

Forestry (Forstei) Lists: 1881-1904

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Background

Between 1881 and 1918 many thousands of young Russian Mennonite men were drafted into the Forestry Service (Forsteidienst). For more information on the Forsteidienst see the related GAMEO [article](#). Although much has been written about the Forstei, important information has been hard to find. For example 1) just what was the process by which young men were drafted (it appears men of “draft age” were chosen through the drawing of lots), 2) what was the “draft age”? and 3) how many men actually served in each year or served throughout the 37 year history of the Forstei?

There are many lists of Forstei recruits found in scattered primary sources. I have chosen to include only the earlier lists of 1881 to 1901 and only those lists I consider to be of genealogical importance. Lists which contain only a recruit’s name without any further identifying information are essentially useless for genealogical purposes and not worth the effort of including here. Many of the lists I have included here provide genealogically important information such as: 1) the village of origin of the person – these were often hard to figure out since some of the young men who wrote these lists were thinking in Plautdietsch when writing down these location names or location names were misspelled. I have occasionally edited these to make them recognizable. 2) the patronymic – by the time the Forstei was started Mennonites had adopted the Russian tradition of using the father’s name as a middle name. Note that Mennonites during this time period did NOT have middle names. See [Mennonites and Middle Names](#). The patronymics were useful for Mennonites in terms of distinguishing people of the same name (and there was never a shortage of that!). This tradition continued in many North American Mennonite communities. 3) Birth date – several lists include the person’s date of birth (but not year). I suspect that this was because birthdays were regularly celebrated in the Forstei camps. 4) Year(s) of service – during these early years it appears that most men started their Forsteidienst at the age of 21 or 22 and served for 4 years. Therefor it is possible to estimate the birth years of the men in these lists.

The lists provided here represent a fraction of the thousands who served during this time. It should be noted that some lists have the year 1880. I am not sure why, since the first camps were not started until April of 1881. Perhaps these men were already sent draft notices in 1880. The Forstei system officially started in September of 1880.

The lists are in approximate chronological order. In most cases, each list is organized by surname.

For more documents regarding the Forstei, including letters, maps etc., see <https://chort.square7.ch/FB/forstd.html>.

[Forstei List A: Jacob Epp Lists: 1881 and 1882](#), from the Jacob Epp Diary, Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 4639 File 4, compiled by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List B: Christlicher Bundes-Bote List for 1881](#), Christlicher Bundes-Bote 15 July 1882 pages 110-111, compiled by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List C: Veliko-Anadol Lists: 1881 & 1882](#), original in Zaporizhzhе Archives, copy & translation Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5564, digitized by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List D: Peter Hiebert Anadol Lists for 1880, 1884, 1885 and 1886](#), Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 4045 File 9, compiled by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List E: Zur Heimat List for 1880](#), Zur Heimat 21 June 1881 page 94, compiled by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List F: Peter Peters Lists, 1883-1889](#), Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5457 File 4, compiled by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List G: 1884-1887 Forstei Leave Requests](#), Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg, Russia (RGIA) Fond 387 Opis 4 Delo 30129, translated by Tatiana Drozdova; transcribed and edited by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List H: Gerhard Froese Lists: 1885-1889](#), Centre for Mennonite Brethren Studies (CMBS) Volume 956 Files 7 & 8, compiled by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List I: Leave Requests from Vladimirovskoye: 1888](#), Russian State Historical Archive, St. Petersburg, Russia (RGIA) Fond 387 Opis 4 Delo 30129, translated by Tatiana Drozdova; transcribed and edited by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List J: Berdiansk List for 1894](#), original in Zaporizhzhе Archives, Copy & Translation Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5564, digitized by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List K: Crimean Phylloxera Unit: 1896 – 1898](#), original in Zaporizhzhе Archives, Copy & Translation Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5564, digitized by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List L: Berdiansk List for 1898](#), original in Zaporizhzhе Archives, copy & translation Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5564, digitized by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List M: Forstei “Calling Cards” List for 1898](#), original in Zaporizhzhе Archives, Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5564 File 9, translated by Tatiana Drozdova; edited by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List N: Forstei “Calling Cards” List for 1900](#), original in Zaporizhzhе Archives, Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5564 File 12, translated by Tatiana Drozdova; edited by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei List O: Forstei “Calling Cards” List for 1901](#), original in Zaporizhzhе Archives, Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5564 File 9, translated by Tatiana Drozdova; edited by Glenn H Penner.

[Forstei Lists P to U: Lists for 1880-1891](#), from the Peter J. Braun Archives File 2900, translated by Sergei Chaiderman: edited by Glenn H. Penner.

[Forstei Lists V and W: Lists for 1896 to 1902](#), from the Mennonite Heritage Archives Volume 5016 File 10, transcribed by Glenn H. Penner.

[Forstei List X: Lists for 1898 to 1904](#), from the Diary of Franz Toews (1901-04), Mennonite Heritage Archives File 2294, translated by Glenn H. Penner and Tatiana Drozdova.

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