

PEABODY TO ALEXANDERWOHL IMMIGRANT HOUSE TRAIL ----SELF GUIDED TOUR by Brian Stucky

It is known that the Alexanderwohl Mennonites came by the Santa Fe Railroad to Peabody, then walked 18 miles northwest to the Immigrant House site. It is also known that there were others that went on to Newton, and traveled up the Chisholm Trail to the Immigrant House.

This self-guided tour is for those people who want to follow this trail, and for some, to walk in the exact footsteps of their ancestors. It will be helpful to have an odometer, measuring to the 1/100 of a mile.

There are no known documents about this Peabody trail, no diaries we have run across so far of where it went, and no surveyor's notes or any kind of maps.

The most remarkable record of this journey is the diary of Kornelius Unruh. This can be found on p. 223 in the light blue colored "Peter Unruh Genealogy." This diary gives an incredibly detailed, day-by-day, minute-by-minute account from the time they left Russia to the time they arrived at the Immigrant Houses. It records when they got on the train, off the train, on the ship, off the ship, etc. The last push from Topeka to home reads as follows on p. 224:

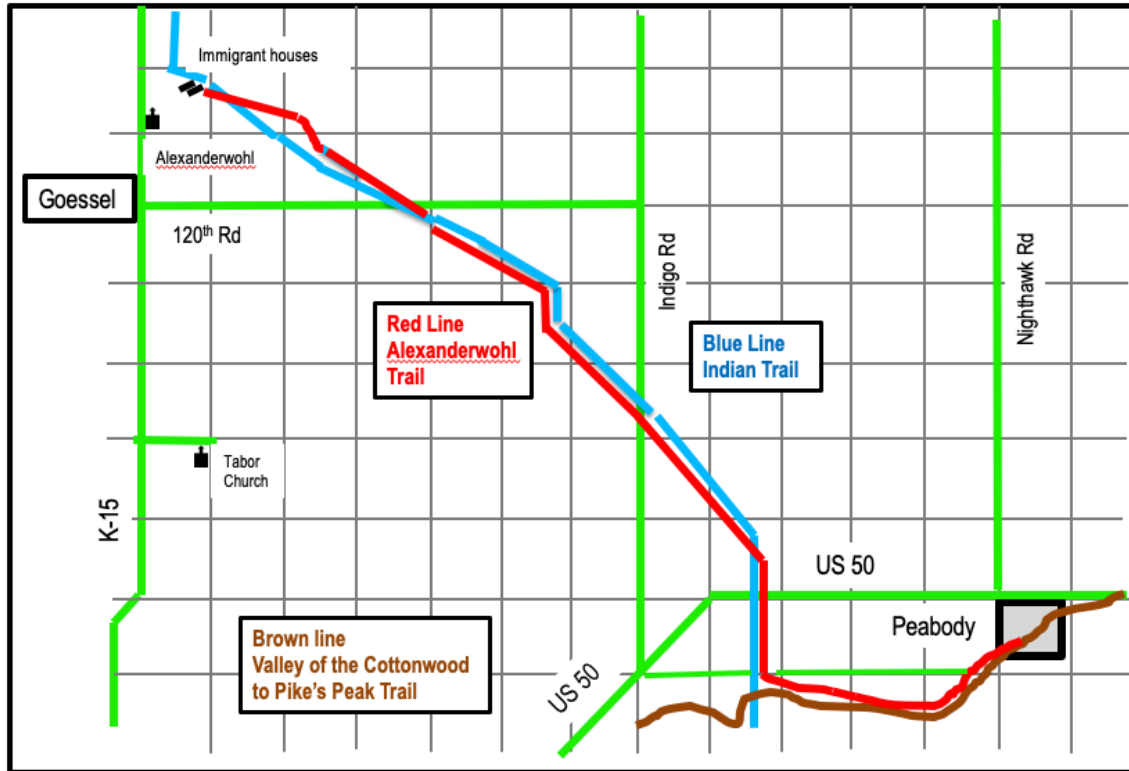
"Then the Kansas Railroad Association took us to Topeka, Kansas. We arrived there the same night and stayed 15 days, until the 26th of September (by Julian calendar - October 8, by Gregorian calendar). During this time two immigrant houses were built by the Railroad Company at their own expense. When we bought the land the railroad company gave the immigrants two sections of land. In Topeka we bought a cooking stove for \$28.00. We left Topeka the 26th of September at 5 o'clock and arrived at Peabody, Kansas at night. The 27th of September at 3 o'clock in the morning we came to the immigrant houses which were built 18 feet by 200 feet and were located in Marion County, Kansas, Menno Township, Section 33." (Diary of Kornelius Unruh, p. 223 "Peter Unruh Genealogy")

This is an amazing account. I have had many discussions with Goessel historians and even an archivist from the Santa Fe archives in Topeka about this journey. I've said, "This is preposterous. To think these people left Topeka at 5:00 p.m., took the train to Peabody and arrived about, let's say, 8:00, unloaded cook stoves they bought in Topeka, along with, no doubt, wagons and horses, and immediately began a night-time march across open prairie grassland, though country which they were told in Russia contained wild animals that would kill them, and "hostile Indians" which they were told would kill them, traveling in the dark to arrive at 3:00 in the morning? You've got to be kidding, " I thought.

The historians say, oh, that's not so unrealistic. Besides, they say, you probably had railroad land agents such as C.B. Schmidt take them by the hand and lead them there. Besides, one other diary account mentions that some Alexanderwohl young men had gone ahead to help the Santa Fe build the immigrant houses. They didn't want to just sit around, they wanted to work, and it would help speed up the process. During the time they were at the site, the diary told of how they took shelter during a driving rain storm under the floor of one of the immigrant houses that extended beyond the hill at the site.

This fits perfectly with the site we know of today. So the Alexanderwohl young men knew the way as well. I could imagine, as the group neared the site, the kids or teenagers running ahead to see who would get there first.

Peabody to Alexanderwohl trail, in Red



Back to the trail itself. The discovery story begins in August 2006, 4 miles east and 1/4 south in a pasture then owned by Lowell and Bonnie Heinrichs. They had known of evidence of a trail running SE to NW, and previous land owners in the Otto Janzen family claimed that it was known as a "mail trail." With the Heinrichs, family member Junior Janzen and trail buddy Larry Buller, we discussed the site. I dowsed the trail onward NW before entering section 33 on the east side. I found this trail entered the immigrant house site from the northeast, and went right up to the back door of the immigrant house.

I returned to the Heinrichs pasture, and followed the trail SE, eventually heading near the SW side of Peabody. I found what I suspected: that the Alexanderwohl group left the SW corner of Peabody on the Valley of the Cottonwood to Pike's Peak Trail, then split off on a narrow trail fork and curved northward, joining yet another trail. I believe one part of it to be following a Kaw Indian trail as it passes a spring. In fact, later dowsing showed that the Alexanderwohl Trail followed Indian trails almost the whole length. But it all connected, and all made sense. So, they didn't just strike out at night northwest and hope to find the immigrant houses. They followed an existing trail virtually the whole way. If this helps people to walk in the footsteps of their ancestors and find meaning, I am humbly grateful to help in that effort.

If you see the words **MUD WARNING!!** Please do not travel here if there has been even a small amount of rain. I'm serious. Marion County roads are notoriously muddy and you will get stuck.

STOP #1. Go to Peabody, KS, to the south end of the main (Walnut) Street to the park on the east side of the street.

LOOK AT: The historical marker placed there to commemorate the thousands of Mennonites who passed through the train station which was located here, seeking a new home and religious freedom in America. It will be important for all trail participants to get out of the vehicle and read the marker.



So, follow me to the next stop. From the historic marker, go north 1 block to 2nd Street. At this corner, you are pretty close to being on the Valley of the Cottonwood Trail. Turn left (west) and go 4 blocks west until you come to the park entrance. Turn left (south) and follow what was once Old Highway 50.

A little south of the Spring Creek is where the Valley of the Cottonwood Trail passed. Follow the road curving to the west. Come to the corner of Nighthawk (Peabody St.) and 60th. Turn right (north).

STOP #3. From S. Peabody (Nighthawk Rd.) and 60th go west on the paved road. At .08 miles trail runs NE to SW.

TRAIL: From the house on the south, 1489 60th, this set of tracks begins about 60 ft. west of the driveway. Continue on west to corner of 60th and Mustang Road.

LOOK AT: As you drive along 60th, you can imagine the trail going SW across the fields. Locally, the 60th Road is known as "Old Trail Road," as it was on yet another trail.

DIRECTIONS: At 60th and Mustang, turn left (south).

STOP #4. From 60th and Mustang, go south.

TRAIL: At .45 miles trail runs E to W.

LOOK AT: After crossing the creek, look to the west where there is a field driveway. Just north of the drive into the hay field is where 5 pairs of tracks cross going E-W. Look to the east for a good sign. If you see a dip or depression by the creek trees, that's the Valley of the Cottonwood Trail. Look back to the west. About 200 ft. into the field, there is a narrow split of about 15 degrees; the Valley of the Cottonwood to the south, and the Alexanderwohl Trail to the north.

NOTE: Reading from an atlas from perhaps the 1960s, it says the NE quarter of section 7, the section directly to your west, was owned by Glenn Cunningham. Yes, this was the great mile runner and world record holder at University of Kansas.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 60th and Mustang Road. Turn left (west). Go 1 mile west to 60th and Limestone (Marion County) or 96th and Osage (Harvey County). This is the Marion/Harvey County line. Turn left (south).

STOP #5. From 60th & Limestone, go south

TRAIL: At .23 to .25 miles is the Alexanderwohl Trail. Trail runs E to W with 18 pairs of wagon tracks.

TRAIL: At .39 to .40 mi. is the Valley of the Cottonwood to Pike's Peak Trail.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to the corner. Turn left (west)

WALTON TOWNSHIP, HARVEY COUNTY

DIRECTIONS: Go west 1 mile to the corner of 96th and Harvest Hill Road. Turn left (south). For future reference, note that you cannot go north of 96th along the county line, as there is no road.

STOP #6. From 96th and Harvest Hills going south you will have again multiple trails.

TRAIL: At .08 to .09 mi. is the Alexanderwohl Trail ESE to WNW.

LOOK AT: This is approximately at the gap in the hedge to the west. The gap in the hedge is not caused by the trail; it is for the electrical line. The trail here goes on an angle, heading towards the residence on the north side of the road. The Alexanderwohl trail may have merged over the Indian trail.

TRAIL: At .22 miles is the Valley of the Cottonwood to Pike's Peak Trail runs E to W.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 96th and Harvest Hills. Turn left (west).

STOP #7. From 96th St. and Harvest Hills go west

RESIDENCE: At .18 mi. to the residence of 10520 96th St.

TRAIL: At .22 to .25 mi. is the Alexanderwohl Trail running ESE to WNW.

LOOK AT: The Alexanderwohl Trail crosses the paved road on a thin angle, going through the front yard of the residence on the north side of the road. It goes through the shelter belt near the corner.

DOWSING NOTE: West of the yard this trail curves and merges with another N-S Indian trail. So here is where the Alexanderwohl trail took a sharp northward curve.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around and go back to 96th and Harvest Hills. Look left (north).

CAUTION: You will quickly notice the grass growing between the tracks on this little-traveled road. Although it is a legal road, I DO NOT recommend traveling on it. You will have to go from 96th and Harvest Hills back east 3 miles to Nighthawk Road, on the west edge of Peabody. Go north 1 mile to the corner of Nighthawk Road and Highway 50.

Turn left. Go west 3 miles to the corner of Highway 50 (70th) and Kanza which is a N-S road. Turn right (north)

STOP #8. From Highway 50 and Kanza, go west a little. Take extreme caution of truck and other traffic. FIND A DRIVEWAY TO PARK.

TRAIL: At .23 to .26 mi. is the Alexanderwohl Trail with 17 wagon tracks, This trail would likely have been used by many other travelers as well.

LOOK AT: The high land on both sides of the highway is where the trail ran N-S. Find the green milepost 287 on the south side of the road.

DIRECTIONS: Turn into a driveway to turn around. After turning around, go back to Highway 50 and Kanza. Turn left (north). **MUD WARNING!!** Go north 1 mile to 80th road. Turn left (west).

EAST BRANCH TOWNSHIP, MARION COUNTY

STOP #9. From 80th and Kanza go west

MARKER: At .50 miles stop for a minute.

LOOK AT: This is a very interesting road. At the half mile fence, stop. There is a spring marked here on USGS Topographical maps. You will notice a small metal sign that reads, "Survey Marker Nearby." This indicates there is a geodetic marker in the area. About 66 ft. south along the half mile fence is a cement marker with a brass disc, indicating a measuring point for a nearby spring. The actual spring is maybe about 150 ft. SW of the half mile fence at the road, and appears as a low spot like a buffalo wallow. It is very unusual that a spring would be here, the highest land for miles around. How could the water table be that high? Go on west towards the house down the hill.

TRAIL: At .69 to .77 mi. is the Alexanderwohl wagon trail SE-NW. At about 150 ft. east of the house the Indian trail begins, with 7 tracks. You may see some trail evidence at the gully in the pasture. Shortly to the west, the wagon trails run to the west side of the house's yard. Not much of any kind of ruts visible in the pasture to the south, but it would be great for 4-wheeling to try to feel the bumps.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to the next corner west, 80th and Jade. Turn right (north).

STOP #10. From 80th and Jade go north

TRAIL: At .32 to .34 miles the trail runs SE to NW.

LOOK AT: Beginning 90 ft. north of the north driveway of the house, the Alexanderwohl Trail runs.

DIRECTIONS: Go on north to the next corner, Jade and 90th. 90th is a better-rocked road and is known locally as the Tabor Church road. Turn left (west).

STOP #11. From Jade and 90th go west

TRAIL: At .55 to .57 mi. the Alexanderwohl Trail is SE-NW.

LOOK AT: Notice the farm on the south at 1043 90th Road. The Indian trail crosses the road a little east of the driveway, going NW.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to the next corner west, the paved Indigo (13-mile) Road. Turn right (north). Watch the traffic.

STOP #12. From 90th and Indigo Road go north

TRAIL: At .37 to .47 mi. the Alexanderwohl Trail is SE-NW.

LOOK AT: As you drive up the hill, at about .37 miles, beginning near the house on the west side, a band of trails extends to the hedge seen on the east side of the road

DIRECTIONS: Continue on north to the next corner, 100th and Indigo. Turn left (west). **MUD WARNING!!** Dirt road.

STOP #13. From Indigo and 100th go west

TRAIL: At .71 to .72 mi. The Alexanderwohl Trail crosses.

LOOK AT: At about .7 mile you come to a hill with an abandoned farm on the north side. The trail comes over the hill from the SE and passes slightly on the west side of the highest part of the hill, going NW.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to the next corner west, 100th and Holly. Turn right (north).

MUD WARNING!!

STOP #14. From 100th and Holly go north

TRAIL: At .17 to .19 mi. is the Alexanderwohl Trail SE-NW.

LOOK AT: Wagon trail begins by the white electrical box and transformer pole on the west. The south two gas lines, going SW-NE, cross right at 5 tracks of the Indian trail, going SE-NW.

DIRECTIONS: As you continue on slowly to the next corner north, look at the magnificent landscape in section 17 to the west. See if you can see any trail ruts. Here is where there must be distinguishing between native pasture and CRP grassland; between true ruts and terracing. When you come to the corner of 110th and Holly, turn left (west). Continue **MUD WARNING!!**

STOP #15. From 110th and Holly go west.

There are multiple trails on this mile

LOOK AT: Don't be fooled by the terraces in the grassland on the south. They seem like ruts but the ones next to the road are not.

TRAIL: At .42 to .43 mi. the Alexanderwohl Trail crosses going SE-NW. Notice that here is some separation from the Indian trail.

TRAIL: At .46 to .47 mi. there are 6 wagon tracks going N-S. I believe this is the Cresswell Trail going to Walton.

DIRECTIONS: At 110th and Goldenrod turn right (north).

STOP #16. From 110th and Goldenrod go north

TRAIL: At .30 to .31 mi. is the Alexanderwohl trail with 10 wagon tracks.

LOOK AT: At 195 to 120 ft. south of the pasture gate on the east side, the Alexanderwohl Trail crosses. Look down to the creek to the SE see any evidence of a creek crossing.

DIRECTIONS: Go on to the next corner north, 120th and Goldenrod Road. 120th is the road coming east out of Goessel, and you are 5 miles east of K-15 here. Note the residence on the SE corner of the intersection. On the east side of the yard you will see the remnants of a country school building, District 27, Pleasant Valley. One listing has it established in 1873. This is the oldest existing school house in its original location in the Goessel area. Today it is used for storage. So, turn left (west). Go 1 mile west on the Goessel road (120th) to Falcon Road. Turn left (south).

STOP #17. From 120th and Falcon go south

TRAIL: At .26 to .27 mi. is the Alexanderwohl trail with 10 wagon tracks SE-NW.

LOOK AT: The pasture on the east side of the road: At the fence line on the north end of the pasture, align yourself at the corner of the pasture, looking SE. A tree will obscure

part of the pasture corner. Look for physical evidence of a trail in different heights, colors or types of vegetation growing in the pasture.

DIRECTIONS: From the pasture on Falcon, turn around, go back to 120th paved road, turn left (west) Falcon is the township line between East Branch on the east and West Branch on the west.

WEST BRANCH TOWNSHIP

STOP #18.

From 120th and Falcon go west

TRAIL: At .22 to .27 mi. is where the Alexanderwohl trail SE-NW is 264 ft. wide at this point.

LOOK AT: The wagon branch goes through the front yard of the residence on the south side of the road, and crosses starting near the mailbox and ending at the west edge of the trees.

DIRECTIONS: Go on west to the next corner, 120th and Eagle. Turn right (north).

STOP #19. From 120th and Eagle, go north

TRAIL: At .43 to .45 mi. the Alexanderwohl trail SE-NW crosses.

LOOK AT: About 225 ft. north of the driveway the Alexanderwohl Trail crosses the road.

DIRECTIONS: Go on north to the corner of 130th and Eagle. About 600 ft. before that corner, you will see on the east side some huge swales that you'd think surely were perfect trail ruts. But they aren't. Locals and old-timers know of no trail going anywhere there, there are no maps indicating anything, and dowsing has come up with zero. So, boy, you sure can be fooled sometimes. At 130th and Eagle, turn left (west).

STOP #20. From 130th and Eagle go west

TRAIL: At .77 to .79 miles the Alexanderwohl trail runs SE to NW spreading out with 11 wagon tracks.

LOOK AT: At about .6 mi. you cross a creek. Halfway between the creek and the red farm shed on the south side, you have the Alexanderwohl Trail.

DIRECTIONS: Continue on to the next corner, 130th and Diamond. Here again you see a jog, a correction line, because you are on the township line between West Branch on the south and Menno on the north. Turn right (north)

STOP #22.

From 130th and Diamond go north

TRAIL: At .21 to .24 miles the Alexanderwohl trail runs ESE to WNW. The trail here has 18 tracks.

LOOK AT: As you drive north, stop about 54 ft. north of the 3rd high line pole. Not much is visible, as there's farmland all around. However, if you look across the section to the west, it is a magnificent view on a clear day. If you know what you are looking for, you can see across the valley to the WNW, on the north side of the dairy farm, into section 33 a mile away, and see the half mile hedge coming towards you. The Alexanderwohl Trail enters section 33 a little to the north of the hedge.

DIRECTIONS: Turn around, go back to 130th and Diamond. Turn right (west) and go on west to the next corner, 130th and Chisholm Trail Road. Turn right (north). **MUD WARNING!!** Dirt road.

MENNO TOWNSHIP

STOP #23. From 130th and Chisholm Trail Road go north. **MUD WARNING!!**

TRAIL: At .50 to .52 mi. about 60 to 90 ft. north of the half mile hedge, the Alexanderwohl Trail crosses ESE to WNW.

LOOK AT: Looking to the SE, you see a row of creek trees. At the left end of those trees is the spot where the Alexanderwohl trail crosses and comes toward you.

TRAIL: At .52 to .53 mi. the parallel Indian trail runs ESE to WNW right north of the Alexanderwohl Trail. It continues on through section 33 on an ESE to WNW path.

TRAIL: At .53 to .54 mi. is what I believe is the trail from Cresswell, with 8 wagon tracks, running E-W. As it comes in from the east, it merges with the Alexanderwohl trail about 210 ft. into the field. As Cresswell had a post office 5 miles to the east at the time, it is thought that mail for the Immigrant houses came to Cresswell. At any rate, look across the section to the farm to the ENE. The Cresswell Trail goes near or through that farm. As the Alexanderwohl trail crosses the road and goes west into section 33, it goes first northwest, then arches and curves toward the southwest. It comes into the Immigrant house site from the northeast, and goes right up to the back door of the house site on the hill.

---STOP HERE. You are at the end of this journey for today. Access to the Immigrant House marker is restricted private property. There may be a special day when a large group will walk or ride out to the Immigrant House site. Then you can stand on the ground where your ancestors first worshipped at home in America. Stay tuned for more information.

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