

PIONEER LIFE IN NEBRASKA PAMPHLETS

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Rudolph Umland, State Supervisor

Florence M. Poast, Editor

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Addison E. Sheldon, Superintendent

WE SETTLED THE PLAINS

SERIES ONE

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Each year the number of Nebraska pioneers is growing smaller. The purpose of this series of pamphlets is to preserve some of the stories of the men and women still living who helped settle Nebraska. These stories will be presented as they are told to the interviewers employed on the Nebraska Writers' Project. Appreciation is expressed to the various local, county and State agencies which have made this work possible.

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INTERVIEW WITH CORA A. BEELS (NORFOLK)

Date: August 27, 1941

Interviewer: Wolfgang Schmidt

To turn thoughts backward almost three-quarters of a century is to realize the great advance that has taken place in this community during these eventful years.

The blood of pioneers flows in my veins. My forebears came from England to Massachusetts, then trekked to the wilds that later became the State of New York. Again the spirit of adventure urged them on to Ohio. Still later, they were found in the wilds of Indiana where I was born, September 15, 1857, and where my recollections begin. Later the prairies of Iowa beckoned, and again the plains of Nebraska where the wandering ceased and where for 67 years my home was

Norfolk.

In the spring of 1874 after the great fire in Independence, Iowa, in which my father was a heavy loser, he started out in a spring wagon drawn by a team of ponies to search for a new location. Destiny must have led him to Norfolk as there did not seem any special reason for his stopping there.

On the first day of July 1874, my mother, two young brothers, sister and myself, went by train to Sioux City, Iowa. From there we went down the muddy Missouri to Missouri Valley, getting stuck for several hours on a sand bar under the broiling heat of a July sun.

At Missouri Valley we again boarded a train which took us to Wisner, Nebraska, then the terminus of the railroad. Here my father met us and early on the morning of the third of July we started in a lumber wagon for the long drive to Norfolk. We had nothing to shelter us from the hot sun; my younger brother, a baby in his mother's arms, was desperately ill with cholera infantum, and it seemed as if he might pass away at any time. A few miles out of Wisner a tire came off of one of the wagon wheels, and all the rest of the way my father walked beside that wheel keeping the tire pounded on with a stick. So our progress was very slow and with every added mile the spirit of our gentle mother sank still lower.

It was nearly dark when we reached the little shack on the hills across from the present Dr. Verges' stock farm, where we were to stay till father finished building a house in town. This Verges farm was then owned by a man named Lambert, and we had to bring all the water we used from his well.

All the long way from Wisner, my pioneer spirit had gloried in the wide views; the glorious symphony of green and yellow furnished by the waving prairie-grass and untold acres of glowing sunflowers.

The town was a tiny hamlet, clustered around the mill. How easy it is to recall the names of those pioneers of long ago. The finances of the town were controlled largely by the English-speaking people; of the muscle and brawn by the Germans, of the two companies of Germans who had come from Watertown, Wisconsin, beginning with 1866, and who had settled on the surrounding hills and in the valleys. The stores were kept by Messrs. J. E. Olney, Hayes and McClary, Schefferger and Pilger. Mr. Moldenhauer had a small shoeshop in the front of his home, where he repaired the community shoes. Colonel Mathewson and his son, C.P. Mathewson, had the post office and bank. Dr. Daniels had a drug and seed store. Mr. Hurford had charge of the drugs in the Olney store. Dr. Behr had an office and Mr. Hermann Gerecke a brickyard. This comprised the town and its outskirts.

The St. Paul Lutheran Church had a log structure at its present location, and the minister, Rev. Heckendorf, conducted religious services on Sunday, and during the week taught school in German in the forenoon; Mrs. Mary Kidder, wife of the Congregational Minister who had homesteaded a claim nearby, taught English school in the afternoons.

The first services of the Congregational Church were held in the home of Colonel Mathewson.

Tradition says that the worshippers carried their chairs with them and carried them back again when they returned home.

On the morning of July Fourth that year, 1874, the prospect for a bountiful harvest was fine, and all were rejoicing. But before noon the great grasshopper invasion had fallen. This is almost impossible to vision. The swarm of insects seemed miles in thickness as we looked up through them toward the sun. So dense were they that they were like clouds darkening the air. One could stand by the side of a field and hear them threatening. On the potato vines they would eat downward, and when they came to a potato bug would calmly kick it and go on their devastating way.

At sundown we were obliged to close the houses as tightly as possible, in spite of the heat, as they covered the house from the ground to the roof and would have filled it if there had been any openings. The oil from their bodies when crushed on the rails would stop the trains from running. What a scene of desolation met the eye when the hordes took their leave.

The little house in which we passed the summer was a board shack of one room with a loft above. There was one window in the south, one in the north, and a door in the east. Our kitchen was a large dry goods box, set on end before the door, where the cooking was done on a gasoline stove.

Late one evening the Methodist Episcopal Presiding Elder came and wanted to stay all night. Mother said that we had no place for him, but he said to give him a pillow and a blanket and he would find a place to sleep. We did so, and he slept with his head in the kitchen and his feet on the doorstep. How primitive it all was!

In the fall, we moved to town to the house father had built at the corner of Madison Avenue and Second Street. This house now is on the north side of Braasch Avenue.

That fall I taught school across the river southeast of Stanton, in the Lowry neighborhood. My bed was a straw tick laid on the floor, in a room with only the weatherboards between me and the wintry winds. It was a mile-and-a-half walk to my schoolhouse, where I built my own fires, and taught about 20 pupils. It was nothing unusual to look out from the door or windows and see Indians stalking by.

In the spring I taught in the Best schoolhouse, now called the Born schoolhouse. That fall, 1875, I went to Cornell College, Mt. Vernon, Iowa; the first one from Norfolk to go away to college. The money earned by teaching took me through that college year, and then I returned home to earn more money.

In the fall of '74 the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in my father's home with seven charter members, of whom I am the only one now living. In the meantime my father had been appointed a local Methodist Episcopal preacher. On Sunday he preached in the morning at Maple Grove, in Alberry and Cunningham neighborhood, and in the afternoon at the Best schoolhouse. I always went along to play the little reed organ for the singing. We always had Sunday dinner at the home of Captain John Craig who lived south of the schoolhouse, perhaps a mile and a half. The alternate Sunday we went to Plum Creek valley, north of Pilger, to the Vail

neighborhood, and in the afternoon father preached at Norfolk.

The little Congregational Church was very hospitable to other denominations. In the morning they had their own Sunday School and services, where Mr. Hurford directed, and later here I played for the choir for some time. The choir consisted of Mr. Hurford, his two daughters, and a man whose name I have forgotten.

In the meantime I had started my music-teaching career. The present Dr. Verges was one of my first pupils. I had a round circuit of about twenty miles in the country, which I covered on horseback, among others the George Williams, Sam Mather, John Craig and John O'Bannion families.

In the meantime, I had taken up a timber claim (it is on this land that Bradford Crane now lives); raised beans and chickens until I had accumulated sufficient funds for another year at College. It took me ten years to complete my college education in this fashion.

One can but admire the courage of these early settlers. Nothing daunted them; blizzards, cyclones, grasshoppers, Indians, prairie fires were all taken in their stride--and taken with a smile and chins up.

The climate has so completely changed that it cannot be compared to that of those early days. In the winter the storms would come roaring down from the north and northwest; the wind blowing with fierce velocity, grinding the snow to a fine powder; the temperature would drop to 35 and 40 below, and Oh, how cold it was! For three or four days we would be storm-bound, and then the weather would begin to change. We were more fortunate than many as we had a hard-coal burner to keep us warm.

The coal for this burner cost 30 dollars a ton, and father hauled it from Wisner.

In the summer, after days of excessive heat, ominous black clouds would roll up from the northwest; the vivid flashes of lightning and deafening peals of thunder were terrifying to the timid. These peals of thunder would sound like cannon balls rolling along the roofs and on the ground. I never heard such thunder before or since. The wind would come sweeping from the wide plains of the Dakotas, and, gaining added momentum with every mile, tear down with devastating energy upon this defenseless region, many times reaching cyclonic proportions.

Relations with the Indians were friendly. There was always an apprehensive feeling, however, both spring and fall, when the Indians camped several hundred strong along the Elkhorn, near where the 13th Street bridge is now located,--and there were perhaps fifty of us in the little village of Norfolk! They were great beggars, and we never refused them anything they asked for. One day an old chief came to our door begging for something to eat. I had just finished baking a jar full of ginger cookies. I poured them into his blanket. He then sat down by the side of the house and did not get up till he had finished the last cookie.

Prairie fires were a great menace--and a grand sight! I recall one from the northwest that we watched for three days and nights. The men constantly prevented wider and wider fire by plowing breaks, and burning the grass between them. The sight of it was awe-inspiring, but it

burned itself out before it reached us. I have seen them come from the south and jump the Elkhorn River. One such fire came as near to us as what is now Phillip Avenue, and we women helped fight it with brooms and pails of water.

June floods were a constant menace in the Norfolk valley. Shocks of grain would come floating down; the water would be in houses above baseboards; boats would be going on Main Street as far west as Fourth or Fifth Streets. This menace continued until the dike was built along the Elkhorn River.

But life was not all serious. Horseback-riding and ball-playing were outdoor sports, together with bowery dancing. We antedated the present alphabetical nomenclature, now so prevalent, with a society having the name of A.F.F.A.B.T.M.I.W. Which translated meant "Anything for fun and bound to make it win." This society met during the fall and winter and had literary programs and card- and dancing-parties.

In 1875, my father opened the Elkhorn Valley Hotel which the family ran for a number of years. Meanwhile he continued preaching in the four places until Norfolk felt it could support a resident pastor. Then he had the charges of Warnerville and Hoskins. During this time he supervised the building of the churches in these two places.

The old square building, at the corner of Main and Third Streets, was then known as the Leavitt block, and is perhaps the most historic building in town. Among other things, it served as courtroom, schoolroom, store, and theater. The upper story was the home of the literary society and also contained over-flow rooms for the Elkhorn Valley Hotel.

An interesting event of those early days was the leaving of the pack train for the Black Hills. This started out from the A.P. Pilger store. The huge covered wagons, each drawn by several yokes of oxen, carried various supplies to the Black Hills people.

The most exciting events of those days were the weekly Saturday visits of Relax Hale and his cowboys. They would ride their horses at breakneck speed up and down Main Street, with revolvers in each hand, shooting rapidly from side to side. Business was at a standstill and all sought such protection as was available. After their revel ceased, business would be resumed.

Mr. Morris Meyer had a drygoods store in the east downstairs room of the Beels building. In their nightly stay at the Elkhorn Valley Hotel, the cowboys were quartered in the upstairs rooms of this same building. Mr. Meyer was deathly afraid of them, and they took particular delight in shooting through the floor into his store while he would frantically pile bolts of goods on the counter for a barricade and hide himself under the counter. Another amusement they enjoyed was to shoot at their beds till they set them on fire, and then throw them into the street and watch them burn. The upper floors of that old building were pitted with shots from their guns.

During these early days a great epidemic of diphtheria brought panic and grief to the little community. The Jones family lost six children in as many days. A few years ago I visited the old cemetery behind the Hospital for the Insane, and there were the six little graves side by side. Dr. Ferdinand Verges, father of our present Dr. Verges, was an angel of mercy to many in those sad times. He was living on a farm in Norfolk. One day, during this time, he said to my mother:

"I left my little boy at home dying. I could do nothing more for him, but there were others here that I could help, so I came." When he returned home that evening, his little boy had passed away.

The Christmas of 1877, Norfolk had its first Community Christmas and program. The joy of one little German girl as she fondled the doll she received from that tree brought tears to the eyes of everyone, and the occasion was never forgotten by those who had the pleasure of arranging the event. These are just a few of the memories of those far off days.

Life was primitive, pleasures were simple and few; people were kind and friendly, and the town was almost as one large family. So as I glance back over the intervening years, what changes have come to pass! During these years, I have seen all the railroads built that come into Norfolk; all the many school buildings--and I recall when the High School on the site of the present Jr. High, burned to the ground. I have seen all the churches built and have known all the ministers down to the present one. The growth of the plant of the State Hospital for the Insane, under the efficient management of Dr. Charlton, is a familiar story.

I have seen the town pass from the days of candles and oil lamps to electric lights, from stoves to furnaces; bathtubs, frigidaires, and all the conveniences of modern living lie within my memory. Virtually all the growth of the city is a familiar story. I am a member of the women's clubs, D.A.R., and the A.A.U.W. All the fraternal orders and their varied activities--all lie within my memory. For 65 years my life was an integral part of its life, and its growth, success, and prosperity very dear to me.

Mrs. Mary Hurfold Tanner, of Battle Creek, Mrs. Sessions, of San Diego, and myself, are the only ones of the English-speaking colony who are still living. Mrs. Tanner was Norfolk's first postmistress.

People talk of "the good old days." I would rather talk of the present good days and of the future good days that are to come.

INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM WEBER (COLUMBUS)

Date: August 6, 1941

Interviewer: Stanley Kula

I was born in Hezerdamstet, Germany, November 11, 1846. The folks left their old home and came to this new country where opportunities were many when I was about seven or eight years old. I don't remember much about the country of my birth, nor of the trip over to this country. I was too young to take those things into my head.

Father settled in Illinois with his family, and that is where I spent most of my boyhood. The country about us was being settled very rapidly, and as I grew older, I could see that when the

time came for me to start making a home for myself, the land would all be gone.

The schooling that I had was practically nothing. What I did learn was taught me by my mother in the German language. I also learned to write from her tutoring. I learned English by contact with people who spoke the language. It is hard for me to read or write the English, and whenever the occasion demands, I prefer to do those things in the German; it is easier for me.

My father was quite a stern German gentleman, and mother was the best mother any boy could have. Father was a great smoker. He raised his own tobacco, and when it was at the right stage of growth, he cut it and put it in a pile where it would sweat. As a result of the various steps of the process of curing, he had what he called "good tobacco." Father was a wonderful singer too; had a wonderful voice. I would say that father had the best voice of any singer in our church. Back there in Illinois, I recall working in the field or perhaps hauling logs out of the timber with oxen. However, at the time that I came here, I had a team of horses.

After making up my mind to go west, mother used to tell me to be a good boy, to pay my honest debts, not to quarrel with anybody, or get into mischief. In fact, I had to almost promise her these things. Along about the time that I was 22 or perhaps 23, the time to begin making my own home had come, and the country where I was to try and establish it was already firmly established in my mind. This was none other than the Nebraska Territory.

We had heard, back there in Illinois, of Nebraska, of Kansas--they were all in "the west." No doubt the reason for my deciding in favor of Nebraska was due to the fact that a neighbor of ours was going out to Nebraska to settle, and by going out with him I would be in good company--at least that's what mother thought.

Another big reason why we both favored Nebraska was the ease, or apparent ease with which land could be acquired. Around us in Illinois, the land was mostly settled and sold fairly high, considering the times. I knew that I could never hope to own an acre of it for this reason; but, by going to Nebraska, the government would practically give anyone a farm under certain conditions.

Shortly after coming here and looking around a bit, I took up a homestead on the edge of the bluffs near the Platte Valley, in Polk County. Of course there were no improvements of any kind; that was up to me. I was to be the future owner! A person had to have some place in which to live; you just couldn't live out in the open! Therefore, about the first thing was to build some kind of home. Since I was near the bluffs, the easiest way for me to build a home was to dig it out of the hill; put a top on it and call it my home. Looking back at the way I lived for some years after, I'd say that I lived like a gopher. We called this type of home "dugout," because it was dug out into the hill. I've seen many hard times in my day, and these old legs of mine did more than their share of walking.

We had a very hard rain one night, and as a result, I got soaking wet, the rain coming right through the roof. I guess I didn't have enough sod and earth on top. I didn't want to put too much weight on the roof for fear that, if it should cave in, I'd get hurt and maybe lose my life. When on this homestead, I was single, and batching; at least the first years I was single.

One day I was returning from Columbus. There was no bridge across the Platte River, and in order to cross, you had to ford it. However, the crossing from the south wasn't so bad, and I made it without any trouble; just as I had many times before. But on the return trip, I got somewhat off the regularly traveled track, and the result was that I got stuck, team and all. I got into some quicksand, and there I was. Unhitching the team from the wagon, I sank into the quicksand myself some few inches, although not as deeply as the horses. Anyway, I had some fear lest I should not be able to get myself out. However, I managed to unhitch the horses--they were stuck with the wagon. After I unhitched them, they had only themselves to get out, and this they did, with some difficulty. The wagon couldn't be gotten out by my efforts alone, so it just stayed there. Afterwards a neighbor pulled it out for me. This fellow lived a short distance from the river, a number of miles away from my place, but nevertheless he was a neighbor. In those days we were all neighbors.

I'll give you an example of how money was made in those early days, and let you judge for yourself how easy it was for us to make MONEY! I had a pretty nice patch of wheat. Well, after threshing it, I got some 500 bushels of nice grain. I sold the wheat for 35 cents per bushel. Out of that, I had to pay another neighbor 25 dollars for a board bill, pay the threshers, and other labor, so you can figure what I made.

Living on my homestead, and getting along fairly well, I at least managed to keep body and soul together and wrote home occasionally telling the folks back there how I was faring. The letters must have sounded quite encouraging because the first thing I knew was the unexpected visit of one of my brothers. He had it in his mind to settle on a homestead around here too, at least I think that was why he came out here. He visited me for some time; not very long though. He said to me one day: "William, why don't you sell what possessions you have and go back to Illinois with me? You'll never make anything here, and besides you have to live like a rat in a hole." He went back all right, but without me. I made up my mind to stay here, even though I did have to live like a rat in a hole--meaning, of course, the dugout.

Another reason for my decision to remain here, come what may, was the fact that I had fallen in love with the girl of my heart. She, too, had lived for some time near Columbus, Nebraska. To say that she was the prettiest thing that I ever saw would be putting it rather mildly. Our courting amounted to practically nothing. On rare occasions, I would ask her to go walking with me about town; that is as far as our courting went. Just how I got up enough nerve to ask her to be my wife, I don't remember, surely she couldn't have been persuaded by what earthly possessions I had, because I had none!

I had my share of bad luck, too, more than most people perhaps. That never deterred me from doing my best. A near calamity happened to me while I was batching. This near tragedy was the result of a prairie fire. Nearly every year we had a prairie fire those days, and every settler plowed a strip of ground around his settlement so that if a fire did come, it wouldn't burn him out--that is, his buildings and possessions. This plowed strip was called a fire guard. I had one plowed around my place, but somehow the fire jumped over the fire guard and proceeded to burn me out--buildings and all.

Being alone, I tried to save what I could, especially the horses; these were in the barn--we'll call it a barn, I did. I got them all out all right, but somehow a colt ran back into the barn. There he

perished, but what could I do? Besides, I lost what little possessions I owned. I had all kinds of ideas about that loss, but I always trusted in the Almighty, and slowly but surely I built up again.

On April 17, 1873 I took the aforementioned young lady as my future partner. Her name was Caroline Labenz, and she was a niece of one of the originators of this town, his name being Charles Reinke. Originally she came with her parents to this country from Germany at the instigation of Mr. Reinke. She was some 14 years old when she came to this country, and soon she realized that she had to go to work and make her living. The first job she had was working in the home of another old-timer by the name of Jonas Welch. At the time he lived near Genoa. At the time we got married, she had been clerking in Hugh Compton's store here in town. Along with working for Jonas Welch, and clerking in the store, she had managed to find time to prove up on a homestead northwest of Platte Center.

After we were married, I took my bride to my homestead, and the dugout. Here we farmed for the next year, when I got an offer of 1,000 dollars for my place. Since my wife had some land, I sold my place, and we moved up to her farm. Here on her farm began the building-up of another place. There was nothing on it; no house, no fences, no nothing. Again, slowly but surely, we went ahead.

One year we were looking for rain for some time, when at last a cloud could be seen in the west--we always got our rain from the west. Gradually that cloud came toward us: surely it would rain! At last it came, but instead of rain, that cloud turned out to be grasshoppers! Yes, grasshoppers, millions of them, perhaps billions! When they settled on the growing crops, whole fields were destroyed for miles. In fact, no field where they settled escaped their hunger. They ate literally everything. In the cornfield, they ate all but the stalk--a pitiful sight.

After a homestead, I forgot to tell you about my different kinds of neighbors. To be honest about it, my most frequent neighbors were Indians. They came to see me often, and their object was usually to beg for food. One day, an Indian came to me and asked for some grub, but this time I had nothing. So when the Indian asked about something to eat, I had to refuse him because I had nothing myself.

My father and mother never came any farther west than Illinois to live, but they did come and visit me one time, after I was established on my wife's homestead. The lay of the land didn't appear badly to them, but I guess Illinois was good enough to them. Some of my sisters settled here and there throughout the country. Like nearly all families, there comes a time when the children leave home and go out into the world to establish themselves for their children; so it was with our family. I went west and established myself in Nebraska; one sister is buried at Washington D.C., another in Butler County, Nebraska, and still another sister is sleeping in the state of Kansas. I'm the oldest sheep alive yet. The rest of the family are buried in Illinois where the old folks made their home.

When I was on the farm, I used to work hard. I used to get up, sometimes when other people were sleeping, and hoe in the garden before it was time to go out in the field.

There was another time we lost our home and all that was in it. It was evening, late in the evening; anyway, all the rest of the family had gone to bed but myself. It was going to rain;

however, there was nothing unusual about rain. It had started, when all at once there was a sharp crack of thunder, and before I realized what had happened, I knew that the house had been struck by lightning. I went outside to see what had happened and discovered that the house was afire. I woke the rest of the family and grabbed a couple of buckets of water to try to put the fire out, but had no success; the only thing that I got out of it was to be soaked wet. The house and contents burned to the ground, also a number of sacks of flour.

Some years after we moved to the farm northwest of Platte Center, I drove 50 head of nice hogs into town. They fetched me 400 dollars. I used to milk 19 cows. The big thing in my farming was stock-raising, cattle and hogs--that's what I made money on.

Around us lived a lot of Polanders. They were good people--at least I found the majority of them to be good people, though I didn't have many dealings with them. Once I recall that I loaned a Polander a couple of hundred dollars to start a blacksmith shop in Tarnov. Just took his note, no security. The fellow was honest because he paid me back every cent that he owed me.

In 1894, we had a dry year. If I remember correctly, none of my neighbors nor I raised an ear of corn. I raised about 100 bushels of wheat, and that is all; however we made it.

We had all kinds of bad luck, but we lived through it all, and when we retired from the farm, we gave each one of the boys a 120-acre farm. Not a dime did I owe anyone, nor were there any debts against any of that land.

In all we had seven children; six boys and one daughter, the daughter passing away when but a child nine years old. Two of my boys are ministers. I have good boys, all six of them. We did the best we could and raised them to be God-fearing boys.

I like to smoke yet. I guess when a fellow can smoke yet, he won't die young. My wife always said that I'd live to be a hundred years old. That I will leave up to the Creator whether or not I live to be a hundred years old. My wife died in this house on November 16, 1934, being then past eighty-one years old. My mother taught me how to pray, and I never forgot to say my prayers; even yet I pray.

Today we have modern machinery which lessens the labor it used to take to run a farm. Everything is done by machinery now. Years ago, much of it had to be done by hand. It seems to me that, in spite of everything, the people used to get along a lot better than they do today, and what we had in those earlier days was paid for, but today I'm afraid a lot of that machinery isn't paid for, and never will get paid for!

Things have changed, and gradually gotten modern; this has had its effect on me, too, changing me somewhat. This change was in the form of a notion to buy a car. The wife said that if I did buy a car, she would never ride with me--I never bought the automobile. Nice things they are, but they cost lots of money.

Yes, if I lived now-a-days like I used to have to live, the people would chase me out of the country! I used to know a lot, but when a fellow gets as old as I am, he forgets a lot.

INTERVIEW WITH MRS. ANNA VON BERGEN (ALBION)

Date: August 22, 1941

Interviewer: Maude Swanson

I was born in Germany in 1869. I came to America when I was 13 years old with my mother and three sisters. Father died in Germany. Mother's father lived here in the United States, and he wrote and insisted that she come to America and bring the children. He said: "You must come to Nebraska where the land is free and every farmer has a smoke house filled with meat." She made plans to come. My oldest brother was in compulsory military service at the time .

We sold our furniture, kept only what we could pack easily and take along with us. We had a nice baby grand piano. I hated to part with that most of all.

When we got on the ship, everything smelled of tar. Mother told the captain that she couldn't endure that smell. He assured her that a great many folks went in there and did not die, and she would be able to stand it.

We waved goodbye to our friends and were on our way. I will never forget that time. A storm came up, and we had to stay in the bay three days before we could go out in the ocean. Then the fun began. The first two days we couldn't eat a thing. The third day our appetites came back, and each of us took our little pail and joined the long line of people going through the kitchen for a helping of food. The big men pushed us children aside, and we got the last and the least food. The cook soon discovered that we were being shoved back and were not getting enough food, and saw to it that we had our share of good things to eat, as well as the others. We sat at long tables and had a merry time eating. We had to hold fast to our bowls or they would roll off the table. We children had lots of fun on the ship.

One by one we got seasick and had to make for the deck upstairs. The deck was partitioned off in three parts: the front for single men, the middle for the married people and the back for the young girls.

All was well for fifteen days. We enjoyed seeing the silvery flying fish and the passing of a ship in the distance. Then one day we got warning of a storm. We were all ordered to tie our dishes and bowls fast and everything else that was loose. It was ten o'clock when the ship started to rock and roll from one side to the other, like an empty eggshell on a washboard. People ran upstairs on deck, yelling and pounding on the doors to get out, and some cursed the captain and accused him of drowning them all like rats. Kitchen utensils were flying from left to right, and in every direction, and everyone who could grabbed a bedpost to help support themselves. It did little good, for the ship was rolling from side to side. I will never forget that dreadful night. We all thanked our lucky stars that the swinging lanterns kept burning all through the night. Two days later we landed in Baltimore, and from there, we took the train for Nebraska.

In Germany, we had studied about the railroad that was built from New York to San Francisco. We thought that was wonderful, and drew maps of the United States and put the railroad through it. We thought the American people were wonderful. Now we were really in America and riding on that train, going to our grandfather's house in Norfolk, Nebraska.

My mother met the Honorable H.T. Spoery, and after a short courtship, she married him. My youngest brother and I went to Platte County, Nebraska, to live with them on the homestead.

Mrs. Barbara Spoery, H.T. Spoery's mother, was one of the few women at that time who had the courage to cultivate a flower-garden on the prairies. It had a white picket fence around it. She had planted young evergreens in a triangle, with some forest trees back of it. The flowers were planted inside this triangle. There was an iron chair, painted white, and a little white settee, bought from Montgomery Ward and Company. This old lady would come out here on summer afternoons and sit and rest. She had zinnias, bachelor's-buttons, pinks, lady's slippers, touch-me-nots, marigolds, tansy, old man, ribbon grass, four-o'clocks. It was really beautiful, all these shades and colors of flowers out on the prairie with the evergreen trees for a background. It was said that she was the first one in the country to raise strawberries, brussel sprouts, and other useful vegetables.

I married John Von Bergen, a Swiss boy, who had come from Switzerland a few years before. He was one of the few boys who drove a horse and buggy in those days, and everyone thought he was "quite a catch." He had a homestead, and then he bought another eighty for five dollars an acre. We were married April 24, 1887, in a little white schoolhouse that my father-in-law built, on land that my step-father donated for the school site. I was not quite eighteen then. Here school was held five days a week; Saturdays the Adventists held church services; on Sunday the Germans held their services, and in the evenings we had political, literary, and social gatherings.

After our marriage, we went to our hone, adjoining my father-in-law's homestead. Near enough, my mother said, so if there should be any sudden sickness, a red cloth could be hung on the windmill, and she would come over. Here our two first children were born.

We lived on the homestead five years. My husband decided to rent it out and try his fortune in the western part of the state, where he bought a half section of cheap land. We had a sale and kept only six horses, two cows and the machinery. He shipped them to Gordon, Nebraska, on the train. This farm was within a few miles of the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation and about thirty miles from what is now known as the "Old Jules Country."

On the old homestead, we had a frame house that my father-in-law built. Here, near Gordon, we had a log house. The logs had been placed, one on top of the other, with no mortar between them. During the day, the sun, and at night, the moon, shone through the open spaces between the logs.

The first week in April was nice but one day soon after the wind blew up and I felt the walls shaking, I looked out and saw our washed underclothes on the line, all filled with snow and frozen stiff. It looked as though my whole family was hanging there. That day all the potatoes froze in the cellar. It wasn't long until the floor and bed were also covered with snow. Our baby got sick, and we wondered why we had left our home and come up here to live.

The first year at Gordon, we raised 800 bushels of wheat on one hundred acres of land; the next year we threshed 400 bushels, and the third year the hot winds came and spoiled it all. We cut it and stacked it for feed. By spring, wheat was seventy-five cents a bushel, and we thrashed our wheat stack and got one hundred bushels. The first year we got thirty-two cents a bushel for it.

Back at Grand Prairie, the renter could not pay rent one year because of drought. Next year was a bumper crop of corn. All corncribs were full, and every available place was used to store corn. Much of it was piled on the ground. This year, farmers had trouble with their brood sows. Because of feeding them too much corn, they became too fat and lost their litters.

In 1895, we dug a huge potato crop--had 140 bushels. The little town of Gordon paid forty cents a bushel, while Columbus paid seventy-five cents a bushel. Again we wondered why we ever left Grand Prairie. My husband bought up a carload of potatoes and shipped them to Columbus.

The farmers around Gordon left their families every fall and went to the sand hills, seventy or eighty miles away, to shoot grouse and prairie chicken for the Chicago and New York markets. The women and children were left at home to look after the livestock. When the time came, the men invited my husband to go along with them. I told him to go. I could be as brave as the other women and stay home. He taught me how to shoot and left his gun with me.

We had six hundred horses and some cattle. They were turned out each morning, and in the evening, they came in for water and went into the corral for the night. I told John if anyone came to scare us, we would all scream at once and keep it up and frighten them away.

I had quite an experience with Polly. She was one of the horses. She came racing home at a terrible gallop. I went out to see what the trouble was. She would look behind her, then kick up her heels and run for all she was worth. As I got closer, I saw a piece of broken garden rake caught in her tail. Every time she kicked, the rake came down and buried its teeth in her flesh. It was a sight. The blood ran in streaks down her legs. "Heavenly Father," I prayed, "whose rake was it, and how was I going to get it out of Polly's tail, and where did she get it?" I was sure Polly would bleed to death. She ran up into the pasture where the other horses were, and they all started to gallop in circles. I called Katherine and told her to bring me a jacket and the buggy whip, and then go back to her little sisters and lock the door behind her. Again I prayed for some unseen power to head the horses to the corral. In spite of my anxiety for Polly, I thought this was a better performance than I had ever seen at a circus.

The other horses were tired and hanging their heads but not Polly. Every few minutes she would again start kicking and racing. I managed to get behind the bunch of horses and head them for home, and Polly followed, shaking, trembling, and kicking. I was afraid of horses, and it took lots of courage to do all this. I thought of my children at home alone. I finally managed to drive Polly into the barn and into her stall, where she found her oats in the manger. She alternately kicked and ate in her misery. How was I to get her tied? It was nearly dark now. I went into the next stall, reached through and put the snap in her halter. The halter rope was fastened to the manger. Now how was I to get the rake out of Polly's tail? I waited until she kicked again, the rake coming up and down on her heels. Then, with a prayer in my heart, I grabbed the broken handle with all my strength and gave it an upward jerk and out came the garden rake. It nearly

took my breath away.

If anyone should ask me to tell the happiest moment of my life, I would say "When I got the rake out of Polly's tail." I could hear the little girls crying in the dark house. In the morning Polly was all right, only weak and tired.

In haying time, it was my task to stand for hours and turn the grind stone for my husband while he sharpened the sickles for the mowers.

We milked six cows and made eight pounds of butter every other day. My mother-in-law taught me how to make Swiss cheese when I was first married. So I made an average of ten pounds every day and sold it to the merchants for ten cents a pound. My cheese became very popular and later sold for twelve cents a pound.

We turned our cattle out in the pasture every morning, and in the evening, the two little girls went out after them. One evening, I heard a loud noise and thought it was a cow bawling. I looked out of the window, and my heart stood still. Some distance away I saw the head of the herd pawing the ground with his front feet, and my little Katie, not more than three feet in front of him, waving a whip and starting him home. I thought every second she would be gored to death, but he didn't move from the spot and neither did she. But she kept waving the whip at him, and suddenly he turned for home, and the rest of the herd followed him. Her fearlessness was her salvation. I asked her if she was not afraid, and she answered, "I just waved my whip at him and said, 'Stop fooling, you old Prince, and get a move on you.'"

About a month later, Prince came up missing. We advertised for him in the weekly papers and offered a reward, and every day John rode out through the pastures to see if he could find him. Two weeks passed, and we had given up finding him, when one day the herdboys came riding in, all excited and said, "Come quick, a calf is in an old well, bawling his head off.

The old dry well was three quarters of a mile away. They took ropes and spades, John, the hired man, with the boy leading the way. It was not a calf, but our Prince. Just a little of his back was showing. The men were dumbfounded. Prince had been in the bottom of the well for fifteen days, without food or water. They dug a trench to the bottom of the well and pulled him out. He could hardly stand, but wobbled out toward the rest of the herd. He looked so sad it almost made me cry. He had lost his cud. We broke three raw eggs open into a cloth, tied it shut, and pushed it down his throat. The hired man said, "Now if it comes up again, he will be all right." We waited, breathlessly, a minute or two, and sure enough the cud appeared, and he began chewing. Then we gave him food and water. Every day we gave him his three eggs, and in six weeks time, he was fat and sleek again.

Our cattle were taken to the big pastures, sixty miles away, and before they left, they all had to be branded. That was a big day (or two, depending on the number of cattle owned). Each ranch had its own brand. Our brand was V.B. It took four men to do the branding. Two men did the roping and

teing

, throwing the cattle down, and two blacksmiths would press red-hot iron into the hips of the animals while they bawled pitifully. In three days, they were ready to go to the pasture in the sand hills.

The two little girls saw and heard this commotion and decided that the cats needed branding. They took the stove poker and put it in the cold stove, got the cat and made ready for the ordeal. Katherine yowled, "Mee-ow!" while Elizabeth operated.

When fall came, the herd had nearly doubled, and the calves were nearly as big as their mothers. Now came weaning time. The calves were taken away from their mothers, then the music began! For two nights, we got scarcely any sleep. The cows bawled for their calves, and the calves bawled for their mothers. The third day they began to quiet down.

At Gordon, we were only a few miles from the Indian Reservation. The Government gave the Indians blankets, coats, and woolen stockings. Often they came and wanted to swap. They would offer me a coat or a blanket for a few forks of hay for their ponies. They would put the blanket down on the ground, and I would put several forks of hay in it, and they gathered the blanket and carried it off. They called hay, "Pezhi." I was never afraid of them when John was around the place or in the field.

One day I was home alone with the children. They were still sleeping. I went out to the garden, about a third of a mile from the house, to plant some watermelon seeds. I happened to look up, and I saw a string of Indian wagons near my porch. I was terror-stricken. My legs were so heavy I could hardly move them. I finally got to the house. All they wanted was to "swap." They never opened the door, so the children were all right--they were still sleeping and didn't get scared at all.

We had just butchered and had meat on the table, and when I opened the door, an old squaw saw the meat on the table, and she threw up her hands and yelled, "Kukusha! Kukusha! Heap Kukusha! Swap! Swap! Swap!" So I gave her a large piece of meat, and she gave me a blanket. So I had two blankets. Then I shut the door on them. They left, and I got over my scare and regained my strength.

Another day, an old squaw stopped at my door with a lap robe. She was wrapped in a blanket and had a knife stuck through it. When she saw me she said, "Swap?" I did want the robe. I offered her meat, but she pointed out to the yard where we had eight little pigs in a pen. I nodded "yes." She went out and stepped over that fence and caught one of the little pigs by its hind legs and carried it outside the pen. She had three papooses with her. She laid the pig on the ground and killed it right there, cut it open like we would a ripe watermelon. She cut off chunks of the heart and liver and gave them to the children, and they ate it right down raw, like our children eat ice cream or candy. They grabbed for it and ate it as fast as she could slice it. They seemed to relish it. My children were watching her. I said to the children, "Come quick, get in the house, or she might get after us with that knife." We went in the house and locked the door.

My children all finished high school, eight of them, and they all went to college, except Elizabeth. She taught one year and then decided to get married. The children have traveled a lot. Harold, the musician of the family, went to the Orient one summer with an orchestra. Alice made a trip to Europe, and while traveling, she visited the home of her father, in Switzerland. Max went to India in a freighter with six hundred mules and thirty riding-horses. The shipment was delivered to the English Government. He was gone four months. I have ten grandchildren.

The greatest privilege I've had was the guiding of eight young lives to manhood and womanhood.

INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE F. SNOWDEN (OMAHA)

Date: September 2, 1941

Interviewer: R.F. Worley

I was born July 12, 1857, in a log cabin in Omaha where Twenty-fourth and Jones Streets are now. I remember the first school I went to--it was a sort of brown color on a hillside which is now Jefferson Square. It had one room with one teacher and just a few kids going, perhaps six or seven mixed whites. I know there were no negroes at that time. I was then about six years old. Did you ever hear of Henry Estabrook? He ran for President one time. He used to go to school there. He was wild, like the rest of the kids, full of devilment. His father was a general in the army. We played ball and marbles and such, but we didn't play ball the way we do now. Frank Parker is the only one still alive who went to school with me. The Parkers had a farm where the Joslyn Memorial now stands.

John Davis, the son of the first banker, was the champion marble player. One time, he won so many marbles, he tied his pants-leg up and filled it with marbles. One of his sons runs the First National Bank here now. The successful ones always were prominent people. There wasn't many things to do in those days. I never kept track--always sorry I didn't.

I went from there to Jackson Street School, between Twelfth and Thirteenth Streets on Jackson. It was purty near the same as the other only there was more kids. I remember the big old box-stove. We kids had to take turns fetching up cord-wood from the basement, or pail of water from the well, or sometimes from the creek which wasn't very far away.

Them days they taught school with a ruler and a hickory stick. I had several fights with the teacher and climbed all over her. Hattie McCone, her name was. She had a big bunch of hair on her head which we called a waterfall, and I would get a hold of that and pull it. There was hardly any houses around there and no paved streets of any kind, and when it rained, the wagon wheels

went clean down to the hub.

I went to the grade school at Tenth and Pacific Streets. I guess the old school is still standing. They used it for awhile in late years as a sort of flop house for hoboes. It was at that school we got our first principal. His name was Beal. I also remember there were a good many Indians scattered around along the creeks, and occasionally, they were making raids around the country. One time we were living on Military Road, I guess it's Cuming Street now, and we heard the Indians were coming, so mother took us out to lay behind the saw logs in the yard. I remember there were always a big bunch of Indians over on Pappio Creek. They would come around and make motions begging for grub. They never drunk coffee, just hot water and lots of sugar.

Once in a while, they would go on a rampage, and we had to chase them away. The Omaha Indians were friendly. They would get up a band of about a hundred and chase the Sioux back. We wasn't afraid of anything in those days, but would always hideout if we heard the Indians were coming.

One time, I remember, the boiler of a sawmill at Seventh and Jones blew up. It landed one man in a cut a hundred yards away. There was no fire department them days, just a little hand-pumper and volunteers; and where the Post Office is, there was just a pond. I recall the first postman; he delivered mail in his hat. Mr. Wyman was the first postmaster.

There was a lot of buffalo and deer around there. I killed my first deer out where Benson is now. There was just two farmhouses there, and it was called Happy Hollow. Out there where Fort Omaha is, there was cornfields on both sides of the road. I remember in the fore part of the '90s, the farmers had their market at Fifteenth and Harney. They sold corn for eight cents a bushel and would even haul it out about as far as fruit. It was mostly wild plums, and it took a dozen eggs to get a pound of sugar.

Mother made all our candles out of tallow. She had a mold for it. Sometimes she put lard in a saucer with a string in it. That and them candles was all the light we had. Mother was Dane descent. Father was Scotch descent. Father started a brick-yard at Kanessville once. That's Council Bluffs now.

He was an auctioneer one time, and he run the first boarding house in Omaha. Mother had a five-room cottage and four lots at about Fourteenth and Jackson Streets, where Murphy's is now. She sold it for 500 dollars with all them lots. How much would they be worth now?

Father used to go down to Missouri to get mules to bring up here to trade. I don't know exactly how the story goes, but one time he started out and took his jack knife, too. Long in the '70s he was city marshal. He started with only one policeman to help him. The cowboys and traders had lots of fights. I remember one day a crowd was trying to round up a big tough, rawboned, gambler. He was made out of rawhide. He stood six foot four and wore striped pants and had a big mustache. His name was Canada Bill, and everybody was afraid of him. He could whip his

weight in wild cats, but father caught him. The old man wasn't a very big man, but Canada Bill said: "I will go with you and nobody else." One time father was elected chief of police, and when the circus came, I didn't have to pay. I would simply tell them my father was chief of police, and they would let me in. The circus was very small then, not at all like these now-a-days, and you could see all over it. You didn't have to pick something out of three rings to watch. In those days, fifty cents would go as far as five dollars now-a-days does.

George F. Train was a real estate seller. He built a bunch of cottages where the south side depot is and called it Train Town. I remember one time he quarrelled with a waiter in Canteen House, and then he built a hotel himself and called it Cozzens House. I think it was about Ninth and Harney. I remember Larson Lyton had a hominy mill at Seventh and Jones. He made the hominy out of white corn.

I remember there was a great many ox and mule teams going through to the west. They had eight or ten head of cattle hitched to one wagon, but they didn't always get through, account of the Indians. They crossed river by ferryboat.

I remember the first street car. It was an old bus. They put wheels under it and a step behind, and a grey horse or mule, I don't remember which, pulled it from Fifteenth and Douglas down to Tenth and Douglas. There was lower traction then. It was always getting off the track. When it run off the track, horses couldn't get down in there, so they used oxen to get it back on track. Oxen could wade through the mud.

I remember there were a lot of boats on the river. They would come up from St. Louis and maybe go as far as Yankton. They brought our groceries. When we heard the whistle, we would all drop everything and run down to the boat to see if we knew anyone or if there was any mail. The latchstring was always out. Everybody trusted everyone else.

There were very few robberies around town, but they robbed trains outside. The tough times were in '64 during the war. I remember the first locomotive we had. They pulled it up the river by boat and loaded it where the Union Pacific bridge is now. They were just starting the Union Pacific, and there was no track then. This locomotive was a small woodburner with a square stack, and you could put it in the fire box of the engines we have now. I made my first excursion on it. I remember they put benches on a flat car and hauled us up Thirteenth Street. I jumped up on the running board and rung the bell. Naturally a kid would do that. I am the first one that ever rung a locomotive bell in Omaha this side of the river, and it was on the first Union Pacific engine. When they broke the first ground for the Union Pacific, they just turned over a couple shovels of dirt and put a marker there. There wasn't many people those days to see it. I have often stood upon the Capitol Hill and wondered at the growth of Omaha. It is a mystery how the town has grown the way it did.

The first ground that ever was broken in Omaha for the railroad was where the old smelter is now. The World Herald had a story that said the first ground was broken where the Union

Pacific shops are now--but at that time it was all swamps down there!

My first job was making cigar boxes. I and another kid was playing by the railroad tracks. A man came along and wanted to know if we wanted to go to work, so we tried it. I made thirty or forty cents a day making cigar boxes by the piece and was paid in nickels and dimes which I showed to everyone. The other kid stayed on that job three or four years. I did all kinds of work after that. In later life, I was a stationary engineer for the telephone company, Burgess-Nash, St. James and the Sanford Hotel. My best job was when I was stationary engineer for Burgess-Nash. I made over 200 dollars a month.

Our clothes wasn't very elegant when I was a kid. I had jean pants and coat, rawhide boots with copper toes and red tops.

Father was in the Civil and Mexican Wars. When he was away to war, we had hard times. People would pile in on us, and we had a hard time to get along. Most always they paid--sometimes with a quarter of beef.

Soldiers don't fight no more, its all done with aeroplanes. They didn't murder women and children then, like they do now, either.

Cleveland is the first man I voted for as president. I used to have a fortune. Now I got nothing. Taxes got too high for the people to keep their land. Hanscom and Kelly couldn't give property away. Had to hang on to it. It made them rich. Old times are all gone. Five sisters brothers, father and mother are all gone.

INTERVIEW WITH FRED GRAVES (RAYMOND)

Date: August 19, 1941

Interviewer: J. Willis Kratzer

I was born in Rockford, Illinois, back in 1871, and spent my boyhood on the move toward the west. We first moved in a covered wagon to Iowa where the family spent fourteen years. They left Illinois when I was a big boy, five months old and a bouncing pioneer--if you never rode in one of those schooners, you don't appreciate the bouncing part of it.

The heart of a great people seemed to be throbbing in a great westward movement, and my father was no different then the rest. Back in Illinois, he outfitted the schooner for the trip, covering it with white canvas cloth which was suspended on the bows that had been made by his own hands. Pots and pans, kettles, and those heavy dishes were packed for use along the way and at the end

of our trip. The old iron kettle, a big fellow, was hung on the side of the wagon near the rear. In use, it was suspended by a chain from a three-legged outfit that father had made out of as many irons. An extra tongue was tied under the schooner--just in case, for the roads were some rough in the schooner days, that is, if there was a road at all.

In the main, the stock was not of the riding type--a yoke of oxen was far more satisfactory, and I never did like to ride a steer. Father was one of the best ox-whackers in the country, and he had some fine oxen.

Of course, I remember nothing of the trip to Iowa, but as a boy of fourteen, I do remember well the journey which brought us to Nebraska. The same method of transportation was used, although it was now in the fall of 1885. Oxen were the old stand-by. They were slow, but in the main, pretty sure of getting you there if you did not grow too old along the way.

The new generation knows little enough about how a horse is shod, and perhaps nothing of the method used to shoe an ox. I remember the smell of hot iron and the ring of the anvil as the shoes were shaped and fitted. The ox was shoved into its place in a frame built for the purpose, and brought to its knees while the men sat around the blacksmith shop and sang and spun yarns. The hoof turned up, and the beast tied down with ropes, the smith began his work of shoeing the front feet. This accomplished, he would put a heavy wide canvas under its middle and, with a windlass, lift the big animal off its hind feet as the wooden pins tightened into their sockets. Thus he would make ready to shoe the hind feet. Kneeling, he would fit the shoe, rising and making several trips to the forge and anvil to fit it perfectly to the split hoof.

Along the way, the country was beautiful, and wild game was abundant. The trees were inhabited by a multitude of birds; the fox-colored thrasher darted in and out of the underbrush; the friendly call of the quail was heard in every thicket. The meadowlark sang his familiar song, and the prairie chicken seemed to be everywhere as was evidenced by the "boom-boom" of the strutting cocks.

In telling you this story, I think that it might be well to forget too many dates and figures, for that is what spoils history. Seems to me, if you could write history like a story and leave out a lot of dates, it would be more interesting. After all, my life has been made interesting and worth living not by the things that I personally have done, but by the conditions by which it was surrounded.

For instance, take the many times that I have suffered having a baby--only I was a boy in my teens instead of the proper subject to be worrying about such an ordeal. It was like this: My mother was known for miles and miles as a very capable midwife, and I remember one time when a neighbor came to get her. He drove into the yard in a lumber wagon drawn by a big team. Jumping out of the wagon, he bounded to the house in about three jumps. I knew what was coming, all right.

It was snowing, but a quiet snow. I was sent to get a doctor and had to travel several miles on

horseback. The neighbor took mother to his cabin. I made this trip as quickly as possible, and as I walked up the steps of the doctor's home, he poked his head out of the window and said: "I'll be with you in a minute, Freddie. Is she all right? I bet it's a false alarm!"

I had been there so many times to get him for women in the country that he knew my step, for it was so downright dark that he couldn't see me, and he also knew the who and why of my coming.

We made the trip back to Benton Duling's without mishap, and, true to the prophecy of the doctor, the whole thing was a false alarm, and the trip was for nothing.

The next afternoon, about the time that the sun begins to hang streamers in the western sky, here came that lumber wagon again, and Benton jumped higher and farther than before. Again I cracked the whip and was off to get the doctor. It was snowing like the devil, and a wind whipped the loose snow into my face like fragments of steel. I cut fences and urged the team to hurry. On the return trip, bringing the doctor, I had to cut the fences in other places for I could not find my old tracks. The storm was nearing blizzard proportions, but the faithful team fought northwest and we made it to Benton's in time to find another false alarm!

The next day, the whole procedure was repeated again, even to the blizzard, the storm being even worse than the day before. But--it happened--yes, sir, it happened at last. The doctor and I got back in time to get that baby into the world, after which the mother, doctor and myself, to say nothing of Benton, rested easier.

The doctor added this increase to his already long list of "my babies;" the mother did the suffering, and I did the work--anyway that is the way it seemed to me. But that is only one of the numerous times that turned out the same way.

Back in those days, there was another custom that is now forgotten--sitting up with the dead. One would not dream of leaving a corpse alone over night, and neighbors would come in from far and wide to keep vigil during the hours of darkness and loneliness.

The time that I have sat with the dead are too numerous to record. There was usually a goodly number present, and this did away with the lonely atmosphere. But sometimes there were only a couple of us, and then we could hear every noise--might not have been spooks, but it sounded pretty spooky at three in the morning with a corpse for a companion.

I have lived in two distinct times. My life has been blessed by the old times and the fine western spirit which is now all but dead. In my early life, I have never seen a stranger turned from the door; I never knew my father to refuse anyone the comfort of a bed--now you have to 'phone or write ahead a few days if you want to be received for Sunday dinner. The hospitality of my early boyhood and manhood has been killed by the hustle and bustle of today. It was a bad exchange when they traded the friendliness and neighborliness of my boyhood for the automobile of today. Society in general took a trimming in that swap. In my boyhood, we would meet neighbor or

stranger alike, and the team stopped to visit without a line being pulled up, they just knew that they had to stop--it was a part of the way of living with which even the horses were familiar. Now, my second life: Men fly past their next door neighbor so fast that they don't even know him until they are gone by, and then they wave a feeble greeting which is wasted on a telephone pole eighty rods down the road.

I remember one time when Charlie Brown, commonly known as Two-wheel Brown, came by the field where I was plowing corn. I was at the end of the field next to the road. Two-wheeled Brown shouted a greeting, unhitched his horses, and proceeded to lie down on the grass at the edge of the road and let his horse graze. Ye Gods! I thought. I was sure that this was good for the whole afternoon, and that I would get nothing done. But to my surprise, after five or ten minutes, he caught up his team and hitching them, drove on down the road.

I couldn't tell a story of the incidents surrounding my life without relating some of the happenings in the old time revivals. Bob Black's grandfather was a preacher, and he helped to organize this church. I.N. Hoopergarner was the evangelist who held the meeting that led to its organization. He said, referring to his name: "I just whoop'em up and garner 'em in." And that is just what he did.

Several years later Rev. H.S. Smith came to Crouse to hold a revival, and I remember one night in particular: They had some hard-boiled sinners at the altar, and the Lord was taking His own glorious time about coming down and shedding His mercy on the fold. It was about 1:00 a.m., and Rev. Smith suggested, "I think that we had better postpone this meeting until tomorrow night, when the petitioners may find the Spirit more willing." He had no more than made the suggestion when Jim Siddons jumped up shouting and singing, "Hold the fort for I am coming." Well, that set the ball to rolling, and the service went on unabated until 4:00 a.m.

Benton Duling, who had just got himself a wife, was determined that he would stay until the Spirit came to him in all Its fullness. In the wee hours of the morning, his feet and legs went to sleep, and he had to be carried out into the hall and given a rub down to bring back circulation. "I can't see why the Lord don't do something for me!" he complained, rubbing his aching legs, "It appears to me that he has already knocked the pins clean out from under you," replied Rev. Smith.

Those were the times when everybody went to church, and the preachers were always anxious to shout the message; not like it is today, with one-service-Sundays! The church has taken an awful licking since then, but it is our own fault; we got so busy legislating new evils that we forgot that the main message of the church was Christ.

Just for instance, in the old days everybody--almost--went to the dances and had a good time. Then the church, for some reason or other, decided it was sinful. The Bible didn't say so, but a lot of preachers declared it so. Well, a lot of people who liked to dance and saw no sin or harm in it just danced and let the church slide.

Same is true of the bobbed hair of a few years ago--the girls with bobbed hair were bound for hell in skirts, but they turned out about ordinary. The war brought its short skirts, and that called for new legislation which damned all girls with knees visible. It grew harder and harder for our young people to move with the times and still be good church members. The church has done the suffering.

Right now is the toughest time that I have ever seen for the church at Crouse to exist. I have been near this church nearly all the time since 1885, but there never was a time equal to now. Even the hard times of the '90s found the church and community in general in better circumstances. There was no corn but a fair crop of oats and lots of hay, wild grasses of course. So there was plenty of feed, and the team was always ready to go out for a good time. With wild game plentiful, we had plenty to eat. It did not cost much to live.

Now we find a different situation. Money is still scarce, and what can be mustered together is put into the tank of the automobile so that it can be coaxed many miles away. Our community life is broken to bits, and that machine of travel--the automobile--has done the breaking. By going miles away for our contact, we lose interest in the community and community religious life, and the church dies slowly but surely. I have always been interested in Crouse church, and still am--guess that is why I touch so much upon this subject. It pains me to see the inevitable--her struggling and final death.

By the way, why don't they stock this country with prairie chickens instead of so many pheasants? They were just an all-round better bird, and I sure would like to see that much of the old days brought back to us. I want to hear their "boom-boom" again on these prairies before I die.

There are many things that cannot be brought back to these prairies. I cannot imagine a new birth of hospitality in spite of centralization points like Lincoln--which kill our community life. I cannot imagine the return of the buffalo, and no more can I visualize the return of the blacksmith shop and barber shop with their rich contributions to local life. But those things that can still be brought back should be returned without delay.

When we first came to Nebraska, it was customary to plow shallow, but I tried it both ways the same year in the same field, and soon found the way to raise corn was to sink that plow in the ground.

In the year 1898, I married one of Hiram Duling's girls, and she has made me a fine wife. We have lived together these many years, and I haven't heard of any divorce as yet.

My wife's father came to Nebraska in February, 1880, from Indiana where he was born October 11, 1854. When he came here, there were no buildings on his farm, and he used his uncle's stable until his own was ready. These old pioneers were of real stock. "Uncle Hiram," as he is

known to everyone for miles around, still lives in the Crouse neighborhood, and, for all his eighty-seven years, is fairly healthy.

I remember well the early school in Crouse. It was established about 1871, and was one of the earliest in the county. Of course, I don't know anything about that, only what I have been told. Rube Leffler was the first director, and Mrs. Charlie (Margaret) Carr taught school in her home before a building was erected. This home was a sod house, a little north of the present site of Grandma Carr's house. But before I came here, the school building was ready, and it became the school, church, and general community center.

The early school was attended by those seeking "learnin'" from many miles around. Several that I can remember came from way over in Seward County. Their ages ranged over quite a territory, some were full grown men, but who were earnest in their desire to learn "schoolin'"; there were many "boys" 25 or 30 years of age who attended school.

One day when I was just a sapling of a young fellow some Indians camped over on West Oak Creek. Benton Duling and myself went over to the camp, for Indians were interesting to us, and the wild Indian was not here anymore. These Indians were peaceable and just wandered around the country begging and stealing. I guess they were of the Omaha tribe. I had very dark hair, so I attracted no attention, but those husky bucks and dirty squaws took turns running their fingers through Benton's hair, for he was light-haired, and they could not understand how any mortal could have blonde hair and were feeling of it to see if it was real, or if they could discover what was the matter with it. His hair was so light-colored that it was almost white, and they had never seen anything like that before.

I went to school right here in District 47, Crouse School, in the year of '85. The old schoolhouse was here then, the one Sib Payne is still living in, and it was kept warm with a big-bellied stove that got right-down hot. There weren't any grades, just readers, and they were pretty limited. Some of the big boys came to school that fall, and I remember George Lipman asked the teacher what readers she had, and she said she had only four. He went home, saying that that wasn't enough, and he couldn't get anything at that school since he already had read the fourth reader. My wife made quite a record in District 47. She went to school there, about '85, and finished all they taught; she sent four children there for eight grades, and one grandchild--three generations having completed their elementary work in this same school.

Yes, I went through the blizzard of '88. It was a humdinger. Guess I'll never forget that storm. The teacher kept the children at school until they were in the hands of some grown-up. Uncle Cal (Calvin Sterns of Raymond, now deceased) took five children, and had them hold tight to him, and fought the storm until he could get them all as far as his own home, which was about a mile and a half south of the school.

I was down south of Raymond when the blizzard came. I remember a neighbor was out hunting a hog, and after finding it, was trying to drive it home when the storm broke; he never got the hog

We conquered the land from the Indian and handed it to our children as a subdued land, that they might not have to battle as we had done. But, believe me, I think that they would be far happier today if this land was still wild as ever, then when they married they would settle down to fight it out together and raise their children in homes that they had fought to build, rather than fall into the hum-drum of life of today, with the coloring left out--that is, unless you want to call such events as a twenty-mile-drive to a show or a long trip over a dusty highway to eat dinner with distant friends coloring for a life. That sure doesn't meet my standard.

When I was a boy, home was the center of family life, and the homes, in turn, centered around the church and school to form community life. Now home is just a place to rush into for a change of clothing and bounce out again on a mad rush to nowhere.

I have tried to give you a little insight into my life--more of the living than of the individual. I have seen them shoot cannon to make it rain--but never shot any; I've seen great men and great pioneers, but that doesn't make me a great man nor a great pioneer. Oh, yes, I've gone west in a covered wagon, but I didn't build the west, so why should I glory? I've seen the inside of a dugout and a sod house, but these did not give me room to shout my own name! No, they were merely some of the blossoms along the way that made my life worth living.
