

Finding Aid to the Ferdinand August Pazandak Photograph Collection

Pazandak, F. A. (Ferdinand August), 1883-1973

F. A. Pazandak Photograph Collection, 1908-1960s

40 photographic prints ; 8x10 in.

4 photographic prints ; 5x7 in.

3 copy photographic prints ; 8x10 in.

81 copy photographic prints ; 5x7 in.

4 copy photographic prints : color ; 8x10 in.

114 film negatives ; 3 ½ x 5 ½ in.

Collection number: Photo 2026

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OVERVIEW

Links: [Pazandak images on Northern Great Plains, 1880-1920 \(Library of Congress American Memory\)](#)

View collection in [Digital Horizons](#)

Access: The collection is open under the rules and regulations of the Institute.

Provenance: Donated by Elaine Pazandak Rumelhart, 1983 (Accession 2092).

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Citation: Institute for Regional Studies, NDSU, Fargo (item number)

BIOGRAPHY

Ferdinand August Pazandak was born near Dundee, Iowa, on May 30, 1883. His father, Joseph, was an immigrant from Hlavatce, Bohemia, now a part of the Czech Republic. Upon arrival in the United States in the early 1860s, Joseph, along with his mother and sister, settled near Dubuque, Iowa. Ferdinand's

mother, Anna Rhubesky, whose parents emigrated from Bohemia, was born in Racine County, Wisconsin. Joseph and Anna were married on February 16, 1873, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. They settled in Dubuque for a few years, where Joseph, who was well-trained in music, played in and directed a Bohemian band. Next they moved to a Bohemian settlement near Dundee, Iowa, where they farmed until coming to North Dakota. Joseph and Anna's children, all born in Iowa, included Joseph Jr., Ferdinand, Laura, Louis, Marie (Mamie), and Matilda. Joseph Sr. could not find enough available land near Dundee to purchase for his growing family and for future use by his children. In 1900 he traveled to North Dakota in search of land. In 1901 the Pazandaks, along with Matilda's son and the Barta and Kelsh families, left by train for Fullerton in Dickey County, North Dakota. They brought lumber, furniture, livestock, seed, and machinery with them. The Pazandaks settled four miles north of Fullerton on a farm they called "Highland Farm." Joseph Sr., a farmer as well as a carpenter, built their house.

Joseph Sr. taught each of his children to play at least one instrument and instilled in them an appreciation of music. Ferdinand, who went by Ferd H. or F.A., learned to play the flute and piccolo. He was so young when he began playing the flute that he had to blow out of the side of his mouth in order to reach the mouthpiece while holding the correct fingering position. He practiced every day, even if it was just a few minutes. In the early 1900s the Pazandak band, consisting of Ferd, his brother Joseph Jr., and his sister Laura, played for dances in Fullerton's Carroll Hotel Ballroom. They earned spending money by playing.

Pazandak also became interested in photography at an early age and began taking pictures when he was sixteen. His first camera was a folding 3A Eastman camera that featured adjustable lens openings to f/125. The camera was large for a type that held roll film and made 3 1/2-inch by 5 1/2-inch negatives. Ferd, who used a tripod when taking his pictures, recorded on film the mechanization of Highland Farm and, later, his own farm. He eventually had over 4,000 slides in his library.

In 1908 the Pazandaks bought their first steam-powered tractor and a steam-lift plow; in 1910 they purchased their first gasoline-powered tractor. Ferd and his brothers had mechanical abilities, which they used to make improvements on the machinery and keep it in good condition. Some of the modifications they made were patented. The brothers (Joseph Sr. died on August 13, 1913) were convinced of the advantages of mechanical power over horse power and sold their last horses in 1916. They had the first fully mechanized farm in the Fullerton area and one of the first in North Dakota. At its peak, Highland Farm consisted of thirteen quarters, just over 2,000 acres. The farm was sold to Emil Lacina in 1943.

On December 29, 1917, Pazandak married Vera Higgs, and they moved to their own farmstead just a short distance northwest of Highland Farm. Vera was born January 5, 1894, at Silverleaf, N.D., near Ellendale, the daughter of John and Blanche Higgs. Prior to her marriage, Vera had been teaching school in the Fullerton area for two years. Ferd and Vera had one daughter, Elaine. They lived in a newly constructed Sears-Roebuck prefabricated house, which offered the most modern facilities in farm homes at that time. Though many wells were attempted at the farm, potable water was never found. A well at the hog house provided water for animals but was unfit for human consumption. All drinking water had to be hauled from neighbors' farms or nearby towns. Thus water conservation was a way of life on their farm.

During the course of farming he raised purebred Hampshire hogs, registered goats, sheep, and, for a brief period, chinchilla rabbits. He never owned cows or used a horse on his farm. Ferd grew several different crops, including wheat, barley, rye, flax, oats, clover, millet, and sunflowers. At the peak of his operation, he farmed seven quarters, just over 1,000 acres. Known to be innovative and progressive, Ferd continued to modify his equipment and find ways to save time and labor. In addition to his interest in farm efficiency and modernization, he also was interested in the development of new seed varieties. This led him to raise and sell certified seed and regular seed, which he cleaned and bagged at his farm and sold

to local seed companies and farmers. Farming was indeed his vocation as well as his avocation. Pazandak retired from active farming in the late 1950s around the age of seventy-five.

Pazandak had many activities and hobbies in addition to farming. He helped organize the rural electrification association in Dickey County and served on the board of directors of the James Valley Electric Cooperative for many years. He also volunteered at the local telephone company and belonged to the Farm Bureau. Photography is what he is remembered for, but he also enjoyed lapidary (cutting, polishing, and mounting stones, particularly agates), playing the flute and piccolo, and traveling. He and Vera visited most of the states, southern Canada, and Jamaica. Ferd often carried his flute with him on these travels and located someone to share his love of music. The Pazandaks were members of the Fullerton Union Church.

Ferd and Vera moved to nearby Oakes, North Dakota, in 1968. Ferd died on January 31, 1973, and Vera died on November 28, 1985. Their daughter Elaine married Elvin Rumelhart. They live in Illinois and have one son.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The F.A. Pazandak Collection contains 115 images documenting the transition on a North Dakota farm from horses to steam engines to tractors, covering the period from 1908 to the 1920s. All images were taken by Mr. Pazandak on the Pazandak farms near Fullerton, N.D., in southeastern North Dakota. In addition, a hand-colored version for four of the images are included. These hand-colored images come from the Senator Milton R. Young Collection and had hung in his Senate office in Washington, D.C. He donated them, together with other photographs and artifacts, to North Dakota State University upon his retirement in 1981. In 1998 through an award from the Library of Congress, the entire collection was placed on the Library of Congress American Memory web site. The web address to access the collection is: http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/award97/ndfahtml/paz_home.html.

It was through the advice and encouragement of Dr. Hiram Drache, history professor at Concordia College, Moorhead, Minn., that Mr. Pazandak's daughter, Elaine P. Rumelhart, donated in 1983 the entire collection of negatives and prints of her late father to the Institute for Regional Studies. Dr. Drache described the collection as " ... one of the best I have come across in my years of working throughout the Midwest in search of agricultural pictures. The collection has given us a better understanding of the technology of agriculture by learning what people were doing in the past."

The Pazandak collection has been organized into sixteen series: Binders, Disking, Farmstead, Grain harvesting, Grain hauling, Lumber hauling, Pazandak portraits, People, Planting trees, Plowing, Repairing tractors, Road maintenance, Seeding, Threshing, Trucks, and Well drilling. These series represent specific farming operations or other activities on the farm. Because of the emphasis on mechanization on the Pazandak farms, the collection focuses upon the steam engines, tractors and other machinery used. Included are Geiser and Minneapolis steam engines, Twin City "25" and "20-35" tractors, Big-4 tractor, Hart-Parr tractor, Case "LA" tractor, International "10-20" and "15-30" tractors, as well as threshing machines, grain binders, disks, headers, grain wagons, plows, drills, road grader, and trucks. There are also several portraits of Mr. and Mrs. Pazandak, and some social scenes involving the family. The home built by Pazandak is also well documenting in images spanning some twenty years.

Not all of the negatives came with corresponding prints, and thus contact prints were generated and added to the collection. Mr. Pazandak in 1969 wrote very detailed descriptions of the tractors shown in the

pictures, as well as other general description notes for various images. The notes are included in the pertinent files. Detailed, item-level cataloging for each image is included on the American Memory web site.

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