

## #37 Anti-German Sentiments Bring Froetschners to Offerle

We've had the privilege of recording over 80 oral histories here at the Kinsley Library. You can read transcripts, listen to audio tapes, view short video clips, and look at family pictures from these oral histories on our website. We try to get a snapshot of the lives of the people we interview. At the time, we never know where the stories they tell us will fit into the mosaic of our local history. The general standard question of "Why did your ancestors come to Edwards County" has offered some insights into our current World War I study.

When I interviewed Marilyn Froetschner Kersting in 2011, she told an interesting story about her grandfather Alvin Froetschner.

*"When my grandfather was down in the Coldwater area, there was animosity against Germans. My grandfather still had very close ties to Germany. He had a picture on his wall of Kaiser Wilhelm II. The neighbors said, 'You get that off your wall!' Well, he took that picture down and put a baby picture of my Dad (Harry Froetschner) and my Uncle Bill (William Froetschner) over the top of the Kaiser. We have that picture!"*

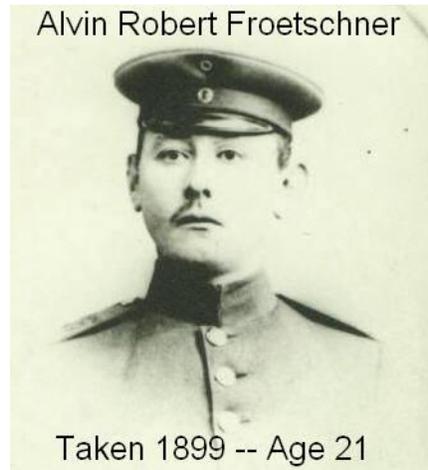
The original pictures (reproduced below) are large and came out of a big antique oval frame.



Marilyn's brother, Jerome Froetschner, came in the library last week and reiterated this story. He said that his grandfather Alvin left the area and moved south of Offerle because most of the people in the area were of English-Americans. It was not comfortable to continue to live there.

I found out a little about Alvin from Julie Ackerman's book, ***Offerle History: 1876-1976***. Alvin was born in 1878 in Germany. His father came to America when Alvin was 3 years old. He settled in Larned, worked for the railroad, and tried to make a home for his family to join him.

The following is taken from the **Offerle History** book: “When Alvin was 18 years old he decided to accompany his father back to America. But the German government changed his plans—insisting that he serve in the army before leaving the country.



Alvin Robert Froetschner

Taken 1899 -- Age 21

At the end of two years, Alvin obtained a furlough to come to America....(in 1900) he left his home near Leipsig, Germany, not able to speak a word of English, but he made the trip without any trouble. It took eighteen days to make the boat trip. There were 1,400 people on the ‘Boon’, a combination freight-passenger trip. His fare was \$85.”

Alvin settled in Larned working on farms and delivering ice. He became a naturalized citizen in 1904, 13 years before his neighbors thought he was a German sympathizer. His granddaughter, Joanne VanCoevern, (her mother was Dora) sent me a copy of his naturalization papers:

Missouri, Western District Naturalization Index, 1840-1990 for Alvin Froetschner	
Naturalization Index > 1848-1950 > Friedman - Garneau	
Family name Frotschner,	Given name or names Alvin
Address Larned, Kansas	
Certificate no. (or vol. and page) Record Book B. P. 1	Title and location of court Dist. Court, Larned, Kansas
Country of birth or allegiance Germany	When born (or age) 24
Date and port of arrival in U. S.	Date of naturalization January 26, 1904
Names and addresses of witnesses Fred Sipple	

In 1906 he bought land and met Sophie Marting, a recent immigrant from Germany. They married in 1907, had 3 sons (William, Harry & Carl), and built up a farm which they sold for \$2,500 in order to purchase a half-section of land in Comanche County, near Coldwater.



They had two daughters (Alma & Dora) and lived on this land for nine years until they sold it to move to Offerle in August, 1918. In December, 1919 Ernest was born. The extended family became integral members of Zion Lutheran Church and the farming community.

Standing: Harry, Alma and Carl. Seated: William, Alvin, Baby Ernest, Sophie and Dora standing at right.