The Complete 1776 Census of Mennonites in West Prussia

Version 9, December 2025

Compiled by Glenn H. Penner

The original version of this census transcription used information from the list at the end of Horst Penner's book. Version 9 includes many corrections resulting from a line-by-line comparison with a photocopy of the original [photocopied from the LSD microfilm #1056552]. Penner missed a few families, and I also found one family in his extraction which I can't locate in the original.

Version 9 also has all the corrections made up to version 8. In version 8 I added a new column. This is church affiliation and is divided into Flemish, Frisian and Old Flemish. NOTE that these do not refer to nationality or ethnic groups. The congregations of the West Prussian Mennonites of 1776 were divided into three groups according to their church affiliation.

This version (9) has a few corrections and additions in the introduction below. The last column also has new information on several families, added since the last version of September 2023. These are highlighted in yellow.

The following Excel tables contain the census of Mennonites in the former West Prussia, taken in 1776.

1776 Census sorted by Surname
1776 Census sorted by Village

In 1772 a large part of the Polish kingdom was partitioned between Russia, Austria and Prussia. The majority of Mennonites living in Poland became subjects of the Prussian king Fredrick the Great (Friedrich II), and residents of the province of West Prussia. In 1776 a census of Mennonites in the newly acquired territory was undertaken. This census was known as the *Special Consignation aller in West Preussen befindlichen Mennonisten Familien im Jahr 1776. Aus den von den Mennonistischen Vermahnern eingelieferten Nachrichten gefertigt vom Intendanten Schlemmer*.

The census does not include the city of Danzig, the Neumark (Brandenburg) area, the Thorn territory, and the region known as the Danziger Nehrung. The latter two regions were acquired by Prussia in 1793, and census lists can be found at
https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/oberness.htm

and
https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/Danzig_Territory_Mennonites_1793.pdf.
A 1767 census for the Neumark area can be found at
https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/neumark.htm.

The Mennonites in the East Prussian regions of Königsberg and Tilsit are not included here. They are enumerated in a separate 1777 census of Mennonites in East Prussia. The 1776 census contains information on 2,638 families and accounts for 12,186 people. This census has appeared in several publications. The data for the first version of this transcription was taken from appendix 7 of Horst Penner's book *Die ost- und westpreußischen Mennoniten*, with the help of an old template prepared by Alan Peters.

If anyone has comments, corrections, or additional bits of information, please contact me. I plan on updating the census in about a year's time.

Census data is arranged in 15 columns. Here are brief descriptions of each column:

- #: the GRanDMA database surname code.
- Last Name: the last name of the head of the family
- First: the first name of the head of the family
- Location: the village of residence of the family
- Congregation.
- Occupation: the occupation of the head of the family
- H: counts the husband of the family
- W: counts the wife
- S: counts the number of sons
- D: counts the number of daughters
- M: counts the male servants in the household
- F: counts the female servants in the household
- Land: indicates the landowning status of the family
- Class: denotes how the Prussian officials classified each family economically
- Comments.

Here are more detailed explanations of some of the column headings:

These are the code numbers used in the GRanDMA database to identify family names. Note that some unrelated family names have erroneously been assigned the same code number. For example, Voth and Vogt are assigned the number 249. Kroeker and Kroeger are assigned the number 141.

For more information on the GRanDMA database see
https://www.grandmaonline.org/gmolstore/pc/Overview-d1.htm

Last name and First Name

I would like to strongly point out that the first and last names in this census reflect how these names were spelled by the person who recorded these names, NOT necessarily the way the household head spelled his name. It should be pointed out that at this time in Mennonite history, the spellings of first and last names were very fluid. Many people spelled their names phonetically and there are documented cases where the same men spelled their names differently when signing different official documents. In some cases, it is easier to use the surname code mentioned above to search for all families with a certain surname.

First names have also changed over the centuries. A few examples are:

Goerth = Gerhard
Jonas = Hans = Johann
Harm = Herman
Dirks = Dirk = Diedrich
Gils = Julius
Knels = Cornelius
Conert/Konert = Conrad

Location

I have tried to use the location name as it appears in the original. In some cases, the name is simply misspelled in the original and I have used the accepted name. In some cases, I have provided an alternate, commonly used, name in brackets. In the cases were two or more locations have the same name I have added the name of the region for each of those villages in brackets. For example: Schoensee (Gross Werder) as opposed to Schoensee (Culm).

For more information on which Mennonite churches to which the people in each village belonged see:
https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/Danzig_District_Mennonite_Villages_1818.pdf and
https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/Marienwerder_District_Mennonite_Villages_1821.pdf . Also see
https://mgr.mennonitegenealogy.com/prussia/West_Prussian_Mennonite_Villages_2023.pdf for more information.

Congregation:

The original census was organized according to congregation. There were no Mennonite villages in West Prussia in the same sense as in Russia or the early years in Canada. However, there were "Mennonite" villages in the sense that certain villages had Mennonites living in them, together with mostly German Lutherans and Catholics. In most cases all the Mennonites in a particular village belonged to a single congregation. In some villages there were Mennonites who belonged to the nearby Flemish or Frisian congregations. In the villages where the Mennonites belonged to the Orlofferfelde Frisian church the Frisian Mennonites appear separately from the Flemish Mennonites (who belonged to the Tiegenhagen, Rosenort, Ladekopp or Baerwalde congregations). Unfortunately, in some of the villages where Mennonites belonged to the Thiensdorf Frisian or Elbing Flemish churches the families of the village were enumerated by one church or the other. This is also the case for some of villages contained Mennonites from the Schoensee Frisian and Przechowka Old Flemish churches. In the villages of Klein and Gross Usenitz, where the majority of Mennonites belonged to the Tragheimerweide Frisian church the minority Flemish members of the Heubuden church were counted by both the Heubuden church and the Tragheimerweide church. I have removed those duplications.

If I was able to positively identify a family as belonging to a particular church, I have noted this in the comments column. Also see the table in the comments (below) for a list of the West Prussian Mennonite churches and their affiliations.

I want to strongly emphasize the Frisian, Flemish or Old Flemish affiliation designation does not necessarily indicate the origin of these families, or their ancestors in the Netherlands. The designation is theological NOT ethnic.

Occupation

The following list contains most of the occupations mentioned in the census.

Abbreviation	Occupation	Translation
A., Arb.	Arbeitsmann	Labourer
Ack., Ackm.	Ackersmann	Farmer
Apoth.-Bude	Apothek-Bude	Pharmacist
Arrd., Arrend.	Arrendator	Tenant
B.	Bauer	Farmer
Bäkschl.	Bäkenschläger	
Brwbr., Brantwbr.	Branntweinbrenner	Brandy distiller
Brsch., Brwschenk.	Branntwienschenker	Brandy Seller

Abbreviation	Occupation	Translation
Brau.	Brauer	Brewer
Brenner		Distiller
De., Di.	Destillateur	Distiller
Essbr.	Essigbrauer	Vinegar brewer
Fuselier		Spindle maker
Gewkr., Gwk.	Gewürzkrämer	spice seller
Gr., Grüt.	Grützer	Grist Miller
Grützm.	Grützmüller	Grist Miller
Häker., Hk.	Häker	proprietor of a general store
Hakbüd.	Hakenbüdner	Proprietor of a general store
Hebamme		Midwife
Hofmann		Estate manager
Holzflosser		Rafter
Holzhd.	Holzhändler	Wood (lumber) merchant
Holzhauer		Woodcutter
Honighandler		Honey Merchant
Kaufm.	Kaufmann	Merchant
k. Gew.	Keine Gewerbe	unemployed
Klempner		Tinsmith
Kornm.	Kornmüller	grain miller
Kuhp.	Kuhpächter	Raises cattle on rented pasture
Kürschner		Furrier
L.	Landmann	Farmer
Lw.	Landwirt	Farm-owner
Leichenbed.		Undertaker
Lein., Leinw.	Leinweber	Linen Weaver
Lederhdl.	Lederhändler	Leather Merchant
Losm.	Losmann	Tenant farmer
Mälzer		Malter
Mi.	Mietsmann	Renter
Mg.	Mietsgärtner	Rented a small plot of land
Milchträgn.	Milchträgner	Milkman
Plattenschläger		Smith
Posmach.	Posamentenmacher	Lacemaker
Radmacher		(Wagon) Wheelmaker
Rotg.	Rotgerber	Tanner
Schnd.	Schneider	Tailor
schenk. Br.	Schenkt Branntwein	sells brandy
Schiffer		Shipper

Abbreviation	Occupation	Translation
Schuhflicker		Shoe mender
Schulm.	Schulmeister	Schoolmaster (teacher)
Schust.	Schuster	Shoemaker
Seiler		Harnessmaker
Spinn.	Spinner	operates a spinning wheel
Tischler		Cabinetmaker
Uhrmacher		Clockmaker
Wagenmeister		master Wagon Maker
Wasserm., Wmüll.	Wassermüller	Operates a Watermill
Web., Wb.	Weber	Weaver
Zeugm.	Zeugmacher	Clothmaker or toolmaker
Zimm.	Zimmermann	Carpenter
Zwirnmacher		Twinemaker

Servants (one column for male (Knecht) and one for female (Magd)) made up about 7% of the entire Mennonite population of West Prussia. These were often teenagers who were living with, and working for, other families. These families were usually wealthier. In some cases, they were relatives or family friends. I suspect that this category included anyone who was living with the family and not a member of the immediate family.

Land

This census classifies families into 6 categories with respect to land ownership/rental.

A.	Arrendator	Tenant (farmer)
E.	Eigentümer, Eigengärtener	Owned their land
Ek.	Eigenkätner	Owned a small house (cottage)
Gärt.	Gärtner	Owned a small plot of land
Mi.	Mietsmann	Renter
Hos.	Hospital	Lived in the poor house

Class

It is difficult to evaluate quantitatively just what each class actually means. It is probably best to indicate the percentage of Mennonite households in each class:

g	gut	good	0.60%

mm	mittelmässig	middle	22.50%
s	schlecht	low	75.80%
a	arm	poor	0.50%
sa	sehr arm	very poor	0.60%

It is unclear to me what criteria were used to classify these families.

Comments:

Comments found in the census are “in quotes”. My comments usually contain additional information obtained from existing West Prussian church records. I have not included the details of the information found in the church records. This you will have to find yourselves.

In some cases, I have checked individuals against the 1772 census of West Prussia or the 1789 census of Mennonite landowners in West Prussia. The notations “1772” and “1789” indicate this.

The Mennonite congregations are as follows:

Danz	Danzig (Flemish & Frisian
Thag	Tiegenhagen (Flemish)
Lad	Ladekopp (Flemish)
Ros	Rosenort (Flemish)
Baer	Bärwalde/Fürstenwerder (Flemish)
Orl	Orloffrefelde (Frisian)
Heub	Heubuden (Flemish)
Sch	Schönsee (Frisian)
Trag	Tragheimerweide (Frisian)
Elb	Elbing/Ellerwald (Flemish)
Thdf	Thiensdorf (Frisian)
Mxhf	Marcushof (Frisian)
Mont	Montau (Frisian)
Prz	Przechowka (Old Flemish)

I also indicate Lutheran or Catholic church registers where I have found references to people in the census (usually deaths). For example, "(Luth/Zeyer)" means that the person is also found in the Lutheran church records of Zeyer. GRanDMA database numbers are also included for many of the household

heads. I have made no attempts to keep up with any changes in GM database numbers for these individuals.

Below are some additional comments on the census in general, which some may find helpful:

1. The first name Esau was frequently used for men named Isaac.

2. The surname for a widow usually ended with an –in or –sche. For example, a widow Penner would be given the surname Pennerin.

3. The spelling variations used in the original are kept in this transcription except in cases where:

a) the spelling was badly corrupted in the original. For example, there is a case there Hiebert is written as Niebert. Plett appears in the census as Riett.

b) first names have been abbreviated. In such cases the first names are written out in full. For example. Abr. is written as Abraham and Wilh. is written Wilhelm, etc.

4. Sr. and Jr. refer to men in the same location with Sr. being the older man and Jr. being the younger man. It does not necessarily refer to father and son.

5. In some cases there are two fathers or two mothers counted. In such cases it is likely that the second father or mother was the widowed father or mother of the husband or wife of the family.

Sources of Error in the spreadsheet

There are many ways in which errors will have crept into the spreadsheet version of the 1776 census. I've been able to eliminate a huge number of these in the latest version (V.9). Some errors can't be fixed without going back in time to 1776.

1. The census data was originally collected by the "Vermahner" of the various Mennonite congregations. These would have been the Ältester (Bishop), Lehrer (minister/preacher) or Diakon (Deacon) of each church. The details of just who collected the original information and how it was collected are lost. How carefully or completely this data was collected would have depended on the individuals involved.

2. The census data was then provided to an official of the Prussian government. This official, presumably *Indentant* Schlemmer, then compiled the list available in the Berlin archives. It appears that he misread some of the surnames (most

of which I've corrected). He copied information on all 2,640 families by hand so, obviously mistakes would have been made.

3. Sometime before the publication of his book Horst Penner must have copied the original census by hand and alphabetized his list. This would have then been typeset for publication. These two processes introduced a fair number of errors. In addition, Penner changed several of the village names to be consistent with the official German names he would have grown up with in pre-World War II West Prussia. Penner also added his own comments and abbreviations without identifying that they were not in the original.

4. Alan Peter prepared a spreadsheet from Penner's book in which he included only 4 columns: surname, first name, village, and a sum of all the people in the family. Some errors appeared during this transcription process.

5. My first version (2004) expanded Alan's version to show all the columns found in the original. I obviously made errors, particularly when typing in all the 0s, 1s, 2s, etc. in the counts of family members.

6. I also added a comments column. More comments were added with each new version. Looking at these comments, I see that I was rather inconsistent with the various abbreviations and notations I used. In v.8 I have tried to fix this.

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