



F 690

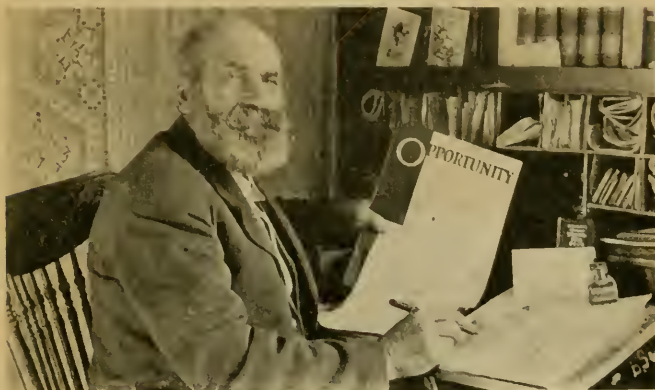
B 6 S 9

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

BOHEMIANS IN CENTRAL KANSAS.

Written by FRANCIS J. SWEHLA, for the Kansas State Historical Society.



FRANCIS J. SWEHLA.

IT is truly said that the best memory is fact recorded. "Black on white" —*cerné na bilem.*"¹ The human mind retains early impressions with wonderful indelibility. But that power of the mind weakens in old age, and we do not become alarmed or aware of the fact till much of our past experience and knowledge has slipped or faded away from us. Recollections are of great variety as to value. We value them according to the amount of happiness they yield us, or knowledge that renders us intelligent, wise, powerful for good. Unhappy recollections serve as a warning lesson.

"Oft in the stilly night
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me.
The smiles, the tears of boyhood years,
The words of love then spoken;
The eyes that shone, now dimmed and gone,
The cheerful hearts unbroken;
Thus in the stilly night,
Ere slumber's chain has bound me,
Fond memory brings the light
Of other days around me."

I was born November 5, 1845, at number 42 in the large village of Albrechtice, near Vltava-Týn, in southern Bohemia—the heart of Europe. My father was a master wheelwright or wagon maker. My mother, whose maiden name was Elizabeth Moudrá, died when the subject of this sketch was less than four years of age, he being the first born—and his younger brother,

1. In the Bohemian language the accented *c* stands for the sound of *ch* as in church, and accented *s* for *sh* as in English; *j* has the sound of *y*, and *z* accented takes the sound of *zh*. It has not been possible to use the proper accent marks in all cases, therefore italics have been resorted to.

less than two years old, died with the mother—the Asiatic cholera decimating the country.

Father, whose first name was also Frantisek as written in the *Cesky* tongue, soon married again. So young Frantisek attended the village school under the care of his stepmother, Anna, till the spring of 1854, when the family with a number of other families from near-by villages moved to the United States of America. We came down the rapid river Vltava [Moldau] to the capital city of Prague, there taking the railroad train by way of Leipzig to Hamburg, and from there by a small steamer to Liverpool, where a three-masted sailing ship was boarded.

After four weeks of fairly good sailing, having experienced only about three days of storm, the colony arrived at New York City and proceeded by railroad train via Philadelphia to Pittsburg, Pa., where a stop of a few weeks was made. From there we went to Cleveland, Ohio, where a longer stop was made; but this city was not the goal of the colonists. Their desire was to acquire land for themselves, and they had been advised by well-informed persons that the new state of Iowa, just beginning to be settled upon its eastern border, was a favored country to go to. Therefore the next move was via the Great Lakes on a rear-end turbine propeller to Chicago, Ill., thence by railroad cars northwest to Galena, as far as any cars ran at that time; from there the journey was made by wagons, to haul the baggage, the women and the children; men had to walk. Thus the colony proceeded to the Mississippi through the dense forest.

An accident which might have been very serious, happened one evening as it grew dark, and before we reached a lowly tavern in the woods. The driver of one of the wagons, seeing a big mud-hole before him, and trying to avoid it, turned too far to the right into the dense trees and upset the wagon in the mud. We were all thrown out; children screamed, women prayed, and the driver cursed; trunks burst wide open, spilling the linen and extra clothing into the mud and water. The men came up to the catastrophe and dragged the besmeared ones out of the mud, set the wagon right side up, and, each finding his own, started on pulling the dear ones along by hand, for no one wanted to get on the wagon again. When dad wiped the mud off my eyes I could see a light ahead. It was the tavern in the woods. Washed up and with a steaming supper in the glare of the candle lights, we saw and felt we were not hurt as bad as we were scared.

Next day reaching the Father of Waters, a steam ferry took us to Dubuque, Iowa. The colonists rented houses on the outskirts of the small town, placing two or more families in each house, and the men looked for work, as the finances of most of them were nearly exhausted by the long journey. My uncle Frank, or Francis Swehla (the same name as father's, they were cousins), took a trip to Wineshiek county, Iowa, where a Bohemian settlement had been started early that summer (1854) near Calmar, then called Whisky Grove. It was on the border of a large settlement of Norsemen, or Norwegians, which reached far beyond Decorah, the county seat. My uncle bought out the rights of a Norwegian settler and secured a section of land for himself and relatives. So after a few months' sojourning in the town of Dubuque, and working for fifty cents per day, part of the colony moved to their destination by a river steamer up the river to Lansing, when they should have gone to McGregor, that being the shortest route. On reaching

Lansing no one could be hired to haul the party west, about fifty miles, so the baggage had to be stored and the party started on foot. We followed a wagon track, according to directions given my father, who was the guide and interpreter for the party on the whole way from home in *Ceske Vlasti*. He was the only one who could speak German, and he was able to find Germans everywhere thus far. But on our second night's lodging in a primitive little log cabin, and they were scarce, he found good people that he could not talk with, as we had struck the Norwegian settlement, but they understood our wants all right. They were a white-haired but a warm-hearted people—those Norsk. Waking up in the morning, we found snow covering the ground, and made our first footprints in snow in America, November 1, 1854. And so the summer was spent, and with it our small capital, in traveling over the greater part of the civilized world to land in the wilderness. A great change of circumstances wrought in half a year's travel!

As it was too late for each family to dig itself a habitation in the hillside as the Norwegian settlers had done, several families combined to build a house out of slabs bought from a rude and primitive sawmill on Turkey river. Uncle had bought a yoke of oxen and an old wagon to haul the slabs and get the baggage left at the river's landing. He built a stable of split rails and old dead grass for hay, but winter was too severe for that kind of quarters, and the oxen froze, or half froze and half starved. In a few days after our arrival I became nine years of age. That was a memorable winter in that home of slabs. We had two cook stoves, one on each side of the aisle that led through the middle of the room from the door at one end to a window at the other. The bedsteads were placed on each side of the aisle like cots in a hospital. But there was no bedstead for me. I slept on the woodpile behind one of the stoves, shivering with cold every night till Mrs. Ján Hájek took me under her feather bed. My oldest sister Katerina was born there that winter, and another girl for our neighbor. She was named Maria Hájek. I can not give dates, as that is over fifty-nine years ago and I have nothing but my memory to go by.

When spring came in 1855 father, with the help of mother, dug a hole in a hill on land bought of the government at \$1.25 per acre. Over the hole, which was about 10 x 12 feet, father built our home, logs on the four sides with three beams for girders to hold the dirt roof. There was a door and one window in one end. Father being a woodworker, found work among the settlers whereby he made a living for his family, which consisted of a wife and three children. Brother Josef was about two and a half years old, and I was the nurse for baby Katerina. Mother made garden, hoeing it right in the sod, and fencing it with brush which I helped to pull together from the hillsides. This brush fence was made from the branches left by those who cut trees and took only the trunks. I was soon found a place to work for my own board and lodging, with \$24 per year besides to father. My employer was Mr. Lawrence Glass, a German-French farmer; here I began to learn German.

The Bohemian settlement kept increasing through new arrivals from Bohemia; they built a Catholic church first in Spillville, in 1860, and later another in Protivin. I soon became tired of working "bound out" by dad, and struck out on my own hook, learning a trade outside the Bohemian settlement. After spending two winters in public schools at Fort Atkinson,

Iowa, I took up the harness-making business, not from choice but from necessity, as no other job could be found in Decorah, whither I went.

October 6, 1862, I, a lad of sixteen years and eleven months, enlisted in company D, Sixth Iowa cavalry. It came about this way. Timothy Finn, a hardware merchant of Decorah, approached me as a recruiting officer, telling me that I would pass anywhere for eighteen, I was so big. There had just been an outbreak of Indian hostilities with a terrible massacre in Minnesota, and the Civil War was raging in the South. I was fired with enthusiasm. I had heard the old folks in town reading and talking about the war and I wanted to go. I was especially anxious to go in a cavalry troop—a cavalryman and a hero seemed synonymous to me then—not now. My father, finding it out, objected bitterly, telling me that he had left the old mother country to keep me clear of military duty, and now I wanted to volunteer. Horrible! But this was the country of my choice. I had heard the sound of the fife and drum, I had seen the flying flags and the recruits marching up and down the streets, and I had caught the war spirit, so to the war I went. That is how I happen to be an old veteran now; three years of war service for Uncle Sam before I was twenty years of age.

Pioneer life in the wilds of Iowa during childhood; pioneer life again after fighting the wild Indians in the Dakota wilderness. Three years in company D, Sixth Iowa cavalry. An honorable discharge from service at the end of the war, October 17, 1865, at Sioux City, Iowa.

On May 18, 1868, I married Miss Anna Kuchta in church at Spillville, Iowa. I put my bride into a prairie schooner, a brand-new covered wagon drawn by two yoke of oxen, and leading a caravan of such westward over the swamps and prairies of Iowa into eastern Dakota we arrived in Saline county Nebraska. I located and surveyed claims for many new settlers in Nebraska, mostly in Saline county, and helped to build up one of the best Bohemian settlements in the state between the years 1869 and 1874.

In the fall of 1869, while gone thirty miles to a grist mill near Lincoln, to get some wheat ground, a trip which with oxen took two days and nights, prairie fire destroyed all my summer's work except the dugout we lived in. On an election day in October, 1873, while at Pleasant Hill, then the county seat of Saline county, electioneering for Anton Herman a young man, son of Bohemian parents, running for the office of county treasurer, prairie fire for the second time swept away all my possessions. And this time it was more than the toil of *one* summer for me and my family. I was a heavy loser in property, but not in life. Starting on Swan creek, driven with the fury of a south wind, the fire swept a district over six miles wide and about nine miles long. In this fire a lady school teacher and some of her pupils perished.

I was standing in the main street of Pleasant Hill when I spied the clouds of smoke in the direction of my home. In the wink of an eye I was in the saddle and splitting the wind with my gray mare. She leaped through the air, blind to danger and knowing no fear, and I was in my own dooryard as my wife came out of the house with our first-born son, Victor, in her arms, meeting me with lamentations. But I wasted no time in that. I grabbed sacks and wet them, determined to stop the fire fiend at the road. Neighbors came running to help, but the wind carried bunches of flaming grass through the air over our heads and in this way lit five big stacks of wheat at the tops.

The fire consumed stacks of hay, a stable, a grain drill, the first in our

settlement of "Empire," a log granary and two ricks of bound oats. All that was left was our log house, a wagon and a dug well, I am not sure whether the bucket was burned or not. The wagon carried me to Kansas the next spring.

The loss of my property drove me to teaching school—my first school—and I furnished my log cabin for the schoolhouse. As I taught that school I did some things besides—I did some thinking as I read my weekly papers, "*Saline County Post*," "*Pleasant Hill News*," and "*Pokrok*," a *Cesky casopis* published in Cleveland, Ohio, and "*Pokrok Zapadu*" (Progress of the West), published in Omaha, Neb. That winter of 1873-'74 was hard also on the laboring class in the cities of the United States. So I undertook to solve the problem of how to better conditions for myself and as many others as possible. I had but eighty acres of a homestead, and that was because Congress had given all odd-numbered sections of land to the Burlington & Missouri River R. R. Company, so the settlers were given only one-half as much as where there was no land grant. We had preëmpted our land before Congress allowed ex-soldiers to take an additional eighty for a homestead. Later the land was all taken up, for I worked hard to settle my fellow countrymen on government land. So I still had a right to an additional eighty besides one hundred and sixty acres under the timber act, two hundred and forty acres in all, wherever I could find it. Many were agitating for western Nebraska, but I dreaded it and preferred to go south and only as far west as I had to, to find a location for a new Bohemian settlement.

I bought a section map of Kansas, discovered the land offices of the United States government, and when spring came and my school was out I led a caravan of covered wagons, on May 5, 1874, in the direction of Kansas. We crossed the line at its intersection of the sixth principal meridian, going through Belleville to Concordia. There we stopped to examine plats at the government land office, but there was a grab game played there. I had to hire a lawyer to get any attention. I spent a few dollars for plats, but was repulsed, and not finding sufficient government land for a colony, went on to Salina, Kan. The south wind blew so hard every day and night that I lost all my followers but one young single man, or rather boy, who got off of one of the retreating wagons and went with me just for the grub, and the love of roving adventure.

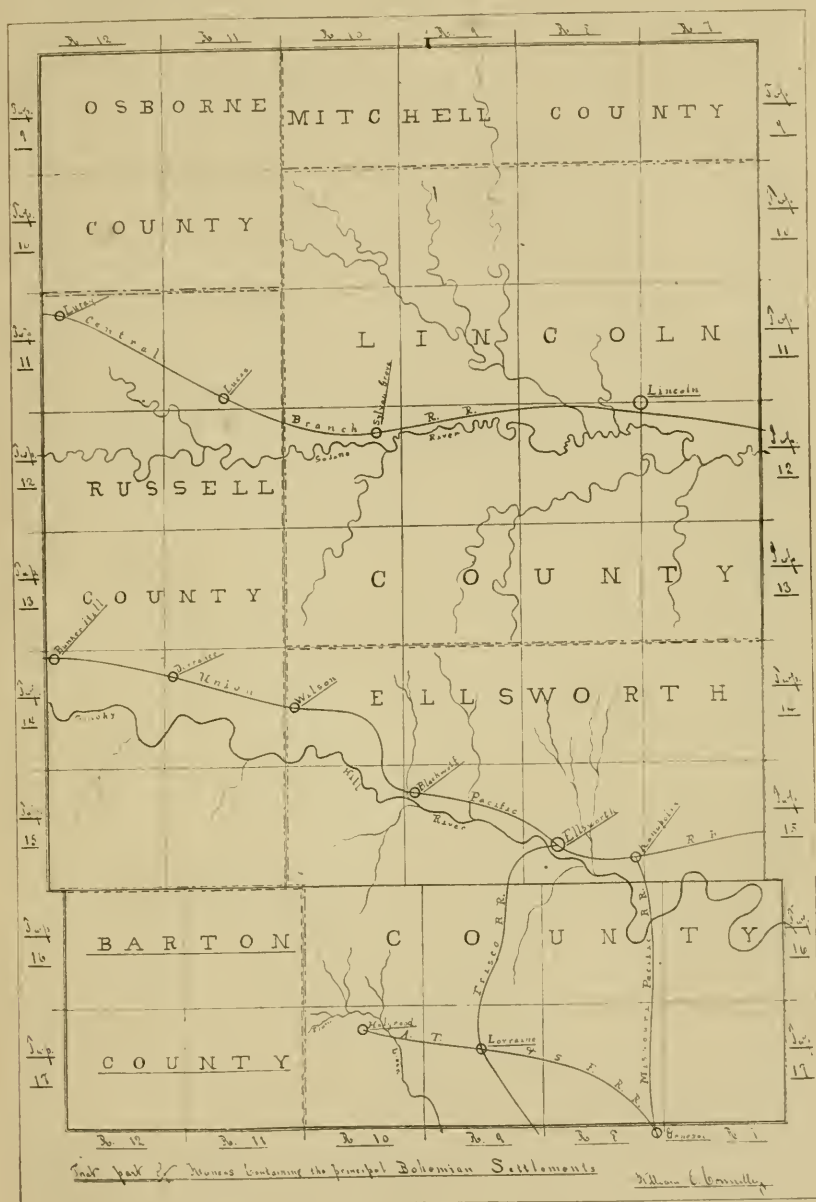
Nothing could turn me from carrying out my plan—nothing less than death. At the Salina land office I found fair and gentlemanly treatment. I could have found land enough for myself in Saline county, but not enough for a colony without buying, so I did not investigate that chance. I bought three or four plats of townships that had railroads in them—Kansas Pacific, and Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe—and went to examine the lands. The eastern part of Ellsworth county, that I passed through, seemed too rough for farming. On May 12, 1874, I passed through the town of Ellsworth. I don't know whether any of its citizens made out the writing on my wagon cover or not. It read: "*Ceská Osada*." Those words, meaning "Bohemian Settlement," conceived first in my brain, were later put on canvas, and afterwards worked into reality—a grand success. May 14, 1874, I arrived at Wilson. Jacob Sackman, an old veteran, was the first man to give me a welcome. But later I found comrades of my own regiment, and company, even, in Ellsworth county. So I decided to seek no further.

While teaching my first public school in my log cabin on my claim in Nebraska, I was reading in my newspapers of our people organizing companies in the large cities to move out and settle on land, to go to farming, because there was a financial panic in this country. Wages were low and many thousands were out of work in every city. One such company of Bohemians in New York City was organized and had secured reduced rates to go west to settle on land; another in Chicago, Ill.; and each club or colony voted to send a committee to explore some western state. Some went to Wisconsin; some to South Dakota and northern Nebraska; some came through Kansas on the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe railroad as far as Larned, I believe, but there was trouble in each and every direction. Discord and disagreements followed. It seemed very hard for the exploring parties to find, to their satisfaction, the "Promised Land, flowing with milk and honey"; and still harder to please all the home-seekers. It is no wonder when we consider where these people had been all their lives. In Bohemia, as in most other parts of Europe, all the people live in cities, towns and villages except a few foresters, who, sixty years ago, with some of the millers, lived in remote places as the American farmer does here. Hence they had never seen isolated farm dwellings.

Customs and habits are second nature, and solitude seemed to frighten such people. An American farmer in a well-settled country seemed to them a poor human lost in a wilderness. How then would a pioneer, miles from his nearest and also lonesome neighbor, look thirty to sixty miles from the nearest little station? Horrible! Unbearable! Buried alive!

Hunger is the hardest task-master, and it seemed to be a case of "root hog or die!" So after I decided to locate a Bohemian settlement in and around Wilson, Kan., then called "Bosland" by the Kansas Pacific Railroad Company, I wrote up the location showing everything I could in its favor. The main things were, temperate climate; good soil; free land from Uncle Sam, or cheap relinquishments of improvements by previous settlers; railroad land at from \$2.50 to \$5.00 per acre; good and plenty of water from never-failing springs and wells at from thirty to sixty feet; plenty of building stone of fine quality, and an accessible railroad station. A paradise for poultry, cattle, horses, sheep, hogs, etc. I kept my pen going, publishing my reports in Bohemian-American papers until I drew the attention of the farm clubs formed in the cities and of all that reading public. Soon letters came pouring in wanting answers, and I had lots of writing to do, but that was all it cost—my time, stationery and postage stamps.

The first homestead entry of government land ever made in the Salina land office by a Bohemian-American was on May 16, 1874, and I made the entry. I bought a breaking-plow, on time, of Mr. S. P. Himes and Albert Jellison, hardware dealers in Bosland; with it I broke prairie, camping by a pond on my newly selected home site. One day, as I was turning over the green sod, I saw a great herd of Texas steers being grazed from Smoky Hill river two or three miles north up to the hills of the divide, and back again to the river, where a camp of herders—"cowboys"—was located. As they came back near noon, while I was out of sight, the cowboys swept down from the hills, with the great herd, right through the ravine over my best hay grass, and by the pond where my covered wagon stood. When I came to take dinner in my prairie schooner I missed my old army six-shooter I had



bought of Uncle Sam when discharged from service. My pocketbook showed signs of inspection, too. But my surveying instruments were not molested. As my exploration trips had cost me about all the money I had with me, the boys did not get a very big haul.

After breaking eighteen acres of sod—buffalo-grass sod—which, owing to lack of rain, got so hard it was with some difficulty that I finished about the middle of June, I did some surveying for Mr. Van Orden, who kept the hotel at Wilson, and Mr. Hutchinson, on section 28, township 14, range 10, where they planned to start a sheep ranch. On June 17, 1874, I started back to my log cabin in Nebraska, where I had left my dear wife and the three children we raised there, Klara, Mary and Victor. Leaving my breaking-plow with the men I bought it of, I struck out north by way of Wolf Creek on the Saline river, a shack of a country store they called Pottersburg, Cawker City, past Jewell Center to Hebron in Nebraska, arriving home in Saline county, Nebraska, on the longest day of the year. As I had written to my wife that I had made a new start, and we would sell out all we could n't carry away in our schooner, she had a buyer there ready waiting for me, Mr. Josef Freof, from Iowa. The sale was made in a short time, without any dickering, at \$12 per acre. I thought I had done well; I had bought eighty acres from the B. & M. R. Rly. Company at \$6 per acre only two summers before, and the other eighty was a preëmption. Especially did I think so a short time after the sale was closed, and about half of the purchase money paid, for I could then square up and get myself and family photographed.

In August, 1874, a great calamity happened to both Kansas and Nebraska—the greatest invasion the new states ever experienced in their history. How many thousands of families could write the darkest chapter of their lives commencing on that date! I think there are very few Kansans who see the date 1874 but will know of what invasion or calamity I write. It was an invasion of cavalry—flying cavalry! I will introduce here a little play of words that may be interesting to a student of languages. The word cavalry is derived, as you know, from the Latin word *caballus*, a horse. Now in the Bohemian or Czech language a horse is *kůň* (the *ň* having sound as in cañyon). Horses—*Koňě*; diminutive, *Koňici*—little horses or ponies. Now *Koňici* is also the name of locusts or grasshoppers in our Bohemian vernacular. When this grand arm of flying cavalry lit on our luxurious cornfield, it was riddled in a few hours. The corn prospect had been very good, the ears filling out and in the milk stage. Gardens and orchards went just as fast as the cornfields; even forest trees were defoliated in a day or two. This great host of locusts reminded me of my first experience with them in Dakota territory, when I was with General Sully's command fighting the hostile Sioux Indians up in the "bad lands," and building Fort Rice. It was our last of the three years of Indian hunting, 1865. The country was invaded that year by the above-mentioned cavalry, outnumbering us a million to one. But we had no crops to be devoured by them, and as we were in the enemy's country we regarded them as our allies rather than a plague. And this word plague in that connection reminds me of the olden times when this kind of cavalry was sent by the Great Jehovah as a reinforcement to Moses in Egypt. So much for the flying cavalry. We still have them with us at this writing—July 22, 1913. Many thousands of dollars have been expended by different counties of the state this summer for the purpose of exterminating them.

Though I was back on my farm in Saline county, Nebraska, I soon read the reports of how Kansas was invaded also. Crops, orchards and nurseries were devastated. And I was already located in that desolated country, just ready to move my family there! Now came a severe test of character. Would I turn with the tide of exodus pouring out of the unfortunate state through every road and by-way—going east? Many of my best friends argued to persuade me to stay with them in Nebraska, saying that Kansas was the native home of the g ashoppers. Ján Rosický, of Crete, Neb., late editor of three Bohemian-American papers in Omaha, my intimate friend, tried hard to dissuade me, but no argument could change my mind from my plan of planting a Bohemian settlement in the very center of Kansas. Mr. V. Shantin, having also sold his farm near Crete, and being a good friend of ours, decided to go with us to see, and if pleased, to settle in our new colony in central Kansas. So we got our prairie schooner ready and sometime in the early part of September we proceeded to move into the new land of promise. Meandering southwest, we entered Kansas at the corner of Washington and Republic counties, going through Republic, Jewell, Mitchell, and Lincoln counties into Wilson township, Ellsworth county. But what a pitiful sight was presented to our astonished view every day. Trees nearly all bare of leaves, grass eaten short everywhere, in some places dead and burned off. But the most discouraging spectacle was the numerous caravans that moved in a contrary direction to ours. And how they looked! My pen is powerless to do justice to the description. I even shrink from giving it such a description as I am able. It is too shocking for tender-hearted persons. It is too pathetic—the human beings we saw and their outfits. I delight in beauty, harmony, thrift; in power for spreading peace, plenty, happiness; comedy rather than tragedy.

Mr. Shantin and family mustered only enough courage to come along till we reached the promised land—that was all! They went back. So my family and I had no company. We started in a strange land, among strangers. But hope kept our courage up, and we went right on building a new home in the then desolate wilderness. But there was a little railroad station in sight, where loomed up a curious-looking tower, all enclosed, with a curious windmill on top, the fans revolving horizontally instead of vertically. That was “Bosland,” now Wilson, on the Kansas Pacific railroad. There lived Mr. Jacob Fowle the postmaster, Albert Jellison and Sol Himes, general merchandise, and Mr. Adam Jellison the lumber man. I bought lumber to build a house, designed for a wheat bin, but to serve as our dwelling till it was needed for the winter wheat which I expected to raise the next year. It was small but cost big money. I lined it all with matched flooring that cost \$60 per thousand; shingles, \$6 per thousand.

That fall through county commissioners the Kansas Pacific Railroad Company furnished those settlers who remained on their farms seed wheat and rye on time, to be paid for a year after. So I got some seed wheat and rye to put out on my sod. The first sowing of winter wheat and rye was done under great difficulty. The difficulty consisted in the ground, it being so dry that a proper seed bed could not be prepared. That was before the invention of the disk-harrow. I tried to stir the dry sod with the breaking-plow, but found it impossible, for it had baked hard instead of rotting. I could only turn over the two inches of sod that had been cut and turned

top side down in June. If I tried to cut a slice deeper, I had to go four inches to make the plow stay in the ground at all, and that was too hard a pull on my pair of old mares. Besides, the ground turned up in nothing but clods—like so many rocks. I made a harrow of oak timber with thirty-six big teeth three-quarters of an inch square, twelve inches long, set one foot apart each way. But it was like harrowing rocks; clods rolled over and over and lost nothing in size. Finally I gave up and sowed the seed on the ground just as it was broken in June, trying to cover by harrowing. I put an old railroad tie on the harrow for weight. There was no grain drill in the country



MR. AND MRS. F. A. SWEHLA AND DAUGHTER ROSA.

then, none could be found on farms or in the towns, so I sowed the seed by hand, just as grandfather used to do in the old country long ago. When I went over the sod with that big weighted harrow, it barely scratched it, it was baked so hard. I could scarcely tell where the harrow had been dragged, and repeated harrowings would not cover all the seed. It was like harrowing a road in a dry time. Then the big flocks of birds, English sparrows, were a pest; they picked up the seed before it could get even one dragging. Of course the crop was according to the work.

That autumn, November 22, 1874, was born Frank Swehla, the first child of Bohemian parents born in central Kansas, and our fourth child. When this boy became a man he married, on August 16, 1897, Miss Anna Martinek,

who was the first girl born of Bohemian parents in Russell county, Kansas. She was born July 20, 1877. The first couple married in the Bohemian colony were Mr. Anton Oswald and Miss Mary Kvasnicka, sometime in 1877.

Fortunately the winter of 1874-'75 was very mild. If it had not been it perhaps would have killed what little live stock there was left here. There was scarcely any feed of any kind, and the prairie grass—the good, nutritious buffalo grass, was burned off. Mr. Wullum on the Cow creek flats had a fireguard plowed around the northeast quarter of section 23, township 14, range, 10, so the grass on that one hundred and sixty acres was saved. My two mares and a colt ran away from the hay I had bought at a high price, from John Jellison of the same flats, but I did not wonder at the dumb brutes. It was the poorest excuse for hay I ever saw—short, moldy, mixed with weeds and other dirt.

I was the only head of a family that spent that winter in the proposed colony. I did some writing. Notwithstanding the desolation caused by drought and grasshoppers and fire, I had a vision of the future greatness of this land of promise, and I never gave up putting into execution my plan to found a Bohemian colony there. I wrote about the possibilities of the country and of its being the best escape for the unemployed of the congested cities, as well as an escape from the cruel tyranny of the Austrian Empire. I wrote to all the different Bohemian papers published in the United States. This brought me many inquiries, letters coming from persons in different parts of the country wanting some special particulars. I had as high as a dozen letters at a time in the post office at Wilson, and answered them all, and nearly always had to use my own stamps. Be it here remembered, I had no pecuniary interest in the project as I was not agent of any land company or individual and got no commission or salary. By correspondence I found an organization in New York City that wanted to get into an agricultural country, but didn't know where; and still another just like it in Chicago. They had spent money on committees, sending them to discover locations for colonies, but all in vain. The committees traveled by railroad and other ways, but found nothing to suit. So my messages were very timely, and very welcome—were in fact messages of great joy, of deliverance from low-wage slavery, and from worse—enforced idleness.

As soon as the spring of 1875 opened emigrants began to flock in from all directions. The first couple that came were not a married couple, but two old bachelors, brothers, Josef and Václav Klima, from the Sable pineries, Michigan, where they had worked some three years and raised a stake of about \$800 each. Detroit had been their headquarters, and they had friends and acquaintances there who soon followed in their wake. Ján Cizek, another old bachelor and a chum of the Klima brothers, came next, with two families, Jacob Jedlicka and Martin Mieg, both having marriageable daughters, and boys big enough to be of great help on a farm. The club in New York City, above mentioned, decided to come to my colony, and secured reduced rates on the railroads through the assistance of the city authorities, with the privilege of a car for themselves. I found free homes for them all near me in Wilson township, Ellsworth county. The three bachelors and Jacob Jedlicka and family I located on section 28, township 14, range 10 west, between one and two miles from Wilson in a direct line. Martin Mieg settled on the northeast quarter of section 34, Wilson township, Josef Dyma-

cek on the north half of the northwest quarter, and Ján Brasna on the south half of the northwest quarter of the same section, 34.

One man of the New York City club, after writing me a letter, broke away from his club and came out some time ahead of them, trying to play sharp, and get first choice of homestead. He landed his family in Ellsworth, our county seat, and came on to Wilson, walking to my cabin two miles due east of town. I met him with a handshake and a smile, and he asked me, "To je pan Swehla?" "Ano," I said, and I asked him his name. "Hu! did n't I write you?" he asked—much surprised that I did not recognize him because he had written to me. I had never seen him, or a picture of him, before. He confidentially told me that he was an "Odd Fellow," which I took for granted; he appeared very odd. His treachery to his fellows left behind did not recommend him to me as being a very desirable neighbor, so I agreed with his brother Odd Fellows who advised him to settle on Buffalo creek near Ellsworth. After many years of hardships on his homestead, I met him as I was surveying a state road through the county, running close to his place, and he complained to me of the great ingratitude of his only son!

The rest of the New York club reached Wilson safely, and I located them all on section 26 in Wilson township, as follows: Martin Honomichl on the northwest quarter; Adolf Honomichl on the north half of the southwest quarter; Ján Krasnicka on the south half of the southwest quarter; Ján Merchl on the northeast quarter; Josef Krofta on the north half of the southeast quarter; Frank Hubka on the south half of the southeast quarter. I divided up the land for them, showing each his corners and boundary lines, made out the description and preëmption papers, and charged them fifty cents apiece. The Chicago club was a much larger club, and the larger part of it came to Wilson later on. The New York City club had many stragglers who came in small groups, as did the Chicago club also. They kept coming out after they had received letters from their friends telling of the great expanse of nice land that became all their own just for the asking, and a small fee to the government.

In a scattering way the following families arrived: Josef Dymacek from Nemaha county, Nebraska; Ján Brasna and family, consisting of two sons, Ján and Rudolf, and four or five girls, came from Detroit, Mich.; Ján Zaloudek with a good sized family; J. F. Tampier, widower, with one son Josef and one daughter Mary, and Martin Fifer and wife, all came from Saginaw, Mich. Later came one more family from Saginaw; the head of it was named Jakup Hanzlicek. He bought raw land in Wilson township, of the Kansas Pacific Railway Company, at about \$5 or \$6 per acre, choosing the southwest quarter of section 15. Ján Zaloudek settled on the southeast quarter of section 6, in the same township. Ján Dlabal and family came from Toledo, Ohio, as did Ján Krejci (pronounced Krāchee) with his family the same spring. Krejci settled on the northeast quarter of section 12, township 14, range 11, Plymouth township, Russell county, and Dlabal settled on the northeast quarter of section 10, township 15, range 10, now in Noble township, Ellsworth county. Josef Vancura settled on the northwest quarter of section 12, township 14, range 11, Plymouth township, Russell county. He brought his family from New York City, as did his two brothers-in-law, Ján Stoka and Václav Hubicka; these last two bought out Jack Crawford on the northwest quarter of section 18, adjoining the town of Wilson; they

divided the land equally. Anton Sabrava and family, of the same party from New York City, bought out Marvin Brown on the northeast quarter of section 18, adjoining Stoka and Hubicka. Vaclav Gregor, a New York City cigar maker, bought the relinquishment and rights to improvement of Frank Brown on the northeast quarter of section 20, Wilson township, taking the west half of it for his homestead and letting Ján Pokorný, also of the New York party, take the east half gratis. Ján Miskovsky was the first Bohemian in Russell county. Josef Hrabik bought out the rights of John Stoltenburg on the northeast quarter of section 24, Plymouth township, Russell county. He and Miskovsky were in the same New York party and were related, their wives being sisters. The wives of Ferdinand Krulis and Josef Martinek, who bought out the rights of Philip Gabel on the southeast quarter of section 14, Plymouth township, Russell county, were also sisters. Krulis and Martinek divided the quarter between them, Martinek taking the east half.

Early in the spring Anton Matous and Josef Junk, from Milwaukee, Wis., came to see the country first before bringing their families. They came, they saw, and were conquered, sending back to Milwaukee a favorable report, and not only their families but many others followed soon after. I was kept busy hunting and showing them locations on free homestead land—so busy that I had to neglect opening up of my own farm. Amongst those who followed from Milwaukee were the following: G. W. Richter, a single man; Josef Rézac, married; Ján Klus, married; V. Chrudinsky; Ján Vesely, married; Joe Junk's parents and other brothers; the family of Anton Matous and his mother and her children.

All settlers mentioned up to this time came by railway. But in the late spring there arrived a caravan of prairie schooners from Minnesota, not drawn by ox teams as I left Iowa eight years before, but by horse power. The caravan arrived in time to help the first settlers, who had preceded them one year, to gather the first harvest of winter wheat. In this addition to our settlement came Ján Sekavec and wife and their sons, W. F. Sekavec, a single man, and Frank Sekavec, married; Josef Zajic (Zäyeetz) married, and Frank Zajic, single—brothers—and their parents and younger sisters and brothers.

Harvesting in the centennial year was done by reaping, self-raking, machines drawn by two, three or four horses or oxen. Behind them, five or six good hands—men or women—would keep up if they were well trained. Two expert binders riding on the Marsh harvester could bind all the grain into bundles and throw them on the ground.

As settlers came, the available free homestead land in the vicinity of Wilson grew scarce, so I had to take the newcomers farther into the domain of the cowboys and their long-horned Texas cattle herds. And here was a conflict of interests. But the law was on the side of the settlers, and the free rangers had to go farther west into the wilderness, as the pioneer turned the buffalo grass under in preparation for the golden harvest.

"Plum Creek Flats" is a level expanse of country, but between it and the Smoky Hill river the land is rough. As the home-seekers came I took them out to show them what vacant land there lay open for entry, and going south from the Smoky and through that rolling prairie land I had difficulty in keeping my prospective settlers patient enough to wait for the beautiful prospect beyond. One time I had a load of land seekers and was

going to show them free home sites in the direction of Plum Creek Flats. Plum creek heads in Palacky township, and runs down through Valley township into Rice county. Nothing suited my party for ten miles along the way. I had told them there was a level country farther on, but they were so disgusted with the travel and the looks of the wild land that they wanted to go back, and made me turn when we were near the divide, from the summit of which they could have seen a most beautiful land of promise. They did not settle in my colony at all. Whether they regret it or not I never found out. The founding of the settlement in Palacky township occurred in June, 1876, when I took the Sekavec party over the crest, or summit, that divided the waters of the Smoky Hill from those of the Arkansas river, and showed them the "Plum Creek Flats."

The largest party of Bohemian home-seekers came September 1, 1876, from Chicago. It was one of the organized clubs or colonization societies mentioned earlier in this article. The Chicago party which arrived in Wilson was but a small fraction, however, of the people who had been attending the meetings held in that city to organize an agricultural colony to settle on cheap lands or government homesteads. Since the panic of 1873 many people in the cities were in real distress, employment was scarce, and wages had been greatly reduced, therefore numbers had attended the meetings and joined the association. But when it came to raising a sum of money to defray the expenses of a committee to be sent out to discover a favorable location for the colony few were willing or able to pay their share of the necessary sum, and the majority withdrew. Out of the two hundred members but seventy-five remained in the club, and finally in 1875 sent three members as a committee to look up a location. The committee, after a trip over the Atchison, Topeka & Santa Fe into central Kansas, returned, reporting in favor of Barton county. But the club for some reason disorganized, and nothing was done until by the efforts of Jan Oliverius, editor of a Bohemian weekly paper, "*Vestník*," then published in Chicago, Ill., a new company was organized. The secretary of this new company wrote a letter of inquiry to me at Wilson, Kan., and receiving a favorable answer to questions, the following members of the club and their families came to Wilson on September 1, 1876: Frank Malir, Matej Libal, Ján Lilák, Josef Fisher, Frank Stehno, sr., Frank Bricháček, V. Schánelec, Ján Schánelec, Frank Dolezal, Ján Cikánek, Frank Novák, V. Mares, all these with families, and Jos. Bricháček, Frank Habart, V. Vanis, Jos. Zamrzla and Frank Stehno, jr., young men of age, but single. More than the above named came, but did not remain to settle and develop the country, so their names are omitted. Later others came, following their relatives and friends; of these I mention the parents of Jos. Zamrzla with their children; Jos. Cikánek, Anton Slechta, V. Slechta, Jos. Smolik, Ján Vlcek, V. Zvolánek, Jos. Bachura, ——— Horejsi, Frank Branda, Frank Harach, V. Dolezal, Frank Lilák, and Frank Boushka. These new settlers located in all directions from the starting point—Wilson township.

For the first arrivals from Chicago I took my big farm wagon, and my two-seated spring wagon, both full. I drove them south of the Smoky Hill river, into what is now Noble township, and located Frank Malir on the southwest quarter of section 8, township 15, range 10, and V. Vanis on the south half of the northwest quarter, and M. Libal on the north half of the

northwest quarter of the same section; Jos. Fisher on the northeast quarter, of section 18, township 15, range 10, Frank Stehno, jr., on the southwest quarter, and V. Mares on the northwest quarter of the same section; Jos. Bachura later on settled on the southeast quarter of section 6. Frank Dolezal bought a relinquishment from Ira E. Danner, a veteran of the Civil War, of the southwest quarter of section 24, township 14, range 10, in Wilson township. Ján Cikánek settled on the northwest quarter of section 30, township 14, range 9, now in Columbia township. Frank and Jos. Brichácek, Ján Schánilec, and Frank Novak and brother settled near the Saline river in Lincoln county, close to Sylvan Grove, where also located the Frank Urban family that came from Washington county, Iowa, in 1882, and from Strejchov near Bechyne, Bohemia, in 1867. Starting in Iowa city as a laborer, Mr. Urban now owns a fine residence in Wilson, to which he retired from his farm in Lincoln county, where he and his sons own land to the amount of 1760 acres. This is by no means an isolated example of thrift, and it should be remembered that there were no free homesteads to be had when the Urban family came to this section of Kansas. Mr. and Mrs. Josef Veverka, sr., came from Chicago, on the 17th day of January, 1878, with a family of small children, all too small to do much work, and a small capital. They bought the relinquishments to the southwest quarter of section 2, township 14, range 11, in Plymouth township, Russell county, of Vac Chrudimsky. Mr. Veverka, being located on the ridge that divides the waters of the Smoky Hill and Saline rivers right where there are building-stone quarries in abundance, made good use of them, putting up all farm buildings, and even a corral, of the magnesia limestone. Mrs. Veverka was an excellent business manager and her husband a hard worker; so they could not help but prosper, raising four sons and three daughters. They now live in a fine residence in Wilson, and recently sold a four-hundred-acre farm. Their sons own upwards of one thousand and forty acres of land. There are many more who have acquired much land, in fact the thrifty are too numerous to name.

The colony's first sad misfortune occurred December 21, 1875, when Mr. Frank Hubka, who built in the ravine near the big curve of the Kansas Pacific railroad, was digging a well, and his neighbor, Mr. Josef Krofta, was helping. They had reached a depth of about twelve feet, going through sand, when what should have been expected happened. The sand caved in onto Mr. Krofta, burying him in the hole. A messenger was sent over two miles on foot to tell the writer of the accident. Knowing that the people near there had no material necessary in such a case, I lost no time in driving my wagon to Wilson, two and a half miles, getting what lumber I estimated to make the hole in that sand safe for a human being.

When I arrived at the hole with my tools, lumber, and the three railroad section hands I had impressed into service, I found the wife of the unfortunate Krofta down in the hole frantically trying to extricate her young husband from that treacherous and persistent sand and from the awful fate of being buried alive. Every move she made and every handful of sand she lifted from over her loved one's head brought down much more on all sides of her. She, herself, looked to me in the very jaws of death, the sand piling about her ready to swallow her on top of her beloved husband. Her mad efforts only succeeded in uncovering Krofta's head so as to let the air to his mouth, but

that was unavailing as it could not get into his lungs. The weight of the sand was so great on his chest as to make expansion impossible. In a short time, with the help of the section hands, I had two regular polygons made out of the two-by-four-inch timber, reinforced by sections of six-inch fencing, just big enough to go into the hole and allow a fence board to be stuck between them and the surrounding ground and sand. But it was useless; Mr. Krofta was dead.

The funeral was held on December 24. The procession was not very large, as there were but few who had horse teams in those days. It was indeed a sad Christmas for the new settlers. Especially was it a sad time for the bereft wife and child and for the mother of the dead man, for they could not have the comfort of their religion in the burial service. They were Roman Catholics and we had no Roman Catholic church in the settlement then, and no priest. Mr. Jos. Krofta's mother was Mrs. Merchl, and this sad accident brought her to her death bed, and in less than a month she died, heart-broken, and her remains were laid to rest by the side of her beloved son.

The bereaved Mr. Merchl and his unmarried son, disheartened now, and no longer contented with their free home, wished to go back to New York City, and Frank Hubka, whose unfortunate well-digging had caused all this, naturally sought to help them realize their desire. The parents and brothers and sisters of Mrs. Hubka were still in their native place, Loza, near Kralovice, Bohemia. The Hubkas wrote them of their new home and that they were landowners and farmers, and that their eighty-acre farm, when compared to the area of the biggest farms in their native village, would cover several of them. That kind of news from Kansas or any part of America always creates a great stir in the congested Old World. So it made a stir in Loza, and Mrs. Hubka's parents, Anton Soukup, his brother Josef Soukup, Ján Kepka, Jakub Vopat and his brother Ján Vopat, Josef Jánecek, Frant. Soukup, Prokop Spousta, all heads of families, began to sell what they could not bring along with them to the new Bohemian settlement in Kansas.

But it was not so easy to sell. Money is extremely scarce in a land impoverished by militarism and ruled as the Austrian government misgoverns the kingdom of Bohemia. Therefore it was not until the spring of 1877 that our colony received its first increase direct from our native land, Cechy. Mr. Hubka's father-in-law, Anton Soukup, bought out the relinquishment of Mr. Merchl on the northeast quarter of section 26, Wilson township, and Mr. Merchl returned to New York City, a broken-hearted old man.

From Loza, near Kralovice, in 1880, came Jos. Kroft, Vaclav Hynes and Havel Soukup. The last two were miners by occupation, and very poor, as all miners are the world around, but Jos. Kroft and his son-in-law Podlena, who also came with them, were well to do. By that time no free homes were to be found except where it was possible to buy some one's relinquishment, and railroad land. Mr. Kroft bought the relinquishment of the southeast quarter of section 10, township 15, range 10, of Mr. Nadeje, a cigar maker from New York City, who returned there. Podlena bought railroad land, the southeast quarter of section three in Noble township.

In the spring of 1877 came two brothers, Stěpán Vaňásek (Vaňásek) from Racine, Wis., a shoemaker, and Josef Vaňásek from New York City, a cabinetmaker. Stěpán bought the northeast quarter of section 27, and

Josef the northwest quarter of section 27, Wilson township, of the Kansas Pacific Railroad Company, at about \$5 per acre on eleven years' payments. Josef Vaňásek, a few years later, bought the south half of section 27 from some speculators in the East. Mr. Stěpán Vaňásek had two married daughters and one single daughter in Racine, Wis. One of the married ones, Mrs. Ján Charvát, and her husband, came later and built a large hall at the northeast corner of section 27 on a fraction of her father's quarter section which the railroad cut off from the rest. This was called "*Ceská Siň*," or "*Bohemian Hall*," and it formed the social center of the colonists for many years.

Colonists were accustomed to use this hall for all kinds of meetings; for such recreations as dramatic performances, athletics, dancing and singing; for cultural purposes, as a library club meeting; Mutual Aid Association meetings; political meetings. Here the settlers were taught their first lessons in "home rule," in republican form of government, and the value of American citizenship. And they were not slow in the ambition to be represented by one or more of their own nationality in the offices of the school district, township, and county as the records will show.

The first Bohemian elected to a public office in Ellsworth county was the founder of the colony, your humble scribe. That was in 1875, by unanimous vote—there being no opponent—for the office of county surveyor. The next year, 1876, I was elected justice of the peace for Wilson township. In 1877, my time having expired as county surveyor, I was reelected to succeed myself, getting three to one votes against Rev. Mr. Williams, of Green Garden township. In 1878 I was again reelected to succeed myself in the office of justice of the peace. My old comrade, Josef Drabek of company I, Sixth Iowa volunteer cavalry, who served with me three years, 1862-'65, and who came here to settle on a homestead on the northeast quarter of section 6, Wilson township, was elected one of the constables. I was kept in two offices at the same time; it brought me lots of trouble but no profit—nothing but loss.

Public office and farming do not work together well. A sample civil case is the following reminiscence:

Sargent and Dillman, partners in threshing-machine, plaintiff, vs. Mr. Bard, farmer, defendant. Mr. Richard Lafferty, attorney for plaintiff, Mr. Ira E. Lloyal, attorney for defendant. A jury trial demanded.

Defendant lived over seven miles east of my house and had about half a dozen witnesses from his neighborhood. Nearly all of the town of Wilson was summoned for jury. I held that trial in my house, as most country justices did. We only had two rooms besides the summer kitchen, and both were full to overflowing. The people were but just gathered for trial by noon, and of course they got hungry. Nothing was said, no questions asked as to how they were to satisfy their hunger. It looked as though it were going to be an involuntary fast, but my good wife came to the rescue and surprised the court and "courtiers" with a big dishpanfull of doughnuts and a big pot of coffee, sufficient for all. A verdict for the plaintiff was the result, and all went home rejoicing. From their smiles I judge they were praising the good cooking of "his honor's" better half. Of course she collected no fees, and I did n't get as much for that day's trial as an ordinary farm hand gets now.

Just one more, a sample of a criminal action. Those were the days of tramps. Many were heeding Greeley's injunction, "Go west, young man, go west!" And they were traveling on the railroad, too—counting ties. I then lived three-eighths of a mile north from the Kansas Pacific, now the Union Pacific, railroad track, and the travelers did not pass me unnoticed—not much. It was almost an everyday occurrence that some of them came to ask for a "bite to eat," occasionally two or three together. One morning a bunch of nine hungry men—all young—came. Of course we were in the habit of turning no one away hungry. They ate and went on their way rejoicing. In a few hours word was sent me that Ben Fowle, a deputy sheriff, had arrested a bunch of tramps, and wished me to come and give them a trial. I held court in town—short and sweet. A German kept a saloon in Wilson, and those same fellows we had fed in the morning went into it to treat each other, but none wanted to foot the bill, and the old German in trying to collect made some of them so angry that a row and broken bottles resulted. I examined the tramps one at a time and sent them to the county jail to be boarded by my friend Sam Hamilton, my fellow "courthouse rat," as the county officers were called sometimes. But the county commissioners got tired of boarding free so many able-bodied men, so they sent them on their journey.

Marrying young couples pleased me best of all my official duties. That was easy money. "I pronounce you man and wife"—three dollars and good luck! Here are some of the couples I had the pleasure of putting under the matrimonial yoke: Václav Oswald and Miss Mary Kvasnicka; Václav Vanis and Miss Katerina Zamrzla; Václav Zvolanek and Miss M. Urban; Ján Cizek and Miss Mary Krejci; Frank Branda and Miss Anna Urban.

Societies in the colony were organized from the first. In the fall of 1875 the first local association was formed by my urgent efforts. I called a meeting one Sunday at the house of Mr. Adolf Honomichl, where the settlers assembled in good number, and we organized a union of the Bohemian-American settlers, and called it "Blahobyt." The following were elected officers for the first year: Francis J. Swehla, chairman; Jos. Klima, secretary; Jakub Jedlicka, treasurer. A committee of three was appointed by the chairman to draw up a constitution.

The object of the union was mutual aid in sickness and distress caused by misfortune; the cultivation of a fraternal feeling; mutual up-lif; mental, moral and physical coöperation, and the burial of dead members.

There being no public hall, no schoolhouse or church building, the society adjourned its meetings from the home of one member to that of another, generally upon invitation. The meetings were held regularly each month, a special meeting being called by the secretary only upon urgent necessity and at the request of some members. Dues were twenty-five cents per month, but in case of emergency a collection was made at a meeting. This union did a great good while it lasted, and it was active five or six years. Perfect harmony prevailed in its meetings, as all religious propaganda was forbidden by the constitution. We aimed at temporal welfare only, leaving freedom of conscience to all.

Besides the good services this union did locally to its members, we sent all the money we could spare to aid the widows and orphans of the Bohemian settlers who were massacred by the Northern Cheyennes in September, 1878,

the last Indian raid in Kansas. After hearing of this outrage and learning the names of our countrymen, though we ourselves were needy, we sent all we had in our treasury to be divided *pro rata* to widows and orphans of the murdered Bohemians.

Thus we worked together until a Roman Catholic priest came to call his sheep to the fold, and separate "Ovecky od beranu," the "faithful from the unfaithful," or unbelievers, as the liberals or free-th'nkers were called here in America. "Berani" was an appellation of reproach given to all adherents of reformed churches in Bohemia, such as the Evangelical church of Europe, but there were very few settlers here who had belonged to that church. A great majority of the "Berani" were formerly Catholics who had lost their faith in that doctrine, but had not attached themselves to any other church.

Before this first local society began to die a second one was organized in the "Bohemian Hall" built by Ján Charvat. This had a different object, a library or reading club with a dramatic and athletic branch. It was started May 2, 1880. We began collecting money for the library by charging membership fees at time of joining, and by monthly dues. Also we made donations of books. I started this by donating my "History of the Jesuits," and others followed the example. However, we were all poor in the supply of books that could be spared.

This club was called "Stanvoy Spolkn Ctenárskeho," the Wilson Bohemian Library, and was instituted by the Bohemian settlers of central Kansas, chiefly farmers and mechanics. It was done with cheerful enthusiasm and rare unanimity, and the library, though small in the beginning, grew to hundreds of volumes, furnishing entertainment and instruction of a far nobler kind than card playing. The rules of the club were printed by the *Slavie*, a Bohemian paper of Racine, Wis. Membership fee was one dollar, payable on entrance into the club; the dues were ten cents a month, payable quarterly. The club held monthly meetings the second Sunday of each month. The constitution and rules consisted of some eight articles, and contained a provision for the burial of members. Any member of the club failing to attend the funeral of a deceased member was obliged to pay a fine of fifty cents into the treasury, and the society, upon the agreement of the family and relatives, conducted the funeral of its deceased members.

This association at the start aimed to have exclusive use of its library, and one section of the original constitution forbids the loaning of books to non-members. I deemed this too narrow and selfish and persuaded the majority of members to adopt my view of it, so the library was offered to the reading public at a nominal fee of five or ten cents a volume. This privilege was very generally made use of, especially after W. F. Sekavec, one of our most earnest members, moved from his farm in Palacky township, where he ran a store and kept the post office of Palacky, to Wilson, where he built a store building with his residence attached in the rear and maintained a hall on the second floor. We elected him our librarian, putting our library into his store. That made it more convenient for all patrons, and it was also a good attraction for his store. Besides, his hall was used for meetings; there the farmers met and organized the Farmers Elevator Company.

Sekavec's hall was rented for many years by a Bohemian lodge organized January 1, 1885, in the Odd Fellows hall. It is a local lodge of an extensive



MEMBERS KANSAS GRAND LODGE BOHEMIAN-SLAVONIAN BENEVOLENT SOCIETY.

order that had its start in St. Louis, Mo., on March 4, 1854, the year I came to America. It is a fraternal order securing to its members both sick benefits and life insurance. Aside from this it aims to cultivate and perpetuate the mother tongue; to promote and elevate the general standing of social, moral and spiritual life, by means of lectures, schools and libraries; and to use its best influence to assist our newly arrived countrymen to become good American citizens in as short a time as possible. This order has spread from a little local association at St. Louis, Mo., to two hundred and twenty-six or more local lodges scattered all over the United States, besides a Grand Lodge in each state. Our state of Kansas has at the present time, 1914, eight subordinate lodges, and a Grand Lodge located at Wilson. The local lodge at Wilson is called "*Rád Vesmir*" number 115. The initials of the national order are C. S. P. S., standing for "*Cesko-Slovansky-Podporujici-Spolek*," meaning Bohemian Slavonic Benevolent Union or Society. The whole membership of the order in the United States is about twenty-six thousand. The National Supreme Lodge at the present time is located at Chicago, Ill.; Ján Pecha, president; Jos. A. Smejkal, vice president; J. V. Luňák, secretary; A. J. Jambor, assistant secretary; Ján Klous, treasurer. Officers of the Kansas Grand Lodge are Ferd Pecival, president; W. F. Sekavec, secretary; Anton Matous, state trustee; Fr. A. Swehla, treasurer.

The following are the names and numbers of the subordinate lodges in the state of Kansas, and the location of each: Kalich (Eucharist) No. 74; president, Jos. Dressler, Holyrood; secretary Fr. J. Novotny, R. F. D. No. 1, Holyrood. This lodge has its own hall at Holyrood, which cost \$8000. Kansas, No. 76; president, Fr. Pánek; secretary, Fr. Kraisinger, R. F. D. No. 1, Rush Center. Nový Tabor, No. 89; president, Václav Voltman; secretary, Anton Stránský, Belleville. Zizkov, No. 100; president, Mat Knedlek, Hanover; secretary, Ján Brychta, Bremen. Zizkuv Dub, No. 109; president, Fr. Plucar; secretary, Jos. Kopsa, Cuba. Vesmir, No. 115; president, Karel Pekráek; secretary, Ferd Pecival; financial secretary, F. A. Swehla. Ant. Dvorák, No. 135; president Jos. Petrácek, Jennings; secretary, Jos. F. Pavlicek, Oberlin. Ellsworth, No. 189; president, Fr. Dolecek, Ellsworth; secretary, Step. Sekavec; financial secretary, J. M. Vondra.

Now, my dear reader, I do not mean to tire you by spreading here the constitution, by-laws and ritual of this great organization. It is too lengthy and dry for any one not directly interested—it covers sixty-two pages. But if any person is interested he can get a copy free for the asking—in either the Bohemian or the English language, or he can see a copy in the library of the Kansas State Historical Society.

Do not think that Bohemians are a very clanish people. Not at all—we are on the whole pretty good mixers. I'll point to one instance which can be proved by records. There are a half dozen or more American societies, lodges, clubs, companies, churches, corporations, etc., in Wilson, and you will find Bohemians in nearly all of them. Years ago when a lodge of the A. O. U. W. was started in Wilson they extended their recruiting among our people and soon had started a regular stampede, the like of which we could never get up in one of our own national lodges. In a short time they had more Bohemians than our own lodge, which had been struggling to increase its numbers for many long years, and with but small results. Bohemians mix

everywhere, learn all languages, travel to all countries, practice all trades, and possess all vices as well as virtues.

We have here plenty of organizations, and still the most useful or necessary may be lacking. But there is no scarcity of noble, exalted, high-sounding principles in any of them. And if those principles were practiced fully by all of the human family we would not need any more lodges or organizations, nor even all of those which we already have.

In 1904 there came into our grand society of C. S. P. S. a disruption, causing a withdrawal and the founding of a new order called the Western Bohemian Brotherly Union, Zapadni Cesko-Bratrská Jednota. At the present writing this order has a membership of 18,055. The lodge of Antonin Dvorák of Z. C. B. J. was organized at Wilson on June 10, 1904, by Dr. J. P. Pecival, with twenty male and fifteen female charter members. The first officers were: past master, Ferd Pecival; president, Dr. J. P. Pecival; vice president, Marie Veverka; secretary, Joseph Tampier; financial secretary, John Hoch; treasurer, Josef Libal; guide, Ján J. Florian; inside guard, Josef Hoch; outside guard, Amalie Tobias.

On January 1, 1914, the same lodge had seventy-two male and fifty-two female members. The following were elected officers: past president, Zdenka Cerny; president, John Helus; vice president, Marie Stehno; secretary, Ferd Pecival; financial secretary, J. H. Cerny; treasurer, F. A. Swehla; guides, Fr. Bohata and Marie Hoch; guard, Anton and Václav Brant; trustees, Jos. Zbornik, Fr. Kaitman and Frant. Bohata.

I must now break the thread of my story about organized societies to introduce a further statement relating to early settlements, so as not to omit our brethren from Moravia.

The Moravian brothers have from the earliest European settlements in the New World left "their footprints on the sands of time." As Moravia is located to the southeast of Bohemia (Cechy), so their settlement in Ellsworth county occupies the same relative position to our Bohemian settlement. The first families from the unhappy land of Moravia came to the settlement in 1878, from the village Pisarova, near the town of Schilburg, department of Olomouc. They were Josef Macek, Fr. Kroboth, Fr. Jilka, and Ján Steiner. From Hustopece, near Brunn, Moravia, came Martin Hoffmans and Karel Urbanek. These six families came via Bremen, Germany, on the ship *Leipzig*, arriving at Baltimore, Md., in sixteen days. The above-named families were the first direct from Moravia. Other settlers arrived from Ringgold county, Iowa, among them the Dolecek brothers, Leopold and Vit, both having large families. Leopold settled in Russell county, near Dubuque; Vit Dolecek, in Noble township, Ellsworth county, adjacent to the Moravians. I am informed that there are but three Americans in all Noble township, the rest of the inhabitants being Bohemians or Moravians and their descendants.

It should be stated here that our colony did not buy land collectively, but individually. The greatest possible freedom of action prevailed. No individual was bound to any taxation or cast-iron rules of subordination. That would increase the hardships of pioneer life. On the contrary, a helping hand was always ready for the needy as far as was possible.

No attempt was made to introduce Old World methods of dividing land. No settling in the old method of villages. The American way of living, each on his farm land, we made our way; the only deflection being of not build-

ing beside the public road in all cases, but rather seeking other conveniences. But that may be excused in many instances by citing the fact that there were no roads, public or private; in most cases the first settler made the virgin tracks—both footprints and wagon roads.

In the year 1878, direct from Stoupnice, Litomysle, Bohemia, came Vaclav Peterka, wife, and nine children, and settled on Cow Creek Flat, nine miles northeast of Wilson, in Lincoln county. All the family now live on farms. Josef Satran and his brother, Benjamin Satran, settled in that same neighborhood about the same time, but they came from the state of Wisconsin to this settlement, and took up homesteads. Josef Satran located on the southwest quarter of section 32, township 13, range 9, in Golden Belt township, Lincoln county.



HOME OF JOSEPH PETERKA, LINCOLN COUNTY, KANSAS.

Our early settlers were not very conspicuous by their dress, as our mode or style of dressing does not differ from the rest of the civilized people of western Europe or the United States. A great many of our people speak the German language. Many Germans settled in Bohemia since A. D. 1310, when John of Luxemburg was elected King, and they increased very much between 1620 and 1648, during the reign of anti-reformation or the Thirty Years' War.

The long list of teachers of Bohemian descent is good evidence that our people believe in universal education. I am indebted to Prof. H. Coover, superintendent of public instruction of Ellsworth county, for the following list. Many of the teachers named have taught in other counties and states than ours. F. J. Swehla, Victor Swehla, Romeo Swehla, Katy Krachy, Mary Knakal, Josef Jedlicka, John Dlabal, Mary Falb, Anna Falb, Rose Jarus, Edward F. Jarus, Albina Dlabal, Josef Vesely, Mary Kolacny, F. G. Novak, Albina Hanzlicek, Mary Hanzlicek, Angas Hanzlicek, Emma Zavodnik, Matilda Vaňásek, Amelia Varta, Theresa Varta, Vaclav Cipra, John S. Schánilec, Rose Kejr, Mary Vanis, Louis Ptacek, Eleanor Soukup.

Helen Soukup, Bessie Soukup, Emma Cipra, Josephine Koci, Pauline Koci, Pauline Cipra, Leona Doubrava, Lydia Kéjr, Edna Dolecek, Josef Novák, Esther Karban, Nina Stehlik, Edward Artas.

A list of Bohemian graduates from the Wilson high school is here submitted: 1890, John Tobias, now a practicing lawyer. 1891, Frank Jedlicka, dead; John Dlabal, farmer. 1893, Mary Knakal; Henry Tobias. 1897, James Somer, merchant. 1898, Rose Straka. 1900, Mary Sibrava; Albina Dlabal, school teacher. 1901, Ernest Tobias; Emil Jedlicka; Kamila Vaňásek and Matilda Vaňásek. 1902, Vlasta Sekavec. 1903, Emma Zavodnik and Rose Jarus. 1904, Mary Vanis. 1905, Anna Falb, school teacher; Albina Hanzliceck, school teacher; Rose Vancura; Del Zeman, druggist, and Louis Ptacek, school teacher. 1907, Joe Vanis, butcher; Richard Zeman, druggist; Mary Hanzliceck. 1908, James Brouk and Jas. Jarus. 1909, Charles Brouk. 1911, Helen Sekavec, Eddie Jarus, and William Peterka. 1912, Esther Karban, Edna Dolecek, and Adolph Hanzliceck. 1913, Frank Mieg.

At present we have thirty young Bohemians who are college students at Kansas University and the various colleges of the state. Some fourteen or fifteen others have gone to institutions outside of Kansas.



EAST SCHOOL DISTRICT No. 10, ELLSWORTH COUNTY.

Business life in the settlement in early days is of a good deal of interest, and I shall touch upon it briefly. Ellsworth had been a shipping point for Texas cattle, and central Kansas had furnished free pasture land for the cattlemen. Stores in town had on hand such things as were in demand by the herders, or cowboys: saddles, blankets, revolvers, knives and camp cooking utensils. But when I asked for a stone sledge in John Bell's hardware store in Ellsworth Captain Hoseman told me they didn't keep them on hand. It was the same thing when I asked for a road scraper and a cross-cut saw for two men. These articles had to be sent for. The cross-cut saw was needed to saw up the trunks of the many dead cottonwood trees left rotting by wood-choppers, I presume during the building of the Kansas Pacific railway. But as the new settlers began to flock in, crowding out the "long-horns," the merchants began to change the character of their goods in stock. And

http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry_Found
in June, 1875, I was able to buy only a Kirby self-rake reaper that John Bell had let a near-by farmer try out. The next year, 1876, "Centennial year," Mr. Martin Honomichl went to Salina with his team of horses and brought home a reaper, the Walter A. Wood "self-rake." Many settlers followed his example and bought the same kind. This harvesting machine was favored by our pioneers because it made a nice, square, compact sheaf, ready to be bound by hand without having to rearrange it. Our first implement dealer, Jan Tobias, wisely kept these machines for sale until binders and headers put them out of market.

In the fall of 1875 I bought the only wheat drill John Bell had, and, as far as we knew, no other merchant in our vicinity had one for sale. It was the Hoosier drill with grass seeder (for which we had no use), costing \$85. I loaned it to everybody far and near, even as far as eleven or twelve miles; and it was the same way with my reaper. Jan Tobias, who was a shrewd business man, soon began to keep Hoosier drills for sale.

Joseph Tampier, a young lad of promise, clerked for Mr. H. Stassen, and later for Mr. Nesmith, thus getting a good training in merchandising. His father, J. F. Tampier, becoming lonesome on his farm in Russell county, without a wife, sold the farm and bought a little grocery store in Wilson, where Mr. Jacob Fowle had kept post office, groceries, and sometimes fresh meat. Soon after Tampier bought the store he had the old rotten building torn down to make room for a large stone building, which later he enlarged. Besides this store room Tampier built another adjoining it on the east side.

Just east of Tampier's second store building the "Sokol" club built the opera house, or what is more frequently called "Turner Hall." Mr. Tampier donated the cost of the west wall of this building, besides giving a ten-foot strip the length of the lot, so that our "Sokol" club might have more room. The contract for the building was let April 29, 1901. It has a frontage of fifty-three feet, is one hundred and three feet long, and two stories high with a nine-foot basement. The stage has a curtain opening of fourteen by twenty-two feet, and floor twenty by fifty feet. The gymnasium under the stage is twenty by forty-nine feet, with a fourteen-and-a-half-foot ceiling. The seating capacity of the hall is five hundred. The building has furnace heat and electric light and its approximate cost was \$15,000.

The Bohemian athletic organization, analogous to the German turnverein, is named "Sokol" (Falcon). Vincent Hubalek, a young Cech fresh from "Ceske Vlasti" (our native land), full of enthusiasm and energy, organized a club of Sokol upon his arrival here in 1892, and in a short time they were able to give public exhibitions of their skill and strength at picnics held in the groves on the banks of the Smoky Hill river.

The first "Sokol" club was organized at the Bohemian Hall in the country, located at the northeast corner of the southeast quarter of section twenty-two, Noble township, Ellsworth county. The second club was organized at Wilson, Vincent Hubalek being the first training master for both clubs. In 1896 was built our National Hall at Wilson. For it was used the best building rock—the magnesia limestone found on the bluffs dividing the watershed between the Saline and Smoky Hill rivers. The Wilson "Sokol Karel Jonás," was the second club of athletics, and they undertook the building of the hall. They secured donations of many kinds from both countrymen and merchants of Wilson, countrymen generally donating work,

hauling the building rock from the quarries, scraping out the basement, etc. The merchants, besides subscribing money, donated articles of merchandise for the "Bazaar" conducted by the "Sokols." Nevertheless a great indebtedness remained on the hall after all efforts to raise money were exhausted. And this indebtedness was a greater burden than the net proceeds from all sources could bear.

This being exclusively a farming community, everything depends on the farmer and his products; and in this part of the "foot-stool" we do not get a bumper crop every year. When the crops are short the farmer is prone to make some retrenchments; then all other enterprises, except banks and loan agents, have a shrinking profit. So it came to pass that "Sokol Karel Jonás" was in imminent danger of a mortgage foreclosure, the building to pass into private hands. To prevent such a disgraceful event lodge Vesmir No. 115 of C. S. P. S. came to the rescue by becoming joint owner, raising money by soliciting more subscriptions as loans on long time, and also securing an extension of time on the mortgage indebtedness. Later on the joint societies admitted a third society to become a joint owner with them, lodge "Antonin Dvorák," of Z. C. B. J. This last lodge was to contribute a sum of money sufficient to pay for the completion of the building and the finishing work. The three societies joining saved the building, and now the mortgages have been wiped out.

Most of our people settled on the raw prairie and made farm homes of it. Very few had ever farmed before. They were in most cases of some mechanical craft, and had to take their first lessons in agriculture under the tutorship of Experience. The most needed trades here in the beginning were blacksmiths, masons and carpenters; to these may be added shoemakers, well diggers and tanners. Anton Somer, a member of our colony, ran the first blacksmith shop in Wilson. In 1878 Vaclav Zavodnik came from Iowa, and started a blacksmith and wagon shop, which he is still running. His nephews, Frank and Fred Michaliceks, came from the mother country, and learning the blacksmith trade from their uncle, ran the north side blacksmith shop for some years. Josef Kalina started a blacksmith shop in Ellsworth in the '70's, he being the first Bohemian resident there. Another Bohemian, Frank Varta, was a tailor in Ellsworth. Anton Slechta, from Chicago, Ill., was the first Bohemian shoemaker in Wilson, but was soon followed by Frank Kucesa from Allegheny, Pa., who ran a shoe shop after Slechta turned to farming in Noble township on the northeast quarter of section 17. Both are now gone, which shows how shops are driven out of business by factories. In the track of the victorious march of industrial development we find the ruins of former handicrafts and trades. The only one I think of now that has not been ruined is the barber. So we had Karel Jadrnec to ply the tonsorial art in Wilson, but he moved to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, and Mr. Vocasek officiates in his place.

Owing to the large number of settlers who preferred to speak their mother tongue, and many of them had no choice in the matter, all the merchants in town employed clerks of Bohemian nationality. Now many of those former clerks are storekeepers themselves; as Joseph Tampier, Frank Knakal, Anton Somer, J. W. Somer, Frank Gregor, Mike Somer, James Somer. In the bank we have J. F. Tobias as cashier, and Ferd Pecival, jr., bookkeeper. The Bohemian business men in Wilson are as follows: Jos. Pelishek, now

postmaster; Tampier & Knakal, groceries and hardware; Fred Sekavec, groceries; Tampier, Somer & Kyner, dry goods and clothing; Frank Gregor, dry goods and clothing; Anton Somer, hardware; Hoch Brothers, lumber; Jarus & Ptacek, groceries; W. W. Klema, farm implements; Frank Klema, garage and auto cars; Vaclav Vanis, meat market; Frank Zernan, pharmacy, drugs; Jos. Vocásek, barber shop; Smetana, meat market; Mrs. Cipra, Central Hotel; George Richter, notary public; Joseph Kvasnicka, manager of farm elevators; Jos. Rezábek, thresher and repair shop; Frank Vlcek, thresher and brass band leader; J. H. Cerny, music teacher and cigar maker, also local editor or agent of a paper, *Kansasky Pokrok*; Albert Mieg, agent and reporter for *Kansaské Rozhledy*. Both of these Bohemian weeklies are published in Omaha, Neb. Jan Herink, picture frames; F. Pohl, cobbler; J. R. Hoch, insurance agent; Frank Sibrava, manager opera house; Vaclav Gregor, janitor of opera house and librarian of Bohemian library; Vaclav Závodník, leader Wilson symphony orchestra. Jan Florian ran a cigar factory in Wilson for years, but quit and returned to Chicago, Ill. Vaclav Gregor ran a cigar factory in the '80's and '90's.

In matters of politics as well as religion the settlers were divided into different parties, but the Democratic party predominated. Ellsworth county under normal conditions is Republican, but a Bohemian candidate, whether Republican or Democrat, generally gets elected. This is because of national affiliation. When a countryman is on the ticket the Bohemians will do some scratching. This fact is evident from the repeated elections to county offices of W. F. Sekavec, when most of the offices were filled by Republicans.

On the question of equal rights for women I must confess that our people have been slow in interest and sympathy. The women themselves do not clamor for the right to vote. Of course there are exceptional cases. Personally I was an odd sheep in the fold because I advocated both temperance and women's rights, and neither of these doctrines found favor among my people. But the spirit of universal liberty and of helpfulness to humanity has penetrated even the most conservative minds. We now have Bohemian women's clubs, and women's lodges. As far back as 1870, in the city of Cleveland, Ohio, was organized a Society of the Bohemian Dames. This organization has since spread over all the Union wherever there is a Bohemian settlement, and we have the society here in Ellsworth county.

The Wilson lodge, Luna, No. 134, "Jednota Česých Dám," or J. C. D., was installed May 3, 1909, with the following-named ladies as charter members: Marie Cerny, Josefa Cipra, Marie Jiricek, Marie Stehno, Marie Kaitman, Anna Swehla, Marie Hoch, Matilda Bouska, Marie Jenik, Marie Pecival, Frantiska Svoboda, Minnie Vopat, Frantiska Kranpac, Ann M. Bronk, Josie Somer, Zdenka Cerny, Anna Vlcek, Amalie Soukup, Anna Hinkson, Marie Helns, Josefa Kvasnicka, Marie Stehno, jr., Anna Mieg, Marie Klema, Marie Chrudimsky, Anna Mares, Sofie M. Dolecek, and Emma Sterela; twenty-eight to start with, and now (1914) they have forty-four members. The entire order over the United States has some 20,485 members. It is a benevolent society similar to the C. S. P. S. already described, and was brought into existence, I presume, for the reason that C. S. P. S. at first excluded women from equal membership although it insured them. Now, since 1909, the C. S. P. S. as well as the other Bohemian

Brotherhood gives the fair sex equal rights with men, soliciting their membership.

This change as to sex equality has come slowly over the minds of our people. In the same way, in the course of another quarter of a century, the liquor question will be looked at very differently by our grandchildren, also the labor question. People must first become familiar with a new idea and be educated up to it before they embrace it.

The object of the organization of Bohemian Dames is culture gained by progressive ideas, and by noble endeavor for humanity's welfare. They urge that children be taught to speak and to respect the mother tongue. They support schools. Aid is given to members of their society in sickness and distress; sick benefits and \$600 death benefit are paid. A local lodge of the order is in Holyrood and is said to be stronger than the lodge at Wilson.

The Catholics of our settlement began in the early '80's to call meetings, urging upon the struggling pioneers the need of caring for their spiritual welfare as well as their physical wants. On the first call thirty-two men attended a meeting to discuss the question of building a house of God. At a second meeting only twenty men were present, and at the third, thirteen, but these thirteen were the lucky number. They were of the faithful, who were not only willing to keep up the struggle of keeping soul and body together but at the same time desired to insure eternal happiness to the soul. A building committee was organized composed of the following men: Jakub Soukup, Jakub Jedlicka, solicitors to raise money; J. F. Tampier, treasurer; Ján Zalondek, building superintendent; Ján Ptacek, assistant solicitor. In two days' canvassing the settlement over \$300 was collected and much more subscribed.

In 1883 Henry Esche, a young man of German descent who had just arrived with his parents from Pennsylvania, was hired to put up the walls. I had already surveyed the lots, which the Kansas Pacific Railway Company had donated. I also set the stakes for the foundation. Owing to the poverty of the early settlers, and the poor crops that we got sometimes, the church building could not be finished all at one time. At first the walls were built out of our nice building stone, and the shingle roof put on, without the belfry. In the latter part of 1885 the first pastor, Rev. Karel Dragoun, arrived from Louvain, Belgium, where he had finished his divinity studies. He was born October 30, 1861, in Kojetin, Moravia.

In a few years the church was finished. But the priest did not give satisfaction to some of the more zealous churchmen, so he was succeeded by Rev. Father Nováček. Under his administration a larger and more pretentious edifice was built, and many years of happiness were realized by the devoted congregation before their house of God, in which they took such pride, was reduced to ashes. The parish then bought a school building of the public-school board, one no longer needed after the large brick schoolhouse was built, and held their meetings and services in that for years, until the present magnificent brick edifice was dedicated in November, 1912.

The Catholics have two societies now (1913): "The Catholic Workman," with a membership of fifty-four men. Jan Kratky, President; Josef Vopat, vice president; Fr. Matas, secretary.

The second society is "The First Central Union of Bohemian-American Women," with nineteen members. Mrs. Marie A. Soukup, president; Mrs.

Josefa Kepka, secretary. There was another organization but it went out of existence for lack of patronage.

Reverend Father Nývacek's administration was a long and successful one for the parish, but for causes unknown to the writer his time had come in the succession of pastors and Father Olesh took his place for a very short time, until Father Weber, the present pastor of the parish, came. As the congregation was of several nationalities it was desirable that its pastor be able to speak the different tongues of his parishioners. Rev. Father Josef Hesoun, of St. Louis, Mo., the latter-day apostle to the Bohemians of the United States, has great credit for the prosperity of not only this parish but all of the Bohemian parishes in the Middle West. Yes, even throughout the whole United States. In his honor, on the event of the celebration of his jubilee of twenty-five years of service in one parish (St. Louis, 1865-1890), there was published a great historical book to commemorate the event. This book, a large octavo volume of 552 pages, is filled with the highest commendations from every nook and corner of our new country, wherever even a few faithful live.

The Catholics of Wilson have built three church buildings on the same lots, within twenty-nine years, each one grander than its predecessor. They have also built a large hall about five miles east and one mile south of Wilson, on the farm of Anton Soukup, where they hold their social gatherings, dances, fairs, basket suppers, or bazaars for church benefits.

At this time (1914) our settlement has spread far and wide from that very small nucleus made in 1874 by a single family. It reaches to Ellsworth, Kanopolis, Geneseo, Luray, Lorain, Holyrood, Dorrance, Lucas, and Sylvan Grove. Of course neither these towns nor the country intervening is composed of Bohemians or their descendants exclusively; other nationalities are mixed with them more or less. In Holyrood, Valley township, there are Bohemians, Irish and Germans. In a population of 380 there are 130 Cechs who are represented in business, Joe Dolecek, Joe Vesely, Jan and Adolf Dolecek; Louis Soucek, Jos. M. Vaňásek, F. E. Horejsi, Dr. G. F. Zerzan, A. J. Pokorny, J. V. Junger, A. Strela, F. A. Vesely, F. Hromadnik, W. F. Jenicek. Jos. Rezac is a retired farmer living in Holyrood, also Jos. Lank and Anton Matous. The latter served for many years as township trustee of Palacky township; he is a bookworm and owns the best library in that part of the country. In 1888, when I taught their school, I frequently visited him, and he then had a good-sized bookcase full of good works.

About all the government land in Palacky township was settled in 1878. And the settlers, mostly Bohemians, some of whom had come in 1876, are here listed. Tobias Doubrava, our present county commissioner, gives me a brief sketch of his father, which is inserted here.

Francis Doubrava, born July 21, 1834, in the village Sloupnice, near Litomisle, department Chrudimsky, Bohemia, immigrated to the United States April 25, 1873. He came directly to Vining, Tama county, Iowa; from there, in 1878, he moved his family to Ellsworth county, Kansas, where a Bohemian settlement had been started, and settled on the northeast quarter of section 10 in Palacky township. Here he lived and farmed, pushing the Great American Desert farther west until December 4, 1894, when he was summoned to pay his last debt to nature, leaving six sons and two daughters to console their widowed mother, who is still living on the old homestead.

The Bohemian homesteaders of Palacky township were: Frank Svaty, Josef Lank, Jan Barta, J. Junger, Anton Borecky, Lukas Sebesta, Fr. Skalecky, Peregrin Kodytek, Josef Rezac, Jan Vesely, Jan Klus, Fr. Doubrava, Jan Nemecek, A. Talsky, Jan Jira, Jos. Socha, Jos. Zelenka, Vac Kolouch, W. F. Sekavec, Jan Sekavec, Frank Sekavec, Fr. Zajic, Josef Zajic, Jan Dressler, Frank Cipra, Josef Sekavec, Jakub Zajic, J. Stejskal, Anton Matous, ——— Sule, J. Kaplicky, Anton Matous, sr., Josef Matous and Edward Matous.

The following are those who bought railroad land: Jos. Barta, Jos. Kraft, Fr. Toman, T. Doubrava, Vaclav Riha, Anton Borecky, Josef Haska, Jan Adamek, Anna Adamek, Jan Vacek, Albert Harbacek, Josef Harbacek, Josef Jezek, Fr. Zavesky, Joseph Socha, jr., Ignac Skalecky, Jan Kozisek, Jos. Novotny, Jan Doubrava, Jos. Z. Sekavec, Fr. Dlouhy, Fr. Jirik, jr., Vaclav Zajic, Vaclav Doubrava, Hynek Horejsi, Frank Horejsi, and Jan Kozisek. Many of the original homesteaders have sold their farms and moved. Practically all the rest of the land in Palacky township is owned by Germans or their descendants.

Expansion has been the motto in this settlement. Our people are prolific as well as industrious. And as the large families grew to adult age more new homes were started on raw land bought from the railroad company or some neighbor willing to sell. At first it was the American who was willing to sell his land, but after years of growing and crowding, even Bohemians sold out to some fellow countryman who wanted a particular location worse than the owner did. Usually the former proprietor went a little farther out from the crowded neighborhood and bought cheaper and a much larger tract of land. Often it was just as good, or even better, than the land he sold. In this way, as well as by new arrivals from Europe, our colony has spread in all directions, but more to the northwest. And now it has reached to the southeast corner of Osborne county, in a continuous stretch of varying width. The Bohemian settlement in Delhi township is made up of families who earlier located near Wilson, but sold their land and moved on. Among them I name Josef Libal, Fred Rabas, Vaclav Aksamet, and Frank Kvasnicka.

In May, 1885, Matej Novak (born January 6, 1836, and died 1911), settled on land near what is now the town of Lucas, Russell county. He bought a relinquished homestead, the southeast quarter of section 22, township 12, range 11. His widow and their son, Frank Novak, still live in the old home.

There was no Lucas then, nor was there a railroad, and they had to drive to Wilson, the nearest trading place, over sixteen or eighteen miles of rough roads, really no roads worthy the name. But soon they got more of their countrymen to settle in the township, and now the following Bohemians are located there: Josef Siroky, Tom Urban, Jan Siroky, Fr. Nadeje, Joseph Votruba, Jan Votruba, Frank Brichacek, Jan Florian, Jos. Brichacek, Joseph Pertl, Jos. Aksamit, Jan Novak, Matej Baur, Vaclav Libal, Jan Rezabek, Josefa Florian, Frank Kvasnicka, sr., Fr. Kvasnicka, jr., Jaros Libal, Jan Novak, jr., Emil Aksamit, Ciril Aksamit, Jan Honomichl, Jos. Rezabek. In the next township west of the above live J. Jilka, Vaclav Novak, Josef Strilecky, Jan Rabas, Jaroslav Sladek, and Vaclav Brant.

Lucas on the Union Pacific branch from Salina is a great marketing point for the Bohemians; they own a farm elevator there. Mr. A. F. Vopat is

cashier of the Farmers' State Bank, and also president of the Lucas Telephone Company. To Lucas the following Bohemians from the southwestern part of Lincoln county come to market: Tom Volak, Josef Stodola, Martin Kral, Mr. Hrabik, Vaclav Krofta, Vaclav Siroky, Vaclav Kozel, Matej Siroky, Vaclav Strilecky, and Will Pulec. Old Mr. Vaclav Aksamit, formerly of Noble township, Ellsworth county, retired from farming, lives in his comfortable residence in Lucas with his better half, enjoying a well-deserved rest in the evening of their long and varied life.

About all of the settlers joined the Farmers' Union, and have in town, besides the grain elevator and coal shed, their own creamery. South of town three and a half miles they have built a "National Hall," which they make their social center. Athletic club "Vysehrad," twenty-two members, and the dramatic club here demonstrate their activity and skill. It is also the meeting place of lodge Z. C. B. J., with forty members of both sexes.

Gymnastics to the young Cechs are as baseball and football to young Americans—almost a national mania. As the French gymnasts and the German turnverein, so the Bohemian "Sokol" pursues the training with an ardor almost approaching worship. Physical training is as old as the human race. The system has been developed as gradually as evolution has pushed the march of civilization. In ancient times Greece had its Olympic games, when the nation was at the zenith of its culture. And when the doctrine of mortification of the body for the salvation of the soul became a dominant practice, the decline of the culture of both body and mind took place. Then "*Mens sana in corpore sano*" proved its truthfulness.

The revival of learning brought refinement of manners, of sports and games, and systems of physical culture. From dancing, fencing and equestrian exercises, the select practice of the nobility and the ruling classes, was developed our modern system of gymnastics in Bohemia. It gradually spread among the common people, and ceased to be confined to nobility, professional men and others of the privileged classes.

The greatest credit for bringing this culture to the whole nation is due to Tyrs and Fügner. In the year 1862, in Prague, the capital of Bohemia, on the 16th of February, they called a meeting to organize a society for physical culture, having a permit from the government. They had exhibited their constitution to the ruling authority, and it had been found satisfactory. For over a year prior to this date they had agitated the subject and awakened some interest in it, so that seventy-five persons attended their meeting. R. Fügner was elected chairman, and on May 13, 1862, Miroslav Tyrs was elected trainer or commander, and quarters for training were secured in Apollo Hall.

From this hall, on June 1, 1862, marched forth the first "Sokol" of Prague to public outdoor exercises. In May, 1863, R. Fügner surprised his members by announcing that he had bought a site on which to build their own hall. Great enthusiasm followed, and when excavation for the foundation was in order, two hundred members of the club appeared with shovels and picks, donating their labor. Following the suggestions of Mir. Tyrs, architect Ullmann drew the plans, and the "Sokol of Prague Building" is distinguished by its architectural beauty and convenience of arrangement, and is a credit to its builders.

From this beginning organization of local clubs spread to cities and towns all over the kingdom, and the first public exhibition of strength and prowess

was held July 5, 1864, at Kutná Hora, where three hundred trainers from five country locals participated. Similar gatherings followed in other cities, until after twenty years of zealous work Prague saw the first congress of the locals of the land in 1882. While eighteen years before there were only three hundred training Sokols, now Prague looked upon a procession of sixteen hundred men from seventy-six locals. By the end of 1883 there were one hundred and four units scattered over Chechia and Moravia. This was accomplished in the face of difficulties, and in spite of the early loss by death of their worthy chairman on November 15, 1865. He was so beloved by all members that they called him "Father of Sokolii." In chairman Fügner's death they lost a tireless worker for their cause and the up-lift of the masses, a warm, unselfish friend, a loving father, a magnanimous character.

In 1869 was begun the organization of women's clubs for the culture of patriotism, mind and body, ethics, esthetics and atheletics. They are called "Sokolky," the feminine of "Sokol."

The second general congress at Prague, in 1891, showed some growth. There were seven thousand participants from two hundred and ten units or local clubs. Of guests or visitors there were three hundred Polaks, two hundred Chorvats or Croatians and Slavonians, besides a deputation of French gymnasts.

The third congress at Prague, in 1896, shows a still greater growth. It was attended by three hundred and forty-six units or local clubs. This included locals from Dresden, Berlin, Hamburg, Paris, Munich and other cities. In the procession there were seven thousand five hundred and thirty-three men, of which three thousand two hundred and eighty-seven belonged to four hundred and thirty-nine drilled units. Congratulatory cablegrams were sent from America. The distinctive specialty of this assembly was the exhibit of the training of five hundred juniors.

In the fourth congress at Prague, June 28 to July 1, 1901, there were guests and visitors from every Slavonian nation on earth, as well as from France and Denmark. Of the "Sokols" eleven thousand one hundred (men), eight hundred and sixty-seven "Sokolek" (women), and one thousand and eighty-eight juniors formed the procession; one thousand seven hundred of the juniors participated in the drilling and exercises. The "Sokol" movement had spread to us here in the United States, and five delegates were present at this meet. Organization of "Sokol" clubs in the United States began in the early '60's and had their "ups and downs." The clubs are mostly composed of the laboring class and fluctuate with their financial condition.



VINCENT HUBALEK.

The Wilson Sokol Club was the forty-ninth organized. The Black Wolf Sokol, No. 48, preceding it one year. In 1897 Wilson Sokol Club was admitted to the Sokol Union of the United States, but it had been organized and chartered by the state of Kansas September 7, 1895. The charter members were, V. Hubalek, Frank Michalicek, M. Somer, J. W. Somer, Henry Tobias, A. Pokorny, Frank Gregor, Fred Michalicek, J. A. Somer, Joseph Podlasek, Frank Swehla and Romeo Swehla.

"Na Zdar"—"May success attend thee"—is the hailing salutation of the "Sokol." May their number increase.

I have come now to the close of my story, which I shall end with some personalities. The years 1893 to 1896 were made up of days that tried man's ingenuity in making both ends meet. There was crop failure after crop failure, and the result was not seen at once but had its influence for a long time after. Mortgage foreclosures were frequent occurrences, and public sale posters were seen on every corner. We all suffered, the big farmer as well as the small one. I lost my farm and all my live stock, and began again under sore affliction and a heavy load of debt.

In May, 1893, our home was destroyed by fire and two of our children burned to death. From this my wife received a mental shock from which she never recovered; she died May 29, 1912. During all these misfortunes I was under medical treatment for an affection of the eyes. At times I suffered untold agonies and was practically blind. I have recovered from the disease, but my sight can never be entirely restored.

Now, in conclusion, I must say that I heartily regret a more able writer could not have been secured for this worthy task of recording something of our Bohemian settlers. But, be it ever so poorly done. I think it is better than not to have done it at all, and I at least have shown good will, if not great ability in the art of writing. This effort may be an incentive to some capable person who will write the story of our settlement properly, and in the near future, before we old pioneers leave for "that bourne from which no traveler returns."

"Lives of great men oft remind us,
We can make our lives sublime;
And departing, leave behind us,
Footprints in the sand of time."

May my "footprints" mislead no mortal, but guide him in the path of virtue. That is the last and best wish of the writer.

RUDOLF J. SMISCHNY.¹

RUDOLF J. SMISCHNY, member of the house of representatives for Ellsworth county in 1913, was born March 27, 1871, in Bohemia. In April, 1873, his parents immigrated to the United States of America, coming to Chicago, Ill. In 1874 they moved to Elgin, Ill., where young Rudolf attended public school four years. When he was ten years of age they moved to South Dakota, going by rail as far as Mitchell, that being the end of the line; then traveling by wagon sixty-five miles to the central part of Brule county.

1. These sketches of representative Bohemians came to the Historical Society through Mr. Swehla and therefore follow his paper.

where they were the first settlers, and where they started a Bohemian colony of thirty-five families. Here young Rudolf helped his father and mother with farm work and attended school.

In 1887 the family moved to Arkansas, settling in Washington county. Young Smischny worked on the farm until 1891, when, being then twenty years of age, he struck out for himself. Having an uncle in a Bohemian settlement in Ellsworth county, Kansas, he came to visit him. Finding work he remained, and in July, 1892, he rented a two-hundred-acre farm. That year all farmers raised bumper crops of wheat, and this encouraged Smischny so much that he decided to get married. Consequently in the spring of 1893 he married Miss Clara Mogg, daughter of John Mogg of Black Wolf creek. Hard times came and a young family added to the cares of the couple, but by grit and pluck they have won out. Starting as a farm laborer, Mr. Smischny now owns a farm of five hundred and sixty acres of good land besides considerable personal property. In 1894 he was elected road overseer of his district. After holding that office five years he was elected township trustee. There he served eleven years, and in 1912 was elected representative for Ellsworth county. In 1911 he organized the Black Wolf Grain and Supply Company, and is president of the company. In 1913 he organized a local Farmers' Union of which he is secretary and treasurer.

Mr. and Mrs. Smischny have ten children—six sons and four daughters. A son and a daughter married a daughter and a son of Frank Zajic one of the early Bohemian settlers from Minnesota.—F. J. S.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF VIT HANZLICEK.

I was born in Bohemia June 15, 1863, in a little village called Lomicka, belonging to Dolno Belle in the vicinity of Pilsen. In that little village my father owned forty acres of land which was divided into eleven pieces.

When I was eighteen months old my mother died. Twelve and one-half years after my mother's death my father took a notion to go to America. He had received a letter from his brother in America, who wrote that he owned a half section of land at Plymouth, Iowa, and that he would sell my father one quarter section if he would come to the United States. I did not want to go to America, because my mother's parents were pretty well off, and I thought I would stay with them.

After my father found out how everything was, he wrote to his brother in Plymouth, Iowa, and told him all about it. Shortly after this I myself received a letter from my uncle. He wrote me to come with my parents to America and that he would do all he could for me. I told my grandfather and grandmother what my uncle wrote me, and they said they would not try to stop me from going, and if it should happen that I would not like it they would send me enough money to return to Europe. After my father found out that I was willing to go with him he sold all his property, and on the 16th of May, 1878, we left our little village of Lomicka to make our future home in the United States.

On leaving our little village we drove a one-horse lumber wagon to Pilsen, which was about fifteen miles away, and was the nearest railway station. At Pilsen we took the train for a seaport; thence we sailed to New York, which took us eleven days. From New York we traveled by train to Plym-

outh, Iowa, where we arrived June 6. My uncle was there waiting for us, and took us to his place, seven miles in the country.

After my father saw the land he entered into a deal with his brother making him a part payment on it; his remaining few dollars he saved for improvements. It did not take very long for me to find out that my uncle wasn't the kind of man I expected him to be, and I began to feel sorry that I came to America. But I remembered what my grandparents had promised me, and wrote them a letter asking them to send me enough money to return to Europe.

Shortly after this my father found out that he could not get a clear title to the land, so an agreement was made in which my uncle was to take the farm back. But he did not have the money my father had paid him, therefore he further agreed with my father that he would send him the money when he needed it in his new home.

My father had a cousin in Butler county, Nebraska, and we calculated on making our new home in that state; so on March 1, 1879, we left Plymouth, Iowa. During all this time I received no answer from my grandparents in Europe, and having no funds of my own whereby I could return to Europe, I had to leave Plymouth with my parents.

We arrived in Butler county on March 3, and father's cousin located eighty acres of land for us, which father bought, paying part with what money he had left, the balance to be paid after he received his money from my uncle in Plymouth, Iowa.

Hard times now came, and my father's money which he brought from Europe, amounting to \$1000, being all gone, and no work to be got at hand for even small wages, I decided that I was big enough to take care of myself. I had heard that a well-known schoolmate of mine from Europe, three years my senior, was in Douglas county, Nebraska, so I left home for Douglas county to try my own luck. On August 1, 1879, I took the train for Omaha, and on arriving there I had five cents left. You can imagine how I felt, unable to speak English, and no cash in my pocket. But I found my friend, who was working on a farm by the month, five miles west of Omaha.

I stayed at this farm for two weeks, working for my board, before my friend could find me a place to work. He got me a job on another farm for ten dollars a month until spring; after that I got fifteen dollars a month for the whole season on the same farm. By spring I had saved a little money, and owning only one suit of clothes, which I took when I left home and which were now nearly all gone, I was glad to have enough to buy me a new suit. I was now seventeen years of age.

A little later on I received a letter from my parents in Butler county, Neb. They wrote me that they could not get the money my uncle owed them because he had lost everything he had, and that they were forced to leave their farm because they could not get the money to pay for it, and that they had moved into a little sod house. All they had left was one ox team and one cow, and with these they wanted to farm a small piece of land by the sod house. They had no seed nor any money to buy seed with, so they wanted to know if I had any money which I could send them. I had some, but not enough, so I overdrew a little from the farmer for whom I worked and sent the money to my parents.

I also wrote them that it would be better for them if they would move to Omaha, after they harvested their crop, because help was scarce in Omaha.

But they even did not wait so long, for they sold the crop in May, 1881, and moved to Omaha, where they bought half of a lot and built a small house on it. Then my father, brother and two sisters got steady work, and it was not long before they had everything paid for.

I was now working for another farmer and was getting twenty dollars a month. During this time my oldest sister came from Europe. After she came to Omaha, I also made my home there. Here I found out from her why I didn't receive an answer from my grandparents when I wrote to them asking for enough money to return to Europe. It was because they had never received my letter.

While I stayed in Omaha I worked at the Smelter, and also found work there for my brother-in-law. But neither of us liked the work very well, as it was against our health. My brother-in-law always wanted to go on a farm, and on hearing that our other uncle was in Kansas, we quit our jobs in Omaha and went to Kansas. I did not go on any business, but just to see what it looked like. We arrived at Wilson, March 3, 1882. My brother-in-law bought a quarter section of land about five miles north of Wilson, known to all as "Hell creek."

I did not like the land here in Kansas very much and could get no work that would pay over twelve dollars a month, so I left, and on April 1, 1882, was again in Omaha.

There I got another job on a farm for twenty-two dollars a month for the whole season. Before my time was up I began to feel lonesome for my sister, and in 1883 I was once more in Kansas. This time I got a job on a farm for fifteen dollars a month, but it wasn't steady. So in the fall I went to the eastern part of the state to husk corn. After the corn was husked and I could find nothing to do, I went and stayed with my sister for two months.

In the spring of 1884 I again got a job on a farm for seven months at eighteen dollars a month. By that fall I had enough money to buy me a team of horses and a wagon, with which I drove to eastern Kansas and Nebraska to shuck and shell corn. After I finished all the work I could find in Nebraska and eastern Kansas, I returned to Wilson, and stayed with my sister until the spring of 1885.

I then rented me a farm four miles south of town and started to "bach." I planted some corn that spring, and in the fall I put in my first wheat crop. After my corn was husked I hauled coal to Wilson from the Wilson coal bank, and worked at what other odd jobs I could get. About this time I received a letter from my parents in Omaha, Neb., stating that they had sold their house and lot there and bought a quarter section of land in Nuckolls county.

During the year 1886-'87 my wheat crop was fair but my corn crop was a failure, so in the fall of 1887, after my wheat crop was in, I took a notion to drive to Nebraska to see my parents. All the way from Wilson, Kan., to Nuckolls county, Nebraska, I found that the corn crop was a failure. After I arrived in Nuckolls county I had to go about twenty miles farther north into Clay county to get a job of husking corn. At the end of each week I returned to my parents' home and always brought a load of corn with me for them, for the corn crop was a failure there too. After all the corn husking was finished I stayed with my parents until spring. Then I drove to my rented

farm at Wilson, Kan. This year [1888] my wheat crop wasn't so very good and the corn crop was again a failure.

In the fall, after all my work was done, I made up my mind that this would be my last trip north to husk corn. Also I did not go as far north as I had on my previous trips. I went up into Republic county only, where the corn was good. There I husked but one week, when I became ill. Before I got well again I was in a hole. Now being closer to my parents in Nebraska I made a trip there and stayed with them until the next spring. In Nebraska the corn crop was pretty good, but I was unable to husk any that winter.

Early in the spring of 1889 I again drove from Nebraska to Wilson, Kan. I said before this that I was never going to make any more trips to Nebraska, because I figured on getting married. So on April 22, 1889, I married Anna Robas, of Wilson, Kan., and on April 23 I brought my wife to my rented farm, and from that time on I had a partner to share my troubles.

All the property I owned at this time was a team of horses, one wagon, two cows and a few farm implements. That year the wheat crop was pretty good, but in 1890 it didn't amount to much. During the year the owner of the farm I was renting wanted to sell the place, but I had no idea of buying it. A little later on I heard of another farm for rent out on the Cow Creek Flats, seven miles northeast of Wilson, and I leased it for three years. So after our wheat crop was harvested we moved to the new farm on Cow Creek Flats. During that summer and fall I plowed with a walking plow seventy acres of ground for wheat.

In 1891 I received a letter from my father telling me that my stepmother was dead. He wanted me to go to Nebraska and farm his land for him. This I did not want to do because I wanted to try my chance in Kansas. Later my father thought the matter over and sold his farm. The money received for it, after deducting enough for his living, was divided among his children, and in 1893 he and his two youngest sons came to Kansas.

After my father came he wanted me to buy a farm of my own, and he told me that he would lend me his money, also the money of his youngest son who was only thirteen years old, and that by giving my brother a mortgage on the farm for nine years I could keep his money until he was of age. So under these circumstances I bought a farm. Right across the road from me was a tract of land for sale. It contained one hundred and sixty acres, with one hundred and five acres in wheat, and I figured that this, with the one hundred acres in wheat on my leased land, ought to give me an average crop. But—my wheat crop was a failure—off of the two hundred and five acres I did not receive one bushel of wheat.

My father began to feel sorry that he had come to Kansas after he saw how everything was, and one day in 1894 he asked me if I could give him the money that he loaned me on the farm. I did not have it, so I told him to take the farm, but he would not do that. He wanted me to sell the place, but I told him that after the failure of crops I would not receive enough money for the farm to pay my debts, and that the money I had put in would be a total loss. After studying the matter over I offered him a second mortgage on the farm for five years, which he accepted. Then he went back to Omaha, where he bought a house and lot with money belonging to his daughter and son who were not yet of age. While in Omaha he lived off the interest which I paid him annually for the use of his money.

I was deep in debt, still I did not give up. I had an idea that some day I would own my farm clear of debt. As the years roll on some are happier than others. This happened to me. As, for instance, when I sold nineteen hundred dollars' worth of products off my farm in one year. This helped me to pay off the second mortgage to my father before it expired. A few years after he received this money from me he died in Omaha. After my father died I could not pay off the first mortgage until my youngest brother became of age, which was in 1902. So it was not until 1902 that I owned my quarter section of land clear of debt.

To-day I own two hundred and eighty acres of land and have some money on hand. I have to thank my father for it. For he was the one who brought me to the notion of buying a farm by offering to loan me his money. Without him I never could have done it. Alone I could never have thought of facing such a large debt as I was forced to face after I purchased the farm.

Now, in the year 1913, I am fifty years old, I weigh two hundred pounds and I have raised a family of four boys and two girls. At the present time, after taking into consideration all the trouble I had to bear in order to accomplish what I have, I will say that I do not feel a bit sorry that my grandparents in Europe never got my letter and that therefore they did not send me money to return to Europe. Kansas has changed considerably since I first saw it, and I intend to remain in Kansas the rest of my days.

AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF JOSEPH SATRAN.

On the 4th of July, 1851, the writer was born in the hamlet of Wesec at the foot of historic Mt. Rip in north-central Bohemia, which is a province of the Austrian Empire in Europe. I was the first-born of nine children—three boys and six girls—all of whom are alive at this writing, which goes to show that we came of good, hardy stock. My father, Frank Satran, was a shoemaker by trade, but his trade did not suffice to keep a family, so he had to eke out a living by farming a few acres of land he owned, in addition. Laboring and living conditions in those days were very hard, laborers' wages averaging only 10 to 12 cents a day, with board. This made my parents very discontented with their lot, so shortly after their third child was born they resolved to sell their little holding and emigrate to the United States. As soon as they got a buyer they sold, and the last days of August, 1856, found them at the seaport of Bremen, Germany, where they embarked in the steerage of a small sailing vessel bound for New York. At that time there were very few steamships crossing the ocean, and the rates of passage, as a matter of course, were exorbitant and out of the question for my parents. There were over two hundred and fifty human beings, herded together like cattle, in the steerage of their little vessel, and no cabin accommodations except for the ship's crew, consequently living conditions were frightful, and the food served out to the emigrants was so coarse and unpalatable that young children could not digest it and cried with hunger. In addition, the drinking water doled out was barely sufficient to keep down the thirst of the people—there was none whatever for washing except salty sea water which was entirely unfit for that purpose. Looking back now it would seem unendurable, but we and the others stood it for seven long weeks, until we reached New York. In these days of fast travel it appears unreasonable

that an ocean voyage of less than four thousand miles, even by sailing vessel, could last that long, but there are plenty of cases on record where it has taken between eight and twelve weeks, owing to storms and head winds. In such cases the privations and sufferings of the passengers through lack of sufficient food and water, must have been horrible.

Before I go any farther I must explain that at the time of our departure from Europe I was only five years old, and that my recollections of my first home are very faint indeed, I suppose on account of their being so commonplace. But our long journey marked a new era in my life, and some of our experiences then are still as vivid in my mind as though they had happened last week. Our final destination was Milwaukee, Wis., where my father's brother with his family had preceded us five months before. We left New York for Buffalo, via Albany, on the New York Central railway, and come to think of it now, it strikes me that the management of that road labored under the impression that emigrants, negroes and cattle were in the same class, for we rode in common box cars furnished with rude plank benches without any backs, and a mere excuse for toilet necessities. The track was so terribly rough and the jolting so terrific that the children, and even the adult passengers, would fall off of those miserable benches; so by the time we reached Buffalo we were all sore and raw.

From Buffalo to Detroit we traveled by side-wheel steamer, and while on that trip I saw deck hands rolling barrels of something alternately from one side of the deck to the other. All this was extremely puzzling to me at that time, and it was nearly twenty years later, on Lake Michigan, when I saw the same performance taking place, that it dawned on my mind that the object was to keep the boat on a level so both paddle wheels would dip the same depth into the water. The journey from Detroit to Milwaukee by rail was without incident, except that on the Northwestern railway, between Chicago and Milwaukee, we rode at great speed in first-class new passenger coaches, which in contrast to the New York Central cattle cars looked and felt palatial indeed.

We arrived in Milwaukee the last of October, just before President Buchanan's election, with times and trade exceedingly dull and stagnant. The country then was on a "free trade" and "hard money" basis, and there seemed to be mighty little of the latter in circulation, because even if a person was lucky enough to secure employment the wages were miserably low and the workingman was expected to trade out most of his earnings. I have heard my parents say that there were weeks and weeks when my father's wage averaged less than five dollars per week, but we lived through it all because my mother was an exceedingly economical and hardworking housewife. Recalling the money of that period, a copper cent was almost as large as a half dollar now; then there were silver three-cent pieces, half dimes, dimes, quarters and half dollars, and very probably a dollar, but I do not recall ever seeing one. The silver coins were about the same size as now. As for the gold coin, there was the gold dollar, so diminutive as to be a mere curiosity, the quarter eagle, half eagle, eagle and double eagle.

Shortly before the Civil War we had the wildcat banking era, the most vicious and irresponsible money system this country was ever cursed with, which impoverished and pauperized thousands of people. Luckily just as the great war broke, and as if by magic, all coin vanished from circulation,

and like the coward it is went into hiding and stayed hidden until long after the war was over. Then at the most critical time in this country's history came the greenback, the paper dollar that saved us from humiliation and defeat; the dollar that was always worth one hundred cents, the dollar that paid all debts, public and private, and always was at par with the gold dollar until our vicious money power succeeded in putting the exception clause on it in order to create a strong demand for their hoarded gold and silver. This is the only dollar, before which I take off my hat, the dollar that never had to have a redeemer back of it! The coming of the greenback brought back prosperity to all the working people. Every man, woman or child that wanted to work had steady employment at good wages, and everybody felt happy.

During the war my father tried to enlist in the army, but was rejected on account of valgus in both feet. Later on he was drafted into service but again rejected. At that period we were living in the city of Milwaukee, where I attended the ninth ward public school from my sixth to my twelfth year. Then, against the advice of my teacher, for I was an apt and obedient pupil, my father took me out of school and set me to work in the large boot and shoe factory of Bradley & Metcalf, where I started in at a wage of \$3.50 a week and worked there steadily for three years. At the end of that time I was getting \$1.25 per day. But the confinement at my work in the shop told on my health and I yearned for outdoor work and exercise, so my parents allowed me to apprentice myself to a house carpenter to learn that trade. Just about that time my father got a chance to sell his house and lot and invested the money in a small truck farm of eighteen acres four miles north of the city, for he too was getting very tired of working in the factory. Although I had a great liking for my trade I soon learned that the work was not at all steady and some seasons there were long periods of idleness; therefore I began taking up with any kind of outdoor work during those dull spells in the building trade, for I had regained my former health and strength.

When I reached my twenty-first year my parents allowed me to keep my savings; up to that time they had gone into the family savings bank. It was then that I conceived the idea of saving up eight hundred or a thousand dollars to start farming for myself. Having always been in a great measure self-reliant, I sailed in and worked and saved, which after all was not difficult, for my health and appetite during outdoor work have always been rugged, and I had never acquired any bad habits. After a while it struck me that by watching for chances to get free transportation on railways I would be enabled to reach other states and sections of the country, which would help me to find a choice location for my farm, as land was altogether too high priced near Milwaukee. Accordingly I hunted up jobs of railway construction and bridge building, whereby I was enabled to view and study the lay of the land and the character of the soil, besides other features pertaining to farming, in the states of Michigan, Indiana, Wisconsin, Illinois, Missouri, Iowa and Minnesota. Thus time passed and things moved along in proper order, until I bumped up against it on a railroad construction job in the extreme south-east corner of Missouri, at New Madrid, in the winter of 1876. I, with a bunch of others, had been sent there by an employment agency in Chicago under promise of good wages and an all winter's job. We arrived there the last day in November, and found the contractor, E. P. Sweeney, a little humpbacked Irishman who looked more like a pack peddler than a railroad

contractor. The most remarkable thing about him was his gift of gab. He certainly must have kissed the Blarney stone not once, but a number of times. Well, to make a long story short, he succeeded in getting three months' work out of nearly one hundred men for their board, a few rags and some tobacco from the company store, and then skipped out when the job was as good as completed. That jolt set my mind to working, and I resolved if ever I worked for anybody again that man would be myself.

When I got home and studied the situation over, I came to the conclusion that I must homestead my farm, for I had only a little over \$600 saved up. I determined on Kansas as my choice, since I had a prejudice against starting a farm in a timber country. I had learned through our Bohemian family paper that F. J. Swehla was just starting a Bohemian colony on government land in Ellsworth county on the line of the Union Pacific railway in central Kansas. I arrived at Wilson, in the the center of the colony, May 18, 1877, and was very favorably impressed by what I saw; but on looking around a few days, I discovered that the choice locations had all been taken up by the earlier settlers. Therefore I bought a relinquishment of a timber culture entry on a fine quarter section of partly improved land and homesteaded an adjoining eighty acres in addition, nine miles northeast of Wilson. That station at the time was not very good to look upon, for it consisted of a frame shack for a depot, a two-story hotel of native stone, a small grain storage warehouse, two grocery stores, a hardware store, a beginning for a lumberyard, blacksmith shop, a dozen or more dwelling houses and the inevitable saloon. Certainly not a very inviting beginning, but most of the settlers were middle-aged and young people, full of hope and determination, and quite willing to rough it at the start.

At the beginning I engaged board for a couple of weeks with Thomas Beadle, of whom I had bought the timber claim. I also bought from him a yoke of oxen for \$85 with the privilege of working off half the amount. I was to work out my board too. Upon investigation I found forty acres of my land in good cultivation, part planted to corn and several hundred forest-tree seedlings set out, but no well or building of any kind on the place. I bought a wagon for \$85, hooked on my oxen and hauled out the lumber to build me a light shack twelve by fourteen by eight feet. Being a carpenter it did not take me long to build, and when my house was finished I drove to town, bought a small stove and the most necessary kitchen utensils, bedding, plow and harrow, some groceries and provisions, and started "baching." At first my housekeeping caused me some vexation and trouble, but finally I broke myself to it. Whenever opportunity offered I worked for wages, but there was not much doing because the great majority of the settlers were as poor as myself and could not afford to hire. In those early days ox teams were used on many farms because of their low cost. Their up-keep was low compared with horses, and besides, when not needed any more they could easily be turned off for beef. It was a common sight in those days to see a number of ox teams in town with farm produce, but now the sight of an ox team hitched to a wagon would create as much excitement as a band of Indians. I drove my ox team for over two years; some of my neighbors drove theirs five and six years; but young men of the present generation would die before they would use an ox team.

My entire crop the first year consisted of about ninety bushels of corn,

mostly "nubbins," and several tons of hay for the oxen. Before freezing weather came I laid up a sod stable which I covered with coarse bluestem hay laid on poles. These I had cut in the nearest wooded creek, on vacant land, and had also hauled my firewood from the same place. I had sowed broadcast ten acres of wheat and five acres of rye, which got a good start before cold weather and made some pasture. The real winter weather, however, did not arrive until the middle of January, when several heavy snowstorms in quick succession piled up big drifts which lasted pretty well into spring. The first summer of my stay here my parents in Wisconsin had become so interested in Kansas land that they authorized me to purchase for them a fine half section of unimproved railroad land lying just alongside of mine. With the opening of spring my father and eldest sister came out here and made their home with me temporarily. Father bought a yoke of well-broken oxen and a milch cow, while sister Ann kept house for us. This took the most disagreeable task off my shoulders, and enabled me to devote most of my time to the building of my father's dwelling house, a substantial one-and-a-half-story stone structure twenty by thirty by fourteen feet. I also built for him a small barn. And thus the second summer rapidly passed away. In the late fall the rest of the family, having sold off everything in Wisconsin, moved into their new home here, and so the entire family were united again. In the meantime new settlers had been pouring in in a steady stream. By this time all the available government land, as well as the more desirable sections of railroad land, had been taken up. In 1878 all the proceeds from my farm which I could spare sold for \$93.40, and the 1879 crop brought me \$161.55. In the summer of 1879 I exchanged my oxen for a horse team and paid a difference of \$85.

The following spring I took the most important step in my life, when I married Catherine Peterka on the 20th day of March, 1880, being then in my twenty-eighth year and my wife in her twenty-fourth. This event put new life into me, and as my wife was a willing worker and helpmate, we both buckled down to our work with hearty good will. That spring and summer we planted and kept in good growing condition thirteen thousand forest-tree seedlings, started an orchard of seventy-five apple, cherry and peach trees, besides tending to our other farm work. My wife also milked two cows and kept a flock of chickens. Our income that year from all sources was \$271.20. The following spring our daughter Rose was born, and in September of that year my father died after a short illness. This year also witnessed a new departure in the harvesting of small grain with a header, when I, my father and father-in-law purchased a ten-foot-cut Hodge header for \$280. With it we cut all of our grain and enough of our neighbors' to amount to two hundred and seventy acres. The sum total of our farm products that year was \$374.30, and the year following \$385.58.

The year 1884 found me, my brothers, father-in-law and neighbor Vincent Ptacek, partners in a new twelve-horse Belleville threshing rig, horse power, which cost us over \$850. For the next eight years we did all of our own threshing and that of the entire neighborhood besides, with this machine.

All statements up to this time have been taken from my diary, but after I went into the threshing business, as well as farming, I was a very busy man and discontinued my journal. Therefore all further statements are from memory only.

Thus the years sped rapidly on. Some brought good crops, others bitter disappointment. The lean years always outnumbered the fat ones. At one time three very lean years came in succession, which tried our patience, resourcefulness and staying powers to the very utmost. That was the critical period, when so many Kansans mortgaged their homes and later on were sold out by the sheriff. Quite early in life I had made it a strict rule to always live within my income, and above all never to venture into any hazardous undertakings, and I suppose that is why we weathered all the storms that beset us. 'Tis true that our living was rather plain in the early years, but we always had enough, and there never was a time when we or our children went hungry. And so we went along, step by step, slow but sure, always getting a little farther ahead each year, raising a numerous family in the meantime. When our youngest child was born, in 1893, we had one girl and six boys, all of them hearty and healthy children. It is undeniable that this circumstance was much in our favor.

In 1889 I built a commodious dwelling house one story and a half high, and four years later built the most substantial and roomy stone basement barn in this vicinity. Several years after I added a large, well-built and convenient granary; also fenced and cross-fenced the entire farm with stone posts and wire, never going a dollar's worth in debt for the improvements. As a matter of fact, debts were always an abomination in my eyes. As my sons grew older and more capable, I enlarged my farming operations, until now we farm five hundred and sixty acres. Seven years ago, when the older boys expressed a desire to go into the threshing business, I procured for them a small steam outfit, and when I saw that they made good at it, I exchanged it for a large modern up-to-date steam threshing outfit, and also an engine gang plow, and we have made a decided success of both threshing and plowing. I have invested in a small portable gasoline engine to elevate grain into the granary. I use it also to shell corn with power self-feed sheller; to run a fanning mill and feed grinder; to saw firewood, for our timber claim has developed into a fine grove; to run a drill, lathe and grindstone in the blacksmith shop; it runs a washing machine with wringer, and a churn and cream separator in a separate washhouse. Along with the threshing business the boys have picked up a large amount of knowledge about machinery and blacksmithing, so now we do all our own machine repairing and general blacksmithing. Just before we engaged in threshing I had bought a fine partly improved farm of half a section in Gove county, but the boys do not seem inclined to farm it at present, so I presume it will have to wait a while yet.

I have never been an office seeker, but I have held minor offices of trust continuously since I first came here, and have always endeavored to administer them faithfully and conscientiously, using the Golden Rule for my guide. What I consider my crowning achievement was when I, with two other successful farmers, resurrected a defunct Farmers Coöperative Elevator Company after the members had all lost faith in it. It was started eighteen years ago to remedy the flagrant abuses practiced upon the farmers by the combined elevator and mill men. Through ignorance, mismanagement, and other causes, the stockholders lost all faith and confidence in it, so in a few years' time it had passed into the hands of three town residents who held the majority of stock, and the abuses were as bad as ever. When the time was ripe for it we three stepped in and made a thorough canvass of

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

the surrounding territory to secure the necessary amount of farmer stockholders to make a successful start. The task proved to be much harder and more discouraging than we had anticipated, for there still rankled much ill feeling and prejudice in the breasts of the old stockholders. It taxed our powers of persuasion to the utmost to arouse confidence in our plan, although it required only \$1600 to take over the property, such as it was. Once started, we met with fair success in the business, though we had bitter opposition from the grain dealers. At the end of the first year we were enabled to declare a liberal dividend, but at the beginning of the second year a serious backset awaited us in the shape of an order from the railway company to enlarge our storage capacity to fifteen thousand bushels or get off the right of way. This meant the building of an entire new elevator in place of our rotten old shack, which held only four thousand and five hundred bushels. So we started out again hustling for more farmer stockholders, for the plans of the new elevator called for a building of twenty-five thousand bushels' capacity at a cost of \$8000. This time, however, we found our task easier, for the old prejudice was dying out and confidence returning. We kept hammering away until we had \$5000 subscribed, then we started in and pushed the building to completion as fast as possible, borrowing the rest of the money needed for the business. Shortly after this we had the good fortune to hire a manager who was a born business man, and who, with the coöperation of the members, made the business an unqualified success. To-day we have over one hundred farmers as stockholders, have added large coal sheds and a feed warehouse, are entirely out of debt, have accumulated a working capital of \$4000, and besides, have each year paid a liberal dividend to the stockholders. We have raised the price of wheat three cents a bushel and give absolutely honest weight to our patrons, whether they are stockholders or not. As a consequence our business has rapidly increased year by year. In consideration of our services as promoters the company has honored us by a unanimous vote for the directorate ever since the organization of the company.

I have neither regrets nor apologies for anything I have done or left undone; the mistakes I have made have been due to error of the mind and not of the heart. I am now in comfortable circumstances, and though there are some fellow pioneers around here who have accumulated more property I do not envy any one, for I know it all came by hard work, good management and strict economy. My family has always enjoyed the best of health, which is a great boon indeed, and they are all alive to-day, with the exception of my youngest son, Victor, who was killed by lightning on the 19th day of August, 1912, in his nineteenth year.

I have always taken an active part in reform movements for the benefit of the working classes, especially the farmers, because as a class they are the least organized and therefore imposed upon to a great extent. In my religious views I have been extremely liberal, and in politics an avowed socialist of eighteen years' standing.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



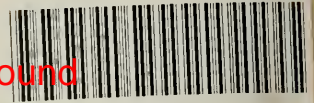
0 016 088 519 1

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

<http://stores.ebay.com/Ancestry-Found>

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 016 088 519 1

