

## Chapter 5

# *The Second Generation*

### 2. Maria Klaers

The Klaers family memory describing the loss of Joseph Klaers' first-born daughter during the family's trip to the United States has been substantiated by contemporary research. The register of the ship *Alberti*, which arrived in the United States on June 3, 1857, lists an infant named Maria as a child of Joseph and Luzia (see pages 25-26 and 41-43). She is listed as age six months. Because this log does not identify infants' ages carefully, it is possible that Maria was born in either late 1856 or early 1857.

There is no American record of this child who had apparently died before the time of the October 1857 Minnesota territorial census. We can infer that she died during the passage, just as remembered by the family. She is named on a four-sided obelisk at Sts. Peter and Paul Cemetery in Loretto. This memorial lists each of Joseph's four children who failed to survive to adulthood.

Sources: Sr. Dorothy (Leonore) Klaers  
Viola Laurent Galzki

### 3. Nicholas Klaers

Joseph Klaers' first son—and first surviving child—was born on Oct. 16, 1857 at the Klaers homestead in Independence Township where his parents settled a few months earlier. It is likely that his name at birth was spelled Nicolas, the German form of the name pre-

ferred by his maternal grandfather, Nicolas Goergen.

He learned farming and blacksmithing from his father while growing up on the family farm. As a young man he met Anna Maria



*Nicholas Klaers and his family in 1886. From left to right: Peter Klaers, Nicholas Klaers, Joseph Klaers, Anna Maria Becker (Klaers), John Klaers.*

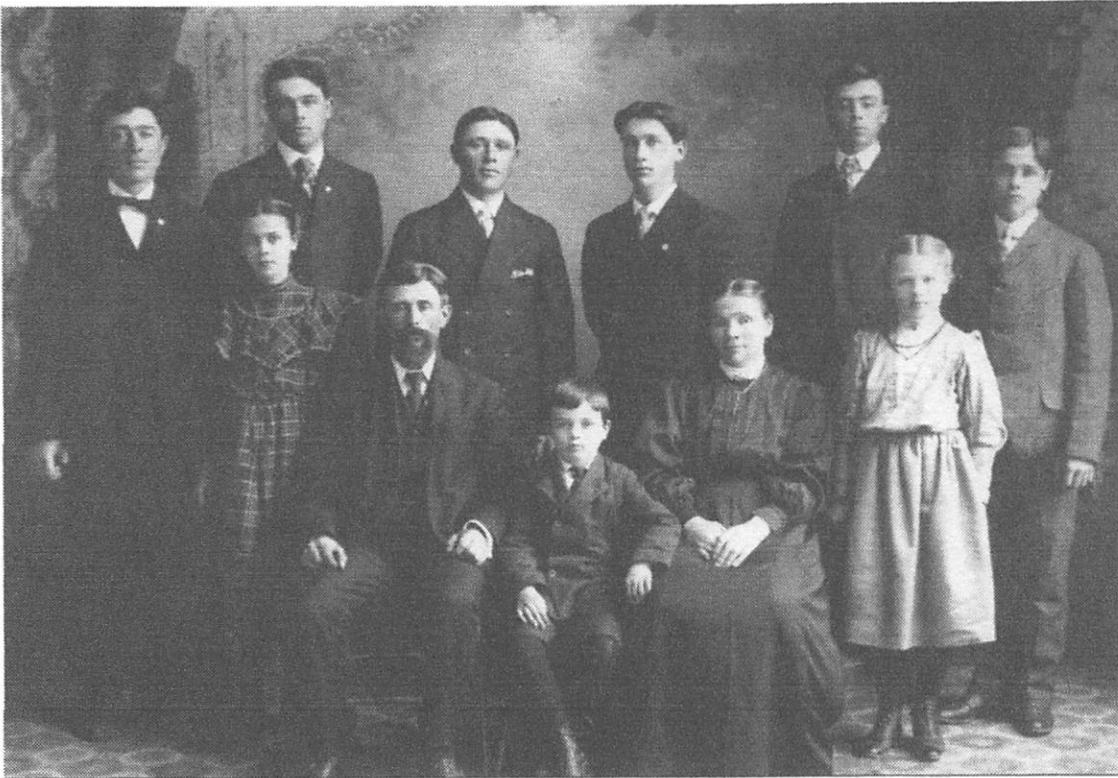
Becker, a woman three years his senior. Anna Maria came from Limbeck, Germany with her sister and five brothers in 1873. Nicholas and Anna Maria were married in 1879. His new wife moved into the farmhouse with his parents and younger brother and sister.

The first of their nine children arrived a year later. Anna Maria had six sons in a row: Joseph, born in 1880; Peter, born in 1882; John, born in 1884; Nicholas, born in 1886; Franz, born in 1889; and Michael, born in 1892. About this time, Nicholas grew the goatee and mustache which became his trademark for the rest of his long life.

Two daughters followed these six sons: Elizabeth, born in 1894 and Marie, born in 1896. Their youngest child, Lawrence, was born two years later, in 1898.

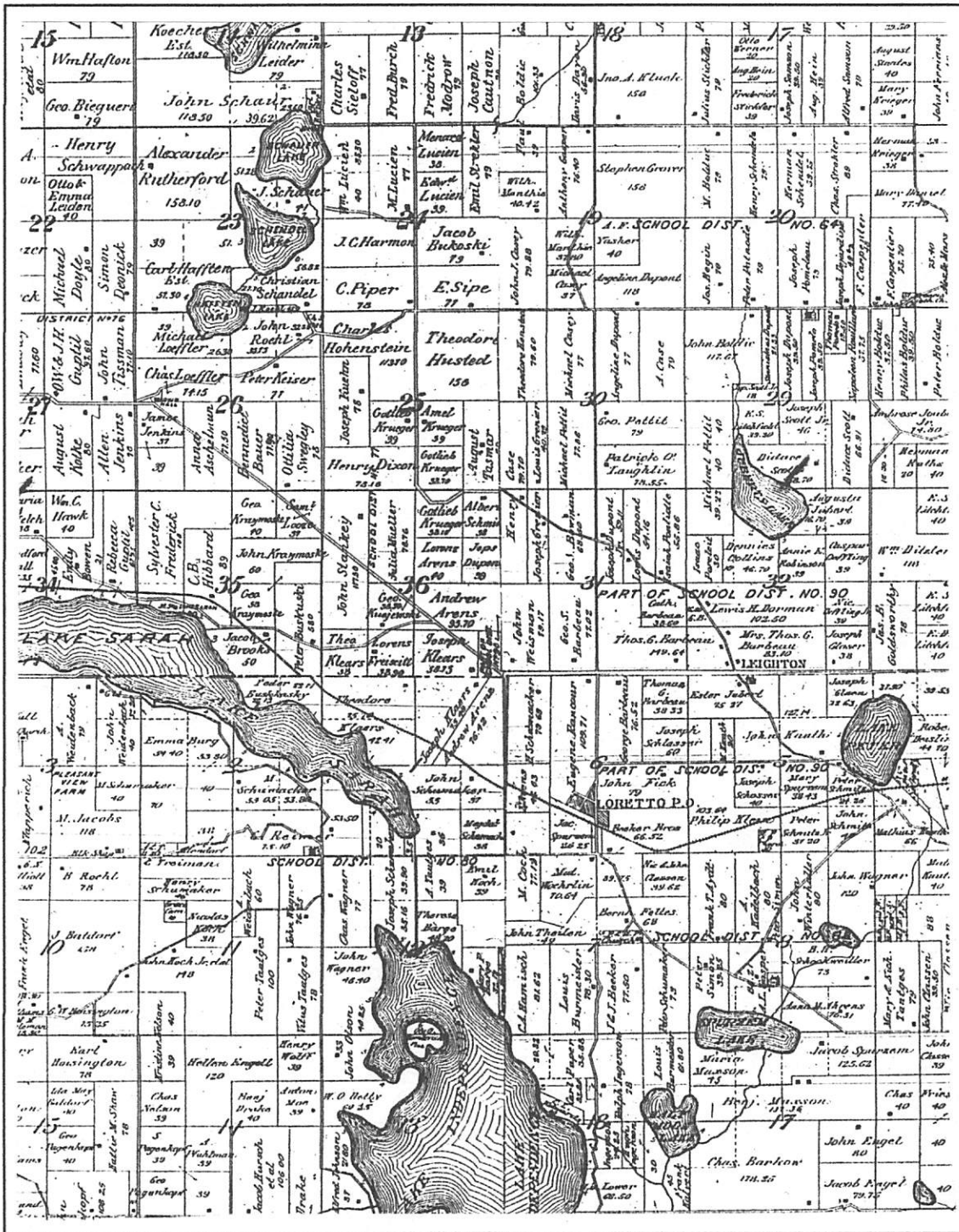
We can presume that Nicholas took increasing responsibility for managing the farm as his parents grew older. His younger brother, Theodore, married in 1881 and settled on the northwest portion of Joseph's land (for a description of Joseph's history of land acquisitions, see pages 36-38). Magdalena, the only other surviving child of Joseph and Luzia married Peter Schumacher five years later and moved to the Schumacher farm in neighboring Medina Township.

Nicholas built a large frame house for his rapidly growing family just south of the original log home which had served the family since the pioneering days before the Civil War. The old log home, which survived in an increasingly decaying state for several decades, later served as a blacksmith shop.



*Nicholas Klaers with his family, approximately 1907. From left to right, seated in front: Nicholas Klaers, Lawrence Klaers, Anna Maria Becker (Klaers). Standing in the second row: Elizabeth Klaers (Arens), Marie Klaers (Arens). Standing in the back row: Joseph Klaers, Nicholas Klaers, Peter Klaers, John Klaers, Frank Klaers, Michael Klaers.*

The Second Generation



1898 plat map for the region around Lake Sarah. At this time, Joseph Klaers still holds title to the land on which he lives with Nicholas and his family. Theodore's farm is just to the west. This map shows the correct division between the Klaers and Arens land.

Nicholas did not acquire title to his father's farm until 1903. Nicolas Goergen (Nicholas Klaers' maternal grandfather) first purchased the land from Lorenz Arens in 1859 (see page 35). Nicholas Goergen held title to the land until his death in 1873, at which time title passed to his widow, Anna Maria Peifer Goergen. When she died in 1879, title passed to her daughter, Luzia Goergen Klaers (Joseph's wife). We can assume that Joseph inherited the land upon his wife's death in 1896.

At the turn of the century, the land again changed hands, passing indirectly from Joseph to Nicholas. The history of land title between 1898 and 1903 is unclear, and we can only infer the details. An 1898 plat map (see page 47) identifies Joseph Klaers as continuing to own the 118-acre farm, comprised of his father-in-law's 78-acre farm, which he expanded with the purchase of 40 acres just across the Greenfield town line in 1880. This map also identifies the parcel of land which went to his second son, Theodore. However, by 1900, ownership of part of Joseph's land had passed to Theresia Klaers, Joseph's sister-in-law (she was the widow of Joseph's brother Johann). According to the mortgage document, Nicholas agreed to purchase this land for \$1000 payable over a three-year period. Perhaps Joseph had earlier financed the purchase of this land with money borrowed from his brother Johann. In any case, Nicholas satisfied the requirements of the mortgage and acquired clear title to the land on Dec. 17, 1903.

The early 1900s must have been a difficult time for Nicholas. His father, with whom he had always lived, died in 1904. Several of his sons demonstrated little interest in farming as they grew up. Nicholas became concerned that the family farm would pass into the hands of strangers. His second son, Peter, assured his father that he would be happy to remain on the farm and keep the land in the family.

After Peter married in the fall of 1908, Nicholas decided to move out of the house. The following spring, Nicholas purchased a smaller 40-acre farm from his brother-in-law, Peter Becker. The Becker land was located within the city limits of Loretto. Years earlier, the Soo Line Railroad purchased some of the

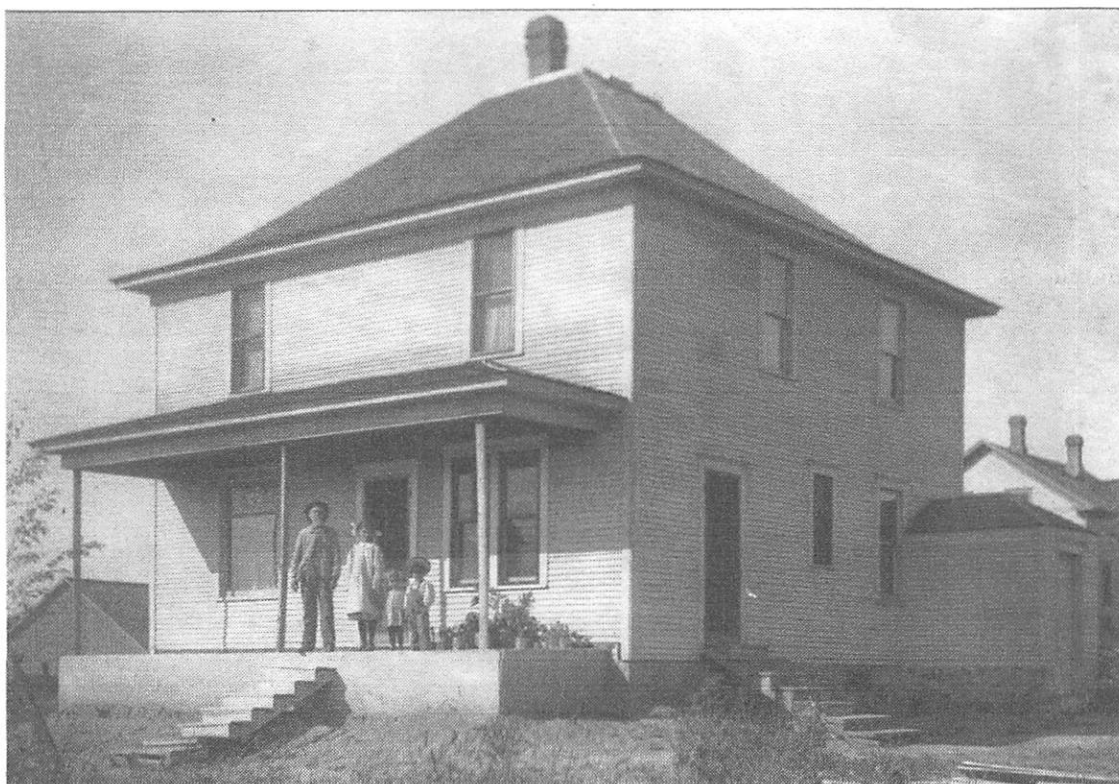
Becker land to establish a rail station in Loretto. Nicholas' son Peter, recently married and now the father of infant twins, remained on the farm while Nicholas, his wife Anna Maria Becker and the three youngest children, Elizabeth, Marie and Lawrence, moved to the new farm in Loretto. This farm included a stand of maple trees which Nicholas particularly loved. He built a tiny cabin in the woods in which he would work through the night to boil the sap down into syrup.

Nicholas' greatest sorrow during the early years in Loretto was the declining health of his wife, Anna Maria Becker. Now sick with cancer, she had never enjoyed good health. More than once, one of the sons was dispatched to locate the priest to administer last rites. She died of cancer on Feb. 12, 1912, leaving Nicholas alone with the three youngest children. Elizabeth married and left the home in 1915. Marie took on full responsibility for managing the household, looking after her father, younger brother Lawrence, and, from time to time, older relatives of her mother.

For a while, Nicholas was joined in the farmhouse by one of these older brothers-in-law, Peter Becker, his deceased wife's oldest living brother. This fragile, tiny man, fifteen years older than Nicholas, even as an old man was known as *Petzer*, (a German diminutive meaning "little Peter"). He suffered from increasing senility, often sneaking out of the house at night to wander down the railroad tracks. Nicholas or Lawrence had to follow after him to bring him back home. Peter found this situation comic—looking behind him, he would laugh at the sight of Nicholas in pursuit. Nicholas or his sons often sat up through the night to watch over Peter Becker.

As Nicholas grew older, his son Peter often came out to help with the farm work. Later, Nicholas' youngest son Lawrence took responsibility for operating this farm, on which he lived until his own death in 1988. Living in town made it possible for Nicholas—a devout Catholic who truly loved the church—to attend mass daily, which he valued deeply.

The year 1921 witnessed the death of Nicholas' maternal aunt, Magdalena Goergen



*Nicholas' Loretto farmhouse, about 1915. Peter Becker, Nicholas' older brother-in-law, is standing on the porch. The identities of the three children have not been established.*

Feltes. Magdalena was the younger sister of his mother, Luzia Goergen and wife of Bernard Feltes. She was eighty years when she died. Her death marks the passing of the immigrant generation—she was the last survivor of the family group who left Germany together in 1857.

During the Loretto years, Sundays provided a special opportunity for family visits. Nicholas' children and grandchildren often stopped at his place on the way to church, either hitching their horses (in the earlier years) or parking their cars (in later years) there before walking to early mass together. Nicholas always loved these visits from his children and grandchildren. Nicholas' sons also visited regularly to play cards with their father.

In 1925 Nicholas' son John Klaers, who had moved to Modesto, California some years earlier made a return visit. Nicholas' entire family gathered at his home for a family reun-

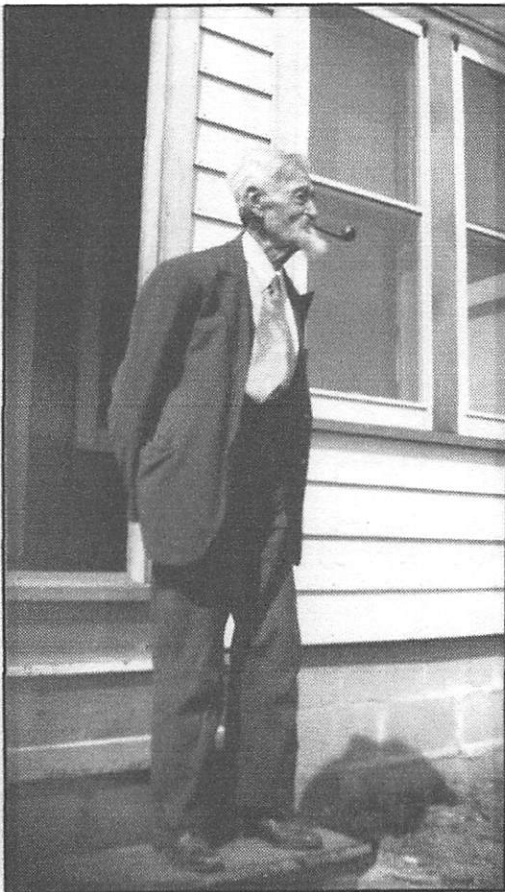
ion. This was Nicholas' grandchildren's first opportunity to meet their Uncle John. A photograph of Nicholas with all of his sons at the time of this reunion appears on page 50.

In the late 1920s, Nicholas' brother Theodore, with his wife Anna, moved to the adjacent property. The two brothers spent countless hours together. They relished their close access to church, regularly attending daily mass together.

Nicholas quietly assumed the role of family patriarch. Twenty-two grandchildren arrived between 1905 and 1938. He especially adored his youngest grandchild, Mary Lee Klaers, who was raised in the home he shared with his youngest son Lawrence and his wife Carola. All the grandchildren knew him as *Peder*, apparently a diminutive of *Pate*, the German word for godfather. Nicholas' children often prompted their own children to speak German to their grandfather. The grand-



Above: Nicholas Klaers with his sons and son-in-law. This 1925 photograph marks a return visit of Nicholas' third son, John Klaers, who had moved to California years earlier. From left to right: Louis Arens (married to Elizabeth Klaers at the time of this picture), Lawrence Klaers, Michael Klaers, Frank Klaers, Nicholas Klaers, John Klaers, Peter Klaers, Joseph Klaers, Nicholas Klaers.



children remember him as an extraordinarily quiet, gentle and loving man of unquestionable honesty and integrity. He had a way of communicating with a gesture, typically preferring silence over speech. Despite his quiet demeanor, he had a droll sense of humor and was always ready with a wry comment. As an older man he was seldom seen without his pipe and beloved dog.

Nicholas, who was blessed with an iron constitution and remarkably good health, began to succumb to cancer of the bladder during his old age. He chose to keep his illness private, neither telling his children nor consulting a doctor. His condition worsened in the early spring of 1948, and his pain became far more intense. On the night of April 12 he entered his final crisis. His sons—who throughout their lives were fiercely loyal to their father and to each other—gathered in his home, spending the night with him. He died the next morning, April 13, six months past his ninetieth birthday. He was buried next to his wife at the old cemetery at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Loretto.

Left: Nicholas Klaers as an older man standing outside his house.

Children of Nicholas Klaers and Anna Maria Becker:

9. **Joseph Klaers**, born Oct. 28, 1880
10. **Peter Aloysius Klaers**, born Oct. 21, 1882
11. **John Klaers**, born June 24, 1884
12. **Nicholas Michael Klaers**, born Dec. 12, 1886
13. **Franz J. Klaers**, born Nov. 9, 1889
14. **Michael Frank Klaers**, born Feb. 26, 1892
15. **Elizabeth M. Klaers**, born March 1894
16. **Marie Delores Klaers**, born June 1896
17. **Lawrence Vincent Klaers**, born Dec. 14, 1898

Sources: Mary Lee Klaers Egan  
Sr. Dorothy (Leonore) Klaers  
Agnes Anna Klaers Schumacher  
Gertrude Dorothy Klaers Stearns  
Dorothy Clara Klaers Van Beusekom

#### 4. Theodore Nicolas Klaers

According to the family's recollection, the third child of Joseph Klaers and Luzia Goergen was born on July 17, 1859. However, a transcript of his baptismal record, noted in the parish register of St. Michael's Church in St. Michael, provides the date of baptism as September 26 and the date of birth as July 24. The date of birth recorded by the parish may or may not be correct.

This baptismal document provides significant biographical detail about Theodore. It identifies Theodore's middle name as Nicolas, a name his parents selected to honor his maternal grandfather, Nicolas Goergen, who served as one of the sponsors. Nicolas' daughter Magdalena, sister to Luzia Goergen Klaers, served as the other sponsor (Magdalena later married Bernard Feltes).

Theodore had at least some schooling as a young man. He is known to have been at class when his younger sister, Maria, was fa-

tally attacked by dogs. He learned to read both English and German. As an adult, he read the *Wanderer*, a German Catholic weekly news-magazine.

As a young man Theodore became interested in a local woman named Anna Arens. Anna, the oldest of ten children, was born in Medina township on Jan. 13, 1861. Her parents, Franz Arens and Anna Mary Mainz Arens, arrived in Medina Township in early 1857, a few months before Joseph Klaers began to farm in Independence Township. Franz Arens was a brother of Lorenz Arens, part of whose land the Joseph Klaers family farmed and later purchased. Franz Arens, a one-time coal miner from the German province of Alsace-Lorraine, had volunteered earlier for service in the Civil War. He fought in the Eleventh Minnesota Regiment, along with his neighbor Hilarius Schumacher, whose son Peter married Theodore's younger sister, Magdalena.



*Theodore Klaers and Anna Arens (Klaers). This picture appears to date from the early to middle 1890s.*

Theodore and Anna were married on Aug. 29, 1881. Their wedding was the first to be recorded in the permanent parish register established at Sts. Peter and Paul Church after the church's second incorporation in 1878. Theodore settled on the northwestern part of the land his father had acquired (see pages 36-38 for a description of Joseph's acquisitions). He built a frame house on this land for his rapidly growing family.

The first of Theodore and Anna's eleven children arrived in 1882, less than a year after their wedding. Children came one after another. This first daughter, Mary, was followed a year later by a second daughter, Lucy, in 1883. Two sons came next: John, born in 1885, and Joseph, born in 1886. The third daughter, Katharina, was born in 1888, followed by a third son, Bernard ("Ben"), born in 1890. Two years later, Anna Magdalena ("Annie") was born, followed by another sister, Magdalena ("Lena"), born in 1893. A fourth son, Franz ("Frank"), was born in 1896, followed two years later by another daughter, Theresa Mary. The Klaers' youngest son, William Joseph, was born in 1900.

As in most families, pregnancy was kept a closely guarded secret. The children never knew when their mother was pregnant. It was only once they saw Mrs. Weissman, the midwife, come across the hill, that they knew the family was about to get larger. This Mrs. Weissman—whose first name was Elizabeth—was a sister to Hilarius Schumacher, neighbor of Joseph Klaers and father-in-law of Theodore's younger sister, Magdalena. More than once, Anna had a child in the morning and was back in the fields by the end of the day. Anna's role on the farm was far greater than performing her own chores. A natural organizer, she assumed the primary responsibility for coordinating the overall flow of work on the farm, making sure that all tasks were performed as required. And if Theodore was working with neighbors on a threshing crew, Anna did all of his chores as well as her own.

Theodore's children all attended five to eight years of school at the country school across Lake Sarah. The school schedule followed the rhythms of the agricultural cycle.

As a result, a school year included only seven or eight months of work. The children also received religious instruction from the local priest at what was called "the German school" in Loretto. Education was not a high value to Theodore—like most of his neighbors, he preferred to have his children working on the farm.

Over the years, the family developed a division of labor based on the children's skills and interests. John and Joe, for example, were responsible for the many horses maintained for working the farm. Anna Magdalena and Frank milked cows. Mary had responsibility for the endless mounds of laundry, all washed by hand in a wringer machine. Her younger sister, Lucy, was steered away from this chore, as her parents were afraid she would catch her long thick hair in the wringer.

Theodore expanded his holdings to 120 acres by the time his youngest children were born (see 1898 plat map on page 47). He was a highly successful farmer, whose habits of hard work and constant thrift paid off handsomely. He possessed an intuitive eye for future value and was skilled at making good deals. He continued to buy land throughout the years his children were growing up. His goal was to provide each of his sons a farm at marriage or to provide a dowry of \$500—a substantial sum of money in those years—to each of his daughters. As a result, Theodore's sons tended to delay marriage until at least the age of thirty so that enough money could be saved to start them off with their own farms. The daughters increasingly believed this to be unfair, as the gift of a farm had a value at least ten times as great as a daughter's dowry. But Theodore reasoned that his daughters' fathers-in-law had the same responsibility to provide a farm for their sons. Of course, few of his daughter's fathers-in-law were able to make this kind of gift to their own sons.

Theodore treated his farm, his animals, and his personal property with great respect. He prided himself on maintaining the farm's structures and equipment in perfect order. In the last year of his life, he sold his twelve-year-old Model "A" Ford to his grandson for \$100. The car had only been driven 10,000 miles in





*Theodore Klaers with his eleven children, approximately 1913 or 1914. Seated in front: Theodore Klaers and his wife, Anna Arens (Klaers). Standing in back row, from left to right: Katherina Klaers, Mary Theresa Klaers (Laurent) , Anna Klaers (Brost/Blackburn), Mary Klaers (Sipe), Frank Klaers, William Klaers, John Klaers, Magdalena Klaers (Laurent), Joseph H. Klaers, Bernard Klaers, Lucy Klaers (Leuer).*

twelve years and remained in showroom condition, having spent each of its twelve winters on blocks.

Like Nicholas, Theodore was devoted to the church. Every Sunday he led his family on foot down the railroad tracks, the most direct route to Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Loretto. On the way home they often stopped to lend a hand to neighbors, even while dressed in their Sunday best. In the winter snows the family could travel by horse-drawn sleigh. Because so many of the children remained on the farm into adult years, an inordinate number of adults piled off this sleigh when they arrived in town.

Theodore and Anna, whose farm included lakeside acreage, become very fond of fishing. Many Sunday afternoons were spent fishing from their small boat. The farm's loca-

tion on the shore of Lake Sarah made Theodore and Anna's home popular with friends and relatives in Minneapolis, who came by train to spend the weekend. Despite the extra work, Theodore and Anna loved hosting their friends.

Life in the Klaers home changed dramatically at the end of World War I. Tragedy struck in the winter of 1918-1919, the first winter after the war's conclusion. A deadly flu epidemic, known popularly as "swine flu," was carried throughout Europe and North America by soldiers returning home. Over twenty million people died in the ensuing epidemic. In these years, three decades before the invention of antibiotics, the disease often proved deadly. Victims were quarantined and care was difficult to obtain.

The disease struck the Klaers home with a vengeance. Katharina, Frank, Theresa and

William all became ill with this life-threatening strain of flu in early 1919. The four victims were quarantined. The family's many friends and relatives were afraid to enter the house. A son-in-law, Theodore Sipe, helped with chores during this time. Marguerite ("Gretchen") Freichels, Theodore Klaers' cousin (his father's older sister's daughter) was the only member of the family who helped during this difficult time. While the three youngest children eventually recovered, Katharina died on Feb. 24, 1919, three months before her thirtieth birthday.

Anna was devastated by Katharina's death. That same year, the two remaining unmarried daughters left home. Theresa was married in May, and Magdalena was married in November. The two daughters married two brothers: Jules and Arthur Laurent. Only the oldest son, John, and the two youngest sons, Franz and William remained at home. During these years, Anna, now without the company of her daughters, felt overwhelmed by the work she had to do by herself.

In the late 1920s, Theodore bought a lot in Loretto, next to his brother Nicholas' home. They left their farm in the care of their three bachelor sons. Anna missed the companionship of her family, and the pace of life on the farm by Lake Sarah. She was bored, frustrated and saddened by the recent losses in her life. Theodore assured her they could move back if she wished, which seemed to help—she became more content with her new lifestyle. Theodore and Anna remained in this home for the rest of their years, though visiting frequently at their original farm near Lake Sarah.

Theodore and Anna attended daily mass with Nicholas. On holy days, they attended every mass that was scheduled. If the mass schedule was changed for some reason, the priest knew to knock on the Klaers' window and inform them of the change. They liked to provide gifts of produce from their immaculate garden and carefully kept fruit orchard for the priest and nuns at the neighboring church. During the depression years, they consistently provided a meal or food package to the home-



*Theodore Klaers with his children at their 1931 fiftieth wedding anniversary. Seated in the front row: William Klaers, Theodore Klaers, Anna Arens (Klaers), Mary Theresa Klaers (Laurent). Standing in the back row: Mary Klaers (Sipe), Lucy Klaers (Leuer), John Klaers, Joseph H. Klaers, Bernard Klaers, Magdalena Klaers (Laurent), Frank Klaers. Two of Theodore's eleven children are missing in this picture: Katharina died in 1919 and Anna Magdalena left Minnesota in 1915.*

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*The Second Generation*

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*Theodore Klaers' family at the fiftieth wedding anniversary party.*

*Seated in front row, from left to right: Leona Leuer (Berthiaume), Theodore Joseph Klaers, Harold Laurent (visible behind Theodore Joseph Klaers), Mildred Laurent (Van Beusekom), Harry "Bud" Sipe, Elmer Laurent, Raymond Laurent, Leon Leuer, Gilbert Laurent, Catherine Sipe, Raymond Klaers, Norbert Laurent, Donald Laurent, granddaughter of John Arens.*

*Kneeling in second row: Viola Laurent (Galzki), Delores Klaers (James), Lorraine Sipe (Hughes), Clarence Klaers, Donald Klaers, LeRoy Klaers.*

*Seated in third row: Lucy Klaers (Leuer), Mary Klaers (Sipe), Lena Simon (Arens), Frances Arens (Meyerhofer), Joseph Schumacher, Madeline Leuer (Veit), Marcella Laurent (Jordan), Theodore Klaers, Anna Arens (Klaers), Lorraine Laurent, Lucille Leuer (Nali), Mary Arens (Schumacher), Nicholas Klaers, Fr. George Kaufmann.*

*Standing in fourth row: Joseph H. Klaers, Katie Arens (Fries), Julianna Bukowsky (Arens), Regina Otto (Klaers), Frank Arens, Muriel Sipe (Kaltzenberger), Annabelle Leuer (Rasmuson), Florence Leuer (Payne), Magdalena Klaers (Laurent), Arthur Laurent, Peter Leuer.*

*Standing in fifth row: Irene Maloney (Klaers), unidentified, Eva Bowman (Klaers), John Clees (in front), William Klaers, Nicholas Arens, Bernard Klaers, Frank Klaers, Peter Arens, James Klaers, Lucy Weidenbach (Arens), grandchild of John Arens, daughter-in-law of John Arens, John Arens.*

*Standing in sixth row: Joseph Arens, Fern Arens, unidentified, Irene Pouliot (Klaers), mother of Carola Stein (Klaers), Sylvester Sipe, Edward Sipe, John Klaers, Theresa Klaers (Laurent), Jules Laurent, Margaret Arens, grandson of John Arens, son of John Arens.*

less men—the "hobos"—who stopped in the area.

They visited frequently with Nicholas Klaers and regularly invited their grandchildren to visit and play cards. The others always knew when Theodore had a good hand—he would bang his knuckles on the table with each card he played. He was not above pulling a "fast one" to gain an extra edge. When he cheated Anna, she would first get mad and then laugh heartily. These years were kind to Theodore and Anna. Theodore appeared happy all the time. He spent many hours smoking his pipe which he would light with slivers of wood he cut from the logs in the house. Anna and he often sat in their rockers side by side, holding hands. Theodore loved to tease, to play jokes and to laugh. At times he laughed so hard his upper plate flew out of his mouth—which only made him laugh the harder.

Sundays and holidays were special times at the Klaers house. Many of their family and friends stopped in to visit on their way to or from Mass. The whole family gathered each year for Thanksgiving Dinner.

Both Theodore and Anna remained healthy during this period. In the summer of 1931 they celebrated their fiftieth wedding anniversary at the farm on Lake Sarah. Nearly a hundred members of the family attended the celebration (see picture on page 55). The party was a huge, afternoon-long affair, remembered as great fun over sixty years later. That evening a group of people from town came out to the farm, making an awful racket. The point of this visit, called a "shiveree," was to honor the couple by carrying on until the visitors were given money to go back to town and buy beer. Theodore didn't want to buy off the crowd, but finally relented and gave them money for drinks.

Anna's health began to fail in the years following this event. She had increasing difficulty sleeping and spent many nighttime hours rocking in her chair and praying the rosary. Theodore had become hard of hearing and had increasing difficulty caring for his wife. Viola Laurent (Magdalena's daughter, whose grandparents were also her grandparents), came to

help care for Anna, and lived primarily with her grandparents between 1935 and 1940. Grandchildren continued to visit often, and were sometimes given extra time by the sisters to walk over from school during recess to visit their ailing grandmother. Finally, Anna suffered a stroke which made it impossible for her to swallow—the doctor ordered intravenous feeding. Although her physical health recovered slightly, Anna increasingly suffered from hallucinations, often wandering outside late at night. Her children and in-laws took turns with her at night; Viola continued to take care of her grandparents during the day. Anna died quietly at home on Feb. 15, 1939.

Theodore seemed lost without Anna. He often spoke to her as though she were still there. The sight of her picture could make him cry. His granddaughter, Viola Laurent, continued to stay at the house and care for him, often assisted by his daughters. Mary Klaers Sipe, his oldest daughter, was at the home as often as possible. The other daughters in the area, Lucy Klaers Leuer, Theresa Klaers Laurent, and Magdalena Klaers Laurent, along with granddaughters, Delores Klaers (daughter of Joseph) and Lucille Leuer (daughter of Lucy) also provided frequent help in these years. After several years alone, Theodore contracted pneumonia, from which he never fully recovered. He died on Nov. 18, 1943. The death certificate identifies the cause of death as leukemia with the presence of other complicating illnesses.

Children of Theodore Nicolas Klaers and Anna Arens:

18. Mary Klaers, born July 23, 1882
19. Lucy Klaers, born Nov. 4, 1883
20. John Klaers, born Feb. 3, 1885
21. Joseph Klaers, born May 6, 1886
22. Katharina Klaers, born May 13, 1888
23. Bernard Klaers, born June 26, 1890
24. Anna Magdalena Klaers, born March 14, 1892
25. Magdalena Klaers, born Dec. 16, 1893
26. Frank Klaers, born Feb. 4, 1896

27. **Mary Theresa Klaers**, born Sept. 12, 1898
28. **William Joseph Klaers**, born Oct. 3, 1900

*Sources:* Viola Anna Laurent Galzki  
Delores Marie Klaers James  
Marcella Theresa Laurent Jordan  
Fr. Marvin Jerome Klaers  
Harry Bernard "Bud" Sipe  
Madeline Mary Leuer Veit

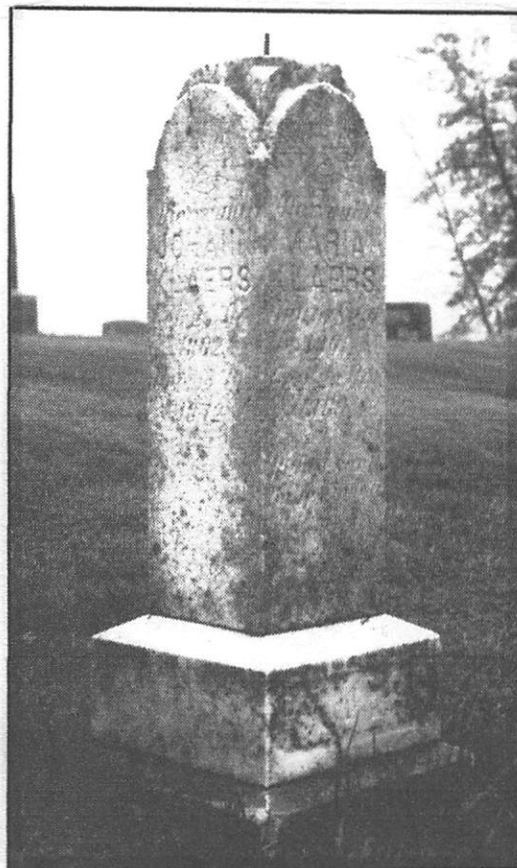
#### 5. **Maria Klaers**

The fourth child of Joseph Klaers and Luzia Goergen was born on Sept. 10, 1861. She was given the same name as the Klaers' first daughter, who died during the family's trip to the United States in 1857. Tragically, this Maria also failed to survive childhood. She was attacked by a pack of wild or semi-wild dogs, and died of her wounds on Oct. 29, 1869. She is buried in the old Sts. Peter and Paul Cemetery in Loretto, sharing a four-sided grave marker memorializing the death of the four Klaers children.

*Sources:* Viola Anna Laurent Galzki  
Sr. Dorothy (Leonore) Klaers

#### 6. **Johann Klaers**

Johann, the fifth child of Joseph Klaers and Luzia Goergen, was born on Oct. 24, 1862. This date of birth is provided by his gravestone; the baptismal record maintained at St. Boniface Church provides a birth date of Oct. 30. This same record identifies his date of baptism as Nov. 18, 1862. John Reisenberger and Magdalena Goergen stood as godparents. John Reisenberger, a neighbor of the Klaers across Lake Sarah, was one of the original group of German families who settled the area in 1857 (see pp. 32). Magdalena Goergen was a younger sister of Johann's mother, Luzia Goergen.



*Grave marker memorializing the four children of Joseph Klaers who failed to survive to adulthood. The two sides visible in this photograph mark the graves of Johann Klaers and Maria Klaers.*

Twelve days before his tenth birthday, he began to suffer intense abdominal pains. The family, unsure of what was happening, ultimately summoned the doctor. But the little boy died before help arrived. He died on Oct. 12, 1872. Tragically, his parents had lost three children during their first fifteen years in the United States. Johann was buried in the old cemetery at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Loretto, sharing a four-sided grave marker memorializing the death of the four Klaers children.

*Sources:* Viola Anna Laurent Galzki  
Sr. Dorothy (Leonore) Klaers

## 7. Magdalena Klaers

The Klaers' family memory identifies Magdalena as the youngest of Joseph's seven children. But documentary evidence suggests that she was sixth and not seventh. When she was born on Dec. 29, 1866, family friends begged the family not to name the little girl Mary, as the two previous girls with that name died tragically as children. Apparently, the family accepted this advice.

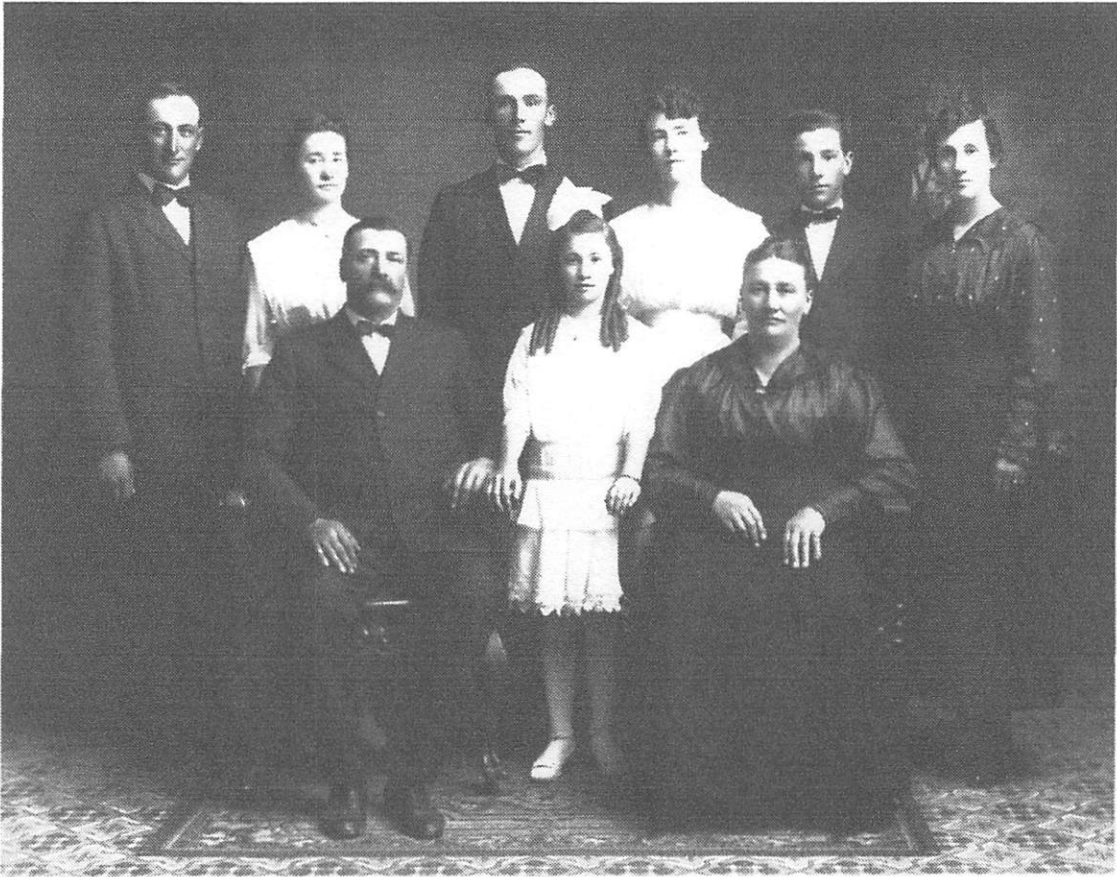
As a young woman of twenty, Magdalena, who was always known as Lena, married Peter Schumacher, a man seven years her senior. Peter's father, Hilarius Schumacher, lived just across the Medina town line, less than a mile from the Klaers farm. Hilarius Schumacher was a civil war veteran whose ten children bore over two thousand descendants. The Schumacher genealogy is thoroughly documented by his descendant Margaret Thies Lauer (see bibliography, page 3).

The Schumachers moved to land owned by Bernhard Feltes, husband of Magdalena's maternal aunt. Bernhard was married to Magdalena Goergen, younger sister of Magdalena Klaers' mother, Luzia Goergen. The Felteses owned two eighty-acre parcels (eighth sections), ten acres of which was given to Sts. Peter and Paul Church for the purpose of building a new church in 1886 (pictured on the plat map on page 47).

Just after the Schumachers' first anniversary, Magdalena gave birth to their first son, Joseph. Gradually, the Schumacher home filled with children. Lucy was born in 1890, followed by a second boy, Hilarius in 1892. Three daughters followed: Magdalena Christina in 1894, Anna Mary in 1897 and Agnes in 1900. Tragically, Agnes died the following spring, at the age of fourteen months. A third son, Henry was born in 1902, followed by the youngest daughter, Regina Marie, born in 1907.



*Magdalena Klaers (Schumacher) and her family outside their farmhouse in Medina Township, approximately 1910. From left to right: Joseph Schumacher, Magdalena Christina Schumacher (Schmitt), Anna Schumacher (Fries), Magdalena Klaers (Schumacher), Joseph Schumacher, Henry Schumacher (in front of his father), Regina Schumacher (Reinking), Hilarius Schumacher.*



*Magdalena's family, approximately 1918 or 1919. Front row: Peter Schumacher, Regina Schumacher (Reinking), Magdalena Klaers (Schumacher). Second row: Joseph Schumacher, Anna Schumacher (Fries), Hilarius Schumacher, Magdalena Christina Schumacher (Schmitt), Henry Schumacher, Lucy Schumacher (Roehl).*

The Schumachers often boarded teachers, some of whose names are recorded in census records. In 1916, five years after Bernhard Feltes died, his widow Magdalena—known to the family as Aunt Feltes—moved in with the Schumachers. She remained with the Schumacher family until her death in 1921. Her passing marked the end of the immigrant generation; all remaining members of the Klaers and Goergen families were born in the United States.

The year of "Aunt Feltes" death also marks the death of Hilarius, the Schumachers' third son, who died at the age of 28 of Hodgkin's disease.

Sometime after Hilary's death, Peter and

Magdalena purchased part of the farm in Independence Township that had been owned by Peter's brother, Joseph Schumacher, who moved to North Dakota. This land, bordering Lake Sarah, remained with the family into the next generation.

The Schumachers' lifestyle was simple. Life on their dairy farm was rugged. Their years on this land came before either indoor plumbing or electricity was introduced to the farmhouse. The Schumachers never owned a car, traveling by horse-drawn buggy in warm weather and horse-drawn sleigh in winter.

The Schumacher farm was the site of the family gatherings remembered by the Schumachers' grandchildren. For example, every

Christmas, the children and grandchildren visited Magdalena and Peter after Midnight Mass. The Schumachers' daughter Lucy, who ultimately had nine children with her husband Mathias Roehl, bundled up her children for the sleigh ride across Lake Sarah for this annual tradition.

In their advancing age, both Peter and Magdalena experienced major setbacks to their health. Peter suffered a stroke in 1934, from which which he never fully recovered. Magdalena developed increasingly severe diabetes. She was soon unable to walk without crutches. As she became increasingly immobilized, several of the grandchildren, including Esther and Bernardine Roehl, took turns staying with their grandparents and providing for their needs. During the spring of 1936, Magdalena's condition worsened. Failure of her diseased heart caused her death on April 28, 1936 at Eitel Hospital, where she had been admitted eight days earlier. Her body was laid out for review at the family farm—where their son Joseph remained—in Independence Township and then buried at Sts. Peter and Paul Cemetery in Loretto. Her husband, Peter, moved back to his son Joseph's farm, where he lived until his own death in 1943.

Children of Magdalena Klaers and Peter Schumacher:

29. **Joseph Schumacher**, born Sept. 23, 1887
30. **Lucy Schumacher**, born Mar. 14, 1890
31. **Hilarius Schumacher**, born June 2, 1892
32. **Magdalena Christina Schumacher**, born Feb. 7, 1894
33. **Anna Mary Schumacher**, born July 21, 1897
34. **Agnes Schumacher**, born Mar. 25, 1900
35. **Henry Schumacher**, born May 19, 1902
36. **Regina Marie Schumacher**, born Dec. 4, 1907

*Sources:* **Marian Ann Roehl Ebert**  
**Sr. Beverly Ann Fries**  
**Fr. Marvin Jerome Klaers**  
**Gregory Nicholas Roehl**

## 8. **Anna Maria Klaers**

The family story places Anna Maria's birth on August 10, 1865 and states that she died of pneumonia in early 1866. There is clearly documented evidence suggesting that her birth came much later and that she was the youngest of Joseph's children by many years.

First, the grave marker in the cemetery provides a date exactly thirteen years later. According to this monument, Anna Maria was born on August 10, 1878. This date is confirmed by records maintained by the Independence Town clerk, which survive in a transcription made by Avery Stubbs for the Western Hennepin County Pioneer Association's archives. The town clerk also records Joseph and Luzia Klaers as the parents. These two pieces of contemporary evidence suggest strongly that the family record is wrong. Apparently, Anna Maria was born when her mother was forty-seven years old. While pregnancy this late in life occurs extremely seldom, it is far from impossible.

The youngest child of Joseph and Luzia never survived her first winter. The grave marker records January 20, 1879 as the baby's date of death. She is the last child memorialized by the four-sided marker by her grave in the old cemetery at Sts. Peter and Paul Church in Loretto.

*Sources:* **Viola Anna Laurent Galzki**  
**Sr. Dorothy (Leonore) Klaers**