

Chapter 9. The Farm

(B. 12 May 1866)

Any author with enough leisure time to write a book on the Silver Lake Kadlec Family would be remiss without including a chapter dedicated exclusively to what is known as “The Farm”, the rolling patch of land, which has been host to seven generations of Kadlec family members, since its first parts were established back in 1866. In a sense, the Farm has become like another Kadlec family member, with its own personal history, personality, and memory of the events it has witnessed over the years.



Figure 9-1. Front View of the Kadlec Farm.

And so the telling of story of the Kadlec Farm could be told from many perspectives to describe its one hundred and forty years of history. Although one hundred and forty years of history is quite a long time by mortal standards, it is miniscule in comparison to the ages that ran before it. Two million years ago the entire state of Minnesota was covered by glaciers, which relentlessly bulldozed and shaped the Kadlec farmland until approximately 14,000 years ago*. The Kadlec farm, like Minnesota's rich prairie soils were developed on the finely ground mineral materials left by the retreating glaciers.

Between ten to twelve thousand years ago the Ice Age was ending in Minnesota, and, as the glacier retreated and the forests and prairies returned, the first Indians began settling in this area. The territory of Minnesota would be established March 3, 1849, later to

* To wit, in the 1970's as a volunteer-indentured servant during Spring rock picking duty in the family fields, the author would occasionally and silently curse these glaciers, who were largely responsible for depositing their stones and boulders just underneath the fertile topsoil where our crops were planted each year.

become the 32nd state of the union on May 11, 1858. McLeod County was created by the territorial legislature March 1, 1856 and was organized March 11, 1856.

The County was platted out into fourteen townships and subdivided into “sections” measuring one mile by one mile square. Each “section” is equivalent to 640 acres of land; therefore a “quarter section” is one-fourth of 640 acres or 160 acres. With that information in mind, the legal description of today’s Kadlec Farm is the “Northwest quarter of Section 31 in Hale Township, McLeod County, Minnesota, USA”.

Indeed Hale Township is one of the fourteen townships in McLeod County and practically sits in the center of the County, with Minnesota State Highway 7 serving as its Southern border. Although the Farm is referred to as a ‘quarter section’, it has lost six acres of its original 160 acre footprint due to a number of roadway and railroad easement acquisitions by the government and public over the years.

In terms of its general composition, the Farm as it is today includes 128 acres of tillable land (63 acres North of the Luce Line State Trail and 65 acres South of it). Of this total, there are approximately 3 acres of land surrounding the house, and a total of 23 acres of wooded land. The wooded land is distributed into three distinct areas, the “main woods”, North of the Luce Line State Trail, which comprises 11 acres and then South of the trail, the “second woods (approximately 9 acres) and the “third woods (approximately 3 acres)”.

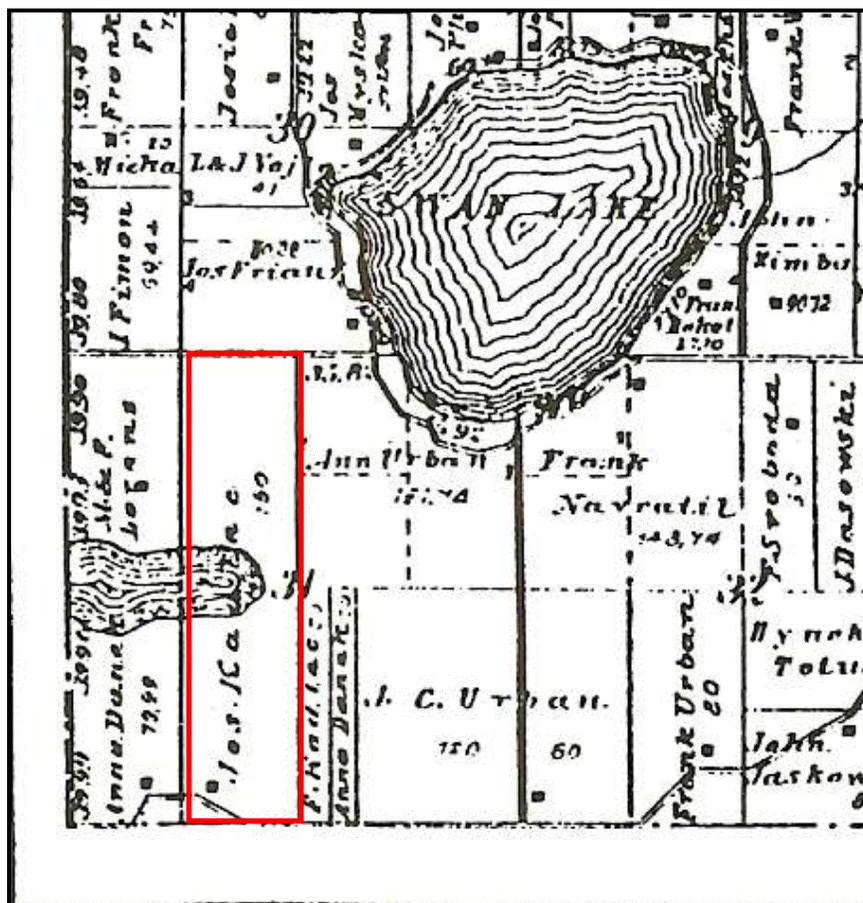


Figure 9-2. Map of the Original Josef Kadlec Farm, 1898

The Origin of the Present Day Kadlec Farm

To Josef Kadlec, born in 1838 and an early pioneer of the mid 1800's, a good share of the farmland that he acquired was wooded, especially at the Northern end of his property. The central part of the land was covered by peat-based wetlands that provided a source of grass that would feed his cows and pigs.

The wooded land was an important source of potential energy for pioneer farmers such as Josef Kadlec and their sons, such as Albin Kadlec. Survival on the land would require the family to regularly cut down trees to provide firewood for the family home and to provide the necessary lumber for the family farm, for building and the home, barn and outbuildings, fence posts, etc. As the woodland was cleared, the stumps would need to be removed (usually through a combination of elbow grease and dynamite) in order to become tillable farmland.

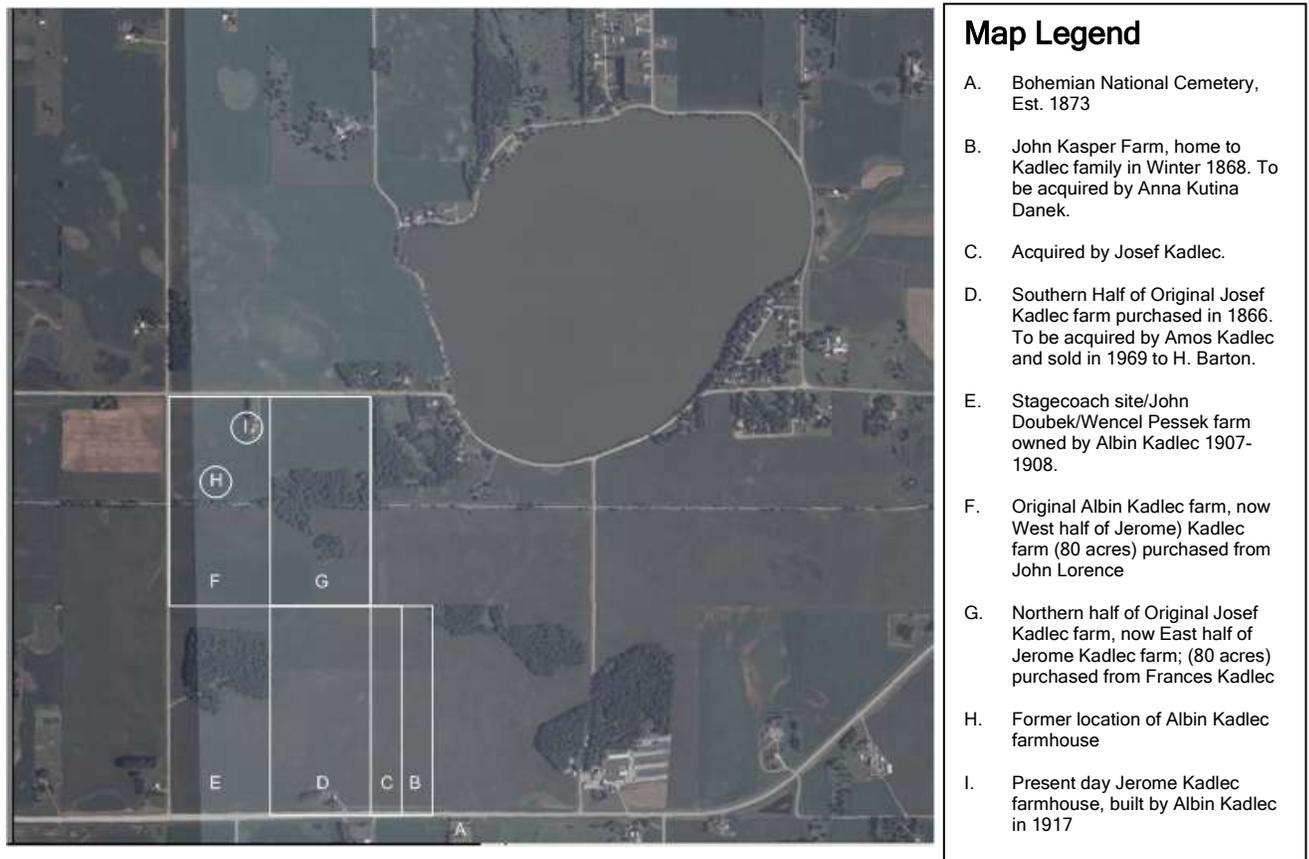


Figure 9-3, Aerial View of Kadlec Farm, Hale Township, McLeod County, MN (Source google.com)

As the family legend states, in 1867 the young Josef Kadlec family lived with the John Kasper family in a one-room log house (Map Item B, see photo next page) near the Bohemian National Cemetery (see above map, item A). The Kaspers had come to the area earlier and obtained the land on a grant, but Josef Kadlec paid \$500 for 160 acres adjoining it to the North in Hale Township (see map items D and G). This "tall and skinny" farm would measure $\frac{1}{4}$ mile wide by 1 mile tall and would be farmed by Josef Kadlec through his death in 1902. The obituary of Josef Kadlec indicated that by 1902 he had 420 acres. Indeed McLeod County plat maps indicate the presence of other farms totaling 260 acres in the name of "Joseph Kadlec", namely in Rich Valley Township to the South near Glencoe and Hutchinson Township to the West.



Figure 9-4. Jan Kasper and wife Susanna, early pioneers and friends of the Josef Kadlec family.



Figure 9-5. Map of Kadlec Farm @1912

However, at the death of Josef Kadlec in 1902, sons Albin and John would share the responsibilities of the family farm. At some point later John would leave the life of farming to work at the Slanga hardware store in the Village of Silver Lake.

On 20 November 1905, Albin would purchase from his mother Francis, the “west half of the east half of the northwest quarter of section 31” or 40 acres for a consideration of \$400 and “as a further consideration for the above described premises the party of the second part shall furnish and deliver to the said party of the first part at her place of residence in McLeod County, Minn. 10 cords of good, dry fire wood each and every year as long as the said party of the first part shall live.”

On 4 May 1906 Albin Kadlec would acquire from Frank and Mary Lorenz, the “West half of the northwest quarter of section 31”, that is, the 80 acres which comprise the Western one-half of the present day Jerome Kadlec farm.

One year later on 1 May 1907 Albin Kadlec would marry Josephine Micka and occupy the log cabin on that land to start their family life together. In 1917 they would complete the construction of the present day Kadlec farmhouse, moving their starter home/log cabin up to the relocated farm site to serve as a garage (it was later razed in 1967--the old barn was also moved from the former farm site to the present farm site and still stands today).

Then on 29 July 1913, Albin Kadlec would purchase an additional 40 acres of land from his mother Francis, the “east half of the east half of the northwest quarter of section 31”,

for a consideration of \$3,000. Less than five months later, on 13 December 1919, his mother Francis would die while visiting the Albin Kadlec farmhouse.



Figure 9-6. Aerial View of Kadlec Farm, Circa 1948.

The above picture is an aerial view of the Albin Kadlec farm in its prime:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------|
| 1. Farmhouse (built 1917) | 7. Corn Crib |
| 2. Garage (former farmhouse relocated to site) | 8. Hog barn |
| 3. Icehouse (later tractor shed) | 9. Chicken house |
| 4. Granary | 10. Old Silo |
| 5. Outhouse | 11. Barn (built 1919) |
| 6. Old Barn (relocated to site) | 12. Pump house |

On 9 November 1949, less than two weeks after the death of Albin, Joseph J. Kadlec and his wife Rose would purchase the 160 acre farm less the railroad easement from the widow Josephine Kadlec for the consideration of \$12,675 with Josephine retaining the “right to occupy such room or rooms in the residence, located on the above described premises, as she may desire during her lifetime”. Indeed Josephine would reside with her son Joseph’s family until her death on 10 August 1962.

The North half of the original Josef Kadlec farm (item G, page 190) remains in the Kadlec family today; it is currently the East half of the farm, which was purchased by Jerome and Judy Kadlec from Rose Kadlec in 1978.



Figures 9-7. and 9-8. Kadlec Farm, Front View, Circa 2006, Photos Courtesy Anton Brink.

The Luce Line Railroad

One notable feature of the Kadlec farm is the Luce Line Railroad (now referred to as the "State Trail"), which transverse the farm across its midsection, from West to East. It now serves as a recreational pathway for walking, bicycling, horseback riding, cross-country skiing, and snowmobiling. Our family typically goes for nice long walks on it to enjoy nature (if the mosquitoes permit) after those fabulous holiday meals, when we need to get out of the house and get some exercise.

The 1851 treaties of Traverse de Sioux and Mendota opened the door to widespread settlement of the region. As a result, many of the villages along the Luce Line State Trail were first settled in the mid to late 1850s (www.luceline.org)

While most of the earliest settlers came from New England or other eastern states, it was not long before European immigrants found their way into central Minnesota.

- Large numbers of Germans settled in Carver County as well as adjacent counties.
- Bohemian and Irish families arrived in the Hutchinson area in 1858 with Danish settlers joining them in 1867.
- Czech and Polish immigrants began to settle within the vicinity of Silver Lake during the late 1860s.
- Swedes moved into other areas of Meeker, Sibley, and Kandiyohi counties.
- Norwegians were attracted to Kandiyohi County and areas to the northwest.

While some of these newcomers were tradesmen, most were farmers interested in the chance to own land, an opportunity that had been denied to many of them in their European homelands. Tiny communities sprang up as settlement advanced westward.

Often, the sawmill and the blacksmith shop preceded agriculture and the flour mill. Many communities were platted before real settlement began, and some remained as only speculative dreams on paper.

Despite the war with the Dakota in 1862, the transformation of the region's woods and prairie into farms continued nearly unabated. The pace of settlement even increased in the years following the Civil War. By the early 1870s, most of the central region of Minnesota was covered by settlements and farms. The 1870s were marred by repeated crop devastation by grasshoppers in the western part of central Minnesota. In addition, low prices for agricultural products and high freight costs created widespread depression and political unrest within farming areas.

This unrest was largely responsible for the phenomenal growth of the first nationwide farmers' organization. Founded by Oliver H. Kelley, an influential farmer in Sherburne County, this organization soon became known as the Grange. Although started in Minnesota, the Grange became a crucial force in the betterment of the life of farm families throughout the Midwest.

By 1872, 61 percent of the cultivated acreage in Minnesota was wheat. Reliance on this single crop could be devastating to the small farmer in the event of a crop failure. However, most farmers raised much of the food necessary to feed their families and livestock. Since these early days, farmers have diversified to include corn, soybeans, some sugar beets, poultry, and livestock.

Railroad History

In 1908, the Electric Short Line Railroad Company was incorporated in Arizona by W. L. Luce and his son, E. D. Luce.

Their plan was to build a railroad from Minneapolis to Brookings, South Dakota, linking many farm communities as yet unserved by a railroad . . . Not long after, a short track was put into operation within Minneapolis.

Westward construction finally began in 1913, when approximately eight miles of track was completed and put into operation between the western city limits of Minneapolis (Glenwood) and Parkers Lake.



Figure 9-9. This was the First Luce Line Steam Train.

The following year saw trackage constructed along the northern shore of Lake Minnetonka, past Stubbs Bay, and west to Winsted. By the end of 1915, the fledgling railroad had reached Hutchinson.

After halting at Hutchinson for several years, construction resumed. The tracks reached Cosmos in 1922 and Lake Lillian in 1923. The railroad's alignment partially followed a trail used by the Dakota people nearly two centuries earlier.



Figure 9-10. Luce Line Train Traveling Over a Bridge.

The alignment selected affects trail use to this day. Other Minnesota railways were built in the previous century, and the fledgling towns therefore grew up around the central location of the depot.

Because of the comparatively late start of the Luce Line, it was built on the perimeter of many of the towns it served. Since most of the land it traveled across had already been settled for some time, the route was not always the most desirable land for construction, and included much land unsuitable for farming, such as wetlands.

In 1915, six gasoline and gas-electric motor cars provided passenger service. Trains ran roundtrip between Minneapolis and Stubbs Bay, Minneapolis and Hutchinson, and eventually between Minneapolis and Lake Lillian.

The line was a boon to early tourists and vacationers, transporting them quickly to the popular resort areas on Medicine Lake, Parkers Lake, and Lake Minnetonka. Unfortunately, fire destroyed two of these motor cars in 1916 and 1918.

Secondhand steam powered engines for freight trains were purchased from the Soo Line and Northern Pacific. By the early 1920s, one freight train per day, in each direction, was scheduled between Minneapolis and Lake Lillian.



Figure 9-11. Luce Line Railroad, East of Hutchinson, State Highway 7, Photo by Bill Armstrong.

On May 1, 1924, the Line was sold and reorganized as the Minnesota Western Railroad Company, with the Luces still in control. Their plans called for an extension to Montevideo and then on to Brookings, South Dakota.

Through the sale of bonds, the enterprising father and son obtained about \$600,000 for continued construction. In 1927, the line reached Gluek, about 12 miles to the east of Montevideo.

All funds had been expended, and the Luces' financial situation was grave. Harry Pence, President of the Minneapolis, Northfield & Southern, bought the line in December 1927.

Gluek was to be the final western terminus of the line, far short of its original destination. However, the 115 miles of the railroad connected many communities to the markets of Minneapolis and St. Paul.

From the late 1920s hauling grain, lumber, and other commodities was the railroad's major role.

The line changed hands twice during the 1950s. Its final owner was the Chicago & North Western Railway Company, purchasing the line along with its previous owner (Minneapolis & St. Louis Railway) on Nov. 1, 1960. The increasing competition from other modes of transportation created an unprofitable situation for the line during the 1960s. The Luce Line was formally abandoned by the Chicago & North Western in 1970.

The Electric Short Line Railroad connected six counties, from the urban environs of the state's largest city to the prairies and farmland of western Minnesota. During its peak years of operation, nearly 20 communities gained railroad access to the expanding metropolitan area of the Twin Cities. Today, 16 of these communities are still served by the railroad's recreational descendent, the Luce Line State Trail

Luce Line History Highlights

Aug. 7, 1908

Electric Short Line Railroad Company started and land was acquired in Minneapolis. Trains traveled between terminal in Minneapolis (near the present Target Center) and Glenwood Junction, which was the western city limits.

1913 to 1916

Track was laid from Glenwood Junction to Stubbs Bay on Lake Minnetonka, to Watertown, Winsted, Silver Lake, and Hutchinson.

1922

Construction reached west of Hutchinson to Cosmos.

1923

Track reached Lake Lillian.

1924

Luce Line bought by Minnesota Western Railroad; renamed Minnesota Western.

1927

Track reached Gluek, MN. No more funds could be secured; so Gluek became the western terminus of the line.

Sept. 10, 1947

"Last run" for passenger service.

1956

Minnesota Western bought by Minneapolis and Saint Louis Railway.

1970

Minnesota Legislature acquired the abandoned tracks for state's first nature trail, the Luce Line Trail.