

HISTORY OF VINCENT AND ROSALIE MARES HEJL

(By Brother F. E. Hejl, in a continued series.—Editor).

The land at that time belonged to Dr. Stevenson, a Civil War veteran who received this land grant. This first Seaton School was the alma mater of my father and mother and many other pioneers in this area. Frank Edward attended school two years. He has stated that he spent most of his school time in the pasture behind the school.

Through the years of 1891 and 1892 in Seaton one more child was born. Joe William was born on December 4, 1891. They lived on the Frank Leskar farm for two years. In 1893 they decided to move again, this time to the community of Westphalia in Falls County. The Hoelscher and Oestman families were farming and prospering there so the Hejl family rented and moved on one of the Frank Hoelscher farms. Incidentally, the Hoelscher and Oestman families came from Europe on the same boat as the Hejl family. Grandpa and Grandma were fluent in the German language and they were close friends with these families.

In the two or three years they lived in Westphalia another child was born, William Frank, on January 7, 1894. It was also in one of these years at Westphalia that Charles Hejl, an uncle to Grandpa, came to live with Grandpa after emigrating to Texas. It was here that he died, a single man, age unknown to me, and the cause of death also unknown. He is buried in the Barclay Cemetery in an unmarked grave. He evidently came to America with his brother, Ignac. Mention is made of

them in my Frank Hejl history.

The three years of farming at Westphalia were not satisfactory for Grandpa and Grandma Vince Hejl. The nearest school was in Barclay. It was too far for the three oldest children to walk, so they did not attend. Therefore, the quest for a better life continued.

Through some friends who are unknown to me, in the year 1894, Grandpa Hejl bought a farm in Waller County. That year, in the fall of 1894, they loaded their belongings in a boxcar in Burlington and again moved, this time to Waller County. This move was made with seven children. This farm was close to where Prairie View College now stands. The house was visible from the Hempstead to Houston highway. They lived on this farm for six years. In Waller their family increased by two more sons: John D., born on October 2, 1895; and Jerry E., born on November 14, 1896. Here in Waller, with a large family, was where they really had to struggle to make a living. Frank Edward, my father, in his teens at the time, worked out on any seasonal job he could get in the area. He was baling prairie hay for 50 cents a day from sunrise to sunset. From the year 1896 through the harvest seasons most of his time was spent working for his relatives in Nelsonville. He related, many times, that he, at 16 years of age, rode horseback from Waller to Nelsonville, some 40 miles distant. Another incident he related is when he helped move one of his relatives to Sealy, which one or from where is not known to the writer. After arriving at San Filipe on the Brazos, they had to wait three days before the

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rise in the river went down so the ferry could take them across.

Frank Edward was confirmed on May 31, 1896, at the age of 15, in the Nelsonville Brethren Church by the Rev. Anton Motycka. Frank Edward stayed with his uncle, Frank Mares, in Nelsonville while studying for confirmation.

Many Czech families were living in the Waller area at this time. The Vince Hejls were neighbors with the Marunas, Horavas and Vaniceks. The land in Waller was not suited for row crop farming and not too productive. They kept working their farm until the fall of 1899, at which time the area was hit by the catastrophic Galveston Storm. Crops were a total loss and the Hejls lost their home — a cruel blow when the struggle to make a living was so hard.

Disheartened and disappointed they did not lose their spirit. They decided to abandon their farm with what they had in it and move back inland to Bell County. They rented a boxcar in Waller and for the third time, loaded their possessions and again headed for Burlington in Falls County by rail. This time with a family of nine children.

They arrived in the latter part of December, 1899 to a previously rented farm owned by John Leskar, Frank Leskar's oldest brother, in the community of Cyclone. This is the second farm southwest of the Ocker Brethren Church. It is now owned and occupied by Frank Leskar, son of John Leskar. On this farm in Cyclone, with good land and hard work, they prospered.

They made good crops every year. Cotton produced a bale per acre. They were contented among neighbors composed of the Mareks, Talaseks, Schillers, Chupiks, Pechals, Babovecs, Holans, Zabciks, Motls and others. They had only a short distance to the Ocker Brethren Church, which was built in 1893.

One year while living here, the winter was very cold and wet. The black dirt roads got so bad they couldn't be traveled in any kind of a vehicle. Grandma's flour bin was empty, so someone had to go get some. Grandpa saddled the horse and sent my father, Frank Edward, who was about 12 years old, to Rogers for a sack of flour. My father often remarked, "(to this day, I wonder how I ever made it." Most of the time leading the horse, he brought home the flour. However, in a few days they lost the horse.

In the three years of living in Cyclone, their three oldest children were growing up. Frank Edward, my father, was nearly 22 years old. Their oldest daughter, Anna, at 20 years of age, married Louis Babovec from Ocker on October 25, 1903 in the Ocker Brethren Church.

In the year of 1903, John Lesikar, then living on a farm of his own in Seaton south of the Hruska and Joe Lesikar farms, decided to move to his farm in Cyclone on which the Vince Hejls were living. He wanted to sell the farm where he was living in Seaton. He offered good terms to Grandpa Hejl

of 1906 they had enough money to pay off the note on the farm. However, the note was for a longer term of years and Mr. John Lesikar would not accept the money, so with this money the Hejls decided to build a new house. In the year of 1907 they built a three-room, two-porch and storeroom house with ample room upstairs. Every room was sealed with beaded ceiling throughout, with an offset border about 30 inches high. They painted it inside and outside. It is remembered by me as always looking neat. They lived the rest of their lives on this farm and in this house. Through their span of life spent in Seaton, they farmed, raised their family and took an active part in church and civic affairs of the community.

In the year of 1906, the Seaton Evangelical congregation organized. The members were from Ziskov or Harris Ranch, Ratibor and the surrounding area of Seaton. All families were of the Czech background. The means of travel at that time were only buggies or horseback. That made it difficult for most of these families to attend worship services at Ocker. They built a church on an acre of land from the Joe F. Sefcik farm, east of the cemetery. Grandparents Vince and Rosalie Hejl were charter members of this group and they took an active part in the congregation.

Their fourth child, Henry W., left home when he was wed to Aloise Babovec on March 1, 1908. They were the first couple to marry in the Seaton

School on the location where the present school is now. Membership was limited to single men. A picture of this group is now in the SPJST Archives. The group met regularly, sponsored a reading club, and invoked fraternity and brotherhood throughout the area. Even before the SPJST lodge was organized, they built a platform on which they sponsored dances. This platform was located in the northwest corner of the Frank Lesikar farm, just off the road to Seaton. This was the farm the Hejls first lived on in 1890. While sponsoring these dances, they were having some trouble with some rough, unwanted cowboys. These cowboys appeared at one of these dances and behaved in total disrespect to the young ladies and everyone present. The members of the CMBJ took matters in their own hands to put a stop to this. They engaged the cowboys in a free-for-all fight. One of the members, Mr. John Kohut mangled one so badly that he later died. After hearings in court, Mr. Kohut was not indicted. My father, Frank Edward, was a member of this club and related that they never had any more trouble from those tough boys.

On June 18, 1911, Vince J. (age 22) married Julia Labaj from Ziskov or Harris Ranch which was settled by mostly Czech people in the early 1900s. This community is about five miles northeast of Temple. The writer presently owns the southeast corner of the then Harris Ranch. Joe W. (age 21) married on November 24, 1912, to Frances Ondrasek whose mother and family

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Their third child, Albina, married on May 7, 1905. She married John Chupik whose parents were living in Ocker. They were married in the Ocker Brethren Church. In the fall of 1905 their first son, my father Frank Edward, married Emily Lesikar, daughter of Joseph Lesikar, on October 29, 1905. The Lesikar family lived at Seaton on a farm adjoining north of the Hejl farm. The marriage was performed by the Rev. Henry Juren in the Ocker Brethren Church. Witnesses were William Hejl, Joseph Lesikar and Joseph R. Marek.

In Seaton, grandpa's family worked hard, saved and prospered. In the fall

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The Seaton SPJST Lodge No. 47 was organized in 1903. It is not known what year Grandpa Hejl joined. He was a member in 1905 as he was elected on the committee to find a suitable place for the building of a hall. This motion passed in the October 1905 meeting. In the spring and summer of 1906 Seaton Star Hall was built, with Grandpa taking an active part. The Hejls signed up all their children in the SPJST. They both had their heart in the SPJST. Grandpa seldom missed a meeting. He was also a member of the RVOS Fire and Storm Insurance Group and a firm believer in it.

The young men of Seaton and the surrounding area, in 1901 or 1902, felt a need for some form of recreation. They organized a young men's club. They named it Cesko Moravska Bratrska Jednota (CMBJ). They were holding their meetings in the new Seaton

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Grand parents Hejl were hard-working and conservative, and through the years built up their homestead. They bought a windmill and built a water-tower house with a small room in which they had a bath tub. This kind of a water system and bath house was popular in those days.

Grandpa built a cellar, half underground, with brick walls sealed inside with mortar. The cellar was covered with a low shingle roof. This was ideal for his grandsons to climb on and slide down. The tin ridge row was riddled with shotgun pellets. Grandpa could not stand the hooting of an owl at night. This is where many an owl lost its life with a BANG from Grandpa's double barrel shotgun.