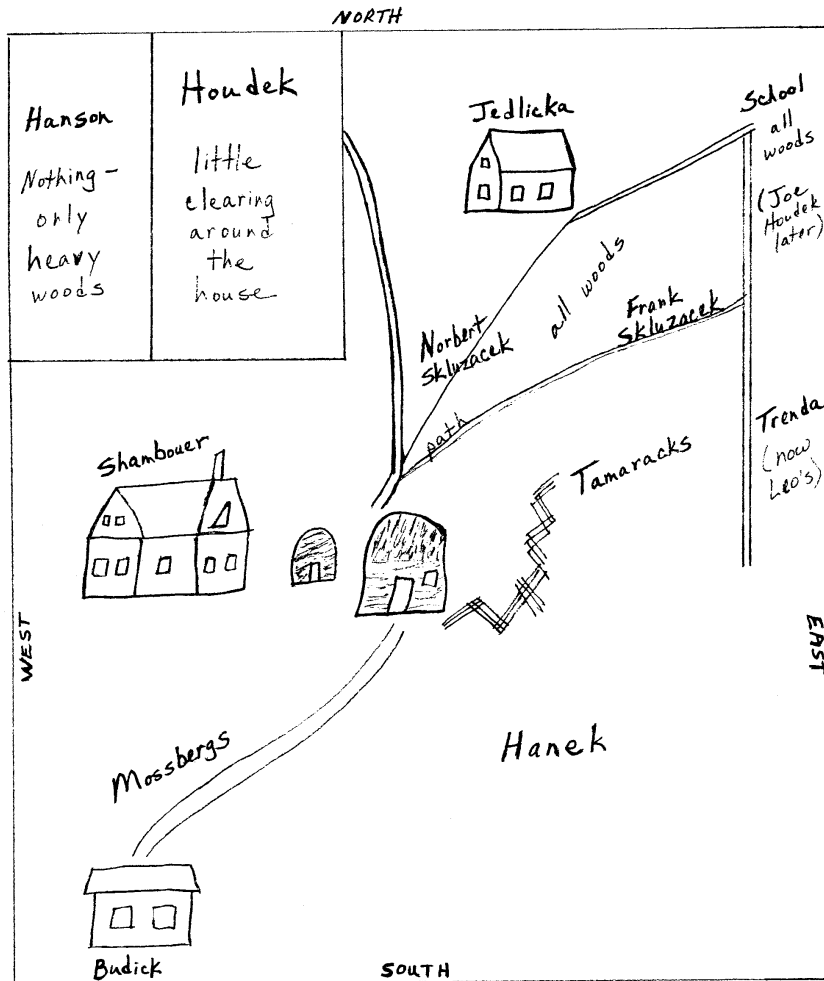


**THESE MEMORIES OF
CHRISTINE SHAMBOUER SKLUZACEK
ARE COURTESY OF
CAROL & JOHN SKLUZACEK**

**CHRISTINE'S MEMORIES
PROVIDE A GLIMPSE INTO THE
LIFE OF CZECH IMMIGRANTS
TO THE PINE CITY AREA IN
THE EARLY 1900S**

**CHRISTINE WAS BORN IN 1891
SHE MARRIED LUDVIG(LOUIS) SKLUZACEK
WHO IMMIGRATED IN 1899 FROM
WHAT WAS THEN CALLED BOHEMIA.**

THE NEIGHBORHOOD



The Skluzacek family immigrated to the United States in 1899 when Ludwig (Louis) was a little boy. When he grew up and courted Christine Shambouer he did so by walking to the Shambouer home through the woods. Later when they married, they bought the Jedlicka farm adjoining the Skluzacek farm. Frank farmed the home place and Norbert farmed by them and they shared machinery and exchanged help.

HOW WE LIVED

Grain and corn were the main crops; few cows, pigs and poultry. The milk was strained into crock jars, set in cellar for couple days, the cream picked off and churned, the butter sold for a few cents.

Before my time, Mother didn't have a sewing machine, the sewing was done by hand. Mother used to say how hard it was to get something done 'cause she had to help in the field. She knitted our stockings and mitts. But first the sheep had to be sheared, then the wool carded, then spin into yarn, rolled into balls before knitting. I don' t remember the sheep, just the shed they were kept in. But I do remember the spinning wheel, my Mother spinning, I played on the floor, the older girls in school--it would be so quiet in the house.

Mother knitted all our stockings, mittens. I wore knit stocking all my schooldays, and also home made underwear of outing flannel with long legs.

First the geese were raised. About the middle of summer when they got done laying and raising their young ones, they began to molt (lose feathers) , so they were closed up for the night. The girls helped to catch them, hand them to mother, she trimmed them and let them out. How they ran for the lake! I imagine it seemed nice to get their body cooled off. By fall before butchering they grew nice feathers again.

The feathers were cared for, dried, later stripped and made into feather thicks and pillows. The mattresses were filled with nice white corn husks. They lasted several years. When house cleaning they were put out on canvas in sun, dusted, aired, the cover washed, and over the mattress we had a thin layer of feather quilt as a mattress pad.

Canning wasn't even heard of. Cabbage was made in large wooden kegs; cucumbers packed in kegs or stone jar in salt. In winter soaked, changing water on them - then prepared with onion and vinegar. They were very good and crisp. The salt was bought in large barrels. We also raised sugar cane corn. There was a corn press near by, the cane hauled there, pressed and made into sorghum syrup. We brought a large barrel of it when we moved to Pine City. Our friends liked it so--it was such a treat to them. Those days syrup was a must. Almost all people didn't have many cows. When they went dry there was no butter. Most children had syrup between bread for lunch to school.

HOW WE MADE SOAP & SAUSAGE

When butchering hogs, everything was used up. The smaller intestines were used for casing for sausages, the large ones and stomach were cleaned and saved with other waste fats. First all winter we saved all ashes - put them in barrels.

Those days lots of things as crackers, apples, etc. came in those barrels. The clerk had to package that. So there is where we got the barrels. Then in spring when frosts were over few holes were drilled in the bottom of the barrel. That was set on a form from rails over some container and little by little pour water over the ashes and let it drip. And that was the lye. For the soap it was all put together in a large iron kettle. All was put into it and boiled until it all boiled apart and started to look like thick honey. Then salt was put in, brought to a boil and let set. Usually it had to be boiled over again with the lye, to make it nice and white. By pouring water over the ashes again second time the lye wasn't so strong. But done the purpose for the 2nd boiling.

Everything was made the hard way as we didn't have the meat grinder and such. When chopping meat for sausages Dad brought in a large hay knife that he used to cut hay from a stack. That was scrubbed clean and on a large bread board he would chop and chop until it was like ground meat. Filling the sausages was another hard chore, kind of funnel filled by hand and push in with kind of a wooden potato masher. We didn't have a meat grinder until I was about 10 years old or so.

THE MOVE & NEW HOME

We moved to Pine City in fall of 1897. I was six years old then.

We came to Uncle Frank Karas's to stay for a few days, later to Uncle Jim's. The house we were to move into on our farm was nothing but an outside shell, no windows, chimney. I didn't get to see it until on a Sunday afternoon Dad and men were working on it. We walked over on a Sunday afternoon, real nice fall like day. How different from the other - thick woods, brush all around. I was picking up and playing with scraps of raw wood. It all smelled so fresh and good.

First the house was finished so we could live in it - only one room. The kitchen was plastered we mostly lived in that. In the other part of house which was all in one a large heater with a drum on top gave a lot of heat. My folks, John and I slept down the older girls up.

That room also served as a dance hall. Quite often the stove was put to a side, the beds moved, planks around the wall to sit on. The families came young and I old and danced. The dances were usually only between Christmas and lent. Used to be called the crazy days.

After the house was ready Dad got a few of the neighbors together to put up a log barn with wild hay for roof; also a chicken coop built the same way. Between the logs, clay and water mixed, form until thick, and plaster it between the logs.

Then the well was spaded down about 44 feet, my folks rigged up some outfit when it got too deep to throw the dirt up. A small tub; Dad filled it, Mother pulled it up. I remember my mother telling the she was always afraid if John was still alive down there. He had to have a lantern down there. Then they had to drill pipes down yet several feet before they got water. Water was very good, clear but hard. It took a long time and lot of hard work.

Sort of a platform was built some feet from top and there in hot weather we dropped by rope fresh meat or whatever to keep cold, sometimes cream for churning.

HOLIDAYS

Christmas

It was the traditional food that was very special. On Christmas Eve, prune stew. If we had fish it was made with fish, onions and little spices. A large kettle of that--that lasted several days. And different kinds of baking with poppy. And all during Advent we were taught Christmas songs, all referring to infant Jesus. One that was the title something like - Come all listen to the good news. The melody was like bells ringing. My mother always wanted us to learn those songs so if someone comes, we could sing for them.

In the earlier days St . Nicholas came December 6th. Sometimes we hang up our stockings. And sometime a bunch of young men came dressed up with masks, some as Saints, one devil, one whatever they were all to be I forgot already. They asked us if we were good and to pray to them. They gave us candy. This of course the grown girls knew it was their friends from the neighborhood so they hide on them. The boys knew they were hiding and where. It was lots of fun and excitement.

Easter

Then Easter it was the eggs - dishes made of eggs. On Good Friday we usually had homemade noodles. We put butter or lard and sprinkle sugar. Mother worked all forenoon on that cause it took a lot to fill us all up. The coloring of eggs, and special bread, with a cross cut on top, something like coffee cake with cinnamon and sugar on top.

DAILY LIFE

Everything was done in such a hard way. The pasture was made by rails from smaller trees, ends trimmed to shape and locked together. Went like this:



Not a nail was used. Over the winter Dad hired a man that stayed with us most of the winter to saw down the trees. Some made into logs which were hauled to the sawmill to make lumber and some into cord wood that was hauled to town to be sold. That was our only income.

Every year more land was cleared. Fire was let go through the swamp in springs. That kind of helped to clear so meadows were made. Little by little more cattle. First we had to save the cream, churn butter. That also you had to trade for groceries.

We raised wheat that was taken to the mill, have it milled into flour, then we got back the bran. That was fed to pigs or chickens into mash - the little potatoes that wouldn't sell we cooked mixed with bran and fed to chickens.

I can't remember what year the creamery started in Rock Creek. We would haul the milk to the creamery, they would skim it, and we got the skim milk back that was fed to pigs and calves. That sure was a big improvement. From there on things were getting better.

House little by little was worked on. First another layer of paper and siding was put on - then the finishing inside. All the lumber for it was from our woods, even the woodwork in side window that was sanded. First coat of paint a light color of cream, the second coat of darker. My Dad mixed the paints, then he made himself a kind of a comb and run through, made grain. It looked nice.

A kitchen was built and that gave us our first dining room, a cistern was under the kitchen to hold rain water, a pump sink. That was a big improvement .

The washing was still done on wash board by hand. Later we got a wash machine; that too had to be pulled by hand. Thought it was almost worse than do little by little by hand.