

## The Mennonite Settlers in Chortitza

### Part 3 – Daniel Bueckert

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Daniel Bueckert (about 1755-1789)

*Daniel is the author's fifth great grandfather, and his daughter Maria is the author's fourth great grandmother. All that is known about Daniel's wife is that she accompanied him on the trek from Prussia to Chortitza. Her name and other information about her are a mystery.*

Daniel Bueckert's story is difficult to assemble due to the unusual circumstances surrounding his migration to Chortitza from Prussia: sparse and incorrect records, records that proffer dates seemingly in conflict with events that took place, and, finally, errors in interpretation of the data available. What follows is a reconstruction of his story based on the facts at hand.

Daniel may have lived in the village of Poppau, situated about 30 km due east of Danzig. The Mennonites of that village were members of the Tiegenhagen church. There was a Daniel Bueckert mentioned in the Tiegenhagen baptism registry in connection with a daughter, Catarina, who was baptized in the church in June 1789. She was recorded as his surviving daughter.

In the months prior, a man who was likely the same Daniel Bueckert was recorded as moving to the village of Neuendorf in the new Mennonite settlement of Chortitza with a household including two adults and four children [1]. It seems most likely that Daniel died in Chortitza, after appearing in the settlement records. It follows that his daughter Catarina was not among the people counted in the household because she was still in Prussia. Word of his death must have been reported back to family members remaining in Prussia. The reason for Catarina remaining behind when the family moved is unknown, but since baptisms were often followed immediately by weddings, it is possible that she had an upcoming wedding, making the move infeasible for her.

The village census for Neuendorf taken in 1795, several years after the first settlers established homesteads, indicates that the Bueckert homestead was inhabited at that time by three of Daniel's surviving children, Jacob (1775), Maria (1777), and Anna (1780) [2].

The three Bueckert children identified in Neuendorf appear earlier in birth records in the Heubuden Church in Prussia. They were born in the village of Heubuden, 5 km west of the larger population center of Marienburg. The birth records match the ages of the children as they appear later in various Chortitza census records. This information offers strong circumstantial evidence that the family lived in Heubuden at some point before they moved to Poppau and then to Chortitza.

There is no information about who Daniel's wife was and what became of her. The fate of the fourth child counted in early settler records mentioned above is also a mystery.

There is an error in the "Feuerstellen-Listen 1802" that has caused confusion among genealogists about who owned the Neuendorf homestead. This record says that the owner, Jacob Bueckert, died and the homestead was given to Michael Loewen who also died; then Loewen's wife married Jacob Peters [3]. This is sometimes interpreted to mean that the original settler was named Jacob Bueckert and when he died the homestead went to Loewen and then to Peters. Further, this Jacob Bueckert is taken to be the father of the three children found in the 1795 census. However, we can be certain the homestead originally belonged to Daniel because he was specifically cited in Russian records associated with funds loaned to his heirs in the period 1788-1793 for the homestead in Neuendorf; there is no mention of a Jacob Bueckert in these records [4]. What seems to have happened is that when the "Feuerstellen-Listen" records were made Daniel was conflated with his eldest son Jacob, who was named the head of the household after Daniel's death up until the homestead passed to Loewen.

Daniel's eldest daughter in Chortitza, Maria, married Michael Loewen (ca 1771-ca1801) between 1795 and 1797. The census in 1797 for the village of Neuendorf says that there were two men and one woman living on the Bueckert homestead and the property had passed into the hands of Loewen. The younger sister Anna had left, possibly to get married, although there are no records to provide information about her situation. Maria's brother Jacob remained with Maria on the family property for a short while.

Maria's husband, Michael Loewen, was a son of Heinrich Loewen (ca 1751-ca 1789). The family came from the village of Neustadterwald. It seems likely that Heinrich and his family migrated to Chortitza with the earliest group of settlers in 1789. However, it also seems likely that he did not survive the journey because there is no record of his household in the list of first settlers. This suggests his family members were counted in other households upon arrival in the new settlement. In 1795 Michael worked on the farm of Peter Dyck in Neuendorf. This was not long before his marriage to Maria.

Michael and Maria had two children, Maria (1798), and Jacob (1800-1857). *[Jacob Loewen is the third great grandfather of the author.]*

Michael died around 1801 and Maria Bueckert married Jacob Peters soon after. The 1801 census lists Jacob Peters and Maria Bueckert in Neuendorf with her two children from her first marriage. *[Jacob Peters is not a direct ancestor of the author, but his parents Johann Peters and Maria Bergen are the author's fifth or sixth great grandparents, depending on which ancestral line is being viewed. Their story is told in Part 2 of this series at <https://www.mooserungenealogy.com/chortitza/articles/part-2-johann-peters-and-maria-bergen/>.]*

Maria's brother, Jacob Bueckert, left the family farm before the September 1801 census was taken. He is listed in the Neuendorf landless census of 1801 as a domestic servant. In 1802 he

married Barbara Conrad in Neuendorf [5]. She was the widow of Johann Hiebert, who had died a couple of months earlier. As recently as autumn 1801 Barbara had been living in Einlage but neither she nor her new husband Jacob appear in the 1802 census. The couple moved to Nieder Chortitza at some point after their wedding and in 1806 were recorded as having taken over the farm of Johann Wiebe. Barbara died the next year and Jacob married Helena Froese. Jacob and his family remained in Nieder Chortitza until 1816. That year they moved to the village of Kronsthal where they appear as landless residents. Probably this means he was a tradesman living in the village and no longer farming.

Maria Bueckert and Jacob Peters continued to operate their farm in Neuendorf until about 1803. That year the village of Nieder Chortitza was established, after which a number of families resettled there, Maria and Jacob among them. Information about the economic wellbeing of the family is comprised of data about livestock and equipment. The data from 1801 in Neuendorf until 1808 in Nieder Chortitza shows steady progress and a fairly well-to-do family. Livestock holdings increased from 3 horses and 11 head of cattle to 5 horses, 14 cows, 1 sheep and 4 pigs. Equipment holdings were fairly constant. In 1808 the family owned a plow, a wagon, a harrow, and a spinning wheel. It is of note that this was a time when many families either shared a plow or simply did not own one at all.

Between 1802 and 1813 Maria and Jacob had five children. Tragically, three died very young. There is a record saying that two children were vaccinated for smallpox in 1809 [6]. In 1810 the family gave up the farm in Nieder Chortitza and moved to Kronsthal where they were listed in the census among the landless residents.

The move to Kronsthal appears to have been a significant turning point in the welfare of the family. Suddenly they became landless. The data in the 1810 census shows a dramatic decrease in assets: they possessed only 3 head of cattle, 3 sheep and 1 pig. The horses were gone and most of the cattle were also gone. They still owned a plow, but the harrow and wagon were gone. They owned 2 spinning wheels.

By 1813 more changes had occurred. The family moved to the village of Neu-Osterwick, where they still lived among the landless residents. Maria's eldest son, Jacob Loewen, does not appear in the census, possibly because he moved out to work. In May 1814 he had returned home but in October he had moved out once again. In the October 1814 census he was listed as a worker in the Schoenhorst household of Johann Wolf and Anna Peters. *[Johann Wolf and Anna Peters are the author's fourth great grandparents. Their story is told in Part 1 of this series at <https://www.mooserungenealogy.com/chortitza/articles/jacob-wolf-and-justina-harder/>.]*

A year later the family had 14 sheep. This increase in the sheep herd corresponds with the previous acquisition of a second spinning wheel, giving the impression that a cottage industry is emerging. However, over the course of a few months the number of sheep had declined significantly while a few cows had been acquired. Eventually only one of the spinning wheels remained.

The census of 1815 brought the news that the family, still living in Neu-Osterwick, had once again become landowners. The financial circumstances that arose to improve their economic situation are unknown. Maria's son Jacob Loewen had returned home once again.

In May 1816 Jacob Loewen went back to the farm of Johann Wolf in Schoenhorst. At the same time his stepsister Anna, the daughter of Jacob Peters and Maria Bueckert, moved to the home of Isbrand Friesen in Schoenhorst to work. Parents Jacob and Maria are once again referred to as landless residents of Neu-Osterwick in the 1816 census. This suggests that the records for 1815, describing the family as landowners, were in error.

The genealogical record is silent about the remainder of the lives of Jacob Peters and Maria Bueckert.

Maria's son Jacob Loewen married Maria Klassen in 1822 [7]. Nothing is known about the background and family of Maria Klassen.

## Notes

[1] See the First Mennonite Settlers document constructed by Glenn Penner at [https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/First\\_Mennonite\\_Settlers\\_in\\_Chortitza.pdf](https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/First_Mennonite_Settlers_in_Chortitza.pdf).

[2] Census records for the settlement of Chortitza can be found at <https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/>.

[3] See the transcription of the record in error in Benjamin Unruh's book *Die niederlandisch-niederdeutschen Hintergrunde der mennonitischen Ostwanderungen*, Karlsruhe, 1955, p. 249. Also see Glenn Penner's comments in the First Mennonite Settlers document cited above about Jacob Bueckert, for whom there is no actual record of settling in Chortitza in the years leading up to 1795. We see Daniel referred to as Jacob in notations in the Chortitza census transcriptions and in other genealogical sources. For example, see Henry Schapansky's references to Jacob Bueckert in *Mennonite Migrations*, pp. 486-487.

[4] This set of records, "Funds Loaned to Mennonite Settlers in the Chortitza Settlement: 1788-1793", translated by Glenn H. Penner and Wilhelm Friesen, can be found at [https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Funds\\_Loaned\\_to\\_Mennonite\\_Settlers\\_in\\_the\\_Chortitza\\_Settlement\\_1788-1793.pdf](https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Funds_Loaned_to_Mennonite_Settlers_in_the_Chortitza_Settlement_1788-1793.pdf).

[5] See the vital statistics records at <https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/vital.htm>.

[6] See the smallpox vaccination list at <https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/1809.htm>.

[7] See the vital statistics records at [https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza\\_Colony\\_Vital\\_Records\\_1822.pdf](https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza_Colony_Vital_Records_1822.pdf).