

Martin and Barbara Trafelet

Information provided by Ruth Trafelet McDonald Winn

Martin Trafelet was one of the early settlers of Case Township when it was still part of Bismark Township. Martin was a young single man who came from Canada. He homesteaded 40 acres upon which he built a shack. Soon after he bought 200 more acres on which he eventually built a two-story log home.

In 1898 he realized a house was not a home without a helpmate. He had gone to school in Port Elgin, Ontario with a younger girl whom he always admired. He wrote to her to tell of his love for her and of what he had prepared for them if she would be his bride. Her name was Barbara Devitt. After much correspondence they were married in Canada October 31, 1899 at the home of Martin's sister Ester Good in Breslan, Ontario.



First Rainy Lake School- Hugh Freel cabin

Their attendant's were Isaiah Devitt and Lilly Trafelet. The newlyweds began their trip by train to the wilds of northern Michigan where they established their home in the area known as Rainy Lake.

The land needed to be cleared for planting crops in the spring and with lots of work and aching muscles the land became very productive over the years.

Potatoes and certified alfalfa seed were the big cash crop along with a dairy herd, a flock of sheep and of course chickens for Sunday dinner.

Barbara was kept busy with the family of six boys and three girls to cook for. Often she was up until midnight knitting, sewing, or tending a sick child.

No modern conveniences, just a tub and wash board for laundry, a wood cook stove for cooking and heating the kitchen, running water was just gotten by going to the pump.

Their children were Leon, Jay, Ralph, Ruth (Winn), Ivan, Nina (Wirgau), David, Althea (Granholm), and Fred.

Barbara died December 1932 with Martin following just three years later in January of 1936.

Pictured in photo of the first Rainy Lake School are Ralph Trafelet, eight years old, Mrs. Hurford, John Freel's sister, Frank Norris, Anna Freel, Lily Houghmaster, Ruth Trafelet, six years old, and Jay Trafelet, ten years old. This picture was taken in 1912.

Some of the descendants still in the area are Ruth Winn, Jo Trafelet, Fred and Rosemary Trafelet, Arnold Trafelet, Warren Trafelet, Mary Lou Winfield and her children.

Jay and his wife Mary ran a store in Millersburg at the old Willing's Bank, Leon was a farmer north of town, and Ivan sailed the Great Lakes. He was one of the men that survived the sinking of the Cederville. He also farmed the old homestead and his wife still lives there.



Rainy Lake School as it looks today