

News from Nan

ANNA'S FAMILY HISTORY

LETTERS HOME

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Alvin Schreiter, author of "Letters Home"

In his last-known picture Alvin Schreiter appears to be no more than a simple, Midwestern farmer, but the immigration story he told in a few letters to his brother still living back home in a poor corner of Germany have fascinated five generations of his American descendants.

In 1873 he left his beloved mother, brother, other family members, and home country because he hated his boss and a society that was becoming dominated by the militaristic and draft-happy Prussians.

He was excited to have a small piece of land he could call his own and an opportunity for a better life for himself, his wife, and his children.

He hoped his mother and brother would join him in rural Michigan.

He was devastated that farming a few sandy, forest-covered acres was so difficult. To support his growing family, he logged during the winter in the North Woods, and in summer he cleared his land, planted, and harvested.

His sons helped on the farm, and his daughters, when they reached age 13, went into service in Detroit.

There were ups and there were downs.

“Dear Brother, ...Write Mother right away and have her come to you. Explain everything to her, how it is with us, that she needs to suffer no hunger with us. That is not the style in America. Everywhere things are served up as for a christening. We eat meat every day and not too little...”

“Dear Brother, ...You write that you want to come in spring. However, I don’t advise you to do it now, for we are having now a period of bad times. Businesses are not going in Port Huron and Detroit. There are a lot of people who have no work...”

And, finally...

“Dear Brother, my wife died of cancer on September 21, 1894. I am alone with my children, three girls, a boy. Two girls in service and two are married, and Paul, too. He is the oldest and lives in Minnesota. I have 80 acres of land, 60 acres under cultivation. The rest is woods. 60 pounds of potatoes cost 10 cents. 11 pounds of barley 60 cents, 100 pounds of peas 35 cents.”

The rest of the letter is lost.

I am sincerely grateful for the many opportunities I have had in life partly due to his bravery, hard work, and sacrifices. Happy 175th birthday (January 18, 2018), Great-grandpa Ehregott August Albin (“Alvin”) Schreiter!



Alvin Schreiter and family in Germany

◀ 2018 ◀ BIRTHDAY ◀ DORSCH ◀ FORESTVILLE ◀ IMMIGRATION ◀ MICHIGAN ◀ SCHREITER