

The Diary of a Farmer's Son... A Trip through History

By Lucas Carl Hinton

Presented on Heritage Sunday - May 15, 2011



My name is Emil Boesenberg and I am fourteen years old. I attend St. Peter's church and school in Elmhurst, Illinois. My teacher's name is Mr. Peter H. Gerdes and he is a well-educated, kind man. The Reverend of our church is Alfred Meyer and he is also a kind and well-educated man. I hope to be the same one day. I know with the good Christian education I am receiving, I have a chance to attend Elmhurst College one day and make a difference as these men have.

I have kept a journal of my youth and I will now share with you my journey. The reader will be taken through the education of my faith and the academic education. I will find the calling God has for me and you will meet the people that helped me to reach my final goal... a life of service to God. The covenant I made to God, my family and to myself will forever be an important part of my life. I will share that story with you now.

October 12, 1908

It is a cold morning and the crops have been brought in. The leaves are in full color and it is an amazing sight. God has really created a beautiful world for me to enjoy, I am grateful for the day that God has made. Thanks be to God.

I had to miss school for a little while to help my family bring in the harvest. I know that Mr. Gerdes understands but I do not want to disappoint him. I need to get up and get to school. The walk will be a chilly one but I have so much to look at for the two miles I must travel, the colors and smells will be a nice distraction from the cold. I wonder what it was I missed while away from my studies, I will have much to catch up on but I know Mr. Gerdes will be patient and supportive. I will work hard to catch up and will be caught up by Thanksgiving. I feel lucky to have been given the primer to work on at night and Pastor Meyer was kind enough to share with me a Bible to read.

It is my routine to get up before the sun rises, eat breakfast, clean myself up and be on my way to school. The walk may be long but at least I have my Bible and the serenity of nature to keep me company. Skimming through the Psalms I came across one that states, "May my meditation be pleasing to Him." I do not understand what the meaning of "Him" is in this verse. Do they mean the All Mighty Lord himself, or do they mean the pastor? I hope Mr. Gerdes has the answer to my troubling question. He may be a school teacher, but he is a congregation member as well and has a further understanding of the Bible. My appreciation for Mr. Gerdes is very high and letting him down would be shameful to me. I look forward to speaking with him.

October 19, 1908

I woke this morning feeling good and ready to start my day. The weather was quite pleasant for an autumn morning, the sun shone brightly and the clouds were a magnificent white against an azure sky. Thanks be to God.

I had my breakfast and set out on my walk to school. I felt at peace. I had spoken to Mr. Gerdes about my questions of Psalm 104, verse 34, he spoke to me of God's intentions and recommended I speak with Pastor Meyer. I was pleased with the answers I was given. Pastor Meyer explained to me that the meditation referred to exactly what I was doing, I was enjoying the nature of the world and feeling very glad that God had gifted me with such beauty. It was again a beautiful morning and again I meditated. This was God's gift to me. I pray now that all my mornings will be filled with such peace and recognition.

November 8, 1908

My family and I have just returned home from the Sunday morning service. It was a beautiful service on a damp and chilly morning. The sanctuary felt warm and inviting and the music was exceptional. The sermon was very good today; Pastor Meyer spoke of forgiveness and acceptance. I am always happy to listen to him speak. His German accent is quite strong and he speaks a bit fast but I can always understand and listen with my heart.

After the service my grandparents come over for an early dinner and we all spend time talking by the fire. The day is filled with laughter and love. Sunday's are one of my favorite days, spending time with family brings me joy.

I will go to sleep now; I have school in the morning and will need to get my chores done before I leave.

November 26, 1908

Today is Thanksgiving Day, what a celebration. I am so happy to be spending this glorious holiday with my family. We will travel to my grandparent's home and have a large turkey dinner with my aunts, my uncles and my many cousins. Thanks be to God.

The morning is very chilly, I know winter is coming and soon the snow will fall. My father says there may be snow tonight, he has read the Poor Richards' Almanac and it has predicted a winter with much precipitation. I do look forward to the snow, it gives my brothers and I may fun days of sledding and building forts of snow and ice. I look forward to the pond freezing so I may skate with my brothers. As I hoped I did catch up on my missed school assignments from October. I am quite happy about that.

I thank God today for the many gifts I have received and I thank Him for the love of family.

November 29, 1908

My family and I are ready to attend Sunday morning service. I am happy to go. I look forward to Reverend Meyer's sermon.

There is a chill in the air this morning and the clouds look threatening, we will probably see snow by the days end. I am not feeling well today, I have some body aches and am quite fatigued. I know I must accompany my family to church so I have a hot cup of tea and some bread. Mother know I am a bit under the weather so she has me wear an extra layer of warm clothes to keep the chill out while we travel to the warmth of our sanctuary.

Today we will have a guest speaker after our service. The newly elected Village President, C.J. Albert will speak to the congregation about the future of our fine village. Our population has now reached approximately 2,000 and the time has come to talk of the future of Elmhurst. My father is interested in hearing what the president has to say. I would also be interested if I was feeling better, but I must admit I look forward to being home in my bed resting. I am sure my illness is nothing and I will feel spry once again after a good night's rest. I hope the village President, with all due respect, speaks quickly and briefly regarding his agenda, but I have never known a politician to do either. I will pray for a quick and effective speech from this well respected man.

November 30, 1908

I have come down with a fever. I cannot attend school today; Mother says I must stay in bed. I can see the look of concern on Mother and Father's face. My parents do not know what is wrong but say they will give it a day or two to run its course, if I am still consumed with fever they will seek the advice of our doctor.

I am quite tired and can no longer write. I must now pray for God's comfort. I know He will watch over me as I sleep and he will help to heal me from my illness. Thanks be to God.

December 25, 1908

Christmas Day! Oh what a joy has fallen on our household. I am up and out of bed for the first time that I can recall since my illness. This day is blessed with health and love. I am so happy to be a part of the family celebration. I will be going to church for the first time since November and I look forward to the comfort and peace I find from our church. This is truly a day to celebrate the birth of our Savior. Thanks be to God.

We will be celebrating Christmas here at home this year. My grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins will be coming to our house for a wonderful feast. I hope my grandmother

makes her delicious Blueberry Pie. I have so much to be grateful for today. I will thank God for all my many blessings.

Merry Christmas.

January 11, 1909

This morning is very cold; walking to school will be very challenging. I must dress warm and put on all of my woollens. Mother has made knip and I can smell it from the warmth of my bed. It smells delicious and makes it easier to go downstairs. I am looking forward to a nice hot sandwich. That will give me the energy I need to get to school. I know the classroom will be nice and warm once I arrive.

We are having a test today in Arithmetic and Geography. I have studied hard and feel that I will receive a high score. Mr. Gerdes reviewed a lot of the material in class so I am well prepared. I do not want to be late, so I had better quicken my pace. I sure hope I do well; I certainly don't want to disappoint Mr. Gerdes, Father or Mother.

January 15, 1909

I am very pleased to announce I scored very high on both of my tests. Mr. Gerdes told me I scored the highest in the class. Mother and Father are both very proud of my accomplishment. I am very proud of myself as well. Thanks be to God.

We are supposed to be getting some more snow tonight, my brothers and I will be sledding tomorrow. I hope to get out first thing in the morning. It is always nice to make the first tracks in the snow. It is so fun to be the first one making tracks in the freshly fallen snow. It is going to be a wonderful day.

January 31, 1909

This morning is very pleasant for January. The temperature is currently 55 degrees and it seems to be rising. The sun is shining brightly and we will be going to worship. I hope today's sermon is not too long. I would like to get outside and enjoy this warmer weather. Much of the snow has melted and my brothers and I would like to play some baseball. I am

sure some of the other boys from church will be joining us. As we leave home for St. Peter's I realize what a beautiful day it really is. Thanks be to God.

The sermon was not as long as it usually is. I think Reverend Meyer would also like to enjoy this fine day. Many of our classmates will be meeting with us to play some baseball. Father is concerned about the warm temperature. It says it shouldn't be so warm in January and we might be getting a storm.

February 1, 1909

Father was right. Last night after the sun went down the temperature dropped drastically. The winds became very strong and it started snowing. We woke this morning to a late season blizzard. The snow seems to be coming down sideways due to the gusts of wind. Trying to get to school would be quite treacherous so father said we may not go. There is really no way we can, seeing anything through the snow and wind is impossible. We will stay indoors today and wait to see what will happen. I am not sure if we will be able to get to school at all this week. The snow has already reached the bottom of the windows. I am glad that I have my books to read. My brothers and I may play some indoor games while we stay warm by the fire.

February 14, 1909

Valentine's Day is finally here and since today is Sunday we will be going to church. I hope that I get some valentine's cards from some of my classmates. I have some to hand out myself, but I especially hope that Martha Pieper is there today. The snow from the stunning blizzard is still melting but it is low enough to walk through and has left the ground soggy.

The service was full of love due to the festive day. Martha Pieper was there today and I'm glad that she accepted my card. She said I was sweet and gave me a kiss on the cheek. On my way home I was so full of joy and love that I stepped in a mud puddle and got my pants soaked. Father was not happy about that and now I must clean them.

Happy Valentine's Day ♥

March 8, 1909

Spring is nearing, hopefully the weather will get better for me to go out and play. It's a day of school and I will be glad to see Mr. Gerdes. My father read out of the newspaper before I left and I heard something about President William Howard Taft reopening naval ports in New Orleans. I plan on asking Mr. Gerdes what this means for our future navy but I'm not concerned about it.

Well school was fine today, I have a bit of homework but I should be able to get it done. Mr. Gerdes didn't read the newspaper today but he said that when he does he will get back to me on the topic.

March 29, 1909

Mr. Gerdes got back to me on the New Orleans naval port topic. He said that Theodore Roosevelt had put in an order that they be closed but William Taft didn't like that so he reopened them, I don't think he will be our president much longer.

The time has come again to prepare the soil for harvesting. My family and I will be working hard to get it done by days end. I hope the nice spring air is well so that we may work until tired not until frozen or burning.

April 1, 1909

It certainly is great to have a family. They are supportive behind your ideas; they help you with things and keep you company. I'm so grateful for my family to be with me. Thanks be to God.

Every time I see Martha I think of angels descending down from heaven and she was the one that came to me. On Sunday there is an ice cream social that will be going on at church. I plan on asking Martha to sit with me; I really hope she says yes.

April 11, 1909

My family and I are finally done preparing the fields for crops as of yesterday. I'm not sure why, but I think this year of harvesting is going to be the best. I pray that it will. Thank you God for all you have done for me and my family.

Today is Sunday, last week was the ice cream social and I did sit with Martha. We talked and talked, we have a lot more in common than I thought we would. We are good friends now, I am overcoming my fear of talking to girls and she is fun to talk to. I am grateful every day that I live because it's one more day I have to spend having a wonderful family and wonderful thoughts of Martha.

Confirmation is coming up soon and I really want to be a member of the wonderful church that I attend. I hope to be able to contribute as much to the church as Reverend Meyer has with his wise words.

May 2, 1909

Confirmation has arrived. I have been through this journey to understand where I seat myself in the Christian church. I have met a lot of new people that have helped me grow in my faith. I am glad that I attended confirmation class; I met new friends, more church family members and to top it off, I met Martha. This has changed my whole view on the Bible stories and I plan on staying with the church for a long time to come. I am going to become one with the church and one with Christ, I am grateful every day that I am here. I always enjoy my life and I thank God for it.

Thanks be to God.

As an adult I married Martha Pieper and we were blessing with five daughters. The oldest were twins; Mildred & Margaret, Dorothy, Ester and Elinor. I was blessed with wonderful memories of my faith and education. In 1925 our church family erected a new building for worship. For my gift of thanks, Martha and I donated the candlesticks and cross that, to this day, adorn the altar of our beautiful sanctuary. I thank God for my many gifts and will always be grateful for my church family and a place to call my own. I hope and pray to God that generations will feel the same blessing I have felt over my lifetime... Thanks be to God.

Emil Boesberg and Family

April 10th, 2011

Dear Congregation of St. Peter's UCC and Fellow Confirmands,

I chose to research the history of St. Peter's Church because it is very special to my family and me. My family has been a part of the church since its start on May 21st, 1876. I'm also a big fan of history. I think there is a lot to be learned by our ancestors. I am very interested in how we all came to where we are now; I abed this on all facets of history...church & religion, technology, human behavior, etc.

The story you have just read is a historic fiction. I put myself in the place of a young boy growing up during the early 1900's. This boy's name is Emil Boesenberg and he is my great-great-grandfather. You've read the story of his life attending St. Peter's church and its school. The story is fictional but many of the characters named are actual people who made a difference in our church and helped build the strong foundation for which we now feel at home.

Many people helped me in researching this information. I would like to thank them personally. Thanks to my Grandma, Judith Bucholz-Bowen, my mom Molly Bowen-Hinton, and Nancy Wilson of the Elmhurst Historical Museum. They helped me very much and I am grateful. I would also like to thank my mentor, Wes Cleeton. He was a great mentor and I appreciate the time he took to be a part of my confirmation.

Happy Reading,
Luc