

it, so they moved the well tower over west from where it originally was. They had dug five holes and capped them all. There was gas down in every one of them, the way I understood.

Mr. Marxen mentioned to me just some time ago that the leases that they gave to the corporation doing this work have all run out now, so no one has any interest or leases on that land that had been signed up at the time they started digging.

There had been reports earlier that Traverse Lake had gone dry in the 1850's and again in 1936. I had information from a fellow who moved out of South Dakota and came back into Minnesota and took over a vacated homestead back in 1881, that he drove straight across Traverse Lake. I have been digging into this to get a little more information out of him. Some of the earlier settlers along Traverse Lake said the information we had before was in error, that the Traverse Lake was dry back in 1881 or 1882, so that would have been three times that the lake had gone dry. There really wasn't much that would keep it from going dry either because the Mustinka River flowed right through the center of the lake. Traverse Lake was noted for being one of the best fishing lakes anywhere in this part of the State. We sure had a mess of fishermen out there every winter spearing fish through the ice. One of the guys we used to get a big kick out of was old Gus Block. One time he was reaching over into the fish hole and his glasses fell off and fell into the lake. The next winter he was out fishing he came back with one of his fish stories. He was telling that while he was out there that morning there was a great big walleye that came through with his glasses on.

My brother George used to do a lot of fishing. Dad used to send a few dollars along with him in case it was poor and then he could always buy fish in those days.

A fellow living along the river by the name of Suess used to catch fish all year around. When he ran short of money, he would hook up his horse and buggy and take a load of fresh fish and start out across the country, selling them from place to place. I remember the many times he came out to my folks place, which was about 13 miles from where he lived down at the river, and the fish were still fresh when he came to the place. He said a lot of them were wiggling when he loaded them up in the buggy. He would cut across country and come to the farm places. A meal of fish went pretty good, I remember, after we had all of this salt pork and bacon and ham. That was all done on the farm and was good, too, but you got so much of it that you got tired of it, and a meal of fish came in pretty handy once in a while just for a change.

Before the dam came in the whole area north of White Rock Dam was all flooded and it was one of the greatest duck ponds on the state. People came from all over. We had a hunting shack out there right west of the Oscar Isackson farm near Mud Lake. Dr. Burton owned the property and we would chip in so much per year to lease that ground and go out there to do our hunting. Mike Doll from Dumont had quite a business as a guide for the city hunters. They would be coming up on a passenger train at 8:00 in the morning. He

would take them out hunting and they would stay overnight out there. If they had good luck the first day, they would head back and get on the 10:00 p.m. train. They just took their ducks into the refrigerator car. They had more than their limit most of the time in just a few hours.

They drained out the flat land on the north side of White Rock Dam and that ruined one of the best duck hunting spots in the state. It wasn't a total loss because after a while the deer moved in. There is still some great hunting on the west side of White Rock Dam and also on the east side of the channel where the old Mustinka riverbed used to be.

When the Mustinka River used to be so low, we could drive out with a team of horses and fish. In some years there was just deep ponds here and there and kind of a gravel runway in between. You could see the suckers when they would move from one to the other with their fins sticking out of the water. Most of the time when I went out, there would be a couple of loads of people who would go out together and bring out a bunch of drag nets. They would go right to the ponds, most of which didn't cover more than a quarter of an acre and were only about four or five feet deep. They were just crammed full of fish that were piling up in the deeper spots.

With men on both sides of the net and some walking behind, just as the fish would come up against the net, they would reach in and grab those they could and throw them out to the shore. It would take only an hour or two and we would have all the fish we could use. We would get grain sacks full of them, bring them back and clean them the same day, put them in salt brine for 24 hours and the next day we would hang them in the smoke house and get a fire under them and start smoking them. You had to smoke them pretty dry and then you could hand them up by their tails. They were real hard and you couldn't eat them without soaking them and boiling them up. Mother had a way of fixing them so she would get a kind of fish soup out of them.

When talk started about getting a dam in the lake, federal engineers came out. Initially they were going to put the dam up there by White Rock, but they got quite a bit of static from the businessmen in Wheaton because they were getting a lot of business from the South Dakota side. They met with the engineers on several occasions and convinced them that they should put it right west of Wheaton and that it would bring the trade from South Dakota side over to Wheaton. They figured that if people would go as far north as White Rock, they would go to Breckenridge or somewhere else to do their shopping. It was more of a business proposition that ruined our duck hunting here in Wheaton, but it brought a little more prosperity to the town, so we had to take one loss to help out another cause.

I can remember times when I was out there duck hunting. We would go out and start shooting a little early like they do now and by 8:00 we would get rid of four and five boxes of shells. It was really something in those days. We would drive out with a team of horses sometimes, that was before we had the car, and take the old surrey. It had

curtains on it, but that didn't stop the mosquitoes from chewing on you all night. Listening to those ducks quacking was really something.

My dad was a hunter because his life depended on it the first years he was out here. He had to shoot prairie chickens because we didn't have anything to eat. If you had only brought one cow out when you homesteaded, you didn't have much meat to eat. We had a kind of standing agreement. Uncle Pete would kill one and we would get a quarter and someone else would kill one and then everybody else would get a quarter. That way you would always have some steaks and different kinds of meat.

The folks had a machine out there with all little round holes on it, cut open on the side. We would fill it up with tallow and drop strings down in the center and make our own candles for light. We didn't have any electric lights, of course, back in those days, and we didn't have gas lights either. We just had that old lantern so you could see where you were going if the chimney was clean. Someone used to joke once in awhile and say, "Let's light a match to see if the lamp is burning." It was almost that bad but nobody seemed to complain. It was the way of life.

I'm getting to be up in my twilight of life. I'm 85 years old now and I remember lots of those things that happened back in those early days. I have seen things improving from one thing to another. Sometimes you would think they were an improvement, but then you would wonder, with all the dissatisfied people we have today throughout the world, if maybe we were more content in with that way of living than we are today. It seems now that everybody tries to bite off a little more than he sometimes can chew. My dad always had a saying — "Don't try to keep up with the Jones. Stop for a while; you will meet most of them on the way back."

Farming wasn't all that bad when you got the right kind of weather. Back in the 30's, that was something to remember, and also back in the 20's under Hoover's administration. We ran into something similar to what we have today. The people blamed the president for everything that went wrong, but it was a worldwide recession.

I remember one time, we were in the store in Dumont one Sunday and it was kind of amusing. We just all got out of church and the stores were always open on Sunday morning. We would congregate and visit and chew the fat. We had one guy there who would use the words that we are using so much today. Depression, Recession, Hard Times — it was getting confusing. This one particular man was all mixed up on his vocabulary. He said, "It wouldn't have been so bad if this compression wouldn't have come along just when we're having these bad times."

When Collis first started up back when all the Irish immigrants came over from Ireland, they built themselves a church and the town started booming. They had themselves a blacksmith shop and a man by the name of Tom Sullivan was running it. Hogans were running the grocery store and Murray's had another grocery store. The place the Hogans had built had a good sized upstairs and was used for a dance

hall and for other gatherings. But later on Macartys came and bought the store from the Hogans.

About that time Mike O'Brian was farming out east of where Wm. Rinke's are living now, just a mile east of Lester Rinke's farm out in Dollymount township. He decided to get off the farm and go to town so he moved to Collis. That was about the time when the government was getting the mail routes going around the country, so Mike O'Brian took one of the routes that went by our place and that was Collis.

They wanted to put the routes out of Dumont first. This was after the trains came through in 1886. Dumont merchants didn't want the mail route in Dumont because they thought it would bring more business to town if they let the people come into town to get their mail. But Collis took the mail route. There were two mail routes. Mike O'Brian took one and his son-in-law took the other one. Later on when Mike O'Brian retired, Bill Hogan took over the second route so the two Hogan boys took the route out of Collis.

Some years back they decided to move the mail out of Collis and bring it to Dumont. They made one route out of the two. Then the mail was delivered by car. At first when Hogans and O'Brians had it, they would drive around the country with the horse and single buggy.

Whenever we had poultry to sell, we would get the information from Wheaton when there was a poultry car on the track in Wheaton for a certain day. Everybody who had poultry to sell would bring it to Wheaton then and generally load it in crates or wagons or whatever you had handy. We would double deck the wagon, one bunch below and one bunch above, and bring them all up to Wheaton to sell them at the car there. They had a scale right by the poultry car and we would sell them for whatever we could get.

Later on, when the cream stations came in, most all of those folks brought their cream to the cream station. By that time they were coming out with a cream separator and when we got a can of cream, we would run it into town and sell it to the local cream buyer. But before that, we would have to bring it into town and put it on the 10:00 passenger train at night to send it down to Minneapolis. A couple days later your can would be back and so was your check.

After a while these little independent firms started bucking the big firms by buying the cream and finding their own outlets. They got a little rough with the local dealers. We had some local dealers here in Wheaton, they were the Hillerstad brothers, who had their place back there about where the Tara Mutual Insurance Company has got their building now. They did a pretty good business and were paying top price for the concerns they were buying for.

The little independent buyer then was Henery Thompson then down at Dumont. That's Tom Thompson's brother. There was also Al Fridgen, the first one to open a place down in Dumont.

Back in thoses days the sanitation systems we had

weren't so hot. All they had on main street was a row of posts driven into the ground with a big ring on them where you could tie your horse. After awhile townspeople thought they were going to make some improvements. After quite a few years when the horses stood out there for quite awhile, it got a little filthy out in front of the business places. By that time the town had incorporated and they got a council and decided to put the hitching posts on the side streets. That kind of carried the horses off the main street. They also put in wooden sidewalks after that.

We had quite a group of business people in Dumont at that time. We had three liquor stores right in a row and in another building was a shoemaker who repaired harnesses, sold shoes and repaired them. Next to it the Mader twins started a millinery store, and a guy named Pete Schmitz had his grocery store there, Mergens was on the corner, and Larson had a blacksmith shop. E. J. Jones had a lumber company. Art Merchant was running a livery barn, Oliver Johnson had a confectionary store, John Blonkart was running a hotel and rooming house.

About 1916 Lynch decided to put up a big hardware store. He did have one on the north side of the street.

The town was building up pretty well. Johnny Schaffer had the hardware store over on the south side of the street. In 1913, my dad built a building for my two older brothers after he had sent them to an automotive school in the Cities over the winter. They opened up a garage in the spring when they came back. They had two other men working for them, Clarence Klindworth and a fellow by the name of Harry McNally from down in the Chokio area.

Shortly after that the war broke out with Germany and Paul and George were both inducted into the service. By the time they came back everybody was fixing their own cars. There wasn't too much to fix on a model "T" and they all learned how to do it themselves. George needed a job. There wasn't anything available, so he took a job as a Fuller brush man. He worked Traverse County. It went pretty well where he knew everybody in this county. But after they transferred him over to Watertown, South Dakota, he got into a new area and started hunting up new agents to help sell. He got out among strangers and in a less populated area, it didn't go over so hot. So he came back and lived in Dumont and took whatever jobs he could get for awhile.

Then in about 1924, along there, Tom Howard was one of the political brains up here in Wheaton. Pat Leonard had been sheriff before that and they wanted to remove him, so they thought they would get George to run for the job. He was just out of the service. He and Ben Cunningham and a bunch of those boys just got back a year or so before and they were getting a kind of new ticket going. They wanted George to run and they finally convinced him.

He didn't find out until later that the purpose of their wanting him to run was to get the vote split up in the southern part of the county. Pat Leonard was running from there again. They figured that if they could split up the vote down there, Pat would be eliminated and Albert Johnson, who was

a good man and had been sheriff here, could come back and beat Leonard.

There were six candidates that fall running for sheriff. People got out and voted in those days. There were 3,600 votes cast in Traverse County at the election. George came out second, and Albert Johnson came out first in the primary election.

The general election was when George won that election by 20 votes out of 3,600 and was elected sheriff — a job he held until his death. I think he was in there 29 years.

The sheriff then was paid only \$75.00 a month. He had two little boys and his wife and himself and they were supposed to live on that. George told me one time, "I have got to go into Gordon Christenson every month to borrow money to pay my last month's bills." The board was pretty conservative and they didn't mind seeing people work for nothing.

My brother-in-law John Frisch, who was running an elevator down in Dumont, was getting \$30.00 a month. They told him that he could either close it up or take the \$30.00. There was no business, the crops were no good and nobody had any money to buy or sell anything. He thought that rather than lie around the house he might as well be down at the elevator.

About that same time Wheaton voted itself dry and that did bring a little more business to Dumont. They had what they called "local option" here. Later they voted county options so then the whole county went dry.

I get a kick out of one sign they had out in front of one of the saloons. One saloon keeper's name was August. The law said they had to have everything sold out and out of there by the first of July, and he put a sign up in front of his saloon which said, "The first of July is going to be the last of August." They always seemed to find a little humor in everything, regardless of how and what happened.

The bootleggers started in and that was quite a thing. If we had had them around at that time, you could have bought alcohol for your car today for about what they were paying for moonshine in those days. One guy was quite proficient in manufacturing moonshine. He said he was getting 16 quarts out of a 30 gallon jar of mash and that was 190 proof stuff. He could dilute that a little bit and burn it in your car today and it would be just about as cheap as gasoline.

A lot of people said that those were the "good old days," but I don't know. I think everyday is a good day when you feel good and you have lots of friends. The main thing is trying to stay well.

Wheaton got to be quite a progressive town. They had nice stores up here. Nordham had a big store on one corner, Dave Wells on another corner. A livery barn was over across the street where Wheaton Auto company is now. The Palmer House and Erickson Helleckson put up some pretty nice buildings here. The main street was pretty good. The south side had seven saloons before the town voted itself dry.

When I went to school up here, Guy Cleone was running

the pool hall. Fred and Bill Fortune had a little grocery store and Swedberg had one over here where the bakery is now. You could get just about anything you wanted in the stores up here at Wheaton. Thorsness ran a grocery store across the street from Fred Lindig's butcher shop. Old Fred was an A-number-one butcher around here at that time. Then his son Ernest took it over after Fred retired. That operation was going for at least 50 years.

We had Pete Sorenson too, he was on the north side of the street here and he had a cigar factory there. We used to go in there when we went to school as kids. He was kind of a friendly old boy and we kind of made a hangout of it there. He would take a bale of tobacco leaves, all he could hold in his hand, they were long shreds, and we were wondering what he was going to do with all that. When he got through rolling it around and working it over, he had one of the prettiest cigars you had ever saw. He had that thing down perfect.

Paul Lambrick had a cigar business too, but he did most of his work right at home. Doc Burton had the livery barn over there where the Hellekson lumber company had their buildings. They had a couple of handy men right there on the place. There was a Jacobson and Anderson running a shop there and there wasn't anything those two boys couldn't fix or make. They were brothers.

Then we had Frank Thill and Pete Thill, who both had blacksmith shops. There was a kind of a mill over there where the new school is now. Flax straw was coming in everyday from all corners of the county and Pete Thill was working in that at the time.

One of the Thill girls married Henry Harps. Henry had the gravel pit out in Walls township, where he made cement blocks. When my dad built the garage in Dumont for my brothers, he made all these for that building himself right there out at the farm in his own pit. He used his own gravel and did a perfect job building this building. It is standing there just as good today as when it was built and that was back in about 1914 or 1915. It was built before the war.

I was talking about the business places in Wheaton.

Martin Lynch, a Ford dealer down in Dumont, built a big building and then he and Andrew Pearson expanded and built the building on the corner where today are the Corner Drug and Liquor Store. That was built around 1920. After they got through digging that basement there, I brought the tractor and used that out on the farm.

There was a lot of farmland that wasn't farmed. People could only farm what they could handle with horses in those days. Very few had tractors. My landlord bought an extra half section of land and I needed a little more power so I bought the Fordson. I remember Jim Phelan told me when I bought the thing, that the first thing that wears out on those Fordson tractors is the crank, and the second thing is the man that runs it. While the crank did wear out, I guarantee that, it didn't seem to hurt me any and I'm 85 years old now.

In the winter time it was cold. It was so hard to start those things, you could hardly turn them over. We would take a steel basket full of corn cobs and pour on a little kerosene, light it and set that under the crank case and heat up the oil so it was good and thin. Then you could start it. Most of the time when we didn't feel like working by cranking it we would just take out a team of good horses and hook on a log chain, one man would get on the tractor seat and the other would drive the team and drag it along until it started.

That's the way we always did it when I farmed three quarters of land. I had Art Sager working for me. I'd let him drive the tractor and I'd take the horses, and we had the chain lying right there. When we came in at noon we'd unhook and then when we'd go out after dinner we'd bring the chain back with us at noon, and then after dinner we'd just hook it on the front of the tractor again and drag it down the road anywhere from five to twenty rods, and then it would start. We never shut it off until we quit at noon or night.

It had the power of about four good horses. That's about all it amounted to. I think I had more power with five horses on the plow than he had with the tractor, because I noticed every once in awhile he'd be lifting the levers up a little bit, whenever he hit a tough spot.

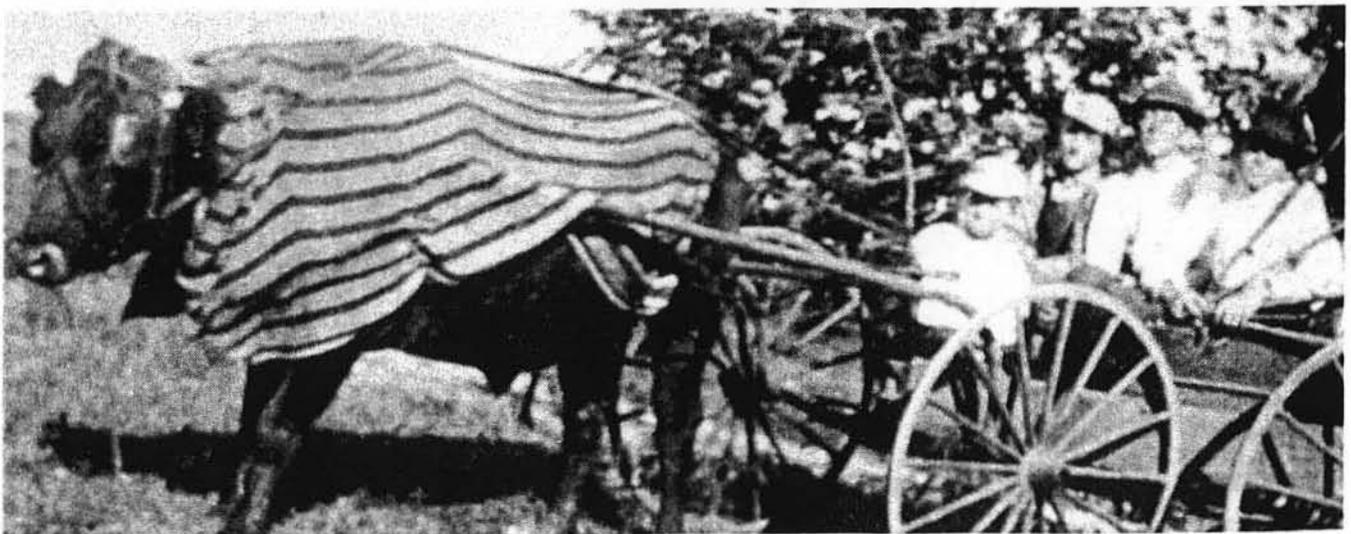
Photo Album



First generation of the Schmitz family to settle in the United States was the Henry Schmitz family. They migrated to the United States from Baden, Germany, in 1855, settling in the area near what is now known as Medicine Lake in eastern Minnesota. Sons of Henry and Anna later moved westward, homesteading in Traverse County. Pictured front row from left are: Pete, Grandma Anna, Grandpa Henry, Gert and Mary. Back row from left: George, Henry, Mike, Anna and Kate. George and Pete were among the first settlers in Traverse County, homesteading in 1875.



THE JACOB SCHMITZ FAMILY pictured in 1948. Seated left to right are Louise, Laura, Veronica, David, Jake, Betty and Vivian. Second row from left: Jacob Jr., Veronica, Jim and Vernon. Back row from left: Valeria, Victory, Donald, Reinhard, Eugene, Catherine.



There was always a way to get by. Jake and Al Schmitz and their cousins Lambert and Tony found that when the horses at home were all in use, they could still get transportation into Dumont for religious classes by hooking up a steer to their adjusted harness rig. It made for a strange sight, but it got the job done.



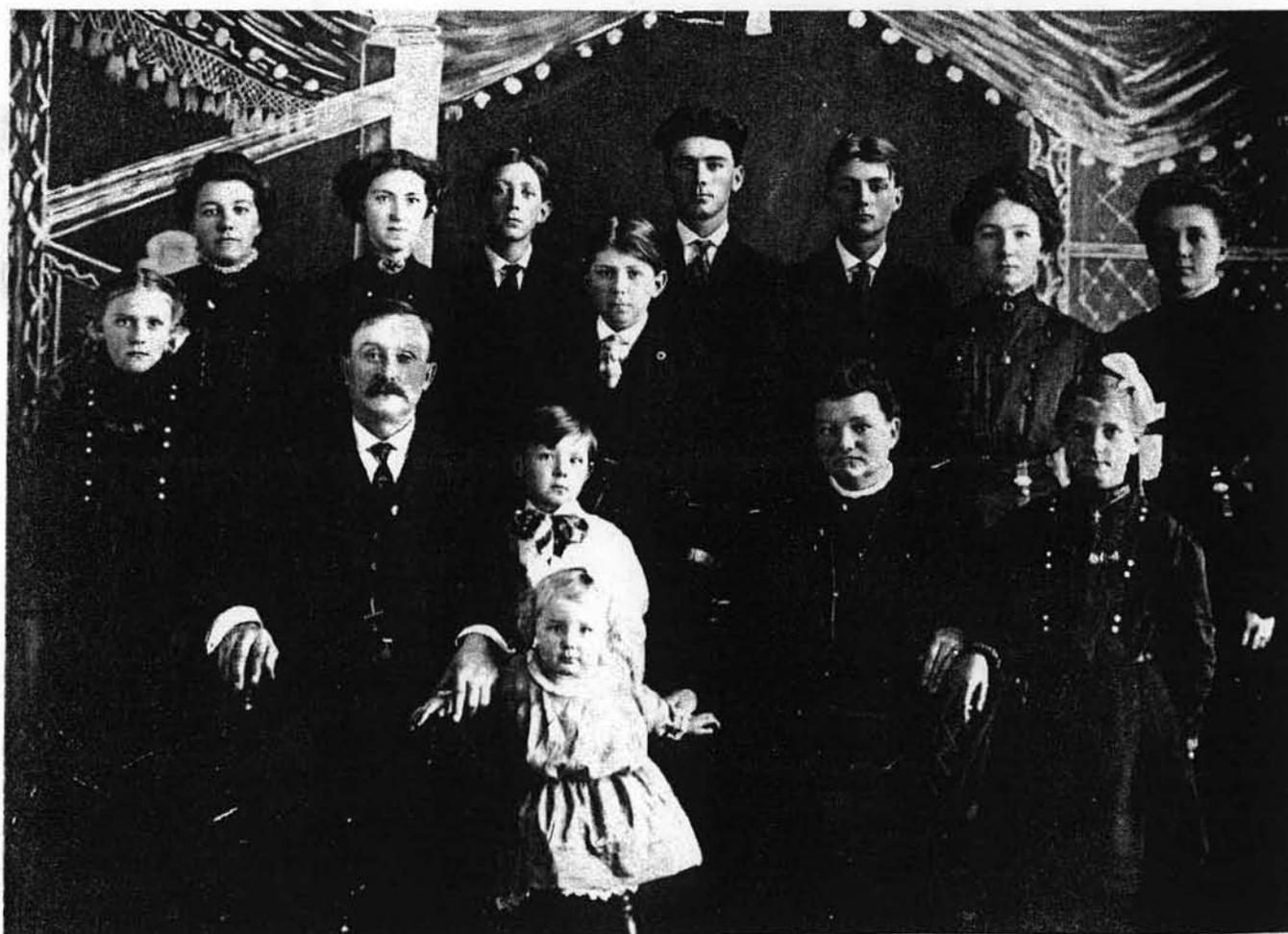
THE PETE SCHMITZ FAMILY. Uncle to Jake Schmitz, Pete homesteaded in Traverse County in 1875. Pictured with his family in the photo above are Pete and his wife Mary seated, with Verney between them. The two youngsters behind them are Pauline and Lambert. In the back row from left are: Mike, Kate, Henry, Tony, Elizabeth, Gertrude and Christina.



Early threshing operation using a steam engine for power at the Henry Swanson farm.

GEORGE and LOUISE SCHMITZ

Pioneer settlers in Traverse County.
George and his brother Pete home-
steaded in Dollymount Township
in 1875.



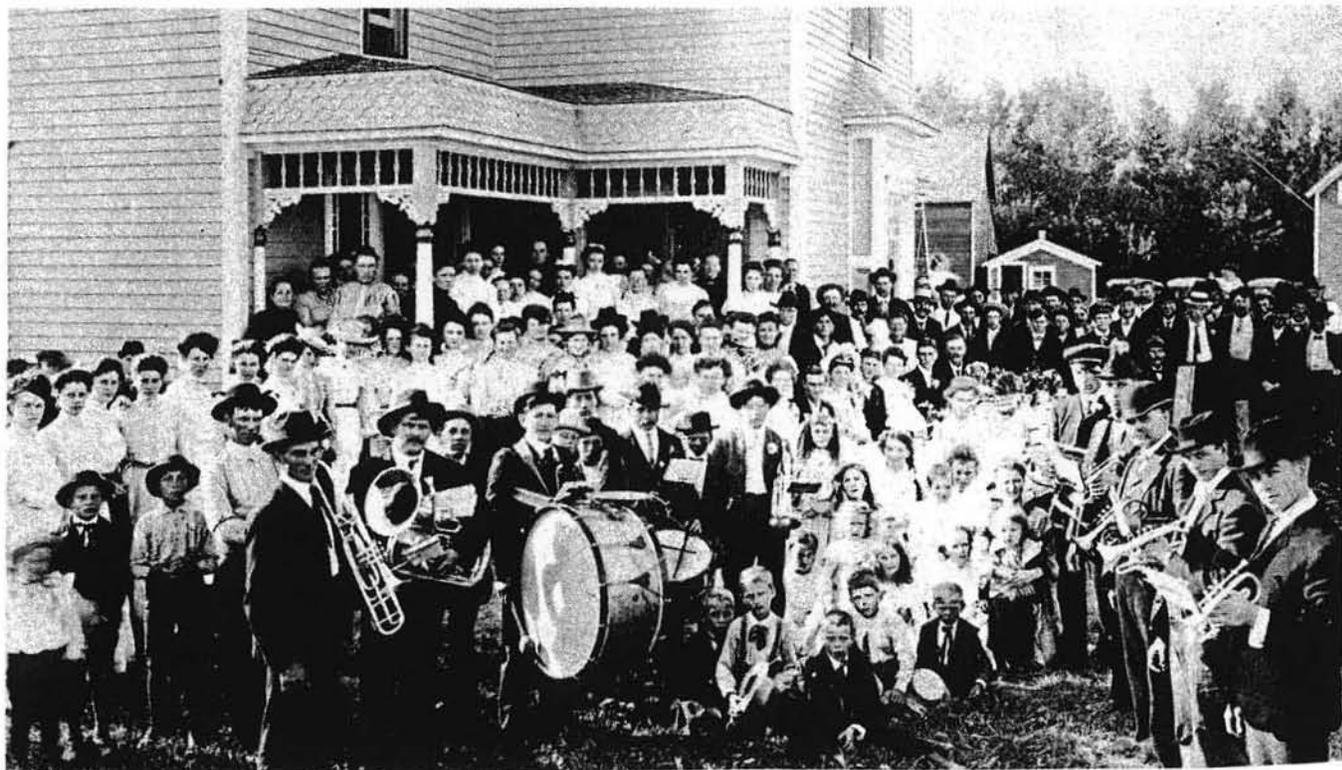
Traverse County pioneer George Schmitz with his wife Louise and family in 1912. The youngster in front is Laura, with Clem behind here. The three young children in the second row, from left, are Margaret, Al and Louise. Standing from left to right in the back row: Lena, Clara, Jake, George, Paul, Mary and Annie



The George Schmitz family was to grow, but this is the way it looked in 1898. The infant in front is Allie, with Paul, Clara and Jacob in the second row. Back row from left: George, Lena, Anna and Mary.



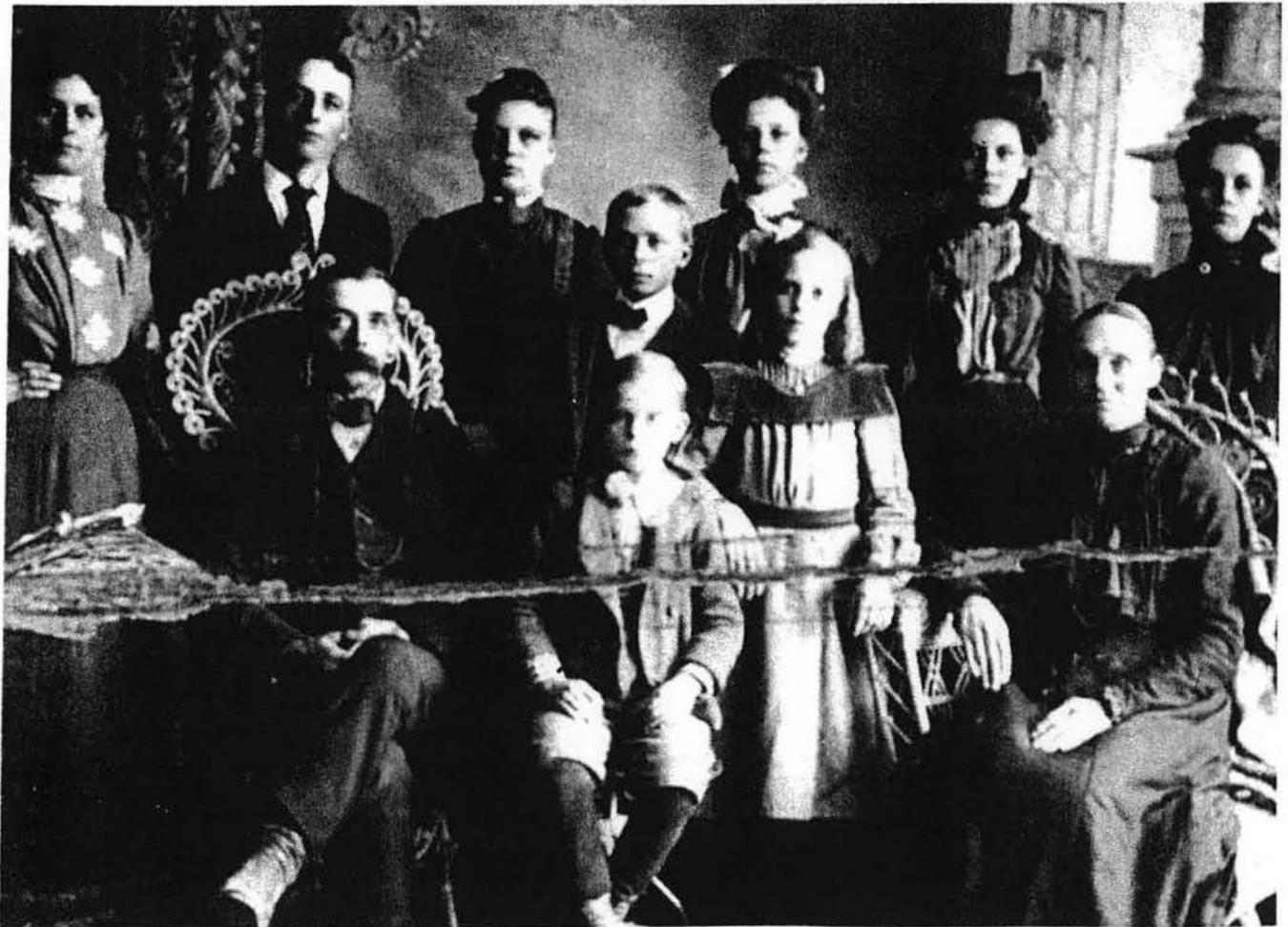
Mike and Emma Schmitz homesteaded in Croke Township. Their family consisted of three daughters: Kate, Rose and Emma.



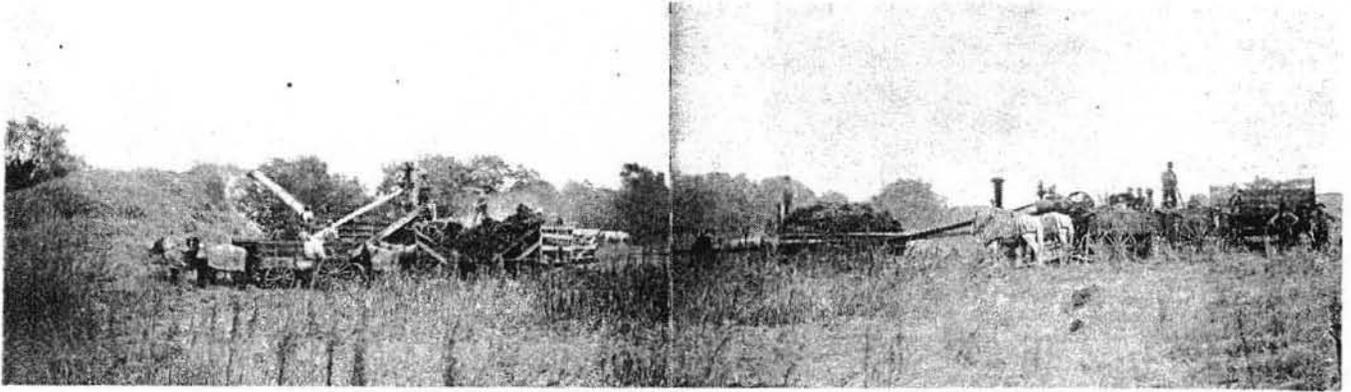
When Lena Schmitz and George Ulman were married in 1903, this was the crowd that gathered at the George Schmitz home. It was a gala affair, with the Dumont band on hand to provide music.



An early General Store at Barry, near the southern edge of Traverse County. Identified in the photo standing on the right is Amanda Palm Hanson (Mrs. Olaf Hanson), mother of Vivian Barlage of Wheaton.



The John Zabell family were homesteaders in Dollymount Township. In this family photo with Mr. and Mrs. Zabell are their children, Herman seated, John and Rosie standing behind him. Standing in back from left to right are Minnie, Paul, Ann, Edith, Em and Mary.



Stack threshing on the John Johnson farm in Lake Valley Township in 1904. The steam engine used to generate power for the threshing rig was one of the early units put into operation in Traverse County.



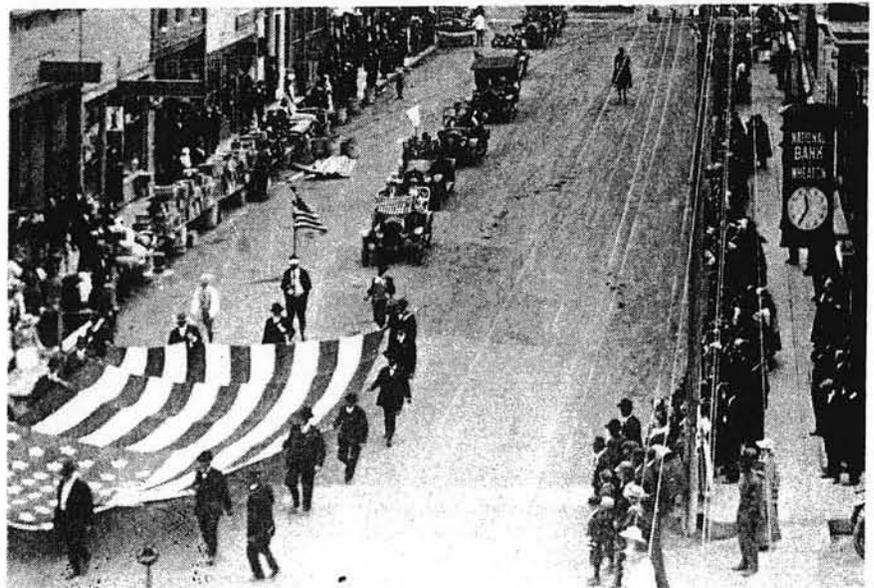
The Trinity Evangelical Lutheran Church band as it appeared in the early part of the 20th century. Most of the band members were men who farmed in Traverse County. The band was formed in 1916. Not all members in the photo have been identified. Those who have been identified include, front row from left: first name unknown Koenig, Harry Winter, Emil Koenig, Willie Althoff, Ted Nerenz; second row: first name unknown Aswege, second man unidentified, John Jansaen, Charlie Althoff, William Minners, Victor Siegler, first name unknown Aswege; back row: Rev. Siegler, first name unknown Aswege, Henry Minners, Paul Fuhrmann, Walter Zimmerman, Charlie Fuhrmann, Max Winter, Willie Fuhrmann, Eddie Fuhrmann, Leo Fisher, and first name unknown Koenig.



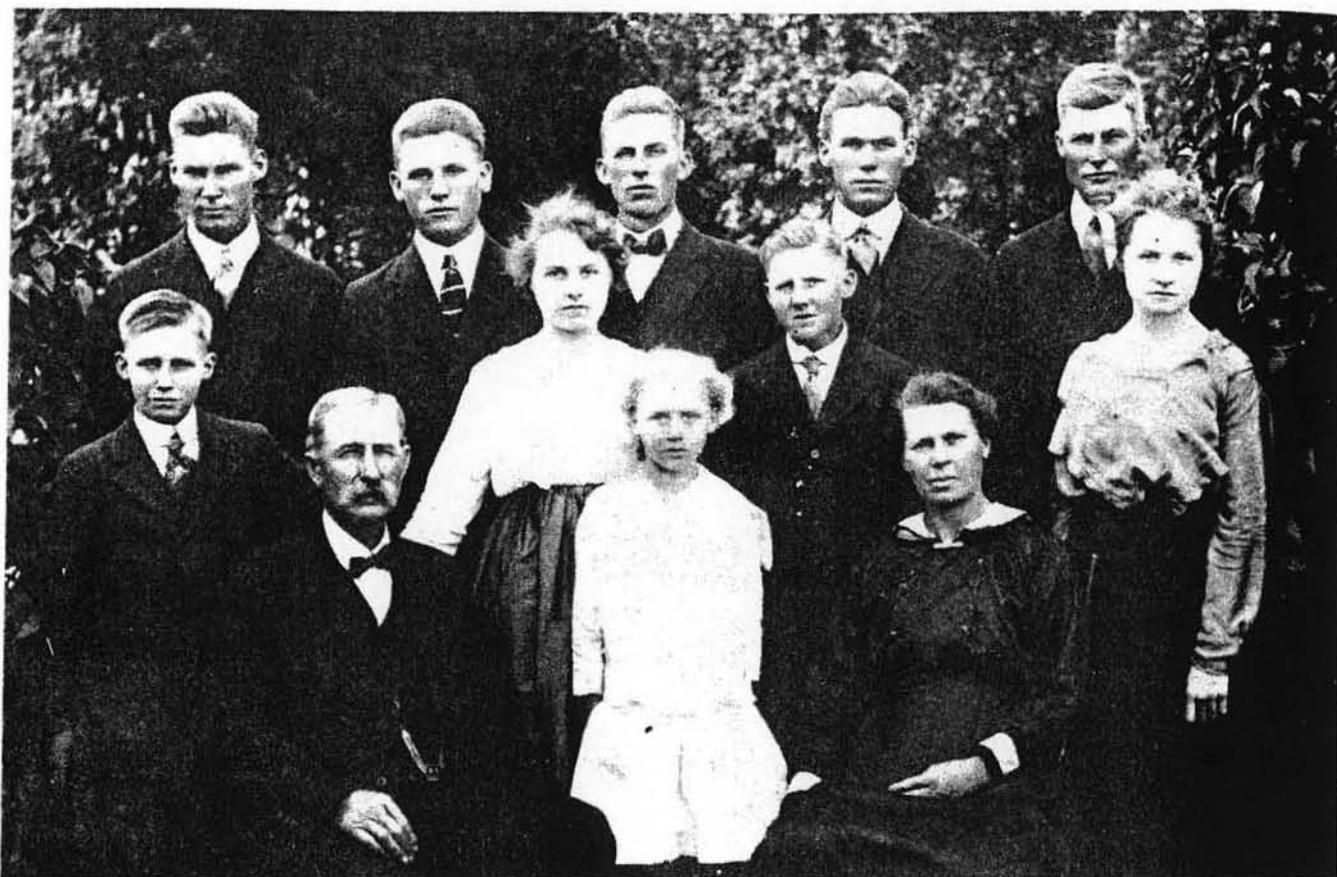
The William Rinke homestead in Dollymount Township.



William Rinke Sr.



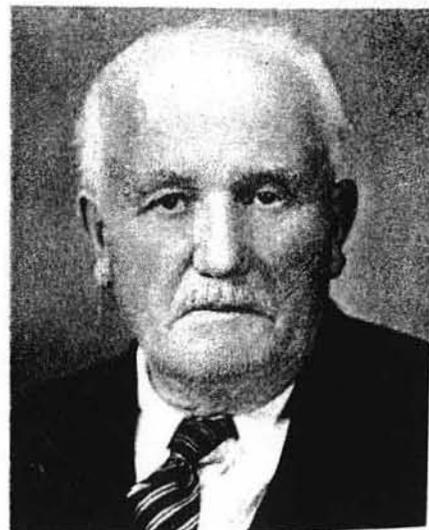
A National Red Cross Parade down the streets of Wheaton on May 18, 1918. The photo shows store fronts on Broadway between 10th and 11th streets.



Heie Osterman family photo taken in 1914. The Osterman family moved to Traverse County in March of 1903 from Iowa. They bought a farm 11 miles southwest of Wheaton in Walls Township. Heie Osterman was born in Litchfield, Illinois Nov. 13, 1862. Mrs. Osterman was born near Mackelberg, Germany Jan. 20, 1865. The five older boys farmed near Wheaton. Pictured between Mr. and Mrs. Osterman is Etta; second row from left: Laurence, Amy, Everett and Francis; third row from left: Edward, Hiram, Frank, Henry and Martin.



Wedding photo of Martin and Aurelia Osterman, Sept. 24, 1909. Attendants were Frank Osterman, Herman Paul, Elsie Brandt and Amelia Miller.



Tom Torgerson, homesteader in Clifton Township. Photo taken in 1935.



Frank and Kate Loqua and family. Photo taken in about 1900.



Mr. and Mrs. Frank F. Thill, married June 29, 1892.



George Peterson family, homesteaders in Croke Township. Standing behind Mr. and Mrs. Peterson are their children, from left: Walter, Alma, George Jr., Lilly, Laura, Alex. This photo was taken in about 1925.



The Karl Rinke family homesteaded in Dollymount Township. Pictured seated between Mr. and Mrs. Karl Rinke is their son William. Standing from left to right are their other children: Fred, Anna and Carrie.

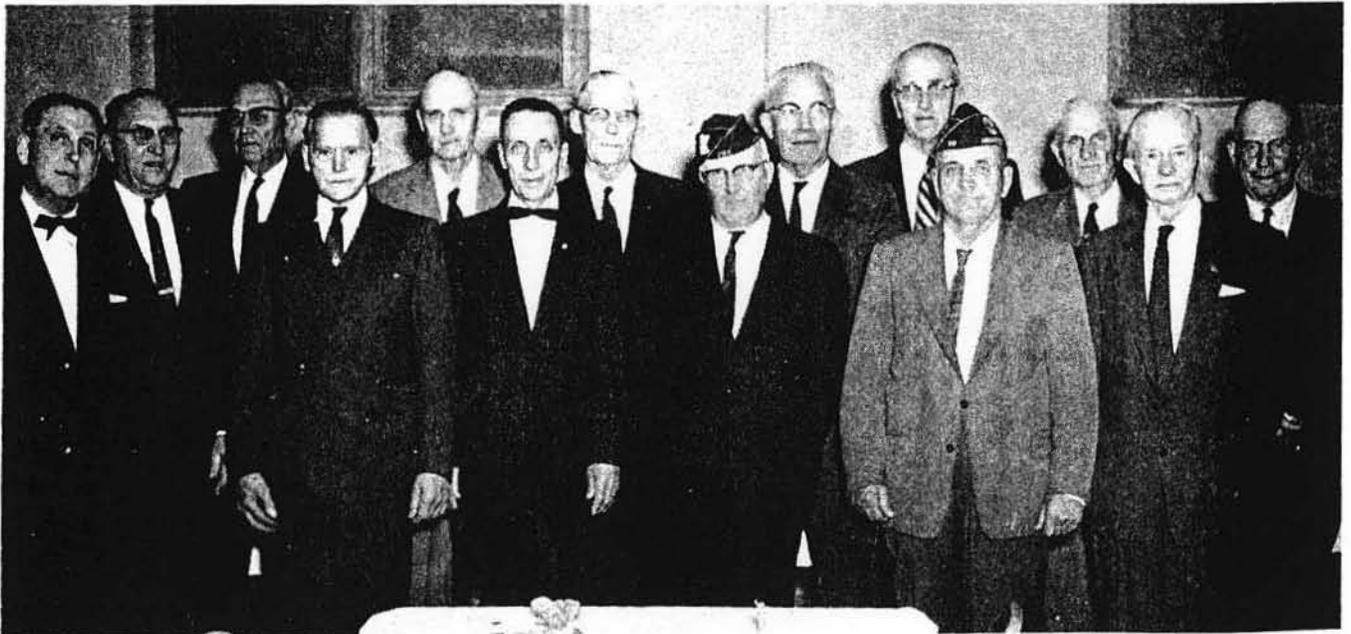


Photo taken in 1963 shows 45-year members of the American Legion Post in Wheaton at that time. Pictured from left to right: Dr. H. N. Weickert, Lloyd Zimbrick, Fred Moore, Edmund Zetterstein, Walter W. Johnson, Ben Fortune, Ed Osterman, Reuben Solberg, Edwin Mielke, Reuben Heggen, Ben Stoick, Walter Hartwig, J. Abel Nelson and Clarence Johanson.



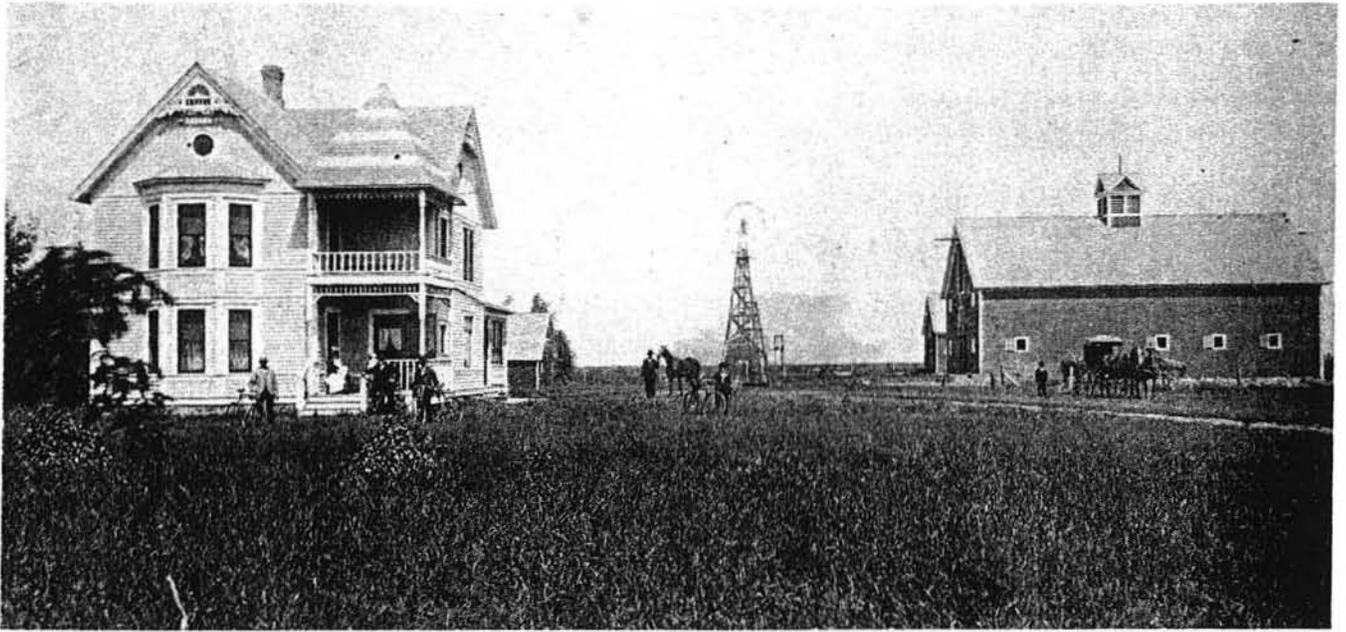
PETER JOHANSON
1904



CHRISTINE JOHANSON
1889



Peter and Christine Johanson were homesteaders in Clifton Township. This family photo taken in the fall of 1892 shows Mr. and Mrs. Johanson with their family of four at that time: Alma born in 1883, Oscar in 1889, Algot in 1891, and Helmer in 1892. Chester and Clarence Johanson of Wheaton were both born to the family at a later time.



The Alex Dalziel farm in Taylor Township. The Dalziels homesteaded on this farmstead in the 1880's.



Rose Bennett is pictured in Manila just before the turn of the century. She went to Manila on an Army transport to teach. She was aboard the first transport to cross after the Spanish American War.



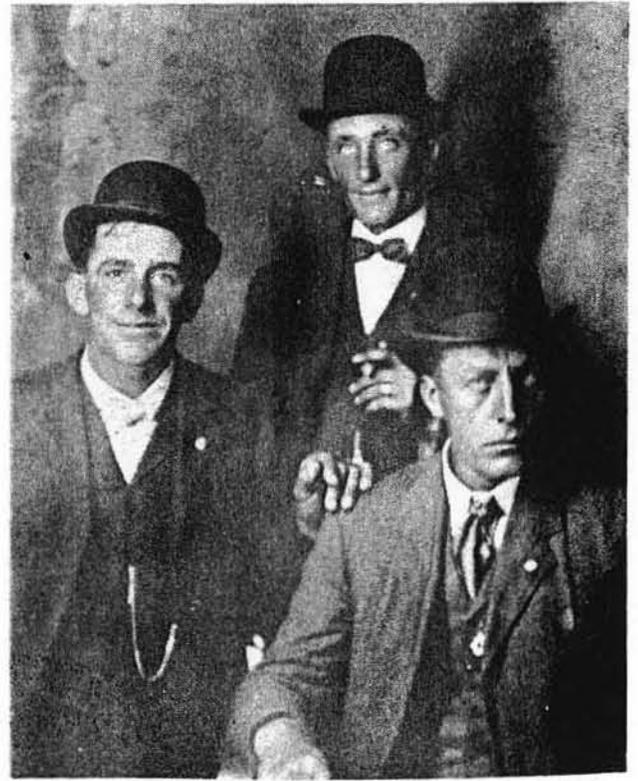
The Alex Dalziel family. Front row: Merriam and John; seated: Alex, Melvin and Gretchen; back row: Max and Roy.



Threshing scene at the Alex Dalziel farm in the early 1900's.



William and Emille Drinkwitz and their son Karl. The family homesteaded in Parnell Township.



The dashing look of the day early in the 20th Century is shown by Karl Drinkwitz, Fred Seidensticker and Ed Finke.