

*This undated story was handwritten by Edith Edmonds, daughter of Alvina (Wunnenberg) and Herbert Edmonds and a granddaughter of the immigrant Henry A. Wunnenberg (elsewhere seen as Heinrich Wunnenberg). Edith was born in 1908. This may have been a school assignment, as it has an "A+" written at the top. Dale Edmonds, Edith's son, found it in the house Henry built.*

## **The Story of My Grandfather by Edith Edmonds**

Mr. H. A. Wunnenberg was born at Calvorde, Germany in 1821. He was the only son of Mr. and Mrs. August Wunnenberg. While he was a young man he learned the trade of a miller, traveling to many different towns to secure the most trade and pay. He always had many pets such as goats, dogs and birds. One of his dogs was very intelligent so he called him Tabor. Many times he would throw a key or anything out in the grain field to teach him to be obedient. No matter where he threw the key Tabor would always find it and bring it back to him.

As there were no banks in his days he always carried his money with him. One day he went to a strange town. He did not get started home before dark, so he decided to stay at a boarding house or hotel as he did not consider it safe to go home carrying the money with him that he had. He went to a hotel taking his little dog with him. When he asked for the key for his room they told him he couldn't take the dog along. Then he told them that he wouldn't stay either as his dog was his only body guard, but after paying an extra sum he was allowed to take him along. Tabor barked furiously many times during the night and Grandfather slept very little, but no one bothered them after all.

In 1853 he married Miss Emilie Rehfeld of Linzarsigle, Germany and came to the United States on their wedding trip where they were planning to make their home. It was usually the custom in Germany to announce their engagement in church three weeks before they were married, but as my Grandfather wanted to come on a ship which was to sail in about a week's time he was given a permit to get married before. On his way over he was very much afraid of being robbed, so he had his money which was mostly gold, sewed in a belt that he wore around his waist. They came over in an old sailboat. Consequently, their trip was very rough and cold. It took a very long time: twelve weeks and six days before they reached land. Grandfather became terribly seasick before they landed, sometimes wishing he hadn't started. While they were still on the ocean but drawing near the coast a large storm came up which tossed the boat backwards and forth from one wave to another. Many times the ship felt like it was upsetting and at one time it was thrown against a huge rock, knocking a hole in the side and causing it to leak. They tried in vain to stop the leak but nothing seemed to help. Then the men began dipping it out and all hands were kept busy to keep it from sinking. After the storm passed it was not long until they reached land safely.

He landed at New York and came from there to Burlington where he remained only a few days trying to locate a place. Later he moved to a small tract of land about twelve miles north of Burlington where he built a log cabin. The roof was made of clapboard or bark. The fireplace extended all along the one side of the cabin. There were two windows, one on either end, which was the only means of light, and these were covered with greased paper to admit light and exclude the air. In the evenings they would light an old grease lamp which gave a much poorer light than our kerosene lamps.

His first year of farming consisted mainly of a "truck patch" and sheep raising, although during the spring months he ran a hard maple sugar camp. He tapped many trees and made large amounts of maple sugar which he sold in a nearby town. The young people used to go out New Years' shooting and when they would call on Grandfather he would give them some maple sugar which they all seemed to enjoy very much as he was the only one nearby who made maple sugar.

He was greatly troubled by wolves catching his sheep and spent many hours sitting or standing behind the haystack watching for them. There were two species of these wolves that bothered most. They were the black timber wolf and the small grey wolf which inhabited the prairie.

Farming was still quite rude as they had a one shovel plow and planted the corn by hand. In later years he bought a farm and moved to another log cabin which was about two and one half miles southeast of Sperry (Iowa).

On the winter days he would get up at two o'clock in the morning and scoop snow away so he could cut down trees to make barrel staves, hoops and rails, the latter of which he built a fence around his farm. He had a yoke of oxen with which he hauled his wood to town, many times taking it to town, but rather than hauling it back home again he would have to unload it some place without receiving any pay for it. These oxen were not driven by lines as our horses are nowadays but were driven with a long pole or stick, quite often running away.

One day as my Grandfather was returning home from town his oxen became very unmanageable. They began running and turned off the main road, then crossed Yellow Springs Creek, over which there was no bridge, with great speed and at a place where the water was quite deep, causing Grandfather to fall off in the water. By the time he reached home his clothing was frozen stiff.

When the Civil War began Grandfather was one of the men supposed to go, but as he was the father of several children he was not compelled to go.

In 1877 after living in a one story frame house he had a two story frame house built on his farm which was a great improvement over the old one. Later he bought and cleared more farm land which was mostly used for the raising of wheat, corn and oats. The first year he lived in this country he cut the grain down by use of the cradle, but later the reaper was invented which cut the grain down and then had to be tied in bundles by hand.

In 1888 his wife died leaving him and the children. During his later life his sons carried on the farming, but although he was troubled with rheumatism he always managed to help do a little of the work.

Considering everything, it seems to me they must have had a very discouraging life and a great many hardships to endure.