

## **The Emigration of John Ries' Forefathers from Germany to Rosenthal, Crimea, Russia**

by John Ries

I, John Ries, in the year 1982, am writing a history of my forefathers who emigrated from Germany to the Crimea in Russia. The Crimea was a big island with many lovely places. The river Barantcha flowed through a beautiful valley covered with all kinds of lovely flowers and fruit trees. This river was about 40verst long and emptied into a bigger river which was called the Salgier. Here they made their home. There were 2,000 dessjatines of available government land. Some of this land was rented out to Turkish people who raised flax and tobacco.

In 1804, 40 families emigrated to the Crimea but only 18 families settled in this valley, forming a village which they called Rosenthal. About 4 miles north of Rosenthal was an all weather highway. From this highway it was 25verst west to Simferopol and 12verst to Crosbasar. Lots were measured out for the 18 families and they started to build homes. The names of these families are not known, only that Anton Fauth was the first mayor of this settlement.

The government gave each family 120 rubles to buy horses or oxen, and 100 rubles to buy seed. The first houses were built with sandstone or clay bricks baked in the sun. In 1807 there were 25 new houses erected. These were called the government houses.

During the period from 1810 -1818 more families came from the provinces of Baden and Württemberg in Germany. By 1818 there were 56 families. This same year the land was measured out and 2 more villages, namely Neusatz and Friedental, along with the village of Rosenthal, were incorporated into the Rosenthal district.

There were not too many farmers among the first settlers, mostly tradesmen and labourers. There were shoemakers, tailors, blacksmiths, and carpenters. They made everything from wagons to cradles. The farmers wanted to work their land the same way they worked it in Germany, but could not do so here in Russia. So they had to change their way of farming. The changeover caused them to lose lots of money for the mistakes they made. The people who came later were able to work better as they learned from the first group and therefore made fewer mistakes.

In 1819, prospects for a crop were excellent and their hopes were high. On June 29, the day of St. Peter and Paul, a severe hailstorm passed over the valley and destroyed everything in its path. Fruit trees, gardens, crops, and hay fields

were flattened. This was a great setback for the poor people of Rosenthal.

From 1820 - 1827 there were again good crops and the settlers prospered. In 1827/28 the locusts came and everything again that was green disappeared. There was no feed for the cattle so they had to be sold, and many of those that were held over

the winter died of starvation. In 1831 a terrible disease (like hoof and mouth) destroyed much of the stock and also claimed many settlers.

After this dilemma, the crops were better as they had more man power, horses and oxen. They also started building bigger and better homes and the government houses started to disappear one by one.

This high and well to do way of living made them turn away from their Christian faith. But the Lord knew how these people reacted and he brought them back to their senses by giving them 3 years of poor crops in 1845-46-47. This always seemed to bring them back to God, church and their Christian faith, realizing that all good things come from the Lord.

In 1823 Rosenthal built their own church and formed a parish. Up to that time the priest came from the principal town of Simferopol to say Sunday mass, perform weddings, baptisms, etc. On Feb.3 of the same year, the first parish priest came to Rosenthal, Fr. John Conrod Wieman. As there were more Catholics in Neusatz, he lived there first, then when the little church in Rosenthal was finished, he moved there. Fr. John Conrod Wieman was a good doctor and also a musician. The main church was built in 1869 and blessed on the 8<sup>th</sup> of September by Fr. Vincent Petraschowsky.

The following priests, councilors and teachers served:

1880 - Fr. Franz Scherer

1881 - Fr. Muench; mayor: George Krug; councilor: Peter Antoni. Fr. Muench was also secretary

1882 - 1883 - Fr. Miller; teacher: Christ Marthaller

1883 - 1886 - Fr. Scherer, priest; teacher: Christ. Marthaller

1885 population was 1,160. The mayor was Fredrich Reinhold; councilor: Ignatius Thomas; teacher: Erasmus Trenne; the church councilors were John Moser and Christ Mock.

1886 - 1891 - Fr. Joe Lorans; the mayor was Ignatius Bosch

1887 - the teacher was Mr. Schmidt

1891 - 1896 - Fr. Franz Scherer

1896 - 1901 - Fr. Ludwig Rissling. Here I made my first Holy Communion in Rosenthal. Mr. Schmidt was the teacher.

1901 - 1903 - Fr. John Fix; teacher: Mr. Schmidt  
1903 - 1905 - Fr. John Beilman  
1905 - 1909 - Fr. George Rissling  
1909 - 1911 - Fr. Johannes Schneider; teacher: Mr. Schmidt  
1905 - 1909 - our parish priest was George Rissling and my teacher was Joseph Reilander. In the morning we would have German lessons and in the afternoon he would teach us Russian.

Since the church was blessed, 19 resident priests served the parish. Fr. John Conrod Wieman was the first priest from 1823-1835, and Fr. Johannes Schneider was the last one from 1809-1911. When Grandfather's youngest son Joseph returned from the army in 1909, he was entitled to inherit the family farm. Therefore we moved 80verst out of Rosenthal, leaving the farm to Joseph who also looked after his parents, my grandparents Joseph and Marion Ries. Then in the year 1911, in the month of April, my family and I immigrated to Canada.

At that time there were 56 homes which were occupied by 65 families. There were 436 inhabitants. The overall size of the village and its farm land consisted of 1,381 dessjatines. From this amount, 337 dessjatines were farm land, 375 were pasture, 185 were hay land, and 254 were forest with 30 dessjatines being divided into lots for the yards and homes.

In 1842 a water driven grinding mill was built and an orchard was planted. The village had 800 inhabitants who were Roman Catholic. There was one church, one rectory, and one school where two teachers taught 108 children. The village and all its land consisted of 1422 dessjatines. The village bought another 1055 dessjatines. The settlers now owned 430 horses, 220 cows, 417 young cattle and oxen, and 224 pigs.

In Rosenthal there was one carpenter, four blacksmiths, and three mills. One mill was driven by water, one by wind (windmill), and the third by steam. There was one store and one wine cellar or wine outlet.