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## The Hutterites and Their Agriculture: 100 years in South Dakota

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# The Hutterites and their Agriculture

100 years  
in South Dakota



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## Contents

The Hutterite Brethren .....	3
History .....	3
South Dakota colonies .....	4
Beliefs and principles .....	8
Hutterite principles applied to agriculture ...	10
Hutterite colonies, population, and agriculture .	11
Hutterite colonies in North America .....	11
South Dakota colonies .....	15
Major crop and livestock enterprises in 1974 .	16
South Dakota vs Manitoba colonies .....	17
Update: New colonies and farms, 1974-1979 ...	18
Selected bibliography .....	21

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# The Hutterites and their Agriculture

## 100 years in South Dakota

Marvin P. Riley, Professor,  
Department of Rural Sociology

South Dakota is the home of the original American settlement of a small religious group known as the Hutterite Brethren. The members of this religious sect have lived in small agricultural villages (colonies) in South Dakota since 1874. Since then, over 200 colonies have been established in the farming areas of the northern prairie states and the western provinces of Canada.

Today the Hutterites still live communally in their colonies, sharing, according to their religious beliefs, all their worldly goods. The Hutterites are unique: While using the most modern agricultural technology, they have isolated themselves from the main currents of western civilization. The strong boundary maintenance of their social system has enabled them to retain much of their culture and social organization developed during

the Protestant Reformation.

The most distinctive feature of the Hutterite way of life is the combination of communal living and modern agricultural enterprises. That the Hutterites have been successful is born out by the fact that both their population and their colonies are flourishing.

The Hutterites are important to other groups because they constitute a rural-farm society based on tradition in the midst of a rapidly changing urban-industrial society. South Dakotans have a special interest in the Hutterites and their communal farms for at least two reasons.

From a historical standpoint, South Dakota is the location of the first settlements of Hutterites when they migrated from Russia in the years 1874 to 1879. In fact, the first colony they established in North America (Old Bon Homme near

Yankton) is still in existence and is thriving.

The second reason for local interest is that South Dakota has the largest Hutterite population and the greatest number of colonies in the United States and these populations are growing.

The South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station has published five reports over the last 20 years on the communal farms of the Hutterite Brethren in South Dakota.<sup>1</sup> The present report provides an update. Its material comes from a 1974 field survey in which the leaders in all the Hutterite colonies in South Dakota were interviewed for population and agricultural information. Also included are revisions and additions to general information on Hutterite life and colony organization.

<sup>1</sup>See bibliography for these publications.

## The Hutterite Brethren

### History

#### Origin of Hutterites

The Hutterites are a very old religious sect.<sup>2</sup> They originated over four centuries ago in 1528 in Austria and Moravia. An offshoot of the Swiss Brethren, they are one of several Anabaptist groups (believers in adult baptism) that arose directly

out of the Protestant Reformation struggles of sixteenth century Europe.

The founders of the Hutterian Brotherhood subscribed to the Anabaptist beliefs of adult baptism and separation of church and state. In accord with the Swiss Brethren, they were strongly opposed to war.

One additional belief distinguishes Hutterites from the Mennonites and other Anabaptist groups—the principle of “community of goods.” The Hutterites inter-

pret the New Testament literally, insisting upon the complete sharing of worldly possessions. It is this principle that provides the basis for their communal living.

Because of these beliefs, the Hutterites were subjected to severe persecution by both “church” and “state.” They were imprisoned, flogged, burned at the stake, and driven from place to place. At times, it appeared that the group would disintegrate. Willing to flee rather than to sacrifice their beliefs, the Hutterites

<sup>2</sup>Information on the history of the Hutterites is drawn largely from John Horsch, *The Hutterite Brethren 1528-1931*; Henry C. Smith, *Smith's story of the Mennonites* 3rd rev ed; and John Hostetler, *Hutterite society*.

were forced eventually from Russia and came to the United States. It is only here in the United States and in Canada that Hutterite populations are presently found.

Jacob Hutter, from whom the sect derives its name, was a hatmaker. Prior to joining the Hutterites in Moravia he had been chief pastor of the Tyrolese Anabaptists.

Although Hutter was not highly educated, he did possess unique leadership and organizational abilities and, in 1533, he became pastor of the Hutterites.

It was through his leadership and the efforts of his assistants that the well defined pattern of community living developed, based on an interpretation of New Testament principles. Hutter was burned at the stake for his beliefs in 1536 at Innsbruck, Austria.

## Hutterites in Europe

The history of the Hutterites in Europe falls into three general periods: (1) approximately a century in Moravia; (2) nearly a century and a half in Hungary, Transylvania, and Wallachia; and (3) slightly over a century in Russia.

The Moravian nobles considered the Hutterites good tenants and pro-

tected them from attacks by the Catholic Church and the Emperor as long as possible. However, the power of the nobles was broken in 1620 and the Hutterites were forced to flee Moravia.

For more than 150 years, they moved from place to place in Hungary and neighboring countries, often forced to flee for their lives. Although often close to extinction, a small group always managed to survive and carry on the faith.

Finally, under the tolerant reign of Catherine the Great, the surviving Hutterites in Wallachia entered into a contract with Russian Count Romanzov in 1770, receiving permission to settle on one of his manors in the Northern Ukraine. Freedom of religion was guaranteed to them, and they were granted exemption from military conscription.

An edict nullifying their grant of exemption from military service was issued in 1871. After an appeal to the crown failed, their non-resistance policy demanded they emigrate. The Hutterites and the Mennonites decided to send delegations to various countries, including America, to look for possible locations for their settlements.

## Colonies in Russia Prior to Migration

At the time of their migration to America, the Hutterites were living in three villages in the Ukraine. They were located on the west side of the Dnieper River about 200 miles northwest of Odessa on the Black Sea.

One congregation, committed to communal living, had settled at Scheromet under the leadership of a minister called "Schmied-Michel" because he was a blacksmith, and consequently, his group was referred to as the *Schmiedeleut* (the Smith's people).

A second congregation, distinct from the first group, lived communally at Hutterdorf under the leadership of Darius Walter. It soon took the name *Dariusleut* (Darius' people), after the given name of their minister.

The third branch of the Hutterites, the *Lehrerleut* (the teacher's people) was not formed until after the arrival of its members in South Dakota. The members of this branch had attempted to establish a *Bruderhof* in the village of Johannesruh but never quite succeeded. It was not until they settled in South Dakota under the leadership of Jacob Wipf, an accomplished teacher (*Lehrer*), that they began to live communally.

## South Dakota Colonies

### Settlement in Dakota Territory

Between 1874 and 1879 practically all Hutterites left the Crimean villages where they had been living. Consequently, about 1300 Hutterites, including those not living communally, arrived in Dakota Territory during these 5 years.

After their arrival, these families divided into about two equal groups—one choosing to live in colonies, the other electing to settle on private farms.<sup>3</sup>

The latter group of noncolony Hutterites became known as the *Prairieleut* (prairie people). They lived on individual farms, continued to speak "Hutterisch," and eventually joined Mennonite and other Protestant church groups.<sup>4</sup>

The first Hutterite colony was established 18 miles west of Yankton along the Missouri River in 1874. The settlers of this colony were Michael Waldner's group; they named their colony *Bon Homme*. Today it is looked upon as the mother of all the *Schmiedeleut* colonies in North America.

Later that same year Darius Walter's group located about 40

miles north of Yankton on government grounds, spending the winter in sod houses on the open prairie at Silver Lake. In 1875 they moved 12 miles west of Freeman in the valley at the confluence of the James River and Wolf Creek and established the Old Wolf Creek colony. This colony is the mother of all the *Dariusleut* colonies in this country and Canada.

The third and last group of Hutterites to come from Russia had not yet succeeded in forming a colony before they emigrated. However, under the able leadership of teacher Jacob Wipf, the group settled about 35 miles southeast of Mitchell on the James River, and began to live communally at Old Elm Springs colony in 1877. This colony became the founding colony of the *Lehrerleut*

<sup>3</sup>For estimate of 1880 colony Hutterite population, see Joseph W. Eaton and Albert J. Mayer, *Man's capacity to reproduce: A demography of a unique population*, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup>Hostetler, pp 115-116.

(teacher's people) branch of the Hutterites.

Although the three founding colonies developed into three distinct people (Leut) within the Hutterite Brethren, they are remarkably uniform in organization and communal pattern of living.

However, each Leut has its own discipline, senior elder, preacher, assembly, and means of settling disputes. Even though they share the same religious doctrine and social patterns, there are very few formal relations between them. For example, marriage between Leuts rarely occurs.<sup>5</sup>

### Early Growth and Expansion

Between 1879 and 1917, new colonies formed rapidly in South Dakota, due to the natural increase of population within the founder colonies which led to colony divisions.<sup>6</sup> Daughter and granddaughter colonies were established along the James River during this time by the three founder colonies.

By 1917, Bon Homme (Schmiedeleut) had three daughter colonies—Milltown, Maxwell, and Huron. The Milltown colony had two daughters of her own—Rosedale and James Valley.

The founder colony of Wolf Creek (Dariusleut) produced five daughter colonies—Jamesville, Tschetter, Spink, Lake Byron, and Richards. Lake Byron had also produced a daughter colony of her own—Yale.

Branch colonies of Old Elm Springs (Lehrerleut) included Rockport, New Elm Springs, and Milford.

The original three founding colonies had divided and increased to a total of 17 at the time of America's entry into World War I. Six were Schmiedeleut; seven Dariusleut; and four Lehrerleut.

### Migration to Canada

Strong sentiments against the Hutterites developed during World War I because of their German background, and even more, because of their refusal to participate in any way in the war effort (including buying war bonds).

Actions of agencies such as the State Council of Defense led to proceedings to annul their corporation charters. As a result, 12 colonies left for Canada in 1918. Four more followed; by 1934 only one Hutterite colony (Old Bon Homme) remained in South Dakota. However, later in that same year, Bon Homme established a new Rockport colony on the

vacated site of old Lehrerleut Rockport colony near Alexandria.

### Return from Canada

During the depression of the 1930's, the state and various other loan agencies had according to one observer "acquired so much land that they didn't know what to do with it all. With nobody farming it and nobody buying it, it wasn't any good to them."

Agents were sent to Canada to ask the Hutterites to come back.<sup>7</sup> In 1935, the South Dakota legislature passed the Communal Corporation

<sup>7</sup>Jon Swan, "The 400-year-old commune," pp 90-100.

Table 1. Hutterite colonies in South Dakota and adjacent states, 1974.<sup>1</sup>

Colony	Address	Date Established	Mother Colony
Big Stone	Graceville, MN 56240	1958	New Elm Springs, SD
Blumengard	Wecota, SD 57480	1952	Blumengard, Man.
Bon Homme	Tabor, SD 57063	1874	Russia
Cedar Grove	Platte, SD 57369	1972	Bon Homme, SD
Clark	Raymond, SD 57258	1955	Jamesville, SD
Clover Leaf	Howard, SD 57349	1963	Gracevale, SD
Deerfield	Ipswich, SD 57451	1971	Plainview, SD
Fairview	LaMoure, ND 58458	1970	Rockport, SD
Fordham	Carpenter, SD 57322	1974	Huron, SD
Glendale	Frankfort, SD 57440	1949	Bon Homme, Man.
Gracevale	Winfred, SD 57076	1948	Tschetter, SD
Greenwood	Delmont, SD 57330	1971	Jamesville, SD
Hillside	Doland, SD 57436	1958	Huron, SD
Huron	Huron, SD 57350	1944	Jamesville, SD
Jamesville	Utica, SD 57067	1937	Huron, Man.
Long Lake	Wetonka, SD 57482	1967	Pearl Creek, SD
Maple River	Fullerton, ND 58441	1969	Blumengard, SD
Maxwell	Scotland, SD 57059	1949	New Elm Springs, SD
Millerdale	Miller, SD 57362	1949	Milltown, Man.
New Elm Springs	Ethan, SD 57334	1936	Maxwell, Man.
Pearl Creek	Iroquois, SD 57353	1949	Huron, Man.
Pembroke	Ipswich, SD 57451	1974	Tschetter, SD
Plainview	Ipswich, SD 57451	1958	Spink, SD
Platte	Platte, SD 57369	1949	Bon Homme, SD
Poinsett	Estelline, SD 57234	1968	New Elm Springs, SD
Riverside	Huron, SD 57350	1949	Rockport, SD
Rockport	Alexandria, SD 57311	1934	Bon Homme, SD
Rosedale	Mitchell, SD 57301	1945	Rockport, SD
Spink	Frankfort, SD 57440	1945	Bon Homme, SD
Spring Creek	Forbes, ND 58439	1964	Maxwell, SD
Spring Valley	Wessington Springs, SD 57382	1963	Platte, SD
Thunderbird	Wecota, SD 57480	1964	Glendale, SD
Tschetter	Menno, SD 57045	1942	Barrickman, Man.
White Rock	Rosholt, SD 57260	1968	Rosedale, SD
Wolf Creek	Menno, SD 57045	1942	Tschetter, SD
Glendale Farm <sup>2</sup>	Britton, SD 57430	1971	Glendale, SD
Gracevale Farm <sup>2</sup>	Bushnell, SD 57011	1972	Gracevale, SD
Hillside Farm <sup>2</sup>	Elkton, SD 57026	1972	Hillside, SD
Big Stone Farm <sup>2</sup>	Flandreau, SD 57028	1973	Big Stone, SD
Wolf Creek Farm <sup>2</sup>	Ramona, SD 57054	1974	Wolf Creek, SD
Riverside Farm <sup>2</sup>	Garden City, SD 57236	1974	Riverside, SD

<sup>1</sup> Source: Riley field survey of South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> Colony farm is distinguished from an established Hutterite colony in that the farm is an emerging daughter colony under construction and development of acreage purchased by the mother colony. The mother colony has not officially divided its population. Date is of first land purchase.

<sup>5</sup>Hostetler, pp 123-124.

<sup>6</sup>The process of colony division is based on the size of the colony's population. Hutterites do not believe in birth control and follow the admonition, "Be ye fruitful and multiply." To maintain the colony as an effective and viable organizational unit, a daughter colony is established at a new location when the original (mother) colony reaches a population from 125 to 150. Approximately half of the original population moves to the new location. The other half stays at the old colony site. It is through this process of colony division that daughter, granddaughter and great granddaughter colonies have developed from the three founding colonies.

Act which allowed the colonies to incorporate and granted them the same tax benefits received by cooperatives. Under these conditions, some of the colonies began returning from Canada.

Contrary to common conception, only seven of the present South

Dakota colonies migrated back from Canada—all of them are of the Schmiedeleut branch.<sup>8</sup>

New Elm Springs, a granddaughter of Bon Homme, was the

<sup>8</sup>Information for this section based on interviews in field survey 1957. See Riley, "Communal Farmers/The Hutterite Brethren."

first to arrive in 1936 and settled at the location of Old Elm Springs colony near Ethan (Table 1 and Map 1). Another granddaughter (Jamesville) returned from Canada in 1937 to its present site near Utica. Tschetter, founded in 1941, is a great-granddaughter of Bon Homme which



Map 1. South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1974.

Data from Riley survey, 1974.

reoccupied an old colony site north of Olivet. Three other granddaughters, (Millerdale, Glendale, and Pearl Creek) came from Canada in 1949. The last colony to come from Canada (Blumengard) moved from Manitoba in 1952 and settled near Wecota.

## Recent Growth and Expansion

All of the Hutterite colonies in South Dakota at the present time are *Schmiedeleut* and have come into existence in one of the following ways: 1) daughter colonies of Bon Homme colony established in South Dakota since 1934; 2) daughter, granddaughter, or great granddaughter colonies of Bon Homme that returned from Canada in the 1936-1952 period; and 3) daughter and granddaughter colonies resulting from the division in South Dakota of the colonies in categories 1 and 2.<sup>9</sup>

In 1942 at the beginning of World War II there were five Hutterite colonies in South Dakota: Bon Homme and her daughter Rockport, and the three colonies (New Elm Springs, Jamesville, and Tschetter) that had returned from Canada.

During 1944 Jamesville established a daughter (Huron colony) on an old colony site north of the city of Huron (Table 1 and Map 1).

In 1945 two new colonies were established. Spink, a new branch of Bon Homme, was established about 10 miles south of Frankfort, and Rosedale was set up near Rockport colony from which it came.

New Elm Springs founded a daughter colony (Maxwell) near Scotland in 1947; Gracevale, a daughter of Tschetter, was established near Winfred in 1948.

Five colonies began in 1949.<sup>10</sup> Bon Homme started the Platte colony near Academy; Rockport began Riverside north of Huron; and three granddaughters of Bon Homme (Glendale, Millerdale, and Pearl Creek) came from Canada and set-

tled near Frankfort, Miller, and Iroquois, respectively. Blumengard, a great granddaughter of Bon Homme, came from Canada the following year. In 1955, Clark colony, a daughter of Jamesville, was established near Raymond. Big Stone colony, a daughter of New Elm Springs, was started near Graceville, Minnesota, in 1958. During 1959 Spink founded a daughter colony (Plainview) near Ipswich.

In 1961, Hillside was established near its mother colony, Huron. Spring Valley, a daughter of Platte colony, and Clover Leaf, a daughter of Gracevale, were established in 1963 near Wessington Springs and Carthage respectively.

Three colonies were established in 1964: Tschetter started Wolf Creek near Menno; Maxwell started Spring Creek in South Dakota near Forbes, North Dakota; and Glendale began Thunderbird colony near Norbeck. Long Lake, near Wetonka, was established by Pearl Creek in 1966. Rosedale branched in 1968 and started the White Rock colony near Rosholt. Also in 1968, the Poinsett colony was established north of Estelline.

## New Colonies since 1969

During the last five years (1969-1974) covered by the present study, seven new colonies were established. In addition, land was

purchased and construction begun on six new colony farms.<sup>11</sup>

The first two colonies of this period were constructed on sites in North Dakota. Blumengard established the Maple River colony near Fullerton, North Dakota, in 1969; in the following year Rockport built Fairview colony on land near La Moure, North Dakota.

In 1970 construction was started on Greenwood, a daughter colony for Jamesville, on farmland purchased near Delmont.

Plainview, a daughter of Spink and a granddaughter of Bon Homme, divided in 1971 and established its new daughter colony (Deerfield) 15 miles north and east of Ipswich.

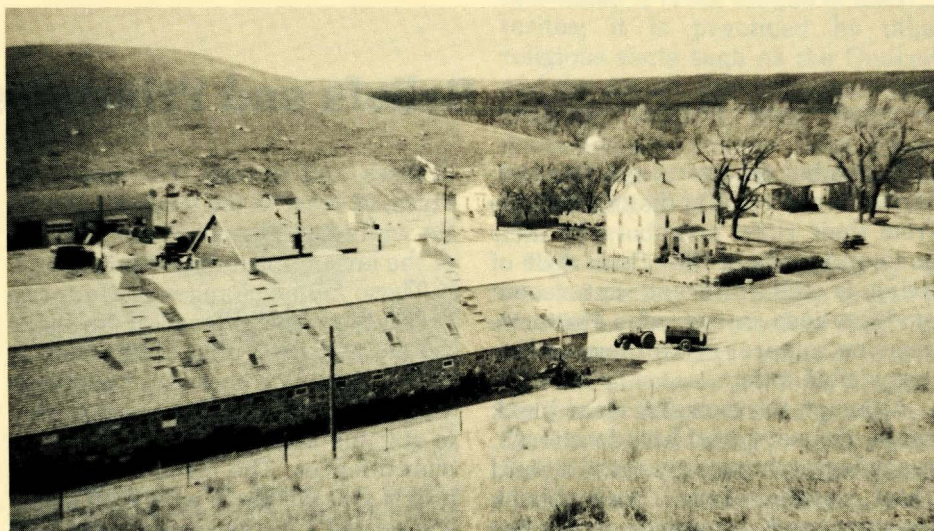
In 1972 Bon Homme colony established another daughter, this time near Platte, and named it Cedar Grove.

The last two colonies covered in this report were established in 1974. Pembroke, located about 5 miles south of Ipswich, is a daughter of Tschetter colony. Fordham, a daughter of Huron, is located about 12 miles north of Carpenter.

## New Colony Farms

According to Hutterite beliefs and practices, colonies reach a point in population size and economic development which dictates the

<sup>11</sup>Information collected during 1974 field survey.



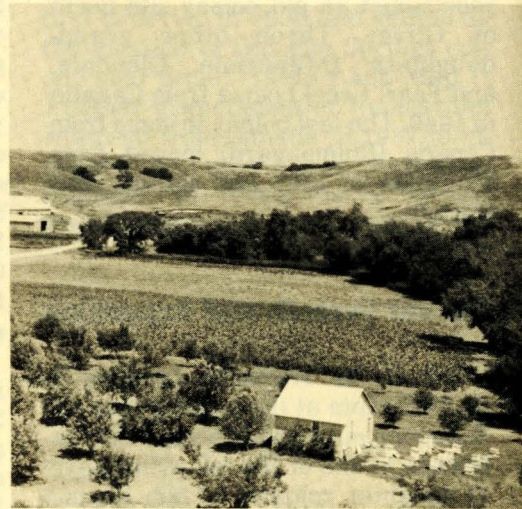
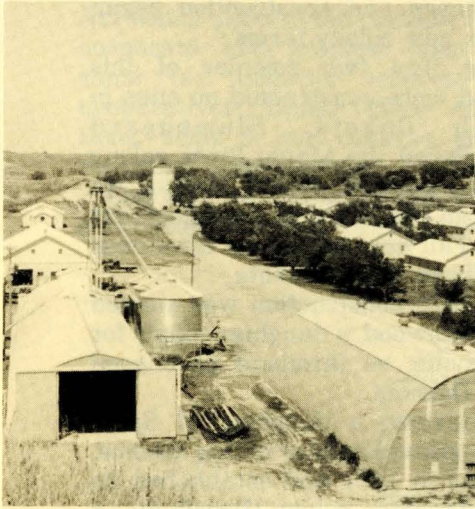
Resentment against the Hutterites during WWI set the stage for a migration to Canada. The Tschetter colony resettled the old Kutter

colony site 20 miles west of Freeman when it returned to South Dakota in 1941. This is a 1957 photo.

<sup>9</sup> Information in this section based on interviews conducted during field survey in 1964. See Riley and James R. Stewart. *The Hutterites: South Dakota's communal farmers.*

<sup>10</sup>Information obtained in interviews and correspondence during field survey in 1968. See Riley and Darryll Johnson. *South Dakota Hutterite colonies 1874-1969.*





Set of photos of Wolf Creek colony in 1974 shows the layout of a colony except for field crops, pastures, and livestock. To the left are grain storage and feed mill, shop units, and

farther back, the schoolhouse. In the center are dwelling units and the communal dining hall; behind are the dairy and poultry units. Orchard and bees are at right. Across Wolf

Creek are hog units and other livestock quarters.

necessity for colony division. Certain steps accompany this process.

Assuming the colony's financial affairs are in good order, the first step toward division is the purchase of farmland for a new colony site. After the land has been purchased, the next step is to send work crews out to begin the construction of living quarters, a dining hall, and all of the farm buildings needed for the various agricultural enterprises of the colony.

Later, after these steps have been completed and the colony is ready for occupancy, there is a formal division of the population of the founding

colony. Approximately half of the population goes to the new colony and half stays at the old colony. When the colony's population has been divided and the move has taken place, the colony "farm" ceases to be a farm and becomes an established colony.

This, in very general terms, is how colony division has traditionally proceeded until recent years, and the whole process is very crucial to Hutterite colony survival. This pattern, however, appears to be changing.

In 1971 Glendale colony purchased 3100 acres for a colony farm near Britton. Gracevale and Hillside col-

onies purchased land for colony farms in 1972, Gracevale buying 2100 acres near Bushnell, and Hillside approximately 1500 acres near Elkton. Big Stone colony in Minnesota decided to set up her daughter colony back in South Dakota and consequently purchased about 500 acres for the Pleasant Valley farm near Flandreau in 1973. New Wolf Creek colony set up her colony farm with a purchase of land (about 1500 acres) near Oldham in 1974. During that same year Riverside colony bought 1000 acres of land near Garden City for the site of their future colony.

## Beliefs and Principles

A number of years ago the Hutterites were readily distinguishable from their rural neighbors by their garb and mode of life. Their style of living is still different; but recent modifications in everyday Hutterite wearing apparel make these people less visible today.

Although the men still wear black coats, trousers, and hats to church, everyday garb may consist of a plaid shirt, suspenders, and black trousers, and a summer straw hat with closely cropped beard for married men. The women's apparel has given way to brighter colored

dresses and aprons. For some colonies, at least in the summer, the little white cap may be worn in place of the larger polka-dotted headscarf.

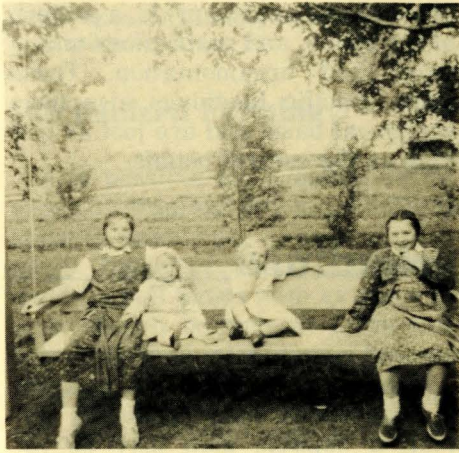
These minor changes in Hutterite dress have not altered their basic beliefs and principles. The practice of communal ownership of property and the form of colony organization is still the same, in spite of modern conveniences. The communal dining hall is still the place where all meals are served. Church services are held in the dining hall, school building, or in a separate church building, just as in the past.

### The Hutterites' World View

Sociologist Dr. John Hostetler's recent book *Hutterite Society* includes a chapter interpreting the *Weltanschauung* or "world view" of the Hutterite Brethren.<sup>12</sup> He has made an extensive study of Hutterite life, particularly in the areas of education and socialization of the children.

Hostetler contends that it is the belief system of the Hutterites that

<sup>12</sup>Hostetler, pp 140-151.



A quiet afternoon lured these little girls to a swing at the Millerdale colony. The colony was constructed in 1949 and is located 15 miles southwest of Miller.

undergirds the whole of Hutterite society. The total system rests on the belief that absolute authority resides in a single omnipotent God who is spiritual, unchanging, and eternal. He created the universe and places everything in a divine order and proper hierarchy.

This spiritual realm stands in marked contrast to the *Weltgeist* or "world spirit" consisting of the transitory and temporal aspects of the material world.

Man was made to worship God the creator, not the things created by God (the material world). The orientation of the Hutterites, then, is toward life after death rather than the pleasures of this earthly life.

Their belief system contains not only a "world view," but also guidelines for carrying out those beliefs in practical life situations. Their belief system provides the **goal** for the group, and the communal form of organization (the colony) becomes the **means** or instrument for achieving those ends.

## Central Beliefs

Dr. Lee Deets, in his study of Hutterite communities in the 1930's, found that all sanctioned activity within the community is ordered around several central beliefs.<sup>13</sup>

According to their beliefs, the Hutterites' way of life is God-sanctioned

and God-commanded. Hutterite relation to the Deity is governed by the belief that God is the Creator, the supreme, all-powerful being to whom all should give obedience. The Hutterites' ways are sanctioned by this infinitely wise Deity who must be obeyed even to martyrdom. Their beliefs are revealed through a literal interpretation of the scriptures and are regarded as direct expressions of the will of God.

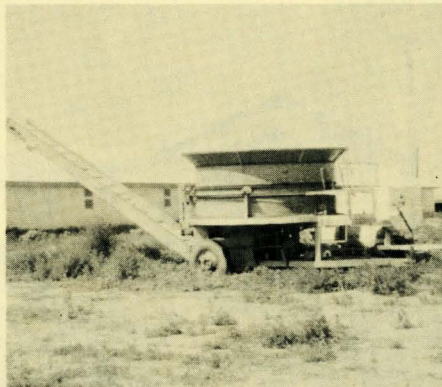
### The principle of communal living.

To the Hutterites, ownership of personal property makes living the good Christian life impossible. Therefore, except for a few personal items, all things in the colonies are owned by the community. Within reasonable limits there is complete equality and everyone is cared for.

The rationale behind the principle of communal living is revealed in a statement from their petition to President Woodrow Wilson in 1918:

The fundamental principles of our faith, as concerns practical life, are community of goods and non-resistance. Our community life is founded on the principle, 'What is mine is thine,' or in other words, on brotherly love and humble Christian service, according to Acts 2:44 and 45: 'And all that believed were together, and had all things in common; and sold their possessions and goods and parted them to all men, as every man has need.'

The importance the Hutterites attach to the principle of communal



This homemade "hay buster" for grinding large hay bales was constructed in 1973 at the Blumengard colony. Blumengard was the last colony to come from Canada to South Dakota in 1950 and is located 10 miles north of Faulkton.



The broom factory at Big Stone colony has been active since the 1950's. Big Stone is the only colony in Minnesota. (Photo courtesy Fargo-Moorhead Sunday Forum)

living is indicated by another statement from the same petition:

Our community life is based on God's word and we could not serve God according to the dictates of our conscience if we were not permitted to live together in our communities. Our members would by the help of God, suffer what He may permit, rather than consent to leave the community life.<sup>14</sup>

**Non-resistance.** The Hutterite interpretation of Christianity is that Christians are not to serve in war or to take revenge. The principle of non-violence is not unique to the Hutterites; it is practiced by other religious sects such as the Quakers and the Amish. Biblical admonitions cited to support their belief of nonresistance include Luke 2:8-20; Isaiah 2:1-4; Micah 4:1-4; and Romans 12:14-21.

**Isolation and nonconformity to secular society.** Hutterites desire to remain as far as possible from the influences of the outside world. Worldly pleasures are to be avoided; the plain, simple life is preferred. Christians, according to their belief, should not conform to the world (Romans 12:2). Nonconformity is expected in all situations where stan-

<sup>13</sup>Lee E. Deets, *The Hutterites: A study in social cohesion*, pp 16-28.

<sup>14</sup>Deets, p 21. See also Peter Hofer, *The Hutterian Brethren and their beliefs*.

dards of the world conflict with their interpretation of biblical standards.

**Other related beliefs.** The preceding enumerated beliefs of the

Hutterites should not be considered inclusive. Many other doctrines stemming from these central beliefs help cement their religious and social structure. Among these are

admonitions against pride, a pattern of discipline, and restrictions on apparel and ornamentation. These more specific teachings also have scriptural basis and are just as binding as the central beliefs.

## Hutterite Principles Applied to Agriculture

Three principles derived from the Hutterites' religious beliefs serve as general rules for everyday life.

First, Hutterites attach importance to the principle of "self-sufficiency." Each colony attempts to be as independent and self-sustaining as possible by producing most of the goods and services it uses.

For the Hutterites, the emphasis on self-sufficiency has always had more than an economic motivation. It keeps down contacts with the outside world. It also reflects the religious emphasis on the principle of austere simplicity. Diversification of colony enterprise is one result of application of this principle.

Another principle, "simplicity of living," further contributes to self-sufficiency by limiting the needs and demands of the Hutterites. It controls what can be produced in the colony.

A third principle, "efficiency," encourages them to accept changes in farming practices. The Hutterites, in contrast to the Old Order Amish, justify the use of modern agricultural technology by stating, "It's not the thing itself that's good or bad, it's the use to which it is put." It also helps explain the extensive use of labor- and cost-saving devices in crop, livestock, and poultry production.

### Colony Organization

Hutterites live in small agricultural villages (*Bruderhofs*) in the center of their landholdings. Each colony headquarters consists of a cluster of buildings. Residences, communal dining hall, church, and school are in the center. Partly surrounding this area are the maintenance shops. A short distance beyond are the granaries and the

barns and sheds for livestock and poultry. Beyond are the pastures and fields.

### Work Organization

The division of labor inherent in colony organization, through which work and productivity is departmentalized, permits the Hutterites to engage in many farming enterprises.

The older, more responsible men of the colony serve as department heads in charge of various farm enterprises such as crops, cattle, and poultry. Each department head is responsible to the colony business manager.

The colony's labor supply is divided among the various departments. Each department head may have an assistant and one or more helpers working under him, depending on the size and importance of the enterprise. Work arrangements allow for flexibility in the use of manpower, particularly in departments with high seasonal requirements for labor. Men are shifted to where the

demand is greatest.

Although election to the position of department head is usually annual, a capable man may be re-elected time and again. After years of experience in an enterprise, first as an apprentice and then by obtaining information from company salesmen, county extension agents, and reading articles in farm journals, most department heads become local "specialists" in their field.

The infusion of Hutterite tradition into work routines has been summarized very effectively:

Work routines, as with nearly everything in the colony, are well organized to assure efficiency and the maintenance of tradition. Men and women work at assigned tasks in groups, organized according to age and sex. Women, who labor almost exclusively at domestic chores, teach young girls the arts of baking and careful food preparation. Men usually develop two special seasonal skills, and they also apprentice colony boys in various crafts. Unlike other religious communal groups, Hutterites eagerly adopt modern machinery in their work, but the object of work is not affluence nor a desire for luxury—work sustains



Poinsett colony was one of the first to utilize all new ranch style houses for its dwelling units. The colony, a daughter of New Elm

Spring, was constructed in 1968 5 miles north of Estelline.

the community, making the spiritual life possible.<sup>15</sup>

## Mechanized Farming

It is possible for a colony to arrange its cropland into large fields to make extensive use of power equipment. Hutterite track and diesel tractors pull plows with as many as nine 14-inch bottoms or three subsoilers hitched in tandem.

To improve and increase production and efficiency, the Hutterites

are willing to try new developments in farm techniques and machinery. Although exceptions may be pointed out, the Hutterites are farmers who attempt to keep up-to-date in their farming practices.

The early Hutterite settlements in South Dakota recognized the need for soil conservation and reconditioning.

They presently use subsoilers, disc plows, and ground chisels to conserve both soil and moisture. Crop rotations have been practiced for many years. Although livestock production provides manure for their land, they are using more commercial fertilizers.

However, even with a high degree of mechanization, extensive crop rotation, and liberal use of fertilizers, the Hutterites feel caught in the inflationary spiral of relatively low prices and ever increasing costs. They know that their agricultural production must be fed to their livestock and poultry before they can realize significant gains.

Supported by their principles of self-sufficiency, simplicity of living, and efficiency, this inflationary spiral encourages them to concentrate on one or two "specialties" while maintaining their basic set of livestock and poultry enterprises.

"Dorothy Schwieder, "Frontier Brethren: The Hutterite Experience in the American West."

# Hutterite Colonies, Population and Agriculture

## Hutterite Colonies in North America

Although Dakota Territory was the original home in North America for all the Hutterites that left Russia in the 1874-77 period, by 1974 Hutterite colonies dotted the plains of several northern prairie states and three western provinces of Canada.

The original three Hutterite colonies of Bon Homme, Wolf Creek, and Old Elm Spring had a total population of 443 in 1880.<sup>16</sup> In less than 100 years the religious sect was

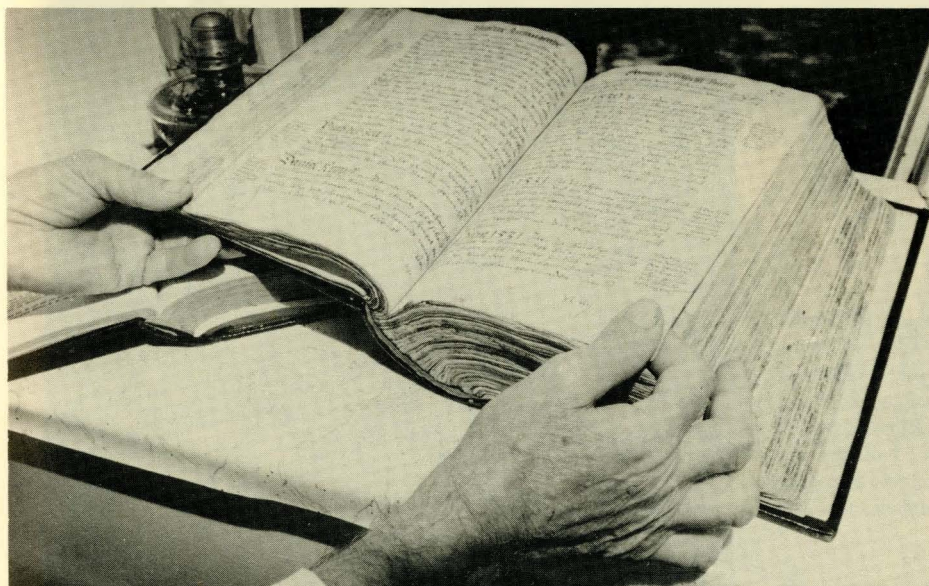
<sup>16</sup>Eaton and Mayer, pp 2-3.

flourishing, with 228 colonies in North America and a population of over 22,000 (Map 2, Table 2).<sup>17</sup>

The Hutterites have been essentially a "closed population" since their arrival in North America. Their growth has come almost entirely from the natural increase of their population—the excess of births over deaths. The Hutterite cultural norms of restricting the use of birth control and the practice of colony division have created a modern demographic phenomenon.

### Location of Colonies

In 1974 nearly three fourths of all Hutterite colonies were located in Canada.<sup>18</sup> The first colonies had moved there from South Dakota and Montana in 1918, and by 1974 there were 167 colonies in Canada (Map 2, Table 2). The largest number (86) was in the province of Alberta. Manitoba had 53 and Saskatchewan

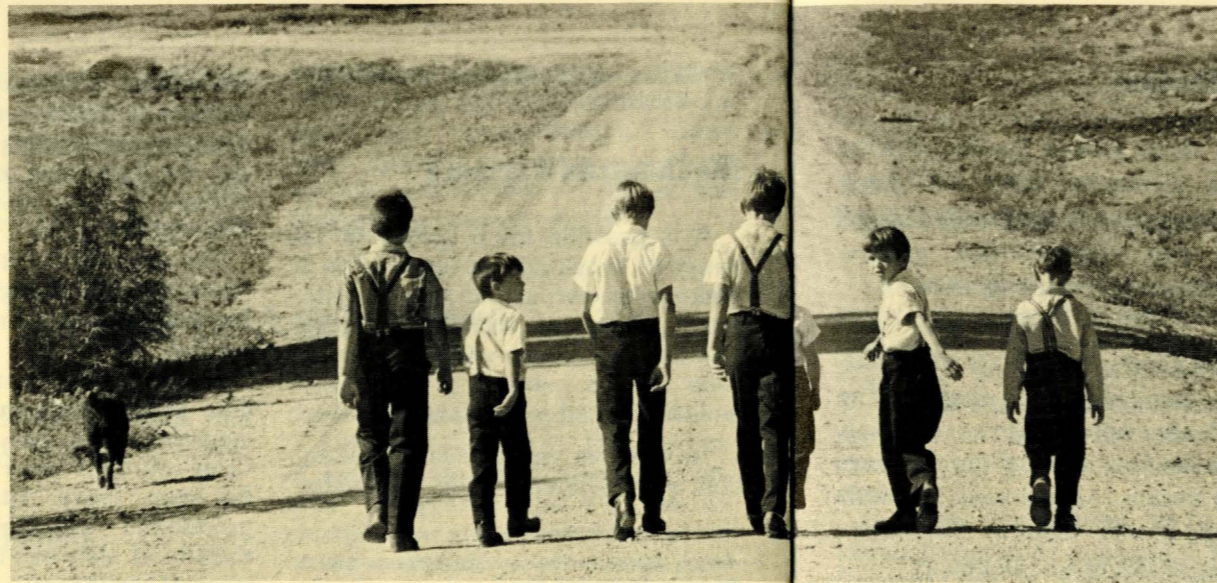


It is fitting that Bon Homme, the oldest Hutterite colony in America, is the home of the original copy of *Die älteste Chronik der Hutterischen Brüder*. This is the precious "great history book" which contains handwritten ac-

counts of all their beliefs, experiences, persecutions, and their martyrs since the beginning of the faith in 1528. It is brought up to date every year. (Photo courtesy Jerry Welch, *Rochester Post-Bulletin*)

<sup>17</sup>Hostetler, p 295. Hostetler's figure is adjusted on the basis of the South Dakota survey (see Table 2 footnote).

<sup>18</sup>An estimate of the distribution of Hutterite population in 1974 can be obtained by examining the distribution of Hutterite colonies inasmuch as each colony had, on the average, approximately 100 persons.



**Bon Homme, eldest of them all**

Their religion forbids Hutterites to bear arms. When an 1871 edict nullified their exemption from military service, the Hutterites emigrated from the Ukraine in Russia, settling in Dakota Territory. Bon Homme, 18 miles west of Yankton, was the first colony established in North America. Because they again refused to participate in any war effort, sentiments against the Hutterites mounted during and after WWI. All colonies migrated to Canada, with the single exception of Bon Homme. All present colonies in South Dakota are descendants of this one colony.

The "community" is paramount to the Hutterite faith. Boys do not go for Sunday walks alone; they go in groups. Women work and sing in the potato field (on the shores of Lewis and Clark Lake) together. "Department heads" and apprentices work at tasks together.

Community of goods and nonviolence are basic principles of the Hutterite faith; they are practiced today with the same commitment as when Bon Homme was established in 1874. (Photos courtesy Jerry Welch, Rochester Post-Bulletin)



One of the bywords into which Hutterites have translated their faith is "efficiency." These tractors are common; many colonies have FWD Steigers with dual wheels.

had the smallest number with 28.

In the United States, South Dakota ranked first in number of colonies with 32; Montana, after receiving her first colony from South Dakota in 1912, ranked a distant second with 23 colonies.

Two other plains states were settled by the Hutterites after 1950. The first North Dakota colony came

from Manitoba in 1950, followed by two more from South Dakota in 1970. Minnesota's one colony came from South Dakota in 1958. Washington received its first colony from Canada in 1960; its second colony is a daughter of the first one.

**Table 2. Total Hutterite colonies in North America, 1974\***

Canada	Number	United States	Number
Alberta	86	Minnesota	1
Manitoba	53	Montana	23
Saskatchewan	28	North Dakota	3
		South Dakota	32
		Washington	2
Total	167	Total	
Canada		United States	61

North America	
Group	Number
Schmiedeleut	89
Dariusleut	78
Lehrerleut	61
Total North America	228

\*South Dakota data from Riley survey and excludes six colony farms. Remainder of data from John Hostetler, *The Hutterites*, 1974, Appendix 15, with minor adjustments.

## Distribution

The three groups (*Leuts*) of Hutterites stemming from the three founding colonies in South Dakota were not distributed evenly throughout the region in 1974.

The largest group was the *Schmiedeleut* who are all related to the mother colony Bon Homme. The 89 colonies were located exclusively in the eastern area of the northern plains region. All colonies in South Dakota, North Dakota, Minnesota and Manitoba are *Schiedeleut*.

The 78 colonies of the *Dariusleut* and the 61 of the *Lehrerleut* were located in Saskatchewan, Alberta, Montana, and Washington. The majority of *Lehrerleut* colonies was in Montana and Saskatchewan, while the *Dariusleut* majority was in Alberta.



Map 2. Hutterite colonies in North America, 1977. (Map courtesy Dorothy Schwieder, Iowa State University)

# South Dakota Colonies

## Population and Acreage

The findings that follow are based on a field survey of all South Dakota Hutterite colonies in 1974. Wherever possible, they are compared to a similar 1964 survey. This provides a basis for observing changes in population, colonies, and agriculture.

In 1974, there were 3,210 Hutterites living in 32 colonies in South Dakota (Table 3). The colonies ranged in population from the smallest with 56 people to the largest with 148. The average was slightly over 100 persons.

The total South Dakota Hutterite population was comprised of 476 families; the average number of families per colony was 15. The average size of the Hutterite family was slightly under seven persons in 1974.

During the period 1964 to 1974, both the number of colonies and the population of Hutterites in South Dakota increased by about one third. This was due primarily to natural increase; no colonies moved into South Dakota from out of state during the period.

**Table 3. Population characteristics of South Dakota Hutterite colonies 1964-1974.<sup>1</sup>**

Population characteristics	1964	1974
Total population	2443	3210
Total colonies	24	32
Average number persons per colony	101.8	100.3
Total number families	341	476
Average number families per colony	14.2	14.9
Average number persons	7.2	6.7
<b>Farmland</b>	<b>1964</b>	<b>1974</b>
Acres operated	122,015	170,344
Acres per colony	5,084	5,323
Acres per family	357.8	357.9
Acres per person	49.9	53.1

<sup>1</sup> Data based on 1974 Riley survey of 32 South Dakota colonies.

acres operated. However, when the acreage is averaged out per colony, there is little change in land operated per colony.

**Average colony.** Data from the 1974 survey show that the "average" South Dakota colony operated 5,323 acres of farmland (4,928 owned and 395 leased, Table 4). Of this acreage, 3,298 acres were in cropland; the remaining 2,025 acres in pasture and other uses.

The colony farmland supported, on the average, a population of 100 people—15 families with an average of slightly less than seven persons per family.

**Table 4. Farmland operated by South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1964 and 1974.<sup>1</sup>**

Farmland	1964	1974	Change 1964-1974
Operated	122,015	170,344	48,329
Owned	113,080	157,699	46,619
Rented	8,935	12,645	3,710
% owned	92.2	92.6	
Cropland	64,173	105,533	41,360
Pasture	57,402	64,811	7,409
% cropland	52.6	62.0	10.6
Acres per colony	5,065	5,323	258
Acres per family	357.8	357.9	0.1
Acres per person	49.9	53.1	3.2

<sup>1</sup> Data based on 1974 Riley survey on 32 South Dakota colonies and 1964 survey of 24 colonies.

Because Hutterite colony land is owned and operated by the members working cooperatively, it is not possible to determine acreage operated by separate families or individuals. However, statistical averages indicate that each family operated the equivalent of 359 acres of which 223 acres were cropland. When Hutterite farmland was averaged out on a per person basis it amounted to about 53 acres per person in 1974. Average acreage per colony did not change much from 1964 to 1974, up 239 acres or 5% for the 10 years (Table 4). Average acres per family showed no change,

and the average acres per person was up 6% (3 acres).

## Size Comparison with Non-Hutterite Farms

A frequently asked question is, "How do Hutterite farms compare with the average farm size in South Dakota?" There are two major problems that make this type of comparison difficult.

First, there is no individual or family ownership or operation of farmland among Hutterites.

Second, Hutterite colonies are spread throughout the land area of East River, South Dakota, which has a considerable variation in soil and climatic conditions. Consequently, an average size farm in the southeastern part of the state is different from one in the northeast or north central area.

To reduce these two problems, a comparison is made between the average size (number of acres) of South Dakota farms with the average number of acres operated by a Hutterite family. It is realized that these two units are not strictly comparable, but it does give us an approximation. The average size of farm is determined for each geographical district of the state used by the Cooperative Agriculture and Livestock Reporting Service in 1974.

In each district, the average size farm is larger than the average number of acres per Hutterite family (Table 5).

The greatest difference occurs in the North Central District (Aberdeen-Ipswich-Faulkton area); the smallest difference is in the Southeast District (Yankton, Union, and Lincoln counties area). The findings from this comparison are only approximate, because they do not provide as precise a measure of the crucial variables as desired.

Major changes since the 1964 survey include an increase in total number of colonies from 24 to 32 and an accompanying increase in total

# Major Crop and Livestock Enterprises in 1974

## Major Crops

All of the Hutterite colonies operate from an agricultural base, and their crop production is utilized chiefly as feed for their livestock and poultry operations. Even so, it is not always sufficient to meet their need, and additional feed must be purchased from the outside.

In 1974, corn continued to be the important grain crop in terms of acreage planted. All colonies planted corn—over 31,000 acres that year (Table 6). Barley moved up significantly after 1964 and ranked second in acreage (26 colonies planting over 19,000 acres).

Major shifts in agriculture from 1964 to 1974 can be assessed by referring to the rankings given by the colony farm managers to agricultural production (Table 7).

It is apparent that Hutterite managers have chosen corn as a major enterprise, while the emphasis in small grains has shifted from wheat and oats to barley. The Hutterites have significantly reduced the production of sorghum, but alfalfa continues to be important.

**Table 6. Number of acres in crops for South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1974.**

Crop	Total acres in crop	Number of colonies with crop	Average acres per colony with crop
Corn	31,790	32	993
Barley	19,340	26	744
Oats	12,480	30	416
Alfalfa	10,710	29	369
Wheat	7,410	16	463
Sorghum	6,920	16	433
Rye	760	6	126
Soybean	570	3	190
Garden	260	32	8
Orchard	82	18	5
Broom corn	53	5	11
Idle acres and other	15,162		

\* Data from Riley survey, 1974.

## Livestock and Poultry Enterprises

Although much of Hutterite farming activity is involved in crop production, the main thrust of their

**Table 5. Comparison of average size of all farms with average number of acres per Hutterite family by district, 1974.\***

District	Average size of farm (acres)	Average acres Hutterite family	No. of colonies in district	Families	Hutterite Total acres
Southeast	370	351	8	103	36,174
East central	420	257	5	93	23,858
Central	1125	373	5	74	26,360
Northeast	535	291	2	31	9,020
North central	1025	428	12	175	74,932
Total state	1046	358	32	476	170,344

\* a. Average size of farm by district in 1974 from South Dakota Crop and Livestock Reporting Service, Annual Report 1975, p 92.

b. Data on South Dakota Hutterite colonies (32 colonies and 5 farms) acreage operated in 1974 from Hutterite colony survey.

c. Hutterite farm acreage included in Average Size Farm column. The five districts in the table represent counties grouped on the basis of geographical subdivisions of East River, South Dakota.

d. State total is based on all districts in the state.

agricultural economy is in the processing of grain and forage crops for livestock and poultry.

Traditionally, Hutterite farming practices have been characterized by diversification both in crop and livestock enterprises. Although this is still true, it has become increasingly common for a colony to emphasize one or another livestock or poultry enterprise over other types. For example, turkey and/or hog production have become predominant in recent years (Table 8).

### Proportion of state's production.

There are some instances, particularly poultry, where Hutterite colony production constitutes a significant proportion of South Dakota's output. In the case of ducks and geese, it is estimated the colonies produced about half of the state's total, with turkeys about a

**Table 8. Livestock and poultry, numbers on and/or produced by Hutterite colonies by type, 1974.**

Type	Total units for colonies (32)	Number of colonies with units	Average units per colony
Beef	7,570	30	252
Hogs	72,630	32	2,270
Sheep	6,770	12	565
Dairy			
Milked	2,440	32	76
Turkeys	292,000	11	26,545
Chickens	274,900	31	8,868
Geese	84,360	24	3,515
Ducks	26,250	28	938
Bee Hives	530	26	20

third and chickens (layers) nearly a tenth.<sup>19</sup>

Even though livestock and poultry production is geared for the market, a portion of their total production

<sup>19</sup>For South Dakota's total production see: South Dakota agriculture, 1974.

**Table 7. Top three crops grown ranked on the basis of colony farm manager estimates, 1964 and 1974.<sup>1</sup>**

Enterprise	Percent of Colonies Ranked Enterprise As:						Ranks in top 3	
	1st Priority		2nd Priority		3rd Priority		1964	1974
	1964	1974	1964	1974	1964	1974	(24)	(32)
Number of Colonies	(24)	(32)	(24)	(32)	(24)	(32)	(24)	(32)
Corn	46%	63%	17%	25%	13%	6%	76%	94%
Sorghum	25%	3%	29%	16%	13%	9%	67%	28%
Oats	13%	0%	25%	16%	33%	41%	71%	57%
Wheat	13%	0%	25%	9%	4%	9%	42%	18%
Alfalfa	4%	0%	0%	3%	21%	25%	25%	28%
Barley	0%	34%	4%	28%	13%	6%	17%	68%
Flax	0%	0%	0%	0%	4%	0%	4%	0%
Soybean	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	3%	0%	6%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		

<sup>1</sup> Data from 1964 and 1974 Riley surveys. Percents rounded and do not necessarily total 100%.



goes for colony consumption. Colony food requirements are most often met in the form of pork, ducks, geese, chickens, milk, and eggs made available to the communal kitchen from various colony departments. Whether it is because of cost or preference, beef is used only occasionally. Mutton and lamb for the table is on the decline except for chislic, which is a favored delicacy.



For some colonies turkeys have been the major income enterprise, with a few colonies marketing around 100,000 birds.

**Top income producing enterprises.** Colony business managers were asked to rank their top three livestock and poultry enterprises on the basis of source of colony income. Over a third of the managers (38%) chose cattle first in 1964 (Table 9). By 1974 hog production was rated highest by 69% of the managers, up from 33% in 1964. Many managers in 1974 showed strong interest in greater involvement in pork production, with the objective of producing about 4,000 or more hogs a year for market in the very near future.



All South Dakota colonies together had about 10,000 acres of alfalfa in 1974. Almost all

Poinsett men and boys turn out to help with the haying.

In 1964, first priority was cattle, hogs, and turkeys in that order, with 96% of the colonies selecting one of the three; in 1974, 94% of the managers ranked hogs, turkeys and dairy, respectively.

In their ranking of the total top three enterprises, colony managers

included the following for both 1964 and 1974: first was hogs, second cattle, and turkeys and dairy tied for third. Major shifts involve increased emphasis on milk production, particularly bulk milk, either grade A or B. A decrease in the emphasis on sheep is apparent.

**Table 9. Top three livestock and poultry enterprises ranked by colonies as major source of income, 1964 and 1974.<sup>1</sup>**

Enterprise	Percent of Colonies Ranking Enterprise As:						In top 3	
	1st Priority		2nd Priority		3rd Priority		1964	1974
	1964	1974	1964	1974	1964	1974	1964	1974
Number of colonies	(24)	(32)	(24)	(32)	(24)	(32)	(24)	(32)
Cattle	38%	3%	29%	39%	21%	25%	88%	67%
Hogs	33%	69%	38%	16%	21%	6%	92%	91%
Turkeys	25%	19%	8%	9%	0%	3%	33%	31%
Sheep	4%	0%	4%	0%	25%	16%	33%	16%
Dairy	0%	6%	8%	31%	22%	25%	30%	65%
Chickens	0%	3%	13%	3%	12%	16%	25%	22%
Geese	0%	0%	0%	3%	0%	6%	0%	9%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%		

<sup>1</sup> Data from Riley survey, 1964 and 1974. Percents rounded and do not necessarily total 100%.

## South Dakota vs. Manitoba Hutterite Colonies

How unique are South Dakota's Hutterite colonies? Do colonies located in different geographical and political settings have different

social and economic structures?

Recently data have become available that permits a comparison of general characteristics between

colonies in South Dakota and the province of Manitoba, Canada.<sup>20</sup> Col-

<sup>20</sup>John Ryan, *The agricultural economy of Manitoba Hutterite colonies, 1977.*

onies in both locations are of the *Schmiedeleut* branch, sharing all of the traditions of the subculture of the same *Leut*. Manitoba colony data is comparable to our data for South Dakota colonies for 1968 and 1974.

### Population and Colony Characteristics

Manitoba had more colonies, more families, and a larger Hutterite population for both 1968 and 1974-75 than South Dakota (Table 10); for that 6-year period, Manitoba had a slightly higher rate of population increase (16% vs. 19%). Other population and colony characteristics were quite similar.

### Colony Agriculture

Unfortunately, there are no agricultural data for the two areas for both periods. However, some

**Table 10. A comparison of population characteristics of South Dakota and Manitoba Hutterite colonies, 1968, 1974-75.<sup>1</sup>**

Population	South Dakota		Manitoba	
	1968	1974	1968	1975
Number of colonies	27	32	43	60
Population	2772	3210	4362	5191
Number of families	390	476	635	850
Average population per colony	103	102	101	87
Average number families per colony	14.4	14.9	14.8	14.2
Average number persons per family	7.1	6.7	6.9	6.1

<sup>1</sup> John Ryan. *The agricultural economy of the Manitoba Hutterite colonies*, pp 58-59 and 258-275. Riley, and Darryll Johnson. *South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1874-1969*, pp 18-22. 1974 data from Riley colony survey, 1974.

comparisons are instructive.

In 1968 Manitoba colonies had more families and a larger population than South Dakota (Table 11). Manitoba colonies also operated a larger acreage of farmland. They owned more of their land (96% vs. 88%). They had a considerable larger portion of cropland (74% vs. 56%).

However, when we control for difference in size by using averages, we find that South Dakota colonies were 40% larger in acreage than Manitoba colonies. Likewise, the average number of acres per family was 42% smaller in Manitoba and acreage per person was 37% smaller than in South Dakota.

### Overall Comparison

The comparison of Manitoba with South Dakota Hutterite colonies reveals some basic differences, and

**Table 11. A comparison of agricultural enterprises in South Dakota and Manitoba Hutterite colonies, 1968.<sup>1</sup>**

Agriculture	South Dakota (1968)	Manitoba (1968)
Total number colonies	27	43
Total population	2,772	4,362
Total acres operated	145,461	165,887
% Land rental	12%	4%
% Land in cropland	56%	74%
Average acres per colony	5,387	3,858
Average acres per family	378	261
Average acres per person	52	38

<sup>1</sup> John Ryan. *The agricultural economy of the Manitoba Hutterite colonies*, pp 58-59 and 258-275. Marvin Riley and Darryll Johnson. *South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1874-1969*, pp 18-22.

overall, some very striking similarities.

Acreage per colony is considerably less in Manitoba, but the land supports and maintains essentially the same number of families and population per colony as South Dakota.

Even though all these colonies are organized according to the traditional pattern of Hutterite principles and beliefs, some procedural differences may exist between these groups.

For example, Manitoba colonies appear to be dividing in a shorter period of time than South Dakota colonies. Whether the smaller amount of acreage for Manitoba colonies is due to differences in agricultural practices and/or differences in the lifestyles of the two groups remains a topic for further study.

## Update: New Colonies and Farms, 1974-1979

A number of significant changes have occurred since the field survey of South Dakota Hutterite colonies was made in 1974. A complete account of these changes cannot be documented without a new survey. However, two important changes can be noted at this time from information furnished by the colonies.

### Change in Number of Colonies and Farms

The first change is in the total number of South Dakota colonies. In 1974 there were 32 colonies in the state; six had purchased farmland (colony farms) which they were in

the process of developing for new daughter colonies. By the spring of 1979, five of these farms had been established as independent colonies through the division process. The sixth, Hillside colony farm, had an official division in the summer of 1979 and named their Elkton colony Brookdale. Table 12 shows the

**Table 12. South Dakota Hutterite colony farms and new colonies, 1974-1979.<sup>1</sup>**

Farm	Mother colony	Location	First land purchased	Original acreage purchased	Established as colony
Glendale †(Sunset colony)	Glendale	Britton, S D	1971	2940	1978
Gracevale †(Roland colony)	Gracevale	Bushnell, S D	1972	1340	1978
Hillside †(Brookdale colony, see text)	Hillside	Elkton, S D	1972	1460	1979
Big Stone †(Plesant Valley colony)	Big Stone	Flandreau, S D	1973	480	1977
Wolf Creek †(Spring Lake colony)	Wolf Creek	Ramona, S D	1974	1513	1978
Riverside †(Hillcrest colony)	Riverside	Garden City, S D	1974	1000	1978
White Rock	White Rock	Moorehead, MN	1977	3000	
Spring Valley	Spring Valley	Letcher, S D	1977	1800	
Spink	Spink	Stratford, S D	1977	2700	
Spring Creek	Spring Creek	Milnor, N D	1977	3300	
Platte	Platte	Kimball, S D	1978	2800	
Maxwell	Maxwell	Wagner, S D	1978	2400	
Rosedale (Millbrook)	Rosedale	(Rosedale's Millsite)	1978	...	
Rockport	Rockport	Alexandria, S D	1979	700	

<sup>1</sup> Colony farm is distinguished from an established Hutterite colony in that the farm is an emerging daughter colony under construction and development of acreage purchases by the mother colony but the mother colony has not officially divided its population.

† Official colony name.

names of these new colonies, their location, and the approximate number of acres of land in the original purchase. By summer 1979, South Dakota had 38 established colonies within its borders.

During the period 1974 to 1979, seven more South Dakota colonies had purchased land for colony farms. Five of these are in South Dakota, one in Minnesota, and one in North Dakota. These farms are in various stages of development, ranging from only farming to construction of colony buildings.

### Change in Pattern of Colony Division

It has been observed that the mother colonies have, in recent years, taken a longer period of time to develop their colony farms from date of first purchase of land to actual colony division. The acreage at first purchase also has been smaller than in the past. The same trends have appeared in the Manitoba colonies:

At the present time it is not unusual to have new colonies being established

with smaller amounts of land and fewer enterprises together with approximately smaller populations. In time these colonies will acquire additional amounts of land and will build their enterprises to match those of other colonies. It should be noted though, that this is a new development.<sup>2</sup>

Formerly, the mother colony would purchase most, if not all, of the total acreage for a daughter colony. Shortly after purchasing the land, the mother colony would start developing a headquarters by moving in old buildings and/or new construction. Within a period of one or two years, the farm was converted into a new colony site ready for division.

The emerging pattern of colony division, in contrast to the traditional pattern, typically involves the early purchase of a smaller acreage of farmland. Usually this purchase takes place 4 to 7 years before the colony expects to divide, and the parcel of purchased land includes only about 1,000 to 2,000 acres. After purchase of the land, it may be simply cropped for a short period of time. During this time, a small work force may be assigned to the location

to farm the land and build housing units, if needed.

As time goes by, colony-type buildings will be constructed. At this stage there is no school; only workers with preschool children are selected for the work force. Either the minister or assistant minister from the mother colony is assigned to oversee the work force and minister to the workers' spiritual needs.

Within a few years, the construction of facilities for livestock or poultry enterprises takes place. Usually these are the same enterprises emphasized in the mother colony. However, at the new location there is usually more modern equipment with improved facilities.

As time for colony division approaches, more farm enterprises will be added together with the acquisition of additional farmland. When the time for colony division arrives it is anticipated that the new colony will have as full a complement of farm enterprises as planned, and sufficient farmland for major support of the colony's economy.

The above account describes what we might call the "ideal type" of colony development under the emerging new pattern for colony division. Some colony farms in their construction come fairly close to the model described above; others only approximate it.

### Reasons for Change

There are undoubtedly a number of reasons why the shift in the pattern of colony division is taking place. An outstanding factor involved is the high cost of farmland. In 1960, some of the farmland in South Dakota suitable for colony purposes could be purchased at about \$50 an acre. Today, similar farmland is selling for approximately \$425 an acre.

The average colony size in South Dakota has been about 5,000 acres. In 1960 it would have taken about \$250,000 to purchase farmland for a colony; today it would cost over \$2,000,000. This does not include the cost of buildings, machinery, equipment, and livestock, which have also increased in price.

<sup>2</sup>Ryan, p 262.

Another reason for the shift to the new pattern appears to be the problem of obtaining farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes. Hutterites like to have their fields adjacent to one another. Cropland in such large units is becoming difficult to find. Development of the new colony over a longer period of time pro-

vides a greater chance for additional acreages nearby to become available.

Whether the shift to a new pattern of colony division is functional for the colony—that is, advantages outweigh disadvantages—remains to be seen. On the surface there are distinct financial advantages to the

colony being able to purchase the farmland and to construct the new colony headquarters at a gradual pace as time and money permit. However, problems of morale of colony members engendered by the longer, more drawn out process of colony division remain to be determined.

### Reasons for Change

There are undoubtedly a number of reasons why the shift in the pattern of colony division is taking place. An outstanding factor is the high cost of farmland in South Dakota. Some of the farmland in South Dakota suitable for colony purposes could be purchased at about \$20 an acre. Today, however, farmland is selling for approximately \$45 an acre. The average colony size in South Dakota has been about 2,000 acres. In 1967 it would have taken about \$100,000 to purchase farmland for a colony that it would cost over \$225,000 to purchase today. The shift in the pattern of colony division is a result of the fact that the cost of farmland has increased in price

and that the Hutterites are unable to purchase the farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes. The shift to a new pattern of colony division is a result of the fact that the cost of farmland has increased in price and that the Hutterites are unable to purchase the farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes. The shift to a new pattern of colony division is a result of the fact that the cost of farmland has increased in price and that the Hutterites are unable to purchase the farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes.

### New Colonies and Farms

The average pattern of colony division in South Dakota is to purchase farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes. The shift to a new pattern of colony division is a result of the fact that the cost of farmland has increased in price and that the Hutterites are unable to purchase the farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes. The shift to a new pattern of colony division is a result of the fact that the cost of farmland has increased in price and that the Hutterites are unable to purchase the farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes.

### Change in Pattern of Colony Division

It has been observed that the pattern of colony division has changed in South Dakota. The shift to a new pattern of colony division is a result of the fact that the cost of farmland has increased in price and that the Hutterites are unable to purchase the farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes. The shift to a new pattern of colony division is a result of the fact that the cost of farmland has increased in price and that the Hutterites are unable to purchase the farmland in large blocks suitable for colony purposes.

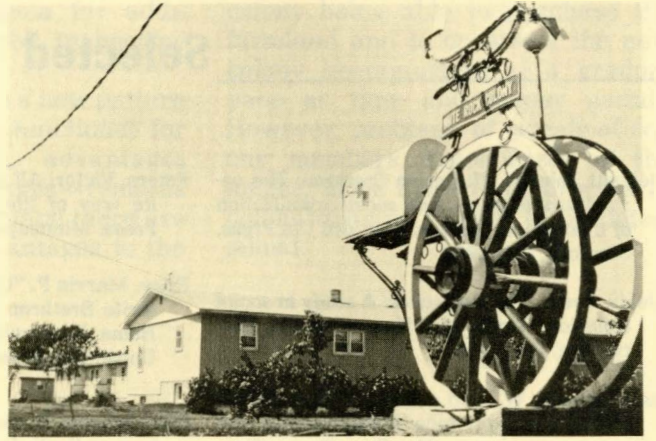
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**Four Hutterite colonies**

Mailbox marks entrance of the White Rock colony, established near Rosholt in 1968.  
*(Photo courtesy Wahpeton Daily News)*



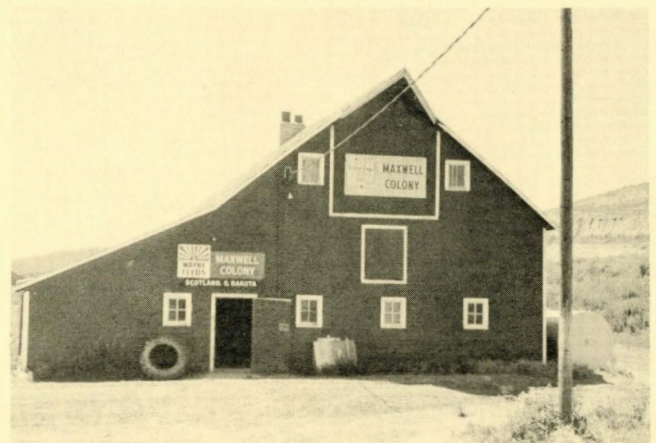
New Elm Spring colony near Ethan was established in 1939.

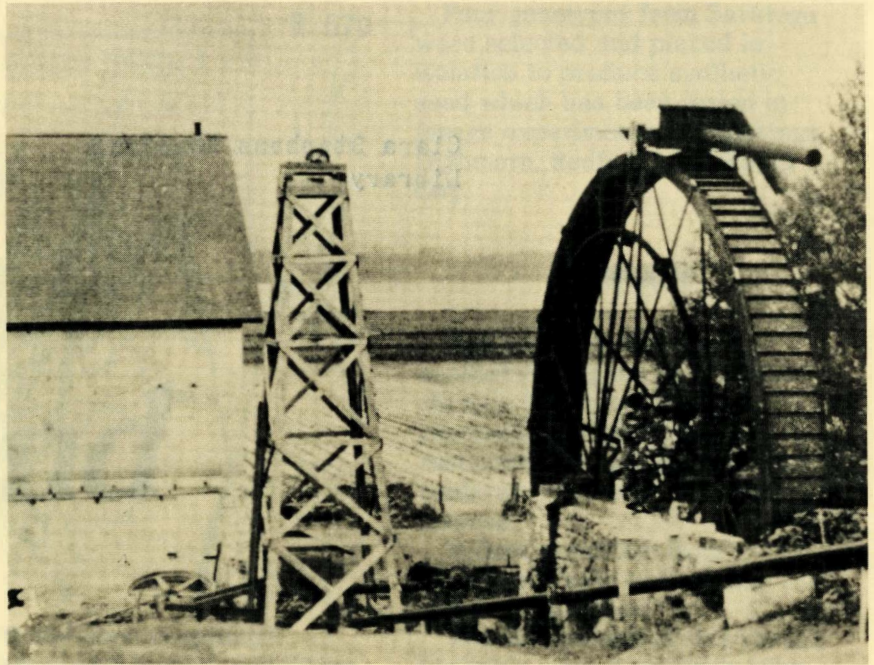


Rosedale colony near Mitchell was begun in 1945.



Maxwell colony was established near Scotland in 1947.





#### **Landmarks of their times**

Above is the old mill constructed in 1875 at the Bon Homme colony. For some time the mill was powered by a water wheel supplied by an artesian well. The photo was taken in 1912.

In contrast is the feed mill finished in 1978 by the Rosedale colony. The mill has a capacity of 150 tons of feed a day. It has 24 bins for feed components plus two bins for drying, and can produce feed supplements and formula feeds for all the colony's extensive livestock and poultry enterprises and custom work for neighboring farmers and other colonies.



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