The Blue River Valley lies north of Manhattan, Kansas. Many residents of the valley trace their heritage back to 1847 when Germany immigrants homesteaded. These energetic farmers plowed the fertile soil, grazed cattle, and built homes for their families. The population of the valley increased in the early 1860s when the U. S. government gave the Kansas Pacific Railway a grant of five million acres to encourage the building of a railroad across the state. In turn the railroad sold land to settlers who would eventually ship their produce to market by rail.

The valley soon included Swedish immigrants. In 1855 John A. Johnson, the first Swede to settle in Kansas, began farming in an area called Mariadahl. By 1866 several more Swedish settlers had arrived. Mr. Johnson donated land for the building of the first Swedish Lutheran Church west of the Missouri River. The grounds also included a home for orphaned children and the community cemetery.

The proposal of Tuttle Creek Dam greatly affected the members of the church. In 1951 Reverend C. G. Bloomquist wrote: “The disastrous flood of last summer, from which many of our members suffered financially in a distressing degree, brought renewed agitation for Tuttle Creek Dam. It has caused and still is causing us grave concern. Its construction, according to the plans of Army Engineers, would practically obliterate both church, the Home, and our church constituency. Our membership has been on the front line fighting valiantly with a host of others in this whole watershed for a far better method of controlling the excess water flow. The battle is by no means won. We hope and pray that a flood control and soil conservation program will be devised which will preserve for us and our children that which we rightfully value so highly and thus save from disintegration this Lutheran Christian community.”

Due to efforts of the Blue Valley residents, funding for the building of Tuttle Creek was delayed. In 1957 the threat was once again knocking at their door. Mariadahl Pastor Gustafson wrote, “We again walk in perilous times. It would seem that those outside our area would send us to a watery grave. We are again challenged as work is resumed on the controversial site of Tuttle Creek Dam. . . . Should water rest in this place a few years from now—shall it cause disbelief in a man’s heart and hatred in his bones?”
Carnahan family farm dating from 1855.

Many of the families in the Blue River Valley had farmed there for years. One of these was the Samuel Carnahan family, which settled in the valley in 1855 near the town of Garrison. The 1887 Evert’s Kansas Atlas featured this prosperous farm owned by Samuel’s son, Pollard.

Generations of Carnahans continued to farm the land in the Blue Valley until the building of the dam and reservoir. In 1950 Quentin Carnahan, great great grandson of Samuel, like many other sons and daughters of the valley graduated from Kansas State University. Quentin, along with many others, returned to the family farm. Shortly thereafter he was drafted by the U. S. Army. He became a member of the 25th Infantry fighting in the Korean War. In an interview conducted by The K-Stater, October 1952, Quentin’s father Herbert asked: “What will he [Quentin] say when he comes home and finds out that while he fought for his country they moved his family off their land?”