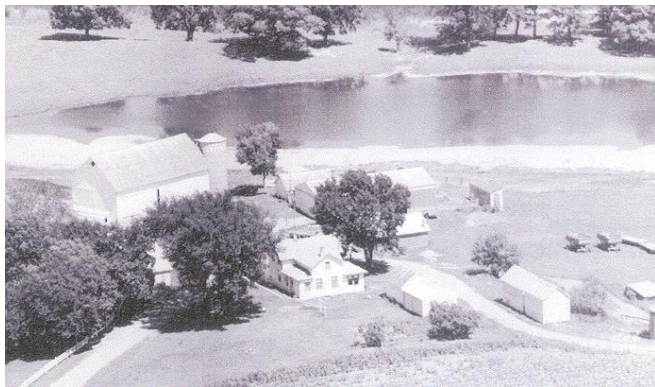


Lake Sarah History: The Klaers Farm Has A Long History

By Dolores Ullstrom

Not long ago, I was in the presence of Rich and Eileen Klaers and I could not help but notice the love and devotion they obviously feel for each other. Could it be that their fifty year marriage was actually made in heaven? Whatever it is, it's working and it is fun to be with them.

I went to their home to talk about Lake Sarah and its history. Rich has lived on the lake his whole life. Eileen joined him in 1952 when they married at Sts. Peter and Paul in Loretto. From a book of Klaers' family history and from their recollections, I was able to put together a short history of their farm and ancestors.



Area History

In 1862, during the Civil War, Congress passed the Homestead Act. Land was made available at no cost to settlers who promised to work the land for five years. This caused a great influx of immigrants who were actively recruited to settle in Minnesota. From the first census in 1857 to the 1900 census the state's population increased more than tenfold to 1,750,000. At the turn of the century, Minnesota had a diverse economy but more than half of the population was farmers.

Hennepin County was organized in 1852. The land that is now Independence and Medina was mostly forested with basswood and maple. In 1854, a group of picnickers out for adventure discovered a large lake on July 4 and named it Lake "Independence" in honor of the holiday. The City of Independence was first settled by Protestants of English descent; Medina Township was settled primarily by Germans. The earliest name of the area was Hamburg, named for the city in Germany. At a town meeting in 1858, the residents changed the name to Medina.

In 1862 the Catholic congregation of Sts. Peter and Paul was organized with services in local homes. In 1867, a small log church was built; it was replaced by a frame church in 1876. The town of Loretto was established in 1886 around a Soo Line Railroad building. The building site was purchased from the Becker family who owned a 40 acre farm in what would become the City of Loretto.

The First Generation

The Joseph Klaers family was among the early German immigrants. Joseph married a woman named Luzia Goergen. Their first child, Mary, died during their trip across the Atlantic. They settled in the Lake Sarah area in 1857 in the northeast corner of Independence. Their second child, Nicholas, was born in Minnesota in October 1857. Theodore was born in 1859.

The Second Generation

Theodore Klaers married Anna Arens in 1881. The wedding was the first to be recorded in the permanent parish register established at Sts. Peter and Paul Church. Anna and Theodore settled on part of his father's land. They had eleven children. Education was very important and all of Theodore and Anna's eleven children attended five to eight years of school. Theodore expanded his holdings to 120 acres. His habits of hard work and constant thrift paid off and he became a highly successful farmer. He was skilled at making good deals. He continued to buy land throughout the years as his children were growing up. His goal was to provide each of his sons a farm at marriage or to provide a dowry of \$500.

Theodore and Anna's farm included land on the northeast shore of Lake Sarah. In previous articles it was referred to as the Klaers' Resort because they rented out fishing boats. Theodore and Anna loved to fish and often had many visitors who came by train to spend the weekend. In the 1920s Theodore moved to Loretto to the house that is currently used as Sts Peter and Paul parish rectory, home to Father Brian Fier.

The Third Generation

Joseph was born May 6, 1886 and was Theo and Anna's fourth child (and second son). At the age of 30, he met a woman from St. Paul named Alice Maloney. Two years later, in 1918, they were married. At the time of Joseph's marriage, true to his word, Theodore bought him an 80 acre farm that was located on the south side of Lake Sarah. The price was \$8,000.

An 1873 map of the area shows the property belonging to John Reiffenberger. Mathias Schumacher married the Reiffenberger's only child. An 1898 map shows the property belonging to Schumacher. The story goes that Mathias and Theodore were out fishing one day and while in the boat, the deal was struck. Mathias reserved a small portion of the farm for himself and built a smaller house for himself and his wife. He lived there until his death in 1946.

Joseph and Alice had five children, two sets of twins. The eldest, James, was born in 1919. He and his wife, Geraldine, live on County Rd 90. Donald and Dolores were born in 1921. Richard and Raymond were born in 1925. Joseph was blessed with an iron constitution and had an endless capacity for work. Schooling for his children was important. They got to class by horse-drawn sled, no matter what the weather. Every Thanksgiving the family traveled across Lake Sarah by sled to join Theodore and Anna for the annual family feast. (Continued page 7)

(Continued from page 6) Electricity arrived in the 1930s. Drought and depression years caused Joseph to sell his prize herd under the federal emergency relief act. He held back his six best cows with which to rebuild his herd. In 1958, at the age of 72, Joseph retired. He and Alice moved into the small house that Mathias Schumacher had built on the property.

The Fourth Generation

Richard Klaers stayed on the family farm. He married Eileen Grotz in 1952. Eileen, raised in Delano, considered herself a city girl. Richard and Eileen lived in the old Mathias Schumacher house for four years until they exchanged places with Richard's parents. They had seven children. A set of twins, Joseph and Michael, were premature and died shortly after birth. They were followed by four girls and one boy, Randal. Randy and his wife, Colleen, now live on the farm. Richard and Eileen live nearby in a house built in 1982.

The Fifth Generation

Randal Klaers married Colleen Hayes in 1985. They transitioned from dairy farming to a beef cattle operation. They raise a type of lean cattle called Buelingo. Eileen describes them as looking like an oreo cookie, dark on both ends and white in the middle. Randy and Colleen recently purchased a pair of beautiful black Percherons draft horses. They farm with them and take family and friends for hay rides.



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