

## JAKE LEBSACK'S MEMORIES OF RUSSIA

Jake was six years old when he and his parents made it to America. The following are some of the things he remembers as a child in Russia.

Jake remembers his mother sat and cried. She was having a hard time getting along with her mother-in-law. Conrad Lebsack's first wife had died. He remarried a lady with four children. This stepmother made life miserable for Conrad's children including the daughter-in-laws. Aunt Annie (Mrs. David Amen) and Aunt Mary (Mrs. David Strasheim) left Russia and came to America because of the stepmother. She was very mean to these two girls. Aunt Mary married David Strasheim at Lincoln, Nebraska. Aunt Annie came to Culbertson, Nebraska and met Dave Amen. She married him and lived in Colorado.

Our house was on top of a hill. There was a creek at the bottom of the hill. Water ran all summer long. There were trees along this creek. Mama went to the creek to wash our clothes. She washed our clothes on the rocks. I remember she made soap from a critter that had died. I remember there was lots of smoke coming from the chimney when she made soap. She used this soap to wash our clothes.

We lived in Frank, Russia. We lived in community houses. They were close together. In the spring we would leave this community and go to the field. We lived in small huts during the summer. We stayed out in the field from planting time to harvest time.

Farmers had to break out their own ground. People owned the land. For every new baby boy, the Kaiser would give so much land. We summerfallowed the fields. There was a weed called devil weed (bindweed is what we call it here in America) that was plowed under for fertilizer. We used wood plows. They had long tongues, in back there was two handle bars, no wheels. There was iron shields on the bottom. The plows were part wood and part iron. Harrows were made of wood, all wood. I remember setting on camels with two humps. Your bottom would get so sore. Dad used camels to farm with. Uncle Con had oxen, and Uncle George plowed with horses. Uncle George and Uncle Con were Dad's brothers. The Communist got George and Con.

We had a stud camel that us kids liked to tease. We stood on the outside of the fence and would blow in his face. The camel would blow snot all over us kids. Camels do spit. We didn't have a lot of livestock, just enough to get by with. We had milk cows, oven, lots of horses and camels. In the winter no livestock was left outside. It was too cold. All livestock was fed inside the barns. Straw and wild hay was the cattle feed. There was always lots of snow and it was very cold.

Our camels had two humps. We had a white camel. One time coming home in the fall this white camel had a baby camel. We stopped along the side of the road. I remember we sat

and watched her have the baby camel. After it was born, we put the baby on the wagon and headed home.

We threshed on canvas. We had a rolled and a horse that walked around and around until the grain was threshed out. We took the straw home and put it in the barn. The grain was put in the granary. The government would come and take a certain amount. This was the tax.

When we butchered in the fall, we put the meat in great big wooden barrels. This was stored in the attic of the house. In the springtime when the meat thawed out, Mom would cook the meat and put it in lard in layers in wooden barrels. This would keep all summer.

We had an orchard. Apples would be put in the wooden barrels. They would make them sauer (pickled). They did the same thing with watermelon. They used a whole melon. We ate sauer watermelon and apples all winter long. Sugar and cherry leaves was used to make the brine in which the apples and watermelon was stored in.

Great Grandma and Great Grandpa lived with us. Great Grandma was blind. They had a little room in our house. It had a small window. I remember seeing the window when my mother took food to her.

Grandpa Klein was a butcher. The only way Grandpa Klein made a living was to be a butcher. He would butcher for the people and they would give him meat in return.

One Christmas. I got a nickel. Someone tried to take it away from me so I put it in my mouth and swallowed it. I saved it, but my Mama had to find it. She found it.