

Family Love Story: How the eldest son of Mary Leisz Minnichsoffer JOSEPH FRANK MINNICHSOFFER first met his wife Dora Greene, circa 1910, as told by their grandson Tony Minnichsoffer in September 2018

Joseph Frank Minnichsoffer was the first-born son of Mary Leisz (1862-1903) and her husband John Minnichsoffer (abt 1863-1908). Born in Peregu Mare in 1889, Joe accompanied his parents and siblings when they immigrated to America in 1901, settling on a farm in Turtle Lake, Wisconsin nearby his uncles the six Leisz brothers and their families.

Joe went on to marry and have five children of his own. Here, Joe's grandson Tony Minnichsoffer tells the story of how his grandparents first met, and how Joe's determination to marry Dora Greene never wavered once he had laid eyes on his bride-to-be.

"Grandpa was a real quiet grumpy German guy, according to most of the people in the family. But I never gave up on him and I was always interviewing him and asking him questions.

I found out early on that he loved horses and dogs, and so if I wanted grandpa to start talking I'd just ask him about his horses. He'd start telling me a horse story and pretty soon it was a people story.

And so one of the stories that I, excuse me, (Tony's voice wavers and breaks) I get kind of emotional about was how he met my grandma. And she was a Greene, which was actually Grüne in German but her family was like 3rd generation, so she was like 4th generation American. And so she kind of looked at him like this "white-haired Dutchman" immigrant.

But his story about their meeting was that he used to take horses, as a job for a young kid—a teenager—he would take horses from the lumber camps back to the farmers in Minnesota who had leased them to the lumber companies (in northwestern Wisconsin, near Joe's home in Turtle Lake). And so in the spring he was driving these big strings of horses through the woods and down the roads alongside the railroad tracks all the way over to Minnesota (maybe 80-100 miles).

One time he was debating whether he should take his money and buy a train ticket or if he should just hitchhike home with the teams or however he could get home the cheapest because he didn't have to rush back to Turtle Lake and he was kind of lollygagging around in Stillwater, Minnesota, which was a boom town.

And he walked by this opera house actually way down in Bayport which was the next town down river and there was an opera house there. And he heard these young ladies singing in the opera house so he walked in and he met the owner of the opera house, a guy named Dave Barker. And Dave said, "Those are my nieces, they aren't in the show, they're just young kids from up north, and my grandpa just kind of fell in love with one of them right there (finger graphic points to Dora). And so he wanted to get close to her but he couldn't.

So this Dave Barker offered him a deal; he said, "I'll let you have a free ticket tonight if you bring a lot of the other lumber guys with you. So grandpa thought that was a heck of a deal, so he went to all the bars (taverns) and tried to round up as many lumber guys as he could to get his free ticket. But none of those girls were around.

So he found out from Mr. Barker where the one was from, and he said out by a little town called Copus in Franconia Township. So grandpa looked at all the advertisements on the bulletin boards and in the paper for a farm job up in that area.

And he found one. So he moved up there (from Turtle Lake, Wisconsin) because that's where my grandma was from. And it took about three or four years before he finally even was able to meet her but he met her brothers who were older than she was and got to be good buddies with them. They played baseball together and eventually he went to a party, and, to make a long story short, my grandma's diary from that day says, "I went to this party Art Suko and every time we played any game or did any dance, when I sat down, there's this little white-haired Dutchman named "Manny Sofas". And that was Joe Minnichsoffer.

Three years later they were married. So that's the story. But it started with me asking him about the horses and then he was telling about bringing these horses back and so it was a fun story, very romantic.