

## **The Goertzen Family History Book**

### **Proposal**

March 5, 2015

A. Bidnall

The proposed book project is a Goertzen family history aimed primarily at members of the sprawling, international Goertzen family, but it will be much more than a genealogical reference.

The book will do two things. First, it will trace the history of the Goertzen family from the Age of Reformation in the sixteenth century to the present. It will trace the movements of as many family branches as possible, using existing published family and Mennonite histories, individual oral and written recollections, and a variety of primary sources relating to the activities, persecution, and migration of family members since the Reformation. The published book will include the most comprehensive historical Goertzen family tree yet produced.

Second, the proposed Goertzen family history is distinctive because it will provide the historical and spiritual context for the conversion and migration of various Goertzen family groups. This will include discussions of:

- The intellectual and political influences on the birth and evolution of the Mennonites, including ancient, Old Church, and Enlightenment philosophies
- Mennonite persecution and exile in Europe
- The technologies that made cross-Atlantic immigration possible, including an examination of the age of steam transport
- The proliferation of Mennonite communities in North and South America

This book will be a family history, but one that situates the Goertzen family at the intersection of the histories of the church, immigration, religion and community. Bringing these wider developments to life will be the written and oral memories of multiple generations of Goertzens.

The history will be image-heavy with existing family photographs and portraits, images relevant to the broader historical context, and high-quality reproductions of primary documents (e.g., early printed Church documents, letters, newspaper articles, passenger lists, etc.). The finished product will be a 14 ¼ x 11” leather-bound coffee table book, ideal for display and durable enough to last for generations.

The projected audience for the book is, of course, Goertzen family members, but it is also intended to be a reliable, authoritative historical reference based on sound academic research and sources, as well as a family heirloom. It will enlighten Goertzen readers for generations to come and serve as a foundation for later family researchers.

Peter Goertzen, a family member himself, will oversee the book's writing and production, and Amanda Bidnall (PhD, Boston College), a British and European historian of society and culture, will perform the initial research and writing. The estimated timeline for research, writing, and editing is five years.

## **Provisional Table of Contents**

### *Introduction*

## **Part One: Europe**

### Chapter One: Prehistory of the Mennonite Goertzens

This chapter will examine some of the relevant pre-Reformation influences on Mennonite dogma and belief. The chapter will include a discussion of classical worldviews, from Socrates to Plutarch, with an emphasis on their implicit presence in Mennonite beliefs. The second major section focuses on the creation of Old Church orthodoxy, and its practice in its first one thousand years.

### Chapter Two: Backdrop to Reformation

This short chapter will be a discussion of Church practice in the two hundred years leading to Reformation, with a particular focus on those practices and orthodoxies that came under fire from reformers, in particular Menno Simon and the Mennonites.

### Chapter Three: Reformation and the Birth of the Mennonites, 1598–1850

This chapter, as its title suggests, will be about the burst of reform that occurred in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, highlighting the differences and similarities between the Mennonites and other reforming religions like the Lutherans, Calvinists, and Anabaptists—in particular in terms of belief and church structure.

### Chapter Four: The Mennonite Goertzens in Europe, 1563–1875

This chapter will examine the experience of the Mennonites in the aftermath of the first Protestant Reformation in Europe, and through the Catholic (or Counter-) Reformation. Over the course of three centuries, this chapter will follow the Mennonite Goertzens as they migrated, or were exiled, to parts of Europe where they were variously protected, tolerated, exploited, and persecuted—including the territories of the Holy Roman and Russian Empires. The first and earliest European Goertzen family tree will be included in this chapter.

## **Part Two: The Americas**

### Chapter Five: Mennonite Movement and the Crossing of the Atlantic

This chapter will focus on the movement of the Mennonites, and the Goertzen families, from Europe to North and South America, beginning in the nineteenth century. The focus here will be on the various push and pull factors that facilitated Mennonite migration, and will include an in-depth discussion of the age of steam transport across the Atlantic. This chapter will discuss the process of migration up to the present.

*Chapters Six through Nine will focus on different regions of Mennonite and Goertzen settlement in the Americas between roughly 1875 and the present, with a chapter each on Canada, the United States, Mexico, and South America. Each chapter will begin with a discussion of the political, economic, and social context of the earliest Mennonite settlements, and end with a look at today's families, the descendants of the first Goertzens to settle across the Atlantic.*

#### Chapter Six: The Mennonites and the Goertzens in Canada

This chapter will trace the history of the Mennonites in Canada, from their settlement in Winnipeg in 1873 to the present. There will be a discussion of the development of the Canadian Mennonite church, and well as the evolution and consequences of Mennonite education and school systems. This chapter will include a Canadian Goertzen family tree.

#### Chapter Seven: The Mennonites and the Goertzens in the United States

This chapter will look at the experiences of the earliest Goertzen and Mennonite settlers as they established communities in Philadelphia, Boston, and New York, tracing their evolution to the present.

#### Chapter Eight: The Mennonites and the Goertzens in Mexico

This chapter will look at the experiences of the earliest Goertzens and Mennonites, from their first settlements in Durango and Chihuahua to the present.

#### Chapter Nine: The Mennonites and the Goertzens in South America

This chapter will look at the experiences of the earliest Goertzen and Mennonite settlers as they established communities in Bolivia, Brazil, Peru, and Argentina, and will follow their evolution to the present.

#### *Conclusion*

Peter Goertzen, 6495-184A St., Surrey, BC V3S 8T1

[pcgoertzen@telus.net](mailto:pcgoertzen@telus.net)

604 574 5795

Funding: <http://gogetfunding.com/project/new-family-history-book>