

"Ada Gauss"

Thoughts of Ada Black Huyck Mead on February 25, 1997.

Ada N. Gauss was born to Gottfried and Mary Elizabeth Brooks Gauss on May 12, 1878 in Unadilla, Michigan. She had 4 brothers : Hartman, William, Eugene, and Fredrick. Her mother died when she was about 10 years old of T.B., know as consumption in those days. She tried to do a lot of things around the house. One thing that I remember her telling about was making the bread. She had to stand on a box to knead it, and her brother Hart helped quite a lot. Her father was a shoe maker, and he traveled by foot or horseback to get orders, buy the leather, and deliver his products. He was frequently away from home.

She met Frank Van Syckle and they became fiends. Some letters that we found showed that they corresponded for some time. The church was their social gatherings. They were married on November 15, 1899. They went to live on a farm owned by his uncle John Van Syckle whose wife had died several years earlier. The farm was located northwest of the little village of Plainfield. During the winter it was decided that Frank's parents would buy a house in Plainfield and Frank and Ada would take over their farm. This move was done in the spring of 1901. This farm was chartered to Samuel F. Van Syckle by President Martin Van Buren August 12, 1837. It was located on Van Road near Plainfield, Michigan in Livingston County. Frank was able to buy his sister's share of the farm after it was willed to them by their father/Edgar Van Syckle in 1922. He did general farming and milking cows, raising sheep, hogs, and chickens. Ada made many pounds of excellent butter that was shipped by train with fresh eggs each week to/Detroit. She was a fine cook and housekeeper. She enjoyed it very much. She adored her husband and children. She was a quiet spoken person that I never heard her complain about anything. She enjoyed her church and read her Bible regularly. Frank was a very hard worker but when necessary they hired an extra man to help do the farm work. But I have also heard my mother tell about all the farm work she and Eugenia did during the summer, especially at haying time. One time she told about them getting to the barn on top of the wagon to find they had a rattlesnake riding with them.

I remember a few things when they were on the farm. One Christmas we were to spend Christmas Day with our Grandparents, and there had been so much snow that Van Syckle Road was blocked. Grandpa came across a field with his horse and sleigh to get us. He took us back to our car later in the afternoon. Christmas at Grandma's was special. The tree and gifts were shut in the parlor until after a delicious dinner had been served by Grandma around her long table [the table that I use to serve my family

and friends]. I also remember a painting of a dish of fruit that hung over her table. In the summer we visited, I remember a playhouse that Auntie Marjorie had made under the trees near the kitchen. In the playhouse, we played with a lot of spice boxes.

Grandpa had sugar diabetes and since insulin hadn't been on the market long, the country Doctor would not prescribe it. He treated it with diet. However, Grandpa would crave sweets so much that it was hard for them to control it. He got sick and developed pneumonia and died October 1, 1930. Louisa, the eldest daughter, told the story that her dad never accepted her spending \$10.00 on a special hat. She felt that he thought she was a spendthrift, therefore, Eugenia Van Syckle Delamarter was made the executrix of the estate.

Grandma and Marjorie moved into a house in Plainfield that had belonged to Mary Louise Montague [Frank's Mother}. They rented the farm for a few years and finally sold it to Ray and Cora Hill on December 20, 1938. Marjorie married Heil Grubaugh, and they both worked at the Howell T.B. Sanitarium for some time. After they moved, Grandma came to stay with us in the winters of 1937 and 1938. In reading Mama's diaries, I found out that Grandma did a lot of ironing and always kept the mending done. She mended socks using a light bulb. I can remember her helping us with the night dishes. She went home in the summer time so she could enjoy quiet, her church, neighbors, and family that still lived near.

In 1941 when I graduated from High School Grandma wanted to go visit her sister-in-law, Lydia and her families who lived in California and Arizona. My father bought a new car for me to drive, and she paid the expenses of the trip. Grandma and I were gone six weeks and had a wonderful time. We first visited in Globe, Arizona with her niece Leta, her husband Barney and son Richard. The extreme heat bothered Grandma. I bought a car window fan cooler before we went across the desert which did help a lot. That night we arrived in Yuma, and it was terribly hot. I rented a motel room that was air cooled, and Grandma stayed in the room. I ate a light meal at the drug store and brought Grandma back food. We arrived the next day at Lydia's, Uncle Eugene's wife, in Long Beach, California. We enjoyed much cooler weather by the coast. Grandma was able to remember many things and good times they had together. Lydia's daughter Lucille Nutter also lived in Long Beach with her husband Ray and their son Gerry. While we were in Long Beach, we took a trip to Catalina and rode in a glass bottom boat. We visited cousin Marjorie Montague in Los Angeles. She took us on a tour of Hollywood. Afterwards, we went north to San Francisco to visit the Fisherman's Wharf, the Golden Gate Bridge and Golden Gate Park. Our next stop was to visit Gordon and Gene Gauss, Grandma's nephew. We did a lot of sight seeing while we were there. Grandma was able to keep up very well.

WE cannot put a date as to when the family felt it was too dangerous for Grandma to be by herself. When they did, she came to our house to live. She was able to work for a lady in East Lansing for some time. When she could no longer work, she simply sat and home and rocked. That's when my dad told us he wanted us all to learn to knit. He felt it was a shame that she couldn't do some kind of handwork. Grandma became so forgetful that she would ask the same questions over and over. The doctor said it was hardening of the arteries. She went with my folks to Florida the winter of 1946, but after that she stayed winters with Bun and me. When the folks built their little house, Grandma stayed with them in the summers. When Daddy died in 1950, Grandma didn't know who he was. There is no written record of the years that followed, so we have tried to put together some information. Mother married Jacob Lange in August of 1951 and at that time, I believe Grandma was living with some ladies in a rest home. The rest home was moved, and Grandma went to live on the farm on Cooper Road, near Jackson with Mother, Jake, Georgia Kaye and Margaret Ann [Where I live now]. Margaret Ann helped Mother care for Grandma. By this time she was very difficult to handle. She would sleep very little and would wander all over the house. Margaret slept on a cot across the bedroom doorway so Grandma wouldn't get out at night. It was a very hard summer for everyone. I believe that she went back to live with Eugenia in the fall of 1954. Thanksgiving time she broke a hip and was in the hospital for some time. She developed pneumonia and died January 8, 1955.

I was very fortunate to have had my Grandma teach me to bake bread and make molasses sugar cookies.

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