

Max Wild

Max Wild was born at LeRoy, Dodge county, Wisconsin, March 1, 1864. He went to the German school until he was fourteen. During the summer and winter he worked out and the same time went to school. His parents were Mr. and Mrs. Sebastian Wild and there were fourteen children in the family.

When Max heard of claims to be had in Dakota territory, he made up his mind he was going to get some land. In March 1886, with Rob Starr, John Evertler, Sam and Andrew Sperga, and Jake Westenhauer, in an immigration car, he started for Dakota territory. Max had with him some machinery, four horses, and a bull dog. When they came to LaCrosse, Wis., the conductor informed them they were going to be in LaCrosse for three-fourths of an hour, so the men went up town. They had just got up town when the whistle blew. By the time they got back, the train was gone. They bought a ticket to St. Paul and when they got to the switching yards in St. Paul they came near getting on the wrong train.

In three days they arrived in Cooperstown. Shortly after Max filed on Sec. 20, Kingsley township. Bill Martin, a neighbor, helped Max build over the shanty that was already on the land. Bill's oxen was always getting in the hay on Max's homestead. Mr. Martin was wondering if the dog of Max's was any good to get the oxen out of the hay. Max said, "You take chance on the oxen, and I'll take chance on the dog." They got on their horses and Max took a two-by-four along. After near killing the oxen, the bulldog chased them in the neighbor's barn. Max had to knock the dog over the head in order to make him quit. Soon all the people wanted this dog to chase away their cattle etc. Max wanted to get rid of this butcher dog because it was no dog to have around the farm for this purpose. John

Fierring heard of this dog and offered Max fifty bushels of oats for it. Max gladly took the oats. Mr. Fierring sent the dog on his own cattle. It killed a cow and sucked the blood out of it. That cured the owner from keeping the dog any longer, so he killed it.

The shanty 12' by 14' was made of lumber bought in Cooperstown. Max and Rob Starr helped each other break up their land as Rob's land was right next to Max's. While Rob did the breaking, Max cooked the meals, and the same time picked a few carloads of buffalo bones. He received about \$12 a ton for them. The two bachelors had a barrel of smoked ham in the cellar. Rob's father had sent it from Wisconsin. While Max was helping Rob break his land, someone had been in and taken the ham. When Max came to fix supper, he found the ham gone. When Rob came in he asked Max why he didn't fry the ham. He couldn't believe it when Max told him there was none. After searching the cellar, Rob was convinced.

The next year, 1887, Max batched alone. His bed was fixed on the wall and the large barrel of soda crackers he had fit right under. The mice made a hole through the floor and into the barrel and were eating the crackers from the bottom, while Max was eating from the top. Max was wondering why he was getting baldheaded. The mice had been using his hair to make a nest. This Max was unaware of until one rainy day he made up his mind to find out why he was getting bald. He pulled out the barrel and turned it up. Mice flew in all directions. Max saved the best crackers on top for company. After the women visitors had finished eating, Max told the mice story.

Mrs. Martin, a neighbor, came over to see how the bachelor was getting along. Max was out breaking at the time, so she made herself to home and locked all around to see how he kept things. Another time she found him burning all his girls' pictures. "I don't want them now; I'm going to get married." Max said.

1888 was a dry year. In the fall of the same year, Max went back to LeRoy, Wis. to see his folks. March 11, 1889 he married Katy Platzer. Max came back to Dakota with Jake Westenhauser, Watt Percy, and John Ewentler, who had also married. He built another two room house and used the shanty for the barn. In April the wives came together to the new country to start in on their own. Mrs. Wild had never lived on a farm before, and all this was new to her; but it didn't take long before she knew a lot around the farm. The house was not yet finished inside when she came and there was also disking to be done. Mrs. Wild couldn't do the pasting of the felt paper on the walls and such other things that was to be done, so Max put her to work with the four horses to do the disking. She had never ridden a horse before in her life, but did the work fine. Max stayed in and fixed the house and barn. The day was dry and dusty. When Mrs. Wild came in, to her husband she looked more like a negro than his wife.

The window finishing and such was yet to be done in the house. It was a hot day in June, 1889 when Mrs. Martin came over to see Mrs. Wild. Her husband was out working and she knew a storm was coming and was afraid to be alone. Mr. Wild was not home either and Mrs. Wild had never known this kind of a day would bring a storm. It started to blow and rain. The women were worried and wished the men were out of the storm. The wind became worse and worse and it rained heavily. The rain came in through the cracks and stood many inches on the floor over Mrs. Wild's new rug. She had raised a nice bunch of chickens and knew they'd be lying dead all over. When it stopped raining, Mrs. Martin suggested Mrs. Wild get a tub and they'd go and pick up the chicks. They gathered up every chick and took them in the house. Mrs. Martin laid them in a flannel in the warm oven and soon the chicks were as spry as before. That same evening the storm had tipped over Watt Percy's house with his wife, Jake, and Watt in it. Mrs. Percy was the

only one injured.

October 4, 1890 their first child was born. She was named Ina.

There were no crops until 1891. They had expected a good crop this year. It was getting cold and there was fear of frost. It was claimed the farmers should haul manure all around the field and when it threatened to freeze, to light the manure. The farmers worked all night hauling manure. One evening it threatened to freeze. They went out and lit it. Smoke was all over the territory. The crop was saved. There weren't enough machings around the territory and lot of the grain had to go to waste. An addition was made to the house in the fall of 1891. In 1892 Mr. Wild sold his homestead in Kingsley township to Lewis Berg for \$800.

July 29, 1893 a son was born by the name of Clarence. That same year the Wilds bought 200 chickens from Christ Raud, a neighbor. They thought they would be able to make a living for groceries etc. from the chickens. Mr. Wild took a basketful of eggs to town one day and received six cents a dozen. Half of the eggs were broken. The amount received for the eggs was not enough to buy sugar. That settled Mr. Wild from raising so many chickens. He started to raise hogs and it went pretty good until hog cholera claimed all thirty-five.

In 1897 Mr. Wild had a quarter of a section in oats. He had hired a man to stack up the oats and to plow a fire break around the field. Towards evening it began to get smoky all around. Mrs. Wild was home alone and was afraid for the oats. After a long time Max came home and together they went to see how the oats were. When they came to the field, no breaking had been done and stacks of oats were on fire. The hired man had gone to town to celebrate instead of breaking the land. All of their oats were destroyed.

Around 1898 Mr. Wild rented some land across the creek. One night while Mr. Wild and his hired man were out working, it threatened to

to freeze. Mrs. Wild went to the barn for hay to cover up her vegetables in the garden. She had carried two forks of hay to the garden when she saw two skunks around the hen house. Instead of carrying anymore hay, she got a chair and climbed on top of the hen house, with the fork in her hands. There was a small hole leading into the chicken coop. She waited an hour before anything happened. Then a large skunk presented itself and started crawling in the hole. Mrs. Wild leaned over the hen house and jabbed the fork into the skunk. The skunk tried desperately to get away. It was hard to get the fork into the skunk. After fighting a long time, she got the fork through the body and into the ground; but the skunk wouldn't die. The skunk scent filled the air and about choked Mr. Wild. The scent woke up the children in the house. The children had been taught not to go out at night for the skunk would get them. When they saw their mother's bed empty and the skunk scent all around, they began crying frantically. Mrs. Wild hollered in for them to bring a chair out so she could get down from the side of the hen house. She left the fork in the skunk and put hay over it. When she went back to work covering her vegetables. The next night Max did the same thing but used the light hay fork. The fork wasn't good enough and the skunk got away. Now they knew where their chickens were disappearing and determined to end the lives of these skunks. They filled a dead chicken with strychnine and put it under the granary. They were never bothered with any more skunks.

Mr. and Mrs. Wild lived on Sec. 20 until the fall of 1899 when they moved to Jessie, and bought one-half section in Sec. 17, Tyrol township. 1890 was a perfectly dry year. Out of their now breaking land they got only 800 bushels of wheat. Mr. and Mrs. Wild became discouraged. They made their living from the five cows they had and sold eggs, the price at this time a little better, 18 and 19 cents

a dozen. Butter was about twenty cents a pound. They soon took up courage and put in a big crop the next year, 1901. Mr. Wild told his wife he was going to put everything in flax this year. He put flax on his old homestead and on his homestead in Jessie. He rented from Berg Bros. one-half section in Sec. 9, Tyrol township and put in twenty acres of wheat. The wheat yielded 22 bushels to the acre. They got \$1.36 a bushel for the flax. That year they had "barrels" of money. They had been living in a small house on the hill and thought they should spread out a little. A new house was built in the fall of 1901.

The last threshing was being finished up on Halloween. Mr. and Mrs. Wild were so busy they never thought of Halloween. The hired men were working hard and quit when night came. The dog barked all night. Mr. Wild had to get up early before daylight to haul the flax away from the machine while the men were working. When he came in the barn he couldn't find any harnesses. The whistle was blowing for him and he became more excited every minute. When he went back in the barn he found all the cows harnessed. When daylight came he found out why the dog was barking so furiously. Ploughs, buggys, sleighs, everything was on top of the barn. The men had certainly played a Halloween trick on Max. It was a windy morning. Due to some carelessness in watching the flax straw pile caught on fire. The threshing machine of Mr. Smith's was just saved in time.

In 1905 a big barn was built on Sec. 17, Tyrol township. In Nov., 1906 Mr. and Mrs. Wild with their two children went back east to visit. They came back on New Year's day. The train came as far as Cooperstown; it was blocked to Jessie. Mr. and Mrs. Wild got a ride home with a farmer. It took two weeks for the plow to work through from Cooperstown to Binford.

Five more children were born to this marriage. Eugene, May 17, 1896

married, 1925; Eva, April 7, 1899, died May 15, 1930; Edna, April 9, 1900, died 1930; Howard, April 21, 1908, died Dec. 11, 1909; Chester, March 2, 1913, married March, 1936. In 1908 their oldest daughter, Ina, married Sever A. Fritz and they moved to Jessie. Mr. Wild built a new house the same year for the newlyweds.

Mr. and Mrs. Wild stayed on the farm until 1914 when they moved into Jessie. Mr. Wild bought out the general store from Erick Erickson. The firm was known as Wild and Fritz. In 1915 he rented a farm from N.O. Haugen in Addie township, Sec. 10. In 1916 they went to Revere and rented a big farm. The first year in Revere, they were completely rusted out. The next year they were entirely haled out and made their living from chickens. There were many storms this year. The many chickens were kept in incubators with white strips of flannel hanging from the top of the incubators to keep them warm. Mrs. Wild didn't have enough white strips for one incubator so she put in red flannel strips. One day a storm came up; it rained heavily. In the morning one incubator was full of pink chicks.

The third year in Revere they had the most booming crop ever had in N. Dak. Wheat yielded as high as 33 bushels to the acre. That same year Mrs. Wild had the most wonderful flower garden in N. Dak. People driving by would stop and admire it. They also raised 500 chickens, 85 turkeys, 80 ducks, and 60 geese. Everything around the farm was white with poultry. It was in the spring of this year, 1918, when Mr. Wild's jet black horse became very sick. He phoned to Cooperstown for Doc Winslow, veterinary to come out. The doctor looked it over and said it had lung fever. The medicine he thought the horse should have cost more than the horse was worth. It would amount to about 45 of quinine. Mr. Wild didn't care how much it would cost if the horse

would get well. They went to Sutton to get the medicine and found the doctor not at home. While waiting for the doctor, Rob Starr came into the drug store. Max told him about the horse. Rob didn't believe in the veterinary business and told Max the best thing to make the horse well was to smear her up with lard, and blanket her up good, and run a quart of alcohol down the horse's neck. Mr. Wild had bought a keg of alcohol sometime before and Mrs. Wild had hid a quart in the barn for use in case of sickness. They took Mr. Starr's advice and the next morning the horse was just as spry as ever.

In the fall of 1918, Mr. and Mrs. Wild moved back to Jessie. Mr. Wild started draying, raising chickens, etc., and did what he could to make a living. In 1920 Mr. Wild put in 160 acres of flax. August 7 a hail storm came and destroyed every bit of it. The crop looked good enough to yield twenty bushels to the acre. The hail storm broke every window in their big house, and destroyed their garden.

March 1, 1925 they moved to Cooperstown and ran a rooming house and hospital. Around the latter part of August, 1933, the pioneer and his wife took in the World's Fair, and visited their son, Gene. They were there three days and then went to visit Mrs. Wild's sister in Milwaukee. They came back September 18.

Mr. Wild celebrated his 73rd birthday March 1, 1937. "I'm feeling so good, that I'm surely going to live two years longer to celebrate my golden wedding anniversary." He said.