

Kronsdienst List

Compiled by Pam Klassen-Dueck

Thousands of Mennonites in Imperial Russia participated in *Kronsdienst*. Of those involved in this ‘Crown-service,’ most were conscripted, though many seem to have enlisted voluntarily, particularly for medical services during World War I. Either way, most Mennonite recruits travelled the route of alternative service which involved the forestry, then incorporated medical services, and still later branched into other roles such as chauffeur work, equine care, road-building, and more.ⁱ The names of thousands of such participants, both conscientious objectors and Russian Army soldiers, appear in this catalogue.

The source with the biggest number of names, so far, has been the [Mennonitische Rundschau](#). Note that by no means does this document contain a comprehensive extraction from the *Rundschau* (or for any of the other sources, for that matter). Most of the entries on this list arose simply from my curiosity to see what service stories would appear via the OCR (optical character reader) function of the website [Internet Archive](#), which has digitized most of the [Rundschau](#). The OCR has limited effectiveness as far as reading *Fraktur* is concerned; nonetheless, the tool still elicited many micro-histories of Mennonites in *Kronsdienst*. The stories were, in turn, captivating and tragic.

Next, I incorporated names from other sources, including memoirs, crowdsourced information, the existing [Mennonite Genealogy Forstei](#) lists, and more.

My cut-off date for Imperial service was approximately the summer of 1918, after the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II but while a group of 40 Mennonite *Sanitaere* (medics) are said to have remained on the job after all their fellow *Kronsdienst* workers had gone home.

I formed a [table](#) in which each participant’s data is organized into columns under the following headings:

- 1) Name. The patronymic is included, if available. Spellings are standardized. If the recruit was a known minister, I added the ‘Rev’ honorific.
- 2) Birth Date. Some dates of birth are included.ⁱⁱ
- 3) Sex. ‘M’ is denoted for men; ‘f’ is denoted for women.
- 4) GRanDMA. Some of the identifying [GRanDMA](#) numbers have been included.

- 5) Origin. Indicated here is the recruit's village of birth and/or the last known residence. In entries based on any of the Mennonite newspapers, the listed location may instead be the village of *Frindschaft* who mentioned the person in a published letter.
- 6) Service Date(s). For many participants, I was able to provide some information about the specific period of service. Consider these dates to be mere estimates.
- 7) Forstei. If the participant served in the forestry (and not the phylloxera unit), this column is marked with an X. I included the names of ministerial couples who managed the sites. If the participant went to a phylloxera unit, this column is marked with an XP.
- 8) Medical. If the recruit joined the medical service – as a *Sanitär*, nurse, or doctor, or as someone whose work supported this area – this column is marked with an X.
- 9) Soldier. If the participant was a soldier, this column is marked with an X.
- 10) Other. If the participant was involved in other work, this column is marked with an X.
- 11) Service Details. In many cases I included additional service information. Most German was translated into English.
- 12) Family. Some new family information is noted here. In most cases, even if the data given was already listed in [GRanDMA](#), I added it to show how I arrived at a certain conclusion. Some notes have been cross-referenced with my [Ancestry](#) genealogy.
- 13) Notes. All notes are my own unless otherwise indicated by quotation marks. I strove to include the destiny of the recruit, if I came across it. For many of those listed, I also included occupation (particularly teachers), other known residences, possible *Selbstschutz* involvement, and more.
- 14) – 23) Sources. Each source is colour-coded and listed in a separate column to help researchers recognize patterns in the data.

The true total of service-participants on this list must be fewer than the current number, as I suspect a duplicate-entry rate of at least 10%.

Limitations:

- My basic knowledge of High German.
- My rudimentary knowledge of military terms.
- The omission of some critical works on the topic.
- Given the list's sheer volume of information, no doubt it contains data-entry errors.

- Because I used a 1918 cut-off date, instead of 1917 when the Tsar abdicated, I may have inadvertently included Red or White Army recruits.

Corrections are welcome.

I am indebted to the late Lawrence Klippenstein, Glenn H. Penner, Tatiana Drozdova, the late Willi Vogt, and others for their prior work on the *Dienst* topic. Thanks to Lawrence and Glenn as well as Conrad Stoesz at [MHC](#) for their assistance. My gratitude also goes out to the many generous participants at [Mennonite Genealogy and History](#) (Irina Weissbecker, Nadja Klassen, Jerry Marshall, Dr Arnold Neufeldt-Fast, and many more) who contributed information and provided translation help.

This project is dedicated to my daughter: may you always work for peace.

Pam Klassen-Dueck
Treaty 1 - Schoenau, Manitoba
E-mail: pamklassen@hotmail.com

Created 21 October 2022.
Formatting by Richard D. Thiessen

[Return to the
Mennonite Genealogy
Russian Mennonite Genealogical Resource Page](#)

ⁱ For more information, see Lawrence Klippenstein's book *Peace and War: Mennonite Conscientious Objectors in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union* and the '[Conscientious Objection](#)' entry in GAMEO.

ⁱⁱ In most cases it seems to be possible to estimate the person's age based on the conscription date, as up until about the Great War – with a few exceptions – conscription seemed to happen at age 21 with service starting at about age 22.