

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

of

JACOB MILLER

Colorado

Born July 2, 1871

Written in 1936

Died Jan 24, 1937

Greeley, Colorado
June 27, 1962

Explanatory note: The following is a transcript of a copy of an original family history prepared by our father, Jacob Miller. The original is not available. The copy appears to be in the handwriting of Eleanor J. Senn. It was given to me by Rachel Schwindt with the understanding that I would duplicate it and send each of the family a copy. I have edited the transcript by correcting the spelling and some of the words.

David J. Miller

Jost Heinrich Miller emigrated with his family from Hessen, Germany to the state of Saratov, Russia, and settled in the colony of Norka on the 15th day of August, 1767. His only son bore him three sons, Johnn Georg, Friedrich, and Peter, and two daughters, Elizabeth Trout and Anna Maria Fisher.

My grandfather, Johnn Georg, had two sons and four daughters. Johannes Peter, my father, was born September 19, 1840, and mother, Elizabeth Pauly, April 17, 1846. To them were born eight children:

Johnnes born September 23, 1869

Jacob born July 2, 1871

Lorence born January 24, 1873

Elisabeth born July 8, 1876

Katharina Elizabeth born August 13, 1878

Jost Heinrich born July 29, 1880

Peter born March 15, 1884

Christina born April 23, 1886 (Christina died at two years of age.)

My Family:

Jacob Miller, born July 2, 1871 and Katharina Margaret, born December 24, 1876 were married September 30, 1894. Their children were:

Lydia, born August 20, 1895

Katherine, born March 13, 1897

Rachel, born January 3, 1899

Hulda, born November 15, 1900

Saul, born February 3, 1903

David J., born May 23, 1906

Barbara, born August 3, 1907

Albert R., born March 18, 1911
Ester Mae, born January 3, 1915
Ruth Fay, born January 3, 1915

I, Jacob Miller, as the second to the oldest son of my parents, Johnnes Peter and Elisabeth Miller, was born on the 2nd day of July, 1871, in the colony of Norka, State Soratov, Russia, a colony of about 11,000 people at that time. My father was a well-to-do farmer and was able to give his children an education. There were three large school-houses in this colony in which was taught mostly religion and reading, writing and arithmetic. The teachers were all German teachers. Only about 75 children, all boys, had a separate schoolroom and were taught history and geography, in the Russian language, and grammar in both German and Russian. I and my four brothers were privileged to attend this school. The rest of the children did not know anything about the outside world, only what someone had told them. There were no newspapers of any kind, except the pastor of the church, which was a Reformed church, got a few copies of a church paper from Germany. I was confirmed at the age of 14, and at that time my father had leased a farm away from the colony. In connection with the farm was a small waterpower flour mill which only ground about 75 bushels of grain in 24 hours. Besides this we kept cattle and sheep, and hogs. Since the land was very productive we were doing very well. When I was 16 years of age I was permitted to go to high school in a neighboring colony, Grimm. I soon got to the last class, and on my father's uncle's advice I had to quit without finishing high school. But my youngest brother, Peter, was privileged to go through the University.

At the age of 20 in 1891 there was a crop failure in our district, and many families emigrated from our state, Saratov, to the United States. My father thought it wise to send me to the new world. The last week in December I went to the state capitol, Saratov, about 60 miles from home to inquire for my passport, and on the first day of January, 1892, I boarded the train with my cousin, Henry Miller, 10 years older than myself, with his family and several others for Germany. At the town of Koono we had to stay a day for the endorsement of our passports, and that day the Czar's army was on a parade which we enjoyed seeing, and hearing the roar of the canon. The first station in Germany was Erdkuhren (?). Here we had to stay a few days on account of a shortage of ships. From here over Berlin

to Hamburg where we had to wait a few days more for the ships we were assigned to with the name of our country, Russia. Part of the time on the ocean we had very rough weather, and it took us 21 days to land in New York. At Ellis Island we had to stay 10 more days, as some sickness had arrived. From New York we took a small boat to Norfolk, Virginia, where I really saw my first negroes, and plenty of them too. A sort of fear came on us when we saw these people. We were not used to them. From here we went by rail to Sutton, Nebraska, arriving here the first of March, 1892. Just two months travel, which nowadays they do in two weeks or less. Arriving in Sutton, Nebraska, some school mates of mine who had left the old world four years before met us at the depot, George and Henry Schleiger. I stayed here three days. By that time John Miller, a cousin of my father, came in from the farm and took us out to their home where we, I and my cousin Henry and family, stayed a week or more waiting for a railroad pass to take us to his son John at Max, Nebraska. Here we worked on the railroad all summer. In the fall of the year my cousin, Henry Miller, went to Harvard, Nebraska, on the farm. Myself and Ludwig Miller, a second cousin of mine, went to McCook, Nebraska. Lui Miller stayed only a short time and went to Portland, Oregon, where his uncle, George Miller, lived. I got a job in a second hand store over the winter, and in the summer worked on the farm for the same man, Harry Ludwick. Mr. Ludwick also was a tinner by trade. I worked for him 14 months, and saved up \$240.00. The coming year, 1894, was still drier and another crop failure. There was very little chance to find a job. In July I took the train and went to Sutton, Nebraska, and from here 9 miles northwest to my cousins, Henry Miller, on the farm. He advised me to stay with him and farm together. The crop was a failure here too, but we had enough corn stock for feed to get us over the winter. Together we cut the corn stalks for feed.

Then I got me a team and a few farm tools, and a cow. Then I had to have a wife to milk the cow and cook for me. Being acquainted with Katharine Margarete Wacker at McCook, Nebraska, I decided to go there and get married. We were united at the Congregational Church of McCook, Nebraska, on the 30th day of September, 1894, by Rev. Marx. This farm was three miles southeast of Stockham (Stockville, Sutton?), Nebraska. There was a small German church at this town which we joined. Rev. Hilkenbaumer was pastor. The crop for 1895 was only fair, and we decided to go back to McCook, Nebraska, on an irrigated farm. Before we moved, Lydia was born on the 20th

of August, 1895. In September we moved to McCook and started farming in company with my brother-in-law, John Wacker. We also took father and mother-in-law with us on the farm with their two smallest children, George and Kathryn. That fall we had a sad experience. There was the irrigation ditch close to the house, and the farm land was below the ditch. There was only one plank lying across the ditch. The little girl crossed the plank one evening all by herself, slipped off, and fell in. Since there was no one around, the girl drowned. This was the second girl they lost within a year. The next spring of 1896 we planted onions, potatoes, and corn. The corn crop was good and made about 50 bushels to the acre, but the rest was poor. My brother-in-law desired that fall to go back to the railroad. I bought his share of interest in the farm equipment, and the coming spring went on another stock range farm where we raised cattle and hogs and milk cows. This farm was three miles southwest of McCook along the Republican River. The owner's name was Sutton. Here we stayed two years and made some headway. Here is where Katherine was born on the 13th day of March, 1897, and Rachel on the 3rd of January, 1899. Meantime my father had died and left me an estate of \$1,500.00. With this money I bought a 320 acre farm three miles southwest of Culbertson, Nebraska. This is the next station west of McCook, where a large relation of the Wacker family lived. Besides the 320 acres of deeded land, I had a section of school land leased for a pasture which made an ideal cattle ranch, and we intended to stay here for good. The next two years were very dry years so that I had to buy straw from the irrigated farmers to feed my cattle through the winter. It happened that a cattle man came out from the east and bought up a lot of land in my neighborhood. So I sold the farm, cattle and all in the spring of 1901. On this farm Hulda was born the 15th day of November, 1900. Another reason for selling out was that my health seemed to fail. We moved from here to Lincoln, Nebraska. Here I went to the doctor for two months, and later in the year I worked in a resident grocery store for Conrad Bauer for a few months, then in a large store in the center of town up to March 1, 1902. My wife's parents stayed on their son's farm, Henry, near Culbertson up to this time. Meanwhile the beet industry was started in Colorado and a lot of families moved from Nebraska to northern Colorado, Greeley, Fort Collins, Eaton, Loveland, and Longmont. A lot of my friends from McCook, Nebraska, moved to Loveland, also my father-in-law. They liked the country so well and asked me to come out too, which I did in the spring of 1902 and worked in a grocery store for Mr. W. J. Galligan who had a very

profitable business. I worked as a delivery boy for \$40.00 a month. Deciding to stay here, we built a home on east 6th Street, No. 431. This was a six-room frame house at the cost of \$1,600.00. In this new house Saul was born February 3, 1902. Before the year was up I got an inside job in a general store owned by Mr. George Briggs. Here I stayed three years and got my wages up to \$60.00 a month, considered to be a good fair wage at that time. In the spring of 1903 I traded my town property for a 10 acre tract at the edge of town on the west side of Colorado Avenue. Here we lived 17 years. All the rest of our children were born here, David, May 23, 1906; Barbara, August 3, 1907; Albert, March 18, 1911; and the twins, Ruth Fay and Ester Mae, January 3, 1915.

While I was working for Mr. Briggs my brother-in-law, Henry Wacker, who was working as a foreman on the railroad, had some money to invest, and he insisted that I use this money some way to make more interest. Some of the farmers and towns people were making money in feeding sheep and cattle, so I invested in sheep and we sure did lose. The next year we fed cattle, and we came out with no profit. In 1906 I decided to go in the mercantile business myself in connection with my brother-in-law, Hy Wacker. This, it seemed too, didn't want to go successfully. I sold 1/2 interest to Con Wacker of Culbertson, Nebraska, and in a few months we traded this business for a 130 acre irrigated farm near Johnstown, Colorado. Meanwhile, Henry Wacker came up from Culbertson, Nebraska, with his family on account of his wife's health. He started a business and later took me in as partner, trading to me his share in the Johnstown farm and paying my brother-in-law, Henry Wacker, in cash for his share of the farm. In two years or so Mr. Henry Wacker desired to move back to Culbertson, Nebraska, and sold me his interest in the business and traded it for a Wisconsin farm. I worked a year for this firm in the old place of business, then stayed one summer at home taking care of the 10 acre tract.

In August, 1913, I started a new grocery store with only a few hundred dollars. This time I was very successful. For the next five years I paid off a \$5,000.00 encumbrance on my ten acre tract and built a new 11-room house on it for \$6,000.00 which was all paid for, beside all new furniture. In the fall of 1918 I sold my business to Mr. Young from Oklahoma who had it for three years. Meanwhile, we sold the ten acre tract for \$22,000.00 and bought a property in

town on Ninth and Cleveland at the cost of \$12,000.00. The rest of the money was invested in dry land and a new car for \$1,800.00. We farmed dry land with a tractor for three years, then buying the same business back from Mr. Young we ran it for seven more years, also the dry land farm part of the time. This time we were not so successful. What profit we made in business we lost on the farm. In 1924, March 10, our mother died, and from then on things seemed going down. In 1928 I traded the rest of my business for a dryland farm and from here on we spent all our time with the farm. In 1929 we had a good wheat crop of 10,000 bushels which sold at \$1.08 per bushel. This gave us courage to go still heavier into farming. In 1930 we raised again over 10,000 bushels but sold only at 59 cents a bushel. Since all the expense and especially machinery were so high priced, we were losing money. In 1931 we had more acreage but only raised 10,000 bushels and sold it at 27 cents per bushel, and that broke us. We still kept on farming for four more years with government help, but the years were dry and crops very poor and still no price. Here we lost everything we had accumulated in previous years. Meantime I worked in a grocery and bakery for Mr. William Goener for three years just to make a living so Ruth Fay and Ester Mae could finish high school. On January 1, 1935, I retired. The boys, Saul, David and Albert had by that time a good start in college and they had to pull themselves through on their own strength.

Original was written in 1936