

**The German Catholics of St. Peter's Colony: 1903-1930**

A Thesis Submitted to the College of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Master of Arts in History

University of Saskatchewan

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## Abstract

The Canadian government, at the turn of the last century, encouraged immigration to Canada. Thousands of German-Catholic immigrants from the United States and Europe responded to the promotion campaign and settled in central Saskatchewan. They formed a religious unit, St. Peter's Colony, in conjunction with Benedictine monks, many of whom were of German-Catholic origin. The monks and colonists built churches and schools. Some of the schools were privately run church (parochial) schools. Catholic nuns taught in some of the public schools. The majority Anglo-Saxon Protestants looked on with suspicion at Peter's Colony. There was a fear that the German Catholics were resisting assimilation into the larger Anglo-Canadian culture. The German Catholics were accused of being disloyal when investigations concluded they were using schools to promote their religious faith and German language. The question of loyalty and how it was understood by the German Catholics of St. Peter's Colony has never been examined. The histories of communities and pioneers of the former colony focus on their particular topics of interest and do not take a comprehensive look at the common values and aspirations shared by the pioneers. This thesis examines the sense of loyalty and citizenship of the colonists by looking at three important aspects of the former colony. The thesis begins by examining the correspondence and decisions of Benedictines. Then the thesis analyzes community histories to determine how communities perceived themselves as belonging to a German-Catholic colony and country of Canada. Next, it reviews histories of the pioneer families to uncover their common values and aspirations. Finally, the thesis concludes that the colonists of St. Peter's Abbey were loyal citizens who expressed their values through their German-Catholic culture.

## Acknowledgements

A heartfelt thank you to Professor Colleen Fitzgerald for encouraging me to pursue my interest in history. Professor Fitzgerald, while serving as president of St. Peter's College, was an excellent role model as a teacher and leader. A special thank you to my supervisor, Professor Bill Waiser, for his constant encouragement and support. Professor Waiser was always available to answer questions. His humble presence made me feel at ease. An acknowledgement to Professors Walter Klaassen and Tom Deutscher for acting as my supervisory committee. Thanks to the Benedictine community of St. Peter's Abbey for sponsoring me in the history graduate studies program. A special thank you to Fr. Demetrius Wasylyniuk, OSB, Benedictine oblate Pat Whittaker, and my parents Ardel and Freda, for their constant support and encouragement.

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## Introduction

The Canadian government went on a vigorous advertising campaign at the beginning of the twentieth century to attract European immigrants to Canada.<sup>1</sup> Settlers who came to Saskatchewan were welcomed as future builders of the country. Among them were German Catholics who formed a German-Catholic colony, St. Peter's Colony, in central Saskatchewan. The colony was a religious jurisdiction in the Roman Catholic Church. It was similar to a Roman Catholic diocese, with the exception that the spiritual leader was a prior or abbot and not a bishop.<sup>2</sup> The colony became home to approximately 18,000 Roman Catholics by 1930.<sup>3</sup> The colonists lived in an area that stretched approximately fifty miles in an east-west direction and thirty miles in a north-south direction.<sup>4</sup> The city of Humboldt lies close to the centre of the former settlement.

The pioneers of St. Peter's Colony moved to a province where the majority of citizens were of an Anglo-Saxon Protestant background. Similar to other non-British ethnic groups, the German Catholics were encouraged to adopt the culture of the majority of the citizens. The elite of the province believed there would be greater unity in the province if immigrants became "Canadianized," or in other words, like the Anglo-Saxon Protestants. There was a fear among the Anglo-Saxon Protestants that people from non-British nations would destroy their culture.<sup>5</sup> As the province became increasingly multicultural, this fear materialized in the popular support of the Ku Klux Klan. The Klan came to Saskatchewan in the late 1920s. Klan organizers spoke of how immigrants were

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2006), 63-67.

<sup>2</sup> Jerome Weber, "St. Peter's Colony," in *A Journey of Faith: St. Peter's Abbacy: 1921-1996* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1996), 2.

<sup>3</sup> Michael Hepp, *The Legacy of St. Peter's Colony* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1998), 53.

<sup>4</sup> Weber, "St. Peter's Colony," in *A Journey of Faith: St. Peter's Abbacy: 1921-1996*, 2-7.

<sup>5</sup> Waiser, 244-246.

a threat to the British heritage. They blamed the Roman Catholic Church for many of the problems in society.<sup>6</sup>

The question of loyalty became a concern in the Anglo-Saxon Protestant community when separate schools opened in Saskatchewan. Separate schools were denounced as a threat to national unity. Criticism was aimed, in particular, at German-Catholic separate and parochial schools. German Catholics comprised the largest minority of the province's non-Anglo-Protestant community. It was believed that German-Catholic schools were being used to resist assimilation into the larger Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture.<sup>7</sup>

One of the targets of criticism was the school system of St. Peter's Colony that began in 1903. St. Peter's Colony was home to Saskatchewan's largest German-Catholic settlement and most of the province's German-Catholic schools. The Anglo-Protestant establishment was suspicious of the intentions of the colony and its Benedictine leadership. Many in the larger community worried that the loyalty of the colonists was directed towards the church leadership and not the country. Their anti-Catholicism was prevalent throughout Canada and reached back to the early days of confederation.<sup>8</sup> Protestants were suspicious of everything Catholic and accused them of holding their loyalty to a foreign pope. The Catholic Church was even blamed for playing a role in the Riel Rebellion in Saskatchewan.<sup>9</sup> Anglo-Saxon Protestants saw themselves as superior to Roman Catholic societies which, they believed, were less prosperous and more violent.

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 250.

<sup>7</sup> Clinton White, "Pre-World War I Saskatchewan German Catholic Thought Concerning the Perpetuation of their Language and Religion," (Regina: Campion College, University of Regina, 1994), 1.

<sup>8</sup> J.R. Miller, "Anti-Catholic Thought in Victorian Canada," *The Canadian Historical Review* (University of Toronto Press) article 13 on line, volume 66, number 4 (1985), 474.

<sup>9</sup> Miller, 475-480, 493.

They also believed the Catholic Church held to beliefs that had no foundation in the Bible.<sup>10</sup> The false beliefs of the church were blamed for social evils which justified Protestant militancy.<sup>11</sup> and explained why Protestants became unnerved over a Catholic prime minister or Catholic immigration in the mid-1800s.<sup>12</sup> The mistrust of Canadians of German descent intensified during the First World War when Canada went to war against Germany and Austria-Hungary. Canadians of German descent were identified as enemies of Canada and a threat to British society.<sup>13</sup>

School inspectors would occasionally pass through the colony. One of the school inspectors, James Anderson, wrote that the majority of the colony's private schools were being used to propagate the German language and Catholic religion. Anderson had credibility; he later became a premier of the province. He was not alone in his findings. Reports by other inspectors echoed these sentiments.<sup>14</sup> Among the most vocal opponents of the separate schools was Rev. E.H. Oliver, principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. He was both a University of Saskatchewan historian and a prominent figure in the Better Schools Movement. He suggested that the schools were promoting German nationalism. Oliver used the media to voice his opposition to separate schools.<sup>15</sup>

The concern over loyalty raises questions about the people of St. Peter's Colony: Who were they? Where did they come from? What were their values and aspirations? What attitudes did they have about Saskatchewan and Canada? These questions and

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 484.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 490-494.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 476-477.

<sup>13</sup> Waiser, 193-194.

<sup>14</sup> White, 19-21.

<sup>15</sup> White, "The German Catholic Parochial Schools of Saskatchewan's St. Peter's Colony, 1903-1934: Their Teachers, Curriculum and Quality of Instruction," (Regina: Campion College, University of Regina, 1995), 29.



others will be addressed in the thesis covering the first thirty years of St. Peter's Colony: 1903-1930. The goal of the thesis is to give an objective presentation of the viewpoints held by pioneers in the former St. Peter's Colony. It will analyze their expressions of German-Catholic traditions and explore whether they were a threat to sovereignty in Canada.

The thesis will accomplish this aim by examining decisions made by pioneers about education, religion, nationality and citizenship. It will look, as well, at their attitudes towards family, community life and non-German ethnic groups within the colony. Insight into the goals and aspirations of these pioneers will be uncovered through their stories, and their approaches to issues of the day. The narratives of the German Catholics will be compared and contrasted with the perceptions of German nationalism and disloyalty held by the Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. The views of the German Catholics will be examined from the inside of the colony to counterbalance past studies which have examined the colony from the outside. The research methodology will focus on the three genres of the former colony, the Benedictines, communities and families. Each genre will become the subject of a chapter in the thesis. Important sources for the research are: personal files of Benedictines, records of organizations in the former colony, research papers on the school system of St. Peter's Colony, and community and family histories. Primary and secondary sources are being used, as well, that help give further insight into these genres.

The first chapter, "Benedictines: Promoting Faith and Loyalty," will study the Benedictine leadership and how it perceived itself in both the colony and country. An analysis will be undertaken of the leadership's promotion of German-Catholic traditions,

and interaction with the colonists and larger Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture. Insight into this study will be gained by looking at the approaches of the Benedictines to issues of the day. The second chapter, “Building Community and Country,” will study the communities of St. Peter’s Colony and how they perceived themselves as belonging to both a German-Catholic colony and the larger country of Canada. The third chapter, “Loyalty: A Natural Aspiration of Pioneers,” will review the stories of the pioneers of St. Peter’s Colony to uncover their common values and aspirations. A comparison will be made between the stories of the German Catholics and non-German Catholics to determine their differences and similarities.

Some important original sources in the first chapter, “Benedictines: Promoting Faith and Loyalty,” will come from the correspondence of the Benedictine leadership. All of the Benedictine priors and abbots wrote letters and circulars to their priests and/or parishioners expressing opinions on social, educational and moral issues. Sometimes the letters were read at Mass, while others were published in newspapers or sent to households. The Catholics were urged to follow the advice of their prior or abbot. Another important original source is the letters written by the Benedictine leadership to civil servants and government representatives.

The personal letters of the first colony leader Prior Alfred Mayer will be used as an original source to shed light on the reasons for the Benedictines coming to Canada. During his term as prior, Mayer wrote eighty letters to his superior Abbot Peter Engel of St. John’s Abbey in Collegeville, Minnesota. He wrote another ten letters to other Benedictine priests and abbots. Mayer was the person largely responsible for bringing the

Benedictines to Saskatchewan. His letters reveal the decision of the Benedictines to come to Canada was based largely on circumstances.

The Benedictines had lived in a priory named Cluny, situated in southern Illinois. The priory was founded by St. Vincent Archabbey in Latrobe, Pennsylvania.<sup>16</sup> The priory was forced to close when the Benedictines failed to make a living there. The community decided to remain together rather than disband and join other monastic communities. The monks began a search for a new home in the United States where they could operate a college.<sup>17</sup> Engel invited them to move to the North-West Territories, in what is now Saskatchewan, where there was a need for priests to serve German-Catholic settlers.<sup>18</sup> A Catholic Settlement society, led by some Roman Catholics, was promoting a German-Catholic colony.<sup>19</sup>

The letters disclose Mayer as someone who was passionate about his work. He was an astute and conscientious administrator. Mayer was a person who believed in good management. He embraced the Benedictine tradition in North America of working with German Catholics and the larger community around. The letters reveal, further, that the primary issue facing the early Benedictine leadership was a conflict with the Benedictine community of St. Vincent Archabbey. The archabbey claimed rights to some of the money from the sale of Cluny property. Mayer argued that he needed the money to begin a new foundation in Canada.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Joel Rippinger, OSB, *The Benedictine Order in the United States: An Interpretive History* (Collegeville, Minnesota, Order of St. Benedict, 1990), 214.

<sup>17</sup> *Saint Peter's Abbey Archives (SPAA)*, Prior Alfred Mayer file, in "Letters of Mayer," Alfred Mayer, July 10, 1901 letter to Abbot Peter Engel.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1902 letter of Mayer to Windschiegel.

<sup>19</sup> Colleen Fitzgerald, *Begin a Good Work: A History of St. Peter's Abbey, 1903-2003* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 2003), 28-30.

<sup>20</sup> "Letters of Mayer," Mayer, August 13, 1903 letter to Engel.

The second leader of the colony, Bruno Doerfler, wrote 127 letters to his former superior, Engel, while serving as leader of the colony. His letters will be used as an important original source for the thesis. The letters portray Doerfler as a man who was pastoral and concerned about the well-being of the people of St. Peter's Colony. They contain information about issues facing farmers, whether it was poor crops or crop prices, the inefficient grain transportation system or the difficulty of getting credit. There is information on the personal hardships faced by pioneers such as sickness and accidents. The primary issue facing Doerfler as leader was finances. The monks were always in need of funds for building, repairing and purchasing needed farm implements. Doerfler became an expert at borrowing and begging for money.

The issue of separate schools and teaching the German language in schools became a concern of Doerfler during his leadership. The Benedictines were accused of using their schools to promote German nationalism and the Catholic faith. In response, he issued a personal circular in 1916 defending the rights of separate schools. He insisted that the German Catholics were loyal Canadian citizens. He defended the German language as a part of their heritage. The circular contains five reproductions of letters sent to the *Saskatoon Daily Star* and *Saskatoon Phoenix*. They address the accusations of Professor Oliver against the private schools of the Humboldt district. One letter was written in response to an editorial in the *Saskatoon Daily Star* on the issue of German Schools of the Humboldt district. Doerfler answered the accusations of Oliver and presented his own facts on the issue.<sup>21</sup>

The position of Doerfler on the question of private (parochial or parish) schools was expressed in a letter to his former superior, Engel of St. John's Abbey. Doerfler

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<sup>21</sup> SPAA, Abbot Bruno Doerfler file, "German Schools in the Humboldt District," January 1916 circular.

informed Engel he was determined to enlighten everyone about his point of view. Copies of his circular were given to provincial government representatives and to ministers of other Christian denominations.<sup>22</sup> Doerfler, in his writings, appeared to be incensed, not only for being attacked with false allegations, but for not being accepted as an equal by the larger Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture.

The issue became a concern of Doerfler again in 1919 when he became aware of a campaign to permit only English as the language of instruction in public schools. A proposal, Doerfler said, was made to the province to allow only French as the other language of instruction. Doerfler blamed the Orangemen for the campaign to promote English. The Orangemen, he believed, were anti-Catholic and wanted to attack the Catholic Church indirectly by ridding it of the German and French languages. He did not express any anger towards politicians, the Anglo-Saxon Protestant culture or country. His only fear was that the politicians would bow to the wishes of the Orangemen.<sup>23</sup>

In addition to correspondence of the Benedictine leadership, original sources of information will come from school trustees of a parochial school in the colony. The trustees were forced by the province to resign to pave the way for a public school in the community of Bruno. The trustees made it clear they were not opposed to public schools. They were aware that they would not be able to financially support a parochial school should they be forced to pay their taxes to a public school.<sup>24</sup> Letters from Premier Walter Scott and the commissioner of education explained how educational policies affected

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<sup>22</sup> Abbot Bruno Doerfler file, in "Letters of Doerfler," January 23, 1916 letter of Doerfler to Abbot Peter Engel of St. John's Abbey.

<sup>23</sup> Doerfler, January 26, 1919 letter to Engel.

<sup>24</sup> SPAA, Bruno Parochial School file, in "Letters on School Issues," Joseph Ehrmantraut, trustee of Bruno Parochial School, September 29, 1909 letter to Premier Walter Scott.

local decisions on education.<sup>25</sup> Benedictine attitudes on education and loyalty are expressed further by Abbot Jerome Weber, OSB, in a report on separate schools,<sup>26</sup> and by a Catholic priest to his parishioners in a letter on Catholic traditions and Canadian citizenship.<sup>27</sup>

Community history books from sixteen communities in the former colony are being used as the primary original source for the second chapter, “Building Community and Country.” The volumes disclose that the majority of the citizens in St. Peter’s Colony were of German-Catholic background. However, there were representations of other ethnic groups and denominations in the colony. The German Catholics formed a majority in nine communities that produced history books. Anglo-Saxon Protestants formed a majority in four communities, while Lutheran Germans were a majority in one. Roman and Ukrainian Catholics were a majority in two communities that produced a history book together. German Catholics were a minority in these communities. The histories of neighbouring municipalities are included in all the history books.

The first three history books in the former colony were written in the 1950s. The fourth was written in the mid-1970s. All of these were later replaced by updated histories. Most of the history books were written in the 1980s; one was written in the 1990s. Three communities produced newer histories after the year 2000.

The third chapter, “Loyalty: A Natural Aspiration of Pioneers,” will analyze the stories of the families which submitted histories in the fifteen history books. Similar to the community histories, the family histories disclose that the majority of pioneers of St.

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<sup>25</sup> SPAA, Bruno Parochial School, “Letters on School Issues,” Walter Scott, October 19, 1909 letter to Bruno Parochial School trustee Joseph Ehrmantraut.

<sup>26</sup> SPAA, Abbot Jerome Weber file, “School Issues,” Report on Separate Schools, 1951.

<sup>27</sup> SPAA, Chrysostom Hoffmann file, in “Letters to Parishioners,” Chrysostom Hoffmann letter to parishioners.

Peter's Colony had a German-Catholic background. Approximately sixty percent of the 3,000 families which submitted histories resided in communities where German Catholics were the majority. They recalled the past from the perspective of either children or adults.

A large percentage of German Catholics were second-generation German Catholics from the United States. The largest group emigrated from the state of Minnesota. Large numbers came from North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin, as well. There were some German Catholics who came from Germany and German settlements in Russia. The remaining settlers came from diverse backgrounds that originated throughout the United States, Canada and Europe.

A large number of Scandinavians, particularly Norwegians, settled in the eastern section of the colony. The second largest Scandinavian group to settle there came from Sweden. Many immigrants from the Ukraine settled in the south-western corner of the colony. Settlers from England, Scotland, Russia, Austria and France were also represented.

Included in the research on family histories are another fourteen family histories, taken from family history books. Thirteen of the histories are from families of a German-Catholic background. One family is of an Austrian-Catholic background. Twelve families came from the United States and two emigrated from Europe. Another five family histories are being used that were taken from a scrapbook composed of interviews from five pioneers with a German-Catholic background. The interviews were carried out in 1955 by students of a school in the former colony. All of the pioneers who were interviewed emigrated from the United States.

The notebooks of the Marysburg Drama Society<sup>28</sup> and Leofeld German Canadian Folk Group<sup>29</sup> will be used as important original sources. The Marysburg Drama Society recorded activities of the organization in 1923-24, listing among other things, debates of the society on important issues of the day. The Leofeld German Canadian Folk Group recorded activities of the organization from 1909 to 1930. A notebook from the community of Bruno outlines the founding of a temperance society.<sup>30</sup> Another notebook from the parish of St. Scholastica near the hamlet of Burr records the beginnings of a Funeral Aid Society.<sup>31</sup> The diary of a missionary Benedictine priest is being used as an original source, as well.<sup>32</sup> Pioneer George Gerwing of Lake Lenore wrote a letter in 1928 expressing his feelings about his first perceptions of his adopted home of Canada.<sup>33</sup> All these original sources express the values of early pioneers. The earliest history book published for Muenster in 1973 has a unique contribution. It documents the thoughts of pioneers on changes that have taken place since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>34</sup> The opinions of the pioneers on the present and future shed light on how they saw the past.

An important source of information will be the research of Clinton White, professor emeritus (history), Campion College, University of Regina. He has written five articles concerning education in the first thirty years of the former St. Peter's Colony.

They give an in-depth analysis of the decisions made by pioneers on education. One

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<sup>28</sup> SPAA, Organizations of St. Peter's Colony file, Marysburg Dramatic and Literary Society Minutes of 1923-1924.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, Leofeld German Canadian Folk Group (translated by Elly Saxinger and Dorothy and Oscar Renneberg from the original minute book of 1909 to 1930).

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, St. Bruno's Anti-Treating League for Western Canada (Temperance Society formed in 1914).

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, Funeral Aid Society of the parish of St. Scholastica, 1922.

<sup>32</sup> Chrysostom Hoffmann file, Hoffmann diary, May 1903 to May 19 of 1905; May 12, 1905 to July 7, 1907; July 23, 1907 to August 16, 1911.

<sup>33</sup> SPAA, Abbot Severin Gertken file, in "Letters of Gertken," George Gerwing letter.

<sup>34</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, *Memories of Muenster's 70 Progressive Years: 1903-1973* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1973).



essay examines the German-Catholic parochial schools, their buildings, equipment and finances. Another looks at the teachers, their background and qualifications. It covers the curriculum and highlights some differences between classes in public and parochial schools. Three essays explore the political and religious attitudes of German Catholics in St. Peter's Colony. In his research, White discusses the reasons behind the choices of pioneers to build either parochial, public or separate schools.<sup>35</sup>

The attitudes of Anglo-Canadians will be explored in *Saskatchewan: A New History*, by historian Bill Waiser;<sup>36</sup> *The Canadian Prairies: A History*, by historian Gerald Friesen;<sup>37</sup> *Enemy Aliens, Prisoners of War: Internment in Canada During the Great War*, by historian Bohdan Kordan;<sup>38</sup> and *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario*, by historian Chad Gaffield.<sup>39</sup>

These sources of information disclose how the attitudes of the Anglo-Canadian culture shaped their perceptions of the colony. The sources, though essential, are limited by their research on the important issues of patriotism, education and language; the examination of these issues is from a vantage point outside the colony. Very little research has been carried out on the beliefs and values of colonists on these themes from

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<sup>35</sup> Clinton White, "A 1905 German American Catholic Plan for Primary Education in the Northwest Territories," (Regina: Campion College, University of Regina, 1990); "Pre-World War I Saskatchewan German Catholic Thought Concerning the Perpetuation of their Language and Religion" (1994); "The German Catholic Parochial Schools of Saskatchewan's St. Peter's Colony, 1903-1934: Their Teachers, Curriculum and Quality of Instruction," (1995); "German Catholic Parochial Schools in St. Peter's Colony: Their Buildings, Equipment and Finances," (1995); "Language, Religion, Schools and Politics Among Catholic Settlers of German-American Background in St. Peter's Colony, Saskatchewan, 1903-1916," (1978).

<sup>36</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2006).

<sup>37</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984).

<sup>38</sup> Bohdan S. Kordan, *Enemy Aliens, Prisoners of War: Internment in Canada During the Great War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002).

<sup>39</sup> Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1987).

within the colony. Past studies were also influenced by cultural prejudices, in the case of E.H. Oliver, and by the limitations of historical research methods. The thesis will counterbalance the outside studies by going within the colony and conducting a comprehensive review of the values of pioneers pertaining to patriotism, language and education. The studies of White came closest to presenting the points of view of colonists on issues regarding education and language. The thesis will give a critical analytical perspective (narrative) to White's research that was based solely on statistics and charts.

As a Benedictine monk and monastic historian at St. Peter's Abbey, I have been fascinated by the stories, published and unpublished, of our early pioneers. A thesis that integrates the histories of the first thirty years of St. Peter's Colony has yet to be written. It is my wish to write a thesis that tells the stories of these first pioneers to reveal how they perceived themselves and how they expressed their values. Their points of view will be measured against the attitudes of those in the Anglo-Protestant culture who were suspicious of them.

## Chapter One Benedictines: Promoting Faith and Loyalty

The Order of St. Benedict is a religious organization of the Roman Catholic Church whose members, Benedictines, live in monasteries. Benedictines follow a constitution known as the Rule of St. Benedict that provides guidelines for their spiritual and temporal governance under a superior known as an abbot. The work of Benedictines is multifaceted and is influenced by the location of monasteries and the needs of surrounding communities. Missionary work is a part of the tradition of Benedictines who have a history of serving neighbouring parishes and schools.<sup>1</sup>

The Benedictines of St. Peter's Colony invested much of their energy in missionary work. Their missionary zeal was a characteristic of the Benedictines in North America who have a tradition of doing missionary work by serving German-Catholic settlers with priests and teachers.<sup>2</sup> Boniface Wimmer, OSB, the first Benedictine abbot in North America, believed monasteries were good bases for priests to serve parishes and schools in a frontier land, and provide stability for priests as they did in medieval Europe.<sup>3</sup> Wimmer, a German of Bavarian descent, expressed pride in the United States, his adopted country. He encouraged German-speaking students to learn English. Only ten years after establishing the first monastery, St. Vincent Archabbey, in Pennsylvania in 1846, Wimmer began to build other monastic foundations across the country.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Leodegar Hunkeler, OSB, trans. by Luke Eberle, OSB, *It Began With Benedict: The Benedictines: Their Background, Founder, History, Life, Contributions to Church and World* (St. Benedict, Oregon: Mount Angel Abbey, 1978), 17-27, 39.

<sup>2</sup> Joel Rippinger, OSB, *The Benedictine Order in the United States: An Interpretive History* (Collegeville, Minnesota: Order of St. Benedict, 1990), 23, 43, 116.

<sup>3</sup> Peter King, *Western Monasticism: A History of the Monastic Movement in the Latin Church* (Spencer, Massachusetts, 1999), 363-366.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 366-368.

The Benedictines transplanted their traditions to Canada in 1903 when monks from Minnesota and Illinois came to St. Peter's Colony. They moved to Canada in response to requests for priests by German Catholics who had immigrated to Canada from Minnesota. The immigrants were familiar with St. John's Abbey, Minnesota, which supplied their former parishes with German-speaking priests. Abbot Peter Engel, OSB, of St. John's sent one of his monks, Bruno Doerfler, OSB, on an excursion to Western Canada to ascertain whether suitable farmland could be found to settle a large number of German Catholics together in a block settlement.<sup>5</sup> The Benedictines in Germany had a tradition of serving Catholic communities from monasteries.<sup>6</sup> Engel promoted that tradition in Canada with a vision of a monastery serving as the centre of a German-Catholic settlement he described as a colony.<sup>7</sup>

Doerfler's first impression of Canada was the friendliness of Canadians. While riding on a train from Winnipeg he wrote, "Nearly all the passengers observed a dignified silence, quite a contrast to what one notices on trains in the United States."<sup>8</sup> The friendliness of Canadians was matched with a warm reception by Immigration officials at Winnipeg, even to the point of appointing a guide to help Doerfler on his travels across Saskatchewan and Alberta to find suitable farmland for a colony. The Immigration officials even suggested that a good location might be near Rosthern, Saskatchewan.<sup>9</sup> The recommendation turned out to be good advice. Doerfler travelled across southern

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<sup>5</sup> Peter Windschiegel, OSB, *Fifty Golden Years: 1903-1953* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1953), 7-9.

<sup>6</sup> King, 364.

<sup>7</sup> Windschiegel, 7.

<sup>8</sup> Jerome Weber, OSB, the reprint of the memoirs of Fr. Bruno Doerfler, in *Quest for a New Homeland: the founding of St. Peter's Colony in Saskatchewan* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1988), 11.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 8-9.

Saskatchewan and Alberta in search of good farmland, and found the most ideal location to be about forty-five miles south of Rosthern.<sup>10</sup>

Thirteen years later when St. Peter's Colony was firmly established and thriving, Doerfler, the spiritual leader, learned that not everyone in Canada was as welcoming to German Catholics as the Immigration officials in Winnipeg. Prominent people in Saskatchewan voiced opposition to separate and private schools and lobbied the provincial government to close them. Some of these critics accused the St. Peter's Colony school system of offering substandard education and promoting Roman Catholicism and German nationalism.<sup>11</sup>

The first leader of the Benedictines at St. Peter's Abbey was Alfred Mayer, who came to Canada in May 1903 with seven Benedictines from a priory in the United States.<sup>12</sup> Mayer wrote eighty letters to Engel, his religious superior, and they disclose Mayer to be someone who was passionate about his work and also an astute and diligent administrator. He was a person who believed in good management and was conscientious about working with others, especially superiors.<sup>13</sup>

Mayer's leadership began in a small monastery called Cluny Priory in southern Illinois, founded in 1892 by St. Vincent Archabbey.<sup>14</sup> Mayer was appointed prior for a five-year term in July 1901. Soon after arriving in Cluny, Mayer concluded that the priory was not financially viable and should close.<sup>15</sup> He corresponded with bishops across the United States about the possibility of opening a priory and college in their

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<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 92-96.

<sup>11</sup> *Saint Peter's Abbey Archives (SPAA)*, Abbot Bruno Doerfler file, "Letters of Doerfler," Bruno Doerfler, "German Schools in the Humboldt District," January 1916 circular.

<sup>12</sup> Windschiegel, "Prior Alfred – First Prior," 11-15.

<sup>13</sup> *SPAA*, Prior Alfred Mayer file, "Letters of Mayer."

<sup>14</sup> Ripinger, 214.

<sup>15</sup> Windschiegel, 11.

dioceses. Among them were bishops responsible for Long Island, New York,<sup>16</sup> Belleville and East St. Louis, Illinois,<sup>17</sup> Lincoln, Nebraska,<sup>18</sup> Pueblo, Colorado,<sup>19</sup> and Idaho.<sup>20</sup> Most of the bishops informed Mayer they were not interested in having Benedictines in their dioceses. Some bishops were open to Benedictines, but Mayer concluded the monks would be unable to make a living in their dioceses.<sup>21</sup>

While Mayer was looking for a new home, Doerfler was on a tour of western Canada to find good farming land for a monastery and other German-Catholic settlers.<sup>22</sup> Engel and the community of St. John's agreed to provide Benedictine priests for settlers willing to live in a colony and invited Mayer and the monks of Cluny to relocate to western Canada. The monks of Cluny accepted the offer and decided to call their new priory St. Peter's Priory, in honour of Abbot Peter Engel. Meanwhile, a Catholic Settlement Society (CSS) formed in St. Paul, Minnesota to assist settlers moving to the colony.<sup>23</sup> The leader of the CSS, Joseph Lange, had previously attempted to find a block of land in Minnesota to settle people of German descent. The CSS helped German Catholics find homesteads in St. Peter's Colony in 1903 and 1904.<sup>24</sup>

The Canadian government, wanting to develop agriculture in western Canada, agreed to reserve fifty townships for the Benedictines and German-Catholic settlers. The Benedictines, in turn, were required to place 500 settlers on homesteads each year for

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<sup>16</sup> "Letters of Mayer," July 10, 1901 letter of Mayer to Abbot Peter Engel.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, September 20, 1901 letter of Mayer to Engel.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, August 15, 1901 letter to Engel.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, August 23, 1902 letter to Windschiegel.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, December 5, 1902 letter to Windschiegel.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1902 letter to Windschiegel.

<sup>22</sup> Colleen Fitzgerald, *Begin a Good Work: A History of St. Peter's Abbey, 1903-2003* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 2003), 26-28.

<sup>23</sup> Windschiegel, 9-13.

<sup>24</sup> Oblate Priests of St. Joseph Colony, trans. by Lambert and Tillie Schneider, *St. Joseph's Colony: 1905-1930* (Winnipeg: St. Paul's College, 1930), 21-22.

three years.<sup>25</sup> Three businessmen, Maurice Hoeschen, Henry Hoeschen and Henry Haskamp, who accompanied Doerfler on the trek to found a colony, formed the German American Land Company. The company purchased 108,000 acres of land in the colony from the North Saskatchewan Land Company and re-sold the land to settlers.<sup>26</sup>

In January 1903, Doerfler escorted Mayer to the future home of the German-Catholic colony of St. Peter's. They met with Bishop Albert Pascal, OMI, in Prince Albert, who was the Roman Catholic spiritual leader in what would become Saskatchewan. The Benedictines requested permission to found a monastery in his diocese, and Bishop Pascal agreed to their request. He drafted a document soliciting the Vatican to allow the Benedictines to serve in a territory covering fifty townships. The document was ratified by Pope Pius X in September 1903. Approximately 700 homesteads were filed by German Catholics during 1903 in what was to become St. Peter's Colony.<sup>27</sup>

Under the federal homestead system, male settlers eighteen years and older, could secure a homestead of 160 acres for the sum of \$10. An official patent to the homestead could be awarded if the settlers lived on it for six months of each year for three years and brought thirty acres under cultivation.<sup>28</sup> Prior Mayer, in 1904, negotiated a homestead arrangement that enabled monks to each take out a homestead and live in the monastery.<sup>29</sup> By 1911, the monks had made claims to twenty quarters of land.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Fitzgerald, 28-30.

<sup>26</sup> Weber, "St. Peter's Abbey:1903-1921," in *Quest for a New Homeland*, 111; and Fitzgerald, 26.

<sup>27</sup> Windschiegel, 13.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Fitzgerald, 43.

<sup>30</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," March 30, 1911 letter of Doerfler to Engel.

The optimism of finding a new priory was broadsided by St. Vincent Archabbot Leander Schnerr when he informed Mayer that any proceeds for the sale of the former Cluny settlement would remain in the United States. The archabbey wanted to be reimbursed for its investments in the priory.<sup>31</sup> The news came as a shock to Mayer who had planned to use the capital from the sale towards building the new priory in Canada. He was worried that he would not have enough money to purchase needed supplies for the new home.<sup>32</sup> In response to the claim by St. Vincent, Mayer wrote that it was contrary to the spirit of its founder, Boniface Wimmer, who had purchased the first 180 acres for Cluny in 1881: “To claim reimbursement for money advanced or assistance rendered for the establishment of a new community is contrary to the decrees of the general chapter of our congregation.”<sup>33</sup>

Meanwhile, the church leadership of St. Joseph’s parish that had been served by the Benedictines made another claim on Cluny land. The church trustees claimed that twelve acres of land managed by the monks had been donated by a former parishioner. Mayer responded that there was no proof of this donation.<sup>34</sup> Engel encouraged Mayer to give the twelve acres to the parish: “It will certainly create a good impression, whilst on the other hand your refusal might, and no doubt will, cause talk about the greedy monks, if not worse.”<sup>35</sup>

The new priory in Canada, St. Peter’s Priory, was ordered by a tribunal to reimburse St. Vincent Archabbey in the amount of \$5,100. The priory was ordered to pay

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<sup>31</sup> “Letters of Mayer,” November 12, 1902 letter of Leander Schnerr, archabbot of St. Vincent Archabbey to Mayer.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, Mayer August 13, 1903 letter to Engel.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1, 1904 letter to Engel.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, February 2, 1905 and March 31, 1905 letters to Engel and leadership of the American Cassinese Congregation.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, Peter Engel, April 20, 1905 letter to Mayer.



an additional \$500 to a family of a deceased monk who had lived at the priory and who had donated \$1,800 on the condition that if the priory closed, surviving members of the family were to receive \$500.<sup>36</sup> The clash with St. Vincent caused Mayer to question his title to the new foundation of St. Peter's Priory. He asked Engel if the monastic community of St. John's would make any claims against property owned by St. Peter's.<sup>37</sup> Engel said that St. John's had no claims over any property of St. Peter's Priory.<sup>38</sup> There is no record of any funds being paid to St. Peter's Priory from the sale of Cluny while Mayer served as prior until his term ended in 1906. Mayer was informed that the Cluny farm was being sold,<sup>39</sup> but was not told what transpired from the sale.<sup>40</sup>

The Benedictines of St. Peter's Priory soon faced another challenge, this time from settlers who had moved into St. Peter's Colony. Some settlers accused the Benedictines of misleading them about the colony. They said they had read advertisements that promised more amenities and much better living conditions. Mayer wrote a strongly-worded letter to the German-Catholic newspaper, *Ohio Waisenfreund*, defending the Benedictines against the accusations. He said the Benedictines were responsible for the spiritual care of the colony and that they were not involved in any advertisements about the colony, business transactions of land companies or the Catholic Settlement Society (CSS). He was aware of the struggles of the settlers because he had visited many:

That several land-seekers here this spring lost their enthusiasm, is not to be astounded at. They arrived here after a long and burdensome wearying trip. Many came here early, when the weather was still raw and the snow covered the land. They then made, as soon as circumstances permitted, a trip through the colony of some 50, 75 or 100 miles, through new and non-settled regions, without roads, over creeks and through

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<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*, Engel, October 28, 1905 letter to Mayer.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, Mayer, February 14, 1906 letter to Engel.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, Engel, February 25, 1906 letter to Mayer.

<sup>39</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Mayer, August 8, 1906 letter to Doerfler.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, September 1, 1906 letter to Doerfler.

sloughs. ... At times they got stuck with their wagons in creeks or sloughs. ... We can speak from our own experience, since we ourselves endured a tour of 75 miles in the colony in bad weather. In a new settlement one must, however, expect such toils, labours. Whoever, therefore, has the drive, the willingness to sacrifice (make sacrifices), and the endurance, will eventually reach his goal. Some of these qualities, however, were lacking in the new arrivals, and for that reason they returned back home. Some could hardly imagine how things are in a new territory. They believed at their arrival that here everything would already be prepared, and the fried pigeons would come flying to them. 'Where then are the churches and schools, the hotels and stores, which should be already prepared for us,' one shouted out as he arrived at Rosthern? 'Where is the monastery?' As one tried to explain that this is all planned for the future, he retorted angrily (in rage), 'Everything is humbug and cheating, the CSS and the Fathers have lied to us and deceived us.' ... Many homesteaders were also demanding and choosy. While they paid the puny sum of \$15 to the society for the choice of a homestead, they figured that they should get one without failures or anything defective.<sup>41</sup>

Later that same year, though, Mayer did an about-face and praised the settlers in a letter to J.W. Gurriff, commissioner of Dominion Lands, Ottawa. He asked Gurriff to grant him a three-month extension in registering homesteaders. There was still some land that had been surveyed and not yet claimed, and Mayer wanted to register the land for German-Catholic settlers. He informed the commissioner the Benedictines were in charge of the spiritual interests of the German American Land Company. He praised the German Catholics for their work ethic and contributions they were able to make to the country. "The class of farmers we bring into Canada, I can say with truth, are unsurpassed in the northwest for their thrift and practical knowledge of farming under existing circumstances," Mayer wrote. "The great majority of them are well-fixed and a number of them bring along with them considerable wealth."<sup>42</sup> The commissioner declined the request:

In reply I would say that the concession granted to your company last year caused a great deal of trouble and dissatisfaction, and as it is contrary to the Department to make reservations or to grant special consideration to any particular class of settlers, it is not considered advisable to depart from the usual practice of having the homestead lands available for the first applicant. We will be very glad to render any assistance in our power in securing good homesteads for your settlers, but they can only be placed on the same footing as other people.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> "Letters of Mayer," translation of a June 16, 1903 letter by Mayer to the *Ohio Waisenfreund*, published July 1, 1903.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, Mayer, November 7, 1903 letter to J.W. Gurriff, commissioner Dominion Lands, Ottawa.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, Gurriff, November 13, 1903 letter to Mayer.

The decision was a disappointment to Mayer who wanted to strengthen the colony with more German-Catholic settlers. Ironically, he already faced a shortage of priests to serve new settlers. He asked his superior, Engel, to allow Doerfler to remain in the colony later than the agreed-upon date of October. Doerfler worked well with people and could be of great help to settlers in Rosthern “who have the ‘blues’ when they come into this new and primitive country.”<sup>44</sup>

In spite of the hardships, Mayer was optimistic about the future. “All seems to be well satisfied with our location and our land. I think we have here a beautiful country.”<sup>45</sup> He glossed over the dissatisfaction and anger of some and wrote further, “Every newcomer seems to be charmed with the country.”<sup>46</sup> The settlers informed Doerfler they wanted a German-Catholic newspaper and that encouraged the Benedictines to begin publishing a Catholic newspaper. The Benedictines were determined to help the settlers in any way possible, to meet the spiritual needs of colonists, in spite of having a shortage of priests.<sup>47</sup> They published the first copy of the newspaper, *St. Peter’s Bote*, in 1904 “to enlighten and instruct the people.” The monks made applications to open four post offices and selected sites for schools as the settlers had expressed an interest in having schools opened as soon as possible.<sup>48</sup>

The major obstacle to many of these developments in the colony, however, remained money. In March 1905, Mayer confided to Engel:

There is almost more and more less money (sic) amongst the people, as they gradually expend the money they have brought along and take none or very little in. ... If I can dispose of our Cluny farm, I will be able to help myself, but at present I have nothing but debts. It is also difficult to borrow money here from any

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<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, Mayer, July 30, 1903 letter to Engel.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, May 27, 1903 letter to Windschiegel.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, November 6, 1903 letter to Engel.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, August 31, 1903 letter to Engel.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, August 13, 1903 letter to Engel.

banks, as only one in Rosthern loans out any money, and then only on collateral security, demanding from 20 to 30 signatures.<sup>49</sup>

The Diocese of Prince Albert was unable to help the Benedictines financially, although it gave them moral support. Bishop Pascal said he wanted the Benedictines to succeed in their work and offered to help them in any way he could.<sup>50</sup> The priory grew by one member when an application was made from a priest, Chrysostom Hoffmann, OSB, from St. Anselm Abbey in Manchester, New Hampshire, to join them. Mayer advised Hoffmann: “If you have only a good and earnest will, you could make yourself useful in Canada. A large field of labour is therein opened for us.”<sup>51</sup>

The five-year term of Mayer as prior came to an end in April 1906. An election was held by the priory to either re-elect Mayer or choose a successor. Doerfler was chosen as the new prior, but he was unable to fill his new role until it was ratified by Pope Pius X. Doerfler became increasingly impatient as he waited for ratification. He complained that all building projects were halted by Mayer who was still in charge but expending his energy preparing to leave the priory. “The impotency is giving rise to some absurd rumours,” Doerfler wrote to Engel, “the most dangerous of which is that the monastery is breaking up. Some evil-minded persons in the parish are spreading these rumours with an assiduity worthy of a better cause.”<sup>52</sup> There was some disappointment, both inside and outside the monastic community, over the rejection of Mayer as prior. Fortunately for Doerfler, the monastery continued to remain intact and its membership remained constant at sixteen monks throughout his term as prior. In 1911 the priory

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<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, May 25, 1905 letter to Engel.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, Albert Pascal of Prince Albert, November 4, 1903 letter to Mayer.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, Mayer, March 31, 1903 letter to Hoffmann.

<sup>52</sup> “Letters of Doerfler,” Doerfler, May 27, 1906 letter to Engel.

became an independent abbey. Doerfler, as head of the abbey, became its first abbot. Between 1911 and 1930 the abbey grew in membership from sixteen to forty-four.<sup>53</sup>

As it had been for Mayer, the issue of finances dogged Doerfler during his term as prior and then as abbot. Money was always in short supply and there was a constant demand for it. The monks were always in need of funds for building, repairing and purchasing needed farm implements. Doerfler became an expert at borrowing and begging for money from St. John's Abbey, local banks or colonists. While serving as prior and then abbot, Doerfler, in most of his correspondence, either thanked Engel for loans of money or requested a loan. His primary concern during his leadership years was building the infrastructure of the colony and paying off debts. This goal began to come to fruition in 1911 when the Benedictines claimed ownership of 3,200 acres or twenty quarter sections of land. Each quarter section was worth close to \$3,000 at that time.<sup>54</sup>

Taking ownership of the land was a major accomplishment for the Benedictines who almost lost it to claims by other settlers. Three years after arriving in the colony, other settlers near the Benedictines began contesting the Benedictine homesteads. Confusion over the ownership of land came from a homestead inspector who told people that the Benedictines had lost title to their land. Doerfler travelled to Regina in 1906 to prove the monks had a legal right to live in the community and claim homesteads. He won his argument, though the monks later received notice to seed more land to crops or lose it, so they hired some men to help them open more land.<sup>55</sup> Rumours of the monks losing their land surfaced again and Doerfler travelled to Winnipeg this time to settle the

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<sup>53</sup> Martin Brodner, "St. Peter's Abbey," in *A Journey of Faith, St. Peter's Abbacy: 1921-1996* (Muenster, Sask., St. Peter's Press, 1996), 232-236.

<sup>54</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Doerfler, March 30, 1911 letter to Engel.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*, September 18, 1906 letter to Engel.

matter with the federal government. The minister in charge of the land question “is no friend of priests,” Doerfler wrote.<sup>56</sup> The fears did not come to fruition; the Benedictines were informed they could keep their homesteads provided more land was seeded into crops.<sup>57</sup>

Doerfler and the Benedictines played an important role in helping the colonists in their struggle to survive. Doerfler travelled to Europe and brought back Franciscan nuns to build a hospital in Humboldt. A new facility opened in 1912 to become the first hospital in the colony.<sup>58</sup> Doerfler made more trips to Germany and Austria to bring back more Franciscan nuns to work as nurses in the hospital and Ursuline nuns to teach in the colony schools.<sup>59</sup>

Priests were also directly involved in settlers’ lives through their travels to visit parishes and parishioners. Doerfler wrote about their dedication and some of their personal sacrifices. One priest froze the bridge of his nose while travelling to a parish in minus 38F temperatures.<sup>60</sup> Another froze his face when he travelled nine miles to visit a dying man. He returned home the next morning at 6 a.m. so he could escort an orphan to Prince Albert the next day, then returned to the colony a day later to prepare for the funeral of the ill parishioner who had died. “During all these experiences he suffered nothing worse than a cold and frost-bitten face,” Doerfler observed. “He writes that he is still good enough to go through the same hardships.”<sup>61</sup> Chrysostom Hoffmann, OSB, a missionary parish priest, spent much of his time travelling to homesteads and rural

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<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, October 20, 1906 letter to Engel.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, February 18, 1907 letter to Engel.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, June 28, 1912 letter to Engel.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, March 30, 1912 letter to Engel.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*, January 9, 1909 letter to Engel.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, January 20, 1909 letter to Engel.

parishes. He often visited the sick and celebrated Mass in homes and mission churches (without resident priests). Sometimes he became caught in freezing winds while travelling to visit families.<sup>62</sup>

Fortunately, not all the interactions between the monks and pioneers involved sacrifice. There were many festive occasions. One incident, in 1909, became too festive.

Doerfler reported:

Fr. Benedict, his trustees and others got into trouble for having dispensed beer at a church picnic July 1. They were fined altogether a sum of \$431.15. While I regret the occurrence, I am glad that it gives me an occasion for enforcing absolutely what I have been trying to carry out for a year past: the banishing of beer from church picnics. The opposition was too strong so far, but now I can surely carry through my intention with ease.<sup>63</sup>

The incident brings to light the differences in opinion between Doerfler and others on the morality of public drinking. It raises the question of how obedient the monks were to the wishes of Doerfler and how much influence Doerfler had over other social issues. Doerfler's letters portray him as a man who was pastoral and concerned about the well-being of others. He often wrote about the weather conditions, crops, and news events.

Doerfler commented on a food shortage in Humboldt during April 1907. Four passenger trains became stranded there during a blizzard as they were blocked by banks of snow that rose from five to ten feet high. Some 1,000 to 1,500 passengers were suddenly without beds or shelter. The hotels barely had enough food to feed everyone. Doerfler reported: "Ordinary freight is not yet moving consequently and the storekeepers are in despair. Fortunately, flour, meat, wood, and seed grain is plentiful in the colony."<sup>64</sup>

The harsh winter in 1907 led to a record-low income for farmers. Doerfler explained:

Wheat is dropping daily and nobody knows where it will find the bottom. ... Many of our settlers are not yet in a position to stand such a situation well, and even the better situated ones feel it. The storekeepers are

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<sup>62</sup> SPAA, Chrysostom Hoffmann file, Chrysostom Hoffmann diary, May 1903 to May 19 of 1905.

<sup>63</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Doerfler, July 29, 1909 letter to Engel.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, April 22, 1907 letter to Engel.

going out of the credit business altogether as they are being pushed by the wholesalers who must cut down their debts to the banks. ... The elevator men also are having their credit line cut down. ... Fortunately most of our settlers grew much more oats than in former years on account of the late season in spring. Oats are a good crop and bring in a good price now.<sup>65</sup>

The lack of money and credit made conditions so gruelling that Doerfler believed that grain buyers wanted “to make beggars of the settlers.”<sup>66</sup> Many of the settlers, in 1907, could not afford warm winter clothing or flour. Fortunately, most people had enough supplies to make it through the winter. Granaries were full of wheat, cellars were full of potatoes, and there was plenty of firewood.<sup>67</sup> The tenacity and hard work of the German Catholics brought greater yields of grain that, only five few years later, challenged the grain transportation system as it became overwhelmed in 1912 during a good crop year. The grain cars were able to handle only a fraction of grain production. The elevator in Muenster was forced to store about 10,000 bushels of wheat on the ground. “If the wheat yield in the Canadian West had been all number one with only half the number of bushels, the country would be much better off than now,” Doerfler wrote.<sup>68</sup> The improved crop yields played an important role in helping the colonists to prosper. A parishioner was proud to inform Doerfler in 1916 that his debt of \$4,000 a year ago had been reduced to \$1,800. The parishioner was planning to build a new house. “Everyone of our people seems to have the chance of a lifetime to get out of debt this year,” Doerfler wrote.<sup>69</sup>

Doerfler’s desire for the German-Catholic colony to prosper was looked on with suspicion by the larger Anglo-Protestant majority which wanted immigrants to assimilate into the larger culture. “Saskatchewan was supposed to be a bastion of British values,

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, November 7, 1907 letter to Engel.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*, December 27, 1907 letter to Engel.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, January 22, 1912 letter to Engel.

<sup>69</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1916 letter to Engel.



traditions, and institutions, not some multicultural amalgam,” writes historian Bill Waiser.<sup>70</sup> Rev. E. H. Oliver, principal of the Presbyterian Theological College in Saskatoon, and others in the Anglo-Canadian establishment would have been alarmed at the promotion of Catholic culture in St. Peter’s Colony through the *Katholikentag* (Catholic Days). Rallies of the *Katholikentag* espousing Catholic traditions and the importance of Catholic schools were held throughout the colony almost every year since 1908 and they spread across Western Canada.<sup>71</sup> They might have appeared to an outsider as conventions stirring up German-Catholic nationalism. On a more visceral level, they were likely a reaction by a church leadership feeling besieged by a society opposed to its traditions and wanting German Catholics to remain enthusiastic for their traditions. The presence of German Catholics and other minorities ignited a debate in which immigration and schooling dominated the dispute over immigration and assimilation.

Previous to the founding of Saskatchewan both Catholics and Protestants were permitted to operate their own schools under the North-West Territories Act of 1875 which granted religious minorities the right to support their own schools. This act was formalized in 1884 when the territorial Board of Education was established. Religious control of schools was replaced in 1892 by a single, government-run Council of Public Instruction. The modifications of 1892 were encouraged by the Protestant majority who wanted all schools to be secular. Their vision of a single-school system was broadsided however, when it appeared that the 1905 autonomy bills creating the new provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan seemed to restore separate schools.<sup>72</sup> Opponents of separate schools accused Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier of permitting the old territorial dual

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<sup>70</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2006), 79.

<sup>71</sup> Windschiegel, 39.

<sup>72</sup> Waiser, 9-10.

school system to continue. Many in the government and opposition parties were outraged, including Clifford Sifton, Minister of the Interior and exponent of public schools, who resigned over the issue.

Smelling blood, the Conservative opposition portrayed the legislation as a blatant invasion of provincial jurisdiction. Some even hinted at a papist conspiracy. Faced with a spiralling crisis that threatened to tear apart the administration and arouse latent Ontario-Quebec animosities, Prime Minister Laurier unceremoniously backed down and allowed a redrafting of the offending clauses to bring him in line with current practice in the territories.<sup>73</sup>

The debate over separate schools was the longest held in parliamentary history and took away the jubilation which should have preceded Saskatchewan's entry into confederation. Saskatchewan's inauguration as a new province was delayed five months because of the bickering. The divisive issue of language and education, a problem of eastern Canada, was now part of the political fabric of Saskatchewan. Territorial leader Frederick Haultain opposed separate schools. His stance ended his relationship with the Saskatchewan Liberals who chose Walter Scott as the province's first premier.<sup>74</sup>

The issues of race and religion became important because of the changing nature of western Canadian immigration in the closing years of the nineteenth century. The population of the North-West Territories in the 1890s was small and the majority of people came from a British background. Sifton vigorously promoted Western Canada as a new home for immigrants after becoming Minister of the Interior in 1896 and believed the prosperity of Canada would be buttressed by the development of agriculture in the North-West Territories. Advertisements were sent to Europe inviting immigrants to come and transform the prairie landscape into farmland.<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-11.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

The Ministry of the Interior looked in particular to Great Britain to supply the greatest number of immigrants to western Canada. The department spent more money on advertising in Great Britain than the rest of Europe. Not surprisingly, the largest number of immigrants to Canada in the early 1900s came from Great Britain. The second largest immigrant group in the early 1900s came from the United States, making up 40 percent of the population born outside Canada and Great Britain. The next two largest groups to relocate in Canada after the Americans were the Austro-Hungarians and Russians. Immigrants from Scandinavian countries and Germany, preferred immigrants, were the fourth and fifth largest groups respectively.<sup>76</sup> Some of the immigrants came from traditionally “non-preferred” countries of central Europe. These were Doukhobors, Russian-Germans, and Ukrainians, whom Sifton believed had the skills and tenacity to turn harsh prairie into productive farmland.

Not everyone, however, shared Sifton’s appreciation of these non-Anglo-Saxon settlers. They may have made good farmers, but would they make good citizens with their unpronounceable last names, pauper-like appearance, strange customs and different religious beliefs? Indeed, central Europeans at the time were popularly associated with poverty, crime, ignorance, and immorality. One newspaper likened their immigrants to a “grand ‘round-up’ of European freaks and hoboes.”<sup>77</sup>

The unusual display of tolerance by Sifton, however, did not make him multicultural or more accepting of traditions other than his own. He expected immigrants to assimilate and embrace Anglo-Canadian traditions. A more polite way of expressing this objective during Sifton’s day was to encourage immigrants to become “Canadianized.”<sup>78</sup> The Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists played a role in assimilation with their proselytizing of Canada’s newest immigrants. The three denominations established schools, school residences, and medical missions where Ukrainians and east-Europeans

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<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

settled. The Protestants believed it was their mission to end the superstitious beliefs of Greek Orthodox, Ukrainian and Roman Catholics, and change them into English-speaking Christian citizens.<sup>79</sup>

In spite of the huge demand for immigrants, the welcome sign by the Department of the Interior was denied to some classes of people and ethnic groups. It was believed that the rigours of farm life would be too much for the urban English, Blacks, Asians, Jews, and southern Europeans, especially Italians. These undesirables, it was assumed, would drift to cities and towns and take away jobs from other Canadian workers.<sup>80</sup> The movement to keep certain groups out of Canada did not go far enough for some in Anglo-Canadian circles who wanted immigration to be based solely on race and not experience in farming. All immigrants, they believed, should be people of British descent.<sup>81</sup> The new Minister of the Interior in 1905, Frank Oliver, shared these nativist views and looked to race as a criterion in immigration. Oliver's preferred country of origin for immigrants was Great Britain, followed by the northern Europeans and Americans. He disliked all other ethnic groups.<sup>82</sup> These concerns would be exacerbated by the Great War.

Great Britain's decision to go to war in August 1914 against Germany, Austria-Hungary, Turkey, and Bulgaria meant Canada was automatically involved in the conflict. Patriotism was strong in the province and many of its citizens who enlisted were men of British background.<sup>83</sup> Discrimination had been a problem before the war, but most of it was directed against Asians, Blacks, and Indians. Hostilities intensified against Germans,

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<sup>79</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 345.

<sup>80</sup> Waiser, 64.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 65.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, 73-74.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 186-87.

once favoured citizens, and Ukrainians, who had lived under the umbrella of Austria-Hungary, and were looked on by Anglo-Canadians as unfit to become British citizens.<sup>84</sup>

The German Catholics of St. Peter's Colony did not complain about unfair treatment during the First World War. Doerfler said he was aware of only one incident during the war involving a man from St. Peter's Colony. "(He) became temporarily insane and had to be taken to the asylum at Battleford. He was so maltreated by the guards there that some of his ribs were broken and an arm had to be amputated. There is an investigation into the matter by order of the government."<sup>85</sup> The war made it difficult for monks to travel to the United States; they were not permitted to study in the United States until after the war.<sup>86</sup>

Surveillance reports by the North-West Mounted Police found Germans and Ukrainians did not threaten the peace and security of Canada. The reports, however, failed to mollify the hostile public mood which became anxious when large numbers of immigrants in western Canada, who had worked at railway and construction projects, lost their jobs. Many were unskilled Ukrainians who drifted into cities looking for work and relief. Anglo-Canadians became alarmed over the large number of destitute men. The federal government responded to their plight by adopting an enemy alien registration and internment policy under the new War Measures Act. Germans and Ukrainians living in or near cities were required by law to register and report monthly. Immediate internment was given to those who failed to register or broke federal regulations. Germans and Ukrainians in rural areas were excluded because they were not considered part of the

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<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 194.

<sup>85</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Doerfler, December 12, 1914 letter to Engel.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, December 27, 1917 letter to Engel.

security problem.<sup>87</sup> The status of 120,000 un-naturalized residents and immigrants in Canada, who were born in countries at war with Canada, was changed to enemy aliens.<sup>88</sup> Over the course of the war, 8,579 enemy aliens were interned in work camps across Canada. Most of these were un-naturalized resident immigrants who had been invited to homestead in Canada.<sup>89</sup> Their only crime was they were perceived to be a threat because of their country of origin.<sup>90</sup>

The Anglo-Canadian establishment reacted to the changing fabric of the province by promoting assimilation to ensure Saskatchewan remain firmly entrenched in British culture.<sup>91</sup> The large presence of non-British immigrants made many Anglo-Canadians wary of losing their dominant presence, and their fears and prejudices against ethnic minorities fuelled a campaign of English-only instruction in schools. The war that was once waged against separate schools evolved into an attack on teaching languages other than English. The provincial Conservative opposition, aware of the public mood, lobbied to have all languages other than English thrown out of schools. Supporting the lobby were the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and the ultra-Protestant Orange Lodge. Several of the province's newspapers urged the Liberal government to support English-only schools.<sup>92</sup> The public sentiment made it apparent that the issue of English-only schools was more than a

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<sup>87</sup> Waiser, 194-96.

<sup>88</sup> Bohdan S. Kordan, *Enemy Aliens, Prisoners of War* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-21.

<sup>91</sup> Waiser, 79.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 198-199.

concern over educational standards -- the survival of democracy and the nation were at stake.<sup>93</sup>

Professor Oliver, a prominent figure in the Better Schools Movement in Saskatchewan, led an attack on the parochial schools of St. Peter's Colony. He accused them of offering an inferior education and promoting German nationalism and Roman Catholicism.<sup>94</sup> The Orange Lodge and Sons of England lobbied to have private schools operate much like public schools which used English as the only language of instruction.<sup>95</sup> Rev. Murdoch Mackinnon of Regina's Knox Presbyterian Church urged one of his parishioners, Premier Walter Scott, to rid the province of separate schools altogether.

Mackinnon steadfastly maintained that any measure that strengthened the financial status of separate schools was inherently bad and only served to increase the nefarious influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Saskatchewan society. That influence, the preacher insisted, had to end if the province was to become a bastion of British civilization; the alternative was a backward, unprogressive people.<sup>96</sup>

The beliefs of Mackinnon and Oliver were held by other Anglo-Canadians who believed it was necessary for children to be educated in schools that promoted British traditions. Many felt it was impossible for immigrants of non-British nations to hold onto their languages and cultures and become loyal Canadian citizens.<sup>97</sup> The suspicion over separate and private schools was rampant in Saskatchewan where the Anglo-Canadians had a firm grip on the political, economic, and social life of the province.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 200.

<sup>94</sup> Clinton White, "The German Catholic Parochial Schools of Saskatchewan's St. Peter's Colony, 1903-1934: Their Teachers, Curriculum and Quality of Instruction," (Regina, Sask., Campion College, University of Regina, 1995), 29. More information in: Rev. E. H. Oliver, "The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities in Saskatchewan," (Saskatoon: Daily Press and Evening Farm, 1915).

<sup>95</sup> White, 31. Information taken from Saskatoon Daily Star, April 22, 1918, and from correspondence of Doerfler to Engel, January 26, 1919.

<sup>96</sup> Waiser, 198.

<sup>97</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, 248.

Doerfler's only opposition to policies of the provincial and federal governments during the First World War concerned the sale of alcohol. The province took over the sale of liquor in 1915 through an amendment to the liquor law in Saskatchewan that made it illegal for the private sector to sell alcohol.<sup>99</sup> "It is more tyrannical than any law that ever existed in Russia or Turkey," Doerfler wrote, "that is, of course, if it is ever applied with all its rigours. ... This law will make it impossible for a man to get a drink of beer, whilst it will encourage whiskey-drinking very much."<sup>100</sup> Doerfler's stance went against public sentiment which labelled the sale of alcohol as immoral. As the war against Germany dragged on, the support for prohibition began to be looked on as support for the country.<sup>101</sup> Later Doerfler joked how the federal government had "decreed that Canada shall be bone-dry from April 1, 1918 till twelve months after the close of the war. So you see that we can show the European old fuggies a thing or two which they did not yet know, how to win wars!"<sup>102</sup>

The hostility by people like Oliver and others in the Anglo-Canadian establishment towards German Catholics did not daunt the resolve of Doerfler to defend the colony's schools and German language. Doerfler issued a circular in 1916 in which he explained that the German Catholics were loyal Canadian citizens and that the German language was a part of the heritage of St. Peter's Colony:

Thirteen years ago, a considerable number of German-speaking people immigrated from the United States into the Humboldt district of this province. Today they are considered among the best, most progressive and most loyal citizens of the West. All of them had lived in America for years. Many of them had been born under the Stars and Stripes. These people had an ideal. It was, that their children should become true Canadians without losing that precious treasure, the language of their forefathers. Their aspiration was that their children should become true bilingualists in the best sense of the word. The public schools of the then

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<sup>99</sup> Canadian Plains Research Centre, "Prohibition and Temperance," in *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* (Regina, Sask.: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005), 727-728.

<sup>100</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Doerfler, June 17, 1915 letter to Engel.

<sup>101</sup> Waiser, 203-204.

<sup>102</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Doerfler, December 27, 1917 letter to Engel.



Northwest Territories did not seem adapted to the purpose. Hence, they founded several private schools to apply their principals. These schools stood the test. In them everything was taught which is taught in the rural government schools. Furthermore, the pupils learnt an additional language, and that language was dear to the German-speaking people of the Humboldt district because it was the language which their mothers had first spoken to them. ... All went well until last September, when Professor Oliver of Saskatoon, without any personal knowledge of the results produced by these schools, attacked them in a public discourse in Regina. He knew nothing about them, but pretended to know all about them. <sup>103</sup>

The circular contained five reproductions of letters sent to the *Saskatoon Daily Star* and *Saskatoon Phoenix* addressing the accusations of Professor Oliver against the private schools of the Humboldt district. One letter was written in response to an editorial in the *Saskatoon Daily Star* on the issue of German Schools of the Humboldt district. Doerfler answered the accusations of Oliver and presented his own facts on the issue. Oliver stated that there were forty-five private schools in the Humboldt district where German was the only language of instruction, and more than two-thirds of the schools in the colony did not use English. Doerfler countered that the actual number of private schools was less than one-third as claimed by Oliver. English was taught in the schools and German was not the only language of instruction. The schools strived to give the same quality instruction in English as offered by public schools. In fact, the proficiency of English was similar to that of neighbouring public schools. In another letter he stated, "Unwittingly, no doubt, Dr. Oliver has been the cause of the hue and cry raised against a whole class of loyal Canadian citizens in the Humboldt district."<sup>104</sup>

The feelings of Doerfler on the issue of private (parish or parochial) schools were explained in a letter to Engel. Doerfler wrote that he was determined to enlighten everyone about the real situation. There was the danger that legislation would be enacted against private schools. Copies of the circular were given to provincial government

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<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, "German Schools in the Humboldt District," January 1916 circular.

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

representatives and priests and ministers of other Christian denominations. Doerfler was impressed with the positive feedback from Crown ministers.<sup>105</sup>

Previous to the First World War there were fifteen parochial schools in the colony; the language of instruction in one was in English only. Another school, which remained open from 1907 to 1909, offered instruction in German for only part of the first school year. The remainder of the schools varied in the amount of time allotted to teaching in either English or German. About half the daily lessons were in English until 1913 when German began to be phased out of parochial schools.<sup>106</sup>

The information on the parochial schools that was gathered by Oliver came from a forty-five-mile buggy ride through an area north of Humboldt. Oliver travelled to the colony in August 1915 and held conversations with some of the people he met. His report about the quality of education in the colony not only misrepresented the schools, but was likely based on preconceived conclusions. Oliver was emphatic about the schools' deficiencies, yet neglected to record any of the positive developments, some of which came through the reforms of the Ursuline nuns who arrived in 1913 to teach. One of the people Oliver talked to for his research was a storekeeper who owned a shop across from a school building used as a convent and school. Oliver did not walk over to the school to meet with the Ursulines, one of whom was the daughter of a British judge and another who came from Ireland.<sup>107</sup>

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<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, January 23, 1916 letter to Engel.

<sup>106</sup> White, 6-8.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30. The Ursuline Convent was at St. Angela School north of Humboldt where all the sisters of the colony lived. At least three Ursulines were fluent in English. More information in: Sister Benedict Plemel, "History of the Ursuline Convent, Bruno," 68; White, "Maintaining Anglo-Celtic Cultural Hegemony in Saskatchewan: Rev. E.H. Oliver, Provisional Educational Policy, and the German Catholics," *Historical Studies in Education*, VI, 2(1994).

Other reports were prepared by school inspectors and scholars who looked at the curriculum, teachers or quality of instruction of St. Peter's Colony schools.<sup>108</sup> Their research was not based on a uniform system of grading schools, and their statistics and other factual information sometimes conflicted with each other.<sup>109</sup> A more comprehensive study of the teachers, quality of instruction and curriculum was carried out by historian Clinton White. He researched both the curriculum of the parochial schools and background of the 104 teachers employed there from 1903 to 1934. White amassed information on eighty-one teachers and found some information on twenty-three. There is no information on the Ursulines who taught, nor the three laymen and five clerics who were temporary substitute teachers.

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<sup>108</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. Research on the schools was carried out by: Rev. E.H. Oliver, *The Country School in Non-English Speaking Communities in Saskatchewan* (Saskatoon: Daily Press and Evening Farm, 1915); Rev. Bruno Doerfler, *German Schools in the Humboldt District* (Muenster, Sask.: n.p., 1916); Harold W. Foght, *A Survey of Education in the Province of Saskatchewan, Canada* (Regina: King's Printer, 1918); Albert Moellmann, "The Germans in Canada: Occupational and Social Adjustment of German Immigrants in Canada," (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1934); C.A. Dawson, *Group Settlement, Ethnic Communities in Western Canada* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1936); Leonard Bercuson, "Education in the Bloc Settlements of Western Canada," (M.A. thesis, McGill University, 1941); Rev. Peter Windschiegel, *Fifty Golden Years: 1903-1953* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1954); Keith A. McLeod, "Education and Assimilation of the New Canadians in the North-West Territories and Saskatchewan, 1885-1934," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Toronto, 1975); Kurt Tischler, "The German Canadians in Saskatchewan with Particular Reference to the Language Problem, 1900-1930," (M.A. thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1978); Alan B. Anderson, "German Settlements in Saskatchewan," in *Roots and Realities Among Eastern and Central Europeans*, Martin L. Kovacs, ed., (Edmonton: Central and Eastern European Studies Assoc., 1983); and Heinz Lehmann, *Das Deutschtum im Westkanada* (Berlin, 1939) in translation to English by Gerhard P. Bassler as *The German Canadians 1750-1937* (St. John's: Jespersion Press, 1986).

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, 1. There is disagreement on who the teachers were. Moellmann, 104-6, Dawson, 321-2, Bercuson, 74, and Tischler, 37-9, say the original teachers were priests. Windschiegel, 21, 39, 57, 185, 210, says most of the teachers were laity. All five state that nuns and lay people taught in later years. There are differences on where teachers came from. Tischler, 38-9, says the teachers trained in Saskatchewan; Windschiegel, 55, 139, 150, 200, says nuns came from Germany and some lay teachers came from the United States; Oliver, 11, notes that two teachers were transients who lived in the United States when not teaching. Regarding teacher qualifications, Windschiegel, 39, says first-class teachers were difficult to find; Oliver, 11, says few who taught before or during 1915 were qualified, and Anderson, 185, refers to teachers in the western part of the colony in 1916 as unqualified. Tischler, 38-9, and Foght, 154, believe the teachers were qualified. Regarding the curriculum and quality of instruction, Oliver, 11, states the curriculum promotes the German language and German nationalism; Doerfler, 1, said the curriculum was the same as rural public schools; Anderson, 185, Tischler, 38, and Windschiegel, 39, said the teachers should be more thoroughly trained. Conversely, Foght said the quality of education was the same as public schools.

When Oliver visited the colony in 1915 there were thirty-six public schools there, three times the number of parochial schools. The majority of teachers in the public schools were Anglo-Celtic Canadians who, with the exception of only a few, were not fluent in German.<sup>110</sup> The parochial schools enrolled about twenty percent of all the students in the colony between 1903 and 1934. The teachers were largely American which made them unique not only in Saskatchewan but possibly in Canada. The majority of the 104 teachers, ninety-six, who taught in parochial schools, had a German background. Most of the teachers, seventy-two, were women. Only one teacher was a priest. Ninety-six teachers came to Saskatchewan from the United States and the majority of these, seventy percent, were born in the United States. Others originated from Germany, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Ontario and the colony.

Close to half of the teachers, thirty-five women and twelve men, taught in parochial schools for only one year. About one-third of the teachers, twenty-six women and eleven men, taught in two or more schools. A large number of teachers returned to the United States after teaching in the colony, or spent their holidays in the United States. Close to thirty percent of teachers taught in a public or separate school before or after teaching in a parochial school.

The parochial schools were often stepping-stones to other careers. Teachers who received a Saskatchewan teaching certificate after being employed in a parochial school usually sought employment in a public or separate school where salaries were higher. Men usually abandoned teaching to farm or enter a business. Most of the women left teaching after getting married. Women taught longer than men and were more likely than

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<sup>110</sup> White, "A 1905 German American Catholic Plan for Primary Education in the North-West Territories," (Regina, Sask.: Campion College, University of Regina, June of 1990), 33. More information in: White, "Education Among German Catholic Settlers in Saskatchewan, 1903-1918: a Reinterpretation."

men to consider their work in the classroom as a career choice. The differences in career choices led to women dominating the teaching profession by the late 1920s. Many of the career women were Canadian-born and varied in qualifications and experience.

A primary difference between teachers in public and private schools was in their qualifications; teachers in private schools did not need the same qualifications as those teaching in public or separate schools. It was necessary to have permission from the Department of Education to teach in a public or separate school after obtaining either a first-, second- or third-class teaching certificate. The differences in standards were evident in St. Peter's Colony where only twelve teachers in private schools had provincial certification, seven of whom were not hired until 1922 or afterwards. Between the years of 1906 and 1917, there were sixteen teachers who had completed only Grade 8 in American or Canadian schools. These statistics must be viewed in a broader context that incorporates the evolution of education in St. Peter's Colony parochial schools and the circumstances in which teachers were hired.

The parochial schools, prior to 1918, employed fifty-eight teachers, excluding Ursuline Sisters. The first five teachers were not qualified to teach in a public Saskatchewan school. They had teaching experience in the United States or Europe and three had attended an American normal school. One teacher trained in Switzerland and two had American certification. One was given provisional status to teach after opening a public school. The remaining forty-two teachers had some teaching experience. Six had taught in Saskatchewan public or separate schools. Eight earned teaching certificates in the United States; one earned a certificate in Germany and another in Ontario. Two taught in the United States and may have held teaching certificates. Four had been

educated beyond the elementary school level in the United States and Europe and four had completed one or two years of high school in Saskatchewan.<sup>111</sup>

The qualifications of the teachers were at their worst level previous to 1910, largely because of a shortage of teachers and poor living accommodations. It was difficult to find teachers willing to live in isolated areas in log cabins or with other pioneer families. The Benedictines recognized the lack of qualifications of some teachers and they believed that it was better to have someone teach who was only partially qualified than to have no school at all.<sup>112</sup> This compromise was not unique to St. Peter's Colony. It was made by other school divisions in the province.<sup>113</sup>

Eleven of the sixteen teachers who had Grade 8 or less prior to 1916 taught in the colony. Seven of these individuals taught between 1906 and 1909. The remaining five taught between 1916 and 1917. Only one of the four teachers employed between 1910 and 1915 taught for more than one year. The other three taught only for a brief period, lasting six months between them. Two of these three completed about two years of high school and taught for a second time. Both would have obtained third-class certification, had it not been for the death of the mother of one of them.

The employment of teachers in 1916 and 1917 with only an elementary education lasted for only one term or less. Two of five teachers continued to teach at later dates after obtaining temporary certification as public school teachers. Another continued as a teacher's aide while furthering her education in an Ursuline-run school. The hiring of

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<sup>111</sup> White, "The German Catholic Parochial Schools of Saskatchewan's St. Peter's Colony, 1903-1934: Their Teachers, Curriculum and Quality of Instruction," 1-4. More information in *St. Peter's Bote* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press), February 14, 1905.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>113</sup> Dale Eisler, *False Expectations: Politics and the Pursuit of the Saskatchewan Myth* (Regina, Sask.: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 2006), 55.

these teachers may have been carried out in part because their salaries were lower than certified teachers and they were able to speak German.

The hiring of teachers during the First World War was difficult throughout the province due to the lack of certified teachers. The public school districts in the colony coped with the shortage of teachers during the war by hiring teachers without certification. In 1916 and 1917 there were more than eighty school districts lying either completely or partially within St. Peter's Colony. In 1916 they employed nineteen teachers without provincial teaching certificates. The following year in 1917, twenty teachers were hired without provincial teaching certificates. Public school districts in the colony, prior to the end of the First World War, often hired teachers with only Grade 8. The qualifications of parochial school teachers improved after 1917 and began to improve significantly following 1921 when a greater proportion earned Saskatchewan certification. This accomplishment was part of the terms of an agreement in 1918 between Doerfler and Premier Martin who held the Ministry of Education.

There is little information on the subjects taught in parochial schools, other than they offered German, English, and religion. Sources of information come from directives of the Benedictine clergy, a letter written by a public school trustee, and an outline of the weekly course by a priest in charge of a parochial school. The ratepayers played a role in the decisions of whether to teach German or give instruction in German.

The Benedictines, by 1916, promoted instruction in English-only.<sup>114</sup> The prominence held to English may have been influenced by the Ursulines who preferred to teach in English and had a good working relationship with the Benedictines. The Ursulines placed a high value on a quality education and sought to meet the standards in

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<sup>114</sup> White, 6-8.

teaching set out by the Department of Education. They were interested in becoming certified teachers and had to learn English to obtain their teacher certificates.<sup>115</sup> Both religious orders, furthermore, had goals of opening their own schools and their ability to meet the provincial curriculum in parochial schools furthered that goal. The Ursulines planned to open a high school academy for girls and the Benedictines wanted to open a high school for boys and a college.<sup>116</sup> Instruction in English helped precipitate the decline of German which, by 1920, was no longer spoken in most schools and was not offered as a class in three schools. Only five schools provided lessons in German from a half hour to an hour each day. By 1929 German was restricted to certain grades and by 1930 the teaching of German as a subject had ceased. Only two parochial schools remained open.<sup>117</sup>

The most reliable report on parochial schools in the colony was written in 1911 by L. L. Kramer, principal of St. Mary's Catholic Separate School in Regina. He visited eight parochial schools after being commissioned by the Department of Education to do a report on them. Kramer gave all the schools passing grades and noted that they taught German and religion for most of the morning. All the schools offered reading, writing, spelling, English, literature, and arithmetic. Kramer was critical of the quality of instruction in geography, history, and grammar, and was surprised to find that the children in only one school sang "God Save the King." Five of the schools used textbooks approved for separate schools in Saskatchewan. One used a text common to Catholic schools in Quebec. Different varieties of texts were used for teaching writing in

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<sup>115</sup> Fitzgerald, 120.

<sup>116</sup> White, 12.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.



four schools. Only two schools had a grammar or arithmetic text and none of the schools had any books on history or geography. Most of the classrooms had maps of Canada.

The quality of the curriculum in the parochial schools slowly improved and by 1916 the classes were comparable to other public and separate schools in Saskatchewan. The curriculum for one of the schools, St. Bernard's, shows that the time allotted to religious instruction and German dropped from two hours and twenty-five minutes to one hour and thirty-five minutes per day. Instruction time for history, geography, and spelling increased. Parochial schools were using textbooks on Canadian and British history, and geography, as prescribed by the Department of Education.

There is little information on curriculums from other parochial schools beginning in 1916, though it is believed that classes offered at St. Bernard's were similar to other public schools. The Ursuline nuns took charge of four parochial schools between 1913 and 1915 and taught all eight grades. They prepared students for the same departmental exams written at public schools. The students of the Ursulines began taking Grade 8 exams as early as 1917. The Benedictines opened a high school for boys in 1921 and students began graduating from it in the mid-1920s.<sup>118</sup>

Other reports by school inspectors previous to 1917 were very critical of the parochial schools and must be read with caution. "Their personal biases or the positions they occupied may have caused them to describe situations other than as they actually were," noted historian Clinton White.<sup>119</sup> The standards they used to rate the parochial schools were not based on a consensus of what constituted a good education. Roman Catholics believed that a good education included religion, while many non-Catholics

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<sup>118</sup> *Ibid.*, 10-12.

<sup>119</sup> *Ibid.*, 12.

wanted religion out of schools. There is no evidence to back arguments that a bilingual education was superior or that students advanced more quickly in the early grades when taught only in English, White said.

One of the inspectors, P.R. McDonald, in a report at the end of 1918, compared a parochial school in the community of Bruno to a nearby public school. The children were refusing to attend the parochial school, he wrote, because too much time was allotted to teaching German and religion, and very little attention was given to other subjects. McDonald's report must be treated with scepticism because he went to Bruno to promote the opening of a public school, and an attack on the parochial supported that goal. There is also evidence he did not like people with a German background. Other reports of attendance at the Bruno school also do not support his allegations. The pastor in charge of the parochial school, Chrysostom Hoffman, OSB, used his considerable influence to enforce attendance at school.<sup>120</sup>

The provincial government and the Liberal premier were more tolerant of the school system in St. Peter's Colony. The most prominent person to inspect the schools, Premier Walter Scott, gave a favourable report of the schools in 1916. Scott, also the Minister of Education, informed an Orange Lodge delegation that there were no problems with the parochial schools. The following year William Martin, the new premier and Minister of Education, visited five parochial schools in St. Peter's Colony. There is no information on why Martin or Scott visited the colony; however, they may have been

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<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, 13. A newspaper article quoted McDonald as referring to Germans as "ignorant foreigners." See DE, PSF, 2189, Hoffman Public School, formerly near Bruno. The colony newspaper, *The Bote*, in 1907, recorded forty-three students had attended school regularly at Bruno. See July 11, August 29 and December 12, 1907 issues.

invited by Doerfler who wanted to build a good relationship with the provincial government.

Attorney General W.F.A. Turgeon informed Doerfler that Martin was satisfied with the parochial schools. The support from the premier should have made both supporters and critics of parochial schools rest much easier. There is reason to believe, however, that politics may have played a role in the favourable ratings. The issue of using languages other than English in the classroom was politically sensitive and the premier did not want to give opponents of parochial schools ammunition to embarrass the government.<sup>121</sup>

A report by inspector James O'Brien in 1917 made it apparent that there was entrenched opposition to parochial schools. O'Brien completed a review of Veronika Public School, which was located near two parochial schools and a separate school. O'Brien criticized the teacher in Veronica School, whom he described as being of Ruthenian descent, and lamented that the quality of instruction in a public school was below that of nearby parochial and separate schools. He was fearful that if the situation did not change, students of the public school would transfer to either separate or parochial schools.

The following year in 1918 Premier Martin informed Doerfler that he was "favourably impressed with the parochial schools which he had visited."<sup>122</sup> Referring to his inspection the previous fall, Martin said his only concern was that the schools' readers were printed in the United States. He preferred that they be printed in Canada. Doerfler replied the readers had been updated and were authorized for English Catholic Schools of

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<sup>121</sup> *Ibid.*, 14-15.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, 18.

Quebec. The readers were believed to be of good quality and better than other Catholic English readers in Canada. Doerfler said he would change the readers if the department insisted. The other books used were authorized by the department.<sup>123</sup>

The province's schools were the subject of a report in 1918 by Harold W. Foght, an educational expert from Washington, D.C. The province commissioned Foght to determine whether the expanding school system was providing adequate education for the students.<sup>124</sup> Foght conducted the most comprehensive study yet to be undertaken in Saskatchewan. He concluded that the schools in the Humboldt district were staffed by qualified teachers who presumably taught as much English as teachers in schools that spoke only English.<sup>125</sup>

The report fell on deaf ears to organizations like the Orange Lodge and Sons of England who insisted that all schools in the province become "English only." The Orangemen wanted parochial schools to operate like English schools which employed teachers who were British subjects and held Saskatchewan teaching certificates. "Certified teachers for all parochial schools could have been obtained only by raiding the public school system. The result might well have been strengthening the former at the expense of the latter, an action which people like inspector O'Brien would have vehemently protested," White remarked.<sup>126</sup> The provincial Conservative opposition, aware of the public mood, lobbied to have all languages other than English thrown out of schools. Supporting the lobby were the Saskatchewan Grain Growers Association, the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities, and several of the province's

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<sup>123</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>124</sup> Ken Horsman, "Education," in *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan*, 280.

<sup>125</sup> White, 30.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, 31.

newspapers which urged the Liberal government to support English-only schools.<sup>127</sup> The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association passed a resolution in 1917 calling for school instruction to be in English only.<sup>128</sup>

The Martin government, fearing a drop in support from the Anglo-Saxon majority, gave in to the demands and amended the School Act in 1919 which declared English the sole language of instruction in all public elementary schools. Some concessions were given for French instruction. Other legislation enforced attendance at parochial schools more stringently.<sup>129</sup>

Doerfler was alarmed at the campaign to allow only English in classrooms. He credited the campaign, in a letter to Engel, to the intolerance of the Orangemen:

The Orangemen have been working hard, and they succeeded in getting this legislation passed. They have been controlling the annual trustee's convention to pass a resolution to the effect that French should be banned entirely also, and all private schools forced to comply exactly with the regulations for the public schools in every respect (text books, subjects, teacher's qualifications, etc. etc.), but without getting any government grant like the public schools. After the government has given in to them once, we must fear that it will not have backbone enough to withstand their plans, of course, the attacks of the Orangemen are directed only ostensibly against the languages. The real object of the attack is the Catholic Church. They consider French and Catholic as identical. The foreign languages had to fall first, so as to open the way for the expulsion of French, and the attack on the private schools is made so that Catholics may not be able to get a Catholic education after the separate schools are abolished, which they hope to accomplish sooner or later.<sup>130</sup>

In spite of the hostility to German Catholics and private schools, Doerfler did not lash out against Anglo-Canadians, either publicly or privately, who were suspicious of German Catholics. Rather than dismiss the establishment as an enemy, he struggled to be accepted as an equal among the Canadian establishment. In the public sphere he defended his beliefs, while privately he expressed a fear that the politicians would bow to the wishes of the Orangemen who had a history of anti-Catholicism. Doerfler reached out to the larger

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<sup>127</sup> Waiser, 198-199.

<sup>128</sup> Horsman, "Education," 283-84.

<sup>129</sup> White, 31-32, and Waiser, 200.

<sup>130</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Doerfler, January 26, 1919 letter to Engel.

Anglo-Canadian community in a conciliatory way by explaining his point of view in letters to government representatives and Protestant church leaders. His support for private and separate schools made it evident that he saw education as a means of preserving the German-Catholic identity, as opposed to promoting isolationism and disloyalty to Canada. Language, religion and education were an inherent part of German-Catholic values that were complementary to living as loyal Canadians. Doerfler's conciliatory response in a hostile atmosphere was characteristic of someone who wanted to live in peace and harmony with his neighbours, as opposed to someone who was contemptuous of his country.

The issues of education and the German language give the impression that they were an obsession of the Benedictine leadership. They were obviously a concern, though not the sole preoccupation of the Benedictines. Only a small number of letters written by Doerfler to Engel between 1902 and 1919 addressed education. Doerfler wrote 127 letters over seventeen years to Engel and only four spoke of conflicts in education. Most were concerned with the daily administration of the Benedictines and the majority of the issues addressed by Doerfler concerned the monastic community and colony. The Benedictines were actually preoccupied with building a German-Catholic community within the larger community of Canada.

The successor to Doerfler, Michael Ott, OSB, was professor of theology, languages, and philosophy at St. John's Abbey. He was also a staunch supporter of Catholic education and promoted Catholic education in his first public address in 1919. His first sermon spoke of the need for a local college. The influence of Ott became apparent just one year later when construction began on a new college that rose to be a

four-story structure that housed both a residential high school and a monastery. Thirty-six students registered the first year in 1921.<sup>131</sup>

The zeal of Ott for Catholic education was explained in a circular issued in 1921. He urged parents to have their children taught in parochial schools and he suggested that every parish with the financial means open a parochial school. Most school districts, he said, had a majority of Catholics. “It is your sacred duty not to send them (children) to schools from which God and the Christian religion are banished.”<sup>132</sup> The determination of Ott to raise funds for education was shown again in 1922 when he issued a second circular to the people and organizations who promised to donate money to the new college building. “It may be a great sacrifice to you to meet your obligation now, but no sacrifice should be too great if made for God. You know that we have built the college for no other purpose than the glory of God and the welfare of St. Peter’s Colony.”<sup>133</sup>

The credibility of the Benedictines was given a boost in 1924 when the Department of Education investigated St. Peter’s Parochial School in Muenster. The investigation was in response to an allegation by a Muenster resident who urged that the parochial school be replaced by a public school. An inspector did a report of the school and St. Peter’s College, in which he wrote “a very good class of education was provided and that there was yet no demand for public school facilities.”<sup>134</sup> He said the school in Muenster was following the department’s curriculum and had all the necessary educational tools used by other schools. Seventy-five students at St. Peter’s College passed Grade 8 exams and another seventeen students were being taught Grades 11 and

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<sup>131</sup> Fitzgerald, 58.

<sup>132</sup> SPAA, Abbot Michael Ott file, “Letters of Ott,” Circular Letter of the abbot-ordinary of St. Peter’s Abbey to the clergy and laity of St. Peter’s Colony, published on October 21, 1921.

<sup>133</sup> “Letters of Ott,” Ott, February 1, 1922 circular.

<sup>134</sup> White, 19.

12 by young priests.<sup>135</sup> Nevertheless, Ott was unable to reverse the trend towards the closing of parochial schools and increased use of public schools. There were thirteen parochial schools operating when Ott became abbot in 1919. When he resigned in 1926, there were only twelve parochial schools open.<sup>136</sup>

Ott's successor was Severin Gertken, OSB, a priest and professor of chemistry at St. John's Abbey. He came to St. Peter's Abbey in early 1927 after finishing teaching for a semester at St. John's Abbey.<sup>137</sup> Gertken placed a different stress on education than Ott who looked on religion as an essential component of education. Gertken, in the first college yearbook, stressed the importance of education as a source of good formation and scholarship. A yearbook for 1927-28 speaks of Benedictine education as a means for "complete living." St. Peter's College, the yearbook said, offered religion in addition to secular courses to help form the whole person.

The yearbook emphasized the modernity of the college classrooms and the discipline of the school. The school offered a second or third year commercial diploma; high school Grade 11 diploma that prepared students for junior matriculation at the University of Saskatchewan; Grade 12 diploma; and second year arts. There were classes in music and religion. Clubs in the college were varied, ranging from religion and drama to music, public speaking, and sports. A schedule was given of the daily routine of the students. Each day began and ended with prayer. Time was allotted for classes, studies, recreation, and meals. There was a list of special lectures that were offered to the students: Bernard Schaeffler, OSB, on his travels to Europe; Gertken did three lectures on

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<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>136</sup> White, "Pre-World War I Saskatchewan German Thought Concerning the Perpetuation of Their Language and Religion," (Regina, Sask., Campion College, University of Regina, 1994), 4. Refer to Table: Roman Catholic Parochial Schools of St. Peter's Colony.

<sup>137</sup> Brodner, "St. Peter's Abbey," taken from *A Journey of Faith*, 237.



astronomy and St. Thomas Aquinas, patron of Catholic colleges; and other guest speakers covering such topics as the Hudson Bay Railroad and the history of music.<sup>138</sup>

The success of education at St. Peter's High School and College did little to stop the trend of closing parochial schools and converting them into public schools. Eight parochial schools closed between 1926 and 1930 and another two schools closed between 1932 and 1934.<sup>139</sup> "The burden of paying both taxes and school dues was more than most could undertake, and the last school was closed in 1934," said historian Colleen Fitzgerald.<sup>140</sup> In spite of this, the credibility of the Benedictines and Ursulines was given a shot in the arm when the parochial schools closed. The students of the former parochial schools were questioned by a school inspector and given passing grades for their performance. Every school, with the exception of one, was replaced by a public school. The replacement schools, with the exception of one, were promptly visited by inspector O'Brien who questioned both students and teachers and graded the performances of the students. Five of the nine schools that had converted to public schools had been taught by Ursulines. The remainder had been taught by lay people. The schools that received the highest ratings had Ursulines as teachers. O'Brien visited twenty-eight public schools within or near the colony, twelve of which he gave good reviews. Twelve schools received average to good reviews; four were rated as below average. There is a good possibility that students in parochial schools in the post-war years had a better education than their counterparts in public schools. At least two-thirds of the students in parochial

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<sup>138</sup> SPAA, St. Peter's College file, St. Peter's College yearbook: 1927-28 (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Abbey, 1927).

<sup>139</sup> White, "The German Catholic Parochial Schools of Saskatchewan's St. Peter's Colony, 1903-1934: Their Teachers, Curriculum and Quality of Instruction," 20.

<sup>140</sup> Fitzgerald, 119.

schools were taught by Ursulines after 1922; they had a reputation for being good teachers.<sup>141</sup>

The clergy and laity of St. Peter's Colony were informed of Gertken's primary concerns in a pastoral letter issued in December 1929. The letter was read at every parish Mass and spoke of the "five great plagues" that afflicted the world. These included: disrespect for authority, hatred among brethren, thirst for pleasure, disgust for work, and forgetfulness of the supernatural objects of life. One of the plagues, thirst for pleasure, was highlighted by Gertken. According to him, this plague had led to barn dances becoming a problem in the colony and occasions of drunkenness and immodesty. Gertken forbade Catholics to take part in or to organize such dances. He emphasized that dancing was not immoral in itself if barn dances were held where behaviour was proper. It was better, however, to ban all barn dances to prevent further occasions of immoral behaviour.<sup>142</sup>

The tone of the pastoral letter of Gertken was almost as harsh as the circular issued by Mayer against the first colonists who lodged complaints against the Benedictines. The issues addressed by Gertken in 1929 were a far cry from the dispute between Mayer and St. Vincent Archabbey, though. The primary concern of Mayer during his leadership was disbanding Cluny and moving to Canada. His major opposition was with St. Vincent Archabbey which, he believed, made an unreasonable claim on the Cluny property. The primary concern of Doerfler for much of his term as a leader was building St. Peter's monastery and colony. He spent much of the time either borrowing or begging for money. The primary foes of Doerfler were those opposed to Catholic

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<sup>141</sup> White, 20-21.

<sup>142</sup> SPAA, Abbot Severin Gertken file, "Letters of Gertken," August 15, 1929 pastoral letter to the clergy and laity of St. Peter's Colony.

schools. His successors, Ott and Gertken, continued to promote Catholic education and scholarship as an essential part of the German-Catholic traditions. Ott believed a good education included the teaching of religion, while Gertken looked on education as essential in the formation of a person.

The Benedictine leadership was influential, but it had its limitations. Doerfler was unable to stamp out public drinking. He was forced to defend the priory against claims on land by settlers. Ott insisted that parents send their children to parochial schools, but the number of parochial schools dropped under his leadership. Gertken dealt with the immorality of barn dances and drinking, and had to contend with the last of the parochial schools closing under his term.

The Benedictines had a good working relationship with other non-German-speaking priests in Saskatchewan. They provided assistance to Irish priests and Irish settlers who were given permission by them to settle in the southeast corner of St. Peter's Colony. They became known as the Irish Colony.<sup>143</sup> The sense of solidarity Doerfler had with others outside the colony came to fruition in a good working relationship with the French bishop of the Diocese of Prince Albert. Bishop Albert Pascal, OMI, appointed Doerfler vicar general of the diocese when he was a prior. Doerfler was installed as administrator of the diocese when he was elevated to the position of abbot.<sup>144</sup>

The Benedictines exemplified their loyalty to the country by going through legal avenues to become a registered community. Whenever they came across a proposed law they felt unjust, they challenged it through legal channels. They also addressed their concerns to public officials and government members. During the First World War,

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<sup>143</sup>Jack Coughlin, *The Irish Colony of Saskatchewan* (Scarborough, Ontario: Lochleven Publishers, 1995), 5.

<sup>144</sup>Windschiegel, "Prior Bruno, Second Prior, First Abbot," 36-37.

Doerfler wrote how he wanted the war to end. His only opposition to government policy during the war was changes to liquor laws that restricted the sale and consumption of alcohol.<sup>145</sup> The disagreement over the law illustrated how attached the Benedictines were to traditions, even when they involved drinking.

Obedying the law was understood as being synonymous with being good and loyal citizens. Hoffmann illustrated the Benedictine understanding of citizenship in a farewell letter to his parishioners of St. Peter's parish, just after the First World War. In the letter he thanked everyone for their support of the parochial school. He wrote that he was hopeful the students of St. Peter's parish would grow to become "useful citizens and exemplary Catholics." The lessons of the nuns should make the students "good citizens of the commonwealth and after this life, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem." Hoffmann was grateful to the people for supporting the war effort, for assisting the destitute in Europe following the war, and for their ongoing support of the orphanage in Prince Albert.<sup>146</sup> Adherence to the law was encouraged, as well, by the bishops. When a provincial law was passed banning the presence of crucifixes and religious habits in public schools, the bishops in Saskatchewan told the Catholic faithful to obey the law. The bishops preferred to work within the legal system to change the law.<sup>147</sup>

The Benedictines did not express hostility to the larger Anglo-Canadian establishment, though the prejudice of the larger culture may have strengthened their resolve to preserve their German-Catholic traditions. The Benedictines of St. Peter's Colony followed the North American tradition of serving German Catholics with parishes

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<sup>145</sup> "Letters of Doerfler," Doerfler, June 17, 1915 letter to Engel.

<sup>146</sup> Chrysostom Hoffmann file, "Letters to Parishioners."

<sup>147</sup> "Letters of Gertken," Archbishop James McGuigan, June 9, 1930 letter to Abbot Severin Gertken.

and schools. Their German-Catholic values encompassed their religious faith, sense of sacrifice, strong work ethic, and working with the government and larger culture.

## Chapter Two Building Community and Country

An early map of St. Peter's Colony pinpoints the location of the Benedictine abbey and college close to the centre of the colony. The abbey appears as a hub from which the communities and churches of the colony branch out (see Appendix). The churches are represented by thirty-two crosses located in twenty-three communities; the remaining crosses are in rural areas.<sup>1</sup> The line marking the border of St. Peter's Colony designates it as a unique part of Saskatchewan, incorporating communities united by a common German language and Catholic faith. The map gives the impression that the colony is a close-knit entity, cut off from the remainder of the province. The colony is, in fact, a jurisdiction of the Roman Catholic Church and not a political unit. It is similar to a Roman Catholic Diocese with the exception that the spiritual leader of the colony is a prior or abbot and not a bishop. Official histories of the colony, published by the Benedictines, speak of the colony and Benedictines having an important role in the lives of the people in the colony.<sup>2</sup> The early map of St. Peter's Colony seems to confirm the Benedictine histories: the abbey and college appear to be central to the colony, providing life-giving support for the faith and educational institutions of the colonists.

The impression left by the map and Benedictine histories quickly fades away after reading the histories of communities in the former colony. The history books largely ignore the presence of the colony and give it little prominence in community life. Some

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<sup>1</sup> *Saint Peter's Abbey Archives (SPAA)*, map of St. Peter's Abbey, "St. Peter's Kolonie Abbatia Nullius."

<sup>2</sup> Jerome Weber, "St. Peter's Colony," in *A Journey of Faith: St. Peter's Abbacy: 1921-1996* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1996), 8; Peter Windschiegel, OSB, *Fifty Golden Years: 1903-1953* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1953), 29-34.

histories fail to even mention the colony, and those that do recognize it are divided on the relevance of the colony to their heritage. Some incorporate the colony as a part of their history, while others mention it in passing, implying that the colony had little influence on their past. All of the histories identify the presence of the church, whether Protestant or Catholic. The Benedictines are given credit, in a few instances, for the naming of communities or building of churches, though they are perceived as having little or no role in community life.

The stories of communities are an important means of clarifying how the communities perceived themselves as belonging to the former colony and the larger communities of the province and country. The community histories will give clarity to the role the Benedictines and colony played in governing community life. The community histories, apart from the records of local church officials, offer another view of colony life and its place in Saskatchewan. The community histories present a broader portrait of colony history, incorporating stories and memories from many facets of community life that encompass a more far-reaching understanding of the past.

Sixteen communities of the former St. Peter's Colony have recorded their stories in fifteen community history books that celebrate their heritage. The histories reveal that the colony was largely German Catholic, though there were other ethnic groups and denominations as well. German Catholics were a minority in some communities that were largely Anglo-Protestant and a minority in other communities that were comprised of many ethnic groups. The communities were shaped by their unique experiences and developed their own understandings of their heritage.

Most of the community histories were written about small towns or hamlets; only one is a city. All of the volumes incorporate the histories of surrounding rural municipalities and villages as well. Committees of local individuals in each community, comprised of usually eight or more people, compiled the histories and drew information from other members of their communities who wrote on specialized topics ranging from agriculture and recreation to health care and education. The committees all displayed creativity in their work, evidenced by the unique design and content of each history volume. Some have simple headings; others have banners with poetic titles that celebrate an aspect of local history or capture a sense of the past. The layout of each volume varies from community to community.

The history committees of each town worked independently of each other. The committees gathered information from local personalities and events to produce narratives that make each community unique, telling a story that sets it apart from other communities and gives each setting a unique character. Likewise, the communities have common characteristics which emerge in narratives about struggling, suffering, sharing, building, and cooperating. The uniqueness of the community histories is demonstrated in their diverse understandings of history.

The German-Catholic culture and Benedictines are credited with having a role in founding and shaping the future of some of these communities, but there are differences in the understanding of the meaning of this role. For example, the first three history books produced in the colony between 1950 and 1971 ignore the presence of the colony. The first history book, from a community that is largely Anglo-Protestant, fails to



mention both the colony and the Benedictines.<sup>3</sup> The other two history books are written in communities that are German Catholic and acknowledge the presence of the Benedictines.<sup>4</sup> The fourth community history book, published in 1973 in a German-Catholic community, situates itself in the colony and gives the Benedictines credit for having a role in its local history.<sup>5</sup>

All four communities produced subsequent history books in the following decades. The focus of one history changed to exclude the presence of the Benedictines and their college.<sup>6</sup> The focus of the other three histories remained the same.<sup>7</sup> Most of the remaining history books of the former St. Peter's Colony were written in the 1980s. One was written in the 1990s. Three communities produced updated versions of histories after the year 2000. The volumes disclose that most of the German Catholics settled in the central areas of the colony and are represented in the community histories of Humboldt, Bruno, Muenster, St. Gregor, Englefeld, Annaheim, Lake Lenore, Marysburg, and Pilger. There are two history books from Humboldt. One was published in 1982 and the second

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<sup>3</sup> Watson Board of Trade History Committee, "Introduction," 6-8, and "The Sacred Heart Church of Watson," 97-100, in *Watson: Fifty Years of Progress, 1900-1950* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1950).

<sup>4</sup> See: Robert Grant, *The Humboldt Story: 1903-1953* (Humboldt, Sask.: Humboldt Board of Trade, 1954), 1-9; St. Gregor Homecoming Committee, "General History," 1-11, and "St. Gregory Roman Catholic Church," 22-25, in *Homesteading to Homecoming: 1903-1971, A History of St. Gregor and District* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1971).

<sup>5</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, "The German Catholic Settlers," by Fr. Werner Renneberg, OSB, 8-12, "St. Peter's Parish," by Anne Daeger, 14-23, "St. Peter's Abbey and College," 29, and "St. Peter's Bote," 34, in *Memories of Muenster's 70 Progressive Years: 1903-1973* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1973).

<sup>6</sup> Humboldt and District History Book Committee, "Pre Humboldt and Area History," 3-8, and "History of Humboldt and Area," 9-20, in *The Best of Humboldt Centennial Edition, including Burr, Carmel, Fulda and Marysburg* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> See: Watson History Book Committee, "Our Early History," 1-5, and "Early History of Watson," by Greg Putnam and Michael Becker, 6-9, in *A Century of Progress, Watson and District, Volume 1* (Altona, Manitoba: Friesens Corporation, 2003); Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "The German Catholic Settlers," by Werner Renneberg, 4-7, "Report on Free Homesteads," by F.I. Lange, 14-16, "St. Peter's Abbey," by Martin Brodner, 34-38, and "Sisters of St. Elizabeth and The Ursuline Sisters," 117-124, in *Muenster and District Centenary History: 1903-2003, As the Creek Flows On* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 2003); and St. Gregor History Book Committee, "General History," 2-7, and "Parish of St. Gregory," 42-45 in *Homesteading to Homecoming: 1903-1996* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1996).

in 2006. The newest version incorporates brief histories of three smaller German-Catholic settlements: Burr, Carmel, and Fulda. The Lake Lenore history includes the small community of Verndale whose settlers were largely Anglo-Saxon Protestant. The community of Middle Lake, in the north-central district, was dominated by German Lutherans. The second largest group there was German Catholic.

Anglo-Saxon Protestants formed the majority of citizens in the eastern area of the colony and are represented in the histories of Watson, Spalding, Naicam, and LeRoy. A small French-Catholic community, Lac Vert, was situated in the northeast near Naicam; its history is incorporated in the history of Naicam. The smaller settlements of Daphne and Romance are included in the histories of Naicam and Spalding. German Catholics were a minority in these communities. Another community of Irish-Catholic background, Sinnett, was carved out in the southeast. Sinnett, founded by Roman Catholic priest John Sinnett, SJ, is included in the history of LeRoy. The south-western portion of the colony had the most diverse ethnic makeup. It was comprised of French, Belgian, Hungarian, Ukrainian, Polish, English, and German immigrants and they are represented in the history book for the communities of Peterson and Dana. One common factor among the citizens of Peterson and Dana was that there was no dominant ethnic group, though the majority were Catholic.

All of the history books situate their communities in Saskatchewan and/or Canada. There is no suggestion that any community is an inherent part of St. Peter's Colony. Only seven community histories even mention that they were part of a German-Catholic colony and all of these histories are from communities where German Catholics

formed the majority of citizens.<sup>8</sup> There is some acknowledgement of the colony in two communities where German Catholics formed the majority. Reference is made to the colony by one of these communities in the section dedicated to churches. The other community refers to the colony in a special article commemorating its centennial.<sup>9</sup> Both communities recognize the colony from the vantage point of church life and not community life.

The German-Catholic histories have one common denominator in their understanding of local history in that they all attach importance to the availability of cheap land as a reason for local settlement. Six communities trace their beginnings to the idea of both a German-Catholic colony and cheap land.<sup>10</sup> Two histories link their beginnings to the cheap land and settlers, though they recognize the presence of the Indians before the arrival of settlers.<sup>11</sup> One community states that its history began before the settlers; it maps its history to the glaciers that formed the landscape, and is proud of

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<sup>8</sup> The seven German-Catholic communities acknowledging the German-Catholic colony included: Annaheim, Bruno, Englefeld, Lake Lenore, Marysburg, Muenster and Pilger.

<sup>9</sup> The history book of St. Gregor refers to the colony in the section dedicated to churches. See: St. Gregor History Book Committee, "Parish of St. Gregory," 42-45 in *Homesteading to Homecoming: 1903-1996*. The updated history book of Humboldt, printed in 2006, refers to the colony in an article on its centennial. See: Humboldt and District History Book Committee, "Humboldt's Centennial Celebrations," by Jennifer Hoesgen, curator, Humboldt and District Museum and Gallery, 840. The Benedictines are mentioned in both histories.

<sup>10</sup> See: Pilger History Book Committee, "The Immigrants," 9-11, in *Pilger Memories: 1903-1980* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1980); Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "The German Catholic Settlers," by Werner Renneberg, 4-7, "Report on Free Homesteads," by F.I. Lange, 14-16, "St. Peter's Abbey," by Martin Brodner, 34-38, and "Sisters of St. Elizabeth and The Ursuline Sisters," 117-124; Annaheim and District History Committee, "Introduction: Chapter 1," 9-13, in *A Cross in the Clearing: A History: 1903-1980* (Melfort, Sask.: Phillips Publishers Ltd., 1980); Bruno History Book Committee, "Early Beginnings," 1, and "Town of Bruno," 9, in *Up to Now* (North Battleford, Sask.: Turner-Warwick Printers, Inc., 1984); Marysburg History Book Committee, "Pioneer Memories," 1-7, "Marysburg and District," 195-198, and "Church," 209-215, in *Beyond Our Dreams, Marysburg and Area* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1987); Lake Lenore History Book Committee, "Chapter 1, Our Heritage," 1-2, and "St. Anthony's Parish," 67-74, in *Sharing Our Heritage, Lake Lenore and Area* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1986).

<sup>11</sup> See: St. Gregor History Book Committee, "General History," 2-7, and "Parish of St. Gregory," 42-45 in *Homesteading to Homecoming: 1903-1996*; Englefeld Historical Society, "Dedication," by Del Koenig, vi, and "History of Englefeld," by Aline Schulte, 3, in *Fields of Prosperity, A History of Englefeld: 1903-1987* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1988).

the fact that it is linked to a former famous trail, the Carlton Trail, and to a major historical event in Saskatchewan, the Riel Rebellion of 1885.<sup>12</sup> There is no reference to the colony having a role in the history of the remaining six community histories where German Catholics were a minority. Three of these communities connect their beginnings to the settlers.<sup>13</sup> Another three trace their past to the presence of Indians and the fur trade.<sup>14</sup>

All of the history books agree on the importance of pioneers who are praised for their sacrifice and hard work. Some volumes have poems dedicated to pioneers and others have included stories of pioneers as a part of their community histories. Some books point out the remarkable faith, work ethic, and culture of the pioneers. There are sections in all the books dedicated to, among other things, schools, churches and the priests and pastors who served them.

The high esteem of settlers for religion and education became apparent soon after arriving in the colony when they insisted that churches and schools be built, in spite of struggling to build homes and plant crops and gardens. Many of the settlers had taken their children out of public and parochial schools in the United States to come to Canada and wanted their children to continue their education. The colonists wanted schools built

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<sup>12</sup> The Humboldt Journal, "Humboldt, 1875-1907," 1-22 in *The Best of Humboldt* (Humboldt, Sask.: The Humboldt Journal, 1982); and Humboldt and District History Book Committee, "Pre Humboldt and Area History," 3-8.

<sup>13</sup> See: Spalding and District Historical Society, "Old Spalding," vi., and "Spalding Literary Society," 18-19, in *Spalding Roots and Branches* (Altoona, Manitoba: Friesen Printers, 1981); Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, "Introduction," 4, in *Middle Lake: The Vintage Years* (Winnipeg: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1982); Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "Dana's Early Settlers," by P.R. Pantella, 1, and "Peterson Community," 10-11, in *Down Memory Lane* (Humboldt, Sask.: Humboldt Publishing Limited, 1980).

<sup>14</sup> See: Watson History Book Committee, "Our Early History," 1-5, and "Early History of Watson," by Greg Putnam and Michael Becker, 6-9, in *A Century of Progress, Watson and District, Volume I*; Naicam Heritage Book Committee, "Earliest Pioneers," 89-90, and "Lac Vert," 86, in *Gleanings Along the Way: A History of Naicam, Lac Vert and Surrounding Districts* (Winnipeg: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1980); LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, "Introduction," vi., and "RM of LeRoy," by Delwyn J. Jansen, 1-6, in *As the Furrows Turn: 1900-1985, LeRoy and District* (Altoona, Manitoba: Friesen Printers, 1986).

as quickly as possible and preferred public schools because they were supported financially by the province.

The first settlers gave the impression that the colony was a place to preserve their traditions, while living harmoniously with other Canadians, as opposed to isolating themselves from the remainder of the country. The settlers cooperated with education officials to meet provincial educational standards. They built parochial schools only after realizing they needed at least a dozen qualified teachers to staff all the schools and only six teachers were available. There were another six teachers in the colony that lacked Canadian teaching certificates. “They (colonists) consequently concluded that unless they took action other than simply establishing public schools, a significant portion of their children might be denied an education,” wrote historian Clinton White.<sup>15</sup> The settlers launched a three-year drive to build parochial schools staffed either by teachers from the colony or those brought in from the United States. Sixteen parochial schools were operating by 1908 and eleven were still open by the beginning of the First World War. The decision to open a school was often made at a meeting following a church service or in someone’s home. Some individuals even organized schools on their own initiative because they wanted to prevent a delay in the education of children in their districts. The eagerness to open schools as quickly as possible superseded even knowing whether sufficient funds were available to operate them. “In view of such considerations and the undeveloped state of St. Peter’s when most parochial schools were organized,” historian

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<sup>15</sup> Clinton White, “German Catholic Schools in St. Peter’s Colony: Their Buildings, Equipment and Finances,” (Regina, Sask., Campion College, University of Regina, 1995), 17. More information in White, “Pre-World War I Elementary Educational Developments,” 176-190.

Clinton White observed, “it is not surprising that facilities were primitive and desirable educational apparatus often lacking during the early years in which they functioned.”<sup>16</sup>

The majority of German Catholics, meanwhile, were either working together to organize public schools or cooperating with other ethnic groups to open public schools.<sup>17</sup> A committee of parents was required to make an application to the province to form a school district; the rural municipality was included in this process. The choosing of the name of a school was usually carried out after a number of names were submitted at a meeting of ratepayers and then voted upon. The names had to be approved by the Department of Education.<sup>18</sup>

German Catholics felt some pressure to give the schools names of German-Catholic saints. The Benedictines insisted that colonists choose names that reflected their German-Catholic heritage. An article from *St. Peter's Bote* of February 1904 urged Roman Catholics to listen to the priests concerning religious education in schools. The priests, the article stated, wanted the people to send their children to schools with religious convictions. The school districts should have German religious names.<sup>19</sup> The priests had little influence, however, as most of their parishioners chose to send their children to public schools. A minority of the schools were parish schools with religious names and another two were separate schools.<sup>20</sup> The names that were chosen were

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 18. This situation applies to St. Bruno School, opened by Chrysostom Hoffmann, OSB. See SPAA: correspondence of Hoffmann to his sister Bertha, October 9, 1909. This applies to August Klein who founded Sacred Heart. There is more information on the creation of parochial schools in White, “Pre-World War I Saskatchewan German Catholic Thought.”

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 20

<sup>18</sup> Watson History Book Committee, “Organizing a School District,” by Leora Callele, 141; and LeRoy Historical Society, “School Districts: Organizing a New School District,” 87-89.

<sup>19</sup> Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, “Formation of School Districts (copied from *St. Peter's Bote*, February 1904),” 174-175.

<sup>20</sup> Tony Saretsky, “Education in St. Peter's Abbey,” 348-350, in *A Journey of Faith, St. Peter's Abbey: 1921-1996* (Muenster, Sask., St. Peter's Press, 1996).

usually reflective of the local experiences of pioneers, and most of the names of schools were secular and did not promote a religious or ethnic ideology. Schools were usually named after local families, war veterans, trees or plants, terrain, or places where immigrants had once lived. A small percentage of schools were named after saints.<sup>21</sup> The Bruno area is illustrative of this pattern where Hoffman School was named after Peter Hoffman, a pioneer who donated an acre of land for the school. Ironside School was named after E.K. Ironside, an early settler of the area. Kildrum School was named in honour of Kildrum Country, Ireland, the former home of a local family. Other schools were called St. Quentin, Sunlight, and Pleasant Grove.<sup>22</sup>

The quality of education in the colony schools improved within the next ten years as settlers began to prosper. By 1911 many colonists had replaced their log cabins with larger frame dwellings and many felt they were emerging from their pioneer stages. Some were even able to purchase luxury automobiles.<sup>23</sup> Many settlers were optimistic that the future was bright and believed more money should be spent on education. This optimism was generated in part by the opening of St. Elizabeth Hospital in Humboldt in 1911 by Franciscan (Sisters of St. Elizabeth) nuns from Klagenfurt, Austria. It was heightened even more by Abbot Bruno Doerfler bringing Ursulines in 1913 and 1914 to teach:

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<sup>21</sup> See: Englefeld Historical Society, "School," 39-67; St. Gregor History Book Committee, "St. Gregor and Area Schools," 51-52; Anaheim and District History Committee, "Education at the Edge of the Forest," 137-158; Pilger History Book Committee, "The St. Bernard Schools," 31, and "Colorado-Pilger-School," 33; Marysburg History Book Committee, "Education," 229-245; Lake Lenore History Book Committee, "Education," 90-110; Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "Education," 174-204; LeRoy Historical Society, "School Districts," 87-136; Watson History Book Committee, "Schools," 141-177; Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "RM of Bayne No. 371," 425, "Kildrum School," 46; Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, "Schools," 25-49; Naicam Heritage Book, "Schools," 42-63; Spalding and District Historical Society, "Schools," 47-83.

<sup>22</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, "Schools in Our District," 74-111.

<sup>23</sup> White, 18.

News that teachers of a religious order were being sought or were on their way spread rapidly throughout the colony and produced a flurry of requests for the services of more sisters than were available. As might be expected, this situation produced some competition among Catholics, success in which would determine not only which parishes obtained Ursulines but also where their convent would be located. Thus, within a short space of time, over half of all parochial school boards arranged for the erection of new buildings, including the four large boarding schools which the sisters initially took over.<sup>24</sup>

The Ursulines immediately began working to improve education in parochial and public schools by increasing the school year to 200 or more days, and arranging to teach all eight grades. Schools in Humboldt improved access to education by offering high school classes. The Saskatchewan government, meanwhile, launched the Better Schools Movement to improve the level of education for students by improving school buildings and facilities, keeping students in school for a full year rather than just part of the year, and improving teacher qualifications.<sup>25</sup> The enthusiasm for education, coupled with prosperity from the war, led to improvements to parochial schools.<sup>26</sup>

German Catholics were both interested in educating their children and having their children learn English, according to Werner Renneberg, OSB, as most of their children understood very little English when starting school. Both German and English were taught in schools, especially parochial schools. The children in the Muenster school liked to speak English on the playground. A teacher told the students to speak German, but they refused. There was no uniform standard for language on school grounds. Some of the children preferred to speak English while others spoke German. The students in the German-Catholic areas began to speak less German and more English as the years progressed until eventually, German ceased to be taught at the primary level. People born after 1930 did not have the fluent German skills of their parents. German sermons, once

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<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 19.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.* More discussion of this issue can be found in Duane Mombourquette, "The Saskatchewan Public Education League and Its Activities" (Honours Paper, History Department, University of Regina, 1986.)

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*



common in parishes, began to be replaced by English in the 1930s, and even when German was spoken, sentences would be intermixed with English words.<sup>27</sup>

The community history books record only one debate over the issue of language in schools. Parents to the north of Peterson did not want to become part of a local school district. They were French-speaking and sent their children outside of the colony boundaries to the school at Prud'homme to learn French. Their actions caused a delay in organizing the local Red Willow School District because many of the ratepayers were French speaking.<sup>28</sup> The only written evidence of tension between Protestants and Catholics was expressed in the Humboldt history book and it concerned education. A Catholic layman and two priests spoke to Catholic parishes about tensions with Protestants. They told the parishes that Catholics could not send their children to a public school, so a separate school was established in Humboldt in 1906.<sup>29</sup>

The most common problem recorded regarding schools was truancy and some school districts tried to solve the problem by appointing truant officers.<sup>30</sup> Others gave allowances or awards for best attendance to encourage students to attend school.<sup>31</sup>

The hiring of teachers was a concern of school trustees who sometimes were confronted with a shortage of teachers and teachers leaving after only one year in an

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<sup>27</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, "The German Catholic Settlers," by Werner Renneberg, 8.

<sup>28</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "A Summary of the History of Red Willow," by Peter Dutchak, 32.

<sup>29</sup> The Humboldt Journal, "Humboldt Schools," 48.

<sup>30</sup> See: Naicam Heritage Book Committee, "Naicam School No. 1999," by Annie Hall, 63; Lake Lenore History Book Committee, "Selmond School District," by Evelyn Lung, 93-94; Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "Kildrum School," 44

<sup>31</sup> See: Lake Lenore History Book Committee, "Lenore Valley School," by Kay Silzer, 91-92; Englefeld Historical Society, "Korbel School District," by Marie Seier, 52, and "Chelton School," 50.

assignment.<sup>32</sup> A report of Leavenworth School from the Anaheim district mentions the first teachers “all came from Eastern Canada and stayed for only short periods of time.”<sup>33</sup> The secretary of Taylor School near Lake Lenore corresponded with principals at teaching schools in Saskatoon, Moose Jaw, Estevan, and Prince Albert, and with the Teachers Agency at Wolseley.<sup>34</sup>

Disagreement over where to locate schools was recorded in one division. Ratepayers in the Englefeld area solved the issue there by moving the school to a more central location.<sup>35</sup>

There is sparse information from community history books on subjects taught in local schools. Students were taught Grades 1 to 8 at Lenore Valley School and some students took correspondence for Grades 9 or 10.<sup>36</sup> The students at Leavenworth School near Anaheim were supplied with Ontario, Alexander, and Canadian readers: “The three-R’s were the main subjects as well as a little bit of geography,” remembers former teacher Erna Hoffman.<sup>37</sup> Betty Schwartz, a former student of Greenside School near Englefeld, remembers the breaks “from the monotony of school work.” The students would sing or play sports, or the teacher would read a storybook.<sup>38</sup> The school histories usually list the dates when schools were built, the cost of building and operating them, teacher and janitor salaries, names of teachers, and the years they taught.

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<sup>32</sup> White, “The German Catholic Parochial Schools of Saskatchewan’s St. Peter’s Colony, 1903-1934: Their Teachers, Curriculum and Quality of Instruction,” (Regina, Sask., Champion College, University of Regina, 1995), 2-3.

<sup>33</sup> Anaheim and District History Committee, “Leavenworth SD No. 1521,” 147.

<sup>34</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Taylor and Lake Lenore District No. 1473,” by Jean Peterson, 100.

<sup>35</sup> Englefeld Historical Society, “Korbel School District,” by Marie Seier, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Lenore Valley School,” by Kay Silzer, 92.

<sup>37</sup> Anaheim and District History Committee, “Leavenworth SD No. 1521,” by Erna Hoffman, 147.

<sup>38</sup> Englefeld Historical Society, “Greenside School District No. 1663,” by Betty Schwartz, 62.

One of the more vivid descriptions of school life is from Korbel School near Englefeld. Students and teachers, in 1907, had slates and a few books at their disposal. Two students shared a desk and the teacher's desk was a table. There were few windows in the classroom at first, making for poor lighting, but later more windows were added. The building was cold in winter, its only source of heat coming from a jacket-furnace located in one corner of the classroom. Students liked to sit near the furnace to keep warm in the cold months. Classes were in session from April to mid-December. Holidays were taken in the winter because of cold weather and poor roads. When harvesting took place, the older children skipped classes to help on the farm.<sup>39</sup>

Parochial schools had the greatest difficulty raising money to maintain schools during their thirty years of existence, in spite of the fact that most ratepayers were German Catholics who valued education and their clergy encouraged them to support parish schools.<sup>40</sup> The common reason cited in the community histories for closing parochial schools was a lack of funds. The parish school in Bruno closed when parishioners complained the school was a financial drain on them.<sup>41</sup> The ratepayers of St. Gregor petitioned the Department of Education in 1913 to establish a public school there. The parochial school had been financed through assessments of \$10 for each homesteader, and after four years it became clear to the school trustees that the levy was not bringing in enough money to operate the school. They were hesitant to increase the assessment, believing the ratepayers could not afford to pay higher fees.<sup>42</sup> The attitude of German Catholics in the Pilger district towards the provincial government was expressed

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<sup>39</sup> Englefeld Historical Society, "Korbel School District No. 1415," by Marie Seier, 53.

<sup>40</sup> Saretsky, "Education in St. Peter's Abbacy," 348-350, in *A Journey of Faith, St. Peter's Abbacy: 1921-1996*.

<sup>41</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, "A History of a Parish: St. Bruno," 115.

<sup>42</sup> St. Gregor Homecoming Committee, "St. Gregor and Area Schools," 51-52.

at a meeting to decide the future of the local parochial school. The meeting agreed that the cost of operating St. Bernard's Parochial School was prohibitive, and the greater freedom of classroom instruction in parochial schools was not enough of an incentive to keep the school open: "Economics forced the people to re-think their situation. The governments generally were quite friendly to Catholics. The district was nearly solidly Catholic, and many felt that a public school would, for all practical purposes, be a Catholic School. And of course it would cost much less to operate with government grants available," records the Pilger history book.<sup>43</sup> The parish school in Pilger went public in 1927.<sup>44</sup>

By late 1921, all of the land in the colony had been organized into 114 public school districts lying either completely within or partially within the borders of the colony. There were ninety-six public schools operating during this period and when another eighteen public school districts became operational everyone was now faced with the prospect of having to support two schools. They had to decide: whether to leave their children in a parochial school and pay the assessments of both schools; transfer their children to the public school and continue to contribute toward the upkeep of the parochial school; or enrol their children in the public school and refuse to pay parochial school assessments. Ratepayers who chose the first two options were forced to pay more towards education than some of their neighbours. The first two options, as early as 1908, were considered to be unjust.<sup>45</sup> Catholics who selected the third option faced criticism of the clergy for non-payment of assessments and from neighbours who continued to use the parochial school and had to increase their contributions. To make matters worse, non-

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<sup>43</sup> Pilger History Book Committee, "The St. Bernard Schools," 31.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> White, 20-21. See file of St. Bruno School, Publications, May 17, 1908.

payment could also create ill will among members of a congregation toward their priest. The hierarchy viewed the pastor of a parish containing a parochial school as the person in charge of the school, and it was therefore his responsibility to urge parishioners to meet their obligations. One pastor denied communion to a man who took his children out of a parochial school. Other parishioners did not agree with the pastor's actions because the man was poor.<sup>46</sup>

Raising funds for parochial schools was always a difficult task and increasingly became a source of grievance and ill feelings among Catholics as public school districts increased in number. Closing parochial schools became the solution for preventing double taxation and delinquency in the payment of parochial school assessments. In spite of the funding problems, seven of St. Peter's parochial schools operated between twenty-three to twenty-nine years and another five from twelve to nineteen years. By 1922, six of the schools boasted facilities that were superior to the majority of public schools in Saskatchewan, and five of the remainder were equal to most other schools. Two-thirds of the buildings became the public schools in their districts when parochial schools ceased to operate in the late 1920s and early 1930s.<sup>47</sup>

As colonists debated the merits of parochial schools, they had to come to terms with their minority status in Canada during the First World War. Renneberg, OSB writes in the Muenster history that the Anglo-Canadian establishment became suspicious of the loyalty of German Canadians who faced injustices by the federal government. Many lost their vote in the federal election of 1917, yet their sons were drafted into the army. Some German newspapers were suspended. Others were forced to publish in the English

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<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 21. This information was given in casual conversations about the St. Joseph parish.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 19-20.

language. Renneberg wrote that the Canadians with a German background did not rebel against any of these injustices and were willing to accept the laws and customs of their country. In many instances German Canadians were reluctant to speak up for their rights. Germans were suspected by authorities if they spoke German in public. During the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan came to Saskatchewan and held anti-Catholic rallies. News of the rallies filtered to St. Peter's Colony and caused apprehension among some people, Renneberg commented. In the First World War and Second World War, the German-Canadians felt the need to prove they were as patriotic as any other ethnic group.<sup>48</sup>

Loyalty to Canada is expressed in all the history books in the former St. Peter's Colony in the sections dedicated to veterans. The communities with an Anglo-Saxon Protestant majority, with the exception of Humboldt, are the only ones with sections dedicated to both First World War and Second World War veterans. The histories of the German-Catholic communities have sections dedicated only to Second World War veterans. It is difficult to designate between First and Second World War veterans in the community of Middle Lake.

The communities with the most obvious signs of loyalty are those where Anglo-Saxon Protestants were the majority. The town of LeRoy was named after a soldier who was killed in the First World War. Interestingly, this fact is not stated in the history of the community, but it is listed in the history of the LeRoy family.<sup>49</sup> The community of Spalding held a Coronation Day picnic at Round Lake in 1911.<sup>50</sup> In 1915, the Rural Municipality (RM) of Spalding exempted all ratepayers "enlisted in His Majesty's

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<sup>48</sup> Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "The German Catholic Settlers," by Renneberg, 4.

<sup>49</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, "Town of LeRoy," by Elsie Wiens, 51, and "The LeRoy Story," by Myrtle Schroeder, 541.

<sup>50</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, "Spalding: A Sporting Town," by Jack Felsing, 89.

forces” from taxes, and in 1916, the RM of Spalding cancelled the patriotic tax on land belonging to enlisted men.<sup>51</sup>

One of the prized hotels in Watson was named in honour of the former head of state, Queen Victoria; it was called Victoria. It was later named the King George Hotel. The hotel was the social centre of the town. The Bank of Commerce in Watson held five-franc notes of the Bank of France for sale for 95 cents each so they could be sent with letters to soldiers in France. The notes could be used by soldiers for buying cigarettes and other necessities.<sup>52</sup> A post office south of Watson was named after Robert Lampard, a local soldier who was killed in the First World War.<sup>53</sup> The Great War Veterans Association was formed in Naicam in 1920 and its members included residents of outlying villages as well. A cenotaph was erected at Naicam “in remembrance of those gallant comrades who lost their lives in war.”<sup>54</sup>

The RM of Three Lakes in 1920 cancelled taxes on land belonging to soldiers. The RM, which is near Middle Lake, gave a grant of \$500 to the town of Humboldt towards a memorial in honour of soldiers who fell in the First World War. The Lake Ignace School in the Middle Lake area opened in 1914. Among the other names suggested for the school were King George and Queen Mary.<sup>55</sup>

In 1914, Humboldt became a recruiting station for volunteers to the army. The next year the citizens sent flour to Belgium to help the hungry and initiated a patriotic

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<sup>51</sup> Watson History Book Committee, “RM of Spalding,” by John Callele, 22.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, “Watson Hotels and Motels,” by Merv Warner, 56, and “Looking Back at our Changing Way of Life,” by Leora Callele, 285.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, “Lampard,” by Leora Callele, 25.

<sup>54</sup> Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “Bying School,” 43, and “Canadian Legion, Naicam Branch,” by Skuli Ketilson and Reg Starks, 199.

<sup>55</sup> Middle Lake History Book Committee, “The Rural Municipality of Three Lakes,” 16, and “Lake Ignace School,” 38.

fund to support the war effort.<sup>56</sup> The Great War Veterans Association began in 1918 with the mandate to assist returning veterans in adjusting to civilian life. The name changed in 1925 to The Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League. A ladies auxiliary to the Great War Veterans Association was formed in Humboldt during 1919 and raised money to help veterans and their families. In 1926 the name changed to Ladies Auxiliary, Canadian Legion of the British Empire Service League.<sup>57</sup> The veterans of the First World War were honoured in 1921 when a cenotaph was dedicated on the courthouse grounds. Patriotism was expressed in addresses during 1928 at the special 21<sup>st</sup> anniversary celebrations of the founding of Humboldt. The entertainment for the celebration included “patriotic selections” of music and “choruses of O Canada.”<sup>58</sup>

The Ursulines in the colony strengthened their ties to Canada during the First World War. The Ursulines first came to Canada in 1911 because they were afraid that the German government would seize their property. They experienced the loss of property in 1873 during the *Kulturkampf* under Bismarck, and the Ursulines believed a foundation in Canada would be a good refuge for them. During the war, all communication was cut off from their motherhouse and, as a result, the Ursulines in St. Peter’s Colony decided to become independent from their German motherhouse in 1916. The Canadian sisters believed they could better serve the colony as an independent community. Benedictine Abbot Bruno Doerfler advised them to adapt to the customs of Canadians who expected

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<sup>56</sup> Humboldt and District History Book Committee, “Part 2: History of Humboldt and Area,” 14-17.

<sup>57</sup> The Humboldt Journal, “Royal Canadian Legion,” by Rev. I. Fraser, 138-139, and “Royal Canadian Legion Ladies Auxiliary,” by Helen Kohlman, 140.

<sup>58</sup> Humboldt and District History Book Committee, “Part 2: History of Humboldt and Area,” 17-19.



them to have more contact with the larger community than they did with people in Germany.<sup>59</sup>

Most of the communities of St. Peter's Colony would not have fit into the mould of the average Saskatchewan town which was dominated by Anglo-Canadians and wanted the province to stay that way.<sup>60</sup> These pro-British sentiments were held in towns throughout the Canadian prairies, writes historian Gerald Friesen. "The typical town existed as an outpost of British-Canadian civilization. It was patriotic. ... It upheld the virtues of order and respectability. ... It accepted the dictates of the national and international economy. ... It was a bastion of empire, in economic and cultural terms," Friesen said.<sup>61</sup> Putting their religion and nationality aside, the German-Catholic communities of St. Peter's Colony embraced these same values of loyalty held by the Anglo-Canadian majority. The German Catholics promoted their local economies, interlinked them with the larger Canadian economy, and worked together with their Anglo-Canadian neighbours to build communities both within and without the colony.

The first communities of St. Peter's Colony came into being before the arrival of the railroad while others grew around local stations. The railroad came through the colony on five separate occasions between 1904 and 1930. Four villages, disappointed the rail lines bypassed them, relocated to the nearest station situated from a half mile to a few miles away. These included the communities of Pilger, Lake Lenore, Spalding, and Middle Lake.<sup>62</sup> Celebrations were held in Naicam when the Canadian Pacific Railway

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<sup>59</sup> Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "The Ursuline Sisters," 122-124.

<sup>60</sup> Bill Waiser, *Saskatchewan: A New History* (Calgary: Fifth House Ltd., 2006), 250-251.

<sup>61</sup> Gerald Friesen, *The Canadian Prairies: A History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), 325.

<sup>62</sup> See: Pilger History Book Committee, "St. Bernard Historical Notes," 13, "The Building of a Fine Community," 47-48; Lake Lenore History Book Committee, "History of Lake Lenore Village," 3; Spalding and District Historical Society, "Old Spalding," vi; Middle Lake History Book Committee, "Middle Lake," 84-85.

passed through<sup>63</sup> and Lake Lenore when the Canadian National Railway reached the community.<sup>64</sup> The business community in Dana credited its prosperity to the Canadian Northern which hauled freight and passenger cars through each day.<sup>65</sup>

The importance of transportation to the livelihood of communities brought some to lobby for improved road conditions. The village of Middle Lake, in 1927, asked the province to add it and other neighbouring communities to the provincial highway system. Organizations were formed throughout the colony to promote business and trade. The Middle Lake Board of Trade was established to encourage prosperity,<sup>66</sup> and a board of trade in Watson had the mandate “to see and recognize the needs of the community, and the will to do something about it.”<sup>67</sup> Residents of communities formed clubs that promoted telephone companies, the building of community halls, and curling rinks. Some individuals built power companies. Others cooperated to improve local safety and services by establishing fire brigades. Some villages had bylaws for keeping the streets clean.<sup>68</sup>

The improved living conditions led to lumber replacing logs in the construction of buildings and businesses became established to supply a new market for motor vehicles and farm machinery. One pioneer in Muenster realized how the community, between

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<sup>63</sup> Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “The CPR-The Iron Horse,” 91.

<sup>64</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “History of Lake Lenore Village,” 3.

<sup>65</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “Dana Village,” by M. Pantella, 2-3.

<sup>66</sup> Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, “The Rural Municipality of Three Lakes 400,” 16, and “Middle Lake Board of Trade,” 100.

<sup>67</sup> Watson History Book Committee, “Watson and District Chamber of Commerce,” by Cathy Coleman and Ardele Painter, 14.

<sup>68</sup> The community of Humboldt boasted electricity, a waterworks and sewage system, telephone company and college by 1930. See Humboldt and District History Book Committee, “History of Humboldt and Area,” 14-19. The community of Bruno had a clay works plant and electricity for homeowners and businesses. It enforced bylaws to keep the streets clean. See Bruno History Book Committee, “Town of Bruno,” 9-11, and “The Bruno Clayworks,” by W.F. Hargarten, 51-56. Companies in Englefeld supplied telephone service and electricity in Englefeld. See Englefeld Historical Society, “History of Englefeld,” by Aline Schulte, 12.

1920 and 1930, was becoming more modern. Many houses, barns, granaries, and sheds that had been built of logs were replaced by structures of lumber. More cars began to be driven as the roads improved.<sup>69</sup>

The farmers in Watson, between 1906 and 1913, became involved in forming their own grain handling and transportation companies. Their cooperation was prompted by the failure of grain companies to handle the increase in grain production.<sup>70</sup> A cheese factory opened in 1925 near LeRoy through the cooperation of local merchants and a milk producers association. Dairy farmers sold milk to the cheese factory and were paid in coupons; the coupons were redeemable at the local grocery stores. The factory closed in 1927 when it became more profitable for dairy producers to sell milk to creameries, and the cost for making cheese increased.<sup>71</sup>

Another trademark of the people of Saskatchewan was their love of entertainment, particularly sports, the most popular of which were baseball, curling, and hockey. "Every school and community had a ball team, and towns would vie with one another to put on one of the best money tournaments," according to historian Bill Waiser.<sup>72</sup> The majority of the communities of St. Peter's Colony fit into this prairie mould; most communities had sports teams, whether baseball, curling, or hockey, and they often competed against each other at local and district levels. The only tension recorded between communities was through rivalries concerning baseball and hockey.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "Agriculture," by Ray Hoffman, 292-293.

<sup>70</sup> Watson History Book Committee, "Elevators and Grain Companies in Watson," by Frank Weber and Dan Schmitz, 78-79.

<sup>71</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, "Cheese Factory Serves Needs of LeRoy Community," by Vi Smith and Bernie Weisgerber, 175.

<sup>72</sup> Waiser, 275.

<sup>73</sup> A baseball league disbanded over a dispute over age limit rules. See Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "Dana School District No. 1714," by P.R. Pantella, 63. Spalding and Watson were rival hockey

Other forms of popular entertainment in Saskatchewan were movies, educational lectures, plays, and musical performances.<sup>74</sup> These pastimes were enjoyed by the communities of St. Peter's Colony as well. Many communities in the colony had musicians who formed bands and played for dances and festive occasions. Two of the communities, Spalding and Marysburg, had active drama and literary societies. The literary society in Spalding staged musical selections, vocal solos and duets, and readings on the lives and works of poets. Debates were held on the issues of the day. Among these were: whether tobacco was more harmful than liquor; whether Canada should separate from the mother country; protectionism vs. free trade; stock farming vs. grain farming; city life vs. country life.<sup>75</sup>

A notebook from the Marysburg Drama Society in 1923-24 records activities of the organization. The society sponsored dances, picnics, and socials to raise money for the community hall. There was entertainment as well at the meetings where jokes were told, debates were held, essays were read on the stars, sun, and moon, and German songs were sung. A reading on Hunting the Wild Pole Cat was well received. A meeting in December of 1923 learned of the difficult conditions in Germany and it was decided to raise money for the destitute there. Debates at the April meetings of 1924 were on: Single vs. Married Life, and Horse vs. Motor Power. The most controversial issue discussed by the dramatic society was in August of 1924 in which there had been a misunderstanding with the pastor, who had accused the literary society of interfering with the annual parish

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communities and fights sometimes broke out between players. See Watson History Book Committee, "Hockey in the Beginning," by Ed Weber and Dave Schmid, 243.

<sup>74</sup> Waiser, 275.

<sup>75</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, "Spalding Literary Society," 19.

picnic. The society agreed to work with the pastor.<sup>76</sup> The Leofeld German Canadian Folk Group recorded activities of the organization, as well. The folk group was part of an international German Folk Group that promoted the German Culture in Canada and in countries throughout Europe. The Leofeld branch agreed, at its June 1923 meeting, to work with the Canadian government in helping Germans to immigrate to Canada. The folk group was informed that many Canadians of German background found it difficult to sponsor relatives who wanted to immigrate to Canada. The Leofeld folk group members believed Canada needed more settlers and it could assist German relatives of Canadians who wanted to move to Canada. An ongoing concern of the organization was fundraising and raising money to build a new community hall.<sup>77</sup>

Many community histories, as well, recorded stories that were unique to the local community, signifying the influence of local events and personalities in shaping the life of each community. The Muenster history book recalled a humorous story on the livery stable and how it was a popular hangout for visiting and drinking.<sup>78</sup> The difficulties of being a justice of the peace in a small community were remembered in the history of Lake Lenore.<sup>79</sup> A dramatic story was written in the Annaheim history about the hardships of building a log cabin and travelling 100 miles for supplies.<sup>80</sup> There was a poignant story in the LeRoy history book on early health care and how families coped with sickness and death. A humorous story, as well, was written about the telephone system

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<sup>76</sup> SPAA, Organizations of St. Peter's Colony file, Marysburg Dramatic and Literary Society Minutes, 1923-1924.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, Leofeld German Canadian Folk Group (translated by Elly Saxinger and Dorothy and Oscar Renneberg from the original minute book of 1909 to 1930).

<sup>78</sup> Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "The Livery Stable," by Leo Weber, 142-145.

<sup>79</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, "Justice of the Peace," by Ben Gerwing, 35-36.

<sup>80</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, "Historical Background," by Rud and Ray Litkenhaus, 111-115.

and how everyone listened in on telephone calls.<sup>81</sup> The communities of Dana and Peterson celebrated their multiculturalism.<sup>82</sup>

These stories that set each community apart from each other exemplify even further the similarities between the communities of the former colony and the communities of Saskatchewan. The community histories of the former colony, like other Saskatchewan history volumes, record unique experiences inherent in each community.<sup>83</sup> The history volumes in the former colony cover similar topics as the histories of the communities across Saskatchewan.<sup>84</sup> The histories point to communities across the province sharing similar goals of becoming a part of Canada in spite of being separated by distance or culture. The culture that formed communities and set them apart through their unique characteristics served as a bond to unite them in their common goals of becoming part of the mosaic of Canada.

The paucity of information on St. Peter's Colony in the communities that once filled the former colony raises the question of why the colony has been largely ignored or forgotten. The members of the history committees should have been aware of the existence of the former colony as most committee members are descendants of pioneers of the colony, and newcomers should have learned about the former colony. The committee members may have believed that the colony and its religious orders belonged in sections dedicated to churches and not histories of communities. There may have been

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<sup>81</sup> LeRoy Historical Society, "Health Care," 153, and "The Nealdale Rural Telephone Company," by Anne Hamilton, 61.

<sup>82</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "Dana Village," by M. Pantella, 2, and "St. Agnes Parish, Peterson," 20.

<sup>83</sup> Merle Massie, "Scribes of Stories, Tellers of Tales: The Phenomenon of Community History in Saskatchewan," (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1997), 40.

<sup>84</sup> Massie found that Saskatchewan history books had pages dedicated to churches, schools, businesses and families, 95; health care, recreation and sports, 126; railroad, agriculture, rural electrification, 110; hospitals, doctors, transportation, local clubs and organizations, poetry and sports, 109. These topics were covered in the history books of the former colony.

an insufficient amount of time to give towards researching the colony. The absence of personal stories that speak to the influence of the colony on the pioneers from the perspective of the pioneers has left a gap in the history of St. Peter's. The story of what it was like living in a community within a German-Catholic colony is missing in the community histories, as is the effect the colony had on the religious, moral and social lives of the colonists. These different impressions of the importance of the colony are likely much different between pioneers and descendants of pioneers. Pioneers likely looked upon the colony as an important component in their lives while their descendants viewed the colony as only a part of their history. The pioneers may have told stories about the colony, but never wrote them down, leaving their descendants with the task of recording information that is largely factual and told from the perspective of an outsider.

There is a pattern in the amount of space given to the former colony and the religious orders. The colony is ignored in communities where Catholics were a minority; there is also no mention of religious orders and Catholic schools. The Protestant majority likely did not consider itself to be part of the colony since it was a legal entity developed by the Roman Catholic Church. The colony and religious orders are given the most coverage in communities where German Catholics were a majority and the Benedictines and/or Ursulines had a presence. These communities would have found it easy to associate themselves with Benedictines and Ursulines, because they had a tangible presence there, and it was natural for them to link the presence of religious orders with the colony. The lack of information on the colony in the other German-Catholic communities may have been an outcome of apathy, not having enough time to do adequate research, or simply taking a part of history for granted they did not consider

necessary to write down. Interestingly, a Benedictine priest prepared the introduction in one history book in a German-Catholic community that ignored the colony.<sup>85</sup> A Benedictine priest and historian was one of the contributors to a history book in another German-Catholic community that said very little about the colony and Benedictines.<sup>86</sup> They may have either taken the former presence of the colony for granted, or found it unnecessary to expand on the history of the colony that was already recorded in history volumes of the Benedictines.<sup>87</sup>

A noticeable omission in the community histories of the former colony is the challenges the communities faced in a country with an establishment that was suspicious of German Catholics. Renneberg, OSB, a Benedictine historian, is the only contributor who discusses the tensions between the German Canadians and the British establishment, especially during the First and Second World Wars. The refusal to acknowledge that legacy suggests local historians preferred to focus on information that was positive and not sensitive in nature. They may also have not been able to find written information on the tensions over language and schooling between the colonists of St. Peter's Colony and the larger Anglo-Protestant establishment. The negative experiences of the past may have been left to oral history which the pioneers did not write down or record in books. Omitting or downplaying negative stories about the past is a common feature of community histories across the province. They tend to overlook events that stirred negative memories and emphasize incidents that built communities.<sup>88</sup> Community

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<sup>85</sup> St. Gregor Homecoming Committee, "Foreword," by Rudolph Novecosky, vi.

<sup>86</sup> Pilger History Book Committee, "Cornerstone," by Renneberg, 6-7.

<sup>87</sup> A history of the colony is recorded in *Fifty Golden Years*, produced by the Benedictines in 1954 and *A Journey of Faith*, produced by the Benedictines in 1996.

<sup>88</sup> Massie, 141.



histories across Saskatchewan tend to give pioneer history a celebratory nature.<sup>89</sup>

Community historians prefer to use these anniversary books as a means of fostering unity and belonging.<sup>90</sup>

Although inspired by the concepts, ideals, and subject matter of classic history, community history has more to do with identifying and celebrating community than with reporting history. Issues of community pride, self-esteem, sentiment, inclusion, and identity are reflected through the creation of the books and the dissemination of the information contained within. Through community history, communities define themselves, and create or re-create a unifying community image.<sup>91</sup>

Since 1978 some 1,000 communities have produced their own histories,<sup>92</sup> all of which exhibit a sense of pride in each community.<sup>93</sup> This same pride is prevalent in the histories of the communities of the former St. Peter's Colony. Their introductions dedicate the books to the pioneers and praise them for their contributions. The books, the introductions state, were published to tell local history for the community. The celebratory nature of the history volumes is exemplified by editors and committees of three books who speak of their origins stemming from a provincial or local anniversary celebration.<sup>94</sup> Two history volumes were printed to celebrate the centennials of their communities,<sup>95</sup> and a third was written in celebration of the centennial of both Saskatchewan and their community.<sup>96</sup>

The history committees of the former colony, in telling their stories, revealed how their sense of citizenship and belonging was as paramount to them as any other

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<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 103.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, 115.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 145.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

<sup>94</sup> See: LeRoy Historical Society, "Introduction," vi; Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "Forward," vi; St. Gregor History Book Committee, "Forward," by Rudolph Novecosky, vi.

<sup>95</sup> Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, "A Message from the Chairman," by Ray Hofmann, x; Watson History Book Committee, "Introduction," v.

<sup>96</sup> Humboldt and District History Book Committee, "Preface," by Don Telfer, iv.

community in the province. The same ideals were shared by the pioneers who expressed them differently through their own cultures.

### **Chapter Three**

#### **Loyalty: A Natural Aspiration of Pioneers**

Chapters 1 and 2 have researched the personal letters of the Benedictines, and the community histories of the former colony to determine what they had to say about nativism, with a particular reference to education, language and the First World War. An examination was made of their understanding of colony and church life and their sense of belonging to the province and country. The following chapter will explore these issues further in the family histories of the community history volumes, and fourteen family histories compiled by families. The stories of the families are essential for opening another window into the world of the colonists to give yet another perspective into their attitudes toward education, religion, community and country. An analysis will be made of the memories of families to uncover their common values, as well as their struggles, goals, and aspirations. It is essential to read about the experiences of the colonists as they remember them in order to get a portrait of colony life from their perspective. Reading the history of the past through the lens of those who experienced it first-hand will offer their viewpoint of their past, and uncover their common values, aspirations and sense of loyalty. The insight from the family histories will serve as a counterpoint to the views and attitudes of outsiders.

The amount of space dedicated to family histories makes it apparent that families were an essential component of community life. The history volumes have sections dedicated to family histories that comprise approximately sixty percent of the history books. The family histories are centred solely on the families, and document events that had special meaning to them. These events usually draw attention to the themes of

struggle, achievement, neighbourliness, and celebration. The histories give further importance to families by also implying that decisions made by colonists were done so in relation to how they benefitted or affected families. The research on family histories has been carried out with the awareness that they were condensed to allow as many families as possible to submit entries to community history books. The majority of histories fill less than a page of each history book, while the remainder cover more than one or more pages. The method of submitting histories was not consistent with every family. Some of the families recorded abridged histories under one family name, while others recorded more-detailed histories in separate family entries.

The family histories, similar to the community histories of the former St. Peter's Colony, disclosed that the majority of the colonists between 1903 and 1930 had a German-Catholic background. Approximately sixty percent of the families who submitted histories in the fifteen community history books resided in communities where German Catholics were the majority. Roughly 3,000 individuals who lived in the colony between 1903 and 1930 recalled the past from the vantage point of either children or adults.

A large percentage of German Catholics were second-generation German Catholics from the United States. The largest group emigrated from the state of Minnesota, and large numbers came from North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin, as well. There were also some German Catholics who came from Germany and German settlements in Russia. The remaining settlers had diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds and came from the United States, Canada, and Europe. A large number of Scandinavians, particularly Norwegians, settled in the eastern section of the colony. The

second largest Scandinavian group to settle there came from Sweden. Many from the Ukraine settled in the south-western corner of the colony; settlers from England, Scotland, Russia, Austria and France were also represented.

The majority of people in the fourteen family history books share similar backgrounds as those in the community history volumes. Thirteen of the histories are from families of a German-Catholic background and one family is of an Austrian-Catholic background. Twelve families came from the United States and two emigrated from Europe. Committees of family members compiled seven of the histories and individual family members wrote the remaining seven family histories. A Marysburg scrapbook is the source of five family histories of a German-Catholic background. The students of the Marysburg school prepared the scrapbook in 1955. The pioneers they interviewed came from the United States.

The fourteen family histories are all longer than the family histories in the community history books, though there is a parallel in the topics covered. The family histories in both the community and family history books contain personal information on birth dates, marriages, and occupations. The histories record events that were significant to families such as hardships, struggles, and celebrations. Socializing with neighbours and other community members was important. Many expressed an interest in education and prospering, and had an appreciation for their community and country. One difference between the stories in the community history books and the personal family histories is the reference to the colony or religious faith. The majority of family histories in the community history volumes make no reference to their religious faith, St. Peter's Colony, or the Benedictines. The majority of personal family history books make a reference to

their religious faith and the colony. None of the histories speak of tensions between German Catholics and the larger Anglo-Canadian establishment, though a few in the community history volumes lament the treatment of Germans during the First World War. One German-Catholic speaks of attending a Ku Klux Klan rally outside of the colony out of curiosity. The only histories that recall tension with governments are those that tell of difficult or unjust living conditions in countries that they left.

If the pioneers were asked why they chose to move to Canada or St. Peter's Colony, the majority would likely have said they had no say in the matter. Most pioneers were either born in the colony or came with their parents, which meant that the decision to locate in the colony was made by a parent or both parents. Most families had between six and eight children. A small percentage of families had fewer than six children, or between twelve and sixteen children.

If the pioneers who made the decision to move to the colony were asked why they chose to locate there, the majority would have said they wanted an opportunity for a better life. Likewise, their children who were born in the colony or came with their parents, held the same desire to prosper. Pioneers valued the notion of living in a German-Catholic colony; however, the opportunity for a better, more prosperous life was equally important.<sup>1</sup>

In actuality, only a small percentage of pioneers stated why they moved to St. Peter's Colony. Only five percent of family histories in the community history books listed a reason and an even smaller percentage, about four percent, mentioned the name St. Peter's Colony. The majority who stated why they chose to move to their new home cited a better life or the prospect of owning land. Those who mentioned St. Peter's

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<sup>1</sup> These findings are the same for community histories and the personal family histories.

Colony usually spoke of land they could purchase in the colony. Less than one percent of the histories of non-German Catholics mentioned the colony's name. These include both Protestants and Catholics of other ethnic backgrounds. The personal family histories, in contrast, stated the reasons for moving to St. Peter's Colony and gave more prominence to the church and colony. All the histories cited the opportunity to purchase cheap land or have a better life as reasons for moving to the colony. All the histories made references to the Roman Catholic Church. The majority mentioned the presence of the colony and Benedictines. Only two personal family volumes omitted the colony, but recorded the presence of the abbey. Only one personal family history failed to mention the existence of the colony, abbey or Benedictines.

One German Catholic pioneer, Peter Baurael of Bruno, echoed the feelings of others when he related how the move for his parents from the United States offered "land to start life in a new country."<sup>2</sup> The Lummerding family of Bruno spoke of the colony as offering land for Roman Catholic settlers. There was not enough farmland in Wisconsin to support a family, so they were eager to move to the colony where they could purchase 160 acres for only \$10.<sup>3</sup> The Korte family of Muenster wrote in the Muenster history book that the colony was an opportunity "to live in a better place where there were better chances of enlarging farming operations."<sup>4</sup> The Kuemper family of Muenster was pleased the Catholic colony would have German Catholic schools, although the availability of Catholic schools was not the sole reason for moving to the colony. The

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<sup>2</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, "Baurael, Peter and Susan," 212, in *Up to Now* (North Battleford, Sask.:Turner-Warwick Printers, Inc., 1984).

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, "Lummerding, Theodore," by Margaret Lummerding Schlosser Schwark, 457.

<sup>4</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, "Mr. and Mrs. Bernard Korte," 193, in *Memories of Muenster's 70 Progressive Years: 1903-1973* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1973).

colony offered affordable land. Farm land had become too expensive in Iowa.<sup>5</sup> Arnold Dauk, a pioneer near Annaheim, remembered in the Annaheim history book that he “found the opportunities, the promises, and the challenges inherent in this newly founded German-Catholic farming community irresistible.”<sup>6</sup> He opened a store which sold everything from groceries to hardware.<sup>7</sup> Corresponding to these values are the stories shared by the families in the personal family history books.<sup>8</sup>

Another factor pointing to the desire for prosperity was the large number of pioneers who did not choose the colony as the first place to settle. About twenty-five percent of the family histories reported that families tried to make a living elsewhere in Canada before moving to a farm or community in the colony. They settled in the colony because of the opportunities to purchase farmland or find work. Most did not state why they left their previous communities. Less than one percent even mentioned St. Peter’s Colony in their histories. They wrote of moving to a new home, a farm or named the district in which they settled.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, “Mr. and Mrs. Gerhard Kuemper,” 201-202.

<sup>6</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, “Arnold Dauk Sr. Family,” by Caroline Dauk, 31, in *A Cross in the Clearing: A History: 1903-1980* (Melfort, Sask.: Phillips Publishers Ltd., 1980).

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> See the family histories of: Charles Alois Schmeiser, *The Story of My Life* (Saskatoon: The Little Print Shop, 2002), 1-5; Edward Novocosky, *Jacob and Helen Novocosky* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 1987), 18; Saint Peter’s Abbey Archives (SPAA), Pioneers of St. Peter’s Colony file, John Gerwing, *A Chronicle of the John Gerwing Family: 1908-1978*; The Hoffman family, *My People, the Hoffmans: 1665-1990* (Humboldt, Sask.: Image Printers, 1991), 30; Zimmerman family, *Faith Endurance Test: The Zimmermans in Canada* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 2005), 1; Rosemarie Hutchins, *From One Room to Another* (Lasqueti Island, B.C.: Willow Mountain Publications, 1992), 2; Frank Dauk family, *My People: The Frank Dauks: 1700-1990* (Humboldt, Sask.: Image Printers, 1991), 14; Del Lummerding, “Lummerding, Theodore,” 24, in *Theodore and Karolina Lummerding Family History* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 1994).

<sup>9</sup> See: Spalding and District Historical Society, “Bengston, George,” 137, “As I Remember-and Have Been Told,” by H. Brenna, 148, “Kidd,” 321, “Jack and Zella Fairman,” by Verma Illeen Fairman, 210, *Spalding Roots and Branches* (Altoona, Manitoba: Friesen Printers, 1981); Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “Nels and Jorgina Voldeng,” by Bernice Wielenga, 592, “Clifford Murray Thompson,” by C.M. Thompson, 582, in *Gleanings Along the Way: A History of Naicam, Lac Vert and Surrounding Districts* (Winnipeg: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1980); Marysburg History Book Committee, “Michael Bauer, Sr.,” by Viola Uebner and Beryl Bauer, 14, in *Beyond Our Dreams, Marysburg and Area* (Muenster, Sask.: St.



The importance attached to a making a good living, as opposed to living in a German-Catholic colony, is made evident in the settlers' discontentment over their difficult living conditions. A pioneer, Otto Lutz, remembered the reactions of many immigrants after they first arrived in Canada:

During our stay at Rosthern there were many men who lost their courage when they heard that their land was one hundred and more miles from the nearest railroad point. They fled south again, because they had not the stuff in them for pioneering. ... On the other hand, there were many others who would have done likewise, if they could have commanded the necessary money, with which to buy their return passage..<sup>10</sup>

John Sterner of Annaheim remembered in the Annaheim history book how he “was bitterly disappointed in what he found and would have gone back (to Bavaria) if he would have had the money.”<sup>11</sup> Herman and Katie Vanderlinde of Annaheim almost went back to the United States when homesickness overcame Katie..<sup>12</sup> Nick and Elizabeth Hofbauer of Bruno were devastated when their home was destroyed by a tornado. “If money had been available, the entire family would have packed up and returned to the U.S.A,” they wrote in the Bruno history book..<sup>13</sup> Mary Hoeber remembered her mother crying over missing her home in Germany. “She cried and shed many tears, wanting to go back to her nice little farm in Germany, where they had cattle, chickens and fruit trees,” Hoeber wrote in the Middle Lake history book..<sup>14</sup> Some homesteaders sold their land when they acquired title to it. They used the money to return to their previous homeland. Others just got tired of their struggles and moved away, remembered pioneer

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Peter's Press, 1987); Bruno History Book Committee, “Gustave, Karl Paul and Knauer, Amelia,” 307; Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Pete Worms Sr.,” 619- 620, in *Sharing Our Heritage, Lake Lenore and Area* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1986).

<sup>10</sup> Otto Lutz, *A Mother Braving a Wilderness*, ed., Thomas Gerwing, OSB (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter's Press, 1977), 14.

<sup>11</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, “John Sterner,” 103.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, “Vanderlinde Family,” 104.

<sup>13</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, “Hofbauer, Nick and Elizabeth,” 348.

<sup>14</sup> Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, “Math Aschenbrenner Sr. Family,” by Mary Hoeber, 129, in *Middle Lake: The Vintage Years* (Winnipeg: Inter-Collegiate Press, 1982).

Dominic Thera.<sup>15</sup> “In the period between 1908 and 1920, many of our neighbours moved away and much land changed hands,” he wrote in Thera family history book.<sup>16</sup>

Overall, the desire to prosper was the most important goal of the German Catholics, non-German Catholics, and Anglo-Saxon Protestants. They expressed this yearning in their stories from the past. Many pioneers remembered when they built their first homes. They recalled some of the characteristics of their first home, and their living conditions. Some pointed out the comforts of newer, improved homes.<sup>17</sup> Many pioneers in German-Catholic and Protestant communities placed a high value on new farm machinery and automobiles. A father and two sons near Lake Lenore were excited to purchase their first tractor in 1922 and another one four years later. “Dad, Math and I were very proud,” wrote Max Forster in the Lake Lenore history book.<sup>18</sup> Ernest Selin, a farmer near Spalding, became the centre of attention in 1928 when he purchased the first combine and swather in the district. “People came from miles around to see how this type of harvesting machinery worked,” he recalled in the Spalding history book.<sup>19</sup> Aloysius Schmitz, in his family history book, wrote, “There was great enthusiasm because of the

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<sup>15</sup> Dominic Thera, *The Thera Story, Volume 1: One Hundred Years, 1850-1950* (Regina: National Print-it Centres, 1991), 5.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 14.

<sup>17</sup> An example is a family in Muenster recalling its first home costing \$30 and the second home worth \$100.75. See Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Caspar Daeger,” 137. Similar examples can be found in history books throughout the former colony. See: Annaheim and District History Committee, “Adam Specht,” 101; Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Anton Revering,” 486; Spalding and District Historical Society, “Carl Oscar Knutson,” 332; Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “Tilda Olson, John Jr. and Olesa Guttormson,” by Olesa Guttormson, 346, and “Marie Knutson and Family,” by Clara (Knutson) Selin, 412; LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, “The Johnstons of LeRoy,” by Keith Johnston, 483, in *As the Furrows Turn: 1900-1985, LeRoy and District* (Altoona, Manitoba: Friesen Printers, 1986); Watson History Book Committee, “Mierke, William and Genevieve,” by Leo Mierke, 709-710, in *A Century of Progress, Watson and District, Volume 1* (Altona, Manitoba: Friesens Corporation, 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Max and Agnes Forster,” 238.

<sup>19</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, “Mrs. Hulda Selin and family,” by Ernest Selin, 457.

prospect of ‘getting ahead.’”<sup>20</sup> His family was excited about the “new and large farm machinery” they purchased. They were amazed with what these machines could do.<sup>21</sup>

In early 1915, approximately twelve years after the formation of St. Peter’s Colony, tensions began to rise between Canadians of Anglo-Saxon Protestant backgrounds and Canadians of German descent. Ursuline sisters in the colony recalled Canadian soldiers in Winnipeg blaming immigrants for unemployment and the poor economic situation in Canada. The soldiers had returned to Winnipeg from the war in Europe. The Ursulines taught in schools in Winnipeg at the beginning of the war before moving to St. Peter’s Colony.<sup>22</sup>

The attitude of the soldiers was the opposite of the findings of Dr. Fleming, a member of Parliament who represented the colony. He is remembered by a former justice of the peace from Muenster as having said, “I am proud to be in a district among the German population. They are progressive and work for a future home, with no hostility.”<sup>23</sup> The loyalty of the Germans manifested itself in a German immigrant who came to Canada in 1905. He guarded the railway bridge in Muenster during the First World War.<sup>24</sup>

The anti-German feelings in Canada during the First World War caused some people of German descent to move to St. Peter’s Colony where they felt accepted. One family came to the Englefeld area from Saskatoon to escape anti-German prejudice. They had a German-sounding name, but were not German; they immigrated to Canada in 1907

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<sup>20</sup> *Saint Peter’s Abbey Archives (SPAA)*, Pioneers of St. Peter’s Colony file, Aloysius Schmitz, *The Jacob and Anna Schmitz Family*, 35.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>22</sup> Maureen Maier, OSU, *Women of Service for the Glory of God* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 2010), 44.

<sup>23</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bruning,” 123.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*

from Switzerland.<sup>25</sup> A German-Catholic family moved to Bruno in 1920, because it was a friendly German-Catholic community. The father of the family had lived in Saskatoon during the war years when working conditions were difficult, especially for the Germans.<sup>26</sup> A man of German background, near St. Gregor, felt German-Canadians were treated poorly by the Canadian government during the First World War. He did not like how German Canadians were considered “enemy aliens.”<sup>27</sup>

Frank Warick of the Dana area expressed sorrow over not being treated like a Canadian citizen during the First World War. He had once lived in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The Canadian government did not trust immigrants from the Austro-Hungarian Empire during the First World War, he wrote in the Dana-Peterson history book. The immigrants “were treated as enemies,” Warick said.<sup>28</sup> The Wartime Elections Act of 1917 denied Canadian “citizens of enemy origin naturalized after 1902” the right to vote.<sup>29</sup> Warick may have been expressing his dislike for Russia in his history. He lamented how the Canadian government looked on the Polish and Ukrainian immigrants from Russia as good friends of Canada. Ironically, the Polish and Ukrainians did not trust the Russians and the German Canadians were not enamoured with the Kaiser, he wrote. In spite of the tensions from the Wartime Elections Act, many Canadians who were treated as second-class citizens enlisted in the war effort, he said. “The great majority of our neighbours were rather fiercely pro-Canadian and all of them rejoiced when, finally,

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<sup>25</sup> Englefeld Historical Society, “Stadelman, Anton and Mary,” 358 in *Fields of Prosperity, A History of Englefeld: 1903-1987* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 1988).

<sup>26</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, “Gantefoer, John and Mary,” 286.

<sup>27</sup> St. Gregor Homecoming Committee, “Niekamp, Clemens and Maria,” 155, in *Homesteading to Homecoming: 1903-1971, A History of St. Gregor and District* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 1971).

<sup>28</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “Warick, Frank,” 356-357, in *Down Memory Lane* (Humboldt, Sask.: Humboldt Publishing Limited, 1980).

<sup>29</sup> Alvin Finkel and Margaret Conrad, *History of the Canadian Peoples, Volume 2: 1867 to the Present* (Toronto, Pearson Education), 170.

not only Germany, but Russia as well, tasted total defeat,” he commented.<sup>30</sup> Warick was likely referring to the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 since Russia fought with the Allies during the First World War. Warick’s sensitivity to ethnic clashes is described in friction in the Dana area and it was not related to patriotism. There was enmity between rural and urban students, he wrote. Antagonism between urban and rural students caused students of German and French backgrounds to unite against students of Russian and Ukrainian heritage.<sup>31</sup>

Hostility to Germans and other minorities continued after the First World War. Herman Schmitz, a musician from Lake Lenore, wrote in the Lake Lenore history book that he changed his German name to Vern Smith when playing for dances in communities where Germans were a minority. In 1928, he and a cousin attended a Ku Klux Klan rally near Melfort. Schmitz recalled nonchalantly how he saw the burning of three crosses of heavy timber that stood about twenty feet high. There were possibly thousands at the rally.<sup>32</sup>

In spite of anti-German sentiments, German Catholics from the colony joined Anglo-Saxon Protestants in the Canadian war effort. Many soldiers from St. Peter’s Colony were killed or wounded while fighting in Europe, although the majority of families who spoke of relatives serving during the First World War had an Anglo-Saxon Protestant background. Their recollections of the war could suggest that German Catholics were less patriotic than Anglo-Saxon Protestants. There is one example to support this conjecture. Some young men from Marysburg hid from authorities when they were conscripted. “My dad was pulled out of bed by the Mounties and taken into

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<sup>30</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “Warick Frank,” 357.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Herman and Rosina Schmitz,” 522.

custody. They thought he was feeding the boys and knew where they were hiding,” remembered Viola Harasym in the Marysburg history book.<sup>33</sup> The recollection of the incident confirms that German-Catholic youth from the colony were conscripted into the Canadian army. The incident is the only one of that nature that was recorded in all the family histories, suggesting that there was no widespread opposition in the colony to the war effort in Canada.

There is no evidence in any of the history books that the Catholic Church or German Catholics discouraged patriotism during the First World War. Examples are given of both German Catholic and other ethnic groups who served in the First World War. Even men who understood little English served in the army. The Middle Lake history book recorded how a young man who immigrated from Hungary and “knew no English when he came to Canada” served during the final months of the war in 1918.<sup>34</sup> Henri Basset, in the Dana-Peterson history book, implied that it was taken for granted that people of all ethnic groups would serve Canada in the war effort. A man of French-Catholic background from Dana was “called to service like everyone else of his age” during the war of 1914-1918, Basset wrote.<sup>35</sup>

The only opposition to the war was voiced by expatriates who disagreed with militarism in their former countries. They expressed no disloyalty to Canada, only a lack of loyalty to their former homelands. One pioneer came from Germany in 1906 because he refused to serve in the German military.<sup>36</sup> One German citizen served in the German

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<sup>33</sup> Marysburg History Book Committee, “Carl Lindberg,” by Viola Harasym, 85.

<sup>34</sup> Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, “The Krenn Family,” by Lawrence Krenn, 265.

<sup>35</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “Basset, Henri Sr.,” 103.

<sup>36</sup> St. Gregor History Book Committee, “Taphorn, Englebert and Wilhelmina,” 193, in *Homesteading to Homecoming: 1903-1996* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 1996).

military in 1910 and felt a war was on the horizon. He emigrated to Marysburg after deciding he did not want to get involved in a “senseless war.”<sup>37</sup> Another German man came to Lake Lenore after feeling disgruntled with political and economic conditions in Germany, but found farming very difficult and returned to Germany in 1912. He remained in Germany for only a few months after finding German militarism too much to withstand and so returned to Canada.<sup>38</sup> Another German was afraid another war would begin in Europe. He came to Annaheim with his family in 1927.<sup>39</sup>

According to accounts in the community histories, immigrants seeking to avoid war or fleeing unjust living conditions came to Canada from Austria, Ukraine, and Russia. The expatriates, feeling let down by the governments of their former countries, had no desire to return to their homelands. The Dana-Peterson history book recalled how a couple fled unjust political conditions in the Ukraine and settled in Dana.<sup>40</sup> The history book has a story of a man who settled in Dana after fleeing the Ukraine to avoid military service.<sup>41</sup> There is another story of an Austrian who fled Austria to avoid military service.<sup>42</sup> The Watson history book reported that a Russian couple settled in Watson after fleeing difficult living and political conditions in Russia.<sup>43</sup> Stefan and Ersebet Will recalled in the Middle Lake history book how they left Hungary and moved to the United States because of the “threat of war.” They became disillusioned with city life and later

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<sup>37</sup> Marysburg History Book Committee, “Gustav Frerichs,” by Anne Strueby, 51.

<sup>38</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Ferdinand and Frances Hoenmans,” 326.

<sup>39</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, “The Joseph Nienaber, Sr. Family,” 223.

<sup>40</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “Polischuk, Philip and Anna,” 309.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, “Perdinka, Mike and Family,” by Mary Skarra, 295-296.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, “Gedir, Angus and Katherine,” 164.

<sup>43</sup> Watson History Book Committee, “LeBold, George and Katherine (Friedel),” by Lydia Diener, 658.

came to Middle Lake where they could farm and be around others with a similar ethnic background.<sup>44</sup>

Patriotism and loyalty were expressed indirectly by the colonists through their fondness for the monarchy. Students in Humboldt were excited over the visit of the wife of the governor general. Two students were chosen to present a bouquet of flowers to the lady.<sup>45</sup> A couple from Marysburg was proud of the fact that they were married on the same day that Queen Elizabeth II was born.<sup>46</sup> A NWMP sergeant in Humboldt attended the coronation of King George V in England in 1911. He was of Scottish-Protestant background, though he married a German Roman Catholic. His son became a Benedictine monk and priest.<sup>47</sup>

Patriotism towards Canada was expressed in Lake Lenore when the community learned the First World War had ended. “All the men ran out onto Main Street, shouting and yelling,” Rob Hopfner wrote in the Lake Lenore history book.<sup>48</sup> A community celebration was held.<sup>49</sup> Another celebration was held in Humboldt, remembered Charles Schmeiser in his family history book:

In the afternoon of November 11, 1918 we cranked our shiny new Model T Ford and left for Humboldt. As we came into town, we thought everyone had gone mad. People were shouting, singing and dancing in the streets. At the main intersection, there was a blazing bonfire, burning the effigy of ‘Kaiser Bill.’ Radio was still unknown so we had been unaware that Armistice had been declared.<sup>50</sup>

The community of Annaheim received a second wave of immigrants in the 1920s who were disgruntled with militarism and living conditions in Germany. The new

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<sup>44</sup> Middle Lake History Book Committee, “Stefan Will and Ersebet Will,” 360.

<sup>45</sup> The Humboldt Journal, “Mills, Ed,” by Le Ella (Mills) Metcalfe, 397, in *The Best of Humboldt* (Humboldt, Sask.: The Humboldt Journal, 1982).

<sup>46</sup> Marysburg History Book Committee, “Fred Strueby,” 161.

<sup>47</sup> The Humboldt Journal, “Gray, Sgt. William James,” 312-314.

<sup>48</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Rob and Leona Hopfner,” 350.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Charles Alois Schmeiser, *The Story of My Life* (Saskatoon: The Little Print Shop, 2002), 16.



citizens were lured by federal advertising seeking farmers.<sup>51</sup> The Johannes Nienaber family wrote in the Annaheim history book that it came to Canada “to escape the dreadful conditions of Germany.”<sup>52</sup> Another family moved to Annaheim because it feared an oncoming war in Europe.<sup>53</sup> The Schreiner family, in the Annaheim history book, said it moved to Canada because “there seemed to be no future in Germany” and there was “cheap farmland” in Canada.<sup>54</sup>

The feeling of patriotism was expressed by George Gerwing of St. Anthony’s Parish in Lake Lenore in a letter of 1928. He and four others came to Rosthern on May 5, 1903. They went on a tour to inspect the colony:

After we made an extensive inspection of these parts, we went back to Rosthern fully satisfied that here is where we will make our home in Canada. ... Then on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, of July 1905 nearly all able-bodied men of the district came together in a large woods about 3 miles south east of where our church stands now, with axes and horses and other material and cut and peeled the logs for our first church. Now just imagine, nearly all Yankees, making use of the biggest holiday, to start, and actually do the heaviest work in connection with building a new church. Can anybody imagine a Yankee working on this day of days. But I don’t think we were Yankees any more, for the very first year after that in 1906 we celebrated Dominion Day, 1<sup>st</sup> July with a church picnic at the Lake.<sup>55</sup>

German immigrants in the colony expressed their desire to become Canadians and integrate into the larger society by studying English.<sup>56</sup> Romanian and Hungarian immigrants in Lake Lenore took English classes so they could pass exams to become Canadian citizens.<sup>57</sup> A family at Lake Lenore began to speak only English at home when

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<sup>51</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, “A Second Influx: Pioneer Sons and Daughters,” 173-261.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, “Johannes Nienaber,” 223.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, “The Joseph Nienaber, Sr. Family,” 223.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, “Mr. and Mrs. Edward W. Schreiner,” 236.

<sup>55</sup> SPAA, Abbot Severin Gertken file, in “Letters of Gertken,” George Gerwing letter.

<sup>56</sup> Families write of teaching English or taking English lessons. See: Muenster and District Centenary History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Grace,” 154, in *Muenster and District Centenary History: 1903-2003, As the Creek Flows On* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 2003); Annaheim and District History Committee, “Holtvogt Family History,” 198; Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Emma Gerwing,” by Ben Gerwing, 280, and “John and Anna Haslbeck,” 317.

<sup>57</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Emma Gerwing,” by Ben Gerwing, 280.

the older children mastered the language in school.<sup>58</sup> Learning the English language did not remove the fondness they had for their culture, though. Many families of German-Catholic background, while embracing English, continued to celebrate their heritage at home by singing German songs.<sup>59</sup> This tradition also applied to families with a Norwegian background.<sup>60</sup> A resident of Naicam began a school to teach children the Norwegian language and culture as he felt it was necessary to preserve his heritage.<sup>61</sup> The Spalding and Naicam districts, known as the Norwegian Grove District,<sup>62</sup> were a further sign of how ethnic groups, such as German Catholics, settled together. A neighbourhood in Humboldt had many English people and was known as “Little London.”<sup>63</sup> These small ethnic settlements within the larger German-Catholic colony may have formed for the same reason as the German Catholics: to preserve cultural ties. They may have felt more secure living among people with similar customs. Celebrating their culture may have been a means of coping with loneliness and adjusting to difficult living conditions. The ethnic minorities likely did not see a contradiction between adopting Canadian customs such as English and celebrating their cultural heritage.

There is no evidence that pioneers resisted learning English; there are only memories of some pioneers having difficulties learning another language. A young student in Bruno found the introduction to school to be difficult because it was in

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<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, “John and Anna Haslbeck,” 317.

<sup>59</sup> Christmas songs were particularly popular among German-Catholic families. See: Pilger History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. James Meyers,” 147, in *Pilger Memories: 1903-1980* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 1980); Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Ancton and Eileen Berscheid,” 150; Anaheim and District History Committee, “Mathias and Susan Ewertz,” 44; Bruno History Book Committee, “Backmann, John,” by Agnes Lummerding, 179.

<sup>60</sup> Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Nils Gustav Berggren,” 242-244, and “The Christian Bernhard Olsen Story,” by Margit Olsen Erickson, 479-480.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*, “The Paul Benjaminson Story,” by Margit Olsen Ericksen, 240.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, “Horace Bott and Family,” by Netta Bott, 249.

<sup>63</sup> The Humboldt Journal, “Conley, W.J.,” by Isobel Meyer, 255.

English; she had attended school nearby in Willmont where lessons were only in German.<sup>64</sup> A teacher at Annaheim “used physical force” against a student for speaking poor English; the teacher thought the student’s poor English was insolence. His family spoke only German at home.<sup>65</sup> A Muenster pioneer attended school for about a month before the teacher realized he did not speak English.<sup>66</sup> Some students of Norwegian and Swedish backgrounds struggled with their first weeks of school because they did not speak English.<sup>67</sup> A teacher from England found it challenging to teach at Champlain School in the north-eastern area of the colony as some of the students spoke only French or German. The teacher earned the respect of the students’ parents for his ability to adapt to the needs of the students.<sup>68</sup> The teacher’s popularity was another indication of the parents’ desire for their children to learn English.

There is only one record of the hiring of teachers and the qualifications were based, not on ethnicity or ability to speak a language, but on what the teacher looked like. Some trustees in Englefeld sometimes hired teachers by looking at photos of applicants.<sup>69</sup> Nevertheless, the decision to keep a teacher depended on more than the teacher’s looks. Teachers had to be able to adjust to the demands of a one-room school and the many needs of the students who attended them.<sup>70</sup> Some teachers lasted only a few months at a school near Annaheim when they found their work and living conditions too difficult; though a former student remembered liking all of the teachers.<sup>71</sup> Max Forster, a former student from Lake Lenore, wrote in the Lake Lenore History book that

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<sup>64</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, “Koenig, Bill and Helen,” by Tony Tegenkamp, 395.

<sup>65</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, “Arnold Dauk Jr.,” 183.

<sup>66</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Arnold Korte,” 191.

<sup>67</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, “The Ross Pederson Family,” 408.

<sup>68</sup> *Ibid.*, “Josiah Tharp, Part III: School,” by Pearl Ellingson, 480.

<sup>69</sup> Englefeld Historical Society, “Wacholtz, Bernard,” by Ed Wacholtz, 396.

<sup>70</sup> Watson History Book Committee, “Daisy School Memories,” by Marion Johnston, 1030.

<sup>71</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, “Adam Stangel,” 242.

he had fond memories of education in both separate and public schools. He met a former teacher of 1918 at a school reunion. The teacher “is a wonderful person and was loved by all his pupils who were glad to see him again,” he wrote.<sup>72</sup>

There were only a few conflicts reported in the schools and they involved discipline. A student was expelled at Annaheim for “drawing certain pictures” which were considered obscene.<sup>73</sup> Another remembered getting punished only once when in school. He received “two strokes of the strap” for writing on the blackboard before school.<sup>74</sup>

The LeRoy history book recorded the only conflict over separate schools and the dispute involved only two people. Joseph Roraff had “some heated arguments” over separate schools with Rev. John Sinnett, a member of the Jesuit religious order. Sinnett wanted local children taught in separate schools. Roraff, a school trustee and Roman Catholic, disagreed, favouring public schools.<sup>75</sup> The Pilger history book recorded the only conflict over education involving public schools. The trustees of Colorado School told Joe and Julia Fischl to remove their children from Colorado School and send them to the Lucien Lake School which was part of their school district. Lucien Lake School was four miles farther away than Colorado School. The parents refused to send their children to Lucien Lake School, finding the distance too great for their children to walk. The children missed school for about a year before being permitted to return to Colorado School.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>72</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Max and Agnes Forster,” 237.

<sup>73</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, “John Berscheid,” 27.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, “Adam Stangel,” 242.

<sup>75</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, “The Margaret Theresa (Roraff) Hamilton Family,” by Joe Hamilton, 657-658.

<sup>76</sup> Pilger History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Joe Fischl,” 92.

The most common problem facing students was inclement weather, poverty, and the demand for work at home. A student near LeRoy was often the only one in class on cold winter days.<sup>77</sup> The cold winter temperatures forced the closing of the school in Bruno for some of the winter months.<sup>78</sup> Sometimes students quit school to work on the farm or find jobs to help earn money for their impoverished families.<sup>79</sup> A teacher near Middle Lake fell asleep at noon hour and the students did not always wake him in time for the 1 p.m. lesson. He farmed and had to work before and after school and he liked to take naps at noon by resting his head on the desk.<sup>80</sup> The school lunches at a Lake Lenore school made it evident that an issue for the students was poverty. A lunch for some was bread covered in syrup, or lard, or salt and pepper.<sup>81</sup> Sometimes students tried to improve their school lunches by trading food with each other.<sup>82</sup> A former student near Bruno remembered eating similar lunches.<sup>83</sup>

The individual family histories shared similar memories of school life and gave a more in-depth look at education. Some families said children were kept at home from school to work on the farm. Other families urged their children leave school after Grade 8 to work on the farm. A smaller percentage of families insisted that their children receive post-secondary education.<sup>84</sup> “I think everyone learned to read and write and I can only

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<sup>77</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, “Henry Michel,” by Elsie Wiens, 589.

<sup>78</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, “Kramer, Peter F. Family,” by Florence Pulvermacher (nee Stumborg),” 407.

<sup>79</sup> See: Bruno History Book Committee, “Hamm, Francis and Ursula,” 313; Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Greenen Jr.,” 149, and “Mr. and Mrs. Herman Korte,” 196; Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, “The August Abel Family,” 125.

<sup>80</sup> Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Adam Baran,” by Victor Baran, 134.

<sup>81</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “William Betnar,” 167.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, “Gilbert Pfeiffer,” 456.

<sup>83</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, “Forreiter, John and Karl,” 285.

<sup>84</sup> A girl in one family was kept at home from school to work on her parents’ farm and for neighbours to earn money for her family. See Hutchins, 5. The children in another family left school after Grade 8 to

speak well of our teachers,” remembered Dominic Thera of the St. James School District. “They did the best that they could with what they had. I don’t recall any teachers having discipline problems,” he wrote in the Thera family history.<sup>85</sup>

The struggles and sacrifices of pioneers likely provided them with their greatest learning experiences, as these were common subject matters in their histories.<sup>86</sup> The stories of struggle in the community and personal family histories speak of people who were not concerned with outside perceptions. The pioneers were interested primarily in their survival and the survival of their families. Many wrote that they coped with poor travelling conditions,<sup>87</sup> and battled endless mosquitoes on their travels.<sup>88</sup> Some walked barefoot in summer to school as children because they lacked proper footwear,<sup>89</sup> or went barefoot most of the time.<sup>90</sup> Many became expert hunters and lived off wildlife such as rabbit, deer, and waterfowl, as well as fish and wild berries.<sup>91</sup> Olga Lorenz wrote in the Lake Lenore history book how many gathered near their home to pick wild raspberries and strawberries. There was an abundance of fish in the local lake. “The neighbours and strangers came from miles around to catch fish. On Sundays our place was like a picnic

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work on the farm. See Ed Novecosky, “Canada, A New Homeland,” by Peter Novecosky, 29. The parents of two families insisted their children become teachers. See Schmitz, 41.

<sup>85</sup> Thera, 15.

<sup>86</sup> Many of the pioneers recalled walking long distances from the train station to their homesteads. They battled mosquitoes and wet trails. See: Watson Board of Trade History Committee, “Anton Bartsch,” 52, in *Watson: Fifty Years of Progress, 1900-1950* (Muenster, Sask.: St. Peter’s Press, 1950); Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. John Bunz,” 130; Annaheim and District History Committee, “Andrew Stangel Family,” 103. Travel to Rosthern to purchase supplies took as long as three weeks before 1905 when the railroad came through. See: Students of St. Henry’s School 1955 Class, *Fifty Golden Years of Marysburg*, “Reminiscence,” Mr. and Mrs. Frank Massinger; Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Moritz Ewen,” 141.

<sup>87</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Barney Loehr,” 213.

<sup>88</sup> Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “Helge and Berte Lee,” by Hazel Thomson, 420.

<sup>89</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “John and Pauline Jasken,” 362.

<sup>90</sup> Pilger History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. John Jasken,” 122.

<sup>91</sup> See: Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Caspar Daeger,” 137, “Mr. and Mrs. John Bunz,” 130, “Mr. and Mrs. John Loehr,” 215; Pilger History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. John Lukan,” 140; Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “The Ambles from Grand Forks, North Dakota,” by Olga Lorenz, 136; Spalding and District Historical Society, “Irvine,” 306-307.

ground,” she commented.<sup>92</sup> Many people picked saskatoons, chokecherries and raspberries. They even roasted barley to make coffee.<sup>93</sup>

Further accounts of the struggles of pioneers make it known that that they were model citizens who valued hard work and contributed to their communities. “Work was something we never ran out of, winter or summer. There was hay, straw, and sheaves to haul. Feeding the horses, cattle, pigs and poultry took most of our time in winter,” recalled Adam Stangel in the Anaheim history book.<sup>94</sup> A farmer near Lake Lenore even listed his everyday chores.<sup>95</sup> One pioneer described, in the Muenster history book, the backbreaking work of clearing the land.<sup>96</sup> The farmers expressed their common dislike for the endless mosquitoes that often chased oxen working the land into a slough to take refuge.<sup>97</sup> Farmers dreaded losing animals to sickness; swamp fever killed many horses.<sup>98</sup>

The pioneers did agree that they faced common worries – anything that threatened their family or well-being, whether sickness, fires and winter blizzards. “Sickness was our greatest worry,” recalled the Gollinger family in the Naicam history book.<sup>99</sup> A family near Spalding felt isolated living forty miles from the nearest doctor in Humboldt. “People hoped and prayed that no one would get sick and need a doctor,” wrote Katie Fohse in the Spalding history book.<sup>100</sup> There are heart-rending stories in the (1982) Humboldt history book of families in St. Peter’s Colony losing loved ones to diphtheria

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<sup>92</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “The Ambles from Grand Forks, North Dakota,” by Olga Lorenz, 136.

<sup>93</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, “Irvine,” 306-307.

<sup>94</sup> Anaheim and District History Committee, “Adam Stangel,” 242.

<sup>95</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Max and Agnes Forster,” 237.

<sup>96</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Herman Korte,” 196.

<sup>97</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “The Haberman Story,” 172

<sup>98</sup> LeRoy Historical Society, “The George King Story,” by George King and Stanley McIntosh, 499.

<sup>99</sup> Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. William Gollinger,” by Annie Hall, 327.

<sup>100</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, “Early Years in Saskatchewan,” by Katie Fohse, 230.

and the 1918 Spanish flu.<sup>101</sup> The Muenster history book recalled how children of a family became orphaned when a parent died.<sup>102</sup> Coupled with the threat of sickness was the ever-present danger of prairie fires that threatened travellers,<sup>103</sup> destroyed farm buildings, businesses, and people's homes.<sup>104</sup> There is a heartbreaking story in the Pilger history book of a mother, child, and two grandchildren perishing in a house fire.<sup>105</sup> Prairie fires were a danger everywhere, whether large communities such as Humboldt,<sup>106</sup> or in isolated fields where farmers were ploughing land.<sup>107</sup> The winter months brought new challenges for travellers who worried about getting caught in blizzards. A pioneer near Dana remembered his neighbour losing his life in a blizzard.<sup>108</sup> A small sod home near Annaheim became a shelter for several travellers who became caught in a blizzard.<sup>109</sup> Some recall miraculously finding their way through blizzards because of the guidance of their horses.<sup>110</sup>

The concern for the well-being of the family served as a conduit to bring people closer together and build community. The residents of St. Peter's Colony preoccupied themselves with meeting the needs of their families and building community. They did not appear to be concerned about outside perceptions. Neighbours rallied to help one

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<sup>101</sup> The Humboldt Journal, "Doppler, Eugene," by Cecile Doppler, 268.

<sup>102</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, "Mr. and Mrs. Peter Funke," 147.

<sup>103</sup> *Ibid.*, "Mr. and Mrs. Philip Muench Sr.," 229.

<sup>104</sup> See: Annaheim and District History Committee, "The Hagerty Family Sr.," 49, "Mr. and Mrs. Victor Mueller," 72, "Edward and Clara Vanderlinde," 252; St. Gregor Homecoming Committee, "Zimmerman, Adolf, Mary and family," 224, "Edward and Clara Vanderlinde," 252; Naicam Heritage Book Committee, "The Harvey Lepine's," 427.

<sup>105</sup> Pilger History Book Committee, "Mr. and Mrs. Frank Kirchner," 128.

<sup>106</sup> The Humboldt Journal, "Doppler, Eugene," by Cecile Doppler, 268.

<sup>107</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, "The George King Family Story," 499.

<sup>108</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "Dauyin, Ephrem and Adele," 132.

<sup>109</sup> Annaheim and District History Committee, "Henry Lachmuth," 64.

<sup>110</sup> See: Bruno History Book Committee, "Koob, Joe and Christina," by Dorothy Freeman, 398; and Naicam Heritage Book Committee, "Josiah Stapleton Family," by Elsie Snowball, 573.



another rebuild when homes and farm buildings burnt down.<sup>111</sup> Leo King of LeRoy remembered “a common bond” bringing neighbours closer together. “A death in their family seemed like one in your own,” he wrote in the LeRoy history book.<sup>112</sup> The Albertson family remembered, in the Spalding history book, how “one man’s problems became the other man’s concern.”<sup>113</sup> The Brenna family recalled in the Spalding history book, “No one felt superior but were one happy family.”<sup>114</sup>

The stories of the colonists spoke of the building of community as central to their way of thinking. They wrote of people coming together to help each other build new buildings or homes.<sup>115</sup> They formed sawing bees to saw firewood for one other,<sup>116</sup> butchering and sausage-making bees to share meat,<sup>117</sup> and attended fundraising socials.<sup>118</sup> Some families opened their homes to travellers who needed a place to stay when they were selling grain or buying groceries.<sup>119</sup> A hotel owner in Dana provided free accommodations to settlers. “Dad kept a lot of poor families from starvation as he provided meat and flour, vegetables and food until they could look after themselves. All were grateful,” remembered Georgina Lapointe in the Dana-Peterson history book.<sup>120</sup> A

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<sup>111</sup> See: Pilger History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Henry Jasken,” 122; Marysburg History Book Committee, “Edward Litz,” 88; Englefeld Historical Society, “Schoenhofen, John and Frances,” 333; Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, “Carl Grundmann,” 199; Watson History Book Committee, “Wenschlag, Frederick Emil and Helena (Thiesen) and Family,” by Rebecca Vossen, 970.

<sup>112</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, “The Charles W. King Story,” by Leo King, 498.

<sup>113</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, “The Albertson Family History,” 112.

<sup>114</sup> *Ibid.*, “Gustav Brenna Family,” 145.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, “Ernest and Kristine Ottoson and family,” by Cora Roli and Carl Ottoson, 404.

<sup>116</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Max and Agnes Forster,” 238.

<sup>117</sup> Bruno History Book Committee, “Krentz, George and Margaret,” 412.

<sup>118</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Edwin Bunz,” 125.

<sup>119</sup> See: Spalding and District Historical Society, “Mr. and Mrs. Elzear Coutu and Family,” by Florence Coutu, 180; and Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Harold Ives,” 173.

<sup>120</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “Turcotte, Leopold and Georgina,” by Georgina Lapointe, 353.

merchant in LeRoy was very generous in extending credit to everyone to help them through difficult times.<sup>121</sup>

The concern that neighbours shared for each other made health care more accessible. A doctor in Humboldt walked for miles between communities to provide medical service.<sup>122</sup> Women served as mid-wives in communities throughout the colony. They usually worked for free and were particularly valuable in helping families cope with sickness.<sup>123</sup>

The indifference towards the nativism of the larger culture in the family histories was shown further in the fascination with past encounters with Indians. Many family histories speak of having encounters with Indians, and all the pioneers speak favourably of them. Families sometimes shared their food with Indians or traded with them.<sup>124</sup> One memorable story by the Zimmerman family recalls Indians being spellbound by the wood stove and cooking utensils of Mary Zimmerman of St. Gregor. They came in her house unannounced to watch her cook meals. They could not speak German but used gestures and signs to communicate their want of milk and eggs. The Indians camped on a hill near the Zimmerman home, and the hill came to be known as 'Indian Hill'.<sup>125</sup>

The high value placed on hospitality manifested itself in the desire for social interaction among neighbours and on a community level. Visiting often occurred between

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<sup>121</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, "Allan Steffenson and Family," 699.

<sup>122</sup> The Humboldt Journal, "Ogilvie, Dr. James Murray," by James Ogilvie Jr., 414.

<sup>123</sup> See: Muenster History Book Committee, "Mr. and Mrs. Henry Dreckmann," 139; LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, "The Arthur Devine Family," by May Finner, 326; Naicam Heritage Book Committee, "The Alfred Anderson Family," by Leverne Anderson and Dorothy Taylor, 217; Spalding and District Historical Society, "Johnson," 311; Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, "Turcotte, Leopold and Georgina," by Georgina Lapointe, 353.

<sup>124</sup> See: Lake Lenore History Book Committee, "Nick and Mary Schuler," by Anna Primus and Evelyn Schuler, 534; Marysburg History Book Committee, "Edward Lutz," 87; Anaheim and District History Committee, "August Roenspies Sr.," 86; and Spalding and District Historical Society, "Henry and Nancy Dobell," by Evelyn Fraser, 196.

<sup>125</sup> St. Gregor History Book Committee, "Zimmerman, Adolf, Mary and family," 224.

families at homes and community events, whether socials, picnics, dances, or sports activities. “It wasn’t all work,” remembered pioneer Max Forster in the Lake Lenore history book. “We played a lot of ball and our team ... went all over to play. ... We also played a lot of hockey. All the neighbour boys were involved for we got together to clean off the sloughs and skate on them.”<sup>126</sup> A pioneer at Muenster remembered gathering with neighbours to sing, play games, or dance. Weddings were a special time for celebration and get-togethers were usually held at a home after the wedding ceremony.<sup>127</sup> Barn and school dances, and stage plays were popular,<sup>128</sup> as well as all night parties with cards and dancing.<sup>129</sup> Families bundled up and travelled by sleigh during the winter to a neighbour’s just to play cards, visit and have lunch. Sometimes six families gathered at one house where there would be dancing and families took turns hosting the visits each week.<sup>130</sup> The importance of having a social life was shown by people walking long distances to visit.<sup>131</sup>

The fondness for music and singing helped transcend ethnic differences near Dana and Peterson in the south-western corner of the colony. Neighbours gathered at the home of a French-Canadian family which became the focal point for musicians, especially fiddlers. A repertoire of songs was sung; one of the favourites was the “Cajun” beat because it was “real Canadian.” A variety of dances were held at a Dana school; Irish folk songs were part of the selection. “In those days we never had a racial problem and we never locked our homes. We all helped one another when the need arose

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<sup>126</sup> Lake Lenore History Book Committee, “Max and Agnes Forster,” 237.

<sup>127</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Herman Korte,” 196

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, “Mr. and Mrs. Frank Bunz,” 127.

<sup>129</sup> Englefeld Historical Society, “Schwartz, Jake,” by Louise Knafelc, 343.

<sup>130</sup> Spalding and District Historical Society, “The Arne and Clara Knutson Family,” by Roy Knutson, 327.

<sup>131</sup> Naicam Heritage Book Committee, “The Alfred Anderson Family,” by Leverne Anderson and Dorothy Taylor, 216.

regardless of race or creed,” the Haberman children wrote in Dana-Peterson history book.<sup>132</sup>

Newspapers, as well, were an important means of helping people cope with their isolation. *St. Peter's Bote*, published by the Benedictines, had stories of the colony and world affairs. The newspaper enabled one family “to forget the lonesomeness and gloominess of our situation.”<sup>133</sup> Another German Catholic newspaper, *The Wander*, was read by a pioneer family. It helped keep them in touch with the outside world as there was no telephone or radio.<sup>134</sup>

The importance of hospitality and neighbourliness transcended religious and ethnic differences. There are no references in the family histories of religious or ethnic disputes; however, about only twenty percent of pioneer stories even mention having a connection to a church. These findings may be emblematic of faith being a private matter. It is possible that membership in churches and church organizations was much stronger than what is implied in the family histories. A case in point is shown by one family in Middle Lake which does not mention having any involvement with a church, yet one of its members became an Ursuline nun.<sup>135</sup> One pioneer did not speak about the importance of his faith, but did write of how he walked nine miles to catechism and Mass.<sup>136</sup>

The pioneers who wrote about involvement with a church expressed their association through either attending a church or religious instruction, being married in a church, or being involved in a church organization. A few did write about the importance of their faith. The fourteen histories published by families gave more importance to the

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<sup>132</sup> Dana-Peterson History Book Committee, “The Haberman Story,” 172-173.

<sup>133</sup> Lutz, 44.

<sup>134</sup> Schmeiser, 8.

<sup>135</sup> Middle Lake Celebrate Saskatchewan History Book Committee, “George Aschenbrenner Family,” 128.

<sup>136</sup> Pilger History Book Committee, “Mr. and Mrs. Joe Neils,” 150.

expression of religious faith. Their faith was largely thought of as a personal matter, manifested in prayer or attendance at church.<sup>137</sup> The faith of pioneers brought people together on both a moral and social dimension. “During the early days, church was not only a place of worship, but it provided a social gathering, an opportunity to meet and visit with your neighbours,” recalled Dominic Thera in his family history book.<sup>138</sup>

The differences in beliefs held between religious faiths were not a barrier to social interaction. A United Church minister who served Englefeld had many good friendships with Catholics there.<sup>139</sup> A Catholic priest in Watson invited a Presbyterian banker to Catholic picnics. The Presbyterians and Anglicans in Watson shared the same church building for many years. The Presbyterian banker’s wife was the organist for both Anglican and Presbyterian services.<sup>140</sup> Protestant ladies in LeRoy formed the Community Club which became a gathering place for women. The Community Club promoted the “spiritual and physical welfare of their community.” The members of the Community Club formed the United Church when the church building was moved into LeRoy in 1928.<sup>141</sup>

There was a common denominator shared between both Catholics and Protestants. People who were active in a church or church organization were usually active in their communities. They were members of service groups, school boards, or local town and municipal councils. Involvement with a church tended to coincide with a sense of

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<sup>137</sup> Otto Lutz finished his work on Saturday to avoid Sunday work. See Otto Lutz, 43. The Dauk family began and ended each day with prayer. See Frank Dauk family, 15. The Schmitz family wanted one of their sons to become a priest. See Aloysius Schmitz, 40. The Doepker family offered many prayers for Mary Doepker who underwent surgery. See Frank Dauk family, “History of Mary and Bernard Doepker,” 63.

<sup>138</sup> Thera, 8.

<sup>139</sup> Englefeld Historical Society, “Fiske, Reverend Daniel,” by Flora Henderson, 180.

<sup>140</sup> Watson History Book Committee, “Recollections of Watson,” by R.P. Findlay, 1027.

<sup>141</sup> LeRoy and RM Heritage Book Committee, “The LeRoy United Church,” by Bob and Marion Barclay, 84.

concern for the larger community. These findings are corroborated in notebooks of two organizations in the colony. The St. Bruno Anti-Treating League for Western Canada gave support to people who were alcoholics. The constitution of the organization states that “the object of the league shall be to bind its members not to give nor to take a treat (drink) in a hotel, saloon, club or any public drinking place.”<sup>142</sup> The organization was founded by Chrysostom Hoffmann, OSB in March of 1914. Hoffmann drafted its constitution, which he said, was to be used as a guide for other branches which wanted to be affiliated with the St. Bruno Anti-Treating League.<sup>143</sup> Another organization, The Funeral Aid Society, was initiated at St. Scholastica Roman Catholic Church near Burr. It gave financial support to local residents who suffered accidents or deaths of family members.<sup>144</sup>

The only account of religious differences was recorded in Humboldt. There was rivalry and name-calling between junior high students of the public and separate schools, but that ended when the students had to come together to share the high school building.<sup>145</sup> There were no references to antagonism between Germans and non-Germans or disputes between ethnic groups.

There is documentation of a conflict on the closing of a parochial school, though the information is hidden in the parochial school records of St. Peter’s Abbey Archives. The family histories might have been silent on this issue, but the official record tells another story. The archive documents express the zeal for Catholic education held by German Catholics and they shed light on ongoing tension between German Catholics and

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<sup>142</sup> SPAA, Organizations of St. Peter’s Colony, St. Bruno’s Anti-Treating League for Western Canada (Temperance Society formed in 1914).

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, Funeral Aid Society of the parish of St. Scholastica, 1922.

<sup>145</sup> The Humboldt Journal, “Hagerman, W.A.,” by Margaret Mann, 319.

the larger Anglo-Canadian establishment. Some parochial school trustees in the Bruno area protested the disbanding of the parochial school by the province in 1909 to form a public school district. The trustees were miffed about being forced to pay taxes to a public school system when they did not want one. If they wanted to keep the parochial school open, they would have to pay both public taxes and finance the parochial school through their own means. A letter of protest was sent by Joseph Ehrmantraut, a trustee of the Bruno Parochial School, on behalf of the school trustees to Premier Walter Scott. Ehrmantraut explained that the parochial school followed the guidelines of public schools; it used English textbooks and taught similar subjects as public schools such as Canadian history. Only one hour each day was spent teaching German. The school, like other schools, was open eight to ten months each year.

We know the value of English and saw to it that it was properly taught in our school. We are all German Catholics and far beyond the district. Only a few (two or three) late comers are non-Catholics. These are the ones who wish to dictate to us and force a school upon us we do not need. These knew among what class of people they were settling; why settle here if not to their taste? <sup>146</sup>

Premier Scott informed Ehrmantraut that efforts were made by the province to resolve the issue. The province faced the only option of dismissing the parochial school trustees and closing the parochial school. The parochial school was not supported by parents of “a number of children of parents who are British subjects by birth,” Scott wrote in a letter. A meeting between school inspector, Smith, and twenty-five ratepayers in February of 1908 failed to reach an agreement on the matter, Scott said. A subsequent meeting was held with another school inspector, McDonald, in March of 1908 and it

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<sup>146</sup> SPAA, Bruno Parochial School file, “Letters on School Issues,” Joseph Ehrmantraut, trustee of Bruno Parochial School, September 29, 1909 letter to Premier Walter Scott.

reached a stalemate. The inspector was ordered to dissolve the local trustees and appoint an official trustee to begin the process for a public school.<sup>147</sup>

The trustees in Bruno informed the premier there was a double standard in the way residents of German and British backgrounds were treated. If only a “half-dozen Englishmen” had petitioned for the return of the parochial school the government would have granted them their wish, Ehrmantraut said in a letter on behalf of the trustees to Scott.<sup>148</sup> Ehrmantraut informed Scott the local ratepayers were not opposed to the Protestants forming another school district. The parents of children attending the parochial school did not want to be forced to pay taxes for a public school in Bruno that only a few families wanted. The Bruno residents who sought a public school were welcome to send their children to the parochial school.<sup>149</sup> Ehrmantraut, in a subsequent letter to the commissioner of education, requested the dissolution of the newly-formed public Bruno School District. The letter said the district did not have the required twelve children attending the school. The letter was signed by forty ratepayers.<sup>150</sup> Scott put an end to the matter in a letter which said, “The Department could not obey the spirit of our school law and at the same time meet the wishes which you and your fellow petitioners express.”<sup>151</sup>

Another issue involving colony schools arose in 1928 when there was concern the province was banning religious garb and crucifixes from public schools. The archival files contain a pastoral letter of Abbot Severin Gertken to the colony priests informing them of the law. Severin said the provincial school trustees were holding a meeting in

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<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*, Walter Scott, October 19, 1909 letter to Joseph Ehrmantraut.

<sup>148</sup> *Ibid.*, Ehrmantraut, October 20, 1909 letter to Hon. Commissioner of Education.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*, Ehrmantraut, October 26, 1909, letter to Walter Scott.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid.*, Ehrmantraut, November 1, 1909 letter to Hon. Commissioner of Education.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid.*, Scott, November 17, 1909 letter to Ehrmantraut.



Regina. He urged the priests to tell the school trustees in the colony to attend the meeting and ask the premier to withdraw his support for the law.<sup>152</sup> Gertken was worried that the province was going to use whatever means available to close all parochial schools.<sup>153</sup> Meanwhile, rumours of parochial schools closing circulated throughout the colony.<sup>154</sup>

The family histories have no information on the issue of parochial schools closing or rumours of schools closing. Pioneers base their recollections of education largely upon personal incidents they remembered at school. The family histories give the impression that educational issues facing the colonists were not a concern to them. The private correspondence between German-Catholic trustees in the Bruno district belies this notion, however, calling attention to a zeal for education by German Catholics who insisted on their right to maintain a parochial school. The trustees lamented the province's decision to force them to open a public school because they knew the provincial funding formula would force them to pay taxes to a public school and they could not afford to support both public and private schools. The German-Catholic trustees made it known there were tensions between German Catholics and the Anglo-Canadian establishment when they stated further that they believed they were being treated as second-class citizens. The private correspondence, along with the writings of Werner Renneberg, OSB, is the only written information on ongoing feelings of tension between the German Catholics and the larger Anglo-Canadian majority.

Only a few pioneers wrote about hostility towards German Canadians during the First World War. Some expressed their objection to being looked upon as aliens during

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<sup>152</sup> Abbot Severin Gertken file, "School Issues," Gertken, June 9, 1928 pastoral letter to priests of St. Peter's Colony.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid.*, Gertken, January 28, 1930 letter to Fr. Rudolph.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid.*, Gertken, January 18, 1930 letter to Fr. Rudolph.

the First World War while others did not comment on how the strain affected them. The Benedictines were silent, as well, in their official histories on nativism and ongoing tensions between Anglo-Canadians and minorities. A report by Jerome Weber, OSB in 1951 makes it evident the Benedictines were concerned about attitudes of Anglo-Canadians towards Roman Catholics and separate schools. Weber, a Benedictine historian who later became abbot, wrote a document entitled Report on Separate Schools. The report questioned why the province refused to fund separate high schools when funding was provided by neighbouring Alberta.<sup>155</sup> Weber commented that the Secondary Education Act of 1907 in Saskatchewan disallowed funding that had been originally granted in 1905 for separate high schools. The act permitted funding only for separate elementary schools. The constitutionality of the Secondary Education Act was called into question by provincial politicians before it became law, Weber wrote. Roman Catholics did not express any public objection to the law, Weber said, because they felt they had no influence with their minority status. The provincial government, in defending the law, stated that Roman Catholic ratepayers were unable to support their own separate high schools.<sup>156</sup> This argument failed to explain how Roman Catholics were able to support seven separate schools in the North-West Territories previous to the founding of Saskatchewan. Some of the schools taught high school subjects, Weber said.<sup>157</sup> Prime Minister Laurier and the federal Minister of Justice refused to challenge the law, Weber wrote, because they were more concerned about provincial rights than the constitutionality of the Act of 1907.<sup>158</sup> Weber, in a cautionary tone, did not suggest that

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<sup>155</sup> SPAA, Abbot Jerome Weber file, Report on Separate Schools, 1951.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, 6, 11,

<sup>158</sup> *Ibid.*, 19

the provincial government was intentionally disregarding the rights of Roman Catholics pertaining to separate schools. He concluded that more research needed to be carried out on the constitutionality of the Secondary Education Act of 1907.<sup>159</sup> Weber's desire for a challenge to the law was finally answered in 1963 when it was amended to allow for separate high school districts.<sup>160</sup>

The lack of information in family histories on ongoing tensions between German Catholics and the larger Anglo-Canadian establishment raises the question of why they were omitted. Historian Merle Massie provides a plausible answer in her research on community and family histories of the province. Communities across Saskatchewan produced history volumes with community and family histories that share similar content. The family histories focused on the personal histories of families, recording births, marriages, deaths, occupations, and achievements.<sup>161</sup> The subject matter of family histories in the province was shaped by community history committees which wanted to record events from the past that were unlikely to cause controversy, discomfort, or provoke anger. The committees met this objective by screening all submissions and removing anything they felt was libellous, slanderous, or a possible cause of division in the communities.<sup>162</sup> Instead, the committees chose to publish information which built communities.

For this reason, certain issues, such as family feuds, murders and other unsavoury scandals, and other bleak points in a community story are nearly non-existent, or at least, not emphasized. Communities across the province used these books as a wonderful opportunity to remember the past as they want to

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<sup>159</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>160</sup> Canadian Plains Research Centre, "Education," by Ken Horsman, in *Encyclopedia of Saskatchewan* (Regina, Sask.: Canadian Plains Research Center, 2005), 279.

<sup>161</sup> Merle Massie, "Scribes of Stories, Tellers of Tales: The Phenomenon of Community History in Saskatchewan," (MA thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1997), 117.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

remember it, and as they wanted others to remember it. ... The books commemorated those who opened up the country, those who fought for it, and those who made it their home.<sup>163</sup>

The policy of history committees raises further questions of how much historical information was intentionally left out by families in the former colony who wanted to avoid writing anything controversial or offensive, particularly on issues related to education or nativism. There are further questions of how many pioneers chose to pass down memories orally to immediate family members and how much of that information was screened. The German Catholics shared similar traditions, yet their families were complex and shared different understandings of their faith and history. They likely chose many avenues for expressing and transmitting history.

The high esteem held for families underscores the importance of the family unit. The history committees believed it was more important to safeguard the family than record historical information that risked causing embarrassment. The high value placed on the family suggests that it had a central role in the formation of the province. The history of St. Peter's Colony may help to explain role of the family in the province: the family had an important role in the creation of the colony. The origins of the colony can be traced to requests by immigrant German Catholics in Western Canada for German-speaking priests. The immigrants had left parishes in the United States which had German-speaking priests. The request was answered by a Benedictine abbot who sent Benedictine monks to serve the immigrants. The German Catholics invited the monks to help them open churches and schools. The settlers respected the Benedictines because the monks helped settlers preserve important traditions that sustained German-Catholic

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<sup>163</sup> *Ibid.*, 126.

families. The monks created St. Peter's Colony, a juridical territory that functioned as a means to safe-guard German-Catholic family traditions.

Benedictines from the past might be mortified to learn that the colony and Benedictines were largely omitted from family histories. The histories are not inferring the colony or Benedictines were not important to pioneers since most of them do not speak about their faith or church. The lack of information suggests that religion was a private matter and that may have corresponded to the colony and Benedictines. The omission raises the question of how well pioneers communicated their past experiences to their descendants, and how well their children and grandchildren understood the values held by pioneers.

The collective memories of families, nevertheless, reinforce the high value placed on the family unit and its central role in the formation of the colony. The histories of families in communities of the former colony focused on past events that were meaningful to families and had a direct correlation to their well-being. Their decisions – whether the building of churches and schools, recreation centres, telephone and power companies – all had the purpose of benefitting families. The importance held to meeting family needs encouraged families to socialize with each other, and help each other in times of hardship or crisis. The needs of families trumped all ethnic, religious and political differences that otherwise might have kept them apart. The importance attached to the family encouraged cooperation, particularly when people were expending much energy simply trying to survive. The families, in their struggles, reached out to each other and subsequently helped build communities and rural municipalities that forged close ties with their counterparts in the province. The expression of loyalty to the family as being

synonymous with loyalty to the country was shown during the First World War when colonists gave their support and lives to their country.

The importance attached to the family unit and country, and lack of concern for outside impressions, was echoed further by pioneers in the first history book of Muenster produced in 1973. The only disappointments recorded by the Muenster and area pioneers were with changes in society which, they said, were causing families and neighbours to become more distant. The pioneers lamented that people had become more interested in material possessions than with each other. Gerhard and Eugenia Koppes reiterated the feelings of others when they wrote that people had a higher standard of living and yet were less interested, than in the past, in visiting with each other.<sup>164</sup> Joe Hinz worried that parents were becoming too distant from their teenagers.<sup>165</sup> Dorothy and Lewellyn Hinz were upset that parents were giving less attention to their children.<sup>166</sup> Ray and Mary Kienlen believed that people had become too busy and were not taking the time to enjoy life.<sup>167</sup>

The shared memories of families in communities of the former St. Peter's Colony and the remainder of the province place the colony in a position to be a microcosm of the larger province: the families of the colony built their communities based on the needs and aspirations of the family.

Historian Chad Gaffield found the pattern of decision-making that had roots in the family was common among anglophone and francophone settlers in Ontario during the nineteenth century. Gaffield conducted studies of three counties and found the needs of

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<sup>164</sup> Muenster History Book Committee, "Mr. and Mrs. Gerhard Koppes," 191.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, "Mr. and Mrs. Joseph L. Hinz," 163.

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, "Mr. and Mrs. Lewellyn Hinz," 166.

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, "Mr. and Mrs. Ray Kienlen," 182.

the family determined immigration patterns and social organization in their communities. “The family was the critical social and economic institution,” Gaffield concluded.<sup>168</sup> The economy of Prescott Country, for example, was driven by the need for families to find new homes. Agriculture was the principal economic activity because it sustained the family.<sup>169</sup> Young anglophone and francophone men and women based their choices on when to marry on the availability of land or savings because they wanted to be able to support families, Gaffield wrote.<sup>170</sup> The family was the principal employer and educator of children between the 1840s and 1870s, teaching children land clearing, spinning and gardening, operating sawmills and shanties.<sup>171</sup> The social and economic history of families influenced whether their children went to school. The better-educated families had more resources to support separate schools and sent their children to them in greater numbers. “Differences in thought and behaviour reflected distinct individual and family circumstances,” Gaffield said.<sup>172</sup> Families looked upon the church as their guardians particularly because they wanted their children to be baptized to ensure an entrance into heaven.<sup>173</sup>

The family was the major social, as well economic, institution for both anglophones and francophones. Townships such as Alfred and Caledonia operated with only a small amount of formal organization. Everyday life occurred within networks of kin and neighbours. The communal nature of existence in Prescott Country cannot be overemphasized. ... The sense of mutual interdependence which characterized rural life in Prescott Country became especially apparent in times of crisis.<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>168</sup> Chad Gaffield, *Language, Schooling, and Cultural Conflict: The Origins of the French-Language Controversy in Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1987), 182-183. Note: Studies have found that ethnic stability has been an essential part of history in both Canada and the United States. The family structure has been integral to maintaining ethnic stability. Gaffield has written about the traditional Canadian historiography by studying Prescott Country in “Canadian Families in Cultural Context: Hypotheses from the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” Canadian Historical Association, *Historical Papers* (1979), 48-70. The importance of maintaining culture is explained in the journal *Canadian Ethnic Studies*.

<sup>169</sup> *Ibid.*, 67.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, 175.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, 159.

<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, 119.

The similarities in values between families of Prescott Country, Ontario and St. Peter's Colony reveal further how families were instrumental in shaping the country. The historical information in family histories of the former St. Peter's Colony has opened a window to the world of the past, though a small part of the past. The historical information covered only certain topics amongst the countless experiences and feelings of pioneers in Canada at the turn of the twentieth century. The present generation can only speculate on what it was like to live in the colony; how pioneers understood the importance of their churches and schools; and how colonists perceived themselves as minorities living in a jurisdiction that was looked upon with suspicion by the larger establishment. The traditions of the German Catholics set them apart from the establishment. The decisions of the German Catholics, however, make it evident that their traditions were another means of expressing the same values and beliefs of the Anglo-Canadians which included loyalty to their country.



## Conclusion

This thesis is the first to study loyalty in St. Peter's Colony by probing the histories of three important genres in the colony: the Benedictines, communities and families. It is the first to analyze the attitudes of colonists towards education and language, and in doing so has become a bridge that interlinks the three genres in the colony. Previous histories focused on their immediate subjects and never investigated the commonalities shared between other communal groups in the former colony. No other historian has looked at the colony from the inside.

The thesis, in exploring the history of the colony, made it apparent that there is more than one way to express loyalty in Canada. The German Catholics were proud Canadians who shared similar values and aspirations as the larger Anglo-Canadian establishment. The Anglo-Canadians wanted to achieve unity in Canada by assimilating all ethnic groups into the Anglo-Canadian culture. The Anglo-Canadian majority looked with suspicion on minority ethnic groups which tried to retain their culture, perceiving non-British cultures as inferior or opposing British values. It is not surprising that the Anglo-Canadian establishment accused St. Peter's Colony as being disloyal, even though the German Catholics were proud Canadians who were merely trying to maintain their traditions.

The histories of the colonists portrayed them as people who were oblivious to outside perceptions or unconcerned about them. The colonists may have been troubled over negative opinions of them, but the first settlers were focused primarily on everyday living and survival. The pioneers placed a high value on their families and made decisions that were related to the benefit of their families. They promoted, among other

things, education, health care, better transportation, recreation and socializing. The decisions of the colonists belied accusations of isolation or disloyalty since the colonists continually brought themselves into closer contact with outside communities as their wealth in the colony increased. The colonists willingly adopted the English language and cooperated with the provincial and federal authorities in forming school and municipal districts.

Chapter One probed the private and pastoral letters of the Benedictine leadership to learn about the issues that concerned them and the attitudes they held towards loyalty, education and the colony. The letters of the Benedictines communicated their principal concern to be everyday survival. The first two Benedictine leaders, Alfred Mayer, OSB and Bruno Doerfler, OSB from 1903 to 1919, usually wrote about their need for money to meet their everyday needs and build the monastic community. They often commented on issues in the colony, suggesting the Benedictines had close contact with the colonists. The following Benedictine leaders, in pastoral letters, expressed their values for education and morality among the colonists.

The Benedictine leadership seemed unconcerned about their image in the larger Canadian community until schools within the colony were accused by Rev. E.H. Oliver, an educator and historian, of promoting disloyalty and German nationalism. Abbot Bruno Doerfler, addressing the accusations of Oliver to another abbot, blamed the attacks on the Orange Lodge. He did not lash out against the Canadian establishment or country, a sign that he had an affinity for the country. The Benedictine leadership responded to the accusations of disloyalty by publically presenting their own facts on the issue, assuring the public that colony schools were promoting good education while upholding German-

Catholic traditions. Doefler seemed miffed at not being accepted as an equal by the Canadian establishment. He insisted he was a good, loyal Canadian citizen. The Benedictine leadership expressed its loyalty indirectly by working with provincial and federal authorities in establishing the colony and using legal channels when necessary to carry out decisions.

The battle over loyalty in the press was not the first major confrontation of the Benedictines, or even the most important. Previous confrontations brought division within the Benedictine leadership and colony. The battles challenged the impressions of nativists who believed the colony was a homogenous enclave of German Catholics building a separate society. The first Benedictine leader, Prior Alfred Mayer, spent much of his energy in a conflict with other Benedictine leaders in the United States over ownership of land in the United States. The conflict may have cost the Canadian monks dearly in lost revenue and increased their financial burdens in Canada. The Benedictines faced accusations of settlers who blamed the Benedictines for giving misleading information about the colony. The allegations pointed to the Benedictines as having limited authority and the colonists having differences in allegiances to the church.

The findings in Chapter One illustrated that history should be revisited again by future generations to uncover new information about the past, or to re-examine the accuracy or veracity of recorded history. The official histories of the Benedictines ignore the issues of loyalty, education and internal conflicts. The publications of educators and historians like Rev. E.H. Oliver implied that some Canadians were disloyal citizens and issues of loyalty and education were tantamount to Canadians.

Historian Clinton White brought the importance of revisiting history to the forefront in his research on schools of St. Peter's Colony. White researched the decisions behind the building of schools and the quality of education they offered. He found that previous reports criticizing the schools were inaccurate, inconsistent or contained false information. White concluded the schools offered education equal to or better than other Saskatchewan public schools.

The above examples illustrate how recorded history gives an impression of the past that has been shaped by those who wrote it. It is essential to understand the background of authors of history to ascertain how historical writings may have been influenced by the predisposition of writers. New generations of historians, separated from the perceptions of previous generations, are essential for giving new perspectives of the past. Future historians may uncover new information that was overlooked or omitted because it was considered unhistorical or too controversial to publish.

Chapter Two looked at the community histories to determine how communities saw their role in the colony and larger Canadian community. The community histories appear to be written independently of each other and understood from the vantage point of the local community: each community history book had its own unique title and cover page. The history volumes, in reality, are analogous to each other. They share similar topics ranging from the history of the local business community and schools, to health care, sports and recreation groups and municipalities. The histories largely ignored information on the past that was controversial or brought embarrassment. The histories of the communities were shaped by policies of local history committees that corresponded to guidelines of history communities throughout the province. History committees of the

former colony, similar to committees throughout the province, used the history books as a means of celebrating community.

All of the community histories of the former colony expressed loyalty to Canada by presenting their communities as being an inherent part of Saskatchewan and/or Canada. Most history volumes did not even acknowledge the former presence of the colony or Benedictines, suggesting further their bond with the country. The only communities that acknowledged the colony and Benedictines were those with German-Catholic backgrounds and their histories did not agree on the importance of the colony or Benedictines. Two communities with German-Catholic backgrounds largely ignored the presence of the colony and Benedictines, verifying further that the authors of history shape the writing of history.

Chapter Three examined the family histories to get insight into their attitudes towards education, their communities, and country. An analysis was made of family decisions to determine their common values and aspirations. The family histories ignored the issues of nativism and ongoing tensions between German Catholics and the larger Anglo-Canadian establishment. Only a handful of families wrote about hostility toward German Canadians during the First World War. The family histories, similar to family histories across Saskatchewan, are similar in content and outlook. The family history volumes focused on personal histories of families, recording births, marriages, deaths, occupations, and achievements. History committees in the former colony, akin to history committees across the province, recorded events from the past that were unlikely to cause controversy or division. The understanding of their role in recording history made it even

more apparent how history is shaped by its author, whether a professional historian, amateur writer or committee of individuals with a common purpose.

The thesis brought the awareness that history is incomplete when the voices of those being written about are silent. History must be told from the vantage point of those who experienced it first-hand. The historian is an outsider looking within an area of interest using limited resources. The historian can only give a perception of a subject under study and is influenced by biases and conditions that effect observations and conclusions. The absence of first-person information leaves a gap that can only be filled by speculation.

The personal letters of the Benedictines and stories of the colonists did bring the reader closer into their realm. Their letters and stories also made it evident that only a small window was opened up into the past because only a fraction of history was recorded. Most of the family and community histories were abridged, or statistical, recording only factual information. They raised further questions of how many histories were lost when pioneers died without recording them; how many original sources with valuable information have been lost; how many families likely chose to omit family histories they felt were too difficult to compile, unnecessary or too sensitive to record; and how many families passed on history orally to immediate family members.

The historian can only guess what it was like to like to have lived in the colony at the turn of the twentieth century. The present generation can only speculate on how the Benedictines or colonists felt about themselves and what issues they considered important. It is possible to surmise that the pioneers of St. Peter's Colony had a sense of independence and shared differing views on the meaning of education, language and

loyalty. It would be fair to guess that the pioneers made decisions that presented them as hardworking citizens who wanted to become good, loyal Canadians and maintain some of their cultural ties – similar to those in the larger establishment who were suspicious of them.





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