

## THE PROMISED LAND

### Spokane's Hutterite Community—A Place Where History Lives

By Vance J. Youmans

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Embodying the Radical Reformation that gave them birth, the Hutterite communities of North America, with their unique dress and culture, endure as enclaves of living history. The Hutterite communities, or *bruderhofs*, remain quite apart from the mainstream of modern society, unseen and unheard by most people.

In 1960 a group of Hutterites, whose roots date back to early 16th-century Switzerland, moved to the outskirts of Spokane, Washington, where today they work, dress and play much as their ancestors did over 400 years ago

Living in communes of usually not more than 150 people, the Hutterites typically practice dryland agriculture on a large scale. Hutterite communities, or "colonies," strive for complete self-sufficiency; they raise virtually everything they need for their sustenance, buying only what they cannot produce on their own land (notably coffee, tea, sugar, salt, light bulbs, chemicals, etc.). Though dressing and living by guidelines hundreds of years old, the Hutterites, paradoxically, engage in the acquisition of the most modern farming technology—a practice that allows them to conduct extremely successful agrarian operations.

Being astute business administrators, the Hutterites generally establish prosperous colonies. This success leads to the development of daughter colonies, a necessity that arises after a colony reaches a certain critical mass. When a colony "branches"—that is, divides to form a new colony—half of the population departs to a pre-selected site, taking its share of the assets with it. Continuous growth has given the Hutterites in North America an estimated population of 30,000 people living in some 300 colonies. These communities tend to double their population every 17 years.

Though attentive to business, the Hutterites remain devoted to religious principles. According to John Hostettler in his book, *Hutterite Society*:

*Hutterites sometimes compare the colony to the ark of Noah in the biblical account of the flood. Only those in the ark (the colony) are prepared to escape the judgment of God and to receive eternal life. In the Hutterite view, "You either are in the ark, or you are not in the ark."*

Baptism is fundamental, says Hostettler: "Baptized members are believed to have received the supernatural gift of the Holy Spirit through obedience and submission and to have more power and responsibility over those who have not been baptized."

Order dominates the Hutterites' universe. The hierarchy in the community, thought to be divinely ordained, gives older people authority over younger, men over women, and the colony over all individual members. God's word stands as the ultimate authority over the community, and compromise has no place.

A council of elders comprises the governing authority of the community. Ministers, managers and vocational bosses all have supervisory positions over the other men and boys who make up the male work force. In the female subculture there is only one official post, that of head cook. All of the other women and older girls comprise the work force assigned to perform traditional women's work.

The Hutterites do not undergo change as rapidly as the rest of modern society. Any type of change must be formally proposed and must be approved by the council. Modifications that improve the community economically, such as a fully loaded Big Bud tractor, are eagerly sought; but personal conveniences such as dishwashers are considered "worldly" items and therefore shunned.

The Hutterites' clothing distinguishes them from the rest of society. Their uniformity in dress is thought to reduce individual pride and advance the idea of a unified community. Hutterian men generally wear dark denim trousers held up by suspenders. They almost always wear hats, especially while working. Beards are mandatory after marriage, especially after the first child is born. Unlike the Amish, Hutterian men keep their hair and beards relatively short.

Women always wear ankle-length dresses and long aprons, reminiscent of their central European heritage. Patterns are allowed, either plaids or floral prints. The prescribed head covering is almost always a black kerchief with white polka dots. Infants often wear bright clothes, but when they become toddlers they are dressed as mirror images of the adults.

A group of these colorful people established a community on the outskirts of Spokane in 1960, already having farmed in the Big Bend area of Washington for four years. They came from Canada seeking suitable farmland on which to carry on their agrarian tradition. To understand how they came to inhabit the Pacific Northwest we must first go back to the beginning of their history.

The Hutterites trace their origin to the Protestant Reformation. Their spiritual forbears held that religious reforms should result in nothing less than communities of believers who practiced the literal tenets of the Bible. They rejected government in their spiritual lives, refused to bear arms or support coercion of any form, and would not swear allegiance to any political body.

One group of these reformers was called the "Anabaptists." This essentially derogatory term literally means "rebaptiser." Learned men in the Anabaptist movement, after careful scrutiny of the Scriptures, reached the conclusion that infant baptism had no biblical basis. Baptism, therefore, was limited to adults who understood the Christian religion and made a "confession of faith." This position was considered heretical by the established church. Since the church and state were virtually synonymous, the other nonconformist views held by the Anabaptists were seen as threatening the established social order.

So the Anabaptists were persecuted: thousands were imprisoned, tortured and executed for their faith. In the ensuing years of the early 16th century, many fled their homelands to the outer reaches of the Holy Roman Empire, where religious toleration existed in varying degrees. In 1528 a group of Anabaptists embarked on a journey from Nickolsburg, in Moravia, to escape the persecutions. On this journey the leaders spread a cloak on the ground and all of the people deposited their personal possessions on it. The goods were then distributed as the need arose, thus beginning the practice of "community of goods." This group settled in Austerlitz, also in Moravia, and developed their system of Christian communal living.

These were the original founders of the Hutterian Brethren. Through the efforts of their bishop, Jacob Hutter, and his assistants, a well-defined communal pattern of living was established that remains virtually unchanged to this day.

In Austerlitz the Hutterites were left largely to themselves, and the *bruderhofs* ("houses of the brethren") prospered. By 1620, however, the Thirty Years War had disrupted central Europe and the Hutterites were forced to flee. They migrated to Hungary and then to Transylvania and Wallachia (both in modern Romania). They were forced to migrate again during the war between Russia and the Ottoman Empire.

In 1770 a decimated group of Hutterites accepted a Russian count's offer to settle on his estate in the Ukraine; here they were assured religious freedom and exemption from military service. The tolerant regime of Catherine the Great, however, gave way to more militaristic rule, and in 1871 the Hutterites lost their right to freedom from military conscription. Rather than give up this privilege, and thus compromise their principles, they decided once again to emigrate, this time to the United States. Immigration came in three waves; the first Hutterites arrived in the Dakota Territory in 1874, the last in 1879. On the Dakota prairie the Hutterian Brethren had, seemingly, found peace at last. They prospered greatly and evolved into three interrelated groups, each of which developed subtle differences in its respective approach to the world. In religious matters, however, they remained identical.

The Hutterian Brethren grew in numbers and branched out in various directions. Some moved to Canada during World War I. The sequence of one clan's migrations, the Gross family's, led them to Pincher Creek, Alberta. Pincher Creek Colony prospered and effectively weathered the storm of the Great Depression. Over time, however, the colony grew to such a size that it was forced to undergo a formal split.

Under the leadership of their minister, Reverend Paul S. Gross, the Pincher Creek Hutterites looked for land in Mexico, Saskatchewan, Alberta and Montana. Then a crooked grain dealer entered the picture and would forever change the lives of the Pincher Creek Hutterites. Paul Gross recalled:

*He must have sold over half a million dollars worth of hybrid wheat to our people in Alberta—dry land grain that yielded a good harvest, you know—and everybody bought it, everybody. Well, he couldn't deliver, so we looked for him and found him in Washington.*

Telephone contacts were made, and the man disclosed that he had neither the grain nor the money. The Hutterites immediately went to their attorney, who contacted a lawyer in Tacoma. It was discovered that the grain dealer had a home in Sunnyside, in the Yakima Valley. When the

lawyer put a \$5,000 lien on his house, he decided to negotiate: "You come down to Sunnyside and we'll talk." During the visit the grain dealer, who owned a twin-engine airplane, offered to show the Hutterites land throughout south-central Washington.

"Well, we got into his plane and we looked at land, but you don't see much from the air," noted Paul Gross. "We did see lots of land—grass-covered hills—but it didn't suit us. So we went home and decided to return with a car."

At some point during their search for a new home, Paul Gross set his sights firmly on the state of Washington. Apparently the view from the air provided at least some measure of clarity, for Gross recalls: "In the back of my mind I had it; since we couldn't buy land in Alberta where we wanted, this could be our future home." Washington was already attractive to Gross because he had heard good things about the state:

*In the late 1800s when the railroad was being built out here, my great-uncle left his home in South Dakota and came west. During that time, the railroad was constructed in the daytime and the Indians would tear it up at nighttime—so the going was slow. Well, the end of the line for my great-uncle was right here in Washington. He loved it so much that he didn't want to go back to Dakota; they had to come get him.*

The stories that Gross's great-uncle told him about Washington always remained lodged in his memory. "He told me Washington was a paradise. Good land, good water, good climate. When we were looking for those things, I remembered what he had said."

The Pincher Creek Hutterites made three trips to Washington looking for farmland. The last journey proved fruitful, though it did not seem so at first. They were actually on their way back to Canada when they stopped for a night's rest in Ritzville.

*We couldn't find anything that was suitable. I stayed up in the hotel lobby and read a paper—almost went to sleep. A man came up to me and said, "Do you know the Mennonites?" I replied, "We're cousins to the Mennonites. We're Hutterians, and we're looking for land."*

The man with whom Gross spoke knew of a ranch that was for sale. He gave Gross directions, and the next day the little band of Hutterian men drove west into "Mennonite territory," and located the home of Clarence Hagen.

*We had on big coats, you know; it was cold. Big coats, caps and beards. He was in his orchard pruning his trees. I said, "Mr. Hagen? Hagen Ranch? Clarence Hagen?" He looked at us and said, "Are you from Mars? What do you want?" I said, "A land agent by the name of Smith said your ranch was for sale." Hagen said to us, "I'll sell or rent to you, either way you want." He had two kids there; they were afraid of us, you know.*

With this introductory phase behind them, the Hutterites and Clarence Hagen were ready to proceed.

Before a deal could be made, Paul Gross had to defend his decision before his brethren in Alberta. Migration to Washington was seen as almost a rebellious move by other Hutterites in Alberta. This move, if it went through, meant actually crossing the Rocky Mountains—something

the Hutterites had never attempted before. Most of the Hutterites were in favor of remaining on the prairie; to the majority, Washington was out of the question.

*For this transaction, the matter had to be brought before our bishop and elders in Alberta. However, the bishop was a good friend of mine and it wasn't hard to persuade him. But his assistant elders were hard to persuade. They said: "Paul Gross will become a renegade. For the sheep that strays from the flock becomes prey to the wolves."*

Gross successfully defended his position, however, and gained approval for the move.

As the Hutterites were planning to relocate permanently in Washington, it was necessary to hire a local lawyer. With the assistance of Clarence Hagen, they located a lawyer in Ritzville by the name of Leonard F. Jansen who had practiced law there since 1951. He recalls his first introduction to the Hutterites in the following account:

*One day in the summer of 1955 I was in my office in Ritzville when suddenly the door opened and in walked about ten or twelve bearded men with black hats and black suits, accompanied by Clarence Hagen. I said to myself "My God! What hath God wrought?" [I] come to find out, they were the Hutterian Brethren of Pincher Creek, Alberta, Canada. Clarence said to me, "I'm going to lease the John L. Fox farm to these people, and you've got to become their lawyer."*

Jansen agreed, and thus began a business relationship that would last for over 35 years. With their lawyer's assistance, the Hutterites purchased 800 acres of the Fox estate as well as 3,800 acres leased from Mrs. Hagen. Their new home was situated near Lind.

The Hutterites immediately faced the challenge of switching from dry-land to irrigation farming. But they had always been able to adapt. As one of the migrants noted:

*The farmer will have to be adaptable to crops and methods that can get the price and not what he wants to grow or thinks he can only grow.... We learned to use it the hard way, but it's important to have good timing and efficiency with an irrigation system, and I think the communal colony can handle that very well.*

They launched into their wheat-growing operation, and by early August they were bringing in their first grain harvest. That autumn they also enjoyed the bounty of their vegetable and fruit harvests.

The Hutterites' experimental enterprise in Washington initially involved only two families. Elias Wollman, Paul Gross's brother-in-law, was the patriarch of the group. A reporter noted:

*The eight members of his family and the five in the family of his son, Jacob, are its nucleus. Two nephews, Mike and Sammy Gross, and two girls from the parent colony in Pincher Creek are with them to help get the community organized and aid with the wheat harvest. All seventeen live in the former Hagen home and an adjacent bunkhouse.*

The Hutterites were well-received in the area, a phenomenon they had not always enjoyed during their history. The conviction that Washington was indeed a good choice for their relocation was affirmed by the productive agriculture: "Here, it's a longer and better season, a

milder winter." Paul Gross noted, "We can grow much more than we could at home. That's the advantage we have."

Though the move from Canada was relatively smooth, it was not without opposition. The Immigration and Naturalization Service stubbornly fought the repatriation of the Hutterites. They had, however, a competent legal mediator in Leonard Jansen, who successfully engineered their migration: "I'm the reason they are here now; I enabled them to return to the United States because they were either born in the United States or were born of American parents. We had many a battle with the immigration service over this...."

The Hutterian experiment in the Big Bend region proved a success. Seasonal work parties came and went and, consequently, the Pincher Creek Hutterites decided to support a fully established *bruderhof*. Between 1956 and 1959 the group had continued to look for a large dryland farm they could buy. With their sights set firmly on Washington, the Hutterites persisted in their search throughout the Big Bend; they looked farther east, even as far as the Palouse. Meanwhile, they continued their farming operation near Lind, during which time they bought and sold machinery in their efforts to keep abreast of the latest technology.

It was a farm machinery salesman who notified the Hutterites of a place that was for sale near Deep Creek, outside of Spokane. The Hutterian Brethren entered into negotiations with Alvin P. Brende, owner of the Brende Machinery Company of Spokane. Brende began selling tracts of land to them in May 1960. Within a month they had bought six tracts of land and had leased several others, totaling approximately 3,000 acres.

Prior to the land negotiations, the board of trustees for the group filed their articles of incorporation in January 1960. These articles, signed by Paul Gross, Jacob Wollman, and Elias Wollman, and notarized by attorney Leonard Jansen, organized the Hutterian Brethren of Spokane as a full religious corporation under sanction of Chapter 24.08 of the Revised Code of Washington. By legally incorporating themselves, the Hutterites were recognized as

*a body politic and corporate, with perpetual succession; they shall be capable, in law, of suing and being sued, pleading and being impleaded, answering and being answered in all the courts of the state; they may have a common seal, alter and change the same at pleasure; acquire, mortgage and sell property, personal and real, for the purpose of carrying out the objects of the corporation, and make bylaws, rules and regulations, as they may deem proper and best for the welfare and good order of the corporation; and may amend the articles of incorporation by supplemental articles, executed and filed the same as the original articles: Provided, that such bylaws, rules and regulations be not contrary to the Constitution and laws of the United States, and the existing laws of the state.*

With the security of these legal provisions, the Hutterites proceeded to buy more land in Spokane County. They began plans for the construction of the colony's buildings and obtained the necessary permits from the county that summer; work on the property, however, did not begin until the late autumn of 1960. From November 1960 through January 1961 the Wollman families moved to the site from the farm near Lind, and Pincher Creek colony formally split—completing the process begun with the initial migration to Washington—with approximately half of the families moving to the newly acquired property. "At Pincher Creek [a] new manager was elected together with his board, as the management had chosen to move to Washington."

There were now 60 Hutterites permanently residing in Washington. During the construction of the buildings, the members of the community lived in temporary quarters; it would not be long, however, before they moved into their completed living units. After the building permits were secured and the families moved to the site, the Hutterites contracted Bestway Building Supply in Spokane, a subsidiary of Boise Cascade, to build prefabricated structures, which were then moved to the colony for assembly. The contractor in charge of the operation was Stan Sloan, a recent graduate of Washington State College. Noted Sloan, "I built that colony; I was, for the most part, the main contractor for that whole project. Eli Wollman said to my boss, 'I never put as much trust in anyone as I have in that young man. When he said this he was pointing to me.'"

Sloan, his work crew, and the Hutterite men assembled three duplexes, "each suitable for two or three families." In addition to these they built a dining hall, with kitchen, bakery, large walk-in freezer and two dining rooms, as well as a chicken house and barn, poultry processing plant, machine shop, schoolhouse, laundry, and dairy barn—all erected by the summer of 1961. "The Hutterian characteristic of absolute orderliness was exemplified in the construction of the colony, all of the buildings were erected perpendicular to a north-south line."

The estimated value of the buildings, as recorded in the permits, was given at roughly \$72,000. Stan Sloan, however, puts the figure substantially higher.

*I can tell you right now that \$72,000 doesn't come close to the actual price tag for that colony. More than once Eli Wollman placed \$10,000, in cash, into my hands to come into Spokane to buy equipment or supplies for the colony. After the place was as complete as it was going to be for a while, I'd have to say that the Hutterites spent over \$300,000 on their community.*

The Hutterian Brethren proceeded with their communal, pacifistic way of life, living ironically, next to the air force missile sites of the Spokane Air Defense Sector. This did not bother them as the land for the missile sites had already been set aside for military purposes when the Hutterites bought their adjacent lands. Paul Gross echoed a perpetual Hutterian position when he said, "We are not concerned about things of the world."

While the Hutterites received a cordial welcome when they arrived in the Big Bend, now they faced their first hostile reception from Washingtonians. The *Spokesman-Review* published an article that brought considerable attention to the Hutterites:

*All is not well in the rolling Espanola country west of Spokane where a strangely somber Hutterite people formed a new American colony two years ago. The older families in the picturesque farm country have been growing uneasy of late over the presence in their midst of a "different people" whose religion, customs and mode of dress are strangely removed from the American viewpoint.*

This uneasiness was apparent among local farmers when the Hutterites first began buying land from Alvin Brende. Leonard Jansen recalls the early stages of the confrontation:

*They were able to pay fifty dollars more per acre than what the land was selling for. This advantage gave the Hutterian Brethren considerable leverage over local farmers who may have wanted to negotiate with Brende for his land. They were, in the view of the people of the vicinity, "foreigners," "different," "not to be trusted." This misunderstanding in some people often led to hatred.*

The *Spokesman-Review* summarized the reaction: "It is the outcropping of deep feelings of resentment on the part of Espanola farm families against what they consider an invasion by strangers."

The farming community elected to combat this "encroachment" by proposing to limit Hutterian expansion through restrictive legislation: "About 200 members of Spokane County Grange No. 4, meeting at Greenbluff Grange Hall, went on record unanimously in favor of a communal property law in the state of Washington."

The members of the Grange intended to present a formal petition for the cause at their statewide meeting in Bellingham, with the hope of introducing the measure to the state legislature. At this same time, locals who opposed the Hutterites printed derogatory literature and began to disseminate rumors about them.

The proposed measure by Grange members was potentially quite restrictive. The *Spokesman-Review* noted: "The purpose of the Grange petition is to put an end to the Hutterian practice of communal farms on which the land, crops and equipment are owned—not by an individual—but for the common use."

Paul Gross questioned the alleged threat of Hutterite expansion: "Does this seem outlandish? I know of many farm families who own much more. We are all American citizens.... It would seem that we have the right to farm as much land as we can acquire."

But the surrounding community was determined to keep the Hutterites from gaining additional lands. Often misconceptions about the Hutterian Brethren have tended to arise from the people who live closest to them, and during this incident the most vocal antagonist towards the colony was a Mrs. Ethel Peterson, "whose farm on Jacobs Road abuts the Hutterite property."

Peterson's agitation was a primary component of the previously mentioned newspaper article. In it she called the Hutterites, "'the world's oldest communists,' and followers of a system wherein all property is vested in the community and all labor practiced for the common good."

It was these elements of Hutterian practice, plus corporate purchasing power and virtually free labor from their members, that enabled them to buy good land in the region. Ethel Peterson complained:

*They claim religion as their basis.... They have registered in the state as a church but have no affiliations or missions with any churches or sects other than their own.... Our main objection is that they operate a farm under the guise of religion.... They want to get many concessions taxwise that permit them to make more money. Then they turn around and try to pressure us into selling them our farms.*

While it cannot be denied that the Hutterian Brethren were active in their land search, the charge that they put pressure on farmers to sell their land was unfounded. Nor was it correct to say that their faith was insincere or that they took advantage of tax laws. But considering the American fear of communism at the time, Ethel Peterson's labeling of the Hutterian Brethren as "the world's oldest communists" was powerful. She continued her verbal assault:



*Mrs. Peterson, pointing to the Russian background of the ancient religious sect, calls attention to the fact that the Hutterite land virtually surrounds two air force missile sites which are vital components of the Spokane Air Defense Sector. "You wonder if they bought their land close to missile sites by accident or design...."*

In the face of the inflamed opposition they encountered, the Hutterites remained characteristically calm. Paul Gross, as the spiritual leader and spokesman for the group, when referring to the measure proposed by the Grange, told the *Spokesman-Review*:

*We will do nothing to fight them.... We do not care to become involved in matters such as this. We believe in the old saying, 'Live and let live....' We will let this matter take its own course, and in the meantime we will go about our business as usual.*

Leonard Jansen, however, was not content to let the issue rest so easily:

*This is outright religious persecution ...of a group of fine people who want nothing more than to do their work and mind their own business. Somebody is going to get sued...unless all of this persecution is stopped immediately.*

When the *Spokesman-Review* published the article on May 27, 1962, the Hutterites and their attorney, considering it defamatory, sued the newspaper. Jansen recalled:

*We brought suit against the paper for publishing incorrect statements, chief of which was their [the Hutterites] being called communists. We won a modest sum of \$3,000 as well as a public retraction and apology by the Spokesman-Review. I was never so pleased in my life as I was to see Bill Cowles and his editorial staff quake at the prospect of being sued.*

The newspaper did not report on the litigation that took place between the Hutterian Brethren of Spokane and the *Spokesman-Review*, but it did formally apologize:

*The Spokesman-Review holds no belief that the Hutterite colony are anything other than substantial, responsible and loyal citizens of the United States. If the article reported viewpoints tending to impugn the reputation of the members of the colony, it was not the intention of the newspaper to do so, and it expresses regret and apologizes in the circumstance.*

The proposal for restrictive legislation never materialized. The Hutterian Brethren of Spokane were exonerated, and Paul Gross admonished his brethren to "never do anything without your lawyer." After this experience, life on the Hutterite farm proceeded with a regular schedule of hard work and much prayer.

During these early years in Washington the Hutterites learned newer, more effective methods of farming, "which included such practices as fertilizing, seed treatment, and different methods of planting and tilling the soil." Their total agrarian pursuit was time-consuming. They retained the dryland operation in Lind as well, and part of the work force from Espanola commuted back and forth every day. In the interest of productivity, the group sold the 400-acre irrigated farm in the late winter of 1963 and concentrated its efforts on the dryland farming of wheat, barley and hay. They added a commercial chicken raising department to the Espanola farm, an operation that had been a successful component of Pincher Creek Colony; however, this venture brought little profit for the colony in Washington, so they replaced the chickens with geese, ducks and

turkeys. As Sarah Anne Gross pointed out, "The chickens didn't bring in much money, only chicken feed." The geese population fixed at over 1,000, and the Hutterites subsequently became the only commercial geese raisers in Washington. At any given time, "We have 300 geese in cold storage in Spokane, ready for the oven."

As the colony progressed, the dairy operation grew as well. The Hutterites began with a small number of cows and slowly increased their herd. As the productivity of dairy goods gained momentum, the colony modernized its operation with an automated milking carousel that made it possible to "milk eight cows in eight minutes." The Carnation Company in Spokane signed a contract with the Spokane Hutterian Brethren, agreeing to purchase all of their milk. "We had 80 cows, but after meeting with Carnation and the bank we doubled the number." The dairy operation grew to such productive levels that this component of the colony's farm alone was "a half million dollar deal."

The Hutterites in the West have almost always farmed coarse grains such as wheat, barley and oats; the colony at Spokane was no exception. They added additional acreage for growing alfalfa for the dairy herd, and began taking some of their grain and alfalfa to the Fox Milling Corporation in Mead, which converted the mixtures into cattle feed. Raising their own feed for their own herds and flocks exemplified the Hutterian characteristic of seeking self-sufficiency.

At some point in the 1970s the group decided to raise commercial turf grass. As Jansen noted: "For several years, well into the 1980s, they raised this turf grass, but it was either not profitable or it simply did not suit them for one reason or another. In time this operation, too, was left by the wayside."

The grass-growing operation was sold to a Portland, Oregon, firm, and the Hutterites then discussed what their next venture would be. They had always grown potatoes for their own larder. By the mid 1970s they had increased the potato operation to 60 acres; yielding 30 tons per acre, this looked to be a productive endeavor. They decided to perfect this important staple, eventually adopting the seed potato as their primary department of production.

*The Hutterites discussed potatoes for quite some time. They researched every variant of potato tuber in the world, looking for the best class that would be the most profitable for them. It was discovered that the finest seed potato was found in Montana. After contacting some growers there, they sent several trucks to Montana and brought back enough seed to commence what would become a very substantial operation.*

The key to success in the agrarian life of the Hutterites has been their willingness to adapt to the dictates of the land on which they live. The change to potato farming was perhaps the most profitable one that they have made in their years in Washington. Bill Gross remembers, "Diversification is regulated by geography. Depending on the region, a colony grows what's best for that region. In our case, the best so far has been the seed potato. Idaho may be home of the famous potatoes, but Washington soil grows the finest...."

The growth of these various operations, combined with a modestly sized orchard, a five-acre garden, and the manufacture of numerous farm and shop implements, has served to establish the Hutterians in Washington.

The number of people of the colony has grown as well. Sixty people comprised the community's membership when it was first formed. Normally, 15 to 20 years pass before a colony doubles its population. By 1972, however, the colony's population was close to 100. Colony records show an approximate total of 30 babies born in Washington between 1956 and 1972." The addition of seven women through marriage brought the population to 97 by 1972. The growth rate of the Spokane Hutterian Brethren was countered by only one person's death. On Sunday, April 1, 1967, Paul Gross's wife, Sarah, died. She was the first person to be interred in the colony's small, private cemetery.

The proliferation of the community was rapid. Though many Hutterian colonies do not branch until a maximum population has been accommodated, the Darius Leut group, to which Deep Creek Colony belongs, "are more willing to form new colonies sooner, and do not mind starting out with a small labor force and marginal resources." For 12 years the Spokane group commuted to the land near Lind. In 1972 they decided on a formal division. Bill Gross commented,

*We branched prematurely. We had a pretty big operation down there, and we tried to run it from here. It was a real hassle, though, so we branched early. If we had waited until the typical colony size of between 120 and 150 was reached, we'd be splitting about now.*

The number of people was indeed smaller than usual, but the successes of the farm provided for substantial financial resources.

*When they decided to split in the traditional manner, we spent many long hours poring over the assets. Finally we were able to reach an agreement which was satisfactory to all of the membership, and both parties came away from the split with a very comfortable amount of capital.*

The Wollman families, accompanied by several Gross families, departed from Espanola and established the Warden Hutterian Brethren, Inc., "in Big Bend Electric Co-op territory, about 25 miles east of Moses Lake." This left a relatively small group of Hutterians in Spokane County to work their 3,600-acre farm while the new colony at Warden took over the 10,000-acre operation.

The Espanola community, now known as Spokane Colony, rose to the challenge of farming their land with a diminished labor pool. The enclave prospered in the ensuing years and acquired more land—5,000 acres total. Half the acreage is irrigated and the rest is dryland farmed. The Hutterites continue to raise seed potatoes as their chief support, and their repeated bumper crops indicate that their traditional stewardship of the land is continuing successfully in Washington.

Paul Gross feels that moving to Washington has been one of the wisest decisions he has ever made in his long life:

*I dearly love it here. The people are friendly and, on the average, spiritually minded. The land has been good to us and we've been good to the land. The climate is wonderful, too. When we get visitors from Alberta, I always ask them, "Has the wind stopped blowing yet?" Yes, Washington has been like a promised land for us.*

Besides the Spokane and Warden colonies, Washington has subsequently become home to two other fully established colonies—Stahville, near Ritzville, and Marlin, near Ruff. Additionally, two much smaller communities have been attempting to establish themselves near Odessa. Only time will tell if they will be successful; perhaps they, like the Spokane settlers, will be able to call Washington their "promised land."

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*Vance Youmans is a history instructor at Spokane Falls Community College and a scholar who specializes in cultural history. This article is derived from his award-winning book on the Hutterian Brethren, The Plough and the Pen.*