

A Biographical Sketch of **Andrew Schwartz** October 6, 1845 to 1939

Andrew Schwartz, a Swiss-German Mennonite farmer from Horodish, Russia, came to America in 1874. With his family he settled near Marion, South Dakota, in a small Mennonite community and proceeded to provide for them by farming. The winters were long and cold and the growing season was short. In 1884 Andrew decided to move to Kansas where he could provide for his family better and get away from the harsh SD winters. Near Pretty Prairie he purchased 160 acres for \$7.00 an acre and here he made his home and raised his family.

He and his wife, Elizabeth, had 11 children. Two died in infancy; one at age 14, and the other eight grew to adulthood. All were married and had families of their own except Frances, affectionately known as Fanny. At three years of age Fanny suffered severe fever which left her partially impaired. She never married and in later life had to be cared for.

Andrew was orphaned at two years of age and a family by the name of Voran took him into their home where he remained until adulthood. He had very little formal education but was taught to love the soil and all it produced. He was brought up in the Mennonite church and his faith in God and the church remained a part of him throughout his lifetime. He was a small, thin man with a sharp eye and a quick step. He, too, as a young married man, wanted to leave Russia and migrate to America with its promise of religious freedom. Passports were needed for the group that was planning to go to America. These documents had to be purchased in the nearest large city which was Katosufka, fifty miles distance. This was a dangerous mission as anyone suspected of carrying money could become a victim of roadside bandits. Andrew volunteered for this job. He thought the best way to conceal his identity would be to look and act like a beggar and walk the fifty miles. Any other form of transportation may have suggested that he was carrying money. He dressed in rags, hid the 50 rubles under his rags and walked to Katosufka. He begged for food and lodging arriving the second day. At Katosufka he was able to get a good night's sleep and rest before returning home. After purchasing the documents, he put on his ragged clothes and returned home the same way, begging for food and spending the night on a bench in a tavern, just another beggar passing through.

Once he arrived in Kansas, Andrew set about fulfilling his dream. The prairie land he purchased was best suited for small grain farming, especially wheat, which was their major source of income. It didn't take him long to learn that this sandy loam was also very good for growing plants and vegetables. He planted many varieties of trees for shelter shade, fruit, and fuel - groves of cottonwood, catalpa, mulberry, and evergreens. Beautiful shade trees, elm, maple, sycamore, locust, linden, walnut, and ash dotted the farmstead. Mulberry hedge lined the driveway. He was also interested in developing his own orchard and planted pear, apple, peach, apricot, plum, and cherry trees. His pride and joy was probably his concord grape vineyard. The wine made from these grapes was not a part of their daily diet; it was used for medicinal purposes and served to guests on special occasions. Andrew also provided the wine for communion services in the church. Blackberry and current bushes were planted throughout the cottonwood grove for Elizabeth's jams and jellies.

He was soon able to purchase the adjoining 160 acres and as the community began to grow a need for a church and school became apparent. Andrew wanted to do something for this growing and vibrant community to make it a better place to live and therefore donated a tract on one corner of his land for the church. To this day this tract is still occupied by the First Mennonite Church of Pretty Prairie. On the opposite corner of his land he donated a tract for a school which for many years was occupied by Springvale, District 121.

Andrew was an avid hunter; even in his older years he could handle a gun with expertise. He also loved to fish and his hunting and fishing provided meat for the table of his growing family. He was handy with the hammer and saw, and with quality wood readily available from the trees he planted, he built furniture and served the community as the casket maker. Many were the times when he anticipated the need for a casket and would start building one. Before it was finished he was approached by a neighbor, friend, or relative who had need for it. He seemed to have a sixth sense and an uncanny ability to know when someone would need his services and would then proceed to fulfill that need through love and devotion to this community. He also put his carpentry skills to use in other ways. A building that still stands on the homestead is a summer kitchen Andrew built over a dugout made into a cellar. This building was built out of native stone and cement and the walls are 15 to 18 inches thick. At one time, the attic held many dusty mementoes of pioneer history. The cellar was well stocked with winter storage of fruits, vegetables, canned goods and meats, including wine and cheese.

During the winter months Andrew spent his time making shoes for his family and neighbors, and harnesses for their ponies. His deft and skilled hands were also self-trained in the art of setting broken bones. He had neither the education nor a certificate to qualify him as a doctor but had an inherent skill that was put to use, even after he retired from the farm.

In 1903 he fulfilled another long-time dream. He purchased a lovely large family house in Kingman for \$250 and for another \$250 had it moved across 18 miles of Kansas prairie to its present site. It took 35 teams of horses to accomplish this feat. The house was a tall T-shaped structure with lots of fancy decorative woodwork trim on the eaves and over the bay windows and porches. The living quarters had four large rooms downstairs and three bedrooms upstairs. With it came two large hanging china lamps. The china shades of the lamps had lovely red hand-painted roses and were supported by weighted brass chains.

Around the house Andrew planted an elm tree to the south for shade which grew to be ten feet in circumference. He also planted cedar trees around the house. Elizabeth loved the new home in which they lived ten years before retiring.

Jonas, their youngest was ready to take over the farm and Andrew now purchased a home in Pretty Prairie where he and Elizabeth with their daughter Fanny spent their days gardening and caring for the many flowers he had planted. He kept his horse and buggy in town and every Sunday morning he would hitch the horse to the buggy and they would ride the three miles to attend church. Often during the warm summer months they would return to the farm and spend the day with Jonas and family.

Elizabeth was getting very frail and one day she fell and broke her hip which never mended. It was a sad day for him when Elizabeth died. He knew he could not take care of Fanny without the help of Elizabeth. Therefore, he lived alone and with the help of a son and daughter-in-law living across the street, he was able to maintain his independent life style to the end.

The only legacy Andrew Schwartz ever had from his forefathers was a German Bible published in the 1620's. This Bible he cherished and carried with him throughout his lifetime. Tradition over two centuries always presented this Bible to the youngest child of that generation. Jonas fell heir to it where it remains to this day. (Written by daughter-in-law, Mrs. Jonas H. (Anna) Schwartz in April 1984.)