

## Frank Chenoweth Family Moves to North Dakota

Some of you may remember that I did a column more than three years ago about the gorgeous house that Frank Chenoweth had built in 1889; it still stands on the southeast corner of 10th Street and 20th Avenue. Frank was Arabut Ludlow's nephew and left Monroe, and his established business here, to explore the west with his wife and son, Chester. They loaded two railroad cars of goods and left on October 10, 1905. They were living in a sod house, with their goods in sheds, until a large stone house could be built. We'll learn the "rest of the story" today and in the column next week.

A letter from Chenoweth, shared in the Monroe Evening Times on November 3, said that they were comfortably situated on their Sand Creek, Billings County, North Dakota ranch with eight horses, a colt, and seven cows. Chenoweth helped care for the stock and milked three of the cows. He expected to buy a large drove of cattle for which he had invested in 160 tons of hay for the winter. The foundation for their stone house had been completed, but the house would not be finished for the winter. They were 40 miles from the nearest railroad and more than two miles from their nearest neighbor.

In another letter, dated January 13, 1906, he shared that they just couldn't get sick of the climate, not having seen a cold day yet. He and his partners had already acquired 3,200 acres with more coming. He owned 50 head of white-faced cattle, seven work horses, and three ponies. They had taken three teams 55 miles to Dickinson to transport lumber and barbed wire. They expected another 250 settlers to arrive in March. He was "well satisfied and have lots of friends here and we have no desire to go back to Monroe to live."

Grace Chenoweth, Monroe, a niece of the Chenoweth received a letter from her aunt on March 21 that their home and all of the contents had been consumed by fire on Tuesday morning, on the coldest day of the winter. They then moved into a 12-foot by 12-foot shanty and were "getting along the best they could." The only clothing they had was what they had been wearing. Their first night in the shanty was freezing cold; "they felt lucky to be able to live through it." The Chenoweths had been content in their new home and were making plans for the spring before the fire. At this time, their only plans were to provide "for immediate comfort and absolute needs."

The fire started in the dining room while Mrs. Chenoweth and her nephew were fixing breakfast; Frank and the hired man were in the barn. They ran with water, but the fire spread too quickly to do anything. "The wind was blowing a fierce gale at the time, which caused the fire to burn so quickly." Mrs. Chenoweth froze her feet, ears, and the fingers on her left hand. All of the beautiful tapestries that she painted, a large library, all their winter clothing, bedding linens, and most everything of value was destroyed. Her trunk was saved; it contained her best clothes except for her party gowns which had been stored in a shed. But those were not the clothes that she needed at the time. Their piano and player, a lounge, four chairs and a table were saved. The loss was estimated at \$2,000, quite a sum at that time. Chester had gone to Chicago four weeks earlier and remained there.

Grace made the trip to visit her uncle and family in May, returning on May 31. She reported that the family was "quite comfortably situated for the summer and expect to have a new house ready for winter." She said they are much attached to the country; Grace liked it immensely and would have liked to live there. It had been rainy and she had to make the 41-mile drive to the railroad station in the rain.

As evidenced by a message from Frank that appeared in the Times on July 5 promoting that area to the readers, the fire had not deterred his enthusiasm. I wasn't sure as I was reading the papers if he was just encouraging the Green County residents to invest or if he would make some money. "I wish to call the attention of Green county people to a profitable investment they can make in this section of the state, called the 'Missouri Slope country.' This rich and productive soil is a deep black loam. I talked with one farmer who, for twelve years, had in succession 300 acres of wheat that never failed to go less than 28



The Frank Chenoweth family had some bad luck while living in North Dakota as evidenced by these headlines from the March 22, 1906 issue of the Monroe Evening Times.

bushels, and some years more. This land was never fertilized. The country is underlaid with Lignite coal. All that is necessary is to scrape off a few feet of dirt and get what coal you wish or you can buy it for 90 cents a ton. There is plenty of homestead land yet. If any of you get interested come up and see for yourself. Let me hear on what Tuesday you will start and I can meet you at Belfield and drive you over the land.”

We’ll learn more next week about Chenoweth’s big deal and how his life changed with yet another major move.