

Martin Kotscherofski

Martin Kotcherofski was born in Volhynia on October 28, 1861. He came to Canada with his wife Ernestine nee Hanke and three sons – Andrew, John and Edward in 1891. They stayed in Winnipeg for a short time, then travelled by train to Calgary. They loaded up their wagons there, and started for Red Deer where Martin took up a homestead. They were not happy there, as early frosts destroyed their crops. They were advised by Pastor Pempeit, a Lutheran Missionary, to move further north.

While crossing the North Saskatchewan River at Edmonton, the ferry capsized, dumping all their belongings into the river. Gathering up what they could, they continued on west to Spruce Grove. There they spent the winter with friends. In the spring, Martin filed on a homestead one mile west and one-half mile north of Rosenthal Church (N.W. 28-52-1-W5).

At first they lived in a sod house, and four more children were born there – Amelia, Ida, Carrie, and Samuel. In 1901, Mrs. Kotcherofski and the eighth child passed away.

In 1902, Martin married a widow from Leduc. Julia Rolof had come from Russia in 1898, and she had seven children – Andy, Fred, Mollie, Minnie, Albertina, Carl, and Daniel (who died at the age of three months.)

Martin and Julia had five more children – Lena, Julia, Bill, Otto and Herman. This large family lived in a log shack with a sod roof. The floor was hard-packed earth, and many times they lived on prairie chickens and rabbits.

In 1907 they built a large log house with siding on it. It had three large rooms upstairs and three downstairs, all heated by coal and wood.

The children walked a mile and a half to school, with the older ones helping the little ones through the snowdrifts in winter. Mrs. Kotcherofski baked 24 loaves of bread a week and washed clothes by hand using a wash-board. During the winter, snow was melted to provide wash water. She did not own a washing machine until 1919. This had a round tub and was cranked by hand.

The family milked from 10 to 15 cows by hand, and separated the milk and churned the cream into butter. Their only transportation for many years was by sleigh or wagon, until they could afford to buy a buggy. Supplies were purchased in old Stony Plain (the original townsite) until the town was moved to its present location.

Martin passed away on October 28, 1924. Julia (Rolof) Kotcherofski, born in 1867, passed away in 1955. They were both buried in Rosenthal Cemetery.

For further information on some of their children, see the following histories: Andrew Kotcherofski, Phillip and Amalia Kulak, William and Ida Becker, Edwin and Carrie Hoffman, Andy Roloff, Gus and Lena Zucht, Peter and Julia Kulak and William Kotch.