

The Obituary of Johannes K. (“J. K.”) Penner

November 27, 1850 - October 8, 1924

Johannes K. (“J. K.”) Penner was born on November 27, 1850 at 12:30 a.m. in [Elbing, West Prussia](#) to Peter Penner and Catherine Kroker Penner. Peter and Catherine had moved to the town of Elbing, West Prussia in 1848, just before the [Revolution of 1848](#). Other children born to this union were Peter (1846), Agathe (1849), Helen (1852), and Wilhelm (1854). Peter died in 1846 at the age of five days. Agathe died December 24, 1850, when J. K. was not even a month old. His sister Helen died on October 7, 1853, at the age of 19 months, when J. K. was not quite three years of age.

J. K.’s father died on September 1, 1855 of cholera before J. K. was five years old. His mother, Catherine, entered widowhood with only two of five children surviving, J. K. and William. For a few years, his mother lived on the third floor of the old Mennonite Church in Elbing, presumably in poverty.¹

In 1856, J. K.’s mother sent him to school at the age of six years. His teacher was Miss Grubart. In 1857 he attended kindergarten (pre 1st class) at the higher burgerschool, presumably in Elbing. On October 4, 1864, Catherine took J. K. to the school in [Broskerfelde](#), where he was taught by [Johannes Claassen](#). He began classes the next day, October 5. About 18 months later, in the spring of 1866, his mother Catherine and his brother William moved to Broskerfelde.

More to follow...

¹ Henry W. Claassen: *J. K. Penner: From Revolution to Revelation!*, p. 5.

Entry from [Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online](#):

Penner, Johannes K. (1850-1926)

Johannes K. Penner (1850-1926), usually called "Lehrer Penner," was born at [Elbing](#), West Prussia, Germany, on 27 November 1850. He attended the school at Elbing and the private school at Bröskefeld, where [Johannes Claassen](#) was his teacher. In 1867 he was baptized by Johann Töws and became a teacher at Bröskefeld. In 1860 he attended the normal school at [Marienburg](#) and in 1870 emigrated with his mother and brother to the [Am Trakt settlement](#), Saratov, Russia, where he became a teacher. On 4 October 1874, he married Helen Jantzen. In 1875 he was elected minister. In 1880 Penner joined the group that moved to Central Asia to escape military service and meet the Lord. Disillusioned, he joined the group who went to America, and arrived in [Beatrice, NE](#) on 19 September 1884, where he taught in a private school and served as minister. His 50th anniversary in teaching was commemorated on 16 June 1917. He died on 8 October 1926.

Bibliography

Andreas, W. C. "Highlights and Sidelights of the Mennonites in Beatrice." *Mennonite Life* I (July 1946): 22.

"Etwas aus dem Leben Pred. J. K. Penner." *Bundesbote-Kalender* (1926): 28.