

# Pioneers of Chortitz, East Reserve

The village of **CHORTITZ** was situated just north of the road allowance of Road 37N, along the south edge of the southeast quarter of section 10-7-5E. The village main street ran parallel to Road 37N but some distance north of the current church building, since the government road that today runs south of the church building did not exist at the time. All the residences were north of the main village street but the church, school, and the cemetery were south of the street on land that was community pasture to be shared by all the villagers. Mennonites from three parts of southern Russia (today Ukraine) arrived on the Mennonite East Reserve beginning in 1874: Old Colony settlers with roots in Chortitza, *Kleine Gemeinde* settlers with roots in the Molotschna from Borosenko, and Bergthaler settlers from the Bergthaler Colony.

Most of the homestead applications for the village of Chortitz were registered in August and September of 1874 and the village was founded the same year. About ten of the original settlers were an anomaly on the East Reserve, in that they originated in the old colony of Chortitza, but had moved to Borosenko ten years earlier, and now arrived on the first ship with the other Mennonites from Borosenko, the *Kleine Gemeinde* who settled in their own villages. It is likely that the Chortitza families named the village in honour of their ancestral home in Russia. Almost all of these Chortitza settlers left the East Re-

serve for either the West Reserve or the Dakotas by 1881, leaving the village to the Bergthaler settlers who took up the cancelled homestead applications.

It is very difficult to ascertain exactly who was included in the original village catchment area, since other village lands surrounded this one, and often settlers are listed under one village and a few years later the same settler is given under a different village. However, in 1877 Chortitz was one of very few villages that registered an agreement with the government, and therefore a definitive list exists as of that year. That village agreement was signed by seven of the original settlers of Chortitza background and by eight settlers of Bergthaler background.

Clauses in the agreement prohibited the landowners from mortgaging, leasing, encumbering or selling their property to anyone other than a Mennonite, and then only with the written consent of the other signatories. It also specified that the southwest and southeast quarters of section ten in Township Seven Range five East of the principal meridian be designated as the village site (although in fact the village already existed there by 1877). Each lot in the village was to have a frontage of 231 feet, and a depth of 247.5 feet on which the buildings and gardens were to be situated. (Source: Orlando Hiebert: *Working Papers of the East Reserve Village Histories*, 1990, pp 45-46.)

By the time the agreement was made in 1877, several of the original settlers had left:

- Heinrich and Elisabeth (Penner) Unruh/Unrau arrived on the first ship in 1874 and filed an entry on ne 3-7-5E, but Heinrich died within a year. Elisabeth remarried and moved to the West Reserve with her second husband.
- Johann and Anna (Olfert) Neudorf also arrived on the first ship in 1874 and filed an entry on se 22-7-5E but Johann died in May of 1877. Anna remarried and moved to the West Reserve with her second husband, although she obtained a patent on the homestead in 1882.
- David and Maria (Neufeld) DeFehr arrived with the same group in 1874 and filed an entry on ne 34-6-5E but became affiliated with Rosengart in the 1881 census.
- David and Agatha (Friesen) Pauls arrived two weeks later in 1874 and filed an entry on ne 27-7-5E but by the fall of 1875 they had canceled their homestead application and moved to Cass County, USA.
- Peter and Maria (Buhr) Friesen also arrived on the third ship in 1874 and filed an entry on sw 3-7-5E but left within a year for Cass County, USA.

Homestead information and village map adapted from *The Historical Atlas of the East Reserve*, Ernest N. Braun and Glen R. Klassen, 2014, page 115.

## Signatories to the Village Agreement 1877

- Johann Nickel b. 1852 ne 15-7-5 (Maria Quiring b. 1853)\*
- Peter Esau b. 1832 se 15-7-5 (Maria Braun b. 1835)\*
- Heinrich Goertzen Jr. b. 1836 sw 15-7-5 (Helena Doerksen b. 1838)
- Wilhelm Vogt b. 1843 ne 10-7-5 (Anna Quiring b. 1845)\*
- Gerhard Wiebe b. 1827 (Bishop) se 10-7-5 (Elisabeth Dyck b. 1828)
- Abraham Klassen b. 1849 nw 10-7-5 (Barbara Quiring b. 1851)\*
- Johann Quiring b. 1836 sw 10-7-5 (Anganetha Wiebe b. 1837)\*
- Isaak Braun b. 1844 ne 3-7-5 (Maria Doerksen b. 1843)\*
- Heinrich Klippenstein b. 1850 se 3-7-5 (Katharina Mueller b. 1854)
- Peter Redekopp b. 1846 nw 3-7-5 (Anna Doerksen b. 1849)\*
- Johann Wiebe b. 1853 sw 3-7-5 (Barbara Peters b. 1853) - son of Bishop
- Peter Wiebe b. 1841 nw 2-7-5 (Judith Penner b. 1842)
- Jacob Penner b. 1834 sw 2-7-5 (Maria Doerksen b. 1840)
- Heinrich Wiebe b. 1859 nw 34-6-5 (Maria Peters Wiebe b. 1855) - son of Bishop
- Johann Wiebe b. 1829 nw 35-6-5 (Anna Penner b. 1834)\*\*

## NOTES:

**Note 1:** By the 1881 Federal Census, of these 15 signatories, all seven Old Colony families (\*) and one Bergthaler family (\*\*) had moved to Edenburg, West Reserve.

**Note 2:** The village had 15 lots, of which about 14 were usually occupied as indicated by the periodic Federal Census.

**Note 3:** Many of these villagers were related, and seem to have settled together on that basis.

**Note 4:** Peter Redekopp was the man who rescued the two men in the well cave-in at the Shantz sheds upon arrival in August 1874.

**Note 5:** Chortitz was the de facto centre of the East Reserve for the many years, and meetings of the two municipalities of Hespeler and Hanover were often held here.

