

Siebe and Bauwina Make the Move

Hagemeyer Generations - Chapter One

by Stanley Hagemeyer © 2018

Siebe and Bauwina were getting ready to travel to the little village of Clara City by train in late winter 1903. They were heading for the farm that Siebe and his father Koert had seen and Siebe had purchased by taking over a land contract with the McLarty & Thompson Land Company. The contract was being given up by previous pioneer family. That deal was struck four months earlier, in November 1902, with the Hagemeyer family to take possession March 1, 1903. March 1st was the traditional time for farm land transfers, allowing the previous owner plenty of time to finish fall harvest, and early enough for the new owners to prepare the land for planting for the new growing season.

The trip would not be pleasure ride. There were no reliable roads north from Clay County, Iowa where they had been living near their parents. Railroads expanded rapidly in the 1800's to become the primary means of transportation. In fact, Iowa had a greater density of railroad track per square miles of territory than any other state. The trains they were about to use to travel would make many stops and they would have to change trains twice, since there was no rail line going directly from Spencer, Iowa, to Clara City, Minnesota.

Bauwina quizzed Siebe, "Are you sure all our things will be alright, and not get mixed up with other people's things? I would hate to see that nice plow you bought last year get taken by somebody else."

Siebe reassured her, "Well, here's how it goes. Ya, it's true, our plow and the disc harrow are on a flat car along with our wagon, and some other equipment of somebody's is on there, too. But these railroad people know what they're doing. There's a tag on every piece of equipment and they won't get mixed up. Besides, I will get out and watch every time the train stops."

Siebe went on, "All the rest of our things take up one end of a box car. I saw how they were loaded. Our crates are all on one end. Our furniture and the trunks are all marked with tags, too. The cows and the horses and pigs are in one-half of a cattle car. The freight agent told me our cars would be left at Clara City overnight so we can take off our belongings and then the next day a train will pick up the cars to take them someplace else."

It was common for some trains to be a "combined" freight with one passenger car plus an assortment of freight cars. Siebe had

explained to her a few days earlier how they would be taking the CM&StP (Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul RR) west to Sioux City, then change to the CRI&P (Chicago Rock Island & Pacific RR) heading northwest to Pipestone, Minnesota. At Pipestone she would get on the early afternoon passenger train of the Great Northern Railway coming north-easterly from Sioux Falls, South Dakota, toward Clara City and on to Willmar, Minnesota. He would stay behind to accompany the cars with all their belongings later in the day.

Bauwina had another question, “How come we have to change trains so many times? I thought you said that last November you and your Pa went straight to Sioux Falls, South Dakota, and then got on a Great Northern train there. Couldn’t we do that, too?”

Siebe hesitated, but replied, “Well, ya, we could do that. But this way the trip is a little shorter. And I have to tell you, that Sioux Falls rail yard is so big and the depot is so busy, I just didn’t want to have to try to keep track of our things in such a big place. Going by passenger wasn’t so bad, but with our stuff on other cars just made me nervous. When we change in Sioux City and in Pipestone, those places are a lot smaller, and I think it will work out fine.”

Bauwina seemed satisfied with this explanation, but both of them felt a certain level of anxiety. After all, they were leaving their home near their parents and friends to go to Minnesota where they only knew a couple cousins. They were finally striking out on their own. They were young, she being 24 years old, and Siebe 27. They were eager, but a rattle of uncertainty about things kept them alert to anything that might go wrong.

The first day of travel went well, even though there were many stops. Their train left Spencer at 1 P.M. and they arrived at Sioux City about 8 p.m. The transition at Sioux City went smoothly. Their cars were set out about 9 p.m. and in a couple hours were shuffled on to the Rock Island line. Siebe and Bauwina walked over to the passenger car that would accompany their freight. They were getting weary and soon all three of them fell asleep in spite of the noises of cars and engines in the rail yard moving about during the hours of darkness. Then with a big jerk they were awakened and realized the train was finally in motion.

Bauwina said to Siebe, “What time is it anyway? We’re finally moving again.”

He pulled out his watch. “It looks like it’s 1:00 a.m. I think we can get some more sleep now. Carlie didn’t wake up did he?”

“No, he’s just sound asleep. I wish I was, too.” The darkness lulled them back soon as the car swayed back and forth and the clicking of the rails mesmerized their senses. More stops and starts came and went with little notice. Then came a squeal of brakes that was louder and a big jerk awakened them all. They had come to Pipestone. There were crewmen shouting directions to somebody, switching their cars once more. The conductor came on board the passenger car and told them, “Here’s your stop. Pipestone it is. Now watch your step getting down with that baby.” He pointed the direction to the Great Northern depot and the tracks where their next train would be mustered.

Here they would part. It was 8 a.m. Siebe was to stay in Pipestone with the cars containing their animals, equipment, and other baggage waiting to be transferred to a freight heading to Clara City much later in the day. So Bauwina and the baby would get on a passenger train that left about noon. That way, she would arrive a day earlier and avoid more stress on baby Koert and herself. Hopefully, she would arrive before supper time, or if the train was delayed, not long after sundown. The timing was not convenient. The morning freight had already come through Pipestone. Siebe would have to wait for a later train.

They would stay in Clara City a few days with her cousin, Frances Thedans (Mrs. Ralph Thedans). Siebe needed that time to move their equipment, animals, and personal belongings out to the farm. Bauwina would be occupied taking care of 6-month old Koert, often called Carl. And she would need her rest.

Before they parted, Bauwina was concerned for her husband, just as he was for her. “Siebe, you make sure you get something to eat for supper tonight and try to some rest. Tomorrow when you get to Clara City, you will have a lot of work to do.”

“Ya, I will just take care of the animals and then after I eat, I’ll try to rest a bit. This has been a long stretch of jerking and jolting for everybody, you, me and the animals, too. Do you feel alright?” He

hated to see her going off with just a little suitcase and the baby all by herself. It was only 90 miles and maybe 4 ½ hours' ride. But she had never been to Clara City and she looked a bit weary already. "I think Fran will be looking for you to come on this train, so Ralph should be at the station when you get there."

"O, I'm alright. And when the train gets moving, Carlie will settle down again. He'll probably sleep the whole way. The wobbling of the train car seems to rock him to sleep. Maybe it will rock me to sleep, too." She smiled at this prospect. Now the conductor was calling for boarding. She came close for a little hug. She was touched as Siebe gently pinched Carl's cheek and said goodbye.

It was such an ordinary thing she had seen him do dozens of times at home. But right now, it seemed especially tender because they were parting for the first time. She turned quickly away toward the train. Siebe had said Clara City was a town of about 300 people, so it shouldn't be hard for her cousin's husband to find her. But their parting brought up feelings of vulnerability and unease she didn't want Siebe to see. He would worry. It had been a grueling journey for both of them, but especially for this young mom. Now she looked forward to staying at the Thedans' and washing up from the trip. Soot from the steam engine found its way into every car whether the windows were open or not, and she could feel grittiness in her hair.

After Bauwina's train departed, Siebe found the cars that were carrying their possessions. He had seen where they were set out on track number four in the Pipestone rail yard. After giving the animals feed and water, he headed for the depot and checked with the agent about what time the freight train he needed would depart. He was told it would come in about 5:30 p.m. if it was on time and leave about 6:30 p.m. He should be alert to not miss it. There were other trains coming through, but this was the next freight that would stop at Clara City. Others were "through" freights that carried long-distance cargo between major division rail yards like Willmar and on to the ports of Duluth, Minnesota and Superior, Wisconsin. He needed wait for the next "local" that serviced the little towns along the way.

Then he crossed the tracks to the nearest restaurant. It was a modest place where weary travelers and often train crews, too, went for a meal, or just for coffee. He spent 20 cents for a plate of beef,

carrots and mashed potatoes. He hated spending money so freely, but knew the next day would be a vigorous one and he wanted to be up and ready for it. After finishing his meal he walked back to the waiting room and found a quiet corner where he could stretch out on a bench undisturbed for a few hours. He had carried a thin blanket roll plus a cheap carpet bag with him on the journey. It had come in handy sleeping on the train and now again, he aimed to settle down for a couple hours of not-too-comfortable sleep this afternoon.

He was alert enough to notice when a train arrived near the end of the day. He watched as the cars with their possessions were switched on to the train, and then he walked to the caboose where he and one other traveler joined two railroad crewmen, the conductor and the rear brakeman. The rest of the ride through the night seemed tedious to him as he dozed from time to time. He was so eager to get to their stop. They passed through ten other small towns with names like Cazenovia, Holland, Ruthton, Green Valley, Hanley and Granite Falls. The train stopped at seven of them to drop off cars or pick up one or two. The ninety mile trip took seven hours, so by the time he finally saw Clara City come into view it was nearly 7 a.m.

Now he was eager to take charge of their belongings. One of the box cars held most of their personal possessions, boxes and crates packed carefully with the minimum to sustain them. They had cooking pots, a set of dishes and the essentials for a kitchen. Their clothes, including warm coats for the winter, were packed in one sizeable trunk,. Siebe spent a half-hour getting the animals off the stock car. It had four separate pens, one including their four cows, one of which had a month-old calf nursing, and one that was milking, having come in fresh three months ago. Siebe had to get into the car during at stops along the trip to relieve her of her milk. There were two crates of chickens, ten of them in all. And one pen held four pigs that were only four months old, so they did not take much space. They would help start the farm's diverse animal population. One of them would become their pork and lard supply after growing over the next 6 months.

Some of their possessions were small but very important; precious seeds, her mother's favorite variety of tomatoes, carrots and peas, so they would be ready to plant a garden. Siebe's parents had

contributed, as well, including one of Siebe's favorites, the ground cherry seed in a small bag of the tiny dried, shrunken fruits that each contained as many as 40 tiny seeds. They would buy a sack of flour, a three gallon can of lard, and some sugar in Clara City before starting out to their new farm the second day.

Everything they needed was on this train. In the stock car, one pen included the two horses that would pull their wagon to bring them out to the farm. The wagon itself was mounted on a flat car and was waiting on the side track where local freight workers were unloading it along with some farm implements, a single 14" plow and a small cultivator, plus a hand-crank seed spreader, spades and forks. There was a lot of work ahead. There was a third draft horse, too, a generous going-away present from Bauwina's father, Heinrich. "You need to have an extra horse. In case one of yours goes lame, you will have the spare you need to get by," he had said.

As soon as he had arrived, Siebe saw to it that the animals were placed together in one of the stock yard pens that were strung out along the track to the west of the depot. He wanted to make sure there were no mixups and their precious collection of animals was fed and watered. The horses were of prime concern. They would pull the wagon and their first load of household and farm supplies out to their new place. When he had everything arranged, he headed for the Thedans' house to get cleaned up and reunite with the most precious cargo that had preceded him.

"Siebe, I thought you would never get here! I heard the train had arrived this morning about breakfast time and here it is ten o'clock already. But I suppose you had a lot to do with the animals and all."

"Ya, I was happy to get off that darn train and get at what I needed to do. Did the trip go alright for you? How is my little boy?" He smiled at Carl, but restrained himself from picking him up. Seibe was sweaty and dirty from the long trip and today's work. Bauwina assured him they had survived well. "It was so nice to get a good night's rest here at Sue's house. Did you get a good rest last night?"

"Well, you know, *liebchen*, those railroad depot benches aren't made for sleeping. And I was missing you two so much."

“I think Carlie wondered where you were, too. He missed you! I thought you might get here in an hour or so but I guess I didn’t think about all the work getting things settled with our property. How did it all go?”

Siebe explained, “You know, some people that work around the train depot don’t seem to know much about animals. So I made sure that I handled the horses and the cows and led them off myself. They are a little spooked by all the noise and the jiggling they had for the last couple days. I did get help with the baggage and the other equipment. So now, I am here. But I’m pretty dirty. So I better get cleaned up.”

The smoke and cinders had made his clothes feel like they were all sandpaper. The next couple days would be exciting and draining, he knew. But they were just the preparation for their real homecoming when they would head out to the farm that was to be their home.

Bauwina said, “Ya, Siebe, you need to get washed up. But how long will it be ‘till we can go out to the farm? I suppose you need a day or so...?” She knew it was complicated, but still hoped it could go faster.

Siebe had planned every step, but it was still challenging to keep all the moving parts under control. He said, “It is going to cost a dollar and a half to keep the chickens and animals penned and fed here in Clara City the next two days. It will take another four dollars to hire a dray [freight] wagon, horses and a driver plus one more man to help unload. They can take the plow and other implements together on their big wagon.

“What about the animals and the chickens? Bauwina asked.

“After the first load,” Siebe replied, “I will come back to get the pigs. The next day I will have the dray company haul the four cows and the calf. I don’t want them there too soon. I need to be ready to take care of them out there.”

He explained that the third day they could all go out on the wagon together. “We can take our wagon with some of the chickens in a crate along with the last two crates of things for the house. We can take our two trunks on the wagon, too, with our clothes and stuff in them. But I want to be ready to take care of the animals and make

sure we get started right.” He was tired from all the work rounding up their things but he was still stimulated by the excitement of it all.

Bauwina gave him a smile. “Well, Siebe, I just can’t wait. I feel a little bit lazy waiting for you to get the moving done. But at least tonight we can sleep in the same bed. And Carlie will rest better knowing we are all back together.”

END of CHAPTER ONE.



*Siebe and Bauwina Hagemeyer
Circa 1900-1903 - two young pioneers*

Siebe Hagemeyer b. Oct 6, 1875 - Missouri
Bauwina Anders Sonius b. May 1, 1878 - Germany
Married May 14, 1900 - Spencer, Clay County, Iowa