Provenance

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# 5. Community-Building: Settlements

*Our future here in Canada very definitely lies on the land and not in the city, in the final analysis, on new land, our only prospect for settling in closed communities, . . . this being our strong desire—*
J.H. JANZEN.[1]

A BETTER future for 20,000 immigrants required not only their successful transfer to Canada but also their permanent settlement, preferably in compact Mennonite communities, on agricultural land. Appropriate parcels of land had to be found, their purchase and equipping, mostly on credit, had to be negotiated, and new ways of farming had to be learned.[2] In the process, old Mennonite communities were strengthened, a host of new ones were founded in the five western provinces, and the whole landscape of Canadian Mennonitism was changed. Compact and closed settlements, however, were for the most part a thing of the past.

Placement of the immigrants on land was a requirement of the government as well as the express wish of most of the Mennonite people, at least until the settlement options narrowed to homesteading in the northern wilderness. There was among the immigrants yet little deviation from "*Farmer-Mennonitentum*,"[3] a Mennonite way of life which was rooted in the soil, although some important exceptions should be noted.[4] Attracted to the towns and cities were a certain

number of skilled and unskilled labourers and the professional people, including a small contingent of teachers and an even smaller number of doctors, who quickly sought Canadian certification by attending the appropriate schools in the cities. There were also a few families of commercial and industrial background, who located in urban environments as soon as the time was opportune. Other early city-dwellers were immigrant girls, whose employment as domestics in affluent urban homes brought much-needed cash to the family coffers back on the farm.[5]

Working for hourly wages or monthly salaries was a necessity for hundreds of the first immigrants, males as well as females, whose settlement on their own land was held up for nearly a year. Such work was sought and found on other people's farms during harvest time for five dollars per day, on the railroads for up to three dollars per day plus board, in lumber or mining camps at 35 dollars per month plus room and board, in construction at five dollars per 13-hour day, in ditchdigging at two dollars per 10-hour day, and in city factories at 15–25 cents an hour, the latter especially in Ontario.[6]

It was in Ontario where early attempts to urbanize were sharply rebuked, both by Canadian society and by the Mennonite leaders. That such attempts were made should not surprise us, given the state of agricultural opportunities and given the urbanity which the immigrants had achieved in their Russian homeland, notwithstanding the basic rural context of their existence. Prosperity and educational endeavours had given them a cultural sophistication and a manner of life more akin to town dwellers than to village peasants.[7]

Not surprisingly, the immigrants arriving in the Waterloo County area were attracted to such towns as Waterloo, New Hamburg, and Hespeler with their furniture and clothing factories. These towns and their workers could not receive them wholeheartedly.[8] On the contrary, the labour organizations and politicians made an issue of "the foreign element," as the anxious battle for jobs soon replaced the welcome which had greeted the immigrants upon their arrival. People were in no mood to let in "Germans," against whom Canada had fought in the war and whose admission to Canada was on condition that they would work on the farm, not in factories and shops. Nor were they willing to see them achieve an early prosperity at the expense of the Canadians.[9]

Leaders in the immigrant community did not wish to jeopardize Canadian goodwill and the immigration movement as such. They took note of the repeated warnings of the authorities "not to bring any more of our brethren into the cities."[10] And they repeatedly encouraged the immigrants, with only partial success, to seek agricultural opportunities either in western Canada or in the more rural parts of Ontario or, failing acquisition of their own land for one reason or another, to get jobs where this would cause less resentment.[11]

One form of "urbanization" which was not controversial was the establishment of the so-called Chicken and Garden Village on the northeast outskirts of Winnipeg, namely in the newly established municipality of North Kildonan. Some Mennonite people from rural Manitoba had settled in Winnipeg as early as 1907. The Mennonite Brethren Church had established a mission with 22 members in 1913,[12] and ministers of the Mennonite Conference had also made Winnipeg a regular preaching outpost for urbanizing Mennonites.[13] This small contingent grew rather rapidly because Winnipeg, of all the Canadian cities, got the larger portion of immigrant students, labourers, professionals, and domestics, the latter requiring the establishment of two girls' homes by the mid-1920s.[14]

The emergence of the rural-urban garden village called North Kildonan was at this time a separate development, which, however, in later years contributed much to make Greater Winnipeg the largest urban Mennonite community anywhere in the world.[15] Meanwhile, this new "subdivision," with its five-acre and one-acre lots, characterized by chicken barns and vegetable gardens, became a significant bridge for urbanizing agriculturalists, at first only few in number but reaching 100 families within a decade.[16]

The immigrants, however, were called to be not labourers or even urban gardeners but farmers, the proper Mennonite vocation in Canada. As we have seen, the agricultural precedent was a strong one. Both the Swiss from Pennsylvania and the Amish from Europe had distinguished themselves in Ontario. They were a people committed to community life as well as to "stewardship of the soil."[17] They didn't "misuse the soil" but rather "they farmed it as though they would live on it forever . . . using just enough of nature's resources for their own need . . . then replanting and replacing these

resources for the common good."[18] And of the departing Mennonites in western Canada it was said by even the most severe critics of their non-assimilationist way of life:

> The Mennonites are very successful farmers. They have beautiful gardens. . . . The work is well organized and farming is carried on as a business.[19]

The departure of such excellent farmers to Mexico and Paraguay represented "a serious economic loss" since they had "been an important factor in the development of the country's resources."[20] Only by replacing these pioneers with "other farmers equally experienced and industrious" could some of this loss of Canada's "best farmers" be tolerated. The immigrants arriving in the 1920s were the right people to replace the emigrants. Their agricultural genius, too, was a matter of record, though there was much learning to be done. Not only did ministers, teachers, craftsmen, estate owners who were really "gentlemen farmers," and accountants have to learn farming again but also they had to do so in the context of the Canadian situation.[21]

*Settlement Organization and Processes*

Canadian agricultural opportunities in the 1920s, however, did not quite measure up to their expectations. To begin with, Canada's agricultural land was not unlimited. The prairies had filled up and the best lands had been taken,[22] though large blocks of land were being held for private sale in more profitable times.[23] The wheat economy was unstable.[24] Yet none of these adversities excused the immigrants from seeking their future on the land.

In the end, the agricultural communities of the immigrants took on many forms in several settings: there were grain farms, cattle farms, pig and poultry farms, "pulpwood farms," vegetable farms, fruit farms, tobacco farms, and, mostly, mixed farms. There were large farms and small farms. Some were destined to produce considerable wealth, others guaranteed for their owners perpetual poverty. The settings were villages in former reserve areas, the open prairies, irrigation districts, bushlands, homestead lands, and gardenlands as in the lower mainland of British Columbia and the Great Lakes

regions of Ontario (Niagara Peninsula and at several points along the north shore of Lake Erie). When the settlement and resettlement process was complete, 272 settlement districts, with a total of 6,127 households or family units, had been established in Canada's five western provinces (see Table 19).

Assuming overall responsibility in this settlement process was the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, which had brought the immigrants to Canada. The Board was anxious and impatient in this matter from the beginning, because the liquidation of the *Reiseschuld* (transportation debt) and the accommodation of still more immigrants depended on the immediate settlement of those arriving.[26] Immigrant interests and obligations were represented by the Central Mennonite Immigrant Committee, an organization formed at Rosthern in 1924. This central immigrant committee developed provincial chapters, and district contact persons or representatives were elected or appointed in all settlement districts as these were established.[27]

The actual agent for finding properties, bringing vendor and buyer together, and concluding a sale on terms satisfactory to both parties was the Canada Colonization Association (CCA) and its Mennonite affiliate, the Mennonite Land Settlement Board (MLSB).[28] The CCA, at this time an agency of the Canadian Pacific Railway, had its beginnings as a post-war citizens' movement, known as the Western Canada Colonization Association. Its emergence was prompted by the conviction that Western development was

TABLE 19[25]

IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENT DISTRICTS IN FIVE PROVINCES

| PROVINCE | DISTRICTS | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|
| Ontario | 17 | 972 |
| Manitoba | 89 | 2,081 |
| Saskatchewan | 108 | 1,645 |
| Alberta | 43 | 948 |
| British Columbia | 15 | 481 |
| Totals | 272 | 6,127 |

not complete, there being an excess of land and railway mileage for the existing population, and that a special effort would be required to bring prospective settlers and available land together, inasmuch as it was now often a question of settling not the best land in the most desirable locations but only the second or third best. The idea was a good one, but the organization lacked the necessary strength to pursue it.[29]

For one year the Canadian Pacific Railway, the Canadian National Railways, and the federal government assumed control of the Association and underwrote the costs. When the federal government surrendered its 50 per cent share to form its own settlement branch, the CPR and the CNR assumed joint responsibility, but only for a year. The CNR withdrew to establish its own settlement association, and in that withdrawal was planted the seeds of a later competition, as the two railroads and their agencies worked on the immigration and settlement causes with different sectors of the Mennonite community.[30]

It was Col. J.S. Dennis, who had played such an important role in persuading the CPR in 1922 to contract for the transportation of Mennonite immigrants, who now urged the railway to assume sole responsibility for the Canada Colonization Association as a desirable long-term business venture even though risks and subsidies were involved in the short term. He reasoned that there were 60 million acres of unoccupied lands along existing railway lines, 25 million acres of which were fit for immediate colonization and production by immigrant families. Since much of this land was in the private hands of absentee landowners, a special agency was needed to bring the vendor and the colonist together. He calculated the economic values as follows: a family of five represented an annual worth of $1,583 to the mercantile and industrial life of Canada and $716 in railway transportation.[31]

On the strength of the Dennis arguments, the CPR agreed in 1924 to operate the Canada Colonization Association on its own. The headquarters were maintained in Winnipeg and there were branch offices in Saskatoon and Calgary. Additionally, there were about a dozen full-time district representatives, and some 200 agents, most of them working part time and on a commission basis.[32]

The CCA soon discovered that immigrants responded best to

agencies at least partly of their own making. Thus, the Mennonites were encouraged to do what the Baptists and Lutherans had already done, namely to devise a denominational settlement agency. The Mennonite Land Settlement Board (MLSB) which came into being had nine members: three chosen by the central immigrant committee, three by the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, and three by the Canadian Colonization Association. A.A. Friesen, the delegate from Russia, who had already invested so much of his life in the immigration, became the manager.[33]

The operations of the MLSB were handled according to precedents already set by the CCA with similar agencies. Regional MLSB offices, as adjuncts of CCA offices, were established in CPR buildings located in such cities as Calgary, Lethbridge, Saskatoon, and Winnipeg. Mennonite agents were recruited whose duty it was to inspect lands for sale and, if suitable, to negotiate their purchase on behalf of interested immigrants. A commission of 2½ per cent on the purchase price financed the MLSB operations.[34] This financing was done through the CCA, which advanced money for the MLSB against the commissions being collected.[35]

In other words, the MLSB was totally dependent on the CCA and appeared to exist only for the sake of a better Mennonite connection and to enable the Board to be somewhat responsible for immigrant settlement policy. Settlement operations were not really handicapped by the largely symbolic role of the MLSB, given the back-up leadership role of the CCA. However, the existence of the structure, really quite impotent, frustrated those who were involved, and the ambiguity of the situation was undoubtedly one of the reasons why Manager Friesen resigned within a few years. The nine-member Board rarely met. There was no executive. There was little interprovincial co-operation. Accounts were not paid by the MLSB, and the contracts were not sent to the MLSB for approval.[36]

In due course, an effort was made to make the operations of the MLSB more real by creating an executive with provincial subcommittees, but the manager of the CCA was a member of the new MLSB executive, and thus nothing really changed. By the end of the decade it was freely admitted that the control of the MLSB was in CCA hands, and the only objection to that state of affairs was that the MLSB should have been allowed to surrender the control

voluntarily.[37] A.A. Friesen, at least, resisted the loss of control. On one occasion he told T.O.F. Herzer, the CCA manager, in no uncertain terms:

> Our Land Settlement staff is quite capable of handling the settlement work in Saskatchewan and does not need any supervision or advice from Winnipeg.[38]

As already indicated, the settlement cause did not really suffer as a result of the state of affairs, because the MLSB-CCA partnership achieved what had been intended, namely an effective settlement operation. The CCA provided knowledge, management, logistics, financing, a network of representatives, and impressive real estate listings. The MLSB provided determined and reliable clients, formal and informal advice, and for the CCA some of its best agents. Of Jacob Gerbrandt, a CCA-MLSB district representative located in Lethbridge, it was said that "a great deal of good work has been accomplished by him in that part of Alberta."[39]

Indeed, so effective was the CCA-MLSB combination that it suggested opportunities for others. Thus it happened that a "Herbert Board" emerged for a brief period as a rival settlement agency for the Rosthern Board.[40] The differences could be negotiated away, because the congregationally based group at Herbert apparently had wanted only to speed up the settlement process, which it accomplished with the successful location of eight families on 2,000 acres of land at Monitor and 12 families on leased land north of Herbert.[41] Much more serious was the founding of a "Winnipeg Board" known as Mennonite Immigration Aid.

Mennonite Immigration Aid arose in 1926—a federal charter was obtained on June 5—under the direction of Gerhard Hiebert, a Winnipeg physician, who became president; Heinrich Vogt, a Winnipeg lawyer formerly from Altona; Abram Janzen, a retired farmer from Gretna; John J. Priesz, an Altona insurance agent; and Abram Buhr of Morse, Saskatchewan, who moved to Winnipeg and became the Aid's chief executive officer.[42] The Aid had both immigration and settlement in mind and before too long was approaching officials of the Canadian National Railways in order to become "a CNR Organization the same as the Board [Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization] is a CPR one."[43]

This was, of course, a misconception, a weakness, which, translated into the working assumptions of the Aid organization, was a serious handicap throughout the time of its existence. When Mennonite Immigration Aid was compared to the Mennonite Land Settlement Board, the analogy had some validity. Compared to the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, however, there was little similarity. The Board was firmly rooted in several Mennonite conferences of Canada and was motivated not by business but by compassion. The Aid was set up by individuals, none of whom had either the stature of a David Toews or that kind of a connection with the church. The business motivation was seen in the first steamship contract signed with the CNR—commissions, such as the Board had not even dreamt of, were part of the deal—and in some of the first business transactions, which involved stipends and railway passes for Aid principals.[44]

The CNR had regretted for some time that all the trans-Atlantic Mennonite business had gone to the CPR, and notice had also been taken that legitimate CNR settlement business had likewise passed into the hands of the CCA of the CPR. In November of 1926 it was learned that the CCA had settled 630 families along CNR lines in the years 1924 to 1926.[45] Not to be overlooked in the whole scheme of things was the hope of the CNR to settle its trans-Atlantic passengers on its own Canadian lands.

Aware of the possibilities, the CNR had expressed its desire to do business with the old Board and for that purpose had entered into discussions with the CPR/CCA, on the one hand, and Board officials, on the other hand. David Toews was entirely open because he saw the possibility of increasing the flow of immigrants and at the same time avoiding the confusion and competition which a new agency would bring. And T.O.F. Herzer of the CCA was also inclined to co-operate with the CNR to avoid competition in the settlement process.[46] After due consideration, however, CPR officials ruled out the possibility of co-operation because the Board was so heavily indebted that it would not be doing justice to their own interest "to agree to the Old Board accepting financial responsibility to another organization."[47]

At that point, the CNR had reluctantly talked to Mennonite Immigration Aid and, to make that option more acceptable, had insisted that some people get out of Aid and that others be brought in.

The removal of H. Vogt, because of his links to other transportation companies and his business reputation, was accomplished in due course,[48] but the support of "reliable and outstanding leaders among the Mennonite people at such principal points as Altona, Gretna, Winkler, Steinbach, Herbert, Rosthern, etc." was not accomplished, though a long list of names was submitted.[49] In the end, all the business of Aid was done by a four-member "Joint Mennonite Committee," consisting of two officials from Aid, Hiebert and Buhr, and two officials appointed by the CNR.[50]

It wasn't that Aid was without tacit Mennonite support, at least from those who for one reason or another had been unhappy with the Board or Bishop David Toews from the beginning, including some people at Herbert. Indeed, it was at Herbert on July 6, 1926, soon after Aid's incorporation, where it received its greatest boost. In a resolution, the Northern [Canadian] District Conference of the Mennonite Brethren Church of North America "wished the new board success and blessing," promising the same hospitality to its immigrants as to those of the Rosthern Board but withholding "any material obligations with regard to the new board."[51]

Actually, all the material support in the world would have made little difference because, for reasons beyond either Board's control, the immigration, and consequently later also the settlement movement, was coming to an end. More than two years after Aid and the CNR signed a contract, only 123 passengers had been delivered to Canada,[52] with the result that the CNR was constantly reviewing the relationship and discovering that "the amount of Mennonite business . . . did not justify our expenditures."[53] Settlement work fared little better, because the initiative gained by the CPR in sticking with the CCA had really paid off in a steady operation with the longest listings and the most reliable agents.

Meanwhile, the competition produced much confusion reaching all the way to the Mennonite settlements in Russia,[54] but not all the effects were negative. Two of the best land inspectors to work on behalf of immigrants, J.J. Hildebrand and Arthur H. Unruh, were in the employ of the CNR settlement association. They were also great believers in homestead settlement, and thus they helped to sharpen the debate among the immigrants, as will be seen, as to which setting offered the best future—the large well-equipped farms on the open prairie, which brought great indebtedness, or the northern wilder-

ness, which allowed settlement without many resources and, more importantly, compact communities with little outside interference.[55]

There was one other positive effect of the unwanted competition. Challenged by a rival organization, the Mennonite Land Settlement Board concluded that the time had come to promote itself more vigorously as "a settlement mechanism for the protection of Mennonite immigrants." Listing the members of the executive committee, as well as the members of the provincial subcommittees, the MLSB reminded all immigrants of its contacts in all three provinces and of its performance. Already in November 1926, 1200 families had been settled on over 300,000 acres of land.[56]

*Homesteads and Villages*

When it came to selecting lands for settlement, there was an immediate divergence in points of view between the immigrants and their hosts. Members of the Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization were more in favour of the so-called wilderness lands, owned either by the government or by the railways. There were several reasons for this position.[57] Most important was the factor of financial indebtedness. The Board was concerned that the *Reiseschuld* not be preempted by other debts.

The total debt burden of the immigrants could be minimized, so the Board reasoned, if the purchase of improved lands and fully equipped farms could be avoided. And, while the cash income from the homesteads would be minimal, a good percentage of that income could be applied to the transportation debt, relatively small compared to the investments required for developed and well-stocked farms.

Another argument pointing in the direction of the homesteads was community-building. The wilderness lands still allowed for a degree of compact settlement. Such settlements were also relatively closed to the outside world, thus allowing more time for adjustment to the new environment. They would also require a greater degree of working together, and neighbours would help each other in the difficult tasks of pioneering.

The first CPR plan called for the settlement of at least 40 families in the so-called Battleford Block, adjacent to or interspersed with "old-timer" Mennonite settlers, who had already shown some inter-

est in the area.[58] The homesteading frontier, however, was not beckoning. To be sure, the offer of 160 acres of free land in exchange for a minimal registration fee and its development over a minimal three-year period was attractive enough. But the clearing of land was difficult, and available homestead lands now tended to be distant from railways. Besides, the failure rate since the 1872 Dominion Lands Act had started the homestead program was most discouraging.[59]

Taking up the challenge of the wilderness made little sense, however, in light of the fact that improved lands appeared to be available within a short distance from their earliest and main point of disembarkation, namely Rosthern. Immediately to the south, in lands once known as the Hague-Osler reserve, the emigration to Mexico was under way. Also, one immigrant leader had inspected Doukhobor lands at Kamsack and Verigin to the east which were being vacated partly to make possible a general Doukhobor emigration to Russia.[60] Negotiations with the latter group soon fell through because Peter Verigin wanted $500,000 in cash.[61]

The former Mennonite reserve lands held some promise, however. They reminded the immigrants of their homeland, and they also required the formation of community organization, so much a part of their identity. From the Board side, the main positive feature of this prospect was that additional homes near by would be in readiness to offer hospitality to more immigrants arriving from Russia.[62] Hence, the emigration was viewed as providential, and various options had been taken on their lands in 1922.[63]

When the first immigrants arrived in 1923 these desired options could not immediately be exercised for a variety of reasons. The emigrants did not leave all at once. Indeed, their leaving stretched through the 1920s, as did the arriving of the immigrants. Additionally, those who left sold some land to those who stayed. The perennial need for Mennonites to acquire more land for marrying sons applied here as it had applied elsewhere. The bigger obstacle, however, lay in the need of those emigrating to have cash for their land to enable them to buy new acreages in Latin America. In search of such resources, contacts were made with prospective financial middlemen. Early in 1924, for instance, Board officials were ready to sign a contract with a Chicago financier, by which he would agree to finance the purchase of 50,000 acres of Old Colony lands, equipment, and stock.[64]

The Chicago financier was expected to agree quickly so that spring plantings could be planned without delay. However, no quick acceptance of the proposal was forthcoming and besides, the departure of the emigrants was also being delayed, so that particular plan and other similar scheming failed to materialize.[65] Thus, the purchase of the lands was held up until several years later. And then only with the help of a London financier were Hague lands purchased at a cost of about $20 per acre at 6 to 7 per cent. In due course, 93 families settled in the villages of Gruenfeld, Hague, Hochfeld, Neuanlage, and Schoenwiese.[66]

Actually, the first village lands to fall into immigrant hands were in southern Manitoba where the choicest of properties were located. The "Mennonite lands" there were described by land agents as "the best improved farmlands in Canada, with first-class buildings" and near-excellent railway service.[67] Some farmers leaving for Mexico had sold for $75 to $100 per acre, though an average conservative value, without farm implements and stock, would have been about $65. This was favourably compared to the block of land south of Swift Current which had brought $44 per acre, there being "absolutely no comparison in the two blocks," the Manitoba block being "admittedly far superior" in every respect. In short:

> . . . the proposition is the most attractive all around . . . in fact the last of its kind available, and without the possibility of a recurrence.[68]

It was not surprising, therefore, that these lands were coveted by the immigrants, and in the end about 191 families settled in the villages of Blumenfeld, Blumenort, Chortitz, Gnadenthal, Gnadenfeld, Hochfeld, Osterwick, Reinland, Reinfeld, Rosenort, Rosengart, and Schoenwiese. The relationship began with the rental of village lands in 1923.[69] It appears that purchases were then made without the help of the Board or other outside middlemen.

In the former East Reserve area in Manitoba a complete replacement of the emigrants with immigrants was achieved on 44,000 acres of land with the help of American financiers. These financiers incorporated in Canada the Intercontinental Company Limited and bought the land for $900,000. The company persuaded American Mennonites and Amish to purchase $100,000 worth of second-

mortgage farm lien bonds through its agent Alvin J. Miller, the former director of American Mennonite Relief in Moscow. The company then proceeded to sell the land in the Arnaud-Grunthal-Niverville-Steinbach area on long-term credit at an average price of $32.50 an acre, negotiated with the help of the CCA-MLSB, to 300 families.[70] About 100 of these families made a few of the surviving villages—Chortitz, Gruenthal, and Kleefeld—in the former East Reserve area their home.

*Big Farms and Mennonite Terms*

While the villages were preferred settlement opportunities, those being vacated could not possibly accommodate all the newcomers. Thus, very soon the CCA-MLSB agents took a close look at a surprising number of very large farm operations for sale in all three prairie provinces. Established in the late 1800s the farms were going out of style, and their owners were anxious to sell their holdings, preferably intact, to owners who would possess them either individually or communally. The impetus to consider this possibility came from W.T. Badger, manager of the Canada Colonization Association, who reminded the MLSB after the deal with the Doukhobors fell through that such "big deals have always resulted in disappointment." As an alternative, Badger drew the Board's attention "to the colonizing of some of the large farms that are available in blocks of from 4,000 to 10,000 acres."[71]

The large farms were owned by real estate, insurance, feed, and mortgage companies, by banks, brokers, and community organizations, as well as by private individuals.[72] Many of the farms were foreign-owned. The Bean farm at Springstein, for instance, was registered in the name of F.A. Bean Canadian Properties of Minneapolis. The Big Four farm at Flaxcombe was owned by the Hon.E.J. Strutt of London, England. And the buyers of a farm at Meadows had to deal with Mr. Paley of Cape Town in South Africa.[73] Another owner of several sections was E.C. Rohrer, a St. Louis stock and bond dealer, who was one of the first to use tractors for all field operations, working them 24 hours a day for breaking, seeding, and summer fallow work. Some pulled up to five binders at one time. Another large landowner was already using an airplane for transportation in the 1920s.[74]

Among the private foreign owners was also H.L. Emmert, a rich

American banker, farmer, and realtor of Pennsylvania Dutch descent. Emmert lost a fortune in the Chicago fire, which motivated him to invest whatever he had left—his estate was valued at $33 million at the time of his death—in Canadian land. He owned thousands of acres of land around the towns of Arnaud, Fannystelle, Glenlea, Morris, Oak Bluff, Selkirk, Sperling, Springstein, St. Elizabeth, Starbuck, Union Point, and Winnipeg. Being terminally ill in 1922, he had deeded this land to a college in Iowa, which in turn set up the H.L. Emmert Land Agency to dispose of the properties in the most profitable way.[75]

One of the persons working for the Emmert foundation was Roy Erb, the son of Benjamin Franklin Erb, a Swiss Mennonite from Preston who had sold his business in 1893 in order to take up farming at Arnaud.[76] There had been other Swiss Mennonites in the region. A small group, chiefly from Johnson County, Iowa, made the St. Elizabeth area their home around 1912. While they conducted a Sunday school in the local schoolhouse, they never organized into a congregation and within a decade the settlement was extinct.[77]

The CCA and the MLSB took a hard look at these farms and suggested that they be sold not to individuals but to groups of Mennonite families. But communal land ownership was not that strong in the Mennonite tradition, at least not in the sense practised by the Anabaptist cousins, the Hutterites, who allowed no private ownership in their colonies. To be sure, the commonwealth in Russia had originated with blocks of land deeded to the Mennonites as a collective society, and the village settlements were characterized by numerous communal features, including the common pasture. But the family *Hoefe* (yards) and adjoining lands were individually held.

The large farms, however, were too large for individual purchase and too attractive to turn down without further consideration even with the requirement of communal ownership, operation, and living, at least initially. Most represented huge parcels of land, up to 5,000 acres and more, and came fully equipped. An agent's description of the Green Briar farms at Lucky Lake in Saskatchewan included the following (composite of four Green Briar farm units):

> 2880 acres, all but about 100 acres under cultivation, 61 horses, cows; one 5-room house, two 6-room houses, 1 7-room house, with cellars, bunk-houses, cisterns; wells; barns

> for 14, 16, 20 and 30 horses; machinery sheds, garages, blacksmith shop, granaries, chicken houses, hog houses; 29 sets of work harnesses, 9 binders, 7 drills, 6 three-furrow disk plows, 7 drag harrows and carts, 1 six-horse disk, 3 six-horse cultivators, 11 wagons, 3 sets of sleighs, 2 fanning mills, 2 grain pickers, 1 tractor, 1 14-inch gang plow, 1 threshing machine outfit, 1 blacksmith outfit, 1 sleeping car, 1 cook car, 1 land packer, 1 Ford car. Total cost $156,000.[78]

The movement onto the large farms began with the purchase of one such farm at Harris, Saskatchewan, by 20 families, with the help of Theodore Nickel, a prosperous farmer at Waldheim. The 5,588-acre farm was owned by Wilson Bros. and was equipped with machinery, 100 head of horses, and a number of cattle and was priced at $270,000.[79] The terms of sale were formalized on behalf of the CCA by the MLSB and its lawyer in what became known as the "Mennonite Contract."[80] The "Mennonite terms" allowed for purchase of the land with buildings, equipment, and stock without cash. Payments were spread over a maximum of 15 years and were based on a half-crop payment plan. The interest on the principal was at six per cent per annum. In the event of a crop failure, the payments, with the exception of taxes and insurance, could be postponed one year.

The terms allowed the vendor to appoint his own manager for a given number of years, but they also obligated him to make additional investments prior to sale if the farm was not fully operational. The contract further required the vendor to construct additional buildings, if needed, to accommodate individual families at the time of the anticipated break-up into average individual allotments of a half-section per family. This was expected to happen in three years. Once precedents had been set and a standard contract fashioned, the purchase of such farms with or without the help of the MLSB proceeded rapidly (Table 20).

The first crop year, 1925, was a good one, permitting substantial payments not only on the land but on the *Reiseschuld* as well. The fine beginnings reduced communal conflicts to a minimum and laid the foundations for an acceptable division of the properties as soon as the families were ready for it. Good crops in the initial years made communal life acceptable, but it also speeded the desire for separate and individual family farm units. Not infrequently, the break-up was accompanied by the enlargement of the community through the acquisition of additional properties.

## TABLE 20[81]

EARLY PURCHASES OF LARGE FARMS
IN PRAIRIE PROVINCES

(list limited to groups of four families or more and approximately first two years of settlement; dashes indicate information not available)

| PLACE | FARM | ACREAGE | PRICE PER ACRE ($) | FAMILIES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | *A. MANITOBA* | | |
| Arnaud | Emmert | 6,788 | 40 | 21 |
| Arnaud | Emmert | 640 | 55 | 4 |
| Arnaud | Greiner | 1,420 | 65/67 | 11 |
| Arnaud | Lyman | 10,720 | 60 | 44 |
| Brunkild | – | 960 | 50 | 4 |
| Cloverleaf | Carter | 2,300 | – | 4 |
| Crystal City | Fyfe | 1,600 | 45 | 6 |
| Crystal City | McKittrick | 1,920 | 45 | 6 |
| Culross | National Trust | 1,622 | 52.50/65 | 7 |
| Dominion City | Lawrence | 1,280 | 42 | 6 |
| Dominion City | Linklater | 500 | 50 | 5 |
| Dominion City | Sharpe | 1,380 | 32 | 6 |
| Dominion City | Saunders | 1,500 | 42 | 9 |
| Dufrost | Emmert | 1,700 | 40 | 8 |
| Dufrost | Emmert | 640 | 47 | 4 |
| Elm Creek | Anderson | 720 | 55 | 4 |
| Elm Creek | Gryte | 960 | 50 | 5 |
| Headingly | Dr. Hiebert | 1,100 | 70 | 4 |
| High Bluff | Aikius | 1,523 | 51 | 5 |
| La Salle | Stewart | 2,000 | 65/75 | 9 |
| Lasalle | Emmert | 4,956 | 50 | 19 |
| Lower Fort Garry | – | 780 | 60 | 4 |
| McDonald | Stewart | 2,000 | 68 | 6 |
| Meadows | Strutt | 9,200 | – | 32 |
| Morris | Schuhman | 800 | 50 | 4 |
| Newton | McMillan | 2,251 | 65/68 | 11 |
| Newton | Sandager | 2,000 | 50 | 6 |
| Niverville | Leistikow | 2,542 | 54 | 8 |
| Osborne | Meagher and Bereman | 4,428 | 62.50 | 14 |
| Springstein | Bean | 2,940 | 60 | 9 |
| St. Adolphe | – | 1,155 | – | 6 |

Table 20 continued

| PLACE | FARM | ACREAGE | PRICE PER ACRE ($) | FAMILIES |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | *A. MANITOBA continued* | | | |
| St. Anne | – | 800 | 37 | 7 |
| Starbuck | Leistikow | 1,200 | 65 | 7 |
| Westbourne | Bank of Nova Scotia | 1,200 | 50 | 12 |
| Westbourne | Campbell | 640 | 47 | 4 |
| Westbourne | McMillan | 1,500 | 40 | 5 |
| Westbourne | Schroeder | 1,700 | 55 | 6 |
| Whitewater | Webb-Jones | 3,000 | 40 | 9 |
| Whitewater | Wilson | 3,600 | 40 | 12 |
| | *B. SASKATCHEWAN* | | | |
| Bredenbury | Bean | 1,600 | 18 | 4 |
| Colonsay | Chesley | 3,620 | 50 | 12 |
| Dundurn | Meilicke | 2,685 | 52.50 | 10 |
| Dundurn | Schwager | 2,080 | 50 | 15 |
| Fiske | Burns | 3,040 | 50 | 9 |
| Flaxcombe | Big Four | 8,480 | 50 | 36 |
| Hanley | Rowse | 1,600 | 50 | 5 |
| Hanley | Sheldon | 9,120 | 50 | 37 |
| Harris | Wilson | 5,586 | 50 | 25 |
| Herschel | Lamborn | 3,200 | 50 | 10 |
| Holdfast | Ennis | 3,020 | 45 | 10 |
| Jansen | Johnson | 960 | 45 | 5 |
| Milden | Dugan | 5,424 | 54.25 | 16 |
| Swift Current | Sykes | 2,720 | 32.50 | 7 |
| | *C. ALBERTA* | | | |
| Acme | F. Williams | 800 | 50 | 4 |
| Hussar | O. Finkbein | 1,280 | 45 | 4 |
| Hussar | O. Finkbein | 1,225 | 35 | 4 |
| Namaka | Lane | 12,265 | 43 | 36 |
| Olds | P. Burns | 3,680 | 31 | 11 |
| Provost | Blair | 2,080 | 45 | 6 |
| Sedalia | Sedalia | 1,280 | 30 | 4 |
| Sterling | Lethbridge Northern | – | – | 10 |
| Wembley | Adair | 3,250 | 18 | 15 |
| Wembley | J. Carrel | 870 | 22 | 4 |

A most interesting and successful big farm settlement was the Lane farm at Namaka, Alberta. The George Lane tract comprised 12,265 acres, extending from the CPR station at Namaka to the Bow River, a distance of eight miles and adjoining the Blackfoot Indian Reserve on the west side. The CCA accepted an offer to colonize the land on a rental basis and by 1926, 36 immigrant families had been placed on it. In 1927, the Lane Company was ready to have the lease applied to a sale and thus the land was purchased in three separate parcels, each with 12 families, for a total price of $527,578. Payments of $75,600, $30,000, and $31,500 were made in the first three years, respectively, after which separate contracts were drawn up for the individual families already residing each on a half-section. The only misfortunes besetting the group were extremely heavy hail losses in some years and conflict with "a clique . . . who sought to boss the farm without regard for the proper authority," but who left in a body to go to another farm elsewhere, after they were voted out of power.[82]

Not surprisingly, there often were problems to be worked out.[83] The 36-family group at Big Four could never agree with the manager and foreman appointed by the vendor. At the Strutt farm, the farm group insisted that the operating expenses of $45,000 incurred by the manager for a crop value of about $100,000 were altogether too high. At the Fyfe farm, six families living in a single dwelling ended up "squabbling among themselves." At the Taylor farm, two brothers, one of whom had owned about 6,000 acres in Russia, would not agree to the operation of the farm by the vendor, even though the signed contract had specified that arrangement. At the Britton farm, lack of weed control, owing to the vendor's not supplying the necessary mower, led to foreclosure. At the Blain farm, there was disagreement over the maintenance of buildings, fences, and equipment.

Adjustments in the contracts had to be made sometimes for reasons quite beyond the control of either the buyer or the vendor, such as crop failures. At Chinook an immigrant had agreed to pay $33,600 for a farm with equipment. He had a 75 per cent crop failure due to hail in the first year and a 100 per cent loss in the second year. A 65 per cent loss in the third year was only partially covered by insurance policies held by both the vendor and the buyer.[84]

Some contracts were broken. One vendor at Rivers, Manitoba, the Imperial Life Assurance Co., requested four families on 1,280 acres to leave the farm, "which they did, giving up possession

peaceably." The reasons were "partly their own fault, partly intrigue of the farm manager, and partly the disappointment of the vendor in not getting peasants for his farm."[85] By 1929, 47 families with 16 contracts, accounting for 16,371 acres valued at nearly $700,000, had surrendered their contracts.[86] Cancellations were usually the result of early crops not being adequate to meet the obligations. Some farms had been priced too high at $50, $60, and $75 an acre. According to one study of land values, $40 an acre was a good average price for farms, including buildings, equipment, and livestock.[87]

Inadequate management and farming methods also accounted for some failures. Some immigrants resisted mixed farming, and others were reluctant to adopt different methods. In the words of one observer, there was a goodly number of immigrants who "were conservative to the bones" and who turned back all the advice of agricultural experts.[88] The breakdown of communal covenants was another factor. According to MLSB Manager A.A. Friesen, "Our farmers were too individualistically oriented to operate a communal establishment for any length of time."[89] Others were no match for "the business acumen of the vendors."[90] Affected families had to make new starts elsewhere.

There were also many happy vendors, pleased with the deal they had made.[91] The Sheldon group, for instance, was expected to harvest a 100,000-bushel crop in the first year, a crop larger than any previous ones. On the McMillan farm the vendor, a president of the Milk Producers' Association, dispensed with the services of his own expert when he discovered how well the "Mennonite group had done with the cows." The Lamborn group paid off $40,000 of a $160,000 indebtedness in the first year. At Namaka, the 36 families had quickly put the land "in better shape . . . than it ever was." When all was said and done the successes were greater than the problems, because

> The purchasers farm the land in the majority of cases better than it has ever been farmed, this is because they . . . do not tackle more than they are able to farm properly.[92]

### *Brush Land and Dry Land*

The developed lands, as a potential place of immigrant settlement on the prairies, were not unlimited and, in due course, other possibili-

ties were looked at, among them the so-called Battleford Block, which had been rejected earlier. The Block was part of the Northern reserve, a vast area, partly prairie and partly wooded, and was owned by the Canadian Pacific Railway. At the time of the building of the CPR, the federal government had granted to the railroad company a belt of land along the track 24 miles wide on either side. To the extent that mountains or muskeg made the land unfit for settlement as in the Canadian Shield, additional blocks were granted on the prairies. Thus, the CPR obtained four large reserves of land far removed from the main track. One of these, the Northern reserve, included the Battleford, Carrot River, and North Saskatchewan River area.[93]

Now the CPR was anxious to make quarter sections available to about 100 families on "brush land terms"[94] and, as a special incentive, offered free use of the land for four years.[95] The price per acre ranged from $8 to $15, depending on the usefulness of the land for agriculture, but the payment thereof could be spread over 34 years at seven per cent interest. Minimum capital needed to make a start was $500, though this could be less if family groups shared equipment and implements.[96] And they responded, not 100 families immediately, but nearly half that number. Among the pioneers was A.A. Friesen, who resigned his position with the MLSB to take up land near Rabbit Lake. The bushland farmers built their dwellings with logs and mud-plaster and shelters for their animals with poles and straw. At the same time they proceeded to clear the land and plant their crops.

The soil was fertile, and when frosts did not interfere with a normal growing season, bumper crops of 40 bushels per acre could be expected. Meanwhile, however, the settlers faced difficult years as they cleared and broke the land, put up log buildings, and dug wells up to 100 feet deep in order to obtain fresh water.[97] As A.A. Friesen recounted many years later:

> The first years were arduous and extremely difficult. We were all very poor, and could not foresee what the eventual outcome would be, and whether or not we would ever become prosperous.[98]

Most of the Manitoba (see Table 21) and Saskatchewan (see Table 22) immigrants had settled on the big farms, but the bushlands of the Battleford Block had also made farming possible for a significant

## TABLE 21[99]

IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENTS IN MANITOBA

| NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS | NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Altona | 47 | 33. | Hochfeld | 19 |
| 2. | Arnaud, Dominion City | 85 | 34. | Holmfield | 15 |
| 3. | Alexander | 25 | 35. | Holland | 3 |
| 4. | Austin, Sidney | 5 | 36. | Kirkella | 13 |
| 5. | Blumenfeld, Eichenfeld | 9 | 37. | Killarney | 10 |
| 6. | Barkfield | 18 | 38. | Kleefeld | 4 |
| 7. | Blumenort | 25 | 39. | Lena | 29 |
| 8. | Beausejour, Brokenhead, Lowland | 9 | 40. | LaSalle, Domain | 34 |
| | | | 41. | Lowe Farm | 8 |
| 9. | Burwalde | 15 | 42. | Margaret, Dunrea | 16 |
| 10. | Brookdale, Moorepark | 13 | 43. | Minnedosa | 5 |
| 11. | Brandon | 9 | 44. | Manitou | 59 |
| 12. | Boissevain | 32 | 45. | McCreary | 8 |
| 13. | Clearwater, Crystal City | 16 | 46. | McAuley | 23 |
| | | | 47. | Morden | 49 |
| 14. | Chortitz (West Reserve) | 14 | 48. | Marquette | 14 |
| | | | 49. | Meadows | 7 |
| 15. | Chortitz (East Reserve) | 53 | 50. | Melita, Elva, Pierson | 14 |
| | | | 51. | Myrtle, Kronsgart | 14 |
| 16. | Carman | 8 | 52. | Morris | 16 |
| 17. | Culross, Elm Creek, Fannystelle | 31 | 53. | Mather | 9 |
| | | | 54. | Neuenburg | 6 |
| 18. | Carrol, Hayfield | 5 | 55. | Neuhorst | 2 |
| 19. | Elgin | 3 | 56. | Ninga | 3 |
| 20. | Elie | 11 | 57. | Niverville | 72 |
| 21. | Foxwarren | 25 | 58. | Newton Siding | 26 |
| 22. | Fork River, Winnipegosis | 36 | 59. | North Kildonan | 79 |
| | | | 60. | Osterwick | 9 |
| 23. | Grande Pointe, Lorette | 7 | 61. | Osborne | 11 |
| | | | 62. | Oak Bluff | 13 |
| 24. | Gretna | 4 | 63. | Oak Lake, Griswold, Henton | 35 |
| 25. | Graysville | 3 | | | |
| 26. | Gnadenthal | 34 | 64. | Portage la Prairie | 11 |
| 27. | Gruenthal | 43 | 65. | Pigeon Lake | 19 |
| 28. | Glenlea, St. Adolphe | 24 | 66. | Plum Coulee | 11 |
| 29. | Gradenfeld | 17 | 67. | Reinland | 17 |
| 30. | Gimli, Winnipeg Beach | 2 | 68. | Reinfeld | 13 |
| 31. | Headingly | 9 | 69. | Rivers | 13 |
| 32. | Horndean | 9 | 70. | Rapid City | 11 |

Table 21 continued

| NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS | NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 71. | Rosenort | 12 | 81. | Swan River | 3 |
| 72. | Rosenfeld | 13 | 82. | Spencer | 13 |
| 73. | Rosengart | 21 | 83. | Stonewall, Balmoral | 10 |
| 74. | St. Elizabeth | 31 | 84. | Starbuck | 16 |
| 75. | Springstein | 25 | 85. | St. Rose du Lac | 3 |
| 76. | Schoenwiese | 11 | 86. | Whitewater, Mountainside | 48 |
| 77. | St. Anne | 17 | 87. | Winkler | 124 |
| 78. | Steinbach | 61 | 88. | Winnipeg | 280 |
| 79. | Sperling | 18 | | | |
| 80. | Stuartburn, Gardenton | 8 | | | |

number of immigrant families. And the same was true of irrigation lands in Alberta. The agricultural potential of southern Alberta for sugar-beet growing had been noted and tested for some time. And in 1925 the $\$1\frac{1}{2}$ million plant of the Canadian Sugar Factories was in operation for the first time.[101] Adequate quantities of water brought in by irrigation canals was one essential condition to be met. Another one, equally important but more difficult to guarantee, was the supply of the right kind of farm labour, namely "continental labourers,"[102] meaning families with a number of workers, including women and children, who could provide the hand labour required for thinning, weeding, and topping.

Once again, Mennonites seemed to be the desired people. However, they were not coming into a settlement vacuum. The landowners of the area were "English-speaking people, very conservative, and not very anxious to receive foreign settlers." They were also reluctant to plant beets, "viewing them as a risky innovation."[103] The feeling was widespread. The MacLeod Board of Trade, for instance, had also gone on record against "this class" who take "from the right kind of settler the best of our lands."[104]

Thus, the new settlement at Coaldale became a testing ground for the immigrants, in both economic and social terms. Here they had to learn, and demonstrate the profitability of, sugar-beet farming on irrigation land. Where many had failed and abandoned sugar-beet

## TABLE 22[100]

IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENTS IN SASKATCHEWAN

| NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS | NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Aberdeen | 27 | 40. | Guernsey | 16 |
| 2. | Annaheim | 2 | 41. | Gilroy | 12 |
| 3. | Abernathy | 1 | 42. | Glenbush | 70 |
| 4. | Big River | 2 | 43. | Gull Lake | 19 |
| 5. | Beechy | 38 | 44. | Glidden, Madison, | |
| 6. | Beverley | 2 | | Kindersley | 15 |
| 7. | Blumenhof | 23 | 45. | Gouldtown | 13 |
| 8. | Borden, Great Deer | 14 | 46. | Schoenwiese | 20 |
| 9. | Braddock | 4 | 47. | Gruenfeld | 16 |
| 10. | Balgonie | 1 | 48. | Hochfeld | 18 |
| 11. | Brocking | 10 | 49. | Hague | 15 |
| 12. | Bournemouth | 24 | 50. | Neuanlage | 24 |
| 13. | North Battleford | 3 | 51. | Humboldt | 4 |
| 14. | Biggar | 5 | 52. | Hanley | 32 |
| 15. | Carrot River | 12 | 53. | Hepburn & Mennon | 47 |
| 16. | Carnduff | 2 | 54. | Herschel | 45 |
| 17. | Colonsay | 12 | 55. | Herbert | 66 |
| 18. | Cactus Lake | 1 | 56. | Harris, Ardath | 9 |
| 19. | Central Butte | 6 | 57. | Indian Head | 6 |
| 20. | Cabri | 10 | 58. | Jansen | 8 |
| 21. | Canwood | 2 | 59. | Kelstern | 5 |
| 22. | Carmel & Hillsley | 3 | 60. | Leader | 2 |
| 23. | Capasin | 7 | 61. | Leinan | 6 |
| 24. | Clair | 2 | 62. | Lorenze | 8 |
| 25. | Duff | 2 | 63. | Laird | 56 |
| 26. | Dalmeny | 22 | 64. | Langham | 25 |
| 27. | Drake | 57 | 65. | Lost River | 19 |
| 28. | Davidson | 3 | 66. | Luseland | 1 |
| 29. | Dundurn | 54 | 67. | Lanigan | 9 |
| 30. | Eyebrow, Tugaske | 15 | 68. | Maxstone | 1 |
| 31. | Eyebrow "A" | 3 | 69. | Main Centre | 23 |
| 32. | Evesham & Hacklin | 6 | 70. | Mayfair | 30 |
| 33. | Eastbrook | 11 | 71. | Mullingar | 27 |
| 34. | Elbow | 12 | 72. | Moose Jaw | 6 |
| 35. | Fleming | 6 | 73. | McMahon | 14 |
| 36. | Fiske | 16 | 74. | Meadow Lake | 5 |
| 37. | Flowing Well | 6 | 75. | Neville | 3 |
| 38. | Foam Lake | 4 | 76. | Nokomis | 4 |
| 39. | Fairholme | 33 | 77. | Osage | 2 |

Table 22 continued

| NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS | NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 78. | Parkerview | 28 | 93. | Speers | 10 |
| 79. | Pikes Peak | 1 | 94. | Superb | 11 |
| 80. | Parry | 2 | 95. | Sonningdale | 11 |
| 81. | Rosthern | 93 | 96. | Schoenfeld | 4 |
| 82. | Rush Lake | 11 | 97. | St. Boswells | 5 |
| 83. | Ruddell | 2 | 98. | Swan Plain | 1 |
| 84. | Rabbit Lake | 45 | 99. | Tompkins, Stone, Carmichael | 4 |
| 85. | Regina | 13 | 100. | Truax | 14 |
| 86. | Rosetown | 5 | 101. | Tessier | 2 |
| 87. | Sheho | 10 | 102. | Viscount & Young | 3 |
| 88. | Scottsburg & Neidpath | 4 | 103. | Waldheim | 47 |
| 89. | Saskatoon | 50 | 104. | Wymark | 13 |
| 90. | Swift Current | 17 | 105. | Watrous | 38 |
| 91. | Swift Current (Syke's Farm) | 17 | 106. | Wishart | 5 |
| 92. | Springwater | 10 | 107. | Wingard | 3 |
| | | | 108. | Wilkie | 2 |

farming as a lost cause, they had to prove that it could be done. At Coaldale, also, the immigrants discovered that peaceful coexistence with their new Canadian neighbours would require effort by both parties. Fortunately for the Mennonites, they had strong leadership in the aforementioned CCA-MLSB representative, Jacob Gerbrandt, and from 1926 on in B.B.Janz.[105]

Area farmers were "converted" to growing sugar beets when the chairman of the newly created Irrigation Farms Colonization Board turned over his land together with horses, stock, and equipment to four families, including the enterprising Klaas Enns.[106] Enns was given the opportunity to purchase a farm, valued at $53,000, without down payment or written contract. The only condition required of Enns was that he sell 150 acres' worth of beets annually under the name of the vendor until the farm was paid for. Enns accepted the offer and, together with three of his brothers and their families, settled on the land in 1926. They, and others who followed, soon proved themselves. In the words of a CPR official:

> We have demonstrated in the Coaldale district the possibilities of developing irrigable land by the aid of Mennonites and the sugar-beet industry. Our experience is showing a way to the successful development of all the irrigable areas in Southern Alberta, the Eastern Section included.[107]

Very soon, the authorities developed schemes to bring in more immigrants by providing 80-acre parcels of land at $40 to $60 per acre and $400 worth of building material to be paid for from the annual proceeds of 10 acres of crop. These settlement provisions, known as sugar-beet contracts, became normative for land purchased from the CPR as well as from private landowners.

The CPR prided itself on the "excellent colony established on a good foundation."[108] But good prospects could not hide the difficult struggles of the sugar-beet growers. They had arrived penniless, without previous experience in irrigation and beet-growing, and more often than not the lands they were taking over were run down and badly infested with weeds.[109] They had to be taught sugar-beet farming and that it was wise "to get beets out of the ground even in snow and not to wait until snow was gone, lest the ground [and the beets!] be frozen hard."[110]

In spite of their handicaps and problems, they were successful in evoking jealousies among their neighbours sufficient to create what was called "the Mennonite situation at Coaldale." A public Coaldale meeting, sponsored by the United Farmers of Alberta, brought the question out into the open. According to Janz, never one to mince words or to avoid colourful speech, the meeting had to do with "Hogs and Mennonites," how to import a new breed of the former and how to export or deport the latter. Actually, the concern was only to prevent further expansion of the settlement.[111]

The immediate occasion was community discontent over the teaching of German and Religion in the small local schoolhouse on Saturdays, for which the school trustees had given official approval. The centre of opposition was the local congregation of the newly formed United Church of Canada, which, needing larger facilities, had made a deal with the local school trustees. The congregation began to meet in the big schoolhouse and subsequently turned its own smaller building over to the trustees, who needed additional classroom space to accommodate the children of the immigrants. The

Mennonites then sought and obtained permission from the school trustees to conduct their own Sunday worship service in the smaller building and special Saturday school classes in German and Religion. Resenting this latter use of *their* building, the United congregation announced a prohibition, which the local police then enforced.[112]

All of this had to be justified, of course, and so word spread through the community that the Mennonites were responsible for veterans and renters leaving the community because they could not compete with the newcomers. And more of the exploiting immigrants were on their way. A statistic of four families just arrived became 29 families, instead of 29 persons, and rumour had it that 60 more families were destined for Coaldale.[113]

The UFA meeting gave public expression to the resentment. Both the CPR and the Mennonites were criticized for bringing in people with tuberculosis, children thus infecting other children. They were blamed for a nearly tenfold increase in land prices compared to the prices 15 years earlier, and for the slave-like use of their women and children. Other people wanted land too, it was argued, but they could not obtain it because it was being kept for the Mennonites. They were even granted an acre of land for a cemetery before the soldiers were satisfied. What was the worst, though, was that these people wanted to enjoy all the privileges of a good country but do nothing to defend it. At that point, B.B. Janz rose to his feet and gave a defence of "war service," which, he said, had involved 11,000 men from a population of approximately 100,000 in Russia:

> Following the war it had been statisically confirmed that the percentage of Mennonites who died in action was larger than that of the Russian soldiers actively engaged. The Mennonites are not afraid to suffer or to die in fulfilling their duty.[114]

The events served to give an outlet to community feeling but also provided the Mennonites with an opportunity to explain themselves, something which they did thereafter in an ongoing way through their own committee and B.B. Janz, the provincial immigrant leader, and with the help of Jacob Gerbrandt, the CCA-MLSB representative stationed in Lethbridge. They also wasted no opportunity to express publicly their gratitude for their new homeland, as will later be seen.

Their best long-term public relations lay in their contributions to

the local economy, though local jealousies arising from immigrant prosperity were not easily set aside. A booming high-quality sugar-beet industry — in three years sugar content increased from 14.5 per cent to 18 per cent, and manufactured sugar increased from 75,000 bags to 100,000 bags[115] — in the end benefited the whole community. More importantly, irrigation farming in what was known as the Eastern Section was much encouraged as a result of the Coaldale experiment. Settlement there thus far had not been an unmitigated success, and in 1924 the Canada Colonization Association was confronted by mass abandonment of the land. To prevent this, interest and water rental accruals were written off, the contract price of dry land was reduced from $25 to $10 per acre, and some irrigable land, valued at $50 per acre, was reclassified as non-irrigable owing to seepage or the accumulation of alkali.[116]

For the settlement, or resettlement, of the so-called Eastern Section irrigation lands in the West Duchess, Rosemary, Countess, and Gem districts, the Canada Colonization Association devised the 100-family settlement scheme, of which immigrants took full advantage. The scheme called for settling individual families on quarter sections, of which at least 120 acres would be irrigable, and advancing them an average of $1,000 worth of equipment, feed, and lumber, on the assumption that the settlers themselves would have sufficient cash for household equipment plus a necessary 25 per cent down payment on four cows. The farms would each have a building, and the purchase price of about $5,000 would be paid on a sharecrop basis. A three-year farming program, worked out in advance and carefully supervised by competent men responsible to the CCA and the CPR's Department of Natural Resources, guided the settlers from unnecessary error and ensured reasonable profits from the outset.[117]

### *Peace River and Reesor*

Another Alberta frontier was the Peace River country in the north. The completion of a Canadian National Railways branch line into Grande Prairie set the stage for settlement into the Central Peace River district by 1930 of 35,000 settlers, 630 of them Mennonites.[118] The attraction of the Peace River area was highlighted by the 1926 bumper wheat crop, and the award a Peace River farmer won for his prize-winning wheat at the 1926 Chicago

International Fair.[119] Farmers had threshed as much as 60 bushels per acre, this being Marquis wheat. The land was remarkably free of wild oats, and there were no other noxious weeds "except a few small patches of 'twitch.' "[120]

The immigrants were not the first Mennonites to enter the Grande Prairie region, though their coming represented the more permanent presence. The Bear Lake district, northwest of Grande Prairie, had in 1917 and 1918 attracted a small community from the U.S.A., seeking refuge in the remote Canadian hinterland from American military conscription.[121]

Immigrant groups made brave starts at Crooked Creek, southeast of Grande Prairie, and westward at La Glace and Lymburn, bringing to 43 the number of settlement districts in Alberta (Table 23). Both the quantity and the quality of the land gift was generous. Homesteaders paid a $10 registration fee, not for a quarter section, but for 320 acres of very fertile farmland capable of enormous crop yields if the growing season was not cut short by frosts.[123]

The wider interest in the Peace River area coincided with the formation of Mennonite Immigration Aid in association with the CNR and with the emigration from Manitoba to the Paraguayan Chaco, and so, not surprisingly, there were those who felt that the isolation of Canada's northland might be a better settlement option than the troublesome Chaco, where those arriving now had "many boils all over their bodies."[124]

Among those lobbying for a turnaround, on the part both of governmental authorities and of the Mennonites, was C.W. Reimer, an unusual individual who was, according to his letterhead, "a dealer in high grade sewing machines and repairing of all kinds." A man of many interests and experiences, Reimer had already led a land-seeking delegation to Nicaragua in 1916.[125] He also spoke French and "during the many days of big-game hunting with half-breeds our conversation was in French only." He had also been on a 600-mile canoe trip with a sailor looking for land in western Canada.[126]

Reimer claimed to be working in the interests of both "our people" and "our powerful empire." After all, was it not a service to the government to keep noncombatant Mennonites and their millions of dollars, plus the taxes they would pay, in Canada? Dollars the "empire" had to have because without money the "empire" could not make use of its brave soldiers.[127] Besides, the "peace-loving, dili-

## TABLE 23[122]

IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENTS IN ALBERTA

| NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS | NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Acme | 12 | 23. | La Glace | 35 |
| 2. | Beaverlodge | 16 | 24. | Lymburn | 23 |
| 3. | Blue Ridge | 7 | 25. | Monitor | 4 |
| 4. | Coaldale | 255 | 26. | Munson & Drumheller | 7 |
| 5. | Crowfoot | 17 | 27. | MacLeod | 5 |
| 6. | Chinook | 4 | 28. | New-Brigden, Sedalia, & Naco | 25 |
| 7. | Carstairs | 20 | 29. | Namaka | 38 |
| 8. | Castor | 14 | 30. | Olds | 9 |
| 9. | Coronation & Lake Thelma | 7 | 31. | Provost | 15 |
| 10. | Calgary | 30 | 32. | Paradise Valley | 2 |
| 11. | Countess | 28 | 33. | Peoria | 1 |
| 12. | Didsbury (Burns Ranch) | 17 | 34. | Pincher Sta. | 2 |
| 13. | Didsbury (Town) | 7 | 35. | Rosemary | 81 |
| 14. | Duchess & Brooks | 15 | 36. | Rimbey | 1 |
| 15. | Edmonton | 1 | 37. | Sunny Slope | 15 |
| 16. | Grassy Lake, Tabor, & Purple Springs | 20 | 38. | Swalwell | 14 |
| 17. | Gem | 48 | 39. | Springridge | 10 |
| 18. | Glenwoodville | 12 | 40. | Tofield | 51 |
| 19. | Hussar I | 1 | 41. | Vauxhall | 25 |
| 20. | Hussar II | 5 | 42. | Wembley | 35 |
| 21. | Irma | 5 | 43. | Willow Creek, Rosedale, & East Coulee | 1 |
| 22. | Lacombe | 8 | | | |

gent, industrious, and quiet farmer" helped to build the "empire" as much as the soldier. Canadian history was witness to the fact that there were ways other "than mere guns" to build an "empire." After all:

> When the British soldiers had fought and brought victory on the Plains of Abraham, [they] were conquered by the French girls that they married, who changed them all to French, except their names. . . .[128]

Apparently, C.W. Reimer was not a man for the CNR, to which organization he made his boldest suggestions. He was brushed aside with the railway's claim that it was not in the business of transporting people from one province to another. However, only two weeks later, the Canadian National Settlement Association was co-operating with another group whose interests would have precisely that effect, namely the transporting of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of Mennonites from Manitoba to Alberta. It was too late to stop the movement to Paraguay, but there were others in southern Manitoba, not of the immigrants, who took a great interest in the prospects of the Peace River district. While there were a number of individuals and groups who embarked on inspection tours,[129] none brought as much attention as the 1927 early summer delegation sponsored in part by some congregations in Manitoba and the newly organized Mennonite Immigration Aid.[130]

The interests of the delegation were very similar to those that had prompted thousands to establish a new home in Latin America, namely an exclusive block of land—about 15 townships of homestead land—and special concessions in education. There was a difference, however, in the latter matter. Those looking to the north were prepared to run their schools under certain government rules and regulations and under the supervision of a government inspector.[131]

There was no fear of pioneering once again, but the hopes of the delegation were not realized, with respect to either education or appropriate parcels of land.[132] As they made a thorough investigation of vast areas beginning with territory north of Lesser Slave Lake and moving on to Peace River Town—an overland trip to Fort Vermilion did not materialize—then to areas both east and west of Grande Prairie, and including also stretches along the Peace in British Columbia, they could not find exactly what they wanted. Everywhere they found reasonably successful pioneers, but none of these could show them the paradise they were hoping to find.[133] Nowhere did they find an area to their liking because one of the following essential ingredients was always lacking: a large exclusive land area or reasonably good soil or open prairie with only a minimum of bushland or reasonable prices.

The Gundy Ranch along the Peace in British Columbia at first looked the most attractive. There were over 30,000 acres, 1,000 of them already under cultivation, available at $20 an acre. Reluctantly,

J.J. Hildebrand, the field secretary of Mennonite Immigration Aid and leader of the delegation, concluded that "the buyers after a year of hard work would be deeper in debt than at the beginning."[134] The railway was 90 miles distant, and the earnings would not be sufficient to cover land costs, production costs, and taxes. The disappointment was great, and he and others could not easily forget Peace River country — until the dream was realized, at least partially, in the 1930s. Hildebrand also looked longingly at land occupied by Indians:

> The Indians have their reserve of land, but as they do not engage in farming, the question was raised whether these Indians could be given a reserve of land in some other place, and their present reserve be divided into homesteads. In case the rest of the land should be taken up, then it would be time to raise that question officially.[135]

Holdeman Mennonites were the next group to establish themselves in the Peace River district.[136] For them, the move to Crooked Creek in the late 1920s was the beginning of a steady, ever-expanding colonization in the Central Peace River area. Fifteen families signed up for 22 quarter sections, including 1,400 acres under cultivation, at $18 per acre, to be paid on a half-crop share basis at three per cent interest in the first year, four per cent in the second year, and six per cent thereafter.[137] The main sources of the Holdeman settlers were the communities at Swalwell and Linden, Alberta. Other sources were Manitoba, Kansas, and Oregon. This mixing of settlers, including those of both Swiss and Dutch ethnic origins, in every new community established by the Holdeman people contributed to the relative strength of the congregations, which, because of their isolation and closedness, were constantly in danger of losing that vitality. The Holdeman settlers also experienced all the troubles of pioneering. According to their own chronicles:

> Many homesteaders' possessions consisted of a saw, hammer, axe and a grub-hoe. Some of them even had a team of horses, a walking plow, harrows, and a cow or two. . . . In the early years of the settlement, the market and the doctor, being 45 miles away, took 3 to 4 days to make the return trip with horses. These horses were also the source of farm power. On Sunday many people would walk to church services and let the horses have a rest.[138]

A fascination similar to the attraction of the Peace River country in the west was in the east focused on northern Ontario, more precisely "the great clay belt on the Hudson Bay slope" which, when cleared, "will be one of the largest farm districts of the world."[139] The clay land, it was said, was very productive, and the Experimental Farm at Kapuskasing, 70 miles west of Cochrane, had proven this by successfully growing oats, peas, barley, clover and timothy, potatoes, turnips, mangels, sunflowers, strawberries, raspberries, and many kinds of vegetables. Additionally, the north was cattle country, though an abundance of wolves made sheep-raising quite hazardous, one wolf being known to have killed as many as 18 sheep in one attack! Bees did well in the north, gathering as much honey as 16 pounds per day per hive![140]

The new land of milk and honey did not require a large investment because plots of land were available on homestead terms. As an inducement to northern settlement, the provincial government offered homestead sites of 75 acres at 50 cents an acre. The property could be registered for only ten dollars and the buyer was given three years to pay off the balance. An immediate cash return lay in the cutting of pulpwood. The Spence Falls Pulp and Power Company was spending five million dollars to enlarge its pulp mill in Kapuskasing in order to serve the growing American demand.

Being pressured by both the CPR and Mennonite leaders to leave the cities so as not to create ill will among workers in a tight labour market, those immigrants who had remained in Ontario agreed to investigate the possibility of establishing a colony, accompanied by a CNR Land Settlement official, and by Thomas Reesor, a Swiss lay leader from Pickering who had done so much for the immigrants since the arrival of the Ontario group in July 1924. Following Reesor's advice, they agreed to start a settlement, provided a railway siding could be built to facilitate, primarily, the marketing of freight. Jacob H. Janzen, a prominent immigrant leader, who viewed virgin lands as the best settlement prospect all along, encouraged them:

> Here masses of our people can, through industry and perseverance, establish their own homes in which they will actually be their own masters, and do not have to sell themselves into the hands of others through the accumulation of great debts.[141]

More compelling yet than the promise of cheap land was the chance to build, with a minimum of outside interference, a community in the tradition of the commonwealth in Russia. The government stood prepared to award significant concessions to the settlers agreeing to reserve homesteads bordering the immediate community for exclusive Mennonite use in the future. "This is very good," one settler explained, "for it permits the possibility of closed settlements and the exclusion of other nationalities. In time, a colony could be built here after our own wishes."[142]

The creation of a community of this kind could only become a reality after difficult years of pioneering struggle and privations. People recognized the extreme nature of the sacrifices required for northern living, and in June 1925 only seven families showed themselves ready to challenge the wilderness. The pioneers selected timbered land in Eilber and Barker townships on both sides of the CNR line, 103 miles east of Cochrane. The nearest town was Mattice, located seven miles to the east. Hearst, 23 miles to the west, served as the regional headquarters. The stopping-off point was the newly built railway siding, which appropriately was named after Thomas Reesor.

The establishment of the Reesor settlement was one of the most difficult undertaken anywhere in Canada by the immigrants. There were no roads, not even trails, and all the supplies—bags of potatoes and flour, as well as building supplies like doors, window glass, and roofing—had to be carried by the people on their backs from the railway siding to their lots up to two miles away "because pack horses cannot pass through the brush on account of the muskeg."[143] Besides, maintaining horses and livestock was a very expensive proposition, feed costing about 35 dollars per ton and a team of horses as much as 500 dollars.

And yet progress was made because the settlers were not easily discouraged and they possessed other "pioneering qualities of a very high nature."[144] Although few of the settlers had any previous experience in bush work, they quickly became "remarkably proficient with the axe," and the buildings which they erected of logs were a "credit to old experienced axe men."[145] Pulpwood was plentiful and one man in a long day could cut up to two cords at four dollars a cord net. Some settlers were ingenious and skilled enough to manufacture their own tools, including a stump puller.

The CNR tried to be accommodating—though Thomas Reesor's request for a Caterpillar was rejected—by allowing more trains to stop and by building an immigrant shed at the siding, which doubled as a place of meeting and worship. And the provincial government assisted in the provision of a school and a teacher. After an inspection tour, Arthur H. Unruh was most optimistic about the permanence of the settlement and about its ongoing vitality.[146]

There were facts to support his optimism. By the fall of 1928 there were 226 persons on 55 homesteads in the settlement. There were 10 teams of horses, 17 cows and 1 bull, and 10 goats, including an essential male. A total of 35 acres had been cleared, the stumps had been pulled, and one farmer alone had planted 300 strawberry plants, 250 raspberry bushes, 20 gooseberry bushes, and 50 currant bushes, plus two apple trees.[147]

For both Unruh and Hildebrand, as well as Mennonite Immigration Aid and the CNR Land Settlement officials, Reesor was a badly needed boost for their cause. Soon they were promoting Reesor as a place where the immigrants could be their own bosses, free of debt, and "more contented and better off than the majority of the Mennonites who have taken up improved, equipped farms at high prices."[148] To the editor of the *Mennonitische Rundschau* Unruh wrote that he did "not notice the discouraged and embittered spirit which, I regret to say, is so frequent amongst the newly settled Russian Mennonites."[149]

For J.J. Hildebrand the prospects were even better.[150] He saw the possibility of a vast colony for hundreds of families emerging north of Mile 103, and all that was needed was an 18-mile railway spur to bring in settlers' effects and to haul out cordwood.[151] However, the CNR was not quite persuaded. Its own superintendent of land settlement viewed Hildebrand's reporting as "more favourable than the circumstances of the settlers justify" because much of the land was low and swampy.[152]

As the matter became a public debate in the press, officials of the Rosthern Board and their supporters entered into the fray. "Many of the newcomers were cheated," said D. Paetkau, "and are now bitterly disappointed."[153] H.B. Janz visited the settlement and wrote about economic hardships, especially for large families lacking able-bodied men.[154] One "J.P.F." passed on the criticism received from two girls who had told him:

> I am not going back. I do not like it there. Six days of the week we look like men. We have to dress ourselves like men for the work in the bush. Only on Sundays we are able to dress ourselves like girls.[155]

The pessimists too were justified in their thinking. The transition from cutting pulpwood to agriculture was proving to be very difficult. Some poorly motivated settlers had been attracted by the glowing promotions and were only a burden to the hard-working ones already there. The CNR was not sufficiently supportive. One of its biggest mistakes was to withdraw the railway pass from Jacob H. Janzen, the colony's spiritual advisor, and, as one of the great believers in Reesor, a strong encouragement to the brave pioneers. When he stayed away, the families started having second thoughts, especially when they heard of the expanding possibilities in southern Ontario.[156]

*Gardens, Orchards, and Dairies*

Elsewhere in Ontario three regions attracted immigrants, sufficiently strongly, in terms of appeal and numbers, to develop permanent settlements, although there was a great deal of moving to and fro from community to community, from factory to farm and back again, and between Ontario and the west as the immigrants pursued the best opportunities for themselves on the basis of reports and rumours. It was not until the depression of the prairie economy in the 1930s that Ontario became fully accepted and popular as a place of permanent settlement.[157]

The Waterloo County region, especially the urban environs of Hespeler, New Hamburg, Kitchener, and Waterloo, did retain or regain a goodly number of immigrant labourers, in spite of local opposition. Some immigrants started their own businesses or purchased farms ranging from 5 acres to 100 acres at prices from $50 to $200 per acre as soon as their reputation and credit had been established and the necessary down payments could be made. Vegetable crops, corn, chickens, beef cattle, and dairy cattle were the sources of income.[158]

The Essex County region and Pelee Island in Lake Erie, the southernmost parts of Ontario, attracted immigrant families en masse—31 families in the spring of 1925 alone—because of earning

possibilities in factories in Windsor and other towns and because of the great demand for labour on vegetable and tobacco farms best provided by families. The island settlement looked so promising that the CPR colonization department soon took an option on half of the island's arable land in order to establish a larger colony for the Mennonites.[159] For the Mennonites the isolation represented by the island had considerable appeal.

Both on the island and on the mainland the farm owners frequently found themselves without an adequate source of reliable farm workers. Thus, the American owners of Pelee Island land welcomed Mennonite sharecroppers, who earned enough from the wheat, vegetable, and tobacco farms to pay their *Reiseschuld* in the first year. The same was true in the Leamington and Harrow areas, where more than 50 families purchased farms ranging from 25 to 100 acres at prices from $100 an acre to $1,000 an acre, while others were renting or sharecropping. The raising of tobacco presented a problem, but so pressing were economic considerations that those who abhorred tobacco-growing accepted it as a necessity of life.[160]

The Vineland-Beamsville area, where Swiss Mennonites had also hosted immigrants and introduced them to work in orchards and factories, became the gateway to a very substantial Mennonite penetration of the peninsula in later years. Here also the cash and credit earned enabled the gradual purchase by groups of families of sizeable orchards. The communal approach reminded the immigrants of their native villages in Russia, and names like Memrik, Schoensee, and Steinbach were applied to the jointly held properties. In the peninsula, as on the prairies, the communal approach was of short duration, mostly because the individual immigrant families soon discovered that they could make it on their own.[161] When the settlements throughout Ontario had stabilized, there were 972 households in 17 districts (Table 24).

The beginnings of larger-scale and permanent Mennonite settlement in British Columbia occurred in February 1928, when the Crain and Eckert Company, owning 700 acres of land between the Vedder River and Vedder Mountain in the Yarrow area of the Fraser River Valley, began to sell the land in approximately 10-acre lots at $150 per acre.[163] Purchasers were paying $200 down and the balance $20 per acre yearly at six per cent interest. Initially, the families had some income from working in the hop gardens about four miles away

## TABLE 24[162]

IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENTS IN ONTARIO

| NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS | NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Baden | 12 | 10. | Pelee Island | 22 |
| 2. | Dunnville | 22 | 11. | Port Rowan | 36 |
| 3. | Gormley | 4 | 12. | Reesor | 57 |
| 4. | Hamilton | 5 | 13. | Toronto | 29 |
| 5. | Hanover | 3 | 14. | Vineland | 123 |
| 6. | Hespeler | 13 | 15. | Virgil | 119 |
| 7. | Kitchener | 177 | 16. | Waterloo | 62 |
| 8. | Leamington | 230 | 17. | Windsor | 20 |
| 9. | New Hamburg | 38 | | | |

or in sawmills, logging camps, and brickyards. At the same time, they began to cultivate their plots of land, experimenting alternately with sugar beets, green beans, rhubarb, and strawberries, but eventually settling on raspberries as the most promising crop. In two years, 46 families had made their home in the Eckert block and an additional 20 families on adjoining half-acre plots.[164] In addition to the economic opportunities, the settlers found the climate very agreeable.[165] The available land at Yarrow was soon exhausted and so Eckert directed others to the Stamersley Valley at Agassiz, where he assisted in the acquisition of land from his own holdings, from the Soldiers' Settlement Board, and otherwise.[166] Twenty-two families made Agassiz their home, and, on the assumption it was permanent, they built a church in 1930. However, land prices turned out to have been too high for what the farms could produce, and within five years the Agassiz settlement was no more.[167]

Another attractive piece of land was a 746-acre tract of land in the South Sumas District near Yarrow, owned by the Northern Construction Company. This was selling in 20-acre units at $115 per acre. A down payment of five per cent was required with the balance payable in 20 years at seven per cent. A committee of Yarrow settlers undertook the responsibility of settling the block.[168]

In the Abbotsford area, settlement began on sections of land cleared of timber but not of stumps.[169] In 1932, the Abbotsford Lumber Company had completed logging operations on a large tract

of land west of Abbotsford between the U.S. border and the Matsqui Valley. The area had been divided into 20-, 30-, and 40-acre lots, which were selling at auction beginning at $10 per acre, with 25 per cent down. What could not be sold by auction was turned over to a local real estate agent for ongoing sale. Stumps covered the area, but between and among the stumps cattle could be raised and strawberries could be grown, thus providing food and income while the huge stumps were blasted one by one from their deep underground anchors and the fields were cleared. The opportunity attracted Mennonites from Agassiz and Yarrow as well as from the prairies, and before long Abbotsford-Clearbrook was challenging Yarrow as the most attractive centre.[170]

Besides berry-growing, dairy farming presented itself as a distinct agricultural opportunity in the Fraser Valley. After an inspection tour, CCA-MLSB representative A.W. Klassen reported that one farmer with 32 inferior cows, some of them giving as little as 5 pounds per day and none over 40 pounds, was none the less grossing $30 a day from these cows. Another, milking over 70 cows a day, showed a daily profit of $50 from retail milk sales. The demand for table cream, milk, and butterfat led Klassen to conclude "that a good dairy man in any part of this district within reach of Vancouver can do exceptionally well."[171] Dairy farming and berry-growing, supplemented by work in hop gardens and lumber camps, became the economic base for ever-expanding settlements, 15 in all, including one on Vancouver Island (Table 25).

TABLE 25[172]

IMMIGRANT SETTLEMENTS IN BRITISH COLUMBIA

| NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS | NO. | DISTRICT | HOUSEHOLDS |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Abbotsford | 120 | 8. | Cranbrook | 1 |
| 2. | Agassiz | 10 | 9. | Hutchison | 1 |
| 3. | Armstrong | 6 | 10. | Oliver | 6 |
| 4. | Arrowhead | 4 | 11. | Red Rock | 1 |
| 5. | Black Creek | 29 | 12. | Renata | 2 |
| 6. | Coglan–Langley Prairie | 18 | 13. | Sardis | 82 |
| 7. | Cottonwood | 1 | 14. | Vancouver | 40 |
| | | | 15. | Yarrow | 160 |

Also in British Columbia, the immigrants pursued the dream of a large, compact, and reasonably exclusive settlement. A 7,000-acre fertile plot of reclaimed, but inadequately drained, marshland in the Pitt Meadows area held some promise in this regard, but the several attempts made to build a strong settlement faltered because drainage and transportation problems were never satisfactorily solved.[173] Some isolated areas of Vancouver Island held a similar appeal, and a small but permanent settlement took root on the east coast at Black Creek, south of Campbell River, where employment in pulp mills and logging camps provided cash while small plots of land were cleared for dairying and berry crops.[174]

The successful placement on land of so many immigrants was cause for rejoicing, but almost everywhere the settlers faced all the hardships of pioneering on new land, many difficult adjustments and many tears. As a leader of the Gem settlement recalled:

> So they came to Gem: landless, homeless, moneyless, saddled with debt, strangers to language and culture, "peculiar" in religious beliefs, quaint, and poor in dress, desiring a home of their own and a means of making a livelihood for themselves and their families.[175]

Hard work was the order of the day, but so was the co-operative effort. The break-up of the communal farms did not mean the end of community. On the contrary, the interdependence of neighbours became the greater reality as the individual households struggled not so much to compete with each other on a single farm as to help each other out on their respective individual farms in order to provide all that was necessary to keep the families fed, clothed, sheltered, and healthy.[176]

Fostering the communal spirit were the local immigrant committees, the provincial immigrant organizations, and the inter-provincial Central Immigrant Committee. But quite probably no other community experience contributed as much to the essential sustenance of the settlers as did the local congregation, which, since the days of Anabaptist beginnings, had provided the social fellowship and the spiritual faith for a people who, wherever they went, could not live by bread alone.

## FOOTNOTES

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3 Isaak Klassen, p. 116.

4 John Friesen, "Manitoba Mennonites in the Rural-Urban Shift," *Mennonite Life* 23 (October 1968): 152–58.

5 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus* (Altona: D.W. Friesen & Sons, 1962), pp. 185–86.

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17 See John A. Hostetter in Foreword to *The Amish of Canada*, by Orland Gingerich (Waterloo: Conrad Press, 1972), p. 10.
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28 *Ibid.*, pp. 188–89.
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32 *Ibid.*
33 David Toews, "Bekanntmachung," *Der Bote* 1 (13 August 1924): 4; Epp, pp. 188–89.
34 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 644, Minutes of Executive Committee, Canada Colonization Association, 16 June 1925.
35 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 643, Minutes of Board of Directors, 16 December 1924.
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39 GAI, 1743, Box 113, File 1055, "Memorandum."

40 According to David Toews, some people at Herbert held the view that immigration work had begun there rather than in Rosthern, because the delegation from Russia had been helped across the border at Portal and because its first meetings had been conducted at Herbert. CMCA, XX-II-A, Vol. 1184, File 139, David Toews, "Erinnerungen aus der Zeit der Russlandhilfe und Immigrationsarbeit von David Toews," p. 2.

41 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 644, Manager's Report to CCA Executive Committee, 2 June 1925. See also CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1289, File 743, Minutes of Mennonite Land Settlement Board, 4 June 1925.

42 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6.

43 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, Arthur H. Unruh to F.J. Freer on "Annual Meeting of Mennonites at Rosthern, Saskatchewan," 10 December 1929.

44 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6.

45 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, "Memo of Discussion with T.O.F. Herzer," 10 November 1926.

46 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, F.J. Freer, "Memorandum of a meeting re: Mennonite Immigration," 12 April 1927.

47 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, Memo re: "Mennonite Situation," 13 July 1926.

48 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, Letter to Mennonite Immigration Aid, 13 August 1927. A close relative of H. Vogt informed the author on 16 March 1981 that he, Vogt, was always "into something," that with him "there was always an angle," and that he was debarred for a time.

49 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, Dan M. Johnson to Mennonite Immigration Aid, 26 November 1926.

50 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, "Memorandum of Agreement between Mennonite Immigration Aid and Canadian National Railways," 2 February 1927.

51 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, J.J. Hildebrand, "Report on My trip to Herbert, Sask.," 7 July 1927.

52 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-5, "Summary of Business Under Mennonite Agreement to March 20, 1929."

53 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, J.S. McGowan to W.J. Black, 3 November 1928.

54 David Toews, "Wanderungen: Eine Erklaerung," *Mennonitische Rundschau* 50 (2 November 1927): 4; PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5632, File 5163-6, F.J. Freer to David Toews, 21 September 1927; Arthur H. Unruh to F.J. Freer on "Annual Meeting of Mennonites at Rosthern, Saskatchewan," 10 December 1929.

55 The author bases the assessment of Unruh and Hildebrand on an examination of the records and the excellent reports filed by these men based as they were on thorough field work.

56 "Die Siedlungsbehoerde (Mennonnite Land Settlement Board)," *Der Bote* 3 (24 November 1926): 10.

57 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1286, File 722, A.A. Friesen to W.T. Badger, Canadian Colonization Association, Winnipeg, 5 November 1923.

58 In the correspondence, reference is made to "Old Colony Mennonites," but Colony, here and in subsequent paragraphs, refers to Mennonites of the older settlements, namely the non-immigrant community, and not, as could be assumed, to those conservative Mennonites more commonly referred to as Old Colony, of whom so many had gone to Mexico in the 1920s. See GAI, 1743, Box 44, File 506, Colonel J.S. Dennis correspondence from September to November of 1924; GAI, 1743, Box 44, File 506, W.J. Gerow, CPR Land Agent, to P.L. Naismith, Manager, Department of Natural Resources, 4 January 1926.

59 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 187–88.

60 GAI, 1743, Box 44, File 506, W.J. Gerow to P.L. Naismith, 4 September 1923.

61 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1286, File 722, A.A. Friesen to W.T. Badger, 21 June 1924.

62 *Ibid.*, 14 November 1923.

63 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, p. 186.

64 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1176, File 89, David Toews and A.A. Friesen to F.J. Webster, Chicago, 21 January 1924.

65 See, for example, 27 May 1924 Board proposal to Morris Ginsburgh of Winnipeg to mediate the purchase of 40,000 acres at $32 an acre. CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1288, File 725.

66 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1170, File 55, "Liste der Distriktmaenner der mennonitischen Immigrantengruppen von Saskatchewan," 18 October 1937.

67 GAI, 1743, Box 44, File 506, "Mennonite Lands," n.d.

68 *Ibid.*

69 Peter D. Zacharias, *Reinland: An Experience in Community* (Altona: Reinland Centennial Committee, 1976), pp. 222–25.

70 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 646, T.O.F. Herzer, "Report to the Directors of CCA," 21 June 1926; Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 196–97.

71 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1286, File 722, W.T. Badger to Canadian Mennonite Board of Colonization, 23 June 1924.

72 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1289, File 743, examples included the following: A.J. Hansen & Co., Prince Albert, an investor in farm mortgages; J.H. Speers & Co., Saskatoon, a feed and seed company; E.H. Crandell, Calgary, a real estate company; R.M. Buchanan Co.

Ltd., a broker; Eriksdale Settlers' Committee, Eriksdale, a community organization. A number of the large American landowners are listed in Unruh, p. 17.

73 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 643, "Memorandum re: Mennonite Settlement Since the Inception of the Mennonite Land Settlement Board, August 1924," n.d.

74 *Ibid.*, p. 17.

75 Hank Unruh, pp. 13, 17–18. See also J.P. Dyck, *Das 25-Jaehrige Jubilaeum der Springsteiner Mennonitengemeinde, 1938–1963* (Springstein, Man., 1963).

76 [Peter R. Harder]. *Arnaud Through the Years* (1974), p. 163.

77 L.J. Burkholder, *A Brief History of the Mennonites in Ontario* (Markham, Ont.: Mennonite Conference of Ontario, 1935), p. 135.

78 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1286, File 722, A.E. Love, Canadian Colonization Association, to Mennonite Land Settlement Board, 17 November 1924.

79 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1288, File 725, newspaper clipping is from *Saskatoon Phoenix*, entitled "Wilson Bros. Dispose Of Harris Holdings For About $270,000."

80 Frank H. Epp, *Mennonite Exodus*, pp. 189–190.

81 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 643, "Memorandum re: Mennonite Settlement Since the Inception of the Mennonite Land Settlement Board, August 1924," n.d.; GAI, 1743, Box 125, File 1224, "List of Settled Families in the Province of Alberta in 1926."

82 GAI, 1743, Box 164, File 1667, "Mennonite Settlement at Namaka."

83 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 643, "Memorandum re: Mennonite Settlement Since the Inception of the Mennonite Land Settlement Board, August 1924," n.d.

84 GAI, 1743, Box 121, File 1172, "Memorandum: Foster-Schmidt, Chinook," 25 August 1930.

85 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 646, T.O.F. Herzer, "To the Directors, CCA," 18 May 1926.

86 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1176, File 89, "Bericht der Siedlungsbehoerde ueber die Provinz Saskatchewan, auf der Sitzung des Zentralen Mennonitischen Immigrantenkomitees, am 3ten und 4ten Juli 1929 in Rosthern, Sask."

87 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1176, File 89, "Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Siedlungsbehoerde in der ersten Haelfte des Jahres, 1929." A 1925 dispatch lists prices for unequipped farms in Manitoba ranging from $53/acre for 1200 acres purchased by 5 families in Starbuck area to $75/acre for a 720-acre farm in St. Agatha area. See CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1290, File 744, Winnipeg Office of Canada Colonization Association to A.A. Friesen, Rosthern, Sask., 5 March 1925.

88 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1176, File 89, "Bericht ueber die Taetigkeit der Siedlungsbehoerde in der ersten Haelfte des Jahres, 1929." Still further evidence of such resistance on the part of some to learn new ways is provided in CMCA, XXII-A, Vol. 1176, File 89, Minutes of Mennonite Land Settlement Board, 22 February 1928.

89 Quoted in Lawrence Klippenstein, "A.A. Friesen," in *Mennonite Memories: Settling in Western Canada*, ed. Lawrence Klippenstein and Julius G. Toews (Winnipeg: Centennial Publications, 1977), p. 200.

90 Isaak Klassen, p. 27.

91 GAI, 1743, Box 82, File 643, "Memorandum re: Mennonite Settlement Since the Inception of the Mennonite Land Settlement Board, August 1924," n.d.

92 GAI, 1743, Box 113, File 1058, W.R. Dick to Manager, Royal Bank of Canada, Gleichen, 2 March 1927.

93 James B. Hedges, *Building the Canadian West: The Land and Colonization Policies of the Canadian Pacific Railway* (New York: Macmillan, 1939), pp. 34–46.

94 GAI, 1743, Box 44, File 506, W.J. Gerow to P.L. Naismith, 15 June 1926.

95 GAI, 1743, Box 44, File 506, minutes of 71st meeting of the Advisory Committee of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Colonization and Development, 14 January 1926.

96 GAI, 1743, Box 44, File 506, T.O.F. Herzer to Frank Schultz, Winnipeg, 3 January 1926.

97 CGC, XV.31–2, "1920-Rabbit Lake." The "Diary of Theodore and Katharine Klassen" contains much detail on settlement problems in the brushlands area.

98 Quoted in Lawrence Klippenstein, pp. 200–1.

99 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1170, File 55, "Liste der Distriktmaenner der mennonitischen Immigrantengruppen in Manitoba," 18 October 1937.

100 *Ibid.*

101 GAI, 1743, Box 46, File 520, "Progress of Sugar Production in Southern Alberta," 14 April 1928.

102 GAI, 1743, Box 85, File 689, James Colley, Assistant Superintendent of Colonization, CPR, "Memo re: Mennonite Settlement in the Coaldale District," 14 October 1926.

103 *Ibid.*

104 "Fear Influx from Central Europe to Southern Alberta," *Lethbridge Herald*, 4 September 1927.

105 GAI, 1743, Box 46, File 520, T.O.F. Herzer to S.G. Porter, Manager, Dept. of Material Resources, CPR, Calgary, 14 March 1928.

106 An expanded account of Coaldale's beginning is found in Aron Sawatzky, "The Mennonites of Alberta and Their Assimilation" (M.A. thesis, University of Alberta, 1964), pp. 105–6.

107 GAI, 1743, Box 45, File 515, James Colley memo, 1 September 1926.

108 GAI, 1743, Box 45, File 515, James Colley memo, 23 August 1926.

109 GAI, 1743, Box 121, File 1172, J. Gerbrandt, "Mennonite Settlement at Coaldale," n.d.

110 GAI, 1743, Box 45, File 515, J. Gerbrandt to S.G. Porter, 12 November 1927, and S.G. Porter to J. Gerbrandt, 30 November 1927.

111 GAI, 1743, Box 46, File 520, B.B. Janz to T.O.F. Herzer, 16 March 1928.

112 *Ibid.*, 10 March 1928.

113 *Ibid.*

114 GAI, 1743, Box 46, File 520, B.B. Janz to T.O.F. Herzer, 16 March 1928. In one sense, the Janz claim was somewhat exaggerated, at least in terms of how it could have been understood by his audience. While there were about 12,000, not 11,000, enlisted in state service, no more than half of these were in war-related medical services, the balance being in the forestry service. See Guy F. Hershberger, "Nonresistance," *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, 3:901.

115 GAI, 1743, Box 46, File 520, "Progress of Sugar Production in Southern Alberta," 14 April 1928.

116 GAI, 1743, Box 36, File 436. Minutes, Advisory Committee of the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Colonization and Development, 31 May, 1924.

117 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1287, File 723, Committee Report on "100-Family Scheme," Brooks, Alberta, 20 September 1928.

118 Even without fertilizers, the land in the Peace River area is capable of oat yields of 110 bushels to the acre and barley yields of 60 to 70 bushels per acre. Frank H. Epp, "The True North: Land of Milk and Honey Not Without Its Bitterness," *Mennonite Reporter* 4 (29 April 1974): 9.

119 GAI, 1743, Box 121, File 1164, A. Klassen, "Reisebericht," 9 September 1927.

120 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163–1, J.J. Hildebrand, "Homestead Lands," June 1927.

121 Frank H. Epp, "The True North: The Church That Disappeared, Whose Influence Lives On," *Mennonite Reporter* 4 (18 March 1974): 11.

122 CMCA, XXII-A-1, Vol. 1170, File 55, "Liste der Distriktmaenner der mennonitischen Immigrantengruppen in Alberta," 22 July 1937.

123 Robert England, p. 178.

124 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-1, C.W. Reimer, Steinbach, to Dan M. Johnson, CNR, 30 April 1927.

125 C.W. Reimer, "Unsere Landbesichtigungsreise nach Nicaragua," *Steinbach Post* 3 (22 November 1916):1; 3 (29 November 1916):2; 3 (6 December 1916):1; 3 (13 December 1916):1; 3 (20 December 1916):3, 6; 3 (27 December 1916):6.

126 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-1, C.W. Reimer to Dan M. Johnson, 30 April 1927.

127 *Ibid.*

128 *Ibid.*

129 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-1, Peter Buhr, Altona, to J.J. Hildebrand, Winnipeg, 14 July 1927, and N.S. McGuire, CNR Department of Colonization, to F.J. Freer, Winnipeg, 28 July 1927; GAI, 1743, Box 113, File 1053, G. Sawatzky, Calgary, to P. Thiessen, Saskatoon, 18 May 1927; PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-3, "Memorandum to Mr. Freer re: P.K. Derksen," 22 February 1929. See also CMCA, XXXI-24, Vol. 674, "A Petition of the Mennonite termed 'Sommerfelder Gemeinde' to the Dominion Government" based on 4 August 1926 meeting.

130 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-1, A. Buhr, Mennonite Immigration Aid, Winnipeg, to F.J. Freer, 13 May 1927. One of the settlers was a Swiss Mennonite from Ontario.

131 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-1, J.J. Hildebrand, "Report on My Trip with the Delegation of the Bergthaler Congregation."

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133 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-1, J.J. Hildebrand, "Report on My Trips to the Mennonite Settlements East and West of the Red River, later part of April and first part of May 1927."

134 PAC, RG. 30, Vol. 5631, File 5163-1, J.J. Hildebrand, "Homestead Lands," June 1927.

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