

# ***Kronsdienst* List 2.0**

## **Compiled by Pam Klassen-Dueck**

Thousands of Mennonites in Imperial Russia participated in *Kronsdienst*, the route of alternative state service which, depending on time and place, involved such work as the forestry, medical services, surveying, road-building, transportation, shipping, mechanical, administrative, cooking, cleaning, supervising a prisoner-of-war camp, and, in one case, even teaching convalescing soldiers how to weave baskets.<sup>i</sup> Most of those who served were conscripted though volunteers did surface in times of war. Appearing in this revised *Kronsdienst* catalogue are more than 4,500 of these names, both conscientious objectors and a few Russian Army soldiers.<sup>ii</sup> Since the first iteration of this list, many duplicate entries have been deleted and many new entries have emerged. Of note is the sharper focus on naming the women who worked in the medical field during WWI.<sup>iii</sup>

This document grew out of my curiosity, starting over two years ago, to see what service stories would appear via the OCR function of the website [Internet Archive](#) which had at that point just finished digitizing the [Mennonitische Rundschau](#). Though the OCR has somewhat limited effectiveness as far as reading *Fraktur* is concerned, the tool elicited numerous micro-histories of Mennonites in *Kronsdienst*. The stories were, in turn, captivating and tragic.

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

I formed a [table](#) in which the extracted information is organized into columns under the following headings:

- A. Name. Most spellings are standardized. To help detect patterns in the data, the patronymic has been included for the men's names, even if they didn't use such in real life. If the recruit was a known minister, I added the honorific.
- B. Birthdate. Many dates of birth are included. I did not attempt to track the difference between old-style and new-style dates. A significant percentage of these birthdates are speculative but have been inserted to help detect patterns in the data.<sup>iv</sup>
- C. Sex. The purpose for this column is to use Excel's 'Sort' function, if a researcher so desires, to quickly group either all the women (*F*) or all the men (*M*) or all the *Oekonom* (*Forstei* minister/managerial) couples (*M / F*).
- D. GRanDMA #. Whenever possible, the identifying [GRanDMA](#) numbers are attached. Many are guesses.

- E. Residences. Indicated here for each person is the village of birth and/or known residences prior to about 1920. I did not attempt to standardize spellings. Note: in entries based on any of the Mennonite newspapers, the listed location may instead belong to *Frindschaft* who mentioned the recruit in a published letter.
- F. Conscription date(s). Many are speculative but have been included to help researchers detect patterns.
- G. Service date(s). For many participants, there is at least some information about the specific period of service. Consider many of these dates to be estimates.
- H. Forstei. If the participant served in the forestry, including war-time watchman work, this column is marked with an X. If the participant went to a phylloxera unit, this column is also marked with a P in brackets. Note that I've listed the names of the ministerial couples (ie, *Oekonomen*) who managed the *Forstei* sites; the wives' names also appear because the literature demonstrates their significant role in supporting the *Kommando*.
- I. Medical. If the recruit joined the medical service – as a *Sanitär* (paramedic), nurse, or doctor, or as someone whose work supported this area – this column is marked with an X.
- J. Soldier. If the participant was a soldier, this column is marked with an X.
- K. Road-building. If the participant helped with building roads, this column is marked with an X.
- L. Other. If the participant was involved in a different capacity, such factory work or supervising POWs, this column is marked with an X.
- M. Service details. In many cases I've noted additional service information specific to the person, as well as broader details about the evolving draft process, service life, and so on.
- N. Family & friends. When I came across genealogical information that didn't appear to be listed in [GRanDMA](#), I tried as often as possible to add it to this column. In some cases, even if the data was already listed in [GRanDMA](#), I entered it anyway to demonstrate how I arrived at a certain conclusion about the person's identity.<sup>v</sup>
- O. Fate and other personal notes. As often as possible, I included information about the person's destiny. I also tried to pull data about occupations (especially teachers, midwives, and writers), personality traits, physical characteristics, and other sorts of details that could potentially help identify these individuals.
- P. – Y. Sources (#1-10). Each source is colour-coded (books, however, are all categorized as one colour) and listed in a separate column to help researchers recognize patterns in the data. Some links have been added and others corrected from the original.

**Project limitations:**

- My rudimentary knowledge of military vocabulary and concepts in both German and English.
- Because I used a 1918 cut-off date, instead of the 1917 date of abdication, I may have inadvertently included Red or White Army recruits, though I believe that they have been weeded out.
- Major sources have not yet been used. E.g., *Friedensstimme* and EWZ records.
- The level of details extracted depended on my time and energy; as such, it varies across entries.
- Undoubtedly, given the sheer volume of information, the list contains data-entry errors.
- The true total of service-participants on this list must be fewer than the current number, as I suspect hundreds of duplicates.

Corrections and additions are welcome.

I am indebted to the late Dr. Lawrence Klippenstein, Dr. Glenn H. Penner, Tatiana Drozdova, the late [Willi Vogt](#), and others for their prior research on the conscientious objectors. Thanks to Lawrence and Glenn as well as [Conrad Stoesz](#) for the personal 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 others) who contributed information and provided translations. Thanks to Richard Thiessen for making room for this document on the Mennonite Genealogy website. And to the fine folks at [GRanDMA Online](#): what amazing research we can accomplish because of your work.

Thank you to my husband for taking care of everyday things so that I had time to read and write. This is for our daughter: may you always work for peace.

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<sup>i</sup> For more information, see Lawrence Klippenstein's book [Peace and War: Mennonite Conscientious Objectors in Tsarist Russia and the Soviet Union](#), the L. Klippenstein & Jacob Dick book [Mennonite Alternative Service in Russia: The Story of Abram Dueck and his Colleagues](#), and [GAMEO](#)'s entry on '[Conscientious Objection](#).'

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ii My designated cut-off date was approximately the summer of 1918, when the forestries were dismantled and while a group of 40 Mennonite *Sanitaere* (medical orderlies) were said to have remained on the job after their peers had already gone home.

iii To attempt this work, first I generated a list of Mennonite women known to have been affiliated with the hospitals of the day; then, cross-referencing against that list, I was able to find a handful of names.

iv In most cases it is possible to estimate the recruit's age based on the conscription date, as up until about the Great War – with exceptions – conscription happened at age 20 or 21 with service starting about a year later. So, for instance, the recruits of 1880, the first mustering, were born in either 1859 or 1860. There are variations, however, for people who were delayed due to illness, etc.

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