Nov. 17, 2018

PERSONAL IMPRESSIONS about two prairie families, Busch and Berning

In the fall of 1980 I enrolled in a year-long class in which the first assignment was to learn more about my Family of Origin – the families of my parents Esther Busch and Henry Bernard. Till that time – I was 40 years old – I hadn't had that much interest. We were what I call a "family of migrant workers" – in 18 years we'd lived in eight towns (one of these twice, twelve different houses). But we had very strong roots.

There were reasons for my interest, not the least of which was Mom's cancer which would take her life less than a year later.

This final summary is my attempt to wrap this project up...at least my part in it.

I deal, here, with only a few observations of a few aspects of our family. I could very easily and considerably expand the list of topics, and comments. Much more is in the Pioneers book (on file at the North Dakota Historical Society in Bismarck).

This admittedly is a project completed with some personal urgency. Shortly, possibly within a month, I will have surgery to repair a deteriorating aortic valve in my heart. This is the same procedure Uncle Vincent Busch had in 2006. Those who see me daily wouldn't notice anything significantly different about me, but doing nothing is not a good option. I expect to be around after surgery, but one never knows. Uncle Vince lived 9 more years, and in the end I think his death was more from "farmer lung" (COPD) than heart. But one never knows for sure. Cathy will keep in touch.

So, the other topics and other opinions than mine are up to those who have an interest 'down the road'. It's been a good journey. Of course, I hope it continues!

In Peace & Thanksgiving,

PS: Many references are made to the book, Pioneers, which I originally put together for our 1993 Busch-Berning reunion, and was essentially in final form in 2005. It was joined, in 2011, by a larger volume consisting of over 100 letters to the farm, written 1905-06. Together they are over 700 pages. The masters for the two books are retained, and perhaps at some point someone will be interested. Perhaps in the spring I can think about making more copies. Let me know if you are interested in more information..

Personal Observations November 13, 2018

The Hazel Green Township/Grant Co Wisconsin Busch and Berning families To North Dakota

No evidence has yet been found about exactly why Ferdinand Busch and his bride, Rosa Berning, moved to Sec 13, Henrietta Township, LaMoure County, in 1905. They were the first white settlers on their piece of land. On the other hand, the James River towns of Grand Rapids (1880) and LaMoure (1882) long preceded their arrival.

I have long speculated that Ferd's uncle, Herman Heinrich (H.H.) Busch of Dubuque had something to do with the move. H. H. Busch seems to have been an active land entrepreneur, as recounted in letters he wrote back to Germany in 1924-25 (pp 271-285 in Pioneers, by Dick Bernard at NDHS.) See also photos 273, 278, 279.

Ferd and Rosa Busch moved to ND after their marriage Feb 28, 1905. Ferd came first, with his brother and best man, Leonard, and a carpenter who may have been their cousin.

They moved to ND, but took Wisconsin, Dubuque and northern Illinois along with them. The photo file and letters attest to the direct and continuing connection with the home country.

Leonard also set up as a farmer, apparently in the Dickey area. He also had married. His time as a farmer in ND seems to have been quite brief...the family apparently set roots in what seemed to be a belt of frequent hail damage. They soon left, and apparently searched for other farming locations in the west, but ultimately ended up in Dubuque.

Ferd and Leonard's sister, Christina, married Rosa's brother, August Berning, and they purchased acreage adjacent to Busch's in Section 13. They lived on the farm from 1907-20; in Dubuque from 1920-33; thence back to the ND farm from 1933 till after Christina died in 1950. It appears that the farmland was sold in the mid-1950s, and August remarried and lived in LaMoure until his death in 1961.

Another sister of Ferd, Cecilia, married Eldo Chinberg, and they owned a business in Adrian ND for some years. Ultimately, they apparently moved back to Dubuque, where Cecilia died sometime in the 1930s.

Rosas' sister, Helena (Lena), came west with Rosa, and spent over 20 years in LaMoure County. She married Art Parker about 1912; in about 1920 they became the first

caretakers of the Veterans Memorial Park in Grand Rapids, holding this job until they moved to Dubuque in the late 1920s.

Four of the seven living children of Wilhelm and Barbara Busch lived for a time in North Dakota. Only Ferd lived there his entire adult life.

Three of the eight surviving children of George and Christina Berning, lived a portion of their adult lives in North Dakota. Only Rosa lived there her entire adult life.

All of them lived in the general area between LaMoure and Jamestown North Dakota.

Within their incomplete stories are many additional stories which would match thousands of other migrants from other places to the youthful state of North Dakota.

Nov. 13, 2018

Religion and the Busch-Berning Families

Religion was central to the life of the families. In the Busch's case, they were active Catholics, the Wisconsin Bernings all educated in Catholic school.

The photo archives are full of First Communion pictures for family members, and other photos of groups largely connected with Catholic activities. In the old days (as I define them, before 1960), relations between denominations (as Catholic and Lutheran and Methodist, etc.) were basically non-existent. Catholics married Catholics, etc. There was little "mixing" of denominations.

Of the four adults on the two farms, Rosa Busch was particularly active in Church activities. Ferd was always active in what I would call church management things, like being Trustee, etc.

The local church came with them. Theirs was a new community. Busch's arrived in 1905 and Bernings in 1907. The nearest Catholic churches were probably in Edgeley (20 miles) or Oakes (30 miles). A Church was established in Dickey (about 12 miles away) about 1910 and probably served the pioneers of the Berlin community initially. LaMoure parish (10 miles) was also established about 1910, but Dickey seemed more important. In Pioneers between pages 55 & 56 are six handwritten pages by Stella Freese, a Busch Neighbor, written about 1975, about Dickey parish and its relationship to historic Berlin parish.

The formal move to build a Catholic Church in Berlin began with fundraising in 1912; and in 1915 the new Church opened, initially as a Mission Parish, served by the Dickey pastor. Lucina Busch may have been in the first First Communion class at the Parish.

Ferd Busch, who was active in many civic activities, was also active as a Trustee of the local church. This was not without its frustrations. In the junk at the farm was a note from the pastor in Lisbon that Ferd had not paid a pledge he had made to their parish. There was an invitation to the opening of the new Catholic school in Oakes. His daughter, Esther, (p. 120 of Pioneers) said about Ferd: "My dad was a church trustee, which meant that he counted the collection on Sunday, and kept track of the money with other dedicated church members. After being called on for donations for a third new church he said in desperation "if they build any more churches I'm going to quit going to church". This was likely a joke, but nonetheless a frustration.

The Berlin Catholic Church closed in 1967, and the building was purchased by the Hutterite Community a few miles away. Vincent Busch removed the stained glass windows and for many years several of them were at the farm.

Nov. 13, 2018

Busch and Berning and Politics

There is nothing simple about "politicis". Thankfully there are persons active in politics – clearly, one of these was Ferd Busch. Most vary in engagement.

First, the Busch's: Ferd Busch was 24 when he arrived in North Dakota in 1905; his wife Rosa, was 21. They had the hopes and dreams of all immigrants. When they died (1967 and 1972) they probably were viewed as small and unsuccessful farmers.

Sometimes there is much missing between beginning and ending. So it is with the Busch's of Henrietta township, LaMoure County ND.

Few actually run for political office. Ferd Busch ran for LaMoure County Auditor in 1928, garnering about 39% of the 4723 votes. In Henrietta, his home township, the vote was 66-66: in neighboring Grand Rapids 57-63. The details are in the Pioneer book, pp 251-52. His opponent was Struble, unknown first name. Also unknown was whether Struble was incumbent which then, as now, makes a difference.

Earlier in 1928 Ferd became one of the first members of the North Dakota Farmer's Union, and was a very active spokesman for the FU in his county. There are several photos in the archive of him on one delegation or another with the Farmers Union.

Ferd Busch was always a gregarious sort of individual. When he came to ND he was a country fiddler, and had his own country band for some period of time. He was part-time representative for John Deere, selling plows and the like. In about 1930 he was a representative for Farmers Union Insurance. He was a township officer, often an officer of the Henrietta school board, a founding member and Trustee of St. John's Catholic Church, and founding member and long-time activist on his areas rural telephone.

He was an inventor, connected with organizations that catered to inventors.

As for party politics, there is little evidence of his allegiances. Nothing in the preserved records shows any official connection between Busch and Sen. Milton R. Young who grew up and lived in the same township as the Busch's. There are a number of greeting cards, from 1943-56, from Sen. Bill Langer.

It is likely that Ferd Busch had some contact with the Non-Partisan League, and may have been active to some degree. On the other hand, in the 1930s he soured on programs like WPA because "loafers" got government work, while he was struggling with surviving the Great Depression. It is unknown whether he was Democrat or Republican.

When it comes to marriage, politics is a team sport. Rosa was tolerant but she had her limits. When Ferd ran for Auditor it was without his wife's support. In her view, he already spent too much time in town.

Daughter Mary, who was born in 1913, and thus would have been 15 in Ferd Busch's most active political year of 1928, recalled her Dad's politics in March, 1993 (page 136 of Pioneers):

"I don't remember a great deal about political discussions. I do remember Dad had no time for F. D. Roosevelt because he kept his taxes paid. He had no chance to get a WPA job for extra cash which he could have used. I guess the main reason Dad got upset over FDRoosevelt was that loafers who were capable of earning a living got the paying jobs, such as foreman of the road crews...

Dad ran for county commissioner [actually county Auditor] in the late 20's [see above]. That was almost a tragedy. He had to keep all of the electioneering materials in the car. It wasn't going to clutter up the house. There was almost a family breakup when he ran...Mother insisted she would not move to LaMoure, the county seat, if he won. There were more hard looks than words exchanged. He didn't win. If he had I don't know what the outcome would have been."

Rosa ("Mrs. Busch") understood service. She was a leader in her own right, in Catholic Church organizations.

Women's Suffrage did not come to be until 1920, and as late as 1946, according to one photo in the photo archives, women did not yet commonly use their own first name. Rosa's name on the back of the photo (in archives, #852) was identified as "Mrs. Busch", as was the case for all 20 ladies in the photo. Even a lady whose husband was not known in the community – he may have deserted, or died before coming to the community – was referred to as "Mrs.". Luckily one elderly member of St. John's Church was able to identify by first name all of the 20 or so women on the 1946 photo, all of whom went by Mrs. thus-and-so.

The Bernings also were interested in politics, reflected by some of their comments in Pioneers.

Bernings were severely impacted by the Great Depression. Rose (Pioneers page 52) said "The neighbors were kind and when Franklin D. Roosevelt said to destroy calves, lambs, etc., to bring prices up, they brought them and left them for Dad. We were never really sure who brought them, but was an early Christmas!"

Ruby (p. 168) said "Dad often referred to Franklin D. Roosevelt as the man who saved the farmers." On the other hand, Melvin (p. 183) said 'Dad was an out-and-out isolationist and I guess some his conservative Republican tendencies rubbed off on me. We used to have long talks about politics and Dad followed every word of Senator Wheeler from Montana and Senator Nye from North Dakota. Both were staunch isolationists and against the participation in the war. Dad had no use for President Roosevelt and his comment on the announcement of Pearl Harbor was "He (Roosevelt) finally got us into the War." I don't believe Dad ever voted for FDR on any of his numerous elections to the presidency."

The problem of 'Loafers", and "Others": a personal observation:

It would be simplest for me to simply move on without commenting on what I have read in our own family histories. I cannot do that. First, I have long publicly self-identified as a "moderate pragmatic Democrat". For many years now I have been an active Democrat at the local level. I easily and often and publicly say I'm a "Dwight Eisenhower Democrat"; my national political heroes would be Harry Truman, FDR (and Eleanor Roosevelt), Jimmy Carter, John Kennedy. But my political mentor and good friend was former Republican Governor of Minnesota Elmer L. Andersen, one of many progressive Republicans who have been banished from today's "Republican Party". Elmer Andersen exemplifies the quandary: he was a wealthy businessman, owner of an internationally recognized company, a Republican legislator before he became Governor, and through his entire political career a moderate who actively supported such things as collective bargaining for workers. He grew up as an orphan. He knew what it was like to have nothing....

I've done family history since 1980. Long before the political tension of the Busch's and Bernings related to the Great Depression came to light, I knew of Dad's brother, Uncle Frank, who before he sealed his fate by going into the peace-time Navy in 1935, killed on the USS Arizona Dec. 7, 1941, had been part of a WPA or CCC crew in North Dakota.

Frank's parents had already lost anything in May of 1927 when his Dad's long-time employer closed its doors, and their bank went under due to fraud, almost within the same week (best I know, the two events were unrelated). The Great Depression came early for them. Frank's Dad, my Grandpa, was a Spanish-American War veteran in the Philippines, 1898-99. His company lost four men in combat. Some people believed, erroneously, that when Frank got the CCC job the family was "double-dipping" from the government. The belief was that the war veterans like Grandpa were getting pensions for their service. He may have gotten something, but it was long delayed, perhaps until the 1940s. (In my years, my grandparents lived in a tiny house, and never had a car.) Somehow they survived, maybe by generosity from Grandma's large family of farmers in their area. I don't know this. It is my best speculation. Their son, Frank, who was 12 when they lost everything, benefitted by "government", and some resented this.

About 250 miles to the southwest, Busch's and Bernings were experiencing the same. Some of their comments are recorded above, including comments about some loafer (probably somebody Grandpa knew) who apparently got a WPA job he didn't deserve. History is never that simple: August Berning Jr., about Frank Bernard's age, had a similar path: "After working in the CCC, he went to the Marines..." (Pioneers p. 50)

Anita (Berning) Cranfield (page 177 of Pioneers) fleshed out the WPA matter in this paragraph in 1993. "The only trees in the area were planted by WPA (Works Progress Administration) workers. The trees were supplied by the government, as was the labor to plant them. There were rows of trees north of the Busches and west of our farm. The land was donated by the owners, and I believe that Uncle Ferd and Dad went half and half on that. The other trees on our farmstead were hand planted by Dad and the rest of us, and many a bucket of water was hauled to keep them going during the drought years. I think the government supplied the trees also, but we did the work. We always took great pride in the many trees around our place when many of the other farms had none. To the best of my recollection those trees to the west were planted in the late '30s.

[the shelterbelts came in about 1934] Finally, also in the late '30s we got an engine for pumping water from our well. That was a great asset because it was a hard pump to work. There were periods during the winter that were so cold that water had to be hand carried to the barn for the animals because it was too cold for them to get out. [In the photo archive is a picture of August Berning proudly standing by the pump at the well.]

Of course, there is more:

Grandpa Bernard turned 65 in 1937, about the same time as Social Security began. There was a phase-in period for Social Security, but ultimately it was a safety net for he and Grandma. Grandma was a homemaker, and it was not until later that Social Security was expanded. Edithe Busch had to lobby her Dad to get her covered under Social Security as a farm worker (see Florence Hedeens memories of Edithe). Social Security is a regular item of political attack these days. If kids want to have Social Security, it is their generation that is going to have to make sure it isn't replaced by some "everyone for him or herself" alternative. There is a very interesting history of the entire concept of social insurance at https://www.ssa.gov/history/briefhistory3.html, the website of Social Security.

In 1965, Medicare was passed. In the junk was Grandpa's first Medicare card. He died in early 1967, at home. It is unlikely that he made any use of Medicare. Grandma, who died in 1972, ultimately did use Medicare, but only at the very end of her life.

The "Other": Most recently, this word is illustrated by the so-called "invasion" of "illegals" from Central America, the first few of whom arrived at the border in the last few days. Anyone who has read this far knows the "facts" (the word is in italics because we only know the facts that somebody, from the President to the media, tell us.

My first memory as a member of the Busch and Berning family of this aspect goes back to about 1953 when the Korean conflict was ending, General McArthur was forced to resign by President Truman, and the hysteria about "Communists" in the U.S. was fueled by Sen. Joe McCarthy of Wisconsin, and the House Unamerican Activities Committee.

I was 13, and in my memory bank are conversations I overheard at the farm. Grandpa worried a lot about "Communists", I gathered, and perhaps others as well. This was fueled by the nuclear arms race, and fueled even further by Sputnik in October, 1957, when I was a senior in high school. (I first viewed sputnik from the Busch lawn on a clear night.) Things like bomb shelters in school basements came to be important items. In the junk were a couple of handbooks, from 1961 and 1970, about how to protect ones self and family in an attack. Looking from today's perspective, the booklets were extremely naïve. War will basically wipe out humanity, whether at ground zero or not.

Concluding:

In these polarized times, when politics is a risky topic to bring up in conversation, these real-time recollections can and hopefully will encourage civil conversation.

What the future will look like is up to all of us.

What is certain to me, is that if we continue at Civil War with each other, the future is dim indeed.

September 8, 2018

Pam Musland Marketing and Communications Supervisor ND Farmers Union 1415 12th Ave SE Jamestown ND 58401

Re:

Ferdinand W. Busch

Berlin ND

Dear Pam:

I have the thread of communications which began with Christina Long a few days ago. The enclosures will speak for themselves, I think. Kristi Carlson might like to see them as well.

I'm 78, born 1940. I knew Grandpa Busch as a small farmer, and even by my low atandards as a youngster, the Busch's never seemed to have much. But I have had the task of closing down 110 years of farm history, and I took the task very seriously. The enclosures come from among the abundant "junk", which I went through piece by piece, and as the history evolved, it was clear to me that Grandpa and Grandma came to be a cut above the ordinary but little things like the Great Depression interfered mightily.

The 14 checks enclosed have their own story. The last one was written October 12, 1929. The Stock Market Crash began less than two weeks later. The last checks I have from the farm are 1931. After that, apparently, they had so little money that they didn't have an account. My Uncle always considered 1934 to be the worst single year.

They lived on ground first owned by Sen. Milton Youngs father. Indeed, Sen. Young lived five miles away in Berlin. That's about a mile or two away from where the Longs live. My Mom (born 1909) remembered babysitting at some point for the Youngs. The first couple of chapters of Mr. Wheat, the biography of Sen. Young, well describe Berlin and Henrietta environs.

The Busch's left behind over 1,000 photos, most of which I have captioned and established in collection 11082 at the North Dakota Historical Society. I am still fine-tuning this, but sooner than later the whole works will be available to the public. Emily Ergen at NDHS would be a good person to talk with about this.

Let's start with this. Questions? Feel free to ask. Thanks for giving these artifacts a home.

C: Kristi Carlson and Christina Long

October 31, 2018

Busch, Berning, Music and Words

It seems there was a gene or two somewhere in the Busch & Berning DNA which expressed themselves through family members who seemed, for ordinary country people, to have an unusual interest in words and music.

One of the early photos in ND has Ferd Busch and fiddle surrounded by family.

Instruments like clarinet, saxophone, piano, fiddle, trumpet, drums were evident at the farm. Remnants of a gramophone were at the farm, with records.

Ferd Busch had learned to play the fiddle, and apparently he worked from sheet music rather than 'by ear' hobby fiddling. He had a country band for country dances. Back home in Wisconsin, there exists to this day a Busch band possibly tied into Ferd Busch's family tree in some as yet unknown way.

Ferd Busch's uncle, H. H. Busch, was the organist at the Dickeyville Catholic Church (Pioneers, p. 288). Ferd's sister, Christina Berning, enjoyed writing. Examples are found in Pioneers at pp 56-63. Christina's granddaughter, Chris Moyer, wrote her own book of poetry and photography in 1994. It's title, "Simple Things to The Believer" Ferd and Rosa's daughter, Esther, enjoyed writing poetry. Samples of her work are at pp 126-29 in Pioneers.

Rosa Busch was said to be an excellent singer in the local church choir. She read the many publications the family subscribed to. Her sister, Cecilia Lange in Wisconsin enjoyed writing verse and was proud of it. The Berning girls, Rosa's sisters, were good letter writers, and seemed to enjoy writing letters which generally showed legible penmanship, grammar and spelling and made sense. Their thoughts are memorialized in the family history in over 100 letters written in 1905-06 and saved by the Busch family (*The Berning and Busch Letters, 1905-06*, on file at North Dakota Historical Society).

In the grandchildren generation, there are excellent musicians and writers as well, so the genetic link continues. A granddaughter, Mary Kay Busch, loves mosic and has long been very active in both choral and instrumental. She's a soprano and plays French Horn. In her 70s she still is very active in choral groups and community orchestra in Minneapolis-St. Paul including singing tours to Germany and England. A set of cousins, Brehmers, sang together regularly. And album of their music is in the Archives. My son Tom, Ferd and Rosa's oldest greatgrandchild, took a run at organizing a band named "King Sultans" and composing music. His product was good, but ended up just a hobby, like most "garage bands", that begin, exist and end. Tom has art talent as well. Certainly there are many other stories in the family tree.

Cousin Carl, son of Ferds daughter, Mary, now has Grandpa's fiddle and uses it expertly. He brought his Uncle Art to tears at the 1993 Busch reunion, playing that fiddle.

ANITA CRANFIELD 1993 P 177-78 Some of my best memories are of us all gathering around the piano at Busch's house and singing.

We had bible study clubs that met once a month at Busch's, Long's, Freese's, and our house. Our place was really too small to lend itself to entertaining, so the big get togethers were the barn dances we had when the hay loft got empty and before the new crop would go in. Uncle Ferd played his fiddle, and Mary played an organ which someone hauled in, and sometimes George, Vince, and Art on the sax and clarinet. All the neighbors would come from the whole countryside.

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Next to basketball we loved dancing. We had high school dances every so often, and for a long while there were Saturday night dances at the hall below the "Oasis", the local pub in Berlin run by the Shockmans. Sometimes there was live music and sometimes it was the juke box music. I'm sure I must have learned to dance from my older sisters, but I remember passing my talent on to Mel and to Art Busch. They passed up the teacher in a hurry, but we had lots of fun. Any dance anywhere in the area would find us there "cutting a rug".

There was a lot of music. Dad loved to play the "fiddle". Lucina played the clarinet and George could play the sax. I learned to chord on the piano and would accompany them. Later I played with Dad when he played for dances, sometimes as many as three a week. Dad was what you called an "old time fiddler". A saxophone, piano, violin and drum made up his orchestra. I don't know for sure all the names of the people who played with Dad's orchestra. Francis Kraft played the saxophone for awhile, Mrs. Sullivan, the bankers wife from Berlin, and Lucina played the piano besides me. A lot of times Dad played the drums along with the violin. For awhile a retired slide trombone player from a large orchestra played. He had extra rhythm and practically brought the roof down when he played "Whispering". What his name was I don't remember. Dancers liked him.

MARY BREHMER

PP 135-34 Plaker

1993

"Red Wing" "Beautiful Dreamer" "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountains" "Home on the Range" and "Pennies from Heaven" were my favorites. All of the popular songs of the 30's were played. Mother had a beautiful voice and would lead the singing. But more often she went into the dining room, closed the door to shut out the noise, and read.

Esther ordered a piano course in music from the New York School of Music. She wasn't home too much so never finished it. She always said she just didn't have the inner rhythm. I made more use of it than she did. I got to grade 4, enough to accompany the "Glee Club" in Wales and school programs.

Our dog was also a musician. He would sit by the parlor window and howl.

The Yoemens, Farmers Union and Ladies Aid all sponsored dances the year around. Cards, whist, would be played until 11 p.m., lunch was served and then you danced till 2 to 3 a.m. or until the crowd thinned out. We went to the dances in Berlin, Grand Rapids, Dickey and once in a great while to Edgeley or LaMoure. There were also barn dances and house parties. No one lacked getting acquainted with their neighbors. Only the men paid 25 cents for a dance ticket. The girls didn't have to pay.