being a church choir in July of that year. They sang at the silver wedding anniversary of Kornelius K. Martens; virtually the whole congregation participated in the celebration. It is assumed that the church stopped functioning about 1930, when Martens was expelled from his home in Grossweide. The church building was later torn down, the materials being used to build a clubhouse in Gnadenfeld.

With the implementation of Soviet policies in the early 1930s, Sparrau suffered the same fate as the other Molotschna villages. At least 15 families were forced off their property as kulaks. Kornelius Kornelius Neufeld, for example, was dispossessed, disenfranchised, and driven four kilometres out onto the steppe. The family dug a hole in the ground for shelter, and lived there for three years. They were not allowed to enter the village. Minister Johann Klassen was dispossessed and his house turned into a barn for the kolkhoz. He was arrested in 1938. Jakob Thiessen had all possessions confiscated, his house was torn down and he was exiled. Most of the men that were allowed to stay at this time were arrested and exiled later in the decade. Altogether at least 57 people from Sparrau were exiled between 1937 and 1939. In December of 1937 four women were arrested, although three were later released.

As the German forces approached the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the arresting of men intensified. At least 28 were taken in Sparrau on September 5, and marched under armed guard for 20 days (40-50 kilometres per day) to prison

camp Ivdellag. The jail cells there were so packed that "their sweat stood in puddles on the cement floor." The men were given no bread or water. By the end of 1941 at least 70% had died of starvation. On September 7 another 14 were taken and assigned to heavy labour.

With the German forces ever drawing nearer the Soviets attempted to evacuate the entire Mennonite population of the Molotschna. The south-west villages were taken to the Lichtenau railway station, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the German Army actually arrived the Soviets were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Sparrau citizens were sent to Nelgovka, but few were actually shipped out, so when the German forces arrived the people simply returned to their homes. According to statistics taken by the occupying forces on February 4, 1942, the 343 Mennonites in Sparrau represented 84% of the total population of 408. There were 101 women, 142 children, but only ten men. Jakob Rahn was the mayor, David Klassen his assistant.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, the Mennonites of Sparrau joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Most were overrun by the advancing Soviet army and were "repatriated." A few, however, did make it to the West. Hans Bartsch reached Canada in 1948, and Kornelius Neufeld sailed for South America, also in 1948. Many of those who were recaptured by the Soviets have since that time died. A number of stragglers, possibly only three, were able to resettle in Germany as *Aussiedler* in the 1990s.

Today the former Konteniusfeld and Sparrau are combined to form the village of Dolgoye. Very little remains from the Mennonite era.

STEINBACH ESTATE

(Maps pages 84,85,86)

Steinbach was a large private estate established in 1812 by Klaas Wiens, the first *Oberschulze* of the Molotschna Colony, who originally settled in the village of Altona. The estate buildings were just south of the Tschokrak River, much of the land south and east of the Juschanlee River. It was on the southern edge of the Molotschna Colony; eventually Steinfeld (1857) was established to the west, and Elisabetthal (1823) to the east of the estate.

Klaas Wiens first began a sheep ranch on the land which had been leased from the crown. He actually moved to this area at least in part because he was unpopular for decrying the sloth of some of the villagers, and encouraging people to better their circumstances. He built a house just north of the Tschokrak River. Peter Schmidt, a young man from Walschbrun in the Palatinate, was hired by Wiens as a labourer. Peter married Wiens's daughter Anna, probably in 1814. This marriage started the long line of Schmidts associated with Steinbach, the next Peter being born in 1817.

Czar Alexander I visited the establishment in 1818, and was very impressed, especially by the number of trees growing in the previously bald steppe. This was in part responsible for the eventual founding of the Molotschna Agricultural Society. In 1819 the Czar granted Wiens almost 350 dessiatines in perpetuity, beginning the tradition of Mennonite estates.

The first Peter (Pieter) Schmidt, son-in-law of Klaas Wiens, continued the development of the estate; he was responsible for much of the early building which occurred. He also played a part in the cultural affairs of the Molotschna , establishing a secondary school on the estate in 1838; Tobias Voth and Peter Neufeld were well known teachers at the school. After this time the estate remained in the possession of the Schmidt family until the time of the communist government takeover.

In 1848 Steinbach had a relatively modest tree nursery, 6,500 forest trees and 1,200 mulberry trees. In 1851 the estate had a total of 43,620 trees, of which 10,450 were mulberry trees in hedges. In 1853 Peter Schmidt and Klaas Schmidt of Steinbach were on the Molotschna Mennonite Council. At one point in the 1860s Peter Schmidt rented an additional 4,000 dessiatines, initially pasture for sheep, but then later he sublet it as small farms, at a considerable profit. When the Molotschna Colony was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Steinbach was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Peter Peter Schmidt, grandson of the original Peter, lived from 1860 to 1910, and played a significant role in many charitable organizations in the Molotschna. He was one of the founders of the *Morija* Deaconess Home, and was on the Molotschna Mennonite School Board.

Jakob Jakob Dick married into the Schmidt family (Anna Schmidt) and built a magnificent home on the estate in 1880, which still stands today.

Steinbach, Juschanlee and Apanlee estates rotated inspirational seminars in the early 1900s. The estate had specially built dormitories for participants of these seminars.

In 1908 the Forstei Taxation List records six estates as being part of Steinbach: Peter and Nikolai Schmidt (11,887 dessiatines), Nikolai Peter Schmidt (1,121 dessiatines), Peter Peter Schmidt (350 dessiatines), Sarah David Schmidt (61 dessiatines), Johann David Regehr (60 dessiatines) and Nikolai Heinrich Schmidt (60 dessiatines). Total land area was 13,539 dessiatines, which would equal a block 11.4 by 11.4 verst (57.12 square miles).

With the onset of the revolution and the following civil war, estate owners were especially targeted people. Steinbach suffered the usual difficulties, although there may have been more danger than in the regular Molotschna villages. In 1922 at least two families from Steinbach, representing 21 people, requested food drafts through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* A number of families left the estate to live with relatives and friends in 1922. Others stayed, but were forced to live in the tavern on the estate. When emigration to Canada became a possibility many families left, most in 1924; there were at least 16 family groups, 58 individuals. Among these were Jakob H. and Anna Dick with six children, Peter and Margaretha Schmidt with three children, Maria Guenther with four children and Anna Bergmann with six children.

The estate was basically abandoned by the Mennonite owners in 1924. It was taken over by the government and used as an orphanage. Today it is called Kalinovka. Many of the buildings still stand, and are being used as a home for disabled children.

STEINFELD

(Map page 87)

Steinfeld was founded in 1857, an expansion village settled primarily by people from the western villages of the Molotschna Colony. Thirty families settled in the village which was laid out along the north bank of the Juschalee, street parallel to the river. The land was part of the colony reserve, meant for such expansion. Prangenau lay to the west, the estate Steinbach to the east.

The name was probably derived from the local conditions – the area must have been stony. The village street was laid out according to the regulations of the Agricultural Society; farm buildings were constructed, also according to regulations, using brick walls and clay roof tiles.

With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Steinfeld had 29 full farms, two half farms and six small farms, totaling 37, occupying 2,046 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Steinfeld was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

Steinfeld was never in the centre of religious activity in the Molotschna Colony. There must have been some influence of the Frisian Rudnerweide congregation – Peter Goerz was ordained minister of that congregation in 1859. There was also interest in the Flemish Alexanderkrone church, Heinrich Wiens (1891) and Johann Enns (1901) being ministers in that congregation.

In 1908 the population of Steinfeld was 340, occupying 2,021 dessiatines. There were four business establishments in the village. Franz Peters handled manufactured goods, Heinrich Braun had a grocery store. Jakob Riediger owned a windmill while Johann Schmidt dealt in wood products.

An Esau Estate was about one kilometre to the west of Steinfeld. The estate buildings, including a motor car garage, were surrounded by a quadrangle of large acacia trees. It was situated just north of the Juschalee River, near a dam which provided a pond to water the cattle, and even bathe the horses of the village.

Steinfeld will have suffered the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages with the onset of the revolution and the subsequent civil war. In 1921 a typhus epidemic was brought to the village by Bolshevik soldiers. Fortunately it was not the severe type, although it was aggravated by the subsequent famine. In 1922 nine requests for food drafts, representing 24 people, were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.* When emigration to Canada became a possibility at least 25 family groups, 91 people, left the Soviet Union.

In 1929 and the early 1930s Steinfeld suffered the same atrocities as other villages of the Molotschna. At least 19 families and individuals were driven from their homes as kulaks. Some were sent out of the village, others were allowed to remain. Full collectivization was implemented in 1930. In the autumn of 1932, because of a poor harvest, 11 men were arrested and exiled without trial to the Kotlas region. Many other families were dispossessed and their last grain taken away. The result was the great famine of the spring of 1933. Boys had to go to the fields to catch gophers; soup was made from leaves of acacia trees. Three men, Franz A. Janzen, Peter Epp and Abraham Unruh, decided to escape. While loading a train car with lumber they left small spaces where they could hide. They were successful! Franz Janzen fled to Romanovka in the Caucasus, where he resumed

teaching, and brought his family to him. Unfortunately in June of 1936 he was arrested again and sentenced to three years in exile in Archangel, where he died in 1939. His family returned to Steinfeld. Altogether another 31 men were exiled between 1935 and 1938.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets first intensified the exile of men. In early September, 27 men aged 16-60 were arrested in Steinfeld and sent away. At least 15 of these died in the labour camps. When the German invaders came even closer the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. The south-west villages were ordered to the Lichtenau railway station, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship away all of those at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka. Steinfeld residents were loaded onto military vehicles, taken to Lichtenau, and there loaded onto freight cars. After a one month journey the 195 people arrived at Aktyubinsk, Kazakhstan in the cold of winter. At least 20% of the people starved to death or died within the first few years.

The German occupying forces took statistics in Steinfeld on February 18, 1942. The 18 remaining Mennonites represented 19.1% of the total population of 94. There were five men, seven women and six children. The mayor was Heinrich Penner.

With the retreat of the German forces from the area in September of 1943, the few remaining Mennonites of Steinfeld joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Apparently the whole village was destroyed when the Germans left, "*es wurde verbrannt, vernichtet.*" Even the windmill was taken down, the foundation stones being used by neighbouring villages.

It is likely that most Steinfeld villagers were overrun by the steadily advancing Soviet forces, but some did make it to the West. At least 11 family groups, 48 individuals, sailed for South America in 1948. This included Abram Neufeld, wife and ten children, Franz Neufeld, wife and eight children and Susanna Hecht with five children.

Of those who were evacuated or "repatriated" about 45 former Steinfelders have now emigrated to Germany as *Aussiedler*. Among these are a Martens clan of 12 people, a Wall family of seven members as well as Fanz and Katharina Janzen.

Today the village of Steinfeld no longer exists. As a villager previously commented, not one stone is left on top of another!

TIEGE

(Map page 88)

The Molotschna Colony was founded in 1804, with nine villages being established along the Molochnaya River. In 1805 another eight villages were laid out east of the original group, along the tributaries leading into the river. Tiege was one of the second group of villages, its 20 original families settling just south of the Kuruschan River, between Ohrloff and Blumenort. Most of the immigrants came from the Marienburg and Elbing areas of West Prussia, and were Flemish. The village was named Tiege at the request of an elderly gentleman, Kornelius Toews, after his favourite river. Most of the allocated 1,300 dessiatines lay south of the village, and while it appeared to be bleak and baren, the two rivers flowing through it gave a considerable area of low lying, very productive pasture land. At least two of the pioneers were wealthy enough to manage on their own, but most villagers required grants to help them establish farms.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census there were 27 establishments in Tiege; the population was 192 (99 males, 93 females), and *Schulze* was Abraham Warkentin.

In 1846 the Tiege wheat production far exceeded that of the Molotschna average. In 1849 Peter Toews produced the second most silk of any farmer in the colony; he continued that trend, in 1851 being the most productive silk producer in Tiege. That year there were 81,858 trees in the village, of which 32,468 were mulberry trees in hedges and 223 were pear trees.

In 1848 Johann Toews was *Schulze*, councillors were Aron Huebert and Kornelius Baerkmann, while Peter Sawatsky was teacher. In 1857 Kornelius Toews was elected *Schulze*, Kornelius Baerkmann remained councillor. Population was 251 (124 males, 127 females), who lived in 41 houses and occupied 1,483 dessiatines. There were 43 students, the teacher being Franz Isaak. With the final land redistribution in the Molotschna in 1869, Tiege had 20 full farms and 23 small farms, totalling 43, occupying 1,668 dessiatines. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Tiege was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Tiege actively participated in the political, cultural and commercial life of the Molotschna Colony. With the encouragement of Johann Cornies, Abraham Toews was elected *Oberschulze* of the Molotschna Colony in 1842, continuing in that position until he died in 1848. Kornelius Toews was elected to the same office in 1868, then continued, after the division of the

Molotschna into two municipalities, as *Oberschulze* of the Halbstadt Volost until 1873.

As well as the usual elementary school, Tiege also boasted a girls school (the Ohrloff school was actually situated in the west end of Tiege). The well known Maria School for the Deaf and Dumb (*Maria Taubstummenschule*) was begun in 1885 in the home of Gerhard Klassen of Blumenort. It was founded to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the reign of Czar Alexander II, and named in honour of his empress. In 1890 new expanded facilities were built in Tiege which could accommodate 40 students. Well trained teachers offered a nine year elementary school education in this showpiece of Mennonite compassion for the disadvantaged. A doctor's office provided medical service in Tiege.

Throughout most of its history Tiege was involved with the Flemish Mennonite church with its various configurations. Bernhard Fast was first a minister (1814), then elder (1821) of the original Ohrloff-Petershagen-Halbstadt congregation. Other ministers in the Flemish church were Abram Isaak (1824), Heinrich Wiebe (1827), Franz Isaak (1850) and Franz Penner (1904).

The principal house of worship of the Mennonite Brethren in the Molotschna was in Rueckenau, but a number of subgroups founded congregations and built at least five buildings in other villages. One of these was in Tiege. In 1906 it had 95 members. Historian P.M. Friesen, also a Mennonite Brethren minister, lived out his last years in Tiege; he died in 1914, just three years after his definitive tome on the history of the M.B. Church was published. The Tiege congregation participated in the 1918 convention of the M.B. Church held in Vassilievka, Kharkov. Participating delegates were Heinrich Lepp and Dietrich Doerksen.

While not a major industrial centre, Tiege did have some commercial activity. In 1908 Gerhard Peters had a windmill, Heinrich Hamm had a bookstore and also a brick factory. Johann Klassen sold manufactured goods, while Bernhard Wiens and Gerhard Giesbrecht sold farm implements. At one time Kornelius Funk manufactured various types of wagons. In 1908 the population was 419, and land cultivated was 1, 587 dessiatines.

Tiege endured the terrors of the revolution and the following civil war, much the same as other Molotschna villages. It was one of the first four villages to organize a *Selbstschutz* (Defensive Brigade) to protect itself from roving bands of anarchists. Yet it was also the home of B. B. Janz, teacher and leader of the Mennonite Brethren congregation. He was a strong advocate for non-resistance, and later did much of the organizational work to allow the massive migration of Mennonites to Canada in the mid 1920s. In the famine of 1922 that followed the civil war there must have been some starving families in Tiege. Eight requests for food drafts were published in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, representing 23 people. When opportunity for migration to Canada opened up in the mid 1920s, the people of Tiege freely followed the advice of B. B. Janz. At least 30 family groups, 101 individuals, left their homes in Tiege to settle in the new country. B. B. Janz himself managed to escape, although the authorities were looking for him at the time!

Those who remained underwent collectivization and other difficulties imposed by the Soviet regime in the early 1930s. Tiege lost 47 of its men who were sent to the north or Siberia prior to the outbreak of World War II.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets ordered all Mennonites to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka, to the far north or central Asia. Tiege residents were in the group at Lichtenau, so virtually all of the Mennonite population, a total of 484, was evacuated by the retreating Soviets. They were all sent to Kazakhstan. The village stood virtually empty when a homeless band of Mennonites from Tchongrav, Crimea, over a hundred people in all, moved in to find a temporary shelter.

When the German Army took statistics on February 2, 1942, there were 136 Mennonites in the village, 22 men, 55 women and 59 children. The mayor was Kornelius Warkentin.

When the German Army evacuated the area in September, 1943, the new Tiege inhabitants plus the few stragglers who had been left all joined the "Great Trek" westward into Poland and Germany. Many were overrun by the advancing Soviet forces, but a substantial number made it to the West. A large group of the Crimean refugees escaped, and eventually settled in Winnipeg, Canada. Peter Bahnmann, Helga Koop with three children, Helene Buller and Heinrich Wiebe were on the *S. S. Volendam*, and heading for South America in 1948, showing that at least some of the original Tiege inhabitants had also escaped from the

Soviet network.

The building of the Maria School for the Deaf and Dumb is still in use today as an administrative centre, although the roof has been replaced and the walls painted. The complex of Ohrloff, Tiege, Blumenort and Rosenort is combined into one town called Orlovo.

TIEGENHAGEN

(Map page 89)

Tiegenhagen was founded in 1805, on the east side of the Molochnaya River. Muntau to the north and Schoenau to the south had been established in 1804, the year the Molotschna Colony was first begun. The settlers were Flemish, and came from the Marienburg and Tiegenhof areas of West Prussia. Eighteen of the original 21 pioneers were very poor, receiving Russian government grants totalling 10,938 rubles 50 kopeks. The soil near the Molochnaya River had saltpetre and was not good for growing grain or hay, although the rest of the territory was sandy and more suitable for grain. In 1832, through dint of hard labour , trees were planted on both sides of the village, in time resulting in lush forest areas.

Jakob Johann Sawatzky, son of Johann and Anna Sawatzky was born in Tiegenhagen in 1805, and was quite possibly the first child born in the village.

In 1825 a group of four men, Jakob Dueck from Tiegenhagen as well as representatives from three other villages, travelled to Poltava to sell their Spanish wool. On the way back they were murdered; the murderers were caught, but very little of the money was recovered.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census Tiegenhagen had a total of 26 establishments, with a population of 185 (101 males, 84 females). At least 15 of the original settlers were still living there. Aron Wiebe was the *Schulze* When the village reports were written in 1848 the *Schulze* was Johann Toews, with councillors Aron Huebert and Kornelius Baerkmann; teacher was Peter Sawatzky.

Mid century wheat production for the village was about the average for the Molotschna, but the lowest income from butter in the whole colony was a Tiegenhagen farmer, 296 rubles, whereas the highest was in Blumenort, at 872 rubles! In 1851 there were 49,443 trees in Tiegenhagen, of which 21,998 were mulberry trees in hedges.

In 1857 Peter Friesen was *Schulze*, with Peter Baergen as councillor. Population of Tiegenhagen was 271 (146 males, 125 females), living in 43 houses, and occupying 1,732 dessiatines. There were 43 students, with teacher Daniel Fast. Fast was a teacher in the village for a total of 19 years, from 1843 to 1862. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Tiegenhagen retained almost exactly the same amount of land, 1,749 dessiatines. There were 19 full farms, four half farms and 24 small farms. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Tiegenhagen was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Tiegenhagen residents participated in the Ohrloff-Petershagen Flemish Mennonite church; Jakob Martens (1848) was a minister, Bernhard Friesen (1820) a deacon. Abram Toews (1867) and Franz Willms (1890) were ministers of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch congregation, Peter Friesen (1860) a deacon.

The principal Mennonite Brethren house of worship in the Molotschna was in Rueckenau, with Tiegenhagen being the site of one of the buildings occupied by a subgroup. In 1906 its membership was 55. Abram Kroeker and Heinrich Braun represented Tiegenhagen at an M.B. convention held in 1910, Heinrich Braun and David Isaak at another convention in 1918.

In 1908 there were six commercial enterprises in the village. Peter Boese had a windmill, Heinrich Kornelsen a motor driven mill. Bernhard Wiebe owned a grocery store, while Johann Konrad built buggies. Abraham Friesen owned a brick factory and Heinrich Bestvater a brass foundry.

Tiegenhagen went through the experiences of the revolution and the civil war much as the other villages of the Molotschna did. Together with Halbstadt, Gnadenfeld and Tiege, Tiegenhagen was one of the first four villages to organize a *Selbstschutz* during the time of anarchy. Gerhard Penner was murdered by two Red soldiers on March 20,1919. Four men were shot in October of that same year. In 1921 it was remarked that "typhus reigned" although specific numbers of people involved is not mentioned. With the subsequent famine there were at least eight requests for help printed in the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*, involving a total of 39 people.

A very large part of the Tiegenhagen population emigrated to Canada in 1924 and 1925. At least 44 families, totalling 164 individuals were specifically listed in the newspapers, but the actual number was probably 70 families with over 200 people. Included among these were Peter Kornelsen, minister of the Mennonite Brethren Church and teacher J. J. Thiessen, who later played an important role in Mennonite emigration to Canada. Jakob Abraham Loewen of Tiegenhagen went to the General

Conference of Mennonite Churches of Russia held in Moscow on January13-18, 1925, to represent the Lichtfelde Evangelical Mennonite congregation. His name is not on the list of those who emigrated.

With the implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s the remaining Mennonites in Tiegenhagen suffered the same fate as other villagers in the Molotschna. Some, such as the Peter Braun and Kornelsen families were expelled from their homes as kulaks. A number of these houses were occupied by people of other nationalities, such as Germans from Volhynia.

Church services stopped sometime in 1930 or 1931. The church building itself was taxed so heavily that no one could pay the amounts required, so it was confiscated and the keys taken in 1931 or 1932. Heinrich Karl Unruh, who had been Sunday School teacher and custodian of the church, officiated at the last Christian funeral performed in Tiegenhagen, from where he was taken away and arrested in 1933. He returned from the Murmansk region in 1938, only to be imprisoned again in 1941, this time for being a spy. He was shot soon after in Mariupol. In 1992 relatives were notified that he had been declared innocent.

Just prior to World War II, 29 men were sent from Tiegenhagen to the far north or Siberia during the Purge, and another 51 were evacuated just before the German armies arrived after the invasion of June, 1941.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna all Mennonites were ordered to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages were taken to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. Before the invaders arrived in early October, 1941, the Soviets were able to ship off all those who had collected at Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka, and sent them to the far north or central Asia. Tiegenhagen Mennonites were among the fortunate thousands at Tokmak. After the German forces overran the area the people simply went back to their homes. When statistics were taken by the German occupation forces on February 2, 1942, there were 487 Mennonites in the village. There were 74 men, 232 women and 181 children in Tiegenhagen, with 13 men drafted into the Red Army. Johann Braun was *Schulze*, with Johann Wiebe his assistant. A few of those who had formerly been expelled from their homes as kulaks reclaimed their property during this period.

In September of 1943 the Mennonites of Tiegenhagen joined the retreating German Army on the "Great Trek"westward to Poland and Germany. Most were later recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army and banished to the north or Siberia. A number of family groups did, however, make it to the West. At least three families sailed for Canada after the war, including the widow of Heinrich Unruh with five children.

A number of Tiegenhagen citizens have now come out of Russia and moved to Germany as *Aussiedler*, for instance David and Erna Unruh and their son, as well as Helene Boese.

Today the church no longer stands; the village is named Levadnoye.

TIEGERWEIDE

(Map page 90)

Tiegerweide was founded in 1822 along the south bank of the Kuruschan River, the village of Rueckenau just to the east. Prior to the settlement the land had been rented by sheep owners from Tiege, who had constructed sheep barns and houses. When the village was established the pioneers simply accepted the name given by the sheep owners - Tiegerweide.

The initial complement of 24 settlers in 1822 consisted of 14 from West Prussia, Danzig and Marienburg regions. These families were poor, having an average of only 300 rubles capital. The government grant to these averaged 859 rubles per family. The other ten families came from older Molotschna villages and required no subsidy.

About half of the Tiegerweide land was north of the Kuruschan River and was hilly; the other half south of the river was flat. There were two areas of low lying land - near the village about 60 dessiatine along the Kuruschan, then also at the south end of the land along the Juschanlee River, 72 dessiatine. This land was excellent for growing grass, in good years yielding bumper crops.

Tiegerweide experienced the same difficulties as other pioneer villages in the Molotschna, but also eventually became quite affluent. In 1835, at the time of the Molotschna census, there were 29 establishments with a total population of 211 (109 males, 102 females). Isaak Hildebrand was *Schulze,* Jakob Peters and Jakob Baerg the councillors. By 1848 there were 46 establishments in Tiegerweide, some of this growth due to housing for labourers. The village had one school, one community granary, one cowherd's hut, three blacksmiths, one windmill and one mill driven by horsepower. There were 52 houses, of which five were built with fired bricks; there were 29 cow barns and 28 grain storage sheds. *Schulze* at the time was Heinrich Guenther, and the councillors were Johann Baerg and

Abram Wiebe, while Reinhard Hiebert was the village teacher.

Mid century agriculture in Tiegerweide was about average for the Molotschna. Wheat yields in 1846 and 1847 were slightly below average, but on a number of occasions profits from butter were among the highest in the colony. Tiegerweide had 98,184 trees, of which 39,451 were mulberry trees in hedges.

Tiegerweide also participated in colony administration. Johann Klassen was *Oberschulze* of the Molotschna from 1833 to 1842. In 1853 Peter Wiebe, Jakob Klassen and K. Wall were on the Molotschna Mennonite Council.

In 1857 Tiegerweide had a population of 181 (94 males, 87 females) living in 49 houses. This is a surprising decrease in population with no known significant migration from the village. There were 50 students with teacher Peter Schmidt. That year Bernhard Mathies was elected *Schulze*, Jakob Baerg councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Tiegerweide had 22 full farms, four half farms and 32 small farms for a total of 58, on 2,072 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Tiegerweide was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Probably most people in Tiegerweide belonged to the Flemish Mennonite Church. Benjamin Wedel was a teacher in Tiegerweide, but was also ordained as a minister by Elder August Lenzmann. Jakob Wiens (1901) was a minister of the Ohrloff-Neukirch congregation, while Johann Heidebrecht was a minister of the Margenau-Landskrone church. There was also a Mennonite Brethren presence. Tiegerweide was on the path of the circuit ministers as they travelled through the Molotschna in 1876-77. Gerhard Regehr, originally coming from Tiegerweide, went to the Ohrloff *Zentralschule*, then completed teachers college in Halbstadt. He was a teacher for some years before he followed Elder Aron Loepp as leader of the Chortitza M.B. Church.

Each village in the Molotschna had an elementary school, including of course, Tiegerweide. An experiment was tried to have increased instruction in the Russian language in four Molotschna schools - Tiegerweide, Rudnerweide, Ohrloff and Halbstadt. Tiegerweide was chosen because of the excellent teacher, a Mr. Neumann.

In the early 1900s additional land was purchased in Siberia to establish new expansion villages. The new Tiegerweide was begun just north of Issyl Kul, about ten verst north of the Trans Siberian Railway. The Siberian village obtained its name because a family Berg, from the Molotschna Tiegerweide, was one of the original 11 settlers.

In 1908 the population of Tiegerweide was 607, occupying 1,934 dessiatines. There were only two business establishments in the village. Johann Funk had a grocery store and Jakob Schellenberg owned a windmill.

Tiegerweide undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages in the revolution, the civil war and the subsequent communist takeover. Mr. Sawatzky served as chairman of the village soviet under the Bolshevik rule in the first half of 1919. When the Reds retreated they wanted to take him along; he refused, so he was shot in Muntau. A young lad, son of a mill owner Schellenberg, was shot without cause by a passing Red soldier in the autumn of 1919. In the following famine a total of nine families, representing 66 individuals, asked for food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.*

By 1921 at least one person had escaped to Germany, but in the mid 1920s the flood gates opened. At least 40 family groups, 144 individuals, emigrated to Canada. Some who wished to leave, however, had to resort to other means. People moved to the far eastern part of Siberia, in the hope of crossing the Amur River ice to China. Nikolai Franz Wiens, wife and child did make it, being registered as refugees in Harbin, China, in 1930.

With implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s some residents of Tiegerweide undoubtedly were expelled from their homes as kulaks. Many men were likely exiled to the far north or central Asia. With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate all Mennonites from the region. They ordered them to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were actually able to ship all those from Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka before the German troops arrived in early October. Tiegerweide residents were among the fortunate thousands collected at Tokmak. With the German occupation they simply went back to their homes.

When the German forces retreated from the region in September of 1943, the entire Mennonite population joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Many were recaptured by the advancing Soviet Army, although a number did reach the West. It is quite probable that most of the residents of

Tiegerweide were among those unfortunate prisoners who were then exiled to the far north or central Asia. None are specifically listed as having escaped to either South America or Canada.

Today the village is called Mostovoye, situated on a major road connecting to Molochansk.

WALDHEIM

(Map page 91)

Waldheim was founded in 1836 by a group of Groningen Old Flemish Mennonites from Volhynia. They settled in the north east corner of the Molotschna along the Begim-Tschokrak River, on land which had been leased by Johann Cornies. The first year eight farmers settled, followed by 12 in 1838, then finally another 20 in 1840 for a total of 40. Their Volhynian homeland consisted mainly of forest (*Wald*), so Johann Cornies named the new village Waldheim. Leading the original group from Volhynia was Kornelius Wedel; he was elected *Schulze* for the first ten years, followed in 1846 by Christian Schlabbach. Most came from the same region in Volhynia, and were relatively close knit, so they maintained their own distinctive variation of Low German.

Agriculture in mid century Waldheim was roughly average for the Molotschna. Wheat production in 1846 and 1847 was below average, but in 1849 Christian Teske planted the second most fruit trees of any farmer in the whole colony, and Johann Deker had the second highest production of tobacco. In 1851 there were100,442 trees in Waldheim, of which 37,191were mulberry trees in hedges.

In 1848 Christian Schlabbach was *Schulze*, David Kuehn and Johann Fast councillors and Heinrich Dirks was school teacher. In 1857 the population was 747 (381 males, 366 females), living in 80 houses, occupying 2,928 dessiatines. There were 161 students, with teacher Daniel Unger. That year Peter Huebert was elected *Schulze*, Abraham Richert councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Waldheim had 34 full farms, 12 half farms and 56 small farms, for a total of 102, on 3,496 dessiatines. Waldheim, both in terms of number of farms and land area, was the largest village in the colony. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Waldheim was in the Gnadenfeld Volost.

The original church for most residents was their own separate Old Flemish congregation, with Elder Peter Schmidt. Jakob Richert (1906) was a minister of that same congregation in the later years. Jakob Hiebert (1877) was a minister of the Ohrloff-Halbstadt-Neukirch church.

There was considerable Mennonite Brethren influence in Waldheim. No one from the village signed the original document of secession, but there were four representatives among the 27 who elected the first elder on May 30, 1860. Gottlieb Strauss, Johann Strauss, Friedrich Strauss and David Dirksen all voted for Heinrich Huebert and Jakob Bekker. There must have been M.B. members in 1876-77, since Waldheim was on the tour for itinerant ministers that year. Revival came to the Molotschna in 1884 and 1885, especially in Margenau and Waldheim, with a consequent increase in M.B. membership.

The principal house of worship of the Mennonite Brethren in the Molotschna was in Rueckenau, but there were other church buildings as well. One of these was in Waldheim. In 1906 the membership was 199. Waldheim actually hosted the M.B. convention in 1903, but also sent delegates to other conventions held in 1910, 1912 and 1918.

In the early 1880s Claas Epp Jr. led a trek into central Asia, there to better meet the Lord at His second coming. One of the groups going on this trek met in Waldheim, leaving on August 1, 1880. A farewell sermon was preached on the text Hebrews 13:14 "For we have no continuing city, but we seek one to come." Then the 75 wagons struck out across the steppes, under the leadership of Minister Abraham Peters, toward the Am Trakt Colony, to rendezvous with a second wagon train. At least three people from Waldheim actually joined the trek. According to the records Kornelius Wedel, his wife and eldest son Johann died on the way.

In the meantime Waldheim continued to develop. The Begim-Tschokrak River, controlled by dikes on either side, ran in an east-west direction through the middle of the village. Parallel to the river, on the north side, was the Landowners' Street, where the full farmers resided. South of the river was the Factory Workers' Street, where the two major factories were located and the owners of the small farms lived. This section of Waldheim was developed in the region originally designated as forest, taking over an ever increasing area. In time the forest disappeared completely, an example of urban development taking over green space!

In 1906, at the time of the first revolution, a number of workers went on strike, threatening to demolish the factory where they were employed. Ten years later a "social democratic" group began to function in Waldheim, blossoming into a workers' uprising by 1917. Throughout the revolution and the

subsequent civil war the Mennonite population of Waldheim suffered the same atrocities as did the other villages in the area, but because of the many factory workers living there, participation in the political upheavals of the time was probably more direct. When the Red Army troops occupied the region in February, 1918, the Waldheim Soviet administered the area. In January of 1922 the Mennonite leaders of the region were incarcerated in the basement of the house adjoining the hospital. Many were executed following the judgments of the Waldheim based court.

The famine of 1922 must have been felt acutely in Waldheim, since at least 33 family units representing 133 individuals requested food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau*. A general meeting to discuss conditions in the Gnadenfeld Volost was held in Landskrone in June of 1922. The situation was thought to be most desperate in the larger villages of Landskrone and Waldheim. Mennonite Central Committee tractors ploughed 72½ dessiatines of land for Waldheim farmers in 1923.

After he had helped to alleviate the starvation in the area by distributing MCC food, David M. Hofer of Chicago held evangelistic meetings in Waldheim, at which many people sought and found salvation.

Emigration to Canada in the mid 1920s was popular in some villages of the Molotschna, marginally so in Waldheim. At least 15 family groups are listed as departing, with a total of 63 individuals. Johann Johann Rahn of Waldheim represented the Molotschna MB Church at the General Conference of Mennonites in Russia, held in Moscow January 13-18, 1925. His name is not on the list of emigrants to Canada.

At least some of the people from Waldheim were among the Mennonites who collected in Moscow in late 1929 in a desperate attempt to leave Russia. David Johann Pankratz was among those fortunate enough to escape, landing in Quebec, Canada, on November 10, 1929. Others tried fleeing eastward, then to cross the Amur River ice into China. Abram Penner, wife Elisabeth and nine children did make it to Harbin, China, being recorded as refugees living there in 1934.

In the 1920s and 1930s Waldheim Mennonites suffered through the various Soviet programs. In time a kolkhoz named *Rotfront* was established. The list of atrocities perpetrated in Waldheim is almost endless. Between 1920 and 1928: 33 people were banned, eight were murdered, four were "taken" and 80 fled. From 1928 to 1933 another 38 people fled. When the kulak program swung into action 118 people were forced out of their homes. Between 1932 and 1934 five people starved to death, and between 1935 and 1939 at least five were murdered. Twenty eight were exiled from 1934 to 1938, another 111 were sent to various labour camps in 1941.

After the invasion of the German Army of June, 1941, many of the men in the region were ordered to appear in Waldheim. They were then marched off to prison camps, and most were never seen again.

With the approach of the German forces to the Molotschna in September, the Soviets tried to evacuate the entire Mennonite population. They ordered everyone to four railway stations. South-west villages were taken to Lichtenau, north-west to Tokmak, north-east to Stulnevo and south-east to Nelgovka. They were able to ship off all those at Lichtenau, and some from Nelgovka. Waldheim residents were among the fortunate ones at Stulnevo, who remained. While they were waiting at the station, however, they could hear the explosions and see the fires which the retreating Soviet soldiers set to destroy as much of industrial Waldheim as possible. When the occupying German forces moved in, the Waldheim people simply went back to their homes.

Statistics collected by the German Army in Waldheim on December 21, 1941 recorded that the 503 "Germans" (¾ Mennonites, ¼ Lutherans) represented 49% of the total population of 1027. There were 36 men, 256 women and 211 children. Of the population only 30% were farmers, 68% labourers. Bernhard Voth was mayor, Peter Fast his assistant.

All of the Mennonites of Waldheim (276 at the time) fled with the retreating German Army in September of 1943, on the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. Altogether 236 were overrun by the advancing Soviet troops, but a number did escape to the West. Susanna Neufeld and two children went to Canada in 1948. At least nine family units, 28 individuals, set sail for South America.

During post-war communist times the village of 1,162 (1970) boasted a highschool, a library, a house of culture and a branch office of the Agricultural Technical Institute. There was an "Association of Knowledge," and Waldheim was the administrative centre of the Gorki Collective Farm. This collective occupied 9,900 hectares of land, with principal activities being the growing of vegetables and raising cattle.

Waldheim is now called Vladovka, with Hierschau being a suburb named Vladovka 2. Only a few of the original Mennonite buildings remain. The school on the Factory Workers Street now serves as a police station. The hospital building remains, and is

said to function as a hospital, although in 2002 there was little evidence of medical activity. Only one tombstone is left in the cemetery, that of David Goertzen, likely because it is in the form of a column, and not useful for building bridges or fences.

WERNERSDORF

(Map page 92)

Wernersdorf was founded in 1824 on the south bank of the Tokmak River. Under the supervision of *Oberschulze* Johann Klassen of Ohrloff, the 20 initial families settled on land previously used by Nogai nomads for pasture. Seven families from the region of Elbing, Marienburg and Tiegenhof in West Prussia had actually arrived in Russia in 1819. Two families came from other Molotschna villages, the other 11 from the Chortitza Colony. The village was named after a Wernersdorf in West Prussia.

The soil was rich and black, although mixed with clay in some regions. It was very good for growing grain and trees, of average quality for grass. The entire land allotment lay south and south-east of the village. It bordered Liebenau on the west and the private estate Felsenthal on the east.

At the time of the 1835 Molotschna census Wernersdorf had 24 establishments with a total population of 178 (93 males, 85 females). *Schulze* was Peter Wiens, councillors were Bernhard Enns and Peter Goerz. In the early years disease among the cattle was a problem, while with the horses it was theft. Up to 1848 a total of 58 horses had been stolen. In 1848 Bernhard Epp was *Schulze,* Peter Goerz and Gerhard Doerksen councillors.

In 1846 the Wernersdorf wheat production was average, but in 1847 the yield was phenomenal, almost twice the Molotschna average. Councillor Peter Goerz was into growing tobacco, having the highest yield for the colony in 1847. In 1851 Wernersdorf had 60,932 trees (a somewhat low number), with 22,372 mulberry trees in hedges.

In 1857 the population of Wernersdorf was 441 (223 males, 218 females) living in 61 houses, occupying 2,095 dessiatines. There were 71 students, with teacher Peter Sawatzky. That same year Bernhard Schroeder was elected *Schulze* and Peter Goerz continued as councillor. With the final redistribution of land in the Molotschna in 1869, Wernersdorf had 29 full farms, two half farms and 45 small farms, totaling 76, on 2,670 dessiatines of land. When the Molotschna was divided into two municipalities in 1871, Wernersdorf was in the Halbstadt Volost.

Wernersdorf participated actively in church affairs, although there was no church building in the village. Dirk Peters was a minister of the Lichtenau-Petershagen-Schoensee congregation in 1837, Kornelius Epp a deacon in 1830. Jakob Bergmann was ordained minister of the Schoensee congregation in 1878, Wilhelm Peters in 1885; Johann Martens was a deacon. Johann Huebert of Wernersdorf participated in the first election of an elder for the Mennonite Brethren on May 30, 1860. He voted for Heinrich Huebert and Jakob Bekker. Claas Epp Jr. led a trek of Mennonites to central Asia in the early 1880s, there to better prepare for the second coming of Christ. At least two people from Wernersdorf died on the trail, Peter Wiens and Aganetha Pauls (nee Wiebe).

Jakob P. Goertz was murdered by a robber on March 3, 1907; 43 rubles were taken. The robber was captured and exiled to Siberia.

In 1908 Wernersdorf had a population of 498, and occupied 2,410 dessiatines. There were five business establishments in the village. Kornelius Wolf and Kornelius Huebert sold manufactured goods. Heinrich Hildebrandt and Jakob Goossen had windmills, while Heinrich Rosenfeld had a postal outlet.

Wernersdorf undoubtedly went through the same difficulties as other Molotschna villages in the revolution, the civil war and the subsequent communist takeover. Ten men were killed in action, either as members of the *Selbstschutz* or the White Army. Franz Johann Goertz and Peter Johann Goertz were among those serving in the White Army. Peter Goertz had actually volunteered for the Russian Army in 1914 and became a German prisoner of war. He later served as the *Selbstschutz* commander for Wernersdorf, Liebenau, Schoensee, Fabrikerwiese and Fuerstenau. With the collapse of the *Selbstschutz* he joined the German Cavalry Regiment of the White Army.

Typhus also struck Wernersdorf, there being eight women and two men involved. In the following famine a total of five families, representing 51 individuals, asked for food packages through the pages of the *Mennonitische Rundschau.*

By 1921 one person had escaped to Germany, and in the mid 1920s at least nine family groups, totaling 42 individuals, emigrated to Canada. Some who wished to leave, however, had to resort to other means. People moved to the far eastern part of Siberia, in the hope of crossing the Amur River ice to China. Nikolai Enns and daughter did make it, being registered as refugees in Harbin, China, in 1930. In a last desperate attempt to escape about 13,000 Mennonites

collected in Moscow in late 1929 and 1930, trying to obtain exit visas. Maria Goertz and one child made it to Germany, residing in the Prenzlau Refugee Camp in 1930.

With the implementation of Soviet policies in the late 1920s and 1930s Wernersdorf suffered the same atrocities as other Molotschna villages. To form the collective farm *Nadezhda* (Hope) at least nine families were forced from their homes as kulaks. These included Peter Aron Dueck, Franz Ediger, Isaak Johann Poettker and Wilhelm Sawatzky. Thirty-one men were arrested in the Purge of 1937-38. All the remaining 34 men were taken on September 5, 1941, and sent to the Perm region.

With the approach of the German Army to the Molotschna after the invasion of June, 1941, the Soviets tried to evacuate all Mennonites from the region. They ordered them to collect at four railway stations. The south-west villages went to Lichtenau, the north-west to Tokmak, the north-east to Stulnevo and the south-east to Nelgovka. The Soviets were able to ship all those from Lichtenau and some from Nelgovka before the German troops arrived in early October. Wernersdorf residents were among the fortunate thousands collected at Stulnevo. When the German Army occupied the region the people simply went back to their homes.

When the German forces retreated from the Molotschna in September of 1943, all Mennonites, including those of Wernersdorf, joined the "Great Trek" westward to Poland and Germany. The trip was difficult, with 14 people dying on the trail. Forty-two young men were conscripted into the German Army. About 294 people were recaptured by the rapidly advancing Soviet Army; 36 died in Poland or on the way back to the U.S.S.R. However, a number did reach the West. At least eight family groups, 18 individuals, sailed for South America by 1950. Jakob Goerz, wife and five children went to Canada in 1948.

Today the remnants of Liebenau and Wernersdorf are part of the village Ostrikovka.

WEIGHTS AND MEASURES

LINEAR MEASUREMENTS			
1 vershok	1/16 arshin	1.7 inches	4.4 cm
1 arshin	16 vershok	28.0 inches	71.12 cm
1 sazhen (faden or fathom)	3 arshin	7.0 feet	213.36 cm
1 verst	500 sazhen (fathoms)	.663 miles (3,500 feet)	1.0668 km
LAND AREA			
1 dessiatine	2,400 square sazhen or fathoms	2.7 acres	1.0925 hectares
1 morgen (Prussian)	.234 dessiatines	.631 acres	.255 hectares
WEIGHTS			
1 zolotnik	1/96 funt	.33 ozs	4.26 grams
1 funt (Russian pound)	96 zolotnik	12.0 ozs	409.5 grams
1 pud (pood)	40 funts	36.11 lbs	16.38 kgs
DRY MEASURES (mostly grains)			
1 chetverik	1/8 chetvert	.75 bushels (U.S.) .73 bushels (Imperial)	26.24 litres
1 chetvert	8 chetverik 8 puds	5.96 bushels (U.S.) 5.77 bushels (Imperial)	209.92 litres
1 fuder	1 ladder wagon full		
MONETARY			
1 ruble The silver ruble was often worth considerably more than the paper ruble	100 kopeks	value in Canadian and U.S. currency has varied from time to time	

Specific values of weights and measures used in Russia have varied from time to time. Some were eventually standardized by imperial decree, and thereafter remained unchanged. The values quoted in this table are those which were, according to our best information, in common use in Russia during the time the Mennonites lived there. In 1918 all weights and measurements in the Soviet Union were changed to the metric system.

Table taken from *Hierschau: An Example of Russian Mennonite Life*

DATES AND CALENDARS

No attempt has been made in this atlas to differentiate or correct dates as to the Julian (Old Style) or Gregorian (New Style) calendars.

The Julian calender was in common use in Europe after it was authorized by Julius Caesar in 46 B.C., but increasing discrepancy with the seasons was noted. Pope Gregory XIII announced that the day after October 4, 1582 was to become October 15, thereby correcting the calendar by ten days. To prevent any further deviation it was also decreed that adjustments would be made to the leap years. Centennial years would be ordinary years unless they were divisible by 400; 1600 was therefore a leap year, 1700, 1800 and 1900 were not. 2000 was a leap year. This corrects as closely as possible for the accepted actual length of the year, being 365.2422 days.

Most western Catholic countries accepted the Gregorian calendar soon after it was announced, although Protestant states such as Denmark, the Netherlands and northern Germany waited until 1700; Britain came on stream in 1752. Because the Gregorian Calender had been promulgated by a Roman Catholic pope it was not accepted by the Russian Orthodox Church and therefore not by Russia.

In the calculation of any historical dates, therefore, one has to know both the date and the country in which the event transpired. Initially the discrepancy was ten days, this changed to 11 on March 1, 1700, then 12 on March 1, 1800 and to 13 days after March 1, 1900. There has been no additional discrepancy calculated this century because 2000 was not a leap year.

The Julian calendar was in use in Russia until February, 1918, when the revolutionary government decreed a switch. February 1 became February 14, thereby catching up the 13 days. The Russian Orthodox Church, however, still maintained the Julian calendar, and to this day (2003) some churches use it.

The early Anabaptists obviously used the Julian calendar, then increasingly after 1582 were in areas of Europe where the Gregorian calendar was in vogue. Mennonites in Prussia used the Gregorian (New Style), but then had to switch to the Julian (Old Style) when they moved to Russia. Because of this peculiarity of dates, some Mennonites celebrated Easter in Prussia, then celebrated it again some days later in Russia.

After February, 1918, all official documentation in the Soviet Union was according to the Gregorian calendar. Some Mennonites accepted this wholeheartedly and even corrected family records to reflect this change. Others, for various reasons, did not. Some maintained old dates, such as birthdays, simply for sentimental reasons. For this atlas, where primary sources have been used from the czarist times in Russia, presumably dates will be Julian, where primary sources are from after February, 1918, they will be Gregorian.

CZARS (TSARS) OF RUSSIA

DURING THE MENNONITE PERIOD

Catherine II (The Great)	1762-1796	Conquered the Crimea and opened southern Russia for settlement. First invited the Mennonites to Russia
Paul I	1796-1801	Confirmed Mennonite privileges
Alexander I	1801-1825	Allied with, then fought against Napoleon
Nicholas I	1825-1855	Autocratic, police state, but some economic reforms
Alexander II	1855-1881	Introduced many reforms. Start of Russification of minorities, including Mennonites. Assassinated
Alexander III	1881-1894	More authoritarian, although industry did well
Nicholas II	1894-1917	Politically weak and unreliable. Shot with most of family in 1918

RUSSO-TURKISH WARS

In general these wars could be characterized by a gradual weakening and territorial loss by the Turkish Empire. Russia's ambitions were to gain more territory in southern Ukraine and around the Black Sea, to become the dominant power in the Balkans, to gain access first to the Black Sea, then to the Mediterranean Sea. Peter the Great (1682-1725) forced the Turks out of most of what now is Ukraine.

1736-1739 1768-1774 1787-1792	In wars during the eighteenth century Russia and Austria were allies against the Turks. Catherine the Great conquered areas north of the Black Sea and the Crimea and opened southern Russia for settlement
1806-1812	Russia gained Bessarabia
1828-1829	Russia gained control of the eastern coast of the Black Sea
1853-1856	Crimean War. Britain and France allied with the Turks. Russia lost dominant position in Balkans and Black Sea.
1877-1878	Russia regained some of the losses of the Crimean War
1914-1917	World War I. Russia had hoped to gain Constantinople and the Dardanelles, but did not succeed.

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INDEX

Geographic names on the maps are indexed
Personal names on the maps are not indexed, but all personal names in the text are indexed
Many personal names are the similar; they are then listed in the order in which they occur in the text, by page number
Each separate entry represents a different person, according to the best information available
Numbers which are in **bold** print are, the first ones maps, the subsequent ones the brief description
A number of entries occur so frequently, in some cases on almost every page(or certainly many pages), so that it did not appear to be particularly useful to index them. These entries are:

Aussiedler
Bolsheviks,Communists,Reds,Soviets
Canada
Famine/Hungersnot
Flemish Mennonite
Frisian Mennonite
Gnadenfeld Volost
Germany
Halbstadt Volost
Mennonitische Rundschau
Molotschna evacuation, mentioning the Lichtenau, Tokmak, Stulnevo and Nelgovka railway stations
Molotschna Colony
Molotschna Mennonite Council
Paraguay
Prussia
Russia, South Russia, New Russia, northern Russia
South America
"The Trek" into Poland and Germany
Ukraine
West Prussia
West (Western Europe)

A

Abrahams, Anna 158
Abrahams, Heinrich 119
Abrahams, Johann 158
Abrahams, Johann 173
Abrahams, Kaethe 158
Abrahams, Kornelius 158
Abrahams, Peter 139
Abraham Peters Brueder 122, 123
Abrams, Peter 140
Abreisskalender 134
Ackerman (also spelled Akkerman) 7-14,20,24,25,47, 49,93
Adrian, Heinrich 110
Adrian, Katharina 110
Agricultural Society 94,117,122, 128,133,136,137,145,147,158, 165,167,171,187,188
Akerman (see Ackerman)
Aktyubinsk 103,189
Albrecht, Franz Heinrich 157
Albrecht, Olga 157
Aleksandrovka (Elisabetthal, Alexanderthal) 15,107,115
Alexander I, Czar 94,106,107, 109,113,114,120,123,155,171, 175,177,187
Alexander II, Czar 105,158,190
Alexanderkrone 6-15,**16**,33,49, 50,58,97,102-4,**105-6**,116, 139,141,152
Alexanderkrone (Flemish) Church 105,140,151,174,188
Alexanderkrone Zentralschule 105,106
Alexanderpol Colony 137
Alexanderthal 4,6-15,**17**,26,36, 80,84,97,103,104,**106-7**,114, 115,129,160,173,180,181
Alexanderthal MB Church 107
Alexanderwohl 4,6-15,**18**,**19**,35, 37,40,63,97,100,103,**107-9**, 120,126,128,129
Alexanderwohl Church, Kansas 108
Alexanderwohl Church, Molotschna 108,121,125,147, 153
Alexandrovsk (see Zaporozhye)
Alexandrowska, Fort (see Zaporozhye)
Alliance Movement 151
Allianzgemeinde (Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood) 151, 192
All Mennonite Conference 150
All Ukrainian Mennonite Union 177
Altenau (see Altona)
Alt-Halbstadt (see Halbstadt)
Alt-Monthal (see Montal)
Alt Nassau (see Nassau)
Altona 3,4,6-15,**20**,67,71,93-95, 97,103,**109-111**,112-14,149, 162,167,183,187
Altona, Sagradovka 151
Altonau (see Altona)
Am Trakt Colony xiii,194
Amur R 95,105,118,121,124, 135,152,155,157,158,169,170, 178,184,186,193,195,196
Andres, Heinrich 122
Andres Johann Johann 170
Andres Peter 158
Andres, Wilhelm 158
Anno-Opanlinka 15
Alt Samara Colony xiii
Apanlee Estate 95,105,134,139, 151,187
Apanlee R 4,7-14,31,64,65,73, 158,166,170
Arab R 7-14,105,122,139
Archangel, Russia 130,170,189
Arkadak Colony xiii
Argentina 174
Astrakhan xiii
Astrakhanka 15
Aulie Ata MB Church 136
Aussiedler, the word, is not indexed, the specific people are
Austria 136,156,161,172,178, 185
Austro-German Forces 95,110, 113,149,162
Azov 1
Azov, Sea of xiii,xiv,1-3,5,99, 165

B

Bachmut 4,6,131,142
Baerg, Abram, Abram 166
Baerg, Bernhard 113
Baerg, David 135
Baerg, Dietrich 183
Baerg, Gerhard Family 120
Baerg, Heinrich 106
Baerg, Heinrich 122
Baerg, Jakob 192
Baerg, Jakob 193
Baerg, Johann 192
Baerg, Wilhelm 162
Baerg, Wilhelm 166
Baergen, Abraham Johann 121
Baergen, Jakob 137
Baergen, Peter 191
Baerkmann, Katharina 146
Baerkmann, Kornelius 189
Baerkmann, Kornelius 191
Bahnmann, Peter 190
Baikal railway 150
Bakhchesaral (Bakhchisary) xiv, 1
Balashovka (Gnadenheim) 15, 130
Balkans 99
Balkovo (Fuerstenwerder) 15, 126
Ballau, Heinrich 156
Balta 1
Baltic Sea 2
Balzer, David 131
Balzer, Franz 170
Balzer, Heinrich 106
Balzer, Heinrich 177
Bamlag Labor Camp 154
Baptist 95
Barg, Heinrich 114
Barg, Heinrich 160
Barg, Isaak 173
Barkmann, Martin 179
Barkowsky, Jakob 172
Bartel, Heinrich 127
Bartel, Heinrich 178
Bartsch, Hans 187
Batum 125,127,130,158
Bauer, Erdmann 184
Bauer, Peter 155
Becker, Andreas 119
Becker, Gerhard 178
Becker, Helena 119
Becker, Heinrich 127

Becker, Jakob 119
Becker, Johann 119
Becker, Johann 153
Becker, Johann 175
Becker, Johann 177
Becker, Johann 178
Becker, Peter 174
Begemtschokrak R (see Begim-Tschokrak R)
Begim-Tschokrak R 4,6-14,18, 19,32,35,37,45,46,55,79,91, 120,124,128,142,147,153,179, 194
Behann, Jakob 184
Beir, Abraham 121
Bekker, Benjamin 177
Bekker, Jakob P 123,160,169, 177,194,196
Belaya R xiii
Belarus xiii
Belgrade 2
Bendery 1
Berdyansk xiv,5,108,128,130, 133,144,153,159,163,165
Berdyansk Uezd 100
Berg 193
Berg Family 107
Berg, Isaak 125
Berg Jakob 121
Berg, Jakob 169
Berg, Jakob 175
Berg, Johann 169
Berg, Katherine 112
Berg, Kornelius 168
Berg, Peter 112
Berg, Peter 149
Bergen, Bernhard 142
Bergen, Bernhard 149
Bergen Family 120
Bergen, Frieda 158
Bergen G Family 121
Bergen Gerhard 121
Bergen, Jakob 105
Bergen, Jakob 125
Bergmann, Anna 188
Bergmann, Heinrich 162
Bergmann, Jakob 145
Bergmann, Jakob 196
Bergmann, Johann 110
Bergmann, Peter 145
Bergmann, Peter 148
Bergmann, Peter 158
Bergthal Colony xiv
Berislav xiv,2,5
Berlin 99,126,129
Berlin Escape 126,180
Bestvater, Heinrich 136
Bestvater, Heinrich 191
Bestvater, Jakob 145
Black Sea xii,xiv,1,2,5,99
Blagodatnoye (Gnadenthal) 15, 131
Blankenburg, Germany 151
Block, Agnes 169
Block, Andreas 169
Block, Franz 169
Block, Heinrich 169
Block, Heinrich 178
Block, Johann 169
Block, Maria 169
Block, Martin 131
Blumberg (see Blumstein)
Blumenort 3,4,6-15,**21**,**22**,**23**, 49,77,88,95,97,103,104,110, **111-12**,167,168,175,176,189, 190,191
Blumstein 3,4,6-15,**24**,**25**,56,67, 71,95,97,103,110,**113-14**,148, 149,162
Boese, David 170
Boese, Helene 192
Boese, Peter 191
Bogdanofka (see Bogdanovka)
Bogdanovka 3,11,61,62
Bogdanovka (Gnadenfeld) 15 128
Boh R (see Yuzhnyy Bug R)
Boldt, Abram 185
Boldt, Anna 161
Boldt, Dietrich 166
Boldt, Isaak 170
Boldt, Peter 132
Bolsheviks/Communists/Reds/ Soviets not indexed
Bolshoi Tokmak (see Tokmak)
Bonellis, Wilhelm 183
Born, Helene 167
Borissovo Colony xiv
Borozenko Colony xii,xiv
Boschmann, Daniel 117
Boschmann, Daniel 155
Boschmann, Jakob 112
Boschmann, Kornelius 138
Boschmann, Kornelius 180
Boschmann, Nikolai 176
Braeul, Jakob 177
Braeul, Johann 167
Brandenburg 93,126
Brandt, Gerhard 147
Braun, Abraham 131
Braun, Abraham 131
Braun, Heinrich 138
Braun, Heinrich 188
Braun, Heinrich 191
Braun, Heinrich J 134
Braun, Isaak 143
Braun, Isaak 155
Braun, Jakob 141
Braun, Jakob 186
Braun, Jakob Dietrich 125
Braun, Johann 113
Braun, Johann 161
Braun, Johann 191
Braun Peter 186
Braun, Peter 192
Braun, Peter Isaak 135
Braun, Peter J 134
Braun, Vallentin 105
Brazil 141,166
Breivogel, Liesel 128
Brest-litovsk, Treaty of 135
Bristol, England 163
Bruderfeld, Crimea 137
Bruderschule (Brotherhood School) 126,127
Bucharest 2
Buehler, Abraham 174
Buettner, Dr 163
Bug R 2
Buhler, Peter 115
Bulgaria xiii
Buller, Benjamin 147
Buller, Heinrich 108
Buller, Helene 190
Buller, Elder Jakob 108
Buller, Peter 121

C

Canada not indexed
Many immigrants in the 1920s and refugees after WW II
Caspian Sea xiii
Catherine the Great 99
Catholic 93
Caucasus Mountains/area xiii,

93,125,127,129,130,173,178,
180,188
Cheka (police) 184
Chelyabinsk 122,170,172,176
Chernigov 2
Chernigov District 128
Chernigovka 3,4,6-15,83,91,
102,141,142
Chernobyl 139
Chicago 195
China 118,121,124,155,158,
170,178,184,186,193,195,
196
Chingul R 7-14
Chortitza Colony xiii,xiv,2,93,
99,101102,116,120,123,144,
149,164,167,170,171,174,196
Chortitza (village) 5
Chortitza MB Church 193
Cimbria, S S 108
Circassians 1
Claassen, A 167
Claassen, David 145
Claassen (Klassen), David
Johann 117
Claassen, Dietrich 160
Claassen, Johann 117,126,153,
160
Claassen, Kornelius 125
Commonwealth (Mennonite) 94
Communists/Reds/Soviets/
Bolsheviks not indexed
Constantinople 119,124,125,
127,135,136,143,158,178
Contenius, Samuel 113,142,
165,171
Conteniusfeld
(see Konteniusfeld)
Cornelssen, Abraham 114,115,
131
Cornies, Agnes (nee Klassen)
167
Cornies, D 167
Cornies, Johann 29,49,93,94,
108,110,117,120,126,128,131,
133,137,139,146,147,149,151,
159,164,167,168,172,174,177,
180,185,189,194
Cornies, Peter 167
Cornies, Philipp David 168
Crimea xiii,xiv,1,3,5,99,102,
109,113,127,129,131,137,
157,162-4,190
Crimean War 108

D

Daniels, Nikolai 161
Danube R xiii,2
Danzig 2,117,123,124,128,131,
164,171,192
Defer, Peter 109
Deker, Johann 194
Deleski, Aganetha 147
Delesky, Jakob 174
Denekin, General 95
Derksen, David 118
Derksen, Emma 178
Derksen P 144
Deutscher Kollektivist Kolkhoz
107,160,173,181
Dick 105
Dick, Abraham 152
Dick, Abram 152
Dick, Abram 152
Dick, Anna 188
Dick, Anna (nee Schmidt) 187
Dick, David 105
Dick, David 151
Dick, David 183
Dick, Franz 137
Dick, Franz 176
Dick, Gerhard 112
Dick, Heinrich 129
Dick, Heinrich 151
Dick, Heinrich 181
Dick, Hermann Peter 130
Dick, Jakob H 188
Dick, Jakob Jakob 187
Dick, Johann 129
Dick, Johann 169
Dick, Johann 173
Dick, Judge 129
Dick, Klaas 114
Dick, Klaas 182
Dick, Kornelius 129
Dick, Peter 114
Dick, Peter 147
Dick, Peter 152
Dick, Wilhelm 126
Dilleskij 111
Dirks 129
Dirks, David 129
Dirks, David 130
Dirks, Gerhard 119
Dirks, Gerhard 170
Dirks, Gerhard 177
Dirks, Heinrich 194
Dirks, Peter 119
Dirksen 163
Dirksen, David 194
Dirksen, Heinrich 156
Dirksen, Jakob 161
Dirksen, Jakob 184
Dirksen, Johann 115
Dirksen, Johann 147
Dniepr R xiii,xiv,1,2,5,99,102,
136,160
Dniestr R xiii,1,2,5,99
Dobenko, General 127
Doerksen, Dietrich 190
Doerksen, Franz 160
Doerksen, Gerhard 196
Doerksen, Jakob 183
Doerksen, Johann 139
Doerksen, N 118
Doerksen, Peter 117
Doerksen, Peter 155
Doerksen, Peter 160
Dolgoye (Konteniusfeld,
Sparrau) 15,143,187
Dolina (Schoenau) 15,183.
Dolinka (Fuerstenau) 124
Don R xiii,1,5,125
Donets R xiii,1,5
Donetsk xiv
Doukhobors 3,4,93,99
Driedger, Abraham 133
Driedger, Abram 172
Driedger, Jakob 179
Driedger, Johann 172
Driedger, Johann Sr 172
Driedger, Johann Jr 172
Driedger, Liese 172
Driediger, J 119
Driediger, Jakob 130
Driediger, Kornelius 119
Driediger, Kornelius 130
Dubojrasapalka 3
Duborzi (see Doukhobors)
Dubrovno 2
Duchoborzen (see Doukhobors)
Dueck, Abraham 142
Dueck, Agatha 164
Duech, Aron Aron 157
Dueck, Bernhard 182

Dueck, Eugene 183
Dueck Family 132
Dueck, Franz 142
Dueck, Franz 153
Dueck, Gerhard 185
Dueck, Elder Heinrich 129
Dueck, Heinrich 141,142
Dueck, Helmut 183
Dueck, Jakob 111
Dueck, Jakob 143
Dueck, Jakob 151
Dueck, Jakob 160
Dueck, Jakob 163
Dueck, Jakob 191
Dueck, Johann 148
Dueck, Johann 161
Dueck, Johann 175
Dueck, Johann Dietrich 106,107
Dueck, Peter 133
Dueck, Peter 173
Dueck, Peter Aron 197
Dueckmann, Heinrich 133
Dueckmann, Martin 107
Duerksen, Abraham 118
Duerksen, Cornelius 107
Duerksen, David 157
Duerksen, Gerhard 143
Duerksen, Jakob G 137
Duerksen, Johann 147
Durlach 11
Dutch/Netherlands 150
Dvina R xiii,1,99
Dyck, Abram 151
Dyck, Frank 172
Dyck, Franz 112
Dyck, Gerhard 141
Dyck, Gerhard 149
Dyck, Jakob 110
Dyck, Jakob 145
Dyck, Jakob 163
Dyck, Jakob 169
Dyck, Jakob Peter 158
Dyck, Johann Family 141
Dyck, Johann 145
Dyck, Kornelius 181
Dyck, Maria 141
Dyck, Peter 143
Dyck, Peter 169
Dyck, Peter 180
Dyck, Peter Johann 145
Dyck, Sonja 169

E

Earthquake 94,119,133,142,159, 163
Ebenezer MB Church, Kansas 162
Eck, Jakob 163
Eckert, Jakob 156
Ediger, Abraham 127
Ediger, Abram 126
Ediger, Elder Alexander 153, 184
Ediger, Franz 197
Ediger, Heinrich 130
Ediger, Heinrich 119,120
Ediger, Heinrich 131
Ediger, Heinrich 170
Ediger, Isaak 151
Ediger, Johann 127
Ediger, Johann 178
Ediger, Katharina 154
Ediger, Peter 120
Einlage 164
Eitzen, Gerhard 185
Ekaterinoslav (Dnepropetrovsk) xiii,xiv,1,2,5,100,127,168
Ekaterinoslav Province 5,100
Elbing 93,99,111,113,117,123, 151,156,159,161,164,171,175, 179,185,189,196
Elisabeth, Czarina 114
Elisabetthal 4,6-15,17,**26**,84-6, 97,103,104,107,**114-16**,126, 131,160,173,177,181,187
Enns 116
Enns 155
Enns, Aron 168
Enns, Bernhard 110
Enns, Bernhard 196
Enns, Claas 121
Enns, Gerhard 121
Enns, Gerhard Family 141
Enns, Gerhard 183
Enns, Helena 136
Enns, Hermann 182
Enns, Herman C 166
Enns, Jakob 110
Enns, Jakob 112
Enns, Jakob 172
Enns, Johann 136
Enns, Johann 155
Enns, Johann 164
Enns, Johann 183
Enns, Johann 188
Enns, Johann Gerhard 152
Enns, Klaas 143
Enns, Kornelius 147
Enns, Kornelius 179
Enns, Kornelius Kornelius 110
Enns, Nikolai 196
Enns, Elder Nikolai 186
Enns, Peter 132
Enns, Peter Family 141
Enns, Peter 165
Enns, Peter 165
Ens, Oberschulz Gerhard 114, 152
Enss, Jakob 123
Epp, Abram 176
Epp, Anna 172
Epp, Bernhard 144,176
Epp, Elder Bernhard 149,155
Epp, Bernhard 196
Epp, Claas Jr 105,122,136,140, 165,194,196
Epp, Elder David H 149,154
Epp, Dirk 165
Epp, Franz 182
Epp, Gerhard 151
Epp, Gerhard 171
Epp, Gerhard 179
Epp, H Family
Epp, Heinrich 163
Epp, Heinrich Heinrich 158
Epp, Helmut 172
Epp, Hermann 163
Epp, Jakob 112
Epp, Jakob 112
Epp, Jakob 144
Epp, Jakob 169
Epp, Jakob 169
Epp, Jakob 173
Epp, Jakob Peter 115
Epp, Johann 159
Epp, Johann 171
Epp, Kornelius 170
Epp, Kornelius 196
Epp, Maria 158
Epp, Margaretha 118
Epp, Martin 144
Epp, Peter 111
Epp, Elder Peter 115
Epp, Peter 169
Epp, Peter 172

Epp, Peter 174
Epp, Peter 188
Ernst Thaelmann Kolkhoz 180
Esau Estate **27**,87,97,**116**,188
Esau, H 140
Esau, Jakob 105
Esau, Jakob 110
Esau, Jakob Family 120
Esau, Jakob 122
Esau, Jakob 151
Esau, Johann 133
Esau, Peter 153
Espelkamp, Germany 122
Estonia xiii
Europe 99
Evacuation of Molotschna in October 1941, all villages
Mentions railway stations at Lichtenau, Tokmak, Stulnevo, Nelgovka
Special map 14
Ewert Family 132
Ewert, Abraham 125
Ewert, Anna (nee Friesen) 169
Ewert, Benjamin 169
Ewert, Heinrich 155
Ewert, Heinrich 185
Ewert, Jakob 166
Ewert, Johann 169
Ewert, Peter 185
Ewert, Oberschulz Wilhelm 94, 100,126
Ewert, Wilhelm 131

F

Fabrikerwiese 7-14,**28**,34,82,97, 100,103,**116**,123,176,184,196
Fadeyev, Judge 107,118,120, 156
Famine/Hungersnot of 1922 not indexed
Fast 171
Fast 175
Fast, Abraham 129
Fast, Abraham 161
Fast, Abram 167
Fast, Abram 176
Fast, Abram J 122
Fast, Elder Bernhard 134, 167, 190
Fast, Bernhard 145
Fast, Bernhard 175
Fast, Daniel 111
Fast, Daniel 191
Fast, David 125
Fast, David 155
Fast, David 169
Fast, David 173
Fast, Elisabeth (nee Regier) 141
Fast, Gerhard 109
Fast, Gerhard 141
Fast, Oberschulz Gerhard 143
Fast, Gerhard 163
Fast, Gerhard 164
Fast, Gerhard 167
Fast, Gerhard 171
Fast, Gerhard 177
Fast, Heinrich 105
Fast, Isaak 153
Fast, Isaak 163
Fast, Jakob 111
Fast, Jakob 137
Fast, Jakob 138
Fast, Jakob 147
Fast, Jakob 154
Fast, Johann 161
Fast, Johann 164
Fast, Johann 182
Fast, Johann 194
Fast, Elder Johann Johann 123, 141,182
Fast, Kornelius 113
Fast, Kornelius 120
Fast, Kornelius 174
Fast, Peter 136
Fast, Peter 136
Fast, Peter 145
Fast, Peter 145
Fast, Peter 195
Fast, Peter Heinrich 118
Felsental Estate 4,6-14,**29**,92,97, 100,**116-17**,196
Feodorovka, Station 101
Feodosiya 2
Federau, Abraham Salomon 156
Fedorovka 56,149
Feodosiya xiv
Fischau 3,4,6-15,**30**,60-2,81,97, 103,**117-18**,154,156
Fischer, Wilhelm 112
Fiz, Johann 163
Flamming Family 106
Flamming, Anna 181
Flamming, Heinrich 170
Flamming, Heinrich 181
Flamming, Peter 181
Flemish Mennonite not indexed
Special map 9
Chart 97,98
Flemming, Johann 119
Flood 146,153
Forestry Service (Forsteidienst) 94,95,117,139,188
Foth, Heinrich 130
Fransen, Katharina 159
Franz 134
Franz, Heinrich I 117
Franz, Heinrich 126
Franz, Heinrich 134
Franz, Heinrich 138
Franz, Heinrich 181
Franz, Jakob 153,154
Franz, Johann 136
Franz, Peter 152
Franzthal 4,6-14,**31**,39,72,78, 97,103,104,**118-120**,131,177, 182
Frederick William III 93,99
Friedberg 120
Friedensdorf 4,6-15,**32**,37,38, 55,97,102,103,**120-22**,128, 129,147,175,177
Friedensdorf Treffen 122
Friedensfeld 123,182
Friedensruh 6-16,**33**,58,69,76, 84,97,103,106,**122-23**,141, 166,170
Friedensruh, Siberia 122
Friedensstimme 134
Friesen 175
Friesen A A 134
Friesen, Abraham 110
Friesen, Abraham 155
Friesen, Abraham 179
Friesen, Abraham 184
Friesen, Abraham 191
Friesen, Abram 182
Friesen, Abram Bernhard 135
Friesen, Abram Aron 172
Friesen, Aron 163
Friesen, Bernhard 175
Friesen, Bernhard 191
Friesen, Bernhard Bernhard 120
Friesen, Bernhard Bernhard 147
Friesen, Brothers (five) 178

Friesen, Claas 176
Friesen, David 133
Friesen, Gerhard 128
Friesen, Gerhard 153
Friesen, Heinrich 114
Friesen, Heinrich 129
Friesen, Heinrich 132
Friesen, Heinrich Abram 182
Friesen, Isaak 129
Friesen, Isaak 186
Friesen, Jakob 168
Friesen, Jakob 181
Friesen, Johann 133
Friesen, Johann 135
Friesen, Johann 158
Friesen, Johann 158
Friesen, Johann 160
Friesen, Johann 165
Friesen, Johann 176
Friesen, Katharina 186
Friesen, Klaas 165
Friesen, Klaas 175
Friesen, Kornelius 110
Friesen, Kornelius 125
Friesen, Kornelius 160
Friesen, Martin 152
Friesen, Martin 185
Friesen, Martin Peter 179
Friesen, Peter 123
Friesen, Peter 130
Friesen, Peter 160
Friesen, Peter 172
Friesen, Peter 175
Friesen, Peter 185
Friesen, Peter 191
Friesen, Peter Martin (P.M.) 101,134,185,190
Friesen, Sara 186
Friesen, Thomas Bernhard 121, 147
Friesen, Wilhelm 186
Frisian Mennonite not indexed
Special map 9
Chart 97,98
Fuerstenau 3,4,6-15,28,**34**,93, 97,99,103,116,**123-24**,184, 196
Fuerstenland Colony xiv
Fuerstenwerder 4,6-15,18,19, **35**,79,97,103,**124-26**
Funk 158
Funk, Andreas Johann 120
Funk, Heinrich 106
Funk, Johann 193
Funk, Kornelius 115
Funk, Kornelius 190
Funk, Peter 159
Funk, Peter 174
Funkner, Friedrich 130

G

Gaeddert, David 153
Gaeddert, Dietrich 108
Gaede, Heinrich 153
General Conference of Mennonite Churches in Russia 105,110,125,130, 132,135,136,143,157,166,168, 178,182,192,195
General Conference of the Mennonite Church 149,163
Georgia xiii
Gerbrandt, Jakob 131
German Colonies (ists) 3,4,6,11, 93,99,133,142
Germany as destination of the Trek not indexed
Giesbrecht, Gerhard 190
Giesbrecht, Heinrich (Andre) 150
Giesbrecht, Jakob 159
Giesbrecht, Johann 150
Giesbrecht, Margareta 172
Giesbrecht, P 150
Giesbrecht, Tina 112
Gilbrecht, Gerhard 108
Gnadenfeld 4,6-15,17,26,**36**,52, 73,78,91,93-5,97,99,100,102, 103,117,**126-28**,135,142,148, 170,186,191
Gnadenfeld Flemish Mennonite Chuch 114,115,126,169,178
Gnadenfeld Girls School 127
Gnadenfeld Volost not indexed
Special map 7
Explanation 100
Gnadenfeld Zentralschule, (Kommerzschule, Handelsschule) 127,128,132, 186
Gnadenheim 4,6-15,18,19,32, **37**,63,97,101,103,**128-30**,137, 157
Gnadenheim MB Church 121, 129,174
Gnadenheim Zentralschule 129
Gnadenthal 6-15,32,37,**38**,55, 63,70,97,103,129,**130-31**
Goertz, Franz Johann 196
Goertz, Heinrich 126
Goertz, Jakob P 196
Goertz, Peter Johann 196
Goertz, Maria 197
Goertzen, Abraham 117
Goertzen, Abraham 184
Goertzen, David 129
Goertzen, David 196
Goertzen, Jakob Kornelius 125
Goerz 126
Goerz, Elder Abram 134,167
Goerz, Elder Franz I 93,100, 106,131,159,168,177,180
Goerz, Elder Franz II 177
Goerz, Heinrich 108
Goerz, Elder Heinrich 144
Goerz, Jakob 197
Goerz, Johann 184
Goerz, Peter 188
Goerz, Peter 196
Goerzen, Abraham 155
Goerzen, David 105
Goerzen, David 151
Goerzen, Heinrich 148
Goerzen, Heinrich 157
Goerzen, Jakob 130
Goerzen, Jakob 145
Goerzen, Jakob 151
Goerzen, Johann 129
Goerzen, Johann 129
Goerzen, Johann 131
Goerzen, Johann 167
Goerzen, Johann Jakob 124
Goerzen, Katharina 129
Goerzen, Kornelius 166
Goerzen, Maria 174
Goerzen, Peter 129
Goetz, Jakob 121
Goossen 105
Goossen 129
Goossen, Franz 120
Goossen, Franz 123
Goossen, Franz 124
Goossen, Franz 127
Goossen, Franz Johann 147
Goossen, Gerhard 147

Goossen, Gerhard 163
Goossen, Gerhard 170
Goossen, Heinrich 113
Goossen, Heinrich 184
Goossen, Jakob 145
Goossen, Jakob 184
Goossen, Jakob 196
Goossen, Johann 183
Goossen, Katharina 124
Goossen, Peter 156
Gomel 2
Gorki Collective Farm 137,138, 195
Gorkoye, Station 155
Graewe, Heinrich H 140
Graudenz 106,120
Grigorovka 15
Grishino 15,180
Groening, Peter 133
Groningen Old Flemish 9,93,97, 98,100,101,108,126,194
Gross Tokmak (see Tokmak)
Gross Tokmack (see Tokmak)
Grossen, Gerhard 111
Grosses Marienburger Werder 114
Grossweide 4,6-15, 31,**39**, 66, 72,78,96,97,100,103,119,126, **131-33**,154,157,177,178,186
Grossweide Orphanage 131
Grushevka (Lichtfelde, Alexanderkrone) 15,104,106, 141,152
Guardian's Committee (Fuersorgekomitee, Office of Foreign Colonists) 100,120, 133,142,156
Guenther, Heinrich 192
Guenther, Heinrich Dietrich 139,151
Guenther, Maria 188
Gulyaipole xiv,164
Gyunevka 15

H

Halbstadt 3,4-15,18,19,30, **40-43**,53,56,61,62,68,74,81, 93-95,97,100-04,131,**133-36**, 144,149,162-4,171,176,182, 185,191,193
Halbstadt Days of Terror 95, 135,164
Halbstadt Flemish Mennonite Church (see Neu-Halbstadt Mennonite Church)
Halbstadt, Prussia 133
Halbstadt Realschule 134
Halbstadt Teachers College 94, 134,193
Halbstadt Volost not indexed
Special map 7
Explanation 100
Halbstadt Zentralschule 112, 134,136,185
Halbstadt-Neu-Halbstadt-Muntau Industrial Complex 163
Halder, General 102
Hamberg 6-15,**44**,51,93,97,103, 116,**136-37**,141,184
Hamberg, Siberia
Hamburg, Germany 108
Hamm 149
Hamm, Abraham 178
Hamm, Mrs Abram 178
Hamm, D 139
Hamm, Heinrich 190
Hamm, Hermann 149
Hamm, Martin 179
Hamm, Peter 179
Hamm, Wilhelm 178
Harbin, China 105,118,124,135, 152,155,157,158,169,170,178, 184,186,193,195,196
Harder 144
Harder, Abraham 131,132
Harder, Abram 108
Harder, Abram 122
Harder, Bernhard (poet and minister) 113,134
Harder, Bernhard 121
Harder, David 124
Harder, Eva 167
Harder, Gerhard 122
Harder, Heinrich 165
Harder, Helena 113
Harder, Helena 141
Harder, Isbrandt 163
Harder, Jakob 129
Harder, Jakob 179
Harder, Johann I 113
Harder, Elder Johann III 113
Harder, Johann 134
Harder, Johann 156
Harder, Johann 171
Harder, Kornelius 107
Harder, Kornelius 157
Harder, Peter 118
Harder, Peter 123
Harder, Peter Family 164
Harms, Peter 113
Harms, Peter Family 169
Harms, Simon 153
Hausknecht, David 126,131
Hecht, Susanna 189
Heide, Abram 107
Heide, Peter 149
Heidebrecht, Barbara 156
Heidebrecht, Daniel
Heidebrecht, Heinrich 155
Heidebrecht, Heinrich 156
Heidebrecht, Jakob 149
Heidebrecht, Jakob 165
Heidebrecht, Johann 156
Heidebrecht, Johann 193
Heidebrecht, Kornelius 149
Heidebrecht, Peter Kornelius 130
Heinrichs, Jakob 140
Helsinki 2
Henderson, Nebraska 137,141
Hensen, Heinrich Heinrich 156
Hiebert, Franz 150
Hiebert, Jakob 157
Hiebert, Jakob 194
Hiebert, Martin 153
Hiebert, Reinhard 121,177,193
Hiebert, Reinhard 169
Hierschau 6-15,**45**,**46**,55,91,93, 95,97,102-04,108,**137-39**,141, 147,148,156,157,177,195
Hierschauer Treffen 138
Hildebrand, Gerhard 113
Hildebrand, Gerhard 181
Hildebrand, Heinrich 148
Hildebrand, Heinrich 161
Hildebrand, Isaak 192
Hildebrand, Johann 155
Hildebrand, Margaretha 137
Hildebrand, Peter 137
Hildebrand, Peter 182
Hildebrandt, Grandmother 138
Hildebrandt, David 138
Hildebrandt, Elisabeth 138
Hildebrandt, Elisabeth

(daughter) 138
Hildebrandt, Gerhard 138
Hildebrandt, Heinrich 138
Hildebrandt, Heinrich 196
Hildebrandt, Isaak 162
Hildebrandt, Jakob 127
Hildebrandt, Jakob 138
Hildebrandt, Jakob 165
Hildebrandt, Jakob Jakob 170
Hildebrandt, Johann 138
Hildebrandt, Katharina 138
Hildebrandt, Katharina 170
Hildebrandt, Maria 138
Hildebrandt, Sara 138
Hildebrandt, Tina 138
Hippenmayer 6,100,116
Hofer, David M 195
Hoffenthal 3,11,40
Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, Kansas 108
Holzrichter, Aganeta 161
Holzrichter, Peter 176
Hooge, Abram Family 120
Hooge, Peter 113
Hoppe, Daniel 151,181
Huebert 146
Huebert 149
Huebert, Aron 189
Huebert, Aron 191
Huebert, David 123,154,155
Huebert, Mrs David 155
Huebert, Dietrich 110
Huebert, Dietrich 136
Huebert, Franz 110
Huebert, Franz 157
Huebert, G D 107
Huebert, Heinrich 107
Huebert, Elder Heinrich 112, 152,153,160,161,169,177,181, 194,196
Huebert, Heinrich 157
Huebert, Heinrich Johann 162
Huebert, Isaak Johann 162
Huebert, Jakob 157
Huebert, Jakob 165
Huebert, Johann 140
Huebert, Johann 162
Huebert, Johann 165
Huebert, Johann 196
Huebert, Kornelius 196
Huebert, Peter 168
Huebert, Peter 194
Huebert, Tina 162
Huebner, Heinrich 156
Huebner, Peter 140
Hungerjahre 155
Hungersnot/Famine of 1922 not indexed

I

Ignatyevo xiii,xiv
Ingul R xiv
Ingulets R xiv
Isaak 155
Isaak, Abraham 117
Isaak, Abraham 155
Isaak, Abram 190
Isaak, Aron 122
Isaak, David 123
Isaak, David 191
Isaak, Franz 128
Isaak, Franz 160
Isaak, Franz 160
Isaak, Franz 189
Isaak, Franz 190
Isaak, Gerhard 118
Isaak, Johann Gerhard 155
Isaak, Kornelius 111
Isaak, Kornelius 156
Isaak, Klaas 182
Isaak, Margaretha 161
Isaak, Peter 131
Isaak, Peter 152
Isaak, Peter 182
Issyl Kul, Siberia 122,136,193
Ivdellag 103,187

J

Jantz, Jakob 123
Jantzen 126
Jantzen, Jakob 105
Janz, Benjamin 131
Janz, Benjamin 143
Janz, Benjamin B 143,168,190
Janz, Dietrich 148
Janz, Elder Heinrich T 148,157
Janz, Helene 143
Janz, Johann 131
Janz, Justina 143
Janz, Mathilda 132
Janz, Peter Peter 132
Janz, Tobias 147
Janzen 140
Janzen 155
Janzen 165
Janzen Family 178
Janzen, Agatha (nee Block) 169
Janzen, Aron 122
Janzen, Elder Daniel 173
Janzen, Dietrich 105
Janzen, Eduard 106,122
Janzen, Franz 165
Janzen, Franz 173
Janzen, Franz 189
Janzen, Franz A 188
Janzen, Gerhard 136
Janzen, Hans 167
Janzen,, Heinrich 131
Janzen, Heinrich 147
Janzen, Heinrich 158
Janzen, Hermann 136
Janzen, Jakob 119,120
Janzen, Jakob 147
Janzen, Jakob 166
Janzen, Jakob 169
Janzen, Jakob 174
Janzen, Jakob 177
Janzen, Jakob 182
Janzen, Johann 106
Janzen, Johann 119
Janzen, Johann 121
Janzen, Johann 127
Janzen, Johann 145
Janzen, Johann 149
Janzen, Johann 165
Janzen, Johann 170
Janzen, Johann 171
Janzen, Katharina 189
Janzen, Kornelius Family 120
Janzen, Kornelius 165
Janzen, Kornelius 168
Janzen, Maria 119
Janzen, Maria 167
Janzen, Nikolai 155
Janzen, Nikolai Franz 166
Janzen, Peter 110
Janzen, Peter 119,120
Janzen, Peter 169
Janzen, Susanna 112
Janzen, Tobias 166
Juschanlee Estate 6-15,**47**,**48**, 49,50,94,97,100,**139**,151,167, 187
Juschanlee R 4,6-14,16,20,27,

31,33,47,49,50,58,69,72,76, 84,85,87,93,105,109,111,114, 116,118,120,122,123,131,139, 151,159,164,166,168,172,174, 180,187,188,192

K

Kaethler, Katharina 154
Kajkulak R 7-14,116
Kalinovka (Steinbach Estate) 15,188
Kaluga 182
Kamenka (Hamberg) 15,137
Kamyenskoye (Blumstein) 15, 114
Kansas 18,108
Karassan xiv
Karl Liebknecht Kolkhoz 176
Karl Marx Collective Farm 127
Kasdorf, Johann 157
Kasper, Abraham 106
Kasper, Abraham 143
Kasper, Peter 107
Kasper, Peter 136
Kazakhstan xiii,102,103,106, 111,130,132,161,174,178,189, 190
Kazan xiii
Kemnitzer, Mrs (nee Dyck) 174
Kerber, Stephan 106
Kertch xiv,5
Khabarovsk 175
Kharkov xiii,2,103,145
Kherson xiii,xiv,1,2,5
Kherson Province 5,100
Khmyelnitskoye (Friedensdorf) 15,122
Kiev xiii,2
Kipolowski, Fort 3
Kirovo (Juschanlee Estate) 15, 139
Klaassen, Johann 171
Klassen Family 107
Klassen, Abram 134
Klassen, Abram 152
Klassen, Abram 159
Klassen, Abram Aron 135
Klassen, Alfred 130
Klassen, Anna 159
Klassen, David 145
Klassen, David 187
Klassen, Dietrich 129
Klassen, Elvina 119
Klassen, Franz 115
Klassen, Franz 145
Klassen, Franz 160
Klassen, Friedrich 145
Klassen, Gerhard 112
Klassen, Gerhard 121
Klassen, Gerhard 141
Klassen, Gerhard 152
Klassen, Gerhard 178
Klassen, Gerhard 190
Klassen, Heinrich 159
Klassen, Heinrich 174
Klassen, Mrs Heinrich 178
Klassen, Jakob 110
Klassen, Jakob 130
Klassen, Jakob 132
Klassen, Jakob 145
Klassen, Jakob 164
Klassen, Jakob 170
Klassen, Jakob 172
Klassen, Jakob 178
Klassen, Jakob 193
Klassen, Oberschulz Johann 110,120,174,176,185,193,196
Klassen, Johann 135
Klassen, Johann 146
Klassen, Johann 146
Klassen, Johann 159
Klassen, Johann 161
Klassen, Johann 164
Klassen, Johann 186
Klassen, Johann 190
Klassen, Katharina 130
Klassen, Kornelius 157
Klassen, Margarethe 148
Klassen, Maria 159
Klassen, Martin 151
Klassen, Nikolai 174
Klassen, P 122
Klassen, Peter 114
Klassen, Peter 121
Klassen, Peter 131
Klassen, Peter 158
Klassen, Peter 159
Klassen, Peter 168
Klassen, Rosa 159
Klassen, Salomon 162
Klassen, Tina 169
Kleefeld 6-14,16,47,49,**50**,90, 97,102-05,**139-41**,186
Kleine Gemeinde 94, 161,171, 176,182
Klett, Elisabeth 161
Kliewer 180
Kliewer, Heinrich 143
Kliewer, Heinrich 178
Kliewer, Heinrich 184
Kliewer, Johann 106
Kliewer, Johann 136
Kliewer, Peter 177
Kliewer, Susan 137
Kliewer, Victor 178
Klippenfeld 6-15,44,**51**,91,93, 97,103,136,**141-42**,184
Klippenstein, Lawrence 99
Koehn, A 174
Koenigsberg 2
Koldau 113
Komintern Kolkhoz 162
Kommission fuer Kirchenangelgenheiten (KfK) (Commission for Church Affairs) 154,157,184
Komsomol Kolkhoz 136
Konovalites 112
Konrad, Johann 191
Konstantinovka xiv
Konteniusfeld 4,6-15,36,**52**,83, 91,93,97,100,103,**141-43**,185, 187
Koop, David David 168
Koop, Dietrich Heinrich 105
Koop, Elder Heinrich 105
Koop, Helga 190
Koop, Isaak 115
Koop, Mrs Isaak (nee Kroeker) 165
Koop, Isbrandt 115
Koop, Johann 123
Koop, Johann 148
Koop, Johann 150
Koop, Johann 180
Koop, Peter 121
Koop, Peter 180
Koop, Peter 183
Kopp, Andreas 163
Kornelsen Family 169
Kornelsen Family 192
Kornelsen, Gerhard 149
Kornelsen, Heinrich 191
Kornelsen, Jakob 149
Kornelsen, Peter 191

Korsak Hill 3
Kosmenko Brothers 104,120
Kotlas 162,175,188
Kovalenko 115,173
Kozolugovka (Rueckenau) 15, 180
Krasnii Armia Kolkhoz 125
Kravetz, Andre 138
Kravetz, Margaretha (nee Plett) 104,138,139
Kremenchug 2,5
Krieger, Martin 155
Krivoy Rog xiv
Kriwoje 120
Kroeger, Abraham 153
Kroeker 140
Kroeker, Abraham 165
Kroeker, Abram 191
Kroeker, Abram Jakob 134,176
Kroeker, Heinrich 145
Kroeker, Jakob 134,135
Kroeker, Jakob 165
Kroeker, Jakob 182
Kroeker, Johann 113
Kroeker, Johann 147
Kroeker, Johann 149
Kroeker, Johann 161
Kroeker, Widow Kornelius 157
Kroeker, Peter 114
Kroeker, Peter 156
Kroeker, Peter 174
Kronsgarten 116,117
Krueger, David 113
Krueger, Franz 113
Krueger, Hermann 123
Krueger, Katharina 122
Kuban R xiii,1
Kuban Settlement xiii,94,112, 117,127,153
Kuehn, David 194
Kulm 118
Kuma R xiii
Kuroshan (Kuruschan) 15,144
Kurudujuschan R (see Kuruschan R)
Kuruschan 7-15,49,**53**,90,97, 100,103,**143-44**,176,180
Kuruschan Home for the Elderly 144
Kuruschan Orphanage 144
Kuruschan R 3,4,6-14,21-25,38, 49,52,53,63,71,77,79,83,88, 90,111,113,130,144,148,156, 167,175,179,185,189,192
Kustanay 103,107
Kutuzovka (Petershagen) 15,43, 172
Kvitkovoye (Pastwa) 15,169

L

Ladekopp 3,4,6-15,**54**,74,97, 103,116,**114-16**,156,183
Ladekopp, West Prussia
Lammert, Peter 133
Landskrone 6-15,32,36,44-46, **55**,70,82,92,93,97,101,103, 120,136,137,**147-48**,195
Landwirtschafticher Verein (see Agricultural Society)
Lange, Friedrich 126
Lange, Wilhelm 93,126,127
Langemann, Jakob 157
Langemann, Peter 171
Langermann, Abraham 129
Langermann, Johann 163
Lankove (Landskrone) 147
Lankovoye (Landskrone) 15, 147,148
Latvia xiii
Leningrad (see St Petersburg)
Lenzmann, Elder August 114, 126,193
Lenzmann, Hermann 127
Lepp, Heinrich 190
Letkemann, Jakob 140
Levadnoye (Tiegenhagen) 15, 192
Lichtenau 3,4,6-15,24,25,30,43, **56**,**57**,60-62,71,81,95,97,101, 103,110,112,113,118,135, **148-50**,154,162
References to the railway station during the evacuation of the Molotschna are not indexed
Lichtenau Flemish Mennonite Church 110,113,121,151,161, 183,184
Lichtenau - Flemish Mennonite Church together with other villages 110,111,113,118,125, 129,145,149,155,163,171,173, 182,196
Lichtfelde 4,6-16,22,23,**58**,69, 77,79,93,97,103,105,106,141, 145,**150-52**,164
Lichtfelde Evangelical Mennonite Brotherhood Church (Allianzgemende) 151,192
Liebenau 4,6-15,**59**,82,92,97, 103,124,**152-54**,184,196,197
Lindenau 3,4,6-15,30,53,56, **60-62**,94,97,103,123,148, **154-56**
Lindenau Zentralschule 155
Lincoln, Nebraska 108
Lithuania xiii
Little Felsental 117
Ljapin 157
Loepp, Elder Aron 193
Loepp, Johann 173
Loewen, Daniel 125
Loewen, David 108
Loewen, David 125
Loewen, David 175
Loewen, David Kornelius 164
Loewen, Dietrich 186
Loewen, Dietrich Dietrich 178
Loewen, Gerhard 145
Loewen, Gerhard Gerhard 123
Loewen, Gertruda 186
Loewen, Isaak 155
Loewen, Jakob 127
Loewen, Jakob 163
Loewen, Jakob 168
Loewen, Jakob 185
Loewen, Jakob Abraham 191
Loewen, Johann 179
Loewen, Kornelius 113
Loewen, Maria 178
Loewen, P 110
Loewen, Peter 107
Loewen, Peter 117
Loewen, Peter 128
Loewen, Peter 163
Loewen, Walter 128
Loewen, Wilhelm 113
Loewen, Wilhelm 163
Lohrenz 180
Lohrenz, Peter 114
Lopp, Kornelius 163
Lower Saxony 138
Ludwigsberg 99
Lugovka (Fuerstenau) 15,124

Lutheran (s) 93,95,126,129,136, 137,142,150,156,158,183,195
Lyubimovka (Lindenau) 15,57. 156

M

Makhno, Makhnovze 95,102, 110,112,115,121,167,186
Makovka 15
Mandtler, Aron A 150
Mandtler, Gerhard 155
Mandtler, Jakob 178
Mandtler, Jakob 178
Mandtler, Jakob Gerhard 155
Mandtler, Peter 174
Margenau 4,6-14,38,**63**,69,70, 76,79,93,97,102-4,130, **156-58**,180,194
Margenau - Flemish Mennonite Church together with other villages 105,108,121,125,129, 130,136,137,147,149,157,170, 179,184,193
Margenau, Siberia 157
Margenau, West Prussia 156
Maria, Mother of the Czar 156
Maria School for the Deaf and Dumb 95,112,190,191
Marianau (see Margenau)
Mariapol (see Mariupol)
Mariawohl 6-15,**64**,**65**,70,73,97, 103,**158-59**,163,166,170
Marienburg 93,99,109,111,113, 114,120,123,124,128,151,152, 156,159,161,164,171,172,174, 175,177,183,189,191,192,196
Marien Taubstummenschule (See Maria School for the Deaf and Dumb)
Marienthal 4,6-15,**66**,75,78,97, 103,104,107,**159-61**,172-4, 181
Marienwerder 108,111,124,128, 131,159,164,167,177,180
Marion County, Kansas 108
Mariupol xiv,3,5,101,192
Maryanovka 15
Martens 165
Martens 171
Martens Family 189
Martens, Abraham 114
Martens, Aganetha 136
Martens, Eugenie 115
Martens, Gerhard 111
Martens, J 119
Martens, Jakob 105
Martens, Jakob 111
Martens, Jakob 191
Martens, Johann 136
Martens, Johann 163
Martens, Johann 171
Martens, Johann 171
Martens, Johann 173
Martens, Johann 184
Martens, Johann 196
Martens, Kornelius 130,154
Martens, Kornelius Kornelius 127,132,157,177,186
Martens, Peter 145
Martens, Peter 179
Martens, Sara 132
Martens, Wilhelm 173
Mathies, Bernhard 193
Matthias, Isaiah 177
Matthies 110
Matthies 152
Matthies, A 122
Matthies, Aron 173
McPherson County, Kansas 108
Meckelburger, Johann 157
Mecklenburg 126
Medical Corps (Sanitaetsdienst) 95,127
Mediterranean Sea 99
Melitopol xiv,5,15,57,102,111, 175
Melitopol Uezd 100
Memrik Colony 94,137,152, 154,184
Menno Celebration 154,184
Mennonite Brethren Church not indexed
Special map 11
Explanation 101
Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) 95,109,116,121,125, 135,136,138,140,141,146,153, 157,164-66,170,180,184,195
Mennonite Centre 136
Mennonitische Rundschau not indexed
Merino Sheep (see Spanish Merino Sheep)
Michailowka 4
Mierau, Peter 125
Millerovo xiii
Minsk xiii
Mirovaya Station 103,119
Moerr 151
Mogilev 2
Mogutsheye Collective Farm 139
Moldavia xiii
Molochansk (Halbstadt, Neu-Halbstadt, Muntau) 15, **43**,57,104,136,164,194
Molochnaya R 3,4,6-14, 20,24, 25,40,43,60,67,68,93,99,101, 109,113,117,133,148,153,154, 161,162,167,175,181,189,191
Molokans 4,6,93,99
Moloschna R (see Molochnaya R)
Molotschna Bruecke 101
Molotschna Mennonite Council not indexed
Molotschna R (see Molochnaya R)
Molotschna (Mennonite) School Board 112,117,122,131,134, 147,151,163,177,187
Montal 3,11
Moputnyeye 15
Morija Deaconess Home 95, 134,136,163,187
Moscow not indexed
Many were at conference there in 1925
Many went there in 1929 for visas
Mostovoye (Tiegerweide) 15,43, 194
Mueller, Georg 163
Muensterberg 3,4,6-15,20,24, 25,**67**,94,95,97,103,110,113, 149,153,**161-62**
Muensterberg, West Prussia 161
Muntau 3,4,6-15,40,42,43,**68**, 89,95,97,103,104,134,**162-64**, 191,193
Muntau Hospital 163
Murmansk 184,192

N

Nachtigal, Abram 151
Nachtigal, Andreas 177
Nachtigal, Heinrich Heinrich 120
Nachtigal, Tobias 171
Nadezhda Collective Farm 197
Napoleonic Wars 93,179
Nassau 3
Nelgovka 7-15
References to the railway station during the evacuation of the Molotschna are not indexed
Nepulyevka Colony xiv
Neu Samara Colony 94,137
Neuborn 95
Neudorf 3
Neudorf, Heinrich 131
Neufeld 155
Neufeld 184
Neufeld, Abram 156
Neufeld, Abram 189
Neufeld, Agatha 148
Neufeld, David 155
Neufeld, Franz 143
Neufeld, Franz 189
Neufeld, Gerhard 114
Neufeld, Gerhard 155
Neufeld, Gerhard P 176
Neufeld, H 117
Neufeld, H 156
Neufeld, Heinrich 154
Neufeld, Heinrich 176
Neufeld, Hermann 123
Neufeld, Isaak 181
Neufeld, Jakob 107
Neufeld, Jakob 114
Neufeld, Jakob 127
Neufeld, Jakob 151
Neufeld, Johann 133
Neufeld, Johann 144
Neufeld, Johann 160
Neufeld, Johann 171
Neufeld, Johann 173
Neufeld, Kornelius 165
Neufeld, Kornelius 187
Neufeld, Kornelius Kornelius 186
Neufeld, Maria 124
Neufeld, Maria 137
Neufeld, Peter 111
Neufeld, Peter 134
Neufeld, Peter 144
Neufeld, Peter 156
Neufeld, Peter 171
Neufeld, Peter 176
Neufeld, Peter 187
Neufeld, Susanna 195
Neufeld, Wilhelm 124
Neufeld, Wilhelm 127
Neufeld, Wilhelm 144
Neufeld, Wilhelm 153
Neufeldt, Gerhard 111
Neufeldt, Hermann 111
Neu-Halbstadt 6-15,40,41,**42**, 43,68,94,96,97,101,103,104, **133-36**,164
Neu-Halbstadt Maedchenschule 94,96,104,134,136
Neu-Halbstadt (Halbstadt) Flemish Mennonite Church 134,135,158,163
Neu-Halbstadt (Halbstadt) MB Church 10,134
Neuheim 95
Neuhof 95,176
Neukirch 4,6-15,33,58,**69**,76,84, 93,97,103,122,123,**164-66**
Neukirch Flemish Mennonite Church 158,163,166
Neumann 193
Neumann Dirk 161
Neumann, Jakob 110
Neumann, Jakob 117
Neumann, Jakob 161
Neu Samara Colony xiii
Neu-Schoensee, Sagradovka 184
Neustaedter, J 141
Neustaedter, Kornelius 105
Neustaedter, Maria 141
New Russia not indexed
New York, USA 108
Nicholas I, Czar 139,166
Nickel Brothers 160
Nickel, Elder Abraham David 177,178
Nickel, David 131
Nickel, David 177
Nickel, Gerhard Gerhard 178
Nickel, Heinrich 162
Nickel, Johann 161
Nickel, Elder Peter 149
Nickel, Wilhelm 161
Nicolaidorf (see Nikolaidorf)
Nikkel, Heinrich 133
Nikolaidorf 6-14,38,63-5,**70**, 97,103,104,158,1**66-67**
Nikolaiyev xiv,1,2,5
Nikolayevitch, Count Konstantin 155,175
Nikopol xiv,150
Nogai (nomads) 3,4,6,93,94,99, 108,109,114,117,118,120,128, 131,133,151,154,156,159,162, 167,168,172,174-6,180,181, 185,196
North America 94-6,104,107, 157,170,172,180,182
Nova Sich 1
Novgorod 2
Novomizhailovka 15
Novonikolyevka 15,180
Novopilkovka 15
Novopoltavka 15
Novospasskoye 15
Novoye 15

O

Ocheretovatoya 15
Odessa xiii,1,2,5,100,110,185
Ohrloff 3,4,6-15,20,24,25,49, 56,**71**,88,94,95,97,101,103, 104,110,112,133,139,155,156, **167-68**,171,176,189,191,193, 196
Ohrloff - Flemish Mennonite Church together with other villages 94,110,113,123,134, 140,145,149,151,163,165,167, 168,171,173,174,182,190,191, 193,194
Ohrloff Girls School 167,190
Ohrloff Hospital 167
Ohrloff Zentralschule 114,167, 193
Ohrlofferfelde 153
Oka R xiii
Oktoberfeld 122,132,178
Olfert, Abram 144
Omsk 157
Opara, Pyotr 169
Orechov 4,5,6,158

Orenburg Colony xiii,94,106, 137
Orenburg (city) xiii
Orlof (see Ohrloff)
Orlovo (Ohrloff, Tiege, Blumenort, Rosenort) 15,57, 104,112,168,176,191
Orsha 2
Oryckhovka 15
Ostraja Hill 3
Ostrikovka (Liebenau, Wernersdorf) 15,154,197
Ott, Jakob 185
Ott, Johann 158
Ottoman Empire 1,99,100

P

Palatinate 187
Panfilovka (Schardau, Pordenau, Marienthal) 15, 161,174,181
Pankratz, David 147
Pankratz, David Johann 195
Pankratz, Heinrich 152
Pankratz, Rita 104,106
Paraguay not indexed
Was the destination of many refugees after World War II
Parker, South Dakota 137
Pastwa 4,6-15,31,39,**72**,97,103, 119,131,**168-69**,177
Paul I, Czar 93,99
Pauls Family 119
Pauls, Aganetha (nee Wiebe) 196
Pauls, Franz 120
Pauls, Klaas 119
Pauls, Kornelius 120
Pauls, Nikolai 120
Pauls, Tina 120
Paulsheim 6-14,36,64,65,**73**,98, 103,158,**170**
Penner 105
Penner, Abraham 118
Penner, Abram 163
Penner, Abram 195
Penner, Anna 144
Penner, Aron 151
Penner, Bernhard 126
Penner, Bernhard 127
Penner, Daniel 181
Penner, David 105
Penner, David 180
Penner, Elisabeth 195
Penner, Franz 190
Penner, Gerhard 158
Penner, Gerhard 191
Penner, Heinrich 115
Penner, Heinrich 143
Penner, Heinrich 150
Penner, Heinrich 163
Penner, Heinrich 163
Penner, Heinrich 175
Penner, Heinrich 182
Penner, Heinrich 189
Penner, Helene 131
Penner, Isaak 142,143
Penner, Jakob 109
Penner, Jakob 117
Penner, Jakob 150
Penner, Jakob 176
Penner, Jakob Peter 156
Penner, Johann 113
Penner, Klaas 156
Penner, Kornelius 147
Penner, Kornelius 153
Penner, Kornelius 167
Penner, Peter 136
Penner, Peter 157
Penner, Peter 162
Penner, Peter 174
Penner, Tobias 110
Penner, Walter 143
Penner, Wilhelm 155
Perekop 4,5,6,143
Perm 197
Peters, Minister Abraham 105, 122,123,136,165,194
Peters, Abraham 145
Peters, Anna 122
Peters, Aron 179
Peters, Elder Bernhard 129,157
Peters, Bernhard 130
Peters, Dirk 196
Peters, Franz 120
Peters, Franz 188
Peters, Gerhard 145
Peters, Gerhard 147
Peters, Gerhard 174
Peters, Gerhard 190
Peters, Heinrich 175
Peters, Elder Heinrich 184
Peters, Heinrich 184
Peters, Isaak 123
Peters, Elder Isaak 185
Peters, Jakob 130
Peters, Jakob 174
Peters, Jakob 192
Peters, Johann 121
Peters, Johann 128
Peters, Johann 129
Peters, Johann 129,174
Peters, Johann 148
Peters, Johann Johann 175
Peters, Katharina 130
Peters, Margaretha 175
Peters, Peter 174
Peters, Susan 175
Peters, Wilhelm 196
Petershagen 3,4,6-15,40,43,54, **74**,94-6,98,103,104,134,144, 161,**170-72**,183
Petker, Johann Johann 147
Petropawlowka 4,6
Petrovka 15
Petrovka (nr Halbstadt) 40
Plett, Elder Gerhard 108,137, 139,147,157
Plett, Johann Johann 135
Poetker, Isaak 148
Poettker, Heinrich 120
Poettker, Isaak Johann 197
Poettker, Johann 123
Poettker, Johann Johann 120
Poland as a destination for the Trek not indexed
Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth 1
Pologi Station 103,107
Poltava 2,110,113,155,191
Pordenau 4,6-15,66,**75**,80,98, 103,104,107,115,137,148,159, 160,161,**170-74**,180,181
Pordenau Flemish Mennonite Church 114,115,123,131,135, 141,143,149,160,169,173,185
Potemkin, Grigorii 99
Povorotnoye (Fuerstenwerder) 126
Prangenau 4,6-14,33,63,69,**76**, 84,87,98,103,129,137,164, **174-75**,188
Predsedatel Redotsch 159
Prenzlau Refugee Camp, Germany 105,110,114,118,

122,138,140,150,152,158,164, 166,168,176,197
Prieb, Emanual 135
Priluvkovka (Muensterberg) 15, 162
Pripet Marshes 2
Pripyat R xiii,2
Prischib 3,7-14,40,93,133,180
Prochanov, J S 134
Prostorye (Grossweide) 15,133
Prussia, West Prussia not indexed
Many settlers originated there
Przekhorka 107
Pschuchovka 119
Purge, the 95,107,121,125,132, 138,182,192,197

Q

Quapp, Johann 155
Quapp, Johann 176
Quebec, Canada 172,195
Quiring, Abraham 170
Quiring, Franz 183
Quiring, Friederich 142

R

Rabsch, August 126
Raduga 134
Rahn, Jakob 187
Rahn, Johann Johann 195
Ratzlaff, Anna 124
Ratzlaff, Benjamin 119
Ratzlaff, Benjamin 127
Ratzlaff, Elder Benjamin 177
Ratzlaff, Peter 119
Ratzlaff, Wilhelm 128
Reds/Soviets/Bolsheviks/ Communists not indexed
Regehr Brothers 141
Regehr, Elder Aaron 173
Regehr, Abraham 177
Regehr, Elias 185
Regehr, Franz 143
Regehr, Gerhard 132
Regehr, Gerhard 173
Regehr, Gerhard 193
Regehr, Isaak P 105
Regehr, Isaak 169
Regehr, Jakob 112
Regehr, Jakob 169
Regehr, Johann 112
Regehr, Johann 136
Regehr, Johann 142
Regehr, Johann David 188
Regehr, Kornelius 158
Regehr, Peter 112
Regehr, Peter 147
Regehr, Peter P 157
Regier, Heinrich 141
Regier, Heinrich 177
Regier, J 150
Regier, Jakob 183
Regier, Johann 110
Regier, Johann 133
Regier, Johann 177
Regier, Johann J 141
Regier, Katharina 141
Regier, Katharina 141
Regier, Klaas Klaas 141
Regier, Peter 110
Regier, Peter 141
Regier, Regier, 150
Reimer 111
Reimer 128
Reimer Family 173
Reimer, A Widow 139
Reimer, Abraham 150
Reimer, Abraham J 164
Reimer, Adolf A 107
Reimer, Aganetha 117
Reimer, Anna 117
Reimer, Mrs Daniel 107
Reimer, David Peter 29,110,117
Reimer, Fenja 162
Reimer, Franz 162
Reimer, Gertruda 117
Reimer, H 167
Reimer, Heinrich 105
Reimer, Heinrich 121
Reimer, Heinrich 139
Reimer, Heinrich 151
Reimer, Helena 167
Reimer, Jakob 151
Reimer, Jakob David 116,126, 127
Reimer, Jakob Peter 117
Reimer, Johann 121
Reimer, Johann 124
Reimer, Katharina 127
Reimer, Klaas 94,161,171
Reimer, Klaas 167
Reimer, Kornelius 115
Reimer, Kornelius J 127
Reimer, Maria (nee Penner) 150
Reimer, Nikolai 130
Reimer, Nikolai 148
Reimer, Peter 133
Reimer, Peter 160
Reinfeld 95
Rempel, Alexander 127
Rempel, Aron 127
Rempel, Franz F 178
Rempel, Georg 127
Rempel, Gustav 134
Rempel, Hermann 105
Rempel, Hermann Gustav 143
Rempel, Isbrand 153
Rempel, Isbrandt 170
Rempel, Jakob 154
Rempel, Jakob 173
Rempel, Johann 170
Rempel, Peter 171,176
Rennpenning, Abraham 116
Rennpenning, Abraham 124
Rennpenning, Heinrich 141
Rennpenning, Jakob 116,184
Rennpenning, Jakob 128
Rennpenning, Peter 156
Richert, Abraham 194
Richert, Daniel 121
Richert, Jakob 194
Richert, Heinrich 166
Richter, Heinrich 164
Riediger, girl 150
Riediger, Abraham 151
Riediger, Abraham 155
Riediger, Abraham 174
Riediger, Gerhard Gerhard 155
Riediger, Jakob 113
Riediger, Jakob 152
Riediger, Jakob 188
Riediger, Peter 151
Riesen, Johann 173
Riga xiii,2,99
Rogalsky, Abraham 124
Rogalsky, Elenore 124
Rogalsky, Johann 149
Romania (see Rumania)
Romanovka 188
Rosa Luxembourg Kolkhoz 182
Rosenfeld, Heinrich 140
Rosenfeld, Heinrich 196
Rosenort 3,4,6-16,21,21-23,49,

53,58,**77**,81,98,103,104,111, 112,144,167,168,**175-76**,191
Rosenthal 3,11
Roskoshnoye 15
Rostov xii,5
Rotfront Kolkhoz 195
Rozovka 15
Rozkovka (Rudnerweide) 15, 178
Rudnerweide 4,6-15,17,31,36, 39,**78**,93,94,98,100,104,119, 120,129,131,173,**177-78**,193
Rudnerweide Frisian Mennonite Church 119,121,129,131,132, 160,170,174,177,181,185,188
Rudnerweide, West Prussia 176
Ruechert, Kornelius 119
Rueckenau 4,6-15,35,49,63,**79**, 90,96,98,101,103,104,108, 112,113,156,**179-80**,192
Rueckenau Fire 179
Rueckenau MB Church 94,113, 121,123,125,129,134,143,157, 165,169,179,182,186,190, 191,194
Ruekkenau (see Rueckenau)
Rumania (ian)(Romania) xiii,102,103,104
Ruppel, Karl Widow 142
Ruppel, Karl Friedrich 142
Rups, Elisabeth 174
Rups, Gertruda 174
Rups, Mamya 174
Russia, South Russia, New Russia, northern Russia not indexed
Russification 94
Rybalovka (Fischau) 15,118
Rybinskoye Reservoir xii

S

Sachorjewska, Fort 3
Sadovoye 15
Saengerfest 179
Sagradovka xiii,xiv,94,137,184
Salt Road 4,6,49,84,85,131,142, 174
Samara (city) xiii
Samara R xiv
Sanitaetsdienst (see Medical Corps)
Saratov xiii
Sawatzky 193
Sawatzky, Anna 191
Sawatzky, Isaak 121
Sawatzky, Isaak 129
Sawatzky, Jakob Johann 191
Sawatzky, Johann 191
Sawatzky, Lena 169
Sawatzky, Peter 125
Sawatzky, Peter 189
Sawatzky, Peter 191
Sawatzky, Peter 196
Sawatzky, Wilhelm 197
Schardau 4,6-15,17,26,75,**80**,84, 98,103,107,142,160,161,172, 173,174,177,**180-81**
Schartner, Kaethe 143
Schellenberg 193
Schellenberg, Elder Abraham 123,162,182
Schellenberg, Abraham 125
Schellenberg, Abram 168
Schellenberg, Jakob 175
Schellenberg, Jakob 193
Schlabbach, Christian 126
Schlabbach, Christian 194
Schlachtin and Baratov Colonies xiv
Schmidt, Abraham 121
Schmidt, Andreas 108
Schmidt, Anna (nee Wiens) 187
Schmidt, Christan 145
Schmidt, David 120
Schmidt, Heinrich 169
Schmidt, Johann 108
Schmidt, Johann 110
Schmidt, Johann 188
Schmidt, Johann Peter 135
Schmidt, Klaas 187
Schmidt, Margaretha 188
Schmidt, Nikolai 111
Schmidt, Nikolai 188
Schmidt, Nikolai Heinrich 188
Schmidt, Nikolai Peter 188
Schmidt, Peter 187
Schmidt, Peter (Pieter) 187
Schmidt, Peter 188
Schmidt, Peter 188
Schmidt, Peter 193
Schmidt, Elder Peter 194
Schmidt, Peter P 151
Schmidt, Peter Peter 187,188
Schmidt, Sarah David 188
Schmidt, Tobias 126
Schoenau 3,4,6-15,30,77,**81**,89, 98,103,113,131,162,**181-83**, 191
Schoeneberg 164
Schoenfeld Colony xiv
Schoensee 3,4,6-15,28,59,**82**, 98,99,103,116,147,163, **183-85**,196
Schoensee Flemish Mennonite Church 116,123,136,145, 154,184,196
Schoensee, Siberia
Schroeder 134
Schroeder 153
Schroeder, Abraham 178
Schroeder, Bernhard 196
Schroeder, David 147
Schroeder, George 172
Schroeder, Heinrich 134
Schroeder, Peter 107
Schroeder, Peter 129
Schroeder, Peter 155
Schroeder, Peter 160
Schroeder, Peter 161
Schroeter, Wilhelm 123
Schulz 128
Schulz Family 173
Schulz, Georg 120
Schulz, Heinrich 121
Schulz, Heinrich 174
Schulz, Jakob 157
Second Martyrs' Synod 157
Seil, Dr 163
Selbstschutz 95,127,135,138, 141,150,162,186,190,191,196
Semenovka 15
Sevastopol xiv,2,5
Seventh Day Adventists 158
Shirokyar 38
Siberia 95,96,102,104,105,107, 110,116-18,121,122,124,125, 129,135,136,140,142,146,152, 154-58,169,170,172,178,184, 190,192,193,196
Siebert, Agatha 143
Siebert, Franz Jakob 143
Siebert, Oberschulz Heinrich 143
Siebert, Nikolai 125
Siemens, Heinrich 111

Siemens, Heinrich 165
Siemens, Jakob 114
Siemens, Johann 125
Siemens, John 172
Siemens, Kornelius 119
Siemens, Peter 143
Siemens, Peter 149
Siemens, Peter 184
Siemens, Peter P 161
Simferopol xiv,5,153
Sissikulak R 39,78,131,177
Sivasch R 83
Skelevatoye 15
Sladkaya Balka 15
Snegurovka (Schoensee) 15,185
Solikamsk 103,106,107
Solovki 168
South America not indexed
Frequent destination of refugees
Soviets/Bolsheviks/ Communists/Reds not indexed
Spanish Merino Sheep/Wool 113,145,155,165,171,191
Sparrau 4,6-15,39,52,78,**83**,98, 103,104,123,143,**185-87**
Sparrau MB Church 132,185, 186
Spasskoye 15
Spat xiv
Spat-Schoental MB Church 157
Spenst, Heinrich 162
Spenst, Helene 123
Stalingrad (Volgograd) xiii, 96
Stalino 154
Stara Sich 1
Steinbach Estate 6-15,17,26,76, 79,80,**84**,**85**,**86**,87,98,100,109, 114,132,139,151,180,**187-88**
Steinfeld 6-14,27,76,84-86,**87**, 98,103,116,175,187,**188-89**
Stobbe 155
Stobbe, Cornelius 136
Stobbe, Heinrich 131
Stobbe, Heinrich 155
Stobbe, Heinrich 177
Stobbe, Peter 123
Stobbe, Peter 145
Stobbe, Wilhelm 156
Stockholm 2
St Petersburg (Leningrad) 2,101, 108,109,129,135,153,157
Strauss, August 181
Strauss, Friedrich 194
Strauss, Gottlieb 194
Strauss, Johann 194
Stuhm 106,124,151,177
Stulnevo 12-15,43,44,51,74
Reference to the railway station during the evacuation of the Molotschna not indexed
Sudermann Brothers 134
Sudermann, Abraham 133
Sudermann, Jakob Jakob 95, 105,134,135
Sudermann, Johann 120
Sudermann, Leonhard 108
Sudermann, Nikolai 111
Sukkau 121
Sukkau, Jakob 161
Sukkau, Johann 111
Sukkau, Maria 161
Sukkau, Peter 180
Suvorovka Settlement xiii
Svyetlodolinskoye (Lichtenau) 15,43,57,150
Svetloye (Alexanderwohl) 15, 109
Swedish Exercises 145
Swetz 107,118,120
Switzerland 185

T

Taganrog xiv,5
Takmak (see Tokmak)
Takmak Hill 3
Takmak R (see Tokmak R)
Tallinn 2
Tarasovka 15
Taurida Province 5,27,100
Tavonius, Dr Erich 134,163,164
Tavonius, Dr Erika 164
Tavria (see Taurida)
Tchongrav, Crimea xiv,190
Teichgraew, Heinrich 113
Teichgraef, Heinrich 157
Teichroeb, Heinrich 130
Teichroeb, Peter Peter 137
Templar (Friends of Jerusalem) 127
Tenpenie 3
Terek Colony xiii,94,137
Teske, Christian 194
Teutonia S S 108
Thielmann 121
Thielmann, Johann 121
Thiessen 105
Thiessen 109
Thiessen 140
Thiessen, Abraham 182
Thiessen, Abram 116
Thiessen, David 166
Thiessen, Franz 105
Thiessen, Franz 111
Thiessen, Gerhard 113
Thiessen, Heinrich 147
Thiessen, J J 191
Thiessen, Jakob 108
Thiessen, Jakob 132
Thiessen, Jakob 138
Thiessen, Jakob 140,186
Thiessen, Jakob 165
Thiessen, Jakob 182
Thiessen, Jakob 186
Thiessen, Johann 135
Thiessen, Johann 142
Thiessen, Johann 177
Thiessen, Julius 170
Thiessen, Klaas 171
Thiessen, Nikolai 158
Thiessen, Peter 169
Thiessen, Peter 173
Thiessen, Peter 182
Thomsen, Johann 165
Thorn 2,99
Tiege 3,4,6-15,21-23,49,71,**88**, 95,98,100,103,104,111,112, 135,167,168,176,185,**189-91**, 192
Tiege MB Church 190
Tiefenbrunn 11
Tiegenhagen 3,4,6-15,68,81,**89**, 95,98,103,135,144,162, **191-92**
Tiegenhagen MB Church 191
Tiegenhof, Prussia 111,113,117, 123,151,156,161,175,191,196
Tiegenhof Estate 171,172
Tiegerweide 4,6-15,40,42,43,49, 53,58,77,79,**90**,98,102,103, 105,144,**192-94**
Tiegerweide, Siberia 193
Tiessen, Heinrich Bernhard 145
Tikhonovka 15

Tilsit 174
Tkechev, General 102
Toews 111
Toews 116
Toews 168
Toews 176
Toews, Abraham 145
Toews, Oberschulz Abraham 189
Toews, Abra 191
Toews, Aron 123
Toews, Aron 124
Toews, Aron A 151
Toews, Franz 173
Toews, Gerhard 124
Toews, Elder Heinrich 173
Toews, J A 107
Toews, J B 107
Toews, Jakob 111
Toews, Jakob 143
Toews, Elder Jakob 149
Toews, Johann 112
Toews, Johann 116
Toews, Johann 160
Toews, Johann 183
Toews, Johann 189
Toews, Johann 191
Toews, Oberschulz Kornelius 94,100
Toews, Kornelius 161
Toews, Kornelius 166
Toews, Kornelius 189
Toews, Oberschulz Kornelius 189
Toews, Oberschulz Peter 106, 145,156,164
Toews, Peter 123
Toews, Peter 124
Toews, Peter 139
Toews, Peter 189
Togasak Station 103,111
Tokmak xiv,3,4,7-15,32,34,54, 90,93
Reference to the railway station during the evacuation of the Molotschna not indexed
Tokmak R 3,4,6-14,28,29,34,40, 59,74,82,92,93,116,123,141, 144,152,153,170,183,196
Tokmak Railway 12-14,101-2, 103,116,136,141,147,149
Tomsk 119,164
Topeka, Kansas 108
Toschingul R 3
Trans Siberian Railway 136, 157,193
Travyevoye (Altona) 15,111
Trek, into Poland and Germany not indexed
Troitskoye 15
Trudovoye 15
Tschernigowka (see Chernigovka)
Tschokrak R 17,26,66,75,80,84, 85,86,106,114,116,159,160, 172,180,187
Tschumakenweg (see Salt Road)
Turks 99
Tyerpyenye 15
Typhus/Typhoid Fever 95,115, 121,122,124,133,136,146,150, 153,155,162,176,182,184,188, 191,196

U

Udarnik (Neukirch,Friedensruh) 15,123,166
Ufa (city) xiii
Ufa Colony xiii,162
Ukraine, Ukrainians not indexed
Ukrainian Orthodox Church 106
Ulbricht, Maria 156
Unger Family 107
Unger 166
Unger, Anna Peter 158
Unger, Daniel 194
Unger, Jakob 179
Unger, Johann 179
Union of South Russian Mennonites 109
United States 94,108,123,124, 137,138,141,162,164,169,182, 185
Unrau, Abram 185
Unrau, Heinrich 153
Unrau, Heinrich David 132
Unrau, Kornelius Heinrich 129
Unruh, Abraham 188
Unruh, Benjamin H 134,135
Unruh, Oberschulz David 126
Unruh, David 192
Unruh, Erna 192
Unruh, Heinrich Family 120
Unruh, Heinrich 127
Unruh, Heinrich 132
Unruh, Heinrich 169
Unruh, Widow Heinrich 192
Uhruh, Heinrich Karl 192
Unruh, Elder Heinrich Peter 134,158,163,164
Unruh, Johann 115
Unruh, Johann 127
Unruh, Kornelius Benjamin 112,134
Unruh, Maria (nee Epp) 112
Unser Blatt 154,184
Unterhaltungsblatt 131,165,181
Ural Mountains/region xiii, 102,103,106,107,174,181,185
Ural R xiii
Uruguay 150

V

Vancouver 162
Vassilievka, Kharkov 190
Vereinhaus, Halbstadt 134
Veseloye 15
Vistula Delta/region 93,99,100, 106,114,144,156,175
Vistula R 2
Vladovka (Waldheim, Hierschau) 15,104,137,138, 139,195
Vogt, Jakob 113
Vogt, Jakob 173
Vogt, Lena 169
Vogt, Maria 169
Volga R xiii,102
Volendam S S 114,115,121,158, 168,190
Volhynia (ians) xiii,95,127,129, 136,137,192,194
Vols, Otto 137
Voth 126
Voth, Agnes 128
Voth, Andreas 123,133,134,181
Voth, Andreas 142,143
Voth, Andreas 168,169
Voth, Bernhard 195
Voth, Heinrich 108
Voth, Heinrich 180
Voth, Jakob 121
Voth, Jakob 147
Voth, Johann 174

Voth, Kornelius 120
Voth, Maria 121
Voth, Peter 120
Voth, Peter 147
Voth, Peter 183
Voth, Tobias 153
Voth, Tobias 187
Voznyesyenka 15

W

Walddorf 11
Walde, Aron 145
Walde, David 145
Walde, Dietrich 145
Walde, Jakob 169
Waldheim 4,6-15,36,45,46,**91**, 93,95,98,99,100,102,103,105, 122,136-8,141,142,148,157, 165,**194-96**
Waldheim Hospital 195,196
Waldheim MB Church 194
Waldheim Soviet 195
Wall 173
Wall Family 189
Wall, Abram 141
Wall, Abram 186
Wall, Aron 142
Wall, Aron 173
Wall, Bernhard 141
Wall, Bernhard 165
Wall, Franz Jr 163,164
Wall, Franz Sr 163
Wall Gerhard 101
Wall, Gerhard 174
Wall, Jakob 147
Wall, Jakob 169
Wall, Johann 101
Wall, Johann 151
Wall, K 193
Wall, Kornelius 152
Wall, Peter 126
Wall, Peter 169
Walschbrun 187
Walter, Gerhard 99
Warkentin, Abraham 146
Warkentin, Abraham 161
Warkentin, Abraham 189
Warkentin, Abram 144
Warkentin, Aron 109
Warkentin, Aron 130
Warkentin, Aron 165
Warkentin, Aron 168
Warkentin, Bernhard 110
Warkentin, Elder Dirk 149,171
Warkentin, Franz 140
Warkentin, Gerhard 125
Warkentin, Gerhard 145
Warkentin, Gerhard 155
Warkentin, Heinrich 111
Warkentin, Elder Jakob 94,109, 110,149
Warkentin, Jakob 110
Warkentin, Jakob 179
Warkentin, Johann 111
Warkentin, Johann 113
Warkentin, Johann 145
Warkentin, Johann 145
Warkentin, Johann 173
Warkentin, Johann 175
Warkentin, Johann 175
Warkentin, Justina 125
Warkentin, Kornelius 190
Warkentin, Nikolai 152
Warsaw 2,99,107
Warthegau 96,161,175
Wasserau 3
Wassilowka 4
Wedel, Mrs 194
Wedel, Benjamin 193
Wedel, F 141
Wedel, Heinrich 153
Wedel, J Family
Wedel, Johann 194
Wedel, Kornelius 93
Wedel, Kornelius 194
Wedel, Elder Peter 100,107,108
Weier, Abraham 128
Weinau 3,11,81
Welk, Aron 186
Wernersdorf 4,6-15,44,51,55, 59,91,**92**,98,103,116,154,184, **196-97**
Wernersdorf, West Prussia 196
West (Western Europe) not indexed
West Prussia not indexed
White Army 13,95,102,105,107, 112,125,127,135,138,184,186, 196
Wichert Brothers 184
Wiebe 144
Wiebe 149
Wiebe 162
Wiebe 180
Wiebe, Abraham 149
Wiebe, Abram 171
Wiebe, Abram 193
Wiebe, Abram Peter 155
Wiebe, Abram Peter 155
Wiebe, Aron 191
Wiebe, Bernhard 191
Wiebe, D 133
Wiebe, Dietrich 152
Wiebe, Dirk 151
Wiebe, Gerhard 147
Wiebe, Gerhard 163
Wiebe, Heinrich 168
Wiebe, Heinrich 190
Wiebe, Heinrich 190
Wiebe, Isaak 162
Wiebe, Jakob 121
Wiebe, Jakob 145
Wiebe, Jakob 181
Wiebe, Johann 110
Wiebe, Johann 160
Wiebe, Johann Jr 178
Wiebe, Johann Sr 178
Wiebe, Johann 192
Wiebe, Klaas 161
Wiebe, Leonhard 161
Wiebe, Peter 122
Wiebe, Peter 146
Wiebe, Peter 156
Wiebe, Peter 160
Wiebe, Peter 181
Wiebe, Peter 193
Wiebe, Philipp 139,167
Wieler, Jakob 123
Wiens 105
Wiens Widow 167
Wiens 175
Wiens, Abraham 115
Wiens, Abraham 182
Wiens, Abram 151
Wiens, Agatha 143
Wiens, Aron 143
Wiens B Family 121
Wiens, Bernhard 130
Wiens, Bernhard 184
Wiens, Bernhard 190
Wiens, David 147
Wiens, ietrich Johann 143
Wiens, Franz 121
Wiens, Franz 155
Wiens, Friedrich 146

Wiens, Heinrich 111
Wiens, Heinrich 129
Wiens, Heinrich 152
Wiens, Elder Heinrich 157
Wiens, Heinrich 163
Wiens, Heinrich 169
Wiens, Heinrich 188
Wiens, Isaak 110
Wiens, J 133
Wiens, Jakob 117
Wiens, Jakob 124
Wiens, Jakob 129
Wiens, Jakob 155
Wiens, Jakob 171
Wiens, Jakob 193
Wiens, Johann 110
Wiens, Johann 110
Wiens, Johann 118
Wiens, Johann 161
Wiens, Johann 176
Wiens, Johann 176
Wiens, Johann 176
Wiens, Oberschulz Klaas 93, 109,111,113,114,123,133,148, 149,154,162,183,187
Wiens, Klaus 117
Wiens, Kornelius 114
Wiens, Martin 155
Wiens, Nikolai 176
Wiens, Nikolai Franz 193
Wiens, Peter 121
Wiens, Peter 140
Wiens, Peter 145
Wiens, Peter 196
Wiens, Peter 196
Wiens, Thomas 167
Wilhelmina Maria, Czarina 158
Willingen, Germany 138
Willms Widow 125
Willms Family 166
Willms, Abram Peter 125
Willms, Agatha 176
Willms, Franz 191
Willms, Gerhard 138
Willms, Gerhard Franz 176
Willms, Gerhard Heinrich 136
Willms, Gertrude 121
Willms, Heinrich 140
Willms, Heinrich 163
Willms, Heinrich H 136
Willms, Heinrich H 148
Willms, Ida 121
Willms, J 144
Willms, Jakob 125
Willms, Jakob 127
Willms, Jakob 178
Willms, Johann 107
Willms, Johann 113
Willms, Johann 125
Willms, Johann 142
Willms, Johann 183
Willms, Kornelius 122
Willms, Kornelius 125
Willms, Peter 125
Willms, Peter 184
Willms, Sara 137
Wilms, J A 171
Winnipeg 99,190
Wittenberg, Jakob 125
Woelk, Jakob 117
Woelk, Jakob 118
Woelk, Kornelius 110
Woelk, Susanna 169
Wolf, Kornelius 196
World War I 95,108,109,127, 140,163,184
World War II 96,154,184,190, 192
Wrangel, General 13,95,102
Wuest, Eduard 126,131,143
Wurms, Jakob 183
Wurms, Johann 183

Y

Yalta xiv
Yazykovo Colony xiii,xiv
Ylinyanya 124
Yurevka 15
Yuzhnyy Bug R xiv,1,99

Z

Zaporozhia 1,99
Zaporozhye (Alexandrovsk) xiii, xiv,3,5,103,119,120,128,144, 150,172
Zaporozhye (Taurida) 15
Zarekonstantinovka Station 101
Zelenovka 15
Zhloba, General 13,102
Zionism 127
Zyelyenyi Yar (Mariawohl) 15, 159

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One of Huebert's longstanding interests is history, particularly that of his own heritage, Mennonite history. He attributes some of this interest to his high school Mennonite history teacher, Gerhard Lohrenz. Huebert has published "Hierschau: An example of Russian Mennonite Life"(1986), "Kornelius Martens: Our Skillful Advocate"(1986) and "Events and People: Events in Russian Mennonite History and the People that made them Happen"(1999). Huebert and William Schroeder have collaborated in the production of the "Mennonite Historical Atlas"(First Edition 1990, Second Edition 1996), which has sold well over 5,000 copies.

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