

Harms, Plenert, and Voth Inheritance Documents: 1840

St. Petersburg Archives (RGIA)

Fond 383 Opus 10 Delo 9340

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These inheritance documents are particularly interesting in that they connect members of an extensive Harms family from Prussia, through the Mennonite village of [Michalin](#) in Volhynia, to South Russia. Information given here has allowed several new genealogical connections to be made in the GRanDMA database.

The Chortitzza and Molotschna members of this family rejected the inheritance, claiming that their families were not entitled to the inheritance since their parents had already died. That reasoning was not correct. The inheritance rules followed by Prussian and Russian Mennonites at the time clearly states that if the deceased had no biological children, the siblings received the inheritance, and if a sibling had died, that sibling's biological descendants received the inheritance. There are many examples of this happening in Prussian and Russian inheritance documents [1, 2]. Since the inheritance was split between so many siblings, nephews and nieces, it is possible that the money was not enough to justify an expensive trip from Russia to Prussian (the inheritance had to be received in person). It is also possible that, because their Volhynian relatives were so poor, the South Russian relatives considered it better for them to get the money. There may have been other reasons. One can only speculate.

1. [West Prussian Property Records from Polish Archives \(bethelks.edu\)](#)
2. [Prussia to Russia Mennonite Inheritance Documents.pdf \(mennonitegenealogy.com\)](#)

1. (pages 1-3)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Department of Internal Affairs

2 Department, 2 Department

7 March 1847, No. 1969

To the Department of State Property.

In 1840, the Kiev Civil Governor handed over to the Department of Internal Affairs a document in which the Mennonites **Heinrich, Gerhard, and Peter Harms**, as well as **Anna Harms and Eva Plenert**, for themselves and for the

small children of their third sister **Maria Voth** (who has died) living in Mikheilovskaya Sloboda, Makhnovsky uyezd, referred to the inheritance left by their aunt **Anna Ewert** in Prussia.

At the request of the above-mentioned persons, this document was simultaneously forwarded to the Prussian Legation staying here for transmission to the correct place.

Now the Prussian Ambassador, General Rochow, has informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the court in Neuenburg [Prussia], before which the inheritance case of **Anna Ewert** is pending, is having difficulties in bringing it to a conclusion because the document in question was not written by **Anna Harms'** husband, **Heinrich Harms**, **Eva Plenert's husband**, **Wilhelm Plenert**, and the father of the small children of the deceased **Maria Voth**, **David Voth**. In order to remove the resulting obstacles, the Court of Neuenburg [Prussia] asks our competent authorities to certify that the document submitted by the Harms, *by which they renounce their inheritance from their aunt Anna Ewert*, is valid under our laws, even if it does not bear the signatures of the three persons mentioned; or that they make a further statement on their own behalf that they agree to the said waiver. In addition, it is necessary to correct the incorrect indication of the year of the sale of the farm in Montau, which took place in 1830 instead of 1829.

The Prussian ambassador asks that someone carry out the above demands of the Neuenburg [Prussia] court.

The Department of the Interior transmits to them the document submitted by General Rochow on the renunciation of the Mennonite Harms and a copy of the contract of sale for the economy in Montau, and humbly requests the First Department of State Property to order the proper execution of the request of the Prussian ambassador and to inform our department of the further course of action.

Director: Signature; Head of Department: Signature

2. (Pages 4-7)

Department of State Property.

September 25, 1847.

To the civil governor of Kiev.

On September 13, 1840, Her Excellency handed over to the Department of Internal Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs a document with which the Mennonites **Heinrich, Gerhard, and Peter Harms, as well as Anna Harms and Eva Plenert**, living in Mikheilovskaya Sloboda, Makhnovsky uyezd, (Kiev Province) for themselves and for the small children of their third

sister Maria **Voth**, who died, renounced the inheritance they had received in Prussia after their aunt Anna Ewert.

At the request of the above-mentioned persons, this document was at the same time forwarded to the Prussian Legation staying here for transmission to the right place.

Now the Prussian envoy General Rochow has informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the court in Neuenburg [Prussia], before which the inheritance case of Anna Ewert is pending, is having difficulties in bringing it to a conclusion because the document in question was not written by **Anna Harms'** husband, **Heinrich Harms**, **Eva Plenert's** husband, **Wilhelm Plenert**, and the father of the young children of the late **Maria Voth**, **David Voth**.

In order to remove the obstacles thus created, the Court of Neuenburg [Prussia] asks our competent authorities to certify that the document submitted by the Harms on their renunciation of the inheritance of their aunt Anna Ewert is valid under our laws, although it does not bear the signatures of the three persons mentioned, or that they make a further declaration on their behalf, that they agree to the said waiver. In addition, it is also necessary that the incorrect indication of the year of the deed of sale for the economy in Montau, which was 1830 and not 1829, be corrected in this document.

The Prussian envoy asks that someone be appointed who will comply with the above demands of the Neuenburg [Prussia] court.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Ministry of State Assets of this request from the Prussian Legation and handed over the documents.

The First Department of State Property hereby transmits the document of the renunciation of the Mennonites Harms and a copy of the contract of sale for the Montau estate, which General Rochow has communicated to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and humbly asks Your Excellency to proceed in accordance with the request of the Prussian Ambassador and to inform this department of the further course of action.

Signed: Director Prokopovich-Antonsky; Sealed: Head of Department Igrenev

Examined: Head of Department Yankovsky

3. (pages 8-9)

Ministry of Internal Affairs. Administrator of the province of Kiev.

27 October 1847, Kiev

To the First Department of the Ministry of State Property.

I have the honour to inform you that I have forwarded the renunciation of the Mennonite Harms of the inheritance they inherited in Prussia to the Berdichev Zemstvo Court in order to correct the error regarding the year of issue of the contract of sale for the economy in Montau. I have instructed the Court to make the additional declaration requested by the Department to the above-mentioned waiver, upon receipt of which I will notify you immediately.

Civil Governor: Signature

4. (pages 10-11)

Ministry of Internal Affairs. Head of Kiev province.

31 March 1848, Kiev

To the First Department of the Ministry of State Assets.

In accordance with the decree of the department of September 25, 1847, with the enclosure of the purchase contract of the economy in Prussia of the Mennonite Harms from the colony of Micheilin and the declaration of renunciation of their inheritance, I ordered the Berdyachevsky Zemstvo Court to make the ordinary corrections and additions to the above-mentioned documents. In their response, the court reports that **Gerhard and Peter Harms, Wilhelm Plenert and his wife Eva and David Voth** and their children settled in the district of Ekaterinoslav and Voth in the province of Taurida in the Berdyansk district after their departure from the colony of **Michalin**: Harms and **Plenert**, *where the latter died leaving behind his children*. I have therefore forwarded the above-mentioned order of the Department, together with the documents, to the Civil Governor of Ekaterinoslav for further disposal and informed the Department thereof.

Civil Governor: Signature

5 (pages 12-13)

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Department of Internal Affairs.

Departments two, desk two.

March 24, 1849, No. 2490

To the First Department of State Estates.

The Department of the Interior has forwarded to the First Department of State Estates the certificate of the renunciation of the Mennonites Harm's inheritance and a copy of the contract of sale of the inn in Montau, which the Prussian ambassador sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 7, 1847, and has asked for these documents to be completed and corrected.

The Prussian envoy, General Rochow, has expressed the wish to be informed of the consequences of the orders made in this matter. Consequently, the

Department of Internal Affairs humbly requests the First Department of State Property to inform it. What is to be answered to the Prussian ambassador's request?

Vice-Director: Count D. Nelenev

Head of Department: Signature

6. (pages 14-17)

Ministry of State Property, First Department, Table 4

April 8, 1849.

To the Department of Internal Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The decree of the Department of Internal Relations of March 7, 1847, No. 1969, was forwarded to the Kiev Civil Governor, together with the documents sent: a) the renunciation of the Mennonites **Harms and Eva Plenert**, both for themselves and for the children of their deceased sister **Maria Voth**, of the right of inheritance which they inherited in Prussia after their **aunt Anna Ewert**, and b) a copy of the deed of sale for the Montau inn in order to correct and supplement the deficiencies found in the deeds of the Neuenburg [Prussia] court: 1. which is not signed by the husbands of the colonists **Anna Harms and Eva Plenert** and the father of the underage Voths, and 2. to correct the incorrect year in the contract of sale of the Montau inn in the same deed.

As a result, the Kiev civil governor informed that the deed of Heinrich Harms and his wife Anna had been duly corrected and that **Gerhard and Peter Harms, Wilhelm Plenert and his wife Eva, as well as David Voth and his children had left the village of Michalin and settled: Harms and Plenert in Ekaterinoslav uyezd, and Voth in Taurida** in Berdyansker uyezd, where the last one died, leaving behind his children.

The governor of Kiev added that he forwarded the department's order and documents to the governor of Ekaterinoslav so that he can take further steps. The First Department of State Property has the honour to inform the Department of Home Affairs thereof.

Signed: Director E. Hahn

Signed by the head of the department: G. Igrenev

Correct: Signature

Letters 8 – 14 (pages 19 – 30) do not contain any relevant information or are copies of previous letters. (see Russian transcript)

15. (pages 31-37)

Ministry of Internal Affairs. Kiev Provincial Administration.

November 5, 1855, No. 20149

To the First Department of the Ministry of State Assets.

Hearing of the provincial administration: the decrees of the Ekaterinoslav civil governor of August 2 last year and June 21 of this year, further correspondence about the estate of Anna Ewert, documents about the renunciation of the Mennonites Harms and Plenert of the inheritance after the said Anna **Ewert**. From this correspondence it appears that in 1840 a document was handed over by His Excellency to the Department of Internal Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in which the Mennonites Heinrich, Gerhard, and Peter Harms as well as Anna Harms and Eva **Plenert**, residing in Micheilowsky Sloboda, Makhnovsky uyezd, for themselves and for the small children of their deceased third sister Maria **Voth** on the inheritance, which they had received in Prussia after their aunt Anna Ewert. At the request of the above-mentioned persons, this document was also sent to the Prussian Legation stationed here. In response, the Prussian Ambassador, General Rochow, informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that the court in Neuenburg [Prussia], before which Anna Ewert's inheritance case is pending, is having difficulty concluding it because the document in question was not written by Anna **Harms'** husband, Heinrich **Harms**, Eva **Plenert's** husband, Wilhelm Plenert, and the father of the late Maria Voth's young children, David **Voth**. In order to remove the obstacles arising from all this, the Court of Neuenburg [Prussia] asks our competent authorities to certify that the document of renunciation of the inheritance of their aunt Anna **Ewert** submitted by the Harms is valid under our laws, although it does not bear the signatures of the three persons mentioned, or that they make a further declaration, that they agree to the said waiver. In addition, it is necessary that the incorrect indication of the year of the purchase contract of the economy in Montau, which took place in 1830 and not 1829, contained in the document of Harms, be corrected. The Prussian envoy asks that the above-mentioned demands of the Neuenburg [Prussia] court be met. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed the Ministry of State Property of this request from the Prussian Legation and forwarded the documents on the renunciation of the Mennonite Harms and the copy of the purchase contract to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Consequently, the Governor forwarded the above-mentioned documents, together with the correspondence concerning the stay of the Mennonites Harms and Plenert in the province of Ekaterinoslav, in order to properly fulfill the aforementioned demand of the Prussian mission, by the letter of March 3, 1848, to the District Administrator of Ekaterinoslav, from whom they are now returned with the corresponding addition.

It was decided to transmit to the First Department of the Ministry of State Property the above-mentioned expert opinions of the Civil Governor of Ekaterinoslav and the documents on the renunciation of the Mennonites **Harms, Plenert** and the minor children **Voth** of the inheritance left after the death of Anna **Ewert**, in accordance with the request of September 21, 1847 under No. 620.

Signatures

16. (Pages 38-40)

Ordinance of the Molotschna District Administration, No. 2207

April 13, 1855.

Municipality of Halbstadt (for the court)

To the official of the 2nd district of the Berdyansk district.

The Mennonite district administration of Molotschna hereby has the honour to return to Your Excellency the file on the renunciation of the Mennonites Harms, Plenert and the Voth children of the inheritance that fell to them in Prussia on the death of their aunt Anna **Ewert**.

District assessor: Wiens, District clerk: **Reimer**

The following children of the deceased in the colony Friedensdorf Mennonites David and Maria, née **Harms, Voth**:

Adults: 1. Andreas **Voth** from Waldheim. 2. Eva **Voth**, married to Wilhelm **Unruh** from Gnadenfeld. For the minors: 3. Peter, 4. Heinrich and 5. Katharina - brothers and sister **Voth**, their guardians Benjamin **Voth** and Heinrich **Petker**, Mennonites from the colony of Friedrichsdorf. These persons are all personally known and admitted to the meetings.

In response to the announcement to them of the decision of the Royal Prussian District and City Court in Neuenburg [Prussia] of 25 February 1830 in the case of the Insurance of the Economy No. 10A in Montau [*property records missing from Bydgoszcz archives Fond 1880*], they put the following statement on the record: That we, the above-mentioned five Voth siblings, have another sister, namely Elisabeth **Voth**, married to Andreas **Schmidt**, in Micheilin, Makhnovsky uyezd, Kiev Province. Our deceased parents David and Maria **Voth** had no other heirs.

With regard to the right of inheritance on our part to the farm No. 10A in Montau, which was sold by Wilhelm **Ewert** to David **Wichert** after the death of his wife, our aunt Anna, née **Franz**, *we are of the opinion that after the death of our parents in the succession we are no longer entitled to make a claim to this farm.*

We hereby fully agree with the above-mentioned verdict of February 25, 1830 in Neuenburg [Prussia] and agree to the transfer of David **Wichert** into the possession of the economy no. 10A in Montau without any protection and avoiding legal costs, and hereby waive all claims to the economy no. 10A, which we hereby sign.

Halbstadt colony, February 1, 1855.

Original signed by: Heinrich **Petker**, guardian; Benjamin **Voth**, guardian; Eva **Voth**, with the help of her husband Wilhelm **Unruh**; Andreas **Voth**.

True to the original: Municipal clerk: Peter **Reimer**

17. (page 41)

Ministry of State Assets, 4th Department, Desk 1.

November 30, 1855, No. 29689.

Transmission of four documents.

To the Department of Internal Relations of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In consequence of the request of the Department of Internal Affairs, as explained in the request of January 26, 1850 under number 875, the First Department of State Assets has the honor to transmit hereby four documents of the Mennonites **Harms, Plenert** and children of the late David **Voth** concerning the renunciation of the inheritance left after their aunt Anna **Ewert**, who died in Prussia.

Signed by Vice-Director Nefediev.

Signed by the head of department: Linden.

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