

## Chapter 14

### The Landeis Family in America

Germans from Russia had begun to filter into the Midwest by 1873, at first targeting Kansas and Nebraska, then later the Dakotas and Saskatchewan and nearby states. The pace of immigration reached its peak in the 1890s and it continued unabated until it finally was brought to a halt by World War One and the Bolshevik era. By 1920 the U.S. national census showed that there were 303,532 first and second generation persons of German-Russian descent in this country. The number was undoubtedly greater since many were simply listed as "Russians," based on their prior nationality and not on their ethnicity.

The Dakotas were the major target for emigres from the Black Sea colonies. The first "Great Dakota Land Boom" occurred from 1879 to 1886. During those years the state's population blossomed from 16,000 to 191,000.<sup>1</sup> Free homestead land lured them, plus the Sioux wars were over and the great buffalo herds were gone, leaving this vast stretch of land open for cultivation. The Germans from Russia were preadapted to survival on the steppes of the Ukraine, and they brought those skills with them to meet the challenges of the harsh conditions in the American Midwest. They also brought with them red spring wheat, which was highly adapted to conditions in Russia as well as in the Midwest. There was great demand for this grain in the flour mills in Minneapolis. Railroads were also expanding westward through the Dakotas and they were offering cheap land for purchase. In 1881 the Northern Pacific Railroad completed the extension of its line westward from Mandan through Dickinson and Belfield. The company launched an active recruitment campaign through its European Bureau of Colonization to lure immigrants.

The largest concentration of Germans from the Black Sea region was in the southwestern portion of North Dakota -- west of the Missouri river, an area known today as the "German triangle." The first colonists from Speier, in the Beresan valley, arrived in the Spring of 1885 -- four bachelors who left Russia to avoid the Russian military service. In 1887 colonists from Neu-Karlsruhe (the daughter colony of Karlsruhe) began to settle on land south of Antelope (in Stark county, just east of Richardton). By 1891 colonists from Karlsruhe, Rastadt, München, Speier and Landau began to settle in Richardton and Dickinson, and within the next two years they had blanketed the area.<sup>2</sup>

#### The Journey to America

The great majority of German-Russian emigrants traveled by train to Hamburg, Germany, which was the major embarkation point for ships traveling across the Atlantic to the New World. Major steamship lines were operating a lucrative business transporting the massive numbers of emigrants at that time. Their fast ships crossed the North Atlantic at a fraction of the cost and the time required by a sea voyage from Odessa. Direct sea passage from Odessa or Crimea through the Mediterranean was possible, but it was slower, more expensive, and there were still lingering political problems between Russia and Turkey.

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<sup>1</sup> Severson 1985.

<sup>2</sup> Sallet 1974, p. 39.

Most German-Russian emigrants used the services of a Jewish travel agent named Mistler. He had opened a branch office in Odessa to provide prospective emigrants with information, travel papers, and tickets. Copies of his advertisements circulated widely in the German colonies.<sup>3</sup> There was another travel agent in Odessa named Stickler or Sticklely whose services were seemingly less dependable and therefore less commonly used. Mistler had a well established route via train from Odessa through Warsaw to Berlin and from there to the seaport at Hamburg, or secondarily at Bremerhaven. His agents along the way were well trained to assist and take care of his clients' needs. Art Flegel<sup>4</sup> has done extensive research on these travel arrangements. He reported that he had never heard of any of Mistler's clients being stranded. However, on occasion the travelers did have problems with border authorities, or after they reached their seaport destination in Germany some chose for one reason or another to remain there for a period of time before continuing on to the USA. Usually it was because they had run low on funds and decided to earn some money before continuing to their final destination.

According to Karl Baedeker's 1914 travel book on Russia, the express train journey from Odessa to Berlin took 37 hours, with the fares being 105 Marks, 70 Marks economy class, seat-ticket 1 ½ Rubles extra. The route went via Podwoločyaka, Lemberg, Kracow, and Oderberg, a distance of 1,744 kilometers (1,084 miles). The train journey via Brest-Litovsk, Warsaw, and Alexandrovo (or Kalisz) took 42 hours -- fares 102 Marks 45, 68 Marks 15 pfennig; seat-ticket 1 1/2 Ruble 70 kopek extra. There were cheaper fares for lower class tickets, which were purchased by most emigrants. From Berlin it was only a few hours by rail to Hamburg.

Further details about the costs are available in letters and receipts which have been saved by descendants of the emigrants. These figures were probably typical for the latter two decades of the nineteenth century. One such receipt shows that the fare for one adult from Dönhof, Russia to Lincoln, Nebraska in 1912 was \$84.65 US currency<sup>5</sup> Another letter<sup>6</sup> sent by a German-Russian emigrant from Bremen, Germany, before his departure in 1912, provides the following details. The exchange rate at the time was \$50.94 for 100 rubles:

“Bremen 3 Apr 1912

“I am sending you herewith travel costs for the trip to America . . . The travel costs per person for adults and for children, age 1 - 12:

New York:

With a Kaiser ship	\$43.50	\$21.75
With fast mail steamer	\$41.00	\$20.50

Baltimore:

With fast mail steamer	\$38.50	\$19.25
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Galveston:

With fast mail steamer	\$36.50	\$18.25
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For children under one year, fare is \$2.50

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<sup>3</sup> Metzger 1930, p. 10.

<sup>4</sup> Cited on GR-Genealogy an internet discussion group, August 29, 2001.

<sup>5</sup> Ron Greenwald posted to the Beresan email list, May 22, 2001.

<sup>6</sup> Information provided by Martin Schock, GR-Genealogy e-mail list, Jan. 31, 2001. The letter was written by his grandfather.

"In addition to the passage fare for third class (between decks) passengers to New York, Baltimore and Galveston, an American head tax payment is required. This is the same for each person, identical, whether an adult, child or youngster and is \$4.00 -- and it must be paid with (at the same time) the passage fare.

The railroad trip costs for adults:

New York to Turtle Lake, N. Dak.                 \$ 35.25

Baltimore to Turtle Lake, N. Dak.                 \$ 33.70

For each child aged from 5 to 12 years, it is half the adult rate; children under 5 years are free.

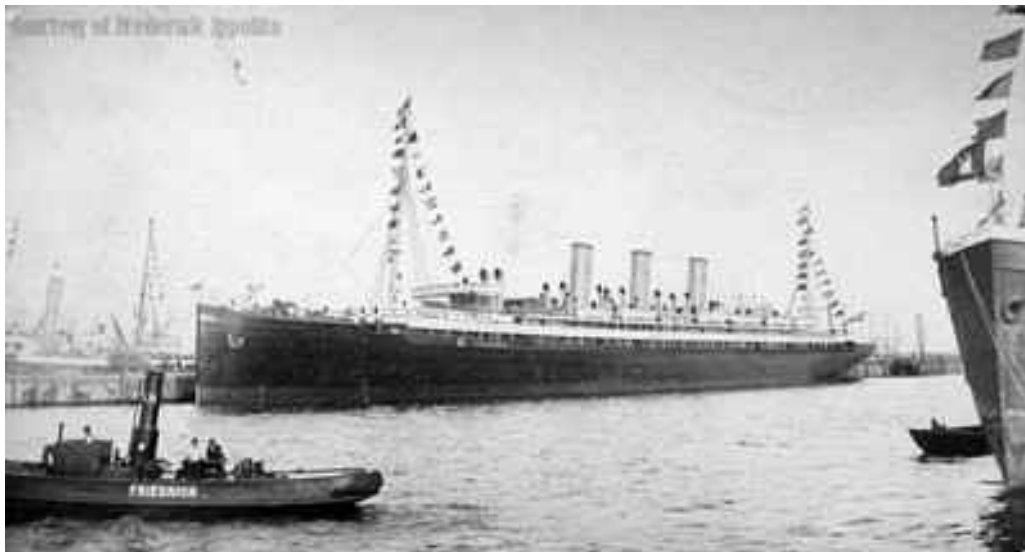
"...[I]t is necessary that in addition to the money for the ocean trip, they also be sent money for the living quarters in Bremen:

\$ 1.50 for each adult

\$ 0.75 for each child 1 to 12 years of age.

For this money, ... [they] will receive quarters and meals until their departure of the steamer, so ... to travel through (from) Russia and Germany, I indicate to you that the trip from Bessarabia to Bremen is \$9.00 for adults, for children aged 4 to 10 years it is half the adult fare, children under 4 years are free."

The Commissioner of the Bureau of Immigration in Hamburg commented on the high volume of traffic in his annual report for 1901: "In the past year, 1,000 German-speaking colonists of German descent travelled from the Russian Gouvernements of Cherson, Bessarabia, and Tauria to the state of South Dakota with the intent to settle there permanently as farmers. These German colonists always travelled in groups of 20 - 30 families and usually took the fast steamers..."<sup>7</sup>



**Augusta Victoria**

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<sup>7</sup> Private communication from Detelf D. Hollatz, via Internet, Jan. 13, 1996

It should be noted that a growing number of families in Germany also joined the emigrant trek to America. An article in a German newspaper in 1888 noted:

“A large number of emigrants, adults and children, most from Baden and Württemberg, arrived yesterday through our city, on their way to their new homeland in America. Lately several south German families who sought their fortune there have returned after expending all their savings, completely penniless: they were lucky to have been back on German soil.”<sup>8</sup>

According to stories told to my mother by her grandmother, Louisa Landeis, they took a train from Odessa to Hamburg and boarded a steamship there to cross to America. The Hamburg ship records show that they boarded the *Augusta Victoria*, on Oct. 3, 1889. The *Augusta Victoria* was a new ship -- it had been constructed in 1888 by the Vulkan Shipbuilding Co. in Stettin Germany. It had a total tonnage of 7,661, a length of 461 ft., a width of 56 ft., three funnels, and it was steam-driven by twin-screws to a speed of 18.5 knots. The ship was operated by the Hamburg-American Line and it actively plowed a round-trip back and forth from Europe to the USA for the next 15 years, until it was sold to the Russians in 1904. They renamed it the *Kuban*, and it saw service briefly during the Russo-Japanese war, after which it was finally scrapped in 1907.

The Hamburg ship register<sup>9</sup> shows the following information for Heinrich and Louisa Landeis: their home village was listed as Neu-Karlsruhe, his occupation was “farmer,” both were 25 years of age, and their children were Philip age 6, Katharine age 2, and “Elise” a female infant age 6 months. This “Elise” is almost certainly an error – it should read “Alex,” who was my grandfather. Louisa sometimes said jokingly that Alex had “no country” because he was born in Russia shortly before their departure and he came across as a baby. Alex was their third child, born in March of 1889. If the months are rounded off, he would in fact have been about 6 months of age at the time of their departure from Russia, which matches the baby shown on the ship’s register. “Alex” pronounced in German sounds similar to “Elise” and it would have been an easy mistake to make by the person writing names in the ship register – especially when he was dealing with a long queue of passengers, most of whom did not speak English. There were more than 1,000 names recorded for that voyage of the *Augusta Victoria*. After he misheard the name of the baby as “Elise,” he checked the gender column as female. “Elise” was not a typical German name -- the most common German diminutive form for Elizabeth would have been “Lisbeth,” or perhaps “Lisl,” but not “Elise.”

In the adjacent berth on the steamship were Louisa Meier-Landeis’ brother, Friedrich Meier, his wife Magdalene Landeis and their family. Friedrich was age 31, his wife Magdalene was 22, and their children were Andreas age 5, and Josef 11 months. Correspondence with descendants indicates that Magdalene’s surname was Landeis, which shows that there was a double marriage between the Landeis and Meier families. Friedrich was also listed as a farmer. Both the Meier and Landeis families were listed as originating in Neu-Karlsruhe (they are the only two families on the ship from this colony). There was one other family with the surname Meier listed on the *Augusta Victoria* (Jacob and Katherine Meier, with seven children); however, they had a different point of origin -- Neuburg, Russia, which was a Lutheran colony located in the Grossliebental district near Odessa – and they did not have a nearby berth on the ship. On this basis, it seems unlikely that this Meier family was related to Louisa and Friedrich.

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<sup>8</sup> *Siegburger Kreisblatt*, Sept. 19, 1888.

<sup>9</sup> LDS Microfilm 0472934

The Augusta Victoria had a total of 1,240 passengers. The majority of them (707, including all the Germans from Russia) traveled steerage class -- which meant that they had the cheapest fare in the section of the ship below sea level where the steering mechanism was located. The steerage section was crowded, dark and damp, with little fresh air. Typically there were no walls separating their berths (blankets were usually hung up for privacy). The remaining passengers (including all the U.S. citizens, and most of those from Austria, Prussia, Saxony, and other parts of the Reich) traveled in private cabins (first and second class). The Germans from Russia came from a variety of colonies -- besides our Landeis and Maier families from Neu-Karlsruhe, others came from Neuburg, Alexanderfeld, Neukandel, Odessa, Rosenfeld, Schonfeld, Bergdorf, Liebenthal, Freudenthal, Petersthal, and Glucksthal. The ship departed from Hamburg on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup> and stopped to pick up additional passengers in Southampton, England.

My mother was quite close to Louisa, her grandmother. Louisa told many stories about the old days, including their passage across the ocean to the USA. Because they traveled steerage class there were only blankets hanging from the ceiling to separate each family and there was little privacy or security. Louisa said that she and Heinrich took turns sleeping in order to keep watch over their possessions. They sold their land in Neu-Karlsruhe and brought a considerable amount of money with them -- according to my mother's estimate about \$2,000 in cash (about 4,000 *rubles*), which Louisa carried in a money-belt tied around her waist beneath her blouse. She complained about how uncomfortable it was, it rubbed sores on her waist. Making matters even worse, sanitary conditions were inadequate and most of the steerage class passengers on the ship contracted lice. It was difficult to scratch beneath the money belt. One evening Heinrich apparently fell asleep while he was supposed to be on watch and Louisa was awakened by someone fumbling with the buttons on her blouse. The person quickly bolted away before she could determine who it was. She thought that the person was after her money belt -- probably well aware that most of the passengers were carrying cash hidden somewhere on their bodies.

Information about the provisions for travel across the Atlantic is provided in a contract for one German-Russian family, dated 8 April, 1893.<sup>10</sup> They were in steerage on the Allan Line, enroute from Hamburg to Halifax. The second page gives specifics about the food that was supplied:

Morning: coffee or tea; butter and white bread

Noon: an appropriately prepared warm meal alternating between beef or salted herring with the appropriate vegetables or fruits, wheat foods or rice

Evening: coffee or tea, butter and white bread.

The amounts that provided for each passenger were:

Beef - 840 Gm

Salted herring - 5 pieces

White bread - 1800 Gm

Butter - 150 Gm

Potatoes - 3000 Gm

White flour - 360 Gm

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<sup>10</sup> Information provided by Elaine Becker Morrison, 3 Sep 2000, GR-Heritage@listserv.nodak.edu

Peas and beans - 200 Gm each  
Barley groats ("*Graupen*") and rice - 200 Gm each  
Coffee - 50 Gm  
Tea - 10 Gm  
Salt - 60 Gm  
For children between the ages of one and six:  
Oatmeal - 300 Gm  
Sugar - 250 Gm  
For every child under one year, 250 Gm condensed milk

Water was to be provided for each passenger:  
distilled water - 2 Liters  
non-distilled water - 4 Liters

After a relatively fast trip across the Atlantic, which took only 5 days and 17 hours, the *Augusta Victoria* docked at New York harbor around midnight on Oct. 11, 1889. The ship records in New York<sup>11</sup> also list the third child in the Landeis family as an infant "Elise," six months of age. The New York passenger ledger undoubtedly just copied the information from the ship ledger at the point of embarkation, and thus repeated the same mistake.

Ellis Island did not open until January, 1892, so we may assume that they did not have to remain in quarantine. They may have initially stayed in a reception and processing complex on Manhattan Island. The Statue of Liberty had quickly become a symbol of the USA, and immigrants arriving in New York harbor after 1886 often competed to be the first ones on deck to spot this landmark. Louisa spoke about how excited she was to see the Statue of Liberty. She also stated that they traveled by boat up the St. Lawrence river to proceed on the next step of their journey by train to North Dakota. Records show that earlier generations of immigrants from Germany had traveled by boat from New York harbor all the way up the Erie Canal to Buffalo, from whence they departed by train or wagon to points farther west. For example, several shiploads of immigrants from Brandenburg Prussia followed this water route westward in 1838, and in 1839 other groups of immigrants from Germany also followed the Erie Canal to Buffalo, then through the Great Lakes to Milwaukee.

#### Heinrich and Louisa Landeis in Richardton, North Dakota

Immigrants from Neu-Karlsruhe had already begun settling just east of Richardton two years before, in 1887, and they had sent word back to family and friends about land availability and the weather conditions. Heinrich and Louisa were drawn to this area by those earlier reports. The town of Richardton was founded in 1881 and its population was still quite small when Germans from the Beresan region of the Ukraine began arriving. Large numbers settled there after 1890. During the last decade of the century the Northern Pacific Railroad operated an immigration house at Richardton for the new settlers where they could stay for a few days after their arrival, until they selected a homestead. From there they spread out into nearby Stark, Hettinger, Adams, Dunn and Bowman counties.

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<sup>11</sup> LDS Microfilm 1027775

The Jan. 26, 1884 issue of the Dickinson Press printed an ad that appeared in German newspapers urging German immigrants to colonize in North Dakota. The ad stated that a family needed about \$750 to get started on a homestead. This would cover a dwelling, a stable, a team and a cow, some implements and seed for potatoes and vegetables for the first year. 160 acres could be taken with an additional acreage under the Timber Culture Act.

Fr. Vincent Wehrle O.S.B., of St. Gall's Priory at Devil's Lake, was assigned Richardton as part of his mission route. He founded St. Mary's church in 1893. This parish was the nucleus for what later expanded into Assumption Abbey (the current church was built in 1908). St. Mary's school at the Abbey (later known as St. Mary's College) opened in 1900, and it didn't become an organized grammar school until 1905. My mother recalls that Philip, Catherine, and Alex attended school there for at least two years, perhaps as many as four years, although their names do not appear in the school's records. When I wrote the Abbey for information, the response was that many of the early records of the student body are unfortunately incomplete or missing. The city of Richardton published a 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary history in 1958, the names of the early settlers are summarized, including those influential in founding St. Mary's and Assumption Abbey.<sup>12</sup> In 1893 there were 40 Catholic families in Richardton (including German-Russians, Irish, and Bavarians), but the surname Landeis isn't mentioned. This may indicate that Heinrich wasn't involved in local business or church activities in Richardton. A clue may be found in the anniversary publication which states that there was trouble in the local Catholic congregation of St. Mary's in the 1890s when the parishioners refused to attend religious services with Fr. John Handtmann and they began to attend their own Sunday services in private homes. This priest eventually left Richardton and the congregation was without a pastor until 1899 when the bishop asked Fr. Vincent Wehrle to return to Richardton to restore peace in the divided congregation. He laid the foundations for the formation of Assumption Abbey and school.

The census and land records show that Heinrich and Louisa resided near Richardton for at least 20 years after their arrival, although the precise location is unclear. They had nine more children in North Dakota, for a total of twelve in their marriage. The births and baptisms for Anna and Magdalena are listed in the records of St. Mary's church, but the information for the others is based on family records<sup>13</sup>:

1. Philipp (born April 28, 1883; 1900 census shows 1884)
2. Katherine (born May 14, 1886)
3. Alex (born March 12, 1889; 1900 census shows 1888).
4. Barbara (born Feb. 18, 1891)
5. Gusta (died at birth, 1893).
6. Ambrose (born Oct. 21, 1895 Richardton, N.D., died Sept. 22, 1966 Butte, Montana).
7. Anna Fredrika (born June 6, 1897, bapt. June 10).
8. John (born May 25, 1900; 1900 census shows 1899, 1940 census shows 1904)
9. Magdalena (born Oct. 13, 1901, died 1907 North Dakota).

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<sup>12</sup> <https://digitalhorizonsonline.org/digital/collection/ndsl-books/id/39840>

<sup>13</sup> Ambrose Landeis visited us in Portland, Oregon in the 1950s. He had a list of all his siblings, with their birthdates. These are mostly the same as shown in the 1900 census.

10. Andrew (died at birth, 1903).
11. Jacob (Jack) (born Dec. 28, 1904).
12. Joseph (died at birth, 1906).

Little is known of those early years near Richardton, but there is some hint that Heinrich and Louisa struggled to make ends meet economically. The early 1890s were marked by drought and an economic depression in the Midwest. This temporarily slowed the initial settlement boom in North Dakota. Many of the early settlers failed to earn a living and sold their homestead claims. Wheat prices steadily declined from 80 cents to 60 cents per bushel.

On Oct. 13, 1897, Heinrich became a naturalized U.S. citizen at the Stark County courthouse in Dickinson. He signed his citizenship papers as "Heinr. Landeis," using a German *Fraktur* script, which shows that he had received some education when growing up in Russia. The 1930 census shows that neither Heinrich nor Louisa had attended school, Louisa stated that she couldn't read or write, although Heinrich stated that he could. It's possible that they meant they hadn't received education in English in the USA. In order to receive citizenship, a person had to abjure his allegiance to the Tsar of Russia, he had to have resided in the U.S. for five years, and at least one year in the state of North Dakota. The two witnesses who signed on behalf of Heinrich were Ed R. Bonny and Fred A. Freeman

The following year, on May 23, 1898, Heinrich was granted title to a 160 acre homestead, located in the "northwest quarter of Section 28 in Township 138, north of Range 92, west of the Fifth Principal Meridian." This land is located nine miles directly south of Richardton, near the Heart river (about where highway 8 south to Mott crosses the river). Heinrich likely filed for this land about 1893, since the claimant normally had to reside on a homestead for at least five years before final title would be awarded. His son, Ambrose, was born Oct. 21, 1895. His draft registration in 1917 states that he was born in "Hart River, N.D." There is no such town, so he was probably referring to the homestead land along the Heart River. There is a small town of Hart, west of Bowman, near where Heinrich later settled in about 1910, but at this early date in 1895 available records show that he lived south of Richardton.

Two years later it appears that Heinrich had also purchased additional land, adjoining Richardton on the north, to supplement his original homestead claim south of town. The U.S. National Census for 1900<sup>14</sup> shows that "Henry Landias," Louisa, and seven children (Philip, Katherine, Alexander, Barbara, Ambrose, Anna, and John) were residing in "Richardton Voting Precinct, Township 140, Range 92W." This location borders Richardton on the north, above Assumption Abbey. The precise location is unknown -- it could have been anywhere within the six mile square (per side) of T140, northeast of the monastery. They probably were not residing in the town limits of Richardton itself (a small portion of which projects up into T140), because the census lists them as "farmers," owning the land on which they resided.

Additional information on the 1900 census confirms that their first three children were born in Russia and the others in North Dakota (the fact that Alexander is shown as born in Russia confirms Louisa's report, and again indicates that the ship records erroneously reported his name as "Elise"). No one in the family reportedly could speak English at that time, and Heinrich and Louisa could read and write only in German. None of the children were reported to have any education.

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<sup>14</sup> LDS Microfilm 1241232.



Louisa's brother, Friedrich Meier, and his family were also listed in the 1900 census, residing in the same township 140 and range 92W as the Landeis family, northeast of Richardton. They had five sons at that time: Andreas, Joseph, Victor, Henry, and Thomas. Neither Friedrich nor Magdalene could speak English, but their two oldest boys could, which probably indicates that they had learned it in school. All could read and write, except for Magdalene

### The Homestead Act

Heinrich was ambitious in his acquisitions of land during these early years in North Dakota. Germans from Russia were a land hungry people. Wherever they settled, their first priority was usually to acquire as much land as they could for farming, grazing, mining of coal, as well as for investment purposes.

The Homestead Act stipulated that anyone who was at least 21 years of age could apply for a claim (there was no minimum age if the person was married and the "head of a family"). The applicant had to have filed for citizenship, and had to testify that he had never taken up arms against the U.S. government. Initially the person had to file an application of intent at the courthouse of jurisdiction in order to "enter" the homestead land, and pay a filing fee of only 10 cents per acre. He had to establish residence on the land within six months, then had to reside there for another four and one-half years (without leaving it for more than six months at a time). Certain improvement had to be made on the property (known as "proving up" on the homestead) -- the soil had to be cultivated, a dwelling at least 10' X 12' had to be built (typically a small "claim shack"), a well had to be dug, and a portion of the land fenced. After these conditions were met, a petition for award of title (known as the "patent") was filed, which required the testamentary signatures of two witnesses. The person had to have become a U.S. citizen by that point, and the land couldn't be attached by lien for debts. In addition to the 160 acres that could be claimed for farming, another quarter section could be claimed for coal mining, and 320 acres could be claimed for grazing. These were known as "preemption claims," which cost \$1.25 per acre.

Although the Homestead Act had several clear requirements, in reality people often bent the rules. The law stipulated that the land had to be occupied for five years in order to finally claim patent title, but many settlers did not stay for the full term. The claim could be sold to someone else after a person had done the initial "proving up" on the homestead. Although a person had to reside on the claim for at least six months each year, it was common for people to reside in town during the Winter, and to move out onto their homesteads during cultivation season, in the Spring, Summer, and early Fall. One story in *Dawn in Golden Valley* (p. 298) states that it was necessary for a person to simply "sleep" on the land to "prove up" on it. The terms of the Homestead Act of 1862 allowed a claimant to purchase additional land after six months at \$1.25 per acre (the going rate for purchasing railroad land at that time was at least \$2.50 per acre). Some homesteaders used this as a legal loophole to purchase more desirable land for below market rates, and then they abandoned their original claim. It was also possible to take out a "tree claim" of additional land for timber, but this method was repealed in 1890 because of fraud and abuse.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Severson 1985, p. 19.

Around the turn of the century the economic conditions in North Dakota began to improve. Prices and crops increased, railroad shipping rates fell, and the expansion of the Great Northern Railroad ushered in the "Second Land Boom." The state and the railroads actively promoted land sales and advertised for settlers. Homesteads blossomed once again. The peak year in homestead claims was in 1908, when 14,287 claims were finalized. The Enlarged Homestead Act of 1909 allowed for 320 acre claims, and the residency requirement was reduced from five to three years. Many speculators flocked in to take out claims, then converted them into cash after land values increased. Only about half of the second boomers actually had farming experience. More than 70 percent of the population in North Dakota at that time was foreign-born.<sup>16</sup>

### Dickinson, North Dakota

By 1906 it appears that the Landeis family sold their original land acquisitions near the Heart River south of Richardton and moved to Dickinson. That year, on July 17, "Henry Landize" purchased Lot 5 in Block F of "Stow's Addition to the town of Dickinson, now city of Dickinson." He purchased the lot from Matthias Werhoff and his wife, "Abilonia" (Apollonia), - obviously another German family, for the price of \$408. It is unknown how long they remained in Dickinson. Heinrich's obituary states only that "he lived for some time at Dickinson, N.D." It seems likely that they were there for about two years, then moved southwest towards Bowman.

Their oldest son, Philip, also took out a homestead near Bowman, but his livelihood was focused on various business in Dickinson. There he married Barbara Schultz, a German woman who had immigrated from the Banat region of Hungary with her son Paul. There were many German-Hungarians in the Dickinson area, second in numbers only to the Germans from Russia. Philip posted several ads in the local newspapers showing his economic activities in Dickinson. In 1901 he posted an ad in the *The Dickinson Press* stating that he was the general manager for a wholesale grocery business and that he should be contacted for prices. Later, in 1920 he operated a tire repair shop and ads for new automobiles appeared in the German language newspaper, *Nord Dakota Herold*, which was published in Dickinson.

### Bowman, North Dakota

Another German language newspaper published in Dickinson, *Die Deutsche Zukunft*, provides a clue about the next move for Heinrich and Louisa. The issue dated July 3, 1908, states (my translation): "Henry Landeis from Midway was in the city on Wednesday to take care of various business matters." The small settlement of Midway was located about 25 miles north of Bowman, below Amidon. This area opened for homesteading around 1907 and several of its early settlers were Germans from Russia.<sup>17</sup> It is likely that Heinrich was in Dickinson in 1908 to handle the details for the sale of his property. The *Dickinson Press* (April

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<sup>16</sup> Severson 1985, p. 27.

<sup>17</sup> In 2009 I spoke with Dorothy Pearson, associated with the Bowman County Historical Society, who was quite familiar with the now extinct town of Midway below Amidon. She said that most of the early families there were Germans from Russia.

11, 1908) reported that "Henry Landize from Midway sold his building to Nick Swan for \$200. Mr. Landize intends to move away soon."

At some point in 1910 Heinrich and Louisa also homesteaded a sheep-ranch in Bowman county, near the South Dakota border (about 12 miles west of Bowman and 13 miles below Rhame). My mother recalled that this land was taken as a second homestead, although the legal papers for this land cannot be found in the courthouse records. It was near Amor, which today is a ghost town. In 1974 we visited Bowman and spoke with Claude White, an elderly man who had homesteaded near the Landeis family. He recalled that Heinrich's land was in the adjacent section just south of his, and east of where their son Alex later took out a homestead. We may assume, then, that Heinrich and Louisa resided in Section 5, about one mile east.<sup>18</sup> Claude didn't know Heinrich and Louisa well because they left the area about 3 years after he took out his own homestead. He said that back in those days you didn't socialize with another man's wife, they were "more private and stuck to the house;" furthermore, Louisa couldn't speak English, and Heinrich's English skills were very limited. Claude remembered their son Alex and Ida (my grandparents) and especially her sister, Mary Fuchs, who remained in Bowman after she married Ben Jerome. He escorted us into the countryside and showed us where Heinrich and Louisa's sod house used to stand. He said that in those days the settlers would go into Rhame a couple times each year for supplies. Everyone had to dig coal for fuel and haul it to their homes in wagons. Sometimes the coal was buried under as much as 15 feet of clay and it required considerable work to dig it out.

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<sup>18</sup> The earliest atlas available for this area is the 1917 Bowman County Atlas. Claude White's lands are shown as the southern one-eighth of Section 26 and the northeast one-fourth of Section 35, Township 130N, Range 105W. No members of the Landeis family are shown at that time since they had all moved out by 1917.



**Heinrich Landeis and Louisa Meier, sod House near Amor, North Dakota (note Heinrich's long-stemmed German style ceramic pipe; he is proudly wearing badges probably for various Catholic men's sodality groups)**

A photo has survived of Heinrich and Louisa standing before their sod-house. Heinrich is holding a long-stemmed German style porcelein pipe. Louisa is at his side, her hand resting on his shoulder, and she is dressed in typical German from Russia fashion -- a long sleeved black dress, modestly buttoned fully up the neck. They appear to be middle-aged in the photo. My mother thought that this photo was taken at their homestead near Amor, west of Bowman. Louisa said that when they built the sod house they excavated soil three to four feet deep, and layered it on the roof for insulation.

The 1910 U.S. National Census<sup>19</sup> shows Heinrich and Louisa and their children residing in Richardton, Stark County, but it also shows that "Henry Landis" and Louisa were living in Bowman County, Township 129, Range 104, which gives us a precise date for when they settled there. They are shown with their sons, Alex "age 24," Ambrose 13, Annie 12, John 10, and Jacob 5. The census was dated May 9, 1910, so in fact Alex was only 21 -- there is no apparent explanation for why his age was off by three years. The census reports that Heinrich and Louisa could not speak English, nor could they read or write (which contradicts the 1900 census! -- such conflicting reports were common at that time, and probably were explained by the fact that persons who were literate only in German sometimes said that they were illiterate in English). The census reports that they came to the USA from Russia in 1888 (also an error, by one year). Heinrich was reported to be a "sheep rancher" and he owned his land free and clear, with no mortgage on it. Alex and Ambrose both could speak English, and both could also read and write -- confirming that they had spent time at the Assumption Abbey boarding school by that date. Both of the sons were reported to be "laborers" on the ranch. There is no information recorded on the education or English ability of the youngest children, Annie, John, and Jacob (Jack). Heinrich, Alex, and Ambrose were each reported as owning 93 livestock.

The area around Rhame and Amor tends to have less precipitation than other parts of North Dakota, which makes farming more difficult. This is reflected in the statement in the 1900 census that Heinrich was a "sheep rancher." Many of the homesteaders there eventually sold out and moved to more favorable locales. Claude White recalled that Heinrich and Louisa sold their land to a couple of bachelor sheep herders around 1913. The two tore down the sod house and built a three-room shack on the site which is still standing today, although it has been abandoned for many years.

The Dickinson Press reported on July 25, 1916 that there was much damage in Rhame from a storm. "Wind, hail, rain hit south of Rhame, numerous farm buildings were destroyed, entire grain crops were lost. Philip Landeis 150 acres, Jacob Landeis 300 acres hail damage, partial, Henry Landeis hail damage as large as chicken eggs."

### My Grandfather Alex's Early Years

According to family stories, Alex, their son, attended school at Assumption Abbey in Richardton for about four years. He received his First Holy Communion and was confirmed there. Because the 1900 census indicated that he and his siblings had no education at the time, we may assume that Alex's schooling took place between about 1901 to 1905 (between the ages of 12 to 17), while the family was residing near Richardton. Although his education was very limited, my mother did recall that he had beautiful, almost calligraphic handwriting which

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<sup>19</sup> LDS microfilm 1375152.

indicates that he had some training. His brother, Ambrose, also attended some schooling at Richardton Abbey and he knew how to write in a beautiful German *Fraktur* script. Classes at the Abbey school may have been conducted in German, since most of the families were immigrants, and there was likely some basic training in English.

Alex spent his early years herding sheep. He was the second oldest son, so much of that burden fell upon him. During the Spring and Summer he was left alone out with the herds, with his horse, dog, and rifle as his sole companions. Heinrich would ride out to bring him food and clean clothes. Alex had much time to practice with his rifle and he became an expert marksman. He was very shy and withdrawn and he found it difficult to speak to strangers, which my mother attributed to his extreme isolation as a boy. She also said that he had a speech impediment -- he stammered when nervous -- which exaggerated his problem. A neighbor in the area "felt sorry for him" and advised Alex to leave home during his early teenage years. My mother felt that the isolation on the farm was not good for him, so he needed to get away and experience the broader world. The approximate date was 1906, after Heinrich and Louisa sold their land near Richardton and moved to Dickinson. Alex was 17 years old at that point and it would have been a natural juncture for him to leave home. Recalling that the 1900 census had stated that Alex couldn't speak English (he was 11 years old at that time), and that he received only about four years of schooling, we may assume that his English skills were limited when he left.

Alex hopped a freight-train loaded with cattle to Chicago, where he earned his living doing odd jobs. There he met an older woman who ran a boarding-house. They reportedly had a romantic affair and "she wanted to marry him." Her name is unknown, but she had reddish hair (this may be a significant detail since Alex always had a "soft spot" for women with reddish hair -- Alex's mother, Louisa, also had reddish blond hair). Alex remained in Chicago for about two years, then decided to return to his parents in North Dakota. The woman gave him a ruby-ring to remember her by -- a ring which he kept all his life, to the great annoyance of Ida, his later wife, my grandmother.

After Alex left Chicago he worked at various jobs -- coal mining, sheep herding, farm labor and ranching in North Dakota. When Alex later met my father, after my parents were married, he said that he recalled working for a while for Adam Wagner, my other grandfather, at his coal mine near Dickinson. Alex returned to his parents' sheep ranch near Bowman by early Spring, 1910. According to my mother, he loved his parents very dearly -- especially his mother, Louisa -- and he wanted to check on them to see how they were getting along on the sheep ranch near Bowman. As an older son, he had a sense of responsibility for his parents and he took care of them all of his life -- more so than did Philip, Ambrose, or the other sons.

Another likely motive for Alex's return to the Bowman area was that he had turned 21 years of age in March, 1910, and he was eligible to claim a homestead. My mother said that he became a naturalized American citizen at the courthouse in Amor, North Dakota.<sup>20</sup> On Oct. 12,

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<sup>20</sup> The Amor courthouse was closed down at some point and all records were moved to Bowman, the county seat. I checked to see what information was available, but the clerk said they didn't have the naturalization records.

1911 Alex filed an affidavit of intent to take out a homestead, adjacent to Heinrich's land.<sup>21</sup> A person named John "Landis" also took out a homestead near Rhame. It's not clear whether this was Alex's brother, John, since my mother claims that neither John nor Jack owned homesteads.

### The Marriage of Alex Landeis and Ida Fuchs

Ida<sup>22</sup> Fuchs was born near Chokio, Minnesota, on Aug. 8, 1887. She was of German-Swiss descent. Her father was Caspar Fuchs, born Nov. 12, 1850 in Studen, Canton Schwyz in Switzerland and he immigrated to Minnesota on July 10, 1872. There he married Theresia Molitor on March 5, 1878. Theresia was born in Mainz, Germany on March 10, 1855 and she immigrated to the USA in 1876 at the age of 21.<sup>23</sup> In 1883 they took out a homestead in Everglades, an unincorporated area of farmlands northwest of Chokio, Minnesota. The 1900 census in Minnesota shows Caspar Fuchs, Theresia, and their family.

The precise year when Ida and her sister Mary moved to Bowman, North Dakota, is not clear. She had already left home by 1908 and resided for a time in Breckenridge, Minnesota, as shown by postcards that she sent that year to her family in Chokio. On one postcard, addressed to her brother Joseph Fuchs, she asked, "how is Papa and Mamma getting along?" According to Ida's memories, Caspar Fuchs had three brothers who came from Switzerland with him. They homesteaded for a while near Bowman when land in that area became available, then moved on to Kalispell, Montana.<sup>24</sup> It is quite likely, then, that Ida and Mary were lured to Bowman around 1908, following the lead of their uncles. They initially worked at a hotel in town -- one as a house-maid, and the other worked in the kitchen. Neither Ida nor Mary appear in the 1910 census for "Bowman Village" (as it was referred to at the time) so they were probably already living in the rural area west of town.

Ida's obituary states that she took out a homestead near Bowman in 1908, and 5 years later she was granted title (patent) to it on December 17, 1913. It was located below the tiny town of Rhame, very close to Heinrich and Louisa's ranch.<sup>25</sup> The title was granted in her

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<sup>21</sup> Alex's homestead application described it as "160 acres, in Township 129, North of Range 104, Section 6, south half of Northeast quarter and north half of the Southeast quarter," dated Oct. 12, 1911. This was just west of Heinrich and Louisa's homestead.

<sup>22</sup> Grandmother initially spelled and pronounced her name as "Eda," which is a German form. In some of the early records (e.g. postcards sent to her by her siblings) her name is spelled "Eda." There is no copy available of her birth record in Minnesota. As an adult she used "Ida" most commonly, so I will use that spelling. Ida is the English form.

<sup>23</sup> Theresia Molitor's birth record states that she was born in Mainz, Germany, on March 20, 1855. Molitor is a Latinized form of the surname Müller. Her parents were **Caspar Molitor** and **Elizabeth Rheinberger**. There are records available from the civil registry of Mainz which enable us to trace the Molitor family there back for three generations.

<sup>24</sup> Details of the Fuchs family are provided in a separate family history. Casper's brothers that homesteaded near Bowman later moved on to Kalispell, Montana. Casper's obituary refers to his brothers Paul and Anton Fuchs, who resided in Kalispell at the time of his death in 1938.

<sup>25</sup> The patent title to Eda's homestead is recorded at Bowman courthouse on Dec. 17, 1913. The legal description was "156.49 acres in Township 130, Range 104, section 31, lots 1 and 2." The township was described as DuVal. DuVal was a rural post office established February 17, 1911.

maiden name, Ida Theresia Fuchs (although by 1913 she and my grandfather were married for two years already).



**Ben Jerome and Mary Fuchs**

Claude White, the elderly homesteader in Bowman with whom we spoke in 1974, remembered Ida and Mary. He told us that they were known as “the two Dutch girls” because they spoke German. The record should be set straight about this nickname. Some of my cousins thought that Ida was known as “the Dutchess,” which they speculated was an allusion to her loose sexual behavior during those early years. When I mentioned that to Claude, he was surprised and firmly rejected it, and said he didn’t know where that “silly idea” came from. He then explained that they were known as “the Dutch girls.”

Claude described them as rugged gals with an independent spirit, and he had great respect for them. He would pick them up in his wagon on his way into town, so they could get their supplies. They resided in Bowman most of the year, and out on the homestead during the Spring and Summer months. According to family stories, Mary did not take out a homestead

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It was located in the southeast quarter of section 33-130-104, Nebo Township 13 miles south-southwest of Rhame. The post office closed December 15, 1911 with mail going to Amor, which still exists.



herself, but the two sisters had each built a small shack, across the road from each other. This suggests that Mary was intending to take out that land as a homestead, but then she met Ben Jerome who had his own homestead some two miles north, closer toward Rhame. Ben and Mary got married on May 8, 1911.<sup>26</sup>

Ida's quarter of land directly adjoined Alex's land on the north. Although she was a stout, strong woman, the job of single-handedly proving up on the homestead was beyond her sole ability, so she hired Alex to help her. Their relationship soon took a serious turn when she became pregnant from Alex. Ida supposedly had another male friend in whom she was interested at the time, but after discovering her condition she decided to settle for Alex. They applied for marriage at Bowman on April 15, 1911, and the ceremony took place at the Catholic church in Rhame on May 10th. Both were stated to be residing in Du Val, in Bowman county. Alex was stated to be 24 and Ida was 23. Note that the surname was spelled "Landice," which was how it literally sounded to the clerk.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> The marriage certificate for Ben Jerome and Mary Fuchs in 1911 states that he was living in Bowman, and she was living in Du Val, which indicates that she was residing with Ida on the homestead. Ben does not appear in the 1910 census in Bowman.

<sup>27</sup> This marriage record is shown on Ancestry.com as "Alex Laudin," which was due to ambivalent reading of the spelling.

# Marriage License

State of North Dakota,  
County of Bowman

In County Court,

Bowman, North Dakota, April 15<sup>th</sup> 1901

To Any Person Authorized by Law to Perform the Marriage Ceremony, Greeting:

You are hereby authorized to join in marriage

Alex Landice

of De Val Bowman Co. N.D., aged 24, and

Ida Fuchs

of De Val Bowman Co. N.D., aged 23, and

of the County and your Certificate you will make due return to my office within thirty days.

[SEAL] CO. NORTH DAKOTA

Wm. H. Sawyer  
Judge of the County Court.

## Certificate of Marriage.

I hereby Certify, That the persons named in the foregoing License were by me joined in marriage at Rhame County of Bowman, State of North Dakota, on the 10 day of May, A. D. 1901.

In Presence of

John O'Brien )  
Wm. H. Sawyer )  
Witnesses. )

Returned and filed for record the 12<sup>th</sup> day of May, A. D. 1901

Wm. H. Sawyer  
Judge of the County Court



**Alex Landeis and Ida Fuchs, Marriage Photo 1911**

Their first child, Clara, was born seven months later on the homestead on Nov. 16, 1911. Their second child, Pauline, was also born there in 1913. On Aug. 28, 1913, Alex's sister, Katie, sent them a postcard, addressed to Amor, North Dakota, which was their closest postal delivery

station at that time. The postcard apparently is a reply to the announcement of Pauline's birth. It begins "*Lieber Bruder u. Eda u. babys,*" and she mentions the two children by name: "Elinor and Pauline" (Eleanor is Clara's middle name). Katie remarks that Pauline "aut to be a boy, well the next time be a big boy, I send the stork ride back to you." That year they also received a postcard from Alex's sister, Barbara, married to Nick Mosbrucker in Haley, N.D.

### The Move to Montana

In the first two decades of the Twentieth century Montana and Saskatchewan became magnets drawing many people from the Dakotas and Minnesota. Large numbers of Germans from Russia had initially settled near Richardton and Dickinson, where the soil is fertile, there is adequate rainfall, and many of their descendants remain there to this day. Their numbers were considerably smaller in the western edge of the state, in the area known as the "Badlands," which is drier with sandy soil not well suited to agriculture. The area near Bowman, in the southwestern portion of the state, had opened for homesteading around 1907, and many people flocked in to take advantage of these opportunities. However, while the 1910 census for Bowman County shows Norwegians, Anglos, and a few Germans, there were very few other Germans from Russia in the townships adjoining Heinrich Landeis' sheep ranch. Many of the German-Russian homesteaders in those areas moved on, looking for better opportunity elsewhere.

As the railroads expanded in Montana during the first two decades of the Twentieth century, the fertile river valley lands became available for purchase. The U.S. government was eager to develop the Midwest and to improve communication, so in many states it made generous land-grants to the railroad companies. In some cases they were given ownership of the land extending out 20 miles on either side of the tracks. The railroad companies sold these lands for about \$2.50 to \$7.50 per acre to land companies and to private farmers. This was an important means for financing the extension of the railroads throughout the country.

The German-Russians were attracted by the new opportunities to the west. One of the family histories in the local history book, *Dawn in Golden Valley*, mentions that a train full of emigrants left Rhame in the summer of 1915, heading to Montana. This shows that there was great interest in Montana at that time among the residents near Rhame, who were displeased with their homesteads in the scrub-lands in southwestern North Dakota. They settled in large numbers in the eastern part of Montana, in an area forming a triangle between Miles City, Baker and Glendive, encompassing four different counties -- Custer, Fallon, Prairie and Dawson. Many found employment in the rapidly growing railroad towns (Glendive, Miles City, Billings, Laurel, Missoula). Others also found seasonal employment with the Great Western Sugar Beet Factory in Billings. The sugar beet industry became an important specialized economic niche for many German-Russians in Montana, as it also was in other states as well, such as Kansas, Colorado, as far east as Michigan, and up into Canada. There has been some discussion (via Internet) that the Germans from Russia played a pioneering role in the sugar beet industry since they were willing to do this back-breaking labor (they have largely been replaced at this time by Mexican laborers).

The valley of the Musselshell river in Montana (just north of Billings) opened for farming about 1909. Before this date, the Musselshell valley had been used primarily for

ranching. There were several very large spreads in the area, such as the 79 Ranch, established in 1879 at Big Coulee, and Two Dot near Harlowton to the west.

A new era dawned when the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul railroad (usually shortened to "the Milwaukee") extended a track through the Musselshell valley in 1907-1908, following the shore of the river. The C.M.& S.P. railroad did not own all the land, since it received only the direct right of way for its track (the government granted them land in other states as compensation). Soon after the C.M.& S.P. railroad came through the Lavina and Ryegate area, the land companies began purchasing lots and launching a vigorous sales campaign. The railroad and the land companies placed ads in local newspapers trumpeting exaggerated claims about the Musselshell valley -- for example, that it was so fertile that "the soil could be bagged and sold as fertilizer." The railroad offered special low-fares on certain days to entice settlers. Small groups of scouts began exploring the area, and they sent word back to their families that the situation looked favorable. Clusters of families moved west from North Dakota and Minnesota, quickly taking advantage of the homestead availability. The railroad was quite busy during these years. Four major trains went through Ryegate each day, and several smaller freight trains in addition.

Ryegate was officially founded in 1910, and it was the County Seat for Golden Valley County. The first school opened in 1911. There was also a general store, a train depot with a postal drop, and a saloon. Supposedly the town was given its name by a railroad official who suggested it because of the fine fields of rye planted there. An early settler purchased land on the East Bench, the plateau southeast of town, where he planted fields of rye on each side of the road as it descended into the valley.

Victor Schaff, born in the German colony of Speier in Russia on Feb. 27, 1858, was married to Elisabeth Hegel (1857-1943) from Landau. They emigrated to the USA in 1889 and settled near Lead, South Dakota, where he found work in the gold mines. About 1900 he took out a homestead near Roosevelt National Park, in western North Dakota. This was on the fringe of the "badlands," and the land was suitable mainly for ranching. When he heard of the land available in the Musselshell valley, Victor sold his homestead, formed a family corporation with his two sons, Michael and Harry, and moved west to Ryegate on March 1, 1910. They bought 5 acres from a land syndicate known as Wheelock and Wheelock, about two miles east of town. Victor Schaff was the first German from North Dakota to settle in the Ryegate area. He sent word back to his relatives about the suitability of the valley for farming, and they soon followed him to Montana. The Schaff family remained on their land east of Ryegate until 1920, when Victor died. Harry Henton (the sheriff) and Verne Johnson bought the Schaff ranch in 1924.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> The Schaaf and Schaff families from the colony of Speier were related, although apparently distant in time. Both branches stemmed from Johann Schaaf b. 1718 in Leimersheim, Rheinpfalz, whose two sons spelled the surname differently (see [www.rollroots.com/schaff.htm](http://www.rollroots.com/schaff.htm)). Victor Schaff (b. March 6, 1855) was the son of Philipp (or Dominick?) Schaff and Katherine Dilschneider in Speier. Victor Schaff married Elisabeth Hegel (b. March 5, 1857 in Landau), they immigrated to North Dakota then relocated to Ryegate, Montana where Victor died Nov. 3, 1920 and Elisabeth died Jan. 28, 1943. Valentin Schaaf was b. 1843 in Speier, the son of Georg Schaaf (b. 1817) and Magdalena Rieger. Valentin's first marriage was in 1870 with Katharina Heck, his second marriage was 1890 with Theresia

Victor Schaff and his sons bought land in the Big Coulee area, 7 miles south of the Musselshell river. Soon after Victor lured other members of the Schaaf and Schanz families to purchase land there. The cost at that time was \$25 per Acre. This is one account of those early years<sup>29</sup>:

My uncle [Anton Schaff] came out of Russia when he was about 16 so he was able to remember quite a bit. Victor and his sons Mike and Harry were the first Schaffs that went to the Big Coulee (also called the 79 Ranch because it was previously a sheep ranch with 79,000 sheep...). The Schaffs were quite wealthy in Russia and able to bring quite a bit of money when they came over – reportedly one of them brought over \$90,000.

After Victor Schaff left North Dakota in 1910 Heinrich and Louisa decided to pull up stakes and follow him to Ryegate, Montana. There was a tie between the Schaff and Landeis families. Theresia Landeis (b. 1855 Karlsruhe), married Valentin Schaaf (b. 1843 Speier) in ca. 1890. Valentin Schaaf and Theresia both died in Speier.

Theresia's father was Jacob Landeis, the son of Daniel. This meant that Theresia Landeis was Heinrich's cousin, she was 9 years older than him. Heinrich was in close contact with Victor Schaff in North Dakota and in Montana. According to my mother, when Heinrich and Louisa first moved to Ryegate, they initially stayed with Victor Schaff for a few weeks until they arranged to purchase their own land. This detail was confirmed by Elisabeth Schaaf-Hecker, who was a young girl at the time, and she recalled her parents speaking of Mr. and Mrs. Landeis who had stayed with them.

There is conflicting information on the precise year when Heinrich and Louisa moved to Ryegate, but it likely was in 1912. There are no records showing when Heinrich sold his land west of Bowman. The records in the Golden Valley courthouse, in Ryegate, show that on July 16, 1912, they purchased 160 acres.<sup>30</sup> This land was located about three miles south and four miles west of Ryegate. The date matches fairly well with that provided by Ambrose Landeis, who stated that his parents lived in the "Richardton, Amar and Bowman areas for 24 years before coming to Ryegate in 1913." Heinrich's obituary states that they settled near Ryegate in 1915, and Louisa's obituary states 1916. Both of these dates are divergent from the 1912 date shown on the land purchase, and they are both certainly in error. The obituaries probably reflect faulty estimated dates provided to the newspaper by Heinrich and Louisa's sons, Alex and Jacob (Jack).

Heinrich sent a brief letter on Oct. 11, 1912 to the German newspaper in Dickinson, *Nord Dakota Herald*, to inform the readers of how he was doing. He sent another letter on Oct. 17, 1913 (my translation as follows): "Worthy Herold: we are still well here in Montana. Enclosed is payment for the newspaper. This year I have harvested 2,300 bushels of winter wheat from 120 acres, and 500 bushels of oats from 25 acres. We have 72 sacks of potatoes, and we also

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Landeis, they had a son, likewise named Valentin, who married Victor Schaff's daughter Barbara Schaff in 1919 in Ryegate. The families in the Ryegate area spell the surname as Schaff.

<sup>29</sup> Information provided by Paul Antone, private communication Nov. 9, 1998.

<sup>30</sup> Heinrich's land purchase near Ryegate in 1912 was described as "N. one-half, N.W. one-fourth, S.E. one-fourth, N.W. one-fourth; N.E. one-fourth, S.W. one-fourth in Section 22, Township 6N, Range 19E."

have enough from our vegetable garden. Presently we have a foot high of snow. It is going well for all of us in Montana. Please send us a calendar for 1914. With greetings to all my friends, Henry Landeis."

There is discrepancy in the dates for Heinrich's move to Montana. The Dickinson Press reported on July 25, 1916 that Henry, Philip, and Jacob Landeis had suffered severe crop damage from a powerful wind, hail, and rain storm that hit south of Rhame, entire grain crops were lost. Henry Landeis reported hail "as large as chicken eggs." It's likely that Heinrich still farmed his land near Bowman after his purchase of land in Montana, perhaps he returned to harvest the crops.

Alex and his new wife, Ida, didn't remain behind in North Dakota for long. Alex sold the claim to his homestead west of Bowman to Alex Meng for \$1,500 on Nov. 29, 1913. Although the five years needed to have final title of the homestead hadn't yet elapsed (he had filed for it only two years before), it was possible to sell his claim since he had made the required improvements.<sup>31</sup> Shortly afterward, on April 4, 1914 they also sold Ida's original homestead to the Farmer's Land Company in Montana, for "\$1 and other valuable considerations." My mother thought that it was sold for "\$1 per acre," although this cannot be determined with certainty. The "other valuable considerations" that they received for Ida's homestead probably consisted of land that they had purchased in the Ryegate area. She and Alex also owed a mortgage of \$600 on their lands in North Dakota. The document of sale shows that they were already residing in Montana by that date (the document was notarized in Ryegate on April 4, 1914).

The records show, then, that Alex and Ida had sold both their homesteads and moved to Ryegate by the Spring of 1914, about two years after Heinrich and Louisa.<sup>32</sup> According to my mother, when Alex and Ida arrived in the Ryegate area they stayed at first with his parents. Joint living arrangements were common among the settlers in those early years. Newcomers stayed for a few weeks with relatives or friends until they could establish themselves in a residence and locate appropriate land to purchase. The Landeis living arrangement collapsed, however, because Ida and Louisa couldn't get along with each other. After a major argument, Louisa supposedly ordered Ida out of the house, and she had to stay in the barn with the children. Alex was gone at the time to North Dakota, earning extra money at sheep-shearing time, so Ida sent him a telegram to return home to help resolve the matter. For a brief while, Alex rented a small yellow frame house in Ryegate while he constructed their own residence.

Alex built a small three room white wooden frame house on the edge of town for himself, Ida, and their two small children. The house had a kitchen, a front room, and one bedroom. Later, on Jan. 24, 1917 they purchased land about one mile east of town on the south side of the Musselshell River, just west of Victor Schaff.<sup>33</sup> Two years later on March 24, 1919

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<sup>31</sup> Although the sale of Alex's claim to the homestead to Alex Meng happened in 1913, the actual transfer of title didn't happen until March 29, 1916, after the required five years had elapsed.

<sup>32</sup> Ida's obituary also states that they moved to Ryegate in 1914.

<sup>33</sup> Alex and Ida's land, south of the Musselshell River, was described as "N.E. one-fourth N.W. one-fourth; W. one-half, N.W. one-fourth, W. one-half, S.W. one-fourth, of Section 10, Township 6N, Range 20E."

Alex sold some of this land and purchased land on the north side of the river.<sup>34</sup> He decided to settle there because the south shore is the river's major flood plain and there is considerable land erosion caused by the river's meandering course and seasonal flooding. Much of the south shore is marsh land and Alex complained that portions of his land there were being washed away. The Musselshell flooded once in 1916 so severely that local residents by the river had to use boats to go into town. This was a fresh memory for Alex in 1917 and it was apparent to him that the north side of the river, which is higher in elevation, was more suitable for a residence. Alex moved his small house in town to this new location about 1919-1920 (my mother recalls that as a young child she watched Alex move the house from town, using a large team of horses). He situated the house about one-half block on the north side of the highway. Later, as more children were born, he added two more bedrooms on the rear of the structure, built log cabin style. The small white-frame house and the log-cabin bedrooms still stand on the property today, although they have been detached, and are used for storage. The house now faces east, whereas originally it was oriented with the kitchen door facing south toward the highway.

My mother stated that Alex and Ida owned 250 acres of land on the north side of the highway, and 80 acres of the original land on the south side which he used for cattle grazing. In addition, Alex bought land about 20 miles north of Ryegate, where he dug a coal mine. This was near a mine owned by the McDonald family. He mined coal there for fuel in the Winter months, and also to sell in town.

Alex and Ida's third child, Anna (my mother) was born in Ryegate the following year after their arrival from North Dakota. They had a total of eight children in their marriage:

1. Clara Eleanor (born Nov. 16, 1911, near Rhame, N.D.)
2. Pauline Ida (born Aug. 5, 1913, near Rhame, N.D.)
3. Anna Marie (born Aug. 26, 1915, Ryegate, MT)
4. Alexander (born Aug. 23, 1917, Ryegate, MT)
5. Frances Katie (born Dec. 13, 1919, Ryegate, MT)
6. Josephine Martha (born April 20, 1922, Ryegate, MT)
7. Henry Casper (born June 27, 1925, Ryegate, MT)
8. Dorothy Louisa (born July 4, 1930, Ryegate, MT)

Heinrich and Louisa didn't remain long on the 160 acres that they initially purchased southwest of Ryegate in 1912. On January 9, 1919, they sold this land. This is the only land transaction recorded for them in the county records in Ryegate. My mother claims that after they sold this land, they purchased land southeast of Ryegate on the East Bench, a plateau overlooking the Musselshell, bounded on the south by Big Coulee creek. Members of the Schaff and Schanz families also owned land along the Big Coulee creek, so it appears that Heinrich and Louisa once again were drawn by the proximity of this family. It is difficult to pinpoint exactly where Heinrich and Louisa resided on the East Bench. My mother states that it was about seven miles southeast of Ryegate -- you went one mile east from town to Alex's land, then another mile east along the highway to Mike Schaff's land, then about one-half mile beyond that

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<sup>34</sup> North of the highway, in Section 3, T6N, R20E. This is where the farmhouse was located that we all remembered from our youth, which still stands today.



they followed a road angling southeast across the Musselshell for about three or four miles to the top of the rimrocks. The Broder family also lived nearby. This appears to have been somewhere in T6N, R21E.

My mother claims that Heinrich and Louisa lost their savings when the banks closed during the Great Depression. The family histories in *Dawn in Golden Valley* recount several instances of farmers who went bankrupt during those years and who sold their land and moved away.

When the Musselshell Valley first opened to farming, the crop yield was plentiful. Many farmers assumed that this trend would continue indefinitely, and they borrowed money to purchase additional land. A long dry spell set in during the 1920s, which continued into the 1930s. This, combined with the grasshopper plagues, brought many of them to ruin. Others couldn't make it financially because 160 acres wasn't enough land to produce sufficient income. In some cases they simply didn't know enough about farming. Some people from city backgrounds had rushed into Montana during the homestead years to take advantage of the free land, or to buy cheap land from the railroads, and they often found themselves ill-prepared for the grueling labor.

Victor Schaaf's land was foreclosed in 1923 and the Federal Land Bank of Spokane sold it at public auction for \$11,521. The buyer rented it to two men who later bought it for \$1. The Schaafs survived by renting land near Lavina, they began leasing state land and buying land for as little as 50 cents per acre from tax sales. They survived by living frugally, providing their own food and clothing. Adding to the hardships, later that decade their wells ran dry and crops failed due to inadequate rainfall. The Schaafs survived by working at an irrigation project in Deadman's Basin, and harvesting sugar beets near Laurel. They endured these trials and eventually came out with a large fruitful spread in the Musselshell Valley.

#### Heinrich and Louisa Landeis, Some Personal Details

Physically Heinrich was rather short, about 5' 6" in height, with dark hair and a sun-tanned complexion. Louisa was about an inch shorter, with a light complexion and blond hair.

Heinrich and Louisa's marriage was deeply conflicted, they argued a lot and he was a heavy drinker. The marriage was not based on love, it was an arranged union (known as *Kuppola* in German dialect) by his father (Peter Landeis, a widower) and Louisa's mother (Barbara Hoffmann-Meier, a widow) in order to keep their lands and money within the family. The fact that they were step-brother and step-sister certainly complicated this relationship. Arranged marriages were common at that time among Germans from Russia, as well as among other ethnic groups in Europe. Many of those relationships eventually matured into deep love; however, this was not the case for Heinrich and Louisa. She supposedly did not like Heinrich – she once commented to the grandchildren, "I didn't like him the minute I laid my eyes on him, and I still don't!" They argued a lot, but in spite of what seemed like an intolerable relationship, they stayed together for 57 years, they had 12 children, and died at ripe old ages! Divorce was uncommon in those days, especially for the very traditional Catholic Germans from Russia.

Several of Heinrich and Louisa's children eventually came to reside with them near Ryegate. Alex's brothers Jacob (Jack), Ambrose, and John, and his sister Annie resided with them at various times. Since they were the younger siblings, they most likely moved to the

Ryegate area with their parents in 1912. Neither Ambrose nor Jack ever got married. John and Ambrose were rodeo riders, and they traveled most of the time. Ambrose earned several awards as a champion bull rider. He suffered an injury from this, his draft registration in 1917 when he was 22 years old states that two fingers and the thumb on his right hand were partly cut off, probably from the rope burn. I have a postcard sent by Ambrose to Heinrich, showing the giant smokestack of the copper smelter in Anaconda, Montana. This suggests that he left the farm and worked there for a time. Most of his life Ambrose earned his living herding livestock, working for large ranches such as the Colby Sheep Co. in Great Falls, MT .

Heinrich and Louisa raised wheat, some cattle, chickens, and turkeys. Louisa also had a large melon garden and she raised many huge sunflowers. Every Fall, Heinrich took a heaping wagon load of watermelons, canteloupes, and musk melons into town to sell. They stopped off at Alex's farm on the way, and the grandchildren enjoyed a melon feast. Ida didn't have the knack for raising melons, so she was always a bit jealous. Louisa saved old tin-cans, punched holes in them, sometimes filled them with manure, and planted them in her garden. She also believed in planting by the phrases of the moon. Louisa undoubtedly brought her taste for melons and sunflowers and her gardening tips from Russia. The large melon gardens, known by the Russian term *Bashtan*, were hallmarks of pride in most German villages. The German colonists also adopted the Ukrainian taste for sunflowers -- many accounts of life in the villages mention that wherever Germans congregated, the floors were soon littered with husks. They filled their cheeks with seeds, skillfully separated the seeds with their tongues, and spit the husks out. My mother remarked that this same pattern was typical of the Germans in North Dakota and Montana.

Mom remembered her grandmother with great affection. Louisa would always bring gifts for her grandchildren at Christmas, although usually it didn't amount to much because she rarely had money. She would rock the younger grandkids, sing them German songs, and tell them stories. Mom remembered her quaint habits, such as how she would chew her food for her grandchildren, then feed it to them. Those were the days before commercial babyfood was available, but mom recalled watching this in disgust when she was a little girl. Louisa would fold her laundry neatly on a chair, then sit on top of the pile for an hour or so to crease them, while she read her German Bible. She used to tell stories of the Bolschevik revolution in Russia and of the terrible things that happened to the German colonists, which Louisa apparently had read in the newspaper. Heinrich had a subscription to the *Nord Dakota Herald*. The German newspapers in North Dakota at that time contained many letters written by those who had remained behind in Russia, reporting the massacres and atrocities that were committed. Letters usually contained lists of the names of relatives and friends that had been killed. Louisa would read these letters and cry. She brought a book of prophecies (*das Sibylla Buch*) with her from Russia, which foretold about the end of the world and the coming Anti-Christ, which she interpreted to be the Bolsheviks. She would read these stories by the hour to the grandchildren, frightening them with dire predictions about how fire some day would come out of the sky.

Louisa was also a healer (*Brauche*) in Russia, North Dakota and in the Ryegate area. The German custom of *Braucherei* was a form of folk-healing involving the use of herbs, poultices, prayers, religious medals, and charms written on small pieces of paper. I have one small metal container that belonged to Louisa, which my mother preserved. It contains a tiny, carefully rolled scroll of paper with the initials of the Three Magi (C+M+B) surrounded by three crosses

(Caspar, Melchior, and Balthasar, you see this charm even today in the Catholic regions of Germany, chalked above doorways on the feast of the Epiphany, also known as Three Kings Day). Louisa would put this tiny metal charm beneath the pillow of anyone in the family who was sick. Prayer slips like this were also tucked over the doorways and windows to ward off evil and witchcraft. As the local *Brauche*, Louisa had usually helped deliver the babies born in the area, especially back in the early years when hospitals and doctors were not easily accessible. The births of Ida's first two children, Clara and Pauline, were registered at Bowman, but they were delivered at home on the homestead. Louisa probably helped deliver them.

Throughout his life Alex remained emotionally close with his mother, Louisa, and he took upon himself the major responsibility for looking after his parents. He stopped by their place usually every week to do whatever work they needed to have done. He regarded his father, Heinrich, as rather worthless. Heinrich wasn't a workaholic, like Alex. He had been an ambitious land speculator, and possibly somewhat of a ladies man when younger, but he supposedly lost his money during the Great Depression years. After this, he was too old to start over and he just gave up and drank. Alex tilled Heinrich's land, and he seems to have also taken care of their joint herds (their brand was an X on top an H, which I assume stood for "Alex and Heinrich;" it is still visible today on the old chicken coop behind the farmhouse). He took care of his parents on their ranch until they became old and infirm. Aunt Clara said that later in his life Heinrich spent most of his time drinking. Sometimes he would be gone at the saloon in Ryegate for days at a time. Louisa would eventually arrange for him to be hauled home in a wagon.

Eventually Heinrich and Louisa sold their land and moved into a small house in Ryegate, then after Louisa became ill they stayed with Alex and Ida for a couple of years. Both Louisa and Heinrich were becoming incapacitated, and Heinrich was drinking heavily. Alex took care of Louisa during her final year. She developed a brain tumor and began to drift away in her mind, convinced that she was still living in Russia. She used to wander off into the root cellar by herself, dreaming about the old country. Ida regarded her as "crazy," and told the kids to ignore her, but they felt close to their grandmother. Louisa had frequent splitting headaches, sometimes crying from the pain. There was nothing they could do for her. They finally placed her in a home for the elderly in Billings, where she died from her tumor within about one month on Feb. 16, 1938, at the age of 74. After Louisa's death there was no one left to hold Heinrich's drinking in check so he basically drank himself to death, which happened nine months later. Jack moved Heinrich in with him in the converted boxcar (put onto a foundation) which he was using as a residence in Ryegate, while he was working for the railroad. Heinrich remained with Jack until his death from a heart attack at home on Nov. 11, 1938, at the age of 75. He was given a Catholic burial. Alex dug their graves with his own hands in Resurrection Cemetery, located behind the farmhouse. He constructed simple white-painted wooden crosses that still stand on their graves today, with zinc name-plates that say "Heinrichs Landeis" and "Louisa Landeis." Although Alex spelled his surname as "Landice" later in life, he preserved the original spelling on his parents' grave markers. He had deep respect for Louisa, and he cried at her death. Louisa was the pillar who held their family together over the years.



Grave marker Resurrection Cemetery, Ryegate, MT  
Heinrichs Landeis, Died Nov. 11, 1938



**Heinrich and Louisa Landeis, Ryegate Montana**

Alex and Ida Landeis, Some Personal Details

My mother recalled that the transition to speaking English happened sometime after World War One. Ida said that during the war years a vigilante gang went around harassing the German speaking settlers in the area. Supposedly they visited the Landeis households, and others such as the Schaff and Schanz, searching for "pro-Kaiser literature." Ida mentioned that they weren't allowed to buy white flour or sugar and spot checks were conducted on their houses to see if they had illegally purchased these commodities. There was probably general rationing of flour and sugar for everyone during the war, but it is likely that the German-speaking families were especially targeted for compliance during this period of anti-German hysteria. According to my mother, there was a local Ku-Klux-Klan group who burned crosses

on the rimrocks outside town. Researchers have noted that there was a revival of the Klan during and after the war years, when they touted themselves as "100% Americans." The Klan targeted not only African-Americans, but also recent immigrants. Germans throughout the Midwest were harassed. Before the war there were hundreds of local German language newspapers throughout the country, but almost all of these were forced out of business during those years of the hyper-patriotism. German farmers reported that vigilante gangs visited their homes and demanded to see how many war bonds they had purchased, as proof of their loyalty to the USA.

The older children in the family (Clara and Pauline) were having problems in school because they couldn't speak English. They both recalled that they couldn't answer the teacher's questions in English, and Pauline had to repeat a grade because of her language difficulties. At that point the teacher visited Alex and Ida to convince them to quit using German at home, "for the sake of the children." Alex decided that they should begin making the transition to English. This decision may also have been prompted partially by the differences in German dialects spoken by Ida and Louisa, which had become a source of arguments. Nevertheless, the family continued using German for several years. Both Alex and Ida spoke German better than English. Heinrich and Louisa were literate only in German, she never learned English, and Heinrich spoke it very poorly. My mom had to act as Louisa's interpreter. Louisa dictated her letters in German to my mother, who would write it down for her in English. Despite his problems in speaking English, Alex doggedly persisted in trying to use that language. I recall once when I was in college I was studying German, and I tried to strike up a conversation with grandpa. He just replied, "vy do you vant to schtudy dat? Ve live in America, ve should speak English."

It was a common issue for the German from Russia immigrants to begin sorting out their ethnic identity after they settled in the USA. Typically they admitted that they came from Tsarist Russia and sometimes the locals called them "Rooshians," but almost always they insisted that they weren't "Rooshians," they were "*Deutsch*." That ethnic distinction had been strictly and legally adhered to even by the Russian authorities during the century or more that the German colonists had resided in Tsarist Russia. After coming to the USA, the issue of ethnic identity became even more complicated by anti-Germanism during the war years. My guess is that grandpa Alex didn't want the family to be targeted, and he obviously wanted to fit in with his drinking buddies in town, so he began saying that they were "Russian." Some of the other younger immigrants also adopted that label at that time; however, Alex's brother, Ambrose, always persisted in labeling himself as "*Deutsch*," as did my father's family in North Dakota. Vigilante activism may have been more of a problem in Montana, where there were local gangs of cowboy rowdies. A much larger percentage of farmers in North Dakota were of foreign origin, especially Germans from Russia, so they might not have been targeted there to the same extent. However, even in North Dakota most of the German language newspapers were shut down by local authorities during the war years.

Alex and Ida were always afraid that the girls would get pregnant before marriage (and their youngest, Dorothy, actually did). Their solution was to try to impose arranged marriages (*Kuppola*), just as had been done with Heinrich and Louisa. They tried to arrange a marriage between Pauline and one of the Schaff boys, but she left home to avoid this. Alex rarely allowed the children to attend dances in town when they reached their teenage years. He would go along as a chaperone, and stand in the sidelines glaring. If any of the boys held one of

his girls too closely he would walk out into the middle of the dance-floor to separate them. After a while the boys in Ryegate became so frightened of Alex that they hesitated to ask any of the Landeis girls for a dance.

Sex was a forbidden topic in the family and grandma's pregnancies were always kept secret. She was big and stout and wore baggy dresses, so no one knew when she was pregnant. When Ida was about to deliver, she and Clara would just disappear into her bedroom, shut the door, and then they would eventually hear a baby cry. Their reaction was, "oh, no, more diapers to wash!" Alex would go into Ryegate to fetch the doctor, but usually the baby was born before the doctor arrived. Louisa nicknamed Henry the *Erdbebbüble* ("earthquake baby") because a quake struck just as he was being born, they heard the baby cry while the house was shaking. He was a big 9.5 pound baby, and they joked that he made the house shake. When they asked Ida where babies came from, she said that she found them under cabbage leaves in the garden. Mom went outside one day to look, but couldn't find any. As the girls became teens and got interested in boys, their curiosity grew. Mom was a very pretty young girl and one day at school she bent over to get a drink at the drinking fountain, and a boy kissed her on the back of her neck. She ran home crying, and told her mom that she was going to have a baby. When Ida asked her what had happened, she told about the kissing incident. Ida told her, "don't be so schtupid, that's not how babies are born!" - but she still wouldn't explain the facts of life to her girls. Whenever they asked, she would dismiss their questions, saying "You'll find out soon enough."



**Pauline, Anna (standing in front of Pauline), Frances (in high chair), Clara, Al (standing before Clara)**



**Anna (under the X) and her siblings, ca. 1930  
Clara (on left), Frances, Josephine, Anna, Henry, Pauline, Al (on right)**





**Ida, with youngest daughter Dorothy on the way**



**Grandpa Alex and Uncle Henry at the Coal Mine**

After Al left home at about age 18, uncle Henry had to take over helping grandpa. Henry was a tall, stout boy and he didn't have health problems like Al. Henry was also big enough to defend himself, so grandpa tended to treat him with a bit more caution. However, Henry told an incredible story of how he too once became the target of grandpa's rage. One time after Henry helped unload the wagon load of coal in Ryegate, he was paid \$3.00 - which he secretly decided to keep because he felt he was entitled to it as wages. When grandpa found out, he went into a rage, took his revolver and fired at Henry, barely missing him, blowing a hole in the back of the chair. Mom said that grandpa deliberately missed, but wanted "to teach Henry a lesson"! Henry worked in the coal mine until age 17, when he left home. Years later, when the kids cleared out the furniture from the old farmhouse, the grandparents still had that chair with the bullet hole in it.

Mom left home promptly on her 18<sup>th</sup> birthday – they made her leave, and she was desperately eager to get away from there. She said that on that last day they still made her do her chores and milk five cows. Alex then drove her to Billings and arranged for her to stay with one of Friedrich Meier’s sons (their cousin Henry Meier and his wife who lived in Billings at that time). After that she moved in with Clara, who bought her \$6.00 worth of groceries and rented her a tiny room with a bare mattress on the floor, no furnishings, no bed linens. After three weeks, mom managed to find a job at the cannery, then when she was 19 she got a job for two summers at Yellowstone Park. Al stayed at home for only about five months after Anna left, and all that time she worried for his safety.



**Grandpa Alex age 57**



**Grandma Ida age 59**

Their reminiscences about Alex and Ida were not all negative. There were also some mixed feelings, some ambivalence, which is common in children from such borderline families. When uncle Henry told the story about how grandpa had fired the revolver at him for withholding \$3.00, Henry chuckled and commented (bizarrely!), “Dad was right, it taught me not to steal”! When Henry died, his last wish was that his ashes be buried between the graves of Alex and Ida in Ryegate, which shows that he still had some nostalgia for them.

Grandma Ida was a stout, strong woman and a great cook. I always remember that she had such large, strong arms. We looked forward to our visits to Ryegate. We explored the farmyard, climbed the rim-rocks, and cranked the handle of her cream separator. She made delicious, rich cottage cheese, which we ate with great gusto like home-made ice cream. She appreciated us as grandchildren, occasionally even smiled at us, but she easily slipped into abrasive and critical remarks. On a couple occasions she tried to lapse into being a strict disciplinarian – always on guard that we might become “schpoiled” -- but my mother always defended us. I recall once that grandma offered to give my mother the whip braided out of horse tail hairs, which she had used to beat her children when they were young. My mom refused to take the whip and she said that she would never use such a thing on us.

Grandpa Alex was a complex person, given his mix of hard work, taciturnity, limited English skills, stuttering, binge drinking, and violent outbursts. My mother, as usual, was very ambivalent about him. While she was terrified of him as a child, she always tended to blame Ida for many of their problems. She said that beneath his reserved surface Alex was very tender hearted, he could cry when emotional, and “he had a heart of gold” (but then she said that about almost everyone!). He was only truly happy when he was out on the prairie with his dogs, his horse, and the livestock. He loved the little lambs in the herd. If any lambs were abandoned, he bottle fed them with great devotion. Incredibly, she also claimed that he loved little babies, he liked to hold them. But he didn’t have much tender hearted devotion to his kids when they got older.

He was not an affectionate grandfather, although he was never cruel to my brothers or me, and he never made disparaging remarks to us, like grandma would do occasionally. I recall that when we climbed around on the rim-rocks behind the farm house grandpa always cautioned us about rattlesnakes. He had a fruit-jar filled with rattles from all the snakes that he had shot, and he gave us a few rattles as souvenirs. My mother recalls that one time a bull-snake crawled inside their house at night and curled up around the central support post in the front room. They found it hanging there the next morning. Alex’s proficiency with guns took on mythical qualities in our family. My mother had great fear of him when she was a child, but she also admired his marksmanship, claiming that he could shoot repeatedly in the same hole on a target. He too took pride in his skill and would ask them to choose a target, which he would then invariably hit. One evening we heard coyotes howling down near the highway, and grandpa was concerned that they were after his livestock. He performed an amazing feat of marksmanship in the almost total darkness – he took his rifle outside, aimed it, fired, making a blinding flash and a deafening explosion. In the distance we heard coyotes yelping in fear and their nails actually left a trail of sparks as they dashed away along the pavement! Grandpa had no love for coyotes and like most other ranchers at that time he could be very cruel to them. My mother recalls that he sometimes chased them down on horseback, roped them around the neck, and dragged them to death. In those days ranchers would drape dead coyotes over their fences as a display of their prowess. Despite being a crack shot, grandpa didn’t hunt. He couldn’t stand to shoot a deer – he thought they were too “cute” – and neither he nor grandma liked venison because they thought it tasted too gamey.

All my aunts and uncles agreed that grandpa was an extremely hard worker. He worked constantly. He would be awake by 4 A.M. daily to do the farm chores and he would work until late at night. Despite the dramatic stories about his drinking binges, my mother acknowledged that he was the hardest worker among all his siblings, more so than his father

Heinrich. Grandpa always managed to provide basic subsistence for his large family, they were never without food to eat, although they didn't have much else. He also helped care for Heinrich and Louisa in their old age. Mom loved to recount the story about how Alex single-handedly rerouted the Musselshell River. He noticed that the river was eroding part of his land across the railroad tracks, so he tried to get the railroad company to cooperate with him in rerouting it because their track beds were endangered as well. They wouldn't help, so Alex rerouted the Musselshell River (which is a good 20' across) by himself, using dynamite, pick-ax, and a team of horses. This anecdote took on the mythical quality in our family of how grandpa was like Paul Bunyan. Another anecdote is that Alex spearheaded the repair and expansion of the the irrigation ditch which flowed behind his farm house into Ryegate. Before this, the land on both the east and west sides of Ryegate lacked sufficient irrigation. Irrigation ditches in those days were regarded as a community endeavor, but each farmer helped Alex only on the stretch passing through their own property, then they quit. Because Alex was at the end of the line before the ditch passed into town, he helped everyone, then had to take the initiative to complete the final stretch by himself. The local history of Golden Valley County does not give him credit for this project. It refers to it as the "Simm's Irrigation Ditch," which is probably named after the settler who put in the original smaller ditch.

Alex and Ida were very poor. Their farm house was a small shanty, with a front-room, two bedrooms, and a kitchen. Grandpa originally bought the house in town and hauled it to his farm with a team of horses. I don't know how they managed to fit nine children there! All of them left home as soon as they were able, and usually my grandparents shooed them out the door by age 18. He had an attached log room in the early years which he built on the back of the house. My mother recalls that during the bitter winters in Montana she could feel icy wind blowing in between the logs in the wall. She told stories about how they were so poor that they would search the town dump for anything of use. Once she found a pair of shoes that were too large for her, but she stuffed newspaper inside them to make them fit. The kids were embarrassed when they went to school because of their old clothes. At Christmas time each child received one gift. My mother recalls that one year she got a rubber ball and some jacks, which she loved and played with constantly. Once they got a box of oranges for the entire family, which they all ate with great relish - including the orange peelings.

On two occasions Alex and Ida took a trip to Minnesota to visit the Fuchs side of the family. On those occasions they left my mother in charge, to run the farm, milk six cows, feed the livestock, and take care of the younger children. She did a good job of it because "she knew they would whip her if things were not perfect when they got back." After they returned, they paid her 25 cents for her services! She took all the kids into Ryegate and bought them ice-cream cones with the quarter.

Despite their poverty, Alex was very responsible about repaying his debts. He didn't believe in contracts, and usually a handshake was sufficient to cement a deal (partially because he and most other people didn't want to pay a lawyer!). He owed no debts to anyone in Ryegate at the time of his death. Uncle Al asked people in town if his father owed any of them money, and some of them were annoyed that he would even ask such a question. They said Alex was too proud to owe money and he always repaid his debts. Generally most Germans from Russia were very responsible about debts, and he was no exception in this regard. With his own family, however, he was a bit laxer because he felt that children owed financial support to their parents. My father recalled that Alex wanted to borrow \$1,200 from him in 1942 to buy

land behind the farm house near where the Catholic Resurrection cemetery now stands. Alex didn't want to borrow the money from the bank because the interest payments were too high; he preferred to have my father withdraw it from his savings (and lose interest!). My father refused, so Alex finally took out a loan and used his farm as collateral. On another occasion grandpa borrowed \$150 from my father and only repaid it almost two years later after a bit of nagging, and after his cows had calves which he could sell for cash.

My grandparents were raised strict Catholic. Louisa and grandma were devout throughout their lives, and they regularly attended the local St. Mathias church in Ryegate. Grandpa attended church occasionally in his early years and he was even willing to make contributions to the priest, but the demands became more than what he could afford. Alex eventually became disgruntled with religion and dismissed it all as a "racket." He always said "when you're dead, you're dead. Look at the dead cattle, do you tink they live again?" He became disgusted with his sister, Annie Paridaen, when she converted to Jehovah's Witness. She would visit and try to preach to the family, but grandpa finally told her to leave, he dumped all her literature outside the door and told her not to return. Mom claimed that Alex donated the land for Resurrection Cemetery, which is sandwiched between the rim-rocks and the irrigation ditch behind Alex's farm house. However, the Schaff family also took credit for this cemetery. The family history for Victor Schaff in *Dawn in Golden Valley* states that he (Victor) donated the land in 1918, after his oldest daughter, Geneveve died during the great flu epidemic. Since the cemetery is directly behind Alex's land, it seems likely that Alex may have donated a portion.

There was always a touch of admiration for the dogged strength and hard work of my grandparents. Their folksy and rugged qualities were a source of jokes in our family. We all laughed about how grandma never wasted anything. She turned old flour sacks into aprons and underwear. Her chicken soup included the gizzards, hearts, and other parts that we didn't want to know about. She always commented, "peeble today they are too schooled!" Grandpa always castrated the rams in his herd with his teeth, then spit the testacles into a bucket. He would bring the testacles into the kitchen and ask grandma to fry them up. She refused to do so because they smelled so bad, so he had to do that himself (Rocky Mountain Oysters! Ryegate had an annual "Testacle Festival" to celebrate this so-called delicacy).

The story is also told that when electricity lines were finally extended out from Ryegate to the rural area, Alex agreed to have their farm house hooked up, but only on the condition that they would never have two light bulbs on at the same time. They had two bare bulbs, one in the kitchen and one in the living room. Eventually Alex did find both lights on, so he took wire cutters and snipped the line leading to the house. From that day until they retired and moved into Ryegate, they supposedly used only kerosene lamps for light. He used an ice house to store block ice during the Summer, but they didn't have an electric refrigerator.

Once when grandpa visited us in Portland, he looked at all the green lawns in front of the houses and snorted in derision. He said, "It costs money to plant grass, doesn't it? You have to spend money watering it, don't you? Can you eat grass? Hell no! Why don't you plow it all up and plant corn and potatoes?" I recall that he would sit in a chair for long periods without speaking, with his fingers spread apart over his face, sometimes just staring at us. He snorted Copenhagen tobacco (*Schnoos*) and he carried a coffee can with him inside the house to dribble saliva into. He covered his mouth when doing that.

Grandma always sent us a Christmas package each year, and she would include a small gift for my brothers and me. It typically included one size 13 pair of Argyle socks and a quarter. We always thought this was hilarious and we had fun arguing over how we would divide up the quarter three ways! My mom would chuckle, and say, "Well, she means well!" We also enjoyed reading grandma's letters. She spoke English with a heavy German accent, and she spelled her words the way she pronounced them. We always remembered one letter in which she announced, "Ve are feeling good. Ve sure got some bad vetter. Ve got a lot of schnow. And the cows they got the schitts."

Grandma and grandpa sold their farm and retired to a small house in Ryegate in about 1965. They were true to their complex relationship to the very end. He had a stroke in their kitchen at home in 1967. One of the Schaffs had been contacted, and he called Clara to tell her that Alex was laying on the floor, Ida was "kicking him and telling him to get up, you old fool!" She probably thought that he had fallen because he was drunk. He lingered for three months in St. Vincent hospital in Billings. During his final days, as Alex lay in the hospital, she would hold his hand; however, as he was dying he reached out for her hand once more and she just said, "oh, what for!" Clara was outraged by this. Alex died on Dec. 9, 1967 at the age of 78. After his death, Sheriff Dolby in Ryegate told the children that they shouldn't leave Ida there by herself. Ida insisted that she should be left alone and that she could handle everything. The children insisted that she move in with Clara, the oldest daughter in nearby Billings, who seems to have had the best relationship with her. They sorted out Ida's belongings, and supposedly built a fire in the backyard, burning much of what they regarded as "junk," which caused Ida to become very upset. As they cleaned out the farmhouse they found small bags of silver dollars taped to the bottom of the kitchen table and under some chairs. Like many of the old farmers who lost their life savings "when Hoover closed the banks during the Great Depression," Alex and Ida didn't trust banks and they preferred to keep their savings in hard currency stashed in various places around the house. She stayed with Clara in Billings for several months, then with Pauline, then with my mother in Portland, then with Al in Seattle. Ida was too much of a burden for her children, she was too difficult to get along with. She finally moved back in with Clara, who was the most patient of the children, and grandma remained with her the longest. They moved her into a rest home in Billings in 1973.

My final memory of grandma was in 1973, when I was between jobs so I drove to Montana and visited her at the rest home. I gave her a kiss, reminded her that I was Annie's boy, and asked her how she was doing. She was not warm or welcoming. She asked me what I was doing there. I told her that I was seeking a teaching position at a university, and thought that I would stop by to visit her. She didn't smile. She just responded, "vell, vhy did you lose your other job? They didn't like you, huh? That's vhat happens when they don't like you." That was typical of grandma. She was always ready to give you a double shotgun blast of criticism. Those, unfortunately, were the last words we ever spoke.

Grandma had been a strong, independent woman all her life and she was unwilling to sink gracefully into old age and disability. Clara said that she lapsed into despair in her final months and prayed to die. Grandma finally died of a stroke on Nov. 29, 1975.

It is very difficult for me to give any final assessments of my grandparents. Mom struggled with this all her life. She vascillated between resentment, anger, sometimes even tears when she talked about her childhood, and at times romanticized idealization of her stout, strong parents. The old expression is that you shouldn't judge anyone until you have walked a

mile in their shoes. In the case of grandma and grandpa, we all walked in their shoes for many years after they were gone.



**Grandpa Alex on his tractor**





**Grandpa Alex age 44**



**Grandpa and Grandma as I remember them**



**Ida Fuchs and Alex Landeis**



Alex age 65 Ida age 66



**Dorothy (left), Ida, Barbara Webb, Josephine, Clara, Henry (right)**



**Anna (standing), Pauline (left), Clara (right)**

## Alex's Siblings: An Overview

1. Philip<sup>35</sup> -- The oldest of Heinrich and Louisa's children, was born April 28, 1883 in Russia (probably Neu-Karlsruhe). Philip was quite entrepreneurial, he tried his hand at various things over the years, including working on the railroad, ranching cattle west of Bowman, and operating businesses in Dickinson. In 1901 Philip posted an ad in the Dickinson Press stating that he was the general manager for a wholesale grocery business. In 1908 the Dickinson Press reported that "Mr. and Mrs. Philip Landize of Midway were in Dickinson the first of the week. Mr. Landize formerly resided in this city and railroaded on the N.P. [Northern Pacific Railroad]. He is now the owner of 300 cattle which are ranged in the hills of Bowman County." Midway was a small town north of Bowman which had opened for homesteading around 1907 and several of its early settlers were Germans from Russia. Heinrich and Louisa probably moved to that area at about that same time. In 1916 the newspapers reported that farmers and ranchers south of Rhame, west of Bowman, had suffered severe damage from a heavy storm, numerous farm buildings were destroyed and entire grain crops were lost. Philip Landeis suffered damage to 150 acres.

Philip didn't abandon his ties with Dickinson. In 1909 the Dickinson Press reported that "Philip Landize of Midway is making headquarters in Dickinson," and that year he posted an ad: "I am local manager for a wholesale grocery house. See me for prices."

Philip tried his hand at selling cars in 1917 (see the ad). He also operated a tire repair business in Dickinson in 1920. The German language newspaper, the *Nord Dakota Herald*, contains ads for his "automobile tire improvement shop on the southside of Dickinson" (*Automobilreifen Ausbesterung Shop auf der Südseite Dickinson*). The ad states that he is an "agent of the Mellinger Extra Ply Tire Co," and "whoever has old automobile tires, bring them to me, or send them here. I will make them as good as new at a cheap price." Retreading tires was a common practice at that time.

Philip had a couple run-ins with the law. The Bismarck Daily Tribune and the Dickinson Press reported a bizarre incident on Jan. 14, 1908. "The Herald at Medora criticizes Judge Winchester for issuing an order for the arrest of Philip Landize. From the Herald it is inferred that the defendant was not getting along pleasantly with his neighbors and now he languishes in jail. The local paper admits, however, that the merits of the case are unknown." Four days later The Dickinson Press added these details: "The people of this locality are somewhat worked up over an article that appeared in the Billings County Herald last week in regard to the arrest of one Philip Landize. The article stated that he was deprived of his liberty under a statute which was a relic of barbarism, and the people of this locality know that any such statement is false, as there was every reason in the world to have this gentleman placed in custody. The editor stated that he had only heard one side of the case; if this be so, we do not see how he can be so astonished at Judge Winchester for signing an order of that kind, as well believe that the judge understands his business about as well as an editor of a small county paper. Innocent people are entitled to some protection even if it does cost the country something."

In 1914 the Dickinson Press reported that "Mrs. Philip Landize" owed delinquent taxes on their land in Stow's Addition to Dickinson.

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<sup>35</sup> Note that it was traditional in German to spell the name "Philipp" with a double-p at the end.

**Automobilreifen Ausbesserung Shop**  
Dickinson, auf der Südseite

Wer alte Automobilreifen (Tires) hat, der bringe sie zu mir, oder schicke sie her. Ich mache dieselben so gut wie neu zu den billigsten Preisen. Auch wenn ihr solche Tires habt, die andere zurückgewiesen haben, dann bringe sie zu mir, denn ich nehme sie an und setze sie in guten Stand.

Wenn sich einer für gute neue Tires interessiert, der komme auch zu mir, denn ich bin der Agent von den Mellinger Extra Ply Tire Co. Jeder, der bei mir von diesen Tires gekauft hat, hat sich sehr zufrieden darüber ausgedrückt.

**Philipp Landeis,**  
Süd Dickinson, N. D.

"Automobile Tire Repair Shop, Southside Dickinson" 1920

**FOR SALE BRAND NEW**

**Regal Hi-Power Thirty Two  
Touring Car** Latest model,  
equipped with  
electric starter and lights, one-man mo-  
hair top, extra rim, tire holder and com-  
plete set of tools including jack, pump,  
etc. Fully equipped.

**\$795 f.o.b. P. H. Landize, Dickinson, N. D.**

Car for sale by P.H. Landize 1917

Philip married Barbara Schulz who was born in the German colonies in the Banat region of Yugoslavia. She had been married before and had a son, Paulie, who Philip adopted. They had 11 children in addition. They lived in Dickinson most of his life, then in their later years they moved to Deer Lodge, MT (where the state prison is located), in order to be close to two of their daughters. My mother was always dismissive of her uncle Philip. She said that all he wanted to do was play music and drink. She described him as sitting in his rocking chair, drinking whiskey, playing his violin, and having "too many children which he couldn't take

proper care of." Philip had his own whiskey still. My mother tells the story that once during the Prohibition era, revenue agents visited his house and his wife, Barbara, hid the whiskey jug between her legs under her dress so they wouldn't see it. Philip died in Missoula, MT, July 8, 1947, at age 64.<sup>36</sup> Barbara also died in Missoula. Philip's oldest daughter, Barbara Ann, became a nun, and died in Bismarck, N.D. See the genealogical summary tables for Philipp's children. Philipp spelled his surname in the original fashion as "Landeis" up through the 1920s, but toward the end of that decade he changed the spelling of his surname to "Landize," which has been retained since by his descendants. The German pronunciation of "-eis" can be closely rendered in English as "-ize," which likely explains the shift in spelling.



**Philip Landeis and family**

Philip's step-son, Paul (known as "Pauley" born 1904) from the previous marriage of Barbara Schulz, attained notoriety at the age of 17. The *Nord Dakota Herald* reported on July 8, 1921 that Paul Landeis received a gold watch with his name inscribed on it as recognition for his

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<sup>36</sup> Philipp's death certificate states that he died of a stroke, and that he also had terminal stomach cancer. He was stated to be a "retired businessman," and he did not receive Social Security. His death certificate contains several errors. It states that he was born in Dickinson, rather than in Russia. His parents are listed as "Henry Landize" and Louise Meyer, both of whom were born in "Germany." Oddly, the informant was his wife, Barbara. This suggests that they rarely discussed his family background.

saving three persons from drowning. The newspaper reported: "Dickinson, Paul Landize, 17, saved all three when Mrs. C.H. Starke, who had plunged into the Heart River in an effort to save her two young daughters, found herself helpless in the swift current."



**Barbara Schultz (on left) and two younger sisters  
Photo taken in Hungary**

2. Katherine ("Katie")-- born May 14, 1886 in Russia (probably Neu-Karlsruhe). As a child she worked for a woman named Mrs. Dietz, who owned a hotel in Dickinson; Heinrich



apparently wanted to adopt her out to Mrs. Dietz. Katie left home as a teenager, married a man named Johnson, and they settled in Everett, WA. Their children were Bill Johnson and Eleanore Schwartz. Bill had one boy from his marriage. Katie got killed at about the age of 50 while she was working at a hotel in Everett - she was shaking out a rug from the second floor, the banister railing gave way as she leaned against it.



**Katie Landeis**

3. Alexander -- born March 12, 1889, probably in Neu-Karlsruhe, shortly before the family left Russia. (He was my grandfather, see discussions above for more details). His draft registration on June 5, 1917 states that he was born March 14, 1890, a naturalized citizen, age 27, he had a wife and 3 children at that time.

4. Barbara -- born Feb. 18, 1891 on the farm near Richardton, North Dakota. She didn't move to Ryegate with the rest of the family, since Heinrich and Louisa had arranged a marriage

(*Kupola*) for her at a young age (about age 17) to Nick Mosbrucker, a man who was considerably older than her, but who had large land and cattle holdings in Haley (Harlow?), N.D. Barbara didn't like him on sight, but the marriage was forced upon her. On her wedding day, after saying the marriage vows, Barbara supposedly ran from the church and hid for two days. Nick was authoritarian and mean to her, and beat her on occasion. He wanted to have a child with her, but Barbara couldn't tolerate him. On one occasion she did become pregnant, but she induced a miscarriage and almost died from it. Nick threatened to kill her and himself on several occasions. Finally he "killed himself" by running his car into a ditch, with the steering-wheel piercing his chest. She sent Alex a postcard in Ryegate on Jan. 29, 1915. After Nick's death, Barbara moved to Ryegate, bought a small house in town. There she met and married Arthur Webb, and had a son with him named Arthur (jr.). Arthur sr. committed a crime and spent time in prison. After he was released, they got together again and resided in Ryegate. She became pregnant with their second child, Frances Webb (later to become a burlesque dancer in Portland). Arthur left her again, and Barbara then moved to Everett, WA, where she resided with her sister, Katie. In Everett, Barbara met and married various men -- my mother claims she was married about five times during her lifetime. She at one point married a man who had about six children. The details about each of these marriages is unclear. Barbara eventually died in San Jose, California, where she is buried. She was a heavy smoker and diabetic. Arthur Webb jr. was still alive as of 1995, residing in Seattle, WA. He resided for a time in San Jose, where he resided in a mobile home and took care of his elderly mother. After her death, he returned to his wife, Vergie, in Seattle. His sister, Frances Webb, was a dancer (burlesque) in Portland, quite voluptuous, we still have an old pinup photo of her. Later in life Frances Webb converted to a Fundamentalist religion, she married several times, and died in the San Francisco Bay area. She also resided in the same mobile home court in San Jose as her brother.



**Barbara Landeis and son Arthur Webb**

5. Gusta -- died at birth, 1893.

6. Ambrose -- born Oct. 21, 1895 on the farm near Richardton, N.D. Ambrose shared Alex's childhood lifestyle, spending much of his time alone on the prairie herding sheep. He became a drifter, working as a farm-hand, cowboy, and rodeo rider. His World War One draft registration dated June 5, 1917 states that he resided in Ryegate, he was age 22, he was a farm laborer for Harry Schaff. Two fingers and the thumb on his right hand were reportedly partly cut off, probably from the rope burn when he was a rodeo rider. The clerk wrote his name as "Ambrose Landice," but his signature was "Ambros Landeis." His birth date was Oct. 21, 1896 (other records show 1895) in "Hart River, North Dakota." Ambrose was probably referring to the Heart River area near Richardton, where Heinrich had a homestead. There is a small town of Hart west of Bowman, N.D. between Bowman and Rhame, but the family didn't move there until about 1910. On the later 1942 draft registration the clerk wrote his name as "Ambrose Mike Landise" but that was a mistake, at the bottom Ambrose signed his name as "Ambrose Maiher [Meier] Landise." Ambrose spoke with a heavy German accent his entire life. He never married, although my mother tells the story that he once had a romantic relationship with a

woman and that he was heart-broken after they split up. He spent his final years in rooming houses and hotels. In 1942 he was residing in the Great Falls Hotel, Montana, and he was employed with the Colby Sheep Co. in Cascade, Montana. His Montana death record states his first name as "Ambrose M," which again refers to his mother's surname Meier. He died on Sept. 22, 1966 at age 70 in Butte, MT of cardiac failure. His death record states that he had never served in the military, but there is an article in The Bismarck Tribune (May 10, 1920) stating that several former soldiers, one of whom was Ambrose Landeis, had letters returned unopened containing a \$60 bonus and a certificate of honorable discharge. Ambrose had lawfully registered for the military draft in 1917 but he apparently did not have to serve because of the loss of fingers on his right hand and this honorable discharge entitled him to a bonus. Ambrose had resided in Butte for four years at the time of his death, he was employed as a ranch worker. His parents were "Harry Landeis and Louisa Meyer," the informant was his sister, Anna Paradaen, resident of Billings. Either Anna was mistaken, or more likely the clerk mistakenly understood her.

Ambrose cut a more dashing figure than Alex. He was a colorful old cowboy. He wore a red Levis neck-scarf, a cowboy hat, and he rolled his own cigarettes. He visited us in Portland when I was about 12 years old, and stayed for about a week. He loved telling us about his adventures as a bronco-rider, spiced with German dialect words, and punctuated every few minutes by a spurt of tobacco into the coffee-can that he carried with him everywhere. Besides his great story-telling skills, Ambrose also managed somewhere along the way (probably at the Abbey school in Richardton) to learn how to write German in a beautiful, nearly calligraphic *Fraktur* script. Most of his tales were humorous anecdotes about life on the farm in his youth, but he did recall that the Landeis family came from the colony of Karlsruhe, near the Black Sea, and he was aware of the early history of the German colonies in Russia. Over the years he had met people from Germany who recognized his dialect - he noted that they called it *Schwäbisch*, which is in fact accurate because most of the original colonists of Karlsruhe in the Ukraine spoke Swabian dialects of German, or dialects close to it.



**Uncle Ambrose**



**Ambrose Landeis**

7. Anna -- ("Annie Paridaen" as she was referred to by everyone) was born July 2, 1897 near Richardton, N.D. In July, 1920 in Roundup, MT she married August ("Gus") Paridaen, a Belgian who spoke Dutch. They bought a farm southeast of Ryegate, in the Big Coulee area, and later retired and moved into town. Anna worked for a while in the town laundry. They had four children: Katie, Adolf (in Edmonton, Alberta), Pauline, and Hilda. August died in 1954, after which Annie moved into the Western Manor retirement home in Billings. At some

point she joined the Christian Science faith, which scandalized the other members of the family. Her third child, Pauline, died from blood-poisoning after she cut herself on a rusty barbed-wire fence and Annie refused to take her to a doctor for treatment. Annie and her husband did not get along with Alex and Ida. Annie occasionally visited them, she would bring her briefcase full of Watchtower literature, then launch into preaching. Alex and Ida were always annoyed by this and said that her religion was "stupid." On one occasion Alex took her briefcase and dumped all the literature on floor, and told her to leave and never return. My mother speculated that Annie got all of Louisa Landeis' personal effects after her death, including the prophetic *Sibylla Buch* and the family Bible, which she may have burned. When Alex and Ida first moved to Ryegate they had briefly rented a small yellow house in town, close by where Annie Paridaen and her husband lived. In later years, after they were all dead, this house was moved and attached to the house where Annie lived. My mother said that they were finally "joined together in death."

Anna's obituary on Nov. 16, 1973 in the Billings Gazette states that she was 76 years old, a widow. Her two surviving daughters [Katie and Hilda] were Mrs. Merle Fought of Miles City and Mrs. Don L. Smith of 1901 Robin Ave. She had two grandchildren. Her funeral services were conducted with the Jehovah's Witness.



**Anna Landeis-Paridaen and Katie Landeis-Johnson**

8. John -- born May 25, 1899 on the farm near Richardton, N.D. He supposedly never took out a homestead and he traveled around on the rodeo circuit in his youth, like his brother Ambrose. He had several different jobs, and once while working at a lumber mill he lost an eye from a splinter, and wore a glass eye for the rest of his life. At the time of Louisa's death in 1938 John and Jack both resided in Fort Peck, MT, probably they had settled there to work on the Fort Pack dam which was built in 1934. According to my mother's memories (likely based on Louisa), John was married twice. There is an old photo showing John seated with a tall, blond woman standing behind him, her name is unknown. She was most likely his first wife, because that was a typical wedding photo arrangement. John married Helen Bureau in 1933 (she was born Oct. 5, 1910). His wedding application states that he was divorced. About 6 months after

their marriage they adopted a baby boy, Richard Daniel Landeis (born June 5, 1934 in Great Falls; his mother was a teenage girl surnamed Jenkins). John and Helen later had a daughter of their own, Donna Landeis, born March 5, 1936 in Glasgow, MT. John and Helen moved to Spokane, WA in 1941 where he worked as a barber. He died of cancer on March 21, 1950 at Takoma, WA. There is conflicting info on John's birth date. MyHeritage.com shows him born in 1899, which is apparently coirrect. However, the 1940 U.S. Census shows John D. Landeis, son of Heinrich and Louisa, age 46 ( b. ca. 1904), residing in Kalispell, MT. 4<sup>th</sup> grade education, wife Helen M., son Richard D. age 5, dau. Donna M. age 4. The Find a Grave web site shows John Richard Landeis born May 25, 1902 in Richardton, N.D., and died Mar. 21, 1950 in Alabama and was buried in Tacoma, WA, age 47. He had a baby daughter born in 1943, who died that year, parents were John Landeis and Helen Bureau. This web site has a photo of his grave marker which shows the dates 1902-1950. This was provided by Kathy Stroope Veasey, who apparently was not a relative. There is no explanation for the conflicting info about John's birth year.



**John Landeis**





**John Landeis**



9. Magdalena -- born Oct. 13, 1901, near Richardton, N.D., died of diphtheria in 1907.

10. Andrew -- died at birth, 1903.

11. Jacob ("Jack") -- born Dec. 28, 1904 in Dickinson (the date shown on his tombstone is incorrect; it states Dec. 28, 1901). Jack too shared the life of his brothers, Alex and Ambrose, on the prairies of North Dakota in his youth. He never got married, and never took out a homestead. At the time of Louisa's death in 1938 her obituary states that he resided in Fort Peck, MT, where he likely worked at the dam along with his brother, John. His military discharge papers show that he was inducted into the army on April 16, 1942 at Missoula. He is described as 5' 5" tall, with blue eyes and brown hair (rather short, as was Heinrich and all the others). He served in the 804th Military Police Battalion for two years. He was sent to England on July 13, 1942, then to North Africa on Dec. 6, where he stayed until Nov. 27, 1943, when he

disembarked back to the USA. He was not involved in any battles during this first tour of duty and he had not yet received any wounds. He was given the Middle Eastern Campaign Medal. His military number was 39605534, and he attained the rank of Private First Class. His character and behavior were described as "excellent." He was honorably discharged on Dec. 5, 1944, and was given \$300 to return to Ryegate. He was single at the time.

Jack apparently reenlisted in the military and was severely wounded during this second tour of duty. The family lost touch with him for many years and the rumor was that he had been killed during World War Two. However, my parents found him still alive in 1978, living at the small hotel in Ryegate. He told them that he had joined the military during the war and that he had served in the campaign in North Africa and Sicily, where he was shot through the chest and lost one of his lungs. Severely wounded and suffering from combat fatigue, he spent the next few years in and out of hospitals. He spent about 20 years under the care of the Veterans Administration (Walter Reed hospital), and lived off a disability pension. He apparently became married at some point, but the details are not clear. When he returned to Ryegate he was dismayed to discover that his parents were deceased at that time and no other members of the family remained there. He spent the remainder of his days at the little hotel in Ryegate. The people in Ryegate liked him, he was regarded as a harmless old man with a good sense of humor. My parents said he rambled a lot as he told the story of his life. He mentioned something about once having a wife. He also asked my father to buy him a holster for his gun. Sheriff Dolby liked old Jack and looked after him. He regularly took Jack to the local restaurant for a meal and made sure he was warm in the winter.

During one of my visits to Ryegate I spoke with someone who knew Jack. He recalled that Jack said that he had enlisted during the war to help keep his brother Alex, and my uncles Al and Henry from being drafted - although that probably was based on Jack's misunderstanding of the draft system.

Jack died on Nov. 6, 1983. He is buried next to Heinrich and Louisa in the Resurrection Cemetery, where he requested to be laid to rest.



**Jack Landeis**



**Jack Landeis in his final years, Ryegate hotel**

12. Joseph -- died at birth, 1906.

Katherine Landeis

Heinrich Landeis had only one known sibling in the USA -- his sister, Kathrine (Katie), born Nov. 12, 1866, died Dec. 16, 1939 in Dickinson. Her death certificate states only that she was born in Russia, and it lists her father's name as Peter Landeis, and her mother as unknown. It is not known when she came to this country. Katherine married Jacob Scheeler, born May 6, 1857, the son of Johann Scheeler and Katherine Lenhart in Karlsruhe (they were related to the Schaffs and to the Hoffmanns).

Jacob and Katie owned a store in Dickinson. They supposedly did well financially. After Jacob's death on Jan 26, 1912, age 54, Nicholas Scheeler took over the store. An article in the *Nord Dakota Herold* in 1913 (one year after Jacob's death) states that the Scheeler family had recently installed electrical wiring in their house, and that they were the first to do so in the entire south side of Dickinson. Ads for the Scheeler store appear in almost every issue of the *Herold*. The following is typical, dated Oct. 17, 1913: "In the N. Scheeler and Co. store the annual sale begins next Thursday. There are winter clothing, shoes, eating utensils and almost everything at lowered prices, many even below cost. Quilts and blankets are included in this sale, which will delight every housewife; come and take a look. The eating utensils are of leading quality; you will make no mistake if you purchase your preparations for the winter at the Scheeler store. Because of the closeness (of the sale), read the posted announcements (for further information)."

## The Meier (Maier, Meyer) Family in Montana

The parents of Louisa, Friedrich, and Jakob Meier were Alois Meier and Barbara Hoffmann, originally from the colony of München. Louisa Meier-Landeis' brother, Friedrich Meier (born Nov. 29, 1856) and his family came across to the USA with Heinrich and Louisa, and settled with them near Richardton. They are shown on the 1900 U.S. census. At that time they had five children: Andreas (age 15, born June, 1885, later known as Anton Fred), Joseph (age 11, born August 1888), Victor (age 7, born June 1893), Henry (age 3, born March 1897), and Thomas (age 1, born 1899).

At some point, Friedrich and his family moved to Billings, Montana where they are shown in the 1910 Census. The only other information available is a brief notice from Billings, printed in the *Nord Dakota Herold* on March 23, 1914. My translation: "Dear Herold: my husband, Friedrich Meier, departed from this life on March 17 and left behind eight children: one son is married, two are in the army and five are still at home. My husband had a brother, by the name of Jakob Meier, who lived at Mott, N. Dak., and he also had a sister, whom Heinrich Landeis married, and who lives in Montana. This serves as a notice to you. Mrs. Henry Meyer, Billings, Mont." The editors added that they offered "their sincere sympathy, on behalf of the readers." The notice appears to have been written by Friedrich's widow, and it was forwarded by his daughter-in-law. Since it states that Friedrich had only one married son, we may assume that the woman who sent the notice to the Herold was the wife of their son, Henry. However, it should be noted that their son Henry was only 17 years old in 1914, which creates some uncertainty about her identity. We might also note that their surnames were spelled differently, although this was not uncommon in those days, even within the same family. Friedrich's death certificate, for example, shows his name as "Frederick Meyers." The certificate states that he died in Billings, he was a retired carpenter, and it confirms the dates in the obituary. Friedrich was only 56 years old, and he died of "uremia due to retention of urine probably from enlarged prostate." Puzzlingly, it also states that he was "single" at the time of his death -- which raises the question of whether Friedrich was separated from his wife at the time of his death. The informant for the data on the death certificate was A. F. Meyers, probably his son Andreas.

The obituary refers to eight children. The 1900 national census shows that their five oldest children were boys. My mother recalled at least three of them. She mentioned that Alex had three cousins who resided in Billings during the 1930s, and their names were Joseph, Henry, and Andrew (Andreas). In addition, she also recalled that there was a fourth cousin named Victor, who was apparently one of those referred to as being in the military. On March 16, 1912, "V.W. Meyer" sent Alex a postcard from an army base in Vancouver, Washington, where V.W. was stationed at the time. Victor requested that Alex write him back soon. Although they were cousins, Victor signed the card "your friend." The card was addressed to Alex at Amor, N.D. The names of the three siblings in the Meier family, born after the 1900 census, are unknown.

Friedrich's obituary states that he had a sister, Louisa Landeis, and a brother, Jakob "Meyer," who resided in Mott, North Dakota, in 1914. Rather than emigrating to North Dakota, as did his siblings, Jakob and his family first went to Rio Cocal in Laguna, in the state of Sta. Katherina, in southern Brazil, in 1887, where they resided for 16 years. Sta. Katherina was heavily

settled by German immigrants, as well as Germans from Russia, and it remains an economically and socially thriving region today. In Brazil, they had two more sons: Innocenz in 1893 and George in 1896. In 1904 they emigrated to the USA, at the urging of his brother, Friedrich, who was residing in Mott, N.D. area at the time. Jakob's grandson (likewise named Jake) recalled that the brother (Friedrich) who lured them to North Dakota later moved to Billings, MT. He also recalled that Jakob used to talk frequently about the Landeis family and about the colonies of Rastadt and München. Jakob and his family arrived in New York on July 3, 1904 on the S.S. Capri. They settled for awhile near Richardton, N.D., then later homesteaded 18 miles northeast of Mott, N.D. Barbara Boehm-Meier preceded Jakob in death by several years, dying in 1928. He died on July 24, 1943 at the age of 82. Both are buried at St. Placidius cemetery, near Mott, N.D. Jakob's son, Thomas, immigrated on April 1, 1904, and settled near Burt, N.D. He applied for U.S. citizenship in 1913. Thomas's petition for citizenship states that he was born in Rastadt, March 1, 1885, lived in Rio Cocal in Laguna, Brazil, before emigrating to the USA, and that he had never become a citizen of Brazil. Thomas married Beata Fitterer in 1912 at the St. Placius church, north of Burt. They retired in the small town of Lemmon, N.D. Thomas's obituary provides different information about his place of birth, stating that he was born in München.

#### The Schaffs and the Schanz families near Ryegate

Victor Schaff and his wife Elizabeth were the first German from Russia family to settle in the Musselshell River valley. He brought a considerable sum of money with him from North Dakota and he played an important role in the early years of the community. Victor bought land about two miles east of town, where he established a large spread. During the first three years religious services were held at Victor's house, and he was credited with building St. Mathias church in Ryegate in 1914. He is also credited with donating land to the church for the cemetery on the other side of the irrigation ditch, behind Alex Landeis' farmhouse. They comprised a large extended group of relatives – his son, Michael Schaff lived in the Ryegate area; his brother Mathias Schaff lived in Glen Ullin, N.D.; Frank Schaff lived in the Bowman area; Jacob Schaff was in Belfield, N.D.; and Valentin Schaff was in New England, N.D.<sup>37</sup>

Alex and Ida stayed with Victor Schaff when they first moved to the Ryegate area. Victor Schaff was related to the Landeis family, and Alex always felt a bond with them. Valentin Schaff (probably Victor's brother, born 1842 in Speier) was married to Theresia Landeis in Karlsruhe, and their son Valentin and wife Barbara (also maiden name Schaff) resided in Ryegate area.

There was a marriage between Eva Schaff and Frank Schanz, and they too lived in the Ryegate area. My mother told vivid stories of the Schaff and Schanz families, probably the result of gossip by grandma Ida. Supposedly, they were "very proud" and they preferred to intermarry among themselves – to quote my mother, "they regarded their own blood as too good to mix with that of other families." She claimed that as a result of this intermarriage some of their children had severe birth defects. Mom led the choir in the Catholic church in Ryegate and she recalled that on Sunday mornings, while she sat in the choir loft overlooking the congregation, she watched them marching in for Mass. The Schaff and Schanz clan always

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<sup>37</sup> Details of Victor Schaff are found in his lengthy obituary in the *Nord Dakota Herald*, Nov. 19, 1920.

arrived together in front of the church in a large caravan of automobiles and paraded proudly into the church, where they sat together as a large group. Some of their children walked in twitching with palsy, and one girl she claimed had a “water bag” on her head (apparently hydrocephalic). One of the Schanz boys was born with a “third leg, that had a hoof on it, and hair like that of a goat.” This child didn’t live long. Supposedly the Ryegate Catholic cemetery is “full of the graves of tiny babies from the Schaff and Schanz clan” that died as a result of birth defects. Ida, and perhaps Louisa, regarded this as a curse from God due to the intermarriages between cousins (the “goat’s foot,” mom pointed out, was a “mark of Satan”). Eventually the Catholic priest “put a stop to those cousin marriages” because they were a violation of the laws of God and nature. She pointed out that farmers knew full well that inbreeding was harmful, and that they had to change the roosters and the bulls every three years or so to prevent weakening of the stock.

I have always regarded these stories as exaggerations, but they do reflect common cultural beliefs and taboos among the Germans from Russia. “Intermarriage” was always the subject of gossip.

Victor Schaff’s son, Mike, had four children. After Victor died in 1920, Mike took over the farm in 1924. Mike took his children into Ryegate to attend school in a large buggy, with benches on each side, pulled by a gentle horse named Fanny. He used to stop at Alex’s farm to pick up their children on the way.<sup>38</sup>

When aunt Pauline was a teenager, she used to work for the Schaff family, doing various house and farm work. She had very fond memories of them. She described them as a large, happy family. She recalled that at butchering time the Schaff and Schanz families would all come together at one farm and divide up into men and women groups to do the work. They butchered the hogs, strung the carcasses up to drain the blood, cleaned the intestines for sausage casings, ground the meat and stuffed the casings. Afterward, they had a big feast, the men would drink, and they would have a dance.

#### Alex and Ida’s Children (my aunts and uncles)

Since my cousins are all alive and in my same generation, I will leave the task to them of writing about their parents. I am presenting a brief summary below.

##### 1. Clara Eleanor

Aunt Clara was born Nov. 16, 1911, on the homestead near Rhame, N.D. Her husband, Frank Deichl, was killed in a tragic railroad accident. She spent the remainder of her days living in their home in Billings. She died May 16, 2003 in Billings, age 91 years and 6 months.

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<sup>38</sup> See *Dawn in Golden Valley*, p. 328





Clara age 22



Frank Deichl



**Clara age 19 and Pauline age 17**

2. Pauline Ida

Aunt Pauline was born Aug. 5, 1913, near Rhame, N.D. She married Russell Mees. For many years they earned their living by being caretakers of a ranch in Wyoming. They had one child, Kenny Mees. She died March 7, 2000, Powell WY.



**Pauline Landeis and Russell Mees**

3. Anna Marie

My mother was born Aug. 26, 1915, Ryegate, MT. She married John M. Wagner in Billings, MT. They had their first two sons, Larry and Kenny, in Billings, then after moving to Portland during World War Two they had their third son, Ron (Roland, myself). After my father died in 1982, she lived in various places - Clackamas Oregon, Billings MT, San Jose California. She had strokes in her later years, which required home care. She spent her final two years living with my nephew, Michael Wagner, in Salem OR. She died Jan. 3, 2000 there in Salem, OR, age 84.



**Anna age 18**

4. Alexander

Uncle Al (he was always referred to as "Al" to distinguish him from grandpa, Alex), was born Aug. 23, 1917, Ryegate, MT. He married Graycie, they had one child, Carolyn Kaye. After Al left Ryegate about age 18, he managed to be a successful butcher and manager of a meat market in Seattle. He died March, 1992 of heart attack in Seattle.



Al age 29



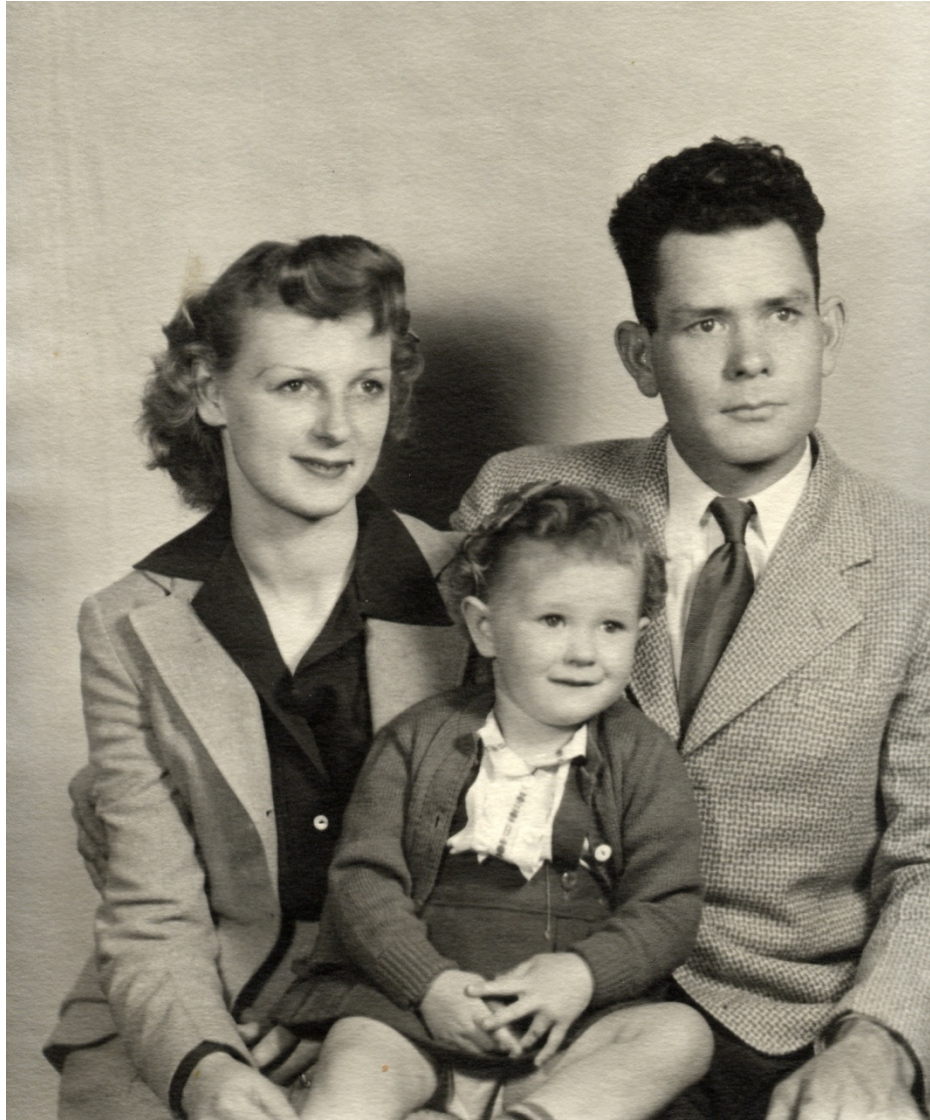
**Al, Grayce, and Carolyn Kay**

5. Frances Katie

Aunt Frances was born Dec. 13, 1919, Ryegate, MT; died Oct. 24, 1986, Boise, ID.

6. Josephine Martha

Aunt Josephine was born April 20, 1922, Ryegate, MT. She married Glen Guard (sp. ?), they had one child, Sandra. She died Oct. 14, 1960 of breast cancer, Seattle. My parents used to drive up to Seattle frequently to visit Al, Henry, Josephine, as well as my dad's brother Mike. Josephine was an exotic woman, she wore her hair with 1950s style curls and used bright red lipstick. She smoked almost constantly and as a result she had chronic deep smoker's cough. Their one child, Sandra, was about my age and we enjoyed visiting with them.



**Josephine, Sandra, and Glen Guard**



**Josephine, Seattle in the 1950s**

7. Henry Casper

Uncle Henry was born June 27, 1925, Ryegate, MT. He was a tall, stout boy and Alex kept him at home to help out at the coal mine. He treated Henry very strictly, and sometimes violently if Alex was on one of his bouts of binge drinking. Henry left home at an early age (about age 17) to escape grandpa. He joined the Army but was discharged 4F because he had an injury due to a cow stepping on his foot in childhood, which prevented him from being able to march. Despite his deprived childhood, Henry managed to do well financially as an adult. He owned businesses in Seattle (his last was an equipment rental business). We found out in later years that Henry was functionally illiterate and he had been hiding this fact from everyone in the family – he did know how to write his signature in his checkbook. He died Sept. 21, 1994, Seattle, was cremated and buried at Ryegate between Alex and Ida's graves.





**Henry**

8. Dorothy Louisa

Aunt Dorothy was born July 4, 1930, Ryegate, MT. She was the youngest child and was treated less harshly than her older siblings. She had a closer relationship with grandma. She became pregnant from a boyfriend in Billings when she was about 15 years old, after which she was sent to stay with Al in Seattle to have the baby, then she returned to Ryegate. Alex and Ida tried to convince Al and Grayce to adopt the baby, and even offered them \$400, but they refused. The baby boy grew up to be Gregory Vine. Her first marriage was with Eddie Berreth (sp.?), with whom she had these children: Debra Shrader (married to Bill Shrader; they lived in Oklahoma in 2001); Linda Gillott (lived in Seattle); Gary Berreth (lived in Washington); Pamela. Her second marriage was with Joe Yure (sp.?). Joe had chronic back pain, he became addicted

to pain medications, and was deeply depressed. Tragically, at midnight, on Dec. 29, 1997, he shot Dorothy in her sleep, then committed suicide.



**Dorothy**

#### Other Branches of the Landeis Family in the USA

George Rath, in his book on the North Dakota Germans, mentions a Jacob Landeis who settled in North Dakota. The records at Richardton Abbey indicate that a Jacob Landeis enrolled his son Paul in the school there in 1914. Jakob was almost certainly the son of Raphael, and the grandson of Anton Landeis (see K14 in genealogy summary).

#### Members of the Landeis Family in Russia and Germany

The *Heimatbuch der Deutschen aus Russland*, published in Stuttgart in 1962, contains a detailed history of Karlsruhe, written by Philipp Landeis. He mentions that his grandfather, Jakob Landeis, was one of the founders of Neu-Karlsruhe, the daughter colony of Karlsruhe, which was founded in 1867. No further information is available on either Philipp or his grandfather. Philipp returned to Germany at some point -- he probably was evacuated by the German army when they pulled out of the Ukraine in 1943, and he was one of the fortunate *Volksdeutsche* who were able to remain in Germany. He was a member of the *Landsmannschaft*

*der Deutschen aus Russland*, an organization in Stuttgart for emigres from the Soviet Union, when he contributed the article to the *Heimatsbuch*. I wrote the *Landsmannschaft* inquiring whether an obituary or family history for Philipp was available, but they simply responded that their organization does not maintain materials on family history. Philipp Landeis is now deceased.

The March 6, 1914 issue of the *Nord Dakota Herald*, the German language newspaper published in Dickinson, contains a letter written by Karl Johann Sprung from Karlsruhe, South Russia. He makes the following wry remark: "I also lost my place with the big boys, Kajetan Landeis took it over. That is not nice of him; I had the place already for five years and took good care of it. So that you know what kind of boys these are, I will explain it to you: they are the munchers (*Mummeln*) that I fodder."

The letter is curious, and raises some interesting points. The reference to "the big boys" has a satirical double-meaning, referring both to the cattle as well as to the "big shots" in the village. This is reflected in Sprung's use of the word *Mummeln*, which can be translated to mean either "munchers" or "mumblers." Apparently Kajetan Landeis was one of the "big shots" in Karlsruhe, and he seems to have taken over Sprung's land or livestock, perhaps due to unpaid debts. The name "Kajetan" is unusual to English speakers, but it is simply the German form for "Gaetano." It is not a very common name, but it does have historic roots in Germany. The most famous person bearing this name was Cardinal Thomas Kajetan (1469 - 1534), the papal delegate to Wittenberg in 1518, who dealt with Martin Luther and the crisis of the Reformation. There was also a Holy Cajetan (Gaetano da Tiene, 1480 - 1547), who founded the order of the "Theatines" (*Ordo Clericorum Regularium Vulgo Theatinorum*, a.k.a. Cajetans). We may assume that the name Kajetan was in use primarily in Catholic families.

A clue to the social status of the Landeis family is found in the 1913 *Deutscher Volkskalender* for Odessa, which lists all the colonies in South Russia, with their mayors (*Dorfschulz*). The mayor for the colony of Neu-Karlsruhe in 1913 was named Landeis (first name not given). This is clear evidence that members of the Landeis family had positions of political influence, at least in the daughter colony of Neu-Karlsruhe. Philipp Landeis, we recall, who wrote the article on the history of Karlsruhe, mentioned that his grandfather, Jakob Landeis, was one of the founders of Neu-Karlsruhe.

The German language newspaper, *Der Staats Anzeiger*, reported an interesting anecdote about Joseph Landeis in Neu-Karlsruhe on Dec. 22, 1910:

"Nikolajew, 9 Nov. 9, 1910, on 2 Nov. there was an unusual case in Neu-Karlsruhe, which is seldom reported for us Germans. The estate owner Joseh Landeis was in his living room as usual, he had gone home as usual at 9:00 P.M. where he drank water which was in the front room, then he went to bed and began to say his prayers. While praying he began to experience sharp pains in his body. His wife, Anna, who was already in bed, took him to bed. The pains began to spread. That same night his wife began to have the same symptoms. The next day Herr Landeis was taken to a doctor in Nowopoltawka, who confirmed that it was poisoning, but he couldn't specify what type. The doctor prescribed a laxative which led to an improvement, but his mouth became sore so he couldn't eat anything hard. On Nov. 8 both went to Nikolajew to see Dr. Rattner, who diagnosed the poisoning. Dr. Rattner gave a remedy and told him to eat only mild foods. The poisoning could have been contracted only from the water, since the other family members ate the same things and weren't sick. The question was, who did this and why? The solution to this question is not easy. Simple people don't

understand anything about “Sublimat” (antiseptic tablets?). These people don’t have particular enemies. This leads to some speculations. Briefly put, the matter at this time is unknown and no one can be guilty, time will clarify things, but this may take as long as until the world will have turned to ash. Are there really such people who would do this?”

This article refers to a substance known as “Sublimat,” which is unclear in its meaning. “Sublimate” at that time referred to mercuric chloride, also called “corrosive sublimate,” which was an ingredient in antiseptic tablets. The mercury ingredient is highly poisonous. People sprinkled salts of mercuric chloride in their drawers to protect paper and cloth from damage by insects, and it was powerful enough to be a common preservative for railroad ties. At that time there were cases of accidental poisoning by over-doses of bichloride of mercury in antiseptic tablets. “Sublimat” may have been a common chemical name at that time for remedies available in pharmacies.

In the April 3, 1925 issue of the *North Dakota Herald* a letter was published from Neu-Karlsruhe, written by Joseph Röther and Adam Schmidt. They mention that within the past five years, several people had died in the village. Among the names listed, were Martin and Paul Landeis.

The April 16, 1926 issue of the *North Dakota Herald* contains a brief notice placed by Katie (Landeis) Scheeler, Heinrich Landeis’ sister: “Mrs. Katherine Scheeler sends the *Herold*, with friendly greetings, to Peter Landeis in Karlsruhe, South Russia.” We may assume that Katie purchased a gift subscription for Peter. It is tempting to assume that this referred to her father, Peter Landeis; however, since he was born in 1825, he would have been 101 years old in 1926, and it seems unlikely that he was still alive at that time. Katie was most likely referring to some other relative named Peter who remained behind in Russia. The best candidate is Peter Landeis (b: 1898) from the village of Neu-Karlsruhe who was arrested in 1929 and sentenced to 10 years in a labor camp (see discussion below). Given their age difference, he may well have been her nephew or a younger cousin.

John Philipps<sup>39</sup> shows that at least one member of the Landeis family moved from Karlsruhe to Speyer. The time period is not stated, but it appears that Philipps’ list of families in Speyer covers the 1930s through about 1945. He lists a Franziska Landeis, born 1870, and her daughter Eva, born 1920, husband unknown. Children: Anna Maria, born 1924. There is no apparent match for who Franziska’s husband may have been.

### Those Who Remained Behind, and Their Fate Under the Soviets

Despite the great wave of emigration in the late 19th century, the majority of the ethnic Germans remained behind in Tsarist Russia. Bishop Kessler provided a graphic portrait of their fate in an address he delivered in 1922 in Ellis County, Kansas.<sup>40</sup> According to Kessler, the Tsar had revived the notion of expelling the German colonists during the First World War. On Feb. 26, 1917 he issued an order for the expulsion of all the ethnic Germans (estimated at that time to be about 2,000,000) and for the confiscation of their property. In Saratov, 1,800 mounted Cossacks were held in readiness to swoop down upon the Volga colonies to murder, plunder,

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<sup>39</sup> Philipps 1996.

<sup>40</sup> Printed in the *Ellis County News*, Feb. 9, 1922.

and scatter the inhabitants. The orders were already in the hands of the army, awaiting execution. Bishop Kessler told his seminarians to pray for a miracle to save them from extinction. On that same day, he reported, the Bolshevik Revolution broke out in Petrograd and the Czarist regime collapsed.

The German colonists longed for peace and at first they regarded the Bolsheviks as their saviors. Soon, however, mass expropriations of their property commenced under Lenin, continuing the process that had begun under the Tsar. Lenin announced that all farmers who had estates worth at least 25,000 rubles would have the entire amount confiscated.

Later, after the Revolution in 1918, the Bolsheviks expropriated most of the crops and tools of the German colonists. A terrible famine occurred in 1922-23, during which hundreds of thousands of the Germans starved to death.

This translated letter was posted on internet by Al Berger in 1997. It describes in graphic detail what happened to Neu-Karlsruhe in 1922. The letter was from John Renner to his uncle Joseph Renner:

January 1, 1922

Dear Uncle Joseph,

Received your letter Dec. 17, it made us very happy, also shared it with my mother and sisters and brothers. First I want to thank you for being so friendly towards us. The money you are going to send me is almost worthless here, no matter from where it is. So your good will is holy to me. Russia has more paper money than the whole world, so there is no shortage. But of bread there is the greatest of need.

This winter millions will die of hunger, our village has 85 homes, and it is one of the more productive ones, and now more than 400 are without bread. I, with my family and sister, five persons, have bread for about 3 months, and then we will live till spring. The hand of the hungry is like a shadow, all day with us begging for bread, it is impossible to say no.

Yes, dear uncle, Russia is an area where one catastrophe follows another; first it was the war, then the revolution, the murders, then the dry spell and hunger deaths. I could write a lot more, but you will see in the news how things are going in Russia.

And now I will try to fulfill your wish in a few lines to describe the murder of my father.

October 27 (1900), 1:00 p.m., the village of Neu-Karlsruhe with 33 homes was surrounded by about 500 bandits on horse and foot. The shooting and hollering brought great fear to the people, at first they thought it was just a robber band going by. The people thought they were more intent on goods than killing, therefore the people didn't flee but hid in their houses. But they soon found out that this hellish brood did not come to rob, but to organize the people against the army of Dinikins, so they should not fear. And all the men should go to school right away, and as always our father was the leader

and first in the schoolhouse, and trusted the devilish band. By and by almost all the men came to the school, then the hellish work started. First they demanded that all the money be brought in, the demand was obeyed. When the robbers had the money, they made the men undress to the underwear, locked them in the schoolroom and locked it from the outside, and shot them through the windows. To this number of unlucky ones belonged also our dear father and two of my brothers. The second oldest and the youngest were to be shot, but through God's intervention they both lived. The oldest was saved by a small favor of his wife. The youngest was saved in a wonderful way by the death of his father and that happened in this way; before the beginning of the shooting, father stood in the corner of the room between the door and window. My young brother and uncle Frank Joseph Lanz kneeled behind the stove and prepared to die. But when the shooting began, father wanted to join the two behind the stove. He got barely to the corner of the stove as a bullet went through his head and silently he fell on the other two kneeling ones, and covered them as a blanket with his lifeless body. The shooting finally ceased, the robbers looked the place over and all lay in a bloodbath, looked dead to them so they left the school and went to rob the homes. Meanwhile the two under the dead body of father took the opportunity to flee, seventeen men were shot that day in Neu-Karlsruhe. Our mother with two of my sisters, and six children of my formerly murdered brother Jakob, sat all afternoon between two straw stacks soaked from rain that came down like in buckets. In the evening she fled to the vinyard hill about 300 meters from the village, where they hid in a night hut. Finally the noise of the robbers in the village ended. Mother found courage and went back to the village, where the poorest but good people kept her overnight.

Next morning she started on foot with the children for the nearest village where she stayed for a week. Then she made it to the Jewish colony, Tesingar, where she stayed a month. My sister Margaretha went on foot to the town Nikolayev to get transportation to Karlsruhe. By and by, my sisters and brothers gathered there from the villages of Halbstadt, Schonfeld and Steinberg. Mother lives now in Steinberg with my youngest brother Theobald, who is still single and is village secretary.

And so my dear Uncle, this is what my mother, brothers and sisters told me. And now best wishes to all your family.

With love, John Renner and family.

In the 1930s Stalin introduced collectivization of agriculture (the Kolkhoz farms), which further depressed agricultural output in Russia. Soon another mass famine occurred, which also drastically affected the German colonies. Having barely recovered from this misery, most of the German colonists (aproximately 1.05 million) were accused by Stalin of being traitors during World War Two, and they were sent to Siberia and Central Asia (no comprehensive records of their relocation points are yet available, but many Volga deportees were taken to labor camps near Chelyabinsk and Norilsk).

The German *Wehrmacht's* rapid push into the southern Ukraine during World War Two prevented the Russians from arresting most of the Germans in the Black Sea colonies. A special

command was created, headed by Dr. Karl Stumpp, for the purpose of gathering all information available on the ethnic German colonists. He and his staff drew plot maps of each of the German colonies in 1944, showing the names of property owners at that time. The map of Karlsruhe shows five families with the surname Landeis – plot 122 (S. Landeis), 226 (Ph. Landeis), 252 (K. Landeis), 290 (P. Landeis), and 308 (M. Landeis).

When the *Wehrmacht* pulled out of the Ukraine they evacuated most of the ethnic Germans and relocated them to the *Wartegau* region in western Poland, where they were granted German citizenship. After the war, however, the Soviets asserted jurisdiction over these former Soviet citizens, and sent them to gulags in Siberia where they shared the fate of their ethnic compatriots from the Volga region. The Soviets finally declared amnesty for the surviving ethnic Germans in 1964, but they weren't allowed to return to their former homes, nor to be compensated for loss of property. The ethnic Germans were relocated primarily in the east Asian republics of the former Soviet Union, the largest number in Kazakhstan where they comprised 4.6% of the total population. Significant numbers also were in Kirghizstan where they comprised 7% of the population, in Tadzhikistan, and in Siberia where they comprised 6% of the population. Altogether there were about two million ethnic Germans living in the former USSR before its collapse, and since then large numbers have been repatriated to Germany.

Lists of ethnic Germans who were "repressed" (i.e. arrested and/or executed) and later "rehabilitated" (i.e. retroactively pardoned) by the Soviets have been published in the *GRHS Heritage Review* (2002-2003). Included are the following:

"Landeis Petro [Peter] Pavlovich [son of Paul] b: 1898 in the village of Neuekarlsruhe [Neu-Karlsruhe], Bashtansky district, a peasant, educated, primary education, lived in the village of Karlsruhe [Karlsruhe], Bashtansky district. An individual peasant. Was arrested on 1 November 1929. Was sentenced to 10 years at a labor camp by the Decision of the Ukrainian People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs on 28 March 1930. Fate unknown. Rehabilitated in 1990."<sup>41</sup>

It is quite likely that this Peter Landeis is the person referred to in the letter by Katie Landeis above, to whom she sent greetings in 1926. Since he was born in 1898, he was likely a nephew or younger cousin.

"Landes Ganna [Hannah] Andriivna [Andreas] was born in 1903 in the town of Mikolayiv, German, a peasant, educated, lived in the village of Veselinove, Veselinivsky district. A worker on a collective farm. Was arrested on 31 August 1945. Sentenced to 5 years at a labor camp by the the Special Committee of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR on 27 March 1946. Served a sentence at Chernogortab Camp of the People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs of the USSR. Was rehabilitated in 1990 (page 50)."<sup>42</sup>

This Hannah Landes may not be a relative because of the spelling of her surname. There was a separate (although very distantly related) family with the surname "Landes" who emigrated from Switzerland to the village of Zurichthal in the Crimea. It is likely that Hannah

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<sup>41</sup> *Heritage Review* 33:1, 2003.

<sup>42</sup> *Heritage Review* 32:4, 2002

Landes was from that family, although her link with Nikolaiev makes her a possible member of the Landeis family.

One file<sup>43</sup> retrieved from the archive in Nikolaiev contains a list of all households in the colony of Speier (one of the former German colonies in the Beresan region) that had been allotted land in 1922. One Landeis family is shown, which indicates that at some point this family had settled there from Karlsruhe:

Thomas Landeis, the son of Karl. In his household was a woman named Franziska, the daughter of Anton (presumably Thomas' wife). They had 5 daughters residing with them: Ermentina, Rosa, Anna, Viktoria, and Elisabetha, all listed as the daughters of Thomas. It is possible that Thomas also had sons, who were not residing with them as of 1922.

Another branch of the Landeis family settled south on the Crimean peninsula. In 2012 I made contact (via Facebook on internet) with Alexander Landeis, who resided in Kiel Germany at the time. He and his family were emigres from Russia, allowed to return to Germany after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Alexander didn't know much about his family history, but his grandfather (likewise named Alexander Landeis) was still alive and also residing in Kiel. Like most ethnic Germans from the Soviet Union, he knew that the first colonists came to Tsarist Russia in the reign of Empress Katharine the Great, but not much beyond that. The young Alex said his grandfather didn't talk much about their experiences in Russia, understandably so since he had been forcibly relocated to a labor camp in Siberia in 1941. The grandfather confirmed that his grandparents were Jakob Landeis and Katherine Deutsch. So, this long lost branch of the Landeis family was successfully integrated into our family tree. Interestingly, the name Alexander also recurred in their family, although it is unknown when it first entered – Jakob's son, Alexander, may have been born in Karlsruhe, or in Rosenfeld. Their place in the genealogical summary table (at the end of this chronicle) is as follows:

**K1751 Jakob Landeis**, b. May 1863, Karlsruhe, m. **Magdalena Deutsch**. They moved to the Crimea ca. 1900, he d. in Rosenfeld, Crimea 1935.

**K17512 Alexander Landeis**, b. ?, m. **Irma Eisenbraun**.

**K175121 Alexander Landeis**, b. 1928 Crimea, evacuated to North Caucasus by Soviets in 1941; m. **Bertha Frank** (she b. 1931, d. 2008 Kiel, Germany); he was still alive in 2012.

**K1751211 Tamara Landeis**, b. 1956 Russia, m. surname **Grib**.

**K17512111 Alexander Landeis**, b. 1973, m. to Natalia Haas (Gaas in Russian), resided in Kiel, Germany as of 2012. He confirmed the line of descent from K1751.

**K17512111 Alena Landeis**, b. 1997 Tscheljabinsk (Cheliabinsk).

**K17512112 Sophie Landeis**, b. 2007 Kiel, Germany.

**K175122 Valentin Landeis**, b. ?

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<sup>43</sup> File 66-2-110b