

MY LIFE IN CHENGWATANA TOWNSHIP

by Mrs. Mary Becvar, June, 1954

My mother and I came here early in 1898 from Minneapolis. I had never lived in the country before so everything was new and strange to me. We arrived in Pine City at about 11 A. M. and my brother, Eli Husted met us and started for his home. He had a lumber wagon and team of horses and after leaving the Wilcox home we didn't see another house until we got out by the dam. There I saw a very large rambling old house which my brother told me had been a hotel or stopping place for the stage coach which used to travel the old Government road from St. Paul to Duluth. Across the road there was an enormous big barn in which the horses and stagecoaches were kept. ~~One of the houses had a little store in it~~ We crossed the bridge which was built on the dam and there were a couple of houses and a school. One of the houses had a little store in it where a few items could be bought. The Murches lived here and way over by the lake the Carl Trippers lived. We followed the old logging trail along the river for several miles, then began slanting off a little northeast, and after several miles, weary ones, we came out at our destination, and my future home, -We- now Voita's

We had neighbors across the road, an old Bohemian couple and we were very good friends from the start altho Mrs. Dusbabec could not speak English, and I could speak no Bohemian. This fine old lady would show me something and tell me what it was in her language, and I would tell her in English, and so she learned English and I learned a little Bohemian. She taught me many of her old country recipes which I found useful as I later met and married a Bohemian boy.

Our next nearest neighbors were the Charles Glanville family. They lived a mile away but we all got to know each other very well. They first lived in a little house about where our little white church stands now. After a year or so, he built the house across from the schoolhouse, District no. 1. My brother Eli helped him

at this time and he also plastered the rooms for Mr. Glanville. In this family there were 4 girls and 3 boys. One of the girls still live in Duluth and I visit her whenever I am in Duluth.

Another family lived just south of the schoolhouse. This too was a large family of about 9 boys and only one girl. Anna^{Rock} and I became very close friends and I visit her home in Superior, Wis. whenever I can. Her oldest brother was my first escort to our neighborhood parties and he still tells people how we used to be together in our young days. He and his wife are among my oldest and dearest friends today. We youngsters used to go blueberrying and rabbit hunting together. If it was too far to walk, some one would take a team and we would all pile in a wagon or sleigh and whatgay times we had singing and enjoying ourselves. We would go down the river fishing and build a fire and have our picnic dinners. It seemed there was always^{something} for us tondo. It was Mr. Kruse who gave the land for the schoolso his children would not have ~~se-far~~ to go way down to the dam to school. At that time, District no. 1 took in a large territory of schoollands. Meadow Lawn school, the Brackenburyschool and one of the schools across the river as well as the school at the dam belonged to our district. Mr. John Holler and Mr. Kruse were on the school board in 1898.

A Mr. Netser owned the Engler place at this time but didn't live on it. Mr. Jim Davis rented it and that was the Hustletown families until later that fall. Mr. Davis played the violinand we would gather there in thr evenings and Mr. Davis would playfor us to dance , and sometimes we would have a really large party and invite Meadow Lawners over. It was usually held at our house because our house was the biggest in the neighborhood.

You see when I came to Chengwatana there was just the four fami families of us close together but later that fall the Gibson family moed in with a large family, from Pine Island. Gibsons lived just east of the schoolhouse and he too played the violin so we always seemed to have plenty of music. Two of these girls still live out in Grego

Oregon. We used to be together as much as possible.

Shortly after that the Ed Adlers moved here and built on Bear Creek and the Lou Haney's built at the top of the hill across the creek from Adlers. Mr. Haney sold to Henry Davis in 1901, and the Carriers and Berkeys had moved in.

My husband bought land and moved here from Sleepy Eye, a gay young bachelor who could play the violin from night until morning. He bought the first team hauled seeder and binder to be used here, also he had a two row riding corn plow which was unheard of before. And best of all to us girls, he had a real top buggy, a very snazy affair, I assure you. He had a very nice team of Morgan horses as well as several other horses so all the girls were agog to see who would be the lucky young girl to be asked out by this charming young beau and I was the very lucky girl and my luck lasted many happy years.

When we first came there really were no roads. We just followed the old logging trails and believe me they were really trails. One didn't dare start for town without an axe or saw in the wagon because you never knew when you would find a tree down across the trail. I soon got over being afraid of things in the country and after I was married I wanted my husband to let me have the liveliest team on the place.

My husband and I moved to Sleepy Eye about 1901, where we lived about four years. By the time we moved back there were many changes. The Kruses had sold to Mr. Collet. The Glanvilles sold to Adolph Blazek, and there were others coming in and settling all the time. The Bells bought and lived where Mrs. Lindahl lived just west of the church. Mr. Perkey had moved here from Farmington, also the Nortons. Grandpa Carrier had moved here and gradually the different farms were settled. Mr. and Mrs. Hopper and two sons came about this time also. Mr. Griffith Talman built the first house on the old Unverzagt place which he later sold to Mr. Kunz, who in turn sold it to Henry Unverzagt.

In June, 1898, we had about a week of heavy rains and the dam ~~was~~

and bridge were washed out. Until the water went down the men would drive as far as the Mr. Trippers and hire him to row them to town. After the water was low enough we would ford the river just west of the present bridge. That summer the road from Cross Lake to Meadow Lawn was grubbed out and they started putting in corduroy fills where necessary. The dam was rebuilt and another bridge was laid on top. In 1900 the dam was dynamited for the first time. Not much damage was done and travel was resumed in a day or so.

Meadow Lawn was settled much more thickly than Hustletown. There were the Royal Smith family, the M. K Smith family, the Kilgores, the Hathaways, and the John Holler family. Then followed the Purdys, and Johnsons and so the places got settled. There were several families of Scofields and the Clyns. Mrs. Charles Purdy was also one of the first girls I became acquainted with and we were always close friends. We were pals long before either of us thought of getting married.

What did we do in time of sickness? I can tell you this, everyone was ready and willing to help his neighbor with work or help of any kind. We of course had no telephones and if a doctor was really needed, someone made the long trip to town for him. But it was only the extreme cases that would call for a doctor. We all kept a supply of the well known remedies on hand and if a neighbor needed help he got it fast. Never News would travel fast even if we had no cars or phones and we did not wait to be asked to help we just went and tried to do what was to be done.

* By this time Mr. Kruse and my brother bought an old threshing machine. This was powered by horses going round & round in circles.