

Life + weddings of the first Estonian
pioneer here in Okaville at 1900.

(Written in July, 1967, by Mom Mottus)

In May 1899 Henry Kingse family with 2
small daughters Linda 3 yrs. + Salme 11 months,
landed here on Canadian soil.

The place was 2 miles east of Sylvan Lake,
at the time called Snake Lake.

Soon after some more Estonians moved in
there came Henry Kingse's brother Kristjään
Kingse's family - Peter Herman family -
2 Herb's brother families - Geital family -
+ Wall family with 2 grown sons, Gust + Madis.

3 or 4 years later, in 1902 or 1903,
Henry Kingse family moved out from
Sylvan Lake to a place about 20 miles west -
to Okaville. At this time the place was
called Medicine, after the Medicine River.

There was no Okaville then - not even
Alberta, this country around here was then
called, North West Territories.

The country was nicer here along the
Medicine river, open water for the cattle,
+ lots of fish for the people.

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But it was a fresh country with lots of
willow brush & poplar trees, that had to
be cleared off the land by hand to make
a living. Not long after, a lot of other
Estonians were coming into this country - & they
were moving in fast, they all took homesteads -
160 acres of land along the Medicine River.

In a few years time, about the time Alberta
was named, there moved in about 40 families
of these early Estonian settlers.

Of course Henry Kingsep's family was always
the first one to move into a new country,
& started living here in Okaville in 1903

Then came John King's family with 4 grown up
children - Fritz - Olga - Gimmie - Arthur - & Ernest -
yet a baby. John King had 2 brothers - Henry
& Sam King - & a sister, Tiina King with 2
teenage daughters - Emma & Anna.

All the rest of them that came, were all young
married couples like Henry Kingsep at that time,
with small children.

There came August Posti - John Varnik -
Adam Mathews - Ed. Viro - John Teener -
Oscar Ossul - John Mares - Peter Pesler John Tuominga
Maerepe - Daniel Saag - John Altman -
3 Sestraps brothers - Mart - Mike - & Gustaw.
& Hurel brothers - August & Karl.

Then there was that big Matten family of
 7 brothers out west - Oscar - Hugo - Roy -
 Ludwig - Johannes - Arthur - & Molly -
 all single at that time except Oscar the oldest
 was married, - 4 more brothers - Carl - John -
 & Henry - & Ogan - 2 Häberle brothers - Karl & John
 2 Hoetz brothers - Peter & Paul - 2 Langer brothers
 Carl & Paul - 3 Pihoski brothers - August - Carl -
 & John - 2 other Matten brothers but no
 relation - Gust & Jacob.

And all these mentioned early Estonian
 pioneers of more than 40 families -
 were all at that time on the same level.
 They all had the same ambition to get ahead
 in life, to clear their homesteads of trees &
 brush & to get bigger grain fields - & bigger income
 & to get richer than the other fellow.
 But this ^{getting richer} ^{was} ^{much} ^{harder} than going to clear land by
 hand acre by acre. Early pioneer people were
 ambitious, had strong willpower, & were happy
 of the fact that they could do it.
 They all took part in that hard work of clearing ^{land}
 Men - women - children & all, & the grain fields
 got bigger ^{& bigger} acre by acre - day by day.
 And they were so happy to have their wishes
 come true ^{through} ^{their} ^{own} ^{hard} ^{work} & sweat.

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They were proud of the fact that they had accomplished something big, had build beautiful homes for themselves & their families had build up the country - making roads, building bridges & cities & beautiful parks. They are proud that through their effort Alberta is of what you see it to-day, & after almost 70 long years, that through their effort beautiful Alberta was born.

Later - There were changes taking place. Alberta was named in 1905, & Eckville (Killik) store, & Gilby stores were built.

Around this time first Estonian wedding took place of Olga Kinn & Karl Paal.

One year later, second wedding took place of Emma Kinn & Carl Langer. Then came the third wedding of Emma Kinn & John Toomingas, then the fourth in 1912 of Lydia Perles & Paul Langer.

And 5 years later in 1917 there came the ^{fifth} wedding of Linda Kingsep & Gust Mattes. Their wedding has lasted for 50 long years, & this is their golden wedding of Linda & Gust of what we are celebrating now.

Henry Kingsep's eldest child & the oldest daughter, ^{first} was going to get married. 1

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At this time weddings were performed in their own homes, because there were no halls, & going to Red Deer was out of question to go on that long 3 day trip with horse team on bad roads. As many guests as there was room were invited.

Here is the wedding of Linda & Gust. It happened to be nice bright sunny day, on this 29th of July 1917. But at night came such a heavy frost that froze all grain in & around Celville. The guests came at 4 o'clock, & the wedding ceremony was performed at 5 by the priest Andrew Harju. There were 3 brides maids, Salme Kingsep - Amanda Mow - & Anna Partti and there were 3 best men, Jacob Mattus - Hugo Mattus - & Carl Pihvoja. Now there came that big wedding supper at 6 o'clock, all good Estonian home-made food, such as very-rosit (blood sausage) very-cack (blood patties) seilt (jelly meat) and there were all kinds of other meats, and that good fresh smoked fish from the Medicine River, even the drink was home-made what they called 'kali', & whole barrel of it to what everybody helped themselves from the top. The dessert & cakes were brought from outside by the guests.

In those times going on a honeymoon was unknown, as with no income they could not afford it. The wedding lasted till late the next morning, the sun was up already when the guests left. Now the young couple Linda & Gust had to go too, to start their new life together of their own. The horse team ^{was} ready ^{waiting} outside Gust's brother Jacob was driving, & the bride's sister Salme sat beside him. The young couple were sitting behind on a demowrat.

Now the four of them were starting out West to Kispiox bay where the newly weds were going to make their home with Jacob at the start.

The house was nicely decorated with young green trees along the walls, there were close neighbors to meet them, singing all kinds of wedding songs, & making jokes. Sweet bread filled the air as the chicken & the trimmings were cooking on the stove for the next meal.

It was a happy life in those times when people were so friendly as one family. They were all on the same level, all poor settlers.

Work came first in those days, and the young married couple had to start working right away, Gust & his brother Jacob took axes on their backs & went to clear more land the next morning.

while Linda had to do the chore and the house-hold duties around the home.

The people had their youth - their health - their high dreams for the better future, they did not mind the hard work, whenever possible they visited one another & had social gatherings much more than now days they started building halls, they made Gilby hall & Estonian hall. Life was progressing fast, they had all kinds of social evenings in the hall, where Henry Kingsep took the lead. He was the soul of the community, a born social leader, & a starter of this early life here in Oshtemo.

Even before the halls were built, Henry Kingsep formed a social group what he called, "Medicine Ore Eesti Selts". Henry & Sam Rinna had the biggest house at the time, & they welcomed the people to go there for their social gatherings. The meetings that were once in 2 weeks. And how happy they ^{all} were, mainly to be together which was so satisfying for their lonely souls. They had choir & dialogue practice for the program they had at Christmas & Easter. And here again Henry Kingsep took the lead, played his violin to teach songs, and he was the most wonderful speaker.

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There were recitations, and debates close
 of the meeting which was so much fun.
 At the meeting ^{the program} had two delicious Estonian
 home-made cakes what each had brought
 along, and that happy chatter filled the
 room during lunch-period.

There were the happy days of the old
 Estonian Pioneers at the beginning of
 1900. So many of them are gone,
 but those that are left, still remember
 those ^{good} old times, & some of them might
 even remember the wedding of Linda & Gust.
 Their wedding has lasted for 50 long years,
 & has matured into Golden Wedding, & into
 centennial years to make it important.
 And this is the Golden Wedding we are
 celebrating tonight of Linda & Gust.

Note: - This valuable article was written by
 sister Linda to be read at the big celebration
 of her & Gust's Golden Wedding anniversary on
 July 29, 1967. The Centennial year. Brother
 Otto was to read it, as he was appointed
 the master of ceremony for that important event.
 But instead of that happy get-together, our
 joy turned into sorrow, as the big family were
 grieved & saddened by our dear Sister's illness
 and passing on Oct. 28th. This article will be a
 sweet remembrance of her. In loving memory
 of Solma