

Looking into Lone Tree Township

by William E. Juhnke

Moundridge Journal - 16 August 1973

What can one learn by looking at a good map or plat?

Bertrand Russell in the preface to Debenham's "The Global Atlas, A New View of the World From Space" wrote, "We learn from geography that the world is round and from astronomy that -man is a speck." The Russell statement was made in 1958. The Soviets put up Sputnik the year before.

The earth round and man a speck!

Are Townships Flat?

The map of a township looks flat but pieced together with other townships it becomes round. We now know the world is round but do we feel that it is? Russell says "No! We have known for hundreds of years that it (the world) is round but we do not feel that it is."

We feel too much that we are the center. We are not really concerned about famines and disasters elsewhere nor how to prevent them. And perhaps here, in preventing disasters, is where the real heroism lies. More and more people are agreeing that little heroism lies in inflicting disasters on others.

To Ostrog

I looked into Debenham's big map book at the McPherson Public Library before my trip which included parts of Poland and Russia last March and April. And then near Rovno I saw the road

sign, "To Ostrog." Then I knew I was in or near the area that many of my neighbors from Lone Tree, Meridian and Inman hailed from. I got more interested in their story. Together we need to learn more that the earth really is round and man is a speck. And now we feel that speck can be erased, and bombs and war are not the only forms of pollution. If a better world neighborhood is not won, we wonder if pollution in its various forms may not get us all.

I know Bertrand Russell could never have been a Holdeman, a Mennonite, or even a Baptist in every respect, and, yet, perhaps we can learn something from this brilliant English-American odd-ball who deeply felt human life was especially precious, not just ours.

Pollution in Lone Tree

What was Lone Tree twp. and school named after? See if you can find that lone tree on the Edwards map of the Journal. The lone tree which once was an exceptional landmark was well and alive in 1884. Today it is dead and gone; not even a speck remains. Not Dutch Elm disease but salt water pollution killed that once huge cottonwood tree.

"I remember that tall cottonwood tree well," says Joe F. Goering, retired farmer now living at 209 E. Thornton in Moundridge.

"My father (John F. Goering, see picture in this issue of the paper) bought land in Lone Tree

Township in 1900. We moved ten miles north, the first of the Swiss Germans to do so. We moved from just across the county line in Harvey County and a bit east of Uncle Joes." That is Adolph Goering's and Mrs. P. O. Graber's father.

Mr. Goering went on to explain that their new land was on section 17, right on the Running Turkey Creek shown on the map. The Lone Tree stood on a spot of the nw quarter on the section just below them, section 20. Salt water pollution from the oil fields up north was the culprit that took the life of the tree.

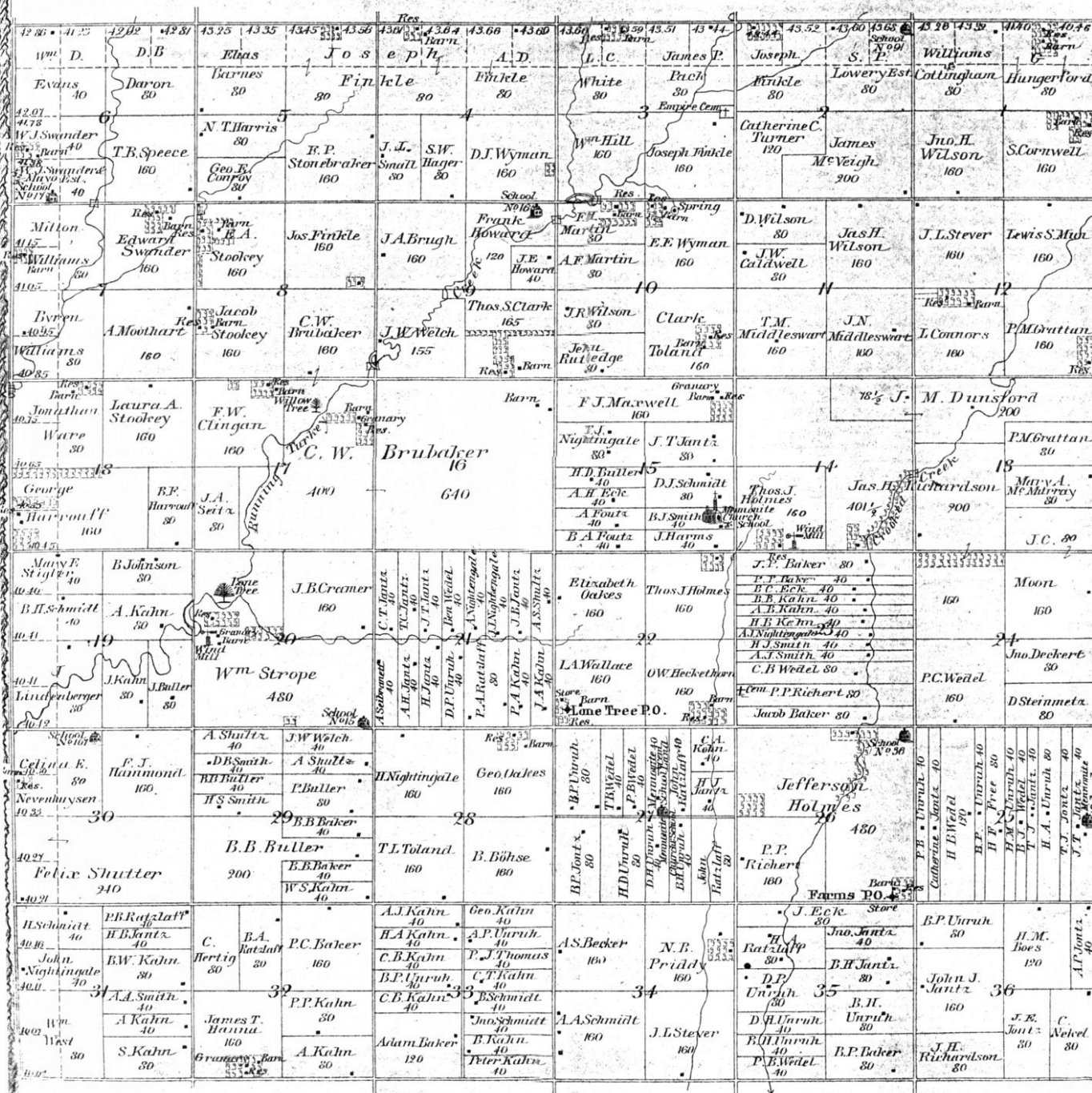
"Token payments to farmers along the Turkey Creek were accepted for possible damage to trees, crops, and pastures. Hundreds of trees died," said Joe. "It's a shame we allowed that to happen!"

Other School and a P.O.

About 1 1/2 miles east of Prairie View School and also on the King City (Elyria-West Liberty) road was Lone Tree School, Dist. No. 15 in the county. It was organized into a district in 1881, had 68 terms and 70 teachers. A mile further east is the Lone Tree Post Office. No residents appear to be alive now who remember the distribution of the mail there, at least we have not found any. A store there, a residence, and a barn is shown.

Another school, South Union, Dist. No. 5, is shown two miles

T. 20. S. R. 2. W
Scale 2 inches = 1 mile



THE LONE TREE TOWNSHIP MAP of 1884 is reproduced from the John P. Edwards Atlas of McPherson County. Herbert E. Stucky, Moundridge, owns the copy from which the print is taken. By turning east off Elyria Exit 54 one can

readily get to old school sites mentioned in the accompanying article as well as to the spot where the Lone Tree stood on the nw quarter on sec. 20.

further east. That district had been organized on Jan. 16, 1874, a year before the new immigrants came. Millie Hodges was the first teacher, school first beginning in 1881. This school proved later to be centrally located in the eastern half of the Lone Tree settlement. By 1918 a two-room structure replaced it. There are no records of school being held before 1881 and in 1884, the year of Edwards map, and in 1886.

Mr. Goering related how the family moved to Gray County from 1927 to 1935. At the end of that period the damage was well underway as he noted. He returned to a residence in the ne quarter of section 16 where he raised the family. His brothers Eli, John, Jonas, and Jacob, the youngest who now occupies the old home place, lived nearby. They lived basically on land which the Edwards map shows as owned by C. W. Brubaker in 1884.

A Landmark Falls

The Edwards map shows the Lone Tree standing just off the north bank on section 20. Elmer L. Goering, one of Jonas' sons who often passed the dying tree on his way to Prairie View School, took the writer to the approximate spot where the tree stood. He recalled that names and initials were carved on the trunk and that these still showed after the giant perennial had fallen.

"I have not been here for twenty-five years and may be off the exact spot a few feet," he said. Elmer agreed that it was off the north bank as shown on Edwards Map.

Asked whether she has a

picture of the Lone Tree or took her pupils on an excursion to see it when she was teacher at Prairie View School (Dist. No. 107) Mrs. Herb C. Stucky (Louise Graber) responded, "I was the second last teacher before the school was closed. No one then spoke of that tree. Most of us did not know it existed."

Emmanuel Church School

It is not that all residents of South Union rejected education outright. Records show that as early as 1876 a four-month German school term was held with study in Bible. A building erected for this purpose is shown near the middle of sec. 27 on the 40 acres given to the church by the Santa Fe Railroad Company to be used for church purposes. The same building was used later for regular Sunday worship service.

C. F. Duerksen from Alexanderwohl, about 15 miles to the east, taught about 100 pupils. Wages on one occasion were free board in the home of Peter B. Wedel. In connection with Duerksen's school work he also gave instruction in the catechism three Sundays a month. Abe J. Unruh, a church historian from Montezuma, says that the fourth Sunday was conducted by elder Jacob Stucky from the Swiss colony.

Other teachers later were Benjamin Ratzlaff, Clara Schrag (Mrs. Emil Borth), Katie Schrag (Mrs. Jonas Senner), Margaret Ensz and Abe J. Unruh. The Schrag sisters, if this information is correct, were sisters of Menno Schrag, long-time editor of "The Mennonite Weekly Review."

Happy Hollow School, Dist. No. 17, attended by Joe Goering, is shown about three miles north of the Lone Tree P. O. Another school, organized in 1872, was Centennial Dist. No. 17. It is shown on section 6 just over 2 ½ miles west of Happy Hollow. Later the building was moved across the line into King City twp.

Sunflower School serves most of the residents of the area in 1973.

The "Helpless Poles"

On close examination of the Edwards map of Lone Tree twp. one notes the very striking checkerboard ownership of 40-acre plots of ground in the southern half of the twp. This land is owned in alternate sections by the so-called "Helpless Poles," a people who can be traced for the most part as having Dutch-German origins and who are really no more "Poles" than their Swiss-German neighbors are "Russians."

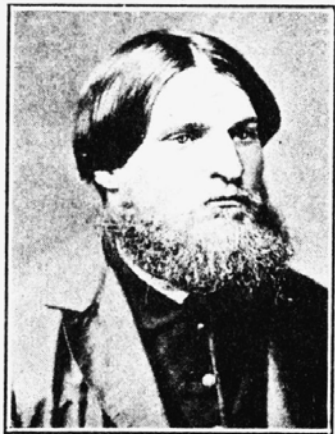
Who were they really? They have been called Ostrogers, Cantoners, Holdemans, Lone Tree People, Unruh's People, Karlwalde Mennonites, and who knows by what other names.

Their coming to Central Kansas and eventual spreading out is an exciting historical episode in its own right and the social, economic and spiritual progress made by them and their descendants since 1875 issues in respect from all who know their story and have them as neighbors in the larger community today. Of course they were and are human, even as all of us. They were in exceptional need a hundred years ago. We now turn to this aspect of the Lone Tree story.

From Antannfka and Karlwalde

The two largest settlements in the Ostrog-Kunov area of Western Volhynia were Antanofka and Karlswalde, the latter being only a few miles sw of Ostrog. The former was the largest of the settlements and not unlike "Anatevka" in "Fiddler on the Roof." In both people were on the move; in both persecuted and confronted by changing social patterns. The subjects here were Prussian Mennonites, the latter Jewish.

These were the people who came to Lone Tree twp. in mid-winter, January, 1875. Koehn, Unruh, Becker, Buller, Jantz, Decker, Wedel, Schmidt, Ratzlaff, Eck, Nachtigal or Nightengale, Voth, and Boese were familiar names according to the recent book, "The Helpless Poles" by Abe J. Unruh, published in February, 1973.



TOBIAS UNRUH was leader of the Ostrog area residents in Polish Russia. He was a member of the deputation in 1873 to explore America for possible settlement, and left the Canton area settlement for Avon, S. D., where he died in 1875.

Tobias Unruh was elder and also overseer of the Antanofka villages. Unruh represented them on his mission to St. Petersburg going with Elder Jacob Stucky of Kotosufka who represented the Swiss Mennonites from Eastern Volhynia. Tobias Unruh was also on the committee of 12 that investigated America as a possible new home in 1873.

Unfortunately, these people were left somewhat leaderless in the Canton area when Elder Unruh determined to go to Avon, South Dakota.

It should be said, however, that Tobias Unruh, their elder in Russia, went to South Dakota partly upon the appeal of that part of his congregation who settled there. It was also the suggestion, according to Unruh in "The Helpless Poles" (p. 173), of friends in the east since Kansas already had several elders among the Russian emigrants and Kakota had none. "So Jacob Stuckey, elder of the Swiss Mennonites across Turkey Creek to the west assumed responsibility of this group. Tobias Wedel (of their own group) was elected song leader." (Unruh, p. 174) There is a slight error here as Stucky was not west of the Turkey Creek.

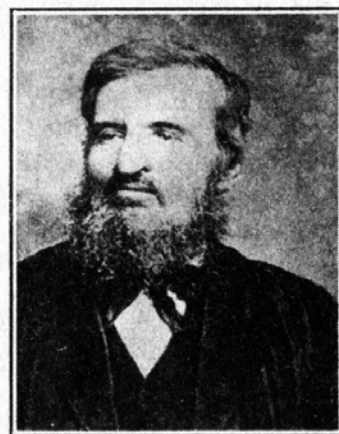
Expand Toward Inman, Elsewhere

As the 40-acre plots proved rather small, they nevertheless were a start. Some of the plots were 20 rods by a mile in order to share the water flow of the Turkey Creek.

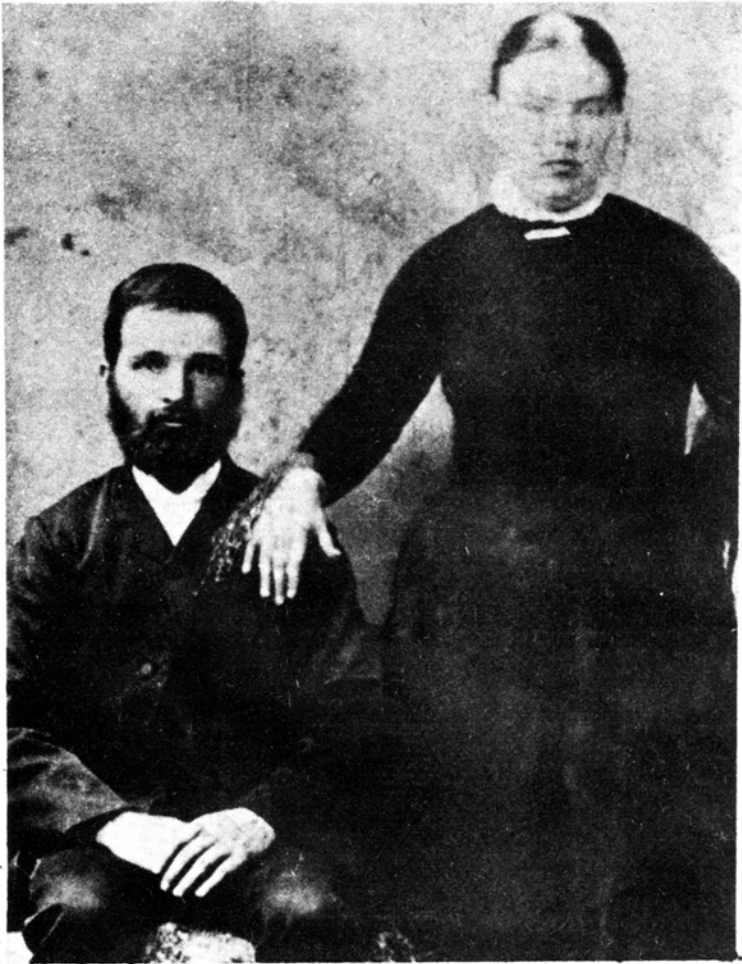
But what of living space for the future? How these people sur-mounted the new conditions

and split up and went into new directions will be taken up next.

(To be continued)



JACOB STUCKY, a Swiss-German leader in eastern Volhynia in Russia, joined Tobias Unruh in 1871 to learn of changes in Russian policy toward Mennonites. He joined Christian Krehbiel and others in concern for the 100-family Ostrogers who arrived in Florence, Kansas, in mid-January, 1875. The July 29, 1880, issue of the McPherson Republican reported: "Rev. Jacob Stookey has been painting his house, looks much better and I think painting buildings in this country is money well invested, to say nothing about looks." Some have said the Swiss were too busy to help the Ostrogers' early plight. Elder Stucky and Rev. John Stucky often did walk to serve at Emmanuel, the latter Ed R. Stucky's grandfather.



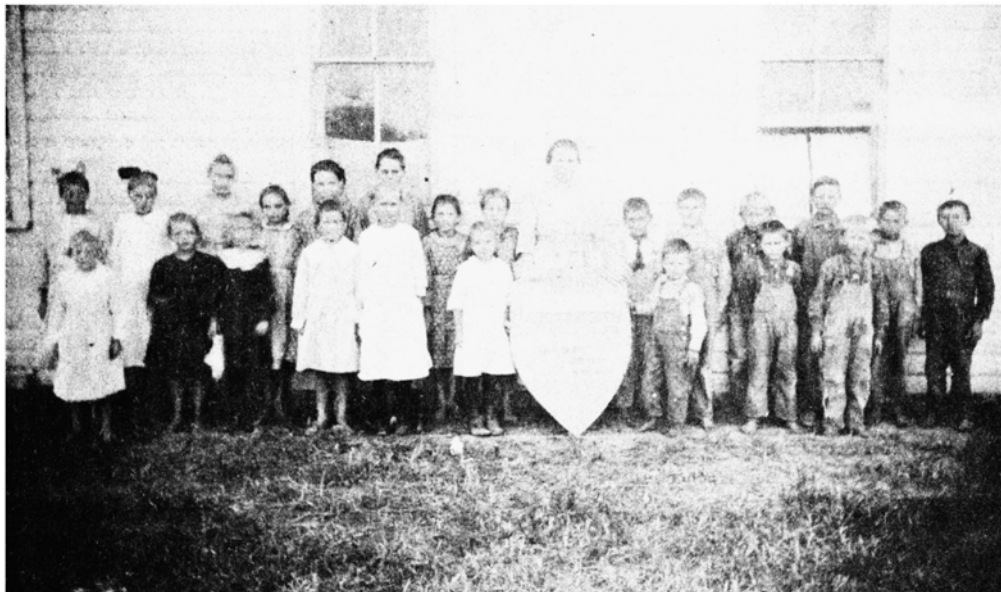
JOHN F. AND FRENİ (Schrag) Goering in their wedding pose. The couple moved into Lone Tree township in 1900 from north Harvey County. It was in the same year that Preacher John Holdeman died. Son, Joseph, of Moundridge furnished the picture.



MRS. HERB C. STUCKY (Louise Graber), Prairie View teacher during the 1938-39 school year.



DAN WALTNER whose wife, Bertha, was schoolboard member at Prairie View, is shown above. Mr. Waltner and a brother, Andrew, farmed just east of the quarter on which the Lone Tree stood. Others on the picture are son, Don, who now has the Waltner Electric Shop in Moundridge, Roland Goertz and Lavern Eck.



STUDENTS OF MRS. P. C. ANDRES (Anna Richert) lined up on the south side of the old Prairie View School building in 1920-21. From left to right: Marie Schelskè (Mrs. Calvin Hall), Marie Borth (Mrs. Ed Kruse), Selma Waltner (Mrs. Ben R. Stucky), Elizabeth Goering (Mrs. Art Wedel), Anna Krehbiel (Mrs. Dan T. Stucky), Amanda Goering (Mrs. Art Goering), Amelia Schelske (Mrs. Marvin Boyce), Miss Richert, Erwin C. Goering, W. L. Bill Kaufman, Ervin Stucky, Dan Borth, Waldo Schrag. Front row: Olga Schelske (Heather), Pearl Kaufman (Mrs. Harold Stotts), Bertha Waltner (Mrs. Waldo Voth), Kathryn Krehbiel Parker, Elsie Stucky (Mrs. Martin Schrag), Elma Boese (Mrs. Alfred Schmidt), Marie Kaufman (Mrs. Harrie Shultz), Henry Boese, Peter Krehbiel and Walter Boese.



PUPILS AT PRAIRIE VIEW IN 1938-39, the students of Louise Graber (Mrs. Herb C. Stucky). Back row, left to right, Rolland Goertz, Lavern Eck, Leonard Eck, Donald Waltner, Claude Koehn, Howard Koehn, Arnold Goertz, Elmer Goering, Marvin "Sieg" Stucky, Forrest Goering. Front row: Loretta Goertz Zehr, Marian Goertz (Mrs. Walt Siemens), Kathryn Goering (Mrs. Willard Kramer), Gertrude Goering (Mrs. Clarence Graber), Mabel Stucky (Mrs. Reuben Goering), Ione Farver, Geneva Krehbiel (Mrs. Arlo Flickner), Jean Koehn (Mrs. Wilbur Koehn), Fern Koehn, R.N. The school building was the second one at Prairie View and came from Turkey Creek and three years later was moved to Farms in Mound twp.