

## **Caroline (Rieps) Krueger (1868-1931)**

Jean F. Fahiman– granddaughter

My paternal grandmother and great grandmother did not, in the eyes of the world, do anything spectacular in their lives in the fields of medicine, science, education, or the arts. They did, however, conquer the world in their own way by courageously leaving their homes in Germany in 1888 to cross the threat of the Atlantic and move into a brave new world. They did not speak the language or know the customs of America and Canada; even so, as capable, hardworking homemakers they helped to forge this nation.

Grandmother Caroline (Rieps) Krueger was born in Golodam, Province of Pommer, Germany in 1868. Great grandmother Albertina (Knuth) Krueger was born in Germany in 1833. My two-generation grandmothers managed to live together, share one home and kitchen for 34 years until 1922 when Albertina Krueger died at age 89. This is a feat to ponder and admire.



A large contingent of Krueger relatives immigrated together from Germany to Menomonie, Wisconsin in 1888. That included my aged great grandparents Ernst and Albertina Krueger, and their grown children, one of them being my grandfather Karl (Charley) Krueger who was born in 1865. Grandmother Caroline Rieps, was engaged to Karl Krueger and they were married after they arrived in the United States. I picture the trepidation her parents must have felt as they watched the ship carry their daughter away to a distant land. Neither my great grandmother nor my grandmother ever saw their family in Germany again. Such loneliness and longing.

Sixteen years after arriving in Wisconsin the Krueger clan moved to Canada. Grandfather Karl Krueger came in 1903 to see the land and in 1904 the family came by rail, bringing their household belongings, livestock and equipment, as well as lumber off their land in Menomonie to build the new farmstead in Macoun, Saskatchewan. That house still stands today.

The first summer the large Krueger contingent lived in a tent while their new home was being built. Grandmother Krueger had given birth to nine children in the States from 1889 to 1903. Imagine living in a tent trying to take care of nine children, her aged in-laws, a frail brother-in-law, her husband and herself. There were fourteen hungry people to feed and there was no bakery nearby to buy bread. The ferocious mosquitoes added to the discomfort of tent living.

I am told that when Grandmother Caroline arrived on the prairies she lay down on the ground and cried, longing to go back to the States to a comfortable and familiar lifestyle. However, she picked herself up and carried on as many women of the time did. Two more children were born, in 1906 and 1909. It was said that Grandmother Caroline nursed each child for up to two years because folklore said a woman who was nursing a child would not conceive. Obviously that idea of birth control was flawed. She had the difficulty of raising eleven children under the stern watchful eyes of a strong-willed mother-in-law.

Two generations of my paternal grandmothers made the difficult transition to immigrate twice to a different country, first from Germany to the United States and then to Canada. Great grandmother was aged when they immigrated and Grandmother a girl about to be married. They did not speak English and they had no amenities, but they both persevered and claimed Canada as home. My grandmother worked tirelessly to meet the needs of eleven children, her autocratic European-minded husband, her critical in-laws, and her frail brother-in-law. My mother remembers that Uncle Reinhold had a strong fondness for his small but mighty sister-in-law and he tried to help her with household chores.

Gender roles were well defined and the husband was expected to provide adequate shelter and food for his family. The wife, the homemaker, was expected to cook, sew and mend, knit socks and

mittens, darn to extend the life of articles of clothing, make quilts, plant a garden large enough to preserve food for winter months, make butter, raise fowl, help the children with school work, and keep the fires burning. In her spare time women did fancy stitch work. I have a treasured, faded, embroidered dresser runner my grandmother made. I can picture her bent over the dim light from a kerosene lamp after a busy day, creating beauty. Pioneer women did not have a vote, rarely owned property, and required their husband's signature and approval to borrow money or do any legal business. It was a life of restrictions.

According to family legend my compliant but spirited little grandmother was not without influence. She managed gently, with a velvet glove, to sway her strong-minded husband to her way without him realizing he was being influenced by his wife. Pioneer women worked wherever needed, doing whatever was needed. My father told the story of going with his grandmother Albertina to the fields to pull weeds out of the crop. She wore a long black skirt, covered her head for protection from the blazing sun, and carried a sack to put the weeds into. It was a long day for the child, and the elderly woman, but she helped the family as they all worked to force the stubborn prairie sod into productivity. Her husband Ernst passed in 1907 and she passed in 1922 at age 89. My mother loved her mother-in-law who she described as small in stature, strong in faith and spirit, and soft in heart.

Within the confines of a busy household consisting of boisterous sons who had a penchant for sports such as wrestling and boxing, a husband who was head-of-the-house, a somewhat formidable old country mother-in-law, she maintained an uncomplaining nature. She sang in a sweet high soprano as she churned butter and kneaded bread dough for twelve-loaf batches. She was the glue that held the family together, providing the warm atmosphere.

My father had high regard for his mother who had extracted the promise from him to not drink or smoke. When he was very ill and in delirium, he saw his mother flooded in light standing on a hill. He desperately wanted to let go of his own life to join her. She had passed, aged 63, in 1931 while attending Easter church service. Dad, his voice husky with the memory, told us how she made peppernuts at Christmas, filling pillow cases of them. The men sat around the family table, dropping peppernuts into their coffee and spooning the little treats into their mouths. I found a recipe and make them every Christmas but Dad said they didn't taste like his mother's.

My grandmother died before I was born so I am writing this story from information gathered in conversations with family members. I have developed a compelling tie to her and the courage it took to be a pioneer woman at the turn of the century. In her roles of homemaker, mother, and wife, she sent ten sons and daughters out into the world to help build this nation. Given the hardships they faced over the years, that was a major accomplishment. One daughter had lived at home and died as a young adult. Transplanted into a strange challenging new life, the two grandmothers left solid foot prints in the prairie sod.

Their stories must be told.