

Early Genealogical Sources for Mennonites in Manitoba: 1874 to 1921

**Glenn Penner (gpenner@uoguelph.ca)
Mennonite Heritage Archives (MHA), Winnipeg, MB**

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This guide is intended for those who want to go beyond simply collecting names and dates and would like to obtain detailed information on their ancestors, including images of relevant records. Emphasis is on digital records available online which provide access to images or describe how to order the images and records which are available in local archives and offices (church or municipal). This is not a guide on how to determine which records are relevant to your ancestor of interest. Once you have determined who your early Manitoba ancestors were using family sources, the GRanDMA (GM) database, etc., you can use this guide to help you find the original records or images of those records.

Note that some of these records are written in German Gothic script.

A. General Sources:

1. The GRanDMA (GM) database and its online interface, GMOL.

<https://www.grandmaonline.org/gmolstore/pc/Overview-d1.htm>

This is a good place to start. Many of the early Manitoba census and church records have been incorporated into the GM database and one can use GM in order to find the volume and page of the appropriate church register. However, this database has only recently started to include images of people and documents. The GM database can be accessed at the MHA or subscriptions can be purchased through the website above.

2. Ancestry.com (or ancestry.ca)

<https://www.ancestry.com> or <https://www.ancestry.ca>

One must have access to a paid subscription. Ancestry.com provides links to census and ship passenger lists with good quality black and white images of most documents.

3. **Familysearch**

<https://familysearch.org/search/>

This web page is run by the Mormon church. A search for a person will often result in links to images of ship lists, census lists, etc. It is still dominated by Americans but is rapidly expanding. Please be wary of the genealogical information which is provided by members of the church (as opposed to original sources). Registration required.

B. Immigration (pre-1920s)

Passenger Lists for 1881 – 1922. see:

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1823240?collectionNameFilter=false>

1. **Hamburg Passenger lists:**

These can be searched online at:

<http://search.ancestry.com/search/db.aspx?dbid=1068>

2. **Quebec Passenger Lists**

These can be searched and images of the original records can be viewed at:

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/immigration/immigration-records/passenger-lists/passenger-lists-quebec-port-1865-1900/Pages/search.aspx>

3. **Mennonites extracted from Quebec and Hamburg lists.**

Quebec Lists 1874-1880:

<http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/canada/quebec/passenger.html>

the above in pdf format:

<http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/download/passenger.pdf>

Quebec lists 1881- 1896:

<http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/canada/18811896.htm>

Hamburg Lists 1890 – 1898:

http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/Elbing-Ellerwald_Baptisms_1778-1795.htm

Quebec Lists 1900 – 1914:

http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/canada/post_1900_canada_migrations_sorted.htm

4. **Brotschuld Records (1878 – 1892)**

The difficult early years in Manitoba made it necessary to make a loan which was guaranteed by the Mennonites in Ontario. Individuals who obtained money through this loan are included in the Brotschuld records.

Digital copies for those who came from the Bergthal Colony are available at the MHA.

5. **Passports**

Russian passport records or any emigration records for Mennonites leaving Russia for this time period have not been found. If you have a Russian passport please inform the MHA and arrange for it to be photographed!

6. **The Shantz List (1874 – 1880)**

Most Mennonites on their way to Manitoba stayed with the Ontario Mennonites over winter. Jacob Shantz kept a list of these families. An photocopy of the original appears to be at the Mennonite Library and archives in Kansas. The lists have been published in C. Hiebert “Brothers in Deed to Brothers in Need”.

B. Church Records

1. **Reinländer Gemeinde Buch** 1880 - 1903 (also known as the Old Colony church)

The originals are in Mexico. Photocopies are deposited at the MHA (Vol. 1107 & 3883) and these copies have also been microfilmed (microfilm

#91). A translation of these records has been published as “Reinländer (Old Colony) Gemeinde Buch 1880 – 1903” J. Dyck and W. Harms Eds. (2006).

2. **Chortitzer Church Records** (originally the East Reserve Bergthal church)

These records are actually a continuation of the church records of the Bergthal colony in Russia. The originals are held by the church. Photocopies are found at the MHA (Vol. 4223, 4313, 4314 and 4931 (this last set was started in Russia)). Very poor quality microfilm copies are at the MHA (microfilm#184).

3. **West Reserve Bergthal Church Records**

These are two volumes of records which were made during the early years of the Bergthal Mennonites in the West Reserve. The originals are at the MHA (Vol. 715). The records ended up with the Bergthaler church.

4. **Sommerfelder Gemeinde Buch** 1881-1935 (originally the West Reserve Bergthal church before the Sommerfelder/Bergthaler spilt).

The originals are held by the church. Microfilm copies are available at the MHA (microfilm #393). A translation of these records has been published as “Sommerfeld Gemeinde Buch ... 1881 – 1935” H. Unger, M. Martens and A. Ens Eds. (2004).

5. **Bergthaler Church Records**

These were started after the split between the Bergthaler and Sommerfelder churches in 1894. Originals are at the MHA (Vol. 718 & 719).

6. **Mennonite Brethren Church Records**

Pre-1920s Manitoba Mennonite Brethren church records

a) Winkler

Originals are at the CMBS in Winnipeg (Vol. 445). Also see microfilm #90. Scans of this microfilm can also be accessed at the CMBS.

b) Kronsgart and Grossweide congregations were started in the 1890s. They were daughter congregations of Winkler.

7. **Kleine Gemeinde Church Records.**

Originals at the MHA (see EMC “boxes” 31 to 35). Also see Vol 2781 item 27 for the original Peter Toews church register. This register appears in Delbert Plett’s book “Profile of the Mennonite Kleine Gemeinde”.

8. **Holdemann Church Records.**

There are no Holdeman church records available.

C. Census Lists

1. **1880 West Reserve Census**

This census was conducted by the Reinländer (old colony) church and includes the birth dates of those enumerated.

Originals are in Mexico. A microfilm copy is available at the MHA (# 44). This census is part of a larger collection of documents which includes a Registry of births, marriages and deaths for 1881 – 1883 (includes the location of the birth as well as the attending midwife).

A transcription of the 1880 census is available on pages 7 – 55 of “1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve” J. Dyck and W. Harms, Eds. (1998).

2. **1881 Canadian Census**

One can search the census here:

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1881/Pages/1881.aspx>

B & W images can be downloaded.

3. **1891 Canadian Census**

One can search the census here:

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1891/Pages/1891.aspx>

B & W images can be downloaded.

4. **1901 Canadian Census**

One can search the census here:

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1901/Pages/about-census.aspx>

or

<http://automatedgenealogy.com/census/>

B & W images can be downloaded.

5. **1906 census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta**

One can search the census here:

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1906/Pages/1906.aspx> or

<http://automatedgenealogy.com/census06/>

B & W images can be downloaded.

6. **1911 Census of Canada**

One can search the census here:

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1911/Pages/1911.aspx> or

<http://automatedgenealogy.com/census11/index.jsp>

B & W images can be downloaded.

7. **1916 census of Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta**

One can search the census here:

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1916/Pages/1916.aspx>

B & W images can be downloaded.

8. **1921 Census of Canada**

<https://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/census/1921/Pages/search.aspx>

D. Property, Tax and Estate Records

1. **Land Grants of Western Canada 1870 – 1930**

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/land/land-grants-western-canada-1870-1930/Pages/land-grants-western-canada.aspx>

2. **Manitoba Homestead Records started about 1878**

The originals were microfilmed and then destroyed by the federal archives. Some of these records contain original signatures and useful genealogical information. Unfortunately the archives did a *shamefully* poor job of microfilming before destroying the records. The MHA has microfilm copies (microfilms 629-649) as well as scans of these microfilms.

3. **Township Plan Maps (Plat Maps)**

These can be found in the Manitoba provincial archives. Use the search engine at <http://pam.minisisinc.com/pam/search.htm>, choose Digital Images and search for the term Township Plans. Then click on the link to the images. You can then choose which Township and Range you want to view. You will be able to see plat maps at reasonable resolution and you will be able to download them at moderate resolution (by right clicking). One can request a digital copy at higher resolution for a fee or visit the archives and take a digital photograph.

4. **Tax Records**

a) Tax assessment records for RM of **Hespeler** and **Hanover**

The originals are at the RM of Hanover municipal office. Microfilms are available on request at the MHA. A transcription for 1885 can be found on pages 131 to 140 of "Settlers of the East Reserve", A. Ens, E. N. Braun and H. N. Fast Eds. (2009).

b) Tax assessment records for RM of **Douglas** and **Rhineland** – 1884 to the 1920s. The originals are at the Manitoba provincial archives. Digital images are available at the MHA. Microfilm copies are also available at the MHA (microfilm # 384).

c) Tax Collectors Rolls for RM of **Stanley** – 1895 to 1920s. Digital images are available at the MHA.

d) **Roland** Tax Collectors Rolls starting in 1915 and voters lists 1908-11, 1914-25.

e) Records for the West Reserve villages (RM of **Rhineland**) – 1881-83

The originals are in Mexico. The MHA has these in microfilm #44. A transcription can be found on pages 58 to 131 of “1880 Village Census of the Mennonite West Reserve” J. Dyck and W. Harms, Eds. (1998). Various local pre-municipality records at the MHA Vol. 1091-93, 1099, 4864a.

5. **Probate Records**

Originals are in the Manitoba provincial archives. Also available online (may be incomplete):

<https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1987562>

6. **Waisenamt records**

Inheritance money for underage orphans was held by the Waisenamt. This money could also be loaned out to members of the congregation. More importantly these file often contain inheritance information.

a) Bergthal Colony and Chortitzer Waisenamt records.

Originals are at the MHA (Vol. 6310 – 8332). Scans are available at the MHA. There is also a searchable inventory available.

b) Bergthaler West Reserve records.

Most of these records were destroyed after the Waisenamt was liquidated. Originals of the remainder are at the MHA (Vol. 972-974).

c) Sommerfelder records.

Originals were destroyed after the Waisenamt was liquidated. Some scattered records are at the MHA.

d) Reinland (Old Colony) records

Originals are in Mexico. Photographs are available at the MHA.

e) Kleine Gemeinde records

Original “Waisen Buch” and related files are found in the MHA (Vol. 5904). Also check EMC “boxes” 31 to 36.

7. **Maps and Property Ownership found in Published Books**

These books contain maps which indicate property ownership. They do not contain the actual property records or copies of property records.

a) E. N. Braun and G. R. Klassen. "Historical Atlas of the East Reserve" 2015.

This book has a lot of very nice maps which include locations of individual properties and also provides the archival source for each historical map.

b) J. Rempel and W. Harms. "Atlas of original Mennonite villages, homesteaders and some burial plots of the Mennonite West Reserve, Manitoba" 1990.

Includes maps which show the land ownership in the West reserve.

8. **Brandordnung Records**

The Brandordnung was a fire insurance organization. These were organized within each village.

a) East reserve

See: "Working papers of the East Reserve Village histories, 1874-1910." 1990, pages 127 to 145. Digital images of the originals are at the MHA.

b) West Reserve

There are a few surviving records for individual West Reserve villages.

Some Brandordnung records can be found with the Mennonite Mutual Insurance Company material. See Vol 4653, 4656 and 4657 at the MHA.

E. Newspapers

1. **Mennonitische Rundschau**

This was the pretty much the only newspaper containing letters written by early Manitoba Mennonites or to early Manitoba Mennonites. It also has many death announcements and obituaries as well as local Manitoba news, including the mention of many people. The MR is now available online here:

https://archive.org/details/pub_die-mennonitische-rundschau

Note that searching is not very good. See this article for more details:

<https://www.mennonitehistorian.ca/49.4.MHDec23.pdf>

Indices up to 1930 can be found at:

<http://cmbs.mennonitebrethren.ca/publications/mennonitische-rundschau-die/>

2. **Messenger of Truth**

The Messenger of Truth was the Holdeman periodical. It contains some genealogical information such as announcements of marriages and obituaries. These are available at the MHA.

F. Photographs

No family history is complete without photographs.

1. **Photos found in archives**

Several Mennonite archives have banded together to form the MAID project. This project is an effort to digitize the photograph collections of these archives. Although this massive project is incomplete, many thousands of photos have been digitized. One can search for these online and order digital copies. See: <https://archives.mhsc.ca/>

2. **Pioneer Portraits of the Past**

Starting in 1974 a series of photographs of Mennonite Settlers in Manitoba was published in the Altona Echo. Each photograph was accompanied by a short write-up on the pioneer family. Unfortunately these are newspaper quality pictures. The original photographs were returned to the owners. Available online here:

<https://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/canada/pioneer/index.htm>

3. **Photos of Schools**

There are many old photographs of schools available online at the Manitoba Historical Society website. Go to <http://www.mb1870.org/mhs-map/search> and search for the name of the school of interest.

G. School Registers

There are half yearly school reports for elementary schools in Mennonite areas starting in 1915. These include the child's name, age and grade and are on microfilm in the provincial archives. There is a Plett

Foundation funded project underway to digitize these registers. Copies will be made available at the MHA.

H. Miscellaneous Civil Records

1. Naturalization records

Year of naturalization can be found in the 1901 census. Unfortunately the original records for naturalizations before 1917 have been destroyed. According to a blog entry by Steve Fast (<https://mennogenforum.blogspot.ca/> 24 Sep 2016 entry) “Only a card index remains, and there is not much information on the card index. A Canadian citizen or resident can make an Access to Information request and pay \$5 CAD to get a copy of the index card.”

2. Civil Records (births, marriages and deaths).

a) Provincial Records. These can be searched for in ancestry.com but images of actual records must be ordered from the Manitoba Vital Statistics agency: <http://vitalstats.gov.mb.ca/Query.php>
Only births more than 100 years ago, marriages more than 80 years ago, and deaths more than 70 years ago can be searched.

b) Municipal Records.

Hanover - There are digital images for baptisms, marriages and deaths for 1891 to 1895 available at the MHA. The microfilms mentioned in D. 4

a) also have many births, marriages and deaths for 1882 to 1920.

Reinland – see section C. 1.

3. World War I Records

Images of some records (such as enlistment records) can be found here:

<http://www.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/discover/military-heritage/first-world-war/personnel-records/Pages/search.aspx>

Mennonites, together with corresponding images have been extracted and are available here:

<http://www.mennonitegenealogy.com/canada/WWI/WWIMennonitesIndexSorted.htm> .

Please make sure to reference your sources!

Archives work hard to preserve documents and copies of documents and make them available to the public. Make sure to include a copy of the page that identifies the document you are copying. If you are not sure how to reference a source, ask one of the archivists for help.

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