

A Fairmont Mayor Remembered

Early settlers of this country, state, and county faced many hardships. They were forced to rely on their own ingenuity in order to forge ahead and make a home and a living for themselves and their families. Fairmont and Martin County have certainly had their share of hard working, industrious, and civic minded citizens over the years. Many are remembered for their accomplishments and the lasting impact on Fairmont and Martin County that they made during their lifetime. One such person in Fairmont's past was Julius Simon, an early settler who made his mark in a very positive manner on Fairmont. So, just who was Julius Simon, you may ask?

Julius Simon was born in Germany on May 9, 1868. He spent his first birthday on board a ship with his parents coming to America. His parents settled in Cook County Illinois where his father became a truck farmer. In 1887, at the young age of nineteen, Julius came to Martin County and acquired land for his parents in Rolling Green Township. In 1889, his parents and other family members arrived. Incidentally, his father spent the remainder of his life on that very homestead. In 1892, Julius Simon married Clara Fortmann. They had a family of thirteen children, of which two died as infants.

After his marriage, Mr. Simon operated farms in Rolling Green and Center Creek Townships, and then acquired 220 acres, part of which was in the city of Fairmont. His farm was considered to be a "model" farm, in part due to his crop rotation system. In addition to his home farm, he had more farmland in other parts of the county, and he was also involved in feeding livestock. Mr. Simon was one of the regulars shipping carloads of livestock to the stockyards in South St. Paul.

Obviously a very industrious individual, Simon branched out with his hobby, commercial fishing, which eventually became a rather profitable venture to the extent that it actually surpassed his cattle business. Simon's commercial fishing business involved fattening thousands of carp every year and shipping them by rail to the New York market. He accomplished this by seining the carp from local lakes during the winter, placing them on tank cars, and shipping them directly to the eastern market. However, many carp were also taken to his home and kept in cribs built in the lake on his farm, fed, and then shipped alive on tank cars to New York City. The cribs were made of wire and measured about sixteen feet square and ten feet deep. The carp were kept within this area and fed during the summer and fall up until about the first of November. Simon shipped anywhere from fourteen to forty carloads annually for more than twenty years.

Although a very successful farmer and commercial fisherman, perhaps most notable was Simon's civic pride. In 1933, he was elected mayor of Fairmont by a landslide. He carried the city by an overwhelming four to one margin. According to a quote from the April 5, 1933, edition of the *Fairmont Daily Sentinel*, "Never in the history of the city has there been such a landslide in a contested election as was accorded Mayor Julius Simon yesterday, according to old timers who were on the job as usual about the time returns were coming into *The Sentinel* office last evening." Simon won the election handily by a margin of 1,357 to 382 for the closest runner up.

In addition to serving as Fairmont's mayor, Simon also served on the Rolling Green and Center Creek township boards, and he was an alderman in Fairmont for sixteen years. During his tenure as a Fairmont alderman, the first paving of Fairmont streets was done, the electric light plant was brought under municipal ownership, the municipal heating plant was constructed, major improvements were made in the sewer and drainage systems, and he was involved in the development of the park system.

Julius Simon passed away unexpectedly in January of 1946. He was an individual that first came to Martin County at the age of nineteen. Through hard work, perseverance, and integrity, he became successful in the businesses of farming and commercial fishing. He didn't stop there. Being very civic minded, he added to the community by serving unselfishly at several levels of local government and thereby helped to develop and improve both Fairmont and Martin County for its citizens at that time as well as for the future. Julius Simon led a life well lived, with accomplishments to be proud of that in turn served the better good of all.

This article is dedicated to Lydia Holland, the daughter of Julius Simon, who lives in Fairmont at Goldfinch Estates.