

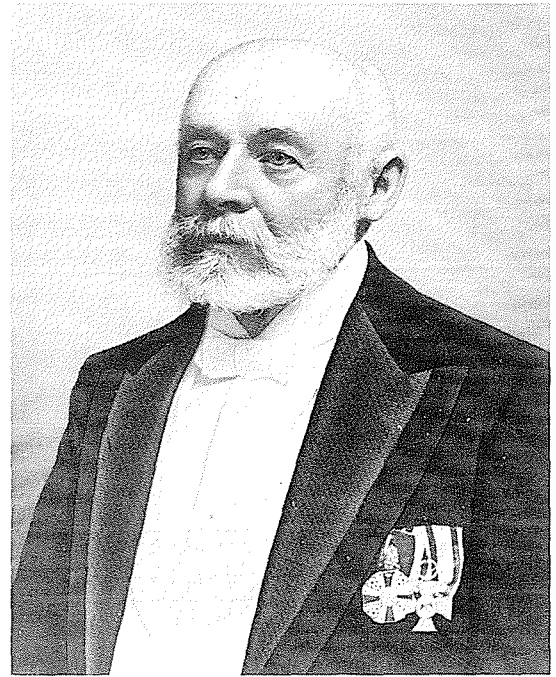
It was the abrogation of military exemption that initially united the colonies in an attempt to persuade the Russian government to change its mind. Delegations from the churches visited the Russian capital, St. Petersburg. After these seemingly fruitless efforts the colonies began investigating possibilities of emigration to the United States and Canada. When Canada heard about the difficulties of the Mennonites in Russia, it reacted just like Russia had a century earlier. Canada, concerned about holding the Americans at the forty-ninth parallel, eager to bring thousands of settlers into the North-West, ordered its special immigration agent in Germany, William Hespeler, to go to Russia immediately to investigate the situation. When the Russian authorities discovered Hespeler's activities in the colonies, he was forced to leave the country. He had spent enough time in the villages, however, to arouse keen interest in emigration and to invite a Mennonite delegation to visit Canada at the expense of the Canadian government.

The delegation that was chosen included both Mennonites and Hutterites. One of the delegates came from Prussia. They visited both Canada and the United States. The table below indicates the composition of the group.

MENNONITE DELEGATION TO AMERICA IN 1873⁸

Name of Delegate	Group Represented
Heinrich Wiebe	Bergthal
<i>Oberschulze</i> Jacob Peters	Bergthal
Cornelius Buhr (accompanied delegates at own expense)	Bergthal
Jacob Buhler	Molotschna
Leonhardt Sudermann	Molotschna
Cornelius Toews	Kleine Gemeinde
David Classen	Kleine Gemeinde
Tobias Unruh	Wolhynia
Andreas Schrag	Wolhynia
Paul Tschetter	Hutterian Brethren
Lorenz Tschetter	Hutterian Brethren
Wilhelm Ewert	West Prussia

Neither Chortitza nor Fürstenland, home colonies of most of Reinland's early immigrants, sent delegates in 1873.⁹ How closely Fürstenland co-operated with the Bergthal delegation is not clear. It is probable that Elders Johann Wiebe of Fürstenland and Gerhard Wiebe of Bergthal, who were first cousins and who were both to emigrate later, were in communication at that time. Evidence indicates, however, that the Fürstenland elder, ordained by the Chortitza elder just a few years earlier, still did not feel totally independent and looked to the mother colony for leadership.¹⁰ And even though there was much interest in



William Hespeler, Canadian government immigration agent, who was dispatched to the Mennonite colonies in Russia in 1872 to invite the Mennonites to migrate to Canada.