

## Old Lutherans Leave Pomerania, 1835-1854

It was thus in the fall of 1838 that Martin Stephan, pastor of St. John's in Dresden, led Old Lutherans to religious freedom in the United States, arriving 5 January 1839 in New Orleans. They waited for the last of the five ships to arrive until it became apparent Ship *Amelia* was lost at sea. Most of the remaining 750 immigrants settled in Perry County, Missouri. These congregations become the basis for the formation of The Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Other Old Lutherans had left during the 1830s and 1840s, settling in the densely forested frontier states of Indiana, Ohio, and Michigan. These congregations also joined the Missouri Synod.



*Figure 12. Pastor Martin Stephan led Old Lutheran emigrants to Perry County, Missouri, in 1838.*

Still other Old Lutherans immigrated to Adelaide, South Australia, aboard the *Zebra*, piloted by Captain Dirk Hahn. Hahn had taken an earlier group of 140 Lutherans to New York 15 September to 10 November 1836. The trip to Australia was a more challenging task. They left Prussia on 22 June 1838, two years later than their original plans, delayed because the Prussian government withdrew their permission to emigrate. A government decree in 1838 allowed emigration only if Old Lutherans were accompanied by a like-minded pastor. The Silesian emigrants were led by Pastor August Ludwig Christian Kavel. They reached Adelaide on 27 December, a journey that included 129 days at sea. Eleven people died during the voyage.

Later, in Mom's stories you will hear of the Gierach family. The patriarch of the family was Christian Gierach (1782-1857), born in Reichenau, Sagan, Silesia. Curiously, Christian Gierach, his wife Rosina, and their seven children were scheduled to travel with the other Silesians to Australia in 1838, but were delayed owing to sickness and thus ended up in America along with the Pomeranians the next year.

The Old Lutheran emigration lasted from 1835 to 1854. According to Iwan's 1943 book, which admittedly is an incomplete listing of emigrant names, the exit from Prussia during that time was a total of 4977 to America, 2139 to Australia, and 18 to Russia, for a total of 7134 people. The largest number of these came from Pomerania, with 2567 going to America, 25 to Australia, and 3 to Russia. All of the names, former homes, occupations, and family relationships are listed in Iwan's book. Most notably, Martin Stephan and his fellow Saxons are not listed and there are also many missing names among the emigrants from Posen. By comparison to the emigration numbers, the population of Pomerania in 1855 was 1,289,134.

Ironically, religious persecution soon came to an end in Prussia. King Friedrich Wilhelm III died in 1840 and was succeeded by Friedrich Wilhelm IV. He disagreed with previous policies, freed pastors from prison, and restored religious freedom over a period of years. However, the Old Lutherans had already lost their churches, sold farms and homes, they were not allowed to call themselves Lutherans, and the distrust was so strong that many continued to emigrate until 1854. Those Old Lutherans that stayed in Prussia formed the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Prussia which retained its identity until 1972 when it merged with other Lutherans of Germany. Prussia became a state in the unified Germany in 1871.

### **Pomerania Towns and Counties**

**G**erman immigrants that settled in Freistadt, Wisconsin, came from scattered towns and rural areas of Pomerania. Almost all the small communities can be identified and in most cases a population still lives at each, albeit the towns and cities now have Polish names. Each village lies within a county (*kreis*). These counties are shown in Figure 13.

Most of the Pomeranian emigrants came from the counties of Cammin (Kammin), Greifenberg, and Regenwalde. Table 1 shows the original names for the towns, the county, and the current Polish or German name. All counties are in Pomerania unless specifically marked otherwise. Only towns associated with an ancestor's birth, marriage or death are listed, as there are hundreds of other towns in Pomerania. Figure 14 shows the location of some of these towns.