

A Historical Narrative Of The Old Bethel Colony

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A story of the Colony adventures. Many changes have taken place in Shelby County, Missouri, in the one hundred and five years since the present site of Bethel was settled by the immigrants, that I endeavor to write about in this sketch.

Dr. William Keil was born in Prussia, March 12, 1812, 138 years ago. He learned the trade of tailor in Germany. Keil, with his wife, located in New York and they operated a tailor shop. They had a good trade. Keil was converted and decided to preach unselfishness and love one another. Against his wife's advice, he sold his shop and moved thirteen miles west of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. At this farm was a man and wife who were born in Bern, Switzerland, by the name of Andrew and Barbara Giesy, with a family of fourteen children: ten boys and four girls. Keil and his wife were welcome in the Giesy home and preached his Christian beliefs. Four of the Giesy boys, Christian, Andrew, Samuel, and Henry were convinced to believe Keil's doctrine and were ministers of the gospel. Rev. Rapp, a minister of Pennsylvania planned to bring a group of immigrants of German lineage from that state on west, promising not to lead them "out of" but into the wilderness. Three scouts were sent out, namely Adam Schule, David Wagner, and Christian Presser to find a suitable location. High water prevented them from traveling farther west than Hannibal, Missouri. But there they heard a report of a fertile prairie near North River. At this place, a grist mill was already in operation. Only two families were living there at that time. Peter Stice owned the grist mill. His daughter, Dicy Stice and Bradford Hunsacker were the first wedding to be recorded in Shelby County. It occurred April 30, 1835. The other family was the Vandiver's, that owned the residence later known as the dwelling "not straight with the world." It remains that way this day and is in excellent condition. The residence has been remodeled lately and is owned and occupied by J. W. Wood and wife, also Stanley Holtshouse, wife, and baby.

A year after the scouts were sent out and had returned and made their report favorable, a meeting was scheduled to make final plans for the trip westward. Rev. Rapp was unable to attend the meeting in the forenoon, and Dr. Keil substituted for him. Keil had their attention for about two hours. Rev. Rapp came in the afternoon but was unable to undo what Keil had accomplished for his followers in his convincing talk in the forenoon. Keil's power of leadership was so convincing that about five hundred persons withdrew from Rev. Rapp. The number who remained with Rapp later settled in Ohio.

The Giesy family planned to migrate west with Dr. Keil and his followers. Helena Giesy, the oldest daughter, believed in Keil's doctrine but was engaged to John A. Roebbling, a young man born June 6, 1806 in Malhausen, Prussia and graduated from the Polytechnic School in Berlin. He manufactured wire rope and built bridges, his first one across the Allegheny River. The last one started across the East River between New York and Brooklyn. He was injured long before its completion. His son, Washington G. Roebbling completed building the bridge, but his father's last days were passed in a building overlooking the bridge so that he could behold daily with his own eyes the completion of his life's ideal. He pronounced the bridge approved a success. Helena went with her parents and Dr. Keil. Helena was never married but did not mention about her disappointment. She taught the children at

Bethel and had the children recite their lessons in the tent as they crossed the plains. Amos Cushman pitched the school tent every evening. Helena had them recite their lessons and was their Angel Mother.

In 1844 Dr. Keil with five hundred sturdy German pilgrims migrated into Shelby County and to the place which was christened Bethel, meaning a House of Worship. A steamboat was chartered and the trip was made down the Ohio River to Cairo, then up the Mississippi River to Hannibal. From there, the trip was made over land by wagon to Bethel, a distance of forty-eight miles. It necessitated the making of several trips to convey all of the people, stock, and provisions they deemed necessary to bring with them to their new home. Much of the food consisted of cured and dried meats. This meat was brought in hogsheads and some of it was stolen in transferring it from the boat to the wagons. As the trip was a long, hard one, much of the food was consumed before they reached Bethel. The only promise made by the dauntless Prussian to those who cast their faith with him was plenty of bread and water. He made no promise of ease or luxury.

Upon the arrival of all the followers to Bethel, two thousand five hundred acres of land were purchased. This was added to until four thousand acres were owned by the colonists. Soon, one thousand one hundred acres of this land was enclosed in one large field. This was known as the common field, which was cultivated under the direction of over-seers, appointed by Dr. Keil. Philip Steinbach was one of these appointees for many years. Christian Giesy, one of Andrew and Barbara Giesy's sons, assisted Hiram and Mary Baker and their five children in Pennsylvania, who were in poor circumstances to come to Bethel; names Hannah, Ruth, Ethan, Beulah, and Joseph. Another family he encouraged to come from Tennessee were Levi and Rhoda Baker and seven children: Amos, Asa, Sarah, Naomi, Martha, Felix, and Lot, Bible names. A brick kiln was started and substantial brick buildings were erected, many of which remain in good condition after over one hundred years. They are built right by the side of the street, with large stone steps leading up to the front door. The windows were large and high above the sidewalks. The walls were about one foot thick. Practically all the buildings were two stories high. A common boarding house for the unmarried men was built and is now used as an apartment house and owned by H. W. Kilb and wife, and has been rearranged lately by Mrs. Kilb. It is occupied by Mr. and Mrs. H. W. Kilb, Meb Logan and wife and daughter, Henry Gumc, our Bethel barber for many years, Christie Allen, Doc Bowers and son Billy, Mrs. Frank Haffner, Virgie Steinback, and Mary Robertson. [William Haffner, a retired farmer owns a substantial brick residence. Will and his sister, Minnie Gibson, Lillie Holderieath, Kossie Musgrove and wife and two children are there at the present time, recently used as Dr. Dutton's office. At one time, Jeff Stapleton Hotel.] Several years ago, Rev. Stecher preached in this building. In early colony days, Prof. Charles Ruge, Helena Giesy in later years. Moses Miller taught school in this building. Miller had one hundred eight pupils at one time.

If anyone entered the colony and was dissatisfied, he was furnished free transportation back where he came from. A treasurer was in charge of all funds and everything that was raised or manufactured went into the common storehouse. From this storehouse, each person drew out his allotted share. Dr. Keil saw to it that every man and woman had work and that each producer received fair compensation of daily needs for this labor. There were no idlers; political discussions were unknown, for Dr. Keil was Lord of all. The colony was based primarily upon confidence. Many of the colonists lived for years without money. Perfect equality was foremost in the minds of those sturdy pilgrims. The economy in the use of all available land is very evident in the colony burying ground. Here no family lots were sold, but one row was marked off and as each person died, he was placed next to the last person buried. When one row was filled, another was marked off. Hebron was the name of the Cemetery.

A band was organized and played far and wide. They were natural musicians and played many different kinds of musical instruments. Christian Giesy induced Henry Conrod Finck to come to Bethel. He was a musician and Postmaster in Bethel. He was born near Stuttgart, Germany. His wife died and left him with five children. Christian Giesy also thought it best for Finck, when the appropriate time

came, to go to Oregon with his children. When they left Bethel, their ages were six, eight, ten, twelve, and fourteen. Henry T. Finck was the eight year old, born September 22, 1854; graduated at the age of 22 with the famous Harvard Centennial Class of 1876. He was an author of eighteen books, musical critic of the New York Evening Post for fourth-three years. In later years John Q. Steinbach, whose German band in Chicago was well known, also other noted musicians.

In 1847, in a small town by the name of Newark, a fair was being waged. Of all the most interesting features, a band contest was being held; Quincy, Hannibal, Kirksville, LaBelle, Edina, Newark, and Bethel bands participated. There were real band wagons in those days. The contesting bands, excepting the Dutch town musicians, rode in red circus band wagons, each drawn by six horses, wearing beaded blankets and head plumes. The parade was beautiful to gaze upon. All gaily decorated wagons headed the procession. The Bethel German Band drove in last and waited patiently until each of the other bands had made its appearance, then seated in a home made linchpin wagon with red running gear and blue body, drawn by four mules in chain harness; the German musicians dressed in homespun blue jeans, trousers, and red flannel shirts drove up. Before the first selection was half finished, the German aggregation had not only won the approval of its audience, but had all the competing members climbing from their elaborate wagons and conceding the contest. The rest of that day, the beribboned German band furnished the music. Even from 1847 until 1935, Bethel possessed one of the best bands in Northeast Missouri. Dias Bower, a descendant of the Germans, at one time was their band instructor. He is at present time a carpenter by trade, 1950.

The attention of these frugal people was directed toward manufacturing; cloth was spun from the wool of the colony sheep that roamed the virgin prairie attended by designated shepherds. The sewing was done by women and a dozen or more were kept busy. All of it was done by hand for several years, as no sewing machines were available at that time. They often worked at night by old fashioned grease lamps. These lights, although not so bright, would sometimes attract the geese and the geese would have a "gabfeast" as the German people said. Almost every family had a flock of geese for feathers for their beds. In the cold part of winter, they sometimes slept between two feather ticks. The hides of the deer, which were at first plentiful, were made into gloves and hats. When deer became scarce in this section, the colonists were compelled to go farther west for their supply of pelts, often trading with friendly Indians. Buckskin gloves were shown by the colonists at the New York exposition in 1858 and acquired national fame. They also won first prize at the [Chicago World's Fair] New York World's Fair. "My mother's sister, Cassie Vawter, worked in the glove department." Mens hats from both fur and lambs wool were made here at the hat factory. Woolen gloves were also made and exported. Harness and shoes were made, the soles of the latter being fastened on with wooden pegs making them rather cumbersome but serviceable.

J. Fred Burckhardt has a wooden shoe (which can be found in the Bethel Museum) that was worn by Jacob Berder, nickname Yuckley, a Frenchman. He lived in the third house south of North River, also a yoke for across the shoulders to make it light and convenient to carry two large buckets of water or anything to be carried in buckets; also an oxen yoke which was used in the colony and shows that it has had a lot of service in the colony days.

Plows which were sold throughout the middle west were made in Bethel foundries. There was a wagon factory and a mill used for grinding food for the people. Molasses was made from the juice of the cane and their own flour and meal were ground at the common mill. Flax was grown and through the process of spinning and weaving, it was converted into linen goods.

Perhaps the greatest source of income was from the distilleries. Here corn and rye were made into whiskey and alcohol. Many a wagon load was hauled from Bethel to Quincy, a distance of forty-eight miles. Here it was sold for as low as eighteen cents a gallon. Amos Cushman drove part of the time on these trips. The woodworkers shop must not be overlooked. There was much walnut lumber worked into substantial and handsome furniture, much of which is still in use. Fine guitars were made here also. Catherine Nichols, now a resident of Chillicothe, has a guitar which was made in the colony.

Also, she has the gloves which won the prize at the World's Fair.

Agriculture and stock raising was an important factor in the colony. The large tract of land was well operated by the colonists. Each family in the colony cared for from two to five cows, according to the size of their family. The cows, seventy-five to one hundred head were be taken out each morning in the summer to pasture on the range of a northwest direction, a number of miles. Practically all the cows had bells on, so they would not lose any of them. Frank Miller and probably others would have been furnished a pony the next year to assist to herd the cows if the colony had continued.

Dr. Keil decided to extend his colony farther northwest. He purchased thirteen hundred acres, ten miles north and a bit west of Kirksville in Adair County. He named the place Nineveh. There was a small sawmill on the Chariton. The place was made by Dr. Keil's advice and in his name. The members of the colony had no written agreement themselves. Everything was taken in faith by the members.

The colony seemed one great, happy family whose code moral and religion was the New Testament, especially the Golden Rule and whose motto was "Gott Mit Uns"-God With Us.

Among the first buildings erected was a Church. Perhaps from an architectural standpoint, it was their crowning work, and until recent years it stood in simple grandeur as a memory of other days. This edifice was constructed of brick and stone, patterned from the type of Churches in Prussia. The floor was paved with brick that were nine inches square. Entirely around the interior of the Church was a balcony made of solid walnut panels. This building would accommodate a multitude of people, and was filled every Sunday morning. The Church had a cupola with a solid walnut railing around it. This was all enclosed by a large, white railing around a balcony. The band played on this balcony. In the belfry was placed three large bells. These bells would chime out the hour of service each Sabbath morning. When Mr. Moses Miller, who was one of the founders of the colony, and one of the last to pass to the great beyond, was asked to what Church the colonist belong, he replied, "The Church of the Living God."

Dr. Keil took the Bible for his creed, which was without money and without price. No one was requested to join the Church, and also not urged to attend. Someone was supposed to see to it that the boys did not loaf on the streets on Sunday while preaching services were going on. Sometimes, I think, it was absolute freedom that caused the big Church where Dr. Keil preached being filled every Sunday. Dr. Keil simply preached the great religion of the Lord Jesus Christ, "Let no day pass over your head without something of use to thy neighbor and thy God being accomplished." They rang all three bells in harmony and they made a pleasing musical sound, and was heard for miles around. The night before Christmas, someone remained at the Church to attend the fires and the bells were rung at four o'clock on Christmas morning. Two colossal trees were erected and on these were placed gifts for all. The holiday festivities lasted until New Years' and the splendor of the Yuletide lingers as a bright spot in the memories of the few survivors. I remember seeing two Christmas trees at this Church just one time. It was a few years after the colony disbanded. Kris Kringle visited each home and this event was looked forward to with joy and reverence. The children knelt and gave thanks to God for the gifts He brought them. A visit could also be expected from "Base Kringle," who wore horns and chains and was dreaded by bad boys.

On New Year's eve, the colonists gathered and danced until the stroke of twelve, pausing then to touch off several large anvils loaded with powder and thereby usher in the New Year. The same custom of firing the anvils was followed just at daybreak on the morning of July fourth at the blacksmith shop by Harmon "Balla" Erich, later William Ziegler, the German Blacksmiths. The sound could be heard for miles around.

Education was considered very important and all the children were kept in school where good teachers were supplied. The school term was twelve months a years. As stated before, Moses Miller was one of these teachers, two of his children, Josephine Beary and Frank Miller are respected citizens of Bethel today, April, 1950.

Claude Musgrove, a grandson of Mr. Miller, is an undertaker at Bethel. Josephine Beary has a

few antiques. She did have an outdoor oven, Jean Bair, a bedstead and probably more colony antiques than anyone. Marve Bower has a very beautiful quilt made in colony time, and a few other relics. [William Ziegler, Jr. was born in Bethel, a retired druggist and Baking Powder man, his present address is 5 Ave., New York, N. Y.]

About two miles east of town, on a high elevation not far from North River, the colonists erected the Governor's Mansion, where he lived a style befitting the dignity of his earldom. This mansion was considered a part of the possessions of the colony. The building was three stories high with a large chimney at each end. It was built of brick and stone, with walls one and one half feet thick. Most of the woodwork was solid walnut lumber. The entire second floor was used as a banquet hall and dance floor. "My Dear Mother, Frances Vawter, danced on this floor when a young girl." At that time, Grandfather John Vawter belonged to the colony. Here there was ample room for eight sets of the famous old square dances. On the third floor were placed rows of shelves, used for drying and curing of roots and herbs.

Dr. Keil was, as his name implies, truly a Doctor of the colony, for he made all the medicine used by the entire colony. It was in these spacious rooms that Dr. Keil met and counseled with all of the foremen, and it was here that all the festivities of the holiday seasons were celebrated with sincere hospitality to all. Dr. Keil christened the mansion Elim, the name it bears today. All the names were from the Bible: Bethel, Hebron, Elim, Nineveh. The building had the roof blown off during a windstorm several years ago and when repaired, the building was changed somewhat from the original third story.

After Dr. Keil's wife, Louise, and six children and Willie in the casket, started across the plains for Washington, August and Rosa Keil, his wife, took possession of the mansion for several years. To this union, three children were born: Frederick, Emanuel, and Amelia. Frederick located in Kansas City. Several years later, Mr. G. J. Henry Mangold and family lived in the mansion. Their son, George Mangold, lives in Shelbyville. Several years later, Magruder Pickett purchased the farm with the mansion. To Mr. Pickett and wife were born two children; a son Ingram, at present time, is a resident of New Mexico and has been a resident of that state the last twelve years. At present time he holds the office of State Corporation Commissioner. He filed on April 4, 1950 for Governor of New Mexico. Gertie, his sister, married William Lair and to this union four children were born: Olivia, Waldon, Margaret, and Virginia. The latter married Guilford Erdman and the Erdman's and Mrs. Lair live in the mansion at present. They have remodeled the interior and made it very convenient and up-to-date. This place is visited by many each year.

In colony days gone by, but not all forgotten, the commodious banquet hall served its purpose of Keil's birthdays. Every year on Dr. Keil's birthday, also his wife, Louise, a strange coincidence as they were born on the same day and year in Prussia, March 6, 1812. Many fatted calves were killed and roasted in huge outdoor ovens and all who came were fed, be they friend or stranger. These two birthdays were considered an important time to celebrate.

A branch colony had been established at Nineveh in Adair County, Missouri, which has been mentioned before. At this place, they had a boot and shoe shop under the direction of Charles Beck, Sr., related to Dr. Keil by marriage, and other enterprises some of which have been mentioned. Several boys and girls planned to go to Nineveh to spend Christmas. In the early hour of this cold December morning, at two o'clock, snow on the ground and snowing in the year of 1868, three sled loads of growing boys and girls, Henry Will, William Keil, Jr. William Haffner, Sr., Glendola Miller, Julia Ziegler, Sophia Ziegler, and others, started from Bethel to Nineveh, north of Kirksville. This was a branch colony of Bethel, used partly for raising feed and grazing stock. The team of mules young August Keil was driving had sleigh bells on and the other two sled loads tried to keep in hearing distance of the bells. With practically no roads and a very small portion of the land fenced, it was hard to stay together. The fences at that time were probably all rail fence. The sled load that Henry Will was with got separated from the other two sleds, but at one time thought they could hear the sleigh bells, but

couldn't get in sight of them. At daylight the next morning, after driving since two o'clock, they drove up to a farm house and recognized the place as they had been there sometime recently. This farm house was eleven miles from Bethel, so they started out again in the right direction and arrived at a farm where Thomas Poor lived, two miles northwest of Novelty. At present time, Jack Howerton lives on this farm. They asked Mr. Thomas Poor if he could or would go ahead and show them the road to Locust Hill. Mr. Poor informed them that he could go there blindfolded. So he started out on horseback to lead the way, but gave it up and told them they had better turn around and stay all night at his place. They didn't need much persuasion to do so. At this home there were two girls and three girls with the sled load. The five girls slept in one bed, "probably didn't sleep but very little." The men endeavored to spend the night by the fireplace. They said their faces would get hot, but their backs at the same time would nearly freeze. About two o'clock the next morning they ran out of wood and they were obliged to go out and scoop the snow away and get more wood to last through the night.

The next morning it was very cold but had cleared off, so they started out and arrived at their destination about night. The other two sled loads made it in the night before. I was told that they danced all night. They remained at Nineveh until after New Years' and when they started home, the snow had quite a crust on it and so deep that they could drive over the rail fences. They returned home without experiencing any more difficulty. There was great rejoicing at Bethel when they returned, because they had feared that they had frozen to death.

There arose a desire among some of the members and especially their leader, Dr. Keil, to start another colony near the west coast, so eight men and one woman were commissioned to go across the plains to find a suitable choice for a colony in the far west. In the year of 1853, they traveled across the prairie. The names of the nine that made the dangerous undertaking were: Mr. and Mrs. Christian Giesy, Adam Scheule, Michael Schaffer, John and Stans Stauffer, John Geinger, and Joseph and Adam Knight. The leading spirit for this dangerous undertaking was the Giesy's. They made as their choice for the location of the colony near the Willapa River. They took up claims there and began preparing for the colonists who were to follow. They were led to make their choice by the magnificent timber, fertility of the soil, the abundance of fish in the streams, also clams and native oysters. Reports went back to Bethel by the slow mail of the progress being made at the Willapa settlement. After a winter and spring, Joseph and Adam Knight returned to Bethel and remained at Bethel until the second large wagon train in 1863. Shortly after the Knight brothers returned and made their report, Dr. Keil started making preparation to take a number of men and women and children across the plains. This proved to be the funeral procession of his son, Willie. The remaining seven of the forerunners worked away diligently and made good progress in preparing for the first colony covered wagon train scheduled for the fall of 1855. They had no trouble with their Indian neighbors, but the curiosity of the tribesmen shown in their frequent visits appealed to the caution of Christian Giesy and soon after the departure of the Knights, he counseled with his companions. Christian Giesy made this remark "forewarned is forearmed," he said. "We are not sure what effect the coming of a large company of our people will have upon our red brothers. They may take fright over the possible loss of their lands and their rights. We must next build a house that shall be our fort. We will make it seeming a dwelling, but it must be large enough to accommodate our own people by crowding." They built a fort, but didn't need to use for protection from the Indians.

As before stated, plans were being made to establish a third colony near the west coast. Willie, second son of Dr. and Mrs. Keil, secured a promise from his father that he be allowed to go along with the first wagon train to go across the plains. But before the plans were completed for the trip, Willie became ill. Dr. Keil had a light spring wagon made for an ambulance to take Willie across the plains, with the hope that the fresh air would benefit his son's health. But alas, Willie died just five days before the time to start. Whatever else may be said of Dr. Keil, it must be said that he was a man of his word. "To him, a promise made was a promise kept," and was sacred in life or death. Dr. Keil secured an iron casket from St. Louis and placed his son in it, filled it with alcohol, and sealed it. The wagon was

changed to a hearse and the casket placed on the hearse drawn by two mules, Queen and Kate.

On the morning of their departure, Keil, with his cavalcade, drew to the square in Bethel, Wednesday, May 23, 1855, with Queen and Kate in the lead with the hearse, thirty-five wagons drawn by oxen, mules, or horses, mostly oxen because they could exist on the prairie grass the longest time, several head of loose stock behind with milk cows and extra oxen. Amos Cushman riding an extra good bay riding horse, Ruth Baker on a white pony, Asa Cushman and Hannah Baker on surefooted blue mules, they were red, white, and blue. They were called Uncle Sam's Quartet.

They didn't have matches in those days to start their campfires. Safety matches were unknown until the fall of 1855. With flint powder, lint, and kindling, lighting campfires was the work of a few minutes, and the members knew all the other devices of the woodsman to start fires, had the occasion demanded.

In the first wagon train across the plains there were two hundred and fifty men, women, and children with good musicians and a number of instruments. I will endeavor to name some of them: Violin, Guitar, Clarinet, Flute, Zither, Drums, and also the "Shella Baum," in English, "Bell Tree," probably others, as they were lovers of good music. The music helped to cause the Indians to wonder.

Dr. Keil halted the caravan on main street, and spoke a few words of advice and encouragement to the ones who remained at Bethel. Then the procession moved slowly out of town to the north. They probably went to Nineveh, then southwest and crossed the Missouri River at St. Joe. According to Keil's first letter, several women and a few men followed a few miles then turning in time to arrive back at Bethel before night, bidding them goodbye and shouting to the "Auf Wiedershen," Goodbye till we meet again. Everything went well from the time that they left Nineveh until they arrived at Wagenblast's place. They remained there two days as he had decided to go with them. They continued west without any bad experience, except that they were warned to turn back on account of the hostile Indians. Keil went away from camp and ascended a high hill to pray. He said that he was not afraid for himself, but he feared for the safety of the women and children. He prayed for guidance as to what to do. He returned to camp with a determination to proceed on west without any fear. Keil blew the trumpet and they started, the hearse ahead, and playing their musical instruments and singing, also being friendly with the red tribe and charitable with the Chiefs. They proceeded on west without losing a life, while others were all killed and many turned back. Dr. Keil said he read in his Bible these words in the book of Numbers in the sixth chapter, verse thirty: "Be strong and of good courage. Fear not nor be afraid of them, for the Lord Thy God, He it is that doth go with Thee, Nor forsake Thee."

One day they found a little wagon by the roadside with provisions in it, with no one near it. They went on for miles and one day a man came across the prairie like a lost sheep. He was a German Locksmith. He had been in America only six months. He had strayed about the prairie like a lost sheep. Dr. Keil took him in as a Father would a Son. He assigned him to assist in driving the cattle.

Before they came to the Platte River, they had seen plenty of buffalo. Jacques Weise followed them on his mule and shot one with his revolver. They had more meat than they could eat. Ruge broke an axle but Link put one in that was better than the old one. "We paid no attention to what is before or behind us. It is dangerous to travel with the soldiers because the Indians are so bitter against them. Three men asked to go with us. I felt sorry for them and took them in. One man I assigned to Wagenblast to drive a team, the second one I assigned to John Stauffer. The third I kept to drive cattle. In the evening, an Indian came to our camp. He was very friendly. I had a meal prepared for him and also gave him some food to take to his children at home. He made signs of gratitude. He went behind a wagon, knelt down and prayed, then mounted his pony and rode away. In the mountains at Ham Fork we camped. In the evening, seven Indians came to our camp. A father with his adult sons. I caused a meal to be prepared for them and seated myself at the table. As this father revealed, he told his sons that they should not eat everything but should also think of the little ones at home and take them some of the good things. I understood what he said, and told them that they might eat it all. That I also had

much for his wife and their children. I told them by signs that they should go home. I gave them something of everything like they had eaten for the family. Aurora gave them her comforter. To the old man I gave him an arrow so that he could make a bow for himself, because that kind of wood cannot be obtained there. All this aroused so much joy in them that one could read the love and gratitude in their features. In parting, I told the old man that he must come on the following morning and bring his friends to breakfast. At daybreak here came twenty-five instead of seven. They brought to camp the oxen that had gone astray in the mountains. They came as to a great festival. They had painted themselves and had put on their best clothes. I fed them and they were very appreciative. I sounded the trumpet and we started on our journey. We distributed tobacco among the Indians and they were glad. We gave the Indian children bread to eat and they seemed to appreciate us dividing food with the hungry. We came to places where the Indians were so numerous that we could not count. Our little girls received many chains of beads from them. I have never seen prettier horses than Casaspallo Ullman and two other Chiefs had in their herd. I rode with the Chiefs two days. When we returned the second day, the Chiefs asked how many boys I had. I informed them three adults and one little one. There upon they informed me that each one would receive a pony. Casaspallo gave Fred his riding pony, Emanuel received another Chief's pony, and they presented Elias with a young stallion. After resting for six days, we resumed our journey across the Blue Mountains.”

Christian Giesy met them at Dallas and accompanied them the rest of the way to Crockett's Landing, near this place there was an open prairie of about three hundred acres. The largest open prairie in that part of the country at that time. It was originally owned by four Americans, from whom Christian Giesy bought two claims. On the first, John Giesy lived and on the other, Schwader. They went to John Giesy's claim first. On the following day, Dr. Keil ascended to the top of the highest elevation from where he could get a good view for some distance around and he decided at first glance that the purpose of the Bethel Society could not be accomplished here. Christian Giesy insisted on Dr. Keil viewing more of the surrounding land before going somewhere else for a more suitable location. Then Dr. Keil went over to where Christian Giesy lived. By November 23, just 22 days after the first ones of the Keil wagon train arrived, the members of the colony on the Pacific Coast were all together on the Willapa, and happy to be safe and well. Though their accommodations were crowded and crude, the buildings being made of logs and other material at hand; while they were all together, a decision was reached to seek a location more suitable for the many residents expected to arrive later from Bethel. A number of men started out in a light spring wagon, probably the one used as a hearse, Amos Cushman driving Queen and Kate.

It was finally decided that the beginning of the far western home of the colonists would be made at what was to be called Aurora, in honor of a favorite daughter of Dr. Keil, where with \$1000 down payment, two quarter sections of land were contracted. At this place, there was a small sawmill and a grist mill in operation. Dr. Keil and a number of others also, the mule team at this time, have returned to the Giesy home in Washington. Dr. Keil is arranging for the funeral of his son Willie. Fifty-five days since the first wagon train arrived, this the 26th of December, 1855. In front of the procession is the flag at half mast, next the Shella Baum “Bell Tree” in English, then the musicians playing their various kinds of musical instruments and singing appropriate songs planned by Dr. Keil before leaving Bethel. Queen and Kate are the hearse team. The small cemetery is about half way between Raymond and Menlo, Washington and near the village of Willapa of Huldamay Giesy, Buell and Henry Giesy, great, great, grandchildren of Andrew and Barbara Giesy (could be three great grandchildren.) A flat slab monument the same as are in Hebron Cemetery at Bethel marks the grave with his name plainly on it. “I have the picture of the marker.”

At Aurora Mills, there was a log house and a few of our colony workmen occupied it and in the spring of 1856 began the construction of other residences, buildings, and shops, and the improvements of the mills. In the spring of 1857, the house that was to be the home of Dr. Keil and his family was finished and they moved in. This was the “das grosse House”-the Big House. There had been in the

meantime to Christian Giesy and wife, a son born, later was known as Dr. A. J. Giesy of Portland, Oregon. A second son was born to them, named Christian Giesy, Jr., later a resident of Aurora, Oregon. Eighteen months later, Christian Giesy, Sr. was drowned while crossing the Willapa Bay in a boat in rough weather. Dr. Keil, who was then with the colonists at Aurora, came to conduct the funeral. Christian Giesy and wife were the leading spirits of the nine spies who came across the plains first. Dr. Keil started to return to Aurora but was called back to preach the funeral of Henry Giesy. He had drowned, but the body was never recovered.

Ground was opened for another notable of the community in the third year thereafter. Andrew Giesy, father of the fourteen children, ten sons and four girls, at whose Pennsylvania home the movement began that led to the coming to Bethel and later migrating to Washington, later to Oregon. Dr. Keil was preacher, counselor, confidant, friend; he was dictator, judge and jury, his word was law and he settled all disputes, no one questioned his authority. There was a board of "headmen" trustees, and he took counsel with them. There was much hard work, the same as there had been at Bethel in the beginning, but the members of the Aurora colony were good farmers and craftsmen, and soon the community was prospering and extended its holdings and putting the land to good use. There had been school for the children from the first and places for religious worship.

A colony store was opened for the needs of the members in supplying their wants, always without money and without price and freely according to their needs without a scratch of the pen, and in a short time there was a general merchandise store to accommodate the trade of the surrounding country. A sawmill and grist mill were on the land at Aurora Mills when the Colonists bought it as before stated. These were enlarged and improved. A tannery was built, a brick yard established, and a drug store opened. Some of the colony members were master craftsmen, they made good furniture, built their houses well and substantial, and were painstaking and thorough in all they did. Each shop had its foreman, and general supervision over all the farm work was arranged so that there might be no lack of seasonable help on the land nor any poorly planned slack or misdirected methods; but the foreman and overseers had their task by the law of nature. The fittest came to his place and there was no long hours save under unfavorable conditions incidental to the planting and harvesting seasons and the like.

There was much leisure and many celebrations. Saturday afternoon was observed as a half holiday. There was a great deal and variety of music. Funerals were attended by all and the bands played appropriate solemn music. The processions started from the Big House of the leader. There was usually a lay off at the end of a heavy or laborious task, then the men generally went hunting. That section was then a timbered wilderness, filled with deer and other game. There was no drunkenness in the colony life. The idle or dissolute person had no favor with the colony people.

Aurora, as before mentioned, was named for a daughter of Dr. Keil, one of his eight or nine children. Aurora was the Roman Goddess of the morning. The word means the dawn of day, the rising light of the morning. There was steady progress at Aurora. More land was acquired, additional acres cleared. Shops were added and enlarged. New houses built in town and on the farms where log cabins had been at first, comfortable frame dwellings were erected with lumber from the sawmill and materials from the output of the shops. They were preparing for further accessions. A second large wagon train was being outfitted in Bethel. Joseph and Adam Knight, two of the nine who went to Washington first, returned at this time. Prof. Wolfe was captain of the second wagon train with two hundred in number, in 1863.

The third wagon train in 1865, their captain John Vogt, with eight in this time across the prairie. The Beck family from Nineveh, related to Dr. Keil by marriage, accompanied the train in 1868; sixty at this time, George Link their captain. One hundred or more from time to time by water. Prof. Finck with his family of small, motherless children made the long journey by water, the main part of the way. John Giesy with his family moved from Willapa to Aurora in 1862.

The members of Aurora colony generally had long lives. This was also true at Bethel. We can

probably contribute this to freedom from worry as one reason, regular habits another, abundant and healthful food a contributing factor, constantly available medical attention was another. It was said "somebody will probably get killed to make it necessary to start a graveyard." This remark was made in the beginning days at Aurora. Sadly to relate, the Cemetery was started with the fatal disease, Smallpox. Lucinda Wolfer died November 3, 1862 with this fatal disease, and the next to pass on with this dreaded disease were four of Dr. Keil's children. Elias, age 19, died November 22, 1862. The next was Louisa, age 18 and Gloriunda, age 15 died the same day, December 11, 1862. Then Aurora, their favorite daughter died on December 14, 1862. The nearest that dates will tell, Aurora was probably five or six years old when she left Bethel with the first wagon train going west. Henry Roser, a young man, was fatally injured by a falling tree and died February 1, 1864.

The Colony church had been planned before the arrival of the prairie schooner train of 1863. Work on the building was begun the following year. The Church was not fully completed and ready for dedication until the latter part of 1867. It was one of the outstanding Church edifices of Oregon of that day. The steeple pierced the sky 114 feet from the ground. Rose windows were features of beautification. Two balconies around the steeple were provided to accommodate the two bands. Aurora had the best band on the Pacific Coast. It was never defeated in a contest. Prof. Finck was a music master. Sometime before this, they had a double wedding-Amos Cushman and Ruth Baker; Asa Cushman and Hannah Baker, the four who left Bethel in 1855 driving the loose stock. They were called "Uncle Sam's Quartet."

Everything that was popular at that time in the way of facilities for the recreation and amusement of both the elders and the children was provided in the park. There were sand piles, swings, teeter boards, coasting chutes, and the rest. Dr. Keil never forgot the children. The merry-go-round was stout in its construction and in its appearance was gay. The motive power for the merry-go-round was Queen and Kate, the "Mule Team" of historic significance in the memories of community life at Bethel and Aurora. The span that was the Band Wagon team and also that drew the plains hearse across the two thousand miles in the covered wagon journey of 1855. Aaron Greenbaum frequently drove the mule team of Dr. Keil's on this occasion. The attention of the people was attracted to the main road south of the big house by an unusual racket that brought others to the scene. Queen and Kate were running away. They had been frightened and beyond control of the driver, except to keep them in the middle of the road. The chairman rushed to the road just as Aaron and Queen and Kate flew past. Aaron raised his hat and bowed as they passed Keil by the side of the road. The team never ran away, before or afterwards.

Dr. Keil unexpectedly died on December 30, 1877. The news of Keil's death cast a spell over its people that no words can describe. Some of his intimate friends had been informed by Dr. Keil of the seriousness of his last sickness. The greater was the shock on account of the suddenness of it. From the time of the spreading of the dreadful news till the afternoon of the next day after the New Years, his people spoke in whispers and went about as though they were treading upon Holy Ground. Then they all followed the body of their beloved leader to the family cemetery near the Church and the park, and reverently laid it to rest. They used solemn music which had been arranged for these sad occasions and had been used at previous times by Dr. Keil, their leader. Andrew Giesy took charge in the place of Dr. Keil. The people sang "Das Grab ist tief und stille"-The Grave is deep and Silent." They sang with a sadder feeling than anytime before. Following the death and funeral of their beloved leader, the colony people were stunned into a state of inaction. Days and weeks passed in indecision as to what should be done next. After this period of depressing doldrums, Andrew Giesy began the Sunday services in the Church; a few weeks later alternating with Frederick Keil, a son of the deceased leader.

Frederick had been studying for the ministry. Andrew Giesy had been left in Dr. Keil's place as the leader at Bethel, but he had no ambition to attempt to fully assume the functions of Dr. Keil at Aurora. There was no one who could fill that place. At the time of Dr. Keil's death, Louise, his wife was living. August was at Bethel, Frederick and Emanuel at Aurora. Subsequently, his wife passed on

to her heavenly home.

Finally, one of the members of the colony sued for the value of his services which he had rendered the colony. It was then developed that the community did not exist or it had never been incorporated, and that it was impossible to hold any one member liable as an individual. Finally, it was agreed that three trustees be appointed to represent Oregon Colony and that five represent Bethel and Nineveh. This was unanimously decided and carried out. Philip Steinbach, Sr., J. G. Bauer, John Shaffer, Philip Miller, and Henry Will were appointed for Bethel and Nineveh. Henry Will, Samuel Miller, and Steven Smith were named for Aurora. Samuel Miller resigned and Israel Snyder was appointed in Miller's place. These Trustees met and agreed as to the rights of each individual colony in the common on property, also the rights of the individual therein. An account was taken as to the amount of property brought into the enterprise by each colonist when he became a member, and then the number of years of service of each one was ascertained. The common property was appraised and a plan of division was formulated by which each colonist or his heirs would receive the amount originally contributed and also the value of his or her service, ascertained by dividing the total value of the remaining property by the total number of years contributed by the entire number of individuals, and then by multiplying the result by the years served by each member. This plan of allotment was honorably carried out by the trustees, without litigation. The vast property interest was allotted in severalty and the Bethel, Nineveh, and Aurora colonies passed into history in the year of 1879, will be seventy-one years this fall, in 1950.

The end was a sad disappointment to the founders of the colony who were living at the time of the disbandment. By their agreement, it was decided that the Aurora community should have and retain all of the real and personal property then owned in Oregon, and in addition thereto, the Bethel community should convey to the Aurora community town lots in Shelby County, Missouri of the appraised value of \$7601.00, real estate in Adair County, Missouri of the appraised value of \$2790.00, real estate in Shelby County, Missouri of the appraised value of \$5836.00, and cash and notes \$887.85, of the aggregate value of \$17,115.00, which said conveyances and transfers were made. Over \$20,000.00 was realized by the Aurora community from the property thus transferred.

Members of the Colony living at present time-1950:

Mrs. Fred Pflum

Mrs. Josephine Berry

Names of Boys whose parents belonged to the Colony:

George Mangold

Frank Miller

William Haffner

Sam Ziegler

Jean Bair

Fred Erick

Carl Ziegler

William Erick

Names of Girls whose parents belonged to the Colony:

Lizzie Will Bower

Lula Bauer

Minnie Haffner Gibson

Allie Moffit Collins

Sophia Steinbach Curry

Amelia Moffit Krieg

Bertha Ziegler Bair

Ida Moffitt Lear McPike

According to the dates, I was four years old. I attended school when Prof. Lear taught. I was in the Colony Church a number of times.

J. Fred. Burckhardt

**Brackets [] indicate either the information in the original article was not correct, or the information is not current, given the length of time since this article was written.