

2009 Cemetery Walk - Walter Van Asten

Hi, I am Leroy Van Asten, the son of John & Martha Van Asten and grandson of Walter Van Asten. Walter Van Asten is the person I am going to play today.

The name Van Asten was given to my ancestors because they left the city of Asten in southwest Holland and moved north about 20 miles to Wanroy. Van in Dutch means 'of' or 'from'.

Now I am playing the part of Walter Van Asten born in 1862.

My father was John Van Asten and was born May 3, 1815 in Wanroy, Holland. I know that on April 15, 1851, he left Amsterdam, Holland on the ship Mozambique for New York. The passenger list shows him as a farmer, age 34 (he was really 36) from Wanroy, the Netherlands, with one container. After a 57 day voyage, John arrived in New York on June 18, 1851 and found his way to Little Chute.

My father purchased land covered with timber in what is now known as the Town of Vandenbroek. He built a little hut with a lean-to for his cow and oxen from logs cut from his own land and began cultivating his property. In 1854, he married Petronella Verhagen. Petronella was born August 16, 1823 in Gerwin, Holland.

My father and mother had nine children, Gertrude, Katherine, Kate (who died at age 7), Martin, Mary, Walter (I'll tell you more about me later), Albert, Cornelius and Hannah.

Here is a picture of my father and mother and here is a family picture taken in the 1880's.

In 1860 John had 80 acres of improved land (cleared of trees) and 9 acres of unimproved land (woods) with a total value of \$600. He had 2 mile cows, 4 working oxen, 3 cattle and 6 swine total value \$196.

Here are some interesting facts about my father. At age 36 he came to Little Chute, at 39 he married. At age 40, his first child was born. At age 52, he had his last child. Mom and Dad had 9 children in about 12 years time. Dad was staying with my family when he died at age 87. Dad was 81 when mom died at age 73. John & Petronella are buried in the old part of this cemetery across the drive; the tall stone with the flag on it.

Now I will tell you about me, Walter Van Asten. I was born March 20, 1862 and was born and raised on the original homestead. I went to the district schoolhouse built on the north east corner of the farm. The school had one large room where eight grades were taught by one teacher. It had a furnace that burned wood from a wood shed near the school. There was no running water and there were two outhouses, one for the boys and one for the girls. Being raised and working on the farm all my youth, I learned the skills and traits of dairy farming. My younger brother Albert and I bought the farm from my dad in 1889.

The farm was well cultivated and equipped with good buildings. The next year, 1890, I married Katherine Vandehey from Hollandtown. I purchased my brother's share a few years later.

Katherine and I have 11 children. Arnold I and John I both died in infancy. Those surviving are Nellie, Henry, Jenny, John H, Arnold II, Hattie, Martin, Anne and Albert. My wife died in 1919 at the age of 54 and I died in 1938 at the age 76.

In 1890, I, Walter, constructed a new barn and in 1900 built a new larger house. I remodeled the house in 1913-1914. I was a dairy farmer until 1921 when I rented the farm to my son John H. Van Asten. He purchased the farm from me in 1924.

On June 14, 1921, John married Martha Coonen of Dundas, WI. Her parents were James and Petronella Coonen, granddaughter of Arnold Verstegen. They have fourteen children. Two died at an early age, Mary and Cyril. Those surviving include Grace, Dorothy, now Sister Cyril Marie, Ivo, Donald, Gerald, Betty, Leroy, Jim, John, Joyce Kenneth and Marcy. John and seven of his children served in the military.

John also attended school at the one room schoolhouse located on the corner of the farm as did his children for the first few years of their schooling. He was the secretary of the school for a number of years and was the town assessor for a few years. John was secretary & treasurer of the Pleasant View Mutual Telephone Company for ten years, until April, 1948 when it was dissolved and the Wisconsin Telephone Company took over.

When John took over the farm he soon remodeled and modernized the barn with concrete mangers and steel stanchions. He erected a concrete silo and new granary, chicken coop and hog house. The home was remodeled in 1935 and electric lights installed in all buildings. Electric service was extended to the rural areas at that time.

John and his son, Leroy, began farming together after Leroy returned from service. In 1956, Leroy married Mary T Gerrits. They were blessed with five children: Linda, Michael, Roger, Dennis and Carol.

After working for John for a year, Leroy bought the personal property in 1957 which included 18 cows and 10 heifers and all of the farming equipment. He bought the real-estate in 1959. In 1963 a milking parlor was added and it is still being used today. Additional acreage was purchased to bring the farm total to 263 acres. Seven silos and several other farm buildings were added.

Leroy served 24 years on the Vandebroek Fire Department and 24 years on the Vandebroek Town Board.

In 1980, Dennis started working on the farm full-time. A full partnership between the two was formed in 1986. The farm grew to 125 milking cows and 125 head of young stock. In 1996 Dennis purchased the buildings and 88 acres of land.

Dennis married Cindy Franzke in 1985. They have four daughters, Brandie, Kristle, Amanda and Melanie. Dennis and his family moved onto the farm in 1988 and farm together as a family.

Little Chute Historical Society Cemetery Walk 2009





Walter Van Asten Family, Circa 1916

Hattie
Jennie

Henry
Walter

John
Albert

Arnold
Catherine

Martin

Nellie
Annie