

IMMIGRANT STORY - CHILDREN BURIED AT CATLIN CEMETERY

It's a fascinating immigrant story unlike any other. It's an emotional story passed down among families of the Swiss Volhynian Mennonites of Kansas. And it will finally, soon be memorialized in stone.

In 1874, as 8,000 Mennonites emigrated from Russia into Kansas, Swiss Mennonites who first settled in the area near today's Moundridge, stepped off the train at Peabody. The men went to scout and buy land in Mound and Turkey Creek townships. When they returned three weeks later, they discovered that *"almost all the children became sick. Some children died. The town had no cemetery at this time. A few miles north there was a place with a few graves. Since there was no other way of transportation, the bodies were carried there and buried."* Until recently, that location has been a mystery.

An article came to light in the January 1875 issue of the *Herald of Truth* newspaper out of Elkhart Indiana. A correspondent from Peabody, KS wrote,

"I found this country completely devastated by the grasshoppers, but the farmers now have out a very fine crop of wheat... They seem well pleased with the country. Brother Stucky's party buried about fourteen children here on Brother H. Hornberger's farm."

A quick check of land records show that this Henry Hornberger farm was exactly the site of what is today's [Catlin Mennonite Cemetery](#). So, we know that the Swiss children are in this cemetery, which is located 3 miles North, 1 West, and ½ North from the Northwest corner of Peabody. After 138 years, they have been found.

A SMCHA task force has researched names, then designed and received bids for a memorial stone to be placed in the Catlin cemetery. Now is the time to solicit funds for the stone. We would ask that you participate in remembering these children by contributing to a fund for the stone. The cost comes to \$2,170.00 for a stone 4' 6" long and 2' 6" high.

What makes the story more complex is to identify exactly who these children are. According to genealogist James W. Krehbiel, author of the book, [Swiss Russian Mennonite Families Before 1874](#), as many as 17 possible children have been identified, with some "Probably buried at Peabody" and some "Possibly buried at Peabody." Some of these names have exact death dates; some have "September 1874"; some are simply identified as having died in "1874." It is also known that some children on the journey were buried in a cemetery north of Halstead. So, in order to properly memorialize the children at Catlin, the wording on the stone was chosen to read, *"Those who are buried here are among the following"* along with the list of all 17 names.

Some families have passed down tearful stories of the children who died at Peabody. Is your family one of those? Since their graves have been unmarked, it is time to memorialize the children. The goal of SMCHA is to place the stone as soon as weather permits in spring 2012, and to have a dedication of the memorial in late August or early September. Now is the time for you to participate and contribute to this project. Funds collected in excess of the cost will be directed toward the ongoing Hopefield cemetery maintenance and toward the Catlin cemetery.

Thank you for your consideration, and support of Swiss Mennonite heritage. The children's names are listed below on the rough design for the stone:

In memory of the Swiss Volhynian Mennonite children who died at Peabody on the journey from Russia to Kansas in 1874 and were buried here in September 1874. Those believed to be buried here include the following:

JOHANN ALBRECHT
Dec 9, 1872--Sept. 13 1874

TOBIAS DIRKS
Nov. 18, 1872--Sept. 1874

FRENI FLICKINGER
Jan. 24, 1872--Sept. 1874

KATHARINA GERING
Aug. 7, 1871--1874

PETER GERING
June 21, 1873--Sept. 1874

PETER P. KAUFMAN
Feb. 24, 1871--Sept. 15, 1874

ANNA KREHBIEL
Nov. 15, 1871--Sept. 10, 1874

ELISABETH KREHBIEL
Mar. 2, 1872--1874

ELISABETH SCHRAG
July 25, 1873--1874

KATHARINA SCHRAG
Oct. 16, 1872--Sept. 15, 1874

ANDREAS STRAUSS
Jan. 28, 1872--1874

FRENI STUCKY
Oct. 16, 1873--Sept. 9, 1874

ANNA VORAN
July 18, 1871--1874

JACOB VORAN
Oct. 29, 1873--1874

MARIA WALTNER
Aug. 1, 1872--1874

FRANCES WEDEL
Oct. 29, 1869--Sept. 25, 1874

SALAMON WEDEL
Mar. 10, 1872--Sept. 25, 1874

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