

**Zeisset Reunion Memorial Service at Leonardville United Methodist Cemetery  
August 8, 2010**

Joshua 4:1a, 4-7 (NRSV)

When the entire nation had finished crossing over the Jordan, ... Joshua summoned the twelve men from the Israelites, whom he had appointed, one from each tribe. Joshua said to them, "...Each of you take up a stone on his shoulder, one for each of the tribes of the Israelites, so that this may be a sign among you. When your children ask in time to come, 'What do those stones mean to you?' then you shall tell them that the waters of the Jordan were cut off in front of the ark of the covenant of the Lord. ... So these stones shall be to the Israelites a memorial forever."

Memorial. A reminder to remember.

What memories do we keep? What are our reminders to remember?

As we stand beside the gravestone of Peter and Lena Baer, we are reminded that six Zeisset immigrant sisters and brothers came to Kansas in the 1880s and early 1890s with the help of their Baer second cousins. We might say, the sisters and brothers founded six tribes of Zeissets. They brought little with them except their memories, some of which they would have preferred to forget. But there were also memories to keep. What reminded them of their memories?

Louise brought with her an autograph book with poems, sayings, and signatures of family members. The autograph book must have been important to her, for not only did she keep it throughout her life, but her Swart descendants continue to keep it. It is a reminder of memories of Louise, of her life, history, values, hopes, dreams, and the heritage she passed on to her descendants.

Henry brought a featherbed. What memories did it evoke for him that he kept it all his life?

Memories—both the good and the painful ones—connect us to the heritage of our past and can show the way for the future.

For thousands of years people have set up stones as reminders to remember. The stones were meant to prompt the question, "What do these stones mean?" They were meant to prompt the telling of family stories about grandparents and great-grandparents, and the many generations before that. The stones were meant to connect the present generation to their heritage, and to remind people to pass on that heritage to future generations.

This weekend of the Zeisset reunion is a reminder to remember. We come to cemeteries where there are stones that remind us to remember the heritage we have from our immigrant forebears. We remember the stories of their lives and of the lives of the family before them. The stones remind us to pass on the stories to our children and grandchildren. The stones remind us to remember the memories.

What do these stones mean? The stone with the names of Peter and Lena Baer is a reminder to remember the story of the relationship between the Baers and the Zeissets.

*Following Carolyn Zeisset's presentation of the preceding meditation, Loretta Hoerman explained how it was that the memorial service was being held beside the graves of Lena and Peter Baer.*

Lena Baer was the daughter of Matthäus Baer and Magdalena Zeisset. She was born in 1842 at Niedersteinach, a first cousin of Jakob Zeisset who was the father of our six immigrant Zeissets. She was born on the farm in Germany where Bettie and Henry Zeisset eventually lived. She was married to Peter Baer.

The Baers were most likely the reason our six immigrant Zeissets came to America. They were of the same generation as the parents of our six Zeisset immigrants. Peter and Lena Baer lived on an estate in Germany just north of Lake Constance. Peter Baer came to America in 1880 with his wife Lena's brother, Henry Baer. The two men came immediately to Kansas and settled first at Alida. Lena Baer and her children came to America in 1884 with her sister Anna Baer, who was married to David Bletscher. Henry Baer remained at Alida, while Peter moved to Leonardville in 1885, just before Bertha and Bettie Zeisset came to America. Bettie lived with the Peter Baer family for some time. Lena Baer died in 1899 and Peter died less than a year later in 1900.

Their stone is one of the few stones in the Leonardville United Methodist Cemetery which is in German.

*The memorial service concluded with Loretta's saying the Lord's Prayer (Vater Unser) in German.*