

## The Mennonite Settlers in Chortitza

### Part 7 – Neighbors: The Schoenhorst Homesteaders of 1789

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#### Introduction

Schoenhorst was among the first villages in the new Chortitza Mennonite Settlement established in 1789. This village was also a key location for the geographic convergence of my ancestors. Part 1 of this series of articles recounted the trek to Schoenhorst made in 1789 by Jacob Wolf (1753-1790) and his wife Justina Harder (1758-1840), whose son Johann Wolf (1778-1848) met and married Anna Peters (1783-after 1822) in Schoenhorst [1]. Part 2 of this series told the story of Anna's parents, Johann Peters (1754-1826) and Maria Bergen (1753-1804), who also settled in Schoenhorst in 1789 [2]. Anna Wolf (1806-1840), a daughter of Johann Wolf and Anna Peters, married Daniel Teichroeb (1789-1857), a later arrival in the Chortitza Settlement [3]. *[Anna Wolf and Daniel Teichroeb are third great grandparents of the author.]* Part 6 of this series featured Schoenhorst settlers Benjamin de Veer (1733-1822) and his wife Anna (1736-after 1816), who arrived in 1789. Their son Jacob de Veer (1780-1823) married Anna Peters' sister Maria (1781) [4]. *[Jacob and Maria are fifth great grandparents of the author.]*

This article will examine other settler families who arrived in Schoenhorst in 1789 - neighbors who played a formative role in the genealogical lineage of the author.

#### Johann Teichroeb and Margaretha Wiebe

Johann Teichroeb (1744-1801) was a weaver and landowner of modest means living with his first wife, Margaretha Wiebe (1736-1781), in the village of Krebsfeld, 13 km west of the large population center of Elbing. In the 1776 Census of Mennonites in West Prussia we see that they had two children, Margaretha (1773-1841) and Heinrich (1776-1851). Margaretha Wiebe predeceased Johann in 1781. Johan emigrated to Ukraine accompanied by his second wife, Catharina, and their children, now numbering three.

Johann was early to adopt sheep herding on a significant scale. His trade as a weaver may have motivated this choice, although a contributing factor would have been difficulties with agriculture due to soil conditions experienced by the settlers in the early years, leading to the adoption of other sidelines such as sheep and cattle farming. As early as 1797, when census records list household property, the family had more horses than the average Schoenhorst homesteader and a sheep herd four times the size of the average in the village and five times the size of the average in the entire settlement of Chortitza [5].

Yet, by 1801 Johann and Catharina had divested entirely of their sheep raising operation. In fact, most occupants of the village had drastically reduced their sheep husbandry operations. The reason for this change is not clear. In the year following the 1801 census Johann died. Catharina married Peter Hiebert, a man half her age and not much older than her own son. By 1802, the year of the next census, their cattle operation showed signs of flourishing, no doubt because of young Hiebert's energetic efforts when he assumed control of the Teichroeb farm.

Around 1795 Margaretha, the elder daughter of Johann and his first wife, was married to a local man named Peter Rempel whose young wife had recently died. *[Margaretha and Peter are fifth great grandparents of the author.]*

### Peter Rempel

Peter Rempel (1759-1820) settled in Schoenhorst in 1789 with his first wife Cornelia (1772-1795) and their first child, Maria, who was an infant at the time, born around 1788 or 1789 [6]. Earlier, in 1776, Peter and his parents had lived in Petershagen, a village located midway between Danzig to the northwest and Elbing to the southeast.

Details about Cornelia and this marriage are sparse. Public family trees occasionally suggest her family name may have been Loewen, but this is far from certain. One genealogist who has documented the Rempel family suggests Cornelia was Peter's second wife, although available census records do not support this thesis [7]. It is remarkable that she was so young when she married Peter. She was only 16 or 17 years of age and he was at least twelve years her senior. By 1795 Peter and Cornelia had four children. Cornelia died in 1795, leaving Peter with a full house and a demanding farm.

Margaretha Teichroeb was married to Peter Rempel around 1795, not long after Cornelia passed away. The couple wasted no time expanding the family. Margaretha's first child was born around 1795 or early 1796. Between 1797 and 1801 the family moved to the village of Chortitza. They operated a substantial cattle operation there. In 1813 the family moved once more, to Neu-Osterwick. The reason for this move is unknown. Certainly, there is no indication that the size of their farming operation changed following this move.

Margaretha and Peter had eight children, in addition to the four children Peter had with his first wife. Margaretha's first son, Heinrich (1799-1870), appears to have lived his entire life in Neu-Osterwick. His son Heinrich and his granddaughter Margaretha Rempel were born in Neu-Osterwick. Margaretha Rempel (1857-1937) married a young man from Schoenberg named Heinrich Epp (1855-1906) in 1876. Their marriage produced ten children, seven in Fuerstenland and three in Canada. Their second child, Helena (1878-1962) was about fourteen years old when she accompanied her parents on the long journey to Saskatchewan. There she met and married Jacob Fast (1874-1939). *[Helena and Jacob are great grandparents of the author.]*

## Wilhelm Giesbrecht

Wilhelm Giesbrecht (1767-after 1818) immigrated to Schoenhorst in 1789 from the village of Heubuden. Church records document his baptism there in 1788 [8]. The circumstances of his journey and the first few years of his life in the Chortitza settlement are very cloudy. There is no specific reference to Wilhelm as an original homesteader, yet he appears in census records as early as 1795. His brother Jacob Giesbrecht and sister-in-law were original householders who established their homestead in Schoenhorst. The immigration data indicates Jacob's household consisted of three adults, suggesting that brother Wilhelm was the third, unidentified, individual [9].

Around 1795 Jacob gave his homestead to Wilhelm, while continuing to live on the property [10]. A couple of years later Jacob once again had his own homestead, leading to the conclusion that the 1795 census must have caught his family in transition, moving from one property to another. Jacob was a weaver and Wilhelm was a tailor.

There are no records indicating who their parents were. Y-DNA evidence recorded in the Mennonite DNA Database gives us one clue to the name of their father [11]. The Molotschna Census of 1835 lists a Gerhard Wilhelm Giesbrecht, Wilhelm being his father's name. A DNA sample from a descendant of Gerhard is an exact match for samples from descendants of Wilhelm and Jacob. This suggests the possibility that the three men were brothers, and sons of Wilhelm Giesbrecht. However, genealogical records do not yet exist to corroborate this conclusion.

The 1795 census informs us that Wilhelm had married a woman named Maria Klassen (1767-1817) around 1790. Maria was the eldest daughter of Franz Klassen and his wife Susanna, homesteaders to Neuendorf in 1789. Information about the composition of the Klassen family in documents about the earliest settlers demonstrates that Maria was with her parents when the family moved to Chortitza. Consequently, Wilhelm and Maria were married in the new settlement. Children of Wilhelm and Maria were among the settlers who established the Bergthal Colony in the late 1830's. The article "Saskatchewan Bergthalers – The Strierner Family" contains a comprehensive discussion of the Bergthal Settlement [12]. *[Wilhelm and Maria are fifth great grandparents of the author.]*

## Source Notes

[1] Part 1 is online at <https://www.mooserungenealogy.com/chortitza/articles/jacob-wolf-and-justina-harder/>.

[2] Part 2 is online at <https://www.mooserungenealogy.com/chortitza/articles/part-2-johann-peters-and-maria-bergen/>.

- [3] The story of the Teichroeb family immigration to Ukraine is online at <https://www.mooserungenealogy.com/articles/teichroeb-ancestry-poland-russia-canada/>.
- [4] Part 6 is online at <https://www.mooserungenealogy.com/chortitza/articles/part-6-benjamin-de-veer-and-his-wife-anna/>.
- [5] The 1797 Census can be viewed online at [https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza Mennonite Settlement Census for 1797.pdf](https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza_Mennonite_Settlement_Census_for_1797.pdf).
- [6] Glenn H. Penner's article describing the earliest settlers in Chortitza is online at [https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/First Mennonite Settlers in Chortitza.pdf](https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/First_Mennonite_Settlers_in_Chortitza.pdf).
- [7] Nikolai Rempel, Das Rempelfamilienbuch, Lage, Germany, 2007.
- [8] See the baptism list for the Heubuden Church (1770-1799) transcribed by Glenn H. Penner at [https://mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/Heubuden Baptisms 1770-1799.htm](https://mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/Heubuden_Baptisms_1770-1799.htm).
- [9] See Glenn Penner's article referenced in citation [6] above.
- [10] The 1795 Census can be viewed online at [https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza Mennonite Settlement Census 1795.pdf](https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/russia/Chortitza_Mennonite_Settlement_Census_1795.pdf).
- [11] Information about the Mennonite DNA project is online at <http://www.mennonitedna.com/>.
- [12] This article is online at <https://www.mooserungenealogy.com/articles/saskatchewan-bergthalers-the-striemer-family/>.