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Dahlem, Albert (1844 - 1925)

Melba Peterson

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THE STORY OF THE LIFE OF AN OLD SETTLER IN MINNESOTA

Every development is interesting--that of a town, institute, or individual always.

In this early history of Sauk Centre a word of interest may be said about the community in which this city arose. How was it founded? Who is its founder? These are interesting questions. The name Sauk Centre means much. Sauk it is thought was taken from a tribe of Indians, the Sacs and Foxes. Thus meaning beauty, satisfaction, contentment, and prosperity, while Centre means the very heart of these possessions.

Into these early fifties came many adventurous men, among them was Alexander Moore. He with six others drew up the first plat for a townsite as early as 1855, to be known as "Sauk Centre Townsite." Little was done for a year or two; but progress was made, a town according to the plat was laid out, articles of founding were properly executed, at that time. Among these men came Albert Dahlem, who came here to round out his future and make his fortune.

The new west--that boundless territory which stirred the very souls of the youth of the early days--called this young man from his home in New York state.

His career started in Minnesota, commencing with the Indian Wars following the Civil War. It was while on duty with his regiment at the border posts of Sauk Centre, Fort Ridgely, and Fort Abercrombie in the Dakota territory that this young man first saw the possibilities of Minnesota; and it was while passing through here with his regiment shortly after the Civil War that he decided upon Sauk Centre as his future home.

This young man saw the execution of Chief Little Six and Medicine Bottle, two chieftains of the Indian raiders who took part in the mass-

acre at Fort Ridgely and New Ulm in 1866. His regiment was ordered to frontier service, taking stations at Fort Ridgely, Minnesota, and later at Fort Abercrombie in Dakota Territory. They camped near the old stockade in Sauk Centre, and it was there that this frontiersman decided to live when all strife had ceased. While on duty, their regiment suffered intensely from the cold. Sometimes their rations were short; salt pork, beans, and hard tack composing the usual fare.

After this pioneer had been discharged from his regular army on March 16, 1868, he again visited Sauk Centre. It was then that he made his final plans to establish himself in business there. At the same time two of his companions in the regiment, Henry Keller and Fred. Williams, came to establish themselves here also. Mr. Keller engaged in the hardware business, and later he became a state senator. Mr. Williams founded a barber shop and saloon. This was very popular in those days. These men were in business here for many years. Mr. Dahlem took active steps to engage in business. He purchased a piece of land on third street from Joseph Capser, the very first prominent settler here, and erected a small building there.

This store was a cigar store called "The New York Store," and an old wooden Indian Queen was placed in front of his store to be in keeping with the times. Ex-congressman Frank Eddy speaks of seeing this queen, as a thrill that comes once in a life time. Mr. Dahlem never failed to tell in his story of the beginnings of Sauk Centre, of how it was shipped by express for fifty dollars, clear from New York. They still have this old queen in their possessions, however. Besides being a cigar store, it was also a news depot; and all the national magazines and the St. Paul, Minneapolis, and New York newspapers were bought at this particular store. These were shipped by express to St. Cloud

and then by stage coach to Sauk Centre. In this way all the settlers kept well posted on the out-side world.

Mr. Dahlem always took pleasure in telling this one story that I will tell to you. Once he gave a man twenty dollars with which to deliver some goods to **history**. He waited eight days for these goods, but none came. At last a man stepped into his store and asked young Dahlem if this man had not arrived. Finding he hadn't, he told Mr. Dahlem that the fellow had gone on a 'spree' but would deliver the goods at once. The man did, at his own expense. This goes to show, Mr. Dahlem said, that it took, sometimes, even as long as twenty days for goods to arrive from St. Cloud, but the usual time was sixteen days by stage coach.

Mr. Dahlem came here just as the dam was being rebuilt for the second time. He watched the Indians cross the bridge time and time again; once, however, during the massacre while he was on duty with his regiment, they were seen carrying their dead and wounded over it.

His education was little while here. He learned most of his English from reading all magazines and papers he could get from places around, thus learning the language. He did have some schooling while living in Germany.

The beginning of the schools should be of interest even though this old settler did not attend them. The first school meeting was held on April 28, 1861. S. Ramsell was moderator and S. M. Bruce was chosen clerk. The first early school teacher was Miss Nellie Harmon, a member of the Harmon family, which was among the earliest families in Minneapolis. She was boarded for ninety cents a week. However, it was not until 1869 that independant schools were started.

Mr. Dahlem tells too of the first physician in Sauk Centre, who was Mr. Benjamin Palmer. He was cultured and possessed medical education; a portion of which he received in Paris.

portion of which he received in Paris. This pioneer has said that he was long remembered by the people and their descendants.

Sauk Centre, so this pioneer relates, was without railroads until 1878. He said that all goods and mail were delivered by stage coach, which took as long as sixteen days to arrive, as I related before. Between Indian attacks and scarcity of mail, they sometimes waited months for a newspaper and many was the time that the old ones were learned strictly by heart.

His great success in this store of his, is being continued by his son. The store is a very successful one.

Mr. Bahlem, several years before his death, would take his old companion, a cane, and go out for a stroll by himself hoping to find some one to whom they could tell of the "Beginnings of Sauk Centre," he always did, and they, being only too glad to hear of his strange but interesting history, would stand for hours on the corners of third street, and neglect their other duties because of their absorption in his story.

But this old pioneer had lived his worthy life well, and helped this city to progress as it did. He died October 15, 1925, leaving his sons and daughters behind to finish what he did not and to tell to their children's children the great beginnings of the city of Sauk Centre, in this state of Minnesota.

--Esther M. Schaub.

RECORDS OF SEVENTY YEARS ARE INTACT

Records of 70 years ago and down through the years, excellently preserved, provide an accurate history of the business institutions founded by Albert Dahlem, in this city. Albert Dahlem kept invoices, statements, receipts and accounts of other transactions in large books, and these have been kept intact by members of the family. These were brought to light in connection with the 70th anniversary of the store.

There are bills from the Herald for advertising dated May 21, 1868, tax receipts, etc., all of which reveal changes in prices, some of them lower today and some higher. Advertising rates of the Herald then were approximately 50 cents per inch; today's price 25 cents. A tax receipt, the first paid by Albert Dahlem in this city, dated Jan. 6, 1868, shows a payment for personal property and real estate from May to January of \$1.63. The tariff, for goods valued at \$200, shipped by way of stage coach was \$2.20; and at that they did not guarantee delivery. A freight bill, issued shortly after the First Division of the St. Paul and Pacific Railroad Company came to Sauk Centre, was 50 cents for 100 pounds of merchandise. This was the Great Northern Railway Company. A second tax receipt for taxes on home, store and personal property, was for \$39.60. A poll tax receipt June 8, 1879 was for 85 cents and failure to pay included three days labor on the road.

A post office receipt, dated 1870 from J. H. Simonton, post master, showed the price of box rent to be forty cents per quarter year. Four barrels of apples were purchased for \$4.00 in 1868. A trip scale cost \$5.00; today its value with modern improvements would be about \$300.

On the first invoice was listed a music box at \$27.00 and one of these is still in existence and is stored upstairs in the Dahlem store. It is built similar to a radio box on a table, and the music comes from a steel roll with sharp pins which as it turns hit sound pins. We are told that with a new spring the machine could be operated. We turned the roll by hand, and there came forth a weird music, similar to the sound of chimes. This music box at one time was the property of the Kellar family.

Lumber receipts from Moore and McClure showed prices on 100 feet of common boards at \$2.10. 200 feet of 16 ft. boards were priced at \$3.20, and 60 feet of 2 x 4's, 20 feet in length, sold at \$1.20.

Copied by: Dorothy Hansmann
Copied from: S.C.H. July 7, 1938
Copied by: Dorothy Hansmann, 7/13/38

DAHLEM, ALBERT JULIUS

File No. B-265

Albert J. Dahlem was born in Stuttgart, Wurtemberg, Germany on March 1, 1844. He was the son of Christian and Wilhelmine (Wahmer) Dahlem.

Mr. Dahlem was eight years old when he came to America with his parents. He was self-educated except for a few months at night school, where he studied mathematics. However, at his death he was well-educated. He was a keen student through life and always kept himself abreast of the times. He stayed in New York for ten years.

He enlisted at the age of twenty-one in the Regular Army. The Regiment was ordered to City Point, Virginia, taking up the march by way of Petersburg to the front, but they arrived about the time of the surrender of Confederate Robert Johnston, which brought the war to a close. After this they returned to the North and took part in the Grand Revue at Washington. This Regiment was in command of Lieutenant Colonel Robert Hill and was ordered to Fort Snelling in November, 1865. They arrived in time to see the execution of Chiefs Little Six and Medicine Battle, of the Sioux tribe, who had taken part in the Massacure at Fort Ridgely and New Ulm in 1862. The execution took place on November 11, 1865. Mr. Dahlem was one of the guards which escorted them to their execution.

In the spring of 1866 the Regiment was ordered to frontier service taking stations at Fort Ridgely and Fort Ripley, Minnesota and later at Fort Abercrombie in the Dakota territory.

It was while passing through Sauk Centre enroute to Abercrombie that Mr. Dahlem first saw his future home. His regiment camped near the stockade. He decided that Sauk Centre had great prospects and was very much interested in settling here.

While on the frontier, Mr. Dahlem's Regiment did a great deal of scout and patrol duty and suffered greatly from the cold. The rations were coffee, salt, pork, beans, and hard tack.

After his discharge on March 16, 1868, Mr. Dahlem again visited Sauk Centre. He made plans to open a business here and went back to New York to purchase a stock of goods. About the same time, Henry Keller and Frederick Williams, two other soldiers of the same Regiment, came to Sauk Centre and entered into business. Mr. Keller had a hardware store and Mr. Williams founded a barber shop and saloon.

Mr. Dahlem returned to Sauk Centre on May 8, 1868. He bought a section of land on Third Street from Joseph Capser and built a little 12 x 14 frame building. In this building he began the "New York Cigar Store." He also bought a wooden "Indian Queen," the trade mark of the old tobacco store fraternity, and placed it in front of his store. The express for the shipment of the "Indian Queen" from New York cost him \$50. His first stock of goods shipped by express from New York was shipped at a cost of \$117.

Mr. Dahlem's store was also a News Depot and had all National magazines, St. Paul, Minneapolis and New York newspapers were handled there. These were shipped by express to Saint Cloud and then on to Sauk Centre by stage coach. They were often late in getting to Sauk Centre, but they kept the settlers in touch with the world.

The first shipment of goods Mr. Dahlem received by stage coach. It required four stage coaches to handle the goods. It was much easier to dispose of the goods than it was to get them to Sauk Centre. One time it required sixteen days to get a bill of goods from Saint Cloud. Mr. Dahlem gave a teamster a \$20 bill to pay the express charges on the goods. He was to deliver the goods at Sauk Centre. It usually took four or five days to make this trip. It was eight days before he heard anything. Then the driver's employer walked into Mr. Dahlem's store and said that the teamster had spent the \$20 bill on a spree in Saint Cloud,

but that he had sobered up and would deliver the goods. He did deliver the goods but it had taken sixteen days. Mr. Dahlem started selling groceries and dry goods.

In 1895 he enlarged his store, due to the increased amount of business. He erected a building on the corner of Third and Oak Streets. Here he carried on his business until 1914, when he built the department store, where his first store building had been located. His son, August, now owns this grocery store and operates it with the help of his sister, Pauline, and son, Willis Dahlem.

Mr. Dahlem was married at Sauk Centre to Miss Caroline Rein, on March 18, 1869. The ceremony was performed by Justice of the Peace, J. D. Carr, "Esquire." The ceremony was performed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Henry Keller, Mrs. Keller being a sister of the bride.

Albert J. and Caroline (Rein) Dahlem had six children. They are Albert William; Henry Charles, who died in young manhood; Pauline Wilhelmine; Emil Eberhard; August Julius; and George Frederick, who died in infancy.

On March 18, 1919 Mr. and Mrs. Dahlem celebrated their Golden Anniversary. All of their relatives and many of their life-long friends were present. Mrs. Joseph Capser was guest of honor. Mr. Capser was unable to attend but sent a letter of congratulations which was read at the dinner table. During the evening the grandchildren sang "Put On Your Old Gray Bonnett" and many other songs. Souvenirs of early days were shown, one very interesting one being a drawing of Third Street as it looked in 1869.

Caroline (Rein) Dahlem passed away in 1921.

Albert J. Dahlem was a Republican and a member of the G. A. R. He was a life-long member of the Zion Lutheran Church.

Mr. Dahlem was in business for sixty years. He was one of the very

DAHLEM, ALBERT JULIUS

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oldest merchants in the entire northwest in continuous business. He retired after the death of his son, Albert, in June of 1919. After that he made daily visits to his store until a short time before his death.

Albert Dahlem's funeral was held on October 22, 1925 at the Zion Lutheran Church. The services were conducted by Reverend Julius Stein. He was buried beside his wife and children in Oakland Cemetery.

Mr. Dahlem was a great friend of Senator Knute Nelson.

Interviewed: Pauline Dahlem
Date: August 11, 1936
By: Melba Peterson

Publication Granted

FROM THE RECORDS IN THE STEARNS COUNTY COURT HOUSE

FOR THE ALBERT DAHLEM BIOGRAPHY

<u>Name</u>	<u>Date of Birth</u>	<u>Place of Birth</u>	<u>Father's Name</u>	<u>Age</u>
1. Henry Dahlem	July 15, 1871	Sauk Centre	Albert Dahlem	
2. Pauline "	Sept. 17, 1873	" "	" "	
3. Emil "	May 8, 1876	" "	" "	
4. August "	Oct. 1, 1878	" "	" "	
5. George "	Apr. 25, 1881	" "	" "	

<u>Mother's Name</u>	<u>Age</u>	<u>Book</u>	<u>Page</u>	<u>Line</u>	<u>Remarks</u>
1. Caroline Dahlem		A	49	1	
2. " "		A	127	28	
3. " "		A	249	13	
4. " "		A	327	16	
5. " "		A	475	7	

MARRIAGE RECORD BOOK C PAGE 288

Albert Dahlem and Caroline Rien

By: J. D. Carr, Justice of Peace

March 19, 1869

Witnesses: Henry Keller and Frederick Williams

BIRTH RECORD BOOK O PAGE 19 LINE 505

Caroline Rien

Born in Germany February 14, 1850

Daughter of Gottlieb Rien and Elizabeth Luedeke

DEATH RECORD BOOK O. PAGE 14 LINE 505

Caroline Dahlem Died July 19, 1922

Age 72 years 4 months and 25 days

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DEATH RECORD BOOK R PAGE 20 LINE 604

Albert Dahlem Died October 20, 1925

Age 81 years 7 months and 16 days

Born March 4, 1844 in Germany