The Manual College

Wednesday, Dec. 14, 1977



Amelia Werre

Amelia Werre sat in the living room of her tiny Sherwood, 'Ore., farmhouse and recounted the story of the people of Norka, a "little German nation" on the upper Volga River.

The land belonged to Russia, but had become a German

enclave in the 1800s.

It was there that her father was born. Near the turn of the century, however, he boarded a train to Hamburg and booked passage on the steamship Wieland for the trip to America.

He was married twice and eventually moved to Felida

with his family.

Mrs. Werre, then Krieger, was born in 1902. More than 70 years later she wrote her memoirs of her youth in the grow-

ing farm community.

Today, Mrs. Werre is a member of the 10,000-member American Historical Society of Germans from Russia, an organization formed to preserve the culture and history of its members, many of whom are descendants of the people of Norka.

Amelia and Gottlieb Werre, a farmer and blacksmith gifted in the use of tools, were married in 1930. He died in

Her sister Pauline, often mentioned in the memoirs, is the mother-in-law of Apollo 15 astronaut James B. Irwin.

Felida memories:

(First of six parts)

My father came to the United States in May, 1890, and settled in Sutton, Neb. Later he moved to Grand Island, Neb., and then to Portland, Ore.

He had been a widower for three years when he proposed to his second cousin, whom he had known from childhood. They

were married July 31, 1898.

He had three young daughters by his first marriage. My sister Pauline was born June 11, 1900, and I came to be the last daughter, born Aug. 15, 1902.

Father in his disappointment in not having a son made the remark, "Must I work

for petticoats all my life?"

Father's mother lived with them, and she did not strive for peace, happiness or harmony in the home. It must have been while I was an infant that mother asked her if she would watch us while she went to the store. The answer she got was, "I raised my children, raise yours!"

When an opportunity arose to get away from these unpleasant situations by moving to a small farm seven miles northwest of

Vancouver, mother was all for it.

I was 10 months old when my family moved to Felida in June, 1903, into an old T-shaped farm house. There was a big kitchen on the long side with two small bedrooms in the rear and a living room with adjoining bedroom on the other part of the "T."

Some of my earliest recollections are of a bitterly cold winter when the news spread that the Columbia River had frozen over. Some of the young men of the community had taken long poles and made it across.

To augment the meager farm income, father would return to Portland to work for

Knight Packing Co.

He helped make dill pickles in the fall. He also put on rubber boots and tromped shredded cabbage in big tanks. He salted it, and it was left to ferment and become sauerkraut. Later on it was transferred into small kegs and other containers and ship-

Flooding every spring

ped throughout Oregon and sold to Portland stores.

After he finished work on Saturdays (there were no 5-day weeks then), he would take the Vancouver street car — which ran on Williams Avenue in Portland to the ferry depot — then the ferry across the Columbia River to Vancouver. From there he walked shome via the railroad tracks.

From Williams Avenue the street car ran over a long wooden trestle with a built-out portion to enable street cars to pass. Before dikes and the Bonneville Dam, this area flooded every year from late spring to early June.

It must have been in the years between 1908 and 1911 that a double railroad track was built north from Vancouver to Seattle, skirting the bluffs and near Lake River. The Greek laborers working on the new railroad often came up the canyon to our house to buy eggs and other produce.

They complained bitterly about their itching legs. Father told them it must be poison oak, as the hillsides were covered with the pest.

As the bluffs were cut back to make room for the second track, it made the possibility of slides a constant danger during heavy rains when the ground was soaked and unstable. The rumble of heavy freight trains could trigger a slide onto the tracks with danger of a derailment. My father was hired to patrol this area on foot during the night. He was given explosive clamp shells to clamp onto the rails when engineers had to be warned.

As the countryside became built up, Felida became a busy railroad station with a wireless telegrapher. Besides the mail sacks, milk cans, boxes of carp and other produce were shipped from Felida north to Seattle or south to Portland. For years, two long logging trains from Yacolt, one in the forenoon, the other in the early afternoon,

came to the Lake River side at Felida where they were run onto a spur and the logs dumped into the river by a moving donkey engine.

They were floated into Vancouver Lake where they were corralled in booms and finally rafted and towed downstream.

There was a large, high water tank near the Felida Station which was filled from one of the many springs coming out of the hillside. The trains often stopped there to take on water.

Cattle would often wander onto the tracks and were killed. The mentally retarded son of the Matt Andersons often stopped trains as he paid no heed to the distress whistle of the engineers.

Every June, with the melting snows in the Cascade Mountains and the swollen rivers feeding the Columbia River, there was high water on the lowlands between the Columbia, the slough and Lake River. The dairymen living on the bottoms along Lake River and Vancouver Lake were in trouble and had to move their herds to higher ground.

Lake River would always go over its banks and come up to the bottom of the railroad tracks. We could see big, fat, golden carp swimming lazily about. My sister and I would dig worms and go fishing in Lake River after the water went down. We would clamber out on the logs lying in the river. This was dangerous — they could have rolled and thrown us off, and neither one of us could swim.

One spring Sunday afternoon, father went fishing with us. We walked what seemed like miles trying to find a good fishing spot. Pauline thought by holding onto some willows alongside a boom log, so she could get onto the log. It moved and Pauline went in over her head. Father grabbed her by the ears and pulled her out!

No fish that Sunday.

gy was dynamite casualty

From the age of 1 to 17 (1903 to 1919), Amelia Krieger, later Werre, lived with her family in the Felida

After revisiting the area, she wrote in 1975 memories of that period of her life. This article is the second of six parts of selections from those memoirs.

Mrs. Werre lives at Sherwood, Ore.

By AMELIA WERRE

Mother used to be scared to be left home alone with two small

children. Hobos Hobos walking the tracks with heir bed rolls on their backs buld find their way up the ca-

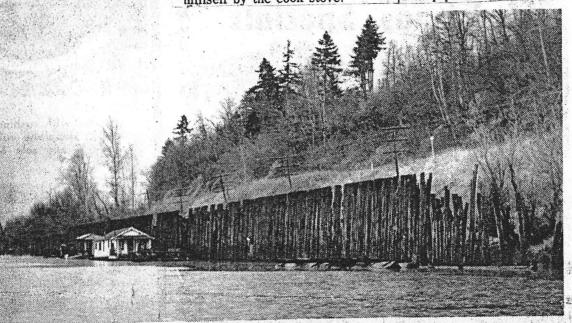
. He did get home, as his family sent us some flower seeds. After World War I broke out, however, we never heard from Conrad Gold again.

Another helper was Mr. Ward, a short, stout man. He slept in the parn in his blanket and dirty quilt. One night the cow got loose and found his long johns - which she chewed for their salt content. The next morning, Mr. Ward was quite grumpy as he tried to warm himself by the cook stove.

My sister and I were taught early to respect the bedding - we were not allowed to sit or wallow on the beds made up with quilts as that would mat the fluffy cotton or woolen filling, reducing their warmth, as well as soiling the covers.

At first father cleared land by blasting out the stumps, which

were then rolled together and burned. Later he acquired a stump puller and clearing land became easier as he used the dynamite to blast out or split the larger stumps, and the smaller ones could be removed with the stump puller.



Pilings along Lake River near Felida Moorage, circa 1900

nyon and ask for a handout. Some would ask for work, and if father could afford to hire them to help clear ground, he would.

Others offered to split wood for their meal. Only once did mother refuse to feed a hobo, and afterward she was conscience stricken. It was against her religion to turn the hungry away.

One of the men who came to the farm with a pack on his back, walking the railroad, was Conrad Gold. He was from Austria and spoke beautiful German. He was working to earn enough money to pay his fare back to Austria where he had a wife, two boys and a girl. He intended to walk to New York and take a ship from there.

He was very handy around the farm, and helped with the fall butchering and land clearing. He made a sled out of green hazelnut wood, bent the runners over a fire, built a framework over the runners, and then added seats. Mother made good use of empty 50- and 100-pound flour sacks and used them to make underwear for

us, pillow cases and even sheets. I can not recall that we had even one store-bought sheet while living on the farm. She even made some especially nice sacks into tablecloths with a hemstitched edging.

Blasting with dynamite was a dangerous job. A hole was dug under the stump with a long-handled half-round blasting spoon. Father would tie together the last bunch

of dynamite to go into the hole, and in one stick he would insert a blasting cap to which a fuse was attached. The hole was filled with dirt and lightly, but firmly, tamped, the fuse was lit and everybody ran for cover. Often a number of stumps were set off at once, so it was essential that count be kept of how many had blown up.

Once father miscounted and started walking toward a loaded stump. When he noticed his error, he made a hasty retreat. The stump went off with a roar, showering nieces of tree and clode

of dirt all around, but fortunately he escaped injury.

There was a high stump near the chicken house, and one day father decided to blast it out. Our buggy was sitting nearby, so father moved it to what he thought was a safe distance.

He set the charge off, and when the big pieces all came down, a large chunk landed in the middle of the buggy and wrecked it beyond repair. After that our transportation was by wagon or train Reaching the train depot required a long walk through the canyon and on the tracks for more than a mile.

When we used dynamite in the winter, it was necessary to keep it from freezing, so mother often kept it in the warm kitchen—which was a scary situation. Everyone had respect for the dynamite blasting caps, and they were handled with great care.

When father did not have anyone to help him saw a tree down, mother would often help pull the long saw back and forth.

There were no chain saws in those days.

Felida memories

Bees swarm as days warm

From the age of 1 to 17 (1903 to 1919), Amelia Krieger, later Werre, lived with her family in the Felida area.

After revisiting the area, she wrote in 1975 memories of that period of her life. This article is the third of six parts of selections from those memoirs.

Mrs: Werre lives at Sherwood, Ore.

By AMELIA WERRE

When the warm days of late spring came, the bees began to swarm, and we made every effort to hive them.

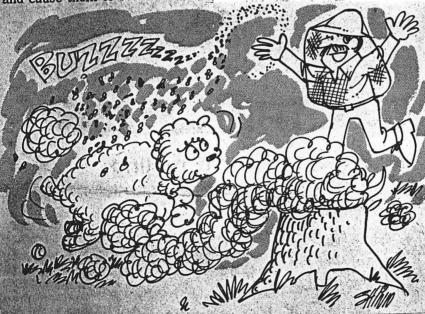
That meant watching when they were swarming to see where they would settle. If they settled on a low limb or the filbert trees, father had no trouble transferring them into a new hive which had been prepared for them.

Purchased foundation wax was inserted into the frames from which they could proceed to build the combs. We often banged on tin pails, dish pans and rang cow bells, supposedly to confuse them and cause them to settle.

When one container with boxes was full of honey, he would place another on top of that. Each box was prepared with a piece of foundation wax as a guide. It was one of my jobs to insert foundation wax into frames and the pound boxes.

Father would sell pound boxes as well as strained honey. He drove miles to borrow a honey extractor and canning knife. He would don his bee hat — which had a fine mesh veil around a tight-fiting coat and gloves. He then proceeded to open hive after hive to take out two or three frames heavy with honey, brushing off bees with a soft brush.

These he took to the house and with the heated canning knife sliced off a thin layer of the sealing wax, set the frames into a honey extractor and by turning the crank the centrifugal force would push the honey out.



If the queen bee wouldn't stay in the new hive, all the workers would follow and nothing could stop them. If a hive swarmed too often, thus weakening the colony, father could don his bee clothes, hunt out the queen and queen cells and destroy the young queens.

This was strained and bottled to be sold. Mother also clarified and melted the wax and later sold it to the druggist in Vancouver.

Once when father was robbing the bees, he forgot to remove the pet lamb that was tied in the area.



When he noticed that the maddened bees had attacked the lamb, he came to the house and told mother to get the lamb to safety.

Mother bundled up the best she could, with her face shielded so she could just see, cut the lamb loose and headed for a burning stump that was smoking. The bees did not like the smoke and left the lamb. It wobbled for a day or two, but the poison wore off.

We were surrounded by forests. In the fall, loggers would set slashings on fire and for weeks the air was blue and acrid with smoke from the burning slash and pitchy snags. Mother was always afraid that the fires would get away and burn us out. She would dig a hole in a large bare spot and bury valuable possessions.

When father acquired more cows, mother churned the cream and made butter to sell. At first the milk was put in a shallow pan and left for the cream to rise to the top in a thick crust which was skimmed off with a flat perforated skimmer. Later on, father bought a cream separator.

Once a week mother would churn the cream, at first in a tall, narrow crock with a wooden paddle; later on a regular wooden churn with paddles was purchased. When the cream separated into butter, mother

would run the buttermilk into crooks that had held the cream.

Then she would work the butter till it was fine-grained and all the buttermilk was out. Finally, it was washed in the cold, well water. It was then salted and ready to mold.

Mother's butter was highly prized, and there was always a ready sale for it. Some people took their butter to the Felida country store. Among them was a bachelor. His butter was so strong that the grocer tossed it across the road into the ditch as he did not want to lose a customer who might refuse to buy the bachelor's butter.

A customer in the store asked what he threw out as his dog was eating it. When he was told it was rancid butter, the customer threatened to shoot the grocer if his dog died!

Mother did her cooking on and baking in an old-fashioned cook

stove. Years later father bought a range with a lot of scroll designs on it. She was proud of her new stove and spent a lot of time keeping it spotless and polished. This was an annoyance to my sister Pauline, who told mother that the stove was her idol! Pauline received a smart slap in the face which she remembers to this day.

One day, after churning butter, she asked me to carry the butter-milk, which she had put in a two-gallon crock. I set the crock on my hip to carry it, but it slipped out of my hands and fell to the floor. The buttermilk splashed up the front of my mother's range, and over part of the floor. She was so horrified she almost was speechless.

All she could say was, "I have never seen anything like this!"

Felida: from stuck pig to

Wednesday, Jan. 4, 1978 Waterlogged dog

From the age of 1 to 17 (1903 to in 1975 memories of that period of her After revisiting the area, she wrote

1919), Amelia Krieger, later Werre, life. This article is the fourth of six parts of selections from those memoirs.

Mrs. Werre lives at Sherwood, Ore

By AMELIA WERRE

Everything was in readiness when butchering day arrived. The knives had to be sharpened, and that meant either my sister Pauline or I had to turn the old grindstone till our arms were tired.

Water was heated to boiling in a great iron kettle and rigging set up to lift the dead animal off the ground into a barrel of hot water and out again and onto a table where it was cleaned. The pig was gutted and hung up to cool. Casings were purchased for the sausages and whole pepper was ground in our old coffee grinder.

Generally only one hog was kept for family use, the others sold. The shoulders, hams and bacon were thoroughly rubbed with coarse salt and then put down in a wooden barrel.

As they were curing they were turned frequently and shifted. The bacon came out first, but the heavier pieces took longer to be cured by the salt brine. When curing was complete, everything was hung in the smokehouse.

Meal planning must have been a real challenge for mother, especially when the meat supply ran out. We were always glad when the young roosters were big enough to butcher so we could have fresh meat. Of course we always had cottage cheese, and in the spring when the chickens began laying again, there were eggs.

Father brought home an orphaned lamb which we raised on the bottle and it became a great pet. When he finally butchered it for meat, we were heartbroken and did not want to eat it.

My sister Pauline and I learned early to keep the house neat and clean. Saturday morning it was our job to scrub the kitchen floor with a brush — which we did on our knees. Mother was busy with baking, cooking and many other chores. When father was gone, she had to milk the cows while we helped with the feeding of the animals and chickens.

Once while cleaning out the pigpen with a pitchfork, a little pig became frightened, and I speared it lengthwise. I don't remember who did the most screaming, I or the pig. Fortunately it didn't die.

Father would never take time to make a swing for us. Pauline, being of an inventive mind, set a ladder against part of the house from which she suspended a swing made out of a light chain that was mended with wire.

On a Sunday morning I was swinging when the wire broke and tore into the inside of my arm at the elbow, exposing the

arteries - an area the size of a dollar.

I did not know this had happened till the blood was running down my arm. My parents took care of this big wound, bathing it with alcohol, then dusting it with a strong germicidal powder. It was then bandaged with clean white cloth. It healed without infection, but I carry a big scar as a reminder.

The first thing father did in his excitement was to grab Pauline and gave her a horrible spanking. He was quicktempered and his word was law.



Whenever we had sore throats; he would fill a glass tube with a small amount of sulphur. While we held our breath he would puff the sulphur into our throats. It really helped, but what a time we had to get our breath again. It was always a frightening experience. Fortunately we never suffered any broken bones.

Our water supply was a 45-foot-deep dug well on the south side of the house. Boards had been used for making the well casing.

They finally rotted and one long, rainy winter when the ground was waterlogged, the pressure of the earth against the rotted wood caused it to let go, and big portions of dirt would splash down into the well.

My bedroom was on that side and I could hear the earth plunging into the well, and it frightened me. It was too dangerous to try to repair this damage, so father dug a new well northeast of the house. It wasn't satisfactory as he struck quicksand and the water was never clear or tasted as good as that from the older well.

There was no cover over the well casing that was above ground, and mother often pleaded with father to cover the well, but to no avail. She worried that one of us would fall

into the well.

We had a black cocker spaniel which loved to chase the cats — which he did all too frequently. One day, while chasing a cat which had climbed up the post and sat on the 2-by-4 over the well, he plunged into its depths, howling as he went

It was my sister Mary who ran to our neighbor, Mr. Corman, and in her excitement told him, "The devil, the devil, the dog is in the well!" He came over and let a ladder down into the well by a rope so the dog would have something to hang onto, and a wooden tub was lowered for him to climb into.

He was finally hauled up - a very wet, cold dog. Mary worked the rest of the day trying to empty the well so we could have clean drinking water.

Next week: the zither player who store and the downfall of the Felida drank too much, a visit to the general prune industry.

Drunken, zither-playing





From the age of 1 to 17 (1903 to 1919). Amelia Krieger, later Werre, lived with her family in the Felida

After revisiting the area, she wrote in 1975 memories of that period of her life. This article is the fifth in a series of six selections from those memoirs.

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By AMELIA WERRE

One late fall or early spring father went to visit a relative who lived on the Columbia River near Astoria. On the way home by river boat he met a passenger who could play the zither so nicely that father invited him to our home so we could hear the musician play.

Mother gave him supper, but he had one too many to drink, and vomited over the floor much to his embarrassment and mother's disgust. He did not stay long. Afterwards father managed to buy us a zither, and my sister and I learned to play a little on it.

There was no electricity:
kerosene lamps, hanging or
standing, were the order of the
day. The lanterns used outside or
in the barn required daily filling,
wick trimming and chimney
cleaning. If the wick was turned
up too high or a strong draft hit
the lamp, it would smoke, and the



Photos circa 1916

(Above) "Mother" and Amelia Krieger

(Left) "Father" - Henry Krieger

when agents came around 1914 when agents came around selling lamps with mantles. At first kerosene, and later white gasoline, was poured into the lamp bowl, and air was pumped in through the small thumb screw opening. They gave off a brilliant white light.

We were taught always to be careful when around a lamp or carrying one, for the fire danger was great. Kerosene often was used when a wood fire was slow starting. In later years, some people tried this with gasoline, much to their sorrow.

We had no telephone, but our neighbor Mr. Corman did, a wall-type one that had to be cranked to get the operator. We had to walk a mile to get our mail which the carrier delivered via a horse and buggy. On the way we would loiter, pick wild strawberries to eat and kick over huge ant hills.

eat and kick over huge ant hills.
There was a general merchandise store at Felida, and they carried a large variety of items. Pictures that one sees now of that era are true to life. Barrels stood about containing food items, and there was a coffee mill to grind the roasted coffee beans, and a large round disk on which huge cheeses were kept under glass cover. An attached knife would eut off a wedge as ordered. The grocer also would take in trade

two-story IOOF Hall, at which social functions were held. A

social functions were held. A small country church was adjacent.

Later on, Felida had a new church built by the Methodists, but, with the advent of the automobile, the young people found other places of amusement and church attendance dwindled to where it could no longer support a pastor. Finally the church too was torn down. The railroad depot, at the bottom of a long steep grade, and the nearby rooming house, for the loggers that unloaded the logging trains, were the sum total of Felida buildings, besides the three-room schoolhouse.

There was a blacksmith in the nearby community of Lake Shore. He also assisted when a farmer's cow was in need of calving help. Only those farmers who had a large dairy had a herd sire, and the rest of the people had to lead their cows to the dairies when

they were bulling.

Lake Shore also had a sulphur spray manufacturing plant. Since prune trees were the major crop in Clark County at that time, the prune trees were pruned early in the year. In April or early May, all the prune trees were sprayed with the lime-sulphur spray. The trunks and limbs of the trees were glistening clean and not a bit of moss was to be seen on them.

In the fall father would often work for Mr. Anderson, a neighbor, in the prune drier. My sister Pauline and I would pick up prunes for the neighbors. One fall Mr. Anderson asked father to pick up walnuts for him, but as father

was busy, I offered to pick up the walnuts and was accepted.

Red peppers 'cur

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By AMELIA WERRE

No work ever was done on Sundays, except care of the livestock. My sister Pauline and I went to Sunday school.

At home, mother would entertain us by showing us the pictures in her little trunk or teaching us to read German out of the German

Our parents sang hymns and their voices harmonized beautifully, so Pauline and I both grew up loving to sing. We were always called on at Christmas time to sing in German for the church program.

Other times we were discriminated against by the other students as we were of German parentage and maybe not as well dressed as others. Father insisted that we speak German at home. so I could not speak a word of English when I started school.

Like all children, we had to go to school. Our three-room schoolhouse must have been 11/2 miles from our house, and we had to walk both ways, rain or shine. Our wraps were hung in the hall. and our lunch boxes were put on the shelves.

Often when I sat down to lunch, to my dismay I found that my goodles had been taken out. Late every fall my parents made Polish sausage, as well as liver sausage. When the sausage consistently was missing, I finally complained to Mr. Sprecher, our eacher. He told me to doctor it up with red pepper. Slits were cut into the sausage and were filled with red pepper, then the meat was pressed back into place. It wasn't long afterwards when the culprit let out with "Wow! Red pepper!" After that Ross Taylor was called "Red Pepper" by the other boys. The bigger boys, weather per-

sausage thie

mitting, used to sit outside along the Hathaway's barnyard fence to eat their lunches, and often I would see them toss out their sandwiches, biscuits, etc., onto the ground, later to be eaten by dogs or chickens. Our parents taught us to bring home every scrap of bread left over from our lunch and that it was sinful to waste bread or throw it on the ground. To this day it goes against my grain to see precious bread so used.

The drinking water for the

school was from a ram set in a spring in a deep canyon some distance from the school.

We had cold running water in the corner of each room, but no common drinking cup. Each one of us had a small folding drinking cup. Towels were on a towel rack, and the ends were sewed together. We would take turns

Continued on next page

More about -

Continued from preceding page

Two I will be

taking them home to launder. Each room had a large furnace that was enclosed with a high jacket. These were stoked with wood. It seemed to throw out enough heat that we were all comfortable.

At the end of the eighth school year, students had to take a state examination to graduate and get a diploma. Since we all had a good foundation in schooling, very few failed to pass the tests. There were no buses to pick up the students to take them to high school in Vancouver, so very few of us had the opportunity to go, which I have always deeply regretted.

grades, kept the boys under con- boys.

trol. It was his habit to pace the room with his trusty switch in hand.

Many times in our long walk home from school, two boys, Roger Beall and Leslie Davis, would slap us, pull our braids, splash mud on us and push us down. We were too timid to go and complain to their parents, and our parents, speaking only broken English, never made any attempt to interfere.

We would complain to our teachers, but that only worsened the situation. They made my life a living hell, and I later remarked that I could see Roger Beall drown and not stretch out a helping hand — such was my bit-Mr. Dale, who taught the upper terness toward these two devilish

> Continued on Previous page

I put in a long day running from tree to tree to pick up every walnut. Later on when Mr. Anderson came to pay me, he asked how much I wanted. I reasoned that I had done the same job that father would have done, and asked him the same wages—\$2—which he would have paid father. He was taken aback, but didn't say anything. He paid me but never asked me to pick up walnuts again.

During the drying season it was a common occurrence for a prune drier to catch on fire and light up the skies at night. This was the case of Matt Anderson's drier.

Since there was no firefighting equipment, it always meant a total loss!

During World War I prunes brought a good price, up to 25 cents a pound. But in another 10 years the price went down to 5 cents or less a pound. Then a blight or disease struck the

orchards, and they no longer produced, so farmers grubbed them out by the thousands and turned to other crops.

Next week: revenge, a fight with the boys and Felida school time. Page 10, Hazel Dell News, Wednesday, January 18, 1978

One afternoon on the way home from school, Pauline finally had enough and turned on our tormentors and knocked the wind out of one of them. She pummeled him as he lay on the ground. After that we had some peace.

We were well taught in our country grade school — we could write a legible hand and outspell any grade school graduate of this day and age. Later when I went to business college after my parents moved back to Portland, I had no difficulty transcribing my shorthand notes and spelling correctly letters dictated to me.

It used to be a long, tiresome trip to Portland by horse and wagon over gravelled roads all the way. The sharp rocks were hard on the horses' feet, especially those on long, steep Joe Hill. Then there was the ferry trip over the Columbia, and another long trip to northeast Portland where the German people of father's acquaintance and his customers lived.

In January of 1917 the first

Interstate Bridge across the Columbia River was opened, and it brought a great change as automobiles became more numerous. Father never owned a car, and we often wondered, with his temperament, if he ever could have learned to drive.

After the close of World War I

when the traffic became heavier, father mulled over his situation. He had no son to help do the heavier work, and he was getting older. When Henry Miller and his two strapping young sons came and asked father if he would sell the farm to them, he and mother talked it over and the answer was

ves.

They packed what they thought could be used in Portland, and all the antiques of those years were left behind. I can still see in my mind's eye our beautiful light-colored Jersey cow that was so tame, looking so sad and forlorn when we left Felida.

