

The Volga-German's Influence on Lutheranism in Colorado

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One of the dangers of a fast paced society revolving around ever new technology is that history of past generations is often viewed as being unimportant and is soon forgotten. History that was so a part of numerous generations before, can in one generation be completely lost. This holds true not only for family history, but also for the history ^{OF} for given church bodies. I think my grandmother recognized this American danger, and that is why she so often talked about her father and mother, God-fearing Volga-German Lutherans, who ventured out with their families to the United States. Both the religious and political reasons for these people coming to the United States are something that Grandmother wanted her grandchildren to know and appreciate. Unfortunately many of her grandchildren, including myself, didn't fully realize the value of what she was trying to preserve while she was alive. This paper is an attempt to know more about a small group of German Lutherans from Russia who settled near Longmont, Colorado, around the turn of this century. We will examine their history, character make-up, and their influence on Lutheranism in Longmont.

A LOOK AT THE DISTANT PAST:

In order to fully understand the character of a small group of German Lutherans that came from Russia to the United States in the ^kNineteen ^kHundreds, it is necessary to see how their ancestors ended up in Russia in the first place. It all started during the reign of Catherine II in Russia (1762-96). The Volga region of her country was relatively fertile, but very few Russians with

any agricultural know-how were settling there. To help educate her own people and to get more crops from that extensive land, in 1762 and 1763 Catherine send^t publications across Europe inviting people to come and settle. To make it more inviting, she gave the following incentives: free land of up to 80 acres per family, deferred taxation, interest-free loans, religious liberty, and self-administration (Stricker 49).

Of all the areas in Europe this invitation went to, it appealed to groups of Germans the most. The cause of this was Germany's Seven-Year War (1756-1763). The war devastated many Germans living in Hesse and the Rhineland areas (Stricker 49). The timing and Catherine's incentive's were right for many German families. If they had to start over, and many of them did, why not start off fresh with their own land.

Surprising to some, not all of the Germans who went over to Russia were farmers. Catherine's invitation was open to every profession. Of those who went, 50% were farmers, 40% were craftsmen, and 10% were adventurers, artists, etc. (Stricker 49). Soon, though, virtually all of them became full-time farmers.

Life in the Volga region of Russia was extremely tough at first. Catherine the Great had great expectations and intentions, but the details were missing. Gerd Stricker, a historian writes, "...the colonization program was quite inadequately planned on the Russian side (e.g., no building material-in many cases the immigrants had to live in mud huts for extended periods)" (Stricker 49).

It would seem that many of the officials under Catherine didn't have the same congeniality that Catherine had. There was little support from the Russian government. The "fertile" land that was promised would take years to work over in order for it to be productive. Besides all that, nomads would often raid their land. Often times these raiding parties would take people captive and sell them as slaves. Stricker estimates that some 1500 German settlers were captured and sold into slavery.

In spite of these conditions, by 1769 some 2700 Germans settled in the Volga region. Another invitation by Catherine II in 1787 brought thousands more. After Catherine the Great's death, Alexander I continued to invite German immigrants. Hundreds of thousands more came in the 1800's (Stricker 49).

The early conditions in the Volga produced a survivor mentality among these Germans. They had to be hard-working and very disciplined in order simply to survive. They had to stick together and support each other. Another result of their survivor mentality was very large families and extended families. From early on, every family member had a definite functions in supporting the rest.

The Germans who settled in Russia were a mix of distinct denominations; namely, Lutheran, Calvinist, and Catholic. Later, some Mennonites who originally settled in the Black Sea area made their way into the Volga. Because of their strong religious ties, the settlements in Russia were defined, for the most part, by denominational lines (Stricker 50). Of the original 101

colonies, 68 were Protestant (mostly Lutheran), and 33 were Catholic. By 1909 there were 150,000 Catholics and 450,000 Protestants (Stricker 50).

Among the Lutheran settlements in the Volga, there was a constant shortage of pastors. For the most part, the Lutheran pastors served several congregations in various colonies; on average about twenty. Most of them were only able to get to each congregation two or three times each year (Stricker, 50). This was a result of very poor roads, severe weather, and long distances between villages. It also should be said that these congregations were not small. Since colonies were defined often times by denominations, and since most of these people were very religious, practically the whole village would attend church.

The pastors themselves came from various Mission societies in Germany and Switzerland, including the Basel Mission Society. Often times it took pastors a while to adjust to the conditions in the Volga. Stricker even indicates that sometimes there was a social gap between pastors and laymen. He writes, "The mentality of pastors from Germany distanced them from the farming community, and in human terms they were sometimes not able to meet the hopes placed on them" (Striker, 51).

Because of the demands placed on each Lutheran pastor, it was necessary to delegate some of their work. Part of this work was absorbed by the *Kusterlehrer* or "sacristan-teacher" or school master (Stricker 50). He acted as both the teacher, and the spiritual authority when the pastor was away. His work included

leading church services and reading sermons while the pastor was gone. Since he was not ordained he was not allowed to preach his own sermons (Stricker, 51). His other church work included teaching confirmation, pre-marriage counseling, baptizing babies, and burying the dead. If a death occurred during the winter months when the ground was virtually unbreakable, the body would be stacked up with others in a given area outside until spring. When the pastor would arrive at a given colony, he would distribute Communion, test confirmands, ratify baptisms and marriages (Stricker, 51).

The Kusterlehrer though was much more than just the pastor's helper. The Russian government used him as an administrator. The Russians set up "central schools" to train them in the Russian language. This schooling lasted for four years (Stricker 51). The Kusterlehrer then would often be the go between the Russian government and the Volga-Germans. He was in many cases the only one in the colony that could read or write Russian. Even though the Russian Government wanted four years training for each Kusterlehrer, they often had no training and were not adequately qualified for their positions.

In addition to his occasional administration work, the Kusterlehrer was the teacher for the children. For the most part, each winter the Volga Germans sent their children, ages seven to fourteen, to the church school. So for three to four months each year the Kusterlehrer was responsible for teaching hundreds of students. Stricker says that class sizes of four

hundred students was quite normal (Stricker, 51). Even though the class sizes were large and the teaching a little impersonal, the Volga-Germans still had schooling for their children. Most Russian villages at this time offered no education (Stricker 51).

Since the schools in the Lutheran villages were really part of the church, the main subject was Luther's Catechism. Along with that was an emphasis on basic reading and arithmetic skills, and hymn-singing (Stricker 51). The three main textbooks were the Bible, the Catechism, and the Lutheran Hymnal.

The lack of man^{power} in both the church and school fueled a laity-led "Brethren Movement" in many of the Lutheran villages. Many of these movements were sparked by Moravians who ventured up from the Black Sea area. The Lutheran Brethren Movement was very similar to pietistic movements happening in the United States at that same time. There was an over-emphasis on experience, feelings and emotions. Sanctification became more important than justification, and theology was down-played. Stricker writes, "The lack of spiritual provisions for the villages brought new members to the Brethren meetings, who became 'brothers' and 'sisters' when they experienced revival, conversion, and a spiritual rebirth" (Stricker 53).

As in other parts of the world where the same pietistic spirit existed, there were Lutheran colonies that adopted apocalyptic and millennialistic views. Stricker writes, "The French Revolution, the Napoleonic wars, crop failures, and religious revivals all helped create an atmosphere conducive to

apocalyptic-eschatological ideas" (Stricker 50). Because the confessional Lutherans rightly rejected these views as an incorrect way of interpreting Scripture, some of these colonies separated themselves from the Lutheran Church and became autonomous. They even set the year 1836 as the year that Christ would return to start the Millennium. Later when this did not happen, many of these Lutherans did return to the Lutheran Church (Stricker 50).

PRE-CONDITIONS FOR COMING TO AMERICA:

By the mid-1800's most Volga-German colonies were flourishing compared to what things were like when they first arrived. By the time the second and third generations of Volga-Germans began to work the land, the fields were yielding surpluses. The determination, persistence, and discipline of the first settlers were paying off. Living and surviving in one of the Lutheran colonies were some families by the name of Leinweber and the Kammerzell.

During this time of relative prosperity, though, conditions developed that would eventually cause thousands of Volga-Germans to leave this land, including the Kammerzells and Leinwebers. These pre-conditions can be broken up into three categories: religious, political, and environmental. As we shall see, all of these factors combined, changed the minds of many of the Volga-Germans and caused them to leave.

As shown in the previous section, the religious environment

in the Volga varied. By the mid-1800's there were not only groups of Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics, but also Mennonites, and Moravians. In addition to this, each of these groups were internally being divided by various "Brethren Movements" and pietism. Needless to say, confrontations developed.

Just as in other parts of church history, it seems that there were a chain of actions and reactions. The pastors had tremendous workloads serving twenty or more congregations each possibly numbering in the thousands. Because each pastor's time was spread so thin, very little individual attention could be given to his members. That was a definite problem that needed to be addressed. The Brethren Movements addressed the problem, but not in the right way. Their reaction carried many false assumptions and doctrines which were mentioned earlier.

Many pastors in return reacted to the Brethren Movements. Some unfortunately accepted everything that the Brethren Movement brought. These churches often were the ones that became the autonomous and millennialistic. Other Lutheran pastors reacted to the Brethren Movement in an arrogant manner rather than Scriptural. Stricker's article hints at a spirit of arrogance among some of the pastors coming out of Germany. This only further alienated the pastors.

Yet other Lutheran pastors as well as lay people reacted in a Scripturally sound way. They identified the false views that were being incorporated into the Brethren Movements and they

warned the members about them. After a period of time the errorists were expelled (Stricker, 53).

By the middle 1800's the colonies were less defined by denominational lines. Because of the lack of man^wpower, this caused problems for confessional pastors. Calvinists, who didn't understand the Scriptural teachings about the Lord's Supper, were settling in formerly Lutheran colonies. They would often attend Lutheran churches since there were no Calvinist churches close by. When Lutheran pastors upheld Scriptural fellowship principles and refused distributing Communion to them, many Calvinist became upset. Since the pastors didn't have enough time for their own members, it would seem that they didn't have much time to patiently instruct these new settlers.

Stricker points out that these fellowship problems became so intense that many Calvinist (and probably some sympathetic yet uninformed Lutherans) appealed to the Russian government (Stricker 51). The reaction that the Russian government made in trying to settle these disputes led to even further complications. These all contributed to many Volga-Germans leaving Russia for America.

Tzar Alexander I decided ~~to do~~ to solve these problems by making concessions that would appeal to the Calvinists. But he disguised ^{he} in Lutheran wrappings so to appease the Lutherans. Basically what he initiated and what eventually developed was that the Evangelical-Lutheran Church in Russia became an official state church. Humanly speaking, it makes sense that the Russian

government would insist that the official church be Lutheran. After all, for quite some time they already had an administrative tie with the Volga colonies through the Lutheran "Kusterlehrer." But since the Russian government could sense that Confessional Lutheranism wasn't as strong and popular as it was in the past, it would simply broaden the definition of Lutheran to also include Calvinists. To help control matters, all pastors' salaries would be paid by the Russian government. Also, key pastors and councils were appointed who would report to Moscow and Petersburg (Stricker 52). It is safe to say that the men who were appointed to these positions and accepted them were compromisers to begin with. These religious leaders became political pawns. The Russian government had undone one of the initial provisions set up by Catherine the Great, namely, religious freedom.

Needless to say, the Russian government's interference into church affairs only further complicated matters. Confessional pastors and lay people were put into difficult positions. Were they going to buckle under the pressure of the State Church by making concessions and compromise their confessional position, or were they going to obey God rather than men and uphold Scriptural fellowship principles?

It is easy to see that these political and religious conditions became part of the impetus for many Confessional Lutherans to leave the Volga to come to America. Many left in the middle 1800's.

In addition to political and religious conditions that were in place by the middle 1800's, soon unfavorable environmental conditions developed as well. Probably the biggest factor was the famine in the Volga in 1891-1892. Since a large majority of the Volga-Germans were farmers, this meant devastation in a short period of time. For years and generations, the growing season for the Volga-Germans for the most part was predictable. But in late Spring of 1891 that all suddenly changed. Adam Giesinger in an article for the American Historical Society of Germans From Russia writes, "The early spring of 1891 was normal. The fields turned beautifully green, but for weeks and weeks not a drop of rain came to maintain the growth. Instead there was a hot east wind which scorched everything and even robbed the late seed of the power to germinate. The fields remained bare through the whole summer" (Giesinger 1).

Because of the increasing population of the Volga-Germans and the severity of the drought, all of the surplus food supply was used up by August of that year. Giesinger writes, "Large multitudes of beggars began to wander through the region, with their numbers growing daily. Soon there was nothing left to beg for in the German villages. The hungry then began to go to more distant places to look for food, which usually had disastrous consequences for them" (Giesinger 1).

In The Czar's Germans, the author, Hattie Plum Williams, describes the famine as follows: "Of the thirteen provinces which the famine covered, the province of Samara [Wiesenseite] was one

of the most terribly afflicted and Saratov [Bergseite] was scarcely less destitute. In the former more than half of the inhabitants were reported utterly destitute" (Williams 202). By the end of two full growing seasons without any crops, conditions were even worse.

The drought itself made inhabitants vulnerable to other killers as well. An epidemic of Typhus spread throughout the Volga at the end of the summer of 1891. One year later, cholera took the lives of many. The famine and its effects definitely contributed to many Volga-Germans wanting to leave this region.

The greatest humanitarian relief came from the United States and individual church bodies in the States. The Volga-Germans who already in the middle 1800's had migrated to the United States, didn't forget about their family and friends back in Russia. To make sure that these relief packages were getting to Volga-Germans, the United States supervised its distribution. In her work, Hattie Plum Williams describes what one of these American supervisors saw:

He found about half the houses closed, the families having moved together to save fuel. Many of the thatched-roofed houses had been uncovered and the straw fed the stock, yet one-third of the horses had died and the rest were sold at very low prices. Sickness was everywhere and no medicine available within fifty miles (Giesinger 1).

The religious, political, and environmental conditions were

right for many of the Volga-Germans to want to leave Russia. The most logical place to go for most was to America. Adam Giesinger writes:

Hundreds of his friends and relatives were in the land of plenty whence relief had come, and many of them had joined in sending help, either directly or through the collected funds. The letters from America told of prosperous people with plenty to eat and wear, and prepaid tickets were offered to those who wanted to come to the United States. These encouragements were enhanced by rate wars among transportation companies which forced the steamship fares down, while railroads carried passengers from the seaboard to Lincoln, NE for \$8.00 (Giesinger 1).

COMING TO THE UNITED STATES:

As a result of the famine and the other conditions in the Volga, there was a very large Volga-German immigration to the United States between 1891-1893. Since these people were farmers, they tended to settle in areas in the United States that had similar agricultural climates as the Volga. Some of the more popular areas were the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and parts of Eastern Colorado. This large immigration to the States at this time still didn't include the Kammerzells and the Leinwebers who would eventually end up in Longmont, CO. However, these 1890's immigrants, would pave the way ~~later~~ for others.

As said before, not all of the Volga-Germans left for America. Many remained, including a few Confessional Lutherans. The famine ended and they hoped to get back to prosperity. It seems that many who remained were the real "die-hards." These people had grown to like the land and their culture in the land. They didn't want it to end and they were afraid, to a certain extent, of the wealth and temptations in America. Others who remained simply were saving up enough money to go to the States. In 1904 some close friends of my grandmother's parents saved up enough money and immigrated to the States. They ended up in Sterling, CO, and would be very instrumental in helping my relatives in a few short years.

Political unrest continued to plague the Volga region, even though the famine was long gone. The underground Bolshevik movement was already at work. To a certain degree the Bolsheviks targeted the Volga-Germans, as they did any agricultural group. They received little if any support, though, from the Volga-Germans. These Germans wanted their autonomy that Catherine the Great had promised them. They didn't want the Russian government interfering anymore with their life ^{as} then they had in the past. And they wanted no part of an underground movement among the Bolsheviks to overturn the government. As a result, the Volga-Germans were held suspect by both the Russian government and the Bolsheviks.

Breaking another one of Catherine's promises, the Russian government began enlisting skilled craftsmen from among the Volga

colonies to serve in the Russian army. One of these was a blacksmith and also confessional Lutheran by the name was George Kammerzell. After he served his time in the Russian army, he was looking for the first opportunity to get his family out of the Volga. Some of his family felt that since he was in the Russian army he become^a aware of just how volatile things had become.

During this same time period the Russian government started changing more policies in the Volga colonies. For one thing, they began taking ever increasing percentages of the Volga-Germans' harvests and profits. Alex Ott, whose grandfather was one of the Germans still living in the Volga at that time, said that the government officials would simply take surplus grain from the granaries at will. Because they were held suspect anyway, they could do nothing about it.

Many of the "die-hards" at this time decided it was time to leave. Sometime during the next few years (1907-1911), several families left the Volga to come to the United States. Many of these later immigrants would settle in Longmont, Colorado. Included in that group were my relatives the Kammerzells and the Leinwebers, and other names such as the Achzigers, Otts, Schlagels, Wagners, Gomers, Nusses, Vogles, Walkers, Litzenbergers, Stugarts, Popes, Graffs, Blumensheins, Pepplers, Horsts, Gorsskopf, Shurrs, Roemmichs, Muellers, Ginthers, Rudys, Kriegers, Lessers, Betzes, Knipples, Haases, Yeagers, Befuses, Giebelhauses, Ashenbrenners, Labers, Schwabs, Webbers, Loases, Knisses, Kochs, Hergenreders, Ostermuellers, and the Roelfs. Not

all of these people were Lutheran. Of the ones who weren't, however, many would become Lutheran due to God working through outreach efforts of a Lutheran pastor by the name of George Busch in Longmont, CO. We will go into detail about him later.

As said before, many of the earlier Volga-German immigrants settled in areas in Nebraska, Kansas, North and South Dakota. Eventually some of them moved further west into areas around Sterling and Morgan, Colorado. Because of their high work ethic, the favorable geographical conditions, and the favorable political conditions in the States, these Volga-German settlements started to prosper as did the earlier ones. The immigrants who settled in Eastern Colorado were especially helpful to the later immigrants of 1907-1911. As they came over, the earlier immigrants supplied their needs and also directed them to go further West into Colorado.

Whether they initially knew it or not, these hard working beet farmers settling in Colorado had attracted entrepreneurs of a different sort. Investors pulled together and started building more and more sugar factories. These owners banked on the dependability of these farmers and their beets. For economic and transportation reasons, the majority of new beet factories were built closer to Denver; namely Greeley, Loveland, Windsor and Longmont.

One of the results of these factories was that the later Volga-German immigrants were encouraged to move even further west. The land was still favorable for sugar beets, plus they

would be a lot closer to the sugar beet factories. There is, though, another reason why many of the Volga-German preferred to live in the Longmont area of Colorado, rather than eastern Colorado. Usually when one thinks of the Volga region in Russia vast prairies come to mind. This is true for the most part, but large portions of the land also bordered mountains. In Russia, the Volga-German were divided into "mountain side Volga" and the "steppe side Volga." Each had their own dialect. It makes sense then, that the majority of the "mountain side Volga" would prefer settling in Longmont with a picturesque view of Long's Peak stretching into the sky over 14,000 feet. A variety of Volga-Germans, though ended up in the Longmont area.

Colorado provided long anticipated opportunities for these immigrants, but the work was still tedious. Because these immigrants were very poor by American standards, it took them a while to earn enough money to buy even small portions of land. Most of them initially worked as migrants and moved around from farm to farm.

It wasn't just the men who worked the Colorado beet fields, but the whole family. Many families would live in "beet shakes" on given farms. What this consisted of was a kerosene stove, a kerosene lamp, bedding, kitchen utensils, and not much more. Harold Stoll of Windsor, CO, recalls how his family worked together on the beet farm. Harold was eight at the time; he had an older sister who was thirteen, two younger brothers age seven and four, and a younger sister at eight months. Harold writes:

My brother Reinhold and I thinned the rows that were blocked by Father, who left rather larger clumps standing than Mother, whose rows were thinned by Pauline. Mother exercised more care and was deft with the hoe that she could frequently leave just a single beet plant, and my sister could nearly always be found ahead of Reinhold and me...Ruth was kept in the baby house, a two-wheeled affair that was moved along as was progressed down the field... It was Albert's duty to look after Ruth (Stoll 7).

Harold goes on to say that the whole family usually was in the field and working by 6 A.M. and didn't go back to the shack until after 6 P.M.

When these families were not doing beet work, they would be attending their garden if they had one. They hoped to have a surplus in order to sell it at the markets. Other chores for these families included taking care of the dairy cow. As in the Volga, these people would train their family dairy cow to return to them at sunset; "The cow will stop, stand before its gate, and moo until the owner lets her in" (Kloberdanz 39). For these immigrants owning a single dairy cow alleviated poverty; "A Kuh deckt viel Armut zu" (Kloberdanz 39). They would often times also sell surplus dairy products. Harold Stoll recalls his milking chores:

"Tears still come to my eyes when I remember walking up to that cow with my hands and wrists aching from a hard

day in the field. I think she was the biggest Holstein in the country, but she had the shortest, hardest teats of any cow I ever milked. She could produce up to six gallons of milk per day, so we had not only enough for ourselves, but also had extra milk to supply or barter with a few neighbors" (Stoll 8).

Probably the greatest amount of work and effort, though was needed at harvest time. Stoll writes, "Shortly after the potatoes were harvested, the beet harvest began, usually after the first of October. It is hard to describe how much incredibly hard work this entailed" (Stoll 9). What made it difficult was that with the exception of a horse-drawn lifter that would loosen the soil, the rest of the work was done by hand. It was a race against time and the temperatures. Freezing wouldn't hurt the beets, but it made it more difficult to get out of the ground. Also there was a constant threat of accidentally cutting off one's finger with the sharp knives that were constantly used to cut off the tops of beets. Added pressure was placed on these families at harvest time when the husbands often left the fields and were employed for a few months at the local beet factories. These men justified doing this because they could make better money and their work would last into the first months of winter (Stoll 9).

After a few years of migrant work, many of the Volga-Germans in the Longmont area were able to buy a few acres of their own land. This would continue until families owned larger farms.

The environmental conditioning in the Volga helped these families, for the most part, to thrive more so than they ever did in Russia. My great-grandfather, Henry Leinweber is quoted as saying, "This place is the Heavens, there is no other place to go."

LUTHERAN OUTREACH TO THE VOLGA-GERMANS IN LONGMONT AREA:

The immigrants who settle in Longmont didn't leave their Lord out of the picture. Many of them, as they had been doing in the Volga, regularly read Scripture and taught their own children Luther's Catechism. For the Confessional Lutherans the lack of pastors in the Volga together with not wanting to be a part of the State Church, had already caused them to form house churches. As they settled in Colorado they simply carried this over. Now away from the State Church, though, these house churches could eventually call a pastor to serve them.

It didn't take long for a small group of Lutherans to do this. George Kammerzell and his family were very instrumental in starting a Lutheran Church in Brighton, CO. They eventually called a pastor from the LCMS. In Longmont a house church turned to the Ohio synod since they were doing work in the area. Eventually they called a pastor by the name of George Busch. The conditions were ripe for Pastor Busch to do some serious mission work among these immigrants. According to Alex Ott who knew Pastor Busch personally, and also Emma Eddy (nee Leinweber) he fit in well to this ministry that God gave to him. He had a deep

compassion for these immigrants and sincerely wanted them to grow in their faith and knowledge in God's Word. To do this he was also able to give up a cash income for less convenient ways of paying a pastor as sides of beef, potatoes, dairy products, eggs, and of course beets.

Within two years, the LORD blessed Pastor Busch's efforts to the point that they were ready to dedicate their first church building. The name of their church was Peace Lutheran Church. The Longmont Times dated July 17, 1910 recorded the event:

Sunday the dedication of the new Evangelical Lutheran Peace church on Baker street and Seventh avenue, Rev. W.L. Busch, pastor, took place. The dedication was conducted in both German and English languages. Rev. A. Busse, of Sterling, CO, preached in the German language and Rev. Oscar Schmidt, of Evans, CO, in English in the forenoon ... Rev. Busch, one of the most earnest and successful pastors of our city, came here about two years ago, and began mission work with the German-Russians, Germans and some English Lutherans people...Through the personal efforts of Rev. Busch the present church has grown into a strong body and now have a fine, new church home in which to carry on their work.

Within his first year at Peace Lutheran Church, Pastor Busch came into contact with Heinrich Leinweber. He was 19 years old and had recently come over with his parents Mary and Conrad Leinweber. Heinrich was dating George Kammerzell's daughter,

Matilda. Later in 1908, Pastor Busch performed his first marriage service at Peace Lutheran for Matilda and Heinrich. They would be long time members of Peace Lutheran, as would their 14 children, which included my grandmother, Pauline.

The growing Peace Lutheran Church soon bought a small school house. This school house had to be transported from a little community called Hygiene. As early as 1912 the church building had to be expanded.

Pastor Busch wanted to reach as many people with God's Word as possible. Since most of these immigrants knew very little English, two of his weekly Sunday services were in German. But Busch knew that the children were learning English, so he added one English service following the two German services.

Things became more difficult after WWI started. The Volga-Germans were held suspect as were a lot of Germans. Many of the beet factories refused to hire Volga-Germans. Because of paranoia, the Colorado State Legislature passed a law forbidding Germans to congregate and speak in German. This had ill-effects on Peace Lutheran Church. Some of the older immigrants still knew very little German. For them it brought back memories of Russian interference into their personal lives; and with that, bitterness.

Some of the younger immigrants and their families, though, reacted in a different way to the pressure. These families liked America and wanted to be treated as Americans. They were willing to sacrifice some of their culture to do this. Many of them got

together in the public's eye and held book-burnings. Any book or document written in German was burned. My grandmother, as a teenager, attended some of those gatherings. Later in life she regretted doing that and realized that a lot of culture was unnecessarily lost.

The Leinweber family was split. Conrad Leinweber's wife, Mary, died in childbirth. Since Conrad not only had two older sons, but also two small boys, Adolf and David, he especially wanted to remarry. The only problem was that Conrad didn't feel that there were any suitable single women for him in the States. He felt that the American women were too worldly. Heinrich's older brother's wife was also very homesick for the Volga. So in 1924, Conrad and his two younger sons, and his oldest son and his wife left Heinrich in Longmont and went back to Russia. This would turn out to be a tragic move on Conrad's part.

Pastor Busch had a lot to deal with in serving his congregation during this time. Older family members became bitter and divided against some of the younger ones. The German services were forbidden by the State. Families were torn by some returning to Russia. And finally, the country was at war.

Conrad and his sons made it back to the Volga, but most of their belongings didn't. Things had drastically changed. Many of the people that they originally left were no longer there. Many of them were either taken by the Bolsheviks to Siberia, murdered, or starved to death. There were a few still there, however, including a woman named Liz that he soon married. Some

of their difficulties are seen in portions of the first letter sent to Heinrich back in Colorado:

"A letter written from us, your parents,...When we came home from the city of Kosak, we then drove right away to the city of Lotoshcnerja and received a paper from the office... but again, we didn't receive the box of clothes. We were told to take a boat [probably some other form of transportation] to Moscow and from there get a paper... that is why we write to you, dear children, to work also on them that we finally receive clothes...Write back soon from America to Russia. Write us how it is by you in the worldly things and also with the Christianity, if it is still is as when we lived there..."

Back in Colorado, Heinrich brought this to the attention of Pastor Busch, and the congregation decided to send relief packages to Conrad and his family, and whoever else might need them. These provisions, however, never reached Conrad. This is evident in the second letter that he wrote to Heinrich:

"We request that this little sheet be delivered to my son Heinrich Leinweber, a note written by us, your parents, your brother David and his wife and child to you, our dearly beloved children, Heinrich and Matilda and the Leinweber children. Let the beginning be made in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. We are informing you that our old grandmother died a blessed death on March

27...Now she rests under God's protection until the joyous resurrection morning when Christ will revive her on the Last Day. Dearly beloved Heinrich and Matilda, write and tell how you are and how things are going. We are further informing you that we sent you several letters, but never received an answer in return. Send us your present address. We have to tell you that goods are very scarce here. Perhaps you can help us if you are in a position to do so...Hoping for an answer. Conrad Leinweber."

After receiving this letter, Heinrich and the Peace congregation sent even more provisions and letters. Again, none of them reached Conrad Leinweber and his family. One last letter was written by Conrad and received by Heinrich. In this last letter, Conrad again pleads with Heinrich to send provisions. Since he hadn't received any news or provisions from Heinrich, he was probably wondering whether his son had simply written him off and didn't care about him. This is evident in his admonishment in this third and finally letter;

"Written from us, your parents...Now we want to make known to you how it is by us. Now it is by us very difficult and sad with the food. If we receive clothes we have to work through Maria Abna. With the food it is very sad and difficult with us. Our food is now 2 small barrels of rye flour and no more potatoes. You can imagine how we are. If you have no pity for us, then it

will cost us our last cow. If you could, do all possible for us, because read Isaiah 58 from verse 7 until the end of the chapter. As it says, if you do something good for us, it will be returned to you manifold here on earth and in heaven everlasting as it says in the Holy Scriptures. Read Matthew 25 from verse 31 until the end of the chapter. As it says there, if you can, do the best for us so that we do not have to give up our last cow. It is very difficult, you cannot understand how it is. Without a cow, and Ehn being also already old, we live from the milk of the cow. It is very terrible with us and very sad. Please be kind and do not forget us. If you can, send us something. We have not permanent home here because we are looking for a future place....Write back soon and do not forget us. Hope to hear from you soon. Conrad Leinweber"

As before, Heinrich and Peace Lutheran Church send [†] more provisions. No further reply was heard from Conrad from Russia. After years of sending letters to Russia, an anonymous letter was sent back to Longmont directing the letter writers to no longer write because their family members were no longer around.

PEACE LUTHERAN CHURCH AFTER WWI

After WWI the law that forbid ^a people from congregating and speaking German was taken off the books. For Peace Lutheran Church it meant publicly holding German services again. Instead

of having two German services followed by one English, though, it was two English services followed by one German. It is seen by this that the congregation was changing. It seems, though, that some of the tensions felt in the 1920's had resolved themselves. In 1932 Pastor George Busch died and his son, W.L. Busch, was called to serve Peace.

W.L. Busch also had a unique ministry. He continued to serve the Volga-Germans and their children, but he had other responsibilities. During WWII, German POW's were sent to work some of the beet fields close to Longmont. On the weekends while they were in their prison camps, Pastor Busch would come out and preach to them in German. Surprisingly, he received no flack from the community.

In the 1950's Peace once again went through many changes. For one thing, the German service attendance had drastically dropped off. As a result all the services were held in English.

It also seems that there were internal struggles in the church at this time. As in the Volga, there seemed to be a range of conflicting views. This included Scriptural views from liberal to conservative. Financially, things were also not going well. Because times were changing, many felt that the pastor should be paid more in a yearly salary rather than in goods and services that Pastor George Busch had been given. Older members disagreed.

According to Alex Ott who would later become the Financial Secretary after the death of W.L. Busch, mission money that came

from the WELS began to help support Peace. This, though according to Alex, was not made public among the members of Peace. If this is true, perhaps it is an indication that some of the members of Peace didn't want to be associated with confessional, conservative views.

When Pastor Busch died in the middle 1950's, the internal divisions in Peace became evident. There was a big dispute as to where to turn to call another pastor. Slightly over half the congregation wanted to call from the ALC, while others felt that the ALC had become too liberal and wanted to become either WELS or LCMS. The majority one out, but many left.

Of those who left, half helped start Our Savior Lutheran Church in Longmont which is WELS. The other half helped form Messiah Lutheran Church (LCMS) which is also in Longmont. According to Emma Eddy (nee Leinweber) the reason half formed a LCMS church and the other a WELS church is because of a disagreement over the Boy Scouts. Messiah is a LCMS church that decided that its all right to allow the Boy Scouts. Those who formed Our Savior Lutheran identified the errors of work-righteousness and unionism that prevail in the Boy Scouts. Both of these congregations ~~are~~ exist today and are growing.

Those who stayed with Peace didn't last much longer. According to Alex Ott who stayed with Peace, Pastor Fritchel (ALC) who was trying to provide a pastor for Peace, put a lot of pressure on the members. He told them that they would have to drastically increase the salary for a pastor before he would

provide them with one. This didn't go over too well. For a while they went with lay-lead services. Attendance dropped off especially among the younger generation. In 1955 it was decided that Peace Lutheran would become absorbed into Bethlehem Lutheran. Bethlehem was originally part of the Norwegian Synod, but became ALC. Today Bethlehem Lutheran is part of ELCA. A few of the original members are still around, including Alex Ott who still has all of the books on Peace Lutheran Church.

Church history continues to be unraveled. God continues to adjust our situations as He sees fit as He spreads his Gospel into the world. For all practical purposes, the Volga-German influence on Lutheranism in Colorado is over. Yet the influence that they had, has certainly affected numerous generations that followed including myself. God, keep us faithful.

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Ott, Alex. of Longmont Colorado. [by Phone]. Born 5/10/14;
Baptized 5/11/14 at Peace Lutheran Church.