



Chipmunk Coulee Pioneers and their Early German Methodist Church *compiled by Robert R. Lorenz, 2002*

Introduction

In the spring of 1943, William Kunerth, at the request of his daughters Bernice and Ruth, wrote about his life in Chipmunk Coulee. Bernice and Ruth then compiled a history of the Kunerth and Starch families, early settlers in the Coulee.

In 1966, Godfrey Tietze wrote his autobiography describing his experiences as a boy growing up in Chipmunk Coulee. In 1991, Mrs. John Starch (Mary Frances Kunerth) wrote her memoirs. The following history is a blending of their stories. Permission to use William Kunerth's material was obtained from Bernice Kunerth Watt's daughter Martha Gaines (September, 2002).

Roger Hiekel, an avid Chipmunk Coulee historian, shared his memories and his mother's photos. I have added additional information from other sources for completeness.

Chipmunk Coulee and its Pioneers

Nestled back among the hills that border the low prairie land on either side of the Mississippi River and about 10 miles southeast of La Crosse, Wisconsin, lays the small and peaceful community known as Chipmunk Coulee. Since it lies in a non-glaciated region of the state, it is bounded by steep hills on either side. The level land at the bottom varies from only a few feet to a few hundred rods in width. It is therefore not the size of this community that interests us. It is rather the people and the spirit that inspired the life of these industrious folks.

There are two parts to the Coulee, south Chipmunk Coulee and north Chipmunk Coulee. Our story has special reference to north Chipmunk Coulee.

The people who first settled in Chipmunk Coulee were true pioneers. Most of them emigrated from northern Bohemia, some as early as 1848. According to a note kept by Franz Anton Tietze, one of the early settlers was a person by the name of Ritschel who settled on north Chipmunk ridge, Town of Shelby, in 1848. Another early settler was Josef Kunerth who left Bohemia alone in 1848. It is possible that favorable reports from these first settlers to family or relatives (possibly Florian Ritschel) in Bohemia prompted others to emigrate.

The Chipmunk Coulee region is very similar to the countryside the early settlers left. Most settlers came from small villages near the town of Tetchen, now known as Decin in the Czech Republic. The area surrounding Tetchen, with the river Elbe and the hills and valleys, is very much like the Chipmunk Coulee region with its hills and ravines and the Mississippi River.

In 1855, according to P. William Filby's German's to America, the following individuals emigrated from the village of Dobern in northern Bohemia: Florian Ritschel, a gardener, with his wife and four children; Franz Anton Tietze, a day-laborer, with his wife and two children; Anton Proksch, a gardener, with his wife and six children; Vinzenz Starch, a day-laborer, with his wife and four children; Josef Krebs, a day-laborer, with his wife and two children; Franz Paudler, a day-laborer's son and Franz Hubsch, a day-laborer's son. A day-laborer worked at small jobs and was paid by the day.

Franz Anton Tietze settled next to the old Ritschel farm. His daughter Theresia was born in a log cabin on Christmas Day in 1858. When she became a young lady she married Ambrose Starch.

In the fall of 1857, Jakob Bendel, his wife Clara and their children: Clara, Jacob, Maria and John emigrated from Güntersdorf, Bohemia.

In 1858, Florian Kunerth, his wife Theresia and four children emigrated from Dobern to Chipmunk Coulee. They settled on land owned by Florian's brother Josef who arrived several years earlier.

Stefan and Rosina Lorenz emigrated from Prause, Bohemia in 1863, settling in south Chipmunk Coulee where he worked as a stonemason and farmer. Rosina's parents, Josef and Anna Maria Werner followed in 1864 and settled next to their daughter's farm.

In 1868 another family left Bohemia bound for Chipmunk Coulee, the family of Stefan Starch, Vinzenz Starch's brother. Stefan's family consisted of his wife Maria Anna Parsche and their children Ambrose, Stefan, Jr. and August. They emigrated from the small village of Ober Ebersdorf near Dobern.

Our ancestors were ethnic Germans living in Bohemian land that was part of the Austrian Empire. Thus, they were citizens of Austria. Their ancestors had migrated into Bohemia from Germany seeking better employment opportunities. They left Bohemia for one or more of the following reasons: 1) an intense dislike of compulsory military training, 2) shortage of food, 3) the advent of weaving mills that were putting home weavers out of business and/or 4) the availability of cheap land in America. Concerning military training, Stefan Lorenz served 9 years in the army of the Austrian Empire.

Thus, these unhappy Bohemians looked to America, the home of the free, to find a place where they could raise their families in peace. Many of them came because they heard that America was a land of plenty. Some early settlers in Chipmunk Coulee wrote to their friends in the homeland saying, "We have sufficient wood for fuel and food for hard work for ourselves and our children."

Early Houses

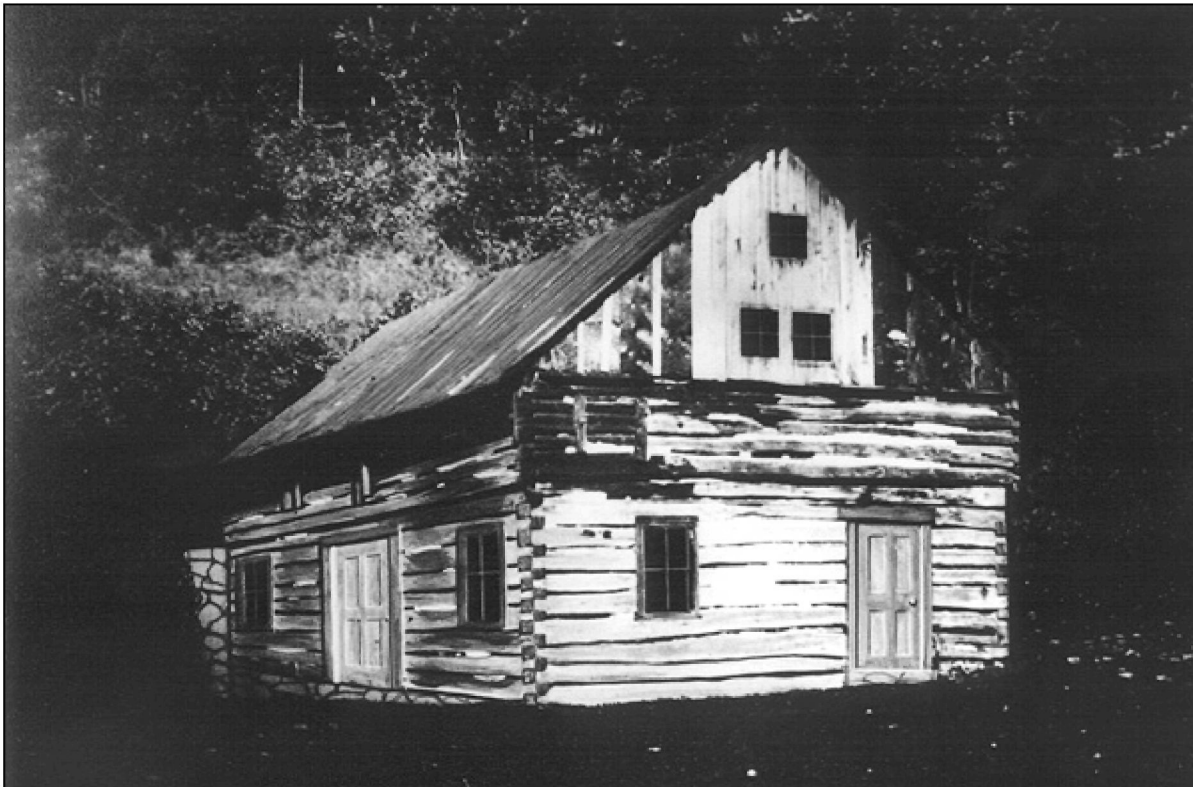
Logs, cut from trees in the woods, provided building material for almost all of the early houses in the Coulee. These log houses were not large but usually consisted of a living room, kitchen, pantry and one or more upstairs bedrooms. Heating of the rooms came from the kitchen stove.

However, although lavish in its supply of heat, the heat usually did not extend far beyond the stove. Winter temperatures in the Coulee sometimes fell to 30° below zero. Lighting in the home was by kerosene lamps or lanterns and by homemade tallow candles called “splints.”

Franz Anton Tietze, his wife Theresia and their two sons, ten-year-old Anton Jr., and three year old Franz, arrived in Chipmunk Coulee late in July of 1855. Anton at once took out his citizenship papers, and proceeded to make a claim for 120 acres of land in the southwest corner of Section 31 in Shelby Township.

Franz Anton then proceeded to build a small log house to the south of a ravine near the Meyer line. A few years later, about 1870 or 1871, he built another log house a short distance to the southwest, perhaps because it was nearer to a spring at the bottom of the ravine and because that place was a little better sheltered from the cold winter north winds. The old house was torn down soon after the family moved into the new one.

The log house built by Vinzenz Starch in 1855 was remarkable in many ways. It consisted of three floors. The back of the house was built into the side of the hill. Behind the large living room on the first floor was another large room that served as a shop. It also may have served as a kitchen. In this room, farm machinery and tools were made or repaired. The room contained an enormous bellows and forge. Connected to this room, were two large caves, faced with stones, that had been dug into the hillside.



The Vinzenz Starch log house at the north end of Starch Coulee. A portion of the stone facing that was part of the two caves can be seen behind the house.

Cold water from a spring farther back in the ravine was piped into troughs in the two caves. The cold running water cooled the air in the caves and served to keep perishable foods stored in them cold. The spring water flowing out of the pipe also served as a source of “running” water for the Starch family. Stefan Lorenz, a stonemason and farmer living in south Chipmunk Coulee, built the caves at the back of the Starch log house.

A room over the shop was used as a granary. A team of horses would pull a wagon of threshed grain up a driveway built over the top of the caves. The grain was then unloaded into bins in the granary. An enclosed spiral stairway led from the front room that was the living and all-purpose room to the bedrooms on the second and to the third floor. The third floor was much like an attic. The interior walls of the living room were covered with a whitewashed plaster-like material.



The Josef Preidel log house in Chipmunk Coulee. Josef is standing with the horses. His wife, Anna Theresia Kunerth, is standing next to baby John. Anna's father Josef Kunerth is seated next to Edwin, Oscar, Theodora and Gertrude.

School Life

Life of the early Chipmunk Coulee settlers revolved around their church and school. The state of Wisconsin urged settlers to provide schools for the education of their children. Most of the settlers were glad to support the school financially and by allowing their children to attend.

A log school building had been built in the Coulee quite early. It contained a wood burning stove and long wooden benches. The school stood north of the road near Starch Coulee, and served until about 1896 when a red brick school was built farther down near the bottom of the Coulee closer to the public road.

A wood-burning stove also heated this red brick school, known as the Hillside Public School, District No. 1. The school ground was enclosed on the sides and back with a board fence. A woodshed stood on the west side, and a double outhouse stood behind the schoolhouse near the east line. It was a one-room schoolhouse and the number of pupils that attended ranged from 20 to 35.



The Hillside School in Chipmunk Coulee around 1900. The teacher is Miss Linda Nessler. Note the iron pump described by Godfrey Tietze.

In later years a wood vestibule was attached to the front of the building with a door entry. Inside the vestibule were hooks on each side for the pupils to hang their caps and coats. The teacher's desk and chair stood at the front facing the pupils. In front of the first row of desks, stood a bench for classes to sit on during recitation. On the teacher's desk, besides books and papers, was a hand bell that the teacher rang to summon the pupils into the school when sessions began.

On the wall to the left of the teacher's desk were some maps and a chart containing the alphabet with simple exercises used by children learning to read. The wall behind the teacher's desk contained a blackboard made out of wood planks painted black. Around 1896, a blackboard consisting of blocks of slate replaced the wood one. On one side of the blackboard was a locked cabinet that contained books the pupils could borrow and take home to read.

For school supplies, the pupils brought a slate, some writing paper in the form of tablets, a lead pencil, a slate pencil, a pen and some ink. Underneath each desk was a shelf where these materials could be stored. There was a receptacle for ink and an attached cover built into each desk and a groove near the top of the desk for pencils. The slate was used a good deal for doing arithmetic and writing exercises. The not very sanitary method for erasing written words on the slate was the act of spitting on the slate and rubbing the chalk off with a rag or the bare hand. This made the periodic washing of the slate with soap and water to remove the scum from the dried saliva necessary.

In the early years, there was no well on the school ground. Two pupils fetched a two-gallon pail of water from the nearby Herold farm every day. Around 1899, a well was dug on the school ground in front of the schoolhouse. An iron pump with a long handle was used to draw water from the ground.

The first day of school was always an exciting occasion. Each youngster was eager to see the new teacher and to have his or her choice of seat. Sorry was the boy or girl whose parents said that they could not go to school the first day because they had to help with fieldwork or take care of their cows.

Godfrey Tietze wrote about his first day at the Hillside School when it opened in the autumn of 1896. My mother walked with me to the school that morning. I do not remember whether my sister Martha and my brother John were with us or not, but the fact that mother took me the two and a half miles to school and took me to meet the teacher made a deep impression on me. I never forgot it, and when my two daughters entered school, I accompanied them. My teacher was Miss Effie Pittenger, a young woman from Onalaska. It is unlikely that she had attended high school. She was an excellent disciplinarian, and maintained strict order in the school. I remember seeing her rap the fingers of pupils standing beside her desk before the assembled school. Once, also, for some gross misconduct, she beat a stick across a boy's behind until the stick broke!

In my years at school, the only punishment I ever received was detention either during intermission or after school. Our father had told us that if we ever got a whopping in school, we would get more when we got home!

One rule Miss Pittenger enforced, to which some of the parents objected, proved to be wise and far seeing. No pupil in the schoolhouse or on the school ground while school was in session was permitted to speak anything but English. This included the forenoon and afternoon intermissions. A pupil caught speaking in German was detained after school.

School started at 9:00 a.m. and ended at 4:00 p.m. There was a fifteen-minute intermission in the middle of the forenoon, an hour intermission at noon, and a fifteen-minute intermission in the

middle of the afternoon session. Except for the Franz Starch and Herold children, who went home for lunch, the pupils ate their noonday lunches at school. Lunches were carried to school in small tin pails. In the cold winter, the lunches sometimes froze on the way.

William Kunerth had the following to say about the brick school. The games children played during the noon hour were Fox and Geese, In Deep Snow, Ball Over, and many others.

In winter months the boys and girls went sledding on the hillside. There was little if any chance to skate. Occasionally, especially in the spring, the children climbed the big hill (known as schoolhouse hill) next to the school at the risk of being late for the beginning of the afternoon session. One day the teacher failed to appear. The men of the Coulee were hauling rock for the foundation of the new brick schoolhouse. For the most part the children waited in or near the schoolyard. However, some of the boys went with the men to get rock. August Kunerth was hauling brick and little Ben Starch was riding on the back of the wagon. Unknown to August, Ben fell off and the rear wheel passed over his arm, breaking it. The doctor said it was a bad break and suggested the arm be amputated. Ben's father said, "Absolutely not!" Ben's arm eventually healed. These frugal farmers hauled their own building materials as much as possible to reduce the cost of the building.

Daniel Starch and Henry Kunerth shared a double seat in school. Miss Pittinger, the teacher, taught Daniel algebra to fill in his free time after he passed the final examination early in the spring of 1897. William Kunerth became the first formal graduate of the country school by passing the county superintendent's examination. In school, many girls had little cards with their names printed on them to exchange with friends.

Some residents thought it was a waste of time and money to send boys to college, but Daniel Starch was sent anyway. Wesley Belling was one of the "firsts" from the area to go away to college. Emil and Daniel Starch went to Charles City, Iowa. Godfrey Tietze also went to college in Charles City, and became a pastor. Much to her disappointment, Lydia Starch was not encouraged to get additional schooling.

Playing hooky from school was practically unknown and woe unto the youngster who would try it. He was reprimanded by his parents and frowned on by his classmates. Young boys and girls usually attended the entire term, which, as I recall was seven months. Older boys usually did not enter school until potatoes and corn had been harvested and the fall plowing completed, which was about the end of November. They stopped attending school in early April when the ground had dried out enough for spring sowing and planting.

Miss Linda Nessler of La Crosse succeeded Miss Pittenger as teacher. The Nesslers were members of the German Methodist Church in north La Crosse. Later they transferred to the larger Salzer Church in south La Crosse. The Nesslers were cousins to an Eggler family living in Mormon Coulee and a Houser family living in Onalaska. Linda was a high school graduate. She was well liked by the pupils and well thought of in the community and taught at the school for five years.

In 1900, William Kunerth became the teacher of the school. He had graduated from the La Crosse County High School, and had taught in the district school in lower Mormon Coulee for several years. He was the superintendent of our Sunday school, and the Justice of the Peace. Mr. Kunerth was the first male schoolteacher I (Godfrey Tietze) had. Mr. Kunerth was kind and considerate, but firm in maintaining discipline and order in the school. Godfrey Eggler of Mormon Coulee, a relative of the Nesslers and Housers, succeeded Mr. Kunerth.

The teachers in the little brick schoolhouse were mainly men. Some of the teachers at the Hillside School over the years were Mary McConville, Barbara Jean Paul, Maud Herold Truesdel, Ben R. Schmitz, Godfrey Eggler, George Kohler, Ben F. Coquillett, George Dubler, Lota Moulton and Miss Love.

In 1918, pupils of the Hillside School included: John and Emily Preidel, Armin, Mary, Joe, Florence and Walter Bendel, Minnie and Rose Reise, Marion Hiekel, Oscar Heller, Frieda Risto, Alice and Elsie Herlitzke, Edward, Emma, Frank and Matilda Lorenz, Reuben Heller, Milton and Willie Belling and Dorothy Granke. Miss Karlstad was the teacher.

In 1920, pupils of the Hillside School included: Francis, Clara, Samuel, Elmer, Frank, Edward, Oscar and Matilda Lorenz, Minnie and Rose Reise, Walter, Armin and Florence Bendel, Reuben Heller, Alice and Elsie Herlitzke, Marian Hiekel, Willard and Winifred Werner and Willie Belling. Enola Crossett was their teacher.

Church Life

Before emigrating from Bohemia, the church played an important part in the life of the Chipmunk Coulee ancestors. Although all were Catholic, there must have been a feeling of dissent among some like Vinzenz and Brigitta Starch who had joined a secret group known as the "Herrenhüttern." The Herrnüttern or Hutterian Brethern was a non-Catholic, non-Protestant communitarian religious sect that originated among the Anabaptists in Austria, Bohemia and Moravia during the Reformation. They were also known as the Hutterites, taking their name from their original leader Jakob Hutter who was burned as a heretic in 1536.

Catholics, except for the priests, generally did not have Bibles but this group had them and read them in their homes. When these families arrived in Chipmunk Coulee, they continued to hold church meetings in their homes. One of the homes was that of Brigitta Starch who brought her German Bible, dated 1841, with her. This large Bible was read daily and carefully protected. In the old log house it was kept up high on the rafters or beams. It was passed on down through the family to Matthew Tietze.

Some of the early Catholic settlers drifted away from their faith after coming to Chipmunk Coulee due to the fact that no priests came to visit them. Because of this the Methodist circuit riders that rode out into the Coulee converted many families. In 1943 Emil J. Bernet, born in the Town of Shelby in 1865, published a series of articles for the La Crosse Tribune (Jan-Mar) on the history of the Salzer Methodist church. He stated, "The Methodist circuit riders were ready to pray with a penitent sinner under a tree in the woods or on the lee side of a hay stack and administer all religious rites when necessary. Virtually left as sheep without a shepherd by his or

her own church, there was an immediate response to the earnest, sincere preaching of the gospel.”

The German Methodist Church in La Crosse

The following inscription appears on the yellowing title page of the “*Church Book of the German Mission of the Episcopal Methodist Church in and about La Crosse, Wisconsin, founded in the year of our Lord 1856, of the Upper Iowa Conference of Bishop Janes.*” The book contains the following statement:

It was a stormy and inclement time in La Crosse. Pastor Carl Kluckhohn was called for the La Crosse Mission but when some threatened to throw him in the Mississippi River he decided not to accept.

It was on April 2, 1857, that the Reverend Carl F. Leipprandt, at the request of H. R. Fiegenbaum, Senior Superintendent of the Galena district, came to La Crosse as the first Methodist preacher. There he could not find a house so he erected a little cottage for himself in the city. Reverend Leipprandt rode out to Chipmunk Coulee and held a series of evangelistic meetings. His methods and messages proved to be quite in accord with the religious beliefs and practices the immigrants had followed before coming to America. A Methodist congregation was organized. When he departed on August 25, 1858, we had in and around La Crosse about 70 supporters but not a single member in the city.

Reverend Peter Schäfer served the La Crosse Mission from 1858-1860. He started his preaching in La Crosse holding his meetings in a schoolhouse on the city’s edge. Wilhelm Schreiner built further during the years 1860-1862. In the second year, he got Ferdinand Fischer to assist at Mormon Coulee, Chipmunk Coulee, Brecken Ridge, Burr Oak and other places that belonged to the Mission. In the year 1862, a modest little church was erected in La Crosse on rented land and the beginning of a small Sunday school was made. Preacher Schreiner left behind five probationers in the city.

Preacher Schreiner was followed by John Brauer 1862-1864, Herman Richter 1864-1866, John A. Salzer 1866-1869 and Emil Uhl for the years 1869 to 1871. These early pastors also served the Chipmunk Coulee church, as it was part of the La Crosse Mission. (From: Die Northwest Deutsche Konferenz der BischöflichenMethodistenkirche, Charles City, Iowa, 1913).

The German Methodist Church in Chipmunk Coulee

Reverend Carl Leipprandt of the La Crosse Mission organized the Chipmunk Coulee community in the year 1857. Six pioneer settlers, who had arrived in the Coulee in 1855, became founding members of the German Methodist Episcopal church. The settlers were Emil Uhl, Jakob Bendel (1857), Franz Anton Tietze, Florian Ritschel, Ignatz Hiekel and Vinzenz Starch (Bernet, 1943). These members and their families met in the log schoolhouse in Starch Coulee (Bernice Kunerth Watt’s family history). In later years Emil Uhl became a pastor in the Methodist church and served the Chipmunk Coulee community from 1869-1871. In addition to Pastor Uhl, Franz

Anton Tietze's grandson Godfrey Tietze became a pastor in the Methodist church, as did Wesley F. Belling.

In 1862, a small frame church was built to the east of the log schoolhouse at a cost of about \$800 on land donated by Jakob and Clara Elstner Bendel (Bernet, 1943). Jakob Bendel was the self-appointed director of singing; his daughter Anna ably assisted him. They enjoyed it and the congregation liked to hear them sing (Bernet, 1943).

A search of Shelby Township land transactions in the La Crosse County Court House for the years 1855 to 1865 turned up only two. On December 11, 1860, Gottlieb Herold sold 5 acres to Emil Uhl. Two years later on December 2, 1862, Jakob Bendel sold 75 acres via a mortgage to Jakob Beckel (Bendel?). Thus it seems that Jakob Bendel did donate land for the early 1862 church.

Franz Anton Tietze served the 1862 church as its Administrator following Pastor Herman Richter. Mr. Tietze recorded the church's activities in a small leather bound book that had been started by Pastor Richter. Entries made by Mr. Tietze began in 1861 and include the names of individuals who contributed to the construction of the church building in 1862 and its replacement in 1875.

In Mr. Tietze's Administrator's Book are listed the following members in 1864: Emil Uhl, Ignatz Hiekel, Vinzenz Starch, Jakob Bendel, Franz Paudler, Florian Ritschel, Brigitta Schimmel (wife of Ignatz Schimmel), Franz Hiekel and Stefan Lorenz.

In later years the membership grew and included Florian Ritschel, Ignatz Hiekel, William Belling, John Belling, Theresia Ringel, Edward Werner, Franz Paudler, Joseph Kunerth, Florian Kunerth, Brigitta Starch (Vinzenz's widow), Franz Starch, Stefan Starch, John Bernet, Melchior Eggler, McKown, J. Sprenger, A. Pruett, John Thiel, Mons Anderson, William Hildebrandt, George Bauer, Franz Dörre, Theresia Wolf, Louis Runkel, L. Wachenheimer, Christopher Koenig, J. Lienlokken, Louis Koethe, John Willing, Gottfried Oehler, Reaper Agent, Conrad Collier, S. Thorwart, F. Thorwart, R. Wagner, Henry Salzer, Emma Gruber, S. Gruber, P. Bernet and George Gruber.

The Chipmunk Coulee congregation became one of a circuit of three in which a small congregation in Breslun Ridge (or Breckenridge now called Brinkmann Ridge) and one in La Crosse were the other two preaching places. The Chipmunk Coulee congregation worshipped in the log schoolhouse in Starch Coulee until 1862, when a modest frame church was built on property donated to the church trustees by Jakob Bendel. A cemetery was laid out on the hillside behind the church that is still maintained.

During the tenure of Pastor Peter Schäfer (1858-1860), two revivals took place at the Chipmunk Coulee church and many settlers were converted and joined the congregation. One conversion was that of the godless saloonkeeper August Lamprecht of Breckenridge. He came to the gathering and sat before the pastor with the aim of disturbing him. However, the Word affected him so much that he fell to the floor and cried out for mercy. At first the members let him lie there because they thought he did this for "sport." But, because he was unable to stand, the pastor

For a time, John A. Salzer (1866-1869), the founder of the John A. Salzer Seed Company of La Crosse, would occasionally come out and preach in place of the regular pastor. He delighted in these jaunts into the country where he could see the fields of grain and fruit trees. Many fields were planted with seeds purchased from Mr. Salzer's company.

| | | | |
|----------------------------|---|--------------------------|---|
| Kaffee | 6 | Mangel | 1 |
| Ringel | 4 | Sand | 1 |
| Knopf | 3 | Minifack | 2 |
| ^{Leine} Löffel | 3 | ^{Leine} Gang | 1 |
| Hand Mangel | 2 | Grünze | 1 |
| Spindel | 2 | Leib | 3 |
| Leinwand Spindel | 3 | Leine | 1 |
| L. Leinwand | 2 | | |
| L. Löffel | 2 | | |
| Wage | 3 | | |
| Grünze | 2 | | |

The note to the left, written in pencil on a piece of brown paper, was found in Franz Anton Tietze's satchel. I believe it to be a list of members of the German Methodist church in Chipmunk Coulee and amounts each contributed. Since Vinzenz Starch, who died in 1867 is on the above list, it may be from 1867 or earlier.

| | |
|-------------------------|---------------|
| Kohlman | 274 |
| Jonsson | 190 |
| Kohlhaus | \$55.50 |
| Gautsch | 22. |
| Janin Öl Lamp Kurbel | 22 |
| Stüben gewiß | 26 |
| Karl Belling | 22 |
| Ofen | 14 |
| Lösung | 12 |
| Stuhl | 2 |
| Stuhl Tisch | 2 |
| Leihstuhl Lorenz Stuhl | 8 |
| Stuhl | 292 |
| Luth | |
| William Belling | |
| Stuhl Tisch | 45 |
| Lime | 80 |
| Öl Lamp Lösung Tisch Öl | 50 |
| Johnson | 21 |
| Öl | 1 |
| Zusammen | 691 47 |

The above list, kept by Administrator Tietze, may be a list of contributors and items purchased for the 1862 German Methodist church in Chipmunk Coulee. The second name on the list is Schreiner. William Schreiner was a Methodist pastor in La Crosse who left the city in 1862 (Bernet 1943). Items purchased for the 1862 church included paint, oil lamp, stove (\$14), bricks, black table (\$2), nails, lime, one stool, some oil and one oilcan. Other names on this list are: Kohlman (\$274), Kohlhaus (\$55.50), Gautsch, (\$26), Karl Belling (\$22), Lorenz (\$12) and William Belling. Died means deed?

| | |
|---|----------|
| <i>List of the german M.E. Church in Red. from: Chipmunk Coulee</i> | |
| Jno. Belling | \$ 10 00 |
| W. Belling | 50 00 |
| E. Haner | 10 00 |
| J. Hickel | 50 00 |
| Fr. Paudler | 12 00 |
| B. Starch | 50 00 |
| J. Bendel the lot, one acre and | 25 00 |
| A. Tietze | 52 80 |
| Jos. Kuntz | 25 00 |
| Fr. Hickel | 35 00 |
| Fl. Ritschel | 50 00 |
| Fr. Starch | 10 00 |
| St. Starch | 10 00 |
| Jno. Barnett | 5 00 |
| Mo. Kown | 5 00 |
| Jno. Thiel | 3 00 |
| Jac. Sprenger | 3 00 |
| W. Nicolay | 2 00 |
| A. Pruehl | 2 00 |
| Unknown | 4 00 |
| " | 3 00 |
| | 426 80 |

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------|
| Mr. Colman | \$ 24 00 |
| L. Wachenheimer the Deed and | 2 00 |
| L. Strigel | two Lamps |
| Frank Dörre | 5 00 |
| Chr. Koenig | 1 00 |
| Jno. Bauer | 3 00 |
| L. Runkel | 2 00 |
| Mons Anderson Paid | 50 00 |
| Grüber | 5 00 |
| Lui Kothee Paid | 3 00 |
| | 2 00 |
| Brother Thiel | 5 00 |
| | Paid 1 00 |
| C. Koller | Paid 1 00 |
| | 2 00 |

List of Early Members

Church Administrator Tietze also saved the above list of early members of Chipmunk Coulee German Methodist church and donations received from each. When compared with his penciled notes on the bottom of the right panel it is obvious he did not pen this "official" list. The list may have been written after 1867 but before 1877 because, 1) B. Starch, (Brigitta) the wife of Vinzenz Starch, is on the list but not her husband; Vinzenz died in 1867 and 2) Fl. (Florian) Ritschel, who died in 1877, is on the list. J. Bendel is most likely Jakob Bendel II who contributed the lot, one-acre and \$25. Therefore, the above may be a list of members that contributed toward the construction of the second wood frame church that was built above the Chipmunk Coulee road in 1875. Contributors noted in pencil are Mons Anderson (\$50), Grüber (\$5), Lui Kothee (\$3), Brother Thiel (\$5) and C. Koller (\$1).

Wesley Tietze and his wife Marie preserved the personal records of Franz Anton Tietze dating from 1855 to 1899. His records are the only link to the first three Chipmunk Coulee German Methodist churches (log house, 1862 and 1875).

| | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|-------------------------------|--|--|--|
| Signature for salary Dietzsch f. Gerst. Gefall. | | | | Bezahlung Dreyßig . payment | | | |
| 1864 65. Dietzsch f. 5. 00. | | | | 1. Vierteljahr f. | | | |
| | | | | 2. Vierteljahr / three months | | | |
| | | | | 3. " " " " | | | |
| | | | | 4. " " " " | | | |
| 1865 66 | | | | 1. Vierteljahr f. 5. 00 | | | |
| 1871 Anzeigebrief angekauft / sown | | | | 2. " " " " | | | |
| Haber-Hafer / oats Erdapfel = Kartoffeln potatoes | | | | 3. " " " " | | | |
| 1871. Einkommen received | | | | 4. " " " " | | | |
| 28 Löff Linn hay | | | | Verkauft / sold | | | |
| butter Linn 20. 00 | | | | 1871 21. 35 24. 50 | | | |
| Eier 10. 00 | | | | 22. 23. 25. 30 | | | |
| Linn 10. 00 | | | | 23. 15. 48 19. 75 | | | |
| Verkauft = sold potatoes | | | | 1872 gesät sown | | | |
| Mehl 1871. 8. 00 | | | | 270 Löff 288 58 | | | |
| Mehl 1871. 26. 25. 27. 45. | | | | Löff 8. 00 3. 34 | | | |
| 8. 18. 30 8. 23. 54. 25. 10. | | | | Löff 8. 00 5. 12 | | | |
| 8. 18 8. 25. 53. 28. 45. | | | | Linn Löff 4. 12 | | | |
| 8. 16. 8. 26. 40. 28. | | | | Linn Löff 3. 22 | | | |
| Linn 8. 24. 30. 28. 10. | | | | Linn 1872 | | | |
| 8. 24. 14. 27. 40. | | | | Linn 13 3. 35 | | | |
| 8. 24. 48. 28. 90. | | | | Linn 8. 00 3. 00 | | | |
| | | | | Linn 11. 00 1. 00 | | | |
| | | | | Linn 12. 00 4. 00 | | | |
| | | | | Linn 13. 00 1. 15 | | | |

A page from Franz Anton Tietze's Administrator's book indicating salary and crops sown and harvested to support the 1862 German Methodist church in Chipmunk Coulee.

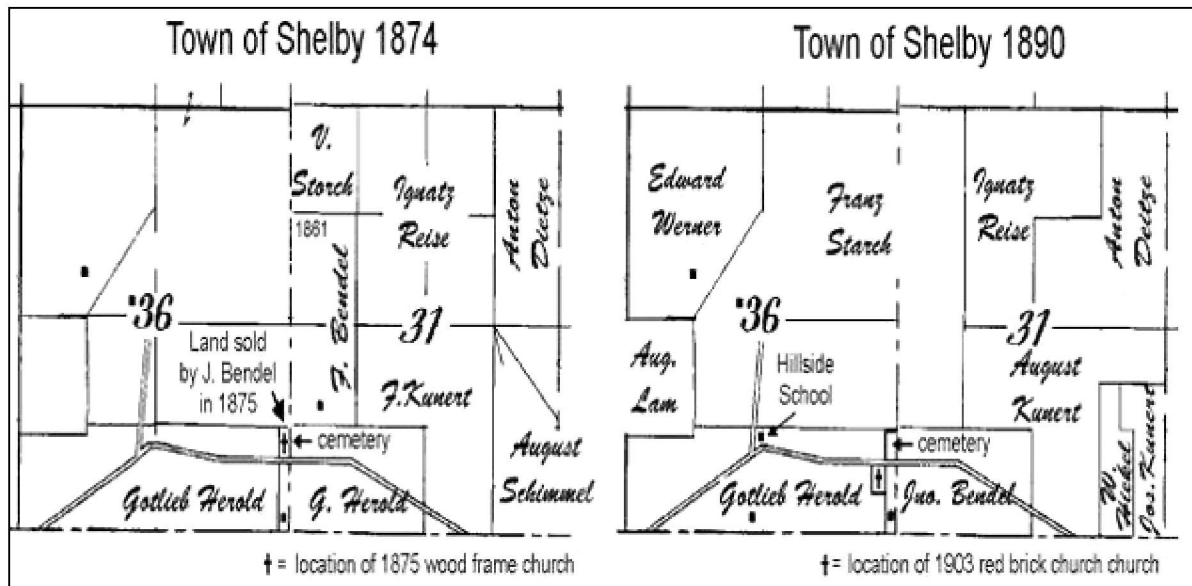
In 1875, a larger wood frame church replaced the 1862 church. On May 26, 1875, Jacob Bendel and his wife Mary Starch Bendel sold a portion of their land to the Trustees of the German Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church for the sum of \$5 (Book of Deeds, Vol. 45, page 490, La Crosse County Court House). The land was in the eastern most part of Section 36. The Trustees were Franz Hiekel, Jakob Bendel, Anton Tietze, Wilhelm Belling and Franz Starch, Sr. This church was built above the road facing south.



The German Methodist church in Chipmunk Coulee in 1875.

A cemetery, laid out on the hillside behind the 1875 church, can be seen in the photograph above (courtesy Roger Hiekel). According to Chipmunk Coulee cemetery records among the first burials in this cemetery was a child of Franz Ringel that died in 1861, Franz Ringel who died in 1865, Jakob Bendel, 1870, Franz Paudler, 1876, Florian Ritschel, 1877 and Heinrich Starch, 1879.

The musical ability of the German people and their love for song is well and long known. This was manifest here too in the many beautiful hymns sung and committed to memory. A great share of them pertained to life hereafter. When funds permitted, around 1896, the congregation purchased a reed organ for use by the church and Sunday school (Bernet, 1943).



Location of the 1875 and 1903 German Methodist Church buildings in Chipmunk Coulee.

In 1857, Rev. Leipprandt, a German Methodist preacher in La Crosse rode out to Chipmunk Coulee and encouraged the settlers to form their own church. At first the members met in a log schoolhouse in Starch Coulee (Kunerth, 1943). Jakob Bendel was one of the founding members (Bernet, 1943).

In 1861, Jakob Bendel purchased a little over 38 acres of land in Section 31 from the US Government (Bureau of Land Management records).

In 1862, Jakob donated some land to the church and a small frame building was erected (Bernet, 1943). This church may have been located on the land Jakob purchased in 1861.

By 1874 the land owned by Jakob Bendel in 1861 was in the possession of his son Franz. The 1874 plat map of Shelby Township shows a house above the road on Franz's property.

Some time after 1874, Gottlieb Herold sold some land below the road in Section 31 to the Bendel family. By 1890, John Bendel owned this land.

On May 26, 1875, Jakob Bendel II and his wife Mary sold a piece of land in Section 36 for \$5 to the Trustees of the German Methodist Episcopal of Shelby. The description of this land is as follows:

“Commencing on the east line of the South East quarter of the South East quarter of Section 36, Township No. 15, North Range No. 7 West, North of and adjoining the public highway, leading through said S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ of S. E. $\frac{1}{4}$ and running thence Northerly along the East line of said Section 36, 14 rods, thence Westerly 10 rods, thence Southerly 14 rods and then Easterly 10 rods to the place of beginning,” (Source: La Crosse County Court House, Book of Deeds, Vol. 45, page 490). The same year a wood frame church was built above the road on this land.

ZUR ERINNERUNG

an den Tag der

Katechismus-Prüfung.

Willie Tietze

wurde nach empfangenem Unterrichte im Katechismus
der Bischöflichen Methodisten Kirche öffentlich ge-

prüft, am *17^{ten} Mai* 18*91*

in der *Disyn*

zu *Chipmunk Coulee*

Solches bezeugt unter herzlichsten Segenswünschen:

John H. Klaus

Prediger der La Crosse Synode

La Crosse Wis am *17 Mai* 18*91*

Denkspruch.

Es ist ein köstlich Ding, geduldig sein und
auf die Hilfe des Herten hoffen. Aflagl. 3, 26.

Copyrighted by CRANSTON & STOWE, Cincinnati, O.

William Tietze, son of Anton and Brigitta Neuman Tietze was confirmed in the 1875 German Methodist church in Chipmunk Coulee.

In 1903, a brick church was built below the public road on land donated by the Herold family replacing the building that stood above the road. This red brick church always reminded William Kunerth of the Little Brown Church in the Vale. Many people walked long distances over hill and dale and rocky roads to attend services. The church had nice oak floors and several beautiful stained glass windows given as memorials by different families. Franz and Theresia Starch gave the large stained glass window in the front of the church in memory of Franz's parents Vinzenz and Brigitta Neumann Starch.



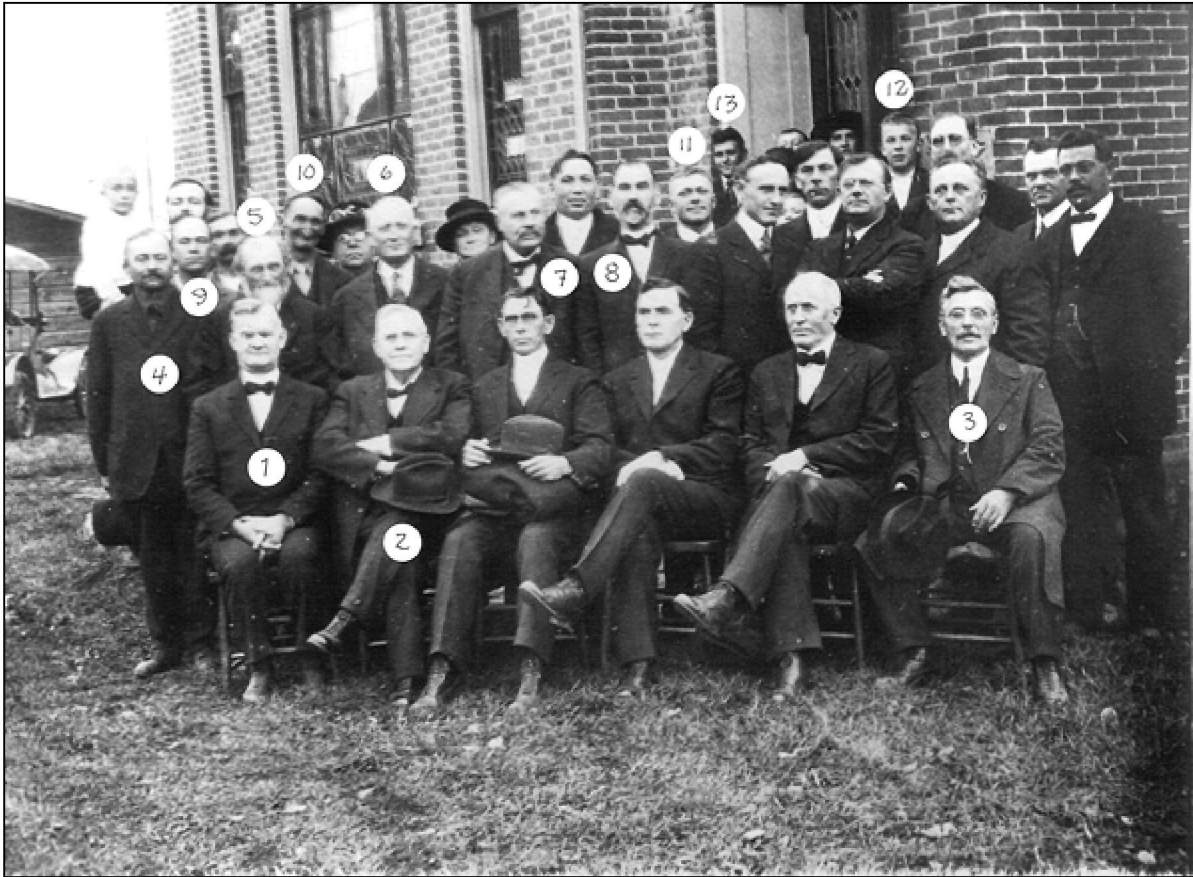
The German Methodist Church in Chipmunk Coulee in the early 1920s.

During the Sunday Service men and boys sat on one side of the church. Women, girls and very small children sat on the other side. In later years when "city" visitors occasionally attended they were not aware of this division in seating and sat anywhere causing raised eyebrows and amusement.

The language used for the services was "high" German as that was the native tongue of the families in the Coulee. In their homes, the families spoke a German dialect called "Deutsch Bohmisch." Children learned to speak German at home and English in school. Catechism was conducted in German during a Sunday service before the whole congregation.

Sunday afternoons, following the service, was the time to visit with one's neighbors. However, after catching up on news of the Coulee it was necessary to return home to do the late afternoon and evening chores. Eggs had to be gathered, the cows milked again and the livestock fed.

Godfrey Tietze wrote about the 1875 Chipmunk Coulee church in his autobiography. Services were conducted in German because there were not enough people in the area who could understand English to make necessary the introduction of English into the service. The first complete English service I attended was some time in the middle 1890s. It was the service conducted by the Reverend Thomas Davidson, a Methodist pastor from La Crosse. His daughter Mary Jane married Ignatz Starch. Ignatz farmed on the ridge to the east of the Stefan Lorenz farm. Reverend Davidson lived with Ignatz and his family. Our pastor, the Reverend Heinrich W. Schneider, assisted Reverend Davidson. Reverend Schneider also made some remarks in English. A quartet from our congregation sang several hymns out of Joy and Gladness, a popular religious songbook of the time. One of these was "Rest for the Weary," in which the officiating minister joined. Reverend Davidson gave the main address. In it he used such words as "Almighty God," and "Jesus Christ." I had never before heard those words used in a religious service. After the service, I asked my mother why the minister used such bad swear words in his sermon. She explained they were "Allmachtig Gott" and "Jesus Christus" in English. I had heard these words before, but only as profanity. The young (and adult) people worshipped and prayed in German, but when they used profanity it was in English. My mother had difficulty explaining to me that the minister, in using the words, was not swearing.



A pastor's conference was held at the German Methodist church in the early 1920s. (Homecoming Day 1924?). Individuals identified: 1.Rev. Panzlau, 2.Rev. Klaus, 3. Rev. Damerow, 4. William Hiekel, 5. Franz Starch, 6. Rev. Schneider, 7. Rev. Hartle, 8. Rev. Schlein, 9. Carl Hiekel, 10. Gus Kunerth, 11. Edmund Tietze, 12. Franz Lorenz, 13. Sam Hiekel.

**CHIPMUNK COULEE
HOMECOMING FINE EVENT
LABOR DAY**

Two Hundred Persons Enjoy Afternoon
and Evening Programs in Church

OLD SETTLERS RECOUNT THE
STORY OF EARLY STRUGGLES

**Noteworthy Event in Valley
Southeast of the City**

Bradley and Rudolph Herold, older permanent residents of the neighborhood who recounted the difficulties and hardships which the first settlers encountered as they cleared the wilderness and made the neighborhood fit for human habitation. Not less interesting and inspiring were the short addresses given by the former pastors of the church who were present. The Rev. Messrs. W. V. Schlung, H. W. Schneider, W. P. Schlein, W. J. Witter and B. C. Brandenburg told of their experiences while they were

The Chipmunk Coulee Homecoming that was held on Labor Day in the Methodist church in Chipmunk Coulee was a memorable event. In spite of the rainy weather which kept many away over 200 persons were present, most of whom were former residents who had gathered from various parts of the country to renew old friendships and form new ones among the young people now growing up in the neighborhood. It was a happy occasion at which the experiences of former days were related to one another. The ladies of the community had prepared a bountiful dinner and supper that was served in the basement of the church.

Afternoon Program

The afternoon program consisted of addresses by the Rev. Wesley F. Belling, a Methodist pastor of Sioux City, Iowa, and Dr. William Kunerth, professor in the Iowa State college at Ames, both Chipmunk Coulee boys. Dr. Daniel Starch of Harvard University, another product of the coulee, could not be present because he had gone to Europe. The orchestra of the Salzer Memorial church furnished special music for the occasion. A very interesting part of the program was the reminiscences given by Messrs. William Belling, Frank Starch, John Bendel, David

pastors here. The Rev. J. L. Panzlau, until a few days ago pastor of the church, presided at the meeting and also introduced the Rev. Frank Hartle of Milwaukee, the newly appointed pastor, who spoke friendly words of greeting.

Evening Program

The program of the evening was presided over by the Rev. Wesley F. Belling, who introduced Chief of Police J. B. Weber of LaCrosse, who spoke a few words on behalf of his mother, who as Miss Bergen, was one of the earliest settlers of the neighborhood.

The neighborhood was first settled about the year 1855. Several families of the first settlers spent the first winter, an unusually severe one, in a small floorless log cabin that had been erected on what is now the Herold farm. In the course of time other immigrants came and built houses. A traveling Methodist preacher soon came and looked up the people, who responded to his ministry and gathered in homes for religious services, until after a few years a church was built. In this way the Methodist church in the coulee had its beginning as a constructive force in the life of the coulee.

From the *La Crosse Daily Tribune and Leader Press*, 1924.

In 2000, Roger Hiekel described to me what he remembered about the 1903 Chipmunk Coulee German Methodist church. "There was a long wood buggy shed east of the church to shelter horses from the sun and flies. There was a large square stepping stone used to get in and out of horse drawn buggies. Across the road from the church was an old wagon wheel on a post that

had mailboxes attached to it. The mailboxes where for the people that lived further up the coulee as the mail route stopped at the church.

Inside the church, in the center, was a long iron rod with a hook at the end hanging from the ceiling. A lamp was hung on it during evening services. A foot-powered organ stood in one corner.

Sunday services were usually held in the afternoon. I do not remember how the church was heated. In the steeple was a large bell with a rope that hung down in the entrance of the church.

At Christmas time a large tree was set in one corner with many burning candles on it secured with clips. Under the tree were small paper bags, one for each member. The bags contained candy, nuts an orange and an apple.

There was a cook stove in the basement that was used to prepare church lunches. The basement was used for Box Socials. The basement also contained a few meeting rooms. Sometimes plays were held in the basement to raise money for the church. I attended two such plays in the early 1930s. One was “A Cheerful Lair” and the other was “Who’s Crazy Now?” John Lorenz was the star player. Emily Preidel spent weeks typing each program on her typewriter.

On Sunday the church was a gathering place for all local people. They came by foot, horse and buggy or on horseback. In later years they came by automobile. After a good rain the entire length of north Chipmunk Coulee was one long ribbon of deep rutted mud that stuck to everything it touched. There were a few big mud holes where the buggy wheels sunk to the hubs. Each time a buggy went through a mud hole it got a little deeper. I remember my Aunt Clara telling about going to church covered with mud because the horses sunk to their bellies going through a mud hole on the way. If the weather was dry you got covered with dust. It was not until the 1940s that a one lane hard surface road replaced the dirt road.” Carl Hiekel was the church janitor in 1907. His records indicate the following items were purchased that year:

| | | |
|-------------|---------------|--------|
| January 2 | 1 lantern | \$0.85 |
| January 12 | 5 gallons oil | \$0.70 |
| February 2 | 5 gallons oil | \$0.70 |
| March 21 | 1 box matches | \$0.05 |
| December 17 | 5 gallons oil | \$0.75 |

As the school was the center for education of children and dispenser of gossip, so the church was the center for religious training and the spreading of news. Of their own accord the community members flocked to the support of the church for spiritual guidance.

Since the center of this community was about 10 miles from La Crosse, it was necessary for a pastor to come out for every service. This was no small chore, especially in winter or spring when the roads were almost impassable. Sometimes these early Methodist preachers or circuit riders rode on horseback from one appointment to the other. They would leave their home in town on Saturday afternoon to be at their appointed place for Sunday morning and at another that

afternoon and still another that night. This meant that they gladly accepted an invitation to a meal or a night's lodging. They were indeed poorly paid. A pastor's annual salary was in many cases much below \$1,000. On occasions when the minister did not show up, either Franz Anton Tietze or Franz Starch conducted the service.

When members of the church behaved improperly, they were cautioned, exhorted and finally removed from church membership after proper admonishment had also been given as specified in the church ritual. One family was dropped from the membership for dancing, drinking and not attending church services.

In the latter part of the 1800s, the Coulee families would gather during the summer to attend camp meetings. The families would live in tents in close proximity and often eat their meals together. There was also a large tent or tabernacle where they would gather for religious services two, three or four times a day. They went to their homes only long enough to do the chores. These meetings lasted for two or more weeks. The whole family attended. These meetings were considered a real outing and vacation.

In winter the so-called "protracted meetings" were a counterpart to the camp meetings of the summer. These nightly gospel meetings were held in the church building for about two weeks with several day meetings interspersed as the weather and other conditions allowed.

The people of Chipmunk Coulee can be compared to the heroes of faith of the Hebrew days. For the most part they were humble peasants leading a simple life. They lived close to the soil and to their God, as they understood him.

The church was the center of the life for the adults. While not every family in the community belonged to the church, those families that did were usually represented 100% on every Sunday unless there was a special reason for their absence. The young people of the congregation attended the preaching service that usually followed Sunday school. Sunday school was a place for spiritual instruction and a place for youngsters to learn to read German. They learned to write German script from the pastors who came to the schoolhouse once a week during the winter months to teach. The sessions lasted only about one hour and included teaching the catechism.

On Sundays after the service, members of the congregation visited before wending their way home. They spread the news and aired their views on many and sundry topics, such as the price of a cord of wood, the latest escapade of a neighbor's boy, the farmer's plight and the presidential election. For example, "What would Cleveland do for the farmer?"

Who would begrudge these hard working law-abiding, frugal and thrifty individuals the right and privilege to talk over such matters at this time? This was one of the few occasions they had to come together. Rural free delivery of mail had not started and there were no telephones. Mail delivery came about 1900 and the telephone about 1907.

Christmas was a big occasion in the Coulee church. Daniel Starch wrote about his early Christmas memories: There had been preparation for weeks. Children in Sunday school were assigned pieces and dialogues to learn for the Christmas program. There was frequent reminding

and urging. Mother would ask, "How much of your piece have you memorized?" There were practice times and testing periods to see how much we could recite. As Christmas drew near, there were rehearsals of our pieces and hymns at the Church with the minister in charge. Several days before Christmas, the congregation appointed a few of their members to cut an evergreen tree from a nearby hillside. The tree was always tall and symmetrical, reaching nearly to the ceiling of the church.

Twenty-five cents was collected for each child in a family. A group was appointed to buy apples, oranges, nuts and candy. One orange, one apple, raisin clusters, ribbon candy, chocolate creams, almonds, walnuts, filberts, and Brazil nuts, the same number of each, were put into brown paper bags. Christmas Eve arrived at last. It was 1890 and I was 12 years old at the time. A fresh, feathery blanket of snow covered the hills and coulee.

Father harnessed horses Bill and Jim, the dress-up go-to-meeting team. They were hitched to the big sleigh and it was pulled out of the shed. The long wagon box was placed on the bolsters of the sleigh. A layer of fragrant clover and timothy hay was placed over the floor of the box. Over the hay was a layer of blankets. Over the layer of blankets a layer of children, and over the children another layer of blankets. Father and mother sat on the wide spring seat up front. Off to church we drove about a mile away. Bill and Jim were tied to the hitching post in front of the church and covered with blankets to keep them warm while the program went on inside.

The church was crowded front to back as at no other time. Prayers were offered and hymns were sung. Stille Nacht (Silent Night) was always included. All the pieces and dialogues were recited. Finally there was the reading of the ageless story: "And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flocks by night." Two tall young men, using long birch saplings with a burning candle attached to the end of each, lit the candles on the tree one by one. Each child's name was read off and he or she received the long awaited Christmas package. The packages were handed out one by one. You never saw such shining faces on both children and grown-ups. There was the final hymn, the minister's benediction, and then home to bed.

During Christmas Eve night, Santa Clause [sic] fixed up each of our places at the breakfast table with his special gifts. There were toys and raisins, sweets, and cookies of many shapes and colors, and Santa always included one or more utilitarian gifts such as a pair of mittens, a cap, earmuffs, overshoes, stockings, or a woolen muffler to wear to school on the cold Coulee days. The path from our farm to the one room schoolhouse a quarter of a mile away down our valley led across the meadow that was sometimes muddy and sometimes knee-deep with snow.

On Christmas morning curiosity awakened us earlier than usual and we peered into the dining room to see what Santa Clause [sic] had brought. Sometimes he had not finished and shooed us back upstairs again. Despite the warnings for which there had been good and sufficient reasons, Santa always turned out to be generous and forgiving. The threatened switch and cabbage head never appeared at anyone's Christmas breakfast place.

Children's Day in Sunday school was emphasized with a special program of songs and recitations. There were three occasions during the year when children received practice in public

speaking. They were the closing day of public school, Children's Day in Sunday school and the Christmas celebration. The first of these was in the English language and held in the school building and the last two were in the German language and held in the church.

An Epworth League was organized in the church about 1895. The League held religious meetings in the church on Sunday evenings attended mainly by the young people.

Great good has come to this hallowed spot known as Chipmunk Coulee. As time went on and more loved ones were buried in the cemetery on the hillside behind the church and the ties binding us to this spot became stronger. The cemetery looms in importance and is rich in sacred memories of the departed. It is noteworthy that from this community came preachers, businessmen, educators, nurses, farmers and engineers but no lawyers or politicians.

For the most part, observance of the Sabbath Day was almost puritanical. Woe unto anyone found doing anything on Sunday that could have been done on another day. They spoke of such a person as "getting his name into the black book." One Sunday William Kunerth and William Tietze confronted Mr. Bradley while he was hauling firewood to his home. William Tietze promptly asked him, "Do you not know that it is Sunday today?" "Yes," replied Mr. Bradley, "but hell, a fellow has to have something to burn!"

The following ministers served the German Methodist Church in the Coulee: the Revs. Fiegenbaum, Hoerger, Prieve, Schnieder, Witte, Schlein, Klaus, Wessel, Hartke, Brenner and Schlung. In the early years there were many ministers because the church allowed them to stay only one year at any one place. Later, the maximum tenure was 3 years and still later 5 years. In recent times the limit was eliminated.

For fear that some may get the impression that the people living in the Coulee were saints, William Kunerth hastened to say that they were humble people subject to all the ills and shortcomings that humanity is heir to. No wings sprouted on any of them. The germs of greed, jealousy, hatred, strife, envy and frivolity were ever present. However, they were kept in subjugation to the nobler and better instincts of life promulgated by the spirit of religion and an interest in higher and ennobling ideals that were propagated by the church. They were in the main simple-hearted peasants who believed that the democratic way of life was the way of dignity and honor.

With the coming of the automobile, members of the congregation were able to attend church in La Crosse. The brick church served until the 1940s, when the death and removal of most of its members made its upkeep impossible. Therefore, the congregation decided to disassemble and remove the brick church rather than allow vandals to damage it. The large stained glass window was taken to a church in Stoddard, Wisconsin and stored. The church's bell now rings in the tower of the Asbury Methodist Church in La Crosse, Wisconsin. Mrs. Wesley Tietze remembers that the pulpit Bible also went to Asbury.

Mormon Coulee

The first German Methodist congregation in Mormon Coulee, Town of Shelby, was organized in 1862 (Bernet, 1943). The old church has long since disappeared. However, the small cemetery, called the Markle Cemetery, associated with the church exists today. It is in the back yard of a house on Highway 14 about 9 miles east of La Crosse. Among those buried in this cemetery are Vinzenz Starch, Ignatz Schimmel, Markle, Ott, Sprenger, Eggler and Bernet.

Brecken Ridge

In the summer of 1860, it was decided to build a German Methodist church on Brecken Ridge. It was to be a log structure and timber logs were prepared during the following winter. The building, 22 by 30 feet, was erected in the spring of 1861 (this church was about 15 miles east of La Crosse on Highway 14). The first names appearing as members in the Brecken Ridge records are the following: Lamprecht, Killer, Koller, Thiel, Koch, Theyson, Woodbridge and others. Frank Koch donated two acres of land and Lamprecht, Kock and Koller were appointed as the building committee. Work was donated on the plan "Gameine schaftlich, everybody works, and no one draws any pay." It is not stated how much was needed for hardware, floors, shingles and other things, but money evidently was available. The church was used for many years (Bernet, 1943).

Lamprecht, Thiel and Koller were neighbors on Brecken Ridge. Thiel and Koller had come from Cincinnati together. Lamprecht had attended some Methodist meetings. His relatives suggested he might yet become a Methodist. "No danger," he said, "I go because the young preacher has something to say." He had been through the Mexican war as a member of a regiment of cavalry, which experience had not improved his morals any. I have heard him say that we were "zwei Gottlos grobe buerschen." Lamprecht kept a saloon. Drinking and card playing were the pleasures of Thiel and Lamprecht. One day they went to a revival meeting and took their places forward and directly in front of the speaker, the latter with the avowed intention of disturbing the meeting and worrying the young preacher. The earnest words of the preacher touched Lamprecht in the right spot and he came under violent conviction, went forward and fell prostrate unable to rise and praying loudly for mercy. People at first thought he was trying to deceive them, but found that he was very much in earnest. He was thoroughly converted, went home, the next morning destroyed his stock of liquors, closed his place, threw his cards into an old well and never used them again (Bernet, 1943).

Lamprecht at once began preparing for the ministry and was a successful and beloved pastor in the Northwestern and Norwegian German conference all his life. Thiel also was converted when almost all of the society at Brecken Ridge turned to the Evangelical association. He worshiped with the rest, opened his home for their meetings, worked in the Sunday school, but with his family remained Methodist (Bernet, 1943).

A cemetery was located near the Brecken Ridge Methodist church on land owned by William Koethe. The earliest burial in the Koethe cemetery was that of Johanna Koch, wife of Fredrich Koch. She died October 21, 1858. Buried in the same cemetery are August Koethe who died November 14, 1862 and John and Sophie Koethe. Other names are Anna Neumann, wife of J.

Neumann, Joseph Ringle and Joseph and Theresia Jahnel. Another cemetery is near by on land owned by Herman Hellwig. The earliest burial there was that of George Lepoke who died October 13, 1857. Others buried in this cemetery include Wilhelmina B. Brinkman, wife of pioneer settler John T. Brinkman. She died April 25, 1863. Her husband John is also buried there; he was born February 8, 1830 and died July 28, 1892. John came to Brecken Ridge with his mother.



The Salzer Methodist church in La Crosse

With the coming of the automobile, members of the Chipmunk Coulee German Methodist congregation were able to attend the Salzer Methodist church in La Crosse. The Salzer church at 7th and Ferry Streets was erected in 1895 at a cost of about \$25,000. It is built of native limestone faced with range rock. Labor and material costs were low at that time. Carpenters and stonemasons were paid \$2.50 per day for a ten-hour day. The interior was finished with natural Tennessee oak. In 1900, the parsonage was damaged by fire. The loss was amply covered by insurance, and it was rebuilt and somewhat enlarged. In 1902, the church was struck by lightning, entailing a fire loss of about \$4,000, entirely covered by insurance. The church is at present insured against fire loss in the amount based on replacement cost of \$100,000, which shows the advance in building costs since the erection of the small log structure on Brecken

Ridge in 1861. The Hinners Organ Company installed a beautiful pipe organ in 1908 (Bernet, 1943).

10

Chronologisch-alphabetische

| | Namen. | Amts-Antritt. | Amts-Ende | Bemerkung |
|---|-------------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------|
| x | Krueger A. | October 1888 | Juli 1889 | Weggezogen |
| x | Luth D. | " | " August " | " |
| x | Markel J. | " | " Nov. 1889 | Weggezogen |
| x | Thiel & J. | " | " | Gefallen |
| x | Weis C. | " | " Jan. 29, 1894 | Fortgezogen |
| x | Eggler M. | " | 1889. Febr. 22, 1890. | Weggezogen |
| x | John Bernet | Febr. 22, 1890. | Sept. 1890. | " |
| x | Tietze, Wilhelm | Jan. 4, 1902 | Sept. 10, 1903 | Fortgezogen |
| x | Belling, Wilhelm | April 5, 1902 | Oct. 25, 1905 | Gestorben |
| x | Lorenz, Stephan | Aug. 26, 1902 | Oct. 2, 1906 | Gestorben |
| x | Tietze, Gottfried | Sept. 30, 1906 | Sept. 1, 1907 | Gestorben |
| | Starch, Ambros | " | " | " |
| x | Herold, Rudolf. | Sept. 1, 1907 | Sept. 1, 1915 | Fortgezogen |
| x | Schlaack Rudolf | Aug. 7, 1908 | Aug. 1909 | Gestorben |
| | Figgie C. F. | Aug. 1907 | | |

A page taken from the Salzer Church General Records 1889-1920. Listed on the page are the names of the members of the church in Chipmunk Coulee. Namen means name, Amts=Antritt means upon his assuming office, Amts=Ende means upon his leaving office and Bemerkung means remark or comment. Apparently Stephan Lorenz assumed an official duty in the church on August 26, 1902 (at the age of 72). His term in office ended October 2, 1906, the date of his death (gestorben).



Die 2. vierteljährliche Versammlung der La Crosse gemein-
sam Gammonda wurde gehalten zu Chipmunk
den 31 Jan. 1903.

Dieselbe wurde vom Hospizgenuss mit Jubel eröffnet
W. P. Schleier wurde als Dekretar erwählt.

Gegenwärtig waren:

Hospizanten Dekretar: L. J. Bremner.

Aufsichtgenossigen: W. P. Schleier.

Präsidenten von Epworth Liga Navinman:
Rudolph Herold.

Klassführer: Franz Starch.

Navinwalten: Wilhelm Belling, Stephan Lorenz.

Truften: Ambros Starch, Wilhelm Kieckel,
Emil Pandler, August Kumerth, Joseph Dietze

Präsidenten von Epworth Liga Navinman =

President of the Epworth League Club

Klassführer = Klassführer = Class Leader

Navinwalten = Verwalter = Administrator

Truften = Trustees

From Salzer church records for the year 1903 containing reference to Chipmunk Coulee church officers.

Social Life in Chipmunk Coulee

The social life of the residents of Chipmunk Coulee was not very advanced, especially in the earlier years. There are several factors relating to this that should be mentioned. The people were not too extroverted. When one adds to that their associations in the church and school and the fact that there were no telephones, one can see why their social life was rather limited. Still, it should be said that for many years, from about 1890 to 1925, there was a community picnic on

the 4th of July attended by everyone in the Coulee. It was held at noon anywhere there was a good spot. One game played at that picnic was "Charlie Was the Miller."

In the summer of 1924, there was a big event in the Coulee known as the "Homecoming." It was widely advertised and extensive plans made to entertain all that had ever lived here. Wesley Belling and Emil Starch planned an elaborate program that would be held at the church. However, a rainy spell set in and greatly reduced attendance. William Kunerth made one of the several speeches and told a joke about Iowa and how hot it got there in the summer time, "It got so hot that popcorn flew up in the air already popped."

"Spelldowns" afforded good training and experience in social graces for the young people and also for those of middle age. The spelldowns were later replaced by debates. The topics for debate included: Is the pen mightier than the sword? Was Lee a better general than Grant? People drove for miles to attend these debates held in the Hillside School. This meant a long trip on poor roads using horse and wagon or bobsled.

Among other social activities in the Coulee was the "sing-in." A sing-in consisted of an informal gathering of young men and women. They sang hymns, songs and played games. Songs sung by the group included Merrily We Roll Along, Good Night Ladies, Jingle Bells, Old Black Joe, Away Over the Mountain, Away Over the Plain, When a Man Has Plenty of Money and Gives His Neighbors None and America. The meetings were usually held on Sunday evenings at any one of several homes chosen by one of the leaders of the group. The more favored places to meet were at the homes of Bob Rogers, William Belling, Joseph Kunerth, David Bradley and Franz Starch. Sometimes we had refreshments. The group adjourned informally about midnight. The sing-in was at its zenith around 1900.

The people of this community knew about dances and dancing but hardly anyone indulged in them extensively for they were "machinations of the devil." Dancing and playing cards were against the rules of the Methodist church. For dates, young people went to meetings at the church, or to "sing-ins" frequently held at the Franz Starch home. In the early years in the Coulee, girls were so scarce that, according to one resident, "If a colored shawl was put over the horns of a goat, the boys would run for it." In some cases, girls in the old country were asked to come over and marry one of the young men in the Coulee. This was the case for Brigitta Neumann, who came from Bohemia in 1872 at the age of 19 with the sole intent of marrying Anton Tietze, Jr.

The use of tobacco was rather common among the older men, but its use was practically unheard of among the younger men. The women young or old did not use tobacco in any form. Beer, liquor and wine were used very sparingly by the members of the predominantly Methodist community. Such practice was frowned upon because of economical and moral considerations.

Weddings were almost always performed in the home of the bride and not in the church. Godfrey Tietze recalled the marriage of his oldest sister Mary to Franz Lorenz, son of Stefan and Rosina Lorenz. It was not the first marriage in the Tietze family. My father's sister Theresia, the youngest and the only child to be born in America, married Ambrose Starch in the 1870s. The marriage of Mary to Franz occurred February 18, 1896. The preparations for the wedding were

mystifying to my young mind. It was something entirely new in my experience and difficult for me to understand. Mother explained to me that she had left her home in Europe to come here and marry my father, changing her name from Brigitta Neumann to Brigitta Tietze. Now Mary was going to change her name to Mary Lorenz and go to live with Franz in his home. Mary would of course come to visit us and we would visit her; but after her marriage, her home would be at the Lorenz's. All this seemed wonderfully strange to me.

It was to be a home wedding, and for the time and circumstances, it was elaborate only since most of the congregation and the people of the neighborhood were invited. Preparations in the home began weeks ahead of the event. A large number of cakes of different varieties were baked and carefully stored for the occasion. I do not recall that Franz and Mary had a wedding cake, and I do not recall that the traditional "cutting" of the wedding cake by the bride and groom took place. Bread was baked in abundance. Days before the wedding, several geese and chickens had to sacrifice their lives to satisfy the appetites of the guests. Our old-fashioned kitchen stove had to do double duty for a number of days, including the wedding day.

A somewhat odd but not really irrelevant event occurs to me in connection with the preparation for Mary's wedding. There had been up to this time, so far as I know, no outhouse on our premises. I remember grandfather sometimes picking up a corn cob in our yard and walking into the woods below our house to relieve himself, but where the women in the family went for the same purpose, I simply do not recall. In the weeks before the wedding, my brother Joseph and the prospective bridegroom built a simple two-hole outhouse below the house behind the granary. It met the needs of the wedding guests and served its purpose for many years following.

A touching fact in connection with the outhouse comes to mind. My grandmother Theresia was by that time almost totally blind. There was a ditch on the left side of the granary and the outhouse. Often when she needed to go out there, she got me to lead her by the hand, so she would not stumble into the ditch. I waited for her while she was inside, then led her safely back to the house. Discarded newspapers and other periodicals were available inside the outhouse, and I often did some reading there while I did what I had to do.

Another event that preceded the wedding should be mentioned here. Weeks before the wedding, Mary had acquired a new drop-head sewing machine, which operated more smoothly and less noisily than our old Singer. Miss Anna Bernet, sister of the Bernet brothers, made Mary's wedding dress. She was an accomplished seamstress that lived in Mormon Coulee. For days Anna was in our home sewing the wedding dress and veil. She played the guitar, and sometimes in the evenings she entertained us by singing Swiss songs and yodeling.

The wedding day came, and the many invited guests arrived on schedule. Their horses were tied up in our large cow stable after the cattle had been put out to the straw stack. The wedding took place in the forenoon in the living room on the east side of the house. The officiating minister was our pastor, the Reverend J. T. Hartke, a robust dignified gentleman, with a neatly trimmed reddish beard, and a strong, melodious voice. I beheld with wondering eyes and listened intently as he administered the simple but dignified ritual of holy matrimony to Mary and Franz, flanked by bridesmaid and best man.

The wedding reception, as I recall, took place after the marriage ceremony. Immediate relatives were the first to offer their congratulations and best wishes to the bride and groom. The assembled guests followed the relatives.

The wedding dinner followed the ceremony and the reception. Because there was not enough table room to accommodate all the guests at one sitting, there were second and third tables. Enough kitchen help was available to wash dishes and reset the tables, until all were fed. I recall that Mrs. Emil Paudler (Frances Hiekel) was particularly active in the preparation and the serving of food.

As to refreshments, there was besides coffee, an abundance of lemonade and ginger ale. Our family held to Methodist principles of abstinence, and no alcoholic beverages were served. After dinner, there was general merrymaking; older people visiting, and younger people playing “round” games like Happy is the Miller, Pig in the Parlor and games approaching square dancing. There was no waltzing; our family stuck to the Methodist rule against social dancing. Older people left in the afternoon; younger people stayed into the night and I believe were served supper.

Economic Life in Chipmunk Coulee

Water was an important item in the economic life of the early settlers in Chipmunk Coulee. The settlers built their homes near the abundant springs found in the coulee. Watercress flourished in several of these springs and under proper conditions and care it could be grown and sold yielding good financial returns. Franz and Theresia Starch had running water piped into their house from a spring up in the hills. The water used in Grandpa Kunerth’s house was pumped by a hydraulic ram from a spring 60 feet below the house. High floods in summer put the ram out of commission around 1880. After that, water was carried to the house from the spring as it was at other farms. In later years the Bellings and Rogers also used a hydraulic ram to pump water.

To live on the top of the ridge was not desirable at first, for people living there had to depend on rainwater for drinking, cooking and washing. However, since about 1890, farmers living on the ridge have been able to drill wells and use a windmill to pump water to the surface.

The farms in the Coulee varied in size from 80 to 420 acres. Women worked in the fields side by side with the men, binding sheaves, loading grain or hay, shocking grain, planting, hoeing and digging potatoes, planting, hoeing and cutting corn and planting and hoeing cabbages. In fact, women did almost every kind of work done by men. The young people of this community were expected to help with farm chores the year round. In summer most of them helped in the fields or helped by carrying drinking water and lunches. They also helped hoe the vegetable garden and picked berries. Both the men and the women went “bare footed” in the summer.

In the fall, farmers cut corn and tied it into shocks for husking later. The stalks provided feed for the cattle in the winter. The ripened grain crop, consisting mainly of wheat, oats and barley was cut, shocked and later stacked. The hilly country made threshing out of the shock almost impossible at that time. The power supply for the early threshing machines or grain separators

was raw horsepower. 10 or 12 horses propelled the threshing machines. Steam engines were used for this work starting in 1885.

The crops that these sturdy farmers could wring from the soil by long hours of hard labor, sweat and toil were usually abundant. Crop failure was unknown, for very diversified farming was practiced, although droughts sometimes reduced the yield. The soil was productive but the fields were almost always either on the side hill or on top of the ridge, making labor difficult. Erosion control became a factor of prime importance, making it necessary to replenish the soil with nutrient materials. Very commonly this was accomplished by spreading barnyard manure on the fields in winter or spring and by using crop rotation in its elementary form.

In the early years when there were abundant woods and fields of grass, erosion was not a problem. Later, as more and more acres were put under cultivation, the topsoil was washed from the hillsides unless special precaution was taken. The gullies were usually grassed to prevent the soil from being washed away. Also, strips of grass and plowed field alternated up the side of the hill.

The first settlers dug up their fields with a stick or hoe. Homesteading involved no end of toil. Cutting trees, grubbing out stumps and rocks to convert the land into tillable acreage for crops, constructing housing and wagon roads from one part of the farm to another, making drainage ditches to prevent erosion and producing the family food supply added up to an almost impossible amount of work for a young family. In the summer of 1867, Vinzenz Starch had an attack described as inflammation of the intestines. He died after a short illness at the age of 56. However, some family members claimed that actually he had worked himself to death, the hard physical struggle causing a rupture.

The early pioneers used oxen and even cows for hauling loads and pulling plows. William Kunerth remembered an ox yolk lying in one of his father's sheds. Plowing fields or binding sheaves of grain by moonlight to get the work done and to avoid the intense heat of the day was not uncommon.

Every farmer had a small orchard of apple and plum trees and here and there a pear tree. The apples were Duchess, Harvester, Crab or Russet. Farmers of the coulee made their own cottage and Limburger cheese and had some of each to sell. They made their own soap and smoked their own hams. In the winter they slaughtered cattle and pigs, and put up the meat for later use. They browned barley, wheat, rye and corn and used it for making coffee. They made pumpkin sauce and apple and plum jellies to spread on bread although not too much of the latter because sugar was costly. Wheat was taken to the mill where 10% was taken out as toll and the remainder ground and returned to the farmer as flour used in baking bread.

The main grain crops raised in the Coulee were spring and winter wheat, oats, and barley, with the occasional field of buckwheat or rye. Many families raised potatoes, cabbages, carrots, onions, cucumbers and watermelons. Almost every household had its own barrel or jar of homemade sauerkraut. Some was made to sell. Large fields of Indian corn were raised to use as fodder (a course food for cattle) and small patches of popcorn could be found in the gardens. Poppy plants were also grown and the seeds used to make "mo-kuchen" (coffee cake).

Horseradish was raised, ground and used on meat at mealtime. Planted in with the Indian corn were numerous hills of pumpkins that were also used as fodder.

The earlier settlers harvested their grain with a scythe. By attaching a framework of four wooden fingers spaced about 6 inches apart, the scythe became a cradle. With it the grain could be laid down in a smooth swath. The swath was then raked into bundles and bound with twine. The “dropper” replaced the cradle. This was a horse drawn machine that consisted of a special arrangement attached to the sickle bar of a reaper. The grain could be dropped in bundles at the command of the driver. Later came the self-rake followed by the self-binder.



A threshing crew at the Joseph Neumann farm at the east end of Chipmunk Coulee.

The vegetation found growing there in its native state attested to the fertility of the soil in the Coulee. The white, black and burr oaks were the main trees in the woods. There were also poplars, white birches and aspens, with a sprinkling of hickory, ash and walnut. Tufts of willow grew along the creek. Young willow twigs were used in spring by the boys to make whistles. The older twigs were used as whip sticks or as fishing poles. The boys fished in the creek or in a slough of the nearby Mississippi River. The fertility of the soil was further shown by the kinds of weeds found growing in it. The weeds were Canada thistle, burdock, yellow dock, wild mustard, dandelion, boat jack, ragweed, mullen, milkweed, quack grass, nettles, lamb's quarter and plantain.

In winter, horse drawn sleighs could usually be used for two months or more. During that time many of the farmers in the Coulee hauled cordwood to La Crosse to sell on the open market or to prearranged customers. This wood was cut purposely to be sold or else came from trees that were grubbed out when clearings in the woods were made. Roads in the Coulee were up hill and down and it was impossible to haul heavy loads over them with a team of horses. The last 5

miles from the west end of the Coulee to lacrosse were on the level. Thus, farmers would often haul a half load of wood over the roads among the hills, unload at the end of the coulee and later come back with another half load of wood and pick up what was needed to make a full load. There were few lumber wagons, a few light wagons and still fewer buggies in the coulee.

Farmers drove to town about once a week to buy groceries and to take eggs and butter to market. Many farmers had regular private customers to whom they sold the eggs and butter and also chickens, cheese and vegetables. Others took their produce to the store in exchange for groceries. The trip to La Crosse took from 2 to 3 hours each way.

In the earlier years, when Franz Starch and his mother Brigitta needed to go to town, they drove a team of oxen. They took a lunch of "butter brot" and cheese and would stop at Gund's brewery on South Avenue to buy a bucket of beer to go with their bread and cheese. In later years, the Starches usually went to town twice a week because their farm was larger. On the way home the horses would make a beeline for the water trough in front of John Stephen's Saloon (then located at the 5-mile house hill). Franz Starch never went into the saloon for a drink, because it was in the Methodist ritual to refrain. However, he had to serve beer on his farm to get the threshers to come. One person Franz knew would get drunk at Stephen's Saloon and climb into his wagon. His horses took him to his farm, as they knew the way.

Slaughtering

East of the house on the farm of Anton Tietze, Jr. stood a gallows. Godfrey Tietze wrote about its use. A beef to be slaughtered was held between two posts of the gallows. A loaded rifle was aimed at the middle of the animal's head and fired bringing the animal down. The next step was to quickly sever the jugular veins at the base of the skull and bleed the animal. Mother was on hand with a clean pan containing a small quantity of salt. The pan was used to catch the animal's blood. She stirred the blood as it flowed into the pan. The blood was used for making blood pudding and blood sausage.

The hind legs of the animal were then skinned from the hooves to the hocks. A strong, bent wooden yoke, long enough to separate the legs enough for disemboweling the animal, with deep notches on each end to prevent the hocks from slipping off, was inserted into the hocks. With a strong rope attached to the cross pole of the gallows, the carcass was slowly elevated by turning the cross pole, with poles stuck into holes in the ends of the cross pole. These poles were tied firmly to the posts of the gallows. The carcass was then skinned, starting with a cut down the middle of the abdomen. The entrails were disengaged from the carcass as the skinning proceeded. The carcass was raised higher, as the operation proceeded. The fatty tissue surrounding the internal organs of the slaughtered beef was carefully removed. It was later used to make tallow candles and soap for household use.

As the slaughter operation continued, the head was skinned completely. Everything usable was saved. After the head had been severed from the neck, the skull was split with an ax to allow the brain to be removed. Brain tissue was considered a delicacy. The tongue was also removed, and the muscular tissues around the jaws were carefully cut away. When slaughtering cows, the udder was removed and preserved. It made a delightful dish called sweetbread. When the hide

had been removed, it was spread out, salted on the inside, carefully folded, tied into a bundle, and sold to the tannery.

When the slaughtering was completed, the carcass was raised as high as it could be, and depending on the weather left on the gallows overnight. In the morning, it was quartered, and loaded on a wagon or a sleigh and taken to La Crosse to be sold at the market. One or two quarters were sometimes kept back and hung in an outbuilding for home consumption.

While on the topic of slaughtering, a few words will be said about the processing of hogs for the market or the table. All the pork consumed by the Tietze family was processed at home. A large scalding trough was part of the equipment. A huge wash boiler was placed on the kitchen stove early in the morning, and filled with water nearly to the brim. It would boil over when the water was hot. The hog that was to be slaughtered was rendered unconscious by a shot to the head, dragged out of its pen and stuck. The jugular vein of the hog is difficult to find in the thick neck. Hence the hog is stuck in the heart with a long, sharp stout knife. This is tricky business since it is easy to miss the heart and get the knife to one side and into a shoulder. As with beef cattle, mother was on hand with her pan to catch the blood.

When the bleeding was complete, the hog was dragged to the scalding trough. A log chain (or heavy rope) was doubled and laid across the trough about 18 inches apart, and the hog placed in the trough on its belly. A handful of wood ashes were also placed in the trough to act as a detergent. Then the hot water was brought in pails and poured over the carcass. Two men, one on each side, manipulated the chain to turn the hog over, until it was scalded just enough so that the bristles and the scales on the hide scraped off easily. Then cold water was poured in the trough to stop the scalding process. The carcass was scraped from the tail to the snout. The hocks were pierced, the yoke inserted, and the carcass pulled up on the gallows. Scraping from top to bottom was continued with the use of cold water, until the carcass was clean. A well-scraped clean hog carcass was a pretty sight. Again, everything usable was saved: the membranes and the intestines for chitterlings, the meat on the head for souse, the blood and liver for sausage, and some of the intestines were processed for sausage casings.

Candle and Soap Making

The process involved in making tallow candles and soap from animal fat was somewhat complicated, but these are the essentials as Godfrey Tietze remembered them. To begin with, the fatty animal tissue obtained at slaughter time was melted down in a large iron pot over the kitchen stove, and the fluid fat drawn off into another pot, and the membrane material pressed to remove from it as much of the fat as possible. The melted tallow was set out to cool and solidify. After the butchering of a beef, several round and thick cakes of tallow were usually piled up in an unheated part of the house. One use to which they were put was the making of tallow candles. Grandfather Franz Anton had a candle mold for making six candles in one operation. Cotton wick, available for this purpose was inserted into the opening for each candle and tied into large knots at the bottom to close the opening so the melted tallow would not run out. On the other end, two iron rods were provided, and the wicks were pulled up and tied to the rods, each wick in the center of the opening for each candle. The melted tallow was then poured into the mold until it was full, and left to solidify. The next morning, the mold containing the candles was brought

into a heated part of the house, so it would expand a little. The knots at the top of the candles were opened or cut off and the candles pulled out of the mold. The wicks were then cut from the rods. Usually, there were a sufficient number of tallow candles available for use in our house.

The process for making soap was a little more complicated. To begin with, the ashes from our kitchen and room heating stoves were put into an ash barrel. The barrel had some small holes at the bottom. When soap making time came, the barrel was elevated over a large washtub and water was poured into the barrel, and the resulting lye solution trickled into the tub underneath. Meanwhile, the large black iron kettle was set up in the yard, the chunks of tallow placed in it together with the gelatinous material that had formed underneath the tallow. A fire, started underneath, melted the contents. Then the lye fluid from under the ash barrel was added and the contents thoroughly stirred during the boiling process, until the whole, by the boiling process had reached the right consistency, determined by experience. Then the fire was allowed to go out, and the contents to cool over night. The next morning, the hard top layer was cut with a stout knife into cakes of soap of proper size, removed and allowed to dry.

Underneath was the layer of dark gelatinous substance, also permeated by the lye solution. This was removed and put in a receptacle and used primarily for washing clothes as soft soap. There were in those days, as I remember, a cake or two of Castile soap in the house. This soap was used for the younger children's needs and probably by the grown women for their toiletry needs. Proctor and Gamble had not yet produced Ivory Soap, which in my judgment is the best and most encountered soap. When grandfather shaved, he took a basin of warm water, dipped a piece of homemade soap in it, and rubbed it over the part of his face to be shaved. He then shaved (he wore a beard on his chin but no mustache) and dried his face. Homemade hard and soft soap was used for all the washing and cleaning in our household. Very little toilet soap from the stores found its way into our home.

Wildlife

The fish in the creek that runs the length of the Coulee, included suckers, chubs, fins and some planted trout. Although the creek was small, there were several swimming holes that changed location with each spring flood. The boys will never forget the fun they had at those swimming holes in the summer time. Those of us who grew up in this Coulee can truly say: "The blood of life was flowing warm when I was living on the farm." This is part of a poem in McGuffey's Reader.

Among the wild animals in the woods were rabbits, squirrels, woodchucks, skunks, and moles. Deer, wolves and foxes were seen on occasion in the early years, and at one time a panther was reportedly prowling the hills. A hill on Grandpa Kunerth's farm was called "deer hill" because deer were often seen there. One had to be on the lookout for snakes, especially rattlesnakes. Chipmunks abounded and it was for this tiny animal that the Coulee got its name.

Hawks were seen rather commonly on summer days as they glided about in the up currents of warm air indicating an approaching rainstorm. In the early summer evenings one could hear the clear, weird and almost depressing call of the whip-poor-will. These birds were so numerous that sometimes one could here 3 or 4 singing at the same time. At night the "who-who" of the horned

owl or the whimpering sound of the screech owl could be heard in the hills. Since the latter sounds as though the owls were laughing, some people called this bird the “laugh owl.” Other birds in the fields and woods were the robin, blue jay, cardinal, sparrow, brown thrush, black bird, oriole, catbird, chickadee, pheasant, bluebird, quail and turtle dove. In the early days the carrier pigeon was seen here in dense flocks.

It was an understood rule, that hunting and discharging firearms on Sundays was not to take place. This was a rule observed by families in our neighborhood who belonged to the Methodist Church. However, I (Godfery Tietze) remember one exception! One early summer Sunday forenoon, my brother John saw a large hawk circling over our barnyard, with its eyes apparently on a brood of chicks in the yard. Seeing the hawk, John grabbed a shotgun, aimed and fired, bringing the hawk to the ground. Although mother was probably glad the hawk had been killed, she nevertheless was upset because it had been shot on a Sunday.

Large owls abounded in our neighborhood. In the middle and late nineties, Joseph Tietze set a pole about six inches in diameter and about 10 feet high in the open field on the ridge to the southeast of our house. On the top of it he placed an open steel trap, with the end of its chain attached to the pole. An owl would occasionally alight on the top of the pole. The trap snapped and the owl was caught. One winter we had as many as four or five owls in the oats granary on the north end of our barn. Occasionally Joseph succeeded in selling one to a butcher or saloonkeeper. The owl was kept in a cage as a curiosity to attract customers. We younger brothers were enlisted to catch mice and flying squirrels to feed the owls. We observed the interesting eating and digestive processes of this bird. The owls swallowed mice and flying squirrels whole. In a few days their fur and bones were regurgitated, rolled into a ball.

The woods abounded with chokecherries in summer and wild grapes, wild crab apples and haws in the fall. Hickory nuts and hazelnuts were abundant and walnuts and butternuts could occasionally be found. The flowers that grew in the woods included the Indian Moccasin (Lady Slipper), Jack-in-the-Pulpit, Indian Pipe, Shooting Star, Sweet Smelling Violet, Painted Cup, Bergamot and Trillium.

Landmarks and Literature

One of the landmarks of this community was the “stone man” built on the top of a hill where it could be seen for miles unobstructed from view by shrubbery or trees. The slabs of rock from which it was made had been quarried near by. It rose to a height of about 8 feet and with its outstretched arms could easily be seen from the school ground. One of the men in the community reportedly built it before 1880 but soon after moved away. Vandals tore it down around 1900.

Another landmark in the community was Grandma Clara Bendel, wife of Jakob Bendel, Sr. Clara was one of the older settlers loved by all. She was the community nurse, midwife and purveyor of news. Clara took great interest in all the affairs of community and in each individual. She had been instrumental in bringing almost all of them into the world. Her kindly disposition, neighborly interest and help were greatly missed after she passed away. She was the mother of John and Jacob Bendel.

Mrs. Bendel helped deliver 200 babies as a midwife. There were no smooth roads then. People had to walk through the woods and fields with only a candle-lit lantern. Clara went in any kind of weather and risked her life several times to assist in the delivery of a baby. Older children in a family were sent away to a neighbor when the new baby was about to be born. Sometimes they met on the way when their father was returning with Mrs. Bendel.

Franz Anton Tietze went to get Grandma Bendel on Christmas Eve in 1858, for his wife Theresia. The Bendels had company and Mr. Tietze delayed in asking Clara to come. Finally, Clara asked about his wife. They went immediately but were too late! The baby, Theresia (later Mrs. Ambrose Starch), had already been born.

Godfrey Tietze, in his autobiography, wrote of the time he was born. In those pioneer years, no physicians were summoned to obstetrical duties except in emergencies, and there were few emergencies.



Jakob Bendel and his wife Clara Elster Bendel. Clara was the Coulee midwife. Photograph, courtesy of Mary Bendel, was taken prior to Mr. Bendel's death in 1870.

My brother William Tietze once told me that when I (Godfrey) was about to be born, my oldest sister Mary, then a little over fourteen years old, was permitted to remain at home to help with what needed to be done to make the event a blessed one. Mary, with father, grandfather and grandmother were the only family members in the house at the time. The other children, Joseph, William, Sarah, John and Martha Elizabeth, were sent off to the Bendel home to summon Clara to come without delay to perform her duties at my arrival. So far as I know, the mile-and-a-half journey was made on foot, both ways.

Mrs. Bendel served as a midwife for the whole coulee charging \$2.00 for each birth. When Ben Starch was born on August 26, 1878, she asked if she could have a big basket of plums in payment, instead of money. Often she took eggs, cheese, etc. to town in her wagon for neighbors who did not have wagons or could not go in so often. They always paid her a little for doing this. William Kunerth sent pigeons with her at times, and she thought they were a little small for selling.

There was also Mr. Breidel who was called upon to set broken bones. Doctors from La Crosse were too expensive to be called out (\$1.00 per mile) and we would try to get along without them. Godfrey Tietze recalled the time a doctor was called out for his grandmother Theresia. Late in 1897, Theresia's health began to fail markedly. I have already mentioned the fact that by this time she had already become almost totally blind. Now she was becoming weak, so that sometimes she had to lie down during the day. Our family physician, E. J. Tiedemann was asked to come out to see her. He had a license to practice medicine, but did not have a medical degree. I remember his coming into our house one night late in the spring of 1898.

He wore a Prince Albert coat and a high silk top hat, and carried a black satchel. I think he used a stethoscope to determine the functioning of grandmother's lungs and heart; and certainly he asked her to open her mouth and stick out her tongue. At the conclusion of his examination, which at best could have been only very superficial, he said: "She is like a worn out machine." He cut a number of small pieces of thin, hard, white paper and spread them out on the table. Mr. Tiedemann then measured out a precise amount of a whitish powder on each, folded each one neatly, put them in a small cardboard box. He gave instructions as to when and how often they should be given to Theresia and then took his departure. I do not recall whether a prescription was given for a further supply of this drug or for any other drug. At any rate, this was the only time the physician saw her during her illness. Among my grandfather's papers is a receipt for \$11.00 signed by Dr. Tiedemann. This appears to have been the total expense of grandmother's illness.

Grandmother's condition gradually worsened so that she had to spend most of her time in bed. To my mother's credit, it is recorded here that she cared for grandmother as devotedly as she could have cared for her own mother. Grandfather had become hard of hearing; besides he had no aptitudes or skills for caring for a sick person. Mother slept on a cot placed in grandmother's room so she could hear and be on hand when her assistance was needed. There was no bedpan or indoor toilet facilities. How these needs were met, I do not know; but mother did it day after day and night after night through the winter. During that time, father's sister Theresia (Mrs. Ambrose Starch) came several nights to relieve mother. My sister Sarah, in her 17th year was, I think, at the time, a considerable help with the housework. There was a family of 11 or 12 to prepare

meals for, the house to be kept in tolerable order, and chores to do. Mother probably neglected other duties; but she did not neglect grandmother.

Toward the end of Holy Week, we younger children got the impression that grandmother was much worse. Early Easter Sunday morning, April 10, 1898, we were awakened and told to go downstairs quickly. Grandmother was dying. I do not remember whether all brothers and sisters were awakened, but I do remember that my grandmother was lying on her back with her mouth wide open breathing laboriously. Gradually her breathing got lighter and finally stopped. The end had come. Grandfather broke down and wept bitterly; the only time I saw him weep. Whether father and mother wept or not, I do not recall. A cloth was rolled into a bandage and placed under her lower jaw. It was then drawn up and tied at the top of her head closing her mouth. Her eyelids were pulled down over her eyes.

I do not recall whether someone drove to town that Sunday to summon the undertaker, or whether that had to wait for the next day. There were no telephones. At any rate, father and grandfather went to town on Monday to get the death certificate, the coffin and the rough box. The funeral was either Tuesday or Wednesday. The only decoration on the coffin was a metal tag with "At Rest" inscribed on it and a small sheaf of ripe wheat, which stayed on the casket during the funeral. The funeral procession was down the road into the valley through the Kunerth property, and to the Chipmunk Coulee church. Her body was buried near that of her son Frank, in the cemetery on the hillside behind the church.

There were a few veterinarians in the early days but they too were far away and their services expensive. When animals needed to be treated Frank Heller was often called upon for help and advice. He applied his homemade remedies and often had success.

Literature in the coulee was not abundant and consisted of the Bible, religious magazines and the occasional weekly newspaper. Among the magazines were the *Apologete*, *Haus und Herd* (Home and Hearth) and the *Glocke* (Bell) a Sunday school paper. The weekly newspaper was the *Nordstern* published in La Crosse by a person named Candrian. He was also the publisher of the *Abendstern*. Of these two papers the publisher wrote: "Den Nordstern und den Abendstern liest jeder Deutsch in nah und fern." Translated this phrase reads: "The North Star and the Evening Star are read by every German near and far."

Memoirs of Mary Frances Starch

"Written at the age of 96 and dedicated to all my grandchildren and great-grandchildren."
(Used with permission from Mrs. John (Vera) Melstrand)

My name is Mary Frances Kunerth Starch and I was born on March 9, 1896, on a farm in Chipmunk Coulee a few miles south of La Crosse, Wisconsin. My mother's name was Frances Tietze Kunerth (the daughter of Augustine Tietze) and her date of birth was May 1, 1852. My father was August Kunerth and he was born February 16, 1854, in Dobern, Bohemia (part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire). He came to America by boat. He was seven years old at the time and

came with his parents (Anton and Maria Anna Tietze). The reason my parents built a house in such a remote place on the farm was because a big spring of fresh water was located there.

Childhood Memories

I never knew my mother. She died of breast cancer when I was about two years old they tell me. It was very hard for my father to take care of my mother and me when she was sick and do all the housework and farm work, even baking bread.

I had three brothers (Henry, Louis and William) but no sisters. The youngest brother was ten years older than I was. He did not have much time for me.

My favorite toys were a little doll and our friendly dog, "Watch." He was a big white farm dog, no special kind. He was never allowed in the house and did not do any tricks or bother the chickens. I do not know how he got his name. A neighbor lady made a little dress for my doll. I was very happy when she put it on the doll.

When my father and the men went out into the fields to work, they usually took me along. They also took some peanuts in the shell that they threw ahead of them. That way I would stay with them while they worked looking for more peanuts.

I got into mischief one time when my father was churning butter and the churn broke down. He took off the cover and went for some tools to fix it. I had to try the crank and over went the churn, spilling the cream onto the floor. This scared me and I ran and hid under my bed and fell asleep. I do not remember being punished, but we went without butter that week.

After the death of my mother, when I was about eight years old, my father married an illiterate woman (Mary Strausche) who had no love for me. As a result I was with my father a lot and that made her jealous.

I always had to sleep in an upstairs bedroom in summer and in winter and was afraid when it rained. I was afraid of the thunder and lightning, but that did not make any difference.

If I did not get up right at the first call in the morning, my stepmother would come upstairs and pull the covers off the bed.

When I was twelve years old, my father bought me a used treadle sewing machine since my stepmother did not allow me to use hers. My stepmother did not like it at all that he gave me something like that, but it made me happy. I started to sew dresses for my doll and for myself. After my stepmother saw that I really could sew things for myself, she asked me to sew things for her also.

One day when my father was in town, I think I did something that upset my stepmother. She had a seizure that scared me so much I did not want to stay alone with her any more.

Household Chores I Had to Do When I Was Young

My stepmother would never ask me to help her with the housework or the cooking. Because of this, I did not learn to do anything as the other girls did. They helped and learned and were able to help their mothers. However, I remember carrying wood into the house and washing clothes.

As a teenager, I remember driving a team of horses mowing rye while my father and two others tied the rye into bundles. I also cut corn with a large corn knife and made shocks of the stalks.

My Favorite Books

My favorite books as a young girl were Heidi, Black Beauty, Beautiful Joe, Uncle Tom's Cabin and The Three Bears.

Parties and Social Events

"Pig in the Parlor" and "Jolly is the Miller" were two of the games we played at parties in different homes in the evening.

Girls made decorated baskets for Basket Socials at the school. The baskets, containing sandwiches, fruit and sometimes cigars, were auctioned to the highest bidder who then ate lunch with the girl who brought the basket.

We often had sleigh-riding parties in the winter and went to programs at the Coulee church by horse and sleigh. It happened one fall that Edmund Tietze, who lived in the Coulee, was going to drive his team of horses to La Crosse to attend a church meeting. He asked us young folks to go along. On our return in the evening, as we passed the Peter Markle farm near the 5 mile house hill, the boys stopped and took some melons, but no one had a knife to cut them.

My Church

I attended the German Methodist Church in Chipmunk Coulee. The church was about a half mile from my home. The minister came out every Sunday from La Crosse with horse and buggy. I was baptized in this church July 12, 1896. Jacob Bendel (son of Jacob Bendel, Sr.) was my sponsor. I was confirmed April 26, 1908.

The church had a big bell that was rung for funerals and Sunday evening services. When someone died, the bell was rung once for each year of their life so all within hearing distance of the bell knew who had died.

Schools I Attended and How Far from Home They Were

My father was very good to me and concerned that I get an education. Grades 1 through 8 (15 - 30 children) were taught in a one-room country school called the Hillside School. The school was about a mile from our farm. It had outside toilets, a jacketed wood burning stove for heat and no running water. The boys carried in wood after school for use the next day. The outdoor

water pump was broken and water had to be carried to the school from the neighbors. One teacher taught all eight grades. Some of the teachers were liked more than others. My favorite subjects in school were physiology and arithmetic.

In those days we had to walk to school, and everyone brought their lunch. My lunch consisted mostly of sandwiches spread with lard instead of butter or jam and maybe a little piece of meat but no cookies or cake. One day when I was eating lunch, a few classmates stood around me and wanted to see how I would react when I found a grape jelly sandwich in my basket that somebody had put in to surprise me. I ate it and it was a treat.

I remember that there were many gophers in the hill pasture next to the schoolyard. The boys carried water up the hill to drown them out of their holes. The girls watched for the gophers to emerge. The boys tried to kill them but some always got away.

Walking home from school one day with a bunch of classmates, I got a nosebleed that scared me. The kids said I was going to die which scared me all the more. I was not very old at the time.

My best friends in school were Theodora and Gertrude Preidel who were my second cousins.

After graduating from the eighth grade, I worked in La Crosse doing housework for a Jewish family with four children. My salary was \$4.00 per week. I wanted to earn some money so that I could go on to school. I always had the desire to become a teacher someday. Before I went away to work, my brothers William and Henry bought the old reed pump organ from the Mormon Coulee church. It sounded very good to me and I was happy with it.

To learn how to play the organ, I walked five miles every week to take piano lessons. The lessons were 35 cents each. I took lessons until it got too cold to walk. I practiced by myself. After I could play rather well, I was asked to play the organ Sunday nights at the church for Epworth League, a meeting of young folks. I also played for a wedding once.

After I had saved a little money from working, I attended Normal School (Teacher's College) in La Crosse. I still did not have much money and had to work for my room and board. This was hard. After attending 1½ years, my brother William asked me to come to Ames, Iowa that fall where he was teaching in the college. I stayed with them and went to school for one semester. As I was the last one in my family to leave home, it was hard on my father. It took a lot of courage for me to go so far from home and not know anyone. I took the county exam for teaching in a country school. I passed and got a certificate to teach in a new one-room school in Avoca, Iowa, close to Council Bluffs.

When I got to Avoca, the clerk met me at the depot and got me started at my school, where I taught without trouble for eight months receiving \$47.00 a month. That spring, I was asked to come back the next fall, which I did, and received \$75.00 a month. They asked me to come back again, but I took another exam that would allow me to teach in Wisconsin.

After saving money earned by teaching school, I was able to buy a used Davenport-Tracy piano from Rev. Clark in La Crosse for \$240. It was too cold to go for lessons in the winter so I learned to play by myself because I liked music so well.

My First Date

My first date was with John Starch. I do not remember my first kiss. There were not many anyhow. John was born October 19, 1887, in Chipmunk Coulee to Franz and Theresa Starch. He was a quiet person, small in stature, and always interested in raising vegetables, strawberries, etc. In the year I took the exam to teach in Wisconsin, I got a letter from John that was a big surprise to me. We lived only a mile apart in the Coulee and had gone to the same school and church but never paid any attention to each other. His sister, Lydia, was married to my brother William. John and I exchanged a couple of letters and had a few dates during the summer.

In the fall John took me over to the school where I was to teach. It was near Chaseburg, Wisconsin, called Pumpkin Ridge. On the way there he asked me to marry him. "Jumping the broomstick," was not very exciting so I said yes. All the other girls were being married.

While teaching at Pumpkin Ridge, I came home a few days for Christmas vacation. While I was home, John asked me to go for a sleigh ride in his nice one-seated cutter. John's horse, Old Fanny, could not keep the road very well. The cutter got into a rut and tipped us out into a snow bank!

Our Wedding and Honeymoon

I drove to La Crosse alone with horse and buggy to buy my brown wedding dress. John and I were married November 15, 1921, in the parsonage of the Methodist Church in La Crosse. Mrs. Panzlau, the minister's wife and her daughter were witnesses. I had my wedding ring in my suitcase but the preacher's son found the ring and my fountain pen and stole them. The next Sunday the preacher's wife showed me a ring that her son had given to her. She did not know where it came from and I did not feel I should tell her. So John bought me another ring.

We traveled to Chicago by train for a little honeymoon visiting the Field Museum and other sites there. On our way home we stopped in Milwaukee and stayed with John's sister over night. The next day John and I set out for home to start farming on a large unhandy 420 acre farm in Chipmunk Coulee. We lived on that farm for over 20 years. During those years I had two major surgeries.

Farming

John and I had to have a lot of hired help, mostly bums, to run the farm. In the summer we raised a lot of melons and vegetables. We also raised dill pickles for Bruha's grocery store in La Crosse. He put them up in barrels. John's folks lived with us then and it was hard to cook for so many.

I sold the vegetables at the Market Square in La Crosse at a metered stall with a police officer sitting and watching. I sold vegetables all summer until late fall, six days a week. In the evening John would drive in to get me. After we returned home we would get another load ready from what John had picked that day. It was hard work.

We had to get up early to get a place on the Market Square because people were coming from far away with their vegetables trying to sell them and make money. They came from Bangor, La Farge, Viroqua and Houston, Minnesota, etc. Most of the money I made went to pay the hired help. Those were hard years until we sold the farm.

We never bought bread or eggs. Seven loaves of bread were baked every week. Coffeecake was baked every Saturday. We raised our own potatoes and vegetables and had our own meat, milk and cream. Candy and ice cream were real treats.

In the early 1930s we sold bottled milk in La Crosse for 5 cents a quart and gave half pints of whipping cream for Christmas gifts to our customers. New customers received a free quart of milk.

All our children were born in St. Anne's Hospital in La Crosse. We were lucky to have a car at that time. John always took me to the hospital day or night, a short trip. I was only there for a few days each time.

One day, when the children were young, we heard on the radio that a mental patient, a woman, walked away from a hospital in La Crosse. Anyone seeing or hearing of such a person should call the hospital at once. The next day I was outside and saw a woman in our sheep pasture. She did not speak but came up to me. We walked about a mile toward La Crosse when a police officer came upon us and picked up the woman.

After the barn burned down, milking so many cows without their familiar stanchions became a problem. To overcome this problem, we built outside mangers to feed the cows hay and malt that we got twice a week from a brewery in La Crosse. The men got busy cutting trees from our woods into logs, sawing the logs into lumber and building a new barn.

When our barn burned down a neighbor who did not care much about us reported us to the city health inspector. He hoped the inspector would come out and stop us from selling milk, but it did not work. Less than a year or so later, their house burned down due to a chimney fire. They had plugged their upstairs chimney with wet rags, but the rags dried out, caught fire and fell out of the chimney.

Our First House With Indoor Plumbing

Right after our marriage, I was fortunate to have a bathroom with running water from a spring. Ours was the first house in the Coulee to have this feature.

After several years of hard farming, my health began to fail. John's mother said I was putting on. Soon thereafter they moved to Milwaukee. I kept getting worse so we went to see a doctor in La

Crosse and he told me that I needed an operation. I had a “floating kidney.” The doctor told me that I could live just fine with only one kidney. After the operation I could not eat anything for almost three days and I became very weak. I am weak to this day and will be 97 years old in a month.

While I was recovering from my kidney operation in the hospital, John and the girls had to do the cooking. That was hard for the girls going to school and all. One day Cyrus Starch came to see me in the hospital while John was getting malt from the brewery. His visit made me feel happy. He was only eight years old at the time. About two years later I had another operation for a tumor. These were hard times and it was hard to get good help.

In 1944, we had an auction and sold the farm and moved to La Crosse. At the time we left the farm we were milking 75 cows, had two retail milk routes and were raising vegetables. It did not bother us at all selling the farm and moving. John worked at the Trane Company for several years and then retired. After that we had a small truck farm and raised gladiolas and vegetables.

Everything was very cheap in those years. Tomatoes sold at three bushel for one dollar, milk ten cents a quart and eggs fifteen cents a dozen. I sold a lot of tomatoes every day.

In those 22 years on the farm we had four lovely children. John passed away on July 13, 1981, about two weeks after having a stroke. After that I was alone to take care of my home and myself.

Our First Car

I never drove a car. George Herold was the first person in the Coulee to get a car, but I do not recall the year. John bought our first car, a Buick.

Other Memories

Years ago, we threshed with a machine run by a steam engine. Every farmer who threshed grain had to have a pile of wood that the engine burned to generate steam. Those were big times. Grain bundles from stacks 20 feet high were fed into the threshing machine. Some farmers threshed from shocks gathered by horse and wagon from the fields. There was always a big crew of neighboring farmers that helped. They all helped each other and the steam engine and threshing machine went from one neighbor to the next.

Threshing time meant baking and cooking for about 10-12 persons. The crew worked hard to build straw stacks, tend the stacks, pitch bundles into the machine, etc. We always had our stacks out in the Coulee a little away from the barn. Sacks of threshed grain were hauled to the granary with a team of horses and dumped into bins in the granary.

Picking grapes and carrying them down from the hillside was another hard job on the farm. John did all that and carried them in baskets on his back. One year we had an early frost that did a lot of damage to the grapes. We were lucky to sell some for making wine for a few cents a pound. We lost a lot of grapes that year. We had a few pickers, but not enough for a two-acre patch.

They did not pick very carefully and a lot of the grapes separated from the stem. I sold some of the grapes at the Market Square in new five-pound baskets and someone became jealous and reported us. So an inspector came around. He thought we had bought the grapes. John was right there and he told the inspector that they were our own grapes and said, "We will take you out and show you where we grow them," and the inspector walked away and did not say another word so I kept on selling.

In my early years there were no movies, radios, television sets or telephones. I remember when we got our first telephone; it was the first one in the Coulee. About ten families eventually got telephones and joined our line. It then became a "party line." To call someone we had to turn a crank on the side of the telephone the same number of rings as the number of the person we were calling. This gave rise to all the phones on the party line ringing at once. One old woman in the Coulee would always answer any and all the rings. We had no electricity and had to use oil lamps for light for many years.

At the Present

I live with my daughter Vera Starch Melstrand and every summer and do whatever I can to help her on her little farm near Holmen, Wisconsin. I am thankful for my health and pretty good eyesight. My legs bother me and I cannot walk very well, and my hearing is not very good. That makes me feel bad, but at 96 one cannot expect to be perfect. I have lived with only one kidney for half of my lifetime. I had five minor skin cancer operations and also an operation for a tumor and carpal tunnel. Vera helps me with my business and is good to me as all my children are. She is a good cook and a hard worker.

A Little Piece of Advice From Your Great Grandmother

Be friendly at all times. Do not drink or smoke and stay away from bad company. Eat sensibly and get plenty of rest and sleep as much as possible.

Completed October 19, 1991 with the help of my daughter Sylvia.



Photograph of Mary Frances Starch taken in 1997 at the age of 101.

Mary F. Starch

Mary F. Starch, 104, died on Friday, Aug. 11, 2000, at the Onalaska Care Center. She was born March 9, 1896, in Chipmunk Coulee to August and Frances (Tietze) Kunerth. She taught school in the early years and then married John Starch on Nov. 19, 1921. He preceded her in death on July 21, 1981. She worked as a farm wife and enjoyed growing vegetables and flowers. At the age of 95, she helped with the hoeing of the garden at her daughter's truck garden. She is survived by two daughters, Mrs. John (Vera) Melstrand of Holmen and Mrs. Robert (Sylvia) Gartung of Lansing, Mich; by a son, Dr. Cyrus Starch of Wild Rose, Wis.; by nine grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren. In addition to her husband, she was preceded in death by a son, Paul; and by three brothers. Funeral services will be Tuesday at 11 a.m. at the Dickinson Family Funeral Home, 1425 Jackson St. The Rev. Donald Iliff, of the Wesley Methodist Church, will officiate. Burial will be in the Woodlawn Cemetery, La Crosse. Friends may call at the funeral home on Tuesday from 10 a.m. until the service.