

The first stories I ever heard about the "old country" were from my Yager grandparents when I stayed with them in Sutton to attend high school. They certainly didn't talk much about it at any time. I wonder why--

For some reason we were talking about cleanliness. Grandma Yager told us those Russ were dirty. At another time the problem of lice came into the conversation. This would always be in the evening while I was doing homework at the kitchen table and Grandma was mending Grandpa's old gloves. He worked on the farm my mother and sis and I lived on south of town. There was no money to buy new gloves; so everything was mended until the patches had patches. I am probably the only farm wife in Nebraska who still mends farm chore gloves. I have worn out plenty of them myself doing the work of a man these past 38 years as a farm wife.

I think it was the earth shaking event of discovery of lice in the old hard leather couch in Grandma's kitchen; that brought about the story about lice on the ship they crossed the ocean to bring them here. Both Grandpa and Grandma were horrified to discover that some lice had come in from the chicken house- probably from the wood pile right next to it.

At least it stirred their memories and brought out the story about the awful conditions on the ship. They talked about the sick people, all around them and the terrible smells and no water to clean up. If I remember correctly, it was Grandma, not Grandpa who volunteered the information.

Grandpa would pace the long rug runner till it was near bed time (8:30) and then read from the Bible. I was never through with my work; but Grandpa would say, "Es ist bett zeit, Glory"; and that was that..

At another time Grandma told me she worked for her big brother on the farm outside Norka for almost nothing. But the little he gave her, made her feel wealthy. She said they would be out there working the fields; and just barely get to sleep when the brother would come around and yell, "Oof, ihr viebstleut!"; and another gruelling day would begin. Concerning a woman's wealth, that was measured in feather ticking and pillows- even after they were here. Once Grandma said some woman was real rich-- she had lots of feathers.

Once when we stayed (my sister went to Sutton Hi in her senior year) over the week end because of a storm, we wanted to make a lemon pie. We asked Grandma for a recipe. Grandpa was disgusted with our ignorance. He said, "Wo muss uns' em kop kucha- net uns' em buch."

My mother told me about Grandpa Yager's military duty in Russia. He carried a heavy hard wooden box about 30" by 24" by 24" on his back. That was the army back pack. Mom moved that box for years and years; but finally, with one of her last moves it went the way of so many things I wish she had kept. Mom said the first grandma (she died before Mom was married- the only Grandma Yager I knew was her step mother) waited for Grandpa to finish his 5 years of service. I suppose that was considered an engagement. My Yost ancestors got out before any of them were called.

While I'm still on Yager stories; I must tell about Grandpa's trip to Nebraska from Denver. He working in Denver, where Mom was born, for several years until the farming bug caught up with him. I still don't know if he was a farmer in Norka; but I doubt it. I'm sure he was a tradesman of some kind. That is a big empty spot in my history; and I doubt I will ever be able to fill it.

I think Manny Reisbeck's brother, Joe, could have told me; but I didn't think of asking him the last time I saw him. He was blind at the time and only about two years from death. But I'm so grateful for all the things he told me then. That was when I learned Grandpa was a drayman in Denver. He was one of the few who boasted a team and wagon. He was much in demand hauling goods and garbage.

I got to see the house where Mom was born; and the church. He was the first child baptized in the old church. I have the 50 anniversary book of the church and she is listed; only they used her mother's name as the child. Her mother was Anna Maria - Mom was Christine.

I know they kept chickens in Globeville. I still have the small revolver Grandpa finally bought when they were troubled with chicken thieves. Joe told me that Grandpa was a real hard taskmaster when he worked for him in the beet fields in the summer. He expected Joe to do twice as much work as my mother, because he was a boy. Joe was Grandpa's nephew. Joe's mother was a sister to the real Grandma Yager. Not once did my mother ever tell us she had worked in beet fields.

Now to Grandpa's trip to Nebraska by team and wagon. I think he said it took more than 12 days. Now this story Grandpa did actually tell himself. He had decided he wanted to buy a farm in Nebraska. He took this scouting trip to locate a farm near Sutton (he had distant relatives here). I think he also came alone again with household goods before he had his family come. I'm not sure of their method of transportation - probably train.

Again, I didn't know if he built the sod house before their arrival. Mom was the only child who lived of the 5 that were born to the first Grandma. Some of those deaths were in Norka, and some in Denver, I think.

The part of Grandpa's story that stayed best in my mind was the bed bugs in the home of his most gracious hosts. They insisted he come in and sleep in the house instead of the barn as he preferred. Half way through the night, he was driven out by the pests sharing his bed.

I wish I could remember more of that story. Can you imagine coming all the way to Sutton Nebraska from Denver in a wagon? It just doesn't seem possible. He had to depend on hosts such as those described above for food for his horses and himself. I suppose he carried some food with him.

How I wish we had a picture of the sod house, 6 miles south and one mile east of Sutton. After some years Grandpa built a frame house which he later moved into Sutton. It was this house I stayed in through my high school years. The house now belongs to my husband's sister. It still looks much the same, except for the front porch.

This about sums up the information I got from my Yager grandparents. Oh one thing more. Grandma told us how homesick they were after coming here. In her first household (she came with her Bauer husband and two

children) they would sing old country songs after the children were in bed. Then they would all cry and cry. That isn't hard for me to believe.

Now for my Yost stories- the first were from Grandma Yost shortly before she died at Harvard. She told us how badly they were treated by the Germans when they had to pass thru to the sea port. They thought they were Russians. She also told us about the conditions on the ship.

Many years later I was to learn that they could have had passage on a first class ship. The relatives already in Harvard Nebraska, had sent money for the tickets. But when they finally got to the port, they were told their ship was not in yet. Great Grandpa, John C. (Stoeffel Hannas) refused to wait. He herded his family on the first old cattle ship that came in. It took them 15 days to cross. They were passed by the ship they should have taken. It required only 8 days to cross-

This information comes from my great uncle George Yost, who was living in Grand Island, Nebr. when I first became interested in the search of my ancestors.

Uncle George was the only remaining member of my great grandfather's family when I began my search. He was 11 years old at the time of the crossing.

My aunts had told me there was still one uncle left. It was the year of Nebraska's centennial celebration; and my daughter's 4-H club was assigned the project called, "Your Heritage". Only this great uncle could answer the questions we had at that time. He was 87 years old at the time.

I looked him up in the Grand Island phone book; feeling I'd have a duce of a time making such an old man understand who I was and what I wanted. I was surprised to hear a lively voice on the phone. He knew exactly who I was when I named my dad.

I had planned to have my son stop in for pictures and information on his way home from work in Grand Island. But Uncle George commanded me to come myself-. When he answered the door (my second trip- the first time I was late for our appointment; and he wouldn't wait- he had a daily card game) I couldn't believe my eyes. He could have been my father if Dad had lived that long. Even on the old family picture, it is clear that my dad looked like his uncle George instead of his own father.

Uncle George told me more than I'd ever got from anybody before. He remembered so well their life in Orka. He and his dad went out to the fields and stayed until the work was done. They traveled with horses; but they used oxen in the fields.

He told us about the time when his father was injured soon after the field work began. He had to do the work and then get his father home. He was only about 9 at the time. He told us about taking the straw out to feed camels in the hinterland. The oxen were left out in the farming areas because they needed little care.

He told the story about the crossing on the freight boat instead of their first class passenger boat. He said his mother was sick before the trip and they thought she would surely die before they reached America.

George was the only one who enjoyed the trip. All the rest were so sea sick.

Great Grandfather was known as "Stoeffel Hannas". I don't know why. Perhaps it was because he repaired boots. Most of the families had their own shoe repair tools. My grandpa Yager did our shoes way up until we moved away to Hastings. When we came back and stayed there to attend school, I don't think he used his tools any more.

Uncle George said his father had promised his minister in Norka (Rev. Sterkel) that he would never cut his hair in the American style. He always wore it parted in front and hanging down the sides.

I have very few mementos from Norka. There is the pass port of Grandpa Yager and Frau Anna Maria. I have a copy of the citizenship papers of both great grandpa Yost and my grandpa Yager. I have my grandpa Yager's Bible with his short version of his life story written in German; also the birth and death dates of his wife and my mother's birth. I have a few precious pictures of both families. Only the Yost history goes back one more generation. There is nothing of great grandfather Yager except the information I finally dug up; after much effort. I know which cemetery holds his remains in Portland; but there is no record of his grave or any marker. Just a Yager plot purchased by his son, Henry. Great Grandmother Yager was buried in a different cemetery; and we have her plot and grave numbers and exact date of death. Great grandfather died before Oregon started keeping such statistics.

This son, Henry, was the only brother my grandfather Yager had. Grandpa brought him and his parents over from Norka after he had worked in Denver long enough to earn the passage. They lived in Denver only a few years before moving to Portland. In time my mother lost track of her only cousins.

Finding that lost Yager family occupied much of my genealogy time for many years. It was thru one of the obituaries Arthur Flegel had saved from the old church publications, that I got my first clue. I shall be forever grateful to him.

Then after many wrong leads, dear Peter Koch found the right family for me. He put me in touch with a daughter of the son Peter, my mother's cousin. That first daughter was only mildly interested in finding a relative in Nebraska. But she had another sister who turned out to be as excited as I. In fact her daughter had been doing genealogy work on the father's family. They were quick to take up the Yager search and have supplied me with almost all the information I could want. They searched diligently in the cemeteries and funeral homes I had been contacting in my search. It was they who learned we could not get a copy of the death certificate. But they did get his death date.

One of the happiest days of my life was when I answered the door to find that long lost second Yager cousin waiting to greet me. How rewarding it is to find new friends thru your search into the past.