

Early History of the KRAUSE Family

as told by Adolf C. Krause

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Our ancestry is traced back to our great, great Grandfather Christian Krausz I (Krausz or Kraucz is the French spelling of Krause) who was a young French soldier in Napoleon's Army when Napoleon decided to invade Russia in the spring of 1812. The Russians had lured the french Army into the interior by falling back step by step and laying waste to the countryside as they went. The Russians burned, pillaged and destroyed their own store houses to starve the French Army. (Later the Russians themselves suffered severely from food and clothing shortages.) Napoleon had expected to spend the winter in Moscow. When he got there, one of the greatest disappointments of his life awaited him. As he approached the city, he saw it was in flames. Most of the inhabitants had been evacuated from the city and those who remained had set the city on fire and Napoleon found himself surrounded by ruins. The Russian Army encamped north of Moscow that winter waiting it out. This became known as the Battle of Boradino.

The French Army, over 600,000 men, was the strongest and best equipped in the world at that time. The Russians had practically no Army, were poorly equipped and lacked discipline. The Russian's only method of retaliation was to burn the immense food stores to prevent Napoleon's further invasion of the rich interior.

The Russian winter was approaching and there was no food for Napoleon's Army. There was nothing left for him to do but to turn back and begin the long march to return to France. But Napoleon

abandoned the Army and fled from Russia - leaving in great haste for Paris with only his personal guards. He left his Army behind completely leaderless. In their disorderly retreat the tired, hungry, wounded soldiers were attacked by guerrillas, an Arctic Blizzard turned rain into snow and howling wolves were a constant threat. Marauding Russian soldiers would join retreating French around evening encampments.

In their haste they overloaded the bridges crossing the River Pe risens, tributary of the Volga, and many lost their lives in the River. The dead became a bridge of human bodies for the remainder to cross over. The balance of his Army was overtaken by a rain which by morning turned to a heavy snow. A cold north wind sent the temperatures to below freezing. Men were found huddled into bunches of 10 to 12 frozen into a solid mass.

Our great, great Grandfather was one of the few survivors of that tragic campaign. The few who had escaped death from disease or exposure or weren't captured, formed a disorderly retreat in small groups. Christian Krausz I was one of a group of twelve soldiers who left Moscow to go home to France. Rain, Cold, Snow and Wolves were the main enemies as they trudged across the frozen fields - over drifts and dead bodies. When one died, he was buried in the snow with his gun. These beaten, retreating soldiers would seek shelter in haystacks at night. Often the ones near the outside would be frozen to death by morning. After a brief burial service, the survivors would take the dead man's ammunition for future use.

By the time Christian Krausz' group reached a small Hollandish settlement near the Weissel River, only three men were left. They

sought refuge in a barn and slept there over night, where the owner of the estate found them the next morning. The villagers took care of the three bedraggled soldiers the rest of the winter. Two of the men were family men who had come from western France. They were anxious to return to their wives and children. In the spring they started walking across the fields to their homeland and their families.

Christian had come from northern France, near Alsace-Lorraine; he had a little knowledge of the German and Holland languages and had served as an interpreter for the three. Christian was a single man and was in no hurry to go home; he remained in the friendly little village. Later he married the daughter of the man who had first found them. He and his bride lived in the village five years and then moved to a German settlement near what later became the City of Lodz. He bought land and built up an estate in the village called Vieonchin.

The following paragraph might help explain why our great, great Grandfather joined a band of retreating soldiers that tramped across the fields instead of "marching" down the highway from village to village and his way home. "The modern stone highway (from central Poland to the ancient city of Ostrog on the frontier of the Soviet Union), bordered with hundred-year-old oaks and poplars, has an old and very rich history. The neighboring villagers still tell stories of the march of Napoleon's Army in 1812 over this same route during their attack on Imperial Russia. And they tell of the defeated soldiers returning the same way and dying in the frozen mud from hunger and cold. The Ukrainians were resentful toward Napoleon's soldiers because they had attacked Russia. The Poles, in spite of their hatred for the Czar, despised Napoleon Bonaparte almost as much because he had promised the Polish people if they entered the war on

his side he would give them a free state, and he did not keep his word. So when the weary soldiers stopped in the villages by the side of the road, the peasants - Ukrainian and Polish - either set their dogs on them or murdered them, refusing to give them food or lodging." The Piasts of Poland by Antoni Gronowicz page 2

Our ancestors witnessed the birth and early growth of the city of Lodz on the swamp lands of the central plains of Poland, Russia at that time. They were among the pioneers who helped transform the wilderness into productive farmlands. The large families contributed to the growth of several German settlements in the area - such as Vieonechin, Zulzfelt, Gurke, Schinkelev

Christian Krausz' son, Christian II (our great Grandfather) acquired large stretches of forest lands and stumpage from the Russian Government. These were huge virgin forest of pine and spruce. Christian Krausz II was an energetic man, who, with the help of men he hired, logged off the land, cleared out the stumps and within one year made the land tillable. Originally they cut lumber by splitting thick boards off the logs with broad axes. Later they bought a hand powered saw from Germany and still later bought power equipment.

The new land was fertile and even today Poland is mainly an agricultural country. It was urgent to get the land cleared promptly. For the clearing of the land they could get the use of it to raise crops. After five years (five crops) the land had to be turned back to the Russian Government. There was no sawmills. The timber taken off the land was sawed into boards by hand with cross-cut saws. Heavy timbers were sawed and delivered to the new city of Lodz. (These huge timbers were used in place of today's steel beams.)

They were used mostly for building large apartments, housing for Lodz' fast growing population. Shingles, boards, barrels - everything was made by hand. The largest apartment house at the time was built and owned by Christian II.

Christian Krause II (somewhere in here the spelling and possibly the pronunciation of the name was Germanized) married a German girl, Johanna Rhode, of Wittenburg. She could neither read nor write but she was super intelligent concerning her husband's business. She could figure sums faster in her head than the rest could with paper and pencil. In their old age they moved to Hchoina to retire, living on a farm (Gut) with their three youngest children - Rudolph, Natalie and Edith. Even in their old age, Christian and Johanna were energetic, ambitious and hardworkers. They built up another estate which they left to their youngest son, Rudolph. Rudolph was a very poor manager. When he got the place, it was debt free but through Rudolph's mismanagement he lost everything little by little. Later, Rudolph married Mr. Alfons Agather's sister.

Children born to Christian II and Johanna were: Friederck, our Grandfather, Barbara (Stensil), Johann, Marie (Fischer), Christian III, Wilhelm, Eleanore (Flath), our Grandmother, Pauline (Wegner), Rudolph, Berta (Rufenach), Natalie (Gumelt).

*(Gustav Krause of Coburg, Germany saved a picture of our great grandparents, Christian II and Johanna Krause, and their children. He sent a copy of it to our mother after World War II. The picture was especially precious to her because it included her father. Mother had never had a picture of her father.)

*Personal note added by Johanna Siegel

One of Marie (Krause) Fischer's sons, Johann, came to the United States to study in the ministry. After studying several years, he gave up the ministry and went to Montana. He lived with our Father and Uncle Fritz on a small farm seven miles north of Kalispell. Our father and Johann Fischer were more like brothers than cousins. In 1904 Johann died of appendicitis and he was the first one to be buried in the Lutheran Cemetery five miles north of Kalispell on the Old Whitefish Road.

The oldest son of Christian II and Johanna, Friederick, our Grandfather, grew up in Vieonchin learning the miller trade. He married Marie Bauer, a farmer's daughter whose ancestors had come from southern Germany. They bought an estate, Gurke, in Poland in partnership with Freiburger and Weber. (Weber went to school with Alfons Agather's father in a Lodz seminary.) Freiburger was the father of Theodore Freiburger of Ronan, Montana.) Weber took the nobleman's house to live in. Frederick Krause took the sheep barns and made a beautiful home out of them. Freiburger made a lovely home out of the stables. Many of the Polish nobility at this time were heavily in debt having tried to keep up with the rich of Europe. Gurke had been such a nobleman's estate. The three young families, men, women and children, worked hard in the fields to make the neglected land productive again. It became a prosperous farm and dairy. The huge hayshed later burned down. It had been struck by lightning. (The hayshed must have been immense from the way our father described it.)

Seven children were born to Frederick and Marie Krause while they lived at Gurke - Johann, Marie (Rimpel), Fritz, Amalia (Podritzki), Pauline (Bonik), Gustav and Adolf. Our father was two years old when Grandfather Frederick Krause sold his share of Gurke to Rufenach,

Leopold's father. (Leopold came to the United States about the same time our father did.) Grandfather bought Joachim, a neglected mill about a mile and half from Gurke, from a German nobleman who had been rich but, who, through gambling and drunkenness had lost his wealth. Grandfather had been buying his flour at Joachim and through that had become interested in buying the mill. Grandfather had learned the miller trade and he felt here was an opportunity to make a better living for his growing family. Five children were born at Joachim - Berta (Scherfer), Martha, (She married her cousin, the son of Barbara Krause and Christain Stensil.), Natalie (Bauer) (She also married a cousin.), Rudolph and Antonia. The last two died in infancy. (Alfred and I visited Joachim in the summer of 1973. See page for an account and other historical information gathered at that time.)

Gustav Krause married Martha Flath, a cousin - our mother's sister - and they made their home with his parents and later took care of them until their death. Grandfather passed away during World War I, August 15, 1915 at the age of 75 and Grandmother Krause lived to be 77. She passed away March 8, 1919. (I can still remember that day. That evening Dad asked Mama to mark the calendar with a special note. "Something happened to my mother today", he said. This was five months after armistice had been declared but no civilian communication had resumed. It was several months later that our folks got the dreaded black bordered letter, with the date our parents already knew in their hearts would be March 8.)

Johann, Fritz and Adolf came to America. Johann came first with his family - wife, Emma and six children - Elizabeth, Alfred, Alfons, Herman, Reinhold and Walter. Fritz and Adolf came later as single men to avoid the Russian draft. Uncle Gustav Krause had been drafted into the Russian Army. When he came home on leave, he described the

deplorable conditions and life in the Army and urged his two brothers to leave as soon as possible. They did.

Our father, Adolph Christian Krause, came to the United States in 1893. He spent two and half years in Minnesota with Emil and Antonia Krieg. Emil Krieg and our father had been passengermates on the Norddeutscher Lloyd Bremen which sailed from Bremen on the 18 of November. (Our father referred to Emil Krieg as Uncle but I don't know the connections.) In March of 1896 our father came to Montana with his cousin, Johann Fischer. They spent some time in Miles City where they worked on the railroad and our father did some carpentry work. On August 1 of 1896 they arrived in Kalispell, Montana. Uncle Fritz and our father took up a homestead in Brown's Gulch, twenty miles east of Kalispell. Later they bought an eighty-acre stump ranch seven miles north of Kalispell, on the Old Whitefish Road. In 1905 our father went back to Joachim, Poland to visit his aging parents. At the family reunion to celebrate our father's arrival from America, he fell in love with his cousin, Wanda. They were married January 16, 1906 and two months later our father brought his bride to a new, strange life, full of many uncertainties.

Uncle Fritz had remained on the farm to take care of their hard-earned possession of which they were very proud - to be landowners in the New World! Now it was Uncle Fritz' turn to visit his parents and find himself a Frau. He spent a year in his homeland and he, too, came back with a German bride. The two brothers lived, together with their wives, in one house for about a year. Then our father bought out Uncle Fritz and Uncle Fritz bought a farm west of Kalispell.

As told by Wanda Krause June 1946

Eleanore Krause, our mother's mother, married Johann Flath of Lodz. He was a harness maker by trade. His parents were poor farmers from Germany. They, Eleanore and Johann, lived in Lodz where they managed the largest apartment house in the city for Eleanore's parents, Christian II and Johanna Krause. To supplement their income Johann continued with his harness making. Four children were born in Lodz, Marie (Fritz), Berta (Patzner), Rudolph, and Martha (Krause). Johann Flath's health had always been on the delicate side. The stress and strain of two jobs was too much for him. His health continued to fail. He sold his harness business and bought a rundown estate. Working in the out-of-doors improved his health but he never was a sturdy, robust man. In a few years of hard work the neglected land was productive again and the estate was flourishing and making a good living for the growing family. Here Ottilie (Zippel), Wanda (Krause), Frieda (died at age 8), Alvine (Eichhorst), Alfred were born. Two more Emma and Lydia died in infancy. When our mother was ten years old, her father died of typhoid fever. He was only 42. Frieda died three weeks later also of typhoid. Grandmother Flath raised eight children alone. They continued to live on the farm after their father's death. The sons and daughters worked side by side with the hired help as was the custom in many European countries.

Our mother was twenty-four when she married, left home and said "Good-bye - Auf Wiedersehen" - never to see her loved ones again.

More on the home life of our mother under THE MARRIAGE OF OUR PARENTS

Our parents saw and often talked about the beautiful structures left by the Swedes and preserved by the Polish Government. They were

especially impressed with the court house and the church in Pabianice. These structures were made entirely of wood. The buildings were put together with wooden pegs in place of metal nails.

The story of our ancestors is written most of it verbatim, from notes I made in the summer of 1946 on my last visit with our father. My great regret is that we (all of us) didn't make notes or write accounts of the many interesting, often hilarious, sometimes sad, but always fascinating events in the lives of our dear parents as they were told to us over the years. The story of OUR PARENTS WEDDING is written mostly from memory - of things Mom and Dad told during the course of their busy lives raising six lively youngsters.

Again, if only we had done this while our parents were still living. We often talked about doing it but kept putting it off. I used to think I would NEVER forget the stories our parents told us. Now, sad to say, time, work and worry, stress and strain have wiped out many of those beautiful memories.