

One thing leads to another. My niece asked me whether our Uncle Albert and Aunt Mabel ever lived anyplace but the house we all knew. Another niece lives there now in that same house—remodeled and with an addition—and the two of them had been talking about it.

My sister and I thought that Albert and Mabel always lived in that house, but we weren't absolutely sure. So, this morning I opened the trunk of family history material and searched out Uncle Albert's typed memoirs. It had been a year or so since I had looked at his composition.

His writings weren't book length by any means, but he had about thirty pages of information about a past that is the heritage of all of us in our family. The answer to the house question was answered in the early part of the document, but I read on, everything in his account of interest to me. In the folder with his memoirs were also copies of many letters his mother—my paternal grandmother—and his sisters—my aunts had written to him in 1912 and 1913 while he was away from home working in a sawmill. Going through all this material I had not looked at for a while, I found the answers to some questions, but discovered many more questions as well.

Albert's own recollections of events of the past were pretty straightforward, and mostly correct, though there were some errors that were probably a result of either just plain supposition on his part, or memories that weren't quite right, or something he had been told by others who may have been mistaken about the past.

He wrote, for example, that his grandparents—my great-grandparents who homesteaded the place where we live now—had left Sweden via Stockholm to come to America about 1870. In fact, they had lived in Copenhagen, Denmark before they came here and left from that location. Some dates in his memoir were not quite correct, either.

All in all, though, Albert's thirty pages tell a story of our area during the last decades of the 19th century up to the 1970s that gives a true picture of life here during that time.

The letters from 1912-13 are interesting in other ways. Though much in them is hinted at or left unsaid, they are much "juicier" than Albert's writings. There are letters from three of his four sisters and from their mother. They impart the gossip and goings-on of the area, including which young couples are courting, who marries, and, in some cases, who has died. They implore him to come home soon, and his mother, Cornelia, tells him that his youngest brother, Everett, who is just four years old, keeps asking where he is.

Two of the sisters, Nell and Hilda, let Albert know that their sister, Elsie, had been converted. Nell wrote: "Did you get Elsie's letter and did you do as she advised you? You know we girls have been going to revival meetings at the Brown church and Elsie's mind wasn't strong enough to keep her balanced, and so she went forward. My but Hilda and I were surprised."

A little later, Hilda wrote to Albert. She was teaching school at the time and staying in her school district during the week, going home on weekends. She continued the tale of Elsie's experiences since the revival: "My land lady is sitting here reading the Bible. Oh those terrible church matters are certainly

fierce. The folks were awfully shocked over Elsie's sudden conversion (sic). And the queer part is that she hasn't yet changed her ideas. But she is just as set in her mind. And she is continually harping religion to us. I was mighty glad to get back." (to her week time lodgings.)

Sure enough, Elsie did write to Albert, urging him to "get right with the Lord." No letters from Albert to his sisters or mother exist, so we don't know what his reply might have been.

From the letters to Albert and from stories all of us heard growing up, we understand that he had planned to move to western Canada with some other young men. Some of them did go, and at least one man remained in Saskatchewan for the rest of his life. And the girls mentioned in his sisters' letters never married Albert. His own memoirs tell the story of his marriage in 1930 to Mabel Coon and the story of their lives after that. Albert died in the late 1970s, several years after his wife had passed away. They never had children, but all of us in the family were welcome there, and there was no lack of young people through the years.

And, yes, they did live in that same house that was on the farm before Albert bought it as a young bachelor. They remodeled and built on a couple of times, but they did not tear down the old building where Albert started.