

REMINISCENCES OF FRANK VEJTASA, FAIRDALE, NORTH DAKOTA.

I first came to Saunders County, Nebraska from the old country and for a time worked on farms, but in 1880 in company with two comrades I went horseback to look for lands in western Nebraska.

We rode to a place 35 miles west of Keya Paha. Keya Paha was then a large "city", consisting of a postoffice in a sod house. We rode through the woods once and saw what looked like large bags hung in the trees. I considered myself the bravest of the party so I took one of the bags down and opened it and found an Indian's corpse inside. On the other side of the Keya Paha river was a reservation. I went there alone and found good soil and ^{rich} grass, but what good did it do when it belonged to the Indians. We rode through that country several days, I think that reservation was west of Fort Randall and O'Neill. Then we went to Box Butte County, where the land was good, but the country unsettled. It was November, a blizzard came and I froze my feet, for I was not prepared for the cold. I heard then that a certain cattleman lost ninety head of cattle. Then I went to Omaha where I worked on the canal, but the work was too hard, I became ill and was taken ^t to the hospital. I was near death, but finally recovered. In 1883 with a certain German I again looked for land. We had a wagon and team and went north, through North Dakota, where there was plenty of game and entertainment but no fuel (wood) or water. We came to an Indian reservation and about fifty Indians surrounded us. Some made signs, others talked to us in their language and still others said: Money, and that of course I understood. Some wanted chewing tobacco. I did not have much money and never chewed tobacco. I had heard that if you show an Indian a letter, he will ^{let} ~~let~~ you go, so I was prepared for them. I showed them a letter, but they shook their heads and then one ran into the hut and came out with a big, powerful Indian. I handed him the letter, I think he was a chief, but he shook his head, spoke to the others and they

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let us go. It was near noon, but we were not hungry, we were glad we got away alive. Later we met an Indian family, but were not afraid of a small number of red men. We traveled on to North Dakota and had many interesting experiences. The land in Walsh county seemed good to us, so we stopped there. I built a sod house, hached it for two years and then married Miss Svoboda from Colfax County. We suffered plenty of hardships, drouth, loss of stock, etc. but now I own 800 acres, a residence that cost eight thousand dollars, and am prospering in every way.