

Mrs. E. F. Sell, National Bank President

By Karl Sanford Kabelac

EMILIE SCHRAMM WAS BORN ON MARCH 4, 1864, ON THE SCHRAMM farm in Brown County, Minnesota. On November 3, 1884, she married Emil F. Sell, a native of Germany who had come with his family as a child in 1869 to Renville County, Minnesota. He became a successful merchant and banker and founding president of The First National Bank of Fairfax, Minnesota (charter #9771) in 1910.

Fairfax, today a community of some 1,300 residents in Renville County, is in the agricultural area of south central Minnesota.

Emil F. Sell died after a short illness on January 9, 1915 and his widow, Emilie, succeeded him as president of the bank. She was to serve in that capacity for 37 years, until 1952.

One of their four daughters Gertrude Olga was the wife of William A. Fiss. They were married in 1910, the same year Fiss became the first cashier of The First National Bank of Fairfax. With his passing in May 1922, Harvey O. Fullerton, the assistant cashier, became cashier for a few years until 1925/26 when Gertrude O. Fiss

Mr. and Mrs. Emil F. Sell. He was president of the bank from its founding in 1910 until his death in 1915. Mrs. Sell succeeded him and served as president until 1952.





Series 1929 Type 1 note on the bank. For some reason lost to history, the note does not bear the facsimile signature of Mrs. E. F. Sell, the president, but rather Albert G. Briese, who was actually the vice-president. The cashier, Gertrude O. Fiss, was the daughter of Mrs. Sell. (Courtesy Higgins Museum)

assumed that position. In order for Mrs. Fiss to be able, with three young children, to assume that role, her mother Mrs. Sell became her housekeeper.

Mrs. Sell died at the age of 93 on June 3, 1957. Her obituary noted she was "quiet, unassuming, gentle, wise, untiring [and] thoughtful" and had played an important part in community life in Fairfax since her marriage in 1884. She was survived by her four daughters, seven grandchildren, and seven great grandchildren.

The First National Bank of Fairfax continues to serve the community, having celebrated its centennial in 2010.

Sources and acknowledgements

Two local histories have been useful in this account. They are Franklyn Curtiss-Wedge, *The History of Renville County Minnesota*, Chicago (1916), volume 2, pages 707-711 for an account of the bank and biographical sketches of Emil F. Sell, William A. Fiss and Albert G. Briese; and *Fairfax Centennial, 1882-1982* (1982), pages 45-47 for an account of Emil F. Sell and his family and pages 225-226 for a history of the bank. An obituary for William A. Fiss is found in the *Fairfax Standard* for May 11, 1922, and for Emilie A. Sell in the issue of June 6, 1957. The assistance of Mary Lou Smith of the Renville County Genealogical Society is gratefully acknowledged. ❖

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