

Backgrounds

Small Town Of Greenway Recalls Glorious Rural Life Some 75 Years Ago

Editor's Note: Greenway, S.D.—located west of Eureka, S.D.—was once a bustling village fulfilling an important business, social, religious and educational role to the surrounding rural population in the early 1900s. As farms gradually increased in size, many people moved to larger towns in the Dakotas or to other parts of the U.S. But a common heritage has united those former Greenway residents. Recently, 285 people gathered for a reunion at Greenway—enjoying the day meeting old friends, taking pictures, and recalling "old times."

They remembered Greenway as an active, close-knit community, as evident by the big turn-out. People came from Aberdeen, Eureka, Hosmer, Roscoe, Artas, Leola, Britton, Frederick, Herreid, Ipswich, Barnard and Clark, South Dakota; Bismarck, Beulah, Ashley, Ellendale, Zeeland, Venturia and Tower City, North Dakota; Kent, Washington; Brighton and Port Huron, Michigan; Minneapolis and Long Prairie, Minnesota; Racine, Wisconsin; Lincoln, Nebraska; and Mountain View and Lodi, California.

Recognition was given to Fred Odenbach, 95, oldest former Greenway area resident. Odenbach now resides in Eureka. All the members of his family attended the reunion. Recognition was also given to former Greenway business people:

—Mrs. Henry Lutz, wife of the late Henry Lutz, who, for many years, operated a general store. Mrs. Lutz now lives in Long Prairie, Minnesota.

—Jess Strader, the first and only high school superintendent. While in Greenway he married the former Ella Odenbach. Mr. and Mrs. Strader now reside in Aberdeen.

—Albert Berreth, a barber who, for several years, also worked in the Greenway State Bank. He is married to Tillie Ottmar and they live in Eureka.

—Elmer Odland, who operated the grain elevator. He and his wife now live in Aberdeen, S.D.

—Emil Diede, who was a cream buyer. Mr. and Mrs. Diede now live in Eureka.

—The late Jake Perman also operated a cream station in Greenway for several years. His widow, "Grandma" Perman attended the reunion. She now resides in Eureka.

—Mrs. Audrey Perman Ackerman, wife of the late Eddie Ackerman, was the last postmistress. She served almost 15 years until in 1975 the U.S. government discontinued mail service in Greenway. Mrs. Ackerman and her two small boys live on a farm south of Greenway.

—Ed Odenbach, the only remaining resident of Greenway, whom the reunion-goers unanimously declared honorary mayor, chief of police, and justice of the peace!

Eureka, S.D. had the honor of being "The Wheat Capitol of the World" until 1902 when the Milwaukee railroad came north. Then Greenway became an important shipping point. Large shipments of grain, livestock, and other agricultural products were transported to markets from Greenway almost weekly.

Early settlers of Greenway were all Germans from Russia. These people were enterprising, ambitious young men and women. They took up land, built homes, cleared the land, broke

the soil and planted crops—and some carried on several commercial businesses as well.

Jacob Lutz, who homesteaded three-fourths mile northwest of Greenway, founded the town and had the first general store. When the railroad came through, he sold the store to two brothers, Adam and Mike Lutz, who had also homesteaded in that area. Then Jacob Lutz took over the duties as station agent for the Milwaukee railroad. He constructed several homes, sold them to other settlers, erected buildings on main street and sold them to other merchants. Lutz operated the first grain elevator, built a blacksmith shop and was instrumental in organizing the Greenway State Bank. He also bought and shipped livestock, and farmed his land.

Adam Lutz later became the sole owner of the general store when he bought Mike's interest. He farmed his land and operated the store for many years. Upon his retirement his sons took over—Adam, Jr. with his wife and family farmed the land, and Henry took over the store. They all played



One of the families present was the Fred Odenbach family. Odenbach, sitting in middle chair wearing dark suit, will soon be 95 years old. He lives in Eureka, S.D.



Everybody loves a picnic—especially when it's to talk about old times.

At the picnic, people heard about Greenway's past . . .



At One Time, Greenway Had Puffed Wheat Factory

active roles in organizing the Greenway State Bank.

After Mike Lutz had sold his interest in the store he expanded by building a hardware store, then a lumber yard, and the second grain elevator. Upon his retirement, his son Gottlieb took over the farm, and another son Jake took over the duties of operating the commercial enterprises in town. They also took a very active interest in building the Greenway State Bank. Jake and his family moved to Lodi, California during the depression.

After the essential commercial businesses were established, more families came to settle in Greenway and the Greenway area.

The bank was of great interest to everyone since it was "their" bank—organized and owned by local people. Men of business and banking knowledge were secured to manage it, some of the men being Daniel Joachim, Carl Schock, and Henry Zenk.

When the Western Union came through, an operator was needed. Help came from Mrs. Hulda Gerkee and her two daughters, Bertha and Grace, who moved to Greenway from the East where Mrs. Gerkee had been a Western Union operator. Mrs. Gerkee took over the duties as Western Union operator and station agent for the Milwaukee railroad.

To keep the rails and track bed in good condition and repair, the Fred Levi family worked long, hard hours in the heat of the summer and below-zero weather in winter. Deep snow drifts in winter created many problems as well!

Travelers who happened to come through the Greenway area always found they had a "home" with those early settlers, as for a very small fee, they could seek lodging and meals at the Roessler home or the Chris Diede home.

The Jacob Lutz farm was located only one-half mile from the Soo Line and Milwaukee junction, and many rail travelers stopped at their farm for a night's lodging and a meal.

As the village grew, a post office was



... about such delightful activities as basket socials, pie socials and spelling contests.

necessary. The first post office was in the Lutz General Store. Later a new post office building was erected, and John Schock became postmaster. He kept that position for many years until he moved to Lodi, California.

These early settlers were a deeply religious people, and building a church was a foremost concern. Eventually, three churches were erected: a Congregational church, Baptist church and Seventh Day Adventist church. There was one cemetery, and all the people did their part to help keep its appearance attractive. The last few years Elmer Lutz has been taking care of the cemetery "and a wonderful job he has done too."

Because it was a farming community and because all the farmers had cows and chickens, eggs and cream were sold or traded for groceries. Greenway had many cream buyers over the years. Some were August Schaeffer, a man by the name

of Mint, Albert Levi, and Jake Perman.

At one time Greenway had a puffed wheat factory! It was operated by Oscar Isaak and Willie Weller. Their products were sold in many stores in other areas for miles around.

Jacob Zoerb had the bulk gasoline service, and later Carl Ottmar took over. Christian Remboldt and his wife operated a small farm west of Greenway. Since he was crippled, he found farming difficult. To supplement his income, he also operated a cobbler shop in Greenway.

Emil Perman had the hardware store and grain elevator. Phillip Miller leased the blacksmith shop from Jacob Lutz. Pete Schreiner was the town carpenter.

At one time there were three Schock brothers in Greenway: Carl in the bank, John at the post office, and Edward in one of the grain elevators.

Dress makers and garment finishers were Mrs. Eva Oster Fischer and Lydia Kussler. Eddie Herr was the first town barber. Albert Levi and

August Schaeffer bought and shipped livestock to eastern markets. Edward Odenbach and Elmer Odland operated the grain elevator.

Saturday night was always a big night! Farmers brought in their produce, bought their groceries, and visited for hours with their neighbors and friends, ate an ice cream cone, and then rounded up the kids to go home. Greenway had many wiener roasts to celebrate almost any occasion—the opening of school, ending the school year, Halloween, the first warm day of spring. The village had its own drama club, put on plays once or twice a year, organized basket socials, pie socials, and spelling contests. On Sunday, everyone went to church—young and old alike.

Greenway was a good community in which to live, and its people have fond memories of their lives spent there.

(The above article was written by Agnes Heiser, Marie Heiser Tesky, and Martha Heiser Mack. All are granddaughters of Greenway's founder, Jacob Lutz.)