

Fred Sieckmann, Sr. | 1869-1965



Fred and Alvina Sieckmann nee Mussmann lived all of their adult lives in Fillmore County, Nebraska.

Fred Sieckmann, Sr. was the third son and fourth child of William and Minnie Sieckmann nee Bütke. He was the last of their children to be born in Rolfshagen, a small village in the principality of Schaumburg-Lippe. This little village is near the city of Obernkirchen. Fred Sr. was born on 29 September 1869.ⁱ He and his family of two brothers, a sister and his parents emigrated to America in 1870. The two older boys, William and Charles were 12 and 10 years of age, respectively, and his sister, Minnie was 7 years old when the family left their northern German home to come to America.ⁱⁱ One sister, Sophie Wilhelmine Justine died at the age of 2 years, just a couple of months before Fred was born. She was buried in the Obernkirchen Evangelical Church cemetery.ⁱⁱⁱ

Records to document the ship that took the family across the great Atlantic Ocean have not been located to date. It is quite likely that they sailed to one of the eastern seaports. The usual trip across the Atlantic took 3-4 weeks. By 30 August 1870 Fred's mother, Wilhelmine and three of the children were living with Christian Buchmeier and his family in Will County, Illinois not too far from the town of

Monee. Fred was not listed in the 1870 census, however, he is listed in the records documenting that the family left Germany in May 1870.

After Wilhelm filed for the family homestead, he built them a small dugout to live in. It was located in the southeast corner of the property. After some time a frame house was built on the northwest corner of the property. This house stood for many years. Family tradition tells that Wilhelm and the two older boys would go to Nebraska City for supplies and to work for extra money. Minnie Sieckmann and the youngest children would remain at the homestead while they were gone. During one occasion, a snowstorm left the family stranded in the dugout for three days. They were rescued by a neighbor, Henry Molthan, who dug them out. It is possible that this was the Great Easter snow storm which occurred in April 1873. History books tell that the drifts were 8 to 10 feet high and the winds packed the snow so hard that people and animals could walk on top of the drifts without sinking in.^{iv}

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The family endured many hardships to establish their farm. In the summer of 1874, there was a grasshopper plague. Again the history books state that within a few hours millions of grasshoppers devoured everything in sight including: crops, clothing, fruit trees and handles of hoes and shovels. They were so thick that the sun was obscured. Following the grasshopper plague, the hot winds came and scorched anything that was still green. The year 1874 was an extremely rough year for families, who lived in the Midwest. That year there were no crops, much destitution and not much hope. Somehow, the Sieckmann family kept their courage and persevered. Each family member had to pitch in and do his or her part. Fred was no exception. He helped his parents with many farm chores and spent much of his time herding the family's cattle. This was quite a chore in these early days since there were no fences.

When Fred Sr. was about 19 years old, the family had to relinquish a portion of their farm to the town of Ohioa, which was established by the Burlington Railroad. The preliminary survey was conducted in April and May of 1886. The first train ran in October of 1886. Three other early families also had to give up their land to the railroad also. They were J. H. Luke, E. D. Babcock and R. L. Clemons. To honor these families, streets were named for the four families, whose land was occupied by the land.

Besides working on the farm, Fred worked for the Ben Stockfeld Dry Goods and Grocery Store. Fred and his father made many trips to the neighboring town of Tobias located about 7 miles east of Ohioa. They hauled lumber which was used to build many of the early buildings in Ohioa.^v

When he was 24 years old, Fred married the 18-year-old, Alvina Mussmann. She was the daughter of Henry and Maria Mussmann nee Dittmer. Alvina and Fred were married at the German Evangelical Lutheran Church. They were married on 30 April 1891.^{vi} The young couple settled on a farm near Ohioa in Franklin Township after their marriage. Fred farmed and worked for some of the local filling stations of Brown, Lucht and Judy. He also took an active role in community affairs, serving as the township assessor for 8 years and as the Education Director for School



Fred and Alvina Sieckmann nee Mussmann;
photo taken about 1955-1960 in Ohioa,
Fillmore County, Nebraska; internet copy provided
by Sharlene Miller nee Sieckmann.

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District Number 9 for 21 years. He served District Number 9 from 1925 to 1945 and District Number 41 for 26 years from 1907 to 1932.^{vii}

Fred and Alvina Sieckmann were the parents of 8 children all born in Fillmore County, Nebraska. Their first child was born and died in January 1892. The other children lived to marry and have their own families. The children were:

- Friedrich Wilhelm Heinrich
- Carl August Heinrich
- Edwill Wilhelm
- Grace Dora
- Howard Heinrich
- Jesse Friedrich
- Dallas Gottlieb



Courtesy of Sharlene Miller nee Sieckmann

The Fred Sieckmann Family about 1916
Front Row (Left to Right): Alvina, Dallas, Fred, Jesse,
Back Row : Howard, Edwill, Grace, Fred Jr, Charlie

The children attended the District Number 41 School. Fred Sieckmann, Sr. farmed until about 1936. After retiring from farming, he and Alvina moved in to the town of Ohioa where they lived for about 24 years. One of the local newspapers, *The Nebraska Signal*, ran a series of articles about Franklin Township farmers. The following article about Fred Sieckmann, Sr. was published on 07 September 1916:

“We had quite a time locating Mr. Sieckmann’s place as it is quite a distance from the main road and sited near a creek, but upon discovery we noticed a well improved farm. Mr. Sieckmann was lucky in getting the farm which was his father’s land. This gave him a good start in life and for eighteen years he has made a successful farmer. His land was cropped with twenty-five acres of wheat, six acres of oats, forty-two acres of corn and five acres of alfalfa. He has hay land and pasture for his stock of which he has a few. One thing noticeable about this farm was the large wood pile. The trees supply them with winter wood. They had quite an orchard of peach trees, which die out in past seasons. Apple and cherry are the productive trees. The land lies six miles south and east of town.”

Fred and Alvina were fortunate to celebrate their 69th wedding anniversary in April 1960. Alvina died in their home in Ohioa on 15 June 1960 at the age of 87. Fred Senior continued to live in Ohioa after her death. He spent much of his time with his daughter, Grace Matthies. He died on 23 May 1965 at the age of 97. They both were buried at the Ohioa Public Cemetery.

ⁱ Stifts Evangelical Church Records, Obernkirchen, Schaumburg-Lippe, Germany read by Angelika Schierhölter, March 1997.

ⁱⁱ Ibid.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Gaffney, Wilbur G. (editor), *The Fillmore County Story*, (unknown: The Geneva Community Grange No. 403, 1968), pages 1-15 and 141-158.

^v Ibid. pages 145-146.

^{vi} Letter written by Grace Matthies to Sharlene Sieckmann in 1974.

^{vii} *The Fillmore County Story*, (unknown: The Geneva Community Grange No. 403, 1968), pages 1-15 and 141-158.