

For Her Children's Sake OR A MOTHER BRAVING A WILDERNESS

TOLD BY HER SON
OTTO G. LUTZ of CARMEL, SASK.
(CONTINUED.)

One day the rumor spread that the railroad was coming soon. A small party of men were cutting the willows and poplars along the line of survey for the right of way. A short time after, I noticed that a large camp of many tents was laid out 1/2 mile north of our homestead. A few days later I was cutting some poles for a chicken house on our land not far off and I walked to the camp from sheer curiosity. The camp was deserted excepting the cooks, a stableman and a blacksmith who were present. The main force, numbering about 45 men and teams were busy plowing up the ground and dumping up the roadbed which had reached already some length. Another camp was at the Wolverine creek south of the monastery and a third one a few miles west. The cook asked me whether mother could spare him some milk and butter milk. I did not know for sure, so he came down the next day, riding a mule, and thereafter mother often sent me with milk to the camp. In return they paid mother with coffee and groceries quite liberally. Some 2 months later the whole stretch of road-bed east and west of our homestead was completed and the camps were moved to other unfinished sections.

I must come back to the early spring of this year 1904. As I have mentioned elsewhere, the railway bridge spanning the Saskatchewan at Saskatoon, had been carried away by the ice and flood water and all the towns to the north including Rosthern were cut off from the outside world. And so also the Colony which got its mail and supplies from Rosthern. There were a number of settlers waiting at Fish Creek for the moment when the ice would break up and they could cross in the ferry, as it was no longer safe to walk or drive across the softening and mushy ice. There seemed to be an endless waiting that spring and when at last they could get across they found Rosthern almost without provisions of any kind with no trains running, before a new bridge could be built. The settlers had to return home with empty hands and wagons and this meant for some almost famine times. Mother had a scanty supply of foodstuffs on hand yet and this fortunately helped us to tide over this period. When the first load of flour was sent out from Rosthern for the store, the driver had only a few bags left on his wagon, when he reached home, as at almost every settler's home which he passed on the way out, a sack of flour was taken directly from the wagon and paid for, since nobody wanted to risk the chance of getting left at the store.

CHAPTER 20. HURRAH!

THE FIRST WHISTLE AGAIN.

The spring passed with its lovely flowers and its song birds and summer came with more beautiful flowers. During the early summer, and shortly after the birth of their baby boy Anna took violently ill with nerve fever. Father John of the monastery was called a few times to administer to Anna both as physician of the soul and of the body. There was no doctor in the Colony as yet, so good Father John (he died some years ago, R.I.P.) helped many people by his great knowledge of medicine. After God, Anna owes it to him that she gained her health again.

During the haying season I helped a neighbor again with putting up his hay, and we also put

up some loads for our own needs. Father John started teaching school in the log church in September. As he was also a very skilled carpenter, he had partitioned off the sanctuary and the altar from the auditorium of the church which he filled with benches and desks made by himself, too. Father John had been a teacher in his earlier years; then he joined the Benedictine Order and was raised to the Holy Priesthood only during the past year. Father Prior Alfred preached the sermon at Father John's first Mass, which was celebrated in the open under the canopy of the blue skies during the previous summer, and in this sermon he said so touchingly that the Lord had sent his call to Father John in the eleventh hour to come and labor in his vineyard. Mother permitted me to go to his school only two short weeks. I would have given a world, if I could have attended that school longer. I loved Father John better than any teacher I had had in Nebraska up to my eleventh year. And who, having had the fortune to know him, did not love him? After two weeks of bliss I was set back in the cold world, because work was so pressing that fall, and as there was neither a father or a bigger brother to do the work, I realized the necessity of staying at home and helping mother and Mary.

There was such work to do as to dig potatoes, replaster the cabin, — this time with lime and sand mortar, as the clay mortar had fallen off,—chop a supply of wood and drag it out of the bush, and haul it home for the winter, etc. It was, while I was plastering over the chinks of the log cabin that I heard the first whistle of a train in the neighborhood of the monastery. And this just one and one half years since we came from Rosthern. I chucked the job and went on strike and ran across the prairies to see the first iron horse again after so long a time, before mother even knew what was up. There were big doings along the roadbed of the railway. A long trestle bridge on piles had been constructed across Wolverine creek and the steel rails had been already laid and a work train had passed over. The big locomotive pushed, before itself and ahead, a string of flat cars, laden with ties and rails with which the track was laid slowly before it. They had then no track laying machine, but the work was done by hand with a large force of men who averaged a couple of miles in a day. At last we were linked up and connected again with the outside world. This event for which hundreds and hundreds of people in the colony had been wishing and waiting occurred in the month of Oct. 1904, fully 2 years after the grandiose plan was conceived to settle a wide tract of wild and remote land, 35x50 miles, and thereby establish the great St. Peter's Colony of Saskatchewan. Since then another railroad was built through the western part of the Colony, and a third one which taps the northern part. Several others are projected and may be built in the future.

The weary trips to Rosthern ceased then for all times to come, as one was able to procure everything soon close at hand. Most every one of the pioneer settlers that had men to work and plow up the virgin prairies, had a little crop that fall and Mr. Froelage the only thrasher in the Colony then, as far as I know of, and who had moved his steam outfit under its own power out here from Saskatoon, moved around and threshed the couple of stacks for each settler.

And to-day? There are hundreds of thousands of bushels of the finest wheat, oats, barley, and flax, threshed annually in the St. Peter's Colony, besides uncountable

pounds of creamery butter and many car loads of cattle and hogs shipped out each year; all this from a region that was a barren and unproductive wilderness 16 years ago, and inhabited only by a few wild animals, and serving as an occasional hunting ground for a band of Indians. And there would not be a dozen banks, — branches of the largest chartered banks in Canada, — in the Colony, unless there were also business for each one of them. And the business is the result of the enduring, untiring labor of the pioneer farmer. A manager of one of the banks told me recently that quite a few of his customers were rated at from \$10,000 to \$35,000 in assets free from encumbrances, and the majority of them are the men who started without any means, or very little, in the early days, but who are of a hard working variety and the kind that build up nations and empires.

But to get back to my own story: With the coming of the railway, mother said and we all felt it, that the great distance that separated us from our dear brother and sister Rosa had shrunken considerably and that once more we were in the same world with them. And how nobly they had assisted and helped mother to carry on during our most trying years. When mother at times did not know anymore where-with to buy food and clothes, the next mail would bring a check from brother, or a package of shoes and clothing from Rosa. She together with Henry and the baby had returned to the States in the fall, following their departure from us in the prairies and had located in St. Paul, Minn. Many a time mother said that without the help of our brother and sister, it would have been an utter impossibility to prove up on the homestead, or continue until Mary and I grew up and became able to care for ourselves.

Many of the neighbors, with men folks to go to work and to earn some money, had it comparatively easy to eke out a living. Some would haul out loads for others from Rosthern, others would go to the lumber camps during the winter, or in spring and summer break up land for those who could not do it themselves, etc. I know of one man who took a subcontract from the railroad contractor and filled up a stretch of roadbed, containing many cubic yards of dirt, when he had only a spade and a wheel-barrow to do it with. He may not have made big wages, but he earned enough to keep his family from starving. Thus the first years passed by and gradually there were more and more acres of land brought under cultivation on every homestead, and the time arrived, when the settlers had no more need of working out to make a living.

CHAPTER 21.

TOWNS AND NEW SETTLERS.

With the coming of the railroad a number of towns and villages sprang into existence at intervals of 6 to 8 miles all along the line. There were eight of these stations located within the Colony beginning with Watson at the east and ending with Dana in the west. No sooner were there side tracks and switches laid, when also quite a few cars with lumber and other building material arrived. In an incredibly short time whole streets were lined with hastily erected buildings ready for occupancy. Soon the stocks, furnishings, fixtures, etc., arrived for the stores, hotels, and offices and there were complete little towns, where only a few months before there was raw prairie and nothing else. During the whole winter building continued, especially at Humboldt which town was located as a division point in the center of the Colony. This town grew so fast

that within a few years it became necessary to install an up-to-date system of electric street lighting, a city water plant (piped from Stony Lake) and a system of sewers. Among the many important buildings of this town there are two brick-veneered churches. The Catholic church of St. Augustine, a solid brick structure, is not only the largest, but also the oldest. Then, there is a high school, the district-court-and-land-titles building, the town-hall, the post-office, hotels, etc. In importance, there are, next, the town of Watson and the villages of Bruno-Muenster-Engelfeld, Dana, St. Gregor, and Carmel which latter is the smallest and youngest place, — all located along the C. N. main-line within the Colony. Of course, there are several other towns, villages, hamlets, and post-offices scattered over the inland portions of the Colony.

To be continued.

Fifteen Years Ago

From No. 39 of St. Peters Bote

Father Prior Alfred Mayer, O.S.B. announces in this issue that during his visit in Winnipeg recently, he purchased a printing press, a job press, gasoline motor, and a paper cutter for \$2,000. The building which is to serve as office will be erected soon.—The Muenster correspondent writes on the 5th of November that they've had a fine October and on the day of writing a bouquet was picked in the monastery's flower garden. The rails are laid on the C. N. R. as far as the Saskatchewan river. At Humboldt, the division point, a telegraph operator has been installed. Last week Mr. Gerwing of Lake Lenore arrived here from Minnesota with six cars settlers' effects. He has eleven sons, eight of whom are old enough to take up homesteads.—In Muenster are three lumber yards. One owned by Mr. Haskamp, one by a Menonite, and the other by Mr. Lyons who was formerly an agent for the Minneapolis and St. Paul Lumber Co. Lumber costs 22, 24, 26 and 28 dollars per M. It is two dollars cheaper here than in Humboldt, where they have only two lumber yards — that of Mr. Haskamp and Mr. Henderson. Muenster also has a physician—Sylvester Hone, M.D., of British Columbia. He is of Irish descent, born in England and studied medicine for four years in Chicago.—Father Mathias left for Minnesota on account of his health. It seems he still had malaria germs in him from Illinois, his former home. Doctors claim that such germs may be in one's system seven years.

John Mamer returned to Muenster on the new railroad with three cars of goods. His family and that of his son Valentine accompanied him. — Last week Mrs. Stammen died in child-bed.—For Albert Nenzel arrived a carload of goods for his store and also a car of flour from Winnipeg.

Annaheim writes on the 1st of November that the wife of Frederick Winter was received into the Church and made her first Holy Communion on the 6th of October. Mr. Dauk, their progressive store-keeper, has received a carload of goods. Three new families arrived recently:—those of Politeski, Wolf and Schiltz.

Lake Lenore writes on the 28th of October that last Sunday two Masses were read there. Father Prior Alfred having come with Fr. Dominic in order to inspect the site for the new church. He decided that it should be built on the site previously determined by him. On Monday two trustees went to Muenster and bought the necessary lumber.

From St. Benedict the correspondent takes pride in reporting the recent visit of Abbot Peter

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