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The Story of A Pioneer Family : A Literary Study of The Pioneer Life of The Reverend and Mrs. C. E. Hirschler In Harvey and Hodgeman Counties, Kansas, and Nobles County In The Cherokee Strip, Oklahoma

Edward E. Hirschler
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THE STORY OF A PIONEER FAMILY

A literary study of the pioneer life of the Reverend and Mrs. C. E. Hirschler in Harvey and Hodgeman Counties, Kansas, and Noble County, in the Cherokee Strip, Oklahoma.

being

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of the Fort Hays Kansas State College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Science

by

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(Fort Hays Kansas State College)

Approved

Myrta E. McInnis

Acting Chairman Graduate Council

Date: May 14, 1937
FOREWORD

This thesis is divided into three parts. The first part tells about the European homes of my parents, and about their coming to Kansas. The second part is about their marriage and moving into Hodgeman County where they and other Mennonite families formed a Mennonite colony. Various pioneer experiences are recounted. The third part tells about the opening of the Cherokee Strip in Oklahoma Territory and my parents moving to the Strip to take up pioneer life farther south.

In this work I attempted to portray the pioneer life of my parents and show that their experiences were typical of those experienced by many pioneers.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Grateful acknowledgment is made to the following persons who gave me much valuable help, information, and criticism:

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E.E.H.
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TO ELSIE
INTRODUCTION
INTRODUCTION

Chris and Elizabeth, although transplanted from a land on the opposite shore of the Atlantic, were rooted to the American soil as so many other pioneers had been before them.

They reared a large family—four sons and four daughters. Mere acquaintances of these old lovers would hardly guess from their cheerful dispositions the hardships endured during their pioneer days in western Kansas and on the prairie in Oklahoma Indian Territory. They experienced weeks of drifting snow and sleet when scarcity of food and fuel became a nightmare; hot winds came from the southwest, blasting and parching the growing crops with their feverish heat; rain fell in torrents, soaking the roofs of soddies so that they caved in upon their occupants and sent Dry and Buckner Creeks on wild rampages; then again monotonous droughts would sap the stored moisture from the soil. But between these freaks in Kansas and Oklahoma weather, then as now, there would be perfect days filled with odors of spring, clover and apple blossoms, and rich pungent smell of the newly turned soil that would send the heart of the prairie-farmer into a flutter of ecstasy.
They acquired a habit of saving everything that had ever come into their home. Every small board, nail, button, every small piece of string was carefully hoarded. "This button", Elizabeth would say, "will replace one lost from one of the youngsters' clothing, or this piece of string will come in handy for mending." I recall the time when one of those pieces of string was instrumental in the extraction of a molar which was actually very loose, but to my youngest sister's way of thinking had roots down to her toes. This characteristic of saving was a hang-over from very frugal living in the old European home and also when this country was new and everything and its use.

Chris and Elizabeth made light of hard times. "I've worn this dress for years," Elizabeth would say, "and this hat is like an old friend. Why this old ostrich feather has been placed on a different place and at a different angle each year, until I can not find a new location for it this year, so I'll just leave it off for a change." No wonder they had dark hollows under their eyes in their twenties when they should have been at their best. They emerged out of it all, prairie fires, dust storms, droughts, near famines, blizzards, and deaths with their chins up
and grinning.

Their oldest daughter became a bride before they celebrated their silver wedding in their new home built upon the site of the old one-roomed shack, the original home on the prairie in the Cherokee country in Oklahoma. Times were far from flourishing, but were much better now. The oldest children were grown and were not only making their own living, but also were contributing toward maintaining the old home. We younger members of the family had access to a better school with better trained teachers. At times when Chris and Elizabeth were in a reminiscent mood, we got glimpses of the interior of a sod-dugout with mud-plastered walls, or of a little home-made blackboard leaning against a rough boarded wall, a small shelf of books and slates. The mother there was hearing reading lessons while she kneaded the bread, was giving out spelling words while she mended. The father was teaching little songs while engaged in some odd jobs about the place. Together they were instilling into childish minds ideals of honesty and clean living with every humble task.

Chris really never was a farmer, nor was he meant to be one. He loved to be with his domestic animals, however. He conversed with the cow which he was milking, and had a name for each one. He trained his favorites,
usually the easy milkers, to come to him to be milked when he called them by name. He talked to and petted the pigs at feeding time. Dogs were his weakness. He always had a very large one and a very small one on the place. He taught them to understand him in two languages. Even the stupid old ducks and chickens knew him and flocked around him when he appeared in the yard, but he was as innocent about farming machinery as Whittier's uncle was about books. His sermons on Sunday mornings were not embellished with beautiful phrasings, but they came straight from his heart and shoulder. His religion was that of his forefathers, pure and simple.

Elizabeth, like so many wives and mothers, out of the very goodness of her heart, spoiled both husband and children. Although she had been the daughter of a poor man and had acquired only scant formal education (European daughters did not receive much education), she possessed a poetic soul. The mean tasks of pioneer farm life which so often left the pioneer woman scarred and bitter, only helped to soften the soul of Elizabeth. She had been a lover of nature from her earliest youth and in her covered-wagon travels she carried with her roots, slips, and bulbs of her favorite flowering plants across Kansas and Oklahoma prairies. An old lady told me recently that the pioneers of the community loved to go to see Elizabeth's flowers
which added so much to the landscape and helped to overcome some of the drabness characteristic of dug-outs and sod-houses. Her life was as outstanding as a high clear obbligato which is heard above the orchestration of confused sounds of every day living.
PART ONE

EUROPEAN BACKGROUND OF CHRISTIAN AND ELIZABETH
1. ELIZABETH'S EARLY HOME AND HER GIRLHOOD

Many a traveler is familiar with the scenic wonders of the Swiss Alps. Even the Austrian Alps are mentioned in travel tales, but few have heard about the beauty spots tucked away among the Carpathians which lift their lofty peaks in welcome to the rising sun. As the traveler descends the eastern slope of the Carpathians, he observes the trees changing from pine to shattered wind-shaken giant oaks of the mountains, and these in turn giving place to little woods and patches of barley, oats, rye, and potatoes. Here and there lonely houses dot the landscape.

In the middle of the nineteenth century, far in the distance, out on the plain, a small country village stood hemmed in by a huge forest. This little dorf has an interesting history. Following the close of the Middle Ages, the Mennonites, a small band of followers of Menno Simons, were persecuted for their belief concerning baptism, a very strong belief in noncombatancy, and refusal to bear arms against their neighbors. In their attempts to flee persecution, these people found their way from Bavaria into Austria. Here they settled not only on the fertile plains of the Danube, but also east of the Carpathians on the plains of the Dneister.
A commentator wrote of these Mennonites: — "They are excellent husbandmen, simple in manners, blameless in their behavior, honest, conscientious, and diligent in addition to being very conservative."

This small dorf was Ehrenfeld near Blyszcwody, and only about an hour's drive by automobile from Lemberg. It was organized by two Müller brothers for a group of Mennonites wishing to come from Bavaria. The original plot of ground consisted of 2200 Joch of land (equivalent to about 2200 acres). The plot was a square; the houses of the village were built on the east side of the main road running diagonally through Ehrenfeld. The farmers farmed all of the ground east of the highway and village with the simplest of machinery and oxen. West of the village was the large forest of towering pine, majestic oak, beeches, and chestnut. Beautiful lakes reflected the smiling blue sky and the branches of the stately monarchs of the forest in the summertime, and in the winter adults and children skated merrily over their glassy surfaces. In spring and summer the children played among the trees and gathered armloads of wild daffodils, primroses, violets, lilies, white and pink daisies, and roses. The nightingale flitted from bush to tree warbling its wild melody to the serene sky, or searching for some choice grub for its hungry mate or young.
Ehrenfeld bei Blyszczwody

Ehrenfeld was a small 'Dorflein' near the Dorf Blyszczwody, Austria. The two places designated as 'Alter Hof' and 'Neuer Hof' are the two original farms owned by the founders of the colony. My grandparents lived in the house No. 5. Here is where they reared their family of one daughter and six sons. The village was not unique in any respect because one can still find such villages scattered throughout all of Austria.
Into this village and its surroundings my mother, Elizabeth Ewy, was born to Peter and Katherine Ewy. My grandfather was the forester or caretaker of the entire forest of Ehrenfeld, which consisted of 2000 Joch of ground. His duties kept him out in the open and because Elizabeth, as a small girl and only daughter, became an especial favorite of her father, much of her childhood was spent out among nature's children. Both the call of the wolf and the call of the nightingale to his mate were familiar sounds to her. She knew and feared the wild boar because she well remembered the time when a wounded boar came rushing toward her and her father while they were in the forest, and the anxious hours spent high up in a tree until the hunters came along, killed the wounded brute which had stationed itself at the foot of the tree, and helped them from their lofty perch.

As a girl Elizabeth did what all the other girls of her locality and age did. She always remembered her first day at the little village school. It was customary for the school master, after once having been elected, to retain his rather exalted position among the villagers, year after year. Upon the strength of this position he often became a virtual dictator and, too often a tyrant in his little domain.
Elizabeth's first day at school was a terrible disappointment to her at it would have been to any child. Without any formalities the master called the beginning class to his desk, and the first thing he asked Elizabeth to do was to write the word "Christus" upon the blackboard, because, he explained, all good little girls should know that name. She was able to write the first letter, but after that it was all a blank. When she stood at the blackboard without doing his bidding, he became infuriated, and grabbing the child he gave her a terrible flogging. Her screams brought the master's wife and oldest daughter to the scene and the poor abused little girl was rescued, taken to the master's nearby dwelling, and consoled as best she could be under the circumstances. After an investigation made by the parents, it was found that the master had become hopelessly drunk that morning before school hours.

She attended the village school and helped about the home until she was about fifteen years old and then she concentrated upon learning the arts in homemaking. She learned to cook, sew, and knit; to cure meats and dry grain for storage in the "scheuer" (store-room) in connection with the house. The European farmer on the continent often houses his family and all his livestock, including the feed, under one roof.
The houses of the German-Austrian farmers were made of home-made brick and tile roofs. Often the floors were sanded instead of boarded. Fresh white sand was strewn upon the floors daily. The built-in oven was fed with the wood brought in from the forest. The food was of the simplest possible. Light bread was a luxury and baked only upon rare occasions. The simple meal often consisted of coarse rye bread, milk, cheese, and potatoes. Meat, however, though not a daily diet, was not so rare but that all had their own supply.

When Elizabeth was sixteen she was apprenticed to a French lady in Lemberg to continue her education and learn the finer arts in house-keeping which the little home in Ehrenfeld did not afford. Here she was taught both the French and Polish languages. She also served as nursemaid to the children. In this capacity she was permitted to eat with the children in the nursery and thus escaped the mean drudgery of the common house servant who did not partake of the same kind of food as the master and his family. She was permitted to take sewing lessons from the professional seamstress who came to the home where Elizabeth was staying, to sew for the madame and her daughters. On very rare occasions she was permitted to accompany the daughters of the household to the theater or to some gay social gathering of the young people of the city.
After having served her two years of apprenticeship with this family, she was transferred to a different place, where she assumed the combined duties of nurse maid and seamstress. Here she received the unheard of salary of five 'Gulden' (equivalent to two dollars) a week. Being a paid servant and yet ranking above the ordinary house servants, she was permitted many privileges which the other girls of the same place did not enjoy. She accompanied the family to church and various amusement resorts. Her ambition to come to the United States once prevented her from going to France with the family for whom she was working.

From her early youth, Elizabeth had been hearing glowing accounts of that wonder land across the Atlantic. She had talked with people who had been there and who brought back stories of untold freedom and wealth to these poor working people. Elizabeth with a few of her friends began to save their scanty 'kreutzers' by wearing hand-down clothes from their mistresses, and by simply refusing to spend any money. When she was twenty-two years old, an opportunity presented itself for her to come to America which she accepted before she knew what she had really done. Two of her friends had purchased tickets to go to America, but on the eve before sailing, the lover of one of the
young ladies persuaded her to remain in the fatherland and marry him instead of going to America. The young woman in her distress called upon Elizabeth, and said that if Elizabeth would take her ticket and go with her sister, the young man would have his wishes gratified. Elizabeth consented simply to relieve the tense situation, and in a few days boarded the steamer "Deutschland" at Hamburg and was on one of her greatest adventures.

Ocean travel was vastly different in the early eighties from what it is today. Elizabeth and her two companions shared a stateroom with a group of other girls. At the times of reminiscence Elizabeth often told us youngsters of sea-sickness and homesickness endured while others on board the vessel enjoyed themselves with dancing, drinking, and many other sorts of entertainment. There too, were those who reveled in debauchery. Her ticket was not of the first class, but second class. This kept her and her companions from enjoying the best which the ship offered. During stormy weather they were forced to keep the portholes in the room closed just when they were the sickest and needed fresh air the most.

When they were nearing New York and their old
homes seemed far away, these young foreign girls began wondering what this new land held in store for them. Their destination was Halstead, Kansas. Employment was awaiting them to help pay for their tickets which had been forwarded to them by Mennonites already established in Kansas. Temptations of all kinds came into their path while still on board the ship and more so after having been safely conveyed to their hotel room, which had been wisely reserved for them in advance.

They spent a day in New York sight-seeing while waiting for the right train to take them half-way across the continent. Tears often glistened in Elizabeth's eyes when she recalled some of the incidents which she experienced that day in New York and on her way to Halstead. One cannot imagine the lost feeling these poor immigrant girls must have had. Not one of them could speak the language of our land, and homesickness was gnawing at their hearts, but a warm welcome awaited them at Halstead and in a short while they had become established in their new environment. Elizabeth knew that her parents and brothers were to follow within a few months.
The person who would appreciate the German countryside as one enchanting harmony from the mountains to the sea, must suffer himself to be enticed out of the great gates of the cities to wander along country lanes through blooming apple orchards; over little rustic bridges spanning gurgling streamlets; through fields bright with scarlet, yellow, and blue summer flowers; under avenues of chestnuts and poplars sheltered by the green domes of oaks and beeches; through villages scented with lime-blossoms into the next ancient village or city dreaming away the ever rolling years within its own secure walls; the air above it full of the odor of roses and acacia and permeated with the restful green of fields and meadows, woods, gardens, and parks.

My father, Christian E. Hirschler, was born on February 9, 1859, to Ulrich and Katherine Krehbiel Hirschler at Meisbrunn, Bayern. His parents moved away from his place of birth when he was only one year old, but his new home, "Der Klosterhof" was even more picturesque than his former home. Klosterhof was in the Rhineland near Donnersberg, and old sentinel, lifting his peaks high above the clouds, upon whose sheltering bosom many knights had built their
castles during the Middle Ages.

Although Chris often described the scenes of his childhood and early life to me, it is hard for me to find words to portray the natural beauty of his ancient home among the beautiful hills along the banks of the Rhine. No one can find one name for all this German landscape, or paint it into one picture; it is too rich, too broad, too deep, too great. It rises like a wonderful symphony, finds ever new variations, yet rounds into one beautiful whole. Strong and powerful, filled with the pain and greatness of a thousand years, rolls the dark ballad of the mighty Rhine. Mighty castles crown the hills that bow down to the river; vinyards ripen to a delicious blue in the warm sun, and in the background lies the great "Schwartztenwald", the home and cradle of many beautiful legends, saga, and folk-songs. Little Red Riding Hood, Hänsel and Gretel, Schneewittchen, the dwarfs and giants, elves, and witches-----all people the great forest. Parcifal, Siegfried, the Nieblung, and Lorelei-----all have had their part in the history of this Rhineland.

Little Christian attended the "Volkschule" in Bolanden, as most little boys of the community did. Later he was sent to the "Gymnasium", one of the four types of state supported schools. At that time the other schools were vocational schools and
did not stress academic training as the Gymnasium did. In 1872 Christian transferred from the Gymnasium to the "Realanstaldt" in Weirhof, a city noted for its scenic beauty. From 1873 to 1875 he attended the preparatory school, "die Preparitor", and for the next two years he was a student at the Seminary at Kaiserslautern.

It is interesting to note what courses young German boys pursued. I have looked through Chris's old notebooks of sixty-five years ago and have found some traces of the following subjects: Philosophy, German, Latin, and French with a little English; Mathematics, Geography, History, Physics, Law, Schoenschreiben, Drawing, Music, Physical Education, and some Handcrafts. Christian specialized in music, especially on the piano and some on the violin, because every German school master had to be able to play, sing, and direct various music organizations.

Every boy in school spent two or more hours a week on German Composition, and like boys in other lands handled themes they could assuredly not understand, probably handled them as other boys, without a scruple or hesitation to 'crib'. "Discuss the Anti-
theses in Lessing's Laoco"n " is an example of the topic young fellows, who were interested in botany, swimming, or physics, wrote about. They did what boys usually do under such trying circumstances---borrowed well preserved papers handed down from the year before. Although the German schools were justified in their claims of being very thorough, they too fell short at times in giving each individual what he most needed.

Christian's home, der Klosterhof, had formerly been a cloister or convent for Catholic Sisters. It was a huge old-fashioned building, with seven-foot thick walls on the ground which tapered to a four-foot thickness under the roof. There were rooms with heavy metal doors locked with huge rusted iron locks, which Christian and his brothers and sisters never explored because they could not gain an entrance. There were huge granaries where grain could be stored. Because this farm at one time belonged to the Catholic Church, the former inmates had tithed, the tenth part of everything had been stored in storerooms and later collected. The house was built on the crest of a hill which helped to form the chain of hills overlooking the Rhine. There were vineyards and orchards of var-
ious fruit trees planted upon the hill sides. Much of the land was terraced to avoid erosion, and to make more land tillable, because every foot of land was utilized.

When Chris came home from the Seminary, he became a school master. Beside teaching school during the week, he was choir director in the village church, and on Sunday mornings he either played the large organ or directed the choir. On holidays he would take his young charges on hikes through the fragrant woods and through the winding paths over the hills. It was customary for the school children to precede the hearse at funerals, and sing or chant songs as they slowly wended their way from the church to the cemetery.

During the summer vacations he helped on the farm with the harvesting of the cereal crops and worked in the vineyard. His father made wine for commercial use. In their wine cellars were wooden wine casks with 100 gallons capacity, which were used for the fermenting process of the wine. After the fermenting process was over, the wine was transferred into huge crocks to age. Cider and vinegar, jellies made from fruit juices, and fruit jams were all by-products.
In 1870, when Christian was eleven years old, the Franco-Prussian War broke out. Christian's oldest brother, John, went to the front, but soon was relieved by a servant who went to take his place. The only thing which Christian remembered of this war was the times when he and the other children went outdoors and put their ears to the ground to hear the rumbling of the distant cannon.

When Chris lived in the Rhinepfalz, this territory was a province of the small kingdom, Bavaria. When Christian's father was a young man, the royal house of Bavaria was Catholic, and not many Protestants were permitted to live in the kingdom; but when the Rhineland was annexed, it was inhabited principally by Protestants, among them many Mennonites. The king soon saw that the Mennonites were expert farmers and invited them to settle in different parts of Bavaria to help improve agriculture. Christian's brother, Ulrich, now living at Beatrice, Nebraska, lived for a time in Bavaria near Tann on the Hammerhof.

Because of a throat disease which climatic conditions in Germany had brought on, Christian was advised by his physician to become a sailor to regain his health. His mother would not consent to this, so
Christian decided to go to America and try his fortunes with the many Mennonites already there.
Even as early as the seventeenth century Mennonites were living in America. A.J. Graber, in *The Mennonite Story* back_of_Bethel_College writes:

On October 6, 1683, the ship Concord arrived in Philadelphia bringing thirteen Mennonite families.

The earliest Mennonite immigrants had settled in and around Germantown, Pennsylvania but gradually moved westward across the continent as the frontier pushed farther into the interior.

I quote further from Graber's account:

There is much romance and adventure in the coming of the Mennonites to Kansas. When the eastern colonies were formed, Kansas was a vast expanse of prairie wilderness, herds of buffalo roamed over it in quest of food, and inhabited only by the wild and warlike Indians. Kansas had not passed the frontier stage when a small band of Mennonites arrived on a prospecting tour seeking for unsettled lands where large areas could be secured cheaply enough to form extensive, compact settlements. This band was soon followed by other groups of Mennonites.

Groups of immigrants as they arrived from Germany and Russia, were carried halfway across the continent on special trains. Hundreds came during the summer of 1874, settling chiefly in Marion, Harvey, and McPherson, and Reno counties. From the moment of their first arrival, the Kansas Mennonites have been a beneficial addition to the population of the state. They have shown themselves to be constantly industrious, thoroughly honest and dependable, self-reliant, and progressive. Today the Mennonites of Kansas constitute one of the pillars of the state's wealth and prosperity.
The Mennonite character has remained essentially the same for three-hundred years and more. Primarily they are farmers—tillers of the soil—and that is what they are still doing in Kansas. The same idealism which has carried them through centuries of oppression and persecution has induced them to establish numerous schools, hospitals, and other institutions of a similar nature.

These are the general contributions of the Mennonites to Kansas, but there is one specific contribution made by the people of this sect who came from Russia, credit for this belongs to them and to them alone, which has meant so much in the development not only of Kansas but all surrounding states, that it is difficult to estimate its full value. That contribution is the introduction of the famous Turkey Red Winter wheat, the hard wheat which has made Kansas at one time the premier wheat producing country in the world, and from which we got the slogan, "Kansas grows the best wheat in the world."

Bernhard Warkentine, one of the earliest pioneers who came from Russia to Kansas, is perhaps the most closely associated with this priceless contribution. He remembered how the wheat grew in similar climate on the Russian Steppes, and was one of the first to bring it to Kansas, prove to the Kansas millers and bakers that it was superior in proteins to the soft spring wheat, and that it made superior bread.

Paul de Kruif in *Hunger Fighters* writes:

Carleton was a queer fish—Nobody could tell from his rambling talk how his mind worked—He never told us what put it into his head to go to Russia. But of one thing there is definite record. While he was roaming up and down through Kansas, one of those days he stole away from his post of duty, he met certain Russian Mennonites. Strangely successful, wheat-raising, God-fearing Mennonites from Russia they were, well-off even in those bitter bad wheat years of the middle eighties and nineties--------Old Lady Nature in her temperament tantrum drove upwards of a quarter of a million settlers out of Kansas. With absent-minded eyes Carleton watched them go—and remembered his God-fearing Mennonites.
These quaint folk were not chased out; they were building fine houses! Carleton saw those farmers, with twenty-five or thirty English words maybe, get yields of thirty bushels to the acre of tough wheat that weighed sixty-two pounds to the bushel----while ruin raged all 'round them. He made friends with these Mennonites, asked them questions they could not understand, pestered them------.

In short, Mr. Carleton, a naturalist, found that the Russian Mennonite farmers had brought their wheat from Taurida in Russia. Every father who came from Russia, got some wheat into the steerage with his family and luggage and brought it right into his home in Kansas.

Christian left Germany in the summer of 1882 and arrived in Philadelphia several weeks later. He spent the winter in Philadelphia and Germantown, and came to Halstead in April of 1883. Here he taught German school during the summer months and later worked on a farm. That fall he began operating a grocery store at the Alta Mills.
The material about Elizabeth's European home and her girlhood experiences is from the "Mennoniten in Kleinpolen" by Professor Peter Bachman; an account of Elizabeth's life written by her husband, Christian; and numerous letters and accounts of members of the family. The remainder is family tradition.

The materials about Chris's early home and life in Germany are from an account of his life written by Chris, himself; a family record contributed by Chris's nephew, Henry Hirschler; and family letters and tradition.

It is not definitely known how Chris spent the first few months in America. He worked as a clerk in a hotel in Philadelphia, and spent some time among the Mennonites in Germantown, Pennsylvania.

The material about the Mennonites is from "The Mennonite Story back of Bethel College" by A.J. Graber; and "Hunger Fighters" by Paul de Kruif.
PART TWO

PIONEERING IN HODGEMAN COUNTY, KANSAS
Chris met Elizabeth for the first time at a social gathering for the young people of the First Mennonite Christian Church at Moundridge. It seems to have been a 'love at first sight' meeting, but girls were not so bold in the eighties to tell young men how much they cared for them, so Chris had to do the asking. This, however, did not take place until the following spring. Their courtship lasted exactly six months. A widow had been on the young school master's trail all winter, trying to impress upon him how wonderful her daughters were in their accomplishments from the culinary arts down to pitching hay and wheat bundles. But it seems as if Elizabeth won.

They were the second couple to be married in the First Mennonite Christian Church. Their wedding day occurred on the eighteenth day of May, 1883. Their honeymoon was a brief ride in a spring wagon, which one of Chris's friends had borrowed for the occasion, from the church to the house of Elizabeth's parents where a wedding dinner had been prepared for the young couple and their guests.

Mr. and Mrs. Jake Hirschler, cousins of Chris, invited them over to their home, where supper had
had been prepared for them and the invited guests. Mrs. Hirschler told the newly-weds that they were trying to hide them from the charavari crowd which was certain to come. But she did not go far enough in her explanations. The truth of the matter was that Jake and his wife were the ring-leaders of the charavari gang. They had invited only the closest relatives of Chris and Elizabeth, and after supper while the guests were enjoying different amusements, a bedlam broke out just outside the door, which rivaled anything Chris or Elizabeth had ever heard. There were sounds of shotguns, cowbells, tin horns, and what not. After the noise-makers had had their fun, Jake invited them into the house for their refreshments. Merry-making began in earnest and lasted until late into the night. Then the guests departed with best wishes for the young married couple.

Chris had been managing a small country store at the Alta Mill on the Little Arkansas southwest of Moundridge. He and Elizabeth went to housekeeping in the rear of the store, where they had partitioned off several small rooms. Since this is a good farming section, business was good in the store, but their prosperity was cut short when, only three months after their marriage, the owner of the building sold it to a man who wanted to enlarge the
building and not only handle general merchandise, but also hardware and farm machinery. This sale of the store put them out of employment and out of their rented home.

That fall Chris taught school and the following spring they moved upon a rented farm, but they had heard in the meantime of a Mennonite colony being established in Hodgeman county about one-hundred and fifty miles west from Moundridge. There still was some government land to be had; so that summer of 1884 Chris and his brother-in-law, Pete Ewy, went west to file upon one-hundred and sixty acres each.

They were fortunate in each getting a quarter section of land three miles west from Marena, which at that time consisted of a combination of post office and grocery store owned and managed by Agust Heimer.

Chris and Pete found some old secondhand lumber which Pete bought, and with this they constructed a rude shack upon the Ewy farm. After completing the shack they returned to Moundridge to join their wives and friends.

During the fall of 1884 and all that winter when the young Hirschlers and Ewys were together the conversations usually drifted upon the one topic which was uppermost in their thoughts; moving west, and their anticipated homes. The young women made plans about arrangement of their
scant supply of furniture in the new homes. Then, too, there was baby Pete, Chris and Elizabeth's little son, to be taken into consideration. He had by now joined the family circle and demanded much of Elizabeth's time. But all of them were young, healthy, and filled with hope. What did it matter that there was no fine furniture to be taken along, or that there was very little money to do business with?

The time finally arrived when Chris and Elizabeth, Pete and Mary, his wife, loaded their covered wagons with all of their possessions for the five-day journey west.

On a morning in May they started. Old Sam and Charley were hitched to the prairie-schooner and were wondering in their own way what it was all about. All of the possessions were in the wagon, covered with its new white canvas. All the relatives were there to see them off. Grandma and Grandpa Ewy, several of the brothers, several neighbors, and other friends were there to bid them good-bye. Grandma Ewy found it double hard to say good-bye to both her children in one day.

Elizabeth's heart was in her throat. For the second time she was leaving her mother behind to sail uncharted seas. But this was different from the first. The thing which gave her strength and hope was her faith in her
husband and the ambition to found a home in a new country in which her son could grow into strong manhood. She remembered the cramped childhood of the old European home. Her children were to have a pleasanter babyhood and be happier children.

Elizabeth threw up her head fearlessly. "Well, we're ready." "Good-bye------"

"Elizabeth, oh, my little Elizabeth------."

"Mother----good-bye------."

"Giddap, Sam, Charley, we must be off----good-bye every one."

The wagon lurched forward---steadied,----moved on. They were on their way. Hands were in the air, hats waved, Grandma's apron was thrown over her head as she steadied herself upon Grandpa's encircling arm. There was sobbing among men as well as women. Elizabeth's hand was upon her dry throat. Her heart felt as if it must burst any minute, but the wagon lurched on ahead toward the west.

Far back in the road Elizabeth could see the little group still standing, watching their departure. Oh, why must one part with his dearest ones, Elizabeth wanted to know. Chris seemed happy and high in spirits because he was taking his little family to a home of their own.
Three days later they camped between Pawnee Rock and Larned. On the fourth day they passed through Larned, then a small prairie town. Here they purchased a few more supplies, because they knew from there on they would pass over nothing but short buffalo grass prairie. That night they made camp on the Pawnee near where Burdett now stands.

The morning of the fifth day dawned clear and beautiful. The air was sweet and wild with the songs of the prairie birds. Away from the creek they saw vast, treeless, flat plains. They had only eighteen miles more to go to their homesteads. The two young women were worn out from the new experience of traveling over one-hundred and fifty miles of endless prairie with a horizontal spread stretching out for miles from the eye's limit on all sides. It seemed that all the low places teemed with life. Bluestem grass and innumerable flowers bordered the trail and seemed to grow with the slightest encouragement. Sunflowers, too, were growing along the trail and patches of them with their lush green foliage could be seen on all sides. They had passed colonies of the prairie dog, who stood at his doorway watching the intruders on his domain, and who when they came too near, with a tiny squeak and a wiggle
of his stub tail would vanish into the dark depths of his burrow.

There were grasshoppers, ants, beetles of various species, and crickets that chirped endlessly all night long and only added to the monotony of the night sounds on the prairie. But this proved that life could exist in western Kansas.

In the afternoon of the fifth day of traveling they reached their destination. They had stopped at Chris and Elizabeth's homestead first to give the women a chance to see the place because they were to in Pete and Mary's shack until the dugout was made for the Hirschlers to move into.

Elizabeth crawled out of the wagon-box. She was stiff and somewhat ill. Her head ached from facing the afternoon sun. Mary, with a jolly look upon her young face, came over to Elizabeth.

"Well, you're home." She chuckled in a merry way. "So this is where you live." The women shook hands in mock formality. "Well, won't you ask me to come in?" she asked in her own comical way. Elizabeth needed a little bolstering just now. The two men had gone down toward the draw which cut across one corner of the land, and where they had decided to make the dugout
for the home and other dugouts for a barn, cellar, and chicken house.

They then moved on two more miles to where the Ewy home was waiting for them. It was a quiet solemn group which unloaded the few meager belongings and arranged them and Mary's few pieces of furniture along the walls of the one-room shack with only a dirt floor.

The silence of the night was suddenly broken by the howl of a coyote. Another answered. It made Elizabeth shiver. Then followed a complete silence, a silence so deep that it roared. Then being overcome with weariness, the group slept the sleep of youth not to be disturbed until the sun was riding high in the sky the next morning.

The first thing to be done that morning was to go for some water. They had used the last of their supply the evening before. That day the two men began digging a well. Their progress was unhindered and on the third day they drank water from their well.

After completing the well on the Ewy farm, the two men began work on the basement of Chris and Elizabeth's dugout. They made the basement twelve feet wide and twenty-four feet long along the north bank of the draw. They dug down four feet, then made the walls
four feet high with strips of sod, which they had prepared by breaking sod and cutting strips two feet long from the layers of sod. Two openings were left on the east and two on the west side for the windows, and the door was to be on the south side. A trip to Kinsley had to be made to get lumber for the rafters and to board the roof. A ridge pole was laid the long way of the house, a little higher than the walls, to provide a curved gable, and inch boards were laid across this and bent down with the weight of the sod piled on top, making a curved roof to shed water. A similar dugout was constructed for the live stock which consisted of two horses and one cow, and another was built for the twenty-four hens which Elizabeth had managed to bring along.

The chickens subsisted chiefly on grasshoppers during this first summer and fall. During the summer Chris bought another cow. With an occasional jack rabbit, eggs, cornmeal, and milk, they managed very well that summer.

They were all very busy during the spring and summer. The men had to take time out from building to plant some row crops. The sod had to be plowed first; but it was not tillable with the few farm implements they had; so the corn and kaffir had to be planted with the hand planter.
After Chris and Elizabeth had moved into their dug-out, their neighbors came over for a housewarming party. They were fortunate to have neighbors living near by. The Blount family lived only one-half mile down the draw to the east, and Sam and Hannah Purple with their three children lived only eighty rods to the southwest on a neighboring quarter section of land. During this first summer and early fall and winter Chris was obliged to haul water from the neighbor's well because he had not had the time to dig a well on his farm.

Elizabeth tried very hard to make her crude shelter as comfortable as possible. She and Chris whitewashed the mud-plastered walls. Elizabeth used an old white petticoat to make curtains. What furniture they possessed was, for the most part, homemade. She worked hard helping Chris with the field work, tending the cows and chickens, and when Chris was away, she often had to haul water for household use and for the livestock. She also tried to cultivate a vegetable garden. Working outside so much calloused her hands, and made her face brown. Baby Pete, too, was becoming more of a chore now. He was constantly and uppermost in Elizabeth's mind. Hannah Purple had warned Elizabeth of numerous rattle snakes along the draw and all over the prairie, and every pioneer
mother held a sickening fear of their dangerous fangs. Elizabeth, indeed, had an opportunity to find out how deadly a rattlesnake bite can be. One evening in the early fall when she was leading her milk cow home from where they had had her staked during the day, the cow stepped upon a rattler and immediately was bitten. That night the cow died, leaving them without milk for several months until the other cow became fresh.

Other Mennonite families had moved into the community the same spring the Hirschlers and Ewys did. These were the Reverend J.P. Miller, J.A. Linscheid, J.A. Ewy, and John Brubacher, an uncle of Elizabeth. All of these too, came from Moundridge, but later in the year, however. Then there were the H. Rupp and John Miller families from Mankato, Minnesota who came at the same time with the others.

All went to work breaking the virgin sod and planting crops of row stuff. All of them used sod in constructing their shelters, either sod-houses or dugouts.

That summer when harvest time came around, the men all went back east to Harvey and McPherson counties to work in the harvest fields or to harvest their own wheat and rye which they had planted the previous autumn. The women and children were left out on the prairie home-
steads to care for the livestock and growing crops and gardens. The money the men earned was to tide them through the long dreary winter months. Chris and Pete were among the men who went, thus leaving Elizabeth and Mary to care for the two places. But because there was a well on the Ewy farm, Chris moved Elizabeth and their livestock over to Pete's farm.

Living in a new country is always hard on the pioneer woman, and these people found their experiences no exceptions. Conditions did not improve very rapidly. One crop failure followed another. There were droughts, hailstorms, tornadoes to harass them.

The Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe railroad company built a branch road out of Larned to Jetmore in 1887. This was a help to most of the Mennonite farmers, who found work in helping to build the grade and lay the tracks. They were fortunate in finding work here at home and received one dollar and twenty-five cents a day for their labor. All of them lived three miles or farther from the station at Marena, and had to walk to the station each morning to begin work at seven. But what were three miles compared with the vast stretches of the unbroken prairie? And, furthermore, they were earning money needed so badly.
Chris and Pete found employment with the railroad company. Chris earned enough money to replace the cow killed by the rattler, and added more conveniences to their home.

Before the first church was erected, services were conducted in private homes. In 1888 when the first Mennonite church was dedicated, there were eight families that attended. The Reverend J.P. Miller was elected as pastor and retained this position until 1915.

Other Mennonites who came later with their families were Peter Hoehn, Henry Hubin, Sr., Henry Miller, John Ewy, Jr., and J.A. Miller, son of the Reverend J.P. Miller.

The Hoehn family came to Hodgeman county late in 1885 from Westpoint, Iowa. Before coming to Hodgeman county, they had lived on a farm in Harvey county, where Mrs. Hoehn died. When they moved upon the farm in Harvey county, a neighbor woman told them that death lurked in the water of the well, but the Hoehns ascribed her forebodings to superstition and did not take heed until the entire family had contracted typhoid. After his wife's death, Mr. Hoehn decided to leave and go farther west.

He, again, hitched his faithful mules, which had brought his family from Iowa, to the covered wagon, loaded his motherless children and their belongings into it, and went west to Hodgeman county, where he filed claim on a
quarter section of government land near the Mennonite colony.

Mr. Hoehn made six or seven trips before he had everything moved out to Hodgeman county. On the first several trips he moved necessary equipment to build his sod huts, plow the sod, and plant a crop. Then he had to take time to harvest his wheat in Harvey county. After harvest he moved his children and then returned later in the year for the remainder of his farming implements and other supplies. On this last trip he was caught at Larned by the "big blizzard" of '85-86. His children were out on the prairie with insufficient food and fuel. The father was to bring flour and coal with him on his return trip. After the storm abated, eleven men and five teams from west of Larned started out with their wagons and supplies to shovel their way through uncharted snow-drifted prairie trails.

On the fifth day Mr. Hoehn reached his home to find his children shivering and starving. But in the course of the five days' trip, he had given or used most of his flour and only one bucket of coal reached the sod home. Another family who had been traveling with Mr. Hoehn from Larned, were trying to get to Jetmore before nightfall. They refused Mr. Hoehn's invitation to stop at his house for the night and go
on to Jetmore the next morning, because they thought they could get there before darkness overtook them. But another snowstorm began raging before night and caught them in the hills between where Hanston now is, and Jetmore. Their frozen bodies with those of their two children and their team of horses were found weeks later------a part of the price of the prairie.

The day preceding the blizzard had been cold and misty, the forerunner of a snowstorm. Chris was helping one of the neighbors haul feed. That morning before he left, Chris had brought several barrels of water from the neighbor's well one-half mile distant. As the day advanced, the water was used up, and with bad weather coming, Elizabeth decided to get water in spite of Chris's bidding her not to venture out.

She yoked a pair of oxen to a sled which was used for hauling purposes, placed two thirty-gallon barrels and one twenty-gallon crock on the sled, and proceeded to go for water.

She had to draw the water from the well with a bucket attached to a rope. The water froze as soon as it was brought to the surface. The rope became stiff from freezing, and she splashed much water upon her clothing. When she started for home, her coat
and dress were ice-covered. Everything went well until she came to their driveway. Here the oxen turned too soon, pulled one side of the sled up a bank, and upset all the water containers. Just spilling the water was not so bad, but her twenty-gallon crock was broken into several pieces. Elizabeth righted the barrels, gathered the broken pieces of the crock, then sat down on the sled and wept. After having had her cry, she turned the team around and went after another load of water. When she finally did get home, she was numb with cold, and she felt sharp neuralgic pains in her head. These pains were, incidentally, the reason for their being up late that night, and indirectly saved the life of a young man.

Because of the fuel shortage in all new plains countries, Chris had gathered "prairie coal" all summer and had stored the buffalo and cow chips in one of the dugouts. Because of his foresight they had fuel to burn when others were forced to remain in bed to keep warm and from freezing. That night when the furies of the storm tore at the corners of their dugout as if resenting its being in their path, Chris and Elizabeth were hovering near their small stove listening to the raging elements. Suddenly they heard
a thud at the door which shook the framework of their
dugout. Then everything was calm for a moment during
a lull of the tempest. Elizabeth asked Chris to go to
the door to see what caused the sudden thud. When Chris
opened the door a snow-covered figure fell against him
and then upon the floor. After having brough the snow
and ice-covered figure into the lamp light, Chris re-
cognized him as young Kit Carson, who claimed to be a
distant relative of the famous Kit Carson. Young Kit
lived in Jetmore but his cattle were wintering not far
from Chris's place.

Young Kit's eyes were iced over, and his face
was completely covered with hard driven snow. Chris
began thawing the frost from Kit's face by applying
more snow. In two hours they had him revived enough
so that he could tell his story.

When Kit saw the storm approaching, he rode out
upon the prairie to round up his cattle. He finally
succeeded in getting the entire herd into the feeding
lot. Then he cut the wires enclosing the feed stacks
and turned his herd in to the stacks. By this time
night had fallen and the drifting snow driven before
a strong howling wind enveloped him so that he became
utterly lost. He dismounted to keep from freezing. In
some way he became separated from his horse. He wandered aimlessly through the storm and in this manner he reached the Hirschler cabin. He was unconscious when Chris brought him into the dugout. Had he fallen several feet away from the door, he would have frozen to death right there.

One of the Miller families was away from home when the storm struck following a calm serene day. The Millers had gone to call upon some friends, and before they could get ready to go home the storm was upon them. They had left their children at home. For three days the storm raged relentlessly. The Miller children had to remain in bed most of the time because there was no fuel. The snow piled into the cattle sheds, and was tramped into a solid mass by the stamping cattle. It became deeper and deeper, so that when the Millers finally came home, they found the cattle down upon their knees with their backs against the top of the shed. It took much shoveling and digging to get all of the livestock from their prison. The children in the meanwhile were safe from the storm, but were starving when their mother arrived home.

Spring finally came over the prairie—not softly, shyly, but with great magic strides as is its way in
Kansas. It was in the flush of the greening hills, in the smelly loam, and in the tell-tale winds. But with spring came a tragedy which has become a fireside story in this part of the state. Sam Purple, Chris and Elizabeth's nearest neighbor, although a kind husband and father, a good neighbor, and a man who meant to do right, was a slave to drink. When under the influence of alcohol his temper often became violent and he committed deeds of which he later was genuinely repentant. He was known as a marksman with his sixshooters all over the southwest. The bartenders at Dodge City, although calloused to all kinds of drunken brawls, hated to see Sam get drunk because he too often shot their bottled wares from the shelves and counters.

Sam had been behaving very well during the hard winter and only that spring of '86, when their fourth baby was born, he had promised Hannah that he was quitting his drinking. When the baby was two weeks old, and the snow had departed, Sam thought that it was necessary to make a trip to Dodge City for needed supplies. Hannah begged him not to go, but to go instead to the small store at Marena, only three miles distant, to get the most necessary supplies. She knew that when Sam came to Dodge City he would meet his friends and
would drink with them. But Sam went to Dodge City and returned without any provisions late that night. He went to bed partly dressed, and next morning when Tillie, Hanah's sister, announced breakfast, Sam jumped from bed and began firing at the members of the family with both his sixshooters. Hannah was going to eat her first breakfast with her little family since the new baby had come. She was in the act of lacing her shoes when Sam shot and killed her. He killed their oldest daughter while she was still sleeping, and in his fury he took the two weeks old infant by its legs and crushed its head against the wall of the stone building. Two small children found cover under the bed and he missed them in his hasty search. Tillie, during the meantime, had hurried from the house and ran over to tell Chris and Elizabeth what had happened. Sam followed her out of doors, still shooting, and wounded her in the arm, but he was barefoot, and the sharp stones and gravel scattered around in the yard prevented him from overtaking her. He gave up the chase and returned into the house and went to bed.

Elizabeth was at home alone with little Pete when the frightened and bleeding Tillie burst into the opened doorway and fainted. It took some time for the frightened girl to recover to the state where she
could think and speak clearly. She sobbed out her story and wanted to know from Elizabeth what she was to do. After Elizabeth had dressed Tillie's wounded arm, she began to formulate plans. She finally decided to leave Tillie and Pete hidden in the corner of the dugout screened off for a clothes closet and store room. After having given instructions what Tillie was to do if Sam should come, Elizabeth made a close scrutiny of all sides through the windows and door before she ventured out. After having convinced herself that Sam was nowhere near, she ran down the slope of the draw, and followed it east over to Blount's place. Mr. Blount was the constable of this township, and the only man at home in the neighborhood. All others were away at work.

When Elizabeth burst into the room at the Blount home without the formality of knocking at the door, or waiting to be invited to enter, Mrs. Blount, a kind prairie mother, rushed to the frightened and breathless Elizabeth and placing strong, steady arms around her shoulders, led her to a chair.

"Now, come, Elizabeth, tell us what is wrong."

"Oh---------"

"Did Chris beat you?"
"No----but oh------."

"Maud, give the poor girl time to get her breath."

After a few moments Elizabeth had sufficiently recovered from her fright and hurried trip so that she could tell the gruesome news to her horrified audience. Mr. Blount was an elderly but fearless man. He decided that it was his duty to go to the scene of the tragedy. Mrs. Blount and Elizabeth could not persuade him to get other men to go with him; so he went alone. Mrs. Blount accompanied Elizabeth home, because she was still weak from fright and her hurried trip.

When Mr. Blount arrived at the Purple home, Sam came bounding out of the house. Jumping high into the air and wildly waving his arms, he shouted,

"Oh, come into the house and see what I did! I sent my whole family to heaven. My brother, the Devil came, to help me."

Mr. Blount asked Sam in a casual way to accompany him to Jetmore to buy coffins for the slain and get the doctor. Sam gladly agreed to that and was led away from the scene of his crime by a kind but determined old man. By the time they arrived in Jetmore on horse back, Sam had sobered sufficiently to realize what he had done, and without any warning of his in-
intentions, he went to the sheriff's office and gave himself up.

The following account concerning this prairie tragedy appeared in the Dodge City Daily Globe:

"L.A. Lauber, Globe printer, was called to Mar- ena, six miles east of Jetmore, where his brother-in-law, Sam Purple, had shot and killed his wife and two children and severely wounded two other members of the family, for no apparent reason----the man, rising late, locked the doors and lined his family up and shot them, all except a child that hid under the bed----he had recently sold his stock and was on a deal to dispose of his land----it was believed he was not insane, but had planned the murders. After the shooting he mounted his horse and rode to the sheriff's office to give himself up, stopping to describe the deed to a neighbor on the way, according to the story Mr. Lauber brought back."

The newspaper story does not agree with the facts as they actually existed, but poor Hannah and her family paid the price families of drunkards so often pay. That evening a wild mob of neighbors led by Hannah's two brothers went to Jetmore, took Sam from the jail, brought him home, and enacted prairie justice upon him. About midnight after the last of the mob had left the scene of lynching, a dark figure crept stealthily out of the darkness toward the house. It was Hannah's father who had kept away from the mob, but who had waited in the darkness to see if justice was administered to the
murderer of his daughter and his grandchildren. Next morning when Elizabeth looked out through her open door, she saw what she knew she would see, Sam's body dangling from a rope fastened to a pole protruding through an upstairs window, and swaying gently back and forth in the morning breeze.
HIGH-CLASS RANCHING

Besides tragedy, droughts, and discouragements, this community had another source for conversation. The coming of Henry S. Mudge, and his brief stay in Hodgeman County, is like the flash of a meteor across the dark harsh background of the early pioneering days. We want to turn away from thoughts of privation, suffering, and heroism to stories of wild dissipation, extravagance, and luxury which still hover around the name of Mudge.

In the year of 1878 when Larned was an outpost to western Kansas, when Jetmore, the county seat of Hodgeman county, consisted of one or two buildings, and there was no Hanston, Henry Mudge, with a woman, then supposed to be Mrs. Mudge, and a whole retinue of servants of different nationalities, came to Larned. They rented two houses on the same street—one in which to live and eat, the other for sleeping quarters. The natives of Larned fairly gasped at so much luxury. The lady wore clothes made for Boston; not for a little western Kansas town. The people of Larned gladly welcomed this liberal and generous millionaire, but their hopes of being benefited by his residing
there were blasted when Mudge and his entire outfit left town for his ranch in Hodgeman county, northwest from Marena and bordering on the north the Mennonite settlement.

Rumors of the wild and woolly west had brought him to Kansas, and he came prepared to dress and act as a wild and woolly should, and to shoot with the best of them. The quarter section of land which he bought for $500, paying twice its value, formed the nucleus around which he built an extensive ranch. He was not interested in making money, but was simply experimenting in ranching. He employed local men to gather rocks from the numerous quarries on his land, and began building his spacious ranch house. Mudge's ambition was to extend his ranch south to the Buckner creek and north to the Pawnee. In order to do this, he brought young men into this country to prove up on some government land. Mudge paid the filing fees, and after the young fellow had qualified for his land, Mudge bought it from him for $200. In the meantime, while waiting for the necessary time to expire for him to prove up on his quarter, the young man found
easy but well-paid employment on the Mudge ranch.

Mudge's first venture in experimental ranching was with sheep. Soon after locating his ranch and starting his men to work at building, he went to Texas, where he bought 5000 sheep and had them brought to his ranch. The large corrals he had made for the sheep were 200 feet by 300 feet. He had no notion about herding sheep; so he sent his cowboys out on the range with them. He had his boundary lines fixed as to how far the sheep were to graze. The men had orders not to permit the sheep to go over those lines. In the course of the first day several sheep were run to death by hard-riding herdsmen. Mudge did not approve of his men's tactics in handling his sheep; so next day he went out with the herd, stationed himself at the boundary line with his gun, and when a sheep crossed the line, he shot it down. By evening he had bagged eighty sheep. For the next few days the ranch help and neighbors feasted on roast mutton.

That autumn Mudge returned to Boston, his former home, where he still had interest in woolen mills, and did not come back to his ranch until mid-winter. Upon his return with a gay party of Boston friends,
both men and women, he found that his sheep had contracted a skin disease. He immediately ordered a dipping vat to be constructed and proceeded to dip his sheep, but when the sheep reached the dripping floor, they did not drip; the drip had frozen on the sheep. He then decided to build a bonfire in the center of the corral and had his men drive the sheep around the fire so that they would not freeze to death. He and his New England friends stayed up all night helping to save his sheep. Whenever a sheep fell from exhaustion, it was drenched with warm milk, and after the milk supply gave out, rum was substituted. Next morning they hauled sixty dead sheep away; all those which had been treated with milk and rum had died. Mudge decided that dip, milk, and rum would not mix in mid-winter weather.

He kept himself surrounded with his Eastern friends. They hunted, played, and drank. They often carried their revelries to excess. The heavy timber doors of the old ranch house still bear the marks of their wild parties and shooting scrapes.

While one of these wild parties was at its wildest, the gay company was suddenly quieted by a gentle knock—a fearful, half-hearted knock
on the door followed immediately by the entrance of a woman, who must certainly have looked her part in feeling out of place. She was dressed in the indespensable calico of the prairie woman, and in her arms she was carrying a twenty-four pound sack of flour. This woman was Elizabeth, who had walked this foggy afternoon to buy some groceries while Chris was away working. Mr. Heimer had offered to take her home because the day had become gloomier and rain was threatening; but she refused his offered ride and started on her home-ward tramp. On the way it so happened, what often happened on the prairie; she became utterly lost. It was growing dusk and the fog was becoming denser; soon she had lost all sense of direction and she wandered aimlessly around on the prairie. After several hours of walking, she finally arrived at Mudge’s ranch-house where, as already stated, a party was in progress. Women were dressed in fashionable party gowns such as Elizabeth had not seen since leaving Lemberg, and the men were attired in all imaginable costumes ranging from full-dress to cowboy chaps.

Mr. Mudge, always master of any situation, came forward in a friendly fashion, welcoming the frightened and bewildered Elizabeth to his party, at the same time relieving her of her sack of flour which she had
been clutching frantically to her body in order not to lose it. Even though it must have been a comedy for the Bostonians, they had composure enough not to laugh at Elizabeth while she was in the room. Mudge heard her story and then ordered one of his men to hitch a pair of fiery ponies to a barouche, imported from the East, and take Elizabeth and her flour home. Elizabeth often spoke of the fast and furious ride that man gave her over the prairie. It was raining by that time and with every flash of lightning the ponies bolted forward and seemed to increase their speed, but she arrived home safely, still holding on to her precious flour. Little Pete and a neighbor girl, who was staying with Elizabeth, were both in tears when she came home. But all's well that ends well, and thus it was with Elizabeth's going to the party at the Mudge ranch.
HE PRAIRIE FIRE

Late in the winter of '86 the skies were lighted up night after night with prairie fires, in one direction or another. Although Chris had plowed fire guards around his buildings and feed stacks, as other farmers had done, he could not feel secure from the dangers which accompanied one of these destroyers of the prairie. In previous fires which had swept over Jetmore to the south and west, farmers had lost much of their stock, in addition to many houses and other buildings. Mrs. T. S. Haun, who lived near Jetmore, had brought her favorite pure-bred Morgan with her for her own special use. This animal was a fleet-footed beautiful horse which had won many a race for his owner. Mr. Haun had tethered the horse out on the prairie one fine day in early spring, and left home to help one of the neighbors with some of his work. Their infant daughter was only eight days old and Mrs. Haun was still confined in her bed, when a prairie fire came roaring in from the Southwest. Mrs. Haun's sister, who is now Mrs. W.S. Kenyon of Jetmore, was staying with the Haun family. When she saw what was coming, she moved her sister and infant into the adjoining dugout, and went
out to see about the horse, but the fire was upon them. Luckily, the fire missed the buildings, but after the smoke had cleared away, and Mr. Haun had returned to his home, the Morgan was found with his legs burned to a crisp and a gelatin-like substance dripping from the lower part of his body. Mr. Haun ended the suffering animal's agony with his six-shooter.

One morning in January of 1887, Elizabeth took little Pete for an outing. They had gone only about a half mile when Elizabeth saw a black, heavy cloud of smoke rolling low over the prairie toward her from the Southwest. She turned immediately and ran home as rapidly as she could under her load. Chris, again, was away working with one of his neighbors at building a stone house to take the place of the soddy.

Elizabeth rounded up her cattle and drove them into the corral because, to her, this seemed a safe place. The fire was coming nearer; in fact, she could see the low running scarlet of the fire beneath the black smoke, when in her fright she took little Pete and began running toward the Blount place. She had not gone far, when the smoke came upon her and seemed to swallow her and Pete. Choking and nearly paralyzed
with fear, Elizabeth kept going, but now she could hear the crackling noise of burning grass behind her. She began calling for help and this proved to be the fortunate thing for her to do. When Chris and Mr. Voice saw the fire approaching, they hurriedly hitched a team of horses to a wagon and drove over to get Elizabeth. She was gone when they arrived at the dugout, but Mr. Voice saw her disappearing into the cloud of smoke. They hastily followed and guided by her cries for help soon found her. Just as they lifted her into the wagon, the fire swept over the prairie beneath the wagon. They drove out of the smoke and back into their own yard, where poor, frightened and exhausted Elizabeth was soon revived with fresh air and cool water.

Because of Chris's foresight in plowing fire guards around the buildings and corral, these were saved, but the entire landscape presented a disfigured mass of charred vegetation.

The Hoehns also experienced their first prairie fire when this same fire swept over their place. They were caught without any kind of protection, but having seen the fire's approach, they had time enough to plow fire guards around their buildings. With the fire came the fire-fighters----more men than they had seen since
their coming to Hodgeman county. Some were in wagons, some were on horse-back, and some were on foot; they were armed with shovels, wet sacks,----anything with which to fight fire. After having turned the fire away, Mr. Hoehn discovered that some of the men had been following the fire since early morning and had had nothing to eat all that day. His daughters had baked bread that day; so he told them to make coffee and feed the hungry men. The famished fire-fighters went into the house a few at a time to quench their thirst and appease their hunger. The Hoehn daughters made coffee until the family supply of Arbuckles was depleted, and needless to say, the men appreciated the hospitality shown them.

Francis Heimer, a brother of August Heimer, who had the Marena store, had come to Hodgeman county with his family, but because of hard times he left his family upon the homestead and went back East to take back his old job. Mrs. Heimer and her children had built up their cattle herd until it consisted of eighty-four head, when a feed shortage forced them to sell all of their cattle. The following spring they planted much feed and raised a good feed crop but had no cattle; so they decided to keep the feed until the following spring and sell it when prices would be high. One night they saw the sky
lighted up by a fire, and the next morning they found themselves right in the path of the raging flames; all they saved from their fourteen year's of toil was their house. All of the feed raised the previous year and most of their buildings went up in smoke. Now they found themselves in nearly the same position they had been in just exactly fourteen years previous. Mrs. Heimer and her sons went right ahead with building up their herd of cattle and replacing their barns and sheds with new buildings as time and money permitted, but they, as a family, never got back to where they had been, financially before the fire. Louis, the oldest son and Neta, a daughter, are now living in Hanston.
A SEVERE WIND AND RAINSTORM

and

A BRIGHT-EYED BABY

March of 1887 was cold, windy, and often filled with flying bits of burned grass, remnants of the terrible prairie fires. Then a snow-flurry would come along and cover the ground with a greyish-black covering—and then the miracle; springtime on the Kansas prairie. This spring Chris set out young saplings in the yard. Elizabeth dug up the rich loam and planted the garden. Life was bursting forth in the form of myriads of wild flowers and the new grass gave the hills to the west a greenish tint.

In June and July the weather became distressingly hot and dry, and the wheat and barley never headed out. As a consequence of this crop failure the men of the community were forced to go back to older settlements to find work in the harvest fields of Harvey and McPherson counties.

Elizabeth and Mary again lived together during the time Chris and Pete were gone, but this time a Mrs. Voice and a Mrs. John Rupp moved in with them. They all had cows to herd and water to draw from wells, so they formed a small business organization of their own. They took turns at herding the cows
and staying with the children. It so happened that each of them had a small son, so it usually took two to herd the cattle and two to herd the small boys.

The men returned to their homes during August and then this "Amazonian" settlement gladly dispersed, each to her own home and family. Elizabeth's aunt, her mother's sister, came back with Chris to visit with Elizabeth and other friends.

Chris and Elizabeth were now expecting their second baby, so Aunt Elizabeth decided to stay until after the arrival of the new baby, but a freak in Kansas weather caused a sad accident and altered all of their plans.

The fall rains set in about the first of September with an occasional accompaniment of a wind storm. One night in September a sudden storm blew in from the Northwest accompanied by a torrential rain and a severe hailstorm. For an hour the storm raged with little abatement. Occasional lulls were followed by renewed blasts that would make the board roof of the dugout tremble. Aunt Elizabeth had retired early because the dense, humid atmosphere irritated the asthma, with which she was afflicted, making her breathing very difficult.

Little Pete, too had been put into his home-made crib.
Chris and Elizabeth sat at the table listening to the raging of the storm, when suddenly everything seemed to go blank. They found themselves in utter darkness and the rain and hail were pouring upon them. Just as the light went out, Elizabeth, instinctively, threw herself over little Pete's crib. After what seemed a long time to her, she heard Chris calling to her from a long way off. What had really happened was that the wind and rain proved too much for the light board roof, and after so much pressure forced upon it, it caved in with its load of soaked sod. It so happened that the corner where they had been sitting was the only spot in the left clear of the fallen roof. Chris began searching around and finally found Elizabeth, unconscious, pinned down over the baby's crib. With hard labor he managed to extricate her and the baby from the debris and succeeded in bringing Elizabeth back to consciousness. The roof had been made with one-by-twelve inch boards. When the roof came down one of these boards snapped and one of the jagged ends caught Elizabeth's left hip and plowed and scraped her left side from her hip on down to her ankle. Bruised and bleeding she helped Chris find something to cover Pete with to protect him from the storm,
and then Elizabeth remembered having heard Aunt Elizabeth scream and then groan. She now forgot about baby Pete lying unprotected under the pouring sky, and they began tearing away broken timbers in their frantic search for their aunt. It was Elizabeth's hand which found her in the darkness, doubled over under several hundred pounds of water-soaked sod and lumber. In her fright Elizabeth seized hold of the timbers which pinned the woman down and snapped two twelve-inch boards as if they had been that much paper. They worked hard in the darkness of the stormy night to free the lifeless body of Aunt Elizabeth.

It happened that, because of the difficulty she found with her breathing, Aunt Elizabeth was sitting up in her bed when the roof crashed, and in this manner she was doubled over and crushed to death.

Elizabeth now took some of the covers from her aunt's bed and put them over Pete's crib. Pete, in the meanwhile, was shouting his complaints out to the dark and relentless world, but there was no one to take him up, nor to take up his cause and redress the injustice from which he was suffering at the moment.

Chris carried the lifeless form out into the yard and laid it tenderly upon the grass. Now what were they
to do? Everything they had in clothes was watersoaked. Their house lay in ruins. The storm was still raging. They moved the baby into the barn which was still intact. Here, in shelter, they decided what was next to be done. They decided that Aunt Elizabeth's body would have to be left outside, and Elizabeth was to remain in the barn while Chris walked to Pete Ewy's place for help.

Before leaving for help, Chris decided that he could gain time if he would hitch his horses to the wagon, but the horses were nowhere to be found. During the storm they had broken tethers, and wandered away. There was nothing for Chris to do but walk the three miles to the home of Pete and Mary. Elizabeth watched him disappear into the darkness. After she had recovered from the first shock and fright, she realized that her body was aching all over. She searched around in the barn and found some dry sacks which she wrapped about herself. Little Pete had forgotten about his fright and had fallen asleep in spite of his damp surroundings. The several hours, during which Chris was absent, seemed an eternity to Elizabeth, but he returned and with him were Pete and Mary. They had brought some dry comforts and clothes for Elizabeth
and Pete. They then loaded Elizabeth, Pete, and the corpse of Aunt Elizabeth into the wagon and sadly drove back to the Ewy home.

Next day Pete made a simple coffin from the boards of the broken roof of Hirschler's dugout. Elizabeth and Mary lined the box with a linen sheet which Chris had brought with him from Germany. In the afternoon friends and neighbors came to pay their last respects to Aunt Elizabeth and try to console Chris and Elizabeth, who had not only had this nerve-wracking experience, but who had also lost their home.

Elizabeth had never been robust, and she was beginning to break under the strenuous hardships which befell the pioneer woman. The Purple tragedy and the prairie fire experience had had their effects upon her, and now this tragedy climaxcd them all. Elizabeth was put to bed and did not leave it for several weeks. Then she finally did get up she could not raise her bruised leg, but dragged it along. They had been living with Pete and Mary since their home was destroyed, but with winter approaching, they decided that they must get dugout fixed and move back home.

When Elizabeth's parents heard about their child-
ren's misfortune and the death of Grandma Ewy's sister, they wrote a letter to Chris and Elizabeth stating that if Chris would come to get them, they would be glad to come to live with Chris and Elizabeth for several weeks. Grandma was not only anxious to see and help her daughter, but she was also anxious to see her two grandsons, little Pete and John, the son of Pete and Mary. It was decided that Chris was to go get the old couple and Elizabeth was to stay with Pete and Mary. They moved all of Chris's stock over to Pete's place so that Pete could care for it during Chris's absence.

During the two weeks that Chris was gone, Elizabeth exercised her bruised leg daily. Walking was very difficult because a huge scab had formed on the deep lacerations on her hip and thigh. Every time she took a step, this scab would crack and cause her pains. But time hung heavy on Elizabeth's hands during those days, so one day she surprised Mary by announcing that she was going to walk to the store at Marena. Mary remonstrated, but Elizabeth was firm and much to Mary's disapproval, she began limping away toward Marena. Elizabeth often said afterward that had she know how painful that would prove to be, she would never have undertaken that walk. After several hours of slow traveling, she arrived on top of
the hill about a mile distant from the store, to see a covered wagon drive away from the store and taking the trail leading westward toward their own place. Now she was all excited, but in spite of her efforts to hurry, she could not get into full view of the wagon, and whoever it was in the wagon, kept on going. When she did arrive at the store, Mr. Heimer told her that Chris and her parents had just arrived, and after buying a few articles, had gone on home. Elizabeth forgot about the small purchases she had planned to make, and without wasting more time, she began her painful tramp home-ward.

Chris and Elizabeth's parents went directly to the Hirschler homestead. As they were viewing the ruins of the dugout, Chris saw in the distance what he guessed to be Elizabeth slowly trudging toward them. They all got into the wagon and went out to meet her. The meeting of Elizabeth and her mother was one of joy, yet mixed with sorrow. The tragic death of Aunt Elizabeth was still fresh in their memories, and it had been a long time since they had seen each other. Grandmother's heart was breaking to see her daughter suffering the way she did. The prairie never did appeal to Grandmother, and if she could have had her own way about the matter, her
children would have never come out here. Then too, her only sister had lost her life out here on the prairie. One can not blame her for wanting to take her daughter back home with her.

The next thing to be done was for Chris and Grandpa to go to Kinsley for lumber with which to mend the broken roof of the dugout. They left early one bright day in the latter part of November. The sun was shining brightly and the meadowlarks were trying to outdo each other in song. The women were staying with Mary. That afternoon the wind shifted to the north and came roaring down over the prairie with its cold blast. Snow began falling before evening and by nightfall a genuine blizzard was enveloping every object on the landscape.

Chris and his father-in-law had just loaded their lumber and other supplies when the storm struck in Kinsley. Because of its intensity, they decided to try to travel several miles on their homeward journey before night overtook them. But the storm increased in its fury, and they had traveled only five miles out of town when they were forced to stop at a farmer's home for shelter. The farmer helped them put their horses into the barn and then took them into the house. They
slept in a warm bed, and before daybreak they arose and got ready to go on. The storm was still raging and the drifts were getting deep. The farmer urged them to stay, but they thought that they could reach home that day. The trail was entirely obliterated, so they trusted to their horses' sense of direction, but as they slowly progressed toward the blinding snowstorm, they both lost their sense of direction and thought that the horses were going in the wrong direction. All that endless day the sharp needlelike wind snarled at them and drove its tingling chill through their clothes, chilling their bodies. At times it seemed that they would smother in the white shifting mass of swirling snow. Late in the evening they saw a light right before them. Chris went to the door and knocked. He was so worn out that he did not recognize the place until he saw their host of the night before standing before them and inviting them into the house. They, again put their horses into the barn and went into the house for food and warmth. It now was clear in their minds that if they had permitted the horses to have their own way, they might have reached home. But they had guided the faithful animals from their right course. That night the storm
wore itself out, and next day they reached home just at sunset. Their tired horses had faithfully plowed through deep drifts, and where the drifts had been too deep, the men had shoveled a path through for the horses and the wagon.

Then Christmas came around, Chris and Elizabeth had moved into their own home. Elizabeth and her mother prepared Christmas dinner for themselves and for Pete and Mary and their small son, John.

Grandma Ewy had promised Elizabeth that she would stay with her until the baby had come. During the weeks after the holidays they made preparations for the new arrival. During the night of February twenty-fourth, Elizabeth was awakened by sharp pangs of pain wracking her body. She awakened Chris. Pre-March winds were blowing this cold desolate February night. Chris arose and replenished the fire. Mary had been ill, so Grandma was at the Ewy home. Chris dressed hurriedly, and with a word of encouragement, was gone into the night. Elizabeth, bolting the door behind him, experienced the greatest fear of all prairie women—to be alone at night upon a desert of prairie with the pangs of childbirth upon her. The winds blew. Little Pete slept on. "Oh, God, bring them home soon."
It was not long, only a matter of an hour or more, until Chris, Grandma, an Mary returned, but to Elizabeth it seemed an eternity. And then Elizabeth had her little girl,----the daughter for whom she had prayed.

They named her Katherine----for the two grandmothers. Now Elizabeth's love was divided between her two babies; yet, she knew she did not have less love for little Pete, and yet there was much affection for the infant daughter too.

The elder Mary knew that they had remained too long from their own home, and when little Katherine was several weeks old, and Elizabeth was able to do her own house work, her parents left her.

Before Chris took them home, he found a neighbor girl who was willing to stay with Elizabeth and help her with the necessary work. Although it was hard for Elizabeth to see her mother leave, she was kept so busy caring for her babies that she had little time left in which to become lonesome.

They did not have their pasture fenced, so Chris arranged to keep their nine head of cattle tethered while he was away. Each day Elizabeth and her young helper had to lead all of the stock to the water and then find a new place with grass upon which to tether
them. One day Elizabeth tried to save time by tying
the ropes of four young heifers together and leading
them to the water at the same time. But they were
young and frisky and began running and jumping, throw-
ing Elizabeth to the ground. She became entangled in
the knotted ropes and was dragged over the ground to
the watering trough where the young animals stopped and
calmly viewed the mischief they had done. Elizabeth's
leg had not yet healed and now it was torn nearly as
badly as it had been formerly. The young girl was lead-
ing the milk cows and was slowly following, but when
she saw what was happeninng, she came running to help
untangle the bruised and sobbing Elizabeth.

Elizabeth had, before they left the house, placed
the water pail on top of the sewing machine out of
little Pete's reach, and had put all other objects,
which she considered dangerous, away from his sight.
the baby was placed upon a pallet on the floor. Pete
was left playing on the floor near by. When Elizabeth,
leaning upon the shoulders of the young girl, came
within hearing distance of the house, she heard baby
Katherine crying at the top of her voice. Elizabeth
forgot about her pains and ran to the house. She
found Pete on top of the sewing machine pouring
water upon the baby's face.

"Me give baby drink", was his reassuring answer to his mother's frightened look.

Elizabeth was beginning to agree with her mother that this was no fit place in which to live. She was weakening under the strain under which she was forced to live. When Chris returned, she decided, she would ask him to take her back to Harvey county.

Then Chris returned from Harvey county, he found Elizabeth in bed. Since the time the young heifers had dragged her, the wounds on her hip and leg had been festering and were causing her great pains. That evening when supper was over and Chris was sitting beside her bed, Elizabeth approached the subject which had been going constantly through her mind the past week. She was afraid of the prairie; she was tired and worn out by constant hardships which were haunting her. Chris was not surprised to hear her talking this way, but he had hoped that she would become acclimated and be willing to stay.

When Pete and Mary came over to see them several days later, and Pete told them that he had a chance to sell his farm, Elizabeth decided then and there
that if Pete would sell his farm and leave, they, too, would leave.

Elizabeth wrote a letter to her parents that evening and told them of these potential plans. Next day she and Chris rode to Marena in the farm wagon. Elizabeth traded a dozen of her precious eggs for a still more precious postage stamp for her letter. The remaining eggs were traded for groceries and they then went home.

Pete and Chris did nothing about selling their land until they had a letter from their parents which stated that there were two farms near each other which were for rent; and if they wanted Grandpa Ewy to rent them to let him know immediately. A letter was dispatched the very next day telling Grandpa to rent the two farms; that they were coming back as soon as they could dispose of their land. Pete sold his farm to a farmer who was planning to stay and see it through, and Chris relinquished his claim-rights back to the government.

Now that the time had arrived when they again were foot-loose, and were ready to return to Harvey county, the prospects of leaving their prairie home did not seem nearly so glittering as they had weeks
before. There was that something which had already taken hold of them, that bond which attached many people to the prairie was stronger than they realized. It was not so easy to leave as Elizabeth and Mary had anticipated. In fact, Elizabeth felt as if she were leaving behind something very dear to her.

Their trip back to Moundridge was uneventful. It rained much of the time, and to keep the children dry, Elizabeth and Mary had to use comforts and quilts as covers over the baby cribs which were suspended from the bows to support the canvas coverings.

Both families lived in the Moundridge community from 1889 to 1893, when they again moved to prairie homes, but this time they went south——to the lands of the Red man.

During these years while they were living on rented farms and Chris taught German school and gave music lessons, three babies, Marie, Otto, and Menno, were born to them. Just before Menno was born, baby Otto contracted intestinal influenza, or 'summer-complaint' as the doctor called it, and never having been a strong child, died at the age of eighteen months.
The death of their small son was one of the worst shocks Elizabeth had thus far experienced. The little fellow had been a patient sufferer, and when he grew constantly weaker, Elizabeth would not relinquish him from her arms. One hot afternoon Elizabeth was holding the sick baby and trying to relieve him of his suffering, when suddenly he writhed a moment in his agony, and then lay quiet.

When they returned from the cemetery, Penny, the little dog with which little Otto had played, was lying on the doorstep. He whined when Chris and Elizabeth passed him on entering the house, and then refused to play with the children. That night he disappeared. Several days later when Chris and Elizabeth visited the little grave, they found Penny—lying in a little hollow he had dug out on the mound of the grave—dying. They took him home, but he refused food and that night he died.

During all of these years, Elizabeth's parents had been having a difficult time trying to become accustomed to American ways of living and working. They came to America several months later than Elizabeth. They immediately moved upon a rented farm and
became tillers of Kansas soil. Farming methods and machinery were vastly different from what they had been in Austria, but they went right on. Grandpa Ewy bought the third reaper which came into the immediate community. Everything worked well only they could never get the knotter on the binder to working. The following harvest the company gave him a new and improved machine in exchange for the former.

But as the more favorable years came, when crops were better, and the old couple was able to add more cows, horses, and pigs to their small herds, and they were able to purchase more of the necessities for their home, Grandpa became ill. For several years he had been suffering with dull pains in his stomach, and now his strength was failing him. His sons, who were still at home with them, were obliged to take over the management of the farm.

Shortly after the death of his small grandson, Otto, Grandpa came into the house one day and went to bed. Grandma followed him into the room.

"Father! Don't you feel well?"

He did not turn his head to answer."Not very well."

Came the reply.
"Is it your stomach? Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, I think not. Put your hand on my stomach, don't you feel a hard lump there? I have been noticing for some time----I believe it is becoming larger and today it pains more than usual."

Grandpa never did know that he had cancer of the stomach. The old-fashioned physician tried to cure him with home remedies and he had never heard of cancer of the stomach. Grandpa became weaker every day and finally he could not partake of food; he suffered agonies of pain and at last starved to death.

They buried him beside little Otto in the little cemetery south and east from Moundridge. Grandma and her sons had a public sale to dispose of their personal property. After visiting with her married children for several weeks, Grandma came to live with Elizabeth and Chris.

One day in the summer of 1893 Pete came over to the Hirschler home with news. He had just heard in town that day people discussing the government's newest project, that of opening free homestead land in
the Oklahoma Indian Territory.

Pete was of the restless type. He had had his fling in western Kansas and returned. Now that he had lived in an established community for several years, and had raised several wheat crops, he felt that he needed more room, and why not try for free land in Oklahoma?

Elizabeth and Mary remembered the lonely summers spent on the prairie in Hodgeman county while the men were forced, by necessity, to return to Harvey county for work. Why not stay here, they thought, where crops were good and more certain?

Pete was all enthusiasm and he was continually talking about the free land to be given away. It took too much cash to buy a farm in Harvey county. A poor man did not have a chance. Why not try his luck in the new country which was to be thrown open to white settlers in September? Pete decided to get old Dolly ready for the race—and he did.
Information concerning the wedding of Chris and Elizabeth was obtained from a letter written by Mrs. Marie Hirschler Dester; a personal interview with Mrs. Jake Hirschler (now deceased), and family tradition. The trip to Hodgeman county and the early experiences on Western Kansas prairies were in part taken from old letters and the remainder is family tradition.

The material about Henry Mudge and his high-class ranching was given to me by Mrs. Margaret Evans Miller of Jetmore, Kansas, who collected it from old records left by the Boston rancher.

The materials for the part about the Prairie Fire and the Wind and Rain Storm were gathered from personal interviews with Miss Elfreda Kenyon and her mother, Mrs. W.S. Kenyon of Jetmore, Kansas, Mrs. Mary Evans also of Jetmore, Mrs. Magdalena Ewy of Hanston, Kansas. Manuscripts from the Hodgeman County Historical Society's files written by Miss. Margaret Evans, L.B. Heimer, Mrs. S.S. Sutton of Hanston, Kansas. An account of the Mennonite church and people written by Mr. H. Rupp. The rest is family tradition.
PART THREE

LIFE IN THE CHEROKEE STRIP
CHEROKEE STRIP: THE RACE

During all that summer of 1893 news kept trickling in about the Indian Territory which was to be thrown open to the white man for permanent homes. Pete listened greedily to these stories. He seemed to be well read in the subject. He watched the papers to see what Congress was doing in Washington, D.C. It seemed that now everything depended upon the President. Chris and Pete harvested their wheat and oats crops and exchanged work with the neighbors during the threshing time.

On August 19, President Cleveland issued this proclamation which fixed September 16 as the date upon which the Strip was to be opened. At twelve o'clock noon, soldiers stationed all along the north and south borders were to fire the signals which would permit any one to run for a city lot or a 160 acre farm.

Pete was all excitement. He had fully decided upon trying his luck at getting a free homestead in the Strip. He began training Dolly, a slenderly built young mare, for endurance. He took her out
daily----raced her---tied her----watched her breathing after each practice. Mary and the Hirschlers only looked on with misgivings. Mary, although she wanted a home of her own, was almost content to remain on a rented farm where she was nearly certain of a crop when harvest time came around.

Chris and Elizabeth had decided not to try for a homestead, but Chris was to go with Pete to the border line to see what was taking place.

President Cleveland and the Secretary of the Interior had made elaborate plans for this opening. "Sooners" had caused much trouble at the opening of 1889; so there were strict laws forbidding any one to enter the land previous to high noon on September 16. The President also provided for four land offices and four land districts with a receiver and clerk for each, in the Strip. These were the Perry district, the Enid district, the Alva district, and the Woodward district, and the land offices were established at each place.

The Act of Congress set apart sections
and thirty-six of each congressional township as school lands; the proceeds of their sales were to be used in financing public schools. The President was authorized to set aside other land for public benefit. He reserved sections thirteen and thirty-three in each congressional township to be used for supporting a university, agricultural college, and normal schools and for securing funds for public buildings. These sections were reserved by the government and any one who staked these in the run, naturally lost out in winning for himself a free home.

A neutral strip of land one hundred feet wide was reserved by the government on which prospective settlers might enter as early as five days previous to the opening. This strip extended around the entire Cherokee Strip. It was not long before this narrow strip of ground was crowded with prospective settlers. Water and food were sold at premium prices.

Pete, Mary, and Chris drove down to the border south of Arkansas City on September 15, to be there early enough so that Pete and Dolly might rest before their race. September 16, 1893, dawned bright
and clear. Not a cloud was in sight. By noon the sun was beating down hot upon a strange sight. The once empty peaceful Oklahoma Territory was now a seething mass of humanity. The one-hundred-foot strip of land was ground into fine dust, and with every movement of man, animal, or of the slightest breeze, a cloud of choking dust arose. Here was drawn up, as in battle array, one of the strangest hosts ever marshalled. The burnished sky was the proscenium. The stage was the unending, flat Oklahoma plain. All that night and morning the actors in the drama were making ready for the grand finale.

This was a drama of land-hunger. All knew that this was to be the last mass adventure of home seekers. As Chris and Mary looked upon the surging mass, they saw pathetic sights. There were covered wagons with canvas flapping, some of them ragged and patched. Occasionally they saw frightened children in quest of their parents from whom they had become separated. Water was scarce; many were thirsty. Men on horseback, on muleback, on high-wheeled bicycles, in buggies, and in wagons were getting into the line because the time was drawing nearer when the signal was to be given.
Shortly before noon a bugle sounded. This was the signal which meant to get on the mark. Mary saw Pete and Dolly in the line. The rifles of the soldiers cracked along the entire front, and every one, poised for instant flight, was off with the wind, hidden in a choking cloud of dust.

There were many women and children, who, like Chris and Mary, had come to see their bread-winner take off. Now they were left behind. Mary was crying, but so were many others. Some were to wait for the return of their 'runner'. Chris and Mary returned home late that night.

George Rainey in his book on "The Cherokee Strip" gives an interesting account of his own running in this race:

Saturday, September 16, came on with a blazing sun and hot wind from the south. The dust rose in clouds, giving one some idea what storm-like coulds of dust would rise when the break was made. At five minutes to twelve all was tense and ready. The last details had been attended to and all were on the line. Horses champed their bits; locomotive safety valves were popping off and all eyes were on the man on horseback, stationed well within the Strip, who was to fire the signal shot which was to start the greatest race in the history of the world.

Look out! A puff of smoke and the race is on. Everything helter shelter, pell mell, every
fellow apparently for himself and the devil for the hindmost. Away they went, the mass gradually thinning as the fleeter left the slower. The horsemen were, of course, soon in the lead, but all were doing their best. Many horses became exhausted and dropped from the race. Hics were broken down and horses stumbled and fell, but the roiling mass moved on and within two hours the tides from the north and south had met near the middle of the Strip. The faster riders were able to secure the better claims, but many a straggler in a covered wagon secured a good home.

The race was over. Then the sun went down that night the tide of humanity had scattered over the land like water seeking its own level; and what, for untold ages had been the home of the buffalo, coyote, and rattlesnake was now a land of homes; and many a tired and hungry rider as he lay that night on soil he could now call his own thought of the wife and babies who, somewhere, were wondering whether their bread-winner had succeeded or failed. Nor did he neglect his jaded horse which, though unable to know what it was all about, had carried him to victory. Many a horse that made that race never afterwards changed owners.

Pete and Dolly got along very well. Dolly had been trained to start quickly as soon as Pete gave her the signal, and as soon as the shot was fired, Dolly was off with the leaders, but there were many more fleet than she, and Pete came too late for the rich Black Bear Bottoms; so he went on south. He finally landed on a hilly farm with a good growth of timber upon it. Here he drove his stake and this became the home for Pete and Mary. There was a spring gushing out from under a projection of rocks, and a huge elm stood guard over it.
Here Pete and Dolly slept that night. Both had quenched their thirst with the cool clear water. Pete staked Dolly out on the tall grass growing beside the little brook which gurgled merrily over its rocky bed. He then washed himself in the cool water, ate some food which he had carried with him, and then stretched himself upon the ground under the Lone Elm still standing guard over the small spring.

Several days later he returned to his family and friends and was all aglow with the account of the race and his success. He was ready to move into the Strip as soon as he could make the proper arrangements for the move. Mary soon was filled with the excitement of moving and the effects were beginning to show on Chris and Elizabeth also.
PETE AND MARY MOVE TO THE STRIP

Pete was all enthusiasm after his return from the Strip. All he talked or thought about was this new land. True, the soil was somewhat red, the grass was not all short since some red-top and blue-stem were mixed in with the buffalo grass, but it was a real country. He had a spring on his farm which would supply water for his cattle as it had supplied the Indians and the buffalo for years. There was timber too; black walnut, red oak, commonly called "the black jack," elm, and locust were growing in wild disorder all over the place. Pete had noticed several kinds of wild plum and one or two varieties of wild fruit trees which he did not recognize by their green fruits.

Chris and Elizabeth listened to his stories and in the back of their minds something was beginning to shape that might have been expressed as a desire to see this country.

Pete was taking two wagon loads of supplies with him. He got one of his cousins to help him move. One wagon contained all of the household supplies; the other contained feed, some grains, and the farming machinery. They led several horses and hoped to drive a small herd of cattle between the wagons.
They left during the latter part of September, only two weeks after the opening; Pete wanted to be there from the beginning of the development of this new land.

Two weeks later Mary received a letter from Pete telling her that their two-room shack was ready for the family. She immediately left for Perry, Oklahoma Territory, on the train. Elizabeth and Chris took her to Newton where she boarded the train which took her to Perry. Before she left, Elizabeth had Mary promise to write as soon as she became established in her new home. This was the first time that these two women had been separated for many years.

Mary's letter came even before Elizabeth had expected it to come. It contained much humor and nothing but flattering things could Mary write about the new country. It was so different from the Western Kansas prairie. Why, here were trees in whose shade one could rest—-an abundant supply of clear pure water came gushing out of a rocky cleft only a few rods from the house. Yes, there was some school land only one-half mile north from their place—-an ideal place for some one—-why not come to look it over?
A Rupp family from near Hutchinson, distant relatives of Elizabeth, came to Chris and Elizabeth's place one evening. They were on their way to the Strip. One of the Rupp boys had been there. He had bought an eighty acre field from a man who had won a homestead, but who did not want to clear all of it from a heavy timber which covered the entire quarter section; so he sold half of it very cheap. The Rupps needed someone to help them with the driving of their cattle, so they asked Chris to go along. One of the boys was planning to return to take care of the place in Reno county. There was no reason why Chris could not go; in fact, Elizabeth wanted him to go—-she missed Mary more than she had realized. She and Grandma could manage while he was gone. Next morning he left with the Rupp family not only as a helper, but also as a prospective land hunter in the Strip.

It took three to four days to drive to Perry, which was at that time only a few weeks old. It resembled a boy's rude collection of store boxes which he has placed in a helter-skelter fashion along imaginary streets.

When Perry was six hours old it boasted of a post-
office, a land office, a saloon in a tent, and also a hotel under a tent. The guests in the hotel that first night paid one dollar for a cot. But Perry began booming the minute it was organized by the government.

It was seven miles out to Pete's farm from Perry. The party covered the seven miles in less than two hours. It was evening when they saw the old sentinel, Lone Elm, silhouetted against the purplish eastern sky.

"That tree yonder is on Pete's farm", explained one of the Rupp boys.

Pete and Mary had been watching their approach, and when the travelers arrived in the yard, they were greeted with a very warm reception, and a simple but warm meal. It was decided that the Rupps were to live with Pete and Mary until they got their log cabin built. Next morning their odd pieces of furniture were taken from the wagons and placed into the small rough-boarded shack which was home to Pete and Mary.

Pete and Chris went to Perry the following day. On their way to town, Pete took Chris over the section of school land which was directly across the county line from his place. The quarter Pete had in mind was a level piece of ground with not a tree upon it. Before
they had driven the seven miles into Perry, Pete had Chris interested enough in the proposition so that he went to the land office to inquire about the land.

He found that any one who so desired, could go upon this school land and begin to farm it. If he wished to do so, he had the right to erect buildings and make a well upon it. Then the government came around to it, this land would be sold. The man living upon it would have first chance at buying it from the government at a given price—-at whatever price the government agent would assess its value.

Chris spent a few days with the Ewys and then he and Bill Rupp returned to their Kansas homes; Chris to his at Moundridge and Bill to his near Hutchinson.

Chris and Elizabeth often talked about the Strip. Nothing, however was decided upon about moving there. The land looked good, but Chris was not anxious to take Elizabeth into a frontier country again. She was still suffering from injuries received in Hodgeman county when the roof of their dugout collapsed. They were thinking of their children too. Pete and six year-old Kate were attending school now, and there were no schools in the Strip. But letters, long letters would
come from Mary and Pete, filled with nothing but praises of the new country. Then Mary also hinted that she was lonely; she wanted the companionship of Elizabeth and her children wanted play-fellows. They too, were longing for their little cousins with whom they had played all their lives.

The following year Chris and Elizabeth had an opportunity to go to Perry with friends who were looking for a new location. Pete was still enthusiastic over their new home. He had built several small buildings and had several haystacks in his feed lot; hay cut on his own place. All of this looked very enticing to the Hirschlers. They were beginning to look upon this new country with more interest, and the northwest quarter of the school land section really was a good piece of ground. There was no homestead in the vicinity as level as this. There was no timber from which fence posts or fuel could be cut, but Pete told Chris that he could get posts from his timber, and made various enticing propositions which sounded interesting. They returned to their home at Moundridge undecided whether to go try their fortunes in the Strip, or remain where they were at Moundridge.
People, many of their acquaintances, kept streaming to the Strip. Many were living on school land; others bought land from those who had won a homestead and then decided not to stay. Pete and Mary wrote frequently, and in the winter of 1894-95 they decided to try living in the Cherokee Strip.

In February Chris had to make a trip to Perry on the train. He arranged with the government's agent to live on the one quarter section of the school land, erect buildings, and make a well. And when the government would sell the land, he had the promise to have first chance.
When Chris returned home immediate steps were taken for the coming move into the Strip. Elizabeth entered into the work of packing and all of the many other tasks which arise when preparing to move all of the property, with more zest than even she was willing to admit. At first she thought of the move with reluctance, but as the preparations progressed she showed more spirit. There were several reasons why this move was much easier: her mother was going with her, and she really was longing to be with Pete and Mary again. Then too, three of her brothers, beside Pete, had already gone there, so this was more like going to her people than leaving them.

One bright, but crisp morning in March Chris loaded his family into a lumber wagon which also contained the household goods, and started on another adventure. He had a second wagon loaded with farming implements, some hay and grain. A man was hired to drive this wagon. There were several cows and young cattle to be taken along. These were easily driven between the two wagons as long as they were driving...
along country roads bordered on both sides with hedgerows, and Chris was planning to join a caravan of home-seekers at Wichita, who also were going into the Strip.

Elizabeth, Grandma, and the children took the train at Newton. The trip overland in a lumber wagon was anything but pleasant. There were several rivers to be forded, cattle rustlers often attacked the travelers, and other inconveniences arising while traveling in a covered wagon, made the journey on the train more desirable. Chris and his men were to follow with the team and wagons.

The train ride to Perry was a novel experience for the children. Elizabeth wished several times that she had remained with Chris and traveled with him in the wagon. Before they had reached Wichita, she had been embarrassed by the behavior of the children. Kate and Marie, then eight and six years old, had formed a hasty but warm friendship with the friendly negro porter. Marie, a slight little curly-headed blonde, had expressed her willingness to go home with him. Pete was continually poking his head out through the car window, which he opened against Elizabeth's orders to keep closed. Just before the train entered Wichita,
another train passed theirs on a side track; as the engine was passing the car in which they were riding, its whistle shrieked, and that was too much for four year-old Menno, who had been sitting very quietly beside Grandma. Then the cars continued to rumble past their train, Menno quietly slipped to the floor of the car, got under the seat, and remained there for the remainder of the trip to Perry. No coaxing by the members of the family would bring him out. But to Elizabeth this meant one worry less. He at least would not get into any mischief.

Pete and Mary were at the station to meet them when their train arrived at Perry. Mary and her children were extremely happy to know that they had come to stay. They took the entire family to their home where they were to await Chris's coming with all of the supplies.

Chris found five wagons in Wichita getting ready to move into the Strip. He and his driver joined the caravan. The cattle were put into one herd and driven by two men on horseback. This relieved each wagon driver from the extra work of trying to care for his own small herd of cattle. There, too, were stories
of cattle rustlers who would come pouncing upon lone travelers and drive the cattle away from the helpless home seeker.

During the second day's traveling, the wagon train crossed the boundary line of Kansas and the Cherokee Strip. That night the leader of the train announced the halt for the night long before sunset. He ordered the drivers to form a large circle with their wagons. From his own wagon he brought ropes and chains and requested each man to do likewise. With these ropes he and the men made a corral for the cattle and horses by stringing the ropes from one wagon to another. When the corral was finished, the two cattle drivers herded the cattle through the opening of the corral and then closed the 'gate' with more rope and chains.

That night Chris was awakened by loud shouts and the popping of guns. He scrambled out of his blankets, slipped on his shoes, and went out to see what was happening. A strange sight met his eyes. There were figures, which appeared to be Indians, on horseback, yelling at the top of their voices, shooting, and trying to break through the improvised rope enclosure. The train boss emerged from his bunk with two guns
blazing deadly fire. There was a scream, a dark figure rolled from his horse; the noise soon ceased. The intruders rode off a distance and seemed to hold a conference. By this time the surprised travelers had all been awakened and several men came forth armed with their guns. Chris saw the fallen man slowly arise from the ground and join his companions. Soon they all rode away. The captain then told the other men, who had gathered about him, that he had been told about rustlers dressed as Indians to make detection more difficult making such attacks as this one. There was very little sleep for any of them during the remainder of that night, but they had saved their cattle, and that was worth a great deal.

The next exciting incident took place several days later at the swollen Salt Fork. The captain saw immediately that trying to cross the fast flowing stream would be dangerous; so he ordered camp to be made. The weather was warm and along the land bottoms of the stream green grass was quite plentiful. Two days were spent in waiting for the water to subside sufficiently to make crossing safe. The captain ordered the wagons to cross first. The water was still deep enough so that in places the horses had to swim, but all the wagons
crossed without any serious mishap. When all the wagons were across, the captain ordered the men to unhitch their teams and be ready to help pull any floundering cow out of the swirling water. The men lined up along the south bank of the Salt Fork and waited for the two men on horses to drive the cattle into the stream. Two young steers took the lead into the stream. They were followed by cows and calves. When the leaders came to the center of the stream where the current was the swiftest, they began to flounder and went into a mill. One of the drivers plunged into the stream and swam his horse into the midst of the rapidly forming mill. He was successful in getting several head from the outer edge to go with the stream and in this way the milling mass unwound and went down stream. There was a curve in the stream several rods downstream, and to this point the captain hurried all the men with their teams. The other driver raced ahead of the floating cattle and plunged into the stream just as the leading ones reached this point. After much floundering in the water, he was successful in getting the leaders turned toward the bank of the river. Some of the men had waded waist deep into the stream to help head the
cattle toward land, but in spite of all what they could and did do, several head drifted on by and went on still farther.

All hands were busy and the men rushed around with their teams wherever they saw any of the cattle trying to get out. Some got into quicksand about a half mile down stream where the bed of the stream became wider and shallow. Here the men really had to fight hard to save their cattle. That evening when camp was made, the captain had each man count his cattle, and they found that not one head was missing.

After this nothing interfered with the progress of the caravan. Several of the wagons dropped out of the train before Perry was reached. The remaining wagons moved steadily onward. At Perry Chris's two wagons left the train; the others were bound for Orlando.

Elizabeth, in the meantime, had become very anxious about Chris's absence. She had expected him on March ninth and now it was the eleventh and he had not arrived. All afternoon of the day Elizabeth walked to and fro in the yard; then she went out upon the brow of the hill west from the house. She was sitting under the old Lone Elm at the spring, when suddenly she saw two wagons coming over the hill about a mile distant. She could not wait until they arrived, so
she went out to meet Chris.

Chris's coming swelled the ever growing number staying with Pete and Mary. Only a few days before Elizabeth, Grandma, and the children arrived, Guss, the brother of Pete and Elizabeth, had come on a land hunting trip and he had come to Pete's house. Two of Mary's cousins were staying with them while their small house was being erected. Mary's brother, too, had arrived unexpectedly and was staying there. Mary called her little two-roomed shack built of rough board- the "Lone Elm Hotel"----room (outside) and board free.

At this particular time five families were trying to find cover in this small makeshift of shelter. Pete was still storing his oats in one of the rooms. At night pallets were made upon the oats for the children, who slept soundly in spite of their makeshift beds. Most of the men slept in their covered wagons. Spring comes earlier in Oklahoma than it does in Kansas; so no one really suffered.

There were no buildings on the land where the Hirschlers were to live, but there was a one-room shack on the neighboring farm which had been forsaken by some early settler. Chris obtained per-
mission from the owner to move into this house. It was a building made from lumber sawed out of native cottonwood trees which had grown on the place. It was a rough appearing concern with weather-beaten boards which had warped out of shape when they dried out. The floor boards were made from the same material about eight inches wide. They too had shrunk after they had been nailed down. But to the Hirschlers this meant home. They gladly moved their furniture into it and lived there in preference to the overcrowded Lone Elm Hotel, even if the lodging and board were free.

Chris, Elizabeth, and Grandma went over to their farm and located the site where they planned to build. Here they broke sod and planted a garden. Several neighbors helped to dig a well. Here they did not dig a hole with a four foot diameter as they had done in Hodgeman County, but they used a post hole auger to which they fastened extension handles. They found water and had the casing down within one day. A framework was built over the well. A pulley was fastened to the cross piece directly above the casing, and the rope with a long tin bucket fastened to one end was drawn through the pulley. Now the well was ready for service,
which it rendered faithfully for many years. During that first summer five families hauled water from this well.

During that first summer Chris bought the shack, in which they were living, for thirty-five dollars. They moved it over to their place on large tree trunks which were fastened together to form a rude sled. A team of horses was hitched to each of the two tree trunks that served as the runners of the sled. The neighbors who were hauling water from the well helped in moving the shack to repay for the water.

All of these who were hauling water from the well had moved on neighboring farms only during that spring or summer of 1895. But before cold weather came all of them had their own wells.

During the fall Chris bought an old lean-to for sixteen dollars. He and Pete had to bring it from Perry loaded upon two lumber wagons placed side by side. There were no roads; so the prairie trails were wide enough to accommodate two wagons driving abreast. This old lean-to was attached on the east side of the one room building already on the place, and was used for a kitchen at the time it was moved out on the place,
and Chris did not get to put in a floor until some time later.

Chris had managed to plant a few acres of sorghum during the spring shortly after their arrival. The summer weather was favorable and they harvested enough grain for chicken feed. In the fall he planted twenty acres of wheat upon the ground which he had plowed several times during the spring and summer. The young wheat grew rapidly in the warm September and October weather. This assured them of winter pasture for their cattle and horses.

All during the winter months, Chris and Pete cut down trees in the timber lands two miles south from Pete's place. The farmers wanted the land cleared, and permitted any one who wanted to cut down the trees, to haul them away. In this manner Chris not only got his fence posts, but also got fuel for the stove, and the smaller branches were used to make laths from which he wove a lath fence for a vegetable garden.

The lath garden fence really was Elizabeth's idea. She offered to sew work shirts and do the patching and darning for seven bachelors living on that many neighboring farms if they would help Chris cut the wood into right lengths and then help him make the hand-split
laths. The merchants who sold enough wire to one cus-
tomer would lend him a wire weaver which wove the laths right into the wire. This made a very substantial en-
closure for the garden. It kept not only their own hogs, cattle, and horses away from the growing vegetables, but also any other animals which roamed over the prairie.

When they moved to the Strip, Chris had taken mul-
berry seeds with him, and after he had done the most necessary work about the place he constructed some frame-
work for an outdoor nursery in which to start his young trees. He planted the seed in the soft loamy beds and they came up by the thousands. The young trees were thinned out and left in their beds for eighteen months.

Chris planted about five hundred young trees on their farm, and all the near-by neighbors came for young trees. As a consequence, all the farms in the neighborhood had mulberry hedges, windbreaks, and groves. Chris planted two rows of trees from the yard to the section road, a distance of one hundred rods. He also planted trees around the house and had a large grove around the poultry house and yard.

Will Rupp had brought peach, apricot, cherry, and plum seeds from near Hutchinson. Chris planted two orchards with the young fruit trees from these seeds,
and when the right time came around he used his tree-craft learned in Germany. He ordered nursery-grown trees and from these he grafted twigs to the seedling trees and in this way supplied his own needs and those of his neighbors with young healthy fruit trees.

Fifteen years later the orchard on Chris's farm offered a beautiful sight in spring when the trees were in bloom. The white of the apricot and cherry trees made a beautiful contrast with the pink of the peach trees, which formed a border around the entire orchard. Apple and pear trees blended their pale pink and creamy white into the color scheme.

One apricot tree was planted near the garden gate and kitchen door. This tree bore two kinds of apricots. One kind was large and yellow. It ripened two weeks earlier than the smaller variety, which had a creamy color. The large variety was sour tasting in spite of its superior appearance. The smaller apricot with an insignificant appearance was sweet and could be made into good tasty apricot butter. Elizabeth often told us that those two varieties of fruit from the same tree resembled the good and the bad in one's character. Our good deeds are often overlooked and seem small and insignificant in comparison with the wicked things
which are done and which are brought to attention of everyone by some busybody. The good things may seem small, but are sweet and have good results; the bad deeds are sour and repulsive even if they do seem to mount high in comparison.

There was one mulberry tree on the south side of the garden upon which we youngsters looked with awe. It was grandma's tree. She had planted it herself. The day she planted it she said in a joking manner that if the tree lived, she too would live. The older children did not understand it as a jest, but took it at face value. It was handed down to the younger members of the family and we treated that particular tree with respect since it possessed such magic powers. The tree still stands and continues to cover the ground with its purple fruit each spring, but grandma has passed on.

The fruit trees supplied our cellars with hundreds of quarts of canned fruits, jams, and jellies. Some apples and peaches were dried and used for cooking during winter. Fresh apples, also, were stored away in the fall and were used for school lunches during the winter months.

The district school house was moved over from Enid, a distance of about thirty-five miles. It was
one of the first school houses in the neighborhood and was named "The Pioneer School". The first term was three months long and there was an enrollment of sixty-five pupils. During the first years of pioneering in the Strip a shifting population would swell the enrollment and then decrease it with its continual fluctuations. There was nothing for the children to do about the home; so parents would send their boys and girls to school. Oftne the teacher had children from twelve on up to eighteen and in several instances twenty-one years old in the same class. The older boys often caused the teacher many problems of discipline. One winter a young sixteen-year old girl was employed to teach school. Everything went well until four young men of the neighborhood decided to attend school. They went only with one purpose in mind, and that was to annoy the teacher. One day she proceeded to use a switch on a twenty-year old fellow. He resented it so much that he drew a large knife and in his rage attempted to stab the girl. She remained calm and when she saw her chance, she grabbed the handle of the knife and drew the sharp blade through the young ruffian's hand, cutting it severely. The board met and made a ruling that the
teacher must expel any pupil who refused to cooperate.

Any eighth-grade graduate could teach school if he could pass a teacher's examination to get a teaching certificate. Often the teacher's formal education did not extend beyond the eighth grade. Many a teacher did not know more about the subjects which he pretended to teach than his pupils. Menno began his first year in school under a teacher of this kind. He was an old man who had tried his fortune at cattle buying, horse trading, and as a last resort began to teach school. Menno was a timid little fellow and Mr. McCormick, the teacher, looked very formidable with his shining bald head and his strange costume of ill-fitting clothes. Mr. McCormick gave a lengthy opening address that first morning. Menno understood very little and as his fright increased he slid farther under the over-sized desk behind which he had been placed. After the address the beginner's class was called forward. There were four beginners. Each gave his name and age and then lapsed into silence. Mr. McCormick cleared his throat, scratched his bald head, and tried to think of a convenient way in which to dispose of the first class. Finally he assumed a very superior air and roared in a very loud voice,

"Go to the board!"
Menno almost fell from the high bench upon which he was perched. He glanced back to where Marie was sitting and she motioned toward the blackboard. Menno took the lead and the three other beginners followed.

"Make an A," was the first command.

All of them fashioned a crude 'A,' much to the teacher's disgust.

"Make a B."

Menno had gone his limit, but the others were able to comply with the request. Mr. McCormick carefully scrutinized the A's and B's on the blackboard, and when he saw that Menno had not made the 'B,' he jumped from his chair, ran over to Menno, grasped him by his shoulder, and shook him. All the while, however, he shouted, "Make a B," and stamped his feet upon the floor. Menno began to cry and the harder he cried, the harder the teacher shook him. Marie was in tears but was helpless. Finally two older girls, about sixteen years old, took enough courage to go to the teacher and ask him to stop abusing the little fellow. Mr. McCormick was surprised to know that this was Menno's first day at school. With a cuff on his ear, Menno and the other beginners were sent to their seats. Their recitation was over for the day. This experience with
Mr. McCormick and another funny happening in which a man named McCormick figured, gave Menno the nickname of "Mc," by which name he is known today. Many of his friends do not know his real name to be Menno.
Texas was the largest and most sparsely settled state in the Union when the Civil War broke out. It also was the grazing grounds for countless thousands of the famous Texas Longhorns. It had been estimated that at the close of the War, there were not less than six millions of cattle grazing on the Texas grasslands.

Before the Mississippi River had come entirely under control, the Confederate Government had bought many of these cattle to feed to its soldiers, but when the "Father of Waters flowed again unvexed to the sea", and the Union blockade had shut all possible outside communication off from the Confederacy, these immense herds increased rapidly.

American ingenuity soon found a way to get Texas beef to northern markets. It took pluck and much daring, but soon there was a trunkline built which connected the central west with eastern markets. Abeline, Kansas, was founded expressly for the purpose of handling Texas cattle. Immense stockyards were built to accommodate hundreds of these wild animals. During the twenty years of its existence, approximately fifteen millions of cattle were driven over the Abeline Trail. Not all of
these went to Abeline, however. Newton, Dodge City, and Wichita, as well as Ellsworth, handled many of them.

Cattle buyers would go into Texas and buy hundreds of cattle and then drive them overland through the Cherokee Strip into Kansas and on to the shipping point.

One day when the Hirschler children with the neighbor’s children were out herding all of their cattle in one group, a large herd of Longhorns came from the south, and soon the farmers’ cattle were mingling with the vast numbers of Longhorns. The drivers seemed to enjoy the joke and refused to aid the children in separating the domestic animals from the wild ones. The children hurried home and told their parents what had happened. The men mounted horses and hurried after their cattle. The Texas drivers still refused to help but kept their herd moving onward. The farmers worked during the remainder of all that day until they had their herds out and away from the herd of Longhorns. They were ten miles from home when they began to collect their cattle and go homeward. This was a common thing for these drivers to do, because every extra head brought to the market meant so much more money for them. The owner sold only his Longhorns, and what there was to be sold besides went to the drivers.
Several other herds of Longhorns came through this neighborhood, but this was the only attempt to steal cattle in daylight.

When Oklahoma Indian Territory was opened for settlement by the white man, the Indians were crowded into small reservations. There was nothing for the Indian to do; so he spent his time in idleness. Often an entire tribe went to visit a neighboring tribe or some relatives who lived on another reservation.

One day in September of 1886, Elizabeth was at home alone with the children when an entire tribe of Poncas drove into the yard. There were twenty covered wagons loaded with squaws, children, and dogs. The warriors traveled on horseback. There were several servants who spoke English and who were the interpreters for the chief. They asked for permission to camp in the yard and to water their two-hundred horses, gifts from the Seminoles with whom they had celebrated an anniversary of some famous historic peace pact.

The day was windy and the grass was high but dry. Elizabeth feared prairie fires worse than Indians; so she invited some of the women into the house to cook their evening meal and asked them not to kindle camp-fires in the yard. The head cook gladly accepted the
invitation and she with five younger squaws came into the house and prepared what seemed to Elizabeth several bushels of succotash, fried pounds of bacon an other meats, and made gallons of coffee. When the food had been prepared, Elizabeth, grandma, and the children were invited to eat with them. The invitation was accepted, and they occupied the place of honor beside the chief and his squaw in the large circle which had been formed.

While the meal was being prepared, the negro servants drew water from the well for the thirsty Indians and horses. The squaws put up tents, and within two hours the yard resembled a mushroom town which sprang up in the Strip within an hour.

Next morning before they departed, the chief came to the door and presented each member of the family with some gift. But the biggest thrill the girls had from this visit was the chance to see and hold a newly born Indian baby which had large dark eyes, tiny mouth, and long black hair.

The Perry-Stillwater trail cut diagonally across Chris's farm. Much commerce was carried on over this trail. The fact that Stillwater had grown to a town of
2500 population before a railroad ever was built through, proves the fact that commerce must have been heavy. Nearly all of the material used to build up the town was hauled from Perry on this trail. It was on this trail the Poncas were traveling when they spent the night in the Hirschler’s yard.
A SCHOOL-HOUSE WEDDING
and
KID STUNTS ON THE OKLAHOMA PRAIRIE

Weddings in the Strip country during the nineties usually were gala affairs, even if there were no houses large enough to accommodate all of the guests, and no churches in which to perform the ceremonies.

The wedding of John Schmidt and Christina Ratzlaff was one of those affairs which left the pioneers gasping and talking for weeks after. Everyone from far and near came. Several families made the thirty-mile trip across the prairies from Orlando to attend. Every guest was asked to contribute to the wedding supper because no one family generally had more than the bare necessities for its own members. The wedding ceremony took place in the Hog Hill school house. All who could crowd into the building did so, and the others who had to remain on the outside, stood around the open windows and doorway. The bride was dressed in a black dress with a white veil. The groom wore a flashy grey-checkered suit.

After the ceremony the guests were taken to two dug-outs from which all of the furniture had been removed, and improvised tables with boards placed upon saw-horses had been spread for the guests. Food of all kinds and
amounts was there. Each family had brought whatever food it had. After everyone had been served with food, hard drinks were served to the men and to any woman who had nerve enough to take any. Then the tables were removed from the dugouts, the dirt floors were sprinkled with water, and dancing started. The younger boys who did not dance were kept busy sprinkling water to keep down the dust, but had to be careful not to get the dirt sticky, because dancing would have been made difficult with a sticky dirt floor.

The younger girls were stationed around the furniture, which had been placed outside, to guard the sleeping babies on the beds while the mothers were dancing.

Although there usually was work for each member of the family, there were hours filled with childish pranks; times when Elizabeth would wonder if her children would return home with body and soul intact. Marie and her cousin John Ewy took especial delight in catching prairie lizards, knocking them unconscious, tying a string around their necks, and fastening the string to a fence, and when the creature regained consciousness, watching it struggle. Often when the weight of
the lizard seemed too light, it was weighted down with a stone fastened to its tail. To their childish minds this seemed the right thing to do. They had heard of prairie justice meted to cattle rustlers, and lizards were cattle rustlers so far as they were concerned. Prairie snakes often met with the same fate, only these could coil themselves around the wire when not weighted heavily enough, and this eliminated the squirming, the chief source for delight.

Menno and the Ewy boys played cowboy, and since horses were scarce, they saddled and rode steers. Often they had swift and dangerous rides down the rocky hills on the Ewy farm. When the steer became accustomed to the saddle and refused to 'buck', he was hitched to a twowheeled cart and was forced to pull the cart loaded with young Evys and Hirschlers.

The prairie was strewn with bleaching bones of the buffalo and the Longhorns which had perished during the gruelling drives from their Texas grazing grounds to the Kansas shipping points. There was a market for bones; so the children of the entire neighborhood often gathered bones and sold them for pin-money.
Wild flowers grew everywhere. In the spring the prairie was covered with white, pink, and blue daisies. Violets grew brought forth their modest blossoms in the cool shady places along the banks of brooks. Cattails flourished in marshy places. The dogwood made splotches of pink color along the wooded lowlands. Nature was at her best and flaunted forth her blessings with color and flowers and songs of birds. The children of the pioneer farmers gathered armloads of these wild flowers. The currant and choke cherry bushes when in bloom in spring-time, perfumed the passing winds from their hidden nooks along the creek banks; and in late summer yielded their purple fruit to the berry pickers. Wild blackberries, dewberries, raspberries, and wild plums grew in profusion in the wooded bottomlands, and these berries were gathered to be canned or made into jellies and jams.
THE NEW CHURCH AND THE NEW HOME

In the spring and summer of 1898 the Mennonites built a church which they named "Friedensau" at the dedicatory services. More Mennonite families had now moved into the neighborhood, and when the Western District Conference of the Mennonites sent a minister to visit these Mennonites, it was decided that there were enough to build and support a church of their own.

The Conference offered to pay for most of the building materials. The local people were to furnish the labor and transport the materials from Perry. Since there were large stone quarries on the Pete and John Ewy farms, stone for the foundation was available for only the labor it took to trim and haul the necessary amount to the church site. All the men of the neighborhood, including Lutherans and Methodists, as well as the Mennonites, donated their labor at building the church.

The Reverend Mr. Koller was the first minister and Chris was elected as one of the church deacons and
served as Sunday School Superintendent. Chris also taught German school in the church building. The term was only twelve weeks long. There were thirty pupils enrolled for this first term. Several non-German speaking families sent their children to study German Reading, Rechnen, Kirchengeschichte, Bibelgeschichte, Schönenschreiben, Religionstunde (Catechism), and Kirchenliedern.

When the Reverend Koller died in 1903, Chris was ordained as minister to take his place. Chris faithfully served the congregation in this capacity until 1915, when he was called to accept the pastorate of the Einsidel Church at Hanston, Kansas. In 1909 Chris was ordained as Elder and the Western District Conference appointed him as a traveling minister to serve outlying churches in connection with his regular charge. For several years he served congregations at Vinita, Nowata, and Goltry.

After the first few years on the Oklahoma prairie, matters took on a more established aspect on the Hirschler farm as well as on all the neighbors’ places. Chris had saved enough money during those earlier years to
and another room to their two-room home. This 'west-room' was quite large, and thrills of all thrills, it had an attic. Even if it did have to serve as a bedroom for Pete and Menno, it could also be used for a play room on rainy days. There were no steps, but a rude ladder fastened to the wall was used to get into the attic.

This three-room house served the family for many years. The last four babies were born here and here they played hide-and-seek. Even if the side boards on the walls were warped, the floor-boards rough and not all parallel, and the family forced to live in three rooms, this was home. The older children still cherish fond memories of this old home.

Chris and Elizabeth had always wanted a larger house. They wanted enough room in which to rear their family, but until recently Elizabeth had not even dared to wish for a new home. But several of the neighbors had already built new houses and the older children were asking for a better place to which they could invite their friends.
In the spring of the year Pete and Chris staked out the new house. A part basement was dug and then stone masons were brought out to the place to build the walls of the basement with stone and lay a stone foundation for the entire house.

Much lumber was brought out from Perry. Pete Ewy was the head carpenter. Many of the neighbors helped and in a short time the new house was nearing completion. For several weeks one could hear the busy tattoo of hammers and the rasping sound of saws, Before Elizabeth even realized that the new house was nearing completion, Chris announced that the four upstairs bedrooms were ready to be moved into. In fact, some of the men had been sleeping in the new building since the roof had been shingled. By September the house was ready for occupancy. Elizabeth had tried to visualize how it would seem to move into a seven-room house. The two oldest rooms of the old house had been moved away and the new house had been built on the old site, just east of the newest room of the old house. This room was attached to the new house and was used for the kitchen.
Now that she was leaving the old house for the new, the thrill was not so great. She realized that it was hard to leave the old home in which several of her babies had been born. Pictures of the early pioneer days thronged before her as she took the last look into the old place. The old lean-to kitchen was moved to John Ewy's place, and the old original room, the nucleus around which the old home had been built, was converted into a poultry house.

The children were delighted with the new house. They boasted to the Ewy children about it, and they in turn became envious because their father built the house for the Hirschler kids and not for them.
The tranquillity of the Hirschler household had suddenly changed into a scene of excitement and confusion. Whatever that letter contained which had thrown the older members of the family into hurried conversation, short snappy orders were given without anyone paying the slightest attention to them; there was much running about which was not getting anyone anywhere. The younger members of the family stood around in the way and were looking on with interest. They were not worried—they were only sensing in some vague way that conditions were not as calm and quiet as usual.

Clara was sent out doors with the two youngest boys. They were too much bother. After they were out of hearing distance, Clara asked:

"Eddie, do you know who is coming?"

"No!"

"Kate's feller."

"Gosh."

"Yes sir, Dad and Kate are going to Perry to meet his train—he's coming all the way from Newton."
"Where's Newton?"

"Way up in Kansas somewhere."

Elizabeth, Grandma, and the older girls were busy cleaning the house. Everything was getting a "Reg'lar Dutch Cleaning" as Pete put it. Each of the three rooms received a thorough going over. When the time arrived to hitch Prince and Fanny to the family carriage and go meet the train, the house had undergone a complete transformation under the guiding hand of Elizabeth and the efforts of Kate and Marie. Beds had been changed about: the old organ was moved out into a place of prominence in the over-crowded west room. Everything was out of place, but to the youngsters' surprise, Elizabeth seemed satisfied to see the house out of its accustomed order. Clara wondered just why the coming of one man should upset an entire household which usually ran so smoothly.

Sixteen-year-old Marie took the three youngest members of the family in hand. First she explained that a very distinguished gentleman was coming. He had very fine manners and expected everyone else to have the same. Eddie thought that he would not like the man
because of his manners, and he told Marie so. But 
Marie went on with her charges, telling them that hands 
and faces had to be scrubbed, and for goodness sakes 
not to act like hungry wolves at the table. Each was to 
wait quietly until he was served----always say 'please' 
and then not forget to say 'thank you'----and on and on. 

Before the guest arrived the younger children had 
heard that Kate had met him while she was staying at 
Uncle Rudolph's house in Moundridge. He was a minister, 
a widower with four children, and his name was Henry. 
But Grandma told the youngsters that it would be all 
right for them to call him "Uncle Voth" because he was 
so much older than they. It was all a mystery to them, 
but it was causing some excitement and they were enjoy-
ing most of it.

When Chris, Kate, and Mr. Voth drove into the yard, 
everything seemed calm and peaceful, but Mr. Voth could 
possibly not know how many curious eyes were focused up-
on him from various hiding places. Menno had planted him-
self on a branch high in the old cottonwood by the hen-
house, and was focusing an old fieldglass upon the 
visitor. Clara and Eddie were trying to see all there 
was to be seen by craning their short necks around the
corners of the granary. Sue was at one of the windows and peeking at him from behind the curtains.

Elizabeth met them at the door and welcomed the guest. Grandma and Marie met them as they entered the kitchen. Everyone else remained outside to wait for the call to supper.

When the children were called to the house to prepare for the evening meal, they entered very quietly, not knowing exactly how they were expected to act. This was a novel experience. Not so much fuss had ever been made before when anyone came. Marie gave the two little boys the second scrubbing for the afternoon and combed the two little tow heads. When they were all cleaned up and lined along the kitchen wall, Kate brought her guest to be introduced to the younger members of the family. They must have presented a picture of nature in the raw, but the guest was equal to the occasion—he shook each scrubbed hand in a friendly way, and impressed the group greatly with his funny remarks. Before Elizabeth had them all seated, the little boys had summoned enough courage to say a few words to him. In fact, they felt so much at ease that
they felt no restraint in his presence and attacked their food in a vicious manner. Marie looked on helplessly as Henno devoured great mouthfuls of food, his cheeks often bulging with too great quantities stored within his mouth. Clara jabbed at a pickle, when they were passed to her, as if she were spearing a salmon swimming in water; Eddie spilled a cup of coffee on the freshly laundered linen tablecloth which Chris had brought from Germany; which received the best of care and was used only on very rare occasions. With these minor breaks in etiquette, the meal passed over without any further interruptions. Elizabeth sighed a big sigh of relief when Chris and the guest left the house when the meal was finished. Thus Mr. Voth was introduced to Kate’s family. Grandma was all aflutter; she had never before met a gentleman with such elegant manners, and his ability to appear at ease in a modest home such as this, quite overwhelmed her.

Grandma might have been quite impressed with Mr. Voth’s manners, but Clara and Eddie received quite the contrary impression the very next day. The children were out in the yard playing cowboy and driving invisible Texas Longhorns as they imagined they had
been driven. They had heard different hair-raising stories about these mythical creatures. One exceptionally stubborn Longhorn refused to follow the herd and insisted on running straight for the house. Clara's stick-horse was racing at a neck-breaking speed after the obstinate animal, when suddenly her mount came to a dead halt right at the window where an old-fashioned settee stood. Clara's eyes bulged and her lower jaw dropped. Her stick horse fell from her hands, and suddenly she tip-toed from the window and beckoned for Eddie to come over to where she stood.

"Look into that window", she whispered in a hoarse voice.

"Well---?"

"Did you see him? He kissed her!"

"No, and I don't care. Come on, let's get that herd to Dodge City before it gets dark." But Clara was interested in what was happening inside the room, and she had already forgotten about that particular Longhorn whose unruly conduct had brought her to the window. When she did join her fellow cowboy in rounding up the now scattered herd, she confided to him,

"Well, he may be a gentleman from Kansas, but I
think Kate should not allow such things. Why we don't even know him."

The Longhorns were now under control and were slowly wending their way through the apple orchard, when they were left by their drivers, and in a few minutes forgotten. The two cowboys searched the trees for dried shrunken apples which had been overlooked when the fruit had been gathered, and which even the hungry blujays now refused to eat. Even this delectable refreshment did not satisfy their hunger; so they went to the house for their mid-afternoon lunch.

Mr. Voth continued to make his calls at the Hirschler home. They finally became regular occurrences. The little boys were glad when he came. Mr. Voth knew what little boys liked. They had a big secret with him. They went out to play and did not stay about the house much when he was there. He had given them gifts; the boys knew what was expected of them. Elizabeth breathed more freely when they were not around, but she did not know why the boys wore such angelic expressions on their faces and did not tear the house upside down, which usually was their habit.

It became a known fact among the members of the family from the oldest to the youngest that, when the new
house was completed, Kate and Mr. Voth were to be married. Preparations were soon underway for the wedding, which was to take place in November. This was the first wedding in the family and plans were being made for a huge affair. Several girl cousins and girl friends came from Newton, Kansas and St. Louis, Missouri, to help with the preparations. There were cakes and pies to be made, chickens and ducks to be dressed, and hams to be baked. Everyone was busy doing something. Grandma put the little boys to work cleaning the yard. There were broken bits of glass, crockery, and small stones: the accumulation of the young Hirschlers' play-things, scattered far and wide. All of this had to be collected and put out of the way for the coming event.

The day finally arrived. So far as the weather was concerned, the day was bright and crisp in the morning, but as the day wore on, the weather became misty and chilly. About one o'clock the guests began to arrive. The ceremony took place at three. The smaller children were out playing. For once in her life Elizabeth forgot about her small boys. When everything became quiet about the house, they went to investigate. The doors were so jammed with people that they could not gain an entrance; so they joined Susie and Clara on
the front porch, where they were standing at the window and looking in. They saw that Kate, dressed in a nice white dress which they had not seen her wear before today, and Mr. Voth were standing near the window with Pete and Marie not standing very far away. The Reverend P. A. Wedel, who had come in on the morning train, was preaching and talking to Kate and Mr. Voth. Well, this was nothing more but having church services in the house. The boys left followed by a string of boy cousins who likewise had found it impossible to get into the house. The boys began discussing the events which were taking place in the house, then finally began throwing whatever objects they could find at the pigeons cooing to each other on the barn roof. Eddie could not find anything suitable to throw, so he scooped up a handful of dust and threw it into the air. The breeze caught the loose soil and blew it upon a group of boys standing a short distance away. One stepped out from the group and shouted,

"Hey, you dirty Mennonites, stop throwing dirt at us!"

Eddie looked astonished; then when he saw who had shouted at him, he became angry. He saw a crushed tin
can on the ground not far from him. He picked it up and threw it at the offender, shouting at the same time, "Take that, you d------d Lutheran."

The tin can struck the boy on the ear; the sharp edge cut the skin and blood streamed from the wound. The injured boy screamed when he saw blood dripping up on the beautifully starched and laundered Faunt-le-Roy collar on his blouse. Several anxious mothers emerged from the crowded doorway, each anxious to see if it was her child who was injured. After the ceremony was over, Elizabeth took Eddie into the kitchen and made him sit on a high kitchen chair as punishment. She felt disgraced to have one of her children cause a commotion out in the yard while the wedding ceremony was in progress. Eddie watched the preparations of the meal and finally became so drowsy that Marie felt sorry for him and carried him into one of the bedrooms and laid him upon the bed where other tired children were asleep.
EPILOGUE
The life experiences of Chris and Elizabeth may be summed up into four principal divisions; their pioneering experiences in Hodgeman county, Kansas; the brief stay in Harvey county, Kansas; the experiences of pioneering in the Strip; and the years of 1915-1928 at Hanston, Kansas.

Everything went smoothly after the turn of the century. Chris never became wealthy at farming, but he was making a living for his family, and giving his children the best advantages then possible for farm children at getting an education. He continued to teach German school during summer months. He paid a man eight dollars a month to do his farm work. During one term in Oklahoma he received twelve dollars a month. So he really cleared only four dollars a month.

Teaching school was not a money-making proposition.

In 1909 Chris and Elizabeth celebrated their Silver Wedding Anniversary. This also served as a family reunion. All of Elizabeth's brothers came to this celebration. Grandma had all of her children under one roof for that day. The young Hirschlers enjoyed this day
immensely. Cousins whom they hardly knew were there to romp and play with.

In 1915 Chris accepted a call from Hanston, Kansas, to become pastor of the Mennonite church there. In September of that year Chris, Elizabeth, Grandma, and six children who were still at home, moved to Hanston.

What had been a prairie in 1889 now was a well-established community. During the time from 1889 to 1915, Hanston had grown to a small prairie town with 250 population where the Marena store had stood. Jetmore, the county seat, had consisted of only a few houses and a town well when Chris and Elizabeth saw it last. In 1915 it was a town with a population of about 800. A stone courthouse stood in the center of the town square. A young park with rapidly growing trees added much to the appearance of the town. At the east end of the town a high school had been erected. Farmers had built large houses and barns. Large herds of fat cattle were contentedly grazing in well fenced pastures where in 1889 small herds had wandered about unhindered by fences and section roads.

Chris worked faithfully at his duties relating to his church work. He and Elizabeth were always ready to help
where help was necessary. In 1928, when all the children had homes of their own, or were away working for themselves, Chris resigned from his duties as pastor of the Mennonite church at Hanston, Kansas; and he, Elizabeth, and Meuno went to live near Moundridge, where most of their married children lived.

Grandma left them in 1926 at the age of ninety-one years. On October 18, 1930 while Chris, Elizabeth, and their youngest son, John, were visiting in Emporia with Pete and his family, Elizabeth died suddenly of a stroke of apoplexy. Chris lived with his children, Marie and family, until February 9, 1936, when he died suddenly on his seventy-seventh birthday.

These two lives so closely knit together, what is their contribution to society? They labored physically and mentally as so many have done before them and will continue to do after them. They did not amass a great fortune in real estate and bonds, but they left behind them kind memories. What is the greater glory after all? The amount of the bank roll or the people on the friendship roll? Of the former they had very little; of the latter, many.
George Rainey's Cherokee Strip was a very valuable reference for the Cherokee Strip division. I quoted from this book in several places. It also helped me to write the story about Pete Ewy's participation in the race.

The remaining parts of this division are taken from numerous letters from my sister, Mrs. Marie Dester, Hesston, Kansas; personal interviews with the same sister and with another sister, Mrs. H.R. Voth, Newton, Kansas; letters from Mrs. Hattie Page, Columbia, Missouri, and personal recollections. The rest is family tradition as told by Chris and Elizabeth, and Mary Ewy of Perry, Oklahoma.
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A brief account of the Mennonite settlement in Hodgeman County, Kansas. It also contains a brief history of the Mennonite church in the colony.


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Dester, Marie. Letters containing family history. Hesston, Kansas.

These letters of various dates included much valuable information about family history.


These letters gave me valuable information about the Strip. Especially legends about the Stillwater Trail.

Vetter, Mrs. J.J. Letter telling in detail about German Schools. Hanston, Kansas, 1937.

D. Personal Interviews


Mrs. Voth, my oldest sister, gave me many interesting stories about early life in the Oklahoma Strip.


Mrs. Ewy related many stories about the European home from which she and my mother came. She is personally acquainted with European customs. She also told of pioneer experiences in Hodgeman county.
Dester, Mrs. Marie. Interview. Hesston, Kansas, Dec. 26, 27, and 28, 1936

Mrs. Dester told me of the experiences in Harvey and Hodgeman counties, and also about the Cherokee Strip.


Mrs. Kenyon told me about the prairie fires in Hodgeman county, about early Indian raids which I did not relate in my story, and about the early hardships which came with early pioneering.

Miller, J. A. Interview. Hanston, Kansas, March 12, 1937.

Mr. Miller told me about the early schools in Austria which he and my mother attended. He also told me the different values of Austrian and foreign money.