HISTORY OF TABOR PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

By Morris Maruska

The first Presbyterian Czechoslovakian settlers in Tabor were John and Joseph Bren, who came from Hopkins, Minnesota, in 1883. In 1889, Mrs. A. E. Brush of Angus invited the people of Tabor to attend a Sunday school which she had organized. That summer through the efforts of the synodical, Drem Adams, after whom Adams Presbytery was named, Vavrina Dosa, a theological student from New York arrived and served one summer. A new granary on the Joe Bren farm served as the meeting place. Everyone in the community was welcome and many who professed different beliefs came. In the fall of 1889, Rev. Vavrina came from New York and organized the church with twenty members. He baptized eleven children. In 1891, having received a loan of $400 from the National Missions and by donating time and money, the first church in Tabor was built. Carpenters were John Brantl and John Kluzak. Some of the ministers who served were: Voholek, Bazot, Koukol, and Dobias. Rev. Dobias was the first resident minister, installed in 1896.

In 1899 Rev. Vaclov Vavrina was installed and served until 1904. After he left, the church was served by students from seminaries or by Joseph Vavrina, a layman. In 1915, Rev. Steel was installed and took up residence in the newly purchased manse, paid for by raising crops on a rented piece of land. The Ladies Aid was organized and presented a three-act play that winter.

In 1922, Rev. Frank Sintak was installed. The services from 1922 to 1944 were mostly in the Czechoslovakian language although, after a few inter-marriages, it was necessary to convert to English for the benefit of those who couldn’t understand Czechoslovakian.

In 1944, upon resignation of Rev. Sintak, the Angus-Euclid-Keywest-Tabor Parish was formed and Rev. Irving Thompson served all four churches. In 1951 the Tabor Congregation merged with the Angus Congregation. Ministers who have served recently are: Rev. James Wetherspoon 1948-1956; Rev. Kayton Palmer 1957-1961; Rev. Vern Maxa 1962-1967; Rev. Calvin Daniels 1969-1973 and Rev. Russell Markhula 1973-

ARTHUR ARNOLD

The Arnold family arrived from Czechoslovakia in 1887 and lived for a time with the Joseph Kliner family two miles east and one and one-half miles south of the town of Tabor until the Arnolds completed building their own home a half a mile away across the fields. Both families stemmed from the same village of Tachlovice eight miles northwest of Prague and they were related. The Kliners were already well established in the community by a number of years when the Arnolds arrived and helped them settle on a 160 acre farm next to their own in section 22 of the township.

The father’s name was John and his wife was a Kliner. He was born in 1849, but in age his wife was three years his senior. When they reached the community the ages of the couple’s children were: Frederick 14, Rose 12, Blanche 3, and Arthur (Otokar) about one year old. Fred was known by the Czech equivalent of that name, “Bedrich”, and Blanche (Bessie) was “Blazena”. Fred married Anna Smrsky and raised six or seven children and spent his life farming a quarter-section or more of land one and a half miles further west which he purchased.

Unless a family had plenty of extra farm help such as grown boys and extra draft horses it was impossible in those years for a farmer to seed very many acres of a 160 acre farm because a walking plow or even a sulky plow would turn over only two or two and a-half acres per day using a pair of oxen or horses. Consequently, many farmers left large areas as sod meadow for cutting hay and for pasture. As a result, most small farmers eked out a bare existence due to the limited production of crops. Arnold saved forage at Tabor was that the area is a lowland with low spots remaining wet much of the summer until drainage ditches were excavated to reach the Red River.

Arthur Arnold, the youngest of the family, devoted most of his life renting out the family farm which he inherited, plying the trade of carpenter, of salesman, and of operating a hotel in the village of Angus. He married Emma Buchholz and raised a family, some of whom are still in the area. He died of tuberculosis in the Crookston Sanatorium on March 20, 1933. Sister Rose married Edward Dostal, a Tabor farmer, in 1895 at the age of 20 and raised nine children: and Blanche married John Vavrina, a farmer, on February 9, 1904, who for one year worked the farm of his bride’s father, John Arnold, until a position opened up to operate a newly constructed grain elevator by the Thorpe Grain Company at the Sherak railroad station nearby. This position John Vavrina held for a number of years while farming on the side. Later he gave up the elevator and concentrated exclusively on farming. In December 1912 he and his family of three children moved closer to Tabor where he had purchased 560 acres of farmland, retaining in addition some 360 acres of rental farms which he had been working at Sherack, and would continue to work. Later he purchased an additional 120 acres nearby.

Grandpa (John) Arnold’s wife died in October 1904 of a coronary failure. Grandpa himself, rather than live alone, moved to live with his son, Fred, for seven years. After this, he lived with his daughter, Rose (Mrs. Dostal) until his death in Grand Forks in 1924 at age 77. Rose herself lived to that same age in 1952: and Blanche died on May 18, 1925 at age 39, having raised four children.

THE GIESE HISTORY

My grandmother, Anna Stuhr, was born on a farm near Hamburg, Germany. In 1871, she came to the United States with her aunt and uncle. Henry and Katy Stuhr were only seventeen and nineteen years old, and she was a child of seven. They came to this country in a small sailing vessel that took six weeks to make the trip.

Four years prior to this time her parents and baby brother came to this country. They left because the Prussians had invaded their country and were making all the young men enlist in the army for five years. In order to make this trip possible, my great grandparents had to sell their farm and most of their possessions. They came to Boston, where my great-grandfather worked in a sugar beet factory long enough to raise money so they could go to Frontenac, Minnesota, where they lived until 1880.

Grandmother, with her aunt and uncle, came to New York in June, where they found work working for a truck farmer, picking straw-berries for ten dollars a month, and my grandmother worked without pay. Here they waited for a letter from my great grandparents sending them money so they could come to Frontenac. But this letter never came. After working for two months they saved enough for four dollars to make the trip. The day they were ready to leave, the farmer talked them into staying another day, because maybe the next day there would be a letter in the mail from Frontenac. Sure enough, the next day the letter was there, but as they found out later, the letter