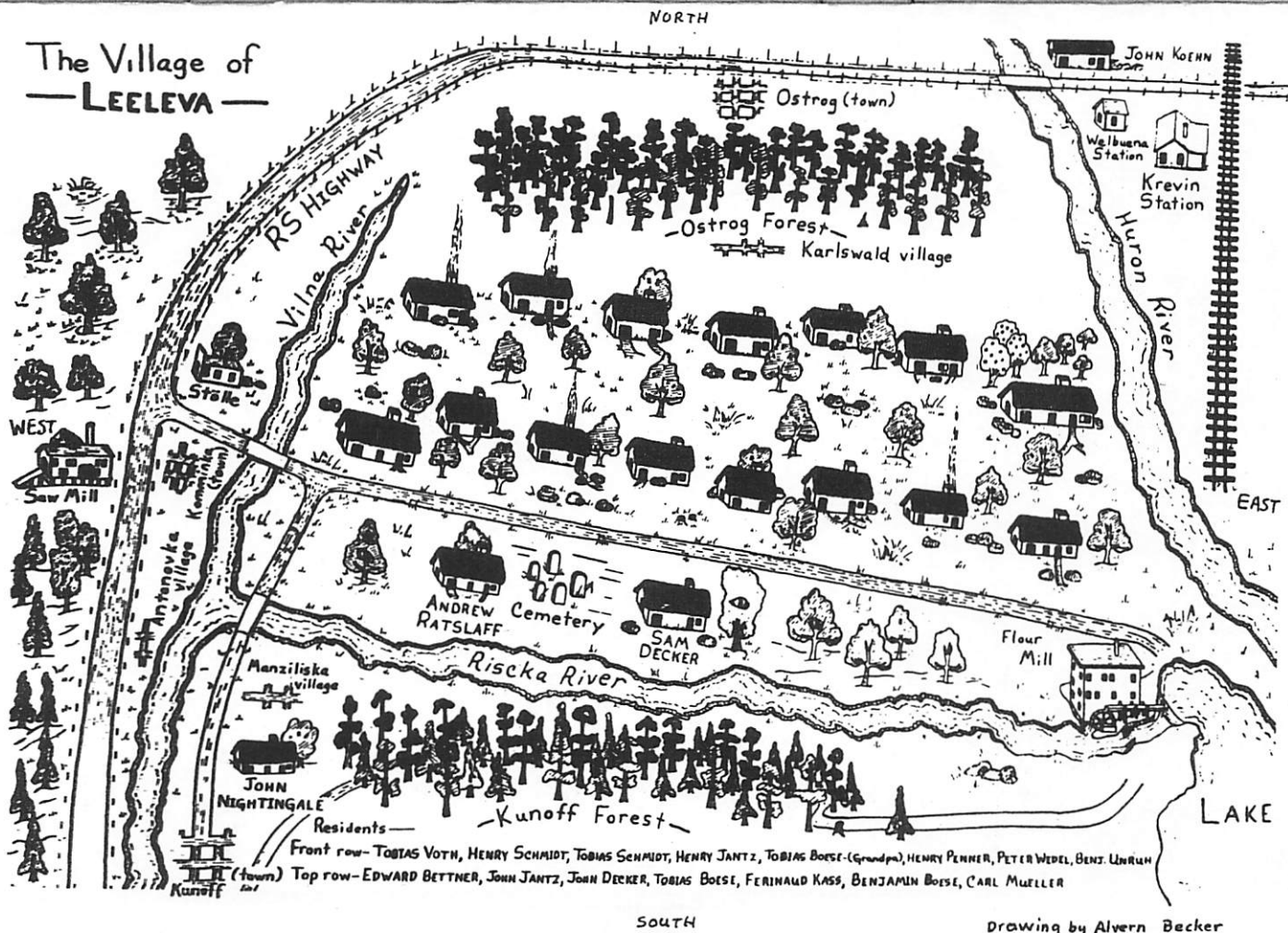


**FROM
VILLAGE LIFE
TO
KANSAS PLAINS**

The Village of — LEELEVA —



Drawing by Alvern Becker
(described by Jake Unruh)

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THE VILLAGE LEELEVA, POLISH RUSSIA

(Recollections of Jake Unruh, Moundridge,
Kansas, who came to America in 1907)

Many of our Mennonite forefathers came from villages in Russia. Sometimes a dozen families lived in a single village. Houses had thatched roofs, sod walls, and dirt floors that were swept once a week, then sprinkled with fine white sand from the sand pit. Fathers and mothers worked hard to support their families. They planted gardens, grew apple and cherry trees, and raised livestock and chickens. Children went to school where they learned the rudiments of reading and writing with the Bible as the main text book. The church was an integral part of village life. In the villages children were born, grew to adulthood; and, when life was over they were laid to rest in the village cemetery. Such a village was Leeleva, earlier known as Ferstendorf.

Leeleva was a half-mile long. As a fire-safety measure, houses were staggered in two crooked rows near the village road that lay east and west. All houses faced south, and trees were abundant. Water for the families came from three wells: one well was located at the Voths, another belonged to the Schmidts, and one to the Unruhs. The barn and house were often under one single roof because of the severe winters. Between the house and barn quarters was a room known as the "fire-room, threshing room or threshing floor". In it firewood was stored, grain was threshed for poultry and animals, and some was ground into flour with a small hand grinder. Straw was chopped for animals or twisted tightly for fuel when the family was temporarily out of wood.

Near the east end of the village lived Jake Unruh, a teenage boy with his father Benjamin C. Unruh, his mother Eva Boese Unruh and his siblings: Helen (Helena), Andrew, Bernard, Carrie (Karolina), Fred and August. Two older brothers, Tobias and John, had died at ages eight and five. A twin to Andrew (David) lived one day. Fred's twin sister (Elizabeth) died at three months. Infant Adam lived eighteen days, baby Susana lived eight days; and Henry, just younger than Jake also died. Thus seven sorrows had come to Jake's family in this far-north village of Leeleva.

Each family paid three rubles as rent for ten morgan (fifteen acres) of land outside the village. Jake and the Mueller boy were frequent partners as cattle herders. Ben paid Jake a penny a day when it was his turn. At eventide the herders walked the cattle homeward. As they progressed through the village each cow turned automatically into its own gate for the night. Jake's family owned several good milk cows as well as one horse.

A fence enclosure, well secured, was necessary to protect calves, pigs and chickens at night from wolves and thieves. Even cows had to be watched closely for it was not unusual to see a native Russian try to lead a cow away when no one was looking. The law did not protect the villagers! Livestock and chickens were put into the barn in the fall and kept there until moderation of temperatures in the spring. In the winter time snow fell almost continuously for about two months. Snow drifted deeply, even over the top of fences. At first the snow was soft and walking was difficult, but when it settled horses pulled wagons and sleighs over fences and ditches.

Families who did not have cattle made a living with "the hen and the hoe". Vegetables grew profusely: peas, beets, cabbage, parsnips, carrots, sweet corn, potatoes, and pumpkins that grew so big they could hardly be lifted. Surplus potatoes were boiled, mashed, and fed to cattle with "shorts" (carbohydrate content of wheat when bran has been removed). Pumpkins were cut in small pieces and fed to cows "for supper".

Pigs were raised for meat and lard. Chickens provided eggs, and then there were the milk products. After each milking excess milk was poured into crocks and placed in a cool place. When the cream came to the top it was spooned off and later churned into butter. The remaining skim milk clabbered and was used for eating and cooking purposes. A stiff dough was made of clabber milk, flour and an egg, and small pieces (chlusscha) of this dough were pinched off and boiled in hot milk. Perogga was a cottage cheese dumpling. Rye was ground into flour at home and baked into good bread.

Tall native grass was cut by hand and stored in the barn hay loft for the long cold winters. Rye was the main crop grown at Leeleva. The seed was broadcast by hand, out with simple hand tools, and threshed with a flail until the early 1900's. Then a crude fanning mill contraption was brought in by Bohemians from the village of Antonovka. Four men worked the machine. Two stood on one end and the others on the opposite side, pulling the moveable part of the mill back and forth, back and forth. One man removed the straw as another caught the grain. In later years Mueller made the mills.

Jake's mother was most hospitable, and she seldom turned anyone away. The saw mill was just west of Leeleva. Many workers lived too far from home to go home at night. When Christmas or holidays rolled around men started homeward. Unexpected guests frequently ate Mother Eva's good bread and butter and slept on her dirt floor.

One day Jake (age 11) was helping his Mother in the threshing room when she suddenly asked him to go out for a while. Jake obediently complied to his mother's request. Later in the day he returned to find that his sister Carrie had been born in the threshing room.

Church services were held at the Minister Tobias Voth home. Several dozen people gathered and seated themselves on twelve-foot planks that served as backless pews. Services lasted from nine o'clock until twelve. Children under six years of age did not attend church but stayed with an older sister or a grandma who was unable to attend. Sermons were in the German language, and they sang out of German song-books. Much of the service was singing the lengthy songs in the hymn-book. Some songs had twelve verses, and singing was loud, slow, and in unison. The song leader sometimes read several lines of a song, then the congregation would sing that portion. Other ministers in the area were three Johns: John Nightingale, John Jantz and John Decker.

Weddings were solemnized in the bride's home. Much preparation preceded the ceremony. Noodle soup and borscht were served with home-made bread. The celebration lasted for three days. Wedding dresses were carefully made of black material, and were worn for years as a "Sunday-best dress".

Jake was a kind of unofficial "village errand boy". Often he had the honor of being a "chaust bidda" (translated literally: wedding inviter). He would go from home to home, announce the date of the wedding, and go on to the next person on the guest list. Messages were not always joyful. Once Jake had to carry a funeral announcement to Jake Koehns that the wife of Tobias Boese had died and the services would be "day after tomorrow". The village people looked in pity on the Koehn family because they lived in "such isolation" twenty miles from Leeleva. (The reason is not known.) Distance prohibited Jake from returning home on the same day, so he stayed for the night. In the evening, the Koehns talked about many things, including the wild animals that roamed freely in the vicinity. When bed time came, the little home was too crowded for Jake to sleep indoors. His bed was a bench in an open lean-to attached to the house. Uneasy thoughts plagued Jake but morning arrived and nothing had happened, much to Jake's relief.

Leeleva people were Mennonites except for the Betners, Muellers and Kass families who attended Lutheran services in another village. The German Lutherans often reminded the Mennonites that their religious beliefs were "a bit odd".

Problems among Mennonites were taken to the Peacemaker who in Leeleva was Teacher Andrew Ratzlaff. He would call a council meeting to solve or reconcile the matter. A family who had "no bread, no flour" might be sent to gather wind-fallen apples from Muellers who had the largest apple orchard in the village. (It was an unwritten law that apples on the ground were free to anyone.) Dried apples, dried beans and Hazel nuts were valuable winter food together with root vegetables stored in bins or corners of the barn. It must have been comfortable to go into the winter season with plenty of food stored for the winter, hay for the animals, and grain for flour and chicken feed!

Weaving during the winter months supplemented the meager income of the people. Polish people brought flax and hemp to be woven into cloth. Flax was beaten and fanned after which mothers and daughters would spin it into thread until their fingers were sore. The spinning wheel was a familiar artifact in the home. Then the weaving machine (tow) was set up in the living room. Handling the pedal and shuttle was heavy work and was done mostly by the men who worked far into the night. Flax was woven into fine-quality linen and hemp produced a coarse cloth. The finished product was thirty inches wide and twenty-five to thirty feet long. The cloth was spread out on the grass and left day and night. The dew fell on it at night and the sun dried it out by day, until the cloth had bleached a beautiful white. Then it was rolled into a cylinder shape. Villagers were paid a quarter per yard for their work.

Near the cemetery, south of the village road lived Andrew Ratzlaff, a black-haired, black-eyed man of medium stature. On school days the weaving loom and spinning wheel were pushed into a corner, and three twelve-foot white pine planks (like the church pews) were brought out. At ten o'clock about a dozen school children arrived and school was in session with the German Bible as the text book. ABC's were written on a slate and the German song book without notes was used in singing class. On Saturday nights the youth and "young-marrieds" gathered at the Ratzlaff home for an evening of singing.

As one walked into a typical village home the door opened into "the little room" that might have a small bench, a shovel and a door to the firebox or oven of the large Russian stove. This stove had a base as large as a small room or closet, was made of dried brick (sometimes plastered), and tapered upward to form the chimney. A part of the stove was boxed out, leaving a shelf below the ceiling level. Jake enjoyed the cozy warmth many times as he slept on the shelf. The second room in the house was the large room in which the meals were prepared and household tasks were done. Again the stove was a part of this room. The third room was the "work room" for weaving, spinning, etc. Beyond that room was the barn area with stalls for horses, cows, and enclosures for pigs and chickens. Warm air from the great stove even filtered into the animal quarters.

One road ran through the village to the west where it branched onto the R.S. Highway which was about eighty miles long and had a three-foot walk-way on each side of the road. To protect pedestrians from horse drawn vehicles, four and one-half foot pine posts were set ten feet apart on the outside of the pathway. On the inner side of the path were shorter posts. (Posts were beveled to a point like an inverted cone). On the opposite side of the highway was a similar walking path. As winter snow became hard-packed on the main road, boys and girls had great times skating and sledding on it!

Low temperatures brought bitter cold to our North Land as the days grew shorter. Almost without exception, the people wore wooden shoes. Those who enjoyed ice skating had the village blacksmith attach steel buttons on their wooden "klusa". Away they went to the frozen river for winter fun. Sometimes a verticle pole was "planted" in a drilled-hole in the river ice. Near the top of the pole a horzintal pole was attached. A skater grasped one end of the cross piece. Several pushed the opposite end, round and round, ever faster! Finally the skater would turn loose and go down river at a high rate of speed for a quarter of a mile.

Forests in Russia are highly valued, and are protected by law. Ostrog Forest, north of Leeleva, was thickly populated with huge pine trees. Even on bright days the forest seemed dark for the immense trees grew close to each other. Three boys had to stretch to reach around a single tree! This forest, three and a half miles by four miles, was patrolled by two government guards. They paced around the forest daily and met at a central place to eat their noon meal. Blueberries grew abundantly in the hay fields and in the forest. The berries grew large, and the village boys would go to pick them, but were allowed only during bright sunshine. If it was cloudy or twilight time, it was easy to get lost. If ever boys were caught in the forest at prohibited times, or they had matches in their pockets, the guards grabbed the boys, whipped them soundly and sent them home.

Firewood was gathered from a small forest east of the village (with government consent). They could gather sticks from the ground, and they could have any branches that could be reached with a pruning hook on a handle. Trees that had fallen over also belonged to the villagers. Logs were pulled home by a horse, loaded on a wagon, or in winter, transported by double sleigh to the lumber mill. Logs were loaded using a large pole as a lever. Once the load was started, the horses dared not stop because the warmed-up runners would immediately sink into the snow and freeze solid. Horses were whipped to keep them moving. Drivers would call out, "Pr-r-r-r" (roll the r's) to the horses as they urged them onward.

Kunoff Forest, south of the village, had pine, birch and oak trees. It was not guarded but was infested with large gray Russian wolves and wild hogs. When wolves became hungry and food was scarce, the wolves would attack horses' heads and throats, or they might sneak up under wagon or sleigh, attack the horses' back legs until they were hamstrung and could not walk!

There were no stores in Leeleva. Jewish peddlers brought their wares: pots and pans, utensils, thread and sewing materials and some sugar. There was little money, so the mothers traded eggs and butter for their purchases. A man might have himself measured by the peddler, and within a period of time, the peddler delivered a newly sewn suit.

Peddlers enjoyed Unruh hospitality. Perhaps Jake's mother had baked bread that day--first building a red-hot fire in the oven of the stove. The ashes were removed, the oven swept clean and the rye-bread dough was put in to bake. By the light of a coal-oil lamp, the family and the guest were seated for supper. Possibly they drank hot tea or bitter coffee which the peddler sold. In the morning he (peddler) thanked Mother Eva with a package of needles or some other small gift. The Jews were most devout. They would fold their hands and say their prayers in private or in public, in the house or in the street, as village children watched from a distance.

Peter Wedels lived next to Jake's home at the east end of the village. Teen age daughters Elizabeth and Agnes, and two grandchildren, Henry (age four) and Marie (six) Nightengale completed the home. Father Nightengale had been drafted into the Russian army. The young mother died leaving two children (an older child, Willie, had died) with the grandparents. Soldiers got only one leave every two years. Father Nightengale remarried and so it happened that they were reared by their grandparents.

In early days, a friendly Russia had beckoned to persecuted Mennonites in Holland and other European countries. Hard working people were needed to develop rural areas, and the Mennonites were known for their perseverance. However, as we read in Exodus 1:8 "there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph". So there came to power a czar who knew not the Mennonites. Local Poles developed a hatred for them, Russians bothered them with governmental controls. Children still attended German School in the forenoon, but they had to go to a Polish school several miles away in the afternoon.

Rumors and circumstances confused the villagers. Should they emigrate to another country or should they stay? Mother Eva felt that Jake should go alone to America. With this in mind, a pair of second hand leather boots was purchased for Jake from a neighbor who had died, and Jake put aside his wooden shoes for the first time.

Mennonites had been leaving Russia for years. Villagers had recently heard that John and Julia Schultz Mayeske had sold their belongings, attempted to escape over the border, and were caught and turned back by a Russian guard. They tried a second time and successfully got over the border, but trouble still followed them. When they got to America Julia had sore eyes. John went to Kansas. Julia returned to Germany until her eyes healed. Then she crossed the Atlantic Ocean the third time to join her husband at Lehigh, Kansas.

Teacher Andrew favored going to Argentina for awhile, but finally joined Benjamin Unruhs and Peter Wedels in making plans to go to America. His family included his wife Susie, nine year old Marie, and younger children Karoline, Katherine,

John and little Susie. Belongings were sold to the Lutherans. Each family was allowed a trunk and two suitcases. A sense of urgency prevailed as they remembered increasing animosity toward the Mennonites. In 1905 a house in Leeleva burned for "unknown reasons". Two more houses were set on fire by a mob of Poles the next year. The government reached out with increasing pressure to draft young men into the military. Now the hours were filled with work. Decisions as to what articles would be packed needed to be made. Mrs. Peter Wedel included several coarsely-woven linen towels that would be used for years in America. The three families bade farewell to their beloved Leeleva and in the early morning darkness of an April morning three lumber wagons carried people and baggage the twenty miles to the railroad station at Krevin. How did they feel as they left behind the familiar scenes of their cozy homes, tools and garden plots, and the memory of wild strawberries, large, luscious and sweet that grew during summer months in ditches, hayfields, and forest.

THE JOURNEY

The journey to freedom was by train, horse-drawn lumber wagon, by ship and on foot. Escape over the border into Czechoslovakia was on foot through a dense forest. The day had been spent hiding and resting in an old barn. Each family had paid 300 rubles (\$150) to hire a Jewish guide. As darkness descended, the party assembled. Parents carried the youngest children, Elizabeth and Agnes carried niece Marie and nephew Henry Nightengale; older children held each other's hands. Dark-haired, brown-eyed Jake was told to walk slowly at the rear of the procession to help the weak or those who might stumble along the way. Marie Ratzlaff felt the fear that settled over the group as the guide gave strict instructions, to "stay together so they wouldn't get lost, to lift their feet high as they walked through the thick carpet of fallen leaves in the forest". Above all there was to be no noise. No one wanted to be caught by a Russian official! The party plodded on and on until it seemed they couldn't take another step. Those who carried children suffered with numbness of the arms. At last they crossed the border in a southerly direction. They were free! A lumber wagon had been hired to take the baggage over the border. The driver bribed the border guards ahead of time. When the time came to cross over, the loud, blustery guards made a great show of trying to stop the horses, but they did not actually make them stop. Thus it, too, was safely across the border.

The round-about journey now turned west, and then north-west. They could have saved both time and distance if they could have traveled west of Leeleva, but it was considered too risky. The party now boarded a train and traveled several hundred miles to Bremen, Germany. They stayed at a travelers' Pilliar house (perhaps translated "Pilgrim House"). Immigrants had to pass a medical examination

so they could get their passports. Jake's sister Helen had an eye problem, so the three families delayed their journey for two weeks, hoping the condition would improve. The day for departure came. Twenty-two people lined up for the medical exam. All went well until Helen came to the last doctor in line. He looked at Helen's eyes and refused permission to board the train with an emphatic "NO". The rest of the families were already boarding, but Helen must stay behind. Brother Jake (fifteen), in that tense, hurried moment couldn't bear the thought of his sister staying alone. He quickly called to his father to throw him the passport. The slam of a heavy train door separated the family. Jake and Helen were left alone.

The train carried the families to Bremerhaven, Germany which was a point of departure for ocean-going vessels. Several weeks had passed since they left Leeleva. The Unruhs, Ratzlaffs and Wedels got on small boats that carried them to the steamship Weimar of the North Dutch Lloyd Line. The date was May 11, 1907.

Most adults got seasick due to the rocking motion of the ocean. They clung to the railings or stayed down in their bunks. The last thing they wanted was food! Not so with the children. Holding on to nothing, even though the ship rocked and rolled, they ran everywhere. In their explorations they found the galley (ship's kitchen) where the workers gave them snacks to eat. When meal time came, the children were not hungry, much to the despair of their seasick parents.

Fourteen days later the "villagers" disembarked at Baltimore, Maryland in the month of May 1907. The children stared in awe at the sights and sounds of the big city. The children ran excitedly across the railroad tracks. Once again the train was boarded and they headed for Kansas. At Kansas City a bearded man boarded the train and seated himself a few seats behind the Ratzlaffs who glanced furtively at him from time to time. At Hillsboro the Ratzlaffs got off the train. So did the bearded man. Suddenly they realized that the man was Teacher Andrew's brother Bernard who had come to America with his parents fourteen years before. They greeted each other warmly. The next stop was Canton, Kansas where Uncle Ben Wedel waited in a surrey with a flat, fringed top. The light weight buggy was pulled by a horse. Peter Wedels, their two daughters and the grandchildren went home with Uncle Ben where they stayed for several months.

The Benjamin Unruhs were left on the train. They disembarked at the Galva, Kansas depot. The day was May 29, 1907. For a number of weeks they lived in an old house owned by Ben Wedel. Then they moved to a 200 acre farm at Burrton, Kansas in time for wheat planting in the fall.

Back in Bremen, Jake and Helen were without their family.

Jake was out going in personality, but blond, blue-eyed Helen was shy and reserved except with close friends and family members. Each day she had to see the doctor for eye-treatment. One day Jake saw a strangely familiar face among the people. She had once lived in a village near Leeleva. Then he realized she was Mrs. Julia (Schultz) Mayeske who had been refused entrance into America because of sore eyes. From that day on, Julia took Helen to the doctor leaving Jake more time to work for their board and room. Frau Schmidt who managed the Pilgrim House found Jake a willing and handy helper. He could speak German, Russian and Polish. One of his jobs was to meet travelers at all hours of the day and night. During the time that they remained in Bremen, Jake became an invaluable helper. Frau Schmidt begged him to stay and work. When he insisted that he must go to America, the Frau told him that she would pay his return fare if he should decide to come back. Furthermore, she would share half of her profit with him.

Six weeks passed. Helen's eyes healed at last. Jake had hoped to sail on a large ship, the Wilhelm. However, they were so anxious to get started that they went on a smaller ship, the Mien. Jake and the captain became friends. The captain offered Jake his binoculars so he could scan the horizon. One day out of port, he spotted the Wilhelm going to Bremerhaven. The next day the big ship Wilhelm sped by on a return trip leaving the little Mien in its wake.

Jake observed his sixteenth birthday on the Atlantic Ocean. On July 7, 1907 they landed at Baltimore. Jake and Helen saw fireflies for the first time in their lives. As a greeting to the immigrants, a group of school children sang especially for them "Shall we Meet Beyond the River" and "When the Roll is Called Up Yonder". Jake and Helen thought these songs were most appropriate to the occasion, which was the beginning of the end of their journey to Kansas.

At Galva, depot agent Peter Marx (also a stone mason) was on the alert for Jake and Helen. As they stepped off the train, Mr. Marx asked them (in the high-German language), "Are these the Unruh children?" The brother and sister had arrived in Kansas. Henry Unruh took them to his home for breakfast. Later Father Ben and Ben Wedel came in a horse-drawn wagon and picked up the "two who had been left behind". Jake went to work immediately, joining a threshing crew that very afternoon.

In the old country Jake's family had been self-sufficient. In the new country they had nothing. They had to start from scratch. In Russia, summer days began to cool off at three o'clock in the afternoon. Father Ben found hot summer days almost unbearable. The house in which they lived was old and they had no machinery. Through kindness of relatives, they acquired a cow and planted wheat with borrowed machinery. But times were hard. Jake was seldom at home. He did many jobs for many people except when he had steady work at the

P. P. Johnsons. He received the standard wage of the day--fifteen dollars a month plus board and room.

THE AFTER YEARS

Those who remained in Leeleva eventually lost their homes. One night at one o'clock a mob came and shot into the Boese home. The Boeses escaped from the rear of their home with only the clothes on their backs. When they looked back, their home was burning. Eventually all the people in the village ran for their lives. Local Poles plundered Leeleva and surrounding villages. Then the Reds came with their destruction, and finally the Germans bombed the bridges on the highway. A traveler who later went through the village reported that only Preacher Tobias Voth's home was left standing. All others had been burned out, shot out and bombed out. Relief aid was sent from America by the Carl Wedels, Jake Deckers and others. It is doubtful that all the relief and money reached those for whom it was intended.

Father Ben's first wheat crop froze out leaving him poorer than ever. Jake went to Canada to work several times. In 1914 he again journeyed to Canada, not knowing that by the time he returned his mother would have died. The year after they came to America, Amelia was born. In 1912 baby Anna was born. She lived two weeks. Then infant Nettie came to join the family and she also died. Mother Eva was not well. Dr. Hertzler, famous surgeon at Halstead had performed some successful goiter surgeries, but chances of recovery were only fifty per cent. Jake had promised to pay for the operation. Mother Eva couldn't convince herself to have the surgery. Thus, at the age of forty-three she died. Had she lived a little longer she would have had another child which would have made a total of eighteen children. Jake would always remember her as a hard-working, warm-hearted mother. Father Ben was left with eight living children: Jake was twenty-two; Helen, nineteen; Andrew, sixteen; Bernard, fourteen; Carrie, eleven; Fred, nine; August, seven and Amelia was five years old. For a year (first grade) Amelia stayed with minister John Boeses after which she went back home for several years.

In 1919 Jake married Minnie Nightingale. They farmed for a living, moving several times. Amelia lived with them during seventh and eighth grade. Then she did hospital work and housework until she had a home of her own.

In 1926 there were four marriages in the family: Andrew, Carrie, August and Father Ben. For twelve years father had been a widower. Then he married Mrs. Carrie Rich whose husband had died leaving her with three daughters and a son. Carrie was a thankful person, enjoyed Ben's home and his children, and they in turn were good to her. For ten years they lived together. On the day of his seventy-third birthday, April 3, 1936, Father Ben died. His life spanned

thirty-seven years in the old century, and thirty-six years of the present century. He lived forty-four years in Russia and twenty-nine years in America.

After Father Ben had sold his farm machinery in 1919, and he moved to Burrton, the family scattered. Bernard lived with Jakes for four years; August was with them two or three years. Fred lived mostly with others but spent short periods of time with Jake and Minnie. Jake's Uncle Pete Unruh would have had to go to the poor house if he hadn't had a place with Jakes. Since they had three daughters and nine sons of their own, there were fourteen people around the table--and that during the depression! Minnie's grandmother, Mrs. Ben (Eva) Nightingale lived a short time with the Unruhs.

In later years, Henry Nightengale married Amelia Unruh Penner after his first wife and her first husband died. Henry remembers how Grandpa Pete Wedels, Agnes and Elizabeth, he and sister Marie lived in what is now the "Adobe House" on display in Hillsboro. The house then was located a few miles out of town.

After Jakes moved away from the farm to a home in Moundridge, Jake did janitor work. Whether his work was done in an obscure, northern village, at a rooming house in Germany, on the farm or cleaning a bank, Jake did his cheerful best. He had compassion for the poor, the helpless and the homeless. He and Minnie never regretted caring for others. Rather, they considered it a privilege. They were thankful for good health and enjoyed the common things of life. Jake's mind, hearing and eye sight were good all his life. He lived a humble life in a dignified way--serving others and respecting God.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Our special thanks and appreciation go to Viola, Mrs. Victor Koehn. For having become interested in the history of our father and his boyhood life in a Russian village. She interviewed him different times shortly before he passed away and also others who were in this particular Mennonite Immigrant party who escaped Russia and came to America in 1907.

Jacob B. Unruh family
December, 1979

SUMMARY

Father Benjamin Unruh's parents were: Cornelius Unruh and Susanna Wedel Unruh. Mother Eva Unruh's parents: Tobias Boehse (later Boese) and Anna Nachtigal Boehse

Relationship of the three immigrant families: Peter Wedel was an uncle to Benjamin Unruh; Mrs. Andrew Ratzlaff was a daughter to Peter Wedels

Known descendants of the original immigrant party who live in this area:

The Benjamin Unruh family of which Jake was the eldest; all live in central Kansas

The Peter Wedel family; the two grandchildren are still living--Henry, now married to Jake's sister Amelia, lives in Newton; Marie Wedel Klassen lives alone in Hillsboro; Agnes Schmidt who lived in Galva (now deceased) was a daughter of Pete Wedels; Elizabeth (also Peter Wedel's daughter was Mrs. Abe Nightingale--two of her children were Irvin Nightingale of Scott City, and Lorena, Mrs. Floyd Frank of Copeland

Teacher Andrew Ratzlaff family: daughter Marie Penner, now a widow, lives alone in Inman; three daughters are Velma, Mrs. Ervin Unruh of Galva; Elda, Mrs. Abe Schrag and Lavina, Mrs. Forrest Goering

Other names mentioned which might be of interest:

Julia Schultz, aunt to Betty (Mrs. Charles Koehn) of Canton;

Henry Unruh who came for Jake and Helen at the Galva depot was father to Ed Unruh, Moundridge

P. P. Johnson, for whom Jake worked for many years, was a grandfather to Linda, Mrs. Elmer Unruh, and Gertie, Mrs. Clayton Unruh

Our forefathers were faithful in their daily labors. Jake's family was no exception. Quiet-spoken Mother Eva and Jake worked side by side doing the menial tasks of the day. During the long hours she taught Jake the Lord's Prayer, thus meeting spiritual needs as well as providing "daily bread". We have a priceless heritage!