

From *Sketch Book No. 4*, 1836, by Abraham Claassen (1825-1910)

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The Dyck and Wall Families

The Dyck Family Name: Origins and Early Ancestry

The Dyck family name has its origins in Flanders, present day Belgium. In Flanders, and in the early years of settlement in West Prussia, “van dem,” “van den,” and “van der” preceded “Dyck” and is indicative of the Dycks being associated with a specific location in Flanders. Sir Anthony van Dyck (1599-1641), the great painter of the Baroque period, was Flemish.

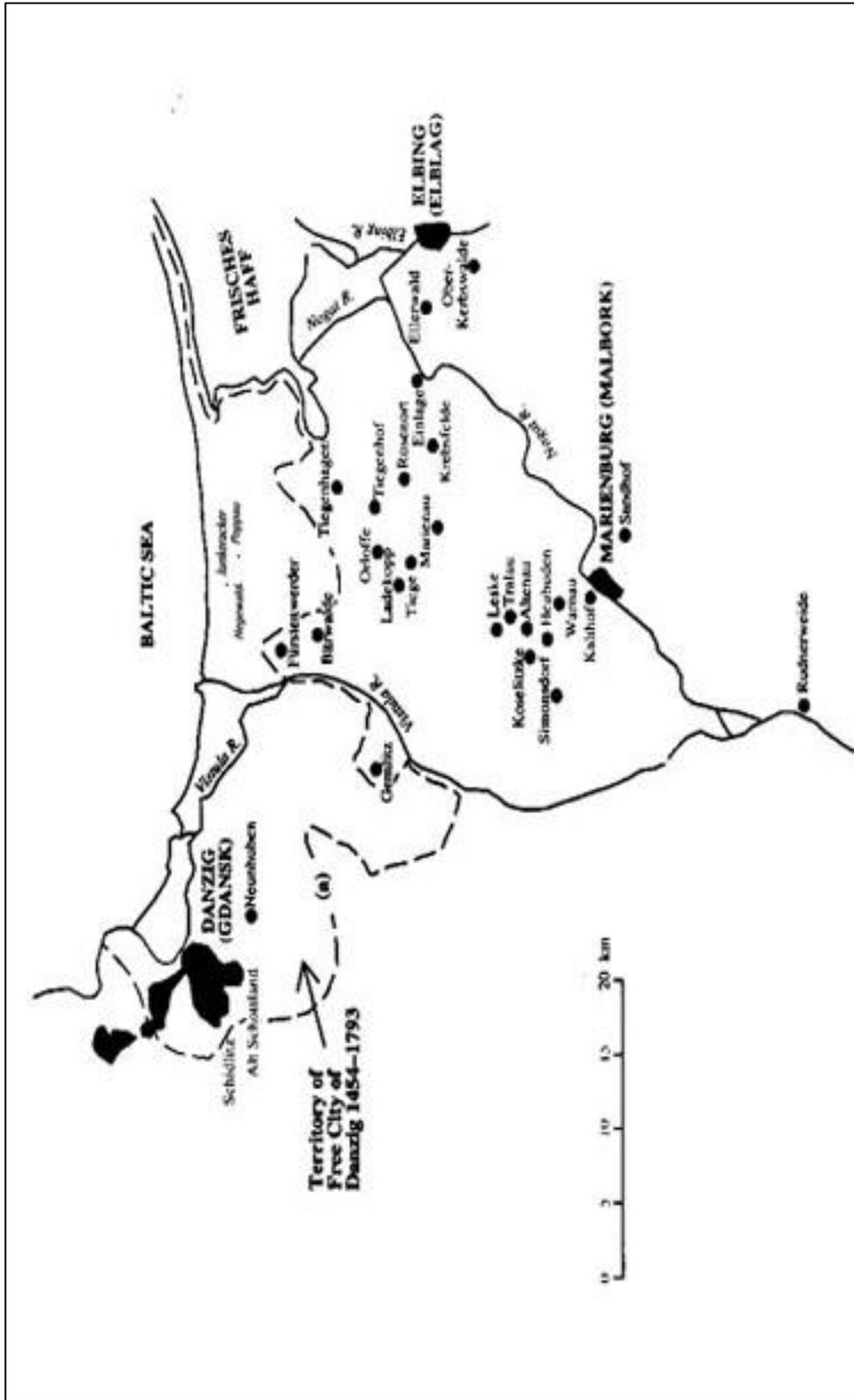
The Dyck family name first occurs in the records of the Flemish Mennonite congregations of West Prussia in 1592. In his book *Die ost-und westpreussischen Mennoniten*, Horst Penner

states that Philipp van den Dyck is listed as a member of the Grossenwerder congregation in 1592. This makes the Dyck name among the oldest Mennonite family names in West Prussia. According to the *Mennonite Encyclopedia*, one of the first elders of the Danzig Mennonite Church was named van Dyck. The Heubuden Mennonite Congregation had as its first elder a man named Jacob Dyck, chosen in 1728, and confirmed by Isaak de Veer of the Danzig church. This Jacob Dyck died in 1748 and was succeeded as elder of the Heubuden congregation, at his own request, by Gerhard von Bergen in 1748. Gerhard von Bergen is a grandfather of our family through our Claassen ancestors.

By 1776 there were 119 families in West Prussia that had the name of Dyck, according to *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*. This figure includes the many variations in use at that time; von Dyck, van Dyck, van den, van der, and van dem Dyck, Dueck, Dieck, Duyck. Many of these families would emigrate to Russia after 1788, and in the first Russian Mennonite colony of Chortitza, Dycks were well represented by elders Gerhard Dyck, his son Isaak, and two elders named Jacob Dyck.

In the 20th century the Furstenwerder congregation of West Prussia was led by Johannes Dyck, chosen in 1919, Ernest Dyck, chosen in 1928, and Johannes Dyck chosen in 1943. This congregation ceased to exist when the Russian Army occupied West Prussia in 1945 at the close of World War II. Similarly, the Ladekopp congregation was represented by the elder Johannes Dyck II from 1919 until its destruction by the Russian Army in 1945.

Paul Dyck is our oldest known direct ancestor with the Dyck family name. He was born in 1670 at Junkeracker Bei Ostsee, West Prussia, and died there in 1740. Junkeracker Bei Ostsee (Junkeracker by the Baltic Sea) is, as its name implies, in the northern most end of the Vistula Delta area of West Prussia, near the coast of the Baltic Sea. Hegewald was the name of a large estate that was part of Junkeracker. The village of Poppau was located two miles east and two miles south of Junkeracker. Dr. Gerhard Driedger, author of *The Werder: The Land Between the Vistula and the Nogat*, is of the opinion that Junkeracker, and the estate Hegewald, originated during the time of the Teutonic Knights, that their names suggest this. Poppau was founded by Mennonite immigrants from Flanders, one of the earliest land reclamation projects in the Vistula Delta region. Our Dyck ancestors were among these early settlers, probably arriving in the second half of the 16th century, the late 1500s. In 1706 Paul Dyck married Susanne Hoffman Reimer, a widow. It is not known if Susanne had any other children from a previous marriage, nor are the dates known of her birth and death. The Reimer name is native West Prussian, according to author Horst Penner. Records of the



Map 4
 Vistula Delta Memmonite settlements from 16th century on
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Teutonic Knights state that before 1400 there were Reimer-Bauern (Reimer-Farmers) living in the Grossenwerder. In 1400 a Mertin Reymer is in the village of Altmuensterberg, a farmer Reymer in Simonsdorf in 1401, a mayor Reymer in Haupt in 1403. It wasn't until the 1600s that Reimers converted to the Mennonite faith, the first recorded in the Danzig Mennonite records in 1671 is Simon Reymer. This information and these dates from Horst Penner suggest the possibility that Susanne Hoffman Reimer was not of the Mennonite faith until her marriage to Paul Dyck.

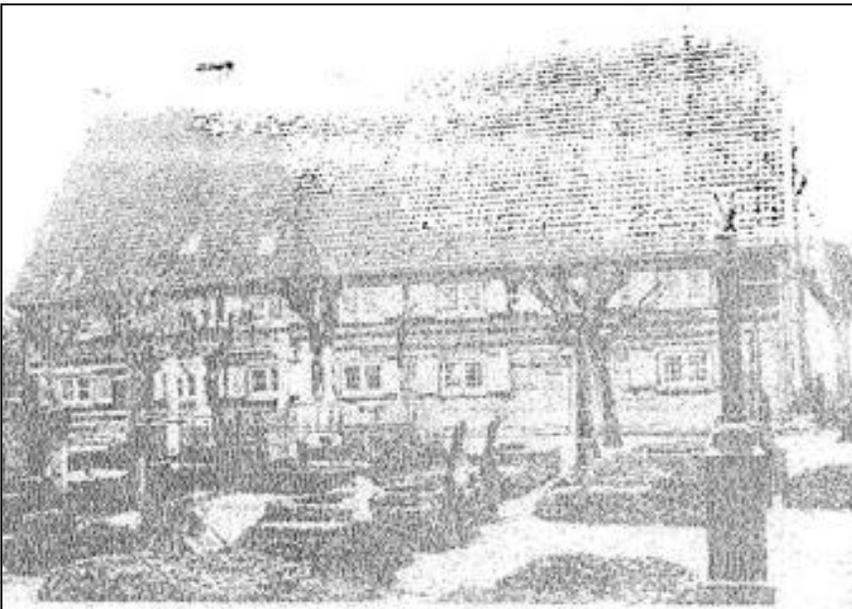
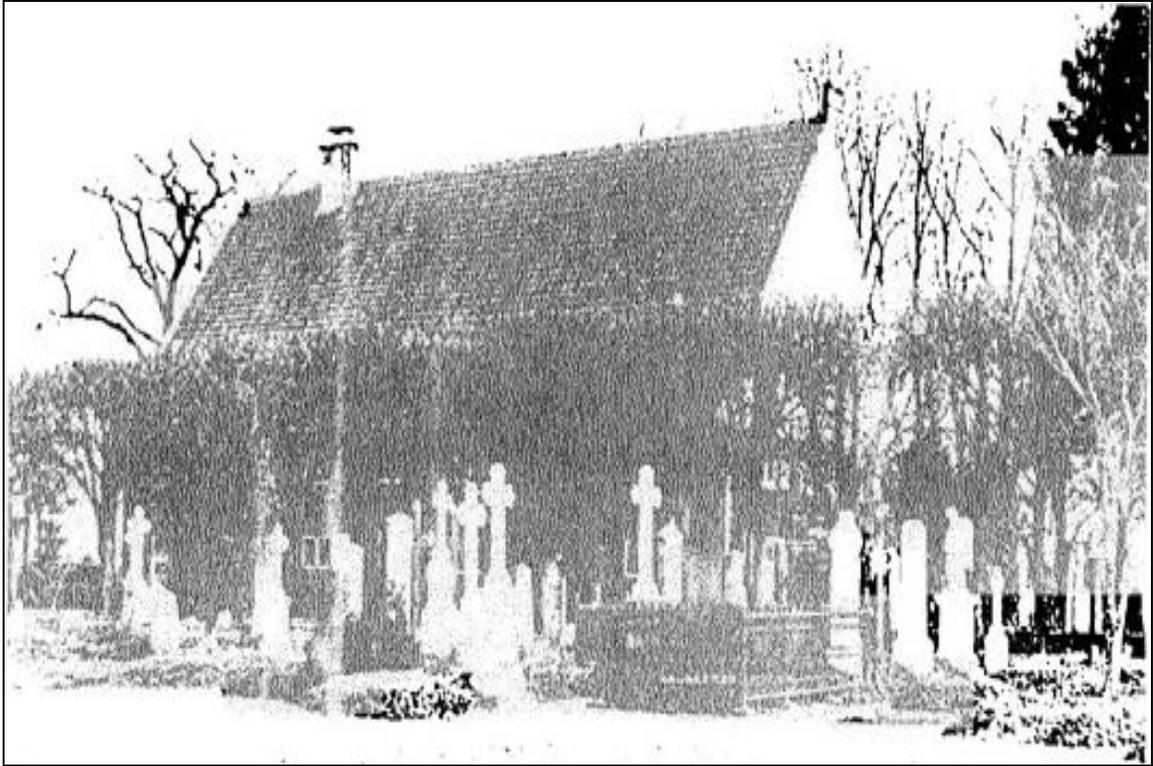
Paul and Susanne Dyck's son Jacob (I) continues our direct family lineage. It is not known if they had any other children. Jacob Dyck (I) was born December 24, 1707, probably at Junkeracker Bei Ostsee, West Prussia. No specific date is available for Jacob's marriage to Catharina Steffen, born 1717. The eldest of their two known children was born in 1743, so a marriage date *circa* 1740 is likely.

Of Catharina Steffen's immediate family, no information is available. However, Horst Penner's research into Mennonite family names of West Prussia provides some interesting background on the Steffen name. A quote from records of the Danzig city council states: "On the 7 March 1575 a Hans Steffens from Herzogenbusch, a Brabanter, received from the council of Danzig, permission to be a settler here although he is not eligible to have city privileges of a citizen because he is a handcraftsman (a stone and statue chiseler); yet he must promise that he will not ever hold a celebration (probably refers to religious services) and also that he will not use any other means to make a living." This Hans Steffens is listed as an elder of the Danzig Flemish Mennonite congregation. A letter dated 1592, from the Thorn Mennonite congregation, is signed by Cornelis Steffens. Cornelis is most likely the son of Hans. Horst Penner believes that the Steffens that were farmers throughout the Grossenwerder villages of Petershagen, Tiegenhagen, and Vogtey in the 1700s, were descended from Hans and Cornelis Steffens. This would include our grandmother Catharina Steffen.

Two sons were born to Jacob (I) and Catharina. Jacob Dyck (II), our direct descendant grandfather, was born November 18, 1743. His brother Paul was born March 10, 1746. No other children are known to have been born to Jacob Dyck (I), who died April 23, 1786 at Hegewald, West Prussia, and his wife Catharina who died March 13, 1771, also at Hegewald, West Prussia.

Jacob Dyck (II) married Maria Claassen on October 3, 1765. Ten children were born to this marriage, two of which are known to have died in infancy. Jacob Dyck (II) died April 9, 1820, at Poppau, West Prussia. No dates are available for Maria Claassen's birth or death.

Until the second half of the 18th century, Mennonite congregations did not have permanent, fixed meeting houses or



The Ladekopp Mennonite Church in the Vistula Delta. Built in 1768, this church was destroyed by the Russian Army in 1945. The present government of Poland has declared the Ladekopp Cemetery a national monument.

Top photo: The Centennial Committee, *History of the Emmaus Mennonite Church*.

Bottom photo: Horst Penner, *Die ost-und westpreussischen Mennoniten*.

churches. The earliest church outside of the Danzig-Schottland congregation was one built at Rosenort in 1754. For this reason it is often impossible to pinpoint which congregation our Dyck ancestors belonged to at these early dates.

One of the earliest organized congregations in the vicinity of our Dyck ancestors was the Mennonite congregation at the old Pruzzen village of Ladekopp. This congregation had sprung from a

need to serve the outlying areas of the original Danzig-Schottland congregations that had existed in organized form since 1569. The list of elders for the Danzig congregation is complete from this early date and includes one with the name of van Dyck. In 1768 Ladekopp was granted permission by the Catholic bishop of Culm to build its own church along with the congregations of Furstenwerder, Tiegenhagen, and Heubuden. These four congregations were known collectively as the Grosse Werder Congregation.

Prior to the building of these churches all Mennonite congregations in the Werder were under the umbrella of the Danzig Mennonite Church. Danzig church records indicate that there was ongoing contact with the Mennonite churches in Holland during the 17th and 18th centuries, that these Dutch churches were looked to for guidance by the Danzig congregation. Close ties were also maintained because many members still had relatives in Flanders and Holland. The Danzig baptismal registers for the 17th and 18th centuries contain an appendix that lists those members that were baptized in Flanders and Holland suggesting that these people held some type of special status in the congregation. In this way the mother churches in Holland exerted a pervading influence that extended throughout all the congregations of the Werder. So close were these ties that Mennonites continued to use their native language of Dutch well into the 18th century. The first Bible printed for Mennonites of West Prussia was in the Dutch language. Elder Quirin Vermeulen printed this Dutch translation of the Bible in Schottland in 1598. The Schottland congregation was the first to make the change from Dutch to the German language in church services. By 1800 hymnals had been published in German, and Low German was the language used by almost all Mennonites. This was indicative of the Germanization of the Werder Mennonites that began with the establishment of their own churches in 1768. This Germanization of West Prussian Mennonites went well beyond the adoption of German as their language. Mennonites enthusiastically adopted all things associated with German high culture and would carry it with them wherever they settled later in Russia and America.

The year before Ladekopp and the other three Grosse Werder Congregations were allowed to build their churches, 1767, Jacob Dyck (III) was born on October 21. He was the second of ten children born to Jacob Dyck (II) and Maria Claassen at Poppau, West Prussia. Jacob Dyck (III) married Margarete Warkentin on October 29, 1791. No information is available about Margarete. Warkentin is a common Mennonite family name and is found in many of the church records of all of the major Mennonite congregations of the Werder. Horst Penner writes in *Die Ost-und westpreussischen Mennoniten* that the Warkentins come from the German state of Mecklenburg in northeastern Germany, specifically

the market town of Perkontin. Perkontin is approximately nine miles west of the port city of Rostock in Mecklenburg. An early variation in the spelling of the name is Parchentin. Lorenz Parchentin is listed as an elder from Furstenwerder, West Prussia, in 1583. His descendant Jacob Parchentin still lived in Furstenwerder in 1727. By 1776 local German dialect had changed the spelling to Warkentin throughout the Mennonite congregations of the Vistula Delta. One member of the Warkentin family, Bernhard Warkentin, was instrumental in introducing hard winter wheat to Kansas after his immigration from Russia in the late 1800s.

Except for our next direct descendant grandfather, Dietrich Dyck, it is unknown how many children Jacob Dyck (III) and Margarete Warkentin had. Jacob Dyck (III) died February 8, 1843, at Hauskampe, West Prussia. Dietrich (Dirk) Dyck was born October 9, 1796, at Poppau, West Prussia. Dietrich was married twice and both of his wives were named Agnete Jantzen. The Jantzen family name is one the most widespread of Mennonite family names. Prior to Jantzens being located in the Vistula Delta of West Prussia, in 1568, the name was found along the entire North Sea area from Holstein to Flanders, including the Frisian Islands. A sample listing from the records of the Danzig Mennonite congregation in 1619 shows various spellings of the name and the varied origins of members: Hartwich Jansen, linenweaver, Holstein; Lenert Jansen von Mecheln, braid, trim maker for clothes; Cornelis Jan, linenweaver, Hollander; Otto Jansen, stockingmaker, Westphalia; Georg Jansen, linenweaver, Brabant.

Dietrich's first marriage occurred on June 23, 1817, at Poppau, West Prussia. Agnete (I) was born January 16, 1796, and so was some ten months older than her husband and 21 years old at the time of her marriage. Dietrich and Agnete (I) had five children beginning with Dietrich (II) born August 3, 1819. Next was a daughter, Katharina, born July 28, 1824. Three more sons followed. Johannes Dietrich, born December 5, 1826, Jacob (IV), born May 5, 1832, and Cornelius, born August 23, 1835. Jacob Dyck (IV) is our direct descendant grandfather. Agnete (I) died the day after Christmas, December 26, 1836. Dietrich married Agnete Jantzen (II) February 19, 1839. She was born May 31, 1813, and was the daughter of the Mayor of Gross Heubuden near Marienburg in the lower Vistula Delta. With this second marriage Dietrich became the father of three more children, all daughters: Agnete, born February 10, 1841, Maria, born September 11, 1846, and Justine, born October 6, 1848.

All eight of Dietrich Dyck's children were born at Poppau, West Prussia. That they all lived to reach adulthood is noteworthy. The rate of infant and child mortality in the early 19th century was extremely high. Dietrich's growing family probably strained the ability of the family farm to provide for them all. The village of

Poppau was on land reclaimed from the sea and Dietrich's farm consisted of only 38 acres. The Dyck family had owned an additional 63 acres near the village of Glabitz, but lost it during the occupation of Prussia by the French Army under Napoleon. Napoleon had ordered a reorganization of all Prussian land holdings in 1806. Had the family been able to retain all of their land holdings, all of Dietrich's sons probably would have been farmers. As it was, Johannes Dietrich, the second son, was sent south to Robach to apprentice as a merchant-storekeeper at the age of 12 in 1839.