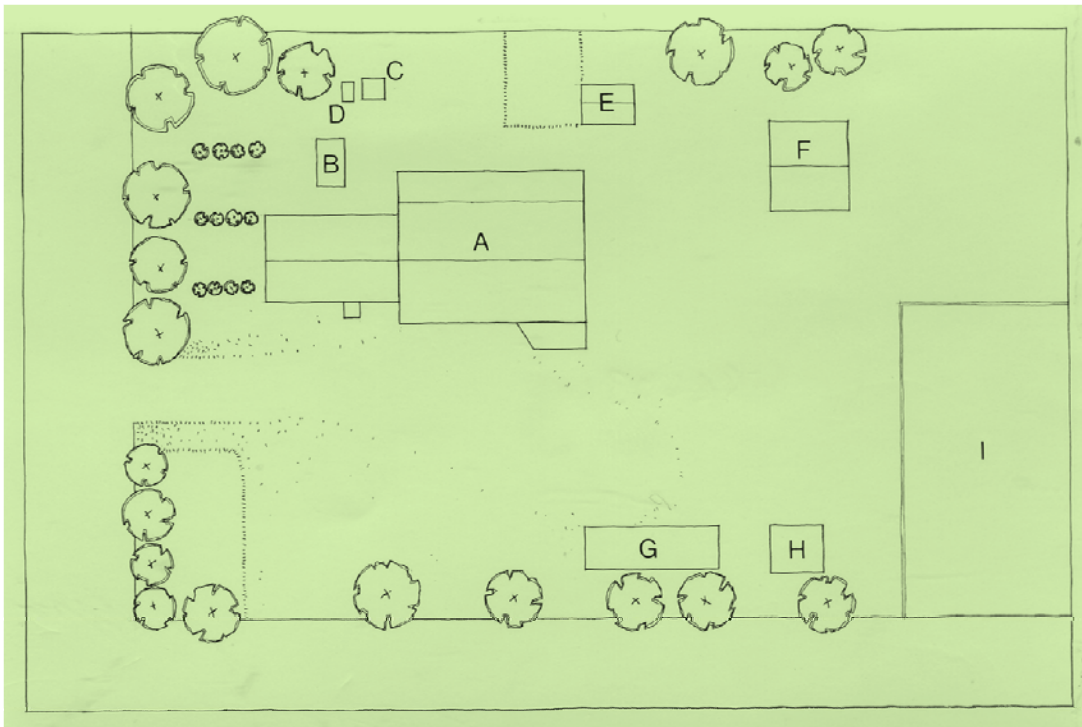


## Other Farm Buildings

The traditional Mennonite house/barn unit was essentially a self-contained farmstead. It combined under one continuous roof a large residence plus facilities for horses, cattle, hogs, and poultry as well as storage areas for hay, feed, and farm implements. During the early years of settlement, when only a few head of livestock were kept and crop acreages were still small, there was little need for other farm buildings. As the Mennonites became more established, however, and with the adoption of mechanized farming methods during the 1890s, additional facilities were required and a variety of small separate farm buildings began to appear. Included among these new structures were summer kitchens, smoke houses, outdoor ovens, granaries, implement sheds, chicken coops and hog sheds. Throughout the Mennonite villages in MSTW, these outbuildings not only exhibited common designs, but were often placed in a similar position vis a vis the other farm buildings (Figure 52).



**Figure 52**

Typical Mennonite yard plan:

- A Main house/barn unit
- B Summer kitchen
- C Bake Oven
- D Smoke house
- E Chicken coop
- F Granary
- G Implement Shed
- H Hog barn
- I Cattle pen

## Summer Kitchens

The "Somma Kjaeck", or summer kitchen, was one of the earliest outbuildings to appear in the farmyard. They were a common feature in the yards of the Mennonite villages in Russia and as soon as the Mennonites became established in Manitoba they began to appear here as well (Figure 53).



**Figure 53**

The "Somma Kjaeck" or summer kitchen, like this example in the Village of Schanzenfeld, was one of the earliest outbuildings to appear on the farmyard.

The traditional location for the "Somma Kjaeck" was across the yard facing the front of the house. Many of the Mennonites in the MSTW district, however, chose to locate it behind the house. This was only a short distance from the kitchen entrance and consequently a more convenient location.

The "Somma Kjaeck" actually served a variety of purposes. Its primary use was, naturally, for the preparation and cooking of family meals during the warm summer months. The transfer of food preparation out-of-doors allowed the house to remain comfortably cool and relatively free from insects. It was also used from time to time during the summer as a laundry room, a canning area, and often as an extra bedroom for the children. During the winter months it served as the storeroom for the winter's supply of cured and fresh meats which were hung from the ceiling and allowed to freeze.

The planning and construction of these buildings was straightforward. Because space was only needed for a stove, table, and a cupboard or two, the majority of summer kitchens were simple one-room gabled structures. Since most of the summer kitchens were not added to the farmstead until the 1890s, they were usually of frame lumber construction. None of the remaining "Somma Kjaecken" in the MSTW district are known to be of log construction. One in the Village of Osterwick, however, has a high, steeply-pitched roof. This suggests that it may once have had a thatch cover in which case the walls, now covered by siding, could well be of log (Figure 54).

In later years, some of the "Somma Kjaecken" were joined to the house with an enclosed hallway which often doubled as a dining area (Figure 55). A few had dining areas added to the rear of the structure.





**Figure 54**

Fehr residence and summer kitchen,  
Village of Osterwick.



**Figure 55**

Jacob Peters residence and attached  
summer kitchen, Village of Reinland.

## Bake Ovens

The main brick oven in the house, by virtue of its design, gave off a great deal of heat. This was a welcome feature during the winter months, but it left the house uncomfortably hot during the summer when bread had to be baked. Therefore, as soon as the settlers became established, many of them constructed outdoor ovens commonly known as "Shtroo Hietens" (Figure 56). A common location was at the rear of the house, near the summer kitchen.



**Figure 56**

A typical Mennonite bake oven, in this case featuring a flat, rather than a vaulted top. (Blumenfeld: Where Land and People Meet, 1981)

The outdoor ovens often varied slightly in size and construction. Many were small vaulted roof structures about 1 x 2 metres in size and 1 metre high with a large cast iron door at the front. They were usually of brick construction over which a thick coating of mud plaster was applied to help retain the heat. A final coating of whitewash was often applied to protect the plaster from rain. In later years a few ovens were covered with small gable roofs for further protection from the elements.

The "Shtroo Hiet" was preheated using a variety of fuels, including straw, wood, and "Mest Sooden" or manure bricks. Once fired the brick-lined walls retained the heat for hours and could sometimes be used several times without having to be reheated. Bake ovens fell into disuse with the adoption of modern wood burning kitchen stoves after 1900 and by the 1950s had all but disappeared. Not a single example is known to still exist in the entire MSTW district. The only known location of a typical Mennonite "Shtroo Hiet" is a reconstruction, located at the Mennonite museum in Steinbach (Figure 57).



**Figure 57**

A reconstructed Mennonite bake oven.

## Smoke Houses

Pork was the staple meat for many years, and every fall, shortly after freeze-up, several families would combine their efforts and butcher a number of hogs for the winter's meat supply. Pork chops and roasts were pickled in salt brine or frozen outside. Other meats, such as hams and pork sausage, were usually smoked.

During this event, the men cleaned and cut the meat, made the various types of sausage, and smoked the meat. The women and children, in addition to providing meals, made the year's supply of lard by melting down the fat. They also cleaned the intestines for use as sausage casing and prepared the various cuts of meat, which were used in the making of headcheese. The daylong bee was also an important social event and was usually the occasion for storytelling and traditional song.

There were two types of facilities used for smoking the meat. As noted earlier, many of the homes had small smoke chambers built into the chimney above the kitchen where the curing was done.

These attic smokers, however, had a limited capacity, were inconveniently located, and required a great deal of time and heat to properly cure the meat. Thus, larger families found it more convenient to construct separate smoke houses or "Rajka Koma" outdoors. Because one or two of these generally served the needs of the whole village, they were not as common as bake ovens. The smoke houses that were built were generally located on the rear side of the house, or towards the back of the yard near the granaries.

There are at least three outdoor smoke houses still remaining in the MSTW district. The most interesting one is located in the Village of Hochfeld. Constructed of solid brick, it is 1.8 x 1.8 metres in size and stands 3.5 metres tall. Its pyramidal roof is constructed of lumber and sheathed with split shingles. Iron rods, upon which the meat was hung, were attached to the interior walls at various heights. To operate the smoker, various cuts of meat were hung at different levels, depending upon their size, and a slow fire kindled on the ground. The smoke was allowed to fill the structure, and eventually filter out the top. Access to the smoker was obtained through a large steel door at the front of the structure.

Another example in the village of Neuenburg is of similar size and design, but of wood frame construction. In this case the pyramidal roof is capped with a tall wooden chimney (Figure 58).

With modern methods of storage and easy access to commercial supplies of meat, the hog-butchering bee is no longer common. A few Mennonites continue the tradition, however, producing the same varieties of sausage that made the district famous for many years.



**Figure 58**  
Wood frame smoke house  
located on the P. Suderman  
farmstead, Village of Neuenburg.

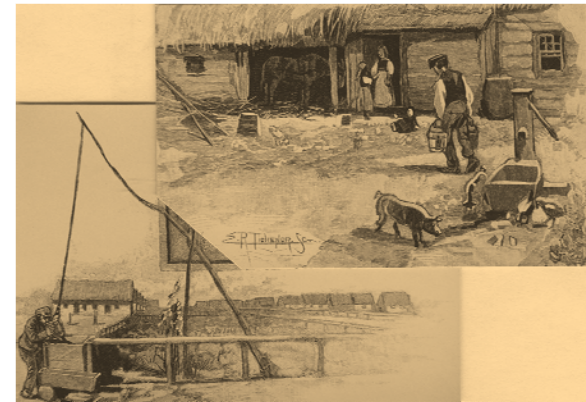


## Wells

Although most Mennonite villages were located and oriented to take full advantage of the creeks that flowed through the district, domestic supplies of water were usually obtained from wells. Because of the close proximity of the Pembina Hills, the ground water table in most of the villages was near to the surface and the wells provided a reliable source of good quality water.

Initially, a single well, usually located at the end of the village street, served the needs of the entire village. But within a few years individual families began to construct their own wells. These early wells were dug by hand and cribbed with logs. Water was drawn by use of a long balance beam. One source suggests that crude wooden pumps were also used during the early years (Figure 59).

Many of the crib wells were later covered over with wooden platforms and roofs and water drawn with the use of a pulley and rope (Figure 60).



**Figure 59**

Many of the early wells made use of a balance beam for drawing water, a few settlers, however, constructed crude wooden pumps. (Provincial Archives Manitoba)

Around the turn of the century, many Mennonite families had new wells drilled and cast-iron hand pumps installed. A few of these later wells were connected to windmill-powered units for labour free operation. Hand pumps and crib wells were in general use until the early 1950s, when modern electric plumbing was installed in most of the homes. Although rarely used, a few of the early hand pumps can still be found in some of the villages.

The traditional location for the well was close to the front entrance of the barn. As a result of this, the barn had to be meticulously cleaned of manure every day to prevent seepage and contamination of the water. The fact that no cases of typhoid were ever reported in the West Reserve, suggests that this duty was rarely neglected. This apparently dangerous location nevertheless had its advantages. Many of the Mennonites enclosed the pump with small sheds attached on one side to the barn. The daily water supply could then be obtained without having to leave the main structure, something which was especially appreciated during the cold winter months.



**Figure 60**

Crib-wells continued to be used after the turn of the century, often with the aid of a rope and pulley. (Winkler, 1982: 161)



## Granaries

During the first decades after settlement, when only small amounts of grain were produced, grain storage was easily accommodated within one or two rooms of the barn. Bagged grain was also often kept in the attic of the house, where it remained dry and acted as an insulator. With the dramatic increase of crop production during the 1890s, however, larger and more efficient storage facilities were soon required.

Like the summer kitchens, granaries were not uncommon in the Mennonite villages of Russia, and when a grain storage facility was required in Manitoba the Mennonites naturally turned to Russia for a model (Figure 61). The typical Mennonite granary or "Shpijka" had a square plan, a high, steeply pitched roof, and a central alleyway in line with the gable ridge of the roof. The large alley doors were generally of the same design as the "Sheen" doors on the barns.

The planning of these granaries was similar to that in granaries found in the English areas of MSTW. Both featured a central drive-through alleyway with two open-walled bins on either side. A team and wagon would be driven into the structure and bagged or loose grain transferred directly into or out of the bins. Many of the Mennonite granaries had a smaller door on each side of the main doors for easier access to the bins. The large area under the gable peak was often utilized for small equipment storage. Also many of the granaries had moveable wall sections which were placed across the alleyway and this space was then used as an extra grain storage area.

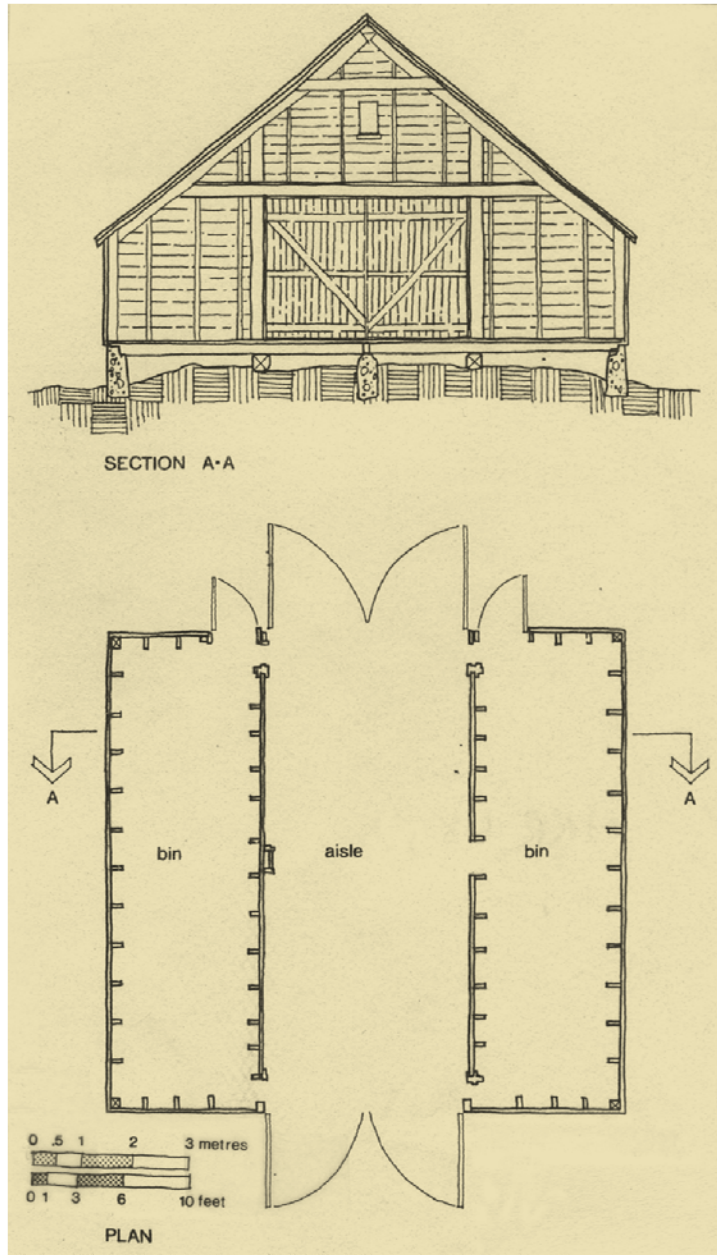
About a dozen of these granaries survive. One, located in the village of Reinland, provides a good illustration of the type of construction commonly use for these structures. It is 10 x 10 metres in size with 2 metre walls and is 6.2 metres high at the peak. The interior framework consists of 50 x 150 mm (2" x 6") studding and the walls area sheathed with horizontal "drop" siding (Figure 62).

The roof once had wooden shingles but it is now covered with modern asphalt roofing. Originally the structure stood on a small earthen mound to direct rainwater away from it, but it was recently placed on a concrete foundation.

After the turn of the century, mechanical grain augers were often used for handling loose grain, and the bins were filled through holes cut in the roof. While round metal granaries have become popular in recent years, at least eleven of the traditional granaries remain in the various villages of the MSTW district. Many of these are in good condition and are still in use.



**Figure 61**  
J.F. Ens granary, Village of Reinland. This example, like most others in the MSTW district, was constructed according to traditional Mennonite designs.



**Figure 62**

Zacharias granary: section and plans.

## Chicken Coops

Poultry production was an important facet of Mennonite pioneer life; chickens, turkeys, duck and geese could all be used for food, sale, or for feather tick bedding. During the early decades of settlement, most Mennonites kept chickens at least, and these flocks were normally housed in the main house/barn unit, usually in a small lean-to section towards the rear of the barn (Plate 133). In later years, however, individual buildings called "Heena Shtaulen" were constructed especially to house poultry (Figure 63).

Sometimes these structures were combined with facilities for hogs. A favourite location for chicken coops was at the far end of the yard behind the barn. Although not as common as they once were, several chicken coops are still being used in the Mennonite villages.

Like other outbuildings built by the Mennonites in the MSTW district, chicken coops were simple utilitarian structures. Most were one-roomed structures of frame construction with simple gable or shed-roofs. A few remaining examples also have an additional room for feed storage. Coops were clearly distinguished from other farm buildings by large window openings along the south or east side. Another feature common to many of the Mennonite coops was a large door which opened onto the feed room. Not generally found on chicken coops constructed in other areas of the province, these doors allowed convenient access to the building when large items like feed, hay, or crated chickens were carried in (Figure 64).



**Figure 63**

Jacob Peters chicken coop, Village of Reinland.



**Figure 64**

George Dyck chicken coop, Village of Neuenburg.

## Machine Sheds

Farm equipment, like agricultural produce, was initially stored in the main house/barn structure. The rear lean-to portion of the barn, known to the Mennonites as the "Sheua", was the usual winter storage area for implements like mowers, ploughs and seeders. Items such as wagons and buggies were stored on the floor of the "Sheen" area or the alleyway of the granary. As the Mennonites began to purchase new or larger machinery during the 1890s, however, additional space was required and various types of machine sheds began to appear on many of the farmsteads.

Machine sheds constructed in the MSTW district were usually simple in design and construction and were not unlike the machine sheds constructed in many other parts of the province during this period. The nature of the equipment stored largely determined the design of the building. A shed in Reinland, for example, once housed a threshing machine. This can be determined by the high roof and large doors at the far end of the structure (Figure 65).

Many of the Mennonite machine sheds featured distinctive doors like those found on barns and granaries (Figure 66).





**Figure 65**

Ens machine shed, Village of Reinland.



**Figure 66**

E. Wahl machine shed, Village of Friedensruh.

## Hog Barns

Given the Mennonite's wide use of pork as a meat staple, it would seem unusual that there are only a few remaining examples of hog barns. This was because few were constructed. During the early decades, hogs, like other livestock, were kept in the main barn structure. When farms diversified and expanded during the 1890s, larger facilities were generally not required for hogs, as they were raised simply for domestic use and only small numbers were kept at one time.

Some of the Mennonites did, however, construct separate hog barns. Like the chicken coops, they were generally simple, one-room frame structures, and were not unlike hog barns constructed in the English areas of the MSTW district. During the Mennonite exodus of the 1920s, a number of those who remained often purchased the homes of those who left and used them as hog sheds, or simply used the material from these homes to construct new facilities (Figure 67).

In recent years, several modern, large-scale hog operations have been established in the MSTW district. Consequently, few Mennonites continue to raise their own hogs, and the hog barn, like the house/barn unit and most other early farmstead buildings, has become a thing of the past. Those which survive are quickly disappearing.



**Figure 67**

After the turn of the century many early homes were converted for use as separate hog barns. This example has a small hatchway cut in the end wall.



## Corn Dryers

Grain was the main agricultural product of the Mennonite settlements for over fifty years. Wheat and flax were generally grown for export, and oats for livestock feed. During the depression of the 1930s, however, production began to shift to a variety of speciality crops which were then being tested and developed at the Federal Department of Agriculture Experimental Farm near Morden. These crops included sugar beets, sunflower, rapeseed, potatoes and corn, which was one of the first new crops grown by the Mennonites.

When it was first introduced during the 1930s, corn was simply used for livestock fodder, but in 1937, a few of the more progressive Mennonite farmers began to grow seed corn. At the time this required the construction of a building in which to dry and de-cob the corn. Three of these facilities were constructed in the MSTW district. The first was built by A.A. Kroeker, a few kilometres south of Winkler in 1937; the other, near Haskett, was constructed by G.G. Elias two years later (Figure 68 and 69).

A third dryer was constructed during the 1940s close to the railroad tracks in Winkler but no longer exists. Both the Kroeker and Elias structures still exist, and while these buildings are of relatively recent construction, they are nevertheless worth some attention.

They were among the first of their type constructed in the province. The structures are of similar size and construction and were both designed for relatively labour free and fuel efficient operation (Figure 70).



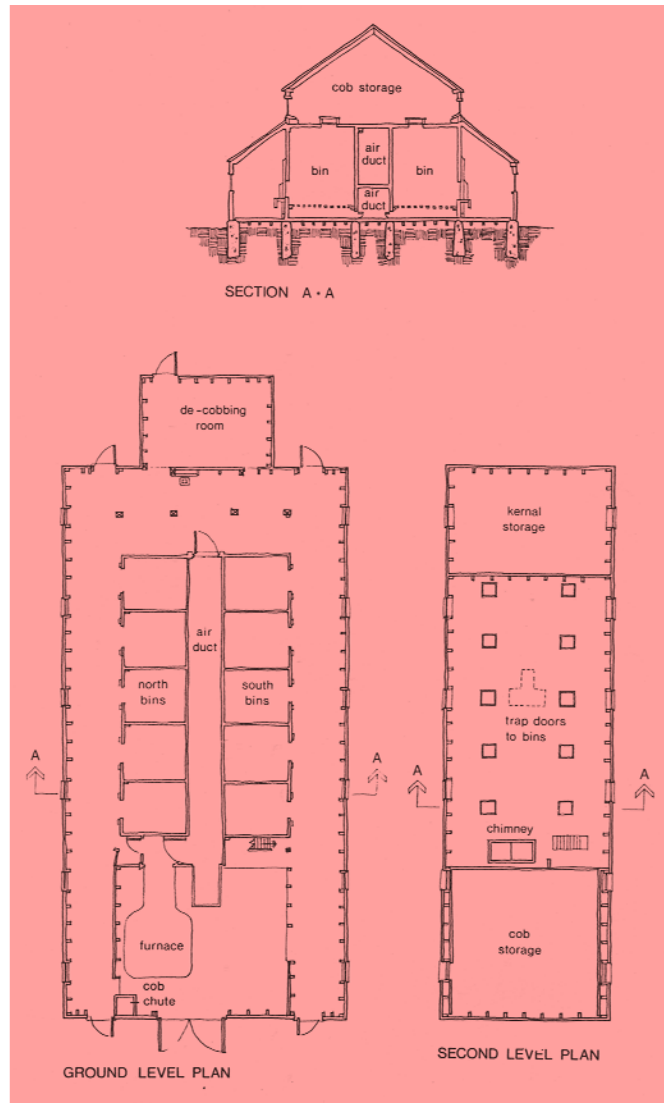
**Figure 68**

A.A. Kroeker corn dryer, constructed in 1937.



**Figure 69**

G.G. Elias corn dryer, constructed in 1939.



**Figure 70**  
Elias corn dryer: plans and section.

In each case the corn was augured from ground level to a distribution unit at the top of the structure. Here it was directed into the various bins located along either side of a central duct system (Figure 71).

Hot air, supplied by a large furnace located at the rear of the structures, was forced into the ductwork and, before escaping through a chimney in the roof, was allowed to filter up through the bins, drying the corn. Once the cobs were sufficiently dry, the bins were emptied with the aid of conveyor belts. This carried the corn to a de-husking machine at the front of the building. From here the separated kernels were either augured into a waiting wagon or truck, or into a storage bin located in the attic at the front end of the structure.

Disposing of the empty cobs was neatly accomplished within the operation. The furnaces were fired up with coal, but once hot enough; the cobs could actually be used for fuel. Thus, from the de-husking machine the spent cobs were hauled to the rear of the building where they were either shovelled directly into the furnace, or augured into another storage bin in the attic above the furnace for later use (Figure 72).

The various mechanical functions in these corn dryers were driven by a complex, integrated system of belt and chain drives and powered by a single stationary engine.



**Figure 71**

Elias corn dryer: second storey detail showing the distribution box and bin hatches.



**Figure 72**

Elias corn dryer: detail of the ground floor showing the cob chute from the second storey storage area and the large furnace at the rear of the structure.