

*Our Grandfather's Axe*

from Krumbeck to Canada by way of  
Poland and Russia 1756 - 1961

**Adolf Buse and Dieter K. Buse**

**Printed by  
University of Alberta Bookstores  
Espresso Books  
2008**

*For our children and grandchildren*

*In lieu of axes*

*Adolf Buse*

Adolf likes long novels, long naps and long hikes in various combinations; in all other matters, brevity.

*Dieter K. Buse*

Dieter K. Buse only grew to average height, the same as Napoleon. At age 9 a little brother came along, so he was torn from his mother's breast and had to fend for himself, including hauling 70 pound chimney blocks up a ladder at age 11. He sought to help people by working in Big Brothers, Heart and Stroke Foundation, Archives Interest Group and Art Gallery of Sudbury. He sought to aid himself and the earth by gardening with nine composters and by walking to work for thirty years. Hiking and golfing often involve friends, while dancing and drinking always involves life/love partner, Judith. Hunting and fishing sometimes involve his grandchildren. He is proud of his two children, never having had to hire a lawyer for them. His favourite colour is black—his own words in print, as in his most recent book, *The Regions of Germany*.

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## PREFACE

*"It is hard to not know what you do know."*

Alistair MacLeod, *As Birds Bring Forth the Sun*, 1992

Consider the Polish saying: "This is my grandfather's axe. My father changed the blade and I changed the handle." The clever Polish peasant who first contrived this paradox undoubtedly amused his contemporaries as much as we are amused today. Perhaps the Polish peasant was also the village philosopher who sought to deliver a message about continuity and change. This message tells us, most assuredly, that grandfather's axe no longer exists. What remains is the idea of grandfather's axe and the link that ties one generation to the next. These links between generations can take one back in time as far as one likes as a succession of blades and handles replace each other. Polish peasants could, metaphorically, hold the ancestral axe that had shaped the logs of the huts they occupied. And each successive generation could also share the stories that came with the history of each transformed axe. Grandfather's axe comes loaded with memories and these memories can be as elusive as the symbolic axe. One might even be tempted to paraphrase the saying as: "This is my grandfather's story. My father changed the opening and I changed the ending."

Today we no longer pass axes from one generation to the next. Instead, we are more likely to ask why the axe was always passed to a son and not a daughter. In a family of five sons, such as ours, the question of who gets the axe might still resonate if we could find the one that we used for chopping wood to heat our first home in Canada. In the absence of the real axe we can produce only metaphorical axes disguised as stories. Putting the stories on paper may make it harder for subsequent generations to change the beginnings and endings, but as long as the next generation remembers the rule about not believing everything they read in the newspaper, they will succeed in creating their own interpretation of the past at a later date.

This memoir is, in part, about our many grandfathers and grandmothers. We take it as given that most people have a natural curiosity about their ancestors. But where to start? For the Buse family, we have found a convenient starting point in

the 18<sup>th</sup> century Prussian village of Krumbeck. In 1756, Martin Buse, a grandfather five generations removed, appears for the first time in the Krumbeck church registers. These registers do not tell us whether Martin kept an axe handy in his windmill, but, as will become apparent in the Prologue, they do tell us quite a lot about his family, including the various spellings of the name Buse. The origin of names is part of the genealogical game and many are disappointed to find that they do not have an ancient noble lineage. We had no such illusions, but did find ourselves engaged in some fruitless speculation about the Buse name before we examined the relevant church documents. The current spelling, Buse, means herring boat in Middle Low German and the name appears as early as 1376 at Greifswald on the Baltic coast. Early variants include Buseke and Busemann. A village called Busedorf, no longer on any contemporary maps, is known to have existed in Pomerania at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

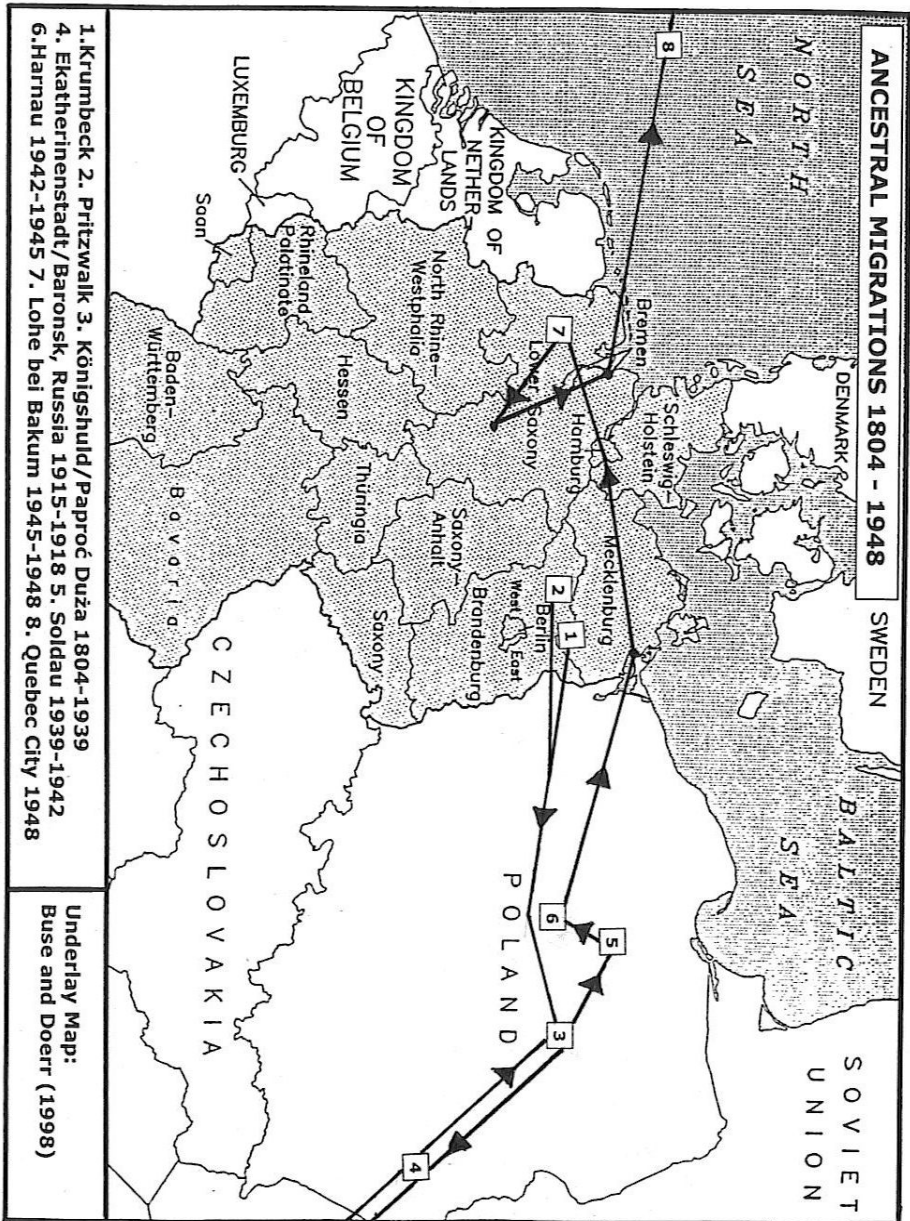
Buse is also French for a common hawk widely distributed across Europe, as well as meaning conduit or tubing. It also means blockhead in colloquial speech. Since French Huguenots came to Prussia in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, a French connection seemed a possibility. No evidence has been found for French origins of the Buse name and given the various spellings in the church registers, namely Buhs, Buhse, Busse and Buße, its German origins are also obscure. It is probably best to acknowledge the impossibility of ever settling the matter decisively. Anyone wishing to do so might note that Buße means repentance and that Bosse is a variant of Busse. Furthermore, in French 'busse' is a flat boat whereas 'bosse' is a hump. These manifold possibilities suggest the following 14<sup>th</sup> century tableau: A group of hump-backed Baltic fishermen, freshly arrived on shore from their flat-keeled herring boat, is salting down the herring catch while beating off attacking hawks with hollow sticks. The locals observe that the blockheads are doing penance again. An itinerant French monk, sitting in the doorway of the Busedorf tavern, is making notes for his travelogue.

No such puzzles confront us when we consider the maternal side of the family. Schütz means marksman. The name appears as early as the 13<sup>th</sup> century in the Prignitz region of Prussia

from which our mother's family originates. A marksman eight centuries ago would have been an archer so those with a desire to construct an heroic past have the raw material to hand. Less heroic is the observation that Schütz also means sluice-gate. Regrettably, the first documented appearance of a Schütz grandfather does not occur until 1812 in the Prignitz town of Pritzwalk. Thus, the Schütz family history prior to 1812 remains uncharted territory.

The route from Krumbeck and Pritzwalk to Canada includes a lengthy 19<sup>th</sup> century stop in Russian Poland and shorter 20<sup>th</sup> century stays in Russia and Germany. Almost 200 years passed before we made landfall in Canada in 1948. What happened in the intervening years is part of our tale. We try to tell the story not only of the individuals who populate the genealogical charts, but also to recount the historical events that shaped, and often disrupted, their lives. If they are known to us, details of the locale in which they lived and the prevailing customs that governed their daily existence are also included. Without such context we deprive ourselves of the opportunity to move closer to some understanding of life as it was experienced at the time. We have gone far afield to gather our evidence. Trips to family villages in Poland and Germany gave us a sense of place. Hours in libraries and archives yielded a mountain of facts that had to be processed. The Prussian archives in Berlin mined by Dieter proved to be a particularly fruitful source for a multitude of details about our colonist ancestors in Poland. Even a conversation Adolf had in a bar in Tokyo generated useful facts from Estonia about some of our collateral ancestors. The indispensable microfilms of church registers available at the Family History Centers of the Mormon Church supplemented our own genealogical sources, although deciphering the typical cleric's handwriting is not a task that we would recommend as a relaxing pastime.

Grandparents, however, are only part of the story. This memoir is also about our parents and ourselves. When we were young we thought we knew everything, at least everything we thought worth knowing. Among the things we thought not worth knowing were the particulars of our past. The past was deemed the preserve of the old; our concerns were the present and the



Ancestral migrations

future. Now that we are older – old, no doubt, if we could see ourselves through the eyes of our grandchildren – we know we do not know everything, including the things we now think

worth knowing. Our youthful indifference is not surprising; we lacked the necessary points of reference to make sense of the many stories from the Polish villages of the Paproć region that were the bread and butter of Sunday afternoon oral history sessions while we were growing up in Barrhead. To establish the necessary points of reference would have required patience and perseverance to ask detailed questions. Patience is not the long suit of the young; there are too many important things to do on a Sunday afternoon, such as finding a way to extract car keys from paternal hands in order to cruise mindlessly the dusty streets of Barrhead. By the time we began to engage seriously the question of our family history many of the Paproćers were gone. We only now recognize how few serious conversations we had with our father prior to his death in 1969 and how many questions remained unanswered. Although we were able to interview some surviving aunts and uncles, as well as having had lengthy conversations with our mother before she died in 1993, many new questions arose when we started the actual analysis and writing.

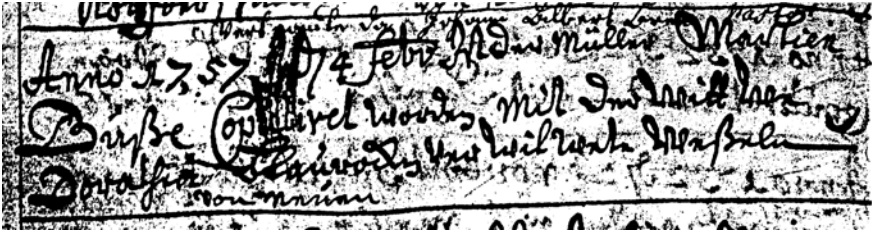
To answer these questions we had to resort to other methods. We were lucky insofar as others had written about village life in Poland before World War II. But these writings, while providing many useful anecdotes, failed to exploit the substantial academic literature on the Germans in Poland. We have digested this literature and supplemented it with archival research. For better or worse, our trail is fully documented with the requisite footnotes to justify labelling our efforts a researched memoir in a way that many memoirs are not. That we were able to do so hinges on one very important fact: We are the last generation in the family that is fluent in German. A better argument for writing this family memoir now cannot be made. The next generation of family historians would be hard pressed to duplicate our efforts.

Jointly authored works create problems of style, content and emphasis. This endeavour proved to be no exception to the general rule. The division of responsibility for chapters was an accident of Adolf's decision to retire earlier than Dieter. Accordingly, Adolf wrote drafts of the first three chapters and Dieter the last two. The chapters were then revised by each author in light of criticism and newly collected material. At the

end of this three-year process, Adolf wrote the Preface and Dieter the Prologue. The Epilogue was a shared production. Being academics, we are by training disputatious, so questions as to how many Protestant angels could dance on the head of a Catholic pin were not avoided. Some of our arguments were prolonged, some humourous, some good-natured and others less so. When we failed to agree, as happened on a number of occasions when personal memory came into play, the major disagreements have been recorded.

Our families, our relatives, our friends, academic and otherwise, were all dragooned into our project. Wives (Kathy and Judith) and children (Heather, Peter, Kent and Lisa) were the first ports of call for comments on drafts. Lisa deserves special thanks for undertaking the onerous job of formatting the final version of this project. Our brothers, Art, Bill and George, added their stories to the family archive, even if not all of them survived the editorial axe. Our aunt Emilie Schütz and step-uncle Karl Krüger, the last living aunt and step-uncle, helped settle a few arguments about life in Poland. The list of helpful cousins (and spouses) is long: Art and Edmund Dams, Lydia Kergel, Edna Kleinfeldt, Lydia Manthey, Lydia Mueller, Else Rentz, Helen and Rudy Schutz, Benny and Irma Schütz, Leo Weirauch and Artur Zitlau. Just as long is the list of academics who generously shared their expertise: Linda Ambrose, Richard Blanke, Heather Coleman, Johan van Doorn, Lisa Doucet, Guy Gaudreau, Hans-Dietrich Gronau, Balder von Hohenbalken (deceased), Graeme Mount, Nancy Reagin, Pierre Simoni, and Thomas Stamm-Kuhlmann. Useful assistance and information also came from David Bell, Carol K. Burns, Vanessa Cordery, Bruno Dams, Isabella von Dewitz, Joerg Dyckerhoff, Jerry Frank, Volker Hahn (deceased), Charlene Hill, Juergen Kniesz, Maciej Marcinkowski, Beth Marshall, Monika Stodolska, Ewald Trotno, Manfred Wacker, Patsy Winkelmann and Liudmila Zaichuk. If debtors' prisons were still in use we would surely receive very long sentences. As it is we are free to give our heartfelt thanks to all our creditors. We also absolve them of any errors that remain. This is a burden that the authors will share in the time-honoured brotherly tradition of blaming the other.

## PROLOGUE: A MILLER'S TALE



Text reads: "Anno 1757 d 4 Febr ist der Müller Martien Buße copuliret worden mit der Wittwe Dorothea Blaurock der Wittwete Weßeln [In the year 1757 on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February the miller Martin Bus(s)e was married to the widow Dorothea Blaurock, the widow of Wes(s)el.]"<sup>1</sup> From the Krumbeck church register of births, marriages and deaths.

In 1800 at age seventy, Martin Buße (1729-1803) reflected on his life as a miller and inn keeper. He decided that he wanted to tell his children and grandchildren about his life in Krumbeck. Since he could not write well he told his tale to the local pastor who wrote his story out as they talked. This is their exchange as the pastor checked the church records to help reinforce Martin's memory.

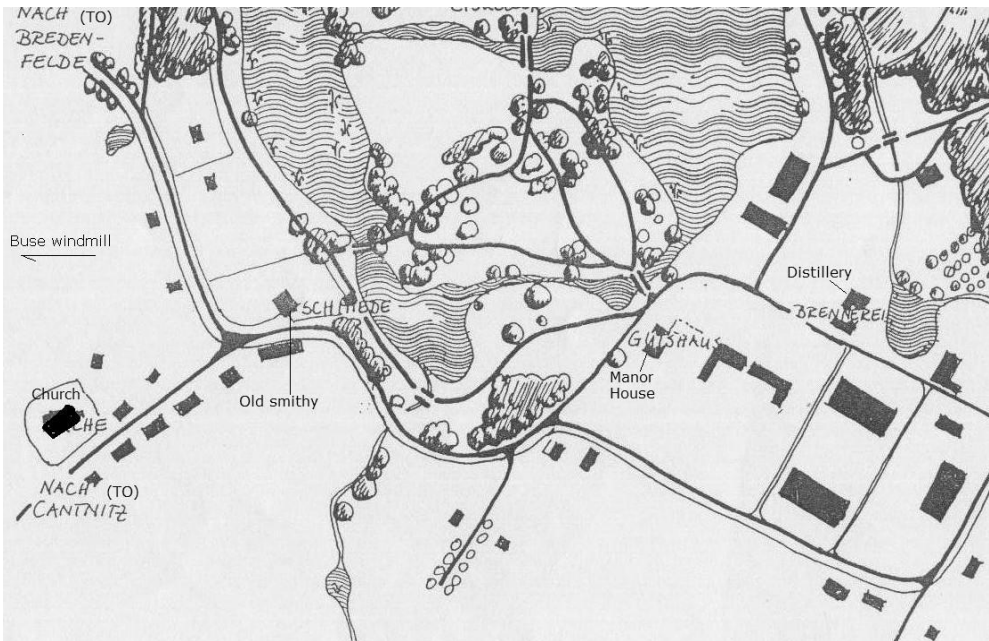
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*Martin:* This tale has no beginning, or none that I can divulge. Some of my children know that I came to Krumbeck nearly fifty years ago. However, none of my relatives came here to live. Only a few came for the occasional christenings after I married here. But perhaps I am getting ahead of myself, as I should tell the children a little about the village in which we live to pass on to grandchildren if they move away.

As we all know the village sits on a slight ridge overlooking a low-lying area, though our windmill is on the heights of land above and to the west of it. The manor house is in the lower

area near what formerly was a “very winding” creek, but has almost disappeared by land drainage.<sup>2</sup> We are in the lake district of eastern Mecklenburg about 100 kilometres due north of Berlin and I wandered much of the region as an apprentice and journeyman.

*Pastor:* What I heard from local chroniclers is that Krumbeck has long been a part of the Uckermark, the northern area of the state of Brandenburg. In 1319 the Bishop of Havelberg consented to the cloister of Himmelforte (some 40 kilometres to the northwest) converting the place of worship at Krumbeck into a chapel. The cloister owned the land and village as part of the Stargard *Vogtei* [protective region or bailiwick]. In 1403 the cloister granted to Wedigo Plate “4 *Hufen* [76 acres] in Krumbeck (Land Stargard) with rights to four days service [per week]” from the peasants.<sup>3</sup> The peasants and villagers repeatedly protested the feudal duties and the lack of services due to them. Around 1500 the territory was acquired by Brandenburg so that Krumbeck became a little territory within Mecklenburg and thus eventually became Prussian and Protestant.



*Krumbeck village map.*



*Martin:* Aristocrats, such as the von Berg and von Dewitz families, owned and operated the estates that include Krumbeck. As you know the von Dewitz family bought the estate in 1797 for 103,000 Reichstaler and is intent on repaying their mortgage of 60,000 in a few years.<sup>4</sup> The rising grain prices of the last decades, partly pushed by more people and warfare, certainly have aided the aristocrats and increased mill lease rates.

*Pastor:* Can I insert some information from the old parish registers? The Krumbeck records of christenings, marriages and deaths occasionally mention general developments and *Merkwürdige* (special) events in the region. Though no one recorded how such events impacted on artisans and villagers, they seemed to cope despite bad weather, diseases and high death rates. Indeed, in recent years the local population has been increasing. The congregation now more than fills the rebuilt field stone Romanesque church which holds about 100 people. As you know in 1785 the tower was added and you must have been among the villagers who helped haul stones and pay the masons. Though we are all Lutherans here for a short time a conflict over jurisdiction between the Prussian and Mecklenburg state had resulted in no pastor serving in the church and records not being kept from 1768 to 1773. Eventually the neighbouring village of Bredenfelde provided clerical support and took over the ministry.

*Martin:* I remember hearing about life's difficulties from a relative, Andreas Buhs, who lived here around 1719. He said that plagues and wars had ravaged the area but Krumbeck seemed to have been spared the worst because it was Prussian territory.

*Pastor:* Some very precise examples can be quoted from the parish registers. One part recounts that Krumbeck had a difficult year in 1708 due to harsh weather. Months of intense cold, much snow and strong winds made travel impossible and destroyed many fruit trees. In addition, during 1708-9, plagues [*Pestseuche*] affected the village and again later warfare: "In 1713 Mecklenburg experienced war and indeed harsher than in the previous two years, for in this year 1713 they received blows from the Russians and the Swedes. Although the village

Krumbeck and certainly Mecklenburg villages suffered much and carried heavy burdens, Krumbeck was generally spared because it belonged to the Mark Brandenburg, and because during such times signs were posted in the middle of the village and at its entrances with the eagle emblem under which was written Prussian Kingdom [:] STAY IN GOOD HEALTH”.

*Martin:* Be sure to write down that during my life wars and diseases made worse by bad weather were fairly normal difficulties, especially affecting the peasants and artisans. Millers and inn keepers are always dependent on good harvests to have grain to grind and on prosperous guests moving about. When I arrived in Krumbeck for a christening of a friend's daughter in December 1756 I heard of many children dying at or near childbirth. Later that happened to some of mine and to other villagers. And at that time Russia, Sweden, and Prussia were still fighting over northern German territories. I remember various military groups and recruits marching through the area at times. But, I must say that was fairly normal as were accidents at the mills. I heard about an apprentice miller dying an awful death not long before I moved to Krumbeck. You know the machinery has many cogs, gears and ropes.

You should also note what changed the village after mid-century: *Bauernverlegung* or removal of peasants. I note that the aristocrats never say anything of the costs to the peasants and serfs of their more efficient exploitation of their estates. Just as I came to Krumbeck the practice of peasant removal became quite common because in 1755 for all of Mecklenburg the aristocratic landlords obtained the right to refuse to renew leases. When they enclosed formerly common lands, the peasants and serfs either had to become day labourers or simply move elsewhere to find a living. This took place in 1771 in Krumbeck under the von Berg family.

*Pastor:* I can support what you say from a summary in the parish register. It notes that von Berg had purchased the estate as an “allodial freehold”—no restrictions on what he did with land or people—in 1765. So he terminated land leases to peasants and some serfs by 1784. This forced villagers and peasants to leave Krumbeck and other estates or to become day labourers just as people were living longer and having

more children who survived into adulthood. In the 1780s Berg started a glass works as part of his modernization of the estate. Can I add that I noticed that the registry occupations increasingly were the insecure ones of day labourer and worker, instead of those associated with training and a trade?

*Martin:* Right, but that is the situation today; let me speak to when I came to Krumbeck in the 1750s. Like all villages we had many trades. I remember a blacksmith, two millers, a cartwright, and sexton, sometimes a pastor. Krumbeck had all of those plus a tailor, tavern keeper and shoemaker though the pastors seem to have served from neighboring villages in the early years. When I came the village had a tavern and it was rumoured that some youth died there in mysterious circumstances.

*Pastor:* I know of the mini-scandal since the register states "20 May 1749 a boy of 14 died in the local tavern who was quietly buried;" nowhere else does the register have an entry that says "quietly buried." But maybe I can guide you to some other items in the registers, though the old marriage registers usually provide just the name of the father of the groom and sometimes a parent of the bride. I have often laughed at the way that the registers identified deflowered maidens and pregnant brides in charming Latin, "*quam ante defloraverat*" and "*quam ante impregnaverat*." The death registers, by contrast, only recorded a date with the statement "*in den Herrn entschlafen*" [asleep in the Lord]. Sometimes they gave information as to whether widow or widower is at issue, or sometimes just "the old so and so" or "the infant child of so and so came to the world dead." The christening registers note legitimate and illegitimate children [in German *Echt* and *Un-Echt*, literally real and unreal] as well as daughter or son of whom, though usually only the father is identified. I have been struck by a series of christenings of illegitimate children in 1742. In one of those a list of 16 persons testified to the event. It seems as though the village legitimized these occurrences, or at least accepted them by having a dozen or so persons serve as witnesses or godparents. A special element in these christening registers is that often a long list of six or seven witnesses or godparents is listed, sometimes over a dozen; the record number seems to be 21.

*Martin:* I remember all the rumours about whose children were whose when I came here. There were many discussions about accepting them all. But I should return to the family history instead of dwelling on village life. So here is the story of how I became miller of Krumbeck. You can probably follow it in the parish registers as well. It all started when the miller Rohe died in 1740. Soon after that Samuel Blaurock, who came from Lychen, became the miller in Krumbeck. He brought with him his two daughters, Rahel and Dorothea. Rahel had been born in Krumbeck in 1729, when Blaurock had been in Krumbeck, probably as a journeyman miller.

*Pastor:* Yes, the Krumbeck register shows 29<sup>th</sup> July 1729 for Rahel's birth. From what I understand the other children were born in the village of Lychen, thirty kilometres south of here, where Blaurock and his brother Ephraim ran the mill in the 1730s.

*Martin:* Yes, Samuel Blaurock's son Martin and his daughter Dorothea—my children's uncle and their mother—were born at Lychen on 11 September 1731 and 14 January 1734, respectively. The Blaurocks, I heard, soon participated in Krumbeck village events.

*Pastor:* If the parish records are any indication, then definitely. I can find some examples of Rahel and Ephraim present at christenings, for instance of the sexton's daughter on 20 September 1744. The godparents were the mother-in-law, the pastor's wife, Jochim Schumacher's wife, Johan Witt, and Andreas Lang in addition to the Blaurocks. So were the Weßels, another family with numerous mill leases over many generations in eastern Mecklenburg. In 1745, on 6 December, Christian Weßel was one of the godparents for Friedrich Kuster's daughter in Krumbeck. And I note that before that the parish record reads: "Anno 1745 15<sup>th</sup> November Andreas Lang(e) married Rahel Blaurock, the miller Samuel Blaurock's daughter."

*Martin:* Though Lang was at this point a day labourer, later he too became a miller in another village because his father-in-law helped him get a lease. But I guess this shows the complexity of family relations and that as millers we almost always quickly

melled with the established villagers. My wife, Dorothea Blaurock (Wessel), told me about the many christenings she and her sister, as the miller's daughters, were invited to attend and so was her sister's husband.

*Pastor:* Again the records confirm that and I can cite some more examples. In 1746, on 24 May, at the christening of the sexton's son Samuel, Samuel Blaurock and his wife ("*Die Frau Blaurocken*") were present among the godparents. This christening again included members of the family of local blacksmiths and one of leading families in church affairs, the Suhrs, who were almost continuously *Vorsteher* (directors). The family members of the Hahns, who mostly served as the local *Schulzen* (or overseers of the village; ironically Hahn translates as rooster), often appear with the Suhrs but also with the various millers. So do members of the Weßel family, for example at christenings in Krumbeck in July 1749 and February 1750: "On 22 February 1750 Maria Krudin's illegitimate son Hans was born and christened on 1 March." Among the twelve godparents were Hans Hahn, Dorothea Weßel and a member of the Peters family which eventually became related to ours. The father is not mentioned though an illegitimate child is again accepted by christening, since most of the families represented are of long standing in Krumbeck.

*Martin:* That was just before my arrival here, but it looks as though the important Hahns were inviting newcomers such as the Weßels and Blaurocks among others into their circle.

If you listened carefully to the names being listed you can figure out that Dorothea Weßel was in the village at the same time as Dorothea Blaurock, often at the same christenings after 1752. That is probably how she got to know Johann Christian Weßel. In any case, Dorothea and Christian soon married.

*Pastor:* But since I cannot find it in the registers, that marriage did not take place in Krumbeck. It probably took place from where Weßel had come, possibly Woldegk or Cantnitz, where his family ran mills. I note that Dorothea Blaurock had been listed by her own name at christenings in 1752 and 1753 but by June 1754 she is called "Weßel's wife".

*Martin:* I only know that they married and next year they had a little girl.

*Pastor:* Here is the register listing of the christening: "On 29 August 1755 Johan Michael Weßel's daughter Dorothea Lea Cathrina was born. The godparents are the sexton's wife, Jochim Voßen's wife, Ephraim Blaurock's wife, Stantzel's [?] wife, Cathrina Dorothea Weßeln, the local pastor Quandt, Andreas Lang, Christopher Fitzner and Martin Blaurock."

*Martin:* I think that entry shows the overlapping circles of friends and relatives in our village. However, that is all just before my time and heard second hand. What I do know is the father died within a year of his one-year-old child dying.

We millers always knew about what mills were available for lease and since Blaurock had leased another mill elsewhere, his daughter stood to inherit his Krumbeck lease that Weßel had been operating. Since I had a friend in Krumbeck who invited me for a christening of his daughter on 19 December 1756 I decided to make an offer of marriage to the widow Weßel. She accepted and we married early next year. I was twenty seven years of age and seeking to improve my situation, though we millers usually had some funds from our families, which helped us remain among the better off in most villages.

*Pastor:* That too is recorded in the church books: "*Anno 1757 d[en] 4 Febr ist der Müller Martien Buße copuliret worden mit der Wittwe Dorothea Blaurock der Wittwete Weßele.*" [In the year 1757 on the 4<sup>th</sup> of February the miller Martin Buße was married to the widow Dorothea Blaurock, the widow of Weßel.]

*Martin:* If I draw all this together for my children then I became one of the millers of Krumbeck by Rohe dying, Samuel Blaurock coming to replace him and bringing his daughter who married the miller Weßel (who thus obtained an inheritable lease) after whose death the daughter (with lease) became a Buße. But as you know I was also a tavern keeper and in some neighboring villages that was more known than my work as miller. Maybe that was because we served a special version of the local favourite, beer soup.

I want to inform my children about my family so I better list all the children their mother and I had. I can remember some birthdays, but forgive me if I cannot be precise in all cases: Johan Martien (born 19<sup>th</sup> July 1758), Johan Carel Thomas (born 4 July 1760), Dorothea (1761?), Friederica Cathrina Hanna Dorothea (born 5<sup>th</sup> August 1762) and Christian (born 7 April 1767). Johan Carel died on 29<sup>th</sup> April 1778, in his 18<sup>th</sup> year. This greatly grieved his mother and me, but I do not want to speculate whether it was by suicide or accident. The pastor of the day found a fine way to say it: "lost his life miserably and pitiably" [*jämmerlich um sein Leben gekommen*]. Christian too died, but within three days of his birth. In 1770 Johan Ludwig's arrival compensated for that loss. Later, after my wife, Dorothea, died in 1775, my second wife bore Wilhelmina Christina Buße, born in Krumbeck during 1776. She was known "as the youngest daughter of the wind miller at Krumbeck, Martin Buße."

As I said my first wife died 21 May 1775 and my mother who had come to live with us died on 31 December 1780. She was known as "*Die alte Buhsin*" [the old Buse] and died "in very old age" of "weakness." It was not a good time for millers since on 8 August 1781 the other "local miller's wife" died. But by then my eldest son Martin and his wife were having my first grandchildren though I lost two other children, a son born in 1780 and dying 10 February 1782 and another only a year old in the same year.

In 1792 my eldest son Johan Marti[e]n, who uses the name Martin, had his own son, Johan Carl, christened here. Martin had married the daughter of a count's chef (*Mundkoch*) in Neu-Strelitz and as you know he is now running the mill here with me. So remaining of my many children are Johan Martin, Dorothea, Friederica, Johan Ludwig, known as Ludwig, and Wilhelmina. I know that my children and grandchildren will keep the family tradition of milling and inn keeping alive. Ludwig seems more interested in agriculture but maybe we can get him a good mill contract somewhere. I see he is developing the usual family and village contacts as he participates in many christenings.

*Pastor:* I can confirm that, as I myself wrote entries in the last

years about his being a godparent, mostly for local artisans: I listed him as a farmer for example on 1 July 1797 as "*Landw[irt]* Buße, again on 22 January 1797 as "*Lud[wig]* Buße" and on 14 March 1797 as "*Lud[wig]* Buße as well as 14 February 1799 as "*Landw[irt]* Buße." When listing a "Meister Buße, in 1797 and 1798, I probably should have specified your son Ludwig's elder brother, Martin.

*Martin:* Perhaps we should not be using so many similar names for our children, yet so many seem to die young that we use the same ones. And of course we try to honour grandparents and uncles and aunts by naming children after them. Speaking of names, let me mention that I have been asked about our religious and ethnic background. People ask do the names from the Old Testament; that is, Rahel, Samuel, Ephraim among the Blaurocks hint at their being converted Jews or as a code for Huguenot background? Other similar ones such as Bartholomew and Lea seem to hint in similar directions, but I do not know. I can tell you though that my wife's family has a long list of Blaurock millers—nearly sixty—all active during the last two centuries in northeastern Mecklenburg.<sup>5</sup> Though Ephraim appears a few times, non-Old Testament names are far more frequent and the Old Testament names precede the arrival of Huguenots to the area after 1700. Confusing this issue some more is that at least one Jewish person with the name Solomon Buse hails from Gnoien, in northeast Mecklenburg. But I told you at the beginning that I am not able to tell the children everything about their background. All I know is that part of my own family and relatives have been millers for some generations, most from further east in Pomerania.

*After a reflective pause and a sigh Martin continued:* I have lost some of my old lease contracts but I do have some from my first wife's husband who came from the long line of miller families, the Weßels, just as did my first wife from the Blaurocks. Both operated mills all over this region. You should know that the lords ran a harsh regime and drove tough bargains. They were concerned about the safety of their property, but they also tried to set social standards as well as to make money off all aspects of our work. We usually signed lengthy contractual leases with lords who owned estates, village lands, mills, and, of course, held serfs.





*Some of the windmills in the southeast Mecklenburg area.*

Those mill and tavern contracts – some of which were inheritable – contained many well-defined conditions. Some ran to five or six pages. That the contracts set out precisely where the inn keeper had the right to harvest hay fields to feed his



*Krumbeck millstone with church keys (photo taken at von Dewitz' manor 1997).*

guests' horses or that the top and bottom millstones' depth measurements were recorded at the beginning of the lease, is not surprising. Millers usually had to pay owners for the amount that the millstones were ground down as well as to make repairs on buildings and machinery, though the lord frequently supplied timbers. But who would have thought that tavern keepers had to agree "not to have music or puppet shows" unless expressly agreed to by the lord of the manor? Or that they could not lend monies to "people from court and

villagers"? Further, that allowing guests to go beyond the tavern threshold with a lit pipe would result in a large fine? Such details and regulations were written into millers' and inn keepers' leasing contracts, including the exact amounts for each aspect of the lease and the fines for transgressions. Martin junior will have to be careful when the leases with von Dewitz are renewed to watch all those details as well as when his son, Johan Carl, comes of age since he is soon going to be apprenticed as a miller.

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Martin did not live to see his grandchild Johan Carl become the miller and inn keeper of Krumbeck because he died 26 November 1803 of "*Wassersucht*" (dropsy). He left a large family of children in Krumbeck and descendants who spread out to other crafts as well as to other villages. Some of the Buse clan, in addition to Johan Carl Buhse, did continue to run mills and inns in Krumbeck and nearby villages. Some were apprentices to millers and some are recorded as having had their goods seized in bankruptcy. Some grandsons became master carpenters while daughters and granddaughters married masons and weavers. The Buse name, with various spellings but mostly as Buhse, continues in the registers past the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century in Krumbeck. Of the distant relatives who stayed in the region most were master craftsmen while a few were associated with hunting, including one marriage to the game keeper for the von Dewitz family.

Of primary interest is Martin Buße's son Ludwig, our direct forefather, who in 1804 emigrated from Krumbeck and whose life in a new area will be explored in the next chapter.<sup>6</sup>

Before we leave Krumbeck and its church registers a note about the village after Martin died and Ludwig left: according to the register's special events, the villagers "suffered much" in 1806 due to the Napoleonic conflict with Prussia. During the next two years they experienced the tribulations of the quartering of French troops. But by 1817 they were celebrating 300 years since Luther's successful Reformation. The registers thereafter mostly show Buhses with relatives coming from greater distances for christenings. Moving about in northeastern

Mecklenburg seemed normal for millers and craftsmen, so perhaps Ludwig's emigration was not exceptional. Meanwhile the registers recorded the continuance of long established patterns with a little twist: on 29 October 1832 the illegitimate daughter of the "dishonoured [*ehrlose*] daughter of Marie Wiechmann" was born and christened on 11 November. The father was the "The sheep herder [*Schaeferknecht*] Louis de Place born at Saint Cartey in France who in 1815 came to Krumbeck with Otto von Dewitz." The village still legitimized children born out of wedlock but now termed the mothers as being without honour. Definitely, it had become time for the Buses to move on, especially since Martin Buße and Samuel Blaurock's daughter, Dorothea, do not help us get to the herring boat beginnings of the lost tribe of Buses.<sup>7</sup>

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The following creative non-fiction is based on an interpretation of the parish records. Some bits of information on the origins of the Buses appeared in Martha Mueller, *Mecklenburger in Osteuropa* (Marburg: Herder Institut, 1972), 318-19, but she has wrong dates and attributed Krumbeck to Mecklenburg whereas it was a Prussian enclave. Finding the colonial lists in the Prussian archives confirmed the genealogical and oral hints at Mecklenburg, and specifically Krumbeck, origins. Our first rudimentary information base was much augmented by analyzing the parish registers of Krumbeck, by utilizing the 800-page *Die Chronik der Familie Wessel*, including sample millers' contracts, supplied by Beth Marshall of California and by the large collection of materials on millers and church registry information for villages in the Krumbeck region passed to us by Manfred Wacker and Juergen Kniesz of Mecklenburg. The narrative form is a creation but the factual information is reality as reflected in contemporary documentation. In the following where direct quotations have no reference they are--with two exceptions taken from contracts in *Die Chronik der Familie Wessel*--from the parish records which can be checked by identifying date. The parish records are accessible through the Church of Latter Day Saints Family History system as film 0069715 (Bredenfelde with originals at the Mecklenburg Staatsarchiv, Schwerin). On 18<sup>th</sup> century millers, their endogenous marriages and their elevated status in village society, see the superb, detailed study based on one aristocratic family's holdings: William Hagen, *Ordinary Prussians: Brandenburg Junkers and Villagers, 1500-1800*

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), ch 6, esp. 350ff., though he identifies tavern keepers more with blacksmiths than millers.

<sup>2</sup>“Krumbeck” in *Kunst-und Geschichts-Denkmäler des Freistaates Mecklenburg-Strelitz* (1952), 174, suggests this may have been the source of the village name.

<sup>3</sup> Lieselott, Enders, *Die Uckermark* (Weimar: Böhlhaus, 1992), 94, 152.

<sup>4</sup> See Gerd Heinrich, *Staatsdienst und Ritterherrschaft. Die Geschichte der Familie von Dewitz in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg und Pommern* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), 140-41; this commissioned history was brought to our attention by the present occupant of the Krumbeck manor house, Isabella Kühne von Dewitz who gave us a copy. She also provided us with a copy of *Der Lenné-Park in Krumbeck* (Friedland: Steffen, 1997), and some excerpts from the parish records and the *Kunst-und Geschichte-Denkmäler* volume on Mecklenburg. For background on Mecklenburg, especially the impact of the Thirty Years (1618-48) which depopulated the land and the Great Northern War (1700-20) see Karl Pagel, *Mecklenburg* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1969), 178-87 and in general, Dieter K. Buse, “Mecklenburg” in *The Regions of Germany* (Westport: Greenwood, 2005). Also Thomas Nügent, *Reisen durch Deutschland und vorzüglich Mecklenburg* (Schwerin: Helms, 2000, reprint of 1781 edited by Sabine Bock) provides an informative travel account that includes much information about the von Dewitz family, conditions of inns, roads, land holdings and the state of agriculture. Although Nugent mostly spent time with aristocrats and pastors, he comments on the peasants’ difficulties.

<sup>5</sup> Hans-Michael Bernhard, *Bewegung und Beharrung. Studien zur Emanzipationsgeschichte der Juden im Grossherzogtum Mecklenburg-Schwerin 1813-1869* (Hannover: Hahnsche, 1998), 91. A person by this name later volunteered as part of a Jewish contingent for military service against Napoleon in 1815 but we have no proof about a relationship to our family.

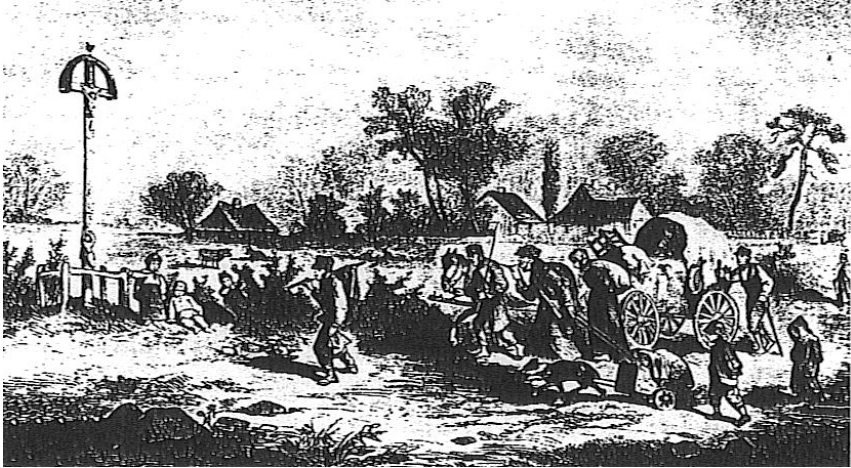
<sup>6</sup> Ludwig was not the only emigrant from Krumbeck to go to Prussian Poland. The Prussian colonial lists, which will be explored in depth in the next chapter, indicate that members of about five families went from Krumbeck to the Prussian colonies in *Neuostpreussen*.

<sup>7</sup> Rudolf Vandr , *M ller in Pommern* (Materialien zur pommerschen Familien-und Orstgeschichte, Heft 2), lists an Andreas Busse running a

mill in Lemnitzmühle near Posen in 1654; a Christian Busse running the same mill before 1669; a Michael Busse in Selchowhammer receiving permission to construct a mill in 1727; a Michael Busse in 1768/73 being miller in Petershagen then master miller in Regenwalde; a Christoph Friedrich Busse in 1769/76 being master miller in Altdamm. The first-mentioned is also listed by Max Bruhn as miller owner in Riege (before 1677) and married to Katharina Wilke, "Pommerische Mühlenmeister, Mühlenbesitzer und ihre Gehilfen," *Sedina-Archiv* (1975-82), 13. How or whether these persons were related to us has not been established, but given that era's tradition of keeping trades within a family, the likelihood is strong that some were our relatives.

# KAPITEL I

## Prussian and Saxon Subjects, Briefly, 1795-1815



German colonists arriving in Poland, Painting by Franciszek Kostrewski, circa 1866.

Colonisten.	Männl. Mile.	Summa Männl. u. Weibl.	Summa Männl. u. Weibl. 18 J. u. jünger	Summa Männl. u. Weibl. 18 J. u. jünger	Summa Männl. u. Weibl. 18 J. u. jünger	Summa Männl. u. Weibl. 18 J. u. jünger	Summa Männl. u. Weibl. 18 J. u. jünger	Summa Männl. u. Weibl. 18 J. u. jünger	Vaterland des Colonisten.	Wann Sie angekommen sind.
25. Siedowal Wagnitz.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	Siefatz	1804.
26. Ding Buef.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	Krombich	1804.
27. verand . . .	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.	1.		

Portion of Ludwig Buse's entry in the Prussian colonist lists. Columns with numerical entries are from l. to r.: Ackerwirt (farmer), Männer (men), Knechte und Jungens (hired hands and servant boys), Summa aller diesen (sum of these); Last two columns: Vaterland des Colonisten (fatherland of the colonists) and Wann Sie angekommen (when they arrived).

## Chapter I

### **PRUSSIAN AND SAXON SUBJECTS, BRIEFLY, 1795 -1815**

A crow taking wing in 1802 from the village of Krumbeck would have arrived, after flying due east for 600 kilometres, in Prussia's most recent territorial acquisition, the province of New East Prussia. Turning southward, a curious crow might well have found a newly planted circle of survey stakes in uncultivated scrubland some 100 kilometres north-east of Warsaw. The circle, approximately one-half kilometre in diameter, was to be the centre of a new Prussian agricultural colony called Königshuld. Ludwig Buse, the unmarried thirty-four year old son of Martin Buse, made the journey from Krumbeck to Königshuld in 1804.<sup>1</sup> His worldly possessions, valued at 757 taler, travelled with him. His companions included not only two other villagers, but perhaps as many as two hired hands and three cows. They were soon joined on their journey by prospective colonists from the neighbouring Duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz who had chosen to become subjects of King Frederick William III and thereby willing participants in the King's colonization efforts in the former Poland. Their self-chosen allegiance to Frederick William was to be short-lived. In 1807 Königshuld became part of the Duchy of Warsaw under the King of Saxony. Very soon thereafter Ludwig Buse found himself paying heavy taxes to finance Napoleon's armies. He became an involuntary subject of the Czar Alexander I in 1813 and he remained a Russian subject until his death in 1846. Details of his life as a colonist farmer will emerge later, but we note here that he married Katherina Driegert who bore him six sons and that the third, David, was born in 1819. The authors of this history are the direct lineal descendants of that third son.

The sounds of wagons on the move have been heard repeatedly throughout European history so the migration of Ludwig Buse was neither unusual nor noteworthy. Yet from the perspective of our family, his decision had momentous consequences because it ultimately put us on course for Quebec City in October 1948. Ludwig Buse did not, however, single-handedly put in motion the sequence of moves across Europe that eventually led to Canada. The sixteen sets of great-great



grandparents of our parents were all colonists, or descendants of colonists, in the Königshuld region and they will appear within our story in due course.<sup>2</sup> But their story cannot be told in isolation from the historical events which shaped their lives. At the very least we should be curious as to why Prussia established colonies on Polish soil and why people were willing to settle in them. That all the colonists started as Prussian subjects, helped pay, as Saxon subjects, for Napoleon's armies and ended their lives under the rule of the czars of Russia also deserves our attention. To deal with these matters some history of Poland becomes inescapable. Also inescapable is the fact that Polish history can be contentious territory. There are German, Russian and Ukrainian interpretations of Polish history and these do not necessarily agree with each other or with the views of Polish historians. We write as Canadians with the firm belief that historical axes are best buried, metaphorically and literally. Whether we have succeeded is for others to judge.

### **The Historical Context**

In the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries the still pagan Lithuanians drove out the Mongol invaders of Eastern Europe and took possession of the extensive lands comprising present-day Belarus (Byelorussia) and Ukraine. Under threat from the territorially aggressive Teutonic Knights, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland formed a dynastic union in 1386 that created the largest realm in Europe. Stretching from the Baltic in the north to the Black Sea in the south, it was a multi-ethnic and multi-lingual agglomeration of Byelorussians, Lithuanians, Poles and Ukrainians with a growing number of Germans and Jews. Commensurate with its size, the new realm had significant influence on Central Europe for almost three hundred years. A few selective facts will serve to illustrate the point. The Teutonic Knights were defeated in 1410 and in 1466, East Prussia, the western part of the territory conquered by the Knights, became a Polish fief. Success at the game of dynastic musical chairs also gave Poland-Lithuania sovereignty over Bohemia and Hungary for portions of the 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Cracow, the Polish capital until 1596, was a centre of Renaissance culture and its university had Nicolas Copernicus as its most famous graduate. Not surprisingly, Poles regard this period as Poland's Golden Age.

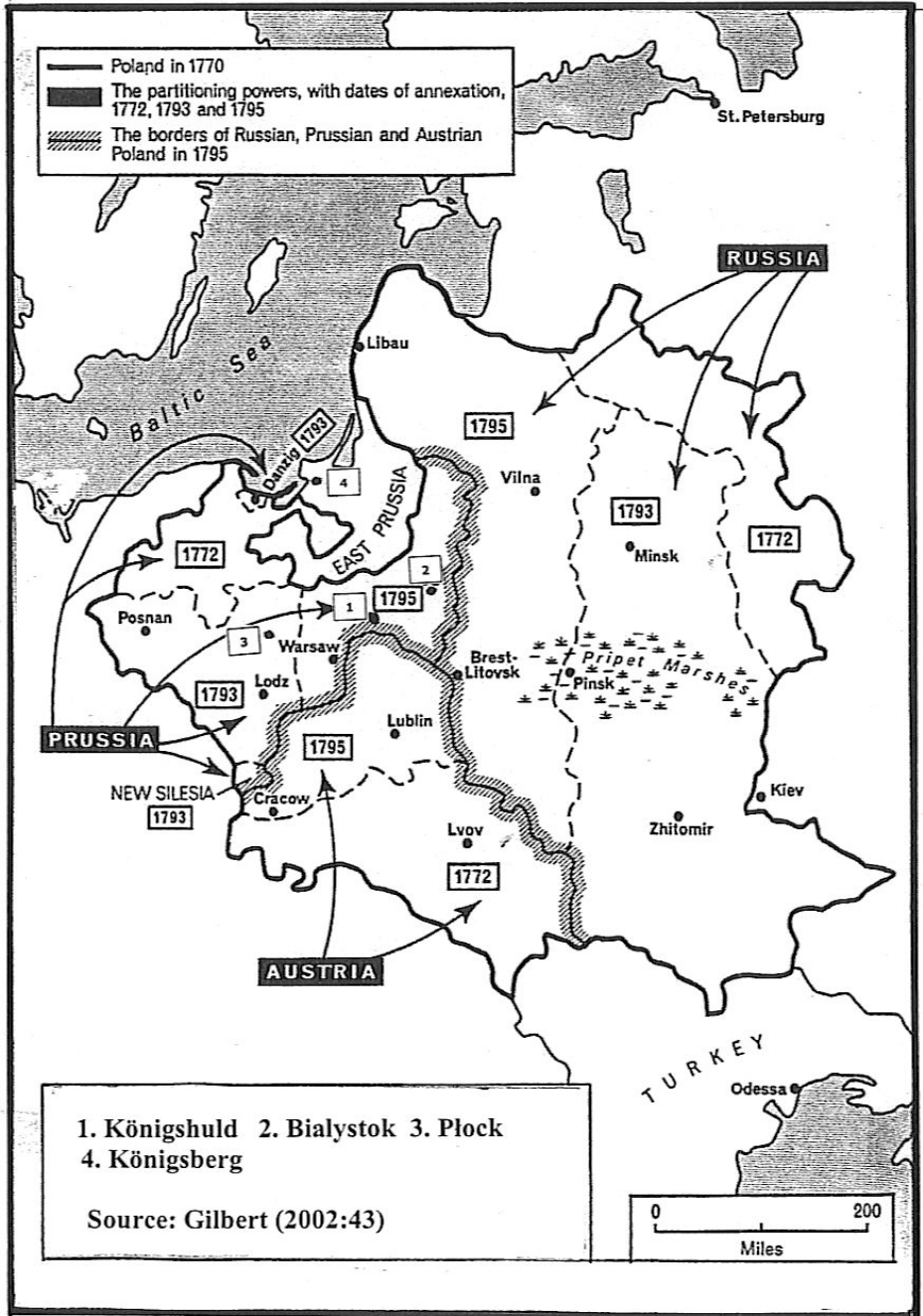
Although the dynastic union of 1386 had given Poland and Lithuania a common ruler, each country kept its own political institutions. A constitutional union in 1569 established a common parliament. This union also separated the Ukrainian territories from Lithuania and integrated them into Poland. Usually referred to as the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, we will apply the label Poland to this arrangement, not only for brevity, but also because the Lithuanian nobility were by now effectively Polonized. When the ruling dynasty failed to produce an heir in 1572, an elective monarchy was established. Poland then had a succession of French, Swedish, Hungarian and Saxon kings with an occasional Polish occupant to show that the job was open to all. The early years of this new political structure gave no hint that Poland's role in Central Europe was likely to diminish. Under Sigismund III Vasa of Sweden, Poland successfully waged war on Russia, occupying Moscow in 1610. Though driven back by 1613, Poland managed to annex additional Russian territory in 1618. By the middle of the century, however, the military power of both Prussia and Russia began to assert itself. East Prussia, now part of Brandenburg, was able to withdraw its allegiance to the Polish Crown in 1657. Russia reconquered most of the Eastern Ukraine in 1667 and recovered Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, by treaty in 1686. The fading light of Polish influence was not without an occasional flash of brilliance. In 1683 the Polish King Jan Sobieski led an heroic cavalry charge into the Turkish camp at the siege of Vienna, precipitating the retreat of the Ottoman Empire from Central Europe. Singular acts of military glory could not, however, compensate for Poland's structural weaknesses. In the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Poland eventually succumbed to the territorial ambitions of its more powerful neighbours.<sup>3</sup>

Frederick II (the Great) of Prussia and Catharine II (the Great) of Russia engineered the first partition of Poland in 1772 with almost no military conflict. Austria claimed its share to preserve the balance of power, having started the process by occupying a narrow slice of southern Poland in 1768. The partition of 1793 was the great-power response to the reform constitution adopted by the Sejm, the Polish parliament, in May 1791. The third partition, in 1795, which dismembered Poland entirely, was the great-power response to the Polish insurrection of 1794. With the constitution of 1791 the Polish nobility

attempted to reform political institutions without any change in social structure. To gain the support of the peasants, the leaders of the insurrection of 1794 promised equality for all and the abolition of serfdom, radical changes inspired by the French Revolution. All such changes were opposed by the partitioning monarchs; anything other than the *status quo* was viewed as the first step on the road to revolution and their own demise. Map 1.1 shows the Polish territories acquired by each of the three powers in each partition. Prussia's acquisitions are of particular interest so we note that the 1772 acquisition was called West Prussia, that of 1793 South Prussia and the last New East Prussia.

With the partition of 1795 Austria, Russia and Prussia erased the Polish state from the map of Europe for over a century. The absolutist monarchs claimed that they did so to end the instability in the region, but it was an instability that they themselves had judiciously nurtured. How could the Polish lands be taken over so easily by the neighbouring states? Institutional failure and aristocratic self-interest provide the main answers. The elected Polish king had few of the prerogatives of his contemporaries. The king was a figurehead, placed on the Polish throne by elections open to bribery and foreign influence. The rulers of Russia, France and Austria each sought to have their interests served by having relatives obtain the Polish crown. This elected figurehead ruled over no central authority or administrative structure. Legislative power resided in the Sejm which was elected by the nobility from its own ranks at regional assemblies. The Polish nobility had long enjoyed unique rights and privileges and these were jealously guarded against any encroachment by the Crown. The most notable and disruptive of these privileges, the *liberum veto*, allowed any member of the Sejm to force the session to disband by voting against a proposed measure. Between 1652 and 1764, 48 of 55 meetings of the Sejm were terminated by one or more members registering their dissent.

The Polish monarch had insufficient independent means to offset this legislative paralysis. In 1750 the revenues of the Polish king were approximately one-thirteenth of those of the Russian czar and just over one percent of those of the French king. With a tiny central administration and no authority to



Map 1.1. The partitions of Poland, 1772, 1793, 1795.

collect taxes, he could maintain neither an effective standing army nor diplomatic service abroad. Power was dispersed into the hands of the great magnates whose vast estates were often larger than most of the princely states of Germany. The wealth generated by these lands, and the exploited serfs who tilled them, enabled the magnates to be cosmopolitan participants in European trends in architecture, art and fashion. They imitated their western cousins with fine palaces, courts and culture. The lesser nobility, often landless but theoretically the equal of any magnate, were mostly poor and uneducated, making them useful pawns in the machinations of the magnates. A weak king and a dysfunctional central authority perpetuated aristocratic wealth and power at the expense of the well-being of the Polish state and people.

While anarchic and archaic institutions married to aristocratic self-interest are explanations, they are not, however, justification for the partitions of Poland. Unhappily for Poland, the right to anarchy was not a political option in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The weak were routinely dispatched by the strong. And the strong then wrote the obituaries justifying their acts. In their proclamation of January 3, 1795 the partitioning monarchs declared that they

were convinced by experience of the absolute inability of the Republic of Poland to provide itself either with a firm or rigorous government or to live peacefully under the law while preserving any form of independence, [and] in their wisdom and love of peace and the happiness of their subjects [they] have decided on the unavoidable necessity of resorting to ... a total partition of this Republic between the three neighbouring powers.<sup>4</sup>

The partitions of Poland remain the example *par excellence* of the unedifying spectacle of great-power politics at work.

### **The Colonies**

Frederick II had initiated a policy of German colonization in West Prussia following the first partition in 1772 and these efforts were extended into both South and New East Prussia after the second and third partitions. The state controlled and

guided the colonization process. Systematic colonization could, therefore, only begin after the Prussians had replaced the Polish governing structures with their own bureaucracy. During the eighteenth century Prussia had developed a highly centralized system of administration which regulated in great detail economic and social life in order to support and augment the military might of the state. Prussia became a garrison state which one observer had aptly characterized as an army with a state attached, as opposed to the other way around. This complex administrative structure could only be imposed on New East Prussia in stages. Initially, the provisional administration relied on the occupying Prussian army units for tax collection and law enforcement although Polish courts continued to function on an interim basis. Putting in place the extensive system of Prussian custom and excise taxes was one priority. Incorporating the Catholic Church and Polish royal estates into the Prussian Crown estates was another.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, before colonies could be planned, surveyors and agronomists had to map and evaluate the newly acquired territory. The colonization program following the third partition did not, therefore, make significant progress until 1797.

Schroettersdorf, one of the first colonies established in 1797, honoured Baron Friedrich Leopold von Schroetter, the Prussian State and Finance Minister responsible for New East Prussia.<sup>6</sup> Schroetter's career had followed a classic trajectory of the Prussian landed gentry. Born in 1743 on an estate near Friedland in East Prussia, he became a cadet in the military and spent the years from 1757 to 1763 on the battlefields of the Seven Years' War. As a career army officer he was based in Königsberg until 1787 when he was appointed to the War College in Berlin with the rank of Major. Four years later he joined the civil administration and returned to Königsberg as President of the East and West Prussian civil administrations. In 1795 Frederick William II, the successor to Frederick II in 1786, added New East Prussia to Schroetter's ministerial responsibilities. An intrinsic talent for administration had assured Schroetter rapid advancement in Berlin. We need to note, however, a less conventional aspect of his career. Prior to his departure for Berlin he had participated in the intellectual life of Königsberg, whose leading light was the renowned philosopher Immanuel Kant and which included the political

economist Christian Kraus among the minor luminaries. Through Kant he would have been exposed to the main ideas of the Enlightenment, even though by this time Kant had already constructed his critique of the Enlightenment's belief in pure reason. From Kraus he learned about new ideas in estate and farm management, as well as the developing challenge to Mercantilist ideas on the role of the state in fostering economic growth. These ideas helped shape Schroetter's policies for the colonization of New East Prussia.

The colonization policy in West Prussia after 1772 had been driven by Mercantilist notions of strengthening the state by increasing population (*Peuplierung* in the Frenchified German in vogue at the time among the educated) which in turn would increase the market for domestic manufacturing. Undoubtedly, Frederick II also valued the military advantages of having East Prussia and Brandenburg linked by a German speaking West Prussia. Schroetter's approach, while not free of Mercantilist implications, was motivated somewhat differently in that Germanization did not appear to be the goal. Both agriculture and commerce in Poland had suffered from the turmoil that preceded the partitions in 1793 and 1795. At a deeper level, economic life in Poland lagged behind developments elsewhere in Europe. Serfdom, with its attendant miseries, prevailed in agriculture and contemporary accounts suggest that the misery in Poland was particularly acute. William Coxe, an English traveller, wrote the following about the peasantry in 1784:

Between Bielsk and Wojszki, [75 kilometres east of Königshuld] our wheel was nearly taking fire, and while we stopped at a small village to have it greased, I entered several cottages, which I found infinitely worse even than those wretched dwellings which I had before examined in the town where the inhabitants were more free; in the latter we observed furniture and some conveniences; in these nothing but the bare walls. The peasants were perfect slaves, and their habitations and appearance corresponded with their miserable situation.<sup>7</sup>

Commerce had few opportunities for growth because the large estates were mostly self-sufficient, importing luxury items from

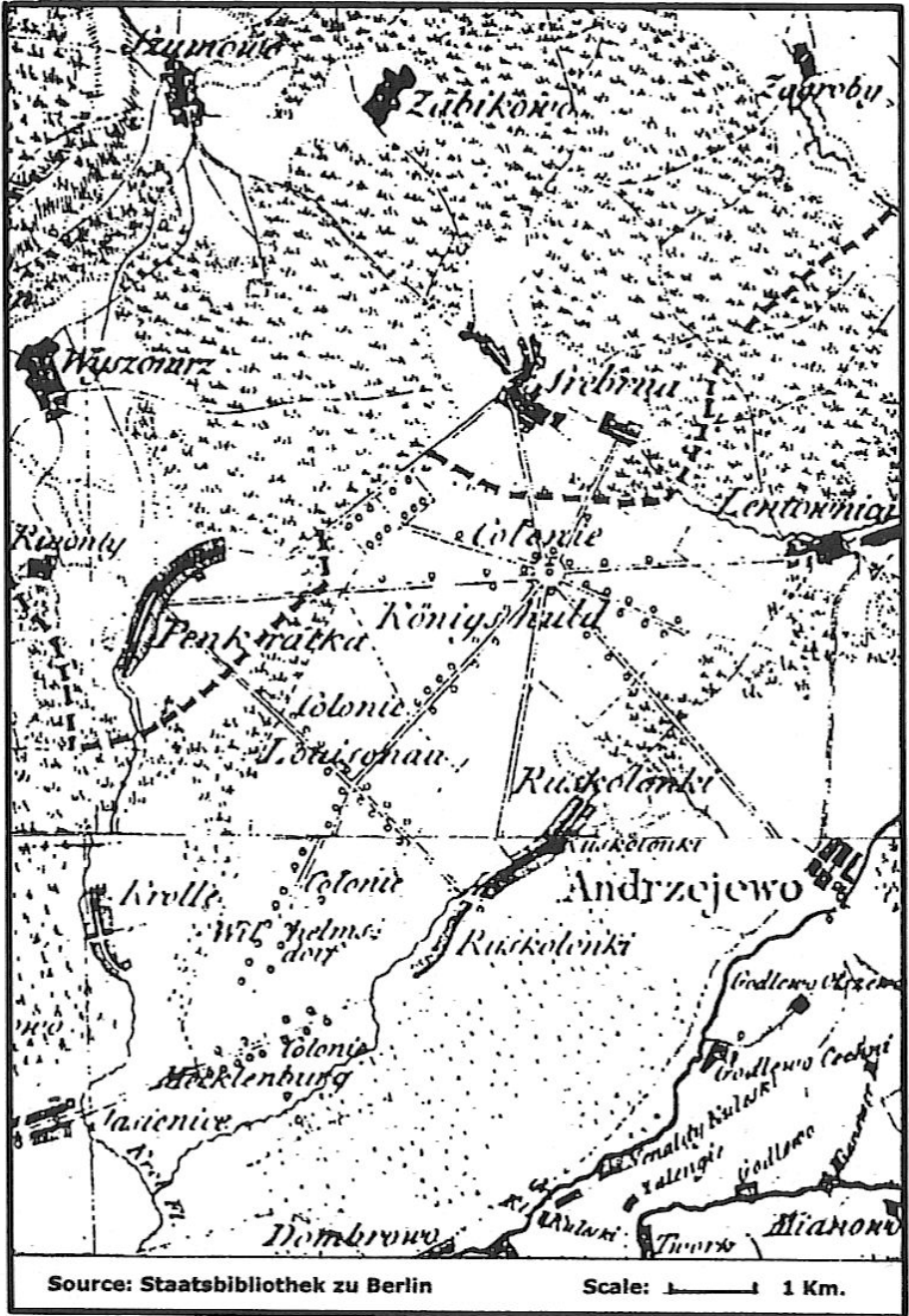
abroad. Furthermore, as elsewhere in Europe, the Polish nobility thought commerce beneath them so that in the absence of strong central government to encourage industry the towns did not flourish. Schroetter believed that these conditions could be changed by a well-designed colonization policy. He proposed that skilled artisans and craftsmen be brought into the towns, not only to start small industry, but also to set an example of Prussian efficiency. Similarly, the agricultural colonies were to be models of good agricultural practices which the Poles would in due course emulate.<sup>8</sup> This can be interpreted as nothing more than classic Prussian arrogance towards the Poles. It can, however, also be viewed as an expression of the rational optimism about the possibility of progress for all humankind that was central to Enlightenment thought. Schroetter's credentials as a liberal reformer are not in doubt; in later life he played an instrumental role in the abolition of the last remnants of serfdom in Prussia.

Whatever we make of Schroetter's motivation, he was a determined colonizer. By 1799 he had persuaded the new king, Frederick William III, to double the allocation for colonization from 20 thousand to 40 thousand taler. He argued with the Minister for South Prussia about the appropriate sources and subsidies for colonists, arguments he won in June 1801 when the King approved Schroetter's proposals for New East Prussia. The budget had risen to 100 thousand taler for the fiscal year 1801-1802. Included in these proposals were the drawings for a new colony on unoccupied Crown land near Ruskołęka in the administrative district of Jasienica. This land had been part of a small estate called Paproć that had been awarded to the Bishopric of Łomża during the reign of the Polish King Jan Kazimierz (ruled 1648-1668). Sometime during the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century it reverted to the Polish Crown and it then became Prussian Crown land at the time of the third partition.<sup>9</sup> The drawings had been prepared in 1799 by Councillor von Wedell,<sup>10</sup> a local administrator, and were apparently modified by Schroetter for his 1801 submission. We do not know who proposed the name Königshuld for this colony. Because the literal translation of 'Königshuld' is King's grace or favour, we can plausibly suggest it was so named after Frederick William gave his approval to Schroetter's proposals.



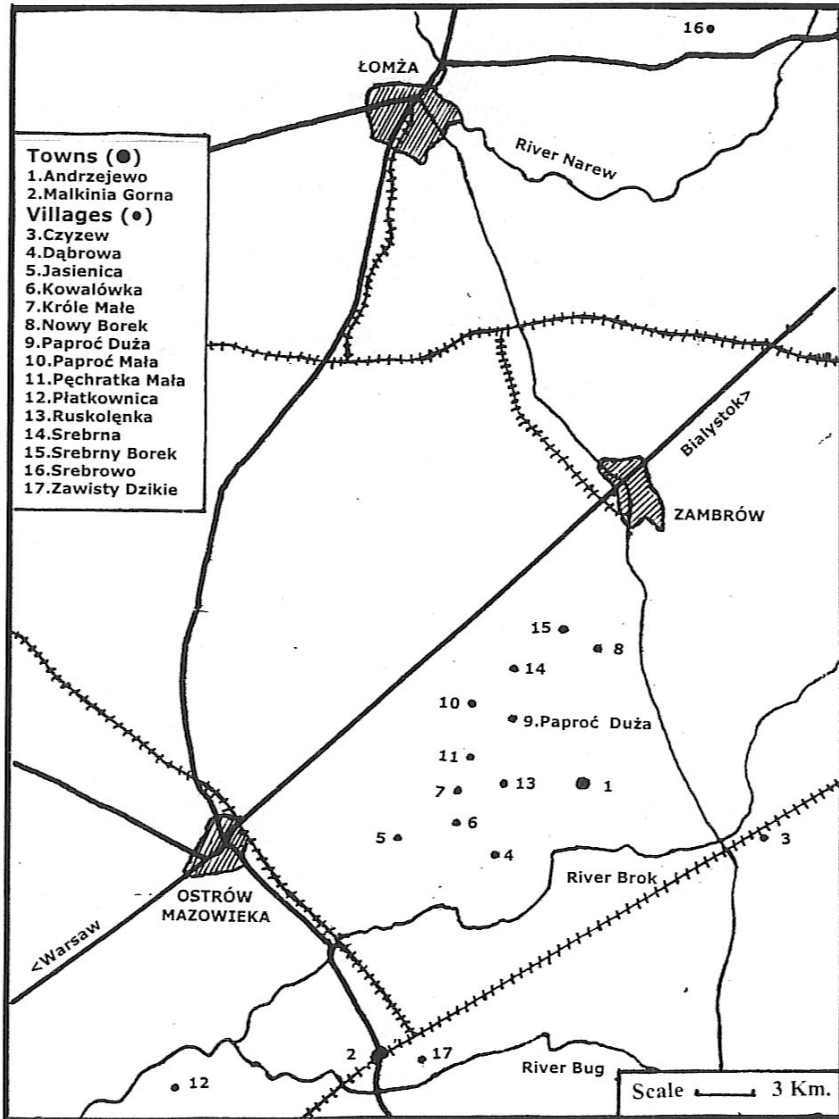
The physical layout for Königshuld was unique among the thirty-two colonies that were eventually established in New East Prussia. The plan specified two population clusters approximately two kilometres apart. One cluster, now called Paproć Mała (*Klein Paprotsch* in German), consisted of a rectangle divided into 40 small plots each 0.77 hectares (1.89 acres) in size. The other cluster, Paproć Duża (*Gross Paprotsch*), was created by a circular road rimmed by farmyards. These farms averaged 26.27 hectares (65 acres) in size and more of them were located along the nine roads that radiated from the circle. Map 1.2, dated 1807, shows that by the end of Prussian rule the circular settlement and its rectangular adjunct had been put in place. (Maps 2.1 and 3.1 in chapters II and III show this structure in better detail. The circle remains visible on internet aerial photos accessible via Google Maps.) We do not know why von Wedell used a circular plan for this colony. Perhaps he had a classical education and was thereby acquainted with the Roman architect Vitruvius who advocated the circle as an ideal form for town planning. More likely, he drew on his own observations of *Rundlinge*, an old North German village type in which the village farmyards formed a circular enclosure for the night-time protection of livestock. Speculation aside, Königshuld could lay claim to the distinction of being the only circular village in Poland.<sup>11</sup> Schroetter appears to have been proud of this plan for he showed it again to the King in 1804 when the latter expressed reservations about the costs of colonization.

In addition to Königshuld, three subsidiary colonies were established in the Ruskołęka region. All three, Louisenau, Wilhelmsdorf and Mecklenburg, lay south-west of Königshuld and also appear on the map of 1807. Today these colonies are known as Pęchratka Mała, Króle Małe and Kowalówka, respectively; see Map 1.3. Louisenau (literally translated as Meadow Louise) honoured the popular reigning queen. As Princess Louise of Mecklenburg-Strelitz she had married Frederick William III in 1793 prior to Frederick William's ascension to the throne in 1797. Their first son, Frederick William, was born in 1795 and their second son, William, in 1797. We do not know which of the three Williams was being honoured by Wilhelmsdorf, although the most recently born second son would be the obvious choice. The colony of



Map 1.2. The Königshtuld colonies, 1807.

Mecklenburg evidently acknowledged the Queen's Mecklenburg lineage. Collectively, the four royal names of these colonies hint at targeted flattery designed to gain royal approval for Schroetter's ambitious plans for New East Prussia.



Map 1.3. The Paproć region today.

The terrain encompassed by these four colonies was almost uniformly flat (see Photo 1.1), sloping gently in a south-westerly direction towards the Little Brok, a small tributary of the Brok which in turn joined the river Bug some 40 kilometres away. Map 1.4, dated 1795, shows the area around Königshuld to be thickly covered with bushes (*Dichter Strauch*), whereas the area around Louisenau, Wilhelmsdorf and Mecklenburg includes some mixed forest (*Melierter Wald*).

The flat terrain meant poor drainage and the profusion of ferns in the moisture laden soil had given the region its original name Paproć, this being Polish for fern. Creatures long in tooth and claw reputedly roamed these wastelands. Excluding the winter season, bears, lynx and wolves would not have found the marshy land much to their liking, but the adjacent and large Crown forests west and north of the colonies would certainly have provided suitable habitat for such animals.<sup>12</sup>

Prussian planning for their colonies was meticulous, even if events often trumped the plans. Before any land could be allocated to colonists a considerable investment in public infrastructure had to be made. Surveying and building circular roads, as well as irregular shaped farms, is obviously more



*Photo 1.1. Paproć Duża terrain looking north-east towards circular road.*



**Legend: Light Shading - Thick Bushes, Dark Shading - Mixed Forest**

**Source: Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin**

**Scale: 1 Km.**

Map 1.4. The Paproč region, 1795.

costly than a rectilinear plan. The biggest costs, however, were incurred in draining the land of excess water. Schroetter, undeterred by the marshy nature of much of this terrain, had reported to Frederick William III that the land was of excellent agricultural quality. Before the agricultural potential could be exploited, much effort had to be expended on a drainage project. The three-foot deep ditches that run along many of the roads today in the Paproć region attest to this effort. The cost of the drainage project amounted to 59,465 taler, approximately one quarter of the total colonization budget for New East Prussia.<sup>13</sup>

Although the records show that some colonists were in the area as early as 1800, almost all of them arrived in the years 1803-04. Since the plans for Königshuld were approved in 1801, this suggests that the surveying, road building and ditching took two years. Presumably, the early arrivals found employment on these public works. Mecklenburg, Wilhelmsdorf and Louisenau were settled earlier than Königshuld. In 1803 the occupancy rate at Mecklenburg stood at 66 per cent, that of Louisenau and Wilhelmsdorf at fifty and forty per cent, respectively. In the same year only thirteen per cent of the sites were occupied at Königshuld.<sup>14</sup> We can infer that the mixed forest around Mecklenburg, Wilhelmsdorf and Louisenau required less drainage work and thus dictated the pattern of settlement.

Schroetter followed up the meticulous planning with detailed annual progress reports to the King. The surviving report for the fiscal year 1805-06 (ending in June) provides us with an overview of the colonies near the end of Prussian rule. In Table 1.1 the first section summarizes land use measured in *Hufen*, the Prussian land unit of the time. A *Hufe* is the equivalent of 7.66 hectares or 18.92 (English) acres.<sup>15</sup> The combined area of the four colonies was 2306.27 hectares or 5696.49 acres (8.90 square miles). Of this total, Königshuld occupied approximately one half (1137 hectares or 2809 acres), making it the second largest colony in New East Prussia after Schroettersdorf. The second line in section 1 shows that after allowing for paths and roads practically all the available land was allocated to leaseholds. This is not, however, true for Königshuld where, after the small road allowance, the unallocated land was split roughly equally between Crown land and a reserve for

additional small leaseholds. Presumably the Crown land (approximately 33 hectares) included the land enclosed by the circular road where a church, a cemetery and a school were to be located.

As might be expected, only very small areas had been brought under cultivation by 1806. Mecklenburg and Wilhelmsdorf, two of the 'older' colonies, had the largest proportions of cultivated land (9.46 and 7.84 per cent, respectively), compared to the much smaller proportion at Königshuld (0.65 per cent). That Louisenau, also an 'older' colony, only had 1.96 per cent under cultivation could be the result of a late arrival of the 1803 group of settlers, forcing them to start clearing land only in 1804. This pattern of progress also applied to land classified as "being cleared". Land still in its native state was scheduled for clearance, no allowance being set aside for woodland. This suggests that in the long run the planners expected the colonists to purchase their wood requirements from the Crown forests.

Sections 2 and 3 of Table 1.1 enumerate the principal characteristics of the two classes of leaseholders, the *Hüfner* and *Büdner*. The *Hüfner*, the landed aristocrats among the colonists, typically received leaseholds of three or four *Hufen* (57 or 76 acres). The *Büdner*, on the other hand, formed the rural proletariat and received only 0.10 *Hufe* (1.89 acres). The *Büdner* or cottagers were the necessary labour force needed by the *Hüfner* to help with sowing and reaping of crops, all done by hand at this time. Two acres would allow the *Büdner* to keep some poultry and livestock along with a garden, but a large family could not be supported on such a small holding. Unless the *Büdner* could pursue a trade such as weaving, labouring for the *Hüfner* was pre-ordained. The huge disparity in the land holdings of the *Hüfner* and the *Büdner* reflected Schroetter's opinion that the one- and two- *Hufe* sized holdings in the colonies in West Prussia had not proved successful. He believed that holdings of this size were not viable as self-sufficient farms, so the owner would of necessity have to work part-time for the larger landholders. Torn between working his own land and that of the large landholder, the one or two *Hüfner* could not do good work on either. Furthermore, the political economy of growth as taught by Kraus and others required farms to be

Table 1.1. The Colonies, June 1806.

(K - Königshuld , L - Louisenau, W - Wilhelmsdorf , M - Mecklenburg)

	K	L	W	M	Total
<b>Land Use (Hufen)</b>					
Total area	148.45	66.90	43.18	42.55	301.08
Allocated for leaseholders	138.97	66.03	43.00	41.21	289.21
Under cultivation	2.73	0.43	3.37	3.90	10.43
Being cleared	24.63	14.90	10.23	14.53	64.29
<b>Hüfner</b>					
Surveyed sites	39	19	13	11	82
Average size (Hufen)	3.43	3.48	3.26	3.64	3.44
Occupied sites	29	16	13	11	69
Houses built	21	13	11	10	55
Animal barns (Ställe)	7	1	1	4	13
Threshing barns (Scheunen)	4	4	6	9	23
Horses	44	22	16	19	101
Oxen	2	0	0	2	4
Cows	94	42	39	51	226
Young cattle (Jungvieh)	22	24	14	26	86
Subsidies budgeted (taler)	21,410	11,645	6,930	6,480	46,465
Average subsidy per site	549	613	533	589	567
Subsidies paid out	9,292	7,398	3,817	5,147	25,654
Average paid out per site	320	462	294	396	370
<b>Büdner</b>					
Surveyed sites	41	0	6	12	59
Average size (Hufen)	0.10	0	0.10	0.10	0.10
Occupied sites	38	0	2	11	51
Houses built	30	0	1	11	42
Horses	0	0	0	2	2
Cows	21	0	1	15	37
Subsidies budgeted (taler)	5,123	0	716	1,485	7,324
Average subsidy per site	125	0	119	124	124
Subsidies paid out	4,738	0	215	1,485	6,438
Average paid out per site	125	0	108	135	126

Source: See Note 14



large enough to generate output above subsistence needs, the surplus to be spent on manufactured goods. The towns would thereby prosper. The planned disparity between the *Hüfner* and *Büdner* also shows up quite clearly in the average budgeted subsidies per site for the two types of colonists: the former were to receive on average 567 taler whereas the latter only 124 taler.

In the 'older' colonies of Mecklenburg and Wilhemsdorf all *Hüfner* sites were occupied in 1806. Excluding the pastor's land allocation, nine *Hüfner* sites remained vacant in Königshuld and three in Louisenau. The overall occupancy rate stood at 85 per cent. The occupancy rate of *Büdner* sites was 86 per cent, although in this case there were free sites in all colonies that had *Büdner* sites. The size of *Büdner* sites never varied from the fixed 0.10 *Hufe*. We noted earlier that most of the *Hüfner* sites were three or four *Hufen* in size, but in each colony there were one or two surveyed *Hüfner* sites as large as five or six *Hufen*. Our paternal ancestor, Ludwig Buse, had acquired a five *Hufen* site (95 acres) in Königshuld; the frontispiece of this chapter shows a portion of the entry for Ludwig Buse in the Prussian records.<sup>16</sup> Two settlers in this colony were granted double sites to increase their holdings to six *Hufen* or more. In addition to clearing their land the colonists had to construct their own farm buildings. Most, including Ludwig Buse, had built their houses, although in Königshuld a substantial number (16) remained to be built. Those without houses must have shared accommodation with other families, this being facilitated by the fact that many came from the same villages in their homelands. Less progress had been made on their barns, the *Ställe* and *Scheunen*. A *Scheune* is a barn, but it is a barn used for threshing and storage only. Animals are housed and fed separately in a *Stall* or stable.<sup>17</sup> These would have been substantial buildings, much larger in size than the sheds used by the *Büdner* to house their animals.

The inventory of animals recorded in Schroetter's reports did not include the chicken and geese owned by the settlers. Only horses, oxen, cows and young cattle (*Jungvieh*) appear in Table 1.1. A somewhat surprising fact, not evident from the table, is the proportion of *Hüfner* who did not have at least one draught animal (horse or ox). In Königshuld this proportion stood at 28

per cent and in Louisenau, Wilhemsdorf and Mecklenburg it stood at 31, 38 and 9 per cent, respectively. Insofar as the land could be cleared by hand, the horses would not have been critical until the land was ready for ploughing. In fact, many of the colonists, including Ludwig Buse, who had no draught animals, also did not have any land under cultivation. Presumably they traded labour for foodstuffs or lived off their ready cash and the Prussian subsidies until such time as they could harvest their own crops. The 5.6 hectares that Ludwig Buse had cleared by 1806 provided feed for his three cows and four calves, but he would have had to trade some other skill, possibly carpentry, for help to bring this land under cultivation.<sup>18</sup> In negotiating for this help the two colonists with a pair of oxen each must have been in a particularly favourable position relative to their neighbours as oxen have the strength needed to pull stumps and break untilled ground.

On average, each *Hufner* owned just slightly more than three cows and one head of *Jungvieh*. The largest herd of ten cows was owned by one of our maternal ancestors, Daniel Schultz, who had already cleared 9.2 hectares (22.7 acres), presumably to produce enough hay to feed his cows over winter.<sup>19</sup> Because most of the colonists at Mecklenburg had been through two calving seasons, the largest number of young cattle can be found there. The *Büdner* owned few animals, with only two horses among the 51 occupied sites and not even one cow per site on average. Notable by their absence are sheep and pigs. These animals are difficult to herd over long distances so none would have been brought from the colonists' homelands and they remained a low priority relative to their immediate needs.

Table 1.1 does not include the agricultural trades and communal facilities designed to make the colonies largely self-contained and self-sufficient communities. In addition to keeping track of the number of craftsmen (*Handwerker*), the bureaucracy kept explicit records on the following trades: miller, smith, tavern keeper (*Krüger* and *Schenker*) and teacher. As of June 1806 no craftsmen were registered in the four colonies, although another source suggests that a wheelwright occupied a *Büdner* site at Königshuld.<sup>20</sup> Also at Königshuld, a resident miller occupied a one *Hufe* site set aside for a planned windmill. In addition to the millsite, the miller

also received six *Hufen* of land. A smith occupied a *Büdner* site. No tavern or inn had been established. A church and school were in the planning stage. In 1805 Schroetter had requested 600 taler for a school, 3000 taler for a church, 1500 for a parsonage and 338 taler for landscaping the church grounds. Included in the 39 *Hüfner* sites at Königshuld was a four *Hufe* allocation for the pastor, but no such generous land entitlement fell to the schoolteacher who, we presume, would have been allocated the empty *Büdner* site in the circular part of the colony. Neither a schoolteacher nor pastor had been found by 1806.

Missing from Schroetter's report of 1805-06 is any mention of the colony of Srebrny Borek (Silberwald) which can be found some five kilometres north-east of Königshuld. Although the origins of this settlement remain unclear, we shall see in the next chapter that the number of German speakers settled there almost equalled the number in Königshuld, and that some of these settlers were our ancestors. There is some evidence to suggest that the first settlers arrived here in 1798 as overflow from another colony that had been faced with uninvited arrivals from the Prignitz region of Western Brandenburg.<sup>21</sup> Nonetheless, Srebrny Borek does not appear on either the 1795 or 1807 maps of the region. If there were settlers present during the Prussian and Saxon times they occupied privately owned land that Polish landlords sought to improve. The Polish owners of the Srebrny Borek lands brought in additional settlers from Mecklenburg and Pomerania between 1818 and 1824, enlarging the existing privately sponsored colony.<sup>22</sup>

## The Colonists

Colonies need colonists. Schroetter spent much time worrying about sources of colonists and their conditions of settlement. He studied the colonization in West Prussia and concluded that it had not been successful. As noted earlier, the farm sizes were deemed too small to make them viable. Nor had the colonists been adequately screened for agricultural skills; in one instance a wigmaker acquired a homestead. Furthermore, the settler did not supply any capital of his own but moved on to a farm with house and barn pre-built by the state. Settlers were also granted a fixed number of years free of land rents and military

service. With such generous inducements it was not uncommon for settlers to disappear when their exemption from rents and military service expired. In the early years of the colonization of New East Prussia circumstances often forced the local administrators to repeat the mistakes of the past. In response to these problems, and as part of his lobbying efforts in Berlin, Schroetter wrote a memorandum in April 1801 that set out his ideas for successful colonization. In June of that year he issued a directive for the implementation of these ideas. The colonies at Königshuld would be settled under these new rules.

In the April report Schroetter pointed to the successful Lithuanian colonization around 1730 by Swiss and Salzburger Austrians in the reign of Frederick William I and on these grounds expressed a preference for non-Prussian colonists. This preference was perhaps also influenced by the problems that were encountered in 1797 with a group of Prussian settlers from the Prignitz region. This group, apparently aware of the generous treatment given settlers in the reign of Frederick II, made persistent demands that they be given similar privileges. Stubborn to the point of pig-headedness, they harassed the local bureaucrats relentlessly for assistance. For example, given a carpenter to help them build the houses they had agreed to build themselves, they were soon back with complaints that the carpenter was not working fast enough, having in the meantime failed to assist the carpenter with the house construction. More pliable German-speaking material could be found elsewhere.<sup>23</sup>

Schroetter sent recruiting agents to other German states but only two, Württemberg and Mecklenburg (both duchies, Strelitz and Schwerin), generated a significant flow of colonists to the Königshuld region. The homelands of the colonists and their household structure are given in the first section of Table 1.2. Setting aside the number of households of unknown origin (probably predominantly Mecklenburger), it is clear that Schroetter's policy of bringing in non-Prussians had some success. Non-Prussians outnumbered Prussians in a ratio of 2.5 to one. That ratio rises to 3.5 to one if we accept the conclusion of another writer who identifies 18 of the 26 settlers of unknown origin as Mecklenburger.<sup>24</sup> Barring the exception of Louisenau, Mecklenburger formed the largest numerical group

Table 1.2. *The Colonists, June 1806.*

(K - Königshuld, L - Louisenau, W - Wilhelmsdorf , M - Mecklenburg)

	K	L	W	M	Total
<b>Household Origin and Number</b>					
Mecklenburg	24	0	5	12	41
Württemberg	8	4	3	0	15
Prussia	20	1	1	5	27
Other German states	1	6	3	2	12
Unknown	15	5	3	2	12
Total households	68	16	15	22	121
Average size of households	4.72	4.75	5.87	5.41	4.99
Total number of people	321	76	88	119	604
<b>Hüfner</b>					
Number of men	27	16	12	11	66
Number of women	24	15	13	10	62
Number of sons	44	25	25	25	119
Number of daughters	37	16	28	18	99
Children per family	3.24	2.56	4.08	4.30	3.41
Number of <i>Knechte</i>	7	2	1	2	12
Number of <i>Mägde</i>	4	2	0	1	7
Value of property (taler)	20,600	7,201	6,179	6,747	40,727
Property per <i>Hufner</i>	710	450	475	613	590
<b>Büdner</b>					
Number of men	38	0	2	11	51
Number of women	37	0	2	11	50
Number of sons	47	0	2	14	63
Number of daughters	55	0	3	16	74
Children per family	2.77	0	2.50	2.73	2.74
Number of <i>Knechte</i>	1	0	0	0	1
Number of <i>Mägde</i>	0	0	0	0	0
Value of property (taler)	n/a	n/a	221	n/a	221
Property per <i>Büdner</i>	n/a	n/a	110	n/a	110

Source: See Note 14

in all colonies. The largest number of Prussians was located at Königshuld and two of this number came from the Prignitz, ensuring at least two stubborn peasants in the colony. Königshuld, with 68 households and 321 people, accounted for slightly more than half of both the total number of households, 121, and the total population, 604. The average household size, calculated without excluding unmarried settlers, but including servants as the members of households varied from a low of 4.72 in Königshuld to a high of 5.87 in Wilhelmsdorf.

We do not have to look far to find reasons why the non-Prussian colonists were willing to abandon their homelands for backbreaking labour in a foreign land surrounded by people whose religion and language they did not share. In both Württemberg and Mecklenburg poverty created a powerful push for many of the peasants. Württemberg, one of the most densely populated regions of Europe, had little room for further division of the peasantry's small plots. Mecklenburg, on the other hand, was under-populated but economically backward. To improve productivity the estate-owning nobility began adopting new agricultural practices in the last half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Large numbers of tenant farmers and cottagers were forced to give up their holdings. This process, called *Bauernlegung*, laid waste to entire villages. If the impoverished farmers and cottagers failed to find work as indentured agricultural day labourers they migrated to the towns or out of the duchies.

Both the landlords and the ducal administrations in Mecklenburg opposed migration. The landlords could impose harsher terms on their own labourers if these labourers could easily be replaced. The ducal authorities viewed out-migration as a resource loss that would diminish an already weak state. Accordingly, Prussian recruiting agents were not welcome in Mecklenburg and after protests by the ducal administrations the Prussian king agreed to keep agents out of the duchies. That did not prevent the Prussian bureaucracy from placing agents in towns, such as Strasburg, on the eastern border of Mecklenburg-Strelitz from which the news about the opportunities in Poland could easily be spread to villages across the border. This strategy appeared to work, leading on occasion to cases of midnight departures. Such a departure took place in

February 1804 when a dozen labourers from an estate at Brohma (today Brohm) made their way to Strasburg without first obtaining the written permission of their lord as the law required. Six of them travelled to Berlin to apply for land in Poland but were refused because they did not have permission to leave the Brohma estate. With the Polish option closed, they had to return to Brohma where they were prosecuted and punished. An estate administrator remarked approvingly that this would "cure the Polish swindle".<sup>25</sup> One of our maternal ancestors, Martin Dabbert, born in Brohm, may well have been among those punished because Dabbert did eventually make it to the Königshuld colonies.

Even those who were not caught up in Mecklenburg's agricultural transformation had reason to think about emigration. Contemporary accounts of peasant life in Mecklenburg paint a grim picture of feudal obligations and punishments; by way of illustration one quote from a 1787 magazine should suffice:

On entering the hall my eyes fell first upon a big thick whip hanging on the wall. The overseer used it to punish all transgressors; he took it to the fields to check the ploughing being done by an indentured serf and whipped man or horse depending on which creature was judged to be at fault.<sup>26</sup>

What the observer of this scene fails to note is that the whip normally used in Mecklenburg had whip ends with nine knots which could tear the flesh and, it was said, bring someone near death with 24 lashes if expertly applied. With a few exceptions, the whip was banned for corporal punishment in 1802 and replaced by a rod.<sup>27</sup>

The push of poverty undoubtedly played its role, but the pull of free land must have been an even greater force. In societies with limited social mobility, land was one of the few avenues for higher social status and wealth. In any case, two acres, while hardly a landed estate, put more potatoes in the pot than no land at all. Even for a relatively prosperous Mecklenburger peasant pushed off his holding by a productivity-seeking landlord, the Prussian offer of a large farm presented a once-in-

a-lifetime opportunity. Free timber for building and temporary exemptions from rents and military service would have made the decision to migrate even easier. As further incentive Prussian custom and excise duties were not levied on property brought to the colony and a mileage travel subsidy paid for each family member. Schroetter was aware, however, that too many generous inducements without corresponding obligations would create problems. In the memorandum and directive cited earlier he set out his solution for the right combination of carrots and sticks to attract and keep successful colonists. To be acceptable, a colonist had to be of good moral character with experience to match the type of holding being requested. Ownership of a minimal amount of property had to be demonstrated; the *Hufner* had to possess 100 taler of property for each *Hufe* he received, whereas the *Büdner* had to possess between 60 and 100 taler. The intent of the property requirement is clear. It forced the settler to risk some of his own equity and the risk usually induced responsible behaviour.

We can get a sense of the magnitude of the property requirement by comparing it to wage rates of the time. A master carpenter could earn one taler for three days labour in the summer, less in winter. An unskilled labourer would earn half that amount.<sup>28</sup> In principle, if Ludwig Buse had been a master carpenter, he required property equivalent of five years of income to be eligible for a five *Hufe* farmstead. In fact, we know that he brought 757 taler to Königshuld, well above the minimum for a five *Hufe* holding. Two other ancestors with *Hufner* sites at Königshuld, Friedrich Peters (a shepherd from Krumbeck with 594 taler) and Daniel Schultz (502 taler), also exceeded substantially the minimum property requirement. On the other hand, our paternal ancestor George Schulz, who had a three *Hufe* site at Louisenau, only just met the minimum with 300 taler.<sup>29</sup> Since the taler amounts are very high relative to what could be saved from yearly income, a goodly portion of the property must have been traditional 'marriage portions' or inheritances.<sup>30</sup> The last row of Section 2 in Table 1.2 shows that on average the *Hufner* in all the colonies exceeded substantially the property requirement, although in many cases the value of the property just equalled the minimum. In at least one case the *Hufner's* property value fell below the minimum.<sup>31</sup> The value of *Büdner* property is known in only two instances



and in both it exceeds the minimum of 60 taler. The disparity in the value of property brought to the colonies by the *Hüfner* and *Büdner* reinforced the great inequality of wealth created by the differences in the size of their land holdings.

The rules for colonists specified agricultural experience as an eligibility condition. The Prussian archival material does not give the backgrounds of colonists, but church parish records examined in a study of Mecklenburger emigrants do so for nineteen colonists.<sup>32</sup> The former trades of nine *Hüfner* were: carpenter (Ludwig Buse, but see Note 18), charcoal burner, miller, smith (these are not the designated miller and smith noted above), master weaver, master tailor, master shoemaker and shepherd (two, one of them Friedrich Peters). With the exception of the two shepherds, and perhaps the miller, substantive agricultural experience is not much in evidence here. In the case of the ten *Büdner*, their former occupations were as follows: weaver and tobacco planter, labourers (five), mason's apprentice (two), hunt servant (*Holzwärter*) and master tailor. With the exception of the master tailor (David Vester from Krumbek) and the mason's apprentices, an agricultural background can be imputed for these newly minted *Büdner*. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the Prussian bureaucrats used a fairly elastic definition of agricultural experience. This may have been of little importance with respect to the *Büdner* whose work consisted of simple agricultural tasks. Furthermore, trades such as weaver or tailor could be combined with working for the *Hüfner*. Building up and running a large farm, on the other hand, would be a considerably riskier proposition in the absence of any knowledge of agriculture. That weavers, tailors and shoemakers were accepted as *Hüfner* suggests that the bureaucracy placed more weight on moral character and the property requirement than on agricultural experience.

The difference in wealth between the two groups of settlers is also reflected in the presence of both male (*Knechte*) and female (*Mägde*) servants among the *Hüfner*. These servants were an integral part of the household, often young boys and girls taken in from families with more children than they could support. Widows and widowers, of which there were five in the colonies, typically had a *Knecht* or a *Magd*, sometimes both.<sup>33</sup>

That Ludwig Buse had two *Knechte*, instead of the more usual one, can best be explained by his status as a single man, although two of the other three single men in Königshuld had no servants. Our ancestor Daniel Schultz had a *Knecht* whereas Friedrich Peters had no servants but did have four children older than 12 years. The records allow us to separate out the single men and servants to calculate the number of children per family. Overall, the average *Hüfner* family had 3.41 children compared to 2.74 for the *Büdner*. The difference is probably due to *Büdner* families being younger on average than *Hüfner* families.

Schroetter believed that advancing money for building construction failed to properly motivate the settler. Instead, he offered a direct subsidy of 100 taler for each *Hufe* of land, but this sum was paid out over time in proportion to the amount of his own capital the *Hufner* invested. Settlers committed themselves to a schedule for the completion of their buildings and failure to meet the schedule could lead to eviction. These rules appeared to have some local flexibility. Ludwig Buse, a three person household, and Friedrich Peters, a seven person household, had received five and four *Hufen* of land, respectively. Despite the difference in household size and land allocation, both were allocated a subsidy of 659 taler. By 1806 Ludwig Buse had collected 190 taler whereas Friedrich Peters had received 430, even though neither had any land under cultivation and both had constructed only their houses. Although the number of rent-free years was set at six, Schroetter devised a scheme of graduated rent payments that began with the second year and ended in the twelfth so that the total rent paid over the twelve years was equivalent to six rent-free years and six full-rent years. Presumably, making the settler pay rents early on motivated him to work harder at making his farm productive. Starting in the second year, the settler also had to pay *Rauchgeld* or a hearth (chimney) tax of one taler and 45 groschen.

A successful settler who met all the conditions of his lease would be offered an inheritable leasehold. The Prussian Crown would remain the owner of the land, but the lease and the buildings could be sold as well as passed to heirs. From a surviving lease we can extract some more information on the

settler experience.<sup>34</sup> In addition to the subsidy and rental conditions noted above, the settler was obligated to participate in the communal life of the colony. He had to support the fire insurance cooperative, to pay his share of church and school costs and to maintain the bridges and paths to his property. Obligations to the Prussian military system included delivery of one eighth of his taxes in grain to the military, work on fortifications, cartage in both war and peace and delivery of feed for the cavalry. In the fine print we find a requirement to keep bees, to provide help for the wolf hunt and a rule allowing for the brewing of beer at home during harvest. This last requirement stemmed from the fact that the state had a monopoly on alcohol production and that monopoly was a major source of revenue. Home brewing would obviously reduce these revenues.

The local bureaucracy monitored every settler's progress. The inventory of livestock, the amount of land cleared and cultivated and the number of buildings completed were duly noted in the annual reports. Supplementary comments reveal that the bureaucrats placed much weight on the state of construction of unfinished buildings. Thus it is noted that Daniel Schultz's house is almost finished whereas this is the state for Friedrich Peters' *Scheune* (barn). In addition, comments about their farming skills and moral conduct were also recorded. Ludwig Buse and George Schulz, for example, were deemed to be running their farms very well, with their moral conduct considered beyond reproach. The administrative centre at Płock reviewed the local assessments and wrote recommendations for further action. Most of these were exhortations to press the settlers to finish their buildings and get on with the land clearing, exhortations that appear in the comments on all our ancestors. Statements of expectations about what is to be achieved in the next year also appear and these seem to be written with an eye on Berlin, the final destination of these reports.

The picture that emerges from this account confirms the earlier observation about the pervasiveness of bureaucracy in Prussian life. All these rules required detailed record keeping and means to enforce them. To what extent the colonization system worked as intended is unknown to us, but the early settlers

probably had well-developed opinions about bureaucrats, especially those who checked for the illicit brewing of beer.

## **Ancestors**

Up to this point four of our ancestors, Ludwig Buse, Friedrich Peters, Daniel Schultz and George Schulz, have made an appearance. All four appear in the Prussian records as having arrived in 1804.<sup>35</sup> No names of other ancestors appear on the lists of 1806, although some names that do appear turn out to be the maiden names of the wives of other male ancestors. Given the small number of our ancestors who are on the Prussian list of 1806, we have to conclude that many arrived in the colonies during the Saxon period (discussed at the end of this chapter) or even later.

Since Ludwig Buse was our paternal great-great-great-grandfather, we will begin our ancestral exhumations with this generation. Tables 1.3 and 1.4 present the available information on our paternal and maternal great-great-great-grandparents, respectively.<sup>36</sup> The structure of these tables is somewhat unusual so a brief explanation is in order. Everyone has two parents and four grandparents, two maternal and two paternal. If we go back five generations, then we have 16 paternal and 16 maternal grandparents; that is, the number of grandparents doubles each time we move back one generation. The Roman numeral V, which precedes all entries in these tables, indicates that we are reaching back five generations. Our parents, Gustav Rudolf Buse and Helene Pauline Schütz, constitute the first generation. The 'P' or 'M' which follows the Roman numeral indicates a paternal or maternal grandparent, respectively.

Husband and wife appear side by side in these tables with the former assigned the odd numbers and the latter the even. Each entry gives, if available, the names of the couple, their dates and places of birth (designated by the symbol \*), marriage (=) and death (+), and the occupation of the husband. Wives, assigned no formal status in these records, we know had multiple occupations, as well as preoccupations: childbearer, cook, washerwoman, gardener, spinner, family doctor and therapist.

Table 1.3. The paternal great-great-grandparents.

V.P1 <b>Johann Christoph Ludwig Buse</b> * —.—. 1770 Krumbek, Prussia + 19.08.1846 Paproć Duża farmer	V.P2 <b>Katharina Driegert (Drügert)</b> * —.—. 1789 + 28.09.1859 Paproć Duża
V.P3 <b>George Schulz</b> * —.—.1783 Carlslust, Meck.-Str. + 01.12.1851 Pęchratka farmer	V.P4 <b>Friederike Bülow</b> * —.—. 1791 + 23.09.1854 Pęchratka
V.P5 <b>Martin Christian Otto Wrede</b> * —.04.1796 Meck.-Schwerin + 23.08.1866 Paproć Duża farmer	V.P6 <b>Dorothea Sophia Peters</b> * 04.07.1800 Krumbek, Prussia + 24.06.1878 Paproć Duża  = 20.11.1820 Jasienica
V.P7 <b>Christian Texter</b> * —.—.1790 + 30.06.1870 Srebrny Borek farmer	V.P8 <b>Friederike Charlotte Wink</b> * —.—.1796 Prussia + 25.04.1880 Srebrny Borek
V.P9 <b>Joachim Christoph Moedbeck</b> * —.—.1767 Netzeband, Meck.-Str. + 09.01.1846 Srebrny Borek day labourer	V.P10 <b>Maria Elizabeth Voigt</b> * —.—.1768 Kyritz, Prussia + 04.11.1828 Srebrny Borek
V.P11 <b>Johann Michael Betke</b> * —.—.1773 Dannenwalde, Prussia + ? Srebrny Borek	V.P12 <b>Katherina Elizabeth Voelker</b> * ? , Dannenwalde, Prussia + ?
V.P13 <b>Andreas Friedrich Filter</b>  * —.—.1780 Woldegk, Meck.-Str. + ? wheelwright  = —.—.1806 Woldegk, Meck.-Str.	V.P14 <b>Sophia Dorothea Elizabeth Pethran (Petrahn)</b> * —.—.1785 Woldegk, Meck.-Str. + ?
V.P15 <b>Karl Hubert</b> * —.—.1786 + 28.05.1842 Srebrny Borek farmer	V.P16 <b>Margarethe Fischer</b> * —.—.1796 + 11.04.1840 Srebrny Borek

Source: See Note 36

Apart from the popularity of the names Johann, Friedrich, Friederike and Dorothea, we should note that the parents of Dorothea Sophia Peters (V.P6, Table 1.3) were Johann Friedrich Peters and Maria Dorothea Boldt who appear as maternal grandparents in Table 1.4, making them common ancestors for both sides of the family. Scattered information about earlier generations (VI and VII) is available and this has been collected into Appendix A.<sup>37</sup> That appendix shows that our Krumbeck roots are deep; Maria Boldt's maternal ancestors, the Däbels, may have already been in Krumbeck in the last quarter of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

Tables 1.3 and 1.4 give the occupations of the settlers after their arrival in the colonies. Since the bureaucracy did not enforce strictly the agricultural experience requirement, it is certainly possible that some of the farmers had been craftsmen prior to their migration. The wheelwright and the two weavers that are listed in our tables would have received a *Büdner* site for home food production. This small mine of genealogical data also allows us to extract a few demographic nuggets on social and material conditions. For the five instances where the date of marriage is known, one took place in October and the balance in November, a choice of month to be expected in an agricultural community. The men's age of marriage ranged from 23 to 29 with an average of 26 years. The average marriage age for women was 21, ranging from 16 to 31. The average age of death appears surprisingly high, being 61 years for women and 69 years for men, but on closer examination mortality among the colonists did not diverge from that experienced by contemporaries in Prussia. Data for the period 1765-1800 from four villages in the Prignitz region shows that for those dying at age 60 or older, the average age of death was 73 years for males and 72 for females. The comparable numbers for our ancestors in Poland are 70 and 76. The odds of making it past 60, however, were not very good. In the Prignitz life expectancy (excluding stillborn) stood at 28.4 years for males and 36.7 years for females. The more primitive conditions at Königshuld could only have worsened life expectancy.<sup>38</sup>

Of the twenty-two cases where the region or place of birth is known, ten are in Mecklenburg and eleven in Prussia. The

Table 1.4. The maternal great-great-grandparents.

<p>V.M1 <b>Christian Friedrich Schütz</b> * —.—.1775 Prussia + 25.04.1847 Paproć Mała day labourer, teacher</p>	<p>V.M2 <b>Dorothea Stechert</b> * —.—.1779 Prussia + 09.07.1820 Dąbrowa</p>
= 1800	
<p>V.M3 <b>Johann Daniel Schultz</b> * 20.04.1771 Schönhausen, Meck.-St. + 12.11.1851 Paproć Duża farmer</p>	<p>V.M4 <b>Anna Maria Christina Behnke</b> * 30.03.1783 Matzdorf, Meck.-Str. + 25.05.1851 Paproć Duża</p>
= 26.10.1800 Schönhausen, Meck.-Str.	
<p>V.M5 <b>Martin Friedrich Dabbert (Tabbert)</b> * 21.02.1759 Brohm, Meck.-Str. + 17.08.1825 Paproć Mała farmer</p>	<p>V.M6 <b>Maria Christina Friederike Schultz</b> * 09.01.1764 Schönhausen, Meck.-Str. + ?</p>
= 1786 Voigtsdorf, Meck.-Str.	
<p>V.M7 <b>Johann Friedrich Peters</b> * —.—.1767 Krumbeck, Prussia + 26.01.1829 Paproć Duża day labourer</p>	<p>V.M8 <b>Maria Dorothea Boldt (Baldt)</b> * 19.09.1763 Krumbeck, Prussia + 16.09.1832 Paproć Duża</p>
= 16.11.1794 Krumbeck, Prussia	
<p>V.M9 <b>Gottlieb Penk</b> * —.—.1774 + 17.01.1841 Kowalówka weaver</p>	<p>V.M10 <b>Anna Mutz</b> * —.—.1784 Württemberg + 29.01.1844 Kowalówka</p>
<p>V.M11 <b>Josef Wolfert</b> * 11.07.1798 Bonlanden, Württemberg + 05.06.1850 Srebrna master weaver</p>	<p>V.M12 <b>Charlotte Rebecca Schulz</b> * —.—.1805 Paproć Duża  + ?</p>
= 18.11.1821 Jasienica	
<p>V.M13 <b>Christian Steinmeier</b> * —.—.1776 + 19.05.1842 Dąbrowa farmer</p>	<p>V.M14 <b>Sophia Trolof</b> * —.—.1798 + 21.08.1846 Dąbrowa</p>
<p>V.M15 <b>Joachim Janke</b> * —.—.1778 Dallmin, Prussia + 20.06.1832 Króle Małe farmer</p>	<p>V.M16 <b>Sophia Dorothea Schultz</b> * —.—.1782 Meck.-? + 07.04.1836 Króle Małe</p>

Source: See Note 36

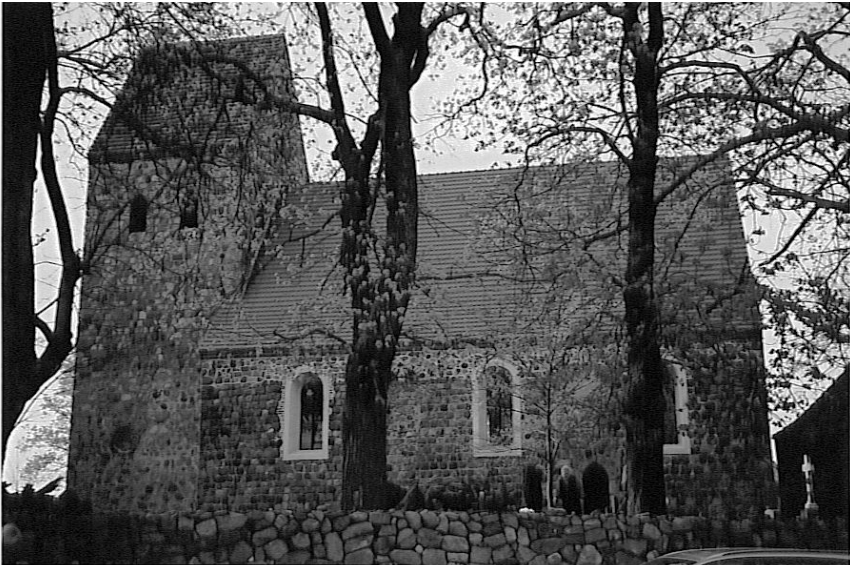
Mecklenburger are predominantly from villages and towns in the region around Woldegk, Mecklenburg-Strelitz (100 kilometres north of Berlin). Apart from the Krumbeckers, most of the Prussians are drawn from the Prignitz region around the towns of Kyritz, Wittstock and Pritzwalk (100 kilometres north-west of Berlin). The unknown origins of these ancient villages and towns are buried in the conflicts between Germanic and Slavic tribes that spanned six centuries. When the Germans finally prevailed at the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, Christianity and feudalism had been bestowed on the region by the Germans. Substantial German migration and settlement had preceded the final imposition of German control and more followed it.

Krumbeck may well have been one of the settlements that sprang up following the arrival of German rule. The etymology of the name certainly points in that direction, since Krumbeck (crooked creek) is a German rather than a Slavic name. It makes its appearance in the written records in 1313 as Krumbeke when a local knight donated his estate at Krumbeck to a Cistercian monastery some 30 kilometres distant. As a result of the Reformation the lands of the monastery ultimately came into the hands of a noble family that owed allegiance to the Elector of Brandenburg and thereby became part of Prussia. Comprising no more than 15 square kilometres (5.79 sq. miles), the Krumbeck lands lay, however, entirely within the boundary of the Duchy of Mecklenburg-Strelitz. Only in 1811 did sovereignty pass from Prussia to Mecklenburg-Strelitz.<sup>39</sup> Ludwig Buse was, therefore, a Prussian subject, but whether he thought of himself as Prussian as opposed to Mecklenburger is certainly open to speculation. His son David signed the entry in the Paproć Duża church register recording Ludwig's death in 1846. Insofar as that entry states that Ludwig came from Krumbeck, Mecklenburg, we have circumstantial evidence of an oral tradition that the family thought of themselves as Mecklenburger.<sup>40</sup> This oral tradition continued to the present day inasmuch as our mother always spoke of the Buse family as being Mecklenburger.

When Ludwig Buse and Friedrich Peters left Krumbeck in 1804 the estate was in the hands of Ulrich Otto von Dewitz. Today, as a result of German re-unification, the manor house from the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century is again occupied by a descendant of



the von Dewitz family. Other surviving buildings from the time of Ludwig Buse include a smithy and the estate workers' living quarters, both no longer in use, with the latter in an advanced state of disrepair. With generous government subsidies, the manor park, created in 1832 by the noted park designer Robert Joseph Lenné, has been restored to its former graceful state and serves as a public space for the village. During the park's reconstruction a four-foot-diameter millstone, today a coffee table on one of the manor's patios, was discovered in one of the ponds (see Prologue for photo of millstone). We like to think that this millstone came from the mill operated by Martin Buse, Ludwig's father. The well-maintained early 14<sup>th</sup> century fieldstone Romanesque church, depicted in Photo 1.2, overlooks a picturesque shallow valley of meadows and willows. On the opposite side of this valley an abandoned grass-covered country road, lined with stately old trees, runs parallel to the modern paved road to Bredenfelde and Woldegk. This abandoned road, made unusable by deep wagon ruts, would have been the exit route used by Ludwig Buse and his Krumbeck compatriots (Photo 1.3). The small graveyard is not home to any Buses, although a Peters family resides in the one of the dozen or so houses that make up the village. The



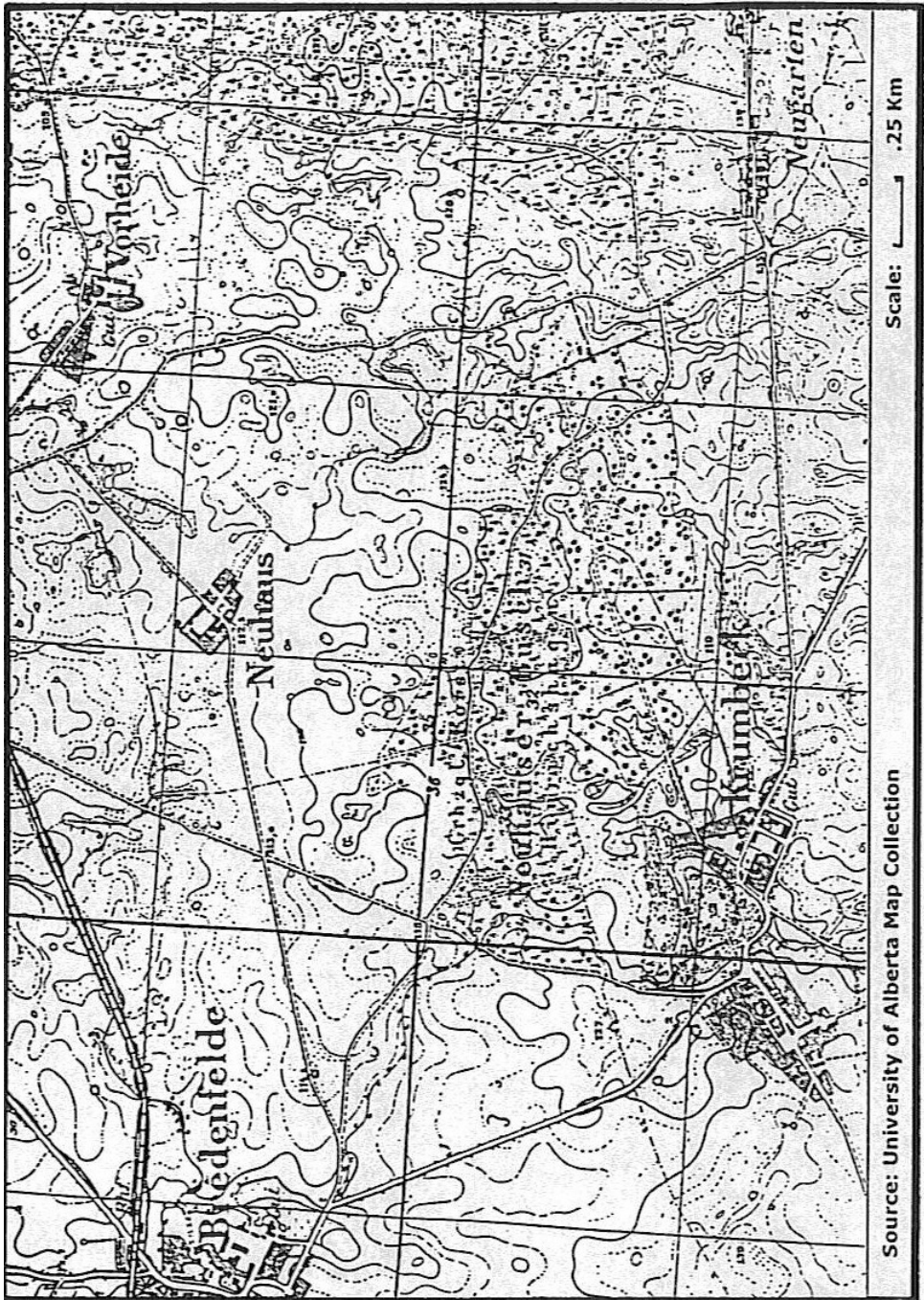
*Photo 1.2 The Krumbeck church.*



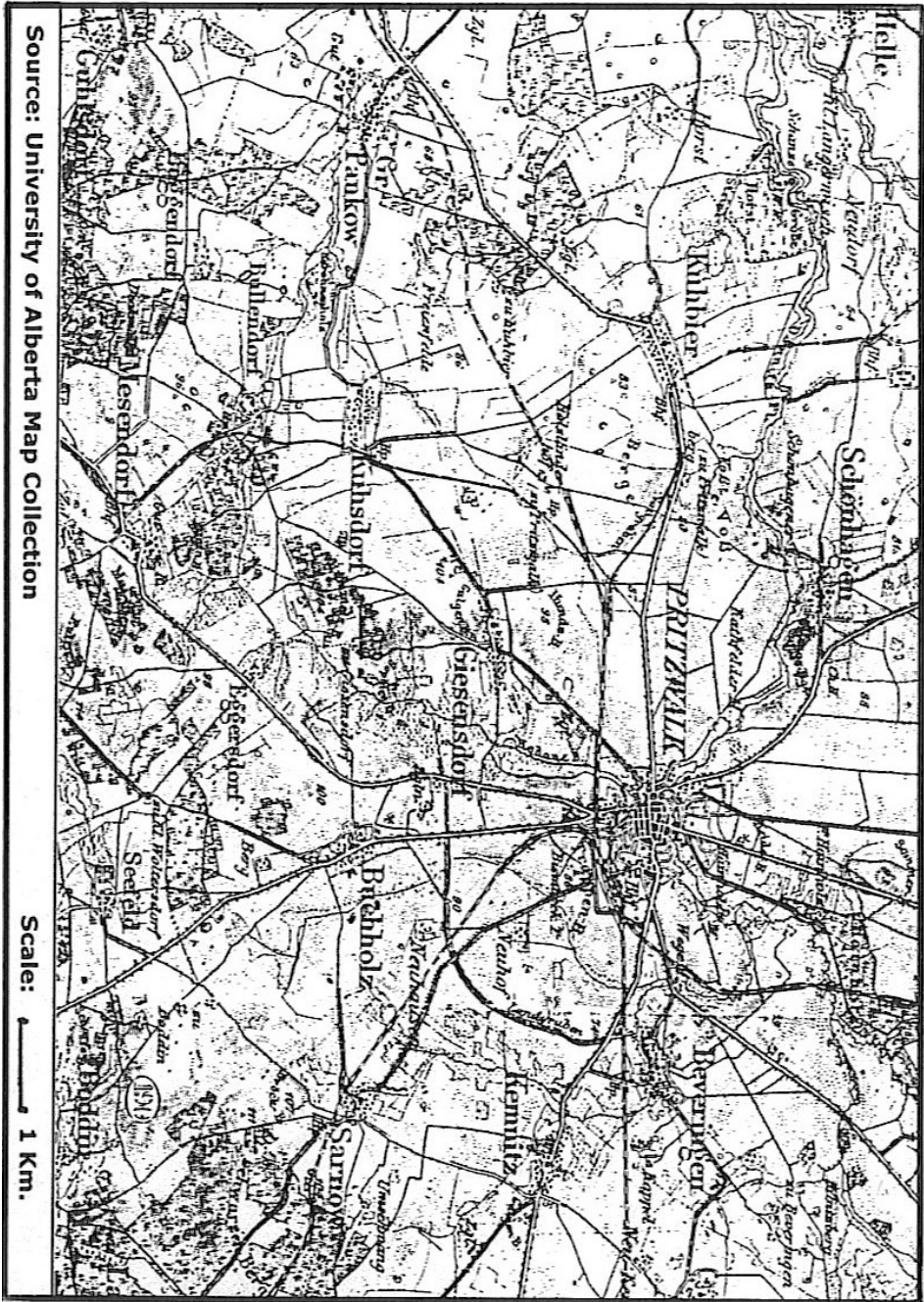
*Photo 1.3. Abandoned road that served as exit from Krumbeck.*

population of the village has declined over the last century. Workers no longer live on the manor grounds and no independent artisans, such as millers and smiths, occupy houses in the village. Map 1.5, based on a 1911 survey, shows the village and estate in more prosperous days. A mill stands on the ridge just west of the village and we are quite certain that this was the site of Martin Buse's mill in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Our genealogical information on the Schütz family lacks the depth and detail available to us about the Buses from Krumbeck. The first documented sighting of a Schütz ancestor occurs in 1812 in the town of Pritzwalk; see Map 1.6. The Schütz name does, however, appear to be of long standing in the Prignitz region. A major regional history notes its first appearance in 1291 and again in 1343. In 1748 a merchant's widow, *née* Schütz, endowed a hospital in the town of Wittstock, twenty kilometres east of Pritzwalk. Two Schützes are known to have served in the Pritzwalk Cuirassier Cavalry Regiment in the 1790s. In 1802 another worked as a *Jaeger* (gamekeeper/hunter) on a Prussian Major's estate north-east of Pritzwalk. Somewhat later in 1813, and fifty kilometres to the northwest, one Friederike Schütz was working as a *Wasch Mädchen* (laundry girl) in the Ludwigslust palace of the Duke of



Map 1.5. The Krumbeck region, 1911.



Map 1.6. The Pritzwalk region, 1921.

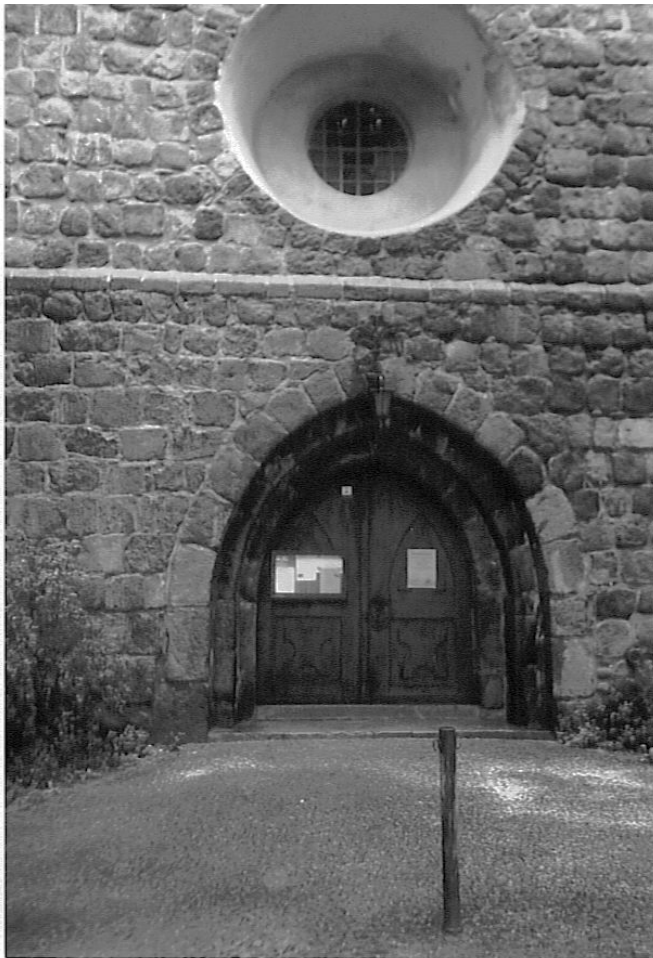
Mecklenburg-Schwerin.<sup>41</sup>

The 1812 Pritzwalk sighting of a Schütz ancestor is actually a double sighting of two grandfathers and one grandmother. On Sunday April 19th of that year, Christian Friedrich Schütz (V.M1, Table 1.4) and his wife, Dorothea Stechert (V.M2), had their son, Friedrich Wilhelm Ludwig, baptized in the St. Nikolai church.<sup>42</sup> In the church register Christian Friedrich is identified as a servant (*Bedienter*) of Colonel von Quitzow zu Bullendorf-Kuhdorf. The village of Kuhdorf lies five kilometres south of Pritzwalk and Bullendorf another kilometre down the road; see Map 1.6. Christian Friedrich's precise duties are unknown. Insofar as he was living in rented accommodation in Pritzwalk and, as we will learn later, he could read and write, it is unlikely that he was a simple menial servant on the von Quitzow estates. Furthermore, the sixteen witnesses included not only Colonel von Quitzow, but a number of men of middle rank in the social hierarchy. Thus we find a horse trainer (*Rossmeister*), two hunters/gamekeepers (*Jaeger*), a master builder, a carpenter and a farmer. Four of the witnesses came from Kuhdorf or Bullendorf, suggesting that Christian Friedrich interacted socially with estate staff or its service providers. Other witnesses came from villages in the neighbourhood of Pritzwalk. Two came from the town of Kyritz 60 kilometres to the south and at least one of these appears to be a Schütz. The Kyritz connection is significant because we have undocumented information that Christian Friedrich was born in the Kyritz region.<sup>43</sup>

Unlike Krumbeck, almost nothing remains at Pritzwalk that can be connected to our ancestors. Pritzwalk is an old trading town with Slavic origins. Its position on major cross-roads allowed it to prosper in the days of the Hanseatic League, of which it was a member. The crossroads were also its downfall. When the Thirty Year's War brought contending armies to the region it suffered greatly. With a population of 4,000 in 1620, by 1640 only 52 residents (and three usable horses) remained as war and pestilence forced people to flee. By 1650 the population recovered to 1,110, but growth after that was negligible with a population in 1801 of only 1,674. A fire in 1821 destroyed most of the town leaving only the nave of the St. Nikolai church intact.<sup>44</sup> Presumably, the Schütz baptism took place in the nave

and the baptismal party entered the nave through the door shown in Photo 1.4.

That Christian Friedrich Schütz lived in rented accommodations in Pritzwalk in 1812 may have been direct consequence of a tragic event in the life of his employer. In February of that year Colonel August Heinrich von Quitzow (1746-1824) lost his seventeen-year old son to a fever. With this death he also lost his last surviving male heir, three other male sons having already died in infancy or boyhood.<sup>45</sup> According to a memoir



*Photo 1.4. The door of St. Nikolai church, Pritzwalk.*

penned by his sole surviving daughter, her father was a shattered man. Colonel von Quitzow had retired in 1806 to the newly-built stone manor house at Bullendorf after a long and distinguished career in the Prussian cavalry. For 43 years he had lived a nomadic existence as an officer in a *Kurassier* (heavy cavalry) regiment, rising steadily through the ranks as he moved his family from one garrison town to another. In 1787 he was awarded Prussia's highest military decoration, Pour le Mérite. Without a male heir to succeed him, a depressed Colonel von Quitzow leased out the Kuhsdorf-Bullendorf estates in the spring of 1812. The new leaseholder would not necessarily have retained all the estate's employees and Christian Friedrich may have ended up in rented accommodation in Pritzwalk as a result. After 1812 Colonel von Quitzow served the Prussian government on a variety of military commissions which may or may not have provided continued employment for Christian Friedrich.

Given a social environment in which the continuation of a family's lineage mattered greatly, the loss of his last son must have been especially distressing to the Colonel. The von Quitzow family had arrived in the Prignitz region as colonizing German nobility in the 12<sup>th</sup> century. From their initial base at Kuhsdorf they spread far and wide throughout the region and beyond, including Mecklenburg and Denmark. They became one of the most powerful families in Brandenburg, acquiring fortresses and villages as their power grew. Two brothers of one branch of the family even attempted, unsuccessfully, to challenge the arrival of the Hohenzollerns as Margraves of Brandenburg in 1412. These two brothers also became notoriously famous as *Raubritter* (robber barons), who attacked and pillaged throughout the region before being brought to heel. Despite this blot on the family shield, by 1450 the Quitzows collectively owned 80 villages in the Prignitz (and 40 elsewhere), making them the largest landowners by this measure. In time the Quitzows became loyal servants of Brandenburg-Prussia, either as bureaucrats or more commonly as officers. Colonel von Quitzow's family provides a good illustration of this phenomenon. His oldest brother held the position of *Landesdirektor der Prignitz* (regional administrator) for 26 years. All his other brothers, five in total, were in the Prussian military. Two brothers died as young officers in the

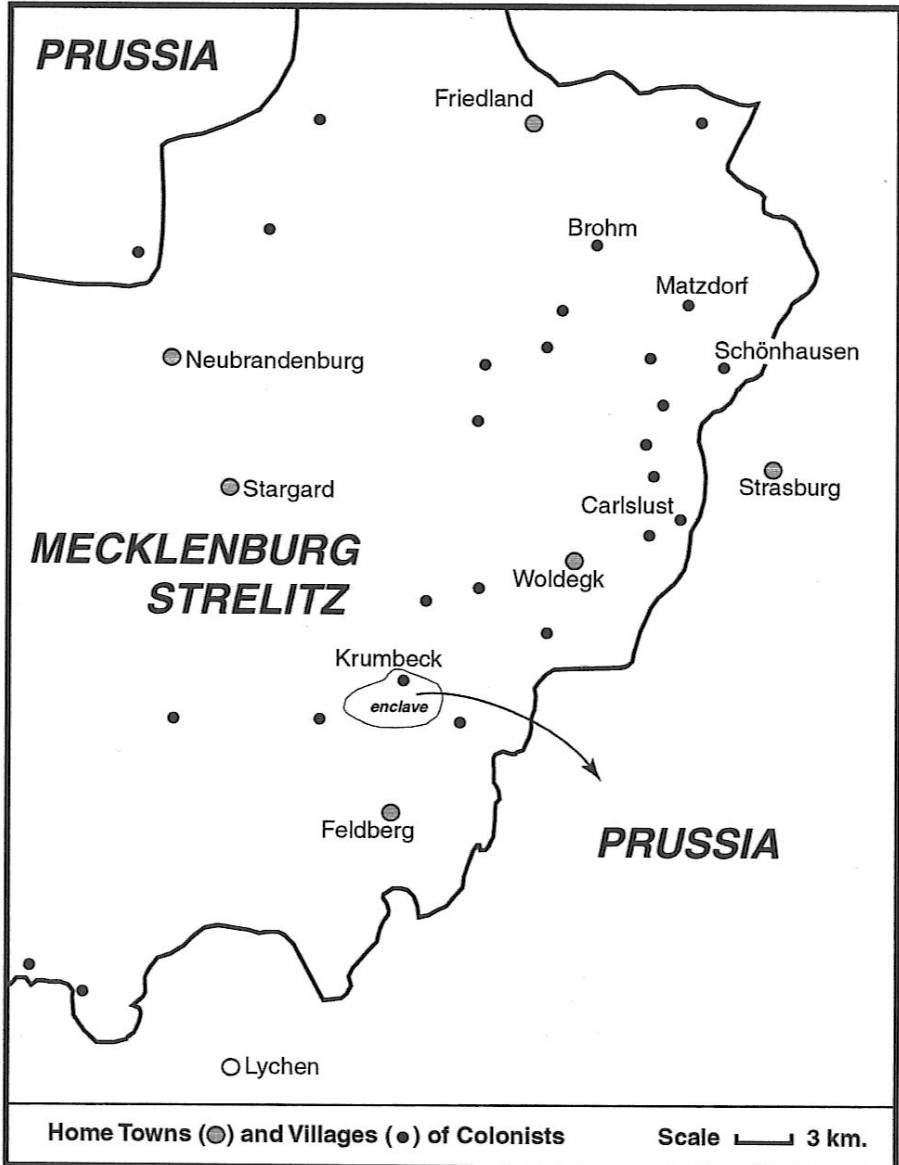
Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and another, Cavalry Major General Christian Heinrich von Quitzow, died of wounds received in 1806 at the famous Prussian defeat at Auerstadt. None of the brothers left surviving male heirs.

The death of Colonel von Quitzow in 1824 at Bullendorf marked the last stage in a long process of decay in the renowned von Quitzow family tree. Only one other branch remained alive and that would die out shortly, removing the name Quitzow from the Prignitz landscape. Colonel von Quitzow's surviving daughter died childless in 1832 and the Kuhsdorf-Bullendorf estates passed into the hands of her husband's family, aristocracy from Hesse. Today Kuhsdorf is just another tidy Prignitz village of some 150 people. The manor house at Bullendorf has been demolished and the remaining buildings are ruins.

With the Buse-Schütz homelands surveyed, we can return to the colonization story. Following Schroetter's 1801 success in having his new colonization plans approved by Frederic William III, the renewed Prussian call for settlers soon reached Mecklenburg, especially the villages and towns in eastern Mecklenburg-Strelitz bordering on Prussia. As noted earlier, the Prussian agents could not recruit on Mecklenburg territory, but they could rely on local networks to spread the news. Some of those who wanted to emigrate sent emissaries to Berlin to verify the conditions of settlement. There is even a reported case of a delegate sent to Poland to check the claims of the Prussians. Others may have relied on favourable letters from Poland of those who had emigrated before 1801. Prior to 1802 nineteen Mecklenburger families emigrated to Poland. Between 1802 and 1805, 89 families did so.<sup>46</sup> At least fifteen families left the Woldegk region for Königshuld in 1803, followed by another 28 or more in 1804 and at least two in 1805.<sup>47</sup> Most of the villages from which these settlers were drawn are marked on Map 1.7.<sup>48</sup> Many of these villages lie close to the border with Prussia, indicating that the recruiting agents had success in enticing prospective colonists across the border. The 1804 group included all of our ancestors that appear in the Prussian records: Ludwig Buse (V.P1) and Friedrich Peters (V.M7) from Krumbeck, Daniel Schultz (V.M3) and George Schulz (V.P3) from the Mecklenburg-Strelitz villages of Matzdorf and

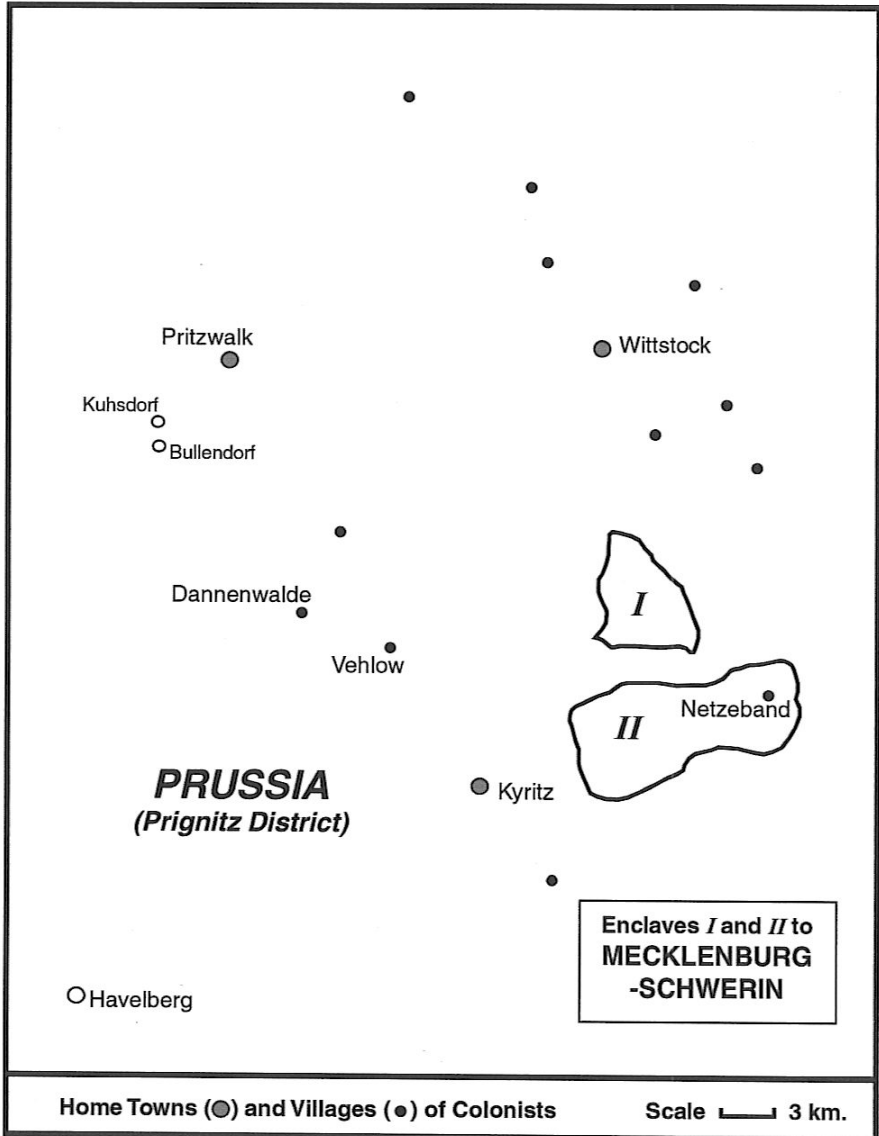


Carlslust, respectively. We do not know whether the 1804 migrants from Krumbeck were influenced in their migration decision by letters from Königshuld sent by the two Krumbeckers who had made the trip in 1803.



Map 1.7. The origins of settlers from the Krumbeck region.

We have considerably less information on the settlers coming from the area east of Pritzwalk in the Prignitz region. The villages that contributed settlers are noted on Map 1.8.<sup>49</sup> Two entries in Table 1.3 (V.P10 and V.P11) are consistent with our



Map 1.8. The origins of settlers from the Pritzwalk region.

earlier observation that many of the settlers in Srebrny Borek were from this area. The Schütz family, however, did not settle at Srebrny Borek. Sometime between 1812 and 1820 they had moved to Dąbrowa, just south of the colony of Mecklenburg, where Dorothea Stechert (V.M2) died in July 1820.<sup>50</sup> In 1818 Colonel von Quitzow was serving on his last government commission so Christian Schütz could still have been his employee at this date. If dismissal occurred shortly thereafter, then the options for the Schütz family certainly included Poland. A surge of emigration from the Prignitz region occurred between 1817 and 1820, prompted in part by depressed economic conditions. In August 1818 a local Prussian administrator noted that "the desire to emigrate to Poland has become epidemic in my country."<sup>51</sup>

The route our ancestors took from Northern Germany to Poland is uncertain. Passage through Berlin seems most likely for both the Pritzwalk/Kyritz and the Woldegk group. Kyritz lay on the Hamburg-Berlin postal road in this period.<sup>52</sup> Woldegk had no direct routes to the east. From Berlin the settlers from both regions could take the postal route to Warsaw. That the settlers travelled in organized caravans is certain, because the records show that the Prussian bureaucracy routinely negotiated with spokesmen for groups arriving from specific regions. The settler caravans had to cover the 600 plus kilometres to Königshuld at the pace set by the slowest walker in the group. Babies, at least one was a one-year-old, and pregnant women would have had the privilege of riding on a wagon. A pair of horses and a wagon were within the reach of only the richer settlers. The less well-off likely made do with a two-wheeled cart piled high with personal effects and pulled by a single draught animal. The poorest had no animals at all; for example, in 1797 in a group of 41 settlers from the Prignitz, 17 had no draught animals.<sup>53</sup> Making due allowance for feeding animals, nightly camp set-up and cooking, the caravans probably did not cover more than 25 kilometres a day so that their journey would have taken at least 24 days to complete.<sup>54</sup> If we add bad weather and mishaps such as broken axles, then a month on the road was the norm for the trip in the most favourable summer conditions. Insofar as the roads of Mecklenburg had a reputation for being impassable in wet weather, and the roads in Poland were unlikely to be better, a month on the road may

well be an under-estimate.<sup>55</sup> A Polish artist's rendition of German settlers arriving in Poland appears as the frontispiece of this chapter.

On arrival in Königshuld land was allocated by draw, the bureaucracy having previously determined who was to be a farmer and who a cottager. It would appear that Ludwig Buse received land on the circle as his descendants still farmed there in 1939. With everyone expected to build houses and barns there were plenty of opportunities for those with a carpenter's skills. Whether Ludwig Buse exploited such opportunities is unclear. Once they received their land the settlers faced the only choice open to colonists since time immemorial: hard work. A German aphorism of the time sums it up nicely: "*Die erste Generation arbeitet sich tot, die zweite leidet Not, die dritte findet ihr Brot*" (The first generation works itself to death, the second suffers deprivation, the third gains its bread).<sup>56</sup> We leave the settlers to their labours and turn now to the larger canvas of European politics.

While Prussia was busy establishing colonies in South and New East Prussia, Napoleon and his armies re-shaped the map of continental Europe. Prussia joined Austria in a military alliance in 1792 in an attempt to contain the French Revolution. A notable lack of military success and an empty treasury forced Prussia to withdraw into neutrality in 1795. Austria, sometimes in alliance with Russia and Great Britain, soldiered on but was decisively defeated in 1805. Napoleon now made demands on Prussia, demands that ultimately forced Prussia into an alliance with Russia and a military challenge to Europe's most formidable army. On October 14, 1806, in two separate battles near the Saxon cities of Jena and Auerstadt, Napoleon routed the Prussians. By December, Berlin and Warsaw were occupied by French troops. Frederick William III retreated to Königsberg. Napoleon followed. An indecisive battle fought in a snowstorm at Eylau in February 1807 by a Russian army, augmented by the remnants of the Prussian, stemmed the Napoleonic tide briefly. Napoleon dispatched another Russian army at Friedland (East Prussia) in June of the same year. Czar Alexander I concluded that discretion was the better part of valour and, along with Frederick William III, signed a peace treaty with Napoleon at Tilsit in July 1807. Napoleon allowed Prussia to

keep West Prussia, but New East Prussia and South Prussia had to be ceded. These latter two territories were incorporated into the Duchy of Warsaw and the Königshuld settlers' allegiance to Prussia involuntarily severed.

### **The Duchy of Warsaw**

Shortly after Napoleon entered Warsaw in January 1807 he confiscated all the wine in the city for his army.<sup>57</sup> The citizens of Warsaw probably surrendered their wine without excessive grumbling, for most of them welcomed Napoleon as a liberator who would restore to them an independent Poland. The Duchy was his offering to the Poles and it was a typical Napoleonic arrangement. A relative or ally, in this case his ally the King of Saxony, was installed as sovereign and the Polish nobility assumed ministerial responsibilities. The resident French minister saw to it that the local administration did not pursue policies that ran counter to Napoleon's grand design for Europe. In exchange for this limited independence the Poles had to create a standing army of 30,000 men organized on the French model with a French marshal in command. To pay for this army both direct and indirect taxes were raised sharply, but inflation-inducing deficits persisted.

The Duchy did not, however, encompass all the territories of pre-partition Poland. Only Prussia, and after 1809, Austria, lost Polish territory. Russia, which acquired the northern half of New East Prussia, had not been pressed to give up territory because Napoleon wanted Russia as an ally against the British. Napoleon had famously remarked that he was waiting to see if the Poles proved themselves worthy to be a nation.<sup>58</sup> Willingness to die for Napoleon was the implied standard of worthiness and the Poles proved willing indeed. Prior to 1807 Polish legions had fought for Napoleon in Italy and the Caribbean. By 1808 they were fighting the British in Spain. But it was in 1812, the year of Napoleon's march on and disastrous retreat from Moscow, that the Poles made their most valiant effort to be worthy of the independence that Napoleon dangled in front of them. Of the half million men who marched on Moscow almost 100,000 were Poles. Only one in four returned alive. The Russians occupied Warsaw at the beginning of February 1813 and replaced the Duchy with a temporary Supreme Council. It took

another two years and two major battles, Leipzig in 1813 and Waterloo in 1815, to unravel Napoleon's Europe and restore much of the old order. In the case of the Duchy, it was buried in June 1815 at the Congress of Vienna and the Kingdom of Poland resurrected as a vassal state of Russia.

To assess the impact on the lives of the settlers of the events in the period 1807 to 1815 we rely on a combination of fact and conjecture. The exit of the Prussian bureaucracy would certainly have removed the detailed oversight of their activities, as well as releasing them from the various commitments they had made to the Prussian Crown. Although they were now subjects of the King of Saxony, the settlers had to deal with a Polish-speaking administration. Contrary to what might be expected, Polish names did not replace the German names of the colonies in the Catholic church records. The process of re-naming did not start until November 1820 and evolved over time with the last change occurring after World War II. Polish names chosen initially continued to identify the non-Polish origins of the villages by prefixing the label 'Kolonía' to each name. Thus Königshuld became Kolonia Paproć, and Louisenau, Wilhelmsdorf and Mecklenburg became Kol. Pęchratka, Kol. Króle and Kol. Kowalówka, respectively. The colony prefix disappeared from Paproć and Kowalówka when the Lutheran church records began in 1837. The circular part of Paproć became Paproć Duża and the rectangular part Paproć Mała, which translates literally as Big Fern and Little Fern, respectively. The Polish villages of Pęchratka and Króle antedated the colonies, so the German colonies became Króle Małe and Pęchratka Lowizna when the colony prefix was dropped for these two villages in the 1840s. The original Pęchratka was renamed Pęchratka Polska to distinguish it from its German neighbor. The transcription of Louisenau as Lowizna became the only reminder of the Prussian origins of these villages. This vestige of Germandom was removed after World War II when Pęchratka Lowizna was renamed Pęchratka Mała.

The settlers could not have escaped the higher indirect taxes, such as the salt tax, or the increases in the hearth tax. They protested against the increased rents for their leaseholds, arguing that their lease agreements with the Prussian Crown remained valid. After lengthy negotiations, a compromise

acceptable to both sides emerged.<sup>59</sup> Whether the settlers escaped the universal conscription, a French innovation introduced into the Polish army in 1808, is uncertain. The Duchy did not abandon the colonization program. King Friedrich August of Saxony, in three decrees issued between March 1809 and January 1812, set out rules for new settlers in Poland which did not differ significantly from those used by the Prussians.<sup>60</sup> Since new settlers and their sons were exempted from military service, perhaps the Königshuld settlers were successful in arguing that the Saxon Crown was bound to honour the promises made by the Prussian Crown. Conceivably, like the Jews, they might have paid a special tax in lieu of military service. Even if they did not serve in the army, Napoleon's campaign of 1812 brought armies to their doorsteps. While the main army took the northern route through Vilna and Smolensk on their way to Moscow, the VII Corps, comprised of 18,500 Saxons commanded by the French General Jean-Louis Reynier, positioned itself to protect Napoleon's southern flank. It was joined later by the 30,000 strong Austrian army led by Prince Carl von Schwarzenberg. Reynier arrived in Zambrów on June 29, 1812 having marched from Brok through Ostrów Mazowiecka; see Map 1.3. Today's arrow-like road between Ostrów and Zambrów passes within three kilometres of Paproć Mała. Reynier's line of march would have been less direct, but that would not have protected the settlers from the customary scavenging of an army living off the land. The chicken population of the Königshuld colonies undoubtedly experienced a sudden decline.

The Austrian army bypassed the colonies, coming only as far north as Siedlce, 80 kilometres east of Warsaw, before turning east towards Byelorussia. Schwarzenberg found that little had been left for him to provision his army after the passage of the Saxons and a Westphalian army.<sup>61</sup> The Polish crop failure of 1811 had worsened the supply situation to the point where the Austrians often had to do without bread, their twenty-day supply soon being exhausted. A half pound ration of meat was the alternative and even this could only be obtained by mandatory requisition of livestock. In response the peasants hid their cattle in the woods.

Schwarzenberg and Reynier kept Russian armies at bay in the

marshes of Byelorussia while Napoleon marched on Moscow. Following Napoleon's flight from Moscow and return to Paris, Schwarzenberg was instructed to retreat towards Warsaw where the French and the Poles hoped to regroup and challenge the advancing Russian armies. He established his headquarters at Pułtusk, 30 kilometres north of Warsaw, and dispersed his army, now reduced to 24,000 men, in a defensive semi-circle around Warsaw. As of December 30, 1812, a division was stationed at Ostrów and a brigade at Zambrów with advance posts further east. On January 6, 1813, Schwarzenberg met a Russian emissary at Ostrów to discuss a ceasefire, but the Russians declined to extend a ceasefire to Reynier's corps, so the meeting yielded nothing useful. In the following four weeks an informal and uneasy truce prevailed, with the Russians gradually displacing the Austrians in their positions around Warsaw and finally occupying the capital in the first week of February. For the better part of a month, therefore, the Königshuld colonies were in the midst of armies on the move. We can only assume that whatever the Austrians did not requisition the Russians did. Cossack cavalry, used by the Russians as advance scouts, undoubtedly appeared in the colonies. The chicken population took another turn for the worse.

During this campaign Schwarzenberg wrote almost daily to his wife. We are the beneficiaries of this epistolary devotion in that we can report some interesting facts about the winter of 1812-1813 in the Paproć region.<sup>62</sup> On December 20, 1812, the temperature at Białystock, 75 kilometres north-east of Königshuld, was -31°C. These extreme temperatures created major clothing and shelter problems for the Austrian army. Schwarzenberg did not suffer on those grounds, but did have to eliminate wine from his menu as his wine barrels kept bursting when the wine froze. On December 26 he wrote from Andrzejewo, an old bishopric lying six kilometres south-east of Königshuld, complaining about a cutting wind that had made the day's ride very unpleasant; see Map 1.3. On January 27, 1813, Schwarzenberg recorded the death of officers and men from an outbreak of typhus in the region.

When the war ended many of the settlers decided that the ravages visited upon them could be avoided in the future by



immigrating to Russia proper, mostly to Bessarabia (southern Russia) and Volhynia (western Ukraine). According to one source (a list of uncertain reliability), in the years 1813-14 at least 106 families, including 9 widows with children, applied to leave or did leave the Königshuld colonies. Another 83 single individuals made the same decision.<sup>63</sup> Two of our ancestors, Daniel Schultz and George Schulz, are on the list. Also on the list is Johann Friedrich Da(h)ms, who may have been a relative of Joachim Dahms, the ancestor of August Dams who sponsored our immigration to Canada in 1948.<sup>64</sup>

A breakdown by colony of the number of families leaving and in brackets the number on site in 1806 (see the colony section) gives the following numbers: Königshuld - 21(68), Louisenau - 47 (16), Wilhelmsdorf - 18(15), Mecklenburg - 20(22). Even allowing for the passage of eight years, the data make it clear that Louisenau, Wilhelmsdorf and Mecklenburg were effectively evacuated, although we will look at this conclusion more closely in the next chapter. Louisenau is of particular interest because the original plan called for only 18 *Hufner* farms. If there were at least 47 families in residence in 1814, the colony had either been enlarged or some of the large farms had been sub-divided into cottagers' allocations. Somewhat surprisingly, no potential immigrants appear from Srebrny Borek. Even more surprising is the appearance of Aron Markowitch as a resident in Mecklenburg. Markowitch is identified as a Jew and, since Jews rarely engaged in agriculture, we conjecture that he was a local trader who had made Mecklenburg his base.

Heavy taxation, crop failure, marauding armies and disease would be the memories that the Duchy of Warsaw left with the settlers who remained. Trying times indeed but not, apparently, trying enough to lead them to try their luck elsewhere. As descendants of this hardy remnant, we probably have good grounds to demand chicken reparations from the French, Austrians and Russians.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Henceforth we will use the spelling 'Buse' because that is how Ludwig's name is entered on the Prussian colonist lists and it is this spelling that has been handed down to us. For the record, we can note here that the herring boat origins and 1376 citation of the Buse name in the Preface come from Bahlow (1972:113-114). The village of Busedorf appears in the entry for the miller Caspar Buschhagen in Vandr 's (2004) list of Pomeranian millers. A list of all references for Chapters I through III can be found in the bibliography that follows Appendix C.

<sup>2</sup> Circumstances, not choice, have dictated our focus on the paternal side of the family in this introduction. We do not have the comparable migration information on the maternal Sch 'tz ancestors.

<sup>3</sup> An overview of Polish history within the larger European context can be extracted from Davies (1996). A concise chapter-length history of Poland can be found in Bideleux and Jeffries (1998). The period 1795-1918, which covers almost the entire span of Polish history that pertains to our family, is the subject of the monograph by Wandych (1974).

<sup>4</sup> Quoted by Lukowski (1999:179-180) in his recent and readable account of the Polish partitions.

<sup>5</sup> Those with a taste for the fine grit of administrative history should consult Bussenius (1960), who provides a detailed account of the work of the Prussian bureaucracy in New East Prussia.

<sup>6</sup> The details of Schroetter's life have been taken from the *Allgemeine Deutsche Biographie* (1891:579-582).

<sup>7</sup> Coxe (1971:185). The appalling conditions under which the Polish serfs lived have been widely noted. Thus, to expand on Coxe, we offer a translated quote from Herzberg (1798:125-126) who cites as his source a Pole by name of Mursinna: "Stables and barns they have only seldom. Because of this, the livestock, cow, goats, pigs, the dog and all the fowl share with the owner's family a small dirty room that is never aired or cleaned. In this room there stands as their annual provisions a barrel of Capusta (cabbage) that creates a horrible stench which is reinforced by the fowl that roosts at night on boards above the stone oven covering it with their droppings.... At night the people share the bare earth with their livestock; at best they sleep on leaf-filled rags. The majority does not undress at night, the men mostly keep on their sheepskin coats in winter as in summer... For the most

part the women wear similar sheepskin coats. The children go about mostly naked. In extreme cold I have often seen village children happily running and playing barefoot in the snow, naked apart from a torn shirt. No one washes or combs themselves... .”

<sup>8</sup> Our account of the colonization of New East Prussia is based largely on the work of Müller (1928). Whenever we have drawn on other sources these are given individual citation. Insofar as Müller drew his material directly from the Prussian archives, the facts we present are likely to be correct from an institutional perspective. We add that our account is a selective one, focusing primarily on the agricultural colonies established by the German settlers. We neglect a whole set of issues and policies related to the overall development of New East Prussia that Schroetter attempted to address. Not only did he have plans for the towns, his plans to improve agriculture included the local indigenous population as well. A keen advocate of incentives to motivate people, in 1801 he set up a system of prizes to reward forty-five desirable activities. For example, the first four Polish farmers who established a new orchard of 200 trees received 20 taler each. Similarly, the first three Jewish teachers who persuaded Jews to become agricultural settlers received 30 taler each. Other prizes were open to the population at large, including a prize of 50 taler each for the first three parishes or estates that planted a minimum number of Canadian pyramidal poplars along the district road. Many other fascinating examples can be found in Schroetter (1801).

<sup>9</sup> Schmit (1959:6).

<sup>10</sup> Councillor Wedell was probably a descendant or relative of Karl Heinrich von Wedell (1712-1782), one of Frederick II’s notable generals in the Seven Years’ War.

<sup>11</sup> Mager (1955:23-24) has a discussion of *Rundlinge* in Mecklenburg. Our visit to Paproć Duża in May 1997 revealed that only half of the circular road was still in use. In June 2006 Carol Kristen-Burns of San Francisco, whose ancestors also come from the Paproć region, found the entire circular road fully operational.

<sup>12</sup> Our source on animal life is Holsche (1800:204-205). Wunderlich (1918:252) claims that bears were no longer to be found in this part of Poland by the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. That wolves and lynx prowled this region at the time of the colonization seems indisputable. Even at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were still extensive forests west and north of Ostrów (Wunderlich, Map XVII). Wunderlich (1918:411) also mentions reports of wolf sightings in the Łomża region in 1916. Ostrów lies 15 km. west and Łomża 35 km. north of Paproć Duża; see Map

## 1.3.

<sup>13</sup> The cost figure is from Pytlak (1917:69). Our uncle, Emil Schütz, told us he worked on the maintenance of these ditches when he was a young man. While visiting the Paproć cemetery in May 1997 our Polish friends were more than a little alarmed when one wheel of their car slipped off the access road and the car got stuck. Three boys from Barrhead who grew up pushing cars out of ditches soon solved the problem.

<sup>14</sup> The occupancy rates were calculated from the Prussian archival material *Nachweisung der Kolonisten auf dem Platten Lande 1806*, Berlin, Geheimes Preussisches Staatsarchiv, II, VI, pp.82-129. For citation purposes we will abbreviate this source as GPS (1806) followed by page numbers. With the exception of Section 1 of Table 1.2, Tables 1.1 and 1.2 were also assembled from the data in GPS. This exciting treasure trove of information about the colonies, as well as our ancestors, was found by Dieter in Berlin in the spring of 2004. The road to this archival jackpot runs through Bussenius (1961) who provides an annotated guide to the documents generated by the Prussian administrations in South Prussia and New East Prussia from 1793 to 1806. Another route to this material is the paper by Staak (1935) who cites GPS (1806) as the source of his list of Mecklenburger colonists in Poland. We are indebted to Balder von Hohenbalken (sadly, deceased) for help with deciphering the often inscrutable handwriting of the Prussian bureaucrats.

<sup>15</sup> Our conversion to metric measure, one *Hufe* equal to 7.66 hectares, is taken from Henning (1969:236). The measure of length in use at the time was the *Rute*, with 180 square *Ruten* making one (Magdeburg) *Morgen* and 30 *Morgen* a *Hufe*. The *Rute* varied in length from region to region so the size of a *Morgen* and a *Hufe* also varied. A map prepared after World War II at an unknown date by an unknown former resident of the region gives the combined land area of Paproć Duża and Paproć Mała in 1939 as 2383 Polish Morga or 1334 hectares; see Fenna (1998:512) for the conversion factor. Our numbers from 1806 gave 1137 hectares for the area of Königshuld. The 1806 number does not include the communal meadow included in the post-World War II map so this accounts for some of the difference, but we should not exclude the possibility that the memory of the map maker was faulty or that an administrative change was made in boundaries after the departure of the Prussians. We are confident we have the right order of magnitude for the area. A letter sent just prior to 1935 by the Paproć teacher, Paul Fröhlich, to Gerhard Staak (1935:49) gives an area of 1017 hectares for Paproć Duża.

<sup>16</sup> The details of Ludwig Buse's possessions, including his land allocation, are given in GPS (1806:110-113).

<sup>17</sup> The English word 'stable' is not quite equivalent to the German *Stall* since the latter can include pigs as occupants whereas the former does not. In passing we can note that Müller (1928:138) found plans for a four *Hufe* homestead in the Prussian archives. Although the plans were never approved, the dimensions of the buildings are worth citing: the house was to be 33 x 34 feet, the *Scheune* 55 x 34, and the *Stall* 37 x 34.

<sup>18</sup> In the Krumbek parish records Ludwig Buse is described as *Landwirt* or farmer, but in Müller's (1972:319) genealogy of the Buse family he is described as a *Zimmerman* (carpenter) and *Ackerwirt* (farmer). There is no documentary record of Ludwig Buse as carpenter so it would appear that Müller is reporting an oral account heard during her visit to the Paproć region in 1937. The two characterizations are not mutually exclusive.

<sup>19</sup> The information on Daniel Schultz is from GPS (1806:106-109).

<sup>20</sup> Müller (1972:326) states that Andreas Taetz, who is on the Prussian list of colonists, was a wheelwright. Given the important role that wagons play in agricultural societies, a wheelwright in a village the size of Königshuld would seem to be a necessity and it is a puzzle as to why he was not identified as a *Handwerker* in the Prussian records.

<sup>21</sup> Müller (1928:123) mentions that in 1801 the Bialystok office set aside 3000 taler for the families that settled near Srebrna before 1799, the year the administration of this region was turned over to the office in Plock. Srebrny Borek lies 3 km. north-east of Srebrna.

<sup>22</sup> From Kossmann (1978:384) we know that the settlement at Srebrny Borek was not on Crown land. Mueller (1940:106) states that the new colonists arrived in 1818-1824.

<sup>23</sup> The Prignitzer peasants appear to have been a rebellious lot in general. For example, in the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the tenant farmers and labourers at the Stavenow estate, some 30 km. distant from Pritzwalk, engaged in legal and physical conflict to protect themselves from the excessive demands of their manorial overlord. In 1808-1809 the farmers of the Prignitz resorted to a rent strike; see Hagen (2002:Chapt. 9 and 605-612).

<sup>24</sup> We have used Müller's (1928: appendix) tabulation of the origins of the settlers. Although the Prussian colonist lists also record the home

village of each colonist, the handwriting is often very difficult to decipher. We have therefore relied on Müller's undoubtedly greater exposure to old German script to give what we hope is a more reliable tabulation. Not that Müller is invariably reliable. For instance, while there are at least two colonists from Alsace (at the time a French territory), he appears to have recorded these as coming from the Holy Roman Empire. Similarly, the work done by Staak (1935) in finding more Mecklenburger among the colonists suggests that Müller was not always in command of the relevant geography. Staak's count of Mecklenburger changes the first row of Table 1.2 as follows: K=37, L=1, W=8, M=13 and Total=59. We have adjusted Staak's numbers to allow for the fact that the five Krumbeck colonists were Prussians, and not Mecklenburger as mistakenly recorded by Staak.

<sup>25</sup> The quote is from Staak (1935:25), who is also the source of the details on recruiting of colonists in Mecklenburg.

<sup>26</sup> Cited in Günther (1963:310). The original German quote reads as follows: *"Ich kam hin, und mein erster Blick, als ich ins Haus trat, war eine grosse dicke Peitsche auf der Hausflur an der Wand hängend. Damit strafte der Verwalter die vorfallenden Vergehen, nahm sie wohl auch mit aufs Feld, wenn ein leibeinger Frohdienstmann pflügte, und schlug Pferde oder Mann, wie eines unrecht machte."*

<sup>27</sup> See Mager (1953:198-201) for details of corporal punishment in Mecklenburg.

<sup>28</sup> Bruford (1959:331) gives wage rates in British currency and we have converted back to taler using his rate of one British pound to 6.67 taler.

<sup>29</sup> George Schulz's and Friedrich Peters' personal details are taken from GPS (1806:98-101 and 110-113).

<sup>30</sup> In Prussia, and probably in Mecklenburg as well, parents settled sums on their children in anticipation of marriage. The eldest usually inherited the land and capital stock and had to pay out their siblings' marriage portions. Much interesting detail about property relations in Prussia in the 18<sup>th</sup> century can be found in Hagen (2002: Chapt. 6,7).

<sup>31</sup> The average for Königshuld is distorted by the 3,949 taler of property owned by a very rich Württemberger. Removing this observation from the calculation lowers the average to 595 taler.

<sup>32</sup> Müller (1972:318-326) documents prior trade or work status for nineteen colonists from the duchies of Mecklenburg. Not every entry is

clearly identified as being drawn from church parish records, but it seems difficult to imagine any other source for this type of information.

<sup>33</sup> The attentive reader may have noted that whenever we speak of the settlers' relations with the Prussian bureaucracy we use the male personal pronoun. This reflects the prevailing social realities of the period in which men were the official heads of households. Widows would take over that role only in the event of the death of a husband which appears to have been the case in three instances by 1806.

<sup>34</sup> The full text of the lease is given in Müller (1928:199-204).

<sup>35</sup> According to Müller's (1972:318) genealogy of the Buse family, Ludwig Buse left Krumbek in 1803. Since Müller also used the Prussian colonial lists as a source, we have to assume this is a transcription error on her part.

<sup>36</sup> The bulk of the genealogical information in Tables 1.3 and 1.4 was assembled by Volker F. Hahn of Kronshagen, Germany in April 1985 and February 1989, respectively. We received this information from our aunt, Emilie Schütz, of Osterrönhof, Germany. Corrections and additions to Hahn's data were made after intensive searches in the Paproć Duża and Jasienica church registries. In some cases we have used the death register to determine year of birth. Because the death register records only the age of the deceased, subtracting the age at death from the year of death to give a year of birth could create an error of one year, depending on whether the person died before or after their birthday. Furthermore, cross-references to marriages and births of children often produced conflicting numbers for dates of birth; this proved to be especially noticeable prior to 1837 when the entries were made in the Catholic Church registries and the inevitable errors of translations from German into Polish occurred. Corrections and additions were also made to the genealogical tables that appear in Chapter II. Some gaps in the later tables are due to the absence of the 1890-99 Paproć Duża registers from the Family History Center (henceforth HFC) microfilms obtained from the Mormon church in Salt Lake, Utah. Hahn did not seem to be aware that deaths during the Volga exile were later recorded in the Paproć Duża church registers.

<sup>37</sup> With the exception of the Buses, the information on generations VI and VII comes from Volker Hahn's genealogy of the Grothe-Schütz families posted on the website: <http://freenet-homepage/hahn.volker>.

<sup>38</sup> The data on age of death and life expectancy in the Prignitz are taken from Hagen (2002:263,265). Hagen (p.249) also reports that in

four Prignitz villages during the period 1694-1799 the median age of death of those dying after reaching age 39 was 63.5 years. Remarkably, the median age of death for the 22 ancestors in Tables 1.3 and 1.4, all of whom died after age 39, is 62.

<sup>39</sup> The historical detail on Krumbeck is drawn from an article in a guide entitled "*Kunst und Geschichts-Denkmäler des Freistaates Mecklenburg-Strelitz*" published by a Mecklenburg government cultural commission sometime in the 1920s. We are indebted to Isabella von Dewitz not only for this article, but also for the generous contribution of the better part of her afternoon dispensing information to us during our April 2004 visit.

<sup>40</sup> Film #1186446 from the FHC.

<sup>41</sup> The citations of the Schütz name to 1748 come from Enders (2000:116, 200, 1173). The two Schütz cavalymen were found in the church register of the Pritzwalk Cuirassier Regiment (Film #172489 from the FHC). A cuirass is a breastplate, and in the cavalry of this period a metal one. The *Jaeger* appears in a Pritzwalk baptism record found by Renate Rueb of Berlin, Germany while she was searching for Schütz ancestors on our behalf. The *Wasch Mädchen* Friedrieke Schütz appears in the list of employees of the Ducal administration included in the Mecklenburg-Schwerin *Staatskalender* of 1813.

<sup>42</sup> The baptismal record was provided by Renate Rueb.

<sup>43</sup> Voelker Hahn's genealogy of the Schütz family stated that Christian Friedrich was born in Wutike/Kyritz in 1775. The church register of the village of Wutike, however, has no entry for Christian Friedrich. Despite this dead-end, the church at Wutike is well worth a visit to see the Flying Angel of Wutike suspended from the ceiling.

<sup>44</sup> The Pritzwalk population figures are from Enders (2000:660, 672, 1076). More details on the 1821 fire can be found on the city of Pritzwalk's website.

<sup>45</sup> We have drawn on Kopp's (1908:1-16) biography of the Colonel for most of the personal details in this paragraph and those which follow. Some of the genealogical information on the Colonel's family comes from Warnstedt (1970: 69-74, 90-91), who is also our source for the early history of the extended von Quitzow clan.

<sup>46</sup> Staak (1935:16) is our source for these numbers as well as the detail on the recruitment activity of the Prussians.



<sup>47</sup> This information has been extracted from Müller's (1972) ethnographic study of Mecklenburger in East Europe. Müller visited the Paproć area in 1937. In the introduction to her book she mentions that she had a family connection to the descendants of the original settlers. Insofar as she gives a detailed genealogical account only of the Buse family, she may have been a relative.

<sup>48</sup> Only the names of home villages of ancestors appear on Map 1.7. The unnamed villages are: Brunn, Cantnitz, Dabelow, Godendorf, Göhren, Golm, Gross Daberkow, Gross Schönfeld, Hinrichshagen, Klein Daberkow, Klockow, Kublank, Lichtenberg, Mildnitz, Neetzka, Neverin, Rehberg, Schönbeck and Woggersin.

<sup>49</sup> Again, only ancestral villages are named on the map. The others are Breitenfeld, Freienstein, Gadow, Randow, Wernikow, Wulfersdorf, Wusterhausen and Zootzen.

<sup>50</sup> There were Schütz colonists in Poland by 1810. In that year the list of parishioners at Płock included the carpenter David Schütz, 27, his wife Elizabeth, 28, and three children. Also listed are David and Johanna Schütz, aged 56 and 52, respectively, which suggests they were the parents of the younger David. The list of parishioners is included in Quednau (no date, 101-116).

<sup>51</sup> Mühle (1995:40).

<sup>52</sup> Schultze (1956:247 and map appendix).

<sup>53</sup> Müller (1928:77).

<sup>54</sup> We made our estimate of 25 km. a day before we found Hagen's (2002:379) report, based on Prussian customs evidence, that it took three days to drive a loaded wagon fifty miles, i.e. 26.8 km. a day.

<sup>55</sup> Mager (1955:326-328) gives considerable detail on road conditions. He cites a report from 1803 which stated that one could not travel more than a (German) mile without finding evidence of upturned and broken wagons and fallen horses.

<sup>56</sup> Mittenzei and Herzfeld (1987:299).

<sup>57</sup> The wine confiscation is mentioned by Holland-Rose (1951:214) who, along with Kukiel (1951) and Handelsman (1951), is the main source for our information on the Duchy of Warsaw.

<sup>58</sup> Lukowski (1999:184).

<sup>59</sup> Schmit (1959-1960, Part III:4).

<sup>60</sup> Neutatz (1993:69).

<sup>61</sup> Gebler (1863) and Novak (1913) were our main sources for the Austrian campaign.

<sup>62</sup> The selected items are from Novak's (1913) edition of Schwarzenberg's letters.

<sup>63</sup> The list of names was initially prepared between 1939 and 1941 by a Dr. Hopf of the Deutsches Ausland-Institut. It has been subsequently re-worked by Wise (1999) and made available in electronic form at the website [www.odessa3.org/collections/ships/link/hopf2.txt](http://www.odessa3.org/collections/ships/link/hopf2.txt).

<sup>64</sup> Enders (2000:500) gives a 1716 reference to a Prignitzer Dahmes family. This is probably an old variant of Da(h)ms, but we have nothing to confirm this. Müller (1972:297) lists the name Friedrich Dahms among the Mecklenburger who migrated to Paproć Duża after the departure of the Prussians. It is almost certain that Friedrich Dahms and Friedrich Dams are the same person. Throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century all the signatures in the Paproć Duża church registers appear as 'Dahms', so the spelling 'Dams' is probably a bureaucratic simplification. We are indebted to Bruno Dams for making his family genealogy available to us. This genealogy, constructed from the church registers at the FHC in Salt Lake City, starts with Joachim Dahms, born in 1788.

## ГЛАВА II

### Russian Subjects, Not So Briefly, 1815-1918



*The Lutheran church at Paproc Duża in the 1930s, built in 1840-41.*

Я, нижеподписавшийся даю сию поличку въ томъ, что во время своего пребывания въ числѣ студентовъ ИМПЕРАТОРСКАГО <sup>Юрьева</sup> Дерптскаго Университета обязуюсь не только не принадлежать ни къ какому тайному сообществу, но даже безъ разрѣшенія на то, въ каждомъ отдѣльномъ случаѣ, университетскаго начальства, не вступать и въ дозволенныя закономъ общества, въ случаѣ же нарушенія мною сего обѣщанія, подвергаюсь немедленному удаленію изъ Университета.

г. ДЕРПТЪ, 16. <sup>12</sup> августа 1893 г.

*Рудольфъ Давидовичъ Бусе*

*Promise made by Rudolf Buse not to join any secret societies or violate any University rules, on penalty of expulsion. Signed at Dorpat University (Estonia) August 16, 1893.*

## Chapter II

### **RUSSIAN SUBJECTS, NOT SO BRIEFLY, 1815-1918**

The communal recitation of the Lord's Prayer at the end of a prayer meeting, however short, is a well-established Protestant tradition. It is unlikely that Pastor Johann Buse departed from this tradition in September 1914 when he held a short prayer meeting on the crowded platform of the railway station at Czyżew, seventeen kilometres south-east of Paproć Duża.<sup>1</sup> At the end of the recitation, there were final hurried embraces as Russian soldiers separated women and children from husbands and fathers. The men and older sons, carrying only hand baggage, then crowded into the box cars of the waiting train, their destination unknown. The fourth line of the Lord's Prayer is "Thy will be done on Earth as it is in Heaven". Any men with theological inclinations had ample opportunity to reflect on this line as, during the next few weeks, a succession of trains took them further and further into the Russian hinterland. At the end of February 1915, without the benefit of clergy, the women and children also made their way into box cars waiting for them at Czyżew.

The Buse and Schütz families were on the move again, but in circumstances not of their choosing. They would not have willingly chosen to travel in box cars to an unknown destination carrying only hand baggage, uncertain whether their property was to be expropriated and their exile permanent. They were not alone in this absence of choice. During World War I German-speaking Russian subjects, along with other minorities such as the Jews, were deported from Poland to the Russian interior because the Russian military doubted their loyalty to the Russian state. When the rail journeys finally ended, most of the Paproć villagers found themselves on the banks of the Volga River in the Russian provinces of Saratov and Samara, some 1650 kilometres from home. There they remained until the Russian Revolution and the subsequent peace treaty between Germany and Russia in March 1918 gave most of them the opportunity to return to Poland.

The full story of the exile on the Volga will appear at the end of

this chapter, after our ancestors' story for the century from 1815 to 1915 has been told. Some historical background will again set the stage. We focus on the Polish insurrections of November 1830 and January 1863 because these two events shaped Russian policy in Poland. We then turn to developments in the Paproć region, constructing as best we can a picture of the evolution of the colonies under Russian rule.<sup>2</sup> The role of the Lutheran Church in this evolution will be given due attention as it was central to the colonists' communal life and the preservation of their German identity. A family letter written by one of our ancestors in 1844 will serve as our window for glimpses into village life. The rest of the ancestors, that is, generations I through IV, then make their appearance. Our parents constitute generation I and their remembered experiences during the Volga exile, as well as those of our numerous aunts and uncles, will be an introduction to some of the oral history of our family.

## **Two Insurrections**

When the Kingdom of Poland emerged from the negotiations at the Congress of Vienna in 1815, it became clear that the Poles' alliance with Napoleon had cost them more than the long tally of battlefield corpses. Prussia reclaimed South Prussia in the form of the Grand Duchy of Posen and Austria took back the Galician territories it had lost in 1809; the remainder of the Duchy of Warsaw was transformed into a new Russian kingdom, often referred to as Congress Poland. This amounted to a fourth partition, with Russia as the main beneficiary, adding 127,000 square kilometres and 3.3 million people to its empire. Czar Alexander I seemed well-disposed towards the Poles, granting them the constitution he denied his own subjects. The constitution of 1815 restored the Sejm, its electorate enlarged to include property-owning town burghers. A Crown-appointed Administrative Council exercised executive power supported by a Polish judiciary and civil service. The reconstituted Polish army marched under its own colours, but its commander-in-chief was the Czar's brother, Grand Duke Constantine, who soon whipped, literally, the army into a credible fighting force.<sup>3</sup> A viceroy in Warsaw saw to it that Russian interests were taken into account in the formulation of legislation. As a last resort the Czar could legislate by decree.<sup>4</sup>

Alexander's liberal attitude to the Poles was put to the test in 1820 when the Sejm rejected legislation proposed by the Council. The Sejm was disbanded and not recalled until 1825, the year of Alexander's death. The new czar, Nicholas I, quickly showed that he had little sympathy for his Polish subjects and their undiminished desire for a truly independent Poland. Because these desires could not be advocated publicly, secret societies proliferated and in 1828 the members of one such society were charged with treason. A lenient tribunal of the Sejm reduced the charge to conspiracy and sentenced the conspirators to three years detention. Nicholas revoked the sentences and imposed his own, sending the conspirators to Siberia in chains. Yet for every conspiracy uncovered by Duke Constantine's secret agents, another one sprouted. One of these, inspired in part by revolutionary upheavals in France and Belgium, grew into a full scale insurrection in 1830-31.

Historians generally agree that poor planning and ineffectual execution doomed to failure the insurrection that began on November 29, 1830. Junior officers and cadets in Warsaw, in league with literary revolutionaries, planned to assassinate Duke Constantine and use the Warsaw garrison to stage a military coup. The assassination attempt was bungled and the senior officers of the garrison gave little support. The working poor, however, saw the insurrection as an opportunity to express their grievances with rioting and looting. The momentum provided by this popular support swept away the Administrative Council and brought in a new government which became increasingly radical, forcing to the sidelines those who were willing to seek an accommodation with Russia. On January 25, 1831 the Sejm, in a fit of rhetorical excess, proclaimed the deposition of Nicholas as King of Poland. Military conflict now became inevitable. The Polish army had some initial success against the Russians, but on May 26 the Poles lost a decisive battle at Ostrołęka (45 kilometres northwest of Paproć Duża). At the beginning of September the Russians captured Warsaw. The remnants of the main Polish army retreated north, crossing into Prussia in early October and from there most of the officers went into exile in Western Europe, primarily in France.

Army officers were not the only ones who chose exile in preference to Russian rule and retribution. A significant

proportion of Poland's cultural and political elite emigrated. Of the political emigrés, the most notable was Prince Adam Czartoryski, a former foreign minister for Alexander I. In Paris Czartoryski established the equivalent of a government-in-exile which served to keep the 'Polish Question' alive in the courts and chanceries of Europe, but failed to influence subsequent political events in Poland to any significant extent. Those who remained behind received summary justice. Some 250 political and military leaders were condemned to death. Most of the remaining officer corps were transported to exile in Russia. Russian officers received as gifts of the state almost all of the sequestered manors of insurrectionists. Political changes included the suspension of the constitution of 1815 and the dissolution of the Sejm, the army and institutes of higher learning, notably Alexander University in Warsaw. The Russian viceroy ruled by decree with scant attention paid to Polish opinion, promises to consult local assemblies notwithstanding. The Polish quest for more freedom had produced less of it. If, prior to the insurrection, many Poles had viewed themselves as loyal subjects of the Czar, after 1831 far fewer did so.

The convenient but indiscriminate label of 'Poles' for the insurrectionists hides the fact that not every Pole supported the uprising. Most of the peasantry, comprising over three-quarters of the population, remained indifferent. The political objectives of the insurrectionists had little meaning for the peasants, who rightly perceived that replacing the czar with a Polish king in Warsaw would hardly relieve them of the oppressive feudal conditions under which they lived. The Napoleonic Code, carried over from the Duchy into the constitution of 1815, gave the peasants some civil rights, but it also gave landlords the right to evict peasants from their holdings. Nevertheless, in the years following the insurrection of 1830, the pressure for change in the status of the peasantry became a major issue for those Poles who had not abandoned the goal of independence. The political Left had always advocated the emancipation of the peasants as part of a program for Polish independence; its most radical elements even advocated freeholds for the peasants without compensation to the landlords. On the Right, the more thoughtful of the landlords recognized that the *status quo* was not sustainable, either politically or economically. To keep seventy-five per cent of the population in permanent servitude

invited social upheaval given developments elsewhere in Western Europe. On the economic front some landlords began to realize that the system of compulsory labour services rendered to the manor by the peasants and the intermingling of manor and peasant holdings created major impediments to efficient production. The landlords tended to favour conversion of labour services to rents and by 1859 rents had replaced labour services on twenty-five per cent of peasant farms.<sup>5</sup> This did not necessarily improve the status of the peasants since many found themselves working as labourers on the estates in order to pay for the rents.

Events outside Congress Poland also kept the peasant question in the forefront of politics. In 1846 Polish nationalists had planned uprisings in both the Duchy of Posen and Galicia (Austrian Poland). The rising in Posen was stillborn, discovered by the Prussians before the Poles had the chance to act. In Galicia the call to arms by the Polish nationalists did not bring the peasants streaming to the Polish colours. Instead, the peasants turned their wrath on their Polish landlords. Some 1000 people died and over 400 manors were plundered. The landlords in the Kingdom of Poland no doubt took note. So did the Russian administration which issued a decree addressing some of the peasant grievances. Peasants were given fixity of tenure and landlords could no longer reduce the size of peasant holdings or increase their duties at the manor. These entitlements were frequently ignored by the landlords who continued to control the local administration of justice.

The barricades that appeared in the capitals of continental Europe in 1848 did not appear in Warsaw. The revolutionary events of that year passed without major incident in Poland. In 1855 Nicholas I died and with him the iron-fisted rule over the Kingdom of Poland. The new czar, Alexander II, expressed a willingness to consider reforms, but warned the Poles not to dream of independence. No new political institutions were created. The Agricultural Society, established in 1857, served as an informal parliament for the landed gentry until it was abolished during the disturbances of 1861. Agricultural reform was the principal topic of debate, with conversion to rents or conversion to freeholds the major fault line among the members. They were, however, united in their search for a



solution that would preserve their privileged position in Polish society.

The more liberal position of Alexander II also fanned the flames of radical romanticism among the youth of Poland. Students again formed secret societies fuelled with visions of a national uprising that would overwhelm the Russians and march eastwards to the boundaries of 1772. They were soon joined by radical priests, minor officials, petty bourgeoisie and artisans who eventually coalesced into a not always harmonious faction known as the 'Reds'. Their program was both nationalist and social; it called for an independent Poland with political liberty for all and the emancipation of the peasantry. In the absence of formal political institutions the 'Reds' dedicated their efforts towards influencing the Agricultural Society to take a more radical stance. The visible manifestations of these efforts were large demonstrations on any significant date in the calendar of Polish history. At one such demonstration in February 1861 five people were killed. In March 1861 Alexander issued the decree to emancipate the serfs in Russia. Conflict between peasants and landlords in Lithuania spread to Poland with peasants refusing to perform labour services at the manors. The Russian viceroy brought the Polish Marquis Alexander Wielopolski into the administration in an effort to defuse an explosive situation. Wielopolski, though a social conservative, sought limited reforms such as more autonomy in Polish affairs and the conversion of labour services to rents. His response to the public disturbances was repression. In early April he disbanded the Agricultural Society after it declared itself in favour of freeholds for the peasants as well as a reconstituted Poland based on the boundaries of 1772, the latter being a non-negotiable issue for the Russians. A few days later over 200 people died when Russian soldiers opened fire on a crowd of demonstrators.

In order to finesse the nationalists' appeal to the peasants, Wielopolski issued a decree in mid-May 1861 for the conversion to rents and the reform of local administrations. These concessions failed to satisfy inflamed nationalist sentiment. Wielopolski had not helped his cause by alienating the Catholic Church when he suggested that the Church might not retain its leading position. The 'Reds' continued their underground

activities, including the recruitment to their cause of Polish officers in the Russian army. A nation-wide insurrection, planned in December 1862, began on January 22, 1863. Without a regular army, the insurgents could not engage the Russian army in pitched battles. Instead, local bands of guerillas resorted to hit-and-run operations throughout the countryside. The burden of supporting these bands fell mostly on the smaller landlords. The magnates had the option of removing themselves abroad in order to avoid the taint of treason which would endanger their properties if the insurgency collapsed. In some areas the peasants supported the insurgents, but in many others they did not, taking the position that the Czar was more likely to protect their interests than the landlords. Although the 'Reds' planned and initiated the insurrection, the conservative 'Whites', primarily the landlords, joined them to create a National Government that operated clandestinely out of Warsaw. The leadership of this government proved unstable, depending very much on which faction gained the upper hand. The 'Whites' sought to restrain the 'Reds' from turning the insurrection into a social revolution. They also sought the intervention of the signatories of the 1815 Congress of Vienna treaties in the hope that external pressure might, as a minimum, force Russia to give the Poles the limited freedom they had enjoyed prior to 1830. The diplomatic dance went as far as a joint protest by Austria, France and England. Russia decided that none of these countries was willing to risk war and successfully called their bluff.

Freed from the need to worry about foreign repercussions, the Czar decided on military terror as his answer to the Poles. The new viceroy, General Berg, imposed a brutal regime of repression in Warsaw in an attempt to destroy the control centre of the insurrection. In March 1864 the Czar also made a bold move to subvert peasant support for the National Government. Freeholds were granted to the peasants without any requirement for direct payments to landlords, who were to be compensated with state bonds. The right of access to forests and pastures, long resisted by the landlords, was also granted. Manor and peasant lands were separated and the landlord no longer controlled the village commune. This was a solution that was redder than any that the 'Reds' had been able to offer, constrained as they were by the need to cooperate with the

'Whites'. Some 700,000 peasants, including the landless, became the ultimate beneficiaries of this decree. Although the Czar's decree included Crown estates we do not know whether the Paproć peasants' leaseholds became freeholds through purchase at this time. This may have occurred as early as 1828 when, for reasons of fiscal economy, a plan was put forward to sell 160,000 Polish morga (221,360 acres) of inheritable Crown leaseholds.<sup>6</sup>

The will to sustain the insurrection gradually eroded under the Russian assault. In April 1864, Romuald Traugutt, a former lieutenant-colonel in the Russian army and now leader of the National Government, was arrested in Warsaw. The web of secrecy that had sheltered the operations of the National Government for fifteen months unravelled. In August, Traugutt and four others were publicly hanged. Russian retribution for the 1863 insurrection amounted to 260 executions, 1,500 sentences of forced labour and 11,000 deportations. Some 1,660 estates were sequestered, creating a large number of impoverished noble families. Major institutional changes followed. Ten regional administrative units, collectively called Vistulaland, replaced the Kingdom of Poland. All governmental authority flowed from St. Petersburg, the Russian capital. Russification of Poland became the official policy. All senior officials, as well as the language of the administration, were Russian. A new university in Warsaw operated as a Russian institution. In schools, the history and geography of Russia and Poland were taught in Russian. Pay scales for teachers discriminated against Poles. Russia was determined to make Poland just another province in its empire. The Poles could resist only passively by undertaking what they called 'organic work' designed to strengthen and sustain the cultural, social and economic life of Poland. Some hard lessons had been learned. Highly risky insurrections exacted correspondingly high costs. The odds ran in favour of failure rather than success. After each insurrection the Poles found the goal of independence further from their grasp.

### **Staying Put**

The conflict between the Poles and Russians intruded into the lives of the German settlers in the Paproć region during the 19<sup>th</sup>

century. We will discuss this intrusion after examining the reaction of the settlers to their new Russian masters. The 1815 protocol governing the hand-over of New East Prussia and South Prussia to Russia allowed for the voluntary movement of German colonists out of these provinces. In the six years allowed for such migration, 90 out of the 2733 eligible families were re-settled in East Prussia. None were from the Königshuld colonies.<sup>7</sup> In August 1815 some colonists made an enquiry to the East Prussian authorities in Königsberg about re-settlement, lamenting their war-time losses and complaining about harassment by the Poles. The reply did little to meet the expectations of the potential migrants; the East Prussian authorities typically did not offer land, but only positions as cottagers (*Büdner*) and day labourers on private and Crown estates. The colonists did not respond to this offer until January 1820 when they requested information about the conditions and terms of re-settlement. In the meantime, another group had, in February 1819, written directly to King Frederick William in Berlin. The Finance Ministry responded, but whether the settlers received this response is unknown. Despite these enquiries, no one moved. Faced with the prospect of being a German-speaking labourer in East Prussia, the settlers decided that being a German-speaking landowner in Poland did not seem such a miserable option after all.

The Prussian response in 1816 to the 1815 enquiry included a request for an inventory of the potential migrants' moveable property. This inventory has survived, with separate lists for 32 *Hüfner* and 25 *Büdner*.<sup>8</sup> The Buse and Schütz names are not in evidence, but three other ancestors appear on the list of *Hüfner*: George Schulz (V.P3, Table 1.3), Daniel Schultz and Johann Friedrich Peters (V.M3 and V.M7, respectively, in Table 1.4). Recall that George Schulz and Daniel Schultz were on the list of people who supposedly migrated to Russia. They were not the only ones who appear to have changed their mind. Twenty of the names that appear on the list of 1816 also show up on the list of migrants to Russia in 1813-14.

These data allow us to make an assessment of how these three ancestors had fared materially in the decade from 1806 to 1816. Only Daniel Schultz's household size had changed significantly; it rose from five to ten people, having added two

sons and two daughters as well as a maid. George Schulz appears to have lost, through death or departure, his three sons, but augmented the household with a daughter, two male servants and a maid. The number of cows and calves had not changed noticeably for Friedrich Peters and Daniel Schultz, whereas George Schulz now only had four cows instead of eight. No one had sheep in 1806 whereas in 1816 both Friedrich Peters and George Schulz each had four. As might be expected, the most dramatic change occurred in the ownership of draught animals. In 1806 Friedrich Peters had two horses, Daniel Schultz three and George Schulz two, whereas in 1816 they had six, six and three, respectively. In addition, George Schulz had acquired a pair of oxen. The value of their moveable property had increased substantially for all three: Friedrich Peters from 594 taler to 818, Daniel Schultz from 502 to 849 and George Schulz from 300 to 431. Although this suggests that their material position actually improved during the Napoleonic period, it reveals nothing about the actual losses they sustained. These unobserved losses may have prompted the request for repatriation to Prussia.

Because individual cases can be misleading, we have also made the 1806 to 1816 comparison using averages for the entire group. The average value of moveable property brought to Königshuld by a *Hufner* had amounted to 619 taler; the comparable figure in 1816 was 518 taler. In 1806 the average *Hufner* owned 1.52 horses, 0.07 oxen, 3.24 cows, 0.76 young cattle (*Jungvieh*) and no sheep or pigs; in 1816 he owned 3.41 horses, 1.09 oxen, 4.25 cows, 3.50 young cattle, 5.09 sheep and 1.56 pigs. The list included the miller – the third richest man in the colonies in 1806 and the richest migrant in 1816 - whose property had decreased from 1,683 to 1,138 taler. In 1816 Königshuld had a tavern and its owner, worth a solid 850 taler, also wanted to leave. The decline in the value of moveable property is not necessarily a direct consequence of war-time losses since the moveable property also included cash-in-hand and the new settlers would have invested a good part of this cash in their buildings. Nevertheless, the modest increase in the average of livestock holdings over the decade gives some support to their claim of substantial war-time losses, at least for those who expressed an interest in leaving Poland.

The *Büdners'* experiences were similar, although their economic position relative to the *Hüfner* appears to have improved somewhat. The moveable property of the average *Büdner* on arrival is unknown so we can only report the average of 230 taler for 1816. He owned on average 1.72 horses, 1.68 cows, 1.44 young calves, 0.96 sheep and 0.44 pigs, whereas in 1806 he had owned only 0.55 cows and no other livestock. Changes in land ownership had occurred; ten of the *Hüfner* had acquired *Büdner* allocations in addition to their own large homesteads. Furthermore, the size of these allocations was 0.20 *Hufen* (6 *Morgen*), twice the size originally allocated in 1803-05. In marginal notes on the *Büdner* list we find that eight of them had doubled the size of their holding from 3 to 6 *Morgen* by a lease grant from the King of Saxony. Whatever their tribulations, the urge for more land remained undiminished in these settlers.

In 1806 Ludwig Buse had two male hired hands, making him one of the 24 per cent of the *Hüfner* who had at least one or more men-servants (*Knechte*) or maids (*Mägde*) in that year. In 1816, 69 per cent of the *Hüfner* had such live-in help. This increase reflects not so much a higher standard of living as it does the conventional agricultural practices of the time in which surplus children, usually over the age of twelve, were placed with those who had the land and resources to utilize them. Childless couples or those without sons invariably had such help. Even the lowly *Büdner* followed this practice. Only one *Büdner* (3%) had hired help in 1806, but 28 per cent had such help in 1816. Given this 'trade' in children, it is probably more meaningful to look at the average household size (which includes servants) rather than average family size. In 1806 the average household size (excluding single men) for *Hüfner* and *Büdner* was 5.08 and 4.78, respectively. A decade later it was 6.69 and 4.92, confirming the argument that surplus children were being 'farmed out'. In fact, the average number of children per family remained remarkably stable in this period. In 1806 the average was 3.24 for *Hüfner* and 2.77 for *Büdner*, whereas in 1816 it was 3.13 and 2.91, respectively.

One entry from the 1816 list deserves to be highlighted. On the list of *Hüfner* is Friedrich Dams, whom we take to be the Johann Friedrich Dams that appears on the list of migrants to

Russia. Friedrich, worth 438 taler, had two sons, one hired hand, two horses, two oxen, three cows, two calves and ten sheep. On the August Dams homestead in Barrhead in 1948 there were two sons, a daughter, four horses, eight cows, six calves and perhaps 18 pigs. The one room house, heated by wood, had a sleeping loft accessible only from the outside and the toilet was out back. If Friedrich Dams had arrived in Barrhead in 1948 straight from the Königshuld of 1816 and exchanged his homespun clothes for some machine-made overalls, we think that he would have felt right at home.

The settlers' complaints in 1815 about harassment by the Poles were likely exaggerated to elicit Prussian sympathy. In 1820 at least five new families from Woldegk settled in the Königshuld colonies and they had undoubtedly made enquiries about conditions in Poland before making the decision to migrate. In a letter to the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, begging for previously approved exit permits, they also state their reasons for wanting to leave: "It is with only one concern that we leave our homeland, wife and child cry for bread and we are not able to provide for their subsistence."<sup>9</sup> This was signed by the wheelwright Filter, the master weaver Hasse, the shoemaker Irrgang and a resident called Topp. Two families of Filters emigrated in 1820 and we believe that the Filter who signed this letter was our ancestor Andreas Friedrich Filter (V.P13 in Table 1.3). The letter was written in the context of a European agricultural crisis. In Mecklenburg prices of bread grains (rye and wheat) fell by 50 per cent from 1817 to 1820. Prices of other agricultural commodities such as wool and mutton also declined, but by lesser amounts. Many landlords, whose estates had declined in value by 40 per cent since 1800, were unable to service the mortgages they had taken on in an earlier land boom.<sup>10</sup> The depression in agriculture spread to the towns where artisans, such as wheelwrights and weavers, were forced into unemployment and, when starvation appeared to be the most likely prospect, eventual emigration.

Another small digression on Mecklenburg-Strelitz yields an interesting story. Although the peasantry was emancipated in 1820, their economic condition remained precarious. Released from their feudal obligations to the landlords, they now found that they had to fight strenuously to extract decent wages from

these same landlords. The state often had to intervene on behalf of the peasantry, especially the landless day labourers. In 1839 a group of day labourers, at the instigation of the estate inspector and the house tutor, murdered the landlord of the manor in the village of Matzdorf. The landlord had a reputation for maltreatment of his labourers, which would account for what was apparently a very gruesome murder. The labourers, convinced that justice had been served, returned to work the following day. The inspector was tried and hanged for his role in persuading the labourers that the landlord was outside the law and therefore not protected by the usual norms of civilized behaviour. The labourers received lesser penalties.<sup>11</sup> This murder is of interest to us because one of our ancestors, Anna Behnke (V.M4, Table 1.4) was born in Matzdorf and her husband, Daniel Schultz (V.M3), although born in nearby Brohm, appears on the colonial lists as a resident of Matzdorf. In these small villages everyone was related to everyone else, even if only indirectly, and Anna Behnke and Daniel Schultz probably had relatives among the labourers who killed the Matzdorf landlord. To have a murderer or two hanging from a distant branch of the family tree is a distinction that most would prefer to disown, but we suspect it is a more common occurrence than is generally acknowledged. We acknowledge ours as the bad, but colourful, fruit on the genealogical shrubbery.

### **A Family Letter**

At this point in our story our sources begin to run dry. Although both the Duchy of Warsaw and Congress Poland had colonization programs patterned after the Prussian system, we do not know whether the Polish (or later Russian administrations) supervised peasant life with the bureaucratic zeal of the Prussians.<sup>12</sup> If there are records of such supervision, our lack of Polish and Russian kept them from our view. When facts fail, fiction is a tempting substitute. We also know our literary limitations and will not try to present an imagined peasant world that captures the essentials of life in a 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish village.<sup>13</sup> Instead, we will build our story around a letter written by the master weaver Josef Wolfert to his nephew on May 26, 1844. One of our ancestors, Wolfert (V.M11, Table 1.4), born in 1798, had come to Königshuld with



his parents from Bonlanden, Württemberg sometime between 1803 and 1806. The translated letter follows:

I received your agreeable letter of March 20<sup>th</sup> of last year on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of this month [May, 1844] with such great joy that I am scarcely able to express myself - The sorrow and the tears that I shed in reading your letter are almost countless - to hear of the death of my beloved sister, your dear Mother, grieves me sorely knowing that before her departure she received no news of me, despite frequent letters to her, as well as my dear Mother's brother in Sielming. Receiving no answer from her, I was of the opinion that she had long forgotten us, but I had not, and I cannot describe the joy that you still thought of me - Please bring me joy again with a letter and the news about all the relatives, how many are still alive and how they are keeping. I no longer live in the Paproć colony but a quarter mile [a German mile equals 4.6 English miles] away where I run a shop with 6 looms producing a variety of table linens and a variety of other work. I employ 4 journeymen weavers and two apprentices. I get work from 10 to 12 miles away, own my property and keep for my own use 1 horse and 2 cows but few hours pass when I do not think of my kin and my fatherland.

God only knows what I have been subjected to in this land of Poland. Thus when the tragic revolution began on 29 November 1830 and everyone in the country between the ages of 18 and 45 had to march with the local militia, we had from the start to exercise daily with musket and weapons until February 6<sup>th</sup> 1831. When the Russian army appeared everywhere on February 6<sup>th</sup> we were lucky to be living near the Russian border so that we Germans put ourselves under the protection of the Russian army, you can imagine the fear and terror that we had to endure - Many hundreds of Germans, and thousands of Jews, all completely innocent, were hung and murdered by the Poles. The cries and lamentation of the women and children were pitiable. Many a mother and her children washed their hands with tears and sighed and cursed Poland for the loss of their murdered father, this I have to tell you, son of my dear sister, what incidents befell me after the Revolution.

Still in the middle of war God afflicted the land with the tragedy of cholera and God's hand tore from me my beloved Mother and a nine-year-old daughter; in the war I also lost 2 horses and this was followed by a livestock epidemic during which I lost 5 head of cattle in 3 days, no small matter in those times. Furthermore, a 1/4-year-old son died and last year 3 of my children died within a quarter of a year ...it was difficult for us parents.

Still living are 4 children, a daughter of 18, one of 6 and a son of 16 years, the second son 13, both attending school in the Polish, Russian and German languages, and we have fulfilled our hopes of having a church and school. In Paproć, 1/4 mile from here, we have a fine church and school, massively built. I took great pains as church warden to bring the matter this far, the government gave us 18,000 florin [the currency of the time] and the balance had to be supplied by the parish. I must also, dear nephew, give you the news about my other siblings, still alive are 2 brothers and a sister. Ludwig is the oldest and has a fine farm, and Friedrich has taken over Father's farm, and my sister has married a wheelwright and has 6 living children, her name is Johanna and her husband Wilhelm Martins, but Ludwig had a huge misfortune two years ago, namely a cancer on the mouth for which no doctor could help him. He was sent to Warsaw where he was cut twice but could not be healed. Every doctor predicted his death, at which point I took him to Łomża, drove the 4 miles from here, and the doctors had consultations about him and then healed him - but he became a cripple.

Dear nephew send me all the news from there and tell me how things stand. Here we have good times, grain is cheap and on the fields everything stands very pretty, we look forward to a blessed harvest. I wrote this letter with great pleasure on the first Ascension day, even if the paper was covered with sadness - but I must also tell you the names of my children, the oldest is called Ludwig, the second Friedrich, the oldest daughter Carolina and the youngest Wilhelmina. Carolina sends her friendly greetings and hand kisses to you and begs you, a relative, to be so kind as to send her as a memento a silver ring and earrings which

cannot be obtained here. [More greetings to relatives, requests for a letter, an address, signature and postscript with greetings from a local widow to her relatives in Württemberg conclude the letter. The address is of interest: To the Master Weaver Josef Wolfert in the village of Srebrny by Zambrow, County of Lomsa Gubernia Augustof, in the Kingdom of Poland, 15 miles beyond Warsaw]<sup>14</sup>

Of immediate genealogical interest is the fact that the daughter Carolina, who requests the silver ring and earrings, would become the mother of our maternal great-grandfather Gustav Penk, the weaver of a blanket that is still in the family today. Noteworthy also is a sister (the recently deceased mother of the nephew) living in the neighbourhood of Bonlanden. Wolfert had three living sisters when his family moved to Königshuld and we conjecture that the youngest, Anna Maria, born in February 1803, may have been left behind.<sup>15</sup> Interesting as the letter is, we must be circumspect about extrapolating the experiences of one person to a larger group. Wolfert appears to have been relatively prosperous since the ownership of an establishment with six employees suggests a modest accumulation of capital. We say modest because it is more than likely that the wooden looms and shop to house them were constructed by Wolfert himself. Wolfert's position as master weaver put him on a social par with the land-rich *Hüfner*, a position confirmed by his role as church warden and many appearances as a witness in the church records. That his brother Ludwig had access to doctors in Warsaw and Łomża also points to a well-established family. This caution about unwarranted extrapolation recorded, there is enough here to extract some useful insights into life in the Paproć region in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Wolfert's letter reveals that the German colonists, like the bulk of the Polish peasantry, had little interest in fighting for Polish independence during the 1830 insurrection. That Wolfert still thought of Württemberg as his 'Fatherland' is perhaps indicative of the attitudes of the colonists. If they had higher allegiances, they probably thought of themselves as subjects of the Czar. Whether this lack of enthusiasm for the Polish cause had subsequent repercussions for their relationships with their Polish neighbours is unknown. The decision of the conscripted

men to put themselves under the protection of the Russian army in February might have been a matter of loyalty, but was more likely a judicious calculation on where the odds for survival were best. The Russian presence must have been temporary for on May 24, 1831 a Polish cavalry squadron attacked an advance Russian guard approaching Czyżew from the south. Campaign maps suggest that a portion of the main Russian army, on its way to the decisive battle at Ostrolęka, passed through or near Paproć Duża.<sup>16</sup> Although Wolfert speaks of hundreds of Germans being hung, no specific instances are cited for the Paproć region even though three Lutheran villagers were hung; we are inclined to think that he is reporting rumours. The same reservation applies to the thousands of Jews supposedly hung. The Polish insurrectionists certainly meted out summary justice for spying, but so did the Russians. The Jews in particular came under suspicion from both sides because of their far flung commercial and financial connections and their position as 'outsiders' in general.<sup>17</sup>

Specific instances of German support for the insurgents during the insurrection of 1863 are on record.<sup>18</sup> The Lutheran teacher-cantor Johann Gundlach was a known sympathizer and a man called Gerbersdorf joined the insurgents. The insurgents requisitioned food from the villagers who, if caught, faced the risk of Cossack whippings and burned down buildings; one German is known to have received 25 lashes with a knotted whip, leaving him bloodied and incapacitated for weeks.<sup>19</sup> The church warden, Jakob Koch, who had delivered foodstuffs to the insurgents in the forest near Paproć Mała, avoided this punishment by persuading the German-speaking Russian General Doll that he, Koch, had been given little choice in the matter. Collaboration with the Russians brought retribution from the insurgents. Three Lutherans were hanged, falsely accused by someone settling a personal vendetta. The majority position on the insurrection had probably changed very little since 1831. A map of partisan activity in the Łomża region lends some support to this conjecture. The map is well covered with markers for Polish guerrilla engagements, but the area centred on Paproć is notably blank.<sup>20</sup> With the possible exception of the Catholic minority, the German settlers remained unassimilated into Polish society. As an identifiable ethnic minority, their political views, such as they were, no

doubt received close scrutiny; even a carefully studied neutrality would have been viewed with suspicion by the Poles.

The question of assimilation will arise again, but in the present context we note that there were Germans in the leadership of both insurrections. Karl Gottlieb Stolzmann (1793-1854), a lieutenant-colonel in the Polish artillery, was one of the conspirators in the 1830 uprising. When the uprising ended he left Poland for London where he made his living as a language teacher. Eduard Jürgens (1827-1863), a public official and political activist of the Left, joined a directory which briefly managed the National Government during the 1863 uprising. He paid with his life on the Russian gallows. Both Stolzmann and Jürgens were Lutherans and, one has to assume, assimilated Germans.<sup>21</sup>

Wolfert's account of disease and death can be taken as a reflection of the prevailing living conditions. The cholera which took Wolfert's mother and daughter during the insurrection came to Poland with the Russian army.<sup>22</sup> It killed both the commanding general of the Russian army and Duke Constantine in 1831. In that year the number of deaths recorded in the Jasienica church registry rose to 259, almost double the 130 deaths in 1830. Among the recorded deaths are two Driegerts and one Wolfert but no Buses. Cholera returned in 1852 when 119 deaths were recorded in the Paproć church register, compared to 65 in the previous year and 64 in 1853.<sup>23</sup> Photo 2.1 shows the cover of the registry in which these deaths were recorded. Epidemics of cholera swept through Europe during most of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and it was only brought under control at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> when public hygiene provided clean drinking water. The havoc wrought by cholera made it a popular swear word in Poland. In this guise it came with us to Canada where, in the early years following our arrival, our parents – especially our mother - used it to express disgust or frustration when something had not turned out quite right.

The cause of death in 1843 of the three Wolfert children is not given so we have to assume that other contagious diseases such as tuberculosis, typhus and typhoid fever took their toll.<sup>24</sup> Although not as deadly as cholera, in the absence of treatment



Photo 2.1. Cover of the Paproć Duża church death registry for the years 1849-1854.

these diseases operated as a Darwinian cull of the weakest. All the settlers had to accept the high infant mortality implied by Wolfert's letter. Unfortunately, the church death registers do not record the cause of death so little can be added in the way of documentation. We can supplement Wolfert's anecdotal remarks with other incidents of childhood death among our ancestors. The two first-born sons of Ludwig Buse, born in 1814 and 1816, both died within ten days of each other in January 1819. An infectious disease, rather than coincidence, would be the obvious explanation. In August 1837, Ludwig's eight-year-old son Johann Daniel also died so that only three of Ludwig's six sons reached adulthood. The third son, our ancestor David, married Henrietta Schulz in 1840 and only two of their first three children survived infancy. Their first-born son, Johann Ludwig, died in February 1842 only one month old, followed a few years later by the death of their twenty-three-month-old daughter Wilhelmine in November 1846. The second son, August, born in February 1843, survived to become our great-grandfather.<sup>25</sup>

Unlike the Polish peasantry, the German settlers were mostly literate inasmuch as they could read but not necessarily write.

The Lutheran tradition of Bible reading served them well when circumstances denied them access to teachers and schools. Wolfert makes a good example. We have already noted that the colony had failed to attract a teacher in Prussian times and they would hardly have been able to attract a teacher and build a school during the upheavals of the Duchy. Wolfert was seventeen, and well past school age, when the Kingdom of Poland was established in 1815. Yet he was obviously capable of writing a full length letter, albeit in a colloquial style. It follows that he must have been schooled at home either by his parents, most likely his father Ludwig, or someone too old to work.<sup>26</sup> In the 1860s most literate peasants had a minimal library that included a Bible, Luther's catechism, a songbook, a book of popular sermons and an ABC reader.<sup>27</sup> Some combination of these books would have been the basis of Wolfert's education at the beginning of the century.

An informal school with a part-time teacher during the winter months probably existed prior to 1837 when the Lutheran parish came into being and the first pastor appointed. In the Lutheran church in Poland a system of cantor-teachers closely linked the parish church and education. A cantor was both a church official, in that he led the singing of the liturgy, and a teacher responsible for religious instruction. By default he would also become responsible for the other subjects. While it is plausible to conjecture that the first cantor-teacher and the first formal school appeared as part of the founding of the parish at Paproć Duża, the church records tell us otherwise. These records show that Pęchratka, Srebrny Borek and Paproć Duża had teachers in 1837, 1839 and 1840, respectively. In 1839, our great-great-great grandfather, Friedrich Schütz (V.M1, Table 1.4), then sixty-three years old is described as a teacher living in Paproć Mała, leaving unclear where he taught. Whether he was fully retired or still working his *Büdner's* allocation is also unclear. Because schooling had to accommodate the seasonal needs of agriculture, it was typically restricted to five months in the winter, forcing the teacher to be a part-time farmer as well. The available information in the church records suggests that the first cantor, Johann Gundlach, appeared sometime in the early 1840s, showing up as a witness for the first time in August 1842.<sup>28</sup> By 1865 a school had also been established in Kowalówka (Mecklenburg). At this

time a total of 248 children attended school: 103 at Paproć Duża, 64 at Srebrny Borek and 81 at Kowalówka.<sup>29</sup>

In his remarks about his sons' schooling Wolfert mentions that instruction is offered in three languages (Polish, Russian and German) but the proportion of each is left unspecified. Russian became compulsory after the insurrection of 1831. We also know that the German in the classroom was High German, rather than the Low German or Mecklenburger *Plattdeutsch* spoken at home and adopted for daily village use even by those who did not come from Mecklenburg. The quality of instruction can only be guessed at. Not only did the cantor-teacher have to be tri-lingual, he had to instruct around a hundred children in half a dozen grades at the same time, all jammed into a single room. The Russian and Polish literary skills imparted under these conditions must have been quite rudimentary. Basic literacy in German was probably the main goal with emphasis on reading. This is confirmed by an examination of the marriage records from 1850 to 1859. During this decade neither the bride nor the groom signed the marriage register in 151 out of 238 entries (63.45%).<sup>30</sup>

Men received priority over women in access to education, Wolfert's sixteen-year-old son being a good illustration. In normal circumstances a sixteen-year-old would have been learning a trade or labouring on a farm. If Wolfert had educational ambitions for his son, then ten years of five-month stints in the classroom would have given his son not much more than grade six of a standard nine-month school year. The disparity between men and women shows up very clearly when the church marriage registry for the decade 1850 through 1859 is examined. Only 8.40% of the brides signed the registry compared to 32.35% of the grooms.<sup>31</sup> Even into the last quarter of the century many peasant women were not fully literate. For example, our grandmother, Auguste (Penk) Schütz, born in 1874, could read but not write. Even her daughter, our aunt Olga (Schütz) Dams, born in 1902, could not write much more than her signature; she dictated letters to her children as the need arose.

The satisfaction that Wolfert expresses with his role in getting the church built is understandable. The colonists had to wait



thirty-eight years for a church to rise in the middle of the circle of land allocated for this purpose by the Prussians. Prior to the arrival of the first pastor in 1837, their religious needs had been served in a haphazard manner. In Prussian times they made use of the Prussian army military chaplains when these happened to be in the vicinity. After the departure of the Prussians they had to rely on visitations from the pastors of other parishes. These were few and far between. Although the Protestants had gained many adherents among the nobility and town burghers, the Jesuit-led Counter-Reformation in Poland diminished their number drastically, especially among the nobility. Lutheranism made few converts in the area covered by the Kingdom of Poland. Only two Lutheran parishes were founded from the date of the Augsburg Confession in 1530 to the founding of the Warsaw parish in 1775.<sup>32</sup> The second oldest parish, Węgrów, founded in 1650, and Suwałki, founded in 1793, were the spiritual shepherds of the flock at Paproć before 1837. Węgrów lies 50 kilometres south and Suwałki 175 kilometres north-east of Paproć Duża. Births, marriages and deaths of the German colonists were therefore recorded in the nearest Catholic church registry at Jasienica or Szumowo. Whether a deceased Lutheran, entered in a Catholic register, went to the Catholic or the Lutheran heaven was no doubt debated by the grave diggers, especially after a few vodkas to keep them in good spirits when frozen ground yielded only slowly to their efforts on a cold winter's day.

Wolfert fails to record the interesting story associated with the origins of the state subsidy of 18,000 florin for the church and school. Although the Paproć villagers had been promised half the cost of a church in 1827, nothing had come of this by 1835. In that year the village sent a petition to the Czarina (Empress) Alexandra Feodorovna setting out their spiritual deprivations. To petition the Czarina of Russia might seem like an exercise in futility, but the villagers knew what cards to play. They were astute enough to remember that the Czarina Alexandra was the former Princess Charlotte of Prussia, daughter of Frederick William III, and that the colonies of Wilhemsdorf and Louisenau were the namesakes of the Czarina's brother and mother, respectively. Princess Charlotte had been re-baptized into the Russian Orthodox Church when she married the future Czar Nicholas I in 1817. Reminded that the colonies were the

handiwork of her father and the villagers were former subjects of Prussia, the Czarina must have seen to it that the Commission of Internal Affairs in Warsaw received appropriate instructions. Alerted to the fact that the villagers had friends in high places, Warsaw responded with the founding of the parish in October 1837. Plans for a church and a parsonage with supporting farm buildings soon followed. The total cost of these buildings was to be 25,706 florin, with the church costing 16,437 florin. Playing the Charlotte card proved to be productive in other ways as well; the villagers bore only 30 per cent of the cost compared to the 50 per cent that had been on offer in 1827.<sup>33</sup>

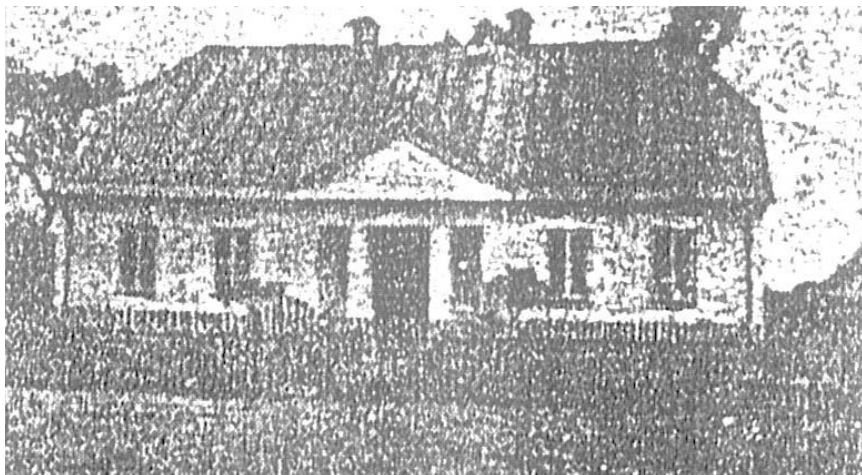
The parsonage and its farm buildings were completed in 1840. The foundation stone for the church was laid in 1841 and the building completed in 1842. Built in the neo-classical style of fieldstone covered with plaster, the church was not a large building, certainly not more than 35 by 70 feet in its external dimensions (10.7 x 21.3 metres); see the photo in the frontispiece of this chapter. The substantial tower and steeple, with a combined height in the neighbourhood of 70 feet (21 metres), made the appropriate statement of aspirations, but they must have contributed significantly to the cost. Wolfert describes the church as solidly built, an apt description as the walls had to be



*Photo 2.2. Interior of Paproć Duża church, 1930s.*

about one and a half feet thick due to the fieldstone construction; see Photo 2.2. Pastor Johann Schlicke, who served the parish from 1839 to 1848, supervised the construction. The first pastor, Theodor Küntzel, had departed after only fifteen months to serve a parish in the more congenial environment of the city of Białystok.

A fine church notwithstanding, retaining pastors proved to be a perennial problem for the parish. On the death of Pastor Schlicke in 1848 at the early age of 40, Karl Wagner served as vicar or substitute pastor until 1851. In 1852 Julius Mrongovius took over the parish, but in the same year he decided to administer the parish from Łomża on account of the dilapidated state of the parsonage. A stone parsonage, built in 1856 (see Photo 2.3), brought Pastor Mrongovius back to the parish from 1859 to 1867, during which time he also pursued his agricultural interests by working the pastor's land himself. From 1867 to 1915 there was a resident pastor for only three years, 1883-1886, when Pastor Karl Doll served the parish. The Paproć parish was obviously not a first choice as a posting. With the exception of Pastor Doll, all the pastors were barely out of theological school, the youngest aged 24 and the oldest 31. Dismayed by the contrast between life in a university town and an isolated agricultural settlement, most of them soon sought postings elsewhere. After the departure of Pastor Doll in 1886,



*Photo 2.3. Parsonage at Paproć Duża, pre-1939.*

Pastor Kaspar Mikulski of Łomża administered the parish until 1926. Pastor Mikulski's forty years of service to the parish gained him many admirers, including our mother who spoke of him fondly.

Pastor Mikulski and the Lutheran church at Paproć Duża added a footnote to Poland's national history in 1899. On July 15 of that year, Mikulski married the future Marshal and Polish leader, Józef Piłsudski, and Maria Juszkiewicz in the Paproć church. Mikulski, a former Catholic priest, had become friends with Piłsudski through a shared interest in the nationalist cause. Piłsudski converted to Lutheranism when the Catholic Church refused to marry him because his intended was a divorcée. That Mikulski used the church at Paproć Duża instead of his church in Łomża leads us to believe that neither Mikulski nor Piłsudski had an interest in making Piłsudski's conversion widely known. When Piłsudski died in 1935 the Polish government decided that he should be eligible for the Catholic heaven; he was given a Catholic state funeral and buried in the crypt of Cracow Castle, resting place of the Polish kings. The Bishop of Cracow objected to this royal treatment of a non-Catholic, but the Polish military persuaded him to let politics take precedence over religion.<sup>34</sup>

### **Unassimilated Lutherans**

One other theme emerges from Wolfert's letter. He asserts that he draws work within a radius of 10 to 12 *Meilen* or 75 to 90 kilometres, a remarkable market area for a local artisan. Since he also employed six workers, it is clear that he wove for the Polish as well as the local German market. Such commercial intercourse with the Poles, and probably Jews, meant that his social milieu extended beyond the confines of the German community. The German farmers had a more limited interaction with the local economy. With their own millers, wheelwrights, smiths, carpenters and cobblers they were almost self-sufficient. Their surplus product could be sold in the nearest local weekly markets at Ostrów or Zambrów to obtain those necessities and the odd luxury item that they could not acquire from the itinerant Jewish pedlars; see Photo 2.4 for a view of the Ostrów market prior to World War I. In these circumstances assimilation into Polish society was unlikely. With religion and



*Photo 2.4. Ostrów market, pre-1918.*

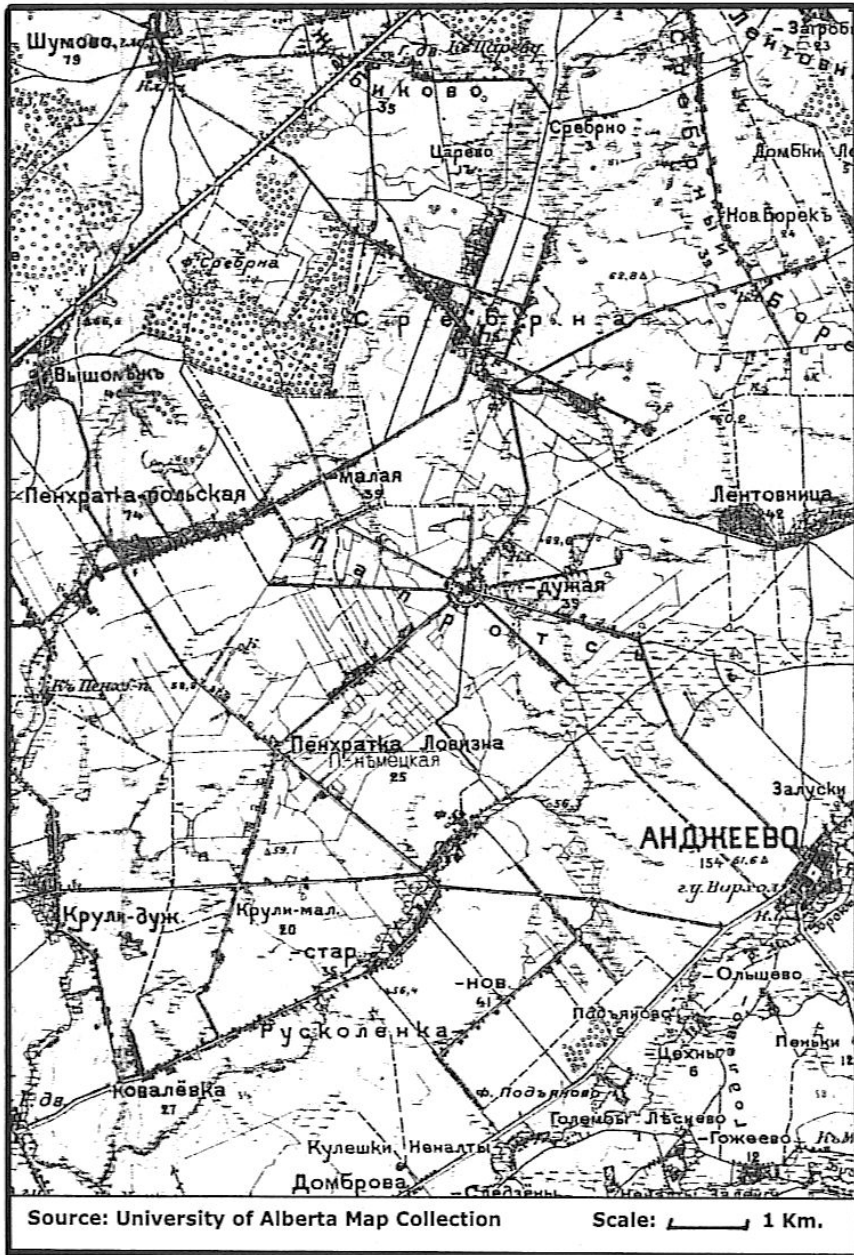
education available in German within a well defined geographical area, the villagers had little difficulty in maintaining their German identity. That identity was at risk only if they left the immediate environs of their village, an option that became more likely as the village grew.<sup>35</sup> Service in the Russian army created one involuntary exit route from the villages into the outside world. Prior to 1874, Russian army recruits, selected by the village commune, served 25 years, often in the frontier outposts of the vast Russian empire. We do not know whether the Paproćers were subject to this system since the Russian state had also granted their own colonists exemption from military service. We do know, however, that with the introduction of universal conscription in 1874 all Paproć men born after 1872 were subject to conscription. Notable is the fact that recruits from the Warsaw military district (including the Paproć region) were sent to the Russian interior because their loyalty was suspect.<sup>36</sup> Compulsory service lasted six years with nine additional years in the reserves and militia. While six years (reduced to three in 1906) might not have been long enough to suppress one's ethnic identity, the exposure to a wider world would change preconceptions of life's options and return to the village was not necessarily guaranteed.

Particularly good soldiers, suitably tall, might even be selected for the Imperial Lifeguards of the Empress and parade in the presence of the emperor and empress on ceremonial occasions at the palace. Such was the experience of Friedrich Wichert of Paproć Mała, drafted to St. Petersburg in 1912. The probability of assimilation was not negligible for someone like Wichert;

many Germans had successful careers in the Russian army. However, the Russian Revolution and two world wars put his life on a different course and he ended his days in Germany. Others had similar experiences. The gravestone of a Wilhelm Schiewe in the Lutheran cemetery in Barrhead is inscribed with the words (in English): Sapper, Russian Imperial Army. Conscripts in the Russian army were often treated brutally, but the gravestone inscription suggests that military service could also be a matter of some pride.

The Russian army not only conscripted men, it also made at least one appearance in the Paproć villages. Military campaigns require detailed topographical information and the requisite maps had to be prepared in advance, especially for places such as Poland which was considered the most likely battleground for any conflict with the Austrian or German empires. In the early 1880s the villagers watched Russian military surveyors traverse the Paproć countryside, recording in great detail physical features such as elevations, ground cover and watercourses. The location of roads, churches, cemeteries, windmills and farmyard buildings was also noted; even the boundaries of fields were delineated. The results are displayed in Map 2.1 which gives us a very clear picture of the lay-out of Paproć at that time. The odds are very good that a copy of this map was in the hands of the officer planning the Russian retreat through Paproć when the Germans advanced in 1915. The odds are even better that in 1914 a Russian officer consulted this map when he had to find the nearest railway station to Paproć once the order to expel the German Lutherans had been issued.

Any voluntary decision to leave the village would have been driven by the same economic logic that had brought the settlers to Poland in the first place, but after 1863 political considerations also played a part. Local opportunities had to be weighed against outside alternatives and a decisive factor would be the availability of land in the village, influenced in turn by population growth. An expanding population could be accommodated by colonizing waste land or buying land in adjacent villages. Alternatively, existing plots could be subdivided. Both population outlets had definite limits. We have already noted in Chapter I that when the Prussians left in 1807 there were 17 unoccupied sites in the four colonies and these



Map 2.1. Russian map of Paproć region, 1884.

sites absorbed any initial population growth. Additional sites

became available through the emigration to Russia in 1813-14, making it possible for the colonies to receive new colonists, such as the arrivals from Woldegk in 1820.

Poland continued to be a destination for German colonists up to 1863, with much of this immigration attracted to the embryonic textile industry centred at Łódź. Some of these colonists came to the Paproć region to found new settlements on private Polish land. The insurrection of 1863 precipitated a massive emigration of German agricultural colonists from Poland to Volhynia in the western part of Ukraine. Having taken note of the three hung Lutherans, at least 28 families from the Paproć region made the decision to move. Among the emigrants were Bernhard, Ludwig and Martin Buse.<sup>37</sup> Substantial emigration from the Paproć region to the United States, as well as South America, took place up to World War I and our family's contribution to this outflow is examined in the next section. At least one Paproć resident participated in the 'Brazilian emigration fever' that took hold in the years 1890-1892.<sup>38</sup> Opportunities also existed in urban areas as Poland's industrialization got underway in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. We have no evidence that the Paproć villagers participated in this process. Any social rebels desirous of escaping the constraints of village life in exchange for the high life, or perhaps the low, in Warsaw would not have been motivated by the economic calculus invoked here, but no such rebels have surfaced in our search through the family closets. The spirit of Matzdorf appears to be a recessive gene.

We are unable to provide complete statistical documentation of the growth of the colonies and the patterns of migration between 1806 and 1915. Population statistics up to 1851 were found, but they are taken from a variety of sources and are of uncertain reliability. Any numerical conclusions that we draw from them are to be viewed as approximately right but precisely wrong. Table 2.1 below summarizes our findings.<sup>39</sup> The first column reproduces the population and in brackets the number of families for the original colonies as of 1806. The 1825 column gives the number of inhabitants (*Einwohner*) and in brackets the number of hearths (*Feuerstellen*) in that year. The number of people (*Seelen*) and families in each village belonging to the Lutheran parish is recorded in the 1835



column. The number of Germans in each village in 1851 is given in the second last column. The 1937 column gives the number of Lutherans and these numbers will be discussed in the next chapter.

*Table 2.1. Population for selected years.*

Location	1806	1825	1835	1851	1937
Paproc Duża (Königshuld)	321 (68)	269 (36)	223 (46)	403	335 (69)
Paproc Mała (Königshuld)	-	187 (38)	254 (58)	358	201 (51)
Pęchatka (Louisenau)	76 (16)	121 (18)	123 (26)	215	112 (22)
Kol. Króle (Wilhelmsdorf)	88 (15)	281 (36)	63 (15)	165	18 (5)
Kowalówka (Mecklenburg)	119 (22)	169 (22)	102 (24)	226	39 (8)
Srebrny Borek	-	-	292 (43)	290	275 (58)
Wieś Dąbrowa	-	109 (21)	63 (13)	-	11 (4)
Wieś Króle	-	107 (17)	62 (14)	124	58 (10)
Wieś Kalinowo	-	298 (52)	101 (23)	123	62 (16)
Totals	604 (121)	1,541 (240)	1,283 (262)	1,904	1,111 (243)

*Source:* See Note 38.

Focusing for the moment on the five original settlements (the first five rows) and assuming that only Germans lived in these settlements, the numbers for 1806, 1825 and 1851 are directly comparable. The 'Germans only' assumption does not, however, appear to be valid for Kolonia Króle. Here the number of Germans is given as 281 in 1825, but in 1851 it has fallen to 165, a huge decline that cannot be attributed solely to the effects of the cholera epidemic of 1831. Either the administrative boundary of Kolonia Króle changed between 1825 and 1851 or the 21 new hearths that appeared between 1806 and 1825 were those of Polish colonists whose total number is unknown. In light of this problem the only reliable aggregate comparison is between 1806 and 1851. Between

these two years the total population of the five original settlements grew from 604 to 1,367, a modest annual growth rate of 1.83%. This growth reflects both natural increase and the inflow of new settlers who took up the remaining unoccupied homesteads in the colonies. Once these were all occupied, newly married couples had to seek land outside the colonies or obtain a portion of an original homestead. Evidence for land division appears as early as 1835 because the number of Lutheran families in that year amounted to 169, whereas the total number of houses that had been allocated land in 1806 was 138. The implicit assumption here is that every family had its own piece of land, but even if, in a few instances, multiple family occupancy of a single site occurred, the error so introduced is probably offset by the omission of the Catholic settlers from this discussion.

Without any 1825 data for Srebrny Borek, we can say little except to repeat our earlier observation that it was one of the largest settlements; its Lutheran population in 1835 exceeded that of both Paproć Duża and Paproć Mała. Its apparent failure to grow between 1835 and 1851 can be explained by the founding of a subsidiary colony called Nowy Borek which in 1937 still had 79 Lutherans. Nowy Borek had initially been settled by German colonists brought in by Polish landlords to occupy under-utilized agricultural land. Similar colonies on private Polish land were set up at Pęczratka and Kalinowo. No dates for the founding of these new colonies are available other than that they were established after 1815.<sup>40</sup>

Table 2.1 shows that Germans moved into adjacent Polish villages; 'wieś' is Polish for village. Only three of these, Dąbrowa, Króle and Kalinowo, appear in the table, but there were many others. For example, in 1835 the town of Ostrów and 15 other villages had a combined total of 198 Lutheran inhabitants. Again we do not know how much of this influx came as overflow from the original colonies and how much from post-1806 immigration. Nonetheless, with allowance for the differences in dates, we can see that by comparing the total number of inhabitants in these three villages in 1825 with the number of Lutherans in them in 1835, the proportion of Germans in these villages could have been as high as 50 per cent. The blank for Dąbrowo in 1851 does not mean that the

Germans had disappeared between 1835 and 1851. We have two ancestors who died there in 1842 and 1846 and one born there in 1853; see Tables 1.4 and 2.3 (below). This is a good illustration of the gap that can exist between official statistics and the facts on the ground.

A Catholic minority among the settlers has been mentioned earlier. This minority is included in all the numbers except those for 1835 and 1937. As to the proportionate size of this minority, we can only make some guesses. Using the 1806 data on the origins of the settlers as a guide to religious affiliation gives us a low estimate of 10 per cent. Using alternative assumptions and alternative sources for 1835 gives us an upper estimate of 18 per cent.<sup>41</sup> Fifteen per cent is a plausible compromise figure which gives us 91 Catholics in the colonies in 1806. If we assume that their natural rate of increase and their share of new colonists was the same as the Lutherans, then we can estimate their total in 1835 as 221 and the total German-speaking population in the Paproć region as 1,742. The Catholic minority had a German-speaking priest until 1915, but they did not have their own school. If they attended a Catholic school, the language of instruction was Polish and their rate of assimilation into Polish society accelerated. Catholics rarely married Lutherans. Catholic Poles, on the other hand, did intermarry with the Catholic Germans, leading to increased assimilation for the Catholic Germans.

### **More Ancestors**

In the preceding sections we have focused primarily on events up to and including 1863. This should not be taken to mean that nothing of significance transpired in Polish affairs in the fifty years leading up to 1915. Although Congress Poland remained a predominantly agricultural society, its social and economic structure began to change as the process of industrialization, after a tentative start in the 1820s, accelerated sharply. The textile industry at Łódź and Białystok, the coal and steel industry in the Dąbrowa Basin, and manufacturing in Warsaw all experienced phenomenal growth, with capital largely supplied by German and French interests. A corresponding explosion in the population brought into being an industrial proletariat and the inevitable conflict between labour

and capital. When the Russian revolution of January 1905 erupted in St. Petersburg, a general strike in Warsaw followed immediately. The strikes spread to the rest of the country and before normality returned at the end of 1906 even the Polish peasants were demanding higher wages from their landlords. Over 2,800 strikes took place, many of them with violence that left almost 400 people dead.

The subsequent reforms in Russia created its first parliament, the Duma, to which the Poles elected members. Previously clandestine, Polish political parties of all stripes emerged, reflecting the various class interests from Left to Right, and each offering its own solution to the question of Polish independence. These economic and political changes had little direct impact on the lives of the peasants of Paproć. They were also untouched by most of the major technological innovations of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Electricity, telephones, automobiles and agricultural mechanization were not part of their lives. Only the railway from Warsaw to St. Petersburg, completed in 1862 with Czyżew as one of its stops, and photography exposed them to new, not necessarily affordable, technology.

Even if the Paproćers took little part in the theatre of national politics, they undoubtedly played out their own local dramas, sometimes in response to external events. One wonders how they reacted when in July 1868 Russian replaced Polish as the language of record in the Paproć church registries. If they were angered by this switch, then this anger must have reached new levels in 1875 when the practice of entering names in both the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets was abandoned, making the church records accessible only to readers of Russian. Perhaps they organized a successful protest, because by 1900 the Latin names had re-appeared.<sup>42</sup> Some of our ancestors must have counted among the angry and it is time to bring this sequence of ancestors on to the stage.

Tables 2.2 and 2.3 present our paternal and maternal ancestors, respectively, beginning with our parents, Gustav Buse and Helene Schütz. The genealogical structure of these tables can be visually summarized as follows (we take Table 2.2 for illustration):

IV.	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	P7	P8
III.		P1		P2		P3		P4
II.			P1				P2	
I.				P1				

In this inverted pyramid I.P1 is our father, Gustav Buse and II.P1 and II.P2 are our paternal grandparents Adolf Buse and Ottilie Moedbeck, respectively. (Recall that P stands for paternal, M for maternal.) Each move up in the generation count doubles the number of grandparents and row IV thus represents our paternal great-great-grandparents. Generation V, which was given in Table 1.3, can simply be laid on top of this display as another row with 16 entries. Note that in this schema, males and females are assigned odd and even numbers, respectively. This means that there is a simple numerical calculation that allows us to move between the rows. Thus if we are given, say II.P2, and we want to know the parents of this person we multiply the number following P by two to get the mother, III.P4, and subtract one from that number to get the father, III.P3. To move down a row simply reverse the procedure.

The demographic facts in these tables can be compared with those in Chapter I. Excluding generation I, the average life-span of men and women for these three generations amounted to 65 and 56 years, respectively. The comparable numbers from the previous chapter were 69 and 61. The decline in life-span should not be interpreted as a decline in life expectancy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century since such statistical variation can be expected given the small number of observations. If these numbers tell us anything, it is that there were no improvements in life expectancy in the Paproć region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century because protection against disease and illness did not improve. The average age of marriage fell from 26 to 22 for men and from 21 to 19 for women. Earlier marriage is consistent with the view that improvement in living standards in agricultural communities leads to family formation at an earlier age. Notably, the month of marriage is no longer restricted to October and November and for all three generations now includes September, January, February, May and June. That some of the January and February marriages may have been

the result of too close proximity among the young men and women during the communal harvest in the previous autumn is not out of the question. Conceivably, the young men were sowing oats when they should have been reaping rye.<sup>43</sup>

As is to be expected, the principal occupation of the men recorded in the two tables is farmer, the Schütz and Penk families being the notable exceptions. There were two generations of blacksmiths in the Schütz family prior to our maternal grandfather, Rudolf (II.M1), taking up the trade of shoemaker. The weaving tradition in the Penk family reaches back to generation V (Gottlieb Penk, V.M9, Table 1.4). The weaver Heinrich Penk (IV.M5) married the eighteen-year-old daughter, Karoline (IV.M6), mentioned in Josef Wolfert's letter of 1844. Despite the ever-increasing competition from machine-woven goods, the Penk weavers appeared to prosper late into the 19<sup>th</sup> century. A pre-World War I portrait (Photo 2.5) of our great-grandfather, the weaver Gustav Penk (III.M3) and his wife, Karoline Steinmeier (III.M4), shows a couple attired in quite elegant style.<sup>44</sup> Our paternal grandfather, Adolf Buse (II.P1) started life as a miller, a trade widely followed by the extended Buse clan. His brothers, David and Johann, were millers in Paproć Duża and Mała, respectively.

The waves of immigrants sweeping into the United States in the thirty years prior to World War I also washed ashore a goodly number of Paproćers with names such as Bülow, Dechow, Fester, Gottschalk, Hermann, Koch, Krüger, Möglich, Müller, Penk, Schultz, Trotno and Wichert.<sup>45</sup> Seven of the nine known siblings of our maternal grandmother, Auguste Penk (II.M2), eventually emigrated to the United States. We say eventually because the first Penks to leave Poland apparently came to Canada via Posen (Prussia) before migrating south. The list of America-bound Penks includes: Ludwig (1877-?), Matilde (1879-1963), Karl (1884-?), Robert (1886-1976), Julius (1889-1979), Olga (1892-1991), and Pauline (1895-1997). In addition to Auguste, only Rudolf (1872-1918), and Emilie Penk (1881-?) remained in Paproć Mała. Dates of entry to the United States are known with certainty only for Matilde (1898), Robert (Philadelphia, 1903), Ludwig (Philadelphia, 1904) and Julius (1908); Karl arrived at an unknown date before 1910. Mathilde may have been the pioneer who created the first link in this

Table 2.2. Four generations of paternal ancestors.

IV.P1 <b>Johann David Buse</b> * 05.06.1819 Paproć Duża + 02.10.1894 Paproć Duża farmer	IV.P2 <b>Henriette Helene Schulz</b> * 24.05.1823 Pęchratka + 17.02.1856 Paproć Duża
=09.02.1840 Paproć Duża	
IV.P3 <b>Friedrich Daniel Wrede</b> * 10.07.1828 Paproć Mała + 27.05.1873 Paproć Duża farmer	IV.P4 <b>Marianna Texter</b> * —.—.1828 Srebrny Borek + 08.02.1903 Paproć Duża
=06.10.1846 Paproć Duża	
IV.P5 <b>Christian Moedbeck</b> * —.—.1801 Vehlow, Prussia + 21.01.1868 Srebrny Borek farmer	IV.P6 <b>Katherina Dorothea Sophia Betke</b> * —.—.1804 Dannenwalde, Prussia + 23.10.1869 Srebrny Borek
= 16.06.1826 Szumowo	
IV.P7 <b>Johann Friedrich Filter</b> * —.—.1810 Woldegk, Meck.-Str. + 12.12.1855 Srebrny Borek farmer	IV.P8 <b>Marianne Katherina Hubert</b> * —.—.1814 Rieschweiler, Pfalz + 07.03.1901 Srebrny Borek
= 28.09.1832 Szumowo	
III.P1 <b>August Buse</b> * 08.02.1843 Paproć Duża + 23.05.1918 Kozlov, Russia farmer	III.P2 <b>Marianne Wrede</b> * 20.10.1847 Paproć Mała + 21.07.1917 Ekaterinenstadt, Russia
= 20.11.1863 Paproć Duża	
III.P3 <b>Johann Moedbeck</b> * 06.01.1827 Srebrny Borek + ?	III.P4 <b>Sophia Elizabeth Filter</b> * 21.08.1838 Srebrny Borek + ?
= 08.06.1856 Paproć Duża	
II.P1 <b>Adolf Buse</b> * 17.03.1869 Paproć Duża + 09.06.1931 Srebrowo miller, handyman	II.P2 <b>Otilie Moedbeck</b> * 26.4.1878 Srebrny Borek + —.—.1918 Orsha, Russia
= ? Paproć Duża	
I.P1 <b>Gustav Rudolf Buse</b> * 21.07.1907 Malkinia Gorna + 31.08.1969 Edmonton, Canada carpenter	
= 31.01.1932 Paproć Duża	

Source: See Note 36, Chapter I

immigration chain.

Not everyone found their American dreams fulfilled. Ludwig Penk had arrived from Antwerp (Belgium) in November 1904 with \$24 dollars to his name, having paid his own passage. He

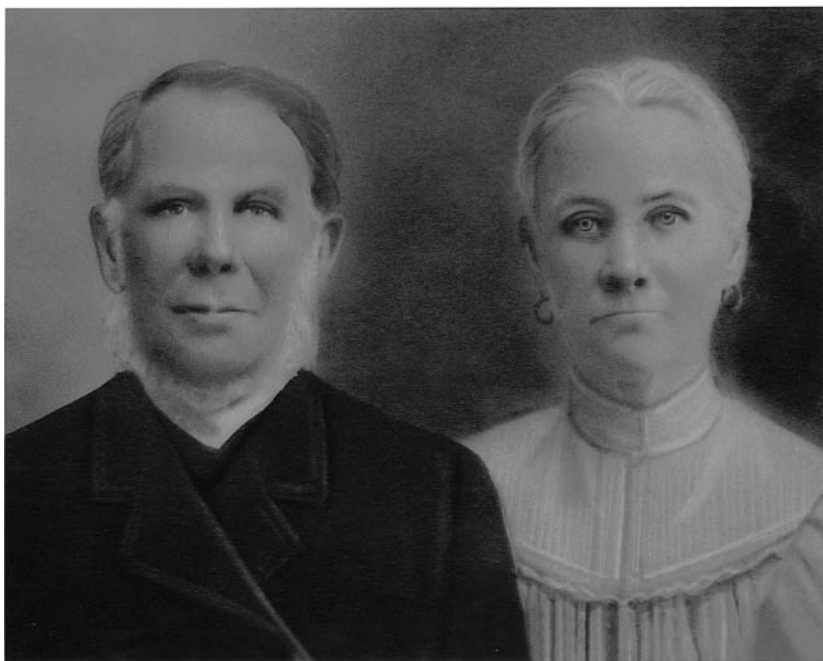
Table 2.3. Four generations of maternal ancestors.

<b>IV.M1 Friedrich Ludwig Wilhelm Schütz</b> * 25.03.1812 Pritzwalk, Prussia + 02.05.1873 Paproć Duża blacksmith, farmer  =09.06.1833 Jasienica	<b>IV.M2 Karoline Schulz</b> * 02.09.1809 Königshuld + 14.03.1872 Paproć Duża  =09.06.1833 Jasienica
<b>IV.M3 Martin Daniel Tabbert (Dabbert)</b> * 21.03.1800 Brohm, Meck.-Str. + 15.01.1893 Paproć Mała farmer  =13.05.1827 Jasienica	<b>IV.M4 Maria Carolina Florentine Peters</b> * 22.03.1803 Krumbek, Prussia + 28.02.1837 Paproć Mała  =13.05.1827 Jasienica
<b>IV.M5 Heinrich Ludwig Penk</b> * —.—.1814 Kowalówka +14.04.1865 Paproć Mała master weaver  =22.10.1844 Paproć Duża	<b>IV.M6 Karolina Helena Wolfert</b> * 02.03.1825 Paproć Mała + —.—.1879  =22.10.1844 Paproć Duża
<b>IV.M7 Friedrich Steinmeier</b> * 18.01.1821 Dąbrowa wieś + 04.12.1868 Dąbrowa wieś farmer  =31.01.1841 Paproć Duża	<b>IV.M8 Katherina Marianna Janke</b> * —.—.1823 Króle wieś + ?  =31.01.1841 Paproć Duża
<b>III.M1 Friedrich Schütz</b> * 14.03.1834 Paproć Duża + 09.06.1899 Paproć Duża blacksmith, farmer  = 12.08.1853 Paproć Duża	<b>III.M2 Dorothea Dabert (Dabbert)</b> * 07.12.1832 Paproć Mała + 30.03.1897 Paproć Duża  = 12.08.1853 Paproć Duża
<b>III.M3 Gustav Penk</b> * 23.05.1846 Kowalówka + 04.03.1922 Paproć Mała weaver  = 10.02.1872 Paproć Duża	<b>III.M4 Karoline Steinmeier</b> * 16.04.1853 Dąbrowa + 20.05.1918 Kishinev, Russia  = 10.02.1872 Paproć Duża
<b>II.M1 Rudolf Karl Schütz</b> * 31.08.1867 Paproć Duża + 01.10.1924 Paproć Mała shoemaker  = ? Paproć Duża	<b>II.M2 Auguste Penk</b> * 01.08.1874 Paproć Mała + 24.03.1941 Soldau, East Prussia  = ? Paproć Duża
<b>I.M1 Helene Pauline Schütz</b> * 11.06.1908 Paproć Duża + 01.07.1993 Edmonton, Canada  = 31.01.1932 Paproć Duża	

Source: See Note 36, Chapter I

listed as his contact his brother-in-law Karol (Charlie) Mehl who had by this time married Mathilde Penk. In 1910 Ludwig married Pauline Koch (1881-?, born in Paproć Duża) in





*Photo 2.5. Gustav and Karoline Penk.*

Philadelphia. Sometime before World War I they had returned permanently to Poland. The circumstances are unknown but they surely must have felt betrayed by fate when they found themselves exiled to the banks of the Volga River a few years later.<sup>46</sup>

Our mother's brother, Bernhard (Uncle Ben) Adolf Schütz (1894-1978) came to Philadelphia as a teenager in 1908 with his cousin 'Sam' Penk. An unconfirmed story has Uncle Ben making the journey on very short notice using the ticket of a Penk who changed his or her mind about emigration at the last moment. Sam Penk was probably Sigmund Penk (1893- ?), son of Rudolf Penk, our maternal grandmother's brother. We do not know whether this pair of teenagers, only fourteen and fifteen years old, made the journey alone or in the company of older emigrants from Paproć. Married in May 1917 to Olga Schultz (1897 -1962), in 1920 Uncle Ben was living with his in-laws in Mercer County, New Jersey and working as a railroad machinist. By 1930 he had, in addition to two daughters (Edna

and Helen), his own home on 80 acres of land in Hamilton Township but was working as an auto repairer.<sup>47</sup> Two of our mother's cousins, Gustav and Fritz Schütz, lived in New York, but when and how they came is unknown. On May 4, 1910, the nineteen-year-old Robert Schütz from Paproć arrived at Ellis Island (New York) on the steamer Finland from Antwerp, Belgium.<sup>48</sup> We do not know how this Robert Schütz fits into the family genealogy.

Although the ancestors listed in the tables above failed to escape the peasant class into which they were born, some upward social mobility occurred elsewhere in the family. Johann David Buse (IV.P1) had eleven sons, six by his second wife Pauline Gundlach, daughter of the teacher-cantor Johann Gundlach.<sup>49</sup> Three of the six became pastors in the Lutheran Church. Johann Buse (1859-1937), Rudolf Buse (1871-1917) and Julius Buse (1880-1947) all completed their theological studies at the University of Dorpat (now Tartu, Estonia) and served in parishes throughout Poland. The frontispiece of this chapter shows a copy of a pledge signed by Rudolf Buse in August 1893 on entering university, promising not to join any secret societies or break any university rules on penalty of expulsion; the undated Photo 2.6 shows Rudolf in a student uniform. Rudolf Buse became the superintendent of the diocese of Kalisz in western Poland in 1910 and died in Russia in 1917. Given that the Paproć parish produced two more Lutheran pastors in this era, Rudolf Gundlach (1850-1922) and Adolf Krempin (1864-1940), it seems likely that the Lutheran Church attracted pastor candidates by providing subsidies for their theological studies. Attendance at the Gymnasium (High School) in Łomża preceded university studies. That Johann David Buse was able to finance this education for three of his sons attests to his prosperity; in one memoir he is characterized as "*den reichen Landwirt Buse in Gross Paproć*" or the rich farmer Buse in Paproć Duża.<sup>50</sup>

One other departure from the village deserves mention. Johann David Buse's (IV.P1) brother, Johann Martin Buse, had three sons. The youngest, Rudolf, born in 1866, rose to the rank of commissioner in the Russian police. He died in action in the Crimea on the Black Sea in southern Russia.<sup>51</sup> We know



Photo 2.6. Rudolf Buse.

nothing of the trajectory of his career, nor the date and circumstances of his death. There was violent conflict in the Crimea during the Revolution of 1905, attacks by the Turks in 1914, violence during the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and battles between the Red Army and the anti-communist White Russians in 1920-21. Any one of these conflicts could take a police commissioner's life.

## Volga Exile

Our mother had a gold locket that she wore quite often in the first decade after our arrival in Canada. When that locket re-appeared after her death in 1993 no one in the family could provide an account of its origins.<sup>52</sup> An expert on Russian crafts has told us that the inlaid design is typical of late Imperial Russia. The pattern on the outside includes two distaffs, devices used to hold fibre while spinning. Inside the locket was a picture of our mother in her late teens; see Photo 2.7. Beneath that picture was another very faded photo of a woman with braided hair. The identity of this woman remains a mystery. We initially conjectured that the mystery woman might be Karoline (Steinmeier) Penk, our maternal great-grandmother. During the exile on the Volga, our maternal grandfather, Rudolf Schütz, reportedly made good money

making boots for the Russian army. With his excess earnings he could have purchased the locket for his wife Auguste. She in turn inserted the photo of her mother, Karoline, into the locket. If these conjectures are correct, then our mother inherited the locket in 1941 when Auguste died. In 2006, however, we established that the mystery woman bears no resemblance to Karoline Penk shown in Photo 2.5.

It is also possible that the mystery woman is a member of the Wrede family. We have in our possession a full length, formally posed, photograph of our mother standing beside her seated friend Matilde Wrede; see Photo 3.10 in Chapter III. The picture of our mother in the locket has been cut from another copy of this full length photo. Since it is quite improbable that she would put her own portrait in a locket that she wore herself, it was someone else who did so. The most likely person to have done this and worn the locket initially was Matilde, who may have given it to our mother as a gift on some special occasion in remembrance of their youthful friendship; our mother's wedding in 1932 suggests itself as a suitable occasion or, alternatively, the Buse family's departure for Canada in 1948. If these conjectures are correct, then Matilde's mother or grandmother becomes the leading candidates for the mysterious woman role. The extended Wrede family was among the largest landholders in Paproć Duża, so the



*Photo 2.7. Locket, Helene Schütz and mystery woman.*

acquisition of what appears to be a quite costly piece of jewelry would have been within their reach. That the locket is of Russian design is not surprising as Poland was an integral part of the Russian Empire. Both accounts of the locket's origins presume it to be of pre-World War I vintage and this fact implies that the locket has a Volga connection. It is time to visit some of the places the locket might have been on its travels.

The deportation of the Paproć villagers to Siberia and southern Russia is the story of many ethnic groups in World War I. Although Germans had served in the Russian military before and during the war, by the time of the Russian defeat at Tannenberg in November 1914 the question of the loyalty of minorities had been starkly posed. Were ethnic Germans reliable, and if not, what should be done about them? The commanding generals, who had dictatorial powers under the laws of war, decided before the end of the year that Germans, Jews and others were potentially or actively disloyal. Already on September 7, 1914 all German colonists were to be deported from the areas occupied by troops in the northernmost province of Poland bordering on East Prussia. On December 23, the Russian state decided to deport all male Germans over 15 years from west of the Vistula River. By the end of the year the deportation order included all the Polish provinces, an order that covered some 200,000 German males owning 20,000 landed properties. In January 1915 the Army chief-of-staff decided that all colonists were to be deported, so that potentially 420,000 Germans in Russian Poland faced deportation. Some were exempted and some provincial governors only deported males over 15. By early 1915 the governor of Warsaw insisted on "the most severe measures of struggle against Germandom through the deportation of the greatest possible number of German colonists, regardless of age or sex."<sup>53</sup> As a result, a crucial decree of February 11, 1915 stated that the Germans had to be outside the designated area within three days and a deadline of February 20 was set for deportation of all Germans. Even in the chaos of war the military transit division recorded 68,000 'enemy subjects' deported in 1914, 134,000 in 1915 and 41,278 in 1916. Although this policy was driven by short-term considerations, the long-run objective appeared to be the permanent expropriation and expulsion of the Germans in order to satisfy

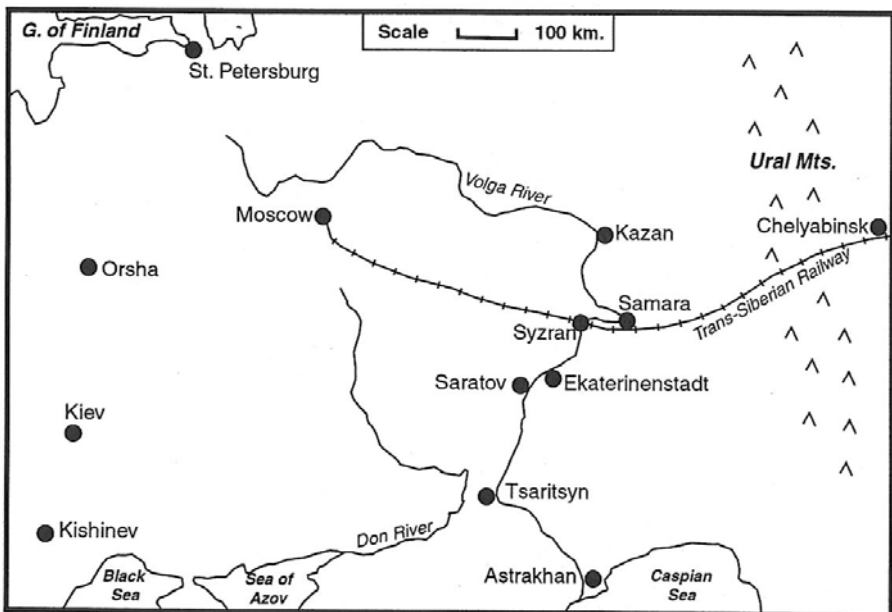
Russian nationalist sentiment which had been growing steadily since the last quarter of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Even though the Paproć villagers were included in the deportation statistics for 1914 and 1915, we do not know very much about how the state and military decrees were interpreted and applied to their specific case. We do know that the Catholic Germans in the Paproć region escaped deportation because they were able to pass themselves off as Poles, confirming our earlier observation about their assimilation. We also know that the entire Lutheran population of the Paproć parish, approximately 1500 people, was exiled to Russia.<sup>54</sup> The number of exiles is sufficiently large to explain their dispersal over a broad geographical region since the Russian bureaucracy undoubtedly had difficulty finding places that could absorb a sudden and large influx of new residents. Some of the Paproć exiles ended up in Siberia and some, including our immediate family, in at least four different locations on the Volga River.

The Paproć deportees were given an hour's notice before leaving for the waiting train at Czyżew. The men deported in 1914 may have been able to write to their families until February 1915 and tell them of their location. Sometimes the authorities let the deportees select their ultimate place of exile, although it seems unlikely that anyone chose Siberia voluntarily. Travel in flea and lice infested box cars has little to recommend it at the best of times. In the middle of the Russian winter, without adequate heat or food, it was a test of both the spirit and the body. The weak or sick rarely withstood the rigours of transport; reminiscences of the Siberian exiles tell of frozen corpses being crudely buried in snowdrifts. One undocumented estimate gives death rates of 50 per cent for children and 15 per cent for adults during the journey to the Russian interior; these death rates imply that 385 people or approximately 25 per cent of the exiles died en route.<sup>55</sup> Those sent to Siberia suffered the additional indignity of being robbed of their best clothes and remaining food when they crossed the Volga at Syzran. Their exile was spent at Kocherdyk, east of Chelyabinsk, a city on the Trans-Siberian railway just east of the Ural Mountains; see Map 2.2.<sup>56</sup> This group of exiles appears to have arrived at Kocherdyk before March 11, 1915 because a death, probably from typhus, occurred here on that date. We

know this date because after their return to the Paproć region many of the exiles entered family births and deaths in Russia in the Paproć Duża church register.<sup>57</sup>

Although we have no tales of robbery from the group that found refuge in the Volga region, we can assume that their experiences were broadly similar. After crossing the Volga at Syzran the Trans-Siberian railway runs east along the Volga to the city of Samara (Kuibyshev in the Soviet era); see Map 2.2. Seventy kilometres upstream from Samara lies the city of Stavropol (today Togliatti). The exiles buried family members in both cities in the spring of 1915. A brother to our aunt Emilie (Buse) Schütz, the six month old Gerhard Buse, died at Samara on April 23, 1915. Pauline (Wrede) Schütz, aged 47, died at Stavropol on March 19, 1915 (her relationship to our branch of the Schütz family is unknown). Of the forty-three known deaths in 1915, twenty-two occurred at Stavropol and eighteen of these occurred in the three month period from March through May. This suggests that Stavropol may have been a temporary refugee centre from which people were transferred as families



Map 2.2. The Volga River and adjacent regions.

reconnected with each other.<sup>58</sup> Some exiles may have travelled from Stavropol to Tsaritsyn, (today Volgograd, formerly Stalingrad) six hundred kilometres south of Samara, but in the absence of a rail connection between the two cities the group at Tsaritsyn probably came by a more southerly route. Paproć exiles had arrived here by May 13, 1915. Friedrich Wichert, he of the Imperial Guard, was wounded in action and, after his release from hospital, followed his family to Tsaritsyn in 1918, just in time for the return trip to Poland.

The greatest number of exiles appeared to have settled in the vicinity of Saratov, the centre of the German Volga colonies. In the middle of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Catherine the Great established colonies in the Volga River region to consolidate Russia's claim on its under-populated southern lands. The 27,000 German colonists who arrived in the years 1764-67 had grown to nearly half a million people by 1916. They had established colonies on both sides of the Volga in the provinces of Saratov and Samara whose capital cities had the same name; see Map 2.2. Additional colonies were founded in 1854 by German Mennonites 100 kilometres north of Samara city. At the time of the 1897 census the descendants of the German colonists formed 6.9% of the population of Saratov province and 8.1% of Samara province. Land reform in 1906 introduced private ownership of land, but many of the colonies continued their system of communal ownership and administration. Initially, the principal agricultural export had been wheat, but after 1870 it was flour, with the city of Saratov as the major centre of a milling industry largely in German hands. Because the region was far removed from the main industrial centres of Russia, an agricultural implement industry had also sprung up. A cottage weaving industry produced and exported to the entire Russian market a highly prized calico-type cotton cloth called *Sarpinka*. As the population grew, so did land shortages and emigration to the United States, Canada and South America occurred prior to World War I. Despite the emigration, there remained a significant proportion of impoverished landless peasants who were good material for political radicalization.<sup>59</sup>

We have no official data on the distribution of the Paproć deportees throughout the Volga region. The Paproć parish records of deaths in Russia suggest the largest number lived at



Ekaterinenstadt, just north of the capital city Saratov, about half way between the cities of Samara and Tsaritsyn. Whether there were a substantial number of Paproć exiles at Saratov city is uncertain. The only known death (May 1916) at Saratov recorded in the Paproć register is for someone born in nearby Zambrów. Nonetheless, with 8,000 refugees in Saratov in 1917 it seems quite likely that some of the skilled artisans from the Paproć might have found work here. A death in the extended family occurred at Saratov on January 3, 1917. Pastor Rudolf Buse (born in Paproć Duża) had been arrested by Cossacks in his parish at Grodziec and banished to Russia in 1914. Prior to his deportation he had been force marched from Grodziec to Łódź and from there to Warsaw, a total of 250 kilometres.<sup>60</sup> His death at the relatively young age of 45 is not surprising as his university records include an 1897 doctor's recommendation that he reside in the countryside for health reasons. The deprivations of deportation and refugee life apparently overwhelmed a weak constitution.

The group of refugees at Ekaterinenstadt (Baronsk in Russian, Marxstadt from 1918 to 1941, and Marx since 1941) included our grandparents, Rudolf and Auguste (Penk) Schütz, and their children. They lived in Ekaterinenstadt from 1915 to 1918. Also living here during these years was our great-grandfather August Buse and his wife Marianne (née Wrede, deceased July 31, 1917, age 69) and at least two of their sons, David Rudolf and Bernhard. David Rudolf Buse (1878-1948) and his wife Emilie (née Moedbeck, 1882-1961) added to their family with the birth of Emilie (our future aunt Emilie Schütz) at Ekaterinenstadt on April 9, 1918. Bernhard Buse and his wife Olga lost their seven-year-old daughter Wanda on April 26, 1917. Maria (Gundlach) Buse, the mother of the pastors Julius, Johann and Rudolf Buse, also died here on September 6, 1915 at age 75.

Ekaterinenstadt (Samara province), on the east bank of the Volga, is 75 kilometres upstream from Saratov. The east bank, known as the 'meadow side' (*Wiesenseite*), is the western edge of the treeless Russian steppe that extends all the way into Central Asia. Founded in 1766, the original colony of 283 settlers had grown into a thriving town of 12,000 by 1912. As one of the principal grain handling ports of the region, it had

become a small industrial centre with four steam powered flour mills, a sawmill and an implement, a hat and a tobacco factory. There were imposing stone Lutheran and Catholic churches, with the steeple of the former being particularly impressive; a pre-1918 overview of the town is given in Photo 2.8. A fine wooden Orthodox Russian church served the Russians who had found employment in the local industries. Some of the descendants of the settlers still farmed, but they lived in town, using temporary shelters on their land allocations during seeding and harvest times. Everyone was bilingual to some degree as both Russian and German were taught in primary school. A High School (*Zentralschule*), one of two in the region, trained both teachers and administrators for local government.

Although the use of German in public was banned early in the war, the Schütz family did not find themselves in a totally strange environment on arrival in Ekaterinenstadt. Church and private speech remained unchanged, so establishing a new life was not as grim a prospect as one might perhaps imagine. The local committee for refugees (*Hilfskomitee für Flüchtlinge*) would have helped with temporary shelter, food, clothing and possibly contacts for work.<sup>61</sup> Nevertheless, food, shelter and clothing for a family of ten must have posed worrisome challenges. In the summer of 1915 there were eight children to

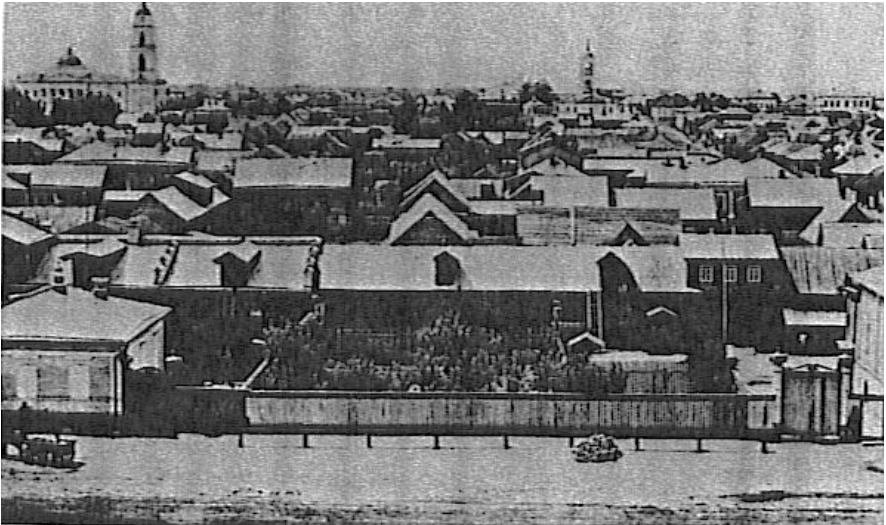


Photo 2.8. Ekaterinenstadt on the Volga River, pre-1918.

provide for: Gustav (born 1896), Adele (1898), Martha (1900), Olga (1902), Emil (1904), Leocadia (1907), Helene (1908) and Robert (1914). The family lived a few blocks from the Volga, but also close to the Lutheran church, whose melodious bells remained a distinct and pleasurable memory for Olga when she talked to us about the Volga in the 1990s.

Gustav was eventually drafted into the Russian army, but did not see action. Because Adele and Leocadia died within five days of each other in January 1917, we assume that they died from the same infectious disease.<sup>62</sup> It is no small irony that it was Adele who had, just prior to the war, been sent a ticket by her brother Ben to come to the United States. She did not make it out of Poland because she, or Ben, had lied about her age. Olga worked as a children's maid for a local farmer. The farmer had six horses and six camels and she witnessed the novel sight of camels being used for ploughing. Martha appears to have been assigned to the home front because she never mentioned work outside the home. The division of labour between these two aunts eventually became permanent. When they returned from exile, Olga was assigned to farm work and Martha to the kitchen.

Finding work would not have been a problem for Grandfather Schütz. Shoes and boots are always in demand, especially in times of war. By 1915 the Volga Germans had, by way of proof of their loyalty, contributed 100,000 rubles to the war effort. In addition to this they contributed large quantities of shoes, clothes and foodstuffs for the notoriously ill-equipped Russian army. Either directly or indirectly, Grandfather Schütz helped put boots on the Russian army. Whether he was able to save much money is somewhat less certain. In Poland, the family could rely on their piece of land and a few animals to supply them with basic foodstuffs. In Ekaterinenstadt the family had to join a market economy and pay the inflationary prices that the war brought. This inflation became acute in the last year of their stay on the Volga. The poor harvest of 1917, only 55 per cent of the average, drove up the price of rye for bread by 460 per cent between July 1917 and January 1918.<sup>63</sup>

The whereabouts of our paternal grandparents, Adolf and Otilie (Moedbeck) Buse, during this period is unknown. We know only

that they came to the Volga with four children: Martha (born 1899), Helene (1904), Gustav (1907), and Alwine (1913). Grandfather Buse, a miller by trade, had managed a steam-powered flour mill at Małkinia Gorna (20 kilometres south-east Paproć Duża). Conscription for the army created shortages of manpower in most industries and Grandfather Buse, along with the exiled artisans from Paproć, presumably had little difficulty in finding work. The peculiarities of the Russian draft system also meant that many of the peasant holdings were stripped of their men and the Paproć refugee farmers could easily step into this gap. There is a distinct possibility that some of our relatives acquired an entirely new perspective on the art of ploughing as they walked behind a team of camels on the Russian steppe.

The February 1917 revolution which deposed the Czar set in motion the train of events that eventually brought the refugees back to Poland. The peasantry of Samara and Saratov provinces welcomed the revolution, seizing estates and converting them to communal ownership. The majority of the Volga Germans also supported the revolution, using it as an opportunity to make claims for more local autonomy. That support was no doubt solidified when the new government repealed the ban on the public use of German. The support for the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917 was more muted and turned to outright hostility among the peasants when the requisitioning of grain and animals began. In Ekaterinenstadt the Bolshevik cause had adherents among the working classes and the local intelligentsia, comprised mostly of teachers. Nonetheless, the Bolsheviks had to use the threat of force to replace the existing government authority. Once in power they nationalized local industries and imposed a levy of two million rubles on the upper classes. At the national level, the imminent collapse of both war production and the army forced the Bolsheviks to seek peace with Germany and Austria. The treaty of Brest-Litovsk in March 1918 temporarily opened the previously closed military frontier to the movement of refugees. In Saratov, Erhard Torinus, a Volhynian Lutheran pastor, supervised a committee that organized the return of refugees. Due to the efforts of this committee many of the Paproć exiles, including the Schütz family, returned to Poland in May or June of 1918.<sup>64</sup>

We do not know whether the returnees organized by Pastor Torinus travelled in small or large groups. In all likelihood they simply took advantage of whatever space they could scrounge on the over-burdened railway system. Until November 1918 most of Ukraine was under German occupation and this provided a reasonably safe southerly exit route. The returnees appeared to have travelled in the direction of Odessa on the Black Sea before turning north towards Volhynia. On May 20, 1918 our maternal great-grandmother, Karoline (Steinmeier) Penk, died at age 65 in Kishinev, Bessarabia (today Moldavia). Our paternal great-grandfather, August Buse, also aged 65, died three days later in Kozlov, a town about 100 kilometres south-east of L'vov (today in Ukraine, formerly Lemberg in Austrian Galicia). Another group of returnees must have travelled a similar route a month later as we know of one death at Nikolaev just north-west of Odessa on June 12, 1918.

Some of the returnees chose a northerly exit route through Moscow. Death was their travelling companion. The following are principal stops on the railway running west from Moscow to Brest on the Polish border: Vyaz'ma, Smolensk, Orsha, Borisov, Minsk and Baranovichi. At each stop, starting with Moscow, one or more Paproć returnees found a final resting place. Two distinct groups can be identified. The first consists of those who made the journey between April and August 1918. These travellers appear to have headed north before the fighting between Bolshevik (Reds) and anti-Bolshevik (Whites) forces in the Russian civil war made the journey unsafe, if not impossible. Deaths of returning Paproćers were recorded in 1918 at Vyaz'ma, Smolensk, Orsha (four) and Minsk. The death at Smolensk was that of Rudolf Penk, our maternal grandmother's brother.

The second group consists of those who died in November and December 1921. Recorded deaths occurred in Moscow (two), Borisov, Minsk and Baranovichi (two). We believe this group started from Samara and Stavropol because Moscow was the closest point for direct return to Poland. Their date of departure cannot be determined. In June 1918 the Whites had captured Samara and considerable territory west of the Volga, making any movement by refugees unlikely. Late in the autumn of that year the Bolsheviks retook Samara and they soon found

themselves fighting peasant uprisings after implementing a brutal program of requisitioning of grain and other property. Stavropol was one of the major battle sites between the Bolsheviks and the peasants in early 1919. Even if the 1921 group somehow escaped the prevailing chaos, they would not have been able to complete the journey to Paproć. The defeat of Germany in November 1918 had led to the creation of the new state of Poland, which was soon engaged in numerous military conflicts with its neighbours because its eastern boundaries were not defined by the peace treaties. The war between Soviet Russia and Poland lasted from February 1919 until October 1920 with a formal peace treaty not concluded until March 1921. Only then were the rest of the Paproć refugees able to return. Some of them may even have spent their time waiting in the refugee camp at Orsha, established by the Soviet government as a collection point for refugees seeking to return to Poland. An official report described the refugees at Orsha as "a bedraggled, hungry and diseased multitude."<sup>65</sup>

We know that our paternal grandparents, Adolf and Otilie Buse, took the northerly route home because Otilie died at Orsha, 450 kilometres south-west of Moscow. Our grandfather did not record her death in the church register after his return to Paproć Duża, leaving the date of her death uncertain. However, our grandfather had remarried by March 1921 so he was not part of the group that returned at the end of 1921. The most probable date of death is, therefore, 1918 and Otilie, presumably, became a victim of the rampant typhus. The 1918 date implies a departure from the Volga in the spring of 1918 during the Red-White battles near Samara, battles that our father, a twelve-year-old at the time, claims to have witnessed from the train taking them out of Russia.

The Volga exile ripped apart the fabric of our grandparents' lives. Their views on the matter are not part of recorded history, but we can be sure that they did not find much pleasure in this arbitrary and, to them, senseless dislocation. For their children, especially the teenagers, it was a grand adventure to an exotic environment. Cossacks, Bashkirs, Kazakhs and Kalmyks from the steppes became part of their lives. Whether on horseback or camel, these tribal peoples left

a lasting visual imprint; our aunt Martha Schütz, in particular, was much impressed with the riding skills of the Cossacks. Our aunts also remembered with fondness the birches on the Volga and the onion-domed Russian churches. Aunt Martha used to say it was the best time of her life and would have been happy to stay there. Luckily for her, the family did not. From 1918 to 1921 Soviet requisition of grain and farm animals destroyed much of the productive capacity of the region. When a drought struck in 1921, a famine ensued. Estimates of the number of people who starved to death range from 50,000 to 166,000.<sup>66</sup>

In addition to her memories Aunt Martha brought back with her a silver ruble and a five ruble gold coin. Carefully hidden in the centre of balls of crocheting thread, these coins travelled with her in this disguise across many borders. No one in the family knew of these coins until the 1980s when she distributed her mementos to her nephews. At that time one of the nephews also received a well-travelled black and red woolen blanket woven by our maternal great-grandfather, Gustav Penk prior to World War I.<sup>67</sup> If the locket, the coins and the blanket could talk, our story of the Volga would surely have been more dramatic. Until someone in the family takes up script writing for movies, the untold tales of the Volga exile remain locked up in these mementos.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> The facts in this sentence are drawn from three sources. From our aunt, Olga Dams, we have the fact that Pastor Buse led a prayer at the railway station when the men departed for Russia. From Wichert (1998:24) we have the name of the station and from our uncle, Emil Schütz, we have the September 1914 date of departure for the men. From the Bible of August Buse (1843-1918), our great-grandfather, we have Feb. 27, 1915 as the date of his family's exile to Russia and we use this date for the departure of the women and children.

<sup>2</sup> Unable to read either Polish or Russian, we have not made any attempt to seek out official archival material that may still exist on the Paproć region or any of its inhabitants for the time span covered by this chapter. There are two exceptions to this statement. First, the Russian university records of the Buse pastors fell into our hands

through sheer good luck and were translated for us by Mark Opgenorth. Second, we have consulted, with the aid of dictionaries and friends, the Paproć Duża church registers (part Polish, part Russian) that are available from the Family History Centers (FHC) of the Mormon Church of Latter Day Saints. Perhaps some future scholar in the family, with linguistic talents greater than ours, will take up the torch and bring to light the archival potential we have neglected.

<sup>3</sup> Harring (1831:57-58) relates a story about Constantine that he heard during his two-year stint in the Russian Imperial Guard. While inspecting a regiment of lancers, Constantine noted that the seams of the lancers' gloves were on the inside instead of on the outside as required by the dress regulations. The officers of the regiment were arrested and the men given 500 lashes each.

<sup>4</sup> This historical section is based on Davies (1981), the two volumes by Leslie (1963, 1969) and Wandych (1974).

<sup>5</sup> Leaders in the movement to re-organize agriculture were the Zamoyski family whose possessions included 100 manors and the services of 100,000 peasants. Our extended family has a tenuous historical link to the Zamoyskis. Sometime in the 1830s Count Andrzej Zamoyski established five German colonies on his lands immediately south of the town of Brok on the river Bug; see Map 1.3. The largest of these, Płatkownica, was the home of Grandfather Adolf Buse's second wife, Helene Krüger, and his residence in the 1920s; see village #12, Map 1.3. In 1843 Zamoyski also established German colonies in the vicinity of Radzymin, 25 km. northeast of Warsaw. One of these colonies, Czubajowizna, is the birthplace of Albert Kleinfeldt, who married our cousin Edna Dams in June 1952. Our source on the founding of the Zamoyski colonies is Kneifel (1971:37,34).

<sup>6</sup> Pytlak (1917:43,88) mentions both the sale of leaseholds in 1828 and the grant of freeholds in 1864. Wandych (1974:82) states that the plan to sell Crown lands was not realized due to the outbreak of the November 1830 insurrection.

<sup>7</sup> These numbers are from Pockrandt (1937:82 ,107).

<sup>8</sup> The lists of 35 *Hüfner* and 22 *Büdner* appear as appendices in Pockrandt (1936). The *Hüfner* are given as residents of Gross Königshuld (Paproć Duża) and the *Büdner* as residents of Klein Königshuld (Paproć Mała). The number of *Hüfner* is overstated by three as these three names hold only 12 Morgen (0.40 Hufe) or less, whereas every *Hufner* in the colony had at least 3 *Hufen*. We have re-classified these three colonists as *Büdner* and have adjusted the totals of each group accordingly in calculating the averages that are reported



in the text. Pockrandt incorrectly assumes that all the *Hüfner* in Gross Königshuld wanted to leave, an error that is readily apparent by the absence of Ludwig Buse from the list. This invalid assumption also explains why Pockrandt mistakenly reports that the total area of the colony is 121 *Hufen* as opposed to the correct number of 148.45 given in Table 1.1. That there was considerable movement in and out of the Königshuld colony in this decade can be deduced from the fact that only nine *Hüfner* and four *Büdner* on the 1816 list also appear on the list of 1806. Movement also occurred within the colonies. Nine Königshuld settlers on the 1816 list gave their location as Louisenau, Wilhelmsdorf or Mecklenburg in the Russian migrants list of 1813-14.

<sup>9</sup> Müller (1972:329).

<sup>10</sup> Abel (1980:Chapter 7).

<sup>11</sup> The murder at Matzdorf is recounted in Endler (1935:82). In April 2004, while George, Dieter, and Bill were looking for ancestral bones in the Schönhausen cemetery near Matzdorf, Adolf found the iron cross which marks the grave of the murdered landlord Haberland.

<sup>12</sup> The colonization efforts of the Duchy of Warsaw and Congress Poland up to 1863 are discussed in Pytlak (1917:Chapter 2).

<sup>13</sup> The best known fictional account of 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish peasant life is the four volume novel, *The Peasants*, by Wladislaw Reymont published between 1902 and 1909. Reymont won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1924. German colonists appear in these volumes in quite unflattering cartoon-like stereotypical portrayals.

<sup>14</sup> Translated from Hahn (2004:33-35). Müller (1972:314-315) gives an abridged and edited version of the letter which mistakenly has Wolfert living in Srebrny Borek instead of Srebrna where he died in 1850.

<sup>15</sup> There were five living children at the time of the move to Poland. Giving up 'surplus' children to childless relatives was not uncommon at this time.

<sup>16</sup> Hordynski (1833:304-305; Map 30).

<sup>17</sup> The indiscriminate hanging of Jews for spying is discussed by Duker (1966:220 and 225) who does not provide any precise numbers.

<sup>18</sup> The details about individuals in this paragraph are taken from Schmit (1959-1960, Part III: 4-5) and Kersten (1938:11-12).

<sup>19</sup> Schmit (1959-1960,Part III:5).

<sup>20</sup> Brodzicki and Godlewska (1987:246).

<sup>21</sup> Stolzmann and Jürgens appear in Kneifel's (1971:306,319) list of notable Lutherans in Poland.

<sup>22</sup> Davies (1996:776-777). A detailed account of cholera in Europe, and Hamburg in particular, can be found in Evans (1987). Cholera is a highly infectious intestinal disease characterized by diarrhea and vomiting after drinking contaminated water.

<sup>23</sup> Kersten (1939). No page numbers are given for this citation as we have only a re-typed version of the original article.

<sup>24</sup> The genealogical data on the Wolfert family given in Hahn (2004:36) differs from Wolfert's statement that he lost three children within the space of three months in 1843. According to Hahn, a seven-year-old daughter died in February 1842, a seven-month old son died in July 1841 and a one-month old baby died in August 1842.

<sup>25</sup> The deaths in 1819 are recorded in a family Bible once owned by our great-grandfather August Buse. At the time Dieter examined it in the 1970s, it was in the hands of Gustav Buse of Hagen, Germany, a cousin to our father. The death of Ludwig Buse's eight year old son, Johann Daniel, in August 1837 is not part of the family genealogy recorded in this Bible. Published in 1710, this Bible was found abandoned at Paproć Duża in 1915 by German soldiers during World War I and was returned to the owners after the war. The deaths of Johann Daniel in 1837, Johann Ludwig in 1842 and Wilhelmine come from FHC film #808436.

<sup>26</sup> According to Hahn's (2004:35) genealogical summary, Wolfert's father, Ludwig, (1748 - prior to 1821) became a government official at Jasienica, so in this instance the father was probably the teacher. There is circumstantial evidence that Ludwig received a *Büdner's* allocation at Königshuld but the colonist list does not permit a definitive conclusion. That Ludwig started as colonist farmer is clear since Wolfert's letter makes reference to his father's farm.

<sup>27</sup> Rogall (1987:294).

<sup>28</sup> Each cited date for the listed teachers and the cantor is taken from the birth and death register of the relevant year in FHC film #808436.

<sup>29</sup> Busch (1867:254).

<sup>30</sup> Film #808437 FHC.

<sup>31</sup> Film #808437 FHC. The disparity between men and women persisted, to a much lesser degree, into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the period 1928 to 1936, 96% of the grooms and 90% of the brides signed the marriage register; data collected from film #1186446 FHC.

<sup>32</sup> These details and the material on the parish and its pastors are based on the two volumes by Kneifel (1967:71-72; 1971:29-30).

<sup>33</sup> The main source for the building of the church is Kersten (1939), supplemented by Kneifel (1971:30).

<sup>34</sup> The details of Piłsudski's funeral are taken from Kneifel (1967:33).

<sup>35</sup> Using the Russian census data of 1897, Mückler (1927:17) has estimated that 5 per cent of German-Protestant farmers had been fully assimilated into Polish society. Town dwellers assimilated at a much faster rate. For example, in 1846 the mayor of the nearby town of Ostrów was one Adam Gerhard. A Lutheran, Gerhard appears as a witness in the 1846 Paproć Duża birth register; FHC film #808436.

<sup>36</sup> See Baumann (1986:33-37). The conscription of European subjects, such as the Poles and Finns, became a matter of considerable debate within the Russia military administration. The two Polish insurrections had not been forgotten by the Russian army.

<sup>37</sup> We are indebted to Carol Kristen-Burns for bringing Müller (1940) to our attention and for her list of Volhynian immigrants from the Paproć region. We combined her list with the names in Müller (1940, 1972) to obtain the total number of known immigrants. Martin Buse was the brother of Johann David Buse (IV.P1 in Table 2.2). We know that Martin's son, Ludwig, moved to Dąbrowa, Volhynia sometime after marrying Wilhelmine Wrede in November 1868. Ludwig's son, Rudolf Buse, was a miller near Rożyszcze in Volhynia. Kossmann (1978:250) estimated the number of Volhynian immigrants at 70,000.

<sup>38</sup> The Brazilian immigrant was mentioned to us by our uncle Emil Schütz. According to Stankiewicz (1975:43), 41,872 people emigrated from Poland in the years 1890-92 and 13 per cent of this number came from the Łomża region.

<sup>39</sup> The numbers for 1825 and 1851 are from Kossmann (1978:367-396). The numbers for 1835 and 1937 are from Kersten (1939). Our analysis of population changes in the Paproć region during the 19<sup>th</sup> century was seriously compromised by lack of access to the Russian census of 1897.

<sup>40</sup> Schmit (1959-1960, Part III:5); see also Note 5 above.

<sup>41</sup> The alternative estimate of the Catholic proportion is based on Kossmann's (1978) list of the number of colonists and dependents living in the original colonies in 1835. Assuming these colonists are the combined total of Catholics and Lutherans, the calculation of the average proportion of Catholics follows directly using the 1835 numbers for Lutherans given in Table 2.1.

<sup>42</sup> The switch from Polish to Russian can be seen in the FHC film #1343933. The church records from 1890 to 1899 are missing, so the re-appearance of personal names in Latin script can only be dated by the FHC film #1046469 which starts in 1900.

<sup>43</sup> Busch (1867:254) reports four out-of-wedlock births in his undated statistics for the parish. The year 1866 is the most likely date.

<sup>44</sup> The apparent prosperity of the Penks in Photo 2.5 could be a facade. Photographers of the time sometimes supplied up-market clothing to their less well-off clients. The portrait of Karoline and Gustav Penk was brought to America by their son Robert. It is now in the possession of Lyola Wagner, the daughter of Pauline (Penk) Wagner. Lyola's daughter, Darlene Reblock of Ashland, Pennsylvania, was kind enough to have a photographer make a copy of this portrait for us.

<sup>45</sup> With the exception of Gottschalk, Schultz and Wichert, these names are cited in Müller (1940:107). Rudolf Wichert, brother of the Imperial guardsman Friedrich, worked in a brewery in New York but returned home before World War I. His sister remained in New York.

<sup>46</sup> The information about Ludwig Penk comes from three sources and illustrates nicely the variety of documents that can be found with a determined search. We learned of his marriage and return to Poland from dossier #175991 of the *Einwanderung Zentralstelle* (EWZ) records taken to the US National Archives after World War II. The EWZ was set up by the Nazis in 1939 to administer the transfer of ethnic Germans from and to newly occupied territories. The US immigration record supplied to us by Richard Williams of Weatherford, Texas gave us details about his arrival in Philadelphia. Film #1186447 from the FHC revealed that Ludwig served as a witness to a Paproć birth registry entry of the baptism of our uncle Julius Schütz in Paproć Duża in November 1918.

<sup>47</sup> We obtained much of the information on the Penks from our cousin Helen Schutz (the Americanized version of Schütz) of South Lyon, Michigan. Helen's mother, Olga Schultz, arrived in the US in May 1908 from Łomża and a connection to the numerous Schultzes in the Paproć region cannot be excluded. The information from Helen has been

supplemented by information from the US censuses of 1910, 1920 and 1930 provided in November 2005 by Richard Williams.

<sup>48</sup> The information on Robert Schütz comes from the Ellis Island immigration website. That site also shows W. Filter, age 37, of Łomża arriving on Sept. 27, 1906 from Hamburg, Germany. He was undoubtedly a descendent of the Filters from Woldegk that came to the Paproć region in 1820. Neither 'Sam' Penk nor Ben Schütz show up on the Ellis Island website; Baltimore is a likely port-of-entry for them. We know that the SS Brandenburg arrived in Baltimore on December 29, 1910 carrying Julius Tester (a misspelling of Fester, possibly Texter), his son Adolf and August Bismarck, all from Paproć Mała (see the website [www.odessa3.org/collections/ships/](http://www.odessa3.org/collections/ships/)).

<sup>49</sup> Johann David Buse fathered a total of 17 children, seven with his first wife, Henriette Schultz. Henriette probably died in childbirth in 1856, having produced a child in 1843, 1844, 1847, 1849, 1850, 1851 and 1853 following her marriage to Johann David in 1840. Johann David's brother, Johann Martin, was almost as prolific, fathering 13 children in the 27 years between 1844 and 1871. David's other brother, Johann Adolf, did not keep up the tradition of large families, producing only three children.

<sup>50</sup> Schmit (1959-1960, Part III:4).

<sup>51</sup> These facts are from Müller (1972:319).

<sup>52</sup> The locket was first shown to the brothers at Adolf's cabin on the Pembina River at the time of the first family reunion in September 1998. At that time no one said that they remembered our mother wearing it. These memories surfaced later and were confirmed by photos of her wearing a locket in the first decade in Canada. It is not possible to determine from these photos whether the locket is the gold locket under dispute. The locket was won by Dieter in a brotherly game of Durak later that evening. Dieter, who had the locket cleaned and appraised, gave it to his wife Judith.

<sup>53</sup> The quote is from Lohr (2003:131), who is also the source for the other details on the deportations.

<sup>54</sup> The exemption of the German Catholics is mentioned by Kersten (1939). According to Kossmann (1978:400), church records show 1,450 church members at Paproć Duża in 1913. In the Russian census of 1897, the district of Ostrów had 2,940 Lutherans, of which 2,307 were identified as German; see Mückler (1927:9). It follows from these two sources that the 5,600 parishioners attributed to Paproć Duża by Holtz (1916:9) is either a typographical error or an estimate

for a much larger region, possibly for the diocese of Augustow. The parish of Paproć Duża lay within the county of Ostrów but whether they shared a common geographic area is unknown.

<sup>55</sup> The death rates are given by Eichler (1921:108). To estimate the number of deaths during transport we assume that the demographic structure of the Lutheran villages in Congress Poland was stable between 1897 and 1915 with a one-to-one ratio of males to females. As reported in Mückler (1927:21), the 1897 Russian census gives the proportion of females under 10 years of age as 30.56 per cent, a figure which we assume also applies to males. If we count the under ten category as children and apply the 1897 proportion to the 1,500 Paproćers, then there were 458 children among the exiles. Applying Eichler's death rates then yields 229 deaths among the children and 156 ( $1,042 \times .15$ ) among adults for a total of 385 deaths. The exiled population thus amounted to 1,115 people, a number that by sheer numerical coincidence corresponds to the parish population of 1,115 reported in 1923. While this estimate of the number of deaths appears to be the right order of magnitude relative to the post-World War I population, it is probably an over-estimate because no allowance has been made for the deaths on the return journey and the deaths due to the Spanish influenza in 1918-19. We have identified 100 deaths in Russia in the Paproć church registry records for the period 1915-21, but this number is undoubtedly too low as not all deaths were recorded by the returning exiles (e.g. our paternal grandmother) and not all the registry entries were legible.

<sup>56</sup> The details of the Siberian exiles are reported in Schmit (1959-1960, Part V:8).

<sup>57</sup> The deaths and births are from FHC film #1046469 and #1186447, respectively.

<sup>58</sup> Our uncle Emil Schütz told us that a group of women and children left the Saratov region by sleigh to join their menfolk at Stavropol, crossing the frozen Volga en route. We suspect the women and children actually travelled the other way because the pattern of deaths suggests larger numbers of exiles in the Saratov region. Thus while 22 of 24 deaths at Stavropol occurred in 1915 and only two in 1916-1918, at Ekaterinenstadt 18 of the 20 recorded deaths occurred in the years 1916-18, suggesting that most of the exiles had moved to Ekaterinenstadt and other locations.

<sup>59</sup> Figes (1989), Koch (1977), Long (1988) and Raleigh (1986), were our sources on the Volga German settlements and the events in the 1915-1921 period that are discussed in the rest of this section.

<sup>60</sup> The date of death is from Kneifel (1967:72) and the report of the forced march from Holtz (1916:7). The tale of the forced march may be apocryphal. Kneifel (1937:74) reports that in the autumn of 1914 he personally saw a dejected Pastor Buse and three to four other prisoners being transported by wagon through his home town of Władysławów, some 40 kilometres east of Grodziec. The wagon was guarded by 15 Cossacks.

<sup>61</sup> Dönninghaus (2002:230).

<sup>62</sup> According to our uncle Emil Schütz, Adela died in 1915 after catching a cold while helping with the harvest. Our mother told us that Leocadia died of the hiccups in 1915. Neither story is particularly plausible given the dates of death, January 11 and 16, 1917, recorded in the Paproć church register.

<sup>63</sup> Figes (1989:89).

<sup>64</sup> Kneifel (1967:245). Our searches notwithstanding, Torinus and his committee apparently left no archival record.

<sup>65</sup> Gatrell (1999:190-191).

<sup>66</sup> The low and high estimates are from Long (1986:252) and Koch (1977:265), respectively. Koch writes from the perspective of the Volga Germans, so his number is likely an exaggeration.

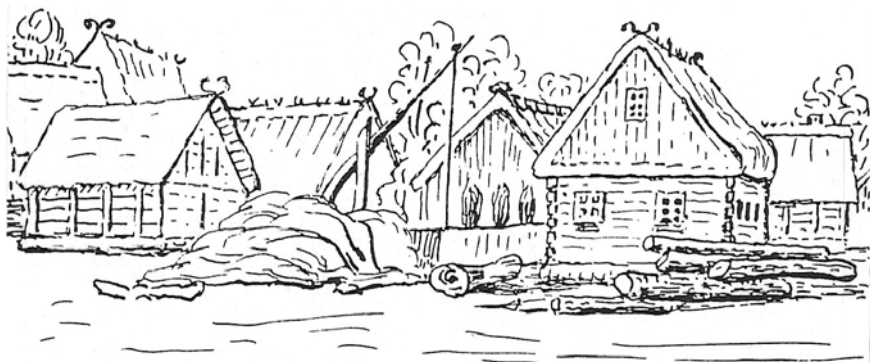
<sup>67</sup> George received the five ruble piece, Dieter the silver ruble and Adolf the blanket.





### ROZDZIAŁ III

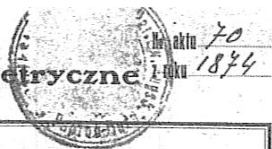
### Polish Citizens, Doubtfully, 1918-1939



Farmyards at Srebrny Borek 1937. Sketch by Martha Müller.

Parafia *E. A. Szproci - Duża*  
 Starostwo *Ostrowski*  
 ziemia *Lanigowska*

### Świadectwo Metryczne



IMIĘ I NAZWISKO	Urodzona <del>Umarła</del> Zawarli związek małżeński w <i>Szproci - Mała</i>			IMIĘ I NAZWISKO RODZICÓW
	dnia	miesiąca	roku	
<i>Augusta Penk</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>lipca</i>	<i>1874</i>	<i> córka Gundawa Penk i Karoliny z Hein- meyerów</i>



Wydane: Tysiąc *osiemnoś* siedemdziesiątego ósmego roku  
 Wydano w *Paproc - Duży* dnia *18 maja* 1927 roku.

Urzędnik Stanu Cywilnego: *Wp Sullawent*

Birth certificate of Auguste Penk born at Paproć Mała on August 1, 1874.  
 Issued at Paproć Duża on May 18, 1927.

## Chapter III

### **POLISH CITIZENS, DOUBTFULLY, 1918-1939**

An outhouse richly ornamented with wood carving reflects nicely the artistic preferences of a winter-idle peasant. A beehive fashioned out of a hollowed-out tree trunk (Photo 3.1) is a good example of frugality-driven peasant ingenuity. Such charming relics of 19<sup>th</sup> century Polish country life can be found 35 kilometres south-east of Paproć Duża in an agricultural museum on the former estate of the Starzeński family at Ciechanowiec.<sup>1</sup> The museum has a wide ranging collection of artifacts touching on all aspects of rural life, including less commonly covered areas such as veterinary science and herbal medicines. The surviving estate buildings include the restored manor house, stables, coach house, servants' quarters and a working water mill with pond. The 20 hectare site is also home to a collection of peasant structures such as cottages, barns, granaries, windmills, a smokehouse, an apiary and a water well with a traditional counter-weighted hoist. Much of the agricultural and handicraft technology on display would have been used in daily life by our ancestors in the Paproć region. The windmills with wooden gears and drive shafts are similar to those once owned by our great-uncles David and Johann Buse. One of the rooms in a peasant hut has been furnished with the tools of a shoemaker, a room into which one can easily insert the image of our shoemaker grandfather in Paproć Duża. The colours of a blanket in a weaving display match the red and black of the Schütz blanket that travelled to the Volga and back.

A collection of peasant carts, buggies and sleds is housed in the former coach house. Included in this assortment of rustic conveyances are some exemplars of the ubiquitous 'V' sided peasant wagon which can still be seen today in the poorer regions of Poland, although the post-World War II model is typically adorned with rubber tires; see Photo 3.2 for the museum exemplars, as well as Photo 2.3 of the Ostrów market. On September 22, 1939, a caravan of such wagons left the churchyard at Paproć Duża, heading north in the direction of East Prussia via Łomża. Ten days earlier German troops had occupied the region, soon followed by orders that all ethnic



*Photo 3.1. Beehive at Ciechanowiec museum.*

Germans were being evacuated prior to the region being turned over to advancing Soviet troops. A month earlier Germany and the Soviet Union had signed a non-aggression pact in Moscow which included a secret protocol that divided Poland into German and Russian spheres of influence. The Paproć region fell into the Soviet sphere.

Once again the Paproć peasants had become pawns in a larger game. War had returned to Poland and our family experienced another version of the forced removal of 1914-15. Their state of mind is a matter of conjecture. It seems unlikely that anyone reflected on the fact that their means of transport back to Germany differed only in detail from that which had brought their ancestors to Poland at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Those with the most to lose materially presumably had deep regrets. Those with less at stake may well have looked upon the enforced move as an opportunity, because life in Poland between the two World Wars had not been without tensions.



*Photo 3.2. Peasant wagons at Ciechanowiec museum.*

They had rebuilt their lives after returning from the Volga exile, but their ethnic identity, long preserved by religion and schooling, was under attack. The details will emerge as we explore village and family life in inter-war Poland. As usual, we offer a preliminary overview of the historical context, including an examination of the important role played by minority politics.

### **Poland Resurrected**

The armistice of November 11, 1918 not only brought World War I to an end, it also created opportunities for those who had dedicated their lives to the fight for an independent Poland.<sup>2</sup> On November 10, 1918, Józef Piłsudski arrived in Warsaw after being released from Magdeburg fortress in Germany where he had been imprisoned since July 1917. Four days later Piłsudski was head-of-state and army commander-in-chief in the new Republic of Poland. The three-man Polish Regency Council, established by the occupying Central Powers during the war, had turned over all state power to Piłsudski and shortly thereafter dissolved itself. Piłsudski had correctly judged that being on the spot would be the shortest route to power and his reputation as a fighter for Polish independence gave him the

necessary public support to attain it. Within the space of four days the former Siberian exile, revolutionary socialist and broadsheet editor, robber of Russian banks and trains, organizer of the paramilitary Riflemen Associations and leader of the Polish Legions in World War I, became the pre-eminent political force in Poland, a position he retained until his death in 1935. Other contenders for power fell by the wayside. The Lublin-based provisional government of the Left dissolved itself and pledged allegiance to Piłsudski. Roman Dmowski, leader of the right-wing National Democrats and long-time rival of Piłsudski, had left Russia in 1916 in order to persuade the Allies that he had a role to play in the resurrection of Poland after the war. His National Committee had been given official status by the Allies in 1917, but at the time of the Armistice he was in the United States on a fund-raising tour. Dmowski and the Allies could do little other than to accept Piłsudski's *fait accompli*.

A contemporary observer described Piłsudski's unusual and extraordinary personality as follows:

An ardent patriot and a man of immense courage and force of character. A pronounced skeptic about orthodox methods, whether applied to military affairs or politics; he loves danger ... Next to danger he is said to love intrigue – a revolutionary by temperament and circumstance, his ingrained proclivity is to the secret and the indirect.<sup>3</sup>

Piłsudski's life prior to his seizure of power in 1918 confirms this assessment. From 1887 to 1893 Piłsudski had been exiled to Siberia for proscribed political activity while at university. On his return from Siberia he joined the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) and clandestinely edited and published the widely-read party newspaper. In 1900, a year after his marriage at Paproć Duża, he was arrested but escaped to Galicia where he continued his anti-Russian activities. These included the leadership of the Subversive Military Department of the PPS whose principal task was robbing Russian banks and trains to finance the fight for independence. A taste for military matters also led Piłsudski to form the Riflemen Associations which he envisioned as the nucleus of a future Polish army.

In August 1914 Piłsudski put his men at the disposal of Austria-Hungary because he believed that this offered the best prospect for the eventual creation of an independent Polish state. Organized into separate and distinct formations, these Polish Legions fought alongside the Austrian army against the Russians. To keep the loyalty of their Polish soldiers and subjects all three empires made promises of an independent Poland, but invariably with conditions that would keep Poland in their respective spheres of influence. The Austrian and German offer of November 1916 was initially accepted, but later rejected by most Poles, including Piłsudski, when Germany began to add more conditions. Piłsudski and the Polish Legions also refused a subsequent demand to swear an oath of loyalty to the Austrian and German emperors. Piłsudski's arrest and imprisonment in the Magdeburg fortress only added to his stature in the eyes of the Polish people.

Although Poland had a head-of-state and soon thereafter a prime minister and cabinet, the new state did not know where its boundaries lay. At the 1919 Peace Conference in Paris, the Polish delegation, co-headed by Dmowski, demanded eastern boundaries that encompassed the better part of Poland's historic Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian territories. In addition to claiming most of East Prussia, Poland also laid claim to West Prussia (eastern Pomerania), Posen and Upper Silesia. The Allies rejected these demands outright, but failed ultimately to make any definitive determination on where to draw the line in the east. The 1919 Treaty of Versailles therefore addressed only Poland's boundaries with Germany. The Grand Duchy of Posen reverted to Poland and the acquisition of West Prussia, exclusive of Danzig, gave Poland access to the sea. Disputed areas, such as Upper Silesia and some regions of East Prussia and West Prussia, were to be resolved by local plebiscite. Any majority decision to join one country would create a new minority out of those who had voted the other way. The question of the borders could not be separated from the question of national minorities and national self-determination. When United States President Woodrow Wilson enumerated his famous fourteen points for the reconstruction of Europe, the principle of national self-determination appeared to be a self-evident proposition, at least to Wilson. Applying this principle in Central Europe soon

brought home a hard reality: the various ethnic groups of the former Russian, German and Austro-Hungarian Empires lived in untidy, sometimes large and ethnically intermingled enclaves. Inevitably, every new state that the Allies constructed in Paris had one or more minorities. Since these minorities were deprived of self-determination, the circle was squared by forcing each new state to accept a Minorities Treaty designed to protect the linguistic, religious and cultural freedom of its minorities.

In the case of Poland the minorities question proved especially troublesome. Within the boundaries claimed by Poland there lived a veritable stew of ethnic groups. Predominantly urban, the Jews could be found in towns and cities throughout this territory. The many German agricultural settlements from the past created numerous linguistic islands, such as Paproć, in the northern and western part, as well as in the Volhynian enclave in the south-east. The newly acquired Prussian territories added significant numbers of Germans to the existing concentrations in the industrial cities such as Łódź. In the south, Czechs and Poles shared the Duchy of Teschen (Cieszyn in Polish). In the north-east, the Poles were in the majority in the old Lithuanian capital of Vilna (Wilno in Polish, Vilnius in Lithuanian), but the surrounding countryside was a mix of Lithuanians, Poles, Byelorussians and various combinations thereof. In the east and the south-east, the Byelorussians and Ukrainians, respectively, formed clear majorities. Peaceful resolution of conflicting claims proved possible in only a few cases. In the Allenstein region of East Prussia and the Marienwerder region of West Prussia, the mostly Germanized Poles voted overwhelmingly to remain in Germany. In the south the Allies awarded the territory of Teschen to Czechoslovakia. Three Polish uprisings and a plebiscite eventually produced a partition of Upper Silesia into Polish and German domains.

The Polish claims to predominantly Lithuanian, Byelorussian and Ukrainian ethnic territory were predicated on the belief that former Polish sovereignty over these lands, acquired through the Polish-Lithuanian union of 1569, somehow trumped the Wilsonian doctrine of self-determination which they claimed for themselves. The chauvinistic Dmowski had a simple solution to the obvious contradiction: Polonize what in his view were

culturally and economically less advanced people. Piłsudski had a broader vision, recognizing perhaps that what was sauce for the Polish goose might also be sauce for the Lithuanian or Ukrainian gander. He proposed a federal structure of autonomous states under the leadership of Poland. The Lithuanians and Ukrainians declined Polish guidance; they wanted their own genuinely independent countries and set about to create them. In the western Ukraine the Poles quickly defeated the Ukrainian nationalists, whereas in the eastern Ukraine the nationalists fell victim to the Red Army during the civil war between the 'Reds' and the 'Whites'. At Versailles the Allies had put off the eastern borders for further study. While the problem was under study, the eastern boundaries were established by force of arms.

In the Lithuanian dispute Poland simply used its superior military power to take the Vilna region, although this was not accomplished permanently until 1922. The dispute over the Polish-Soviet border generated a full scale war.<sup>4</sup> In western Poland the German armies had departed in haste following the armistice. In the east, however, the withdrawal of a half million German soldiers stretched over several months. As they withdrew the Soviet Union moved troops west and Poland moved troops east. The first engagement occurred on February 14, 1919 at Bereza Kartuska, some 100 kilometres north-east of Brest-Litovsk. Throughout 1919 the Soviet Union, still fighting the civil war with the 'Whites', could not hold up the eastward advance of the Polish forces. A spring offensive in April 1920 led to the capture of Kiev by the Poles. With the civil war coming to a close, the Soviet Union mounted an effective counter-offensive and drove deep into Poland. In the first week of August a Soviet cavalry corps captured the Łomża region. Battles took place south of Ostrów and Paproć, giving the peasants of Paproć a reminder of Cossack methods.<sup>5</sup>

In Warsaw the diplomatic corps prepared to leave as a Polish collapse appeared inevitable. Then the Miracle on the Vistula occurred. Taking a high risk gamble, Piłsudski deliberately weakened the line of defence against the Soviets and personally took command of a hastily assembled strike-force 100 kilometres south of the capital. On August 16 the strike-force attacked the southern flank of the Red armies facing



Warsaw. The Poles were surprised to find porous Soviet defences. The over-confident Red Army had not kept any forces in reserve to hold their over-stretched supply and communications lines. The Soviets were surprised in turn to find a Polish army in their rear. A Soviet rout ensued. On August 20 the peasants at Paproć could watch the Third Soviet Army retreating along the Ostrów-Zambrów road.<sup>6</sup> Although hostilities ceased in October 1920, the Treaty of Riga, March 18, 1921, officially ended the war and made the eastern boundaries permanent until 1939. Poland's significant territorial gains in the east were validated at Riga, but it also acquired large numbers of non-Poles in the process.

The new Polish state faced formidable challenges. It had to weld together the three pieces of Poland that had been under the rule of three different empires for over a hundred years. Three systems of local administration and justice had to be rationalized. The war-damaged and inadequate existing infrastructure included anomalies such as a railway system without a common gauge. The 1921 census classified 64 per cent of the population as peasants, most of whom farmed small, widely dispersed holdings that kept agricultural productivity low. Widespread illiteracy remained a problem. Industrial production in 1923 was 30 per cent lower than in 1913. The circulation of multiple currencies hampered internal trade. Persistent and massive government budget deficits created hyper-inflation in the early 1920s. A new national currency, the złoty, was not introduced until 1924. The process of building national institutions included the adoption of a constitution in 1921. The constitution laid out the basis of a liberal democratic state with universal suffrage in a system of proportional representation in both the Sejm and the Senate. The balance of power between the executive and legislative branches heavily favoured the latter. The President could appoint a Prime Minister and Cabinet, but the Sejm had the right to vote out of office both the Prime Minister and any or all of the Cabinet. One article of the Minorities Treaty was incorporated into the constitution.<sup>7</sup> This article stipulated that members of national minorities had the same rights as Poles and that these rights included the use of their language, the provision of private schools and religious and cultural institutions.

In the first election under the new constitution in November 1922 no dominant party emerged. Proportional representation had the predictable effect of generating a multiplicity of parties. Ethnic minority parties received 18.4 per cent of the vote. With the exception of the Right, which had received 29.1 per cent of the vote, practically all the other parties were willing to elect Piłsudski as President. Contrary to all expectations, Piłsudski turned down the presidency because he believed it was too subordinate to the Sejm. He did, however, remain as Chief-of-Staff of the Army until 1923, having been elevated to the post of First Marshal of Poland in the meantime. A succession of unstable governments followed as the Sejm lapsed into multi-party chaos. By 1925 the number of registered political parties had risen to 92, of which 32 were represented in the Sejm. Without a tradition of public service many members of the Sejm exploited their constitutional power for personal enrichment.

The antics in the Sejm proved too much for Piłsudski, who had nothing but contempt for the deputies. In May 1926 he staged a coup and installed a President and government in which he was Prime Minister for two years. Although Piłsudski had come to power with the help of the Left, once in power he repudiated the Left and organized his supporters into a bloc that reflected his vision of Poland.<sup>8</sup> This vision fit no conventional political categories; anyone who was willing to support Piłsudski could be a member. If it had a core principle it was a form of moral renewal that would allow Poland to fulfill Piłsudski's long-standing desire to make Poland a European great power. One element of this vision was an army free of civilian meddling and to this end Piłsudski assumed the position of Inspector-General of the Army and Minister of War. Nominally the Sejm and Senate retained their power, but it was understood that all major policy questions required Piłsudski's attention. Piłsudski's former comrades-in-arms from the Polish Legions, who began to play an ever larger role in Polish politics, were the handmaidens of this oversight of all government business.

Piłsudski did not have absolute power; the government was still constrained by the constitution of 1921 and had therefore to make accommodations with the Sejm. To obtain the necessary two-thirds majority for a constitutional change the government resorted to political repression in the 1930 election. Some

2,000 people were held in custody including 64 deputies of the Sejm who were beaten and abused while in detention at the military prison at Brześć (Brest-Litovsk). This tainted election yielded the government only 55.6 percent of the seats in the Sejm, but it was enough to move Poland further down the road to an authoritarian state. By 1932 the government could legislate by decree, press censorship increased and political opponents in universities lost their positions. The death of Piłsudski in 1935 created a period of shifting alliances, but did not change the drift towards ever more authoritarian methods. Proportional representation was replaced by a corporatist system in which local assemblies of interest groups such as chambers of commerce and professional associations selected candidates for office. Such a system lent itself readily to interference by the government; the opposition boycotted the elections of 1935 in protest. The military continued to play an ever increasing part in politics so that eventually the period after Piłsudski's death became known as the 'Government of the Colonels'.

Poland's foreign policy in the inter-war period sought to keep its two main potential enemies, Germany and the Soviet Union, from threatening its security. The threat from the Soviets included subversion of the existing social order, although Stalin's announced policy of 'socialism in one country' made this threat less immediate after 1925. The border between Poland and Germany imposed by the Allies had never been accepted by post-war German governments nor the German population at large. To protect itself against this potential threat from Germany, Poland had signed a treaty of mutual assistance with France, but France was never able to afford the firm commitments that Poland thought necessary to restrain its two big neighbours. Although Poland joined the League of Nations, it did not join any multi-lateral security pacts. Instead, it attempted to maintain good relations with both Germany and the Soviet Union. With the latter it signed a non-aggression pact in 1932 and with the former it signed a similar ten-year agreement in 1934. As an adjunct to its foreign policy Poland used a system of universal conscription to create one of the largest armies in Central Europe. Its operational capabilities were, however, distorted under Piłsudski, who, like many a general, continued to plan for the last war. In consequence, the

Polish army had a disproportionate amount of cavalry and insufficient numbers of mechanized units.<sup>9</sup>

### **Minority Politics**

Our family belonged to the German minority in Poland and even rural backwaters such as Paproć could not escape minority politics. The status and treatment of Poland's minorities in the inter-war period created frictions both within Poland and with its neighbours, especially Germany. The Polish censuses of 1921 and 1931 gave the total population as 27.2 and 31.9 million, respectively. The ethnic composition of these totals, in percentages, was as follows:<sup>10</sup> Poles (1921 - 69.2, 1931 - 68.9), Ukrainians (14.3, 13.9), Jews (7.8, 8.5), Byelorussians (3.9, 3.1), Germans (3.8, 2.3), Others (1.0, 3.3). In 1921 minority affiliation was defined by nationality whereas in 1931 affiliation was defined by mother tongue. Every minority found reasons to dispute the accuracy of these percentages. Thus, for example, if religion is used instead of mother tongue, the percentage of Jews in 1931 rises from 8.5 to 9.8 per cent; i.e., the number of Jews in 1931 was 3.1 rather than 2.7 million. Estimates made by the ethnic Germans put their number as high as 1.1 million in 1926 compared to the 0.7 million given by the census of 1921. Detailed discussion of these disputes does not add much to our understanding of the minority question; we will take the Polish census results as benchmarks to indicate the relative size of each group.<sup>11</sup>

Regardless of the criteria used to define minority affiliation, almost one third of Poland's population was non-Polish. That problems arose with its minorities is, therefore, not surprising. One incident from the early days of the new republic can, perhaps, be taken as an indicator of the explosive potential of the minorities issue. Following Piłsudski's refusal of the presidency in 1922, the Sejm, with support of the minorities, elected a Leftist, Gabriel Narutowicz, as the first President of Poland. The Right, whose candidate had lost, claimed that the President had been installed by Jews, Germans and Ukrainians. Five days after his inauguration Narutowicz was assassinated by an extreme nationalist anti-Semite. Poland had signed its Minorities Treaty reluctantly, taking the view that the Treaty infringed on its sovereignty. It also resented the fact that

Germany had not been forced to sign a Minorities Treaty. Thus while Poland's constitution expressed suitable liberal sentiments on the rights of minorities, the enforcement of these rights seldom matched the sentiments. Even when conscious attempts were made to try to improve relations with its minorities, as in 1926, lower level administrative units often sabotaged the directives from Warsaw. One British writer - and we could cite others - has concluded that "The long preoccupation with national survival obscured for many Poles the need to accord fair treatment to Poland's national minorities."<sup>12</sup>

Given the gap between promise and delivery, the Polish minorities made frequent appeals to the League of Nations for redress, as was their right under the Minorities Treaty. Of the 517 petitions submitted to the League in the period 1929-1939, almost 30 per cent came from the German minority in Poland. To the evident displeasure of the Poles, the German government also submitted three petitions on behalf of the German minority, the last in 1931 to protest the conduct of the 1930 election in Poznań (Posen) and Pomorze (Pomerania).<sup>13</sup> Not all petitions were accepted for consideration by the League, some being deemed too trivial or too obviously designed to malign Poland's standing in the international community. Nonetheless, in 1934, after its proposal to extend the provisions of the Minorities Treaty to all members of the League of Nations failed, Poland declared itself no longer bound by the Treaty.

The school system proved to be a major point of friction. The minorities believed that the compulsory system of public schools was simply a vehicle for Polonization. Poles, on the other hand, viewed instruction in Polish as a legitimate demand for participation in the civic life of the state. The school question had a long history. For example, in 1819 the Warsaw Consistory of the Evangelical Church sent a circular to its pastors reminding them that the church had an obligation to "render unto Caesar what is Caesar's" insofar as colonists had an obligation to learn the language of their adopted country. The circular spoke disapprovingly of a case in which parents had instructed a schoolteacher not to teach their children Polish. Nor was the Consistory impressed by colonists of twenty years standing who could speak no Polish. The circular was

prompted by complaints from some parishes that their religious freedom, guaranteed by the Constitution of 1815, was being endangered because the education authorities were replacing Lutheran teachers with non-Lutherans. According to the complainants, the non-Lutheran (i.e., Catholic) teachers could not conduct German Sunday services when their overworked pastors had to be absent. The education authorities claimed that they had no desire to interfere with religion, demanding only that Polish be taught in the schools. Wolfert's letter of 1844 (see Chapter II) does not make any critical remarks about the teaching of Polish in the Paproć school so we can, perhaps, conclude that the colonists eventually accepted the demand for instruction in Polish as reasonable.<sup>14</sup>

Educational matters were less amicable in the inter-war period. Most of the Ukrainian elementary schools in Galicia and Volhynia were replaced by bilingual schools. In the larger urban centres the Jews established their own system of private schools as permitted by the constitution. In the territory that had formerly been Congress Poland the Polish state expropriated the extensive system of German church schools and integrated them into the public system. A decree in March 1919 permitted three types of schools for the German minority: a German language school if at least 40 German-speaking pupils were to hand, mixed German-Polish language schools and Polish language schools with religious instruction in German. Theory and practice seldom resembled each other. Administrative ruses by the education authorities, such as re-defining school district boundaries, meant that very few German language schools came into being. According to one (potentially biased) source, in the school year 1935-36 there were eleven German language schools instead of the 291 that the numbers justified.<sup>15</sup> In the former Prussian territories special provision had been made for German schools, but these too were subject to the pressures of Polonization.<sup>16</sup>

The fight over German schooling can best be characterized as bureaucratic trench warfare with the Polish Ministry of Religious Denominations and Public Enlightenment (RDPE). Among the active participants in these battles was Pastor Erich Buse (1895-1945), son of Pastor Johann Buse, who in turn was half-brother to our great-grandfather August Buse (III.P1, Table

2.2). Erich Buse had been pastor in the large German Lutheran parish at Lipno in central Poland since 1923. He submitted a total of 221 petitions and appeals in defense of the German language schools. Some of these went to the Polish High Court which apparently rendered favourable judgments in many cases.<sup>17</sup>

Bureaucratic warfare over schooling and culture created tensions that served to exacerbate more fundamental issues with some minorities. In the Ukrainian territories large Polish estates dominated agriculture and little progress had been made on land reform. This provided fertile ground for radical nationalists whose ultimate goal was the re-establishment of the independent West Ukrainian National Republic that existed briefly between November 1918 and July 1919. In 1930 the Polish government resorted to a violent pacification program in response to acts of sabotage. The radicals responded in turn with political assassinations, including one government minister. Sufficient numbers of Ukrainians were arrested in the subsequent repressions that a special internment camp was established at Bereza Kartuska in 1934.

Violence was also visited on the Jews, but for totally different reasons. This violence arose not because the Jews sought to create an independent state on Polish territory. Rather, it was part of the long history of anti-Semitism in Europe in which Poland participated in the inter-war period.<sup>18</sup> Although poverty was widespread among Jews, Jewish success in the professions and business generated resentment among Poles and the other minorities. Discrimination against un-assimilated Jews in public employment and the universities, common in the inter-war period, increased in intensity during the 1930s as successive Polish governments moved further to the right. The depression served only to reinforce resentment against the Jews. All sectors of Polish society, including the Jews, were affected by the depression, but the Jewish control of retail trade made them easy targets for scapegoating as the authors of Polish economic misfortune. The Catholic Church supported boycotts of Jewish businesses, boycotts that eventually degenerated into violence. Seventy-nine Jews died during anti-Jewish riots in the years 1935-37 and some 500 were injured.<sup>19</sup>

A particularly striking example of German-Polish conflict occurred in the Evangelical Augsburg Church to which the parish at Paproć Duża belonged. The largest of the Protestant churches in Poland, this Lutheran church had, in 1938-39, roughly 450,000 adherents of whom approximately three-quarters were German-speaking.<sup>20</sup> The church leadership, on the other hand, consisted mostly of Poles or Polonized Germans. Two facts help to explain why a predominantly German church had a Polish leadership. First, many ethnic German pastors in the Augsburg church had assimilated and identified themselves as Poles. This Polonization had occurred, in part, because many of the German pastors chose to live in the larger Polish towns rather than in their village parishes. The sons of these pastors, many of whom followed their fathers into the clergy, absorbed Polish history and culture in school as well as in their daily life outside the home. Secondly, after the ratification of the 1921 constitution, the Polish government turned to the regulation of church affairs. Applying the Russian church law of 1849, which was still in force, the Minister of the Interior appointed new members to the Augsburg Church Consistory, the governing council of the church. Not surprisingly, he appointed Poles and Polonized Germans. The General Superintendent of the church, Julius Bursche, appointed by the Czar in 1904, remained in his position.

As head of the Augsburg Church in the inter-war period, Bursche (1862-1942), played the lead role in the Polish-German church dispute.<sup>21</sup> Son of an ethnic German pastor and a descendant of an immigrant Saxon weaver, Bursche became a Polish nationalist during his university studies. This nationalism he brought into the Augsburg Church, declaring on more than one occasion that the Augsburg Church must be a Polish church. Only a Polish church, he believed, would be able to hold on to its members and carry out its mission of converting Catholics to the Lutheran faith. Superintendent Bursche had long been an activist. Following World War I he served the Polish government in a number of missions abroad as well as being Polish representative in various international church organizations. Notably, he had been a Polish delegate for church matters at the Paris Peace Conference and a Polish commissioner in the referendum for the Allenstein region where he had hoped to bring the Masurian Poles into the Augsburg



## Church.

In 1922, at the request of the Sejm, the Augsburg Church called into being a synod (a church parliament with representation by both clergy and laity) to formulate proposals for a new church law that would replace the Russian law of 1849. This synod proved very divisive as the Polish and German factions could not come to any agreement that would meet German demands for a voice in church affairs that would reflect their numerical strength. Talk of separate Polish and German Augsburg Churches surfaced, but this was a breach that the majority of Poles and Germans were not willing to make. As a compromise, a synodal commission, with equal numbers of Poles and Germans, was established and its proposals were eventually forwarded to the RDPE Ministry. The Ministry made no response. While the commission's proposals lay dormant, Bursche continued to pursue nationalist policies in the church, leading to further polarization into two opposing camps. For example, taking note that assimilated Lutheran Germans in urban centres often converted to Catholicism, Bursche established a Polish parish for 500 people in Łódź. Presumably, the 3,000 German speakers in Warsaw, who were denied a separate parish of their own, reacted to this news with less than Christian charity. The question of a new church law did not re-emerge until 1933 when Bursche revealed that he had been negotiating new laws with the RDPE Ministry since 1930. A political battle along ethnic lines followed this revelation.

The RDPE Ministry proposed two distinct laws: a law governing the relationship of the Augsburg Church to the Polish state and a law for the internal governance of the church. Both were remarkable for the degree of state interference in the affairs of the church, much of it to the potential disadvantage of the Germans. The proposed laws drew criticism from abroad and at home, including some Polish pastors and laity. The most vocal protests, however, came from the German side, both pastors and laity alike. A working group of activist German pastors, comprising two-thirds of all German pastors, organized meetings, appeals and petitions, including a telegram to the President of Poland, characterizing the proposed law as unconstitutional. The German political party, *Deutscher Volksverband in Polen* (German Folk Union in Poland),

suspected by the Poles of Nazi leanings, organized the protests of the laity. Mediation efforts by Bursche failed because neither the Ministry nor the Germans were willing to yield any ground. When it became apparent that no substantive concessions were on offer, Bursche re-activated the synodal commission of 1922 and, after the Germans walked out in protest, accepted the new laws on behalf the Augsburg Church in November 1936. Within a month both laws were put in force by Presidential decree.

Although state regulation of churches may strike the modern democratic reader as puzzling, the Polish constitution included church-related clauses. In addition to religious freedom, it gave equal rights to all denominations but declared the Roman Catholic Church to be the leading church. When the relationship between the Vatican and the Polish state was codified in the 1925 Concordat, the state could intervene on some church matters. For example, although the Vatican selected Archbishops and Bishops, the Pope had to enquire of the Polish President whether there were any objections of a political nature to the Vatican's choices. On balance though, the Catholic Church was allowed a high degree of autonomy. Less so for the Augsburg Church under the 1936 law.<sup>22</sup> In lieu of a General Superintendent, an elected Bishop became the head of the church, but only with the approval of the RDPE Minister. But there the similarity to the Concordat ends. All other appointments in the Augsburg Church were conditional on the requirement that the RDPE had no objections of a political nature. Even at the parish level, the Consistory had to assure regional governors that no political objections would be raised against pastors chosen by a parish. Since the RDPE Ministry was the most likely source of such objections, this condition amounted to indirect pre-appointment screening for political reliability as defined by the Minister. In the case of parish priests in the Catholic Church the Concordat requires only that the candidate not be a threat to the security of the state.<sup>23</sup>

Superintendent Bursche became Bishop in 1937 as well as President of the Consistory and the Synod. All three positions were held for life. The new law soon had an impact on church affairs. In church-wide elections in early 1937 for candidates for Consistorial Councillors, four of ten dioceses had their candidates rejected. Among the rejected was Erich Buse, whose

work on behalf of the German schools must have been judged politically objectionable by the Minister. The protests against the new church laws continued both at home and abroad; even the Anglican Bishop of Chichester joined the critics. Attempts at mediation in 1938 by an international church council failed. The Augsburg Church had split into Polish and German parts and only the outbreak of World War II prevented the inevitable formal separation.

Conflict within churches is usually about doctrine. No points of doctrine were under dispute in the Augsburg Church. God, one presumes, spoke Polish and German equally well; yet language created the divide and the foundation for the politics of identity. Both sides understood that if language is lost by an ethnic group, the battle for ethnic survival is over, unless ethnicity is defined by religion as in the case of the Jews. This being understood, both sides in the Augsburg Church dispute acted accordingly. The dispute had political ramifications beyond the merely local. In order to bolster its claim for a revision of the 1919 borders, the Weimar Republic had provided secret subsidies to the German minority in Poland, especially those living in the former Prussian lands awarded to Poland.<sup>24</sup> By supporting economic enterprises and social institutions in these areas the German government intended to deter both assimilation and German emigration out of Poland because a viable German presence was needed in Poland to sustain the border claims. The seizure of power by the Nazis in 1933 brought a more open and aggressively political policy in support of the German minority in Poland. These aggressive propaganda campaigns influenced many German minority organizations to adopt a pro-Nazi stance which contributed to the increasing political tensions between Poland and Germany. The drift of many Protestant Germans into pro-Nazi political organizations in Poland may well have some roots in the bitter dispute with Bursche. Politics and religion seldom mix well and Bishop Bursche's endeavours in this regard can be taken as a prime example of the unhappy consequences of putting religion at the service of politics. A wiser man might have recognized that to force an issue as delicate as the language in which one prays to God was a policy doomed to create bitterness.<sup>25</sup>

Our account of the minorities in Poland has focused on the

conflicts. Yet the degree of polarization should not be exaggerated; many minority members, especially Jews, chose to participate fully in Polish life and in so doing began the process of assimilation that re-defines identity. At some point the modifiers change: a Polish Jew becomes a Jewish Pole. This happened to many Germans as well, the Polonized pastors in the Augsburg Church being the obvious example, although it is worth noting that this Polonization occurred mostly before World War I. Cooperation occurred not only in daily life, but in politics as well. For radical socialists the question of ethnic identity took second place to the more important category of class. The enemy of the proletariat was the capitalist, not a Pole, a Jew or a German. In the 1920s the German Socialist Workers' Party of Poland (DSAP) and the Polish Socialist Party put forward a common list of candidates for the national elections. The two parties also worked together organizing unions in the textile industry in Łódź. This cooperation had ceased by the 1930s.<sup>26</sup> Despite these examples of ethnic harmony, the rate of assimilation of the minorities in the inter-war period undoubtedly slowed down. The creation of the Polish national state after the war established an environment that demanded new allegiances and where these demands transgressed self-defined notions of identity, resistance occurred.

### **Village Life**

When the first group of Volga exiles returned in the spring of 1918 they found a devastated landscape.<sup>27</sup> In Paproć Duża only three or four houses remained standing. The school and parsonage were intact, but the latter had been plundered of all its furnishings. The church escaped being torched by the retreating Russians in 1915 only by the sudden arrival of some German troops. The amount of damage sustained by the church is uncertain.<sup>28</sup> Although more houses and barns had survived in the other villages, they were empty shells, in some instances even stripped of their doors and windows.<sup>29</sup> A farmer by name of Schroeder is reputed to have collapsed in despair on the threshold of his home and died three days later. Faced with the grim prospect of years of reconstruction, some of the returnees chose to emigrate or seek work in Germany.

Until November 1918 the occupying German forces provided critical help in the reconstruction. Army horses hauled timber for the new buildings and worked the fields in preparation for seeding. A Prussian sergeant taught school in the church because the school building had been converted to the local army headquarters. With the departure of the German troops following the Armistice, the villagers had to cope not only with their own material deprivations, but also with the less than friendly attitudes of some of their Polish neighbours. One memoir reports the confiscation of livestock from some of the Paproć villagers.<sup>30</sup> The Soviet-Polish war and the hyper-inflation following it only added to their difficulties. In response to Superintendent Bursche's pleas at the Paris peace conference, the United Lutheran Church of America provided \$100,000 of aid to their Lutheran brethren in addition to a sizable quantity of second-hand goods. The Danish Lutherans also sent contributions. The Polish government promised aid for reconstruction.<sup>31</sup> No record of any aid reaching the Paproć region has come to our attention.

Communal institutions also had to be reconstructed. The education decree of 1919 took education out of their hands. The former religious schools in Paproć Duża and Srebrny Borek became part of the Polish system of elementary schools. The Paproć school offered seven years of instruction beginning at age seven, but many of the poorer families withdrew their children well before the seventh year. In the years leading up to World War I the Russification program in Congress Poland had progressively replaced German with Russian, so that by 1913 only two hours of German instruction remained. Polish now replaced Russian in this scheme. We do not know whether there were sufficient numbers of German children (40) in 1919 to permit a fully German school as allowed by the new education decree. Church records indicate a German school at Paproć Duża in 1923, but the number of hours of German is not specified.<sup>32</sup> In the absence of anyone in the community with the necessary bureaucratic skills to challenge decisions handed down by the RDPE Ministry, the villagers presumably accepted whatever the Ministry decreed. By 1938 the Paproć school had four hours of instruction in German, two of them religious, even though 51 of the 66 pupils were Lutherans. The four-hour system had been introduced at Srebrny Borek much earlier.

This language policy generated much resentment which still resonated sixty years later in Canada.<sup>33</sup> Presumably, since they were far removed from any of the major concentrations of Germans in Poland, most of them would have preferred a bilingual system with equal amounts of German and Polish so that they could maintain their mother tongue yet function effectively outside their own community.

A pastor for the church would have been out of the question in the first few years after the war, so the baptisms, confirmations and burials fell to the cantor-teachers. In 1926 Pastor Leopold Proniewiez, a former Catholic priest, arrived only to leave within six months. Shortly thereafter he re-converted to the Catholic faith; the role of the Paproć congregation in this decision is unknown. Pastor Mikulski then served the parish from his home congregation in Łomża. Mikulski reportedly preached regularly against miserliness, invoking the colorful image of a farmer who was so miserly that he kept no dog, preferring instead to crawl into the doghouse at night and do his own barking. Two more pastors, Bruno Gutknecht and Alexander Jehnke, passed through the parish in 1929 and 1930. From 1930 until November 1936 Henryk Zalewski, pastor at Łomża, held services once a month at Paproć Duża. After November 1936 Rudolf Kersten became the resident full-time pastor until the congregation was dissolved in September 1939.

Pastor Kersten was a well-travelled cleric. Following his theological training he took as his first posting in 1913 the Lutheran parish at Edenwold, Saskatchewan.<sup>34</sup> During World War I he spent some time in North Dakota and from 1918 to 1921 he was pastor at St. Peter's Lutheran church in Bashaw, Alberta. He returned to Poland in 1921, serving first in Volhynia and then at Stawiszyn (western Poland) before coming to Paproć Duża. His arrival marked the start of a period of renewed church activity. The dormant *Posaunenchor*, or brass band, first established in 1902, was re-organized and provided accompaniment for the organ and choir during services. Of the twelve musicians, two were Schützes and four Buses with Bernhard Buse, a cousin of our father, its last leader.<sup>35</sup> Sunday school and Bible study groups became a regular part of religious life. Long active in Lutheran youth organizations, including the editorship of a youth newsletter, Pastor Kersten

took the youth of the parish under his wing. The establishment of a community library and reading circle addressed broader cultural concerns, but religion remained an essential element in this literary endeavor; the books from the Sunday school library were apparently much in demand. We have nothing concrete to indicate that this upsurge in religious and cultural life was a defensive reaction against external pressures arising out of the internal church conflict or the minority politics at the national level, yet we cannot avoid the supposition that these events in the outside world had generated greater support for new groups and institutions in the parish.

The centennial celebration of the Paproć parish took place in June 1938 with Bishop Bursche in attendance. The church council at this time included Rudolf Schütz, Gustav Buse (not our father) and Johann Buse, but only the last, our father's Uncle Johann, is known to us as a direct relative.<sup>36</sup> Under the guidance of Mrs. Kersten and with a 1,000 złoty subvention from the Warsaw Consistory, the women of the parish made new altar and pulpit coverings to mark the centenary; see Photo 2.1 in Chapter II. A new lectern and songboards completed the refurbishment. The press in Germany, politically attuned to the Nazi policies supporting Germandom abroad, made note of the event, whereas the German press in Poland ignored it, much to the chagrin of Pastor Kersten. Reich Germans were in attendance, but the guests from America, no doubt former residents, failed to make it on time. The *Posaunenchor* from Srebrny Borek joined the dozen Paproć musicians to create a 21-man band that must have been a challenge to the organist. The church choir added its musical offerings over the course of the two days of festivities. Members of the Buse and Schütz clans, long active in the choir, must have sung on this occasion. A 1935-36 photo of the sixteen person choir, under the direction of the Paproć teacher Paul Fröhlich, shows two Schützes and eight Buses, including our aunt Emilie Buse (later Schütz by marriage).<sup>37</sup> We know that our uncle Emil Schütz was in the choir in 1930-31 (see Photo 3.3) and our aunt Martha Schütz at some undetermined date. Our mother and her friends sang in the youth choir in the 1920s. Whether the Buse-Schütz pre-eminence in the musical life of the church reflected an excess of musical talent or simply a preponderance of numbers is something we cannot judge.



*Photo 3.3. Paproc choir 1930-31, Emil Schütz in first row, third from left.*

The church presided over the markers defining the stages of life: baptism, confirmation, marriage and death. The ritual for these events tends to change only slowly so the order of service on each occasion may well have resembled the ceremonies that most of us experienced in Canada. This included the segregated seating of men and women until it disappeared from the Lutheran church in Barrhead sometime in the 1950s. Baptism and confirmation were celebrated within the immediate family. Marriages cast the social net wider. Funerals were open to all who cared to come, typically the better part of the village. At the home of the deceased, the superstitious stopped pendulum clocks and opened a window or door so that the soul might leave. The dead were washed down and laid out in finery at home; see Photo 3.4. Villagers paid their last respects at a sober overnight wake. Funeral processions made their way from the home of the deceased to the church the next day. The casket, carried in turn by the men, was followed by the mourners singing funeral hymns. In the year of mourning that followed, the family shunned worldly pursuits and regularly visited and tended the grave.





*Photo 3.4. Funeral of Augustine Korman (seated 4th from left Gunda Busch, standing, starting 5th from left, Pastor Zalewski, Johann Busch, Amanda Korman).*

The custom of primogeniture, in which all property goes to the eldest male in the household, did not play any part in the transfer of property between generations. Property was divided equally among all the children, male and female alike, with a child's share often being transferred upon marriage. Parents arranged most marriages, undertaking the delicate negotiations designed to preserve the status and capital of the two families. The size of the dowry was the fulcrum of these negotiations. More often than not, the couple to be married was informed after the arrangements had been made. Only the landless poor could afford to marry for love, but rarely without the approval of their parents. For well-to-do farmers, a wedding would be a two-day affair, with costs being shared. Mounted riders, usually a brother of the bride or the groom, delivered spoken invitations and in turn were plied with drink to the eventual detriment of the spoken delivery. Bride and groom came to the church in separate wagons, suitably decorated for the occasion, with the entire procession accompanied by musicians. The really well-to-do would come in their carriages.<sup>38</sup> The young boys of the village would attempt to delay the wedding procession with obstacles on the road which would soon disappear on delivery of a small coin.

Following the church ceremony, the bride joined the groom on his wagon and they then attempted to outrace the rest of the wedding party to the bride's home. Much butchering and baking had occurred in the days prior to the wedding and all this effort came to fruition in the wedding feast. The dance that followed had rituals we came to know in Barrhead and may well be universal European traditions. The newly-weds took the first dance and then the bride danced with her father-in-law and the groom with his mother-in-law. Those too old to dance sat on the sidelines and passed judgment on those who did. Mothers used the occasion to teach their children rudimentary dance steps. At midnight the bride removed her veil which was then worn in turn by the unmarried women. When, early in the morning, the dance came to an end the guests from further afield made their beds on straw in the barn. The next day a hearty mid-day meal prepared them for the second night of dancing. Such largesse spread over two days could only be dispensed by the well-to-do; a single meal and one night's dancing would have been all that smallholders and labourers could manage.

The wedding of an eldest son was frequently the point at which the parents turned over the management of the farm to the young couple. The parents would typically continue to live with them providing help and advice, the former undoubtedly being more welcome than the latter. The buildings on the farm would be proportionate in size and number to the size of the farm. In Paproć Duża the average farm size had shrunk from 31 hectares (76 acres) in 1805-06 to around 15 hectares (37 acres) in 1939, with an approximate doubling in the number of farm sites. The buildings on a larger farm were usually arranged around a square farmyard with the house facing the pig and fowl sheds and the cow and horse barn (*Stall*) facing the threshing and storage barn (*Scheune*). The size of the dung heap in front of the *Stall* served as an indicator of wealth. An open well with counter-weighted hoist completed the farmyard; see the frontispiece of this chapter for a 1937 sketch of a typical farmyard and Photo 3.5 for a similar yard preserved at the agricultural museum in Ciechanowiec. The essential vegetable garden, often augmented by fruit trees such as plums and pears, could be found behind one of the buildings. On smaller farms, buildings were often combined; for example,



Photo 3.5. Farmyard at Ciechanowiec museum.

our uncle August Dams, who farmed at Króle Małe, had house and barn under one roof with the two buildings separated by an open passageway.<sup>39</sup>

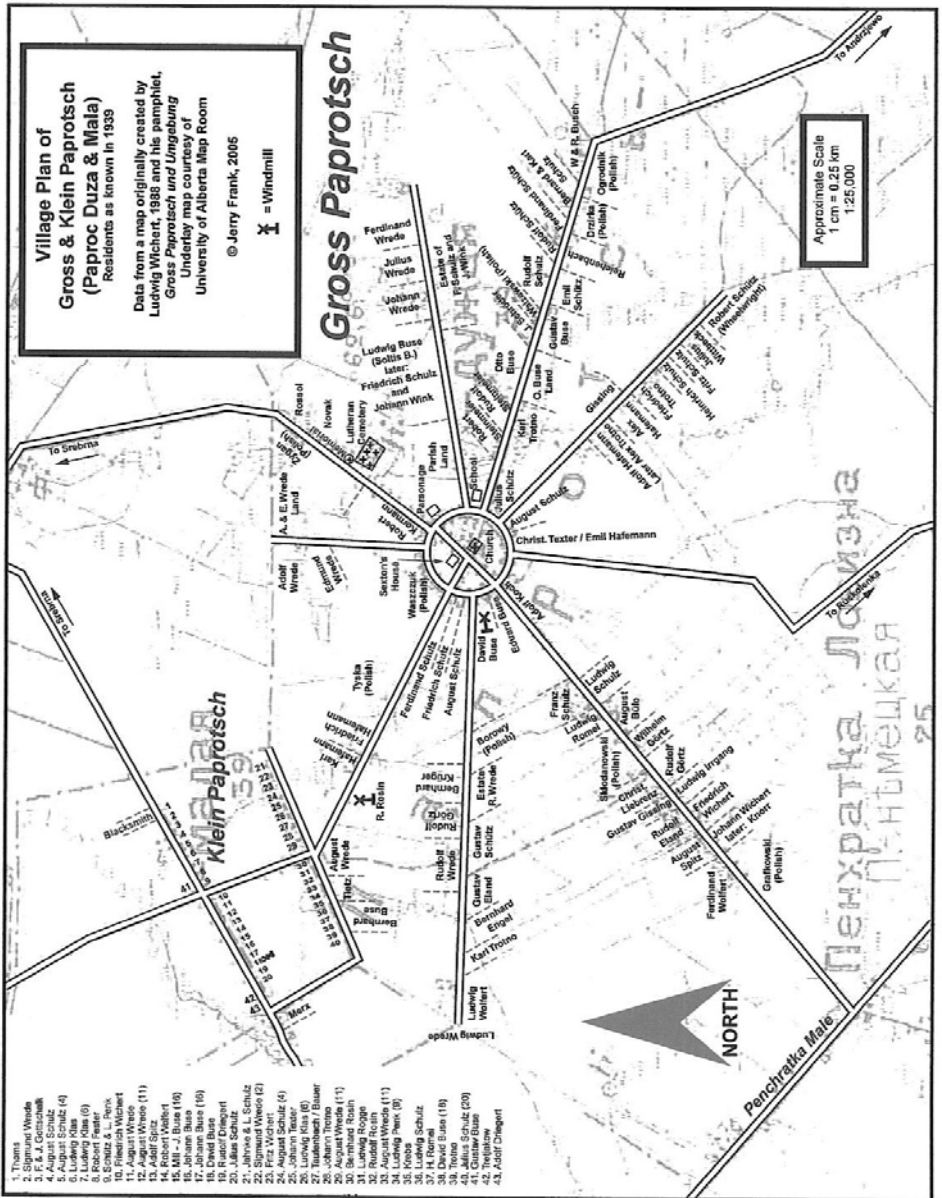
Wooden buildings, typically log planking, were the norm, brick and stone appearing only in ovens, chimneys and foundations. Thatched roofs with carved horsehead gables prevailed, although tin and shingles were also in use. Some half-timbered (*Fachwerk*) houses still stood in 1937.<sup>40</sup> Photo 3.6 (taken in 1997) shows a typical pre-war wooden plank house in Paproć Duża. Noteworthy are the corners held together by dovetail joints. Wood was also the primary fuel for cooking and heating, supplemented occasionally by peat. By placing the brick hearth against a kitchen wall in the middle of the house a version of central heating could be effected. This hearth, called a *Kachelofen* when tiled, served as the focal point of family life. In some houses the smoke from the oven could be diverted to a smoke cupboard in the attic in which sausages and other meats were cured and stored. Wherever possible, tools or parts thereof were homemade using wood. Hay rakes, for example, were entirely wood, whereas the blades for scythes were purchased in nearby Ostrów. Willows provided the material for basketry and the art of weaving the willow branches into



Photo 3.6. Wooden house at Paproć Duża, pre-1939.

containers for storage and transport was an essential skill handed down from one generation to the next. Our aunt Martha Schütz learned this skill as a teen-ager. The culture of wood extended, of course, to toys such as spinning tops and whistles. The timber for building and the wood for heating had to be purchased from the state or private forests, the Paproć region having harvested what little timber it had during the colonization era at the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century; compare the forest cover shown on Maps 1.2 and 2.1 in Chapter I and II.

Every farmer, regardless of farm size, carried on a form of mixed farming. The need to feed and clothe the family determined, in the first instance, the choice of crops and animals; production for an external market remained secondary. Cereal crops included wheat, rye, oats, barley and buckwheat, all milled locally. In 1939, Paproć Duża had two windmills, one of them owned by David Buse, our father's uncle. Another uncle, Johann Buse, owned the windmill in Paproć Mała; see Map 3.1.<sup>41</sup> Srebrny Borek also had two windmills but by 1939 only one remained in operation. All these mills could be rotated around a centre post so that the sails faced the wind, hence the name post-mill or *Bockmühle* in



German. Such mills stood raised above the ground and from their underside a long wooden arm with a wheel at its end

rested on the ground. When the miller had to rotate the mill he climbed down and 'put his shoulder to the wheel'. The distance between the two millstones determined the fineness of the grind and the miller had to 'keep his nose to the grindstone' to ensure quality control.<sup>42</sup> Apart from the millstones, these mills and their moving parts were constructed of wood. Our mother remembered David Buse rebuilding his mill after the return from the Volga.

Root crops such as potatoes, turnips and beetroot were grown both for personal consumption and animal feed. A three-field system of crop rotation left one-third of the land fallow every year. The orchard and honey bees provided fruit and honey with the latter frequently used in medicinal concoctions. Fresh red meat appeared only briefly when a calf or pig was butchered with most of the useable meat being converted to sausage, bacon and hams. Fowl provided eggs and in the case of geese and ducks meat and fat were secondary to the much-prized down used in featherbeds. The milk from cows yielded butter and curdled cheese, although not without considerable effort. Sheep provided wool for clothing and the linen from flax could be used both for clothing and household linens.

Surplus product, such as eggs, cereals and livestock, could be sold at the market in Ostrów or to the itinerant Jewish traders. According to our uncle Emil Schütz, the Jewish traders would only buy the front half of a calf, returning the hind quarters after it was butchered according to Jewish rites.<sup>43</sup> In Płatkownica (60 kilometres from Warsaw), where our paternal grandfather lived in the 1920s, the villagers raised geese specifically for the Christmas market in Warsaw. A dairy cooperative operated in Srebrny Borek in 1939, but we have not been able to establish how it functioned or what it produced; butter and cheese are the obvious products. Labourers and craftsmen who lacked sufficient land to produce many of the foodstuffs we have mentioned would have had to use their earnings to purchase many items. In the absence of proper retail outlets in the villages, payment in kind must have been very common. Andrzejewo, six kilometres south-east of Paproć Duża, served as the local shopping centre, as well as the postal address for the church and the villagers. For some time in the inter-war period, a Jewish widow in Paproć Mała ran

a small shop selling items such as vodka and yeast. No obviously Jewish name appears on the list of residents in 1939; see Map 3.1. This leaves as an open question whether the widow died or whether the Germans at Paproć Mała participated in the boycott of Jewish retailers in the mid-1930s. A similar Jewish shop in Paproć Duża survived until the outbreak of war in 1939. Again, no Jewish names appear on the maps drawn up after the war by former Paproćers.<sup>44</sup>

The agricultural cycle dictated the pattern of work on the farms. During seeding and harvesting, when weather is decisive, the working day lasted from sunrise until sunset. For the May hay harvest a start at dawn was essential as a scythe will only cut efficiently when the grass is laden with dew.<sup>45</sup> Winter rye planted the previous autumn was harvested at the end of July, soon followed by the other cereal crops. Scythemen cut the grain and the women bound it into sheaves using straw twine. The sheaves were then assembled into stooks for later pick-up by the harvest wagon. Horse-driven mechanical mowers and binders made their appearance in the late thirties, but they were the exception. Harvesting by hand remained the rule. After the sheaves had dried in the barn, they were threshed on the barn floor (*Diele*) using flails. Large farms had threshing machines powered by horses that walked around a turnstile with a ground level drive-shaft linked to the threshing machine. The threshed grain and chaff fell directly on to the ground underneath the 2.5 metre long and 1.5 metre square box that housed the mechanical flails. A hand powered winnowing machine separated chaff from the grain. The horse and turnstile also powered mechanical straw choppers to produce animal feed.

This labour intensive system of production did not exempt children. On the communally held pastures they herded cows and geese, often to the detriment of their schooling.<sup>46</sup> In October the potato harvest emptied the schools, with children given *Kartoffelferien* or 'Potato Holidays'. When the fields were clear of crops they were plowed in preparation for the following year. A harvest Thanksgiving service completed the annual cycle.

The food that appeared on the table after all these labours was

simple fare. Bread, milk, gruel from wheat grits and barley groats, potatoes, sauerkraut (*kapusta*) and cured meats, alone or in combination, made for a monotonous diet. In the summer this would be augmented by the fresh vegetables from the garden and the fruit from the orchard. Soups based on potatoes with bits of fat were common. The full-corn rye bread was baked weekly. A cool room or insulated cupboard kept perishables such as butter and milk from turning rancid in the summer. In winter smoked and pickled foods predominated, along with the ever-present potato. The more well-to-do could, of course, afford the luxury of butchering some of their fowl or livestock, but for the lesser folk the monotony of the winter diet would be broken only on special days such as Christmas or, if they were lucky, by an invitation to a wedding.

Self-sufficiency extended to clothing, although this self-sufficiency showed a marked decline in the inter-war period, as half a dozen photos confirm. Nonetheless, woolen and linen items continued to be produced in this period. The production of linen is exceedingly labour intensive so that its use may have been restricted to household linens since traditional linen shirting could have been replaced by cheaper machine-woven cotton. Linen production begins with the seeding of flax in May on specially prepared rolled ground. Weeding the young plants, often on hands and knees, is essential to allow the flax to gain a good foothold. A month after flowering the three foot high flax is harvested by pulling it out by the roots. Pulling flax is backbreaking work, for man and woman alike; one twelfth of a hectare (one fifth of an acre) is a good day's work.<sup>47</sup> The seeds are separated from the stalks by a special comb or pounding with a mallet and saved for conversion to oil or cattle cake. The wooden core of the flax stalks is then loosened from the flax fibre in a bacterial process called retting. This can be done outdoors relying on heavy dew to provide the necessary moisture or by soaking the flax in tubs which is apparently a very foul smelling business. The tub method was used in Paproć.

After retting the stalks must be carefully dried over a heat source such as an oven or a special outdoor pit. Once dry the wooden core of the stalk is broken and separated from the flax fibre by means of a flax brake. The brake is a hinged arm that



breaks the wooden core of the stalks when it is brought down on the grooved platform that forms the bottom half of the brake. Residual wood fibre is then removed by the process of scutching which is basically a scraping process in a device specifically designed for this purpose. In the Paproć region the residual was apparently shaken off by the young women. In the last step prior to spinning the flax fibre is pulled through a set of very sharp upright metal teeth called a hackle which removes any remaining chaff and short fibres before they are tied into golden colored hanks that are often compared to hair. The flaxen-haired maidens of rustic novels apparently have sound agricultural roots.

The breaking, drying and hackling of the flax was, more often than not, a communal affair. The end of the hard labour provided the excuse for a festive celebration called *Brechhocht* (literally, break high time or, perhaps, peasant break dancing) in the Mecklenburger Low German.<sup>48</sup> A meal, a dance, singing and burning of the chaff marked the occasion. Spinning of the flax fibre, as well as wool, was also a communal affair for the women of the villages. They gathered in groups during the winter for spinning sessions at which they amused themselves with jokes and ghost stories, the latter adding an extra bit of excitement to the walk home on the unlit village roads. The yarn spun by the women of Paproć had a reputation for strength. It was said that a dog, unfed for three days, could not break free if it was tied up with Paproć yarn.<sup>49</sup> The preparation of wool prior to spinning also required much effort, but for this work the children could be recruited to help.

If the men gathered to socialize during these spinning evenings their amusements certainly included the Russian card game 'Durak' (fool or blockhead) as well as the Polish card game 'Thousand and One'. Checkers, played with homemade wooden boards and pieces, might alternate with the card games. If they drank, straight vodka was the norm, although illicitly brewed fruit *Schnapps* probably made an appearance as well. Almost everyone smoked, principally hand-rolled cigarettes; those with a little more cash might smoke packaged cigarettes, those with less cash made do with newspaper for cigarette paper.<sup>50</sup> As the conversation and banter ranged over village life, proverbs would be interjected to make a point. A man planning a journey

might observe that "*Wenn Engel reisen, lacht der Himmel - When angels travel the Heavens smile.*" An observation about someone's financial carelessness would be stated as "*Wer den Pfennig nicht ehrt, ist des Talers nicht wert - He who does not watch his pennies does not deserve the dollar.*" Someone offering advice to stay clear of a contentious issue might say "*Rühr den Dreck nicht an, dann stinkt er nicht -If you don't stir that crap, it won't stink.*"

Both men and women wove the linen and woolen yarns. We have in our possession a linen kitchen towel measuring 63 by 17 inches woven by our maternal grandmother, Auguste Penk (later Schütz). It has a square pattern design and her initials are embroidered into one corner, two features that suggest a piece from her pre-World War I trousseau. According to our uncle Emil Schütz, our maternal great-grandfather Gustav Penk, (Auguste's father) had a regular clientele of marriageable girls who wove their trousseau items on his looms after he had prepared the warp. Two linen table cloths from this era have also survived.<sup>51</sup> Larger pieces, such as the red and black woolen blanket woven by Gustav Penk for our aunt Martha Schütz, must have been part of the stock-in-trade of all journeymen and master weavers. These weavers worked mostly from traditional designs that they learned as apprentices or collected and modified over time. The red and black Penk blanket is a traditional design called 'snowballs and pine trees' in a complex double woven structure. Gustav Penk had to leave his pattern book in Paproć Mała during the Volga exile and its loss must have been a serious handicap when he tried to re-establish himself on his return. Whether woolen cloth continued to be woven is unclear. At one time the Paproć region weavers produced a heavy woolen cloth that was sent to a factory near Białystok for further processing. After being felted and sheared this cloth could be tailored into capes called *burka* which allowed the wearer, according to one memoir, to remain in the rain for hours without getting wet.<sup>52</sup>

We do not know whether during the inter-war period the farmers in the Paproć region were able to rebuild their material wealth to the level that they had enjoyed prior to World War I. We believe it to be unlikely. By Polish standards anything over ten hectares counted as a large operation, so the average 15

hectare size of the farms at Paproć Duża implied a land-rich farm community. Yet they began the period with next to nothing in the way of working capital. Not much could have been accomplished in the first few years when war and hyperinflation came their way. Apart from the weather, their ability to prosper depended on the market prices of the surplus output that they could generate. During the depression, prices of agricultural products fell over fifty per cent, whereas the prices of industrial goods did not fall as much. To the extent that they were self-sufficient the depression would have hurt the farmers less than the craftsmen and labourers. These difficulties notwithstanding, it is surprising that the depression almost never figured in the stories that were recounted by the Paproć diaspora in their Sunday afternoon social gatherings in Barrhead. Perhaps, when you are poor, being just a little bit poorer is simply taken as another blow by fate.

Emigration is a classic solution to poverty and inter-war Poland was no exception. Around 150,000 people, mostly poor and land-hungry peasants from Galicia, emigrated to Canada during this period. Over two-thirds of this emigration took place prior to 1930 when the depression and a shipping dispute between Poland and Canada sharply curtailed the outflow of emigrants. Ethnic Germans made up almost eight per cent of the emigrants among which there were an unknown number from the Paproć region. Canada took in homesteaders, agricultural workers and female domestic workers. The homesteader needed \$250 of capital in hand whereas the others required only \$25. Many of the agricultural workers came with dreams of saving enough to acquire a homestead, a dream that not everyone realized. Before 1930 a third class passage to Halifax cost \$130, a substantial sum since this amounted to the price of three cows in Poland. A Polish exit visa and passport plus a medical examination by Polish doctors relieved the peasant of some more cash. A Canadian visa and medical exam at the departure port did the same. For some years the suitably named Dr. Asprin served as Canada's medical officer.<sup>53</sup>

Among the known emigrants from the Paproć region, Adolf Bernrot, from the village of Ruskołęka, was the first link in a chain that extends to our family's arrival in Canada. Bernrot, his wife and son Arthur arrived in Barrhead in May 1928. In the

following year he sponsored his brother-in-law Adolf Busch. Both Bernrot and Busch eventually acquired farms north of Barrhead. In 1938 Adolf Bernrot also sponsored Adolf Dams, his wife Helene and their two children, Olga and Bruno. One year later Bernrot added the crucial link in the chain when he sponsored our uncle August Dams and our Aunt Olga along with their two children, Edna and Edmund. August Dams financed his family's journey with the proceeds of the sale of his farm. The family travelled third class on the 'Baltrover' from the Polish port of Gdynia for London, England on June 22, 1939. After a railway journey across England, they sailed from Liverpool and arrived in Quebec City on July 7, 1939. Their timing proved to be exquisite. They escaped the war and continued the chain when they sponsored the Buse family in 1948. Remarkable also is the fact that only 106 ethnic Germans from Poland entered Canada in the fiscal year 1939-40. Although the number of immigrants was very small, as a proportion of the total Polish emigration to Canada that year it was almost certainly higher than the proportion of Germans in Poland as a whole.<sup>54</sup> This was also the case for the Bernrot and Busch arrival years. In 1928-29 German emigration peaked at 2,624.

Independently of the Barrhead group, Rudolf Schroeder of Paproć Duża had emigrated to Saskatchewan in 1929. In the 1940s he moved to Esther, Alberta where he eventually established a large open-prairie grain growing operation. His wife, Olga Schroeder, was the sister to our uncle Adolf Zitlau. This connection brought Adolf Zitlau, his daughter Lydia and Rudolf's brother Julius to Alberta after the war, though not all at the same time. In a similar fashion our uncle Emil Schütz was able to come to Winnipeg in 1950 because his wife's brother, Ben Korman, had emigrated to Canada in the 1920s.

### **Family Life**

In the ordinary course of events most families usually have three generations alive at any one time. Character sketches of grandparents can thus be constructed from the memories and experiences of the grandchildren. We are not so lucky. When the last of our four grandparents died in 1941, the oldest grandchild, Arthur, was only seven and the other two, Willie

and Adolf, were four and one, respectively. What we offer, therefore, is simply a collection of stories that we hope will let a little of their character come to light.

On the paternal side, all that we know about our grandmother, Ottilie Moedbeck, has already been recorded in the previous chapter. Born in 1878 in Srebrny Borek, she married Adolf Buse (Table 2.2, II.P1) shortly before the turn of the century and died at Orsha in the Soviet Union in 1918 on the way home from the Volga exile. The marriage with Adolf Buse produced four children: Martha (born in 1899), Helene (1904), Gustav (1907) and Alwine (1913). Martha and Gustav were born in Malkinia-Gorna, whereas Helene was born in Paproć Duża and Alwine in Zawisty Dzikie, a small village just south of Malkinia-Gorna; see Map 1.3. At Malkinia-Gorna, 18 kilometres south-west of Paproć on the main rail line between Warsaw and Bialystok, Grandfather Buse managed a steam-powered mill. According to our mother, Grandfather Buse did not manage the mill well and this may explain why the family had moved to Zawisty Dzikie by 1913. Whether Grandfather Buse continued to work at the miller's trade at this time is unknown and also unknown is how he earned his livelihood during the exile in Russia. Following the family's return to Poland, he married the widow Helene Krüger, who brought four children (Ludwig (1912-1945), Sigmund (1914-2003), Amanda (1918-1979) and Karl (1919)) from her previous marriage into the new family. Helene Krüger came from the German settlement at Płatkownica just south of the river Bug and 30 kilometres south-west of Paproć Duża; see Map 1.3. The Krüger family had been small landowners (10 acres) in Płatkownica and the newly created family, with perhaps as many as six children, took up residence there.<sup>55</sup>

Things did not go well at Płatkownica. Grandfather Buse had little interest in farming, forcing the older Krüger boys to do the farm labour while he tinkering with engines, his preferred pastime. He acquired a diesel engine which he adapted to replace horses on threshing machines, an innovation that did not apparently have great success with the local peasantry. The engine required hand cranking to start, a task that fell to our father who had to endure the lively exhortations of Grandfather Buse to crank harder when the engine did not start promptly.

His style of family management seemed destined to create problems. He read the Bible assiduously, underlining those passages that showed that women must be subservient to men. When he went out, bread, butter and sausage were locked in the cupboard and the key went into his pocket. He collected the wages that Sigmund Krüger earned as a farm labourer in Paproć. Around 1927 the two oldest Krüger brothers challenged his dictatorial ways and under threat of violence Grandfather Buse left the family. Because we know that he died in 1931 at Ruda Srebrowo (today Srebrowo, 18 kilometres east of Łomża; see Map 1.3), we believe he lived with his daughter (and our aunt) Helene who had married Eduard Weihrauch in 1923. Uncle Weihrauch, in addition to farming 19 acres at Ruda Srebrowo, also owned a water mill which probably provided opportunities for mechanical tinkering by Grandfather Buse.<sup>56</sup> The break with Płatkownica was not complete. We know that Helene Krüger visited him at Ruda Srebrowo with the result that a fourth and final daughter was added to the family in 1928.<sup>57</sup> That he was a difficult man is probably a generous reading. His attempt to introduce mechanization into the local farm scene makes him, perhaps, a visionary who arrived too early with a good idea. That he was not at the forefront of liberal thought can, however, be asserted without contradiction.

Photos, probably from the early 1920s, of our maternal grandparents, Auguste Penk and Rudolf Schütz, record them in traditional unsmiling poses looking straight into the camera; see Photos 3.7 and 3.8. Their peasant status is obvious from the heavy coats that appear to be made from the homespun cloth described in the previous section. Grandmother Schütz, a small and wiry woman, had by this time given birth to twelve children. These twelve children defined her role in life and one can only imagine the innumerable tasks and long hours that stretched over the years of child rearing, even after allowing for the early death of three daughters. A strong moral sense combined with personal courage must have been part of her character. During a typhus outbreak in 1921 she tended, at obvious risk to herself, the sick who were quarantined in a shed on straw litters. We also have one story that suggests an ability to assert herself to make a necessary point. Grandfather Schütz often played his accordion at Polish weddings which could last



*Photos 3.7 and 3.8. Auguste (Penk) Schütz (l.) and Rudolf Schütz (r.), 1920s.*

as long as three days, to the undoubted detriment of the Schütz family home life. On one occasion Grandmother Schütz appeared at one of these wedding dances with a clean shirt for her husband. While Grandfather Schütz went to change, she smashed his accordion. The Poles, so the story goes, took a collection, rushed out to buy another accordion the next day and persuaded Grandfather Schütz to stay on for the next night. The repercussions on the home front are not part of the story.<sup>58</sup>

The accordion story hints at a gregarious and easy-going nature for our grandfather. But there are also hints of traditional peasant shrewdness when it came to matters of money and property. Much has been written by economists about the double coincidence of wants in explaining the origins of money, but none of these writings have noted a peculiar Polish version of this phenomenon practiced by Grandfather Schütz. He made his living as a shoemaker, but he also had some land and a team of horses and a wagon. If the tongue on the wagon broke, a substantial tree would be needed to replace it. Having such a tree to hand when a tongue broke provided considerable convenience. There were both state and private forests adjacent to the Paproć villages and they were all

guarded by foresters. Foresters, however, ply their business in boots and these, like wagon tongues, tend to wear out. Here was a classic case of the double coincidence of wants: the shoemaker needs a tree and the forester needs boots. On an appointed evening the forester would appear at Grandfather's house and make himself comfortable behind the large oven while Grandfather made a new set of boots; see Photo 3.9 for a shoemaker's bench with tools. Two of the older boys would announce that they were going out for the evening. Later that week the forester would report that someone had recently made off with a fine straight tree. He declared that the matter would be investigated thoroughly.

Another story comes out of the Soviet-Polish war. During the Soviet advance in July 1920 Grandfather Schütz, along with other Paproć villagers, became unwilling wagoners for the Soviet army. Following the Soviet rout in the Battle of Warsaw these villagers began to straggle home and Grandfather Schütz was not among them, much to the dismay of his family. He did, however, show up eventually, his stock of horses augmented by one. The newly acquired horse, technically the booty of the Polish army, served as self-selected war reparations.



*Photo 3.9. Cobbler's bench at at Ciechanowiec museum.*



Pastor Henryk Zalewski had a very busy day on Saturday, January 31, 1932. At two o'clock he married our father's sister, Alwine, to Adolf Zitlau, a labourer from Srebrny Borek. At three o'clock he married our uncle August Dams' brother Adolf to Helena Schönemann. At five o'clock he married our parents. In the absence of a resident pastor, an afternoon of marriages probably served the convenience of Pastor Zalewski, who had to come from Łomża, rather than any special desire on the part of those being married. In the church register our father is described as a bachelor craftsman and our mother as an unmarried girl.<sup>59</sup> The witnesses to the marriage were our mother's brother Gustav Schütz and our father's brother-in-law Eduard Weirauch (Weihrauch). Banns for the wedding had been announced on January 7<sup>th</sup> and read in church on the following two Sundays. We can be certain that any celebrations did not extend past midnight on Saturday since dancing was not allowed on Sundays. No wedding photos have come our way, although wedding photos of other relatives have survived from this era.

Our parents' signatures in the church register are a surprise inasmuch as they signed their last name in Polonized form, our father writing 'Buze' for 'Buse' and our mother 'Scyz' for 'Schütz'. Similarly, Alwine Buse and her new husband, Adolf Zitlau, wrote 'Buze' and 'Cytlau', respectively. In the registry entry, however, all these names are recorded in German versions, leading us to conclude that the decision to Polonize was voluntary, rather than a legal imposition. The Polonization of first names was common in the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the records and signatures almost always showing, for example, 'Johann' as 'Jan' and 'Karl' as 'Karol'. Much less frequently, Polonized last names also appear, one of them being our great-great grandfather, David Buse (IV.P1, Table 2.2), who almost invariably signed the church register as 'Buze'. An exception occurred at the death of his father Ludwig in 1846 when he signed as David Buse. This schizophrenic attitude towards signatures also holds true for our uncle Gustav Schütz who signed as 'Szcyc' in 1922 and 1928 but in the 1930s used 'Schütz'. Thus on our parents' marriage entry, the signatures 'Szcyc' (our mother) and 'Schütz' appear on the same entry. Perhaps some of this represents a generational effect of trying to be modern, since both our mother and uncle signed in the

Polonized form when they were in their twenties. Whether the more fundamental issue of uncertainty about identity was lurking here is something that we will never know.

The previous generation had faced the same dilemma when the Russification program that followed the 1863 insurrection made Russian the primary language of instruction. As a result, signatures of some witnesses in the Paproć church registers start to appear in Cyrillic script. Our paternal grandfather Adolf Buse, born in 1870, always signed in the Cyrillic form 'Byze', which is also how the name is entered in the register. His step-uncle, Rudolf Buse, used the Cyrillic form in 1893 while a university student; see the frontispiece of this chapter. Our great-grandfather August Buse, on the other hand, used both the Latin and Cyrillic form, showing the same schizophrenia that Gustav Schütz displayed a generation later. In a 1909 marriage registry entry all signatures, groom, bride and witnesses, appear in Cyrillic, which suggests that the Russification program was succeeding.<sup>60</sup> The parallels in the behaviour of the 'Russian' and 'Polish' generations brings to mind the cliché about history repeating itself, not least because the assimilationist pressures of each language regime were brought to a crashing halt by a world war.

We do not know whether our parents had a lengthy courtship. Our mother was twenty-three and our father twenty-four, marriage ages well within the norm for the time. An unconfirmed story has them meeting for the first time during blueberry picking. Our mother did not tell us much about her teen-age years apart from an incident in which a branch snapped into her eye resulting in a costly visit to a doctor in nearby Ostrów; she appears a teen-ager in Photo 3.10. We do not know whether her three years of schooling, possibly four, took place in Russia or in Paproć Duża after the return from the Volga in 1918 when she was ten years old. With Aunt Olga assigned to agricultural task and Aunt Martha in charge of cooking, our mother was expected to specialize in weaving, something she declined to do.<sup>61</sup> Instead, despite difficulties with making sleeves, she became an expert seamstress and undoubtedly helped support the Schütz family with her earnings. How she acquired her skills is not entirely clear. Given the conventions of the time, she would have prepared for



*Photo 3.10. Matilde Wrede and Helene Schütz, 1920s.*

marriage by acquiring the appropriate household skills, including sewing, from her mother. Her skill level, on the other hand, suggests an informal apprenticeship with a village seamstress. Until her marriage she lived with her widowed mother and the other unmarried children including, at the very least, our Aunt Martha and Uncles Julius and Robert.

Sometime around 1922, at the age of 15, our father left Płatkownica to live and work with his uncle Johann Buse in Paproć Mała. One story says he was pushed out to make room for the expanding family of Grandfather Buse. Another says he left because he was beaten for failing to feed the horses before coming in for the mid-day meal. Whatever the cause, our father was undoubtedly happy to leave behind the recalcitrant diesel engine, the locked food cupboard and the occasional beating. A couple of years as a labourer must have convinced him that this

was a career with limited prospects. Despite his limited education, he apprenticed as a joiner (cabinet maker) with a Jewish master during the years 1924 to 1928, receiving his journeyman's papers in his last year. The location of the shop where he trained is not known to us, but we do know it had a leaky roof, a source of perpetual irritation to our father who as the apprentice had to do a succession of patch jobs on rainy days. The apprenticeship made him a first rate craftsman, although it needs to be added he did appear to have a natural feel for wood and hand tools. For his master's exam in Bialystok in 1936 he had to build a wooden staircase relying entirely on mortise and tenon joints and wooden pegs. That he stayed in Paproć Mała, rather than drifting off into one of the nearby towns, suggests that relying on his own 'tribe' during the depression provided a more secure livelihood. Not that work was always close to hand. In August 1932, though recently married, he helped build Eduard Weirauch's new water mill at Ruda Srebrowo some 60 kilometres distant by road.<sup>62</sup>

The newly formed family eventually acquired a small two room house (site 41 on Map 3.1) across the road from Grandmother Schütz in Paproć Mała. The first son, Arthur, born on July 13, 1933, may have been born in this house. Our mother must have found the first child a challenge for Grandmother Schütz would not let Arthur be breast-fed because our mother was thought to be too agitated. A posed garden photo from 1935 (or early 1936) shows the family of three dressed in their Sunday best; see Photo 3.11. Our mother is wearing a long dress with a wide white collar, our father a suit that seems just a little too small and Arthur a white shirt and knitted leggings of some sort. The contrast to the peasant style in the photos of our grandparents is obvious; in dress, at least, the Buse family had become modern. A second son, Wilhelm (Willie) Rudolf, born on December 24, 1936, made Christmas that year exceptional. With Grandmother Schütz and our Aunt Martha living just across the road, our mother could take advantage of the benefits of an extended family. The two sons spent many hours with Grandmother Schütz, giving our mother free time to supplement the family income with sewing. Grandmother's house must have been of special interest in the winter because it had the traditional *Kachelofen* that provided lasting and generous heat. Whether Grandmother Schütz or our Aunt



*Photo 3.11. Buse family, 1935-36.*

Martha still used the loom that stood near the oven is unknown.

No stories have come down to us suggesting serious deprivation. The depressed economic conditions of the time notwithstanding, the Buse family appears to have prospered over time. A picture of our family's economic position, possibly overstated in some particulars, can be constructed from claims for wartime losses our father submitted in the 1960s to the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>63</sup> He states that in 1932 he built a 100 metre square wooden workshop on three hectares (7.41 acres) of land in Paproć Duża. This land must have been leased until 1938, when he bought it from Franz Schulz for 2,000 złoty. As of 1939 he still owed Franz Schulz 1,000 złoty. His

average annual income for 1937-39 is reported as 5,000 złoty, a very substantial figure when compared to the typical industrial worker's annual income which varied from 500 to 1,500 złoty. There were two main lines of work, furniture making and house building and finishing, with the clients supplying the wood. By 1939 one journeyman and one apprentice worked with him in the summer. The apprentice was his cousin, Leonhard Buse, and the journeyman, whom he had trained, our uncle Robert Schütz. Total turnover of this operation was estimated at 15 to 20 thousand złoty per annum with outstanding obligations of about 400 złoty.<sup>64</sup> Presumably, most of the work came to him from the local Lutheran community which meant he and his workers could go from job to job by bicycle.

In the late summer of 1939 the construction of a larger four-room house in Paproć Duża, its walls made of thick log planks in the local style, had reached the rafter stage.<sup>65</sup> During the house construction phase the Buse family lived with the Ludwig Schulz family, whose large farm lay across the road. According to our father's claims document, the two-room house in Paproć Mała had been rented out for 40 złoty per month. The land at this time was seeded to flax and potatoes. Ownership of one cow is also claimed, but none of the older brothers can remember this cow. It may have been kept as part of the Ludwig Schulz herd as no mention is made of a Buse-owned barn or shed in the documents. By this time the family also appears to have owned a radio because Ludwig Wichert, son of the Imperial Guardsman Friedrich Wichert, has informed us that he visited the Buse family regularly to listen to radio broadcasts on a crystal set with ear phones. The Ludwig Schulz family also had a radio which Grandmother Schulz viewed with considerable apprehension. In her opinion, a voice without a body could only be the work of the Devil.<sup>66</sup>

The extended family included a large number of aunts and uncles. (To help the reader keep track, a reference list, as well as photos, of these aunts and uncles and their children is included as Appendix B). Mention has already been made of our father's sister Alwine and her husband Adolf Zitlau who earned his living as a farm labourer. The marriage of Helene to the miller Eduard Weihrauch has also been noted. On August 6,

1922 our father's oldest sister, Martha, married Johann Gottschalk, a farmer from Paproć Mała.<sup>67</sup> On the Schütz side of the family our Uncles Gustav, Emil and Robert, and our Aunt Olga all married in the inter-war period. Aunt Olga married August Dams on Sunday, May 25, 1930 with Pastor Gutknecht presiding. The Sunday wedding suggests a modest celebration without a dance. They lived in Króle Małe (Wilhelmsdorf) where they farmed approximately 15 acres including a small orchard. Uncle Gustav married Emilie Krüger on Sunday, October 22, 1922. He farmed 13 hectares (33 acres) in Paproć Duża.<sup>68</sup> The eleven hectares (28 acres) of land that had been originally owned by Grandfather Schütz in Paproć Duża fell to Emil who was responsible for paying out each surviving child's equal share. Uncle Emil married Amanda Korman on Friday, July 20, 1934 and had by 1936 built himself a new 24 by 20 foot house with two bedrooms. Uncle Robert married our father's cousin, Emilie Buse, on Tuesday, February 21, 1939. Aunt Martha and Uncle Julius remained unmarried; Photo 3.12 (from the mid-thirties) shows Grandmother Schütz with the then unmarried children Julius, Martha and Robert. The care of Grandmother Schütz, after she turned the farm over to Emil, presumably followed the customs of the time and was shared jointly by all the children according to their relative means. The house she occupied in Paproć Mała shows up on Map 3.1 as being owned or occupied jointly with her brother Ludwig Penk. Photo 3.13 (taken in 1997) shows this house in its post-war state with a new white-washed exterior.

Some of these aunts and uncles we never knew or knew only through post-war visits to Germany. The Canadian aunts and uncles we got to know quite well, even though Uncle Emil and Aunt Amanda lived 800 miles away in Winnipeg. Uncle Emil was a lively soul, a characteristic acquired perhaps from his father. An accomplished dancer, he could do the traditional Polish dances such as the *mazurka* when properly fuelled with straight shots of liquor. Drinking liquor straight was not just an adjunct of dancing, it was part of the culture of hospitality. No one could visit either Uncle Emil or Uncle Gustav without being offered a 'little' shot of something.<sup>69</sup> Liquor also had medicinal uses or at least supposed medical benefits. At the time of the typhus epidemic, Uncles Emil and Gustav had been designated to dig graves and dispose of the dead. To ward off the typhus

they drank vodka straight and smoked all the time. According to Uncle Emil this prophylactic regime had the blessing of a



*Photo 3.12. Martha, Julius, Robert (standing), and Auguste (Penk) Schütz mid-1930s.*





*Photo 3.13. Schütz-Penk house with new post-war exterior.*

medical doctor, who no doubt applied this preventive medicine to himself as well, with unknown consequences for his patients.

We have a final story about Uncle Gustav. During the Soviet-Polish war he had been drafted into the Polish army. In one engagement, the commanding Polish officer was killed and command fell to Uncle Gustav. The story says he and his men routed an entire regiment of the Red Army. Whether he was drinking vodka straight and smoking throughout this feat the story does not say.<sup>70</sup> During World War II Uncle Gustav was drafted into the *Volkssturm* (people's militia) and thus he has the distinction of having served in the military of three different countries (Russia, Poland and Germany). Captured by the Red Army at the end of the war, he had to serve as a translator in Siberia for two years before becoming a forest worker in Thuringia, East Germany.

### **Requiem for Paproć**

If our parents were faithful listeners to the Polish radio news in the 1930s they would have heard the Polish account of the events that unfolded in Germany after the seizure of power by Hitler in 1933. If they had access to short-wave radio, and this is a possibility, then they would have heard the German, and somewhat different, version of these events. What these events

implied for Poland was not always immediately clear, but by 1938 a clearer picture began to emerge. Hitler's repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles through massive re-armament, and re-militarization of the Rhineland, followed by the annexation of Austria, had all been achieved with the acquiescence of the major European powers. The politics of appeasement reached their nadir with the Munich Agreement signed at the end of September 1938. France and Great Britain, with the Czechs as hapless bystanders, agreed to Hitler's dismemberment of Czechoslovakia. Nazi Germany annexed the Czech Suedetenland. Poland took the opportunity to seize that part of Teschen that they felt had been awarded unjustly to Czechoslovakia at Versailles. Support for the Nazi regime in Germany reached new heights; many Germans believed that Hitler had found the way for the restoration of Germany to great power status without the need for war. Neville Chamberlain, the British Prime Minister, returned to London proclaiming "Peace in our time". Hitler assured the world that he had made his last territorial claim.

Although peace prevailed for almost a year, Hitler's territorial ambitions could not be restrained that long. In mid-March 1939, what remained of Czechoslovakia was divided into two states, a German occupied and administered protectorate and the rump state of Slovakia. A week later, under threat of force, Lithuania surrendered the Baltic territory and port of Memel to the German Reich. It was now Poland's turn to be subjected to a campaign of intimidation. Hitler made two demands: extra-territorial road and rail access across the Polish Corridor to East Prussia and the return of the Free City of Danzig to Germany. Poland declined to negotiate either demand. At the end of March, Great Britain, having finally taken the measure of Hitler's promises, agreed on a mutual assistance pact with Poland in the event of a German attack. France joined this pact a few months later. During the same week in March Hitler had informed the commander-in-chief of the *Wehrmacht* (German Army) that he would use force against Poland if diplomacy failed. The High Command produced operational plans for an attack on Poland anytime after September 1, 1939. In April Hitler withdrew from the German-Polish Non-Aggression Pact. During the long hot summer of 1939 Hitler spent much of his time at Berchtesgaden, his retreat in the Bavarian Alps, while

the German press and radio kept up its propaganda campaign against Poland. Europe expected war; only its timing and participants were considered uncertain.

When Germany attacked Poland on September 1, 1939, it did so on three fronts, from the west and south and from the north in East Prussia. Although Warsaw did not fall until September 27 and the last remnant of the Polish army did not surrender until October 5, the outcome of the war was decided within the first three weeks. The German 21<sup>st</sup> Infantry Division, moving south from East Prussia, reached the Paproć region in the second week of the war. In the days between September 11 and 13 there were battles south of Zambrów reaching as far as Srebrny Borek and Paproć Duża. A family of nine and a young boy became casualties in these battles. With the possible exception of one bombed barn, Paproć Duża and Mała sustained no damage and were in the hands of German troops by September 12.<sup>71</sup> The German-speaking inhabitants welcomed the *Wehrmacht* soldiers enthusiastically, relieved to be free from a perceived threat to their safety at the hands of their Polish neighbours. In the months leading up to the war anti-German sentiment had been fuelled by a Polish propaganda campaign, creating mounting tensions between ethnic Germans and Poles. With the outbreak of the war, the Paproć area residents felt themselves sufficiently threatened that they did not leave their villages and organized night patrols in anticipation of Polish attacks.

In the belief that its German minority was acting as a fifth column, the Polish government had also embarked on a program of selective internment of those ethnic Germans it deemed to be potential traitors. In the Paproć region, eleven residents were arrested and shipped to the internment camp Bereza Kartuska. Our aunt Emilie Schütz remembers the following names: Ludwig Buse, Adolf Schulz, Franz Schulz and his sister Wanda, our uncles Emil and Robert Schütz, Gerhard Trotno and Emil Wrede. The reasons of the Polish authorities for these arrests are unknown to us; we know only that those arrested were considered enemies of the state. Elsewhere in Poland, most leaders of German cultural, political and business organizations were interned. As far as we know none of the Paproć internees had been activists in such organizations,

although their membership in pro-German political parties such as the *Deutscher Volksverband* seems quite likely. In the mid-1930s the formerly conservative *Volksverband* fell into the hands of a younger generation who took Hitler's National Socialism as their model. The party actively recruited members in stray German settlements in the Cholm region, and this activity appears to have extended as far north as the Paproć region because we know our father was a *Volksverband* member.<sup>72</sup> Since our father was not interned, membership does not appear to have been sufficient grounds for internment. We know that Emil and Robert Schütz, Franz Schulz and Gerhard Trotno were not members.

As village *soltys* or headman in 1939, Ludwig Buse would of necessity have had some interaction with the Polish authorities, but how these interactions created suspicions about his loyalty remains a mystery. For the others, anecdotal evidence suggests that the grounds for their detention were a mixture of paranoia, personal spite and ill-advised political activity or commentary. Franz Schulz may have had a shortwave radio that received German broadcasts and listening to such broadcasts had been forbidden. If he, or any of the others, had disobeyed this ban, any local Poles who somehow became aware of this would have assumed that he was receiving secret messages from Germany, a very common rumour in the Polish press at this time. Uncle Emil believed he was detained because of an incident in August 1939. As part of their war preparations the Polish authorities had called for a muster of wagons and horses. At the Paproć muster Uncle Emil had joked to one of his Polish neighbours that the neighbour appeared to have left his best horses and wagon at home.<sup>73</sup> Our Uncle Robert was, in the words of his wife (Emilie), a 'loudmouth' and loudmouths seldom go unnoticed.

As noted earlier, Bereza Kartuska, some 200 kilometres east of Paproć Duża, had been established in 1934 as a camp for Ukrainian political detainees. As recounted by our Uncle Emil, the regime at Bereza consisted mostly of forced strenuous exercise and the occasional beating. Discipline was strict, with physical abuse if orders were not obeyed. On one occasion, while doing push-ups, he took a forbidden glance at his neighbour and received a rifle butt to the head for this

transgression. Accounts by other detainees tell of considerably more violence with regular unprovoked beatings.<sup>74</sup> Shortly after the Soviet Union invaded Poland on September 17, 1939 the Polish guards at Bereza took flight. The detainees broke out and the Paproćers began the trek home. When they reached the Bug River they hijacked an oarless boat, made their way downstream and then proceeded cross-country towards home. When they reached home they found only empty houses. The ethnic German residents had been moved *en masse* to East Prussia. The Bereza detainees were, however, able to track down their missing families in their new German homeland.

The move of the ethnic Germans from the Paproć region took place within ten days of the arrival of the German forces. Having given up their horses and wagons in the Polish mobilization, the Paproć villagers were allowed to select new ones from those captured by the German army from the Polish forces. Horses to hand, the villagers prepared to proceed with their autumn ploughing and seeding. But politics took precedence over agriculture. Secret protocols attached to the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact of August 23, 1939 had divided Poland into German and Soviet spheres of influence. The territory allocated to the Soviets included Warsaw and all of central Poland east of the Vistula, although a subsequent agreement signed on September 28 put the boundary about ten kilometres west of Paproć Duża. German re-settlement officials gave the villagers a choice: live under Soviet rule or be re-settled in the German Reich. Their memories of Bolshevik depredations during the Volga exile and the Polish-Soviet War resolved the debate in favour of return to Germany, or *Heim ins Reich* as the official program was subsequently called when much larger transfers of ethnic Germans were organized.<sup>75</sup>

Our Aunt Emilie Schütz recalls having plenty of time to pack a wagon with food and household effects. Agricultural implements and the current year's harvest were abandoned. The wagons assembled at the Paproć church, proceeded to Zambrów and then via Łomża to East Prussia. With livestock bringing up the rear, the column of wagons stretched over four kilometres.<sup>76</sup> At Łomża the bridge across the Narew River had been destroyed, forcing the caravan to make a treacherous descent down the riverbank to cross the river on a temporary bridge built by

German army engineers. Our mother, five months pregnant, recounted how Willie and Arthur left blue marks on her breast and arms as they hung on to her during the crossing. No other incident about the trip to East Prussia has come our way. We can only assume that the officials supervising the trek planned each night's stop until the caravans reached the towns of Ortelsburg (Szczytno today) and Johannsburg (Pisz) in East Prussia, approximately 100 kilometres north of Paproć Duża.

Whether they realized it or not, a chapter was closing on the story of the German peasants of Paproć. After 135 years of ploughing Polish soil they were tearing up the roots that had bound them to the land for five generations. Regret, possibly even bitterness, must have been in the minds of all; abandoning one's home at a week's notice is an agonizing decision, even if the circumstances dictate its necessity. Perhaps some of them thought that their move was temporary, a repeat of the Volga exile under less harrowing circumstances. We know that at least one of them thought the exodus an improbable project which would lead to grief.<sup>77</sup> The fact remains, however, that they had the choice; their Polish neighbours did not. The freedom to choose derived from their ethnic identity. That they had been able to maintain this identity for five generations living in another country provides a remarkable contrast to our own assimilation into Canadian society within one generation.

Prior to World War I their religious and educational institutions had been the cultural bulwarks against assimilation into Polish society. Furthermore, the self-sufficiency of peasant agriculture enabled a largely self-enclosed community to avoid economic integration. In the inter-war period church and school had come under attack and the self-enclosed character of the original settlements continued to diminish. The outlying settlements such as Pęchratka (Louisenau), Krolé (Wilhelmsdorf) and Kowalówka (Mecklenburg) had been ethnically mixed even before World War I and by 1937 only 13 Lutheran families remained in the last two named villages (see Table 2.1). In 1939 there were nine Polish landholders in Paproć Duża who owned approximately 10 per cent of the village land. Interestingly enough, about half of this land had at one time belonged to the Buse clan. The reasons for the sale of the Buse

lands to the new Polish owners are unknown to us. Only Paproć Mała remained entirely ethnic German by 1939; see Map 3.1. As Poles moved into the villages and became the majority, the street language would gradually have shifted from German to Polish. The greatest impact of this shift would have been on the children whose exposure to German would now be limited to church and home since schooling was by this time almost entirely in Polish. The ensuing loss of fluency in German would be a crucial step in the process of assimilation, as our own experience in Canada confirms.

Even without war, the prospects for the survival of an ethnic German enclave at Paproć in 1939 were not very promising. Not only was their language at risk, the requisite population base to sustain an ethnic enclave was lacking. Indeed, if we look at the entire life-span of the Paproć enclave, the Lutheran population had actually peaked in 1865. The numbers, subject to the usual caveat about reliability, for the available years are as follows:<sup>78</sup> 1806 - 514, 1835 - 1,481, 1865 - 1,908, 1913 - 1,450, 1923 - 1,115, 1937 - 1,355. After growing vigorously until 1865, the number of Lutherans in 1937 was not even as great as the number had been in 1835. The decline from 1865 to 1913 can be attributed to the migration to Volhynia and America. The 24 per cent decline between 1913 and 1923 reflects the Volga exile and the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918. Even though the population grew in the inter-war period, this population growth could not defeat more fundamental forces working against the survival of the Paproć enclave. As noted earlier, farming methods were labour intensive with low levels of agricultural mechanization. Mechanization would have come to Paproć sooner or later and reduced the need for labour. Rural depopulation has always accompanied the transition to more capital intensive agriculture. In the absence of mechanization their farms would have remained marginal and unable to keep the young from seeking better opportunities in the towns. In the case of ethnic minorities, this process of urbanization almost always meant assimilation.

Forces other than economics can also drive the complex process of assimilation; people could and did make conscious choices about their identity. The history of the Paproć region gives us two contrasting examples of such choices. In Chapter

II we noted that the Paproć teacher and cantor, Johann Gundlach, had expressed sympathy for the insurrectionists of 1863, sympathy that probably influenced the outlook of his son, Pastor Rudolf Gustav Gundlach (1850-1922). Following his theological studies at Dorpat, Rudolf Gundlach served as pastor in a succession of ethnic German parishes. This working environment notwithstanding, he identified himself as a Pole and joined Superintendent Bursche's group of Polish nationalists in the German-Polish church conflict. In contrast, Pastor Erich Buse established himself as a champion of German language rights in the inter-war period. Born in Konstantynow near Łódź and son of the Paproć-born Pastor Johann Buse, he studied for the ministry at both Dorpat and Leipzig. Ordained in 1921, he served the large German parish of Lipno until 1942. Despite being on opposite sides in the identity question, the two men were closely linked by family; Rudolf Gundlach's sister Pauline was Erich Buse's grandmother. Near the end of the war our family made a brief re-connection to the Gundlach family. Rudolf Gustav Gundlach's son, the engineer Major Rudolf Gundlach (1892-1957), invented and patented a tank periscope in 1936 that the Allies, especially the British, installed in their tanks. In April 1945 Gundlach periscopes mounted on British tanks were focused on the defendants of the village of Lüsche in western Germany. Cowering in a make-shift bunker at a farm in Lüsche were Helene Buse and her two youngest sons.<sup>79</sup> The two oldest sons, trying to be as inconspicuous as possible, lay crying in a furrow of a ploughed field.

All of Poland's minority questions were resolved by World War II and its aftermath. Today Poland is an ethnically and religiously homogeneous state. That it took the horrors of the war to reach a solution that was the objective of inter-war Polish minority policies ranks high among the ironies of tribal politics. Had the Germans not fallen prey to the Nazi madness and had the Poles shown a little more understanding of the process of assimilation, the outcome might have been the same. Among the residents of this imagined Paproć there would be a goodly number with the name Buze or Buza and some of them might well be university professors writing, in Polish, the history of the Buze-Buza family. Today's actual residents of Paproć know little of the history of their village since they are mostly displaced persons from the former Polish territories



incorporated into the Soviet Union after the war. Only the very old remember their former German neighbours and they do so without apparent rancour. One of them is on record as saying "They were indistinguishable from the Poles, but they were our Germans."<sup>80</sup>

The former Lutheran cemetery is unmarked, an overgrown tangle of shrubs and weeds. A new Catholic church has been built on the site of the former Lutheran church that was destroyed after the war.<sup>81</sup> The new church is a slightly altered replica of the original. Many of the former German residents who joined the organized bus tours to the Paproć region in the last two decades contributed to the building fund. We like to think that at the consecration of the new Catholic church an ecumenical minded priest recounted some of the history of the Germans resting in the cemetery. Perhaps the priest also had a sense of irony and included in his musical selections the sixth movement of Brahms' "*Ein deutsches Requiem - A German Requiem*". The sixth movement is entitled "*Denn wir haben hier keine bleibende Statt - For we have here no fixed abode.*"

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> George, Dieter and Adolf visited this museum in May 1997. The sleighs on display in the coach house reminded George that our mother and Aunt Martha told him of travelling by sleigh in the winter with heated rocks as foot warmers.

<sup>2</sup> Our principal sources for this section are Broszat (1972:173-271) Davies (1981, Chapters 18 and 19), Leslie (1980, Chapters 4 to 7) and Watt (1979).

<sup>3</sup> D'Abernon (1931:32-33).

<sup>4</sup> Davies (1972) is the best known book-length account of the Soviet-Polish war and one of our principal sources.

<sup>5</sup> The battle south of Paproć is noted in Szczepański (1995: 244). After the war the Polish authorities erected a huge cross on a raised earthen base to commemorate this battle. According to our aunt Olga Dams, the Paproć peasants helped to construct the base. Isaak Babel's

(1929) *Konarmiya* (Red Cavalry) stories of his experiences as a member of a Cossack cavalry group are essential reading for anyone looking for an eye-witness account of Cossack methods during the Soviet-Polish war. Confiscation of foodstuffs and goods, especially horses and wagons, was the norm.

<sup>6</sup> D'Abernon (1931, Map E in map set).

<sup>7</sup> Article 8 of the Minorities Treaty appears as Article 110 in the 1921 constitution; reproduced in Horak (1961: Appendix 1 and 3).

<sup>8</sup> Although Piłsudski had abandoned the Polish Socialist Party in 1918, the PPS had nevertheless supported Piłsudski in his first government.

<sup>9</sup> When Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939 it put into the field 1.5 million men and 3,600 armoured vehicles. The comparable numbers for Poland are 1.3 million men and 750 armoured vehicles. Germany brought one cavalry brigade to the Polish campaign. Poland had eleven cavalry brigades in action; Rhode (1991:101).

<sup>10</sup> These are the official Polish data as reported in Horak (1961:100). Horak's work has anti-Polish polemical tendencies. Accordingly, we use his data but are not committed to his analysis of it.

<sup>11</sup> Mückler (1927) and Heike (1985:162-165) are two exemplars of a large literature devoted to the question of the size of the German minority. Mückler's monograph examines the inadequacies of the 1921 census which, according to Heike, the Poles themselves did not consider fully reliable. For example, Mückler (p.85) reports that the 1921 census shows 240 Evangelicals living in Paproć Duża but no Germans. This does not necessarily mean deliberate falsification since it would have been easy for the census enumerator to confuse the distinction between nationality and citizenship in the newly created Poland. That same confusion might have also existed in the minds of the Paproć residents. That politics played a part in the 1931 census seems clear. In the case of the Byelorussians, their numbers were underestimated by classifying local dialects of Byelorussian as separate local languages. Even Davies (1981:406), who usually gives the benefit of the doubt to the Poles, revises the percentage of Byelorussians upwards to 4.7 per cent from the recorded 3.1.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie (1980:148). To cite another source, we can quote Kershaw (2000:241): "There had been undoubted discrimination against the German minority ... in pre-war Poland, mounting sharply during the summer crisis of 1939." Some specific details about discrimination in land reform and industrial employment are given in Komjathy and

Stockwell (1980:87-90).

<sup>13</sup> Macartney (1968:343-345).

<sup>14</sup> The circular is reproduced as Appendix I in Quednau (1940 - 1944?:99-100).

<sup>15</sup> Heike (1985:315). Since the numbers are derived from the estimates made by the Germans themselves, their accuracy can be questioned. However, even if the school age population is arbitrarily reduced by 25 per cent, the number of mandated schools still stands at 218 compared to the actual 11.

<sup>16</sup> The attempts to Polonize the Germans in this region mirrored the efforts of the Prussians to Germanize the Poles in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This Germanization policy was most vigorously pursued following the creation of the German Empire in 1871. The school laws of 1873-74 forcefully imposed German as the language of instruction at all levels of schooling, regardless of the mother tongue of the children. More details on the Prussian Germanization policies can be found in Hagen (1980:120-136).

<sup>17</sup> Kneifel (1967:71).

<sup>18</sup> Buse and Doerr (2001:xi-xv) summarize and assess three well-known accounts of the relationship between Poles and Jews in the inter-war period. Detailed studies of Jewish life in the inter-war period are presented in Polonsky, Mendelsohn and Tomaszewski (1994).

<sup>19</sup> The number of deaths is taken from Gilbert (1993:21). Landau-Czajka (1994) examines the image of the Jew in the Catholic press in the inter-war period. With few exceptions, this press was overwhelmingly anti-Semitic.

<sup>20</sup> As with all minority statistics, these numbers are contested terrain and we have tried to steer a middle course. Kneifel (1972:16), a German partisan in the church dispute, splits the Augsburg Lutherans as 80% German and 20% Poles as of January 1938. In a footnote (p.252) he cites the Polish church paper *Głos Ewangelicki* as reporting a 69% German and 31% Polish split in August 1939. Heike (1985:229-230) repeats Kneifel's percentages but also does his own calculation for the former Congress Poland using the 1931 census data. He concludes that the Germans constituted 76% of the church membership at that time. The undocumented and undated estimate of just over 50% Germans made by Szeruda (1938:616) appears to be of little value.

<sup>21</sup> Kneifel (1967:32-46, 65-70 and 1972:17-22) deals at length with the Polish-German church conflict in the inter-war period as well as its historical background. Heike (1985:228-265) covers the same material in a less polemical fashion. Regrettably, we have not been able to read the Polish version of these events although we have taken into account the Polish position as given in Bursche (1938).

<sup>22</sup> The relevant sections of the Polish constitution, the 1925 Concordat and the 1936 church law are given in Hoogenhuyze (1937:35-61).

<sup>23</sup> Bursche (1938:70-77), writing in defense of his role in the 1936 law, notes the parallel between the Concordat and the 1936 law, but fails to note the difference in treatment of those below the rank of archbishop and bishop. He also states that he was distressed by some of the conditions imposed on the Lutheran church, but argues no better deal could have been had in the prevailing political climate.

<sup>24</sup> A full account of these secret subsidies is given in Krekeler (1973).

<sup>25</sup> Bursche paid with his life for his Polonization efforts. In September 1939 he was arrested by the Nazis, shipped to the concentration camp at Sachsenhausen, fell ill and died in a police hospital in February 1942.

<sup>26</sup> Further discussion and examples of peaceful communal relations between Poles and Germans can be found in Blanke (1999:37-55).

<sup>27</sup> In addition to our own recollections of stories told by the Paproćers while we were growing up in Barrhead, we have drawn on Müller (1972), Kersten (1938), Schmit (1959/1960) and Wichert (1998) for this section. Ludwig Wichert collected a great deal of information about life in the Paproć region by organizing reunions and trips back to Poland.

<sup>28</sup> Holtz (1916:10) reports severe damage to the church, but his account does not seem to be entirely trustworthy since he also asserts that the school at Paproć Duża was burned down. Wichert (1998:26) states that in 1918 the school was a German military command post. In a conversation of April 21, 1996 our aunt Olga Dams told us that sometime after 1918 every other poplar tree around the church was cut down and the proceeds of the lumber sale used to repair the church organ.

<sup>29</sup> Müller (1972:316) cites a 1925 regimental newsletter which reported that the German soldiers who passed through the Paproć

villages during World War I found well-built houses surrounded by orchards and shrubs that distinguished them from other houses they had seen in this region.

<sup>30</sup> Müller (1972:317).

<sup>31</sup> Bursche (1938:68-69).

<sup>32</sup> The school is mentioned by Mückler (1927:85) in his discussion of the 1925 Augsburg Church yearbook.

<sup>33</sup> The data on schooling are from Kersten (1938). The sense of grievance about the school system was expressed by Richard Korman in a March 1999 conversation in Barrhead.

<sup>34</sup> With the exception of the facts about his tenure at Bashaw, the biographical detail on Pastor Kersten is taken from Kneifel (1967:109-110).

<sup>35</sup> The members of the *Posaunenchor* were Emil Wrede, Robert Steinmeyer, Eduard Busch, Eduard Krempin, Adolf and Franz Schulz, Ferdinand and Friedrich Schütz, and Julius, Otto, Karl and Bernhard Buse. Apart from Bernhard and Karl Buse, who were cousins to our father, we do not know how the other Buses were related to our family; the two Schützes may have been uncles of our mother. The names appear under an undated photograph in Wichert (1998:78).

<sup>36</sup> The church councillor Gustav Buse lived in Paproć Duża whereas our father, Gustav Rudolf Buse, lived in Paproć Mała. To add to the confusion, a third Gustav Buse lived in one of the two Paproć villages. Our father was known as '*der grosse Gustav*' and one of the others, shorter in stature and our father's cousin, went by the title of '*der kleine Gustav*'; i.e., Big Gus and Little Gus, respectively. Big Gus measured in at around five foot eight.

<sup>37</sup> The photo appears in Wichert (1998:82). The names were: Friedrich and Ferdinand Schütz and Gustav (not *der grosse*), Ida, Bernhard, Gerhard, Emilie, Karl, Otto and Julius Buse. Six of the names overlap with the *Posaunenchor* so the two photos from which these names are drawn must be from different years.

<sup>38</sup> We know that Johann Busch, later of Barrhead, and Ludwig Schulz had carriages. The Schulz family owned almost 100 acres of land. Ruth Schulz (now Goldbeck) recalls that her father had eleven horses and two Polish farm workers to help run the farm.

<sup>39</sup> This is the recollection of our cousin Edna (Dams) Kleinfeldt.

<sup>40</sup> In her memoir of a visit to Paproć in 1937 Müller (1972:316) does not specify the number of half-timbered houses she saw. She wrote about them in the context of surviving Mecklenburger traditions so even one such house would have been evidence of the tradition. Since only three houses in Paproć Duża remained standing after the villagers returned from the Volga exile, we conjecture that the new houses that were built were not half-timbered since these take longer to construct than a log plank house. Building with wood was not just a rural phenomenon. As of 1904 only 24 per cent of the buildings in the towns of the Łomża *gubernia* (province) were brick; Kazimierski (1994: 264, Table 9).

<sup>41</sup> In the list of residents at Paproć Mała, Site #15 on Map 3.1 is given as the location of Johann Buse's mill. The symbol for the mill, on the other hand, is mistakenly located on Site #18 owned by David Buse.

<sup>42</sup> These two popular sayings, which have their origins in the miller's trade, are mentioned in an article on mills and milling by Richard Schienke (2005). This article also has many fine pictures of post and water mills in Poland.

<sup>43</sup> Jewish food rules, generally known as 'Kosher', include a generic restriction against the ingestion of blood. In addition to this, in the case of animals such as calves and sheep, the sciatic nerve and certain fats must also be removed from the hindquarters, a difficult and highly skilled task. Accordingly, the Jewish traders found it simpler to buy only that part that of the calf that could easily be butchered following these rules. We are indebted to Naomi Sharir for advice on this matter.

<sup>44</sup> Both our mother and our uncle Emil Schütz mentioned the Jewish shop in Paproć Mała. Ruth (Schulz) Goldbeck told of us about the shop in Paproć Duża. Wichert (1998) makes no mention of any Jews.

<sup>45</sup> In 1973 our uncle Gustav Schütz, then 77 years old and living in East Germany, still rose at dawn to scythe the grass for his rabbits.

<sup>46</sup> Our cousin Edna (Dams) Kleinfeldt recalls herding geese and cows after school.

<sup>47</sup> The rate for pulling flax is given by Heinrich (1992:18) as applying to able-bodied men in the Flanders flax industry. Women, whose upper body strength is, on average, less than that of men, would pull at a somewhat lower rate. We have no opinion on the average strength of the flax-pulling Paproć women.

<sup>48</sup> Schmit (1960, #5:7). Ewald Trotno, formerly of Srebrny Borek, remembers this celebration by the name of *Brok Twecka*. *Hochtid* is also the Low German word for wedding, another occasion for a 'high time'.

<sup>49</sup> Schmit (1960, #5:7).

<sup>50</sup> In inter-war Poland alcohol and tobacco, as well as matches and salt, were state monopolies; Taylor (1970:92). Dieter remembers that the government produced cigarettes were called 'Pilsudski' cigarettes by our father, indicating perhaps that the Paproć residents made no distinction between government enterprises and Marshal Pilsudski.

<sup>51</sup> If the conjecture about the tea towel being a trousseau item is correct, then it is very old indeed because Auguste Penk was married by 1894. That the towel survived the Volga exile suggests that it was used to wrap food rather than finding daily use in washing up. Kathy Buse is now the owner of the towel, having received it as a gift from Emil Schütz. The two linen table cloths also came to Canada with the Emil Schütz family.

<sup>52</sup> The wool cloth and felt capes are mentioned by Schmit (1960,#5:7). He calls the capes *bunda* rather than *burka*. Inasmuch as *bunda* is Polish for sheepskin or sleeveless jerkin (vest), whereas *burka* means hooded greatcoat or hooded cloak, Schmit's memory appears to have failed him. Conceivably, both terms were in use since vests could have been made from the felted cloth as well. Ewald Trotno remembers only the *burka* as a common garment.

<sup>53</sup> Reczyńska (1996:202). The details of emigration from Poland to Canada are also from this source.

<sup>54</sup> We are indebted to Lise Doucette of Laurentian University for the 1939/40 number. The comparable numbers for all ethnic groups covering the years 1926/27 to 1937/38 are given in Reczyńska (1996:72). In almost every year, the German share of total emigration exceeds the share that the Germans represented in the 1931 census.

<sup>55</sup> Our step-uncle Karl Krüger provided us with the details of life at Platkownica.

<sup>56</sup> We have assumed that the 30 by 30 feet water mill that Uncle Weihrauch built in 1932/33 replaced an older, smaller mill which provided Grandfather Buse with tinkering opportunities. The information about the water mill is taken from a handwritten document

prepared for a post-war claim for reparations made by our Aunt Helene. We are indebted to our cousin Leo Weirauch for this information. A similar claim for lost property made in 1940 by Uncle Weihrauch to the German authorities in Łódź estimated the value of his 19 acres, two fish ponds with fish, three acres of woodland and the watermill at 60,000 zloty. He estimated his annual income at 12,000 zloty which made him very rich relative to industrial workers who earned between 10 to 30 zloty per week or 500 to 1,500 zloty per annum; see Taylor (1970:128) for wage rates in the inter-war period. In order to protect the external value of its currency Poland pursued a deflationary monetary policy in the inter-war period, leading to substantial unemployment and falling wages.

<sup>57</sup> Their names and dates of birth are as follows: Erna (7.12.1921), Olga (19.1.1924), Ella (18.4.1926) and Emma (11.3.1928). Erna died in 2000, Ella in 2005.

<sup>58</sup> All stories about our maternal grandparents are derived from two interviews conducted by Adolf with our uncle Emil Schütz in August 1997 and April 2000. Like all stories that have been passed down from the past, they have probably benefitted from the addition of drama and colour in the retelling.

<sup>59</sup> Our parents' marriage appears as registry entry #4 for the year 1932 on film #1186446 from the FHC. The entries for the other two marriages on that Saturday are also from this film. In the discussion of names which follows in the rest of the paragraph, we use the word 'Polonization' informally since the transition from 'Schütz' to 'Scyz' is technically an instance of phonetic transcription in which the sound of the name is preserved. The transition from 'Buse' to 'Buza' noted by Kossmann (1978: 138) is an example of Polonization in which the objective is to make the name sound Polish. We note in passing that in Polish 'buza' is a refreshing drink made from oatmeal or ground millet.

<sup>60</sup> Examples of the signatures of both Adolf and August Buse, as well as the 1909 marriage entry, can be found in FHC film #1046469.

<sup>61</sup> The division of labour in the Schütz household and our mother's refusal to learn to weave was mentioned to Kathy Buse when Kathy took up weaving in the 1980s.

<sup>62</sup> That our father worked on the building of the water mill is an inference drawn from two sources. In August 1932 he acted as registry witness in the Łomża Lutheran church when the death of Eduard Weihrauch's eight-year old son Edward was recorded. An application for property restitution, made by his wife (our Aunt Helene) in the



1950s, states that the mill was built in 1933. The discrepancy in dates could be due to memory failure or that the mill took at least a year to build, not an improbable building time as it was a 30 x 30 foot three storey structure.

<sup>63</sup> In 1952 the Federal Republic of Germany established a reparations program called *Lastenausgleich* (burden sharing). The program did not provide full restitution. If a claim was accepted, partial payment was made according to a fixed schedule that varied with the size of the claim. Our father made two applications, one in June 1960 and another in September 1966. In the 1960 application he claimed for the loss of the contents of the two-room house and three hectares of land and a cow. The claim for the household goods was accepted and yielded a payment of 1,200 DM plus a family supplement of 800 DM for a total award of 2,000 DM (approximately \$540 CA). A revised claim in 1965 for the three hectares of land, the cow and agricultural tools generated a payment to each of our parents of 2,560 DM or \$692. In the 1966 claim our father sought compensation for his workshop in Paproć Duża as well as the woodworking shop he operated following the forced move to East Prussia in 1939. The claim for the East Prussian shop was rejected. The claim for the Paproć shop was accepted but not settled until after his 1969 death. Our mother received one-third of this settlement (2,667 DM or approximately \$720) and each son received two-fifteenth (1,067 DM or approximately \$288).

<sup>64</sup> Our suggestion that the claims are probably inflated is prompted by his apparent high income in 1937-39 and the large turnover reported for the East Prussian shop. Even if we accept the income figure, the reported turnover of 15 -20 thousand zloty for the Paproć shop is suspect. If clients paid for all materials, then the only outlays would have been wages and these would have been less than 15 thousand in total as the journeyman and apprentice worked only in the summer and at a considerably lower annual rate than the 5,000 zloty earned by our father. To take a roseate view of the past is not uncommon, but for the 1966 claims an additional factor comes into play. Buse Construction was in serious financial difficulty at this time and the attendant stress apparently induced our father to try to recover some of his losses by making inflated claims for the two workshops.

<sup>65</sup> The new Buse house was being built on property shown as that of Franz Schulz on Map 3.1. This property lay on the road to Pęchratka, (Louisenau) about a kilometre southwest of the church. Wanda Schulz, Franz Schulz's sister, had a photo of the partially-built Buse house that Art saw once on a visit to Edmonton. This photo, among others from Paproć, was apparently burned by Wanda's second husband in a fit of depression following her death in 2001. Our father did not make any

reparation claims for this house.

<sup>66</sup> Ruth (Schulz) Goldbeck told us the anecdote of the Devil and the radio. Whether these radios could receive short-wave transmissions from Germany is unclear. The Paproć villages lay within 100 kilometres of East Prussia so German propaganda broadcasts could have been transmitted for standard radio receivers. The Krüger family at Platkownica also had an earphone radio and Karl Krüger has told us that they listened secretly to Polish broadcasts, something that had been forbidden by the Polish authorities.

<sup>67</sup> The marriage date is from film #1186446 of the FHC. J. and F. Gottschalk appear on the list of residents of Paproć Mała (site #3 on Map 3.1) in 1939. We believe the 'F' to be a typographical error.

<sup>68</sup> The reported size of the land holdings should be taken as approximations in many cases. They come from an undated map constructed after World War II by unknown (to us) former residents of the Paproć region. For example, this map reports that Emil Schütz farmed 12 Polish morga, whereas he told us he farmed 20 morga.

<sup>69</sup> Although Uncle Ben Schütz had left for the US while only a teenager, when he came to visit Barrhead and Edmonton in the 1960s and 1970s his consumption of straight shots of hard liquor became legendary. Our mother's uncle, Robert Penk, who travelled with him, came a close second in this competition.

<sup>70</sup> Emil Schütz is the source of this story.

<sup>71</sup> The deaths are mentioned by Müller (1940:108). According to Emil Schütz, who came back to the village after the residents had moved to East Prussia, the barn was bombed because someone had raised a Polish flag on it to prevent it being attacked by the Poles. Our grandmother's East Prussian police registration papers show that she was in the German Reich as of September 13, meaning an area under control of German authorities.

<sup>72</sup> This recruiting activity is mentioned by Heike (1985:207). The family of Ed Mueller, husband of our cousin Lydia Zitlau, came from the Cholm region. Ed's father was arrested and interned at Bereza Kartuska. Our father's membership in the *Deutscher Volksverband* is recorded in his 1940 application for German citizenship, a copy of which has been obtained from the Berlin Document Centre.

<sup>73</sup> This was a joke with an edge. Emil Schütz had hidden his best horse harness under a pile of grain in a granary.

<sup>74</sup> Aurich (1969:65-70) presents a number of written testimonials of internees.

<sup>75</sup> We have not been able to determine whether the move was supervised by military, paramilitary, police or civilian personnel. Wichert (1998:31) mentions only re-settlement officials. Our Aunt Emilie recalls military but without any specific detail. The two memories are not necessarily inconsistent. As of September 22 the Paproć region was still part of the designated Russian sphere of influence and the German army was evacuating the region to make room for the advancing Soviets. The German army would have shared the road to Lomża with the Paproć evacuees. Richard Korman, in a conversation on March 7, 1999, suggested the SA (*Sturmabteilung*, a paramilitary organization), but we are certain this is incorrect as the SA had no responsibilities outside Germany proper. The brown uniforms that Richard remembers must have been those of the Nazi welfare organization (*Nationalsozialistische Volkswohlfahrt*) which met the evacuees when they crossed the border into East Prussia; Müller (1940:109). According to Ewald Trotno, when the trek was routed through Przasnysz (Poland) for final dispersal, the re-settlement officials wore civilian clothes. At Płatkownica the move was supervised by the *Waffen-SS*, the military branch of the SS. Our step-uncle, Karl Krüger, has a clear memory of this, since he took an SS man to another village to fetch a wagon. The best known English source of information on the re-settlement of the ethnic Germans, Koehl (1957), does not go into any detail about the Germans from the Narew region, focusing instead on the much larger population transfers which took place later. The German sources, such as Müller (1991), are equally short on details about the Narew Germans. An exception is Bierschenk (1954:83) who reports that 8,785 people from the Narew region were re-settled. The Paproć evacuees made up about 15 per cent of this number.

<sup>76</sup> Müller (1940:108)

<sup>77</sup> The pessimist was Ewald Trotno's father.

<sup>78</sup> The number for 1806 is our estimate of the number of Lutherans among the original colonists; the numbers for 1835 and 1937 are taken from Kersten (1938) and the rest from Kossmann (1978, Table VI: 400-402).

<sup>79</sup> The details of the Gundlach periscope can be extracted from the internet site [www.unipedia.info/Rudolf\\_Gundlach.html](http://www.unipedia.info/Rudolf_Gundlach.html). The Gundlach family continued its tradition of achievement in post-war Poland. The

son of the periscope inventor became a distinguished engineer and academic whose decorations include the Gold Cross of Merit awarded by the Polish government. The details of the life of Erich Buse are taken from the biographical entry in Kneifel (1967:71). From the biographical entry for his father in the same volume (pp.71-72) we can also infer that Erich Buse's siblings did not follow him into the German nationalist camp. His sister Helene married a Polish medical doctor. His brother Oskar, also a pastor, served the Polish Lutheran exiles in London, England after the war. His brother Alfred, a classical scholar and linguist reputedly fluent in 28 languages, taught at the Free Polish University of Łódź in the inter-war period. His sister Wanda, married a factory director with a German name whose ethnic status is unknown to us.

<sup>80</sup> Monko (1993:8-9).

<sup>81</sup> The Soviet army used the church as a munitions store after the Paproć region fell into their hands in late summer 1944. The church remained a ruin until 1967 when it was demolished and the stones used to build a barn and fence; reported by Monko (1993:9). Carol Kristen-Burns provided us with a picture of the rebuilt church following her visit to Paproć Duża in June 2006.



## Chapter IV

### GERMAN CITIZENS, TEMPORARILY, 1939-1948

In April 1939 the Hamburg-Amerika liner 'Huascarán' cruised to the Balearic Isles with Hermann Goering on board. The head of the *Luftwaffe* (air force) and economic director for Nazi Germany invited the officers from the escorting naval destroyer to the 'Huascarán' for drinks. At one point in the evening Goering grabbed the punch bowl, took it below deck and treated the crew to a drink.<sup>1</sup> Largesse of another kind appeared nearly a decade later. In October 1948 the Canadian Pacific ship 'Beaverbrae' sailed for Canada with a load of European refugees, including the Buse family. A shipload of 773 refugees and 116 crew sailed every thirty-five days in 1948 for the Canadian Christian Council for Refugees with the following provisions from Canada: 10 tons of potatoes, 8 tons of fresh meat, 3 tons of smoked meat, 7 tons of flour, 4 tons of vegetables, 2 tons of butter and cheese, 4 tons of poultry and 20,000 eggs.<sup>2</sup> During the Buse voyage the crew stood on a catwalk and threw chocolate bars and candy to the children on



*Photo 4.1. Deck of refugee transport ship Beaverbrae with Uncle Emil Schütz's family (centre).*

the deck below. The 'Beaverbrae', somewhat differently outfitted, was a reincarnation of the 'Huascarán.'

During World War II the 480-foot 'Huascarán' had been refitted as a repair ship aiding German submarines. After the war the Allies assigned it to Canada to compensate for ships that had been torpedoed by the German navy.<sup>3</sup> From 1947 to 1954 it ferried refugees, displaced persons and emigrants, mostly from Bremerhaven, Germany to Halifax and Quebec City. If the war changed the functions and fortunes of ships, it transformed people's lives even more. People repeatedly were forced to move. Our family, the colonists of the previous chapters, was amongst those who moved the most. Previously their treks had been by foot, by horse and wagon, and by rail. During this decade they added trucks and ocean-going boats to their transport means. This crucial and difficult decade also brought the permanent dispersal of the Paproć Lutheran community.<sup>4</sup>

### **Another Type of War**

World War II differed in many respects from the first great calamity in 1914-1918.<sup>5</sup> Many more people died (estimates run to 60 million, compared to 10 million) in battle, through bombing, under slave labour conditions and in concentration and killing camps. Millions more were shunted around Europe. Many became prisoners of war (POWs) and the killing included a large racial and biological element. Frequently the racial killing has been termed the Holocaust regarding Jews, though its many victims included gypsies (Roma and Sinti) and Slavic peoples. The biological killing involved the mentally ill and homosexuals, and the concept had been stretched by the Nazis to include Communists.

Towards and after the war's end some of the largest population transfers in history took place as concentration camps were liberated, slave labourers sought, or were forced, to return home, refugees scurried away from battlefields and ethnic cleansing accompanied political reorganization. The estimates run to 20 million persons moving back and forth across Central Europe. Before the war ended many ethnic Germans fled from the path of the advancing Soviet armies. After the conflict, with Allied approval, millions of Germans were transferred or fled

from expected and actual revenge by populations whom some Germans had subjugated and the Nazi state had murdered. The 'flight' (*die Flucht*, sometimes called the forced removal, or *die Vertreibung*) and ethnic cleansing by Czechs and Poles—approved by their recreated states—provided many Germans with the opportunity to cast themselves as 'victims' and to conveniently forget the multitude of victims the German regime had created before 1945.

In this war, initiated by Adolf Hitler on the pretense of German self-determination, the Nazi elite sought to eliminate Poland, to expand Germany eastward and to dominate Europe. The military conflict passed through a series of stages. After the quick defeat, in three weeks, of Poland in September 1939, and the failure to end the conflict by diplomacy, Germany lost the air war in the Battle of Britain during the summer and fall of 1940. That meant the postponement of the planned invasion of Britain and eventually its abandonment. It also meant that in the long run Germany would not be safe from aerial attacks. However, in spring 1940 the so-called 'phoney' ground war (of sitting and waiting) ended. Germany attacked and occupied Norway, Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium and France. By mid-June 1940 Hitler triumphantly forced France to sign an armistice putting much of northern and western France under German occupation, leaving the rump client state of Vichy under a reactionary French administration. The Italian dictator, Benito Mussolini, suddenly wanted to participate in the division of Europe, and attacked Yugoslavia. Simultaneously, he tried to expand the Italian empire in Africa. Soon German troops were required to support the Italians in both areas. Despite already having captured much territory by mid-1941, but striking no decisive blow against Britain and its supporting empire, Hitler insisted to his generals that the quick victories could continue. He banked on the United States staying neutral and Britain being contained due to supply problems caused by submarine (U-Boot) attacks on convoys.

In June 1941 Hitler launched the largest-ever land force of 3.6 million troops against the Soviet Union. By December 1941 three massive armies had overrun the western Soviet Union, stood in shelling range of Leningrad and Moscow, and had advanced past Kiev. However, the knock-out blow had not been



achieved as the Soviets moved factories and people east, brought up reserves and demonstrated that Stalinist and Communist dictatorship could combine with Russian patriotism to defend a 'homeland.' Before the battles in the east started, in May 1941 Hitler had ordered that all captured political commissars of the Soviet system were to be immediately executed. As in the Polish campaign, *Einsatzgruppen* (killing squads of the SS [*Schutzstaffeln*, meaning Protective Squads but operative as elite para-military formations]) followed the regular troops, sorted out Jews and commissars, organized ghettos and carried out mass executions. This killing of civilians was novel in its magnitude and organization. The destruction of European Jews and enslavement of Slavic populations had entered a new stage after June 1941.

Four major conflicts turned the war against Germany and Italy. First, after Japan expanded the Pacific conflict in December 1941 by attacking the United States at Pearl Harbour, Hitler unilaterally declared war on the United States. Within a year American resources would alter the balance of power. Second, on the eastern front Leningrad and Moscow refused to collapse during 1942. The battle for Stalingrad at the end of 1942 demonstrated the limits of supply lines and military capabilities of the new German empire. The Nazi and *Wehrmacht* [military] leaders' ideological outlook overrode strategic self-interest and insight.<sup>6</sup> Major reversals for Germany started at the end of 1942 and the beginning of 1943. Third, the famed 'desert fox,' General Rommel, who had swept across much of the North Africa in tanks seeking to outflank the British forces, found himself out-numbered by mid-1942. The African front collapsed and permitted the creation of a base from which Americans, Canadians and British forces would begin the attack on the European mainland through Italy during 1943. Fourth, bombing raids from Britain forced the German military to realize that another front existed in the air as, by late 1941, German cities began to burn, the populace ran for hastily created shelter, and the war economy repeatedly had to be reorganized. Not often noted is that in East Prussia during late 1941 and 1944, Soviet air strikes harried the populace. However, after the major reversals of 1943 and 1944, the ethnic Germans of the eastern borderlands had new worries. These would prove to be of a different magnitude than the previous problems of food

shortages and conscription. They anticipated that their area and lives would be overrun by Soviet troops seeking a harsh revenge.

By 1944 the Soviets from the east, the Americans, Canadians and British from the south and the British and Americans from the air made it evident that Germany would lose this war despite the demands of the Japanese-American conflict in the Pacific. The landing on the Normandy coast in June 1944 complemented the relentless drive towards German territory by Soviet armies crossing into occupied Poland and Hungary. From mid-1944 Hitler sacrificed men and materials for an obviously lost cause, which officially ended May 8, 1945.

Unlike 1918, the Allies insisted on 'unconditional' surrender and were intent on overthrowing Nazism and changing Germany by occupation and division. They also intended to re-educate the German people through de-militarization, de-Nazification, de-cartelization and democratization. If fanatic Nazis and common German people stood in the way of those goals, the Allies would force acceptance.<sup>7</sup> Their methods were harsh, but mild compared to those that the German regime had employed in imposing their racial empire on Europe.

Racial empire refers to the other war that Nazi Germany fought behind the military lines. As has been increasingly revealed by historical research, the racial warfare included participation by the German military.<sup>8</sup> This war sought to impose a racial pecking order as well as a racial cleansing on Europe. What began haphazardly ended as program: Eradicating Jews and Bolsheviks, eliminating homosexuals, gypsies and so-called 'asocials,' including the gassing of the mentally retarded, executing all Communist leaders and starving Soviet POWs, sometimes in the same POW camps where western Allied prisoners were adequately fed and housed.

In all these struggles the roles of perpetrator, of collaborator, of bystander and of fellow traveller were open to Germans. Many actively chose one or more roles, but some were also victims either as resisters, or involuntary participants in Nazi policies and practices. Many people simply sought to survive. If one moves from the general to the specific, from the Nazi policies

organizing genocide to the experiences of families entwined in Nazi meshes, the complicated nature of individual family existence may become clearer.

Wars move people. Armies move according to the outcome of battle. Labourers are forced to move according to industrial and agricultural needs. Civilians move to get out of the way of the fighting and often are deported or forced to migrate. During World War II millions moved and our family was among them, in the military, as civilians, as deportees and refugees. Although not among those arbitrarily shipped around as slave labourers or those moved to death camps, some experienced concentration camps, prisoner of war camps and living with strangers as refugees.

Wars kill people. Some 27 million Soviet civilians, some 6 million Jews, about 6 million Poles and a similar number of Germans died. Some northern, many western and southern Europeans as well as soldiers from other continents died on the multitude of battlefields, in camps and by bombing, but the majority of deaths were in the east European borderlands. Some of our relatives were among those whose lives were transformed and some died. We write their story within the larger context with the realization that family history moving towards a remembered past can become very personal and problematic. Trying to work mainly from the limited documentation that exists about our family, we do not hide, but we also do not blame; we seek to illustrate and sometimes hope to explain.

### **Poland and the Beginnings of War**

In fall 1939 the situation of Germans in Poland became precarious. We might think the opposite, since the German military quickly won the war. Yet, at first some Germans had reason for anxiety, partly because of the manner in which ethnic minorities in Poland had been treated as second-class citizens in the inter-war era. Ethnic relations became especially tense in the weeks before the war began. For instance, our uncle Eduard Weihrauch and his family were deported from Ruda Srebrowo.<sup>9</sup> In addition, at the very beginning of the fighting, the Polish state as well as some Polish individuals took

actions against ethnic Germans within Poland. These actions were planned and organized before hostilities started, namely to identify, to apprehend and to incarcerate persons who might be disloyal to Poland, or somehow support the German military. A tiny group of Germans, in fact, was disloyal and others sympathetic to the German cause.<sup>10</sup> Yet, mostly without evidence, the Polish state and some individuals struck out against the 'strangers in their midst' who had been there over a hundred years.

Some Germans were incarcerated. Oral accounts, of contemporaries and relatives, indicate that some were taken captive, beaten and placed in holding camps such as at Bereza Kartuska, as recounted in the previous chapter. At Bromberg, where violent clashes between Poles and Germans occurred, over a thousand ethnic Germans were killed by Poles. This event became sensationalized and the number of German victims was blown out of proportion by Nazi propaganda claiming 55,000 deaths in all.<sup>11</sup> However, many Germans, including our mother, later referred to Bromberg's 'Bloody Sunday', as though this justified all the subsequent actions against Poles and Jews. Certainly it helped foster hatred of Poles and propelled some ethnic Germans into the so-called 'ethnic German self-protection' units (*Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz*).<sup>12</sup>

Within three weeks the incarcerated ethnic Germans were freed because when the German military or the Soviets took over parts of Poland the tables turned. Soon German 'self-protection' militias were exacting what they considered revenge on Poles and Jews for 'Bromberg' and other incidents. Simultaneously, the ethnic German population would have to have seen the beginnings of the Nazi machinery of death—not necessarily of the *Wehrmacht*, but certainly of the Nazi elite organizations, the SS, SD (security police) and *Selbstschutz*. Even if they did not participate, the ethnic Germans probably knew about these groups' actions in general.

What precisely did the local population of the newly conquered territories know about the actions and intentions of the German war and racial machine? The question is difficult to answer and will be reposed for different situations in the following account,

but known now is that orders were given to the *Einsatzgruppen* following the *Wehrmacht* troops to shoot Polish insurrectionists, and that "the order, to immediately shoot all Polish insurrectionists (without trial), went directly out of Hitler's *Führer* train to the *Einsatzkommandos*." <sup>13</sup> The *Einsatzgruppen* and the so-called 'self-protection groups' murdered tens of thousands Polish persons by spring 1940. The number of ethnic German civilians killed by Poles at the beginning of the war is estimated at between 5,000 and 13,000.<sup>14</sup>

Though some Germans, Jews and Poles, witnessed, and a minority of ethnic Germans participated in the extreme measures aimed at Poles and Jews, most of the Germans in Poland, like the other groups there, at first would have been concerned to survive or to adjust to the new order. Until at least mid-September 1939 no one knew the outcome of the war nor whether the western powers intended to continue it. What the Nazi leaders intended also remained unclear. A leading historian of the process of Jewish and ethnic destruction in Poland has written: "No documentation exists from before the beginning of the war that in any way points to the preparations by German security offices for dealing with Jews living in defeated Poland."<sup>15</sup> That the Nazi regime intended to create some new social order stood clear. That such a world included a resettlement of population, which eventually involved the movement of millions of ethnic groups, would have been known by few aside from the Nazi elite.

Two processes overlapped. One involved the division of Poland between Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia. That process took place based on pre-war agreements finalized on maps delineating spheres of influence by Soviet and Nazi military personnel on 28 September 1939.<sup>16</sup> The ethnic Germans in the Soviet part of Poland were brought '*Heim ins Reich*' (home into the empire) within a year, though some such as the Paproćers were moved immediately beginning in September and October 1939. The second process involved the ethnic cleansing and reorganizing of western Poland, which affected all the people living there.<sup>17</sup>

As noted in the previous chapter, the first process affected the Schütz-Buse and related families because their settlement, or

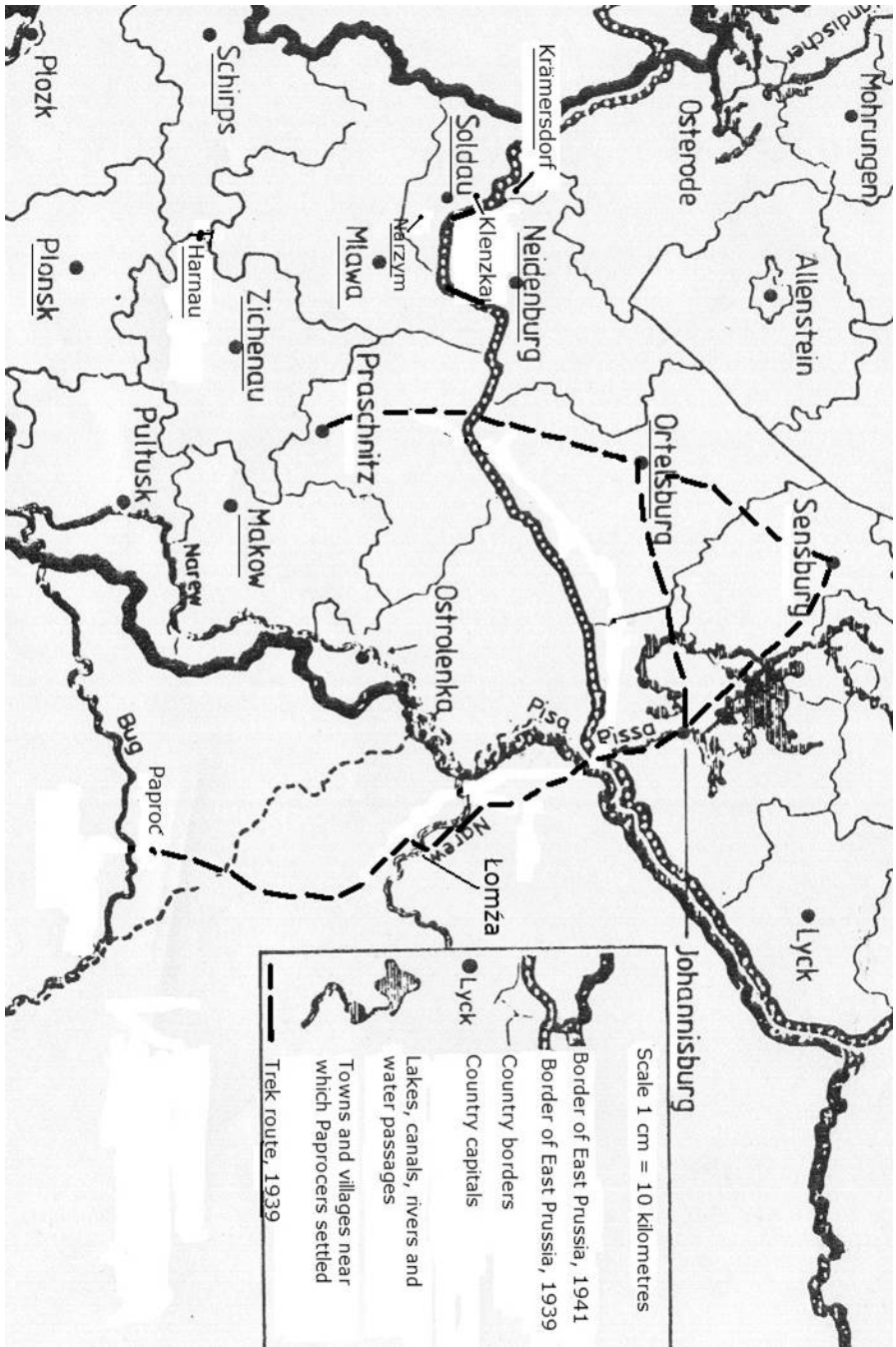
'homeland' Paproć, sat just a few kilometres east of the dividing line in the Soviet occupied region. The administrative district that included Paproć was divided with half the population (3,507 of 7,014) eventually attributed equally to the Soviet and German zones.<sup>18</sup> In mid-September 1939, our family immediately moved with the protection of the German military administration to East Prussia or to the territory conquered from Poland. Some oral accounts suggest orders came from Königsberg but we presume decisions were made in Berlin. Our father's deposition summarizing his life, made in May 1948, included the statement that he had "lived with my family in Gross Paproć [Duża] until around mid-September. Around that time I moved away from Gross Paproć with my family, after I had found out that the area was to be occupied by the advancing Russians."<sup>19</sup> The villagers apparently had been given a choice and all the Lutherans decided to move. According to a map created by a contemporary, the Paproćers went north to Łomża (40 kilometres) where they crossed the Narew River and then moved on to East Prussia (see Map 4.1).<sup>20</sup> The trek continued northwest towards Johannisburg where one part, including the Josef Trotno family stayed. Another part, including our Aunt Emilie who remembers helping with the harvest there, went northwest towards Sensburg. The remainder, including our Uncle Emil whose wife gave birth to Lydia on 30 September there, went west to Ortelsburg, where they helped with the potato harvest. With which group our own family moved is not clear though our Aunt Emilie said Aunt Martha, Uncle Julius and grandmother Penk were not with her group. However, in October all were recombined and trekked further south to Praschnitz (Przasnysz) (having covered over 100 kilometres in total). It served as the point of dispersal with all resettled by January 1940. The dispersal must have depended on available placements taken from Poles and, apparently, on a bureaucratic goal of genetically mixing the in-bred Paproćers. They were sent in all directions: northwest to Soldau and Neidenburg, south to Maków and Płońsk, southwest to Schirps, west to Thorn (including the Johann Buse family). Most were placed on farms associated with small hamlets in East Prussia or northern areas of pre-war Poland, concentrations of which were around Soldau (Robert Schütz, our family, Emil Schütz) and Mława (Zitlau family, Gustav Schütz, Josef Trotno family).

Our father received a piece of land at Krämersdorf (Kramarzewo), 12 kilometres north of Soldau (Działdowo). The latter town sat in the border region lost to Germany in 1920, but was reattached to East Prussia in September 1939. Our father apparently found the assigned plot small and rocky. For someone who had held three hectares in Paproć Duża, he claimed the new territory would only feed a few goats. Arthur remembers goats being on the property with one butting Willie sufficiently hard that our father hit it with a large stone, knocking out the goat.<sup>21</sup>

Within four months, by 15 January 1940, the Buses and at least one Schütz (Robert and Emilie) family moved into Soldau (north-east edge, Fischerei area) displacing Poles from their houses and farms. After four weeks in temporary quarters, our maternal grandmother, Auguste (Penk) Schütz, who had been with Julius Schütz and the Robert Schütz family on their trek north, as well as Aunt Martha Schütz ended up in a nearby village, Klenzkau (7 kilometres north of Soldau). Our uncle Gustav Schütz received a farm at Kosiny Kapiczne (10 kilometres south of Mława) while his brother Emil received a farm at Jablonowo (12 kilometres south-east of Soldau), where other close and distant relatives had farms. He obtained four horses in addition to his two brought from Paproć and eventually had two Polish farmhands and a maid. After he was drafted, for six months in 1941 and for the rest of the war in 1942, his wife ran the farm. One of our father's sister's families, the Adolf Zitlaus, was at Narzym and another, the Eduard Weirauchs, at Bugorzynek. The Paproćers, comprising inter-related families and clans who had lived in a set of villages within fifteen kilometres of each other, were now dispersed over a much larger region, within an area circumscribed by more than fifty kilometres.

According to our mother, our father rejected an assignment to agriculture (*Landwirtschaft*), though in June 1940 officials still listed him as "agriculturalist."<sup>22</sup> However, he seems to have found a way to return to carpentry work. Arthur does not remember any farm for the Soldau stay and thinks father worked at carpentry for someone else.

Among the notable events at Soldau was the appearance of a



Map 4.1. East Prussia, 1939-1941.



third son, Adolf, on 10 February 1940. During the whole unsettling time since September 1939—the beginning of war, the disappearance of relatives, the move to Krämersdorf, separation of family members, and the move to Soldau—our mother had been expecting and would have had very limited, if any, medical care.<sup>23</sup> A home birth with midwife in attendance seems to have been the norm as it had been at Paproć. Like the older boys, Adolf would be bottle fed.

The Polish owners, of the farm or town buildings that the Germans received, were to work for the new overlords, though some Poles and Jews were shipped to the so-called Generalgouvernement area of German occupation. That region comprised the rump Polish territory, including Warsaw and Kraków, west of the Soviet-occupied part. The Zichenau (Ciechanów) administrative district of East Prussia to which many ethnic Germans—including our family—were relocated, was immediately annexed to the Reich province of East Prussia (see Map 4.1). In it the 15,000 Germans were outnumbered by some 800,000 Poles and 80,000 Jews. By 1943 Poles still numbered over 800,000, Germans had increased to 55,000 and Jews had disappeared to ghettos, work or death camps.<sup>24</sup> Hitler intended to use the occupied area of Poland (the Generalgouvernement area) as a type of dumping ground, or reservation, for Jews and Poles. Heinrich Himmler, who as head of the SS intended to create a wall of Germandom against the Slavs, also became head of the office responsible for ethnic resettlement and the sorting of peoples in Eastern Europe. This office immediately began that harsh process.

In this confused context, especially for the families being shunted about, the extent to which Germans knew of shootings and violence against Jews and Poles is not known. Clear is that the ethnic Germans participated without much choice in another part of the process of ethnic cleansing, namely the displacement of Poles from their property. Having been displaced from their homes in eastern Poland, the ethnic Germans were assigned to those of Poles or Jews forced to make way for them. Some of the Poles were being forced out of houses and off property that until 1920 had been owned by Germans who themselves had been forced to flee by the Polish state's inter-war policies, including expropriation.

The moves must have been traumatic for all, even if Jews being concentrated into ghettos, as at Mława, a small town between Soldau and the regional administrative capital Zichenau, suffered the most.<sup>25</sup> But that process has received much, and highly deserved, attention, while the resettlement of ethnic Germans has usually been treated from the perspective of an impersonal policy. Most transferred ethnic Germans lost what had been their 'homeland' for over a hundred years in the Paproć and other areas scattered through former central Poland. After their deportation to the interior of Russia, by 1918 or just afterwards most had returned to those areas, instead of trying some alternative such as going to Germany (which a few did) or emigrating (which more, including villagers from the Paproć area, did during the 1920s and 1930s). Some, including distant relatives, objected to the 1939 move and muttered reservations about the war.

About receiving the property of others in 1939-40, some felt guilty. Our Aunt Emilie Schütz would later state how it had grieved her to be in a house taken from a Polish couple who were forced to live in their own barn, but added, "we too had lost our homes." Another aunt, Helene Weirauch, whose own family had to live in a camp for some time, said nearly everyone suffered horrible conditions in trying to survive. However, in the 1939 trek, unlike the earlier deportation to central Russia in 1914-15, the Paproćers had been allowed to pack and take their possessions, and they were in areas defended by the German military. A further significant difference to World War I must be underscored: the Nazi regime would place the ethnic Germans politically, economically and socially far above the Poles and Jews.

### **A Major Move: Soldau**

Into what kind of locale and situation did the ethnic Germans get placed during late 1939? By contrast to Krämersdorf, Soldau served as a commercial and distribution centre on a main rail line. It still has a fine Renaissance *Rathaus* (city hall) on its large market square surrounded by imposing three storey artisan and traders' houses, most of which had been restored in the 1920s (Photo 4.2).

In 1940 Soldau had approximately 6,000 inhabitants.<sup>26</sup> The town had a long history of German-Polish-Russian conflicts. In the first months of World War I the advancing Russians had occupied this East Prussian town and established a harsh rule. When retreating in late 1914 they had shelled the town so that many of the fine Hanseatic houses on the market square became rubble. In 1919 the town, along with the border region, was a part of eastern Prussia assigned by the Allies to the new Polish state in the Treaty of Versailles. The transfer took place in 1920. The Polish authorities distributed and put up bi-lingual placards on 15 January 1920 decreeing: "the population is herewith instructed: during the time of the occupation of the district by the military, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of this month, maintain absolute calm. The occupation is not a military but a peaceful endeavour. The Polish military has the strictest instructions to deal with the civilian population in a friendly manner."<sup>27</sup> If one remembers that many Germans, including some German Jews, such as the banker Max Warburg, thought Poles far below Germans culturally, then the resentment fostered by this transfer of Germans to Polish sovereignty, probably resonated for a long time. Certainly, it would have been in the memory of all the local inhabitants when the *Volksdeutsche* from eastern Poland were placed in this area during 1939 and 1940. Did the way that the Poles treated the Germans under their rule after 1920 influence how the Germans treated Poles after 1939? This question is probably impossible to answer.



Photo 4.2. Soldau main square, 1939.

Two issues stand out in relation to Soldau and the people moved from the Paproć area by the German authorities beginning in late September 1939. First, they had to try to re-establish themselves and their livelihood as well as keeping their families together. In Paproć, most of the villagers had lived within walking distance, but were now more widely dispersed, perhaps for practical reasons such as finding housing or for ideological reasons, namely to assimilate them and end their in-breeding.

Second, we cannot establish if anyone of our relatives participated in the *Selbstschutz*. What roles they may have played in policing duties—which were often assigned to those conscripted into the military but not serving at the front—and the degree to which they became involved in the repression of Poles, remains unclear. Extensive documentation, however, has recorded that being located on a main railway line, Soldau had a re-education and labour camp for holding Poles who were considered a threat, offered resistance or had been denounced by Germans. Established by October 1939, the camp was located in a military barracks area near the railway station. Further, the following events relate to Soldau and its immediate hinterland. Between October and December 1939 at least seven Poles were murdered and placed in shallow graves at Lidzbark.<sup>28</sup> In fall 1939, at the Soldau re-education camp, the *Selbstschutz* group from Bromberg shot 40 elite Poles brought from Bromberg by buses. Later more Poles designated for execution in revenge for Bromberg were taken to the military barracks at the Soldau camp. Establishing what was known by whom and when is difficult. But related to this issue is documentation which states that the officials under security chief Reinhard Heydrich worried that the information about executing Poles at Soldau might not be kept from the populace.<sup>29</sup> In fall 1939 some 300 Jews and Poles were transported from the camp at Soldau into the nearby woods at Komorniki and the nearby Jewish cemetery at Ksiezodwor (Kämmersdorf) for execution (see Map 4.2). On 5 December 1939 a public execution of a well-known local Pole sought to set an example that German authority could not be challenged. At the end of 1939 and beginning of 1940 an unknown number of Poles were shot at the Villa Wyrwicz in Soldau. Beginning February 1940, in the woods at Komorniki, the execution of



Map 4.2. Soldau area.

some 12,000 Poles and Jews from the Soldau camp by Gestapo, police and self-protection units took place. The bodies were deposited in mass graves that in 1944 were exhumed by the so-called Special Group 1005 to remove evidence.<sup>30</sup> If 12,000 persons are moved through a town of 6,000 within a short time, can the local population know nothing, especially if the mass executions are in woods less than four kilometres from the town and the main road from the railway station and work camp to Komorniki passed through northeast Soldau, the Fischerei where our family was settled by 15 January 1940?

A recent study employing Gestapo records for the Zichenau

district notes: "The most notorious AEL [Arbeitserziehungslager=work-education camp] Działdowo (Soldau) claimed at least 20,000 victims and was constructed early in the war in order to help exterminate the opponents of the Nazi state. The AEL [camps] in the Ciechanów District were feared institutions and their notorious reputation differed little from that of the concentration camps." Yet that study adds that the head of the East Prussian security police stated "during the winter of 1939-1940 I created the Działdowo camp, specifically in order to conduct the necessary executions without publicity."<sup>31</sup> What then can be concluded about knowledge, complicity or opposition to regime policies and practices by the average person?

In 1940 the newly moved ethnic Germans would not have been aware of what the presence of *Kaiser's Kaffeegesellschaft* (coffee company) trucks meant in Soldau. Those camouflaged trucks were employed in secret experiments to gas mentally ill persons. An official report reads: "The special 'Kommando Lange,' under the direction of the criminal commissar [*Kriminal-kommissar* or superintendent] Herbert Lange, had proven itself by the murder of 1,500 mentally ill in the transit camp Soldau/East Prussia between 21 May and 8 June 1940. This was done under the guise of 'evacuation.' In October or November 1941 it moved into the manor house (called palace) of a former Polish domain on the edge of the stream and confiscated public buildings in the village [sic: town] and some houses occupied by Poles."<sup>32</sup> Was that manor house (castle) just down the street from the Buse and Schütz residences? By contrast to the murder of the mentally ill, the ethnic Germans must have known that many Poles were being mistreated, with their elite mostly incarcerated in punishment and labour camps. Soldau's transit camp remained active for Poles being rounded up and sent to concentration camps if found to be part of any resistance to German rule. A Gestapo document from 28 September 1940 in the Russian-German Museum in Karlshorst Berlin provides an example of a Pole suspected of working for Polish intelligence being held at the Soldau camp until sent to the concentration camp at Ravensbrück. What our parents and relatives knew about persons taken to the camp, near the railway station across town and about a kilometre from where the Buse and Schütz families lived, remains unclear.

Certainly, it would have been difficult to have avoided knowing that Soldau later served as a transit camp (*Durchgangslager*) for Jews. During 1942, 7,000 Jewish men were shipped from Plock to Soldau. From there they were later shipped to Zichenau, Warsaw and Radom before being divided for work assignments.<sup>33</sup> What we—the authors of this account—did not know until we began our researches is the extent to which the war, the ethnic cleansing, the biologically motivated killing and the Holocaust took place all around us in our infancy and childhood.

When asked during the 1960s what he knew about the executions and destruction of Jews, our father said to one son: "one knew about such things but one kept one's nose out of it." When asked why, in addition to her religious beliefs, she held anti-Semitic attitudes, our mother told a muddled story about a Jewish shopkeeper who refused to sell food to her for her children. The terminology she used exhibited the usual stereotypes of Jews as devious anti-Christians as well as a resentment of misused economic power.

At times our mother and some other family members offered stereotypes about the Poles as culturally lower than the Germans. They sometimes used the phrase "*polnische Wirtschaft*," meaning Polish mismanagement. However, nearly as bad as Jews, in her view of the world, were Catholics. Our father too could offer unkind remarks about Jews and Poles, but mostly those comments were combined with an example of personal ill-treatment or stupidity by a member of the named group. And, unlike our mother, he applied such comments to all ethnic groups, including Germans. By contrast, mother's sister, our Aunt Olga, who emigrated to Canada in July 1939 from the ethnically mixed village of Króle Małe (former Wilhelmsdorf) commented that Germans, Poles and Jews had interacted normally, with children from all groups playing together. As shown in the previous chapter, during their times in Paproć our parent's had had some contact with Jews and much interaction with Poles.

The war created harsher attitudes, partly due to the need to survive and due to Nazi instructions not to fraternize with Poles. Yet, the elder brothers remember that they had Polish

playmates during the war. Since the family members were nearly all bi-lingual, they can still remember Polish children's songs sixty years later. Despite Nazi policies, not all the Polish elite had disappeared and not everyone followed the instructions against fraternizing. For instance, living in the building that housed the Buse family in Soldau, according to the older brothers' memory, was a former Polish officer with whom the family interacted. Perhaps the conclusion to be drawn is that the ethnic relations were complex and most of the simple perspectives that the Nazis tried to impose, and some historians have imitated by focusing on policies rather than practices, do not match an experienced reality.

Historians who made a thorough examination of the Gestapo files for the Zichenau district found some principled stances against the Nazi authorities, in an area where people "were witness to brutalities on a scale not seen in central and western Germany—for example, the creation of ghettos, deportations of Jews to nearby death camps, and the frequent public execution of Poles...[and] required...to adhere to strict codes of behaviour, dictated by the exclusionary policies of the regime."<sup>34</sup> The Gestapo oversaw most aspects of daily life. In March 1940, for example, they recorded the food shortages and distribution problems in the Soldau area.<sup>35</sup> Despite the net of regulations, which included forbidding Poles to use park benches, the Gestapo registered some *Polenfreundlichkeit* (friendliness to Poles) statements against the regime and even *Judenfreundlichkeit* (friendliness to Jews). Many warnings were handed to those who fraternized with Poles. As in the old Reich, most of the Gestapo information came from denunciations and intercepted private letters. The letters indicate widespread knowledge of the atrocities against Jews and Poles.

Our families' names—as far as we have been able to discover—appear in none of the possible heroic, nor major problematic, roles.<sup>36</sup> One uncle, Emil Schütz, recounted that he served in the *Hilfspolizei* [auxiliary police]. He received a pistol and carbine with his brown uniform. Drill and training were, according to his account, on Sunday. His job included helping the police round up workers for labour camps. He stood guard while the police made the raids. He claimed that during one night raid he let a young woman go. His pistol nearly led to a family tragedy



because during one leave our father jokingly pointed it towards our mother and it went off to everyone's surprise. Luckily, the shot missed. At the end of the war the uncle gave the pistol to a relative who threw it away. These 'little' people made their newest accommodations and sought to survive another regime.

### Aryan Citizens

In June 1940, many of the former Paproćers, including the Buse family, applied for citizenship—perhaps were instructed to apply for—and became German citizens. This process involved a thorough review of hundreds of thousands of people whom the SS and Nazi bureaucracy responsible for ethnic resettlement sorted according to racial categories. Four categorizations on this so-called *Volksliste* (people's or racial list, about which our mother muttered agitated words though never clarifying why) existed. Category 1 applied to those Germans who had been Reich citizens before 1919 and thus almost automatically were deemed racially acceptable. Category 2 designated *Volksdeutsche*, or ethnic Germans, who had lived outside the Reich but were found to be racially untainted. Category 3 identified those of German background, but who had some shortcomings such as intermarriage with other ethnic groups or lack of German cultural norms, including linguistic and homemaking skills. Category 4 identified those who had been racially 'defiled' or were regarded as renegades because of sympathizing with other ethnic groups. Only those in the first two categories received citizenship, though the review practice became less stringent as labour needs increased during 1943 and 1944. The document recording the examination results comprised a long questionnaire, including much information about the medical, genealogical and racial history of the applicants.

With registration number 175,681 the Gustav Buse family officially became Germans, we presume racial Category 2, on 17 June 1940.<sup>37</sup> Our father's profession stated "agriculturalist [*Landwirt*]" though he had trained as a carpenter and passed a master artisan's examination. By 1941 he again worked at carpentry though whether he had a shop or worked for someone else remains unclear. The second page describes his facial and bodily features in detail [see frontispiece]. His health

was found to be "satisfactory". His background, the family's moves and religion, are recorded, and he is found to speak German "well". The summary, which includes genealogical data for two past generations based on church records, finds him to be "race: *arisch* [Aryan]." It states that he moved to Soldau on 15 January 1940 and came from the Narew region. This document listed his wife Helene and the three children (Arthur, Wilhelm, Adolf) who also became German citizens.

Within a week, our spinster aunt, Martha Schütz (Number 175,854), the Adolf Zitlau family (Number 176,631), and the Robert (Number 175,851), Emil (175,732) and Gustav (Number 183,851) Schütz families became citizens of the German Reich in the same racial category.<sup>38</sup> The Paproć clan seems still to have tried to live and act as a group though settled into a variety of farm villages and towns in East Prussia. Our Aunt Martha's citizenship registry gives Soldau as residence with previous residence at Klenzkau in district Neidenburg, which is where our maternal grandmother Auguste (Penk) Schütz (Number 175,853) was registered. The farms of other relatives from Paproć were clustered in the Soldau area. Since neither our grandmother nor our aunt would have received property, they must have been with other relatives at the time. Arthur remembers that after our grandmother died in March 1941, just after our father's conscription, Aunt Martha came to live with the family, perhaps to help with the increasing number of children.

An important issue, but difficult to reconstruct with precision, is the ideological stances taken by our parents and relatives. That our father tended to avoid all extremes is confirmed by the contents of the questionnaire to obtain citizenship. The space under the question "Actively organized for *Volkstum* (ethnic solidarity)" is empty, which means no pro-Nazi or *Selbstschutz* activities or party memberships prior to June 1940.<sup>39</sup> Even those incarcerated from the Paproć area at the beginning of the war seem to have no special attributes and only a few of the documents indicate political activities. More concern seems to be evident about inherited biological problems and in some cases citizenship was granted only after further review.<sup>40</sup>

Though little evidence exists, it seems that after the initial

problems of relocation, the Buse family led a difficult but fairly normal life, installed in a two storey house shared with others. The older brothers remember the house as very rough, run down and small—we had two rooms—with a corridor and stairs in the middle. During a 1997 visit it appeared large and substantial (Photo 4.3). Only a few photos exist of the family in Poland, but one shows mother with the three eldest boys (Photo 4.4). This must be before Dieter's birth in Soldau on September 15, 1941 which one brother remembers as being behind a curtain, with a midwife and much screaming as Dieter was having his foreskin shortened. Probably the photo was taken in the yard back of the house at Soldau. Some snow suggests late spring 1941. Perhaps confirming the approximate date is the way that our mother is holding Adolf which suggests pregnancy. The eldest, Arthur, looks about 8 years old with Willie about 5, and all have nice coats and clothes. This might have been a remembrance photo since our father was conscripted in March 1941. Several photos show him in *Luftwaffe* uniform, some with his unit. Another photo depicts our mother and Aunt Martha on a park bench with the three oldest children while Dieter is hidden in a beautiful baby carriage (Photo 4.5). One picture shows our father in uniform beside our well-dressed mother in jacket with brooch, her hair



Photo 4.3. Soldau house with castle in background.



*Photo 4.4. Art, Willie with our mother crouched holding Adolf, Soldau, 1941.*



*Photo 4.5. Baby carriage in which is thing of beauty (Dieter), Art, Adolf, our mother, Willie, Aunt Martha, Soldau, probably 1942.*

nicely swept back (Photo 4.6). Between them is Amanda Schütz. Our parents are posing as the godparents of Emil and Amanda Schütz's son Adolf baptized on May 11, 1942. He died in 1944 and our mother told of Amanda being very distressed.



Photo 4.6. Our father, Aunt Amanda and our mother at christening, 1942.

The men were away, presumably in the military, and mother washed down the dead child in preparation for the funeral. When telling the story she added that they, meaning her sisters and relatives, always said that she could do it, indicating that they depended on her to do all the jobs no one wanted ("*Du kannst dass ja.*"). Though some of the relatives perceived her as too easily upset to raise her own children, here she is encouraged to take charge, especially of unwanted tasks.

Death visited many members of the immediate family. One of our uncles, Julius Schütz, died in Soldau due to poor health, possibly consumption. He had gone swimming in a cold pond near Paproč and never fully recovered. Later, he had been rejected for military service. Our maternal grandmother, Auguste [Penk] Schütz, died on 24 March 1941 at Soldau. Another of mother's brothers, Robert Schütz, died as a soldier in Russia on 23 July 1942. In the case of the latter, Willie remembers that this took place while the family resided in Soldau. Since Robert's family lived up the street, he and our mother went to their house to comfort, Emilie, who became a 24-year-old widow with two children. A related story involves the making of wooden grave crosses for killed soldiers. Robert Schütz, who had apprenticed with our father in Paproč, made

military crosses near the front. Apparently he had made one extra and joked that it was his. Next day he died. As the war drew to a close, death claimed other relatives. Our step-uncle, Ludwig Krüger, a stretcher bearer, died in southern France sometime in early 1945, and our uncle Eduard Weirauch died at Mława in February 1945, as a member of the *Volksturm* [defense units made up of older men].

In addition to Adolf and Dieter being added to the immediate Buse family during 1940 and 1941, cousins continued to augment the larger clan: Elfriede and Waldemar Gottschalk to our father's oldest sister's family during 1941 and 1943; Lydia, Eleanor and Wilhelm to our father's younger sister's family during 1939, 1941 and 1943; Adolf to our mother's next older brother's family in 1942; Manfred to our mother's next youngest brother in 1940. [See Appendix B for details.] The usual pattern of births in wartime applied: fewer as more men were recruited and as the future looked bleaker.

No matter how severe the times, people do not live by bread alone. From oral accounts we know that schooling, church and social activities continued. As children we had to say our prayers to "loving God" every night. Our mother and Aunt Martha sang hymns and folksongs nearly every day as well as reading Biblical texts. Women tended gardens, picked berries and reared children. Men played cards, especially the Russian card game Durak while in the military. A search for normality despite wartime can be expected. Visits and get-togethers with the relations and friends from Paproć seem to have continued with religion and singing still at the centre of many family activities. For instance, the older boys remember a visit to the Weirauchs taken by balky horses and buggy. Perhaps the horses sensed something, for when the family arrived at the Weirauch village it was mostly a smoldering ruin since our cousin, Leo Weirauch, had been surreptitiously smoking and started a fire. Ironically, their own house built of brick survived. Paproć may have physically been behind this clan but they carried parts in their heads and habits.

Some knowledge of the circumstances under which the ethnic Germans lived in their new area can be seen through a special lens. Secret reports on the mood and situation of the East

Prussian populace exist for 1941 to 1945. They were mostly written by Nazi judiciary officials who were part of the regime's system of controlling the Poles as well as observing the Germans. For 1942 they reveal steadfast support for the war, even belief in its necessity, among the Germans. These reports illustrate much about the conditions of life during war and genocide. Some reports note that the cold winter of 1941-42 had led to fuel and food shortages, so that women frequently stood for hours in front of shops to obtain vegetables. A report from 11 June 1942 emphasized "the concern about daily bread stood in the forefront of the thinking of the populace."<sup>41</sup> In the generally poor Zichenau district black market, slaughtering particularly bothered the authorities after a decrease in meat rations had been instituted. Poles were executed for it to set an example because: "The slaughtering must stop, if the district of Zichenau, as a purely agricultural region is to fulfill its war task, namely to provide as great as possible an agricultural surplus to supply the *Wehrmacht* and to support the *Volkgenossen* [racial comrades] producing armaments in the old Reich." When some Jews in the ghetto of Mława were found with fish, ten were hanged in front of the 5,000 inmates of the ghetto. A riot started and the police shot 27 Jews. As revenge and as a warning, another 50 Jews were selected and shot the next day. Ironically, at the same time, the Germans reportedly felt unsafe due to the number of Russian POWs and foreign forced labourers present in the region. By October 1942 the increased deaths among East Prussian soldiers, who like our father mostly served on the north sector of the eastern front, worried the populace. The common people also expressed surprise at the Soviet ability to keep bringing up more troops and tanks. By this time the SS had taken over judicial functions regarding executions in response to increased Polish resistance. During July 1943 eighteen incidents of armed bands of Poles attacking German officials were registered for the previous six months in the Zichenau district. These reports hint at the conflicts, tensions and difficulties experienced by the Paproćers in their new home.

The family narrative remains one of 'little' people, whose lives had been forced into new trajectories by officials and events far beyond their control. They had repeatedly been moved because of various state policies. They must have struggled to attain a

normal existence. However, they did not determine the parameters of that existence as they experienced shortages of coal and foodstuffs due to wartime.<sup>42</sup> Though they had received Polish property, they had to establish a new livelihood.

They were involved in part of a larger process of ethnic population transfers planned and executed by the Nazi elite. Many experts from the Reich sorted and categorized these 'little' people. The experts' task under the direction of the Nazi leadership was to sort out the population and establish the racial regime that Himmler had envisaged for the East. The new regime sent out 'experts' to transform and to 'improve' those ethnic Germans, who had been 'infected' by living among the supposedly culturally lower Russians and Poles, who allegedly ran dirty homes. Though they may have shared some of the sentiments of the old Reich experts, the ethnic Germans had had to live with Poles, Jews, White Russians and Ukrainians on a daily basis for a long time.<sup>43</sup> They had found an accommodation with their neighbours, including learning their languages, of which our uneducated father knew most (Polish fluently, some Russian and Ukrainian) while our mother spoke Polish. The Paproćers were all bi-lingual (German and Polish). Some were tri-lingual due to time in Russia and to having been schooled in the Russian language before 1918. Now teachers and home economists as well as nurses and women's groups from the old Reich were sent out to Germanize these Germans, and to tell them not to associate with Poles. Starting in late 1940 the first batch of 50 women settler-aides (*Ansiedlerbetreuer*) arrived in East Prussia.<sup>44</sup> They were followed in February 1941 by the next batch of 50 *Betreuer* (aides) until eventually some thousand from various Nazi organizations operated kindergartens, cleaned Polish homes taken for German re-settlers and taught home economics. Our mother spoke emotionally about one such young person trying to tell her what to do. Evidently, she did not take kindly to a 'whipper-snapper' interfering in her life.

We expound upon this issue not because the Nazi view of eastern Germans requiring 'civilizing' is being accepted or that some defense of eastern, mostly poverty-based, norms is necessary. Given the high standards of cleanliness all the Paproćers exhibited in the households we have experienced,



including those who had emigrated before World War II, we doubt that the family needed a Reich German to teach them hygiene or home economics. Certainly they did not need to learn German customs since a teacher, who worked in a neighbouring village, wrote at length about the Mecklenburg dialect and traditions encountered in the Paproć area villages at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>45</sup> Further, our mother spoke of using Advent calendars in her youth and the family celebrated the usual Christian German holidays. Perhaps not much should be made of limited evidence, since only a few pictures exist of the interior of the Lutheran church which stood at the centre of the circular road at Paproć Duża. Taken before 1939 [see previous chapter], they suggest that organization and cleanliness was associated with godliness (as much as Germanness). The photo shows that the Paproćers had a candelabra shaped like a series of rings making a cone, covered with evergreen boughs tied in circular layers decorated with tall candles, perhaps to represent a Christmas tree. In addition the picture shows an altar and pulpit covered in lace next to a kneeling area for communion around the altar covered with white linen—all in place before Nazi aides came to teach washing and 'German' customs. A local history which includes some photos from the late 1930s confirms that neatness and cleanliness probably equalled Sunday best norms of a comparable group of peasants in the German Reich: suits and ties for the men, fine embroidered dresses, stylish hats and jewelry for the women, scrubbed and combed children (see also Photo 3.3).

Our mother had two very useful skills: sewing and basic nursing. The former she learned as an apprentice while still a teen-ager. Her nursing skills, which may have been gained through one of the settler-aides' courses, included cleansing and bandaging wounds. Both of those skills would prove invaluable to her. The older brothers remember her sewing clothes for poor relatives during the war. Later she kept clothes on her own children's backs by creating clothing from discarded military uniforms and second-hand clothes. With her nursing skills she cared for her boys' many cuts and bruises. Yet, mostly she applied the traditional remedies of the herbal medicine of peasant experience, namely from a world where there was no doctor. Willie remembers leeches being applied to

cleanse his blood. She may have gained knowledge of nursing from some *Betreuer*, but her lifelong belief in the powers of plants via teas, infusions and plasters superceded expensive cures. During Paproć times doctors were consulted only whenever home remedies failed, or in case of emergencies. That may have changed when the family lived in larger towns.

With the birth on 15 September 1941 of her fourth son, Dieter, at home with the help of a midwife, our mother qualified for a special Nazi honour, namely a bronze medal recognizing her contribution to motherhood (Photo 4.7). For the production of four children a woman received bronze, with five to seven, silver, and with eight or more the gold Cross of Honour of the German Mother. A family story has the medal being ground under a heel after the war when mother encountered some British occupation authority.



Photo 4.7. Our father and four boys, Harnau, probably 1942.

## Military Service and Daily Existence

In answer to that crucial question asked of fathers during the 1960s: 'What did you do during the war?' we know a bit. Our father, like our three uncles on our mother's side, as well as many Papročers, was inducted into the German military in March 1941 (Photo 4.8). He came home on leave in May 1942 and served at least for a time in Latvia north of Riga and was discharged in October 1942.<sup>46</sup> In his deposition of May 1948 he stated "On this day [5 March 1941], as an ethnic German, I was called to military service by the military recruiting office Ortelsburg which was part of the military district command in Allenstein." He added regarding his ethnicity and conscription: "I note that my ancestors migrated in 1812 [actually 1804] from Mecklenburg [actually the Prussian enclave Krumbek] to Gr[oss] Paprotsch. I did not volunteer to serve in the German military, but followed the order to enlist because of the command to appear." He attained the rank of lance corporal (*Obergefreiter*) sometime during his second active service from February 1944 to when he became a POW at the end of March 1945 near the village of Anholt close to the Dutch border. He claimed to have been with a unit of paratroopers though serving on the ground. After the war he told stories of being a cook and thus not having to shoot. George remembers our father finding relaxation by making some simple soup with many carrots during stressful moments in the 1960s. Willie remembers him creating goulash soup for lunch when he stayed home from church. His May 1946 discharge papers from POW status by the British state simply "Air Force."

His service records have been lost, but an office of the present German state has been able to put together an account of the units with which he served based on unit change documentation. That account confirms that he was conscripted in March 1941 with basic training in a signals corps during April 1941. The home address for 1942 was Soldau, Fischerei 29; for 1944 it was Harnau, Markt 15. His initial unit affiliation read "544 second airplane reconnaissance division of the *Signal Regiment 1 (II. Flugmeldeabteilung, Luftgau Nachrichten Regiment 1)* [signal regiment, plane reconnaissance department]". In August 1941 he was with the regiment based at Königsberg, East Prussia. In September he served with the *II Stab* (Number



*Photo 4.8. Richard Korman, Uncle Robert Schütz, Julius Schroeder and Sigmund Korman (seated) in dress uniform.*

II Staff) with the same regiment in Königsberg. By October 1942 when he was released from active service he had been transferred to *I. Bataillon Luftnachrichten Flugmelde-Regiment 91* with service duties in Königsberg, East Prussia. On 25 February 1944 he was re-enrolled with the same unit though when he became a POW on the western front at Anholt on 30 March 1945 he was with the *4. Kompanie Flieger Regiment 17*. His rank in 1945 was lance corporal and home address was Anklamfähre, Post Kanin (Photo 4.9).<sup>47</sup>

During his service on the eastern front his unit served north of East Prussia during 1942. The circumstances around him and the nature of warfare in that region were simply horrendous.



Photo 4.9. Our father in military uniform, 1943.

The Riga area witnessed the major deportations and mass executions of Reich Jews during 1942. Further, the *Wehrmacht* intentionally lived off the land by confiscations of foodstuffs with the intended consequence that millions of Slavs would starve. "The entire army on the Eastern Front, some three million men with extremely high ration requirements, would have to 'live off the land,' as it was called. In this way, the policy of starvation [for the Soviet civilian population]... became an unconditional military necessity... approved by Hitler, co-initiated by Goering and the leaders of the *Wehrmacht*... Himmler told a meeting of SS Group Leaders in the middle of June 1941...that the Soviet population would be decimated by about 30 million people."<sup>48</sup>

After 21 September 1942 our father returned from Balvi (Latvia) via Riga to Königsberg, East Prussia, according to a one-way military travel ticket that stated the reason for travel as "discharge." He then seems to have been on reserve duty because his 1948 deposition stated "I belonged to the German *Wehrmacht* until the end of the war." Among his reserve duties

in the Soldau area he often mounted a tower to watch and to report on plane movements. Arthur and Willie remember that they occasionally accompanied him. About income during the Soldau stay, aside from receiving military pay, little is known.

Sometime after his return we must have moved to Harnau (Raciaż), twenty-five kilometres southwest of Zichenau and some 80 kilometres south southeast of Soldau; see Map 4.1. There we moved to a building on the central market square and our father took over a shop behind the commercial buildings which faced the square. Whether the shop was operational on take-over is unclear. Our residence was above a pharmacy on the eastern side of the square, with the large Catholic church to the north just off the square and mayor's office to the south on the square itself. Both shop and residence had probably been taken by the occupying authorities from Jewish families, deported in February 1941, since most of the commerce of this town of about 5,000 had been in the hands of its 1,600 Jewish inhabitants before the war (Photos 4.10 and 4.11).<sup>49</sup>

Some speculations supported by limited documentation allow us to suggest the following to help explain the acquisition of property in Harnau. On 8 September 1942 our father was instructed to fulfill some "task or assignment [*Aufgabe*]" and the document providing that information, dated 31 December 1943, states that since he had passed the master's examination with the district economic chamber of East Prussia, his 'assignment' had been completed.<sup>50</sup> According to the two older brothers his master's papers were achieved through building a special writing desk or cabinet. In his 1948 deposition, our father stated that he had already passed his apprenticeship in 1928 and in 1936 passed the masters examination in front of a Polish examination committee in Białystok. He may have had to prove that his carpentry skills equalled Reich norms. Perhaps the Harnau property was obtained because he sought compensation for property lost in Paproć. Since the resettlement bureaucracy that was trying to Germanize the newly incorporated territories sought people to take over the empty Jewish businesses, our father became a potential candidate for such a role. Since he did not want to be an agriculturalist he probably put in a claim consistent with his Polish training. In September 1942 he was selected and the conditions imposed were that he had to



*Photo 4.10. Harnau market square, steps lead into pharmacy above which family lived fall 1942-January 1945 (photo from May 1997).*



*Photo 4.11. Harnau, just south of where Buses lived (photo from May 1997).*

demonstrate being a master carpenter and possibly to become a Nazi party member. After his application for the 'task' was

approved he was released from active duty in October. In December 1942 he applied for party membership as will be noted later.

To understand the property issue, a little background on the Nazi office that was involved needs to be presented.<sup>51</sup> The so-called Reich 'trust agency' [*Treuhand*] confiscated and allotted Polish and Jewish property. It distributed that property primarily to *Volksdeutsche*, the ethnic Germans of the occupied territories. It operated with policies favouring Germans who were on the official *Volksdeutsche* registry though that official list did not exist before September 1940.

But even then sales and leases depended on having participated in activities on behalf of Germandom. Such activities could include membership in German organizations or public endeavours such as the self-protection units. Though our father had been a member of the *Deutscher Volksverein* (DVV) in Poland, according to his citizenship application he had a blank in the crucial category of activities on behalf of Germandom. Hence, the family did not fare well in the initial allocation of property. Later, after he had served in the military in 1941-42 and had completed his assigned 'task', namely proving his carpentry skills in 1942-43 and had applied for Nazi party membership in December 1942 he apparently qualified for the Harnau property. Another element in the allocation of property related to the SS resettlement office seeking to foster middle class trades and handicrafts. Many Reich Germans applied for property, especially shops, but preference was given to those being resettled. In the Zichenau area the number of handicraft shops confiscated by October 1942 stood at 2,058 out of 3,015 inventoried by the trust agency. The process took a long time because of registration as well as repair, that is, supposedly improving machinery and infrastructure to Reich standards. The same applied to housing, but at the end of September 1942 only 8,568 or 9.1% of the housing in Zichenau district had been improved compared to 63% in the neighbouring Warthegau. Purchase of property by the new occupants was to take place only after the war, which meant that our family rented or leased the allotted shop and dwelling in Harnau.



We know a little about the family's income and property. From our father's postwar demands for compensation for wartime losses some more details emerge.<sup>52</sup> Similar to the application for compensation for losses in Paproć, noted in the previous chapter, our father applied to the German government for compensation in September 1966 for losses relating to the shop in Paproć and the business in Harnau. Regarding the latter he claimed to have had a building and furniture workshop designated as an "artisan shop [*Handwerks-betrieb*]". He stated that he had rebuilt a dwelling into a shop at his own costs. In answer to the question how he had obtained the property he wrote "the German Trust Agency East had provided a property (dwelling) transformed into a workshop of 600 square metres using own means." He claimed compensation for machinery, work benches, and tools and asserted that he had had no debts. It seems that at its height seven full-time workers were employed. The shop made "coffins, furniture and house furnishings," of which the first would have been highly profitable during 1943-44.

Once in Harnau life seems normal from the few photos that exist. One, probably from late 1942, shows our father with his four sons (Photo 4.7). The locale may be Soldau or the sheds near the shop at Harnau. Two of the few remaining pictures from Poland show a garden and most likely date from the next summer (1943) since Dieter is walking on his own. He stands in front of our crouching mother wearing an apron and holding up her little dog. Flowers in the two pictures indicate summer with the women picking something (berries?) (Photos 4.12-4.14). The slightly soiled clothes of the children—all boys in shorts with some barefoot—indicate good playing conditions. A few other photos complete the small family collection from wartime Poland and East Prussia. They are of our father and cousins or sisters, one in a rowboat with friends (Photo 4.15). Some are of craftsmen in front of a brick building which mother identified as 'father's' shop. Our mother told about the many difficulties—especially obtaining lumber and getting it from Zichenau, directing workmen—of running that shop when our father served in the military. Those stories undoubtedly date from his second service during 1944-45.

By 1943 the family seems to have made a large step up socially



*Photo 4.12. Our mother and Dieter with mutt, Harnau, 1943.*



*Photo 4.13. Children in garden with our mother's mutt, Harnau, 1943.*



*Photo 4.14. Dieter with Adolf among playmates, Harnau 1943.*



*Photo 4.15. Our father, back, boating with friends, early 1940s.*



Photo 4.16. Polish workers at shop, Harnau, probably 1944.

from the peasant status of Paproć, and certainly far above the crude timber houses down the street in Harnau. In addition to a larger residence in a prominent place, we leased a very substantial shop employing at least five Polish workers (Photo 4.16). Arthur took piano lessons, though apparently skipping most of them. He recounted a story about one such act of truancy during which he, age 10, and friends went to the cellar of a stable to smoke. Some straw caught fire and only the appearance of the Polish stable hand prevented the stables from going up in flames. He also claims that Adolf ratted on him and Willie when they smoked, because they had not allowed Adolf to go for a one-way ride in a *Kutsche* (carriage) that had brought some visitors. Later in the day our father offered Arthur a cigarette which he declined. Our father then said "so you don't smoke?" to which Arthur said "of course not." Arthur then received a good strapping for lying rather than smoking. At the age of ten Arthur joined the *Jungvolk*, the junior part of the Hitler Youth, the compulsory para-military organization for all males at age 14.

If we speak of normality in the midst of wartime, we note that only a few photos exist. None are of holidays in the mountains

or on the seacoast. Many of the latter are common, even for the war years until 1944, in the family photo albums of the Nazi elite and most middle class families who lived within the old Reich. Yet, apparently Arthur went to the sea coast for a 'Kur,' or spa cure, along with a number of other children. This two-month stay at Cranz, about 20 kilometres north of Königsberg resulted from Arthur having been assessed as small for his age with a 'weak' constitution. A special diet and sports, probably with some Nazi ideological indoctrination, accompanied the sea air.

In late 1943 or in 1944 Emma Buse, our father's fifteen-year-old half-sister, came to visit the family in Harnau. Assigned to baby-sit Arthur and Willie, the 15-year-old proved to be no match for two rambunctious boys who tied her to a tree while they went swimming in the creek that flowed through the park behind the Buse carpentry shop. We do not know how the Polish maid (*Kindermädchen*), who started to help with the children during 1943 at Harnau, fared with so many boys. However, her arrival and perhaps taking photos, also signalled the family's social rise.

One significant aspect of life for the pre-war Paproćers had been religion. The church had been central to their survival as a separate community of Lutherans among a majority of Catholic Poles and some Jews. Our mother spoke frequently of the importance of faith and often praised the pre-war pastor of Paproć, Rudolf Kersten. She made some comments to the effect that the Nazis were wrong in not supporting Christianity, indeed, that they undercut it. But, what Christianity meant is difficult to determine. Certainly it meant communal social activities, church attendance and Bible study. The fundamentals of prayers and catechism were repeatedly employed and emphasized in the family, yet nagging questions about their meaning remain open. The relationship between moral behaviour and Christian professions in all 'western' societies raises profound issues summarized crudely by the question: what was any 'good' Christian doing joining the Nazi's system, as the youngest brother born in Canada later asked and as has been asked by many historians and philosophers. Perhaps the answer is similar to what were 'good' Spanish Christians and 'good' Dutch Christians doing slaughtering natives in their

colonies, or 'good' British Christians doing in the slave trade, or those involved in genocides in North America and Australia? But if comparative moralizing is left aside, perhaps the story of a distant relative, Pastor Erich Ludwig Gustav Buse, whose parish was in Lipno [Warthegau], is instructive. He had returned to his parish after having been incarcerated by Polish authorities in September 1939. Polish Catholic women approached him and begged him to intervene on behalf of their husbands who had been arrested by the Germans. He intervened on their behalf, using "his influence with the German military authorities in favour of Poles and Jews."<sup>53</sup> However, after the German civilian authorities took over from the military he was accused of having failed the Nazi cause. The author, who related that story and who wrote an account of the Evangelical church in the Wartheland, claimed that Erich Buse refused to provide an SS officer from Thorn [Toruń] with a list of Evangelical Poles in his area. This may have resulted in Erich Buse being conscripted during 1942. Captured on the eastern front, he died of diphtheria as a Soviet POW in Soviet hands on 7 November 1945.

Though we have no evidence of our father holding any minor or important positions, he did join the Nazi Party. His application, according to the Nazi file card with membership number 9,593,923, is dated 10 December 1942. Was this required to obtain the property in Harnau? Our mother spoke of having 'to participate' ("*mitmachen*"), but did not clarify in what or for what reason. The files of the other Nazi organizations do not indicate any other memberships. He officially became a party member on 11 August 1943. That document confirmed his residence as on the main market square in Harnau in the district of East Prussia.<sup>54</sup>

Though the records are slim and seem innocuous, they make us wonder why someone would become among the last persons to join the Nazi Party? The question is especially pertinent, since by late 1942 the momentum of war had turned, or was turning with the battles at Stalingrad. Was it, as our mother indicated, that he had to, or that it was a way to attain and to keep property? Certainly persons of even modest status were expected to join, or in some cases were simply signed up, occasionally even without their knowledge. Regardless of what

the answer might be, he apparently participated in some unsavory activities which our mother would not clarify and simply brushed aside as fighting 'partisans.' Harnau was in an area of intense Polish "guerrilla" activity.<sup>55</sup> Willie remembers our mother telling him, in response to his curiosity about some strife, that when one of the shop workers spoke critically against the war, our father, the mayor of the town and some other men beat him up. In response to the question why a mother would tell such a story to a son, Willie says it was because he asked. By contrast Arthur maintains that relations with the Polish and other workers were good, especially with the shop foreman, Sigmund. Arthur knows of no beating. The older brothers agree that sometimes German officers and nurses stayed with the family and our parents apparently had good relations with the occupying officials. Arthur had been in German schools at Soldau and Harnau since 1939, and he seems to have believed in the war effort to the end. Adolf and Willie remember that he became irate at Willie who had asserted during the trek west in 1945 that the war was lost.

As the Moloch of war continued to swallow German soldiers, older men were called to service. The death rate was highest for the German military between March 1944 and March 1945. In February 1944 our father, like many *Volksdeutsche*, despite being 37 years of age and having four children, was recalled for military duty. Luckily, this time he went to the western front where he would be wounded by shrapnel in the right arm, but not released. Only one touching letter survives. On 14 February 1945 he wrote: "Dear Helene and children! Since I again have a bit of time I want to write you a few words and can inform you that, thank God, I am still healthy and alive, which I also hope is the case with you. Dear Helene I can tell you, that we are again going into [fighting] position and how we will come out only God knows, but everything will work out, one only has to not let one's head hang as nothing can be changed, since we have already gone through so much and the dear God has protected us all and will also continue to care for us. Dear Helene I am waiting for mail from you. I close for today. Kiss my boys for Papa, your Gustav." This letter is typewritten with many errors. A handwritten postscript says: "my Mutti do not let your head hang down, it will work out, your Gustav."<sup>56</sup>

By the time that he wrote the quoted letter, the so-called “hour of the women” had been underway for a long time in East Prussia for our mother and her boys. In addition to our mother, our many aunts must be counted among these women. The phrase, ‘Hour of the Women’—coined by an East Prussian aristocrat honouring his sister, who led a trek from the family manor aided by servants, money and connections— is appropriately used by many historians for the period, 1944-46. During that time, and often longer, women headed the families, farms and firms, cleared the rubble, and worked to re-establish normality while the men were absent, making war or languishing in POW camps or prisons.<sup>57</sup> Our mother certainly proved she could handle the resulting responsibilities, starting with running the carpentry shop from 1944. When and how she received the quoted letter remains a mystery, since well before its date she had already packed a wagon with possessions and sent them to our father’s uncle Johann Buse near Thorn to send west. Arthur remembers this as being before Christmas 1944 so that the seriousness of the Soviet advances seemed well understood. Our mother had begun the preparations for a trek west in advance of the Soviet army getting to southern East Prussia, namely as a result of its massive offensive begun on 13 and 14 January 1945. At that time the Soviets, who by 9 January had established a line on the Vistula (plus Bug and Narew) River, were approximately 80 kilometres from Harnau.

### **Refugees or On the Move Again**

Sometime around mid-January 1945 our mother and Aunt Martha, with four boys in tow, caught the “last train” out of Harnau for Thorn (65 kilometres).<sup>58</sup> All accounts agree that we left on a wounded soldiers’ train because our mother convinced soldiers to let her on a medical train. She pleaded with them about her and her family being just like their own mothers and children. What, she asked, would they do if these were their relatives? The way our mother told and retold the story, the event occurred after she had hired a horse and wagon to go to Zichenau to collect lumber for the carpentry shop. Some official named Thiele was surprised to see her and told her she should take her children and leave as fast as possible because the Russians were advancing.<sup>59</sup> Though a governmental plan of evacuation existed, the official order to evacuate East Prussia



kept being delayed and was finally issued on the same day as for the Wartheland, west of East Prussia, on 19 January 1945. Before that date leaving was considered treasonous. As our mother later repeated the story, she had sent our household goods to our father's uncle, Johann Buse, who had a farm near Thorn. But because she left by train she lost most of the family belongings, including special goose-down featherbeds about which she still pined decades later in Canada. With four children and Aunt Martha, she arrived at the train station in Thorn, where she met the same official Thiele also seeking to leave. He advised her not to take any train towards the south from where the Russians were quickly advancing.

The family seems to have been able to take the train towards Stettin (about 230 kilometres west) but was stopped at Schneidemühl (about 80 kilometres from Thorn). We still were in Schneidemühl during late January 1945 according to Arthur. From Schneidemühl the family moved by *Wehrmacht* truck and rail to Anklam via Stettin (another 140 kilometres) with the children wrapped in featherbeds. It was bitter cold and snowed. In addition, the trek brought traumatic events. For a short, agonizing time the family members became separated. Arthur and Willie were put on a train at Anklam Fähre. But, because of an air raid the train moved off without waiting for the rest to mount. The train headed into a forest as our frantic mother and aunt wondered what to do. Yet they must have scurried somewhere to safety with the two smaller children. Adolf remembers being in an air raid shelter, probably at the train station. The train returned after the air raid and the family was reunited. That was the second time an air raid had separated Arthur and Willie from the family. A similar incident had occurred at the Thorn railway station. According to our Aunt Martha, our mother proved a very resourceful person. She had two suitcases, one of which she somehow kept full of sausages and bread; the other held a few possessions, mementos (including a few photos, residence documents, jewelry) and clothes. A heavy blanket woven by our great-grandfather accompanied Aunt Martha as did some Russian rubles hidden in her crocheting yarn. The older brothers insist that the family had six suitcases, with mother and Aunt Martha carrying two, while Arthur and Willie had one each. Perhaps Aunt Martha referred only to the two mother carried. Mother had some

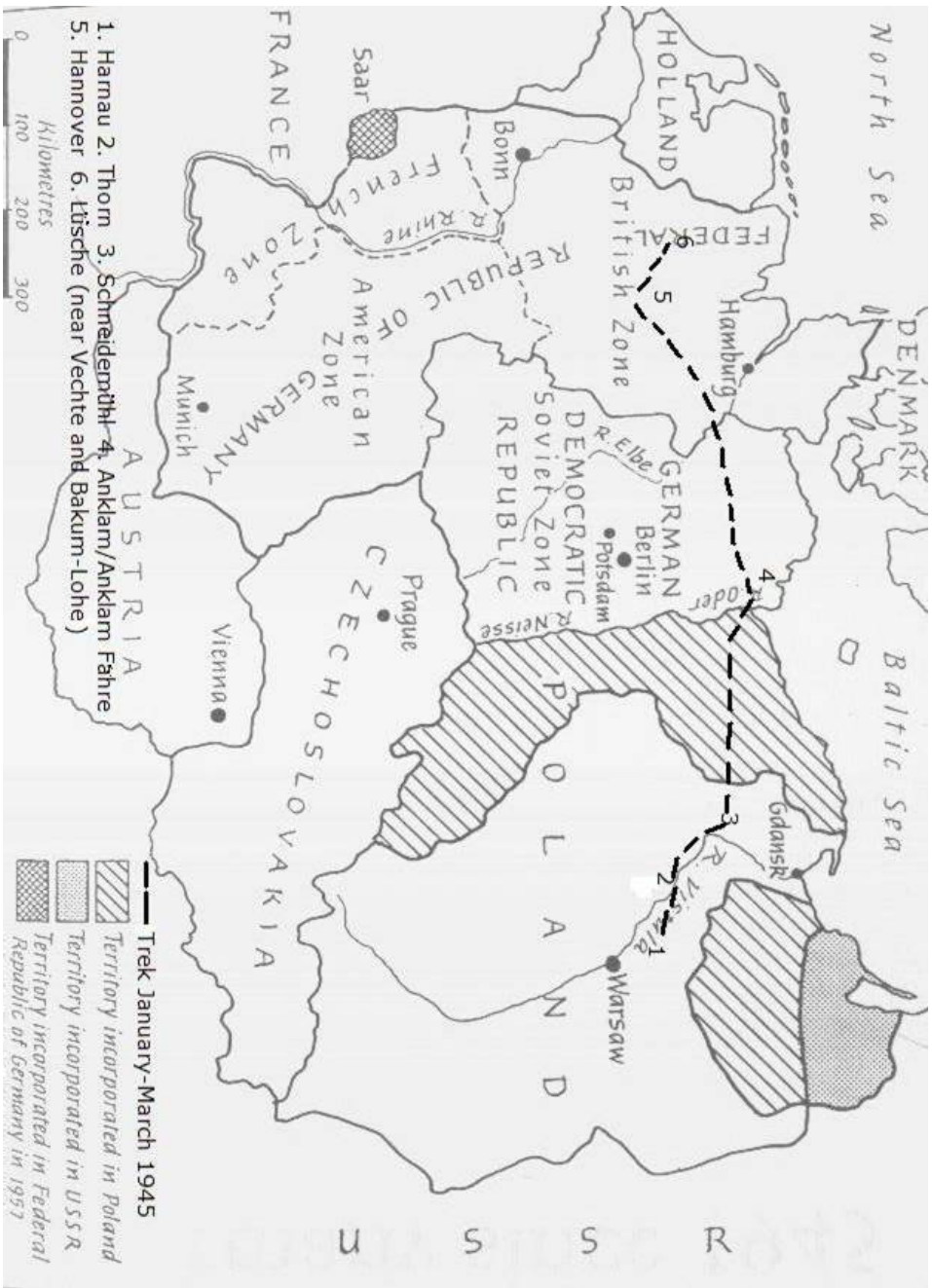
monies possibly from the carpentry business though she later claimed to have lost bank savings in Harnau.

Our mother's pluck, or perhaps her connections, placed our family among the first wave of lucky people leaving the east. Our move by rail and truck differed from the multitude, which mainly used 'ladder' wagons and their feet (Map 4.3). Our Uncle Emil Schütz's family started in January with two wagons, but only one survived the trek to Schleswig-Holstein. Similarly, our Aunt Emilie Schütz, started in the third week of January from Soldau accompanied by her two small children and a Polish worker with her possessions on a horse-drawn wagon. Soon the Polish labourer demanded his clothes and went back. Retreating soldiers, who overtook her, told her the Soviet military was only five kilometres away and took the family along on a truck, leaving all her possessions at roadside. With only the clothes on her back she arrived by train in Rostock with her children. She went to the address of a woman (Miller) who had worked in 'Germanizing' the east and who took her in. In December 1945 she went further west by train and joined relatives, including her parents, found through word of mouth and the Red Cross, in Schleswig-Holstein. Another distant relative recounted that already in late 1944 they had spoken within the family of possible meeting places in western Germany if they had to evacuate.<sup>60</sup>

Eventually some 11 to 13 million Germans would flee or be forced to leave between early 1945 and 1947. Estimates place the number that died at more than a million. By the official British census of 29 October 1946 over 7 million easterners were then in the three western zones of Germany; 3.6 million were in the British Zone which included the Buses.<sup>61</sup> We were lucky in that we made it out so quickly. Many others later tried to leave by horse and wagon. The Soviet military overran them, raping, looting and killing the trekkers while some were strafed from the air. Some drowned trying to cross rivers or in boats attacked by Allied forces, including the over 5,000 refugees of the 9,343 people on the 'Wilhelm Gustloff' torpedoed by the Soviets.<sup>62</sup> Most refugees, though, died on the roads, some of starvation and cold, with the worst scenes of revenge killing occurring in Poland and Czechoslovakia right after the war.

In a comparative study of ethnic cleansing during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, an historian has placed the departure and expulsions of Germans in context. He has shown how Josef Stalin and Winston Churchill approved the population transfers, regardless of the cost of lives. Indeed, both seemed to think little of the death of a million or so Germans. This author notes that the new Polish authorities assumed that dispossession, deportations and deaths of Germans would be the after-war norm. His account outlines the process, noting that after the Potsdam meeting of August 1945 the brutality against the remaining German population, of whom 3.5 million had fled various parts of the borderlands before the Soviet attack of January 1945, increased. A Polish historian has estimated that in one village "Bojkow (Schönwald)" of approximately 2,000 persons: "250 Germans suffered casualties during the war, 180 members of the *Wehrmacht* died, 30 civilians died, 200 were murdered in January 1945, no doubt as a result of the Russian offensive, 30 died or were killed in Polish camps, 70 died while fleeing, and 100 were transported to the Soviet Union."<sup>63</sup>

Simply getting out and getting out early required luck. We could have been stuck in Harnau until huge treks were underway, foodstuffs depleted or ships sunk while crossing freezing seas. Among the unlucky ones were the Adolf Zitlau family, who lived in Narzym, ten kilometres south-east of Soldau. Our Aunt Alwine and the five children, Arthur, Adolf, Lydia, Eleanore and Willie were overtaken by Soviet troops at Narzym. Aunt Alwine was killed by Soviet troops, resisting rape according to Lydia and our mother. Lydia (born December 1939), was taken along by fleeing German relatives who ended up in the western part of Germany. She crossed the Atlantic with our family, despite her father finding her just before the departure. Later she would be reunited with him in Canada. Her youngest brother, Willie, disappeared. Eleanore (Elli) married a Pole and later emigrated with her family to Canada in 1961. Her two older brothers were taken in (or over) by a Polish family who had lost their own children. The brothers were treated as farm labourers and forced to work endlessly for next to nothing. They lost their German heritage, including their language and their family identity, though they later regained contact with relatives, and much later visited their sisters in Canada. In the late 1980s one settled in western Germany. But in their life



Map 4.3. The Buse family's migration, 1945.

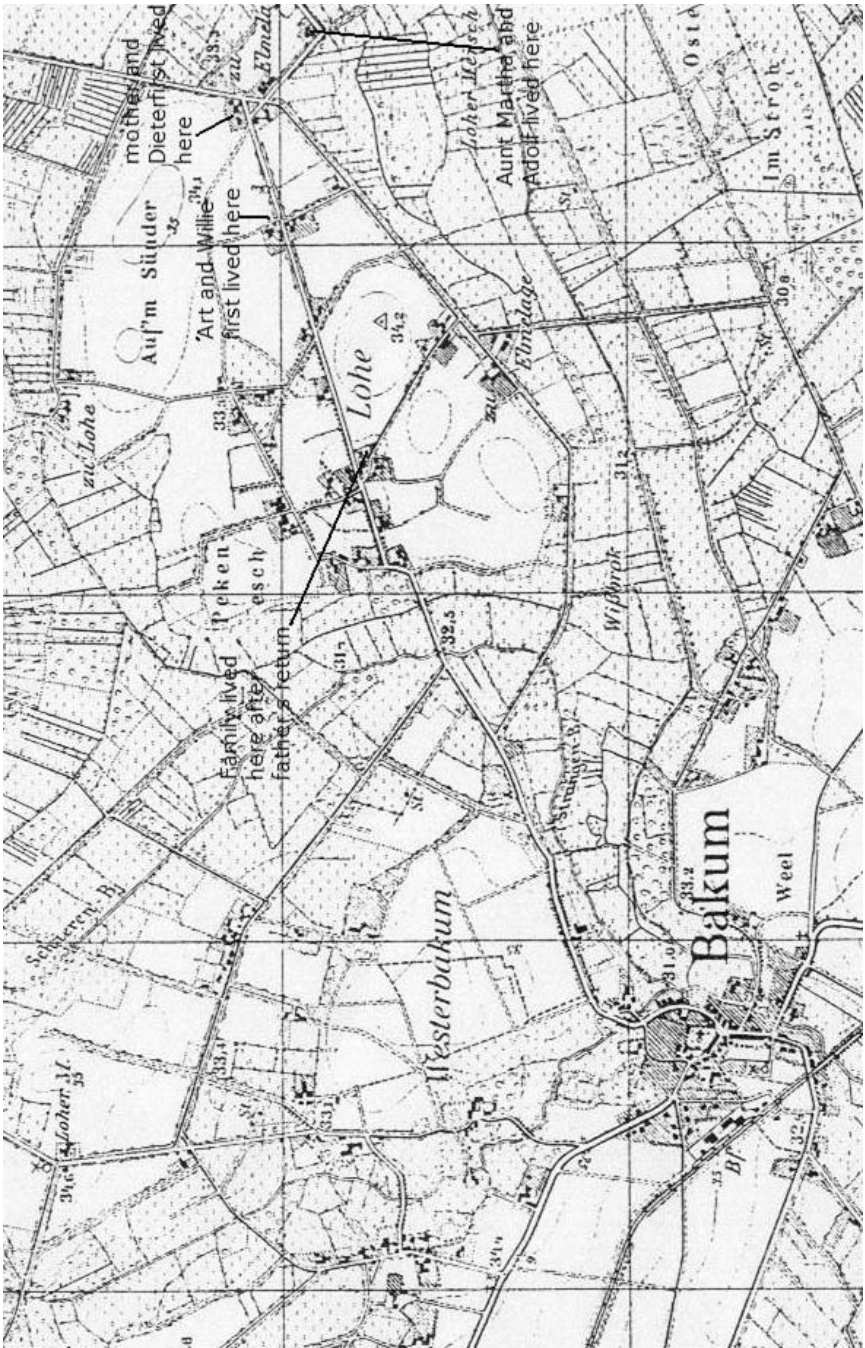
they had had no education beyond the minimal. They had been treated as second-class even when they intermarried with Poles. Their life opportunities were exceptionally limited. When we visited one of them in Działdowo (Soldau) in 1997 we could see the edge of poverty on which they sat. We experienced the meaning of the phrase 'there but for the grace of God go I.'

Another and different outcome for many Germans who did not make it out of occupied Poland has been recounted by Martha (Schulz) Kent in her autobiographical/psychological account, *Eine Porzellanscherbe im Graben: Eine deutsche Flüchtlingskindheit* [A piece of broken porcelain in the ditch: A German refugee childhood].<sup>64</sup> Ironically, as a youth she lived in the same town, Barrhead (and then on a nearby farm), in northern Alberta, as we did. She attended the same school without her or us knowing each other's background. Incarcerated for four years in a Polish work camp, she and her family were forced to work for Polish employers for meagre food rations from 1945 to 1949. That too was a 1945 possibility which our family escaped. We were lucky too in not experiencing major health problems, including malnutrition, freezing or disease during our trek. Hunger and illness licked at our heels, but did not quite catch up to us.

At Anklam Fähre, a tiny village just southeast of Anklam on the Mecklenburg coast, refugees were shipped across the special lift rail bridge to Usedom Island. In February-March 1945 our family spent six weeks there, mostly surviving on fish. Then we trekked by truck, rail and foot ever westward bunking at various refugee barracks. Most of the time we caught trains since we were unencumbered by horse and wagon as so many trekkers were, though all seemed to try to get as far west as possible to avoid the Russians. From Anklam we went south to Hannover (approximately 200 kilometres) which had been bombed to rubble so we continued west towards Oldenburg. Arthur remembers walking from Vechta to Lüsche. At one barracks Dieter—three and a half year old—met with a minor accident. He had been put on a bench in front of a hot stove, but fell over against it once asleep, seriously burning his forehead. Our mother bandaged it, but later some nurse insisted on tearing off the bandage which included the scab, leaving a scar on his left forehead. Later our mother repeatedly

insisted that would not have happened if the nurse had left it alone. Does this incident and her retelling it reflect on her experiences with 'experts' from the old Reich? A more amusing trek story told by our mother and Aunt Martha involved standing in line for milk rations. Dieter apparently crawled between many women's legs to get to the front of the line with his tin container.

Around the end of the first week of April, the family arrived at the small village of Lüsche south of Cloppenburg, near Oldenburg. Oddly, this was only a week after our father had been captured by British troops about 150 kilometres southwest of Lüsche. There we experienced battle first-hand involving the same British units. According to Arthur and Willie, because some Nazi fanatic installed himself in a church tower at a crossroads and shot at advancing British troops, the British attacked the village with artillery. This push south of Cloppenburg on 13 April 1945 by the British 43<sup>rd</sup> Guards Armoured Division was part of the main British, Canadian and American offensive towards Bremen.<sup>65</sup> The official account of the Guards Armoured Division states: "More serious resistance was found at Lüsche, where there was quite a large number of enemy, and, after setting most of the houses on fire with rockets, an infantry attack was put in while some tanks went round to the South... One German officer complained that the use of rockets was 'not cricket'...."<sup>66</sup> During part of the battle, our mother, Aunt Martha, Adolf and Dieter were in a root cellar converted to a bunker that was hit, but their end of it survived. When we had entered the bunker a barn with cows had been nearby. When we exited it, the barn had disappeared. Adolf remembered our mother later talking about the awful stench of burned flesh. Arthur and Willie had been elsewhere and ran across a field as the fighting started. They were shot at as they ran towards some woods. Later they went to the bunker. The village had been nearly destroyed. The older brothers remember later hanging around a bivouac of British soldiers who handed out candy to children and eyed some German women but nothing untoward happened. It seems hard to believe that some of the same troop formations involved in the capture of our father were shooting at other members of the family who had arrived in northwestern Germany by a very different route and for a different purpose, though survival



Map 4.4. Bakum-Lohe.

undoubtedly motivated both parents.

The Nazi bureaucracy in western Germany responsible for refugees, which at first continued its work despite the military loss and occupation, assigned the Buse family to be housed with various farm families at Lohe-Bakum near Vechta (see Map 4.4). The occupying forces confirmed these arrangements. This occurred within weeks according to Arthur's recollection. Our Aunt Martha's identity papers from when she became a German citizen in 1940 have typed across the front that the "mayor of Bakum, 15 November 1945" attests "that the holder of this card lives in Lohe, district of Vechta" (Photo 4.17). Vechta amounted to a small town with farm villages stretching out from it, including the village of Bakum and collection of farms known as Lohe to the east. The large church at Bakum was Catholic, but we went every Sunday to Protestant services and sometimes to the market at the town. Arthur would be confirmed there in 1947. The older boys soon attended a Protestant school. At first our mother and Dieter were at one farm (Müllers), Aunt Martha and Adolf were with another family (Deberdinks) down the road (about a third of a kilometre), while Arthur and Willie were allotted to yet another family (Gramanns) though Willie spent the day at another family (Bramlage). By the time father returned from POW camp in Belgium in May 1946 we all housed together in a converted building at Marie and Fienchen's, whose last name no one remembers, who ran a farm for an absent owner with first name Heinrich. There Adolf shared a bed with Aunt Martha just off the kitchen, Arthur and Willie slept upstairs and Dieter remembers father displacing him from mother's bed. The hired hand, Albert Eichler, and a school teacher, both from Silesia, were also at the farm.

The hosts of refugee families were not always willing to share their houses and since they were Catholic, our mother's prejudices must have been tested again. Indeed nearly every major bend on the roads had, and still has, a big cross with a crucified Christ on a large pedestal. That was true of the triangular corner with hedge where the main road split in front of the place where we housed together. The flat farmlands were interrupted by small forested areas and the older brothers convinced Dieter that a witch lived in one of them.



Für Eintragungen der NSD.

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Der Bürgermeister der Bakum, den 15. 11. 45  
Gemeinde Bakum,

Inhaberin dieses Scheines  
ist wohnhaft in Lohe Mrs. Veichta.

11995 29 2 P

Nr. 175854 ❖

## Deutsches Reich



### Rückkehrer: ausweis

Name: <i>Schitz</i>			Personenbeschreibung		
<small>(bei Frauen auch Mädchennamen)</small>			Größe: <i>1,54</i> m		
Vorname: <i>Martha</i>			Gestalt: <i>Schlank</i>		
Geburtsort: <i>Gr. Papratsch</i>			Hautfarbe: <i>bräun</i>		
Geburtsort: <i>Russland</i>			Augenfarbe: <i>gr. blau</i>		
Beruf: <i>Wirtschafterin</i>			Besondere Kennzeichen: <i>/</i>		
Familienstand: <i>ledig</i>					
Bisherige Staatsangehörigkeit: <i>polnisch</i>					
Bisheriger Wohnort: <i>Kluwakan Kr. Miedun</i>					
Unterschrift des Inhabers <i>Martha Schitz</i>					
(Unterschrift des Inhabers)					
Soldau, den 18. Juni 1940					
Einsatzstelle Auswahlamt (Ausstellende Behörde)					
Diesstempel <i>Wagner</i>					
(Unterschrift des ausstellenden Beamten)					

Kinder		
Name	Geburtsort und Geburtszeit	Geburtsort
/		

Photo 4.17. Aunt Martha's travel document, approved by mayor of Bakum, November 1945.

When our father returned from a British POW camp in May 1946 he weighed just over 100 pounds though the discharge

papers stated he was in "good" health. According to the older brothers he stated that he had been captured in Holland by the British and was held in a POW camp in Belgium. He spoke of the "damned British," not in terms of abuse but of lack of foodstuffs. Though the Belgians themselves suffered rationing and underfed the POWs, he told a story about the POWs being offered '*le fromage*' (cheese). Since they did not understand and the French-speaking Belgian kept repeating '*le fromage*' one of the German POWs responded '*leck mir am Arsch*' (lick my ass, which can sound similar). They soon learned to appreciate '*le fromage*.' By contrast, Uncle Emil Schütz, stayed in American captivity in France from March 1945 to March 1946. After a time living in the open he had the privilege of a barracks with kitchen duty which meant enough to eat. Our father had time to craft a ring out of aluminum with a bakelite insert which he gave to our mother on his return. He had found the family through the Red Cross. When discharged he received 40 Reich Mark and had 30 days to supply himself with civilian clothes or to have his uniform dyed. One story regarding his return relates to the length of time the family had been fatherless, from February 1944 to May 1946. Apparently, after our father's return, Dieter stated to Adolf that this was *his* father and that Adolf should get his own.

Life in Lohe must have been insecure for our parents with no home, no employment at first and the difficulties of feeding a family while depending upon strangers' generosity. Arthur remembers our mother writing to Canada by the end of 1946 to take up contact with the relatives and to explore the possibilities of emigration. Studies have shown that relations between refugees and their assigned farm families were frequently tense but improved over time.<sup>67</sup> Our family appears to have integrated quite quickly. That they came from a peasant background must have helped speed integration into an agricultural community.<sup>68</sup> None of the brothers remember any overt acts of resentment against the refugee intruders, which was similar to what our cousin Lydia Schütz (later Manthey) experienced in northern Germany where a farmer treated her the same as his own son. Sympathy for the fatherless Buse children was shown by at least one of our hosts. On one occasion the farmer Deberdink took Adolf along on a long carriage ride to another village to inspect a herd of

cattle. Rain and fog prevailed and Deberdink left Adolf sitting in the carriage while he went to look for his herd. When Deberdink failed to return promptly Adolf struck out for home on his own. He stopped at a farm to ask for directions and when Deberdink found him he was eating birthday cake, a rare treat in the days of sugar rationing.

Aside from ration cards, on what we survived remains vague, though all had to help on the farm and our father soon had work as a carpenter. Our mother made our clothes, but food and getting food preoccupied everyone. Shortages did not mean starvation, though it did mean repetition of what was available. Barley soup was served more than once a day and eventually some ended in the farmer's flowers. However, soon the refugees and the hosting farm families became drawn together by a common enemy, namely, the food inspectors and regulators. The children were instructed not to talk about the pig slaughter, especially at school. Evidently the pig being slaughtered did not exist, or at least not on the official register, but was '*Schwarz*' (black, or slang for the black market). Every morsel of the non-existent pig would be used, the women collecting the blood for sausage. Picking potatoes and fruit and generally helping with farm work remain common memories. During haying, Adolf amused himself by catching frogs and dropping them down the backs of the women harvesters. Perhaps only Willie and Dieter remember Dieter throwing a pitchfork at his bullying older brother. But all remember pumpnickel bread, in big blocks about two feet long and one foot square, being dumped beside the entrance to the farm yard. Then the boys had to haul it to the house in a little wagon.

At least two huge '*Care*' [Cooperative for American Remittances to Europe] packages arrived from our Uncle Ben Schütz in Trenton, New Jersey. Americans paid \$10 to have a package that fed 10 people sent to starving relatives or others in Europe. At first the packages included beef broth, liver loaf, corned beef, Spam, bacon, margarine, lard, preserves, honey, raisins, chocolate, sugar, egg powder, whole milk powder and coffee. Later they included tools, blankets, and school and medical supplies. We imagined Uncle Ben, who also sent packages to Uncle Emil Schütz's family, as some plutocrat since

he could afford to send us soap (which Dieter remembers Willie poking it into Adolf's eye), biscuits and candies as well as tinned meats. Opening the box found the family and farm hosts gathered around it, like Christmas, as each item was carefully examined with many possessive thoughts about who might have the right to consume or use it.

In the search for normality, even as refugees, the family celebrated the traditional holidays, Easter and Christmas, plus birthdays. Easter eggs were coloured by our mother with onion skins wrapped around them and hidden in the area enclosed by the hedge. St. Nicholas came to the farm house door and we were threatened with coal, instead of sweets, in our wooden shoes and a beating from his helper Rupknecht if we had been bad. Hard chunks of brownish crystallized sugar served as the main treat. Among the later disputes about the memories relating to this period was the question of whether mother made a morning birthday table for Dieter who remembers hiding under the covers (in the one room where we lived) until she said he could emerge to see the goodies on it. The other brothers do not remember that, perhaps because they lodged elsewhere or because as the youngest (known as *Der Kleine*, the little one), he tended to receive extra attention.

Hunting mushrooms would relate to the postwar food issue, but also became one of the fun activities undertaken with our mother and father, wandering in some forest. Our parents sought chanterelles, though where and when this occurred in the 1946 to 1948 years remains unclear. But the brothers do recollect hunting for wood. This had to be after father returned because he attached a weight to his belt and threw it up to knock down dead branches which the women and boys then gathered. Firewood and food were among the sacred and scarce objects of the day.

Our father's habits included smoking many self-rolled cigarettes because 'real' smokes were scarce. The older brothers all remember him growing and drying tobacco, even smoking a pipe due to the scarcity of paper. His belt, however, was not always scarce, though it seemed as though Willie aimed at being the 'black sheep' and received more blows than the others. Dieter remembers Willie receiving a licking for some

misdemeanor after he had tried to escape his punishment by taking off with our father's work bicycle. Dieter too rode the valuable bicycle which was too big for him to put his leg over the handlebar and so rode sideways with one leg through the bars. That resulted in his riding towards a ditch full of nettles. He jumped away and the bike lodged among the nettles, from which he refused to recover it. The result was an encounter with the belt (which came from the shop machinery in Harnau and had been used by our mother to tie up suitcases). Arthur also remembers riding the bicycle into nettles because it did not steer well. By contrast to the harsh discipline, our father made some wooden toys for the younger brothers, including a fine truck. All the boys also had time to escape into the woods, and to play dangerous games, including setting a small wood on fire. We dug huge holes and lined them with peat clumps and branches to make forts. In one escape from some war-imitating game, Willie, being chased by Arthur, cut open his leg on an old rusty plough. On another occasion Arthur cut Willie's nose with a knife, enough to leave a scar, and on yet another occasion



*Photo 4.18. Buse family, Bakum-Lohe (Vecta), probably 1947.*

Arthur knocked out a tooth near a pond. Among the causes for increased belt activity or scolding was the breaking of wooden clogs by the elder brothers playing soccer under the direction of the teacher Koth.

Most of our clothes comprised re-sewn military uniforms. Arthur remembers our mother receiving an old suit from a farmer in the village, taking it apart and re-sewing it as his confirmation outfit in 1947. Before our departure to Canada some bought clothes included grey sports outfits for Willie and Adolf. Those outfits would now seem *avant garde* fashionable in the sweat-suit world [see departure photo on next chapter frontispiece].

The farm owner where we lodged had a tall, hired hand, Albert, who looked dim-witted because he had round spectacles thick as Coke bottles. He hated the farm dog, Lux, a huge mongrel. One day Lux knocked over the rabbits' pen which the older boys kept. The rabbits were intended to augment the food supply. Arthur received a cut from the falling pen. Marie and Fienchen had no qualms about feeding Lux scraps at the table, much to the disgust of our mother and Aunt Martha. Another food-related story, that Arthur remembers, involved the boys breaking into the smoke house through a vent and stealing sausages. Thefts of food included select picking of the cherry tree across the road from the farm. According to Adolf, we were supposed to be guarding the tree in the absence of the adults. From a spot nearby we ambushed a bus with mud balls. Unfortunately, one of the windows was open and our fire was accurate.

Beginning in fall 1945 the older boys went to a Protestant public school in Bakum, with Adolf and Dieter starting in 1946 and 1948, respectively. Arthur, according to a letter dated 1 May 1948, seeking to become an apprentice carpenter, had gone to public school in Soldau from his sixth year to his eighth (1939 to 1941), and in Harnau from his eighth to his eleventh (1942 to 1944). Almost as if no war or refugee trek had interrupted life he wrote that from his "eleventh to fourteenth year I attended public school at Bakum," graduating at Easter 1948, before starting his carpentry apprenticeship with our father. Arthur and Willie are on a remembrance photo with some fifty students from their school class (Photo 4.19). Report

cards from Bakum, attesting to good comportment and high learning skills by all the boys, accompanied the family across the ocean. Documents such as inoculation papers from Bakum in 1947 and chest x-rays of 1948 from Hanover relate to preparations for emigration as well as the disease and health issues following wars and lack of foodstuffs.

Just before our departure for Canada we took a trip to Rendsburg in Schleswig-Holstein on the Kiel Canal. That was where some of the Paproćers, including father's eldest sister's family, the Gottschalks, had found places to stay. Aunt Emilie Schütz's trek west also had terminated there. Her two boys taught us how to climb out over the canal on some railway tracks. Most impressive was the ferry which hung below the huge railway bridge over the canal and was free of charge, though the conductor quickly tired of our daily presence. We may have crossed via the other marvel of a double swing bridge which opened to let large boats pass. We probably visited other relatives living in Schleswig-Holstein and in Lower Saxony. Certainly, everyone attributed great significance to the coming move across the Atlantic as numerous pictures were taken of the family, with relatives and friends at Bakum and Lohe, at Hanover and just before our departure. Much singing of *Heimatland Ade* accompanied those gatherings, though what homeland we might have been singing about would have tested ethnographers' skills.

Among the preoccupations of the adults after father's return from POW camp would have been the possibilities of emigration. Our father later claimed that he had wanted to emigrate already before the war. When and how the contacts with the overseas relatives were made and clearances were obtained is difficult to reconstruct. The process involved many hoops and checks that were already underway early in 1948 since our father gave a notary-attested deposition about his background on 13 May 1948. He signed that "I have been a member neither of the NSDAP (*National Sozialistische Deutsche Arbeiter Partei*, Nazi Party) nor of any part of its associated organizations." According to Willie he signed a contract to become a farmer once in Canada, though that is doubtful since the quota list of desired immigrant skills by the Canadian government mostly focused on domestics, construction and



*Photo 4.19. Art (3<sup>rd</sup> row, 6<sup>th</sup> from left) and Willie's (1<sup>st</sup> row, 3<sup>rd</sup> from left) school class in Bakum; on back: In remembrance of our class in Bakum, 1948.*

building workers, miners and semi-skilled trades.<sup>69</sup> During August 1948 the family went to Hanover by train to be checked medically for emigration. This excursion involved many tensions surrounding the question of whether Willie's slight case of tuberculosis would allow him to pass the emigration test. But on 28 August 1948 (the date of the x-rays) we received a transit authorization issued at Bad Salzflén near Hanover valid for one year to enter Canada. An interesting aspect of the document relates to identity. Nationality is listed as "Polish," so the German citizenship disappeared along with the Nazi party membership into a realm of adjusted memory. The visa included a stamp of approval on 6 September from the Canadian Department of Health. The official visa was issued on 7 September at Hanover, giving only three months from date of issue to enter Canada. By this time the finances and sponsorship for the trip must have been arranged with the relatives in Canada and USA. During the immigration review process we stayed in a camp, Muhlenberg, for some weeks. Arthur remembers it as an acceptable simple barracks. A report by a Canadian official acknowledged that it was in very rough



shape, holding about 1,000 refugees, identified as DPs [displaced persons] before they were shipped to Bremerhaven to board the 'Breaverbrae.'<sup>70</sup> Willie remembers the camp as the place where he saw his first baseball game and that a huge mound beside the camp was rumoured to be a mass grave.

Until 1950 Canada had a policy of no immigration from Germany and the Allies refused to allow emigration from Germany until 1951. Special permission had to be obtained to become an exception to the rules, which were modified for refugees and displaced persons. In 1948-49, only some 3,676 persons were given that permission of whom 523 were Germans, 176 Dutch and 750 Jewish. Of the total 118,297 persons entering Canada in 1948-49 4,795 were of German descent with 1,412 registered as coming from Poland.<sup>71</sup> Between 1945 and 1959 nearly two million immigrants came to Canada; nearly every tenth person in the country was an immigrant with the great majority from Europe.

Our trip was financed by Uncle Ben Schütz in the US, but we were sponsored by August Dams. Since the Dams family had Polish citizenship they were not treated as ethnic Germans or enemy aliens during the war, which may have helped in the sponsorship. Similarly, our application gave stateless for citizenship. Finally, regarding background, our father had stated in his deposition of 13 May 1948 that he had not been involved in any Nazi organizations. That turned out to be a fateful, and successful, lie. Some of us did not know that our father was an illegal immigrant until 1988, nearly twenty years after his death. The Canadian Christian Council of Churches helped get us permission to enter Canada. They did the same for our Aunt Martha who came to live with us in Barrhead, during late 1949. She travelled via Naples to Halifax where she arrived 4 September 1949 to cross Canada by train. Under the same system the family of Uncle Emil Schütz went to Winnipeg during 1950, sponsored by Amanda's relatives, the Ben Korman family, who had immigrated during the 1920s. Other distant relatives or acquaintances from Paproć such as the Korman, Busch and Wichert families helped re-establish part of the Paproć clan on a terrain in northern Alberta not dissimilar to the one that they had left in Poland.

The main dispersal of the Paproć people had begun in September 1939. World War II destroyed that community with Humpty Dumpty results. Few aside from those who became refugees and displaced persons know the complicated story of east European Germans during the war and its aftermath. Though much has recently been written on the postwar refugees, the groups from Czechoslovakia and the western areas of Poland have received most of the attention.

Where the many Paproćers were located by the time that the Buse family lived near Barrhead reveals much about the impact of war on this once close-knit group.<sup>72</sup> On the 'Beaverbrae' voyage with the Buse family was our cousin, nine-year-old Lydia Zitlau, niece of our father. She was sponsored by the Rudolf Schroeder family (who had emigrated before the war and whose wife was a sister of Adolf Zitlau) at Esther, Alberta. She appears on a family photo taken before our departure in October 1948. Her aunt, our father's cousin Pauline, is also on the photo. That aunt on 4 October 1948 attested that "I, Pauline Steinmeier, nee Buse, living in Peheim, formerly resident in Narzym, district Neidenburg, East Prussia, declare under oath, that the woman personally known to me as Mrs. Alwine Zitlau, nee Buse, was shot by Russian troops in February 1945 at Narzym. I declare directly that I saw the body of the deceased and participated in its burial. I was a witness to the event and declare herewith that I was an immediate witness to this death." We believe this document came into being because Lydia would have needed proof of her mother's death to be able to accompany our family to Canada where she would later be joined by her father, Adolf Zitlau, another of the Paproćers who made it to Canada. At least one uncle, Gustav Schütz, spent years in a Soviet POW camp and would later settle in Thüringia at Bad Salzungen, in eastern Germany. Our father's widowed sister, Helene Weirauch with two sons and a daughter, trekked with horse and wagon as far as Pomerania. They were stopped in what would become Poland and worked without pay on an estate until June 1948. After being in a transit camp they established themselves at a small town, Stelle, south east of Hamburg. Located in the same town or nearby were our father's half-sister Ella and family and the Krügers into whose family one of Helene Weirauch's daughters had married. Our aunt Martha Gottschalk also lived near Stelle. Our mother's

deceased brother Robert's family stopped at Osterrönfeld near Rendsburg in Schleswig-Holstein, as did her brother Emil's family before getting to Winnipeg, Canada. Nearby was our father's half sister Erna. Our father's cousins ended in many other parts of western Germany, some near Münster and others near Heidelberg. More distant relations resided in Edmonton and Barrhead.

Paproc as a village had been physically destroyed—in 1997 only part of the ring road and a few farm houses survived. Paproc as a community would slowly be destroyed by the 'tyranny of distance' (to steal a phrase from an Australian historian). The tyranny of distance was first experienced on the 'Beaverbrae' (Photo 4.1). Everyone over-ate the first bountiful meal and suffered the consequences. All remember the passage to Canada on rough seas with much vomiting. An emergency drill caused Dieter much distress since the older boys convinced him that it was real. He and Lydia slept with the women while Arthur, Willie and Adolf were with the men in bunks going up five levels. The cure for seasickness was claimed to be rye bread and herring which the refugees brought to augment the ship's supplies. This remedy seems to have become occasional fare for the family when gathered to remember distant sojourns.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> D. Showalter et al., eds., *Voices of the Third Reich* (London: Regnery Gateway, 1989), 17-18; Rolf Johannesson told the story, having been on the escorting ship.

<sup>2</sup> Jean Bruce, *After the War* (Don Mills: Fitzhenry and Whiteside, 1982), 41.

<sup>3</sup> In 1954 the 'Beaverbrae' was sold to Cogedar Lines and renamed 'Aurelia', running from Europe to Australia. Later sold to Charndis Lines and renamed the 'Romanza,' the same ship served Mediterranean cruises until 1991 when it burned. Pictures of the ship in various states can be viewed at [www.simplonpc.co.uk/ChandrisRomanza.html](http://www.simplonpc.co.uk/ChandrisRomanza.html) or by a search using 'Beaverbrae' which will provide examples of refugees and emigrants who sailed on it.

<sup>4</sup> See Dieter K. Buse, "Dissolving German diasporas: an unknown aspect" in Mathias Schulze, et al., eds. *German Diasporic Experiences: Identity, Migration, and Loss*. (Waterloo: Wilfred Laurier Press, 2008).

<sup>5</sup> The most comprehensive account of World War II is the ten-volume series being translated into English as *Germany and the Second World War* edited by the German Research Institute for Military History (Oxford: Clarendon, 1999ff); pertinent here is Vol. II *Germany's Initial Conquests in Europe*. Less comprehensive but easier to access is Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

<sup>6</sup> A more critical and colourful perspective suggests that the Nazi and *Wehrmacht* leaders were, in one brother's view, dumb as a sack of hammers for what they attempted.

<sup>7</sup> Until recently attempts to illustrate the brutalities of the occupation of Germany usually centred upon Soviet or French transgressions, for instance by Norman Naimark, *The Russians in Germany* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 1995), who highlighted the thousands of rapes. A renewed discussion has been initiated by Giles MacDonogh, *After the Reich: The Brutal History of the Allied Occupation* (New York: Basic, 2007).

<sup>8</sup> A huge literature, mostly in specialized journals, has been written since the *Wehrmacht* war crimes exhibit toured Germany. A significant sample is: Hamburg Institute for Social Research, ed., *The German Army and Genocide. Crimes against Prisoners, Jews and other Civilians in the East, 1939-1944*. (New York: New Press, 1999); this is a very abbreviated English version of *Vernichtungskrieg* (Hamburg, 1995), the catalogue of the exhibit. Omer Bartov, et al., eds., *Crimes of War: Guilt and Denial in the Twentieth Century*. New York: The New Press, 2002, focuses mainly on German crimes with little comparative context. The question of torture of POWs remains a burning topic due to recent revelations about its use in Iraq and elsewhere as well as the reports of Britain running a torture centre through which 3,000 German POWs passed during World War II, see *The Globe and Mail* 12 November, 2005, 19.

<sup>9</sup> The reasons for the deportation are not clear but the Lutheran pastor at Łomża certified on 6 November 1939 that "Eduard Franz Weirauch....member of the Evangelical-Augsburg church in Łomża, *Volksdeutsche*, owner of a water-driven mill, [had] a farm of 20 [sic] Russian Morgen and agricultural buildings [with a worth of] 60,000 Zloty." The minister further testified that Weirauch "as a *Volksdeutsche* had been deported with all his family before the war."

Documents in possession of Eduard's son, Leo Weirauch, Stelle Germany. When the family returned to Poland they lived for a time in a camp. According to Hans-Christian Harten, *De-Kulturation und Germanisierung: die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Erziehungspolitik in Polen 1939-1945* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996), 114: "At the end of 1939, the resettlement office in Litzmannstadt created temporary camps for 62,000 persons in confiscated factories, schools and other buildings...."

<sup>10</sup> See Hans Umbreit, *Deutsche Militärverwaltung 1938-39. Die militärische Besetzung der Tschechoslowakei und Polens*. Stuttgart, 1977, 74; he claims some Germans were working for German intelligence, the *Abwehr*.

<sup>11</sup> A judicious and informed account is Richard Blanke, *Orphans of Versailles: The Germans in Western Poland, 1918-1939* (Louisville: University of Kentucky, 1993), 234ff., who reviews the statistics employed by various groups.

<sup>12</sup> Perhaps the best summary account is Doris L. Bergen, "The 'Volksdeutschen' of Eastern Europe," *Yearbook of European Studies* XIII (1999), 70ff. However, the extensive files of the Einwanderungszentralstelle (EWZ), available via microfilm through the Family History Centres provide much demographic material not sufficiently utilized by historians.

<sup>13</sup> Quoted in Ullrich Herbert, *Best* (Bonn: Dietz, 1996), 243.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Christian Jansen and Arno Weckbecker, *Der 'Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz'*. Munich: 1992, 38, and *Germany and the Second World War*, II, 138, which claims "Altogether some 13,000 ethnic Germans lost their lives."

<sup>15</sup> Herbert, *Best*, 594, footnote 335.

<sup>16</sup> For the Polish-German military conflict and the invasion of Soviet troops see *Germany and the Second World War* Vol II, ch. III, esp. 118ff.

<sup>17</sup> The academic literature on this question is extensive though almost always focused on policy and Nazi practices as opposed to impact on the people affected. Robert Koehl, *RKFDV: German Resettlement and Population Policy, 1939-1945* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1957) and Valdis Lumans, *Himmler's Auxiliaries: the Volksdeutsche Mittelstelle and the German national minorities of Europe, 1933-1945* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1993),

remain the basic works, but see also Doris L. Bergen, "The 'Volksdeutschen' of Eastern Europe, World War II, and the Holocaust: Constructed Ethnicity, Real Genocide," in Keith Bullivant, et al., eds., *Germany and Eastern Europe* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1999) and Harten, *De-Kulturation und Germanisierung*, ch. 3-4.

<sup>18</sup>See *Statistische Gemeindeverzeichniss des bisherigen polnischen Staates* (Berlin, October 1939), 75, 100, and Theodor Bierschenk, "Zahlen über die während des zweiten Weltkrieges umgesiedelten deutschen Volksgruppenangehörigen," *Zeitschrift für Ostforschung* III (1954), 81, who cites 8,785 persons from Narewgebiet (Bialystoker Bezirk).

<sup>19</sup> Original document created for emigration purposes is in our possession.

<sup>20</sup> Martha Müller, "Mecklenburger wander nach Polen (1795) und kehren heim (1940)," in *Jahrbuch des Deutschlands-Instituts* (1940-41) V, 89. This piece is written from a pro-Nazi perspective in that she is sure that the resettlers, "as Germans, will help the Führer build up the east." (109)

<sup>21</sup> The quality of land and farms received was, of course, of great interest to the resettlers who had come from a fairly productive area. If our father insisted on a better location, our Aunt Emilie later faced a different situation due to the death of the family head, Robert Schütz in July 1942 on the eastern front. In early 1944 she applied to give up the farm yet wanted to keep inheritance rights for a future allotment for her sons. The bureaucrat reviewing the case wrote that Robert had held three hectares in Paproć and had been allotted twelve near Soldau. However, the land had very light soil, was located three kilometres from the farmyard in Soldau and estimated by the bureaucrat as not good for crops, aside perhaps from reforestation, so the farm could not be profitable. Further, the wife was incapable of running it. Information from EWZ file 175851. Instead of being able to farm or follow their trades the Paproćers had to rebuild their lives dependent upon bureaucratic decisions.

<sup>22</sup> Information on date of move to Soldau (January 15, 1940) and occupation listing at that time has been taken from the citizenship document on Gustav Buse at the Berlin Documentation Center. Copy of file obtained in December 1988. In the deposition made for immigration purposes in May 1948 at Vechta our father stated that he had lived in Soldau from September 1939 but in that statement he only provided a few precise dates. The latter document is in our possession.

<sup>23</sup> When asked why Adolf received his name, our mother replied that he was named after his paternal grandfather. Whether the personalities of the era played a role remains a matter of conjecture; Only Arthur and Dieter received non-traditional names since Willie's second name, Rudolf, had been traditional in the family.

<sup>24</sup> Figures for 1943 census in Jan Grabowski and Zbigniew R. Grawowski, "Germans in the Eyes of the Gestapo: The Ciechanów District, 1939-45," *Contemporary European History* XIII (2004), 27; the pamphlet *Deutsche und Polen* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1985), offers a very balanced, informed and illustrated account of Polish-German relations in the 20<sup>th</sup> century including ethnic tensions, the Soviet-Nazi pact, the German attack and the course of the war, the annexation and occupation practices, the Nazi policies of ethnic cleansing, the *Heim ins Reich* movement, the Polish resistance as well as the Polish mistreatment of Germans at war's end. Regarding the numbers of persons affected by the creation of racial categories, a graph (p. 37) summarizes the demographic situation for various districts in January 1944. Southeast Prussia (Zichenau and Suwalki districts) had 9,000 persons in category I, 22,000 in II, 13,000 in III, 1,000 in IV, 25,000 *Reichsdeutsche*, 10,000 additional ethnic Germans (from eastern areas Germany had already lost) plus 920,000 Poles.

<sup>25</sup> Ronny Kabus, *Die Juden in Ostpreussen* (Husum: Husum, 1998), 178-79, provides photos of the Jewish ghetto in Mława and Jewish street cleaning in Maków during 1939-40.

<sup>26</sup> According to Emil Guttzeit, *Ostpreussen in 1440 Bildern*. (Leer: Rautenberg, 1972), 38; the guide for the German military entering Poland gave Soldau as having 5173 inhabitants with 4032 in the surrounding area of the Soldaukreis, *Statistische Gemeindeverzeichnis des bisherigen polnischen Staates* (Berlin, October 1939), 69.

<sup>27</sup> Warsaw National Library, I A6 1920 (Działdowo).

<sup>28</sup> This and following cases, aside from the issue of public knowledge, are from Christian Jensen, *Der 'Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz' in Polen, 1939-40* (Munich: Oldenburg, 1992), 229.

<sup>29</sup> See Christian Tilitzki, *Alltag in Ostpreussen, 1940-45. Die geheimen Lageberichte der Königsberger Justiz* (Leer: Rautenberg, 1991), 58.

<sup>30</sup> Jensen, "Volksdeutsche Selbstschutz," 229, gives a summary of Soldau executions.

<sup>31</sup> Grabowski, "Germans in the Eyes of the Gestapo: The Ciechanów

District, 1939-1945," 26.

<sup>32</sup> Document from Arndt and Wolfgang Scheffler, "Organisierter Massenmord an Juden in nationalsozialistischen Vernichtungslagern," 539-71, reprinted in Karl Bracher, *Nationalsozialistische Diktatur* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1983), 551; this information has been repeated on some internet sites under "Soldau," but without context. Götz Aly, "'Jewish Resettlement': Reflections on the Political Pre-History of the Holocaust," in Ulrich Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies* (New York: Berghahn, 1999), 68, specifies 1,558 German and about 400 Polish mental patients. He points out that this action was undertaken by the same commando that organized the first extermination camp and in his view the ethnic cleansing and population resettlement is directly linked to the Holocaust. The document collection *Nationalsozialistische Massentötungen durch Giftgas. Eine Dokumentation* ed. by Eugen Kogon et al. (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1983), 65, note 309, also gives 1,558 as the number of mental patients gassed at Soldau in trucks disguised as Kaiser-Kaffee vehicles.

<sup>33</sup> The number is from Michal Grynberg, *Zydzi w rejencji Ciechanowskiej 1939-42* (Warszawa: PWN, 1984), 104 with map of deportations, and 46 which show ghettos, camps, rail and road lines by which Soldau (Działdowo), Mława, Zichenau (Ciechanów) and Harnau (Raćiaź) were linked. An article by Gumkowski "Oboz Hitlerowski w Działdowie" is about the educational, punishment and transit camp Soldau (Arbeitserziehungslager, Arbeitsstraflager and Durchgangslager Soldau). Both items are from Wansee Villa library, Berlin.

<sup>34</sup> Grabowski, "Germans in the Eyes of the Gestapo: The Ciechanów District, 1939-1945," 22.

<sup>35</sup> See Bundesarchiv Berlin, R 58/149 Meldungen aus dem Reich Nr 66, 14-15, 15 March 1940.

<sup>36</sup> A Paproć neighbour, Franz Schulz, one of those deported to Bereza, joined the SS, but we know nothing about his activities.

<sup>37</sup> This information is from *Einbürgerungs* (citizenship) materials in Berlin Documentation Center, re Gustav Buse, file EWZ 175681. Interpreting this eight-page document is not easy. "Gesamturteil" [overall judgement] says "III" regarding categorization of parts of body type (p. 2) and the top of the next page has two spaces with "II?" and "III?" in them while at the bottom it has "Urteil [judgement] III" However, the crucial item is the final result which is "II" on



following page granting citizenship immediately with "*Keine Bedenken*" [no reservations] underlined.

<sup>38</sup> Based on EWZ files with matching numbers. We have copies of the citizenship certificate of these persons, including Helene Weirauch who, along with her four children, attained citizenship on 16 May, 1940 in Plauen, Saxony. For some reason that family on its return from deportation lived in a camp at Łódź with the father at an *Arbeitslager* [work camp], which probably provided accommodations and employment. The trust agency organized such camps as housing was being prepared. From our cousin Leo Weirauch we obtained copies of two photos of the family at the camp and a list of possessions dated February 1940, plus an attest from a pastor. They must have been trying to obtain compensation for possessions, including a water mill, left behind when they were deported from Ruda Srebrowo, near Łomża.

<sup>39</sup> Willie, though only five years in December 1941, claims he remembers our father being in the brown uniform of the SA, the Nazi stormtroopers or para-military units. Arthur disputes this and insists the only uniform in which he saw his father was that of his military unit. Willie maintains that our father and some friends went to the huge Tannenberg memorial site thirty kilometres north of Soldau (built during the 1920s to honour the German victory of late 1914 and enlarged to mythologize General von Hindenburg during the 1930s), for a large gathering and march past. In 1943 such celebrations took place there, but the SA was not part of them because the SA did not establish organizations in the newly annexed territories of Poland, unlike the SS. See Dietrich Orlow, *The History of the Nazi Party 1933-1945* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1973), Vol. 2, 296. The Berlin Documentation Center files, which have very complete membership data for all Nazi groups, do not substantiate any Gustav Buse being in the SA or any similar organizations. Possibly our father went to Tannenberg as a reservist.

<sup>40</sup> EWZ 175670, the citizenship case of Ludwig Buse (born 1903), a second cousin of our father, was deferred due to his father's brother having had two dwarf children. This reason also caused a similar delay for his relative, Ludwig Buse (born 1877); file 175630.

<sup>41</sup> Tilitski, *Alltag in Ostpreussen*, 201, rest of materials from same source, 189-251.

<sup>42</sup> The secret reports about conditions in the Zichenau district in 1941 indicated concerns about lack of foodstuffs, especially vegetables, lack of coal and problems of inflation caused by troops stationed in the area

before the attack on the Soviet Union. See Tilitzki, *Alltag*, esp. 145ff. Some persons expressed reservations about the war, though "the clash with Russia, i.e. with Bolshevism, is seen among the *Volk* as absolutely necessary." (154) The immorality of some women (181), whose men were absent in the military, as well as of youth criminality raised questions about the moral fibre of the populace. Zichenau was considered an economically "poor district," (188) by officials in early 1942.

<sup>43</sup> Richard Blanke, "When Germans and Poles lived together" *Yearbook of European Studies* XIII (1999), 49 suggests "a reasonably normal German-Polish everyday coexistence at the sub-political level."

<sup>44</sup> Elizabeth Harvey, *Women and the Nazi East: Agents and Witnesses of Germanization*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003) has written extensively on this subject, but always from the perspective of the policies and questionable publicity materials of the Nazis. Her book, like her previous articles, seeks to demonstrate women's leadership (agency) for those imposing the Germanization, but seems to see no female initiatives or choices for the subjects receiving the ideology. Despite that approach she acknowledges what evacuation policies meant: "As ever, the ethnic Germans were pawns in the schemes of the SS planners." (284) Nancy Reagin has kindly allowed us to read her manuscript chapters which deal with the same subject in a more nuanced and comparative fashion, now published in *The Heimat Abroad: The Boundaries of Germanness* (University of Michigan, 2005), ch 2. "The Imagined *Hausfrau* and German National Character" and especially ch. 6 "Ethnic Cleansing: 'Germanization' in Occupied Poland."

<sup>45</sup> Michael Schmit, "Siedlungsgeschichte von Gross-Paproc und den Tochtergemeinden," *Weg und Ziel* (1959-1960), Heft 10, 6ff. He started teaching in 1904, did historical research in Polish and Prussian archives but his notes were lost and he later reconstructed much of his information from memory after World War II.

<sup>46</sup> A search at the German federal archives section responsible for military records (Bundesarchiv Zentralnachweisstelle Aachen) found no service records for Gustav Buse; letter to Dieter K. Buse 30 August 2004, but see next note. We have his *Kleiner Wehrmachtfahrtschein* (lesser military travel ticket) giving his discharge date in 1942.

<sup>47</sup> The above is based on correspondence by Frau Steinkohl, Deutsche Dienststelle, Berlin to Dieter K. Buse, dated 24 February, 11 and 14 April 2005. This office has copies of some military records. The last entry for our father states place of capture as Arnold on March 30, 1945, but

since no such place exists we presume Anholt, where the British units entered Holland via Germany, was meant. In [www.ww2.dk](http://www.ww2.dk) many of the re-formations of the Air Force signal units can be followed, though it is not always clear where they were located.

<sup>48</sup> Christian Gerlach, "German Economic Interests, Occupation Policy, and the Murder of the Jews in Belorussia, 1941-43," in Ulrich Herbert, ed., *National Socialist Extermination Policies* (New York: Berghahn, 1999), 214-16.

<sup>49</sup> The population in 1939 was 4,789 persons in 465 dwellings according to *Statistische Gemeindeverzeichnis des bisherigen polnischen Staates* (Berlin, October 1939), 76.

<sup>50</sup> The documents and photos mentioned in the rest of this chapter are with Adolf, Dieter K. or George Buse; the stories come from the brothers or from interviews with, and questions asked of, family members and relations. We realize that each person remembers different events and often in their own fashion, and frequently relates them in their own interest.

<sup>51</sup> For conflicting policies and practices see Bernhard Rosenkötter, *Treuhandpolitik: Die 'Haupttreuhandstelle Ost' und der Raub polnischer Vermögen 1939-1945* (Wuppertal: Klartext, 2003), 179-81; 211ff, and H.-C. Harten, *De-Kulturation und Germanisierung. Die nationalsozialistische Rassen- und Erziehungspolitik in Polen 1939-1945* (Frankfurt: Campus, 1996), 99ff re *Volksliste*.

<sup>52</sup> The documents relating to the *Lastenausgleich* [war burden equalization] application are in possession of Adolf. They are confusing, replete with errors in dating and contain unsubstantiated claims; the exaggerated valuations which our father assigned to the Harnau enterprise were probably influenced by the financial difficulties he experienced at the time of his last applications in 1966. After bankruptcy in 1968 he may have been considering, just prior to his death in 1969, appealing the rejection of the Harnau claims.

<sup>53</sup> Eduard Kneifel, *Die Evangelische Kirche im Wartheland-Ost (Lodz)- ihr Aufbau und ihre Auseinandersetzung mit dem Nationalsozialismus 1939-1945* (Vierkirchen: Selbstverlag, 1976), 13-15. Kneifel's accounts must be treated with caution since in the late 1930s he fostered *Deutschtum*, whereas after the war he wrote mainly about the resistance of the churches to Nazism. However, he offers detailed knowledge of people and events.

<sup>54</sup> Copies from Berlin Document Center with covering letter by Dr. Simon to Dieter K. Buse, 2 December, 1988 indicating that other files checked and no further memberships in SA or SS.

<sup>55</sup> *Poland: An Encyclopedic Guide* (Warsaw: Polish Scientific Publications, 2000), 389, also Tilitzki, *Alltag in Ostpreussen*, 239 which cites reports about 'Banden' from outside area attacking local officials with little support from local Poles in May 1943.

<sup>56</sup> Willie interprets this typewritten letter as proof of father having some menial post behind the lines. Was there a connection between our father's favorite war and marching song, namely the song of the *Funkersoldaten* (the radio-message soldiers), and his military tasks?

<sup>57</sup> See Christian von Krockow, *Hour of the Women. A Young Mother's Fight to Survive at the Close of World War II* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), who forgets what privileges aristocrats still had, even during their times of plight and flight. Similar is Gerd Heinrich, *Staatsdienst und Rittergut. Die Geschichte der Familie von Dewitz in Brandenburg, Mecklenburg und Pommern* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1990), an account of the history of the aristocratic family who in 1797 bought the Prussian village, Krumbeck, from which we trace one part of our family's migrations. In 1990(!) that west-German historian could still write "For Pomerania as for the whole German east the end of the war brought shortages, death and *Vertreibung*, a fate which at least for central Europe has no parallel," overlooking all that previously had happened to Poles and Jews, among others. He reprints some of the diary-like notes of Leonie von Dewitz who in March 1945 wrote "Now I knew for the first time the horror-filled and bitter war."(250) The reprinted diary of Else von Dewitz from 13 April 1945 to 24 June 1945 recounts the trek difficulties, including thefts (by Germans, Poles and Soviets) and rapes (by Soviets).

<sup>58</sup> Willie claims the date of departure as January 17<sup>th</sup> but a local priest present in Harnau at war's end claimed in a 1997 interview that the Russians arrived on that date.

<sup>59</sup> Arthur remembers the name of the mayor of Raćiaź very clearly as being Thielemann since he played with the children. Perhaps our mother mixed up two persons.

<sup>60</sup> The documentation provided by the Deutsche Dienststelle from various military records gives as 'home address' Anklamfähre for 1945, so it appears that father had heard from mother on the trek, or they had agreed on an exit route beforehand, as had some of our relatives. Latter information from Mathilde Wrede of Barntrop to Dieter K. Buse,

1 December 2004.

<sup>61</sup> Statistics from Rainer Schulze, "Growing Discontent: Relations between Native and Refugee Populations in a Rural District of Western Germany after the Second World War," in R. Moeller, ed., *West Germany under Construction* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997), 53-56. He looks at the Celle area of Lower Saxony for which many personal accounts are available.

<sup>62</sup> Günther Grass's historical novel, *Im Krebsgang*, about this largest marine disaster in history, has resulted in much debate because it presents Germans as victims.

<sup>63</sup> Norman M. Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), ch. 4, 126; the person who originally tried to focus attention on the plight of postwar eastern Germans, Alfred-Maurice de Zayas, with books such as *Nemesis at Potsdam* [Allied disregard for German civilians' rights] and *The Wehrmacht War Crimes Bureau* [on Allied crimes] had little success. By contrast, his *A Terrible Revenge: The Ethnic Cleansing of the East European Germans, 1944-1950* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993; German 1986) has received acknowledgement since the topic had again become fashionable. The photographs at the beginning of his book showing destroyed treks illustrate many tragic stories.

<sup>64</sup> (Bern: Scherz, 2003). Her story might be compared to the very remarkable account of Alfred B, a Polish neighbour of our mother in Edmonton as recounted to Adolf in 2004 in Edmonton: His family was brought to the Reich from Volhynia (today Ukraine) in 1941 and given a Polish farm near Kolo (Posen area). In 1945 his father fell into the hands of the Russians and the rest of the family got caught by the Poles. He was 15 at the time and the Poles separated him from his mother and the other children. He was put in jail at Kolo with 15 other boys aged 12 to 17. They were under the supervision of a German called Zimmerman who soon was hanged in the prison yard for war crimes. All the boys had to witness the hanging. Conditions were very bad, but Alfred was lucky. The warden had worked for the German ration office and had issued extra ration coupons for clothing to Alfred's father in exchange for food from the farm. Instead of having to work in a labour detail outside the prison, Alfred became the warden's valet, even doing work at the warden's house a couple of times a week, getting a square meal in the process. He explained that the round bread in prison was divided using a piece of string and the bread cutter position rotated daily with the bread cutter from the previous day having first choice. He was then transferred to the prison in Konin where he was given general mopping duties, his warden friend

at Kolo having put in a good word for him. One day he was sitting in his little room with the mops when he heard some scratching and found himself looking at a hole in the brick wall. On the other side were a group of prisoners digging their way to freedom. They warned him that if he ratted he would be done in. So Albert B. decided that henceforth he would spend as little time in the mop room as possible. When 70 prisoners escaped, his interrogators accepted his argument that he was always busy elsewhere. Transfer to another prison again gave him an inside job with access to the attic where all prisoners' personal effects were stored. When in 1948 he heard that he was to be released he did some switching in the attic and provided himself with suitably sized clothing since he had come in as a 15 year old. With a German shoemaker in the prison he made a deal for a pair of boots in exchange for transferring two good shirts to the shoemakers' box in the attic. The boots turned out to have cardboard soles. Prior to his release he had made friends with a Polish farmer who had been given a four month sentence for critiquing socialism too vociferously. The farmer offered Albert a job which he in due course took. He then trained as a baker, but was soon drafted into the Polish army. He did his service with the elite 1st Division at Ciechanów (Zichenau). He thinks he ended up there because a Polish friend was the son of the Minister of Youth. His mess mates included Jaruslezki, the later leader who imposed martial law in 1981. Of the 2,000 recruits he was the first to be promoted and only his lack of Polish citizenship kept him from officer school. He got out to Germany in 1957 and to Canada in 1959. His mother had died earlier in Germany but he had not been allowed to attend the funeral. This too was a postwar life trajectory. Many variants have recently appeared as memoirs including Wolfgang W. E. Samuel, *German Boy: A Child in War* (New York: Broadway, 2001).

<sup>65</sup> The troop movements are described in L. F. Ellis, *Victory in the West. The Defeat of Germany*. (London: Her Majesty's Stationary Office, 1968), 305ff esp. 311 and Herbert Schwarzwald, *Bremen und Nordwestdeutschland am Kriegsende 1945* (Bremen: Schünemann, 1974) II, 127-131.

<sup>66</sup> The Earl of Rosse and E. R. Hill, *The Story of the Guards Armoured Division* (London: Geoffrey Bles, 1956), 254; Günter Wegmann, *Das Kriegsende zwischen Ems und Weser* (Oldenburg: Bültmann & Gerriets, 2000), 222-23 says "Lüsche was defended stubbornly, the place shot into flames (37 prisoners)...." For military history references we are indebted to Greg Liedtke, Michael Boire and Johan van Doorn.

<sup>67</sup> Schulze, "Growing Discontent", esp 57ff.

<sup>68</sup> While still living at the Deberdinks, Aunt Martha taught the women of the household the art of crocheting. On a visit to the area in 1973 Dieter was long plied with questions about Aunt Martha while in 1993, Adolf was shown one of Aunt Martha's doilies by the farmer's daughter, Olga Krüger.

<sup>69</sup> The main categories were wood and clothing workers, domestic servants, heavy labourers, building and construction workers, agricultural workers and metal miners. See *Documents on Canadian External Relations* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 2005) Vol. 14, document 792 (8. April 1948).

<sup>70</sup> *Ibid*, document 795 (3 September 1948) lists the number of Canadian personnel reviewing immigrants and points out that some Muhlenberg camp buildings lacked windows and doors. In early October, when we would have been leaving, inspectors still found "A few additional buildings have been rendered barely habitable by the installation of doors and windows... facilities such as washrooms are woefully inadequate." These documents are available at [www.international.gc.ca/departement/history/dcer/details-en.asp?intRefid=10532](http://www.international.gc.ca/departement/history/dcer/details-en.asp?intRefid=10532).

<sup>71</sup> Statistics from *Report of the Department of Mines and Resources* (Ottawa: HMP, 1948), 249 and (1949), 256, 268/9. Canada had immigration officers and an Immigration Headquarters at Karlsruhe, Germany. The following regulations applied at the time of the Buse trip: "The procedure relative to the admission of displaced persons to Canada is for the sponsor to make application to the nearest immigration office. From the information supplied on Immigration Form 55 an investigation is made on settlement arrangements in Canada. In approved cases the list of relatives is forwarded to the Immigration Headquarters.... From the approved list International Refugee Organization field staffs seek out and assemble the proposed immigrants for examination by Immigration teams... The Canadian Christian Council for Resettlement of Refugees [CCCR] was formed in June 1947, to assist in the processing overseas and movement to Canada of approved immigrants who are displaced persons in occupied territory but who do not come under the mandate of the IRO...This organization has representatives in Germany. The CCCR also undertakes to have approved immigrants X-rayed and blood-tested, documented and assembled for examination by Immigration teams.... Almost all immigrants handled by the CCCR are first degree relatives of residents of Canada." For the general situation see Reg Whitaker, "Canadian Immigration Policy Since Confederation" Booklet 15 (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 1991), 14-15, K. M. McLaughlin, "The Germans in Canada," Booklet 11 (Ottawa: Canadian

Historical Association, 1985), 16-17, and Alexander Freund, *Aufbrüche nach dem Zusammenbruch: Die deutsche Nordamerika-Auswanderung nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg*. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht unipress, 2004).

<sup>72</sup> Only some of the immediate family has been listed, other cousins' and neighbours' destinations include: Gustav Buse in Hagen, Leo and Bernhard Buse in Ketsch near Heidelberg, Karl Trotno in Düsseldorf, Franz Schulz in Düsseldorf, Ludwig Schultz in Witten, Edmund Wrede in Bielefeld.

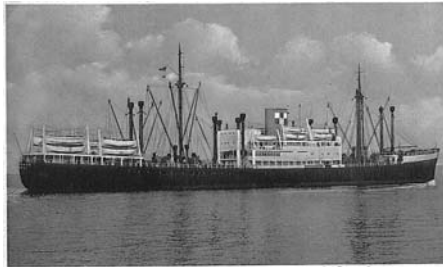


## CHAPTER V

### Canadian Citizens, Eventually, 1948-1961



*Buse family before leaving Germany (with Pauline Steinmeier, Aunt Martha, and cousin Lydia Zitlau), Bakum-Lohe, October 1948.*



*Schiff „Beaverbrae“ bei der Ausfahrt von Bremen nach Canada*

*Refugee Transport Ship Beaverbrae leaving Bremer[haven] for Canada.*



*Buse family at Uncle August Dams' farm, spring 1949.*

## Chapter V

### CANADIAN CITIZENS, EVENTUALLY, 1948-1961

Immigration identification cards, stamped 28 October 1948, certify that six Buses (Gustav, Helene, Arthur, Wilhelm, Adolf and Dieter) made landfall at Quebec City, having arrived on the ship 'Beaverbrae'.<sup>1</sup> It had left Bremerhaven on 18 October. The family soon boarded the Canadian National Railway train for the week-long journey to Edmonton, Alberta. Train schedules indicate that the Northern Alberta Railway trip from Edmonton to Barrhead added nearly another five hours. Our mother later remembered the endless miles of small trees and empty countryside during the train ride west. She admitted that she had feared what would be at the end of the tracks. Our father spent some of his two dollars in Quebec City buying chocolate bars for his boys. With most belongings in a wooden crate, which our father had made, we arrived in Barrhead, the railhead 110 kilometres northwest of Edmonton. We were met at the small train station by our Aunt Olga and Uncle August Dams.

The Dams family lived about nine kilometres south of town in a rough, one-room clapboard house, which had a low attic entered from the outside (Photo 5.1). The attic became the children's refuge on very cold winter nights. Since few memories exist of experiencing aching cold we probably lived day and night in longjohns, the full body underwear commonplace at the time. The farm yard comprised a log barn, a big garage, some granaries and a chicken and turkey coop plus a pigsty. Chopping and carrying wood for heating and cooking, getting water from the hand pump, feeding animals and running the hand-run milk separator were everyday chores shared with the cousins. We were housed, during the winter 1948-49, in one half of the un-insulated double garage. According to a cousin, it was "fixed up" with a rough plank floor, later removed so as to accommodate a huge lug-wheel tractor (Photo 5.2). Thinking of where to live and how to earn a living must have been traumatic issues for our parents. For children, the novelties, such as kerosene lamps pumped to a white glow and dynamite used to blow stumps out of the



*Photo 5.1. Dams' homestead farmhouse with ladder to attic.*

ground, helped to overcome any fears and anxieties. The touching, continuous generosity and genuine warmth of the reception by the Dams family eased the transition. However, all family members faced the questions immigrants confront: who were they and what might they become? Our parents probably wondered about their material and spiritual prospects: what possibilities did life hold, and would they be able to attach themselves to a new community?

Our father's first detested job comprised shovelling sand and gravel onto a wagon for a farmer at three dollars a day. After a day he quit, since the farmer merely drove the wagon and harried him to load and unload it. He later recalled that as a skilled craftsman he resented the work and the farmer's attitude. He soon started offering to do carpentry work. His first of many buildings was a shed for a farmer named Nicol. With borrowed monies, he soon bought two lots in Barrhead from F. R. (Mac) McVey, the manager of the feed mill, for \$200. The lots were in the poorest area, south of the rail tracks, near the feed mill, creamery and four huge grain elevators. That collection of buildings mirrored the economic functions of Barrhead, which served a rural economy of about ten thousand persons.<sup>2</sup> The Buse's empty lots reflected the potential for economic growth. The family's modest social rise would start

from that bit of property, even though it only provided a five-year resting base for the mobile Buses.

Our family went to Barrhead because our aunt and uncle were there. Although the migration chain out of Paproć was generally presented in the last chapter, some elaboration can help explain why the Damses had chosen to go to northern Alberta in June 1939. Aunt Olga Dams told us that a fellow named Adolf Bernrot from their area near Paproć had gone bankrupt and emigrated to Canada in 1928. He and his wife, Leopoldina, had established a farm about eight kilometres north of Barrhead where his family still resided when we arrived. He had written back to Poland about the availability of land and the possibilities of hunting. Other Germans from Poland, such as Leopoldina's brother Adolf Busch, followed the Bernrots in 1928.<sup>3</sup> A friend of Adolf Busch's, Adolf Dams from a nearby village, migrated in 1938 with Bernrot's sponsorship. In turn, he influenced his brother, namely our uncle August Dams. Northern Canada seemed ideal for a peasant wanting land, especially since Uncle August liked to hunt and had difficulties with the Polish authorities, due to poaching and having a weapon. One cousin's story has him leaning on a hollowed-out fencepost, which hid his weapon, while the Polish police



*Photo 5.2. Garage on Dams' farm; family lived in right side, winter 1948-49, (photo taken 1998).*

searched his property. Rumours of an impending war reinforced his desire to leave. According to his son Art, the last straw came when Uncle August, accused of some gun-related infraction, physically accosted a Polish official and spent some months in jail. Our Aunt Olga reluctantly emigrated and missed the orchards in Poland until the war in Europe convinced her that coming to Canada was the right decision. Though Uncle August worked for another farmer during the first fall and winter (1939-40), he soon borrowed money and bought land in the Paddle River area south of Barrhead.<sup>4</sup> The family built a simple small shack and added farm buildings as they could afford them. His wife, daughter Edna Elsa (born 28 November 1931), and son Edmund (born 11 July 1935) had accompanied him to Canada. Another boy, Arthur, appeared 5 October 1939, three months after their arrival.

The Dams family had been completely cut off from the German relatives in Poland and East Prussia during the war by the wartime stoppage of mails, and perhaps because of the forced moves of the Buse/Schütz families. Mail shipments between Canada and Germany resumed in 1946. Only after that did Aunt Olga learn about the death of her mother in 1941 and the deaths of her two brothers. According to her daughter, she was upset for some time. Somehow contact with the Paproćers was reestablished, perhaps through Bernrot whose sister, Mrs. Moeglich, also came to Barrhead in 1948.<sup>5</sup> By then the hard-working and friendly Dams family must have been known and accepted in the small Paddle River community, where the one-room school also served as community centre. On November 11, 1948 the *Barrhead Leader* reported under the rubric "Paddle River Ramblings" that "The Dams family have a family of immigrant relations from Germany."

The immigrants would not have known of this attention in the local press. This was probably the first time that their many travels had received public notice in such a personalized fashion. State policies and warfare had determined the fate of the Paproćers and had ultimately disbanded their community. In Canada a quite different situation faced them. Certainly survival in a material sense remained a major component of their lives but the immigrants, in their daily struggles, were mainly left to fend for themselves. Relatives and an already

established German-Canadian community provided immediate support. The instruments of the state and the harsh ethnic politics experienced by previous generations in Europe were far removed, so that in Canada economic issues primarily dominated immigrant lives.

What was Canada in 1948? Though a powerful victor country with a large navy and a huge resource base in land and minerals where a Cold War was underway, the immigrants would have experienced a new world in which British institutions prevailed. Hence, this chapter changes perspective. Whereas previously we were outsiders looking into the window of our predecessors' pasts, we now become present and relate experiences of which we were a part and hence part of the story itself. History turns more to memory. In making our way in the not-so-distant past perhaps we tend to see ourselves more as doers and makers as opposed to responders to the environment and policies of others. Perhaps that is simply due to being in a more free society. But, we do not think that we need to provide a detailed overview of the postwar situation, though we will introduce state policies and local situations to provide some context for the Buse family experience during an era of general economic boom and slow development toward a multicultural society.

### **Joining the German-Canadians**

By the 1940s a large German community existed in the Barrhead region. Many settlers of German background had arrived during the inter-war era and many second-generation immigrants had moved to the Barrhead area around the time of World War II. With the Bernrots, Busches, Damses and other families, a tiny enclave of Germans from central Poland, including Paproćers, already resided there.<sup>6</sup> In addition to the Buses, between 1948 and 1950, the Johann Busch, Richard Korman, Johann Wichert and Rudolf Wichert families augmented the Paproćers. Most joined the large religious community of German-speaking Lutherans. That community centred on the St. John's Lutheran Church of Barrhead, which eased the social integration of the Paproćers (Photo 5.3).<sup>7</sup>



*Photo 5.3. St. John's Lutheran church from town water tower, about 1956.*

On Saturdays and Sundays, somehow all or most of the ten members of the Dams and Buse families squeezed into the Damses' 1928 Essex for the trek to Barrhead. Saturday afternoon catechism and confirmation classes held in German provided common experiences for the children—seen as suffering by some—as well as friendships. The August and Olga Dams, Adolf and Helene Dams, Adolf and Lena Busch, Johann and Gunda Busch, Richard and Meta Korman, Johann and Elfriede Wichert and Rudolf and Elsa Wichert families formed an initial group of close friends. Somewhat later John and Elsa Elbe, John and Agnes Klein, Robert and Helga Neumann, and Jacob and Hulda Handel joined the list of families with whom the Buses formed close relationships. Initially, almost all were first or second generation Germans and all were members of the Lutheran church. Some, though, belonged to a different synod which had its English church in Mellowdale, about 15 kilometres north of Barrhead. The Lutheran religion provided an immediate bond because parents enforced church attendance, usually until confirmation at age 13 or 14, and because the congregation provided some furnishings for impoverished refugees, including the Buses.

Language and religion made integration easier. Over a thousand Lutherans, mostly of German background, lived in the Barrhead district with 255 in the town by 1951 (out of a town population of 1,253 and a district population of around 5,000).<sup>8</sup>

To accommodate the growing number of parishioners, in 1949 the church building was lengthened and raised with a basement added. In 1948 the official church language at St. John's was German, though the children soon switched to English among themselves. This influence of the dominant culture and the difficulties of some second- and especially third-generation Germans (many educated in Russian, Polish or English) in understanding German, led to language wars within the Barrhead congregation. Some of this must have seemed a replay of Paproć church and school struggles. At issue was whether the church services should be held only in German, only in English or whether the community could afford two services. The latter would be the eventual compromise after 1955, though the prime time slot of 11 a.m. Sunday went to the English language in 1961 after some ugly disputes. That decision amounted to a defeat for the newer arrivals, including the Paproćers, and their allies among the recent immigrants from other parts of Germany. However, the pre-eminence of the German language during the Buses' first years helped ease the newcomers into the church community. Further, because some businesses, such as the Waksel brothers' OK General Store, the Hoffman hardware store and the barbers Bill Rendfleisch and Martin Greilach, had bilingual English and German personnel, for many daily transactions and especially for practicing their faith, language proved a small barrier for immigrants. Indeed, our mother continued to function mostly in German and that remained the language of the home until the late 1950s, after which it became a mix due to the school and work dominance of English, English-speaking friends and eventually English-speaking daughters-in-law.

During our time in Barrhead, the first minister, Pastor Fritz Rehn, offered hellfire and brimstone sermons, while his successor, Johannes Gnauck (1954-60), took a softer approach. Gnauck organized the Luther League to try to keep the youth attached to the church during the increasingly commercial 1950s which included rural-urban shifts of population, higher levels of education and options such as organized sports and leisure activities. The Luther League offered social activities, some of which the youth transformed from innocent social evenings into sly dating encounters. The League activities included sending adolescents to Christian conferences in



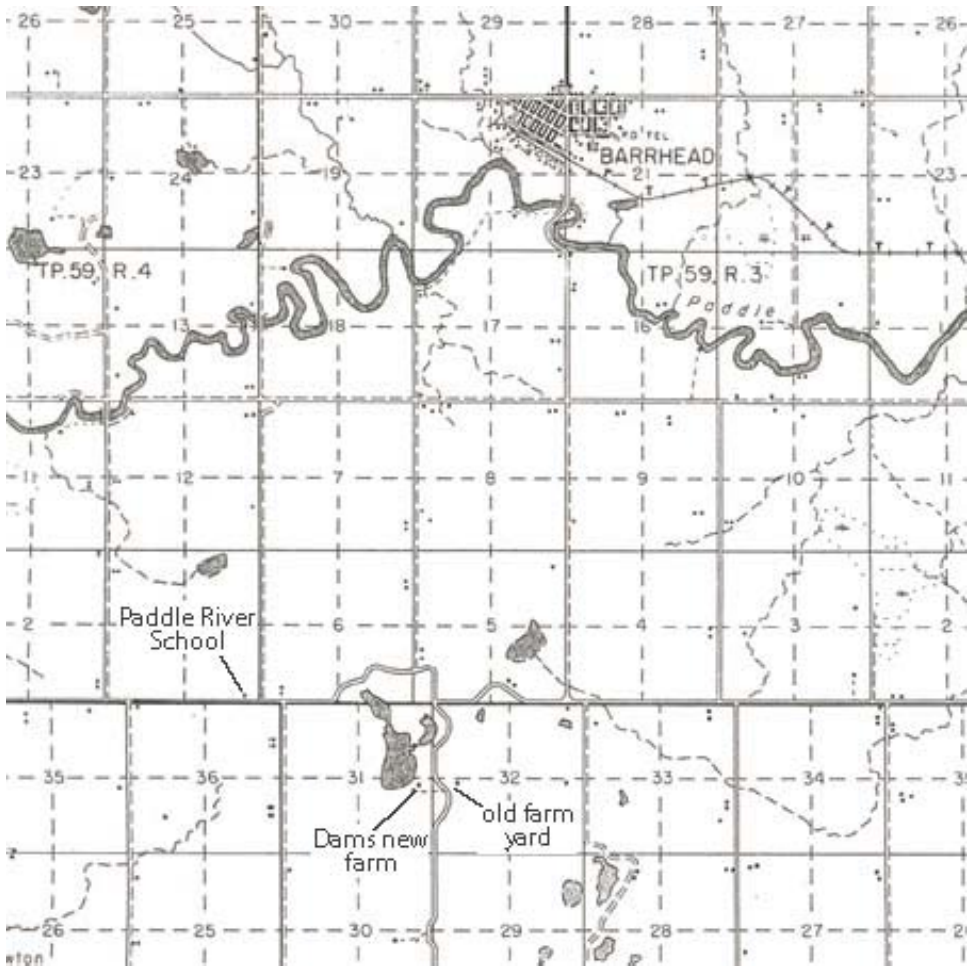
Edmonton. All the boys participated, some only to placate our mother. Confirmations, Christmas, Easter and taking Holy Communion were special church and family occasions, which partly served as spiritual and dress-up rituals through which each youth group passed, and partly as events that drew together various generations (Photo 5.4). Following German tradition, the family opened gifts on Christmas Eve after church service. Barrhead's German religious and social communities allowed the immigrants to continue well-established patterns which made the transition to a new place easier.



*Photo 5.4. Card playing at Dams' farm, possibly 1950, our mother in background, Rudolf Wichert on right.*

### **Joining the Canadians in Barrhead**

School and work probably were the decisive factors in the integration of postwar immigrants. During the winter of 1948-49, all the Buse and Dams boys walked the three or more kilometres west to Paddle River School; Edna Dams was already practicing nursing in Barrhead. The distance to the school depended on the cold. Once the ice had frozen on the pond across from the main connecting roads near the Dams' farm, the children could walk across it to the one-room school (though the younger ones were exempted on very cold days) (Map 5.1).



Map 5.1. Barrhead 1949, regional overview (each section division equals one-half mile).

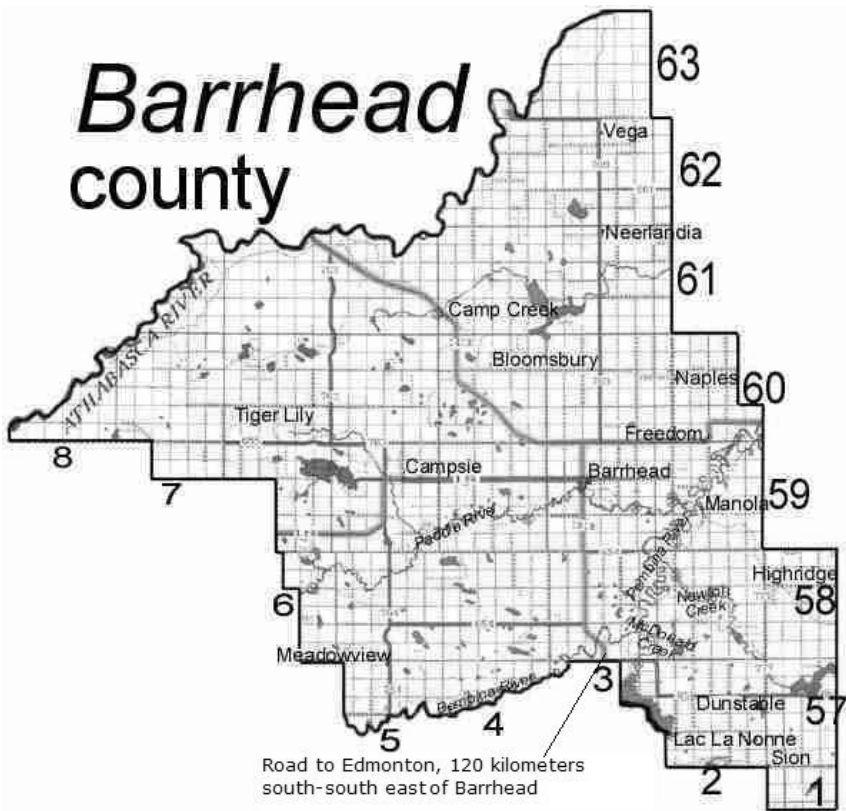
The teacher had little ability to keep the children of all eight grades in order. Playing outside offered more life skills than the formal learning inside. The ponies and horses on which some students came from their farms were of great interest in the semi-anarchical situation. It arose because the teacher frequently came out of the teacherage next door very late. School ground conflicts occasionally led to pitched battles. On one occasion the bigger Buse brothers rescued Edmund Dams who was being hung up in the pony shed by some older boys. Despite the name calling, school attendance began the slow

process of integration by reinforcement of rudimentary English, and by participation in common enterprises such as Christmas pageants, recess games, lunch time sports and Bible studies (mandatory in Alberta under the Social Credit government). What began at Paddle River—some tensions but slow integration—would continue at Barrhead Public and High School, and Edmonton or Calgary technical colleges, after 1949.<sup>9</sup>

In summer 1949 the family moved to a small, un-insulated, horizontally nailed shiplap covered house that our father and Art, with some help from Willie, built on one of the lots in Barrhead. The shortened version of Arthur's name came into use around this time while Willie consciously adopted Bill when he left Barrhead in 1955.

The village of Barrhead had been founded in 1927 and at first its population increased quite slowly. In 1941 it only had 399 people, but by June 1948, as a town, it attained 802 and by 1951 that jumped to 1,253, then to 1,610 in 1956 and 2,285 in 1961. By 1961 the county of Barrhead (Map 5.2) had 5,759 inhabitants.<sup>10</sup> Though electrified, the town had no gravel roads until the end of the 1940s and no paved ones in the 1950s (Photo 5.5). On 22 September 1949 the local newspaper reported on the first efforts to gravel the main streets. By the mid-1950s about one third were gravel. Sewers were built beginning in 1947 in the area close to Main Street, so outhouses and poop removal were still the norm even in areas with water mains. Perhaps illustrative of the nature of the town, in May 1949 the town council received "a letter of complaint with regards to cows and chickens trespassing on private property and causing a general nuisance. The people concerned were to be warned that livestock are not permitted to run at large within town and cows should not be kept in a residential area."<sup>11</sup>

Much of the population of the town and surrounding district comprised young people—in 1951 35% of the town population was under 14 years of age, one-half under 25; in 1961 33% were under 14 and again half under 25. However, for the youngest categories (0-4, 5-9) males outnumbered females in



Map 5.2. Barrhead County.

town, while in the higher ones (15-19, 20-24), females outnumbered males. This suggests that younger urban males were leaving for work or higher education elsewhere. Similarly to the town, in the county of Barrhead 10% were under 5 and 30% under 14 in 1961, but for the county the rural male/female pattern was the reverse as young rural males stayed on the farms while young rural females went to town or to higher education. In either case, the population growth fuelled a demand for housing and for educational institutions. As the school district expanded and high school grades were added to the earlier grades during the 1940s, children from outlying areas came to Barrhead for higher education, some staying in dormitories. In January 1948, as part of a centraliz-



*Photo 5.5. Barrhead from south; this is from an unaddressed and unsorted postcard from 1948 on which our mother had written on back after mid-1949: "This is the village in which we live. Later I will send you a picture of our house and car."*

ation process, the first bus brought students to town, including Afro-Americans from the Campsie area. Soon buses brought ethnic Canadians from the whole region for all grades: Italians from Naples, Dutch from Neerlandia, Germans from Bloomsbury and Mellowdale, Ukrainians from Topland, French from various communities, British from everywhere but especially Campsie, Belvedere and Manola.<sup>12</sup> The existence of so many ethnic groups must have made integration easier. Before adding more contours to Barrhead's physical and social composition, the home situation of the immigrant family will be outlined.

The first Buse house had sawdust piled around it to keep out drafts and cold during the winter 1949-50 (Photo 5.6). Originally it sat on log supports. Our mother, always nervous about the reliability of these supports, had Adolf place temporary braces on the south wall of the house for the duration of one wind storm. A dugout of about six by six feet, and about five feet deep, accessed by a trapdoor, served as main pantry and refrigerator. Bill remembers digging it by hand with younger brothers carrying the dirt outside. The house, 16



*Photo 5.6. First Barrhead house on right, with supplies for the garage/workshed under construction; Mrs. Moeglich and mother, 1949.*

by 28 feet, had a front room (*'gute Stube'*, parlour) of about 10 feet depth running the full width of the house.

That room eventually held an oil space heater. At first, the heater and the room were rarely used because of lack of monies for oil. For more than a year it had boarded-up windows and lacked furniture. Before Christmas 1950, windows, made by our father with self-made tools, were installed. Some of those hand-crafted windows were distributed to the brothers by Adolf, who rescued them in 2005 when the house was being renovated. When linoleum was being laid Bill and Art horsed around and cracked off a corner. For that they received treatment with a yardstick from our father. The entry and only door to the house, later entered through an added porch, went directly into the kitchen (Photo 5.7). This too was a room of about 10 feet by the width of the house. It had a wall of cupboards with a sink and its associated slop pail below at the small west window. On one occasion, Adolf and Dieter tied a fork to a stick and stole doughnuts cooling on the kitchen counter by reaching in through this window. A large stove with hot water reservoir graced the north side.<sup>13</sup> Wood was piled below and water stood by the cupboards. A table near the larger east window was situated so that we could all just sit on benches and chairs around it. The kitchen was as central to the house as it was to life. From it one could go into our parent's

tiny bedroom—but generally one did not enter their private space—which had a window and barely room enough for a double bed.

After early 1951 this room also had to accommodate the home-made crib of the surprise—our mother was over 42!—Canadian addition, George Bernard (born 29 January). At least he proved a surprise to the older brothers, though they soon learned that according to the attending doctor, Keir, pregnancy was supposed to provide a cure for our mother's kidney stones. One family story thus has George's arrival helping her; another version was that his squawking got on her nerves so that she occasionally announced that he was an unwanted addition, sometimes in front of him. Consistency not being her strength, she also mollycoddled him as her little curly haired girl and set tough rules for Adolf and Dieter as frequent babysitters.

Another tiny room, the one with the trap door to the 'cellar', entered from the kitchen, served as the wash room and storage area. It had steep stairs to the attic near its window, although the stairs were more like a ladder. Under the roof was just enough space on one side to get by the two metal-frame



*Photo 5.7. First Barrhead house with brick siding, added porch and muddy boots, 1950.*

double beds shared by the four older boys. Art and Bill slept in the first bed beside the window while Adolf and Dieter had the one next to the chimney. Many struggles occurred about sleeping on each other's half. Beyond a curtain and the chimney was the 'room' of Aunt Martha, our mother's sister who came from Germany to live with us in September 1949. Her room had a window to the front of the house. In that room she kept a mantle clock that chimed every quarter hour. On more than one occasion the chime disappeared as a protest against this nightly sleep disturber.

Outside this small house, a well for hand pumping water meant many trips with many pails to fill the stove reservoir. The large



*Photo 5.8. Our mother and George at Christmas, 1951.*



kitchen stove heated by wood was a favorite meeting place for warmth and the only source of warm water. Baths were in a large metal tub on the kitchen floor and usually occurred (symbolically?) once a week before Saturday catechism classes. The water was shared and it remained a privilege to be bathed first. At the time the boys did not reflect on the quantity of work involved for our mother and Aunt Martha in washing—at first by hand, later by a machine with wringer—and hanging outside to dry the clothes they kept getting dirty. Adolf remembers a related chore in that he and Dieter were sent to the Paddle River with a can to get water. Our mother wanted river water which was softer than well water for washing. Clothes were always clean and our mother, the daughter of a shoemaker, placed emphasis on well-made shoes. The few existing photos from this time, usually taken on Sunday or on special occasions show us very well groomed, in spite of the rough conditions (Photos 5.8 and 5.9). Respectability remained



*Photo 5.9. Dieter and Adolf at Christmas, 1951.*

a virtue which our mother instilled and our father supported. Clean white shirts, ties and well-polished shoes were norms enforced for Sundays, but grooming was instilled by daily inspections. Our mother sewed cute George many little matching outfits.

The family ate increasingly more as we moved from impoverishment to frugality. Among the basic foodstuffs consumed were potatoes, boiled in the shell, peeled and boiled or fried, and more potatoes as pancakes. Meat—sometimes wonderful calf meat—mostly came from Uncle August Dams' farm. We helped slaughter and butcher pigs which he shot in the head with a .22 calibre rifle. Canning chickens in large jars usually amounted to a three-day fall chore for the women and younger family members, since it involved chopping off heads, plucking and singeing off feathers and cleaning carcasses before cooking the meat to put into jars and seal (Photo 5.10). Later some of Edna Kleinfelds' troublesome turkeys went the same route. At first many little barrels of herring—ads in the local paper announced that 7 pound jars from the OK General Store sold for \$1.85 in 1948—were combined with boiled potatoes (*Pelkartoffeln*). Sometimes as a treat our mother and



Photo 5.10. Our mother and Aunt Olga preparing chickens for gathering of relatives, including American visitors, 1955.

Aunt Martha would make *Perogen* (not to be confused with Polish perogie). This is a labour-intensive meal. Many potatoes are grated, pressed nearly dry and mixed with a bit of boiled potato. Inside a handful of this mixture goes some quark (a smooth soft white cheese) with vanilla and sugar. The resulting big ball or submarine is lowered into boiling water and when it surfaces is fished out with a strainer. Then the sub would be fried on all sides in bacon fat—a lot of bacon fat, if available. At Christmas special treats included *Pfeffernüsse* [pepper nuts or tiny spicy cookies].

Once we became richer the food probably became worse from a health perspective. Our mother, who believed in the necessity of consuming fat due to her peasant cooking style and perhaps due to some of the postwar days on the edge of hunger, fried pork chops to well beyond Sienna brown in ½ inch of fat. Eastern Germans traditionally eat lard heaped on heavy breads (*Stollen*), a practice our mother and our father continued at first, in father's case accompanied by raw onions. Much lard went into pastry, especially *Streuselkuchen* (crumbly cake that is mainly yeast dough covered with butter and sugar crumbs). Vegetables were served at about the same rate as sailors received on 17<sup>th</sup> century vessels—namely, what vegetables? A few carrots and peas from a jar were the normal fare. Pickled red beets are remembered by some brothers as a regular side dish. We ate much cabbage, mostly in the form of homemade sauerkraut made from cabbages that the boys had to cut on an instrument with a sliding, guillotine blade. The sauerkraut, spiced with garlic and bacon, would be eaten with more potatoes, sometimes carrots, and if lucky bratwurst. Bread was baked, though less frequently after German rye became available through the local bakery. Our father had a very low regard for soft Canadian white bread and thought corn and turnips were for animals. Was it childish, piggish behaviour or a residue of the period during which we craved food when we later held eating contests? When adults were absent, a large bowl of jelly would be made, a line drawn down the middle and the attempt made to eat as quickly as possible to get to eat beyond one's own side. We drank quarts of milk in one large gulp, perhaps training for later beer drinking contests. Still in 2005, one of Dieter's friends, Johnny Busch, remembered his first encounter with what he assumed would be a town kid

foreign to the ways of the farm. Instead, Dieter demonstrated his abilities by sucking out the insides of a dozen raw eggs.

Aunt Martha provided moral reinforcement in our parents' absence. She did it in two ways. First, she served as the surveillance officer reporting back to the other moral authorities. Second, she told German children stories well. Dieter in particular remembers fables about the adventures of the fox and wolf, in which the fox invariably won.<sup>14</sup> For example, the fox and wolf were wandering down a road when they smelled pancakes being prepared by a farmer's wife. They snuck through a window into the cellar where the pancakes were being stacked on a shelf. As they gorged themselves the fox kept jumping through the window. When he saw that the wolf was huge with pancakes he knocked over some jars creating much noise before he jumped out the window. The wolf became stuck in the window and was beaten—in some versions by the farmer and in some by the farmer's wife—until he finally made it through. The heavy-handed moral of not overeating seemed mixed with one about not being kind to your partner in crime. Regardless of their competition and strife, in Aunt Martha's accounts the fox and wolf pair went out for more adventures together with the invariable result. She also sang many German folksongs and hymns, in which our mother often joined her. Lullabies, such as "*Weisst Du wie viel Wolken wehen, weit hinüber Gottes Zelt? Gott allein hat sie gezählet, dass Ihm auch nicht eines fehlet...*" [Do you know how many clouds are floating, through God's heavens; only He has counted them, so none are missing...?], were amongst our mother's favourites. Some underscored the grandeur and mystery of God and nature. Those alternated with martial Lutheranism: "*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott, ein gute Wehr und Waffe...*" [A mighty fortress is our God, a good defense and weapon...]."

Aunt Martha expressed pride at her voice and said she had been in a choir. Eventually, she would begin night work at the local school as a cleaner from which she saved enough money to buy two lots in town. Her life trials and travels had taught her frugality and how to take care of her interests. She stood as much as sat at meals. She had one of those boarding house reaches which we children would extend, by moving whatever

food for which she was reaching just before her fork arrived. Aunt Martha tended to take herself seriously and the boys frequently made fun of her—an immediate impact of North American movie culture— as Tonto of Lone Ranger fame, or our mother's side kick. We did not appreciate her household contribution sufficiently, indeed organized to increase it. For example, when Adolf and Dieter were supposed to do the dinner dishes they would argue, by arrangement, as to whose turn it was to wash and whose to dry. This game would continue until Aunt Martha would assert "Stop, I will do them" and they could head out to play.

The boys preferred to escape outdoors, although even there more chores lurked. The other lot was planted with potatoes which they had to hoe. A middle strip with carrots, red beets and some cabbages was near the pump. A small rough building constructed as a possible garage near the back alley, served as our father's workshop, and was heated by an oval 'trash' burner which survived to serve in the next garage. He dried rough lumber and planed it for finish work. He still built the occasional piece of furniture, including a large dining table for the Dams' family. An outdoor toilet near the alley and behind the huge woodpile completed the new holdings of the Buses. The toilet seemed very far away during cold winter nights so large cans served as pee pots. In the toilet the paper was old Eaton's mail-order catalogues of which some boys remember the lingerie pages being saved until the last (Photo 5.11). In summer 1950 the outside of the house received a red fake-brick covering which helped to insulate walls that only had Ten-Test wallboard (a soft easily broken material) covering the 2x4 walls.

Among the pervasive facts of life in Barrhead and what all its inhabitants shared in the early 1950s can be summed up in one word: mud. When the spring thaw came the roads became rutted, the clay base became greasy and cars went sideways as well as forward. All inhabitants developed strong leg muscles because walking included the ability to pull boots out of holes which sought to suck them in and keep them. A contemporary remembered "lots of mud around then and many a time I got [a friend and wife] out of their rubber boots stuck in the alley."<sup>15</sup> During the early 1950s five miles of concrete sidewalks



*Photo 5.11. Our mother with curly haired George; our stately toilet and wood pile in background, 1952.*

slowly replaced the wooden ones in the main area of town. After rains, cars and trucks moved as though all the drivers were drunk. Learning to push vehicles out of ditches or walking to find a farmer with a tractor were normal apprenticeships for males. The Buse boys eventually graduated with high marks from much training due to girlfriends living out of town or going to out-of-town dances. Because only main roads were gravelled and only one highway leading to town was being slowly paved after our arrival, Barrhead and its surrounding areas became mired in mud each spring or after heavy rains. In 1956 the town had 18 miles of roads, streets and alleys, but only half were gravelled, none paved. As late as the visit of bootless American relatives in 1955 women were helped by gallant cousins but everyone slid around, despite some planks laid to help stay above the muck. On our side of town the road on which we first lived only received gravel after we moved in

1954; the next had gravel immediately, though sidewalks only came later.

While we lived south of the tracks the neighbours were generally poorer families, for whom, like us, family entertainment prevailed. On the east side was another German immigrant family (Wedman). The father fulfilled many stereotypes of Germanic attitudes, yet liked to play games such as three-weekend Monopoly sessions with his and the younger Buse children. At home, our parents often led the family at "*Mensch ärger dich nicht*" [=do not get mad; or "give no quarter," a simple version of Parcheesi, also known as Sorry], but soon Chinese checkers became a passion. Later a bakery worker and his relatives replaced the Wedmans. As a hobby photographer the baker took perhaps the first colour pictures of the family in 1953 (Photo 5.12). Those were taken during a



*Photo 5.12. Family picture, 1953, taken south of Paddle River; back (l. to r.) Our mother and father, Art, Bill, Adolf, front (l. to r.) Dieter, George, Aunt Martha (original in colour).*

Sunday after-church outing on a side road next to the south side of the Paddle River where the family frequently picked Saskatoon berries to can for winter desserts. More poor families lived across the street from the first house, including a German woman refugee from Poland with three blond daughters. The Buse yard sloped to empty space at the road corner to the west; later that lot would be occupied by the house of a retired couple who filled their yard with vegetable plots from which peas sometimes disappeared in Buse boy raids. Beyond the outdoor toilet and huge wood pile, in a square old house lived a kindly old Englishman, Mr. Thompson, with a bad-tempered dog. One day the dog bit Adolf, and our mother insisted that she needed hairs from the dog to make a poultice. Dieter was sent with scissors to obtain the hair, but kept thinking that if this dog has bitten Adolf...then nervously explained to Mr. Thompson why he needed some of the dog's hair.

Most interesting to the younger boys was the slope behind the alley, which remained an open field leading down to the farm fields that were being converted into a small, nine-hole, sand-green golf course. Bounded by the Paddle River, it opened officially in August 1951. Many hours were spent on the golf course, finding balls to sell and caddying for people whom we perceived as being very rich. Once, when the river flooded, Bill, Adolf and Dieter cut down poplar trees on the course to make rafts. That brought us trouble with Dan Waksel, who owned the course and with our father who still had his wide belt. The golf course also witnessed many signs of kindness by families such as the Hardys—he was the notary public for whom our father did some work—who gave Adolf and Dieter some old golf clubs so we could learn to play and later even provided birthday presents. Of course, at first we did not pay to play but snuck onto the course at the holes away from the club house. A few years later, one after the other, Adolf and Dieter obtained jobs weeding, oiling and raking the sand greens. Later still Dieter followed Adolf as delivery boy, driving groceries ordered by phone, for the Waksels' store. We had good relations with the owners, even if one proved rather stingy.

Flanking the west and south sides of the course was one of the boys' playgrounds, the Paddle River. One spring Adolf and Dieter decided to venture onto an ice floe. They soon retreated



with boots full of cold water.<sup>16</sup> More hours were spent at the edge of the river, including in winter to trap weasels and squirrels to sell the furs. The Dams' cousins had taught us the ways to skin, stretch and dry furs on wooden boards. Fishing was by a string tied to pant loops and the hook and line twirled, then thrown to catch the occasional pike.<sup>17</sup> Near the Paddle River forts were built, hikes were taken west to the rapids and further to the fishing hole. The larger swimming hole still further upstream with its rope hanging from a big tree later became taboo because of a youth who drowned saving a girl.

By this time, Art, who had arrived in Canada over 15 years old, was long at work. He did not go to school after Paddle River but obtained a job delivering milk for a year (1949-50). The local dairy was on a bend of the Paddle River just east of the golf course and the bridge on the main road south. The winter proved to be so cold that the owners had to bring crates, in small batches, to Art on the open horse-drawn wagon, so the milk would not freeze. Visiting the dairy became a frequent activity for all the boys. Checking out the milking machines, feeding the horses, helping with milking, getting to ride the open milk wagon behind the horses under Art's supervision and occasionally being allowed to guide the horses were exciting pastimes. Trying to carry quart bottles of milk four at a time tested small hands. Consuming a pint of chocolate milk without paying fulfilled refugee dreams. In 1950 Art joined a road construction crew near Hinton staying at a camp at Obed. The crew was preparing the right of way for the road which ultimately became the four-lane highway to Jasper. He started as a brush cutter, then graduated to driving a fuel truck that serviced 10 Caterpillars (bulldozers) and two supply trucks.

Again some Paproćers remained together: on the construction gang with Art, Richard Korman worked as a cat skinner or driver, Gunda Busch was camp cook while husband Johann served as camp flunky and helped with cooking and cleaning bunks. To burn brush piles, rubber tires were set alight. Art remembers lots of food (especially meat), including a snack bar in the evening. A portion of one bunkhouse became the recreation room with cards as the main activity. A bigger treat was a movie in Edson on week-ends. To improve his English, Art spent a lot of time reading, especially comics. This camp

was government run, operating on 10-hour days with no overtime. It was peaceable; he remembers no fights and that the immigrants wanted to keep their nose clean, which may have been easier as the camp was, at least, officially, alcohol free. After being at the camp, Art worked for our father and later apprenticed with him.

Ethnic relations in Barrhead proved to be generally unproblematic, even if each group mingled mostly with its own when we came. For example, the Wahls, owners of the dairy, were part of the Lutheran community, and had befriended the new immigrants. So did some British families. To illustrate: a few houses east on our street stood the long low house of the McVeys. They became friends of the family. They provided some furnishings and occasionally food. Our mother's lack of English did not deter Mrs. McVey from arriving for afternoon coffee with explanations on how to function in Barrhead and Canada. Most of Art's friends came from the German Lutheran clan. For those who continued in school a different pattern emerged. The school chums and after school buddies were a varied lot including Germans, English, Ukrainians, and Italians.<sup>18</sup> Ethnicity meant little at school. If a pecking order existed it probably found Ukrainians at the bottom, though not as disdained as First Nations' people. In our experience of working with and for various ethnic groups, the stereotype of Ukrainians being primitive and dirty was fully reinforced at one farm where we built a barn, yet the same stereotype was completely destroyed at another where we built a house. In the former case, the farmer tried to steal some of the lumber by hiding it under some hay—our father spent every lunch time poking around the farm until he found the missing lumber—and the woman fried chops without a pan on the stove though her children's university graduation pictures were in the same room. In the latter case, we ate extremely well in a tidy nice place—a chicken per person forced post-lunch naps—and Dieter who could not really drive was permitted to grind the gears on the farm truck at age 14. Another pecking order related to being a good school yard fighter or especially good at sports to impress girls.<sup>19</sup> In the end, if any pecking order had significance, it related to achievements at school. Academic merit and social popularity, not ethnic background, decided youth status in Barrhead.<sup>20</sup>

One of the favorite haunts of the younger boys was the co-operative feed mill, at the east end of our street north of the creamery, operated by Cecil ('Shorty') Shilling. The dumping of big farm grain trucks and the movements of grains through tubes and conveyors were intriguing. The boys knew that they were pests hanging around after school, but eventually they became little helpers allowed to control some chutes and scales. One exciting occasion relating to the feed mill involved the local policeman asking our father's help because he thought a thief was in the office in the evening. After returning from finding the building empty, our father commented to the effect that the policeman wanted someone with many children to enter a potentially dangerous situation before he did. Adolf and Dieter benefitted from the relationship with Shilling because they obtained used 'steelies,' or ball bearings, from the mill. Those were employed for winning marble games at school. On one occasion, at about age 13 and 11, they set up a sort of betting business with little holes in cardboard boxes and collected pennies from fellow students who could not shoot into the holes with their light marbles, whereas the Buses with their heavier armaments could. When they had nearly taken all the students' marbles and quite a bit of money, someone ratted and the teachers stopped one of their earliest attempts at free enterprise. After 1957, the Shillings opened a café, Aggie's, where Aunt Martha washed dishes and gathered town gossip. Our father occasionally stopped there for afternoon coffee and pie. George fondly remembers the couple as especially kindly and always providing him with a treat.

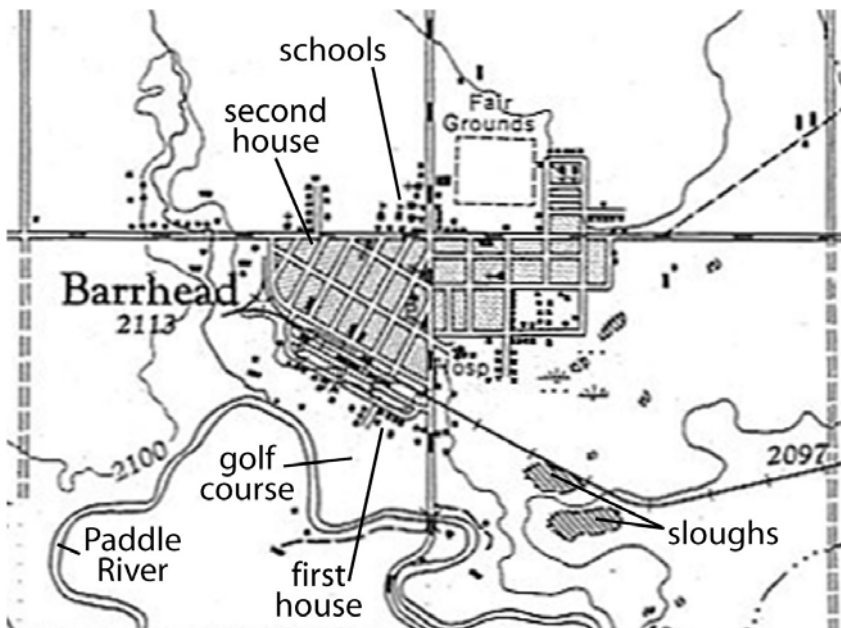
North of the first Buse home, at the southern end of Main Street, stood the reddish-brown monuments to capitalism and cooperation, or farmers' pooling their selling power. Four huge grain elevators (Home Grain, Alberta Pool, United Grain Growers, Alberta Pacific Grain), with an additional one being constructed soon after our arrival, stood guard at the tracks. These sentinels, hovering over every prairie and parkland town, rose some ten stories above the low flatlands that were once covered with small poplar and spruce trees. The elevators, made of nailed flat-laid two by sixes (sometimes bigger lumber at bottom and smaller toward top) with external bolt systems to counteract the pressure of the grain inside, and their four-storey outrigger buildings, dwarfed us and the town. We passed

between them every day going to school. Today people would be forced by fences and liability issues to go around, but in the 1950s we followed worn trails which everyone from south of the tracks used. Crossing the tracks was not dangerous as the trains kept decreasing in frequency. By the late 1950s only farm products moved out and oil field supplies for Swan Hills came in. However, in the meantime the tracks provided another playground. On a couple of occasions locomotive drivers could be convinced that we needed rides. We were dropped off the train on the outskirts east of town where a swamp north of the dairy provided bad skating and worse hockey in the winter. Despite the strength of hockey locally—boxing was the other popular male preoccupation of the early 1950s—no Buse became accomplished in the Canadian sport, perhaps because of the very old, ill-fitting skates and the Eaton catalogues used as leg padding. Because of the bull rushes on the edge, if a missed puck ended there, someone broke through the ice and a fire was necessary so as to be dry before going home, and not to be in trouble and threatened with punishment.

An aside on crime and punishment is necessary: we received no physical punishment for minor transgressions of adult-imposed norms. Although the brothers have varying memories, it seems that generally the belt was a deterrent equivalent to a nuclear bomb, always invoked but rarely applied. Bill and Dieter think that our mother invoked it when our father was away. Dieter remembers the occasional leather treatment (once after receiving the strap at school for shooting rubber bands). George says he received it liberally from our mother. Our father could be quick tempered but just as quickly lose his anger. Bill, George and Dieter remember him using the flat side of a handsaw as a corrective to not doing some work properly, or after ruining some material.

North of the elevators sat the main triangular town (Map 5.3). For five years, Willie, Adolf and Dieter traversed it each day twice in both directions for school. One frequent stopping point was the post office where the boys came in separately to ask if any mail had arrived for the Buses. The postmaster and clerk, cranky René Gauchie, grew to dislike the pestering. In revenge for his nastiness the Buse boys would jar the outdoor wooden stair railing and soon a contest was underway as to by when

they would have it knocked loose and down. The three block-long main street held most of the businesses from hotels at each end to barber shops, coffee shops, grocery, hardware, pool hall, pharmacy, with garages and churches in between. Some people, such as the dentist Harder, lived behind their offices. Some, such as Holmbergs who operated a ladies' wear, lived above them. Second-storey apartments above a few stores, such as the Fyfe Pharmacy on the main intersection with two banks, made some buildings look big. However, most were one-storey affairs with false-squared fronts, though many, including the OK General Store, covered the length of the lot to the back alley. Indeed, some lots remained empty until late into the 1960s. Towards the north end of the main street sat a big Catholic church and opposite a more modest Anglican one, both with manses and much space around them. At the north end of town past the Dallas hotel stood a new bowling alley and the place of Saturday afternoon magic, the cinema theatre. This street was traversed every day by the many children of the relatively poor families living south of the tracks as they hustled



Map 5.3. Barrhead 1954, street overview.

to and from school at the north end of town. Our mother insisted on our coming home for lunch, so we had to rush the five blocks home and back to arrive in time for softball and other school yard games with the students who came by bus.

With the postwar baby and immigration boom, education proved to be a growth industry for the town. As the schools were amalgamated and more buses added to bring farm children from ever-further outlying areas, teachers were hired with only a few months of training past high school. In the early 1950s, a school district reorganization resulted in the population of Barrhead town almost doubling during school days. A town that recorded a population of 802 at mid-1948, had 729 school students in October 1949; for year-end sports competitions over two thousand would arrive in the early 1950s. An aircraft hangar bought in 1949 to replace the burned-down town hall became the new high school auditorium with many classrooms on two sides of the large building. The stage at the front of the huge hall provided the raised platform from which important announcements were made, such as the death of King George VI and accession to the throne of Elizabeth II in June 1952. This auditorium would be decorated for the school graduation ceremonies. It served for theatre and school dances and, as the only gym, provided the place for basketball and gymnastic demonstrations watched from the balconies. Public events such as the Air Cadets annual reviews were held there. The high school auditorium doubled as social centre for the town, and remained the town's main public space until the 1980s.

People of British background dominated the main tone-setting institutions: from Town Council to Chamber of Commerce, from School Board to Legion, from Kinsmen to Masons, from Women's Institutes to Kinnettes. A few second or third generation Dutch and German names appear on the membership lists by the 1950s and increase during the 1960s. However, the British pre-eminence did not prevent the participation and integration of newcomers; indeed, by the time of our arrival one would hardly have known that the Messmers, Beneschs, Schultzes and others had been of German or Austrian background. Their integration had been completed through sports, business and loss of original language. The

demographic and economic postwar situation favoured anyone with skills, for whom opportunities abounded. In the building trades, as well as in small commercial enterprises (hardware stores, appliances, garages, flower and dime stores, motels, and cinema), the 1950s amounted to what a local history termed "The Golden Years" of Barrhead's growth.

If the future boded well and the timing of the Buses arrival proved propitious, the situation of 1949 challenged all family members. Finding work and supporting a large family preoccupied our father. Art aided him. Sewing clothes for the growing children occupied our mother, darning socks and food preparations kept Aunt Martha busy. Improving English was easier for those exposed to it in school and at work. The boys all remember having few communications difficulties within a year. Our father too seemed to have few linguistic difficulties. By contrast, our mother created a new language in which she used phrases such as 'Get gerade hier', which could mean get out of here or straighten up in a combination of English and German. Within a few years the boys lost their accents which aided integration.

Money meant much. Rarely would any be wasted and emphasis was always placed on saving it so as to make purchases in cash. Our parents had lost possessions in Paproć and again when forced to move from Harnau; our mother lamented the lack of documentation such as bank books when compensation possibilities arose later. The peasant or craftsmen mentality of having all wealth in cash or property reinforced frugality. Except for the Sunday suits—the first new ones usually received for confirmation—clothes were handed down and down, repaired and stitched. Our father often traded services. For example, he did some carpentry work for the dentist so that family members could get teeth repaired. The boys still living at home sought money as the means to get to movies or buy comics and candies.<sup>21</sup> Fyfe's Pharmacy became a favourite stopping point from and to school for Willie, Adolf and Dieter who wanted to read the comics other children bought. Eventually kindly Mr. Fyfe gave them old ones each week with the covers torn off, probably to stop them blocking the way of regular customers. The concept of an allowance did not exist. All the boys found ways to earn money, from collecting beer

bottles in ditches and delivering papers to finding and selling golf balls. Bill took music lessons on the accordion and by 1952 had a band, The Musical Five, which helped him obtain the fancy clothes and shoes he desired.

Perhaps a story can illustrate the obsessive focus on having and keeping money. One day a conflict and struggle occurred over who owned a found dime. Dieter swallowed it, which meant pooping behind the garage and stirring through the excrement for some days so as to recover the coin. The poor knew how to hang onto things, because each little thing meant so much. Dropping another brother's possessions into a hole that had been punched through the soft wall near the stairs going to the attic bedroom was a threat as well as a means of settling sibling conflicts. Much Plasticine, many marbles and some candies accumulated in the wall. The candies mostly came from Halloween when the boys became professional collectors. They ran through the town getting a bagful of goodies each year. In 2004, Adolf's school chum Harvey Elbe remembered Dieter saying something about some character in a house they were passing during their collecting, to the effect that the man did not like noise. Dieter proceeded to throw a rock destined for his roof. Instead the rock went through a window and they all ran as fast as they could. Harvey added that later they encountered a gang with whom they had a fight, until one gang member pulled a knife and we ran away.

A different kind of Halloween story reflects less on poverty than child control. Our outdoor toilet had been tipped during the first year in town. The next year Art and Willie were not allowed to go out for fear that they would get into trouble doing similar acts. Whether they or our father had the idea to set our toilet next to the hole is not clear, but they enjoyed the scene from the upstairs window when a trickster fell into the shit pit. Apparently, an equivalent story appears in many rural or small town memories of Canada in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>22</sup>

Our father could be authoritarian about behaviour and norms, especially regarding work, but he also took time to explain the way he made his own tools such as chisels, rope-tension saws and window planers. He created whistles from willow branches, a usual Paproć activity for boys with a pen knife. In doing so he



would explain the process of beating the bark to loosen it. Similarly he explained the mysteries of mortise and tendon joints or in-laying wood. We all learned to calculate and to measure carefully so that no extra wood would be bought or wasted for a project.

By this time, 1951-52, we would have been to see the movies. At the Roxy Theatre westerns or musicals with western themes predominated. Roy Rogers, many 'Indians' including Geronimo, the Lone Ranger and other heroes rode past. In March 1950, for example, Gregory Peck and Ann Baxter appeared in "Yellow Sky" advertised by *The Barrhead Leader* as a "super Western," while John Wayne in "Three God Fathers" offered "hard-bitten Texas desperados." After the mid-1950s the subject of the cinema mattered less than the darkness where hands could be held and sometimes nervously moved to other body parts. By the end of the decade visits to the drive-in north of town became the norm because necking could take place in more comfort, with much bargaining over who would obtain the truck and who the car. Bowling in the new alley next to the theatre, as well as playing 8-ball and snooker in the pool hall, moved from special luxury to normal activity. Before confirmation these activities were mostly placed in the sin category by our mother. Our means of entry and activities related to another entertainment, the annual two-day rodeo, reflected our frugality. Much time was spent hanging around the animal corrals trying to figure out how to get free entrance tickets, as we once did by saying our father was down the line of those waiting to buy tickets. During and after the rodeo the area under the stands would be carefully combed on hands and knees, looking for the change which had dropped out of pockets. Finding quarters and dimes offered as much excitement as the huge Brahma bulls. George remembers—this would have been toward the end of the 1950s—our mother once giving him 50 cents for the rodeo which all disappeared as entrance fee. The next year he joined his friends in sneaking in free.

Just as the family was becoming financially established in Barrhead a significant medical expense occurred. The background is that Willie, Adolf and Dieter had an extensive paper route delivering *The Edmonton Journal* starting in 1950.

This brought some earning, with much learning. During the winter when the bus that arrived at the north end of town stopped to let off passengers at one hotel, the newspaper delivery boys would grab hold of the back bumper and be pulled down the icy main street, learning how to wear out the handed-down boots they wanted replaced. When the bus stopped near the hotel at the south end of Main Street, the bundled papers were thrown on the ground. Then followed a mad rush during which the bundles were cut open and a dash made to the nearby hotel to sell extras for pure profit. Among the memorable incidents relating to the paper deliveries was the discovery by Adolf and Dieter that Willie was taking more than what we deemed his share of the gains. He still claims—smilingly—that this was his managerial due for heavier responsibilities. In any case, Dieter threw a good-sized stone which hit the offending brother. Willie gave chase and as he was about to pounce on him, Dieter threw himself down sideways so that Willie's knees went across the sidewalk, and he had difficulties walking for some days but dared not relate the cause at home. Some Christian moral probably had relevance.

Leaving the usual hi-jinks and normal sibling rivalry of the boys aside, the paper route caused a major calamity. In rushing to open one bundle of papers with a jackknife, Adolf cut his left eye on 28 May 1951. He ran to the local medical clinic and hospital, but had to be taken for specialist treatment in Edmonton. He stayed for 17 days to June 13. This meant large expenses when no public health care existed. Our father's anxieties and our mother's anguish were evident. Our father made arrangements for hospital costs and trips to Edmonton where Adolf would receive exemplary treatment. Those trips took place via Westlock where the road was being rebuilt with pavement to Clyde Corner. Tractors and Caterpillars often had to haul the old 35 Ford through mud and deep sticky clay. Bill remembers an occasion when the gas tank started to leak. After a few tanks of gas, a service station attendant taught our father the solution—chewing gum.

Adolf made an early return to school, keen to purse his studies as he had just been moved ahead one grade on the day of his accident. A rare inflammation developed in the sightless,

injured eye and this inflammation then moved to the good eye. Another hospitalization followed from June 29 to July 17, and to save the good eye, the left was removed after a common decision by our parents and Adolf. The specialist, Dr. Gross, a very kind doctor, took an interest in Adolf and charged only for the first surgery. After that he took nothing in the way of fees. However, hospital bills and trips to Edmonton were a strain, though Adolf took the bus alone for numerous check-ups (Photo 5.13).<sup>23</sup>

During the next winter Dieter required x-rays for an ankle kicked by someone wearing big boots during a recess soccer bout. A positive consequence for him was being pulled to school on a sled by bullying Willie. More important and costly was our father's right, namely his working, hand, being broken and being placed in a cast for a month following a blow from a sledge hammer. He had told the workman hitting the foundation stake that he was holding to stop, and then placed his hand on the stake to help himself up, but the workman gave another blow. Later he fell off a catwalk at the Beaver Lumber yard breaking his hip because the railing had not been properly attached. Eventually he received some compensation



*Photo 5.13. Adolf (after eye accident), George and Art in front yard of first house, Barrhead, 1952.*

for lost work time. Despite such accidents and setbacks the family prospered.

### **Building Barrhead**

Our arrival coincided with the expansion of Barrhead as well as the end of poverty and subsistence for the area's farmers. Though some land still had not been cleared and though a few First Nations people—48 registered in the large area stretching from Barrhead to north of Edmonton in the 1951 census—still camped in teepees in the park north of the town in 1949, electricity, tractors and vehicles had changed agriculture in the district. Hard work remained the norm for all farm family members, but the pioneer era of breaking new land, homesteading and eking out a living in log cabins, had passed.<sup>24</sup> Some farmers still used horses but most had changed to tractors. Grain and livestock prices were high and matched the upward population movement, due to large families, immigration, and economic growth. The desire for comfort in newer, larger houses as well as investments in larger barns and sheds had begun. Indeed, by the 1940s a few farmers already had large homes and barns as the second generation replaced log cabins and temporary sheds.

From carpentry our father quickly turned to building houses, barns and commercial structures. At first the customers were mainly various ethnic families, including many Ukrainians and Germans. In one house-building case the farmer paid in musty fifty-dollar bills, evidently from a buried can. Noteworthy were some special buildings: the Ukrainian Orthodox churches built with three silver onion-style steeples. The first church, just north of town built for a tiny congregation of seven families (21 members according to the 1951 census), advertised Buse and Sons' work to everyone coming and going on the main road leading north from Barrhead (Photo 5.14). Our father adapted quickly to Canadian construction methods switching to the 45 degree nailing of exterior boards after having nailed our house horizontally. Later the domed steeples topped with crosses caught the attention of passers-by. During 1952 similar steeples were built for the church at Rossington, northeast of town.<sup>25</sup> Obtaining the contract to build those steeples, plus another Ukrainian church in the neighbouring town of Westlock



*Photo 5.14. Our father on work site of Ukrainian Orthodox Church with onion steeple built for congregation of seven families, 1952.*

probably resulted from the first one. All the boys worked on some aspect of the first church and most worked on the many houses built in and around Barrhead.

George remained too young to participate during the 1950s, although he visited many construction sites and later also learned how to work with tools. Our mother was trying to raise him as a girl with long blond curls and pretty little suits which she sewed for him. One Saturday, while she and our father were shopping, all the boys decided that George, who was about two and half, needed a haircut. We cut off his curls. When our mother returned she was distraught. She guarded the curls in an envelope until near her death four decades later when she passed them to George. Our father had to pretend he was on our mother's side, but we knew from the lack of punishment that he thought it time for George to have another role.

All the boys worked with and for the 'old man' as he became known. Indeed, working a lot, working hard and working well

were instilled by both parents. They themselves served as the role models as did the Dams family and all the Paproćers. However, society also encouraged labour as the town council minutes indicate: "In December of 1954 [Barrhead] Council passed a resolution requesting a certain lady to lay a charge against her husband who will not work."<sup>26</sup> The Buses needed no prompting from the town council to put in ten to twelve hour days. (According to a wage list dating from summer 1962, though then relatively prosperous, we still worked an average of over 53 hours per week).

Art remembers our father as an excellent craftsman, but tough taskmaster with high standards. When those norms were not met—and all the boys can confirm this—our father could become enraged and sometimes turned the air blue with much swearing. Aside from Art, who learned carpentry, each of the sons in turn started at the bottom, first as a helper to some worker, then cleaning boards used for making concrete forms. Tarring basements came next. Once big and strong enough they graduated to helping pour basements by mixing cement via shovelling sand, gravel and cement mix into the small machine or wheel-barrowing the result up an incline to pour it. Clean jobs such as nailing floor, framing and sheathing walls and roofs followed. Laying shingles, like all the tasks which would show as a finished product, stayed reserved for experienced workers. Bill remembers little training and an authoritarian workplace. As one of his first jobs, he went along to Topland, north of Fort Assiniboine on the Athabasca River that had to be crossed by ferry, to help build a house for a Ukrainian family. Often the farmers provided lumber that had been cut on their land. In this case the farmer had so much roughly planed lumber that the 2x4s were simply nailed solid instead of having air space or insulation.<sup>27</sup>

Our father, who did the finish work—cupboards, doors, floor, door and window trim—inside these houses, soon became known for the quality of his built-in cabinets and had more than enough work. He proved a demanding boss, but generally liked to share a joke and knew when to knock off for a beer. This would be infrequently because the focus remained on work. Since he thought Alberta liquor laws—the legal age was 21—ridiculous, our father occasionally did take under-aged workers

along with the older men to the beer parlour on rainy days. Dieter remembers our father advising him and Johnny Busch to sit with our backs to the person serving and to make sure we ordered two beers for everyone when it was our turn. Adolf remembers only one under-aged visit in accompaniment of Art. Our father had to have regular pauses for smokes, though he could work well with a cigarette hanging out of his mouth corner or from his yellowed fingers, which was always. He consumed about three packs of 20 cigarettes a day (Photo 5. 15). He had good relations with the increasing number of men who worked for him (Johann Busch, Richard Korman, and Alex Mantei, in the mid-1950s, later Emil Buchholz, Johann Wichert, Franz Denneschewitz, and Ewald Jetzki). Mostly they were other immigrants (a Pole and a Hungarian as well as some of English background passed through, while some of Dieter's school buddies such as Johnny Busch and Paul Balzer stayed longer as labourers). German and English served as the languages of work, which meant that everyone developed a bi-lingual swearing capacity, as language on the job was quite foul. When a defining stage had been reached in the building,



*Photo 5.15. Our father smoking (as always) in first truck on which only part of Buse and Sons visible, about 1955.*

such as pouring the basement, a beer would be drunk in celebration while continuing to work. A home movie from 1959 shows the ready-mix driver joining the basement pourers in a beer while the pouring continues. Though no real *Richtfeste* (rafters-up celebration in Germany) were organized, having the rafters on and roof shingled usually led to a toast. By 1954 Art decided to be apprenticed to our father. To qualify as an instructor our father had to prove his competence and thus had his German craftsman's master's papers translated and notarized.

Financially, the family quickly advanced as our father took advantage of the building boom that began in the mid-1950s. Some of our father's tax returns were among our mother's papers. The table below shows his total income, taxable income, and tax paid from 1955 to 1961.

Year	Total income	Taxable income	Tax paid	Dependent children
1955	2597.30	0	0	4
1956	2643.90	0	0	4
1958	4916.60	1566.60	220	3
1959	2451.13	0	0	2
1960	9684.02	6834.02	1356.84	2
1961	6602.16	4252.16	755.48	1

His relative position on the income scale can be seen by examining the percentage of tax payers in Alberta who reported income less than our father for the same years:

1955 – 37%; 1956 – 34%; 1957 – not available; 1958 – 78%; 1959 – 24%; 1960 – 96%; 1961 – 88%.

The percentages of those below him on the income scale tend to rise, except 1959, and the last two years are therefore even more remarkable. The fluctuating nature of the construction business may be reflected in the numbers for 1959-61. We can



make a more localized comparison of his income levels. Data from census division 13, in which Barrhead was located, reveal that the average tax payer's income rises steadily from 2,710 in 1955 to 3,656 in 1961. By contrast our father's income jumped dramatically to well above the average by 1958. By 1961 he had attained the income range of most self-employed occupations, but much less than professionals such as doctors, dentists and lawyers. From almost nothing in 1948-49 to among the top ten to twenty percent of earners is a striking rise over a decade.<sup>28</sup>

Whatever reservations we might have about specific years, our father was making a lot of money, especially relative to other tax payers. Since, at least until Buse Construction was formed in 1959, he tried to operate with cash income, some of his tax filings may be underestimates of his actual income. He undoubtedly was salting a lot of it away for retirement, perhaps by buying real estate. The younger brothers at home benefited, but did not notice the degree of increased wealth, since our parents remained very frugal. Indeed, Adolf suggests that though our father bought a new Meteor car in 1958, he could have afforded a more middle-class Mercury. Perhaps being frugal proved the judicious path to take, since building permits in the Town of Barrhead dropped sharply in 1962 and remained at half the 1961 level until 1967.

One can trace our move up the financial and social ladder by the cars and houses owned. By 1954 we built a new large house in the west part of town which had sewer and water mains; sidewalks soon appeared. In the spring of that year it rained heavily after the hole for the house basement had been dug by Caterpillar. Willie and Dieter were assigned to pump out the water. The electric pump cut out and Willie waded into the water to investigate. As he touched the pump it shorted and held him as 110 volts went through his body. Dieter could not see it, but luckily Eddie Yuill, the boy from next door, ran and unplugged the cord. A few seconds longer and Willie, who had difficulties moving for a few days, would have been electrocuted. For his quick action Eddie received a metal plane from Bill. All the boys helped build the house with Willie and Dieter shingling and Eddie Yuill passing up shingles as the winter snows began.

The resulting lathe and plaster house—this time immediately covered in fake grey stone siding (Photo 5.16)—had a large living room that opened to a good-sized dining room. The former room had a big plate glass window, the dining room a set of corner windows. These rooms had fine hardwood floors which the younger boys had to polish by shuffling backward and forward with a soft rag over their feet. The ample kitchen contained many cupboards, corner nook with table, plus new electric stove and fridge. A master bedroom was off the small bathroom. On that bedroom's mauve walls Ewald Trotno, a German-trained journeyman and distant relative whom our father hired, stencilled flowers. Trotno, also a postwar refugee, originated from Srebrny Borek, near Paproć.

On the second floor Aunt Martha had her own room to the front. Adolf and Dieter shared the room facing north. That meant knowing when our father awoke in the bedroom below, as he had a morning coughing fit until his first cigarette was lit and puffed. Since Art and Willie soon left Barrhead, or came home only for weekends, by around 1955-56, Adolf and Dieter each had their own rooms upstairs. However, Adolf's privacy did not last as George replaced Willie and joined Adolf in the upstairs south bedroom.



*Photo 5.16. Our father in front of second Barrhead house, 1956.*

The basement had a coal furnace soon changed to gas. The new fuel caused an explosion that blew the steel door off as our father went to investigate why the furnace had not started on a cold day. Luckily, the flying door just missed him. In addition, the downstairs had a wash area with a wringer washer. Under the porch and stairs a cold room held rows of sealers with beet pickles and fruits. An unfinished storage area was sometimes converted to party space by the boys. The stairs led to the large porch at the back where the many outdoor clothes and boots could be deposited without soiling the house. On an outdoor platform attached to the porch clothes could be hung out to dry, and cakes and pies set on it to cool. Dieter recalls that he followed the example of the fox and stole many goodies from the back porch, learning how to cut strips out of cakes so they looked uncut.

For this house our father built new wooden beds and some of the other furniture, including a birch coffee table, flower stand and phonograph-radio cabinet.<sup>29</sup> Our mother, though, insisted on a 'modern' Arbourite table and chairs set for the kitchen. A very large double garage—bigger than the first house at 28 by 30 feet—held our father's workplace on one side and again a trash burner ate all the end pieces of wood with a red glow in winter. George remembers father's frugality in that nothing over three inches long could be burned. The back big door toward the alley never became operative. The remaining small backyard contained a potato and vegetable garden. In the front the required Canadian bit of green space mostly served the neighbour's dog, though our father improved it by planting a blue spruce.

At this house the neighbours were predominately English and middle class, unlike the ethnic mix and poor people among the mill and elevators south of the tracks. The Jack and Anne Yuill family lived to the south and became friends, with Jack encouraging the boys to join Air Cadets and Anne being a very helpful and informed person. She knew most people in town through her bridge club, the Canadian Legion, and the United Church. Jack's father had been mayor (1947-59) as well as a Member of Parliament. The children, Jack jr and Eddie became partners in Buse boys' mischief. The Wilda and Harvey Yuill family lived across the alley and their black-haired daughters

were of interest to the teen-aged Buse boys. They were frequently invited to attend the parties in our basement. Adolf's ability to take out his glass eye proved to be the hit of some of these gatherings, though he insists he only took it out a few times at gatherings with his male friends until he grew up at the start of high school. In retrospect, our liquor supply probably added to our popularity. Our father's disdain of the liquor laws meant that he thought it educational to provide—we had to pay—a modest amount of beer and liquor for parties which we augmented by other means. Though some of the neighbours evidently disapproved of the youthful imbibing, relations among the adults remained more than cordial. The neighbours to the north were the Messmer family. They were among our competitors in the construction business but their dog and their sweet daughter, Suzie, became George's close playmates. Other neighbours included the vice-principal of the high school, Ray Nadeau, across the road with whom we had little interaction at the time, though he came to appreciate our scholastic abilities. Aunt Martha, whose window let her see the Nadeau house, had suspicions about the goings-on there, perhaps revealing her prejudices or her gossiping abilities. She worked washing dishes first at the Victory and then at Aggies Café, and what she heard there helped her keep rumour mills moving. Our new house's physical placement brought us much closer to the schools that became the focus of our mother's ambitions for the children.

The upgrading of cars proceeded simultaneously with the house improvement. The original 1935 charcoal Ford car bought in 1949 for 300 dollars had been replaced by a green 1949 Meteor by 1952. Art, who learned to drive with the first car, remembers the 1952 purchase as made without going into debt. Bill adds that one could only see out the front of the 1935 Ford since the side windows still had the original glass which had gone milky (a failed attempt at shatter-proof glass). An old 1946 Fargo truck (Photo 5.17), later with Buse and Sons (nicely painted at an angle by Ewald Trotno) on the door, would be replaced by a new white Mercury truck in 1956. With the old one Willie learned to drive and on an errand to Dams' farm nearly ended in the barn when a tie rod broke.



*Photo 5.17. Bill and George with dog with old Fargo truck, Barrhead, 1950s.*

The importance of these vehicles as indicators of immigrant success, and of cars and trucks in general during the early postwar era, can be seen by their presence in family photos. Every family member posed with the used car purchased in 1952, including Aunt Martha, Willie with his accordion and Adolf and Dieter holding George with Adolf's friend Harvey Elbe. By late 1958 a new green and white, chrome-laden, 1959 Meteor Rideau 500 car announced our arrival among the prosperous. After that a new truck (1960 red and white Mercury, 1962 blue and white Mercury) or car (1965 Ford) came every few years. By 1954 Art had his own Meteor bought at Bell Motors for 2,800 dollars saved from dairy, road and construction work (Photo 5.18). It served as the family car until his marriage in 1956. Willie, by then known as Bill, bought a 1952 Pontiac sedan in 1959; later he made all envious with a sporty Silver Hawk Studebaker.

Simultaneously, many new clothes and shoes helped us fit into the fashion trends. By the mid-1950s we all had new suits for church. By the mid- to late-1950s we also had the desired objects of the era, suede or leather jackets, pink shirts and



*Photo 5.18. Art with 1954 Meteor Niagara, Barrhead, 1950s.*

appropriate shoes, namely 'desert' boots of soft leather. Flat hats with brim turned inside to make the front smooth and thicker came in many patterns from checkered to plain. Thin ties against white shirts were required Sunday dress, even when playing cards in the afternoon or evening.

Though sausages and sauerkraut remained favourite foods, and occasionally the herring and potatoes of early days were repeated, the variety of meats from John Klein's butcher shop (after mid-1956) included various sausages, cutlets and big roasts. By then more vegetables (though mostly canned) appeared in addition to home-canned fruit, such as cherries. Bill recalls that around 1958 he introduced our mother to her first salad during a trip home from Calgary. Especially notable was the increase of fancy cakes, such as cheese cakes—eventually including Christmas fruit cakes and cookies—about which the refugees had only dreamed for many years. Ironically, the food probably became more stereotypically German—in the western German sense—as opposed to the peasant foods of Mecklenburg and Poland, which had been the Paproćers' traditional fare. In five years the refugees had arrived materially, in that all basic needs were filled.

The early days of impoverishment were not without festivities. Family gatherings, which extended to the whole Paproć clan on occasion, seemed very frequent in retrospect. They also followed a ritualized pattern. No matter where held they usually included a combination of the two Busch, Wichert, Dams and Buse families. The gatherings of two dozen people would be after Sunday church service (Photos 5.19 and 5.20). The men and children ate first at long mismatched tables set together. Home-made pickled cucumbers and beets accompanied turkey or chicken, but sometimes many breaded cutlets, and piles of boiled or mashed potatoes with gravy also appeared. Vegetables were seasonal or canned. Pies or cakes followed. The women who had cooked for the two dozen persons were accustomed to their dual-duty role from feeding threshing and building crews. They would eat later, when the children had headed for the wood piles for chopping contests and other games, or had gone behind some building to sneak a smoke and to fraternize with the opposite sex. On one Sunday at Damses, a raised axe slipped from ten-year-old Adolf's grip and



*Photo 5.19. Some of the Paproćers during Sunday gathering at Buses (from left Adolf Dams, Rudolf Wichert with Eliszabeth Dams in front, Gunda Busch, Meta Korman, Johann Busch, Richard Korman, August Dams, our father, our mother, Elsie Wichert, Aunt Olga, Aunt Martha), Barrhead, probably 1951.*



*Photo 5.20. Same Sunday afternoon gathering at Buses: (in front) Dieter, behind him Art Wichert and Art Dams, and behind Art Wichert Adolf next to Bill with squeeze box; back from left: Adolf Wichert, Edna Dams, Art, Ed Wichert and Bruno Dams, Barrhead, probably 1951.*

he gashed his head. This later caused double trouble as someone snuck out precious towels to soak up the blood. Meanwhile the men, slowly sipping a beer from long-necked bottles, would have shirt-sleeves rolled up and ties loosened as they energetically played cards (Photo 5.21), especially the Russian game Durak [fool], on kitchen tables brought outside and ringed with chairs.<sup>30</sup> A shot of hard liquor might have accompanied the meal and be had again before departure. Adolf remembers jugs of port as among the original drinks. During the summer months each family seemed to take a turn hosting the clan though by the mid-1950s the big gatherings became less frequent. The composition of the group moved beyond Paproćers and relatives to other Germans such as the Kleins and Neumanns, or new relatives when Art married into the Elbe family.

Some memorable occasions included the weddings and confirmation gatherings. For instance, in August 1952 when Edna Dams married Albert Kleinfeld, a second-generation German farmer from Manola, the whole Paproć, and much of





*Photo 5.21. Ewald Trotno, Dieter, Harvey Elbe and Adolf at Elbes (compare with Photo 5.4).*

the German clan plus neighbours participated at the Dams' farm. Such occasions provided fancy food, sneaking extra pops and hanging around for the children, much flirting for the teenagers and dancing and drinking for the rest. Bill played for that dance and remembers someone asking him to continue into the early hours but offering him a mere two dollars extra pay. He drank as much of the free booze as he could to compensate and remembers becoming quite ill. Most memorable perhaps were the parties after evening meals, especially Saturdays during winter months. The furniture would be pushed to the side or out of the biggest room and loud music and much, sometimes quite wild, dancing followed. On one occasion at the Wicherts, Edmund Dams swung a woman with such abandon that her legs knocked off the stove pipe bringing down soot on everyone. Stories were told—our father, John Klein and others raised in oral traditions were good at it—and good fellowship encouraged. On one occasion Lena Busch complained about the heat and our father pulled forward her dress and blew down it to much laughter at the risqué behaviour. Young and old mixed, though the events were orchestrated by the adults, with children encouraged to participate or left to their own games provided those fit within the general guidelines of moral comportment.

Sometimes Willie played his accordion for these occasions, but mostly he played dances at the country schools and community halls. He had taken music lessons and provided much entertainment for the family. His musical talents were evident, and his band competed in the province-wide Alberta Search for Talent show. During the 1950s the run-off competitions led to province-wide finals in which Willie's group won a prize. After that he played at weddings and Saturday night dances at the halls next to corner stores and gas stations of the tiny hamlets surrounding Barrhead. For the family, Willie's accordion was a source of much pleasure and led to the whole family singing German folksongs and sometimes our father's military songs ('Drei Lilien', 'Lili Marleen'). When Willie moved to Edmonton in 1955 the big void he left was only partly filled by a phonograph and the purchase of German records.

### **From frugality to modest consumption**

Perhaps three events, as well as the new house and vehicles, illustrate the Buse's social and economic arrival by the mid-1950s. One involved Bill and a conflict at school, but mainly it comprised an attack on immigrants. Second would be Art's wedding in 1956, a large and lavish affair. The third would be our parents' silver anniversary celebration underscoring our entry into local institutions as equal participants.

Not long after our move to the new house, and as a result of our father's success, an incident occurred at school. In late 1954 or early 1955, a Fluet girl accosted Bill, who had achieved much popularity at school. She made assertions about foreigners working cheaper and taking Canadian jobs, meaning that her father thought he was losing out on work. In a large shop Fred Fluet sold paint and made cabinets, but European training and craftsmanship showed to our father's advantage as Fluet's woodworking firm did not thrive. The extended French-Canadian Catholic family had homesteaded in 1906 at Mosside, a hamlet south of Barrhead.<sup>31</sup> They had become relatively well-to-do in saw milling, lumber sales and construction. The son in the wood working business had bought an old grain mill in Barrhead and converted it to a big carpentry shop. Though themselves immigrants and inter-married with German descendants, the Fluet daughter engaged in blame-the-

foreigner tactics. Bill may have responded in kind to the assertion. The Vice-Principal, Ray Nadeau, became involved. In any case, the issue was settled quietly—according to Art some milled goods continued to be bought at the Fluet store—but it illustrated some of the resentment of the immigrants' successes. Our mother and father added it to the list of reasons—another was an older girl, Agnes Rendfleisch, about whom Bill had conflicts with our mother regarding her wanting to marry him—for Bill being allowed to do Grade 12 in Edmonton. He threatened to quit school if he had to return to Barrhead High so went to Concordia College starting in fall 1955.

Dieter remembers other ethnic incidents, some of which included fisticuffs, but only in the very first years in Barrhead. This related to other students calling him names about being German and making fun of his wearing short pants made by our mother. His Grade two class picture (1950) shows him as the only one with short pants, similar to Adolf then in Grade four who has no memories of ethnic discrimination. Our mother offered a fine retort for us to use if schoolmates did not like our clothes—ask them to give you better ones. Soon Willie, Adolf and Dieter were part of the usual school gangs and groups favoured for team and game selection at recess. Adolf remembers being part of a gang playing Indians and cowboys in the early 1950s wearing the high boots our mother had brought along from Germany. The ill-fitting boots impeded speedy escapes and made him a regular victim of Indian ambushes. Despite the Fluet incident, Willie, who started at Grade five in Barrhead, had become socially very popular as his musical group demonstrated. Adolf became known for scholarly activities—in the 1958 school yearbook he was presented as a computing machine who could answer all questions—though both Adolf and Dieter participated actively in school and social activities as yearbooks of the later 1950s and the local newspaper reports confirm.

Our mother was especially ambitious for her boys. However, she failed in her desire to have at least one pastor (if not more) and one doctor of medicine. Beginning with Willie each of the boys in turn rejected the pastor route. Adolf tells of our mother inviting Pastor Rehn for a visit and making sure that Adolf was

present. Rehn had brought his clerical robe, collar and cross. He and our mother insisted that Adolf try on this gear. When he did they kept saying that it was a perfect fit and that he should plan for the ministry. After also rejecting the minister route toward which he often found himself pushed until he turned nine (perhaps due to swearing too much from being on construction sites), George frequently heard about the need to study to become a doctor. One local practitioner served as role model for our mother until George could employ the rumour that that doctor had been caught in the back seat of his car with a nurse.

Instead, eventually a construction superintendent, a draftsman, two professors and a pension manager moved to the middle class niches of North America. During the 1950s all were given the basis to do that as they were pushed to do their best. Barrhead offered the basis for climbing up the social ladder through work and education. At home all were given much positive and negative reinforcement and offered attention despite the number involved. Much sibling rivalry probably did not make raising five energetic, active and ambitious boys easy. We often did dangerous things such as sticking fingers in power saws, getting pieces of wood stuck in body parts, and breaking limbs at sports. George, at about age six, had a particularly nasty accident falling off some concrete forms. He fell onto rocks smashing his left elbow. Dieter literally dragged him home and Willie took him to the hospital where his broken arm was badly set. It later had to be rebroken but could not be completely reset, though it hardly serves as a golf handicap. Perhaps we were following our father's example since he stuck his palm into the planer so that a piece from his upper arm had to be sewn in to replace the torn-out flesh. In spring 1958 Adolf and Dieter floated down the river on large ice floes and could have drowned as the floes headed for the rapids. They both grabbed at a tree hanging over the river with their legs in the cold water. They dried themselves at the neighbour's where they had George bring other clothes, with Mrs. Yuill promising not to tell our mother.

Whereas the boys participated in drunken parties, and though our father liked a shot of hard liquor and our mother sipped a tiny bit of wine, our parents rarely indulged in much alcohol.

Much later, we found out that many of the 'herbal medicines' our mother occasionally sipped had a high alcohol content. Our parents adapted to, but did not accept, the semi-Puritan Social Credit approach to liquor by which only those over twenty-one could purchase alcohol, had to sign for it and women were not allowed to drink in public places. After plebiscites in 1957—Barrhead voted for more drinking establishments—"Ladies and Escorts" entries to beer parlours allowed women accompanied by a male to enter. Big cities such as Edmonton liberalized the regulations earlier.

Our mother employed liquor in a special way as a medical aid. If any illness appeared, whether a cough or a pain, she boiled one-third honey, one-third butter and one-third *Schnapps* in an enameled cup and made the ill person drink the cupful as hot and quickly as possible. This peasant cure can be understood as a way to knock out children, force them to rest and leave working adults from being pestered. In any case, hardly anyone ever was sick. Colds and flus were not considered serious enough to stop going to work or school. Dieter's report cards over five years (1952-57) show being late once, no absences for two years, a one-day absence for one year and in December 1955 missing 3 days, meaning he must have wanted a lot of hot drinks. When we had television after 1956, on Saturday afternoons our father would lie on the living room carpet and share a bottle of vodka with butcher John Klein and/or blacksmith Jacob Handel watching the theatre of wrestling, Abbot and Costello or Laurel and Hardy movies to hearty laughter. On such occasions they demonstrated Germanic capacity and emptied the bottle, though Klein would have consumed the largest portion.

Certainly the boys proved to be better consumers than their parents in the alcohol category, except perhaps Art. Sometimes we roxy-toned the back fence next to the garden. The reference is to a bespeckled-looking paint common during the late 1950s which dried looking a lot like vomit. We were allowed to be wild in our little bit of spare time, or put another way, our mother proved incapable of preventing us from sowing some oats. However, morality, work and educational demands were set at high levels. At all those tasks all the Buse boys did very well. Our mother regularly checked report cards and insisted we

could do better. George received the brunt of these pressures, especially when he remained the only one at home after 1960. Dieter and George's troubles started in 1955 when Adolf, on graduation from Grade 9, won the Governor-General's medal for the highest standing in the Barrhead and Westlock school divisions, and numerous prizes thereafter.<sup>32</sup>

Though calculating in commercial enterprises, and apolitical according to Art, our father generally moved through each new situation more relaxed than our mother. He had his own style regarding norms. For instance, after Bill and Adolf went to a country wedding dance with our father's brand new white 1956 truck in which they had been sick from booze—vehicles then were part of the drink culture for most youth—, the 'old man' made them get up early and clean it as well as put in a very long hard day despite their hangovers. Often that was his style of cure or punishment.

Our father taught the difference between cheating at games and being honest in life. At cards he would invariably make some distracting movement, toss down a card and sweep away the trick trying to avoid the opponent's noticing that he did not have the required high card or trump. He operated similarly in Chinese checkers, at which our mother and Aunt Martha passionately hovered like vultures over the board. When he knew he was losing or became bored, he bumped the board or rolled a few marbles and placed them back to his advantage. Occasionally he participated in crokinole, a popular Canadian board game. There he would try to play a piece which had already been knocked off. This game was played passionately by the boys during the late 1950s (with the unwritten rule, according to Bill, that winners had the right to pee on losers). On one occasion, Dieter and Adolf decided that Johann Busch and our father were winning at Durak because of the speed with which they cheated. We arranged to lean back and hide two low cards each in our shirt pockets. At the end of the hand our opponents puzzled about some cards not having been played, but conceded defeat. After a few more rounds of the same, we gleefully revealed our trick and all were soon laughing about our learning their ways. Our father always did his cheating in such a charming way that even when caught he made everyone laugh. But he underscored: "*ist doch nur ein*

*Spiel* [it is only a game]". By contrast in life and business he generally believed in trusting people and honesty. However, he was not naïve and knew when to adjust facts, as he had about his Nazi party membership and nationality to obtain immigration clearance. Dieter remembers an incident when we were building a house across from Weisgerber's lumber yard, a retailer from whom our father sometimes had bought material. In this instance our father had found some cheap out-of-town source. Weisgerber mustered up his courage, came across the street and confronted our father. He asked who we thought we were, not even letting him bid on the job. When Weisgerber had left father said, "he is of course right."

Our mother had not only academic but also religious and social ambitions for her boys. She succeeded at one of her aims, namely having the boys marry into German Lutheran families, or at least she succeeded with the eldest. That leads to the second event illustrating our social arrival. On 8 June 1956 Art married Gertrude Elbe. Her ethnic German grandparents on her mother Elsa's side, the Schlack family, had come from Russia in 1926 and had moved to Barrhead in 1928.<sup>33</sup> Gertrude's father John and his brother Alfred Elbe, also ethnic Germans, had settled in the Barrhead area by 1933. In sum, the Elbes were a second-generation, well-established German farm family living three kilometres north of town. Hinting at their relative wealth, in addition to a large barn and extensive fields, their stucco house even had a tiled fireplace! (Photo 5.22) They were members of the St. John's Lutheran Church. The son Harvey became Adolf's school and after-school buddy by 1952 and together they engaged in hobbies such as photography. Art's interest in Gertrude developed through our father doing renovations to the Elbe house and through church contacts. Their wedding reception, with a fancy rented Lincoln and a friend of Gertrude's as bride's maid and Bill as one of the best men, filled the Legion Hall. Bill remembers trouble with his regular girl friend due to his strong interest in the sexy bridesmaid with whom he had been matched. Over 200 guests, some from distant places, mostly of German background, attended the bash. As was traditional for the local ethnic weddings, booze flowed freely and profusely. Our father claimed to have paid for it and the many flowers. Polkas, fox trots and waltzes followed one another for hours. No member of



*Photo 5.22. Engagement of Art and Gertrude at Elbes, 1956.*

the Buse, Elbe, Schütz, Dams, Wichert, Busch....clan was missing. On the Elbe side the guest list included Arndts and Rendfleischs as well as many of the Elbe's neighbouring farm families. The German and English languages intermingled as much as the people.

Perhaps the report on the front page of the local newspaper on 12 July 1956, written by members of the Elbe family documents as much as the memories: "Wedding Bells Buse- Elbe: Bouquets of mixed flowers banked the altar of St. John's Lutheran Church Friday June 8 for the double ring ceremony.... Rev. Gnauck officiated.... The bride chose a gown of chantilly lace over satin, the full skirt extending en train. The gown featured a sweetheart neckline and lily point sleeves. Her chapel veil was held in place by a three-strand pearl headpiece. She carried a bouquet of American beauty roses encircling a white orchid, with streamers of sweet-heart roses. Her only jewelry was a set of cultured pearls and ear-rings, a gift of the groom. Attending the bride as maid of honor [sic] was Miss Elda Bartell and the bridesmaid was Miss Lydia Zitlau. They wore similarly styled gowns of net over satin with lace boleros....The groom was attended by his brother, Mr. William Buse, as best



man and by Mr. Harvey Elbe, brother of the bride. Ushering the guests to marked pews were Mr. Adolph [sic] Buse and Mr. Erwin Dievert. The bride's mother chose for the occasion a light blue lace and net dress with white and navy accessories. Her corsage was of sweetheart roses. The mother of the groom wore a blue lace dress with yellow and white accessories and a corsage of yellow roses...After supper the guests were entertained at a dance... For travelling to Coeur d'Alene and Spokane the bride chose a grey flecked suit with white and navy accessories and an orchid en corsage... Attending the wedding from out-of-town..." In a town of 1,600 persons the event may have been the show of the season. Though the account contained the standard emphasis on female clothes, this wedding report was longer than most and having two ministers outdid rival events. This occurred less than seven years after arrival as ill-dressed refugees.

Could a new version of Paproć—Germans among a predominantly English instead of a Polish majority population mixed with other ethnic minorities—have begun on the Alberta parklands? At first the Barrhead area ethnic and religious groups tended to marry among themselves, similar to most migrant groups. For example, one of Mrs. Elbe's sisters had married a Rendfleisch and another wed an Arndt—all of whom became part of the extended German clan with whom we interacted, especially thanks to church and marriage ties. Our mother more than hinted at the appropriateness of Art's marriage choice, reinforced by the appearance of the first grandchild, Arthur jr in December 1958. She expressed her dislike of one of Bill's first amours within the German community which led him to branch out in Edmonton. By this time Adolf had developed an interest in a French-Canadian dark-haired class mate from far north of Barrhead, while Dieter surreptitiously dated an English (partly Irish and German) classmate, Judy (later Judith) Betts, living only a block away. Perhaps symptomatic of those personal ethnic relations were our ties to the larger community and our integration in it. Our mother could not hide her reservations about Bill's next choice and first marriage partner of December 1961, Sylvia Mykitiw, a Ukrainian Catholic. At university Adolf met Kathy Showalter, who was of English and German extraction. They married in 1964 without any noticeable objections on the part of our

mother, a mid-morning Baptist wedding notwithstanding. Dieter's first choice, with marriage in November 1961 (Photo 5.23), slowly became acceptable as she walked by the house every Sunday on her way to teach Sunday school at the United Church in fine clothes which our mother found especially acceptable because they had been sewn by the wearer. However, the quick marriage due to pregnancy again lowered appreciation until the first female grandchild restored it in 1962. No new Paproć of German Lutherans would be replicated at Barrhead as most Buse sons went multicultural.

Our parents were pleased, especially our mother, that Art and Bill finished their technical training in 1957 and 1958-59, respectively, and obtained good jobs, eventually buying or building themselves houses in or near Edmonton. By then Adolf headed off to Edmonton for university after being school valedictorian. He won a three-year university tuition scholarship plus a \$500 Friends of the University Scholarship and \$50 Board of Governor's prize. Dieter proved to be a good student as well and just as active as Adolf had been in sports and Air Cadets. Our mother did not like our heavy involvement in sports thinking it would undercut academics and work, and



*Photo 5.23. Dieter and Judith's wedding, 1961.*

sometimes she employed the line that Adolf needed to save his sole eye for important matters. She had special reservations about Adolf joining a major local institution for adolescent males. Adolf wanted to join Air Cadets because his buddies Harvey Elbe and Bill Becker were in it. Like Dieter, he had also heard about free trips to summer camp and perhaps flying lessons. Our mother rightly associated this youth group with the military, but wrongly feared that her sons would soon be sent off to war. In any case, during October 1955 both joined. They became exemplary little robots: ironing shirts and pants, shining boots and marching very well. Eventually, both would be on prize-winning drill teams and go to summer camps with novel flying experiences in Beaver or DC3 planes at Sea Island, B.C. The excitement of those first flights would be reinforced at Namao, near Edmonton. There orientation flights found many youths, except us, doing more roxy-toning inside transport planes. Dieter went to Sea Island for summer camp in 1956, both went to Sea Island in 1957 (Photo 5.24). At that year's annual Barrhead squadron review Dieter won the award for best cadet in the whole squadron.

Another accident quickened the end of Adolf's Air Cadet career and fostered Dieter's rise. One late spring day in 1958 mother insisted that Adolf and Dieter deliver a package of her sewing—she mostly did curtains and dresses. We appropriated the neighbour's bikes since we had none. Racing home on the way back on the dark gravel road Dieter thought he heard Adolf yell something. He stopped and Adolf ran full speed into his pedal, sailed through the air and landed on the gravel road seriously skinning his hands and one knee. Though Adolf's participation in the drill team was undercut and Dieter moved up into his place for the main march past, 1958 remained Adolf's year of local glory. In addition to being high school valedictorian and winning university scholarships, he won an Air Cadet exchange visit to the U.S. After two weeks of touring Air Force bases and tourist sites in Massachusetts, the cadets visited New York City and Washington, D.C., including the Pentagon and the Rose Garden of the White House, where Dwight Eisenhower gave a brief welcome. Later Dieter moved further up the ranks and in 1959 won participation in the national drill instructors' course at Camp Borden, Ontario, for six weeks. By fall 1959 he was the commander of the whole squadron. His rifle team won national



*Photo 5.24. Adolf and Dieter as Air Cadets at summer camp Sea Island, BC., excerpted from photo of squadron, 1957; back row, first four from l., Adolf, Pete Holland, Harvey Elbe and Bruce Robinson; far r. Jack Yuill; Johnny Busch middle behind sign, Dieter second from r. front.*

prizes for shooting. As a result of his drill team's winning performance he obtained a memorable trip in a trainer jet. In 1960, in addition to a university scholarship, he won a three week exchange visit to England, which included flying in a Comet jet, gliding near Dover and seeing Queen Elizabeth II on the grounds of Balmoral castle in Scotland. The local newspaper between 1955 and 1960 frequently reported the Buse brothers' academic, sports and Air Cadet achievements. An irony of our integration is surely that in 1945-46 our father was a POW of the British. Yet by 1957 he attended father and son banquets of the youth paramilitary organization of one of the victor countries. With him, our mother, dressed in hat and fine suit and accompanied by the parents of other Air Cadets, such as the Bell and Bredo war-veteran families, attended the annual parades and proudly watched as the sons collected prizes and trips.

By the late 1950s our father's business seemed well established but may have been affected by the general economic downturn of 1958. It appears that at least one worker was laid off and jobs were taken further afield including the building of two houses in Edmonton. However, in ten years our father had built up a reputation as a very reliable house builder, sometimes doing as many as ten houses a year. Whether taking jobs out of town came from necessity or opportunity is not known. Art was laid off by Poole Construction in Edmonton during 1958 and he returned home to work. During that summer one of the distant jobs was the Hinton pool hall. The crew included our father, Art, Richard Korman and Adolf, who served as mud man for the concrete block layer. Later came much pounding of nails as home-made laminated beams were constructed from plywood. Art and Adolf alternated sitting in the open box of the truck on the way to and from Hinton (about 280 kilometres).

By January 1959 our father had invited Art to participate in a partnership called Buse Construction. Pay stubs show four full-time and six part-time or casual labourers working with the partners in May 1959. One job involved a three-man crew building Hal Bernrot's store at Swan Hills. That included trips into grizzly bear country and trucks sinking to the cab in mud and muskeg so that a 100 kilometre trek turned into a 36 hour adventure. Art, Adolf and Franz Denneschewitz had to sleep in the cab and wait to be rescued by a Caterpillar. The only food, cold pork and beans and white bread, attracted no grizzlies (Photo 5.25). Perhaps the grizzlies had overhead one of them say "I'm hungry enough to eat a bear."

Such adventures aside, in 1959 our father's income dropped to half its previous level, according to his tax returns. Yet, during the next year it quadrupled. The impact of the changes passed unnoticed to the younger children, given the pace of building activities. Numerous larger contracts were mixed with continued house building. In May 1960 a major job involved an addition to the United Church. This congregation with over 400 persons was the town's largest. A large main church already sat high on a full basement. Onto its south side Buse Construction built a tall rectangular tower as well as a beamed hall and meeting rooms. Adolf and Dieter served as mud and lumber



*Photo 5.25. Art and Franz Dennechewitz on way to Swan Hills, 1959.*

haulers since much of the angular building required more skilled labour, directed by our father and Art. An enlargement of Bell's Garage—where the family Ford vehicles were purchased—occurred simultaneously with that job. Soon we had so much work that in 1961, Dieter, at age 19, led a crew building a school addition at Clyde. One Friday Art arrived to inspect and went into a swearing spell about how much money the company would lose because Dieter had "screwed up." Dieter insisted that he had followed every architectural drawing. Art ranted until he explained that no heating duct holes had been left in the concrete foundations and we were already putting joists in place for the floors. The architects had indeed omitted to put the holes on their drawings and eventually paid for the correction. That was done by Art and Dieter lying in mud under the joists with a jack hammer trying to break holes in especially strong concrete. The force of our cursing probably exerted as much pressure as the jackhammer. Years later a local account commented that "the design and construction...was more suited to Southern California than Northern Alberta....The cinder blocks had little insulation and the full-length windows held in little heat." Perhaps the heating ducts were not large enough.<sup>34</sup>

A bit later Buse Construction built a huge department store (Stedman's) which included 6 inch laminated beams over a thirty-foot span. Gingerly walking across to place the cross pieces made hearts beat faster. Art complaining about the quality of the tile laying—the first time in such a big space—caused more heart beating. Simultaneously Buse Construction worked on an optician's (Huculak) building during a rainy summer in which Dieter and his buddy Johnny Busch built foundation forms in mud and took them apart in muddy water.

As the two elder brothers moved away or started their own families, our father built our mother more modern, compact houses on some of the lots he had bought on speculation. When she found a flaw—in the one near the sports grounds, for example, she did not like the entry and thought it too far from the town centre—he simply sold it and built her another. Eventually, she accepted one nearer downtown and they moved there in 1963.

Work mostly proved enjoyable because one saw buildings rise out of the ground. Pride in one's creation as well as in efficiency dominated at all the work places. Sometimes it was downright fun as Adolf and Dieter engaged in Brucemanship. Bruce Robinson, a very tall school and golf chum wanted to do some physical labour. But we all knew he had little coordination. He persisted and our father finally relented. However, our father hired him on condition that Bruce remained our responsibility. On Bruce's first day at work, we explained the art of basement tarring. We told him you made a large rectangle on the side of the basement and then slowly filled it at a 45 degree angle. Bruce was tarring nicely away, not achieving much, when the 'old man' arrived, and, while smoking, watched Bruce. Saying nothing to Bruce, he turned to Adolf and Dieter, who were snickering and nailing floor pretending not to notice anything. He said: you will have the floor done by lunch. He knew we would have to work really hard and have to have Bruce's help to do it. Bruce emerged with as much tar on himself as the basement walls and after getting him semi-clean we had to nail in the proverbial hell fashion as Bruce brought boards. Other pranks at work included conflicts and competition with the electricians and plumbers.<sup>35</sup> Hiding tools or wetting someone's

lunch were pranks, but when they nailed a sacred object called a leather jacket to a floor war had been declared.

At home too, pranks continued and included George. For instance, our mother and aunt had baked some pies before they went off with our father to visit Uncle Ben and family in the United States, leaving Adolf and Dieter in charge of George. He was told that the remaining pie would be only for those over ten. He grabbed the pie and locked himself in the bathroom. Since he knew that the bathroom door could be unlocked with a wooden match, he pulled out a drawer to block the door. Adolf and Dieter cajoled, threatened and schemed. They tried to open and crawl through the window, but George locked it. Then they thought they had the answer: Adolf would distract George at the door while Dieter reached through the laundry chute to push the drawer shut. However, George saw the hands coming through and shut the chute on Dieter's fingers. He did eventually share the pie after promises that we would not retaliate.

Aside from work and school, our parent's private and social life continued to move mainly in German circles. A significant marker of our passage up the social ladder can be seen by looking at photos of our parents' silver wedding anniversary celebration in January 1957. The new house, now full of fine furnishings, lamps, mirrors and the plate service with gold edging that our mother had long coveted, served as the venue. The Paproć clan predominated though many other Germans from the community participated. This was where the extended family gathered. However, the Buse bunch appears less than happy in one staged photo. Adolf's explanation is that the minister was giving a lecture on marriage. The other pictures, of cake cutting and dancing, show the usual conviviality of clan gatherings. Like many other nominally private events this one received notice in the local newspaper on the front page, 14 February 1957: "Silver Wedding Feted Locally: Recently over eighty friends and relatives gathered at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Gustav Buse to surprise them on the occasion of the 25<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary.... Since their arrival here they and their family have taken an active interest in church and community affairs. Rev. Gnauck was present and gave an address. The evening was spent dancing...." In addition to listing the sons



and sisters present, the report noted that Uncle Emil came all the way from Winnipeg (Photo 5.26).



*Photo 5.26. Uncle Emil and Mrs. Schroeder dancing at surprise wedding anniversary party; our father and mother dancing at same.*

During the late 1950s, when Bill was studying surveying and drafting in Calgary at the Southern Institute of Technology, and while Art was working in Edmonton for Poole Construction after completing his apprenticeship, the family went to visit them. That meant trips to Edmonton and as a family we took our first trip to what was considered far away Calgary plus the first weekend holiday to Banff. In the car German folk songs were sung, pieces of heavy rye bread torn off—our father detested Canadian white mush which he would roll into a ball—and sausage passed around to take a bite. The songs were lively ones, such as “Lustig ist das Ziegeuner Leben, fariah, fariah hoh. Brauch den Kaiser kein Zins zu geben, fariah, fariah hoh. Lustig ist es im gruenen Wald, wo der Ziegeuner sein Weib vertreibt, fariah, fariah, fariah, fariah hoh. [The gypsy life is lively....do not need to pay imperial taxes...it is lively in the green forest, where the gypsy beats his wife....”] The family still shared everything, including ethnic prejudices.

By then too our father had served as *Vorsteher* (church elder responsible for Sunday collection as well as on the management council) of St. John’s church, though he never pretended to be a committed religious person. By contrast our mother insisted on the show of church participation as well as having a very

emotional attachment to her faith. By this time, aside from Art and George, the other boys had reservations about institutional religion and slowly avoided church attendance. After confirmation in Edmonton, George too drifted away from religion, aside from christenings and weddings.

Despite the boys beginning to go their own way, many activities and outings were still as a family. Most importantly an atmosphere of being on an upward march, collecting material goods and being on a trajectory toward material heaven dominated everyone's outlook in the late 1950s.

Perhaps more details about Barrhead would confirm and supplement some of the above claims about the family fortunes fitting with the postwar upward economic curve and the ease of integration thanks to the presence of so many ethnic groups and that the local commercial scene included some of German and Lutheran background.<sup>36</sup> However, the demographic and economic situations are insufficient as an explanation for social advancement and integration. The attitudes of the townspeople to newcomers must be noted. In general the atmosphere was liberal and open, though one or two incidents hinted that underneath the surface some resentment of the capable newcomers existed in a few quarters.<sup>37</sup> Among the liberal and supportive groups were the school teachers. In retrospect some Barrhead teachers seem surprisingly French with names such as Bujeau, Nadeau, and Picard though all worked in English. Here too the dominant group was British as Jenkins, Houston, Martin, Nochbar, Nicols, O'Brien, Joys, Ott, Murphy attest, while Isabel Collins probably was Jewish<sup>38</sup> and Mr. K—no one could spell and most students muttered a version of Krzywkowski—was definitely Polish. Despite their diverse background the teachers mostly offered a very thorough grounding in their subjects. Occasionally a teacher proved to be an alcoholic (Houston) but students enjoyed that he invited them to play sports instead of study. Another (Rickerson), who was very young and pretty, proved she knew numerous card games. Regardless, many students from Barrhead, including the Buse boys, received a solid basis for further studies and like their compatriots were encouraged to go to college or university.<sup>39</sup> Perhaps though the Buses did as well as they did because at home—whether in Germany or in Canada—schooling was

treated with reverence, doing homework always an excuse for not doing some chore. Knowing about the world was encouraged both at school and at home. Bill subscribed to a student magazine, *World Affairs*; Adolf followed suit and Dieter's cash book indicates that he too had a subscription in 1958. Alberta schools then offered a cosmopolitan concern with current affairs. Indicative of the concern to encourage

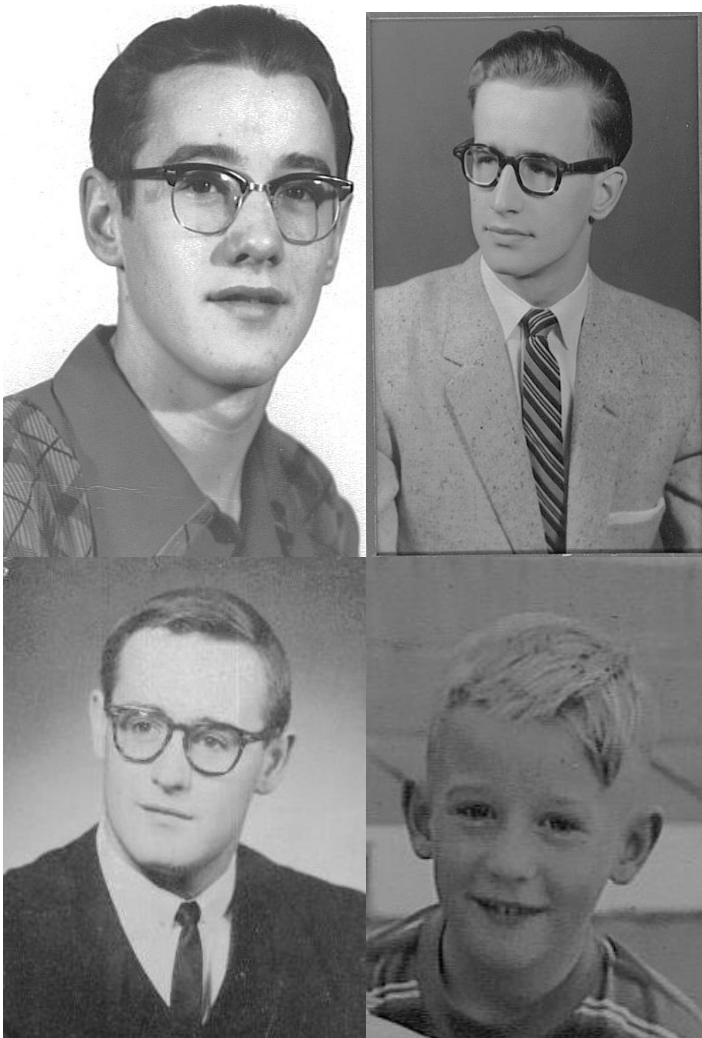


Photo 5.27. The four younger Buse boys, clockwise, Bill, 1955, Adolf, 1958, Dieter, 1960, George, 1959.

study, our mother saved the issues of *World Affairs* starting with 1952 for the rest of her life, perhaps for George.

Education and reading was not limited to the children. Our father read German newspapers such as *Deutsche Kurier* and *Nordwester* which came weekly from Winnipeg. They confirmed the perspective that postwar Germans were victims and offered a Cold War view of the world. Additionally, our father enjoyed stories of war exploits such as those of Adolf Gallant, the German air ace, whose *Der Erste und der Letzte* (published in English as *The First and the Last*, 1954) lay around the house with similar fare. Our mother and Aunt Martha read the Bible and later had little church calendars with the Biblical quotation of the day.

When asked about when he saw his first coloured person, Art remembers that Gertrude Elbe had a coloured friend from a hamlet near Barrhead called Cavell whom he met at the Elbe house. In Dieter's case the first encounter remained in his mind because our father had just bought his first brand new car in fall 1958. He took our mother, Aunt Martha, Judith and Dieter for a ride to Thunder Lake, where a cottage development was underway 18 kilometres west of town. On the way back Dieter was allowed to drive the new vehicle and our father directed him through a mud hole, but the car became stuck. Dieter went to a nearby farm house where the farmer turned out to be a coloured person. Dieter offered to put his leather jacket in the mud, crawl under the car to hook up the chain, but our father insisted that tying it to the bumper would suffice. The farmer pulled us out with his tractor. However, the story has a second importance because Judith remembers it in relation to our father's temperament. He blew up totally as the bumper of his new car bent when the tractor lurched forward. Our mother pointed out that it was his own fault and soon he laughed about it. Judith, who knew both Gustav and Helene Buse from about 1956, remembers our father as a generally tolerant, pleasant and gentle person, who later proved good at playing with the grandchildren and who could smooth over mother's negative assertions, but on occasion he could explode with a more than verbally violent streak. He loved wind-up toys and could be playful. She also remembers that our mother saw nature with

the surprise of children's eyes but could return with a morbid outlook from meetings with her German female friends.

A great shock for Judith was our mother's belief in omens, including that a bird on a window sill meant a son's death on a trip. When that son returned healthy it did not alter our mother's beliefs at all. The mix of peasant lore and fervent Christianity gave cause for the occasional head shaking, though many of her herbal cures had the insights of long experience. She frequently visited the herbalist who operated across the road from the Elbe farm to get her supply of teas, roots and powders, although later she moved more to the German bottled varieties. On our father's side, the equivalent was the proverbial utterances such as "*Du bist dumm geboren und hast nichts dazu gelernt* [You were born dumb and have not learned anything to augment it]", or "*Du kannst keine Rückenschmerzen haben, denn Du hasst nur ein Hacken wovon Dein Hintern hängt.* [You cannot have back pains, since you only have a hook from which your butt hangs.]" Other peasant explanations including teaching patience or proper place: when children impatiently wanted a turn, they were told "First come seven piles of manure, then for a while, nothing, then it is your turn." Given Judith's family's more reserved English background in which such outbursts and statements were as uncommon as our wild dancing and clan gatherings were normal, the car incident proved a memorable shock.

By then, almost precisely a decade after coming to Canada, the Buse family had established itself very well materially. Photographs—there are many by the late 1950s as the boys had cameras—show a great variety of clothes (golf shirts, bow ties, hats), a house full of furnishings including television, fancy couches, landscape and religious pictures on the walls, and George dressed up in top hat and tuxedo our mother made for some dress-up party. Most important, our father had a reputation as a reliable, capable builder and the family's presence was acknowledged in the newspaper and the local institutions. Our mother still sewed, not for income but because people appreciated the quality of her curtain and dress making. She took time with her new family as she watched 'I Love Lucy' on television into which she immersed herself totally as her own boys left one by one. The boys were proven achievers

within the Canadian context. In a decade the refugee immigrants had made many goods, including themselves. Like most of the ethnic immigrants of the postwar era in Canada, the economic upward march of Germans still meant political exclusion and in the large cities some social discrimination until more than a generation later.<sup>40</sup> The Buses were not as extreme as the self-exclusionist Greeks in the recent movie "My Big Fat Greek Wedding", but much of their lifestyle in 1950s and 1960s Canada fits a similar pattern of traditions being tested and of integration by the second generation.

### **Canadians or German-Canadians?**

On December 12, 1961 Adolf obtained his Canadian citizenship, the last in the family. By the late 1950s our parents informed themselves about the process in order to be able to obtain passports to visit relatives in the United States and later Germany. By 1957 they had sufficient wealth for such possibilities. The Department of Immigration sent them some booklets, "Our Country" and "Our History," offering mostly propaganda. Our father laughed at the easy questions that they were warned they might have to answer: such as, which were the longest rivers in the country. On 20 February 1958 they officially became Canadians and later visited Uncle Ben in Trenton, New Jersey. Bill signed on during 1958, while Art had obtained his on 27 April 1956. Dieter had his citizenship expedited by the Air Force bureaucracy in spring 1960 when he needed a passport to go to England for the Air Cadet exchange visit. Having been hard working refugees and immigrants with no criminal records, all the Buses joined George as Canadian citizens (Photo 5.28). During a decade or so in the country they had made their contribution to building Barrhead. Did they have a new identity as active participants in Barrhead and Alberta society, as builders and contributors? We leave many questions open as to the meaning of our journeys—geographically, ethnically and socially. The new citizen's travels certainly were not over, but their travels and their children's moves increasingly resulted from choices they made, as opposed to those imposed by warring states.

The successors of the refugee Paproćers are fairly well established in middle class occupations but spread about



*Photo 5.28. The Buse family (back l. to r.): George, Dieter, Adolf, Bill, Art; front, our mother and father, 1964.*

Canada, the United States and England. Their cousins and second cousins are dispersed in the United States, Germany, Canada, and even Australia.<sup>41</sup> Few family members and relatives have fallen far from the pedigree tree.

Paproćers can be found in many places but, as with many groups, it would be artificial to speak of diasporas, since they have been integrated to a high degree into their surrounding societies. The Prussian-Russian-Polish-racial German colonization approach is gone. Not long before his death in Barrhead, one of the Paproćers, Richard Korman, said that all should "thank Adolf for getting us out of that nest." He meant Hitler and Paproć. Another, Ludwig Wichert, recently wrote from Germany regarding Paproć: "it is no longer homeland. Homeland is here in Germany."<sup>42</sup> For some of us, we presume homeland is Canada and the world.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> A word on methodology: the previous chapters were constructed by employing genealogical charts, seeking original documents and examining many secondary historical sources. Towards the end of Chapter IV we began to employ personal memories and this chapter contains many. We have checked written information on Alberta, especially Barrhead, including in the local newspaper. We have also interviewed relatives, friends and contemporaries as well as employing a questionnaire among the brothers to systematize stories and information. A note on names: as children and thereafter we all called our parents by the German terms *Mutti* and *Vati*. When speaking to others about them in English we termed them 'mom' and 'dad' (or 'the old man'). In the text we employ the more neutral 'our mother' and 'our father'. Willie and Bill are used interchangeably.

<sup>2</sup> *Survey of Barrhead* (Edmonton: Government of the Province of Alberta, 1957), 12, based on 1956 Canada census data, assumes that the trading area reached 100 kilometres north, 30 south, 40 west and 20 east, which by then encompassed 12,331 people. Barrhead in the 1940s developed in a similar fashion as other small towns in Alberta which served as agricultural distribution centres. See Donald G. Wetherell, *Town life: main street and the evolution of small town Alberta, 1880-1947* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2000), which examines ten diverse towns.

<sup>3</sup> See Adolf Bernrot family history in *Mellowdale Memories* (Mellowdale: Mellowdale Book Committee, 1981), 105, and Adolf Busch family history in the book celebrating fifty years of Barrhead: *The Golden Years* (Barrhead: History Book Committee, 1978), 278. Immigration records at <http://www.collectionscanada.gc.ca/archivianet/immigration-1925/> list "Bernrot Adolf, age 30, Nationality Polish, arrived 1928" which corrects above books' date. According to the Paproć Duża marriage register Bernrot came from Kowalówka, and his wife from Ruskolenka, just south of Paproć Duża. The August Dams family came from Króle Małe (the former Wilhelmsdorf near Ruskolenka).

<sup>4</sup> The memoirs of Edna and Art Dams are in a privately published booklet "Dams Family Reunion Shared Memories of Family Members" (2007). Aunt Olga Dams stated to Dieter that the family had no difficulties during World War II. Since they had come with Polish passports they were not considered enemy aliens as some Canadian residents of German background. See Franca Iacovetta, et al., eds., *Enemies within: Italian and other Internees in Canada and Abroad* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).



<sup>5</sup> See Audrey Moeglich note in *The Golden Years*, 306; the Moeglich's were our distant relatives on the Schütz side.

<sup>6</sup> *The Golden Years*, 391 provides information on many families, such as the Rendfleischs, who came to Bruderheim from Poland in 1927, then moved to the Barrhead area in 1928. On the way by train the engineer and fireman stopped to pick strawberries and soon everyone on the train joined them. Others such as the Gottlieb Wagner family of German descent came from Russia in 1905 to Bruderheim, then to Mellowdale in 1920. Similarly, the John Breitreitz family of eastern Germany came to Golden Spike in 1911 before going to Barrhead in 1945.

<sup>7</sup> A summary history of St. John's Lutheran Church is in *The Golden Years*, 87-91; it was also published separately with more pictures.

<sup>8</sup> *Ninth Census of Canada 1951. Volume I, Population* (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1953), 41-87.

<sup>9</sup> Bill remembers Mrs. McNamara as the Paddle River teacher, whom he and Dieter encountered again in Barrhead and neither liked on either occasion. He also recalls a woman by the name of Festay (?) who taught Bible lessons. Art found his mathematical skills from German schooling exceeded those of the same-age Canadians at Paddle River.

<sup>10</sup> These numbers and the following information are from the census data summarized in *Survey of Barrhead*, 1957 and 1964 editions, supplemented by village census statistics reprinted in *The Golden Years*, 34-40; excerpts from the town council minutes, and 1951 and 1961 Canada censuses. See also Roger Sauve, *Alberta People: Trends and Projections* (Okotoks: People Consulting, 2000), 5.

<sup>11</sup> *The Golden Years*, 38.

<sup>12</sup> Short histories of each of these farm communities can be found in *The Golden Years*. By the 1950s no ethnic group completely dominated any one area as farm properties traded hands.

<sup>13</sup> Sitting on the warm reservoir end was a privilege. One day when Dieter raced in to be first inside and on the stove he did not notice that it had been super-heated for bread baking, so he burned his hand very badly while pulling himself onto the stove by leaning on his left hand. Mother applied much *Ozonol*, one of her favourite ointment remedies in addition to iodine, and bandages.

<sup>14</sup> Jack Zipes, ed., *The Complete Fairy Tales of the Brothers Grimm* (New York: Bantam, 1987), 281ff offers three versions of this tale. That a version made it to Poland and Canada illustrates the travels of German culture or the commonness of peasant fables.

<sup>15</sup> 'Shorty' Schilling in *The Golden Years*, 404; or see further mud stories, 462.

<sup>16</sup> During most of the 1950s Adolf and Dieter shared chores and much play time, including having the rope break on a swing they were pushing to its height limit. They sailed through the air with the seat on which one had been sitting and the other standing, while their hands burned from the rope, but both landed without a broken bone.

<sup>17</sup> Uncle August Dams, a pleasant quiet man with a disarming grin, liked fishing and on occasion took some of the Buse boys with him in a little wooden boat powered by oars. Dieter remembers being taken to Perch Lake and afterwards receiving some of the fish he had not caught.

<sup>18</sup> At the risk of adding a clutter of names: Art's German buddies included Art Bernrot, Alvin Gross, Bruno Dams, Bill's musical group was mixed German and English (Lindquist, Walker). Adolf had second-generation German (Harvey Elbe, Willie Becker, Willie Handel) and then English friends (Marvin Kraft, Dennis Barton). At first Dieter had a Ukrainian buddy (Eugene Dwery) and Italian friend (Larry Ceccetti). Later it was English (Brian Hobbs) and second-generation German (Johnny Busch), by junior high school mostly English (Judith Betts now Buse, Jackie Bell, Ron Barton, Jackie Yuill).

<sup>19</sup> Bill's buddies such as Jim Walker, Adolf's buddies such as Don Jennings, Charlie Saunders; Dieter's buddies such as Fred Proft, Ron Barton, Larry Johnson, Larry Schulz ranked high in sports or were generally popular and socially active in the school.

<sup>20</sup> Adolf had the top marks in his grade and in the school probably every year after Grade 4. Dieter found Adolf left a big wake behind his scholastic battleship, but in Grade six was motivated to obtain the top honours because the teacher gave stars and the person with the most stars received a prize of a bag of chocolate bars per subject. At the beginning of a later school year a teacher (Mr. K, almost drooling over having another potentially great student), when doing the first roll call and getting to Buse, Dieter, asked "Are you a brother of Adolf?" to which Dieter—tired of the comparison—replied "Never heard of him" and the whole class broke out laughing at the uninformed teacher. Later he expended more energy on Air Cadets, sports and girlfriend

Judith. Bill's marks showed a decline from Grade six (1950) when he did very well to Grade ten when they were average. He attributes this to his discovery of women, or women of him.

<sup>21</sup> Dieter vividly remembers returning from an enjoyable stay at the Adolf Busch farm with his then-buddy Johnny. Mr. Busch gave him a quarter because we had been so good—maybe because this time we did not set the woodpile on fire and had not burned a hole in the thresher canvas—and helpful with farm chores. Or, perhaps we had not gone behind a new huge hay stack, which we had helped build after bringing the hay from the fields by horse and lurching wagon, to smoke. On the latter occasion Dieter had been hit on the head by a piece of wood being thrown with a string attached to tie down the stack. The quarter was turned over many times and much admired before being used for a movie and sweets.

<sup>22</sup> Neil Sutherland, *Growing Up: Childhood in English Canada from the Great War to the Age of Television* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 21, explores the patterns and problems of memory.

<sup>23</sup> Adolf thinks that the financial impact was limited in that apart from an initial payment (perhaps \$200) to Dr. Gross, that kindly ophthalmologist carried him as a charity case. The Lutheran Church raised over \$200 to send Adolf to Rochester for treatment, but this was not used with the money going for new chairs for the church basement. However, since he spent time away from the family he would not have experienced the anxieties, which mother especially tried to keep from him. From our father's income tax returns plus the hospital bills and receipts which mother had kept we can calculate that approximately 30% of income went to paying for the accident. Generally the costs could not have precipitated any long-term monetary problems since by mid-1952 the next used car was bought for cash.

<sup>24</sup> In a personal memoir-history of Barrhead district, Judith Buse's mother's Aunt Elsie Thompson, who helped organize the Barrhead historical museum and initiated *The Golden Years* local history, thinks the shift from horses occurred by the early 1940s. The typewritten memoir is in Judith Buse's possession.

<sup>25</sup> For photo and local history see *Furrows, Fires and Floods: History of Rossington, Pembina Heights and Woodmore Districts* (n.p. New Horizons, 1982), 24-25.

<sup>26</sup> *The Golden Years*, 39.

<sup>27</sup> Bill would have been about 15 but all started work young with Adolf starting his construction career by cleaning concrete-form boards at Dan Waksel's house at about age 12. By 1952 Dieter hauled mud for a cranky brick layer doing chimneys and later he nailed gyp-rock on ceilings with Johann Busch, a shrewd guy who always set the scaffolds for his own height.

<sup>28</sup> These figures were calculated by Adolf from our father's income tax returns and the annual issues of Taxation Statistics, Department of National Revenue, Ottawa, and census data of 1961. In 1955 our father filed his first tax return; from 1959 forward the returns were prepared by an accounting firm in Edmonton. No indication exists as to who prepared the pre-1959 returns, but our father did not do them.

<sup>29</sup> Some of the pieces that father crafted in Barrhead days survived. Art has an oak flower stand, Dieter and Lisa Buse have a matching mahogany bed and dresser. The plywood beds that the boys used at this house are now in Adolf's cabin. Aunt Martha's bed is with Adolf's daughter Heather.

<sup>30</sup> "Durak is undoubtedly the most popular card game in Russia. It would hardly be an exaggeration to say that every Russian who plays cards knows this game. 'Durak' means fool, the fool in this game being the loser - the player who is left with cards after everyone else has run out. The game... is properly called 'Podkidnoy Durak', which means "fool with throwing in". This name refers to the fact that after an attack is begun, it can be continued by 'throwing in' further cards whose ranks match those already played." From <http://www.pagat.com/beatng/durak.html> which provides more information on rules and various styles of play.

<sup>31</sup> See *The Golden Years*, 291-294.

<sup>32</sup> In addition to the medal he won a national essay prize of \$25 from the social studies magazine *World Affairs*. The teachers added another \$25 to the prize.

<sup>33</sup> See *The Golden Years*, 404.

<sup>34</sup> Quoted from a local history, *Clyde* (Clyde: Clyde History Book Committee, 2000), 142 which states "In 1961, a Barrhead contractor, Buse Construction, was awarded a contract to build a vice-principal's office and three additional class rooms..."

<sup>35</sup> A difference of opinion and memory by Adolf and Dieter relates to another Bruce event: In Dieter's memory in the summer (1959) on a

rainy day, our father took Adolf, Dieter and Bruce to work on an indoor job, namely nailing out a huge milk barn (at Hauch's farm; we claimed he was putting his cow pasture under roof). In Dieter's memory he and Adolf set the scaffolds too high for Bruce and put him awkwardly between us. Winking to each other we offered to hold the plywood sheets while he started the nailing. Every time he lined up a nail and went to hammer it, we slightly shifted the sheet. Bruce just did not catch on, despite the blood dripping from his banged fingers. Adolf insists that Dieter was not a party to Bruce's bloodletting. Adolf's account claims that Art brought crew out to the work site. Dieter was not part of that crew. No manipulation of scaffolds took place. Bruce, being inexperienced and somewhat uncoordinated, managed to frequently smash his fingers. To his credit, Bruce did not give up.

<sup>36</sup> The following list of businesses in Barrhead during the 1950s does not seek to be complete, but merely seeks to demonstrate the ethnic and religious mix, in addition to the well-established firms and success of some second-generation Germans:

- Stephani Motors (Chrysler dealership, second generation Germans and Lutherans)
- Bell Motors (Ford dealership, British and United Church)
- Harris Implements (British, and mostly secular like previous owner Thompson, Judith Buse's uncle Frank)
- Guest TV, by 1955 Betts TV and Appliance (British and German, United Church for social reasons; Judith's family's business)
- Lee's Flowers (British and United)
- Fyfe Pharmacy (British and United)
- Waxsel Brother's OK Store (second generation German and secular)
- Huculak optical (Ukrainian? and ?)
- Harder dentist (British and United)
- Schulz Trucking (second generation German and ?) Bredo Trucking (third generation German and United) Schmidt Trucking (German and Lutheran)
- Bredo pool hall, later Ready mix (third-generation German and United)
- Coop Creamery—Bootsma (manager, second-generation Dutch)
- Feed Mill (run by Shorty Shilling—British and ?)
- Elevators (Holland manager of one; British and secular; First Nations wife)
- Red and White, Coop, King and Co (? there were 4 or five)
- Hotels: Dallas and Barrhead
- Wahl dairy (second generation German and Lutheran)
- Doctors: Keir, Horner, plus another (were British) and later Godberson (British with some German and United or Anglican?)

Bredo's Men's Wear which became John's [Nickerson] (third generation German and United)  
 Oulton's Ladies Wear (British and United)  
 Hoffman department store (second generation German and United or secular?)  
 George Rose pool hall (British and secular; Gertz had pool hall later, second generation German)  
 Construction and carpentry: Fluet (French and Catholic), Buse (German and Lutheran) and Messmer (British with German background and baseball as religion), later Hugh Horner (British and United or whatever religion would attract votes for a conservative Member of Parliament)  
 Lumber: Weisgerber (third generation German and secular) Beaver (outside control)  
 Larkins (British and United) editor of *Barrhead Leader*, the local weekly newspaper  
 Benesch bakery (Next generation funeral home—second generation German and United?)

<sup>37</sup> In asking a number of Barrhead contemporaries as to what they remembered about the Buse boys, a general consensus appeared in the comments: most said we were known as being "smart." Few resented or thought anyone was concerned about the immigrants' successes, certainly not at school though some were in the larger community, and that we were much noted as active socially in school, in cadets and sports.

<sup>38</sup> She encouraged Dieter to write an essay for B'nai Birth which won a prize. The competition was noted in the *Edmonton Journal* with Dieter listed as among three finalists from Alberta; from an undated clipping saved by our mother.

<sup>39</sup> The claim by Martha Kent [Schulz], *Porcellanscherben im Graben* [see previous chapter], as she recounts her time in Barrhead during the 1950s, namely that no one spoke of university or provided any encouragement to attend higher education, is questionable. Her memories of Barrhead seem clouded by her previous traumatic experiences. She seems not to have been involved in school activities and appears not have gone back to high school year books—one from 1960 points to her interest in clothes design and the desire to study in the United States—or to the local newspaper to check her memory. She won a second of one of the many prizes given to encourage scholarship, according to *The Barrhead Leader* (18 December 1957). The newspaper reported frequently on the attempt by teachers and administrators to provide the best possible education; see for example 13 June 1957. Of Dieter's and Judith Betts' 1960 graduating class at

least 12 (Bell, Betts, Buse, Craig, Fleming, Hauch, Hobbs, Hohol, Hoyne, Jesten, O'Brien, Stiles) of 60 went to university. Another example: about Hannelore Hauch the 1960 yearbook said: "At University she will surely reach the sky." Many females became teachers while many males stayed on family farms. An important factor which affected the number going to higher education was early marriage; many classmates were married by age 21 or 22.

<sup>40</sup> See Gerhard Bassler, "Silent or Silenced Co-Founders of Canada? Reflections on the History of German Canadians," *Canadian Ethnic Studies* XXII (1990), 38-46, and Pat Brennan, "Canada, Germans in" in Adam Thomas, ed., *Germany and the Americas* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 2005), I, 202-212 or the memories of social difficulties in *Canadian Mosaic: Life Stories of Post-War German-Speaking Immigrants to Sudbury* (Sudbury, 2003), including "Divided Pasts: Germans Becoming Sudburians" by Dieter K. Buse, 276-289 and in Anelika Sauer and Matthias Zimmer, eds., *A Chorus of Different Voices: German-Canadian Identities* (New York: Peter Lang, 1998).

<sup>41</sup> The cousins and second cousins in the US (Uncle Bernard Schütz's children and grandchildren) in the United States attained middle class occupations as teachers, musicians and tool makers. Those in Germany frequently became journeymen as skilled labourers and later master craftsmen. Of those in Canada a few remained farmers (Dams) while some became teachers and technicians.

<sup>42</sup> Letter to Dieter K. Buse, 8 December, 2004.





## EPILOGUE

*"Life is not what one lived, but what one remembers  
and how one remembers it in order to recount it."*

Gabriel García Márquez, *Living to Tell the Tale*

Summer 2006: The smokestacks of Sudbury cast long shadows. But not so long as to darken the quintessential Canadian barbecue on which the multi-cultural Canadian *Bratwurst* is sizzling. The family wine experts are trying to determine which wine will do justice to the sausage or vice versa. Traditionalists stick to beer. Under-aged grandchildren find ways of sampling both beverages. The conversation runs in well-worn tracks: family news, old stories and jokes, a little politics. Old photographs are re-examined and new ones exchanged. The five Buse brothers, their families and relatives have gathered for their third family reunion. The first reunion, held in 1998 in Edmonton, celebrated our fiftieth year in Canada. Five years later we moved on to Prince George, BC.

This migrating festival mirrors the family dispersal. Our first house in Barrhead still stands, recently renovated and enlarged,



*Bill, Dieter, Adolf, George, and Art, in front of first Barrhead house, 1998 family reunion.*



*George, Dieter, Adolf, Bill, and Art, Prince George, 2003 family reunion.*

our father's handcrafted windows rescued and distributed as widely as the family. But no Buses live in what is now a prosperous town of 4,200 people. Our stay there lasted a mere twenty years, just long enough to let us lay claim to youthful years of small town virtues and vices. Today a Buse brother can be found in Prince George, San Diego, Edmonton, Sudbury and Toronto. Most of their children are just as widely dispersed with some overseas.

Although we celebrate with vestiges of German culture we are unambiguously integrated Canadians, a resident of San Diego notwithstanding. Schooling and jobs allowed us to make a relatively untroubled transition to a new culture. The German language has been nearly abandoned along with the Lutheran church, barring one exception. If we have abandoned outward symbols of our German past, some deeper currents have survived. The work ethic of our parents, instilled by example and training, is not so easily shed. We have taken the opportunities that Canada offered and constructed mainstream Canadian lives.

These lives are the five untold stories that would run from 1961

to the present. Although each brother went his own way, these stories would show that we lived as ordinary Canadians. No one in the family has been awarded the Order of Canada; nor has anyone gone to jail. Whatever the trials and tribulations of daily life in Canada may have been, they pale when set against the upheavals and traumas experienced by our parents and grandparents. Living in Central Europe in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century guaranteed them an interesting life, though they had to be lucky enough to survive. The uneventful life of an ordinary Canadian does not lack for appeal when viewed from this perspective.



*Our father.*

If the five untold stories of the brothers are tales yet to be created, the end of our parents' story deserves to be recorded. In 1967, after the dissolution of Buse Construction, our parents moved to Edmonton. Our father worked as a carpenter in a woodworking shop until his death from cancer in 1969. A better medical diagnosis of his early kidney complaints might have saved him from a relatively early death. Our mother continued to live in the house they had bought until she too died of cancer in 1993. She died at home, alert and mobile almost to the end. After George married in 1973 she had lived alone for twenty years but she did not have a lonely life. A continuous involvement with a wide circle of relatives and friends, along with a firm belief in a spotless house and daily devotion, sustained her. She maintained a tradition of basement dinners at which as many as a dozen people would eat, drink and talk. Smaller groups were treated to *Kaffee und Kuchen* [coffee and cake] in the upstairs dining room. She left many fond memories for those who shared her table. The lives of her boys and their families were followed with motherly concern and pride. We set down a brief summary of those lives below. A detailed genealogy of the descendants of Gustav Buse and Helene Schütz is attached as Appendix C.



*George, Dieter, our mother, Adolf, Bill and Art, Edmonton, 1986, first gathering of the brothers since our father's death in 1969.*

Art and Gertrude left Barrhead for Prince George in 1968. Art joined a large construction company which carried out projects throughout northern British Columbia. Many trucks later he retired in 1998 having been the firm's superintendent for seventeen years. Gertrude worked as a secretary. They had two children. Arthur Jr., with a Masters degree in architecture, started in Winnipeg, then established his own practice. He and his wife Joanne Willmann, a lab technician, live in Surrey BC with their four boys, Joshua, Stephen, Nicolas and Matthew. Their daughter, Betty Anne, is a chartered accountant and partner with Touche Deloitte in Prince George. She is married to Eric Shiels who is a sales manager for a wholesale grocery chain.

Bill first worked as a draftsman for Shell Oil in Calgary and later for the University of Alberta in Edmonton. He abandoned his career as draftsman after he moved to Vancouver in 1967. Work in construction in northern British Columbia and later in the Toronto area followed. Since 1992 he has lived in San Diego with his new marriage partner, and salesperson, Patsy Shields. He continues to work in the construction industry. Bill's son, Kurt, works in the window manufacturing business. He and his partner, Lori Riczu, a para-legal with the federal Justice Department in Vancouver, live in Coquitlam, BC.

Adolf returned to Edmonton as professor in the economics department at the University of Alberta in 1966 after leaving Canada in 1962 for doctoral studies as a Commonwealth Scholar at the University of Birmingham in England. He has been Professor Emeritus since 1997. Kathy pursued many crafts during motherhood before settling on weaving as a full time vocation. Adolf and Kathy had two children, Heather and Peter. Heather married Jörg Dyckerhoff, a mechanical engineer. They live just outside Edmonton with their four children, Hannah, Josiah, Mishael and Alexander. Peter followed his father's footsteps to Britain as a Commonwealth Scholar. He now teaches English and cultural studies at Salford University in England. His Spanish wife, Nuria Triana-Toribio, teaches film and literature at Manchester University.

Dieter went to the University of Oregon on a Canada Council graduate fellowship. He studied European History and did

research in Germany before becoming a professor at Laurentian University in Sudbury Ontario in 1969. He held an Alexander von Humboldt fellowship and became Professor Emeritus in 2005. Judith taught school before becoming a library supervisor. Their daughter Lisa has a Masters degree in forestry and works as a technology transfer specialist. She lives with her partner, Wayne Bell, a forest ecology research scientist, and their two boys, David and Jason, in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. Their son Kent studied and worked in many countries before completing a doctorate in London, England. After a three year stint at Yale University he worked as a health policy analyst at the London School of Economics before continuing the same work with the British Overseas Development Institute. With Sarah Hawkes, a medical researcher, he has two children, Salvador and Isis.

Following his masters degree in geography at the University of Alberta, George joined the provincial civil service. For many years he was chief administrative officer in the provincial government's pension administration. He left his management position with the government in 2001 to become vice-president of a pension plan in Toronto. George married Jaine Edgelow in 1973. Prior to moving to Toronto Jaine ran a private consulting firm. Their daughter, Sara, has just completed a Masters degree in geology at Carleton University in Ottawa and works for the Ontario Geological Survey in Sudbury. Their son, Christopher, is studying for his Masters in Sociology at the University of British Columbia.

To end we return to the beginning. When Ludwig Buse struck out for Prussian Poland he left behind four brothers and sisters whom he probably never saw again. The church register, when he died, states "parents unknown," but that he came from Krumbeck. Here are more untold stories. Krumbeck does not yield them up. Many of the strands we followed backwards in time led to dead ends.

At this point perhaps we need to comment on why we followed our ancestors' paths. Perhaps we can also draw some reflective meaning out of the accumulated materials. Curiosity set us on the trail of research and discovery regarding our family histories. We wanted to know whence we had come and what

previous generations had experienced. We wondered what roles our parents had played during that crucial era of the world wars and genocide. Now we realize that that era was an interlude, important but not as singular as often presented.

We certainly know much more about the migrations of our ancestors. We also can answer many more questions about what our ancestors experienced, where they experienced it and what they did in terms of occupations. We know too the general situation for each generation and some of the choices, and lack of choices, which confronted them. However, we still know little about their motivations, their perspectives and their beliefs, aside from religious attachments. Unlike some authors of family histories, we had no huge family archive of papers, letters and diaries to draw upon.<sup>i</sup> Unlike others we could turn to few collections of religious and institutional sources which clarified outlook and intentions.<sup>ii</sup> However, we learned from many authors, whose works helped us to think about the processes of colonization, ethnic integration and minority relations.

The historical record on our family seems to confirm a common sense assumption: the further down the social scale, the less people had decisive powers to shape policy and practice. Yet, all social levels are involved when societies clash over land, or the fundamental issue of a place to stand, a *Heimat*. Having land and keeping land is central to much of the history of the world, and our families' histories reflect that as much as the contentious history of Europe in the 20<sup>th</sup> century or the Middle East in the 21<sup>st</sup>. Domination and displacement—whether of ethnic groups or of natives—unfortunately have been historical norms, though our family past also hints at peaceful reconciliation and compromise as possibilities. Having a place, sharing a place or taking someone else's place is an integral part of world history and the interaction of peoples. Our families' histories, until the present generation, mirror that preoccupation and it is a sad historical fact that our ancestors' acquisition of land in Poland was preceded by an act of aggression by Prussia against Poland. Yet the Paproć colonists displaced no one since they were settled on unused lands. Nor did the Poles seek to expel the German colonists when they had some degree of domestic autonomy. Indeed, they continued to recruit German agricultural colonists for both public and private

colonies until the 1850s.

That some of our relatives would engage in nostalgia about the Paproć past is not surprising though that approach lacks balance. It romanticizes a supposedly 'healthy' agricultural village world of short life-spans, conflicts over language, and consequences from inbreeding and insularity. The reasons for emigration before and after World War One are not clear, but hint at problems with land inheritance. Communal activities and being a religious community remained the main memories among a very circumscribed and inter-related set of villagers in the stories told by the Paproćers. But rarely did they mention the lack of solutions to demographic trends, the ethnic rivalries and especially not the mistreatment of Jews and Poles when Germans ruled. Instead a second focus was on victimization during World War I and at the end of World War II. Similarly, those individuals—including a multitude of academics—who see Germans in Eastern Europe as only imperialists and perpetrators also distort the historical record. They avoid the years of living side-by-side and interaction at the local level of various ethnic groups who shared common problems, whether fluctuating grain prices or Russian overlords and deportations.

Before we began our researches we did have knowledge as to how our parents perceived social situations. When our father heard that some of his sons were going to become university professors, he said: "Every day a holiday, but no Sundays." He knew enough of the paper-pushing world to see that the physical demands would be lessened, but that perhaps the rituals and clan order of his own world would disappear. When our mother talked about what her sons should become she had her own ambitions, but she also wanted "*keine hohe Tiere*" [literally: no high animals]. She shared the petty bourgeois distrust of politicians and lawyers and with her religious outlook did not want her sons to move into what she saw as unethical spheres. She shared many of the prejudices of her era and liked adherence to formal etiquette.

We now are more aware that the present preoccupations of family members have some historical background. The genes of the present generations of Buses in Canada may have mutated toward most becoming, like other middle-class persons,





*Our mother, early 1980s (l.) and early 1990s (r.)*

grinders of paper, instead of the grains of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, or the growers of crops and the weavers of cloth and makers of shoes of the 19<sup>th</sup>. But, some have continued earlier aspects of family life by being occupied with carpentry, by interests in special foods and wines, by noting the quality of cloth and shoes, by hunting, and certainly by keeping pubs alive—none except our father would have been interested in taking any lit pipes across the thresholds but definitely all favour music and puppet shows; lords be damned! Some direct lines do seem to run toward a lineage with the Buses of 18<sup>th</sup> century Krumbeck and with the Schützes of 19<sup>th</sup> century Paproć. We wonder how much of Barrhead our children and grandchildren might find in us.

Among the consequences of finding new knowledge we know that we have to adjust the myths and memories. The hard facts from our research will no longer allow family members to proclaim ours as being a poverty-stricken past. As millers in the 18<sup>th</sup> century we were among the village elite with connections

to the rulers of that society. Since David Buse was known as a “rich farmer” we can hardly continue to think of the 19<sup>th</sup> century colonists as eking out a living and since our father had a radio and was building a house in 1939 the family seemed to survive well despite the constraints for Germans in inter-war Poland. That the oldest son took piano lessons during a world war suggests wartime migration probably improved the material situation rather than impoverishing the family. Certainly we lived in an un-insulated garage during the first winter in Canada, but it did have a plank floor!

Among the benefits of doing this project was the interaction between relatives who live at great distances from each other. Though we had the help of some generous genealogists and some informed historians, the competition among the brothers prompted us to a higher level than any individual family member would have achieved. That too is a comment on the family’s remembered lives, including buried axes that have not been mythologized into a story.

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### Notes

<sup>i</sup> An example would be the European bestseller by Geert Mak, *Das Jahrhundert meines Vaters* (so far available only in Dutch and German; Leck: btb, 2005). He can cite letters and diaries as he traces his family in superb fashion from the Netherlands to Indonesia and back showing their racial attitudes and social assumptions. Less insightful but imaginative use of family papers is evident in Michael Ignatieff, *The Russian Album* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1987). More profound is Modris Eksteins, *Walking Since Daybreak: A story of Eastern Europe, World War II and the Heart of our Century* (Toronto: Key Porter, 1999), though, like our own story, neither of the latter accounts get much past the surface of their predecessors’ activities and beliefs.

<sup>ii</sup> An example would be the moving account by Victoria Freeman, *Distant Relations: How My Ancestors Colonized North America* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2000). She details her family’s part in the displacement of natives and in good intentions gone awry.

## Appendix A Partial Genealogy: Generations VI and VII

### Paternal (Table 1.3)

#### **Johann Christoph Ludwig Buse (V.P1)**

*VI Father:* Martin Buse (\*circa 1735; +26.11.1803, Neugarten near Krumbeck, Prussia)

*VI Mother:* Dorothea Blaurock (\*11.09.1730 Lychen, Prussia; +21.05.1775, Krumbeck, Prussia)

*Marriage:* 04.02.1757, Krumbeck, Prussia

*VII Paternal grandfather:* Samuel Blaurock, master miller

#### **Friederike Bülow (V.P4)**

*VI Father:* David Bülow (\*circa 1760; pre-1817)

*VI Mother:* Friederike Rebecka Rehfeld (\*circa 1765)

*Marriage:* pre-1790

#### **Friederike Charlotte Wink (V.P8)**

*VI Father:* Johann Daniel Wink (\*1765, Rühn, Mecklenburg-Schwerin; +20.03.1847, Srebrny Borek)

*VI Mother:* Rosalie Boether (\*1775, Gross Lüben (Prignitz), Prussia; +24.09.1847, Srebrny Borek)

### Maternal (Table 1.4)

#### **Friedrich Christian Schütz (V.M1)**

*VI Father:* Joachim Schütz (\*circa 1740)

*VI Mother:* Maria Dorothea Perchen (\*circa 1745)

*Marriage:* pre-1768

#### **Johann Daniel Schultz (V.M3)**

*VI Father:* Christian Friedrich Schultze (*Stadthalter*/ deputy legal authority holder) (\*22.12.1709 Schönhausen, Mecklenburg-Strelitz)

*VI Mother:* Anna Elisabeth Schwenn

*Marriage:* 05.12.1760 Schönhausen, Mecklenburg-Strelitz

*VII Paternal grandfather:* Batholomaei Schultze

(\*Schönhausen, Mecklenburg-Strelitz, uncertain)

*VII Paternal grandmother:* Trine Olerke (father, Andreas Olerke)

*Marriage:* 24.10.1700 Schönhausen, Mecklenburg-Strelitz  
*VII Maternal grandfather:* Martin Schwenn, farmer

**Anna Maria Christina Behnke (V.M4)**

*VI Father:* Christian Friedrich Behncke, day labourer  
*VI Mother:* Maria Elisabeth Schütten  
*Marriage:* 15.11.1776 Schönhausen, Mecklenburg-Strelitz

**Martin Friedrich Dabbert (Tabbert) (V.M5)**

*VI Father:* Hans Jurgen Tabbert (\*Brohm, Mecklenburg-Strelitz)  
*VI Mother:* Louise Wollenberg  
*VII Paternal grandfather:* David Tabbert, farmer (\*Brohm, Mecklenburg-Strelitz)  
*VII Paternal grandmother:* Margaretha Genz (\*Brohm, Mecklenburg-Strelitz)

**Christiana Maria Friederike Schultz (V.M6)**

Sister to Johann Daniel Schultz (above), identical forebears

**Johann Friedrich Peters (V.M7)**

*VI Father:* Johann Peter (\*circa 1735)  
*VI Mother:* Catharina Breden (\*circa 1740)  
*Marriage:* pre-1767

**Maria Dorothea Baldt (V.M8)**

*VI Father:* Martien Baldt (\*circa 1725)  
*VI Mother:* Maria Däbels (\*22.08.1728 Krumbeck, Prussia)  
*Marriage:* 28.09.1747 Krumbeck, Prussia  
*VII Maternal grandfather:* Joachim Däbels (\*circa 1680; +16.03.1751 Krumbeck, Prussia)  
*VII Maternal grandmother:* name unknown (\*circa 1685; +03.08.1738 Krumbeck, Prussia)  
*Marriage:* Krumbeck, Prussia, uncertain

## Appendix B Aunts, Uncles and Cousins

### A. Paternal (Buse)<sup>1</sup>

- 1. Martha Auguste** (\*29.01.1899, Malkinia; + 07.11.1969, Osterrönfeld, GFR)  
 (=06.08.1922) **Johann Gottschalk** (\*13.11.1893, Paproć Mała; + 21.07.1970, Osterrönfeld, GFR)

- Children: i) **Erna** (\*07.09.1924, Paproć Mała; + 20.07.1995, Bergish-Gladbach, Germany)  
 (= Helmut Schlömp)
- ii) **Adolf** (\*18.11.1926, Paproć Mała)  
 (= Erna Eichhorst)
- iii) **Else** (\*01.06.1934, Paproć Mała)  
 (= Reinhold Rentz)
- iv) **Lydia** (\*26.12.1936, Paproć Mała)  
 (= a. Sigmund Zamzow, b. Willi Kergel)
- v) **Ottilie** (\*19.12.1938, Paproć Mała)  
 (= Hans Desler)
- vi) **Elfriede** (\*23.03.1941, Neudorf, East Prussia, Germany)  
 (= Berthold Götze)
- vii) **Waldemar** (\*31.09.1943, Nick, East Prussia, Germany)  
 (= Heidemarie Schulze)



*Gottschalk family: back row from l. Erna, Adolf, Else; middle row from l. Lydia, Elfriede, Ottilie; front from l.: Martha, Waldemar, Johann.*

**2. Helene Pauline** (\*05.05.1904, Paproć Duża; +27.09.1987, Stelle, GFR)  
 (=19.05.1923) **Eduard F. Weirauch** (\*01.01.1892, Ruda Srebrowo; +?.02.1945, Mława)

- Children:
- i) **Wanda** (\*25.04.1925, Ruda Srebrowo, +28.04.2002, Stelle, Germany)  
 (= Sigmund Krüger)
  - ii) **Alwine Alma** (\*15.07.1928, Ruda Srebrowo; + 28.07.1978, Stelle, GFR)  
 (= Walter Heidrich)
  - iii) **Karl** (\*24.09.1933, Ruda Srebrowo)  
 (= Elisabeth Meyer)
  - iv) **Leonhard** (\*25.05.1937, Ruda Srebrowo)  
 (= Gisela Peters)



*Weirauch family, 1940: from left in back row 2<sup>nd</sup> Wanda, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Helene and Eduard, second row 2<sup>nd</sup> Alwine, front row 1<sup>st</sup> Leonhard, 2<sup>nd</sup> Karl.*



*Back row (l. to r.) Wanda (Weirauch) Krüger, Helene Weirauch, Martha Gottschalk, Alwine (Weirauch) Heidrich, front row Leonhard Weirauch, Waltraut Schlömp (grand-daughter to Martha Gottschalk).*

**3. Alwine** (\*30.07.1913, Zawisty Dzikie; +?.2.1945, Narzym)  
 (=31.01.1932) Adolf Zitlau (\*09.01.1908, Andrzejewo; +  
 01.01.1988, Edmonton, CA)

- Children:
- i) Artur (\*28.05.1932, Srebrny Borek)  
 (= Hedwig Goczoll)
  - ii) Adolf (\*23.03.1935, Ruskolęka)  
 (= Helena Demski)
  - iii) Lydia (\*06.12.1939, Pruskien, Germany)  
 (= Eduard Mueller)
  - iv) Eleanore (\*13.08.1941, Narzym, Germany;  
 +23.02.1986, Toronto, CA)  
 (= Walter Mikulski)
  - v) Wilhelm Bruno (\*23.03.1943, Narzym, Germany;  
 + ?)



*Zitlau family: (l. to r.) Adolf, Alwine, Artur, Adolf, (front) Lydia and Eleanore.*



## B. Maternal (Schütz)

- 1. Bernhard Adolf** (\*05.06.1894, Paproć Duża; +12.09.1978, Point Pleasant, New Jersey, USA)  
 (=26.05.1917) Olga A. Schultz (\*26.10.1897, Łomża;  
 +24.01.1962, Trenton, NJ, USA)

- Children: i) Edna Mathilda (\*05.07.1919, Port Mercer, NJ, USA)  
 (= Charles Schultz)  
 ii) Helen May (\*21.01.1928, Port Mercer, NJ, USA)  
 (= Rudolf Schütz)  
 iii) Ann Elaine (\*31.10.1939, Trenton, NJ, USA)  
 (= Carl Reese)  
 iv) Joan Brenda (\*14.10.1941, Trenton, NJ, USA)  
 (= Louis M. Cordas)



*Top row (l. to r.): Bernhard Schutz, Olga (Schultz) Schutz, Edna (Schutz) Schultz; Bottom row (l. to r.): Helen Schutz, Ann (Schutz) Reese, Joan (Schutz) Cordas.*

- 2. Gustav** (\*21.01.1896, Paproć Duża; +01.09.1987, Waldfisch, GDR)  
 (=22.10.1922) Emilie P. Krüger (\*13.02.1905, Paproć Duża; +16.08.1985, Gumpelstadt, GDR)

- Children: i) Eleanore (Elli) (\*22.10.1924, Paproć Duża; +24.08.1956, GDR)  
 (= Ernst Buse)  
 ii) Leokadia (Lotte) (\*26.08.1926, Paproć Duża; +17.04.1975, Waldfisch, GDR)  
 (= Rudolf Grossmann)  
 iii) Rudolf (Rudy) (\*01.11.1928, Paproć Duża)  
 (= Helen Schutz)  
 iv) Alice (\*21.03.1939, Paproć Duża; +28.11.1959, Witzelroda, GDR)



*Top row (l. to r.): Gustav Schütz, Emilie (Krüger) Schütz, Eleanore (Schütz) Buse; Bottom row (l. to r.): Leokadia (Schütz) Grossman, Rudolf Schutz, Alice Schütz*

**3. Adela** (\*1898, Paproć Duża; + 11.01.1915, Ekaterinenstadt (Baronsk), Russia)

**4. Martha** (\*10.06.1900, Paproć Duża; +27.11.1990, Barrhead, Alberta, CA)



*Martha Schütz, 1920s and 1970s*

**5. Olga** (\*03.10.1902, Paproć Duża; +28.06.1999, Barrhead, Alberta, CA)

(=25.05.1930) August Dams (\*07.12.1902, Kowalówka; +29.05.1983, Barrhead, AB, CA)

Children: i) Edna (\*28.02.1931, Kowalówka)  
(= Albert Kleinfeldt)

ii) Edmund (\*11.07.1935, Kowalówka)

iii) Arthur (\*05.10.1939, Barrhead, Alberta, CA)



*Dams family (l. to r.): Edna, Olga, Arthur, August and Edmund.*

**6. Leopoldina** (\*1903, Paproć Duża; +pre-1915, Paproć Duża)

**7. Mathilda** (\*1905, Paproć Duża; +pre-1915, Paproć Duża)

**8. Emil** (\*05.02.1906, Paproć Duża; +20.08.2001, Winnipeg, Manitoba, CA)  
 (=22.07.1934) Amanda Korman (\*14.06.1910, Kowalówka;  
 +19.08.1996, Winnipeg, CA)

Children: i) Lydia (\*30.09.1939, Ortelsburg, Germany)  
 (= Theo Manthey)

ii) Adolf (\*03.05.1942, Soldau, Germany; +1944, Soldau, Germany)

iii) Ingrid (\*04.09.1947, Osterrönfeld, GFR)  
 (= Alan Yorke)



*Schütz family (l. to r.): Ingrid, Amanda, Lydia and Emil.*

**9. Leocadia** (\*1907, Paproć Duża; +16.01.1915,  
Ekaterinenstadt, Russia)

**10. Robert** (\*09.11.1914, Paproć Duża; +23.07.1942,  
Voronezh, Soviet Union)  
(= 21.02.1939) Emilie Buse (\*09.04.1918, Ekaterinenstadt  
(Baronsk), Russia)

Children: i) Bernhard (Beni) (\*12.04.1939, Paproć Mała)  
(= Irma Graf)  
ii) Manfred (Fredri) (\*23.11.1940, Soldau,  
Germany; + 27.08.2000, Kiel, Germany)  
(= Hannelore Krambeck)



*Emilie and Robert Schütz.*



*Bernhard, Manfred and Emilie Schütz.*

**11. Julius** (\*24.11.1918, Paproć Duża; +1942, Soldau, Germany)



*Julius Schütz.*

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, all place names are in Poland or Russian Poland. The awkward problem of shifting national boundaries when determining country of birth or death has been resolved on a purely legalistic basis: we ignored contemporary boundaries and chose the country that had the authority to issue birth or death certificates at the time of the event. The German Federal Republic (West Germany) and the German Democratic Republic (East Germany) have been abbreviated as GFR and GDR, respectively.





**Appendix C**  
**The Descendants of**  
**Gustav R. Buse and Helene P. Schütz**

**I. Arthur** (\*13.07.1933, Paproć Mała, Poland)  
= 08.06.1956

Gertrude Elizabeth Elbe (\*19.03.1936, Barrhead, Alberta)

Children

1. Arthur Erwin (\*05.12.1958, Barrhead, Alberta)  
= 07.08.1982

Joanne Sylvia Willmann (\*19.10.1961, Prince George, B.C.)

Children

i) Joshua David (\*02.01.1986, Winnipeg, Manitoba)

ii) Stephen Andrew (\*24.07.1988, Winnipeg, Manitoba)

iii) Nicolas Joseph Aaron (\*19.11.1992, Surrey, B.C.)

iv) Matthew Joel (\*01.11.1994, Surrey, B.C.)

2. Elizabeth Ann (\*19.03.1963, Barrhead, Alberta)  
= 08.10.1994

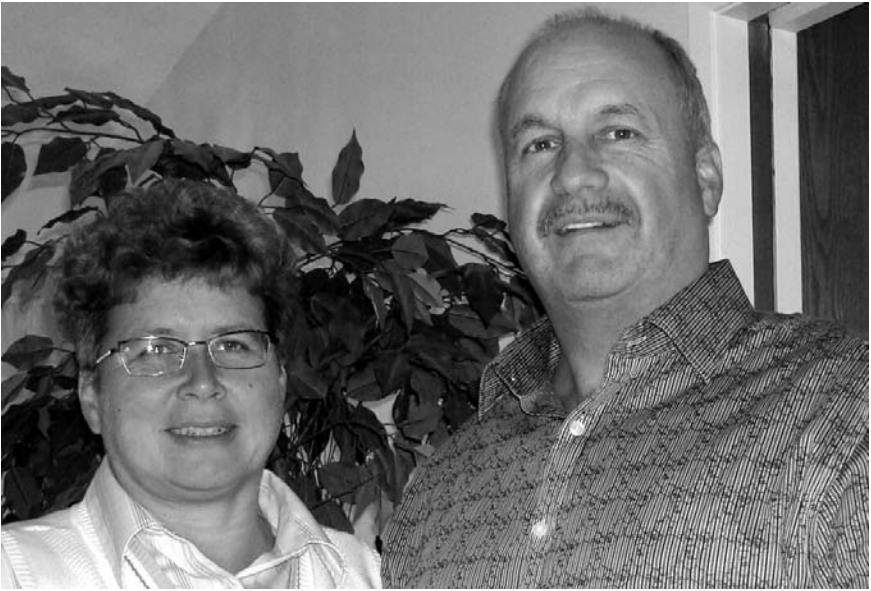
Eric Alan Shiels (\*24.02.1958, Prince George, B.C.)



*Gertrude and Art, 2008.*



*Nicholas, Steven, Matthew, Joshua (back l. to r.),  
Arthur and Joanne (front), 2007.*



*Betty Anne and Eric, 2008.*

**II. Wilhelm Rudolf** (\*24.12.1936, Paproć Mała, Poland)

a. = 23.12.1961

Sylvia Jean Mykitiw (\*07.07.1937, Calgary, Alberta)

## 1. Child

Kurt William (\*13.03.1963, Edmonton, Alberta)

= Lori Gay Riczu (\*25.04.1968, Peace River, Alberta)

b. =31.12.1992

Patricia Ann Shields (\*23.08.1949, Calgary, Alberta)

*Patsy and Bill, 2005.**Lori and Kurt, 2007.*

**III. Adolf** (\*10.02.1940, Soldau, Germany)

= 20.08.1964

Kathleen Louise Showalter (\*10.02.1942, Toronto, Ontario)

## Children

1. Heather Louise (\*05.10.1968, Edmonton, Alberta)

= 11.08.1990

Joerg Dyckerhoff (\*06.03.1964, Wiesbaden, Germany)

## Children

i) Hannah Anina (\*11.03.1992, Cambridge, Ontario)

ii) Josiah (\*19.12.1993, Cambridge, Ontario)

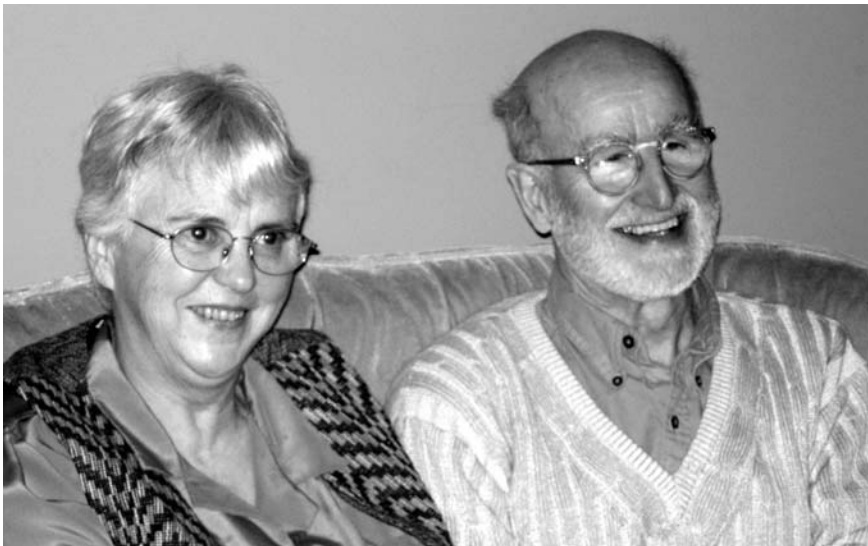
iii) Mishael (\*09.04.1996, Cambridge, Ontario)

iv) Alexander (\*15.12.1998, Edmonton, Alberta)

2. Peter Anthony (\*04.02.1970, Edmonton, Alberta)

= 28.06.2003

Núria Triana-Toribio (\*15.03.1965, Oviedo, Spain)

*Kathy and Adolf, 2008.*



*Heather and Joerg, 2008.*



*Clockwise: Hannah, Josiah, Alexander, Mishael, 2008.*



*Peter and Nuria, 2008.*

**IV. Dieter Kurt** (\*15.09.1941, Soldau, Germany)

= 18.11.1961

Judith Marilyn Betts (\*29.06.1942, Calgary, Alberta)

## Children

1. Lisa Jean (\*18.07.1962, Barrhead, Alberta)

=

(Frederick) Wayne Bell (\*21.06.1961, Killarney, Manitoba)

## Children

i) David Michael (\*25.07.1991, Thunder Bay, Ontario)

ii) Jason Kyle (\*18.01.1993, Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario)

2. (Dieter) Kent (\*11.04.1964, Edmonton, Alberta)

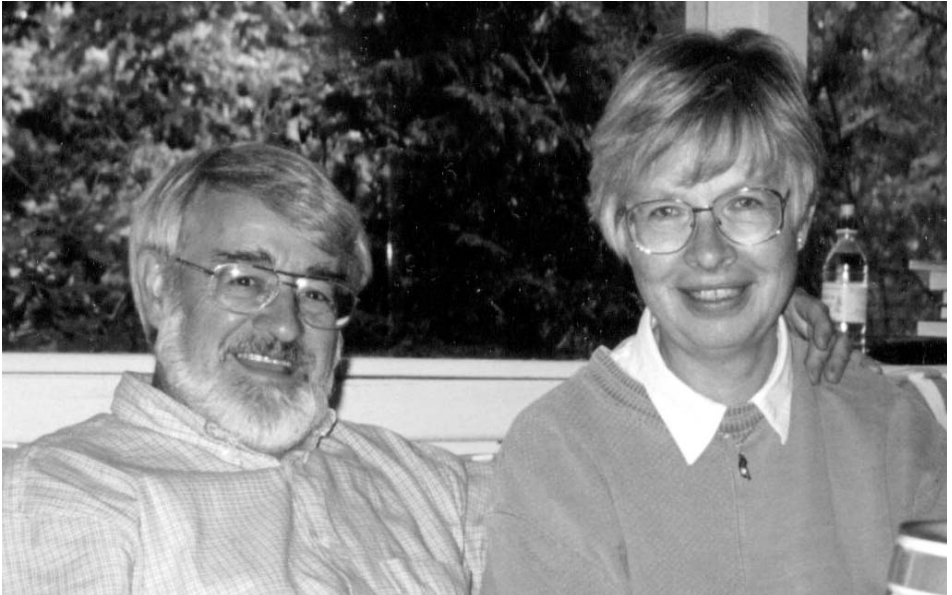
= 01.01.1998

Sarah Hawkes (\*17.10.1964, Romford, U.K)

## Children

i) Salvador James Rajah Pascal (\*15.04.1998, London, U.K.)

ii) Isis Aurora Freya (\*04.12.2000, New Haven, Connecticut, U.S.A.)

*Dieter and Judith, 2005.*



*Wayne and Lisa, 2008.*



*David and Jason, 2008*





*Kent and Sarah, 2007.*



*Isis and Salvador, 2007.*

**V. George Bernhard** (\*29.01.1951, Barrhead, Alberta)  
= 18.08.1973

Jaine Allyson Edgelow (\*10.08.1951, North Battleford,  
Sask.)

Children

1. Sara Jaine (\*13.08.1981, Edmonton, Alberta)
2. Christopher George Gustav (\*10.04.1984, Edmonton,  
Alberta)



*George and Jaine, 2004.*



*Sara, 2007, and Chris, 2004.*

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