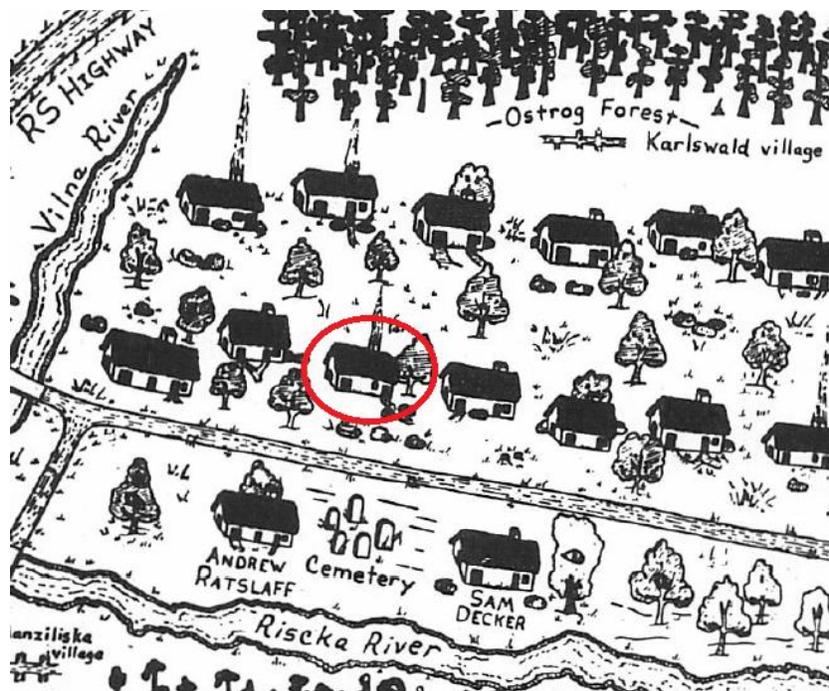


# Leeleva Online Map

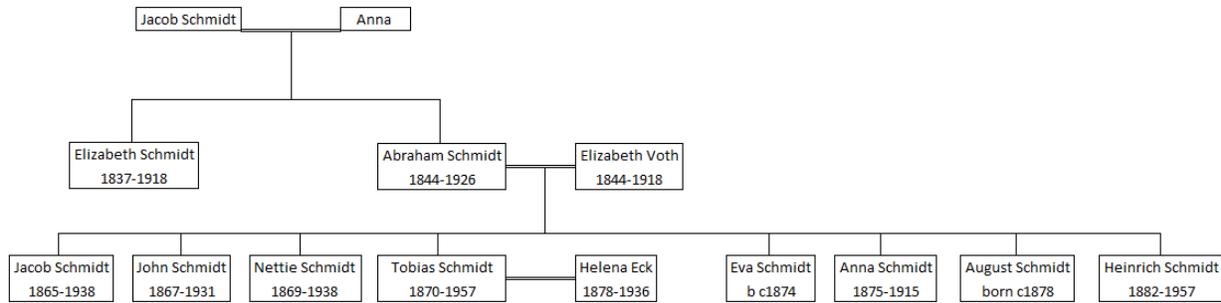
## Tobias Schmidt

Jake Unruh places the Tobias Schmidt house toward the west end of the village, directly across the main road from the cemetery.



Tobias Schmidt was a son of Abraham Schmidt and Elizabeth (Voth) Schmidt. Abraham Schmidt, with his brothers and sisters, were a well-established family among the Karolswalde villages, and were closely related to the Deckers, Penners and Ratslaffs (Ratzlaffs).

Just a couple houses to the east from Tobias Schmidt lived his aunt and uncle, Heinrich and Elizabeth (Schmidt) Penner.



## Abraham Schmidt Family Tree

According to the GRANDMA database, the eight children of Jacob Schmidt all lived in the Karolswalde villages and were intermarried into the Boese, Unruh, Voth, and Decker families. Abraham Schmidt married Elizabeth Voth who could trace her maternal ancestry through the Jantzes who were related to many Karolswalde families. Abraham and Elizabeth had eight children. Of these eight, seven immigrated aboard the S.S. Gothia, together with their parents and Abraham's sister, Elizabeth (Schmidt) Penner and three of her children, to America in 1891. Nettie, Abraham's oldest daughter, travelled with her husband, Peter Unruh, and their three children. On the passenger list from the S.S. Gothia, the Schmidt Family clearly indicates their home village as "Lelewe".

The eldest of Abraham's children, Jacob, was completing his forestry service with the Russian military in 1891 and could not leave Russia at that time. Tobias, nearing the age when he too would need to serve the Russian military, pushed hard for his family to leave for America as soon as possible.

Schmidt family memoirs tell that the family made preparations to leave Russia covertly. At one point, a local Russian found out about their plans, but was paid off to keep their secret. In the autumn of 1891, the Schmidts, Penners and Unruhs left their homes bound for Germany. They took only what they could carry and left most of their belongings in their homes. They wanted it to appear as if they were returning, so that upon investigation the local authorities would just think the family went on a short trip to visit nearby relatives.

The families hired guides to smuggle them across the border of Austria-Hungary. Travel was made under the cover of darkness and the family hid during the day. Wagons were used until they got near the border, at which point they needed to travel by foot.

Extreme care was needed to walk through the forests at night, trying to be quiet while walking through all the autumn leaves. At last they reached the border and quietly slipped onto a train, bound for Germany.

In all likelihood, these families crossed the border into Austria-Hungary at the Radziwilow (Radyvyliv) -Brody border crossing, about 75 miles west of Ostrog by train. Radziwilow was the last town west along the train route in Russia and Brody lie across the border and was the first town at the eastern edge of Austria-Hungary. Both towns at this time were very dangerous for these Mennonites; full of border-smugglers and soldiers. This map shows the Radziwilow-Brody border as it appeared in 1889. The bold-black railway route north-east from Radziwilow passed through Dubno and then came near to Ostrog, passing through the stations at Welburne (Velbivno) and Krevin (Kryvyn).



**Border Crossing at Radziwilow-Brody; 1889**

It's interesting that the story of the Schmidt-Penner-Unruh exodus from Leeleva is very similar to that experienced by the Ratzlaff-Koehn-Nachtigall families in 1893 and the Unruh-Wedel-Ratzlaff families in 1906. All these families were able to escape Russia by hiring smugglers and sneaking over the border under the cover of darkness.

Tobias Schmidt, just a young man when the family immigrated in 1891, must have lived in the house alone for just a short period of time before leaving Russia. He married Helena Eck in Kansas in 1896. During the immigration process, Tobias' last name was changed to Smith and the family can be traced by this name after 1891. The children of Tobias and Helena lived throughout Kansas and Oklahoma, and succeeding generations spread as far as Arizona where Tobias' great granddaughter, Sue Escarrega, lives with her family today.

Of note is the fact that the house next-door to the west of the Tobias Schmidt house is labelled as the Henry Schmidt home. Tobias did have a brother named Heinrich (German for Henry), but he was only nine years old in 1891 when the family left for America. A nine-year-old could not have had his own house yet. At this time we do not know anything further about the identity of Henry Schmidt or the Henry Schmidt house. Much searching has been done through the GRANDMA database, but no good candidates for the occupant(s) of this house have yet been identified.