

A Walk Back in Time at “Grandpa and Grandma Pape Farm”, 2013

As the pages of the calendar keep turning, with months and years going by more rapidly in our elderly years, we are inclined to try to turn back those pages to remember those events, people and places that have shaped our lives and have meant so much to us. It is for this reason that I wanted to take a trip to the old Pape Farm and see what remained. The memories, or images in my mind I wanted to rekindle and photograph what remained so I could share this with our children, grandchildren and their children so they would know the strong “fabric of life” they come from. Heritage I know means a lot to my children but may not mean as much to the grandchildren as it does to us at this time. I am certain that as time passes in their lives they will be proud of our past because it is what has helped to shape their lives. Our ways, our emotions, our morals and Christian beliefs instilled in us by our Grandparents and our Parents we have in turn instilled in our children and them in theirs.

It was a hot summer day in September, a Saturday of the Concordia Festival, that my brother Bob and I took a trip to The Farm. We knew the only way to the homestead was not by the old road off Highway 40, but through the neighbor’s farm, Wilber Schlesselmann. Driving up the lane to his farm place, memories began to be rekindled, not of his farm but by seeing his barn and the buildings surrounding his farm place. The barn seemed to be the same design as on Grandpa’s place. This inspiration moved us to hurry on to the old farm place. Wilber was busy in town getting ready for the evening events but his son welcomed us to the property. We drove around the back of his house to an old lane, resembling the lane to Grandpa’s house from Highway 40. leading toward Grandpa’s farm. I seem to remember that I might have traveled this lane with Uncle Henry and my Dad to the Schesselman’s once “way back when” but in the opposite direction. This time I was going back toward the Farm and back in time. As we approached the homestead from the North, I noticed sadly that most everything was overgrown with brush and trees. I should have expected this, but we usually want good things in life not to change and want it to be as we remembered. As we made a left turn, my feeling was rekindled seeing to the left the old machine shed. This had been preserved over the years and brought back memories. At this point my mind went in fast rewind to the memory of first, Grandpa’s 35 Chevrolet parked there, and later Uncle Henry’s International pickup. I also remember a workbench on the side, with a lot of cans of nuts and bolts, old sickle blades, a grind stone and other old scrap iron piled up on it. As with all old machine sheds with dirt floors, the odor of motor oil lingered in the air. The imagination comes back as to the oil that had dripped over the years from Grandpa’s and Uncle Henry’s cars, pickups and other vehicles and machines parked at the same spot.



As I stood in the lane in front of the machine shed and looked to the right, I saw what was left of the milking parlor and old water tower. The old water tower was laying on its side and a little rusty. It had served its purpose for many years bring running water (gravity fed) into the milking parlor where the milk was separated and the cans were cleaned and the cats waited for their taste of the good Jersey milk. The north wall of the milking parlor is still partially standing. The parlor was build of brick thereby keeping the inside cool for the milk. It was attached to the summer kitchen. The summer kitchen was used by Grandpa and Grandma in the summer when it was hot because it was cooler than cooking in the regular kitchen. The kitchen was used to prepare meals, for canning food and I am sure for cooking large meals for the thrashing crews when they came in the summer. Being hot inside the Good Lord provided the air conditioning in the summer kitchen with a cool breeze through the windows and the breeze way which connected the summer kitchen to the house.



Taking my thoughts away from the milking parlor, I looked ahead down the “drive way”. On the left of the old lane I saw what used to be the tool shed. Only a small portion remained standing. As my memory serves me, the “tool shed” was approximately 24 to 30 feet long had two doors in the front facing the driveway. The first room contained numerous tools, and was therefore called the tool shed even though most of the building was home to other equipment and supplies for the farm. I recall that there were many tools and a vast assortment of them, old and new. To a young boy it was all the tools in the world. The other door opened to a room which contained lumber for building other tools such as shovels and rakes and some feed, as best I can recall. My memory does recall vividly that it contained an old bicycle. It was a large bicycle, one bar. It had wooden rims but no tires. On this old bicycle, no doubt having possibly been ridden by my Uncle’s Edwin, Louie and Elmer, I learned to ride a bike. I can still hear the crunch of the gravel or rocks as the wooden rims rolled over them, down the drive, which seemed to be a slight hill, going down toward the chicken house. As I recall the bike did not have brakes so I am sure I took many falls but my mind has blocked out any hurts and I can only remember the good feeling of riding a bike by myself.



As I continued my walk past the now fallen tool shed, I saw straight the side of the old barn. It was overgrown with brush and trees and was told that it had long been abandoned and not used. It had served Grandpa and Uncle Henry as a horse barn on this side, cattle stalls for milking on the other side which was separated by a walkway, and a loft where the winter hay was stored. The isle was also a place where the horse harnesses and some feed was stored. The harnesses always seemed to have a distinctive smell. .



Looking to my left as I walked between what remained of the tool shed and barn. I remember a combine in the back of the tool shed as well as one of the most visited “houses” on the property, that everyone at one time or another visited, the outhouse. Outhouses had a tendency to move ever so often, so this may have “proudly” stood in another location in the minds of my older brother, sister and cousins. I remember having spent some time in this “house” reading the Sears and Roebuck or Montgomery Ward catalog. It was also a “house” that my dear wife had never experienced until our first visit to the farm after our wedding. There was also a “convenience” within the house or “urgent needs” that came in the form of chamber pots. They were used primarily during the night to accommodate a persons needs.

Away from that memory I continued my walk to around what used to be the back of the barn. The other shed, on the left, where other farm equipment was kept. I remember that at one time it housed an old tractor that had iron lug wheels. Looking to the right of where that shed had stood I looked for the corn crib where we experienced a corn sheller. We loved putting the corn cobs in the sheller and watching the corn fall out the bottom and the cob coming out the side. I am sure Uncle Henry would have let us do this all day if he had known we were in there playing.

I also remember the hog pens in the same vicinity where the hogs were slopped. My grandchildren will ask. What do you mean, “slopped”? Slop that was fed hogs was table scrapes or food scrapes with usually some feed mixed in with the watery “mess”, therefore called “slop”. Grandpa and Grandma, Aunt Flora and Uncle Henry, as well as our parents never wasted anything. Everything was used, and you never heard them complain that they had nothing. God blessed them all through good and bad times. Looking toward where the back of barn was, I remember the windmill. Was it still there? It was! Still standing? A tree had grown up in the middle of it supporting it so it stood tall and proud. The blades of the windmill could be seen in the tree top not turning but seeming to say, “Turn me loose and give me wind”. I remember when you released the lever (like taking off the brake) and turned the blades to the wind it would make the shaft connected to the pump go up and down and consequently pumping the water. (No electric bill) The pump rusted as it was, still stood above a broken cement water trough and seemed to be waiting for the action to start. Many a gallon of water it had pumped in its day for the horses to drink, not to forget the mules of Grandpa’s. I have always loved windmill where ever they are but my first love for them came from Grandpa’s farm.







We also walked to where the chicken house was. Only the foundation remained. The picture of the flock of Leghorn chickens outside of the chicken house helps to bring back a vivid memory.

I couldn't help but to also go to the end of the lane to see if the pond was still there. It was still there and with water. My mother would tell us about when the pond froze over they would go skating. I have an old pair of those, iron clasp on, skates that she gave me that was used on that pond.



A walk through the pasture outside of the fence toward the house brought us to location which would have been in line with the front porch of the house. Even though the brush was too thick to walk through it did not keep me from remembering how it was on the inside. I vividly remember the front of the house. Not often did we go through the front doors to the front yard. What are most memorable about the front door way was the cobalt blue glass windows at the side of the front door. I used to look through the glass to the outside, where we now stood, and see the world as blue. The cedar trees in the front, the grass, the field and sky were all a bright deeper blue. Even on a rainy or overcast day the world still seemed bright. One of my favorite colors to this day, cobalt blue.



Through the brush you can see the house which so proudly stood with its shutters and ornate decorations on the front porch. The house where loving parents were raised. The house where a prominent minister was raised who endured many trials in life but devoted himself to Christ ministry; where a future mayor of the city and a successful business man who had a city lake named after him was raised; a house and farm where a very successful farmer of the community was taught the successful ways of farming; where a daughter who devoted her life to supporting, a God fearing family and a loving husband who devoted his life to ministering to young children as a Lutheran teacher, was raised; where a daughter was raised who remained on the farm and kept the memories of the Pape home alive and was an example of humility and thankfulness; and where a son who gave the ultimate sacrifice, his life, in service for his country, was raised. This house, where devotion to God and family was taught, which in turn helped to shape our lives and making us proud of our heritage, was now lying still. It was not just a house but a **Home**. An important **Home** in our past, Grandpa and Grandma's. It now laid undisturbed, holding "*memories of our past*".

