

A Martin County Pioneer

There have been many individuals and families instrumental in the progress and development of Martin County over the course of its rich history. One of these individuals, a Martin County pioneer, was Henry Ledebur. So, you may be wondering, just who was Henry Ledebur, and what did he accomplish?

As was the case for many of those hardy individuals that settled this region in the 1800's, Henry Ledebur was an immigrant. He came to the U. S. from Germany at the age of 14 in 1871. He at first stayed with relatives in La Crosse, Wisconsin, for two years working as a hired man before moving to Wycoff, Minnesota, where he operated a farm. It was there that he met his future wife, Caroline Niemeyer, a widow with two sons. She had relatives in Martin County, and they encouraged Henry and his wife, Caroline, to move their family to the Fairmont area.

In 1883 Henry Ledebur and his family moved to Martin County. They purchased 160 acres of farmland in Section 34 of Fraser Township for \$12.50 per acre. The farm was purchased from Edwin Berry, also known as "Elder" Berry because he was an ordained Baptist minister. Ledebur operated the farm, designated as a "Century Farm" in 1983, for thirty-three years. The Ledeburs built a ten room brick home in 1895, the first brick home built in the rural area of Martin County. It is presently occupied by Jonathon Meschke, a descendent of Henry Ledebur.

In 1915, the Ledeburs moved to Fairmont and, in 1926, they built a home at 409 South Park Street. Mr. Ledebur was one of the organizers of the Citizens National Bank of Fairmont that opened for business in 1918. He served as president of the bank from its inception until it was purchased by Fairmont National Bank in 1931. He also served as treasurer of the Farmers Insurance Company, he was an officer of elevators in Fairmont and Welcome, and he served on both the school board and the Fraser Township Board as well as being an assessor in Fraser Township at one time. In addition to these many activities, he found time to serve as president of the Lutheran Church in Welcome as well as deacon, and later as treasurer of St. Paul's Lutheran church in Fairmont as well.

Henry Ledebur was considered an individual of foremost integrity who could always be depended upon to do the right thing. A quote from his obituary exemplifies his integrity as follows: "No one more square ever lived." Henry Ledebur was a long time Martin County resident, a truly civic minded individual, and a beloved citizen. He spent thirty-three years as a farmer, he served as president of the Citizens Bank of Fairmont, and he spent a great deal of time involved in a multitude of other civic duties. He passed away on June 21, 1938, at the age of 81 and was preceded in death by his wife, Caroline.

The Ledebur Legacy has extended its influence to present day Martin County not only to his descendants, but also to the room that the Martin County Genealogy Society will occupy in the Pioneer Museum that is named in honor of the Ledeburs. The Ledebur descendants have made significant financial and volunteer contributions to this endeavor which will afford both the Martin County Genealogy Society and the Martin County

Historical Society the opportunity to more efficiently and effectively serve its patrons now and into the future.

Consequently, the impact that a fourteen year old immigrant who left Germany in 1871 has had on Martin County did not end with his death. Rather, his influence, as a result of the numerous contributions of his many descendents, has continued well beyond his death by positively affecting Martin County and its citizens of today and into the future as well.

The Martin County Historical Society will host an open house for the descendents of Henry Ledebur that will be in Fairmont at the Pioneer Museum on Saturday, June 20th from 9:00 a.m. to noon. This will include a ribbon cutting by the Fairmont Area Chamber Ambassadors for the new home of the Martin County Genealogy Society, the Ledebur Room, in the Pioneer Museum. The public is invited to attend.

For more information on this topic, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.