

Memories of Allean (Mertz) Boschee

Electronic mail message from Allean (Mertz) Boschee

I, Allean (Mertz) Boschee, was on the Journey to the Homeland tour to the Glueckstal colonies in Germany and the Ukraine Odessa in May 2008. I'm so glad I went on that tour where my Grandparents, Johann (John Sr.) and Christine (Reuer) Mertz, came from. My dad was only 3 years old at the time. My early memories of growing up in North Dakota at a farm 15 miles southeast of Dawson, ND. The roads were gravel, rough, and rugged. The winters were cold and stormy with lots of snow. My parents, Reinhold and Frieda (Wanner) Mertz were hard working people having 8 children. It kept them and all of us very busy. We called them Mama and Papa. I am their third child.



John Sr. & Christine (Reuer) Mertz Sr. 1907

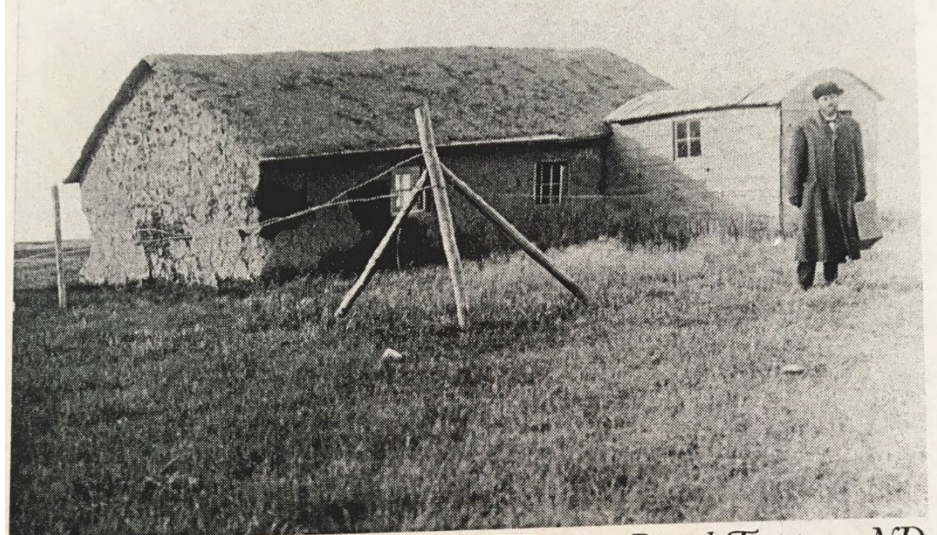
In those days there was no electricity, no telephones, and no running water. I carried a lot of water in and out for drinking and washing clothes. Eventually, we did get 32-volt, 10 large batteries, that gave us electricity. It was weak and it had to be recharged every week. We were limited to how many appliances that could be used at one time. Once lightning struck the south side of the barn where it broke siding and went up the wires. It traveled to the house where it went down to the basement and broke several batteries. It was a mess. Amazing it didn't cause a fire! Finally, in 1950, REA Electricity came into the area. Lives changed. In the year 1959 an indoor bathroom was added and running water was put in. This was the last of the outhouse!

In 1908, when Germans from Russia settled in North Dakota and homesteaded south of Tappen they built a sod church ½ mile south of the present church. Then in 1913 Glueckstal Lutheran Church was built on the prairie 5 miles from our farm. It was named Glueckstal Lutheran Church because that is where most of the people were from and it means "Valley of Good Fortune". It is still standing tall and proud today but no more services. There is a nice fenced in cemetery there where my Grandparents and relatives are buried. It never had a basement or running water. It only had an outhouse which is still there. My Grandpa Mertz Sr. desire was to get an organ and teach himself to play and become an organist at the



Later Years

Church. After lots of hard work and practice he did become the organist. The first organ was purchased in 1922. During bad weather we went to Christmas Eve and Sunday services with horses hitched to a bobsled. There was lots of straw on the floor and goose down feather ticks that Mom made with heavy denim fabric to keep us warm. One was to sit on and one was to cover up with. We didn't like to be covered up over our heads because our hair would get all messed up.



Glueckstal Sod Church, Missionary Nagel – Rural Tappen, ND

Especially, on Christmas Eve but our Dad insisted that we had to cover our heads. Snow would come in on the sides of the sleigh from the horse's feet. Mom always sewed us new dresses for Christmas Eve. There was always a nice program. We all had to memorize Bible verses and sing Christmas Carols. Many years we only had kerosene lamps in Church before electricity. Later years we had Christmas tree with small lit up candles in clip on candle holders. Quite a fire hazard! We were always excited for Christmas Eve after the service. All the kids would get a bag of candy, nuts, and fruit. We always thought that they were free until we found out that our parents paid in advance. It was exciting to look at the Christmas wish catalogs, but we didn't get many presents for Christmas. What we all looked forward to every Christmas were all the goodies that Mom made including



Glückstal Lutheran Church

candies, cookies, kuchen, breads, popcorn balls, along with nuts and fruit. Every evening after supper we would have those special treats until they were all gone.

We never went hungry. We always had canned chicken, pork, headcheese, liver sausage, and smoked homemade sausage. Nothing was ever wasted. We had canned jams, fruits, and homemade sauerkraut. Mom made homemade root beer. We would have it with popcorn. It was so yummy! We also had canned rhubarb juice, chokecherry wine, and beer.

We went to a one room country schoolhouse with no plumbing and only had an outhouse. It was 3 miles from our farm. It was called Belton I. And again, if the weather was bad our Dad would take

us with horses and bobsled. In good weather, we had a nice white Shetland pony named Daisy. She would be hitched to a 2-wheel cart with one seat across. We would go by ourselves when we went with Daisy or we would walk. There was a barn for the horses. We always had to milk cows before going to school. We always took our lunch in a tin syrup pail. There was only one teacher for 1st through 8th grade. We never did get an allowance. In those days we never expected to get paid.



The horses and bobsled that we used to go to Church and school during bad weather.

For entertainment, we

played 500. We only needed a bat and a ball. Or Andy I Over. We played with paper dolls cut out of old catalogs. We would cut out clothes for them. Then we would find appliances and furniture for their homes. We made mud pies and we would pretend baking them. We would take rocks from the rock pile and lay them on the ground side by side to make rooms but we had to put the rocks back on the pile again when we were done. Kids used their imagination in those days.



Allean (Mertz) Boschee

After I grew up and got married, we had 3 children and I started a tradition of making a tree ornament every year for each child. After they grew up and left home, they took their ornaments with them to decorate their own Christmas tree. I continued that tradition after my children were married with their own children where I would make one for each grandchild and one for each couple.

Our Dad loved to sing. He had a nice voice. After supper he would go into the other room, rock in the rocking chair, start to sing, and then call us to come and sing with him. The little ones would stand on the rockers and the rest would gather around him to sing.

I played guitar for many years and shared my music ministry at nursing homes, family gatherings, and with instrumental groups. I believe it's been proven to me that the love of music is food for the soul.

For all the hardships and loneliness suffered by Germans from Russia people who homesteaded in the US. They had to have a strong faith and put their trust in God and their Savior, Jesus Christ. They were people who knew how to build houses of materials from the earth. They knew how to use dried mischt for fuel. They were great farmers for the most part having raised wheat and flax in South Russia.



Reinhold and Frieda (Wanner) Mertz