

A SHORT REPORT ON THE FAMILY OF MIKE WENDELBOE

By Mary Wendelboe

Mike, or more correctly, Micael Østergaard Wendelboe, was born in Góðvad, near to Silkeborg, Denmark, in 1880, to Peter and Hansine Wendelboe, who had a small farm, four miles from what was not a town, but ^{held} had a future ^{promise} of becoming one in the near future, as there was potential water power, and a paper mill was in the offing, if the damming up of the river was not already a fact. More of that its possible to find out, as I have a book on Silkeborg, with dates re this.

He was the fifth boy, and there was three other children younger, all of them girls. In all, there were ten children raised to maturity, in the hardest times, ever experienced in South Dakota in the time that it was pioneered. At one time there was much talk about a new Danish colony being started in Texas. Peter Wendelboe went down with some of the youngsters, to take up homestead, but he was not made up of the material, that pioneers successfully. When his oldest son, Jens, succumbed to yellow fever, and Rasmus nearly went the same way, he brought his outfit back to South Dakota and stayed there, several years yet. - - -

Here should be inserted a bit of the lifestory of his wife. She had become an orphan, when the cholera raged

in Hensborg, a city belonging to Denmark then but since been taken by Germany. All her family was taken but she was somehow taken away, and adopted by a well-to-do family, in Copenhagen. While she grew up there, she was given a good education; we know, she went to one of the new "Folk-Schools" started by Bishop Grundtvig, after the serfs were freed from bondage. It is too bad that I can't quote the year for any of these events. She must have been a fine cook and housekeeper, because she was working on one of the large estates, that dotted the countryside where the farm help could still be had for room and board and almost no extra money wages.

Peter Wendelboe must have been a good foreman on the same estate, or he'd never have met her. She was the housekeeper for the family, and didn't have anything to do with the workers. There must have been six or seven men under Grandpa's command later on but then he was called up to serve a year or whatever was the length of the compulsory service as a soldier. He had absolutely no education then, he couldn't read or write or print. But he had a pal, who was smarter and the two of them on their Sundays or days off, walked around the town, which happened to be Viborg, and learned to read from the signs on the stores. - - - This pal became an acquaintance of the writer's father, and by a co-incidence, my aunt kept house for this man when his wife died, and he was too old or and obese to look after himself. He got very excited when he discovered his old friend, and I had to write many letters to him before he died. I believe he and

Grandpa died the(smae) same year. Grandpa was very disappointed over not being able to personally write to hom (before he died) But his sight was too feeble then. But I am sure this friend wondered mightily when he was told that Peter Wendelboe, who couldn't read or write when he was soldier, had been Postmaster for many years in Canada.

Grandpa was not much of a worker, but he was able to get lots of work out of others. But it was Grandma who did most of the heavy work, with the aid of the girls, as soon as they were ~~were old enough~~. The boys took off for other jobs, as soon as they could quit school.

After the fiasco of the Texas expedition, Grandpa couldn't settle down to farming. Mike had to have exams to get his papers, so his career on the R.R. was finished. Then the rumor went all over there was free land to be had for homesteads in Canada, in fact it was in Alberta, not too far from South Dakota. So after a lot of argument, pro and con, Grandpa went up to Alberta, looked around, liked what he saw, and went back to South Dakota and got ready to ~~now~~ have an auction sale in the spring, early.

So, in the spring of 1903 Grandpa, Grandma, and Dagmor arrived in Claresholm, Alberta, and a week later Mike arrived too, having traveled in a boxcar, full of furniture, feed and livestock. After looking around a bit, the two men picked out two quarters, adjoining each other, fifteen miles straight east of Claresholm, and as soon as the land office was opened, in Lethbridge, and the district thrown open for homesteading, they filed on the two quarters, and Mike began to haul lumber for buildings down from the Porcupine Hills, the nearest source of

could buy rough lumber from a government sawmill. ^{with} there was no roads at first, and if it was wet, after rain or snow, Mike often told about the way they had to roughlock the wagonwheels, so the load wouldn't slice down on the horses on the steep hillsides.

But he persevered, and eventually they had enough lumber to build a 24 x 24 foot cottage, a blacksmith shop, and a small, solid, hiproofed barn. The barn and the shop was located in Mike's quarter the cottage in Grandpa's.

The year 1902 had been a wet year, and many of the new settlers didn't like that sort of climate, and decided to pull up stakes and look for greener pastures. Many of them sold their cattle and horses, and their implements, and as Grandpa was well heeled after the auction in South Dakota, he bought many heads of livestock, and in a couple or three years, Dagmar and Grandma were milking up to twenty cows, feeding calves and pigs, and as there was a small pond a short distance from the house, Grandma also raised a big flock of ducks.

As soon as the smithy was built, work for Mike began to collect. He had always done all the repairwork on the farm in Dakota, and he made a lot of friends in Alberta, too, as blacksmiths and woodworkers were scarce and he was skilled in both. This part of the province was settled by Finns from Astoria who were nearly all fisherman, and what knowledge they had regarding farming, was mostly brought from the old country, Finland.

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Only three or four families remains on their original homestead. long enough to help celebrate Barons' 40th year Anniversary in . They included John Hendrikson, Andrew and Bill Jackson, whose sister later married an emigrant from the old country, (named) Jonas Rauhala.

The C.P.R. was building a railroad between Lethbridge and Calgary, since it looked as if the country could grow good wheat in abundance. Over the little Bow river at Carmangay a wooden Bridge went up, and the rails had been laid down from Calgary as ~~xxx~~ far as that; the famous bridge over the Old Man River that was known all over Canada as "the highest longest Bridge" was finished in 1909, the rails met in Barons, so the district was all set to become, as it did, ~~the town that~~ the town that was the first to ship a million bushels of No. 1 hard wheat. And then-----, there was no rain or snow for 13 months,-- no wheat,-- no gardens,--and the farmers left in droves, and those that stayed behind, spent their time between scanning the heavens for rain, and matching dimes for beer at the beerparlor.

The first rain to break the drought began to fall September 1, 1910. It didn't stop falling until everything was soaked and every hollow and ditch was full. It must have fallen steady for four or five days. Now there was lots of ~~water~~ feed coming up so no one bothered to put up hay. But there was a very heavy snowfall the 10th or 11th, the train was stopped between Lethbridge and Barons, for days. At last a rotary plow was sent north to clear the heavy drifts, that were packed solid in front of the depot as well as south and north of it. At first it caouldn't move the

snow, and when it got jarred loose, the big solid lumps broke every window in the depot, downstairs and upstairs. Mrs. MacDermot and the children were going to watch the spectacle from the upstairs bedroom windows, and the only thing, that saved them all from being killed outright was the fact, they had enough sense to crawl under the beds. Jimmy MacDermott, who must have been about eight or ten years old, was very peeved; he had wanted to see the excitement, but the view was not what he had expected. It was not possible to repair all the damage up and down the line for many days as there was a terrific shortage of glass, in fact, it was weeks before even the depots in Carmangay and Barons were replaced. But the farmers rejoiced, and well they might; They ~~were~~ harvested as immense crop, the straw was nearly too long and heavy to support itself and a lot of it lodged. Mike invented a gadget that would raise the grain enough, so the binder knife could cut it, but of course he didn't get it patented before one of the big implement dealers' snoops had got wind of it and made a model of it for his company. Mike didn't have time, for one thing, and for another, he didn't know how to go about it until he had the same thing happen to him several times, then he gave up on it.

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