

1991

Recent Changes in Hutterite Colony Expansion

William L. Smith
Loras College

Follow this and additional works at: <https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/greatplainssociologist>



Part of the [Regional Sociology Commons](#), and the [Rural Sociology Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Smith, William L. (1991) "Recent Changes in Hutterite Colony Expansion," *Great Plains Sociologist*. Vol. 4 , Article 6.

Available at: <https://openprairie.sdstate.edu/greatplainssociologist/vol4/iss1/6>

This Research Note is brought to you for free and open access by Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. It has been accepted for inclusion in Great Plains Sociologist by an authorized editor of Open PRAIRIE: Open Public Research Access Institutional Repository and Information Exchange. For more information, please contact michael.biondo@sdstate.edu.

RESEARCH NOTES

Recent Changes in Hutterite Colony Expansion

William L. Smith
Loras College

Current Demographics

Two thirds of present day Hutterians reside in the following four Canadian provinces: Alberta, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia. The remaining one third have settled in five northern states of the U.S.A.: South Dakota, Montana, North Dakota, Washington, and Minnesota. The number of Hutterites vary according to the sources quoted but the best current estimates indicate that there are approximately between 33,309 (Anderson, 1989) and 32,850 (Raber, 1987:55) as compared to 21,521 in 1974 (Hostetler, 1974) and 16,931 listed in a 1969 census of Hutterite members (Friedmann, 1970:101) and 16,500 in 1965 (Hostetler and Huntington, 1980:1).

Geographer Lawrence Anderson predicts that if Hutterites maintain their current growth rate of 4.37% by the year 2000 Hutterite population will increase to 60,000 (Anderson, n. d.). There are currently 374 colonies, 104 in the United States and 270 in Canada (1990 Hutterite Address Book) see table one. Hostetler (1974) listed a total of 203 colonies including 80 Schmiedleut, 66 Dariusleut, and 57 Lehrerleut and Hostetler and Huntington (1967) found 170 colonies in 1965. Riley (1970:5) lists the number of colonies at 158 in 1965 with a population of 17,300 with approximately 5,300 residing in the United States.

The three leuts (distinct people) share a common history, language, theology, and culture although each leut has developed its own system of discipline, preacher assemblies, and some customs. The leuts take their names from some of the first Hutterite leaders in America. For example,

Lehrerleut and Dariusleut colonies consider the Schmiedleut colonies to be the most liberal of the three. The Schmiedleut are more worldly in their dress and their clothing tends to be more accustomed to modern tastes and styles (Hostetler, 1974:174-175).

Table 1
Hutterite Colonies in Canada and the United States

CANADA	UNITED STATES
<i>Dariusleut Colonies</i>	
Alberta 81	Montana 13
British Columbia 1	Washington 5
Saskatchewan 26	
<i>Lehrerleut Colonies</i>	
Alberta 50	Montana 27
Saskatchewan 26	
<i>Schmiedleut Colonies</i>	
Manitoba 86	Minnesota 3
	North Dakota 6
	South Dakota 50

The Montana Hutterites: A Case-in-Point

The first Hutterites came to Montana in 1911 and developed the Spring Creek Colony outside of Lewistown in central Montana. In 1918 the Spring Creek Colony closed and moved to Canada. Between 1945-1948 8 colonies were established by Canadian Hutterites in Eastern Montana. By 1970 there were 22 colonies, 37 by 1982, and presently 40 colonies in 1990 of which 13 are Dariusleut and 27 Lehrerleut. Four thousand Hutterites (see Table 2 below) currently live in Montana and colony expansion will continue due to low death rates and high birth rates. When colonies start to reach 100-120 members, plans are begun to 'branch out' and new colonies are created

so everyone will have a chance to be productive workers and contributors to the bruderhof (colony). An average Montana Hutterite colony needs 10,000-12,000 acres of land to house their operation (Alwin, 1982:78).

Table 2
Montana Hutterite Colonies

1. Malta	14. Seville	27. Pleasant Valley
2. Loring	15. Big Sky	28. Surprise Creek
3. Turner	16. Glendale	29. Deerfield
4. North Harlem	17. Kingsbury	30. Spring Creek
5. East End	18. Birch Creek	31. King
6. Hilldale	19. Rockport	32. Ayers
7. Gildford	20. Miami	33. Fords Creek
8. Riverview	21. Miller	34. Springdale
9. Sage Creek	22. New Rockport	35. Martinsdale
10. Eagle Creek	23. Milford	36. Duncan
11. Rim Rock	24. Cascade	37. Spring Water
12. Hillside	25. Fair Haven	38. Golden Valley
13. Glacier	26. Big Stone	39. Flat Willow
		40. Forty Mile

Table 3 summarizes data which was compiled from a mail survey conducted in the summer of 1988. 73% (32 of the 44 colonies in Montana and Washington) returned a completed questionnaire. The figures reported in this table are averages per colony based upon the data provided by the 32 colonies who completed the questionnaire.

Table 3
Demographic Information

1. Number of families: 15
 2. Children under 16 years of age: 27
 3. Adults 16 years of age and older: 46
 4. Number of acres owned: 10,162
 5. Number of acres leased: 3,602
 6. Number of acres in crop production: 5,771
 7. Number of acres in pasture: 4,899
-

The Hutterites are located in Montana's farming belt and make use of modern technology which has contributed to their status as the most productive farmers in the state. According to economist Gail Cramer, the Hutterites are viewed as being on the forefront of agricultural technological use. At the Riverview colony, a computer keeps tabs on the daily milk production of cows and calculates how much feed each cow needs based upon their output (Shirley, 1987b).

Montana Hutterite colonies raise 45% of Montana's hogs and as much as 75% of its eggs. The colonies produce 40 million pounds of milk, which is approximately 15% of the state's total milk production (Shirley, 1987b).

Hutterite colonies are registered as communal churches with the federal government and state of Montana. They pay federal income taxes on all income that surpasses the standard combined colony population deduction. For state income tax purposes, the Hutterite colonies pay the same rates as any other corporation.

Professor Gail Cramer, formerly an agricultural economist at Montana State University and currently a Professor at the University of Arkansas, has calculated that the Hutterites own less than one percent of all farm and ranch land in Montana and pose no threat to other ranchers and

farmers (Shirley, 1987a).

For those interested in further information on the Hutterites consult Hostetler (1974) for a comprehensive treatment of Hutterite culture and Miller (1990) for an extensive bibliography.

References

- Alwin, J. 1982. *Eastern Montana: A Portrait of the Land and Its People*. Helena, Montana: Montana Magazine, Inc.
- Anderson, L. 1989. "Hutterite Colonies and Memberships 1989." Unpublished Document.
- _____. No date. "Demographic Patterns of the Hutterites 1874-1986." Unpublished Paper.
- Friedmann, R. 1970. "A Hutterite Census for 1969: Hutterite Growth in One Century 1874-1969." *Mennonite Quarterly* 5(44): 100-105.
- Hostetler, J. 1974. *Hutterite Society*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- _____ and G. Huntington. 1980. *The Hutterites in North America*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Hutterite Address Book*. 1990. Great Falls, Montana: Licini's Print Shop.
- Miller, T. 1990. *American Communes, 1860-1960 A Bibliography*. New York: Garland Publishing, Inc.
- Raber, B. 1987. *The New Almanac*. Gordonville, PA: The Print Shop.
- Riley, M. 1970. *South Dakota Colonies: 1874-1969*. Brookings: Agricultural Experiment Station, South Dakota State University. Bulletin 565.
- Shirley, S. 1987a. "Hutterite Farm Expansion Spurs Criticism." *Billings Gazette*, October 5.
- _____. 1987b. "Montana's Hutterites." *Independent Record*. October 4.