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Time Perspectivism as Applied to Three Mennonite Cemeteries in York County, Nebraska

Tayrah Epp

Abstract: Time perspectivism is a view in which time scales bring into focus different processes, which produces a need to use different concepts and explanatory variables (Bailey 1987, 2007). The three Mennonite cemeteries, Epp, Faith Evangelical and Bethesda, were analyzed using time perspectivism and are linked spatially and temporally to one another as indicated in the headstone inscriptions and decorative motifs. This case study provides an example of short-term scale change in which the Mennonites transition from Standard German to English. Much of this paper's focus is on the Epp cemetery, which when viewed as a palimpsest of meaning show its use and change in meaning over time. The Epp cemetery shows considerable planning in its construction, which is reflected in its layout. While all three show consistency in headstone size, inscriptions and decorative motifs, there is, stylistically, a closer link between the Epp and Bethesda cemeteries.

Introduction

Cemeteries are incredible sources of information for the historian and the archaeologist without requiring ground disturbance. Headstones can provide accurate dates relating to changes in style, religion, attitudes towards death, lineage, and demography. Time perspectivism is the view that different time scales bring into focus different processes, requiring different concepts and different explanatory variables (Bailey 1987, 2007). From this perspective I analyze the Epp cemetery, a small family Mennonite burial plot, and compare the types, decorative motifs, and inscriptions of the headstones to two other communal Mennonite cemeteries, Bethesda and Faith Evangelical, located near Henderson, Nebraska.

First this paper introduces the methods and materials used for analyzing the cemeteries and the Mennonite history. Next it provides a brief synopsis of the origins of the Mennonites from the Netherlands to Henderson, Nebraska. Types and decorative motifs are explored for connections linking these three cemeteries across time and space. Inscription language uses are given a greater emphasis as the

headstones can be used to explore short-term language changes in the Henderson community from the 1870s until the 1940s. The Epp cemetery is analyzed using Bailey's (2007) palimpsest of meaning. Since the Epp cemetery is the smallest with 11 headstones and 14 burials, each burial will have its own life history with the emphasis on the associated gravestones. Finding information on Mennonite cemeteries in the United States is extremely difficult. Most focus on New England and Southern cemeteries due to their elaborate and unusual decorations and forms (Mytum 2002). However there is one survey of Mennonite headstones from Ontario that was used to compare with those of Henderson (Norris 1988).

Methods and Materials

Three cemeteries were chosen for field surveys: Epp, Bethesda, and Faith Evangelical cemeteries. Epp cemetery was chosen since it is a Mennonite family burial plot that is of a manageable size, quite amenable to a life history of each burial. Since I also wanted to explore ties across space and time, I chose predominately Mennonite cemeteries, Faith Evangelical and Bethesda. These two were chosen because they were easy to access and were of different sizes.

Each cemetery was surveyed to determine the approximate number of headstones and to determine the locations of those dated to the late 1800s to early 1900s. Each stone of that time period was then recorded with their location, inscription, decoration, and a sketch of each stone's form. Pictures were taken of each stone in the Epp cemetery and of representative stones in Bethesda and Faith Evangelical. Headstones that were not original were included in this initial survey. Later, each stone was assigned a specific type based on form, decorative motifs, and inscriptions, and was compiled into an Excel database. Those that were clearly not original headstones were removed from study at this stage.

The family genealogies were taken entirely from a third generation copy of the Kirchen Buch I (Bethesda Mennonite Church, *Familien Regifter*, 1888-1925, Henderson, Nebraska). This served as the family registry at Bethesda from 1888 until 1925. Children that were born and died both in Russia and the United States prior to 1888 were recorded by each individual family, husband and wife. The husband and wife usually had their birth dates and their place of birth listed. The parents of the husband and wife were also listed, usually with birth and sometimes death dates. Another valuable source of information regarding the Henderson Mennonites is the book, *Henderson Mennonites: from Holland to Henderson*, written for the centennial celebrating the 1874 immigration (Voth 1974). It includes information from the Mennonite Encyclopedia as well as detailed immigrants' lists

from 1874 until 1878 and also provides a copy of a circa 1910 Census Map. Nancy Beach of the York Historical Society provided other census maps of the Henderson Township.

History of the Henderson Mennonites

In order to understand the Henderson Mennonites, their cemeteries, and religious practices, Mennonite history and origins must also be understood. Their history demonstrates a strong emphasis on a German Mennonite identity and a strict adherence to their religious beliefs. These beliefs often clashed with the political and religious leaders of the countries where they resided. Headstones are used to explore this identity and belief structure over time. *Henderson Mennonites: from Holland to Henderson*, provides a brief historical account of the Mennonite origins and traces the Henderson Mennonites from the Netherlands to Henderson, Nebraska (Voth 1974). The following historical overview is from the aforementioned book.

The origins of the Mennonites can be traced to the Reformation of the Catholic Church in the early 1500s. The German Lutheran reform movement in 1517 spread quickly to include Switzerland. The leading reformer, Ulrich Zwingli, wanted more extensive changes in theology in addition to Luther's changes to church worship and organization. Zwingli's student, Conrad Grebel, questioned infant baptism and the church being an arm of the state. Grebel and his close friends were expelled from Zurich and began spreading their teachings. This stance on infant baptism and the baptizing of adults became known as Anabaptists, 'again-baptizers.' The Anabaptist movement spread quickly to the northern cantons of Switzerland, over into southern Germany, and Austria. In 1530, the movement had reached the Netherlands. One of the most contentious beliefs was the refusal to bear arms in war leading to the persecution of Anabaptists starting in the 1530s. Within a century they became known as '*Die stille im Lande*' (quiet in the land), meeting in homes, cemeteries, and nearby forests (Voth 1974:3).

Menno Simons, a Catholic priest, was an influential leader of the Anabaptists. Dissatisfied with Catholicism, Menno in 1536 became a leader of the Anabaptist movement. His followers from the Flemish and Frisian congregations supported Menno's stance on strict punishment of wayward members, favoring the name, "Menists," (in German, "*Mennonisten*") (Voth 1974:5).

Pressures from the War of Spanish Succession led the Netherlands to fight a war of independence. Spain was strongly Catholic and the Netherlands were influenced by the reform movement. The refusal to bear arms left the Dutch Mennonites pressured from both sides and subsequently led to further persecution. Dutch Mennonites moved to

the Danzig area of East Prussia, the earliest from 1549, and by 1600 many fleeing Mennonites had settled near Danzig. Despite additional taxes and strict rules, the Mennonites flourished from 1600 to 1780, with villages scattered from Elbing on the Baltic Sea coast all along the Vistula River to Thorn, about 150 miles upriver (Voth 1974:5). Voth reports that the Henderson Mennonites are mostly descended from those living near Schwetz and Kulm, which are north of Thorn.

Relations among the Mennonites and the Prussian and Polish kings were always uneasy, but in 1787 the new Prussian king issued an edict severely limiting further acquisition of land. Catherine the Great recently had acquired land north of the Black Sea and wanted to settle this area with Europeans in order to build an agricultural resource and a stable region within her empire. Catherine issued a manifesto in 1786, guaranteeing free land and religious practice. The first 228 families left in 1788 to form the Chortitza colony. The Napoleonic wars resulted in a fresh impetus to immigrate to Russia. A new colony, Molotschna, was established along the Molotschna River in the early 1800s. Prosperity and relative peace lasted from the 1820s until the 1870s. When rumors began in 1870 that the Russian government was going to revoke the Mennonite Privilegium, which granted exemption from the military, maintain German schools, and various other privileges, a delegation was sent in 1871 to St. Petersburg to urge against rescinding the privilegium. This delegation was not successful and plans were made to migrate once again.

The first groups of Mennonites boarded the ships S.S. Teutonia and S.S. Cimbria, in 1874. The groups arrived in Lincoln, Nebraska, in September of that year. All but thirty-five families decided to move to Kansas. Those 207 people who chose to settle in Nebraska arrived at the immigrant house on October 14, 1874, a mile east of present day Henderson. This first group and the groups that followed again maintained a strong German Mennonite identity even though in a new country.

Mennonite Cemeteries

As previously stated, the Epp Cemetery was chosen since it is a small, manageably sized cemetery that is quite amenable to a study of life histories of each deceased individual and their related headstones. Since the entire population of this cemetery is Mennonite, two other cemeteries with primarily late nineteenth and early twentieth century Mennonite burials were also chosen for comparison. Faith Evangelical is a medium-sized cemetery and Bethesda Mennonite Church cemetery is the largest Mennonite cemetery in the Henderson, Nebraska area.

Epp Cemetery

The Epp Cemetery is a small two family burial plot. There are 14 people buried there, although only twelve names are mentioned on the eleven headstones. The two families represented are those of Reverend Heinrich Epp and Johann Harder. There is one unmarked grave of Gerhard Epp, who was born and died in 1894 (Nancy Beach, personal communication 2007), although he is not directly related to Reverend Heinrich Epp nor to the Harders (Kirchen Buch I). The earliest burial was in 1885 and the latest was in 1935. This cemetery is located a quarter mile south on York County Road 6, two miles east of Henderson, Nebraska.

Faith Evangelical Cemetery

This cemetery has had numerous names, which coincides with the changes in its associated church's name. The Ebenezer Church split off from the Bethesda Mennonite Church in 1882 (Voth 1974). The church erected a building one mile south of Henderson, Nebraska, across the road (York County Road 8) and to the west of the Faith Evangelical cemetery. The name was later changed to Evangelical Mennonite Brethren. Recently the name was changed again to Faith Evangelical, the current name of the cemetery. There is no sign marking the cemetery with its name. The earliest burial was in 1879, which indicates the cemetery was founded prior to the church. There are over 180 burials and the cemetery is still in use. The cemetery is separated into three distinct areas. The northeast corner contains 28 headstones, the northwest corner contains 36 headstones, and the largest section, the southern half, still in use, has approximately 170 headstones.

Bethesda Mennonite Church Cemetery

This is the largest Mennonite cemetery near Henderson, Nebraska which is not surprising considering Bethesda Church is the largest of the three Mennonite churches founded in the late 1800s (Voth 1974). The earliest clearly legible burial date is 1874, but the name, Jas. W. Wilson, is not a typical Mennonite name and is not listed on the immigrant lists (Voth 1974:237-255) or the Bethesda family registry, Kirchen Buch I. Unfortunately the month of death is illegible. The next earliest burial is 1878, but is listed on a stone erected within the last ten years by Bethesda Church. There are approximately 725 headstones and the cemetery is still in use. It is located on York County Road 8, one mile north and a quarter mile east of Henderson. Originally, Bethesda's church building was located across the road to the west.

Headstone Types

This research includes headstones with dates between the 1870s and 1940s. Headstones were split into 9 different types based upon shape and profile. Material used, limestone, granite, bronze, and concrete, was not included in this typology. This was done in order to determine if headstone types changed over time as well as in determining links between the three cemeteries included in the study. Types 1 through 9 are as follows:

- Type 1-square/rectangular stones that have a flat profile, decorated/non-decorated, single/multiple names
- Type 2-upright, base/no base, straight edges with a curvilinear top, single/multiple names
- Type 3-upright, base/no base, straight edge with a straight top, single/multiple names

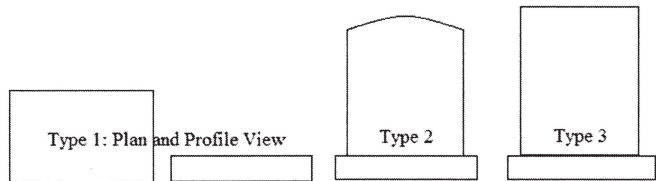


Figure 1: Types 1, 2 and 3

- Type 4-childrens, typical decoration: willow branches, flowers, scroll, may/may not have a statue on top (see Figure 2)



Figure 2: Typical Type 4

- Type 5-upright, flat surface, profile is triangular
- Type 6-rectangular, flat, last name is centered at top, two areas left and right for two names and dates

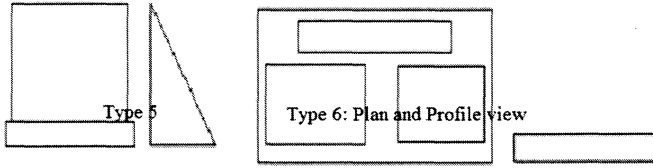


Figure 3: Types 5 and 6

- Type 7-upright, base, last name centered at top, two areas left and right for two names and dates
- Type 8-upright, profile is triangular, base/no base, last name centered at top, two areas left and right for two names and dates

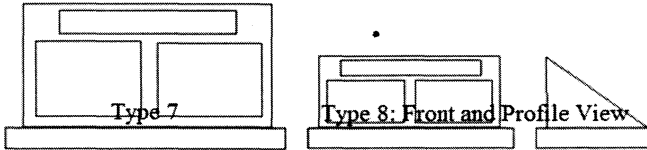


Figure 4: Types 7 and 8

- Type 9-upright, obelisk.

By far the most common types in all three cemeteries were 1, 2, and 3 with 50, 41, and 54 headstones respectively. There is a clear trend indicating the decrease in popularity for Types 2 and 3 when plotted by decade from 1874 until 1940 (see Table 1). Type 2 declines sharply in popularity after 1910. Type 1 is usually quite simple and made of granite and is the cheapest headstone option, which is the likely reason it is still used quite frequently up until 1940. Bethesda Cemetery has over 40 Type 1, stones placed within the last ten years for those with no prior stones (Nancy Beach, personal communication 2007), but were not counted in the sampling above since these stones are backdated considerably. Based upon a cursory look at Bethesda and Faith cemeteries, after the 1940s, Types 7 and 8 become extremely popular and Types 2 and 3 virtually disappear.

Height was not a significant variable; even glancing across the three cemeteries the only noticeable difference in heights is between adult and children headstones. Children's headstones were usually much smaller than the adults; Types 1 and 4 were the most common. Even the most recent child headstones were still smaller than the adults and typically Type 1. In fact the fairly standard sizing of adult burials is consistent with what was expected. Mennonites generally are not ostentatious and this is reflected in death as in life (Norris 1988). There are no large family mausoleums or ornate family headstones. One

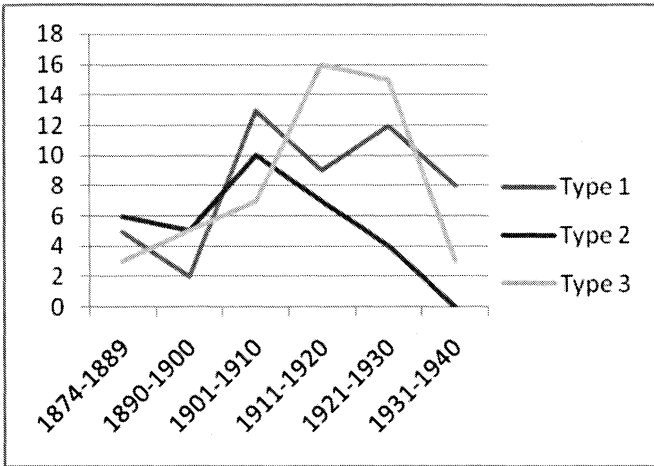


Table 1: Headstone Type Change by Decade

exception is the Kroeker headstone, which is approximately 1.5m taller for a total height of 2.5m and more elaborately decorated than typical (see Figure 5). An Ontario survey of three rural cemeteries with Mennonite sections also indicated uniform gravestone heights (Norris 1988:142).

Henderson Mennonite cemetery stones face either west or east. In the Epp Cemetery all 11 stones face east. Faith Evangelical stones all face west towards the road, which is not unusual for rural cemeteries according to Norris (1988). Bethesda on the other hand has approximately nine rows (1874-1940) that face east. After about the 1940s suddenly the orientation changes and all rows face west. This could be due to the expansion of the cemetery grounds (Voth 1974; Nancy Beach, personal communication 2007). The body is still buried to the east of the headstone based upon the most recent burials where the soil has been disturbed. The determination of body orientation is not possible for all burials, but based on the first original row at Bethesda and the few instances of kerbing the bodies were usually placed to the east of the stone. Clearly body orientation is not of religious significance and in the case of Bethesda relates to the expansion of the cemetery.



Figure 5: Kroeker Headstone

All three cemeteries bury the deceased in chronological order with few family plots. Husbands and wives tended to be commemorated on separate stones from 1870s to the 1940s but after the 1940s nearly all husbands and wives share a headstone (Types 7 and 8) or are buried next to each other. This uniformity creates an excellent basis for determining stones that are clearly not original or were backdated considerably. For example, in Faith Evangelical cemetery there are two stones that are clearly not originals. The Weilers' headstone is a Type 8 and states they were married in 1868, but this particular type of inscription is popular after the 1940s with the earliest marriage dates from the 1930s, although most are from the 1940s and 1950s.

Backdating headstones makes it more difficult to study changes in inscriptions, headstone styles, and decoration. There is also the problem with gravestones when a shared stone, two or more names listed, is placed on a grave. Mytum (2000, 2002) recommends that when analyzing cemeteries, time categories of at least a decade should be used, since this will usually cover the time range when the shared stone could possibly have been placed on the grave. Weathering is another way to determine relatively which inscriptions or stones came first; however, there are multiple variables: stone direction, location, and material. Changes in inscription engravings are an indication of primary and secondary inscriptions (Mytum 2002:2). For example, if an inscription has significantly more weathering or if it is dated first it is most likely the primary inscription, though this is not always true.

Decorative Motifs

Another variable of change examined was decorative motifs. Headstone motifs were separated into general categories. Flowers were grouped together as flowers regardless of whether they were the same species; this was by far the most common type (see Table 2). Scrolls included motifs as a text background or those marks indicating the end of a scroll. Architectural details included columns and various other architectural elaborations. Motifs that did not fit into the main categories were depictions of heaven, an urn, an anchor, Bible/book, candle, and star; all had less than three representative stones. Most of these unusual motifs were found in the largest cemetery, Bethesda, which considering the larger population of headstones is not surprising.

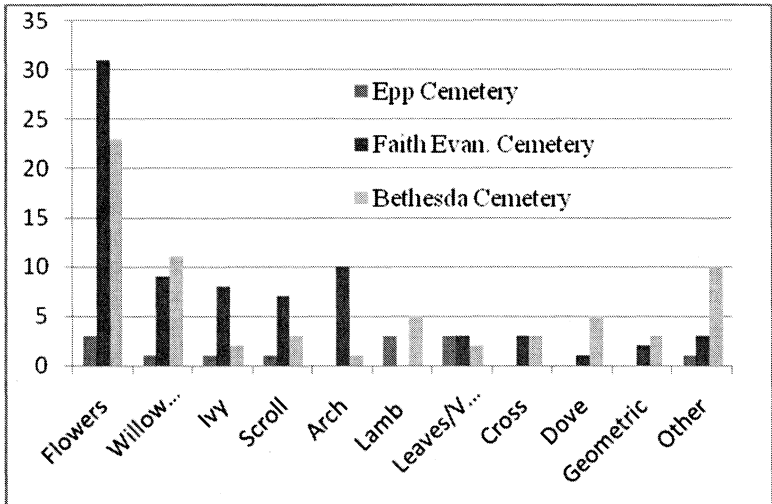


Table 2: Decorative Motifs

References to studies concerning Mennonite cemeteries are incredibly rare. There is only one that I am aware of. It involved a survey of three rural cemeteries in Haldimand County, Ontario that contained Mennonite sections (Norris 1988). Here also, Mennonite gravestones were modest and were of “remarkably uniform height” (Norris 1988:142). The memorials were plain vertical slabs, which is strikingly similar to the Henderson Mennonite gravestones. Unfortunately Norris does not mention the number of Mennonite gravestones surveyed so it is difficult to compare the motif results accurately. The total number of headstones surveyed was 174 including those of Catholics and Presbyterians. My case study has 24 gravestones that fit into a

comparative timeline. Regardless Tables 3 and 4 indicate that Henderson and Haldimand County gravestones both use the willow and flowers for decoration. Only one gravestone from Bethesda uses the cross during this time period, 1870-1899, and none on Haldimand County's, which makes Mennonite stones especially distinct from those of Catholics (Norris 19:143). The lack of use of the Bible and clasped hands in Henderson is surprising since those from Haldimand County use both motifs considerably. Also both of these motifs are examples of religious iconography.

Mennonite Gravestone Motifs Haldimand County, Ontario 1870-1899	
Motif	%
Willow	5.1
Hand of God	1.3
Clasped Hands	16.7
Bible	14.1
Lamb	7.7
Flowers, Wreaths	23.1
Cross, Crucifix	0
Other Motifs	23.1
No Motif	9

Table 3: Adapted from Norris (1988)

The Epp Cemetery headstone decorations include all of the major decorative motifs, (flowers, willow branches, and ivy). Ivy on the 1885 stone is unexpected given that this motif was not popular until after 1911. One decorative variable which links Bethesda and Epp cemeteries more closely is in using lambs on children's graves. Only one other decorative variable connects these two cemeteries stylistically; emphasis on the first initial of the last name. In the Epp cemetery, the two main stones those of Heinrich H. and Helena Epp, have an elaborate 'E' decorated with leaves and branches. Bethesda cemetery also has this type of ornamentation on five headstones. They are associated with the largest stones in that cemetery as well. Figures 6 and 7 below clearly demonstrate the similarities between one on the left from the Epp Cemetery and the other from the Bethesda Cemetery, although those in the Epp cemetery are clearly not as ornate.



Figure 6: Heinrich H. Epp Headstone, Epp Cemetery
 Figure 7: Regier Headstone, Bethesda Cemetery

Inscriptions

The Mennonites used two languages prior to adopting English. Standard German was used for reading the Bible and in church services, while West Prussian Low German was used colloquially (Buchheit 1978). West Prussian Low German was influenced by three West-Germanic dialects: Low Franconian, Low Saxon, and Frisian (Buchheit 1978:9). The first settlers and their children, in Nebraska, were fluent in both Low and Standard German but since they were not as economically self-sufficient as they had been in Russia, they learned English in order to deal with non-Mennonite neighbors. Until 1930 there was a German School to teach Standard German so that individuals could read Martin Luther's Bible (Buchheit 1978, Voth 1974). The outbreak of World War I and neighboring non-German communities' unfavorable attitudes toward those of German descent created a decline in the use of Standard German for church services. Over the next two decades, the transition from German to English was complete, although special services were still held in German (Buchheit 1987:24). Nadean Epp (personal communication 2007) reports that when she was a child in the 1940s, church services were still held in German.

Headstone inscriptions are in Standard German, English, or both. Those headstones with phrases and words such as *frau des* (wife of) and *gestorben* (died) and *geboren* (born), or their abbreviations, *gest* or *geb*, were included with those in German, whether or not they had any other German inscriptions. Those with just names and years of birth and death were not included. From Table 5, it is evident that as German declined in use, English increased in use. What is significant about the

language change is the increase in English inscriptions after World War I. As described earlier, Mennonites felt considerable pressure to become more Americanized, which included learning English not only for dealing with non-German neighbors, but also within the Mennonite community. The patterns seen in inscriptions are remarkably similar to changes in languages spoken and used for church services, since headstones included German inscriptions well into the 1940s. Clearly headstones are an excellent indication of assimilation within a culture. This is an excellent example of a cultural change, which Bailey (1987; 2007) would label a short-term scale change. It should be noted that Mennonites, especially during the late 1870s to 1940s, viewed themselves as Mennonite in their cultural identity and not just German. In addition, the Mennonites in Prussia and in Russia resisted interference with the use of their own language in churches and in schools. Mennonites changed languages once before in the 1600s due to pressure from the Prussian Catholic priests and neighbors (Buchheit 1978).

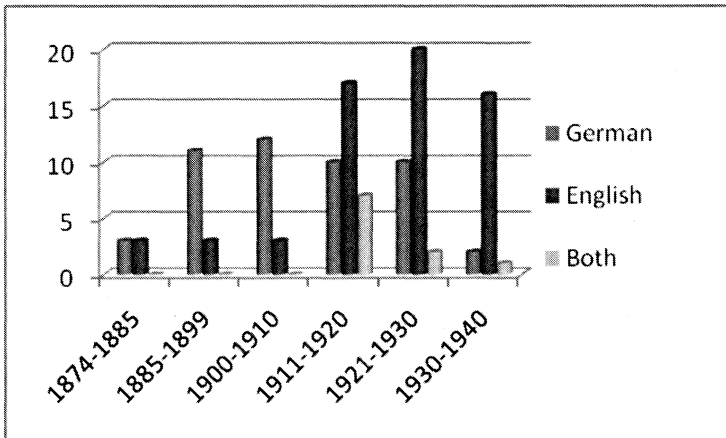


Table 5: Use of Standard German and English in Gravestones

Table 5 illustrates that English was already in use among Mennonites prior to World War I. The change was clearly accelerated due to outside pressures. These headstones indicate a willingness to change languages, which has not readily been evident in books and papers regarding the Mennonites (e.g. Voth 1974; Buchheit 1978). There were six Mennonite headstones that clearly use English from 1874 until 1899. Initially it was expected that prior to 1900 there would be little use of English, if at all. There were ten headstones in English originally noted, however three of them were questionably Mennonite, due to the last names and since they listed age in years, months, and

days the only these three use that inscription style, and so were not included in the study. Another was excluded because its concrete base showed no evidence of lichen, nor did the base have large inclusions similar to the other stones from that period. In fact the concrete shows little weathering and was similar in appearance to the Bethesda stones' concrete bases, placed in the last ten years.

Palimpsest of Meaning

Bailey describes a palimpsest of meaning as “the succession of meanings acquired by a particular object, or a group of objects, as a result of different uses, contexts of use, and associations to which they have been exposed from the original moment of manufacture to their current resting place” (2007:11). This palimpsest type is an excellent way to analyze the Epp Cemetery and possibly glean new information. The cemetery as an entity has changed considerably in meaning since before 1885. I chose to treat the Epp Cemetery as its own entity since a fence clearly identifies it as being separate from the land surrounding it. There are four periods that can be used to describe the Epp cemetery's change in meaning. These periods are:

Period 1: the use of the land prior to becoming a burial ground;

Period 2: use as a burial ground;

Period 3: abandonment and upkeep;

Period 4: rediscovery and uses.

Period 1

Heinrich Epp purchased the half section of land containing the cemetery in 1874. Prior to being used as a cemetery the land was used for agricultural purposes. A hand drawn 1874 settlement map indicates that Heinrich Epp owned the east half of section 9 prior to his death in 1885 (Voth 1974:34). Upon his death, his land (including the area where he is buried) would have been given to his son, Heinrich H. Epp. It is interesting that Heinrich is buried on his land even though both the Bethesda and Faith Evangelical cemeteries were already in use at this time.

Period 2

The first burial was in 1885 which marks the beginning the use of this land for memorializing the dead. For seven years, it was a memorial to one individual, Heinrich Epp, until the burial of his grandson, Jacob Epp, in 1892. (The Henderson Mennonites during the first three decades in the Unites States use a small number of first names, and often the sons would be named after their fathers, many

sons whether or not they were named after their father were given a middle initial representing the first letter of their father's names to help differentiate family ties. This practice still continues though to a lesser degree.) There are two families represented, Heinrich H. (son of Heinrich Epp) and Helena Epp's children and grandchildren, and Johann and Helena Harder and their infant son. There is one unmarked burial, Gerhard Epp, who is not directly related to either family. During its use this cemetery was a memorial to the dead and had considerable significance and meaning to the Harders and the Epps. During its use as a cemetery, 14 people were interred there.

Period 3

The last burial is of Heinrich H. in 1933 marking the beginning of Period 3. It is difficult to determine how long after 1933 the cemetery no longer had significant meaning to those with family members buried there. Since this cemetery is a quarter mile from the nearest road and located on private property, few probably know of it. It is overgrown with weeds and has numerous badger holes but the fence and gates are still in good condition. The current owner uses the fence as part of a system for stacking irrigation pipe. None of the cemetery's occupants are directly related to the owner. I thought, based upon the condition of the cemetery, it had been completely abandoned and no one maintained it unlike the other Mennonite cemeteries still in use. However Heinrich H. and Helena Epp's grandsons, Robert and Carl Epp, used to mow the grass and cut the weeds once a year though they used to maintain it more frequently (Delwayne Epp, personal communication 2007). Whether it will be maintained after their death, is unknown.

Period 4

The York County Historical Society is currently compiling pictures and data on all cemeteries and graves in York County (Nancy Beach, personal communication 2007). Through this effort, the Epp Cemetery has been rediscovered. Its meaning has once again changed. Now it is part of the county's official history and a part of the genealogical data, which for this author provides a chance to compare a small burial plot with the larger Mennonite cemeteries in the area.

Chronology of the Construction and Use of the Epp Cemetery

This analysis is based upon Olivier's treatment of the Hochdorf tumulus in regards to the way the tumulus was constructed and the maintenance of the memory of the dead, which involves various stages of construction (Olivier 2001). Olivier recognizes three cycles relating to the construction of the tumulus and the objects deposited in the grave. These cycles recognize different time periods and relationships

between the deceased and the living (Olivier 2001:132). The Epp cemetery construction and use chronology analysis, while modeled after Olivier's treatment of the tumulus, differs in that there are no clear cycles. The Epp cemetery however illustrates planning similar to that of the tumulus construction.

There seems to be a remarkable amount of planning involved with the Epp cemetery's layout (see Figure 8). Originally Heinrich H. and family planned to use the cemetery longer than the dates indicate. The cemetery is approximately 30 meters by 30 meters as indicated by a barbed wire fence. Less than one-fourth of it is filled. The time of fence construction is unknown; perhaps it was built immediately upon the death of Heinrich Epp, which would indicate a plan for an extensive family plot. The style and condition of the gates is identical to those at the Faith Evangelical cemetery, which would indicate a similar time frame. Barbed wire is used for fencing at all three of the cemeteries analyzed, which would fit with the Mennonite mentality of not using overly expensive and highly decorated ways of honoring the dead.

The way the headstones are arranged indicates considerable planning if the current boundaries of the fence indicate the original size and shape of the cemetery. The first burial in 1885 is in the southwest corner. To the north of the first burial are two later burials in 1923 and 1933 respectively. The second burial is in 1892, Jacob Epp, and is directly east of the first burial. In a line directly north of Jacob Epp's stone are five more burials with four stones arranged in chronological order from 1908 to 1916. A third row was started with the burial of Gustav Mierau, 1925. Other than Heinrich H.'s burial it appears the use of the cemetery ceased in 1925. The last burial did not take place until eight years after Gustav Mierau in 1933. Figure 8 illustrates the layout of this cemetery; although not drawn to scale it is clear that the three families represented are buried in distinct locations.

This layout indicates that Heinrich H. and Helena Epp planned to be buried next to each other alongside Heinrich's father. The two stones commemorating Johann and Helena Harder (1910, 1919) and their son, John (1888) were placed in the northwest corner. This arrangement with space for a pathway through the gate would indicate that the current or previous fence was there prior to 1910 or 1919. The separation between the two families may indicate that the Harders planned to continue burying family members and to keep family members together in death.

Gate			
Heinrich Epp 1885	Heinrich H. Epp 1933	Helena Epp 1923	Johann and Helena Harder John 1919 Harder 1888 (Shared) 1910
Jacob Elisabeth Epp Mierau 1892 1912	Gustave Richard Sahra Epp 1908/9 1916	Heinrich Mierau 1909	
Gustav E. Mierau 1925			→ N Gerhard Epp 1894

Figure 8: Epp Cemetery layout, not to scale.

The unmarked burial of Gerhard Epp is in the northeast corner (Nancy Beach, personal communication 2007). There seems to be a separation of families since Gerhard is from another Epp family, who migrated to the area in 1875. He was buried in 1894 in a distinct corner of his own. Perhaps a third family was planning on using this land for their family burials as well. Gerhard's parents and infant siblings are buried in the Faith Evangelical cemetery approximately two miles west of the Epp cemetery.

Based on discussions with Nancy Beach of the York Historical Society, most of the earliest burials from the 1870s and 1880s were on privately owned land. Both the Faith Evangelical and Bethesda cemeteries' headstones indicate that the number of burials after 1880 increased dramatically. Since these cemeteries were founded prior to the Epp cemetery it is puzzling that this family started and continued their own family plot.

Epp Cemetery Headstone Narratives

Each stone in this small plot has a story to tell and can indicate familial and spatial relationships between the Harders and the Epps. With the aid of historical documents, all but one of the burials has a connection to one another. Five stones are granite and the other eight

are limestone, both materials are non-local origin. This nonlocal stone is not really relevant to the life histories of the deceased, since all of the headstones from this period are of non-local stone except those made from concrete at Bethesda and Faith Evangelical cemeteries. Prior to the inscriptions and placement of headstones upon the graves, the stones themselves mean little except as a commodity.

Heinrich Epp Gravestone

Reverend Heinrich Epp and his family were among the first 35 families to come to Henderson in 1874 (Voth 1974). He served as a pastor for the Ebenezer Church after its formation in 1882. His headstone is a Type 3 with a Bible or open book engraved on top. In fact on his headstone is the phrase, “*Geb. Sud Rusland*” (born in South Russia), which indicates his family migrated to the Molotschna Colony prior to 1821 based upon his year of birth and the founding of the colony. However, the Elizabethal settlement was not founded until 1823 (Voth 1974), indicating at least one previous move within the Molotschna Colony. There are few headstones that indicate birth in South Russia. His son, Heinrich H., was also born in South Russia, but it is not stated on the son’s stone. This seems to indicate that Heinrich Epp’s connection to his birthplace was still quite strong or possibly his family’s connection to South Russia. As noted earlier the use of ivy on his stone indicates a later placement of the gravestone. Inscriptions were in German, which fits the language trend in the other two cemeteries.

Absent from this cemetery is his second wife, Margaretha Wall, which is puzzling (see Table 5: genealogical data). Margaretha could have remarried after the death of her husband considering she was 46 at his death, or Heinrich H. did not bury his stepmother here upon her death. Considering her husband was the pastor of the Ebenezer Church it would be expected that she would be buried in Faith Evangelical cemetery, but no headstone lists a Margaretha with the right birth year. She is also absent in the Bethesda cemetery as well.

Heinrich H. and Helena (Peters) Epp Gravestones

Heinrich H. was also a pastor but when his father left Bethesda, Heinrich H.’s family remained, and the son would later become a pastor of Bethesda. Yet Heinrich H. and his father, Heinrich, are buried together rather than in the cemeteries of the churches where they were pastors. Husband and wife had the same type stone and decoration with strong connections to Bethesda (see above). Kirchen Buch I Family Registry (1888-1925) lists their birthplace as South Russia but both were over the age of 16 when they emigrated to the United States. Helena arrived four years after Heinrich on the S.S. Strassburg, the same ship as Johann and Helena Harder.

Harder Gravestones

There are two connections between the Harders and the Epps, they both emigrated on the S.S. Strassburg and they were neighbors. The Harders lived to the north of the cemetery across the road to the east; the two family's houses were less than a half mile apart. Based on their names being included in the Bethesda Family Registry it is likely the Harders too attended Bethesda Mennonite Church. Their gravestones, small Type 1 with no decoration, indicate that they were not as wealthy as the Epps. According to the Henderson Township map of circa 1910, the Harders owned 120 acres whereas the Epps owned 620 acres. Their son, John, the youngest child, died in 1888 and is the second person buried in the cemetery. It is clear that he was intentionally buried on the opposite side as that of Reverend Epp. This could indicate the Harders were neighbors at that time as well since their son would be buried nearby. The family registry lists another infant who died in 1878; there is no stone in either Bethesda or Faith Evangelical. Most likely the infant, Helena, was buried on the Harders' land, unmarked. Possibly she died on the way from New York and was buried alongside the railroad tracks given that the S.S. Strassburg arrived in New York on July 2, 1878 and Helena died on August 26, 1878.

Children of Heinrich H. and Helena Epp

Jacob Epp, born and died in 1892, was the third burial and as previously explained buried directly east of his grandfather, Heinrich (see Figure 8 and Table 6). His stone (Type 2) has an unusual motif, a rose. No other flower motif in the other two cemeteries depicts a rose, a symbol of the brevity of earthly life (Norris 1988). Heinrich H. and Helena also lost two other children, Sahra and Gustave, who share a gravestone (Type 2 with a lamb on the top), probably because they died only four days apart. Sahra, Gustave, and their nephew, Heinrich Mierau, were likely killed by the same illness since Heinrich died only twenty days after Sahra.

Grandchildren of Heinrich H. and Helena Epp

There are four grandchildren buried in the Epp cemetery. The first to be buried was Heinrich Mierau, the son of their eldest daughter, Margaretha. His sister Elisabeth, died in 1912 and also has an unusual stone it has the same base as that of Type 4, pictured above, but has an oval shape instead of the heart. It is with Elisabeth's stone (1912) that the switch from German to English is first demonstrated in this cemetery. 'At Rest' is inscribed at the bottom. There is the possibility that the stone already had this inscription, but the month of July is spelled with a 'y' and not an 'i,' which indicates a deliberate use of English. Her parents probably chose the stone for their daughter. In the family registry Elisabeth is listed as Liese, a common nickname. Why

that is not used on her stone is not known. In the Faith Evangelical cemetery, there is a stone where Liese is used. Heinrich's inscription months are abbreviated so it is impossible to say whether it is supposed to be English or German.

The only son of Cornelius (Heinrich H.'s son) and Bertha Epp, Richard, was born and died in 1916. Here again English is used instead of German. His stone also has a lamb. The lamb is used on three stones, which ties this cemetery stylistically to that of Bethesda. The second to last burial is of Gustav E. Mierau, son of David and Helena Mierau. His stone is identical to that of his cousin, Richard.

First Generation	Second Generation	Third Generation	Fourth Generation
		Margaretha Epp m. Jacob Mierau	Heinrich 1909 Elisabeth 1912
Heinrich Epp 1885*	Heinrich H. Epp 1933 m. Helena Peters 1923	Helena Epp m. Dietrich Epp	Gustav 1925
m. Maria Regier m. Margaretha Wall		Cornelius D. Epp m. Bertha Regier Jacob 1892 Sarha 1909 Gustave 1908	Richard Epp 1916

Table 6: Heinrich Epp's Geneology.

*Those with years listed after their names are buried in the Epp cemetery.

Unmarked Grave

Finding a connection between this burial and either of the Epp or Harder families was difficult. The links are tenuous at best. Gerhard Epp, born and died in 1894, is the grandson of Gerhard and Katharina Epp. Gerhard Epp is listed as the owner of land circa 1910 directly to the north of Heinrich H.'s half section (Voth 1974:147). Gerhard Epp was also a pastor of Bethesda. His son Heinrich G. and wife Katharina

are buried in Faith Evangelical cemetery. Infant Gerhard Epp is also memorialized in Faith Evangelical cemetery. He shares a stone with siblings, Benjamin, Aaron, Eva, and Jacob. Above his name, is inscribed, 'in memoriam.' Jacob was the last sibling to be buried and that was not until 1910. Gerhard did not have a memorial until sixteen years after his death, which is why historical documents must be used when available to supplement the gravestone record.

Conclusion

The Henderson Mennonites have quite a complex history with their movement from the Netherlands to Prussia then to Russia and finally into the United States. In Prussia and in Russia they lived in nucleated villages. This settlement pattern together with religious persecution and the moves from country to country have created a religious identity, which can be argued to be separate from their ethnic identity as Germans from Russia. Their cemeteries indicate uniformity in the size, shapes, and decorations used on headstones even when compared to Canadian Mennonites. This uniformity is useful for indicating headstones that are clearly not original.

The Epp cemetery clearly has links to both the Bethesda and Faith Evangelical but stylistically it is closely linked to Bethesda cemetery. The Heinrich H. family was buried together in death even though members attended a different church. All three cemeteries illustrate the change from Standard German to English over 65 years, which is an excellent example of a short-term scale change. The Epp cemetery viewed as a palimpsest of meaning is useful for indicating its use and change in meaning over time. The chronology of the building of the Epp cemetery, modeled after Olivier's analysis of a burial tumulus (2001), shows considerable planning and is reflected in the cemetery's layout. Each burial and its associated headstone has a life history and details connections between the Epp cemetery and Bethesda and Faith Evangelical cemeteries temporally and spatially.

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