

Traverse County

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**Telling It
The Way
Things Were**

by Jacob Schmitz

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The following pages are memories of the author of people and happenings with which he became familiar during his more than eight decades of life in Traverse County, Minnesota. The author used no notes to compile this account of the county. Relying upon his memory to recapture the many incidents recounted by his father, one of the early pioneer settlers in Traverse County, and after talking with many of the older residents of the county today, the author has set to paper the following account. It is not intended that this book be considered a complete history of Traverse County, but rather a collection of the author's memories of his years in the county.

By the author

1911

1. I am Jacob Schmitz from Wheaton, Minneosta. What I am trying to do is write a story on the early history of Traverse County.

My father was born in St. John's, Germany, in 1854. When he was three months old his family migrated to the United States. They left Baden, Germany, on a sailboat on the 15th day of March, 1855, and spent 90 days on the ocean due to severe weather and storms. My grandfather told my dad that there were days they had to take the sails down, and they would drift back some days farther than they had gone forward the day before.

There were 53 people on board this boat. After 90 days they landed in Boston. They were out of food and had been out of water on many occasions. Whenever a storm came up, every available utensil was set out to catch rain water, but by the time they landed they had neither water nor food.

They had relatives living over in this country and had gotten in touch with them, so they knew their destination. They left Boston as soon as possible and came as far as Wausau, Wisconsin, by train, then hired a wagon to bring their trunk and other earthly belongings with them as far as the Mississippi River. They crossed the river on a barge and came to a place which was later named St. Paul.

There were no railroads out of St. Paul at the time they arrived. There were some folks and relatives living down in the Medicine Lake area, where they intended to make their home, who met them in the St. Paul area and brought them out to their place and kept them there at their homes.

My grandfather bought an eighty acre tract of woodland. The neighbors all came together to help cut down the trees and shape them into condition so they could build them into a fairly good-sized log house. After the log house was built, providing shelter for his family, my grandfather went through the same process and built a log barn.

My dad talked about the old log barns during the severe winter nights. After they had obtained a few cattle and a lot of small calves, my grandfather would get my father and Uncle Pete up at night about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning to go out to the barn and get the calves up and make them move around to keep their circulation going. Many of the folks were losing their young stock because they would freeze to death.

After they had gotten situated into their own home, my grandfather bought a team of horses, along with a cow, from some neighbors. I often remember some of the remarks my dad made about how hard up they were and how tough times were. He said that they raised the family on cottage cheese.

The wildlife was plentiful at that time due to the large amount of woodland and the many deer running wild in that part of the state, along with a large amount of grouse. My father used to tell us about the carrier pigeons which are now extinct in this county. He said that there were acres and acres of trees which were solidly filled with carrier pigeons at night.

There was no school when my ancestors first arrived, so they built their own school. My dad was one of the few people at that time who had an opportunity to get a little education. He received what they called a fourth grade education.

When he was sixteen years old he got a job in a little inland town by the name of St. Anthony and would get home occasionally on weekends. But most of the time he would have to walk quite a distance, so he would just stay with the people he was working for.

His job was in a blacksmith shop. He received a salary of \$10.00 per month plus board and room. He stayed with the person who owned the shop and received very good training in the blacksmith business. There were no machine companies at that time and everything used for a machine had to be built. Wagon wheels and hubs all had to be made. This was all done by hand.

They also built walking plows. The trick to building these was to get the curve made properly and the slab of steel had to be polished down so that it would scour. My dad got to be quite good in that line. He stayed at the blacksmith shop for five years until he reached his 21st birthday.

While he was a young boy, working at St. Anthony, one of my dad's buddies was James J. Hill, who later became the foreman of the Great Northern Railroad when they started extending it westward. The rails had to be hauled across the Mississippi River by barges. Construction started westward out of St. Paul and the first town they built to was St. Anthony.

My dad had a brother named Pete Schmitz, older by a couple of years. Pete's trade was that of a carpenter. He ran into a little tough luck one day. He was helping to build a church and it was just about completed when they were putting on the steeple. When they were trying to put it in place, the steeple slipped away from them and carried Pete and two other boys down off the building onto the ground. One of the carpenters was killed instantly and the other one came down unhurt, but my uncle Pete damaged his hip, which caused him to have a little limp for the rest of his life.

The by-word in those days was, "Go west young man, go west," and that was where everybody was heading.

When my dad and Uncle Pete decided to come out to western Minnesota to homestead, there was no such thing as Traverse County. This was what they called Minnesota Territory. In the treaty with Canada in 1862, the boundary lines were decided upon between the two countries. This was called Minnesota Territory which included North Dakota, South Dakota and Minnesota. In the year 1878, the population from immigrants was ample to declare Minnesota a state.

When my dad arrived out here, to what is now called Dollymount Township, he, along with Uncle Pete, staked a claim in the fall of 1875.

After staking his claim, my dad went back and stayed with his parents. Then in the spring, he and brother Pete brought back a double set of machinery that he had built. One set was for my dad, the other for Pete, so that they would both have the same kind of machinery. The two of them homesteaded just 40 rods apart.

Everyone in those days would usually pick out a place close to some sort of drainage, as the water level was so high at that time and most of the country was under water. This area through here, when the first explorers came into the country from Washington D. C., was called a Glacier Lake. Everything between the banks of Traverse Lake to Sauk Centre was one solid lake. The area around what is now Charleville was recorded as having 20 feet of water which was considered one of the deepest spots. The only land that was visible was some hills that were sticking out above the water level.

As the water level receded, the Red River cut a waterway leading north up into the Hudson Bay in Canada. The high water pressure also cut what was called the Little Minnesota River in the Browns Valley area and that led into what is now known as Big Stone Lake which outlet ended up in the Minnesota River and then led into the Mississippi River.

The Indian uprising had been in 1867 down in the Browns Valley area. Some of the first whites were in that area and the Indians were not too happy about being pushed back onto a reservation. My dad would tell of the times that he would be out in the field, breaking up the sod, when he would see a dark object coming way off on the horizon. It was usually an Indian from the Cass Lake Reservation going down to the Sisseton area to visit with some of his relatives.

The Indian families were split up after the uprising. A family that would have a few braves in their family would possibly be shipped up to the Cass Lake area and the mother and dad and the smaller ones would stay down at Sisseton. The reverse was also true with the braves shipped to Sisseton, while the mother, dad and smaller children would stay at Cass Lake. This was done for the purpose of not having too many braves in a group where they might decide to cause more uprisings.

My father's homestead was out near the 12 Mile Creek, about three miles east of Dumont, Minnesota. The closest town at that time was Morris, Minnesota. My dad built a small cabin which we call a fish house today. It was only 12'

by 14' and he lived in that for six years.

The railroad kept coming west and got as far as Litchfield; then they extended it to Morris through Willmar and as the immigrants kept coming in they would move it on farther.

At one time the government asked Bishop Ireland from St. Paul to go over to Ireland and try to bring back around 60 families to come to this country to make their homes. The reason for this was to get the area south and west of Willmar built up, for they would not extend the railroad unless there were enough people living in that area. Fifty-three families were brought back. Most of those immigrants settled around DeGraff and Murdock. You may have heard the saying "The DeGraff Irish" because this was a completely Irish settlement in that area.

The first thing that the Irish did when they settled in the southern part of the county was to build a church at Collis, Minnesota. I can remember when I was a little tyke, there were no roads and we drove straight across meadow land all the way to Collis to go to church. Back in those days, going that far to church was like a day for visiting other people. The people would get there about one-half to three-quarters of an hour before church would begin and would stand around outside visiting and socializing.

It is so much different today. If you walk slowly coming out of church, by the time you get outside there isn't a car parked out in front anymore. The socialability of the people in those days was amazing and everybody was everybody else's friend. If there was a wedding, it was announced in church; they never sent out invitations since everybody was invited, and usually everybody came. I can remember when my older sisters got married, the people came from miles and miles around to be there. They were so happy to have the opportunity to get someplace and get out with the people.

If anybody was going to build a new building or an addition to his home, he didn't have to hire any carpenters. Everybody would pitch in and help. There was always someone who was handy with a saw and another would mark the lumber for cutting and still others would be nailing it together. A complete barn about 30 feet by 50 feet could be built in two or three days. All it took was to call a social gathering along with possibly a keg of beer and that was all the pay anybody wanted.

It is so different today. I am not condemning the people today; just comparing them with their ancestors. There were also no classes of people where one thought he was better than another. People felt that the more friends they knew, the more they got out of life.

I can remember that my dad always tried to keep enough grain seed on hand so that in case they would not get a crop one year he would have enough for the next year to plant. Once in awhile some fellow would come over and say, "George, I need 300 bushels of wheat but I haven't got any money, but will give you my note until fall." My dad would tell them that they could have the wheat but I don't want your note. "If your word is no good your note won't be any good either."

One day a fellow came over and he said, "I want to start seeding next week but I don't have any seed grain on hand. I went to the bank and they turned me down, but they told me that if I could get a good signer, they would give me the money," which was \$300.00 to buy the seed he needed. My dad said, "You have your buggy and team here don't you?" He answered yes and my dad said, "What's keeping us from going to town right now? I will go to town and sign your note for you." He did. My dad came home with his \$300.00 and the guy came over and got his seed grain at the time he needed it. That's the way people were in those days.

When my father and his brother Pete moved up here, the only homesteader in the eastern part of Traverse County in the Dollymount township area was John Doll. He was also from the same area as my parents. He brought his whole family along, which consisted of 3 boys and 4 girls. With his wife, this was a family of nine. The boys were named Andrew, Mike and Antone. When Antone saw what conditions were like out here, like not having any neighbors for as many as 30 to 40 miles and the severe winters, he decided to go back to where he came from and spent the remainder of his life there. Both Andrew and Mike stayed here and filed for homestead. The four girls, named Emma, Kate, Lena and Mary, also stayed here.

My Uncle Mike, who was my dad's younger brother, married Lena Doll. She told me on one occasion that during the first winter they spent out here, there were eight of them who stayed in a small cabin that they had built. She said that it was only 16 feet by 20 feet and they spent the winter in it. In order to keep from freezing to death, they used buffalo chips and twists of hay for fuel.

Early farming in this area was not easy. My dad told of the time they broke up what sod they could for farming but the water level was so high they had to run barefoot behind the plow. He said the water on the lower spots would follow him down the furrow. After the black soil was upturned and layed in the sun for a while, it got so they could work it.

The crop my dad planted the first year he was up here amounted to six acres. He cut the wheat with a scythe and pounded it out with a flail. The oats he just cut off and stacked up to feed to his horses. There was plenty of grass because the whole country was open prairie. There wasn't a tree any closer than the hills of Traverse Lake.

There was a homesteader who came to the area a little later than my dad and he settled over about a mile east of where Dumont now stands. He stuck it out for five years, which was required before one could get title from the government. But as soon as he got title, he put his farm up for sale.

My mother's dad has lost his wife when my mother was 3 years old. His name was Joe Butz. Grandpa Butz was considered a first class carpenter and the only way he could make a living was to go where there was work to be done. Traverse County and all of western Minnesota was already homesteaded so he came out from St. Paul and worked in South Dakota when they started homesteading there. He got some jobs like masonry work, plastering and also building

homes.

He had heard that there was this one fellow who wanted to sell his title to his farm just one mile east of Dumont. Grandpa Butz lived on this farm for a number of years by himself, and when he finally bought the place he went and got my mother, who had reached the age of 16 by then, and his other two children, Lena and John. My dad met Joe Butz as soon as they came into this area and he got acquainted with the family right away since he only lived two miles east of them.

Back in 1867 a reservation was established west of Browns Valley. For several years after that Browns Valley was a busy place as it watched a steady flow of provisions, supplies, goods and immunities for the reservation and the Fort. This brought business but it did not bring settlement. Neighboring Minnesota regions had been almost depopulated by an Indian outbreak. The Indians were still in North Dakota; the government had not yet conducted the survey of the townships and the sections necessary as a preliminary to the granting of titles.

In 1870 there were but 13 people in the whole area of this present county of Traverse. The government survey was made in 1870 and the land opened for settlement. The original notes of the survey are on file at the office of the Traverse County Register of Deeds.

The first permanent settlement outside of Browns Valley was made in Windsor Township along Lake Travrse, where Hugh Whitely, George Schiefley and James D. Findlay, with his family, arrived from Philadelphia in September, 1871. Other settlements followed rapidly and many of the settlers were from the eastern states. A number of Irish settled in the central part of the county. The settlers were of mixed nationality. Along the Mustinka River they were mostly Scandanavians.

The County of Traverse was created and the boundary lines established and defined by an act of the Legislature on February 20th, 1862. The boundaries were again established and defined by the Legislature on March 6, 1868, and on February 14th, 1881. That was six years after my dad staked his claim.

In order to establish an election precinct, Governor C. K. Davis in 1874 appointed S. J. Brown, son of Joseph R. Brown, as county commissioner. The following year the Governor appointed Hugh Whitely and M. J. Mathews to act with S. J. Brown as the board of county commissioners. In 1879 three others were appointed.

In July 1880 there was some talk of organizing the county and establishing a county seat. This resulted in a meeting on October 9, 1880, to discuss the proposition.

A bill to organize the county was presented to the Legislature early in 1881, and on February 14, 1881, it was passed. Browns Valley was designated as the temporary county seat. The act also called for an election of county officers at the next election.

A county convention was held on March 2, 1881, and nomi-

nations were made. At the election held on March 8, 1881, the following officers were elected: Commissioners — First District, George McLane; Second District, P. D. O'Phelan; third District, H. H. Howe; Auditor, H. W. Barrett; Treasurer, J. T. Schain; Register of Deeds, H. L. Mills; Judge of Probate, W. H. Place; County Attorney, Josephus Alley; Sheriff, W. S. Barnett; Clerk of Court, S. W. Frasier; Superintendent of Schools, D. L. Roach; Court Commissioner, A. Cowles; Coroner, C. C. Mills.

The elected county commissioners held their first county board meeting on April 2, 1881, and the bonds of Auditor, County Commissioner, Clerk of District Court, Attorney, Register of Deeds, Judge of Probate, Sheriff, Treasurer and Coroner were accepted. Petitions for the following townships were granted and the time and place designated for the first meeting: the township of Leonardsville at the home of Steven Hopkins; the township of Tara on April 19, 1881, at the home of P. D. O'Phelan; on April 19, 1881, the township of Lake Valley at Wettman's store; April 19, 1881, the township of Arthur at the home of Thomas Flood; April 10, 1881, the township of Parnell at the home of James Neon; April 19, 1881, the township of Walls at the home of James O'Phelan.

The County was divided into three commissioner districts. District 1 consisted of Ranges 48, 49 of Township 126. District 2 consisted of Ranges 45, 46 and 47 of township 125 and Ranges 45 and 46 of Township 126. District 3 consisted of Ranges 47 of Township 126 and Ranges 45, 46 and 47 of Township 127, and Ranges 45, 46 and 47 of Township 129.

The Board held a three day session from July 25 to July 27th, 1881. Petition to organize the following townships was granted and a meeting was called for each: Township of Redpath at the home of Nels Nelson. On August the 13th, 1881, the township of Windsor at the home of A. J. Schmidt Jr. On August 13, 1881, the township if Tintah at the home of David S. Hall. On August 13, 1881, the township of Dollymount at the home of Gus Johnson. On October 15, 1881, a petition was granted to organize a township of Monson and Taylor and a meeting was called at the home of Peter Monson on October 27, 1881.

On October 27, 1881 at the home of J. J. Taylor the meeting for organization of Taylor Township was held. Other Townships were organized later.

The first school district was organized in the fall of 1881 in Township 126, Range 48. School Districts number 2 and 3 were organized the following year. At a meeting of the Board of County Commissioners on April 2, 1881, School Districts number 4 thru 13 were organized and before August 1882 there were 34 school districts organized. District number 13 was in Leonardsville township and I remember going to school programs down there.

Traverse County, like many other counties, had county seat conflicts. Traverse Post Office was designated by the legislature as the county seat in 1868 and again under its later name of Browns Valley. In the meantime a rival village, Maudada, had been started 15 miles away on the shore of Lake Traverse south of the mouth of the Mustinka River. The

people of this hamlet put up a strenuous fight to get the county seat. At an election held in the fall of 1881, Maudada won out by 16 votes. Several meetings of the county board were held there. The election however, was nullified by the courts. Maudada had not been platted and therefore had no official existence. Besides that, in their eagerness, the twelve legal voters in the village had cast no less than thirty ballots.

When the present Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul, and Pacific railroad was built through the county in 1880, seven villages were platted along its route. One was Wheaton. The people of that village soon started an agitation to obtain the county seat. The first effort was unsuccessful, but the people of Wheaton persisted in their efforts. Browns Valley residents felt a coming conflict and entered into a scheme with the residents of Graceville, in Big Stone County, to unite the two counties, call it "Blaine" after James G. Blaine of Maine, and have the county seat at Graceville. This plan was encouraged by several, but did not materialize.

At the same time the people of Wheaton planned a similar scheme with Ortonville. The issue was brought before the legislature to authorize a vote in both counties and a lively contest occurred which resulted in the death of the bill and a new law for removal of a county seat. Wheaton made another attempt to gain the county seat and won. In 1886 the records and officers were moved there.

The first year that my dad raised wheat, he had to thresh it out with a flail. There were no stores in the area closer than Morris. One of the pieces of necessary equipment he did bring along was a food grinder. He would grind his wheat once and then put in a finer grinding device and run it through a second time. This way he would make his own flour and meal.

Meat was no scarcity, since the country was overrun by prairie chickens and rabbits. The buffalo herd had all been killed off years before by the buffalo hunters. Many hunters came from the European countries as sportsmen just to get in on the buffalo slaughter.

The land between my dad's homestead and what is now Herman contained thousands of buffalo and the buffalo hunters would come through on horseback. One crew would go ahead and shoot the buffalo and the skinning crew would follow. The hide would be the only part of the animal that was saved. Every homesteader had an outfit made up of buffalo hides, which would include a coat, hat, mittens, etc.

My uncle, Pete Schmitz, along with his farming operation, which was getting quite large, also built a large two-story building in Dumont. The lower part was used for a grocery and dry goods store where you could buy just about anything that was on the market at that time. A similar store was on the corner in Dumont, owned by a fellow named Mervins. This was quite a thing, two general stores in Dumont. The town also had three saloons.

The post office was in the house owned by Nick Hultz. Martin Lynch came into town and he put up a hardware store on the north side of the street and in later years he put up the

building that now is the Legion Hall. In the upstairs was the Dumont Dance Hall. There used to be some terrific crowds down there.

Most of the churches in Wheaton, about seven of them in all, passed an ordinance that there could be no dances on Saturday nights, so a lot of the Wheaton people went down to Dumont for the Saturday night dances. The reason the churches passed the ordinance was because the people felt that the children would be up all night and would want to sleep the next morning instead of going to church, which really did happen in a good many cases.

The band that played the dances in Dumont was made up of my brother George, who played the violin, my sister Mary on the piano, Joe Doll and Roy Roth, who played the xylophone, and John Frisch on the slide trombone. When George couldn't get to the dance, he used to get Trombone Anderson from Wheaton to go down and help them out. Another girl also played in the band, but her name I cannot remember, and she was a whiz on the clarinet. They used to play until one or two o'clock in the morning, but at 12 o'clock the band would shut down for almost an hour so that people could go down to the restaurant and have a little lunch, then come back to finish the dance.

One particular night we really had a ball there. The regular orchestra was down having lunch and there happened to be a drifter who came into town with a set of bagpipes. Jim Burke, who was working as a salesman in a hardware store, offered this drifter fifty cents to come up and play during the break. When the regular orchestra came back from lunch, everyone was out on the floor having fun dancing to the bagpipes.

It was really a fun town; the people came from all over to the dances. I can remember nights when there were as many as 200 tickets sold. The hall was overcrowded, but it seemed that the more people that were there, the more fun they were having.

After Lynch had that building put up, a minstrel show started to come in. We had our share of entertainment in those days. One thing that caused a lot of interest was wrestling and there were some pretty interesting wrestling matches. Most of the time for the preliminaries, they had the Gauger twins getting into the ring and slugging it out at each other and the crowd really enjoyed that.

Our school was called District No. 25. When the immigrants came into the community, most of them brought families who had not a day of schooling. My dad called a meeting one night at his place and he told the neighbors that it was about time to go along with this school business, too. This was back about the time the rest of the county was organized for schools. He told them they could have one acre on the northeast end of his quarter which he would donate to the school district if they wanted to build a school there. There were many people who were 20 to 26 years old coming back to school. My dad had been married at that time for a year, but he went back to school for one winter.

Back in those days it was only compulsory to go 40 days

to school. Most started in fall and would quit again about the time spring work started up. Our school house was about 16 feet by 20 feet in size and there were 30 children going to school there. The school was a little crowded all right, but the teacher seemed to get along pretty good and had plenty of time to help everyone. They had the blackboard facing the pupils instead of behind the pupils as you see in most schools today.

Some of the kids, while they were sitting there, were watching what was going on in the grade ahead of them, and by the time they got to that grade, they knew about a lot of the things taught. I always thought that was good practice that we had out in our public schools. We also had a dunce bench and I held that one down a few times myself. You would be put in a corner for about 15 minutes to a half hour usually because you did not mind the teacher, not doing what you were told or were failing in one of your subjects.

I got through the eighth grade. Arithmetic was my favorite subject, but the grammar we had was something that I couldn't seem to digest. The teachers who we had were all out of Graceville. Minnie Bennett was one of the teachers. She was a sister to Mike Peyton's first wife. Rose Goodhart was another good teacher. She graduated out of the Catholic parochial school down in Graceville. Nellie and Jenny Caulley and Nellie King also taught in the school.

Nellie King was quite a teacher. She would start to work you over until it seemed she was going to tear you apart. Before she got through, she was laughing as much as the kids were. I don't think she ever raised a hand against anyone. She was a real exceptional teacher.

We were taught algebra and then we had what we called civics, civil government, and this was all taught in the grade schools. Those who wanted to learn had every opportunity.

My dad said that when he went back and all those big boys were going back to school, the teacher was a young girl by the name of Mamie Walker. She only weighed about 115 pounds, just a small girl, but was real good with the big folks. Some of the students were having a little trouble learning how to make a few of the letters and my dad was going to help one of the neighbor boys because he didn't know how to make a "Q". This teacher came back to the desk however and she said, "George, mind your own business or I will teach you how to make a Q." He really got quite a kick out of it because he was twice the size she was, but she held her own. Her salary in those days was \$15.00 per month along with free board and room. She never had to pay any income tax on that \$15.00, so she had all of that to live on.

Back in those days if you got a three inch rain, it wasn't like today when the creek is dry again in two or three days. That wouldn't happen back then because there were no drainage ditches to speak of. I remember one time we had a three inch rain down by Johnson, Minnesota. We didn't get any up home but we had 40 acres of hay lying on virgin sod that we had cut and Dad said, "Tomorrow afternoon we are going out there and try to stack that hay." So he put me on the horse rig and I was supposed to rake the hay. When I got to

the south end of the field there was a mess of water coming down through there, and on top of that there were a lot of rats that would jump about 12 to 15 feet every lunge. It was something I had never seen before. The rats went about a mile down across the field and stopped at a farm place to make a home there. Our neighbor couldn't understand how those rats came over to his place. They were eating up everything around.

Dollymount township bought what they called a "bull-ditcher", which was a type of shovel approximately three feet wide on the bottom and about eight feet across on the top. Most ditches were about 7 feet deep. That's the time when they started draining.

Charley Zimmerman from Dumont, Mrs. Walter Cordes' dad, was living in town and was a policeman in Dumont. He took the job of operating this machine. He would haul it over to where they were going to start the ditching project. There were two outfits called capsules and they would haul them back about 10 rods and then run a cable, one on each side of the place where they were going to dig the ditch, back to the bullditcher. It was then run by horse power. The horses would walk around and the cables would tighten up and would pull the ditcher along. A lot of ditching was done by this machine. Most of the water was ditched to the Dollymount Creek, now called the 12 Mile Creek.

They ditched out the swamps east of Dumont out to where the Raddatz and Leininger's farm, that used to be duck ponds out there. At this time, very little of that land could be farmed. The farmers would drain into that big ditch. After that they didn't have quite so much flooding to contend with. All this land between the eastern part of Dollymount Township and Herman was all flat land. Back in those days it was still all virgin sod.

When my dad was homesteading out there, the first years, he'd break over a couple of acres a day and after he'd do that for three or four days, his one team of horses would get pretty tired.

When Dad wanted to go to Herman, he would let the horses stand and take a day or two rest. Then he would walk from his home 18 miles to Herman. All the ravines and creeks were full of water year around in those days. When he would come to a creek, he would have to take his clothes off and swim across the creek while holding his clothes on a long pole carrying it over his head. When he got across he would put his clothes back on and continue on until he came to another creek. It would generally take about one day to get to Herman. When he got there he would pick up the things he needed at the grocery store. The grocery man would always let him sleep in the back end of the store. The next day he would start off for home.

After Herman came into existence, there was a regular trail from Herman over to this area. There was a Scandinavian settlement along the Mustinka River and most of the settlers got their lumber from Herman. But when my dad came out a few years earlier, there were two trails leading out of Morris. One was going north and west across the prairie

and the other one was going east towards Graceville. Dad would, however, head straight across country and drive on meadow land most of the time. Nobody wanted that flat land back in those days because everything would drown out.

One time going to Herman in 1880, there was a terrible storm, which went down in history as the worst storm that they ever had in the State of Minnesota. Emil Conrad had gone to Herman and when he started for home and was out in the middle of this open prairie, the storm hit and blinded him. He couldn't see where he was going. He knew he would freeze to death if he didn't cover himself up. All the old-timers had coats and mittens and caps made out of buffalo and when they went out they were sure to have extra blankets along with them to cover their horses.

Emil just tied his lines to the wagon and thought he would ride the storm out. It was in the early afternoon when the storm hit and he had no idea where he was. He lay down in the sleigh and let the horses go their own way. At two o'clock that morning the horses stopped and he got up and looked to see why they stopped. They had stopped right ahead of his house. It was just a natural instinct that the horses found their way home through the blizzard where a man has no chance whatsoever.

My father said that the storm blew for three weeks and contained a lot of snow. People could not go anywhere, but just stayed indoors. Finally a calm day arrived, and my uncle Pete and my dad hooked up a team to a sled and drove two miles west of Dumont and a mile south to check around to see how all their friends were after the storm. At one of the places, the sod house was completely covered by snow. They knew where the sod house was, but they couldn't see it until they were almost on top of it. The stove pipe was sticking out of the top of the big drift of snow. They went over and scooped out the entry and found the residents in good shape.

I can remember back in 1904; I was nine years old at that time. We got some dry summers and that year was one of them. All of the top soil was blown off the fields and about the only thing that was any good in that soil was the overturned sod with all this fertility. On the west 40 acres of Dad's homestead, that stuff was up in the air everyday and when the wind would quit for a few days, Dad would go out and try to work it up and put some more crop on it. But it never paid off because every few days a storm would come and by the time the grain would come out of the ground, the wind would cut it off again.

We sowed one field down three times in one year that I can remember and never harvested a bushel of it. In 1911 they went through the same thing again when we had those dirt storms and dust storms. These years were nothing in comparison to the early 30's. Then we went three years without even taking the binder out of the shed.

Another hazard of farming back in some of the years was rust. The varieties of grains that we had was blue stem wheat and white Russian oats. Both were late varieties. With all the high moisture that we had in the soil and heavy dews and with the hot sun coming out the next day, we would have

a field of wheat that was just a beautiful picture and a week later the whole field was black. There was nothing there to harvest. If you did try to harvest some of it, you would try to cut enough so that you would have enough seed for another crop.

Peter Schmitz bought a threshing machine. The Avery people came out with what they called a separator, run by horsepower, where horses would walk around in circles. It was built with a large round gear which was approximately eight feet across and it was connected to a small pinion that led to the cylinder on the threshing machine. In front of the cylinder there were extra sprockets sticking out with pulleys on, one of which would run the fan to clean the grain and another would run the elevator that elevated the grain up into the hopper where it was measured out and recorded the amount of bushels that was threshed. You could set it for so many pounds for barley and wheat and all, according to what the weights were at time per bushel for each variety. The pipe leading down from the measuring hopper was built with two openings on the end, V-shaped and with a flange in the middle. When you would get a bushel or a bushel and a half, whatever you wanted to put into a grain sack, it would transfer over to the opposite side where you had an empty sack to catch the next batch. The grain was all hauled in bags at that time.

Back in those days the place where the grain was hauled was called an elevator, but it wasn't a big tall building like they have now. It was constructed in such a way that you could drop the grain into a pit and it was elevated up into certain bins. The grain had to be carried in bags and dropped into the bins. From there it was loaded into box cars and shipped to the cities.

After the flail was discontinued, the McCormick people came up with what they called a header. It would cut the grain off, similar to a binder, but it didn't have the binding equipment on it to make bundles.

When Pete Schmitz got that Avery threshing machine, they had a man standing on a barrel right next to the feeder and he would rip the bundles open and spread them so they wouldn't be going through the machine all in a clump as they did after awhile when they had the choppers on the front of the machine. They used to have those cutters that would cut the strings and kind of spread the bundles. Peter Schmitz' oldest son Henry used to do most of the spreading as the grain went into the cylinder. There was no blower on this machine. The shakers were extended out to the rear of the machine and it would just shake straw onto the ground.

One man would run what they called a bucking pole, which was made out of an 8 by 8 or 10 by 10 beam and there was fastened under the extending six feet each way from where it was tacked on under the beam. There was a rope leading from the end of this thing which was about 14 feet long and had a horse on each end up in front. The person running the bucking pole would drive the horses up through this thing and underneath where the straw would come out and he would pull this approximately 15 to 20 rods one way and then turn the team around and come back the opposite

way. This was the way it was done out in the fields.

When they threshed in the barnyards they had what they called a strawstacker which was built similar to a grain elevator. They could make some tremendous straw piles, possibly 30 feet each way and sometimes even larger. They would thresh for many days because they wanted to get as much straw in the yard as they possibly could.

We put a binding attachment onto this old machine which did away with having to bind it by hand. As it came in there and the packers would push it out, there was a little arm in behind the knotter. Just as soon as the packer had enough pressure, the thing would trip and arm would come around and bring the thread over across the needle and make the knot.

After my uncle did away with the horsepower he bought what they called a Buffalo Pitts steam engine. It was quite a bit different than most of the engines that you see nowadays at exhibitions where they have threshing bees. This one had the smokestack right up above the fireplace. The man who was fireman had to get up about 4:15 in the morning to go out and start a fire in the firepot. The steam gauge would get up to about 150 by 7:00 in the morning when the crew came to work. The salary then was about \$1.50 a day for hauling bundles and we would work from 7:00 in the morning until dark that evening. Lots of times we took an extra hour or so to finish up some neighbor's threshing so they could bring the machine over to the next neighbor's place the next day.

We always looked forward to the threshing time. It seemed to be such fun. The neighbors would get together and there seemed to be such good will among the people in those days when everybody was out helping each other.

When grain was scooped into the granery they always had what they called a "granery man". They always had one man lying in there on top of the grain pushing it back from the opening where it was scooped in. A lot of times that poor guy would be all in by three o'clock in the afternoon lying there on his stomach. Sometimes the bin would get so full there'd be only a couple of feet between him and the floor up above.

Dad had quite a large granery and he put a regular stairway in it. When they would put oats in sacks we kids who were smaller would have it unloaded in not time flat. They'd only put a bushel of oats in a sack, and that was about 30 pounds. We'd go up the stairway and dump it in a bin. A couple would be going up and another couple coming down all the time. The upstairs of the granery would be filled with the lighter grains like barley and oats. The wheat was always left on the first floor.

We had another crop that was called speltz, and it never went over too great because it was something used more or less mixed in with oats. The kernel of speltz looked similar to a kernel of wheat and it never had much of a market and was used mostly as a feed crop.

Later on the working crews organized a group called the IWW which was the initials for the Independent Workers of the World. Towards the end of a threshing job we would bring

a keg of beer along to treat the boys. We could buy an eight gallon keg back then for \$1.25. This created good will among the men. Once in awhile my dad would bring out some whiskey.

About the time the war broke out, my brothers Paul and George were in the first draft and didn't have any agricultural status. George was an engineer and he got in the Engineer Corps. He didn't see too much active service, but Paul was in the front lines. When they came back the garage business was shot and everybody went out and tuned up their own equipment and there were no jobs available. After the war, prices went down and everything was cheaper; there wasn't any money in farming anymore. During the war we got \$3.10 a bushel for wheat which was a pretty good price compared to 60 or 70 cents a bushel before.

There was a terrific demand for navy beans. The government was paying \$20.00 a bushel for them and they were trying to get all of them they could to be used for the army. Right after the war there was a great demand for flax. That's when most of our earthen sod got broken up.

Back during the recession years, we had a party that had to look for a place to live, someone else had rented a farm or purchased it and there was nothing left but a small quarter of land over in the eastern part of the county. It was out there north and east of the Raddatz farm which many people know, located straight east of Dumont. Since then the place has been torn down and the trees all removed, and this party had no other place to live. The man himself had quite a handicap and he had a wife and three children. His brother-in-law, a bachelor, moved in with them to help a little bit to try to keep things going. The crops were a failure in those years.

The banker who was carrying the small loan on the place decided that there was no way he was going to make it anyhow, so they decided he should quit entirely and he gave him a release on his property. All he was farming with at that time was five horses and horse machinery and a little eight foot disc and grain binder that had seen its best days.

The house was not very large and it wasn't kept up too well. We were visiting over there one afternoon when a thunderstorm came up and he was burning wood. There was an ample supply of that around the place, lots of dead trees and had a kindling box and had a range that was customary. The woman went and moved the wood out from underneath in front of the stove and put it under the table as the roof started to leak and the water was coming down on top of the kindling in her house. She moved the wood under the table where the rain wouldn't hit it in order to keep it dry.

They were really having a rough time and when they had the sale that day, a lot of the farmers just didn't need any more stock because they had about all they could feed. With what little crop they had, there was no object in buying more horses. The cow brought market price, but when the horses came up, the boys decided to have some fun. Larry Higgins was the auctioneer and the first horse they brought out, someone bid \$1.49 on it. The next guy raised it to \$1.98 and \$2.29, etc., until it got up to \$4.98 which was the last bid. That

was the most they could get out of it and they just made a joke out of the thing because they knew that the farmer wasn't going to have enough to pay off the bank anyway.

My brother Al bought a team and one horse over there one day and got that one for \$2.98. There was one nice three year old that they had and that one brought \$35.00.

Talking about the hard times, we had them back in those days. Everybody lost a lot of sleep and also money and they had a lot of worries about what they were going to have for the next day. However, they never lost their humor. They figured that things were about at the bottom because there was only one way they could go. It had to get better, which it did. When Roosevelt got in as President, those who were hanging on and able to get going, got what they used to call a barnyard loan, helping to get a little more cattle and getting a good start once the crops started to get a little better and the rates started coming again. It was people like those with courage and determination, who built this country, and it's been improving it seems ever since.

In order to help some of the farmers get rid of some of their products they had the foreign countries borrow some money so they could buy our products. I remember when World War I was on, they had the same thing happen in World War II. Canada went on a cash and carry basis where we sold a lot of food stock to the allies over in the foreign countries on time. Only one country ever paid the United States back for their loans, and that was Denmark. The rest of them, the bills just got canceled out.

In the winter of 48 and 49, we had one of the worst blizzards that I can remember in my lifetime. When Victor got home from the service in 1946 he wanted to go farming and I bought a quarter of land which was formally owned by a man in Nebraska. At that time 160 acres of land cost \$7,200.00. There was nothing available while the boys were away in service those four years. Everything was broken up, everything that was worth farming. There were a few quack grass farms left, and if you wanted to expand a little bit you could rent some of those vacant quack grass quarters, but by the time you got the quack grass under control so you could raise anything on it you didn't make an awful lot on what you did raise. In the meantime we got some of those army worms, which came in and threshed our oats for us before it was even ripe.

Back to the blizzards again, the snow banks were so high that Victor got himself a snow scoop to keep his driveway open and he had that on the front of his "H" International tractor that he had just bought. He never farmed with horses; that tractor cut a swath wide enough so that he could get in and out with the car. One day the car stalled on him while he was in the middle of the cut and he had to run the window down in order to crawl out to get out of the car so that he could go back and crank it up again.

It kept on blowing and getting worse all the time most of the winter and the people couldn't get out of their farmsteads anyplace without some help. Whenever they got sick they would bring a doctor out when necessary with an air-

plane. I remember Paul Frisch had an airplane at the time and a lot of times he would bring out medicine and groceries to people who couldn't get to town. All the people would do is call in their order to Fredolph Anderson in Wheaton, who ran a little store on the south side of the street, and he was quite gracious about fixing a box of whatever they wanted. Paul Frisch would get into Wheaton and get the stuff and load it on the airplane and haul it out to the people.

The biggest problem was that they were getting away from using coal as oil burners came into existence. Frisch would have a 30 gallon barrel of fuel oil that he would deliver to the farms that were running out of fuel. Everybody was backed up into about one or two rooms in their homes and they were not able to heat most of the house in order to conserve on fuel.

We had those very little oil heaters at that time, as a general rule. Some of the people had wood burners, too, I remember. A good many of them went out and sawed off the top of the 10 foot fence posts to use as fuel in the wood burners.

Not so many years back we had a bad winter again and that's when the snowmobiles were quite a popular item. Our county would go down main highway 75 with groceries that would have to be delivered out into the area and snowmobiles would be there to shoot across the fields and take the groceries and medicine or whatever they needed out to the farm places.

Then in the spring we really got some floods when the snow all started to leave. The water backed up into the streets in Dumont from the creek and it was right up in main street and the electric company had to come out from Fergus Falls and go down the street with a boat and disconnect the electrical appliances so nobody would be getting electrocuted.

There were many cases where a new human being was coming into this world where the doctor was unable to get out to the farm and they would just put the mother on a snowmobile and bring her in to the hospital here in Wheaton. The last few years it seems that the snowmobiles have lost their popularity. Now they are handy for just getting around for joy rides but with the price of gasoline, it seems like they are restricting the use of them also.

The snow plows, when they would go out to clean the roads off in the winter times, would push all they could to the sides and then they could use the wings. This was mostly around building sites. The wings push it up as high as they could, which was five to seven feet high, and they would have men standing on top of the drifts scooping it back from there, so when they came back again there would some place to put the snow. There would be cuts 20 to 30 yards long where they would have to pound away at it.

I know on one occasion a couple miles northeast of Wheaton, there was a snowplow that started on one end of the highway, pounding away moving the hard packed snow. Another one got over and worked from the east and it took them two days to get a half mile done, and it would just barely get done before it was blown shut again, and they would

have to start all over. There are not too many of the younger generation who have seen much of that kind of hardship.

Sometimes I think these good old days they talk about were not quite as good as we pictured them, but I guess everyday that if you feel well the other things are just minor.

Back in the early 1900's when we got those big blizzards, my father's grove that he had started earlier got quite tall. The snow would come and after it got over the grove it would drop down in front of our buildings. We had quite a time trying to get into the barns. Dad had made a double door in the cow barn. There were times that we had to go and clean out that barn and would get a team and sled out in front of the barn, but we couldn't get the bottom doors open. We would just have to form sort of a human conveyor and usually one of the older boys, George or Paul, would have the largest fork. They would move the manure up as far as they could toward the next one and then the next person in line would throw it up to the door and the third person would throw it up into the sled and then we would haul it out into the fields on a hay rack. We used to call the guy way in the rear throwing it from one to the next the foreman, because he didn't have to take any crap from anybody.

In mention of some of the dances that we used to have, they were pretty much the same as we have today, such as the waltz and polka. But they had one they called the Turkey Trot and they had the square dance and the two-step. Donald Falk knew them all. He was probably the best dancer in the area. They had the schottische also in those days. Another one came along called the Shimmy, which was originated by a Scotchman out in front of a pay toilet.

Back in the olden days we did not have electricity, which came in during the 1940's. The kerosene lamp was about the best we could come up with. Everyone of us kids had a candle in his bedroom that we could light up to find our way around in the bedroom when we went to sleep. The candle fit in a little candleholder so that we could carry it around wherever we had to go. Later the gas lamps came out, which were quite an improvement, but they disappeared right after we got the electricity on the farm.

Back in the early days when the railroad first came through from Ortonville to Fargo, the railroad used to have a big water tank west of the tracks in Wheaton. The water was pumped up into that tank and the steam engine would take on water here at Wheaton either on its way up to Fargo or on its way back. The first trains that went through used to burn wood and later on they converted over to coal.

Once Tara Mutual Insurance Company Manager Mr. Sullivan and the directors decided to make a fire inspection of all the homes in a certain area. I had Dollymount and Croke townships where I had to crawl up into the attic and on top of the houses and inspect the chimneys. On some of the old chimneys the upper bricks on top of the house used to be moved over a little bit and out a little wider from the regular chimney and they would rest on some rafters. Sometimes the brackets would settle in the house somewhat and there would be a spacing from an inch to an inch and a half between

where the bricks were resting up on top of the roof to the point where the bricks had settled down. While I was up in the attic the farmers would always be cooperative and would mix up a bunch of plaster. I would be up in the attic and fill up the cracks around the chimney. That is where so many fires have started back in those days. Mr. Sullivan thought it would be quite a paying proposition to patch these up and it was a help to me because all incomes were pretty small at that time and anything helped.

Back in the years when my dad was walking back and forth to Herman to get supplies, he would see a lot of old buffalo bones out in the prairie lands. After the train had come from

Morris to Breckenridge he had heard that there was a market for buffalo bones down at Chaska, Minnesota, where a sugar refinery had opened up and was operating. They used the bones for refining the sugar by running the sugar through those bones to take out some particles. They would pay as high as \$26.00 for a ton of buffalo bones loaded at Herman. My mom and dad would leave my oldest sister, Lena, with Uncle Pete's family and they would go out on the prairie gathering buffalo bones. They would haul them all the way over to Herman and load them in those gondola cars which were open on top and by Saturday afternoon they would have a load of bones gathered off the prairie. That was what was left by the buffalo hunters, people taking only the hides.

2. It was around the time when President Hoover always mentioned prosperity is right around the corner. There is a story about a woman who stopped at a gas station one day and asked the attendant, "Where is the ladies room?" He said, "It is right around the corner." She said, "Now look here mister, I'm not looking for prosperity, I'm looking for relief."

During that time the hog prices dropped down and they were paying \$2.20 which was the top price in South St. Paul after you got them down there. Cows were selling for as low as 75 cents a hundred and the folks decided they wanted to start another shipping association in Dumont. They wanted to mark everybody's stock, because some would stuff their animals with salt the night before, and the animals would be good and thirsty and take on a lot of water. They would gain some weight in a hurry and then be taken across the scales.

There were a lot of folks who lived eight to ten miles out in the country, and their animals had shrunk quite a bit by the time they got them to town. When they decided they wanted to start this association they wanted to have everybody's stock marked. We had a meeting and they appointed me to run the shipping association. Everything went real fine up until more dry years kept coming on and the government went out and bought cows from us for \$18.00 a head for milk cows. They would allow each one just enough cows so that you had milk and butter for your family. I only had five cows at the time and I had to sell three for \$18.00 apiece. They let you keep your horses so that you could get back into the fields when weather turned right.

Some of the hay we were getting was frozen into lumps so bad you couldn't get a hay hook into it. Some were cutting all that old rubbish and hay along the Platt River down near North Platt and that area, and they were putting it in little bunches out there, maybe 1,000 or 1,500 pounds of hay at a time. They would go out with sprinkling trucks and sprinkle the hay to give it some weight and then they would bale it and would sell it to the government. The government was taking anything that was called hay. When we would get home here in the cold weather we couldn't get the hay hook into it. That was costing us \$22.00 a ton for that kind of feed, but we had to have it, so we would break the bale the best we knew how and give a little to the horses and some to the cows.

We were getting corn also thru the government and that was doctored up when we got it, too. When we would put a little in the horses' feed box for a week straight, you had to go in there and scrape the gravel out of the feed box. Finally they started shipping hay from Washington state. It was a mixture of oats and what they called stock peas. They were

black peas and the animals were just crazy for that stuff. It was costing us \$32.00 a ton.

This was all charged to us and the following years like 1933 and 1934 and 1935 we didn't harvest any crops at all. During that period we were getting some feed from the government in the summer time and then we would turn a couple of cows we had out in the plowed fields and they would find a few thistles here and there to chew on.

In the winter months everything we were feeding had to be bought and paid for later on if we continued farming. A good many had quit farming at that time and looked for work. They never accumulated enough money to pay their loans and they evidently didn't ever have to pay them. But some of us were caught there and had to stay. We couldn't find anything else to do so we stuck it out and after in the spring of 1936 we started getting some pretty good crops.

The government put Peter Lee in here as a representative of this area to take care of those who needed government loans and we could borrow money from the government to go out and put our crops in.

Charlie Putnam had quite a herd of cattle that he was able to hang on to and he had a good farming operation up at Tintah.

In the fall of 1932, the bankers operated on eastern money quite a bit. They would use our collateral and mortgages to borrow money on and at that time if you had \$3,000 worth you could borrow \$1,000 from the local bank. But they could get the full \$3,000 from the government on a guarantee. Of course, when the eastern money men tightened up on their money, the banks had to get tighter themselves. So they had a problem on their hands, too, and they had a lot of folks in the community who owed a lot more money than their stuff was worth.

Gordon Christensen was running the bank at that time in Wheaton, but it wasn't a locally owned bank at that time. He was working for a salary. The directors met one night and they decided that they were going to have to sell a few people out who had personal property enough to pay what they owed the bank so that they could raise some capital to keep some of the loans for those who were unable to pay the full bill. That's the way he explained it to me when he came out and talked to me. He said, "You will have to try to borrow the money from someone else because you are one of the names that had been decided on to foreclose." He explained that if they sold out the people who couldn't get enough money for their goods, the bank would never be able to get its money. "The only way we

can get it is to stick with those and help them through until they get back on their feet and be able to pay us what they owe in full," he said.

They also said that I would have to give a release on my property and so they could hold public auction sale. That caught me by surprise because I knew I had enough interest to pay off if I sold, but it didn't leave me anything left. I wasn't the only one, however. There were lots of them who got the same kind of treatment.

I told Gordon that if he was going to sell me out for no other reason than that, I was going to ask for a sheriff's sale. My brother George was the sheriff at that time and he was kind of soft-hearted. He had already sold a few people out and sent a deputy out to cry the sale. I went to my brother George and told him what the deal was and I said that I was going to have a sheriff's sale and "I don't want you to send your deputy out or someone else. You come and cry the sale yourself." "Well kid," he said, "if that's what you want, that's what I do." That's what he did, so I had the privilege of having my own brother cry my own mortgage foreclosure sale.

They went to the elevator and took what money I had coming for the oats and crops that I had in the granery and we swept the granery completely clean and hauled it in for sale. We didn't have a thing left after the sale. They even sold my garden. They got a bid for \$5.00 for the garden and the bank took that money, too. The bank wasn't a locally owned bank at that time. It was a large corporation that owned this outfit. I wouldn't have expected that kind of treatment from a local bank.

I was about at my wits end and didn't know what to do. A guy that I thought was a friend of mine wrote to my landlady. He had a son-in-law who was being moved off the place he was on, and he told my landlady that I was being sold out and wouldn't be able to start farming again. He recommended that his brother-in-law be allowed to rent the place that I was on. My landlady wrote back to me and said, "My God, Jake, what's going on back there?" She mentioned that she had gotten a letter from this person and he told her that I was going to have to quit.

There was an old set of buildings known as the Overcash place, sitting right south of Wheaton, and someone said, "Where is Jake going to go live with his big family? They said he could go and live in that Overcash place." That's the kind of treatment I was getting from one of the people I thought was my friend. I was just about where I didn't know what to do.

The morning after the sale, about six o'clock, a pickup drove in my yard. I wasn't up yet because I had nothing to get up for since everything was gone. I had no chores to do. I am not giving you a hard luck story, I am just telling you the truth. Sam Deal's father, Joe Deal, drove in the yard and he said, "Jake, I hear you had a little tough luck yesterday." I said, "I guess you could call it that." He asked me what I intended to do and I said that if I could get another start I planned to keep right on farming.

We only had two hundred acres at that time that we were farming. Mr. Deal grabbed his checkbook and signed a blank check and then said, "You know that you have 48 hours to redeem anything that has been sold on a mortgage foreclosure." He told me to make a list of those things that I wanted back and take the check to the First State Bank and tell them that I wanted to reclaim those items. He furnished me the money to buy back the things I needed. He told me not to necessarily buy back the pigs or cows which were 15 head but get the important stuff.

The first thing I reclaimed was the garden and the drill. This was a fairly new drill which I bought for \$875 and that was already hauled home and put in the party's garage who had purchased it. I had heard that he knew earlier that I was going to be sold out and he could buy my drill. So I repurchased the drill and one or two of the horses I needed.

Sam's dad also told me that in the spring when I needed seed grain and feed grain or anything that I needed, he would give it to me and I would have my hogs. He said he would furnish me some brood sows and a couple more cows, which he did. In turn, his dad, John Deal gave me the use of one of his horses and Henry Thompson, whose wife is now a Nursing Home patient here in Wheaton, drove in with a team of horses and a half a wagon box full of oats for me to use while I was doing my plowing. We started out from there again.

There was a young family working out at what is known as the Kelly farm out east of the Deal family. They had a mortgage and the mortgage company was foreclosing on them. The kids were at a loss; they didn't know what to do. The Deal's, the same Deal family that helped me out when the chips were down, went and paid off the loan and kept the farm for them, and his land finally came back after Roosevelt's administration and things finally got around the corner.

When Fred Forcier came up into this area with his family, he had the soil tested there to see if they could raise sugarbeets. He had raised a lot of them when he was down at Chaska and sold them to the refinery there. He brought all of his sugarbeet equipment along with him when he came up here and he did put considerable acreage into sugarbeets. He got a wonderful stand of beets, but there was no outlet for them because the cost of moving them from here clear down to Chaska would eat up all the profits that he could make.

When he came here he had two large herds of dairy cattle. He had around 20 head of guernseys, which he kept separate from another herd of holsteins of equal size. He more-or-less was a dairy man down there and he kept on with the same thing when he was up here. He had quite a family and a lot of help and they handled two sections of land without any problems. He built another barn and got another herd of horses and he had separate pastures for both herds of cattle.

When he moved up here from Chaska, he brought most of his stuff up with immigrant cars, but his tractor he drove all the way from Chaska clear up to Dumont. It took him quite a few days to make the trip, but he said many times he had to make a detour because certain roads were posted for more

than the weight he was allowed to use and so he had to switch off and use country roads for awhile.

He was a determined man and had lost his hearing completely but still was quite a conversationalist. It was just a joy to listen to him talk because you could learn so much and it was all from actual experience which certainly was a great help.

He and his boys kept on farming until he decided to split up the farm and get a couple of his boys going who wanted to farm. Del Forcier lives on the home place now, which used to be the old Stevens farm, and then another one of the boys built across the road. He went into the turkey business along with his farming business and he raised hundreds and hundreds of turkeys.

The Stevens farm was rented by old Siegfred Hendrickson when they came over when Charley Hunter left his farm and moved to Dumont. Hendricksons rented the Charley Hunter farm and from there the Hendricksons later moved onto what they call the Stevens Farm.

I was going to mention here something about how the plowing was done, back in those days. It was all done with horses until the time the tractors came. The first tractor that I ever saw operate was a Hart Par tractor. It was driven by Clarence Klindworth. There was a vacant quarter on the Hendrickson farm that they wanted to get back into production. Claus Hauschild was in the implement business at that time and he bought this first tractor and had Clarence Klindworth run it for him. It pulled three bottoms and was a kind of funny looking contraption. It had one big wide wheel in the back and two smaller wheels in the front. The big drive wheel in the back is what produced the power to pull the plows.

After Pete Schmitz had bought the steam engine and started threshing with steam, Pete Hauschild also went into the threshing business. He had two outfits going at one time. My brother George had learned how to run the steam engine so they hired him to run the steam engine. They made a large beam behind the steam engine and fastened eight 2-bottom plows to this beam so they could turn over 16 furrows at one time. In order not to lose too much time turning around with this engine, they usually started off plowing by measuring off so he came through the middle of the quarter of the land and strike out a little piece, possibly an acre or so and make short rounds, then they would plow in circles and the machine would be going in circles all day long. By the time they got the quarter just about all plowed, there would be a few little triangle pieces in each corner of the quarter and someone would come in with a team of horses and plow out the parts that the tractor didn't take.

When they had started raising corn back in 1904, 40 acres was about the limit my dad would put in out of his 640 acres at that time. But we never hand picked much. He had a corn binder and we cut all that corn and bound it and shocked it and then he bought what they called a corn shredder. There are quite a few people living today who could probably tell you what one of those things was. Many were feeding these corn shredders, and got their arms too close, and they lost an arm.

Dad had one of those but he didn't have an engine to run it. Fred Rinke was farming his father's old homestead at the time, and he had bought one of those 16-horse Simplicity models. It was what they called a one-lunger at the time. It only had one cylinder. Dad would hire it from Rinke to run the corn shredder. We would load the barn half full of hay and then we would blow the rest of it full of shreddings from the corn. There were always more corn shreddings than we could get in the barn, so we would throw a stack of corn shreddings along the side of the barn. Half of it would go to waste. The cattle would step it down and wouldn't eat it when we threw the corn across to them. But it wouldn't make much difference. We would haul it out on the open gumbo spots in the field and get a little humus in the soil and loosen up the gumbo spots a little bit.

O'Brien Land Company owned the farm that the Tritz's have now. When the Tritz's bought the place they got it through the O'Brien Land Company and that was part of this wild meadow land yet. There was a full section in there or more, but was part of the trail we used to drive across the meadows when we would go down to Collis to church in the early years before any of that land was broken up into farming land. Nobody homesteaded that place so it was all prairie at the time until the O'Briens got it and broke it up. John Tritz was the man's name and there were a lot of his grandchildren around here today, all good farmers.

When the trains started coming to Dumont, a lot of merchandise was brought in on the trains. Paul Zabell, after he got married, moved to town and started a dray line. Everything was shipped in by freight at that time and unloaded at the depot. Paul would get 25 cents for delivery to a store. In those days it didn't take much money and he had a team of horses and a wagon and that's where he got his start in business, in the dray line after he left the farm.

That went on for years and years where everything was brought in by rail. At that time occasionally a carload of apples would come in from Missouri, where they raised a lot of them. They were loaded loose in the box car and they were selling them for \$1.00 a bushel. My dad happened to be uptown one day when he spotted the car on the side track. He brought home 20 bushels the first time; there was a big family of us. Mother got busy making apple jelly and jam and anything that you could keep without refrigeration.

She always did a lot of canning, and I have 70 to 80 jars today that are dated back to 1900. Many of them were filled up with canned goods by her back in 1917. When I got married and started for myself, she kind of filled the shelves for us at home, for me and Veronica, with canned goods the first winter.

A day or two later Dad went back to town again and this fellow said he had planned on having this railroad car taken from Dumont to Wheaton. He told my father that they wanted \$14.00 to move this car and spot it in Wheaton and there were only 70 to 80 bushels of apples left in the car by that time. He offered to sell the balance of what he had for 50 cents a bushel. My dad took 10 bushels more so we had 30 bushels of apples.

They were what they called Roman Beauties. They were

those good red apples, still selling today in the store, the same brand.

The way we sold our cream those days after we got the cream separator, was to put it in cans and try to keep it in a cold place. We built an extra tank by the well and filled it quite often each day to keep the water as cool as possible. Some people had pits by the well, where they let the cans down in a pit. A good many times the cream would still be sour before we would get into the can and get it over to the train. We were shipping it out on the trains.

Tildin Produce and R. E. Cobb and some of those concerns in Minneapolis and St. Paul were buying it at the time. We would ship it down there and a couple of days later we would get a check back. Sometimes the cream would get so sour it would blow the cover off the top of the can, but you still got paid for what was still left in by the time it got there. It would be loaded by 10:00 at night on the passenger train in Dumont and that would get down to Minneapolis the next morning, so it wasn't on the road too long.

The same way with the poultry we had extra; we would have to put them in crates and take them down and ship them to the cities in order to sell any surplus we had above what we needed for ourselves. Later on, R. E. Cobb and all these different ones put buying stations out in the country.

And then we had Al Fridgen from Dumont. When the saloons went out in prohibition days Al got one of those buildings and he opened up a produce station in Dumont. We could sell our cream right directly to the cream buyers in Dumont. Al Fridgen ran one of them and later on Henry Thompson took over another one.

I remember one day, Pete Hauschild had bought a new Ford car. Just as he was ready to drive to Wheaton, that was back in 1913 or 1914, Tom Thompson came into town. He had a can of cream in his car. They asked him if he wanted to ride along to Wheaton. "Golly, I have got to get my cream check first, I haven't got any other money," he said. So he ran over to Henry Thompson's and said, "I am in a hurry. Pete Hauschild is waiting to take me to Wheaton and I have to get out of here quick because they are ready to leave." So Thompson looked in the book to see what he had coming and gave him weights and tests and wrote him a check for an equal amount.

When Tom Thompson got home his wife said to him, "Tom, why didn't you take the cream along?" He said, "I did." "No," she said, "the cream is still sitting on the porch. What you took in was a can of buttermilk." The next can of cream Tom took in, he gave the cream station to replace the buttermilk.

About the city of Collis. When I was a boy after the railroad came through, of course, they already had their church there and they had their school there and they had two grocery stores. One was run by Mr. Murray and the other one was run by Mr. Macarty. They had a blacksmith shop and a grain elevator. There were several families living there like the two mail carriers who later came out of Collis. A few families

that had land adjoining the town were the Barrys, living right across the road from the city of Collis at that time, and also the McDonnells who lived just on the outskirts of town. Andy Hogen became mail carrier in Collis. He built himself a home there, too. Later on, I don't remember who lived in the house previously, but Bill Hogan was there. They had built a house in Collis for a parsonage for the priest. Charlie Schuckhart from Graceville ran the elevator. That later was closed down and moved to Wheaton. That's part of the one that the Farmers Elevator owns here in Wheaton. It's the one on the north side.

When we were kids, our creek was more or less just like a river. This creek connected with another one which was over here by what was known as the John Deal farm. The two creeks joined down in that area.

The trapping was good. Muskrats were very plentiful in the creeks at the time and we would catch an occasional mink. Weasels were plentiful and fox, there were lots of those around at the time. Trapping was pretty good for anyone. It was more or less a sideline but I went in for trapping quite a bit.

Oh yes, skunks, we used to get a \$1.25 if the hide was prime. Late in the fall we would get what they called the broad stripe. That was one that had two big white streaks down across its back as far as its tail. It started up the back of its head. Then they had the narrow stripe, that one was the same pattern only it had two stripes down its back and it was narrow. Some of them were called the short stripe. They only had a stripe come about half way down on the animal's carcass and from there on it was black all the way. They paid more for the short stripe than they did for the narrow, and more for the narrow than they did for the broad.

We used to trap those. Every old building had those under them, and we had some old buildings. There were a couple of litters a year that would grow up. We used to send our furs to St. Louis. The rest of them went to Chicago to the Schubert Company.

The Funston Brothers had a fur buying station. There were fur buyers in the country at that time, but they would go around and buy your furs and sell them to someone else. We always dealt direct with the big company and would get a little more out of it that way. We didn't lose the middle man's commission. The weasels were quite in demand and the red fox also was used for scarves. If it was a real nice red one, the deep colored red would bring \$5.00, and if it was more pale like you see here once in awhile, most of the would bring only \$2.50. We pretty well know what were going to get. The muskrats if you would get a good one, you would get 40 cents. If it was small and damaged a little bit you would get less.

I saved up over \$21.00 and went to the hardware store, Lynch's Hardware, and saw a brand new Stevens pump gun standing in the showcase there. I had just gotten my check in the mail that morning from the fur company and had enough money there to buy that gun. I stood around and hesitated quite awhile about what Dad was going to say if I came home with a new gun. I didn't ask his permission first. So I figured

that I was going to take a chance on him because he was quite a sportsman himself. He lived off of wild game most of the time while he was homesteading and I thought I would go ahead and buy this gun and see what he said when I got home. He was more pleased with the gun than I was after he had seen it.

I will tell you the price of them in those days. When I bought this new Stevens gun, it was \$21.60 for a six-shot pump and the dealer threw in two boxes of black powder shells yet. They were 50 cents a box. Those black powder shells were really something. You could go out hunting and you could knock down a couple of prairie chickens, but before the smoke got blown out of the way you didn't know if you had gotten one or not.

We were quite fortunate. We were at our neighbor's, 40 rods south of Uncle Pete's, when a pair of hunting dogs came over one afternoon. They were called "pointers". They were short haired and had red spots, some real bird dogs. They couldn't find an owner for them; nobody claimed them. They put notices in the paper, but nobody remembered losing any dogs, so they kept them.

The first litter was eleven pups; boy was I ready to get one of the males for a bird dog. And I got a real one, too! That dog could sense when I was ready to go hunting. When I came to the house he seemed to understand what I was coming for. When I opened the door he was standing on his hind feet waiting at the door for me to come out. That dog could do just anything but talk.

Hunting prairie chickens he would find more prairie chickens than he would ever know were in the country. He would just zig-zag back and forth for a stretch of 40 acres. When he would point them, it was a sight to behold. He would stand there with one foot in the air and his tail straight up and his nose pointed straight ahead. You knew the birds were quite far in front of him. If he had a bird hiding right down front of him he would have his nose pointed right to the ground. Many times I had to walk up behind him and give him a boot with my knee to move on, in order to flush the bird. That would give him the signal to go and he would get them up in the air.

Prairie chickens weren't hard to hit. They flew straight away all the time. It was almost like shooting at a post across the street. They never curved like a pheasant did, sway and go kitty-corner up in the air. Those things flew in a straight direction. You never had a cripple because of one pellet hit a prairie chicken he stayed down. A pheasant you can hit with a full load and he may get up and run yet. They are a much tougher bird than the prairie chicken.

A prairie chicken had to be quite tough though to survive the winters like they did out in the open prairies with no trees. When the cold weather came they would go to the edge of a creek bank somewhere, where there was tall grass and they could nest by burrowing down in the snow. Many times when we were out fox hunting in the winter we would run into a place where a covey of prairie chickens had dug themselves into the snowbank. We would tramp around on the snow up above

and that would scare them a little and some of them would come out of the hole. We would generally come home with a good supply of prairie chickens.

In the spring of the year, when they were out on the prairie in the mating season, that was really amusing to your ears. You could hear them for miles on those quiet mornings when they were chirping. The males were giving their calls and the females would be answering them in a different pitch.

In the winter time about New Year's, when there was school vacation, the barn would be pretty empty of hay and we would start hauling hay until we got the barn filled up again. We always carried a gun and sitting up on top of the hay load, coming back in the winter time, we used B.B.'s. The regular size shot was too weak because they always stayed far enough out of range so the smaller pellets wouldn't knock them down.

We had some quail in those days, too, but they were so easy to kill. You would see a covey of the sitting in the snow and fire into the covey and you probably would get seven or eight, so they didn't last long in this country. The partridge took over, but they would give you a little different deal than the quail did. These things would make you get right on the job because when they got up they were gone.

When we went to school in the later years, we had what was called a county nurse. That was quite an improvement. Back in the earlier days there were a lot of children coming to school who had lice in their hair. I can remember some of the girls and boys who sat in front of me in school. You could see the lice crawling around on the lower part of their necks and when the county nurse got in on the job and started visiting the schools, she detected that stuff right away. She gave their parents orders to get this thing cleaned up and also told them how this problem could be handled. It only took a short time and the schools were clean.

She was quite an addition to the county help that we had. She made her home in Dumont and was quite handy down there. If someone was sick, she was a registered nurse, we would call Bessy Burns. If she thought it was something that needed extra help, we would call for Dr. Ewing up here in Wheaton. Then Lindberg came in doctoring with him so either one of them would come out if she thought it was necessary, or our parents would bring us to the doctor.

I got married in 1917 to a Dumont girl living on the farm. Her father came from France and settled in Canada and finally drifted over and made his home in Richmond, Minn. My mother-in-law was raised in Cold Spring. Later they moved to St. Cloud and then to the Dumont area, back in about 1912. That's how I met my wife. She went to the same church, but did not go to the same school. But we made it to dances the same as many other of the people from way outside of our areas.

My dad and mother would go down and visit their relatives in the Minneapolis area. Back in the early 1900's, when the Cantillian boys had started what they called the American Baseball Association, Minneapolis was enrolled in that

outfit with Toledo and Kansas City and a whole string of towns. I went to some of the ball games when I was down there in 1912. I know the names of every ballplayer who was on the team at that time, I could quote each name. I always got a kick out of the fans because they were razzing the players just like they do today.

They had a shortstop by the name of Gill, he was a tall guy, about 6'2", and he had a small head structure and a very narrow face. His ears were large for the size of his head and they sort of protruded out a little. The fans used to razz that poor guy until there was no end to it. They would scream out at him, "Flop your ears, there is a fly on your neck," and things like that they would throw at him, and he would just sit there and laugh. The more fun they were having the more he got out of it because they were the ones that were throwing in the 50 cents at the gate and paying his wages. So he didn't care what they did nor did any of the rest of them.

There was one game I happened to be to down there where Cy Young, the older people will remember that name, was pitching for Minneapolis. They had a double header that day. Cy Young was pitching, Owens was catching and Williams was playing second base. He pitched the first game and shut Kansas City out three to nothing. Then he asked Joe Cantillion if he couldn't go back and pitch the second one, too. He already had in nine innings and he went back and pitched the second game and he went nine more innings and again shut them out five to nothing. There were 18 innings of straight shutout pitching that day.

The baseballs they used those days were wrapped around a piece of rock. Later people wanted to see homeruns, so they put a cork inside the baseball to give it a little more spring when it got hit. Still the people screamed for more homeruns, so they came up with rubber centers in the ball.

We used to have ball games out in our pasture. That was the playground for the Dollymount team when they beat all the neighboring towns and townships. It was in our cow pasture, so sliding bases was quite easy sometimes.

Back in the early 90's when Frank Willett lived at Collis, he got to digging a well down there. He had Jimmy White of Dumont dig for him. As you know, Collis has been known as the highest point above sea level of any part of western Minnesota. He was digging a well down there and he got down quite a distance and he ran into gas, they kept on going on through until they finally got down a couple hundred feet and hit a good water vein. They didn't pay any attention to the gas, but in later years they were wishing that they had checked the gas out to see if there would have been enough for lighting and fuel for those people that lived in the little town at that time.

Several years later, Henry Heidelberger owned some land in the northern part of Croke township and his son Albert was getting married. He built a new house on that farm for him and also a new barn and set him up for farming operations. They were digging a well out there and a couple hundred feet down they struck gas there also. The

well driller, Jimmy White, wanted to keep the well for a gas well. He figured he could heat and light his farm with gas. Al told him, "I didn't hire you to dig gas, I am paying you for getting me some water." So they went on through the gas vein and on down until they finally hit a good vein of water. When they hit this gas, they piped it up and put pipe down and reducers and reduced the pressure down to 35 pounds. It could have been utilized, but when the pressure got up to 35 pounds the pressure down below was much higher and she blew up and came alongside the casing and up into the well pit. They always smell gas in that well pit.

The Marxen people came up from Almo, Iowa, and they bought a farm up around Hinkley, Minnesota. After a few years they decided they didn't like it up there so they came down around the Wheaton area. In about 1906 and they bought the place where Arnold Marxen lives now. There is a tower out there where they dug for gas. There was a concern from Wyoming with a foreman by the name of Lent. He had a man by the name of Jackson doing the drilling for him. Arnold told me that at 400 feet they hit gas vein out there and they were drilling for oil. There was some oil that came up with the gas. He talked about the slushing that they were doing while they were drilling. They would have that in a tub and would get from two to three inches of oil on top of the water that was used for slushing.

There was a man by the name of Leith from Montevideo who was the head of the whole promotion. He started selling stock to anybody who was interested in investing in this with the prospect of getting some benefits out of an oil well. They sold stock all over the state of Minnesota. There are some folks from southern Iowa that I know who had shares in it. I was renting a farm from my landlady who was Mrs. Itohlmoos from Penger, Nebraska. She said that all her neighbors had stock in this well out here in Wheaton, and it looked like it was going to go over good.

Marxen told me that they convinced him that he should start using this gas in his house for cooking and heating. They ran a pipe from the gas well on his farm and his gauge showed 25 pounds of pressure. There was a valve out by the barn and they put some piping into his house and he led the gas into his stove in the kitchen. He said it worked fine and it made heat for cooking and baking. Everything was going good, but they forgot to put on a pilot light or didn't think about it at that time, so all they did was open a valve and get a match and light the gas that came into the stove.

One day his wife opened the valve a little sooner than she intended to and before she got back with the match there was quite an accumulation of gas in the stove. When she lit the stove, it blew up. The lid went way up to the ceiling and the stove was pretty well in pieces. Marxen ran out to the barn and shut off the valve and that was the end of their experimenting with gas.

When these men were digging and had gone down about 400 feet, they hit granite. They kept breaking their bits, and after several attempts to get through, they just never made