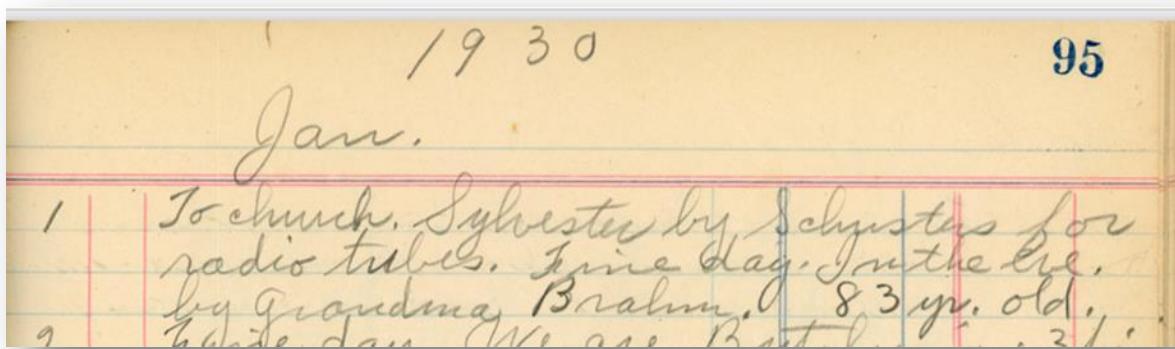


80 Grandma Brahm 83

The year 1930 marked the beginning of a nearly decade-long period of worldwide economic instability. It was the first full year of what came to be called the *Great Depression*. Aside from Tonie's annotation of that fact in her journal, she never made any direct mention of how this affected life on the farm.

On New Year's Day 1930, she jotted down two items of note in her journal. She wrote that she sent seventeen-year-old son, Sylvester to Schusters to pick up some replacement "radio tubes." (See the separate chapter on the family's new radio.)



January 1, 1930 – "To church. Sylvester by Schusters for radio tubes. Fine day. In the eve, by Grandma Brahm. 83 yr. old."

The other item of note was the birthday gathering for "Grandma Brahm." So, who was this lady? Mary Anna Brahm was not really Tonie's grandmother. In fact, she wasn't even related by blood. Three of her children, Joseph, Catherine and Anna married three of Harry Claas' siblings, Theresa, William and Fred. For that fact alone, it was important that she be recognized. This was her 83rd birthday and this event had to be marked and celebrated.

Mary Anna Brahm, that grand, elderly lady was held in high esteem by most everyone. Consequently, she became everyone's "Grandma." She was the matriarch of her family, the members of whom were prominent, if for no other reason than the many members of the Brahm family who populated the Fussville community.

Mary Anna was born in Germany in 1847. She came to this country as one of the "Forty-eighters." Actually, she emigrated



with her parents, Peter Mueller and Angela Eberhardt Mueller in 1850, when she was just three years old. So technically, she was a bit tardy to have been given the distinction of “Forty-eighter,” but by every classification, she was part of the great German migration to America. While she was too young to have had a memory of it, she endured the trials of Transatlantic travel, along with her three older siblings.

Mary Anna married Johann Brahm in Fussville around 1870 and together, they had two sons (Peter and Joseph, who married Harry Claas’ sister Theresa) and two daughters

(Anna, who married Harry’s brother Fred, and Catherine, who married Harry’s brother Willie). She was described as a pioneer woman who helped to tame the wilderness. But if that was the case, she had to do it without the help of her husband.



Shortly after the birth of their fourth child, Johann died in 1878, at the young age of only 34. Mary Anna was left alone to raise four children: Peter age 7, Joseph 5, Anna 3 and Catherine 1. She had no immediate family of her own; her parents and siblings had long since moved to Minnesota.

Mary Anna’s oldest son, Peter married Petronella Gilsdorf in 1899. They had seven children and farmed in the Fussville area. It seemed that history repeated itself when in 1911, Peter’s wife died suddenly at the age of 34. Her obituary read:

The sudden passing away of Mrs. Peter Brahm, while on her way to a neighbor's farm last Friday evening was a great shock to her family and friends. She and her husband walked over to Anton Schneider's carrying their eight week infant with them. They had reached the Milwaukee road, a few rods from Schneider's when she complained of feeling ill and was compelled to rest by the roadside. The attack was so severe that she was carried in the first vehicle that passed to the dwelling and a physician summoned but she expired in a few minutes. Examination showed an attack of heart disease.

After the sudden death of her daughter-in-law, Mary Anna moved in with Peter and for almost two decades, helped to raise his seven young children.

By Christmas of 1930, the news of Grandma Brahm’s declining health had spread throughout Fussville.

29 Cutting meat. Harry sick. Grandma sick
30 Making sausage. Grandma Brahm sick

December 29, 1930 - "Cutting meat. Harry sick. Grandma sick."

December 30, 1930 - "Making sausage. Grandma Brahm sick."

1 To church. In the afternoon by Grandma Brahm. In the eve. by Mittelsteadts

January 1, 1931 - "To church. In the afternoon by Grandma Brahm. In the eve by Mittelsteadts."

Then came the sad news.

8 Grandma Brahm died

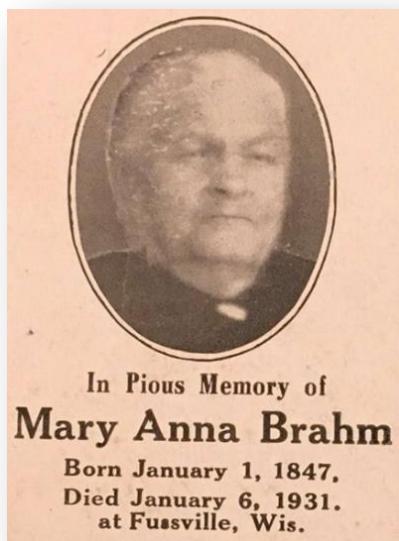
January 6, 1931 - "Grandma Brahm died."

Anna Brahm's obituary was published in the Menomonee News on January 8, 1931.

PIONEER WOMAN OF MENOMONEE DIES

Mrs. Anna Brahm, nee Mueller, died at the advanced age of 84 years, at the home of her son, Peter Brahm, in the town of Menomonee. Death came peacefully on Tuesday, Jan. 6, at 1 o'clock in the afternoon. The funeral services will be held tomorrow (Friday) morning at 9:30 from the residence to St. Anthony's Church, Fussville. Burial will take place in the church cemetery.

Mrs. Brahm was one of the earliest among the settlers in the vicinity. Born in Germany, she came with her parents to Menomonee when only three years old making her residence in the town



81 years. Her residence in the town was one of the longest, if indeed not the longest, among the early settlers. Deceased was a woman of many sterling qualities and a faithful member of St. Anthony's Church. She is survived by two daughters and two sons."

There seems to have been some confusion. Was Grandma Brahm's given name Mary or Anna or Mary Anna or Maria? There didn't appear to have been agreement among all of the sources. So perhaps that is the best reason. She was everyone's grandma. She was simply called "Grandma."

