

Early German & Wendish Settlers of Eastland County

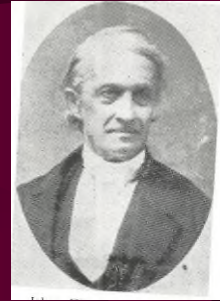
Discovering The German/Wendish Community 6 Miles South of Cisco and the German/Wendish Community South of Romney

The Wends

- The Wends settled on the Polish border in Germany.
- They have their own language, more related to Polish than German.
- In Germany, the Wends are known as the Sorbs.
- The term Wend is actually a derogatory term in Germany.
- The Wends mainly assimilated into the German culture while still keeping a few of their own traditions.

The Texas Wends

- Sailed to Texas on the Ben Nevis in 1854 arriving in Galveston on 12/16/1854.
- Led by the Rev. Jan Killian who was called to be their pastor.
- Established Serbin in Bastrop County (now Lee County) in 1855.



A Few Interesting Facts About the Wends in Texas



- When the first church at Serbin was dedicated in 1859, Rev. Killian preached the sermon in Wendish, German, and English. He did not know any English prior to coming to America.
- The current church finished in 1871 has the highest pulpit of any religious community in the State of Texas.
- Serbin is home to the only Wendish Museum outside of Germany.





The First German Settler in Eastland County

- Emil Schaefer settled in Cisco in 1880 with his father Joseph Schaefer and sister Vallie Schaldenbrant.
- He discovered this area on an expedition across the US going to Oregon and California prior to coming to Cisco.
- Emil wrote stories in German language newspapers in Germany and America to encourage Germans to relocate to Eastland County
- Emil was the first farmer to plant and raise a peanut crop in Eastland County.

Wilhem and Maria Ziehr

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1883 via Ellis Island.
- Had \$2 when he arrived in Eastland County.
- He purchased 1,200 acres over the span of 20 years.



Daniel and Emilie Wende



- Daniel and Emilie arrived in 1884.
- Their older sons Karl and Otto arrived in 1885 with other relatives.
- Daniel worked for the railroad.

Adolph and Mathila Reich

- Arrived in 1884 with the Daniel Wende family.
- Adolph worked for the railroad..



Emil Karl (E.K) and Emilie Winge



- E.K. arrived initially in Eastland County in 1885 eventually moving away.
- Later returned to Cisco in 1900 with his bride to start his family.
- E.K. worked for the railroad and Emilie was a nurse.

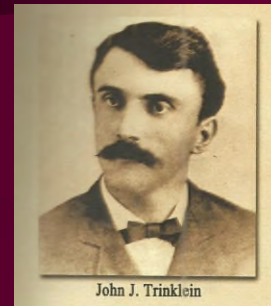
Gustav and Johanna Bauman

- Arrived in Cisco in 1885 with Karl and Otto Wende and E. K. Winge.
- Johanna was sister of Emilie Wende, half sister of Adolph Reich, and aunt of E. K. Winge.
- Donated the land for Bethlehem Lutheran Church, now the site of Redeemer Lutheran Cemetery.

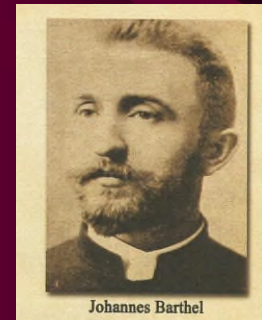
Karl and Emma Schaefer

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1886.
- Emma was known as a “rubbing doctor” similar to a chiropractor of today.
- Karl and Emma hosted the first Lutheran services in Eastland County in their home and were instrumental in establishing the first Lutheran Church in Eastland County.

In 1886, the first formal Lutheran services held in Eastland County were held in the home of Karl and Emma Schaefer. In 1885, the Rev. John J. Trinklein visited with the German Lutherans in the area about the possibility of organizing a Lutheran congregation. Rev. Trinklein was based out of Riesel, TX. In 1886, Rev. Johannes Barthel began ministering to the Lutherans in Eastland County.



John J. Trinklein



Johannes Barthel

Rev. Richard Seils and the Rev. A. W. Kramer also served the Cisco area through 1890.

In 1890, Bethlehem Lutheran Church was organized. It was affiliated with the Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod. The land for the church was donated by Johanna Bauman which is now at the site of the Redeemer Lutheran Cemetery.

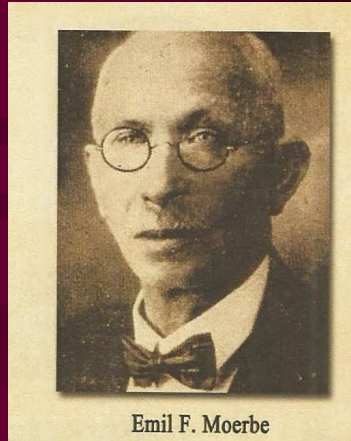


Rev. Richard Seils



Rev. A.W. Kramer

Not much is know about the early history of Bethlehem Lutheran Church. In 1891, the Rev. Emil Moerbe began serving the congregation at Cisco. He also served mission stations in Abilene, Baird, and Big Spring. Cisco at this time was the base mission station for West Texas congregations of the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. Later mission stations at Albany, Ballinger, Clyde, Romney, Sagerton, Stamford, Strawn, and Winters were added to this mission base. Cisco served as a base for mission hub for the West Texas congregations until around 1920.



Emil F. Moerbe

Other German settlers who who arrived in this area in the early 1890s were the Frank Artzie family, Fritz Graeff, and the William Mullinkoff family. These families lived in the community only a few years.

In 1892, the Frank Artzie, William Mullinkoff, Karl Schaefer, and Wilhelm Ziehr families joined together to purchase a communion set for Bethlehem Lutheran Church. A portion of this set is currently in display at the Texas Wendish Heritage Museum.



Robert Koehler

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1893.
- Married Margaret Ziehr in February 1895.
- Later moved to the Hondo, TX area to farm around 1920.



William and Johanna/Marie Eifert



- William arrived in Eastland County in 1894 after reading an article written by Emil Schaefer in a German newspaper.
- William married Johanna Moerbe in 1894 and she passed away in 1895 due to complications with the birth of twins (a boy and a girl).
- Married Marie Domann from Fedor, TX in 1896.

A few interesting tidbits about William Eifert

- He was an opportunist taking advantage of learning where he traveled.
- He lived in Canada, Nebraska, Michigan, New Orleans, and Central America prior to coming to Eastland County.
- He was fluent in German, English (learned while living in Chicago), and Swedish (learned while living in Michigan)
- Worked on a banana plantation in Central America. He was 1 of 6 out of the 300 initial workers to survive the voyages to and from as well as the work conditions. The majority of this work crew died due to yellow fever.

Stroebe Family

In April 1895, Stroebe brothers Henry, Julius, and William traveled from Germania (now Lakota), Iowa to search for land in Texas. They were in route to the Rio Grande Valley via train when a log punctured the train's boiler on the tracks just outside of Cisco. While the brothers were waiting for the train to be fixed, they hired a land promoter to see the available land near Cisco. Each brother found properties around 4-6 miles south of Cisco with Henry and William purchasing adjoining properties and Julius buying property a short distance away.

Henry and Christina Stroebel

- Henry celebrated his 17th birthday on his voyage to America in 1888 settling in northern Iowa.
- Moved to Eastland County in 1896.



Julius Stroebel



- Arrived in Eastland County in 1896.
- Left Eastland County in 1897 returning to Iowa telling the Stroebel family remaining in Iowa that his brothers with their families would starve trying to farm in Texas.
- In the winter of 1898, Julius wrote in bicycle from Germnia, IA to Madison, MN where he purchased land and lived the remainder of this life with his wife Katherina who he married in 1899.

William and Barbara Stroebel

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1896.
- After William's death in 1911, Barbara one of the first women to successfully manage a farming operation in Eastland County, tripling the size of the farming operations in less than 10 years.



Bethlehem and Peace Lutheran Churches

In 1896, a division of unknown nature arose at Bethlehem Lutheran Church during the pastorate of Rev. Waechter (1895 – 1899).

Bethlehem Lutheran Church relocated to the Henry Stroebel place and remained with the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod. The church was serviced by Rev K. Hoeh (1899 – 1902).

Peace Lutheran Church was formed at the site previously donated by Johanna Bauman for Bethlehem Lutheran Church. Adolph Reich and Daniel Wende were listed as contacts for this mission post which attempted to affiliate with the Ohio Synod of the Lutheran Church.

Other German families which settled in Eastland County around this time were the Mrs. August Appelt and family, Paul Manske family, and August Seiwert family. These families only stayed in the community for a short time.

Henry and Margarethe Luker

- Arrived in 1896 settling in the Romney community.
- Lived in Iowa, Illinois, and Big Spring, TX prior to coming to Romney.
- Henry was a fire fighter prior to becoming a farmer.



August and Emilie Lieske



- Arrived in Eastland County in 1899 from Converse, TX.
- August served in the Russian army.
- August was one of the first farmers in Eastland County to practice agricultural diversification.
- August was the official photographer of the community.

Henry and Marie Massman

- Arrived in Romney from Illinois in 1899.
- Had the largest farming operations of the German settlers.
- He left Romney in 1918 to settle in California leasing in land to local farmers.



Rev. Gustav Mueller

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1902.
- Successfully organized the Lutheran Church in the Romney community and reunited Peace and Bethlehem Lutheran Churches.
- Married Clara Wiegmann, sister of Marie Massmann, on September 4, 1904.
- Later served other congregations in Kansas, Illinois, Missouri, and Texas.



Zion Lutheran Church Romney, TX 1903 - 1928

- Church was started on January 1, 1903 with the Massmann and Luker families as charter members. Rev. Mueller was first pastor.
- The church was located near the burial site of Henry Massman, son of Henry and Marie Massman.
- Later the Stephan, Gerhardt, Weiser, Miller, Schneider and Londonburg families were members of the congregation.
- The church closed in 1928.

Zion Lutheran Church Romney, TX Building Dedication in 1903



Otto Paul (O. P.) and Anna Weiser

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1904.
- The Weiser family was the first Wendish family to settle in Eastland County.
- O. P. was an accomplished musician serving the area Lutheran churches as organist.



Herman and Pauline Stephan



- Came to Eastland County in 1904.
- First Wendish family to settle in the Romney German community.
- Herman helped build the current St. Paul Lutheran Church in Serbin, TX.

Edward and Louise Mueller (Miller)

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1904.
- Louise's brother August Abraham also came to Texas and lived with them.
- In 1917 at the onset of World War I, they Americanized their last name to Miller to have a less German sounding last name.



Christ Lutheran Church

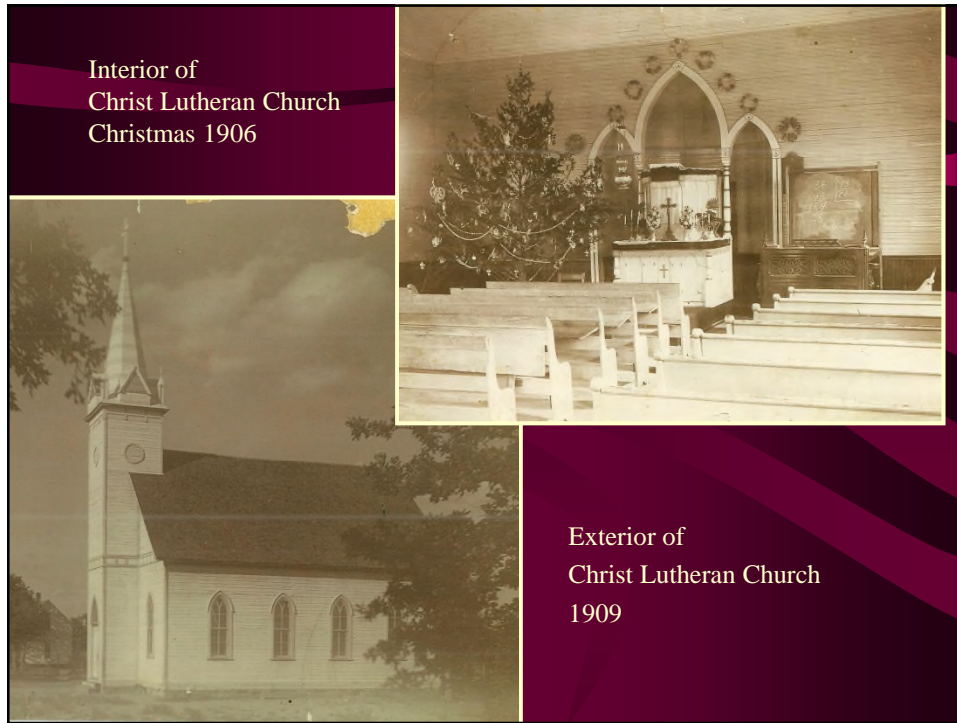
In 1902, Rev. Gustav Mueller came to serve Bethlehem Lutheran Church. He was able to reunite the congregations of Bethlehem and Peace Lutheran Churches.

On March 6, 1904 a meeting was held to adopt a constitution for the congregation.

On April 1, 1904 Christ Lutheran Church was formally organized.



In October 1906, the Christ Lutheran Church dedicated their house of worship. The cornerstone was laid in March 1906.



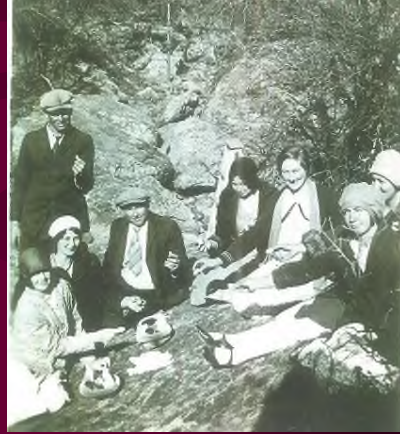
John and Katherine Gerhardt



- Arrived in Eastland County in 1906 settling in Romney.
- Came in Texas in 1903 purchasing land near De Leon.
- Learned of the German settlement in Romney by Albert Lieske who came to De Leon looking for work as a farm hand.

Karl and Alma Winge

- Arrived in Eastland County in 1912.
- Lived in Mercedes prior to coming to Cisco. They relocated here after several years of crop failures in Mercedes.



In 1912, Christ Lutheran Church hosted the Lutheran Church Missouri Synod Texas District Circuit Counselors Conference..



Ben and Mary Weise



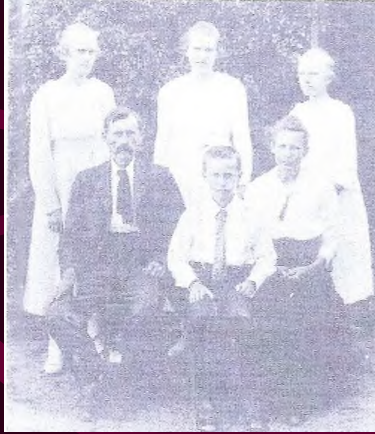
- Arrived in Eastland County in 1915.
- They farmed in Serbin, Lockett (Vernon), and Arkansas prior to moving here.

Karl August Weise

- Came to Eastland County from Serbin, TX in 1924 to live with his son Ben.
- Was a passenger on the Ben Nevis in 1854.
- Was a Confederate Soldier.
- Helped build the current historic St. Paul Lutheran Church in Serbin, TX.

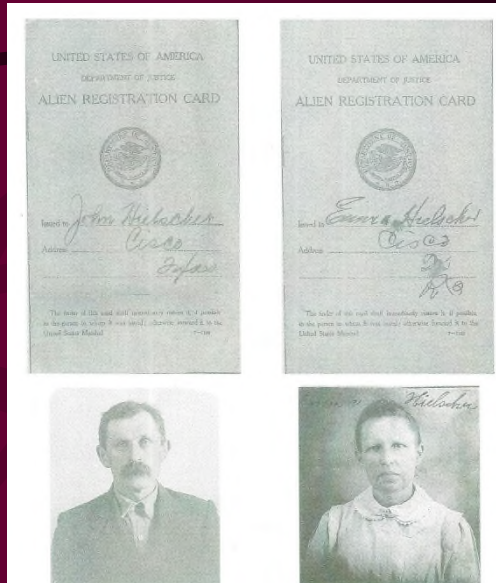


John and Emma Hielscher



- Arrived in Eastland County in 1915 from Vernon, TX.
- During WWI, the family had to register as illegal aliens as John was in the country illegally. His wife and children were American citizens.
- In 1926, John renounced his German citizenship and became a US Citizen.

These are the illegal alien cards and photo IDs for John and Emma Hielscher.



In 1917 Christ Lutheran Church built a parochial school building. Prior to this, school was held in the church building.



Grace Lutheran Church organized in the town of Cisco in November 1921 with the Rev. Arthur Ardnt as pastor. Charter member families were J.H. Blanken, August Fricke, Carl Gerhardt, Henry Leurs, O. P. Weiser, and Hans Ziehr. Although the majority of the members were of German ancestry, services were conducted solely in the English language. In 1922 they built their first sanctuary and parsonage.

Grace Lutheran Church



Church and Parsonage
– Winter 1925

Church Interior
- Easter 1922

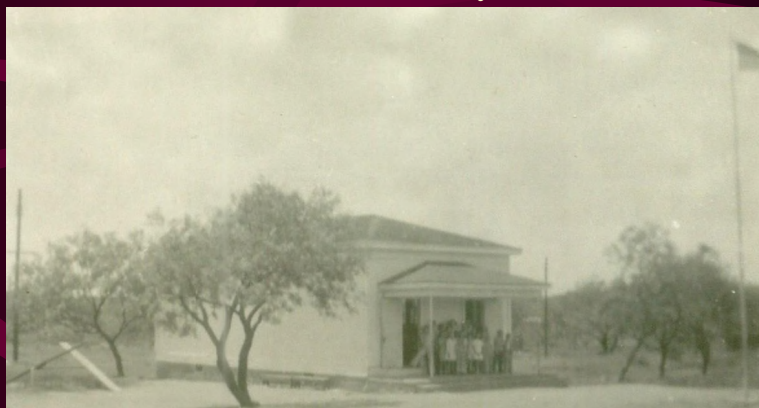


Grace Lutheran Ladies Aid

- In the spring of 1922, eight ladies of Grace Lutheran Church organized the first permanent Ladies Aid organization of any Lutheran Church Missouri Synod congregation in West Texas.
- The Ladies Aid purchased a matching offering plate and communion set for the church in 1922 as well as the church hymnals in 1927.
- The Ladies Aid was instrumental in starting the Sunday School program at the church in 1925.



In 1927, Grace Lutheran Parochial School was established. In 1929, they built their school building using materials from the former Zion Lutheran Church in Romney.



In 1965, Christ Lutheran Church and Grace Lutheran Church combined to form Redeemer Lutheran Church.

In July 1986, a monument with a brief history of Christ Lutheran Church was dedicated at the Christ Lutheran Cemetery. It has the cornerstone from church in the monument.



In 2012, the Christ Lutheran, Redeemer Lutheran, and Romney Lutheran Cemeteries were designated as Historic Texas Cemeteries by the Texas Historical Commission. On September 7, 2013 the Historical Markers were dedicated.



From August 2012 to October 2012 there was a special exhibit at the Eastland County Museum titled *Early German Settlers of Eastland County: Struggles of an Immigrant Community*.

In March 2013, this exhibit became a permanent community room there at the museum.

Dedication

- Willie Mae Holt Ziehr
(August 17, 1906 –
March 12, 1991)
- George Carl (G.C.)
Stroebe
(August 18, 1906 –
August 22, 1980)



Thank you for viewing this
presentation.

A work in progress compiled by:
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