

Biography of Edward Michaelis
--Walter Michaelis

The pioneer whose biography I have chosen to write is Mr. Edward Michaelis.

Mr. Edward Michaelis was born September twelfth 1842, at Geilenfelde by Frieleberg in der Neumark Regirungs bezirk Frankfurt in Germany. Due to the hard times he had in Germany he came to the new world to seek a better living in 1862.

He had some relatives at Valley City and in corresponding about Dakota territory decided to come to the rolling prairies to make his new home. When Mr. Michaelis came the twenty second day of March to Valley City, which had been called Northington, there was so much snow around the buildings that they had to sit down on the large snowbanks and slide in order to get down to the door. Later on it began to thaw and lots of water accumulated and finally the ice blocked up in the Sheyenne River and it caused a flood, so that the whole town was under water. He bought an ox team and paid three hundred and twenty five dollars for four and one hundred and twenty eight dollars for two cows. Mr. Michaelis then left Valley City for Griggs County but when they came to Denning crossing on Bald Hill Creek they could not cross, the current being so strong and the creek so deep and wide, so they unloaded what lumber they had and went to Valley City. They stayed for five days and tried again but could not get through then either. The third time they went by Dazey towards what is Hannaford now and the Northern Pacific section house by Jack Mills and reached the pioneers homestead with very little trouble in a short time. Mr. Michaelis hired a surveyor to measure his land which was Southeast $\frac{1}{4}$ of section 8, township 145, and range 59. The next thing was to put up a house and in order to do that he had to get lumber. He started in the morning with four oxen to Valley City to get some lumber for a claim shanty fourteen by sixteen. He wanted to move his family up to the homestead, before the cold weather set in. Before he could get ready it became cloudy and black looking the northwest and some one said they might have a blizzard. "Oh, it can't be," he said, for it was by this time the nineteenth of May. He drove down to the valley to get some seed potatoes at three dollars and fifty cents a bushel. When he started back from town the storm was so fierce that he could not go along side of his oxen for large gravel stones flew in his face. He had to hide himself behind the wagon and let the oxen go. When he came to the place where he stopped it was so cold and such a blizzard as he had never seen in all his life.

Soon he began to make preparations for planting. He struck out a piece of land three fourths miles long to break for 1883 crop. He had four good oxen and a good sixteen inch plow. He made eight rounds before breakfast, let the oxen feed, then eight rounds before dinner and eight rounds after dinner, that made thirty six miles a day. After breaking twenty acres, he had to build a barn. Sod was the material used at that time for barns. He built a barn 20x30 feet. Sod was used as brick and sand was the mortar. Crutches brought from the Sheyenne River were put in the center to hold up the roof which was made by putting

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Watering the cattle during the winter was rather a hard task the water had to be pulled up out of the well in buckets. Standing at the well was not so easy on account of the cold and storm in the early part of the winter but he had to change his method when the stock went to drink they froze their noses white and ran shaking to the barn from the cold.

The long winter kept all folks at home. Not being prepared for such a long hard winter the pioneer family ran out of flour and food. By this time Cooperstown had been built up. Mr. Michaelis wanted to go to town every day but it was so stormy all the while that it was impossible for him to get there.

The fuel they used was wood. When they were short of wood they used five foot long slough hay. Mr. Michaelis took bundles into the shack at night, went to work and twisted it by hand into a solid chunk and piled these up and put them in the stove as they were needed. Others took straw and screening. When they came to town their clothing had a peculiar odor from screening. When they had a day of forty below zero they would say it was a fine day. Often times the chimneys would freeze up and the lignite soot would run down from the chimney onto the roof and into their windows when it thawed a little during some days.

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The Pioneers: One Man's Story Of The Early Days

by Edward Michaelis

In the summer of 1883 the railroad track got ready as far as Cooperstown. Then we could get our mail brought up to Cooperstown by train. I am sorry but I can't say who was the first post master in Cooperstown.

There was a mail route coming from Sanborn to Mount Clair, located on Sec. 20-145-59, at Duncan Sinclair's place and Mr. Duncan Sinclair was post master. Mr. Arthur Sinclair was mail carrier from Mount Clair to New Rockford, going by my place on sec. 8-145-59. I mind that sometimes there was such a blizzard that I thought it was impossible to find the road, but he would come out of the snow mist. I could see him for a rod or two, then he was gone in the mist again. I wondered many a time how he could find the road. He had a brown pony about 800 pounds, no bridle on at all, so the pony took all the responsibility on himself and carried the mail for Uncle Sam, with Archie in co-operation. Before that line had been established we got our mail brought

up from Sanborn by Mr. R. C. Cooper. The ware house was the temporary post office and Al Shue or Billy Lenham were post-masters.

When I first came to Dakota there were plenty of buffalo bones lying on the prairies. People went out with double box wagon, picked them up, brought them to Cooperstown and sold them at \$10 a ton. There were plenty of buffalo paths where they had travelled. I found some bones that had been sawed—for steak probably by the hunters.

There was lots of good game. I could see these great big white cranes—a beautiful bird—and also the gray crane. There were some swans, too, and wild geese by the ten thousands—various colors, gray, white, black. In spring when they came from the south they were moving for more than a whole month, and when they sat down it covered at times a whole quarter section. I once opened my barn, I thought some of them would go in, but they did not. They were hard on people's crop, by picking up the seed and eating

the young plant also. Prairie chickens were plentiful. There were some birds at that time you don't see any more.

One day at about 1 o'clock I saw three nice deer coming up to my place, close by. Ed Hanson fired a shot at them, but did not hit them.

My daughter Mathilda found a wild goose nest with five eggs, brought them home and set a hen and hatched them out. They grew up and we had lots of amusement with them.

There were lots of wolves and foxes and some lynx too.

Now it is no more than right to show what kind of people we had in this land of Dakota Territory. As soon as South and North were divided and became a state, we went to work and made N. Dakota prohibition, and it has stood for that up to this day. Before it was a state at least three or four saloons were in Cooperstown, and drug stores all sold intoxicating liquor, but they had to get out after the election. That has been a blessing to the state.

In 1896-97 I believe we had the most snow and storms. On the

28th day of October it began to rain and on the 29th when we came out in the morning it was a regular blizzard and it kept on until the snow was that deep that trains could not run. They had to shovel all along the track till they had a big snow ditch, and the next blizzard made it worse then it was before. The worst of it was there was no coal at home. So I went out with two teams and had about 500 pounds of coal to the load and kept on that way until we had a road by driving on it every day. But before I could do that we unhitched the team and drove them through without the sleigh.

I went that year to Canada. I had a man hired—Andrew Hanson. He said to me, "You can go and have your visit and don't worry. I will take good care of everything." And he did, too.

And when we came back in the spring of 1897 and came as far as Fargo, people said we could not get through to Cooperstown, and I noticed when in the coach that there was so much snow on the track that the car was running as much on the

hard snow as on the rails. The conductor asked us if we did not know that there was so much snow and said, "You can't get through to Cooperstown." And so it was. We had to lay over at Sanborn for a whole week. They tried every day with the snow plow—run it as far as they could and then shovel it out, until finally the rotary machine got orders to clean up the road to Cooperstown. And that did not go so easy. When the rotary was as far as a little beyond Dazey they got orders to come back. They were needed on the main line. But they were beyond so far that they could not come back before they came to Cooperstown to use the turn table. Now that was good for us for there were quite a bunch gathered at Sanborn. We had no money. The R. R. Co. started to take care of us, but there were some fellows who got themselves some whiskey and got drunk, and so we were all turned out. They said that if you have money for whiskey you can pay your own bill too. So there we were. I happened to

meet Mr. Cox. He knew me and I asked him if he could let me have some money. "Yes, Ed," he said, "all you want." So I got all I needed.

Then we came to Cooperstown, and also to the farm. The buildings were so drifted in, the snow reached as high as to touch the shingles on the roof. I thought that we would have a real flood when the snow melted in the spring. But no, the ground was not frozen and the water went in as fast as it thawed. The crop was not much good that year because no frost in the ground. The water trickled down before it was ripe, and that is what it always does when we have no frost in the ground. Now I think I will quit. This goes as far as to the summer of 1897.

The climate had changed wonderfully from 1882 to 1927, and the people need four times as much money as we did.

Now good bye until later.

Walter my boy, take good care of this. I want it back if you get through with it.

Your Gramps

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