

INTRODUCTION

We all wonder from time to time, I'm sure, just where it was that our backgrounds originated.

Please sit down and listen, while I tell you a story--well, not all story. Some of it is very true, and the rest--well just take it for what it's worth to each of you.

The folks told most of it, but I added some of my own as I remember it. Relax now, and spend some time with me originating.....

In the early seventeenth century, Catherine the Great issued an invitation to the German people to come to Russia. She was looking for able and thrifty farmers to work the virgin soil along the Volga and around the Black Sea.

The Czarina's offer included freedom from military service, freedom from taxes, and an amazing freedom to live as Germans in the depths of Russia.

Our ancestors came to Russia from Germany in the early ^{seventeenth} ~~eighteenth~~ century.

In 1822 Martin Lebsack (great-grandfather) was born in a village in Frank, ^{died in 1902} Russia, where he grew up in a large family, married, but we have no history of this pioneer woman.

One of the sons in the family was Conrad (father of Jacob Lebsack) born in 1852, grew up and married Anna Margareta Graening. To them were born the following children: Conrad Jr., Anna Mary, Jacob ^{Henry} (1882) and Anna Margaret. They lived together in villages with high board walls around them. They feared the Russians and there were packs of wolves roaming the country as well. These people suffered hardships and loneliness, being away from families. There were no churches, no places to shop, not to mention shopping centers. Can you imagine doing your shopping once a year, no deep freeze, no lockers, andno welfare!

In the fall after their crops were gathered in they made a trip to the mill to get their wheat ground into flour, and a minister came to the settlement at Christmas and Easter to serve communion to these people and baptize their children.

In 1889, when Jacob was seven years of age, his mother passed away. The father struggled for awhile trying to keep his family together, but it seemed too much of a job for him and he heard about a young widow in the next village of Walter. He went to visit her and soon came back with a new "mother" for his little ones. Three children were born to this union; Alexander, Henrietta and Dave. The stepmother was indeed a stepmother. As the children grew up she showed much favoritism and this was hard for the children to accept, but they did so. Things went well for the family though. They raised good crops and the boys grew up and married, brought their brides home, and another room was added on to the house each time a bride and groom arrived home. The girls in the family always moved out when they married. There were fun times too. Meetings in the evenings, singing, dancing, and courting too.

Much of the time the parents chose mates for their children, but not with Jacob.

Up the lane, at the other end of the village, lived the Kleins, John and his wife Catherine nee Schmidt, and their family.

Things had not gone as well for them. John and his brother had inherited

their small farm and stock from their father when he passed away. The brother decided it was too cold for him here, and sold out to John and moved south, away from the family. This was too much for John. When his livestock was hit by a disease and he lost everything, including the land, he became the village butcher. They also had a large family, twelve children all told. Three of them died in infancy and one little crippled son died when he was about four years of age. Mother talked about little lame Frederick often. These were the children they raised: Katherine Margaret (our mother, born in 1885), John, Catherine, Fred, Anna, Jake, George and Henrietta.

Times were hard and as the children grew they were sent out to work to help keep the family going. Katherine Margaret went to work as a sort of a "maid", more like a jack of all trades. She took care of the neighbors children, milked their cows, fed the hogs, cleaned manure out of the barns, baked bread, washed clothes, did the cooking, just anything there was to do. The ovens were much like those of the Spanish people or the Indian tribes, in an earthen wall and were built to hold six or eight loaves of bread at one time.

They made their own laundry soap, and it wasn't "Tide". They used wood ashes instead of lye, and washed on the banks of a lake on some rocks. They didn't hardly have the laundry we have. Most of their clothes were made of dark materials that didn't show the every day soil. Babies wore dark diapers during the week, with only white ones being worn on Sunday. In the summer time they only wore little shirts to cover their little bottoms. Mama told about scrubbing the floor when she was just a young girl, and her brother John, kept running over the wet floor leaving tracks. She took a very wet cloth and struck him, leaving a nice red steak across his little bottom, as he had nothing on except his little shirt.

When she was twelve years old she was sent to Frank, Russia, to attend confirmation school, a class of twelve boys and girls. After this she was old enough to leave home and work for wages, meager as they were.

She also joined the evening crowds when she could get away, but for quite a time she seemed to be an innocent onlooker.

Gee! The boys were so tall and good looking, but she was so young. It sure didn't hurt to dream though.

She could spin or comb the wool from the master's flock, as well as the older girls, and she was a comely lass with her dark hair and pretty brown eyes. When they sang, she was able to hold her own in a very pleasant alto voice.

Young Jacob loved to drive horses, but when he was just a young man, his ^{father's} grandfather Conrad Lebsack bought some camels to drive to Saratov in the fall, with a load of grain to the mill. I guess the boys must have been boys

even back in those days. Like the boys today race down Rose Avenue, those fellows raced their teams into Saratov and back, and Jacob could beat any horse teams with his camels. He didn't have to stop to water them and they could take such long steps. It sounded like such fun when Papa told us these things as we were growing up. They kept a camel stallion locked up in a stall at home. He was for breeding purposes only, and was sort of ornery. The boys had to feed, water, and exercise him. While Dad was taking his turn at this chore, the mean old fellow just bit Papa's arm above his elbow, leaving a scar for the rest of his life.

By this time young Jacob was old enough to get serious about girls, and it seems like he was able to have the pick of the crowd, but the young lady he chose ^{his} the first love was not to be for him. Her parents decided to go to America and she left with them. When Katherine was about fifteen years of age, he began noticing her, and asking her to walk with him, and such. When she had her days off to go home, she told her mother about her young boy friend, but grandmother said, "He is too old for you, and besides, you wouldn't fit into that family, we are too poor." But the young lovers never gave up. Sometimes Jacob lifted Katherine up over the wall to take a walk and to make plans. I'm sure they could see a very bright future, as most young people see at such a time.....nothing but happiness in store for them.

Again grandmother warned her, and told her she couldn't be happy living under the same roof as the young man's stepmother. On October 3, 1903, two months before her eighteenth birthday, they were married by Rev. Sammit in Russia. Jacob and Katherine moved in with his parents, and they seemed very happy. His older brother Conrad, was already married and Katherine and Conrad's wife, Marybelle, became very close. When Jacob's stepmother locked the cupboard which contained the soap, eggs, lard and whatever they needed, they always stuck together and managed quite well.

By this time there were rumors of wars, and the Kaiser was drafting young men into the service, and Jacob was one of these. Katherine stayed at home, and when she could get away, she would go to the other end of Frank (the village) and tell her mother about her loneliness and heartache. Grandma said "I told you you wouldn't be happy there."

He served in the army for three years, but never was into the actual fighting. He had been chosen as the Czarina's chauffeur, to take her wherever and whenever she she wanted to go. What a handsome young serviceman (or mother called him her soldier) he must have been, with dark hair, mustache, almost six feet tall, wearing his black polished boots. He really kept them shiny.

After three long years he was home for three weeks, and the first child was conceived. Mama was so sick with "morning sickness" and stepmother Lebsack was so

unhappy with her. She said, "What did he come home for? We didn't need him for that." But Marybelle helped her again. In the spring and summer they went outside the village where their farm ground lay, and they sowed their grain, then went out again later to harvest. They cut the grain with a scythe, and the women made a sort of a "rope" out of the straw and gathered up the loose grain and tied it into bundles, and these were stacked into neat stacks.

They packed food and whatever else they needed to gather in the harvest, and just stayed out, living in tents, ^{until} ~~under~~ harvest was completed.

This special day, Katherine was on the stack stacking the bundles all day, Marybelle was watching her and helping whenever she could. After they had gone to bed after supper, Jacob and Katherine's first son, Jake was born, on July 14, 1907. How she longed for her soldier husband, but he had had his leave, and was not able to come home now.

When fall rolled around, and the necessary work was done, Katherine found some free time and was able to visit her parents more often. Her mother felt so sorry for her and told her to be an obedient daughter-in-law, and Jacob would come home and they could be a family again. One cold stormy day she asked the old grandmother if she could rock young Jack for awhile. She just had to see her mother for a little while. She placed the child in the old blind grandmother's lap, and hurried to her parents' home. She didn't stay very late, but it was almost dusk, when on the way home she saw this man in a big fur hat and coat with the collar up, coming toward her. Something about him was so familiar, and she looked again and recognized her "soldier". What a reunion that must have been for them, seeing his wife and a son he had never seen for the first time. This must have been a real thrill.

Now, after Jacob came home from the service, they lead a very normal life once again. When young Jake was just a toddler they went to harvest again, and as he was trying out his little legs, he ran right into a scythe one of the men was using to cut grain with, cutting his leg severely. He still has a noticeable scar on his leg.

On January 11, 1908, Frederick was born.

Once again, there were rumors of war. The Tsarina or Empress Alexandra was also expecting a child, and if this was a son (after already having four daughters) and an heir, the soldiers would draw straws, and the lucky ones would be able to return home. The child was a boy, and Jacob was one of the lucky ones to return home.

John was born October 2, 1909.

The younger men of the community called a meeting in the old schoolhouse and held a worship service. After many tears, the men went back to the service, but only for a short time and the country's problems were settled peacefully and the rest of them were also able to return home. The family grew by leaps and bounds, and by this

time more of the sons were married, and more children were born into this already large family. By now there was a total of twenty-two people in this household. There were problems, as there are among that many people, and there was talk of wealth in America. "Why can't we try it, we can always come back."

On October 4, 1911, the first daughter, Lydia, was born. This was the first grand daughter in the family. During this time Jacob and Katherine were making plans that would change their whole life. Grandfather was real unhappy with the young couple, and blamed Katherine for all of this. He said she was trying to take Jacob away from his homeland and his family. ^{Step}Setpmother played her cards well. She took Katherine's nicer things, linens, bedding, some of the children's things, and her new warm black coat that Grandmother Klein had made for her, and said she would give them back when they returned from America.

When Lydia was one year old, they wrote to Mr. Strasheim in Loveland, Colorado, and asked for financial aid to help them to get to this new land. Aunt Mary (Papa's sister) had married David Strasheim earlier and they had arrived in the states and had settled in Lincoln, Nebraska.

There was not much packing to be done, but what little they had was put into bundles. (No luggage in these days!) Grandma Klein packed a box of food and seven of the younger families left Frank, Russia, and went across Germany by train, arriving at the port of the Hamburg America shipping lines. Upon their arrival, they were told that there was no more room aboard the ship and they would not be able to go. Suddenly, they were approached by a small dark haired, dark eyed man, who told them that for a special price, he would be able to find room for them. Papa told us later that he was a Jew and this was his means of a livelihood, getting more money out of these desperate people.

After living in this large household for nine years, and now with four children, we were all headed for a rich, free land, or so we were told by those who had gone ahead before us.

The men on the ship spent much time on the deck, and the weather was wet and foggy most of the three weeks it took to reach Ellis Island, New York. Several of the children in the group died onboard ship, and were simply wrapped in blankets and buried in the ocean.

The folks talked about the (Lady) Statue of Liberty, but by the time the ship docked the two older boys, Jake and Fred had contacted a bad case of measles and Dad had real sore eyes from the salt air and cold. This turned out to be a trying time for them. The family was separated. Jake and Fred were admitted to the hospital and quarantined, Mama had John and Lydia in her room, and Papa was getting treated for his sore eyes. If his eyes just would not get well, they would ship him back to Russia.

Mama was beside herself with worry over Papa and the two boys.

She took the two little ones for walks and let them play on the grass. One day, she heard someone call "Mama! Mama!" She recognized the voices, those of Jake and Fred, calling to her from the window of their hospital room. She called to them, but a nurse appeared just that quick and drew the shade. She came and told Mama never to talk to them again. They refused the food that was served and simply cried for their mother. Jake's measles had settled in his eyes, and he was so sick. He kept the after affects of his measles until he had eye surgery in Sterling when he was about 16 years of age.

Some of our relatives and friends had settled in Hastings, Nebraska, as well as Lincoln and McCook, Nebraska, and some had settled near Fruita, Colorado. Dad's sister Anna had come over earlier with a group and met and married David Amen in Fruita, Colorado.

After about three weeks on Ellis Island, the family was reunited and left for Lincoln, Nebraska to stay with Aunt Mary and Uncle David Strasheim. What a joyful reunion that must have been after the long voyage and the illnesses.

The Strasheims had two children and our four plus the adults filled this small house up.

Here we were now, in a strange land, a whole new life, and Papa only knew how to farm in Russia. He couldn't speak a word of English. What was he going to do with his little brood in this place? After a short time at Aunt Mary's, he left us and took the train for Hastings, Nebraska in search of work. How can you get a job when you can't speak a word to make yourself understood? But he was young, and in those days there were no welfare commodities or checks, and he was very willing and able to do most anything to prove himself. The folks back in Russia had told him they would see us back in a short time.

Mr. Yashka Wagner, an old friend, was a great help to Papa. When he arrived in Hastings, he said the Burlington railroad was hiring people to work and went with him to see about a job. Just one applicant ahead of Papa, and the foreman was a man that Papa had played with back home. He hired the first man, but fired him and Papa got a job as car inspector and worked on the night shift on the Burlington Railroad. He learned the language and the ways of his new country quickly, worked ^{very} hard for fifteen cents an hour, eight hours per day, for one year, and then he got a raise, twenty-two cents an hour. He remained ^{there} for four years. When he had had his job a week, he was issued a "pass", and brought his family to Hastings on the train.

Mr. Wagner had rented a small white three-room house for us. Mrs. Wagner's (Aunt Marybelle to us kids) brother lived on a small farm just outside of town, and they had fruit trees, a large garden, which they shared with us. They had seven children, so there were always clothes they had outgrown. Mrs. Wagner gave us some

extra bedding, and we settled in our new home.

When we left our home in Russia, Lydia had just learned to walk, but by this time had forgotten it all and just sat and looked and cried when the boys went to play.

The weather here was different than we were accustomed to, and it was hard for Papa to work all night and try to sleep during those hot humid summer Nebraska days, especially with children running through the house, but I guess we soon learned to be quiet.

The neighbors told him to order a keg of beer and put it in the cellar under the house and to take a drink before breakfast when he got home in the morning. This seemed to help his appetite. These were the days of saloons, so obtaining the beer was no problem.

Lydia finally learned to walk by the time she was two years old, and Mama could relax a bit. Now there were rumors of another war, this one our new homeland was involved in.

On April 19, 1914, Clarence Albert, our first natural born American was born. Mama had a hard time regaining her strength after his birth.

In the spring of 1914, Mr. Casper Lebsack (don't think he was related) helped Papa borrow some money to help Grandma and Grandpa Klein and their family come to America. They arrived April 11, 1914. Catherine (Mama's sister) remained in Russia where she had married John Walker at a young age, where she later died.

Grandparents Klein had found work in the beetfields near Scottsbluff, Nebraska, and moved into a beet shack. Papa got a "pass" for us again, and went to spend the summer with them. There were eight of them and six of us. We must have filled that beet shack to overflowing! Papa stayed in Hastings at his railroad job.

When fall came, the boys started to school, and when Lydia was four, she started to Kindergarten. We still couldn't speak English very well, and sometimes had problems in school. How do you ask the teacher if you can go to the restroom? The first day of school, the teacher had to call John in out of the other room, to interpret Lydia's request.

It seems I can still smell the odor that came through the swinging door of the saloon when we walked by, cheese on rye and beer.

Our class went for walks in the park and the teacher gave us peanuts to feed the squirrels. We would stop at the Blacksmith shop to watch the man shoe a horse, and he would give us horse shoe nails to take home.

We had some next door neighbors that we met again later in Sterling, Mr. and Mrs. Sorch. She was such a timid little woman. They had three daughters, and were as poor as we were, except we had more kids. They had a lean to porch built on to

their little house, and she would slice apples and spread them out on a sheet on the roof of the porch to dry. This was so close to our fence, our boys would climb up on the fence onto her roof, and eat the apples. She would call to Mama, "Mrs. Lebsack, your boys are stealing my apples." John said if she wouldn't put them up there we wouldn't take them.

I'm sure Mama had her hands full raising the children, mostly by herself during this time.

With a family this size, new clothes were at a minimum, so mending and patching were the next thing to do. After patching both knees of Fred's pants very neatly, as only Mama could do, she reprimanded Fred for some of his actions. In retaliation he went out into the alley, sat down on a bucket, and proceeded to undo the patches off both knees of his pants. The things boys won't do.....

The Casper Lebsacks across the street had a red milch cow with horns. I can remember Mrs. Lebsack milking just outside the house. They always shared their milk with us. They had several children; Pauline, Evelyn and Herbert that came over to play with us.

On October 5, 1916, another baby girl joined our family, and was named Leona Pauline. Papa decided he couldn't feed us all on his railroad salary and Mama was just not getting strong. She only weighed 107 lbs. at this time.

By this time, the Amen family that had settled in Fruita, discovered they didn't have good water rights on their farms, and sold out and moved to Proctor, Colorado to farm. This family consisted of Grandpa and Grandma Amen, Conrad and Katherine Margaret and their four children, George and Alice and their five children, David and Anna (Papa's sister) and their five children, Henry and Henrietta and their six children, Carl and Katie and their three children, a sister and her husband, Henry and Henrietta Krieger and their three children. They had bought and all settled in their sod houses in the Skinner Draw. Papa wrote to Uncle Dave, inquiring about the work at Proctor, and we got a job working in the beet fields. Dad worked on the Blue Ranch for the Jim Hamils. In the spring of 1917 a group of people went from Hastings to Proctor on a beet train. The only names I can remember were the Adam Trupps and us.

Uncle Dave Amen came to meet us with a team of horses hitched to a wagon, and took our belongings plus the eight of us to their home, where we stayed for a few days while they and the folks cleaned and whitewashed the shack and set up the beds, stove and table. This shack on the Jim Hamil Ranch was our first home near Proctor. The Trupps moved into a chicken house on the Charlie Morton farm, but they didn't stay as Mrs. Trupp said she wasn't about to live in anybody else's chicken house.

If we thought this was going to be better than living in Hastings, we had another guess coming. It may have been better financially, but the hardships the folks went

through were something else.

They were in the beet fields early and late, and it was dry and hot. I'm sure Mama worried about us at home alone in the shack; Lydia, Clarence and Leona.

When the beet thinning was finished Papa helped at the ranch with the haying and irrigating. Hamils had given us a cow to milk and I remember Papa brought some home made ice cream home whenever they had some. They always put up ice in the winter time.

This was the time we met Mrs. John Barney and her trotting mare and two wheeled cart. She could really drive that horse, whip in hand with her lines, the cart loaded with kids, what a treat. Mr. Barney had been arrested when officers found his still in an irrigation ditch, covered with weeds, and he was sent to prison.

Papa came home from work one evening during beet thinning time with a cute cuddly puppy, a real plaything for the children Mr. Hamil said. He was like all puppies, running into your feet, nipping at your heels or just plain in the way. Leona was about eight or nine months old at the time and Lydia and Clarence stayed at the shack, supposedly to care for ^{her}. We had walked to the beetfield before, but this special day Mama saw us coming and she knew something was wrong. The puppy wasn't with us. She started toward home to meet us. When she asked where the puppy was we told her he was locked up in the shack with the baby. When she opened the door, Leona was in the cradle on her little knees screaming and the dog was reaching in to snap at her feet when he could reach her. Her little legs were scratched and bleeding and that was the end of the puppy.

In spite of all this, we made it through the summer. Now it was beet topping time, something new to learn again, and the boys were so young to be in the field all day wielding those large beet knives and piling those heavy beets, but they did their best. The folks got up at two in the morning, dressed as warmly as they could, and took their lanterns and knives and went to work.

It was the fall of 1917, Mama was just pregnan^t again and very tired, not feeling very good. I wonder what must have gone through her mind at these times. But she told us later that Papa said if he could make enough money he would go back to Russia again. She said that just wouldn't ever happen to her. Even all the problems were better than that. Mr. Hamil was a kind and understanding man. They had five children of their own at this time, and he knew what Mama was going through. The snows came early that year and it was so cold. He hired some Mexican help and they were good too, and between them they got all the beets out and taken care of. Papa didn't mind the work, but he did want something better for his family, and had looked around for a farm to rent.

An Eastern lady, and I mean lady, was living on a dryland quarter near Uncle

Daves, and she was a widow with a small son, Billy. She was ready to go back east. She had had enough of these hardships here. We moved into the small farm house with ^{her} ~~her~~. She was packing to move out and we were moving in. It must have been utter confusion.

She and Mama grew to be close friends in the short time we were all together. For some reason she had to stay longer, and they used to drive her black mare to Sterling to shop. This was 23 miles, sometimes they stayed all night.

Finally she and Billy left and Papa bought four horses and several cows, some farm machinery, and was ready to start a new venture. Uncle Dave thought Papa should have more farm ground and helped him rent 40 acres of irrigated land from Mr. Skinner.

This was war time in our new country, times were hard, but we always had enough to eat even if it was cold corn bread much of the time. We had a Red Cross pasted on our front door. Everything was in sort of a turmoil once again. There was little white flour in the country. We used cornmeal instead. To us this was not new. We had been poor all our lives, and don't think we kids realized things were too different except conversation after church and in the grocery store. We never went anyplace else.

Once again it was planting time on our new farm and we had 40 acres of beets and our dryland was planted to beans.

May 23, 1918, Rachel was born.

I don't remember much about the religious aspect of our life during this time, except that prayer meetings were held at Grandpa Amens's soddie, and how those people did sing. These were their native meeting songs from Russia.

The boys grew fast and were all boys too. One day they caught a stray tomcat in the yard and tried to chop his tail off with a hatchet. Each try the cat moved and he had several notches before he got away. The next day Conrad Amen came down and asked the boys what they had done to his cat. They never tried that again.

This was a hard year for Papa. He cultivated, irrigated, helped hoe the beets, and now it was fall and topping and hauling time. During this time he became very ill with the "flu". Dr. Hoff came from Iliff and fixed him a strong "Hot Toddy" and put him to bed. When he woke up the next morning his fever had broken and his bed was soaked with perspiration, but in a few days he was back on the beet wagon and haul^{ed} all the beets that Mama and the boys piled and topped. He went to Hastings ^{to sell the beets} that we still had, so there was no turning back now.

Papa was getting acquainted in Sterling too. There were two quarters of good irrigated ground just west of Mrs. Vanack's place that belonged to the Cheairs Investment, Co. Mr. Grady Cheairs, one of the owners, and Papa got together and

and Papa decided to break the lease with Mrs. Vanack and farm 160 acres of good farm ground. Mr. Cheairs built a new house just about a quarter of a mile to the west of Mrs. Vanack's farm.

The older boys went to school in Proctor for a short time, but now Jake, Fred, John and Lydia went to the Little White School House--The McGinley School. Here we met Tom and Loretta Dugan just catty-corner from the school. Tom Jr., was a tall auburn haired freckled faced young man. Loretta was a pretty curly haired petite young lady. She and I (Lydia) became very close. Many evenings after school, she walked home with me, and we had such good times together. Mr. and Mrs. Dugan were Irish Catholics, and very nice people. He maintained our mail route with a four horse team hitched to a drag or float. We called it. Carrying the box for the horses' grain for their noon meal and Mr. Dugan's lunch was also included on this float.

Raymond and Denzel Pyle lived about one mile north of the school. Pyles originally came from Wyoming. Denzel was sort of a comedian, teased the girls, showed us how he could put a whole banana or hard boiled egg in his mouth at one time. He always brought his bicycle to school and gave the girls rides.

Dan McGinley lived a quarter mile south of the school. They moved away after Dan graduated from the ninth grade.

The Omans lived on the hill about a quarter mile northwest of the school.

Later Wendell and Lillian Amen and Emma Zinn joined us, but this was after Clarence and Leona started to school.

Miss Claire Campbell was one of the first teachers I can remember. She was a very small young lady and seems like she had some problems with the bigger boys. We had from the first through the ninth grade, so some of the boys were six feet tall.

Some of the Amen children went to school with us too. Edna and Lena, our cousins, walked with us and many evenings we had real arguments and all went home mad at each other. Then Uncle Dave and Aunt Annie came down to our house and straightened us out again.

In the spring when it was nice and warm, we would move our seats out on the big open plank porch on the front of the schoolhouse and have class outside. We played pomp pomp pull-away, last couple out, drop the handkerchief, baseball, and in the wintertime we played fox and geese. There were many more students, some came and went, seemed like we had some new ones every year.

Denzel Pyle and I started together and were the only kids in our class until we graduated from the eighth grade.

When Omans moved away, Schwindts moved in. They were German Catholics. We really didn't understand or realize the difference except when we had fights on the playground and Armaine Schwindt would scream "Darn Protestants", and the boys would

yell back, "Darn Catholics". Many of these people moved back into Sterling for the winter and come back in the spring to work in the beet fields. A section of Sterling was called the Russian Corner.

Our lunches, a piece of rye or white homemade bread, a piece of homemade sausage, and an apple. During the war it was cold cornbread and homemade liverwurst. It took some time before I could eat cornbread and say I really liked it.

But, we just grew like Topsy in "Uncle Tom's Cabin", and had more babies.

Now we were ready to move into our new home. We actually had a house with two bedrooms, a living room, dining room and kitchen plus a small room about 6 x 8 that was to be our first indoor bathroom. It was never finished and Mama set a single bed in it and Jake slept there.

We never hired any beet help. Mama and the kids did all of that while Papa did the farming with horses. By this time we had Prince and Brownie, the meanest horses we ever had. Run away they did, seemed like almost every day. Jake was old enough to help now, but it didn't take much to spook that team. They always came home when they were tired running. Sometimes Papa took his frustrations out on Jake. Mama always felt so sorry for the boys because they had to work so hard and then these things always happened too.

It seems like all the money we could make was put right back into the farm and Mama just made do with whatever was left over. She did the washing for the whole family on the washboard and tub. During the winter Papa would do the "long Johns" that he and the boys wore, because they were too heavy for Mama.

We had a big black iron kettle, and in the spring Papa would dig a hole out in the yard and build a fire and put the cracklings and used greases, bacon, sausage or whatever was left over, and that wasn't too much, would add lye and water and cook lye soap.

We always did our own butchering, salted the side pork, fried down the pork steaks, and always had canned beef in half gallon jars on the cellar shelves. Our milk and eggs, friers, and a big garden kept us fed. We never ate out, not even a hamburger. Noone else around there did either.

By this time another little girl came to our house, Emma Katherine. She was born April 27, 1920.

When Christmas came around again, Grandpa and Grandma Klein were living in Hastings. Aunt Anna Klein worked in a cigar shop, rolling cigars. George and Jake Klein worked in the brickyard, and they got along, but Grandma was real sick so Mama took Leona, Rachel and Emma and went to Hastings to visit. When she was gone Papa had his hands full getting us to school, cooking, washing and getting ready for Christmas. He tried to make biscuits but they just didn't brown in that old oven.

Mama stayed three weeks and by the time she came home we had a real nice blue cook stove in the kitchen.

Then it was spring and planting time. Papa got the ground all ready, the corn lister was greased up and filled with seed corn, and he and Mama took the horses, Prince and Brownie, and two others, hitched them up and put Mama on the seat, told her what to do, and he went to burn weeds and clean the big irrigation ditch. This looked like such a load for the horses so Mama raised the lever on the lister, planting shallower and that way she got a bigger field done sooner. But Wow! All at once she found herself on the doubletree behind Prince and Brownie. The horses seemed to feel her fright, the lister had hit a big rock and she had fallen off the lister. They stood perfectly still and she crawled back on the seat and went on with her planting. She had bumped a knee though, and had a sore leg most of the summer. Her cornfield was one of the best and she finally told Papa what she had done.

When we had hay to stack, she did the stacking. Papa was on the haybuck and Fred and Jake handled the stacker horses. The neighbors marvelled at the well-shaped hay stacks Lebsacks had. When they asked who stacked them and he told them, Mama did, they could hardly believe it.

Whenever Pyles or Stewarts or any of the other neighbors needed help they always asked for help from the German people because they really worked and always earned their money.

The second year we planted all the south quarter and fifteen acres of the north field was planted into spring wheat, of which we had a wonderful crop. We cut all of it with a binder. Papa did all the cutting, and Mama and Jake and Fred shocked. Papa hired a young man to help shock, Ralph Bagent, but he didn't last very long. He said "That old lady must be crazy to work like that." But they did get it all shocked and now it was time to thresh. Bill Stewart from Peetz, came to do all the threshing in the community, and this was a time of more hard work, good food, and some visiting. The neighbors always helped each other, even the women helped with the cooking and the baking. There were six pies to bake every day, bread to bake, chicken or geese or ducks to dress, lunches to take to the field, usually cake or coffeecake, and jugs of cold water. When threshing was over we sold our wheat for \$2 per bushel, which was a very good price, better than for anything else.

There were always babies to care for and ^{chores} ~~chore~~ never stopped.

By this time Grady Cheairs was building a beautiful new house on the "other place" we had been renting, and it was just about time to move. We little kids used to go over after school and look around. One afternoon we flushed the stool in the basement bathroom. When the water came it really scared us and we hurried home.

This new house was really something. Two bathrooms, a full basement, carpets on the floors, linoleum in the kitchen, drapes, built-in cupboards, and our own electric light plant, and that nice new kitchen range from Christmas in the kitchen.

By this time the Amen school was finished and the teacher, Clara Stewart, rode past our house on her white horse every morning. Lots of times she rode past our school in the afternoon to spend the night with a boyfriend. There was whispering and snickering among the pupils, but she married him later.

Some of our teachers were Clare Campbell, Mr. Church, Irene Neller, Ann Corrigan, Vivian Gill and Ruth Stewart. We had such good times in school. Our programs were something else and the picnics the last day of school topped the year. We always had homemade ice cream.

Our county superintendent was Miss Flora A. Allison, who was also our county nurse. She was so tall and walked so straight, and when she visited our school we were always on our best behaviour. I was ten years old at the time, and so underweight she told me to bring a pint of milk and bread and butter and rest on the recitation bench while the other kids played. I said we hardly had enough milk for our calves, but I rested during recess time all winter.

Freda Marie was born July 27, 1922.

By this time the Amens had built new homes. George, Conrad and David. Henry and his family had moved to Loveland, Colorado, and Mr. and Mrs. Philip Constance had moved on their place. They had the children the ages of ours and we became good friends.

By now we were having church in the Amen School. Sometimes a student pastor and sometimes we had a minister year around. One of these, Rev. and Mrs. Steiger, were from Switzerland. They had a daughter named Miriam, just a baby, when they came. They lived in our "other house." They were really nice to us kids. One day when we were thinning beets right near their house, he brought out some ice cream for us. I don't think we had ever had store bought ice cream before. Rev. Steiger said he thought we just worked too hard on such hot days.

Some of the other ministers were Rev. Kalmbach, Rev. Hoelzer, Rev. Eckhardt, Rev. Amen, Strauch, and Mehl. We had a choir in our church, held Christian Endeavor on Sunday evenings. After C. E. the older kids would play games and visit. Lots of times we walked home after dark.

By this time Mr. Cheairs and his hired man, Carl Zwetzig, had built a corral, a barn and a fence around the house, and planted trees in the front yard. But we still spent our summers thinning beets, hoeing them and milking cows, feeding calves and hogs. 1926 Grandma Klein (Mama's mother) died at this time, and Grandpa came out later to stay at Uncle Fred Kleins and sometimes at our house.

In the spring of 1922 Papa went to the bank and borrowed money to send back to his family in Russia to help pay for the transportation of his half-brother Dave, and two nephews, Carl and George, brother Conrad's sons. They got word that someone had gotten ahold of the money and boys could not come to America, so Papa started all over again and finally, in the early fall, he went to Proctor one Sunday right after church and back with these three young men. Their clothes were very different, their haircuts were odd, and they couldn't speak a word of English, but that was no problem. We all spoke German too. After they had greeted us all, Mama made them go into the bathroom and one after another, they shed their clothes and Mama burned their clothes and gave them new ones, because they were so covered with lice due to riding in stock cars like cattle through Germany, and remaining like this during their voyage to America. We were all so happy to have them with us. They stayed until the beets were hauled and then Carl moved down to the John Crum home and worked as a farm laborer all winter. He was killed in a train accident in the spring. George and Dave stayed and helped with the corn picking and anything else we had to do. This gave us a total of nine of our own children, the folks and these two young men. We butchered a hog about once a month and Mama baked bread every other day. Papa made a large wooden box. We called it a trough, and we used it to mix our sausage when we butchered, and then used it as a bread box. Since we always milked cows, and shipped cream, we always made our own butter in a crock with a long stick with a paddle at one end, and this was poked up and down until the cream turned to butter. Earlier we used to trade some butter for groceries down at Lamb's grocery store in Proctor.

During this time, Vivian Gill was the teacher at our school, and she expanded her program to include a session of night school, in which Dave and George Lebsack enrolled, as well as Papa. This eventually led to Papa becoming an American citizen that same year (1922), which also naturalized all of the children born in the old country.

Ernestine was born May 24, 1924, to be the last baby of this family.

Vivian Gill was a very special teacher to Lydia. She asked her to spend a week end at her home in Sterling. As I had never been away from home before, we had a coke at the drug store fountain and went to her church and sang "Bringing in the Sheaves". All the songs I had ever heard in church were German, and it seemed odd to me that the words could be so different but to the same melody.

John and Fred attended and graduated from High School in Sterling. While attending they stayed at the home of Mr. and Mrs. John Schledwitz. Jake, Lydia, Leona and Rachel did not graduate from high school. Emma graduated from Iliff; Freda and Ernestine graduated from Crook. By this time we were attending church in Sterling. A new Congregational Church was started.

In 1929 the crash came. The beets froze in the ground, we couldn't market the potatoes. Then Papa shipped cattle. When he came home from this trip to Omaha, he walked the 3½ miles from Proctor, and Mama asked why he didn't call and he said "It's real bad, one of the men from Loveland committed suicide because he lost everything." But he just kept trying.

On Feb. 8, 1931, we had our first wedding. Jake married Natalie (Dolly) Kiel, and cousin George married her sister Ernestine, at a double ceremony in Sterling with a big dinner at our house.

The next year, January 24, 1932, John married Mary Fritzler, another big wedding at the church and noodle soup with all the good homemade things with angel food cake, and another young farm couple ready to begin their life.

Now we needed help again to get the beets hauled and one of the hired men came back this year to haul. Ted Dobler from Burlington, Colorado, and on Feb. 22, 1934, Lydia and Ted were quietly married at the Lebsack home, no church wedding, just immediate family, and they went to their home in Burlington. We were poor, poor again.

In 1937 Clarence married Esther Hettinger. Fred had gone to California during this time and married Alma Peterson this same year.

In 1938 Leona married Esther's (Clarence's wife) brother, Bob. After they were married a few years, and had two little boys, Bob passed away, and in May of 1946 she married Dan Steinmetz in Greeley.

Rachel also married a local young fellow, Albert (Pack) Schuppe on Nov. 24, 1940.

In June of 1941, Emma married her highschool sweetheart, Raymond Kautz. After a short time Raymond was inducted into the Army and Emma lived in California until he came back and they bought a farm there.

Now Ted and Lydia were living on a farm near Iliff and his brother Walter was attending Theological Seminary in Yankton, South Dakota. A group of young singers from the college toured the country singing gospel music at the churches. Among them was Hugo Flag, and on Aug. 22, 1943, Hugo married Freda and she became the minister's wife.

Now the folks only had Ernestine at home. Papa was tired, and they were talking sale. In 1944, they had a farm sale, rented the farm to Rachel and her husband, and bought a lovely home in Greeley, Colorado. On June 24, 1946, Ernestine married her high school sweetheart, Fred May in another big church wedding, along with all the trimmings.

Papa became ill with sugar diabetes and later Leukemia. He passed away February 16, 1959, and was buried in the Sterling, Colorado cemetery.

Then Mama sold her big house and bought a smaller home near her church, where

she lived alone for 16 years until her death on December 3, 1975. She was buried beside Papa in Sterling.

They had celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary in 1953. It was always so nice to go to Grandma's house. She always had homemade rye bread, German sausage and homemade noodles. She could cook a meal in such a hurry, no matter how many grandkids showed up. Seems like most of them wanted Grandma's consent when they married. She became a naturalized citizen in 1953. One of the questions they were asked when they applied was "What is flying over the courthouse?" She later told us the man ahead of her answered "pigeons" instead of the correct answer, the American Flag.

When there was a visiting minister, it seems he always came to our house. After they moved to Greeley they invited the church choir and the minister for waffle suppers. They enjoyed a few real good years before Papa became so ill, but he was always a farmer at heart, even though they lived in town.

Mama was a quilter, all the children and grandchildren receiving quilted quilts that she had made. She loved to crochet and made noodles with her German noodle machine.

At the present time, this is the status of this illustrious family:
August, 1984.

Jake Lebsack and wife Dolly, reside south of Holyoke. He has three sons, Robert and wife Frances; Richard and wife Mary Lou; and Allen and wife Corrine.

Fred and wife Molly reside in San Pedro, California. He has one son Wayne and wife Vera who live near them in California.

John and wife Mary reside south of Sterling. They have two sons; Donald and wife Joyce of Sterling and John Jr., and wife Dennis.

Lydia lost her husband, Ted in 1981, and resides in Burlington. They have three children; Bonnie and husband Dean, and Tom and wife Rose of Burlington, and Stan and wife JoAnne of Edmond, Oklahoma.

Clarence and wife Esther reside in Sterling. They have four children; Lyle and wife Sharon who reside in Chicago, Ill.; Tom and wife Linda who resides in Tokyo, Japan; Steve and wife Betty of Denver, Colorado; and Sharon of Hattiesburg, Mississippi.

Leona and husband Dan reside in Greeley, and have five children; Donnie and wife Betty of Greeley; Delbert and wife Jean of _____; Margaret and husband Jerry of Denver, Colorado; Loren and wife Marge of Littleton, Colorado; and Lowell and wife Jenny of Denver.

Rachel and Pack (Albert) still reside on the home place near Proctor and have three children; Gordon and wife Earlene of Iliff; Marla and husband Earl of Akron;

and Janie and husband Rich of Brush.

Emma and husband Ray, live in Visalia, California. They have three children:

Judy _____

Jim Visalia _____

Ray San Francisco _____

Freda and husband Hugo reside in Burwell, Nebraska. They have four children;

Kenton New York _____

Linda Nebraska _____

Cindy Minnesota _____

and Susan of Aspen _____

Ernestine and husband Fred live in Greeley. They have two sons, Randy and wife

Michaela of Denver _____ and Rick and wife Nancy of

Denver _____

The family has a true story of many immigrant families who have come to America seeking, finding, some with many heartaches and sorrows, but this family has truly been blessed in many ways.

All ten children are living as of August 18, 1984. When you think of the span of years, the many happenings, the sweat and effort that went into all of it, it makes you wonder how some of the present generation would cope with many of the situations which faced these people. Even with ten children, this family still reached out to help many of those around them, some still less fortunate than themselves.

Jacob Lebsack and Katherine Klein Lebsack have truly left a legacy for this family to follow; a love of freedom, nature and family.

*Written by Lydia Lebsack Dohler
in 1985.*

*Typed and put together by
Bonnie Dohler Witzel.*