

Transitional Period (1900-1925)

Around the turn of the century, as the Mennonites in the MSTW district began to be assimilated into the mainstream of Canadian society, strict adherence to traditions began to wane. This was reflected not only culturally, as more Mennonites began accepting municipal government and public schools, but architecturally as well. The adoption of farm mechanization was especially disruptive. The "Raine" or strip field system proved to be unsuited to mechanization and, as residents began to move out to individual farmsteads, many villages began to break up. Moreover those Mennonites who did move onto farmsteads rarely chose to construct the customary house/barn units, but instead erected separated structures of contemporary design (Figure 44).



Figure 44

Jacob Loewen farmstead, eight kilometres north of Winkler, 1906. Most of the Mennonites who moved out of the villages to individual quarter section farms constructed houses and farm buildings of contemporary design. (Manitoba Mennonite Memories, 1974: 262)

The more conservative Mennonites who remained in the villages, tended to continue constructing attached units. While the general shape and exterior appearance of the house was usually retained, a number of modifications began to be introduced. One of the most notable was the re-orientation of new homes so that they now faced the village street resulting in a "T"-shaped plan (Figure 45).

This arrangement was looked upon as being more attractive, and it improved hygiene by further separating the barn from the house through use of a small connecting link. Often this link was the rear portion of the original house which was retained when the new one was constructed (Figure 46).

These new arrangements resulted in a slightly modified floor plan in the new homes. The interior "Gang", or connecting alleyway, was no longer necessary and was eliminated. The "Somma Shtov" was often removed from the plan to enlarge the kitchen area, as was the small cooking room in the centre of the building. In a few cases dormer windows were installed in the upper storey and the space used for bedrooms. This allowed the enlargement of the "Ajck Shtov" by reducing the size of the "Tjleene Shtov" which generally became the washroom. The new "Ajck Shtov" generally became the parents' bedroom, and the "Groote Shtov" was now used exclusively as the living room (Figure 47). Similar internal changes were introduced to older houses being renovated at this time.



Figure 45

Jacob Peters residence, Village of Reinland. After the turn of the century many Mennonites broke with tradition and constructed houses which faced the village street.



Figure 46

Henry Ens residence, Village of Reinland. On the left, the link in the context as a connection between the house and the barn. On the right, the link in more detail.

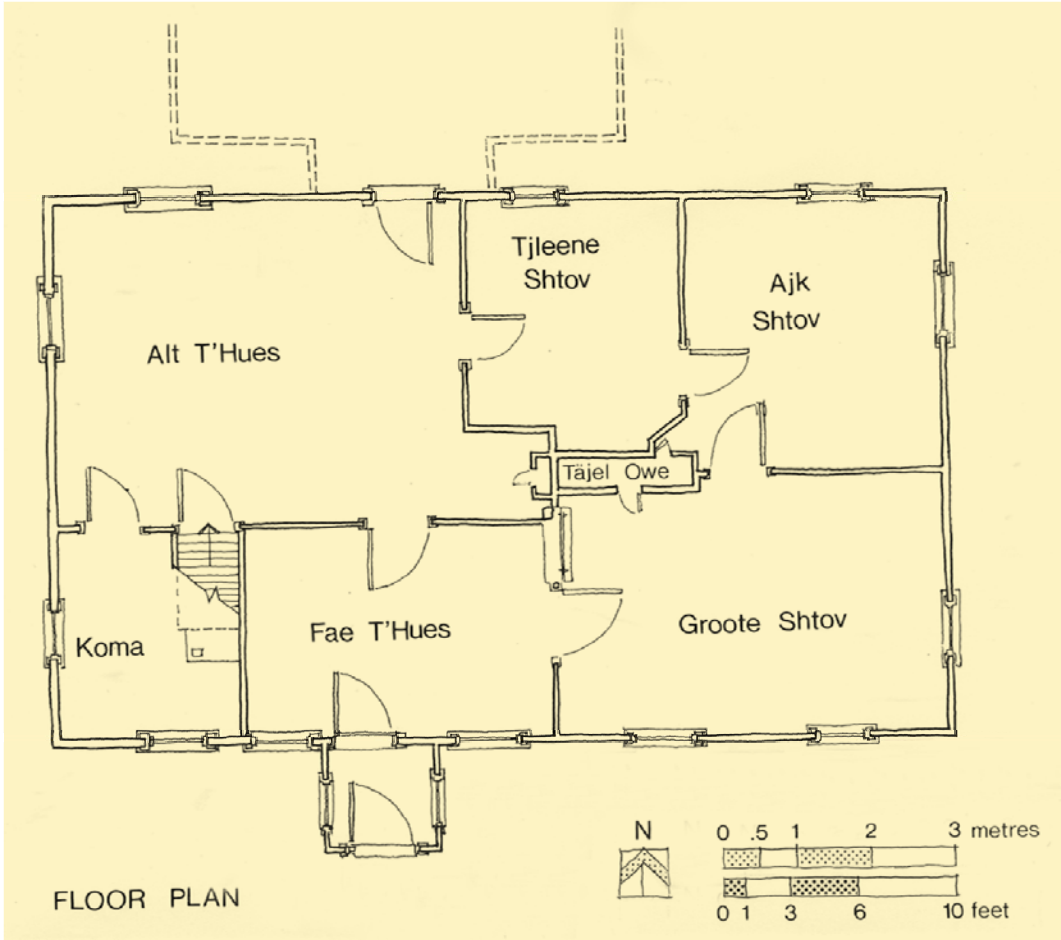


Figure 47
 H. Ens residence: Floor plan.

Few of the homes built after 1900 included the traditional central brick heater, as coal and oil-burning furnaces were increasingly being installed in the basements. This also eliminated the traditional smoke chamber in the attic. As a result smoke houses were often constructed outside near the summer kitchen and this proved to be more efficient and convenient.

Barns constructed during this period also reflected a growing acceptance of contemporary designs. The heavy timber framework of the earlier barns was replaced with a light timber framework. In such cases, traditional bent designs and joinery were generally still used, although in a more simplified manner (Figure 48).



Figure 48

Heide barn, Village of Hochfeld, ca. 1912. Many of the barns constructed after the turn of the century featured a light timber framework, more simplified joints and nailed connections.

By 1910 many barns were being constructed entirely of frame lumber, and it was at this time that a number of basic design changes began to appear. In many Mennonite farmyards, separate outbuildings were now being constructed for poultry, hogs and grain storage; the "Owesied" sections were no longer required and were excluded from the new barns being constructed. This in turn affected the basic fenestration pattern of the barn. Many barns now featured larger, separated windows on both sides of the structure, rather than the traditional single row of small windows along the front. Also, the adoption of the hay sling during this period, affected both roof shape and rafter design. To accommodate use of the sling, the area directly beneath the roof peak had to be free from obstruction. In some cases, this was achieved by simply replacing the rafter purlins with two diagonal braces (Figure 49).

In other cases, the entire roof was replaced with a more contemporary, gambrel shaped roof, which was self-supporting and had a high volume storage capacity (Figure 50).

Finally, during the early 1920s the Mennonites in the MSTW district increasingly constructed houses and barns which were detached.

By the late 1920s, barns, as well as homes, were almost entirely of contemporary design and construction. Traditional elements were not completely abandoned, however. Until recently vestiges of traditional Mennonite design were often incorporated into structures, including the use of window shutters, large "Sheen" style doors on the barns and outbuildings, and the occasional attachment of house and barn via a connecting link (Figure 51).

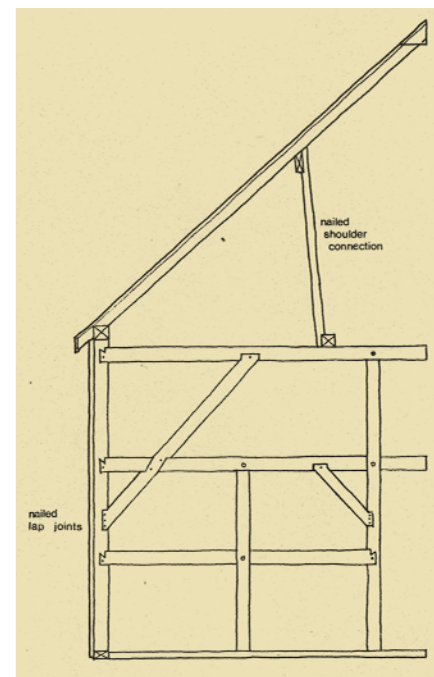


Figure 49
With the adoption of hay sling, shortly after the turn of the century, an open span type of rafter was required, which resulted in the modification or complete removal of the original barn rafters?



Figure 50
Jacob Peters barn, Village of Reinland, 1912. The protective peak extension over the sling tracking mechanism was an innovation.



Figure 51
Petkau farmstead, Village of Reinland.
(Reinland, 1976: 105)