

# Farms Community history exciting, humdrum, unique

by William E. Juhnke

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Last week, October 8-12, was National Hot Lunch Week. It is generally believed that distribution of surplus meat, fruit, vegetables to hot lunch programs began with the New Deal in the 1930's.

Was that something new? Hot lunches for the school children at Farms School, Dist. No. 31, in NE Mound Twp. were served hot lunches beginning in the fall of 1919. This was done by the women of the Farms Community Club for nearly a generation before hot lunches became national policy. And they did not take one thin dime from the federal treasury.

## **The Farms Community Club**

It was in Oct. 21, 1915, that the ladies of the Farms community met at the home of Mrs. D. W. Galle and organized for what they said was "the betterment of the social and school life of the district," and one said "to get better acquainted with our neighbors." It was no mere gossip society but they met to gain new ideas in cooking, sewing, gardening, etc. There was a modest kind of pride in their school, which they said was "a Standard School," and in the cooperation between school and patrons. Charter members of the Farms Community Club were Mesdames H. E. Haury, Pete Belgard, Dan Auernheimer, E. W.

Rupp, O.C. Rupp, D. O. Rupp, P. O. Caldwell, A. E. Caldwell, Hiram Scott, Carl Scott, D. W. Galle and Miss Theresa Galle.

## **Early Solidarity at Farms**

The early story of the Farms Community was preserved and compiled into a seven page document written in longhand and was provided to the writer through the courtesy of Dale Galle who lives only a few steps of where the school and community center stood until consolidation and change wrought its, shall we say, untimely end.

## **Some Homesteaded**

In January, 1872, what was to be Farms Community was un-settled territory. The first settlers came from the eastern states. Homesteaders here were Charley Scott, Hiram Scott, Perry Carper, J. P. Pack and P. O. Caldwell from West Virginia; Chancey D. Fisk and Ed Fisk came from New York; Robert Hughette and Clem Philbreck, the latter a Civil War veteran, came from Illinois.

Alex Bonham, Lewis Steever, Napoleon Pruddy, Simon Matthews, John Decker, Amos Schowalter, and William Shelly also came from the east. Chancey Fisk and the P. O. Caddells were

the last survivors of this original group.

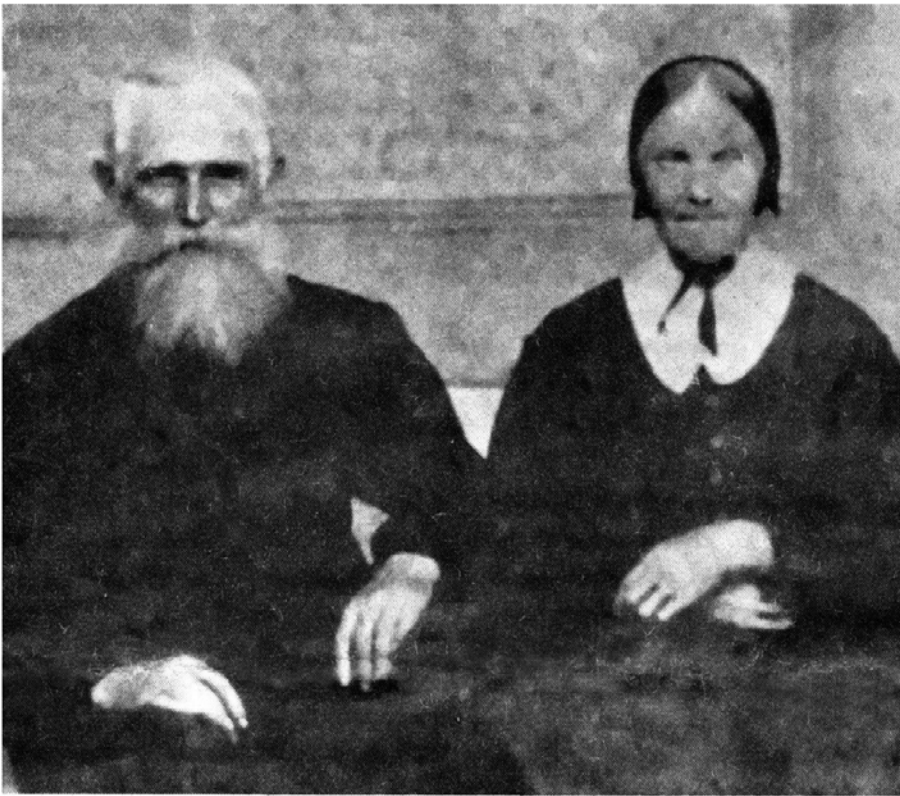
## **Some Bought Railroad Land**

John J. Rupp homesteaded on section 13 in Mound twp. as is shown on the J. P. Edwards map of 1884. The Rupp family came from Iowa. Three sons, Otto, Ed and Dave, lived in the Farms district. The elder Rupp later moved to California where they lived in retirement. That the Rupp family were solid citizens of the community while here is indicated by the fact that John Rupp served as a minister in the pioneer church at Christian from 1880-1884. The Rupp family's picture is in this issue of the Journal.

Jacob Haury and family came from Iowa. Haury was cobbler in the district for many years. He too moved to California later. Two of their sons, Gustav and Arthur, taught at Farms School.

Jacob Schmidt and family came from Iowa and bought land from the Santa Fe RR. A son, Ernest, lived in Moundridge.

The Edwards map shows that Peter Krehbiel who came from Illinois bought the entire section south of Farms School. He rented the land to Peter Galle and family and to others. Peter Galle was Dale's grandfather. The Galle family came to the Farms district in 1882.



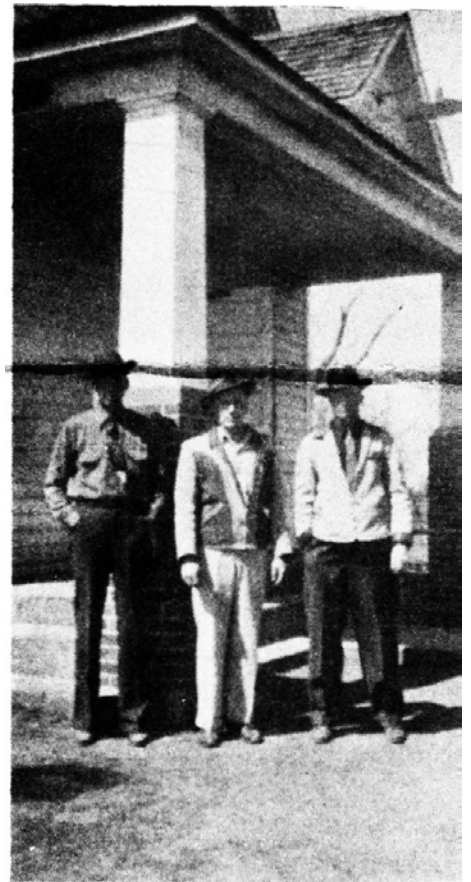
REV. AND MRS. JOHN RUPP and three children, Otto, Ed and Dave, came to Farms Community in 1875. Emma, John and Will located in California. A daughter, Clara, moved to Tacoma, Wahington. Rev. Rupp served the First Church of Christian from 1880-1884. "The Rupp family was the most outstanding in the community. There were four young people at the home, and young folks from all around loved to meet there especially on Sunday afternoons when all kinds of harmless games were played and singing music were other diversions. Grandpa and Grandma Rupp enjoyed seeing the young people happy." Mary Dawson, Nee Beaton, the first teacher in the Christian District.

### Pioneer Privations

James P. Pack homesteaded the se quarter of section 2 in Mound twp. where Dale and Bertha Galle now reside. We now quote from his personal recollections, material written in the first person and an invaluable collection written in response to Dale's mothers request, Mrs. Dave (Toland) Galle.

"On the 11th day of April,

1872, J. P. Carper, Hiram Scott, Charley Scott and myself homesteaded section 2 in Mound Township. I think at that time Steve Bell and Abe Schowalter were living in a dugout on a claim west of the Thornton Cole homestead (se qtr. of sec. 22). William Forbes was camped in his wagon with his family in Line Tree.... There was not a home in sight. All the homestead land was taken during the summer of 1872.....



WELDON (BUN) RUPP, W. L. (BILL) KAUFMAN, AND DALE GALLE who served on the Farms schoolboard for a total of forty years. An exciting time remembered by each is taking turns getting and returning a pretty femme music teacher from McPherson.

"On about the twentieth of Mar., 1872, I with my wife and two children; T. P. Carper, my uncle, and his wife and three children; Hiram and Charley Scott, brothers; and P. O. Caldwell left West Virginia for Kansas. We went by way of wagon sixty or seventy miles; (then) we took the steamboat for Cincinnati; thence by rail to Humboldt. There we purchased a pony for forty dollars. It proved so balky we paid twenty-five dollars to boot and got a good one.

We bought a lumber wagon and borrowed by brother's pony and drove to McPherson County, and picked up our claims and went to Wichita and homesteaded them; went back to my brother's where we had left our families. There we bought eight head of three-year-old steers to break prairie with. One yoke of the steers was all that ever had a yoke on. I think we paid twenty-five dollars a head. We went to work to break the steers so we could haul our goods and families to our new homes 125 miles away."

### **Steer Breaks Neck**

"In breaking the steer one turned a somersault and broke his neck, and it cost us thirty dollars to replace him. When we, thought we had them sufficiently broke, we loaded our goods and families in the wagon. We also bought two cows to take with us.

We had not traveled but a few miles till we struck quite a down grade for a hundred yards or so and the oxen got the advantage of us and went down the road pell-mell, each one trying to see how fast he could run. At the bottom of the hill a big mud hole was awaiting us. It was a risky run-a-way with our wives and children in the wagon. I don't think any thing short of a cyclone would have stopped them till they reached the mud hole."

Then he relates how instead of driving four oxen they took two off. They were pretty well broke when they got to their claim being seven days on the road in that stint. The group faced rain, wind, snow. "After we got to our claims we made a tent of our wagon sheets

and some bed clothes."

### **To Newton for Lumber**

"Newton was our trading point. The (RR) cars only running that far west at that time." This was three years before the town of Christian was born. It was two years before the coming of the Mennonites in 1874. There was only one house between Newton and the Pack homestead. They went back to Newton for a second load of lumber and for "some grub." They got to the East Emmit (creek) about four miles from Newton. It was after dark. The oxen were unhitched and turned loose to graze on the prairie. They went down to the creek for water where something scared them. Only one steer was found near Newton. Others assisted in the hunt. A pony used was stolen left for a brief time while trying to locate steer tracks in the creekbed.

### **Discovered But-**

The three steers were found in the cattle herd of a man near Newton named Finan. Eighteen dollars got their release. Looking around the pioneer town of Newton for the pony, sure enough, there was the man's pony hitched to a buggy. Now we pick up Mr. Pack's own words:

"I told the parties that it was my pony and that it had been stolen. They claimed they bought the pony from a man named Young, a gambler, and it had been gambled off and Young had a bill of sale for it. I forbid them to leave with the pony. I went to see Young and sure enough he had a sale bill for it. My uncle's name was signed

to the bill. They had forged his name (after) seeing him in Newton and heard him offering a reward for the cattle....We soon found out we were up against it, as they had a click that could prove anything." That particular pony proved to be a lost cause.

### **Rattlesnakes and Blizzards**

Pack reports that there were lots of rattlesnakes in the country. One bit a little girl at Schowalters and she died.

One day he and his uncle Charley Scott with two yoke of oxen and Schowalters' who had a horse team went to the Turkey Creek to get some firewood and lumber. "Just as we got our wood loaded one of those terrible Kansas blizzards struck us. We still had seven miles to go, no road and lots of the time one could not see more than ten steps." He says the mercury got down to 16 below zero and they had no overcoats. His left eye was frozen over so he could not see out of it.

### **King City PO 7 Miles Away**

This was before Christian and Moundridge, of course. There was no telephone or rural mail delivery. The nearest post office was at King City 7 miles distant. "We had to walk or go in our ox wagon."

The first Sunday School was organized in 1873. It was held in a Mr. Loomis's residence in Lone Tree about four miles toward Canton. It was agreed to meet at other homes as well and later on "at Pioneer school house." In later years the school at Farms was used for preaching services. Old timers remember a Rev. Minton who

preached and called them to rise and sing "The Long Meter Doxology" (Praise God from Whom all blessings flow.....).

The first cemetery was on the William Pack farm, where John Juhnkes now live. Graves were moved later to the Moundridge or Empire cemeteries. Anna Pack Zody remembered a Rev. Seavy who drove from Mount Hope to preach at Farms or Empire. His wife was blind.

### **Remember the Grasshoppers**

One person, Louisa Schneider Moon, later among those in Los Angeles, Calif., remembered the grasshoppers as "coming down like rain" and "they would strike the ground and were very much alive. They ate up everything and left as mysteriously as they came."

### **Community Loyalty**

To this writer at least, a lingering memory at reading the carefully kept letters and reminiscences of the Farms Community residents, some who long had moved away even as far as California and to other states, is of a quality of loyalty and solidarity that has become rare indeed. Some of the living was routine, even humdrum, as for all of us.

There is written record of reunions of Farms schoolmates, relatives, and friends in far away California with as many as twenty or more in attendance. It is a kind of thing one finds sometimes among 40-year high school or college graduates.

With permission I now insert portions of a letter from Dave and

Emma Galle, from Mound-ridge, Kansas, dated May 5, 1931, sent "To the Farms people in California."

"How much we would like to be with you next Sunday. Tell us who the oldest member present at your picnic is, who once lived in this community. Wonder if you would see many changes here? Of course, there are changes in the people. Much hedge has been taken out but plenty is left. Apple orchards are mostly gone in this neighborhood.

"Our school had 36 enrolled last winter.....Mrs. P. O. Caldwell and Chancey Fisk are the only pioneers left in the district.

"Kansas looks her best right now with everything green and growing. You better come back to the land where you don't have to .worry about earthquakes..." (Here the reply letter from the California group said their unanimous chorus promptly echoed, "What about tornadoes?")

"We want a write up for the Moundridge Journal of your picnic and people attending....

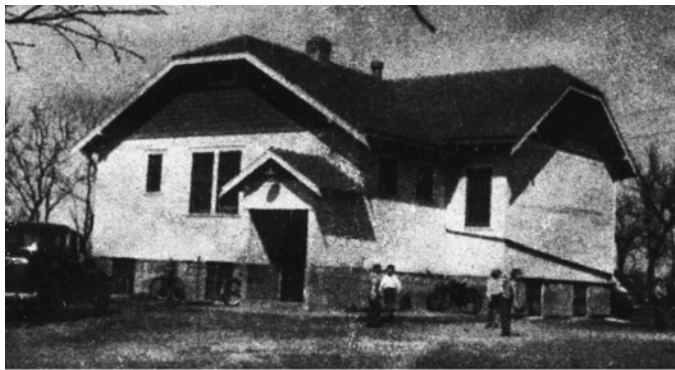
"With best wishes for a pleasant time next Sunday, we are sincerely, Dave and Emma Galle."

It is rare for a small rural community to be united not so much by a common ethnic bond or isolation as by a sincere interest in one another gathered together by people who cared for one another.

What a nice memorabilia in this bit of Americana in the Farms Community in what now is more than one hundred years in Southeastern McPherson County for the earliest to arrive here. Not least among them was one James Pack. He was preceded only by the coyote, the buffalo and one called

The Red Man. Interestingly, Pack and the others from Farms had little to say about their experience with the Indians.

Emma Toland Galle deserves much credit for preserving the record of the Farms Community.



**Farms school building as it appeared in 1948-49**



THE LOWER ROOM OF FARMS SCHOOL, 1948-1949, were from left: Kenneth Vogts, Donald Vogts, Dickie Helms, Karen Becker, Margaret Koehn, Donald Stucky, Bill Rupp, Darrel Yost, Julitta Koehn, Gilbert Borgan, Carolyn Wilkening, Alton Koehn, Bob Rupp, Gary Stucky. Marilyn Stucky is not pictured.



THE UPPER ROOM OF FARMS SCHOOL, 1948-1949, were from left: Jerome Kaufman, LaVerne Flickinger, Kenneth Stucky, Nelson Galle, Eugene Koehn, David Rupp, Curtis Vogts, Berneil Rupp, Carol Vogts, Dorothy Galle, Carol Kaufman, Darleen Helms, Marlene Becker, Evelyn Flickinger, Eugene Becker, Jerry Becker, Weldon Koehn, Marvin Flickinger.



FORMER TEACHERS OF FARMS SCHOOL gathered in 1959, the year the school was closed, to reminisce. Those attending the dinner and reunion are from the left in the back row Doris Everert Timmons, Eunice Reckover, Martha Wedel Regier, Zenora Handke Klaassen, Ed R. Stucky, Clarence Rupp, Vic Goering. Front row from left Gwen Galle Janzen, Anna Toland Voraan, Barbara Koiler Rupp, Gladys Glazier Parks, Linda Balzer Rupp, Arivalla Caldwell Borgan, Gilbert Galle.