MYTH AND HISTORY: TURKEY RED WHEAT AND THE "KANSAS MIRACLE"

by
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In 1897, Henry King wrote an article on Kansas for the popular *Scribner's Monthly* that began:

> There is no more enticing scene than the Kansas prairie in spring. The eye wanders out over gracefully swerving and unmonotonous lines to what seems the very limit of things; you dare not conjecture where the earth ends and the sky begins.

Many today might second that thought after traveling westward on I-70, but perhaps, after three generations, we have lost some appreciation of that scene. This article will examine the remaking of that landscape's lines by new settlers and conjecture about where myth ends and history begins.

In 1873 and 1874 a number of Mennonite families in southern Russia commenced a long migration by train and steamship to America. There, after considering several possible locations, most of them chose the virgin prairie of Kansas, where railroads like the Santa Fe had many sections of land-stretching in a checkerboard pattern across the state-to sell cheap. The largest group, from the Molochna-Ukrainian village of Alexanderwohl, alone bought sixty-five of them from the Santa Fe in Marion, McPherson, and Harvey counties and homesteaded quite a few more.[1] When these people left Russia, each family (it was later believed) brought a sack or crock of wheat, a hard red winter wheat which made Kansas famous and an economically prosperous agricultural state. The Catholic and Lutheran Volga Germans who came to Ellis, Rush, and Russell counties a couple of years later reinforced and helped spread the adaptation of "their" Russian wheat.

That is the story. It is a nice, neat one. And in 1974 the state celebrated the centennial of this event in grand style; there were parades and celebrations in practically every town: a wheat queen was crowned--Andrea Polansky of Belleville; and Highway 50 was appropriately renamed the "Wheat Centennial Memorial Highway."[2] A paperback novel was even published with the title *Turkey Red*.[3] A U.S. postal stamp commemorated the occasion. Pamphlets, articles, and books recounted the "history" of this famous grain. One of the state's best known contributions to the bicentennial of the American Declaration of Independence was a liberty bell made of wheat straw. And today a wheat heritage museum in the Mennonite community of Goessel perpetuates the folk tradition.

The story of Turkey Red wheat is perhaps second only to Dorothy and Toto in making Kansas famous in national as well as local lore. Prominence was given to it in a 1985 article on Kansas in the *National Geographic*, and in March of 1989 it was featured in *The New Yorker* in a three part series on the Great Plains by Ian Frazier that later became a best-seller in book form. Quoting from the article: "As it turned out, the Russian Mennonites made ideal plains farmers--they had been practicing on the steppes for nearly a hundred years." After relating some nonsense about sod houses (the first Mennonite settlers generally did not bother with them) and an alleged ability to cope with

grasshoppers, Frazier stated:

> Most important, the Mennonites knew what to plant. Each Mennonite family had brought a bushel or more of Crimean wheat from Russia. This wheat, a hard, red, short-stemmed variety later called Turkey Red, was resistant to heat, cold, and drought. It was the right crop for the plains, and the Mennonites knew to cultivate it . . . [4]

And so the idea continues in the popular imagination today, but what does history--the search for and telling of what actually happened--say about all of this? In short, the story is largely a myth, as historian James Malin of the University of Kansas demonstrated in the 1940s, but like all myths it has some factual basis, more perhaps than Malin was willing to grant. The truth about Turkey Red and the Kansas wheat miracle is more complex to unravel but in its way is as intriguing and exciting as the myth.[5]

The situation in Russia in the 1870s must first be examined. Dubbed "Rooshians" when they arrived in Kansas, the Ukrainian Dutch-speaking Mennonites, the Volynian (Polish) Swiss-speaking Mennonites, and the Volga German Lutherans and Catholics, who spoke a variety of German dialects, were concentrated, respectively, in substantial and relatively prosperous colonial settlements almost a thousand miles apart, where they had settled about a hundred years earlier. Many of them were unhappy and restless because of population growth and restricted opportunities for expansion to new lands. Moreover, there were increased Russian nationalist pressures that threatened their cultural identities, and the liberal reforms of Alexander II's government also threatened the special privileges that had been granted to them when they first moved into Russia. The chief of these was exemption from recruitment into the Russian army. The Mennonites were naturally concerned because of their pacifist religious beliefs, but even the Catholic and Lutheran Germans were afraid that military service would mean conversion to the Russian Orthodox church. Even more, this and other actually progressive steps by the Russian government meant greater interference by the central government in the historic autonomy of these foreign agricultural colonies.[6] "Liberal" reforms--treating everyone more equal--were thus a cause of dissent, much as among Soviet nationalities in recent years.

There is a certain irony that significant economic progress in Russia and technological change encouraged outmigration. The telegraph and newspapers carried advertisements of cheap land in America, and the extension of Russian railroads to their areas provided access to relatively cheap and easy transportation. Other factors prodding movement were religious controversy and growing distinctions between rich and poor in the communities. The Mennonites were, in fact, able to work out with the Russian government a rather progressive system of alternative service and thus avoided military conscription. Yet, quite a few of them did leave Russia, and most of these initial emigrants came to Kansas.

Why Kansas? Land agents of the Kansas Pacific and the Santa Fe, such as C. B. Schmidt, certainly had something to do with their choosing Kansas. The Mennonites were also guided by co-religionists from Illinois and Indiana (such as the Funks, the Krehbiels, and the Wiebes) who knew good agricultural opportunities when they saw them. And officials of Kansas, who had seen their state crippled by

drought and the worst grasshopper plague in history in 1874, bent over backwards to satisfy these new, peaceful, and agriculturally-experienced settlers; flexible conscription laws and welcome mats greeted them at every depot. The drought and grasshopper devastation also meant that the railroad directors were desperate to sell the land received from Congressional grants in order to meet payrolls and pay back loans obtained to build tracks across a thinly populated state.

Most settlers from Russia arrived in July and August and were naturally anxious to get started on their new farms. They were accustomed to growing grain, but never corn, in Russia, so the new settlers planted wheat--probably as much as 50,000 acres in the fall of 1874. One can now see a problem with the story outlined at the beginning. If each family sowed forty acres that fall and each brought one small sack of wheat--well, it just does not compute.

A number of contemporary descriptions exist of the early settlers getting off trains in Kansas, packed several families to a car. Local newspapers printed detailed accounts of their appearance, even their sounds and smells, and the goods they brought with them: clothing, blankets, pots and pans and always a tea kettle, perhaps a straw mattress or two, some furniture and small tools, bibles. There is no mention of bags or crocks of wheat, which should have been of special interest to Kansans. If Turkey Red wheat came to Kansas in 1874, it was quite successfully smuggled in. The new immigrants brought what they could carry--for 10,000 miles through several stopovers, aboard crowded trains and ships.

Most had one other essential with them--money from the sale of their farms--which they used to great effect by purchasing goods in quantity and through hard bargaining: horses, wagons, cattle, chickens, plows, etc., all reported in detail by happy, economically-minded and Kansas-conscious newspapers. Some even contracted with local carpenters to build houses and barns and very quickly had flourishing farms; this too was glowingly reported by the press. They brought flower, melon, and other garden seeds, but not a word can be found about any wheat. In fact, in some of the surviving testimony of settlers, it is clearly stated that seed wheat was among the items purchased that first year.[7]

When and how did the story of Mennonites carrying wheat to Kansas gain currency? The first public references to the 1874 Mennonites bringing Turkey Red date to the early 1900s, especially in a *Saturday Evening Post* article of 1910 by F. D. Coburn, Secretary of the State Board of Agriculture. There is much confusion and many contradictions, however, in these accounts. Finally, early in 1927, Bliss Isely, an editor of the Wichita *Beacon*, set out to trace the origins of Turkey Red for a Sunday feature article.[8] As recounted several years later, he first wrote to Carl Warkentin, the son of a prominent miller of Ukrainian Mennonite background, but Warkentin proved uncooperative. Isely then enlisted the aid of David Richert, a mathematics professor at Bethel College, who asked his students to enquire in their communities when they went home for the weekend as to the origin of Turkey Red wheat.[9]

One of these Bethel undergraduates found an elderly woman living in Hillsboro, Anna Barkman Wohlgemuth, who recalled at age eight obeying her father's instructions back in their Crimean village of Annenfeld

(which happens to mean Anna's field), to pick out, quoting Isely, "the best seeds from their bins--ONE GRAIN AT A TIME." Intrigued by her recollection that this amounted to two gallons, Isely then determined that the young Anna had selected exactly 259,862 grains, disregarding the fact that a gallon measurement did not exist in Russia.[10]

The Anna Barkman story thus became an important part of the Turkey Red myth. Unfortunately, it is rather unscientifically documented, and Mrs. Wohlgemuth died shortly afterwards without apparently writing anything down. It is weakest in identifying what kind of grain was in that Crimean granary and in relating what actually happened to it in Kansas, if it ever completed the long journey from Odessa, through Breslau, Hamburg, New York, and a lengthy stopover near Elkhart, Indiana. Moreover, characteristic of myths, this story from one family of a particular Mennonite sect in the Crimea was quickly expanded to include every Mennonite family who emigrated from various places in Russia.

A question also arises over what kind of grain was likely to be in a Crimean Mennonite granary in 1874, since in that year four times as much rye as wheat was produced in Russia, oats yields doubled those of wheat, and barley, millet, buckwheat, and other grains nearly equalled wheat. All kinds of wheat represented only twelve per cent of total Russian grain production in 1870.[11] Russia, like Kansas, was simply not a major wheat area in 1874. Mennonite agriculture in Russia was also quite diversified with emphases upon dairying and sheep raising as much as grain production.

The Southern Russian steppe, where the Molochna and Crimean Mennonites lived, however, was the only subregion of Russia where the production of wheat exceeded rye, barley, and other grains, and reliable contemporary evidence supports the recent development there of a hard, red winter wheat, called *arnautka*, which was rising in importance for export to Southern Europe.[12]

But even if we admit that two gallons and perhaps a few other sacks or crocks of hard Russian wheat came to Kansas with the Krimmer Mennonites who settled Gnadenau,[13] just south of Hillsboro, in August 1874, problems still exist: were these grains actually planted? And, if so, how was this variety--or these varieties--kept separate and distinct from the great many other acres of wheat planted by the Mennonite immigrants that fall? Or did the "gallons" end up as chickenfeed or the first loaf of bread?

The answers, unfortunately, are elusive, but during the first couple of years, Gnadenau and other Mennonite settlements in that area attracted many visitors and press reports. Nothing can be found from them about any new wheat. From newspapers it appears that the Santa Fe Railroad, anxious that all their Mennonite customers have a successful start, provided discounted seed wheat from local stocks. Most likely it was Early Red May, a soft red spring wheat best adapted to surviving a winter in south central Kansas, though several other soft varieties--Lancaster, Gypsey, and White Genneseе--were grown in Marion County that fall, while next door in Harvey County, White Walker and Gold Drop were popular.[14]

We need to ask two more questions: When does Turkey Red really come into the picture? And what actually were the contributions of these German-speaking immigrants from Russia? The answers can be found in

the time and complexities involved in the triumph of winter wheat over spring wheat, of hard wheat over soft, and of wheat over corn.[15]

In 1873, before the Mennonites arrived, Kansas was primarily a corn state and most of the wheat was planted in the spring. But a few had followed an earlier Indian practice--around Shawnee Mission (Johnson County)--of planting wheat in the fall. In fact, one of the first documented commercial fields of wheat in Kansas, that on Judge Spicer's farm four miles west of Lawrence, was sown in the fall of 1856.[16] What these fall sowings suffered in the way of winter kill was often made up by better yields in a dry summer than that planted in the spring, as the winter wheat would benefit more from early spring moisture and escape summer rust damage. The main obstacles were the absence of a local market for wheat and cheap transportation to distant markets, wheat being deemed unsatisfactory for feeding livestock and horses, and the prevalence of corn, which was usually harvested too late to allow for fall wheat planting in those fields. Winter wheat, moreover, was vulnerable to the winter and spring cattle drives coming up from Texas and Oklahoma, but once these were better controlled and fenced off, it had greater possibilities on the plains.

Then, after the Civil War came the railroads, and they brought more settlers--and distant market possibilities. Finally, T. C. Henry, an ambitious real estate agent and promoter, planted about 500 acres of wheat in a field just east of Abilene in the fall of 1873 and expanded it to 1,200 acres the following year. He used six oxen teams pulling Moline gang plows on a stretch along the railroad three miles long. Everyone travelling along the Kansas Pacific (now the Union Pacific) marvelled at the scene, especially when his Marsh cutters and steam threshers yielded golden piles of grain, while the still immature spring wheat and corn was being devastated by drought and grasshoppers in 1874.[17] The lesson was learned, and Henry made much of the publicity and his recommendation of Early Red May (the soft spring wheat which he considered most suitable for fall sowing). In 1875, Kansas farmers, including the new Mennonite immigrants from Russia, increased their wheat sowings substantially to 750,000 acres, two thirds of it in winter wheat.

The acreage of spring wheat continued to decline in proportion, especially when more dry land prairie was brought under cultivation. The Catholic and Lutheran Volga German immigrants, coming into Ellis, Rush, and Russell counties in 1876 and later, made quite an impact, quickly changing this Kansas landscape from cattle ranching to farming on this drier land, similar to the Volga region. But in Kansas they had the advantage of a milder winter and the possibility, that never existed in Russia, of planting in the fall to take best advantage of snow melt and spring rains. In Russia they always had planted spring wheat, predominantly a hard- grained variety known as White Turkey (*beloturka*) a durum type wheat, because the severity of the winter there was similar to Canada or North Dakota.

So the settlers from Russia adapted to Kansas and shifted from spring to fall planting and initially to soft wheat. A Hays City newspaper reported in 1883, "Our Russian friends are on the high road to fortune, raising wheat against all odds [!] is making them rich." But ample proof exists of the endurance of spring wheat and corn: in 1884 over in Russell County, Christian Anschutz, the Volga-German Lutheran founder of a

Kansas family that was later to achieve considerable economic prominence, cultivated 70 acres of winter wheat, 60 acres of spring wheat, and 50 acres of corn, along with smaller fields of barley, oats, potatoes, and tobacco.[18] No doubt a major reason for this was the necessity for family farmers, unlike promoters such as Henry, to be diversified.

In fact, in these years after the Volga Germans arrived, one third of the cultivated land in Ellis County was in corn. Clearly, that crop was by no means beaten in Kansas and could still grow as high as an elephant's eye in summer. The Topeka *Daily Commonwealth* reported in October 1879, "Corn is king in Kansas, so far as space is concerned. They plant it by the square mile." Even the Mennonites around Newton and Marion grew this farm staple too--and still do. They also experimented with cotton, tobacco, flax, and even rice in their quest to find the best return. The Winfield *Courier* reported (March 23, 1876) that for the year after the great grasshopper plague, "Kansas produced more corn to the acre . . . than any other state in the union." It would still be many years before Kansas would become *the* wheat state.

When did "Red Turkey," its Russian name because the grains were "redder" than other wheat and was thought to have come from the Balkan part of the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, or "Turkey Red" in Kansan, actually come into the picture? While most farmers simply planted what they had grown, the search for better varieties of grain had been going on for many years in both Russia and the United States, the two primary grain exporting countries.

As early as 1862 the Department of Agriculture was seeking wheat samples from Russia as well as other countries, and a hard spring wheat, Scotch Fife, spread rapidly from Canada into Minnesota in the 1870s.[19] A variety of hard red wheat called Ostery, brought from Russia in 1877, produced impressive results for the Missouri Agricultural College in 1882. But even earlier, in 1881, a hard red winter wheat from Russia was definitely established in Kansas, though probably not from Anna Barkman's two gallons, as something called "Turkish" was listed as a local variety and as hard wheat in the Kansas City market reports.[20] It had reached Ellis County the next year, according to the Hays City *Star-Sentinel* (July 13, 1882): "The turkey-beard wheat proved itself a valuable quality beyond expectation. People who attended the fair last season will remember the sample of seed exhibited." This report also provides a clue as to how it spread. In 1883, the Marion *Record* compared the color of "Turkey" to Red May and concluded, "But then the contrast will disappear when the Russian wheat entirely supercedes the softer varieties, as it seems destined to do."[21] But it would still take time.

The wheat experiments in Kansas were promoted by large farm entrepreneurs such as Henry, by millers, exporters, and railroads, by state officials, and by cereal grain specialists. In 1887 the Kansas Agricultural College's experimental farm near Manhattan was testing 51 distinct varieties under the supervision of Edward Mason Shelton, who, interestingly, was originally from England. Though some of these were hard wheats with Russian, Turkish, and Bulgarian labels, Shelton still recommended Early Red May or Zimmerman, both soft wheats, for Kansas, but he noted that a Turkey wheat, which he referred to as "amber"

in color, was being grown successfully in McPherson County--that is, in Mennonite territory.[22]

Shelton also reported that the advantages of some of these new Russian varieties of wheat were greater hardiness, and therefore less winter kill, and, for at least one Turkish variety, resistance to black rust, which was a special problem encountered by all summer varieties that ripened late in the season. But a major disadvantage remained--milling--although this is a kind of chicken and egg problem: which comes first, the mill or the wheat? These hard varieties were generally classified at the time as "macaroni" wheats, and indeed the primary stimulus for growing hard wheat in southern Russia was for export to Italy and other parts of the Mediterranean. One other important advantage of hard wheat was that it is richer in gluten (protein) and would produce more flour (and thus more bread) per bushel. In the United States, there was yet less demand for this kind of flour and consequently a lack of milling facilities that could handle hard wheat. But the spread of hard spring wheat in Minnesota led to the establishment of new milling processes in Minneapolis, using steel rollers instead of millstones and an air-forced middling process to separate the bran.[23]

Also, a vastly increased immigration from Southern and Eastern Europe to American urban areas was changing the American flour market. By the mid-1880s, some of this new demand was met by a Newton miller of Ukrainian Mennonite origin (though he converted to the Presbyterian faith at marriage)--Bernhard Warkentin. In 1885 and 1886 in quest of wheat varieties he, in fact, made two trips back to Russia, where his father was still in the milling business.[24] In the Crimea and in the Berdiansk (Sea of Azov) exporting area, with which he was most familiar, was grown a general class of hard, red spring wheat known as *arnautka*, strains of which had localized names such as *Krimka* and *Krasnaia Turka* or Red Turkey. He brought back a carload of *arnautka*--which means "Albanian" in Russian--and pioneered the further testing of samples in Kansas with the help of Shelton and his successor, Mark Carleton.[25]

Warkentin also contributed in another way; he adapted milling machinery in Kansas to steel rollers of the Minneapolis kind that could grind hard wheat more effectively. In 1886 he bought the Monarch Steam Mill in Newton and modernized and expanded it the following year as the Newton Milling Company. Soon his "Cream of Kansas" flour was being produced by several mills and sold nationally. By 1888 he had broken into the European market. That year Jannsens and Company of Antwerp (Belgium) informed Warkentin that "Kansas flour of Turkey wheat is always welcome in this country. It is the only flour that answers well the purpose."[26] That fall acreage devoted to hard winter wheat in Kansas and surrounding states soared.

It is important to note that other modern steel roller milling operations, employing a "middling" purifying process, spread rapidly across the state at that very time. In McPherson the Queen Bee Mill was remodeled and refitted in 1894 and produced flour that was reported to compete well with Pillsbury of Minneapolis. The Pearl Milling Company also commenced operations there in 1894, while the Smoky Valley Roller Mills nearby in Lindsborg, now a museum (as is Warkentin's Newton mill), began producing its hard wheat "Golden Patent" flour in 1888. Responding to

market demands, the Inman mill began operation in 1892 and was subsequently expanded into one of the area's largest and longest lasting.[27] These wheat processing mills that soon replaced stockyards as the economic backbones of small town Kansas had advantages over the larger centralized flour mills in controlling quality of supply and of having cheaper transportation costs.

So, perhaps the true centennial of Turkey Red should be celebrated in 1990. This approximate date is supported by a Russian agricultural dictionary, published in 1895, which, in its detailed definition of wheat, noted that *arnautka*, as reported by a Russian cereal expert visiting the Chicago Columbian Exposition in 1892, "is called red turkey in America and is grown as a winter wheat."[28] Certainly the dramatic expansion of agriculture and ranching across Kansas was attracting world attention by then. Henry King quipped for a national audience in 1897, "It has been asserted that the Kansan would not care to go to heaven unless he could be guaranteed an ample range to the west of it."[29]

But that is not the end of the story, and a true centennial is further obscured by historical complexities. Wheat in the 1890s was still secondary to corn in Kansas, partly, in fact, because of its vulnerability to winter kill, disease, and the Hessian fly, and to market uncertainties and persisting milling problems, but also because of the coincidence of increasing demand for feed grain to fatten cattle and pigs for the growing urban market. Marion and McPherson counties produced five times as much corn as wheat in 1889, and even in Russell County more acreage was devoted to corn than wheat.[30] Perhaps even Mennonites and Volga Germans were shifting fields from wheat to corn at that time. Moreover, the wheat that Warkentin ground into flour at this time was listed in the market reports as No. 2 Red, which was probably some "Turkish" or *arnautka* variety but may not have been the classic Turkey Red that made Kansas famous. And the miller himself recommended to others and planted "Oregon May" on his own farm near Halstead in the fall of 1888; Carleton later reflected that good quality Turkey wheat was not appreciated until the late 1890s.[31] The search was not over.

Several more years of testing followed. In 1898, as an "agricultural explorer" for the Department of Agriculture, Carleton toured Russia extensively and brought back a very hard durum wheat from the Volga region called "Kubanka," which was initially tried in Kansas. Two years later, Warkentin, representing the Kansas Millers' Association, and Carleton visited South Russia together and pinpointed a Mennonite village in the Crimea which had been practicing advanced seed selection. Warkentin apparently bought the crop, for the next year 15,000 bushels were shipped from Odessa to Kansas City (like carrying coal to Newcastle) and from there by carload lot to various points in Kansas. This was no doubt Turkey Red, but other *arnautka* or "Turkey" strains of hard red wheat, one labelled "Kharkov" from its place of origin, were introduced from Russia by Carleton about the same time.[32]

The Kansas Agricultural College finally realized the importance of having an experimental farm in prime wheat country and established one near Hays in 1902. Thanks to the success there of Kharkov and subsequent agricultural extension promotion, by 1909 it had swept Kansas, and corn definitely and permanently into second rank. The Wichita *Eagle* reported in 1909 that

wheat growers were highly interested in Kharkov wheat, and the next year the *Kansas Farmer* praised hard wheat of the "Turkish type" and advised all wheat growers to obtain good seed of "hard red winter wheat of the 'Turkey type,' preferably Kharkov or Turkey," as if this was the first time it had made such a recommendation.[33] Perhaps then, 1910 marks the achievement of the Kansas miracle.

Then from one mutant head of Turkey Red came what was first known as "Crimean wheat pedigree number 762," more familiarly known as "Kanred." It was for many years the major competitor of Kharkov, followed by other improved Turkey varieties--Blackhull, Kanvale, Tenmarq, Pawnee, and others--through the great expansion of wheat acreage during and following World War I, when grain exports from Russia were cut off by war, revolution, and civil war, and Kansas farmers (and Eastern speculators) responded to a government patriotic drive to increase wheat production.[34]

With the state's total wheat yields doubling between 1915 and 1925, by 1924 the Kansas governor could confidently claim that "Kansas grows the best wheat in the world," and about ninety per cent of it was Turkey.[35] The following year Kansas crowned its first "wheat girl," Vada Watson-- perhaps a clear sign that something major was happening--and it was reported proudly that she drew the biggest crowd of the year at the state capitol.[36]

In the ten-year period from 1917 to 1927, Kansas produced, on average, 14.7%, or one seventh of the world's production of wheat. It would never reach that percentage again, because of the spread of cultivation of wheat throughout the world. But between 1919 and 1954, Turkey wheat varieties dominated the American market, accounting for twice as much acreage as the next highest wheat classification.[37] About 1927, therefore, the time of Bliss Isley's revelation of the Anna Barkman story, we can probably conclude that the Kansas miracle had occurred, that history had caught up with myth, and that thanks to wheat, Kansas had become the nation's bread basket. This image would soon be tarnished by Depression and soiled by the Dust Bowl that the massive conversion of rangeland to wheat helped create, but it endures to this day.

While most Kansans adhere to the idea of Turkey Red arriving in the baggage of Mennonites in 1874 as part of the lore of the state, "academics" such as Malin, arguing on the basis of logic and evidence, gave the major credit to millers and agronomists (especially Warkentin and Carleton) and a long period of scientific experimentation. Turkey Red may, in fact, have been planted in the Barkman backyard in Gnadenau in the fall of 1874, but it was certainly unrecognized and had little effect on the state's agriculture for several more years. By 1880, earlier than scholars of the subject have allowed, a hard red winter wheat of Russian origin, perhaps first brought by new Mennonite settlers or those visiting their Ukrainian homeland, and at least akin to Turkey Red, was becoming established in Kansas in Mennonite areas. It soon spread to other quarters but did not become dominant for many years because of milling, storage, and marketing problems. The success of Turkey Red and hard wheat was clearly dependent on milling technology and market expansion.

This miracle of Kansas wheat, and it certainly can still be called one, was thus a combination of things:

determined, hard working immigrants arriving from areas of Europe where corn was unknown; clever land promotion by people like Henry and Schmidt; cheap and convenient railroad and homesteading land; the drought and grasshoppers wiping out spring wheat and corn in 1874; experimentation and seed selection over a number of decades by millers and agricultural specialists such as Warkentin, Krehbiel, Shelton, and Carleton; the industrial revolution that perfected milling and transportation technology while also packing cities with people hungry for spaghetti and macaroni and good, cheap bread; and perhaps, but not yet founded on historical fact, that week or so of painstaking seed picking by Anna Barkman that at least provided a colorful and appropriate folk image for agricultural change; but above all, by soil and climate conditions and the social, economic, and political environment of a very unique part of the world.

NOTES

1. Purchase records are in Land Department Records, 1873-75, RR 308:13, Santa Fe Railroad Papers, Kansas State Historical Society [hereafter KSHS]. I am very much indebted to the collections and helpful staff of the society for much of the content of this paper, and to the Kansas Committee for the Humanities, whose "Speakers Bureau" inspired an earlier version of this paper, the first audience being a county extension group in Cimarron (Gray County). It was also presented in 1989 to annual meetings of the Kansas History Teachers Association and the Kansas Folklore Society, and benefited from audience feedback and encouragement for subsequent revisions.

2. For the 1974 version of the Turkey Red story, see Harley Stucky, "The Wheat Centennial Year in Review," December 16, 1974, typescript of news release, KSHS; HBC 1014, *Journal of the House of the Kansas Legislature*, January 22, 1973: 61-61; "Golden Grows the Grain," *Kansas* (no. 1, 1974): 13-18; Jane Hogan, "US-50 Designated Wheat Centennial Memorial Highway," *Highway Highlights* (June 1974): 8-9; Herbert F. Friesen, "History of Turkey Hard Wheats in U.S.A." (Dodge City: High Plains Publ., n. d.); and--for the next generation: *The Story of Wheat Coloring Book*, as played by the Anna Barkman Road Company, Hillsboro, Kansas (Hillsboro: TC-AV Productions, 1974). The best, scholarly account is K. S. Quisenberry and L. P. Reitz, "Turkey Wheat: the Cornerstones of Empire," *Agricultural History*, vol. 48, no. 1 (January 1974): 98-110.

3. Esther Loewen Vogt, *Turkey Red* (Elgin, Ill.: David C. Cook Publ. Co., 1975).

4. Ian Frazier, "A Reporter at Large: Great Plains III," *The New Yorker*, March 6, 1989: 54-55.

5. For an excellent essay on the interrelations of myth and history and the historian's role, see Austin E. Fife, "Folklore and Local History," chapter four of his *Exploring Western Americana* (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press, 1988), pp. 45-54.

6. A classic account of the Mennonite migration--and still useful--is C. Henry Smith, *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites: An Episode in the Settling of the Last Frontier, 1874-1884* (Berne, Indiana: Mennonite Book Concern, 1927). For particulars

as to Kansas, see my article, "The Migration of the Russian-Germans to Kansas," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, vol. 40, no. 1 (Spring 1974): 38-62.

7. Wichita *Eagle*, August 27, 1874; Alberta Pantle, citing elder Jacob Wiebe, "Settlement of the Krimmer Mennonite Brethren at Gnadenau, Marion County," *The Kansas Historical Quarterly*, vol. 13, no. 5 (February 1945): 269. For rich descriptions of Mennonite arrivals, see Topeka *Daily Commonwealth*, especially the articles by Noble Prentis, July 26 and October 15, 1874, and April 25, 1875.

8. Bliss Isely, "Why Kansas is a Great Wheat State," Wichita *Beacon*, May 15, 1927, in Wheat Clippings, vol. 1, 1870-1930, KSHS. This was repeated by a number of newspapers, notably by the Kansas City *Star*, June 5, 1927, under the heading, "Mennonite Children Selected the Wheat Seed that Has Made Kansas Famous." F. D. Coburn gave the credit to Warkentin: "Fighting a Bread Famine," *The Saturday Evening Post*, vol. 182, no. 45 (May 7, 1910): 3-4.

9. Carroll K. Michener, "Stuffed Straights: from the Managing Editor Sifter," *The Northwestern Miller*, June 28, 1944.

10. Wichita *Beacon*, May 15, 1927; Kansas City *Star*, June 5, 1927; "Highlights of Gnadenau," Parkview Centennial Committee (Canton: The Sterling Press, 1974), pp. 7-9. One other story of wheat being brought directly from Russia in 1875 surfaced in 1949, when a trunk belonging to Abraham Seibert, who settled near Dundee in Barton County, returned to Kansas along with the claim that it had contained Turkey Red wheat. "Treasure Chest That Brought Kansas Start in Wheat Goes to Great Bend as Its 'Home'," Topeka *Daily Capitol*, November 1, 1949, Santa Fe Clippings, KSHS.

11. A. S. Nifontov, *Zernovoe proizvodstvo Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX veka* [The Grain Production of Russia in the Second Half of the 19th Century] (Moscow: Nauka, 1974), pp. 184-86.

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 171-75. One of the best contemporary sources is an Englishman who was selling agricultural machinery to the Mennonites in Russia: George Hume, *Thirty Five Years in Russia* (London: Simpkin, Marshall, Hamilton, Kent & Co., 1914), pp. 50-55. He notes that a hard wheat produced by Mennonites in the 1860s was much in demand in Italy for macaroni.

13. For the history of this unique Mennonite village see David V. Wiebe, *Grace Meadow: The Story of Gnadenau and Its First Elder, Marion County, Kansas* (Hillsboro: Mennonite Brethren Publishing House, 1967), and Prantle, *The Kansas Historical Quarterly* (February 1945): 259-85.

14. On varieties of wheat: Harvey County *News*, October 6 and November 24, 1875; and Marion County *Record*, January 24, 1878. On the seed wheat for the Mennonites, see Glenn Danford Bradley, *The Story of the Santa Fe* (Boston: Richard G. Badger, 1920), p. 123. On the Mennonite special concentration on wheat: "The Russian settlers make a great specialty of wheat, and are largely increasing its production in Marion County every year. Our Americans raise immense quantities of it, but do not make it so much of a specialty--rather preferring a variety of crops." Peabody *Gazette*, July 29, 1881; and "Wheat around Gnadenau looks well, of which there is considerable." Marion County *Record*, April 13, 1879. But on the continuing dominance of corn: Topeka *Daily Commonwealth*, October 26, 1879.

15. For good outlines of wheat history, see Homer E. Socolofsky, "History of Wheat," in *Wheat-Field to Market: The Story of the Golden Crop* (Hutchinson: Kansas Wheat Commission, 2d ed., 1969), pp. 7-24; James L. Colwell, "American Wheat

Varieties: Our History in Microcosm," *Social Science Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3 (October 1979): 67-78; and Quisenberry and Reitz, cited above.

16. Topeka *Capital*, February 10, 1910, in Wheat Clippings, vol. 1, KSHS.

17. James Malin, *Winter Wheat in the Golden Belt of Kansas: A Study in Adaptation to Subhumid Geographical Environment* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1944), pp. 30, 66-67; Stuart Henry [brother of T. C. Henry], *Kansas Winter Wheat: Winter Wheat in the Golden Belt of Kansas: A Reply and Critique by an Eyewitness*, by author, n.d.; Kansas City *Journal*, n. d. (1904?), Wheat Clippings, KSHS.

18. Russell County Census, 1885. As late as 1882 the North Topeka Farmers Club debated the topic: "Can wheat be successfully raised in Kansas?" The Topeka *Times*, June 30, 1882.

19. Isaac Newton, Department of Agriculture, Washington, to Bayard Taylor, Secretary of Legation, St. Petersburg, October 6, 1862, Diplomatic Post Records, Russia, vol. 4501, p. 20, Record Group 84, National Archives; Herman Steen, *Flour Milling in America* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Reprint, 1973), p. 44.

20. "The Wheat Harvest," Topeka *Daily Commonwealth*, June 22, 1880; "Experiments in Wheat Raising," Newton *Kansan*, November 9, 1882; Mark A. Carleton, "Hard Wheats Winning Their Way," *Yearbook of the United States Department of Agriculture 1914* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1915), p. 402. Around the village of Catherine in Ellis County that summer were grown 1,730 acres of winter wheat, 738 acres of corn, 140 of millet, 138 of oats, 40 of sorghum, 36 of potatoes, and 8 acres of tobacco. Hays City *The Star-Sentinel*, July 13, 1882.

21. North Topeka *Mail*, quoting the Marion *Record*, October 25, 1883; Malin, p. 181.

22. Hays City *German-American Advocate*, July 18, 1883.

23. Steen, pp. 49-51.

24. On Warkentin, see M. E. Schmidt, "Bernhard and Wilhelmine Warkentin," typescript, Manuscript Department, KSHS; David A. Haury, "Bernhard Warkentin and the Kansas Mennonite Pioneers," *Mennonite Life*, vol. 27, no. 3 (September 1974): 70-76; and Jan Preston, "The Warkentin Legacy," *Kansas!*, 1987, no. 1.

25. The Russian chapter of Turkey Red has yet to be written, and sources are not easily attainable. Since *arnautka* was apparently a Turkish term for special Albanian (terroristic?) tax collectors in the Balkans, one possible scenario is that wheat collected in Bulgaria found its way to the Tatars in the Crimea, where it was discovered by the Mennonites moving there just after the Crimean War. But it was known to Russians as early as 1840. V. I. Dal', *Tolkovyi slovar' zhivago Velikorusskago iazyka* [Explanatory Dictionary of the Living Great Russian Language], vol. 1 (Moscow, 1863), p. 20; I. Demol's article of 1842 in I. Palimpsestov, ed. *Sbornik statei o sel'skom khoziaistve iuga Rossii--izvlechennykh iz Zapisok Imperatorskogo Obschestva . . . s 1830 po 1868 god* [A Collection of Articles about the Agriculture of South Russia--Extracted from the Notes of the Imperial Society . . . from 1830 to 1868] (Odessa: P. Frantsov, 1868), pp. 271-73.

26. Malin, p. 196; *Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture for the Quarter Ending March, 1920* (Topeka: Kansas State Printing Plant, 1920), p. 219. Another source reports that Kansas hard wheat flour reached Paris as early as 1884. C. B. Hoffman, "Milling in the Kansas Wheat Belt," *Thirteenth Biennial Report of the*

Kansas State Board of Agriculture for the Years 1901 and 1902 (Topeka: Kansas Department of Agriculture, 1903), pp. 538-39.

27. W. J. Krehbiel, *The McPherson Republican Magazine Supplement*, March 1, 1901; and Krehbiel, *McPherson County*, May 23, 1902; Paul R. Lawrence, "Newton Mills and the Santa Fe," *The Santa Fe Magazine*, vol. 26, no. 7 (June 1932): 22-24; Allen Pauls, "The Milling Industry in Inman, Kansas," *Heritage of the Great Plains*, vol. 21, no. 3 (Summer 1988): 32-37; Steen, pp. 49-54.

28. S. M. Bogdanov, *Illiustrirovannyi Sel'skokhoziaistvennyi Slovar'* [Illustrated Agricultural Dictionary] (Kiev: Barskii, 1895), p. 1087.

29. Henry King, "Picturesque Features of Kansas Farming," *Scribner's Monthly*, vol. 19, no. 1 (November 1879): 132.

30. *Seventh Biennial Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture. . .for the Years 1889-1890* (Topeka: Kansas Publ. House, 1891), part II, pp. 5-9.

31. Carleton, "Hard Wheats," p. 401; Malin, p. 205; Newton *Republican*, October 22, 1888.

32. Carleton, "Wheat Improvement in Kansas," *Thirteenth Biennial Report*, pp. 514-15; Malin, p. 206; Great Bend *Tribune*, August 12, 1936, in Wheat Clippings, KSHS; Paul de Kruif, "The Wheat Dream: Carleton," in *Hunger Fighters* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1928), p. 14.

33. H. A. Fitz, "Wheat As the Kansas Miller Wants It," *Kansas Farmer*, August 20, 1910, in Wheat Clippings, vol. 1, KSHS, p. 47; De Kruif, pp. 17- 24; "Wheat Growers are Highly Interested in Kharkov Wheat," Wichita *Eagle*, June 25, 1909, in Wheat Clippings, vol. 1, KSHS, p. 41.

34. Malin, p. 206; *Report of the Kansas State Board of Agriculture*, 1920, p. 213; Colwell, *Social Science Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3: 75-76.

35. Topeka *Journal*, April 2, 1928, in Wheat Clippings, vol. 1, KSHS; Raymond L. Flory, *Historical Atlas of McPherson County* (McPherson: McPherson County Historical Society, 1983), p. 47.

36. Wheat Clippings, vol. 1, KSHS, p. 65.

37. For the next chapter, on how the pure Turkey varieties were supplanted by shorter, stronger stemmed hybrids, such as Marquis, Triumph, and Scout, that were easier to combine and more drought and disease resistant, see Dana G. Dalrymple, "Changes in Wheat Varieties and Yields in the United States, 1919-1984," *Agricultural History*, vol. 62, no. 4 (fall 1988): 20-36.