

(as Grandpa Kenow might have told it)

I remember my Grandpa, Albert Kenow Sr., as a hardworking but very quiet man. In asking my dad and his brothers and sisters about Grandpa, no one remembered him telling about life in the "Old Country", his trip to America or what his life was like in Minnesota when he first came here in the 1880s. No one seems to know the whereabouts of a family Bible or of other documents that may have belonged to our ancestors. I have searched other sources of records and found information that I have been able to incorporate in the following account. Information from various sources is only as accurate as the records themselves. My account is based on stories I have read about other immigrants who did tell their stories and from the records of the church in Roggow. I am sure our ancestors would have had similar experiences and have used this in writing Grandpa's Story. More information about our family is found in the Kenow Family History published earlier and on the web site: [. This site also provides links to pictures and maps that may be downloaded and printed if you like.](#)

Harold R. Kenow, summer 2006

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Pomerania was the land in northeast Germany along the Baltic Sea. Pomerania, or Pommern, as it was called in Germany, was a Prussian province about one-seventh the size of Minnesota. Minnesota's area is 79,617 square miles, Pomerania is 11,654 square miles. The Kienow family was living in the Kreis (county) of Regenwalde. Meesow was located just to the left of the L in Labes on the map above. This is an area that

looks like the land around Faribault, with hills, trees, farmland, rivers and lakes.

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Grandpa's Story

My story begins in a land over 5,000 miles from Minnesota in a place called Pommern. Pommern was a province or state in the Kingdom of Prussia just south of the Baltic Sea. The village where my parents lived and where I was born was Meesow. It was in the county (Kreis) of Regenwalde. The map of Pommern helps us locate our village. The people living in Pommern were called Pommeranians. After World War II this land was taken from Germany and given to Poland. All the Germans living there were forced to leave the area by the Russians and Poles.

Meesow was too small to have its own church so we went to church in Roggow about 4 miles away. Recent pictures of Meesow, now called Mieszewo, Poland help us see the similarities. Many buildings in this village are over 100 years old. The following articles tell us about the village of Meesow:

• In 1791 the village of Meesow contained 21 farmsteads, 2 sheep farms, a blacksmith shop, a watermill and 40 furnaces. It later became the train line between Regenwalde to Sallmow and Labes to Daber. •

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Meesow, Kreis Regenwalde, Pommern

Meesow (May-zo) was one of 32 villages that belonged to the Dewitz family until the 1800s. From 1804 to 1869 Lieutenant Leopold Ludwig owned the estate. According to a report, dated 1868, the Rittergut (German Knight's estate) included 14 farm houses, 2 industrial buildings and 20 tax free buildings. There were 238 people with the 39 families and the livestock included 33 horses, 95 head of cattle and 1928 sheep.

The Kirchdorf (church community) was made up of 29 farm houses, a church and a Brigadier General's home. There were 306 people with the 50 families. They owned 61 horses, 182 head of cattle and a herd of 1001 sheep.

The Evangelical Church records, which are held in the Landeskirche Archives at Greifswald, Germany, contain many soldier statistics. Also, the report of 20 tax free buildings and the Brigadier General's home, indicates that Meesow may have been a base for army training.

(Information from - <http://www.geocities.com/regenwalde/b-villages.htm>)

The land around Meesow and Roggow was very similar to the land around Faribault, Minnesota. Most of the villagers were farmers. The farmers had their homes in the village and would go out to their fields from there. It was great fun to have other children to play with. However the children were expected to help with work on the farm so we didn't get a lot of time to play. Many workers were needed on the farms since they did not have a lot of labor saving equipment. Hay was cut by hand and brought to the barns or piled into stacks. Animals needed to be taken to the pastures and brought back to the barns. Sheep were the most common animals but they also had cows, horses, pigs, goats, chickens, ducks, rabbits and geese.

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My great-great grandfather David was known as the Shepherd Kañnow. The spelling of the family name Kañnow changes to Kainow and then to Kienow in the Roggow records. Animals were important to the villagers. They provided food, wool for clothing and skins for leather. Other villagers would call on him much like farmers today would call on a Veterinarian. The Shepherd was a highly respected member of the village. The church records of Roggow show us that he was living in the Meesow area in the 1780s. The death record for his wife Anna Sophia in 1795 as well as the death record for David in 1810 provide some of the early information about our family.

My great grandfather Gottlieb was a small farmer in Meesow. The marriage record for Gottlieb and Anna Maria Buss is found in the Roggow church records. They had ten children.

My grandfather Ludwig was the youngest of the 10 children of Gottlieb and Anna Kienow. My dad and my Grandma œMinnieœ• Kienow used to tell me stories about my Grandpa Ludwig Kienow. He died before I was born from tuberculosis at age 54. I wish that I could have known him personally. It seems he was very popular and well liked by everyone. He was often asked to be a godfather to children of relatives and friends.

Ludwig's birth record and marriage record are found in the Roggow church records.

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Since Ludwig was the youngest child he would not inherit the family farm. Ludwig and an older brother Carl often talked about going to America where there was lots of land and opportunity. They had heard many stories from friends and neighbors who urged them to come to the U.S.A. Carl Kienow and his family left Germany in 1874 and settled in southern Wisconsin. Since Ludwig had died in 1870 his family was not ready to leave with Carl.

After Ludwig's death his children kept alive the dream of going to America. There were a number of factors that led to this decision. It was difficult for ambitious, hard working men to have a farm of their own if they were not the oldest son. Other factors for leaving included political unrest, unhappiness with government and its policies and poor harvests. The promise of a better life in America was too enticing!

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My dad's first wife, Emilie Bertha Caroline Bartelt, had died in 1875. They had three children, Helene, Ernestina and Herman. Helene died from measles before she reached the age of 2.

My parents were Carl Friedrich William Kienow and Louise Henriette Florentine Stark. Dad was known as William and mother as Henriette. My parents were married on July 21, 1876. When I was born on April 21, 1877, they gave me the name Albert Friedrich August Kienow when I was baptized on May 5, 1877 at the church in the village of Roggow. One of my sponsors was Friedrike Pofahl, my dad's sister.

Brother Robert was born in 1879 and my sister Anna was born in 1881. That made a total of 5 children in our family. My father worked on a farm but didn't own it.

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Leaving their homeland was not easy. They would be leaving friends and relatives for an uncertain future. Fortunately many friends and relatives had already gone to America or were planning to do so.

The first to leave was the oldest daughter of Ludwig and Minnie Kienow, Friedrike who had married Ferdinand Pofahl. They chose to go to Rice County in Minnesota because they had other relatives and friends there.

At last the day finally came that we would start our trip to America. I was only four when Grandma Minnie Kienow left with my Aunt Emilie and Uncle Fredrich Wolf for Minnesota in 1881. Now, almost 2 years later we were about to leave. Whatever we wanted to take we had to carry with us.

The plan was to take the train to Bremen where we would board the ship to America. It was my first train ride! At least it was a lot faster then walking or riding a wagon behind the horse. The ride was quite bumpy and not real pleasant. It prepared us for the much longer train ride we would have in America from Baltimore to Minnesota.

I had never seen such a big city like Bremen before. Such big buildings and such a busy place! And then we saw the Hohenzollern, the ship we would sail on along with hundreds of other passengers. It was such a big ship that all the people in my home of Meesow would not have filled it up. It was made out of steel and had two large masts for the sails. It also had engines to move us along in the water even if there was no wind. The trip wouldn't be nearly as long as earlier immigrants had whose ships only had sails.

The trip itself was no picnic. There were so many people on board there was no room to run around. People got seasick, the food was terrible, and it was damp and cold. My mother was pregnant and she had to put up with 5 of us kids. Sometimes we wondered if we should have stayed in Germany.

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Finally, on April 17, 1883, they told us that our ship would dock in Baltimore, Maryland the next day. What a relief it was to see land again! We had to go through the immigration center to make sure we were all healthy enough to stay in America. There were friendly people who spoke German who could help us make plans for our trip to Minnesota.

Another train ride! But this was going to be a lot longer than the one we had in Germany. It was spring in America so we got to see a lot of green. The trees were leafing out and farmers were planting their crops. America is so big!

Finally we arrived in Minnesota. Grandma Minnie and dad's sister's families were there to meet us and take us in. Grandma almost smothered us with hugs and kisses.

Faribault was much larger than Meesow. The farmers around Faribault needed workers to cut hay and other farm chores. Many homes and businesses were being built for the growing population so dad could find work in many places. Some of the work was seasonal.

We were in Faribault about 5 months when my youngest sister, Ida, was born on Oct. 1, 1883. Our family now numbered 7, my mom and dad, half sister Tina, half brother Herman, myself and sisters Anna and Ida.

Mother got sick and died on January 1, 1886. She was only 39 years old. Now dad was left with 5 children ages 15 to 3. Other family members and friends helped us out while dad worked and tried to keep the family together. I was only 8 years old when mother died.

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Our family belonged to Trinity Lutheran Church. The church also had a school where classes were taught in German and English. My first teacher was the Pastor Henry Schulz. As the church and school grew they were able to hire Martin Kirsch as a teacher for the one room school. We also received our confirmation instruction from Pastor Schulz and I was confirmed on Palm Sunday, March 22, 1891.

Even though I was only a teenager I was able to find odd jobs around town. We never got paid much but it kept me busy and helped provide some of the basic necessities for our family. By the time I was 18 I found a job at the Faribo Woolen Mill as a spinner. Many of the farmers raised sheep just like they did in Germany. Faribo Woolen Mills became famous for its fine woolen blankets and other products. If you had a reputation as a good, hard worker, it was much easier to find a job.

Faribault became an important center to the surrounding farmers. Two train lines came through Faribault, the Milwaukee Road and the Rock Island. Faribault also became the county seat for Rice County. Schools for the Deaf, Blind and the Handicapped were built as well as Shattuck, St. James and St. Mary's private schools. The town was sometimes called the Athens of the West.

My grandmother Minnie died in the spring of 1901. She had been so important to our family for many years and we would miss her a lot.

Since Faribault was becoming so important to the surrounding area, it brought many young girls to town to find work. These young ladies could find work as domestics or workers in the hotels and schools. One of these girls came from the town of Montgomery. Her name was Mary Smetana. When I saw her, I took a liking to her and she for me. I was all German and she was full blooded Bohemian!

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We were married on October 1, 1901. Weddings were quite simple back then. They often took place at the parsonage or home rather than in the church. Just the witnesses and perhaps a few others at the wedding and then more relatives and friends for a small reception after.

Our first child was born in 1902 and we named him Myron but his nickname was "Pat".

I was working at the flour mill when my father was killed by a fall from a train in 1903. He had hitched a ride on the train to come to the mill to see me but lost his grip and fell to his death. My father had become a Naturalized Citizen of the United States in 1900. Since I was born in Germany I had to go through the same process and completed the requirements and became a Naturalized Citizen on January 8, 1913.

After ten years our family was outgrowing our house on First Street and Irving Avenue and we looked around for more room. I always wanted to have my own little farm and we found a place on Prairie Avenue with 7 acres of land and a house. The purchase price was \$3,000. It was a stretch for us to make such a bold step. With our family now totaling 7 children we would be able to raise most of our own food. In the years that followed we purchased an additional 8 acres, built a barn and added on to the house. In 1928 we even had electricity installed and in 1950 we had city water for the first time. Everyone in the family had to do their part in supporting the family. Even the youngest could help with weeding in the garden, feeding the animals and harvesting the crops. "If any would not work, neither should they eat" was clearly understood.

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Since I was very young when my parents came to the USA and since my close relatives had also immigrated, we did not keep contact with people in Germany. When World War I started we had become citizens of the U.S. or were in the process of doing so. Some German immigrants were treated badly because of their heritage. This anti-German sentiment caused many to abandon using German and becoming more Americanized.

By 1926 our family had grown to 12 children, 9 boys and 3 girls. The older boys were able to find work in places like the King Flour Mill, the Shaft-Pierce Shoe Factory and Nutting Truck and Caster Company. The Great Depression that began in 1929 and lasted into the 1930s was hard for everyone. However there was still a need for the products of these companies so people had some work even if it was not full time. The farm became even more important for the raising of food for the family. We usually had a surplus of sweet corn and other vegetables that we could sell plus eggs and milk. Barney, our horse, and I would often plow the gardens for other people and could earn extra cash. My wife, Mary, was a genius at keeping everything organized and seeing that we were all well fed. In addition she sold Watkins Products and was active at church.

During World War II four of our sons were in the Armed Forces. George was in the Air Force, Leonard and Harlan in the Army, and Ray in the Navy. We had a banner in our front window with 4 stars, one for each son. For some families the star was gold indicating that their son had been killed in the war. We were indeed thankful that our sons came back alive after the war and that our family could continue to enjoy the blessings of this country. For that we give thanks to Almighty God.

During my life I saw many amazing inventions such as the first automobiles, the first airplanes, the first radios, refrigerators and a host of other new products. It was an unbelievable journey!

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