

## Simeon's First Year in Kansas

Simeon Swartz and his wife, Sarah, brought their family from Woodford County, Illinois to Kansas in 1874. Simeon was a minister. They headed into Kansas which was known as a dangerous place.

A few months after they got to Rice County, they had already had many ups and downs in their life on the prairie. They had a baby that summer but it had died nine days later. A good corn crop had disappeared in three days when a huge cloud of grasshoppers devoured it on their way across Kansas. They still didn't have a house and were living in a tent made of the cover of the wagon.

In the weeks that followed these disasters, Simeon and Sarah were heart-broken and their family and their neighbors were hungry! Simeon focused on his work. After an entire week of thinking about what he should do, a mysterious thought came to him and settled in his mind. He felt that he should dig a cave in a hillside on their land. The idea wouldn't go away. It grew stronger and stronger until he decided it was the right thing to do.

He and his family dug the ten by twenty foot cave, while neighbors and friends watched and questioned them. "What do you expect to do with a cave?" they asked. The only reply Simeon had for them was, "I might need it sometime." It made them feel better to be doing something they believed in during this time and before long, they felt much better and able to face the future. They now had hope that everything would work out for the best.

The cave was finished in September, and stocked with what food they still had. Between rainstorms, Simeon and his neighbors built the Swartz family a sod house. The settlers got the soil ready for a crop of wheat. Their food supply was running very low. In October, the men in the surrounding area set off to hunt buffalo down in Oklahoma. They were hoping to replace the food that the grasshoppers had devoured. The men returned home four weeks later, in time to celebrate the holidays with their families. They brought buffalo meat back with them. During the trip, one man was accidentally shot in the arm and two horses died when they were poisoned by bad water in a stream.

On January 8, 1875, the weather turned very cold. At twenty degrees below zero, it was colder than any other time Simeon experienced in the many years since that bitter night. Along with the frigid air came snow in blizzard amounts. Sometime during the night, the raging wind carried the roof of the sod house up and away, leaving the family exposed to the icy snow. It was their fourteen year-old son, Charley, who snapped them out of the shock and dismay at their situation by yelling for everyone to run for the cave.

The blizzard raged on for three days and nights. For the next three weeks of that cold January in 1875, the cave was their home. There was dried buffalo meat and a crock of corn mush, that Sarah had prepared the night before the storm. That satisfied their hunger. Simeon and his family made several trips back to the sod house to search for things that they needed. It meant digging through five feet of snow that had settled into the four walls of their home. Digging out the cook stove allowed them some hot water and warm food cooked in front of the cave, under the open sky. They waited for the weather to clear.

It was nearly February, that winter, before the snow cleared enough for neighbors to help Simeon replace the roof on their soddy. The Swartz family thanked God that they had the idea to dig the cave the summer before even with all the questions and doubts of their neighbors.

## CHILDREN OF SIMEON AND SARAH SWARTZ

Mary Catherine Swartz was born October 7, 1857, in Liberty township, Fairfield county, Ohio.

Emma Sophia Swartz was born January 9, 1859> at Bettsville , Sandusky county, Ohio.

Charles Wesley Swartz was born March 23, 1860, at Logansville , Logan county, Ohio.

William Lincoln Swartz was born March 6, 1862, in York township, Fulton county, Ohio.

Daniel Bruff Swartz was born November 26, 1863, in Liberty township, Hancock county, Ohio.

Ira Swartz, born in a canvas shelter July 4, 1874, in Farmer township, Rice county, Kansas. Lived nine days.

Dwight Lyman Roy S. was born October 30, 1875, in Farmer township, Rice aunty, Kansas.

Orvo Merrill Swartz was born November 10, 1878, In Farmer township, Rice county, Kansas.

Sod house from Sept. 1874 to Oct. 1879.