

Provenance

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Trek to Upper Canada

2. On to Russia and Canada

The movement of the Mennonites into Canada from the United States . . . coincided with that of the United Empire Loyalists, yet theirs was a deeper purpose, a religious loyalty which wavers not nor fails because of changing sentiments of political impact only—S. F. COFFMAN¹

AS THE 1700s drew to a close, thousands of Mennonites in Pennsylvania and Prussia were on the move, once again seeking a new homeland which might offer them a greater measure of liberty, security and prosperity. This search on each side of the Atlantic led in an opposite geographic direction, although the new migrations and settlement experiences produced some remarkable parallels. Unknown to the Dutch-German Mennonites in Prussia migrating east and south and to the Swiss-German Mennonites in Pennsylvania moving west and north, their common search predestined the joining of their respective eastern and western histories less than 100 years later.

The historic circumstances and political developments leading up to the two migrations were similar; in both situations, national ambitions and revolutionary ferment produced much uncertainty and insecurity for the Mennonites. However, in both settings the discomfort was not so great or so complete that they were forced to move on. If, at the time of their rising anxieties, they had not been confronted with settlement offers from the Russian

Tsar and the British King, the Mennonites could have remained a while longer in their old homes without too much distress. Indeed, the majority of them did. This fact alone makes the sorting out of motives and causes for resettlement somewhat problematical.

Long-term considerations, however, were crucial. In the distant and even near future, the Mennonites could see themselves increasingly crowded in the sense of both geographic opportunity and religious liberty. In Prussia the two factors were intimately related. The military reign of Frederick the Great (1740-1786) had produced many concessions for the Mennonites. As respectable and appreciative citizens, they presented their best gifts to him — on one occasion their two best oxen, 400 pounds of butter and 20 cakes of cheese. Nevertheless, they remained a problem for an ambitious monarch who could not easily allow so many large families with so many non-military sons to expand into farm after farm in the kingdom he was enlarging and consolidating.

The reign of his father, Frederick I (1688-1740), the first king of Prussia, had already produced a strong army which Frederick II (the Great) now intended to improve and expand. Believing that might made right, he renamed his tax collectors war commissars and his cabinet members war ministers, as he insisted on authority and discipline from top to bottom. Then he seized Silesia from Austria and, in the reversal of European alliances that followed, Prussia found herself confronting, and being confronted by, France, Austria, Russia, Saxony and Sweden. Only Britain, which was fighting France in the Seven Years War (1756-1763), remained friendly.

Even with a powerful ally, however, Frederick's continental enemies could be overwhelming and so the militarization of his regime continued. In this policy he was loyally supported by the Lutheran state clergy. Thus, once more, church and state stood out against the Mennonites. By 1774 the industrious nonconformists were being limited in their land acquisitions, and by 1780 they were being taxed 5,000 thaler annually for the support of military schools. The impact of these impositions was ameliorated by Frederick's basic goodwill toward his enterprising citizens, whose own internal discipline he could appreciate.

The time after Frederick's death in 1786, therefore, became an ominous one for the Mennonites. In the same year they dispatched a delegation to the new eastern land of promise from which the Tsarina, Catherine the Great, had sent a special emis-

sary inviting western and central European agriculturists to settle in her lands. Such invitations had been extended prior to her time and not only by the Russian tsars. The Hapsburgs of Austria, for instance, were similarly settling their province of Galicia, and here also Mennonites were involved. Thousands of colonists from some of the small German states were leading pioneers in the Middle Volga region. This time there was a special invitation from Russia for the Mennonites in Prussia. Having just been seized from the Turks, the particular lands to be domesticated (to ensure long-term Russian control) were known as new Russia, north of the Black Sea.²

Two years later, in 1788, 228 families — most of them poor and already landless — set out to found the Colony of Chortitza east of the Dnieper River and near the present city of Zaparozhe. They were delayed en route by renewed fighting between the Russians and the Turks and forced to endure a most oppressive winter in temporary camps. Yet, in spite of these troubles and a switch in settlement plans due to Turkish intervention in the areas originally chosen, as well as other seemingly endless hardships, the decision appeared to be a good one. They arrived at the revised destination in July 1789, the same year the Prussian land-purchase restrictions were completed.

In the face of such militarism, the eastern solution seemed to be right for the nearly 10,000 Prussian Mennonites who migrated to Russia over a period of 60 years and more. In 1803 they founded the Molotschna Colony, about 100 miles across the Dnieper River, east of Chortitza. And later, when the new Prussian constitution failed to provide for military exemption on religious grounds, two additional colonies were established east of the Volga River in the Saratov region, also known as the Middle Volga area. Indeed, the eastern movements had not yet run their course when the sons of the pioneer immigrants to Russia were looking westward for an even better destiny.

In British North America, the Swiss-German Mennonites were slowly though unwittingly preparing and being prepared to receive the Dutch-German Mennonites from Russia. To begin with, they were steadily pushing forward the frontiers of economic opportunity and religious liberty, both essential elements of that preparation. In southeastern Pennsylvania the good land had been rapidly bought up, and already in the middle of the 1700s there was movement to new and cheaper lands, offering ample room for expansion. These were found in Virginia to the south; in

western Pennsylvania and Ohio to the west; ultimately in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa; and beyond the Mississippi to regions almost unknown then. Most important for our story was the discovery of Ontario or Upper Canada.

Although the first permanent Mennonite settlements in Canada were founded as a direct result of the American Revolution, the possibility that Anabaptists were present in the Maritimes in the mid-eighteenth century must not be overlooked. The same movements which produced the larger German and Quaker colonies in Pennsylvania brought Germans from the Rhineland and the Palatinate, Quakers and Baptists from England, and Anabaptist groups to New England and the Maritimes.³ In 1754 an Anglican rector in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, made specific mention of Anabaptists in his area, and these were subsequently linked to the Anabaptists of the Reformation.⁴ It does appear that such small groups, if they were indeed Anabaptists, were quickly absorbed either by the Quakers or by the Baptists. Anabaptists have also been identified in New Brunswick, but here too they were so "closely aligned dogmatically with the Society of Friends or Quakers that, for religious purposes, they joined forces."⁵

Some Anabaptists apparently came to the Maritimes as part of the post-revolution loyalist movements. At St. John's River in Nova Scotia, for instance, there appeared in 1783, alongside a Quaker Company of 102 persons, an "Anabaptist Company of 47 persons of which 20 were adult men, 11 women, and 16 children."⁶ But again, no subsequent record of a continuing separate identity has been discovered, so that a disintegration or absorption into the community can be assumed in this case.

The movements that endured were those to Upper Canada, aided and abetted by the thirteen American colonies' declaring themselves independent from the British in 1776. Their revolution against the king resulted in the creation of a republican state, the United States of America. Like the nationalist kingdoms of Europe, the U.S.A. had expansive ambitions of its own. Within its first generation the new republic would reach out for more British-American land in the north precisely at the time when her ally, France, was reaching eastward as far as possible. In Prussia, as in Pennsylvania, the Mennonites had difficulty forgetting the benefits of monarchical friendships. Political promises, in addition to the abundance of land to which the British government was inviting them, led about 2,000 to migrate to Upper

Canada beginning in 1786, the very year the Prussian delegation was entering Russia.

Catching the Mennonites in the middle, the troubles between Britain and her colonies had been brewing for many years. The more George III restricted the aspirations of the colonies, the more the Americans rebelled, especially when confronted by what they called "intolerable acts." One of these was the 1774 Quebec Act by which the British sought to make peace with their newly-won province of French Quebec by recognizing not only the boundaries of that province but also the legitimate presence of the French people in all the territory north of the Ohio River. The British, for their own reasons, were finding ways of accommodating non-Anglican minorities — but not without benefit to such migrating peoples as the Mennonites.

The American rebellion against the British presented the Mennonites of Pennsylvania with a real dilemma. On the one hand, they owed much of their freedom to the British. The concessions on the oath that had been made to the Quakers had gradually, with Quaker help, extended to the Mennonites and to the Amish. The Militia Act of 1757 provided for Quaker, Mennonite, and Moravian exemption from the bearing of arms. This exemption, however, required service in other capacities such as extinguishing fires, suppressing the insurrections of slaves, caring for the wounded, and transporting food and information.

Also favouring the British, at least for a time, was Mennonite respect for authority and government. While their nonresistance doctrine demanded non-participation in British wars, it also did not allow for participation in political revolution, least of all against the British.⁷ Moreover, a pro-American stance would mean siding with those people in Pennsylvania who through the 1700s had agitated against Quaker-Mennonite peace principles and against the Quakers and Mennonites themselves. It was difficult for the Mennonites to be pro-American, at least as long as the super-patriots harassed them, confiscated their properties, imprisoned them and on occasion threatened their lives.⁸ A message passed on to "the highest authorities" from Mennonites and German Baptists (or Dunkards, later known as the Church of the Brethren) in Lancaster County expressed well the pro-British view:

The Mennonists and German Baptists (Brethren) . . . in the different parts of Pennsylvania have long wished to know

from Authority how to conduct themselves during the present Rebellion, that they might not give offence to His Majesty or His Representative in America . . . some of the Ministers and leading men of those two Societies, drew up an Address and Petition to the King in behalf of those two Societies . . . setting forth their Happiness while under His Government, their desire to be reinstated in the enjoyment of their former Blessings, and their Readiness to part with Goods and Chattles to bring about so desirable an Event, and praying that a general Line of Conduct might be pointed out to them, to conduct themselves by, and whether their sowing Grain, planting Corn was not in some measure considered as aiding and abetting the Rebellion, and whether they would be suffered to enjoy their religious principle as heretofore.⁹

On the other hand, the Americans also took actions favourable to dissenters. The Continental Congress of 1775, for instance, assured people "who from religious principles cannot bear arms in any case" that it intended no violence against their consciences, even while it ordered the colonies to form militia companies. The Pennsylvania Assembly on November 7, 1775, having heard a joint petition from the Societies of Mennonists and German Baptists, likewise recognized "the good people . . . conscientiously scrupulous of bearing arms" and asked all pacifists to "spend their time and substance in the public service."¹⁰

In addition to the Quakers, Mennonites, and Dunkards, another group of evangelical pacifists emerged in Pennsylvania at this time. They were the River Brethren or Tunkers (not to be confused with Dunkards); later they were also known as Brethren in Christ. A revivalistic group, partly of Mennonite origin, the Tunkers shared many Mennonite emphases. Both being immersed in the ambivalent mood of the times, they would later share a common destiny — emigration.

Following the Continental Congress of 1776, there was further cause for pro-American feelings. The defenders of the revolution seemed to express truths which the Anabaptists had defended with their lives 250 years before. After all, the colonial revolution represented no less than the cause of liberty for all mankind. In that sense the revolutionaries were not really rebels, but like the Anabaptists before them, they insisted on higher rights and committed themselves to a stricter obedience than could be represented or demanded by a usurping British king. Quite clearly, the Declaration of Independence contained self-evident truths to which Anabaptists might readily be able to assent.

There were obstacles, however, to Mennonite acceptance of the situation. The declared right of a people to abolish government presented problems to the civilly obedient pacifists. The revolution might mean liberation for the majority of Americans, but what could it mean for the minorities, religious or otherwise? The Germans had already been harassed — not to mention the Indians and the Negroes. The same Thomas Jefferson who had drafted the declaration about equally created men had at least 100 slaves on his own plantation. Thus the ambivalent elements of virtue and vice became quite confused in the revolutionary struggle. It wasn't always clear who was fighting hardest for a free humanity — the British, the Americans, or perhaps the so-called non-associators, that is, the non-participants in the militia.

To the non-associators, the American cause tended to lose its legitimacy whenever the super-patriots took the law into their own hands as when, in 1777, the Pennsylvania Assembly called for a new oath of allegiance, allowing no exemptions. In the establishment of a new sovereignty and a new nationalism, the oath, of course, was essential for America. But for the Mennonites the oath was also paramount. More than a simple linguistic exercise or a political liturgy which might be forgotten immediately after the swearing, the oath for them was a statement of ultimate loyalty which, since 1525, had belonged only to God.

On the matter of taxes, also, the authorities were not so considerate, and it was this issue which precipitated a debate and tested the loyalties in the Mennonite community, soon leading to another division in the Church. In 1776 Preacher Christian Funk of the Franconia Conference stood out against the other eight ministers in insisting that a special congressional war tax be paid. As far as he was concerned, the new state constitution was as favourable as the old charter from Penn. "Were Christ here," said Funk, "he would say to give Congress that which belongs to Congress, and to God, that which is God's."¹¹ Besides, he said, the Congressional paper money with which the tax was to be paid was already in current use.

As it turned out, Funk's opinion was a minority position. The 1775 Mennonite-Dunkard petition which said that "we are willing to pay taxes" to Caesar apparently did not necessarily have reference to the new American caesars. The other eight ministers equated the payment of three pounds and ten shillings with a personal involvement in war. They objected not only to paying taxes but also to the impressment by the militia of some of their

horses, wheat, and provender. In addition, their objection was conditioned by the uncertainty of the outcome; some were still predicting that the king would win. The end of the debate came in 1778 when Christian Funk was silenced and separated from the Church in a splinter movement which eventually died out. The majority of the Mennonites paid fines or went to jail rather than submit to the oath of allegiance or to the payment of war taxes.

The 1783 Peace of Versailles confirmed the sovereignty of the American nation. Those fighting with the British accepted the invitation to live elsewhere in the British realm, mostly in Canada, where they became known as United Empire Loyalists. The non-associators needed more time to make up their minds, and in the end the vast majority accepted the new sovereignty. Their leanings toward the British, however, were not forgotten very easily, and in the end those leanings made the abundance of land in Upper Canada that much more attractive.

The prospects of a more congenial political climate and favourable cultural environment may also have influenced their decision. The possible role of German culture in the northward movement has, heretofore, been overlooked, but it must not be forgotten that Mennonites were still quite German in their cultural expression. Their religious activity was carried on in the High German of the Luther Bible, and their social communications were in the Pennsylvania *Deutsch* dialect. In the Pennsylvania environment the Mennonites had learned to integrate their religion with British politics, German culture, and colonial land as a total formula for the good life. That good life had now begun to break apart. German culture had felt the fires of the American melting pot before 1756. After 1776 the revolution not only dissolved the British Crown but it also hastened the dissolution of the German cultural commonwealth.

It was soon apparent that the British environment in Upper Canada offered not only British privileges, freedom for Mennonite religion, and an abundance of good land, but also the easier continuance of the German culture. After all, George III was tied to the German House of Hanover, and the four districts of Upper Canada had been given German names — Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nassau, and Hesse — in order to flatter the Hanoverian king. Besides, the princes of Hesse had supplied German troops for the British struggle against the American rebels. These troops and one thousand other German loyalist families from New York

placed the Germans second in line after the English among the early loyalists. Indeed, many of these Germans were nicknamed Hessians after their mercenary prototypes. It should not be surprising, therefore, to discover that German-speaking minorities looked to British North America not only because it was British but also because it could very well be German and, for migrating Mennonites at least, German considerations were strong. They formed the German Land Company to mediate the buying and selling of their land, and their most important centre later became known as Berlin (the present-day Kitchener).

The first requirement for settlement, however, was land, and it is safe to assume that without its easy availability there would have been no migration. In Pennsylvania as in Prussia there was no great urgency to depart since there was no persecution that seriously imperilled life, faith or prosperity. The only urgency lay in the cultural, political and geographic limitations which appeared on the horizon.

In Upper Canada the frontier was just being opened up by government "purchases" of lands from the Indians, the first of which was made in 1766. Each deal or treaty involved some cash, instalment payments as "eternal rent," and guarantees of security for the Indians. The instalments, though, were sometimes forgotten and so were the guarantees of security for the Indians. Piece by piece the Indian surrendered his land on the assumption that each new treaty would halt the white man's advance. Less than a century later only the so-called Indian reservations were left for him.

Agricultural settlement in Upper Canada began with farm operations around military outposts, the first at Fort Niagara around 1780. This policy in turn led to land grants to soldiers and others loyal to the king, of which 40 per cent were Germans by 1784. That same year three million acres of land were "purchased" from the Indians along the St. Lawrence, as hundreds of loyalists, mostly officials, teachers, businessmen, real estate men, officers and soldiers were attracted by the British promise of free land, free settlement provisions and compensation for losses sustained in support of the British cause. By 1791, when Upper Canada became a separate province, it boasted a settlement population of 25,000, of which 20,000 were loyalists. By that time, the Crown had freely granted over 12 million acres of land, of which more than 11 million had gone to generals, officers, militiamen and other loyalists. Government officials, barristers, clergymen and

surveyors got most of the rest, although some land was set aside for schools. The Constitutional Act of 1791 further reserved one-seventh of all land (seven lots in every 48) for the Crown and another one-seventh for the church.

Not all of the newcomers were serious settlers or even serious loyalists. Among those who had left the thirteen colonies voluntarily were many land speculators and exploiters. And among those who took up land, there were also many soldiers and bureaucrats who knew nothing about agriculture; their weaknesses became advantages for the Mennonites, who did not qualify for free land since most of them were not true loyalists. The Mennonites were serious settlers and, in their own way, pro-British. Among the so-called late loyalists, the Mennonites were the last, both in a chronological sense and in emotional-political terms.¹² One of their descendants made loyalism a cause sufficient for himself to become president of the Dominion Council of the United Empire Loyalist Association.¹³ As good agriculturists, Mennonites and Tunkers became buyer-prospects for those lands which loyalists were anxious to sell. At the turn of the century such sales had been made or were in progress in four communities, or counties as they were later known: Lincoln, Welland, Waterloo and York.

The first migration leading to permanent Mennonite community in Canada occurred in 1786 and coincided with main loyalist movements, suggesting a strong association with the loyalist cause. That first group seems to have consisted of "fringe" Mennonites. (In Russia the first emigrants also came without preachers to lead them). None of the five who constituted that first prospecting party — three brothers, John, Thielman (or Tilman) and Stoffel (or Christopher) Kolb, and Franklin Albrecht (Albright) and Frederich Hahn — were ever found registered in any church books in Upper Canada.¹⁴ In spite of their loyalist tendencies they did not qualify — nor did they choose to qualify — for free land grants.

The "prospectors" took up land at the Twenty, i.e., along a creek 20 miles from the Niagara River, in the fertile lowlands between the Niagara escarpment and Lake Ontario. What price they paid is not known, but thirteen years later their relatives and friends bought 1,100 acres in the area with a deposit of \$40.00, paying \$2.50 per acre for a portion lying near the Indian Trail that later became highway number eight, and \$1.50 per acre for the portion nearer the lake.¹⁵ By 1802, 33 families from Bucks County had found their new frontier in Lincoln County,

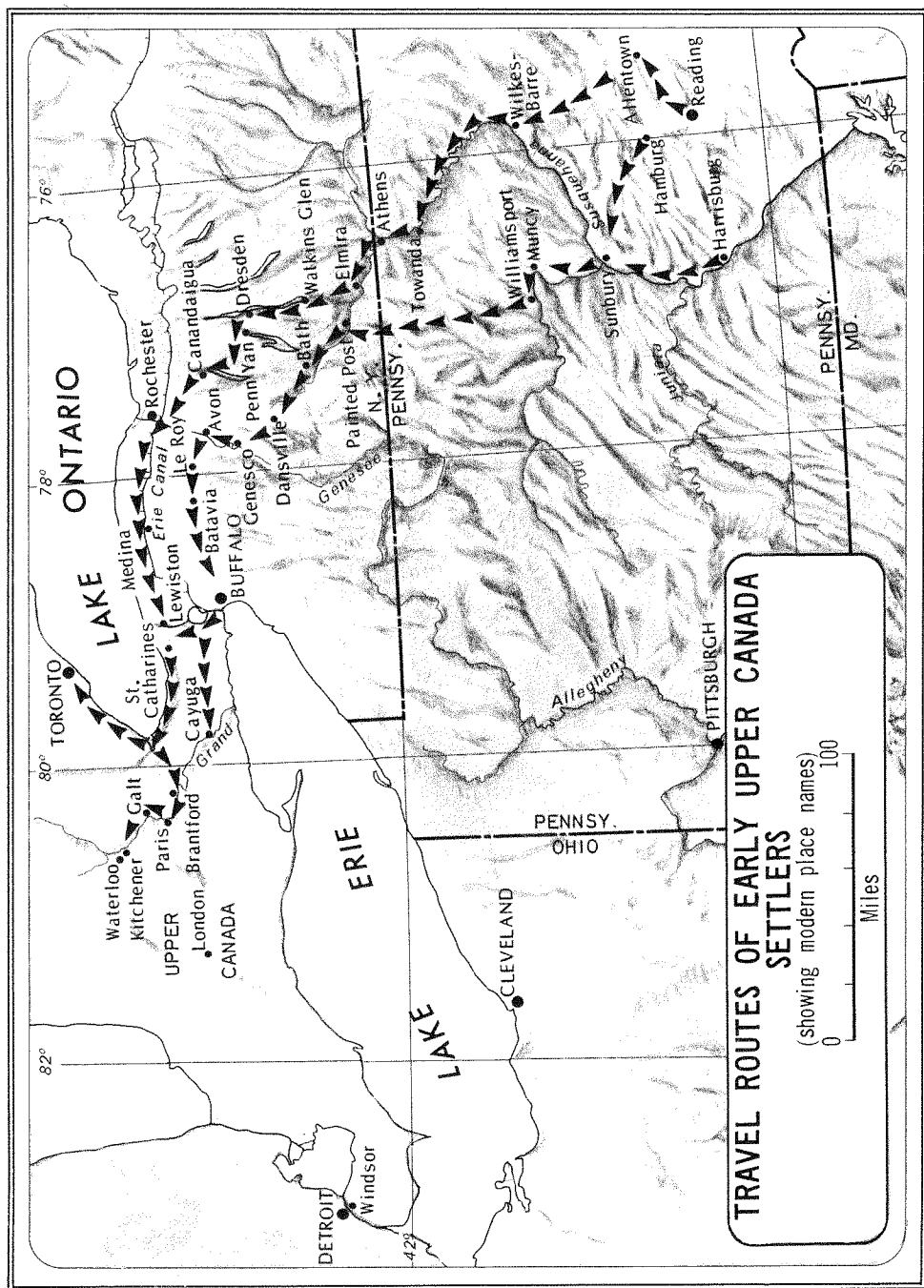
more particularly between Vineland and Beamsville at sites which later became known as Jordan and Campden.

Meanwhile, other enterprising individuals, apparently fringe Mennonites, were establishing themselves in other areas. In 1788 Jacob Sevits became the forerunner of groups of Mennonite, Quaker and Tunker families, in the Sherkston area of Welland County, fifteen miles to the west of Fort Erie.¹⁶ In 1789 John Troyer took up an offer for a land grant at Long Point Bay with authority later to build a dock. A year later Jacob Burkholder from Lancaster took up land near what was to become the city of Hamilton.

As in the Maritimes, not all of these settlements led to permanent Mennonite communities. The Sherkston group was eventually absorbed by the Tunkers and partly by the Quakers. The Burkholders became the foundation of a Methodist church which was named after them. Troyer was an overactive loyalist — he claimed to have “suffered much by the rebellious Americans” and was too far removed from other Mennonites to remain one himself. He was a pacifist, however, unwilling to bear arms, though he had “no objection to employ his team in any service of government either civil or military.”¹⁷

The Waterloo settlement had its beginnings in 1800 with settlers from Franklin County in Pennsylvania. The Joseph Schoerg (Sherk) and Samuel Betzner families had travelled to the Twenty in the fall of 1799 and wintered there; in the spring they moved on via the Indian trail to Brantford and up the shores of the Grand River to land known as Block No. 2 or the Beasley Tract. Within a year they were joined by six families from Lancaster County; among them was Samuel Betzner, Sr. In 1801 seven families also arrived from Montgomery County. In 1802 the arrivals, which included Joseph Bechtel, a minister, and John and Sam Bricker, brought the total to 25 families, with a sound promise of others to follow.

By 1803, however, there were problems to be overcome. The legal title to the land the Mennonites thought they had purchased was not clear. The lands for six miles on either side of the Grand River had been granted, on vaguely defined terms, to a particular and unusual group of loyalists — the Six Nations Confederacy of the Iroquois.¹⁸ The ancestral home of the Iroquois was the Finger Lakes region of up-state New York. During the Revolutionary Wars these Indians, particularly the Mohawk tribe, had remained loyal to the British cause. Consequently they were driven from



their homes when the Americans prevailed in that conflict.¹⁹ The British then agreed to provide new lands for their native allies. Under the leadership of Joseph Brant, the Six Nations were granted 576,000 acres of choice lands along the Grand River. Approximately 2,000 Indians, the majority of them Mohawks, followed Brant to Canada to settle on these lands. At the time much of this land was occupied by the Mississauga Indians with whom the British negotiated a treaty without difficulty.²⁰ The Huron tribes which had long occupied the area had been dispersed in earlier wars with the Iroquois.

Joseph Brant had always been the subject of much controversy. At times he acted as though he hoped to establish an independent Indian state within British territory. At other times he seemed very eager to sell as much land as possible. He soon found several persons interested in purchasing large tracts of Grand River lands and made private arrangements with them, justifying the proposed sales by suggesting that successful farmers would teach the Indians agriculture.²¹ His people were also in great need of funds which the land sales would provide. Therefore Brant, without any reference to the government and only limited consultation with his own sachems, "sold" large tracts of land to private land speculators and "jobbers."²²

Serious disputes quickly developed. There were charges that Brant personally pocketed much of the money he received for the lands. Certainly most of his followers remained in poverty. Furthermore, the government was unwilling to recognize these sales for two reasons. First, the sales had not been properly processed, approved and registered at York. Second, the authorities had grave doubts about alienating large tracts of Indian lands, fearing serious problems if the Indians sold the lands, spent the money and then found themselves destitute. The government insisted that any funds accruing from land sales be placed in trust funds administered by government trustees. Private and possibly corrupt arrangements between Brant and the buyers were entirely unacceptable and, for several years, the government refused to grant any legal titles to the land.

Brant was greatly irritated by the British attempt to block his land sales and threatened hostile action. The Lieutenant-Governor at the weakly defended capital of York thought the threats of Indian hostilities most serious, especially after the outbreak of the Napoleonic Wars, when renewed French and Spanish campaigns might be expected. The situation was made much worse by

the fact that, in 1794, the British finally, and much to the disgust of the western Indians, met one of the terms of the 1783 Peace Treaty and surrendered the strategic western posts of Niagara, Detroit, and Michilimackinac. In this troubled situation the authorities at York decided to placate Brant and his Confederacy and, in 1798, the land transactions between the Six Nations and the white men who wished to purchase lands were approved.²³

Six large blocks of land were quickly sold. The government insisted that the funds be paid to trustees, but Brant had himself named as a special agent of the Six Nations and continued to make private arrangements. The land of interest to the Mennonites was in Block No. 2. That block consisted of 94,012 acres and was sold for £8,887 to Richard Beasley, James Wilson and St. Jean Baptiste Rousseau; it was payable on or before the first day of April "which will be in the year of our Lord Two thousand seven hundred and ninety eight," in other words a thousand years later.²⁴ Interest was at six per cent annually payable by April 1. The terms of sale were justified as providing a permanent income to the Indians, but they allowed for a convenient forgetting of the principal and some of the buyers also forgot to pay, or misdirected their payments of, interest. Thus it was with Beasley and company. The two interest payments that were made after 1798 went directly to Brant rather than to the government trustees.²⁵

It is difficult to believe that Beasley, who acted in business affairs on behalf of the three land speculators, did not know what he was doing, although his numerous private and public involvements could have produced forgetfulness and carelessness. As an early and youthful loyalist, Beasley had entered the ground floor of economic and political development in Upper Canada and subsequently made the most of it. At sixteen he had already fought with a British ranger corps, been captured, and then released on account of his youth. He became an early trader, later a miller, and in the 1780s a land speculator. At the same time he was named a justice of the peace, then a magistrate, and finally he became a legislator.

In his search for buyers of his land he responded eagerly to the Mennonite interests. Being partly of Dutch descent, he moved easily in Germanic circles. One of his sons married a Hesse, and a daughter wed one of the Hamilton Burkholders. With the help of an Indian guide, Richard Beasley introduced Sherk and Betzner to the land. Both declared it much better than they had ex-

pected to find and immediately bought sites near an abundant supply of water. Joseph Sherk took 261 acres opposite Doon, paying for them with the sale of a horse, and Samuel Betzner purchased 200 acres on the west bank of the Grand River at Blair. Thereafter, John Biehn and George Bechtel registered the purchase of over 3,000 acres each, including the sites of Doon, New Aberdeen and German Mills, and reaching within little more than a mile of what later became the city of Kitchener. These purchases aroused a good deal of excitement in the homeland and it appeared that a considerable movement was beginning to take shape.²⁶

Then, early in 1803, the Executive Council of Upper Canada discovered that Beasley had not paid either interest or principal on the mortgage, and that he had never informed the Mennonites that there was a mortgage on the lands they had purchased. Beasley, when challenged, readily admitted the problem, producing great consternation both at York and in the Mennonite settlements. The situation was not improved when it was revealed that some interest had in fact been paid directly to Brant without the knowledge of the trustees. Eventually an arrangement was worked out between Beasley, the government, and the Mennonites whereby the latter agreed to buy a 60,000-acre block from Beasley for £10,000. Beasley received credit for the money he had paid directly to Brant and agreed to pay off the entire mortgage, this time to the government-appointed trustees.²⁷

These negotiations took time, of course, and some settlers gave up their holdings and looked elsewhere; for a time, abandonment of the entire settlement was considered. New settlers refused to go to the Waterloo area before the land ownership question was settled. Indeed, some families already en route to Waterloo in 1803 were redirected at the Twenty to York County. Among the new Mennonite settlers to go to this area were two ministers, Henry Wideman and Peter Musselman, both from Montgomery County. They were followed a year later by the Christian Reesor family (the parents and four married children) as well as by Casper Sherk who had intended to join his pioneer brother at Waterloo. A slow but steady trickle of settlers increased the colony to about 30 families by 1825.

Meanwhile the Bricker brothers, John and Samuel, of Waterloo, had gone back to Lancaster County in Pennsylvania to obtain help in raising the £10,000 needed to purchase the 60,000 acres from Richard Beasley. After some discouragements and setbacks,

they found 23 farmers ready to join them in the formation of the German Land Company. Among them were John Bricker's sister-in-law and three Erb brothers, John, Jacob and Abraham, and a cousin Daniel Erb, all of them having plenty of pioneer spirit. The formation of the land company made financial sense, at least later on, but at the time the event was also a triumph for the religious principle of helping brothers in need.

The German Land Company completed the land transaction with Beasley and the government, with Daniel Erb and Samuel Bricker concluding the deal at Niagara on November 28, 1803.²⁸ Nearly all the purchase amount, which had been brought in silver dollars by horseback from Pennsylvania, constituted the down payment. The balance, including 6 per cent interest, and having also been brought in silver coin from the homeland, was paid on May 23, 1805. In the words of a Kitchener historian:

The second bulk of silver was placed in a keg on a pleasure wagon, driven by Samuel Bricker, while John Bricker, Daniel, John, and Jacob Erb, mounted on horseback, acted as guards, and delivered the specie at Niagara. Afterward the wagon was presented to Samuel Bricker for his praiseworthy services.²⁹

The government saw to it, so the white man's story goes, that the Indians got their share, and the German Land Company gained clear title to the land. The same story reads differently, as does all North American history, when it is remembered that this land belonged originally to the Indians. Their views of land and ownership were foreign to European understanding; land negotiations following the system of the colonizers were strange at best. In this light the red man's story, only now being recorded, saw few blessings in the best of deals.³⁰ The idea of selling, the method of measuring, the nature of the contract, the setting of the price, and the lawyers, all emerged from the white man's society, which handled the whole deal and pocketed the profits, while the Indian was crowded into the corners of what had once been unlimited space.

The land block itself was subdivided into 128 lots of 488 acres and 32 lots of 83 acres each. Although lots were cast to ensure equitable access to the various parcels of land, there was no limit to the number any one party could buy, and some, like Jacob Wisler, bought as many as 21.³¹ In a few years the 60,000 acres had been spoken for, and in 1807 the German Company was

buying an additional 45,195 acres in Woolwich Township, this time from William Wallace of Niagara. The Abraham Weber party, which on June 22 of the same year delivered a half-barrel of gold and silver coin to pay for the Wallace tract, included the people who cleared the lands on which later the city of Kitchener was to stand. They arrived in four wagons, or Conestogas, drawn by two- and four-horse teams.³²

Among them was one man destined to play a role more significant than any other in the development of the community — Benjamin Eby, the founder of Ebytown. Before entering more fully into the story of his leadership in the Waterloo County community, in the Ebytown congregation, and in the Mennonite Conference of Ontario, it is well to survey the agricultural and legal pioneering in which he shared.

FOOTNOTES

1. S. F. Coffman, "The Adventure of Faith," *Waterloo Historical Society*, XIV (1926), p. 232.
2. David G. Rempel, "The Mennonite Migration to New Russia, 1788-1870," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, IX (April 1935), pp. 71-91, and IX (July 1935), pp. 109-28; "The Mennonite Colonies in New Russia . . ." (Ph.D. dissertation, Stanford University, 1935); P. M. Friesen, *Die Alt-Evangelische Mennonitische Bruderschaft in Russland, 1789-1910* (Halbstadt, Russia: Raduga, 1911).
3. Ian F. Mackinnon, *Settlements and Churches in Nova Scotia, 1749-1776* (Montreal: Walker, 1930), pp. 12-15; W. O. Raymond, "Alexander McNutt and the Pre-Loyalist Settlements of Nova Scotia," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd Ser., Vols. IV, V, VI (1910-12), pp. 83-9, 105-7; George Edward Levy, *The Baptists of the Maritime Provinces, 1753-1946* (Saint John: Barnes-Hopkins, 1946), pp. 1-5; Edward M. Saunders, *History of the Baptists in the Maritime Provinces* (Halifax: John Burgoyne, 1902), pp. 61-2; Esther Clark Wright, *The Loyalists of New Brunswick* (Fredericton: published by the author, 1955), pp. 92, 158-91, 202-37.
4. L. Richter, "Germans in Nova Scotia," *Dalhousie Review*, XV (January 1936), pp. 425-34. See also a contradiction of Richter by William P. Bell, *"The Foreign Protestants" and the Settlement of Nova Scotia: A History of a Piece of Arrested British Colonial Policy in the Eighteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1961), pp. 102-3.

5. Donald Warden, New Brunswick Provincial Archives, letter to Edward Dahl, July 22, 1969 (CGC).
6. Wright, *op. cit.*, p. 244.
7. Wilbur J. Bender, "Pacifism Among the Mennonites, Amish Mennonites, and Schwenkfelders of Pennsylvania to 1783," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, I (July 1927), pp. 23-40; I (October 1927), pp. 21-47.
8. Glenn Weaver, "Benjamin Franklin and the Pennsylvania Germans," in Leonard Dinnerstein and Frederic C. Jaher, eds., *The Aliens: A History of Ethnic Minorities in America* (New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1970), pp. 47-64.
9. Donald F. Durnbaugh, "Relationships of the Brethren with the Mennonites and Quakers, 1708-1865," *Church History*, XXXV (March 1966), pp. 35-59.
10. Smith, *Immigration*, pp. 283-7.
11. Christel Funk, *Ein Spiegel für Alle Menschen* (Reading, Pa.: Johann Ritter & Company, 1813), p. 54.
12. Marcus Lee Hansen, *The Mingling of the Canadian and American Peoples* (Toronto: The Ryerson Press, 1940), Vol. I, Chap. IV, "The Followers of the Loyalists, 1785-1812."
13. Letter from H. S. Honsberger to Frank H. Epp (CGC Archives). See also H. Stanley Honsberger, Q.C., "A Message from the President to the Dominion Council United Empire Loyalists Association of Canada," *The Loyalist Gazette*, April 1963, p. 1. Also *The Loyalist Gazette*, November 1964.
14. CGC Archives, "The One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of the Mennonite Church at Vineland, Ontario" (unpublished manuscript, n.d.), 111-24.
15. L. J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario* (Markham, Ont.: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935), p. 31.
16. *Ibid.*
17. *Ibid.*, p. 38. See also: *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, Vol. 24, p. 142; and *Ontario Historical Society, Ontario History*, XXXIX, pp. 18-20.
18. The Confederacy originally included five nations: the Oneidas, Onondagas, Senecas, Cayugas and the Mohawks. At the beginning of the nineteenth century they were joined by the Tuscaroras, whose ancestral home was in the Carolinas but who had also remained loyal to the British cause. Throughout the period under consideration the Confederacy was referred to as either Five Nations or Six Nations. Most of the Indians who actually came to Canada were Mohawks. Many members of the other tribes remained or returned to the United States after 1783.
19. G. F. G. Stanley, "The Six Nations and the American Revolution," *Ontario History*, LVI (1964), pp. 217-34.
20. PAC, Record Group 10, Vol. 26, Folder for 1801-1802. Memor-

- andum from Joseph Brant regarding land surrendered by the Mississauga, dated 3 April, 1802.
21. C. M. Johnston, ed., *The Valley of the Six Nations: A Collection of Documents on the Indian Lands of the Grand River* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1964).
 22. PAC, Record Group 1, E3, Vol. 7, No. 12, pp. 31-64. Trusteeship of Funds of Five Nations lands. Also File No. 20, pp. 79-83 (1897). Funds arising from the sale of Grand River lands. Also Vol. 68, File No. 35, pp. 206-18 (1803). Report on Six Nations Grand River lands. Also Vol. 27, Folder for 1806-1807. Speeches by Captain Brant on 3 September and 9 November, 1806.
 23. C. M. Johnston, "Joseph Brant, the Grand River Lands and the Northwest Crisis," *Ontario History*, LV (1903), pp. 267-82.
 24. PAC, Record Group 10, Vol. 26, Folder for 1798. Declaration by Richard Beasley, James Wilson and St. John Baptiste Rousseau, regarding terms on the acquired Grand River lands 1 April, 1798.
 25. PAC, Record Group 10, Vol. 26, Folder for 1803-1804.
 26. A. B. Sherk, "The Pennsylvania Germans in Waterloo County," *Ontario Historical Society Papers and Records*, VII (1906); C. M. Johnston, "An Outline of Early Settlement in Grand River Valley," *Ontario History*, LVI (1962), pp. 43-67.
 27. PAC, Record Group 10, Vol. 26, Folder for 1803-1804. Articles of Agreement between Richard Beasley, Daniel Erb and Samuel Bricker, 28 November, 1803. Also Claus's Receipt for Funds paid by the German Land Company, 21 May, 1804.
 28. *Ibid.*
 29. W. V. Uttley, *The History of Kitchener, Ontario* (Kitchener: The Chronicle Press, 1937), p. 10.
 30. See, for example, Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society: The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: M. G. Hurtig, Ltd., 1969); Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickinberg, eds., *Native Rights in Canada*, 2nd ed. (Toronto: The Indian-Eskimo Association of Canada in association with General Publishing Ltd., 1972).
 31. Irwin C. Bricker, "The Trek of the Pennsylvanians to Canada in the year 1805," *Waterloo Historical Society*, XXII (1934), pp. 123-31.
 32. The Conestoga wagon of Abraham Weber is on display at Doon Pioneer Village, Kitchener, Ontario.