

Westphalia – the New Home in Missouri

People in Mastholte still ask about the emigrants who found a new home. Often, interest concerns those who left with the Loehners. The largest number of these emigrants settled in middle United States. The places seem to circle the small town of Westphalia in Missouri.

So, interest centers on Henry Loehner's return visit in 1846 when the Sunday churchyards of Mastholte and Moese were filled with graphic and detailed accounts of his good fortune.

His visit resulted in 192 recorded emigrants leaving for America. Henry had settled in Missouri where first settlers about 1836 had named the area, New Westphalia. The earliest Mastholte emigrant arrived there in 1836 – John Henry Joseph Meyerpeter. A day laborer, he was born 1809 at Moese.

Westphalia, Missouri

The small place provides the most important resources for a large, scattered community – post office, gasoline station, drugstore, physician, etc.

Church property provides the most important focus -- the Catholic St. Joseph Church, with cemetery, rectory, and school.

Current population is about 400 in Westphalia and about 4,000 in the surrounding area.

St. Joseph Church, founded by people from Oelde and Paderborn, celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1985 with an illustrated commemorative volume of 250 pages. The book contained a great number of family names known in Mastholte and Moese and photos of churches in Mastholte (St. James), Westenholz, Wadersloh, and Oelde.

Mayor Pat Hilkemeyer

In 1989 the author of this book received a letter from the mayor and Dolf Schroeder, a professor at the University of Missouri, of their intention to visit Oelde and Mastholte. Westphalia wanted to establish a city-partnership with Oelde. Hilkemeyer and Schroeder planned to visit Mastholte in September.

They brought many interesting items from Westphalia including the jubilee volume, telephone books, and land registers.

Westphalia Names from Mastholte

The Westphalia items contain many family names found in Mastholte. In addition to Loehner, others include Berhorst, Luebbert, Fachtel, Voerhoff, and Damhorst. The number of family names total more than forty—from Adrian through Kramer and Plassmeyer to Winkelmann.

Language Problems

Not only the group of emigrants with Henry Loehner settled together, but also other emigrants grouped together because of language problems – the differences between Low and High German [Plattdeutsch and Hochdeutsch].

For example, in Mastholte, Low German was spoken; in Rheinland, and Baden, High German. The Catholic churches, especially where Jesuit missionaries were active, encourages the separation of the two language groups. The problem resulted in many from Westfalen to settle in and around Westphalia while Rheinlanders grouped in nearby areas.

After the American Civil War, emigrants of the two language groups spoke English with each other but many spoke their native language among themselves. Some new words were added to the original tongues. For example, in Low German, “refrigerator” became “Kühlschrank”; a “freezer” was “Gefriertruhe.” In this century, Low German was so rarely used in Germany, that researchers from the University of Münster came to Westphalia to study Low German.

The city partnership between Oelde and Westphalia [perhaps with connection of Mastholte] allowed finding other things, especially customs in church.

Other Places in America

Obviously, emigrants from Moese and Mastholte settled in other American places. For example, Hackenkamps in Atlanta GA and McCook NE, Luebberts in FL and NE, Stuckenschnieders in ND and SD. Others went to large cities, for example, St. Louis.

Millions of Germans in USA

German emigration was a social and demographic phenomenon of the 1830s to 1914. About 4.5 million German emigrated then, of which about 4 million went to the United States.

From 1844 to the end of that century, about 190,000 left Westfalen.

Since the close of World War II, the relationship between the old and the new homeland has continued and increased.

From Mastholte, Die Geschichte zweier Gemeinden: Moese und Mastholte, page 235ff. by Bert Bertling, Translation by Edward Bode.