

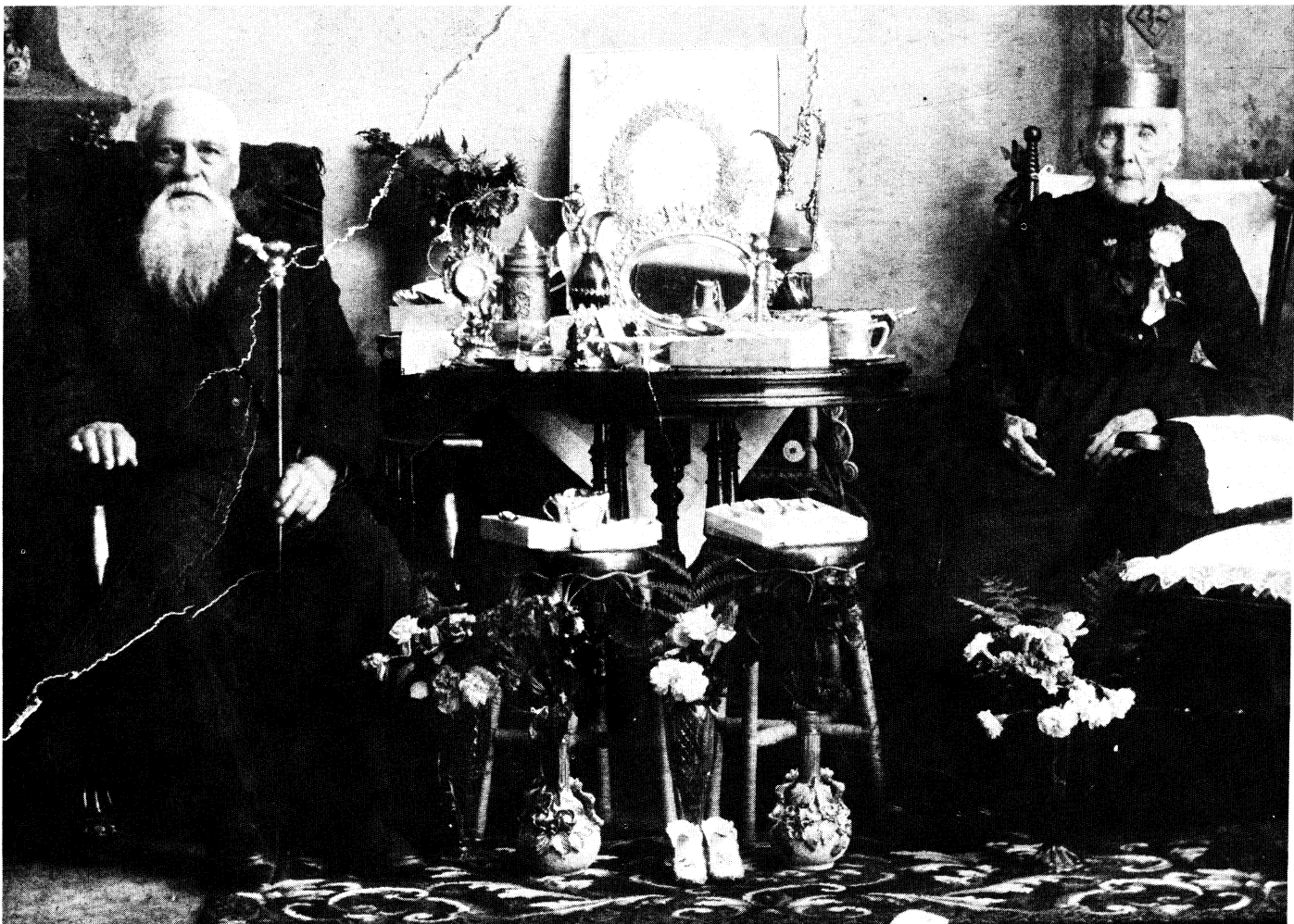
Chapter 17

French Grove History - The Wantz Family

My maternal great-great grandfather, George Wantz, was born March 3, 1825, at Breitendance, Contan Villers in Alsace which was a part of France until the Franco-Prussian War in 1870. I have been told my Great Great Grandmother Wantz was a Swiss lady - Anna Marie Warner, born January 15, 1834. However, her headstone at Hillside Cemetery, State Center, is dated January 15, 1826, and her name is Mary A. Worner. Ralph Riemenschneider, who has done an extensive family research on the Riemenschneider family history, also indicated her name spelling as Weiner. Ralph's research showed her obituary birthplace as Hechingen in Wurtemberg, Germany, and his other resources indicated her birthplace as Hochen Zollern, Switzerland. My Mother, Ruby Davis, and my Aunt Laurretta Wehrman remember her as coming from Switzerland.

In 1844, when George was 19, he came with his family to Somonauk, Illinois, and in 1846 moved to Loherville, New York. In 1845, Anna Marie (Mary Ann) Warner came to Lowville, New York. (Ralph Riemenschneider believes Loherville and Lowville are the same place since he could only find Lowville in the atlas) with her father and 5 other children - her mother having died before the family came to America.

George and Anna Marie were married October 26, 1852, at LaSalle, Illinois. In 1854, with their oldest daughter Adelaide, they came by covered wagon from Illinois to Marshall County, Iowa, to the community known as French Grove. I have always assumed French Grove was known as such due to my great great grandfather's French ancestry since they were among the first settlers in that community where they farmed for 36



**George and Mary Wantz
50th Wedding Anniversary - 1902**

years.

George made his first purchase of French Grove land from the United States November 21, 1854.

A log cabin was built west of the present Karl Freiberg home and was razed in 1965 to make place for another building. According to Karl, it was a very sturdily built structure. At first, the base of a large tree trunk was used for a table and smaller stumps were used for seats.

Throughout the years following his first purchase of land, George Wantz made numerous additions to his holdings. A grant of land was also set aside by the United States to the State of Iowa for school purposes where the Dick Castell family now reside and was known as the French Grove School, Section 16, Minerva Township. In the abstract, it shows the land issued to George Wantz March 9, 1863 and in the same year, December 3, 1863, ½ A. of land was deeded from George Wantz and wife to District Township of Minerva and was recorded January 4, 1864.

1. Initial purchase: November 21, 1854, from United States.
2. January 15, 1855 - Purchase from United States.
3. March 9, 1863 - Purchase from State of Iowa.
4. December 21, 1867 - Land deeded from Elias and Catherine Stanton.
5. September 27, 1871 - Land deeded from heirs of William G. Logsdon Estate.
6. July 10, 1872 - Land deeded from heirs of George M. Wells Estate.
7. April 26, 1879 - Land deeded from Henry and Hannah Schaper.
8. February 20, 1887 - Another tract of land deeded from Henry and Hannah Schaper.

George and Mary Ann Wantz had 4 daughters:
Adelaide (8/12/1853 - 5/ /1951) married Fred Ohlson (1/12/1845 - 1931) and farmed in Nebraska.

Emma married William Voss May 4, 1873 and lived in St. Joseph, Missouri.

Mary Ann (3/8/1855 - 3/11/1944) married Wilhelm (William) Riemenschneider (6/4/1850 - 6/10/1911) April 27, 1870, who was a farmer.

Josephine (11/8/1857 - 6/30/1944) married August Riemenschneider (12/1/1854 - 6/27/1916) April 2, 1877, who was a cattle and hog buyer.

William and August Riemenschneider were brothers who emigrated to America with their parents from Wenzel, Germany, in 1868.

The Wantzes retired from farming in 1890 when he was 65, moved to State Center and bought a home there. In October of 1902, they celebrated their golden wedding. In 1907, they moved to the home of their youngest daughter, Mrs. August (Josephine) Riemenschneider, where Mrs. Wantz died in 1908. Mr. Wantz died in 1910, having been in exceptionally good health until shortly before his death.

My Great Grandparents, Mary Ann and William Riemenschneider lived with her parents and my Grandmother Emma was the first child born in the log cabin on May 31, 1870. Two boys, William and Earnest were also born in the log cabin before the new home was built where Karl Freiberg now lives and which has had extensive remodeling at intervals throughout the years. Mary was the first child born in the new home. Since Earnest was born in 1875 and Mary in 1879, the house would have been built in the intervening years. My great grandparents had 10 children, all of whom grew to adulthood except one daughter, Hilda, who died at the age of 12. I've been told she died from "inflammation of the bowel" now known to be caused by a ruptured appendix. According to Ralph Riemenschneider's family history, all of the sons became farmers and all the daughters married farmers who settled on farms near State Center. They had families of from 1 to 12 children for a total of 50 grandchildren. Over 40 of these children grew to maturity and many have stayed in Marshall County, not far from State Center.

CHILDREN OF WILLIAM & MARY WANTZ RIEMENSCHNEIDER

1. Emma Lauretta (5/31/1871 - 12/23/1940) M. 9/22/1892 Frederick (Fred) Hilleman (12/3/1868 - 10/2/1901) - 6 children:
Lauretta Hilleman Wehrman
Leona Hilleman Ramsey
Ildra Hilleman Amendt
Ruby Hilleman Davis
Herbert Hilleman
Frederick (Fritz) Hilleman
M. June 1903 Martin Bohrisch (1/18/1871 - 1/24/1940) - 1 child:
Walter Bohrisch
2. William F. (3/14/1873 - 11/11/1916) M. 12/15/1910 Alice Nauke (12/17/1884 - 3/3/1914) - 1 child:
Roscoe Riemenschneider
3. Earnest L. (1/18/1875 - 4/2/1953) M. 1/3/1901 Emma Henze (9/3/1880 - 9/25/1916) - 2 children:
Ralph W. H. Riemenschneider
Earl G. Riemenschneider
M. 11/14/1923 Ruby Riemenschneider
4. Mary J. (8/21/1879 - 8/25/1958) M. 10/6/1898 Albert Weuve (2/21/1877 - 1/7/1965) - 7 children:
Mayme Weuve*
Hilda Weuve Ethington
George Weuve
Harold Weuve*
Verne Weuve
Leo Weuve
Raymond Weuve*

5. George W. (2/19/1882 - 1/23/1961) M. 1905 Alice Stott (12/12/1883 - 12/4/1953) - 8 children:
 Hilda Riemenschneider Hamm
 Helen Riemenschneider*
 Donald Riemenschneider
 Margaret Riemenschneider Whaley
 Frank Riemenschneider
 George Riemenschneider
 Kenneth Riemenschneider
 Carol Riemenschneider Dudley
6. Josephine (Josie) (4/17/1884 - 10/29/1955) M. 12/31/1902 Oscar Buschbom (7/26/1870 - 12/27/1956) - 12 children:
 Cordelia Buschbom*
 Florence Buschbom Sharp
 Amanda Buschbom Anderson
 Mildred Buschbom Coles
 Edith Buschbom Rand
 Helen Buschbom Dougherty
 Arnold Buschbom
 Oscar Buschbom
 Andrew Buschbom
 Arthera Buschbom*
 Althea Buschbom*
 Cecil Buschbom
7. Clara (9/1/1886 - 8/28/1959) M. 8/7/1913 Louis (Lou) Edwards (1886 - 5/29/1922) - 4 children:
 Alvin Edwards
 Florence Edwards Watts
 Dorrine Edwards Keenan
 Ruth Edwards*
8. Hilda (11/7/1888 - 5/30/1900)
9. Louis (Louie) (11/30/1891 - 8/9/1977) M. 1920 Lela Pettys (12/5/1894 - 5/16/1977) - 4 children:
 Floy Riemenschneider Steffenson
 Wayne Riemenschneider
 Don Earl Riemenschneider
 Jean Riemenschneider Daters
10. Florence (11/2/1894 - 12/4/1956) M. 6/24/1914 James P. (Jimmie) Figgins (3/26/1893 - 1/21/1957) - 5 children:
 Dale Figgins
 Doris Figgins Schaper
 Dorothy Figgins Ahrendt
 Mary Figgins*
 Richard Figgins

* These children did not live to grow up.

According to the 1907 Atlas of Marshall County, Iowa, loaned to me by Shirley and Ed Eckhardt, William Riemenschneider owned land where Boyd Van Metre now lives and also land across the road now owned by my brother, Harold (Bud) Davis.

The original home on Boyd's farm burned down and the present home was built in 1903 according to dates Boyd and Virginia found written on the plaster when they remodeled. "Willie" and "Ernie", the two oldest boys, stayed with my father's parents, George and Emma Davis, following the fire according to my aunt Mildred who still lives on the parental farm North of Boyd's.

Later William purchased a farm West of State Center on which he built a new home now occupied by the Larry Henchal's and owned by William's grandson Wayne Riemenschneider. My great grandfather died in 1911 of cancer of the stomach. Mary Ann Riemenschneider continued to live on the farm with her 3 youngest children, Clara, Louie, and Florence. Later she bought a house in town now occupied by Mary Conkin. I remember her as a neat, tiny little lady sitting in what seemed to me an enormous, high bed with a tall headboard; a semi-invalid whose hands were forever busy doing crocheting or some type of fanciwork almost to the day she died. My Great Grandmother Mary Ann died March 11, 1944, and I was a flower girl at her funeral at the old St. Paul's Lutheran Church in State Center, Iowa.

My Grandmother Emma Riemenschneider (5/31/1871 - 12/23/1940), born at French Grove, married Frederick Hilleman III (12/3/1868 - 10/2/1901) September 22, 1892. His father, Frederick Henry Hilleman II was born at Balshausen, Brunswick, Germany, December 17, 1830. The 1907 Marshall County Atlas lists the same date but place of birth as Hagenlieck. Braunschweig, Germany. Before coming to America, Fred II married Christina Hennis in Heorsun May 25, 1838. Two children were born to them in Germany - Anna (3/28/1863 - 6/1/1940) married W. Yingst and Augusta (1/9/1865 - 8/30/1937) married Swain A. Oster-son. They came to Illinois in the fall of 1865 in February, 1866, Frederick II, his brothers and sister moved to Iowa. The women and children came by train and the men migrated by wagon. At this time the railroad was being extended from Central Iowa west to Omaha. The first land was purchased in Section 29, of Marietta Township where Frederick II lived until 1873 and then moved to land purchased in Minerva Township where the Kenneth Pfantz family now lives. Other children born to Frederick II and Christina (Hennis) were Paulina (2/11/1867 - ?) married to John Reinhart, Frederick Henry III married to my Grandmother Emma and Emma (1/11/1872 3/13/1944) married to Henry L. Pfantz, Jr., 9/29/1892, who farmed the "French Grove Stock Farm".

Frederick II and Christine Hennis Hilleman moved to State Center in 1882, the same year my Grandparents, Emma Lauretta Riemenschneider and Frederick Henry III, were married. They were the parents of the following children (taken from history of Frederick I and Fredericke Uhde Hilleman descendents):

Lauretta Mary Ann Christine Hilleman (7/6/1893) married Oscar Wehrman (8/23/1891) on May 27, 1914, and celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary May 27, 1981.

Leona Augusta Hilleman (8/8/1894 - 1/1/1972) married Clyde Ramsey (3/29/1882 - 1967) on December 12, 1935.

Ildra Caroline Hilleman (11/1/1895 - 2/24/1964) married Edward Amendt (4/10/1887 - 7/21/1962) on December 3, 1913.

Ruby Marie Anna Hilleman (3/3/1897) married Carl George Davis (2/20/1897 - 10/10/1975) on August 29, 1923.

Herbert William Hilleman (8/9/1898 - 8/8/1975) married Caroline Elizabeth Tigges (5/2/1894) on October 6, 1920.

Frederick Henry Hilleman IV (12/21/1901 - 2/15/1952) married Leonora Grier (10/28/1907 - 5/9/82) on April 4, 1925.

These children were all born on the farm where Kenneth Pfantz lives. Kenneth's Grandmother Emma Hilleman Pfantz and my Grandfather Frederick Henry Hilleman III were brother and sister.

My Aunt Laurretta Wehrman remembers an Indian squaw coming to the house every winter, sometimes with a papoose on her back, asking for food and my grandmother always gave her something. My Uncle Walter Davis (8/11/1894 - 11/15/1961) also remembered Indians trapping in French Grove during the winter. Elsie Armbricht, who lived as a child east of State Center (present home of Inez Eggers) remembers seeing Indians when she walked to country school and being frightened by the sight of them.

My Grandfather Frederick Henry III was killed when he was caught in the belt of a gasoline engine used to grind feed the night of October 2, 1901. He would have been 33 years old the following day and my mother was 4 years old at the time of his death. Elsie Armbricht told me the reason he was grinding feed at night was because of Albert Hennis' wedding which was to take place the next day. In those days the weddings usually took place in the morning and it was an all day celebration so the necessary farm chores were being done the night before. (Albert Hennis was a brother to Hilda Hunzleman who now lives in State Center and Albert farmed on the land where John Paper now lives.)

My Grandmother Emma gave birth to a son Frederick Henry IV in December following the death of her husband. She remained on the farm and in June, 1903, married Martin Bohrisch. My Aunt Laurretta remembers the ceremony taking place in the living room of the home where Kenneth Pfantz lives. I remember Grandpa Bohrisch as having dark hair with a red moustache and speaking with a very strong German accent. They moved to Logan Township near Van Cleve in March, 1904, and a son, Walter, was born July 24, 1904, who married Nellie Phillips. They proceeded to build a new home and the carpenter was Matthew (Pat) Riese who was a bachelor and lived with them during the time he built the house by himself with occasional help by Chris Muschick. (Matthew (Pat) Riese was a brother to Christian Riese, the father of Earnest, Martin, Edgar and Arthur Riese, all of with whom my father, Carl Davis, threshed when I was a child near Colo.) Pat fashioned an open book out of wood and carved 1904 on the "pages" placing it in a gable on the east side of the house. The family moved into the new home in 1905.

I remember my Grandma Hilleman Bohrisch making rag rugs on a loom and using them to carpet part of the numerous rooms in the house plus making rugs for many other people. She also made many beautiful quilts and comforters. Grandma and Grandpa Bohrisch raised an enormous garden with garden paths lined with chives. Besides beautiful flowers and vegetables, they had strawberry and raspberry patches and grape arbors from which my Grandpa Bohrisch made wine. I also remember huge family dinners with mountains of delicious food and many relatives including the Hilleman's, Riemenschneiders, Buschboms, Figgins, Amendts, and Wehrmans, and also a Louie Goodman family, a neighbor, who I believe lived south on the next farm. My Step-Grandfather died January 24, 1940, and my Grandmother Emma died the same year in the home of my Aunt Laurretta Wehrman where Larry Honeck now lives. I addressed her Christmas cards for her that year, but she died 2 days before Christmas on December 23, 1940.

Submitted by Elaine E. Robins

FRENCH GROVE HISTORY - THE PFANTZ FAMILY

Henry L. Pfantz, Jr.'s father, who came from Germany, was also one of the pioneers who settled at French Grove and the home farm was known as the "French Grove Stock Farm". Henry, Sr., followed the occupation of farming up to the time of his death March 10, 1906. Henry, Jr., married my Great Aunt Emma Hilleman on September 29, 1892, and were living on the home farm at French Grove when the 1907 Marshall County Atlas was printed. Their children were:

Hilda (8/24/1893) married John Edler.
 Earl Frederick (8/7/1895) married Pearl Stone.
 Arthur Louis (12/6/1896) married Leona Schaper.
 Ralph (12/4/1898) married Florence Dahlem.
 Angeline (11/27/1900) married Raymond Wilkening.
 Harold (2/17/1903) married Frieda Koppey.
 Raymond (2/22/1905) married Grace Merservey. Grace died in 1943 and Raymond is now married to Rivola.
 Marguerite Christine (5/15/1906) married Harold Frederick Hilleman.
 Ida Emma (7/26/1909) married Ferdinand Mehlich.
 Gertrude Hannah (9/14/1914) married Wilbert Brandt who died in 1948, and she then married Nolen Eubank who died in 1975.

(Names and birthdates of children taken from history of Frederick I and Fredericke Uhde Hilleman descendants.)

Submitted by Elaine E. Robins

FRENCH GROVE HISTORY - THE SCHAPER FAMILY

My paternal Great Grandmother, Sophia Busse, was born July 20, 1844, in Hanover, Germany, and came to the United States with her parents in 1847 at the age of 3 where they settled in Illinois. My Great Grandfather, Louis Schaper, Sr., was also born in Wenzel, Hanover, Germany, June 18, 1838 (Marshall County Atlas gives her birth date as July 11, 1839) but do not know when he came to America. He and Sophia were married January 1, 1865, in a country church at Elk Grove in Cook County, Illinois, by a Pastor H. Schmidt.

Following his discharge from the Union Army in the Civil War in 1865, they came to Marshall County the same year settling at French Grove, their home located in the approximate area of the present John Maddick home and neighbors to my Great Great Grandparent Wantz's on my mother's side. (Elsie Armbricht's grandfather, Henry Busse, was a brother to my great grandmother, Sophia Busse Schaper, and who Elsie knew as "Aunt Schaper". Elsie's mother, Sophia, was born January 21, 1868, and that same year the family came by covered wagon from Illinois to Iowa. It was the early part of April when they arrived at the Mississippi and it was still frozen. They drove over the ice in their covered wagon and after they got across, the ice broke up. Elsie Armbricht also has a photograph album which her mother received on her 15th birthday, January 21, 1883, from her first cousin Emma Schaper, my grandmother, who celebrated her 15th birthday June 6 of that same year. This was the same year of the diphtheria epidemic and several families lost children to the disease including two of my grandmother Emma's younger brothers.) My Great Grandmother Sophia told my Aunt Mildred how the timber provided them with fuel and much of their food in the form of game, gooseberries, currants and other wild fruits. At first Minerva Creek furnished them with water - - washing done on a wash board and hung over bushes to dry. Before a barn was built, a straw stack was used for wind protection when Louis milked his cows. He was also an avid pipe smoker and one day when Sophia looked out the window, his "barn" was going up in smoke, thanks to his incessant pipe puffing.

My mother, Ruby Davis, my Aunt Mildred Davis and her first cousin, Esther Bangtson, gave me information concerning the children of Sophia and Louis Schaper who survived to adulthood. Shirley Eckhardt also gave me the information concerning the 4 children buried at Hillside with their parents near State Center. According to Mildred, they were first buried in the Hartwig timber at French Grove. These children are:

Louis H. 1866-1867
 Carl A. 1874-1883
 Freddie H. 1879-1883
 Edward C. 1886-1886

These graves are now located in the northern part of Hillside Cemetery and not far from the tombstones of

George and Mary Ann Wantz, my maternal great great grandparents. A diphtheria epidemic caused the death of the 2 children in 1883. In severe cases of diphtheria, a grayish membrane covers the tonsils and throat obstructing the airway. As told to me, a Dr. Engle from State Center was called who removed the membrane with a pliers (? my thinking would be a surgical forceps) to open the airways but the children subsequently hemorrhaged to death. In connection with this incident, Elsie Armbricht told me that Dr. Engle told "Aunt Schaper", as she was called by great grandmother Sophia, that she should burn all the bedding and clothing of the children. This was too much for Sophia's frugal spirit. She said she would not burn up any bedding or clothing but wash everything and if she died, she died. She did the washing, she did not contract diphtheria, and she lived on to be 84 years old. Also, I've been told another baby was stillborn to Sophia when she was 45 years old after the death of her husband, but I have no records concerning this child. Louis, Sr., died August 24, 1889, at the age of 51 years due to complications of "lung fever" contracted when he was in the Civil War.

The children of Louis, Sr., and Sophia Busse Schaper are:

Louis H. (1866-1867)
 Emma (6/6/1868 - 9/24/1957) married 2/28/1892,
 George Benjamin Davis (6/2/1863 - 3/11/1947)
 Louis "Louie" (4/ /1870 - ?) married Anna Larson (died of tuberculosis), married "Aunt Millie" Leifheit.
 William C. (7/9/1872 - 2/13/1942) married 2/20/1902,
 Martha Jessie (10/15/1879 in Germany - 10/ /1964).
 Carl A. (1874-1883)
 Henry C. (2/16/1877 - 4/21/1962) married 2/6/1902,
 Lena Eggers (3/4/1881 in Selbeck, Hanover, Germany - 9/27/1960)
 Freddie H. (1879-1883)
 Conrad "Uncle Cooney" (1/20/1881 - 5/5/1962) married Lydia Nolte.
 Mathilda "Aunt Tillie" (12/3/1883 at French Grove - 2/19/1975) married 9/5/1907, Otto Edler (6/4/1886 at State Center - 6/4/1945).
 Edward C. (1886-1886)

Following the death of Louis Sr., Sophia filed for guardianship of her children to Henry L. Smith February 21, 1890. Mr. Smith was the grandfather of Harley Smith whose wife Cordelia now lives in State Center. The names and ages of the children are listed in this order: Emma - 21, Louis - 19, William - 17, Henry - 12, Conrad - 8, and "Tilly" - 5.

Apparently before Louie died, he purchased and built on the land where Jim and Kathleen Montgomery now live (Kathleen would be a great grandchild) since Sophia's obituary states they had moved to a farmstead NE of State Center. The farm was also the home of a daughter, Mrs. Otto Edler (Tillie) and her husband with whom Mrs. Schaper made her home much of the time after the death of her husband, August 24, 1889. The 1907 Marshall County Atlas shows Sophia Schaper as the owner of this land in the NW corner of Section 24. She

died at the home of Emma and George Davis (my grandparents) on a Maundy Thursday evening March 29, 1929, at 9:00 p.m. due to infirmities of old age. In her latter years, it was necessary for her to have gallbladder surgery when she was living with Tillie and Otto. A Dr. Chesire, a Marshalltown surgeon and Dr. Ira Kaufman from State Center performed surgery on the kitchen table using only LOCAL ANESTHESIA. As told to me, they removed 140 gall stones from the size of peas to a walnut - - the little ones heavier and the largest one of very light weight. Pastor Henry C. Koepke was called to sit with her during the surgery and comforted her in her German language which she loved to speak. A registered nurse was assigned to the case 24 hours around the clock (this was standard procedure for private duty nurses in hospital cases also) and when she was well enough to travel she was moved to George and Emma's home to convalesce. Sophia never fully recovered mentally or physically following the traumatic ordeal of her surgery. According to a newspaper clipping -- Funeral services were held at 1:00 p.m. at the George B. Davis home and 1:30 p.m. at St. John's Lutheran Church in charge of Rev. Henry C. Koepke. Burial was in Hillside Cemetery.

Now, the story of my grandmother Emma, the first child of Sophia and Louis Schaper to grow to maturity. When Emma was born June 6, 1868, in the area of the John Maddick home, much of the land was still heavily timbered. She was baptized June 28, 1868, by a Pastor C. Wuensch in French Grove school house (present home of the Dick Castell family) where regular services were also conducted. She was confirmed April 2, 1882, by Pastor C. F. Hermann in the German language at the French Grove Lutheran Church, now known as St. John's Lutheran Church of State Center, Iowa. She also attended the parochial school which had been erected in 1880-1881 on the church grounds.

My grandmother Emma married my grandfather, George Benjamin Davis (Davies in Wales) February 28, 1892, at French Grove Lutheran Church. He was born June 2, 1863, at Pembrokeshire, Wales, where he was baptized and came to America when he was 9 years old. His father, James Davies (1/5/1821 - 3/20/1903) was born at Hodgeston, South Wales, and married Margaret Wright (6/11/1827 - 6/9/1899) at Warren, South Wales, June 6, 1846. She was born at Stockpool, South Wales.

In January 1873, James Davis and 2 children came to America and settled in Big Rock, Illinois. Margaret came with 7 more children, including my grandfather, in April of the following year. A sister Fanny (1/18/1851 - ?), who was married, remained in Wales. The oldest child also named Fanny was born 5/23/1848 and died 8/19/1850.

The reason for leaving Wales was that times were hard and money was scarce. Much of the crops that were grown on the Crowder estate on which James Davies was a tenant farmer were always destined for the Crown. After the fields were harvested, a detail of men would

come and measure the depth of the big grain bins to determine how much was on hand. This was done by forcing a measuring stick into the bin. A large percentage of each crop was hauled away post haste to the Crown storage.

One spring day when my grandfather George and a brother Richard were out in the fields throwing sticks and stones at the ravens to keep them from eating the newly planted seed of the "black pease", an older brother William came running to them all excited and yelling: "We are going to America" over and over again.

Another reason for leaving Wales was that a Lord Edwin Reed, a son of the overseer of the large Crowder estate, wished to marry my grandfather's sister, Fanny. Many disagreements took place over this affair since his family did not want their son to marry a commoner. They did marry however and the father retaliated by cutting the son's pension to a mere pittance. They eventually separated, but Fanny had saved money with which she purchased a large structure for the aged known as a GOTHIC HOUSE in England and which she operated until shortly before her death. (Another interesting note: Fanny studied music in Wales and was a gifted player of the large upright harp. Queen Victoria heard of her and arranged to have a tutor give her additional lessons. Due to her musical accomplishment, she became a celebrity and had the honor to play before royalty many times.

It took several weeks to cross the ocean and there was much sickness aboard ship. Also, two very bad storms were encountered enroute. The family was eventually reunited and made their permanent home in Big Rock, Illinois.

My grandfather George was 18 years old when he came to Iowa with his younger brother Richard in 1881.

After their marriage, February 28, 1892, my grandparents settled on a farm 1 mile west of St. John's and approximately 1½ miles southwest of French Grove - the birthplace of my grandmother. My Welsh and English speaking grandfather was confirmed March 27, 1892, in the German language which he understood but was not able to speak fluently. He was confirmed in the church parsonage of the French Grove Lutheran Church by a Pastor P. Meinecke. Some of my fondest memories of this kind, wonderful, old gentleman are his singing the old "Welsh Lullaby" to me in his native language.

The 200 acre farm on which George and Emma first lived belonged to her mother Sophia. Sophia and Louis Schaper purchased this land in 1886 from Charles and Josephine Grimsehl, cousins of Sophia. On August 8, 1896, a land transaction was made to George and Emma Davis from Sophia and minors. In March 1899, another exchange was made from Bill and Louis Schaper, Emma's 2 older brothers. My grandparents built a new home in 1913 in which my Aunt Mildred now lives and remained on the same farm until the end of their days. George died March 11, 1947 and Emma

September 24, 1957. Children of George and Emma Davis:

1. Walter, born August 11, 1894, confirmed April 12, 1908 by Rev. A. J. Boehm, died 11/15/1961.
2. Carl George Davis, born February 20, 1897, baptized 3/21/1897 by A.J. Boehm, confirmed March 20, 1910 by A.J. Boehm, died 10/10/1975.
- 3.&4. Mildred Matilda Sophia and stillborn twin sister, born May 16, 1903, baptized June 21, 1903 by A.J. Boehm.

This was the first set of twins delivered by Dr. Ira Kaufman of State Center. My grandmother was very ill from uremic poisoning and not expected to live.

Mildred was confirmed April 1, 1917, at French Grove Lutheran Church by Pastor Henry Markworth. This was the last class to be confirmed in the German language due to growing animosity towards anything German in W.W. I. Due to these feelings, part of the class was confirmed in the German language in a morning service and five were confirmed in the English language in the evening. Mildred and the largest share of the class were confirmed in the morning since most of the families were very proud of their German heritage despite the war -- especially great grandma Sophia who felt you just weren't properly confirmed unless it was in her beloved German language.

5. Harold George, born September 24, 1905, baptized October 22, 1905, by A. J. Boehm. He died October 29, 1912, due to peritonitis after a long illness from injuries sustained in a runaway horse and wagon accident.

When my Aunt Mildred was still very small, corn was only 3¢ per bushel. She remembers my grandpa George Davis hauling corn by sled to the Fricke homestead where the Glen Eggers family now lives. The money from the corn was used to buy coal from State Center. Since money was scarce, for Christmas my very practical and thrifty grandfather made Mildred an open shelf cupboard from the many wooden spools saved by my grandmother who was a seamstress. As a young girl, Emma went to Marshalltown and earned her board and room learning to be a professional seamstress. Grandpa used the roughly hewn wood from packing boxes in which food staples (dried fruits, etc.) were boxed on the occasional trips to town for supplies for the shelves of the "spool" cupboard. Crackers, dried fruit, etc., were stored in a porch and she remembers my Uncle Walter and father Carl going out for "snacks" at bedtime. He made a portable plant shelf for grandma's geraniums which had prolific blooms throughout the winter with the aid of all the humidity from laundry forever drying in the old house where they first lived.

The green paint he used on both gifts was given to him by an Ed Bishop who had a grocery store on the south side of West Main Street used by Tony Kastner at

this writing. My Aunt Mildred still has the plant shelf and the "spool" cupboard with their original coat of green paint which she and her mother received so long ago. Both pieces are in excellent condition, not only due to the good workmanship and high quality of paint -- but mainly to the loving care they've been given these many years. It was one of the most delightful and memorable Christmas gifts she ever received.

My father, a third generation French Grove descendant, Carl George Davis, married my mother, Ruby Marie Anna Hilleman, a fourth generation French Grove descendent, August 29, 1923. They were married in the church parsonage at St. John's Lutheran Church by Pastor A.W. Brauer (Father of Ruth Stuempfig whose husband, Pastor E.L. Stuempfig came to serve St. John's in 1965). Their attendants were Eleanor and Leon Wengert.

Their first home was in State Center in Ben Gray's mother's house where Elizabeth Bowman now lives. The next year they moved to George Frohwein's house in the NE part of State Center. They moved to the Colo farm in March 1926 and built a new home in 1951. About 1941, my father bought the farm west of the home place and a new home was built on this place in 1963. They moved into this new home on the west place on a nice sunny day in February 1964. Nile Hartwig and sons Richard and Russell helped my parents move. My father died of cancer October 10, 1975 in his home on the farm on a beautiful, warm, and sunny fall day.

My parents Carl and Ruby Davis had four children:

1. Elaine Emma born November 22, 1925.
2. Myrna Mae born April 28, 1927.
3. Kathryn Jean born June 30, 1928.
4. Harold George born August 9, 1930.

Blair Eugene Robins (6/10/1925) from Grundy Center, Iowa, and I were married August 29, 1948, in the old St. Paul's Lutheran Church in State Center since our St. John's had been destroyed by fire January 1, 1945. Construction on the new church had progressed to the point that regular church services were held in the basement. Our wedding reception was held in the church basement.

After farming several years, we bought our present home in Clemons from the Lloyd Binkert family and moved here in July 1955.

The earliest memory I have of Clemons is not a pleasant one. When I was very small, I delighted in staying for visits at my Grandpa George Davis's, but occasionally they would bring me to the Clemons barber shop to get my hair "shingled" high upon my head in the back and above my ears on the sides. That I detested.

More pleasant memories are the ones connected with our St. John's Lutheran Mission Festivals held behind the creamery in the Clemons Park. Elsie Armbrrecht told me that her son Richard who was born May 30, 1926,

was baptized in the Clemons Park at the Mission Festival picnic which was usually held the second Sunday in June. If I remember correctly there was a bandstand in the park, lots of good food to eat, ballgames in the afternoon and the most fun of all was walking across the swinging bridge over Minerva Creek.

Other good memories are picnics with the Wengert and Lahr families (Mrs. August Lahr was Velma Wengert) and wading in the creek. Years later my parents made frequent trips north of Clemons to deliver eggs to the Richard Easton's who operated a hatchery for several years.

We are the parents of 6 children:

1. Jeanette Louise (October 6, 1949) married to David Helland. They have 2 sons: Trenton born February 27, 1975, and Marshall born January 1, 1981. They live in Effingham, Illinois.
2. Jeanine Kay (November 6, 1950) married to Kenneth Worl. They have one daughter: Christin Elizabeth born May 14, 1981. They live in Tempe, Arizona.
3. Bruce Carl (January 12, 1954) lives in State Center.
4. Jeanelle Christine (January 18, 1958) lives in Tempe, Arizona.
5. Jeanice Elaine (May 18, 1960) married to Rick Pundt, lives in State Center.
6. Jeananne Marie (February 24, 1965) living at home in Clemons.

Our grandchildren, Trenton, Marshall and Christin are sixth generation Schaper and seventh generation Wantz descendants from French Grove pioneers. French Grove County Park today is one of my favorite spots to visit for its natural beauty and peaceful surroundings. It is also a bird watcher's paradise.

Throughout the years, the French Grove Timber was divided into many small parcels of land which have been owned by numerous area families. In the early days, the timber served as a main source of fuel for its owners. Some of the family names of former owners given to me are: Wantz, Schaper, Pfantz, Hartwig, Riese, Henze, Beye and Armbrrecht.

Submitted by Elaine E. Robins

HISTORY OF ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

White settlers were beginning to displace the roaming Indians around the middle of the last century. Without railroads and improved highways this part of the state remained but thinly settled until the end of the Civil War. As conditions adjusted themselves after the Civil War and when the railroads had made their advent into the state, conditions changed rapidly. Thousands of farmers from Illinois, Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky, and from the northern European countries, took up homesteads on

the virgin prairies of the state. Immigrants came in steady streams and many of them were of German origin.

A few German families settled in this vicinity. Here they found conditions ideal for establishing their homes and in due season they prospered as God showed His blessings upon them. These pioneer German Lutherans were brought up in the fear of God and they also longed to do their God given duty toward their children. They wanted their children brought up in the faith of their fathers.

This longing was satisfied when a few Lutheran families were placed under the shepherding care of a circuit riding missionary, Rev. Lossner, and later under the spiritual care of Rev. F. Doescher, who was residing at Ft. Dodge, Iowa. One of the Rev. F. Doescher's assistants reported to his mission board that he had traveled 6,622 miles in saddle and buckboard during the year.

About ten years after the founder of Marshalltown had plotted the city and had with the assistance of his friends, wrested the county seat from Marietta in 1853. Rev. Lossner, a Lutheran missionary, came here to supply the religious needs of the German Lutherans of that place and vicinity. The bloody Civil War, however, greatly retarded the progress of his work, which he was conducting with a great deal of self-denial. Later his work was continued by Rev. E. Doescher.

On the 17th of April, 1865, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized by missionary Doescher. It was also known as French Grove Lutheran Church. The constitution that was adopted at that time was signed by nine members. The charter members of the church were: Louis Hartwig, Henry Oehlsen, Louis Frohwein, Henry Schaper, Fred Bader, August German, August Eckhardt, George German, and Fred Oehlsen. These families were content for the time being to worship in the Old Center School House. In the Fall of the same year the piece of ground was bought on which later a church building with annex for school purposes and a parsonage was erected. This five acres of ground was purchased for \$100 from George German, one of the founding fathers. Should St. John's ever be dissolved, the covenant of the church gives the owner of the other 75 acres of the original George German 80 first option to buy the church property. The present owner is Mary Eckhardt Conkin. It is also recorded the cornerstone cost the sum of twelve dollars. The church of today, stands on this same piece of land.

This little flock was then ministered to by missionary Lossner, and later on by Rev. Mertens. After Rev. Mertens, Rev. Doescher, then stationed at Timber Creek, took charge and was finally called by the congregation as its resident pastor. He was succeeded by Rev. Wunsch. After Rev. Wunsch a certain Mr. Kugland, by profession a veterinary surgeon, offered his services as pastor to the congregation on the ground of his being well versed in the Scriptures. During his short tenure of

the ministerial office the first parsonage was destroyed by fire, causing also the loss of church records. The records were then commenced by Rev. P. Studt, then pastor at Luzerne, Iowa, who ministered to the congregation during its partoral vacancies.

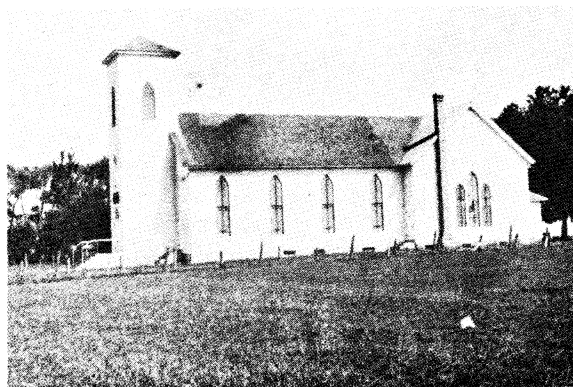
On April 17, 1870 Rev. Doescher, then living at Boone, Iowa, was privileged to confirm the first class consisting of the following catechumens: Katy Schaper, Minnie Schaper, Vena Eckhardt, Hanna Eckhardt, Caroline Eckhardt, Mary Bader, Tillie Bader, Fred Hilleman, August Tops, Mary Rafeld, Caroline Tops, Hanna German, Mary Eckhardt, and Edward Rafeld.

In the year 1872 Rev. C. F. Herman was called and for twelve years, from August 4, 1872, to Easter 1885, faithfully served the congregation. Soon the flock had increased so that it became necessary to provide a new church building. The voting members, 29 in number at the time, erected the new church at a cost of \$4,000, and it was dedicated on the 18th of October 1874. Most of the members were then yet poorly situated and were obliged to borrow the money for the church building fund at 12 percent interest. They also erected a school building in 1880.

Rev. C. F. Herman was followed by Rev. P. Meineke who took charge from 1885-1892. In the Fall of 1889 the church bell, weighing 1,800 pounds, and costing \$348 was installed. At this early stage of St. John's history the congregation was mission minded as can be seen from a paragraph gleaned from the Fiftieth anniversary booklet of the sister congregation at Hubbard, Iowa. The paragraph reads: "A debt incurred through the building of the church soon caused great concern. The congregation was poor and the members few. Payment of the note was due. In their great distress the members appealed to the sister congregation at State Center. The fellow Christians at that place granted the Hubbard parish to solicit funds. A committee canvassed the French Grove congregation and raised sufficient money to liquidate the indebtedness. To this day St. John's congregation of Hubbard is indebted to the church at State Center for having helped to save the church. Humanly speaking, it was the support of these friends in Marshall Conty that saved the Lutheran cause at Hubbard.

Rev. A. J. Boehm was the next pastor to serve and was installed November 6, 1892. He also taught in the school along with his pastoral duties. In 1902 a pipe organ, costing \$671, was dedicated on the third Sunday in Advent. Elsie Armbricht remembers the pipe organ with a hand pump bellows on the north side of the old church. When Pastor Boehm, who was also the organist, was ready to play, he would tap a little black pedal on the organ. This was the signal for an older boy assigned to the job to pump the handle which was about two feet long to fill the bellows with air to get sound from the pipe organ. The church was also lit by kerosene lamps for evening services. The furnace was installed and only the older members who saw the long line of stove pipes could fully appreciate this improvement. A new

parsonage was built in 1900. During Pastor Boehm's shepherding the services were changed to English. Toward the close of 1911, after nineteen years of faithful and successful service, Rev. Boehm accepted a call to the Lutheran congregation at Ogden, Iowa.



The old St. John's Lutheran Church which burned Jan. 1, 1945

Rev. H. Markworth became St. John's next pastor, being installed in January of 1912. He was instrumental in organizing the present Ladies Aid Society. While Rev. Markworth was pastor of this congregation the membership had grown to such an extent that an addition had to be built in 1917. Elsie Eggers and Bill Armbricht were married November 29, 1917, and she remembers that all the work was not yet completed. The pipe organ was moved to the south side of the new addition and was now operated by an electric powered pump since electricity was also installed at this time. St. John's celebrated the fiftieth anniversary in 1915. The following paragraph from an old newspaper says: "The original small flock has increased so that at present it numbers over 500 souls. Within this space of time, as far as the records show, there have been baptized 1,000 children, confirmed 500 children and adults, married 186 couples, and buried 225 persons." The services of Pastor Markworth came to an end and all too soon. Due to ill health he had to resign from his life's calling.

Rev. A. Brauer was called to be Rev. Markworth's successor. He faithfully served the congregation from 1920-1924. The congregation gave him a peaceful release to take up a charge at Keystone, Iowa. The Luther League was organized while Rev. Brauer was here. This organization later became the Walther League.

Rev. H. C. Koepke became the pastor in 1924. Mission treasuries, charities and other worthy causes had an ardent and enthusiastic advocate in Rev. Koepke. It was he who prevailed upon the congregation to organize and establish a Sunday School in 1928. It was also Pastor Koepke who saw the need and possibility of a congregation at Marshalltown. The growth and progress of the sister congregation, Redeemer of Marshalltown, shows the wisdom of his vision and labor. Also three of his sons entered the ministry and although in failing health, Rev. Koepke labored faithfully until the Lord called him home.

Rev. William J. F. Zabel was installed as pastor on May 3, 1931 and served until October 1940. The Diamond Jubilee was celebrated during his pastorate. He was given a peaceful release to become pastor at Charlotte, Iowa.

Rev. Geo. H. Perlich became the shepherd of St. John's in January, 1941. He came from Keokuk, Iowa, and served faithfully for fifteen years. The German services were discontinued entirely in 1941 and the order of service was changed also. The constitution was revised in 1942.

The church was completely remodeled, refurnished, and rededicated at a cost of \$10,000. This rededication of the interior was held on June 27, 1943. The basement was remodeled in 1944. The highest membership was attained under the leadership of Rev. Perlich. It was 740 baptized souls, 536 communicants, and 133 voters.

Six months later a disastrous fire occurred on the night of January 1, 1945. The fire was discovered by the custodian, Henry Oehlsen, about 8:20 in the evening. Attempts to enter the church to save the church Bible and other records proved futile and St. John's church was completely destroyed. The loss was about \$35,000. This fire caused many conscientious decisions to be made. Some wanted the church to remain at the country location. Some wanted to build a church in town. A

peaceful release was granted 164 communicants, 220 souls, on April 18, 1945. This group formed Trinity congregation, State Center, which was organized on April 11, 1945.

St. John's held services in the State Center high school gym until April 1942. Weddings and funerals were held in other Lutheran churches in the area. Organizations of the church had their meetings in the homes of the members. After many delays of the architect, the ground breaking for the present church edifice was held on June 23, 1946, and church services in the basement of the new church began in April, 1947. The cornerstone for the church was laid in a special Thanksgiving Day service, 1948. At that time thank offering gifts were made in the amount of \$27,000.

The dedication of the present church building was held April 18, 1950, along with a celebration of the 85th anniversary of the church's organization. More than one thousand persons attended the dedication service. The cost was set at \$225,000 plus many, many hours of labor by members, and the church building was paid for soon after. In May 1955, lightning struck the steeple and caused a small fire. The damage was about \$5,000. Rev. Perlich was very reluctantly released to accept a call to Janesville, Minnesota, and preached his farewell sermon on January 8, 1956.

Rev. Walter B. L. Strandes was called to succeed



St. John's Lutheran Church, State Center.
Also known as "French Grove" Lutheran Church and the "German" Lutheran Church.

Rev. Perlich. He served St. John's until August, 1961. He faithfully administered to all, especially to the aged and shut-ins. He was installed on September 23, 1865 and went to Elma, Iowa, in 1961.

Rev. Robert L. Thoeke was called from Idaho, and was installed on June 3, 1962. He was the pastor until November 15, 1964, when he was peacefully released to accept a pastorate at Kewanee, Illinois. Pastor Thoeke manifested a deep interest in the music of the church and added to the Communion Service by chanting the liturgy. He was especially helpful to the young people of the congregation. Ground breaking for a new parsonage was held April 16, 1964, and Pastor Thoeke, wife Nancy, and family moved into the Morrell Funke home at Clemons, now owned by Maudie Pritchett. The new parsonage was finished early in 1965 at a cost of \$30,000.

Rev. E. L. Stuempfig, who had served as pastor of Concordia Lutheran Church in Waterloo, Iowa, became St. John's seventeenth pastor. He was installed on April 25, 1965. This was also the centennial year of the church. Pastor Stuempfig retired after 10 years at St. John's and he and his wife, Ruth, built a new home at Marengo, Iowa. At present he is serving as vacancy pastor at Trinity Lutheran Church at Dillon. Ruth is the daughter of Pastor A. Brauer who served at St. John's from 1920-1924.

Pastor Lyle Kiemz was our next pastor from 1975 until 1977. Many will remember his weekly column in the State Center Enterprise known as "Klergy Klatter" by Klemz.

In August 1977, Pastor Marvin Flansch, wife Joyce, and family moved to St. John's. Since his coming, the most ambitious project has been the establishment of the Clemons Lutheran School in its second year of existence assisted by members from Redeemer, Marshalltown, and Trinity, State Center.

Many of the younger members of St. John's have gone into the ministry and the parochial school profession. Mike Maddick, son of John and Helen Beaty Maddick of rural State Center, is in his first year at Concordia Seminary at Fort Wayne, Indiana, studying for the ministry. His first two years of study were at St. Paul's, Concordia, Missouri, and his next two were at Concordia in Ann Arbor, Michigan, from which he graduated before entering the seminary.

Other members of St. John's who entered the ministry were the sons of Pastor Koepke, Victor, Luther and Theodore; Rev. Rodney Riese (deceased) son of Martin, Sr., and Irene Armbrrecht Riese; Rev. Schuler; son of Alvin and Elva Elliott Schuler and Rev. Charles Bell (deceased) son of Fred and Estella Armbrrecht Bell.

Those who studied as parochial school teachers were Louis Armbrrecht (deceased) son of Bill and Elsie Eggers Armbrrecht; Dean Wengert, son of Rollie and Lillian Bernard Wengert, and John Fricke, son of Elmer and Dorothy Muschick Fricke. John has been a professor

of Biology at Concordia at Ann Arbor, Michigan, but is currently on sabbatical leave working towards his doctorate at Michigan State in East Lansing.

Others who studied for the teaching profession are: Helen Riese Burge and Evelyn Riese Lutz, daughters of Art, Sr. and Lois Pfantz Riese; Janet Jessen Komarchuk, daughter of Edwin and Anna Busse Jessen (Edwin is a son of C. E. Jessen who taught at St. John's from 1915-1922); Dorothy Hunzelman Lensch, daughter of Warren and Hilda Hennis Hunzelman; Martin Riese, Jr., son of Martin, Sr. and Irene Armbrrecht Riese; Delores Meadows, daughter of Harley and Cordelia Voight Smith.

Mary, daughter of Howard and Marcella Probst Riese of rural Colo is currently studying at Concordia in Seward, Nebraska. Another daughter and also a Seward graduate, Lynne (Mrs. Larry) Pfantz is presently teaching 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades at the Clemons Lutheran School.

Two other Seward graduates are sisters Jean Armbrrecht and Joyce Armbrrecht Narrington, daughters of Hugo and Muriel Wengert Armbrrecht. Jean is presently teaching at Detroit, Michigan, after a 3 year stint at Kabala in Sierra Leone, West Africa, teaching children of the natives and of other missionary families. Her main objective is working with the Lutheran Bible Translators, a very difficult task in translating the Bible into the many dialects of the native tribes.

St. John's has maintained a cemetery almost from the beginning.

About 19 members served in W. W. I, some 50 men and women served in W. W. II, and members also served in the Korean and Viet Nam conflicts. The supreme sacrifice was paid by Harland Pfantz in W. W. I and by Morris Fricke in W. W. II. Later, Kenneth Schuler died while serving his country.

As of January, 1982, 459 baptized members belong to St. John's.

Submitted by Elaine E. Robins

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

On the 17th of April, 1875, St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church was organized by a circuit riding missionary by the name of Rev. F. Doescher who resided at Fort Dodge, Iowa. It was also known as "French Grove Lutheran Church" due to its location near French Grove village as well as the "German Lutheran Church" since that was the language preached in the church due to the predominantly German immigrant settlers in the area.

The nine charter members of the church were: Louis Hartwig, Henry F. Oehlsen, Louis Frohwein, Henry Schaper, Fred Bader, August German, August Eckhardt,

George German and Fred Oehlsen. Area descendants of the German race relate that August and George German had the surname of Garbelmann when they first came to America: Garbelmann is the Teutonic translation of the word "German". The 1907 atlas has printed the name as "Gerbelmann". The Dorthea Garbelmann, daughter of August Garbelmann, Sr., in school sketch #9 is the same Dorthea German who married G. J. Wengert. At first these families worshipped at the French Grove or #5 Center School which was probably built in 1864 since the land had been deeded to Minerva Township by a Frenchman, George Wantz, December 3, 1863.

In the fall of 1865, the charter members of the new church group purchased 5 acres of land in Section 22 on which they later erected a church building with an annex for school purposes, but a parsonage was erected first. The 5 acres of ground was purchased for \$100 from the SW corner of 80 acres of land owned by George German, one of the founding fathers. The cornerstone of the church with the school annex cost the sum of \$12.

The 1871 map indicates a road running north and south cutting Section 22 on which the church property is located into a west quarter section with the north 80 owned by George Wantz who settled at French Grove in 1854 now owned by Karl Freiberg. The south 80 acres was owned by Henry F. Oehlsen, Sr. On the east side of the road, the middle 160 acres of Section 22 to the north is also owned by Henry F. Oehlsen, Sr.

On the middle 80 acres to the south is 75 acres now belonging to Henry Schaper and in the SW corner is the 5 acres of church property which is the site of the future church and parochial school frame buildings. The 80 acres south of the church is divided into a west 40 owned by A. Stellet and an east 40 owned by F. Oehlsen.

The east quarter of Section 22 was divided into a north 80 acres belonging to E. Tuttle and the south 80 also belonged to H. Schaper, adjoining the east end of his 75 acres and the church property. The 1981 atlas showed the same east quarter section belonging to Martin Gerke (now deceased) and a sister, Laura.

The 1885 map shows 80 acres south of the church owned by Henry Zeisneiss and all of the middle section to the north owned by Henry Oehlsen, Sr., plus the 80 on the west side of the road for a total of 315 acres. The 5 acres is designated as the "German Church".

The 1907 map indicates the 5 acres as the "German Lutheran Church" and the south 80 is now owned by Henry Nolte. Henry F. Oehlsen owns 80 acres in Section 21 adjacent to the 80 acres west of the church in Section 22 and the following sketch is printed in the 1907 atlas concerning father and son: "H. F. OEHLSEN, a wealthy and influential farmer of Minerva Township, owns and occupies a beautiful homestead on "Pleasant Home Farm", located on section 22. Here he was born, July 31, 1861, to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Oehlsen. Mr. Oehlsen, the elder, moved with his family from Illinois into Marshall County in March of the year 1861 and

located on the farm on which he still lives. In the German Lutheran Church, which stands on the south part of the home farm, occurred the marriage of H. P. Oehlsen to Miss Margaret Thoma, a daughter of John Thoma, who came from Erie County, New York, to Marshall County in 1882. Mr. and Mrs. Oehlsen are the parents of seven children, namely: Anna, Margaret, Walter, Clara, Emmanuel, Henry and Arthur. The family has been affiliated with the German Lutheran Church for a great many years. Henry Oehlsen, Sr., being treasurer of the church for over thirty years, after which he was succeeded by H. F. Oehlsen, who still holds the office. The latter was also director of the German Lutheran School from 1894 to 1900. He is an upright citizen and an esteemed member of his community."

In 1924, the 5 acres is indicated as "St. John's Lutheran Church" and Henry F. Oehlsen, Jr., owns 395 acres of land north and west of the church. Henry Oehlsen, Sr.'s, great grandson, Dick Oehlsen, now lives on and farms the Oehlsen land west of the church road. The 235 acres north of the church once known as the "Pleasant Home Farm" is owned by Mary Eckhardt Conkin whose son, Rufus and wife, Bessie Hilleman Conkin, operate and reside on this property. The south 80 is owned by Mary Frohwein Nolte, wife of Henry. Their son, Wilbur, married Nora Smith, granddaughter of Henry L. Smith (noted in school sketch #6, 8 and 9), daughter of Louis Smith in school sketch #8. Louis Nolte, grandson of Henry Nolte and great grandson of Henry L. Smith, with wife, Lornetta nee Kuhlman, presently live on and operate the farm south of the church and his children Stan Nolte and Sandra Kellen have ownership of the east 40 acres.

The congregation, from the beginning, recognized the importance of Christian education, so provided the needs of its children with facilities for that purpose. The school was first taught in the parsonage by the pastors and later on in the annex of the church built around 1874. On April 17, 1870, Rev. F. Doescher confirmed the first class consisting of the following catechumens: Katy Schaper, Minnie Schaper, Vena Eckhardt, Hanna Eckhardt, Caroline Eckhardt, Mary Bader, Tillie Bader, Fred Hilleman, August Tops, Mary Rafeld, Caroline Tops, Hanna German, Mary Eckhardt and Edward Rafeld.

During the tenure of Rev. C. F. Herman, from August 4, 1872 to Easter, 1885, the frame school structure was built in 1880. It was used until the present school annex was built in the new church in 1947. The parish school was conducted by the pastors until 1880. The first teacher was J. A. Wiedman and among his students were my grandmother, Emma Schaper (b. 6/6/68) and her first cousin Sophia Busse (b. Jan. 1868 - Elsie Armbricht's mother). They were confirmed by Pastor C. F. Herman on April 2, 1882. Mr. Wiedman taught 1880 to 1882.

John Thoma, who had come from Erie County, New York, taught from 1882-1893. His daughter,

Margaret, married Henry F. Oehlsen, Jr.

Rev. Albert J. Boehm, who served his first congregation at Dillon, came from 1892 to 1911. This remarkable man was installed November 6, 1892, and served as pastor, teacher and organist. He married Mary Smith, daughter of H. L. Smith, noted in school sketches #6, #8, and #9. School was held Monday through Thursday. His niece, Ildra Smith Oakes, remembers him visiting the sick on Fridays. While he was here, a new parsonage was built in 1900. He was an accomplished musician and in 1902, a new pipe organ was installed at a cost of \$671. Elsie Armbrrecht also remembers the 4 days of school, leaving 2 days for this energetic man for studying, practicing on the organ, preparing his sermons and weekday classes. My Aunt Mildred Davis recalls his many trips from pulpit to organ to lectern, etc., during Sunday services. In later years, Louie Nolte, who now lives the first place south of St. John's, was also called upon to operate the manual pump on the pipe organ due to a rare occasional electrical problem or power failure. In 1897, Pastor Boehm baptized both my mother, Ruby Hilleman, who was born where Kenneth Pfantz now lives in Section 24, and my father, Carl Davis, born where my Aunt Mildred Davis now lives in Section 20. On

March 20, 1910, Pastor Boehm confirmed my father with a class totalling 24 catechumens. This was the largest class ever confirmed from St. John's Lutheran Church.

Elsie Armbrrecht, who was also a member of the 1910 class, remembers going to the Claude Sparks Studio in State Center to have their class picture taken. This studio was located in the same block east of the eventual site-to-be of the present middle school building.

There was another member of the class who had died in the fall of 1909 from a brain tumor - Albert Mahlow of Zearing, first cousin to Martin Mehlich of Zearing and a 1910 confirmand. Besides the confirmation class, Pastor Boehm had younger children of members who lived near the church attending parochial school. However, most children of the congregation attended classes in their respective school districts and usually did not come to the parish school until the 7th and 8th grade in preparation for their confirmation rites.

During Pastor Boehm's tenure, the English language was introduced into the services, but German services were also continued and in later years were held once a month before the English service until they were discontinued completely in 1941. Toward the close of



1910 Confirmation Class of St. John's Lutheran Church

L-R

Front: Arthur Humbert, Emmanuel "Pat" Oehlsen

2nd: Ildra Smith Oakes, Amanda Edler Miller, Myrta German, Louise Strohm Brandt, Mary Eckhardt Conkin, Amanda Schaper Fehrle

3rd: Leora Gerke Metge, Melinda Buschbom Bailey, Earl Pfantz, Ivadel Hartwig Oehlsen, Erma German Wilkey, Arthur Riese, Lilah German Brown, Edna Smith Humbert

Back: Carl Davis, Carolina Gerke Tisler, Martin Mehlich, Amelia Hennis Schuler, Lawrence Hartwig, Hilda Armbrrecht Brackney, Orville Wengert, Elsie Eggers Armbrrecht

1911, after years of faithful service, Rev. Boehm accepted a call to the Lutheran congregation at Ogden, Iowa. A granddaughter of Pastor Boehm, Mary, daughter of Hugo Boehm, is married to Jim Zabel, a familiar name to Central Iowans as a longtime sports announcer on WHO radio and TV.

Due to the distance from the church, some of the children were boarded with members who lived nearer the church, especially during the winter months. In good weather, children came on their ponies and in horse and buggies.

Ilda Smith Oakes, who first attended the #6 Busse School, remembers her mother, Emma, boarding not only the Busse school teachers but parochial school students as well. Ira Pfantz from State Center and Ernie Buschbomm, her mother's step-brother, were among her student boarders.

Elsie Armbricht, whose parents, August and Sophia Busse Eggers, lived east of State Center, usually boarded in the winter months with her mother's relatives who lived on the farm now owned by Clifford and Lucy Schaper. Her Uncle August Busse had contracted tuberculosis and her mother didn't want her exposed to the disease so she was boarded at Henry F. and Mary Thoma Oehlsen's home north of the church for her last year at parochial school.

Mrs. Oehlsen not only boarded Elsie, she also had 7 children of her own, 2 hired men and during the winter, Martin Mehlich, another parochial student, boarded with the family. The house, now occupied by Rufus and Bessie Conkin, had 2 stairways and girls bedrooms were on one side and boys and hired men's bedrooms on the other side. Many of the homes were built with 2 stairways, including Emma Smith's, as well as the home originally built by George Wantz in the late 1870's and now is the remodeled home of Karl and Iva dell Freiberg.

During the warm fall and spring days, Elsie drove a horse and buggy from her home 2½ miles east of State Center (present home of Inez Eggers in Section 7 of Washington Township) to the Henry Neidert farm (present home of Larry Westphal) where she left her mode of travel and walked the remaining quarter plus a mile to the school.

Louis Pozehl was teacher from 1911-1915. During his tenure, a teacherage was built in 1914, now occupied by William Levenhagen and wife Joanne, principal and secretary respectively of the Clemons Lutheran School.

C. F. Jessen taught from 1915-1922. A "pony barn" was built in the early twenties for the many children who came from State Center and distant surrounding areas either riding their individual ponies or riding in buggies.

Hilda Thake (Mrs. Roy) Moore went to parochial school for 2 years, being confirmed in the spring of 1924 and remembers the pony barn as being a new building.

She also recalls that when school was dismissed at the end of the day, it seemed like an army moving out with all the ponies and buggies racing from the church yard.

Mr. Richard L. George served as a teacher for the longest time. He came in 1922 and retired in 1944 when he went into social welfare work in Marshalltown. "Teacher" George was born March 26, 1887, and his wife, Rose, recently celebrated her 94th birthday on January 17, 1982. Mrs. George is residing with her daughter, Roberta Riese, in Marshalltown at this writing (1/31/82). When Mr. and Mrs. George came to St. John's in 1922, he received a yearly salary of about \$1,000 and served as teacher, organist, choir director, church janitor and caretaker of the church cemetery. Besides this, they sometimes boarded students during the winter months and occasionally had overnite boarders when unexpected storms or emergencies stranded students at school. They also raised a garden, kept a cow and chickens. Some of the children Mrs. George mentioned boarding were Schuler children from State Center and also Muriel Wengert from Colo, daughter of Leon and Eleanor Wengert who married Hugo Armbricht, son of Bill and Elsie Armbricht of Clemons.

This writer was a student of Teacher George, attending grades 7 and 8 at St. John's. This was the custom for many families and understood without question by the children. The unfamiliar daily memory work seemed most difficult at first, but through this training study habits were developed which remained in good stead throughout the rest of my schooling. Teacher George was short in stature but a giant in the respect with which he was beheld by his students. Bill Armbricht, a member of St. John's and also on the Clemons school board, was told by both Mr. Shutt and Mr. Ringold, Marshall County superintendents, how impressed they were by the excellent discipline maintained in his classroom. He always sat very erect at his desk which stood on a platform at the front of the room and walked as straight and brisk as a soldier. The older children were assigned daily turns to sweep the floor during the noon hour.

Our last year at parochial school also included more intensive catechism study taught by the pastor, in my case, Rev. William Zabel, in his study at the parsonage.

I was confirmed on Pentecost Sunday, May 28, 1939, with Richard Armbricht, Raymond Bell, Claire Schoppe, Verland Nolte, Vivian Kutzner, Helen Mayer, Eloise Severidt, Wanda Frohwein, Doris Fehrle and Eloise German. It was about this time that some of the children were being confirmed in 7th grade to escape the 8th grade county exams which rural students were required to pass as a prerequisite into high school.

The pony barn was still in use during my 2 years at St. John's by a few families. Some of those children were Richard and Louis Armbricht, Darlene Smith, George and Carroll Wengert, Dale Anselme, Marvin Pfantz,

David Honeck and Vernon Hunzelman.

My home was located on what we called "Main Street Road" one mile west of the Marshall County line in Story County where Ray Doser now lives and approximately 5 miles from school. During good weather, my first year, I, too, rode a large pony to school. One of my rides will never be as famous as Paul Revere's but it certainly was as exciting to me at least. Dick, my pony, didn't like to go to school as well as his rider. Every morning it was a struggle as to whether we were going to go to school where he stood all day in the pony barn or head back home to his manger of hay, his ration of corn and oats in his feed box, and better yet, to a nice green pasture. He also showed his disapproval in other subtle methods, as swelling into a baby hot-air balloon the minute the saddle landed on his back and it seemed no matter how tight one cinched the straps, once one was mounted, there just as suddenly evolved a skinny, apparently under fed, steed with cinch straps loosely dangled about his girth.

Coming home from school, however, was a source of joy until the "Day of the Gravel Truck". We were coming home at our usual fast clip with the reins knotted loosely over his neck (he always knew the way home) when a gravel truck came roaring down upon us from the east. With a snort we were off to the races - the gravel truck never did catch up - my tam flew off my head (which I never saw again) and my book bag beating my back with every gallop. Our neighbor to the east of us, George Weuve, who still lives on the home place, was plowing his field but I had no intention of letting him or the truck driver know Yours Truly was not in control of that pony. However the slightest glance from any observer would have disputed my claim of who was REALLY in control. So as we flew down the road with the gravel truck roaring and growling on our heels, I was determined to give Georgie a nonchalant, neighborly wave of my hand. In reality, it was a case of praying my right hand off the pommel of the saddle and my arm out and up into a swift, feeble, rigid extension of same. That difficult maneuver accomplished, we resumed our former "book beating bag on the back and both hands desperately hanging on to the pommel at any cost" position. As we swiftly approached our lane prodded by the gravel truck, we zoomed in with no apparent change of pace that I was aware of and then another zoom into the barn with a sharp turn into his stall where Dick came to a dead stop, but I did not, flying over his head and over his manger landing very undignified but unhurt.

Another time on a lovely spring morning after a heavy rain with the dewdrops sparkling like diamonds in the grass, the spring flowers blooming and the little brook trickling along the mud road east of my Aunt Mildred's, Dick and I were nearing the east end of the road. Upon approaching a clump of willows in a corner pasture where Larry Westphal now lives, several horses behind the willows snorted. Dick reared, slipped in the mud and down we fell. Just as quickly, he got up again, but I was hanging with my left foot caught in the stirrup. For once in his life, Dick stood still until I was able to

extricate myself. NO ONE HAS EVER HAD TO CONVINCE ME THAT WE ARE UNDER THE PROTECTION OF GUARDIAN ANGLES. On rare occasions when a storm came up at the close of the school day, my grandparents came after me where I boarded overnite and Dick, not me, boarded with Teacher George. He didn't behave any better for my teacher than he did for me - we would put him in the little pasture east of the barn and he returned the favor by opening gates and doors with his muzzle and eat the feed meant for Teacher George's cow. In general, he usually managed to make an all around nuisance of himself. He was such a pain sometimes, I must have blocked his name right out of my head. It took Bob Schradle, who now lives in the St. Anthony area and was just a little boy when his father, Bruce, worked for my Dad, to come up with Dick's name.

During the first winter, I boarded with my grandparents, George and Emma Davis, who lived a little over a mile west of the church which was such a loving experience with my Welsh grandfather and my German grandmother.

The next year it was time for my sister, Myrna, to go to parochial school as well as George and Carroll Wengert. Their father, "Rollie", and my father, Carl Davis, took turns driving us to school along with another neighbor boy, Verland Nolte. Teacher George also taught my sister Kathryn and brother Harold.

We always had a Christmas program and all recitations, Christmas poems and songs were memorized. At the end of the year, we had a rather ambitious closing program at night, outdoors, on a big wooden platform built at the west end of the school for the occasion. Here again we memorized all our songs and recitations. Little plays were given and always - lots of singing - the best part. Some of the songs I remember were: "My Grandfather's Clock", "Listen to the Mocking Bird" and "The Church in the Wildwood". We were accompanied by Teacher George playing the old pump organ which was normally placed to the right of his desk inside the classroom, which he played every morning for our opening devotion.

When the program was over, Teacher George passed out quarters to all of us for treats. This money came from the interest of a special gift of money, the principal of which was donated by our friend Mr. H. L. Smith in the #6, #8, and #9 school sketches and was to remain intact. For many years, the children of St. John's looked forward to their special treat from this special person long after his death.

After the long devoted years of teaching by Mr. George, Myra Potratz served from 1944-1945. Herbert Beer taught from 1945-1947. Louis Armbrrecht (deceased), son of Bill and Elsie Armbrrecht, taught 1947-1949. Louie was the first person to teach in the basement of the new school annex and also had the unique position of teaching Kenneth and Sherwood, his two

younger brothers. The church and upper school annex was completed and dedicated April 18, 1950, the 85th anniversary of the church's organization. Rosalie Krueger served 1949-1950. Martin Riese, Jr., son of Martin, Sr., and Irene Ambrecht Riese, taught 1950-1952. He is an uncle to Lynne Riese Pfantz teaching at Clemons Lutheran School. E. T. Mueller was here from 1952-1954. Rosemary Schultz taught 1954-1955. Joseph House taught 1955-958. Among his students were my two oldest daughters, Jeanette and Jeanine Robins, making them the fourth generation of my family to attend St. John's parochial school. Jerome Earls on taught 1958 to January 1962 and left to take a civil service job. Since his job required his presence at the beginning of the new year, Edith (Mrs. Sherwood) Ambrecht finished teaching the final semester of school and gave the children their basic skills tests. This closed 97 years of parochial school education for the children of St. John's Lutheran Church, State Center.

Fred Fricke bought the old frame St. John's school and it was moved to the one acre site of the remodeled Busse "school" home in Section 19 of Marietta Township. According to Dorothy Muschick Fricke, it was a larger building than the Busse structure. It was placed on a cement block foundation, but no use was ever made of the building and it was eventually razed.

Submitted by Elaine E. Robins



St. John's Lutheran Parochial School - 1940

L-R

Front: Evelyn Schuler, Myrna Davis, Arlene Davis, Kathryn Davis, Dolores Smith, Dorothy Hunzelman, Dorothy Oehlsen

2nd: Daryl Moore, Louie Ambrecht, Henry Oehlsen, Jr., George Wengert, Don Earl Pfantz, Mr. R.L. George, Darlene Smith, Duane Conkin, Charles Bell, Richard Moore, John "Hansie" Zabel, Martin Riese

3rd: William "Billy" Zabel, Leonard Miller, Vernon Hunzelman, Carroll Wengert, David Honeck, Eleanor Oehlsen, Marie Mehlich, Keith Schoppe, Caryl Kuhlman, Vernon Eggers