

# Grandfather Gustav Berger's Letter to His Father and Sisters (Translated By Paula Marie Berger Hilgendorf)

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Forestville, Wis.  
1-16-1913

Dear Father and dear Sisters!

At last, at last I will begin to write the promised letter. Instead of a letter it should really be a book, since half a year has gone by since you heard anything from us. Where shall I begin, even if I only write about the important things? I'll begin with the present time. So far we are in good health, only our dear Mama doesn't feel very strong; the load is too much for her. She has had to drain her strength for a long time already. The little one (Margaret) has been quite restless all fall; now she is better, since she can sit in her buggy and play. Since November we have a girl here, Erna Vogt, daughter of Pastor Vogt of Fowler, Michigan. She is a music teacher. She is giving music lessons to Gerhard, Ernst and Theodora, and helps as much as possible with the house work. It's some help for Ida, so she isn't all alone with the little ones.

The house is echoing with music. This evening Frieda Geske is here. They want to give a concert here in Forestville this Friday evening. They still must practice a lot. Later they want to give a concert in Algoma, and maybe also in Kolberg. That John is in Milwaukee since September I probably wrote before. At Christmas time he was home. He studies with enthusiasm. During Easter vacation, God willing, he will visit you. *Christkind* (Christ child) was generous with gifts for all. We had a large Christmas tree, which reached from floor to ceiling. The tree was a gift from Gomolls. Gertrude and Paula each recited a verse in church. Little Otto always sang lustily: "Gott ist die Lücke, Iluetz mich erlesen Er licht auch mich." (God's love eternal, planned my salvation, etc.). When he sees anything with notes he says, "There is Gott ist die Liche." At dinner when he gets tired he says, "I'm terribly sick," and then he lies down and goes to sleep.

Today I read the report about the dedication of your organ. Also in Ashippun things are going forward. What about the new congregation? Is it still alive? On Oct. 13 our new school was dedicated. It's a nice building. One thing missing is a teacher

(male) for the school. I hope that we will get one, even if temporarily only a lady teacher. Geskes have a new little boy. He was baptized on Thanksgiving Day. (This would be Frederick Edmund John Geske, born on November 7, 1912 and the grandfather of David Geske, who we recently saw at our 2014 Berger Cousins' Reunion.)

We have a big operation here, almost like a farmer. We have three cows and a calf. The one cow, which we bought last summer, will not freshen again and so we have to sell her. Next Monday she must go. In November we had an opportunity to buy a good cow. Pastor Munding from Montpelier went to an auction (or held an auction – not sure). The cow cost us \$56.25. She will freshen on Dec. 23 – the other one in March. We sell seven quarts of milk every day. The milk cows are very expensive this year, while the farmers have plenty of feed. We are fortunate, as so far we haven't had to spend much for feed. The cows now eat outdoors, as the little snow we had is almost gone again. Hay is very cheap. Corn didn't amount to much, as it all froze. We harvested 75 bushels of potatoes. Only a few were rotten. We therefore will not go hungry. We butchered a pig in November, and it's all eaten up except the hams. The other one we butchered last week. So far we have had a mild winter. Today we had thawing weather and fog. We had hardly any sledding.

The picture of the little Werth tribe arrived. They all look real healthy. We are finally sending pictures of our little ones, Gertrude, Paula and Otto.

Now I must quit, as there is still a lot of work waiting. You said in your letter, dear father, that you wrote to Germany. Did you never hear anything from Uncle Ludwig again? Did he really disappear? Don't the other relatives in Germany know anything about him?

Please let Marie and Emma read this letter, as I don't know when I can get around to writing to them. Herman has been waiting for a letter for a long time also.

Greetings to all of you from all of us.

Your son and brother,

Gustav Berger