

The real story behind King City

by William E. Juhnke

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(H. B. Kelly's record, quoted in the John P. Edwards Atlas, is referred to. Valuable information on King City was furnished by Bertha Mugler Beam, her sister Carrie Mugler, and Gus Johnson. The first two live presently in McPherson; Gus still lives on his father's farm one west and 1/2 north of Elyria. Their parents were long-time residents of the township. Val Stucky, whose school picture and words were helpful in the story on Turkey Creek twp. (Feb. 1, 1973, Mdge. Journal), again gives valuable information. Jacob J. Wedel added extra personal touches. Misinterpretations and/or errors in fact are, of course, the full responsibility of the writer. wj)

Two steps are attempted in reporting the story of King City Township, the first, to explore what is behind an Indian treaty and the marker that represents it; and, second, to dig out the actual rather than the romantic story of a town named after one Dr. F. L. King.

Just south of Elyria, at one point of an obvious crossing of the Turkey Creek, stands a grove of spreading oaks. Indian arrowheads found under these now stately trees, as at other points, testify to an exciting story in and around King City that is all but forgotten.

The John P. Edwards map, used through the courtesy of Herb E. Stucky of Moundridge, shows the W. H. Loomis distillery on land owned and farmed by Herman J. and Dorothy Schrag and the John M. Schrag family. This distillery would be only a couple of stone throws slightly to the west of the oak grove.

Also, just off the Schrag farm is the marker for an Indian Treaty of 1825 on old highway 81 south of Elyria placed there by the Kansas Historical Society and the State Highway Commission. This spot is

less than two miles west of exit 54 on I-35 and a short distance SE of the WR Elevator in Elyria.

Cowboys-Indians-Rustlers

"In Western America the presence of Indians has done no more than give a touch of romance or a spice of danger to the explorations of some regions." That remarkable statement was made by James Bryce, English traveler and writer, who wrote it in 1888 after extensive visits in the trans-Mississippi region. Do you agree? Only a touch of romance and a spice of danger!

What would Lord Bryce have said had he lived to learn of the November, 1972, sacking of the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs, only a couple of days prior to the election? Or if he would have known of the ruckus at Wounded Knee, where in 1890 the frontier was supposedly closed, but as this is being written, it looks as though Bryce made the un-derstatement of the day.

Val Stucky and his older brother now deceased, Ben L. Stucky (father of Carl T. and Herb C. Stucky NW of Elyria), Val Krehbiel and Henry Voth were among the first Swiss-German businessmen in Elyria. Later came J. H. Stucky, C. B. Goering, John R. Stucky, Alvin Schrag, George Hackenberg, and others. Of course, they were preceded by F. L. King, A. G. Smith, John W. Hill and others of the first settlers of King City.

Val Stucky remembers the anecdote about how A. G. Smith had left his wife behind. When she did make her appearance and saw her husband dirty, blackened, sweaty in his own workshop she exclaimed, "We are going to go back right

now!"

Ben L. Stucky was the second depot agent following Perry Ball. Ben was followed by Dave Voth.

Living in apartment above the store while single for the first year, Val then married Ida Schrag and lived there for a time before building his own home. He affirms as quite factual stories of stolen horses being hid in a cove on the west bank of the Turkey Creek just a few yards before it leaves section 26. It was here cowboys learned to look for stolen critters and more often than not failed in their recovery.

Cowboys Attend Services

In the spring of 1872 a Sunday School was held in a dugout with Mr. D. D. Carpenter as superintendent. Cowboys came to the services. About this time a group of homesteaders, former Ohioans, came from Iowa, and located nearby. These included Byron, Milton and Hervey Williams. The latter led the colony of Baptists and held preaching missions over a store in old King City. These later were instrumental in organizing the McPherson Baptist Church.

A S.S. was started in the Elyria schoolhouse about 1912; services were conducted by a Rev. Fahlgren, a little man driving an old Ford who was an emotional milleniast and believed that the end times were near. A Rev. Switzer, a fiery revivalist in later years, is remembered. Back-sliders were plentiful even then.

A Baptist group held services at Victory school in the twp. starting in 1881. Centennial Unison S.S. began in 1888. It discontinued in 1936, however, a missionary society in that area of the township is still going. Santa Fe had a S.S. from 1905-1909.

I distinctly remember the story, a true account no doubt, told by Joe D.C. Goering when he raised the question, "What kind of priest was Moses father-in-law, the priest of Midian?" After a short pause came the positive reply, "A Catholic priest, of course!" The Catholic Church was over a thousand years off being born. Surely the Elyria S.S. was not just a Bible Belt innovation. It must have served a useful, community-building purpose.

Let us go back to the birth of King City.

Who Was Dr. King?

F. L. King is shown by the map as owning 320 acres on section 34. He was chosen president by the group composed mostly of veterans from Ashtabula, Ohio, and the group later, in respect for his leadership, chose to name the town and township in his honor.

Beam and Johnson report that the Ohio group had made a careful preliminary survey covering 17 counties in Kansas during the winter of 1870-71.

"They concluded that McPherson County was the most desirable for richness of soil and beauty.

"Salina was the nearest point by railroad. The county had good wheat and grazing land and hedges grew rapidly. Water could be obtained by digging 15 or 25 feet. The entire colony approved the report.

"In the spring of 1871 a group started for the chosen place. Some members of the group included A. G. Smith, who homesteaded where Arlyn Wedels now live, Dr. F. L. King, who was chosen president; J. U. Fellows, secretary and Joseph Andrews, treasurer. They traveled from Salina with wagons drawn by mules. All the satchels, bundles, baskets and tents were hauled in the wagons. The party walked.

"The first night after leaving Salina they camped near Lindsborg.

They traveled south by the sun and camped on Dry Turkey Creek the following night. A terrific storm nearly demolished the camp. Soon they were joined (note a second group) by Wm. Bye, and Charles West, D. D. Carpenter and others.

"The newcomers decided on a spot a half mile south of the present town of Elyria and called it King City after Dr. King. They began erecting homes with lumber brought from Salina. The townsite was organized Oct. 28, 1871 with A. G. Smith, trustee, R. O'Dell, treasurer, and S. C. Johnson, clerk."

Santa Fe Trail

Cowboys had been bringing long-horned cattle from the Southwest and King City was one of the stopping places for them and also a supply camp enroute to Abilene.

Even though the Santa Fe Trail had its origin fifty years before King City was founded, the early history of the township is closely connected with the history of the Santa Fe Trail. Beam and Johnson offer the valuable detail that the trail was not a single lane throughout but "Actually (it was) a lane used for travel across the plains, varying from one mile to ten miles in width."

In 1906 the Daughters of the American Revolution placed markers commemorating the trail route. Two of these markers are in King City twp. One is located on K 17 one-half mile south of the present Santa Fe School, and the other is 1 ½ miles west of Elyria on the north side of the county road.

The early use of the trail was mostly as a military route during the Mexican and Civil Wars, and after gold was discovered the trail experienced a growth in usage.

The Indians were not used to the white man's concept of property rights. Fort Larned, now a museum, was among others built as a

protection from the Indians, and perhaps from marauding whites as well.

As among the Pequots of Pennsylvania a hundred years earlier, early peaceful ways had a way of turning to violence.

First Swiss-Germans Had Indian Problems

The Swiss-Germans who settled in SE McPherson County in 1874, after their 100-year Russian interlude, pretty largely escaped Indian difficulties in Kansas. This was not true of some of their compatriots, Mennonites from the Palatinate, who came direct to Pennsylvania.

C. Henry Smith, in "The Story of the Mennonites," 1957, p. 542+, says that the Pequea settlement, for example, was in the heart of the Indian country. He lists names such as Bowman, Herr, Schantz, Weber, and others on that frontier. Smith says, "For a time the Mennonites and Indians lived on friendly terms, and their children often played together. But as the settlement grew, the Indians moved farther west, and during the later colonial wars the entire frontier suffered from Indian raids. In 1758 a letter written by several Mennonite ministers to Holland asking for financial help states that two hundred families in Pennsylvania had been robbed of their property by the Indians and fifty persons had been killed. Among these were some Mennonites and Amish."

Coronado Saw King City Area

H. B. Kelly refers to a "tradition (which) says that Coronado in his expedition from Mexico to the northern boundary of Kansas in 1542, passed through the territory of McPherson County, from the southwest to the northeast, via the "site of King City" (mine) and Old Empire. The Santa Fe Trail established in 1825, passed south of

the present city of McPherson." Coronado is supposedly the first white European to travel into this Indian country. He had an Indian guide whom he cut to pieces when he did not finally lead them to the Seven Cities of Cibola.

The veterans of Ashtabula, Ohio, of course came later and Kelly agrees that they were joined by a second group, that is, the fifteen families from Ashtabula were joined by some from Indiana. Now, did these suffer the same Indian difficulties as in northern parts of McPherson County? Most of the evidence is to the contrary.

Kelly cites the Pawnee Indians as giving the settlers "considerable trouble in 1867." They killed a man named R. Temple on Gypsum Creek, he reports. "In 1868 the settlers were subjected to Indian depredations, though no lives were lost. In September of that year a band of Osages while raiding the country carried off Mrs. Bassett and a child but a few days old." There is a picture of Mrs. Bassett in the centennial issue of the Sentinel. Varying accounts of that incident have been told. Our point here is, however, that something needed to be done for safety of those settlers and in 1870 a company was formed for protection against depredations of this sort.

As the western frontier was pushed back the first travelers did journey through unknown country and at their own risk, and because some unkind things were done on both sides and because basic concepts of property rights were different and perhaps for other reasons, some whites were massacred and their property and horses were stolen. So we see reasons did exist for trying to make treaties with the Indian tribes and pay them for the privilege of passing through their territory.

Treaty of 1825

A treaty had been made at Council Grove with the Osage Indians and another with the Kaw nation in King City twp. on Dry Turkey Creek 1 ½ miles west of Elyria. We know some of the details because George C. Sibley, one of the surveyors, kept a diary and related that on Aug. 14, 1825, they came to a small grove of trees on a stream which the Indians called "Sora Consta" and, says Sibley, "(We) were soon joined by a group of Indians. They made camp under a large spreading oak."

No mention is made of smoking peace pipes. Presumably purposes were explained; mutual advantages were posed. As shown on the picture of the marker shown elsewhere in the **Journal**, negotiations were conducted through "Old Bill" Williams, a noted guide and trapper. The same terms were proposed as had been agreeable to the Osages in Council Grove. It is said that the terms were accepted without hesitation and a treaty signed. Whether the Indians fully understood that the payment of \$800 was not only the first installment or was the full compensation for a perpetual right-of-way through the territory of the Indians, may be somewhat difficult to really know. Radical Indians today are complaining about a trail of broken treaties. This writer has not learned that this particular treaty of 1825 is one which some Indians want to have reviewed.

Big Deal

Perhaps in fairness it could be said that the story that has come down to us from white hands is that in this case the agreement on the Dry Turkey Creek was one in which "the chiefs appeared in perfect agreement." Anyway they were given goods valued at \$300 and on order of Curtis and Ely, traders near them, for other goods as they might desire to the value of \$500

(McPherson Sentinel, May 12, 1970, p. 10A).

This made the total payment come to \$800 which, except for a slight inflation that has occurred since then, is about equal to a down-payment for a 1973 Caprice from Mid Way Chevrolet.

Any alert junior high student under Mr. Vic Goering's guidance would perhaps shrug that off with the simple remark: "Big Deal!"

Is History Bunk?

If this analysis holds, does the youth's response but symbolize the lurking, inner doubt all of us have-at least to some extent? Doubt about who we are and where we are going? Henry Ford did say history is bunk; Ecclesiastes said all is vanity. I do not want to challenge the latter, but look here Henry, if you put America on wheels, is your part in history bunk, too? I know you embarked on a futile peace ship to Norway then hoping to end World War I. We will give you an A for that. And we also remember that in World War II you built bombers, guns, and motorized equipment in the Willow Run and River Rouge plants. A complex man, Mr. Ford, most of his personal estate, valued in the hundreds of millions was left to the Ford Foundation, one of the world's largest public trusts.

Mennonites on Wheels

I asked Jacob J. Wedel, 83, now of the Memorial Home in Mound-ridge, whether the picture of the Elyria "Flat" or hotel brought back memories of his days in business in Elyria. Jac and his brother-in-law Oswald Krehbiel sold us our first tractor, a Hart Parr that pulled four bottoms. Jake's wife was Mary Krehbiel, daughter of "Posthalter" Krehbiel. Their children: Bob, Margie (Mrs. Richard Graber), Gene, and Vernon all started school in Elyria. I remember Jac as a pretty good baseball pitcher.

“Yes,” said Jac, “but I do not remember that the Flat was ever occupied. I remember when it was razed and a hardware store built there.”

“Is that you and Emil Krehbiel (brother of Mrs. Linda Kaufman of Mdge.) on the Ford on the south side of Elyria’s First and Main?”

Jac got out the magnifying glass. He peered. “I can’t tell for sure. Dan Waltner also had a Ford, I believe. I’ve never seen that picture before. If the picture was taken in 1907, It’s not me because I was in California then.”

We talked about others with automobiles. Henry Krehbiel’s father owned land in King City and Lone Tree. Henry still married Kate Stucky even though his father once refused to give that first car after the son had filled it with gas. Never would he do that to his sons, he told me.

We talked about those who sold gasoline to the farmers: George Voth, Otto Juhnke, David Schrag, Dan J. Stucky, C. D. Kaufman, Eli Stucky, Olin Waltner, Bill Wolff and Art Graber.

Jac and Emil paid out many a dime for cottontails to the boys of the Elyria community. It was 15c for jackrabbits, sometimes more.

Going North

Swiss-Germans had first settled in Mound and Turkey Creek. Now they were moving north. The map of 1884 shows only one or two Germans in King City twp.

The county directory of 1907 borrowed from the McPherson College Museum through the courtesy of Dr. Dell showed a few more; by 1915 the directory showed between 20-30.

How many of the off-spring of the Ashtabula ex-civil war vets who founded King City remain there today? The Wests, Aliens, I?rakes, an O’dell and a Frieze shown in King City by the map of 1884 seems to

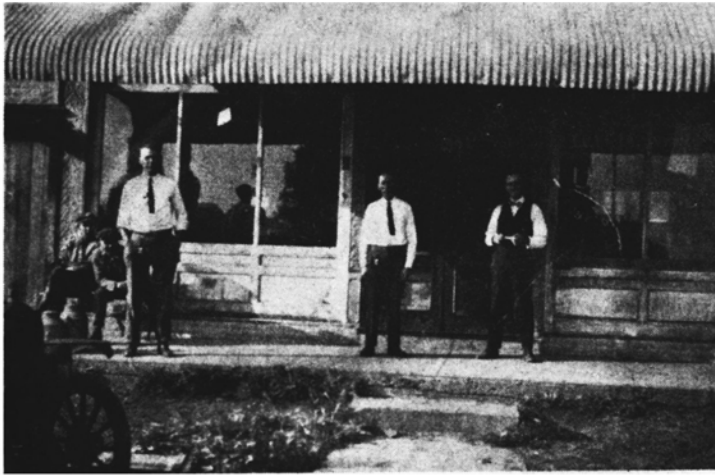
show the Indiana element had more staying power if this analysis is correct.

Milton Tapp, of the first group from Ashtabula stayed quite a while as mail carrier and brought the mail south of King City and Elyria to Lake View. A picture of Mr. Tapp, his second wife and her grandson, Marvin Boyce, their dwelling next to the Elyria Flat, and the horse and buggy used in mail delivery and for transportation is shown in this issue of the **Journal**. Jac Wedel says Tapp was gone when he came to Elyria.

Well, this is far from the whole story. Is there enough to draw any parallels?

Has there been encroachment - first on the Indians, then by the Swiss-Germans on those who got to the county, at the most, three or four years earlier than those they called “The Russians?”

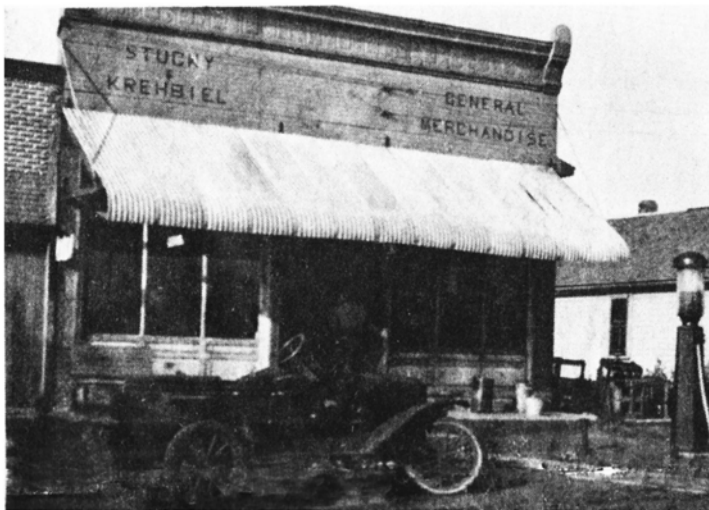
We turn next to Lonetree Township to observe development there.



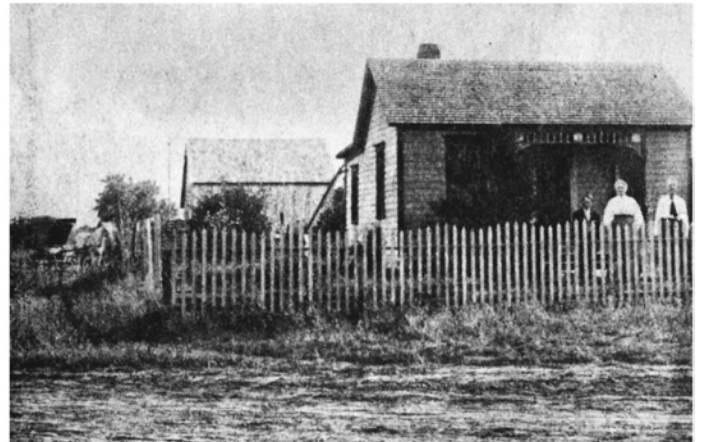
IN FRONT OF ELYRIA STORE from left are: Marvin Boyce, Bennie Hiebert, Jac Wedel, Emil Krehbiel, and Elyria banker C. H. Hiebert. All of them, along with others, played in the band directed by Paul Crabb.



NORTHSIDE OF ELYRIA main street looking to the east. Garage mechanic was Emmett All. Abe Dyck, Ross Bonham and others used the garage as a blacksmith shop later. Cars are parked in front of the Elyria State Bank. The bank building was built by J. R. "Jimmy" Johnson and Val A. Stucky. It was organized April 9, 1913. The first banker was Wirt Salthouse, followed by N. O. Sellberg, Ben Decker and C. H. Hiebert. In the mid-20's it merged with the Home State Bank of McPherson.



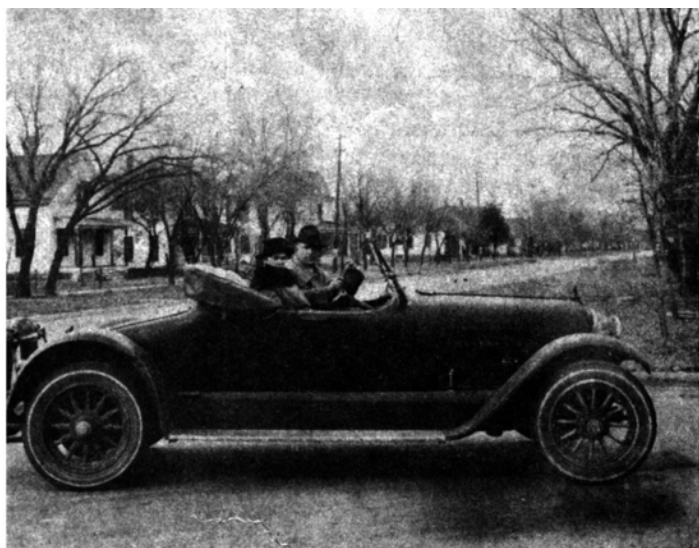
JAC WEDEL'S FORD PICKUP in front of Stucky & Krehbiel General Merchandise Building. Note the town gas pump on the right and Emil's residence. Jac had at this time bought out Val Stucky's share in the business.



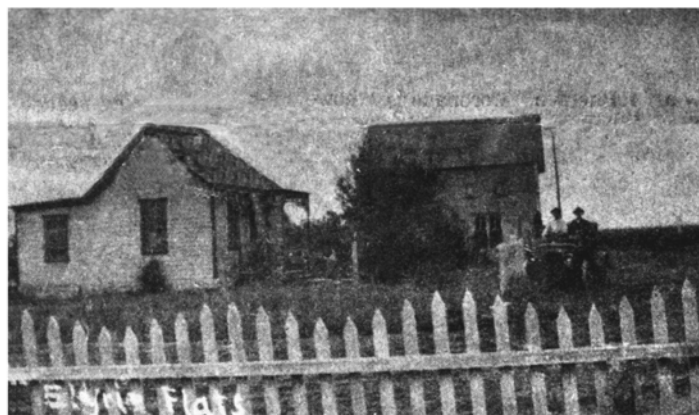
ON THE CORNER OF FIRST AND MAIN in Elyria after the turn of the century. Shown is Milton Tapp, early day resident and mail carrier, his wife, her grandson, Marvin Boyce. The usual means of travel stands tied to a hitching post on the left side of the picture. (Photo through courtesy of Bertha Mugler Beam)



JACOB J. and MARY (KREHBIEL) WEDEL in their wedding picture. They were married on Feb. 20, 1916, and first lived in an apartment above the Elyria Mercantile Store.



C. C. and Anna (Wedel) Krehbiel and their Mercer in 1922. They lived on the SW 1/2 of Sec. 13 in King City twp. Their children are Art, Ted and Alice (Mrs. Bert Kaufman).



THE TWO-STORY BUILDING in the background was the Elyria hotel known as "The Flats," in 1907. Bertha Mugler Beam, who furnished the picture thought the occupants of the auto might be Jake Wedel and Emil Krehbiel. The house shown was built by Paul Mugler in 1891. Before it was sold and moved to Elyria it served as the Mugler residence, 1 mile east and 1 mile north of Elyria.



J. N. KAUFMAN IN 1910 is shown with the first family automobile, a Mason. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. N. R. Kaufman, lived on sec. 25 of King City township on land bought from A. G. and Mary Smith. J. N. used to say his mother refused to ride in it at the very beginning. J. N.'s family is very familiar in Moundridge. They include Viola Kaufman, Selma (Mrs. Paul Hatfield), Ray J. Kaufman and O. J. Kaufman of Wichita.



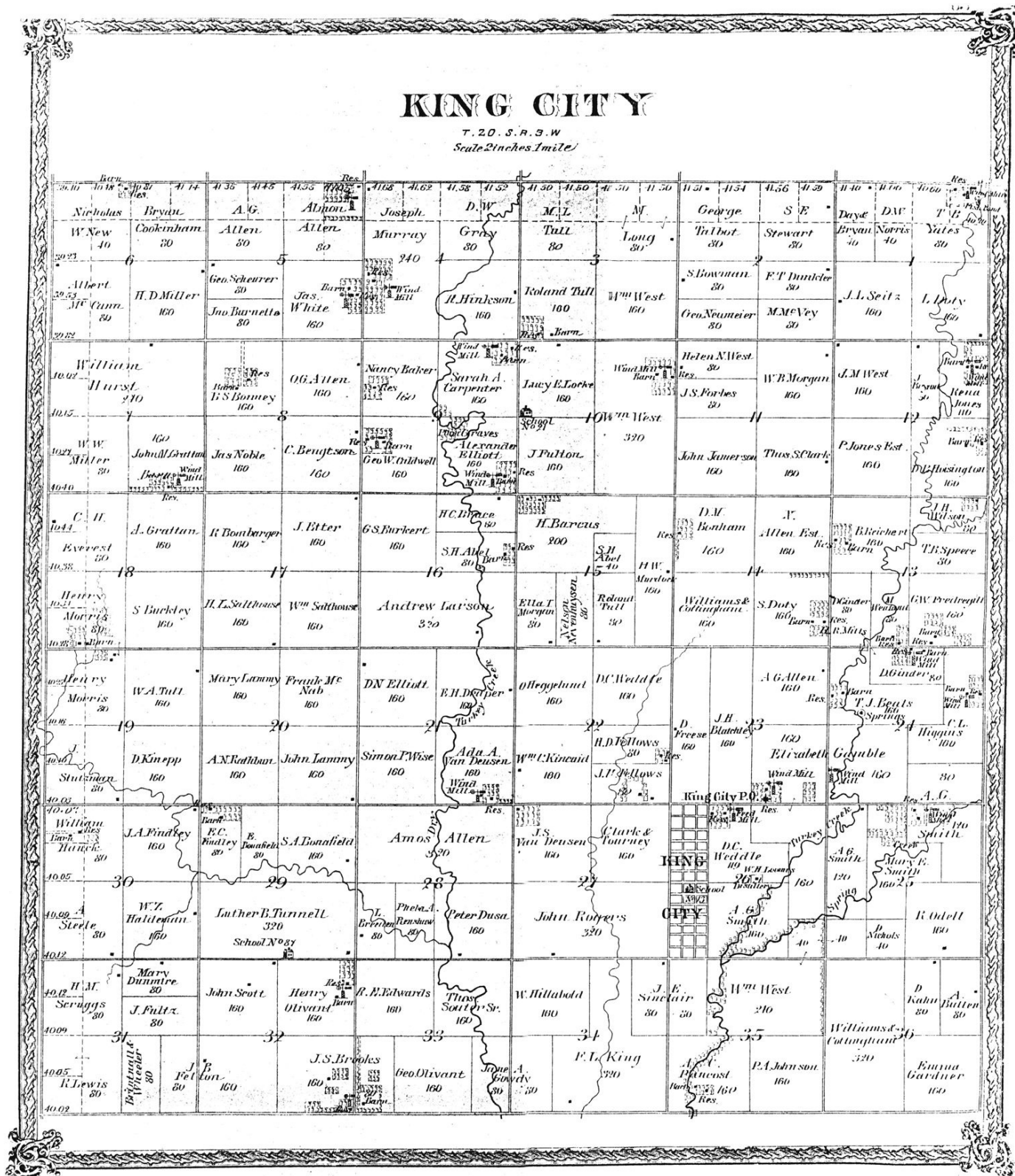
FLOOD WATER IN ELYRIA IN 1917. Depot is shown in right. First depot agent was Perry Ball who also operated the telegraph. Later agents were Ben L. Stucky, Dave Voth. John R. Stucky was dispatcher for a time.



THIS HISTORICAL SIGN BOARD stands in a small roadside park on US-81 just east of Elyria. It was placed and unveiled in a special ceremony in May, 1941. Helen Rose Juhnke (Mrs. Bob Friese), a daughter of Wesley and Amelia (Graber) Juhnke, was chosen by the pupils of King City School and did the unveiling. A band led by August San Romani played. H. S. Buzick Jr. of Council Grove spoke.



KING CITY SCHOOL, DISTRICT NO. 13. Taken in 1909. Eva Finkle (Mrs. Dana Voshell), teacher. Front row seated left to right: Jonas Kaufman, Gust Johnson, Bill Layton. Kneeling: George Drake, Arthur Quinn, Jewel Partin. Girls: Katie Stucky, Gladys Partin, Minnie Mugler, Ida Kaufman, Martha Mugler, Bertha Mugler, Carrie Mugler. Four girls back of this row: Grace Quinn, Fanny Stucky, Emma Voth, Mary Krehbiel. Three girls to Miss Finkel's left: Maggie Layton, Anna Partin, Josie Drake. Three boys in back row: Marvin Boyce, Geo. Voth, Guy Partin. The building was moved with many horses from its previous location in King City. It stood due east of the present Marvin Juhnke residence in Elyria. (Picture courtesy of Minnie Mugler and Bertha Mugler Beam.)



THE 1884 ATLAS shows King City on sec. 26 in a twp. by the same name. It is shown laid out in lots for a full mile on the west side of the section; also shown is School District No. 13, a distillery, a feed mill, and post office on the north edge. F. L. King, after whom the town and twp. is named, owns 320 acres

on sec. 34. The first well was only 25 ft. deep. There was a brickyard, several store buildings, two hotels, blacksmith shop, lumberyard and some 30-40 homes. Like Christian, in Mound twp., its demise was caused by being on the railroad route.