

“REMEMBERING FROM WHERE WE CAME”

by Myron Voran

Someone once said- "If you don't care where you came from, then you also don't care where you are going." I am sure no one here is guilty of not caring where they are going as you chose to come here.

Arnold Wedel spoke to me one day saying "Since you are a Kernele would you set out a few pictures and say something about your Grandpa Jacob K. (Kernele) Graber"? I had always known that there were so many Graber families that the use of a nickname was almost like an early day computer in pointing out who we were talking about. There were at onetime five Walter Grabers in the Pretty Prairie community. Walter J.(Foxy), Walter H. (Buthker), Walter E. (Huphser), Walter J. J. (Mautzy Hanske) and Walter W.(Sprig Kernele) Graber. This complicated use of nick-names was finally somewhat solved by the girls in a family. My mother Hulda Graber & two of her sisters named three of us male cousins Myron, Marlowe, & Milo. Poor immigrant Grandpa (Kernele) Graber often called all three of us (Maarrvin).

Grandpa passed away in 1942. After his death, I always wished that I could speak with him about life in Russia. Some of the questions I would like to ask would be about his working in a brick factory as an eight year old, the trip over the ocean, the trip to the Dakotas, working for the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railway laying tracks near Marion S. Dakota, and the trip to Kansas in a boxcar as a newly married couple to a very lonely and difficult life. Grandpa, as I remember him, walked with a cane as a result of falling off a windmill. He also had a car-train collision. Grandma Mary (Batcha Graber) also deserves much credit enduring 15 pregnancies resulting in 9 living children. I marvel at what this couple achieved and accomplished. Eight of their nine children finished high school, several of the daughters went to college became teachers. One son was in the Federal Housing Administration in Washington under F.D.R. One son received a Masters Degree from Chicago University & taught at Bethel. A other son served in the Kansas Senate. Each of the surviving 9 children inherited 80 acres of land. Many of the grandchildren worked in the medical field as doctors, dentists, nurses, veterinary college teachers, public school teachers, pharmacists. I don't know what kind of (Kernele) (Seed) Grandpa planted, but it seemed to bear much fruit.

I have placed on exhibit, several early pictures of the Jacob K. (Kernele) Graber family and the excellent recent Peter O. Graber Genealogy by Betty Hartzler, plus an April, 1950 copy of Mennonite Life. The April, 1950 issue of Mennonite Life holds special meaning for me as it contains an article entitled "The Swiss Mennonites--Pretty Prairie" by Arthur J. Graber with a cover picture of the Jacob K. Graber family farm. This issue also has my wife Mildred Claassen's family history in an article entitled "A Tree at Whitewater" by J. W. Fretz. This article includes pictures of fourteen children of John H. and Elizabeth Claassen, and each of their farms.

Sources-

April, 1950 Mennonite Life- "The Swiss Mennonites--Pretty Prairie" by Arthur J. Graber
April, 1950 Mennonite Life- "A Tree At Whitewater" by J. W. Fretz

1940 Mem. Biography- "Settlers Who Pioneered in Two States" by W, W. Graber
2001 The Peter O. Graber Genealogy - by Betty J. Hartzler