

Author's Note

A few years later I looked through the yellow spiral notebook and began writing about the tragedy. I searched for Mr. Steinman in Colorado to ask questions, but learned from his wife Marie that he had died in 1999. Soon after Mr. Steinman's death, Marie destroyed the draft memoir I saw on the train. She said it would cause the affected families too much anguish if it were published.

I couldn't remember many of the details, so I assembled parts that were missing during interviews with several members of the Steinman and Hansen families in Iowa and by reading historical accounts of the tragedy in local newspapers. I visited the Cow Creek area near Hillview, where both the families lived, and walked across some of the fields that are mentioned in this book. The buildings of both farms are long gone and the locations of roads have been changed.

I interviewed Paul Steinman's younger sister Gertrude in Hillview; she was convinced that her uncle Damien was murdered. None of the newspaper articles I read made this suggestion and the coroner's report listed his death as suicide. Her conclusion added an unexpected twist to the story.

This is a fictional novel based on the short period of time from early December of 1918 to late July of 1919. It includes parts of the story Mr. Steinman told on the train. I wrote it first as an historical novel, but so much is not known about what really happened during those fateful months that the first draft was more fiction than nonfiction. Furthermore, I could not publish the novel

SHADOWS IN THE LOESS HILLS

as first written because I agree with Paul Steinman's wife Marie that it might offend, or in some way harm, the affected families. Therefore, I changed the time interval, characters' names and identities of several towns.