

Rochus and Margaretha Rose Solga

Rochus Solga

b. 16 Aug 1860 (Szczedzik, Poland)
d. 7 May 1936 (Browerville, Minnesota)
m. 20 Jan 1885 (Strzedrzyk, Poland)

Margaretha Rose (Margaret)

Wawrzynek (Vavenarch)
b. 13 Jul 1863 (Szczedzick, Silesia, Prussia)
d. 21 Jul 1942



Rochus and Margaretha Solga¹
Date uncertain: approx 1920

Rochus and Margaretha grew up in Szczedzik, a small Polish community that was part of Prussia in the 1860s.² Szczedzik was about 8 miles from Oppeln. A German map (see appendix) shows Oppeln on the Oder River in Silesia near Breslau which was 200 miles north of Bratislava. Rochus and Margaretha attended German schools and spoke German in public, but Polish in the home. After their marriage in 1885, Rochus and Margaretha immigrated to the United States (16 Apr 1886). Margaretha is assumed to have been pregnant with Andrew at the time they crossed the Atlantic Ocean, (he was born seven months later, 18 Nov 1886). Joan (Solga) Rutherford notes that Rochus and Margaretha probably came up the Hudson River to the Erie Canal, then by rail to the Mississippi, and horse and buggy from Minneapolis to Waverly, Minnesota.

¹ Solga: Szolga means “retainer” (servant) in Hungarian. (Pronounced “shh olga”.)

² Prussia: The Kingdom of Prussia dominated northern Germany politically, economically and in terms of population, and was the core of the unified Northern German Confederation formed in 1867 which became part of the German Empire in 1871. See appendix for brief political history of Poland in the 1800s.



Rochus SOLGA
 b. 16 Aug 1860, Szedzick, POLAND
 d. 7 May 1936, Browerville, Todd County, Minnesota

Margaretha Rose WAWRZYNEK (VAVENARCH)
 b. 13 Jul 1863, Szedzick, SILESIA (PRUSSIA)
 d. 10 Jul 1942 Browerville, Minnesota

Andrew Albert SOLGA
 b. 18 Nov 1886, Waverly, Minnesota
 d. 19 Nov 1958, Minot, North Dakota

Anthony Theodore (Tony) SOLGA
 b. 17 Jan 1889, Waverly, Minnesota
 d. 2 Dec 1975, Rugby, North Dakota

Frances (Francis) SOLGA
 b. 29 Sep 1890, Browerville, Minnesota
 d. 17 Mar 1955

Sophia (Sophie) SOLGA
 b. 4 May 1892, Browerville, Minnesota
 d. Sep 1970, Chicago, Illinois

John Anthony SOLGA
 b. 26 Dec 1894, Browerville, Minnesota
 d. 25 Jul 1965

Gertrude Leone SOLGA
 b. 17 Mar 1897, Browerville, Minnesota
 d. 1 Dec 1976, Crosslake, Minnesota

Henry Edward (Harry) SOLGA
 b. 29 Mar 1899, Browerville, Minnesota
 d. 9 Feb 1986, Ah Gwah Ching, Minnesota

Frank SOLGA
 b. 10 May 1903, Browerville, Minnesota
 d. 8 Jan 1965, Browerville, Minnesota

Agnes SOLGA
 b. 25 Jan 1905, Browerville, Minnesota
 d. May 1974, Chicago, Illinois

Note: Rochus' obituary 5.14.1936 'The Todd County Press' notes a 10th child who died in infancy (1887?).

Rochus and Margaretha

During their initial years in the States (1886-1890), Rochus worked as a farmhand in Waverly, Minnesota in Wright County. Andrew and Tony were born during this time. Rochus' obituary mentions another child who died in infancy in 1887.³ On 15 Nov 1890 they moved northwest, purchasing land in Todd County, Iona Township, where they farmed for over thirty years before moving into the town of Browerville.⁴ Why they left the Waverly area is not precisely known, but it is possible that the Browerville area was attractive due to its growing population of others with Polish heritage. The Polish-Catholic church⁵ in Browerville was quite impressive, built in 1909. Rochus and Margaret were very involved: members of Sacred Heart, Rosary, and St. Joseph Societies, and the Third Society Order of St. Francis.

³ Polish Immigrants: According to Thaddeus Radzilowski, professor of history at Southwest State University in Minnesota "Only a small number – less than 10 percent – of the several million Polish rural immigrants who arrived and stayed in the United States after the Civil War ended up as farmers. When they first came, almost all Polish immigrants went to work in coal mines, steel mines, packing houses, and auto factories. It wasn't land that they sought here; they wanted to make enough money as quickly as possible to buy a farm or save the existing family farm back in the old country. About 35 percent went back to their villages on the Polish plain-some disappointed many successful. The rest remained in the United States because they found the new life in America more attractive than the old one or because war, changed circumstances at home..." www.worldandi.com article #17518 "Polish Americans in Wilno: 'Out on the Wing'"

⁴ Browerville: The present City of Browerville was legally established on Feb 8, 1884, as a village. However, the origins of the city began much earlier, back to about 1865 when the John Bassett family settled in the area. The original location of the city was approximately three miles north of the present location on the Long Prairie River. A landmark location today would be the "Hartford Bridge." In 1882 J. V. Brower, for whom Browerville is named, platted the site of Browerville on a location next to the Great Northern Railroad line, and the current location of Browerville was established. By 1890 Browerville had a population of 86. On July 16, 1954, the electors of the City of Browerville voted to become a Home Rule Charter City thus terminating the "village" status. The community has a strong German and Polish ethnic history. The original Catholic Church, St. Joseph's, was established in 1882. By 1895, St. Peter's Catholic Church was already established to provide worship for the German members of the community. <http://browerville.govoffice.com>

Novel: LaVyrle Spencer's book "Then Came Heaven" (c.1997) is set in Browerville in the 1950s and provides a good description of town.

⁵ Catholic Church: Added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1985. With its unique "onion" towers, Christ the King Catholic church, earlier known as St. Joseph's Catholic Church, on Browerville's main street is one of the most beautiful Catholic churches to be found anywhere! It was built by German and Polish immigrants of the area. The two nationalities had a dispute over money; leading to the German families building their own church, St. Peter's Catholic Church, a few blocks east of the "Polish church". As the numbers of parishioners dwindled, the two congregations once more joined together as Christ the King. St. Peter's was demolished and its parochial school became what is presently known as the Thread Shed I. (History of Todd County, www.co.todd.mn.us/toddcounty 2/12/2003)

St. Joseph Church in Browerville



Photo taken in 2003 by Joan (Solga) Rutherford

Rochus and Margaretha's Farm Outside of Browerville

A farm in those days was self-sufficient for the family: garden, chickens, pigs to slaughter. Dick recalls his mother saying that it would take Rochus a full day's journey to bring grain to the nearest mill. Dick doesn't remember much about the farm as he was a young child during those years.



Family Photograph 1910-12

Dick's memories of his Grandpa are few. He recalls one visit to the farm, when he was probably four years old, walking along with Rochus to the mail box. Rochus spoke Polish, little 'Richie' spoke English – so the walk was a quiet one.

Dick remembers that his Grandma had a washing machine (gyrator) out on the back porch. It consisted of a tub of water and a basket with a handle on a pivot. Clothes were put into the basket which was then hand-gyrated by working the handle. As a small boy, Dick remembers that it was difficult to start the basket moving, but once it got going momentum made it easier.



Browerville Farm
Photos taken by Beth Solga

Dick recalls his Grandmother as a forceful woman; very bossy with her daughters, sharp of tongue. Dick remembers one day on the farm following her into the chicken coop where Margaretha grabbed a bird, carried it to the side yard, and then proceeded to whack off its head. Dick, stunned, watched the bird flop all over the yard. As a city boy, he decided to stay clear of his grandma.



Margaretha and Rochus with Family

In 1927 Rochus and Margaretha sold the farm and moved into town. Dick reports that deeds to farm property and other land were in grandmother's name. The Todd county History Book (according to Karen Gess) states that they moved in 1928 to the village of Browerville, leaving Harry to operate the farm, and that Rochus suffered a stroke of paralysis in 1928.

Rochus and Margaretha's Home in the Town of Browerville

Dick describes it as a nice house with a parlor in the front, dining room in back, (yet he recalls that they always ate in the kitchen), and a stairway to the second floor. Dick remembers sleeping upstairs, vividly recalling the odor of moth balls and a feather tick mattress with feather tick cover; he loved the 'cloud nine' feel of the bed.



Browerville House

Photo taken by Dick in 1980

Dick knows that over the years his family made many trips to Browerville. They'd take the train to Fargo then catch a branch train. Once his grandparents moved into Browerville the train depot was only a half a block from their home. They'd stay for five or six days seeing lots of family (including his mother's Opelia family). A highlight for a small town day was to go down and watch the train come in. Dick also recalls summers in the city park when movies would show against the side of a building. Again, a new experience for a city kid who was use to indoor theaters.



Margaretha, Rochus and Family

Dick recalls that Rochus was noted for his mathematical ability to view something and tell the volume of it. For example he'd be asked to estimate the amount of dirt needed to fill a depression for a road to be build (a civil engineer of sorts). Rochus received citizenship 30 Mar 1897 in the 7th Judicial District of Minnesota. (Records record his name as "Roch Salgo".)



***Andrew, Harry, Frank, Sophie, Agnes, Frances, John, and Tony
Margaretha and Rochus***

Possibly taken: January 1935 when their 50th wedding anniversary was honored with a special mass observed at St. Joseph's church in Browerville.



*Tony, John, Andrew, Harry, and Frank
Date uncertain: approx 1935*

Dick remembers the family going back for the funeral after Rochus passed away. He died of myocardial failure after a seven year illness. The funeral was held at St. Joseph's Catholic Church and internment was in the St. Joseph's cemetery. Dick recalls the church bells ringing once for every age of Rochus' life. Dick describes the men of the family as old country, and thus for the wake they sat up all night with the body in the other room for viewing. (Dick describes it as an opportunity for the men to get drunk.) Dick remembers hiding with Cousin Raymond under some table and listening to the bravado of all the men. He remembers his father pontificating about peanuts ... an uncle was saying something about peanuts being fattening, but Andrew said it took as much energy to digest them as the calories they gave.



May 7, 1936

Family Photos Taken in 1936 at Funeral for Rochus Solga



Sophia, Frank, Frances, Tony, Margaretha, John, Gertrude, Harry, Agnes, and Andrew



Mother to Nine



*Andrew, Tony, Frances, Sophia, John, Gertrude, Harry, Frank, and Agnes
Oldest to Youngest*



Sophia, Gertrude, Frances, and Agnes with Margaretha

During the late 1930s Dick remembers several trips when he drove his father back to Browerville.

Margaret passed away just days after her 79th birthday of carcinoma.

Solga Plot at St. Joseph (Evergreen) Cemetery, Browerville, Minnesota

(End of 11th row, on right side of the arch.)



Photo taken by Joan (Solga) Rutherford 2003



Photo taken by Dick Solga 1980

Individual Stones

Mother Margaret
1863-1942

Father Rochus
1860-1936



Gertrude L. Solga
1897-1976

Sophia Solga
1892-1970

Photos taken by Joan (Solga) Rutherford 2003

Rochus: Father: John Szolga
 Brother married woman from Czechoslovakia
 Brother moved to Alaska
 Sister: Frances Solga (died of heat stroke while in the hay field, age 10)

Margaretha: Parents: John and Mary Wawiziniak
 Sisters: two mentioned in obituary

Names on US Census: 1900 Rachos Solga
 1910 Rohne Solga
 1920 Popus or Pohus Solga
 1930 Salga

Roch Salgo US Citizenship 7th Judicial District for State of Minnesota, 30 Mar 1897