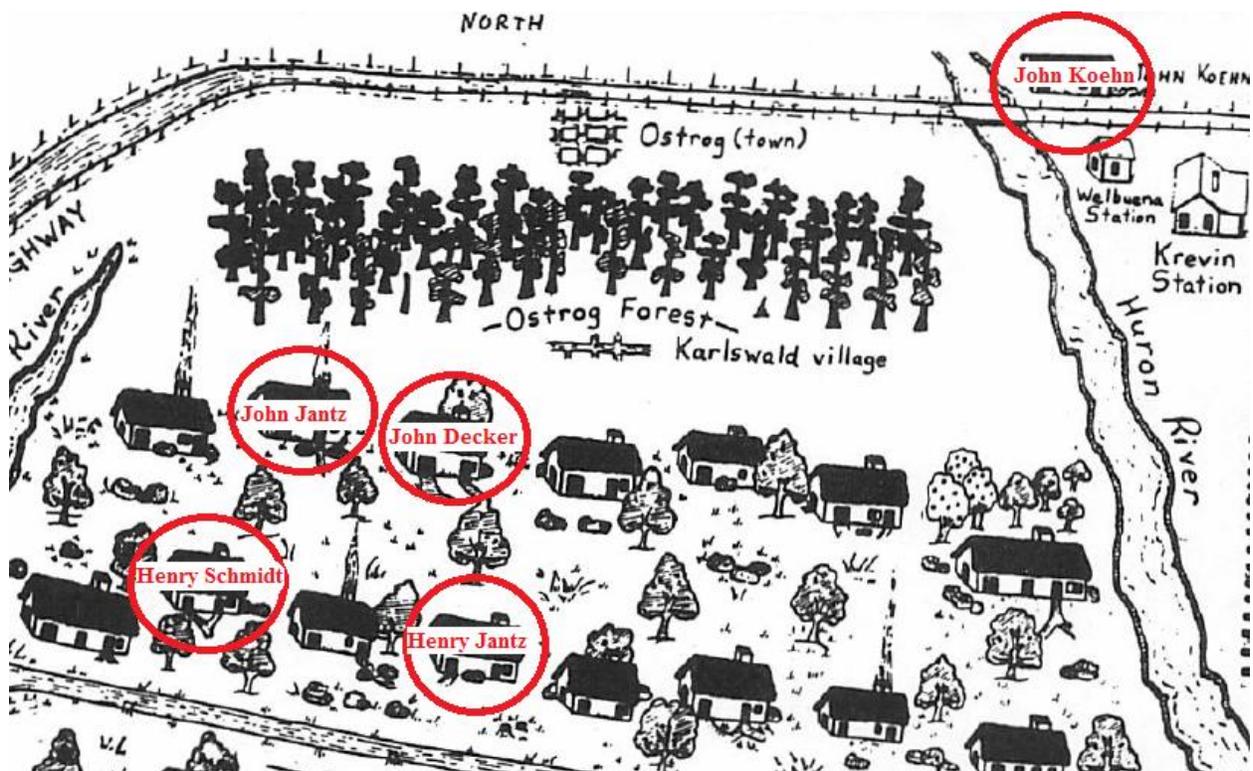


# Leeleva Online Map

## John Decker, Henry Jantz, John Jantz, John Koehn, and Henry Schmidt

At present, we don't know for sure the identities of John Decker, Henry Jantz, John Jantz, John Koehn, and Henry Schmidt. We have some possibilities for each, a pretty good possibility specifically for John Decker, but we may never know for certain who these men were.

The GRANDMA database is the primary source for identifying these folks. As long as people have remained tied to the Mennonite Church in some way, they should be included in GRANDMA. However, if they separate from the Church somehow, their names in the Mennonite records become less frequent. Typically in GRANDMA if a person's name remains unfound, that person fell away from the Church somehow. Unfortunately, the main reason the people we're looking for would have fallen away from the Church was if they were not able to emigrate from Russia before the Russian Revolution in 1917. There's a strong chance any remaining Mennonites in Volhynia were deported to Siberia after the Revolution. I feel it's likely that these five villagers and their families never left Russia.



## **John Decker - minister**

Leeleva villagers Sam Decker and Helena (Decker) Nightengale did have a nephew named John Decker who would be a good fit for this man. Son of Tobias Decker and Lena Bayer, John T Decker (#591476) was born about the year 1870. GRANDMA says that he did not leave Russia and that he “disappeared” during WWII. His youngest sister, Julia, was born in Grünthal in 1878, moved to the Molotschna Colony by 1909, and to Paraguay sometime after 1915. He had a nephew, via his younger brother Jacob, who lived in Galva, KS. We don't know anything further about his parents or other siblings.

Soviet NKVD records indicate two John Deckers but lack patronymic names for both. One was born in 1866 and lived in the Crimea. This man was arrested by the NKVD and executed in 1937. Could this have been John T Decker?

Numerous other John Deckers appear in Bremen departure records as well as records of listing ethnic Germans leaving Russia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century. Furthermore, several John Decker are listed in Soviet NKVD records as being arrested in the 1920s or 1930s. A few of these are obviously Mennonites, but none are obviously our villager.

## **Henry Jantz**

In GRANDMA we find two Henry Jantzes who could be this villager. Both were related to the Jantz Family of Karolswalde, descended from Cornelius Jantz (1739-1803).

Henry P Jantz (#209092) was born in 1837, the son of Peter Jantz. He was baptized in 1854 and some of his family members immigrated to America in 1874 and 1875. It does appear as if he was born in Volhynia.

Henry J Jantz (#72623) was born in 1856, the son of Johan Jantz. He could very well have died in childhood. His parents and some siblings appear to have moved to the Molotchna Colony after 1877.

The Mormon Genealogy website FamilySearch lists a Henry Jantz, born 1867, who immigrated to Canada in 1908 from “Russian Poland\*\*”. This Henry Jantz was living in Saskatchewan in 1916 at which time he was polled by a Canadian census.

**\*\*Note:** “Russian Poland” or “Poland, Russia” was a typical term some of the Volhynian Mennonites used to describe the Volhynian region. The area before the Partitions of Poland (1772-1795) was part of Poland. After the partitions, this area was wholly controlled by the Russian Empire. When these records say “Russian Poland” or “Polish Russia”, it probably means Russian Empire area that was formerly Poland, namely Volhynia and parts of Byelorussia and Poland proper.

Numerous other men named Heinrich Jantz appear in various records. Bremen, Germany, departure records indicate a man named Heinrich Janz from the village Salomke, Volhynia, in 1907. This probably wasn't our villager since Salomke was not one of the villages where Mennonites lived.

Finally, NKVD records do indicate several Heinrich or Henry Jantzes imprisoned in the 1930s, but not that are obviously our villager.

### **John Jantz - minister**

The best possibility for John Jantz in the GRANDMA database appears to be John B Jantz, born 1846. John B Jantz (#71006) was born to Benjamin Jantz and Anna (Nickel). Like Henry Jantz above, John B was descended from Cornelius Jantz (1739-1803). His parents immigrated to America in 1875. John was the oldest child. The lack of information about him may indicate that he either died in childhood or that he remained in Russia after his family immigrated (he would have been 29 years old in 1875, so it is possible that he stayed behind).

Two more John Jantzes are found at FamilySearch, but both appear to be a little young to fit Leeleva minister John Jantz:

John Jantz is found on FamilySearch living in North Dakota. This man emigrated from Russia in 1891 (born 1871 in Russia). No more information is known; this individual is not listed in GRANDMA.

John Jantz found on FamilySearch living in Harvey County, KS emigrated from Russia in 1896 (born 1873 in Poland, Russia). This man was not married at the time of the 1900 census. This man does not appear to be listed in GRANDMA.

Otherwise, I have been able to find no other good options for John Jantz among Russian immigrant or Soviet NKVD arrest records.

## **John Koehn**

There aren't any real good matches for this John Koehn in either the GRANDMA database or at FamilySearch. The best John Koehn I can find in GRANDMA was married to an Anna Buller from Antonovka, but we don't know anything more about him. This John Koehn (#284457) was probably from Grünthal and may have been related to Leeleva villager Tobias Boese's first wife, Susanna (Koehn). GRANDMA doesn't tell us anything about Susanna's family, so it's possible that she had a relative named John.

Many John Koehns are listed among Bremen departure records as well as ethnic German immigrants leaving Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> Centuries. Furthermore, many, many John Koehns are listed in Soviet NKVD records from the 1920s and 1930s. Unfortunately these records are very difficult to wade through as the Russian translation for the German name of Koehn varies widely. I've identified several Mennonite Koehns who were arrested, but none who appear to originate from the Volhynian villages.

## **Henry Schmidt**

Many Schmidt surnames were changed to Smith upon emigration to U.S.A. Thus, this name could be found as Henry Smith in American records. Searching for a "Henry Smith" without knowing any additional details is fairly pointless as the name is so common. However, I have found some possibilities:

Heinrich P Schmidt (#283731) was born in 1829 in Karolswalde to Peter and Katharina (Foth) Schmidt. He was closely related to the Decker Family (Sam Decker, Helena (Nightingale) Decker, etc.), as well as other known Leeleva villagers. Heinrich P married Helena Buller in 1853. Records conflict a bit, but they may have immigrated to America in 1894. This is potentially a real good fit for our villager, but with how common this name was there's no way to be sure. At this point I've been unable to find immigration information to see what village he came from in Russia.

Heinrich C Schmidt (#402099) was born in 1862 to Cornelius and Helena (Ratzlaff) Schmidt. Helena was from the Volhynian Mennonite Village of Heinrichsdorf, but no additional information is known about this person.

Heinrich T Schmidt (#280177) was born in 1871 in Volhynia to Tobias Schmidt and Luvantina (Decker). This man was a nephew to Heinrich P Schmidt above and closely related to known Leeleva villagers, the Abraham Schmidts. It's not quite clear, but his family may very well have immigrated to America in 1874.

Heinrich A Schmidt (#283067) was born in 1854 in Karolswalde to Andreas and Helena (Boehs) Schmidt. The records are unclear, but it's very possible that he immigrated to America with his family in 1874.

Several other Henry Schmidts are found at FamilySearch. For instance, a Henry Schmidt can be found living in Blaine County, Oklahoma, in federal census information from 1920. This man was born in Russia in 1855 and immigrated to America in 1891. At this point I've been unable to find immigration information to see what village he came from in Russia.

In passenger lists departing from Bremen, Germany, I've found a Heinrich Schmidt travelling with his mother, Maria, and his sister, Katharina, in 1914. These three Germans were originally coming from a village in Russia named Lesnoi. This Heinrich Schmidt, however, was only five years old at the time. No father is listed; could the father's name have been Heinrich? Lesnoi is a form of the name Lesnaya, a name by which Leeleva has been known. While there are many villages by this name in Russia and Ukraine, how many of them would have been home to ethnic Germans in the early 20<sup>th</sup> Century? \*\* GRANDMA does not seem to include this Heinrich Schmidt or his mother or sister.

No fewer than 74 Henry or Heinrich Schmidts are listed as victims of political repression in the U.S.S.R. during the 1920s and 1930s. Several of these are obviously of Mennonite descent, but none are listed as having come from Volhynia.

\*\*German settlers during the 19<sup>th</sup> Century settled in many areas of the Russian Empire, especially Ukraine. Large groups of Germans settled in Volhynia, southern left-bank Ukraine, Bessarabia, and along the southern Volga River. I am not aware of any German villages named anything similar to Lesnoi, save for Leeleva, A.K.A. Fürstendorf.