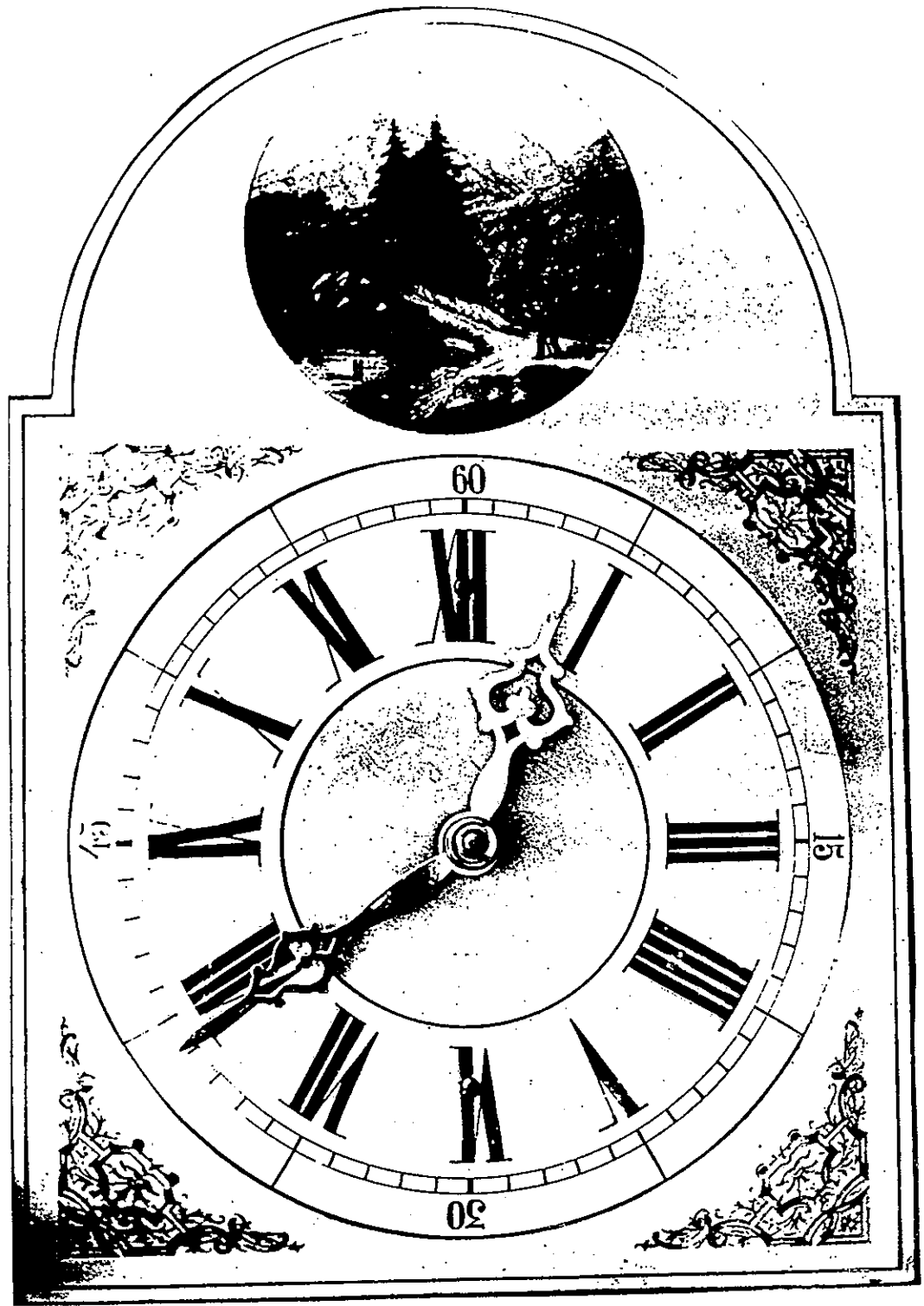


Kroeger
Clocks



The Clockmakers of Rosenthal.

JOHANN KROEGER 1754-1824

BORN IN WEST PRUSSIA. CAME TO
ROSENTHAL IN 1804 & ESTABLISHED
CLOCKMAKING THERE.

ABRAM KROEGER 1791-1872

CAME TO ROSENTHAL WITH HIS PARENTS
& CARRIED ON WITH THE CLOCKMAKING

DAVID KROEGER 1829-1909

BORN IN ROSENTHAL. EXPANDED
THE FAMILY BUSINESS. HE BUILT THE
SHOP & FOUNDRY. DURING HIS LIFE-
TIME THE GREATEST NUMBER OF
CLOCKS WERE MANUFACTURED.

DAVID KROEGER JR. 1860-1920

CONTINUED WITH CLOCK FABRICATION
& STARTED TO DIVERSE INTO MASHINERY
FOR AGRICULTURE.

PETER KROEGER 1890-1942

WORKED IN CLOCKMAKING IN HIS
YOUNGER YEARS & LATER WAS THE
SUPERINTENDANT OF THE WORKS.

JOHANN KROEGER JR. 1863 - ? (THE BROTHER OF DAVID)

TOOK OVER THE CLOCKMAKING & REPAIR,
& WORKED IN HIS OWN SHOP TILL 1938.



DAVID KROEGER (1860-1920)
MARGARETA geb. KRAHN
(1858-1920)



DAVID KROEGER
(1883-1920)



AGATA KROEGER
(1885-1954)



PETER KROEGER
(1890-1942)



ABRAM KROEGER
(1892-1920)



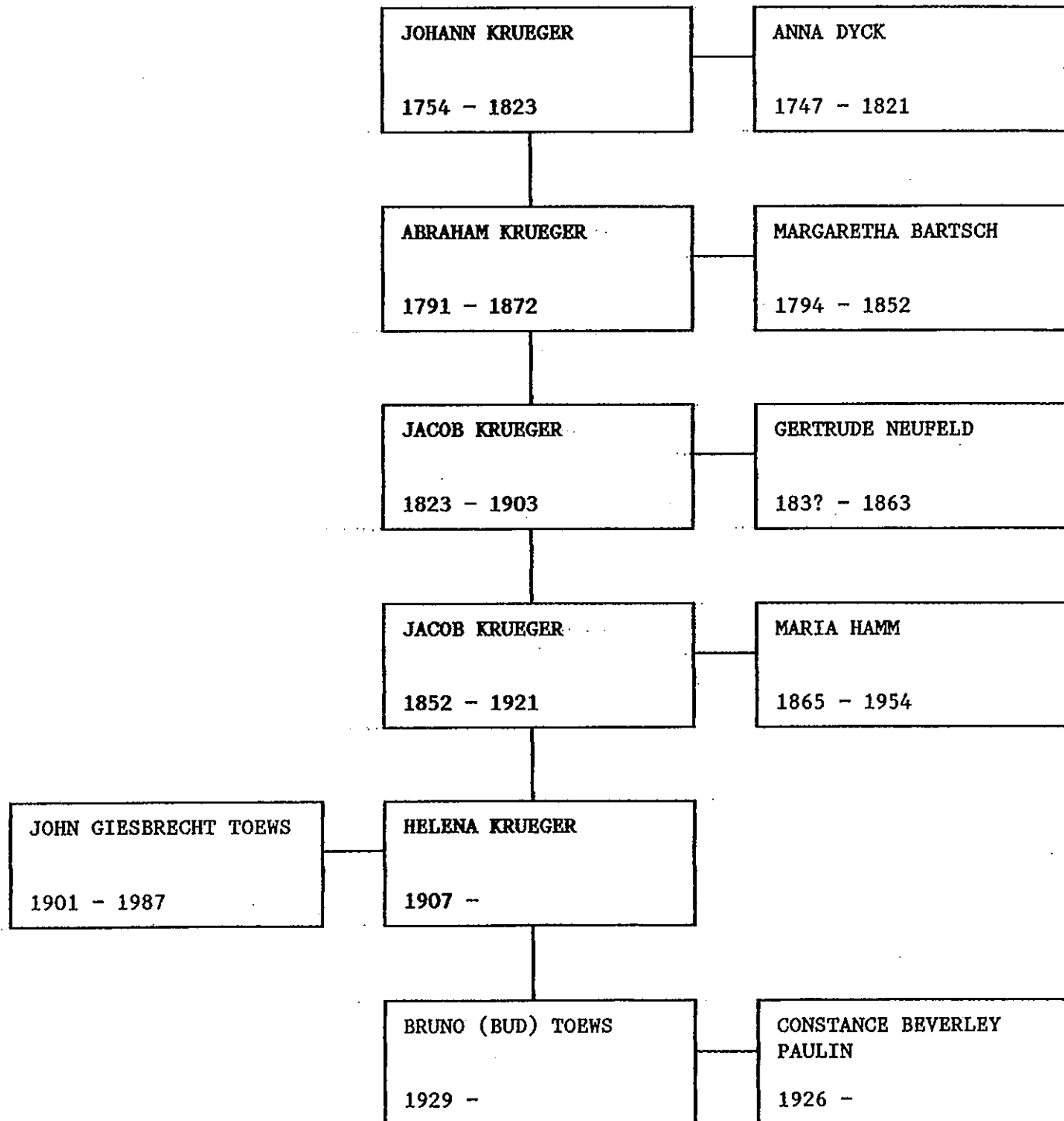
JOHANN KROEGER
(1894-194?)



MARGARETA KROEGER
1896

GERHARD KROEGER (No PICTURE) (1900-1919)

KRUEGER LINE



FAMILY HISTORY OF THE CLOCKMAKER KROEGERS (KROGER)

The area, where Johann Kroeger established a clockmaking business in the early 1800's had been actively settled by German Mennonites from Western Prussia since 1789. It was an agricultural region on the banks of the Dnjepr river in the central Ukraine, not far from the city of Alexandrowsk (now Saporoshje).

The clockmaker Johann Kroeger, age 54, originally from the village of Reimerswalde, near Marienburg West-Prussia, arrived in Chortitza in 1804, with his wife Anganeta (nee Dyck) age 60, their two daughters, Anna 20, Maria 16, and son Abraham 13:

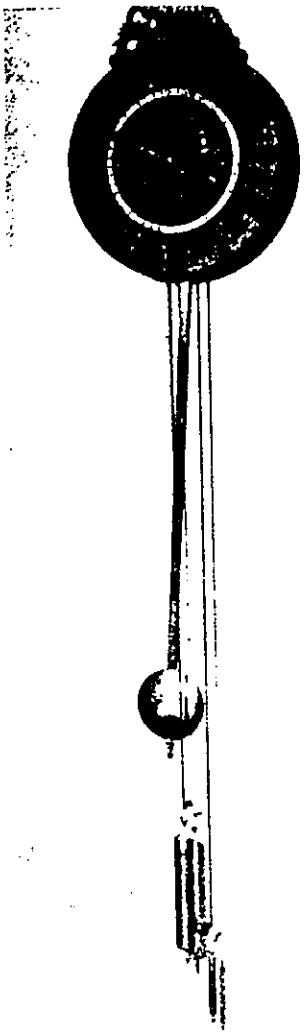
By this time the first settlers of the "Altkolonie" (old colony) were well established and were economically strong enough to support such craftsman as a clockmaker.

Johann had brought with him not only his skill as a clockmaker, but also the basic tools and some material for new clocks. Soon after his arrival he set up shop in a cottage that he probably built with the help of other settlers. Since he was not a farmer, the cottage was located on land not best suited for agriculture. It was situated in the picturesque hills of the nearby village of Rosental, known for its wild roses, lilacs, and large wild peartrees (Kruschtje beam).

Here in one of the ravines, protected from the cold northeast winds, a very primitive cottage type house was built: mud floor, mud walls, and a straw thatched roof. It served as living quarters for the Kroeger family of five, and as a clock shop.

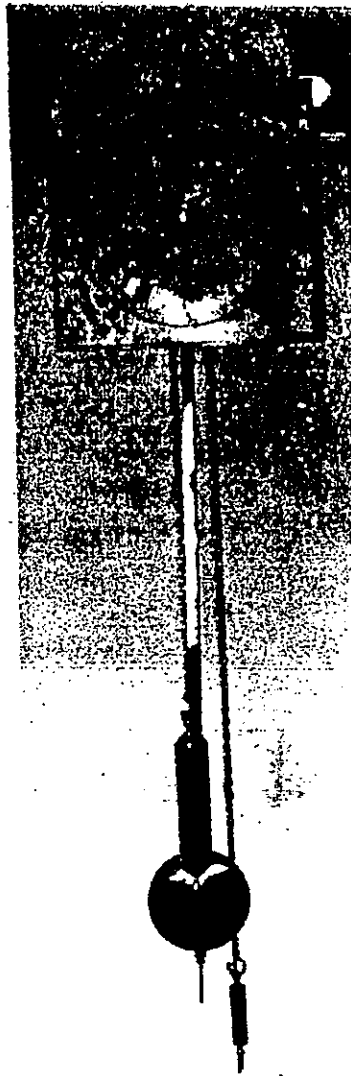
By 1808 the family was listed as having: 2 cows, 2 pigs, 1 wagon, 5 loads of hay and a spinning wheel.

We can well imagine under what circumstances clocks were made at the time. The tools were primitive and the machines, if any were very, very simple. Yet clocks of surprising accuracy were produced. They were of course "accurate" in a sense, since they only had the one hour hand.



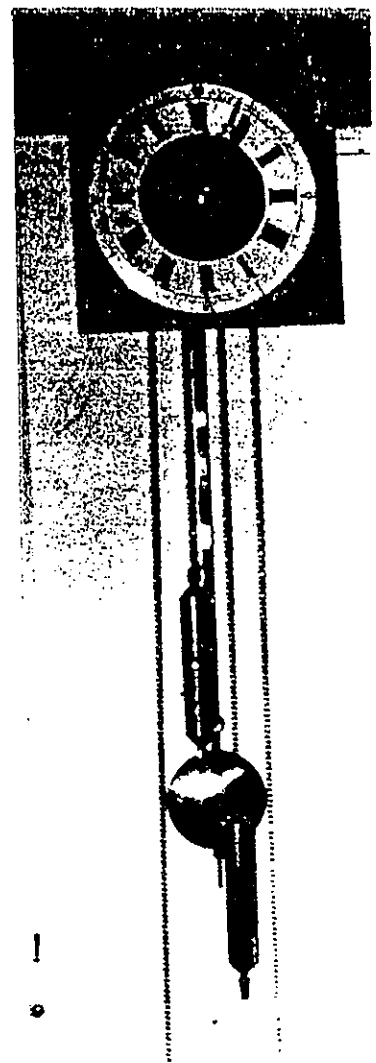
1837
ONE HAND

K
R
O
E
G
E
R



1887
TWO HANDS

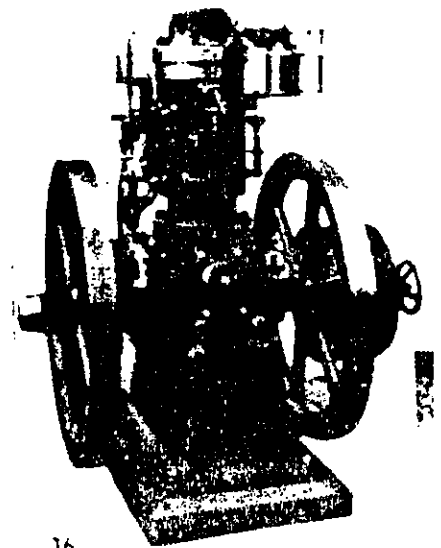
C
L
O
C
K
S



1897
CHIMES



KROEGER'S CLOCK & MOTOR FACTORY



16

KROEGER MOTOR

It was the skill of the craftsman that counted heavily and not so much the tools of the trade. The clocks were made singly, at first probably to order, with the initials of the owner and year proudly displayed on the hand painted face.

At the age of 24 in 1815 Johann's son Abraham married Margareta Bartsch age 21. She was the daughter of the famous Johann Bartsch, a member of the deputation that negotiated the terms of settlement for the Mennonites with Kathrine the Great, the II of Russia. The impressive gravestone of Johann Bartsch once erected on his grave, has been brought from the Ukraine to Manitoba and stands now on the grounds of the Mennonite Village Museum in Steinbach.

The Abraham Kroegers continued the clockmaking. They built a larger full size house (which stands and is occupied to this day) not far from the original cottage, but closer to the main street of the village. The cottage still served for a while as a clockshop.

Abraham and Margareta had 12 children with 2 sets of twins. There were 7 boys and 5 girls. 2 girls died as infants. Helena and Anganeta were the oldest twins, followed by Abraham junior. Then came Jacob, who lived to a ripe old age of 80.* In 1850 he married Gertuda Neufeld. They had 6 children. He is of special interest, since he has left a handwritten record of the Kroeger - Krueger clan, which was brought to Canada by his oldest son, also a Jacob, who came to Canada in 1900. Jacob junior and family decided to go to Canada to join relatives of his wife. Before he left his father entrusted him with a sealed package, to be opened only at sea on the boat to Canada. The package contained an accurate genealogy of his family and also a set of rules to live by in their new homeland. (It reads as follows):

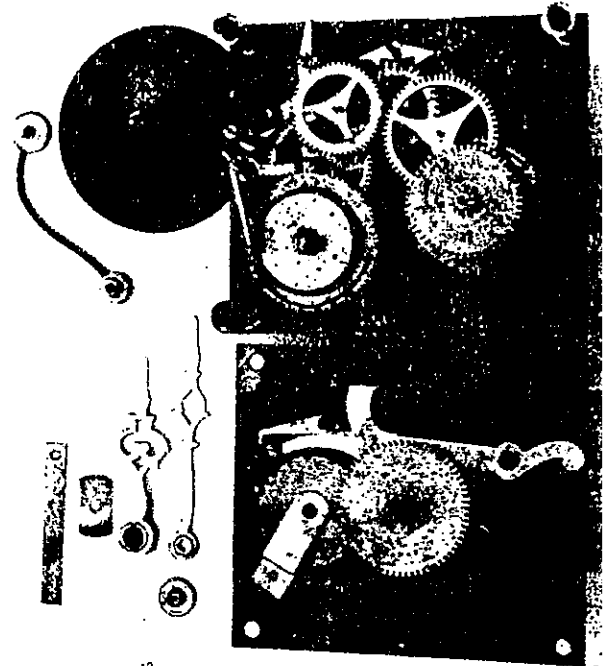
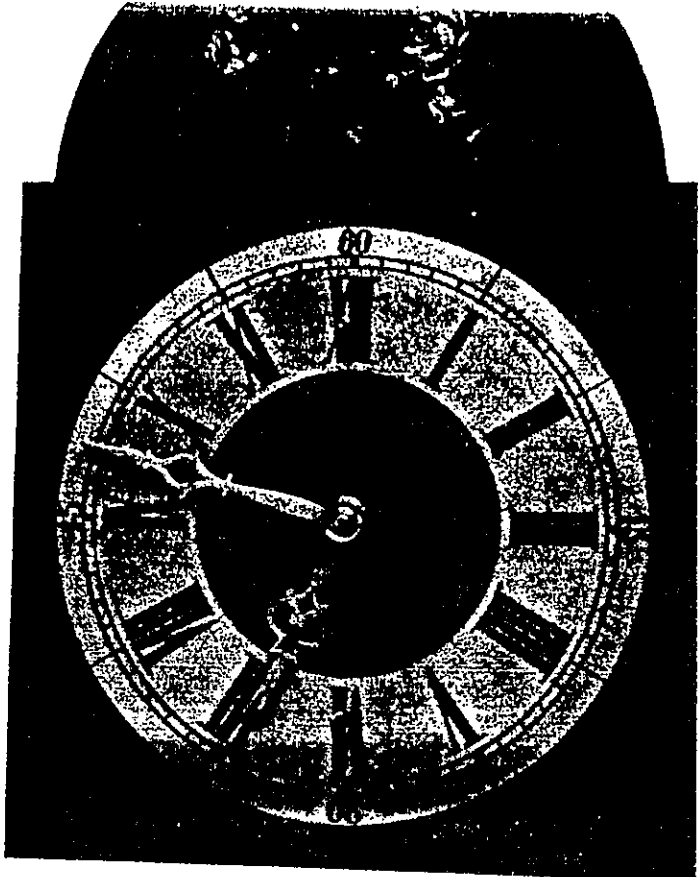
Going back to Abraham's 12 children. The second set of twin girls were Margareta and Katharina. Johann followed, then David, Peter and Heinrich. Mother Margareta passed away in 1852, and Abraham married a widow Anna Loewen in 1853. Abraham died at the age of 81 in 1872.

Let's see how Johann, the last of the Kroeyer clock makers endured the time of turmoil: war, revolution, banditism, famine and communist persecution. With his family and the machinery for clock making Johann moved to a new location on the Dnjeprstrasse. He married Katharina Goertz from the Molotschna, a deeply religious woman, who contributed so much to the Mennonite Community, especially with her Christian-oriented kindergarten. They had 4 sons and 1 daughter. As in so many families, disaster struck during the period of transition from a well-regulated life before World War I and communist rule. The oldest son Johann perished in action never to return. The second son was tragically shot to death by his Russian girlfriend. This not being enough, the family was struck by smallpox, which almost claimed the life of their third son. Surviving all this, Uncle Johann and Tante Tin continued to be the pleasant elderly couple, well respected by everyone. Uncle Johann was a gentle person with a white Franz Joseph beard. He was the craftsman knowing every facet of clock making, a true master, but probably not a very good business man.

In the shop on the Dnjeprstrasse a limited number of clocks were produced, and the older clocks were being repaired right up to 1930-1932. As children we liked to visit Uncle Johann. To get there in summertime we would go up the narrow street to the cemetery past grandfather David's "Fabrik" (factory). At the cemetery we would usually have a quick look at the gravestones of our grandparents.

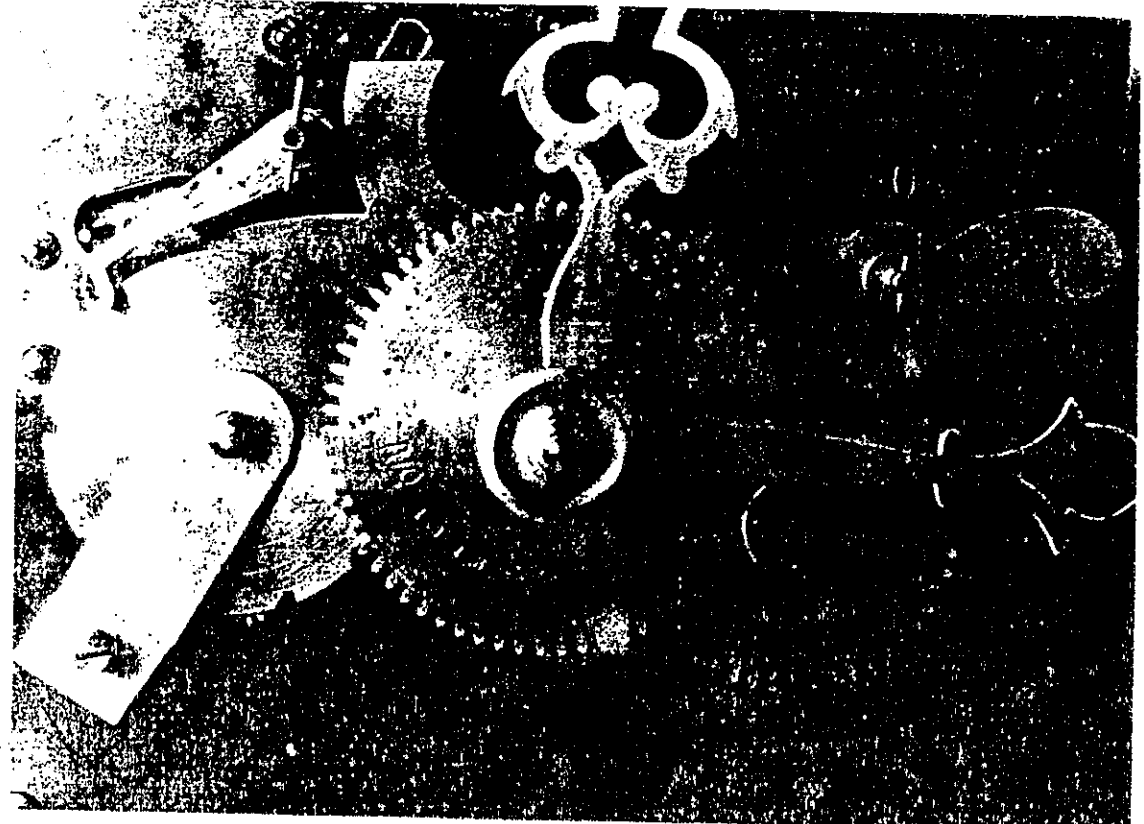
From there, at the highest point above the town, we could see far into the valley leading to the Rosentaler dam. Behind it the Dnjepr river, and half to the right the elevated plateau of the so called "Schweinskopf", and behind it the mighty hydroelectric dam built during 1930-43. In front of us was the "Koloniesgarten" in a deep ravine with steep slopes covered with trees and brush. Here one could find the most aromatic large purple-blue violets. In the evening one could hear the nightingale sing their hauntingly beautiful songs. Down the slope on a secret path through the valley and up again, with a few freshly picked violets we would be at Uncle Johann's door. The brick floor in the kitchen, which one had to pass to reach the other rooms, had been artfully sprinkled with white sand. Stepping on it created a peculiar sensation.

WITH A
STRIKING MECHANISM
FROM ca. 1880



Kroeger Clock No. 1925 - Model - 51

THE LATER KROEGER CLOCKS HAD HAND-
PAINTED NUMERALS & MINUTE DIVISIONS
BUT THE DECORATIONS WERE TRANSFER PICTURES



ENLARGED VIEW OF THE FRONT PLATE

The clock movement as such as invented in northern Italy long before that and was used for steeple clocks. At first the clocks were made mainly for the wealthy, but by the early 1800's clocks were widely in use in all European countries.

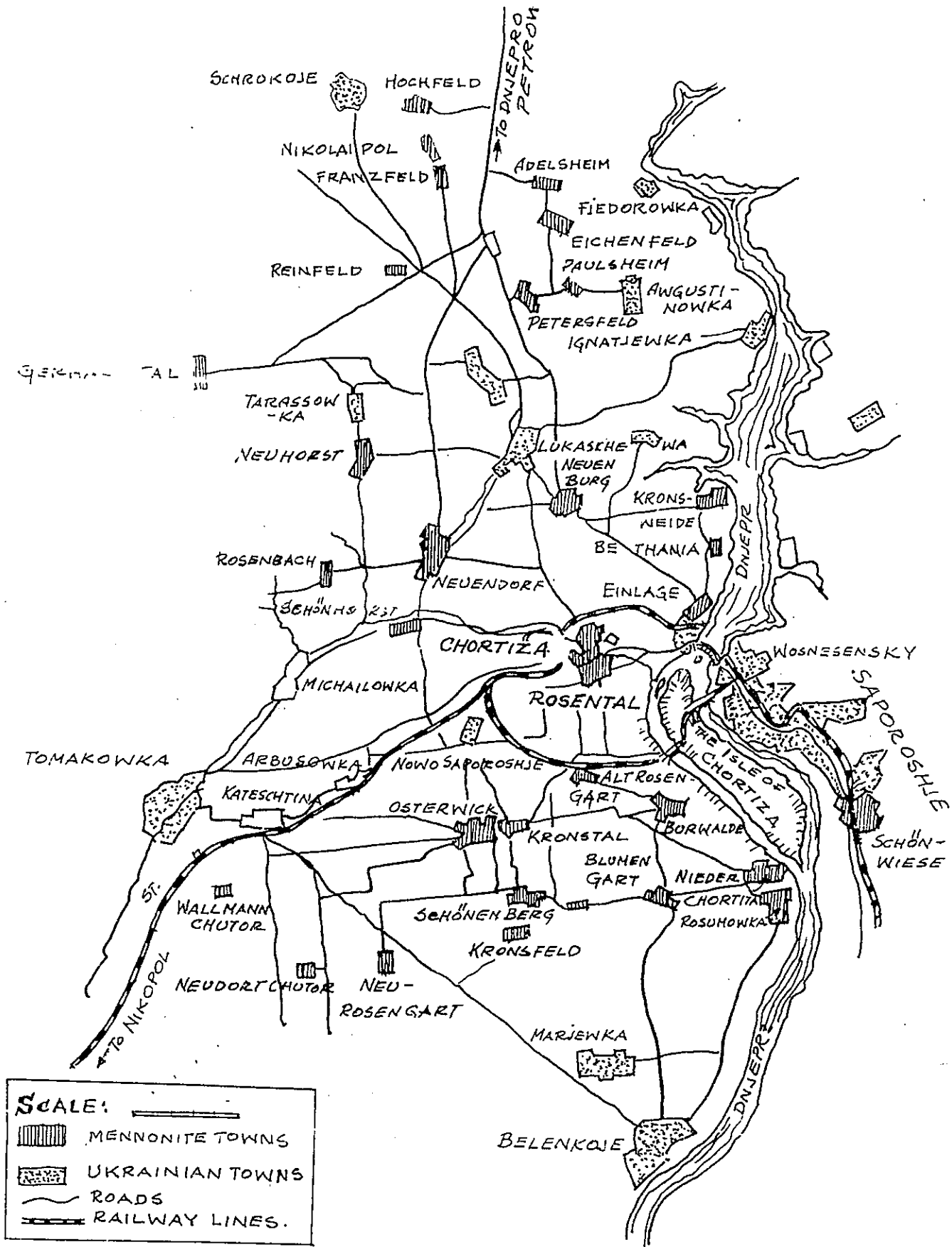
going back to our Kroeger clocks, I would like to mention that they were by no means cheap. A simple clock with no chimes was sold for around 50.00 Russian rubles. This was a lot of money considering a man's wages for one day was 90 kopeks to 1.00 ruble at that time (around 1890).

Great-Grandfather David donated the steeple clock for the Zentralschule (Central School) in Chortitza. It was destroyed in the latter part of World War II. There was also a steeple clock supplied for Moscow, the capital of the Russian Empire.

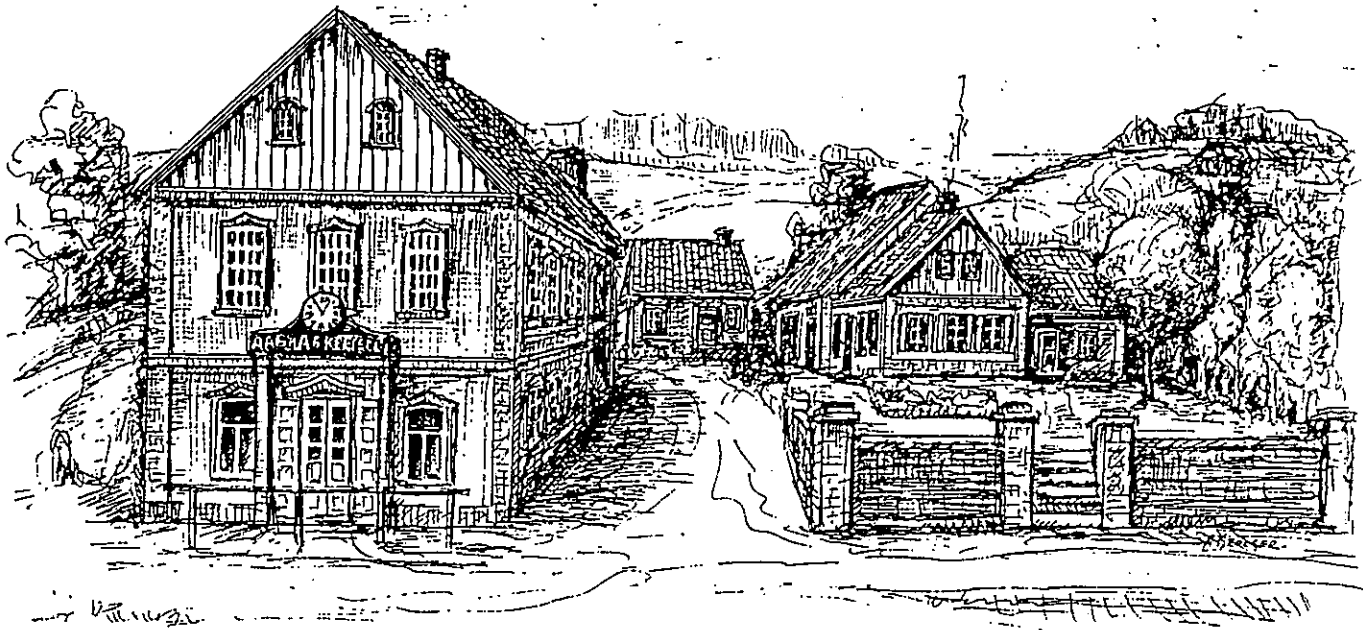
Let us have another glance at the Kroeger family as such. Clocks, as the primary product, were gradually replaced by other products, namely ploughshares and the newly invented one-cylinder internal combustion engine from Germany. The new field was actively pursued. At the turn of the century many cities staged industrial exhibitions. These were visited by the Kroegers and their products were exhibited in Jekaterinaslaw, Warsaw, Charkow, and Riga.

As David senior became older David junior and his brother Johann (1863-?) ran the business as partners for ^a while, but then separated in good faith.

David pursued the production of two cycle engines etc. His oldest son David (III) was sent to Germany to study engineering. Peter, my father, apprenticed in all fields of the mechanical trade. Abram studied commerce. The family prepared for the new endeavour but with the civil war after the revolution of 1917 the business was dealt a fatal blow. We know how the anarchists treated our people. Grandfather David was questioned and severely beaten - he never recovered. Typhoid struck and wiped out half of the family, including my father's first wife Helene (nee Koop), in a period of a few months. Two of the survivors Peter and Johann (III) were forcefully sent to imprisonment during the great 1937 Stalin purge, just because they were sons of capitalists, because they were Germans, because they were christians.



Mennonite Towns & Villages - Alt-Kolonie.



UHREN UND MOTOREN FABRIK DAVID KRÖGER
ca 1910

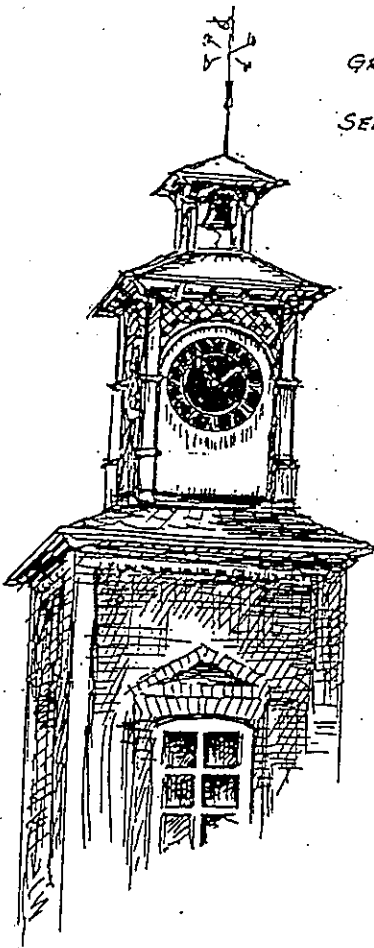
ROSENTAL BEI CHORTIZA KR. ALEXANDROWSK

GRÜNDER DER UHRMACHEREI JOHANN KRÖGER 1754-1823
(UHRMACHER AUS PREUSSEN)

SEINE NACHFOLGER: ABRAHAM KRÖGER 1791-1872

DAVID KROEGER 1829-1909

DAVID D. KROEGER 1860-1920 & JOHANN D. KROEGER 1863-?



It is known, that the whole family was employed in clockmaking at one time or another. There is evidence for instance that Peter (1832-1908) also made clocks. His initials appear on a clock restored by the author. Clockmaking was a good business at that time. The surrounding farm communities prospered. Further Mennonite colonies had been established: namely in other parts of the Ukraine, in the Crimea, the Caucasus, and also in Siberia. The Kroegers supplied these settlements with their clocks. There are Kroeger clocks in the Orenburg area of Siberia even at the present time, as reported by visitors from over there. In order to be able to satisfy the demand, a new shop had been built on the premises of the Kroeger property.

David (1829-1909), the tenth child of Abraham, became head of the family business. In 1859, he married the energetic Agathe Sawatzky (1842-1929) from Schoenenberg. A new house had been built for them on the neighbouring lot, just on the north side of their parents' property.

Since the whole terrain of the area had a rather steep slope, a considerable effort was required to create a reasonable flat yard around the house. This was accomplished by means of retaining walls and terracing, the result of which was an interesting landscape.

David Kroegers had 6 children: 3 boys: David junior (the author's grandfather), Abraham, Johann and 3 girls: Helena, Agatha and Margareta.

By the time David junior (1860-1920) grew up and got married to Margareta Krahn from Chortitza in 1882 the clockmaking had pretty well reached its peak. The business had outgrown its "cottage" and also the "house" industry stages as such.

The plans for the future included a two-storey shop and office building. (with provision for expansion), a foundry, blacksmith shop and a new residential building with a stable for horses and other domestic animals. As the time progressed all this was built on an acquired property across the street from David senior's house around 1890.

The clock sales had proliferated. Outside workers had been hired to ensure a steady flow of production. Just about every Mennonite family had a Kroeger clock.

At this point it shall be mentioned, that there were other Mennonite clockmakers, namely, Lepp in the town of Einlage, Hildebrand in Chortitza, and Mantler in the Molotschna, but the Kroeger-clocks were the most numerous. As mentioned before the market was coming to a saturation point, and the plans for the future included diversification into other products, as can be expected for use in agriculture.

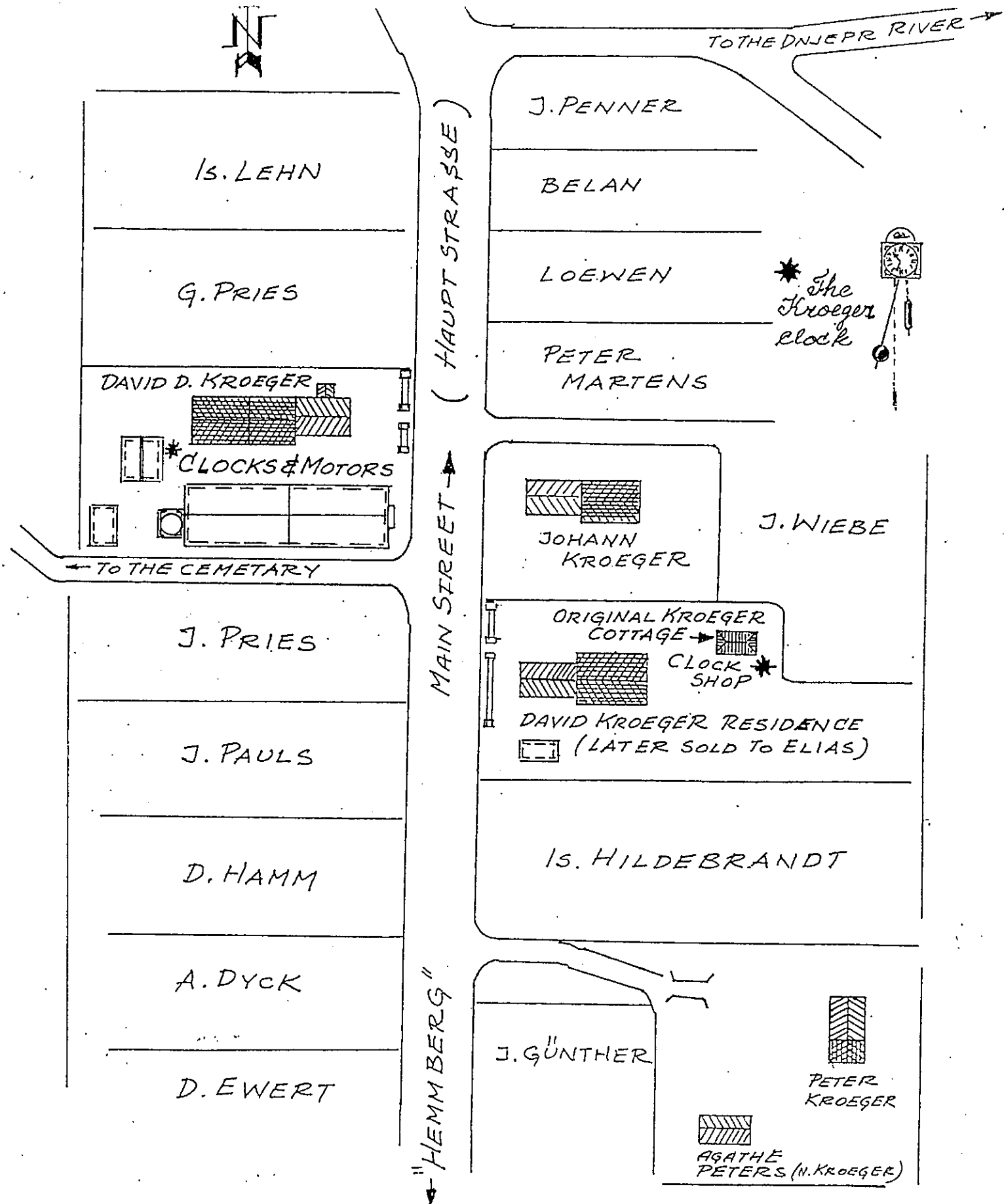
David junior & Margareta had 10 children, of which 3 died in infancy. The other 7 were: David (III), Agata, Peter (the author's father), Abram, Johann, Margarete and Gerhard. Their faith is well known to us. David studied in Germany, but died during the typhoid epidemic in Rosental, Agata died here in the Rostern home for the aged. Peter (my father) perished in one of the prison camps in Russia as did Johann, Abram died of typhoid, Gerhard perished during the civil war. But Margarete, our Tante Greta, in whose honour I am presenting this paper, is present today. She is the wife of Mr. Abraham P. Regier of Virgil, Ontario, a well known pioneer in the credit union field and former active member of the Canadian Mennonite Conference.

Tante Greta is the one that still remembers how the clocks were made. Everybody had to chip in: the boys, at a very early age, made the simpler parts of the clocks, the girls had to help with the artwork on the clock dials.

What kind of clocks were made? As mentioned before, the early clocks were very simple with only the hour hand and a string instead of a chain. Later came the ringing clocks. Further diversifications included clocks with alarms and calendars. Apparently there were also clocks made in wooden cases, but very few and only for export to the new world. It would take too long to dwell on the historical development of the pendulum clock. For the interested, this would be a chapter in itself. Briefly: Galileo Galilei discovered the free swinging pendulum, Christian Huygens, a scientist of the Netherlands, had the pendulum implemented into a clock in 1656-57.



A CONCEPTUAL DRAWING OF THE KROEGER-KATTE
(COTTAGE) THAT WAS BUILT BY JOHANN WHO SETTLED
IN ROSENTAL NEAR CHORTIZA IN THE YEAR 1804 . .
AT FIRST THE FAMILY LIVED THERE, LATER IT SERVED
AS THE ORIGINAL CLOCK SHOP.



PARTIAL MAP OF ROSENTAL (ALTKOLONIE) SHOWING THE LOCATION OF D. KROEGER'S CLOCK & MOTOR WORKS & RESIDENCES

The violets were for Tante Tin, but our interest was for Onkel Johann. At that time the clock shop had been housed in one of the rooms (back to home industry). Here Onkel Johann toiled with his clocks. There would be a whole wall full, all ticking away, swinging their beautiful shining brass pendulums. We would watch for a while, then we would be awarded with a cookie or some cherries from the orchard... and off we went.

Many years have since passed. There are no more clock maker Kroegers around, but the clocks survived and have been brought to this and many other countries, namely to the U.S.A., Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina, and lately also to Germany.

Isn't it peculiar that one would take a monster of a clock like that on a thousand mile journey? Well, the clock becomes, so to speak, a member of the family. Home is where one hears the familiar tic-toc.

There are numerous stories and anecdotes connected with these clocks. One of them: "Schmiet den Koata rut enn tratj de Klock opp ver den Schlopegone". (meaning throw the cat out and wind the clock before going to bed).

The clocks have been mentioned in plays and poems of our people. They are not like the electric clocks of our modern times that never need our attention. They have to be wound, set, shined up and cleaned every 4 to 5 years. Maybe this attention creates attachment. I have not found many of them for sale. It is truly a Mennonite heirloom. These clocks should be maintained and kept in the family, preferably with a write-up about the history for the clock and the family for future generations.



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R3M 3M9