

This specially edited on-line edition is presented on the Vahsholtz website for those Vahsholtz relatives who may not have a copy of the book. You may feel free to print a copy or order the 40 percent larger version that includes all the genealogical data and charts. This edition contains the same stories as the printed version, but omits many of the names and relationships that are spelled out in some detail there.

The Road From Zwilipp

Special On-Line Edition

Dedicated to Louis and Melvina Hitzeman Who Provided the Foundation We Built On

Genealogy by Marge Vahsholtz and Madeline Brockmeier Stories by Many Members of the Vahsholz Family Edited by Bob Vahsholtz

The cover is a recent photograph of the road from Zwilipp taken by Duane Vahsholtz



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First Edition—2003 Specially Edited On-Line Version

Note: This book is not copyrighted nor is it offered for commercial sale. It's a family project provided to family members at cost, and we encourage you to copy, add to and make changes as you see fit. The first printing, which was in color, is long sold out. Copies in black and white are available for \$20.

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Note: Names in **boldface** indicate Vahsholz bloodline. Numbers in brackets indicate birth year.

Introduction

This book is about the Vahsholz family, and we've certainly "simplified and misrepresented" some of them. None of that was intentional—we've tried to get the facts, capture the spirit, and ignore the rumors, but it's quite a challenge. We gathered information from many sources over lots of years. Melvina Hitzeman gets much of the credit because she and Louis compiled the first book of Vahsholz history in 1977. Melvina put untold hours into that book, and it is the foundation of this one. Melvina and many others have gathered additional data since that time. Nearly a decade ago, Madeline Brockmeier and Marge Vahsholtz independently set about entering the known data into computers. A year ago, they met and pooled their efforts. They spent endless hours chasing contradictions and missing links, and met many relatives who pitched in as they could.



Lou and Melvina Hitzeman on their fiftieth anniversary

You might ask why did they do all that work? A good answer comes from Lulu Bates, who wrote to Amelia Wicki in 1977 and responded to that question, "I agree that it does take a lot of time and patience to get information on families and history. But, what I have

done, I have enjoyed and I find it very interesting. It also gives us a better insight of the trials and tribulations of our forefathers, their mode of living and things they had to deal with."

Melvina, Madeline, Marge and Lulu have two things in common; they're interested in family history and they have no Vahsholz blood in their veins. Those of us who do, owe them a big vote of thanks. All of us who worked on this book hope that you too will find it interesting and that it will give you better insights into the trials and tribulations of your ancestors. Thanks too, to all those others who contributed to this book in so many ways.

We're sure there are errors to be found and we'd appreciate your calling them to our attention. We believe it best to get this family information distributed rather than spending more years chasing details and lost Vahsholz tribes.

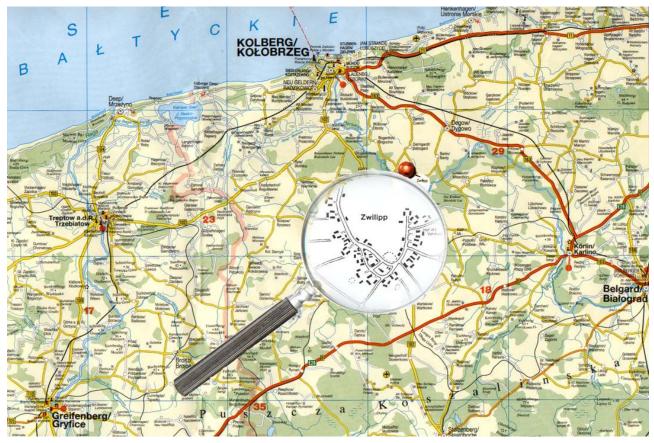
The portions written in italics like this are the editor's comments. Please don't throw tomatoes; I'm editing as best I can.

Bob Vahsholtz, 2003

Note: The published book is bound in a way that allows you to add pages to your section of the book, perhaps developing the story of younger generations or adding newfound information about ancestors as it comes in. We'd appreciate your forwarding copies of all such additions and corrections to the family web site so that the files can be kept up-to-date. This on-line version does not contain most of the details we have on family members still living, so don't assume we don't have your family's data just because it's not here. On the other hand, if you've never sent details of your branch to us (or not in recent years), we'd love to have your updates. Contact information is on the web site.

Much of the text here is edited, condensed and developed from the original 1977 Hitzeman book Martin Vahsholtz 1675—1977 Over 300 Years of Genealogy. Major additions are credited to their authors, but we have tried to avoid bogging the text down with source references.

The published edition includes genealogy data as best we could assemble it up to 2003. In the interests of protecting family privacy, personal information on those living has been omitted from this on-line version.



The Vahsholz Story begins in a little village a few miles from the Baltic Sea. When our ancestors lived there the country was called Pomerania—a part of Prussia. Before and since it has been called by many names as Europe's warring factions fought battles there.

The Village of Zwilipp A paper furnished by Martin Vahsholz (1929) from Germany, written in the 20th century; author unknown



Pomerania in 1000 A.D. before Zwilipp existed. The stick pin shows where it would later be located. Pomerania was part of Poland. Germany was the orange country to the left and Prussia was to the right.

The place known as Zwilipp was mentioned in 1159 as a gift from the Duke of Ratibor—his wife's name was

Pribislawa—to the convent Grobe of Usedom. This makes Zwilipp one of the oldest villages in the district (county). After Prussia's rise to power, the farmers of Zwilipp bought themselves free for 400 "taler" (the dollar of that place and time) since King Friedrich II needed a lot of money.



On this map dated 1200, Pomerania was part of the Holy Roman Empire.

Between 1644 and 1726, Mathias Haring and Heinrich Wustenberg worked as pastors in Zwilipp. Pastors were

the mediators of culture in the villages. They upheld moral standards requiring regular church visits and piety. The royal bailiff was the administrator of the village; he had the help of the "Dorfsculze" and two jury-men. A document from the Prussian archives in Berlin from 1726 mentions Zwilipp having 13 farmers, one "Kossaten" and the tailor David Rackow. There were six married couples and two single women. The farmers had to travel to Kolberg to the blacksmith; the mill was in Bogenthin. There was no bar; beer was brewed by turns.



By 1648, the date of this map, Poland had grown enormously and Pomerania was part of a fractured Prussia.

During the Seven-Year War, the Russians besieged the fortress of Kolberg twice in vain—1758 and 1760. The third time they came with a big army and conquered the fortress by starving the people. They also came to Zwilipp. The farmers had to surrender all of their cattle and grain to the enemy, but the buildings were spared.

The villages Damgard, Wobrow, Necknin, Bullenwinkel and Tramm were completely destroyed. The country was in very bad shape, and during the winter of 1761-62 it was so cold that even the Russians called it "Siberian Cold." People died of starvation, cold and epidemics. In Zernin, six of 18 farmers and four of eight Kossaten survived; in Bogenthin only six out of nine lived. In the destroyed village of Damgard, three of nine farmers were still alive, and in Tramm, three of six farmers and four out of eight Kossaten. More than half of the 328 people in the community of Zernin died.

How many people died in Zwilipp is unknown since all church documents were burned. Pastor Felix Muller had to flee from Zernin to Zwilipp. The Russian General Romanzoff gave him permission to preach in Zwilipp. Because of Pastor Muller's work and the kindness of the General, Zwilipp got away easier. A document in the

¹ We're not sure what a Kossaten is. Duane Vahsholtz' translator says that "Kosaken" or "Cossacks" is the word for free farmers from Old Russia who provided cavalry regiments in case of war.

Berlin archives from 1762 states: "The village [Zwilipp] is in good condition and the buildings also." The farmers discovered "mergel" in their fields (a combination of clay and calcium carbonate) and used it for fertilizer. They got a good crop and were able to pay all of their taxes and duties.

There were bad times again between 1770 and 1774. There were hardly any potatoes, the grain rotted in the fields and there was barely anything to live from. Farmer Bonnss lived on Hof³ #3, which today is Vassholz.⁴ He could not keep your property. It was the same on the Hof #8 (Painter Berg). One Vassholz was removed. The son of farmer Peter Witt from Jaasde was put on the farm twice by force, but he fled. His successor Schwarzhoff from Leikow also left the farm and country secretly.

Hans Schwerdtfeger was put on next, and his descendants stayed on the farm for five generations, until 1911. In 1807 the French came to Zwilipp after a long time of peace. The commander of Kolberg ordered the burning of the fairly new ferry bridge. The French arrived at the Lustebuhrer shore and built a new crossing by putting barn doors on top of the stumps. They marched through Zwilipp to their camp in Trammerfeld.



This map portrays Pomerania as a part of Prussia in the years 1815 to 1875. Too many maps? We could include many more to show all the strife that was part of our ancestor's homeland. By the time of this map, many were ready to leave, and did. The text of these stories tells much more.

In 1812 the French marched to Russia but did not come through Zwilipp. That was a very bad time again for everybody. The winter of 1812-13 was very cold, not only in Russia, but also in Prussia. The pitiful remainder of the French army returning from Russia made the Prussians yearn for liberation.

The archives in Berlin state that Zwilipp, having 150 inhabitants, furnished 17 freedom fighters.

² That's probably why we can't trace the Vahsholz family further back than Martin (1675).

³ "Hof" means "farm" in German

⁴ This spelling was apparently dictated by some government office and is used by some of the German branch.

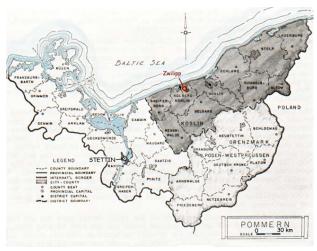
Around 1840 the lifestyle of the farmers was simple. They grew a lot of "raps" (rapeseed) for their oil, and kept bees and sheep. The food was very hardy. At weddings they served a dessert (grits) made out of buckwheat, sprinkled with sugar and cinnamon. In the middle lay a large clump of butter. The old pastor Pricellius used to say, "If all mountains were butter and all valleys grits, and the sunshine would make the butter melt into the grits, that would make a great meal!"

How did these Pomeranians get so hungry and feisty? Let's look at a little ancient history of the area:

Where They Came From—I This section is condensed and edited from Louis (1913) and Melvina (1914) Hitzeman's 1977 book

The original Germanic peoples represented one branch of the Indo-European family of nations—a group united by speech rather than race. They were generally peaceful agricultural peasants with a social order based upon patriarchy, monogamy and belief in the power and majesty of the sky-god.

The Teutonic people of Northern Europe were also Indo-European, but originally more inclined to wander the continent as hunting and fishing nomads. Not until the years 3000—1800 B.C. were they inclined to settle down and adopt an area as home. In Northeast Germany, the area that came to be known as Pomerania, the Teutonic nomads, skilled hunters and fighters, displaced or subjugated the early peaceful peasants, buying or seizing their land.



This detail map of Pomerania (Pommern in German) is adapted from the Hitzeman book.

The fusion of these two cultures over time created our German Heritage. The Romans said, "The ancient German people were tall and very fair [complexioned]. They lived in tribes and counted their wealth in flocks and herds of animals. They were fond of drinking and gambling and left the housework and the field work for their women." They were also described as wearing

coarse cloth and animal skins, along with armor of leather and metal. They used spears, swords and battle-axes made of metal and stone, and worshipped their gods outdoors amid the great forest. The tribes hated towns, cities and left wasteland between tribes to reduce chances of quarrels. They were said to be brave, loyal to their chiefs, and faithful to their wives.⁵

They also lacked masonry skills and built with wooden beams, often filled in with clay, rock and brush. Most houses had steep roofs covered with straw or brush, extending almost to the ground on one side as a protection against the weather. Huts had a single room with an open hearth in the center, and no chimney. Smoke had to find its way out doors or windows. Benches ran along perimeter walls, and there would be a table and stools. Villages consisted of scattered houses fenced from each other and with a fence also surrounding the village. Caves were dug into the ground and covered with leaves or dung. They served as storehouses, protection from severe climate and other dangers. Women and maids used them as workshops for spinning, weaving and sewing.

Fields surrounding the village were owned by the community, which dictated cultivation, seeding and harvest. They lived simply, eating bread, vegetables and meat. Cows were for milk and sheep for wool, with horses and pigs providing the main source of meat. They consumed large quantities of a sort of wine or beer fermented from barley or wheat, much of it while enjoying a major recreation—gambling. The only craft deemed worthy of a German freeman was smithing; building arms and ornaments.

Though early marriages had been little more than rape and purchase of brides, it evolved into a most important civil contract. Still, the father was the head of the household and even possessed the power of life and death over wife, children and slaves. ⁶ It was considered shameful to limit the number of children or kill one's offspring.

Honor and glory ranked higher on the scale of values than life or death, for both men and women and they preferred death to slavery and disgrace. Visitors and traders were welcomed and treated well.

⁵ We depend upon the Romans for such descriptions as the early Germans had no writing of their own.

⁶ When we, Bob and Marge, were searching for the maiden name of Mrs. Frank Vasholz in Norfolk, Nebraska, we found remnants of this culture. Both Frank's and his wife's obituaries referred to his wife as Mrs. Frank Vasholz, giving her no other identification. We finally found her given name, Louise, on her tombstone and deduced her maiden name from the names of her brothers, who were listed as survivors in her obituary.

Tribes were based on families, which grew to include several related families growing to a size of perhaps 50 to 100 families. Such villages were often marked by dialect, custom, traditions, racial characteristics and the like. The ancient Germans did not develop the concept of a state, and when it finally came into being, it grew from the family concept.

There were two classes; freemen and slaves. Only the freemen, descended from free parents, were full-fledged members of the tribe or community. They shared in ownership of land, were permitted to take up arms and were admitted to popular assemblies. Most prominent among them were noblemen of distinguished ancestry. The slaves were chiefly prisoners of war along with their children. Freemen who gambled away their freedom were usually sold to foreign traders to become slaves elsewhere.

In the years 2000 to 800 B.C., with the infusion of Teutonic blood, the Germanic warrior-peasant gained more wanderlust, aspiring toward the stature of the gods of his cultural childhood. Migration and conquest took them as far as Russia and Greece. By 800 B.C. the German tribes held much of Central Europe.

Meanwhile, the Roman Empire was expanding, occupying most of Europe with the exception of the core held by the Germans, whom the Romans called "Barbarians." The Romans had little interest in invading the German territories, but did not hesitate to hire them as soldiers for the Roman Empire. The Empire was spread thin however, and in 400 to 750 A.D. the Germans helped speed its downfall by invading across the Rhine. They took land from the Romans, but more importantly, adopted their culture, technology and way of life. Though the Roman Empire fell, the Germanic tribes were absorbed by the numerical and cultural superiority of the Romans.

Through all this period, the range of class distinctions increased, with each successive downward class dependent upon the one above. Thus began the feudal system, where increasing numbers of the populace were totally dependent upon the will and skill of monarchs.

Christianity had become the state religion under the Roman Emperor Constantine (306—337 A.D.). The Roman Catholic Church survived the state, with its own hierarchy and system of administration. By 768 A.D. the Frankish King Charlemagne had conquered much of Europe including the heathen Saxons and Germans and established the Holy Roman Empire with Catholicism as its foundation.

Charlemagne's kingdom was short-lived, challenged from the East by swarms of Hungarian invaders. The Vikings stormed into Baltic areas from the North. Otto the Great (936—973 A.D.) succeeded Charlemagne in the German part of the Empire. He put as many of his relatives as possible in charge of the quarreling German fiefdoms and thus united, defeated the Hungarians. This

loose confederation of interests did not last, as there was continual bickering over Church vs. Elected vs. Anointed power. As discord mounted, the Church stepped into the breach, maintaining order by threat or persuasion, seeing that contracts were honored, wills carried out and marriage obligations observed. The Church promoted education and dispensed charity and protection. This was an invitation to corruption, and in due course few transactions took place without gifts and fees collected.

In 1059, Pope Nicholas II issued a decree that took the election of the head of the Church out of the hands of both the Emperor and the people of Rome and placed it in the hands of Cardinals who represented the Roman Catholic clergy.

As the power of the Church increased, that of the Emperor diminished. There were in the Empire some 300 widely differing states. Political power rested mainly in the hands of seven Electors who chose the Emperor, a power they used to further their own ambitions.

German medieval cities were small and unsanitary. But they had magnificent churches and cathedrals, and many of the guild houses and private homes were quaint and picturesque. Cities were busy places with crowded universities, showy public festivals, fairs and saints' day celebrations. In cities, feudal class distinctions were not so strict and a poor man had a chance to rise within the merchant class. The country was cleaner but most peasants were virtually slaves, with laborers bound to stay on their landlord's estate as serfs.

Over a period of several hundred years, commonly known as the Dark Ages or Middle Ages, progress essentially ground to a halt. In 1520, Martin Luther was one of the voices heralding an end to the corruption of the past and the beginning of more enlightened times.

While the Reformation triggered many needed reforms, it also split Europe, and especially Germany, along religious lines. The Thirty-Years War raged as armies from Austria, Denmark, Sweden, Bohemia and France fought across German turf, leaving behind complete social and economic collapse. The Treaties of Westphalia gave each ruler the right to establish the religion of his state.

Laws developed largely from tradition, and tradition established patriarchy. There was a strong tradition against parceling out the estate among children, especially as the size of estates shrunk from that practice. The transfer of property was an issue charged with dynamite.

By the 20th Century, there had been many conflicts among the nations of Europe that sometimes boiled over into wars. No nation wanted World War I, but when Archduke Ferdinand of Austria was assassinated in 1914, conflict resulted and escalated. Each country sought allies in the game of bluff and saber rattling. More and more nations participated, with the U.S. joining the fray

in 1917. Germany was the big loser and the Weimar Republic set up to govern it was crippled from the beginning. That weak government set the stage for Hitler to take control in 1933. Hitler skillfully played the Russians against the West, aided by Japan. Again, America was late entering the war, but its huge productive capacity, combined with enlisting the Russians on the side of the Allies, defeated Germany again.

After WWII ended in 1945, the establishment of a strong and free West Germany and Japan led to unprecedented growth in both nations. East Germany, which included Pomerania, did not enjoy comparable success until the Iron Curtain fell and Germany was reunited. Pomerania had been ceded to the control of the U.S.S.R. and became part of Poland, used as a place to move Poles displaced as the Russians absorbed large portions of what had been Polish land.

Where They Came From—II This paper was provided by Duane Vahsholtz (1933)—source unknown

Our ancestors came from an area of Germany that is called Pomerania. This area has been called East Germany/Poland since WWII. [Zwilipp] is now in Poland, about 40 miles from the Poland-New Unified Germany border, and was formerly called West Pomerania.

Pomerania gained its German character with the founding of monasteries and its accompanying settlers. They strengthened the economic and military power of the Slavic Dukes against the attacks from the Polish Piasts⁷ and settled most of the Pomeranian cities.

In 1181 a legal relationship was formed between Germany and Pomerania, when the Emperor of Germany, Frederick I, granted to Duke Bogislav I the territory of Pomerania. Three years later after a sea battle north of Stettin, Pomerania fell to Denmark and was ruled by King Knut the Sixth of Denmark. The Danes were defeated in the Battle of Bornhoeved and were left with only one small principality in Pomerania. The Emperor of Germany then gave Pomerania back to the Duke of Brandenburg.

In 1295, the city of Labes (a city about 40 miles from our ancestors' homes) was established. In 1331, about the time The Plague killed a quarter to one-third of the population, Daber (about ten miles from our ancestors' homes) became a town.

In 1389, after Denmark had fallen to Germany, a Pomeranian Duke, Erich, was chosen King of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. This was Pomerania's only big

⁷ According to a Polish translator Duane Vahsholtz contacted, Piasts were the two first Polish dynasties and their followers.

break, but unfortunately it didn't work out—he was ousted from office after 52 years. In 1404 the last Danish speaking person in Pomerania died, and Low German was the official spoken language and Latin the written language.

1440 saw the founding of the "Prussian Federation," which was an alliance of towns and nobility rising against the Teutonic Knights (who had been purchasing vast amounts of land during the century). In 1454 the Federation went to war against the Teutonic Knights and Poland interceded, and this war went on for 13 years.

In 1521 Johann Knipstro began Martin Luther's teachings in Pomerania. The Reformation movement was introduced in 1534 with 45 monasteries and institutions secularized. A Counter-Reformation in Poland around 1587 divided the cultures of the Polish and German people. By 1544, the Catholic Church had mostly died out

In the 1560s the nobility started owning large estate farms and small farmers had to become dependent upon them, and some had to revert to serfdom to survive. Eastern Pomeranians settled new lands in previously unoccupied areas, and were encouraged to develop the textile industry.

The Thirty-Years War (1618-1648) reduced the population by 50 to 70 percent. As a result of the war, the royal leadership fell out of support, and West Pomerania fell to Swedish rule, East Pomerania to Prussia.

In 1701 Frederick III was elected King of Prussia, and officially Prussia became a kingdom. Under King Frederick William I in 1712, Prussia set up a standing army and an organized bureaucracy. This army then attacked and retook Stettin. At the same time Poland decided upon demolition of all evangelical churches, and this caused a great immigration of Poles into Pomerania. 1720 saw the Prussian Army retake West Pomerania back from the Swedes.

Potato growing was introduced to Pomerania in 1727, and it was adopted as the product of the country by Frederick the Great.

Under the leadership of Frederick the Great, the greatest time period for Pomerania was realized. He helped establish 159 villages, added 26,500 settlers and improved new lands. He lifted tolls on the Oder River, and expanded Swinmuende Harbor. The population increased to 310,000. He helped found the Royal Ironworks of Torgelow, the first industrial plant in Pomerania and brought the country into the Industrial Age.

The time period of 1756 to 1763 saw the Seven-Years War with Russia. Still, by 1800, Prussian Pomerania had 480,000 inhabitants, and in 1806 farmers were freed from serfdom. 1806 also saw war with the French. Parts of Southern Pomerania were lost. Also, Poland gained parts of Prussia.

In 1810 Pomerania had 510,000 inhabitants, and by the first national census in 1816, it had 683,000. By 1843 it had 1.1 million people, and with the opening of the rail line from Berlin to Stettin, Pomerania entered the age of rail.

Pomerania became part of the Second German Empire in 1871 and the Pomeranian Prime Minister, Otto von Bismarck, became Prime Minister and Imperial Chancellor of Germany after suggesting the idea of merging the two countries.

The population of Pomeranian Germany in 1875 was 1.5 million. Pomerania remained under self-control of Prussia until 1933. Adolph Hitler integrated it into his Third Reich and it became a district of Germany.

I am not writing of what happened in Pomerania after our ancestors left, as it is not pertinent. But I feel that I must tell of what happened during and after WWII, as our ancestors left relatives there.

The Allies bombed Stettin, but didn't go much farther east. With the push of the Russian Army westerly through Germany, Pomerania was destroyed. A great deal of the Pomeranian populace fled west across the Oder River into what is now East Germany. Pomerania lost 500,000 individuals. Under the terms of the WWII Peace Treaty, the Soviet Union wanted to re-establish Poland, but it wanted the land where Poland was for itself. The answer was to take Polish lands, expel the Poles, and move them to Pomerania; then expel the Pomeranians from their homelands. Most Pomeranians moved into East and West Germany. This was the largest movement of people in the history of the world; all told about six million people were told to pack up and leave within 24 hours.

Our Ancestors Religion

Our ancestors that came to the United States belonged to a church called the German Reformed Church. The Church had important responsibilities, such as marrying people, birth registration, and burying the dead. Good standing in a church meant very much in a person's life.



The Lutheran Church in Zwilipp

In the early 1800s there were two churches in Northern Germany and Pomerania, the Lutherans and the Calvinists. Shortly after Martin Luther's Reformation, Pomerania became overwhelmingly Protestant and almost entirely Lutheran. Basic Calvinistic doctrine said that those in power were God's Elected People, therefore, nobility and the rich tended to be Calvinistic. In the Lutheran Church riches were not held in high regard; therefore, it was considered the religion of the people.

King Frederick the Great was careful to favor neither of the two religions, as he feared it would weaken the state of Prussia, which was growing weary of constant wars.

King Friedrich Wilhelm III was not so wise. He felt it a disgrace that in the church where he worshipped, services varied immensely week to week, as they alternated between Lutheran and Calvinist ministers. In addition, as a Calvinist, he could not take communion with his wife, a Lutheran

King Friedrich Wilhelm III made a royal proclamation on September 17, 1817 called "Entstehung der Preussischen Landeskirche," which means "Foundation of the Prussian State Church." It called for ministers and congregations of both religions to overcome their narrow sectarian views and to join together in Holy Communion and in Church organization.



The altar of the Zwilipp Lutheran Church

Because of the way things in general were going in the state, most saw this as a logical way to begin putting order into things. It worked fine until 1822, when signs of opposition appeared to the unification. The Calvinists didn't believe in Lutheran Creeds and the Lutherans didn't want to change the order of their services. The ministers of both churches were unenthusiastic about going back to old ways as they worked under direct orders from the King.

Pomerania, in general, was noted to stay Lutheran, even after orders from the King. The religious resentment continued for many years, and it is interesting to note that upon coming to America, our ancestors were quick to pick up the Lutheran teachings rather than going to some of the American off-shoots of Calvinism.



In 1945 the Zwilipp church was vandalized by the Russians and hit by lightning. The Poles who currently occupy Zwilipp rebuilt it as a Catholic Church using donations of West German tourists.

Why Our Ancestors Left

I can only speculate that our families left the place they had lived for generations due to the lack of opportunities for them in Pomerania, plus the "tendency" of the Government to go to war. Some historical facts that I will put forth may also have caused them to emigrate.

In the early 1800s, a ruling came down that when a farm owner died, his estate was divided up equally among his surviving children. As years went by, the farms were broken up so small that no one could survive on the small acreage that was left, so the king made another proclamation, this time saying that the eldest surviving male would inherit the estate. This often forced all the children except the inheritor out into the streets.

People were not allowed to buy farms, so farmers could not expand and ended up selling a small number of products for a high price. This also created a large group of "unlanded farmers," which I expect most of our ancestors were

With the advent of good transportation systems to and within Prussia and Germany, many materials were easily moved. Pomerania was essentially an agrarian province, so this system began delivering imported agricultural goods, which sold for a lower price than Pomeranian products. This caused a great depression in Pomerania from the 1850s until the early 1900s—the years of record emigration from there.

In 1870 there came the announcement that all males must serve a compulsory three-year military term.

With the passage of the Homestead Act of 1862 in the United States, many Pomeranians left for greener pastures. These people wrote back home that indeed, things were better in America. Germany and America both had efficient mail systems and mail delivery only took about three weeks.

Pomerania was also suffering from a population explosion in the last part of the 19th Century. There was not enough acreage being farmed to produce food to feed everyone. This caused a lot of poverty, and the Government's answer was to make individual villages responsible for feeding and caring for the surplus people. Many villages found it cheaper to send them to America than to feed them.

The Prussian Government decided a good course of action would be to allow and encourage emigration to North and South America. They published pamphlets, circulars and the like describing how easy it was to get to America, and provided information on the climate, growing conditions and labor situation.

They subsidized the shipping lines, scheduled rail transportation from homelands to the debarking ports and sent agents to New York to assure the new immigrants got to their new destinations safely. All of these things and more probably added up to record emigration.

Interesting Facts about the Pomeranian People

Pomeranian surnames were not established until the early 1810s. Children before this would not take their parents surname but would take their parents' first name or any other name their parents liked. This made it very difficult for the Government to track relatives and administer wills, etc. The Government then said on a given date, all must register their surnames; all children take on this surname, and stay with it. The problem with this plan was that if you were 45 years old, and your name was John Smith, and you elected to keep this name, and your elderly father decided he would be Charles Jones, then you become John Jones, father of the Smith kids. It wasn't until the next generation that your surname became a permanent part of your life and that of your family. This makes Genealogical study before this period very difficult. During this time many Germans took on surnames describing their jobs, appearance, name of the area they were from, etc.

What They Found by Bob Vahsholtz (1935)

It appears that most of our ancestors came to this country seeking the prospect of having a farm of their own. The Vahsholz's were primarily farmers, not "washers of wood" as a literal translation of the name would suggest.



Sketch by Bob Vahsholtz—date unknown

Their timing was good. The railroads were opening up land in the Midwest that would become "the breadbasket of the world." Agriculture was as hot as Silicon Valley would become a hundred years later. Our ancestors, for the most part, claimed or purchased farms and built them by the sweat of their brows.

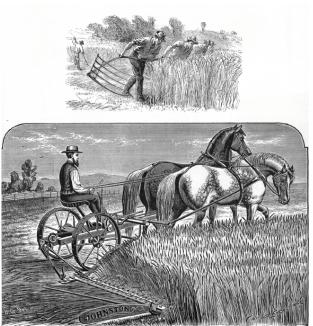
But, like all boom times, the farm economy gave way to the wave of industrialization. Many of the stories in this book portray the wrenching agonies involved in making the transition at a personal level. Some statistics can provide a bit of the flavor of the challenge.

In 1900 nearly a third of the American labor force was involved in farming, and worked hard to feed the other two-thirds. The typical family spent \$266 per year on food. Sounds like a bargain? That was 43% of their total living expenses. Farm families ate as much, but supplied two-thirds of their own food, so their cash outlay was small. Most of what they raised went to feed the city folk, but more than a fourth of their crops went to sustain their horses and mules. These days, fuel expenses run about six or seven percent of farm income.

Total acreage cultivated today is down about ten percent from 1900, but output per acre has more than doubled. Less than three percent of the labor force is involved in producing more food than we can eat or export. The typical family eats about twice as much as they did then, but spends only 14% of their income on food. Too much of that is for junk food, fancy packaging and advertising.

Those of us who grew up on the farm didn't see all this happening. We just saw increasingly hard work and high risk year after year, and when it got to be too much, or

we saw a chance, we sought greener pastures. Even those who live close to their roots on the farm have, for the most part, found other work. Politicians talk about "saving the family farm," but in truth, it's gone as a driving force in the economy.







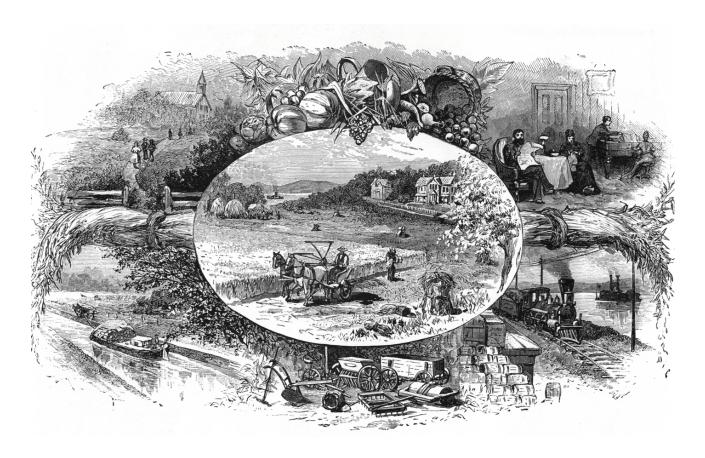
From cutting wheat with a hand-sickle to a mower, to binders that cut and bundled the wheat, to combines that cut and separated the grain in the field, great progress was made in mechanizing farming. Lloyd and Homer Vahsholtz are on the combine above, in a 1937 photo. Since then, combines are self-propelled and have air-conditioned cabs, but productivity gains have slowed.

What happened to all those farmers? This book provides some clues, but statistically, most went into manufacturing. In 1977, Lulu Bates wrote from Clay Center, Kansas to Amelia Wicki:

"Sounds like Bern [Kansas] is making a lot of progress. So many of the smaller towns are going the other direction. Having young people return and going into business is a healthy situation. Our town has also progressed through the years. We have two large industrial plants; employ around 200 people and sometimes more. We also have some smaller industries. It all makes for more employment. We are to have a new shopping center on the west edge of town. Many new additions to the city have all new homes and there are still more going up. At the cost of things today, and from an economic standpoint, one wonders where the money is coming from. But, anymore so much is on credit and some get so involved that they never will get out of debt. It doesn't seem to bother people."

True enough, but that wasn't the end of it. In his last days, Robert "Doc" Friedrich (1896) said to Fred Vahsholtz (1910), "Fred, did you ever think about how much change there's been in our lives? When we were kids, the fastest thing we could think of was a good horse. Now spacecraft circle the earth in 90 minutes." And changes continue. Between 1900 and 1970, the percentage of laborers engaged in manufacturing increased by a third—but they didn't stay there. As we've moved into a service economy, the percentage of manufacturing workers has dropped back to less than it was in 1900 and everyone is scrambling for white-collar work. The road ahead was never clear, but it has become increasingly hazy during the past century.

Plenty of voices are now saying the pace of change will accelerate in the years ahead. As you young readers reflect on your ancestors described in this book, consider how they adapted to changing circumstances. The challenges you face will be different—but probably just as great.



This book is laid out beginning with the oldest known ancestor, proceeding branch-by-branch through the generations to the newest. There are some 2000 people in the Vahsholtz Family Tree, most of whom are omitted from this edition. We have focused on the Vahsholtz bloodline, putting the emphasis where we have information.

We cover 12 generations, emphasizing the 6th to 9th—roughly the hundred-years from 1875 to 1975, updated from Melvina's book. When the name of a blood relative is introduced in the text, it's printed in **boldface** followed by their year of birth. After that introduction, their name is again boldfaced if it seems useful for purposes of clarity. Editor's comments are in italics. The published book has charts as well as an index to help clarify relationships.

Chapter One—Generations 1 Through 5

Descendants of Martin Vahsholz (1675)

The first generation—the earliest Vahsholtz ancestor we know of—is Martin Vahsholz (1675). He was born in Zwilipp, Pomerania, and died there in 1725. He was a peasant farmer in the territory of Prussia (now part of Poland). The village was near Kolberg on the north coast of the Baltic Sea. The original Vahsholz family never spelled our name with a "t." **Christian Vahsholtz** (1811) signed his name with the "t" on his passport to America, for reasons unknown. Most branches of the family adopted that spelling—some introduced other variations. So far, we've not found a single member of the family living in this country who uses the original spelling.

The spelling of "Zwilipp" was even more contorted. Polish and early German people spelled it as Zwielipper ... the Latin form was Zwilippum. The Polish spelling, "Swielubie," is said to mean "The Atlantic Bridge to Germany." In this book, we spell the name Zwilipp, as that is the spelling on Zwilipp documents and seems most common. There are other variations, including Zwillip, which may be considered correct.

In about 1530 in Zwilipp, a "beautiful" church was built with the best stone, red-yellow in color. They were of a flat composition, "hard to fit by hand for a good job." In the church the folks heard God's Word preached loud and clear. The sermons were long on Sundays. The people looked forward to the frequent holidays. On Saturday evenings the church would ring the bell loud and clear to spread the news of the village of Zwilipp. It has been said that nearly every gravestone had the name of a Vahsholz inscribed on it. Martin's (1675) name, along with five subsequent generations of the family, appears on page 24, the "Stammtafel der Familie Vahsholz" Family Tree.

Generation Two

We have records of only one child of Martin Vahsholz (1675); **Christian Vahsholz** (1705). Like his father, he was a Bauer or farmer peasant of Hof #10 (house or farm

number—there were about 18 Hofs in Zwilipp at the end of WWII).

Generation Three

Erdmann Vahsholz (1747) was also born in Hof #10. "Erdmann" means earth farmer. He married Rosina Gauger and they had two sons, Christian (1784) and Martin (1791). After Rosina died in 1800 bearing another child who also died, Erdman married Maria Rackow.

Generation Four

Christian Vahsholz (1784) was also born, raised and died in Zwilipp. He married Dorothea Elisabeth Vahsholz (1785), a cousin or other relative from nearby Zwilipper's Ferry Boat Landing. She died in 1875 in Zwilipp; long after her husband had passed on in 1837. They had six children. All the children immigrated to America except the oldest girl, Henriette Marie Vahsholz Rackow (1809)⁸ and the second son, Friedrich Wilhelm (1815). Friedrich Wilhelm eventually lost Hof #10.

Martin Vahsholz (1791) was also born at Hof #10 and married Marie Rackow (1797) who was born in Hof #3. It was through this marriage that Hof #3 came into the family.

Generation Five

We don't know much about **Henriette Marie Vahsholz** (1809), the oldest child of Christian (1784), except that she was born in Zwilipp and died there in 1856.

Christian (1784) failed to leave a will at his death. Tradition and law in Prussia at that time said the home place should go to Christian Daniel Vahsholz (1811), the oldest son, with the girls receiving all the household goods and the other sons getting cash, if there was any to spare. Friedrich Wilhelm Vahsholz (1815), the second son, was promised the home place by his mother, Dorothea Elisabeth, after her husband died. Dorothea and Friedrich claimed they put a large sum of money into the place. Christian could not borrow money against the property to pay off his mother and brother, as they demanded, if he was to take ownership. A lawsuit over the matter went on for seven years. On account of the cost of litigation, Christian finally let Friedrich and his mother have the place.

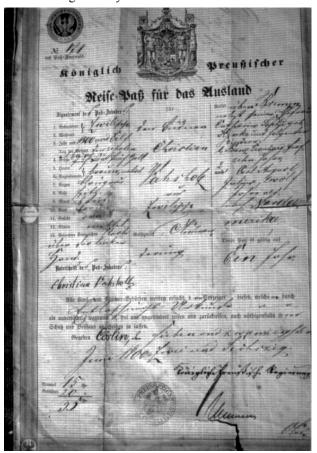
⁸ Henriette married Erdmann Rackow who farmed with oxen (cows) and lived in Zernin Cottage Stelle. He was called a Bauer Einlieger, which means that the cottage stood on the communal grounds for the peasants to use.

⁹ We're uncertain of the middle name, having only a couple of letters mentioning it. If anyone can confirm or refute the "Daniel," please tell us.



Christian Daniel Vahsholz (1811) on the right, with his wife "Sophie."

The law gave the mother the right to live in the upper floors of her home until her death, even if it fell into the hands of strangers. Apparently Friedrich was not a great manager, or perhaps because of the legal costs, he lost Hof #10 to strangers. ¹⁰ Friedrich moved to Degow and his mother lived at Hof #10 until her death in 1875. She died at the age of 90 years.



Christian's passport. Note the "Vahsholtz" signature.

Some time after giving up his right to Hof #10, Christian (1811) and his wife, Dorothea Marie "Sophie" Henke (1811) and family took out a passport to America dated June 27, 1862 at Koslin, Prussia. The family left by sailboat with the good wishes of Kaiser William I, the King of Prussia. They went to Bremen and over the Atlantic Ocean. They took just clothes and money. The trip took seven weeks and Christian felt that he would never make it. He spent much of his time in prayer, using the Bible that has been passed down to **Duane Leroy Vahsholtz** (1933). The family arrived about the 18th of August 1862. ¹¹

Volume 14 of *Germans to America*, the primary source of German Immigration data, lists:

Page 329	Ship: Therese To: New York	
Page 330	Vasholz,	
	Hermann	Age 52 Male; Farmer
	Bertha	Age 20 Female; Daughter
	Christian	Age 52 Male; Farmer
	Sophia	Age 52 Female; Wife
	Leonard	Age 15 Male; Son
	Carl	Age 12 Male; Son

Children older than 15 had to have their own passport.

Ship records are often in error. We now know that "Hermann," shown as age 52, was Christian Daniel's 18-year-old son **Friedrich August "Herman" Vahsholtz** (1844).

Christian's German Passport, translated by Louis Hitzeman:

- 1. Place of Birth: Zwilipp
- 2. Place of Living: Zwilipp
- 3. Year & Date of Birth: 10 March 1811
- 4. Height: 5'5" tall
- 5. Hair: Brown
- 6. Eyebrows: Brown
- 7. Eyes: Blue Gray
- 8. Nose: Pointed
- 9. Mouth: Broad mouth
- 10. Beard: Large Beard
- 11. Face: Round
- 12. Stature: Middle
- 13. Birthmark: Scar over left hand

For: to Journey Christian Vahsholtz from Zwilipp

Travel Purpose: to North America

People going: Traveled through Bremen with the family. Dorothea Sophie Marie born Henke and children. 1) Franz Leonhard, 15 yrs. 2) Karl August Julius, 12 years¹²

¹⁰ The new owners were named Varchman and Griesack. In 1920 the home place was divided into Hof #10a and #10b and used as a guesthouse.

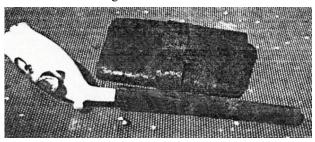
¹¹ My dad, **Fred Richard Vahsholtz** (1910) said an uncle had advised Christian to make the move to keep his sons out of the corrupt Prussian Army.

¹² The other children were on their own passports.

Signature of the Person of the Pass: *Christian Vahsholtz*¹³ Note that Christian's height, five-feet-five, ranked him as "middle" stature.

The personal belongings of Christian and Dorothea were handed down on the Hartman side of the family. As of 1972, Mae Ethel Whaley (1901) who married **Theodore Hartman** (1883) had the following personal belongings of Christian and Dorothea in her possession.¹⁴

- a) A wooden trunk that crossed the ocean in 1862.
- b) Pipe from Prussia.
- c) Lutheran Bible, leather bound, dated. (Duane Vahsholtz has this Bible now.)
- d) Small wooden table that Christian made himself.
- e) Picture of Christian Vahsholtz and his wife Sophie (see p. 16).
- f) Christian Vahsholtz' Passport and Naturalization papers (see p. 16).
- g) Incorporation papers of the first stone church, called St. John's Evangelical Lutheran.



This pipe, and leather purse belonged to Christian. Except for the Bible, we don't know where these family treasures are now. If anyone has knowledge of their whereabouts, we should try to be sure they stay in the family.



Not long after Christian's voyage, steamships cut the trip from six weeks or more to about a week, with smoother sailing, lower cost and enhanced safety.



The 1840 Bible contains no useful family records. Duane had it rebound, and aside from water stains, it's in pretty good shape.



Christian's family brought this muzzleloader from Germany. Dick Vahsholtz (1934) has it now.

Christian Vahsholtz farmed a half section of land located west of Chicago in Cook County, Illinois. After six years he sold his farm and was paid in gold coins, but was afraid to reinvest, so he buried it until the Civil War was over. He dug up the gold when the western frontier enticed him. The Vahsholtz's took the train to St. Joseph, Missouri where they bought horses, harness, wagons, milk cows and chickens. They crossed the Missouri River to go west to Seneca, Kansas.¹⁵

Christian Vahsholtz worked very hard to establish a church. He was strong in Christian training and faithful to his God. Several Vahsholtz ancestors signed the constitution of First St. John's Ev. Lutheran Church.

Later in life Christian and Sophie Vahsholtz lived with their children several months at a time or as long as they wished. Both died at the home of their daughter, **Bertha Eloise Vahsholtz Hartman** (1842). They're buried in St. John's Evangelical Lutheran cemetery, which is about $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles west, $\frac{1}{4}$ mile south of Highway 71 from Bern, Nemaha County, Kansas. It is located on a knoll in the middle of the field with cedar trees nearby—the church is gone; only the cemetery exists, and neither a road nor so much as a path leads to it. The church and cemetery were on land that once belonged to **Franz "Hermann" Albert**

17

¹³ This is the first appearance of the "t" in Vahsholtz.
¹⁴ She lived on the original farm, 9 ¾ miles north of Seneca, Kansas on Highway 63. She was a great help to the Hitzeman's in putting together the Vahsholtz story. We don't know where most of these items are now.

¹⁵ Melvina suggests the families included Christian Vahsholtz (1811) and family, his brother; Karl "Charles" Ludwig A. Vahsholz (1821), his wife and three children, and perhaps their brother Heinrich Ferdinand Vahsholz (1824).

Fahsholtz (1856), son of Karl "Charles" Ludwig A. Vahsholtz (1821).



In about 1975, Lou Hitzeman and Fred Vahsholtz view Christian's tombstone, at the location of the old St. John's Lutheran Church #2 Cemetery. It had been knocked nearly over and the top was laying beside it. Fred insisted that Christian had not come to this country, until Lou showed him the tombstone.



As this photo of Christian's tombstone shows, family and community efforts resulted in the repairing of the cemetery and resetting of tombstones. Fred took us, Bob (above) and Marge, to see the cemetery in 1993.



Christian's name can be seen on the front of the stone



Sophie's name is on the side

Christian's brother **Friedrich Wilhelm Vahsholz** (1815) married Wilhelmina Paape. He was the last Vahsholz farmer of Hof #10 who lost his father's heavily indebted home place. He then moved to Degow, which is only a short distance south of Zwilipp. His mother Dorothea (1785) stayed in her home at Hof #10 until her death.

Anna Regina Vahsholz (1817) came to the U.S. and married Christian Baller. She died in Nemaha County, Kansas.

Karl "Charles" Ludwig A. Vahsholz (1821) was born in Hof #10, Zwilipp, came to America about the same time as his brother Christian. According to Lulu Bates (1905), in a 1977 letter to Amelia Wicki, Karl and his family left Germany in about 1860 and were at sea for six weeks in a sailboat. There was some trouble and they stopped in Scotland and finally arrived in Canada. Lulu thought they settled a while in Kingston, Ontario, where

Karl "Charles" worked as a watchman in a piano factory. From there, they went to Cedarburg, Wisconsin and later to Nemaha County, Kansas. Karl took out citizenship papers in Nemaha County in 1877, and died there in 1889.



Karl "Charles" Ludwig's Vahsholz' gravestone

Karl "Charles" married Friederike Träder (1824) and she died sixteen years later in 1856. He then married Friederike's sister, Henrietta Träder (1827). In the Kansas Census of 1875 he was listed as a general farmer having \$1,000 worth of real estate and \$400 worth of personal property. A son, **Franz "Hermann" Albert Vahsholtz** (1856) changed the spelling to Fahsholtz. Karl "Charles" Ludwig A. Vahsholz (1821) also sometimes used the Fahsholtz spelling, but is not to be confused with Karl August Julius "Charles" Fahsholtz (1850) who apparently used this spelling only.

The youngest of Christian Vahsholz' (1784) children was **Heinrich Ferdinand** (1824). He came to America, and we're not sure what became of him. Perhaps when Karl "Charles" stopped off in Cedarburg, Wisconsin, Heinrich Ferdinand was with him and stayed there. Ruth (Blaschka) Walters found records of a Ferdinand Vasholz, said to have been born in 1826, who died in Cedarburg on July 21, 1893. His short obituary noted he was a farm hand and made no mention of relatives. The same information appears on a census obituary. We have no other "Ferdinand Vasholz" to fit these records. The

Stammtafel (see p. 24) gives Heinrich Ferdinand's birth year as 1824. It could be wrong, as could the Wisconsin records. Or we could be talking about two different people.

Switching now to another branch, **Martin Vahsholz** (1791) had a large family but we know very little about them aside from birth, death and marriage data in some cases. The member of this branch important to our story is:

Heinrich August Vahsholz (1823), who was born in Hof #3 in Zwilipp, and died there in 1884. He married Henriette Eichholz (1818), daughter of Friedrich Eichholz a farmer of Hof #3, Degow, Pomerania. They are the ancestors of Martin Hermann Robert August Vahsholz (1929) and the other known Vahsholz relatives still in Germany.

Chapter Two, Generations 5 & 6

Descendants of **Christian Daniel Vahsholtz** (1811)

Christian Daniel and all of his family came to the U.S. except for August Henry Vahsholz (1838) who was born in Zwilipp and died about 1861, and Henrietta Sophie Vahsholz (1840), who died at age two. August was a Forest Ranger for the King of Prussia, who had two sons and a daughter, Laura. His job was to protect the forest and its animal life. While on duty, he was shot by a trespassing hunter who didn't want to leave. The Kaiser (King of Prussia) ordered his men to "take care" of the trespasser immediately.

Bertha Elwine Eloise Vahsholtz (1842) was born in Zwilipp, and died in Nemaha County, Kansas. In 1863 she married H. Fred Hartman (1835) in Crete (west of Chicago).

Fred Hartman stowed away on a ship in 1852 to avoid conscription into the German Army. He came to New York and then to Chicago at age 19. His mother watched Fred and his brother Henry Hartman leave and gave them this advice, "Be always clean and righteous until your cool grave, and don't wander one finger's breadth from God's word." Fred and Bertha Hartman farmed in Illinois until their third child was born. In 1868 they moved to a farm about ten miles north of Seneca in Nemaha County.

Even after they moved to the farm, Fred continued his carpenter work in Seneca. It was not unusual for Fred to outrun or out-maneuver stray Indians on his way to or from work. One never knew how friendly they might be. In the fall of 1871, Fred hauled lumber from White Cloud, Kansas (a city near the Missouri River) to build their home and to replace a small log cabin they had been using. They lived through many crop failures and hardships. In 1868 and again in 1883, the grasshoppers took everything. For two years they lived on cornbread—made with water. The 1870 Census showed their farm to be valued at \$1,500, with \$500 worth of personal property.

According to her obituary, Bertha Hartman died of apoplexy and "a large audience attended the funeral."

Four years later, Fred died. Excerpts from his obituary: "Fred Hartman, Sr., passed away on Tuesday morning ... They came to Kansas in March, 1868, locating ... on a farm north of town where he lived until his death. This farm he received from Simon Bloss for the woodwork of the old stone house on the Bloss farm. Mr. Hartman was one of those sturdy pioneers so few of whom now remain, who were the prime factors in the development of the Central West. His life embraced the years in which prairie land advanced from a value measure by a mere pittance to one hundredfold. His labors were crowned with knowledge of work well done, his niche amply

filled, his children to several generations prosperous and contented in the land he adopted.

"He was a member of the German Church near his home. In 1913 he and his wife celebrated their golden wedding anniversary with a complete circle of their children and grandchildren about them, an event that brightened the downward slope of life."

Life could be harsh in those days, but they also found time for fun. **Helen (Hartman) Callam** (1920) relates: "H. Fred Hartman and some of his neighbors perpetrated a hoax on one of their unmarried neighbors who wasn't popular with the ladies. They introduced him to a shy but buxom young lady. After visiting with her several times at the neighbor's home, he proposed marriage. She accepted. An impromptu wedding was arranged. That night, after the ceremony and a dinner, they departed for his home. He was anticipating the joys of nuptial bliss when his 'bride' inquired if he wore false teeth. He whipped them out to answer her question. She gave a piercing scream and ran from the house, not to be found anywhere. The 'bride' was a neighbor's young hired man dressed up in some of his wife's clothes.

"This was written up in the Bern, Kansas newspaper."

Returning now to Christian Daniel's (1811) flock, **Friedrich August "Herman" Vahsholtz** (1844) was born in Zwilipp¹⁶ and died in 1935 at age 91.

In 1869 Herman married Johannah Wesselhoeft (1852). Johanna came to this country in 1866 with her mother and stepfather, Walter Schneider. Her family met the Vahsholtz's in the Chicago area and traveled with them to Nemaha County, Kansas.

Johannah died in 1944 in Hope, Kansas, aged 92.



Johanna and Herman Vahsholtz in their old age

¹⁶ Herman was the oldest living son of Christian's when they made the voyage and was listed on the ship's records as age 52—the same as his parents. His age should have been listed as 18. His naturalization papers confirm that he arrived in the U.S. in 1862 on the same ship as his parents.

The 1875 Kansas State Census listed Herman as a successful farmer in Nemaha County, Seneca, Kansas. He had \$2,500 worth of real estate and \$900 personal property. They moved from Nemaha County to near Woodbine, Kansas in 1899. They moved to Hope in 1915.

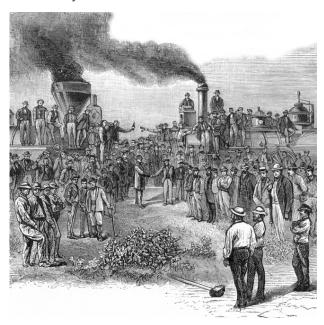
Christian Daniel's middle surviving son was **Franz Leonard Vahsholtz** (1847), born in Hof #10, Zwilipp, and died in Clay Center, Kansas in 1934.

Franz Leonard came to America in 1862 at the age of 15 with his parents, Christian (1811) and Dorothea "Sophie" Vahsholtz (1811).

Leonard was spelled "Leonhard" in German. Franz Leonard dropped the "h" from Leonhard in later years and used Franz L. Vahsholtz on business papers.

He worked on building the Great Western Railroad (Union Pacific). He was present at the driving of the Golden Spike at Promontory Point, Utah.

He married Sophia Wilhelmine Louise "Sophie" Robbing (1849) in 1870. She was born in Kaohlenfeld, Hannover, Germany, and died in 1923. About six months after Sophie's death, Franz Leonard married Catherine (Gehring) "Mrs. Earp" Erb (1867). She died June 20, 1945 in Clay Center.



This ceremony celebrated completion of the first rail line crossing the country



Franz Leonard Vahsholtz as a young man



Sophie Robbing as a young woman

Sophie Robbing was 16 years old when she came by herself to America on the sailing ship *Europa*. Her brothers wrote asking her to come to America where she could earn more money making bricks. The voyage took three months, and she arrived on June 5, 1866. One incident she related was the dense fog, so thick they could not see further than two feet on the ship's deck. It lasted three days with foghorns blowing constantly. Franz Leonard became acquainted with Sophie while she was working in a hotel in Seneca, Kansas and they married.



Sophie's Trunk she brought from Germany



Sophie's trunk still shows her destination address in America. The trunk is in the possession of Jay Brooks Peterson, Velma Friedrich Peterson's son.

In 1995, Irma Friedrich White (1905) told us (Bob and Marge) another story that she'd heard from her mother, Hulda Vahsholtz Friedrich (1874). She said that Sophie was of the peasant class and was being "courted" by someone of the upper class whom she described as a "prince." She left little doubt that such "courtship" left the young girl with few options, and the "courtship" was unlikely to come to a happy resolution. Sophie, at age 16 with brothers in America, packed what she could in her trunk and set sail for America. Mostly that trunk

included clothing and such necessities, but she also packed a necklace given her by the prince.



Our examination suggests the "Prince" didn't waste a lot of money on this piece of jewelry.

Sophie's trip was successful and in her old age, she wanted to pass the necklace on to her descendants. She did so by giving her daughters **Hulda Friedrich** (1874) the necklace and **Amanda Hitzemann** (1873) its pendant. In her last years and having no heirs, Irma gave us the necklace, asked us to find the pendant and be sure the two pieces stayed in the family.

So far, our inquiries have gone nowhere. No one else has ever heard this story, nor does the necklace look familiar to anyone we've spoken to. If you can shed light on this mystery, we'd love to hear from you.

Returning to our story, in 1870 Franz Leonard purchased 160 acres of farmland in Nemaha County, Kansas. He paid \$725, or \$4.54 per acre. The pioneer families endured the grasshoppers in 1870, the big flood in 1883 and the great blizzard of January 12, 1888. Franz Leonard and Sophie built a 20'x40' stone house of two rooms—living room and dining room area with a 12'x15' lean-to for a kitchen on the north side of the house. They dug a dirt floor cellar under the living room and constructed a porch on the south side. A small stairway from the kitchen led to the two rooms in the attic that served for sleeping quarters for their children. The original house was standing in August, 1969. The house was no longer used as a larger two-story frame house had been built nearer the road.

Farming in Seneca was becoming more mechanized than it had been for his father, Christian (1811). Still, they worked hard to bring up the family; most of the work was done by hand and they traded labor among neighbors rather than hiring. They took wheat to the mill to be ground for making bread. Oats and wheat were still cut with a grass mower and bundled by hand.



Lou Hitzeman inside the Nemaha County house

One time Franz Leonard drove 16 miles to Humbolt, Nebraska, with milk and eggs to purchase groceries. They offered him three cents per dozen for eggs—so he took them back to the wagon and fed them to the horses instead of buying hay at the livery stable.

In 1884, Franz Leonard purchased 75 acres for \$1,748. Again, no mortgage was given. In 1885, a year of severe economic depression, he took a \$1,100 mortgage on the home place.

Franz Leonard and Sophie sold their 235-acre farm for \$11,100 in 1902. They moved everything to Lyon County, near Olpe, Kansas. There they purchased 240 acres of farmland for \$6,550. In 1903 they purchased another 200 acres for \$4,500. Later Leonard and Sophie purchased the remainder of the half-section. In 1919 they sold a half-section (320 acres) for \$19,000 to fund retirement.

Melvina tells a farming success story. Having come to America as a teenager, Franz Leonard worked hard and saved money. As the chart below summarizes Melvina's findings, he bought his first Nemaha County farm with \$725 cash savings. That's equal to about \$5,000 of today's dollars—a tidy sum that was much harder to save back then than now. With his bride, he worked that farm, built a house and despite more challenges than we can imagine, saved enough to buy more land, still without borrowing. Times remained tough and prices of commodities were going down while the price of land went up. It took courage to buy land. In 1902, Franz Leonard sold his Nemaha County farm and moved to

Olpe, Lyon County, Kansas where land was cheaper. He was able to buy some of the best in that area and double his acreage for a comparable investment. By 1919 he was able to sell most of that land and nearly double his money, hanging onto more than a hundred acres, presumably rented for retirement income. When he retired to Clay Center, he had \$19,000 from the land he'd sold, rental income from the land he still owned, and whatever cash savings he might have put away. At that time he and Sophie could have bought a nice house in Clay Center for \$5,000 and retired in comfort without any help from Social Security or pension. They were what was called "well-off." His long obituary described him as, "an ambitious and judicial father, [who] provided well for his family."

Year	Acres Price	Yr. 2000 \$	Action
1870	160 \$725	\$5,000	Bought Kansas Farm
1884	75 1,748	14,500	Bought More Land
1902	235 11,100		Sold Out Nemaha
			County
1902	240 6,550	81,900	Bought Land in Lyon
			County
1902	200 4,500	50,000	Bought More Land
Later	? ?	?	Bought More Land
1919	320 19,000	127,000	Sold Most of Land

In 1910, Franz Leonard and Sophie moved to 910 East Lincoln in Clay Center, Kansas and retired from general farming. They celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1920.

When five year-old grandson Louis Hitzeman visited his grandfather's modern Clay Center house, he went to the barn instead of the new inside bathroom saying, "Better stay with the old—take no chances."



Franz Leonard's Clay Center house, in about 1975

After Sophie's death in 1923, Franz Leonard married "Mrs. Earp," (Catherine Gehring Erb) in 1924. **Darrell Brockmeier**, (1930) said that Great Grandpa Vahsholtz (Franz Leonard) told Darrell's mother that his second wife, "Grandma Earp," was "not like the first wife."



Franz Leonard and Sophie beside a Model T Ford



Franz Leonard and his second wife, "Mrs. Earp." Might that be the same Model T?

Following is Sophie's obituary, originally printed in German, apparently in a Clay Center paper, and translated for us by Hildegard V. Gross of the Mormon Family History Center in Santa Maria, California. We were surprised by the last paragraph. Hildegard suggested this was probably written mainly for the benefit of people back in the Old Country, and was used as a way of conveying some timely news about the harvest.

Clay Center, Kan., 27 June 1923

On this day we buried the wife of our church officer F.L. Vahsholtz. We laid her down in the lap of the earth at our beautiful city cemetery. She was born Sophie Robbing in Kohlenfeld near Hannover, Germany on December 4, 1849.

In the spring of 1866 she came with her brother to this land. At first she settled down in the state of Illinois. In the year 1868 she came to the state of Kansas. On the 12th of August 1870 in Nemaha Country, she married Mr. F.L. Vahsholtz with whom she shared 53 years of joy and sorrow.

For approximately a year the Lord saw fit to have her carry this cross. Her strength started to dwindle and walking became very difficult. Several months before her death, her feet refused to serve her. Even so, most of the time she was pain-free, thanks to the Lord. The last four to five weeks of her earthly pilgrimage she spent in bed, but was always very satisfied and said to every visitor, "I'm doing good." Her end came a little quicker than we had expected. On the 25th of June at 4:15 P.M. she closed her eyes for this life.

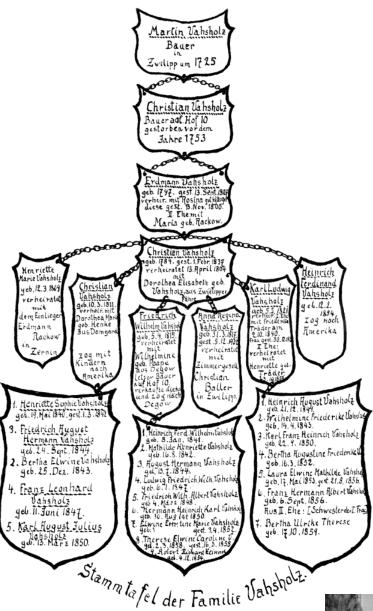
"Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord," Revelations 14:13 was the German service text and Psalm 23:4 was the text for the English part of the sermon.

Survivors include her husband, two sons, three daughters, one brother, 27 grandchildren, three sons-in-law and other relatives. Three children preceded their mother in death. She was aged 73 years, six months and 21 days.

The wheat harvest is in full swing and profits look very good. April and May had a lot of rain and the low spots were often flooded. The rye suffered as a result. The alfalfa was very good. The farmers have been blessed with lots of work. The city people always think, "The rich farmers!" Try farming for one year and then you will think different.



This Hoosier cabinet was in Franz Leonard and Sophie's kitchen. After his death, his second wife sold the cabinet to her daughter. Fred Vahsholtz (1910) bought it at her auction. It's now in the home of Kim (Vahsholtz) Wallace (1961).



After WWI when Germany was in ruins, Franz Leonard was in contact with some of the family remaining in the Zwilipp area. According to Lulu Bates (1905) in a letter dated 1977 to Amelia Wicki, Franz Leonard "...received a letter from some relative of the Vahsholz, telling about their losses and asking if they could help. He brought the letter up to Dad (Franz "Hermann" Albert Fahsholtz 1856) and he and Dad sent money at different times. In return for their help, Uncle Leonard received this family tree, or 'Stammtafel' as they call it there, to show their appreciation." Mr. Asmus, a Zwilipp schoolteacher, apparently prepared it.

This "Stammtafel" has proven a priceless resource in establishing the relationships among the surviving members of the Vahsholz family. A much-reduced copy is printed above. The original "Stammtafel" is about eight inches wide, and 15 inches tall.

Irma Friedrich White (1905) was given a book wrapped in brown paper that she remembered being told was the family Bible. Having no children and knowing of my interest in family history, she decided to give it to me (Bob). Just prior to our arrival to pick it up, she opened the parcel to be sure it was still in good shape.

It was in good condition but it was **not** the family Bible, but a volume of Luther's writings in German. We were all disappointed of course, but inside that book we found two letters in German script. Parts were missing but they were clearly written in thanks to the American Vahsholtz family. We are grateful to Hildegarde V. Gross of the Mormon Family History Center in Santa Maria, California for the translations.

October 1921—Dacig, Sandgrube 27-A

Dear Mr. Vehrholtz:

I am so very sorry that I could not thank you sooner with all my heart for your big help, but my little children took in the mail when I was very ill. They were worried and scared ... and they put it with the rest of the mail. I did not find it until today and try to hurry to thank you.

We are at the end of our strength and knowhow. I had double lung, kidney and intestine infection, including a nervous breakdown. Without your help from across the ocean, my children would have been lost.



Irma and John White, the day we got the "Bible"

The war took everything from us, right from the beginning we had to flee twice. Though living close to

the motherland, we lost everything. Because of my illness I was brought here to the Pastoral place. No one knows us here. My father was superintendent; he is dead. My brother lost everything in Upper Silesia! My small oldest daughter had an accident and is paralyzed for the last five years. Due to fatigue, hunger, and distress the children are all sick! Nervous choking attacks and stomach illness! Five daughters and small boy, who moans and cries at night in a dark room, his ankle broke three weeks ago and he is laying in a cast. Due to the illness and suffering of my husband, life is a pain. I have nothing left to trade or sell.

No heating in the house, no heating material to burn or potatoes for the winter. No lard to put on the bread. Now Christmas is at the door, the Light of Love. You probably have children of your own; please have mercies for my children. I sent them begging to strangers, but they would rather starve and freeze than go out to beg. They have suffered too much. Now we wish we had some cabbage to make cabbage soup. We have gleaned ears of wheat and ground it on a coffee mill to make papmeal. We have no lard and never meat. Now in winter, no potatoes. No one can stand this.



Here's a sample of the German text

You offered us help in such an honorable way, oh had I only been able to write sooner. The dollar is high now; for heavens sake please send us some dollars in a letter. I can exchange it here. Please send it soon, because we won't be able to stand it until fall is here. And if you and your loving wife could send us some lard or bacon, you would do us a great deed. We can buy nothing. To be able to live it takes thousands. The husband's pension only pays 3,307 Marks per year and that is hardly enough for the expensive rent. To live and buy clothes etc. we have nothing. Also no heating material or potatoes, what shall happen?

One pound of fish costs 25 to 30 Marks. One pound of lard costs 36 Marks. Flour and sugar 6 Marks and butter up to 30 Marks. 100 pounds of potatoes cost 150 Marks—how can I buy these items?

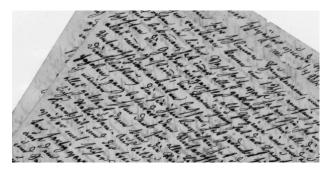
What shall I feed my small ones; milk is not available? You are a man who can help us, so I can start an existence for us. In God's mercy will you please help us? One pair of shoes costs 400 Marks; I can't afford clothes, and America has promised us...

Should I be able to present my children a warm room and a table with food at Christmas, I would thank you for it on my knees.

With my friendliest greetings, and also to your lovely wife,

Yours truly,

Mrs. Pastor Gertrud Jahn



A second letter had no first or last page but appears to have been written from Berlin by a Vahsholz relative in less desperate circumstances.

... arrived well in Berlin in the afternoon about five o'clock on the 31st of October. On the first of November at noon came Hedwig with her son from the place where she works. Wilhelm arrived Sunday just about five o'clock in the afternoon. Now the joy was great and now I had a lot of work to do, to cook for all and to shop. My mother was very weak and almost a skeleton. On Hedwig's things, a lot to alter and mend. Wilhelm and Hedwig took care of things that they could, considering the distance; in short it was hustling and bustling 'til late in the night; to top if off I could not sleep because of all the excitement. But the dear Lord always helps the weak to overcome everything, even though I thought I would break down. At the same time the worry about Hedwig. When I looked at her; her sad eyes, the large shadows under her eyes can't mean health, even though she says she's fine. The whole past half-year, she lived in worry and our meeting again was for me a painful memory. As soon as she saw me, she threw her arms around my neck and cried and I had a hard time to console her. Again it was not like a joyful meeting, more like a painful goodbye forever. May the dear Lord guard my premonition, but as God will, whatever He will send. I will try to carry patiently and we all want to put ourselves in His hands.

On the eighth of November, she left on a Sunday morning at 3:30 and arrived well in the evening at 12 o'clock in Bonn where she then met my sister. I thought every day that she would come back. The Baroness von Katzele didn't let her go though, and I had to stay with my old mother and take care of her, as at this time of the year she becomes weaker.

About 15 minutes after Wilhelm arrived here, he received a dispatch from the postman; he was being promoted to Sergeant and that within six years! This was a great joy for us. Then Wilhelm left on the 11th of November at seven o'clock in the morning.



The caption of the back of this photo from Alfred Vahsholtz' album reads, "William Vahsholtz, wife and daughter. His sister, Hedwig Emilie Vahsholtz. His mother, wife of William Vahsholtz Sr. Royal guard in Black Forest in Germany who was shot in heart by a poacher while on duty. Gold watch chain was shot in heart, when found." We can't tie these names into the Vahsholz genealogy, but the story sounds similar to the one that opened this chapter. Can anyone shed further light on this?

I received notes from Hedwig, even though written in pencil in a hurry, saying she was doing all right, His Lordship was kind and friendly and Aunt is staying longer for her, while she is getting used to everything. In the third week I received a letter of despair from her where she wished she was able to die, because the terrible stomach pain returned and that she was not going to be able to stand it a second time. Imagine my fearful scare. I was in despair, I walked around in the room hands wringing, now what is there to do? Her in the wide world far away, the terrible travel expenses to Bonn 14 hours from Berlin. Everything confused my head. Then I

sat down and wrote my sister, "I am in despair, bring Hedwig home—being ill she can't be useful to strangers," my God what shall happen, what shall we do? Few days later I received a letter from my sister, saying, "Be calm, I have not mentioned your utterance to the Baron and Baroness. They won't let Hedwig go. They called the doctor and he said she does not have to leave her job." The doctor ordered rest, to eat light food and to go to bed and also prescribed some powder, which then helped. Now she writes that she is very well and always has red cheeks. May the Lord continue to bless her.



Duane Vahsholtz supplied this photograph of (apparently) the same soldier. On the back it says in German, "Wilhelm Vahsholz fir Onkel Leonhardt" and below that someone wrote "Born 1842." Martin Vahsholz from Germany says the uniform looks similar to the one his father wore in WWI. If this soldier is from that era, the birth information appears to be wrong.

My sister did not arrive in Berlin until the fifth of January in terrible cold weather and told me that Hedwig is doing well, but it doesn't leave her time to write, because she is so busy with Madam Baroness. We should not constantly urge her to write, because she should not sacrifice her night rest for that. I know how it is, when one is at the job and I am satisfied to get a sign of life here and there. In all that excitement and worry about Hedwig's illness, I

received then your letter from Wilhelm with the sad death notice about our good Grandmother. I was deeply shaken, it came blow after blow and it affected me so much that the sad news caused me to have headaches and I had no desire to do anything and therefore didn't write. I wanted to leave and travel daily, but because of my weakness and the terrible cold weather, I could not undertake anything. I then arrived well on the 28th of March in Lütow and will be busy the whole summer in quietness, so I can rest in the evening. We still have it here real cold; I still have to heat-up daily and in the nights still have frost.

Now some more about Wilhelm. This entire muddle and his heavy schedule and duties kept him from writing and I still scarcely receive his letters. Six weeks have gone by and he wrote that he has not been able to write to dear grandfather and uncle, but maybe tomorrow he will be able and so it went on and on. He is being changed around a lot, has to learn new difficult duties and when he came back from maneuvers, immediately he was commanded into the Reserve Regiment, which will be pulled together each year. From four to six weeks he had to use his time to do the duties of sergeant major, furnish the office, and had a company of approximately 40 men under him. He had a terrible captain; each day had to report to him about everything. Came at one o'clock, always received him with the same words, "Now dear Vahsholz, what do you have?" He never received anything in return, yet always everything was a success, paid out the monies for the whole troop, all papers in and out were exact, and everything balanced. At the end, the captain let the non-commissioned officers all step up and forward, thanked everyone for the good and loyal services shown to him. The captain made then a special mention in front of everyone; "I say my best thank you for all his services in this time to officer Vahsholz."

Everything was a success—then came the journey to us, then again that terrible recruiting education, next the worry with Hedwig's illness and the sad death; everything shakes him deeply because he has such loving feelings for all. When he was done with the recruits, he was voted by the regiment's commander as best officer and sergeant and sent to Potzdam to the regimental school for half a year. But first he was sent to the staff division in Posen and then on the 15th of April to Potzdam, where he arrived well and in good health at four o'clock in the afternoon. Before that he was being examined three times by the doctor with the rest of his troop. Only very healthy men were allowed to be sent there. Now may the Lord continue to guide him on his way. Now he probably will write to you also as soon he is settled, and don't be angry with us because of the late writing.

These are the only reasons my dear relative, you are all lucky to live and to be together. How difficult it is for an alone-standing woman ...

So ends that letter in mid-sentence. Now we'll return to the other offspring of **Christian Daniel Vahsholz** (1811).

Karl August Julius "Charles" Fahsholtz (1850) was born in Hof # 10 in Zwilipp and died in 1923 in Clovis, New Mexico. His first wife was Sophia Hecht (1855) whom he married in 1873. She died of childbirth in 1875. In 1878, Karl married Elizabeth "Lizzie" Hunzeker (1860) who was born in Berne, Switzerland, came to U.S. in 1864, and died in 1937 in El Paso, Texas. Ten children were born to the second marriage.

Karl "Charles" was the youngest son of Christian (1811) and came over with his parents in 1862 at age 12. He was said to have changed his last name so people would pronounce it correctly in English, and spell the name the way it sounded. (V has the F sound in German). In the Kansas census of March 1, 1875 the Fahsholtz farm in Nemaha County showed that he had 160 acres of diversified farming as follows:

\$70.00 machinery

\$30.00 wages and board paid out

79 acres of pasture

24 acres of flax (linen)

25 acres of spring wheat

22 acres of corn

5 acres of barley (beer and grain)

4 acres of oats (horses and food)

1 acre of potatoes

2 Horses

2 Milk Cows

2 sheep (wool and meat)

6 pigs

1 dog

Karl "Charles" was active in the Hamiltonian "Horse Breeder" business. The Fahsholtz's moved to Oklahoma in about 1895. In about 1900, they moved to Hollene, New Mexico, near Clovis.

The last of Christian Vahsholz' (1811) offspring was **Minnie Vahsholtz** (1863). She was born in Fort Dearborn (near Chicago), Illinois and married Lutheran Church Pastor Fred Maske. Their children were:

Hulda Maske married Mr. Laurenz or Lawerenz. They had three daughters, **Bertha**, **Amanda** and **Hulda**.

Fred Maske married Rose and they had one child, Else.

Minnie Maske

Bertha Maske

If anyone has any more information about the Maske's, please let us know.

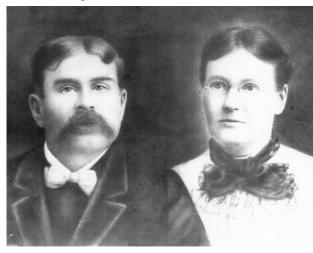
¹⁷ My dad, **Fred Vahsholtz** (1910) said he'd heard the reason for the change in spelling was to lessen confusion for the Nemaha County mailman, who must have faced quite a challenge sorting the Vahsholtz mail.

Chapter Three, Generations 5 & 6

Descendants of **Friedrich Wilhelm Vahsholz** (1815)

Returning now to another branch from Christian (1784); his son **Friedrich Wilhelm**, a brother to Christian Daniel (1811), married Wilhemina Paape. Their children, all born in Pomerania, include:

- Heinrich Ferdinand Wilhelm Vahsholz (1841).
- Mathilde Henrietta Vahsholz (1842).
- August Hermann Vahsholz (1844).
- Ludwig Friedrich Wilhelm Vahsholz (1847).
- Friedrich Wilhelm Albert Vahsholz (1848). Friedrich had a son who came to the U.S.
- Hermann Heinrich Karl Vahsholz (1850) who we believe was married to Rosalina Peel. She may belong somewhere else in this branch.
- Elwine Ernestine Marie Vahsholz (1852).
- Robert Richard Heinrich Vasholz (1854) came over in 1891 or 1892. He married Bertha Friederika Antonio Hasenpusch (1855) from Belgrade, Germany. He came to Stanton, Nebraska, USA in 1892 at age 37 to farm.



Robert and Bertha Vahsholz

 The last child of Friedrich and Wilhelmina was Therese Elwine Caroline Vahsholz (1858) who died as an infant.

Kelli Ann Vahsholtz Olson (1975) researched the Nebraska branch and reported, "In 1919 Robert and Bertha resided on a small acreage at the edge of Fremont, Nebraska and they were members of the Trinity Lutheran Church." Kelli also quotes from the Fremont, Nebraska *Tribune*, dated 07-18-1942, probably from an obituary:

"Mrs. Robert Vasholz was educated in schools of Berlin, and came from a long line of famous educators. Members of her family were knighted in 1649, and she was an honorary member of Taolean Club, an educational organization in California. She possessed a fine character

and an outstanding philosophical mind, and many people, including several American celebrities, have been inspired by her correspondence.

"When Robert died in 1934 from a brief episode of pneumonia, his estate had been willed to his dear wife Bertha. She entered the hospital 15 Feb 1942, moved to the Good Samaritan Home in May, and remained there until her death 17 July 1942."

A message from **Robert Ivan "Bob" Vasholz** (1936) says: "My grandmother Bertha Hasenpusch Vasholz (1855) tells of her trip on the train with my grandfather and seven children to Bremen hafen from Konigsberg to embark for America in 1891. On the train she met and visited with a very nice lady. Upon arrival to Bremen, the family stayed in a hotel for the night. The next day they went down to the ship to depart to America. When they counted noses, they realized there were only six children. They were sure they had left with seven.

"Where was the three-year old? After some consternation, the woman who my grandmother befriended on the train arrived with the wandering stray. She had seen the child without his parents and realized he was lost. Since my grandmother didn't designate her children by their names, but by their age, we were curious who this three-year old was. I finally figured that it was my father **Franz "Frank" Joseph Vasholz** (1887). I always wondered, if my father had not made it to America, where would I be today?"

Doloris Vera (Vasholz) Anderson (1912) wrote, "The family is supposed to have sailed from the port of Bremen in 1891 on the steamship Stuttgart. This is according to the Bertha Hasenpusch records."

Other members of this family besides Robert may have also come to the U.S.

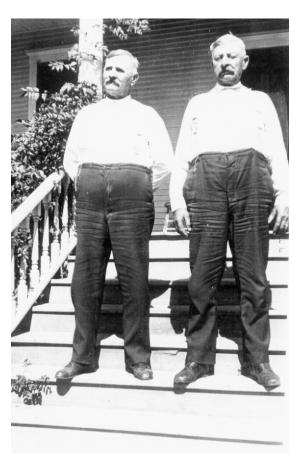
We think it's likely that Friedrich Wilhelm (1815) had a second wife whose name we do not know, and that she and Friedrich were the parents of the following children:

- Theodore Vasholz (1859) was born in Pomerania and died in Stanton, Nebraska in 1938. His first wife was Emma Ohm (1864), and his second wife was Bertha Polenz. Theodore and Emma had an adopted son, Walter.
- Frank F. Vasholz (1869) was born in Kolberg, Germany and died in 1944. His wife was Louise Siedschlag. From their obituaries, we have determined that their children were Mrs. Fred (Vasholz) Huebner, Mrs. Leo (Vasholz) Slobodny, Esther (Vasholz) Hakanson, Mrs. Elmer (Vasholz) Braasch, and Adele (Vasholz) Jones.
- Laura (Vasholz) Glaser, their sister, may be older or younger.

We wish we had more information on this branch.



Theodore Vasholz with wife Emma and son Walter. This photo was taken on their 25th anniversary. They celebrated by going to Germany, and young Walter went along.



Theodore Vahsholz on the right, with Hermann Fahsholtz in a 1927 photo taken at Theodore's home in Stanton, Nebraska.



This is Hermann's second wife Anna with Theodore's sister, Mrs. Laura Glaser. We're guessing Anna is the one on the left, but we don't know. Also taken in 1927.

Chapter Four, Generations 5 & 6

Descendants of Karl "Charles" Ludwig A. Vahsholz (1821)

Charles Vahsholz married Friederike Träder (1824) and they had six children:

 Heinrich "August" Vahsholz (1841) who was born in Zwilipp, and died in 1924 in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. He married Augusta Friederike Krueger (1846) in Germany. She was born in Natelfitz, Pomerania and died in 1918 in Cedarburg.



"August" Vahsholz in uniform



Augusta and August Vahsholz beside their home

According to his obituary, Heinrich "August" served in the Prussian War in 1866. In 1868 he and his new wife Augusta Krueger came to America, settling in

New York. "He remained there a year and then moved to Cedarburg. He was a mason by trade, and was a friendly man, a dutiful father, kind and good."

His State of Wisconsin Death Certificate shows the spelling of his name as "August Vasholtz." We used the original spelling as his name is spelled several ways in the records.

The following is from his wife's obituary, entitled *Death of a Good Woman*, "... She was married to August Vasholtz in the old country and came to America with her husband in August, 1869, settling in Cedarburg where they have resided ever since.

"She was a kind and noble old lady and bore the burden of her suffering without much complaint. She was a woman of much character, a good Christian and a true friend, and her death even in her old age has left much sorrow."

- Wilhemine Friederike Vahsholz (1843) stayed in Pomerania as far as we know.
- **Karl Franz Heinrich Vahsholz** (1850) stayed in Pomerania as far as we know.
- Bertha Augustine Friederike Vahsholz (1852) stayed in Pomerania as far as we know.
- Laura Elwine Mathilde Vahsholz (1853) died as a child in Zwilipp in 1856.
- Next we come to Heinrich "August's" youngest brother, Franz "Hermann" Albert Fahsholtz (1856), who was born in Pomerania, lived in Wisconsin, moved to Kansas as a young man and died in 1942 in Clay Center, Kansas. He married Verena Henrietta Elizabeth "Lizzie" Hunzeker (1856). After she died he married Anna D.M. (Buck) Bates (1869). In a letter dated December 11, 1990, Frances Barnes, sister of the Bern, Kansas historian Amelia Wicki, described him as "a large stalwart person, big voice, but kind and gentle."

Before they moved to Linn in 1910, Hermann and Lizzie owned the farm where the second St. John's Evangelical Church west of Bern had stood. It was a 2-storey frame building and was torn down in 1906 or 1907. In the cemetery lie several Vahsholtz families and relatives. There are cedar trees in the graveyard area on a knoll in the middle of the farm.

After moving to Linn, Hermann Fahsholtz changed the "V" to "F" because the people in Linn could not pronounce it the German way.

Anna Bates (1869) had a daughter, Lulu Bates (1905) who was raised in the household, but apparently not legally adopted since she did not change her name to Fahsholtz. Nevertheless, Lulu took a great interest in Vahsholz genealogy. She provided much of the information that made this book possible through her many letters to family

members over the years. She died October 4, 1983 in Clay Center, Kansas.



"Hermann" and Lizzie Fahsholtz

The second wife of Karl "Charles" Ludwig A. Vahsholz (1821) was Henrietta Träder (1827) who died in 1857. They had one child:

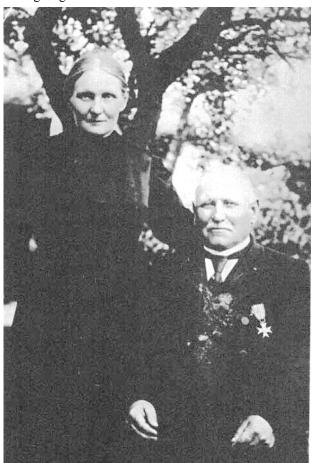
• Bertha Ulrike Theresa "Ida" Vahsholz (1859) who married Edward Blanke.

Chapter Five, Generations 5 & 6

Descandants of Heinrich August Vahsholz (1823)

Finally at this level there's **Heinrich August Vahsholz**, son of **Martin Vahsholz** (1791) and Marie Rackow (1797). Heinrich's wife was Henriette Eichholz (1818). Their children were all born in Zwilipp and include:

- Karl Friedrich Wilhelm Vahsholz (1848) who only lived a month.
- Karl Wilhelm Jul. Vahsholz (1849) who died at age eight.



Hulda and Robert Vahsholz

- Robert Heinrich Ferdinand Vahsholz (1852) who married Hulda Kath (1862) from Berlin. He was president of the church in Zwilipp for a long time. He died in 1924. Until 1945, his son Hermann Otto Gustav Vahsholz (1895) still owned Hof #3 (see Chapter 14). Hermann is the father of Martin Hermann Robert August Vahsholz (1929), our distant German cousin who came to the Vahsholtz reunion in 1992.
- Theodor August Paul Vahsholz (1855) died at age three.
- Friedbert Rud. Franz Vahsholz (1857) died at age 16.

- Laura Therese Elwine Frederike Vahsholz (1859) died before her first birthday.
- Gustav Richard Emil Vahsholz (1860) married Ulrike Firzlaff. He died in 1920 in Seefeld, Germany.
- Antonie Elwine Bianka Vahsholz (1863) died at age four.
- **Hermann Karl Albert Vahsholz** (1866) married Emilie Wetzel. He died in Kolberg, East Germany.
- Franz Friedrich August Vahsholz (1869) married Auguste Karus.

Mr. Asmus, the teacher from the church in Zwilipp wrote in 1920 to Franz Leonard, "The family Vahsholz is well-to-do and highly respected in the district (Kreise). You can be very proud."

At this point, we move on to the remaining generations of each branch as defined in previous chapters. We start off with generation six, adding generations seven and eight (eight marked by bullets), and tossing in information from succeeding generations if appropriate.

Chapter **Six**, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of **Bertha Elwine Eloise** (Vahsholtz)

Hartman (1842)

H. Fred Hartman (1835) and **Bertha Vahsholtz** (1842) had a large family; nine children, and all but one survived.



This is the only Hartman photograph we have, and we haven't been able to identify the people.

Herman Hartman (1864) was born at Eagle Lake, Illinois. At age 24, he married Kathrina "Katie" Baker (1870). He passed away in February 1893 from complications of typhoid fever. He is buried in the St. John's Evangelical Lutheran cemetery southwest of Bern, Kansas. Katie is supposed to have planted the cedar tree that is at his gravesite. Fred Frehe was working for Herman during his illness and stayed on to help afterwards.

Five years later Katie married Fred Frehe and she lived to age 95. Katie was always well liked by the Hartman family. She was a sister to John T. Baker, Sr. (1869), who married **Bertha Hartman** (1875), daughter of H. Fred Hartman and Bertha Elwine Eloise.

Fred H. Hartman, Jr. (1866), was born at Eagle Lake, Illinois and died in 1945 at Long Beach, California. He

married and later divorced Ellen "Ella" J. Graney (1872). **Helen Hartman Callam** (1920) recalls that Fred "... worked as a jack-of-all-trades for a number of years before and after his marriage—farming, carpentry, etc. After he got a job with the railroad he stuck with that the rest of his life, eventually working up to conductor.

"Fred and Ella lived apart for many years. It was rumored that religion and his liking for alcoholic beverages were the main problems with their marriage. He paid her alimony until all the children were of age. He used to joke and say when he met St. Peter he could tell him he always paid the alimony."

Children of Fred Jr. and Ella were:

- James F. Hartman (1893) who married Zella Watts of Pocatello, Idaho. They had no children. James was killed in motorcycle accident in Pocatello.
 Helen Callam recalls, "He was an amateur mechanic and installed brakes on his motorcycle. The brakes locked up and threw him over the handlebars and broke his neck. It was just at the end of WWI. He is buried in Pocatello. His widow later remarried."
- Winifred Hartman was married twice and divorced. No children. She died in Riverside, California and is possibly buried in Riverside where her mother lived.
- Raymond Hartman (1903) died in 1974, probably in California. He also married, divorced and remarried, having no children by either union.

A note from Helen Callam says, "... these children (of Fred & Ella) were all born in the Seneca/Bern (Kansas) area ... from what my Grandma Hartman said, I think Winifred and Raymond stayed pretty much in California where their mother lived. I think Ella divorced Fred when Raymond was a few years old."

The next child of H. Fred and Bertha was **Henry Fred Hartman** (1868), who was born at Eagle Lake, Illinois and died in 1930 in Nemaha County, Kansas. He married Wilhelmina "Minnie" Louisa Maria Poppe (1873). She was the daughter of Fred Poppe and Amelia Wiesedeppe. He appears to have dealt with the confusion of names by using the name "Fritz" (from the 1880 census) and "Henry F." (on his tombstone).

His obituary said, in part, "The entire community was shocked Monday morning when the news spread that Henry Hartman had passed away during the night ... While yet an infant his parents came to Nemaha County, Kansas where he resided over 61 years. He is numbered among those who grew up with the community, coming here with the first settlers, and growing to manhood amid the surroundings of the frontier.

"His friends were innumerable. He radiated good cheer and friendliness endearing himself to all who knew him. Last Friday his home was the scene of a happy family reunion when all his children and grandchildren were home for the day. On Wednesday they gathered again with leaden hearts to bid a loved one a last fond farewell."

Helen Callam (1920) wrote, "I talked with Uncle Carl Hartman and he said he clearly remembered his father's death. Especially since he was embalmed in his own home. Uncle Carl said he could remember his older brother, Elmer, carrying the bucket with his father's blood out of the room and across the yard and dumping it under some trees.

"I can remember the night of Grandpa's death but I cannot remember the following days—except my dad took me to school the next day in the car. I cannot remember anything about the funeral or interment—perhaps younger children didn't go to funerals in those times."

Children of Henry and Minnie Hartman:

Elmer Edward Henry Hartman (1892), who died in 1974, in Benton, Arkansas, just about the time Wal-Mart was getting started there. Elmer was born in Nemaha County and started his education at the Riverside School. Then he went to Bern and staved with his Poppe Grandparents and went to the Bern School until about 1903. The last year they lived south of Bern he went to the German Bible School at the Friedens Evangelical Church, taught by the ministers. He rode a mule from Bern to his Grandfather Hartman's farm on Sunday afternoon and left the mule there during the week and walked a half-mile north to school. On Friday evenings he rode the mule back to the farm south of Bern. When they moved to the Turkey Creek farm again in 1909, he attended the Tayor Rapids country school on the east side of the Nemaha River. He lived at home and farmed his 80 acres until his marriage to Emily Alice Jordon (1908) in his late forties. He traded that 80acre farm for one down by Denison, Kansas and that is where their son **Edward** (1937) was born. Elmer lost that farm and they went to Georgia where his wife's family lived. He worked in a sawmill until after Ernie (1939) was born and then they came back to Kansas. Elmer worked for the county driving a maintainer¹⁸ until a shop accident while welding took the sight of one eye. Then they moved to Sabetha, Kansas where he worked as custodian at the Sabetha Creamery until his retirement. After a few years of retirement they sold their house and moved to Benton, Arkansas, where their married son Edward lived.

Christ "Chris" Frederick Hartman (1895) who died in 1986, in Pawnee City, Nebraska. He married Edith May Fluent (1900). They were the parents of Helen Mildred Hartman Callam (1920). Helen provided much of the information on the Hartman family, as well as other members of the Vahsholz family. Helen tells of drought years in Kansas during the Great Depression: "...my dad was pitching bundles on the threshing crew. For some reason he drove home at noon and decided to get a bite to eat. When he went back out, he had to get some sandpaper and smooth the fork handles. The grasshoppers had eaten it rough for the salt from his hands.

"The same year when the grasshoppers and chinch bugs were thick, the county was furnishing bran mixed with poison to the farmers. Between the wheat field and the kaffir corn field, dad plowed a trench. Then he scattered the bait in the furrow. I can remember places in the furrow were completely filled with dead hoppers and bugs.

"Anyone remember eating Georgie Porgie? To extend the tubs of oatmeal, my folks cleaned and winnowed wheat, cooked it like rice and with a bit of sugar or honey it made a breakfast cereal. Now that really 'stuck to the ribs' and staved off hunger! I suppose it was the forerunner of today's Malt-o-Meal. Dad sometimes ran it through the grinder too. Mama sifted out the flour for baking and the coarser was cereal."

- Anna Bertha Hartman (1897) was born in Nemaha County and died there in 1974. Helen Callam provided notes from Anna's obituary—extracts include:
 - "Anna was united in marriage to Emil A. Lear (1888) ... and they made their home on a farm west of Bern where they lived until 1932 when they moved to a farm south west of Sabetha, Kansas. Anna was a kind and compassionate person who was always willing to help others in need and made many friends in her walk of life."
- Katherina "Katie" Amalia Hartman (1898) was born in Nemaha County and died in 1990 in Deer Park, Texas. According to her obituary, she and her husband, Daniel Booker Marsh (1895) joined the Reformed Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints in 1922 and were "faithful to their covenant their entire lives."
- Carl Louis Hartman (1909) was born, with his twin brother Fred Herman Hartman (1909), in Nemaha County, and Carl died there in 1997. Carl's wife was Louise Rose Banwart (1911). Fred's wife, Mildred Herring, was from St. Joseph, Missouri. They had no children. Fred died in 1989 in DuBois, Nebraska.

¹⁸ The "Maintainer" was aptly named. It was a road grader and typically the only machine the county employed to maintain the roads. That was possible because most of the roads were dirt. A graveled road was considered a highway.

- Francis "George" Hartman (1915) remained single and farmed near Seneca. He also drove heavy construction machinery. He died in Tecumseh, Nebraska in 1985.
- Marvin Emil Hartman (1918) was born in Nemaha County. His wife was Minnie Lucille Wissler (1924).

Emma S. Hartman, (1869) the fourth child of H. Fred Hartman (1835) and Bertha (Vahsholtz) Hartman was born in Nemaha County, Kansas and died in 1894 in Pawnee City, Nebraska. She married Samuel L. Hunzeker (1866). Emma died a few days after the birth of their son, Eddie S. (1894). Sam's brother-in-law was Karl August Julius "Charlie" Fahsholtz. (1850) who married Elizabeth "Lizzie" Hunzeker (1860).

Children of Emma Hartman and Samuel Hunzeker were:

- Clyde Fredrick Hunzeker (1890) who married Lily Josephine Branek (1890). They died together in an auto accident in 1947.
- Eddie S. Hunzeker (1894) died in 1938. He married Anna Beyreis (1896).

Emma's sister **Eade "Ida" Louise Hartman** (1871) was born in Nemaha County, and died in 1956. Children of Ida Hartman and her husband Louis Rudolph Wiesedeppe (1864) were:

- **Herman H. Wiesedeppe** (1891) who died in 1928. He married Emma Hecht (1894).
- William Fred Wiesedeppe (1894) married Emma's sister, Christina Hecht (1897). They had no children and he died in 1967.
- Mabel Bertha Wiesedeppe (1907) died in 1991. She graduated from Seneca Public High School in 1926. She taught first grade most of the 36 years she spent at the grade school and was principal one time when she taught sixth grade. She earned her BS Degree in Education from Emporia State Teacher's College during this time and had 20 hours toward a Masters Degree. Her husband was Walter A. Grollmes (1911) who worked for International Harvester for 18 years.

H. Fred and Bertha Hartman's Sixth child was **Gustave Hartman** (1874) who died at the age of three months.

Next came **Bertha Hartman** (1875) who was born in Nemaha County. She married John T. Baker, Sr. (1869) as noted earlier. Bertha died in 1933.

Edward L. Hartman (1878) was born in Nemaha County and died there in 1939. As far as we know, he never married.

The last child, **Theodore H. B. Hartman** (1883) was born in Nemaha County. He married Mae Ethel Whaley (1901). It was Mae who wound up with the Vahsholz

family possessions brought from Germany after Christian Vahsholtz (1811) and his wife died at the home of their daughter, Bertha (Vahsholtz) Hartman. When Bertha died in 1915, the personal belongings of Christian and Dorothea Vahsholtz were handed down through Mae's branch of the Hartman family.

Helen Callam typed up Mae's obituary from which we quote: "Mae Ethel Hartman died November 28, 1988. She was born near Seneca, Kansas on May 18, 1901 to Albert and Martha (Kinney) Whaley. Mae was a lifelong resident of Nemaha Township, Nemaha County, Kansas.

"On March 20, 1920, Mae was married to Theodore Hartman of Seneca, Kansas. They moved to the farm home two miles south of the Kansas-Nebraska state line, where Mae lived until her death. Theodore died March 6, 1956. Mae was a farm wife. She raised chickens, geese and a large garden."

The three sons of Theodore and Mae:

- Lawrence Frederich "Hezzie" Hartman (1922) did not marry and died in 2002. The Topeka, Kansas Capital Journal reported his death, which apparently occurred while he was working on a tractor:
 - "Lawrence F. 'Hezzie' Hartman, 79, Seneca, died Saturday, March 16, 2002, at his farm north of Seneca. Mr. Hartman farmed his entire life. He also had worked at Koelzer Lumber County in Bern, as a mechanic for Roy Ewing Motors at Sabetha, Kansas and in construction on the watershed dams at Ulysses.

"He also had been a mechanic for Chauza Service Station and Klepper Oil, both in DuBois, Nebraska. He served in the Army during WWII as an automatic rifleman with the 382nd Infantry Regiment in the Pacific Theater, in southern Philippines and in the liberation army. He was wounded on Leyte Island and on Okinawa and received the Purple Heart among several other decorations and citations."

- Clyde Edward Hartman (1925) died January 1, 2000. He married Ethel Mae Boydston and they later divorced.
- Harry William Hartman (1932) who married Libby (Niaz) Orosco.



Back Row, left to right: Laura, Louise, Emma, Mary and Bertha Front: Paul, John, Father Herman, Robert, Mother Johannah, Edward and William Vahsholtz

Chapter **Seven**, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of **Friedrich August "Herman" Vahsholtz** (1844)

Another large family, the ten children of "Herman" Vahsholtz and Johannah Antonia Berta Wesselhoeft (1852) were:

Bertha Johanna Francisco Vahsholtz (1869) who was born in Nemaha County, Kansas. She died in 1941 in Hope, Kansas. She married William Schaaf (1863) who emigrated from Germany. His occupation was wool dyer, a trade he learned in Germany. He came to this country searching for his brother Jacob, a baker who had lived briefly in Seneca, Kansas. Jacob went on further west, but William settled in Nemaha County and bought a farm.

From a letter Bertha wrote to a cousin:

"I was born in a log house. The house was so cold. At my age between four and five there was a blizzard. We wanted to keep warm. Mother had the stove as hot as she could get it. We had to go to bed during the day to keep warm. Not much of a variety to eat. No church to go to. There were no boys so Mary and myself had to help with the chores. The well went dry. Then we had to carry

water for 60 hogs a quarter of a mile from the creek. Also for 12 calves. 'Til 16 years old I worked, planted, weeded it in the fall. We did not dare start to school 'til corn was husked. That way we were always behind in our studies. I got half through the third reader, then I had to quit."



1890 Wedding photograph of William and Bertha Schaaf



Rear, Left to Right: Bertha, Cornelia, Elesa, Jennie, and Clara Front: Bertha, Edwin, William Sr. and William Jr.

Children of Bertha Vahsholtz and William Schaaf were:

- Carl William Schaaf (1891), who died at six months of age.
- Clara Bertha Schaaf (1893), born in Nemaha County and died a hundred years later in 1993 in Herington. She married Peter R. Diepenbrock (1892).

Elinor Lucile (Diepenbrock) Remy (1931) writes: "I remember my great-grandmother, Johanna

Vahsholtz, but not my great grandfather, Hermann Vahsholtz. He must have died before I was born. 19

"When I was small I would go visit my Grandma Schaaf (Bertha Vahsholtz Schaaf, 1869) for a week in the summertime. They lived across the road from my Great-Grandmother (Johanna Wesselhoeft 1852) Vahsholtz. I remember her wearing a long skirt and sunbonnet or dust cap and being very stooped. We would go over there a couple of times during the week. I never cared to go there because the house was always so dark (and smelled). There were always three in the house—Great Grandmother (Johanna), Emma (Emma Vahsholtz 1875, sister of Bertha) and a housekeeper or caretaker. Emma, who was simple, always scared me. I don't know what her problem was or how long she had been that way. If I remember right, my mother said that she was OK when she was young. Emma would come over to Grandma's about every day for maybe an hour. Grandma always gave her something to eat because she didn't think she was getting enough food.

"Grandpa (William Schaaf) milked a cow and Grandma always sent milk over for them.

¹⁹ Elinor was four years old when he died.



Clara Schaaf

"Now about my grandparents. This was a large family. My mother, Clara (Clara Schaaf Diepenbrock 1893) was the oldest and had to take

care of the others. Grandma was sick quite often, probably with gallstones. Besides taking care of the family, a nephew and niece, Carl and Louisa Schaaf (Grandpa's brother's kids) lived with them. Grandpa went to California to get them so that they wouldn't [have to live] in an orphanage. Usually a schoolteacher would stay with them too, so Grandma had to do a lot of cooking. One thing I remembered was that she always made whole wheat bread.

"Usually once during the winter we would go there for dinner after church. The afternoon was spent talking and listening to the Victrola. In the middle of the afternoon Grandma would go down to the basement and bring up her bottle of homemade grape wine. We all had a tablespoon or two.

"I didn't see my grandparents much except on Sunday. We attended the same church, St. Paul's Lutheran, in Herington, Kansas. Grandma always had candy tied up in a handkerchief that she gave us kids. It was usually peppermint or horehound. Later on it was always Juicy Fruit chewing gum.

"I can still smell the trumpet vine by the swing on the porch and the sound of the 'Doodle Bug' [a special two-car train.] early in the morning before I got up.

"Grandpa always had a large garden. He would start it in February and it usually froze the first time. There was never a weed in sight.

"I have been a bookkeeper most of my life. After high school and business college I worked in the bank for eight years, got married, had three kids and then worked in the office at the Herington Livestock Auction for over thirty years. My husband, Lee W. Remy (1930), is a farmer, stockman, order buyer, auctioneer, appraiser and real estate broker. We live on a farm near Burdick, Kansas; same place all our married life; different house.

"Our oldest son, **Tim** (1959) and his wife and four kids live in Michigan. He is superintendent for a roofing company that puts roofs on large buildings, like Wal-Mart. His wife is a schoolteacher.

"**Tom** (1961) is manager of the elevator in Herington. His wife is a schoolteacher.

"Jan (1966) lives in Branson, Missouri where she is wardrobe supervisor for the Rockettes, traveled with Barbara Mandrell for three years taking care of her wardrobe and now sews for many of the stars in Branson.

"So now you know where I came from and what we are doing."



CLARA DIEPENBROCK
... to observe special birthday

From an article celebrating Clara's 100th birthday

Returning now to the children of **Bertha (Vahsholtz) Schaaf** and William Schaaf:

- Elesa Minna Schaaf (1895) was born about the time the California cousins arrived. She attended Bethany College at Lindsborg, Kansas and taught school and music. She married a merchant, Carl Albert Hass (1890) who later became a banker at Herington. She died in 1972.
- **Jenny Cornelia Schaaf** (1897) was the next child. She married Paul Schimming, a farmer and mechanic. She died in 1955.
- Cornelia "Cora" M. Schaaf (1900) graduated from Hope High School in three years. She attended Bethany College for a year and Kansas State College for a year, majoring in music and becoming a teacher. She married her second cousin, Herman Henry Friedrich (1900), a car salesman who became the Ford dealer in Hope. In the Friedrich family, Cora was known as "Co." She went on to get her B.A. and they moved to Nebraska, then Colorado and finally California. After Herman died, Co became a medical technician. She died in 1992 in Santa Monica, California. (More about this family in Chapter Eight under the Friedrich's.)



Elesa and Carl Haas



Bertha and Pastor Herman Koester

• Bertha Johanna Schaaf (1903) attended parochial school in Herington during her seventh and eighth grades, where her teacher was Pastor Herman J. Koester. After a year at Concordia Teacher's College in Seward, Nebraska, she taught in that same Herington school for 12 years. After attaining a B.S. she taught in Wisconsin for five years. In 1942 at age 39, she married Pastor Herman Koester and they served an Illinois congregation, with Bertha teaching, playing the organ and directing the choir. Herman died in 1978 and Bertha in 2000.

- William Henry "Bill" Schaaf, Jr. (1905) became a car salesman upon finishing high school. He married Alice Margaret Meuli (1908) and was a tool and die supervisor until he retired. He died in 1983.
- Edwin Paul Schaaf (1907) was born in Hope, Kansas and died in 1985 in Herington. He was a farmer and, like his father, served as tax assessor and county commissioner. His wife was Leora Margaret Irwin (1908).
- Herbert Schaaf, (1910) died of "brain fever" at age two



Bertha at age ten with Edwin, six and Bill, eight Marga Haas Miner (1934), daughter of Elesa Minna Schaaf (1895) takes up the Schaaf family story:

As noted earlier, William's brother Jacob had gone on West. In Los Angeles in 1897, he married Jenny Jensen and they had two children, Louise (1888) and Karl (1890). Jenny died eight days after the birth of Karl and Jacob arranged to pay friends to care for his two children.

The "friends" put the children in an orphanage and pocketed the money. Somehow, William and Bertha learned of this some five years later, borrowed money and sent for those children. William drove the 60 miles to St. Joseph, Missouri to meet their train and took them home to raise. With all those children to manage, Bertha senior had to have her weekly duties well planned and

managed. She baked twice a week—fourteen loaves of whole wheat and white bread and coffee cakes. She kept a wood heater burning during the winter months and cooked on a wood-burning stove. She washed clothes by hand on Mondays and ironed using sad irons²⁰ heated on the cook stove on Tuesdays.

The family arose at daylight and Bertha prepared a large breakfast, which began with William's requested bowl of oatmeal. The next course consisted of eggs, pancakes or biscuits, coffee and milk. The largest meal of the day was at noontime when meat was included. They had cured pork, beef or chicken. A beef was hung in the barn during the winter and what was left when the weather got warm was preserved in salt brine. Suppers were lighter meals and often were egg dishes, cottage cheese or bread and milk. After supper, William read a devotional from a German book. The family worked until dark before going to bed.

Every spring the family planted a huge garden and ate from it as long as they could keep the vegetables. They could preserve fruits that grew quite abundantly in Kansas. William had an orchard with apples, peaches, grapes and wild plums. Near the orchard he had beehives and sold honey.

William was a hardworking man and expected the same from his family. His oldest daughter, Clara, later wrote, "I was the chore boy. Louisa helped more in the kitchen. Karl helped a little but he didn't like farm work! [Karl later became a farmer.] I milked cows, cultivated and planted corn. Dad went ahead with the lister²¹ and I walked behind with one horse and the planter. Wheat, oats and flax were cut with the binder and everyone helped to shock it. If there wasn't anything else to do, we chopped cockleburs."

The Schaaf's had to travel either by horse and cart or walk the two miles to Bern for the mail. In Bern were two mercantile stores where they could shop or a baker where bread was sold (six loaves for 25¢ and a free donut to the customer). The children could also buy a dish of ice cream in Bern.

William's efforts paid off so that by 1901 he and his brother Jacob were able to visit their birthplace in Waldfischbach, Germany. When he returned to Bern, William learned that Bertha's parents had decided to move. Bertha's brothers were now older and their father needed more land for his heirs. He settled on a large tract

²⁰ Sad irons are heavy chunks of cast iron with a detachable handle. Several are lined up on top of the kitchen stove where they absorb heat and hold it for a while due to their mass while the housewife uses them in turn. They are appropriately named.

²¹ A lister was an implement that plowed deep furrows into which the corn could be planted. Later, a curler or cultivator tossed the ridge back around the young corn stalks, killing the weeds, if the timing was right.

of land near Woodbine, Kansas, some 125 miles southwest of Bern.

In 1906, William and Bertha also moved their family to a farm near Woodbine. Two railroad cars were required for the move, one for livestock and the other for machinery and household goods.

On that farm the cows had to be walked 1½ miles from their pasture to the barn for milking. The milk and cream were delivered to private customers as well as sold to a restaurant and creamery. Bertha also boarded school teachers and the minister's daughter who worked in Hope.

Since the farm had no house, the family initially rented one that Dwight D. Eisenhower's family had lived in. They later built a modern eight-room house with bath and carbide lights. William found those conveniences too expensive however, and sold that farm. He purchased another just outside the city limits of Hope that had an older house. His family thought it awful to move from a new home to an old one again.

William's brother Jacob, the baker, died in Denver in 1913. William brought the body to Hope for burial but their Lutheran pastor refused to officiate at the funeral. Jacob had belonged to the Baker's Union, and at that time, the Lutherans believed that if one joined a union they lacked God-fearing faith. William recruited the Methodist minister to handle the burial service.

In 1917, due to disagreements in the Missouri Synod Church at Lyons Creek, William and Bertha changed their church home to St. Paul's Lutheran Church, American Synod, in Herington. William had purchased a car and the additional six miles to church was not too far.



Bertha Schaaf Koester with her parents on their fiftieth anniversary in 1940, in front of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Herington. This church was also the location of the 2002 Vahsholtz Reunion.

Bertha died in 1941, probably of cancer.

In his old age, living alone on his farm with failing eyesight, William continued to work hard. He loved children and always had candy for them. His own needs were served if he could start his day with a bowl of oatmeal. When he was no longer able to drive, he continued his tax assessor work by walking his territory and hitching a ride with local farmers. At age 98 he entered a nursing home where he died a month before reaching the age of 101.



Mary Vahsholtz Shannon

The second child of Herman and Johannah was **Mary Louise H. Vahsholtz** (1873) who was born in Nemaha County, and died in 1945 in Topeka. She married Tilton K. Shannon.

Her sister **Emma Vahsholtz** (1875) stayed single and lived with her parents at Hope, where she died in 1947.

Another sister, **Laura Vahsholtz** (1877) married Samuel Mitsch in 1905. She died in 1942. Samuel was sort of an inventor and designed some kind of hay stacker. Relatives are not quite sure whether he took out a patent.

John C. D. Vahsholtz (1879), the oldest son of Herman and Johannah, was born in Nemaha County. He married Elizabeth "Lizzie" Mosteller (1878) who was born in Strasburg, Pennsylvania. They were divorced in about 1933. She moved with her children to Washougal, Washington. John died in a rest home in Abilene, Kansas at the age of 94 years. John and his son, Oskar (1911),

are both buried in the Shady Brook Immanuel Lutheran Church Cemetery, near Herington. **Duane Leroy Vahsholtz** (1933) remembers going with his Uncle **Lloyd Ora Vahsholtz** (1917) to the cemetery and seeing the two graves, side by side. Lloyd had a gravestone sculpted for his father, John, in the state of Washington and then took it back to Kansas to mount the stone himself.

John and Lizzie's children, all born in Hope, Kansas include:

Roy John Samuel Vahsholtz (1906) married Frieda Bertha Martha Rindt (1905). Their son Duane Leroy Vahsholtz (1933) says, "The first four of us six kids were born in that little house about a mile outside of Woodbine, Kansas on the road from Navarre. The house itself is now torn down and all that remains is the foundation wall and the old cistern. We left in 1941, just before the War because Dad's Uncle Sam Mitsch had died and there was no future for the family in that situation. Dad was working for that uncle. Dad's family, except for John, had already left for Washington and had sent promises of a better life so we left with a car and trailer loaded with all our earthly goods. It was the best thing that they could have done, in retrospect. Two more sisters were born in Washington."

Duane is a retired high school counselor/shop teacher. He made significant contributions to this book.



Four of John and Elizabeth's children: Back; Lillian and Roy. Front; Clara and Oskar, who died shortly after this photo was taken.

- **Lillian M. Vahsholtz** (1907) who died in 1985. She married Ralph "Gene" Hootman.
- Clara Elisa Vahsholtz (1909) died in 1995. She married Ernest Carl Krause (1905).
- Oskar Vahsholtz (1911) died as a baby.

- Lawrence "Elmer" Vahsholtz (1912) who died in 1984 in Hemet, California. His wife was Inez Frances Leona Buhman (1918).
- **Homer M. Vahsholtz** (1915) who married Ila Margaret Baron (1921). He died in Vancouver, Washington in 2001.
- Lloyd Ora Vahsholtz (1917) of Washougal, Washington, married Ella L. Owens (1921). Lloyd has played a big role in providing information, keeping the family together, and introducing us to each other.

Homer and Lloyd based on Duane Vahsholtz's (1933) interviews with Homer Vahsholtz (1915) in Feb. 1995 and Lloyd Vahsholtz (1917) in 2001

According to Lloyd, my Grandfather John C. D. Vahsholtz (1879) and Grandmother Elizabeth "Lizzie" Mosteller (1878) met while they were attending school in Bern, Kansas, near Seneca. John's father, Friedrich August "Herman" Vahsholtz (1844) had lived in that area after having moved from another location on the Missouri River where he had worked on a ferry. It was while working on that ferry that he met his wife, Johannah Wesselhoeft (1852).

Herman came from Seneca to the Hope, Kansas area looking for property because problems had developed with the neighbors who were involved with fence cutting on Herman's property. Apparently, the neighbors in Seneca were largely Catholic and they wanted the Protestants out. The Government required a homesteader to keep the land fenced. Herman "sold out" in Seneca after finding 320 acres in the Hope area. John stayed behind on the home place.

Later, John attended Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. He studied for the ministry for a year before returning home because he was needed to help with the farming.

Grandma Lizzie (1878) was born in Strasburg, Pennsylvania, moved to Nebraska, then to Bern, Kansas. Her uncle had walked from Pennsylvania to Nebraska. She had a husband whose last name was Westfalt before marrying John. She had been married just a short time before she realized that her mother-in-law was running everything, so she sought a divorce. About this time Grandpa John sent a letter to Lizzie asking her to marry him based on an old romance going back to grade school days. They were married in 1905 and lived at Uncle Paul's old place. Lizzie had enough money from her dad to buy 160 acres of property, build a barn and machine shed, buy equipment and have everything paid for.

Roy (1906), **Lillian** (1907) and **Clara** (1909) were born at the old place before John and Lizzie moved to their new property. On the new land the crops of corn, wheat and oats were highly productive because the soil was

newly turned from prairie sod. New soil made for excellent crops!

Oskar (1911), Elmer (1912), Homer (1915) and Lloyd (1917) were born on the family farm in Hope, Kansas. Oskar died of spinal meningitis in his first year. He is buried, along with his dad, John, in the cemetery of Immanuel Lutheran Church at Shady Brook, outside of Herington, Kansas.

All the children attended grade school in the community of Grandview, a rural district about 1½ miles from home. There were approximately 15 students when Homer attended with one teacher teaching all eight grades. Each group would move to the front of the room as they were to receive instruction and the remaining students would sit in back. There was not much equipment for play, leaving little to do at recess. Some children brought play equipment from home. Homer remembers going out and playing on a fence many times. He liked school, especially arithmetic, but didn't care for reading or spelling. School started in early September and lasted for nine months. None of the Vahsholtz boys attended the first days of school because they were needed for farm work.

At home the children could always find something to do. There was ice-skating in the winter, hunting, and trapping for muskrat and skunk. A good muskrat fur would be worth \$2.00, a day's wage. In the summer they spent a lot of time in the cornfield hoeing sunflowers. "The kids then were a heck of a lot happier than they are now," Homer said, "they had things to do that had a purpose—chores and work—with no competition from others."

Lizzie, his mother, was well liked by everyone. She always had a big garden and was industrious with projects that would help with the family coffers.

When Great-Grandpa Herman (1844) moved to the Hope area he bought a section of land that was divided into quarter sections among three of the boys; Ed (Albert Edward 1891), Paul (Paul Theodore 1888) and John (1879), with Herman keeping a fourth. Four Vahsholtz families thus lived on this section of land. Bill (William Henry 1886), another of the uncles, lived nearby on another piece of land not well suited for farming. Lizzie got along well with all 12 of the aunts, who were often feuding amongst themselves.

Lloyd spoke of harvest days and the harvest crews traveling from farm to farm to thresh the wheat for each farmer in turn. Large meals would be served to these threshing crews and a farmer's wife would be judged by the meal she served. At the end of the threshing season a big table would be set out in a farmer's yard and all of the farmers and the threshing crew would sit around this table to "settle up."

Homer said that he was lucky all his life. "I've had nothing to complain about. If anything went wrong it was my own fault. I've had lots of breaks."

In his youth Homer had played the tenor banjo. Elmer had played the guitar and Ernest had played a violin. Grandpa John at one time played in a brass band. Homer and Elmer used to play for dances in the summertime. Someone would make home brew. Music and home brew were the beginning of a party.

In the late 1930s Kansas was a "dry" state but Nebraska was not. On more than one occasion Ernest Krause and Homer would drive up to Nebraska where Homer would buy whiskey and Ernest would buy wine. Upon their return, Homer would stash the whiskey in the haymow in the barn. When preparing to go to a Saturday night dance, he would load some whiskey in his car and then sell it during the dance. Grandma Lizzie knew about the stash but never said anything.

One of Homer's acquaintances had converted an old garage into a dance floor. One night the county sheriff came to look at this dance hall to see what was going on. It scared Homer because he had whiskey in his car. He slipped out of the dance and drove away to hide the booze in a stone fence. His comment about this incident, "That's crazy." The sheriff involved was one that later got hit on the head with a bottle in Abilene. "He wasn't Wild Bill Hickok," (a famous Abilene sheriff from frontier days).

The farm that the John Vahsholtz family lived on was 160 acres owned free and clear. They had a mortgaged half section, 320 acres near Navarre, a small town not far from Hope, Kansas. The Depression hit soon after the purchase of that land and the family ended up losing everything. In Homer's opinion, the Depression wasn't the problem, but rather John over-extending to buy a threshing outfit, which included a Titan tractor and a steamer. John was the first in the area to have a steamer. As time went on John had three Titan tractors on the place and only one would work. When Grandpa John and Grandma Lizzie were divorced, the three tractors were still sitting idle on the place. In the late Thirties the Japanese were buying steel so Homer had them hauled off and sold for scrap.

From interviewing both Homer and Lloyd, I got the picture of Grandpa John. He was the oldest son of Herman Vahsholtz and had been brought up working with his dad in a kind of partnership arrangement. He had the same kind of expectation of his oldest son, Roy (my father). John wanted to expand his farm and the productivity through the use of machinery. Whenever the Titan tractor would break down he would withdraw from the field to try to repair it leaving the boys to plow using two teams of horses. John might make it around a field once before the tractor would break down and then not be seen for the rest of the day. Homer's comment was, "Dad always had big ideas and those were his downfall, with the Depression coming on when it did."

When Roy was 19, he would harness 12 horses each morning to be used as two teams for plowing. Through

the day Roy and Elmer would each plow using a separate team. Grandpa John depended on Roy to get a lot of work done. When Roy was 21 he figured he was old enough to be on his own. Roy went to work for Uncle Sam Mitsch (husband of **Laura Vahsholtz**, 1877, a daughter of Herman). Grandpa John raised all kinds of hell when Roy left and went so far as to go to Uncle Sam's at Woodbine to bring Roy back to Hope. Homer felt there wasn't enough for all of the boys to do and Grandpa John should have let Roy go. Homer felt that Grandpa John was too lazy to work himself.

Sam and Laura had no children and lived on a farm about a mile outside of Woodbine. Laura had worked at one time as an elementary school teacher. First Roy, and later Homer, worked there for 75 cents a day. Roy's workday would begin at five a.m. when he would go out to the barn to begin milking. The workday would extend to nine p.m. and would include the milking, separating the cream, hauling manure and feeding the cattle.

Roy and Homer would come in from milking in the morning to a cold breakfast. They would have a hot midday dinner but supper was always cold because they would work through the evening. The Mitsch family would have already eaten supper. Roy lived in the attic of the old home. In Homer's estimation, Roy was not treated well

Like Homer's grandmother, Aunt Laura would go around talking to herself. "It was almost impossible to carry on a conversation with Aunt Laura. She was nice enough—just strange. Grandpa Herman talked kind of rough. The first time he rode in a car he hollered, 'Whoa, Whoa,' as it approached a gate, the same way one would do if they were driving a team of horses. That's the way the old Germans were. The old man was the boss."

Some anecdotal events were recounted as Homer and I talked about old memories. He remembers Roy talking about Uncle Sam and his dog. The dog grabbed hold of a cow's tail and was tormenting her by pulling repeatedly. In anger Uncle Sam picked up a hammer and beat the dog to death. On another occasion Uncle Sam was chopping forage in a silage cutter. As he attempted to clear the outlet he accidentally cut off the fingers of one hand. He presented the maimed hand to Homer and laughed about it. Homer's comment; "Strange sense of humor." It occurred to me that Uncle Sam was probably in shock.

Homer remembered a trip to Washington, Nebraska to pick up Lloyd and Grandma Lizzie at her brother's home. He thought Lloyd and Grandma must have traveled there by train. The boys slept outside. Grandma's brother had a hole in the ground with a door over the opening for storing ice. He was taken by how well ice can be stored that way, well into the summer. Trips to Topeka and Wichita also stood out in his memory; a long way in those days.

When asked to recount what he remembered about Elmer, he talked about Elmer always tinkering. At one point he was working on a windmill to generate electricity to charge a battery that could be used to power a radio. Elmer was always penny-wise and had more money than Homer. When they would go to a movie he would stand there and let Homer buy the tickets.

Grandpa John had been raised to believe that the oldest son should work under the control of his father. That was the way he'd had to work—so he wanted to control a tractor that Roy had bought. A dispute arose. Roy left the house with his clothing in the middle of the night. He went to Chapman, Kansas where he worked for a widow who needed help with her farming.

Grandpa John and Grandma Lizzie divorced in 1933. Grandma was in poor health during this time in their marriage. Lloyd's theory on the cause of the divorce was that while in poor health, Grandma was afraid that she would become pregnant again. She had already borne seven children. Foreclosure on the land took place in 1933 at about the time of the divorce. Roy had left the Hope place before the divorce. They were given 18 months to pay off the debt. With the divorce John took the power equipment while Lizzie kept the horse-drawn equipment and cattle. Later, the family found that there was an existing mortgage against the cattle that John had not mentioned.

The next year's wheat crop was used to buy back the cattle. The family had no car and very little food to live on. It was through Lizzie's industry and ingenuity that the family was able to survive. She would take orders door-to-door in Herington for butchered chickens. She would then butcher, clean and deliver the chickens.

Lloyd recounted how and why the Vahsholtz family migrated to Washougal, Washington.

The Rock Island Railroad went through Herington. It had a round house, ice house, cattle yard and water from Herington Lake to supply water for the steam engines. The town also had a sizable number of itinerants. From one of them, Uncle Ernest's brother, Herman Krause, learned of job opportunities at the paper mill in Camas, Washington. Because Ernest (husband of Clara Elisa Vahsholtz, 1909) was not doing well with his farm he decided to "sell out" and came to Washougal. After attempting to get a start in Washougal, the family decided to return to Hope, Kansas where Ernest bought a service station. After a period of time, Homer and the Krause family moved to California to attempt a start there. Uncle Homer worked as a plumber; Uncle Ernest as a carpenter.

At about the same time, 1936, Uncle Elmer traveled by bus to the Camas area where he found work as a mechanic for the Buick dealer. Uncle Lloyd says that Elmer was a self-taught mechanic and was quite ingenious with some of his creations.

Homer and the Ernest Krause family traveled to Southgate, just outside of Los Angeles where they sought work. Homer first worked in a plumbing shop; then for General Electric where he worked tempering bases for electric motors. Homer then returned to Kansas to work with brothers Elmer and Lloyd, harvesting for Grandma back in Hope. The Ernest Krause family moved back to Washington at about this time.

After harvesting, Elmer came to Washington. Grandma and Lloyd came soon after (in 1937) and lived in a house by the Congregational Church in Washougal while waiting for a house to be built. Grandma had accumulated about \$3,500, which she had earned on the farm before leaving. She had earned this money from a hot bed for tomato plants, which she would plant in early spring, and from raising about 300 chickens each year. While Grandma was working on her projects, Lloyd was working the farm. The banker that had worked with Grandma on the foreclosure had commented that Grandma was "the salt of the earth" for the way she had worked to pay back the mortgage and the way she had helped her family to survive.

Upon arriving here, their first purchases were electric and oil stoves for the house in Washougal, which they were renting. Homer came from California a little later to live with Grandma and Lloyd. Soon after Uncle Elmer and Grandma went looking for property and decided upon a one-acre plot on the present "I" Street in Washougal. That piece of property was acquired at a price of \$325. Elmer, Lloyd and Homer built the house for Grandma at a cost of \$900. The street was a dirt road that had been developed by the WPA through a prune orchard.

From this first carpentry project, Uncle Homer went on to build his next house for the Orville Osgood family, then the house for the Roy Vahsholtz family and then the house that he and Ila (Ila Margaret Baron 1921) lived in.

I asked Homer how he and IIa had met. They were dancing at the Grange Hall in Washougal when she was 15, and he didn't see her again for about two years. Dances were held at the time in an old barn in the Mt. Pleasant area. It was there that Homer once again met IIa and they danced the rest of their lives. Homer danced at an early age in Kansas and then while he was living in California. He wanted to clarify that what he had been doing was not to a regular dance step but rather moving with the music. He and IIa were married on September first, 1940, on a weekend when a lot of his friends were also married. A sizable number of people were concerned about being drafted, which seemed to have something to do with this interest in marriage.

²² Think about that remarkable accomplishment! Lizzie was a divorced woman, bankrupt in the middle of the worst depression in memory. She not only survived, but also saved up \$3,500 (about \$25,000 in today's dollars) in just four years.

Homer had a high draft number so he was not concerned about being drafted early. Early in their marriage Homer worked at building houses as a carpenter and was busy with the Roy Vahsholtz house, and others. He said he was lucky because he had bought the materials for the houses in time to avoid the war shortage. From there he went to work for about three months in the paper mill where he worked as a chipper operator. There he lost some hearing, he thought, because no one used earplugs in those days.

At age 29 years and the father of two children, he was drafted into the army with nine months left in the war. While on bivouac in basic training he learned that the war with Japan was over. Later, while stationed at Camp Roberts outside of San Luis Obispo, California, he was involved in closing the camp down during Christmas holiday season.

Homer commented on Roy and Frieda leaving Kansas after Uncle Sam's death. Until then they would not have felt free to make the move to Washington. A farmer's life really confines the family to the land and the chores. The problem that developed after Uncle Sam's death was because nothing was in writing and Aunt Laura probably wasn't prepared to handle the estate settlement. I remember my dad saying that Aunt Laura had thought he wasn't worth any more than a dollar a day. When Uncle Sam died, Roy sold his cattle and from that sale had \$200, the amount of money that allowed him to finally break free from the responsibilities of farming and to make the move to Washington for a new start.



April 2002 picture of Lloyd Vahsholtz, with Bob Vahsholtz, left and Duane Vahsholtz, right.

Homer also did some recounting of Grandpa John. I mentioned that Joanne (Dorothea "Joanne" Heiberg Peterson 1935) and I had also visited John when we were on a trip to Kansas in the 1970s. We had gone to visit him in a county rest home and found that he was in the hospital recuperating from gall bladder surgery. At first, he did not know who we were but once we could identify ourselves he wanted to talk about Grandma Lizzie. Grandpa John commented that if he and Lizzie had just tried a little harder they could have made their marriage work. Homer commented that he didn't know if that was true or not. He remembered that his dad didn't do much in the wintertime and for that matter, not much in the summer either. Grandpa John had an old Model T that he would drive around and take Homer with him. Homer said that he thought his mother had tried with the marriage. "Who knows?"



Roy and Frieda Vahsholtz's family, visiting Martin Vahsholtz about 1940. Frieda is holding Harold. Next to her is Duane, then Arlene and at the left is Vernon.



John Vahsholtz (left) in his later years with Louis, Paul and Otto Vahsholtz.

A remembrance of mine while interviewing was of Grandpa John talking about his grandfather working on a job in Seneca, Kansas running a grader for a new railroad going in at the time. For lunch he would milk his horse. With the milk and bread that he had brought from home he would have his lunch. It was there (in Seneca) that two Vahsholtz brothers were having trouble with their mail reaching them. As a solution to the mail problem, one brother decided to change the spelling of his name. Thus, a whole branch of the family tree began with the family name Fahsholtz.

An Interview with Mom Duane Vahsholtz' interview with his mother, Frieda Bertha Martha (Rindt) Vahsholtz (1905) in 1984; about two years after his Dad died in 1982.

Mom's early recollections were of life in Lincolnville, Kansas, the small farming town where she was born. She was one of eight girls in a family of 12 children who had her responsibilities to contribute to a larger family. Before going to school, the kids had to milk the cows and then walk $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles through the pasture (or two miles by road) to the parochial school in town. In the summer their time during the week was devoted to hoeing weeds in the cornfield. Wednesday nights and Sundays were happy social times spent with friends and neighbors.

Sunday afternoons would find them getting together with friends. They would play softball or provoke the "old sheep buck" in a stone-fenced pen. The kids would sit on the fence and as one of them got the courage to jump—or was pushed into the pen—they would run for the opposite side trying to avoid being butted by the horned ram. He butted hard and then he would back off and return to butt again.

Winter evenings found the brothers and sisters sitting at the kitchen table studying by the light of a kerosene lamp. There was room for 15 at that table with a grandmother included. Wintertime entertainment included sliding down a hill on a washing machine lid, used as a sled in the snow. Indoors, a favorite pastime was playing cards or checkers.

In those days they had largely dirt roads; a real hazard with rain and melting snow. The heavy clay soil became a sticky gumbo clinging to tires and wheels and bogging down a wagon or an automobile. When people in that area saw rain coming, they would return home as soon as possible to avoid becoming stranded because of mud or a swollen stream.

The school that Mom attended was one big room for all eight grades. The upper class students would work individually or in small groups with the younger kids. They did not have all classes every day but hymn singing and Catechism were a constant. Other classes included history, German, English grammar, reading, arithmetic and geography. They had to study at home and then go through the work at school. That would take up only 10-15 minutes of the class time. Her parents didn't help with homework much but left the helping up to older brothers and sisters.

In schools then they weren't spanked, but would be slapped on the hands with a ruler for discipline. "It would never work now the way it did then." There were too many kids covering too broad a scope. One teacher was responsible for 70 students. But there was order. Recess was fun.

As Mom remembers, the school had to discontinue the teaching of German in 1920, the year she was confirmed.

The effects of WWI were being felt in rural areas. As the parochial school kids would pass the public school students on the other side of Lincolnville, the jeers came, "Here come the Huns!" a derogatory name. Mom's father had immigrated to America from what is now Poland and her mother was of German ancestry.

After the children were confirmed they were through with parochial school and attended the public school to prepare for their eighth grade examination. There they did not have to study as hard because German was not in the curriculum and public school was less rigorous.

From all of her memories relating to confirmation, Mom must have thought of it as a significant event. She recounted that confirmation preparation started early in her education. At first, there was a little memory work. The final year was a time of much preparation and memorizing the Small Catechism. On confirmation day the class would sit at the front of the church and submit to an hour of questioning. After that they recited their vows from memory.

When asked about her thoughts on confirmation, Mom stated that the way they did it was the only way they knew. She thought that kids now would not be able to sit that long. "Memorizing means that some things will stay with you longer. Sometimes you don't remember because you don't know what you're saying."

As she grew older, Wednesday summertime evenings were spent in town where the girls would sit in cars on the streets and talk until 11:00 p.m. or later. The men would sit on benches by the stores and talk farming. At age 21 she saw her first movie, a silent event.

Transportation up to 1920 was a matter of walking, sled, horse and buggy or carriage. The carriage had side curtains; the lumber wagon was an open affair. The sled was used for going to church in winter. Because of transportation limitations, the whole family was never in church at the same time. Somebody had to stay at home to cook dinner. No one wanted to walk because they had walked to school all week long. Herbert Rohloff's parents had one of the first cars in the area. Herbert came over one Sunday offering the kids a ride but none were willing. There were no horses so it was too scary! The Rindt's (Mom's parents) got their first car in 1920 at a cost of \$350. Mom got to ride in it to church for her confirmation.

After confirmation, Mom went on to public high school for about two years. She said she would have liked to continue, but her older brothers and sisters "thought she needed better clothes." Her parents wanted her to go on, but she chose to stay home and work. While in high school she remembers taking four subjects a year including history, algebra, Latin and English. The schedule sounded to me much like the block schedule being used in some of the area high schools today.

Career planning in those days was easier than it is today. The boys knew that they would be farmers. Girls worked as domestics. Mom's sister, Clara, worked as a dishwasher in Herington, Kansas but soon grew disgruntled with that type of work. Some of the boys went to work with the railroad in Herington, a railroad center at the time.

Mom went to work outside the home at age 16 as a domestic for a family named Munsterman in Antelope, Kansas. The family had four children and a large orchard, which must have been significant because of the work it provided. That autumn, her brother Ernest had an appendicitis operation; then a week later her brother Otto had the same procedure. Soon after that a horse kicked her father, leaving all three immobilized. Mom had to return home to help her sister Ida and her brother, Rudy, with shucking the corn.²³

Later Ida was married and Mom moved further in the country to "keep house" for Ernest. She worked for him for six years. Realizing she wasn't getting anywhere, she found a job with the Ed Michelis family in Herington; then to the Hill's for 2½ years cooking, washing, ironing and milking. Asked what she'd hoped for at that point in life, she replied she didn't know. She enjoyed life and wasn't used to anything else.

Conveniences and household chores were different in those days. The washing machine had no electric or gas engine. Children would crank the machine by hand in ten-minute shifts. Then the clothing would have to be rinsed. Washdays meant two long clotheslines filled with drying clothing. Water was drawn from the cistern for the washing; well water was used for drinking and cooking.²⁴

Foods were preserved by smoking and canning. An entire hindquarter of beef would be smoked throughout. Pork hams and shoulders would be put in smoked salt and then allowed to cure. They would then be cleaned and packed in wooden barrels filled with oats surrounding the meat. The meat would last until the following summer. The Rindt's also raised apples and peaches. Apples were kept

²³ Shucking corn is done in late fall after the stalks and ears are fully dry. A team of horses is hitched to a wagon and directed down a pair of rows. The "shuckers" or "huskers" walk down adjacent rows on one side picking the ears of corn off the stalk, pulling off the husks and tossing the ears in the wagon. A "bung-board" on the far side helps prevent tossed ears from going overboard. Younger shuckers took one or two rows close to the wagon and veterans took multiple rows further out. Good horses would stay on their row, move forward, and stop on command.

²⁴ Cistern water, collected from rain that fell on the roof, was naturally soft, while well water was generally hard, containing minerals picked up on its way to the water table. Some homes had both well and cistern, while others had only a cistern or only a well.

in long bins in the basement where they would keep until well past Christmas; longer when the apples were dried on the back porch. They never sprayed and never had wormy apples. Canning was a popular summertime activity with as many as 700 quarts preserved each season, much of it in two-quart jars.

In those days there was no prenatal care for expectant mothers. The children in the family knew nothing about another child coming because those things just were not talked about. A doctor would come to the home for a birth and midwives were also available to help. Mothers had to stay in bed for ten days. On the ninth day the mother was told to be "very still" because on that day everything went back into place.

When asked about the Rindt house in Lincolnville, Mom described it as having six rooms. The girls had a room upstairs as did the boys. A closet extended all across one side of each of the two rooms. Two beds were located in each bedroom. This arrangement could work because not all of the 13 children were at home at the same time. The house had a big kitchen with a cooking stove and a heating stove. Mom's grandmother had a room and a stove of her own. There was a parlor used only on Sundays. There the men would go after the Sunday meal to visit and smoke cigars. The women would come later after cleaning the dishes for their socializing. The room would always smell strongly of cigar smoke after these occasions and would have to be aired out after use. Mom mentioned that cigar smoke remains a nostalgic smell from those days of her youth.

Mom discussed her first meeting Dad (Roy John Samuel Vahsholtz 1906). She was visiting the August Krause family on a Sunday afternoon when Dad dropped by. That evening he called and asked her to go to a movie. Alma enthusiastically said, "Go, go!" Mom accepted, but when Dad arrived at her house she was unable to go because of a severe headache. He called again the next Sunday and she accepted. This time there was no headache. Both of them had to work into the evening on weekdays; he at Uncle Sam's and she at the Hill's. As time went on, he came over to her home in Lincolnville to go to church in the morning and then he would go back to work, returning in the evening to play cards or to visit. Everyone went to town on Saturday night so she went with the Hill's to Herington and then with one of her family members to Lincolnville for Sunday. As time went on Dad would join Mom for dinner at one of her married sisters. Dad always did enjoy these dinners because Aunt Laura (Laura Vahsholtz Mitsch 1877) didn't cook much during the week. Dad always did like to eat.

Mom found Dad quite attractive. There were things she didn't like about him, but she got used to him. Dad belonged to the American Lutheran Church, but he could have gone to any church, because his father had attended a wide variety of churches. Mom had said that the thing that drew Dad to the Missouri Synod Lutheran Church

was probably her sister's Sunday dinners to which they were invited.

Dad knew he had to keep working for his uncle, Sam Mitsch. He had worked for the county on road construction before that job, but had lost that job with the coming of the Depression. Dad was working for \$1.00 a day during harvest and at other times for one-third of the cream—about \$20.00 per month. Money did go a lot further in those days.²⁵ The Depression wasn't really over until the family moved out here (Washington State) and with the coming of WWII.

Their wedding day was on June 14, 1933 at 7:30 in the evening—Flag Day. Dad got up early and helped his brothers get the milking done at a very early hour so the afternoon milking could begin at 3:00 p.m. and the wedding party could get ready on time. There was no honeymoon for the new couple. On the Kansas prairie there was no place to go and there was no money either. They stayed overnight with her parents in Lincolnville. Dad got up at 4:00 a.m. the next morning, drove to Woodbine and resumed his milking chores. Mom's sister helped to get their house in order so the two of them could move in.

The house that they moved into had an outside toilet, no electricity and a cistern. A cistern is a concrete underground storage used as a depository for water directed from the roof of the house when it rained. After it rained, the water couldn't be used until sediment settled to the bottom. Through the use of a mechanical lift, the water could be brought up. ²⁶ Water was brought into the house in a bucket and then dipped from the bucket with a dipper for drinking or cooking needs. In the wintertime the bucket would freeze inside the house and would need thawing on the kitchen stove before the day's activities could begin.

During those early years at that house, Mom would help with the milking in the morning and evening. While us children were small we would stay with Aunt Laura in the evenings. In the mornings we were left at the house across a ravine from the Mitch home while we were still sleeping. As we grew older, the matches were hidden along with anything else that could get kids in trouble. By the time they returned to the house from milking we would be up and playing. This arrangement was attempted in an effort to finish the milking and have some time for some kind of social life in the evenings. Often, however, when the milking got done early, Uncle Sam would require that Dad work longer. "We had no

²⁵ Still, that's only about \$150 per month in today's dollars. Of course room and board, such as it was, came with the deal.

²⁶ This device was not a pump. It was a sort of enclosed windlass with a series of cups on a chain. It worked satisfactorily on cisterns, which were shallow compared to wells, and brought up less sediment.

social life so we didn't know any different because we never went out," in Mom's words. To me, it sounded like our parents needed a good union organization.

During the interview Mom spoke of her lack of nursing skills and gave an example. One day she and Marie Allen, an old friend, were talking about the taking of a baby's temperature. Mom asked how that was done. Marie asked, "You mean you don't know how to take a baby's temperature?" Mom replied that she never owned a baby thermometer and that the kids were always healthy so she didn't need one. She guessed that was because she was a poor nurse. One Sunday morning Vernon (Vernon Charles Vahsholtz 1935) was playing with a little metal car and somehow fell on it, cutting his forehead. Dad took a piece of tape, put something on the wound and taped it shut. Dad knew better what to do than Mom, in her words.

Along the route that ran by our home from Abilene to Woodbine (in Kansas), a gypsy caravan would pass from time-to-time. They could be seen from some distance away as they traveled the road. At their approach Mom would gather us kids into the house because they had the reputation for stealing chickens and picking up children. Their passing was always uneventful.

There was nothing going on in Woodbine and Mom was hardly ever able to get out of the house. In her words, it would have been hard if she was not already accustomed to this way of life. Wednesday and Saturday were "town night" and Sunday was for church. Woodbine seemed a quiet town, and life on the farm was lonely. They barely knew the neighbors because work kept them at home.



Roy and Frieda Vahsholtz holding Norma, Duane and Vernon, Arlene and Harold

One of the neighbors that they did know was the Longhofers, who lived about a half-mile away. Evidently, both Vernon and I had what was called a "kiddy car." The Longhofer family was visiting one evening and Dad gave mine to the Longhofer child because he didn't have one and Dad thought that Vernon and I could share Vernon's. About a week later, Mom said, I walked through the pasture to their home and got it back. She didn't know what I might have said.

Uncle Sam had an agreement with Dad that he would help Dad get a good start in farming if Dad would help him. When Uncle Sam died in February it didn't work out that way because Uncle Sam apparently didn't have a will. Dad was asked to help with the sale. Aunt Laura and her nephew wanted Dad to stay on and rent the pasture to raise his calves. They wanted to charge him \$100 a year. When they found that Dad wasn't going to stay, they rented the pasture to two of Aunt Laura's brothers for \$35 a year. Dad did get a third of the calves for the last couple of years that they worked together. Aunt Laura felt that Dad was worth no more than a dollar a day so a decision was needed about the family's future. With the \$200 from the sale of the calves and with support from his family already in Washington, the decision was made to go West. Dad had written his brothers asking them if they could send money in case of car trouble and they agreed to help. They wanted Mom and Dad to come to Washington because they knew that there was nothing for them in Kansas.

The trip to Washington began on the 24th of April, 1940 using a car pulling a four-wheeled trailer completely loaded with their earthly possessions. Four children filled the back seat. The trip took a total of seven days. To Dad, the Rocky Mountains seemed impassable because of their size as they were viewed from the Prairie. This was the first time my parents had seen the mountains. A stop at Bonneville Dam stands out in my mind, as does the old scenic highway, the main route on the Oregon side and the view from the Vista House. When we arrived in Washougal, Washington, the first week was spent at Grandma's (Elizabeth "Lizzie" Mosteller Vahsholtz 1878) house.

In Grandma's neighborhood lived an elderly prune farmer named Mr. Peterson. He owned a farm in the Sunset View area of Washougal, a place to stay until a new house could be finished by Dad's brother, Homer (Homer M. Vahsholtz 1915). The Peterson farm was in a fairly remote area, once again making a lonely life for Mom. The house needed cleaning and that was done. After a week the family moved in.

From the neighbors we learned that bears in the area had visited a nearby apple orchard the previous fall. Someone else had seen a bobcat on the road near the house and I just knew there were cougars in the area because in Kansas I had heard that there were cougars in Washington. Early that summer, Dad and I were picking

cherries at the Peterson home in town and the four o'clock whistle blew for a shift change at the Washougal Woolen Mill. At age six I *knew* that was the sound of a cougar and that it would certainly be at our house in the country when we got there. I never knew what cougars sounded like, but that seemed like the way they should sound.

Dad was able to get on the "extra board" at Crown Zellerbach Paper Mill right away but that was only part-time work. He also worked part-time with Glen Cottrell, who owned the dam on the Washougal River used for electrical generation, and for Frank Brown as a carpenter's helper. The jobs were either too few or too many on any given day. If he found no work at the paper mill in the morning he would go to work at one of the other two places. Then, he might have to work a swing shift at the mill after having worked a day shift for Frank Brown or Glen Cottrell. Dad was 34 at the time. It could never be disputed that Dad was a hard worker trying to provide for his family and "get ahead."

Mom told the story of coming home one evening from Washougal to the farm. Walking on the road was what she described as a "bum." Somehow, she thought he was going to stay in our barn overnight because, in Kansas, that's what bums did. The next morning when she went to the barn to milk the three cows she opened the barn door with trepidation and yelled, "If you are in there you better get out!" She waited awhile, nothing happened, so she proceeded to enter the barn to milk the cows. Fortunately, there was an electric light in the barn, which could be turned on from the house. That did much to alleviate her fears on such mornings. Since we were the first house on the pickup route, the milk from our cows had to be in cans at the road by 8:00 a.m. If she were late, the milk could not be picked up until the next day and might sour.

The first Christmas in Washington on the Peterson farm was one with few presents and no tradition. I remember a Christmas tree covered, not with ornaments, but garlands of popcorn strung on thread. While Mom was out in the barn milking, we children ate popcorn from the Christmas tree as the first course of breakfast.

Another incident occurred in the woodshed one day when Vernon, Arlene (Arlene Virginia Vahsholtz

Brumsickle 1937) and I were playing. I was on my knees with one hand on a chopping block, reading a comic strip while Vernon was on my back. Arlene had an ax, and told me to move my hand. I didn't, and Arlene brought the ax down on my hand. The resulting cut hand required four stitches and a long time to heal. Life was pretty wild at Sunset View east of Washougal!

We moved to the newly completed house in March of 1941. There, we had a new convenience, a water heater that was operated by a wood stove with city running water. We had our own bathroom that took care of the needs of six people, later growing to eight. We had a

basement with cement floor and fruit shelves. The chicken house was soon built and a single car garage completed. We kept one cow that was sometimes staked and sometimes allowed to pasture in a nearby fenced area. The house cost \$3,200.²⁷ Life was certainly easier than in Woodbine.



The Roy Vahsholtz house is in the foreground, where Frieda lives to this day. The next house down was the third house Homer built and next is Lloyd's, where he still lives.

A Missouri Synod Lutheran congregation was meeting at the IOOF Hall in Camas and that became the church that we attended. Several years before we had arrived, the congregation was started at the Hirsekorn home in Camas. In those early days, the pastor from Salmon Creek, Pastor Westendorf, came to minister to the needs of this young congregation. About 25 people would attend on a typical Sunday. With the big stuffed moose above the altar, dancing wax remaining on the floors from a lodge dance the night before, and various lodge emblems on the walls, it didn't seem much like church.

On a December Sunday morning in 1941, Bill Schwartz, a member of the congregation, went to his car after church to listen to his car radio. There he learned that Japan had just bombed Pearl Harbor, and came back upstairs to announce the news.

Because of his age and the size of his family, Dad wasn't concerned about the ensuing military draft. The economy got much better so the 20-year mortgage on the new house was paid for in two years. "We always had something to sell so there was more money than ever."

Soon after the start of WWII, Dad moved from working at the paper mill to the Kaiser Shipyard in Vancouver, Washington. At the paper mill the workers were told that the shipyards were more important than papermaking and

²⁷ About \$25,000 in today's dollars. So how come today's houses cost five times as much or more? Well, that price probably didn't include the lot, which in any event was nominal. Also Homer probably did most of the work himself helped by one or two non-union unskilled laborers. There were no codes or building permits required. There was no overhead charged to the project. Finally, the house was probably about a third the size of current houses, with very few amenities. If such a house were built today, few would buy it.

the pay was better, so the move was made. At the shipyard Dad became a plumber and pipe fitter working on liberty ships and small aircraft carriers being produced in Vancouver. Dad worked at the shipyard until it closed at the end of the War; then he returned to the wooden mill, a part of the paper mill in Camas where he had worked before.

One of Mom's remembrances of the war years was the compulsory blackouts that went on for a couple of years at the beginning of the War. They were to prevent enemy aircraft from seeing cities and towns. Windows had to be covered in such a way that no light would shine through. Car headlights were also covered with narrow slits cut to allow a little light to shine through to the road. The speed limit at that time was 35 mph to conserve gas and tires.

During the war in the summertime, Jantzen Beach Park would hold picnics each Sunday to bring people from different states together. When the War started many, many people from the Midwest migrated to the Portland-Vancouver area for the jobs in the shipyards. Kansas Day provided an opportunity for the people of Kansas to get together in the picnic area. At one of these picnics they met a couple that had moved to the Portland area from Woodbine.



Behind Frieda in this 2002 photo are from left, Duane, Harold and Bob Vahsholtz

This interview was made when Mom was 79. Asked if she had anything else she wanted to say to her grandkids, she said she didn't because they would think she was so old fashioned. Then she said, "Let's quit."

So we did.

Returning now to the children of Herman (1844) and Johannah (1852), the sixth child was **Louisa "Louise" Minna Vahsholtz** (1883) who was born in Nemaha County and died in 1970 in Santa Ana, California. She and her husband are buried in Topeka, Kansas. She married Charles William Ramsbarger (1874) who died in 1919. From 1919 to 1951 she worked in the glassware department at Crosby's in Topeka. During retirement, Louise lived with her daughter, Frances in California. Their children were:

• Charles Eugene Ramsbarger, Sr. (1909) who was born in Topeka and died in 1977 in Garden Grove, California. He married Eleanor Birdie Poppe (1908). Their son, Charles Eugene Ramsbarger, Jr. (1940) married Ruth Ann Elliott (1941). After Charles' death in 1974, Ruth Ann married Michael Henderson M.D. in 1978. He adopted her two children. Her son's name became Charles Elliott Ramsbarger Henderson (1971). Though suffering from diabetes, in 1986 Charles received the God and Country Award—only one out of 100 Boy Scouts attain this award.



Charles William Ramsbarger and wife Louise Vahsholtz Ramsbarger with son Charles Eugene, Sr. and daughter "Frances"

Francesca Alethea "Frances Aletha" Ramsbarger
 (1911) was also born in Topeka and died in 1983 in
 Santa Ana, California. She married William Hal
 Rager (1901). Frances lived in Topeka before she
 moved to California in 1952.



Frances Ramsbarger Rager and her mother Louise Vahsholtz Ramsbarger

The seventh child of Herman and Johannah was **William Henry Vahsholtz** (1886) who died in 1957. In 1912, he married Minnie Kracke. Their children were:

- Louis Vahsholtz (1914) who died in 1979.
- Walter Vahsholtz (1917) who also died in 1979.
- Otto Vahsholtz (1920) who died in 1986.



Paul Vahsholtz and Auguste Weber Vahsholtz

The eighth child was **Paul Theodore Vahsholtz** (1888) who died in 1967. In 1913 he married Auguste Weber (1885). Their children were:

- Elsie B. Vahsholtz (1915) who married Phillip S. Welsh (1916). She died in 1978.
- Hildegard Frieda Marie Vahsholtz (1915) died in 2000. She was Elsie's twin sister. Her husband was Elmer William Stroede (1910).
- Josephine Frances Vahsholtz (1916) married Martin A. Kohls.

Child number nine of Herman and Johannah was **Albert** "Edward" Vahsholtz (1891), born in Nemaha County and died in 1961 at Herington. He married Ida Wilhelmine Martha Weber (1893). After Edward's death, Ida lived on at the farm alone and as late as 1975 was still mowing her own lawn. She died in 1984 at age 91. Edward and Ida's children were:

• Meta Ida Vahsholtz (1915), who died in 2000. She married Lawrence Carsey Veerhusen (1917). In 1993 daughter, Betty Jo (Veerhusen) Long (1943) wrote, "I grew up in the Herington, Kansas area. My parents were and still are farmers in the community. I met my husband, Bill (William Charles Long, 1941), in Wichita, Kansas. After he got out of the Air Force in 1964 we moved to New York where our children were born. In 1967 Bill started his

- employment with American Airlines and we are now living in Spring, Texas, a suburb of Houston."
- Valena "Velora" Vahsholtz (1918), married Glenn Julius Drosselmeyer (1918). In November 1992, Velora wrote: "I attended the schools near Woodbine, Kansas. Our family attended the St. Paul's Lutheran Church, which then was a small church in the country near Shadybrook. It has been moved to Woodbine. We were a happy family living in the country on a farm. Each one had a special job, such as milking, feeding calves, pigs, chickens and getting in the firewood. We made our own entertainment in those days.

"After leaving the farm I worked in Herington, then on to Wichita, where I met Glenn where we both had jobs in aircraft factories. Glenn was in the Service when we were married in 1945. He was discharged in 1946.

"We then came to Colorado, the southeastern corner of Baca County. Lived in Two Buttes since 1948. We were farmers, with about 1,500 acres of land, both dry and irrigation. Glenn [who died in 1988] loved farming and truly enjoyed life and being with people and meeting new friends. He is greatly missed by all who knew him."

- Norwood "Butch" Vahsholtz (1920). His wife was Naola.
- Millie Louise Vahsholtz (1923) married Jack Edward Colvin (1925). Millie wrote, "I attended Grandview Grade School and Woodbine High School. In 1942 after graduation I left for Wichita and worked for Beech Aircraft until after the War. I was a riveter²⁸ on the Douglas Aircraft. After Beech Aircraft I worked for Duhe, Inc., which was a retail stationery store. When we were married I moved to Kansas City, there I worked for Schooley's, also a stationery store. After we had the boys, I worked for Sears for 25 years and retired in 1988.

"My home life with my parents was full of hard work—times were really hard and we all worked together to survive. We had lots of real good times. We looked forward to Saturday night. We went to Woodbine to a free movie and an ice cream cone. We were farmers and didn't go very far from home. We went to church every Sunday.

"My married life has been wonderful. I have a real good husband and three wonderful boys. They all have good jobs and come see us often. We are a real close family. Couldn't ask for a better life."

 Merle Weber Vahsholtz (1928) married Lillie Marie Louise Kickhaefer (1929). In 1999 they celebrated their fiftieth anniversary with their family

²⁸ Millie the Riveter!

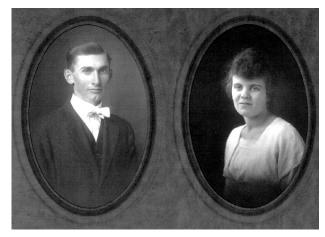
in Branson, Missouri. Merle was a foreman for Anderson-Oxandale for 11 years and an Amoco agent and jobber for 26 years, retiring in 1995. Lillie worked in the business with Merle and retired in 1996.

Rose Marie Vahsholtz (1935) married Gene Meuli and later, married Royal E. Womochil (1929). Prior to her death in 2001, she wrote, "I went to school for six years in a little one-room school called Grandview. I attended the St. Paul American Lutheran Church with my parents. It was first located one mile west and about 1/2 mile south of Shady Brook. I was baptized and confirmed there. Later it was moved to Woodbine, Kansas. After I was married. I attended the New Basel Church which is located 11 miles south and 1½ miles east of Abilene. Kansas. My three sons were baptized and confirmed there. I have lived on farms in the Woodbine and Abilene areas all my life; first with my parents. You have many hardships from crop failures and drops in crop prices. You go along trying to make the best of

"Living with my parents, we had a lot of fun, they were easy to get along with, but if you did something they were unhappy with, they let you know about it.

"My biggest occupation was raising my three sons. After they were grown and on their own I worked in a nursing home, which turned out to be quite a job. I loved the elderly folks, but the work was very hard."

According to her obituary, Rose had worked for KSAL Radio in Salina and Gamber's Music Store in Abilene as well as Enterprise Estates Nursing Center in Enterprise.

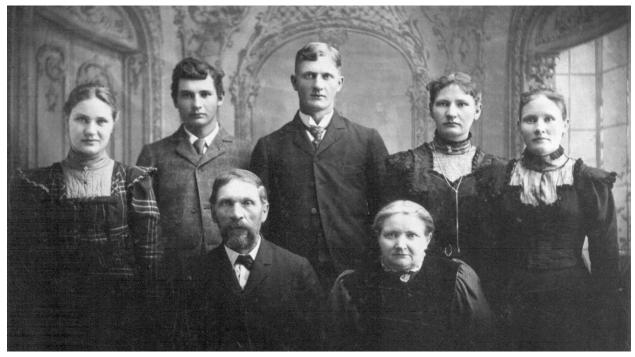


Robert and Lydia Weber Vahsholtz

The tenth and last child of Herman and Johannah was **Robert Martin Vahsholtz**, **Sr.** (1894), who was born in Nemaha County, lived on the farm near Woodbine and died in 1973. He married Lydia Sophia Clara Weber (1897), one of the four Weber girls who helped their

father in his general merchandise store in Woodbine. Children of Bob and Lydia Weber were:

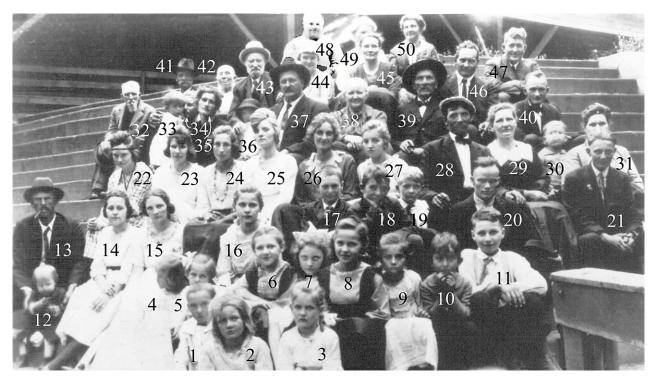
- Dorothy Vahsholtz (1919) married John D. Henry.
 Her sister LaVada said, "Dorothy was divorced from John Henry many years ago and then they remarried shortly before he died."
- Evelina Vahsholtz (1920) married Charles Ditzel (1914).
- Robert Floyd Vahsholtz, Jr. (1922) married Lucile Maria Munstermann (1918) in 1959 and after her death in 1994, married Donna Easter.
- Leonard Wayne Vahsholtz (1924) died in 1999. He married Pearl Ruth Miller Barrett. His obituary said Leonard was a mechanic who owned and operated the Vahsholtz Garage at Woodbine since 1951.
- Herbert Kenneth Vahsholtz (1926) died in 1998.
 His wife was Erline Eva Albrecht (1931). Herbert
 was a farmer and stockman. He served with the
 United States Army during World War II with the
 infantry in Japan and Philippine Islands from 19441946. Their daughter is Kelli Ann (Vahsholtz)
 Olson (1975) who started the research on the
 Nebraska Vasholz branch.
- LaVada Ruth Vahsholtz (1928) married Richard "Dick" Allen Traskowsky (1928).



Rear: L. to R. Hattie, Herman, Henry, Amanda, and Hulda. Front, Franz and Sophie Vahsholtz



Rear L to R: Hattie Vahsholtz Schroeder, Carl Schroeder, Lena Weerts Vahsholtz, Henry Hitzemann, Dick Friedrich, Hulda Vahsholtz Friedrich, Lena Young Vahsholtz, Herman Vahsholtz. Front L to R: Amanda Vahsholtz Hitzemann, Sophie and Franz Leonard Vahsholtz on their fiftieth anniversary, and Henry Vahsholtz—August 12, 1920



- 1. Louis Leonard Hitzeman
- 2. Irma Alruma Sophia Vahsholtz
- Hulda Schroeder
- Hedwig "Hattie" Vahsholtz
- 5. Alvina Schroeder
- 6. Clara Schroeder
- 7. Velma Friedrich
- 8. Unknown
- 9. Hilda "Betty" Vahsholtz
- 10. Leonard Vahsholtz
- 11. Wilhelm "Judge" Karl Schroeder 26. Katherine "Katie" Vahsholtz
- 12. Mabel Schroeder
- 13. Karl Schroeder, Sr.
- 14. Unknown
- 15. Irma Esther Hilda Friederich

- 16. Lydia Hulda Marie Schroeder
- 18. Fred Richard Herman Vahsholtz Leonard?
- 19. Henry "Hank" Vahsholtz
- 20. Robert "Doc" Friedrich?
- 21. Martin Leonard Vahsholtz
- 22. Unknown
- 23. Ella Hedwig Schroeder
- 24. Mildred "Meta" Vahsholtz
- 25. Irene Friedrich
- 27. Unknown
- 28. Richard "Dick" Friedrich
- 29. Amanda Vahsholtz Hitzemann
- 30 Herman Schroeder

- 31. Hedwig "Hattie" Schroeder
- 17.Edwin Henry Herman Hitzeman 32.Cousin or Brother of Franz
 - 33. George Robert Vahsholtz
 - 34. Agde Lena Weerts Vahsholtz
 - 35. Lena Caroline Young Vahsholtz
 - 36. Richard Herman Vahsholtz
 - 37. Henry Leonard Vahsholtz
 - 38. Sophia (Robbing) Vahsholtz
 - 39. Franz Leonard Vahsholtz
 - 40. Herman Henry Friedrich?
 - 41. Henry Hitzemann
 - 42. Unknown
 - 43.Hermann Fahsholtz?
 - 44. Lulu Bates

- 45. Hulda (Vahsholtz) Friedrich
- 46. Herman A. Vahsholtz
- 47. Mr. Ruhter
- 48. Unknown
- 49. Mrs. Ruhter
- 50. Anna (Bates) Fahsholtz

Franz Leonard & Sophie's Fiftieth Anniversary Photo August 12, 1920

Chapter **Eight**, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Including the three preceding photographs

Descendants of Franz Leonard Vahsholtz (1847)

Five of the eight children of Franz Leonard and Sophie Wilhelmine Louise Robbing (1849) survived childhood—fairly typical for those days. Their first child, Bertha Vahsholtz (1871) died the year she was born.

Amanda Elwine Vahsholtz (1873) and all of her siblings were born near Seneca in Nemaha County, Kansas. Amanda died in 1941 in Emporia, Kansas. Her husband was Heinrich Friedrich Herman "Henry" Hitzemann (1864), son of Johann Hitzemann and Sophie Beethe. He was born in Elgin, Illinois, and died in 1948 in Emporia.

Amanda met her husband when she came to Pawnee City. Nebraska, to develop and enlarge pictures for the people of that farming area. Later she painted in oils on canvas.

Henry Hitzemann was a carpenter, plasterer and a farmer at the time when he met Amanda. Henry and his brother farmed together near Steinauer, Nebraska before they married. Henry courted Amanda by driving a slick team of horses and buggy thirty miles to Seneca from Steinauer. Henry and Amanda were married at the second St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church in Nemaha County in 1899.

In 1902 Franz Leonard and family moved to Olpe, Kansas (about 11 miles southwest of Emporia). Henry and Amanda also moved there. Henry first rented a farm and later purchased the 160 acres of general farming land from its Los Angeles owner for \$2,600. He assumed a mortgage of \$1,000. The farm was located west of Franz Leonard's and had a shed, barn and four-room square one-story house. Amanda sold eggs and butter she had churned to the stores in Emporia for extra cash.

In 1909 Henry purchased a second farm for \$4,500. He assumed the mortgage of \$1,900. This farm stayed in the Hitzeman family until Edwin Hitzeman (1911), his

oldest son, sold it in about 1968. It had an L-shaped frame house with porch on the east side and four rooms. **Edwin** and **Louis Hitzeman** (1914) were born there. While living there, Henry and Amanda bought a new black Ford with a throw-in clutch on one side; a novelty in the country at that time. In 1915 they bought another farm near Herington and moved there.



Amanda and Henry Hitzemann's wedding, 1899

Amanda Hitzemann really wanted a girl and when Louis turned out to be a boy, she put him in a dress and long curls for several years after he started to walk. Since Amanda and Henry didn't have children for many years after their marriage, they took in the youngest Wyman's daughter, Nellie, aged eight. The oldest girl was taken by Leonard and Sophie Vahsholtz. Lula Wyman, the other girl, was married at the age of 17. The youngest of the three girls, Nellie, was unmanageable. Amanda and Henry took her back to Winfield, Kansas to The Lutheran Children's Home when she was 14.

In 1937 Amanda and Henry sold the Herington farm and moved to near Emporia—a 160-acre farm.

Amanda Hitzemann died of cancer in 1941 at age 68. Henry Hitzemann died in 1948 at the age of 84.

Darrell Brockmeier said Henry and Amanda Hitzemann were like Grandparents to him after Grandpa and Grandma Vahsholtz (**Henry**, 1879, and Lena 1883

Vahsholtz) moved to Oklahoma. The Hitzemann's had a toy train behind the dining room door that Darrell knew he could play with.



Henry and Amanda with Lou (bottom) and Edwin

According to a story at the 1997 Vahsholtz Cousins Reunion, Henry Hitzemann once road "shotgun" on a stagecoach—that is he was armed and rode beside the driver of the stage to protect against bandits.

Children of Amanda Vahsholtz and Henry Hitzemann were:

- Edwin Henry Herman Hitzeman (1911) was born at Olpe and died in 1980 at Independence, Kansas. He first married Bessie Bain and later married Bernice Seyfert (1917). They had three children. After their divorce, he married Joan Putraz. This marriage also ended in divorce. Dwayne Louis Hitzeman (1944) had a twin sister, Delores Lorena Hitzeman. Dwayne enlisted in the Navy in 1966 and in 1969 he married Bonnie Lauppe. He earned his Electrical Engineering Degree at Wichita State University in 1972. **Delores** graduated with a B.S. in Medical Technology from Wichita State. Edwin and Bernice's daughter Sharon Ann (1947) graduated Cum Laude (with honors) from Wichita State University with a Bachelor of Arts in Education in 1970. Later she earned a Masters degree from the same university.
- Louis Leonard George Hitzeman (1914) was born at Olpe, and died on Feb. 18, 1992 shortly after he and Melvina celebrated their 50th Wedding Anniversary. Louis' wife was Melvina Frieda Tena Seyfert (1913), sister of Bernice who Edwin married. Louis and Melvina had no children.

Both Edwin and Louis were born on the family farm near Olpe. The farm was suitable for the early farmers for grain crops as they needed good bottom land for feed, fodder, hay, water springs, pasture for cattle and a cistern for household water.

In 1915 when Louis Hitzeman was a year old and they'd moved to Herington, Kansas, his parents, Henry and Amanda, brother Edwin and Nellie (the girl they were raising) went by train for sightseeing

and traveling to Los Angeles, Idaho, and the West Coast for one year. They hired a single girl to help with the children while traveling. They rented out the 160-acre farm at Olpe while they traveled.



Melvina Hitzeman as a teacher in 1942

The boys attended St. John Lutheran Parochial School, near Lyon Creek, and four years at Hope High School. Edwin did not finish high school as he became too interested in electricity and radios, etc. Edwin and a friend started an electrical shop in Hope. The Depression of the 1930s closed that shop.

Edwin Hitzeman wired many of the rural homes near Emporia and Olpe for electricity (REA)²⁹ besides farming the inherited farm. While his children were still young Edwin operated an electric shop in Olpe. Later he established an electrical wholesale store called "Jayhawk" in Independence, Kansas.

Edwin and Louis changed the spelling of Hitzemann to use only one "n."

²⁹ The Rural Electrification Administration was a program set up and subsidized by the Federal Government to bring electricity to nearly all family farms. It wasn't free, so some farmers chose to do without. When **Fred Vahsholtz** (1910) lived on a deadend road in South Dakota, his only neighbor chose to do without, effectively doubling the cost of bringing the wires to Fred's farm. Fred bought a generator and used gas appliances, also doing without the REA. Then the neighbor changed his mind, and **he** had to pay the extra cost to get wired.

Melvina and Louis were married on January third, 1942 just after World War II was announced on December seventh. Louis and Melvina moved to Wichita, Kansas where Louis was employed at Boeing Aircraft Company making B25 airplanes. They stayed in Wichita until 1943 when Louis' A-1 classification meant either return to the farm or fight in the army.

They returned to the farm until the fall of 1946. They then sold the 160-acre farm Louis inherited from his folks. After the farm was sold, Louis finished the Coyne Electrical and Refrigeration College course.

Teachers were scarce during the war years. Melvina taught commercial subjects (typing, shorthand, bookkeeping and algebra) at Elmdale Rural High School and at Reading Rural High School until 1947. In that year Melvina and Louis took an extensive belated honeymoon trip to the East Coast from Chicago down the Eastern Coast to Florida; then a boat to Havana, Cuba; then toured Florida, Alabama, Louisiana, Texas, and finally arrived in Wichita three months later.

Louis and Melvina moved to Wichita and purchased their first home in 1950 at 821 S. Dellrose for \$7,900 and sold it three years later for \$10,000 (about \$50,000 current dollars). They purchased a second house at 317 N. Brookside, Wichita in March 1951 for \$17,800. Louis was employed as a technician in refrigeration and electrical appliances. He retired after 29 years of service at Southwestern Electrical Company. Melvina was a professional instructor and teacher for 22 years in District 259, Wichita Public Schools, and retired after 32 years of teaching Business subjects.



Melvina Hitzeman and Marge Vahsholtz, tracing begats

Melvina earned a Bachelor of Science in Education and Bachelor of Science in Commerce (business) in 1941 at Emporia State Teachers College and a Masters Degree in Education (Social Studies) in 1959 from Wichita University.

Louis and Melvina enjoyed the culture and customs of foreign countries and traveled widely throughout the world. Besides their activities in the Lutheran Church, they enjoyed the Wichita Color Slide Club where both earned trophies in International Photography.

Melvina was granted a scholarship to attend the International College of Educational and Social Issues of the World in Scandinavian Countries, Sweden, Denmark, and Norway. She was also granted a scholarship to attend the Audubon Society's camp in Maine to study the "Nature and Marine Life of the Atlantic Coast and Islands."

Most importantly to the rest of us, Louis and Melvina Hitzeman were the authors of "Martin Vahsholtz Genealogy 1675-1977" for which the Vahsholtz family is duly thankful.



Amanda and Hulda Vahsholtz

Franz Leonard and Sophie's second child was **Ottilie** "**Hulda**" **Vahsholtz** (1874). She married George Richard "Dick" Friedrich (1866) who died in 1946. He was a successful farmer and carpenter. Hulda died in

1970 just two weeks short of age 96. They're both buried at Santa Monica, California. In her last years she lived with her single daughter, Irene, at Three Rivers, California. Hulda and Dick's children were all born at DuBois, Nebraska except Velma, the youngest.



Dick and Hulda Friedrich's 1892 wedding photo



Hulda hated to leave the Nebraska house. To remember it, she got some house paint from the shed and painted this picture.



Hulda's daughter Velma hated to leave their next house her father built on the Verdigris River and painted this picture



The Friedrich family: Back: Herman, "Doc," George, Irene and Irma Front: Velma, Dick and Hulda

Children of Dick and Hulda:

- George Edmund Friedrich (1894) who married Alice Lessman. They adopted two children, a boy and a girl. They first lived on a farm on the Verdigris River near Madison, Kansas, which George rented from his father. Darrell Brockmeier notes they then lived near Clay Center in the country. From there they moved to California and George worked in a mill. Later he farmed at Keats, Kansas doing carpentry work on the side. He retired at Wakefield, Nebraska, where their daughter and husband lived. He died in 1977.
- Robert Leonard "Doc" Friedrich (1896) who married Clara Ott. He was a chiropractor in Manhattan, Kansas. Later he retired to a place in the country about five miles northeast of Manhattan. For professional purposes, he changed the spelling of his name to Fredrick. His obituary said Doc had been a resident of Manhattan since 1922 and operated his practice from 1922 to 1951. He died in 1975.

- Irene Sophie Marie Friedrich (1898) died in 1993 at Susanville, California. She retired from the Veterans Administration, Los Angeles, California to a mountain home at Three Rivers, California. She never married.
- Herman Henry Friedrich (1900) married his second cousin, Cornelia "Cora" Schaaf (1900) who was known in the Friedrich family as "Co." He died in 1948 at Santa Monica, California.
- Irma Esther Hilda Friedrich (1905) married John Richard White (1916) in 1954. Both Irma and John were teachers at Susanville, California. They had no children. In 1995 she said she hoped to live to see the new millennium, and she made it. Both shared a love of books and travel. Both Irma and John died at Susanville, California in 2001.
- Velma Alice Friedrich (1912), the youngest of the Friedrich children, was born in Olpe, Kansas after the family moved to the farm on the Verdigris River. She married Edwin "Taylor" Peterson (1911). She and Taylor retired to Three Rivers, California. He died in 1992.



Velma Friedrich Peterson at age 89

Growing Up in Kansas by Velma Alice Friedrich Peterson (1912)

Storms

One of my earliest memories is that of a severe thunderstorm. The Midwest is noted for them and they are certainly colorful, dangerous and dramatic. I remember my father (Richard "Dick" Friedrich, 1866) placing us all on a mattress in the middle of the living room and there we stayed until the storm abated. I can't figure out what the theory was behind this action. I do not remember being scared, even though my mother (Hulda Vahsholtz Friedrich, 1874) was praying and wringing her hands. I guess I must have enjoyed the crashing thunder and zigzag lightening. I still do, along with the wonderful smell of rain.

Most all farms had storm caves. They were built a bit like a sod house—slightly rounded above ground with steps leading down to a cellar which usually had shelves along the sides holding canned fruit and vegetables; thus serving a dual purpose. Sometimes a storm would arrive so fast it was hard to make it from the house to the cellar. That happened to my sister **Irene**, (1898) and the wind slammed the cave door on her hand, breaking the third finger. Doctors were few and far away, so my father set her finger. It mended quite well, but pretty much on the crooked side.

Another time my sister Irene and I were alone on our farm when, at dusk, a huge black cloud and sudden strong wind came up. A tornado. Irene screamed and grabbing my hand (I was five years old), pulled me down to the cellar under the kitchen in the old stone part of the house. ³⁰ We had no time to get to the storm cave. There was a terrible roar and the stones of the house seemed to make a grinding noise. In the morning when we went out to look, trees were toppled and the barn moved off its foundation and neatly set down again.

Another memory is the Golden Tree. I was visiting my cousins on my Uncle Herman's (**Herman August Vahsholtz** 1880) farm. A strong electrical storm came up just after dark. We kids were in the kitchen playing a game at the kitchen table when my uncle called us to the living room saying, "This is something to see!" And there on the lawn was an absolute golden tree; every leaf, twig, branch and trunk, right down into the ground.

Country School

When I was six years old, I started to go to school. By law, I was too young for the first grade, but our very kind teacher allowed me to accompany my sister, Irma (1905), seven years older than I was. My memories of this school are wonderful. It was located in a grove of trees with a creek running along one side of them. We

created a marvelous play area among the trees and the "big boys" built a plank bridge across the stream.

Our winters were cold and in the middle of the big school room stood a giant stove, really more like a furnace, on top of which Miss McClure warmed bricks, but only the small children received them—or older children if they had a cold. How good they felt to my cold, cold feet!

On rainy days, at recess time, we played games inside. One of the favorites was a guessing game in which one person would have an object in mind and was questioned by the rest of the group until the object was identified.

One day it was my turn and it was quickly determined that I was thinking of an animal—reddish brown, white face, four legs, tail—a cow? No, I said it was not a cow. A calf? No, it wasn't a calf. A dog? A cat? No, none of these. Give up? I said triumphantly. A chorus of, "yes, but it's got to be a cow!" "Not a cow," I said, bursting with glee, "It's a bull!"

Now in those long-gone days the term "bull" was not used in polite society, and Irma berated me all the way home and immediately informed my mother of my disgraceful behavior. And I, of course, received another long lecture.

Next to the school was a large open field that, in the springtime, turned into a wonderful expanse of wildflowers in vivid reds, purple, yellow and white. We called them daisies, but since this was still natural prairie land, they had to be wild anemone. When we finished making our colorful baskets, Miss McClure allowed us to crawl under the fence to gather big fistfuls of them to fill our baskets.

Since I was so much younger than the rest of my five siblings, my days were sometimes quite lonely. My parents, however, in spite of their busy lives, spent happy hours with me. My mother played "store" with me while she busily sewed at the treadle sewing machine. Those machine drawers held all sorts of things—buttons, snaps, spools of thread, rick-rack, ribbons, elastic, and lace trimming. I bought them over and over again, even learning to haggle a bit over the price. That is where I learned about money, using real coins that my mother kept in an old black leather coin purse.

Like all little girls in those days, I had a playhouse under the cottonwood trees where I made wonderful mud pies and chicken noodle soup out of the wood curls from my father's shop. At the end of the day he'd have dinner with me before going into the house to wash up. He would smack his lips and tell me how wonderful everything tasted and what a good cook I was, just like Mama.

He also built things for me—like a good-sized dollhouse with tiny furniture. One summer he put up a tent for me; put an old canvas cot in it and built a small table and four benches. I dragged all my goodies in there—my own little kingdom. Sometimes my mother let me sleep all night there, with my dog.

³⁰ I remember that cellar being referred to as a "way station" on the old Chisholm Trail.

Church

Sunday was the important day of the week. The hustle and bustle of an early breakfast, donning our best clothes and setting out across the rolling grassland in the "surrey with the fringe on top." One of my earliest memories is the joy of such a ride on a crisp spring day, listening to the lovely song of the meadowlark—still my favorite songbird. Our church was the typical little white one of the prairie, bell tower at the front and chimney at the other end. Church was also the big part of our social life, visiting with people after the service and often having dinner with relatives or friends afterwards. Sunday was the only day when people had time to visit. Of course, the poor women cooked all day Saturday to prepare the huge dinners. One time we'd been invited to my Aunt Hattie's house (Hedwig "Hattie" Vahsholtz Schroeder 1886). Hers was a very large family—11 children. I remember the dining room table being very long with extra small tables when there was company. On this day, when we were about to be seated, my aunt was counting "noses."

"Where's Hermmie?" (my little cousin **Herman Leonard Schroeder** 1917) she asked. Everyone looked, everyone called; no Hermmie. "Do you suppose he is still at church? Did we forget him?" My Uncle Carl (Carl August Schroeder 1882) and my father went off to find out. There he was, sitting forlornly on the top step in the silence of the churchyard.

Sunday was also a fun day at home when we had no company or it was a rainy indoor day. My father, brothers and Irene all played the harmonica and **George** (1894) sang. He had a very good baritone voice and sang at all the weddings and funerals. Irene whistled—she could do all kinds of fancy trills and birdcalls. Later, when we got our first phonograph, she whistled with the popular whistling records of the time such as *Listen to the Mockingbird*. Sometimes my mother played the organ and sometimes my mother and father danced—the Viennese Waltz or polka. All together, to my young mind, they could really make music.

Christmas

Christmas, of course, was the most wonderful event of the year. On Christmas Eve the church was decorated with a huge tree; floor to ceiling, and lighted with dozens of burning candles. Four men with very long snuffers circled the tree constantly during the program³¹ of Christmas hymns and spoken verses at the end of which each child was given a sack of nuts, candy, a large red apple and big orange. The ride home; the horses prancing over the frozen snow, the bells on their collars jingling merrily to a hot supper of oyster stew, a big treat. I don't remember having oysters at any other time.

³¹ They were watching for fires. The candles on the tree were real, and the dry tree was highly flammable.

Holiday food preparation started in November; as many as six kinds of German Christmas cookies. The cellar was full of the smoky aroma of hams, sides of bacon and the many kinds of German sausages. For Christmas dinner there was usually a roast goose with dressing, several vegetables, pickles, relishes, preserves, jellies, Christmas cookies and cakes, and always mince pie.

Christmas morning was also very special starting with our gifts at daylight followed by Christmas stollen.³² Unlike these days, our gifts were modest, but always something we had longed for; not a necessity like a pair of shoes. Donning our Christmas finery for the morning service, singing the glorious Christmas hymns, wishing one and all a Merry Christmas. How the world has changed!

One year when I was seven years old and my parents had left the farm in Herman (brother **Herman Friedrich** 1900) and Irene's care and had moved to town, there was an extremely heavy snowstorm causing roads to be impassable and drifts to cover the fences. Herman and Irene were expected for Christmas day, but of course, we didn't think it possible for them to make it. However, about noontime, here they came, each riding their beautiful buckskins, somehow managing their way through the drifts. What a joyful day it was until my brother, while I was happily showing him what Santa Claus had brought me, said, putting his arms around me, "Now Honey, aren't you a little too old to believe in Santa? He's for little kids." I was crushed and it took me years to forgive him for that.

Farm Challenges

Shortly after moving to the Clay Center farm I had two experiences, which to me, were very dramatic. Like all children, I, at times, disobeyed the rules. I was playing in the barn one hot day and took off my shoes. Running around barefoot seemed so good until I stepped on a board with a rusty nail. This, of course, brought forth great howls of misery and a fast trip to the doctor in our new car with red wheels. I remember my father held me on his lap and the doctor telling me a long story involving cows. "Look at that big picture up on the wall," he said. And then it happened! He took a long rod and burned a hole in my foot, or so it seemed to me. I never went barefoot again.

My mother had a big white gander who loved to chase people. On another hot summer day I was in a hurry and in urgent need to get to the outhouse. Here came the gander and he was gaining on me. But, I won, slammed the door and was down on the two-holer with great relief when suddenly I had a piercing pain in my bottom. That horrible white beast had a hole in the side of the privy, stretched his long neck through it and took a big deep bite. The sympathy I received was well larded with hearty laughter.

³² A dough-based German cake with fruits and nuts.

I never had or learned to ride a bicycle, but there were always horses on every farm. When I visited my cousins at my Uncle Herman's farm, I always rode Bird, a pretty Indian pony. One day **Hilda** (**Vahsholtz** 1912) and I decided to ride to Ladysmith for a soda pop. There was a small stream with a wooden bridge just outside of the tiny village. It was in the middle of this bridge that Bird suddenly rose up in the air and came down on all four feet bunched together. She did this three times while I hung on to the saddle horn for dear life. She was quite successful. What Hilda and I saw was a thoroughly mashed rattlesnake!

How it came about I don't remember, but my cousin Fred (Vahsholtz 1910) bet Hilda and me a quarter that we couldn't walk to town where my family now lived. Naturally, we accepted the bet. We got up at dawn; my Aunt Lena (Weerts Vahsholtz 1886) made each of us a sandwich and off we went. I still remember the sweet smell of wild roses and hiding in a culvert when we heard a car coming. Once there was no culvert or bush to conceal us and the man offered us a ride. We said, "No, thank you!" and started to run. The man laughed and waved as he passed us. We finished the trip (eight miles) and thoroughly enjoyed a rather late breakfast. However, we never collected our quarter. Fred seemed to have endless excuses for the delay, but always promising—soon now.

Another time Fred dared me to climb the windmill and in Kansas the wind is always blowing, so the wheel was moving at a good speed. From the ground the platform looked to be of ample width, but when I got up there with the wheel so close I felt pretty shaky. Going down seemed to be worse than climbing up. We knew this was against the rules and Hilda was mad at Fred for daring me, so she told my Uncle (Herman 1880). This time Fred was in trouble. He received a severe lecture and extra work. I didn't escape a lecture either and was harshly scolded for doing such a dangerous thing.

Town Challenges

Living in town was a different kind of fun from the farm. My playmates were Arnold, who was two years younger, and Kate, who was four and one-half years older than I was. We roller skated, played jacks, went on picnics to the cemetery, pulling my Blue Bird wagon with an assortment of toys, books and our lunch. And, we played paper dolls! Even Arnold! We cut our dolls out of the popular magazines of the day such as *The Delineator* and *Women's Home Companion*. We built our houses out of cardboard boxes, furniture out of pasteboard covered with wallpaper to resemble fabric and cars out of matchboxes. We each had a family of parents, children and relatives who visited each other, got into arguments, went to celebrations, picnics, etc. We didn't outgrow this fun for quite a long time.

Although Clay Center was a small town, it still was a good bit larger than anything I was used to. My

grandparents (Franz Leonard and Sophie Vahsholtz) also lived there and every Sunday after Sunday School (this also was new to me and the church was about three or four times larger than our country church), I went to stay with my Grandmother while my Grandfather tolled the bell and stayed for church. I don't know just what my Grandmother's problem was, but she had great difficulty walking so my Grandfather did not want to leave her alone. She was a round, jolly little person and we had such fun playing games and telling stories. At the end of the hour there was always a candy treat after which Grandpa showed me the garden. This was a ritual. He loved flowers and had many of them mixed among his vegetables. As we walked the little narrow brick paths, he explained their characteristics and what was new to me all in German. He rarely picked them but, once in a while, he would give me an especially beautiful blossom

By the time I was in the fifth grade my family made another move to Lawrence, Kansas, the seat of learning for the state. That fall Irene entered the Lawrence Business College; Irma, Kansas University (KU) and I started 6th grade. Lawrence was a big town with many stores, streetcars and streets entirely made of bricks, and an inter-urban to Kansas City. There were three movie theaters, two parks and a town swimming pool, plus Potters Lake on the KU campus—all very impressive to our country eyes.

Lawrence is a very old town and its settlement, due to the controversy over slavery, a political powder keg. There were still many "old families" living in the lovely Victorian homes. One of these, the Olmstead family, was close to us, and Irma Olmstead and I became very good friends. Their house was built of native stone, large and impressive. Almost every room had a fireplace and it was completely furnished with beautiful antiques. It stood in a small valley, bordered by a little stream and beneath a long cliff. On top of this cliff was the apple orchard.

One day when Mr. Olmstead was mending the fence and digging postholes, he suddenly lost his entire posthole digger. It simply disappeared into the earth. With more digging, more earth disappeared, following a definite line pattern. So, his oldest son John, got the idea of digging into the cliff from below. After much work, he finally found a fairly sizeable hole, which when crawling into it on his hands and knees, led into a tunnel. This tunnel then led into several rooms large enough to allow him to stand up.

The first room contained the remains of some sort of bed, rotted rugs, a disintegrated wooden trunk with shreds of clothes and a small table. The next room contained a larger table, some broken shelves and chairs and a fireplace with ashes and corn still in it! The next room had evidently been used for sleeping, for there were pegs on the wall with ragged, torn clothes and two rotted leather belts. It was blocked at one end with all the dirt

from the orchard. John wanted to dig into it, but for some reason, his father was against it. I don't know whether they ever found the posthole digger.

This was, of course, a part of the great Underground Railroad which brought thousands of slaves to freedom in the north and Canada.

We were all so excited by this discovery that, since it was at the end of October, we planned a big Halloween party. Everyone had to wear masks and crawl into the opening on hands and knees. Once inside, John, Florence and Faith had created all sorts of weird things to do by the light of pumpkin lanterns only. I don't think we younger kids ever had so much fun. Of course the evening ended at the house where Mrs. Olmstead had all sorts of Halloween goodies waiting.

Although my years through high school and the university contained much joy, my really happy, carefree childhood ended with the farm days.

Diary of Ottilie "Hulda" (Vahsholtz) Friedrich (1874)

This diary began in 1906 and ended in 1908. Much of it deals with the mundane things like weather that could make or break a farmer in those days. As you read this, imagine the work days of this relatively prosperous family.

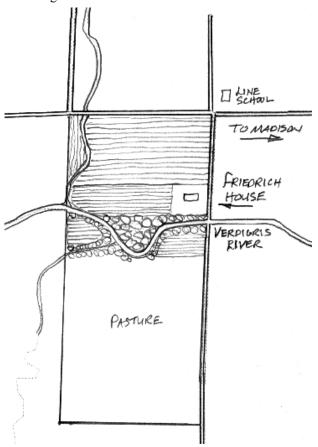
April, 1906 – It is my object to keep an account of my family and myself. I have been married for 13 years and five months and four days and have a family of five children. Three boys and two girls. **George Edmond** born March 24, 1894, **Robert Leonard** born June 23, 1896, **Irene Sophie Marie** born October 1, 1898, **Herman Henry** born September 1, 1900 and **Irma Hilda** born September 16, 1905.

It has been my wish very often already to keep some account as the years go by. Will state here in the beginning that we have lived in Nebraska until this last winter. Came to Kansas to live on December 18th, 1905; still own our Nebraska home. We have it rented out, have bought a farm here in Greenwood Co. on the Verdigris River consisting of 308 acres containing about 100 acres of bottom land. We like it real well so far, but cannot say now whether will always stay here. The winter of 1905 has been a beautiful one. The thermometer never having been below zero all winter, only the month of March has been rather blustery for much outdoor work, but the last week was good and the people put in their oats and speltz.³³ The month of April has been a good growing month so far.

April 25th – It has been a pleasant warm day and is nice and clear this evening. Dick has been planting corn. I have been doing my usual round of work, besides have been setting hens, churning and cutting out some dresses

for Irene and taking care of the baby, she is such a sweet little thing.

April 26th – Was calm this morning. At about half past ten the wind sprung up from the southeast and blew just common rate this evening. It looks as if we might have some rain during the night. It has been agreeably warm today. Noticed the apricots are the size of beans. I planted some cucumbers and squash for early use. Baby has been a little fretful. I think she is cutting her first two upper teeth. Have made Irene a dress today, baked 8 loaves of bread besides the other necessary work. Robert went over to help Amanda (Amanda Vahsholtz Hitzemann 1873) disinfect her chicken coop, then he is going to stay all night with his grandparents and come home in the morning. George has been planting watermelons, burning some stalks where they were too thick to be turned under and fishing minnows for bait to catch larger fish.



The Friedrich farm straddled the Verdigris River. The road on the right still crosses the river without the benefit of a bridge as of 1998. Heavy woods surrounded the river. In the time this diary was written, the small triangular field at the left was virgin forest. Later George harvested and sold the trees, and this field was called "the stump patch." Line School was so named because that horizontal road is the county line.

April 27^{th} – We had just a faint sprinkling of rain last night. The wind was in the south today. Between two and

³³ A hard-grained variety of spring wheat.

three o'clock a shower came up from the southwest but it passed to the west of us and we only got a good sprinkle, but a heavy shower went to the northwest. It must have rained quite heavy up there for Dick went across the creek to plant corn and in about two hours the creek commenced rising and before he knew it, in about a half an hour the creek was so high he could not cross it, so he had to go to Herman's and stay all night. I have been ironing besides my other work and sewing a little too, as much as I had time.

April 28th – It has been a warm day with clouds drifting to the north. It is ten days today since the earthquake and the awful resulting fire which ruined three-fourths of San Francisco. Such things make me think of the Day of Judgment. May the Lord have mercy on us all. Have had lots of work today, it being Saturday and I am expecting company tomorrow.

Sun. April 29th – Was nice and clear this morning but began to cloud up at about eleven o'clock. Brothers Henrys (**Henry Vahsholtz** 1879) and Hermans (**Herman Vahsholtz** 1880) were here visiting, but Henrys went home rather a little earlier than they would have otherwise. It looked so much like rain. I am very tired this evening.

Mon. April 30th – Has been cloudy most of the day. Wind was south, sometimes a little southwest. Looks quite a little like rain tonight. Had a little shower of rain last night. Herman worried so much over the lightening last night he did not get a good rest at all. I believe he always is frightened so at a thunderstorm. Dick finished planting corn today. I planted some flowers. Did various other small jobs and made Irene a dress.

Tues. May 1st – Today has been a lovely day; calm and warm, with a few lazily drifting clouds in the afternoon. I washed today and hunted up the lightweight underclothes.

Wed. May 2nd – Nice and pleasant this morning. It clouded up about noon and we had a thundershower at two o'clock and a beautiful rain. Then it rained several more showers during the afternoon. The corn can surely come up and everything grow fine now. I had visitors today and so did not get anything done but the churning and the necessary work. The minister, his wife and son were here.

Thurs. May 3rd – It is a little cooler then it has been this evening. It has been clear most of the day. There were some clouds drifting from the southwest early in the morning. George went over to Amanda's and got us some strawberry plants. Dick has been listing for kaffir corn, which he is going to plant tomorrow. I have been sewing on baby's dainty little Sunday dress.

Sat. May 5th – It was rather cool today. Have been doing my regular Saturday's work. Matie (Meta Droege Vahsholtz 1885) was here visiting me while Herman and Dick went to town together.

Sun. May 6^{th} – Went to church this morning. It was very cool this morning. I am afraid they had a frost up north at our old home. We were home in the afternoon. Toward evening we went across the creek to look at our orchard and speltz and oats. It looked nice.

Mon. May 7^{th} – In the morning it was nice and calm but from eleven o'clock on the wind blew very hard from the south. I washed, but did not hang out the clothes; it was too windy.

Tues. May 8th – It was cloudy and rained a little this morning. It looked for a while as if it would be a rainy day, but it was too cold to rain much. It broke up about nine o'clock. I went over to Matie's then and helped her fry down their meat.

Wed. May 9th – Have been sewing a little again on baby's dress. The machine bothered some. It did not want to stitch right, so I did not get very much done. Dick and George went to get the cattle that he bought off Papa. We had a light frost last night; not enough to hurt any of the fruit, but it hurt my beans some. Today it turned warmer again.

Thurs. May 10th – Has been warm and a little windy again. We are beginning to need a shower of rain. Dick has been fixing hog sheds and pens. I finished baby's new dress, baked ginger snaps, planted some beans, and did my usual round of work.

Fri. May 11th – Today has been another windy day. It has been so cool the past four or five days and it is quite dry too. The dry and cold together have caused the corn to come up very uneven, so Dick will have to replant some. I have been ironing, baking bread and patching pants today.

Sat. May 12th – The wind blew again today. I have been doing my Saturday's cleaning up, made a churning, the boys did the turning and hoed quite a piece in the garden.

Sun. May 13th – We were to church this morning. Herman's came home with us from church and spent the afternoon. It was very windy again today. I hope it will rain soon.

Mon. May 14th – Today it has been cloudy all day and we had a light shower of rain this afternoon. I have been putting away our Sunday clothes, and getting everything straightened up. The rest of the time I had to spare, I have been working on baby's Battenburg hood.

Tues. May 15th – Today has been cloudy most all day but it only sprinkled just a little. I have been washing, and setting some hens and taken 17 little chicks off the nest. I now have 78 little chickens. Robert found the first ripe strawberries today.

Wed. May 16th – Was clear early in the morning. At about 8 o'clock clouds began drifting from the southwest. It remained cloudy most of the day; clear this evening. We need a rain. Baby is eight months old today. She weighs 17 lbs. now; her two upper teeth are through now,

so she has four teeth now. I have worked two batches of butter, washed the churn and hoed in the garden about three hours besides my general housework.

Thurs. May 17th – The wind has been in the south and it has been partly cloudy all day. At about 6 o'clock it began to look very much like rain in the southwest and now at 8 o'clock it is clouded up all over and there is hardly any wind so we may have rain. I do hope we will. We need it quite bad. I have been ironing today and also made two gallons of ginger snaps.

Fri. May 18th – We did not get any rain after all. It was cloudy in the west and north yet this morning. We caught two big fish last night; one weighed seven pounds and the other four and three-fourth pounds, so we had a big mess for dinner and I pickled about four quarts besides. Mamma (Sophie Robbing Vahsholtz 1849) came over today and is going to stay all night with us.

Sat. May 19th – It was pleasant today and is rather cool tonight. Mamma went home about eleven o'clock, then Herman's came over and we all went to town together.

Sun. May 20th – We did not go to church today. We got home rather late last night and besides Hitzemanns and Hattie (**Hedwig "Hattie" Vahsholtz** 1886) came today to make us a visit. Hattie is going to stay with me this week and help me with my sewing.

Mon. May 21st – It has been a sultry day and threatening rain all day but did not rain yet. I hope it will.

Tues. May 22^{nd} – Have been washing today but did not hang it out, it threatened so much for rain.

Thurs. May 24th – We had a nice rain last night; of course we can well use more, but are very thankful for what we got. Hattie and I went to church, it being Ascension Day today. Just after we got home, we had another small shower of rain and later in the afternoon another one.

Fri. May 25th – Last night we had another small shower of rain, so taking all the showers together it was quite a refreshment. Have been setting out plants.

Mon. May 28^{th} – Have been so very busy the past week that I have not had time to write every day so will sum several days into one writing. Saturday I did my general cleaning up that always keeps me busy until late. Sunday we all went to Hitzemann's. Hattie's going to stay with me until Tuesday evening. Today Dick and I went to town. We had 36 doz. eggs and 17 ½ pounds butter to take. Got 12 cents cash for each. I forgot to put down Friday that Milda had a little mule colt that day.

Tues. May 29th – Had a big washing today. It was late when I got it out. Hattie went home this evening. She made two waists for me and three for Herman and helped me quite a little with my other work.

Wed. May 30th – Today was Decoration Day. We did not go anywhere. Don't know hardly anyone yet, so did not care to. We had a very nice shower of rain last night again. Things can just grow fine now. I have done a hard

days work in the garden; sowing seed, setting out plants and weeding. I am stiff as a board as the saying is. It was very warm this afternoon, registered 80 degrees in the shade at 4 o'clock.

Thurs. May 31^{st} – This afternoon we had a big rain. It must have rained about 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ inch. It was levely.

Fri. June 1st – Have been working in the garden and ironing and worked some on baby's Battenburg hood. Herman's were here this evening.

Sat. June 2^{nd} – Today I have been weeding my flower garden, scrubbed, made a cake, canned two quarts of cherries, put buttons and button holes in my waist and the trimming on it, besides my general work.

Sun. June 3rd – We went to church this morning. Then we went to Herman's, but it looked so much like rain at about 3 o'clock, so we thought we had better come home. We did not quite get home before it started and it rained a good-sized shower.

Mon. June 4th – Toward noon it looked very much like rain, but it went around to the northwest. Amanda and Henry were here today and got some cherries. We picked four buckets full off the one tree in the old orchard. I sent a bucket full along for mama.

Tues. June 5th – Have been working butter today. Dick and Irene went to town this afternoon. I sent 17 pounds of butter and 30 dozen eggs down. In the afternoon I put up cherries.

Wed. June 6th – I washed this forenoon. Finished about three o'clock, then picked cherries. We have picked ten buckets full so far now in all. Herman and Matie were here this morning. Herman helped Dick take out the pump and clean the well and Matie picked cherries to take home to can.

Thurs. June 7th – I put up cherries today. Have 22 quarts put up so far. In the afternoon I did some mending. We had about a half inch of rain last night, but they had a heavy rain northwest of us, for the river was bank full at about 8 o'clock. Later we heard that Rock Creek was up almost to its high water mark, being of course out of its banks, it surely must have rained very heavy up north. We also heard that it stormed north of here. Heard that it blew Mr. Fred Schultz's barn and hen house all to pieces. Both buildings were put up about two months ago and were just finished. We noticed no wind here. They live about six miles north of us.

Fri. June 8^{th} – Dick and brother Herman went to town together today. We made a churning this morning. In the afternoon I ironed and mended and put a new yoke on one of baby's dresses. We had another shower of rain last night, about $\frac{3}{4}$ of an inch.

Sat. June 9^{th} – Have been baking bread, scrubbing, bathing the children and myself and various small jobs. Dick has been plowing corn this afternoon.

Sun. June 10th – We all went visiting to brother Henry's today. It was a nice cool day. We heard there today that the Cottonwood River, which is twenty miles north of here, was three miles wide. Henry and Henry Hitzemann went to Emporia and crossed it. They said it lacked about two inches of running into the spring wagon box. I would not like to have been with them. They had to go if it was possible for they together have about one hundred pounds of butter to deliver.

Mon. June 11th – I have been feeling horrid today. Had the neuralgia and toothache so bad. This morning I could hardly do anything but finally got the Sunday clothes put away and dinner over. In the afternoon I felt some better; then I went into the garden and hoed two long rows of cabbage and then picked two quarts of raspberries for supper.

Tues. June 12th – Have been churning, working butter, doing housework and making buttonholes in baby's dress and picked two quarts of raspberries for supper again. They are very hard picking. They are not in rows. The weather has been fine since the rains last week. Today at noon it was 72 degrees in the shade.

Wed. June 13th – Have been washing today. In the afternoon George and I picked 4 quarts of raspberries; that is after the washing was done. Mamma came this evening to stay all night with us and pick raspberries. She brought me 8 quarts of juneberries. I put them up with cherries.

Thurs. June 14th – I put up 14 quarts of fruit today and helped Mamma pick cherries and raspberries. We have had some nice cool days lately.

Fri. June 15th – Have been ironing but did not get quite done. Picked and put up a few cherries. Used the rest for sauce. Herman's came over this afternoon. They picked 4 quarts of raspberries and some cherries. Dick has been hauling hay and mulching his late potatoes.

Sat. June 16th – Baby is nine months old today. She sat alone awhile for the first time yesterday. She weighs seventeen pounds. I put up 7 quarts of cherries today and did my Saturday's work and picked 2 quarts of raspberries and bathed baby, Herman, Irene and myself.

Sun. June 17^{th} – We all went down to visit Grandpa's today. It was quite warm today. Amandas were there too.

Mon. June 18th – Robert and Irene did a churning and I worked 22 pounds of butter and got it ready to send to town and helped Dick take out the pump and put it back in. There was something wrong with the sucker. Amanda and Hattie came over and I helped them pick raspberries in the afternoon.

Tues. June 19th – I washed today and then picked raspberries until evening. The sun went down behind a cloud. Maybe we will have rain. We can use a shower, although nothing is suffering for rain. We hear that it is very dry in our old home state Nebraska.

Wed. June 20th – We did have a splendid rain last night. An easy dribbling rain from half past ten until near daylight. I have been canning raspberries and pie plant today.

Fri. June 22nd – Have been canning fruit and ironing and made a cocoanut cake for Robert's birthday which will be tomorrow. Made ginger snaps yesterday. I have a toothache.

Sat. June 23rd – Today Robert is ten years old. How the time does fly. We gave him a dime and the book entitled, *The San Francisco Calamity by Earthquake and Fire*. We had enough rain last night so corn plowing did not go today. My tooth has been aching mostly all day.

Sun. June 24th – Well we had another quite big shower of rain last night. Brother Henrys were coming to eat raspberries today but it was cloudy yet until about eleven o'clock and I guess they did not want to risk it. I guess it was too muddy anyway to drive so far. Hermans came over. In the afternoon we picked four quarts of raspberries for supper.

Mon. June 25th – My tooth ached almost all day so I did not get much done besides my housework. George was sick all day yesterday. He had to vomit four or five times. Maybe he ate too many berries, but then Herman is complaining too and now Herman had to vomit too, so I think it must be a kind of a spring sickness.

Tues. June 26th – We made a churning this morning. Dick and Robert went to town this afternoon. George went to stay all night and get strawberry plants from Hitzemann's. I fixed up several different things in the house, framed a picture and sorted all the papers.

Wed. June 27^{th} – It has been a little windy today. It was 84 degrees at four o'clock. Robert and I washed. Then I pulled weeds in the garden for about two hours. Dick was sick this afternoon. He had to throw up too, like the rest of them

Thurs. June 28th – Dick and I set out 140 strawberry plants this morning. Then I did my housework and got dinner. In the afternoon I made 2 gallons of ginger snaps and picked 2 quarts of raspberries and small jobs. It has been quite windy today.

Fri. June 29th – We made a churning this morning. The butter was quite soft. Have ironed today, washed out some things; hoed a little.

Wed. July 11th – Well here it is twelve days since I wrote last. I have had so much work and have been so tired in the evening that I have not been able to do any writing. Will try to take it up more regularly now again. We spent the Fourth at Henry's. We had a family celebration there. All had a nice time. We had a light rain the night of the Fourth. The boys and I went to church Sunday. Hitzemanns and Hattie and Carl (Schroeder) were here last Sunday and Papa and Mamma and Henrys were here Sunday a week ago.

Thurs. July 12th – Have been ironing and doing so many other things up today for we intend to go to Emporia tomorrow if the weather will allow. We had quite a nice rain this afternoon.

Fri. July 13th – We went to Emporia today. We started at fifteen minutes 'til six. We got quite a lot of shopping done but were very tired. We stayed at Hitzemann's and rested until four o'clock Saturday morning and got home again at about half past six.

Sun. July 15th – Hermans and we intended to go to the Flint Hills today but it started to rain at about three o'clock in the night. Then quit for about two hours during chore time. Then began again and rained 'til about four o'clock in the evening. It was a beautiful rain, just splendid for the corn. It looks as if the Lord was going to give us a good crop.

Mon. July 16^{th} – Today baby is ten months old. She weighs $17 \frac{1}{2}$ pounds now. She does not creep yet, only kind of crawfishes backward a little. She is just as good as she can be. I made her a dress today and cut out another one.

Tues. July 17th – They began stacking grain today again. Robert and I washed.

Wed. July 18th – They finished stacking our grain today. We have no wheat this year. We have about ten acres of oats, and four acres of speltz. Matie came along and stayed all day. She helped me some with getting the dinner. After dinner I made ginger snaps and made about three-fourths of a dress for baby.

Thurs. July 19th – Today Dick and George went to help Herman stack his grain. It was nice and clear this morning but later it began to cloud up and at one o'clock it began to rain. We had quite a nice shower. Then it quit for about three-fourths of an hour and then it began again and rained quite heavy for an hour. So in all we had a pretty big rain.

Sat. July 21st – This morning Dick and I took our lounge or rather couch all apart and upholstered it new. We got the under work all done. Now as soon as we get our new velour and fringe and get the top fixed I think our couch will be as good as new. Then in the afternoon Dick went to town yet while I had everything to clean up yet. It was a hard days work but I am glad that much is done. It was very warm this afternoon and evening.

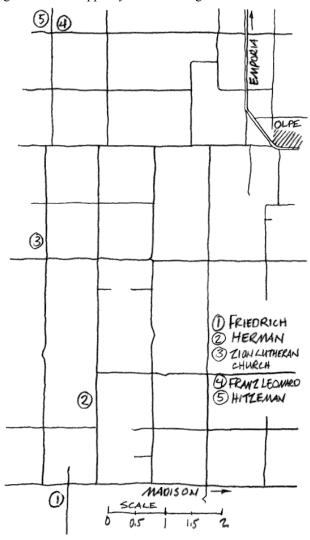
Sun. July 22nd – We went to church this morning and then to Grandpa's. George and Robert stayed at home. They shall go some Sunday when we will stay home. It is so far over there that we don't all like to go at the same time. It makes it so late coming home. It was very warm and sultry today. The warmest day we have had I believe, but this evening it cooled off nice and we had a pleasant ride home.

Mon. July 23^{rd} – George went over to help brother Henry plow corn and kaffir corn. He has so much work and there is no help to be got. It has kept him behind so with

his corn plowing, so Dick let George go over for three days. Dick went and helped Herman stack the rest of his grain today and Robert and I washed. It was a big washing. It took us almost 'til six o'clock. Of course I had several jobs that kept me from getting an early start.

Tues. July 24th – We churned this morning and in the afternoon I worked in the garden until I was so stiff and sore that I could hardly stir.

Thurs. July 26th – Have been ironing today. It was quite a big job and it was late when I got done. I also pickled a gallon of crab apples yet this evening.



It was more than six miles to church and further to the main area where the Vahsholtz's settled. It's no wonder the Friedrichs developed close ties with Herman's family, just two miles away. Trips to Madison (nine miles) and especially Emporia (20 miles) were major expeditions with horse and buggy.

Fri. July 27^{th} – The children churned again this morning. I had my usual work and besides I had the butter to work and made a batch of soap and pickled another gallon of crab apples.

Sat. July 28th – This morning Dick and I propped up the peach tree limbs. They are loaded so heavy with fruit that a good many are breaking off. We have so much fruit of all kinds here we cannot use it all. We have to let so much go to waste. Then I had to work the butter over and get it ready for town. I baked bread and in the afternoon swept and scrubbed and cleaned up. We had a fine rain last night. It rained from one 'til three o'clock, raining a good big inch in that time. Corn can just grow a-flying these last few weeks. We have had such nice rains always.

Sun. July 29th – Brother Hermans and all of us went picnicking today to what they call the Big Spring pasture. In this pasture lays the source of the north fork of the Verdigris River on which our farm is located. It flows from under a bluff about eight or ten feet high. The big spring flows out of three places which are several inches apart. Each stream flows about a foot wide and about two inches deep. It was a nice day and we had a good time. We drove about thirty or thirty-five miles in all.

Mon. July 30^{th} – I have had the toothache all day today. I think I must have taken a cold yesterday. Could not do anything; only what just had to be done.

*Tues. July 31*st – Robert and I did a big washing today. Then I put up a gallon of peaches yet.

Wed. Aug I^{st} – I baked bread and put up peaches today. Am very tired tonight. I made out part of an order to Sears too. We intend to send for some things.

Thurs. Aug 2^{nd} – Finished making out my order. Wrote a letter and put up one gallon of peaches and peeled another gallon to sugar and have ready to can in the morning.

Fri. Aug. 3rd – Today I ironed. Put up those peaches that I peeled and sugared last night and peeled another gallon to put up tomorrow and dug some onions.

Sat. Aug. 4th – We had quite a heavy rain today. It began raining at four o'clock and rained 'til six o'clock. It rained a good two inches. I had all my work done except scrubbing. I had to do that while it rained.

Sun. Aug. 5th – We meant to go to church today but it looked so much like rain that we did not risk it. A little after nine o'clock it began to look a little better. Then George quickly got ready yet and went. It was too late for us all to get ready, for church begins at ten o'clock. Robert got sick with the stomachache at about ten o'clock and was pretty sick for several hours. We went to the English Sunday School then in the afternoon.

Mon. Aug. 6th – It looked quite cloudy yet this morning, but I thought it would break up like yesterday and so started to wash. At 11 o'clock it began to rain and rained 'til 2 o'clock, so I had to leave my washing 'til ten and finish it towards evening, for I do the washing outside on the north side of the house.

Tues. Aug. 7th – We intended to go to town today but it looked so threatening again that we did not risk it. But it did not rain after all.

Wed. Aug. 8th – We went to town this morning. We had quite a lot of shopping to do and it was three o'clock when we got back. We got us a new rocking chair. Dick got a pair of boots and I got every-day shoes and Sunday shoes. I did some mending yet after we got home and I had things straightened out again.

Thurs. Aug. 9^{th} – I pickled four quarts of peaches today and peeled one large bucket full, for butter and started it to cook. We had a light shower of rain Wednesday. I forgot to put that down yesterday.

Fri. Aug. 10^{th} – We made a churning this morning. I baked bread also and finished my peach butter and ironed. It began to rain today at noon and rained the greater part of the afternoon.

Sun. Aug. 12th – It still looked some like rain but it did not rain. There was no church today. The minister is off to conference. We went to Herman's on a visit. Papa and Mama were there too. Today Papa and Mama were married thirty-six years and it is just eight years since Aunt Dorothy was buried. My how time flies. To think it can be that long ago already.

Thurs. Aug 16th – Today baby is eleven months old. She creeps a little now by just sliding forward on her stomach. She lost a half-pound since last month. She only weighs 17 pounds now. She sweats so much I think that is the reason. It has been very warm this week. I have been making soap. Dick and the boys are haying at Herman's this week.

Sun. Aug. 19th – Dick, Robert, Baby and I went to church. George and Irene both could not go. George stepped on a nail and Irene stepped on a piece of glass so they both could not wear any shoes. Herman stayed home with them. Amandas came home with us. We had a nice visit.

Mon. Aug 20th – This week they are going to make hay here at our place. Matie came with Herman today. She helped me do some sewing. I am thankful to her. I have so much to do and school will soon begin. The boys helped me wash this morning.

Sat. Aug. 25th – Have been very busy all week and especially today. I put up 8 quarts of plum butter today. Did my regular Saturday's work and got ready a picnic dinner to take to Mission Fest tomorrow. We had three nice small showers of rain in succession; one on Thursday toward evening, one on Friday during the middle of the day and one this evening, which we could see and hear. Must have been a pretty severe one about ten or fifteen miles to the east of us. Hattie came and helped me can peaches Thursday. She came Wednesday evening. She had to stay all night Thursday night too, for it rained so she could not go home.

Sun. Aug. 26th – Today we had Mission Fest in a grove including a picnic dinner. It was a lovely cool day. There were only about two dozen strangers. The collection brought two hundred and twenty dollars. That is surely a big collection for only a small congregation. This evening it is quite cool; the first breath of fall, one might say.

Mon. $Aug\ 27^{th}$ – I have been paring and canning pears today. Dick has been plowing and the boys have been cutting hedge. It was warmer again today.

Tues. $Aug. 28^{th}$ – Dick and the boys went to Herman's to help thresh. I churned in the morning and did up my work. Then at ten minutes 'til twelve all of the minister's family came. Then I had to hurry and get dinner and entertain them and of course I got nothing more done.

Wed. Aug. 29^{th} – Today they are making hay again in our pasture. I have been washing; had a big washing again.

Sun. Sept 2nd – I was not able to go to church today. Have taken a cold and it settled in my head and the result is neuralgia. Was not able to be up mostly all day. Yesterday was Herman's birthday. Now he is six. My how the time flies. We gave him a knife with a chain on it and of course I made him a cake. The boys went to church.

Sun. Sept. 9th – Today we all went to church. Then the boys stayed and visited with the minister's sons and the rest of us went to Aunt Amanda's. My I haven't written any all this last week. We have been plastering this last week and I have so much canning to do yet. I just can't take time to write at present.

Sun. Sept. 16th – Today is baby's birthday. Just one year old. She weighs only seventeen pounds. Such a little thing and just as sweet and good as she can be. She plays mostly all day on the floor, for the rest go to school now. School started last Monday. Herman goes too.

Sept. 19^{th} – Today is Hattie's birthday. It is a nice sunny day. She is twenty years old, my how the time flies.

Sept. 23rd – Today Hattie was married. Now she is Mrs. Carl Schroeder. She had a lovely sunshiny day. She had a church wedding. Hattie looked splendid. She was dressed white from head to foot. Her dress was lovely and fit her to perfection. I think she married a good man and I hope her married life will be as pleasant as her wedding day.

Oct. I^{st} – Well, today is Irene's birthday. She is eight years old. Today I made her a cocoanut cake. We gave her five handkerchiefs, a tablet and a dime for presents.

Oct. 16th – Baby is thirteen months old today. She weighs eighteen pounds now. She talks quite a bit already, but does not try to walk at all. Yet, it seems I cannot get time to write at all anymore; only on days that I want to specially remember. With the four children going to school and baby to take care of and all the work to do alone it is really almost more than my two hands can manage, but then I try to do the best I can.

Nov. 5^{th} – We have a corn husker now. Have had him over a week already and will have him longer than that yet, so I have still more to do.

Nov. 20th – It seems as if we are going to have winter early this year. We had a good six inches of snow on Sunday and Monday night and it was quite cold too. I am glad we have our corn so near out. We have about 100 bushels in the field yet, but we are not ready for winter yet anyway. We have no sheds fixed yet.

Nov. 21st – Today is our wedding day. My, I can't hardly think that it is fourteen years already since we were married. My, it will not be long and we will be old. It was a nice sunny day with only a few clouds off toward the south; a good deal like the day we were married.

Nov. 25th – Well today is my birthday. I am thirty-two years old today. It was cloudy all day yesterday and this morning at about five o'clock it began to rain. It continued raining nearly all day long and is still raining now at six o'clock and consequently the snow has disappeared.

Nov. 29th – This is Thanksgiving Day and truly thankful we ought to be. The Lord has blessed our work and we have raised an abundance of everything and the best of all we have had no sickness in our family. And we are very thankful. I fixed up a fine dinner and expected to have most of the folks here to dinner, but it started to rain in the night and has kept it up all day with only a short interval between eleven and twelve o'clock. Then Hermans came over. We had the house decorated. The children helped do that. We had roasted stuffed chickens, several varieties of pickles, potatoes, baked beans, chili sauce, cranberry sauce, peaches, jelly, apple tarts with whipped cream, pumpkin pie, spice and nut cake and coffee.

Dec. 16th – Well here baby is another month older and weighs twenty pounds now. She talks quite a little for her age.

Jan. 16th, 1907 – Another month has slipped by and I have not written since last month. We had a fine Xmas. Went to church Xmas Eve. George, Robert, Irene and Herman all spoke. They all spoke nice and Dick and I were pleased. We all got many presents. I received more and nicer ones than ever before. They were an ironing board for sleeves, a handsome jardinière, a food chopper and a lovely china pitcher decorated with roses and gold from Dick, a fancy hat pin and a shirt waist set from my boys, a prayer and sermon book from Mamma, a fine Smyrna rug and fancy hat pin from Papa, a beautiful china bowl from Amanda, a lovely large glass bowl and a vase and mat from Hattie, a nice sofa pillow from Matie, a fancy thermometer and handkerchief from Augusta (Augusta Niedert Vahsholtz 1878), a fancy hardanger collar from Rosa, a fancy pin cushion from Aunt Minnie and a fancy shell from the preacher's wife. Surely a large list. It makes me feel very happy to be remembered. This Xmas day Dick, Irene and Herman went away for a visit

to our old home in Nebraska. Of course that made it lonesome for the boys and me but they had a good time and we were glad to have them go. Well today baby is 16 months old and weighs 21 pounds.

Feb. 16th – Now baby is 17 months old. Just one more month and she will be a year and a half. How the time does fly. She will say almost any common word we tell her now. She began to walk just a few days before she was sixteen months old.

March 2nd – I came home from Amanda's yesterday evening. I was there from Monday evening 'til Friday evening while Henry was here and papered our house. He done a nice job, but Amanda and I struck it bad. It rained all the time except the first day and we had the worst mud plodding to do we ever had in our lives. I had some cold when I went and I came home with about the worst cold I ever had.

March 11th – Well my cold is finally breaking up now, but since Saturday evening my right foot is swelled quite bad around the ankle and pains me so that I can't hardly walk at all.

March 12th – Baby took sick of the stomach yesterday evening and had to vomit all night through. She must have vomited a dozen times or more and now she has the diarrhea very bad. She is pretty sick.

March 13th – Baby had a very high fever all night. It did not let up until six o'clock this morning. We sat up all night with her. We will call the doctor if she continues this way much longer. My foot is no better either yet. Evening, baby has been quite sick all day but seems to be some better now.

March 15th – Baby is almost better again now, for which we feel very thankful. We received word from Henry F's that Uncle Henry is very sick. He wanted Dick to come but Dick could not go because baby was so sick.

March 19th – We got word today that Uncle Henry is getting better. We were very glad to hear it. Baby is better again now and my foot is getting better too although it pains me quite a little.

April 1st – We went to a funeral today; a young couple lost their baby boy six months old. The only child they had. I feel so sorry for them. How awful it would be for us if we had to give our baby up. I hope the Lord will let us keep her and all the rest of our children too. But those parents hoped so too, and yet they had to give their baby up. But the Lord surely knows best. His will be done. We must never forget to say that, no matter what we hope or pray for.

Wed. April 3^{rd} – I started to wean the baby yesterday morning. She was alright during the day but in the evening she cried pretty hard. She thought it dreadful to go to sleep without her dinner. After midnight she did not cry anymore, but slept 'til morning.

Thurs. April 4^{th} – Last night baby went to sleep in the evening without crying and slept all night without waking. That was good for the second night.

April 16th – Now baby is 19 months old. We have not weighed her lately but she has always weighed about the same the last few times, but it is too cunning to hear the little thing talk. She says almost everything and says it so plain. It is a delight to hear her. Well our big fruit prospects are gone. We had a killing frost the 12th and everything was so far advanced that it just had to freeze. My it is too bad, we would have had so awful much fruit. The apricots were as large as butter beans already. Peaches, pears, cherries, plums, apples; everything is gone. If it don't freeze too hard any more we will have dewberries, raspberries and some grapes and also some gooseberries, but that looks like very little fruit when one is used to so much. The 12th Dick was 41 years old. I made a large cake and gave him a calfskin leather pocket book and a pair of gloves.

May 2nd – It has been cold and dry during the whole month of April. Every time it clouded up and wanted to rain the wind would turn to the north and get cold but finally Monday, the 29th the Lord sent us a nice rain. It was a cold rain. So cold that I lost 26 little chicks. But now it is nice and warm. Dick finished planting his corn and kaffir corn today. I hope it will come up nice.

Feb. 2nd, 1908 – It has been a long time indeed since I wrote and what all has happened in those nine months. Summer came and went and now almost spring again. The 30th of May, George Borger came to visit us. He stayed eleven days and we had a good visit. Then he and Dick went to Oklahoma to see Uncle Henrys and Aunt Melias.

We raised medium good crops of everything. Our corn averaged 33 bushels to the acre.

On Sept. the 7th brother Hermans had a baby boy born to them. Dear Matie had been ailing for two weeks before. She told me several different times that she felt well all summer. Then suddenly she began to swell all over the body. They went to the doctor immediately. He said it was kidney trouble. We were all fearing the outcome when we heard that. But at first after the baby was born she seemed so well and oh how delighted she was that she had a little girl and a baby boy. I stayed with her that evening and night and left her happy and in good spirits the next morning.

That evening Dick and I and the three small children went to see her again. I went in and talked with her about ten minutes. She said she had a headache. Then I went into the kitchen to get some things for the baby. Little Herman was in the room with her. He came running and said Aunt Matie was shaking awfully. I went in and found her unconscious. I called the men. I had only been away from her about two minutes. Herman called the doctor. It took us about half an hour to rouse her. Then she did not know anything of what had happened to her. The Dr. said

it was convulsions. He gave medicines and for about five hours....

Velma says her mother was so shattered by the death of her sister-in-law and close friend Matie that she was unable to finish the closing paragraph above, and never returned to writing her diary.

Matie's daughter Meta was told that the baby, Leonard, was nursed by another woman and may have lived several weeks until he too died.

Typed May 11, 1996, from Velma (Friedrich) Peterson's copy of her mother's diary.

Returning now to Franz Leonard and Sophie's family, they had a son **Willie Vahsholtz** (1876) who lived only three years.



Probably taken shortly before Willie died

D. H. Cottrell

Franz Leonard and Sophie's oldest son who survived was **Henry Leonard Vahsholtz** (1879). He was born in Nemaha County, Kansas and died in 1946 in Emporia, Kansas. In 1901 he married Augusta Louise Niedert (1878), daughter of Gottlieb and Louise Niedert. She died in 1910 and is buried at Zion Lutheran Church Cemetery near Olpe.

Seneca, Kansas.



Brothers Herman (left) and Henry Vahsholtz



Henry and Augusta Vahsholtz' 1901 wedding photo



Henry and Augusta with Katie, and Martin

Speaking of his grandmother Augusta (1878), **Darrell Brockmeier** (1930) says his mother related to him: "At the time Augusta (1878) passed away it was in a rainy season and the roads were all muddy. The funeral home was in Emporia and the funeral was in a country church which was on a dirt road about 12 miles from Emporia. The hearse was horse drawn. As they made the trip along the muddy dirt road the double tree on the hearse broke and caused quite a delay getting to the church and cemetery."³⁴

After Augusta's death, Henry married Lena C. Jung (1883), daughter of Jacob Jung and Sophia Weiss. She was born in Finstigen, Alsace-Lorraine, France, and died in 1972 in Emporia. Darrell Brockmeier said Lena told

him that on their way to America, her father had her ears pierced in Paris, France.

Henry had two children with the first wife and 12 with the second. He was a big man, known as a farmer and blacksmith. Henry and Lena moved to Russell Springs, Kansas in 1925 to get more land for his boys. That proved to be an unfortunate move—only four years before the Great Depression of the 30s brought drought and dust storms to the Midwest and financial ruin to the nation. Henry and Lena Vahsholtz moved on to Oklahoma, next to Missouri and then back to the Emporia area.

In later years Henry and Lena Vahsholtz lived at Americus, Kansas, north of Emporia. They are buried in the Evergreen Cemetery south of Emporia.

According to Lena's son, **Milton Edward Vahsholtz** (1925), when Lena married, her maiden name was "Jung." Her brother changed it to "Young" in later years. The Selts Millinery and Jewelry Store in Clay Center had employed her as a milliner before her marriage in 1911.



Henry and Lena Vahsholtz at the time of their marriage in 1911

The oldest child of Henry and Augusta was:

For younger readers, a "double-tree" is part of the hardware of hitching horses. With a single horse, a "single-tree" is a crossbar usually made of oak or hickory with rings to attach the horse's harness at the ends and a ring in the middle to attach to the hitch of the wagon. A double-tree consists of two single-trees plus a wider and stronger similar piece spanning the distance between the horses, to which the wagon is hitched. Or hearse in this case.

• Katharina "Katie" Louisa Hedwig Vahsholtz (1903) who was born near Olpe, in Lyon County, Kansas. She lived in the Topeka area since 1947 and died there in 1983. She married Edward Friedrich Heinrich Brockmeier (1901) who was employed by the David Keller Construction Company. He died in 1960. She then married Richard Carl Strauss (1893). He died in 1977.

A son, Werner Elmer Brockmeier (1925), who was married to Marjorie Ann Steinmeyer (1928), died on Dec. 22, 1956. The newspaper said, "A 31-year old welder died Saturday at a local hospital from injuries suffered Thursday when he was struck on the head by a 60-pound weight at the Santa Fe shops. Werner E. Brockmeier died from a skull fracture and other head injuries. He had been associated with the Santa Fe at Topeka since moving there with his parents nine years ago."



Katie and Ed Brockmeier's 1924 wedding photo

Katie and Ed were also **Darrell Edward Brockmeier's** (1930) parents. Darrell and his wife
Madeline Ruth Cott (1933) were instrumental in the
creation of this book. Madeline began assembling
data many years ago. She wrote in 2001, "I was born
in rural Woodbine, Kansas and when I was ten, my
folks moved to rural Lincolnville where they are
buried in the Lincolnville Cemetery. I attended
Pleasant Valley School from Grade one to four;
Woodbine Grade School for the first part of fifth
grade; St. John's Lutheran School, Lincolnville,
Kansas for the last part of fifth grade through middle
of eighth grade, and the last part of eighth grade at

Lincolnville Grade School, graduating May 29, 1947. I attended Lincolnville, Kansas High School for four years, graduating third highest in the class on May 16, 1951. I moved to Topeka after high school where I met Darrell Brockmeier at Walther League." They were engaged in July 1952 and married in November.

Another son is **Allan Dale Brockmeier** (1937) whose wife is Elizabeth McClaren Mercer (1936).

FAMILY HISTORY by Darrell Edward

Brockmeier (1930). This was written while Darrell was recovering from heart problems.

Over a period of time, my wife Madeline and other family members have been trying to encourage me to write down things that I remember from the time when I was a small child until the present. They felt it would be good for other people, especially younger people, to know what life was like in a different time period, when customs and styles of living were much different than they are today. So I shall make a serious attempt to write down some things that I remember that were highlights and made impressions on me.

I especially hope some of the things I tell about, will be of special interest to my daughter **Darla** (1959), and my grandchildren, **Laura** (1987), **Jonathan** (1990) and **Heather** (1993), who are all very special to me.

My Early Years—Life on the Farm

I was born in 1930 on a farm in Morris County, Kansas. I was born at home which was not uncommon at this time. They would call the doctor to the home and he would deliver the baby and the parents would hire someone, usually a mature lady with some experience with babies, to help the family for a while until the mother was strong enough to take care of things on her own.

The old farmhouse was a little drafty. We used a wood-burning stove for heat and had a wood-fired kitchen range to cook our food. We also had a three-burner kerosene stove in the kitchen that was also used to cook and to can food for later use. It was also used to heat water to do the laundry. We had no automatic washers or clothes dryers. Clothes were washed in a machine powered with a gasoline engine and it had a wringer that squeezed water out of the clothes after they were washed. The clothes were still wet after going through the wringer so they would be hung on a wire clothesline outside. This was a cold job in the wintertime.

During my early childhood years we had no electricity on our farm. We had kerosene lamps for light in the house. We had no refrigerator, no air-conditioning; not even a fan. We kept the windows and doors open to keep the air coming in.



Darrell's mother Katie (Vahsholtz) Brockmeier with a team of horses in harness

Without a refrigerator, keeping food from spoiling was different from the way we do it today. We had a deepwater well on our farm. The water was pumped out of the well by a windmill connected to steel pipes. The water was good and cold and was pumped into a concrete trough, which was in the milk house next to the windmill. We would put some food items into this trough to keep them cool. It did a pretty good job. Sometimes we placed a brick on top of the food containers so they would not upset in the water. From the cement trough, the water would run through a pipe underground and across the farmyard to a large stock tank by the barn. This tank is where the cattle and horses came to drink.

My birth year, 1930, was in the period of time known as the "Great Depression," a time from about 1929 to the late 1930's. The nation's economy had collapsed and business was very poor. Work was very hard to find, money was very scarce and people had to get by on very little.

For the farmers in Kansas there was another problem besides the Depression. Those were what was known as the "Dust Bowl Days," a period of several years when it rained very little and everything dried up. The wind blew hard and dust would blow all over the countryside. Sometimes the dust was so thick you couldn't see. It would sift into the houses and cause drifts of dirt to collect in ditches and across farm fields. All the farm crops dried up in the fields and the farmers had problems finding feed for their livestock.

Some farmers lost their farms and their livestock and had to try to find some other way to make a living. It was then that the Federal Government started the WPA, "Workers Progress Association," where people could get a job with the Government building lakes, parks, ponds, post office buildings, streets and sidewalks, etc. This program helped people who were in trouble financially.



Katie in the wheat field

During this time period our family was farming 160 acres of upland farm ground. That means there was no river or creek that ran through our land. We had the same problems with drought and depression as the other farmers. Somehow my father managed to hang on to the farm. It required a lot of sacrifice and doing without. One winter all we had to feed our cattle was a big stack of wheat straw. Dad bought some black strap molasses to pour over the straw and the cattle ate it all. He managed to feed the cattle through the winter until they could go in the pasture when spring came. I believe the driest and hottest years were 1934 and 1936.

It seems as if we raised a fair wheat crop each year. That helped enough so that the taxes and mortgage payments on the farm could be paid.

On our farm my parents had a variety of things they tried to make a profit. They would plant wheat, oats, corn, some kind of sorghum crop, alfalfa hay and prairie hay. Some of the wheat was sold for cash and some was fed to livestock and chickens. Dad also raised hogs and we always had milk cows. We usually milked around eight to ten cows every morning and evening. They were milked by hand (no milking machine) and all the family members helped. We kids started milking around age eleven.

Everyone was responsible for certain chores. My main chore during the fall and winter was to keep the big wood box on the back porch filled with firewood for the heating stove and kitchen range. I also gathered eggs in the chicken house and put them in an egg case in the cellar. We had no running water in the house, so it had to be brought in with a pail from the well. This water was then used for drinking, cooking, washing dishes, washing our hands and faces and whatever we needed water for.

We always had chickens. Every spring we would get 200 baby chicks. Roughly half would be rooster and half pullets. Most of the roosters would be butchered and eaten as fried chicken during the summer months. The pullets were kept to lay eggs to take to town to sell, and also supply us with eggs for cooking. We usually got our baby chicks from a hatchery in Junction City, Kansas. That was a trip of 25 miles and was an exciting day for

us. With the old car we had, this was a big outing. Junction City was much larger than Herington where we usually did our shopping. It was exciting to go into so many different stores. Junction City was close to Fort Riley, a big army installation, so there were always a lot of soldiers in uniforms on the streets. I remember as a small child being afraid of these men in uniforms.

After Mom and Dad finished their shopping we would go to the hatchery and pick up our baby chicks. They would be packed in large boxes and put in the back seat of the car between my older brother and me. All the way home we would hear the peep-peep of the chicks. When we got home the chicks were placed in a small building called a brooder house. The little chicks needed heat and this came from a kerosene heater that warmed a big metal hood called a hover. The baby chicks would gather under the hover to stay warm. The little chicks required a lot of care. They needed to be kept warm, they needed feed and water and the brooder house had to be kept clean. We usually used fresh wheat straw for bedding on the floor.

My mother also liked to raise big white geese. She would buy some goose eggs from a neighbor and put them under a setting hen. The hen would sit on the eggs until they would hatch out the little goslings. It looked rather strange to see the little goslings following the hen around the farmyard.

I mentioned that we always milked cows. In my early years I remember we used to sell cream. We got cream by running the milk through a cream separator in the milk house. This was a hand-operated machine that had two spouts. As the machine was turned with a crank, centrifugal action would separate cream in one spout and the skim milk out the other. The skim milk was fed to the pigs. This job was done every morning and evening after milking. The cream was put into a galvanized can with a lid and placed in the water trough in the milk house to keep it cool. I don't remember if it was once or twice a week a man would come with his truck from the creamery to pick up the cream. He would take it to the creamery where it was made into butter and other dairy items. Later on we guit separating the milk and started selling whole milk. We would just milk the cows, strain the milk through a filter into ten gallon galvanized milk cans that had lids. Then the cans were placed in the trough in the milk house. A man with a truck came every day to pick up the milk and take it to the plant. We never sold grade A milk, which is what we buy at the supermarket. We sold grade C milk, which was processed into cheese, butter and other dairy products.

We used the raw milk as it was taken from the cows for our home use. It wasn't pasteurized or homogenized. Some people say milk should not be used this way, but we never seemed to get sick from it.

We always had cats and a dog around the farm. The cats were good for catching mice that got in the granaries and other farm outbuildings.

Most of the dogs we had weren't all that good, but we had one that was a good and intelligent dog. It was more or less my dog and I remember I had to beg my parents to let me get it from the neighbors. I named him "Colie." I don't know where I got the name. Colie was very good working with cattle and hogs. Dad had purchased a herd of ten Holstein milk cows and a Holstein bull. The bull had a tendency to be mean. He would come around and bellow and put his head down and charge the horses and also people. I was usually the one who would go into the pasture at evening time to bring the cows to the barn to be milked. When the bull saw me coming he would start to paw the ground and bellow. This meant he was angry and ready to fight. The only things on the farm he had any respect for were my father and Colie. Dad would always say, "Before you go after the cows be sure that the dog goes with you." When the bull would see us coming he would bellow and paw the ground and I would tell Colie, "Sic-Em" and point at the bull. Colie would go after him and bark and bite his heels. The bull would calm down and head for the barnyard. He didn't try to fight with the dog. Colie also was my pal and went with me when I was doing chores around the farm.

When we moved to Topeka in 1947 we brought Colie along, but he was not happy in town. He was used to the farm life. So we gave him to Uncle Martin (Martin Leonard Gottlieb Vahsholtz 1904) and his children, Geraldine (Geraldine Ann "Geri" Vahsholtz Anschutz Tate 1937) and Lester (Lester Martin Vahsholtz 1942) who lived on a farm. Colie adjusted to his new family and was happy. Later he had a sad ending. He found some rat poison and ate it and died.

Our 160-acre farm had 100 acres of cropland and 60 acres of pasture grass. The pasture was where the cows and horses would graze, "eat grass" during the spring, summer and early fall. We still used horses to pull the farm implements. We had a tractor, but it was used mostly for plowing and heavy farm work. Horses were used to pull the farm wagons, cultivate, plant wheat, plant corn and put up hay. We had five workhorses and they were used a lot. We did not have a riding horse. We could ride two of the workhorses but we didn't have a saddle so it was rough riding. The bull would throw a fit if I rode the horse in the pasture to bring in the cows, so I didn't do that.

Most of the fieldwork we did wasn't too bad. I would take a team of horses and cultivate corn or mow hay and rake it, or take a hayrack wagon to haul loose hay to the barn. One thing I really didn't care to do was putting up prairie hay, usually in the middle of August. We had a hay meadow on a ridge at the south end of the farm. First, the hay was cut with a horse-drawn mower, and then it was raked and then made into a stack. This was the part I didn't like.

The hay would be pushed together first with a "haybuck" and then I would get on top of the pile and tromp it down as Dad would pitch more and more hay upon the stack for me to spread around and tromp down. It seemed as if the wind always blew on the hay meadow and the hay always wanted to blow away, which made the job quite hard, dirty and itchy. I was always happy when this job was over. Today farmers put their hay in large bales, which are handled with tractors and large wagons. An entirely different way than the way we did it with horses and pitchforks.

I did a lot of the plowing, which we did with the tractor. We had a 10-20 McCormick Deering tractor and a two-bottom plow that we pulled behind. I didn't mind the plowing, even if I did get real dusty and dirty by the end of the day.

We had some bad things that happened on the farm. In the fall of 1938 our barn caught fire and burned to the ground. It happened on a Saturday morning. My older brother, Werner (Werner Elmer Brockmeier 1925) and I were watering calves when Werner saw flames coming from the barn roof. He called to my father who was working on our car. He quick ran into the barn and got some calves out. He also got out the horses' harness. We had two granaries in the barn holding most of that summer's wheat crop. Much of it was lost in the fire. Dad did save some and used it for hog feed and chicken feed.

Now we needed a new barn. The milk cows were used to being milked while in stanchions. Dad fixed an area in a chicken house with stanchions for a milking area, but it was not a good arrangement.

Dad talked to my Grandpa Vahsholtz (Henry Vahsholtz 1879) who had some experience with building farm buildings. He agreed to take the job. He lived at Emporia, Kansas so he came and lived with us while he built our new barn. Dad helped and they built on the old foundation. The new barn wasn't as tall as the old one but it turned out to be a nice, well built building and was a good addition for both the farm animals and us.

In 1943 Mother was climbing the ladder going to the hayloft in the barn when she slipped and fell down, breaking her leg in the process. This was during the World War II years and many things were rationed including automobile tires. We had a 1937 Ford but the tires were very bad and we were afraid to drive it. How were we going to get Mother to the doctor? His office was in Herington, which was ten miles away. Dad called the doctor and he said he would come out and get her. This all took extra time.

The doctor finally came and Mother was taken to the doctor's office where her leg was set and a cast was applied. The doctor was afraid she might go into shock from the ordeal, so she was taken to my Aunt Clara Gehrke's house in Herington so she would be close enough for the doctor to keep her under observation. After a few days she could come home.



Grandpa Henry Vahsholtz was proud of his horses

This happened in late spring when there was a lot of work to be done on the farm. All the fieldwork needed to be taken care of and Mother had planted a large garden, and the vegetables were ready to harvest. Dad decided we would need help. He went to see his older sister Louisa and asked if she would consider helping us. She was a widow and lived alone and had free time. She came and stayed with us most of that summer. She was a hard working lady who could manage the housekeeping chores, canned a lot of the garden produce and other chores. We certainly were grateful for her help in our time of need.

Our farm was good for raising wheat. Dad would plant around 50 acres of wheat every year. It required a lot of work to get the field ready for seeding. First it was plowed, then disked, then harrowed. Then it was ready to be seeded using an implement called a grain drill. This was all done in the fall of the year. In the spring it would really start to grow.

When I was a small child, wheat harvest was done differently than today. When the crop started to ripen, it was cut and tied in bundles with a grain binder. These bundles were then put together in shocks and left a few days to fully ripen. Then we would contact a neighbor who owned a threshing machine to see when he could come to our place. The threshing machine (sometimes called a separator) would separate the wheat kernels from the straw. The straw would go out the big blower pipe and make a big straw stack. The grain went through a spout into a grain wagon. It took quite a crew to do this job.

There were men who had rack wagons pulled by a team of horses that went into the field to load the bundles from the shocks and bring them to the threshing machine. There were spike pitchers that stayed in the field to help load the wagons. There was a grain hauler that unloaded

the wagons when they were filled with grain. There was also the separator man who owned the machine. He saw to it that the machine was operating properly. Sometimes there were as many as twelve men in a harvest crew. They were neighborhood farmers who would go from farm to farm and help each other. The man that owned the threshing machine was paid, but the other men just exchanged their work with one another.



A Vahsholtz threshing crew poses for a photo. The tractor has a pulley on the right side that powers the thresher using the long flat belt that can be seen running toward the bundle-loaders. Staying clear of that belt was just one thing they had to watch out for.

All these men had to be fed a noon meal. This was a big job for the women. The men worked hard and had big appetites. They would be fed fried chicken, mashed potatoes, sliced homegrown tomatoes, various salads and relishes. With no refrigerator, things could not be made too far in advance. The crew liked cold drinks so Mom would go to the little town of Latimer and buy a block of ice. We all thought this was a treat. Now we could have iced tea or lemonade. After the noon meal all the dishes needed to be washed by hand (no dishwashers). Then by four o'clock it was time to take lunch to the men in the field. As you can well imagine, wheat harvest was a very busy time for everyone. It was always good to have the harvest over with.

In the fall the corn and sorghum crops were cut and shocked for livestock feed in the wintertime. This was also the time to put up prairie hay.

We had no timber on our farm so Dad would go five miles with a team of horses and wagon to cut firewood for our heating stove and kitchen range. First a tree had to be chopped down with an axe. Then trimmed and cut so it would fit on the wagon. This too was a lot of work but it had to be done if we wanted to stay warm during the winter.

As you can see there was a lot of work involved in farming. Gradually things got easier. When the combine came along, wheat harvest was much easier. Two men could do the work that had required twelve. The first combines were pulled with a tractor. Later came self-

propelled combines with air-conditioned cabs, stereo music and comfortable seats. These came after we had left the farm and moved to town. Combines are also used to harvest corn, milo and soybeans. This was all done the hard way when we were on the farm.

Farming has changed a lot since we left the farm in 1947. At that time farms were much smaller than they are today. Many farms were 160 acres or 320 for the larger farmers. Now some farms are 1,000 acres or more. This requires a big investment in equipment, fertilizer, and insecticides. This all has to do with progress and no one would want to go back to the old way of doing things, even though it was a slower paced way of life.

The War Years

I remember December 7, 1941 when Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and we were forced into war. I was 11 years old at the time. We were members of St. Paul's Lutheran Church in Herington, Kansas and they were going to have a school children's Christmas program on Christmas Eve. The children needed to practice on the four Sunday afternoons before Christmas. I was at this practice and Dad and Mom picked me up afterwards and we started for home—a ten-mile trip. Our 1937 Ford was the first car we had with a radio. Dad turned it on and they were giving the news that there had been an attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese. I didn't understand what all this meant, but I could see that Mom and Dad had a serious look on their faces and seemed concerned. The next day I went to school and the teacher had us take out our geography books and we learned about Japan.

This was before there were television sets and we did not take a daily newspaper so we didn't really understand what was happening in the world or what the war was all about. We soon found out that things were going to be different. One of the first things that happened was rationing. Many of the things that had always been available were now needed for the war effort. Things I remember being in short supply were meat, canned fruit and vegetables, sugar, coffee, syrup, shoes, clothing and cigarettes. No automobiles were being built and no car tires or very little farm machinery was being manufactured. Gasoline was rationed to four gallons a week for the average driver with an "A" card. If you were a farmer you might qualify for a "B" card, which let you get eight gallons per week.

All the automobile and farm machinery plants were converted so they could make military vehicles and weapons of war. All the aircraft plants quickly expanded their production to assemble warplanes. Shipyards also went into high gear and there was plenty of work for everybody.

The government quickly started to draft all the young, able-bodied men for the armed forces. If I remember correctly, all men between the ages of 18 to 35 had to register for the draft. They started with 18 year-olds and

worked up to the older men. Some men would be deferred if they worked in essential jobs such as defense plants or some farmers because the government needed all the food they could get to feed the military and the people on the home front. I believe everyone was willing to work together and put up with inconvenience in order to get this awful war finished.

During 1942 the Government started buying farmland just east from where we lived. They bought 1,700 acres and built the Herington Army Air Field. Construction was done at a fast pace and soon there were all kinds of buildings, hangers, runways and fences covering the area. The northwest corner of the air base was only ¾ mile from our farmhouse. In January of 1943 the base was formally opened and they started bringing in airplanes. First, it was a lot of B-17's and B-24's. Later they would bring in the big B-29's.

Herington Army Air Base was used to process plane crews and equipment. The planes would be completely checked over and we could hear their engines roaring all night long getting their final check. They would then be loaded and the crew would get on board and take off and fly to California, where the plane would refuel and then take off again for the Philippine Islands.

At the peak of the war, the Herington Air Base had 110 officers and 2,125 enlisted men and women. This was a lot of service people to come into an area where the largest town was Herington, with a population around 3,000. It got rather crowded on Saturday night.

Being on the farm during the war helped us cope with food rationing. We always raised a large vegetable garden and chickens and hogs for meat. The people that lived in the cities had a much harder time getting food. Everyone had to get food ration stamp books and could only buy meat or canned goods if they had stamps. Red stamps for meat and blue stamps for canned goods. People also needed stamps for gasoline, shoes and sugar. Appliances such as washing machines and refrigerators were impossible to buy, so people learned to make do with what they had. Car tires were also extremely hard to get. All this material was needed for the military.

Military personnel had to be moved by trains. Herington was served by the main line of the Rock Island Railroad so "Troop Trains" would come through town and the soldiers would hang out of the train windows and wave and holler "Hi" to the people along the way.

I had several cousins who were drafted into the army and also several uncles. One cousin, Roy Gehrke, was killed in Europe at the time of the worst battles of the war. He was a second lieutenant in charge of three tanks and was hit by shrapnel. I also had an uncle, Melvin (Melvin Carl Vahsholtz 1925), who was killed on Luzon in the Philippines. He was a twin, and his twin brother, Milton (Milton Edward Vahsholtz 1925) was fighting at his side when Melvin was hit. This was very hard for Milton to deal with. The battle was so intense he couldn't even

go out with his critically wounded brother. The medics had to drag him out crawling on their bellies. He died on the way out.

The young men were all fighting the war, so the need for workers in the defense plants was great. They hired women to fill jobs that had always been done by men. The women did a great job and proved they could handle such work.

The war years were hard years for many people. It was a very destructive war and many people lost their lives. On May 7, 1945, Germany surrendered to the Allies and on September 2, 1945, Japan surrendered, after the Americans dropped atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That ended World War II.

The troops started to come home again and a whole new era would begin as they married and started new families. The people all wanted new cars and all the things that were not made during the war years. Factories converted from making war material to making the things people had been doing without. People also needed housing, opening up another big project as builders moved out into the suburbs and started a new building trend. All this demand made for a good job market and things were going better than they had for a long time. People were ready to get on with their lives and leave the war years behind.

After the war my father could see that the way people farmed was changing. Farms were getting bigger, requiring more and larger farm machinery. Our small 160-acre farm still used horses for much of the fieldwork. The larger farmers were doing most everything with tractors, which were getting bigger and more powerful.

My father didn't know what he should do. If he bought new and larger equipment he would need to have more land to farm and this would require a big investment; money he didn't have. He still had a mortgage to pay off on the farm we had.

He decided to stay a small farmer and see if he could find some part-time work in Herington and have me do more of the work around the farm. He found work he liked at the Badger Lumber Co., but he didn't get many hours. He then found a job at the grain elevator and this worked out pretty good.

We worked this way for a while, but trying to work in town and keep the farming operation going at the same time was not an ideal situation. I was only 16 years old, still in school, and not mechanically inclined. I had problems when machinery broke down and didn't always know how things should be handled without my father's supervision.

After considering a lot of factors, and after much discussion, my father and mother decided to go to Topeka and talk to relatives (Schumachers) who had moved there. These people had also been farmers and then decided to move to town. After talking to them, my

parents decided to give some serious thought to giving up farming and moving to town. The next step was to decide what to do with the farm. They decided to rent the farmland to a neighbor that they knew and trusted. They would also have a farm sale and sell all the livestock, chickens, farm equipment and miscellaneous items.

After this was decided, Dad and Mom went to Topeka again to look for a job for Dad. They went to a lot of places without much luck. It seems they were giving preference to hiring veterans since it was so close after the war. Dad and Mom thought of a man from Herington that had come to Topeka and started David Keller Construction Company. Dad went to see him and he hired Dad. They built higher quality homes, churches, small office buildings and even small schools.

The next thing needed was a house in Topeka. After some serious looking and planning, they decided on a small two-bedroom bungalow at 1346 High St. We arranged to use my cousin Milton Gehrke's father's truck to get us moved in June of 1947.

After getting settled in, I started looking for a job. This was a little hard to do. As I mentioned before, the veterans were hired first, so this didn't leave too many good jobs for kids still in high school. I did find a little job at the Topeka Country Club as a "golf caddy" carrying the clubs of the members as they played the golf course. I didn't make much money, but I did get a lot of fresh air and sunshine. I also found a part-time job at the A&P grocery store working ten hours on Saturdays and several hours on Monday evenings. The Saturday work was always very busy and the manager worked us hard, but I was happy that I could earn a little money. I was paid 75 cents per hour. This sounds unbelievable now, but it was a fair wage at that time.

I was 16 years old and had just finished my junior year in high school at Herington. I was now ready to start my senior year at Topeka High School, a totally new experience. At Herington High the junior class had 69 students and at Topeka High there would be over 600 students in the senior class of 1948. I was nervous and concerned about adjusting to a totally different school system. It didn't take long until I adjusted and blended in with the rest of the class. I enjoyed my year at Topeka High and sometimes wish I could have had three years there. There were so many more opportunities and options that you do not have in a smaller school.

I graduated from Topeka High in 1948. I didn't go on to college. I had a deep desire to get a job and earn some money. This probably was not the best choice for me to make as far as getting ahead in life, but that was the decision I made.

I found a full time job in the laboratory at Forbes Bros. Mill in North Topeka, doing tests. This was a corn mill where they made corn meal and corn grits, for the breweries to use in making beer. When I started there the laboratory wasn't very big. Soon after they hired a chief

chemist and set up a completely new lab with all new equipment so we could run a variety of tests to make sure the products we made met the breweries' specifications.

The chief chemist taught me how to use much of the new equipment and I found the work very interesting. The mill generally ran around the clock, requiring me to do some night shift work. I got used to this after a while and would work one week days and one week nights.



The Brockmeiers in California. L to R: Edward Brockmeier, Katie Vahsholtz Brockmeier, Hulda Friedrich, Irene Friedrich and Darrell Brockmeier

Then Lauhoff Grain Co. from Danville, Illinois bought Forbes Mill and there were a lot of changes made. They fired several managers including the mill superintendent and the chief chemist. They wanted things done differently in the lab and they put me in charge of it. They sent me to Danville for training and said I would need to go back again for more. This was in 1951 and it looked like things were shaping up real good for me. Then in July there was a really big flood that flooded all of North Topeka. After the water went down they called us back to work to clean up the mess. We had made some progress when Government inspectors came in and condemned the mill. They said it could no longer make food products as the building was contaminated. So that was the end of my work as a mill chemist.

I suppose I could have found work at another mill in another city but I was only 21 years old and didn't even think that far. Also, the Korean War was going on and I was afraid I would be drafted before long.

Next, International Motor Trucks hired me in the parts department. The job was interesting and also challenging. I had to work with the public, company mechanics and the shop foreman who could be quite difficult at times.

International was a company that believed in moving people around to different departments within the company. After about eight months they gave me the job of shop clerk, figuring the amount of the bills for repairs done to customers' vehicles. This was a job I did not care

for. Customers would complain about the charges and give the shop clerk a rough time. It finally got too much for me so I gave notice and quit.



Madeline and Darrell's 1952 wedding photo

From there I found work at W.A.L. Thompson Wholesale Hardware Co. I was hired on October 6, 1952 as an order picker. We filled customer orders and took them to the packing area where the packers prepared them to be shipped all over the Midwest. After about two years I was promoted to assistant shipping clerk. I worked for Thompson Hardware for 13 ½ years. I could see their business was going down hill and could not continue the way things were going.



Katie and Ed's 30th anniversary in 1954, with grandson Craig, Darrell, Werner (Craig's father) and Allan

I found an opening at Whelan Lumber Co. in 1966. They put me in the hardware warehouse, waiting on customers who needed orders filled that had been written by sales people at the order desks. We also filled the hardware orders going out on Whelan trucks. When I started at Whelan's there were five full-time employees in the hardware warehouse, plus one part-time person. We also took care of the hardware receiving dock, checked in merchandise and stocked shelves. At that time Whelan's had around 250 employees; a rather large operation, considering that it was a home-owned family operation.



Darrell and Madeline Brockmeier's 50th Wedding Anniversary, 2002

Eventually I was made warehouse manager and by the time I retired in 1995, there was only one full-time person working the warehouse and several part-time people that helped out as needed. At that time, Whelan's decided to completely remodel their downtown yard where I had worked for 30 years. They started this project when I was still working and it changed the whole area where I had always worked. With all the dirt, noise and moving of merchandise, I was really glad to leave. All in all, Whelan's was a good company to work for. I never made a lot of money, but I had a steady job and always seemed to get along all right.

Returning now to the second child of Henry and Augusta:

• Martin Leonard Gottlieb Vahsholtz (1904) was born at Olpe, Lyon County, Kansas and died in 1985 at Topeka. He married Mathilda "Eleanora" Fischer (1908). Martin was a farmer in the White City, Kansas area before he moved to Council Grove, Kansas in 1954. He moved to Topeka to retire in 1976 where they bought the home of Darrell and Madeline Brockmeier at 721 Medford.

Martin's daughter Geraldine Ann "Geri"
Vahsholtz Anschutz Tate (1937) played an important role in creating this book. It was Geri who found and scanned most of the old family photos and she also supplied stories. At the time of her marriage to John David Anschutz (1931), Geri worked for National Reserve Life Insurance Company, Topeka, taking ten years off to raise her two children, Janet Ann Anschutz (1961) and Bruce David Anschutz (1965). She went back to work in 1971 for the Shawnee County Treasurer. Her second husband is

James L. Tate (1933). Geri retired in 2002—just in time to pitch in on this project.

20th Century Family History by Geraldine "Geri" Ann Vahsholtz Anschutz Tate (1937). The following is condensed from a draft that Geri wrote upon her return from a Lutheran Women's Missionary League convention in the Black Hills of South Dakota in 1989. She dedicated it to her husbands, her children and her future descendants.

My dad, Martin Leonard Gottlieb Vahsholtz (1904), was born on a farm near Olpe, Kansas, as was his sister Katharina "Katie" Louisa Hedwig Vahsholtz (1903). They were the children of Henry Leonard Vahsholtz (1879) and Augusta Louise Niedert Vahsholtz (1878). They were a happy family—doing normal chores and farming.



Grandpa's house had shutters that actually shut. That's him (Henry) on the right, then Katie, next my dad, Martin, Grandma Augusta and at the far left, Emma Hecht, Augusta's niece.

Dad had to go to school too early in life for him, because his parents didn't want Katie to have to go by herself. Then his mother died when he was five, creating a very hard time for young Martin. His father, Henry, left the children with strict grandparents and an aunt and uncle who probably didn't realize the stress the kids were going through. Emotional stress was not discussed. Adults were in charge. I grew up hearing stories that today might be described as child abuse and thinking how lucky I was that God had given me two wonderful loving Christian parents.

My mother, Mathilda "Eleanora" Fischer Vahsholtz (1908) always went by the name "Eleanora." She was surprised to learn that her baptismal certificate gave her first name as Mathilda. Mom did not tell as many stories as Dad, but she did tell of walking several miles to school with her sister and encountering a coyote. She said they just stopped and stared at him eyeball to eyeball until he left. She also recalled how difficult it was as a little girl

to cross the grader ditches full of water after the spring thaw. They had more snow in those days.

My German heritage is Lutheran and I had the privilege of visiting Germany and "Lutherland." The highlight of my week has always been going to church for spiritual and social growth. In my childhood, going to town on Saturday for groceries and other staples was another highlight.

Grandpa Henry Vahsholtz and his brothers lived close around Olpe. On the 4th of July, the families celebrated by getting together for dinner. Then they would shoot off dynamite for fireworks—sometimes in water tanks for louder noise.



Young Martin Vahsholtz the trapper caught a skunk

Grandpa remarried a few years after my grandmother Augusta died, to Lena Jung, and moved from Olpe to Herington, Kansas. Dad told the story of the move. His uncles helped. Each had a wagon filled with belongings and pulled by horses. They stayed at farms along the way and slept in haylofts in barns. Turk, their dog, walked the whole way.

My parents grew up in the decade of the 1920s. Mother went to Herington High School and graduated in 1928. During her high school years, she lived with the Mosdorf family. She and her sister, Hilda, worked in the Mosdorf family dry goods store. My father's career in farming started as a child on our farm and later as a young man doing farm labor in the neighborhood. His father Henry, his grandfather Franz Leonard (1847), and all of his uncles were farmers.

My parents were married on April 27, 1930, at the Zion Lutheran Church in Latimer, Kansas. That was a rainy

day and the roads were dirt—no gravel or asphalt. The reception was at my grandparent's farm. Relatives drove their horses and wagons or cars across the pasture to get to the house. The drive was muddy too. My dad got sick that night. He thought it was from chicken salad. No refrigeration in those days!



Dad (Martin Vahsholtz) was proud of his first car

Their first home was on a rented farm owned by Mother's Uncle Herman and Aunt Louise Fischer. Then they moved to another rented farm between White City and Woodbine. The landlord was a tightwad dictator who feared he wouldn't get his share. He came out to the farm and made Dad's life miserable. The farm was close to St. John's Lutheran Church. Only the cemetery remains today.

That was the "Great Depression" days, causing their farming career to get off to a slow start. Nevertheless, it was always a partnership for my mother and dad, as was their marriage of 55 years. I asked Mother once, "How did you survive?" She would laugh and say, "We were happy—we had each other. All the young people were in the same shape. No one had much money. We raised our own food."

Dad made music in the evening with his grandfather's (Franz Leonard 1847) accordion that Dad inherited and I still have. He also had a harp and taught himself to play both. There was no radio or television in those days. Cats and dogs were company and pets. The cats kept mice and rats from the house and barn. Dogs helped round up cattle to bring to the barn for milking twice a day.

Wheat was the main crop grown in Kansas. Seed wheat was planted in the fall. Before winter the seeds sprouted in the ground and came up as a grass-like pasture which cattle were turned out on to graze. During the winter, the wheat went dormant, waiting for winter snow and spring rains. In spring the plants came alive and grew into golden ripe wheat fields.



Dad and Mom's (Martin and Eleanora Vahsholtz) wedding in 1930 just after the stock market crash of 1929 as the Great Depression began



Les and me (Geri) with Franz Leonard's accordion



Dad shocking wheat. It was hot, dirty work under the summer Kansas sun.

First the wheat was cut with a binder and gathered into bundles. Workers would pick up these bundles and stack them into a "shock" of wheat—a small stack—for drying. My dad did this kind of work and also joined a custom wheat harvesting crew that traveled from Oklahoma through Kansas and Nebraska in the summer. The crew followed the harvest from farm to farm, threshing wheat bundles. The threshing machine would separate the wheat kernels from the straw.



Steam engines such as this powered the threshing machines when Dad was growing up.

Old steam engines always fascinated my dad. In their later years, Mother and Dad went to a lot of "Threshing Bees" where collectors would bring old threshers and steam engines to show how they worked earlier in the century. Such events continue to this day.

Horses were important and every farmer had some working horses. They were used to till the soil and every other pulling job that is done today with tractors.

I was born in 1937 at another farm 4 ½ miles west of White City rented from Dr. Reynolds who also delivered me. Dad told the story many times how Mother was in labor and he went to get Grandma Anna Fischer at Latimer first and then to get the doctor in White City. There were no telephones.

When I was three, I remember one evening as Mother and Dad were milking; they left me a lamp lit on a high shelf. I guess I thought it was taking too long to milk, so I got a chair, took down the lamp and set it on a chair by the window, attempting to see out in the dark. I can still remember the terrified expression on my mother's face

when she came rushing into the house carrying her milk buckets. I could have dropped the lamp and caused a serious fire.

The house was cold and drafty. One winter it was so cold that the drinking water in the water bucket was covered with ice in the morning. Another time I remember being in the yard between the barn and house. A thunderstorm came up and scared me. I didn't know what to do when Dad called me to come to him at the barn or go to the house where Mother was calling. I think I went to the house. By this time period (late Thirties), harvest was done by Dad and Mother, with the help of some of Dad's younger brothers. Dad had a Case combine and a Farmall tractor. The combine cut the standing wheat and separated the grain and straw as the tractor pulled it around the field. It took less manpower to harvest with the invention of the combine.



Martin beside the combine and his brother Rhinehart "Rhiney" beside the tractor. A combine was a portable threshing machine having its own engine and a sickle bar to cut the standing grain. Early models like this one were pulled by tractors. Later, combines were commonly self-propelled.



That's me, Geri on the left. Rhiney is on the pickup and dad. Martin, on the combine.

In the 40s my parents made a big step, buying their first farm. It was 160 acres about ½ mile east and ½ mile south of White City and called the Funk place. I remember the real estate agent taking us to Wichita to make the deal with the Federal Land Bank. He took us to

eat in a restaurant—a first such dining experience. The folks bought me a little red purse that I treasured for years.



The wheat was hauled to an elevator like this one, where it was loaded onto trains and shipped to terminals and mills. Later most of these small elevators were replaced by much larger ones made of concrete.

This era got my folks on their feet financially for the first time in their married life. They were Republicans, but Dad always said that President Franklin Roosevelt helped them with programs, and WWII helped also.

My Brother, Lester Martin Vahsholtz (1942) was born in this decade. My parents called Doctor Brethour in the middle of the night and he met them at a crossroad and followed them into Council Grove. Les was a breach baby, born in Loomis Nursing Home. A new baby coming wasn't explained to older kids in those days and I was quite confused when Mother and Dad were both gone one morning and only my deaf Great Aunt Lena Brockmeier was with me. She had come to "visit" some days earlier because this time my Grandma Anna Fischer couldn't come to help my parents.

I was sure my parents were outside somewhere, so I'd go out to try and find them. Aunt Lena being deaf, could not explain what was going on, so she just followed me around the farm and in her own way tried to comfort me. Finally in the afternoon Dad came home and explained that I had a *new baby* brother.

In later years when Mother was doctoring with Dr. Brethour, her appointments were in the evening after chores, which meant we all could see free movies on a vacant lot in town. There were Western movies with Gene Autry. I guess I thought he was pretty handsome.

Dad was too old to be drafted for service in WWII, and had been too young for WWI. He said he thought he was missing out on adventures not going to war. He'd wanted to go to WWI but was glad he didn't have to go to WWII. By that time he realized what war was all about

and also he had a family and was trying to get ahead on his own farm.

During that wartime, I remember it didn't matter how much money you had, things like gasoline, sugar, tires and shoes were rationed and you had to have stamps to buy them.

I had four uncles in WWII, Rhinehart Frank "Rhiney" or "Ron" Vahsholtz (1922), Verner Alvin Vahsholtz (1924), and the twins, Milton Edward Vahsholtz and Melvin Carl Vahsholtz (1925). Melvin was killed in the Philippines at age 18. I remember my parents taking us to my grandparents' farm near Emporia for family reunions when any of the uncles came home for a furlough. It was an emotional event, especially when we all went to the train station to see them off. Grandma didn't want to listen to news on the radio for fear of what she would hear. They did get word by an officer that one of the twins was killed. Milton and Melvin were in a foxhole in the Philippine Islands and decided to separate. Melvin went to another foxhole, and that one was hit by a bomb.

Soldiers from Fort Riley would sometimes practice war games on the road to White City from our farm. They would hide the tanks and jeeps in the grader ditches and camouflage them with tree limbs, pretending they were capturing White City. That was pretty frightening to a little girl coming home from school. I would cut across an alfalfa field rather than walk on the road. I didn't realize until I grew up that every afternoon, Mother was watching for me from the front yard. I have a candleholder that says "God could not be everywhere so he created mothers." I believe that God is everywhere, but he reveals Himself to us through other people—in this case, my mother.

The soldiers were not supposed to go into farmsteads, but some would come and ask my folks if they could get fresh water from the windmill pump. That water was pumped into a tank for the cattle or directed into the milk house in a cement trough where the cream cans were kept cool so the cream wouldn't spoil until the creamery truck came to pick it up. Dad allowed the soldiers to take the water and he enjoyed talking with them.

One of our neighbors, Marty Hood, had German war prisoners come to work for him during haying season. They were brought to America to help with the harvest, and held in camps. One was in North Central Kansas, called Camp Concordia. Neighbors helped one another with fieldwork too. Dad was over helping Marty Hood on occasion and since he could speak a little German, could carry on a conversation with those prisoners. Doing so gave him pleasure and helped them get along. They were good workers who didn't understand what was going on with the war. They were just following orders.

General Eisenhower came back after the war as a hero, especially to Kansas. He was a native son of Abilene and we went there every time Eisenhower came to Kansas to

celebrate on his behalf. I remember speeches and parades that were all day affairs.

The war years helped my folks in many ways. They raised chickens—hens to lay eggs to sell in 30 dozen crates, and all the eggs we could eat and use in baking. Also eggs were a supper meal. I liked creamed eggs, which Mother would make using a white sauce in a skillet and then drop the eggs into the white sauce to cook, spooning the white sauce over the top of the eggs too. It was good. We usually had oatmeal or cream of wheat—ground at the elevator from our own wheat! Mother made homemade bread—cinnamon rolls for Sundays—and coffee and milk to drink for breakfast. I made cocoa-moca in those days and didn't know it. I put a teaspoon of Hershey's Cocoa in a cup, some sugar, two tablespoons of hot coffee and filled the cup with our cow's milk.

Roosters were sold in Council Grove except for some kept to butcher and eat or put into a locker that was rented in town (we had no freezer or refrigerator, and no electricity until 1946).

We had a big garden. We canned vegetables, green beans, and corn, made pickled beets, cucumbers into pickles, and sauerkraut from cabbage. Besides those, we ate fresh vegetables in season all summer. Potatoes and sweet potatoes were dug and stored in the basement for winter use. We had a cherry tree and mulberry trees. Mother canned cherries, mulberries, gooseberries and wild plums, along with making delicious fruit pies and jellies.

If we didn't know where Les was, we could look over the top of the tool shed, and find him eating mulberries off the tree. Les even had luck raising cotton from some seeds that had been given to him. He had white rabbits that were butchered and put into the locker for meat for winter.



Martin, Geri, Les and Eleanora Vahsholtz in 1948

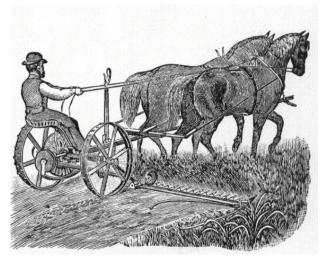
We had milk cows that were bred with one bull. The calves were fed grain and kept in a small pasture close to the barn. The cows had to be milked each morning and evening. The milk was separated into skim milk and cream using a machine called a cream separator. It had to

be cleaned every day. The cream was sold and the skim milk was fed to the pigs. The calves were sold in the fall. A hog was kept to butcher for winter meat because they were cheaper. One year I remember a calf broke its leg on the way to market. Dad had it butchered at the locker plant and we had fresh beef that year.

Flour for baking was made by taking some of our own wheat to the elevator in Council Grove to be ground into flour. The elevator put the flour into cotton sacks that were printed and could be made into clothes for the family. I made my own school dresses after I was in high school and some before. Mother did a lot of sewing and taught me to sew, in addition to home economics classes I took in high school.

The farm was self sufficient in many ways. We raised wheat, oats and some corn. Alfalfa fields produced hay for cattle in winter. In the spring, Dad cut the alfalfa with a mower pulled by two horses and later, the tractor. He let the hay dry and then used a rake pulled by horses to rake the alfalfa into long rows to be picked up and stacked.

I really liked going to the fields to meet my dad while he was mowing, especially with the horses. Sometimes I would ride above the sickle on the toolbox.³⁵ New mown alfalfa has a beautiful sweet smell.



A two horsepower mower. The gentleman on the mower is probably not an ancestor.

Nature was interrupted by mowing over, for example, rabbit nests with new babies in them. Sometimes Les and I would try to raise the babies, putting them in a box and

³⁵ This was a very dangerous practice, but typical of what seemed reasonable risks in those days. One day my dad was mowing with my brother Dick riding on the fender of the tractor. Sometimes the sickle would get stuck with some tough weeds, and Dick would jump down and free the blade while Dad held the clutch. One time Dick signaled he had it clear, but reached back for one more weed just as Dad engaged the clutch. Dick lost a finger.

feeding them with an eyedropper. They usually didn't live very long.



After the hay was mowed, it was allowed to dry and then raked into windrows—continuous linear stacks using a dump rake like Katie Vahsholtz is on at the left. The horses on the near right of the stack, guided by Dad, pull a hay-buck down rows until it's piled full and then take the hay to the stacker. That's the machine shown dumping a load of hay on the top of the haystack. Horses barely visible in the background raise and lower the stacker using a system of cables and levers. When it's down, the hay-buck straddles the stacker and deposits its load. It's all hard work, but Grandpa Henry, on top of the stack, has the dirtiest and hardest work. He uses a pitchfork to level and distribute the hay into the kind of neat stack shown here.

The pasture was used for the cows grazing in summer. One of my jobs was to bring the cows in for milking. The steers were transported to my Fischer grandparents pasture to fatten them up for sale in the fall.



Later, Dad used this combination hay-buck and stacker; a much more efficient method of making stacks. It was made obsolete by hay balers that packaged hay into convenient chunks. That's Les and me on the haystack.

The war was on and sometimes military airplanes flew over, from the base nearby. I remember seeing planes flying over our place on fire, with the men parachuting out. It was common for them to crash. One crashed west of White City and Dad and the neighbor went with the pickup to the crash site. Women and children stayed

home. After several days of Army investigation, Dad took us by to see the site.

Sometimes thunderstorms would come up suddenly and catch the men in the hay fields. One time Dad and a neighbor were helping another neighbor put up hay across the creek, when a rainstorm came up. Creeks went out of their banks with flooding and the roads were closed. Dad had to spend the night at the neighbor's. We could see their home but there was no way to get across. That neighbor's wife made them very good ice cream in a refrigerator tray. Mother got the recipe and then she made it too.

Wheat was usually harvested at the end of June; Dad liked to be done by the 4th of July. Then we'd go to Council Grove City Lake and watch the fireworks display over the lake. Of course, Mother would pack a picnic lunch to enjoy in the evening.



Dad's small combine (with Les and me on top) cut a swath just six feet wide and was powered from the tractor that pulled it.

By this time, Dad harvested with his Allis Chalmers combine pulled by his Allis Chalmers tractor. Les and I liked to ride around the wheat field on top of the combine beside the grain bin and watch the grain shell out into the bin and the straw separate out the side. We liked being part of the action. We had straw hats. Les had a cowboy style and I had a regular straw hat or sometimes a sunbonnet like my Mother and Grandma Fischer. Mother was the wheat hauler, taking pickup loads of wheat to the elevator. We would ride with her to town to watch her drive onto the scales first to weigh the pickup and the grain. Then she'd drive into the elevator where a pulley would lift the front of the pickup while someone opened the tailgate to let the wheat out into the elevator pit. Then she'd drive back to the scale to be weighed again so the weight of the grain could be calculated.

Some years the folks would store some wheat in steel bins on the farm until prices would be higher to sell. They had an auger that would auger the wheat out of the pickup into the steel bin. Dad would have to watch the grain in the bin so it wouldn't get "hot."³⁶

³⁶ If the grain was not **dry** enough, it would get hot.

Dad always had a gallon jug of well water on his tractor or in the pickup. It was a vinegar jug wrapped in a gunnysack soaked with well water. It sure tasted good on a hot summer day.

Once we bought a case (24 bottles) of Pepsi and kept it in the basement for special occasions. We'd split two bottles between the four of us. We had a lot of tea and Kool-aid made with sugar. Mother bought lemon mix from the traveling Watkins man. Dad teased Mother that the Watkins man was her boyfriend. She bought a few things from him, including vanilla and pain relievers.

Returning now to the family line:

Martin's son Lester Martin Vahsholtz (1942) was born when the family lived near White City. When he was eleven they moved to another farm north of Council Grove. Lester played a significant role in creating this book. He graduated from Council Grove High School in 1960 and attended Washburn University in Topeka, Kansas as an art student. There he won a \$200 scholarship purchase award for a painting. He then earned a fine arts degree from Washburn and was working on a Bachelor of Business Administration from Washburn at the time of his engagement to Cynthia Fern Gilchrist (1945). At the time of their marriage he was employed in the TV art division of WDAF, Kansas City. Lester currently works for the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency where he is a chartered employee starting with the agency's birth in 1971. Lester started a graphics department at that time and has grown it into the high tech multimedia era. He and his current wife, Carole Ann Armentrout Taylor (1950), live in Kansas City.

How I Remember My Past by Lester Martin "Les" Vahsholtz (1942).

The earliest thing I can remember is seeing tears in my Dad's eye as he lifted me up to see Grandpa (Henry Leonard Vahsholtz 1879) lying in the casket. I don't remember Grandpa Vahsholtz when he was alive. Dad told the story of Grandpa Vahsholtz saying that when he died he wanted to die quick. And that he did, in 1946 with a heart attack on the street in Emporia, Kansas. Dad said he managed to walk to a gas station where he died.

My only sibling is my sister **Geraldine Ann "Geri" Vahsholtz Anschutz Tate** (1937) who is five years older. Because of the age difference, we didn't play together much, so I generated my own entertainment, which did not seem to be hard to do on the farm.

During the 11 years I lived on the farm, (1942-1953) my parents lived almost completely "off the land" and purchased very few groceries in town. It was during those 11 years that they completely paid off their White City farm through strict management of their assets.



Grandma Lena and Grandpa Henry Vahsholtz in their later years

They milked four to eight cows early every morning and every evening, sold the cream for money, mixed the skim milk with the garbage to make slop to feed the hogs. They raised chickens and sold eggs, and raised roosters to butcher for family meat, bred cattle to raise for market, bred hogs to fatten and sell, and planted a huge garden for family vegetables, fruit and canning. Dad raised corn for the hogs, sorghum to fill the silo with silage for the stock cattle, alfalfa for the milk cows, milo and oats for the chickens, and wheat to sell. Dad traded some wheat for flour at the flourmill in Council Grove and mother made all of the bread and pastries for the family. The flour sacks were made of cotton with nice colorful patterns so that the cloth could be made into shirts and dresses. Mother was a great seamstress and made clothes for us with a foot-pedal Singer sewing machine. I remember when she accidentally ran the needle through her thumb.

Geraldine and I would help butcher young six-month old roosters. We cut their heads off with an ax and dunked them into hot water and plucked off their feathers. Right after their heads were cut off, they would jump around for a while, hence the saying, "running around like a chicken with its head cut off." The dressed and cut up chicken was frozen and stored in a rented locker in White City. The baby chicks were purchased every spring at Junction City. We usually purchased around 100. Half were roosters and half were females. Grandpa Fischer always did the same. He called them "peepes." The baby chicks were transported in boxes with air holes and we would stack them in the back seat of the car. They would "peep" all the way home. Raising baby chicks was an art in itself. We had a special building called a "brooder house" which was complete with a "kerosene brooder stove" to keep the chicks warm, as it was still early

spring. The water had to be treated with special pills that turned the water red so the chicks wouldn't die.

We raised cattle but we seldom butchered any for family meat. I suppose they were worth more money than the hog Dad would butcher every winter and cure in an unheated upstairs bedroom. Being good Germans, the head meat was made into "scrapples" and the blood was made into "blood sausage." That may all sound bad, but I always considered it a treat. Mother helped with milking the cows and separating the cream. As I got older I milked too, using a one-legged stool made out of a piece of 2x4 lumber nailed to foot-long 1x6. The cows were in the barn with their heads locked in a "stall" where there was hay for them to eat while they were being milked. Some of the cows would be prone to kick as they were being milked, so Dad would put on a set of "kickers" made of chain and iron that held the cow's back legs together. To milk the cow, you had to sit on the onelegged stool and hold a full size milk bucket between your knees, which got heavier as it filled with milk.



Les Vahsholtz and Colie, a boy's best friend

A close companion was a dog named Colie who was given to us by my cousins Darrell and Alan Brockmeier when they moved off the farm to Topeka. I remember the story of how Colie had once saved Darrell from being injured by a Bull. We usually had two more dogs besides Colie, but Colie was special and would let me dress him up in an Indian suit and other silly things.

The White City School was about a mile away and Mom and Dad sent me to first grade when I was five. Geraldine and I would walk to school together and sometimes people we didn't even know would stop and give us a ride (something you would not let your kids do today).

I remember a big storm that snowed Grandma Vahsholtz in with us for over a week. She had come to spend Thanksgiving with us but couldn't leave until after my birthday on December first. The snow was literally from the top of one fence post to the other on our narrow gravel country road. Dad and I walked to White City together with empty flour sacks to buy a few groceries.

One Christmas Santa Claus brought me an electric train. It looked like the diesel trains we would see on the railroad tracks. Dad made a large 4x8 foot base for it and we set it up in an unheated bedroom upstairs.

The White City farmhouse was square and two stories high. We only heated the large kitchen using a propane heater. Mother cooked with a wood stove. The house was originally set up for heating more rooms with a coal furnace in the basement, but we hardly used that, as coal was more expensive, I suppose. Consequently, our bedrooms upstairs were unheated and you could freeze water on a cold winter night. However, with a real feather bed and a homemade comforter you could easily be toasty-warm all night. Mom and Dad would always have a "pot" in their bedroom. No running water meant no toilets except an "outhouse" which is not too convenient in the night, so we had a two-gallon pot with a lid, and that's what we used. The kids in town all had running water so I always felt they must be richer than we were.

I was pretty much of a loner with only a few friends. Although no one made fun of me, most of the city kids paid me little attention. I had two or three kids that I would consider closer friends and that was about it.

I believe that I had a tricycle, but from that I went straight to a used full-size bicycle that Dad must have bought at a farm sale or something. Even with the seat all the way down, my feet weren't anywhere close to touching the ground so learning to ride required a more innovative approach. I would roll a 50-gallon barrel near the barnyard silo and wheel the bike next to it. Then I got on the barrel, then on the bike seat making sure the left pedal was up (since I'm left-footed), then pushed hard with my left foot and took off. It was ride or fall. And after a period of falling, it was more riding than falling. Now turning the corner around the tool shed and the chicken house was another thing. I had to run into the chicken house a few times before I got that down pat.

One day Mom and I were gone to a funeral and Dad was baling hay with our Allis Chalmers baler that made round bales. It was one of the first self-tying balers and didn't work properly unless the hay was fed in just right. This required quite a little jumping off the tractor and hand-feeding some hay. The baler was driven by the power take-off from the tractor and like so many farmers, my dad dispensed with the ill-fitting shield provided. Also like so often happened, he'd lost the cotter pin that held the assembly together and replaced it with a bent nail.

He happened to be baling right beside the highway at one point and had to jump off and feed some hav. This time,

he got too close to that whirling nail. It snagged his loose-fitting overalls and ripped them right off him, while Dad hung onto the tractor tire to avoid getting wrapped around the power take-off himself. He survived with minor scratches, but there he stood in his underpants, right beside the highway with traffic whizzing past.

Dad unwrapped the scraps of his pants, shielded himself as best he could and made for the house. When we got home, we found torn bits of overalls hanging over a kitchen chair and Dad nowhere in sight. He'd gotten a fresh pair of overalls and gone back to baling hay.



Geri framed the original Vahsholtz family tree for Les' 60th birthday in 2002

Children of Henry (1879) and his second wife Lena (1883) were:

• Irma Alruna Sophie Vahsholtz (1912) who was born at Clay Center, Kansas and died in 1953. She married Edward W. Rathke.



Irma (Vahsholtz) Rathke, Katie (Vahsholtz) Brockmeier), Hattie (Vahsholtz) Rathke, Hank Vahsholtz, Eleanora (Fischer) Vahsholtz and Lena (Young) Vahsholtz

Henry Bernard John "Hank" Vahsholtz (1913) was born in Morris County, near Herington, Kansas. He married Olga Eva Rathke (1919). Hank recently said to Madeline Brockmeier, "Do you know how Grandpa (Franz Leonard 1847) got the job of being a hunter of wild game when they were building the railroad? He said that when they were working on the railroad, on Sunday afternoons they would go do some target practice. When the bosses saw how good he was, they asked him if he would like to have the job of hunting." At age 89, Hank is an amazing person, according to the Brockmeiers. "He has heart problems but that doesn't slow down his ambition. He said he has five old tractors to restore where he lives in Americus and they go to Colorado Springs to be near their boys about half the year, and there he has three old buggies to fix. He also makes new sleighs."



Hank, Olga, Pauline and Richard Vahsholtz



Hank and Olga's fiftieth anniversary in 1989. From left; Steve, Olga, Hank, Stan and Gary. The kids are Seth and April (Steve's children).

 Baby Vahsholtz (1914) Henry and Lena's third child died as an infant. • Hedwig "Hattie" Caroline Emma Vahsholtz (1916) was born in Morris County. She married Ernest Carl Rathke (1907).



Melvin, Alfred, Milton, Hank, Martin and Richard

 Richard Herman Ernest Vahsholtz (1918) was born in Morris County; he died in 1957 in South Platte, Colorado. His wife was Pauline Alice Cross. A newspaper article in *The Denver, Colorado Post*, January 31, 1957 reported his death:

"Richard was killed in a dynamite explosion at the Madonna open pit mine two miles northeast of South Platte in Jefferson County, Colorado. The blast occurred while three men, Richard, Mr. Hollingsworth and Harold Plunkett were dynamiting for feldspar, a mineral used in the production of glass and steel. Hollingsworth told the deputies that seven charges had been set in the rock face. He said only six went off and he thought the fuse had burned out on the seventh. As the three went back to reset the last charge it exploded. Richard, standing directly over the charge, was blown 25 feet in the air and onto the mine shelf. Plunkett, standing near Vahsholtz, was thrown against the side of the mine. Hollingsworth was blown back to the mine entrance. Mrs. Plunkett, who rides the truck with her husband, was just walking into the pit when the dynamite went off. Her screams attracted several employees of the Eagle Mining Company who were working nearby. They helped get the men from the mine. Efforts to get Richard to Colorado General were delayed when a private ambulance from Denver went into a ditch and overturned. Richard, meanwhile, had been loaded into a station wagon and taken from the mine to Colorado Hwy 67 where he was transferred to an ambulance from Castle Rock. Slick, snowy roads further slowed the ambulance trip to Denver. The mine was owned by International Minerals & Chemical Corp., Denver but Hollingsworth and Vahsholtz had leased it for the past five months. They had mined an average of 100 tons of feldspar a week."

- Albert Vahsholtz (1919) died as a baby.
- Eleanor Marie Vahsholtz (1921) was born in Morris County and died in 2001 in Topeka. She married Kenneth W. Conroy (1928).



Rhiney on Bora Bora Island in the Pacific

• Rhinehart Frank "Rhiney" or "Ron" Vahsholtz (1922) was born in Morris County and died in 1992 in Topeka. His wife was Dorothea M. "Dottie" Dittemore (1922). He was a construction worker and truck driver. He was a veteran of World War II, having served as a medical corpsman in the Society Islands and New Caledonia in the Pacific. He later was stationed in the Hawaiian Islands where he was a fire truck driver. As a hobby, he was a garage saler & antiquer.



Verner in Uniform

- Verner Alvin Vahsholtz (1924) was born in Morris County and died in 2000 in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He married Lorraine Long. He was a master carpenter and lived in several different locations. He also served in the Army for four years.
- Melvin Carl Vahsholtz (1925) was born in Morris
 County and died in 1945 on Luzon Island,
 Philippines, just prior to the end of World War II,
 where he was killed in action. The following is
 quoted from a newspaper article of the time.

"Pvt. Melvin Vahsholtz, 19, son of Mr. and Mrs. H. L. Vahsholtz of Americus, was killed in action in the

Philippines March 13. His parents received official confirmation of their son's death by the War Department by telegram, April 16. However, they had previously received a letter from their son, Pvt. Milton Vahsholtz, a twin brother of Melvin, serving in the same infantry division, advising that Melvin had been killed and that he had talked to him before his death. Pvt. Melvin is buried in Manila.



Melvin in Uniform

"Pvt. Milton, his twin brother, was also wounded in the same action and is now recuperating in a Filipino hospital.

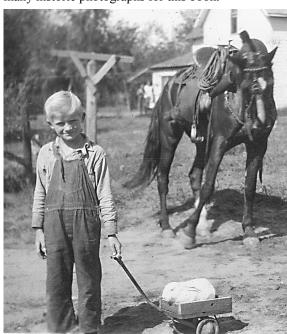
"The Vahsholtz twins are brothers of Mrs. Ed Brockmeier and Martin Vahsholtz of White City. The Vahsholtz family is well remembered here, having lived on a farm near Herington for more than twelve years. It was on this farm that Melvin and Milton were born and reared.

"The Vahsholtz twins had been together almost continuously since entering the armed service. They were inducted from Lyon County on April 14, 1944 and took their basic training together at Camp Hood, Texas, and had been together during their eleven months service before Melvin's death. They visited their parents while on a furlough last October and were sent overseas in November, 1944.

"They arrived on Dutch New Guinea on Christmas Day and were sent to the Philippines in February for service in the 43rd Infantry Division."

 Milton Edward Vahsholtz (1925) was born in Morris County. He married Elizabeth "Joan" Baldwin (1932). Milton was injured and his twin brother Melvin was killed during World War II

- while both were serving in the same Infantry Division. Milton recuperated in a Filipino hospital.
- Alfred Clarence Vahsholtz (1926) was born at Russell Springs, Kansas. He married Rubie Lee McDuffie Hale (1931). Alfred and Rubie supplied many historic photographs for this book.



Alfred as a boy in Oklahoma. His brother Richard made this little wagon for Darrell Brockmeier when they visited. There was no room for it in the car, so Darrell had to leave it, which broke his heart.



Herman Vahsholtz's confirmation photo Henry's only brother who lived was Herman August Vahsholtz (1880) who also had two wives. He died in

1946 near Olpe, Kansas. He first married Meta "Matie" Matilda Droege (1885) who bore him a daughter and then died in 1907 bearing a son, who also died.



Herman and his first wife Matie's wedding, 1904

Like his older brother Henry, Herman was a blacksmith who turned to farming after marriage. Children of Herman and Matie were:

Meta Mildred "Yvonne" Vahsholtz (1905)
married Charles Clayton Colby, LeRoy Allen
Cramer and then Travis Houston Lawson (1919).



L to R: Claudia (Caldron) Johnson, Meta Mildred (Vahsholtz) Lawson on her 89th birthday, Royce Caldron, Maxine (Colby) Cramer Caldron Bentley Glenn—November, 1994

Meta's grandson, **Royce Gene Caldron** (1947) wrote in 2002: "When I first developed my interest in genealogy, I eventually contacted my great half-uncle **Fred Richard Herman Vahsholtz** (1910)

through information I had obtained about the Lebold -Vahsholtz Mansion in Abilene, Kansas. He was a very gracious person, as was his wife Merle Evelyn Butler Vahsholtz (1912). Though I did not know them, they were very friendly folks and made my family and me feel like part of their family.

"When I stayed overnight with them, and later when my wife and daughters also stayed with them, we all very clearly remember Aunt Merle telling us just to be sure and make the beds in the morning as she just never knew when she might be giving tours of the Mansion. My daughters were delighted to tell their friends that they had slept in a museum.



Herman, his daughter Meta and their dog

"When I finally convinced my grandmother (Meta) to make the trip to Abilene to visit her half-brother Fred, I wasn't sure what was going to happen. She told me she had not seen him except maybe once since the funeral for their father. It had been around fifty years since that had happened.

"When we arrived in Abilene and she and Fred became reacquainted with one another, it was like they just picked up where they left off, just like any brother and sister. I remember them talking about some friends that they used to play with and arguing with one another about just who's friend it was! They were talking and carrying on just like a couple of kids themselves.

"Soon after that my grandmother became unable to travel so I was really glad that I had cajoled her into making the trip."

• **Leonard Vahsholtz** (1907) was born on the farm near Olpe, and died as an infant.



Herman and Lena Vahsholtz, about 1909

Herman married Agde "Lena" Weerts (1886) in 1909. She died in 1986 at the age of 99, 40 years after her husband's death.

Children of Herman and Lena were:

• Fred Richard Herman Vahsholtz (1910) who was born on the Olpe farm and died in 1995. He married Merle Eveyln Butler (1912). From the newspaper announcement of their marriage, "Mr. Vahsholtz is a graduate of the Clay County Community High School with the class of 1929. Since his graduation he has been employed for a time with the [Herman] Friedrich Motor Company of Hope, Kansas.

From their wedding announcement, "Mr. and Mrs. Fred Vahsholtz left Saturday to spend the weekend in Topeka and Lawrence. They will live on the Butler farm northwest of Emporia." From Merle's obituary, "The couple worked together in a variety of places and businesses, including farming. Their careers culminated in the Vahsholtz Implement Company of Salina, which they owned and operated

for about 20 years. The Lebold -Vahsholtz Mansion was a retirement project that sparked a wave of restoration in Abilene and inspired the book, *Mansion of Dreams*."

Fred died in 1995 and Merle in 1999.



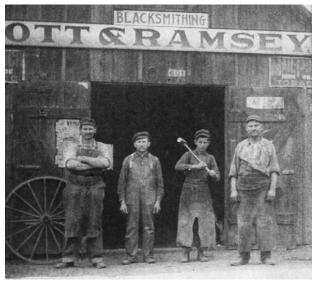
Meta and Fred Vahsholtz

The Whole Thing in a Nutshell ... In about 1982, Ruth Merle Vahsholtz Richter (1941) wrote several pages describing her parents' lives. About ten years later, I, her brother Robert John "Bob" Vahsholtz (1935) wrote another paper on the family's history. The following is condensed from those two papers. Our dad had many stories and lots of favorite expressions. When he set out to summarize something by saying "Here's the whole thing in a nutshell ..." we could be pretty sure the nutshell would overflow, as has our attempt at summarizing our father.

Franz Leonard Vahsholtz (1847) and Sophie Wilhelmine Louise Robbing (1849) were good German Lutherans who spoke the German language around home. They did adopt many customs of their new country though, including a strong desire to see all their children prosper and have their own farms. But in the German tradition, they also wanted to keep the family together. Amanda Elwine (Vahsholtz) Hitzemann (1873) and Ottilie "Hulda" (Vahsholtz) Friedrich (1874) had

married in the 1890s, and their husbands, as well as the Vahsholtz sons, were looking for farms of their own.

Land had gotten expensive in Nemaha County at the turn of the last century and acquiring five farms there was out of the question. **Henry Leonard** (1879) was about to be married and **Herman August** (1880, our grandpa) had already left home to work as a blacksmith's apprentice at Seneca, Kansas (he later set up shop at Lincolnville, Kansas).



That's Grandpa Herman on the left. Look at those arms!

Unless something was done, the family would scatter to the winds.

The dust had settled from the 1893 Oklahoma Land Rush, and it was said that good land could be bought there at favorable prices. Franz Leonard's family (excepting Herman) set out to look for land.

That was during the age of railroads, and they bought tickets to Oklahoma, stopping overnight in Emporia, Kansas. That evening, they met a German Lutheran from Emporia who was a real estate agent. Told of their landquest, he said they need go no further. There was good farmland available at attractive prices in an established German Lutheran community near Olpe, just south of Emporia. They stayed over to check it out and were convinced. The family farm in Nemaha County was sold and farms were purchased (including one bought by Uncle Henry Hitzemann), all in Lyon County except for one purchased by George Richard "Dick" Friedrich (1866), the husband of Aunt Ottile "Hulda" (1874). It was just across the line in Greenwood County. Aunt Hedwig Louise "Hattie" (1886) was single at the time and in 1906 married Carl August Schroeder (1882) who already had a farm in Lyon County. Carl was called "Uncle As" because of his habitual misuse of the pronoun "as." In our family, few were called by their given names, even though they were typically given

several names to choose from. Anyway, there were too many Carl's in the Vahsholtz tribe already.

Herman, our grandfather, gave up his blacksmith shop and bought a farm in Lyon County on Rock Creek, which had a nice little stone house. A frame addition was moved in and attached. Herman married Meta "Matie" Matilda Droege (1885), who had moved from Clay Center with her parents to the farm across Rock Creek. Herman's oldest daughter, **Meta Mildred**

"Yvonne" (1905) was born in that stone house. At the age of 22, her mother Meta, died after giving birth to a son, Leonard (1907), who also died. They are buried in the old country Lutheran cemetery near Olpe. Franz Leonard, the patriarch, was living on his farm, which was being farmed by Uncle Henry Leonard Vahsholtz (1879). Franz Leonard and Sophie took care of Meta until Herman remarried.



A 1979 sketch by Bob Vahsholtz of Grandpa Herman's Olpe farmhouse in Lyon County where Dad was born.

The John Weerts family had moved from South Dakota to an 80-acre farm in that same Lutheran community in Lyon County, for the sake of the mother's health. It is believed she had "consumption" (tuberculosis) and died of it not long after the move. Maybe she died of overwork, for she had a large family—eleven children—nine of them girls. One of the girls, Agde "Lena" Weerts (1886), was a beauty and at age 23 in 1909, she married Herman, the widower, and moved to his farm.

Our father, Fred Richard Herman (1910), and his sister Hilda Marie "Betty" Brier (1912) were born on the Rock Creek farm. While Herman's farm was in a nice setting, there was relatively little good farmland on it. Grandpa rented out the Rock Creek farm and bought another just south of Clay Center, near where he'd worked as a blacksmith. The family moved to the Clay Center place when our father was about three years old, and that's where he grew up.

Uncle Dick Friedrich (1866) and **Aunt Hulda** (1874) also moved to Clay Center, renting out the Greenwood County place. Uncle Dick was one of Dad's favorite relatives. Our brother Dick was named after him and Bob was named after his son, **Robert Leonard "Doc" Friedrich** (1896). Grandpa Franz Leonard (1847) retired in Clay Center and died there. He is buried in the

Greenwood Cemetery just north of town, part of which was acquired from Uncle Dick's Clay Center place.

Dad graduated from high school in Clay Center in 1929, after selling cars on the side—Marmons, Dodges, Austins and Model A Fords. About the time he graduated, Herman sold the Clay Center place and moved the family back to the Lyon County farm.

Dad's half-sister Meta (1905) had never gotten along with her stepmother, Lena. Dad used to tell us kids that he and Meta had mostly raised the rest of the family, and how Meta resented her dad's new wife and her young half-sisters. Shortly after the return to Lyon County, Meta took up with a guy who did not meet with Herman's approval. He forbid Meta to see Charles Colby. In defiance, Meta ran off and married him. There was a big fuss at the train station as she was leaving, and Meta remained alienated from the family for the rest of her life. Attempts at reconciliation proved nearly fruitless.

Hilda "Betty" met our mother, Merle Evelyn Butler (1912) at Emporia State Teacher's College. One day Hilda and Mom were returning from Peter Pan Park where they'd been playing tennis. They were "good" girls who would never talk to strangers, so Mom was surprised and stood her ground when Hilda went over to speak to a young man who'd waved from a 1928 Ford convertible. The young man was Fred and after suitable introductions, he talked them into riding along on a "short trip" to Hope. They didn't return until after midnight and found the housemother had the police looking for them. Mom later came to realize that such "short trips" were part of life with Dad.

Both Hilda and Mom started teaching school that fall, each earning the sum of \$70 per month.

Mom had led a sheltered life, and young Fred swept her off her feet—especially after he won over Merle's father, John William "Gampy" Butler (1880) by offering to rent his place.³⁷ They were married in 1933. For their honeymoon, they drove to Lawrence, Kansas to visit the Friedrichs. The groom's parents and two young sisters went along.

Mom continued to teach while the young couple lived in Gamp's upstairs spare bedroom. As time permitted, they built a little house on the Butler farm where they lived when our brother **Richard Fred "Dick"** (1934) was born. That three-room house was built of lumber they milled on the farm except for the windows, doors and shingles. Total cost was \$200, paid for from Merle's teaching income.

Though raised on the farm, Dad had selling in his blood. He talked his father-in-law into a business partnership in

³⁷ Merle's father, who we called Gamp or Gampy Butler couldn't farm it because while in his early forties, his doctor told him that he had a bad heart and had only a few years to live. Gamp died at age 94.

White City. Dad raised his share of the capital, a thousand dollars, by auctioning everything they owned. That was the start of the Butler–Vahsholtz Motor Company. Gamp's portion of the investment is said to have come from the sale of his mother's farm. Gamp Butler bought the building in White City and rented it to the partnership. He found a new renter for the Butler farm and moved to White City to help operate the fledgling business.



An early picture of Fred and Merle Vahsholtz taken by Martin Vahsholtz

From the start, it was rocky going. Gamp knew little of the operation of a business, but had strong opinions. Dad didn't know much more, and his opinions were even stronger. Still, after a couple of months he landed a franchise for Chevrolet automobiles. A coup? Not really. White City had very strong dealers for both Ford and Plymouth. Nearby Herington, booming because it had become the area's rail center, had a powerful Chevrolet dealer. The new guy on the block got few crumbs of business.

Within a couple of months, Dad landed the Case franchise. That was tough sledding too, especially since the Butler–Vahsholtz partnership continued to fray. White City never was much of a "City" and this was all happening in 1935—the very heart of the Great Depression, just as Herington was sucking the remaining life out of the little town.

As the business floundered, Dad's notion was to expand and Gamp's was to retreat. After a few months of operation, with the net worth of the business essentially zero, Gamp wanted out; Mom wanted out, and Dad wanted to keep going. Using his typical strategy, Dad solved the problem by making a deal. The Case Blockman whose name was Coe was interested in buying the White City business, but he had no money. Dad took him in as a partner and Butler–Vahsholtz became Coe–Vahsholtz. Then Obermeyer Chevrolet in Herington was interested in hiring Dad as a salesman, so he made a deal to sell his share of the White City business to Coe, taking used machinery in place of cash.

So our parents, with two boys—Robert John "Bob"(1935) had just been born at a cost of \$75— arrived in Herington with no money, owning nothing but some used machinery, which was located back in White City. They had no way to haul the equipment to Herington, nor any place to put it. Dad made a deal with Obermeyer for a spot to park his equipment, borrowed a truck to haul it to Herington, and life went on. Gamp moved back to his farm.

Shortly after the move to Herington, Dad got frustrated working for Obermeyer, and in any case, was not earning enough to feed his family. He made another deal; this time acquiring franchises for Case, along with Nash and Willys cars. The new enterprise rented part of the Peugh Building. Peugh also continued his salvage business there, and Floyd Faw operated a shop in the rear.

Despite all the franchises, the new Herington deal was very skimpy in terms of profit potential. Dad couldn't afford experienced help. Mom pitched in to help out at the store, hiring her sister Beulah to look after the boys. Dad hired his younger brothers, **Leonard John** (1914) and **George Robert** (1919) to help out in the shop. As part of the deal, he—Mom actually—provided them room and board, all sharing a three-room house.

Those were very tough times; the trough of the Great Depression, and the folks were on the brink of insolvency many times. Sometimes their net worth was negative, but Dad could always manage to borrow a few dollars, make another deal and keep going. He took on the franchise for Dodge cars and Diamond T trucks. When nothing could be sold, he'd take an old truck and haul some fence posts or something somewhere. Anything to bring in some cash. One time he bought a load of fresh fish from the Gulf Coast, covered them with ice and hauled them to Kansas, where he hoped to find a buyer—and did.

Mom was the worrier and Dad the entrepreneurial risk-taker. They didn't always agree, but made a pretty good team. Dad was always resourceful and while he took scary risks from time to time, he could generally find a way to make his schemes work out, if not profitably, then adequately to fund another try. He took great pride in never being turned down for a bank loan. He knew how to ask, when to ask and more importantly, when *not* to ask. When we moved to a new area, his first sales call was always the bank, where he'd establish a personal relationship with the president.

After several false starts toward recovery from the endless Great Depression, the economy would plunge

again. About the time it looked like things could get no worse, World War II broke out. Dick and Bob didn't comprehend what was going on until our beloved Uncle George was drafted. Young and handsome, driving a Ford V8 with a rumble seat, George was our hero. As he was leaving, he gave Bob a blue plastic Eversharp pencil, which he treasured. After George had been gone about a month, Dad read a war headline to Mom. Dick and Bob were puzzled. How could George be gone so long and the war not yet won?



When Dick and Bob were kids, Dad would shout from the innards of a machine he was dissecting, "Hand me the Floyd Faw!" We'd hustle around and find this heavy hammer. Apparently Floyd was not on Dad's payroll but did a lot of work for the business. When he departed he left behind this hammer, which was forever dubbed, "The Floyd Faw." It's shown here on Grandpa Herman Vahsholtz's anvil, which in turn rests on its original walnut block in Bob's barn in California.

As the Great War absorbed the nation's manpower and total productive effort, it became increasingly likely that young Leonard would follow George into battle, and there was a possibility that even Dad might be drafted. He bought a farm, but not to avoid the draft. Let us back up now and tell how our parents got back to their farming roots.

Today we look back upon the Great Depression primarily as a financial catastrophe, which it surely was. From a Kansas perspective of that time though, it was known as the Dust Bowl that destroyed the Nation's backbone; agriculture. Both of our parents sprung from that farming heritage. Though Dad was a born salesman, he shared Mom's strong urge to own a farm. They both wanted the

security of land and believed a farm was the best place to raise kids.

This offer starts today. Your neighbor is buying a Case plow--Why don't you?



We Have Available
Repairs for the
Following Makes of
Farm Machinery
CASE
OSBORNE
ROCK ISLAND
GRAND DETOUR
EMERSON

YOU WANT A LOT FOR YOUR MONEY—
AND WE HAVE IT IN THE NEW
CASE TRACTORS

We recommend the new and modern CASE TRACTORS, because we honestly believe they offer just the kind of farm power farmers need today. They have the capacity and speed to get work done quickly and at the lowest cost. They burn fuel spatingly, even the cheaper grades. Their low upkeep is something every owner is proud to talk about. We'll stack these modern, fraction against any others and prove you get far more for you'm encey in a CASE.

All models of CASE tactors are available with rubber tires to suit every requirement. In addition to low fuel cost experienced by users of shese modern power units, low pressure tires offer operating comfort, speed and increased work output. Many farmers are finding this new wheel equipment ideal for their work.





This is part of a full-page ad Dad put in the Herington paper. Rubber tires must have seemed like "plowing on air" for farmers used to riding around on steel wheels with lugs.

One day when the Herington business was in an upswing, Dad announced that the checking account had just reached a thousand dollars. The folks were both elated, but Dad had big and immediate plans. He'd located a thousand acres of "good" wheat land, which he could buy, free and clear with that \$1,000. Mom, the pessimist (she said realist) was quick to point out that the place had not raised a crop in five years. Dad, the optimist (he said realist) said it certainly had in the past and would again; meanwhile the business would support them. As usual, both were right and both were wrong. That land would have been a great investment if they'd just hung onto it for a few years. But in the next few years their thousand dollars was consumed in keeping the business afloat, so they might have lost both the land and the business.

The dream of a farm suffered a setback, but did not die. Uncle Dick Friedrich still owned his farm down on the Verdigris River near Madison, Kansas and had rented it to his son **George Edmund** (1894) who wanted to leave. No other buyer or suitable tenant could be found, so Uncle Dick sold it to Dad, taking a small down payment—a used Chevy car. As the new machinery

inventory was being returned to the Case Company, Mom found Dick sitting on the back steps of the store with tears rolling down his cheeks saying, "We *gotta* sell Case. We've *always* sold Case."

After closing the Herington business, George Friedrich was still finishing his crop-year on the farm, so the folks moved back to the little house on Gampy's place. They took along the leftover used machinery inventory, and once in while between other endeavors, Dad would round up a buyer for something. Dick observed, "This is the poorest sell-place we *ever* had."

Vic Johnson, a friend and customer since White City days, proposed to back Dad in another Case business, with Dad contributing the used machinery for his share of the capital. They went back to Herington and started up again in a different location. They lived in a little three-room house next to the store and Dick and Bob were pretty much in charge of themselves. They played on the used machinery and Bob was noted for falling off combines a lot, but never did seem to get hurt. One time a mechanic started up an old Wallace tractor that had no muffler, and the fearsome noise scared Bob. Later, another tractor was to be started, and Bob covered his ears. Dick said, "Don't worry Bob, it ain't no Wallace."

Ruth was conceived in Herington and when she was due, Mom told Dad to gather up us boys and head for Emporia.³⁸ The plan was to drop the boys off at Gamp's place, which was on the way. A customer drove up just as they were pulling out of town and tried to flag them down. Mom said, "Don't stop—there's no time!" Dad knew she meant it, so he ignored the farmer and kept going. Well, the farmer figured he'd not been seen and gave chase. They had to go 90 miles per hour to outrun him, which turned out to be a good thing—Mom went into labor enroute. The pains started coming faster and she knew she was about to deliver, hospital or no. As they approached Gamp's place, it was clear there was no time to drive the loop and up the lane, so Dick and Bob were dropped off at the dirt road to Gamp's and told to walk from there. One of us said as they were pulling away, "If you're going to see the doctor, see if he can take that lump off your stomach." Both boys had been told a baby was coming and had said, "If it's a baby girl, we're going to run away from home."

Ruth Merle Vahsholtz Richter (1941) was born OK, the doctor did take the lump off, and the boys didn't run away. Back at Herington, Mom continued her function as parts manager, bookkeeper and general assistant at the store, hiring her sister Betty to take care of Ruth. When Betty had to go back to high school, they hired another woman to baby-sit. Theoretically, this woman was

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³⁸ All three of us kids were born in the Emporia hospital, in mid-afternoon, delivered by the same doctor and we all weighed the same at birth. Despite all our family's moving, we never lived in the town of Emporia.

looking after all three of us, but Dick and Bob were used to taking care of themselves and continued to do so. They had tricycles to ride, but Bob was a slow learner and pushed his along behind Dick.

Gamp bought Dick a red wagon. It had roller bearing wheels and was the pride of the boys' young lives. They did all the things you can do with a wagon, including dismantling it. They soon mastered the taking-apart, but not the putting-together. Dad did not enjoy assembling the greasy wheel bearings, so the boys finally learned the trick of holding all those rollers in place while slipping the wheel on the axle. In all those sessions, they never lost a roller.

The second Herington Case business did not prosper as hoped—Dad felt that Vic Johnson didn't hang in there—and in fact, few businesses were doing well, though recovery was coming. Vic said, "Buy or sell" and lacking cash, Dad had to sell. So the folks moved to the Greenwood County farm on the Verdigris River in time for Dad to earn a draft deferment as a farmer.

At that time, the farm was rented out to a family named Lewis, and their contract had a while to run. The folks wanted to get Dick and Bob started off at the beginning of the school year, so they moved into two rooms of the house that Uncle Dick had built. Those rooms did not include the kitchen and there was no bath (we shared the outhouse with the Lewis family). Dick and Bob started hiking a quarter mile up the road to one-room Line School, across the county line in Lyon County.

Grandpa Herman Vahsholtz, died in 1946 and is buried at Evergreen Cemetery just south of Emporia. Grandma, Lena, died 40 years later and is also buried there.



When Bob was a freshman at General Beadle High School in Madison, South Dakota, he made this saw and a wood chisel in shop class. He gave the chisel to Grandpa Butler and never saw it again. He gave the saw to his dad, who was more inclined toward discipline than compliments. Fred said, "Your Grandpa [Herman] would have been proud to see you make tools like these."

The Rock Creek farm was sold after Grandpa's death and their goods auctioned. At age eleven, Bob's total net worth was five dollars, and he asked Mom if he could bid on the Vahsholtz phonograph. It was a console model wind-up Victrola, with a beautiful Mahogany cabinet and a whole stack of 78-RPM records. Mom said he could,

and Bob hung around for hours, waiting for it to sell. Dad sent him off on some errand, and of course, that's when the phonograph was auctioned. Crestfallen, Bob tracked down the high bidder who paid three dollars and offered him five, explaining it was a family piece. He was turned down.

While the "Uncle Dick" farm was a fine place to raise kids, it was not that great for raising crops. George Friederich had not done much to develop the land, and in fairness, it was quite a challenge. Just when we'd get the weeds under control, the Verdigris would flood the fields and deliver a fresh crop of weed seeds.

Those were heady days. The Great Depression had finally ended and America was firing up its productivity to win the Great War. Newspapers of the day abounded in articles portraying the miracles that technology was about to bring. Dad bought one of the first new Ford tractors and at age eight, Dick operated it while Dad hauled cattle to Kansas City, ran a custom hay baling operation and delved into other businesses to keep us fed. That Ford was an innovative tractor at the time, having hydraulic lift and a seating position forward and lower than other tractors. Neighbors driving by couldn't see little Dick at the controls, and the rumor spread that Fred had one of those new radio-controlled tractors.



When our parents were married they couldn't afford a wedding portrait so they put that off until their financial position improved. This was their "wedding" picture, taken 15 years later.

At the end of the War, Dad heard that the Weerts family farm (Grandma Lena's family) in South Dakota was going to be sold to settle the estate. We drove up there and bought it. We made the move in the spring, leaving on Saturday, arriving on Sunday and starting school the next day. Dad then sold the Kansas farm. It was about ten miles from Madison, Kansas and the new place was

about ten miles from Madison, South Dakota. These things are destined to happen, mainly to confuse genealogists.



The Weerts house with unknown Weerts family members in foreground

The old house was in bad shape and Gamp Butler came up to help make it livable. A first priority was the decrepit—and full—outhouse. Gamp dug a neat square hole right beside it so the outhouse could be moved and its capacity renewed. He called Mom out to see if the hole was deep enough. "Yes," she said, with young Ruthie at her side, "I believe that will do until we get the new house built." Ruthie disagreed, "I think the roof will still stick out." She thought the old structure deserved a decent burial.

That farm was a fortuitous purchase. It was good land and we lived there during the boom times that followed World War II, raising fine crops that brought top prices. In addition, combines and other machinery were in short supply up there, but Dad knew where to get them. Though he had no franchise, he sold more farm machinery than most franchised dealers in the state, had no overhead, and made good profits. The folks built a new house and outbuildings, spruced up the place and paid off their debts. The combines were brought in by truck from the South, unassembled. Dad told the farmers that assembling them was easy and could be done at our farm, where he'd provide someone to instruct them. That someone was Bob, aged 12 or 13, who knew those Case combines forward and backward. He would sometimes be guiding two or three setup crews.

By 1950 Dad was feeling pretty good, but Mom, the family worrier, said we had so much money invested in the place that there wasn't much in the way of real profit. Dad disagreed and named a price he believed the farm would bring. Mom said no way. Dad said, "Put an ad in the paper and you'll see." Mom wrote an ad and when it appeared in the paper, she said, "Look here in the paper is advertised exactly the kind of place we've been looking for all our lives." It was too, and the first looker bought it at Dad's price. I think we were all a little

surprised, and maybe a bit dismayed, because we all liked that farm.

Anyway, with that pile of cash, the folks decided to tour the country and pick a new place to settle. We drove through most of the West and looked at property in several states. Mom leaned toward Idaho, her birthplace, with us kids leaning right along. Dad favored Kansas, where he knew people, the prices were lower, and we'd be close to his family. Uncle George Vahsholtz, who was working in McPherson, Kansas heard about the Canton farm and we bought it, the first we'd owned that had no tie to family. We left South Dakota on Saturday, arrived at Canton on Sunday and started school on Monday.

That farm was in sad shape, having suffered many years of poor management. The house was so bad Dick said it couldn't be made livable. We lived in town for six months while Mom fixed it up. Then we all agreed it was the best house we'd ever had (including the new one in South Dakota). We fixed up the farm too; with Dick and Bob doing the farming while Dad sold machinery and ran his trucks. We rented more land and soon were farming a thousand acres. One day after some calculations, Dad said, "No wonder we're not making any money on the farm. We've got \$20,000 invested in machinery." Today you can pay that for a plow.

Dad's dream was a Vahsholtz family empire with Dick managing the farming, Bob the business and Ruth the books. But it was not to be.



When they lived at this Canton, Kansas farm, Mom worried a tornado would come when she was there alone. One day when just she and Ruth were there working in the kitchen, a tornado *did* come. It blew part of the roof off the house, blew the garage down the hill, destroyed a cattle shed and moved the silo six inches on its foundation. Neither Mom nor Ruth noticed it until they later saw the damage.

Dick and Bob graduated from high school and found brides among the local populace. Dick married Jolene (Diana "Jolene" Johnson Allen 1935) and found work as a salesman. With his farm boys gone, Dad sold the Canton home site, kept the land and bought the Case business in Salina from Al Stiechen. He said he bought that business to get Dick back into the family business, but his love of selling was no doubt a major factor.

Dick was doing fine elsewhere until Dad talked him into applying his sales talents at the Case store. It was a good opportunity and one for which Dick was well suited except for one problem. He soon learned that despite best intentions, Dad did not delegate responsibility very well. His business was successful, but it was a one-man show, with Mom tidying up the details in the background.

Frustrated, Dick packed up Jolene and their sons Randy (Randal Jay Allen Vahsholtz 1954) and Greg (Gregory Keith Vahsholtz 1956), and moved to Idaho. There two twin daughters were born (Janine Pat and Jeannie Pam Vahsholtz 1965) while Dick worked with another implement dealer. He pursued a very successful sales career, moving on to doing just fine in a business of his own for many years. Dick's family made Idaho their home.

Bob married Marge (Marjorie Alice "Marge" Otte 1937) and found his escape from the family business in education. After gaining a degree in Industrial Design from Art Center in Los Angeles, Bob spent a few years designing mobile and modular housing in Indiana. After Jon (Jon K Vahsholtz 1959) and Kim (Kim J

Vahsholtz 1961) were born, Bob and a partner started an industrial design firm specializing in that industry. After a few years they found that most of their work was actually in management consulting and Bob went on to a second career as a corporate planner.

Bob and family moved a lot, following career opportunities. After spending 14 years in Canada—the last seven in Winnipeg—they decided to move where it's warm to retire, and moved to the Central Coast of California in 1988.

Ruth was interested in music so she went to high school in Winfield, Kansas. There she got a good education and also found a husband; Ron (Ronald Roy Richter 1941). They were married while Ron was in college in Seward, Nebraska. He became a parochial school teacher and moved to various assignments. Ginger (Ginger G Richter 1962) was born in Seward, Tammy (Tammy K Richter 1963) in New Orleans, Cindy (Cindy J Richter 1969) in the Virgin Islands and Bruce (Bruce R Richter 1971) in Joliet, Illinois. That stint in the Virgin Islands gave the Richters a taste for exotic places and led to the move to Seoul, Korea. Ron became Principal of the grade school there and Ruth developed a career in guidance counseling.

The whole family enjoyed Korea, but the smog was too much for Ron and he developed asthma. They moved backed to the U.S. where Doctor Richter is currently working with foreign students at his old alma mater in Seward.

Meanwhile back in Salina, the Case business prospered and Al Stiechen decided he wanted it back, so Dad sold it to him and set up a used machinery lot across town. It wasn't long until Al Stiechen decided he wanted out again, so Dad traded him the Canton land for the Salina business. Fred and Merle went on to manage that operation successfully, building it into one of the top 100 Case dealerships in the world—with no hired sales staff. Dad handled all the sales himself. Then one day in 1974 he burst his appendix just as an eager buyer wanted the Case business. It was time for retirement anyway. Once again, his timing was good. The preceding years had been good for the implement business. It's been rocky ever since.

When Dad thought he was dying from complications of his burst appendix, he promised Mom that she could realize her lifetime dream and buy an old mansion to restore as a retirement project, and Mom took him up on it. They bought the crumbling Lebold Mansion in Abilene, Kansas for about the value of the lot and restored it from the ground up, with Dad grumbling all the way. But he stuck to his promise, pitched in and helped and was always proud of Mom's accomplishment and skill as a tour guide.



"Think Big" was a good motto for this Case award ceremony. No one ever accused Dad of thinking small. Like most salesmen, he loved a sales challenge and won many awards. Fred and Merle are on the left.

He never fully recovered, and having been the picture of health all his working life, Dad was never able to come to terms with his limitations. By then, each of us kids was living in a different country with the nearest 800 miles away. Dad tried traveling and operating various small businesses, but never achieved much happiness in retirement. He was a salesman at heart, and a dealmaker. With his health gone, he was unable to pursue the work he'd always enjoyed.

For her part, Mom had lived most of her life frustrated in Dad's shadow. They were both strong people who viewed life's challenges from different perspectives. Dad was raised in the patriarchal German society, where the man was the unchallenged head of the family and called the shots. That tradition was strongly observed in the household in which he grew up. Grandma—Lena, the second wife—did little to assert herself. Dad, as the oldest son, carried a heavy burden of responsibility. Mom was raised a Methodist in the English tradition. Both of her parents were proud and competent in their own areas of endeavor and shared authority.

Our parents believed marriages were entered for better or worse, so they worked out their differences and got along. They always presented a united front to the world and to us kids. They both worked hard and pulled together for purposes of earning a living and making our lives better, and they strongly supported their church and community.



Vahsholtz cousins, taken at Martin and Eleanora's fiftieth anniversary in 1980. L to R, Leonard, Hank, Martin, Fred, Lou Hitzeman and Alfred

During retirement, Mom's career got its opportunity to blossom. The restoration of the old Lebold Mansion was a work of art; the first certified restoration in the state. She became the "Mother of Restoration" in Abilene, as well as a great entertainer giving her tours. Many people returned again and again to hear her talk and show her house. She always claimed she never attained any degree of happiness through it all but, like Dad, she took great satisfaction from her accomplishments.

They both did well.

Stories about Grandpa by Randal Jay "Randy" Vahsholtz (1954). Randy is Dick Vahsholtz's (1934) oldest son.

When Grandpa (Fred Richard Vahsholtz, 1910) had his business in Herington, he had a fellow working for him

by the name of Barney, whose last name is now lost in legend. Barney was an integral part of more than one story of Grandpa's and the escapades of Fred and Barney in Herington undoubtedly were the inspiration for the famous TV series *The Flintstones*.

It seems Grandpa and Barney had to make a delivery of a Whippet motorcar to a customer a few miles from town. They were justifiably proud of the work they'd done to get that old car purring like a kitten. As they tootled through the countryside, Barney looked up ahead to the train crossing and noticed a fast freight speeding toward the rough railroad crossing ahead.

Fred started to hit the brakes, but Barney said, "Keep 'er going Fred! We can beat that train if you keep 'er going!"

"We can make it Fred, keep 'er goin'!"

Fred hesitated, "Barney, we'll never make it!"



Grandpa floored that old Whippet, and it lurched ahead at a breakneck speed of maybe 45 miles per hour.

"Keep 'er goin' Fred, we can make it!"

Just yards from the crossing, the old Whippet was up to maybe 50 mph—way too fast for that rough crossing, but perilously close to the train.



"We'll never make it, Fred, We'll never make it!" shouted Barney reaching for the door handle.

That old Whippet took brief flight as it bounced across those tracks with its back bumper clearing the train by inches.

"We made 'er, Fred, we *made 'er!*" sighed Barney taking his hand off the door handle and wiping his brow.

When Greg (Gregory Keith Vahsholtz 1956) and I were little we called our grandparents "Zaza" and "Mema," and those nicknames stuck to them pretty much the rest of their lives. One time when I was about three or four I was "helping" Mema haul wheat with the pickup. The combine had a faulty auger that would sometimes start augering grain of its own accord. Mema was watching and saw that start to happen, so she set out in hot pursuit, honking the horn with me leaning out the window shouting, "Just a minute Zaza, we're coming with the peek-up!"

Leonard's (1914) son George (George Robert Vahsholtz 1944) had one of the best stories I ever heard about Grandpa, his Uncle Fred. It seems George was about 12 or 14 years old, and helping on the farm in Canton one summer. The two of them each had a tractor pulling a disc, and running through a field that was really tough going. Young George was going on up ahead with his tractor, and the quality of his disking at the speed he was going was not up to expectations. Grandpa stopped him, and proceeded to chew him out. "You'd better keep an eye on me, and by golly if you see me waving my hat, you darn sure better pay attention and slow down!" (Some language may have been changed here to protect the innocent). George was chastened to the quick, and somewhat sore about it, so as he looked over and saw a massive hornet's nest right in the path of Grandpa's tractor and disc, he thought better of warning him about it, but decided that he was really going to keep an eye on Uncle Fred when he went through it. And sure enough, as he was jumping off the tractor and sprinting through the field, Uncle Fred was really waving his hat!

I remember their big old house at Canton, the outbuildings, the gate to the wooded area out back and this white Lassie-type dog. I can remember being in awe of Grandma's meat grinder. I can remember the TV being turned to a baseball game and Grandpa saying, "I've got a cousin named Vic Weerts." The announcer had mentioned a batter named Vic Wertz, and I was too young to realize they weren't one and the same, and was quite impressed. Grandma called from the next room saying, "They're probably not the same people though." I can hear that exchange like it was yesterday. Imagine two people with the same name!

I can remember when my parents went to the Bahamas on a trip Dad (Dick Vahsholtz 1934) had won and Greg and I stayed in Canton with "Mema and Zaza." We practically dared Zaza to spank us, making a lot of noise after being cautioned not to after bedtime. Something about the look on Zaza's face as he came through the door gave us a last-second realization that we had strayed too far.

Little kids don't remember anything as much as they remember the good feeling they get when their parents tell them out of the blue they are going to see their grandparents, and all my cousins will agree.

At a later stage in life, I spent the summer of '71 working for the Vahsholtz Implement Company in Salina and I was proud to be spending a summer under the tutelage of a man I considered one of the finest business men in town. What a setup! And not only that, here was Grandma working there every day in spite of the headaches that she wished she wasn't famous for.

That summer, I was to learn "how to work" as Grandpa told everyone. He put me in this old building and assigned me the task of turning a three-bottom plow into

a two-bottom plow. That thing looked like it was about 30 years old, and some of those bolts and nuts were rusted solid. I had just finished weight lifting for football and I had a whole 130 pounds of muscle to apply to this task, but that wasn't doing me much good on a couple of those nuts. After a couple frustrating hours, Grandpa came out to see how I was doing, and saw my predicament. Now to a 16-year-old bony kid, nothing looks quite as impressive as a big old muscley hand wrapping around a wrench, and let me tell you, Grandpa put some effort into it. His lips were clenched shut—and he loosened those nuts—and when a really rusty nut is turned, it sounds out its displeasure—but with Grandpa on the wrench, it had no choice, it had to turn.

Another time that same summer, we went to deliver a three-bottom V-plow in Western Kansas to an old farmer named John Zwizig. Now a V-plow is different than a regular plow—instead of a bottom about two or three feet long, and maybe a foot wide, they are about six or eight feet wide, wide V-shaped (hence the name). As they are being pulled behind the tractor they ride a few inches under the top soil, and de-root any stubble, weeds, anything in the way—not real sure with my limited agricultural background what the primary need wasanyway we had to deliver one. Now to transport one of these things, the two outside V's are hinged so they swing up, and out of the way, so we don't de-root station wagons and semis on the interstate. To unload, as all the chains are loosened and such, you don't necessarily want the V's down. With Grandpa down below undoing chains and me up on the truck, one of the V's started to swing down, right on top of Grandpa, and just scrawny little me to keep Grandpa from getting a bonk that might have hurt even him. I was able to ease it down, and was a little sore afterwards. As I looked down, Grandpa had seen what was happening, and that last couple of feet he was helping to ease it down. Years later I asked Grandpa if he remembered the time I kept him from getting conked by the V-plow, and he said he didn't. Grandma told me that he had trouble remembering stories where someone else was the hero.

Grandpa worked long hours and I never could see how a man could drive late like he did and only get about four or five hours sleep every day. Grandma not only worked every day and ran a household; she ran an awfully *big* household and did it well.

My dad tells the story of a trip he took to Alaska with Grandpa back in 1975 or thereabouts. All the way up there were hitchhikers and hippies along side the road. They passed a car with four guys, out of gas. Grandpa said, "We might as well give one of those guys a ride." The fellow got in and asked, "Are you in the habit of picking up hitchhikers?" Grandpa said, "No, but we thought you needed a little help." It was 30 miles up the road to the first gas station. While Dad and Grandpa were fueling Grandpa's car, the other guy bought a can and

filled it with gas and started walking back down the road. Grandpa started the car and drove back down the road, rolled down his window and asked, "You damned fool, where are you going?" The guy said he was headed back to his car. Grandpa said, "Get in, we'll give you a ride back."

It was no surprise to me that my grandparents spent their last years living in one of the most famous houses in Kansas—a house that would be nothing if they hadn't got hold of it. Material wealth is not substantial compared to the family they reared, and the job they did of raising three children and letting them all learn not just to work, but to enjoy life.

Traveling with Dad by Ruth Vahsholtz Richter (1941)

Virtually from the day I was born, I traveled with my parents wherever they went, and Dad was always going someplace to sell somebody something or was going to pick up a load of fence posts or machinery or whatever. He liked to have company along on these trips. My mother was a reluctant passenger, but evidently I was ready to go whenever and wherever.

Initially as a baby, I rode along in a cardboard box, first lying down in it, and later sitting up. Dad was always eager to point out all the sights along the way to his passengers and I must have been very willing to take it all in. Even as a baby I must have sensed the "rules" that there was to be no fussing and whining and I don't recall that either of my parents ever said anything about me being naughty when I was in the car—at least once I got past the colic of my first three months.

These trips were often long, sometimes in distance, but more often it was because Dad was a born salesman and loved to talk. If he was talking to a customer, it might be several hours before they'd get around to talking about the deal. More unspoken "rules" were established in that I was always to stay sitting in the car waiting patiently whether it was a Kansas hot summer day or a cold winter day (no air conditioning and no running the car to keep the heater going either). An avid reader from first grade on, evidently it never occurred to me to bring along a book or perhaps that was another rule. Dad wanted my undivided attention while he was in the car and, besides, our mother always said that reading in a moving car would make a person sick (it always did that to her, anyway!).

I have always loved to travel and these days all of the family just sighs when they hear the latest trip I've planned. When I was a kid, while the trip itself was interesting, I think I more likely agreed to go along because at some point on every trip there would be some kind of a treat. Aside from trips, such treats were few and far between when I was a child. Dad liked to stop at a

restaurant or a cafe for something to eat or drink, but sometimes he'd just buy a tank of gas and come out with a pack of gum for me. These weren't things to be asked for, but good things that came to those having the patience to wait.

If we stopped at a cafe, we kids would always ask our parents once we were seated at a table "what can we have?" The answer from our Dad was always the same, "Anything you want." The unspoken rule here was that whatever we got, we'd surely better eat it all. Without fail after we'd been told we could have whatever we wanted, each of us would order a hamburger and french fries. I'm not sure my brothers enjoyed eating out that much, preferring our mother's cooking, but Dad and I shared the joy of eating in a restaurant, any restaurant, and Dad continued to go to restaurants regularly until shortly before he died. I still think it's a big treat to go out to eat—anyplace in the world and any kind of food has appeal!

Christmas in L.A. with Dad by Ruth Vahsholtz Richter (1941)

Our first Christmas living in L.A., Mom (Merle Butler Vahsholtz 1912) and Ginger (**Ginger Richter** 1962) flew out to spend Christmas with us. Dick and Jo and the Twins drove out, and Dad also drove there. The idea was that Mom would ride back home with him (why there was such an arrangement eludes me at the moment—and it didn't work out that way because Mom fell and broke herself in many places).

After Mom got to our house, she commented that she had allowed Dad to head off to California without our address or even our phone number and she had no idea what he was going to do when he got to Los Angeles. That evening, Christmas Eve, I believe, we were all sitting around our house, the fog was rolling in as it often did at that time of the year, and wondering if we'd ever see Dad again. The phone rings, I answer it, and Dad says, "Hi Ruthie." Well, I'm surprised and pleased to hear from him and wonder how the heck I'm going to tell him to get to our place from wherever the dickens he's calling from. So when I ask him where he is, he replies "I think I'm pretty close to your place," and told me he was calling from a filling station and the street it was on. Well, he was pretty close—no more than ten blocks away and just a block from our church and school!

We may have asked him how he homed in on where we lived so closely, having no address and no particular knowledge of the area, only that we lived not too far from the ocean—I don't remember. I do know that Dad's natural instincts and sense of direction rarely failed him until his later years. Most of us would have been totally lost under those circumstances.

The Vision Thing by Janine Pat Vahsholtz Korsen (1965) Janine is one of Dick Vahsholtz's (1934) twins

One time Grandpa drove clear to Idaho and he couldn't see very good. The was pulling two horse trailers behind his pickup to deliver to Dad. He arrived at Mom and Dad's house late in the evening and it was dark. Mom, Dad, Jeannie (**Jeannie Pam Vahsholtz Phillips** 1965) and I were there waiting for him. We were looking out the window watching for him when we saw a long string of lights go right past our driveway. It was either a semi or a pickup with about two of something hitched on behind, judging by how many lights there were. Jeannie and I jumped out of our chairs and ran out the front door and down the driveway. We saw that it was Grandpa but he had driven right past the driveway towards Rupert. We started running down the highway after him with our flashlights.

He must have realized he had gone too far because he stopped down the highway a ways to turn around at one of the next businesses. We knew he couldn't see very well by that time in his life and we were really worried about him. Anyway, we got his attention after he got turned around and we literally led him down the highway back to our driveway with our flashlights, much like people on a runway do with planes. With one of us on each side of the driveway, we led him in. He made it just fine then.

We were simply amazed that he drove clear to Idaho not being able to see any better than that.

I believe that was the same trip that he got really sick while he was in Idaho, but he pulled through it and drove back to Kansas all by himself.

Early Art by Merle Butler Vahsholtz (1912). We recently found this little story written about 30 years ago.

When Dick and Bob were small and I had to work at the store, my sister Beulah took care of them. One day she had a dental appointment and left them with me. I was very busy and when they asked if they could paint, I said go ahead. I always gave them a can of water and a paintbrush and let them "paint" the machinery in the back. This time in lieu of water, they used transmission grease and what a mess after two hours! We didn't know whether to save them or throw them on the scrap pile—and the new machinery was something else too.

The Fred Vahsholtz Tape The following is edited from a tape made by Ken Wickstrom in the early '90s. Mom worked with us on two books about her life, but I'd had no luck getting my dad to write or dictate his stories. Ken, a cousin on Mom's side, decided to help. One day while visiting from Idaho, he put a tape recorder in his cap and went off to Clay Center with Dad in the pickup. The quality of the recording is poor, but I was able to pick up enough that, in combination with having heard the stories so many times before, I was able to piece together most of what was said.

One day driving his Model A demonstrator to high school, Fred noticed a junk tractor of obscure make and vintage that had perfectly good lugs on its wheels. "Lugs" are steel wedges bolted onto the wheels to provide traction and they make tractor-travel extremely unpleasant, but they did the job before rubber tires became efficient and affordable. Anyway, Fred noticed those lugs happened to be identical to those in use by John Deere, thus having some value. He approached the farmer who owned the tractor and offered five dollars for the lugs. That offer was quickly accepted. The next Sunday, Fred grabbed some wrenches from his father's blacksmith shop and drove over to the junk tractor's location. It took all day to remove those lugs and the budding entrepreneur finally headed home at twilight.

In rural Kansas, unpainted steel bolts left exposed to the weather rust themselves tight. Steel lugs are bolted on tight to start with, and these had been exposed to the elements a long time.



This Case tractor and combine belonged to a neighbor of Martin Vahsholtz. The lugs on those rear wheels are typical. They have to carry the weight and full power of the tractor in any circumstances, so they're put on tight, and rust makes them tighter.

The next day after school, he stopped by the John Deere dealer and sold him the lugs for \$20. Sound like low pay for a hard day's work in the Kansas sun? In today's

always passed his driver's tests, and never so much as scratched a fender.

³⁹ He'd always had one bad eye due to an accident when he was a boy. It got much worse as he aged. Then he got cataracts on the good eye and by the time he had the cataract removed, his diabetes had essentially ruined the "good" eye. For his last decade, Dad was virtually blind in one eye, having only foggy peripheral vision, and couldn't see out of the other—except for a narrow tunnel. Still he would not give up driving, somehow

dollars, that would be about a hundred dollars, not counting the value of the experience. Not bad for a kid.

Fred tells of early automobiles; "We had the second car south of Clay Center—perhaps the second in the county—a Brush. The Yarrow's had a Velie. The two were as far apart as the Poles. The Velie was a big high-wheeler with 34-inch rims. The Brush was a one-cylinder with coil springs all around and a planetary transmission. The gas for our car was delivered by a fellow with a team of horses and a tank trailer from Clay Center."



The 1911 Brush had a wooden frame and axles, and the engine ran "backwards" (counterclockwise). The coil springs were also backwards, acting in tension rather than compression.



This 1911 Velie 40 sold for \$1,800. In hyperbole typical of advertising of the day they claimed for their superior rear axle, "50% of auto troubles are due to defective rear axles. Therefore, 50% of average trouble is absolutely avoided in the Velie 40."

The Herman Vahsholtz's (Herman August Vahsholtz 1880) delivered their wheat to Wakefield, about ten miles away. That's how Kansas towns came to be located no more than twenty miles apart. Ten miles was considered a day's trip with a team of horses to the elevator with a load of wheat and return. Herman's farm was about half-

way between Clay Center and Wakefield, but they preferred hauling to Wakefield.

Fred's job from an early age was to haul the wheat, and he found that by switching teams at mid-day, he could often make two trips in one day. Even so, hauling in the wheat might take as long as a month.

One day Fred had finished his first trip and his dad was out in the field with the other team. Fred decided to make the second trip with the team he'd used in the morning, even though he was scheduled to bring back a 3,000 lb. load of coal.

The trip to Wakefield went fine, but after unloading the wheat, the elevator operator protested, "You can't expect that team to haul coal back on their second trip of the day! Besides, it looks like it might rain." With a stubbornness that he saw as determination, Fred insisted the wagon be loaded with coal, and upon weighing the load, the men who scooped it on found they'd put on 400 extra pounds. Fred accepted it and headed for home.

There are hills between Wakefield and the Vahsholtz place, and some of them have a soapstone base. They get very slippery when wet. Just as Fred headed out of town, it started to sprinkle and shortly turned into rain. "I had a dickens of a time keeping the wagon on the road," he said, "and could only manage it by staying right on the crown of the road." And then he came to the biggest hill. On the way up, the horses wanted to stop and they surely needed the rest, but Fred feared that if they got stopped they'd be unable to start the load again. He kept them pulling, and they made it. By the time they'd crested that hill in the rain, the horses were dead-tired and it was getting dark. Fred was in trouble and he knew it.

A wealthy farmer lived at about that point on the road, and there was a buckboard (a light traveling wagon) parked in his driveway. Fred walked up and knocked on the farmer's door, but got no answer—there was no one home. "I've been told," he said, "that I should have left a note, parked my load of coal, hitched my team on that buckboard, and headed for home. But I was raised to believe that you don't borrow something without permission." So he headed on down the road in cold soaking rain. "Man, it was cold! Finally I got so cold I tied the reins to the post and let the horses go at their own pace. They wanted to be home as much as I did. I got down and walked behind the wagon. When the horses got tired and stopped to rest, I'd rest. When they walked, I'd walk."

When he finally got to the driveway, Fred saw his dad in the barnyard with a lantern, just saddling up to come look for him. His team was so tired they stopped to rest twice between the road and the barn, a distance of perhaps a hundred yards.

The day's work didn't end there. They rubbed the horses down, put horse blankets on them, gave them a little water and hay, and then Fred got to go to the house and get his own first bite since noon. After a snack, he went back to the barn and rubbed the horses down again, and then rubbed them once more with salt to reduce their soreness. Then they were allowed to drink all the water they wanted, fed some oats and more hay. Fred got to bed at 2:30 A.M.

Almost across the road from the Vahsholtz place south of Clay Center is a one-room school where Fred got his basic education, perhaps in more ways than one. The cedar trees still standing (as of the mid-nineties) were planted by Fred and his first girlfriend in 1927. Her name was Millie Davies and she lived just up the road and taught at that school. Driving past with Ken in his last years, Fred said of those cedars, "It looks like every damned one of 'em growed! You know, you do something like that and it kind of surprises you what becomes of it." Fred married another schoolteacher, Merle.

When Fred was a kid, the Herman Vahsholtz family used to go to picnics at the park in Clay Center on Labor Day or the Fourth of July. One day young Fred and his dad were walking along and saw a big man selling lemonade for five cents a glass. Herman bought them each a glass and laid down a quarter. The man gave him a dime in change. Herman said, "Hey, you short changed me a nickel!" "No I didn't," the big fellow replied with a chuckle, "Nickel a glass; two for fifteen!" Fred was surprised when his dad just walked away.

After a bit they passed that spot again and the man was busy selling lemonade, and had several glasses sitting on his table. Herman picked up one and gave it to Fred and took another for himself. Both drank their lemonade and set the empties back on the table.

"Hey, you forgot to pay for those," the chunky guy shouted as they started to leave. "No I didn't," replied Herman, "Five cents a glass, four for 15, remember?"

One day a carnival came to Clay Center and it had one of those "ring the bell" challenges where you hit a pad with a mallet, sending a weight up a cable. If you hit it just right and hard enough, you ring the bell and win a prize. This carnival game is the source of the phrase to "ring the bell" as a mark of success. As you might expect, it's harder than it looks, but the carnival barker can ring the bell easily because he knows just how to hit the pad. At Clay Center, as everywhere else in those days, the town kids would taunt each other to show off their strength attempting to ring the bell or at least best each other, funneling quite a few quarters into the barker's purse.

That evening several people, including Herman and Fred, were gathered around to watch as a farm boy from the hills southwest of town was showing his skill. Out in that country, he'd driven a lot of fence posts and knew how to swing a maul. The first time he stepped up and laid down his quarter, he rang the bell three times in a row, winning his choice of prizes. One of the town boys took the kid

aside and asked him to try again, supplying the quarter. He rang it three more times. Others got the idea and the kid was working up a pretty good sweat ringing that bell. So was the barker, but what could he do?

As the kid tired, he finally swung wrong and broke the handle out of a maul. That can happen, and the barker had five spares for just such an eventuality. But the carnival man saw his opportunity and demanded the boy pay for the broken handle. The poor kid was completely flustered, had no money and felt he shouldn't have to pay, but didn't know what to do.

At that point, Herman—the blacksmith—walked up, handed the barker a quarter grabbed a maul and struck the pad, splintering the handle. Then he picked up another and broke it, and another, and another, and then the last one. Dropping the final broken handle he said, "Now you S.O.B., let's see you collect from me."

Fred said, "My dad could have taken one of the mauls in one hand and one in the other and alternated ringing that bell all day. My dad could come the nearest to hitting where he aimed of any man I ever saw. When he cut into a log with an axe, he'd make a cleaner cut than most guys could make with a chisel. When he was 15, my dad went to work for a blacksmith named Krueger in Seneca as an apprentice for three years. He did blacksmith work all his life."

When he was young, Herman played the fiddle at barn dances. In later years he stopped doing so. Young Fred used to sneak off to the barn dances with one of his buddies, but was sure his dad would have forbid it had he known. Apparently those barn dances at Clay Center were not what you'd call good family entertainment.

"One thing I learned from my grandpa," Fred said, "Is don't ever tell your kid what to do unless you intend to see that they do it."

One time in Herington when the boys were small and their Aunt Beulah was looking after them, Fred went home for lunch. Merle was minding the store and Fred had a man coming to see him at one o'clock. The meal went without a hitch until Beulah served cake. Fred put a piece on Dick's (Richard Fred "Dick" 1934) plate, one on his own and then one on Bob's (Robert John "Bob" 1935). Bob, aged about two, threw his cake on the floor. Fred picked him up out of his high chair, put him on the floor and said, "Pick up the cake." Bob refused and cried, launching one of those famous Vahsholtz battles of will. Bob wouldn't pick up the cake and Fred couldn't make him do it, but neither could he give up. He'd take Bob's little hand and put it on the cake, but Bob wouldn't close his fingers. He scolded and cajoled, and Bob cried. Finally at three in the afternoon, Bob picked up the cake and put it on his high chair.

Not satisfied with that, Fred said, "Now I didn't ask you if you wanted cake and so you could have said you didn't want it and that would have been OK. But since you've

been so stubborn, now *eat the cake!*" Bob ate the cake and in telling this story, Fred said, "I didn't have any more trouble with him." Bob however, does recall a few rough spots along the way.

Now we return to the narrative on Herman and Lena's children:

- Hilda Marie "Betty" Vahsholtz (1912) was born on the farm near Olpe; she died in 1996 in Perryton, Texas. She married Fred Lester "Freddie" Brier (1912). They later divorced and she married William "Bill" E. Koch.
- Leonard John Vahsholtz (1914) was born on the Clay County farm near Clay Center, Kansas. He died in 1999 in Geneseo, Kansas. A resident of Geneseo for 19 years, moving from Castle Rock, Colorado, he was a retired Teamsters Union truck driver. He married Kate Rosie Gehring (1921). They divorced and she died in 1994. In 1970 he married Wynona Mae Hardy. A son, George Robert Vahsholtz (1944), graduated from Washburn Law School in Topeka, Kansas. He is self-employed as an attorney in Colorado. Another son, Leonard John Vahsholtz, Jr. (1948), along with his son Clinton Vahsholtz, have attained considerable fame in racing, particularly on the Pike's Peak course. Clint's motto is said to be, "accelerate until you see God."

Richard "Dick" Vahsholtz (1934) tells about his Uncle Leonard: "Leonard was always getting into one business or another, many of which involved trucking. Often his rolling stock was in less-thanperfect condition. This didn't slow him down much. One day Leonard was batting down the road at a pretty good clip in an old Ford truck when his passenger criticized his driving one too many times. Leonard yanked the steering wheel off its shaft and handed it to his passenger as the truck thundered on down the road and said, 'If you don't like my driving, *you* take the damned wheel!' The passenger quickly returned the steering wheel and complained no further. Leonard jammed it back on the shaft and never missed a beat."

Dick's son Randal Jay "Randy" Vahsholtz (1954) tells about his great uncle, "Old Uncle Leonard used to come around quite a bit, and you know, he was just a little rough around the edges. I remember one time, I was about a senior in High School and he came around and we all decided to go to the park and play baseball. So I figured, here is this old guy—maybe 60 or so—I'd let him use my mitt and I would play barehanded. I tossed my glove to Leonard and told him I'd be OK and his eyes just got big and he had a baseball in his hands and he said, "Well what are you going to use?" I said I would be

OK, and he said, "Well what if someone throws you one about like this?" And his 60-year-old arm reached back behind him and threw a stinging fastball I was just able to catch. "I said well, I'd catch it like that," and I threw the ball back to him. Again he reached back and said, "Well, what if someone threw you one like *this?*" Now his arm was just a little looser, and he really sizzled one in there and I still caught it. Like a fool I tossed it back to him saying, "Well, I'd still catch it." Now he says, "Well, what if someone threw you one like this one?" And this one came in sounding like bacon landing on a hot skillet.

I still caught it, but this time I said, "Let me use that mitt!" And of course old Leonard was hee-heeing over that one.

• George Robert Vahsholtz (1919) died in 1962 in McPherson, Kansas. He married Norma Jean Esser (1928) in 1948. From his obituary: "George R. Vahsholtz, son of Herman A. and Lena Weerts Vahsholtz, was born April 24, 1919 at Clay Center, Kansas. Ten years later the family moved to Madison, Kansas where George completed his schooling. On March 2, 1942 he entered the service of his country and was a part of the D-Day campaign in World War II. He advanced to a staff sergeant and received his discharge in November 1945.

"Mr. Vahsholtz came to McPherson in 1946 and was employed as a mechanic by the Robert V. Smith Implement Company. George was an active member of the Grace Lutheran Church, and he was also a member of the V.F.W. and American Legion. He was later associated with his brother, Fred, in long distance trucking before his late employment with the Vahsholtz Implement Company of Salina. In February of this year he had encountered some heart ailment, but recovery had seemed satisfactory, until his sudden and untimely passing.

"George loved life and God's great outdoors. He enjoyed sports of all kinds, especially bowling and fishing. A devoted husband and a true friend to those about him. If life could be measured, not in years, but in terms of service to loved ones, friends, church and community, perhaps it would seem more complete."

Memories of George by Bob Vahsholtz (1935)

Shortly after George came home from WWII, he went to work for Smith Motor and Implement in McPherson. When he took that job, we were living in South Dakota and we didn't see him until he came to visit, probably in the summer of 1947 or '48. George was our hero and we'd missed him in all those years. Before the war, he had a 1936 Ford with a rumble seat, which Dick (Vahsholtz 1934) and I thought was just about the ultimate car. It had taken our hero quite a while to win

the war and we'd grown a lot since last seeing him. We didn't know quite what to expect.



George and Norma Vahsholtz at our Canton house

George arrived in a brand-new yellow Studebaker Commander convertible, the first car we'd ever seen of that revolutionary new design. The first thing he did was take us fishing, making his memory forever warm in our hearts.

Though we played other card games, Pitch was always the prime game at our house. When we lived at Canton, George and Norma would come over from McPherson on a Sunday afternoon and we'd play Pitch. Generally, the idea was the game would end at nine or ten so we could all get some rest for the next day's work or school. But in our branch of the family, we always liked to win. Unfortunately, we also liked to bid. Too much of the latter could jeopardize the former, and the games often got right out of hand.

Our favorite version of Pitch was five-handed call-forpartner, mainly because that version encourages the highest potential bids—shoot the moon counted 20 points, and each successive shoot doubled the bid. Dick and I liked five-handed because a fifth player was needed, and often that meant Mom would drop out and both of us could play. If everybody shot, the bid could reach 320, whereas it only took 35 points to win the game.

Ah, but getting those 35 points! Often the game would be won on the first hand. More often it would not, and two players would be in the hole. Maybe next hand a couple more would go down. Two players had to go out to win, and many times we'd be mired in a game with everybody showing negative scores of a hundred or more points. I remember George being in the hole more than 500 points. My, but he hated to lose. The deeper he got in the hole the more inclined to shoot, and to go home with a game unfinished was not acceptable. We'd be up at

midnight or well past, but I don't recall ever giving up and leaving a game unfinished.



George, Dad (Fred) and another favorite uncle from Mom's side, Wayne Gatewood, playing cards

Continuing with the children of Herman and Lena:

- Winona "Nonie" Ramona Vahsholtz (1921)
 married Dale Emerson Saffels (1921), one-time
 Democratic candidate for Governor of Kansas. That
 marriage ended in divorce in 1975.
- Marcine "Mitzi" Pearl Vahsholtz (1926). She married Dean Harold Francis (1927) and moved to Berkeley, California.

After the death of a **Baby Boy** (1884), the last child of Franz Leonard and Sophie was **Hedwig Louise "Hattie" Vahsholtz** (1886). She died in 1964 in Pacoima, California. She married Carl August Schroeder (1882) in 1906 and he died in 1942 in California.



Hedwig "Hattie" Vahsholtz Schroeder with daughter Ella "Hattie" Kuhn. Seated is granddaughter Norma Jean Johnson, holding Hedwig Hattie's great grandson Rickie Lee Johnson—about 1950.

Children of Hattie and Carl were all born near Olpe, Kansas:

• Ella Hedwig "Hattie" Schroeder (1908) died in 1999 in Hillsboro, Oregon. In 1928, she married Abraham Kuhn (1902) and they moved to Oregon in 1940. He died in 1962. She then married William D. Hewitt (1903), a welder for various companies around the area, who died in 1978.

Ella "Hattie" worked for many years as a seamstress for Wally Folsom's Tailor Shop in Hillsboro. After her husband's death she worked out of her home and was known as a perfectionist in her sewing. Many quilts she made for her children won blue ribbons in the professional division at the Oregon State Fair. She was also known as an excellent cook.

Ella's daughter **Norma Jean Kuhn Johnson** (1928) says, "We left Kansas in 1939 and I remember my mother said no way she would leave her sewing machine (a gift from her parents). So Dad built a platform of sorts to hold it and tied the whole thing to the back of the car. I wish Mom had taken a picture of the car showing the machine. In those days motels—the ones we stayed in anyway—had a pile of wood by the door and you had to build a fire to keep warm. We came through Flagstaff, Arizona and it was bitterly cold! I still see my dad building a fire in the stoye at that cabin."



1928 Wedding of Abraham "Abe" Kuhn, Left, and Ella "Hattie" Schroeder. Behind are best man Dan

Kuhn (Abe's brother) and maid of honor, Lydia Schroeder (Ella's sister).

- Wilhelm Karl "Carl" Schroeder, Jr. (1909) died in 1985 in California. He married and divorced Leona and then married Opal Selma Stimpson. Neither marriage had surviving children.
- Lydia Hulda Maria Schroeder (1910) died in 1993 in California. She married Edward F. Svoboda (1910) in a double wedding with her sister, Hulda.
- Klara Sophie "Clara" Schroeder (1912) married Henry Harry Kohlman (1911), a farmer, meat market proprietor, rancher, carpenter, road construction superintendent, logger, dairy owner and superintendent of an irrigation canal. She died in 2002.
- Hulda Marie Martha Regina "Judy" Schroeder (1914) died in 1992, in California. Hulda and Paul Henke, her first husband, had one child who died shortly after birth. She later married James Bracken, Morris Miller, and Argil R. Wascom.

Etta Kohlman Williams says, "My Aunt Hulda was a darling but very vain. She changed her name, according to her friends, and I am sure that if she knew that Grandma was writing her name properly she would have chided her for it. They were living in war and post-war times in California, The Promised Land, and Hulda wanted to be very modern. I would call her Aunt Hulda and she would say, 'Oh, no. My name is Judy now!'"

Darrell Brockmeier remembers visiting Aunt Hattie Schroeder in California in 1957 and Hattie saying, "Yes, Hulda changed her name to Judy. She said that the name Hulda was too Dutch."

- Alvina Laura Schroeder (1915) died in 1994. She married Paul A. Sinclair and they had no children. Later she married Willis Martin Wells (1923), whose genealogy work was helpful in documenting the Schroeder family.
- **Herman Leonard Schroeder** (1917) married Eugenia K. "Gene" Kleinsmith (1916).
- Mabel Alice Martha Schroeder (1919) died in 1999 in California. She married Arthur C. Longhofer (1919) of Woodbine, Kansas, and later William Althouse.
- Erna Lorene Schroeder (1922) married and divorced three husbands, Thomas Tharp, Mickey Brown and Raymond Reed.
- Melvin Warren Schroeder (1925) died in 2001 in Pomona, California. His wife was Gladys Marie Moore (1929).
- Loyd Herbert Schroeder (1928) died as a baby.



Hattie and Carl Schroeder with eight of their young children



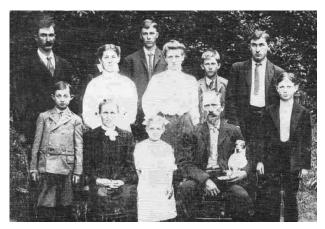
Here's the whole family in about 1937. Left to Right, Front: Erna, Carl, Melvin, Hattie, and Mabel: Rear: Lydia, Carl, Hulda, Alvina, Herman, Ella, and Clara.

Chapter Nine, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of Karl August Julius "Charles" Fahsholtz (1850)

Charles and his first wife, Sophia Hecht (1855) had one child **Sophie M**. (1875). The mother died in childbirth and the child lived for five months.

Charles then wed Elisabeth "Lizzie" Hunzeker (1860). All of their ten children survived infancy, which was unusual in those days.



Back—L. to R.: Fred and Charlie; Center, Bill, Anna, Martha, Ed, Walter and Albert; Front, Elizabeth Hunzeker, with Bertha standing and Karl August Julius "Charlie" Fahsholtz

Frederick Christopher Fahsholtz, Sr. (1879) was born in Nemaha County and died in 1945 in Clovis, New Mexico. He first married Olie Ola Annabel (1875), then Elizabeth Hermon and finally Clara Ruth Emerson (1899).

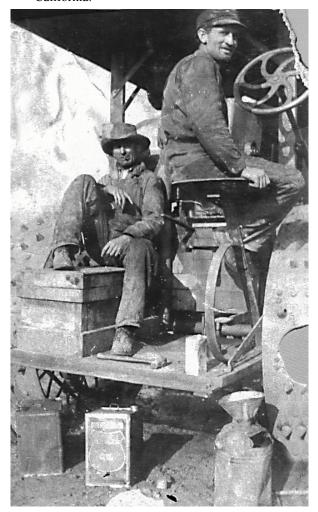


Fred and Olie Fahsholtz take a ride

Children of Frederick and Olie Annabel include:

- **Roy Thomas Fahsholtz** (1906) who married Ruby Adelle Osborn (1912) and later Ethel Rierson Pino (1907). He died from tuberculosis in 1977.
- Joseph F. Fahsholtz (1908) Married Nora Riley and later, Kitty Freeman. His third wife was Hester Allen. He died in 1947.
- Paul Fahsholtz (1910)

 Eugene Fahsholtz (1915) died in 1958 in Burbank, California.



Fred Sr., left, had a well drilling rig

Children of Frederick and Elizabeth Hermon:

- Carl Albert Fahsholtz who married and later divorced Joyce.
- **Douglas Fairbanks Fahsholtz** who married Betty Jean Campbell.
- Rosa Lee Fahsholtz (1919) who married Alvin Herman Klement (1910). She died in 1967.
- Juanita Fahsholtz (1922), who married John Lynn Bachman Harris (1918). In a letter dated June of 2002, Juanita wrote, "My twin sister and I were taken by my Aunt (Martha Elizabeth Fahsholtz 1881) up to Boise, Idaho to live. We were seven years old—never saw the New Mexico crowd again or heard from them. My aunt kept in touch I'm sure. After high school, Wanda and I went to Denver, Colorado. I took a job in an ammunition plant making 30 caliber bullets for the war. I joined the Navy in 1945. That's how I got here to Georgia."
- Wanda Fahsholtz (1922) twin sister of Juanita, who married Jack Mulvey and died about 1983.

 Raymond Bruce Fahsholtz (1924) married Gilda Marie Goodson, Norma Kathleen Barnhart (1932), Anna Ratliff, and Irene Dusza. He died in 1990.

Frederick and Clara Ruth Emerson had one child:

 Frederick Christopher Fahsholtz Jr. (1937) married Della Virginia Crocker (1943), who supplied us lots of information on this branch.



Fred Jr. and Della Fahsholtz in 1960

The second child of Charles and Lizzie was **Martha Elizabeth Fahsholtz** (1881) born in Nemaha County and died about 1967 in Caldwell, Idaho. She married Charles Frederick A. Tritthart and her second marriage was to Anthony N. Wozniak (1876). Their children were:

- Ralph Wozniak
- Isabel Wozniak

Charles and Lizzie's third child **Minnie Adeline Fahsholtz** (1883), died in 1887 at age three and is buried in the same cemetery as Christian and Sophie Vahsholtz in Nemaha County, Kansas.

Then came another son, **Walter Samuel Fahsholtz** (1885) born in Nemaha County and died in 1964 in Independence, Kansas. He married Alice Jane Robertson (1886). Their children, all born in Alluwe, Oklahoma include:

• Charles Audrey Fahsholtz (1908) who died in 1942. He married Fay Marguerite McCall (1910).

- Thomas Ulysses Fahsholtz (1910) first married Mary Lucille Allen (1912) and then Labertha Ann Whitakes (1925).
- Wanda Elizabeth Fahsholtz (1914) married Forest Edward Albert (1914).

The fifth child of Karl Julius "Charles" and Lizzie was **Charles Julius Fahsholtz** (1887) born in Nemaha County. He married Delia Branstetter (1879). They had two children:

- Charles Julius Fahsholtz, Jr. (1913) who died as a baby.
- **Leonard E. Fahsholtz** (1915) born in Delaware, Oklahoma. He died in 1942 in Fellows, California.

Child number six of Charles and Lizzie was **Annie Lydia Fahsholtz** (1889) who was born in Nemaha County and died in 1975 in Missoula, Montana. She married Elwood T. Sumner (1868).

The seven children of Annie and Elwood Sumner were:

- Martha Elizabeth Sumner (1910) born at Oakley, Idaho and died the following year.
- **Mabel Eloise Sumner** (1912) born at Glens Ferry, Idaho and died of diphtheria as a child in 1917.
- Merle Marie Sumner (1914) born at Two Dot, Montana and died in 1924 at age ten.
- Floyd Sumner (1916) born at Two Dot, Montana.
- **Bertha Elinor Sumner** (1918) born at Texico, New Mexico.
- **Boyd Thomas Sumner** (1920) born at Belgrade, Montana and died as a young child in 1923.
- Eva Arlene Sumner (1923) was born at Belgrade, Montana and married Conrad Shelhamer.

The seventh child of Charles and Lizzie was **Edwin August Fahsholtz** (1891), born in Nemaha County and died in 1954. He married Eula Isham (1898). Their three children were:

- **Maxine Fahsholtz** (1917) who was born at Texico, New Mexico. She married Virgil Bynum (1918).
- Edwin Euless Fahsholtz (1918) married Vida "Hope" Reed (1917). The following story written by Ed was furnished by his granddaughter, Amy Fahsholtz (1972).

Edwin Fahsholtz' Account of Aleutian Fighting.

Several members of the Vahsholz family were part of the "the Greatest Generation" that served in WWII. Few had the inclination to tell their stories—especially in writing. It happens that Edwin did tell his story immediately after it happened while stationed in Hawaii in 1943. He wrote it well and his family preserved the record.

Did you know that in 1942 the Japanese occupied strategic territory in Alaska? It was critical to their strategy to hold positions close to the U.S. for supply bases. Hawaii and Midway were key, and there the Japanese efforts were rebuffed at great cost. They were more successful in capturing Attu and Kiska in 1942, two islands in the Aleutian chain. There they dug in, built airstrips and supply depots. The battle for reclaiming Attu was one of the bloodiest in WWII. The story occupies about 30 words in Encyclopedia Britannica. If you want to learn more, read Alaska by James Michener.

As an enlisted man fresh from training as a Medic, Edwin Fahsholtz got no briefing on strategy, and he wrote this report just after it happened, so he could only cover the details of his experience. Here's Edwin:

Twelve o'clock, April 23, 1943 we left Fort Ord for parts unknown to us. It didn't take long for us to figure it outit was San Francisco. We knew that this was only a small step in the journey that was coming.

We got off of the train immediately after arrival, then we stood out along the railroad tracks for about forty-five minutes waiting for everything to get straightened out and

The American reconquest of Attu, which began on

11 May, 1943, was one of the significant battles of

World War II, for although it involved relatively few

troops, it determined whether Japan had any hope of

using an Alaskan foothold from which to attack the

United States and Canada. The Japanese defenders

superior soldiers dedicated to the task of retaining

this foothold on American territory. Led by officers

of great daring and acumen, they had constructed a

chain of positions that were the acme of defensive

warfare ... To rout heroic Japanese like these was

storms and Siberian gales.

going to be a hellish assignment conducted in arctic

From Alaska by James Michener

of Attu were a resolute group of about 2,600

etc. We were then marched onto a pier where we had to wait for about three hours for everybody to get checked on to the ship. (They call roll and check everybody individually.) The Medics are always last, the reason we had to wait so long before our turn. We finally got on the ship and got our place in the troop compartment. We got everything settled and then we had to go and draw some clothing back on the pier. We got some Artic clothing,

iacket, leather boots and a sleeping bag. We then went back on the ship and went to bed at two a.m. We all slept rather late that morning and before a lot of us were up we were pulling out of the harbor.

The talk was all about Alaska now and occasionally you would hear something about Norway. Of course nobody knew anything about where we were going.

There wasn't much doing on the ship for the first couple of days. Everyone was getting settled and as comfortable as possible. The second day we were out, we were told where we were going. Were we surprised to find out that it was Attu. There weren't very many of us that had ever heard of Attu until that morning. The rumors got around that it would only take about thirty-six hours to take the island. There were a few other stories that were very good at the time but I have forgotten them. They were just about like the one about thirty-six hours.

The rest of the time we spent on the ship was uneventful. We studied a map of Attu, had a few lectures, calisthenics on the deck everyday, playing cards and reading. (That is if you were lucky enough to find something to read.) They had a store on the ship and if you wanted anything out of it there would be a long line that you would have to sweat out. We run into a large storm on our way and we all enjoyed watching the waves, it broke the monotony. I had heard a lot of stories about the waves being so large and didn't believe them, but now I can tell them.

The first land that we saw was some small island with mountains all covered with snow. Our first stopping place was Cold Bay; there we stayed for a couple of days on the ship. Six Alaskan scouts boarded our ship before we pulled out. They had been all up and down the Aleutian Chain, scouting and patrolling. We got a lot of information from them on how to live and conduct ourselves in the cold weather, also about the conditions on Attu.

Everybody was getting very anxious to get off of the boat by this time. When we finally got in the vicinity of Attu

> the fog was so heavy and the sea was so rough that we supposed to land on May 6th and it was four days later a landing.

I was rather surprised at myself, and the rest of the fellows, on the way that we were taking everything. It seemed to me like we were just going on another maneuver. Laughing and making jokes about the

were unable to land. We were before we were able to make

coming battle. We were about the last to debark and before we left the ship we got a report that there was not any opposition on the beach. It finally came our turn to go down the side of the ship on a rope net into a Higgins boat. After we were loaded into the boat it was about four or five hours before the boats were loaded and ready to go ashore. It was still foggy, but not so bad. A person could see fairly well. The Higgins boats and Tank lighters made a very impressive

The name of the bay that we made our landing was Massacre Bay. The beach was very smooth; we made our landing very good. We didn't ever get our feet wet. (The way these boats unloaded the men and etc. was with a ramp that is fastened on to the front of the boat and they let the ramp down as soon as the boat hits the beach. It only takes about five seconds for thirty-six men to run off of the boat.) We carried our equipment away from the

sight as they all headed toward the beach, loaded with

men, equipment and supplies.

beach about twenty-five yards, there we waited for the rest of the fellows to land so that we could all get together. It was just dark when we landed.



The furthest out of the Aleutian Islands is Attu. At 1,100 miles from the mainland of Alaska, the 35-milelong island is only 770 miles from Japan.

We found out that our destination was on up Massacre Valley about a mile so it was decided that the best thing to do was to stay along the beach for the rest of the night. It was around two a.m. of May 12th when we went to bed. So far we hadn't heard a shot. We only had one blanket apiece so we doubled up and two men slept together.

As soon as it got daylight, Major Cochrane said that we were going to the Regimental C.P. (Command Post). After walking a short distance we discovered that it was very hard walking with the heavy packs that we had and the heavy clothes that we wore was another difficulty. The terrain was very rough and to make it worse there was thick tundra on the ground. Every step that we would take our feet would sink in the tundra two or three inches. The C.P. must have been over a mile from the beach and by the time we reached there we were just about to give out.

We took a short rest and the Major told us where we could dig in. We got our entrenching tools and started in. We still hadn't any gunfire. We didn't have long to wait. We had our slit trenches about half dug when we heard a whistling sound over our head. That was the first shell that any of us had ever heard, but we didn't need to be told to get in what slit trenches we had. There was about seven of them that went over our heads. They hit the ground with a loud explosion, after the first three shots it all got very amusing to us. We would hear one coming and everybody would duck in their trenches and they were very muddy and each time we ducked down we got a little muddier. Everybody got to laughing about the way the other person looked, then we got to making jokes about the situation and before long we had everybody laughing.

We had one casualty from the results of their shelling. I think that he was hit in the hand with a piece of shrapnel and he was between us and the beach so he was evacuated back to the beach.

After about two hours we were fairly well settled and we decided to eat dinner. (It wasn't much trouble, just a K ration.) Just about the middle of the afternoon we got word that Colonel Earle, our Regimental Commander, was missing. About an hour after we got this message we got word that one of the Alaskan Scouts that was with the Colonel was up ahead of us about three quarters of a mile. He was wanted back at the aid station immediately. Four of us took a litter and went up the mountain. There was a Lt. at the C.P. and he was going back to the company so he showed us the way to where he was. He had six shots in this right arm and a shot in the groin. We bandaged him the best that we could and gave him a shot of morphine. On our way back we heard a few bullets whizzing over our heads so we put our patient next to a small bank and then got down ourselves. We waited there about twenty minutes and we didn't hear any more bullets so we picked up our patient and started on the long walk back to our aid station.

I thought that I had done some backbreaking work before, but after about three hundred yards with that litter I saw that we were going to have a job that was going to take about everything we had. One of the biggest things that made carrying a litter difficult was the terrain. It was very uneven and wet. Fifty yards was a long distance to carry a litter without having to stop for a rest.

Everybody was looking for us back at the aid station and when we got within sight they sent out some more litter bearers to relieve us. By the time we arrived at the aid station our patient was under the influence of the morphine that he didn't know what he was talking about. General Brown (Division Commander) was there and wanted to find out the whereabouts of Colonel Earle but was unable to do so on account of his condition.

Late that evening we learned that Col. Earle had been killed. Nobody seemed to know any particulars about it. They organized about twenty men that evening to go after his body as soon as it was dark enough. Six men to carry the litter and the rest were guards in case there was any Japs around to give them any trouble.

The days there in Attu were very long. We only had about five hours of darkness. From there on throughout the battle I don't remember the days, dates or the time. There was never any schedule that we had to go by. You ate when you were hungry and slept when you got the chance—or you had to in order to keep going.

It was two days before we got any word from the 2nd and 3rd Battalions. When we did hear we found out that they had all of their casualties on hand as they were unable to evacuate them. Major Cochrane organized means for evacuating the Battalions. Captain Broadus from the Navy hospital on the beach was at our aid station and he was going up to the 2nd Battalion aid station. There was a very dense fog so he thought that he could get up there without any trouble. I went up with him to see if it would be possible to evacuate their wounded. At the 2nd

Battalion C.P. we got a runner to show us the way to the aid station.

When we walked into their aid station, they were very glad to see us. I hadn't seen any of the fellows since we left Fort Ord. The way that we were all shaking hands, a person would think that we hadn't seen each other in years. They hadn't had anything to eat but three meals of K rations and very little sleep. They thought several times that it was going to be their last stopping place. They had been fired upon with artillery and one fellow was killed and another wounded. Things looking so hopeless probably accounted for them being so glad to see us.

We discussed the evacuation of the wounded and came to the conclusion that if the fog stayed down we could evacuate them fairly safe. We got word back to Major Cochrane that we needed about forty litter bearers and it wasn't very long before they arrived. The best way that we could, as well as the safest way to get the wounded out of the ravine, was up the side and it was very steep. We had to put men up on the bank with a long rope to help pull the litter. The fog lifted several times and every time the Japs would start shooting a machine gun over the ravine, the fellows on the bank would slide down the bank for protection. As soon as the fog came down they would go back up again. We just had enough men to allow four men to a litter and in the excitement a lot of fellows ran out on us. It took about two hours to get the place cleared of all the wounded. There were about eighteen that we had to carry out. I helped carry out the last patient after we got him out of the ravine and carried him about fifty yards we heard a few bullets whistling around us. We immediately hit the ground. It was mostly water and snow that we had to lie in, but that felt all right. After we had hit the ground the firing ceased so we must have gotten out of sight. The fog was lifting and we knew that it wasn't any use to try to carry our patient until the fog had come down again. There were a few fellows behind us and they must have been exposed a little because we heard somebody hollering for help. He wasn't hit bad; more scared than he was hurt.

The fellows that were behind us got a little anxious to move out of that area and they all made a dash up the hill and the minute they started the Japs cut loose on them with their machine gun. There must have been about fifteen men that started running and only three of them got hit, but not any of them serious enough that they couldn't walk. One fellow that was in our Detachment got hit in the arm. As he came by us I asked him to give somebody some help on a litter. (I didn't know that he had been hit.) He said, "I can't do it, they winged me back there." Then I noticed that his arm was hanging down by his side. He still had a smile on his face while he was talking to me. He wasn't over eighteen years old. After they had all got up the hill the Japs quit shooting.

We decided to stay in our position for a while longer and see if the fog wouldn't return. We all vowed then that

from then on we would never say anything about the fog being too heavy. We stayed there in the snow and water for about an hour before we thought that it was safe enough to start out. It seemed about three hours. On our way we caught up with two fellows that were carrying a litter by themselves. They said that the other two fellows had run out on them when things had got so hot a few minutes before we caught up with them. That is a real job for two men. It is hard enough for four or six men to carry a litter and then when two had to do it, it was terrible. We went out of that area just as fast as we could, but a person could only go so far and then he would have to rest. There were times that a fellow would go as far as he could and would get so tired that he wouldn't care whether he got hit or not.

When we got into safer territory we took our time getting back to our aid station. It was around two thousand yards that we had to carry our patients.

After all of the accumulated casualties had been carried in, things began to ease up considerable for us. We did all of our litter carrying at night. For the next three nights I helped carry litters from the front lines, acting as guide for other litter bearers that didn't know the way to the front lines. I would do my sleeping in the daytime. Everybody that we could get a hold of helped carry litters. A lot of fellows worked in the daytime and at night they would come up and help us. The majority of the soldiers of Attu really put everything that they had into the battle.

We began to get a lot of exposure cases, a lot of them not able to walk. A lot of fellows had been penned down for about five days and not able to move around enough. We had to carry over half of the exposure cases. Some of the fellows lost their feet because circulation had stopped and gangrene had set in.

About this time the 3rd Battalion had been relieved and they had come back to our area and stayed there for about twenty-four hours, then took up a new position. They arrived just before dark and all of the men looked just about give out. They made themselves as comfortable as possible for the night.

The next day there was a kitchen set up about three hundred yards ahead of our aid station and there was a large bunch of men grouped around the kitchen waiting for something to eat. The Japs must have been able to see the large group there around the kitchen. They fired a couple of artillery shells, one in the middle of the kitchen and one a short distance from the kitchen. I don't remember how many casualties there were altogether but we were very busy around there for a while. Several fellows were killed. The Japs also fired on some tents around close to our area and wounded another bunch, but nobody killed.

The next day the 3rd Battalion moved out of that area. I went along with them to take the place of some of their men that they had in the hospital and etc. We camped at

the head of Massacre Valley and Sarana pass. We only stayed there that night and the next day we started out to go across the ridge of the mountains that separated Massacre Valley and Sarana Pass. It was a very strenuous walk up to the top of the ridge. (It was on this ridge that the Japs were located that held up the 2nd Battalion so long, and also the cause of us having so many casualties. The 2nd Battalion had moved around and was located on the ridge of mountains between Holtz Bay area and Chichagof Valley.) We moved about a mile and a half that day and dug in for the night just past the center of the ridge.

During the night it began to sleet and rain. When we got up in the morning a lot of our sleeping bags were wet. There wasn't anything that we could do about them but roll them up wet and hope that the sun would shine and we would be able to get them dry. We moved about fifty yards and the wind seemed to start blowing and it certainly made a fellow miserable. There were deep ravines along the way and you had to walk around the edge of them. The men that had gone on ahead of us had made a small trail in the snow. A lot of the ravines had quite a bit of snow in them. If a person had slipped he would have slid a hundred yards or more before he would have stopped at the bottom.

To get to our destination and still stay in the safest place we had to cross a few ravines. It was impossible to walk down the side of them; you just had to hold yourself from sliding too fast. We took temporary shelter in a ravine and everybody started digging himself a hole to get in. We were there about ten minutes when the Japs must have seen us. They began spraying the ravine with bullets. Everybody got behind what protection they could when they first started shooting. By the sound of the bullets we could tell that they were over our heads. They only fired on us about three minutes. We all started working on our trenches again and about the time we got started they started firing again. We weren't so lucky this time. A fellow had gone up the ravine and he was in line with the fire. He got about three bullets in his hips and legs. We brought him down out of the danger and dressed his wounds and gave him some morphine then sent him on back towards Massacre Valley on a litter.

We learned that we were going to move across Sarana Pass so we discontinued our digging and got ready to move. We moved out of the ravine very slowly, always keeping about a hundred yards behind each other just in case some Jap decided to take a shot he wouldn't have so much to shoot at. It was about three hundred-and-fifty yards across the Pass. There wasn't a shot fired at any of us. We learned later that the machine gun that was giving us so much trouble in the ravine had been knocked out.

We were now entering into Chichagof Valley, the last objective of the battle. We had a few casualties that we had to take care of and send back towards Massacre Valley that day. We dug in for the night on the side of a

mountain next to Sarana Pass. It was still sleeting and raining by spell and continued that way throughout the night and all of the next day. We moved again that morning over toward Chichagof Valley. Everyone's clothes were getting wet as well as our sleeping bags. We all had on rain clothes but the wind seemed to blow the water into your clothes.



The weather on Attu Island is miserable year-round with rain or snow likely five or six days of each week and less than a dozen annual days of sunshine.

We dug in that night at the entrance to Chichagof Valley from Sarana Pass. A couple of us decided to make a good shelter for the night so we cut blocks of tundra about eighteen inches square and made walls about two feet high and just wide enough so that we could sleep in it comfortable. We covered the top over with a rubberized blanket to keep the rain and sleet out. This was the best place we had had to sleep in since we left the boat.

We only had one or two casualties to take care of that day. For the next two or three days our casualties were very light, about one or two a day. The weather had taken a turn for the better and the sun actually shone the day after we moved into our new area. Everybody got everything dry once again.

The 2nd Battalion was pushing up the ridge of mountains between Holtz Bay area and Chichagof Harbor. The 1st Battalion already had pushed all of the Japs out of the Holtz Bay area into Chichagof Harbor and was holding it to keep the Japs from going back over that way. 3rd Battalion was located from the head of Chichagof Valley on over the mountains along Sarana Pass to the beach. All the Battalions were pushing toward Chichagof Harbor.

We held that position for about three days. A company from a different Regiment was called in to make a push down Chichagof Valley. They started their push just about three hours before dark and there were quite a few casualties that we had to handle through our aid station. They went only a short distance and then held their positions until one of our companies would take over their positions.

During the night our Navy sent up flares with messages to the Japs to surrender or they would all be killed. About two a.m. of the same night we got word that there was a casualty down the valley where they had been fighting. I got some other Medics and a litter and we started out to get our patient. We had a guide with us that was supposed to know where the patient was. We looked around the area where the patient was supposed to be and we couldn't find him, so we decided to give up and go back to the aid station. (We had a tent set up that we were using for an aid station and the battalion was also using it for a C.P.)

All of the time that we were out looking for the soldier that was wounded the Navy was still shooting flares. Every time one would go off, it would light up the valley almost like day. We would drop down on the ground just in case there was any Japs around that might want to take a shot at us.

We had one patient in the tent that we were waiting until morning to evacuate on account of the darkness. I asked him if there was anything that I could do for him before I went to sleep. There wasn't, so I made myself as comfortable as possible because it wasn't long until it would be getting daylight. I was just beginning to doze a little when the phone operator exclaimed that the phone was dead. That caused quite a commotion in the tent and the first thing that was said was that the Japs must have broken through our lines and cut the telephone wires. That was no sooner said than a Lt. run out of the tent and hollered, "All of you Americans get up and fight." All hell broke loose then. It was just beginning to get daylight. I could hear screams of agony and the Japs screaming as they charged through our area. Bullets were flying everywhere. The Japs turned a machine gun on the tent and holes appeared everywhere. Hand grenades were thrown at the tent but we were very lucky—they never did go off until they hit the ground, and some of them never did go off. I was hugging old mother earth again. I felt something hot hit my shoulder and I didn't know whether I was hit or not. I felt around under my clothes but couldn't feel any blood so I figured that I wasn't hurt. By this time there were a few guns lying around that I could use. I cut a hole in a corner of the tent with a bayonet. The main body of the Japs had passed on through our area. There were a few left around yet to cause us trouble. No sooner had I got the hole cut than I saw a Jap sticking his head over the side of a bank about thirty yards away. I took a quick shot and missed and shot again. I don't know whether I hit him or not, I didn't see him anymore. It was just light enough to tell that it was a Jap. I really enjoyed shooting at that Jap. I would have felt a lot better if I knew for sure whether I had hit him or not. We had a quart of whiskey and we had passed it around just before that, maybe that accounted for the way I felt about it.

Things were very quiet around there for about thirty minutes, then we heard a bunch of Japs start talking about fifty yards away. The way they sounded we thought that there was about thirty or forty over there. There was a small gulch that they were in. Out of the ten that was in

the tent there was five of us left able to fight. We didn't think we had a chance, as we figured that they would make a charge on the tent. We didn't have long to wait; two Japs came over the rise where they were having a discussion. They were hollering and running as fast as they could, each one had a bayonet on his rifle all set for use. There was myself and a Lt. on this side of the tent. I shot the one coming at my corner of the tent and the first shot didn't stop him so I let him have another one, which stopped him. The one coming at the other side of the tent was stopped about the same time, but he wasn't completely knocked out and got behind a slit trench. The Lt. didn't know whether he got him or not, he asked me if I could get him from my side. I saw that I could so I let him have a shot and he relaxed so I knew that he wouldn't cause us any more trouble.

We didn't know it then but there was only five Japs doing all of the talking. After the two had made the charge at our tent we saw three more trying to slip away. I took a shot at them but they were too far off. I did make them duck down out of sight though.

Things were very quiet then and I had time to wonder about all of the fellows that were in their slit trenches when the Japs hit. I was the only Medic in the tent. Captain Chernow, the doctor, had left the tent as soon as the Japs had hit. He came back in the tent once while the Japs were attacking but he left immediately. I didn't know whether he was killed or wounded. Later on I heard that he had been bayoneted in the lower part of the face. There were three Captains, three Lt.'s, one Major, one Lt. Colonel and four enlisted men. Two of the enlisted men came in the tent while the attack was going on, one of them was the wounded that we had brought in about midnight, and myself.

All the Captains were wounded: one died about twentyfour hours later with a shot in the stomach. The second Captain was wounded by a hand grenade. The Japs threw a hand grenade on the tent and it rolled off of the side and rolled under the tent. His left arm was broken and had a lot of shrapnel in his chest. One Lt. was killed immediately when the attack started—the one that gave the alarm that the Japs were attacking. (He was shot as he was coming back in the tent and said, "Those little dirty got me.") One had a piece of shrapnel in the back of his neck but not serious. The Lt. Colonel was killed. The wounded man that we had in the tent was hit a couple of more times but none of them very serious. After the first assault that the Japs made and things had quieted down a little, he slipped out of the tent. I never saw him again. Everybody else in the tent got by without any injuries.

We could have all left but there was such confusion outside that a fellow didn't know what to do, bullets were flying everywhere. Everybody was so confused that they didn't know where they were firing.

I left the tent to find some litter bearers to get our wounded out of the tent. I passed several slit trenches and in almost every one was a soldier bayoneted, shot or with his head caved in with the butt of a gun. There were a few that had been bayoneted in their sleeping bags. Some were lying outside of their trenches. There were Japs scattered all around the area also, to make up for a few of our losses. Three Japs met their end within four feet of the tent that we had occupied.

Just about everybody in our area had made a dash across Sarana Pass back towards Massacre Valley when the Japs hit. Some of them jumped out of their sleeping bags and didn't even take time to put their boots on. There was a lot of amusing stories told about the dash that they made across. I imagine it would have been funny to watch if a fellow could have kept his own feet still long enough to watch them. There wasn't much laughing going on though, until it was all over.

I found a few of the Medics that were still around and we got a litter and carried the wounded down in the ravine to a tent. There we found Major Cochrane and a Lt. that was a doctor. The rest of the day we were all busy carrying the wounded down to the tent and gave them what first aid that we could. We had about forty wounded around there before the day was over.

The Japs also attacked a hospital that was stationed about four hundred yards from our area. They used bayonets and tore the tents, threw hand grenades in them. Bayoneted a few of the patients. There were about five tents being used for a hospital and one for a kitchen. The Japs must have been hungry because they certainly did take a lot of rations. They were also very fond of our cigarettes. One tent that contained some patients wasn't even touched. They threw a few hand grenades around but they never did go into it. It so happened that one of our own men (Medic) was in the tent. He got a piece of shrapnel in his shoulder but that was about all that got hurt. Past the hospital about two hundred yards was a kitchen and the Japs made a raid on it. They bayoneted a lot of fellows around there and used hand grenades. They took a bunch of rations and cigarettes from that kitchen. One nice thing about that place, there was a lot more dead Japs than Americans.

The story we got later was that the Japs made this assault to get through our lines and reach our artillery and fire it back on us. There was one Jap Medical Officer that was captured and he said they took everybody that was able to walk and those that were wounded and unable to go, they killed—or they killed themselves. Some of the Japs that were on the raid had only one hand that they could use; a few were wounded in the head and body. The way the Japs acted on the raid they seemed like they were all doped just before they started. We never did find out for sure. Our C.P. was their first resistance that they run into and from there they went to Sarana Pass. On the other side there was an Engineers' Camp. They were also

caught unaware but not as bad as we were. They formed a line of defense and stopped the Japs. About half of the Japs killed themselves with hand grenades when they saw that they couldn't get anywhere. They would hold the grenade to their head or to their abdomen and what a mess they would make.

When night came, everybody was advised to have two persons in a slit trench and one fellow would stay awake at all times. Nobody used their sleeping bags. Just before day break that morning, Bruce Anderson saw a bunch of men going back towards Chichagof Harbor. He hollered at them to halt but they didn't even seem to hear him. He awakened me with his shouting and I hollered at them and they still didn't stop, so we decided that they were Japs. We couldn't tell how many there was as they were in a single file. The word soon got around and the whole camp was awakened. As soon as it got a little lighter the battle started, but the Japs didn't put up much resistance and by noon it was over. By the way it looked there was more Japs that killed themselves than were killed by our soldiers. There was a small gully where it seemed that most of the Japs were and there they congregated to kill themselves. There was about thirty there and all of them blowed into all different shapes. This bunch of Japs were probably some that had got by in the raid the night before. They had a lot of our rations and some had our guns that they had picked up the night before. One even had one of our helmets on. We didn't have so many casualties that time. It seemed as if the Japs didn't have much fight left in them, which probably accounted for the fact that so many killed themselves.

That afternoon, 3rd Battalion moved on down into Chichagof Harbor. There wasn't much left of the camp they had there. A lot of their buildings were torn down and they had set fire to a lot of them and they were still burning when we arrived. One building must have been part of a hospital because there were about ten bodies in it and they were fairly well cooked. That day ended all resistance, there was a few Japs left yet but they were all scattered out and without food.

We were all very glad that everything was over but we were all too tired to show very much enthusiasm over it.

Everybody gathered up something to make themselves a little more comfortable for sleeping. We found a lot of Jap blankets that we made good use of. We lived in our improvised shelter for about four days; then we got tents to live in with a stove. Then we got a kitchen and was it wonderful to get something hot to eat. We couldn't get enough to satisfy our hunger. Food was the main subject that we talked about. We were always telling about all of the good things that we had to eat when we were at home and how much we were going to eat whenever we got back there again. Candy was more precious than money, just any kind of candy just so that it was sweet. About all that we could get at that time was hard candy but it was

certainly good. We could eat jams and jelly just like it was candy and enjoy it.

About June 7th we received some mail and that was the biggest help to our morale that we could get. This was the first mail we had received since we left. We were permitted to write letters but material for writing was almost impossible to get. Our barracks bags were back at Massacre Beach.

June 10th, I went back to Hdq. Section of the Medics. They were located over in Sarana Pass. We only stayed there one night and from there we moved over to Massacre Valley where we set up tents and to our surprise we got cots to sleep on. The first thing to sleep on other than the ground in a month. That was to be the permanent Hdqs. of the 17th. We heard that there was a post exchange down on Massacre Beach so we took a collection and went down and bought a large order of candy. We were all just like a bunch of kids—when it came to candy we couldn't get enough of it. A person could have got rich selling candy there.

I was certainly amazed at the progress that had been made over in Massacre Beach. There was a good road from Massacre toward Chichagof and from there it was to go on over to Holtz Bay. Jeeps, trucks and tractors were running on the road and only a month ago we were walking over there in mud. There were buildings along the beach and a pier that was over half finished.

On June 14th I was promoted to S/Sgt. and went over to the 1st Battalion. So again I had to pack and move. The 1st Battalion was located over in Temnac Bay area. They had the best location on the island. It was a small valley and fairly flat compared to the rest of the island.

There wasn't much going on at that time, just getting settled and etc. Later on we had to start digging emplacements for Quonset Huts. They were fairly large holes, we thought, to have to dig with a shovel—twenty feet wide, forty feet long and four feet deep. Of course we didn't work too hard, but we did do the best job and everybody said that we did the job the way it was supposed to be, so naturally our ego went up considerable. We had four emplacements to dig and we got three completely finished and one hut set up. We used it for a dispensary, the reason we were the first to get one in our Battalion.

About the 1st of July we began to hear rumors that we were going to move again and then it wasn't long until we knew that we were going to go someplace. We soon learned that it wasn't combat that we were going into again but we never did know for sure where we were going until we got there. Another Regiment had moved in to take our place and three days after they arrived we moved out. What a change though that had taken place after only two months had passed. The Navy had mess halls built with electric light, showers and warehouses of all kinds. Speaking of showers, I don't think over one per

cent of any of us had ever had a bath since we had left the States. Nobody seemed to mind it in the slightest.

On the morning of July 11th we left our happy home of a month. They had named the valley "Peaceful Valley."

The pier was finished now and another was about half finished. Instead of getting on the ship by a rope ladder as we had used to leave the ship when we arrived, we walked on to the pier and onto our ship.



Sergeant Edwin Fahsholtz

A band was playing "Home Sweet Home" as we went aboard the ship. There was always the rumor about going back to the States but there wasn't much reason for us to go back so soon yet. We all thought that Kiska would be on our list before we got to the States.

We didn't have long to wait to find our destination, after about two days we arrived in Adak. We could see a lot of huts and we figured that we would surely have them to live in. We left the boat and got our direction straightened out and started walking towards our camping area. We didn't have to walk very far until we got a truck to take us to our camp. What a wonderful letdown that we built ourselves up to get. Instead of huts there wasn't a thing in our area but the ground with the usual amount of grass and tundra. To get to this area we had to cross a deep ravine, after we got there we had to

pitch our pup tents. To make things worse, it began to rain; not hard but just enough to get a person wet.

We finally got things settled, tents and everything. There wasn't anything special to do. We had sick call every day and to make things more interesting we would have somebody come in with something wrong with him, the cause being this ravine that we had to cross to get to the road. Our rations had to be carried across the ravine and it was always wet and muddy.

One nice thing about Adak was that we could get all of the candy that we wanted and our chow was very good compared to what we had in Attu. (It was all dehydrated there and it didn't have much taste to it.)

We went on a maneuver around the 1st of August to a nearby island. It didn't amount to much, to our notion. We spent three nights on the boat and one night on the island. All that we did was climb the side of a mountain on this island and when we got to the top we assimilated an aid station and then rested until it got dark. We were supposed to go back to the beach in the dark just for the practice of moving around in the dark. We all had a lot of fun going down the side of the mountain. Somebody was always falling down and every time we would fall would slide a ways before you could stop yourself.

We had just got down to the beach and got settled in our sleeping bags and it began to rain. We had been issued a rubberized sheet called a poncho and it was supposed to be just the thing to slip your sleeping bag in to keep it dry. They were all right but when they were made they should have made a hole in the bottom of them for the water to run out, because that is about all they were good for. The water would run off the top and run into the side. Instances such as I have just stated are what makes a soldier's morale hit the bottom.

We loaded back on our ship and went back to Adak. There we made another landing, and to make things better for our low morale, it started raining again about the time that we hit the beach. We had to walk all of the way (about three miles) back to our area. Instead of just a drizzle as it was when we started, it started raining hard while we were about a mile from camp, and continued all of the way.

From then until now everything is still a secret and I imagine it will stay that way. About all that I can say is that we ended up in the Hawaiian Islands.

There are a lot of other events that could be told about the battle of Attu but they wouldn't get by the censors, so they will just have to wait.



Edwin and Vida "Hope" Fahsholtz, much later

The third child of Edwin August Fahsholtz (1891) and Eula Isham (1898) was:

Glennis Gale Fahsholtz

And the eighth child of Charles and Lizzie was **Albert Clyde Fahsholtz** (1894) who never married and died in 1914. He was the last child we know to have been born in Nemaha County.

Ninth was **William Johnson Fahsholtz** (1897) whose first wife was Rhea E. Alsberg (1897). His second wife was Evangeline Anna (Lemay) White (1904). William died in 1967.

Della Crocker Fahsholtz (1943) tells of a son of Charles, who she believes to be Albert Clyde (not Willie as he was called by the Hollene Cemetery Association). One day ... "he caught his fingers in the cogs of a threshing machine while at work at Grandpa Duncan's threshing wheat. Oscar G. Turner carried him to Texico, New Mexico in a buggy. Some fingers were amputated and he was under the influence of chloroform. Uncle Oscar was sitting by his bedside when he noticed he was breathing too heavy and very irregular. He ran out to get the doctor, and on their return, he was dead. I would say he was over-sedated, but it could have been heart failure. Some people couldn't take chloroform." Life on the farm was hazardous.

Tenth and last was **Bertha Hilda Fahsholtz** (1900) who was born in Chelsea, Oklahoma, and died in 1957 in El Paso, Texas. She married William Thomas Clark (1890) who died in 1931. Then she married Jim Maples (1885). Children of Bertha Fahsholtz and William Clark were:

- Lillian Clark (1921)
- Thomas J. Clark (1923)
- William Thomas Clark (1925) died in 1926.
- Billie Clark

Bertha Fahsholtz and Jim Maples child was:

 Sally Maples (1935) born at Lubbock, Texas. She married Robert Hiatt.

Chapter **Ten**, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of **Friedrich Wilhelm Albert Vahsholz** (1848)

We know a bit about one child of Friedrich Wilhelm Albert, **Herbert Fred Hermann Vasholz** (1891) who was born in Alt-Werder, Germany and married Gretchen Amanda "Margaret" Voigt (1893). We believe this family settled in Nebraska. Herbert died in New Mexico in 1946 but is buried in Omaha, Nebraska. Gretchen died in California and is also buried in Omaha. The children of Herbert and Margaret were:

- Helmuth "Theodore" Vasholz (1916), born in Stanton, Nebraska, who married Oral Mae Kilson. He died in 1974.
- Thelma Emma Vasholz (1918), born in Crofton, Nebraska, who died as a baby.
- Alfred Herbert Vasholz (1920), born in Crofton, Nebraska, who married Herberta Ruth Wright. He died in 1944.
- **Violet Rose Vasholz** (1922) who was born in Omaha. She married Henry Jay Baker, Jr.
- **Herbert Fred Vasholz, Jr.** (1924), born in Omaha. He married Geraldine Frances "Gerry" Dallinger. He died in 1995.
- George Melvin Vasholz (1926) was born in Omaha.
 He married Mary Charlotte "Helen" Clary (1927).
- Raymond "Robert" Vasholz (1929) who was born in Omaha and married Elizabeth Joan Rich.
- Darlene Ruth Vasholz (1933) who was also born in Omaha. She first married Willard Lee Hodge and later William Exum.

Chapter **Eleven**, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of **Robert Richard Heinrich Vasholz** (1854)

Robert and Bertha Hasenpusch Vasholz (1855) founded most of the Nebraska branch of the family that we know about. Robert died in 1934 and Bertha in 1942. They had eight children:

Two unknown children were born in Germany, according to family sources, and died there. The other children were:

Robert Vasholz —Unknown birth and death date.

Doloris Vera (Vasholz) Anderson (1912) writes, "My father, Franz 'Frank' Joseph Vasholz (1887) also had a brother Robert who does not appear on the genealogical chart and I can't tell you for certain where he ranked, but I feel sure he was the eldest of Robert Richard Vasholz's (1854) children. He left the farm in the early 1900s and the family seemed to lose track of him. I know I have no memory of an Uncle Robert, other than his name being mentioned now and then. Apparently, Robert was a sort of nomad. My aunt, Anna Laurie Vasholz House (1891), had among her mementos two penny post cards which he sent to her—one was from Chicago dated 1908 and the other from Atlanta dated 1911. In the card from Atlanta he indicated his health was deteriorating, so it's doubtful he served in WWI."

Paul Rhinehard Vasholz (1878) married Bertha Wolfe (1882) and later Lydia M. Wild (1883). Paul died in 1961.

Clara Vasholz (1884) died in 1968.

Franz "Frank" Joseph Vasholz (1887) died in 1971. Frank's first wife was Myrtle Ivy Peterson and his second was Mollie Goldstein (1910). Frank is the son who nearly got lost departing Germany. (See story, Chapter Three.)

Doloris Vera (Vasholz) Anderson (1912) writes, "I can affirm that all the Vasholz family was an example of industriousness; all hard workers. My father was a meat cutter all his life, working six days a week from early morning to suppertime. He and Paul Rhinehard Vasholz (1878) did their own butchering on the family farm in Fremont, Nebraska. I look back and wonder how they did so much with no modern facilities. All the descendants have a good work ethic also."

Frank and Myrtle's children are:

- **Vivian Lucille Vasholz** (1908) who married Martin Gaughen.
- Earl Stanley Vasholz (1911) who married Doris.
- **Doloris Vera Vasholz** (1912) who married Gilbert Anderson (1900).

Frank and Mollie's children are:



Robert and Phyllis Vasholz Dreisbach

• **Phyllis Joyce Vasholz** (1932) who married Jerry Ingram and later Robert Dreisbach.



Bob and Julia Vasholz in a 2002 photograph

- Robert Ivan "Bob" Vasholz (1936) who became a pastor and later earned his doctorate from the University of Stellenbosch in South Africa. He married Julia Spillman Martin (1937) and lives in St. Louis, where he is a professor at Covenant Seminary, teaching Aramaic and Canaanite languages.
- Roberta I. Vasholz (1936), twin sister of Robert.

Anna "Annah" Laurie Vasholz (1891) married Irvin Benton House (1891). They lived and died in California. Her niece, **Deloris Vasholz Anderson** (1912), says "...she was quite an individualist and it was her idea to add the "h" to "Anna" after moving to California in the early 20's."

William T. Vasholz (1895) married Marjorie Bridger (1901). He was a veteran railroad worker, a depot agent according to Veda Fahsholtz Kolle (1937). William was still working just a week prior to his sudden death from a heart attack in 1946.

Louis W. Vasholz (1896) married Lulu E. Scheffler (1898). He died in 1983. Louis had a twin brother who died at birth. Louis and Lulu had a daughter:

- **Betty Lou Vasholz** who married Francis Gregg. **Amelia "Mollie" Vasholz** married Peter Davidson. Amelia is said to have died at about age 25. They had a son:
- Leo Earl Davidson who was born, according to an ad seeking heirs to Leo's estate, in 1905.

The youngest child of Robert Richard and Bertha Hasenpusch was **Ida Vasholz**.

The Nebraska Vasholz Family by Kelli Vahsholtz Olson, research done in 1994/1996

Paul R. Vasholz was born 16 April 1878 in Belgard, Germany, and in 1892 he came to the USA with his parents. He worked in the butcher business until 1904, when he married Bertha Wolfe (1882), and began farming in Saunders County for the next 13 years. Bertha died in 1916 at the age of 34. In 1920 Paul built his own market in Fremont, Nebraska and married Lydia M. Wild (1883). He owned and operated the Vasholz Meat Company at 308 N. Main St. in Fremont until his death in 1961. This was located in the same block as the Kavich Furniture Store, where the Kavich family still has their business. Frank Joseph (1887) and his wife Myrtle resided at 228 East 3rd. Paul R. and his wife Lydia lived at 308 ½ North Main, in an apartment above the business.

In 1921 Frank J. and Paul R. were both operating the company. Frank and his family later moved to Kansas City, Missouri leaving Paul with the business.

Paul built a house at 625 North Union and must have resided there for a while, later moving back to his apartment at 308 ½ North Main. Lydia died September second, 1956 and her estate included land in Saunders County, Nebraska. At that time, it was worth \$250 per acre, or \$20,000. This land was farmed by young men employed by Paul in order to provide the meats and goods for the market.

Before 1960, Paul's brother **Louis W. Vasholz** (1896) moved to Fremont, Nebraska from Manteca, California.

Louis became the meat cutter for the company, and also resided in Paul's house at 625 North Union.



Paul, Frank and Louis Vasholz in front of their store

In 1960 Paul was no longer listed in the Fremont City Directory. When Paul died August 6, 1961, Louis W. became the executor of Paul's estate and also the manager of the market. Louis inherited the meat market and the house at 625 North Union, and according to the will, he was to sell the estate "no later than a year from the time of Paul's death."

From 1961 to 1963, Louis W. was listed as the manager of the market; then it was no longer listed in the Directory. This is when the market changed hands, was moved, and renamed the Fremont Meat Market. The house was sold to Mr. Joseph H. Bals, and Louis' family left Fremont and moved to Washington, Nebraska. The house still stands and is owned by the Salem Lutheran Church in Fremont, Nebraska, which is where Paul R. attended church. Frank's house at 228 East 3rd no longer stands.



The tiled entrance to the Vasholz meat market still exists as of 2002

When Robert and Bertha died, Paul had to attain guardianship of his sister **Clara** (1884), and become the executor of the estate. Clara was diagnosed as "a feeble minded person," and lived her entire life at home until age 58, when she no longer had parents alive to tend to her needs. Because of the inability to keep Clara at his own home and tend to her, Paul had to admit her to the Nebraska State Home in Beatrice, Nebraska, where she died at the age of 84 on November 10, 1968.

Paul was an outgoing man and recognized by others as a leader in the community. In 1904 he organized the Pohocco Band, and in 1910, the Pohocco Boys Band of Saunders County. When he moved to Fremont in 1920 he was a member of the Fraternal Order of Eagles. He organized the Vasholz Boys Concert Band, and in 1930 he organized the Vasholz Clown Band, which played for parades and civic activities in Fremont.

Buried in the Ridge Cemetery of Fremont, plots can be found for Paul R. and Lydia M. Vasholtz, and also for Clara, Bertha and Robert Vasholz. Bertha Vasholz, the first wife of P.R. Vasholz, can be found in the Platteville Cemetery of Saunders County.



In 2002, the "Vasholtz Meat Market" sign could still be seen on the side of the building. The stained glass above the door has been removed and is said to be for sale. The current sign says "Classen's" but the store is apparently closed and used only for storage.

Chapter Twelve, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of **Heinrich "August" Vahsholz** (1841)

August and Augusta Friederike (Krueger) Vahsholz (1846) headed up the Wisconsin Vahsholtz's. Their children included:

Ludwig Herman Ferdinand "Louis" Vahsholtz (1871) who was born in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. He died in 1939. He married Ellenore Ottilie Louise "Ella" Steffen (1876), daughter of Julius Steffen and Auguste Krause. Children of Ludwig and Ellenore were:

- Herbert Johannes Richard Vahsholtz (1896) who married Esther Behling (1912). Herbert died in 1974.
- A daughter who died at birth in 1899.
- Ferdinand Herman Vahsholtz (1901) who died in 1974.
- Louis Paul Otto Vahsholtz (1904) who died at age one.

August and Augusta's second child was **Martha Franziska Josephine Vahsholtz** (1872) who married Herman Otto Wendt (1873). She died in 1918. Their children were:

- **Viola Margaret Wendt** (1899) who married Herman Philip Hofmann.
- **Ruth Elizabeth Wendt** (1902) who married Grant Edward Wordell (1902).

The third child of August and Augusta was **Anna Ulrike Bertha Vahsholtz** (1874) who married John H. Evans (1882).

Fourth came **Johannes Carl Herman Vahsholtz** (1876), born in Cedarburg and died there in 1950. He married Alwine Martha Albertine Williams (1879). Their children were:

- Esther Martha Adele Vahsholtz (1902) who died in 1954 in Milwaukee. She married Charles Ray Walters (1896). Their oldest son, Ray John W. Walters (1924), married Ruth Anna Rose Blaschka (1926) who has been working with us for several years to sort out the relationships of the Wisconsin Vahsholtz's.
- Arthur Paul Willie Vahsholtz (1905) died at age three.
- Ruth Anna Augusta Vahsholtz (1907) married Raymond Otto William Riebe (1909). Ruth died in 1990.
- Alvina Vahsholtz (1909) died as a baby.

August and Augusta named their fifth child Auguste Johanne Elsie Anna Vahsholtz (1878). She married

Georg August Ferdinand Jastrow. August was apparently quite a popular name.



Ray and Ruth Walters

Next, apparently they named another girl **Auguste Albertine Wilhelmine Vahsholtz** (1880), but that daughter died as an infant.

Paul Franz Wilhelm Vasholz (1882) came next. He married Lydia Anna Amelia Steffen (1885). He died in 1956.

When asked why his grandfather changed the spelling of his last name from his parents' spelling, **Daniel Charles** "**Dan" Vasholz** (1945) replied, "My grandfather was a salesman in the furniture business and he felt that it was easier to give his name over the phone by shortening it." Children of Paul Vasholz and Lydia Steffen were:

- Roy August Vasholz (1908) who was born in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and died there in 1974. He married Julia Wuensch (1910).
- **August John Herman Vasholz** (1910) died in 1997. His wife was Velma Clara Prange (1915).
- Shirley Emma Esther Vasholz (1926) married Richard C. Hintz (1926).

The eighth child of August and Augusta was **Ida Anna Maria Vahsholtz** (1884) who married Elmer H. Elgas (1883). They had one child, **Carol Elgas**.

Next came **Arthur August Michael Vahsholtz** (1886) who died as a young child. He was followed by **Herbert Gustav Albert Vahsholtz** (1889) who died as a baby.

Finally August and Augusta had **Arno Johann Albert Vahsholtz** (1891) who like all the others, was born in Cedarburg, Wisconsin. He died in 1946 in Milwaukee. He married Emma John (1891) and they had one child:

 Gertrude Vahsholtz (1913) who married Arthur E. Matthews.

Chapter Thirteen, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of Franz "Hermann" Albert Fahsholtz (1856)

Hermann Fahsholtz married Verena Henrietta Elizabeth "Lizzie" Hunzeker (1856). After her death in 1910, he married Anna D. M. (Buck) Bates (See Chapter Four for details).



The family of Hermann Fahsholtz in Bern, Kansas. The photo is believed to date from 1903. We've not been able to identify the individuals with certainty.

Children of Hermann and Lizzie include:

Edward "Ed" (Hunzeker) Fahsholtz (1876) who was born in Nebraska and died in 1958. He married Sussan Sophie "Susie" Krutz. According to Verena M. (Hartman) Meyer (1915), Ed was the son of Herman's first wife (Lizzie) whose husband had died. Ed was four years old when Grandpa Hermann adopted him. Verena also said that Sussie is a sister to Minnie Louise Krutz (1884), who married George L. "El" Fahsholtz (1880), Ed's younger stepbrother. Children of Edward and Sussan were:

• **George G. F. Fahsholtz** (1911), born at Linn, Kansas, who married Martha Lohmeyer and died in 1993.



George's son Lowell Fahsholtz, about 1940, is now President of Quality Homes in Summerfield, Kansas.

Alma Elizabeth Fahsholtz (1913) whose husband was Traugott Luther Juergensen (1907). Alma was a parochial school teacher in Topeka, Holyrood, and Paola, Kansas and Gary, Indiana. She also taught piano lessons for many years. She was an organist and a soloist in the churches she served. She received her Masters Degree at Washburn University, Topeka. One of her sons, James "Jim" Juergensen (1936), earned a doctor's degree and became a minister.

Herman and Lizzie's second child was **George L. "El" Fahsholtz** (1880) born in Nemaha County, who died in 1965. He married Minnie Louise Krutz (1884). They had two children:

- **Arno L. Fahsholtz** (1917) who died in 1993.
- Veleda Fahsholtz (1919) who died in 2000 in Washington, Kansas. She never married and died on the family farm where she was born.

The third child of Hermann and Lizzie was **Verena Henrietta Elisabeth "Lillie" Fahsholtz** (1882) who married Chris F. Hartman (1880). She died in 1942. She and Chris had the following children:

- Florence Unice "Saloma" Hartman (1905) who died in 1987. She married John Scheele (1901).
- Albert Edward Hartman (1908) who died in 1975. His wife was Olga Helms.
- Herman Hartman (1910), died in 1978. His wife was Marie Wurtz.
- **Louis Hartman** (1912), died in 1987. He married Edna Kohlmeier.
- Verena M. Hartman (1915) died in 1995. Her husband was Herman George Meyer (1912). Their son Dennis Clark Meyer (1940) was born in Clay Center. He was in the National Guard for six years after High School. His first year of College was at Colorado and three years at Kansas University, graduating with a BA. He has been a banker in Olathe, Kansas since 1963 and was named president of the bank in about 1993. Another son, Ned Herman Meyer (1946) had worked with the Meyer Lumber Yard for 16 years as of 1993. Their daughter, Ruth Juanita Meyer (1942) married John French and she taught elementary school.
- Willard Hartman (1918) died in 1983. He married Nora Dageford. They had no children.
- Wilbert Hartman (1920) married Winifred Potts.

The fourth child of Hermann and Lizzie was **Lenora** "Nora" Emma Fahsholtz (1884) who married David Dittbrenner (1891). She died in 1974.

Next came **Sarah Ida Fahsholtz** (1886) who married Louis "Louie" Meyer (1893). She died in 1970, having no children.

She was followed by **Jesse Fahsholtz** (1891) who married Stella Meyer (1895) and they also had no children.

Finally, their seventh child was **Rufus Albert Eli Herman F. Fahsholtz** (1895) who died in 1992. He married Alice Emma Marie Meyer (1896). Verena M. (Hartman) Meyer's October 1994 note says, "Mom's (Verena Henrietta Elizabeth [Fahsholtz] Hartman) younger sister (Sarah Fahsholtz) and two brothers (Jessie and Rufus Fahsholtz) married Meyers' brothers and sisters (Louis Meyer, Stella Meyer and Alice Meyer). This Meyer family is not related to my husband (Herman G. Meyer)."

Rufus and Alice had one child, Veda Volene
Fahsholtz (1937) whose husband was Robert Kolle
(1937).



Martin Vahsholtz (1929) furnished this picture, which he believes was probably taken in 1929, because his mother Meta (Krause) Vahsholz on the left looks pregnant. Next to her is Grandmother Hulda (Kath) Vahsholz, then Marianne Roock, probably a daughter of the next woman, Margarete Amanda "Grete" (Vahsholz) Roock, followed by Martin's sister, Inge Vahsholz (age about five) and then Herman Vahsholz, Martin's dad. The gentleman with the beard may be a farm hand. That's Hof #3, the Vahsholz's Zwilipp house in the background.

Finally, we come to the last branch for which we have information, the ones who remained in Germany.

Chapter Fourteen, Generations 6, 7 & 8

Descendants of **Robert Heinrich Ferdinand Vahsholz** (1852)

The family of Robert Vahsholz (1852) and Hulda Kath (1862) included:

Margarete Amanda Franziska "Grete" Vahsholz (1888) who married George Heinrich Wilhelm Roock. We know of one daughter, Marianne Roock (1918), who married a man named Renery.

The second child was **Robert Richard Franz Wilhelm Vahsholz** (1890) who died as a baby.

Third came **Erna Frieda Emma Anna Vahsholz** (1893) who, like the others, was born in Zwilipp. She died in 1963 in Klein Waabs. She married Heinrich Henke, a farmer also from Zwilipp. They had six sons in WWI and all survived but one, **Erich Henke**.

Fourth, **Hermann Otto Gustav Vahsholz** (1895), who married Meta Krause (1898). Hermann farmed Hof #3 in Zwilipp until the Russian invasion in 1945. His family fled to West Germany. He died in 1979 in Remagen, Rhineland. Hermann and Meta's children were:

- **Ingeborg "Inge" Lore Vahsholz** (1924), who died in 1978, in Friesdorf, Bonn.
- **Brunhilde Vahsholz** (1925), who died in Zwilipp at age three.
- Asta Vahsholz (1927).



Hulda Kath, a photo taken at a studio in Coslin

 Martin Hermann Robert August Vahsholz (1929) married Johanna "Hannchen" Anna Helene Horter (1920) who died in 2000. They attended the 1992 Vahsholtz Cousins Reunion.

The fifth child of Robert and Hulda was **Meta Herta Irma Elisabeth Vahsholz** (1897) who died as an infant.

Sixth was **Gustav Robert Reinhold Vahsholz** (1899) who died at the age of ten months.

Number seven was **Ernest Fritz Friedebert Vahsholz** (1901) who died in 1945. His wife was Margarete Kruger-Belgard.

The last child of Robert and Hulda was **Ilse Erika Sophie Vahsholz** (1906) who married Walter Giese Stettin. She died in 1991.

Following is the letter **Martin** (1929) wrote saying why he would be unable to attend the 2000 reunion:

Dear Relatives in America,

Hearty thanks for your invitation to the Cousins Reunion. I honor with pleasure to accept the invitation, but unfortunately my dear wife Hannchen died on the 15th of May this year in the hospital of Remagen. I still have a lot of paperwork/business to finish and cannot leave Remagen for a while. I would appreciate it very much if you would let the other Vahsholtz's know the sad news and why I have not written. I hope the reunion is a success and I give you my best wishes and hearty greetings to all that are there.

Your Cousin of Germany,

Martin Vahsholz

He was unable to attend the 2002 reunion either, for personal reasons, but sent this message:

Remagen, 2nd of June, 2002

Dear Bob and Dear Marge!

Received your letter. Was glad to read that you are starting to get a book together about the Vahsholz Family.

Some time ago I wrote the story about the end of 1945. I hope you will be able to utilize some of it. Should you have any questions, I am on standby and available anytime.

Should it be possible, I surely would like to order a copy of the book and will have it paid to you via my bank.

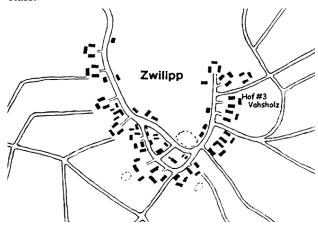
Love and Greetings with all my heart!

Martin Vahsholz

The End of 1945 A report of a young farm boy, whose inheritance in Zwilipp, Kolberg-Körlin County was all lost in 1945, because of this unholy war. *Thanks to Hildegarde V. Gross of the Mormon Family History Center in Santa Maria, California for translating Martin's story.*

I was born in Zwilipp, Kolberg-Körlin County, on the fourth of October, 1929 at the farm of my parents, Hermann Vahsholz and his wife Meta; her maiden name was Krause.

Already in my young age, I was being trained in the family farm's agricultural business. In the year of 1936 I entered the public school in Zwilipp. It was a first grade through eighth grade school. Our teacher, Max Michaelis, drilled us eight years through the school system and I graduated in 1944 from this school. In March of 1944 I was being confirmed by our Pastor Borchert and released into the hard life of the following years. Our pastor was living in Zernin, approximately six miles from Zwilipp. During the last years of war, even though he was in his eightieth year and owned a car (DKW Auto Union), he still rode his bicycle to teach his class.



This is an approximate map of the village of Zwilipp. You can see Hof #3 on the right where Martin's family lived. Hof #10 is on the left side of the map and we're uncertain of its exact location.

My school time was ended. Mother always wanted me to attend the Ordensburg "Krössinsee" College and here to be able to expand my horizons in political science. Also I was supposed to attend the Agricultural College in Kolberg/Henkenhagen, but since Germany lost the war, all that didn't happen. The German Empire crashed!

The sixth of March, 1945 was the time when the Russian troops entered Zwilipp and started to plunder and rob. "Uhri, uhri," were their first words in German and gone were our watches and clocks. Father was immediately led out of the living room and was supposed to be shot. I didn't leave his side and I was terrified that they would actually go through with it. The Russians soon noticed that Father was a hunter and therefore would have guns. Myself, I owned a silver mounted hunting gun, a present from my Uncle Hermann Vahsholz at Greifswald. We hid those weapons in the barn under the straw and certainly thought them to be safe there. The Russians pushed and beat us with their rifle butts and we had no choice but to

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⁴⁰ Watches, Watches!

hand the weapons over to them. Those weapons were beautiful, but the Russians didn't appreciate beauty and broke them all in pieces.



A recent picture of the Vahsholz house in Zwilipp

Father was again heavily beaten by them and they told him to admit that he belonged to the NSDAP (National Socialistische Arbeiter Partei or National Social Workers Union). The more Father denied that, the more they hit him. This was my first encounter with the Russians and I will not ever forget it, as long as I live.

The days went by and we were constantly intruded on by the Russians, robbing, stealing and destroying anything that got into their hands. Oh, and there were my sisters and they asked, "Where are your sisters?" My two sisters, Inge the oldest and Asta the younger, were hidden away in the cow stables under approximately three to four meters⁴¹ high of hay. Mother had to take them something to eat and drink when there was no Russian nearby. Mother had made herself look old and ugly with old headscarves and therefore they didn't bother her.



This is the brick barn that Martin's (1929) father built. Notice initials "HV" near the top. Below that is the construction date, 1932.

The Russians opened all the stables to the horses, cows, and pigs and feathered animals. Now they were running

around confused on the loose. Soon, even the animals were being herded away by the Russians.

That's when it started to be a bad time for us boys. We had to go into hiding as good as we possibly could, because the Russians needed animal/cattle herders and whoever got caught by them—goodbye forever for that boy. Three weeks later we all had to leave our farm. Before all this started, Father already had built and readied a plan-wagon (wagon-train or canvas-wagon). With two worn-out horses in front of it, we left. People, including my father, in our village were being snatched away by the GPU⁴² people and it seemed forever.



On a recent trip to Zwilipp, Martin found the village nearly in ruins again. The Vahsholz barn had fallen in and the bricks were being taken for other uses. He was able to retrieve and then restore this plaque his father had put on the barn.

All alone with that large wagon, Mother and my sisters and our farm dog Senta, journeyed in the direction of Bartin, Peuske, through Fritzow to Dassow. My horses were bathed in sweat; the wagon was much too heavy for them. We found shelter in Dassow on a farm of the family Bruno Hardt. We—I mean Mother and my sisters—slept in our canvas-wagon, which we had parked in front of their farmhouse. Also our hunting dog, Dina, was part of the party and the Russians also later took him. From Dassow, we all, including Mother, had to go to work at the nearby Altmarien Field Airport.

I learned that some of my school colleagues were located in Putzernin and I wanted very much to get in touch with them, but suddenly Russians came and bound up men and boys to herd-up cows for them. This time I was also captured, but I was lucky and was assigned to a Mongolian officer as driver with a coach and one horse.

Now in Fritzow, the evening was approaching and we had nothing to eat. The Russians quickly shot two chickens with a pistol, we plucked the feathers, cooked

⁴² Geheime Partei Union or the Secret Russian State Police

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⁴¹ Approximately 10 to 12 feet.

and ate them. At a nearby farm courtyard we heard tumultuous noises, girls and women amusing themselves with the Russians. I had to tend to the music for them with an old gramophone all through the night.

The next day we drove in the direction of Degow, they had me stop at the Lumber Mill Peuske. My Mongolian officer suggested that I should hurry and get off the coach and disappear! I was very happy. I couldn't let anyone see me anywhere; otherwise the Russians would catch me again. It was almost evening and I had the desire to get quickly back to Dassow, because Mother didn't know my whereabouts. Unfortunately I couldn't go back through Fritzow, where hundreds of drunken Russians partied and shot in the air, so I found a rye barn and here I spent the night, freezing horribly. The next morning I was able to walk through the village, because all Russians lay in a deep sleep due to their drunkenness the night before. They had plenty of potato brandy and drank it straight out of the milk barrels and lid covers.

The joy was great when I arrived again in Dassow. We had to leave Dassow, but where to now?

We turned around and went back home again, but oh my, how our place did look! In the house, everything was absolutely destroyed—broken, human waste in all the rooms, on the stairs, everywhere. Next we had to worry about how we could get our daily bread. There was nothing left, only a few potatoes in the cellar and a few whole-wheat kernels in the rye barn. Completely empty was the grocery pantry in the cellar, drinking water was gone, and we were confronted with a big O-U-T.

We had to leave our Zwilipp farm again, this time with one horse and a small wagon. The journey took us to Mechenthin, approximately seven kilometers (approx. 4.5 miles) in distance. At the time when our neighbors, Werner Radmer and family also were still with us, our dog Senta died and I buried him in their large barn.

After a few days we went home again, and on the way home I got seriously ill with a high fever, wasn't even able to unsaddle my horse. I was ill with typhus, a fever sickness and daily I lost a lot of weight. The fever went as high as 40 degrees Celsius (approx. 103 degrees Fahrenheit), for about four weeks and I started to become delirious. Mother in her distress asked Mrs. Heldt, a lovely older woman with some medical knowledge, for help and to standby. She always came in the evening and rubbed some oil from India on my body. And lo and behold in just a few days we noticed the fever declining. She had saved my life! I needed two crutches to lean on and be able to learn how to walk again, since I got so very skinny, that I could not even stand up. After a few weeks I was able to drop the crutches. Many of my school colleagues lost their lives to this treacherous illness.

Then the Russian invasion was in Zwilipp again; everything and anything that was still alive and crawling, was being forced-herded together, disposed of, snatched and secretly taken away, including me; my luck had run out this time. We were being locked-up at Mrs. Varchmin's postal facility. Then in the evening with a Panjewagon (plan-wagon or canvas-wagon) and enough Russians armed to their teeth with weapons drove us through Pustar, Bogenthin, Wobrow, Necknin, to Alt Tramm. Here we were being locked-up again in a small house. During the night inspection they forced my boots off my feet and threw me a pair of old worn-out overshoes. Alt Tramm is a small farm village before Kolberg, and was full of drunken Russians and a bunch of prostitutes and lewd women. It was horrible—dreadful.

We kept going on foot in the direction of Degow, past heavy artillery and Panzers, which had attacked Kolberg, which at this point in time hadn't yet fallen. Here I saw for the first time a Stalin Organ, 43 built on top of an American truck.

Arriving in Degendorf we were locked-up in the "Guesthouse Schwertfeger" (or Swordcutler). We were constantly being questioned here. Were you a political partisan, or part of the Hitler Jugend Gruppe (Hitler Youth Group)? I said yes, with the young folks. Questioning went on and on. By now we were here a multitude of people and tormented by hunger and thirst, but no food or drink in sight.

Arriving in Henkenhagen, they locked us up in the "Lumber Mill Glander." Finally we got some dried-up cabbage soup, and the result was devastating! The next day they sent us to work at the Bodenhagen Airport to fill bomb craters. There I got to see Germany's Luftwaffe (Airforce), always four Me 109 Jägers (Hunters) with their noses pushed together and out of fuel. I was only able to stand it for two nights here. I chanced it, escaped and went toward home, diagonally across the Kolberger City Forest. This was only possible during the night, because in the daytime we would have been snatched-up by the Russians. We were in luck; farmers named Treptow from Bartin and myself were able to arrive at our home places.

I could not believe my eyes, the whole village was vacant, empty, the men and women and children were gone, but where? After long hours of searching in the nearby forest, I found my people.

I would like to add something here. As we had to march off from Degow in the direction of Bodenhagen, some of the men who stepped out of line or fell were being shot on the spot and left there to die. I also had to look-on from the window as I saw as a Russian ride off with our stallion "Ausbund" on his three legs; the right front leg just hung there. Later we found the horse lying dead in the highway ditch.

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 $^{^{43}}$ A launch platform for multiple rockets, mounted on a truck.

A month went by with each day Russians robbing, plundering, and raping women. One morning, a sunny day, Mother called out, come quickly! There was an invasion of the Polish/ Poles in front of our farm. Two of the Poles came inside and told us that our farm is being taken over. They assigned us to a room, (our previous dining room), and we were told that from now on we had to work for them.

I discovered later that this Pole was on leave of absence from his army for one year. Now started the big drama. The Poles hated us Germans very much and we were suffering because of it. Fall was already upon us; I had been able to rescue from the German military two oneyear old colts from the last breeding of one brown horse. The Pole guy hitched that horse to a coach-wagon and drove off. I couldn't believe my eyes when he (the Pole) came back and the horse was barely able to walk. The hindguarter of the horse at the upper part of the muscular section was totally torn off and bleeding severely. What happened, the horse probably kicked back over the guard-board of the wagon and thereby his muscles were literally torn off. I couldn't hold back my tears. The Pole took the horse by its halter and led it behind the barn. took his pistol out, shot it and left the horse lying there. My two small colts were treated just as bad, they were being hitched to the big, heavy hav-mower or threshing machine and had to pull this heavy machinery. Out of patience, I said to Mother, "I want to get away from here, because I can't take it anymore." She agreed.

A few days later, I was plowing the back fields with a Polish horse, as the Pole grandfather appeared and suggested to me that I leave everything behind and take Mother and my sisters and leave the farm. Now where to? We decided to go to the train station at Degow. Mother had sewed for us backpacks from towels. We packed them quickly and we walked through the back of the farm, along the church trail, passing by the Emil Draeger's farm and along Bartin Street to Degow.

On the way to the train station, toward the right side, the Polish locked us up in a guesthouse and thoroughly robbed us, so we were left with nothing but our lives and some of Mother's silverware, but nothing to eat. They locked us up in an open freight train wagon and sent us on through Belgard and here they stole my shoes out of my rucksack. Now I really had nothing left.

In a few days, the journey continued in the direction of Stettin. At the Stettin station everything and everybody was being tossed out of the freight wagons and we spent the night at the train station. During the night, Polish and Russian vagabonds took advantage of the chance to attack and rape the girls and women. They also attacked Mother and she desperately tried to fight them off, then they beat her with the rifle butt and I threw myself over her to protect her and received the beatings instead. My two sisters got by this time and they left them alone.

The next morning the journey continued in the open freight rail wagon to Pöppendorf near Lübeck. Thank God, Americans, food to eat, ridding of lice and a roof over our head! But this wasn't our goal; we wanted to get to the Rhein-River area!

We were being further transported in an open coal-freight-wagon to the Island of Sylt. Morsum in Nissenhütten, eating, getting rid of lice, and hopefully getting some rest. We were at our wit's end, exhausted, and Mother didn't want to go on living. No news about our father's whereabouts or if he was still alive.

At our worst point, we thought of a way out, to Karow in Mecklenburg over Goldberg. Here we landed on the third of October at my sister Inge's classmate. They used to attend the School of Domestic Economy in Köslin together. They were surprised to see us and received us accordingly. Even though I was helping at their farm, harvesting carrots, they didn't invite us to eat with them and Mother had to cook our meals separately. So we didn't want to stay there any longer either and we got in touch with some relatives, Margarethe Roock and Marianne Renery in Güstrow. They helped us with our departure out of the Russian zone and finally we were able to settle down in the Rheinland area.

I wrote all this down, so it will never be forgotten, and may be of interest to posterity.

Written on the 22nd of January, 1997.

Martin Vahsholz

This story doesn't detail what happened to Hermann, his father, so we asked Martin about him:

As a 19 year-old man Father had to fight in WWI. He fought in Verdun and Cambrai as an infantryman for four years. 44 After that they sent him to the Balkans, Yugoslavia, Monastir. After being wounded, back to Russia as a prisoner and released as a prisoner to Zwilipp to take over the Vahsholz farm. In WWII he was called again to fight in 1939, but they sent him home after a few weeks to take care of the farm to raise food. He was considered indispensable on the farm. [At the end of WWII] he was taken prisoner as a civilian. This happened at the end of May in 1945. He was taken to Bromberg in Poland; later to South Russia. He came back to his family in Dorstadt, Niedersachsen by Wolfenbutel in 1950. I was learning agriculture here and it was here that I met my Hannchen and it was here that we were married.

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⁴⁴ One of the worst battles of all time, Verdun resulted in about half-a-million casualties for each side, lasted nearly a year and resulted in no strategic gains for either side. At Cambrai, the British first demonstrated the potential of tanks on the battlefield.



Hanchenn and Martin Vahsholz about 1993

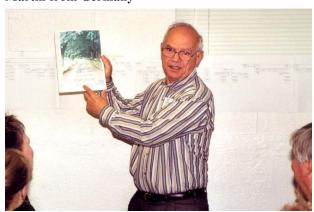
Photos From the 2002 Vahsholtz Reunion Herington, Kansas



Master of ceremonies Ruth Vahsholtz Richter with Sophie's necklace



Darrell Brockmeier reads a letter from Cousin Martin from Germany



Bob Vahsholtz shows a draft of the book



Marge requests even more genealogical data



Les Vahsholtz tells "The Pants" story



Lee & Elinor Diepenbrock Remy and Clarine Diepenbrock Jones



L to R: Merle & Lillie Vahsholtz, Millie & Jack Colvin, Ned, Alex, Dennis and Annetta Vahsholtz



Melvina Hitzeman, author of the original Vahsholtz genealogy book



Duane & Joanne Vahsholtz



Lorna Doone "Doonie" Friedrich Lungren



Erline Albrecht Vahsholtz



The Brockmeiers: Front: Daniel, Robbie and Laura Scott Middle: Stacy Brockmeier, Jonathan and Heather Nolan, Kristin and Peggy Scott, Liz Brockmeier Back: Darrell & Madeline, Darla & Laura Nolan, Rob Scott and Allan Brockmeier





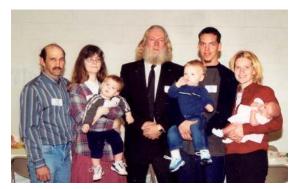
Front: Geri Tate, Janet Powell, Christina and Sophie Vahsholtz, Carole and Les Vahsholtz

Alvin, Theresa and Jamie Vahsholtz

Rear: Jim Tate, Jenny Reynolds, Tim Vahsholtz



Rubie & Alfred Vahsholtz, Olga & Hank Vahsholtz, Joan & Milton Vahsholtz, and Hattie Rathke



Doyle, Heidi & Timothy Hollis, Ron Vahsholtz, Nolan, Heather and children Tyler & Emma Vahsholtz



Front: Sandra, Courtney, Dustin, Laurele, Gale, Zachary & Richard Graham. Rear: Leonhard, Joyce Swift, Hattie Rathke, Larry Rathke and Kathy Graham



Kathy & Royce Caldron



Ron & Ruth Richter, Bob & Marge Vahsholtz



George & Teresa Vahsholtz



Della & Fred Fahsholtz and Amy Fahsholtz



The walls were lined with genealogy charts, and the tables loaded with food and conversation