

Memories of Alvin Cherney written about his grandfather – Tomas Cerney.

Alvin wrote this on April 25, 1989 for Dawn (either a daughter or granddaughter). He is the son of James Cherney who is the son of Tomas. Alvin was a teenager when his grandparents died and really was not particularly interested in the stories about them. He wished they were alive when he was writing this as he certainly would have a lot of questions. So these are Alvin's memories recalling what he could from his teen years.

Grandpa Cerny ran away from Praha, Bohemia to Wisconsin in 1861 at the age of 17. He was the only child as his mother had passed away. At that time Bohemia was ruled by the Roman Empire. Tomas did not like that form of government and besides he would have to join the army so decided to run away. After the World War I, the country was changed from Bohemia and Slovakia to Czechoslovakia and Praha to Prague.

Grandpa told me he walked all the way from New York to Wisconsin. Claimed he got a ride from no one. He came to this part of Kewaunee Co. because Mr. Herman was a friend of his in Bohemia and had left the year before and was living north of Cherneysville where the Stodola place is. I do not know when grandpa purchased the land, (was a solid white pine forest) but did tell me he purchased it from the government for \$1 per acre. That included the 40 acres now owned by Stodola, that Frank & Julia Velcier sold and where the Cherney homestead is now. Also the 40 acres where the present cattle barn is and 40 acres ½ mi west, ½ mile south and 1 mile west, we called the Paul's 40 later 20. Also 40 acres across the road from Rabas Imp. Co. When the land was divided between my Dad, James and his younger brother Tom, Tom got the homestead 40 acres and 20 acres of Paul's 40. and neither wanted the Rabas 40 as in order to transport the crops, he had an agreement with the Rebitz family across the road from Joe Shefchik for a right of way as it was impossible at that time to go east on the Rabas hill with a team of horses with a load of either hay or grain, given it was so steep. No way could a team control the weight so it was sold to Rabas in 1909.

Forgot to mention that when Grandpa arrived in Wisconsin or when he purchased the land he established an Episcopal church where the cemetery is now on 1 acre of land, because of his hatred of the Roman rule in Bohemia. He donated the land and all the lumber for the church and a house. The house was sold to Machiclek, east of 163 and east of Cherneyville road. Seems I got ahead of myself again. St. Anne's Episcopal (Catholic) church as then called and now whenever news of previous years seems the news media claims it to be a catholic church, which is was not. It prospered for many years as (Saint Wenceslas north of Pilsen) and Saint Anne. Until the Roman Catholic church again took over. And build the church of St. Joseph in Pilsen. The Bishop sent a fire and brimstone preacher (Father Prohaska), stating that the St. Anne Episcopal church was not the right religion, his lies started to spread and members started to fall away by 1906 all that was left was the Cherneys, Hermans, Schwiners, Pauls Radays and Blahniks – too small a congregation to afford a steady pastor, so services were once a month sometimes less. Do remember Mother and Dad arguing at night, thinking I was asleep. Mother wanted to join St. Joseph of Pilsen (yes she was Roman Catholic before marrying Dad and were married in Kewaunee in the Catholic Church). So eventually we were converted and attended church in Pilsen. Do remember Dad coming home from Sunday mass in 1920. Dad had a (1918 Ford touring car), coming down the Stodola hill we saw a bunch of cars at St. Anne's. So we did not stop at home, went to see what was going on. Grandpa had the keys to the church and home. A pastor traveling through stopped (he was given directions from the Episcopal Bishop in Sheboygan) to look up grandpa. Grandpa send some friends and neighbors (who came as we did) to see what was going on and to notify other neighbors that there would be services. So lo and behold, I was the only boy there so the pastor and Grandpa convinced me to be altar boy. I was 10 years old and never did it before (but the pastor told me he would tell me what he wants me to do. So he announced during this sermon that there will be service again on Monday and I

should be altar boy again. At the time the present home was in the process of being built, the frame was up along with the rafters, no roof boards. So not wanting to be altar boy again, I shimmed up the bare rafters to the peak and no amount of begging by Grandpa and Grandma, mother or dad could convince me to come down until the service was over.

Grandpa & Grandma Cherney were to me the most wonderful Grandparents. Grandpa & Grandma never learned the English language. He was very fluent in the German language. He did all his banking business with Mr. Osterloh who came to the house to do Grandpa's investments. So the last 8 or 9 years before passing away, Mr. Osterloh came over. Grandpa sent for me or called me if they could not understand each other. Mr. Osterloh knew English so he told me and I translated to Grandpa in Bohemian. Also Grandpa when I saw him sign any papers with Mr. Osterloh, he always signed Tomas Cerney. They both always rewarded me with a nickel or dime to buy candy. In fact, I saved some and was the first one in school to have a pen and a bottle of ink in the sixth grade. Any time I did get into trouble according to my mother's standards, I would run over to Grandpa and explain and he would always defend me. Grandpa and Grandma had six children – Martin, Frank, James, Anna (Blahnik), Tom and Theresa (Nejedlo).

I never did ask how Grandpa met Grandma but do know her maiden name was Monika Karcerovski of Kewanee. I still cannot understand why her name on the grave marker states Minnie. Grandma would most always when she called Grandpa called him ulti (oolti). I believe that is old man in German. I do know that when ever I went to the flour & feed mill in Kewanee, Mr. Karcerovski always said we were related, but again I never inquired how. The name sound Polish but they always spoke Czech.

I don't know when he (Grandpa) built the tavern and dance hall; I do believe he rented it for a while. He never smoked or drank any alcoholic drinks not even beer. I did ask him how he could run a tavern and not drink. He replied. "I sold the darn stuff not use it". I do remember a few dances there before Dad & Mom closed it when Prohibition came in. I believe that was when they could have made the most money. At that time whiskeys were sold in 50 gallon barrels. I remember 5 barrels were left in the basement but don't know how much in each when Dad closed the tavern. I was 8 years old and do recall tasting some out of barrel faucet.

Some will argue as I stated about the news media calling St. Anne's, a Catholic Church, but early 1930, I did convince my dad that we should buy the land and now empty house & church. We had to contact the Episcopal Bishop in Sheboygan and did so by mail. He came in person to look at the property and made a deal on the spot. Sold it to dad for \$100. We immediately started to disassemble the Church building. That sale included the organ, all the pews and a bunch of vestments along with a picture of St. Anne. We donated the picture to the Episcopal Church in De Pere. I believe also called St. Anne.

The picture is in the church vestry, where a number of pastors house together. The pews were donated to a church in Carney Michigan. My uncle Anton Blahnik came with a Model T platform truck and we piled all the pews on. I don't know how he ever made it all that distance as then the roads were dirt and gravel. The organ we had in our home for years – no one new how to play it and weren't played unless Mike Mahlik, the Pilsen tavern keeper came to visit. He played for us so eventually Dad dismantled it and built a few flower stands with the salvaged lumber. Also believe some parts of the organ may still be up stairs where other lumber is stored in the machine shed, also most of the lumber off the main & side altars are there. At the time the roof was going bad and the floor shifted or must say the walls gave out or shifted out so the timbers slid off the stone foundation, which was not very sturdy. Sure was some very nice pine lumber and timbers. Had most of it stored out side in the weather till 1940 when we used the lumber to put up the added lean to on the west side of the barn. So there is some blessed lumber in that building. I had a rather funny experience while dismantling the steeple. There were 2 cross

timbers notched in the center and mortised. The center timber tapered to a point at the top to hold the metal cross, now resting on the cemetery fence. So I was going to lift it out of the mortises and lower it to dad on the choir floor. At the time I was already smoking cigarettes and had wood matches in my pants pocket (no safety matches then). When sliding the timber down the matches in my pocket ignited so I hollered dad jump away and lucky he did as I had to let the timber go to put out the flame in my pocket. The timber went through the choir floor down to the main floor. The stone from the foundation we used to line the ditch east along the cemetery, also the concrete slabs are from the church house foundation.

When Grandma Monika died in 1937, Grandpa would not allow us to take her to St. Joseph's in Pilsen, so there were just graveside services and she was laid out in their home as grandpa stipulated he does not want to have services there either. He passed away just a year later, so mother had her way and had services at St. Joseph's. Wonder if he will forgive her. As I wrote above they were laid out in their home that was on the acre lot where the machine shed the garage and the home is, just on the northeast corner.

After Grandma and Grandpa passed away or after 1938, as mother was just frantic to demolish the home after they passed away. Did admit in later years that she was afraid she would have to move into it if and when she had to retire. Don't know why as it was a nice home though rather small, full basement, 1st floor, kitchen 1 bedroom pantry living room and a closet under the stairway to the second floor. Second floor was not finished into rooms, the south end of the house had a full length 7ft side porch, full enclosed, west end used as a storage area. (Rest of the story is about Alvin and is grandma's side of the family – Ask Bern to see original if you are interested but it is hard to read.)