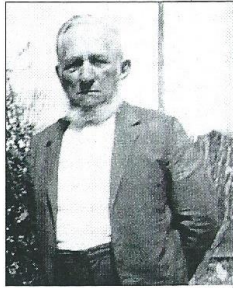


A SHORT STORY OF MY LIFE, told by HEINRICH JANZEN



Heinrich Janzen, 1927

"In the year 1927, I start with the story of my life. The 15th of February (1928) I am here in Reedley, California, on a visit; otherwise I live in Medford, Oklahoma.

"So far as I know by hear-say, I was born in 1854 in Rueckenau, a village in South Russia (Molostschna Colony). One year after my birth I lost both of my parents through death. My father's name was Jakob and that of my Mother was Helena Janzen; then I got foster parents.

"Their names were Cornelius and Katharina Enns, and they were also my Uncle and Aunt. There with them I had a very good time of life. They treated me lovingly. Through them I received a very good education.



Katharina & Cornelius Enns with Heinrich
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"If my memory is correct, we lived not far from Steinbach, a rich estate in the Molostschna Colony.



Peter Schmidt's Steinbach Estate

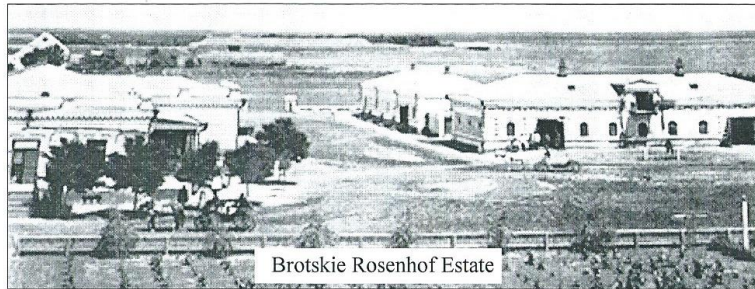


Steinbach Estate Barn

"The owner at that time was Peter Schmidt. On this place, Father had to watch the boundaries of his land and take care that the Russians did not too often let their cattle on Uncle Schmidt's hay field.

"On a beautiful day in the fall, two gentlemen came into our yard. They were Uncle Peter Schmidt and Uncle Jacob Dick from Brotskie, later also called *Ekonomie Rosenhof*. They asked Father if he would like to move to Brotskie and work as a gardener in the garden of Mr. Dick. He would pay him well and for me it was time to start to school and I could do that there. That gave us something to think about and to consider, and also to overcome, since it was more than 100 miles away from the Colony, also from the village where my Mother's parents lived. Time to think was short. I still remember that my Mother sobbed very hard, and then Father said, "Then I must get ready to go and call it off". But after a short hesitation (since it was not customary to refuse in those days) Mother said, "Nay, nay, *vie whora dit nich off sia*". Translated in English is "No, no, we will not call this off". And with that our fate, as people call this way of acting sometimes, was sealed and we moved that same winter (1861) to Brotskie; also called *Rosenhof*.

"There I had the opportunity to attend school. Mr. Voth, who had only one hand, was the



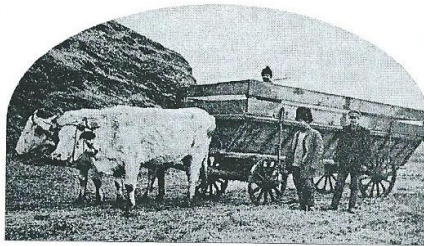
Brotskie Rosenhof Estate

teacher. The following winter Abraham Ediger was the teacher. To these men I went to school seven long winters with ten months each winter and without missing one day. Then the Edigers moved to Berdjansk and an old Uncle Heinrich Franz became the teacher. And two more Russian winters I went to school and again I did not miss a day. With that a period in the life of a man ends, and if only we could appreciate the value of an education at the time and realize it is one of the most important periods of our lives.

"During the summer, I learned to farm with my Uncle Jakob Traksel; helping thresh, bringing in the grain, and everything that needs to be done on a farm. A very tiresome job was driving slowly around and around the threshing floor, so that the grain would separate from the straw. . . this in 100 degree heat. That we could not do in this day and age, too time consuming. I was freed from that job when I grew older and stronger and I had to help bring in the wheat. One day Uncle said, "Now you can go together with that Russian boy and bring in a load of wheat from the field. You can pitch it up and the boy can stack it". So we did as he said. We drove to the field, about five miles with a rack wagon. (The wheat was not in sheaves as it is here in this country). The Russian boy pitched the wheat up and I stacked it evenly, to bring a real big load home. It looked as if we were bringing home a huge haystack. After we had driven one or two miles a big part of our load fell off.

"I scolded the Russian severely and took the fork and threw it back on and he had to stack it; so we finally got home. I have never more stacked, but have always pitched it up and that I liked better.

"That winter, after my Father had worked seven years as the Gardener and one year as the Administrator for Mr. Dick, my Uncle Jakob Traxel wanted to move to the Gnadenfeld, Molotschna Colony. My Father decided to buy his buildings, rent the land that belonged to Mr. Dick, and we started to farm. In addition, there was an oil mill press on this farm. The oil press operated mostly in the winter. The Russians observed Lent for six weeks before Easter and during that time they were not permitted to eat meat or butter or to drink milk, but fish and oils of different kinds, such as linseed, hemp, and sunflower oils were allowed. Our oil mill press brought us about five to six hundred dollars cash income at that time. We remained until 1879 on that farm.



"In the meantime, these things of importance to me and you took place. I had the chance to drive with my neighbor to the new settlement Sagradowka. Three of my brothers and sisters lived there, and Jakob Friesen had one brother to visit there. After arriving at my brother Aaron Janzen's, he said to me one nice evening that his neighbors had gone to the Molotschna, which was about 200 miles, driving with horses. They had a grown-up daughter and a good one, too, who very well understood farm management. Since I was grown and old enough to have a good housekeeper, and as I didn't want to say no to my brother, I said, "Come let's go down and see". Well, we went there and I liked her very much, and probably she liked me too, because she allowed me to visit her again, and that I did. Then I returned home with Jakob Friesen.

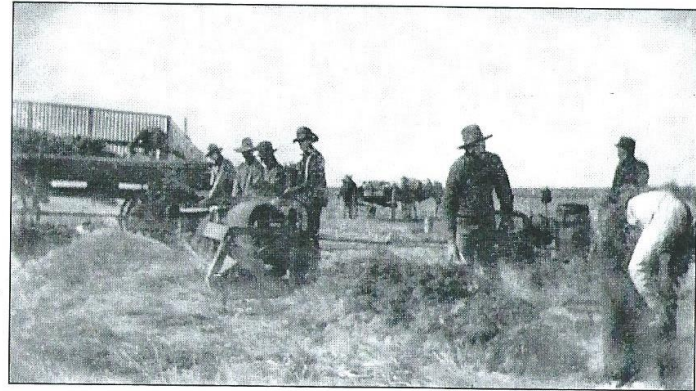
"I thought and thought how I could break the news to my parents, especially my Mother, but finally it had to be done. In the first days of November in 1875, I told Mother what I intended to do and Mother told Father. On a rainy day we drove to Sagradowka and on November 11th, Katharina Gossen and I celebrated our wedding. The dear lovely Katharina had not seen me before nor had I seen her. I have never regretted it, and she was indeed a loving, true housewife. She left her parents and brothers and sisters to go with me, not only to Rosenhof, 200 miles away, but without a complaint to America in 1879.

"In Russia we defenseless Christians could no longer stay. The privilege promised by Empress Katharina II was taken away. The government said we had to take up swords and supply soldiers like all the other people in the country. And so we, and many of our belief, migrated from Russia to North America in five different groups and at five different times. Our group in 1879 was the last and largest one. Only we Mennonites were on the ship except for the crew. We had a change because of the Russian unpunctual scheduling, and had to wait five long June days in Antwerpen, Belgium, because we missed the reserved ship. We arrived at 12 o'clock midnight in Antwerpen, only to find that our promised ship had sailed earlier that same day. But that time passed too, and finally we sailed five days later aboard the old ship called "The Vaterland". We arrived without any mishaps after 14 long days and nights, in Philadelphia.

"We had only what the sailors called a "breeze" to go through, about the middle of the journey. My dear wife and I obtained permission to sleep on the floor of the dining room. The waves came sideways towards our ship, such a box is like a nutshell on the great ocean and we were afraid we might roll out of our beds. At midnight the storm raged so that we slid from one side to the other. I thought if we were to get off here, then woe to us. But the best of all Captains helped us and we made it safely over. And yet we had to bury at sea three souls from our group. But as it is said, "The sea will give up her dead again". We arrived in America about the end of June, 1879.

"We went by train from Philadelphia to Burrton, Reno County, Kansas. There, and in the surrounding area, many Germans and our friends and relatives had already settled when the emigration began from Russia in 1874. Our friends met us at the station and our Uncle Herman Harder took us home. Mrs. Harder was my Mother's sister. While driving, Uncle Harder called again and again, "Get up! Get up!" And a little later again he called "Get up!" Then my Mother said, "Na, woa vont hia en Get Epp?" "No, no! That's what you call to the horses here when you want them to go faster". "Oh!" And then we had something to laugh about.

"After arriving in America and resting from the four weeks journey, Father started looking for a farm, because we were country people and farmers. It didn't take long and we found a place in McPherson County, KS, that we liked. We purchased it, as the man, an American, wanted to move away. Consequently after only one week, we were at home on our farm. We had lost only five to six weeks and that time had been used to make the journey to America. We were again on our own land, and I started working again. It felt good to have safe ground under the feet.



"I did not long to go back to our home in the old country, since I had all that I possessed with me; my wife, children, and parents. We started with a new, fresh courage to work. The dear God did not forsake us, even though things happened at times a little different than we had expected. Nevertheless we saw a big family grow up. Except for our dear wife and mother, all are alive and I am in my 74th year already. I must praise God and say, "I have never wanted for anything".
~~~~~Heinrich Janzen, 1928~~~~~