

LIFE ON A SMALL FRUIT AND DAIRY FARM  
IN WESTERN NEW YORK STATE, CIRCA 1900  
BY WILLIAM J. KHURT

THE FAMILY:

MY FAMILY CAME FROM GRIBAU IN POMMERANIA IN EAST PRUSSIA. THEY HAD WORKED ON AN ESTATE OWNED BY A PRUSSIAN BARON, WHERE THEY HAD LIVED AND DONE FARM WORK FOR SEVERAL HUNDRED YEARS.

MY GRANDFATHER, CHRISTOPHER KUHRT, WAS MARRIED TWICE. HIS FIRST FAMILY CONSISTED OF ONE SON AND TWO DAUGHTERS. THE SON SERVED IN THE GERMAN COAST GUARD FOR A FEW YEARS, THEN MARRIED AND CAME TO THE UNITED STATES ABOUT 1876, WHERE HE BOUGHT A SMALL FARM NEAR FORESTVILLE IN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY. ONE OF THE DAUGHTERS MARRIED IN GERMANY, THEN CAME TO CHICAGO WHERE HER HUSBAND DID CARPENTER WORK. THE SECOND DAUGHTER MARRIED THE YOUNG MANAGER OF THE ESTATE. HER FAMILY OF FOUR, TWO SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS CONTINUED THE FAMILY IN GERMANY. AFTER THE DEATH OF HIS FIRST WIFE, MY GRANDFATHER MARRIED AGAIN AND, AFTER A FEW YEARS LIVING AROUND BERLIN, HE BROUGHT HIS SECOND FAMILY OF ~~two~~ <sup>three</sup> SONS AND TWO DAUGHTERS TO THE UNITED STATES IN 1880. MY FATHER, THE THIRD SON REMAINED IN GERMANY ONE MORE YEAR BECAUSE HE WAS TRAINING TO BECOME A MACHINIST. THEN HE CAME OVER ALONE. MY GRANDFATHER AND FAMILY BOUGHT A SMALL FARM IN THE TOWN OF SHERIDAN IN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY, WHERE HE AND HIS OLDER SONS WORKED IN THE BUILDING OF THE NICKEL PLATE RAILROAD FROM NEW YORK TO CHICAGO. WHEN THE ROAD REACHED ASHTABULA, OHIO, ANOTHER CREW TOOK OVER AND MY GRANDFATHER BEGAN FARMING. THE RAILROAD AND THE SMALL FARMS WERE ONLY ABOUT ONE HALF, MILE SOUTH OF THE SHORE OF LAKE ERIE. AFTER MY FATHER CAME OVER HE DID FARM WORK FOR A FEW YEARS. HE WORKED ON THE REED FARM NEAR LAKE ERIE WHERE THE OWNER WAS A GREAT LAKES SHIP CAPTAIN. THEY HAD A SON, DANIEL REED, ABOUT THE SAME AGE AS MY FATHER, DANIEL REED, BECAME OUR CONGRESSMAN AND I SAW HIM WHEN I LIVED IN WASHINGTON D.C. MY MOTHER WAS ALSO OF GERMAN STOCK. MY GRANDFATHER MASSMAN CAME OVER ABOUT THE SAME TIME AS MY GRANDFATHER KHURT. THEY CAME FROM MECKLENBURG, NORTH ON THE BALTIC SEA. HE AND TWO OF HIS OLDER SONS HELPED TO BUILD THE NICKEL PLATE RAILROAD AND BOUGHT SMALL FARMS NEARBY. MY MOTHER, ELIZABETH, WAS THE OLDEST OF A FAMILY OF SIX, THREE SONS AND THREE DAUGHTERS. MY MOTHER WAS BORN ON THE FARM IN THE TOWN OF SHERIDAN; WENT TO SCHOOL THROUGH SIXTH GRADE, THEN WENT TO WORK AS A DOMESTIC ON THE BUTLER FARM NEAR SHERIDAN CENTER. MY FATHER AND MOTHER WERE MARRIED IN 1888 AND MY FATHER BEGAN WORK IN THE BROOKS PLANT OF THE AMERICAN LOCOMOTIVE COMPANY-THEN LATER HE WORKED FOR A COMPANY THAT WAS FITTING RAILROAD PASSERGER CARS FOR STEAM HEAT INSTEAD OF COAL STOVES. THEIR OLDEST SON, REUBEN, WAS BORN IN DUNKERK IN 1890. THEN MY FATHER BOUGHT THE SMALL FRUIT AND DAIRY FARM IN 1893. MY BROTHER RAYMOND WAS BORN 1893 AND I WAS BORN IN 1895 ON THE FARM. EIGHT YEARS LATER A DAUGHTER ETHELYN WAS BORN AND TWO YEARS, LATER THE TWINS MARGUERITE AND MARJORIE CAME ALONG.

## THE FARM:

IT CONSISTED OF 50 ACRES SITUATED ON WHAT IS NOW-KING ROAD. IT WAS ABOUT 3 MILES SOUTH OF LAKE ERIE. IT WAS, AND IS, TWO MILES TO SHERIDAN CENTER, 2 2/3 MILES TO FORESTVILLE, 5 MILES TO SILVER CREEK, 6 MILES TO DUNKIRK AND FREDONIA AND 44 MILES SOUTHWEST OF BUFFALO.

THE LAND WAS ROLLING HILLS ON THE SOUTHEND, THEN SLOPEING TO THE NORTH. THE UPPER AREA WAS HILLY EXCEPT WHERE THE HOME STOOD, BUT THE SOIL WAS GRAVEL-LOAM. THE LOWER PART OF THE FARM WAS LOAM SOIL ALSO BUT HEAVIER, BUT THE LOWER ACRES WERE WET AND ABOUT 10 ACRES WERE FILLED WITH STUMPS AND ROCKS AND COULD ONLY BE USED FOR PASTURE. LATER ON MY FATHER PUT IN A TILE AND DRAINED THE LOWER HALF OF THE FARM. ON THE WEST WAS A DEEP RAVINE, 50 FEET BELOW THE HOUSE LEVEL WITH A CREEK RUNNING NORTH TOWARD LAKE ERIE.

THE BUILDINGS WERE QUITE GOOD, MADE BY A CARPENTER FROM WHITE PINE FROM THE AREA. THE HOUSE HAD 5 BEDROOMS, TWO ON THE FIRST FLOOR, 3 ON THE SECOND FLOOR. THERE WAS A LARGE KITCHEN, PANTRY, LIVING ROOM AND PARLOR BESIDES THE TWO BEDROOMS. THERE WAS A BEAUTIFUL SOLID WALNUT STAIRWAY TO THE BEDROOMS ON THE SECOND FLOOR, ONE BEDROOM WAS QUITE LARGE. THERE WAS NO BATHROOM OR TOILET, THE LATTER BEING ABOUT 60 FEET FROM THE HOUSE. THEN THERE WAS A LARGE CELLAR WITH BINS FOR POTATOES AND APPLES AND AN 8X8 HANGING SHELF FOR CANNED FRUITS AND CANNED MEATS.

WE MADE OUR OWN WASHING SOAP-FAT WOULD BE COLLECTED DURING THE WINTER MONTHS. THEN IN THE SPRING WE HEATED IT IN A BIG IRON KETTLE. WHEN HOT, WE ADDED LYE FROM OUR ASHES BARREL AND PRESTO, THERE WERE 2-3 GALLONS OF SOFT SOAP.

OUR DRINKING WATER AND COOKING WATER CAME FROM A 24 FOOT WELL ABOUT 15 FEET FROM THE PANTRY. A SUCTION TYPE PUMP BROUGHT IT TO THE PANTY SINK. ALSO THE RAIN WATER WAS COLLECTED BY EVE TROUGHS AROUND THE HOUSE AND PIPED INTO A 12' X 12' CISTERN. A SUCTION PUMP BROUGHT IT INTO THE PANTRY SINK ALSO. THAT SOFT WATER WAS IDEAL FOR CLOTHES WASHING, WE HAD A WELL IN THE COW BARN ALSO.

ON MONDAYS, MOTHER WASHED CLOTHES WINTER AND SUMMER. WHEN I WAS 5 YEARS OLD SHE HAD ONLY A ZINC WASH BOARD AND A BIG COPPER KETTLE. LATER WE BOUGHT A WASH TUB WITH A BAFFLE IN THE CENTER. AFTER RINSING, CLOTHES WERE PUT THROUGH A HAND WRINGER AND THEN ONTO A LONG TRIPLE WIRE CLOTHES LINE OUTSIDE THE HOUSE. WHEN DRY, MOST OF THE CLOTHES WERE IRONED WITH FLAT IRONS HEATED ON TOP OF THE STOVE.

NORTH OF THE HOUSE WAS THE WOODSHED WITH ROOM FOR 8 TO 10 CORDS OF WOOD FOR THE STOVES AND SOME ROOM FOR SMALL TOOLS. WE HAD TO COOK AND HEAT WITH WOOD THAT WE CUT EACH WINTER. WE HAD NO ELECTRICITY, NO TELEPHONE, AND OF COURSE NO TELEVISION, RADIO OR AUTOMOBILE. NEXT TO THE WOODSHED WAS A CHICKEN HOUSE LARGE ENOUGH FOR ABOUT 200 LAYING HENS. NEXT WAS THE PIG PEN WITH SEPARATE PENS FOR 2 SOWS AND A LARGER PEN FOR 12-15 GROWING PIGS. BEYOND THAT WAS THE HORSEBARN WITH STALLS FOR 4 HORSES AND A FRONT

ROOM FOR A BUGGY, SLEIGHS, A LIGHT WAGON AND BINS FOR FEED. ALSO FOR HARNESS ETC. THE SECOND FLOOR OF THE HORSEBARN HAD A TONGUE AND GROOVE FLOOR; HAD BEEN USED FOR LOCAL SQUARE DANCES-THEN USED FOR HAY. BACK OF THE HORSEBARN WAS THE COWBARN, WITH STANTIONS FOR 16 MILKING COWS, AND 2 CALF PENS. THE UPPER LEVEL OF THIS BARN WAS USED FOR HAY, STRAW AND SOMETIMES BUNDLES OF GRAIN. A SHED ATTACHED TO THE COWBARN HELD 6-8 SHEEP.

#### WHAT WE PRODUCED.

ON THE FARM THERE WERE A FEW ACRES OF CONCORD GRAPES. ONE ACRE OF RED RASPBERRIES AND A TWO ACRE APPLE ORCHARD WITH MANY VARIETIES OF APPLES NOT GROWN TODAY. THE MAIN VARIETIES WERE BALDWIN AND RHODE ISLAND GREENING. THE LATTER WAS THE BEST APPLE FOR PIE AND APPLESAUCE I HAVE EVER TASTED. WE USUALLY PICKED 500 TO 600 BUSHEL OF APPLES TO SELL AND WE MADE 5 BARRELS OF CIDER VINEGAR; WE ALWAYS GREW 2 ACRES OF LATE POTATOES, SOME FOR THE FAMILY AND FOR SALE; WE GREW 2 ACRES OF WHEAT WHICH WE TOOK TO A FLOUR MILL-9 MILES AWAY, GOT OUR OWN FLOUR, BRAN FOR COW FEED AND MIDLINGS FOR THE PIGS. WE ALSO GREW CORN FOR HARD CORN AND SILAGE (LATER). THEN OF COURSE CLOVER AND TIMOTHY HAY FOR THE STOCK. THE GRAPES, USUALLY AROUND 20 TONS WERE PACKED IN 12 QUART BASKETS AND DELIVERED TO A RAILROAD SIDING WITH ICED CARS WHICH WENT TO CHICAGO, BOSTON ETC. A FARMERS COOPERATIVE HANDLED THE SALE-ABOUT \$25.00 PER TON. WE OFTEN HAD 2 ACRES OF CABBAGE OR 2 ACRES OF TOMATOES THAT WENT TO HEINZ AT PITTSBURG. WE MILKED TWICE A DAY; AT FIRST WE PUT THE MILK IN LARGE PANS FOR CREAM TO RISE-LATER WE HAD A DELAVAL CREAM SEPARATOR. WE MADE SWEET CREAM BUTTER; 60 POUNDS A WEEK, I CHURNED IT-30 POUNDS EACH ON TUESDAY AND FRIDAY NIGHTS AFTER SCHOOL. I "WORKED OVER" THE BUTTER WITH A WOODEN PADDLE IN A LARGE WOODEN BOWL. MOTHER WOULD ADD SALT. THEN I PACKED THE BUTTER IN CROCK-2 TO 6 POUNDS AS ORDERED BY CUSTOMERS IN DUNKIRK. EVERY SATURDAY MORNING, THE SPRING WAGON WAS LOADED WITH BUTTER, EGGS, AND POTATOES AND OFTEN VEGETABLES SUCH AS CABBAGE, ALL WENT TO FAMILY CUSTOMERS. BUTTER WAS ABOUT \$.20 A POUND, POTATOES AND APPLES \$.50 A BUSHEL. AFTER OUR PRODUCE WAS SOLD MY FOLKS BROUGHT CHEESE, CANNED SALMON, SUGAR, BAKING POWDER ETC AND NEEDED CLOTHING SUCH AS SHOES, OVERSHOES, COATS, PANTS ETC. MOTHER MADE SWEATERS, MITTENS SCARFS OUT OF THE WOOL FROM THE SHEEP. WHEN I WAS 8 YEARS OLD I WAS ASSIGNED TO HELP MOTHER IN THE HOUSE WHERE I LEARNED TO COOK, BAKE, CARE FOR MY SMALL SISTERS. THAT HAS HELPED ME IN LATER YEARS. WE ALWAYS KEPT 2 SOWS WITH 8 TO 10 PIGS IN EACH LITTER. THEY WERE BORN IN THE FALL, SOME IN THE SPRING. MY FATHER AND BROTHER REUBEN BUTCHERED IN NOVEMBER AND MARCH EACH YEAR. WE KEPT 2 HOGS IN THE FALL AND 2 IN THE SPRING FOR THE FAMILY; WE SOLD 6-8 EACH FALL AND SPRING TO A WHOLESALE BUTCHER IN DUNKIRK-\$.20 TO \$.25 PER POUND, DRESSED WEIGHT, ABOUT 160 POUNDS. THEN FATHER CURED THE HAMS WITH HOT SALT; LATER SMOKED THEM FOR 2 MONTHS. HE MADE 3-4 LARGE PANS OF PORK SAUSAGE, BAKED IT IN THE OVEN; THE FAT CAME TO THE TOP AND SEALED THE PAN. THEN IT WAS COVERED AND PUT IN THE CELLAR. THEN OF COURSE, WE HAD THE FRESH PORK (TENDERLOINS), PORK ROAST ETC. PORK BELLY MEAT WAS CURED AS SALT PORK IN A LARGE CROCK IN THE CELLAR.

SAME IN SPRING AFTER BUTCHERING. WE ALWAYS HAD A QUARTER OR ONE SIDE OF A YOUNG BEEF HEIFER; (THE BULLS WERE SOLD AS CALVES). SO WE HAD PLENTY OF GOOD BEEF. WE HATCHED 250 TO 300 CHICKS EACH SPRING. THEN WE HAD YOUNG FRYERS IN SUMMER-HENS WERE KEPT FOR LAYING EGGS; WE ALWAYS HAD 15 TO 20 DUCKS AND 12-15 GEESE. NO TURKEYS THEN-TOO HARD TO RAISE THE POULTS. LOTS OF VEGETABLES, CARROTS, TURNIPS, CELERY, WINTER (HUBBARD) SQUASH, PUMPKIN AND LOTS OF CUCUMBERS. WE ALSO HAD LEAF LETTUCE AND ASPARAGUS IN SEASON. SO WE ATE WELL DRANK NO FRESH MILK- BUT LOTS OF CREAM, BUTTER AND COTTAGE CHEESE. MILK WAS USED IN COOKING. IN SUMMER A FISH WAGON WOULD COME-WITH LAKE FISH-PIKE; PERCH, MULLET FROM LAKE ERIE; LAKE SUPERIOR WHITE FISH 4-5 POUNDS. I SCALED THEM, MOTHER BAKED THEM IN A BIG PAN WITH MILK, CREAM, BUTTER, SALT PEPPER. WOULD BE DONE IN A FEW MINUTES; WE ALSO BOUGHT "SMOKED CISCO"-LAKE SUPERIOR WHITEFISH WEIGHING ABOUT 1/2 POUND EACH; DELICIOUS SMOKED FISH.

AS I SAID WE HAD PLENTY OF GOOD FOOD. MOTHER MADE BREAD, PIES DOUGHNUTS (FRIED CAKES) EVERY WEEK SATURDAYS. WE HAD LOTS OF APPLE PIE AND APPLE SAUCE AND OTHER CANNED FRUITS. ON THE HOLIDAYS MOTHER MADE COFFEE CAKE AND PEPPER NUTS, BESIDES PUMPKIN AND MIMCE PIES. FATHER HAD TO HAVE PICKLED HERRING ONCE A YEAR. THAT WAS THE ONLY GERMAN FOOD HE ASKED FOR. (HE SPOKE EXCELLECT ENGLISH, LEARNED IT IN SCHOOL IN GERMANY.)

BUT MONEY WAS VERY SCARE. MY FOLKS WERE STILL PAYING FOR THE FARM. THEY MADE A TRIP TO THE LENDER EACH FALL TO PAY ON PRINCIPAL AND THE INTEREST. ALL SUMMER AND FALL MY MOTHER KEPT ACCUMULATING THE MONEY IN A SHOE BOX UNTIL THEY HAD THE MONEY TO PAY THE PRINCIPAL AND INTEREST ON THE FARM. NOTHING MUCH WAS BOUGHT UNTIL THEY MADE THE TRIP AND PAID UP. THEY NEVER MISSED A PAYMENT DATE. AFTER THAT, THINGS COULD BE BOUGHT LIKE SHOES, BOOTS, OVERCOATS, ETC. TWO CROPS THAT SUPPLEMENTED THE OTHER FOOD SALES WERE THE RED RASPBERRIES AND CHESTNUTS. IN SEASON, WE HAD HIGH SCHOOL PICKERS FROM DUNKIRK; THEY WOULD PICK ALL DAY FOR 1 TO 2 CENTS PER BASKET. THEY COULD MAKE A DOLLAR TO TWO DOLLARS A DAY. AT THE END OF THE DAY WE LOADED THE 32 QUART CRATES (SOMETIMES 20) ONTO THE SPRING WAGON AND HEADED FOR DUNKIRK. AS SOON AS WE REACHED THE AREA OF OUR BUTTER CUSTOMERS OUT WOULD COME THE WOMEN WITH DISH PANS AND ALL KINDS OF CONTAINERS. SOME WOMEN WOULD TAKE AS MANY AS 10 QUARTS. BY DARK, ALL THE BERRIES WOULD BE SOLD, (8 TO 10 CENTS) A QUART, AND WE HEADED HOME.

ON THE CHESTNUTS, THE RAVINE I MENTIONED HAD 6 BIG CHESTNUT TREES ON THE STEEP BANKS. EVERY FALL, AFTER A FROST OR TWO, THE BURRS WOULD OPEN AND DROP THE CHESTNUTS ON THE GROUND. THEY WERE A SMALL VARIETY-ABOUT 1/2 TO 1 INCH ACROSS BUT VERY SWEET AND FLAVORFUL, ESPECIALLY ROASTED. RAYMOND AND I, AFTER SCHOOL, WOULD PICK UP THESE CHESTNUTS UNTIL DARK. WE STORED THEM IN GRAIN SACKS, OFTEN AS MANY AS 6-100 POUND BAGS WHICH WE SOLD FOR \$5.00 A BUSHEL. SO AFTER ALL, WE MANAGED AND STAYED OUT OF DEBT.

#### EDUCATION:

MY FATHER AND MOTHER BOTH INSISTED ON SCHOOLING FOR US

CHILDREN. ETHELYN FINISHED HIGH SCHOOL AT FORESTVILLE A VERY GOOD GRADE AND HIGH SCHOOL AND THEN MARRIED. SHE RAISED SEVEN FINE CHILDREN. RAYMOND GRADUATED FROM HIGH SCHOOL AND THEN TOOK THE AGRICULTURAL TEACHERS COURSE AT COURTLAND NORMAL SCHOOL. HE WAS AN AGRICULTURAL HIGH SCHOOL TEACHER MOST OF HIS LIFE. MARGUERITE AND MARJORIE GRADUATED FROM FREDONIA NORMAL SCHOOL (NOW A BRANCH OF THE NEW YORK STATE COLLEGE SYSTEM.) BOTH TAUGHT GRADE SCHOOL FOR SEVERAL YEARS AND THEN MARRIED. REUBEN QUIT HIGH SCHOOL, STAYED ON THE FARM AND EVENTUALLY PRODUCED FRESH MILK FOR BUFFALO AND DUNKIRK. MARJORIE IS STILL ALIVE-THE ONLY ONE EXCEPT WILLIAM THE YOUNGEST SON-THAT'S ME. I TAUGHT SCHOOL 2 YEARS, THEN ENTERED CORNELL LAW SCHOOL IN 1916-1917. WHEN THE WAR STARTED THEY SENT US HOME TO GROW FOOD FOR THE ALLIES. I WENT BACK TO CORNELL IN THE FALL OF 1917 BUT WAS CALLED INTO THE 4th OFFICERS SCHOOL IN LATE MARCH. GOT A LIEUTENANTS COMMISSION IN AUGUST-THEN WAS SENT TO BATTERY COMMANDERS SCHOOL AT FORT SILL TO BECOME A FIELD ARTILLERY INSTRUCTOR. AT GRADUATION-ONE DAY AFTER ARMISTICE, I WAS GIVEN COMMAND OF BATTERY F-56th REGIMENT OF FIELD ARTILLERY. I WAS DISCHARGED JUST BEFORE CHRISTMAS 1918. I HAD NO MONEY TO RESUME SCHOOL SO I WORKED IN THE OIL FIELDS OF TEXAS, AROUND BRECKENRIDGE. AFTER 2 1/2 YEARS THERE, I HAD ENOUGH MONEY TO FINISH CORNELL WHICH I DID IN SEPTEMBER 1922. I WAS THEN EMPLOYED BY U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE; DID RESEARCH IN GRAIN MARKETING IN MINNESOTA, NORTH AND SOUTH DAKOTA AND MONTANA. IN THE FALL AND WINTER I TOOK GRADUATE WORK IN ECONOMICS AND MARKETING OF FARM CROPS-UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA; MASTERS DEGREE IN 1926 AND MUCH OF THE PHD. I MARRIED IN 1927. THEN AFTER THE DEMISE OF THE FEDERAL FARM BOARD, INSTEAD OF GOING ON TO HARVARD TO FINISH MY PHD, I CAME TO CALIFORNIA. STARTED AT THE BOTTOM IN THE CALIFORNIA STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE AND DURING THE NEXT 31 YEARS ROSE TO THE TOP POSITION OF ACTING DIRECTOR OF THE DEPARTMENT. I RETIRED IN 1963. MY FIRST WIFE DOROTHY PASSED AWAY IN 1971 AND IN 1972 I MARRIED AGAIN, A FAMILY FRIEND WHO WAS TRYING TO RUN A SMALL BEEF CATTLE OPERATION IN AMADOR COUNTY. WE LIVED MOSTLY ON THE RANCH BUT FOR 15 YEARS I KEPT MY HOME IN SACRAMENTO. ESTHER CONTRACTED ALZHEIMERS DISEASE IN 1983 AND PASSED AWAY IN 1988. I RETURNED TO MY HOME IN SACRAMENTO WHERE I LIVE ALONE WITH SOME HELP.

#### RECREATION:

WITHOUT A T.V., RADIO, TELEPHONE OR AUTO, YOUNG PEOPLE TODAY SAY "OH YOU MUST HAVE BEEN BORED TO DEATH" ABSOLUTELY NOT SO. IN SUMMER WE HAD PICNICS ESPECIALLY ON THE FOURTH OF JULY. OUR RAVINE WAS IDEAL FOR SHOOTING OFF SKY ROCKETS AND ROMAN CANDLES, A BIG FRIED CHICKEN DINNER, MANY NEIGHBORS, RELATIVE BROUGHT FOOD; HOME MADE ICE CREAM, CAKE, PIE AND WE HAD PARTIES ALMOST EVERY WEEK. I PLAYED BASEBALL FROM THE TIME I WAS 10 YEARS OLD-UNTIL I STOPPED AS A SEMI-PRO IN 1921. THEN THERE WAS SWIMMING AND FISHING IN OUR CREEK AND IN LAKE ERIE. TWO YEARS, 10 OF US BOYS CAMPED IN A BIG TENT ON THE SHORE OF LAKE ERIE, I WAS THE COOK-NIGHTS AT MID-NIGHT WE ALL GATHERED NEAR A TRESTLE NEAR THE FOUR TRACKS OF THE NEW YORK CENTRAL RAILROAD. THE

TWO 20th CENTURY LIMITED TRAINS-ONE FROM NEW YORK, WEST BOUND, AND ONE FROM CHICAGO, EAST BOUND WOULD MEET ON THIS TRESTLE 40 FEET ABOVE US. SURE ENOUGH, ABOUT MIDNIGHT WOULD COME THE "WHO WHO" FROM THE EAST-THEN THE SAME FROM THE WEST AND THESE TWO 20 CARS TRAINS WOULD PASS EACH OTHER OVER THIS TRESTLE. IT GAVE US A REAL THRILL.

WHAT DID WE DO IN THE WINTER? WELL WE HAD ICE SKATING ON A BIG POND 2 MILES AWAY. YOUNG PEOPLE FROM NEARBY WOULD GATHER-SKATE TOGETHER OR SOME OF US PLAYED HOCKEY WE HAD LOTS OF PARTIES, SQUARE DANCING, CHURCH ON SUNDAY. ALMOST EVERY NIGHT AT 8 P.M. NEIGHBOR YOUNG PEOPLE WOULD COME TO OUR PLACE. WE PLAYED CARDS, DOMINOES, CHECKERS AND OTHER GAMES. WE ALWAYS MADE POPCORN AND A BIG PAN OF CRISPY COLD APPLES FROM THE CELLAR. HOLIDAYS THERE WAS MUCH VISITING, MUCH FOOD-NO BEER OR STRONG DRINKS. WE HAD CIDER UNTIL IT FERMENTED AND WE HAD GRAPE JUICE. BUT WEEKDAYS WE WERE IN BED BY 10 P.M. AND UP AT 6:30 AND OFF TO SCHOOL AT 8 A.M. A 2 1/2 MILE WALK WINTER AND SUMMER. HOME AT 5 P.M., THEN OUR ASSIGNED CHORES TO DO.

#### HEALTH:

EVERY SATURDAY WE CHILDREN BATHED. IN WINTER A BIG TUB OF HOT WATER WAS MADE AVAILABLE. WE TOOK SPONGE BATHS. AND THEN CHANGED UNDER CLOTHES. IN SUMMER WE BOYS BATHED IN THE CREEK OR WITH A BOWL OF COLD WATER. WE ALL HAD THE USUAL CHILDRENS DISEASES SUCH AS MEASLES, WHOOPING ENOUGH AND CHICKEN BOX-THE LATTER LEFT ME WITH SHINGLES WHEN I BECAME OLDER. ALMOST EVERY WINTER WE HAD BAD COLDS. SORE THROATS AND THE "GRIPPE"-NOW CALLED THE FLU, WE USED HOME REMEDIES-VERY LITTLE MEDICINE. THE NEAREST DOCTOR WAS IN FORESTVILLE TWO AND 3/4 MILES AWAY. BUT WE ALL SURVIVED-EVEN THOUGH OUR DIET WAS ON THE HEAVY PROTEIN AND FAT SIDE, WE ALL WORKED HARD SUMMERS AND WINTERS AND WE BURNED UP THE ENERGY. NO ONE IN OUR FAMILY WAS FAT-WE WERE ALL STRONG AND HEALTHY. THEN WHAT HAPPENED? THEY DRILLED A GAS WELL ON OUR FARM ABOUT 1910. AFTER THAT, WE HAD FREE GAS-NO MORE WOOD STOVES. BUT GAS HEAT AND LIGHTS. A LITTLE LATER A TELEPHONE (YOU COULD LISTEN IN ON YOUR NEIGHBORS) THEN ELECTRICITY ABOUT 1912; NO MORE GAS LAMPS. IN 1916 WE BOUGHT A MODEL T FORD. AFTER PAYING OFF THE FARM. MY FATHER BOUGHT A DODGE CAR-BUT HE WAS KILLED IN A FARM ACCIDENT WHEN HE WAS 72. MOTHER BECAME BLIND BUT LIVED TO 93. WAS LIFE BETTER OR WORSE THEN OR NOW? WELL YES AND NO. WE HAD MORE PHYSICAL WORK TO DO. LESS CONVENIENCES. POORER HEALTH CARE AND VERY LIMITED TRAVEL. NOW WE HAVE ALL THESE CONVENIENCES. BUT WE DID NOT SUFFER FROM THE CONDITIONS; WE LEARNED TO COPE AND TAKE CARE OF OURSELVES. BESIDES, ON THE FARM WE FELT WE WERE AN IMPORTANT PART OF THE FARM OPERATION. WE WERE VERY GLAD TO WORK HARD BECAUSE IT WAS ALL FOR THE "GOOD OF THE FAMILY" THAT TRAINING AND EXPERIENCE HELPED ME COPE WITH PROBLEMS IN MY LATER YEARS. IT WAS GOOD! I AM GLAD I HAD THAT BACKGROUND. AND I BLESS MY FATHER AND MOTHER WHO TAUGHT US TO BE HONEST, HARD WORKING AND DECENT-THE FAMILY MOTTO!

WILLIAM J. KUHRT