

Early Mound Township history

by Bill Juhnke

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Who remains unmoved by the tension between tradition and change? Hardly anyone in the Moundridge community, especially if he has seen "Fiddler on the Roof." "Without tradition our lives would be as shaky as a fiddler on a roof. You decreed what I am ... Out of a worthless hunk of clay God has made a man today." These words take on special meaning coming at us thru Tevye, thru Motel the tailor, and the peasant Jew's eldest daughter, Tzeitel.

There is now renewed interest in both tradition and change, and in what can result in the future from a better blend of both.

How Blend the Old and New

In working out this wise blend, some of us have discovered that we do not know enough of what has been.

The life commitment of many of the first settlers of our community and the inner resources that carried them thru outer difficulty become evident when we examine the record and take time to think about it.

Learning From the Past

The full record can not be told here without a much more complete sharing of information and a digging into various sources such as the Edwards Atlas. There is P. P. Wedel's "Short History." This book, first published in German, has been translated into English by Mr. and Mrs. Ben B. J. Goering and is available in a second printing from them. There are personal diaries and group records and minutes.

One of the most exciting personal records is Christian Krehbiel's "Autobiography" which ran to 240 typed pages. Early day church records are available, newspaper articles, etc.

The Edwards atlas provides the basis for this beginning since it furnishes a key sketch of what appears in 1884, only ten years after the coming of the Swiss-Germans to the southern part of McPherson County, Kansas.

Village of Christian

A striking fact to a resident of the Moundridge community is that in 1884 there is no town of Moundridge and no railroad dissecting the area. That first came two years later. The map gives the fact that on the junction of the corners of sections 26, 27, 34, and 35 there is the small village of

Christian. The store stands on Christian Hirschler's land; the Mennonite school on Christian Krehblel's. William Galle directs the school. The church is on Christian Voran's land. Notice Voran is spelled Foran.

The founding of the village is recorded in Christian Krehbiel's "Autobiography" thus:

"To make sure that I got a full section of land I had to go far north of Halstead to the country between Newton and McPherson. There I selected Section 27, at \$4.00 an acre, in the expectation that a town would be established in the neighborhood. Indeed when Christian Voran, Christian Hirschler, and my brother Daniel bought the sections adjoining mine, we jointly laid out a town site and named it Christian, Kansas. My older brother opened a store, and we built a church on the corner of my land."

The map, of course, shows a post office center. In contrast to what Krehbiel says the map of 1884 shows the church on Voran's side. Has change already occurred? Was the very first church building made into a school? Was another more substantial one built across the road to the east? Or is the map in error?

First Church of Christian

From the "Church Chronicle" of the First Mennonite Church of Christian, Kansas, we see (p. 8) "The brethren decided to build a simple 'up and down' board house that would meet the need. The location was chosen at Christian. The money needed for the purpose was borrowed. The labor was supplied by the brethren themselves By the end of February it was completed and could be dedicated on March 4, 1877. The services opened with a song by a well prepared choir (musical heritage showing) and with an introduction by the local minister (Valentin Krehbiel, Christian Krehbiel's brother). Elder Jacob Stucky (He and Jacob D. Goering served the church on section 19) delivered the festive sermon based on Revelation 21: 3. The minister of the congregation followed with the dedicatory sermon on the same text: 'Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he shall dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them and be their God'"

Tradition vs. Change

The "Church Chronicle" goes on to say: "However, when in 1886 the Eldorado-McPherson branch of the Missouri Pacific Railroad was built it bypassed Christian and established the town of Moundridge just one mile north of where Christian was located. The business houses including the U.S. Post Office were moved to Moundridge, and the town of Christian became extinct."

Extinct! Can anything be extinct if remembered, recovered in the minds of people who want to know about their own roots and way down deep hunger for some of the same solid relationships that their forbears seem to have had?

One Mile North

One mile north of Christian is a junction of land owned then by John J. Wedel, a half-section with 160 acres on each side. Due west on the north side is land owned by Thornton C. J. Cole, grandfather of Mrs. Herb Kutnink and Richard S. Cole. Thus we see the basis of the two main street crossings of present-day Moundridge, Cole and Christian avenues.

Rootage in the Soil

Has the native soil itself been considered adequately as a part of our inheritance. Can its use or abuse be a part of our tradition? Today's ecologists say we better take a look.

The topography of Mound twp. in terms of water and land resources is shown as cut through or divided by two streams or creeks. On the east side is Black Kettle Creek. The middle and western part is drained by Crooked Creek sometimes called Sand Creek. Note the snake's trail made thru the twp.

Who was Black Kettle?

It is now known that Black Kettle was a peaceful Indian well known in the area between the Smoky and Arkansas bottoms. There can be little doubt that Black Kettle, after whom the stream was named, was an Indian Chief in the area prior to possession of the land by settlers as shown on the map. It had been his hunting territory only a few years ago.

Dee Brown says in "Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee" (p. 145) that Black Kettle was known as a fine man and highly respected by all who knew him. He was not an extremist as Roman Nose and the Dog Indians. He may well have been among those Chiefs who signed the treaty of 1865 giving up tribal rights to their old hunting grounds. We shall look at this problem more when we discuss the Indian Treaty marker near Elyria later.

A Man of Peace

Brown points out that Roman Nose was among other Indians who scoffed at treaties which they did not sign and would not accept. They came to hunt between the Smoky and the Arkansas. Black Kettle and his wife tried but could not deter the (p. 164). When Custer's men came, Black Kettle raised his hand in peace. The men ignored his gesture. They shot him and his wife and rode over them rough shod. Their entire Indian village was destroyed. Was this possibly where the village of Christian stood, somewhere near the creek running through the east side of Moundridge presently, a creek known as Black Kettle? In 1866 this same Colonel Custer garrisoned the west line of McPherson County with his famous (or was it infamous) 7th Cavalry. For more details see H. B. Kelly, "History of McPherson County, Kansas, from 1870 to 1883."

Andrew Kaufman, now 97 and oldest resident in the Moundridge Memorial Home, told that he remembers when Indians were quartered near Wichita and near Halstead. "They passed our area a number of times. They were the peaceful kind."

In 1884 Andrew lived with his father, Joseph, and mother, Barbara (Graber) Kaufman, in Turkey Creek, twp., five miles west of Christian and 1/4 north, where Walter Juhnkes now reside.

A Ridge

Between the two streams, Black Kettle and Crooked Creek, was a ridge which seemed to peak about a mile north of the village of Christian. According to the Centennial issue of the "McPherson Sentinel," May 12, 1970, p. 1-G, "Mound township was named because of its site on a ridge visible from the west, according to J. W. Krehbiel in the Nyquist book ("Pioneer Life and Lore"). The city took its name from the township name."

And so the land and streams that abounded in game for Indian hunting less than ten years before the immigrants of 1864 came, this land was well drained, had good soil for an agricultural people who helped bring Turkey Red wheat to Kansas and formed the basis along with their neighbors of a valuable production and fruitful living for years to come. This production was no end in itself, for with it came churches, as indicated to some extent, and schools.

Schools

A school already referred to was the school at Christian led in 1884 by William Galle, the man who became the first minister and elder of the

West Zion Mennonite Church. This school was primarily a church school but some secular courses were offered.

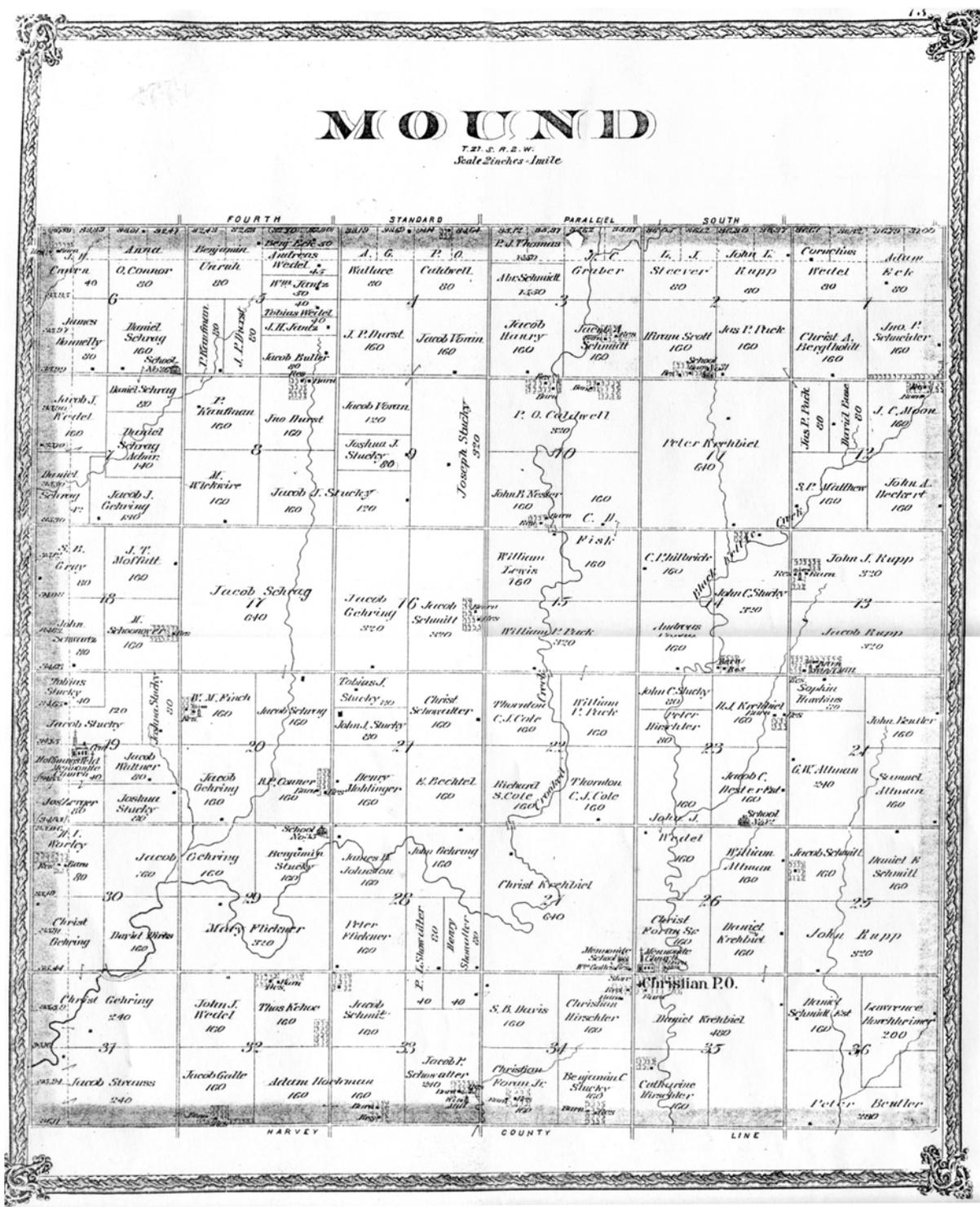
Another such school continued in the old immigrant house near the site of the Hoffnungsfeld Church near the middle of section 19 in Mound twp. Andrew Kaufman says he remembers attending school in the immigrant house which had been provided by the Atchison, Topeka, and Sante Fe Railroad.

“One year the teacher was Zisman, a Lutheran. His older children worked for farmers in the community. The north part of the immigrant house was partitioned as a residence for the teacher's family. Another teacher there was John Voth, grandfather of Milo Voth of Moundridge.” The course of study was limited to religious instruction, history, language study and mathematics.

The Edwards map shows public tax supported schools centered in communities in Mound twp. in terms of walking distance and were fairly evenly spaced throughout the township. Pioneer was school district 26 and on section 6, Farms (No.31) on section 2, Mound (No.35) on section 29, and Plainview School No.72 was on section 23. Anna Rupp taught here 7 years. “There were 8 grades and a full course of study was offered including reading, writing, spelling, penmanship, arithmetic, history, and geography. I started school at Plainview myself as a child.”

Lake View, Kansas

The Hoffnungsfeld Mennonite Church, its cornerstone laid only two years before in 1882, is shown near the center of section 19 of Mound twp. It was the second church building in Mound twp. The charter of the Hoffnungsfeld congregation indicates that its address is Lake View, Kansas. Where was this town? Was it a small village like Christian? Was it a postal center only? Was J. J. Krehbiel, father of Mrs. J. N. Kaufman of Moundridge and Oswin Krehbiel of the Moundridge Memorial Home postmaster there? These are some topics to be considered next.



The map shown is taken from John P. Edwards Historical Atlas of McPherson County and is dated 1884. Despite certain errors in spelling and in the exact location of streams, much valuable history remains hidden in this pioneer work. Herbert E. Stucky, Moundridge, owns the Edwards copy from which the print is taken.

Only a handful of people remain in the community who can express vivid memories of what once was. A look at the Edwards material coupled with memories that this stirs in these older citizens, along with other information can stimulate interest in the history and traditions and hopefully can guide us into newer horizons for tomorrow.