

Schoenwiese one of the originals

• by J. C. Fehr

Schoenwiese is another one of the original villages of 1875. It is located two miles east of Reinland. It is interesting to note that of the original 18 villages settled in the West Reserve in 1875, a good percentage have survived the years.

After it was settled it became a rather large village, almost a mile long, with about three dozen farmyards.

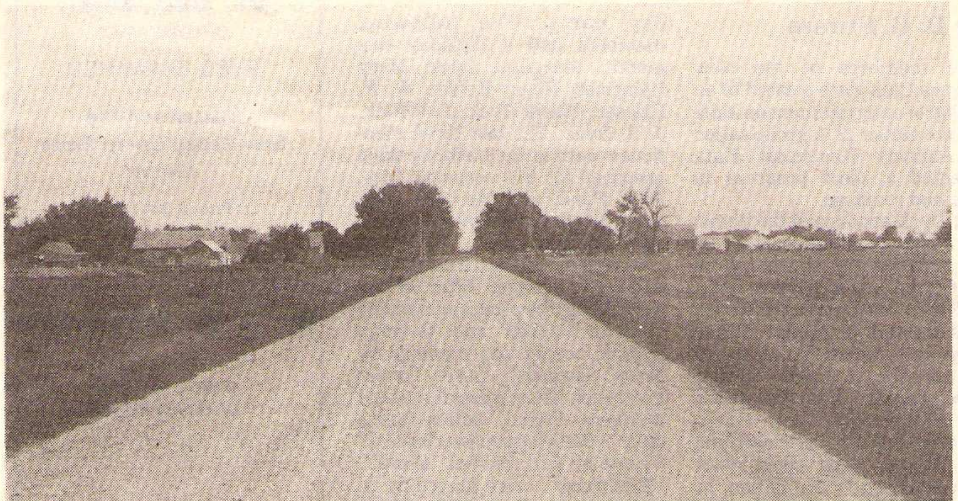
By 1880, with a population of close to 200, it had a surplus of young men, who then established the village of Gnadenthal.

Most of the pioneers also came from the Old Colony in Russia. The majority of them were rather poor in worldly goods, and therefore the first years were quite difficult. Some of them lived in semlins for three years before they could build a house. Common family names at that time were: Guenther, Friesen, Zacharias, Thiessen, Giesbrecht, Froese, Wieler, Enns, Reimer, Heinrichs, Bueckert, Harder, Kroeker and Penner.

The years became better, so that their community pasture, consisting of the section south of the village, sometimes supported close to 300 head of livestock.

This district probably has the greatest variation of soils in the R.M. There are areas of light soil and areas of heavy soil. Some is quite productive and some has alkali patches where nothing grows.

In the late 1930s, when a number of families returned from Mexico, the church bought 5-acre plots for them. These were located on the section east of the village, which was then considered rather poor land and therefore cheap. This area then became a sort of a transitional place, where the families lived



The village of Schoenwiese. Note tall cottonwoods on both sides of the street.

until they could get a better place. As a result this section probably has the most subdivisions of farmland in the R.M.

Even though this was a large village at one time it never did have its own church, as Reinland was nearby. It did, however, have a small store for a number of years.

A private school operated here until 1925, when it changed to a public school. The enrollment in 1940-41 was 72. It decreased over the years until it reached a low of under 10 in the late 1970s. The school year of 1981-82 was the last year that the school was in operation. Today the schoolyard is the site of an outdoor ice rink.

In the year 1974 the community organized a reunion of past and present residents, which turned out very successfully. The large machine shed where the event was held could not hold all the people that had come to take part.



Teacher and pupils, June 1979. Back row l. to r. — Teacher C. P. Zacharias, Ken Thiessen, George Kroeker, Wayne Zacharias, Daniel Dyck, Ruth Thiessen. Middle, l. to r. — Vern Thiessen, Ben Dyck, James Fehr, Ed Fehr, Art Fehr, Mary Dyck. Front, Margie Kroeker, Abe Kroeker, Randy Thiessen, Abe Teichroeb, Peter Kroeker, Chuck Peters.