

History of the Arley Community

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Source:

The History of Clay County published in 1920 says: "No reliable, authentic information can be given of any permanent settlement made in what is now Clay County prior to the year of 1819." This is about 26 years before the organization of the German Methodist Episcopal Church at First Prairie, now Arley. This helps us to place the German people in this community between 1819 and 1845.

In early days this community was called "First Prairie," possibly because of its contour in contrast to surrounding territory. Most early settlers coming from Germany and Switzerland and settling in this new country just opened and organized as Clay County.

The German Methodist Episcopal Church at "First Prairie" had its beginning in the year 1845. Reverend Heinrich Neulsen was the minister. The charter members were Conrad Hessel, Sr. and wife, Gottliebe; Jacob Hessel and wife, Marie; Fred Hartel and wife, Eva B.; Gottlieb Loeffler and his wife, Elizabeth. These all came directly from Germany to Arley.

When the church at First Prairie was organized, religious services were held in the homes of the people. Later a building was erected just to the south of the church and cemetery as a residence for the pastor and a place to hold religious services.

The first Sunday School in the Arley Church seems to indicate that Uncle Peter Hartel was the first Sunday School Superintendent. He was an uncle to Conrad Hartel and great uncle of Homer and Victor Hartel, Irene Hackman, Emma Tuschhoff, Ruth Neth, and Ella Neudeck. Uncle Peter Hartel was the teacher of 21 boys.

The Epworth League was an important organization for the young people. Started in 1900 by H.A. Hohenwald, it continued up to 1950. Then under the ministry of Reverend Arland Neighbours in 1951 the Methodist Youth Fellowship was organized for the young people, and has continued to the present day.

The Foreign Missionary Society was carried on a number of years by the ladies of the Arley Church. When the three Methodisms were united into one Methodist Church in 1939, the Arley Methodist remained in the St. Joseph District of the Missouri Conference. The women of the Arley Church then were organized into a Woman's Society of Christian Service after unification of Methodism. Mr. Homer Hartel was the first president. Then in 1944 Mrs. R.S. Tomlin, wife of Reverend Tomlin, pastor at the time, reorganized the W.S.C.S. The following officers were elected: President, Mrs. Floyd Hessel; Vice President, Mrs. John Gwin; Recording Secretary, Mrs. Otto Neth; Treasurer, Mrs. William Bailey; Secretary of Missionary Education and Service, Mrs. George Neth; Secretary of Publication, Mrs. Graydon Wever; Secretary of Christian Social Relations and Local Activities, Mrs. Henry Moog; Secretary of Youth Work and Children, Miss Ruby Forbis; Secretary of Supplies, Mrs. Willie Irminger; Committee on Parsonage, Mrs. Robert Neth and Mrs. Henry Moog; Committee on Flowers, Mrs. Willie Irminger and Mrs. Will Bailey. The W.S.C.S. is very active in the work of the church today.

In 1877 when the church was erected, the building south of the church was retained as a residence for the pastor. A deed to this lot was given on May 7, 1877, by Frederick Hartel and his wife, Eva Barbara. The sum paid for the lot was ten dollars.

The building of this church increased the growth of the congregation and, to serve the community more efficiently, during the pastorate of Reverend H.A. Hohenwald (1894 to 1899) the north wing of the church was added. During these years a parsonage was built on the lot adjoining the church lot on the south. The deed to the lot was given by Fred Bauman and wife, Mary D. on July 31, 1899, to Fred Hessel, O.H. Weber, Conrad Hartel, Edward Hessel, Jacob Neth, Sr., George Neth, Sr. and R.H. Irminger as trustees for the Methodist Episcopal Church at Arley, Missouri. The price paid for the lot was \$25.00.

When Jesse Harrington served as minister in the Arley Church from 1946 to 1948 a basement was built under the church. The men of the congregation removed the dirt from under the building. The rest was finished by hired labor. The basement was divided into Sunday School classrooms. Also a kitchen with cabinets and stove was installed. All of this was an improvement to the church.

Always a heavy burden falls on the church brought on by wars of nations. In the Civil War Samuel Weber, Henry Weber, John Irminger, John Frick, Jacob Neth, Sr., Phillip Hammel, Carl Frick and Louis Hartel answered the call.

On April 24, 1898, Spain declared war on the United States. The next year the United States declared war on Spain. This soon reached the Arley community, and Jacob Goefert entered the Spanish-American War. He returned home at the close.

The most destructive war up to this time was World War I declared against Germany in 1914 and ended in 1818 [sic]. Those engaged in this war were Henry and Arley Weber, sons of Otto and Elizabeth Weber; Clarence and Bertram Hessel, sons of Conrad Hessel, Jr. and Bertha Hessel; and Herbert Hartel, son of Conrad and Elizabeth Hartel. All returned home from the war without any casualty.

Twenty-seven years later on December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. On December 8, 1941, the United States declared war on Japan and Germany declared war on the United States on December 9, 1941. This was the beginning of World War II. Again the Arley community answered the call of duty and the following young men left for the services: William Eissler, son of Gus and Mary Eissler; Theodore Eissler, son of Theodore and Lena Eissler; V.V. Neudeck, son of Walter and Ella Neudeck; J. Wilburn Neth, son of George, Jr. and Etta Neth; J.W. Odor, son of Joseph and Gertrude Odor; Harold K. Hartel, son of Victor and Edith Hartel; Glenn C. Hartel, son of Homer and Ruth Hartel; David H. Pence, son of Cleve and Georgia Pence. All returned home except Private Glenn C. Hartel, son of Homer and Ruth Hartel. He was reported missing in action August 10, 1944, in General Patton's Third Army. Then the official report came September 27, 1944, that he had been killed in action. To the parents the government presented the Purple Heart and a certificate from Franklin D. Roosevelt and one from the Secretary of War. Memorial services were held in the Arley Church on Sunday, October 8, 1944, conducted by Dr. W.H. Hackman, an uncle of Glenn's, assisted by Reverend R.S. Tomlin, pastor of the church at that time.

Previous to 1894 the community now called "Arley" was known as "first Prairie." In 1893 Rudolph Weber established a store east of the church across the road running north and south. He wanted a name for his store that would designate its location and attract the public. Several names were suggested, when Mrs. Fred Hessel got a cue from the name given the newly born baby boy of Mr. and Mrs. Otto Weber, who had given their son the name of "Arley." This name suited Rudolph Weber so the store was called Arley, and the name was given to the church also. A post office was established there in 1894 and was registered as "Arley." This office continued until 1901 when Free Rural Delivery Route was established.

Chris Rauchle came to this country from Germany after World War I, and in 1924 he and Reverend Charles Koehner rented a building located east of the Arley Store owned by Walter Benson who also owned and operated the store at that time. This was converted into a garage. Two years later the partnership was dissolved and Chris took over the business. He converted it into a hardware store and garage, which became known as Arley Hardware and Garage. He married Irene Goefert; they have a daughter, Helen, and twin sons Charles and Chris, Jr. Chris Jr. and his wife, Rosie, have two children, Christina and Chris Wayne. This garage and hardware store is still in operation by Charles and Chris, Jr. They also farm the land owned by their father.

In 1940 John and Nova Gwin of Smithville bought the Arley Store from Wilburn Neth and moved with their daughter, Betty, to Arley on March 20 and maintained a general store for six years. In September, 1946, they sold the business to Louie and Ada Doyle, who farmed near Arley. It then changed ownership to Perry Doyle and wife.

In 1952 the Arley Store burned. At that time a man by the name of Butler was operating the store. The fire departments were called from Smithville and Kearney, however, the fire was out of control before they arrived and the store was destroyed. They saved the homes and buildings surrounding the store. A new store was built in 1954 by John and Nova Gwin just south of the parsonage on land which they owned. They stayed in business three years and then closed out the store and converted the building into a home which they sold to A.J. and Patty Deshon.

Just west of the church and parsonage Donald and Betty Hartel built a basement in 1963. They intended to finish it into a home later. At this time they have a cabinet shop in the basement which is doing a thriving business.

The Arley School was founded in 1870. The land was given by Jacob Creek and his wife, Virginia, for \$1.00 making it legal. The first directors were Phillip Ebert, Conrad Hessel and John Ervin. The farm which the school was located on was purchased by Frederick Hessel from Jacob Creek in 1898. A deed was made on November 19, 1900, making this the Arley School District. The directors were Gus Burnett, James Ebert and Fred Hessel. There was school in this district until the fall of 1965. It was then discontinued for lack of school children in the district. It was cheaper to transport the few children to Kearney and Smithville schools. School directors at this time are Tip Ervin, Don Phillips and Chris Rauchle, Jr. The Clerk is Casper Weber. The last teacher was Mrs. Davis Shepard.

Valentine Moog was in Germany in October, 1823. He migrated from Germany to Indiana on April 23, 1853, and moved from Indiana to Moniteau County, Missouri in 185. He married Mary Yost, who was born in Germany February 10, 1836. They reared a large family on a farm near Jamestown, Missouri. They attended church at Jamestown Methodist Episcopal Church. Before their last child was born they moved to Arley where they lived the remainder of their lives. John Moog was born January 31, 1882, the last child of Valentine and Mary Moog. On September 27, 1905 he married Mabel Teney. To this union were born three children, Alletta, Forest and Verna. Alletta married Willia Irminger and Verna married Nevis Chancellor. Both couples still reside in Arley and are active in the church and community. Forest lives in Mason City, Iowa.

John Moog was a faithful member of the Arley Methodist Church and served as treasurer for many years. He devoted much of his time to Downing School, acting as President of the Board for several terms.

John Moog had one brother, Henry Moog, who lived on the adjoining farm. He married Lizzie Neth and to this union was born a daughter, Stella, and a son, Wesley. Henry was active in the community and served as clerk for the Downing School for 50 years and also spent much of his time working for the Arley Church. He also served as director for the Kearney Commercial Bank.

The grandparents and parents of R.H. Irminger arrived at Liberty Landing in 1842. R.H. Irminger's grandfather was Rudolph Irminger. The boys of the family were Rudolph, John, and Henry. The girls were Lizzie I. Brenner and Emily I. (Mrs. Samuel Weber).

The father of R.H. Irminger was John and his mother was Catherine Hammel. The boys of the family were Will, Rudolph and Louis. The girls were Carrie I. (McKarnin) and Fannie I. (Boetger). R.H. Irminger married Christine Fisher. Their sons are Marvin, Lawrence and Willie. Their daughters are Lillie I. (Westover), Eva I. (Dunn), Grace I. (Urban) and Stella I. (Arthur).

Willie Irminger and his wife Alletta (Moog) and Gene Arthur, his wife, Stella (Irminger) and their three children: Betty Jean, Dewayne and Laurie still live in the Arley community.

Henry Weber and his wife, Mary (who was R.H. Irminger's great great Aunt) were the parents of Otto Weber who married Elizabeth Hessel. The sons of this family were Henry, Arley, Casper and Graydon. The daughters were Lena, Addie, Ella, Emma, Ester, Clare and Helen. Casper Weber and his wife, Opal

(Neth) have two sons, Edward and Michael. S.T. Kelly and his wife, Ester (Weber) had three sons: Sammy, Loyd and Robert. Graydon and Ada Weber have two daughters, Jane (Mrs. Kenneth Vaughn) and Pat (Mrs. Lyle Don Carlos). Jane has a daughter, Laura, and a son, Kenneth, Jr. Pat has two daughters, Lydia and Julie. Casper and Opal Weber and Graydon and Ada Weber still reside on farms in the Arley community and are active in the Arley Church. Both Casper and Graydon Weber serve as deacons and on the church board. Casper was Secretary and Treasurer of the Arley School and also served as director. Graydon served as director for many years on the Arley School Board.

John Valentine Stroeter and his wife, Elizabeth Mueller came from Erfurt, Germany, and settled in Richmond, Wisconsin. They had nine children.

Ida Charlotte Stroeter married Edward Hessel and to this union was born six children: Lenora, Bernice, Mabel, Grace, Flora, and Floyd William.

Floyd W. Hessel married Eunice Tuschhoff and they have three sons: John Edward, Floyd William and Edward Lind; and three daughters: Carol Sue, Mary Lou and Elizabeth. This family continues to live in the Arley community and is active in church and Sunday school work.

Mr. and Mrs. Louis Hessel, whose father and grandfather helped establish the Arley Church, had two children; Anna and Elmer. Mr. Hessel was President of the Kearney Trust Bank and served in that capacity until his death. Mr. Hessel was very active in church work at Arley. Anna and Elmer still live on their father's farm and are dedicated members of the Arley Church and work for the betterment of the community.

William Schmidt was born in Germany. He listened to the advice of an uncle living near Edwardsville, Illinois, and at an early age he came to the United States, the country of opportunity and freedom. For a while he lived with his uncle in Illinois. His next move was to Clay County, Missouri, the Mt. Gilead-Arley vicinity where he took an active part in community life. He married Mary Elizabeth Yoder on February 19, 1891. This union was blessed with seven children. The oldest child, Mary, died in 1896; Henry in 1945 and Edith in 1929.

In 1896 Mr. Schmidt moved to a farm southwest of Liberty. In 1950 this farm became the site of the Ford plant.

In 1918 Mr. Schmidt purchased the J.V. Stroeter farm where he and his family continued to live. Mr. Schmidt was always interested in agriculture, used methods to improve the soil and built a new, modern house on the farm in order to provide more comfortable living for his family.

A son, Paul Schmidt and his wife live on the home place. Ernest Schmidt lives on a farm south of Cameron, Missouri. Ruth (Mrs. Harry E. Murphy) lives in Long Beach, California, where she and her husband take care of their business interests. Josephine taught at the Wagy and Arley schools and now, with her husband, Ernest C. Rempfer, resides in Kansas City, Missouri.

Both Mr. and Mrs. William Schmidt were held in highest regards by all who had privilege to know them.

When death ended his life's work, he was laid to rest beside his wife who passed away August 7, 1938, in the Arley cemetery. Thus his residence in Clay County, east of Smithville, began and ended in the same area.

Mr. and Mrs. Schmidt were members of the Methodist Church of Arley.

Jacob Sautter was born April 22, 1877, in Willmandingen, Germany, in the area of Stuttgart. He came to America at the age of 16 in 1893. He had heard stories of a land that was so large there was room for everybody and its people were friendly. Some cousins also from the same town either came with him or had already been here: George Sautter and his sister Anna Sautter Neth, wife of William Neth, and John Eissler, husband of Lydia Hess Eissler.

Arley was attractive to him by being mostly settled with German-speaking people and having a German church at the time.

He went back to Germany after some years and married Anna Schweikart of Erpfingen, a small town near Willmandingen. She was born August 31, 1870. To this marriage five children were born, two of whom lived: the oldest Anna M. was born June 29, 1899, and Pauline was born May 18, 1904.

In either 1904 or 1905 Jacob sold the old family home and came back to America. He bought a farm from a Mr. Anderson on the Kearney-Smithville Road. Anna M. went to school at the Waggy school. After about three years he sold it and went back to Germany and bought a dairy in Willmandingen, his old home town. Anna went to school there for one year in 1909 and then he sold the dairy and came back to America and bought another farm from a brother to Mr. Anderson down the road from the first one. Anna M. and Pauline went to Mt. Gilead school; Anna went two years to Central Wesleyan at Warrenton, Missouri.

In 1919 Jacob sold his farm again and moved to near Liberty, Missouri. Pauline attended high school in Liberty and in 1920 Jacob (Jake) decided to go back to Germany where he built another home and stayed about three years, coming back about 1923 and buying the Homer Hartel farm on the Kearney-Smithville Road, which he farmed until he passed away November 26, 1953. His wife, Anna, passed away April 30, 1952.

Pauline married Paul Schmidt of the area February 8, 1925, and Anna M. married Albert Klausman of Buffalo, New York, November 12, 1925. Pauline and Paul have a son, Richard, and a daughter, Carolyn and two grandchildren. Anna M. and Albert have a son, Jim, and a daughter, Rosemary, and six grandchildren.

George Neth, Sr. was born in Germany in 1850 and came to this country at the age of 14 years with his parents. They settled in Clinton before moving to Arley. He married Catherine Smith in 1872. She had come from Germany in 1854 at the age of 4 years. Their sons were George, Jr., Otto and Oscar. Their daughters were Lizzie, Emma, Pauline and Florence. George Neth, Sr. was president of the bank in Paradise, Missouri, until it closed in the early 1930s. George Neth, Jr. married Etta Guifford, and to this union three girls and two boys were born: Orville Neth married Mildred Hartel and they have a daughter, Judy (Riley) and a son, Jerry; Wilburn Neth married Mary Ruth Logan; Verna Neth married Omer McQuerry and they have a daughter, Patty (DeShon) and a son, James; Opal Neth married Casper Weber and they have two sons, Edward and Michael; Emma Neth married Alfred Eissler and they have two sons, William and Robert. Some of these families are still living in the Arley community.

Otto Neth married Ruth Hartel (daughter of Conrad Hartel) and had two children, a daughter, Elizabeth and a son, Robert.

Oscar Neth married Irma Doeiffit and they had three children: Margery, C.O. and Herbert.

Emma Neth married William Bailey and they had two sons, Ralph and Clay.

Lizzie Neth married Henry Moog and they had a daughter, Stella, who married Bertham Marsh and had two sons, O.H. and Donald, and a son, Wesley Moog.

Homer and Ruth Hartel had four children. Mildred married Orville Neth and they have a son, Jerry and a daughter, Judy (Mrs. Gary Riley). Glenn Hartel died serving his country in World War II. Donald married Betty Gwin and they have seven children: Colleen (Mrs. Jim Kennedy), Lane, Neil, Becky, Mark, Jane and Ruth.

James married Dolores Wren and they have three children: Jeffrey and the twins, Julie and David.

Homer and Ruth Hartel still reside in Homer's father's (Conrad Hartel who helped found the Arley Church) old home across the road from the Arley Church. He rings the church bell every Sunday morning at 9:30 and at 10:00 for Sunday School. He served on the church board and taught Sunday School classes and served as Sunday School superintendent for years. He also serves on the Arley Cemetery Board.