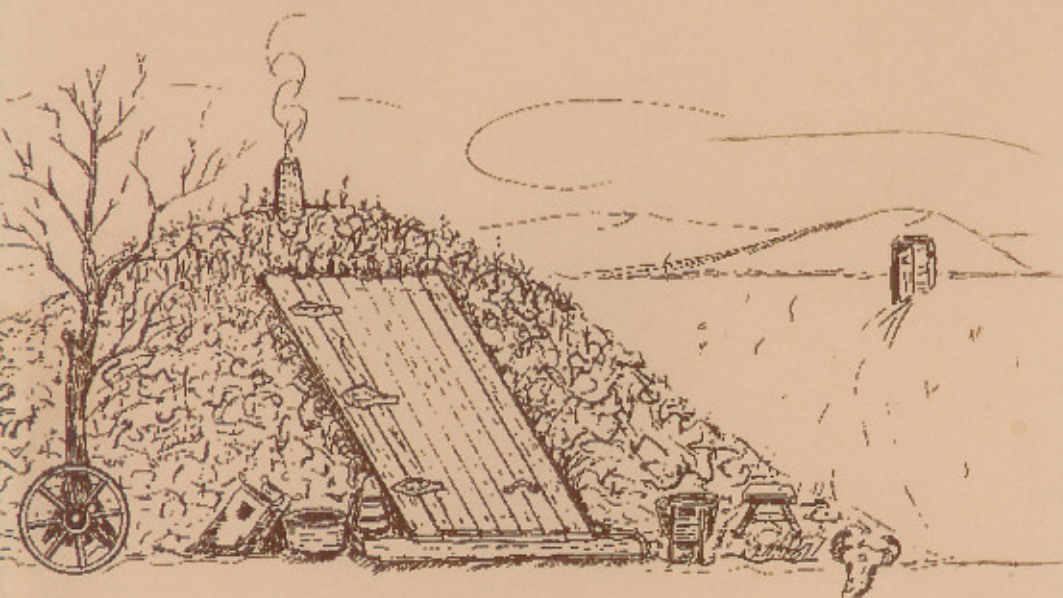


Jarjus, A Little Homesteader

SECOND EDITION

Clara M. Geske

Appended by
Richard E. Mittelstaedt



DECENDANTS of MARTIN MITTELSTAEDT

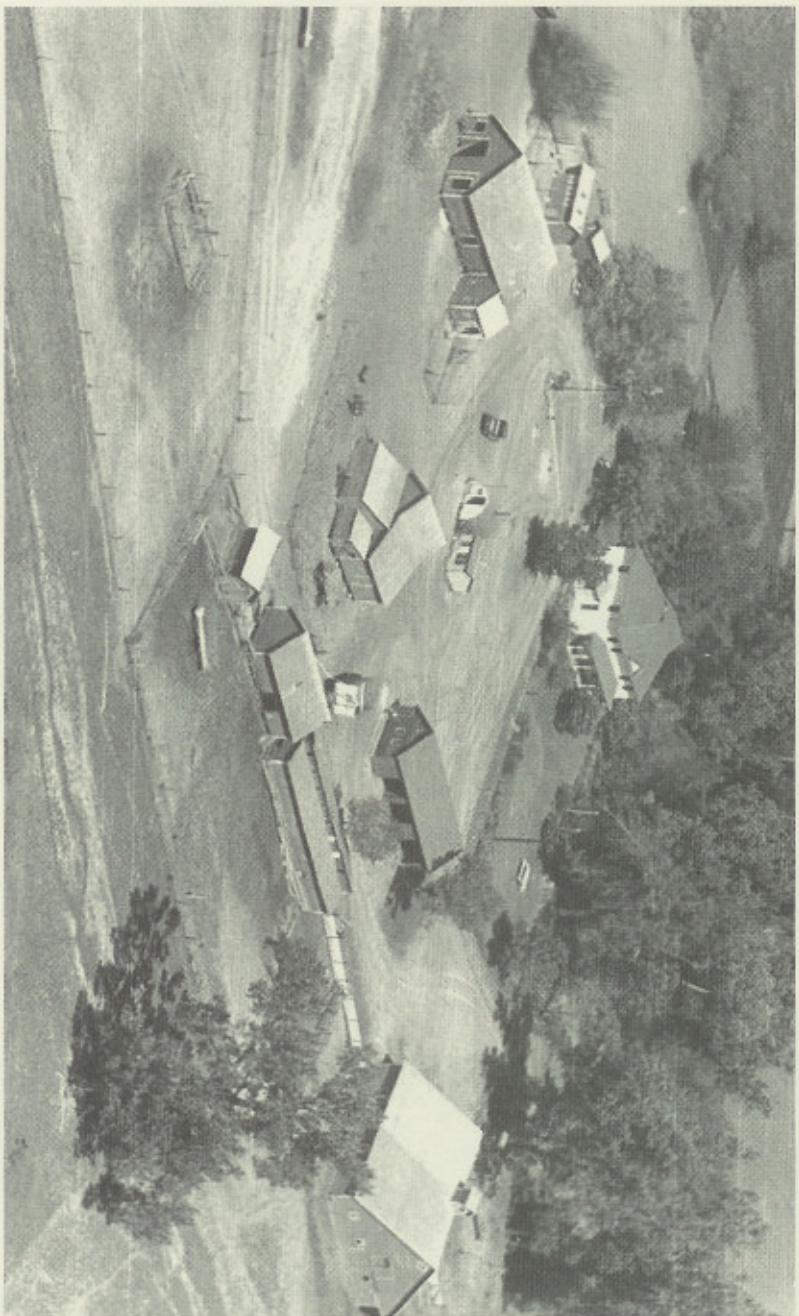
Martin Mittelstaedt was born 1823 in Zeden-on-the-Oder, Brandenburg (Prussia). He married Dora Schultz 1841. She was born 1827 in Zeden-on-the-Oder, and died 1849 in Zeden-on-the-Oder.

Children of Martin Mittelstaedt and Dora Schultz are:

1. Otto Jarjus Mittelstaedt, born June 17, 1849,
Zeden-on-the-Oder, Brandenburg, Germany;
Died January 5, 1937, Norfolk, Nebraska.
2. Fred Mittelstaedt Born 1842 Died _____
3. Ernst Mittelstaedt Born 1844 Died _____
4. Yetta Mittelstaedt Born 1846 Died _____
5. Dora Mittelstaedt Born 1848 Died _____



JARJUS & MATHILDA (Spreeman) MITTELSTAEDT FAMILY
(l-r) Front row: Arnold, Jarjus, Mathilda, Erich,
Standing in between: Lillie, Martin,
Standing: Hellmuth, Walter, Clara, Otto, Hugo.



Jarjus Mittelstaedt homestead, Pierce County, Nebraska
(Jarjus homesteaded this farm in 1870)

To all the descendents of Jarjus Mittelstaedt . . .
This book is dedicated.



Clara (right) and
daughter, Edith

As Aunt Clara
Geske was going
blind when she
wrote the original
book on Jarjus, she
would dictate and
her daughter Edith
would write it
down for her.



Clara (Mittelstaedt) Geske

FORWARD

Jarjus was not a tall man nor large in stature. Therefore, I chose the title for the story of his life to be "Jarjus, A Little Homesteader".

This story is written for posterity's sake. I hope to write simply enough that a third-grader can understand it. Although it contains true stories of his life, some of the dates may be a bit incorrect.

It is difficult for the younger generation to realize what the pioneers endured during the early and latter years of their life. Their ancestors worked hard, beginning early in the day and going until late in the evening. They had little time for pleasure or vacation.

The name "Jarjus" is pronounced "Yaryus". In the German language, the letter "J" is pronounced as the letter or sound of "Y". Unfortunately, the Homestead papers had his name spelled "Gargus". It is noticeable by the heavy printing on the letters "G" that they had been changed from the letters "J" to the letters "G".

The Author

March 2006

Clara M. Geske

Appended by:

Richard E. Mittelstaedt

CHAPTER 1

In the year 1849 on June 17 a son was born to Martin and Dora Mittelstaedt at Zeden-on-the-Oder in Germany; the youngest of a second marriage. He was given the name "Jarjus", and was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran faith. Since his mother had died when he was only a few days old, it became the responsibility of his two half-sisters to take her place in caring for all his needs and sending him to school. They, evidently, had not told Jarjus of his mother's death. When he heard his playmates talk about their mother, it confused him, making him wonder why he didn't have one. Yetta and Dora explained to him that she had died when he was a little baby.

His father was a farmer. The family lived in town and his father drove out to the country for the farm work. As a lad, Jarjus helped around the house, running errands for his half-sisters and even for the neighbors. There was an orchard of apple, pear, plum and other fruit trees which bore an abundance of fruit. One of his duties was to peel and cut the apples, and then to place them on a rack to be dried in a heated oven. He had to stir them occasionally.

It was customary for every boy to have a profession in Germany, Jarjus chose to be a furrier; his brother, Fred, carpentry; and his other brother, Ernest, basket weaving.

His two brothers left their homeland, Germany, for the United States where they lived on homesteads. Two of his older half-brothers had gone to live in Russia. The Leader had placed a call for young men in Germany to come to Russia as share-croppers in farming. It seems as if the farmers there were not progressing well. His half-brothers took up the offer. After they left, they did not correspond with the family, and all contact was lost. They evidently married Russian girls and raised families there.

There were some people who had come from Russia to the midwestern part of the United States by the name of "Mittelstaedt" and one man had owned a lumber yard in Norfolk, Nebraska. When the man died, the obituary in the local newspaper carried a picture of him. He looked exactly like Ernest Mittelstaedt. Jarjus inquired into the man's family history, but there was no record of his ancestry being from Russia. Still, it was quite certain that they were related because of the striking resemblance.

At the age of eighteen, Jarjus left Germany and came to the United States to start a new life for himself. His two brothers had loaned him the money for the trip. He went to Horican, Wisconsin where he lived for about two and a half years. At first he worked for a farmer in order to earn some money. Then he found work with a furrier business. There, he made fur coats, caps, muffs, capes and many other pieces of fur apparel. In those days, women used fur muffs and collars, and men wore fur coats, mittens, etc.

Jarjus said that they were so busy before Christmas they worked late every night, and on Christmas Eve, they worked all night in order to get the last order filled. Being completely exhausted, he went to bed at dawn and stayed there the entire next day. A few weeks of vacation followed. Later, the company prepared more furs for the next season's work. It had its own tannery. (More about furs later in the story).

Jarjus, wanting to live near his two brothers, came to Nebraska to start a home nearby. Ernest had taken homestead in Stanton County and Fred chose his homestead in Pierce County, Nebraska.

It was compulsory that, one desiring a homestead, be twenty-one years of age in order to apply for a permit to farm a certain portion of land. Since Jarjus became twenty-one on June 17, 1870, he filed to the United States Government for a homestead at Norfolk, Nebraska. Quite a number of homesteads had been applied for, which meant that land had been chosen and taken. Jarjus had to take what land was left. He chose eighty acres of land in one section (#24) on the north side of the road and eighty acres in another section (#25) on the south side of the same road, opposite each other, both sections being in Pierce County.

The Homestead Law permitted one to live on the land for seven years before getting the title or patent on it. In the year 1877, Jarjus received the title from the U.S. Government, granting him ownership of that land. From then on, Jarjus was required to pay taxes on it every year. The Law also stated that it was compulsory to build a house with a good roof and other buildings, if possible, on the land.

Jarjus did not have much money to start with. Because he had to have some kind of dwelling, he dug a cave where he lived very simply. It was cool in the summer and not too cold in the winter. During his first year there, a prairie fire destroyed it. It didn't take him long to dig another cave in which to live, but he did not use it any longer than was necessary.

Jarjus planted a sapling near his cave in order for him to see the location of his home from a distance. He had found it in a grove of cottonwood trees that were growing on his brother, Fred's land. It grew into a beautiful tree, giving welcome shade during the hot summer days. In fact, it stood there as a landmark long after the Little Homesteader had passed away. But, it stands there no longer.

In later years corn was planted near the lonely cottonwood tree. During the cultivating season, its cool shade beckoned the men and horses to rest awhile. One could see the men eating their lunch in its shade.



THE LANDMARK
COTTON WOOD TREE

Frank Wachter, Jr., Joe Vylidahl, and
Frank Wachter, Sr. cutting
the large cottonwood tree down.

He also planted two cottonwood trees about a quarter of a mile away where he intended to build his future house.

One of the most important things that Jarjus needed was water. There was a spring flowing nearby, but it was insufficient for all of his livestock needs. With the aid of some friends he dug a well. It was located sixty yards from where the house was supposed to be built. The size of the well was approximately 5 feet by 5 feet and thirty or more feet deep. Boards lined it to prevent a cave-in. A framework, built above it, held a pulley with a rope long enough to permit a wooden bucket to reach its bottom. A wooden bucket was attached to the other end of the rope. When one bucket was raised with water, the other one would be lowered to fill. The water was clear and cold, and very satisfying to the thirst. It took a long time to draw up sufficient water for their needs. He built a large trough to hold the drinking water for the livestock. This well was used for many years.

At first, Jarjus bought a pair of calves and trained them to bear the yoke around their neck and to push with their shoulder. Being considerate of animals needing protection from the elements, he built them a shed. He gave them the names of "Joe" and "Hanz". Although they were strong, Jarjus did not use them in the field during the heat of the day. He would start working them early in the morning and resting them a long time in the middle of the day. Then, he worked them very late in the evening.

The first few years was spent breaking the prairie with a plow drawn by the pair of oxen. He sowed his first wheat by hand and harvested it with a scythe. After breaking up more land, he also planted some corn. Those first three years were not very productive as the grasshoppers ate so much of the crops.

One time Jarjus decided to visit his brother, Ernest and family in Stanton County, in order to buy supplies and feed for his oxen. It was a long trip, about forty miles one way. In preparation for the trip, he fed the animals, as usual, the evening before, and packed a lunch to eat along the way. Since Jarjus had no clock or watch, he guessed the time of day by how high the sun was in the sky. He retired early. After what seemed to him a long night of sleep, he got out of bed, dressed and went to the barn to feed the oxen. He hitched them to a "drag" made of some planks fastened together with runners like a sled. Jarjus had fashioned a seat to make driving more comfortable. He started out before sunrise on the long trip. You can imagine how long it would take as the oxen walked slowly. When Jarjus arrived at his brother's homestead, the family was just getting up to start their morning chores. It was apparent that he must not have slept very long the night before and travelled most of the night. Jarjus stayed overnight with them, starting the long trip back home the next morning.

Enroute home, Jarjus came upon some men working on the road. It must have been amusing to see him sitting on top of the grain bags at the back end of the "drag" for they stood and gustily laughed at them. Their dinner pails were setting on the bridge near its edge. As the drag passed, on of the oxen on that side kicked some of the pails off. He, evidently, didn't like being laughed at. It was late when Jarjus arrived home. He was glad to be back with his feed supply. Sometime later he traded the oxen for a team of draft horses for the field work.

Jarjus was very good at trapping and made his living during the winter months by selling hides and furs. He also made up some furs for his own use. He would set traps for mink, muskrats and other fur-bearing animals. Sometimes he would have a wildcat in the trap. It is told that wildcats are very dangerous to trap. One man almost lost his life by one. The cat acted like it was dead. When the man came close to the trap, it sprang at him to claw his throat. Fortunately, the man was wearing a very heavy scarf around his neck which protected his throat from getting cut by its claws. Being aware of the danger, Jarjus was very careful in approaching a trap with a wildcat in it.

One year, towards spring, some Indians came to sell their furs to Jarjus. He would buy some if it was possible to use them in his furrier business. Those that he didn't need he sent away to Chicago on the fur market. He tanned the furs that he used. He had learned this when training for the furrier business. It was a rather tiresome job. It took a long time to get the furs ready for garment making.

Jarjus made fur collars and muffs. They were very fashionable. It was at that time that he made a beaver coat for a friend. It wore well as it was many years later that this friend brought the coat to Jarjus, asking him to repair some rips in it.

Since Jarjus had not done any sewing for sometime, he suggested that his friend take it to a tailor. But, his friend said: "You made the coat. I don't want anybody else to work on it. I want you to do it." Therefore, Jarjus went to work on it and was proud of how well it looked when finished.

He also made many mittens, moccasins and caps. Once he made a "footsack" for himself to keep his feet warm while driving the horses during the cold weather. It was made of canvas and lined with sheepskin wool. The back of the sack was made



Jarjus in his fur outfit.



Arnold Mittelstaedt with the furs and the .25-20

long enough to sit on while his feet rested down in it. The front was a laprobe with a mufflike opening provided for keeping the hands warm. Both sides of this sack were open partway down for stepping into. After Jarjus married, he made a footwarmer for his wife to use while riding during the winter months.

In his latter years, Jarjus tanned a cowhide and sent it away to a factory to have it cut into harness pieces for repairing worn-out harness parts.

In those days, the Indians came around to sell their wares to Jarjus. He examined the items and then decided on a certain price to offer them. When he payed them, he was careful not to let them see all his cash for they wanted all the cash he had. Sometimes they would not be satisfied with what he offered them, so he would offer some chickens. One time he told them that they could have a hen, but that they would have to catch her, as the chickens were running in the yard. They were quick and it didn't take them long to catch her. Jarjus had quite a way of understanding them and they seemed to understand him. He asked them, with sign language, if they were going to kill her for eating. They indicated in like manner, that they would keep her for laying eggs.

CHAPTER 2

As soon as it was possible Jarjus built a small house on the west edge of the south eighty-acre tract of land. He dug the cellar by hand. It was a slow and tedious job. His brother, Fred, had grown sons who helped their uncle finish the cellar digging. It was not a full basement; just a place large enough to store potatoes and other vegetables. Ten-gallon crocks, kept covered, held meat preserved in brine for use anytime during the winter. An outside entrance had a sloping doorway to the cellar. In case of inclement weather one could get to the cellar from indoors. A door in the floor, at the south side of the dining room, had a metal ring on one side of the door which served as a handle for opening it. A stepladder, fastened down, led to the cellar. Jarjus had assistance in constructing the house. His brother, Fred, a carpenter by trade, was a welcome help. When finished, one room served as a bedroom and living room, and the small kitchen was used as a dining room. The upstairs, although not plastered, served as a bedroom.

After the Homestead Patent (Title) was approved, Jarjus bought a quarter section of land (160 acres) adjacent to the west of his south eighty acres. The owners had left the community, offering it for a very low price. Then, the opportunity presented itself for him to purchase a quarter section of land just west of his north eighty-acre tract for delinquent taxes. Although Jarjus went into debt he was sure that he would profit by it. A large portion was grassland, used for hay or grazing. The remainder was plowed for cultivation. This meant lots of work, requiring a hired man to help with the field work. He bought horses and machinery as they were needed, sometimes borrowing machinery from his neighbors. Since they were kind enough to help him in time of need, he returned help whenever possible. This now made him three quarter-sections of land altogether. This gave him an ideal place to build his granary and other buildings.

Blizzards were quite common every winter. The blizzard of 1888 went down in history. Much livestock was lost, and it was a tragedy that people lost their lives also.

One man was in his barn not a great distance from his house. Knowing exactly in what direction and how far to go in order to get to his house, he started out walking. With assurance that he should be there, he stopped and looked around. A dark object stood to his left. He turned and found his house. He was

safe at home; what a narrow escape! After the blizzard subsided, men went out to hunt for missing animals and men. It was a pitiful job, but it had to be done.

After a severe snowstorm, the Indians would come around to see if there were any animals dead from the storm. If they found one, they would eat it. But first, they inspected the carcass. They did not want to eat one that had been sick or dead for a long time.

When Jarjus bought horses he had to provide a shelter for them. He built a barn large enough for twelve horses and a lean-to on both north and south sides for cattle and calves. The second story haymow held many tons of hay. He raised enough cattle from his own herd that he could fatten and ship some to Omaha. Years later a hogbarn was added to his farmyard for housing his pigs.

In those days Jarjus envisioned a large grain harvest. Again he went to building and this time it was a grainery. Neighbors and relatives assisted him. Considered a very important building by Jarjus, it stood almost in the center of the yard. It had a second story, consisting of two large grain bins and a little hallway. One was constructed with a hopper and a chute to the first floor. A lean-to added two large bins to the grainery, making four grain bins on the first floor. Strong beams, across the top of the lean-to, supported the building. This was an ideal place for Jarjus to store his cornplanter when not in use. It took no space away from the grain storage.

Years later he built a lean-to on the south side of the grainery for storing the grain binder. A small enclosure to one corner of the building became a shelter for a few chickens.

As the settlers travelled to Norfolk from northwest of Jarjus' yard, their road passed directly through his yard. He permitted them to feed their horses and to keep them comfortable during their stay. This caused problems later. Some of the travelers would stop there when he was not at home. Jarjus began to notice that some grain had been taken. He posted a warning on the grainery door to the effect that a loaded gun was triggered inside to go off when the door opened. There actually was not one set to go off for he didn't want to kill anyone. The warning was effective; he didn't miss any more grain.

Another building spree began when the corncrib was built. The large bins, one on the east and the other on the west side,

held about 2500 bushels of corn. A large gangway in between the bins could be used for storing machinery as a roof covered the entire building.

Jarjus planted a grove of cottonwood trees north of the yard for a windbreak. Another large grove was planted southeast of the yard covering about five acres of land. A spring flowed between this grove and the yard. Years later, these trees grew so large that some were cut down for lumber. Jarjus hired a Saw-mill Company to come and cut the lumber on the east end of the grove. That lumber was used to build a second corncrib by the hoglot. The grove was part of the pasture where the fattening cattle grazed. The trees furnished plenty of fuel for the cook stoves and heaters every winter. The stumps were left standing to decay and provide fuel for the smoke house in smoking sausages, hams and bacon.

Jarjus cooked for himself and his hired help, baking his own bread. When he made the dough, he set it in his bed, to keep it warm for raising. In the meantime, he worked outdoors. He shaped the dough into six loaves, setting them back in his bed for raising. The neighbor children, who were visiting him at the time, watched with amazement; they told their mother that Jarjus baked his bread in his bed! The small cook stove held six loaves for baking.

One day when Jarjus had several men helping with the building of the barn, he prepared and served dinner to them. It was not an elaborate type of meal, but the "stick-to-the-ribs" kind of meal, consisting of potatoes, meat, beans and bread. As he waiting on the table, pouring the coffee, he bragged about his good coffee. When the men finished eating, they said "Now we ate all of your potatoes and meat; you won't have any food left but beans to eat." "Oh, no!", he replied: "I have something left for myself to eat. It think it is a poor cook who doesn't save something back for himself."

Jarjus told the men that he had been the chief potato peeler for the family and that he was taught to peel them very thin. He prided himself in telling how he helped peel apples for his father, slicing them and putting them on trays. After the bread had been baked, and the oven was still hot, the trays were then placed in the oven for drying the apples. His responsibility was to stir them every hour, and later on less and less. He told how the neighborhood boys had offered to help stir them, their knowing well that they would get some to eat. Naturally, some of the apples found their way into their pockets to be eaten later.

On February 10, 1887, Jarjus married Mathilda Spreeman. She, with her family, had come from Germany when she was twelve years old. They came to Nebraska and were living on a farm several miles northeast of Jarjus. She had attended public schools in order to learn English. She worked as a housemaid for several families, and it was at the home of the Carl Rohrke family where he met her.

In getting married, his bachelor days came to a happy end. Now Jarjus could spend more time outdoors instead of cooking meals and washing dishes.

Jarjus trained a few cows for milking. It was wonderful having fresh milk, butter and cream to use anytime. Mathilda was a very good cook. It took a lot of food to feed a hungry husband and hired man. Their first son arrived late in the summer of 1888. They named him Otto Jarjus.



Jarjus and wife, Mathilda.
First Picture after Marriage

CHAPTER 3

In the early days of farming the wheat crop was cut by a reaper. There was no binder attached to it for tying the bundles of grain with twine. He and his helpers had to tie the grain by hand. They fashioned their own way of tying it by twisting the stems into a knot on the seed end, bringing it around and tying it with the other end. It was quite a trick! Jarjus was fast at it. He could tie faster than any of the other men. Perhaps the skinning of animals, etc. in the furrier business had helped to develop such nimble fingers. As machinery manufacturing progressed, a binder, with a knotter attached, came on the market. Jarjus bought one, which made it easier for tying the bundles and cutting the twine.

Three or four young men loaded the bundles on a rack-type wagon and brought them to the yard for stacking. The stacks stood far enough apart to allow the threshing machine to stand between them for loading from both sides.



Putting bundles on the wagon before threshing.



Rumley steam tractor used for threshing grain in 1915

The owner of a threshing machine would go from farm to farm during the harvest season. Usually eight farmers, as a crew, would help one another thresh his grain. As the machine stood next to the stacks, the men on each stack pitched bundles into it. One man, at each side of the machine, cut the twine with a sharp knife as the bundle was thrown on to the moving belt. That took fast action.

Two men filled the grain sacks on a horse-pulled wagon at the threshing machine, tying each sack at the top and stacking it in the wagon. The grain was taken to the grainery for unloading. There were enough workers that the threshing could continue until finished.

The unloading of the grain, at the grainery, was hard work, requiring four men to do it. One man would toss a sack up to another man for emptying into the bins. A sack, hooked on to the bottom of the chute on the first floor, caught the grain as it came down the chute. The other two men emptied the sacks into the bins.

Several years later the men did not stack the bundles of grain. It was shocked out in the stubble field waiting to be threshed. Also, the owner of the threshing machine held a meeting to find out what farmers would make up the threshing crew.

When it came corn-planting time Jarjus insisted on planting the corn himself, always using the same team of horses. The cornplanter had a seat on it; the only piece of machinery having that convenience at first. A wire, attached to the planter, had knots about thirty inches apart, reaching the entire length of the field. When this wire passed through the turnplate in the bottom of the seedbox, the knot tripped the plate, dropping two or three kernels into the ground. The knots, being spaced far enough apart, made even rows to make it possible for cultivating crosswise, and keeping the field clean from grass for a period of weeks.

Jarjus was very particular with keeping his machinery in good working condition. His first cornplanter had many parts made of hard wood, painted blue. Upon finishing with the planting, he immediately took it apart and stored it, piece by piece, on top of the beams of the grainery. When it wore out, it was not weather-worn, the blue could still be seen.

His first machinery did not have seats on them because Jarjus could not afford buying the riding kind. The cultivator, plow

and harrows required one walking behind them for operating them. The cultivator had two handles for controlling the shovels. If a plant was not growing straight in a line, the shovel could be swung to one side to avoid cutting it off. As time passed and more money became available to him, the latest machinery was purchased. The riding cultivator made it easier and less tiring to operate.

The men got plenty of exercise walking behind the plow in the springtime and were very tired at the end of a working day.

His son, Otto, about the age of sixteen, saw tractors being used for some field work. He asked his father to buy one for them, which he did; a G-O tractor having very large steel wheels. It could not be used for cultivating corn as the wheels would pack the ground too much. It was only used for plowing, disking and pulling the grain binder during harvest season. Later on, tractors were manufactured with rubber tires, making it possible to use them for more field work.

Jarjus planted patches of sweet clover in the poor soil of the oatfield to improve the soil. The clover, with its little nodules growing on its roots, gave nitrogen for food to the soil. The sweet clover was still small in size when the grain was cut, that it didn't interfere with the binder tying the bundles of grain. He also planted twenty acres of alfalfa and five acres of red clover which provided good feed for the horses.

Jarjus had a full-time hired man all year round until the boys became grown and able to help with the farm work. Then he hired one occasionally when the work became too much for them.



Cornpicking wagons with bang boards.

As long as the boys needed schooling, they were excused from the field work. They always carried their share of responsibility by milking both morning and evening. The small boys had their jobs of carrying in wood and cobs for fuel.

When it came time for picking corn, the big boys were kept out of school to help with the picking. Mathilda helped on Saturdays since there was no school and Clara was home to do the cooking. Otto and Walter had a wagon to themselves. Hugo had a wagon, and Mathilda helped pick to fill his load. Later on, when Arnold and Helmuth were big enough, Mathilda took them with her to pick corn. They usually picked three wagon loads a day. They started early in the morning and came in with a load about 9:30 a.m.

After the unloading they would have lunch because they were hungry and would not get back home with another load until about 1:30 p.m. The others would come home with a load about noon and unload it, then eat their dinner. Clara knew that her Mother liked potatoes so she always had them freshly cooked for Mathilda's dinner. The third trip to the field brought a load in by evening. The older boys would unload that load. Sometimes a hired man helped with the cornpicking. The length of time varied due to weather conditions as to when corn picking would be finished, and sometimes it took until after Christmas.

There were times when the grasshoppers became a hazard. Jarjus tried to get ahead of them, if possible, by planting his grain early in the spring. It would be so early in the spring that the neighbors would remark: "Jarjus must be crazy!" And, sometimes, there would be a snowfall after planting the grain. It would ripen early in the summer due to the early planting. Many times he cut his grain before the grasshoppers could devour all of it.

One summer Jarjus made two swaths around the field. When the binder broke down, there was a two-day delay while the machine was being repaired. The grasshoppers destroyed over half of the crop during that time. There was nothing that the farmers could do about it. The grasshoppers would cut the seeds off and eat the stems. Some cornfields were completely devoured. It was a sorry sight! Jarjus was wise in setting the bundles in round shocks. That way he had only one bundle exposed to the outside where the grasshoppers and birds could eat the grain. When it rained, only top bundles got wet, and when the wind blew some bundles off, they were put back into place. When the



WINDMILL ON THE MITTELSTAEDT FARM

By the chicken house and the smoke house is Lois and Richard with Dad's (Erich's) pet rooster, Toby (lower right)

farmers set the bundles in long shocks, it gave free access to the grasshoppers and birds to eat the grain.

Several years after his marriage Jarjus noticed his livestock required more drinking water. The old well had served its purpose. It became evident that a larger one was needed. Accordingly, he hired a "Well-driller outfit" to drill a deep well nearby, and a windmill was constructed on the site. The tower had a wheel at the top. When the wind was strong enough to turn the wheel, it pumped almost constantly to furnish sufficient water to a large drinking tank for all the livestock.

Next, Jarjus built a mill, twelve feet by fifteen feet, west of the tower. A contraption, devised with a long pole, was fastened to the plunging rod of the pump. It would go up and down as the windmill pumped. A ratchet wheel, connected to the end of the pole, turned the grinder in the mill as the windmill turned. Usually, there was enough grain ground during the day for feeding the livestock in the evening.

The increased herd of cattle and consequent increased production of milk made it necessary for Jarjus to get a cooling tank for both milk and cream. All the pumping water ran through the milk tank. It held ten three-gallon cans, fastened inside the tank to keep them from falling over. Cletes, soldered on to the outside of the cans, made it possible to hook them inside the tank.

The cream came to the top of the milk and was skimmed off with a large ladle. It was stored in cans and kept cool in the

cooling tank. A Creamery truck carried it to the Creamery for testing and marketing.

The skimmed milk was used for making cottage cheese and fed to the bucket calves and hogs. Mathilda let it set in order for it to sour which she used to make the cottage cheese. Her family was well supplied.

Later Jarjus bought a cream separator, turned by hand. It went faster than skimming the cream by ladle. During the height of the milking season, family members milked more than twenty cows by hand.

A scarlet fever epidemic spread among the children during the winter of 1893. Some families lost most of their children. His brother, Ernest, lost three boys within a three-week period. That was hard to take!

Jarjus and Mathilda had four children at that time: Otto, Walter, Hugo, and Clara, being a infant. They all came down with the fever within a short period of time. The Doctor came to the home nearly every day to treat them until the fever broke. After the children recovered, someone, pessimistically, said to the parents, "Next year they will get sick again, you may lose them then!" You can be sure that he and his wife watched for signs of illness. About a year later, when the children started coughing, they were immediately put to bed and kept warm. (The Doctor had warned them to stay out of drafts.) They got well quick, surely because of such good care given them.

Along about that time, Jarjus rented out some acreage to his brother, Fred's two grown sons. Their father had only a quarter-section (160 acres) of land to farm. Therefore, he could spare them for some time, and it gave them a chance to earn some money. The boys stayed with their Uncle and Aunt most of the time while doing the field work. Otherwise, they were home helping their Dad. Since the boys boarded there, they helped Mathilda in many ways. There was always fuel and water to carry in and chores to be done. They slept with the older boys upstairs since there were two double beds. (The smaller children slept in a trundle bed downstairs.)

During cornpicking season Fred's two sons first picked the corn at home and then picked the corn on their rented acreage. Again they boarded until their corn was picked. One time their father came to stay overnight. Everyone got up about 4:30 a.m. to do the chores, eat breakfast and go to the field by sunrise.

Fred "slept in" as he was tired. When he got up and saw that the men had already gone to the field, he remarked: "Are you folks crazy, getting up in the dark?" Jarjus was quick to reply; "If we didn't get up that early we wouldn't get our corn picked until spring." Jarjus was an early riser. He had no rest until the field work was done.

As the boys grew and could do all of the field work by themselves, Jarjus did most of the cattle and hog chores. The only corn picking he did was to snap the ears and throw them on the wagon. He usually took two of the younger boys, Arnold and Helmuth, along with him to the field. He was good at snapping corn, but he detested picking it.

In getting the feed ready, Jarjus would chop the ears into short pieces on a chopping block with a corn knife. It was a tedious job, but he took his time. With the steers kept in the feedlot, he started them on snapped corn early in the season. After a period of two months, they were fed shelled corn until they were heavy enough for market. A self-feeder was set up with the shelled corn, needing refilling occasionally. Jarjus fed them alfalfa hay also. The feeding rack held about two loads of hay. The boys would keep it filled.

The hogs would keep the hay eaten off the lower section of the rack, as it was close enough to the ground. Nothing was wasted. They also were fed ear corn and skimmed milk most of the time.

In the springtime, at farrowing time, Jarjus was especially busy. He spent hours with the sows during very cold weather. Several times he brought some piglets to the house in a bushel basket to keep them warm because the sows were restless and may kill them by laying on them. When he returned the little ones to the mother sow, he watched to make sure that they were nursing. That was time consuming! Jarjus had real patience with those pigs and was a good example to his sons. There were times that he needed help from the boys.

When the hogs were ready for market, Jarjus hauled them by wagon. The farmers helped one another as it took four or more wagon loads to haul the hogs to the small stockyard at Hadar, three miles away. They might be kept there for several days, waiting to be loaded into the train stockcar. That meant someone needed to feed them there.

In the case of three or four farmers shipping their hogs in the

same train car, they would have to mark them for identification. Each used a different-colored paint. Usually one or more of the men would go along with the shipment, riding in the caboose.

One time when Jarjus was riding in a caboose, it came loose from the train. The impetus caused it to run along behind. The brakeman signalled to the engineer with his lantern for the train to stop. (It was night.) Not realizing what the trouble was, the engineer halted the train too quickly. The caboose struck the train with such force that everything loose inside went helter skelter. One large object knocked a fellow unconscious. One can imagine the confusion, groaning and cursing among those passengers! One man was hurt in his back, and his nose bled. Jarjus didn't get hurt at all. The twelve passengers were requested by the Railroad Company to have their Doctor check them for injuries and to return with his signed paper. Everyone who went to the Doctor was paid two dollars by the Company. One man, who hadn't gotten hurt, refused to sign the statement, desiring to wait to see if injuries would show up. As a result of his not going to the Doctor, the Company would not pay him.

The farmers were always afraid of prairie fires. Some of them lost their homes in such a fire. Jarjus plowed a strip of land twelve feet wide northwest of his yard for protection, called the "fireline." He kept it cleared all summer so that there was no chance of fire burning through it. A strip of grass was left standing twenty feet wide near the yard which he kept mowed all summer. He plowed another strip twelve feet wide next to it for security purposes. The strip between the plowed ground was burned out, when necessary, to prevent the fire from spreading.

Years later, a fire went through a great deal of prairie land about four miles southwest of his place. A farmer wanted to burn a small stack of straw in order to plow the ground on which the stack stood. The wind was "still" when he lit the stack. Then the wind started blowing and picked up speed. It picked up chunks of burning straw and carried it afar, setting the prairie grass on fire. The neighbors were watching the burning straw pile. When they saw the prairie land burning, they hurriedly plowed furrows ahead of the fire with their fastest-driving horses. A farmyard was in the direct path of the fire. Two of the neighbors quickly plowed double furrows about twenty rods from it. When the flames hit the single furrow, it slowed down;

then when it hit the wider furrow, it went out. But, in the meantime, the family, seeing the smoke coming through their grove of trees near their house, was frightened. The mother and children hastily left their house. The old grandfather was so sure that the house was going to be burned. He had the presence of mind to take the safety box with him that contained all the valuable papers. How thankful all of them were for the men who came to their rescue in fighting that terrible prairie fire.

Where there wasn't so much danger of prairie fires, Jarjus planted willow trees along the fireline. More space was needed to enlarge the flock of chickens. A new chicken house met that need. The old chicken house was used for setting hens. Every spring some hens were set with about sixteen eggs for hatching. As soon as the cockerels grew large enough, they were butchered for fryers, and the larger ones for roasting. The hens layed so well that some eggs could be sold to the grocery store to trade for groceries.

The old hen house was also used for keeping ducks overnight. Ducks were easy to raise. The ducklings, only a few months old, would go to the pond, out in the pasture and would stay there all day. At sundown, one would see them waddle back home and go into the coop for the night. Every morning their feed consisted of a mixture of cracked corn and milk.

The new chicken house also held two large nests on the floor for the geese. The eggs were placed under clucks for hatching. There would be about a dozen goslings to raise. They would be large enough by fall to butcher. Due to the fact that the feathers were so thick on their body, they had to be loosened by steaming over a boiler of water. The soft feathers or "down" and the large wing and tail feathers were put in separate sacks.

It wasn't unusual to have a feather-stripping party. A group of people sat around a large table. The soft feathers, placed in the middle of the table, were stripped with the fingers. The soft part was kept to be used for filling pillows and feather beds. The quill was thrown into a sack to be discarded. After the clean-up job, they all enjoyed a good lunch.