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Rengel, Anton (1853 -)

Dean Nelson

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Anton Rengel was born in Saint Cloud, January 16, 1853 the son of John and Elizabeth (Geisen) Rengel.

John and Elizabeth (Geisen) Rengel were natives of Germany, born in Koblenz and came to America about 1852 on a wedding trip. They arrived in Chicago and, in company with his brothers, ^{John} Anton started for Minnesota on foot. Elizabeth Rengel stayed in Chicago. John arrived in Sauk Rapids, Minnesota and inquired about land. He was informed of the land across the river and asked how he was to get across. He was told to wait until the Indians came and they took him across in a canoe. He located a claim homestead about where Saint Anthony church now stands, at 20-24th Avenue and First Street North. John then returned to Chicago and brought his wife back to Saint Cloud. This time the journey was made by ox cart and forded the Mississippi River at Lowry's Trading Post, near Sauk Rapids, Minnesota. Their nearest neighbors were the Schwarzs and the Ruehles.

Anton Rengel was born and raised on this homestead. The reason for his father taking a farm so far from the present site of Saint Cloud's business district was that this location was about the only place where there were any trees. The land from John Rengel's farm to the river was all prairie.

The day that Anton was born the Indians were all around the cabin. His mother had only a bed of pallet supported by fence rails. His father wouldn't let the Indians in until the child was born. Anton says, "They frightened us so that I guess it accounts for my always having been afraid of Indians."

Anton relates further, "As a child I can recall one time the Indians came at meal time. We only had bread made of cracked wheat and milk to drink. The Indians left right away and came back about an hour later with two deer over their shoulders. They gave us these thinking that we

must be starving."

"Prices were so high that we couldn't afford to buy anything to eat. Flour was \$18 a barrel, meat 50¢ a pound, and coffee 60¢ a pound. My mother used to grind wheat in the coffee mill to bake bread with."

"My father brought supplies up from Saint Paul by ox cart. He had to ford the river both ways and by leaving on Monday morning he could get back by the following Saturday evening."

"Our early cabin had no floor or beds. We slept on dried wild grass and had fence posts to divide the beds. Our neighbors were so poor at one time that they wore boards, strapped on their feet with willows, for shoes."

"Our only draft animals were oxen and I still wish I had a yoke of oxen. They can outpull any team of horses."

"I was baptized by Father Francis X. Pierz in my father's cabin. I was lying in a crib of poles and wild grass and there was only the bare ground underneath."

"My parents often remarked about the long trip across the ocean. It took sixty-six days, and they thought they would never arrive in America. That is quite a period of time to see just water and no land."

"The first store, or log cabin used for a store, that I can remember is one built by N. P. Clark. John Zapp was a clerk there at one time. My father used to haul supplies to northern forts where soldiers were stationed. This trip used to take five to six weeks and was made by ox cart, later called the Red River carts. My father used to leave on this trip and when he came back six weeks later I didn't know him because of his growth of beard. He always told us tales of Indians, and the hardships of the soldiers."

One of Anton's sisters lived at Grand Lake, Minnesota. After several

visits to her home he met and became acquainted with Elizabeth Roth. In 1880 Anton asked Elizabeth Roth for her hand in marriage and she consented, so they were married in Saint Mary's church at Saint Cloud June 22, 1880, by Father Severin Gross.

Elizabeth (Roth) Rengel was born in Missouri June 9, 1857, daughter of Mathias and Lucia (Eickhorn) Roth. Her parents were natives of Prussia, Germany. When Elizabeth was ten years old they moved to Minnesota and settled at Grand Lake, section 6, Maine Prairie township, Stearns County.

To Anton and Elizabeth (Roth) Rengel there were born six children all deceased. Anton and Elizabeth (Roth) Rengel's only direct decedents are Mrs. Edwin Hiemenz a granddaughter and her daughter Alice Heimenz.

Mr. and Mrs. Anton Rengel are still living and enjoying life at their home at 37 Cooper Avenue North, Saint Cloud, Minnesota.

Although having outlived all their children they are still very interested in modern times and life. Mr. Rengel does rug weaving as a trade to earn a living and from the writers viewpoint, is quite an expert rug weaver.

Interviewed: Anton Rengel
Date: June 30, 1936
By: Dean Nelson

FROM THE CENSUS RECORDS OF 1860

Enumerated on June 7, 1860-- by C. Grandelmeyer

Post Office -- St. Cloud

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Line 19

John Rengel Age 47
Sex Male
Occupation Farmer
Birth Place Prussia

Line 20

Elizabeth Rengel Age 38
Sex Female
Birth Place Prussia

Line 21

Peter Rengel Age 8
Sex Male
Birth Place Prussia

Line 22

Anton Rengel Age 4
Sex Male
Birth Place Minnesota

Line 23

Margret Rengel Age 2
Sex Female
Birth Place Minnesota

Line 24

Gertrude Rengel Age 6 months
Sex Female
Birth Place Minnesota