

Teichroeb Family Books 1835-1944: Historical Context

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Daniel Teichroeb (1835-1918) and his son Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944) recorded many significant family events between 1879, the year of Daniel's marriage to Agatha Dueck, and the years just prior to Peter's death in 1944. These records were written in German and had to be translated. In this article these records have been set within their historical context. Entries in the books have been sequenced chronologically for the sake of continuity.

Book 1

This is the register of Daniel Teigroeb of Schoenhorst.

Daniel Teigroeb died on 5 January 1857 at the age of 67 years, 10 months, and 13 days. He was born on 22 February 1789.

[Ed. Daniel Teichroeb (1789-1857) mentioned in this entry is the father of Daniel (1835-1918), author of Book 1. The elder Daniel (1789-1857) was the son of Michael Teichroeb (ca 1740-ca 1803) and Anganetha (possibly Dyck based on their marital record in the Heubuden Mennonite Church Book) (ca 1761-before 1835). After Michael died Anganetha moved to the Mennonite settlement of Molotschna in 1803 with their five sons and two daughters. The migration of 1803 was the second major episode in Netherlandic Mennonite relocations from Prussia to Russia, the first being the move to the Mennonite settlement of Chortitza which began in 1788-89 and continued for several years thereafter.

Michael Teichroeb (ca 1740-ca 1803) had two children from a first marriage. The first child was a son, Peter Teichroeb (ca 1761-?) who moved to the settlement of Chortitza in the first wave of settlers in 1788-89. The second child was a daughter, Anna Teichroeb (ca 1769-?), of whom there is no other information. Michael's first wife died, and he married a second time in 1774 to Helena Dyck (?-1778). Helena gave birth to twins (a girl and a boy) in 1778 who died immediately after they were born. Helena died the next day. Michael's third wife was Anganetha (ca 1761-before 1835).

Daniel (1789-1857) did not remain in the Molotschna settlement long. In 1813 he moved to the village of Burwalde in the settlement of Chortitza where he married Maria (ca 1779-1834), the widow of Bernhard Krahn (1770-1813) and assumed ownership of the Krahn farm. Daniel and Maria had no children. Maria died around 1834 and Daniel married Anna Wolf (1806-ca 1840). Anna was born in Schoenhorst in the settlement of Chortitza. Daniel relocated to Schoenhorst either concurrent with the wedding or earlier, after his first wife died. He would have sold or traded the Burwalde farm for a property in Schoenhorst. It is likely that Daniel and Anna had

only one child, Daniel (1835-1918). Anna died before 1840 and Daniel married again. There is no record of any offspring from his third marriage.

The Mennonite settlement of Chortitza is located on the west bank of the Dnieper River in eastern Ukraine. The Dnieper River is central to the geography of the Mennonite settlements. It was a long, navigable waterway, vital for transporting Mennonite settlers en route from Baltic Sea ports and transporting their agricultural produce to ports on the Black Sea for export. The Dnieper is sourced in the Valdai Hills of Russia, near Smolensk. It winds southward through Belarus to Kiev in Ukraine. At Kiev the river bends southeast and flows for 440 kilometers to the Mennonite settlement of Chortitza on the west bank. There it bends sharply west and flows for 100 kilometers, bypassing the Mennonite settlement of Fuerstenland on the east bank, before turning southwest and heading 130 kilometers to the city of Kherson on the Black Sea.

The Mennonite settlement of Molotschna was located 80 km. southeast of Chortitza, across the Dnieper River, on the east bank of the Molochnaya River.]

I, Daniel Teigroeb, was born on 6 May 1835 and married on 21 August 1856 to Maria Abrams, who was born on 7 June 1835.

[Ed. Maria Abrams (1835-1891) was the daughter of Peter Abrams (1798-?) and Margaretha Krahn (1803-1855). Peter moved to the Mennonite settlement of Molotschna around 1819-20, a year or two after his parents Abraham Abrams (1761-?) and Anna Doerksen (ca 1765-before 1835). A few years later he moved to the Chortitza settlement where he married Margaretha. Margaretha had been born in the village of Burwalde to Bernhard Krahn (1770-1813) and his wife Maria (ca 1779-1834). This is the same Maria who later became the first wife of Daniel Teichroeb (1789-1857). In short, Maria Abrams (1835-1891) was the daughter-in-law of Daniel Teichroeb (1789-1857) as well as the granddaughter of his first wife.]

Children of this marriage:

Son Peter was born on 2 August 1857.

[Ed. Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944) is the author of Book 2.]

Son Daniel was born on 7 March 1860.

Daughter Margareta was born on 11 February 1862 and died on 6 January 1887.

Son Jacob was born on 24 October 1863 and died on 18 January 1873.

On 17 March 1864 I saw the Privilegium.

[Ed. This entry refers to the Mennonites' Russian Privilegium, granted by Tsar Paul in 1800. The Mennonite settlers viewed this document with tremendous reverence because it represented the foundation of their most treasured privileges, the right to freedom of worship and the right to

exemption from military duty. To see the document must come as close as one can to a Mennonite pilgrimage.

Prior to the first settlement in Chortitza in 1788-89 the Mennonites in the Danzig area had appointed two deputies to investigate the land and terms offered by the Russian crown. These men, Johann Bartsch and Jacob Hoepfner, negotiated an arrangement with Governor-General Grigory Potemkin, which, although receiving royal assent, was not a formal Privilegium.

Once the settlers were established in the new settlement of Chortitza they became preoccupied with receiving a more formal charter of privileges, particularly after the deaths of Potemkin and Tsarina Catherine. Emissaries were sent to St. Petersburg to petition the Tsar. After two years of effort, they obtained the Imperial Privilegium.

The copy of the document in the possession of the Mennonite settlers was reported to be printed in gold letters on sheets of parchment divided by leaves of blue silk, bound and encased for protection.¹ The document was kept in the village of Chortitza, stored in various places over the years, at times in a separate secure building, at other times in the Mayor's office or the District Office. There are reports that between 1862 and 1867 it was held in a small fireproof building in the village of Chortitza.² This would have been the place where Daniel saw the document.

At the time of the Russian civil war the Privilegium was housed in a fireproof safe in the District Office in Chortitza. The office was raided, and the document taken by anarchists.³ It was never recovered.]

Son Heinrich was born on 17 January 1866.

Son Bernhard was born on 14 July 1868 and died on 12 October 1872.

On 3 December 1870 son Heinrich was bitten by the dog.

[Ed. This must have been an alarming event but there are no other details to explain the circumstances or outcome.]

Son Johan was born on 22 January 1871.

Daughter Maria was born on 23 July 1873.

Son Jacob was born on 19 April 1876 and died on 22 September 1881.

Daughter Katarina was born on 5 December 1878.

In the year 1877 I had 3500 Rubles.

On 17 February 1879 we moved to Georgstal.

I acquired a farm there for 2150 Rubles.

[Ed. Georgstal was a village in the Mennonite settlement of Fuerstenland. Communities built on agrarian economies were constantly in need of new farmland for their burgeoning families. The Mennonite groups in Ukraine were no exception. The first daughter colony established by the Chortitza settlers was the Bergthal settlement of 1836. Next, in 1864 the Fuerstenland settlement was established. In general, the property in Fuerstenland was leased in 65 dessiatina allotments. Land was leased for 1.25 rubles per dessiatina when Fuerstenland was first established but prices rose steadily through to the outset of WWI.

For settlers who could afford to purchase their own property there were wealthy aristocrats who made land available for sale outside the settlement. Daniel purchased his land. The average price of land in the period 1863-1872 was 17.3 rubles per dessiatina. In the period 1873-1882 prices had risen to 20.67.⁴ Daniel might have paid around 19 rubles per dessiatina for his land. He would have purchased about 110 dessiatinas, placing him in the lower ranks of the top 12% of landowners in Russia at the time, who controlled 89% of the land.⁵

Between 1879, when Daniel purchased his land, and 1904 land prices doubled twice.⁶ By 1904 Daniel's land would have been worth 8,000-9,000 rubles. The disparity between this and the living standards of farm laborers is substantial. In 1904 the average annual household income of landless peasants (the sort of laborers who would have been housed and employed on Daniel's farm) was 221 rubles.⁷

In 1879 when Daniel purchased the farm there was a strong bias to the production of grain crops. I assume this is what he focused on. Regular 65 dessiatina farms in the Fuerstenland settlement typically had 45 dessiatinas of arable land available after allowing for gardens, orchards, and pasturage.⁸ Likely on Daniel's larger farm about 90 dessiatinas would be arable land and at any point in time about 70 dessiatinas would be used for producing cash crops, with the balance lying in fallow.

Using winter wheat yields and profits of 65.19 rubles per dessiatina⁹ as a proxy for whatever crops might have been in the rotation, in the 1890s Daniel's farm could have potentially generated a net income of 4,500 rubles, or at least 20 times as much as the household income of laborers on his farm.

In 1898 Daniel was the mayor of Georgstal.^{10]}

My wife died on 25 June 1891 at the age of 56 years and 18 days.

Daniel Teichroeb of Georgstal married Margaretha Dueck of Kronsthal on 15 September 1891.

My wife Margaretha Schellenberg was born on 6 November 1837.

[Ed. Margaretha Schellenberg (1837-1914) was the widow of Peter Dueck.]

Daniel was taken to Ebenfeld on 12 September.

[Ed. There is no year or context for this entry, but it appears to have been made between 1891 and 1901. Ebenfeld was another Mennonite settlement in the area. Possibly Daniel went there to check the prospects for moving there.]

On 5 February 1901 Heinrich Teichroeb moved to Uhrenburg.

[Ed. Heinrich Teichroeb (1866-1932) moved to the Mennonite settlement of Orenburg in 1901 and lived there for the rest of his life. Orenburg was a major city in Russia and a trading hub between European and Asiatic Russia long before the Mennonite settlement was established in the region in 1894. The settlement was located on the Ural River 1,500 kilometers northeast of Chortitza.]

Daniel Teichroeb moved to America on 10 June 1902 with 10 children: Maria, Sara, Daniel, Heinrich, Margareta, Abraham, Ana, Anganeta, Katarina, Liesabet.

Johan Teichroeb moved to Uhrenburg on 24 October 1902 with 4 children: Johanna, Daniel, Peter, Margareta.

[Ed. Johann Teichroeb (1871-1942) moved to Orenburg in 1902 and lived in Russia for the rest of his life. I have met his great grandson, Jakob Teichrib, online, and learned something about this branch of the family. Johann Teichroeb (1871-1942) was married to Anna Dyck (1872-1922). Anna died in the Orenburg settlement. One of their sons was Jakob Teichrib (1905-1940). He lived in Kyrgyzstan with his wife Frida Henning (1910-1964) and three sons, Victor, Arnold, and Edvin. Jakob (1905-1940) was arrested by the Russian police and taken to Magadan, Siberia, where he died shortly after his arrest. In 1991 Arnold and his son, Jakob (the great grandson mentioned earlier), moved to Germany.

Regarding the other children of Daniel Teichroeb (1835-1918) for which there are only birth entries: no other details are known about daughter Maria Teichroeb (1873-?); daughter Katarina Teichroeb (1878-1953) moved to Canada in 1926.]

On 12 March 1903, my wife had a stroke.

In 1914 my wife had a second stroke and she died on 9 September 1914.

[Ed. This is the end of Daniel's family register.]

Book 2

This is the register of Peter Teichroeb, born on 2 August 1857.

His wife, Agatha Dueck, was born on 9 March 1859.

We were married on 8 November 1879.

[Ed. Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944) was born in the village of Schoenhorst in the settlement of Chortitza. He moved to the settlement of Fuerstenland with his parents and younger siblings in 1879. He married Agatha Dueck (1859-1922) later that year and they established their homestead in Olgafeld, a village adjoining Georgstal.

Agatha (1859-1922) was a daughter of Johann Dueck (ca 1824-1892) and Anna Hiebert (1827-1911). Both parents were born in the settlement of Chortitza. Anna's origins are unclear, but Johann's family can be traced to the village of Tiegenhagen in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth in the early eighteenth century. Johann's grandparents, Johann Dueck (1766-1831) and Agneta Schulz (1771-?) immigrated and established a homestead in the Mennonite settlement of Molotschna in 1804.]

Children of this marriage:

Daughter Maria was born on 3 October 1880.

Daughter Anna was born on 16 April 1882.

Daughter Agatha was born on 11 April 1884.

Daughter Margaretha was born on 16 February 1886.

Son Peter was born on 22 March 1888.

Son Johan was born on 8 February 1890 and died on 2 November 1890.

Daughter Katharina was born on 2 October 1891.

Son Johan was born on 10 February 1894.

Daughter Helena was born on 27 August 1897.

Son Heinrich was born on 2 September 1899.

Daughter Elisabeth was born on 2 April 1902 and died on 8 December 1903.

Son Daniel was born on 20 April 1904.

Grandmother Anna Dueck was born on 24 February 1827 and died on 10 October 1911.

[Ed. This entry refers to Anna Hiebert (1827-1911), mother of Agatha Dueck (1859-1922) and mother-in-law of Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944).]

Father Daniel Teichroeb died on 20 February 1918 at the age of 82 years, 2 months, and 14 days.

[Ed. This entry refers to Daniel Teichroeb (1835-1918), author of Book 1.]

Heinrich went to America on 16 March 1922.

Our child was buried on 11 June 1922 at the age of 22 years, 8 months, and 26 days.

[Ed. These entries refer to Heinrich Teichroeb (1899-1922) who died in Germany on 28 May 1922 on his way to Canada.]

My wife Agatha Dueck died on 26 July 1922 at the age of 63 years, 2 months, and 18 days.

We lived in marriage for 43 years and 9 months.

12 children were born of which 3 have died. 9 children are still living.

33 grandchildren were born of which 8 have died.

[Ed. Daughter Maria Teichroeb (1880-1949) left Michaelsburg in the settlement of Fuerstenland, emigrating to Canada with her family in 1926. She arrived in Saint John, New Brunswick in December 1926, a third-class passenger aboard the S.S. Metagama, originating in Liverpool. With her were her husband, Jacob Redekop (1874-1960), and children Isaac, Sarah, Maria, Peter, Heinrich, and Agatha. Maria died in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan in 1949.

Daughter Anna Teichroeb (1882-?) married Gerhard Giesbrecht (1885-1933). They owned one of the two flour mills in Fuerstenland. In the aftermath of the Russian Revolution the mill was nationalized but they were allowed to remain there as workers. My grandfather, Dan Teichroeb (1904-2005), would send care packages after he was established in Canada. Around 1934 he received word by return post that Anna and Gerhard were dead. It was learned many years later that Gerhard had died in 1933 but Anna survived him.

World War II (1939-1945) created chaotic conditions for the family. German speaking citizens of the USSR were treated badly. It seems that Anna's son Peter was taken away by Russian police in 1941 and never seen or heard from again. The German army occupied Eastern Ukraine for a time, during which German speaking inhabitants had a brief reprieve from Russian domination and mistreatment. When the German military retreated from the occupied territories in 1943, they implemented a policy of relocating German speaking citizens to other German occupied territories further west. This was the experience of Anna and the three youngest of her remaining children. At various times in 1943 they all were moved to Poland and resettled. Her eldest daughter appears to have emigrated to Poland after the war.

Daughter Agatha Teichroeb (1884-1980) came to Canada in 1912. She is listed as a steerage passenger aboard the S.S. Saturnia originating in Glasgow and landing in Quebec in September 1912 with children Agatha, Elizabeth, Peter, and Isaac. Her husband, Wilhelm Dyck (1880-1955), arrived aboard the same ship three months later, in December 1912. He was held up en route because of an eye problem. Both passenger lists indicate the destination of the family was Rosthern, Saskatchewan.

Daughter Margaretha Teichroeb (1886-1978) was unmarried when she emigrated. She travelled to Canada with her father, Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944), in 1925. In Canada Margaretha married Johann Giesbrecht (1873-1958).

Son Peter Teichroeb (1888-1968) was unmarried when he emigrated 1912. In Canada he married and had a family, but other details are very sparse. He became involved in a serious criminal misadventure for which he was apprehended. He spent a few years of his old age in prison, and it is believed that he died around 1968 in Manitoba or Ontario.

Daughter Katharina Teichroeb (1891-1980) came to Canada in 1925 aboard the Empress of France with her husband, Jacob Leppki (1890-1926) and two children, Agatha, and Katharina. In a most tragic turn of events, Jacob Leppki (1890-1926), died shortly after arriving in Canada.

Son Johann Teichroeb (1894-1984) and his wife Aganetha Dyck (1894-1950) came to Canada with Johann's father Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944) in 1925. Johann and Aganetha lived in British Columbia.

Daughter Helena Teichroeb (1897-1986) came to Canada aboard the Empress of France with her husband, Bernhard Petkau (1895-1973), and their daughter, Maria. They travelled with Helena's sister Katharina Teichroeb (1891-1980).

Son Heinrich Teichroeb (1899-1922) left for Canada on 16 March 1922, travelling on a passport belonging to a good friend who had died earlier. The family of this friend were ethnic Germans who were evicted from Russia around the same time. Heinrich got as far as Germany where he contracted Typhus. He died alone in a boarding house on 28 May 1922.

Peter Teichroeb (1857-1944) emigrated in 1925. In earlier days, before WWI and the ensuing upheaval of the Russian revolution and the Ukrainian War of Independence, he had been a wealthy farmer with substantial land holdings. Everything was lost in the aftermath of the political and military turmoil and Peter, at the age of 68, determined to start over in Canada.

Son Dan Teichroeb (1904-2005), my grandfather, had passage booked on the same ship as his father and other family members. He found that escaping Russia was more difficult for him than the others. He had been involved in the hostilities between Mennonite landowners and the Ukrainian anarchists while still a teenager, and then he was conscripted by the White Army fighting to restore the Russian monarchy. By 1925 survival was precarious for Dan and obtaining emigration papers was a challenge. The passenger manifest of his father's ship lists Dan as a passenger who was not on board the ship when it left for Canada. During the next few months, he was able to procure an exit visa and make the long journey to Canada alone.]

On 19 February 1923 I, Peter Teichroeb, married Maria Rempel, born 1 March 1865.

[Ed. Maria was Maria Dueck (1865-1937), the widow of David Rempel (1864-1922). Maria was the sister of Peter's first wife Agatha Dueck. When Peter moved to Canada, Maria refused to accompany him.]

Peter and Agatha's children on 18 July 1938:

There were 12 children of whom 3 have died and 9 are still living.

There are 69 grandchildren.

There are 14 great-grandchildren of whom 11 are still living.

My father died at the age of 87 years, 4 months, and 5 days. He died in the company of his children Katarina and Johan Reimer three and a half days after a rupture.

[Ed. I am unsure who wrote the last entry. Peter (1857-1944) suffered a ruptured intestine and died not long after. The reference here is to his daughter Katharina Teichroeb (1891-1980) and her second husband Johann Reimer (1883-1965).

This is the end of Peter's family register.]

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