



The Heritage

www.goesselmuseum.com

Summer 2023

From Prussia to Russia

By Fern Bartel, Museum Director

In Goessel and our surrounding communities, thoughts are turning to the 2024 150th celebration of the emigration of our ancestors from South Russia (now Ukraine) to Kansas. But the migration from South Russia was not the first time the community had moved together. In 1819, Elder Peter Wedel led his congregation by wagon train from Przechowko, West Prussia, to the Molotschna Valley, South Russia, and established the Alexanderwohl village and church there.

The following are snippets of the earlier migration to South Russia as originally told by Wedel's daughter, Mrs. Issac Fast. (*credits at end of article*)

Life in West Prussia

The Przechowko "group fared very well [in West Prussia*] both materially and spiritually ... A family usually had two horses, two cows, six sheep, and several chickens ... The main products were rye, flax, and vegetables. The rye was ground between two stones and baked into bread. The flax stalks were prepared ... for spinning ... then made into linen for homemade clothes."

War clouds came as France threatened Germany. West Prussia was part of Germany at that time. "Germany introduced universal military training and drafted all young men to serve as soldiers" including Elder Peter Wedel who was imprisoned because he refused to take up "murderous weapons." When Wedel and all the draftees were released, the "church decided to migrate to Russia."

"In the summer of 1819 much flax was sown, because this furnished the linen to cover their wagons. The wagons were all made fourteen feet long with hoops over them which were covered with double linen ... They were all poor, and they could not sell the land, only the cows, sheep and chickens ... The beginning of May 1820 was decided as the time for leaving."

The Migration Begins

"Peter Wedel, elder of the Wedel Church as it was then called, was 27 years old in 1820, the beginning of May, when he led the entire group composed of

1820 Migration, continued on page 3

Upcoming Events:

Museum Hours

May - September:
Tues - Sat: 10 am - 5 pm

Small Town Saturday Night Workshops, 6:30 pm July 22

macramé plant hanger

August 26

floral arranging

See page 2

Fourth Monday Genealogy Group

7:00 pm Goessel City
Community Room

July — no meeting

August 28

Pat Penner — 150th plans

Sept. 25

J. Harvey Koehn — Train
Depots

October 23

Elaine McAllister —
Creating and Maintaining a
Heritage Album

Country Threshing Days

August 4, 5, & 6

See page 4

Goessel Harvest Festival

October 7

Free museum admission

Low German Saying

Aula Aunfank ess schwoa. All beginnings are hard.

Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum Board Members:

John Janzen, President; Pat Penner, Vice-President; Sandy Duerksen, Secretary; Aileen Esau, Treasurer; * Fern Bartel, Museum Director; * Roger Bartel, Myron Goertzen, Kris Schmucker, Lloyd Voth, Nelson Voth, Connie Wiens, James Wiens. *non-voting members

Ditt unt Daut (this and that) by Fern Bartel, Museum Director

The Celebration Begins!

Did you see the flags in the Goessel, Alexanderwohl, and Tabor cemeteries over the Memorial Day week-end? Our ancestors had the Faith and Courage to take the Action of leaving their homesteads of 50 plus years to immigrate to America. We seek to honor and thank them. We will put the flags up again for Memorial Day 2024 and again in September when we celebrate the arrival of the Alexanderwohl immigrants to this area. Thanks be to God!



Thanks to museum board member Pat Penner for this wonderful idea of the flags, researching the best materials, and the accompanying leg work for the project. Also thanks to the crews who located the ancestors' plots and put out the flags.



Introducing the 150th Celebration Logo

Look for this logo, designed by Steve Banman, during events and activities, and on advertisements and promotional items throughout the 150th celebration.

We are asking for donations to help with costs associated with the yearlong celebration. Send financial gifts to the Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum at P.O. Box 231, Goessel, KS 67053 with the notation "150th Anniversary Celebration."

Matching Money for Endowment

The Patterson Family Foundation has made a matching grant up to \$70,000 available to the Goessel Community Foundation and those, like the museum, with funds under their umbrella. The museum has an endowment fund for general operating expenses. There are two windows of time when financial gifts received will qualify to receive the match: monies contributed from now until September 8th and monies donated from September 20th to November 20th (provided grant funds are still available).

If interested in adding to the museum's endowment fund and multiplying the value of your contribution, please make checks payable to Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum and write "Patterson Matching Funds" in the memo line. Mail or drop off your check between now and September 8, or from September 20 to November 20. Thank you for considering this exciting opportunity!

Small Town Saturday Night Workshops, July & August 2023

July 22, 6:30 pm at the Prep School
Macramé Plant Hanger with Knits & Knots by Jenna
\$30 museum members, \$35 non-members
RSVP to the museum by July 8.

August 26, 6:30 pm at the Prep School
Floral Arranging with Firebranch Farm
\$25 museum members, \$30 non-members
RSVP to the museum by August 12.

South Bloomfield School Gets New Paint

The South Bloomfield School was prepped and painted by Painting Services of Newton, owned by Marcos Duran. Fabulous job!



1820 Migration, continued from page 1

thirty families with thirty large traveling vehicles from Pschokowka, West Prussia to Russia.”

“They had to travel in a roundabout way to reach the German border city, Podmolashinski. Molashinska was the Russian border city. Everybody who wanted to cross the border had to go here and submit to a thorough customs examination.”

“There were stretches of stony and unfrozen road to cross and the wagons were heavily loaded. As a result, a wheel from one of the wagons broke at times. When this happened ... the small blacksmith shop was brought out and put upon the ground. The men ... hammered and wrought the broken wheel until it was again fixed ... It was a very pleasant joyride for the young people, and they sometimes ran far from the wagons, picked flowers and scared up some wild animals.”

“As they came further south, they found villages of Russians, but since they could not speak their language they had difficulty making themselves understood. Flour was bought here, but there was much sand in it. The Russian people thresh the rye with a stick and winnow the grain, but the wind does not take out the sand which grates between the teeth when the bread is eaten.”

Winter

“At last they arrived in the Old Colony of Chortitzer, where they had to winter, because it was impossible to go on. There was too much snow in the area between the Chortitzer Colony and Molotschna where they wished to go. The villagers came to the road and looked into the wagons and said, ... ‘Well, well, these are not from the Kulmer area of Germany where we are from, but we must get them under shelter today yet.’ All the families were lodged.”

On the Road Again

“In spring Elder Wedel went from house to house, where some of our group had stayed, and wanted to settle accounts ... but no pay was accepted. The necessary horses were bought collectively ... No pay was accepted for the necessary things such as flour, meat, potatoes, lard and salt.”

Alexanderwohl

“This area from the Old Colony toward the Sea of Azov was a beautiful region. The men ... gathered to discuss the landscape ... While they were traveling

in this leisurely fashion they saw that a noteworthy vehicle was approaching them. They had never seen the like before. The driver stopped where the men were and the Emperor Alexander alighted, greeted them, and asked, “Where do you come from? Where are you going?” Elder Wedel told him that they were heading for the Molotschna. Emperor Alexander wished them well ... Then he entered his coach and left. As the group proceeded, they discussed the name of the future village home. The Emperor’s name was Alexander and he had wished them well on the steppes of Russia, so they took the word that the emperor had spoken, namely “well” [wohl] and added it to his name so the name for the new village was ready before they even reached it, namely Alexanderwohl.”

Crossing the Dnieper River

“As this caravan traveled further south the river Dnieper was before them which had to be crossed. However, there was no bridge. The Russians had made a big platform with a fence around it, which they used to ferry people across the river with all their belongings ... The Russians counted the wagons and set the price at fifteen “rubel” for the thirty wagons ... About ten wagons could go on this platform at one time and the horses were tied to the fence ... As long as the water was shallow, long poles were used to push when it got too deep then they rowed as well as they could.”

Arrival at Last, Alexanderwohl Village 1821-1874

“After all the wagons had crossed, the group proceeded on their journey. There were three days of travel before they arrived at their destination at the Molotschna which is a Russian name for a river. They were glad to arrive as this was to be a future home. They had been on their way for a year. A fine piece of land was chosen for the thirty farms near to this river. The village was named Alexanderwohl after the Russian Emperor’s name. Each farmer took about the equivalent of a quarter section of land as measured in this country.”

* The West Prussia area formerly belonged to Poland. Poland ceded that area to Germany in lieu of a debt it had incurred and was unable to repay.

Credits:

Passages taken from Alexanderwohl — Tabor One Hundredth Anniversary, From Holland to America. Writings by Mrs. Issac Fast and Maria Becker (Translated by Augusta Schmidt), by Henry B. Schmidt and Maria Schmidt Friesen. Compiled by Martha Friesen Graber. North Newton, Kansas 67117. November 1961. Third Printing 1974. Mennonite Press, Inc., North Newton, Kansas 67117.



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Museum Hours:
March, April, October,
& November:
Tues - Sat: 12 pm - 4 pm
Closed Sundays & Mondays

Open by appointment
December through February

May - September:
Tues - Sat: 10 am - 5 pm

The Heritage

Written & edited by:
Fern Bartel, Director
Aileen Esau, Treasurer
Museum Board Members
Anne Harvey

50th Annual Country Threshing Days, August 4, 5, and 6, 2023

Friday evening's entertainment will be Haymakers, a group who "takes the concept of the string band and plugs it into a broad swath of acoustic music that stretches from traditional folk to Americana, from Appalachian mountain music to western swing, and even into the realm of the jam band." Dustin Arbuckle (lead vocals/harmonica), Tom Page (guitar/vocals), Caleb Drummond (upright bass/vocals), and Anthony Trupia (mandolin/vocals) "lock into an array of grooves that go in and outside the box of traditional acoustic music." Plan to enjoy their show on Friday, August 4, at the Goessel High School auditorium (100 E. Main, use JH doors) at 7:00 pm. Admission is by donation and benefits the Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum.

Highlights of the weekend include the parade on Saturday, August 5, at 9:30 am on Main Street, followed by the Low German Meal at Goessel Elementary—priced per item, benefiting the museum.

Purchase a button for access to the museum and show grounds for all three days. Check our website for a full schedule of events.



Haymakers will entertain on August 4
(Photo and quote from <https://haymakers316.com/f/haymakers-press-sheet>)