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Edo Reinhardt Freese was a well-respected citizen of the small farming town of Monee, Will County, Illinois and very active in civic affairs.<sup>1</sup>

Born in Germany, Edo immigrated to the United States with his parents in 1854. In 1870, he married Anna Helen Fechtmann, daughter of Johann and Helen Magdalena Kandes Fechtmann. The couple had four children. John took over the store after Edo's retirement, and Reinhardt served as Monee Postmaster from 1914 until his death in 1922. Two daughters did not survive childhood.<sup>2</sup>

After clerking in the store of Fred H. Luehrs for two years, Edo was employed by the Illinois Central Railroad as a baggage man for eleven years and an express agent for the railroad for more than thirty years.<sup>3</sup> In 1877, he formed a partnership with George Sonneborn and opened a small store in Monee selling general merchandise. In 1890, he sold his share to John Sonneborn, George's son, and opened his own store in a building he built at the corner of Oak Road and Margaret Street, which still stands today.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Muriel Mueller Milne, *Our Roots are Deep*, 1974, p. 304-306

<sup>2</sup> W.W. Stevens, *Past and Present of Will County, Illinois*, The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, Chicago, IL, 1907, p. 632-633.

<sup>3</sup> "Edo R. Freese, who has been", *The Joliet Evening Herald News*, 19 Feb 1909, page 11, Newspapers.com.

<sup>4</sup> Muriel Mueller Milne, *Our Roots are Deep*, 1974, p. 43

Edo served as Monee township supervisor, school director, village clerk, postmaster,<sup>5</sup> fire chief,<sup>6</sup> and justice of the peace. He served on the Will County Board<sup>7</sup> and was also a notary. Many residents of Monee came to him for legal advice. He was also a member of the Masonic Lodge in the neighboring town of Peotone for over 50 years, and in 1928 was honored with a reception that was attended by almost 100 people.<sup>8</sup>

What is believed to be the first communication by telephone in Monee was a call made by John Freese to his father, when John installed a telephone from his home to his father's store in 1894. In 1913, he opened the Monee State Bank inside his general store.<sup>9</sup>

Edo was also a founding member of St. Paul's Evangelical and Lutheran Church, serving as President and on the church board.<sup>10</sup>

In June 1914, Edo Freese celebrated his arrival to the United States with a party. In attendance were several friends and family members who made the trip with him, including his sister, Helena Freese Harms. A photograph was published in the newspaper that is the best photograph the author has found of her ancestor to date.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Muriel Mueller Milne, *Our Roots are Deep*, 1974, p. 129.

<sup>6</sup> Muriel Mueller Milne, *Our Roots are Deep*, 1974, p. 150

<sup>7</sup> "Twenty members of the county board" *The Joliet Evening Herald-News*, 19 Feb 1905, p. 5, Newspapers.com.

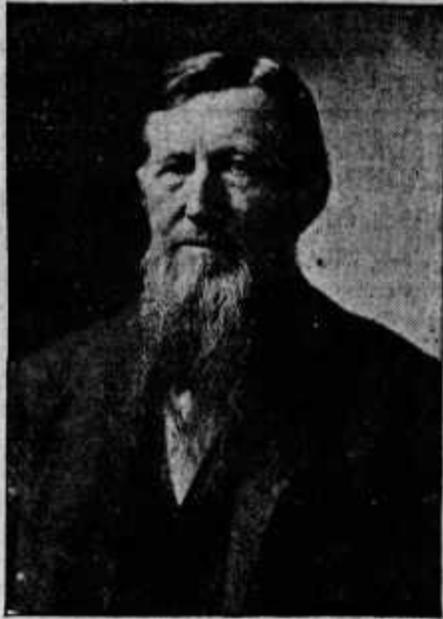
<sup>8</sup> "Edo R. Freese Honored," *The Monee Review*, 15 May 1928, p. 1.

<sup>9</sup> Muriel Mueller Milne, *Our Roots are Deep*, 1974, p. 43.

<sup>10</sup> "Monee Church Elects Heads", *The Joliet Evening Herald News*, 10 Feb 1911, p. 16, Newspapers.com.

<sup>11</sup> "Takes Friends Back Over Sixty Years," *The Joliet News*, 1 Jun 1914, p. 2, Newspapers.com.

**CELEBRATING ARRIVAL HERE**



Edo Freese of Monee who is entertaining a number of friends today who were passengers on the same Atlantic steamer which brought him to America sixty years ago.

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“Takes Friends Back Over Sixty Years,” *The Joliet News*, 1 Jun 1914, p. 2, Newspapers.com.