

*THIS WAS MY WORLD,
LITTLE DEAR ONE -
Mathilda's Scrapbook*



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Bradenton, Florida

Dedication

This book is dedicated to each of my grandchildren, that you may retain all your life the curiosity you had when you were young, a curiosity that allows you to follow your heart and your passion, to follow ideas that may have no immediate practical purpose, to go down rabbit holes of knowledge just because they are there, to embrace thoughts that intrigue you. This book has been a great adventure of discovery for me as I wrote it, immersing me in labyrinthine rabbit holes of information I did not even know existed. I hope it will be a similar experience for you. May you always continue to live your own Story.

Acknowledgments

This book would not have been possible without the following people and resources, and I gratefully acknowledge them here.

Mathilda Sabers Crubel and John Francis Crubel, my paternal grandparents, and all the Segbers/Sebers/Sabers and Crubel ancestors going back to those who immigrated to the United States in the 1800s. It has been my honor to research and record their stories.

Raymond John Crubel, my father, whose large album of identified family photographs and detailed genealogical records provided the foundation for this book.

Fred Althoff, Member of the New Vienna Area Historical Society and my fourth cousin on the Schulte/Althoff side. Fred was a tireless researcher of census and land records archives in County Clerk's offices and libraries in Iowa and Wisconsin, making repeated visits to search microfilm and digitized databases and online records. In addition, he was an ongoing source of encouragement, information and photographs supporting the book.

Sylveria Sabers Ruden, whose excellent and very large genealogical compilation titled **Segbers-Sebers-Sabers-Seber Family History** provided most of the extended-family genealogical information for the over 4000 descendants of the original immigrants plus some of the photographs for this book. Special thanks to her sister Pat Sabers Klosterman for making it possible for me to acquire Sylveria's book.

The New Vienna, Iowa, Area Historical Society Heritage House Museum docents and volunteers who gave generously of their time to assist my research, especially Carol Willenborg, Inez Kluesner, and Inez Vaske Schultz. They guided my cemetery research, gave me a tour of the Museum, and shared the Society library of historical resources and records.

Jim Warczak, Local Historian for the Bloomington, Wisconsin, Public Library, who graciously gave his time and resources to provide a treasure trove of information and photographs about Bloomington and its early history.

Cousins Kay Pasker, Velma Sabers Frericks, Fran Hoefer, Jo Klostermann, Rick Domeyer, Dennis Moris, and Marty Krapfl, who each provided information about the extended family.

Vally Mandic, friend, travel companion, and chauffeur for my 2018 research trip to Iowa and Wisconsin. Her help gave me the freedom to focus on the places, resources, and photography for this book.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

The following bibliography is purposely simple and abbreviated, and not written according to formal APA or MLA guidelines. These are only some of the written resources consulted for the book. Most of the many online resources used are credited in the body of the book.

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St. Boniface Congregation Centennial Celebration 1846-1946, June Fifth, 1946, New Vienna, Iowa.

Looking Back . . . A Pictorial History of Dubuque & Delaware Counties, Published by the Dyersville Commercial, Eastern Iowa Shopping News, 2002. This publication provided information and historical photographs of farming life in Iowa at the turn of the 20th century.

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Snapshots in Time – A Photographic Journey Through Bloomington’s History, published to commemorate the 100th anniversary of Bloomington, Wisconsin. This excellent booklet provided stories, information, and most of the historical photos for the Bloomington section of my book.

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The Palimpsest, Early Iowa in Fiction, William J. Petersen, 1955.

Author Note: This book was researched and written during 2018 and 2019. I did my best to ensure that the information presented in this book would be accurate and true. Records, memories, and interpretations can sometimes be misleading or reported incorrectly. If you are an extended family member on the Sabers or Crubel side and identify a genealogical error in my book, please let me know.

Additional Author Note about the pictures and images in my book: Between 2018 when this book was first published on the internet and 2024 when it was reviewed for publishing on my website, some of the pictures in the book became unavailable for viewing because of security concerns identified in their linkages. As we are all aware, security updates on our computers are ongoing and help keep us safe from current internet risks. Sometimes, innocent information or pictures get caught in the security sweep. I have chosen to leave blank the spaces where these pictures were in my book, in case their links become free of security risks in the future. There is no security risk for the online reader of this book.

PREFACE

The book ***THIS WAS MY WORLD, LITTLE DEAR ONE – Mathilda’s Scrapbook*** is a fictional story told in a grave, an attempt by my paternal grandmother Mathilda Sabers Crubel to distract and comfort my 8-year-old brother John who had just been laid to rest next to her after drowning in the Mississippi River. My grandmother had died at age 27 in the 1918 Spanish Flu. In the book, she creates for him a scrapbook of her life and times at the turn of the 20th century, inviting his participation in the imaginary process of pulling down information from the Cloud of Information Data Bits. The book is by its nature intended to be viewed not as a genealogical record nor an historical account, nor any kind of scholarly publication, even though it has elements of all of those, but as an informal scrapbook of information, an adventure back in time, an opportunity for the reader to enter the world my grandmother inhabited 100 years ago. The story was written to honor the 100th anniversary of her death on November 22, 1918, which was also her 8th wedding anniversary, and to honor the memory of my baby brother John.

The book has grown into a final form quite different from initial expectations. Over the course of its incubation and production, the book seemed to take on a life of its own, changing shape from a simple narrative story relating genealogy and family history, into a long, meandering chronicle of often maddening historical detail and complicated richness. Eventually I came to see this evolution as an advantage, not a deficit or weakness, because it mimics the nature of truth itself, that multifaceted, complex, slippery-slidey thing that is above all dependent on the powers, or lack thereof, of the mind that creates it and the data resources available to that mind at that moment in time. Nothing in life happens in a vacuum. The tiniest, most unimportant and unnoted changes may result ultimately in enormous social or environmental or mental shifts. Providing seemingly unimportant and irrelevant detail, an overload of richness, if you will, often provides the miasmic soup out of which the steam of truth rises gently, inviting us to breathe its elusive aroma.

Therefore you, the reader, are the primary component in bringing this story to life. That, in its essence, is the fundamental challenge of the digital age, to not only navigate the overwhelming, continually expanding and reorganizing oceans of data bits, but to select out of those teeming waters the nuggets of information that permit us to assemble our own truths to live by. Allowing a story to be a little ambivalent, messy, and out of control is usually the price we pay to bring us nearer the experience of the truth we seek. It is one thing to be told a story, to have your perceptions and ideas shaped and limited by the views and visions of an author, but it is another thing to construct the story for yourself. The first is comfortable and easy, without responsibility or guilt. The second asks you to jump into the pot and build your own story, your own truth. In this book you get a little of both.

In this digital age, history is being re-written at a dizzying pace. Long-accepted facts, doctrines and truisms are being questioned, icons are falling, heroes are toppling, information we thought true last year is now not so true as new data comes to light. I recognize that although I assembled for this book the best and most current information available to me in 2018, from the most credible sources - university publications, state or federal records, historical records departments and the archives of recognized commercial enterprises - the story in this book will never be “true.” New discoveries, along with human error, frailty, and bias, including mine, cannot be avoided. However, understanding the limitations of our ability to tell a true story will in itself help us arrive at a story of greater truth. In the real world, the acceptance of this concept becomes the central paradox of the digital age and the source of the ever-growing dichotomy between those who genuinely seek truth and those who seek only to be right. Those who wield power, in all spheres, must be right; they cannot tolerate the ambiguities required by truth. Fortunately, our little story does not suffer under those heavy moral shackles. Our story exists only to entertain, enlighten, and, with a bit of luck, befuddle the reader.

As this story began to take shape under the direction of hundreds of hours of research, it became clear that a choice would have to be made about documenting sources and giving credit appropriately. The problem was that the scope of the work grew exponentially as an ever-increasing number of resource materials bubbled up and demanded inclusion. A scholarly work intended to be published and sold must meticulously document and record sources, especially when source materials are quoted verbatim. Over the months of research this book eventually required, an estimated several hundred different source materials were used and quoted, sometimes whole pages or essays, when it seemed superfluous to rephrase or rewrite information that had been perfectly written already. More importantly, quoting sources as they were written often added a welcome level of authenticity. Therefore, these decisions were ultimately made:

1. ***THIS WAS MY WORLD, LITTLE DEAR ONE – Mathilda’s Scrapbook*** is not intended for commercial publication. It is a story for my grandchildren, to help them come to know the life and times of their great-great grandmother Mathilda. It is also a resource for anyone interested in the history of midwestern pioneer expansion in the United States at the turn of the twentieth century, especially the history of the settlements in southeastern Iowa and southwestern Wisconsin.
2. The hundreds of internet sources that have found their way into the book, either as background information or as directly quoted paragraphs, pages, or articles, have been credited casually as they were referenced, not in the approved journalistic manner of footnotes and citations, which would have made the book clumsy. Other sources are listed in the Acknowledgments pages of the book. I hope any author who sees his or her words quoted here without benefit of proper credit will understand that such an omission was not intended. My goal has been the further dissemination of research already made available to the public. Equally unintentional are any errors of data recording or interpretations, for which I take full responsibility. It is my belief that the informality of scrapbook presentation allows for a relaxation of editorial and stylistic rules that would otherwise be imposed on the book, and that this casual format might increase the reader’s enjoyment of the book.

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