

Barton County Historical Society

PO Box 1091

Great Bend, KS 67530-1091

<http://bartoncountymuseum.org>

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The Village Crier

Barton County Historical Society

September 2013, Volume 21, Number 4

Museum Memos

When we built the Schulz Research Library, we knew that we needed a gathering place for things: papers, books, negatives, tapes, CDs, DVDs (technology changes every 5 minutes), and our vast picture collection. But the library continues to serve a dual purpose. It is also a wonderful place to put people. We hold all our own meetings there and can provide space for others as well. Class reunions, special events meetings, family reunions—the library is a comfortable and quiet place for wrapping minds around the business at hand.

At the annual meeting last January members voted to increase family memberships from \$25 to \$30 a year. All other categories remained the same. Look at your mailing label and if it says F2013 that means your dues for 2014 can be paid at any time. If we receive your money by the end of September, we will honor yearly dues at the \$25 rate. Oh, and by the way, dues in any category can be sent for 2014.

Our membership committee is thinking of ways to increase membership, but they will also consider what YOU want. What appeals to you? How many and what kind of meetings? Special events? Hours of operation? In other words, how can we continue to bring a quality attraction here and bring new looks at old things? Yes, your opinion does count. And the committee as well as all of us try to define the value of a membership. Single members can visit as often as they like, at no charge. Family memberships give the same privilege to all members living in the household. All meetings are open to everyone at any level of membership. And of course you receive 4 of these fabulous newsletters, providing long forgotten or never known snippets about our fascinating past. Other “perks” are being carefully considered. But, the most important reason for your membership is to assist us in bringing this quality attraction to this county.

Two researchers have spent much productive time with us recently. One was doing grain elevators along the railroad. The other person is gathering information

about the mills in Kansas for Kansas State University. With their exclusive milling program at KSU, I am sure this will be an excellent resource. Back to paragraph #1, this library has provided an invaluable resource, since we had tucked away a whole attic of paper, as well as the bits and pieces scattered everywhere else.

Contributor members since last reported include: Mary Lou Button, Jerry and Theda Jo Wendell, Concrete Services Co., and Community Bank.

We recently had a combined project with the Kansas Wetlands Education Center (KWEC). They were loaned a whole box of things from the Robl estate to copy and preserve, so that is just what happened. This is just one example of shared information, shared responsibilities. Many attractions and facilities work together to make Barton County an exciting destination for visitors and what we all desire to be a memorable place to live and work. Hope to see you soon so visit whenever you can.

Beverly Komarek, Executive Director

Is it time to renew your membership?

Check the top line of your mailing label for a letter designation and date. If it is circled in red, your membership is now due.

S _____ \$15 Annual Individual Membership

F _____ \$30 Annual Family Membership

C _____ \$100-\$499 Contributor

X _____ \$500+ Benefactor

L _____ \$1000+ for Life members

R is for Reciprocal

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Calendar of Events

- Sept 2 - **Labor Day - Museum Closed**
Sept 9 - Board of Directors Meeting - 7:30 pm
Sept 23 - Program Meeting - 7:30 pm

Oct 28 - Program Meeting - 7:30 pm

Nov 11 - **Veterans Day**
Nov 18 - Board of Directors Meeting - 7:30 pm
Nov 19 - **Winter Hours Begin**
Tuesday-Friday, 10:00 am-5:00 pm
Nov 25 - Program Meeting - 7:30 pm
Nov 28 - **Thanksgiving - Museum Closed**

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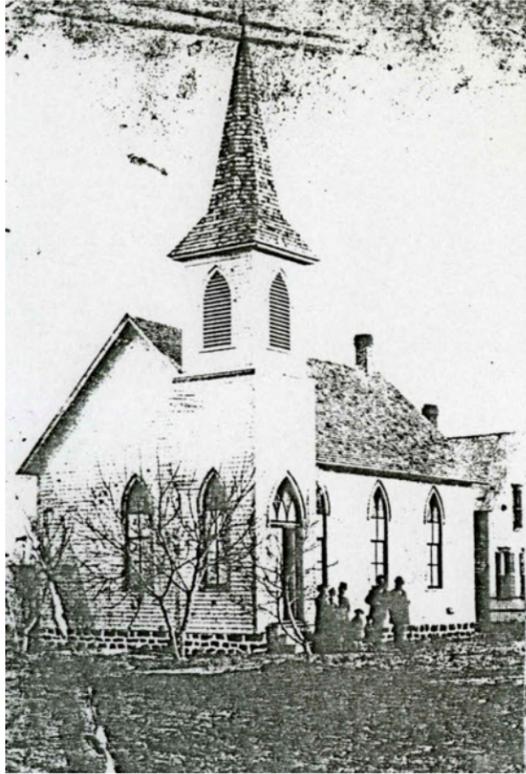


Wolf Milling Company

John Wolf, a native of Bremen, Germany, brought his family to Ellinwood in 1878 and purchased the brewery from John Hess. Wolf operated the brewery until prohibition forced it out of business. So, he began milling wheat instead, as well as being involved in many other parts of Ellinwood's economy.

GERMAN METHODISTS IN BARTON COUNTY

Karen Neuforth, BCHS Research Coordinator



Great Bend German Methodist Church
(Copy provided to the author by Irwin Alefs)

I'm sure some of our readers may be a little curious about what the difference is between a German Methodist and a regular Methodist. The answer lies in the word German (i.e., German-speaking). Methodism, of course, is a protestant and evangelical religious movement, which began in the 18th century among a group of students at Oxford University in England. Those students included brothers John and Charles Wesley, George Whitefield, and others. These "Methodists" were very methodical and detailed in their study of the Bible and promoted discipline in their opinions and lifestyles.

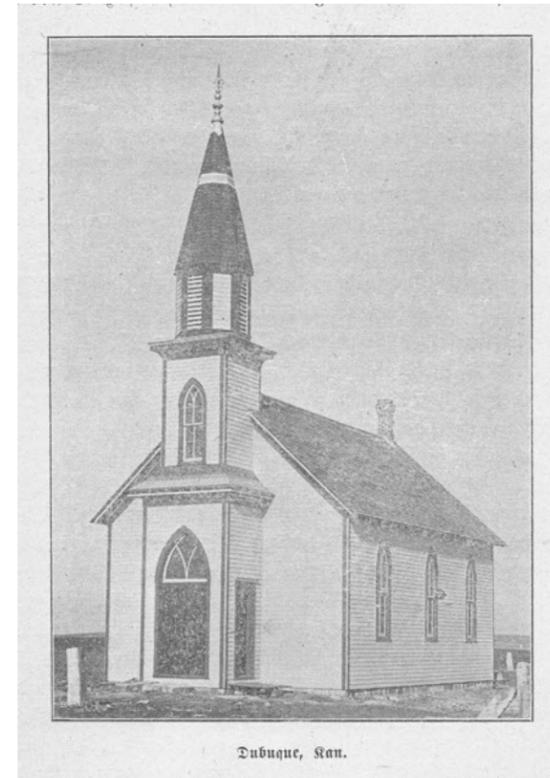
The Wesley brothers brought their ideas to the American colonies in 1735, proposing to convert the Native American tribes in Georgia to Christianity. For many years, ministers following their path were still a part of the Church of England, but with the American Revolution division came and the Methodist Episcopal Church was formed at Baltimore, Maryland, in 1784.

In the 1830s, with a massive German migration to the United States, Methodist circuit riders carried their message out to German-speaking settlements, working both in larger cities with significant German populations, and in parts of the country, eventually including Kansas, that were just beginning to be settled by homesteaders.

By the late 1830s, these German-speaking congregations of the Methodist Episcopal Church, began forming geographically defined German Conferences. A century later, these would then be absorbed into the English-speaking conferences of the denomination as the use of the German language in their communities declined.

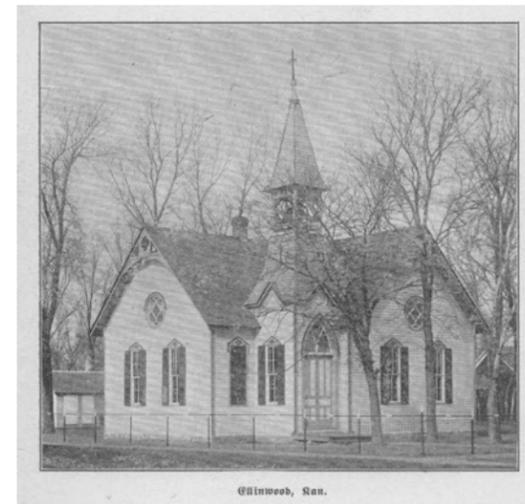
The story of the German Methodists in this area begins with one of those circuit riding preachers, Rev. J.J. Eichenberger, who came down here from Salina in 1875 to gather congregations in Great Bend and Ellinwood. A native of Switzerland, Eichenberger was a Civil War veteran, who had served a number of churches in Missouri before being sent to Kansas in 1873. Eichenberger formally organized the Great Bend Circuit in 1876 with thirty-five members. When he was transferred in 1878, Rev. John Adam Müller, a native of the Bavarian Palatinate, took charge. A blacksmith by trade, he joined the Methodist Church and was sent as a missionary to Lawrence, Kansas, in 1860, serving five counties and preaching in twelve different locations. He also fought in the Civil War, resuming his circuit riding in Missouri, Iowa, and Kansas after his discharge. In 1879, a parsonage was built in Great Bend and by 1886 the congregation boasted a new church building at the northeast corner of Broadway and Stone.

All of these ministers served other settlements in this area as well. Along with Great Bend, Rev. Eichenberger was initially assigned to take on Great Bend and Ellinwood in 1875, but it appears that nothing much happened with Ellinwood until 1883. But, in 1876, Eichenberger was assigned Dubuque as part of his circuit, several German Methodist families (Hofmeister, Ruch, Oeser, etc.) from Iowa and Illinois having settled in that vicinity. They first gathered in C. Hofmeister's sod house with C. Ruch leading worship. In 1885 this parish built a small church, which was replaced by a larger one in 1898. That building was struck by lightning two years later and burned down, being replaced by a third church.



Dubuque German Methodist Church
(From *Souvenir der West Deutschen Konferenz der Bischoeflichen Methodistenkirche*, 1906)

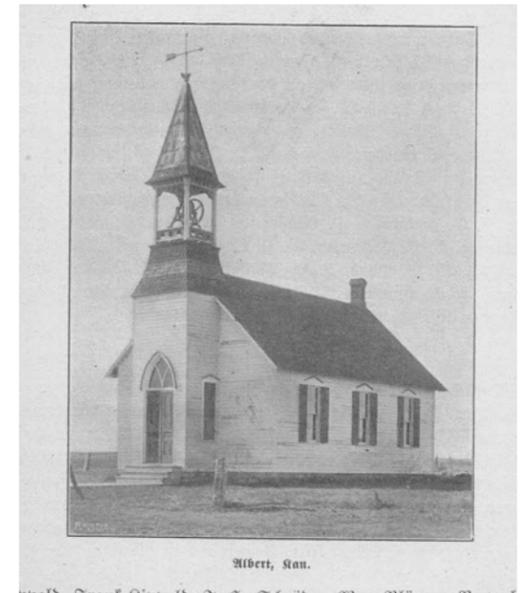
In 1883, while serving the Great Bend Circuit, Rev. J.H. Dreyer reported, "I have received two new places to preach, the one is 20 miles southwest of here, the second in Ellinwood. Of late I have not yet held regular services, but I hope in future to be able to do so." The first members of this parish were the Rinkers, Simons, and Hartmanns. In 1898, they purchased the English Methodist Church building in Ellinwood and added a parsonage in 1899 when Ellinwood and Dubuque were joined as one appointment.



Ellinwood German Methodist Church
(From the 1906 *Souvenir*)

On to the northwest of Great Bend, the Grünewald, Gabbert, Haase, Thalheim, Schultz, Schröder, and Andres families in the Albert neighborhood came together and C.G. Fritsch, who had been an assistant of Rev. Eichenberger, was appointed to serve them in 1878. In the early 1890s, they managed to erect a small church west of Albert.

There were other small parishes scattered across the area. H.H. Hackmann, who worked at Great Bend from 1884 to 1887, reportedly had seven places at which he was assigned to preach. There were congregations at Bushton, Wilson, Larned, Kinsley, Bison, LaCrosse, Russell, and Otis, among others.



Albert German Methodist Church
(From *Souvenir der West Deutschen Konferenz der Bischoeflichen Methodistenkirche*, 1906)

As use of the German language declined, especially with the anti-German sentiments that came with the two World Wars, the German branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church was absorbed into and joined with their English-speaking brethren. Sometimes a congregation just converted their services to English, sometimes an English and a German congregation merged. These actions were generally determined by time, place, and the local population.

Those early circuit riding preachers brought their faith out to the furthest reaches of the unsettled prairies and mountains, helping forge new communities, often providing educational resources, and giving their congregants a spiritual home. For these reasons, their stories and the stories of all those little country churches, be they Methodist, Catholic, Congregational, Lutheran, Evangelical & Reformed, Brethren, or whatever, need to be honored and preserved.