

~~~ Soldier Carl ~~~



On the left, Tsar Alexander III, Emperor of Russia, King of Poland, and Grand Duke of Finland. He ruled from 1881 until his death in 1894.



On the right, Tsar Nicholas II, son of Alexander III, last Emperor of Russia, ruling from 1 November 1894 until his forced abdication on 15 March 1917.

Carl Geier - Soldier In Service to Tsar Nicholas II:

I) Did Carl Geier ever fight in combat?

No, but he came very close to it one time. For hundreds of years, dating back to the 16th century, conflicts broke out between the Russian and Turkish Empires. The Turkish Sultans desired to expand northward and westward while the Romanov Tsars wanted to gain land southward toward the Black and Caspian Seas. Four wars were fought between these two powers during the 1800's, the last of which occurred before the birth of Carl Geier. The most famous and bloody of these was known as the Crimean War in which the Turks were aided by the British and French. This was not the last time these two Western European nations interfered.

One day Grandpa Carl related this incident: His company were ordered to the railway station where they were joined by many more units. They boarded the trains and headed south, eventually arriving near the border between Russia and Turkey. Their commanders deployed and made them ready to attack. The order never came. Eventually, after an indeterminate number of days, they were ordered back onto the trains and returned to their bases in the north. Some time later Grandpa Carl learned about the diplomacy which ensued between the powers involved. The British and French, it seemed, influenced Tsar Nicholas II to remove his forces from the Turkish border.

## II) Army rations.

I'm not sure if all the fare issued to the common soldier was bad but one item certainly was. In fact, it was almost inedible. Each day they handed out to the men loaves of black bread, probably a kind of rye bread. It was so bland and awful tasting that when thrown away not even the hungry company dogs would eat it. Fortunately for Grandpa Carl he had a certain friend, a fellow German who was an officer and a married man. This kind person occasionally invited Carl home with him where he filled up on solid German home cooking.

## III) Carl Geier in big trouble:

"The state religion of the Russian Empire was that of the Russian Orthodox Christianity. Its head was the Tsar, who held the title of Supreme Defender of the Church." In many ways Russian Orthodoxy is very similar to Roman Catholicism, including its adoration of religious icons. These icons are typically paintings depicting holy people or places. Many of these are images of the holy saints. Every soldier was required to attend religious services and records were kept of those who failed to show.

One eventful Sunday, Carl and a soldier buddy chose not to attend services but loitered about the huge cathedral hallways, smoking as they perused the paintings that covered the walls. Now Carl would not confess who it was, him or his buddy or maybe both, but a cigarette was cruelly snuffed out on one of the icons, damaging it. I suppose it was a rash act done without thinking, but it was eventually discovered and irate church officials began an investigation who might be responsible. Checking the records they soon discovered that only Carl and his friend could not be accounted for during the time in question. So, it came as quite a surprise when an order arrived requesting their presence before a panel of church officials.

"Alright then, Carl, we know it was you who did damage the holy icon. You may as well confess and face your punishment." Carl began to think hard and fast how to answer. Then he remembered his religious upbringing which was not Russian Orthodox. He thought he had a way out of this mess but not 100 percent sure it would work. This is what he answered:

"You believe that these saints shown in these pictures are alive in heaven and you can pray to them?"

"Absolutely we believe that and we pray to them every day."

"Well then, you pray to them now and if they answer that I did this terrible thing, I am ready to lay down my life." Needless to say, after many confusing looks on the faces of the officials, the matter was dropped and Carl was free to go.

#### IV) Carl Geier is smitten:

One day, while on a leave of absence, Carl and a couple buddies were taking a leisurely stroll through the village when they came upon a group of young women in the village park. They stopped to chat with them and find out who they were. Carl was quite taken with one very lovely girl. She gave her name as Henrietta Mahler, the daughter of a Lutheran pastor. After a brief courtship, they were married in the summer of 1910. I do not know the exact date of their wedding, but the whole family gathered to celebrate their 50th anniversary one fine summer day in 1960.

#### V) Carl Geier ordered home:

About a year after arriving in North Dakota Carl received a telegram from the Russian Embassy in Washington demanding his immediate return. How did the Russians know of his whereabouts? Well, either they obtained this information from some US government agency, or Carl himself provided this information before leaving Russia. I believe the latter is true because Carl was still ostensibly in service to the Imperial Russian military. The other question is: What prompted this telegram in the first place?

In June of 1914 the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, heir to the throne of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and his wife, were assassinated while touring Sarajevo, Bosnia. This was the spark that ignited the beginning of the First World War, the 'war to end all wars'. It quickly expanded to become a global conflict. There were several factors that precipitated this tragedy, not least of which was the rise of nationalism throughout Europe.

Sources:

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_War\\_I](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_War_I)

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationalism>

Back to Carl Geier's dilemma. Turns out he had borrowed money from Farmer's State Bank in Heaton, a small town in Wells County, North Dakota. He took the telegram to the president of the bank to ask what he should do. The president, a Mr. Turner, took the telegram, tore it into several pieces, and tossed it into his pot-bellied stove (i.e. Carl, they can't make you go back).