

HISTORY OF THE JOHN TLACHAC FAMILY 1856-1972

As written by JOHN TLACHAC March 1975

This transcript is published as it was originally written by John Tlachac, who lived in Door County, Wisconsin, USA his entire life.

The way the first settlers to this country lived...

This country was all woods with no roads, traveling was done on foot. My grandparents Mathias and Mary Tlachac came to America from what was then called Bohemia, belonging to Austria, ruled by a King. They came from the village of Cep which was in the district of Budejovica. As Austria was a German country, the Bohemians had to learn to read German in school.

Only the boys went to school, which was only in the winter months. The Bohemian language had to be learned at home. Grandpa could not write except his name. Grandma could write, but very well. Grandfather talked German. His parents were very poor people. They were laborers and owned only a home in the village. Wages were so low that laborers could not make enough money to have any property of their own.

When Grandfather was a young man; many people were leaving Bohemia for America. He began to be interested also, but had no money. Grandfather was working for a farmer by the name of Joseph Cerny who was quite well off for those times. He too became interested in going to America. Then one day he told grandfather that if he wanted to come to America that he would loan him money for the boat and train fare if he would work for him in America long enough to pay off the debt. Grandfather thought about it and decided to take him up on the bargain.

It was the year of 1856 that Cerny sold his farm and prepared to leave Bohemia for America. Grandfather obtained the necessary papers to leave the country. Cerny, his wife and children and grandpa left Cep Oct.24 and traveled to Prague by river boat. On Oct. 27, they left Prague by train to the port of Bremen where they boarded a large sail boat which could take up to 100 people. They sailed through the North Sea to the Atlantic Ocean. They were on the Ocean for 53 days when they got to the New York harbor. There they spent two days. From there they boarded a train for Chicago which took four days. Then they took another train for Milwaukee. It took one day to get to Milwaukee from Chicago. From Milwaukee they rode by stage coach to Manitowoc as there were no trains north of Milwaukee. It took almost a week to get there. By that time it was three days before Christmas.

From Manitowoc they had to go to a small place called Green Street about two miles south of Maribel in the township Cooperstown where they found a place to live. After getting settled Cerny looked for and bought 120 acres of land and began to clear it of trees.

The trip cost \$100.00 besides other traveling expenses as meals, train fare and stagecoach traveling. After about two years the debt to Cerny was repaid. Then grandfather began to save money to send to Europe to bring grandmother and uncle Math to this country. Then October 24, 1859 they made the trip to America. They made the trip Manitowoc a few days before Christmas. They family lived in Green Street for several years, working for Cerny.

Grandmother's relatives did not leave Bohemia. They were property owners and made a better living. She had two sisters, Anna and Katerrina and four brothers, Math, Jacob, Jan, and Vojta. There are, at present, a number of relatives of the Hadac family living in what is now called Czechoslovakia. My cousin Math Tlachac had been writing to them before his death.

Door County, Wisconsin

Several of the Tlachac neighbors of Cep Bohemia came to America and moved to the township of Brussels, Door County, one of which was John Cisar. Then in the year of 1862 grandpa was looking for land around Cooperstown, but by that time all the land had been bought up. He decided to look for land somewhere else. He knew that Cisar's lived in Door County so he went down and found where he lived in the township of Brussels. Cisar had bought two eighty acre tracts of land. Grandfather made a bargain on one eighty acres.

Then in 1864 they moved to Brussels. They had no way of moving so Cisar hitched his yoke of oxen to a wagon and drove to Green Street and bought the Tlachac family of five to Brussels and they lived there several weeks with Cisar. There were several families living in that neighborhood, they got together and built a small log house. Grandparents moved in and at last had a home of their own.

Clearing the land of trees began and a small piece of ground was broke for a garden. They had no well for several years. Water had to be brought from small creeks which were plentiful then. The next year grandfather bought a pair of oxen and they were able to plant a little patch of wheat. Cutting down large trees and pulling them together to burn was a very slow and hard work. Tools like a harrow and wagon had to be made by hand and made of wood. For several years the little field of grain, had to be planted and cut by hand. A tool called a cradle was used to cut it. The cradle was pretty much like a grass scythe with a blade about three feet long handle, about three inches wide. About four prongs of wood curved like the cutting blade and fastened above the blade to hold the grain together as it was cut off the ground. It stayed in small sheaves. A small sheaf was taken and wrapped around the sheaf and a bundle made. A wood rake was used to rake enough grain for a bundle, as there was no barn; the bundles were put up into a stack.

Threshing

Threshing was done with a tool called a flail, which was made of a piece of wood about two feel long and three inches in diameter and was fastened to a handle about six feet long. One end of the flail had a hole drilled in it and a leather strap or small rope was used to fasten it to the handle.

Threshing was done by placing the bundles on the ground side by side and the grain was pounded out of the heads. The straw was removed with a fork and the grain and chaff was shoveled over and the wind blew the chaff away. Some years later a fanning mill was purchased to separate the grain from the chaff. I remember seeing the fanning mill when I was a young man. It, and some other first machinery stored in a small barn which housed the livestock which grandparents owned some years after they had feed for them.

In touch with Cep Bohemia until 1885

My Grandparents kept in touch with their folks in Cep. A man they knew by the name of Baster was able to write well so he would write for them. The folks in Cep wrote back and gave them all the news. Grandfather's brother died in 1867 and mother died about thirty years before him. Two sisters and two brothers lived at that time. They sold the house and were supposed to have moved to this country and lived in Chicago. Martin visited my grandparents one summer and helped clear land. After several months he got lonesome and said that he would go back to Europe. He got as far as Chicago, found work and lived there and wasn't heard from for many years. Then in the year of 1919 through a Bohemian newspaper, it was learned that Martin lived in Chicago. One son John was living then: was married and had three daughters and one son Frank, Math Tlachac wrote there and some month's later John came to visit us here at our folk's home. He was a sick man then and died about a year later. His daughters Sylvia, Lillian, Rose and his son, Frank, came up this way nearly every year. Sylvia died some years ago. John had a brother Andrew and a sister Mary but nothing is known about them. After the year 1885 the Hadac family quit writing to America. That was the last that was known about our relatives in Cep Bohemia for many years.

Grandparents kept clearing more woodland into fields for grain but they died not having a deed to their property until the year of 1878. There were some unexplained problems.

The Grain Reaper

In 1869 a grain reaper was bought. There already was too much grain to cut with a cradle. They also bought their first team of horses and a small thresher. It was powered by horses. A machine with a large cog wheel about four feet in diameter mounted on a heavy frame. Four long sweeps of 3 x 5 inch hardwood were fastened from the center of the wheel to the outside to which the horses were hitched and had to walk in a circle. Iron rods about 1 1/2" in diameter and about ten feet long connected the horsepower to the machine. This machine just had a cylinder and a concave. The threshed grain and straw came off together and had to be separated with a fork by hand and shovel and cleaned of chaff with a fanning mill. A grain reaper was like a hay mower with a platform built behind the cutting bar. A set of rakes moved the cut grain from the cutting bar to the side of the platform. One of the rakes was set in such a way that it pushed the grain off the platform to the ground in bunches which had to be bound into bundles by hand. I have not seen the machine as it was when it was in operating condition. My father took the platform and rakes off and used the mower for cutting ripe peas.

Log House and Log Stable

They still lived in their small log house and had a small log stable located 20 acres from the road which very likely did not exist at that time. By that time their family was larger by three. Magdeline, John, my father and Uncle Steve. Uncle was about two months old when the Peshtigo fire went through. The fire was all around them but having cleared land all around their home they did not burn out, but a stack of wheat started to burn and they were able to put it out. If their home and stable would have burned they surely would have perished as many families did at that time. Some settlements were wiped out entirely. With a team of horses they could do a more work than with oxen which were very, very slow moving around.

“Then the grandparents were glad that they came to America”

Then in 1875 grand parents built a log barn along the road where the big frame barn now stands. I remember the barn when it was taken down in 1905. I also remember the threshing machine with a strew elevator instead of a straw blower. The grain into a half bushel measure and had to be emptied into the bag by hand which required an extra man. The first grain binder was bought around 1880 or soon after. Then more bundles had to be bound by hand as the machine tied nice bundles which were easier to shock.

By that time they had a few head of cattle, pigs, sheep and some poultry. For cattle and horses they built a log stable northeast of their barn with a loft above and a place to drive in with a load of hay in-between the two parts of the stable. A small log stable for poultry and sheep was built onto the large stable. They had more grain by then so a log granary was put upon the south east of the barn. The log granary was taken down in 1909 and a frame building with a shed or machinery was built on to it. I was eleven years old then and I helped take the old building down. The year of 1880 a large house of logs was built with siding of pine over the logs. In 1921 the larger part of the house was moved closer to the road and an addition put on to it. Grandparents had a complete set of buildings when they moved into their new house. Their first well was drilled at about the same time. By that time as they had been clearing more of their woods of trees and stumps more grain like oats, barley, and peas besides wheat were planted. At the year of 1883 they had a large crop of wheat threshed over 800 bushels and sold all for two dollars a bushel. Then the grandparents were glad that they came to America to make a living because in Bohemia it would not have been possible to own a farm.

By then there were steam powered thresh machines, called grain separators in which the bundles were fed to the machine, straw was delivered onto a stack and clean grain was carried in bags into the grain bins. My grandparents farmed until 1896 when they retired.

My Father

My father went to Algoma High School part of two terms. He would have liked to keep on going to school. In those years most of the young men went the lumber woods to make logs. So the second he quit school in the late fall end went to Northern Michigan and Wisconsin lumber camps to work. He must have been around 16 or 17 Years old then. He worked eight or nine winters and several summers. In summer he worked in saw mills and also worked in Green Bay. When Uncle Math got married he lived with the Grandparents. Things did not work out well so he left and moved to a farm close by now by now owned by James Tlachac. Shortly after he bought a farm in the town of Lincoln and lived there the rest of his life.

Uncle Steve was going to take over the home farm but could agree on a bargain, so he did not live there when he got married. Grandparents him another farm which is now Robert Tlachacs place.

My father was then called home for to help his parents run the farm for that year. He got married in 1897 and took over the 80 acres across the road which was supposed to be given to the son for supporting his parents. One forty he got several years after he lived there and the other forty which by then was a heavily wooded land, he got about 15 years after.

My father's brother Frank moved on the farm that uncle Math left a few years before. My father's sisters got married and moved to the southern part of the town of Lincoln in Kewaunee County. The house on the farm was made for two families. It had a wing built onto the larger part of the house.

Grandparents lived in the smaller part of the house. That part of the house where they lived still stands and is made into a garage and work shop. By the time they retired, they had lived about forty years in America.

There was about fifty acres cleared on the land where the buildings stood. Across the road they had about twenty five acres under cultivation. That part of the farm had been a deep swamp with mostly cedar and some pine timber. The 1871 fire went through and every thing burned to the ground. My father said that after the fire went through they could see Kohberg! Some of the cedars that burned, but not fall were standing for almost fifty years before father and I took them down used some of them for lumber when they remodeled the house in 1921.

The eighty where the buildings stand had been all hardwood. The trees were mostly maple some beach, elm and hemlock. My folks owned the farm for about forty years when my brother Vojta took it over. Grandfather had not ever spoken of having any uncles or cousins living in Bohemia when he left.

It is not likely that there were any other Tlachac's left in Bohemia after his brothers Martin and Jacob left their country. The oldest brother Joseph served in the army when he was 18 years old and did not return home and so it is believed that he died in service.

Second brother Jacob served his army duty returned home and worked out. Not much was known about him. He was believed to have died at an early age. I remember my father telling about him visiting grandparents for some" when he left he was have supposed to have gone back to Europe but he might not have went back but perhaps found a job and lived in this country.

The sisters Rosalie and Anna married but that was all that was known about them. One of Annals daughters married a Kostichka, which moved to the town of Ahnapee in Kewaunee County, but it is not, known where Rosalie and Anna lived when they came to America.

My cousin Math Tlachac also talked to Uncle Math

My cousin Math Tlachac as a young man had been interested in the way the first settlers to this country and our grandparents and their families lived and where they came to in America from Europe. He spent a lot of time and inquired of people who knew of someone that could give him some information. One man that he knew when he lived in Chippawa Falls told him about a relative of his who lived in Manitowoc, that they may be able to help him. This was a granddaughter of the people grandfather came to this country with. He wrote to her and found out that Joseph Cerny lived on his farm until his son took the farm over when he married. He and another man bought a brewery in Kewaunee. They operated the brewery for several years. The business was not good and they went bankrupted and lost the money they had invested in the business. Then Joseph Cerny moved back to the farm and lived with his son and family the rest of his life.

Math Tlachac also talked to uncle Math, Uncle Steve, and Emily Tlachac besides what he remembered what grandfather told him about their life. He wrote all the information and some years later had it made into a book. He worked at it many years. He even wrote to Czecho- Stovakia for some of his information. Some of what is written here is what I remembered my father telling us. What I have written is just a small part of what Math composed.

The Farm

Many changes took place on the farm after my parents owned it besides the large frame barn and granary the log stable was taken down in 1928 and the logs were sawed into lumber and used to build a new building for hogs, chickens and machinery and also a garage for a car and truck. They had more livestock then. They did not furnish enough water for them so they had the well drilled deeper and supplied an unlimited amount of water. That was in the middle of the summer of 1914. The house was in poor condition so they decided to remodel it. A basement was dug and the larger part of the house was moved on it and an addition was built on it to make more room. It has five bedrooms. The old part was completely rebuilt inside, with new siding on the outside.

In 1911 they built a wood stave silo and later a concrete silo replaced the old one. At about the year 1915 we started to cut wood on the north forty across the road from the buildings. My father sold several acres of standing timber to neighbors for firewood. We cut wood for ourselves and some to sell as stove wood. After that, every year the woods was smaller. When my brothers were out of school they made many cords of wood every year in the winter months. My father hauled wood to Algoma and Forestville every fall until spring with a team of horses and wagon and a sleigh. Around the late 1920s some of the land was plowed. That kept on from year to year until about half of the forty was under cultivation. Just, a few acres of woods were left standing for pasture land. The south eighty has about sixty acres under cultivation. The rest is hardwoods. When my brother Vojta took over the farm he made more improvement, so the frame granary was taken down and a large machinery building replaced it. A steel grain bin was built for grain.

He also built two more silos, had a barn cleaner and pipeline milking equipment. He increased his herd of cattle to around eighty head. They bought forty acres of land from the Edward Tlachac farm and purchased a complete set of modern farm machinery. During their ownership the farm was in the Tlachac family over 100 years. Vojta was the third Tlachac in the family to own the farm. When their children grew up and were on their own Vojta was near retirement age and could not do all the work, he sold the farm and moved to Forestville. The farm was bought by Jos Wercheck, he kept it less than one year when he sold to Richard Ducat, a young couple who seem to make out all right.

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