

REMINISCENCES OF FRANK KARNIK, DODGE, NEBRASKA.

I came to Nebraska, to Fremont, October 1, 1877. Nowadays the trip is much shorter and pleasanter, it was not so then. The old pioneers were good hearted, they were willing to help others, although they had nothing themselves. We came to the farm of Ignac Vlasak, thirty miles northwest of Fremont. He had a large family and they lived in a dug out but they welcomed us with open arms and for two weeks we enjoyed their hospitality. Thanks be to him! A number of Bohemians were settled in the vicinity and I wanted to be near my own kind, but no homesteads were to be had any more so I bought 80 acres, to be paid for in ten years. The first payment took all the money I had. How was I to build a home? Two neighbors came, one with a team, the other with a breaking plow. One plowed up building material, the other planned the house and then we began. In three days our "residence" was ready together with home made furniture. I bought a cow and two old Texas oxen, owing for them and I made a sleigh on which I rode summer and winter. The next year I broke 20 acres in May and June and in July my wife and I worked for a neighbor, tying bundles of grain. The third year I sowed the 20 acres and broke 20 more. The grain was fine, but the grasshoppers finished it in two hours. The fourth year I sowed 40 acres and when the crop began to get green, the grasshoppers began to hatch and in a month nothing was left. What now? It was still time to plant more corn, but there was no seed. I heard that a car of corn had been brought to town, so several neighbors went there and bought corn in the ear at \$1.60 bushel. To buy two bushels took all the money I had. After planting came cold rains and the crop rotted. Four years of lost time and effort! How to get seed for spring? How to get food, shoes, clothing? That was a question I could not answer.



People were leaving the country, they wanted to sell but there were no buyers. But I gathered courage and thought of my two strong hands. The State of Nebraska offered help to the needy, but the Bohemians were timid and did not ask for it. Some few that did got nothing. The Bohemians are good to work and pay others, but they do not get much appreciation in return. I managed to get some seed and planted it, the crop was good and was followed by other good crops, which we took to town sixteen and twenty miles with our oxen. Corn sold for 10 and 11 cents per bushel, wheat 35 cents per bushel, hogs \$1.75 <sup>per hundred</sup> a pound. If we had an accident on the way and were obliged to spend the night in town, we had hardly enough left, after selling, to buy half a gallon of molasses and a package of coffee. We had to sell at any price. No one had credit, we had to pay. When a farmer wants to go to market now, he asks the price by telephone. If the price is low, he does not sell, because he does not have to, he has money now. If he has not money, he has credit and he has business knowledge that enables him to wait for better prices. Times grew better, eventually I bought 200 more acres, and some of our countrymen more. Where you saw sod houses you <sup>now</sup> see fine residences and surrounding buildings that look like half a village in Bohemia, to say nothing about stock and poultry. Where we used to ride slowly, even in sleighs in summer, you see our grandsons shoot around in automobiles. Land sells for several hundred dollars per acre. And the changed conditions have changed many a pioneer, just as dull instruments are sharpened on a grindstone, so dull brains are sharpened with good reading. Our dear paper Hospodar has been such a grindstone. Our grandchildren have a much better chance than even our children did, for we could not give them the kind of education we



would have liked to give them. I was on the school board years ago and I remember when we had a teacher who was very good, had a diploma and all that and yet at the same time he herded cattle. He brought the cattle near the school and after school took it away again.

Now we have highly educated teachers and professors so that the poorest laborer can give his child an education. The last years have had an effect on country schools. There are two reasons for this. First, most of the people belong to various sects, which build sectarian schools for thousands of dollars and the children are sent there, even if the public school is but a few feet away. Even if a father like that has a dozen children, not one steps over the threshold of a public school. Sometime but two or three farmers in a given locality send their children to public schools. I am speaking of districts where Bohemians are in a minority. The other reason is that we have towns nearby where there are fine schools, beautifully equipped in every way, and many farmers send their children there. I am quite satisfied with the fruits of my efforts.