

Remembering
John Zuschka
1795-1843



as part of
Arenzville's 175th Celebration
September 5 & 6, 2014

Researched and written by
Molly Clark Daniel
Charleston, IL
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with special appreciation to:

Theresa Langley, District Bookkeeper
Steve Eisenhauer, Superintendent
Community Unity School District 27
(for assistance with school records)

Office Staff – County Clerk's Office
Cass County, IL
(for assistance with land records)

The late Theodore and Hester Lovekamp
(for their publication on Arenzville local history)

Robert and the late Donna Clark
(for use of their school yearbook)

John Zuschka

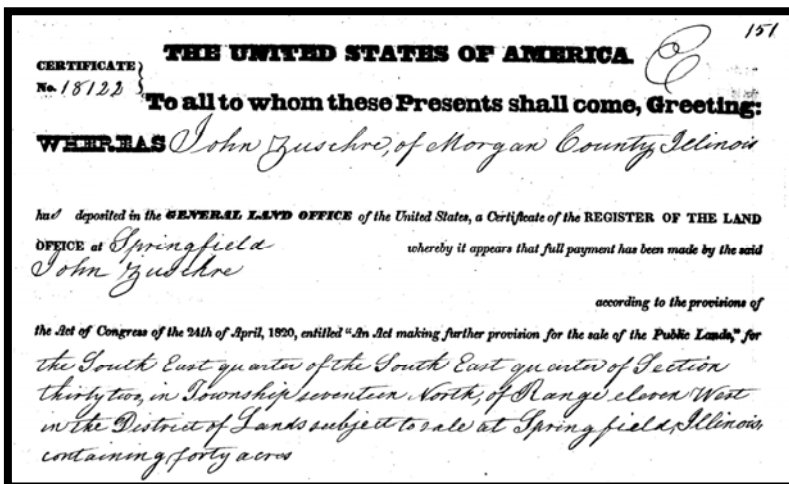
John Zuschka rests peacefully on the hill in the cemetery east of the village of Arenzville, near a gravemaker donated by school children of Arenzville.

As residents of Arenzville, we hope he knows how grateful we are for his contribution to the local school. As a community, the people in Arenzville have long valued a good education. This place has produced successful farmers,

talented musicians, university professors, decorated soldiers, gifted physicians and nationally recognized researchers – and that covers just the Clyde and Helen Ginder family!



John Zuschka was among the first of many men who acted on opportunities presented by the Land Sales Act of 1820, which authorized sale of public domain land “in the West.” The Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales database¹ shows that on 22 February 1837 “John Zuschre” purchased two parcels of 40 acres each located in Morgan County’s portion² of Township 17. He paid \$1.25 an acre.



He worked hard and was a successful farmer. The appraisal of his estate shows that he had accumulated considerable (for the times) household property and goods, including “two and half books.” But apparently recognizing the nearness of his impending death, he turned to his friends John

¹ Illinois Public Domain Land Tract Sales Database, <http://www.ilsos.gov/isa/landsrch.jsp>

² Zuschka’s parcels were located in the three-mile strip along the northern boundary of Morgan County, which for reasons that remain unclear, was not included with the rest of Township 17 when Cass County was formed in 1837. Residents in the three-mile strip sought and were granted a referendum on the question, and they overwhelmingly voted to become part of Cass County, which became effective in 1845, after Zuschka’s death.

A. and Francis Arenz, with a request to help him write a last will. He died six months later. Only 48 years old at the time of his death, John Zuschka had never married and had no children. But his final act of generosity is remembered yet today, as we celebrate Arenzville's 175 years of history.

In 1882, his friend John A. Arenz remembered this about him:

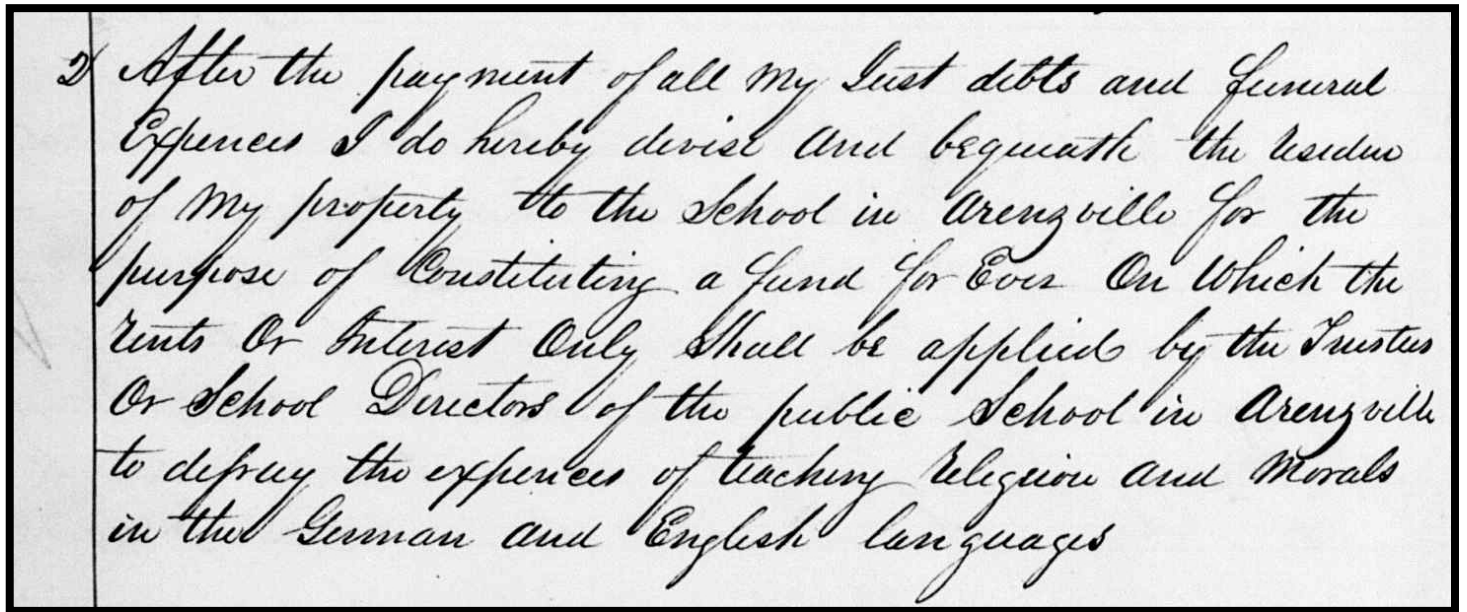
The first funeral at Arenzville was that of John Fuschka [Zuschka]. He was an old bachelor without any living relatives, had drifted about in the world from place to place, never receiving any kind words or treatment, as he told it, until he came to Arenzville, and found employment with Francis Arenz. By industry and frugal habits he had saved his wages and acquired possession of eighty acres of good land near the town. His last will and testament was written by J. A. Arenz, to whom he offered to bequeath one half of his land, and the other half to his brother Francis. It was pointed out to him, that neither of them needed any such gift, and that he would perform a generous act of benevolence, and perpetuate his memory, by bequeathing his farm to the school at Arenzville, to which he cheerfully assented. Mr. Fuschka [Zuschka] was not captivating in appearance, small in size, but he possessed a large soul, full of honesty and trustworthiness. The citizens of Arenzville should honor his grave and remember his generosity. The farm is now cultivated by Casper Becker, and the annual rent goes to the school fund.³

John Zuschka's generosity is all the more remarkable because, at the time of his gift, there was no free public education system in Illinois. Though the legislature made several attempts, it was not until 1855 that it passed laws to provide for the establishment and support of free public schools. In the meantime, the residents of Arenzville – many of whom were German immigrants with a university education – wanted a school for their children.

The first school erected in Arenzville was built in 1839, with the assistance of Francis Arenz, who donated a piece of land for a village park and arranged for a small building to be erected in the northwest corner. (He and Thomas Beard also collaborated in building the first school in Beardstown.) "This little building,

³ Judge J. A. Arenz, Chapter XIV, *History of Cass County, Illinois*, edited by William Henry Perrin, Chicago, O.L. Baskin & Co. Historical Publishers, 1882.

without steps or steeple, was used as a school when a teacher was available and as church on Sundays when a minister chanced by. School was usually a short period of time, about three months, when heat was not needed. Each child paid tuition, the sum and total of the schoolmaster's wages. When a teacher was not available, some of the pupils were tutored at home. The early settlers were educated in their native lands and they were staunch believers in education and religious principles."⁴



I After the payment of all my Just debts and General Expenses I do hereby devise And bequeth the residue of my property to the School in Arenzville for the purpose of Constituting a fund for Ever On Which the rents Or Interest Only shall be applied by the Trustees Or School Directors of the public School in Arenzville to defray the expenses of teaching Religion and Morals in the German and English languages

Item 2 in the Will of John Zuschka (dated 12 March 1843, probated 15 September 1843) reads as follows:

After the payment of all my just debts and funeral expenses I do hereby devise and bequeath the residue of my property to the school in Arenzville, for the purpose of constituting a fund for Ever. On which the rents or interest only, shall be applied by the trustees or School Directors of the public School in Arenzville to defray the expenses of teaching religion and morals in the German and English languages.⁵

⁴ Theodore and Hester Ham Lovekamp, *A Local History Collection of Arenzville, Illinois*, self-published, Stevens Publishing, Astoria, IL, 1988, p. 38. Accessible online at <http://www.burgoo.org/history/book.html>

⁵ Morgan County, IL, Will Book A2, page 193, accessible online at <https://familysearch.org/search/collection/1834344>

In 1892, when Arenzville constructed its first permanent school building on the southeast corner of the town, it was on property adjoining the “school farm,” as John Zuschka’s legacy was known for generations following his death. The Zuschka School added a two-year high school course to the original eight grades. The building was destroyed by fire in November 1908, miraculously with no loss of life despite the fact that the town did not yet have a fire hydrant system and battled the fire with a bucket brigade after being alerted by the whistle of a passing train. The community promptly built a second school on the same site, and it opened its doors in 1909, serving the community for more than 75 years.



1892 Zuschka School



Arenzville in 1900, as viewed from near John Zuschka's resting place in the East Cemetery.

The Arenzville School



Zuschka School built in 1909

In 1950, beginning a process to consolidate with schools in nearby towns of Concord and Chapin, the board of education of Community Unit School District 27, petitioned the Cass County Circuit Court for permission to sell the school farm. Approval was granted, and most of John Zuschka's 80 acres were sold to Frank Dober for \$14,000 in October 1950.⁶ A small parcel was retained for use by the school as an athletic field until it was also sold in 1986 to Don and Roberta Meyer.⁷



*Commemorative plate with
image of 1892 Zuschka
School*

⁶ Cass County, IL, Deed Book 114, pg. 319.

⁷ Cass County, IL, Deed Book 154, p. 138-139.

Deed Record No. 114, Cass County

97389

48105--ILLINOIS OFFICE SUPPLY CO., OTTAWA, ILL.

COMMUNITY UNIT SCHOOL
DISTRICT NO. 27DEEDFiled for record, this 16th day of October,
A. D. 1950 at 10:30 A. M.TO

F. W. Finn Recorder

FRANK DOBER

WHEREAS the undersigned Board of Education of Community Unit School District No. 27 of the Counties of Cass, Morgan and Scott, in the State of Illinois, a body politic and corporate, under and by authority of a decree of the Circuit Court of Cass County, Illinois, in Chancery Case No. 3620, entered on the 11th day of May, A. D. 1950, in a certain cause wherein said Board of Education was Plaintiff and Ivan A. Elliott, as Attorney General of the State of Illinois, et al, were Defendants, did, on the 9th day of August, 1950, duly sell the premises hereinafter described at public auction to Frank Dober for the sum of Fourteen Thousand (\$14,000.00) Dollars, and said sale was duly approved and confirmed by said Court on the 15th day of September, A. D. 1950;

In 1960, the final class graduated from Arenzville High School, and the newly formed Triopia school district continued to hold classes for its students in 4th through 9th grades at the Zuschka School in Arenzville. The district's high school students met in Chapin, and elementary grades met in smaller buildings in each town. In April 1969, construction was completed on a new facility near Concord to house Triopia Junior-Senior High School (grades 7 through 12.) Arenzville elementary students continued to meet in the Zuschka School until 1985, when the State's safety codes prompted the community to discontinue use of the building. A new addition for the district's elementary students was constructed at the junior-senior high school near Concord, and classes began meeting there in 1988.

As for the Zuschka School building, it was demolished and the site purchased by a group of generous citizens of Arenzville to create Zuschka Square, which today serves as the home for a small community building and the Ross Houston Memorial Apartments (senior housing) at Zuschka Square.



And then there is this footnote in the most recent audited financial report of Community Unit School District 27:

Community Unit School District No. 27 is the trustee of a fund established by John Zuschke, Jr., consisting of \$12,500, invested in Certificates of Deposit. The trust provides that the principal remain intact and that the income earned on the principal be used for educational purposes of the District.

Arenzville and the community school continue to benefit from John Zuschka's gift. To show our enduring gratitude for his generosity, the Village will remember this kind man with the placement of a floral wreath at his gravesite as part of our weekend of to celebrate the Village's history.



ROBERT CLARK



GLORIA BROWN



GERALD ROEGGE



SUELLEN STILTZ



KRISTINE NATEMEYER



JANET DAHMAN



ALLEN KLEINSCHMIDT



MRS. MARY SMITH Spens.

ARENZVILLE 19 HIGH SCHOOL 60



MR. FARRELL MCGINNIS Spens.
Principal



CHARLES MUSCH



TIM HUEY



DONNA STAAKE



CAROL LOVEKAMP



ALICE ALEXANDER



MARK ABERNATHY



MERVIN BEETS



PATRICIA ROBISON



JOE RICHARDSON



CHARLES ATER



MYRA LOVEKAMP

When the Roll is Called Up Yonder.

J. M. B.

J. M. Black.

1. When the trumpet of the Lord shall sound, and time shall be no more, And the
 2. On that bright and cloudless morning when the dead in Christ shall rise, And the
 3. Let us la-bor for the Mas-ter from the dawn till set-ting sun, Let us

morn-ing breaks, e-ter-nal, bright and fair; When the saved of earth shall gather
 glo - ry of His res - ur-rec-tion share; When His cho-sen ones shall gather
 talk of all His wondrous love and care; Then when all of life is o - ver,

o - ver on the oth-er shore, And the roll is called up yon-der, I'll be there.
 to their home beyond the skies, And the roll is called up yon-der, I'll be there.
 and our work on earth is done, And the roll is called up yon-der, We'll be there.

CHORUS.

When the roll..... is called up yon - - der, When the
 When the roll is called up yon-der. I'll be there,

roll..... is called up yon - - der, When the roll..... is
 When the roll is called up yon-der, I'll be there, When the roll is

