



3 or 4 feet long, with a check valve in the lower end, was lowered with a rope and then drawn to the top; the rope passed over a pulley and was attached to a cylindrical drum with a crank at one end.

The invention of pumps was a great boon to the farm woman. At first she carried water from a spring or a water barrel. Later, when a well was dug, a pulley with a bucket on the end of a rope, or a pulley with a chain and a bucket on each end, simplified matters somewhat; but the invention of the pump was the greatest boon to the farm wife. The next major improvement was the invention of the windmill, for it transferred the drudgery of daily pumping to the eternal winds of the plains. The windmill tower was described as "the unmistakable sign of human habitation throughout the Great Plains."

The settlers' early farm implements consisted of a plow, harrow, corn planter, and some simple harvester. Their first corn planters were of the hand check variety. They plowed the ground, harrowed it, and marked it. The marker was made of four or five 4" x 4s nailed together about 3½ feet apart. This was dragged over the ground crosswise to the direction of planting. Then the man checking the corn dropped the corn on these marks. This was done to provide for cross-cultivation. Later, the check rower and wire was introduced, and this inconvenience was eliminated.

Grain was harvested mostly by headers. The header made a 10 or 12 foot cut, and was pushed rather than pulled. The cutter was pushed by a long beam attached to its back side, with a team of horses on each side. The man running the header stood on a little platform behind the horses and steered it. The cut grain was elevated into header boxes and hauled away and piled into rick stacks.

The McCormick Reaper made a cut of 5 or 6 feet and had a reel that looked very much like a Dutch windmill. The reel slats, of which there were four, had tines or teeth on them. Three of these reel slats knocked the cut grain down onto the triangular platform, and the fourth was so geared as to brush it off. This left the cut grain in bunches which were later bound by hand with straw, picked up, and hauled away. This was called a self-rake.

Some of the early settlers also used a machine known as a Marsh harvester, which superseded the McCormick Reaper or self-rake. This machine elevated the grain and dropped it onto what was called a table or platform. Two people rode on the machine, standing on a lower platform. Each of these grabbed a handful of straw, divided it so as to make a double-length band, and tied a small armfull of grain into a bundle. The bundles were then thrown or dropped to the ground, and were later picked up and hauled away.



Photo from William Ruhl  
Henry Kolar & Co. threshing crew (of Exeter) with horse-powered thresher.

The stacks of grain were later threshed by the old horse-powered threshing machines. Power was furnished by six or eight teams and conveyed to the thresher by means of tumbling rods. The horse power was staked down by heavy poles. A beam or sweep—one for each team—was socketed into the master wheel and braced. The horses did not pull from the ends of the sweeps, as there were pulleys in the end of each sweep. A chain passed through these pulleys, one of which was fastened to the doubletrees to which the horses pulled and the other end was hooked back into equalizing rods. The purpose of these equalizing rods, which lay loose in a circle upon the sweeps, was to distribute the pull evenly among

the teams. The man standing on the horse power kept the teams going, and the "kids" kept the straw away from behind the separator, a very dusty and dirty job.

## CHURCHES

The Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church had its origin in 1882, when the first regular services received by the Lutherans of Momence township were provided by the Rev. John Meyer, who came from Kiowa and conducted services every fourth Sunday. He drove his ponies over the roadless prairies, through the waters of the Blue River and Old Sandy Creek. In the summer of 1883, the congregation formally organized and, under his guidance, decided to build their first church. The site—the SE corner of the farm of Detlef Koch, in the SE¼ of Sec. 24—was donated by Mr. Koch. The church building, which cost \$538 and was completed with no debts against it, was dedicated to God on Pentecost Day, June 1, 1884, by the Rev. John Meyer. Pictures pertaining to the history of the church are in the files of the *Signal* and were used in a historical booklet compiled by the church for its 50th anniversary in 1934.

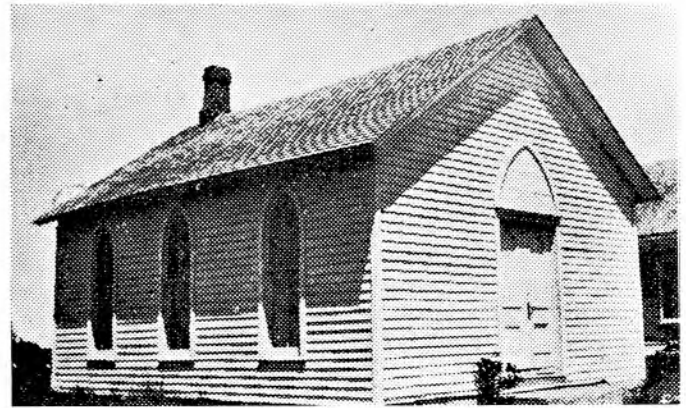


Photo from Kenneth Koch  
First Zion Church building, dedicated in 1884.

Among the first members of the Zion congregation were Claus Franzen, president, trustee, and collector; Frank Otte, secretary; Chris Gratopp, trustee; Charles Gratopp, collector; Fritz Busse; Will Gehrke; Carl Gehrke; Pete D. Koch, collector; Ed Misch, treasurer and trustee; W. Engel; Ed Ohnesorge; B. Tobiassen; William Steinke; Henry Frenzen; Chris Broderson, Sr.; William Schmock; John Koch; Claus Roweder; Gus Ohnesorge; and Herman Gehrke.

Soon after the dedication of the church, the Rev. S. Meeske of Tobias took charge of this flock for somewhat over a year. During this time, for reasons which are by now obscure, a division arose in the congregation. The majority of members, retaining the use of the church, called a pastor of the Lutheran General Synod and incorporated themselves as the German Evangelical Lutheran Congregation of Momence. This group was served in the following years first by the Rev. William Thole of Ohio, and later by the Revs. J. Bond, C. Huber, and J. Buechsenstein. The minority group, meeting in private homes, was again served by the Rev. John Meyer of Kiowa and later by the Rev. Maak of Grafton, who were members of the Missouri Synod.

The two factions were reunited on January 10, 1889, and decided to drop membership in their respective synods and join the Wisconsin Synod. In the early spring of that year, the Rev. Michael Wolff of the Wisconsin Synod was installed as pastor. Since Pastor Wolff also served another congregation near Grafton, services at Zion were conducted only in alternate weeks. A modest parsonage was erected, just west of the cemetery adjoining the church, in 1889. Pastor Wolff served the congregation until 1891, when he resigned. Candidate of Theology C. G. Kleinlein was then called, and he served both congregations until March, 1896, when he accepted a call to East Farmington, Wisconsin.

The Rev. C. W. Siegler was then installed as pastor of both congregations in the summer of 1896, and served until September 30, 1900. The Rev. Kluge of Grafton served the congregation until the newly called pastor, the Rev. George Kirschke, was installed early in 1901.

In 1901, during the pastorate of the Rev. Mr. Kirschke, the congregation decided to move into the town of Shickley. Six lots were purchased in the northwestern part of the town and a new and larger frame church was built on the east lots of the site. The new church—34' x 56' and with a steeple—was erected for a total cost of \$3,181.56. The members of the building committee were H. Wittmack, Charles Gratopp, and Fred Hesse.

The parsonage was moved into town, enlarged a bit and repaired, and put on the west lots of the church site. The first church was also brought into town and placed near the new church, where it served as a schoolhouse and parish hall until it was replaced by a new educational unit and parish hall, dedicated on October 22, 1950.

The new frame church, which had been dedicated in September, 1901, was totally destroyed by a lightning-started fire on May 21, 1918. Although the members were stricken, they were not dismayed. They soon decided to build a new brick church on the old site. The members did much of the work themselves. The brick church was dedicated in the fall of 1918. Although the building was valued at \$10,000, the actual cash cost was only \$6,500. It was only a few years until the whole church was free of debt. During the winters of 1922 and 1923, the congregation built the present parsonage, at a cost of \$5,500.

At the time of their Golden Jubilee in 1934, the Zion congregation numbered about 190 souls, including about 130 communicants and 47 voting members. The highest and most intimate connection with the congregation is the communicant membership. This is granted to confirmed men, women, and children of about age 13 and upward. The Zion congregation, still a vital force in Shickley, has reason to rejoice; and they voice it in the words: "The Lord had done great things for us, whereof we are glad," and "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits."

The pastors who have served the Zion church have been:

John Meyer	A. B. Korn
S. Meeske	William F. Wietzke
William Thole	D. Luebke (temporary)
J. Bond	John Raabe
C. Huber	Henry Ellwein
J. Buechsenstein	L. E. Vogel (temporary)
— Maak	K. Schaaf (temporary)
Michael Wolff	Laurence E. Wachholz
C. G. Kleinlein	Corliss Stokamp (temporary)
W. C. Siegler	Otto H. Wittig
George Kirschke	Enno Budde
H. Zimmermann	Norman F. Seebach (1962-)
F. L. Brenner	

The **German Evangelical Lutheran Church** was founded largely because many of the Zion members found it difficult to travel to the Zion Church. A local Free Will Baptist congregation had merged with their brethren in Geneva; and so the new group purchased the superseded church building in 1894 from off the farm of Ed Role's father in Stanton township and moved it to the NW corner of the SW ¼ of Sec. 1, T6N, R4W. The building was duly dedicated, and a parsonage was erected beside it. Its work and services continued until 1917, when it was forced to disband on account of limited membership. Some of the members of this congregation were Claus Franzen, William Gosch, Charles Gehrke, and Mike Gehrke. After the congregation disbanded, the church building was sold to William Loghry and converted into a house, still standing, 4½ miles W of Geneva (NE corner of the SE ¼ of Sec. 6, Stanton township).

**St. Mary's Church** (Turkey Creek) started from small beginnings. Shortly after the coming of the Burlington R.R. to the county in 1871, 10 families from Wisconsin located in the west-central part of the county, most of them in Momence

precinct. Many at first lived in dugouts and sod houses, had large families, and were buffeted by the hardships and adversities of pioneer life.

Being staunch Catholics, their first concern was for the ministrations of their religion and the welfare of their children; but for a time there was no possibility of obtaining a resident priest. There was no Catholic church nearer than Crete. The priest in charge there, Father Lechleitner, was already overburdened, having charge of all the missions from Crete west to Kearney. Mass was offered once a month in one of the homes southwest of Sutton. Many of the settlers made the round trip of 30 or more miles on foot or in open farm wagons—a long journey, especially in midwinter. Finally, in 1875, the first Mass in what is now St. Mary's Parish, Turkey Creek, was celebrated by Father F. Lechleitner.



Photo from Father Paul Ulenberg  
St. Mary's Catholic Church in late 1940's

The first church edifice was built in 1879, a small building put up by parishioners Peter Gergen and John Marson. As more settlers came in, and as families grew, this became too small and was replaced by a larger building about 1892.

In 1916, Turkey Creek was made a parish and the present commodious rectory was built. The Rev. A. J. Lutz, appointed the first resident pastor, served here for nearly 20 years. He was succeeded in 1935 by the Rev. Paul Ulenberg. Under his administration, a barracks building was bought from the deactivated Fairmont Army Air Base and made into a parish hall on its present site. Since 1947 this recreational hall has added much to the social life of the parish and to the welfare of its young people.

Also during the administration of Father Ulenberg, the Rev. Charles L. Gergen, a grandson of Peter Gergen who had built the first church, was ordained in St. Mary's Church on April 14, 1948. His sister, Gladys M. Gergen, had entered the teaching Sisters of St. Frances in September, 1940, her name in religion being Sister Marionita. Sister M. Jane Frances, daughter of early settler Peter Weis, joined the Poor Sisters of St. Francis Seraph, who work amongst the



Photo from Mrs. Sylvia Stoldorf  
District No. 48 schoolhouse about 1920—Charles Lightbody by pump.

poor and lowly. She is presently a pharmacist in a hospital in Colorado Springs.

Father Ulenberg was succeeded by Father Francis Pluta, who was in turn succeeded by the Rev. John Kozlik.

Better roads and larger farms have brought to St. Mary's Parish the same fate as that suffered by many another rural parish. As late as the middle 1940's there were 75 families in the parish; by 1967, the growing trend toward larger farms had reduced the number to 45 families.

## SCHOOLS

District No. 48 was formed on September 13, 1872, when County Superintendent John A. Dempster set aside Secs. 1, 2, 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, and 15 of Momence township to constitute that district.



Photo from Ernest Reinsch  
School District No. 49 (about 1909). *Front row, left to right:* Lydia Frieden, Mary Gratopp, Anna Nittler, Elnore Nittler, Helen Carl, Elizabeth Volz, Florence Jacque, Anna McCluskey, Elizabeth Nittler, Mary Hesse, Minnie Franz, Lydia Gratopp, Walter Hesse. *Back row:* Adolph Carl, Ed McCluskey, Billy Bucklemun, Fred Volz, Nick Weis, Pete Marson, Tony Schommer, Carl Gratopp, Lou Gratopp, Johnny Weis, Joe McCluskey, Anna Sughrue (teacher), Rose Gratopp, Helen Nittler, Mary Franz, Katie Volz, Louise Nittler.

District No. 49 was organized on September 13, 1872, when Superintendent Dempster set apart for it Secs. 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 34, 35, and 36. By a special election on July 17, 1953, District 49 was attached to the reorganized District 54 (Shickley).

On the same date, District No. 50 was designated as consisting of Secs. 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, and 33. From the many sod houses surrounding it, District 50 came to be known as the Sod Town (or Sodtown) school.



Photo from Mrs. Rena Kamler  
School District No. 50 during 1913-1914 term. 1—Teacher, Helen Nittler, 2—Hiney Alfs, 3—Alois Weber, 4—Rena Weber, 5—Floyd Peterson, 6—Carl Schriefer, 7—Emil Krause, 8—Otto Erthum, 9—Lawrence Weber, 10—Clinton Peterson, 11—Harold Weber, 12—George Krause, 13—Hattie Portwood, 14—Leonard Lawson, 15—Charlie Broderson, 16—Ervin Nelson, 17—Ruben Lawson, 18—Edwin Nelson, 19—Betsy Anderson, 20—Cecilia Carl, 21—Anna Belle Portwood, 22—Millie Portwood, 23—Sophia Broderson, 24—Alius Erthum, 25—Edna Broderson, 26—Selma Nelson, 27—Violet Peterson, 28—Eda Sanburg, 29—George Erthum, 30—Alice Schriefer, 31—Clara Weber, 32—Hilda Krause, 33—Clarence Krause, 34—Genevieve Erthum, 35—Frank Carl, 36—Lulu Sanburg, 37—Frances Carl, 38—Mamie Nelson, 39—Oscar Mueller, 40—Sophia Krause.

On February 18, 1873, Secs. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 16, 17, and 18 were set aside by the then acting county superintendent to constitute District No. 60, which came to be known as the Fairview or Combs school. Here Ella Oblinger attended after her first year in District 63, and the three Oblinger girls attended after their return to Fillmore County in 1883.



Photo from Mrs. Ed Isley  
School District No. 60 (May 1, 1914). *Front row, left to right:* Arthur Hatcliff, Lester Hatcliff, Luella Goesch, Lillie Goesch (twins), Nellie Kalberg, Vera Johnson, Elda Johnson, Nels Kalberg. *Back row:* Elsie Goesch, Harry Robinson, Alice Hatcliff, Willie Robinson, Florence Hatcliff, Elsie Hatcliff, Christine Bernmaster (teacher), Leonard Fenske, Esther Goesch, Oscar Hatcliff.

District No. 79 was formed on January 15, 1880, by detaching Secs. 3, 10, and 15 from District 48 and Secs. 4, 9, and 16 from District 60.



Photo from Ernest Reinsch  
Pupils in School District No. 79 in 1913. *Back row, left to right:* Anton Weis, Walter Schafer, Ernest Reinsch, Marie Weis, Norma Walter, Minnie Schneider (teacher). *Front row:* Cecila Weis, Marie Kamler, Loretta Walter, Vincent Weis.



Photo from Mrs. Mary McLaughlin  
School District No 92. in 1932. *Front row, left to right:* Elmer Reinsch, Victoria Marson, Francis Marson, Nadine Richardson, Mary Grote, Linus Kamler. *Second row:* Bertha Gergen, Delores Stengel, Wilma Marson, Wilmetta Marson, Mabel Reinsch, Margaret Grote, Kathryn Marson. *Third row:* Teacher Mary Yetman, Virgil Richardson, Doris Marson, Vione Schafer, Doris Richardson, Eleanor Grote, Herb Donlinger. *Back row:* Bernard Grote, Alfred Gergen, Robert Reinsch, Gerald Kamler, Kenneth Richardson, John Stengel, Bob Donlinger.

On March 12, 1889, **District No. 92**, known also as Sanburg school and Turkey Creek school, was formed by detaching lands from Districts 50 and 60. Many such detachments were made in the various districts and added to other districts, from time to time, to give children the advantage of schools closer to their homes.

## FAMILIES

Mr. and Mrs. **Joseph Alkire** settled on a homestead 9 miles W of Geneva in the spring of 1872, with three sons and one daughter. Their homestead was on what is now the Clay Center and Geneva highway (Nebraska 41). In 1872 there were no roads. Mr. Alkire plowed a furrow for the children to follow to school, which was held in a room of a neighbor's house.

They lived in a sod house for a few years, building a new frame house just before Agnes was born in 1879. Mrs. Alkire's maiden name was Nancy Ellen Jordan. Years later the grandparents, Mr. and Mrs. Cyrus Jordan, moved to Nebraska from Kansas and lived  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile from the Alkires. Later more of the relatives settled in Nebraska. The roads were worn down deep where horses traveled, not much like the highways now.

I remember hearing my folks tell about the bad storm of 1873. My father had left fuel to last until his return (he had to go a long way to work to make a living until the homestead was in shape to raise crops). A family in the neighborhood was leaving, and they came to the Alkire home to wash, iron, bake bread, etc. They used up the fuel and did not chop more wood for Mrs. Alkire. The wood had to be hauled from down on the river south of us. It took three days for each trip they made.

Mr. Alkire used to walk to Sutton or Geneva for necessities. He took a grain sack. We had horses, but he let them rest and he made trips on foot. The children did not see much of town only at Christmas time, Fourth of July, or some such time.

In busy summertime they walked two miles to Sunday School, and later "Free Will Baptist" had services at a schoolhouse. The Alkires were always steadfast Christians and always strict with the children. There were three schoolhouses within two miles. When they needed shoes, Mr. Alkire got some twigs of lilac or something, measured the size by fitting one just as long as the old shoe, then another a little longer, which was taken for shoe size.

I remember the snowstorm of 1888 quite well. For some reason the folks would not let me go to school that day, but my two brothers, Jim and Frank, went. They had to face that storm for two miles home; but they arrived safely, with only frosted ears. After the storm, the drifts were almost like rock in our yard. All our wagons with side boards and our windlass well had to be tunneled out, with a bare space close to the house. I remember how I enjoyed hauling my brother Walter on his sled. He was two years old at this time.

I can remember how well off we felt when we got a pump to pump water instead of using a windlass well. I can remember how the men folks pumped water for horses and 20 head of cattle.

The Joseph Alkires lived on the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 4, T6N, R4W, Momence. They had 10 children (two of whom died in infancy). There were five older and four younger than myself.  
— Agnes (Alkire) Smock

**C. N. Broderson** was born on November 12, 1834, in Schleswigz Hulstein, then a part of Denmark but later part of Germany. In the old country, he took military training and fought in the war between Denmark and Germany (1866). He was a cooper by trade, and followed this trade until he came to Nebraska. As a young man, he had many and varied occupations, including those of sailor and whaler. On one whaling trip he visited Greenland, of which he reported that it was so cold that when he spat, the spit would freeze into ice before hitting the ground. He came here in the fall of

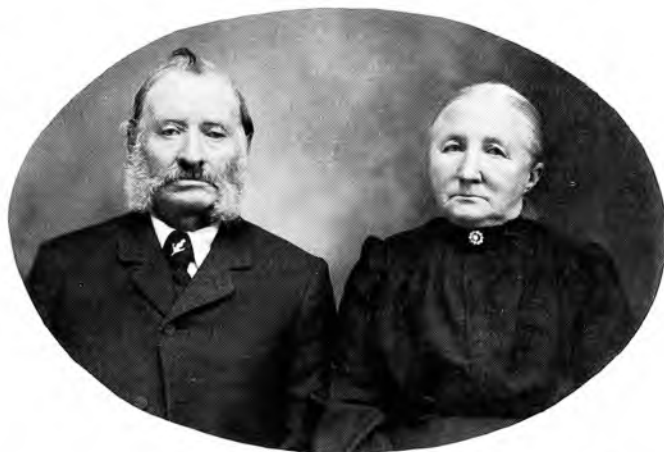


Photo from Mrs. Pearl Everts  
Mr. and Mrs. C. N. Broderson in 1912

1885 and bought his land, the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28 in Momence township, of a man named Tower. Several of his first children died when quite young; two of them are buried on the place he farmed. His surviving children were Mrs. Jacob Frantz, Christian M., Lewis P., and Henry J. The first three are deceased, but Dr. Henry J. Broderson lives in Menlo Park, California. Mr. Broderson passed away in 1918 at the age of 84.

**Miles Brotherton** was born in New York State in 1840. He fought in the War of the Rebellion on the side of the Union, serving from the beginning to the end of the war, and was with General W. T. Sherman on his famous "March to the Sea." He was married to Louisa MacBeth in 1868. To this union were born five children: May, James, Ed, Edith, and Anna.

Mr. Brotherton came to Fillmore County in 1871 and homesteaded in Sec. 4 of Momence township. He went through many typical experiences of the early settlers of the county. He experienced not only the blizzard of 1888 but also that of 1873. In 1873, Mr. Brotherton and another man named Russel Ferguson, leaving the women at home, had gone to Davenport and were caught in that fearful storm. They had to make their way home afterward through heavy drifts and difficult roads. In the next year (1874), they suffered from the grasshoppers which ate every green thing, and also ate the end out of an old cultivator tongue, because it had some particles of sweat on it from the horses which had been hitched to it.

Mr. Brotherton lived in a sod house for many years, and his older children were born in it. He lived on this farm all his life until he passed away on February 7, 1925.

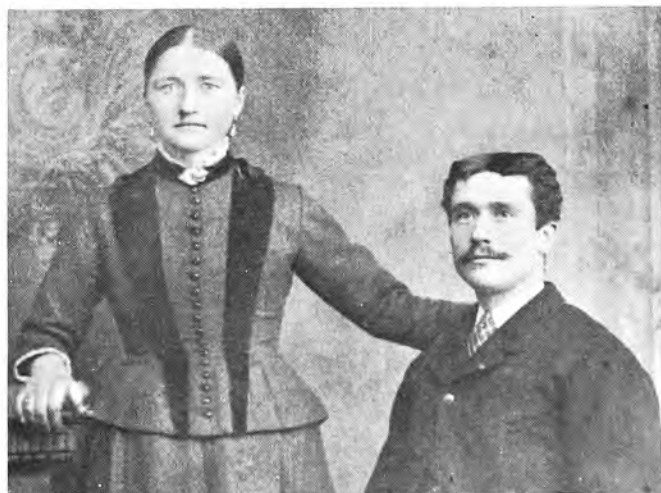


Photo from John Carl  
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Carl about 1889

**Peter Carl** was born in Sinz, Rhein Province, Germany, on July 31, 1864. He was married on March 28, 1889, to Anna M. Nittler in Sinz. They came to America for their honeymoon and settled in Momence township. They lived in Nebraska all their married life except for one year spent in California. Mr. and Mrs. Carl retired from the farm in 1925 and made their home in Geneva. Mrs. Carl passed away in 1940 and Mr. Carl in 1956. They were the parents of 10 children. Two sons passed away in infancy. The other children were: John M., of Geneva; Otto M., of Sutton; Adolph A., of Omaha; Frank P., of Turlock, California; Mrs. Helen Dirkson, of North Hollywood, California; Cecilia (Mrs. William Kenny), of Savannah, Missouri; Mrs. Frances Donn, of Westville, Indiana; and Ann (Mrs. Le Ray Shickly), of Van Nuys, California.

**William Fenske** and his wife Amelia came to the United States in 1867 with their three sons, Otto, Emil, and William, from the province of Brandenburg, Germany, when William was six years old. They lived for a short time near Martland and for a year near Superior, and then bought a farm in Momence township.

The younger William Fenske married Caroline Simmons in 1901. They had one son, Leonard; but, shortly thereafter, Caroline Fenske passed away. In 1914, William married Christine Burmeister of Grafton. To this union were born three daughters: Beatrice (Mrs. Reuben Burbach), Gretchen (Mrs. Albert Heidtbrink), and Doris (Mrs. Leslie Miles of Fairmont). All three daughters followed their mother's profession of teacher.

In 1920, the Fenskes moved to Sutton, but William Fenske and his son Leonard still farmed the home place, where Leonard still lives in 1967. For many years William was employed as a mechanic by the late William Sheridan and sons of Sutton. It was said that William could fix anything from a lady's tiny watch to a large locomotive, and that "where others failed, Billy succeeded." William Fenske died October 28, 1960.

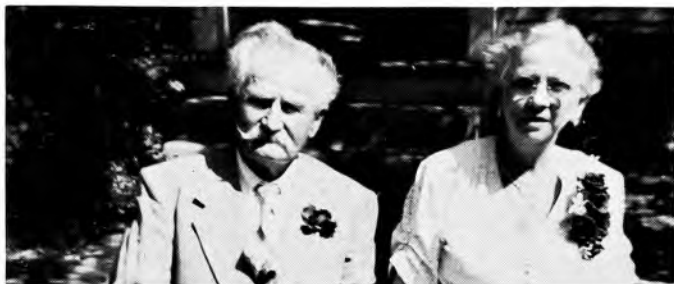


Photo from Mrs. William Fenske

Mr. and Mrs. William Fenske on their 40th wedding anniversary (Sept. 8, 1954).

**Claus Franzen** came to Momence township in the fall of 1877. He purchased 80 acres, the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 2, for \$350. His son, Henry Franzen, was born on December 27 of that year. Claus returned to Vermont, Illinois, where he lived for 2 years. On coming back to Fillmore County, he bought back the same piece of land for \$700. He took an active part in organizing and founding the Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sec. 24 and also in organizing the German Evangelical Lutheran Church in Sec. 1. He was also active in many civic duties and affairs of the township.

**Peter Gergen** was brought to America by his parents when he was about two years old. At the age of 20, he enlisted in the Union Army. He went through many skirmishes but suffered no more damage than a bullet hole in the end of his coat. After the Civil War he was honorably discharged; as a veteran, he was entitled to a pension, which he declined.

A few years later, he married Mary Lorge, in Wisconsin. To this union were born seven children: Nick, Mary, J. P. ("Champy"), Barbara, Joe, Mike, and Willie. The family came to Fillmore County in 1875 and located on the E  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 28, Momence township, where they lived in a dugout for two years. He later acquired more land, the W  $\frac{1}{2}$



Photo from Norbert Gergen

The Peter Gergen family about 1888. Front row, left to right: Dulcissima, Mrs. Gergen with William (on lap), Peter Gergen, Mike and Joe. Back row: Mary Gergen (Engelbert), Nick, and John P. Gergen.

of the W  $\frac{1}{2}$  of Sec. 13, where he built a home. In 1879, he and his brother-in-law, John Marson, built the first Catholic church (St. Mary's). Later, in 1892, a larger edifice was built, in which he was also much interested.

**Mark Hatcliff**, born in England, married Jennie Christian of Crete, Nebraska. They settled on a farm in Momence township in 1897. Their children were three boys — Oscar, Lester, and Arthur — and four girls — Hattie, Alice, Elsie, and Florence. All the children attended school in District 60. None other than Hatcliffs have owned or lived on their farm in Sec. 7, which they have occupied continuously. Mr. Hatcliff passed away in 1931 and Mrs. Hatcliff in 1951. Lester and Arthur "batch" and live on the home place, which they farm and keep in neat repair.



Photo from Mrs. Ed Isley

The Mark Hatcliff family (Jan. 30, 1925). Front row, left to right: Lester, Mark Hatcliff, Jennie Hatcliff, Arthur. Back row: Florence, Oscar, Alice, Hattie, Elsie.

**John Hokom** was born in Sweden in 1839. He got only a meager education in the public schools, was confirmed in the Lutheran Church of Sweden at 15, and served for two years in the Swedish army. In the hope of bettering his financial condition, he emigrated to America at the age of 29. On landing in New York, he went at once to Knox County, Illinois. Later he spent a short time in Wisconsin but returned to Knox County, where he spent six years in farming, at first working for others by the month. While living there, Mr. Hokom was married to Olivia Anderson in 1872; they had five children: Martin, Henry, Hattie, John, and Ida.

On leaving Galesburg (Knox County), he came directly to Fillmore County. In Bryant township, he purchased 160 acres south of Shickley for \$6 an acre; but the family had to endure many hardships during their early residence here, and he at one time offered to trade the entire tract for a horse, as he had become very discouraged. However, a year later he sold this place for \$1,800. In 1883, he bought his farm of 240 acres in Sec. 19, Momence township for \$3,200. In time, this became one of the show places of the locality; all the improvements on it were put there by himself and his family.

**John Katheiser, Sr.**, was born in Luxemburg on August 19, 1883. His mother had been born on the border between Luxemburg and Germany. He came to the United States

shortly before the Civil War and served for three years in the Union army. Besides being in many battles, he was in the big explosion at Memphis and was in the hospital there for more than a year. He was in the battle of Mobile, August 5, 1864, where his regiment was so far wiped out that only 13 men survived. Here, too, he underwent his worst military hardships because supplies were cut off and for three days they had only a few crackers and a little water until help came. His brother Nick, who also fought in the Civil War, died in it.

After getting out of the army, he went back to Luxemburg and married Katherine Steiner. This union later produced eight children, six boys and two girls: William, Peter, Annie, Anthony, John, Jake, Mike, and Mary. Shortly after their marriage, they came to the United States on a ship that took 90 days in crossing the Atlantic.

They settled for a few years in Lockport, Illinois, where his two brothers were; their three older children were born there. On coming to Nebraska, they bought railroad land in Sec. 11, Momence township. Here Mr. Katheiser built a frame house, 12' x 16'; in the same year, he built a sod house onto the frame house and plastered the entire house. He farmed with a team of oxen the first year. He was justice of the peace and also kept the post office (known as Turkey Creek P. O.) in their home. He hired a teacher and had a three-month school for the surrounding families. The mail was brought from Fairmont on horseback twice a month. Their hardships and troubles were many and various. At one time they ran out of flour to bake bread. Not being able to drive the oxen the 18 miles to Fairmont, he took a basket of eggs and a roll of butter, walked to Fairmont, and returned with a 50-pound sack of flour on his back. Their best way of getting flour in those days was for the neighbors to go together and take a load of wheat to the Fillmore Mill north of Grafton and come back with a load of flour to divide up among them.

John Katheiser died on December 8, 1900.



Photo from Elvin Krause  
Albert and Emma Krause in 1946

**Albert Carl Krause**, son of Henry and Louise Krause, was born in Germany on December 13, 1868. When he was six months old, his parents brought him to America; they settled in Henry County, Illinois. In 1872, they came to Nebraska and homesteaded in the western part of Fillmore County near Shickley (NW ¼, Sec. 30, T6, R4W), where Albert grew up.

On September 26, 1895, he married Margaret Schnuerle. To this union were born three children, Ed, George, and Sophia. Mrs. Krause passed away on October 22, 1902, leaving Mr. Krause with three small children. He married Emma Rachow on June 17, 1903. They had four children: Clarence, Emil, Hilda, and Elvin. Mr. and Mrs. Krause continued to live northwest of Shickley for many years while their children grew to adulthood. While he continued his farming operations, he also served the community in various township offices which he performed faithfully and with exactness.

Mr. Krause was baptized and confirmed in the faith of the Zion Lutheran Church when but a young man. In 1928, Mr. and Mrs. Krause moved from the farm to Geneva, where they made their home until his passing on July 22, 1951.



Photo from Mrs. Sylvia Stoldorf  
The J. J. Lightbody family (some time before 1891). Front row, right to left: J. J. Lightbody, wife Lovina, Lizzie. Back row, left to right: Isaac, Charles, Anna.

**J. J. Lightbody** was born on January 3, 1849, at Plainfield, Coshocot County, Ohio. After marrying Lovina M. Saylor on July 29, 1869, he moved in 1869 to Iowa, where they lived for a year. In 1871, they homesteaded on Sec. 1, Momence township, and had a piece of land across the road in Stanton township. At first they lived in a sod house in Stanton, while he built a frame house in Momence, to which they later moved. They had five children: Lizzie, Annie, Charles, Isaac, and a girl who died in infancy.

By hard work and by such sacrifices as those of many other pioneers, he accumulated a substantial amount of property and at the time of his death (April 12, 1874) was one of the largest landholders in Fillmore County. He truly saw the whole change from barren prairies to fertile fields dotted with villages and cities. Besides his extensive farming operations, he built several homes and brick buildings in the west side of Geneva. He was always generous and kind, as well as keen and alert and ready to assist in any way toward the betterment of his community and his town.

**John Mansfield** was born in Sweden on February 4, 1829. Educated in the Swedish public schools and confirmed in the Lutheran Church, he served in the Swedish army for 26 years. At the age of 23, he was married to Sarah Johnson; they had 10 children, all born in Sweden, but only five then living were brought to America: William, Annie, Elsie, Julius, and Emil. In 1879, at the age of 50, Mr. Mansfield emigrated to America. After landing in New York City, they went to Portland, Connecticut, and then later to Omaha, where they lived for two and a half years before coming to Fillmore County in the spring of 1883. The year before, he had purchased 160 acres in Momence township, Sec. 19, for \$1,200; when he came, the land was entirely unimproved. Although he had but \$1.50 when he located upon the place, he prospered from year to year and was able to lay aside business cares and enjoy the fruits of his toil. He served for 10 years as school treasurer in his district. He died on November 20, 1911.

**David Myers** (William D. Myers) was another old settler of Momence township and, like Miles Brotherton, had fought for the Union in the Civil War. He may have been with General Sherman on his march "from Atlanta to the sea"; but little is known of this old soldier. After the war, he traveled as far west as Colorado before homesteading on the SE ¼ of Sec. 18 in Momence. He made a gift of one acre in the SW corner of his homestead for a burial ground, known as Fairview Cemetery. David Myers, his wife, and three children — Annie, Irvin, and Charlie — are all buried there.

Born in the East on January 1, 1845, he died in Fillmore County on May 9, 1915.

The following account of **John Portwood** was written by his daughter, Mrs. Eva Portwood Dodge:

I have been asked to write all I know about my father John Portwood's father's family, also John Portwood's own family, and the District 50 school, called the Sodtown school, and how it got its name.

To start with, my father, John Portwood, was born in Troy, Indiana, in the year 1862, the oldest in his family. When John was a boy of 12, in 1874, his father's family, together

with two other families, came to Fillmore County to take homestead claims. One of those families was Mr. and Mrs. Amos Taylor, John's aunt and uncle (SW ¼, Sec. 28, T6N, R4W). I don't know the other family's name. They came by covered wagons and oxen teams. I think most of those homesteaders built sod houses and lived in them many years and later built frame houses. Soon many more families came and settled in the Sodtown district. These people came from several different states and all took homesteads, so of course there had to be a schoolhouse built.

There were four families (Joe and Ambrose Parish, Edwin TePier, and Alex McManus) living on homesteads ¼ mile S of this schoolhouse. Each built a sod house on their own quarter section of land, making all four sod houses right close together like a small town. They dug a bored well, and all used the same well, drawing the water by bucket, thus giving this District 50 school the name of Sodtown. My grandfather Portwood's family were all sent to the Sodtown school, together with the other families that had taken homesteads. The names of a few living close by were Minnesota Carlson, Olaf Berquist, Gene Jackman, August Bengston, Oliver Warthen, the Post brothers, and Ambrose and Jim Parish (SE ¼, Sec. 32, T6, R4 and NW ¼, Sec. 32). The Post brothers (NW ¼, Sec. 20, T6, R4 and NE ¼, Sec. 20) set out a tree claim of about 80 acres. I well remember those trees. Those early pioneer homesteaders met with many hardships in those days.

Their closest doctor was Dr. Charles Snowden of Davenport. They had to prepare their eats to last nearly a week and also for their oxen teams and go to the South Blue River and cut down trees for their winter fuel. They hauled the wood by taking off their wagon boxes and loading the wood on the running gears of their wagons. I remember my father saying that while on one of those trips for wood, together with some of their neighbors, there was a total eclipse of the sun. It became as dark as night in the middle of the afternoon. This lasted about one hour, then began to pass off and looked like dawn. The roosters all began crowing just like at dawn today.

To continue my story: All this homestead land was soon taken up. One man by the name of Isaac Frey, and his son Elam Frey and a granddaughter, Hattie Herbold, took a homestead a few miles west of my grandfather's homestead, the Portwood place. This Frey family was from Erie, Pennsylvania. In the year 1886, my father, John Portwood, and Hattie Herbold were married and built a house and barn and lived a short time on the corner of his uncle's (Captain George Anderson's) place. During this time, I was born. I wasn't quite a year old at the time of the bad blizzard of 1888 which I heard my folks and many of the old-timers tell about. During the fall of '88, my folks and I and my great-grandfather, Isaac Frey, went to the state of Arkansas to buy land, going by covered wagons, driving horses. They located near a town called Rosebud, a small town. They had lots of hard work clearing trees, stumps, and rocks from their land. There were many nice things there, nice warm climate, nice neighbors, lots of all kinds of fruit and lots of wild game, such as wild turkeys, deer, wild dogs, squirrels, coon, and opossum.

Most of our friends in Arkansas were very religious people, going to church on Sunday and having what they called "Singing School" one evening during the week, everyone learning to sing the hymns by rote. In early fall every year they would all attend a large camp meeting that lasted two weeks. We would call it a convention today. My folks and their neighbors would cook and bake up a lot of food and stay for several days, driving there by horses and wagons. Lots of ministers and folks would attend this big camp meeting for miles around, hearing many good sermons and joining in singing the old-time hymns.

The John Portwood family only lived in Arkansas four years and then decided to go back to Nebraska, as there was beginning to be so much malaria fever there. My folks wanted to get back to Nebraska before we got it. On our way back my sister next to me got the malaria when they had gotten as near as Goodwin, Kansas. They rented a house and had a doctor every day, but they couldn't save her. She died. I

was five years old when we came back to Nebraska. A few things I remember about Arkansas, the most outstanding being their nice fields of cotton, and going along with my daddy when he was picking his cotton.

After coming back to Nebraska, my father worked at anything he could get to do and soon rented his uncle's (Captain George Anderson's) farm just ¼ mile E from the Sodtown schoolhouse. Mr. and Mrs. Anderson retired and moved to Shickley. On this rented farm most of John Portwood's family was born and went to the Sodtown school. In 1901, my folks bought and moved to a farm 1½ miles E of the Anderson place, and there the family finished growing up, and all married. Mr. and Mrs. Portwood continued living on this farm until they died. Mother died in May, 1929, and Father the same year, in November, 1929.

At the homestead place, one mile S and ½ mile E of the Portwood place, known as the Price place and post office, the mail was brought once a week by horseback, star route, from Fairmont. Everyone from far around came there for their mail. I imagine this was in the 1870's, before there was a Shickley.

**Warren J. Post** was born in Vermont, where his parents farmed, on March 14, 1853. The family later moved to Illinois, where they continued farming until they moved to Nebraska in 1874 and took up homesteads in Sec. 20 of Mommence township. For about nine years they lived in a sod house and underwent all the privations and hardships incident to life on the frontier. Their crops were destroyed sometimes by grasshoppers, sometimes by drought and hail, which caused hard times. By strict economy and untiring labor, they overcame all obstacles, and success at length crowned their efforts. Their nearest market was Sutton, 13 miles away; Geneva was just starting, and Shickley was not yet thought of.

The following "Reminiscences of Nebraska Pioneer Days" were supplied by Warren J. Post in 1899:

My parents were born in Vermont. After they were married they moved to Green County, Illinois, in 1856. They went to a farm that was nearly all timber. They cleared the ground in order to raise a crop. The second year the army worm destroyed all the small grain. They stayed there four years. Then they moved to Woodford County, Illinois, and bought a farm, all prairie. The estate of my grandfather was not settled until the war broke out. Then the administrator enlisted and was killed. His bond was worthless and everything was then lost. So in September of 1873 we emigrated to Nebraska. It took five long weeks. We landed in Beatrice which was then a small town but lively all the same. When we came on our land, father and I had \$4.60 between us. We put in 10 acres of wheat and 25 acres of corn. The grasshoppers ate up the corn and I heard at the time that the neighbors lost some of their plowshares and grindstones, but ours were covered up and we did not lose them. We got our fuel from the South Blue River. Had 20 miles to haul it.

In the autumn of 1874, L. D. Phillips, P. L. Lancaster, and myself went buffalo hunting, as neither we nor any of the neighbors had any meat of any kind and no money to buy any. We started from home with 2 wagons and 8 large barrels for the meat. We went by way of Hastings, a town of only about 20 houses at that time, and from there to Kearney. It contained about 100 houses and was a pretty tough place. There were Mexicans and cowboys. They ran the town almost as they pleased. We stayed there two days and bought our supplies. There was a man killed while we were there.

Next we went to North Platte. It was a very lively town, too. We got 2 antelope while crossing the Platte valley. We went south to the Republican River. In crossing the river, we got mired down in quicksand. We had to unload and carry everything out. The water was 3½ feet deep. There was a gentle Nebraska breeze blowing from the north, and so we had to build a fire and dry our clothes. We started on to the Red Willow. Then our eyes began to get larger, for we could see herds of buffalo in all directions. We camped on Red Willow at noon. We were very anxious for some buffalo meat,



so after dinner we started moving out to see what we could do with them. They looked like sod houses moving towards us. We agreed to kill only animals one and two years old, so we would have nice, tender meat. We got 2 that afternoon. While going to camp, we got one wolf and one wildcat. To make a long story short, we got our barrels filled with nice, tender meat. I killed my first buffalo with my first shot. I have some very nice buffalo horns now and think a great deal of them as old relics. We were with the buffaloes two weeks.

Just one mile from camp there was an Indian buried in a tree. It was wrapped in a blanket and was laid on poles laid across the limbs of the tree. Articles such as beads and wristlets were also with it. All rivers and small streams were full of beaver and otter. There were many elk, deer, antelope, and wolves. We saw herds of buffalo that were 3 miles long and from 1/2 mile to 2 miles wide. We thought at the time there were 30,000 head in some herds. This may seem large, but it is all true. We killed 40 buffaloes, 4 elk, several deer and antelope. We saw where Indians had killed from 25 to 100 buffaloes in one place that did not even cover 15 acres of ground. We got arrows that laid where the remains were left.

Remember, we spent all our money at Kearney to buy our supplies. So when we started back we didn't have any flour or tobacco when we reached Kearney. We had to hunt antelope and sell them to get provisions. It was straight meat three times a day for one week. Next, we concluded to ship our barrels of meat home from Kearney to Edgar. Father and the neighbors went and got it. They were very much pleased. Each barrel weighed over 400 pounds. We stayed in Kearney for two weeks and sold \$40 worth of antelope and deer. We came home when winter had commenced. That winter was a hard one. My brother Harvey and myself killed 80 jack rabbits that winter. We shipped them to Omaha and got as much as 50 cents apiece for them. Then I went to Illinois and worked until it was time for me to be back on the homestead.

In 1938, Harvey Post set up a trust fund of \$1,000 in the First National Bank of Greencastle, Pennsylvania, the interest to be used by the Fairview Cemetery Board for upkeep of the cemetery. Harvey Post died at Greencastle in 1948.

The parents of Warren J. Post and Harvey Post and their granddaughter Savilla Post sleep in Fairview Cemetery, Momence township.

**Lewis Pratt** came from Taylor County, Iowa, to Fillmore County in 1884 and purchased a relinquishment of a timber claim from John and Tom Ackland, in Sec. 4 of Momence township. He was married in Taylor County in 1880; he and his wife had 3 girls, Sylvia, Winifred, and Elva. He decided that the best way he could help them through life would be to give them an education, in spite of the fact that they had to go a long distance to school. Sylvia, the eldest, had the distinction of being the first girl in the county to take the eighth-grade examinations. A good part of the time, they had 9 miles to drive to school. Sylvia graduated from the Shickley High School in 1902 and taught school for 3 years in District 63 (Mann school), one in District 50 (Sodtown), and 3 months in District 44 in Milligan. Mr. Pratt farmed all his life. He passed away in February, 1908, at the age of 57.

**John W. Price** was, in all probability, the first settler in Momence township. He was born in Ontario County, New York, in 1831, of Irish and Welsh parents. His parents took him back to Europe with them, but returned to America in 1845 and lived in Ohio. He enlisted in the U. S. Army and was sent to Texas, where he was promoted to sergeant and spent 3 years skirmishing in the region. He was then sent to Florida on an expedition against the Seminole Indians. He was mustered out in May, 1858, but re-enlisted on the breaking out of the War of the Rebellion. He took part in the battles of Perryville, Corinth, Stone River, Hoover's Gap, Chickamauga, and Mission Ridge, and was discharged on the expiration of his enlistment, August 14, 1864. In 1866, he married Orinda M. Barrows of Madison County, Ohio. They moved to Iroquois County, Illinois, where they farmed until they came to Nebraska and located in Fillmore County on

April 18, 1872, on Sec. 3, Momence township.

A native of Sweden, **Charles Sanburg** was born on February 21, 1845, and at 15 was confirmed in the Swedish Lutheran Church. For 12 years he worked for a farmer in Sweden at a wage of \$9 a month, and served 2 years in the Swedish army. He married Edith Peterson in 1873. Eight children were born to this union: Carl (who married Mollie Spurling), Emma (wife of August Pearson), Anna, Ella, Oscar, Minnie, Grant, and Lena. The family came to Fillmore County in 1885 and purchased 160 acres in Momence township, Sec. 17, for \$2,600 and an adjoining tract for \$1,600. He was interested in raising stock of various kinds. He also served as justice of the peace for 2 terms and as school director for 13 years. He and his family belonged to the Swedish Lutheran Church of Stockholm. He died on October 29, 1916.



Photo from Mrs. Henry Reinsch  
The John Bernard Schommer family in 1922. Back row, left to right: Ben, Joe, John, Bill, Tony. Front row: Mary, Rose, Maggie, Angela, Annie. Inset: Mr. and Mrs. John Schommer.

**John B. Schommer** was born north of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. His wife, Katherine, was also born in that vicinity. They were married on May 1, 1877, at Holy Cross, Wisconsin, 30 miles south of Milwaukee. Thirteen children were born to this union: Casper, John, Joe, Katherine, Mary, Margaret, Ben, Jake, Annie, Rose, William, Anthony, and Angela. All were born in February except Casper, the oldest.

The Schommers came to Nebraska in the spring of 1878. When they arrived at Fairmont, a neighbor met them with a team and wagon. Because there were no roads, they drove across the prairie. As they crossed Turkey Creek, the water was so high that the horses started to swim and the wagon box started to float off the bolsters, so that the men had to hold it down. Mother often said that she was really afraid they would drown. It was quite an experience for her.

Mr. Schommer pre-empted the SE 1/4 of Sec. 12 in Momence township in 1878. Later, John Gergen, a brother of Peter Gergen, took up the NE 1/4 of Sec. 12 and they built their houses with only the line fence between them, and a footpath connecting the houses. Later, in 1884, Mr. Schommer bought the SE 1/4 of Sec. 13, a piece of railroad land, on which he built a 5-room house. As the family was becoming larger, they needed more room in which to live as well as more acres to farm.

Mr. Schommer was an architect and builder, and he, Peter Gergen, and John Marson built the first St. Mary's Church in 1879. The larger structure was built in 1894 and dedicated in the fall of that year. Some time later Mr. Schommer's sister and her husband, Mr. and Mrs. Peter Lecher, came from Wisconsin and Mr. Schommer leased an acre of land from Hans Weis, across the road south of the church, and built a general-merchandise store with living quarters in the back. The Lechers ran the store. Then the post office, known as the Turkey Creek P. O., which had been in the Katheiser home, was moved to this store.

About this same time, the Chicago & Northwestern R.R. had planned to run through Fillmore County and had surveyed and set stakes past the Turkey Creek Church. It was expected that a station might be established there and that

a town might grow around it; but for some reason the line was changed and built 4 miles to the east, through Martland and Shickley instead.

Schommer and Lecher sold the store to John Arendt of Le Mars, Iowa. Then John P. Thoma came from Le Mars and the two formed a partnership. The store was moved to Shickley and became known as the Thoma & Arendt store.

Mr. Schommer experienced the hardships and anxieties incident to pioneer life. One October morning he set out for Kansas to get his wood for the winter. When he woke up the next morning, it was snowing, and so he hurried back lest he be caught in a blizzard. In the meantime his wife and children spent many anxious hours praying and awaiting his return. Also, in those days, in case of sickness they had to go a long way for a doctor, and the trip had to be made by team.

In 1887, Mr. Schommer and his family moved to Humphrey, Nebraska, where his children had the advantage of a nine-month school. While there, Mr. Schommer built a number of large churches and schools in Platte and near-by counties. With the depression of the nineties, he came back to Fillmore County and shared with his fellow pioneers there the rough times of blizzards, hail, and grasshoppers.

—*Mary (Schommer) Katheiser*



Photo from Mrs. Sylvia Stoldorf

Mr. and Mrs. August Stoldorf at their golden wedding celebration (1929).

**August Stoldorf** was born in Germany in 1856 and came to America in 1865. He had no schooling and was a self-educated as well as self-made man. He married Minnie Goesch on December 18, 1879, a native of Germany who had been confirmed in the Lutheran Church there; her husband was confirmed in this country. He rented land for some time in Bennett township before buying land in Momence, in Sec. 8. Mr. and Mrs. Stoldorf had seven children: John, Annie, Will, Lena, Emma, Louis, and Mary. He passed away on August 9, 1934.

**Giles Thomas**, son of William Paul and Margaret Thomas, was born in Cass County, Indiana, on December 16, 1840. He and his twin brother Sam were the oldest of a family of 10 children. He enlisted in the Union army at Logansport on August 12, 1862, and served as a corporal in Co. K, 99th Indiana Infantry, and in the 20th Company, 2nd Battalion, Veteran Reserve Corps. As color guard of his regiment, he was wounded on July 24, 1864, at Atlanta, Georgia, when the colors were shot from his hands. The staff was cut in two and the bullet entered his right hand. He was honorably discharged on November 14, 1865. He came to Nebraska in 1872 and underwent both the hardships and the joys of the pioneer. He passed away at his home in Geneva on February 16, 1929, at the age of 88 years and 2 months.

—*Nellie and Annie Sheridan*

**Heinrich Vauck** was born on December 8, 1835, in Mecklenburg, Germany, and arrived in the United States on May 22, 1867. After living for several years in east-central Illinois, he came to Momence township in 1873 and timber-claimed the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 18. His wife, Ernestine Lange, was born near Stettin, Germany, on June 16, 1847. They were married on January 21, 1875, and had two sons. One son, Henry, grew to manhood and lived in Sutton. Heinrich Vauck died on July 14, 1883, and his wife on February 17,

1898. They and the oldest son, August, are buried in Fairview Cemetery.

—*Henry Vauck*

**Henry Vauck**, son of Mr. and Mrs. Heinrich Vauck, was born on November 22, 1876, in Momence township, thus gaining the distinction of being one of the first children born there. While yet a small boy, he had an accident which seriously crippled him. But in spite of his handicap he had the grit and determination to make the best of life.

He entered the ninth grade of Sutton High School in 1892, taught a two-month term in 1894, and graduated from Sutton's 12th grade in 1895. After teaching another year, he attended the Rohrbaugh Business College in Omaha until October, 1897. He then taught in the rural schools of Fillmore and adjoining counties for four years. As a teacher, he won the love and admiration of his pupils, their parents, and the school patrons, and was soon called upon to assume greater responsibilities. He taught one year in Shickley, attended the Peru Normal School, and was elected county superintendent of Fillmore County in 1904, a position which he held until 1910.

Henry Vauck married Alice Oakley on March 12, 1902. To this union were born four children: Edward L., Earl A., Burnett E., and Bernice E. (Mrs. Orren L. Graves). The oldest son, Edward, became an expert for the Nebraska State Railway Commission; the second, Earl, a farmer near Sutton; and the third, Burnett, superintendent of schools at Duncan. The daughter's husband became a member of the police force at Lincoln. All four children were graduated from Sutton High School and all attended the University of Nebraska.

Henry Vauck became county judge of Clay County on January 3, 1929, and served in this position with marked ability for 12 years. He also had the honor and distinction of serving as postmaster of the Nebraska Legislature in 1941.

In 1938 he published a book called *Blizzards*, commemorating the blizzard of January 12, 1888, and the reunion at Fairview School (District 60) in Fillmore County, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the blizzard, a reunion of the pupils and teacher who had seen that terrible day. This celebration and reunion soon grew to greater proportions than first anticipated, and extra arrangements had to be made to accommodate the crowd. The anniversary proved to be a fair day instead of foul, and the many and varied reminiscences of past experience brought a good deal of cheer to all those present.

—*Henry Vauck*

Henry Vauck and his wife Alice were killed in an automobile-train collision at a railroad crossing in Sutton on November 11, 1957.

**Peter Weis, Sr.**, born in 1811, came with his wife, Katherine (Smith) Weis, and their children, from Burmeingen, Luxemburg, to America in 1867. They first located in Lasalle County, Illinois, where they farmed until 1871, when they came to Fillmore County. Here they homesteaded the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 14 in Momence township, and lived for their first two years in a dugout. He prospered by hard work and the diligence of his sons, and was able to assist each of them in setting up their own farms. He died on March 28, 1891.

John Weis, Sr., a son of Peter Weis, Sr., was born in Burmeingen on March 15, 1846, and came to America and Nebraska with his parents. His wife, Helen Magdalen Frick, was born in Belgium, Wisconsin, March 19, 1856. They were united in marriage on February 12, 1878, at Lake Church, Belgium, Wisconsin. To this union were born eight children: Kate, John, Nick, Clara, Peter, Joe, Ann, and Leo.

Like many of the early settlers, John Weis made his way by many years of hard work, patience, perseverance, and sacrifice. He became one of the largest landholders of Fillmore County. At some time before acquiring these lands, he went to Kansas and purchased 200 head of cattle which were driven on the hoof to Nebraska, where they were later divided up amongst himself and his three brothers.

John Weis also conducted a general-merchandise store just south of St. Mary's Church for several years. In 1910, he moved into Geneva to spend his declining years, and died there on February 20, 1929.



Photo from Reno Weis  
Mr. and Mrs. Peter Weis, Sr.  
(about 1885)

John J. (Hans) Weis, another son of Peter Weis, Sr., was born in Luxemburg in 1847. Coming to Nebraska with his parents in 1871, he homesteaded the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 14. He was married to Elizabeth Mertz in Holy Cross, Wisconsin, in 1878. To this union were born four children: Mary, Lena, John, and Nick. He died here in 1925.

Jacob Weis, another son of Peter Weis, Sr., was born in Luxemburg on August 11, 1856. Jacob was about 15 years old when he came to Fillmore County. After his arrival in Nebraska, he worked on the railroad for two years, assisting in the construction of the main line of the Burlington and also the branch line from Crete to Beatrice. He later purchased 160 acres in Sec. 14 of Momence township and, by earnest farming, became one of the well-to-do in the county.

Jacob Weis married Clara Sampont on March 24, 1881. To this union were born six children: Anna, Rosa, Agnes, Walter and Florence (twins), and Reno. In the fall of 1897, he was nominated by the Democratic party for county treasurer and was endorsed by the Populists. He won the election by a majority of 250 votes.

Peter D. Weis, another son of Peter Weis, Sr., was born in Luxemburg on October 5, 1859. When he came to America he was a lad of eight years. He assisted his father on the homestead, improving and cultivating the land for 11 years. Then his father gave him 160 acres and he began farming on his own account. For seven years he and his brother Jacob worked together in the operation of their farms.

On January 7, 1899, he was united in marriage with Susan Sampont. They became the parents of five children: Charles J., Arthur, Lawrence, Peter, and Cordilla (or Cordelia). Both were devoted members of the Catholic Church, Mr. Weis having been confirmed at Sutton, Nebraska, and his wife at Port Washington, Wisconsin. Peter Weis devoted himself to farming for about nine years after his marriage. He then moved into Geneva and engaged in the livery business. He passed away on January 29, 1948.

**Robert Weber** came to Fillmore County in 1871 and homesteaded the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 22, Momence township. He married Kate Weis, a sister of the Weis brothers. Their children were Katherine, John, Nick, Peter, Jake, Clara, and Emma.

The **Alfred Yetman** family came to Momence township about the year 1889 and settled on the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  of Sec. 5, T6, R4W. At an early age, Mr. Yetman passed away, leaving a widow and two fatherless sons. With their aid, Mrs. Yetman managed to keep and run the family farm. Living about equally distant from Geneva and Sutton, they chose Sutton as their school and church and market town. Neither winter's cold nor summer's heat could keep them from attending Mass on Sundays; they traveled the 10 miles by horse and buggy.

Grown to manhood, Bert Yetman married Mayme Burns and settled on a farm in Sec. 4,  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile east of the home place. There their five children were born. Leo and Robert married and settled in California. Mary married Vincent McLaughlin of Geneva. Kathryn (Mrs. Edgar Nunns) lives in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Eileen (Mrs. Charles Witt) lives near Hastings, Nebraska. Like his father, Bert passed away at an early age, but the family remained on the farm until the children were grown.

Frank Yetman married Minnie Schneider of Geneva, and until his mother's death he and his family lived with her on the home place. Hard times and crop failures caused them to give up farming and move to Hastings, where for many years Frank served as a police officer. Most of his children and his wife still live there. Mrs. Bert Yetman and one of her daughters, Mrs. Mary McLaughlin, live in Geneva.

It is always heartening to witness the success of men who have emigrated to America without capital and from positions of obscurity have worked their way upward to prosperity, even to wealth. Such a man was **John Zimmerman**, who became one of the most prosperous farmers of Fillmore County, owner of 640 acres in Momence township.



Photo from Mrs. Mary McLaughlin  
Mrs. Alfred Yetman

John Zimmerman was born in Bindsachsen Kreis Bidingen, Hessen Darmstadt, Germany, on December 7, 1829, a son of John C. and Margaret (Schwab) Zimmerman. He was the youngest of their 11 children. Left an orphan at an early age, he was forced to earn his own living, and at the age of 14 he began to learn the shoemaking trade, which he followed for 18 years. He was educated in the public schools of his native land and was confirmed in the Reformed Church. At the age of 29, he married Miss Anne Mary Eifirt; to this union were born 11 children: Elizabeth, John, Henry, Emma, Samuel, Mary, Simon Philip, Sarah Eliza, Clara, Caroline, and Conrad.

Borrowing money to pay his passage, he came to America alone in 1860, on a sailing vessel which was 31 days crossing the Atlantic. He farmed on rented lands in Illinois for 13 years. In 1872, he came to Exeter, Nebraska, where he bought a few lots; but he returned to Illinois and did not locate permanently here until the following year (1873). When the family arrived in Fairmont, they lived for 2 weeks in the railway car in which their goods had been shipped; then they came to Momence township, where Mr. Zimmerman located his homestead claim of 160 acres (NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ , Sec. 14, T6, R4W), for which he paid \$200. For 13 years the family lived in a sod house while he broke and improved his land, meanwhile trading in Fairmont. His crops were almost totally destroyed by grasshoppers in 1874 and again, several years later, by hailstorms. But he prospered, and in 1883 he erected a large stock barn and two years later built a good two-story residence, 30' x 24'. His farm became one of the most desirable in Momence township.

Five Swedish families came to Fillmore County in 1878 and located in Sec 36, Momence township, buying school land for \$7 an acre. Each family took a quarter section. Fritz and Axel Landberg took the NW  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; John Gustafson the NE  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; Frank Johnson the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$ ; and Swan Johnson the SW  $\frac{1}{4}$ . Mr. and Mrs. C. M. Bowman were the parents of Mrs. Frank Johnson, and the SE  $\frac{1}{4}$  was divided between these two families.

**Joseph Reinsch**, the second eldest son of Franz and Caroline Reinsch, was born June 13, 1851, in Neundorf, Silesia, Germany. Franz Reinsch, Joseph's father, was born in the same area on January 30, 1816, and his wife, Caroline Krueger, was born there in 1828. They had nine children. In the spring of 1869, Franz came to America, arriving in Nebraska on July 29, and made application for a homestead in Seward County near Germantown (now known as Garland).

In the fall of 1869, Joseph Reinsch and five of his brothers and sisters sailed for America and came by train to



Photo from Joe Reinsch  
The Avery threshing rig purchased by Mr. Reinsch in 1910. (Notice the bundle being tossed from the hayrack.)



Photo from Joe Reinsch  
The Joseph Reinsch family (about 1890). Back row, left to right: William, Annie, Charlie, Johnnie, Henry. Front row: Frank, Herman, Mrs. Emma Reinsch (holding baby Ernest), Emma, Joseph Reinsch, Mollie, and Emil.



Photo from Mrs. N. S. Bengtson  
August Bengtson farm 4 miles N and 4 miles W of Shickley (taken in 1886). Left to right: August Bengtson, Nels A. Bengtson, Nellie Bengtson, Mrs. August (Hannah) Bengtson, and an unidentified woman.

Nebraska City, arriving there on November 1, 1869. They joined their father, Franz, on his Seward County homestead and lived in a dugout until they built a sod house, 20' x 28', with one window and one door.

Joseph Reinsch came to Fillmore County in 1873, selected the W 1/2 of Sec. 10 in Momence township, and filed his claim in Beatrice on November 5, 1873, when he was 22 years old. He married Emma Kamler in Nebraska City on April 12, 1882. They had 13 children: Emil, Anna, Frank, Charles, John, William, Henry, Herman, Amalia, Emma, Fred, Ernest, and Caroline.

During his years of proving up, Joseph walked to Nebraska City for cottonwood switches to plant a windbreak. Fillmore County records at the courthouse show that by November 3, 1877, he had built a sod house 10' x 12', with one window and one door, had plowed and cultivated 55 acres of his land, built a sod stable 10' x 16', and planted five acres of cottonwood trees for a windbreak. This homestead is now the farm property of William Reinsch, fifth son of Joseph and Emma Reinsch.

In 1905, Emil Reinsch bought a threshing rig, delivered to Shickley, for \$3,800. The separator was a 36' Avery "Yellow Fellow," with a 20 horsepower steam engine, make now unremembered. Shock-threshing season started in mid-July and lasted from 6 to 8 weeks; stack-threshing season began in mid-September and ended in December or January. A threshing day began at sunrise and ended at sundown. The charge for shock threshing was 8¢ per bushel; for stack threshing, 4¢ per bushel. Bundle pitchers were paid \$4 per day for team, rack, and man. Stack-threshing pitchers were also paid \$4 per day. At that time, No. 1 wheat sold for from 50¢ to 75¢ per bushel.

—Joe Reinsch

