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REMINISCENCES OF MRS. FRANK JELINEK, CRETE, NEBRASKA.

I came to Nebraska in 1865. Of those first Bohemian settlers are left ^{but} by I and my sister-in-law, the wife of Josef Jelinek Sr. I mean the women, the rest are all gone. Of the men are left but Frank and Josef Jelinek, Vaclav Kubicek and Tomas Kovarik. I do not include the younger ones, who at that time were children. The first Bohemian settlers in Saline County, Nebraska were my husband Frank Jelinek, his brother Joseph and Vaclav Sestak, who came 100 miles foot from Arago. There was no railroad then or town. They came here in April 1865. The grass was green, the woods full of blossoms and wild plums, the air filled with perfume. Who came to the Blue River and saw the woods along the stream and the beautiful prairies around was enthused. It seemed to him an earthly paradise. There was an American living here by the name of Migl (Note of translator: This may be misspelled, it may have been Miggle or so) who gave us good advice. Our men took claims and my husband went back to Wisconsin to prepare us for moving. He was very enthusiastic and told us about the paradise in Nebraska. He had spent eleven years in Wisconsin, working hard with the stumps, so no wonder Nebraska seemed a paradise. We set out September 12th., there were six Bohemian families, travelling to paradise. I have never been in the real, the heavenly paradise. but if it is anything like that Nebraska paradise was, I do not care to go there. We came to St. Joseph, Missouri. It was just after the close of the Civil War, the trains were crowded with soldiers. We arrived at our destination but our baggage did not. The next day the men went to buy a pair of horses and we made

preparations to travel on, but our luggage did not come. We waited a whole month, but we had hardly any money and winter was approaching. Scarlet fever prevailed in the town, our children took it too, but we had to go and had no other means of travel except the wagons. The trip was two hundred miles long and autumn brought its bad weather and muddy roads. Our three year old boy died, we buried him on the way. After two weeks of hardships we got to the Big Blue, in the night of November 22nd. I ought to say that when our things were not coming, my husband's brother, Vaclav Jelinek, Vaclav Kubicek and Vaclav Sestak did not want to wait, so they set out ahead on foot, in order to prepare a shelter for us, and so they were already on their lands when we came, on the other side of the river. We camped by the river over night and the next day got the wagons across which was difficult, because the river was deep and sandy. They had to put three pairs of horses in each wagon. We lost a horse that day, the effort was too much for him. When we had crossed the river, fourteen Indians came to meet us on horseback. Mercy but we were scared! We were told that the Indians kill white men, but all ended well. They only wanted tobacco, so our men quickly gave them all they had. Our residences, that is sod houses, were ready for us, and how gladly we crept into them, even though they had no doors or windows. Instead of a window there was a hole stuffed with dried grass and a quilt hung over the opening served for a door. We put grass on the ground for bedding. This "house" was 12 x 21 feet and there were eighteen of us, we were packed like herring. The next day a box was placed in a corner, that was a table. Four posts were driven in the other corner, young trees were laid across them and covered with

grass, that was our bed. The others lay on the ground. During the first part of December we ^{had} good a regular Nebraska blizzard. I shiver even now when I think of it. The wagons and sod house were full of snow, the children were covered with it and the horses without shelter. We had a windbreak, but the snow was too high. The horses ran away, our men hunted them two days and found them sixty miles away. At last came spring and it came early and was warm. Everybody was busy with crops and building and everything looked fine. But in the middle of August the grasshoppers came and by evening not a leaf was left. The only thing they did not touch was sorghum. The river was covered with them, so that we could not use the water and we had no well. No one had wells then, they all used water from the river. I got the ague and was ill all summer. I must tell you how we celebrated the first Fourth of July in Nebraska. There were several Bohemian families which had come that spring, so each housewife brought something good to eat to Mr. Vaclav Petrasek's farm. There were plenty of prairie chickens, I used to shoot them, and even though I did always shut both eyes, sometimes I hit one. Rabbits were plenty and we had corn bread too, but we could put no eggs or milk in it, just salt and water. Wheat bread was rare, for a 200 barrel of flour cost \$20.00. The principal thing was money and nobody had any. We were cheered by visions of a new crop, and then we were all young. Mr. Petrasek sang and accompanied himself by beating a plow disc and we danced and had a merry time. That was our last jolly day for a long time to come, for the next year the grasshoppers came again. That is they hatched ^{from} ~~of~~ the eggs left the year before and when they got wings, they flew away. More and more

Bohemians came, some directly from the old country. We had a farm right on the Big Blue River and when we used to view the prairies all around us, it seemed to us they never would be settled, while now every acre costs a great sum. We live in Crete, in retirement. We had five children, three died. We have had three weddings, the first, the silver and the golden, and our friends always surprised us and showed their friendship, which is a very pleasant memory to us. When I look back in the past, I tremble to think what we had to go through, but life even then had its happy aspects. We were all young and all beginners, each one was equal to the other, and all were honest and open. If any one had something good, the others had to taste of it, we were all invited and had a good time.