

(1928) Edwin Eisenbeis History (a:3.1.5.3.7-4.5.2.7.1-1)

by Edwin Eisenbeis History. Apparently this was written in about 1928. The text has not been edited for corrections.

During the last half of the eighteenth century immigration and migration were the thing, especially among the German people. There were many causes of course, but the chief ones are, heavy taxes left by the wars, religious persecution and small opportunity for getting any where in the world. In following short paragraph we are going to pay more attention to the migrates than those that left Europe.

These migrates particularly those that went East are of special interest to me. Among that group were certain Eisenbeiß and Strobles. Nothing can be said of the Eisenbeiß's except that they came to Glückstahl, Russia about this time, but when and who they were is not known. There is, however, a record of the Strobles who settled in Glückstahl Sud Rußland and laid the maternal half of the present Eisenbeiß family. Strobles were skilled weavers. They produced such things as rugs, drapery and dress of various kinds. Both lived to the age of eight-nine and eighty-eight with the male on the long end. Their daughter married a certain Jacob Eisenbeiß in 1849 and by doing gave rise to the Eisenbeiß family. Both of these were born in Russia, the former in 1818, and the latter in 1827.

Great grandfather can easily be compared with my grandfather in all of his traits. He was just as care free, as simple and as humorous as grandfather. He liked singing and could produce a fair quality of sound. He was a stickler, seldom did he leave anything undone, nor did he leave his friend in danger.

His stature was very similar to that of grandpa. He had blond hair, dark eyes, heavy set, of average height and weight about a hundred and eighty pounds. His gait was just as wearied as grandpa's.

Their chief occupation was farming, but they were also butter traders. This last was an exceedingly interesting occupation, for every morning they would take their butter and go from house to house barter the butter for various kinds of commodities, such as eggs, milk, cheese, and meats, etc.

Their life's journey ended at sixty-six and sixty-eight with the help mate taken the first departure.

They were successful in their work if what they gave to each of their sons is anything of a criterion. Each one of their three sons received seven-eighths acres of land, besides all the necessary livestock and implements at the time of their marriage. Their daughter also received a fair share. There still was a fair inheritance to be divided among the children after the passing of the parents.

A decade before the foregoing trespassed away their third son and third child had already come into his own and was making fair progress. This third son, or my grandfather, answered to the name Jacob. He was born on March 8th, 1862. During his childhood he was a rather quiet person and for the most part let things follow their natural course.

At the age of seven he started the kleine schule where he was taught reading, writing, and arithmetic. After a thorough knowledge of these things he was promoted to the middlere schule, where he had to memorize certain passages in the New Testament, and writing. From here the pupil was send to the Gross Schule where he read the Old and New Testament, worked numbers, received special attention in writing, and were particularly instructed in the meaning of the Bible. They also did memorizing but that was more or less of secondary importance in this division of the school. At the age of fifteen they were confirmed. From now on there was no more school except the Sunday afternoon instruction, or Kinderlehr, until they were eighteen years old with school life came to a close.

The length of the school day was from eight A.M. until twelve and from one P.M. until four P.M., for a period of five days a week, and from six to seven months a year.

The school administration, such as is was, was that of the teacher's. Each of the foregoing division of school had one instructor and he was the sole ruler. He was hired by the congregation just like a preacher and his term was good behavior. He could punish the pupils for any infraction he himself set up; could promote as he saw fit. No one ever thought of looking after the school. Just as unconcerned as people are today. The educational part of it was pretty good. My grandparents seems to think that their form of education was better than ours. One reason why he favored that more is because everything center around religion, and also German. Even though its been almost two hundred years since our families left Germany, yet all are great champions of that language. They look upon us younger ones, that don't favor German as radicals.

The Russian Government paid little or no attention to the ways this German settlement lived in Russia just so they paid their taxes and behaved well. Consequently they could regulate their school as they wanted. That's why they retained their German element.

Grandparents they walked about a mile to school. The three divisions, Kleine, middle, and Gross were all in one building thus making a total of about four hundred pupils in that particular building.

The school life, instruction, activities seemed all were on a day confirmation. It was a big graduation day.

Confirmation to them was a very sacred act. It meant much to the youngster who was to be confirmed. He was interested in this day from another point of view namely; that this confirmation day marked the end of his school life, and like most youngsters are, glad to see that day.

Days rolled by until we have May 7 in 1882 when he (Jacob) married Katharina Gaub, who was born in 1862. As a child she received the same instruction in the same school, and was confirmed the same time grandpa was. Both knew each other well, and I have little doubt that they weren't happy to see each other at this time. I rather am inclined to believe that the "school day sweetheart" influence had something to do with their early marriage. Be that as it may; the two settle down to real life right after their marriage. From this date until 1898 they worked together year after year, and their efforts were not in vain, for by that time they were one of the leading families in their community.

Their native spot, Gluckstahl Sud Russia, which is about fifty miles north from Odessa and about hundred miles West from Trespol. This must have been a wonderful country. The climate was similar to that of California, for they could raise any kind of fruit they wished, and the returns were plentiful, too. One of the most important fruit they raised was wine grapes and the vintage. From the evidence that I have been able to gather it seems that no German-Russian could live without his glass of wine. Even though they were surrounded with wine all the time none of the family used in excessively only in moderation. And in spite of the close relation with wine in their early life's everyone is a true supporter of the prohibition law. Such was their native land which they left behind in 1898 for the vast prairie and rolling hills of South Dakota. Why would any man leave this fair land for the unknown prairies of South Dakota. One of many reasons was the vast opportunity, offered here in U.S.; but the prime reason was the oppression of the old country.

Grandpa's native country demand military service from every man regardless of family state. Shortly after he was married he was drafted, and from then on he had to go to service for five successive years, six months a year, for which he received a hundred and ninety dollars a year. But what was worse than the salary was the condition in the army and especially when they had imitation skirmishes or imitation war. During these skirmishes they were at times three days without food or drink, Especially was this a terrible condition for the infantry of which grandpa was a member. He also was a chobbler, but only for a short time. After these five years he was allowed freedom and his hopes became higher as the days went by for a happy life, but hopes came only to be shattered again. After five years of blissful life he was again called back to his old military post. It wasn't so bad this time for he had only to serve one month a year. Even at that grandpa refused to this any longer. After his return from the service he said: "They aren't going to get me again." Thus October, 1898 he his wife, and five children said "goodby" to Russia. On November second they finished their trip at Eureka, So. Dak..

The journey was one that wasn't so pleasant nor was it the other extreme either. They had barely gotten on their way when the weather became disagreeable. The heavens became darker and darker, the waves more wild until the surroundings looked like that of a dungeon, and the waves like the murder jaws of a hungry shark. Finally the hideous waves met on top of the ship, where they found an opening into the baggage room and through which wave let their water fall into the lower deck. When water was discovered by the passengers, shouts went out in horror, "the ship is sinking". And can easily imagine what a mob would do when they hear such words. The sink even got sick people on top of the deck. However, grandmother and a few others who were deathly sick remained in bed. After watching this state of affairs grandmother remembered Jesus words, "why are ye so fearful, where is your faith:--" This passage is not recorded to show my grandmother's piety, but merely to show what the Savior means to her. After a brief investigation it was found to be merely a false alarm. From now until the end of their trip which was in Eureka, So. Dak. everything went orderly, and after sixteen and a half day of traveling they arrived at Eureka where they stayed the winter with grandfather's cousin, John Stroble.

During this time grandpa bought two quarters of land, two horses, one cow, one stove, two beds, a table, and four chairs. Probably he would have bought more stuff, but by the time he had this paid his eighteen hundreds, which he had brought along from Russia were all spend. Thus after making their first friends in American during that long winter. They moved to their new home which is eighteen miles South from Eureka, and where the grandparents resided until 1920 when they moved to Bowdle, to live in peace and happiness to the end.

The little property mentioned above has been converted into an enormous sum by now. Where then, they had a mere sod house they now have two one modern house; where then they had two quarters they now have four and a three quarter left after giving on to each of their eight children a year ago. But even though they converted the small sum into the estate they never forgot that all the credit goes to the Lord and God. "God is their everything. He is fortune and adversity. He is life and death, He His rich and poor." "Pray and work their God will Help" has always been their motto. No matter what hour of the day it is when they began their day's work, or the time of the year, they always find time for morning and evening andacht.

Their strong sense of religion has partly been inherited, partly through the hard knocks of the world, and partly acquired from their religious school of instruction. I have to marvel the way they can recite Bible passages. Even if they did a lot of memorizing in school their efforts weren't all in vain.

Besides their earthly possession they were blessed with twelve children of whom two died in Russian and two here. All of these children are well of physically and financially. All are farmers.

Grandmother is the only one on father's side who thinks dancing is a great sin. She is very violent against the dance, but even at that she allowed her children to go.

On outstanding characteristic is; the confession of the Lutheran doctrine as far back as we can trace our history all have been strong champions of the Lutheran Church and all have married into Lutheran families except one. Very seldom has Sunday morning found these fathers outside of church. Even though that is a noble family tradition there is a very strong tendency to break that among the present generation.

Just the mere fact that all were Lutherans isn't so any special credit. It is just following the natural course. The fact is that there were no other churches except the Lutheran and reformed until the marriage of my grandfolk which was in 1882. Even these two believers worshipped at the same time and in the same church. The only time that they had separate services was when they celebrated the Lord's Supper.

At the age of sixty-six we find grandfather in a fairly active. His health is excellent, which enables him to endure heat and cold at extreme degrees, and also from being in bed for a longer time than one night. He weighed about a hundred and seventy pounds. He has great endurance and a desire for work. Every now he runs away from grandmother, like a little kid, to out on the farm and work a few days. It's terribly hard for him to be away from his farm and the work that is there. He works very slow, but is always on the job. During harvest season when he is called for meal; he certainly makes a person laugh with that habit. At times he is just about at the house when suddenly he remembers that the chickens haven't been fed, or that a calf is sick in the barn which should have some attention, and so he finds a little thing for every meal, and every meal he gets it from grandmother and the rest of the family. Even if the whole family is against him at first he usually has a good humorous excuse waiting for them, and soon the place is restored again.

He never cares much for companion that is; when he should go away. He would much sooner stay at home and go to bed.

He is very much for walking. The fact is it's about as hard to make him go horse back as it is to make him come to the table on time. After a hard days work he'll just as soon walk as ride on horse. A habit he acquired from the Russian infantry service.

One outstanding trait that I admired is his marksmanship. At his present age he very seldom misses his target. No matter if the game runs or flies he is sure to get it. Many a time I saw one of his son's give him the gun to get a certain game. The only time uses glasses is when he reads.

He is a dandy old scout to have around the house. He is extremely modest. Conditions have to be very bad before he is not satisfied. He always like to be the last one. "Your first," when he knows that his age demands the opposite. When it comes to work he is just the opposite. He is the first one there and the last one away.

He is a poor disciplinarian and a poor business manager outside of his farm work. Grandmother had to keep order in the house and also handle the family business, the latter she still does.

He is very careless about his dress. He doesn't mind the looks nor fit just so it gives the protection he needs. He'll seldom buys new clothing for himself without being reminded a number of times to get it.

Seldom does he get new parts for his machinery and farm, that is when something is broken. All he would do is to take it into his blacksmith and pretty soon you'd see him coming out again with some kind of a patch on it, and it wasn't so careless done either. Where he neglected himself in dress he certainly would make up for it on his implements. That's the repairing habit he learned in the Russian Army. One very bad habit he has it doing just one thing more before calling it a day.

All in all he is a good old pal to have around the house. His religious spirit, his dry humor, his modesty, his earnestness, his ambition, his friendliness, his kindness to man and animal, his service to his country, and his faithfulness all make for the man you like to have as your grandfather.

Grandmother in many respects is just the opposite from him. Her health is lots weaker, her constitution can't compare with grandpa's, and her endurance is very limited. This condition is mostly due because of a lot of unnecessary worry in the last few years. The last little thing will cause her to worry were it doesn't even face grandpa. She also worked too hard during her twenties and thirties. Besides taken care of the household duties and children, she would always go out and do field work during the harvest season.

She is the leader, manager, and disciplinarian of the family. Where grandfather has a hard time to get used to routine she is a very close observer of it. And when the minute comes to change to something else, she has the least difficulty of changing, where grandpa finds it difficult.

She is very thoughtful where grandpa forgets things very easily, and Especially does she pay particular attention to where she puts things, and because of that she is orderly where grandfather is more careless.

The quality that I admire most about her is her generosity. When Christmas or Easter comes around she has always something for all her grandchildren when they visit her. No matter if she knows or if she doesn't know that they are coming she has something every last time. She does not only give to her immediate relatives, but to the world at large. She doesn't want any thanks for it. Many a time has she called me to the side to a place where she could easily make her escapes hurriedly after she had given me money or gifts. This to avoid any thanks.

She feels and believes that she has no right to receive thanks for these material things. These things were given to her by God and Naturally they belong to Him and He should therefore receive the thanks and not she. One can't help but feel that it is the spirit of love that moves to share some of her blessing with all the world.

No wonder grandpa gets along as well with her. A sweetheart that has such love for God certainly has ample love for her better half. I do hope that you live for many years to come together with all of your near ones.

Grandfather is left out of three brothers, but has one sister living here in America, who is real well to do; and one living in Russia of whose condition I know nothing.

Grandmother has only one relative alive yet who lives in Russia. Both of these two that live in Russ had a terrible life during the war and after.

Of the two century of family history not a one has ever made an attempt to go beyond his father's trade. All seem to be satisfied with farm life. There hasn't and isn't a single relative that has not been a husband man the greater part of his life. There they were born, there they made their living and there they died. All of them enjoyed this heavy manual labor, at least no one has made any serious complaints yet, and if they wouldn't have been satisfied they certainly would have turned their attention to something else. So judging from the past my place is on the farm, which it might yet be. Even if I go back on the farm I have broken a family tradition of many years, standing.

I not only broke the above mentioned tradition, but also a more nobler and earnest one namely, that of a strong Lutheran. All of the past and present people have been strong defenders of Lutheranism, but even at that, their devoted doctrine has been lost to a certain degree in me.

I have also found that sickness among children is very common in our families and most of the deaths that occurred where those of children two or three years old.

Characteristics that I inherited are the following; From my grandfather I got my easy going trait. It makes little difference to me when I get there. From him I also received most of my modesty. I, like he, always like to avoid social activity and if I do attend, the hidden corners are my places.

From grandmother and from my father I received the quality of leading not so much organizing as just leading, also a strong sense of duty and honesty.