German-Russian Catholic Colonization in Western Kansas: a Settlement Geography.

Albert Jepmond Petersen Jr

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GERMAN-RUSSIAN CATHOLIC COLONIZATION IN WESTERN KANSAS: A SETTLEMENT GEOGRAPHY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

by

Albert Jepmond Petersen, Jr.
B.A., University of Colorado, 1959
M.A., University of Colorado, 1964
May, 1970
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The change in an areal landscape pattern is dependent first upon the nature of the land, and second upon the character of the people who settle there. The morphology of the present Ellis County, Kansas, landscape has developed as a composite of traditional German-Russian Catholic culture interacting with the pre-existing physical and cultural milieu. A blend of adopted and imported culture traits had created within the Kansas study area a German-Russian settlement pattern which enabled the first successful agrarian exploitation of the American Great Plains.

The German-agriculturalist who colonized the Russian-Volga under the invitation of Catharine the Great immigrated to the Western Kansas steppe during the decade of the 1870's. Conditioned by a century of life on the Volga steppe, the German-Russian colonist attempted to reestablish that rural-village settlement that he best understood. As a result, elements of German-Russian material culture have created a unique settlement situation that in both form and function has remained as a visible imprint on the local landscape.
INTRODUCTION

The American Great Plains constituted, as Walter Prescott Webb (1931) pointed out, a natural environment which most Northern European cultures had no prior experience. The early concept of the Great American Desert, together with the presence of a warlike indigenous nomad, relegated the Great Plains to that area which must be endured on the journey to opportunity beyond.

By 1870, a series of events had finally opened the last of America's frontier. Settlement had been extended to the eastern fringe of the semiarid plains, and the desert concept had already ceased to exist even in the imagination. Construction of the railroad subdued the aborigine as it subdued the treeless landscape, making both less of a hazard to European civilization. The concept of desert gave way to the equally mythical garden beyond the Missouri, inducing the first influx of agriculturalists onto the Great Plains proper.

The earliest agrarian response to the Great Plains became one of disillusionment. The garden myth was shattered when it was quickly discovered that rain did not follow the
plow, as railroad propaganda had promised. The writings of Hamlin Garland (1891) capture the sense of frustration and despair that must have been the general reaction of the eastern farmer to the incomprehensible environment. In a moment of reflection, Garland's hero utters:

So this is the reality of the dream! This is the 'homestead in the Golden West, embowered in trees, beside the purling brook! A shanty on a barren plain, hot and lone as a desert. My God!

Despite the changing technology that Webb (1931, p. 9) credited with providing the impetus for civilizing the plains, he was quick to note that the initial American response to the Great Plains was a temporary failure for the agrarian civilization. While recognizing the inherent dangers of over simplified historical sequence, the basic premise underlying this settlement study is that successful agrarian utilization of the American Great Plains was coterminous with, and stimulated by, the arrival of German immigrants from Russia.

The German agriculturalist, familiar with the natural and economic realities of the Russian steppe, was essentially the vanguard of successful agricultural exploitation of the Great Plains--from Canada to Oklahoma. Largely ignored in both historic and geographic accounts, German-Russian culture provided the first meaningful agrarian evaluation of the Great Plains environment, changing the garden concept from a myth
This essay is concerned with the cultural-economic viability of one of the many German-Russian immigrant groups to the American Great Plains. The group under consideration in this study has its roots in early 18th century Germany. It reestablished itself on the Russian steppe during the reign of Catharine the Great, only to be rerooted a century later on the plains of Western Kansas. ¹ Representing less than 1,500 of the 120,000 Germans who emigrated to the United States from Russia between the years 1870 and 1920, this group comprises the largest single German-Russian Catholic settlement in the United States.

Although a number of studies have explored the German-Russian in the United States,² these studies have been concerned largely with aspects of nonmaterial culture. This study is not concerned with a culture whole, but rather with culture elements, or traits, that are a ramification of German-Russian material culture.

¹For the purpose of this study, Western Kansas will be used to refer specifically to the 39 counties of Kansas lying west of the 99th meridian (see Plate 7).

²Among a number of important studies must be included: C. Henry Smith's (1923 and 1950) work on the Mennonites; Bennett (1967) and Peter (1965) on the Hutterites of North America; and Schock's (1967) work on Black Sea colonists.
In reestablishing itself in a new cultural and physical milieu, German-Russian material culture became a blend of imported and adopted traits that can be attributed, in large measure, to the cultural contacts with, and the economic pressures of, the existing landscape. It is perhaps naive to separate qualitatively nonmaterial and material culture, since both function as integral parts of the human value system; but for practical reasons, foremost concern will be given to those elements which have made a visible imprint on the landscape.

To the adverse fortuitous events imposed by man and nature, the German-Russian response was positive. While German-Russian culture is fundamentally conservative, mechanisms exist for rapid cultural assimilation, particularly as related to the functioning conditions of the market place. In all cultural aspects, the German-Russian represented to his American neighbor the epitome of stability and progress.

Many of the traditional elements of German-Russian culture remain today as indelible imprints on the landscape, despite the homogenizing effect of modern agriculture. These elements include churches, dwellings, outbuildings, fences, systems of land subdivision, and village patterns—elements that in both form and function give characteristic expression to German-Russian Catholic settlement.
The study deals with the morphology of traditional forms as defined by Jordan (1966b) and Kniffen (1960). How a people must work to alter their environment depends, in the first place, on the opportunities that the area affords them, and in the second place, on the people themselves; upon their abilities; upon their traditions acquired perhaps in an area other than the one they now inhabit; upon their technological equipment, which in turn is largely a matter of contacts, place and time; upon their appraisal of the resources of the place to which they have come; and upon the length of their sojourn there. Within such a framework, the German-Russian community in Western Kansas is a classic demonstration of an established cultural tradition being stimulated by circumstance to modify itself and its new environment into a framework that was culturally acceptable. The resultant settlement form is the essence of this study.
CHAPTER I

THE GERMANS FROM RUSSIA

On February 21, 1876, fourteen immigrant families disembarked from a Kansas Pacific Railway car at Hays City, Kansas. The following day they established the village colony of Liebenthal fifteen miles to the south. During the next two years, almost two thousand German-Catholic settlers were to emigrate from the Volga regions of Russia to the Ellis County, Kansas, area.

Speaking a foreign tongue and wearing strange clothes, these immigrants engendered amongst their American neighbors, feelings of cautious optimism that were reflected in a local newspaper editorial (Ellis County Star, April 27, 1876, p. 4) of the period:

... Awkward and odd as these people may appear in their homespun garments, we do not think they merit either the contempt, or abuse heaped upon them by the press of the State and by their American neighbors.... Appearing as they do to be hard workers; determined to bring wealth out of the soil where they, as well as we, think it exists; they are bound to make it a success.
Let them but shake off some of their old sectional prejudices, seek for modern enlightenment, and become good American citizens, and we know of no valid objection to their coming here in numbers sufficient to take up all of our vacant lands.

It is not easy, however, for the German-Russian to shake off his "old sectional prejudices," for they were part of a heritage resulting from centuries of hardship and suspicion.

The roots of German-Russian Catholic culture have their origin in the culture history of Hessen, the Rhineland, and the Palatinate in southwestern Germany. During the reign of Catharine the Great, the German-born Czarina of Russia, a massive effort was undertaken to encourage landless German peasants and displaced craftsmen to stimulate settlement of the Russian steppes. In the three year period, from 1764 to 1766, over 27,000 Germans emigrated to the Russian Volga area (Bauer, 1908, pp. 12-15).

The reasons for German emigration to the Volga area were manifold, but the greatest impetus lay in the ravages of the Seven Years' War, which killed or displaced over 800,000 German peasants. In response to the chaotic situation which existed in most of the German principalities, Catharine issued a royal manifesto in July of 1763. The manifesto had a wide-reaching appeal, for it offered free land to the landless peasants; religious freedom to those racked by centuries of
religious conflict; and exemption from military service
(Bauer, 1908, p. 7). Economic distress, resulting from land
scarcity and a heavy tax burden throughout the Holy Roman
Empire, was met with the Czarina's promise of interest-free
loans and thirty years of tax exemption (Stumpp, 1966, p. 12).

By 1768 there were 102 German agricultural colonies
established on the Volga (Bauer, 1908, p. 16). Most of the
colonies were situated on the east or meadow side of the
river in the vicinity of the Russian town of Saratov. A few
colonies, however, were established on the west, or hill side,
of the river to the south of Saratov (see Plate 1).¹

The Czarina's plan for German settlement was restrictive
and settlement was limited to a prescribed area of slightly
over 10,000 square miles. Although passage was provided for
the German immigrant at government expense, only married
couples and their children were admitted, and then in groups
of 30 to 40 (Schock, 1956, p. 22). Closed German agricul-
tural villages were established and were separated strictly
according to religious denomination (Stumpp, 1964, p. 42).

¹Of the 102 original Volga villages, only 38 were founded
by Roman Catholics. The 16 Catholic villages appearing on
Plate 1 are the source of the immigrants that were to settle
in the Kansas study area. The spelling of the German Volga
village names varies considerably with the source, but through-
out this paper all such place names will adhere to the spell-
ing of Judge Jacob Ruppenthal (Ruppenthal, 1913-14, pp. 518-
523).
Varying in size from 23 to 184 inhabitants, each village was permitted self-government and complete freedom to conduct its own religious affairs.

The early years of Volga settlement proved almost intolerable. Russian performance never quite lived up to German expectations. The French and Belgian agents, subsidized by the Czarina for each family they induced to colonize, misappropriated government loans and, in general, misrepresented the realities of the Volga frontier. The skilled artisans and professional people found little demand for their services and were soon forced to toil behind the plow.

Leaving behind the wars of Europe, the colonists were soon faced with the military escapades of Pugachev, the claimant to Catharine's crown. After the demise of Pugachev, the plunder of the Catholic colony of Marienthal on August 15, 1776, initiated the raids of the nomadic Kirghiz tribes, who for decades periodically harassed the Volga settlers (Bonwetsch, 1919, pp. 39-40).

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1Emilian Pugachev was a Cossack deserter from the Russian Army who, in 1773 and 1774, led a peasant insurrection against the serfdom imposed by Catharine the Great. Pugachev harassed the entire Volga area, killing those who did not support his effort. He was captured in September of 1774 and executed in Moscow on January 10, 1775 (Gaissinovitch, 1938).
Despite all hardships, the German-Volga colonies grew and some prospered. From the original 102 villages, with 27,000 settlers in 1767, the population increased to 250,000 living in 170 villages by 1868 (Bauer, 1908, p. 47). As the villages outgrew their contiguous agricultural land, sister colonies were established with the assistance of the original colony. This attempt to alleviate population pressure on the land diffused German village settlement along all the smaller rivers of the original Russian land grant.

The German farmer who became prosperous was able to purchase land from his Russian neighbor, and prior to the First World War over 2,700,000 acres of land were so acquired (Stumpp, 1964, p. 25). The majority of the colonists, however, had to derive their sustenance from within the prescribed German settlement area.

Within the closed village the Russian mir system, with

1German land ownership was considerably greater in the Black Sea area (11,340,000 acres), but this was a result of differing Russian land policies in the two areas.

2According to Oscar Schmieder (1928, p. 416), the existence of the mir dates back at least to 1500. Under the mir system the land was divided into small lots that were distributed among the different families of the village. The title of all land remained with the state.
its periodic redistribution of agricultural lands, had been imposed upon the colonists negating the accumulation of property. Under the mir system arable land was reapportioned every seven years, when each male, regardless of age, received an equal share or "soul portion." As population increased each soul portion grew continually smaller. Creation of sister colonies proved only a temporary remedy, not a solution, to the land problem.

The mir system which placed a premium on male children was self-defeating by encouraging large families. In 1798, for example, there was an average of 38 acres of arable land for each person, but by 1869 the acres per person had declined to 3.75 (Hummel, 1936, p. 43).

Although the general prosperity of the village increased, there developed a sizable class of poorer farmers who could afford neither to buy nor to rent land. This condition reached critical proportions during the 1860's and 70's, forcing eventual emigration from the Volga area.

The scarcity of land was not the only impetus to German emigration. Colonial resentment had been building since the levying of taxes in 1809—taxes which had increased ten fold in the following fifty years. New anti-German policies in the Russian government led to the "Ukase of 1871" which imposed Russification upon the German populations. Village
autonomy came to an end as the German colonies became subject to the Russian Interior Minister, and village administration of school and church affairs came to an end in 1876 (Bauer, 1908, p. 52). It was the military law passed in January of 1874, however, that precipitated the mass exodus from Russia. With the termination of Catharine's exemption from military service, Germans between the ages of 16 and 40 were subject to the draft. The six years of military service in the Czar's army were severe on both mind and body, and not even Russians willingly served. The Russian Orthodox service was the only religious service permitted, and for many Catholics, six years without benefit of the Roman rite was intolerable.

The factors mentioned—land problems, Russification, and the military draft—were the causes for emigration most often cited in contemporary accounts, and they are all well documented in numerous historical documents. However, there is also the psychological factor of German land hunger. This factor has important implications but proves difficult, if not impossible, to document. In a study on the nature of the German agrarian village on the Russian steppe, Löw (1916, p. 54) claims "... this hunger for land filled the spirit of the people" and was responsible for their willingness to suffer the difficulties of their early settlement.
Describing the reasons for his parents' migration from the Volga to North Dakota, Schock (1965, pp. 100-101) points to the belief that "land hunger outweighed land need as a motive for their exodus." Schock goes further and notes that the soil contributed more than to just physical needs "... land also had a psychological bearing on life. With the possession of land, a family's prestige rose in the community."

Whatever many have motivated their desire to leave Russia, over 3,000 Catholic colonists met at Herzog in the spring of 1874 to plan for that eventuality. A committee of five men was chosen to travel to Brazil\(^1\) and to report back on the feasibility of establishing colonies there. After arriving in Hamburg, Germany, the committee was advised by steamship agents that western North America offered greater settlement possibilities; and subsequently they traveled to the United States exploring as far west as Clay County, Nebraska\(^2\) (Wasinger, n.d., p. 14). Upon their return to the

\(^1\) Of the estimated one million Germans that emigrated from Russia to the Americas prior to the 1917 Revolution, over 250,000 were to go to Brazil (Stumpp, 1964, p. 31).

\(^2\) One of the committee, Anton Wasinger, had a friend who had earlier emigrated to Nebraska, and with whom he had been in contact prior to their leaving Russia.
Volga, the committee actively encouraged emigration to the American Great Plains.

In his diary relating the events of the period, Wasinger (n.d. p. 15) describes the preparation and exodus of one group from the village of Schoenchen:

. . . colonists prepared to leave the Russian paradise. Many things had to be done. All debts had to be liquidated. The land could not be sold since it belonged to the government. They could sell their cattle and horses and cows. Household furniture and implements no one wanted to buy since so many were selling out. . . . Horses sold for ten to fifteen ruble and a cow could sell for seven or eight ruble¹. . . .

Everything was readied and the time for departure was at hand. . . .

¹The official 1876 exchange rate gave the ruble a value of U.S. $.72.
CHAPTER II

GERMAN-RUSSIAN CATHOLIC IMMIGRATION
TO WESTERN KANSAS

On October 10 and 11, 1875, 1 fifty-four Catholic families departed by train from Saratov, Russia, for Bremen, Germany. Crossing the Atlantic aboard the steamship "Ohio," they reached Baltimore, Maryland, on November 23, 1875.

Upon their arrival in Baltimore, leaders of the Catholic immigrants made arrangements with Carl Schmidt, 2 an agent for the Atchison, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, for passage to Topeka, Kansas. It is not known how the immigrant leaders came to seek Schmidt's assistance, but Schmidt was aware of the German-Russian exodus, having returned earlier that winter from Russia with 400 German Mennonite families. Schmidt was

1 The Russian calendar had not adopted the Gregorian reform and consequently the dates are twelve days behind, giving October 22 and 23, 1875, as the dates of emigration.

2 Schmidt was a native of Germany who emigrated to the United States in 1864 and became the land agent for the railroad.
also responsible for a propaganda pamphlet (Neuestes von
Kansas und seinen Hülfsquellen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung
der Ländereinen der Atchison Topeka und Santa Fe Eisenbahn)
published in German by the railroad and distributed to ship­
ing agents in Germany (Schmidt, 1905-06, p. 495).

Arriving in Topeka on November 28, the colonists decided
to obtain temporary winter shelter and look for whatever em­
ployment could be found. After securing housing for the
colonists in vacant railroad buildings, Schmidt took the leaders
along the Santa Fe route in search of land suitable for coloni­
zation.

Remembering the land problems of their Volga experience,
these village agriculturalists were seeking large expanses
of cheap unbroken land upon which to establish their new col­
onies. Previous Mennonite settlement, however, had inflated
railroad land values to five dollars an acre and had taken up
most of the available homestead land along the railroad.

Since land was not readily available on the Santa Fe
route, the colonists turned to the agents of the Kansas Paci­
fic Railway who were eager to have them explore railroad
lands a few miles to the north. A German-speaking agent,
Adam Roedelheimer, was willing to sell Kansas Pacific land
in Ellis and Rush Counties at two dollars and fifty cents an
acre. With the availability of large tracts of homestead
land as a further inducement, many colonists pooled their resources and the purchase of land commenced (Laing, 1909-10, p. 495).

The first German-Russian Catholic immigrants to the Ellis County area arrived in Hays City on February 21, 1876. The fourteen families had come from the Volga villages of Liebenthal and Neu Ober-Monjou the previous October. They moved immediately to the two sections of land they had purchased from the railroad, fifteen miles south of Hays City in Rush County. On land donated for the establishment of a village, simple sod-dugout dwellings were quickly constructed which provided some shelter from a blizzard which struck that same night (Dreiling, 1926, p. 34).

The following week, on March 1, the second group of colonists arrived in Hays City. Five families from Katharinestadt, Russia, had collectively purchased Section 16 (T 13 S, R 17 W) from the Kansas School Commission for three dollars an acre. The section was nine miles northeast of Hays City and, while permanent dwellings were being constructed, the immigrant families lived in a rented store. On April 8, they moved to their newly created village of Catharinestadt--later Anglicized to Catharine (Laing, 1909-10, p. 495).

That same day (April 8), a third group of Catholic immigrants established the colony of Herzog one-half mile north
of the English colony of Victoria.\footnote{The English colonists were later to leave, and in time, the German-Russian settlement absorbed the older settlement; however, in 1913 the name of the settlement was changed from the German Herzog, to the older English, Victoria. For a detailed account of George Grant's Victoria colonists see Raisch, 1937.} Of the twenty-three immigrant families, fourteen had originated in the Volga village of Herzog for which the new colony was named. The other eight families came from the Volga villages of Beaurgard, Lui,\footnote{Lui, or Louis as it is often spelled, Beaurgard, and Monjou are French names that were given to the villages in honor of the French agents who brought the immigrant groups to the Volga (Toepfer, 1966, p. 34).} Liebenthal, Ober Monjou, and Marienthal (Laing, 1909, p. 495).

Of the fifty-four Catholic families that had emigrated from the Volga area in October of 1875, forty-two immigrated to Western Kansas and established the colonies of Liebenthal, Catharine, and Herzog. Together these colonies were to form the nucleus for future German-Russian Catholic settlement in the area. Through letters to friends and relatives in the old country, the colonists would encourage further immigration; but with Catholic settlement established, it was the railroad that was to be responsible for much of the subsequent Catholic colonization of this area.
The motives of the railroad were largely economic. A great deal of unsold land was available along its route (see Plate 2). The alternate sections\(^1\) provided by the government to encourage railroad construction were a source of wealth only if sold. Agriculturalists were particularly desirous, for as Schmidt (1905-06, p. 487) had noted, "... a quarter-section of land in grain produced eight car loads of freight while a quarter-section left in grass would, at best, produce only one car load of cattle." The railroad, therefore, made a monumental effort to encourage agricultural settlement along its tracks.

With the existence of German-Russian Catholic villages in Western Kansas, the railroad agents found it relatively easy to induce further Catholic settlement. Agents were on hand in New York and Baltimore for the arrival of additional German-Russian Catholic immigrants during the summer and fall of 1876. The competitive maneuvering of the land agents is described in the following diary account by one of the colonists:

\(^1\)The government granted to the Kansas Pacific Railway the odd numbered sections for a distance of twenty miles on each side of the track which were sold by the railroad for an average price of $2.97 per acre (Kansas Pacific Railway, April 1871, p. 12).
PLATE 2

MAP OF PART
OF THE
KANSAS PACIFIC RAILWAY LANDS
Which are offered at lower prices and on better terms than any other lands of equal quality in the West.
Water in springs, streams and wells, is abundant, pure and good; and the climate is mild and exceedingly healthy. The large crops produced sufficiently prove the fertility of the soil. The Kansas display of products at the Centennial surpassed all others.

$ indicates Railway lands sold, indicates Railway lands for sale.
The others are government lands, part of which have been taken as Homesteads but plenty yet remain to be occupied as Free Homes by incoming settlers.
For further information address
B. J. GILMORE,
Land Commissioner.
SALINA, KANSAS.

Railroad Land Ownership At Time Of German-Russian Settlement (1876)
Various railroad companies vied with one another in the matter of transporting all these people to their destinations. The Kansas Pacific Railway had their agents on hand whose business it was to persuade people to come to the wide open spaces in Kansas... One of these agents was a German by the name of Roedelheimer\(^1\) (Wasinger, n.d. p. 17).

With the journey from the Volga to Kansas requiring almost five weeks, the second influx of German-Russians did not begin until July 26, 1876, at which time sixteen families joined the earlier Catharine settlement. On August 20, thirteen families arrived and established the colony of Pfeifer southwest of Hays City. This group came largely from the Volga hillside villages of Pfeifer, Kamenka, and Semjenonika (Laing, 1909-10, p. 496). During the following three years, twenty-eight additional families joined the Pfeifer settlement and the immigrant population in that village reached 171 (Dreiling, 1926, p. 70).

The colonists who were to establish the Munjor colony arrived at Victoria, Kansas, on August 3, 1876, and temporarily settled south of the Herzog village settlement. The colony was

\(^1\)Adam Roedelheimer was the land agent responsible for the first German-Russian settlements in the Ellis County area earlier that year. He was on hand in New York for the arrival of the above-mentioned group of 108 families in late July, 1876.
comprised of twenty-nine families from the Volga villages of Ober-Monjou, Witmann, Marienthal, and Gattung. Two months after their arrival, they collectively purchased Section 25 (T 14 S, R 18 W) from the railroad and the colony moved to its new location. Additional families continued to arrive from Russia and the village population reached 250 before organized immigration ceased (Laing, 1909-10, p. 498).

The Schoenchen colony was the last of the original six German-Russian village settlements. Colonists from Schoenchen, Russia, had settled in Liebenthal on August 14, 1876. A dispute broke out over the location of new dwellings, and in April and May of 1877, the Schoenchen colonists, together with several families from Neu Ober-Monjou, founded the new colony of Schoenchen on the northwest quarter of Section 28 (T 15 S, R 18 W) (Laing, 1909-10, p. 498).

By the summer of 1877, the six original colonies shown on Plate 3 had been established. The last organized body of immigrants arrived in September of 1878, bringing the total immigration of German-Russian Catholics in the area to 1,459 men, women, and children (Laing, 1909-10, pp. 493-502). Although immigration continued until the outbreak of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917, it consisted of individual family groups, so that population growth was due more to a high birthrate than to immigration.
CHAPTER III

THE GERMAN-RUSSIAN VILLAGE

People who have learned to live together in villages and who are accustomed to daily associations with their fellows do not, as a rule, choose to give up this association in order to settle on isolated farmsteads. To the German-Russian immigrant, the agricultural village was an institution with origins in the Teutonic clan. According to Robert Dickinson (1949, p. 240), the beginnings of German village settlement date from the first millennium of the Christian era. With village life perpetuated on the Russian Volga, it seemed only reasonable that the Kansas immigrant would retain his propensity for that which was familiar. Tradition, after all, has the force of law.

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1 The American term village does not correctly describe the German Dorf. Trewartha's (1949) classic village-hamlet terminology is of little relevance to an understanding of the German-Russian village. Definitions, as used by the United States Bureau of Census, are also meaningless. As used throughout this essay, the term village will refer to the German concept of a highly homogeneous group of inhabitants deriving their primary production from the soil. A more complete definition can be found in Niemeier (1967, p. 69).
The Volga Village Settlement:

The necessity of purchasing land in large rectangular blocks was a part of the American experience for which the new immigrant had no prior referant. The Russian mir system with its periodic subdivision of state owned land, together with the traditional German Dreifelderwirtschaft\(^1\), had created a unique Volga land settlement pattern.

Each Volga village was assigned a given area of land for its perpetual use, but title to all land was to remain with the state. The traditional agricultural village, or Gewanndorf, was established, and the arable land was parcelled into Gewannfluren\(^2\) composed of three or more Gewanne.\(^3\) Each Gewann, in turn, was subdivided into long strips which were assigned, by lot, to individual families for cultivation. The number of Gewannfluren, or common arable fields, varied somewhat with each village, depending upon the size of the

\(^{1}\)The common German three-field system associated with the agriculture village, having a triennial rotation of crops.

\(^{2}\)A cultivated area belonging to a village and composed of several sections or Gewanne.

\(^{3}\)A division of the communal lands of a village composed throughout of lands of about the same quality divided into elongated strips and cultivated to a time-table usage prescribed by the village community. During the early period of Volga settlement each Gewann would generally be approximately 22.5 hectares (König, 1938, p. 143).
Russian grant and the nature of the local topography. Each village, however, had thirty or more Gewanne which would imply the existence of ten or so Gewannfluren (König, 1938, p. 143.)

Associated with the village site were the family gardens and common pastures. Unlike the typical German village system with its surrounding fields and outlying pasture, the Volga system was largely reversed. Since most land lay back from the village stream site, the Gewannflur might be situated many miles from the village itself. It was not uncommon for the Volga villagers to travel 10 or 20 kilometers to reach their most distant fields. Livestock, therefore, were kept in close proximity to the village because of the daily requirements of milking and the dependency on horse transport.

By the time of the German exodus from Russia in the 1870's, the traditional Gewannflur system had reached ridiculous proportions. The Russian mir system required that the land be subdivided on a per capita basis every seven years. In many instances the Gewann had been divided into strips measuring scarcely 4 by 170 meters (König, 1938, p. 143), and the average family was farming a total of less than twelve acres of land. Village agriculture, in general, had reached a point where it could be more appropriately termed 'horticulture.'
The Village Site:

Arriving on the Kansas scene in cohesive community groups, the immigrants' initial response was to recreate that village life that he best understood. In a choice of village site there were three general criteria that proved fundamental to all German-Russian settlement—(1) easy access of transportation; (2) a large expanse of cheap, unbroken land; and (3) the availability of a surface water supply. Collectively, these criteria form the basis for each German-Russian village settlement and each has its antecedent in a common cultural heritage.

The existence of the Kansas Pacific Railway\(^1\) made German-Russian settlement in the study area possible. The total import of the railroad to European exploitation of the Great Plains has been expressed in numerous historical works. Most notable is Webb's thesis (1931, p. 279), in which he stated:

Not only did they [railroads] provide transportation, furnish manufactured necessaries, and carry surplus products to market, but they sold the land to the immigrant in large quantities and on terms which appeared to be very liberal.

\(^1\)In 1880 the controlling stock in the Kansas Pacific Railway came under the control of the Union Pacific Railroad and the name was changed at that time.
Malin (1956, p. 375) noted that the absence of navigable rivers in Kansas negated its early agricultural development. He states that:

... thirty to forty miles from the Missouri River markets, corn was worth nothing for sale because of the cost of carriage by animal power . . . the steam railroad made the grass-land a grain-growing area.

The German-Russian was a capitalist who came to this new land with the expectation of realizing wealth from the soil. He settled the Ellis County landscape with the intention of becoming a commercial grain farmer as he had been on the Volga in years past. As such, he was forced to depend upon the American scene for transport and market of his produce despite his inclination to live apart from it.

Although none of the original village settlements chose an immediate rail location, the railroad's significance to the survival of village life was recognized. Each village was established within reasonable transport distance of the railroad.¹ The construction and maintenance of access roads became one of the prime responsibilities of the early village.

Each village group sought to avoid the confines of restricted settlement. A village site was, therefore, chosen with reference to the availability of large tracts of

¹A reasonable transport distance implied that a wagonload of grain could be delivered to, and return from, a railhead during daylight hours.
potentially arable land within walking distance. Although the colonist realized his inability to immediately control the larger expanses of unbroken land which surrounded the site, this did not deter him from projecting his ambitions well into the future.

Each of the original six villages was subsequently established in the midst of unbroken prairie that was owned either by the railroad and for sale at reasonable prices, by the government and free for the developing, or by George Grant's disillusioned English "gentlemen cowboys,"¹ who were willing to sell cheap. This development of encircling the village with unsettled land tended to isolate the German-Russian from contact with other settlement in the area.

Upon finding land suitable for the future growth and development of the community, the colonists then set out to locate their village in proximity to a perennial stream in order to insure a reliable water supply. The semiarid climate of the Great Plains was similar to that of the previous Volga experience. Having had to endure the periodic droughts of the Russian steppe, the German-Russian was well aware of the

¹The remainder of an earlier Scottish and English settlement of 1874, under the leadership of George Grant, that attempted to establish a cattle industry in Ellis County.
drastic variability in precipitation\textsuperscript{1} that could be expected. Obtaining their water from hand-dug wells, not directly from the stream, the depth of the water table was an important consideration in the choice of the village site. The colonists were careful, however, to avoid the immediate floodplain. The heavy, localized summer-afternoon thunder-showers, characteristic of both the Volga and Western Kansas, could swell a small stream out of its banks within a few hours. However, the village sites were so well chosen that the only reported case of village flooding\textsuperscript{2} took place during the early months of the Herzog settlement in the spring of 1876.

Village sites, then, were carefully chosen to be elevated above the local floodplain. Each of the six original villages (and later, the sister villages) were situated on terraces twenty to sixty feet above the floodplain, and yet, within as close proximity to the stream as possible.

Proximity of a stream had a second importance for the village in that the stream banks were the only local source

\textsuperscript{1}The annual average precipitation for Ellis County is 23.05 inches, but yearly precipitation ranges considerably, from a low of 11.75 inches to a high of 31.24 inches.

\textsuperscript{2}Flooding in the study area did not become a common occurrence until the 1950's and then only within the settlements along Big Creek.
of wood. The native cottonwood, *Populus monilifera*, the dominate species, was limited in distribution to the floodplains of the major drainage systems. The heavily wooded floodplains provided a striking contrast to the monotonous shortgrass\(^1\) covering the interfluvial areas.

Distribution of Villages:

The distribution of the original German-Russian villages, as they are manifest on the landscape, (see Plate 3) gives the appearance of a predetermined settlement pattern spacing arrived at through a conscious effort by the colonists. The Christaller model, with its hexagonal arrangement, can be superimposed over the existing village distribution with only minimal interpolation. The mean distance between nearest villages is 7.2 miles, with no village farther than 9 miles from its nearest neighbor. The statistical implications of village spacing and distribution are obvious, but in light of the historical perspective, statistical analysis appears irrelevant and misleading.

Christaller's "laws of settlement" (1966, pp. 190-192) are based upon two fundamental criteria: the principle of

\(^1\)The most important native grasses in the study area are buffalo grass (*Buchloe dactyloides*) and bunch bluestem (*Andropogon scoparius*).
marketing, and the separation principle. The former is predicated upon a hierarchy of service functions associated with each trade center. The latter principle implies that, given time, economic survival of the fittest will arrange settlements with "astonishing exactness."

The distribution of the German-Russian villages, although outwardly conforming to the Christaller model, abrogates the basic principles of his central place distribution. While the railroad remained an important criterion in the location of the village, each village site was chosen with total disregard to any other trade function. Essentially, the original villages were established simultaneously, and in the spacing of cultural features, a statistical method becomes operationally meaningful only if time is taken as a factor in the analysis.

Just as a fortuitous sequence of events brought the German-Russian immigrants to Western Kansas, the criteria utilized in the choice of village sites were largely responsible for the rather obvious clustering of the village settlements. There existed, however, no conscious desire on the part of the colonists to establish village settlements in close proximity to each other, as might be supposed from the consequent distribution. The desire for large tracts of land tended to disperse settlements rather than concentrate them.
Conditions existing within the surrounding geographic landscape served to circumscribe bounds to the extension of German-Russian settlement. Considering the general criteria utilized by each group of colonists for their village site, the implied restrictions inherent in those criteria severely limited settlement choice.

The nature of the local relief, for example, restricted the availability of land suitable for field cultivation. From northeast to southwest the study area is characterized by an extreme rolling topography\(^1\) typical of the brake\(^2\) between the High Plains and Central Lowland. This brake topography creates a change in local relief of 700 feet within a horizontal distance of less than ten miles (Merriam, 1963, p.45). The shallow soils, with exposures of limestone and chalk (see Plate 4), inhibited the extension of German-Russian settlement to the north and west.

South of the established village settlements, where land was suitable for cultivation, Kansas Pacific Railway land

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\(^1\)While lying within the Great Plains Province, Fenneman (1931, pp. 25-30) classifies this area as the "Plains Border . . . marked at many places by a scarp running in and out among stream heads and known as the 'break of the plains'." Locally this area is classified by Schoewe (1949) as the Blue Hills.

\(^2\)The term "brake" originally referred to the change in vegetation found within the localized topography, but subsequently has become associated with the break in slope.
gave way to that of the Santa Fe with its inflated land values. Arable land to the east in Russell and Barton counties had already attracted considerable German Lutheran settlements.

The settlement area was, in itself, bounded by the previously discussed site criteria. Within the confines of this settlement area, the distribution of German-Russian villages was a manifestation of the limited possibilities offered by the environment. The resultant settlement distribution is essentially a classic example of ecological fit. Considering the settlement criteria previously mentioned, the spacing of settlements was controlled by the amount of land required by each to support its population.

The Village Plan:

With the village site chosen, members of the community set about to lay out their new village. Minor differences were to manifest themselves, despite the fact that each village was established in accordance with the Volga model. The plan of the Volga village of Dehler¹ (see Plate 5) is representative of the Volga Catholic settlements (Hagin, 1966, p. 78)

¹Dehler was a Catholic Volga village established in 1767. The village plat is used here because it is representative and was the only Volga plat available to the writer.
PLATE 5


GERMAN—VOLGA VILLAGE

SOURCE: Martin Hagin (1966)
and, with the exception of size, is characteristic of the plan followed by the Kansas immigrants.

Each village plat followed a rectangular grid pattern with streets laid out at right angles. The usual Volga village was three blocks long and two blocks wide (Konig, 138, p. 120). Although this arrangement of streets varied somewhat in the Kansas villages, the area enclosed by each village block was subdivided into dwelling lots approximating the rectangular dimensions of lots in the Volga village—32 by 64 meters\(^1\) (Konig, 1938, p. 120).

Since the conservation of space was not a major consideration in the establishment of the new village, many more lots were planned than the colonists immediately needed. The town lots located on Plates 9, 16 and 19 show the location of all lots on the original village plats, and they do not necessarily indicate the location of a dwelling. The colonists were too optimistic in their anticipation of village growth so that many of the lots were never utilized except as common pasture.

As had been the case on the Volga, each village chose

\(^1\)Although some difference exist, 100 by 200 feet are the typical dimensions of German-Russian village lots in Kansas.
a central village location for the establishment of its church. A centrally located block of lots was collectively donated by the colony to be used as a church square. The only exception to this manner of locating the church square was in the Herzog settlement. In the latter case the railroad had donated land for the erection of a church and the village was to build subsequently around the church square.

The existence of the American rectangular land survey influenced the German-Russian village in that the north-south and east-west arrangement of the townships and their subsequent subdivisions gave that same orientation to the village layout. The village street pattern, for example, resulted from the establishment of the village along one or more section lines. Of all the German-Russian villages, only Catharine was established oblique to the north-south orientation (see Plate 9). The reason for this is unknown, but local speculation gives credit to either too much "schnapps" or to the physical arrangement of the stream terrace—the latter, probably being a more realistic explanation.

**Village Expansion:**

After the establishment of the Kansas village and the construction of the temporary dwellings, the German-Russian family immediately set out to acquire suitable land for field
cultivation. There was no hesitation at putting the land to the plow and, within a year, the new settler had drastically altered the face of the local landscape.

While considering that the Volga family cultivated little more than a dozen acres, the phenomenally rapid manner in which the Kansas sod was plowed would seem to defy rational explanation. Contemporary newspaper accounts describe with amazement the agricultural achievements of the German-Russian settler. The Catharine colony was reported to have two thousand acres under cultivation within a year of their arrival (Hays City Sentinel, May 11, 1877, p. 2). The Ellis County Star of August 3, 1877, reported "... the Russians of Liebenthal are well satisfied and will sow at least 1,500 acres of wheat this fall." Several months later the same paper (October 26, 1877) noted, "... the Russians of Hartsouk have sown 2,000 acres of wheat."

In 1876, the year of first German-Russian settlement, the State Board of Agriculture (1876, p. 145) reported that there were 1,756 acres under cultivation in Ellis County. Two years later the Board (1878-79, pp. 204-208) reported that

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1 The village of Herzog was spelled in a variety of ways by the non-German-Russian. The 1893 USGS Quadrangle used the spelling Hartsook.
cultivation had increased to 10,754 acres while the population had increased by only 861. During this two-year period there was a sharp decrease in non-German-Russian population in the county, which implies that the increase in cultivated acreage was a result of German-Russian efforts. This conclusion is supported by Laing (1909-10, p. 523), who observed that at the end of 1877 "... 75 percent of the 'cultivated' land in Ellis County is in the hands of the German-Russians."

The acres under cultivation increased progressively during the following twenty years, as indicated on Table 1.

**TABLE 1**

**TOTAL AREA UNDER CULTIVATION IN ELLIS COUNTY, KANSAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Acres</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>1,756</td>
<td>1,576</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>10,754</td>
<td>2,437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>44,996</td>
<td>5,519</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>56,368</td>
<td>5,046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>100,296</td>
<td>7,628</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>196,126</td>
<td>7,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>256,738</td>
<td>8,543</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>350,936</td>
<td>10,321</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>388,039</td>
<td>11,683</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
While not all the land under cultivation in Ellis County was being cultivated by German-Russians, their share of the total acreage was considerable. Laing (1909-10, p. 525) reports that in 1889 the German-Russians were cultivating 82,003 acres in the county; within ten years it had increased to 196,550 acres.

Due to the nature of the local surface configuration, much more land had to be occupied than was cultivated. Land with potential cultivability varied considerably throughout the study area, as indicated in Plate 6. With the land subdivision imposed by the American rectangular land survey, the settler was often required to purchase much unusable acreage in order to obtain a desired cultivable tract.

The Two-House System:

With the rapid increase in field cultivation and the existence of natural land-use restrictions, the German-Russian settler was forced to venture further from the village in search of new land. During the first quarter century of settlement, as fields became located further from the village, the daily commuting between village and field became impractical and the "two-house" system was introduced.

The two-house system was a modification of the field camps associated with the Volga village. In the cultivation
PLATE 6

LEGEND

Suitable for Cultivation

Not Suitable for Cultivation

GENERALIZED LAND-USE CAPABILITY

SOURCE: USDA Soil Conservation Service (1948)
of distant gewanne the Volga villagers developed summer camps which were utilized during the planting and harvesting of field crops (Toepfer, 1966, p. 67). Since field cultivation was a family matter on the Kansas scene, permanent summer dwellings were established on the distant family farmstead\(^1\) (Pekari, 1942, p. 13).

The entire family would move to the farmstead during the planting and harvesting seasons. Returning to the village on Saturday afternoons, the entire village would congregate together for the Sunday religious obligations. During most of the summer and early fall, the village could properly be termed as a "Sunday town." After the planting of the winter wheat in late September and early October, the family returned to the village and daily village life was resumed.

The two-house system can still be found in the study area at the time of this writing, but for the most part it was abandoned with the introduction of the automobile. Johannes (1946, p. 35) reports that the automobile did not come into wide use in the area until after World War I, and that only after 1920 did the majority of the farmers live on

\(^1\)Residing on the farmstead fulfilled the residency requirement of the Homestead Law, but the law itself was in no way responsible for the two-house system. Enforcement of the residency provision of the law was extremely lax while the construction of outbuildings served the same legal purpose.
the farmstead to the exclusion of the town house. Population figures reveal that the general shift to the isolated farmstead took place between 1925 and 1935. An examination of two villages—Pfeifer and Liebenthal—with reliable population statistics indicates that while the township population, which includes the village, remained constant, the population of the village itself, dropped sharply.¹

The maintenance of two homes was costly to the family and, as a result, both were usually small and neither was very well furnished. With more rapid transportation the family could fulfill its religious and educational obligations while maintaining permanent residence on the farmstead. As a result, the village became a retirement community for the older members of the family while retaining its religious and educational foci for the young. Recent fieldwork in the study area reveals that forty percent of the inhabited village dwellings are occupied by retired farm families, while only seventeen percent are occupied by families with

¹In the Pfeifer village population declined from 513 in 1925 to 200 in 1935 (Rand McNally Commercial Atlas of America, 56th and 66th editions) while the township population of Freedom Township increased from 521 to 566 during the same ten-year period.
elementary-school-age children.¹

The Sister Village:

For the first two decades of settlement, the two-house system adequately served the needs of the villagers. As village population continued to increase and farmsteads became located progressively further from the village site, there arose a demand for the creation of "sister village colonies."

As a case in point, the establishment of the Severin settlement is representative of the other German-Russian sister villages. In a local history of the settlement, Gottschalk (1966, pp. 1-2) relates the reasons for the founding of the settlement:

... In 1915 the parish of Catharine had reached a population of over six hundred souls. The parish church, on the other hand, had a seating capacity of only 320 people... Secondly, a large number of the parishioners owned farms that were at great distances from the church. In those years of the horse and buggy, ten to fifteen miles were a considerable distance to travel.

¹Of the six original villages, Victoria (Herzog) is excluded because of its commercial functions. In the remaining 5 villages there presently stand 294 dwellings, of which 240 are occupied. Young families under 35 years of age occupy 41 of the dwellings (20 in Munjor alone) while 199 dwellings are occupied by families over 35 years of age.
On February 13, 1916, sixteen families petitioned the entire congregation to assist in establishing a new village settlement. The Catharine community contributed over $1,000, and the Severin colony was begun. Although a planned village was actually laid out, the only buildings constructed were a small church and a school.¹

By the time of the establishment of sister villages the German-Russian need for village life had become diluted by the presence of a second generation who were in the process of becoming Americanized. As a consequence, the new villages could more appropriately be called rural parish neighborhoods. Three of the new sister villages for example, consisted of little more than a rural church and a school that ministered to the religious and educational needs of a new generation that were to grow to maturity without the benefit of a true German village experience.

Within the study area, the sister-village concept never took root as it had on the Volga. The clustered nature of the gewannflur and its subdivisions gave impetus to Volga village life, while the large rectangular fields associated

¹A complete list of sister villages in the study area is found in Table 2, and each is located accordingly, on Plate 3.
with the American land survey tended to disperse the farmsteads, thereby inhibiting village growth.

**TABLE 2**

**GERMAN-RUSSIAN SISTER VILLAGES IN ELLIS AND RUSH COUNTIES, KANSAS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sister Village</th>
<th>Number of Original Families</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Original Colony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Emmeram</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1901</td>
<td>Herzog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loretto</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>1902</td>
<td>Pfeifer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walker</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>1903</td>
<td>Herzog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Antonino</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Munjor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vincent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1907</td>
<td>Herzog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Severin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>1916</td>
<td>Catharine</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

German-Russian Catholic settlement in Western Kansas outside the immediate study area can also be largely attributed to the establishment of sister villages by the original six colonies. With the increasing demand for land within the original settlement area, many colonists chose to look for greater opportunities elsewhere.

The first organized exodus from the study area took place in 1892, when twenty-six families founded the village colony of Marienthal (see Plate 7). The following year forty-two families from Herzog joined several German Catholic families, who had previously established the village of Gorham, seven
PLATE 7

GERMAN-RUSSIAN CATHOLIC SETTLEMENTS IN WESTERN KANSAS (1910)
miles east of Herzog in Russell County. In 1894 the colony of St. Peter was founded northwest of the Ellis County area (Laing, 1909-10, p. 517). A list of the German-Russian Catholic settlements outside the immediate study area can be found in Table 3. The table includes only those settlements that were a result of organized groups. Not included in Table 3, but located on Plate 7, are the two villages of Angelus and Collyer. These two villages were founded by a small group of German-Russian Catholics who had emigrated from the Black Sea area of Russia shortly after 1900 (Ruppenthal, 1913-14, p. 526).

In no other area of Western Kansas, however, did German-Russian Catholic life retain such a traditional quality as it did in the original village settlements of 1876 and 1877. Most later villages incorporated many non-German Russians, thus losing their homogeneous character. As with any culture, it is largely in the peripheral areas that acculturation is most pronounced, while the core area holds to the last vestige of tradition.

1Excluding the settlements within the study area, Plate 7 locates all German-Russian Catholic village settlements in Western Kansas existing prior to 1910.
TABLE 3

GERMAN-RUSSIAN CATHOLIC SETTLEMENTS
IN WESTERN KANSAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sister Village</th>
<th>Number of Original Families</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Original Colony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Marienthal</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Ellis County</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gorham</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Herzog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Peter</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Herzog</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Park</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1905</td>
<td>Munjor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ness City</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>1915</td>
<td>Ellis County</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within the core area of German-Russian Catholic settlement, the church was fundamental to village life. As settlement dispersed, the church's influence over the lives of its followers sharply declined. The church outside the study area,

1The table does not include settlements of the study area shown in Plate 2.

2Originally called Buffalo Park, the site had previously been occupied during the construction of the Kansas Pacific Railway. Families continued to move to the area as late as 1940. There are today many German-Russian Catholics in the vicinity of the village, but the village of Park, itself, is predominantly non-German-Russian.

3The area of organized settlement was actually a few miles northeast of the town of Ness City and consisted of isolated farmsteads. The colony received aid from the parishes in the study area for the construction of a church which was located in Ness City.
for example, lost much of its German quality when forced to turn to English-speaking priests.¹ The concentration of Catholic settlement found in the original settlement area enabled the Church to maintain a large, vigorous parochial school system within the village.

While taking note of the secondary clusters of German-Russian Catholic settlements in Western Kansas, the remainder of this essay will be concerned with the essential core area of settlement. Having recently traversed the area of settlements outside the study area, it was noted by this writer that after a half century since the establishment of these settlements, little, if any, German-Russian character remains.

¹Ellis County was the westernmost limit of the Concordia Diocese which provided the German-speaking Capuchin priests.
CHAPTER IV

KANSAS LAND OWNERSHIP PATTERNS

The Village Situation:

On the Kansas landscape, each original German-Russian colony established the agricultural village with remarkable uniformity in site and plan. Within the immediate settlement situation, however, there occurred differences in the basic pattern of village settlement. Although time has tended to homogenize each settlement into a common German-Russian form, characteristic original settlement situation differences continue to exist as indelible imprints on the village landscape. The settlement of four villages---(1) Catharine, (2) Herzog, (3) Pfeifer, and (4) Munjor---will be examined as illustrative.

In each case, the original settlement situation is yet evident in the landscape as a manifestation of land ownership

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1Settlement "situation" as used in this essay is so defined as to include the immediate environs of the agricultural village--that functional part of the village excluding the village site itself.
patterns. Although differences appear in each village situation, the overriding similarities are much more obvious. These differences from village to village, while not profound, are significant in that they are a result of the human factor of choice within the bounds of cultural acceptance.¹

The Catharine Settlement:

The location of the Catharine settlement (see Figures 1 and 2) was chosen by the five original families who had emigrated from Katharinestadt, Russia. Shortly after their arrival in Kansas in April of 1876, they purchased Section 16 (T 13 S, R 17 W) from the Kansas School Commission (see Plate 8). Each of four families purchased one of the four quarters of the section, yet the entire section was intended to be collectively owned.

Upon the arrival of thirty-nine additional families during the next two years, the financial responsibility of the original purchase was shared by all families. Collectively they contributed $4,635.48 for the establishment of the

¹The persistence of original land ownership patterns has been observed by Sauer (1941, p. 21) and Kniffen (1966, p. 23). Kniffen reports that the settlement patterns most resistant to change are the "original and traditional modes of dividing land," while Sauer states that "land rights and land use are likely to conserve a good deal of the past."
Figure 1. Oblique aerial view of Catharine, Kansas.

Figure 2. Ground view of Catharine, Kansas.
PLATE 8

CATHARINE SETTLEMENT

SECTION 16, T13S, R17 W

SOURCE: Standard Atlas of Ellis County, Kansas (1906)
PLATE 9

CATHARINE VILLAGE

COMMON GRAZING LAND

CATHOLIC CEMETERY

SOURCE: Standard Atlas of Ellis County, Kansas (1905)
Catharine Land Company, and the deed was recorded in 1880 at the Ellis County courthouse.

Fifty acres of the section were set aside for the village site, while the remaining acreage was divided into shares. Each family that contributed to the purchase price received, in return, one or more shares, depending upon the size of its contribution. The shares ranged from six to thirty-eight acres, and each five-acre share entitled the family to both a lot in the village and a lot in the cemetery (Pekari, 1942, p. 12).

Although acre shares were allotted to each family, the land was not subdivided, but rather held in common. The collective use of the land was set forth by the Catharine colonists in the original deed which reads, in part:

... neither will anyone, at any time, plow cultivate, or in anywise use the said lands for agricultural purposes ... but it shall lie in waste and be used by the inhabitants of the Catharine Town for the grazing and feeding of their respective stock.

This practice of having a common pasture (Viehweide) associated with the village had its antecedents on the Russian Volga and is depicted on the map of the Dehler Settlement (see Plate 10). Whereas the nature of the land situation on the Volga relegated the common pasture to that land unsuited for cultivation, such efficient land use was not a pressing concern on the Kansas landscape. The 640-acre section,
PLATE 10

GERMAN—VOLGA SETTLEMENT

SOURCE: Martin Hagin (1966)
therefore, was used with no regard for the presence of arable land contained within.

Since the village experience was a necessary part of German-Russian life, the Catharine Land Company provided each family a town lot. The original deed stated:

. . . the parties shall be allowed to select a place 88 by 140 feet whereon he may erect a dwelling house and around which he may, if he so chooses, raise a garden.

With the subsequent layout of the village, the town lots became somewhat larger, commonly measuring 97 by 145 feet. The one hundred and forty lots planned provided the original families considerable choice of location, but most were to construct their dwellings around the two town blocks that were set aside for the future construction of the church (see Figure 1).

The church square, measuring 346 by 648 feet, was centrally located, as had been the case on the Volga. The land was collectively donated and officially deeded to the Bishop of Wichita on May 23, 1893 (Pekari, 1942, p. 12).

It was not until 1892 that the village was professionally surveyed, and yet, the original layout of streets and

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1Town lot is the vernacular term applied to a dwelling lot within the village.
lots proved extremely regular. The official Ellis County plat of Catharine, as indicated on Plates 8 and 9, was a result of the 1892 survey. The survey brought to the awareness of the villagers, several potential legal complications that might result from the existence of the common grazing land. The Catharine Land Company which controlled the land was not a legal, recognized company under Kansas law. The villagers were therefore encouraged to apply for a State charter. In April of 1893, the St. Catharine Town and Grazing Company was officially chartered by the State of Kansas, replacing the Catharine Land Company.

The capital stock of the new company, valued at $7,040, was divided into 128 shares, at $55 per share. The property remained in common use and no property could be sold, except upon a two-thirds vote of the stockholders. There existed additional regulations not specifically stated in the charter but agreed upon by mutual consent of the villagers. These restrictions provided that no one individual could hold more than ten shares of stock in the company; that tax dues were to be raised by the collection of a pasturage fee; and that individual cutting of timber along the creek was prohibited as the dry wood was gathered yearly by all shareholders and sold to the highest bidder (Dreiling, 1926, p. 42).

In 1897, the directors of the company issued deeds of ownership for the town lots. There existed, however, an
understood exclusion law permitting a shareholder to sell or rent his share of the grazing land to whomever he chose, although the town lot could be sold only with the approval of two-thirds of all shareholders (Pekari, 1942, p. 13).

The 1893 charter stated that the St. Catharine Town and Grazing Company was to exist for fifty years, but the company dissolved in 1908 with the legal subdivision of the common grazing land. Many of the shareholders made little or no use of the common land and wished to be rid of the responsibilities of its maintenance. A new generation gaining control had little sympathy with the ways of the old country and, seeing little use in the existence of a common pasture, they parceled the common land into tracts equaling the number of outstanding shares and divided them by casting lots (Dreiling, 1926, p. 42).

The Catharine plat of 1922 indicates the division of the common land into forty tracts (see Plate 11). A road, placed north-south through the center of the section, divides the two rows of tracts, each running 2,607 feet, east-west. The widths of the tracts vary according to the number of shares held by each stockholder. In the years since, the tracts have become consolidated into fewer fragments, much more efficiently cultivated. An aerial photograph of the general area (see Plate 12), taken in 1965, clearly reveals, however,
PLATE 11

A SELECTED PORTION OF THE 1922 ELLIS COUNTY TOWNSHIP PLAT

SOURCE: Standard Atlas of Ellis County, Kansas (1922)
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH CATHARINE, KANSAS
1965

subdivision of common land

0 1 mile

Courtesy of USDA
the continued presence of the said tracts as relict features in the landscape.

The Herzog Settlement:

The founders of the Herzog settlement arrived in Ellis County, Kansas, in the same month as their Catharine neighbors—April, 1876. In the establishment of their colony, however, they responded differently to the existing landscape situation. The twenty-three families of the colony purchased an entire 640-acre section (Section 1 of T 14 S, R 17 W) from the Kansas Pacific Railway. Upon the request of the colonists, the railroad land agent divided the section into forty-acre strips, running east-west through the length of the section. Each family purchased as many of the strips as it felt able. In several cases, more than one family combined their resources to purchase a single strip, since individually, each lacked the necessary capital. As a result, deeds were eventually given to strips ranging in size from fifteen to eighty acres (see Plate 13).

Each family received a deed to the strip, or strips, which it purchased from the railroad. The long, narrow strips led to title descriptions that were unusual in the early days of Kansas settlement. One such deed describes the forty acre strip purchased by Jacob Lang for $200 (Ellis County, Kansas; Record of Deeds):
... the south-half of the north-half of the north-half of the NE quarter and the south-half of the north-half of the north-half of the NW quarter of Section 1 in T 14 S, R 17 W.

The strips were held in private ownership with the intended use of field cultivation. Although the subdivision of the section into narrow strips is reminiscent of the division of the German Gewann, any such association must, of necessity, be purely conjectural. Many of the original agricultural strips have remained intact to the present, and their general orientation can be see in the 1938 aerial photograph of the settlement (see Plate 14). Since each family had land within a mile or less of the village, the existence of a common village pasture, with its collective ownership of property, never materialized.

The original Herzog village site was located on seventeen acres of land in the northeast corner of Section 12 (T 14 S, R 17 W). The site was donated by one of the colonists who had preempted\(^1\) the contiguous quarter-section to the south of the original purchase.

\(^1\)Under the Preemption Act of 1841, one hundred and sixty acres of government land were subject to preemption at $2.50 an acre within the limits of railroad land grants.
AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH VICTORIA, KANSAS
1938

0 1 mile

agricultural strips
original Herzog village
Victoria

Courtesy of the National Archives
In 1879, the Kansas Pacific Railway donated ten acres in the northwest corner of their adjoining section (Section 7 of T 14 S, R 16 W) for the purpose of constructing a church and school (Dreiling, 1926, p. 49). By 1881, the village had increased to 214 families (Johannes, 1946, p. 18) and the village site was extended to the north of the church square.¹ During the following decades, as the population increased, the village was eventually to develop around the church square, giving it its present central location.

Since Herzog was the only German-Russian settlement in close proximity to a rail location,² (see Plate 15) it soon became the largest of the German-Russian villages. The Herzog village was the only village that outgrew its original site and was the only village to develop a merchant class.

The village continued to expand its area toward the railroad, and by 1900 the German-Russian had completely replaced the earlier Scottish influence in Victoria. In 1913, the village officially incorporated and a local civil government was established. At that time the entire settlement was given

¹Land was donated for village growth by John Goetz, Anton Dreiling and John Dreiling. Later, John Pfeifer provided land for the village growth to the east and south of the church square.

²The original village site was exactly one-half mile north of the Victoria depot on the Kansas Pacific Railway.
PLATE 15

SELECTED PORTION OF THE 1896 HAYS, KANSAS QUADRANGLE

SOURCE: USGS (1896)
its present name, Victoria.¹

The Pfeifer Settlement:

The original site of the Pfeifer settlement (see Figure 3) was chosen by the thirteen families from Pfeifer, Russia, who arrived in Ellis County in August of 1876. Four of the colonists purchased Section 25 (T 15 S, R 17 W) from the railroad. It was the original intent of the colonists that the section would be divided into long, narrow strips running north-south the length of the section, upon which the colonists would construct their dwellings. Each family purchased one or more strips from the original investors in order to share the original financial burden (Dreiling, 1926, p. 70).

With the arrival of additional families during the following years, there developed general dissatisfaction with the character of the settlement. Dissatisfaction arose first with the dispersed nature of the dwellings, which held little appeal for the traditional village dwellers. Secondly, the site itself was situated on the sand and marsh floodplain of

¹The name given by George Grant's Scottish colonists in honor of Queen Victoria of Great Britain. The reason German-Russians retained the English name in place of the German, Herzog, was due to the railroad's reluctance to change the name of its depot.
Figure 3. A ground view of Pfeifer, Kansas. The trees in the foreground border the Smoky Hill River.

Figure 4. Oblique aerial view of Pfeifer, Kansas, looking southwest toward the agricultural strips west of the village.
the Smoky Hill River which offered no area suitable for the establishment of the traditional German village.

Finally, in 1884, the colonists moved en masse to the present village site (see Plate 3), several hundred yards to the south. The new site was located on a terrace lying approximately sixty feet above the floodplain on a quarter section (NW-1/4 of Section 26, T 15 S, R 17 W) homesteaded in 1879 by one of the colonists (Laing, 1909-10, p. 515).

The new village site was located in the eastern portion of the quarter section. A rectangular village plan was laid out and large town lots were sectioned off. The general nature of the village plan, with its central church square, was almost identical to that of the other German-Russian villages (see Plate 16).

Excepting the area set aside for the village cemetery, that part of the quarter section not used for the village was subdivided into long, narrow garden lots (see Figure 4). Each garden lot was forty-four feet wide and extended 1,490 feet east-west through the remainder of the quarter section (Laing, 1909-10, p. 515). The purchase of one garden lot entitled the settler to one town lot and he received a deed to both from the original owner. Many families purchased more than one garden lot, which accounts for the varying widths of the unit lots depicted on the village plat (see Plate 16).
PLATE 16

CATHOLIC
CEMETERY

TOWN LOTS

GARDEN LOTS

KANSAS STREET

SARATOV STREET

SHERITA STREET

CHURCH SQUARE

ST. JACOB STREET

TOWN LOTS

1490'

PFEIFER VILLAGE

NW 1/4 of SECTION 36, T15 S, R 17 W

SOURCE: Standard Atlas of Ellis County, Kansas (1905)
Although the narrow strips were referred to as garden lots, they were never cultivated by the early villagers, but were used instead as pasture. Common use was not popular; consequently each family fenced its lot as soon as possible.

To the Pfeifer villagers, the garden lot or pasture fulfilled much the same purpose as the common grazing land found in the Catharine settlement. It was only after the disappearance of the horse as the major source of power that the lots were to be cultivated. The garden lots are still in evidence in the landscape and several are identifiable on the 1965 aerial photograph of the settlement (see Plate 17).

The Munjor Settlement:

The founders of the Munjor settlement collectively purchased an entire 640 acre section (Section 25 of T 14 S, R 18 W) from the railroad in October of 1876. The village site was chosen on the extreme northeast corner of the section (see Plate 18) in the vicinity of Big Creek. Adjoining two section lines, the village was arranged in the common rectangular fashion. The details of the village plan are

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1. The original deed had a purchase price of $2,240, or $3.50 an acre, which the colony was to pay in installments to be arranged with the railroad.
PLATE 17

AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH PFEIFER, KANSAS
1965

Garden lots

0 1 mile

Courtesy of USDA
TOWN LOTS

Cemetery

COMMON GRAZING LAND

GARDEN LOTS
NW 1/4 of SECTION 30
T 14 S, R 17 W

MUNJOR SETTLEMENT

SECTION 25, T 14 S, R 18 W

SOURCE: Standard Atlas of Ellis County, Kansas (1906)
included on Plate 19, and are similar to the other villages previously mentioned.

For the purchase of the section, the Munjor Land Company was formed and the leaders of the colony were appointed as trustees. As with the Catharine settlement, that portion of the section not used for town lots was held in common ownership and used as pasture for livestock.

The village was officially surveyed and platted in 1882, and, at that time the Munjor Company was officially charted by the State of Kansas. With the incorporation charter, the Munjor Land and Grazing Company1 was established with total assets of $10,000. Shares of $50 each were distributed equally to all heads of families. Except for this equal distribution of all shares, the Land and Grazing Company functioned in the same manner as its Catharine counterpart.

In 1888, the south half of the original section was sold to one of the settlers, and deeds to town lots were given in 1899. Dissention had been building among the villagers over the financial responsibilities necessary to maintain the

1The charter was filed with the Kansas Secretary of State on October 10, 1882, and was granted on the following day. A legal corporation was drawn up at the suggestion of John Schyler, a German-speaking lawyer from Hays City and a recognized friend of the settlement, who furnished the village with a copy of the charter in German—Die Munjor Dorf und Weide Gesellschaft (Laing, 1909-10, p. 514).
company. As a result the company was legally dissolved in 1911.\(^1\) The remaining grazing land was subdivided into long, narrow strips running east-west through the section (see Plate 20). The vacant town lots belonging to the company were sold and the money subsequently divided among all shareholders.

Shortly after the purchase of the original section and the establishment of the village site, the Munjor settlers purchased most of the contiguous quarter section (NW-1/4 of Section 30, T 14 S, R 17 W) that had been homesteaded previously (see Plate 18). The deed, dated January 1, 1879, stated that 156 acres were purchased for $400 and were divided into eighty tracts. Fifty-three families participated in the purchase and each was given a title for the tract or tracts that they bought (Ellis County, Kansas; Record of Deeds).\(^2\)

Although each tract was considered to have the same cash value, they varied considerably in size (see Plate 19).

\(^1\)The last meeting of the Munjor Town and Grazing Company was held on April 7, 1911, at which time the necessary two-thirds of the shareholders voted to liquidate the company.

\(^2\)The land was sold by Anton Schneider; each of the 53 heads of families bought from one to four tracts.
Tracts were laid out so that each would have the same amount of arable land—a practice common to the German Gewannflur.

Legally described as tracts, each was designed as a garden lot with the express purpose of providing saleable garden produce to outside markets as well as supplying food for village consumption. The garden lots were so used, however, for less than a decade, after which they quickly became consolidated and placed in field cultivation. The general nature of the original garden subdivision, as indicated on Plate 19, is still distinguishable as a relict feature on a 1938 aerial photograph of the Munjor settlement (see Plate 20).

The village garden, so commonplace on the Volga, was not successfully transplanted to the new village structure. The Munjor experience was the only serious attempt at the continuation of such a practice. To the German-Russian, it became early apparent that the future lay in the commercial cultivation of wheat, and greatest effort was extended toward that end. In general, family gardens were exceptionally small and were restricted to the confines of the town lot.

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1 Referred to as tracts on the original deed, each was numbered from 1 to 80.
Field Ownership:

Collective ownership and use of land as found in the village situation was not a practice that was to extend itself outside the immediate village settlement. The concept of private ownership of land, although not widespread on the Volga, was quickly assimilated by the German-Russian.

Since the vast majority of the immigrants had expended their limited financial resources in reaching their new home, the alternate sections of free public land subject to homesteading were most eagerly sought after. Within six months after the arrival of the first colonists, the Hays City Sentinel (September 6, 1876, p. 2) reported that over two hundred homestead applications had been taken out by German-Russians in Ellis County.

The rapidity with which the German-Russian was able to homestead much of the land surrounding the village was made possible by German-speaking officials of the General Land Office in Hays City.¹ They provided the colonists with the

¹The register of the GLO's Western District at the time of German-Russian settlement was B. Hanna, who was able to converse with the colonists in German. The Western District General Land Office was located in Hays City from June 1874 until October 1879, when it was moved to Wakeeney, Kansas. It subsequently was moved to Colby in 1905 and to Dodge City in 1909.
necessary information and assistance that enabled them to become the leading landowners in the county within two years (Johannes, 1946, p. 14).

Upon his declaration of intent to become a citizen and payment of a nine-dollar filing fee, the colonist was able to homestead eighty acres of "double minimum" land.¹ Since each homestead applicant was required to be twenty-one years of age or the head of a family, the German-Russian practices of large families and early marriage enabled many family units to homestead as many as 320 acres.

As additional 160 acres could be acquired under the provisions of the Timber-Culture Act of 1874. The act required that the applicant pay $2.50 per acre and show proof within eight years of having planted "675 living thrifty trees to

¹There were two classes of agricultural public lands in Kansas--one class at $1.25 per acre designated as minimum and another class at $2.50 per acre designated as double minimum. The latter includes all land embraced within the alternate sections of land provided for by railroad land grants. The homestead right was limited to 160 acres of minimum land and 80 acres of double minimum land. A complete description of how public lands could be obtained in Western Kansas is to be found in Fourth Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1883-84, pp. 507-519.
each acre." Public lands were also subject to preemption, providing up to one quarter section at $2.50 per acre. Upon filing a declaratory statement of intent, the applicant had thirty-three months in which to make the necessary interest-free payments.

For German-Russian settlement throughout the study area, the availability of vast expanses of public land had a two-fold significance. First, the homestead and preemption land provided the vast majority of new immigrants the basis upon which their agricultural future was built. Secondly, the legal arrangements involved in entering either a homestead or preemption claim necessitated private land ownership, since no provision had been made in the enabling Congressional legislation for collective or corporate land ownership.

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1 The provisions of the Preemption Act of 1841 were similar to the Homestead Act, excepting that the latter provided free land and was restricted in the study area to 80 acres. It was possible for an applicant to take advantage of all three government land acts and so acquire 400 acres of public land. The Timber-Culture Act, however, was never popular with the German-Russian settler and, as such, saw restricted use in the study area.

2 In 1874, approximately half of the 576,000 acres in Ellis County were public lands and half were railroad lands. By 1883 the railroad still had over 174,000 unsold acres while less than 50,000 acres of public land remained.

3 The effective legislation governing the General Land Office can be found in Circulars and Regulations of the General Land Office, U.S. Department of Interior, Washington: 1930.
The alternate odd-numbered sections of railroad land were also available for German-Russian purchase and most of the village situations were located on such land. The railroad land, unlike government land, varied considerably in price, depending on its agrarian potential and the localized supply and demand. In the first year of German-Russian settlement (1876) railroad land sold for $2 to $7 per acre, but by 1885 the price had risen to $3 to $15 per acre.

While eager to purchase railroad land, most could not afford the required ten percent down payment. As a result, the purchase of railroad land, as well as other private land, had to wait until the family became more affluent. The patriarchal structure of the German-Russian family, however, enabled a total family commitment of energy and ability toward the acquisition of such land. Since hard money was a scarce commodity, the family members sought employment outside the village and, as Laing (1909-10, p. 525) noted: "the money then earned was invested in land and stock."

As previously stated, the German-Russian rapidly acquired the available arable land which surrounded his village. What

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1The Kansas Pacific Railway required one-tenth of the purchase price at the time of purchase and the remainder in ten annual installments at seven percent interest.
is most noteworthy about the early acquisition of property is the contiguous nature of the land ownership. Whereas the Volga farm included small strips of land from a number of scattered Gewanne, the family farm on the Kansas landscape consisted of contiguous sectional subdivisions. A study of land ownership plats indicates this concentrated family pattern. An analysis of one typical German-Russian township in 1905 reveals that of 144 property descriptions, 54 are contiguous, while only 11 are separated.

Considering the nature of agriculture during the period of animal power, such a concentration of land associated with the family farm is not difficult to understand. It would seem only reasonable that no matter how advanced the agricultural technology, a farmer would prefer to have his fields concentrated. Such concentration, however, had not been part of the traditional German-Russian cultural inventory, and as such, it must be concluded that the resultant field patterns are a product of the American experience.

Stability of Land Ownership:

In spite of the normal economic fluctuations associated with the marginal nature of agriculture on the Great Plains, the German-Russian family endured, and generally prospered, during the first quarter century of settlement. As a result, land ownership expanded rapidly to encompass the greatest
share of the arable land within the study area. By 1905, the core area of settlement had been firmly established, as shown on Plate 21a. The basic land ownership pattern has been altered only slightly during the following years.

Minor expansion in the German-Russian land ownership prior to 1935 was attendant upon the establishment of sister villages. In recent years, the mobility of agriculture has enabled the farmer to cultivate more-distant fields, thus tending to disperse the basic ownership pattern. Within the core area of settlement, however, the nature of German-Russian land ownership has retained remarkable permanence\(^1\) (see Plate 21a, b, c,).

The stable nature of German-Russian land ownership within the study area has been a consequence of the first generation of settlers who were eager to control as much arable land as possible. What appeared as an irrational hunger for land (Johannes, 1946, p. 37) was, in reality, the family desire to

\(^1\)In Plate 21 the less-concentrated pattern of German-Russian ownership on the 1965 map is due largely to intermarriage of German-Russian females with non-German-Russian males which results in non-German-Russian names on land ownership plats. In Munjor village, for example, informants could not think of any farms within the township that had been purchased by non-German-Russians.
LEGEND

- GERMAN-RUSSIAN
- UNION-PACIFIC
- STATE and FEDERAL

LAND OWNERSHIP
1935

SOURCE: Field Abstract Map (1935)
establish each male heir with a self-supporting farm.¹ When understood in the context of the large family—an average of nine children per family—such land ownership behavior appears more rational.

Throughout the study area, German-Russian land ownership must be understood, not in terms of individual family ownership, but in terms of extended family ownership. While title to all land was in the hands of the family patriarch, the traditional idea of a single family farm is misleading. In 1900, while the average Kansas farm was 246.7 acres, the German-Russian farm averaged 480 acres (Anderson, 1948, p. 32). During the following forty-five years, while the average size of the Kansas farm increased to 344 acres, the German-Russian farm increased only 8 acres. German-Russian population continued to grow with the second generation averaging 8.1 children per family (Johannes, 1946, p. 38). A corresponding increase in land ownership, however, did not develop.

By the time the first American-born generation reached adulthood, conditions existing outside of family control largely abrogated the original intent of eventual farm

¹Jordan (1966, p. 168) found that widespread land purchase by Texas Germans of the 19th century was "attributable, in part, to their desire to provide an inheritance for their numerous children."
subdivision. Although the farm was legally subdivided amongst the children, it remained cultivated as a single unit and the Volga practice of agrarian subdivision of land never materialized on the Kansas landscape. Subsequent trends in American agriculture made division of the original farm economically impractical and, in most cases, ownership was retained by the family patriarch.¹

The third generation German-Russian rapidly became acculturated into American society, which has resulted in a natural escape valve enabling the surplus agrarian population to leave the farm. As a consequence the population pressure, which was in part responsible for the German exodus from Russia, was not to manifest itself in the study area.² The

¹A case in point is an 81 year-old second-generation German-Russian who owns 1,280 acres near Liebenthal, Kansas. He has informed this writer that the land will be equally divided among his twelve children upon his death. At present, two sons cultivate the acreage.

²Anderson (1948, p. 31) indicates that prior to World War II excess farm population was absorbed largely by the expansion of urban activities within the county. Census figures reveal that between 1930 and 1940, farm migration was 2,100 while the total county population increased by 1,601. Of fifteen retired German-Russians interviewed by this writer in 1969, it was found that 71 percent of their children presently reside outside the study area. One 79-year-old informant with 13 children, for example, has only three living within the area.
essential stable nature of the rural landscape is shown in Table 4, which compares the number of inhabited dwellings and the population of two townships within the core area of settlement.

**TABLE 4**

SETTLEMENT IN WHEATLAND AND LOOKOUT TOWNSHIPS ELLIS COUNTY, KANSAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Wheatland Dwellings</th>
<th>Wheatland Population</th>
<th>Lookout Dwellings</th>
<th>Lookout Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>532</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>334</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>699</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>356</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In a classic study of population and settlement change in Western Kansas, Kollmorgen (1951) reported a sharp increase, followed by a decrease, in rural farmsteads in Sherman County between 1900 and 1950. Using the criteria employed by

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Population figures were obtained from U.S. Census reports. The number of dwellings were obtained from three sources—
1) the 1890 figures from the U.S.G.S. Topographic Quadrangle,
2) the 1920 figures from the 1922 Standard Atlas of Ellis County, Kansas, and 3) the 1965 figures from the Kansas State Highway Commission.
Kollmorgen, it was found that, although a corresponding change in population took place in Ellis County, the number of family farmsteads remained essentially the same over the past half century, as can be noted in Table 4. While Kollmorgen noted a "long-time instability of farm population" and farm size in his area of study, the inverse has been true of Ellis County. Between 1900 and 1940, for example, farm size in Sherman County has increased almost 100 percent from 419 acres to 812 acres, while in Ellis County, farm size has increased from 450.1 to 450.8 acres during the same period.

The decrease in rural population in the German-Russian townships of Ellis County, as noted by Anderson (1948), has been due to the emigration of young people from the farm and village. Despite youthful migration, the family farm has continued essentially intact to the present. In an earlier study dealing with the turnover of farm population in Kansas, Malin (1936, p. 371) reported that Ellis County had the highest retention of farm ownership of any county in the state. A random selection of townships in Western Kansas revealed that between 1875 and 1935, 68 percent of the farm land in Wheatland Township of Ellis County remained in the hands of the same owners, while in townships outside Ellis County, the average was 11.1 percent. The change in land ownership between 1905 and 1935, as reported by Malin, was
17.2 percent and 56.4 percent respectively. In Sherman County, Kollmorgen found that from 1937 to 1950, 66 percent of the land changed hands and, as he reported, "... frequency of transfer does reflect, or at least suggest, instability of population." Within the German-Russian settlement area, however, comparable figures reveal that between 1940 and 1965, 24.9 percent of the land changed hands, and that only 13 percent was transferred outside the immediate family.¹ Using Kollmorgen's hypothesis, this would indicate, if not a stable population, that the German-Russian hearth certainly has a stable land ownership pattern.

Those farms within the study area that could not survive the unpredictable nature of Kansas agriculture were usually subdivided and sold piecemeal to surrounding neighbors. Land values, together with the changing nature of cereal cultivation, precluded the sale of such land to outsiders.² Land within the hearth of German-Russian settlement has remained German-Russian.

¹Freedom Township, for example, contains 34,560 acres of which only 8,580 acres changed owners between 1940 and 1965—only 4,320 acres were transferred outside family ownership.

²One of the largest landholders in Western Kansas is the Great Western Sugar Company. Successful in the surrounding counties, the company has not yet purchased land within the hearth of German-Russian settlement. As of the time of this study, no large German-Russian wheat operation has been sold. The small parcels of land available to a land-company operation can not be cultivated economically.
CHAPTER V

GERMAN-RUSSIAN AGRICULTURE

To the German-Russian immigrant, wealth was to be gleaned from the land; the very forces which drew him to Western Kansas were those associated with the soil. Although often described as hungry for land, any land would not suffice, as the colonist sought only that land which was suitable for the plow. While others came to the Great Plains with cattle to utilize what the soil had traditionally produced, the German-Russian arrived with a handful of grain and saw in the brown earth beneath the sod, the potential for a new life.

With his arrival in Ellis County in 1876, the German-Russian was to push the agricultural frontier well into a previously hostile environment. He began at once to transform the native landscape and, within twenty-five years, he placed 100,000 acres under cultivation. Where others were to fail on the Great Plains, his previous experience on the Russian steppe enabled him to succeed.
Agricultural Assimilation:

On the Volga the German was a commercial grain farmer with over 80 percent of his land in spring wheat (König, 1938, p. 159). With his arrival in Western Kansas, the colonist planted the seed grain which he had brought with him, but because of the local situation, his crops were soon altered to meet the demand of the new environment. Winter wheat\(^1\) and corn, neither of which was grown on the Volga, rapidly replaced the two basic Volga crops—spring wheat and rye. The agricultural records kept by one German-Russian, Anthony Karlin, in part reported by Laing (1909-10, p. 524), are reproduced in Table 5. As can be noted, spring wheat was quickly replaced by winter wheat. By the late 1890's, corn had also been largely abandoned, leaving the German-Russian farm a single-crop operation.

The climatic fluctuations characteristic of the American Great Plains, together with the economic realities of the market place, essentially restricted field cultivation to that

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\(^1\)According to Malin (1944, pp. 162-29), the term hard wheat had little meaning prior to 1873 as "... the texture of wheat kernels were seldom the subject of comment." Although the great variety of wheat names tends to confuse the issue, Malin notes that the first true variety of hard winter wheat was introduced into the United States by German-Russian Mennonites who settled in Marion County, Kansas, in 1874. The reputation of this hard red Turkey wheat had preceded it to the United States, and it was in great demand in the grain markets.
### TABLE 5

**AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS FROM ANTHONY KARLIN FARM**  
**(1876-1898)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Winter Wheat Acres</th>
<th>Winter Wheat Yields in Bushels</th>
<th>Spring Wheat Acres</th>
<th>Spring Wheat Yields in Bushels</th>
<th>Corn Acres</th>
<th>Corn Yields in Bushels</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1878</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>648</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1879</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>517</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1880</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>12(^a)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1881</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>1260</td>
<td>no longer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>40(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>planted</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>250</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>no figures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1884</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>1955</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>296</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>480(^c)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>800</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1886</td>
<td>140</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>372</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>--(^b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1888</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>2302</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>--(^d)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1889</td>
<td>182</td>
<td>4350</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>--</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>585(^d)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>--(^e)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>1800</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>11-1/4</td>
<td>175</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>120</td>
<td>3700(^e)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>162</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>--(^f)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>265(^d)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>780(^d)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>--(^d)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>320(^d)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>6(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>820(^g)</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>8(^a)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>160</td>
<td>3500</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Corn no longer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1898</td>
<td>170</td>
<td>2580</td>
<td>--</td>
<td>Planted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^a\)Crop a total failure;  
\(^b\)Crop damaged by chinch bug;  
\(^c\)Too much rain;  
\(^d\)Drought;  
\(^e\)Very good year;  
\(^f\)Total failure in wheat, no rain from August 1892 to June 26, 1893;  
\(^g\)Hail damage.
crop which provided the greatest percentage of success.
Although an isolated case, the available figures from the
Karlin farm indicate that for the years included, winter
wheat produced that success.

The generalized climatic differences between the Volga
and Kansas settlement areas can be noted on Plate 22. The
colder winters of the Volga area prevented the cultivation
of winter wheat, hence the Volga Germans had little famili­
arity with it. The milder winter temperatures in the Kansas
study area permit the growth of winter wheat but, according
to Nuttonson (1955), there is no general environmental re­
striction to the growth of spring wheat in Western Kansas.
Thus, the generalized climatic differences fail to explain
the rapid shift from spring to winter wheat.

The reason for the German-Russian shift of crops was
threefold: First, winter wheat could be harvested 26 days
earlier than spring wheat. Nuttonson (1955, pp. 84-85, 270-
271) reported that the mean harvest date for spring wheat is
July 21, while that for winter wheat is June 25. Weather
records of the study area indicate that the incidence of
thundershower activity, hail, and tornadoes increases sharply
from June through August. Essentially, the earlier the crop
is harvested, the less chance of damage from localized weather
activity. Secondly, as Nuttonson points out, the planting of
PLATE 22

STATION: HAYS, KANSAS
LAT. 38.51 LONG. 99.72 MEAN ANNUAL TEMP. 51.4°
MEAN ANNUAL RANGE OF TEMP. 49.9°
MEAN ANNUAL PRECIP. 22.1"

STATION: SARATOV, USSR
LAT. 51.32 LONG. 46.03 MEAN ANNUAL TEMP. 42.1°
MEAN ANNUAL RANGE OF TEMP. 60.3°
MEAN ANNUAL PRECIP. 14.6"

SOURCE: Kansas State Board of Agriculture (1948)

SOURCE: Lothar König (1938)

CLIMATIC CHARTS
winter wheat is a "more efficient land use." His study reveals that greater yield result with spring wheat if the land is left fallow, resulting in "two years' accumulation of moisture in the soil . . . for the production of one crop."

With winter wheat, the early harvest enables the land to be fallow during the period of greatest precipitation, and thus the land can be cultivated yearly while maintaining high yields. Nuttonson also noted that in a study of wheat yields in the Hays, Kansas, area from 1916 to 1954, "it was found that rainfall over a 3 month period prior to planting was very important" to eventual yield. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, winter wheat was preferred because it could demand a considerably higher market price. In 1878, for example, winter wheat sold for 61¢ per bushel in Hays City while spring wheat brought only 46¢ per bushel. Rye sold for 22¢, which eliminated it from competitive consideration.

The abruptness of the change from spring to winter wheat was important in that it reflected a basic German-Russian attitude toward his new environment. What may appear as a simple alteration in wheat variety was, in reality, a drastic change in the traditional nature of field cultivation.

The German *Dreifelderwirtschaft*, with its crop rotation and
fallowing practices,¹ did not manifest itself on the Kansas landscape. The seasonal shift in field cultivation necessitated by the planting of winter wheat² was itself part of the spontaneous and revolutionary change in pattern of economic life.

Although Stumpp (1964) describes the Volga-Germans as "fiercely conservative in their agricultural practices," this conservatism did not maintain itself in Western Kansas. Within the context of the German-Russian economic system, the American scene induced a positive attitude toward change. Despite the conservative nature of his social organization, which is discussed in Chapter VII, the German-Russian was quick to assimilate all the newer innovations in agriculture technology.

The rapidity with which the German-Russian assimilated American agricultural technology seems to defy rational explanation. All available literature dealing with Volga Germans

¹During the early period of settlement, crop rotation and fallowing practices were largely abandoned. They have been reintroduced in the period following the Dust Bowl of the 1930's.

²Nuttonson (1955) reports that the mean date for planting spring wheat in the Saratov area is April 23, while the date for winter wheat in the Hays area is October 1.
stresses their resistance to change. One informant who lived in the Volga area as a young man and later emigrated to Schoenchen at the outbreak of World War I reported that "... most Germans on the Volga were still threshing wheat on a threshing floor with horse power." However, in July of 1877, less than a year after their arrival in Kansas, a local Hays City newspaper reported, "the Russians have adapted themselves to the ways of the American farmer insofar as the purchase of improved machinery is concerned ... two Russians of Victoria settlement have purchased a steam threshing machine and are threshing for 4-1/2 cents per bushel."

(Ellis County Star, July 27, 1877, p. 3). Although such inconsistent behavior does not lend itself well to explanation, it is important to note that in the marketplace where the economic survival of the culture was at stake, such behavior was successful.

Agrarian Success and Failure:

Despite his willingness to adopt American agricultural technology, German-Russian agrarian success within the settlement area was not a foregone conclusion. The concept of the Great American Desert and its subsequent ramifications for agriculture have persisted down to the present in one form or another. Johnson (1900), in his classic monograph, "The High Plains and Their Utilization" ventured the opinion that the
Plains could never become an agricultural region. In describing the Kansas drought of the 1890's, Johnson stated that "... grazing is assumed to be the ultimate use of the land." Although the German-Russian was willing to alter his traditional economic pattern, he did so only within a framework that was culturally acceptable, and this did not include Johnson's "ultimate use."

In his analysis of cereal cultivation in Sheridan County, Kansas, Thomthwaite (1936, p. 235) reached the same conclusion as Johnson about the future of agriculture in Western Kansas. While describing a later drought, Thomthwaite noted "... farmers who are hoping to get rich by raising wheat are unable or unwilling to consider, realistically, the odds against them."

The German-Russian agriculturalist, unlike his American counterpart, had been conditioned to the realities of the marginal nature of agriculture in steppe environments. A century of life on the Russian steppe had prepared the German-Russian for the cyclic nature of precipitation. This

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1 Sheridan County is located approximately 40 miles northwest of the study area.

2 König (1938, pp. 168-69) reports that on the Volga during the 18th and 19th centuries one year in five was a bad harvest due to drought. Severe drought conditions destroyed the crops in 1850, 1852, 1853, 1855, 1864, and 1875. From 1850 to 1910, thirteen bad droughts occurred, destroying the harvest; nine years recorded exceptionally good harvests; 38 years were classed as average harvests.
experience had taught him to survive on "one good crop out of three." The early droughts which Clements and Chaney (1936, pp. 41-43) describe as driving much of the earlier European settlement from the Great Plains did not substantially affect German-Russian agriculture.

Essentially, the German-Russians' prior experiences with steppe environments had enabled him to make the necessary adjustments to the Kansas landscape. The first great drought came in 1893 and lasted until 1897.¹ Although many of the German-Russians sent their children to seek outside employment "... the stout-hearted men remained, till with the year 1897, a bountiful harvest rewarded their endurance" (Laing, 1909-10, p. 526). The general American reaction was considerably different, and, as Palmer (1965, p. 34) noted, there was a universal decline in population with "as many as 90 percent of the settlers abandoning their farms."

Between the years 1877 and 1962, Palmer (1965, p. 43) reported that thirty-seven percent of the months in Western Kansas were characterized by drought. During this same period

¹Major droughts have occurred within the study area from 1893-1897, 1932-1940, and 1952-1956. As reported by Palmer (1965, p. 56), "... there appears to be sufficient evidence to lead one to speculate concerning the possibility that an extreme drought will again occur in Western Kansas sometime between 1972 and 1975."
there were 132 months when the drought reached severe to extreme proportions. Palmer noted also that 37 percent of the months were under a wet spell while only 12 percent of the months were near normal conditions. Although it may at first seem unrealistic to have three-fourths of the time given to either a drought or abnormally wet weather, it is characteristic of steppe environments that normal or average weather does not occur very frequently, even on a monthly basis.

The longest and most serious recorded drought in Western Kansas lasted from August 1932 through October 1940. During this period, there was a 9 percent decrease in rural population throughout the state but only a 1.5 percent decrease in Ellis County. Although agriculture suffered correspondingly throughout the German-Russian areas, the family farm persisted. Using a variety of measures—population, ownership, tenancy, and the like—the general agricultural pattern in Ellis County was the antithesis of the state as a whole. This high incidence of tenancy and "sidewalk" farming reported by Kollmorgen (1951, pp. 475-483) in Sherman County was not evidenced in the German-Russian study area.

Although drought can be expected for one-third of the time in the study area, there are other factors that affect the success and failure of local agriculture. An examination
of the yearly yields from the Karlin farm found in Table 5 indicate that crop failure results from a variety of natural causes—too much rain can result in wheat rust and chinch bug damage; wind and hail damage is an ever-present danger beyond the farmers' control; and the periodic plagues of grasshoppers prevent successful yields of late-maturing crops.

Agricultural success and failure has also been related to conditions in the market place. The great fluctuation in the price of wheat, governed by supply and demand, is as remote from individual control as the forces of nature. The figures in Table 6 indicate the great variability in market price, as well as yield. Considering rising farm costs, an examination of the available statistics reveals that the margin of profit has been steadily narrowed during the past half century.

The German-Russian Garden:

Together with spring wheat and rye, the German-Russian brought a great variety of garden crops to his new home. Two of the more important—tobacco and watermelon—could hardly be called garden crops, but both were so considered (Laing, 1909-10, p. 523). The German-Russian farmer was, and has remained, an avid cigar smoker and, as such, his most important
early garden crop was tobacco.\footnote{Local informants report that during any natural disaster, one protected the livestock and dad's tobacco, in that order.} Used entirely for family consumption, production was never extensive—only 103,600 pounds in 1880. Homemade cigars remained popular with the first generation settler, but by 1910 the tobacco plant had disappeared from the landscape.

TABLE 6

WHEAT YIELD AND MARKET PRICE
ELLIS COUNTY, KANSAS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Bushels Produced</th>
<th>Price per Bushel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>92,008</td>
<td>$ .60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1900</td>
<td>2,239,149</td>
<td>.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1905</td>
<td>905,405</td>
<td>.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1910</td>
<td>2,070,965</td>
<td>.87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>4,497,800</td>
<td>.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>3,594,276</td>
<td>1.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1925</td>
<td>715,025</td>
<td>1.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1930</td>
<td>3,753,200</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1935</td>
<td>101,961</td>
<td>.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1940</td>
<td>642,000</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>1,823,000</td>
<td>1.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>1,764,000</td>
<td>2.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1955</td>
<td>2,026,000</td>
<td>2.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>3,335,000</td>
<td>1.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>2,380,000</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A second important crop was watermelon, which was grown as a field crop by most early colonists. As with tobacco, the seeds were brought from the Volga and on the Volga the melon was grown principally on a patch of ground, or bastahn, located on a subirrigated stream floodplain (Schock, 1965, p. 53). Unlike tobacco, the melon was grown for commercial sale in the study area until the late 1950's.

The watermelon was a favorite German-Russian food, considered essential at social gatherings. While the fresh melon was being consumed, the seeds were saved and dried to be eaten as a winter snack—often described by American visitors as "Russian peanuts."

Exact figures on watermelon production are lacking, but a general concensus of informants places the size of the bastahn at five to ten acres. Yields were reported to be high, with the surplus melons being pickled in salt brine for winter use.

One extremely important Volga garden crop which did not find wide cultivation in the study area was the Irish potato. On the Volga the potato was the most important famine crop,

1The Ellis County Star (August 10, 1876) reported "... the sale of the first Russian watermelons" in Hays City.
and was usually planted extensively on the stream floodplains. During years of poor grain harvest, König (1938, pp. 159-162) reports, "... potatoes often accounted for more than half of the total agricultural production."

Although the potato remained an important staple in the German-Russian diet, it was not grown by German-Russians in the study area, despite the fact that agricultural statistics indicate that the Irish potato was grown successfully in Ellis County.

As Laing (1909-10, p. 253) noted, the German-Russian garden remained surprisingly small considering the agrarian nature of the people, together with the fact that garden cultivation had been an important undertaking on the Volga. Aside from tobacco and watermelons "... the cultivation of other vegetables has remained on a small scale."

With the arrival of the German-Russian in the American Great Plains, there occurred an unexplained and drastic change in the nature of garden cultivation. As previously noted in this essay, the Volga village had associated with it the village garden area, Gemüseland, together with a village orchard, Obstgärten. The only attempt to establish a village garden in Kansas was in Munjor. The Munjor experience was unsuccessful and the Volga concept never fully developed.
Instead of the Volga village garden, each family planted a small garden on its village or town lot. With the development of the two-house system, the garden was moved to the farmstead, but generally it remained small. The large German-Russian vegetable garden was the exception rather than the rule. The reasons for this are uncertain--many informants pointing to the grasshopper, with others relating to lack of moisture as the main reason.

It can be noted, however, that with the establishment of the German-Russian on the Kansas landscape, fundamental changes took place with respect to traditional agrarian life. First, on the Volga field, labor was restricted to the men who were periodically encamped at distant Gewanne. The women and elderly men remained in the village to tend the livestock and care for the garden. On the American scene the woman was not only responsible for the home and garden, but she also worked in the fields. A contemporary newspaper account (Ellis County Star, May 11, 1877, p. 3) describing the life of the German-Russian wife states, "... his women do the hard work or, at least, share it with him ... she is his companion; his servant; his beast of burden." Laing (1909-10, p. 517) reports that "in the early days she took her place in the harvest field, but in late years this has grown rare."
Secondly, the de-emphasis of vegetable cultivation was a manifestation of the difference in the nature of agrarian commerce in the two areas in question. While providing grain for export, the Volga village was, of necessity, a self-sufficient community that did not import foodstuffs due to the localized limitations of river transport. Essentially, Volga commerce consisted of exporting village surplus while importing only what the village could not produce for itself.

The availability of rapid rail transport on the American Great Plains provided greater flexibility in the nature of agrarian commerce. A greater variety of imported foodstuffs was available for purchase on the local markets than were available on the Volga.\(^1\) The common garden vegetables consumed by the German-Russian—root crops and cabbage—could readily withstand rail transport.

Creating a new life on the Kansas plains left little time for the care of a large garden. The entire family effort was directed toward field cultivation and, if successful, the

\(^1\)Whiskey, for example, was homemade on the Volga, yet with the arrival in Kansas, all whiskey was purchased from Kansas City, Missouri. Only with the introduction of Prohibition did the German-Russian begin to make his own alcoholic drinks.
necessary vegetable staples could be readily purchased. The cultivated garden was, therefore, given over to pot and medicinal herbs.

As tea drinkers, the German-Russians brought with them from the Volga a dog fennel, camomile (*Anthemis cotula*), which was used widely in eastern Europe for its medicinal qualities. The small flowers (see Figure 5) are dried and placed in boiling water and drunk with the evening meal, a practice yet in vogue in Kansas. Another common garden plant was the black nightshade (*Solanum nigrum*), which was introduced and has remained cultivated to the present (see Figure 6). The black berries which the plant produces make a topping for *Schwartzzebeeren Keuchen*, a pastry used at weddings and at the Christmas Season (Sackett, 1967, p. 21).

Generally, the plants that remained a dominant part of the garden complex had a specialized use. Although almost unknown by the younger generations, many of these plants remain cultivated today as ornamentals by older village dwellers. In the present scene there is a conspicuous absence of vegetable gardens. During many months of field observation, not

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1Native plants were also used to make tea, one of the more common being broom snakeweed (*Gutierrezia sarothrae*).
Figure 5. Camomile, *Anthemis cotula*, a common medicinal herb used in making a tea. (grown by Jake Herrman; Liebenthal, Kansas)

Figure 6. Black nightshade, *Solanum nigrum*, (grown by Al Rohr; Munjor, Kansas)
one garden was found on an isolated farmstead. Gardens\(^1\) can yet be found on the town lots, but they too are the exception rather than the rule.

Seasonal Agrarian Activity:

Stumpp's (1964, p. 82) description of life in the German agrarian community as "... uniform and monotonous" tends to characterize both Volga and Kansas settlement. Except for the changes in seasonal routine brought about by a serious drought or a plague of grasshoppers, life on the agricultural landscape was a continuation of a seemingly ageless, uninterrupted cycle of events. Although variety may be the spice of life, any serious alteration in the annual cycle of economic activity could well spell disaster to the entire village community.

On the Volga the cycle of agrarian activity commenced with the late fall plowing of the gewanne in preparation for spring planting. The long, narrow subdivisions of the gewanne were plowed from the center outward with a walking plow pulled by horses or camels. A center furrow was plowed first a

\(^1\)Observed gardens in the study area were weedy and in general poorly kept. The neatness which characterizes the German-Russian yard does not appear to carry over to the garden. One elderly female in Munjor informed this writer that late summer crops do poorly since irrigation is not practiced.
given distance down the field, and the plowing continued around this furrow progressively outward (see Figure 7). After the field had been plowed it was raked by hand to break up the large clods and then left to soak up the winter moisture.

During the severe Russian winter, all livestock was brought into the village and kept within the confines of the village Hofplatz (village yard). Winter activity was largely restricted to the house and village. Toepfer (1966, p. 66) reports that during this time the women made most family clothing and "... would keep busy spinning yarn and knitting." Although the men spent most of their time socializing, this was also the season for "restocking the family ice house and repairing the tools."

In the spring the men were in the fields planting their wheat and rye as soon as the frost was out of the ground. Nuttonson (1955, pp. 270-271) reports that the mean planting date for spring wheat in the Saratov area is April 23rd and for rye, April 18th. At this time, the fields were "too heavy for the plow." Owing to the fall plowing, Stumpp (1964, p. 82) notes: "the seed was hand broadcast and the field was simply prepared with a drag."

Since the family fields were distributed over a number of gewanne lying at considerable distances from the village,
Figure 7. Plowing of the narrow agricultural strip on the Volga. (courtesy: Stumpp, 1964)

Figure 8. Threshing with stone rollers on the Volga. (courtesy: Stumpp, 1964)
it was necessary to establish field camps composed of a num-
ber of families, each of which was cultivating its allotted
land. As the necessary work was completed, the camp would
be moved to the next Gewann and, and Schock (1966, p. 53)
commented, "... since going to the steppe required two to
three hours ... temporary shelter was erected in tents for
sleeping at night." Usually, the distant fields were culti-
vated by the younger family members and the married children
were accompanied by their wives, who were responsible for
preparing the meals (Toepfer, 1966, p. 68).

After the field crops were planted, the family turned to
the planting of the village garden. Larger garden plots,
called bashtans, were planted with watermelon, pumpkins, and
potatoes (Stumpp, 1964, p. 82). With the family garden
planted, the men returned to the town lot to convert the
previous winter's manure pile into next winter's mist-holz,
or firewood. The unique process was described by Pallas (1862,
p. 62) from his 1794 visit:

The dung was gathered in heaps, and left to
putrify during the winter. After the first
agricultural labors of the spring are finished,
this compost is placed several feet deep, on a
dry spot, mixed with a proportionate quantity
of straw, and then trampled upon by horses and
oxen, till it forms a compact mass. When it is
half dried in the open air, it is cut like turf
into square pieces, which are piled up till they
are completely dried, and afterwards they serve
as a stock of fuel for the winter. This artificial turf has long been used by the Crim-Tartars; it burns with a hot flame, and imparts excellent heat. . . .

Stumpp (1964, p. 85) reports that in early July¹ "... the farmer drove to his fields, picked a few ears of grain and rubbed them in his hands to see if the kernels were ripe. He then placed a few in his mouth to find out if they were sufficiently hard or still 'milky'." The harvest season required the same family organization as the planting season, although it involved considerably more excitement. Since the reaping and gathering of the crop had to be accomplished quickly to avoid the "shelling out of the grain," greater family effort was expended. In a classic description of the typical harvest, Toepfer (1966, p. 70) described not only the primitive methods employed, but the nature of the patriarchal family as well:

¹It is reported by Nuttonson (1955, 1957) that rye is ready to harvest as early as June 26th and spring wheat on June 29th in the Saratov area. The mean harvest date however, is July 13th and July 21st, respectively.
... with father at the head the procession started with the men and their scythes and sickles\(^1\) down to the field. Letting the men take over, father walked only a few yards, found himself a shady spot near the tent and had the women pour him a dipper of Kwass\(^2\).

The harvest lasted from ten days to two weeks, depending on how many in the family were able to do manual labor. After the wheat, or rye, was cut, it was tied and shocked in small round piles until dry, at which time it was brought to the town lot for threshing. The early threshing process (see Figure 8) is described by Stumpp (1964, p. 86) as being the "hardest work of the entire year." After the sheaves of grain were hauled to a common village location they were, as Stumpp notes:

... spread out on a specially prepared threshing floor (\textit{preschplatz}), a team of horses, hitched to a threshing stone, were driven round the threshing floor, until the husks were separated from the kernels. ... Depending on the type, the grain had to be turned two or three times ... the straw was 'shaken off,' gathered into piles and carried to the edge of the threshing floor. ... This process was repeated two or three times a day, and the wealth of a farmer could be determined by the size of his straw stacks.

\(^1\)The scythe and sickle were not replaced on the Volga until 1870.

\(^2\)Kwass was a locally used Slavic term that referred to a fermented rye beverage.
After the grain was winnowed to separate the chaff from the grain, it was divided into three equal portions—one-third to be used as insurance against future crop failures, one-third for sale in the Russian market, and one-third for family use and seed grain.

Throughout the summer months, the women toiled in the village gardens. In the late summer it was their responsibility to pick and cure the tobacco crop. Summer was also the season when villagers would make the yearly trip to the larger market towns to sell their grain and purchase the necessary staples that could not be produced locally. The village people did little traveling, however. As Toepfer (1966, p. 73) noted, "... once or twice a year the father and mother and the oldest married son and his wife made the trip to Katharinestadt or Saratov to purchase supplies."

Autumn brought the harvest of the specialized gardens, or bashtans; the gathering of the potatoes, melons, and orchard crops was usually a family project. Fall was also the time for the slaughtering of hogs and cattle.¹

¹The Germans had developed a type of cattle that was able to endure the winters as well as produce quantities of milk and beef. Known as "German red cattle" they differed from the Russian cattle in that they were not developed as beasts of burden but for their food qualities (Stumpp, 1964, p. 92).
The annual cycle of events was completed with the fall plowing of the Gewann which came "after the leaves had left the trees." Stumpp (1964, p. 82) reports that after "... all the work was completed, the villagers celebrated the harvest thanksgiving, or the 'Kirchweih', the feast of the patron saint of the church."

On the Kansas landscape, the annual economic cycle was altered to fit the demands of the new environment. The planting of winter wheat required that both plowing and sowing of the field take place in the early fall so that the plant was able to develop its root system sufficiently to withstand the winter freeze. The fields were usually plowed in early September and the grain sown in late September or early October.

During the early period of settlement, field preparation and the sowing of the grain involved the entire family. The Kansas fields were unusually large compared to those of the Russian experience. Plowed with a walking plow, the large rectangular field was divided into a number of long, narrow strips, which were plowed in the same manner as the Volga strips. The farmer would systematically move across the field a strip at a time. With the introduction of the riding plow in the 1880's, the field was plowed in one continuous block. Whereas the earlier strips were plowed from the inside outward,
the walking plow was used from the outside of the field and worked toward the center. With the center of the rectangular field plowed, the four corners would then be "plowed out." This method of plowing has remained to the present, despite the introduction of the reversible plow. The distinctive pattern created is observable in the aerial photographs of the area (see Figures 9 and 10).

With the planting of the winter wheat, family attention turned to the slaughter of selected livestock in preparation of the winter months. The family would return to the village in the middle of October, taking the horses and remaining cattle to the shelter of the town lot. In the later years, when the family became affluent and owned more livestock than could be wintered in the village, "the older boys managed their own housekeeping on the farm during the winter while taking care of the farm chores" (Engel, 1949).

The Kansas winter was not as severe as that on the Volga, and, as a result, the men of the village kept themselves busy by quarrying local stone. Exposures of both Fort Hays and Greenhorn limestones (see Plate 4 and Figure 11) provided an abundance of excellent building material. Although not accustomed to quarrying and building with stone, the German-Russians quickly learned the techniques from George Grant's Scottish colonists who had preceded them to Ellis
Figure 9. Portion of a 1938 aerial photograph indicating method of field plowing. (near Walker, Kansas)

Figure 10. Portion of a 1965 aerial photograph indicating traditional field plowing, with introduced contour plowing. (near Catharine, Kansas)
Figure 11. Exposure of Greenhorn Limestone. (near Schoenchen, Kansas)

Figure 12. Abandoned stone quarry. (near Schoenchen, Kansas)
The quarrying of the limestone required tremendous effort and, as such, winter was not a time of leisure. Three to five feet of surface material had to be removed, (see Figure 12) and once the stone was quarried, it had to be carried many miles to the village or farmstead. Since stones used for fence posts often weighed 600 to 1,200 pounds, the grain wagon was stripped down to its frame and the stones laid across. The heavier fence posts were taken to the fields and set immediately.

As on the Volga, winter was also the season for the filling of the ice house. Each village maintained one large ice house which was controlled by the village priest. On the Kansas landscape, the ice froze to only three to four inches and, as the ice was cut and hauled to the ice house, weeks might pass until the process could be repeated.

The ice harvest was usually under the control of several older men who did the cutting of the blocks. The hauling and packing of the ice was done by the younger boys under the supervision of the priest. The layers of ice were packed with straw, which was usually sufficient to retain ice well into the following August. Many years, the ice on the stream would not freeze sufficiently to be used. During such time, the ice house was packed with snow and then water was poured in and a
"soft ice" would form.

In addition to the village ice house, each family maintained an ice house on the farmstead, which also had to be filled when conditions were right. This too was usually the responsibility of the younger children, as the father and older sons were engaged in the quarry.

With those villages which maintained a common pasture, (see Figure 13) it was the usual practice to turn the milk cows out to graze, when the weather permitted. The younger children were required to take turns tending the livestock, since there were no fences around this pasture. The family responsibility of providing one of its children to care for village livestock was allocated on the basis of the number of cows the family grazed--each two cows required one day of herding. The large family size, however, usually prevented any one child from missing too much school.

With the beginning of April the family moved to the isolated farmstead where it would remain, except on weekends, until the winter wheat was seeded (Engel, 1949). At this time, the town lot was given its spring cleaning, and the manure pile was converted into Mist-holz so it could dry sufficiently through the summer.

Those fields which were to be planted in summer crops were plowed and sown as quickly as possible. The period of
Figure 13. The common grazing land of Catharine, Kansas, has changed very little in appearance, although privately owned today.

Figure 14. Narrow agricultural strips of the Pfeifer settlement.
spring plowing was critical, yet it varied considerably from one part of the study area to another. All such work had to be completed by the time of the wheat harvest. The high clay content of the local soils which inhibits percolation of early summer moisture could turn a field into a sea of mud, thus preventing an early planting. Despite late-summer precipitation, the exceedingly high evaporation levels made it desirable for the earliest possible planting of summer crops.

The harvest of winter wheat began in late June, with the mean annual harvest date, June 25\(^1\) (Nutteron, 1955, p. 85). Although the scythe was probably used during the earliest harvests, it was quickly replaced with the horse-powered header (see Figure 16) which harvested the grain and deposited it in the header barge where it was then carried to the threshing area. The rapidity with which the German-Russian was to adapt to newer agricultural technology has been previously discussed. Although the exact date of the header's introduction is unknown, the Ellis County Star (May 3, 1879, p. 3) of 1879 reported that "... 38 harvesters have been sold since our last issue; 18 to one Russian settlement in

\(^{1}\)The wheat harvest begins as early as June 9th, and has been as late as July 8th.
Figure 15. An oblique aerial view of Munjor village looking east toward the garden lots.

Figure 16. Harvesting wheat (ca 1900) with a header and header barge in Ellis County.
one day." One 81-year-old informant noted, "the use of the headers and header barge was widespread when I was a young boy . . . in fact, my father had since worn one out when I got into the fields at eight years of age."

The field harvest usually lasted as long as it had on the Volga, with sometimes three weeks being required. Despite the use of the header, the Kansas fields were many times larger than their Volga counterparts, which many have provided the stimulus for rapid mechanization. There was little doubt that field cultivation was much more extensive than it had been on the Volga, hence the scythe and sickle were largely ineffective.

Throughout the harvest, the wheat was being stacked near the family granary to await threshing. A generalized threshing area, or Dreschplatz, was set aside on each farm, but only on rare occasions did the farmer employ the age-old practice of threshing with livestock as employed on the Volga.

From the earliest harvest, the German-Russian made use of the steam-powered threshing machine. Since immediate threshing of the grain was less important than immediate harvest, the farmer could wait his turn as the "threshing machine made its rounds being pulled by horses from one farm to
another.¹

The grain was then stored in a granary, which was the best-built building on the place, to be sold through the year as the family needed money or as the market price improved. The large grain elevators, so commonplace on the present landscape, were unknown during the first half-century of settlement. Grain was not sold in bulk, but was brought to market in sacks periodically through the year.

After the harvest there was a general slack in activity, as repair of machinery and care of the farmstead were less demanding on time. During this period, the father would send one of his older boys to work off the family poll tax.² The yearly tax assessment was three dollars for everyone over twenty-one years of age. Since money was scarce, the tax would be worked out by two-days' labor on the county roads—one day labor with a team of horses.

The harvest of summer crops was usually completed in

¹The threshing machines were privately owned by farm families who, when finished with their work, would lend the machine to neighbors at a set price per bushel.

²Ellis County required that a poll tax for road construction be paid before one could vote in state or national elections. The tax, which was collected in each township, was abandoned in 1930.
early August, then, before the fall plowing, time was given to gathering available firewood. Although wood has always been a scarce commodity within the study area, there was, as one older German-Russian put it, "... a hell of a lot more trees along the rivers in those days." The trees on the common land were protected by mutual agreement, but through most of the area, available trees disappeared quickly. Those who owned land along the major streams reportedly sold trees for one dollar each. After the tree had been cut into usable pieces, it was transported back to the town lot to be used with the Mist-holz. Coal was available from the railroad, but "what damn fool would burn money?" It was not until after 1900 that the German-Russian was forced to turn to burning money because of the complete denudation of the native forest.

Looking down on Big Creek from George Grant's old English villa, the present German owner noted:

... when I was a kid there was hardly a tree as big around as my fist along that creek. They have been allowed to come back but only because nobody wanted to spend their time cutting them. ... Now I am an old man and those trees and I grew up together.

With the return to fall plowing, the yearly cycle of events began anew.
CHAPTER VI

GERMAN-RUSSIAN HOUSE TYPES

In a discussion on the focus of human settlement study, Stone (1965, p. 34) emphasized the import of buildings as the "one tangible expression of man-land relationships." The buildings by which man attached himself to the earth's surface are an outgrowth of his economic endeavor, and as Sauer stated: (1941, p. 22) "... the study of house types basically is the study of the smallest economic unit, as that of the village or town is that of the economic community."

Considered as an economic unit, the German-Russian house type is an expression of an established value system. In Sauer's terms, the German-Russian house type is the most traditional aspect of their material culture. The house type itself remained largely unaffected by early changes in technological capacity--changes that had profound influence on the broader agrarian economy.

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1For the purpose of this study the term "house type" will refer to the totality of the immediate unit housing complex.
The German-Russian Hofplatz on the Volga and in Kansas:

The German-Russian residence consisted of a complex of structures and functional areas which included, among other things, the family dwelling, barns and outbuildings, a corral, a yard, and perhaps a garden, all of which were surrounded by a fence. Described simply as a town lot, the arrangement of the total complex had remarkable uniformity both on the Volga and in the Kansas study area.

The typical Volga town lot or Hofplatz was rectangular in shape—a length twice its width—with the physical arrangement of structures shown on Plate 23. Measuring 32 by 64 meters, the Volga Hofplatz was essentially a small family fortress surrounded by a solid board fence six to eight feet high (see Figures 17 and 18). There was usually one large wooden gate that provided the only means of entering and leaving. The fence originally provided the individual family with protection against the nomadic Kirghiz, but it has remained as a stylized feature of the Hofplatz into the twentieth century.

Although the exact arrangement of structures varied somewhat with each Hofplatz, each was divided into a house yard (Vorderhof) and a barn yard (Hinterhof). The two yards were separated by a long series of connected barns and sheds
TYPICAL GERMAN-VOLGA 'HOFPLATZ'

0 30 feet

--- Board Fence

SOURCE: Lothar König (1938)
Figure 17. Katharinenstadt, Russia—the largest German-Volga settlement. (courtesy: Stumpp, 1964)

Figure 18. A Volga village lot with associated structures. (courtesy: Hummel, 1936)
extending the width of the lot.

Besides the family dwelling (Wohnhaus), the Volga Vorderhof was occupied by a number of other structures. The family ice house and cave cellar were both semisubterranean buildings that each family deemed essential in the storage of food. The bake kitchen, or summer kitchen, was used during the summer months to cook all food, while during the winter it provided living quarters for family members (König, 1938, p. 124). Each Hofplatz also had a shallow hand-dug well that provided most of the family's water. The village also had one or more common wells that would furnish a reliable water supply during periods of drought.

The Hinterhof (32 x 26.3 meters) was smaller than the Vorderhof (32 x 38 meters), and it was used exclusively as a winter corral for the livestock. The outbuildings which separated the two parts of the yard were located so as to minimize the distance necessary to walk from the family dwelling to the livestock during the severe Volga winters. As König (1938, p. 122) noted, however, "... the east European specialized house, (Wohnstallhaus) which sheltered both the family and its livestock, was not found on the Volga although common with the Mennonites to the south."

With the establishment of German village life on the Kansas landscape, the town lot, or Hofplatz, was to develop
much the same appearance that it had on the Volga (see Plate 24). In each village the Hofplatz took its rectangular form, although its dimensions varied from village to village.¹

The village lot utilized as a family residence was fenced in its entirety. During the early period of settlement the dwelling yard or vorderhof was fenced in much the same manner as it had been on the Volga. The high board fence, however, was to be quickly replaced with a low picket fence and the remaining boards were used for other purposes. Considering the poor economic situation faced by most families during the first decades on the Kansas plains, it is surprising that such a relict architectural feature would be perpetuated. Although the solid board fence was to disappear from the landscape by 1900, it was replaced almost universally by a picket fence (see Figures 19 and 20). The fencing of the dwelling yard has remained to the present, in one form or another. While appearing to serve no useful function, it may be, as Robert Frost noted, "... good fences make good neighbors."

¹Each of the original villages had lots which were considerably longer than they were wide. The exact dimensions are as follows: Catharine, 97 x 145 feet; Pfeifer, 91.5 x 238 feet; Munjor, 100 x 150 feet; and Liebenthal, 144 x 202 feet.
PLATE 24

CATHARINE TOWN LOT

ca 1890

SOURCE: Ed Meis personal interview (6/21/69)
Figure 19. Picket fence extending from original stone structure. (Munjor, Kansas)

Figure 20. Picket fence and stone post construction. (Liebenthal, Kansas)
The rear portion of the town lot or Hinterhof served as a corral for livestock and was also fenced. While the board fence did not extend to the Hinterhof, it was, nevertheless, just as securely fenced. The two most-common fences used were stone or brick and barbed wire. Local limestone, not suitable for other building material, was often used to fence the corral, as can be seen in Figures 21 and 22. Such fences were five or six feet high, enough to provide shelter against winter blizzards. Some mud-brick and sod fences were also used during the early decades of settlement, but they were replaced with barbed wire attached to stone fence posts.

The family dwelling was situated with the bedroom side of the structure adjoining the street. The windows were heavily shuttered and the single entrance opened on the interior yard. The dwelling yard was occupied also by a wash house, or summer kitchen, serving the same purpose as its Volga counterpart. The individual family ice house was not part of the town-lot complex, as a central village ice house served that purpose. The family garden, absent on the Volga Hofplatz, was a commonplace feature on the early Kansas town lot.

The dispersed nature of the outbuildings shown in Plate 23 is not necessarily representative of the German-Russian town lot, as can be noted from the distribution of structures
Figure 21. Abandoned stone wall which fenced rear of town lot. (Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 22. Stone fence surrounding the corral of an abandoned town lot. (Munjor, Kansas)
in Figure 64. While the functional nature of outbuildings was consistent from one town lot to another, a formalized arrangement of such structures did not develop. The existence of the outlying farmstead tended to diminish the import of many buildings on the town lot. Most families maintained granaries and storage barns on the farmstead while bringing feed and equipment to the town lot only as it was needed.

The town lot orientation of the family residence extended itself to the isolated farmstead, or Einzelhof. Although not a part of the original settlement complex, the Einzelhof developed as an outgrowth of the two-house system. The wash house, or summer kitchen, was usually the first building constructed and it sheltered the entire family during the summer months. As the Einzelhof evolved into a more-permanent residence, the common town-lot features developed, although on a larger scale.

The Vorderhof, or household yard, was fenced, and it incorporated essentially the same outbuildings as the town-lot (see Plate 25). The ice house was reintroduced and the single gate, or entrance, remained until the introduction of the automobile.

Those structures associated with the Hinterhof became more dispersed (see Figures 24, 25 and 26), since space was no longer a major consideration. It would appear that the
GERMAN-RUSSIAN 'EINZELHOF'

KANSAS ca 1900

SOURCE: Richard Hart personal interview (6/69)
Figure 23. Abandoned isolated farmstead with gable-roofed stone dwelling. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 24. Isolated farmstead. (near Munjor, Kansas)
Figure 25. Isolated farmstead. (south of Victoria, Kansas)

Figure 26. Isolated farmstead. (near Catharine, Kansas)
close proximity of the structures housing livestock was not as pressing a concern as it had been on the Volga, due to the mild winter conditions of the Kansas landscape.

A striking feature common to all German-Russian family residences—whether town lot or isolated farmstead—is a noticeable orderliness. This attention to village tidiness and order is a characteristic which dates from the beginning of settlement in the study area. A non-German-Russian reporter (Hays City Sentinel, February 16, 1877, p. 3), who visited the early villages, described the Munjor settlement "to be clean, and everything about the cluster of two dozen houses denoted attention to tidiness and order." While recognizing the dangers inherent in the generalized ethnic stereotype of German thoroughness, such thoroughness certainly appears to manifest itself on the local landscape.

The immediate environs of the German-Russian residence is so well kept that it projects sterility to the casual observer. There are no abandoned structures or machinery of any type about the residence. All buildings are well kept and painted and do not present the general disrepair found on the non-German-Russian farmstead. Today, the dwelling yards are planted in grass which is always well trimmed. The absence of flowers and ornamentals is almost universal. During the early years of settlement the grass was removed
from the yard and, as one informant reported, "... it was the responsibility of the young boys to sweep the yard daily with a twig broom."

While those residences which are abandoned have been allowed to decay and become overgrown with weeds, those still occupied present the very epitome of neatness. Within each village complex there are no exceptions. Fieldwork in the study area revealed that any habitable dwelling that had junk strewn about the yard was occupied by a non-German-Russian.

The German-Russian Dwelling Construction:

Arriving on the American Great Plains, the German-Russian first constructed temporary shelter on his assigned village site. The first dwellings constructed were semisubterranean sod houses. Although often attributed to the American experience, the German-Russian sod dwelling (semljanken) had its origins on the Volga.

The semljanken was a Russian peasant dwelling utilized by the Germans during their early Volga settlement (König, 1938, p. 125). With their arrival on the Kansas prairie they began with the common Russian construction. Unlike the American sod house, the semljanken was set three feet in the ground. Pekari (1942, p. 12) describes the sod houses as "cozy affairs 16 by 24 feet," and Dreiling (1926, p. 23) notes
that the interior walls were built of sod which projected several feet above the ground level. Dreiling's recollections are almost identical with the semljanken described by König (1938, p. 125) in his description of the Volga house. As Dreiling describes the sod house:

Trees and saplings gathered on the creek banks formed the rafters and supports for the roof which was made of plain boards covered with a layer of dirt several inches thick, firmly packed. The interior of the house usually contained two rooms—a small anteroom containing the fireplace... and a larger one which served as living, dining and bedroom.

The interior walls of the semljanken were plastered with a combination of mud mixed with dried prairie grass. After the sod had been removed from the ground, the exposed clayey soil was plowed and watered down. Horses trampled the mixture while walking in a circle. When the proper consistency was obtained, grass or straw was added and mixed thoroughly. The mud-plaster was spread on the walls by hand to a thickness of one to two inches (see Figures 27 and 28). When dry, the plaster was whitewashed with a local chalk, pounded and mixed with water.

The mud-straw mixture was also pressed into molds and made into sun-dried bricks, or Kohlsteine (see Figure 29). The use of these bricks was common on both the Volga and Kansas landscapes. The absence of other building material, however, made the use of such bricks of greater importance along the
Figure 27. Interior wall mud-straw plaster over wall lath. (near Victoria, Kansas)

Figure 28. Interior wall mud-straw plaster over a stone wall. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)
Figure 29. Making mud-straw bricks on the Volga. (courtesy Stumpp, 1964)

Figure 30. Mud-straw bricks used in interior wall construction of dwelling. (near Schoenchen, Kansas)
Volga than in Kansas. The mud-straw brick (see Figure 30) was used for interior partitions in Kansas German-Russian dwellings until the 1940's. As an exterior building material, the inferior quality of local Ellis County clay\textsuperscript{1} relegated the mud-straw brick to the same eventual extinction as the sod slab.

The \textit{semljankanen}, as well as later German-Russian dwellings, was heated during the winter by a large brick oven which occupied a prominent position in the dwelling. The Kansas German-Russian oven (see Plate 26) was identical to the oven used on the Volga. Constructed of clay bricks, the oven had an overall dimension of six feet long, three feet wide, and four feet high. A base, eighteen inches high, was filled with sand and covered with bricks. Upon this base the oven, fireplace, and chimney were constructed. The top of the oven was overlaid with strips of iron which supported the bricks on top and a recessed, rectangular, iron pot. The entrance to the oven was in the rear of the fireplace.

The German-Russian oven was a multipurpose structure used for cooking and baking of food, as well as heating the family dwelling. When the oven was to be used, the fire was

\textsuperscript{1}For an analysis of the proper use of local clay for brick construction, see Read, 1949, p. 436.
GERMAN-RUSSIAN OVEN
started in the oven itself and when sufficiently hot, the fire would be scraped forward to the fireplace. The iron pot recessed in the top of the oven was used for cooking, while a second pot could be heated in the fireplace.

It has been reported by informants that the brick oven was much more efficient in heating the family dwelling than the later iron stove, since it used less fuel and it could retain heat throughout the night, but the fragile nature of the homemade brick construction did require constant repair and, as a result, the iron stove was quickly adopted.

Associated with lower economic status on the Volga, the German-Russian sod dwelling was considered as only a temporary shelter. On the Kansas landscape the semljanken disappeared within a decade. Permanent village shelter was constructed of wood or stone.

Within the German-Russian village, frame structures were preferred and those who could afford to purchase lumber so constructed their family dwelling. The most common building material in the early village was limestone, however. The stone was available in the local area and was free to those who wished to expend the labor.

Although building stone was unavailable on the Volga, the German-Russian was familiar with brick construction. Upon his arrival in the study area, he came into immediate contact
with stone structures built by the railroad and the military at Fort Hays. Scottish immigrants, who had settled earlier in the immediate vicinity of the German-Russian villages, had hired many young German-Russians to work in their stone quarries. As a result, the German-Russian adapted his previous knowledge to newly acquired techniques and stone structures were erected within a year of their settlement.

The earliest stone structures were cemented with a simple clay-mud (see Figures 31), as had been the case with brick construction on the Volga. However, the limestone blocks did not lend themselves to protective whitewashing, as did brick. Within a few years, the German-Russian learned to mix lime with sand to make a more-substantial mortar. Unslaked lime was boiled and mixed with local sand to form a cement for exterior walls. Since stone buildings were double walled (18 inches thick), the interior walls continued to be cemented with clay-mud—a practice which continued until after the introduction of portland cement (see Figures 32).

While the early stone structures gave evidence of a crude, simplified masonry, those constructed after 1900 show the influence of expert masonry (see Figures 33 and 34). The use of quality masonry necessary for the massive church structures in each village was a result of one man—Father Emmeram Kansler. Kansler had been a stone mason in Germany before
Figure 31. Exterior stone construction with mud cementing weathered away. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 32. Exterior and interior stone construction with mud cementing. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)
becoming a Capuchin priest. Arriving in the study area in the late 1890's, Kansler traveled from village to village supervising the construction of religious buildings. His influence was carried over to the stone dwelling. Those structures in the study area that exhibit detailed masonry have been constructed after 1899.¹

While construction material changed from brick on the Volga to stone in the Kansas study area, the common elements of roof construction retained their Old World form (see Figure 39). As on the Volga, the wall plate, which secures the roof rafters to the wall structure, was tied to the wall by long, vertical wall posts built into the stone wall itself (see Figures 35 and 36). Although the exact extent of such construction outside the study area is unknown, within the study area the technique is unique to early German-Russian architecture. An examination of non-German-Russian stone structures of the period reveals a different method of construction, with the wall plate recessed and secured to the stone with metal bolts.

The tie beam which extends from wall to wall and forms a triangular support for the roof was not an integral part of

¹Kansler's first stone structure was the Capuchin monastery in Herzog which was begun in 1899.
Figure 33. Limestone and mud-cement construction. (Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 34. Limestone construction 1908. (near Victoria, Kansas)
Figure 35. Exterior stone-wall construction with vertical posts. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 36. Vertical-post construction which anchored the roof to the exterior stone walls. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)
the roof structure itself in early German-Russian stone construction. Often situated as much as six inches below the wall plate, the tie beam was set into the stone wall (see Figures 37 and 38).

The footings of stone structures were unusually shallow. Large, flat footing stones, twenty-four inches wide, were placed on three to four inches of sand so that the top of the stone would be at ground level. The interior floor joists were not built into the walls, but simply rested upon that part of the footing stone that extended into the interior of the structure.

Although stone structures dominated the early village landscape (see Figure 41), such construction was not particularly popular with the German-Russian in Kansas. On the Volga, the German dwelling evolved from the semljanken to the rectangular log structure, with its dovetail notching, and eventually to the simple frame dwelling (König, 1938, p. 25). While brick construction was used, it was reserved for public buildings and interior walls.

As soon as the family was financially able, it chose to build with lumber. Many earlier stone dwellings were subsequently covered with wood siding (see Figure 42), while other stone dwellings simply added frame additions.
Figure 37. Tie-beam construction in stone structure. Interior view. (Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 38. Tie-beam construction in stone structure. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)
Figure 39. Roof construction in stone structure. (near Schoenchen, Kansas)

Figure 40. Footing stone under frame structure. (Pfeifer, Kansas)
Figure 41. One of the first stone dwellings in Liebenthal, Kansas. Common hipped roof with chimney offset from center.

Figure 42. Simple gable roof stone dwelling which has been covered with wood siding. Structure built in 1878. (Herzog, Kansas)
The frame structure was constructed on a footing similar to that described with stone structures, although the footing stones (see Figure 40) were not as large. Essentially, the entire structure was secured to the footing by its own weight.

To give the frame structure additional weight and stability against the strong Kansas wind, the exterior walls were packed with a stone and mud-straw nogging (see Figures 43 and 44). The nogging was packed from the inside as the interior wall was being constructed. According to König (1938, p. 126), a similar construction was used on the Volga. König reports that "a moss and mud" used earlier for chinking log structures was later used to fill the walls of frame structures. While such construction was used for its insulating qualities on the Volga, it is impossible today to assess whether the same was true of the stone-mud nogging of the study area. A consensus of informants did not attribute its use to insulating the dwelling, but as one informant noted: "... it was done to keep the house from blowing off its foundation."

Although no such stone-mud nogging was used in outbuildings, it may be because of the lack of interior walls, yet the outbuildings were anchored no more securely to their foundations than the family dwelling.

Many frame dwellings built as late as 1940 utilized the stone-mud nogging. A construction feature peculiar to the
Figure 43. Abandoned frame dwelling with stone-mud nogging. (Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 44. A close-up of the stone-mud nogging seen in Figure 43.
German-Russians, it is totally unknown to the present generation.

The German-Russian Family Dwelling Form:

The architectural form of the traditional German-Russian dwelling retained the character of its Volga origins despite changes in building material imposed by the new environment. The form of the traditional German-Volga einfachen Haus (simple house) was reestablished on the Kansas landscape with only minor variation. The model floor plan depicted in Plate 27 can be readily superimposed on all the early Kansas dwellings.

On the Volga, as Stumpp (1964, p. 56) notes, "... almost everywhere the colonist house had a somewhat similar floor plan." Having a rectangular form, the einfachen Haus was divided into four rooms of equal size. The single-story dwelling varied somewhat in size, however, and, as Hagin (1966, p. 80) reported, "the length went from 12-18 meters; the width from 6.5-10 meters." A single entrance opened upon a small antechamber or kriliz,\(^1\) which served as a coatroom

\(^1\)Of Russian origin the kriliz was a small addition to the basic dwelling. During the winter it kept the extreme cold from entering directly into the kitchen and it served as a room for removal of the heavy outer garments. Large earthen water coolers were kept in the kriliz during the summer.
GERMAN-VOLGA 'EINFACHEN HAUS'
MODEL FLOORPLAN ca 1850.

SOURCE: Karl Stumpp (1964)
during the winter. The *kriliz* was not an integral part of the dwelling structure, but was added as a shed-roof appendage (see Figure 18).

The dimensions of the interior rooms were a function of the size of the structure but, the basic four-room plan was universal. Despite its rather limited size, the *einfachen Haus* provided shelter for an extended patriarchal family which might include three or four married sons, their wives and their children. Excepting the kitchen, the use of other rooms varied with family size. All the young children would share the small attic which was reached by stairs through the kitchen.

Although many dwellings supported a gable roof with two end gables, the most popular roof on the Volga *einfachen Haus* was the hipped roof with a single dormer overlooking the street, which provided the only natural light for the attic. This hipped-roof style prevailed on the Volga dwelling but was never used on outbuildings.

The entire dwelling was heated by a large brick oven identical to that described for the *semljanken*. The oven was situated in the central corner of the kitchen. A central chimney heated the other rooms as well as the attic. The chimney had a generalized central location, although a direct vertical flue often placed the exterior chimney several feet
off from the center of the roof (see Figures 41 and 48).

Excepting the kriliz or antechamber, the German-Russian dwelling on the Kansas landscape was identical in form to its Volga counterpart. Although many of the Kansas dwellings have a shed-roof antechamber, most dwellings appear to have been constructed without this unique Russian architectural feature. One can only hypothesize on the reason for the abandonment of such an appendage, but certainly the milder winter conditions of the Kansas area must have been an important factor.

The Kansas dwelling changed from the simple two-room semljanken or sod house immediately into the common four-room German structure. In a family history, Engel (1949) describes this dwelling change: "... an adobe house replaced the sod house which was replaced by a four room frame building which was later replaced by a two story frame building."

As family size and affluence increased, additions were often added to the original four-room structure, as can be seen in Plate 27. Although such additions gave to the German-Russian dwelling an "L" or "T" shape, all newly constructed dwellings retained the simple rectangular, four-room floorplan. While later German-Russian structures increased in size, the ground floor retained its Old World orientation, and additional rooms were added by increasing the structure by a half or
a full story.

The German-Russian preference for the hipped roof and dormer was retained (see Figures 45, 46, 47, and 48). All the early structures had the heavy plank-shuttered window (see Figures 53 and 54); and the early architrave, or moulded frame above the window, is identical to that found on the Volga. The single entrance in the rear of the dwelling is a feature of German-Russian architecture that was retained until the post-World War II period. Almost without exception, the older dwellings show a conspicuous absence of a front door. In many structures with a front door, a closer examination reveals evidence of later remodeling.

German-Russian Outbuildings:

The single most important structure on the German-Russian Hofplatz was the granary. As commercial wheat farmers, the economic survival of the family depended upon storage and sale of grain. The practice of withholding grain as an insurance against future crop failures was a carry-over from the Volga background.

The original granaries were unusually large structures measuring 20 feet wide, 30 feet long, and 10 feet high. Covered with a gable roof, the granary had an exterior stair which led to a gable-loft entrance (see Figure 55).
Figure 45. One of the oldest stone dwellings in Catharine, Kansas. Basic stone structure built ca 1880, with frame appendages added later.

Figure 46. Hipped-roof stone dwelling constructed ca 1900. Central chimney removed in later remodeling. (Munjor, Kansas)
Figure 47. Single-story stone dwelling with dormers. (Catharine, Kansas)

Figure 48. Single-story, four-room frame dwelling with single dormer. Most representative German-Russian dwelling form. (Catharine, Kansas)
Figure 49. One and one-half story stone dwelling.  
(Victoria, Kansas)

Figure 50. One and one-half story frame dwelling.  
Dormers on gable roof are unusual.  
(Catharine, Kansas)
Figure 51. A four-room frame dwelling on an isolated farmstead. The dwelling is still in use during the summer months.

Figure 52. A combined stone and frame dwelling in Herzog, ca 1885. The frame portion is an added appendage. (courtesy Kansas State Historical Society)
Figure 53. Plank-shuttered window with common Volga architrave construction. (Liebenthal, Kansas)

Figure 54. Plank-shuttered window on stone dwelling. (Pfeifer, Kansas)
Figure 55. Early stone granary with exterior loft door. (Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 56. Double door frame granary. (Pfeifer, Kansas)
The grain was carried in sacks up the exterior stairs to the loft where it was poured into bins. A single ground-level door was used while unloading the interior bins.

Although stone granaries were constructed (see Figure 55), the usual granary was a frame structure. A wood floor rested on flat limestone slabs so that it was elevated eight to ten inches above ground level. By 1900, the single-entrance Volga granary had given way to a slightly smaller structure of American origin with two ground-level doors—one for each bin (see Figure 56). The grain was loaded into each bin through the open doorway and not through the attic as had been the case with the Volga granary.

With the German-Russian two-house system the principal granary was constructed on the farmstead. The town-lot granary was therefore a smaller structure that served immediate family needs during the winter.

The largest structure on the Hofplatz was a general-purpose barn which served as a shelter for cattle and horses as well as a milking area. The barn, as well as most other outbuildings, was usually constructed of stone, since that was the cheapest building material. A gable roof was universal, and an exterior stairway to the loft was common (see Figures 57 and 58).
Figure 57. Barn constructed in 1886 of local limestone. The quoins, or cornerstone construction, was an adaptation from Scottish masonry in the area. (Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 58. Limestone barn constructed in the 1890's. (Liebenthal, Kansas)
The loft was exceptionally large for the size of the structure, since the ceiling beams, or tie beams, were constructed well below the wall plate. The interior ceiling was therefore low—being usually less than six feet.

The individual family ice house was a rectangular semisubterranean structure measuring 12 feet wide by 14 feet long and 10 feet deep. The interior walls were lined with stone (see Figure 60), and the floor was laid with large flat limestone slabs. The ice house was usually situated near a slope so that melted water could be drained off through a floor tile. The ice house roof was a simple gable construction with the rafters resting on ground-level supports (see Figure 59).

Each Hofplatz had a semisubterranean cold cellar which also served as a tornado shelter. While the walls and floor were constructed in the same manner as in the ice house, the cave cellar was several feet larger in length and width. A rounded keystone arch served as a roof which, in turn, was overlaid with sod, producing a slightly raised relief from the surrounding yard (see Figures 61 and 62).

Both the ice house and the cave cellar were identical in form to those constructed on the Volga. König (1938, p. 124) describes both structures as "rectangular holes in the earth lined with Feldsteinen [fieldstone]." The ice house, or Eiskeller, was "covered with a wooden roof," while the
Figure 59. Abandoned ice house on an isolated farmstead. (near Catharine, Kansas)

Figure 60. Abandoned ice house showing interior stone construction. (near Pfeifer, Kansas, in Rush County)
Figure 61. A cave cellar on an isolated farmstead. (near Victoria, Kansas)

Figure 62. Roof structure of an abandoned cave cellar. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)
German name for cave cellar, ausgewölbte Keller, aptly describes its roof structure.

The bakehouse (Bachaus) was a common structure both on the Volga and in Kansas. Often described as a summer kitchen or wash house, each term is functionally descriptive of the use to which this structure was intended.

A single-room rectangular structure with a gable roof, the bakehouse was constructed of brick on the Volga and of limestone in the study area (see Figure 63). The original floor consisted of packed mud and straw, although most were later overlaid with wood. One end of the bakehouse was dominated by the German oven and a large built-in washing pot that could be heated from beneath. An interior end chimney was universal and contrasted sharply with the central chimney of the family dwelling.

The bake kitchen served as a general all-purpose room for the women during the summer months, while during the winter it became the residence of the oldest married son. When being utilized as a family dwelling, a cloth curtain was extended across the structure, dividing it into two equally sized rooms.
Figure 63. German-Russian bake kitchen. Interior end chimney has been removed in later remodeling. (Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 64. Abandoned series of town-lot outbuildings connected in the common Volga fashion. (Pfeifer, Kansas)
Field Enclosure:

Although unknown on the Volga, barbed-wire fencing\(^1\) was a necessity for successful field agriculture in Western Kansas during the 1880's. The total import of barbed wire to the agrarian development of the Great Plains had been noted by Webb (1931, p. 318) when he wrote "... it [barbed wire] made the homestead possible in the dry plains." Dependent upon the government homestead for his economic survival, the German-Russian was forced by historical circumstance to enclose not only his town lot but also his agricultural fields.

The herd law, which was to bring an end of the open range, had been in effect since May 25, 1872 in the Ellis County area (Kansas State Board of Agriculture, 1877-78, p. 208). Although the herd law had been in effect for four years prior to German-Russian settlement, it was largely ineffective. The colonists who settled south of Herzog and east of Munjor were forced to coexist with George Grant's Scottish ranchers, who were largely indifferent to the law which required the fencing in of their livestock.

\(^1\)According to the Kansas State Board of Agriculture (1882, p. 231) the cost of constructing one rod of barbed wire fence was considerably cheaper than either stone or board fencing--Barbed wire, $.65; stone, $1.88; board, $1.40.
An immediacy of enclosing cultivated fields was not a necessity everywhere within the study area, however, since the German-Russian usually herded his livestock. While it was only in those areas where contact with prior settlement forced such field enclosure, the idea of fencing the entire farmstead became popular and spread rapidly throughout the entire study area. Within twenty years, the enclosure of cultivated fields, unknown on the Volga, became a symbol of status and most early fences bore the mark of their builder (see Figure 66).

One unique and indispensable feature of German-Russian fence construction was the use of limestone fence posts. The origin of the stone-slab fence post is unknown, but a general consensus of informants credits its first use in the area to George Grant's colonists. Used with barbed wire, the stone post was also used with the early board and picket fence which enclosed the town lot.

Barbed wire was attached to the stone posts by the use of two nails which were hammered into a small hand drilled

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1 The quarrying of fence posts is restricted to local exposures of Greenhorn Limestone (see Plate 4). Merriam (1963, pp. 51-56) notes that within the Greenhorn Formation "a persistent bed known as Fencepost Limestone . . . varies in thickness from .5 to 1.0 foot."
Figure 65. The two-nail attachments of barbed wire to the stone fence post. (Fence Rock Museum; La Crosse, Kansas)

Figure 66. The mark of the fence builder. (near Munjor, Kansas)
hole (see Figure 65). Board and picket fences were attached to the vertical stone posts by nailing to wooden plugs which had been wedged into holes drilled into the post.

The stone-post-barbed-wire complex is unique to Western Kansas (see Figure 67). While the complex has diffused out from the German-Russian area, the use of stone-post construction does not extend more than seventy-five miles beyond the study area, despite the fact that suitable stone can be found within the Greenhorn Formation from Wyoming to north Texas.

With the enforcement of the herd law and the eventual decline in the horse as the major source of power, the fences which enclosed the arable fields fell into general disrepair (see Figure 68). The stone post, being difficult to remove, remained for several decades, essentially serving no purpose. Since the World War II period, however, many of the early fences have been rebuilt, utilizing the posts set a half century earlier. The rejuvenation of the stone-post-barbed-wire fence has been due to the recent introduction of a sorghum-cattle complex.
Figure 67. Barbed-wire and limestone-post fence construction. (near Pfeifer, Kansas)

Figure 68. Abandoned barbed-wire fence. (near Munjor, Kansas)
CHAPTER VII

GERMAN-RUSSIAN SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

While this essay has been concerned largely with material factors that have visibly altered the local landscape, there exist several social factors that have been important in determining the character of settlement. The factors of church and family life have been indirectly referred to throughout this study, and each is fundamentally significant to understanding German-Russian Catholic settlement.

Church Life:

An observer of the German-Russian village scene today cannot fail to note the central position that the church plays in village life. Many of the massive, stone Gothic churches are visible at a great distance, giving the appearance of being disproportionate in their size to the village itself (see Figure 3). The densest cluster of dwellings immediately surrounds the church square, while a post office and any retail store will most often face the church.

The importance of the church in the Catholic villages is manifest in part by the sheer size of the structures, (see Figures 69 and 70) but to the German-Russian Catholic, the
Figure 69. The Catholic church of Herzog, Russia (ca 1920), constructed of brick.

Figure 70. Holy Cross Catholic Church in Pfeifer, Kansas, constructed of limestone.
The church is more than just a religious institution—the church is a fundamental part of German-Russian culture. Although such subjective evaluation is difficult to document, the first-generation Kansas settlers describe the church as the unifying factor binding German-Russian Catholics together.

The Catholic religious orders that ministered to the Volga colonies provided German-speaking priests (Toepfer, 1966, pp. 80-82), and a German-speaking Catholic college was later established at Saratov. The German-Russian concept of self, his recognition of his distinct culture persisting for a century on the Volga and being perpetuated in his new home, is a ramification of the church.

Within five years after the establishment of the colonies in Western Kansas, Capuchin priests could be found in each of the villages (Laing, 1909-10, p. 504). The Capuchin order was composed of priests who themselves had migrated from Germany only several years before, and many knew very little English. Although the Capuchins ministered to the religious needs of the German-Russian, they also performed important extra-religious roles as doctors, mediators, and business advisors witnessing contracts and supervising sales (Toepfer, 1966, p. 134). As the best-educated man in the village, the priest became the village spokesman both among the villages and between the village and the outside world. The priest
still maintains this role, although it is not as overt today. For an outsider who wishes to make village contacts, acquaintance with the local priest is the surest way to village acceptance.

The role of the priest was even reflected in the collective purchase of village land by the original settlers, which led to the establishment of communal land used either for grazing or garden plots. Reminiscent of the mir system used on the Volga, these common lands gave a "communistic character to the village, and served to unite the inhabitants more closely in social life so as to give it the appearance of family life on a large scale" (Laing, 1909-10, p. 516).

Kansas law required the incorporation of these communal lands and the subsequent establishment of state-chartered town and grazing companies led to an incipient political organization. Fundamentally democratic, these companies served as loosely structured village governments functioning through the church.

The church not only served as a framework of a quasi government to the village, but the closely knit social interaction that Laing noted is largely a manifestation of church-centered activity. Religious societies such as the Third Order of St. Francis served a recreational as well as a spiritual role (Johannes, 1946, p. 77). The Sunday mass was followed by
a day of intensive village contact, with the young men engaged in a game of baseball while the older men retired to the local general store to discourse over warm beer.

Although the sphere of family social interaction and recreation has expanded in the post-World War II period, traditional primary-group activities were associated directly or indirectly with the church and served in lieu of commercial recreation, largely eliminating outside expenditures of money for amusement. It would appear that church budgets and associated church activities "absorbed some of the income which otherwise would be used for commercial recreation" (Anderson, 1948, p. 12).

As agricultural land extended farther from the village, there occurred a loss of population, first in the establishment of a two-house system, and later to the permanent isolated farmstead. However, identity with the village has persisted, and even on the isolated farmstead one considers himself a part of the village. What appears to have developed is an extended village or neighborhood whose boundaries are well defined by the local inhabitants (see Plate 28).

The neighborhood exists as a church-centered association of families sharing in common locality experiences. The homogeneity of the neighborhood is reflected in the fact that in many neighborhoods 90 to 100 percent of the families belong
GERMAN—RUSSIAN NEIGHBORHOODS
ca 1940

SOURCE: A.H. Anderson and Randall C. Hill (1948)
to the same church (Anderson, 1948, p. 5). National political behavior also manifests this homogeneity as revealed in presidential voting statistics. In 1896, Herzog Township voted 106 to 0 for the Democratic candidate, while in 1928 the vote was 287 to 2 (Petersen, 1968, p. 61). A recent sample of political preference indicated a 62 to 9 Democratic bias among German-Russians throughout Ellis County, while non-German-Russians had a slight Republican leaning (Petersen, 1968, p. 58).

The most important integrating function performed by the church is that of educating the children. Although outright financing of education has shifted back and forth over the years between the church and state, teaching of the four R's—reading, 'riting, 'rithmetic, and religion—has persisted uninterrupted to the present (Johannes, 1946, p. 84). In the non-German-Russian areas of Ellis County the rural school situated in a wheat field is the rule, but in German-Russian areas the rural school is missing. In essence, education, both secular and parochial, has been a village function, tying the rural neighborhood together.

One should not infer that the traditional village provided for a totality of social interaction. The German-Russian recognized that by the very nature of his economic activity a
national awareness was necessary. Since most of the colonists were of meager financial means, many had to seek outside employment as domestic servants or as railroad laborers (Ruppenthal, 1913, p. 526). A common experience of those skilled in a trade was to establish a home in the village, purchase land for farming, and then leave the farm labor to their children, while the parents would move to Hays City to seek skilled employment.

In an important sense, the village, and later the neighborhood village, has always served as a place of economic establishment and then out-migration—a situation recognized by the present village dweller. It has been a simple fact that there is not sufficient land to give all an opportunity to farm, and the laboring class of Hays has absorbed much of the village surplus.

In the German-Russian community social class is difficult to define. The outward manifestation of affluence has never been a characteristic of these conservative, agrarian people. Participation in social activity is carried out in and around the informal religious structure, and in this regard the church has been a great leveling influence (Anderson, 1948, p. 40).
Family Life:

Complementing the church in maintaining socio-cultural solidarity has been the structure of the German-Russian family. The patriarchal family system had its antecedent roots deep in German culture. It was perpetuated on the Volga due to the mir system with its periodic resubdivision of the land which placed a premium on retaining males within the household (Johannes, 1946, p. 39).

Traditionally, the family has been large, with the first generation in the study area averaging 9.3 children (Johannes, 1946, p. 39). It was common with this generation that marriageable age was young by modern standards—18 to 19 years for the boy and 14 to 16 for the girl. Since the married couple was not mature enough to manage a home and farm, it was the practice for them to reside with the husband's family for several years (Johannes, 1946, p. 40).

The father acted as an overseer and managed the family finances while leaving much of the manual work to his sons. The pooling of all resources of the extended family under paternal control enabled the purchase of more land and farm machinery. An ideal situation would have the father purchasing additional land as each son got married, with the idea of dividing the land among his boys at some future time. An accumulation of family wealth was also a necessity since the
girls did not share in the land but were to be given an equal share in the form of a marriage dowry (Laing, 1909-10, p. 517).

Although the practice of arranged marriage disappeared rapidly from the Kansas villages, family and community pressures continued to play an important role in the choice of marriage partners. The custom of endogamous village marriage was enforced by peer groups up until the turn of the century. A young man choosing a partner from another village was, at times, driven out of the village by his comrades (Johannes, 1946, p. 108). This early practice of endogamous village marriage somewhat limited choice, and it was not uncommon for two or three marriage unions to take place between two families. Second-cousin marriages were not frequent, but did occur.

By 1900 marriage of couples from different villages was permitted, but in most cases the marriage ceremony was performed in the village of the groom. Such intermarriage broke down clanishness and fostered greater German-Russian cooperation.

The position of the woman in the German-Russian family is reflected, in part, through the marital arrangements. The early patriarchal system consigned women to an inferior status. In an early sociological study of the German-Russian, Laing (1909-10, p. 517) noted that "the status of women is to all
purposes that of a 'Hausfrau', the home being the sphere of her activity."

While visits to Hays City were infrequent, there existed a code of "sidewalk behavior" which saw the family walking in a line with father first, followed by the mother and children in order of birth. With some families, the practice persisted until the 1940's.

Observation of the German-Russian community fails to reveal any overt emphasis placed upon a male child, as might be inferred from the patriarchal and patrilocal nature of the family. Kinship is traced bilinearly, yet one might presuppose a leaning toward a patrilineal kinship due to the strong tendency of the German-Russian for male inheritance of land—the most important possession.

Family problems were worked out within the extended family structure. A strong sense of moral and emotional security is a ramification of the permanent status of the family. Divorce was unknown among the older families (Johannes, 1946, p. 142), while figures on illegitimacy are not available since it was not recognized to exist.¹

¹Williams (1916, p. 91) reported that the Volga-Germans in Lincoln, Nebraska, had a negligible divorce rate—.04 per 1,000 against 3.7 per 1,000 for the city as a whole.
The traditional manner of settling family disagreements of a prolonged nature involved the Christmas Eve kinship get-together in the father's house. All arguments would be solved and all family debts were "reviewed and settled by the father" (Anderson, 1948, p. 42). The entire family would then attend midnight mass.

The traditional German-Russian culture was church and family oriented. The high value placed upon the family would seem to have had positive social significance. To be sure, the role of the family has diminished as recent generations have become acculturated into the mainstream of American society. The more democratic concept of family life today has led to much looser family associations.

The affinity these people had for the church has weakened, as is evidenced by the relative decline in both church attendance and the number of priests required to meet the religious need.

As one views the German-Russian community today, the many factors of social disorganization are not difficult to perceive. What is perhaps difficult to understand is the factor or factors that continue to bind these people together. The dynamic organizing elements of church and family still exist, although somewhat diluted, and yet there is little doubt that the strongest binding element has remained the soil itself.
CONCLUSION

In this settlement study an attempt has been made to discuss the origins and the blending of culture elements that have, in their form and function, visibly altered the landscape of the Western Kansas study area. Each culture element has shown a flexibility that has enabled the German-Russian to make the necessary adjustment to exploit successfully the Great Plains environment. The dominant theme presented by this study has been one of cultural-economic stability—a characteristic not unique to the particular group in question, but representative of most German-Russian settlement on the Great Plains.

The German-Russian Catholic has brought to the Kansas landscape culture traits that have survived the test of trial and error on the Russian steppe. While attempting to re-establish his cultural traditions on the Kansas plains, circumstances outside of his control were subsequently to alter the manifest pattern of his settlement. Although it is impossible to assess all the fortuitous factors that influence human settlement, it has become apparent in the course of this study that three factors have had a profound influence on the course
of German-Russian settlement—(1) the natural landscape; (2) the pre-existing land ownership; and (3) the conditions of the economic market place.

While the Kansas Great Plains are remarkably similar to the Russian-Volga steppe, there are localized differences that had important influence on the course of agrarian settlement. What appear as minor climatic difference prove to be a major influence in altering field cultivation. The shift from spring to winter wheat drastically changed a long established sequence of agrarian events.

The lack of local forests in the Kansas study area, together with the availability of local building stone, brought about a significant change in construction material. The Volga frame dwelling was not to manifest itself on the Kansas scene until the family had achieved some affluence. Building with stone, unknown on the Volga, demonstrated a German-Russian adaptation from mud-brick construction, and yet, while the local environment induced change in building material, construction form retained its Old World character.

Existing patterns of land ownership not only influenced the original village settlement situation, but the legal subdivisions inherent in the American rectangular land survey continued to determine the shape of future ownership patterns. State laws governing the sale of public lands stimulated
private ownership in contrast to the traditional German-Volga collective land-use. Early attempts to establish patterns resembling the German Gewanne were not to extend beyond the immediate village situation, as a German-Russian family gave themselves over to the quarter-section homestead.

The conditions of the economic market place and the subsequent dependence upon rail transport not only influenced the distribution of settlement, but they also altered the traditional pattern of agrarian activity in decreasing family self-sufficiency. The railroad which was responsible for bringing the German-Russian to the Great Plains also provided the artery of commerce, without which agrarian life would have been impossible.

While each of the above-mentioned events was to bring about change in the traditional pattern of German-Russian settlement, all change took place within a matrix that could be successfully assimilated while at the same time enabling the German-Russian to deal effectively with the environment. There developed, certainly, differences in the Volga and Kansas settlement patterns, but similarities are far more evident in the landscape—the form of the German-Russian house type, the totality of village existence, together with the nebulous elements which have bound these people to the soil.
Despite all change brought about since the post-war period, the study area still exhibits a German-Russianness that is evident even to the casual observer. The process of total assimilation, however, is inevitable, and yet many traditional culture traits have, and will, remain even if only as relict features in the landscape. The imprint of initial occupancy on an area's subsequent settlement has been noted by Kniffen (1965) and Sauer (1941). Certainly, many aspects of German-Russian material culture examined in this study—the village complex, land ownership patterns, and village place-names—will retain a measure of observable permanence, although time shall dull human understanding.

What has been attempted here is a small part of a larger whole. A broader understanding of the German-Russian contribution to Great Plains settlement per se may have provided the underlying hypothesis for this study, but it is not to be demonstrated conclusively in this paper. It is hoped, however, that what scholarship may be found herein will, in some measure, aid a future student in his attempt to understand the grander scheme.
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