

## Tell About Homesteading

Laura Mohr and Aima Dehning compiled this information for the Big Springs Historical Society. It was read by Mrs. James Johnson at a meeting of the organization.

Henry F. Kallsen was born in Schleswig-Holstein, Germany, in 1855. He was one of a family of seven boys and three girls.

He came to the U.S. by ship and settled near Atlantic, Ia., in 1884, farming there for a year before moving to Deuel County and filing on a homestead 7½ miles northwest of Big Springs in 1885. He returned to Atlantic for the winter and in the spring returned with a team of horses, a wagon and a plow.

His companion, Bill Duve (sometimes pronounced Dewey), had filed on the quarter just west of Kallsen's. These two men had their possessions sent from Iowa by Union Pacific to Big Springs. They began at once to build a sod house on the quarter section line, breaking the prairie and planting their crops.

During these years, Anna Magdalena Roh (pronounced Ray), who was born in Schleswig-Holstein in 1859 in a family of two boys and four girls, left Germany and came to the U.S.,

working first at Davenport, Ia. Lena, as she was known to her friends, became the wife of Henry Kallsen and came to live in the sod house on the homestead. Their oldest daughter, Lillie, was born in the sod house in 1889 and died of diphtheria in 1896. Laura was also born in the sod house in 1891.

Before the twins, Walter and William, were born in 1893 (Lillie died at the age of four weeks, cause of death unknown), Kallsen had built a frame house about in the center of the east line of their farm.

He dug a well here to supply water. Prior to that the family had hauled water from the North Platte River in barrels. One barrel was used for household purposes and the rest for livestock or washing. Later, water was obtained from the Oswalds on the Altmanshofer place. Here Alma was born in 1895, Carl in 1898 and Herman in 1901. As the family grew, more rooms were added along with a porch with colonial trim and lattice banister.

For stove fuel, the family gathered cow chips in the pasture and stacked them into piles. Later they would go out with a wagon, load chips and stack them near the house for winter use. They would also go along the railroad tracks to gather pieces of coal that would shake off the coal cars. The firemen often would throw extra pieces out if they saw someone gathering coal.

Little of the land was farmed. Corn was planted using a hand corn planter or a spade. If the corn did not get covered, mice would eat the kernels and the hill would be a total loss. Navy beans were planted and were harvested by pulling the plants, placing them in a wagon box and tromping on them to thresh out the beans.

As there were no fences, the children had to herd cattle. Each cow was named. During the hot days, the children took vining weeds and placed them on their heads for shades as there were no trees. For a treat, they took little bottles of water, each with a drop of vanilla in it for flavoring. Then they took small sips so it would last all morn-

ing or afternoon.

John Stenwalls had a dugout in the middle of the southeast quarter of that section (now owned by Alma Dehning). Later they dug a well and built on the hill where the Dehnings lived.

Kallsen helped three young lads come to America from Germany. The first was J. Henry Kallsen in 1893. He later married Lizzie Leder and they celebrated their 64th wedding anniversary in January, 1968. They live at Grover, Colo. Next, Nick Kallsen came. He married Myrtle Zalman in September, 1907. They live at Brighton, Colo. John Jurgensen came in 1910 and is living at Big Springs.

About 1½ miles north of the Kallsen home was the church of their faith, the German Lutheran. Kallsen was a charter member and helped erect the building. It was a white frame structure with a row of windows on the east and west and the entrance on the south. It had a tall steeple tipped with a cross. The church yard contained a burial ground to the west, this being fenced in against the cattle of the free range. A row of hitching posts in front of the church was used for tying up teams of horses and saddle ponies during the services.

There was a prairie fire around Easter in 1910. It started on the highway about one mile west of where Delmont Splitter lives now. A family by the name of Ruby was burning a straw pile when the wind changed from the south to the west and spread the flames. Almost everything was destroyed, hogs, chickens, haystack, fence posts, barn, leaving only the windmill and the house. All of the tongues and other wood portions of the machinery burned. Neighbors threw water on the house to keep it from burning.

Mrs. Mohr (Laura Kallsen) remembers of their family being on the way to church once when they were met by a swarm of grasshoppers. Her father turned the team around and returned home, quickly piling up manure with a lot of straw and setting it afire to burn the hoppers' wings or drive them away from the crops with the smoke.

She also remembers attending school in a sod school on the southeast corner of Section 5. School also was held in the Kallsen home for their own children and neighborhood children a few months out of the year.

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Schools were heated with potbellied stoves in the center of the room. Fire was kindled each morning by the teachers. Often the school was starting to get warm by the time the pupils arrived, but sometimes they wore their coats until noon before the room was warm enough. Many a child would stand close to the heater and scorch his clothing. Coal was used for fuel and corn cobs or wood for kindling.

Mrs. Kallsen acted as midwife and delivered many babies. Sometimes she rode horseback to the homes and other times the people came to get her when she was needed.

Mr. and Mrs. Kallsen built their home in town in 1919 after retiring. It is now the home where Mrs. Mohr and Carl Kallsen live.