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# “A House for Seven Dollars and a Cow for Seven Dollars”

## Life in a New Country

I was born in Westphalen, Prussia, in 1846. In March, 1852, when I was six years old, our family left Bremen, Germany, to live in the United States. We left on a small sailboat to a larger sailboat, which had three large masts, and we were eleven weeks on the vessel, and landed at New Orleans. Every Saturday the ship captain gave all of us children prunes, and we used to play on the deck of the ship, and one of the trap doors was open, and I fell down to the bottom of the vessel.

When we left New Orleans, we took a small steamboat to St. Louis, and one day they blew the whistle, and we all screamed as we thought that the boiler of the steamboat had burst. From St. Louis they took us on a small canal boat towed by two horses driven by one man, and we all lay on top of the deck. As the canal boat deck was shallow, my folks tied me to my grandmother and my sister at night, so that I could not roll off in the canal, and we arrived in Chicago on June 15, 1852.

My Uncle Esch from the town of Leyden came with a team and got us. We stayed with him a short time, and then John Landwer came from Deer Grove and got us and gave me some stick candy which was the first candy that I ever had in my life.

My father bought a small log house for \$7, and the farmers moved it on an eighty acre prairie that my uncle, B. H. Landwer, owned. My

*This store building was built by Garret Landwer in the 1870's for general merchandise. It was still being used 100 years later as the Village Green florist shop on the southeast corner of Cook and Station streets. It served as the village post office from 1905 to 1913.*

Garret Landwer in early 1880's.



Benedict,

Barrington,  
III.

father bought a cow for \$7, and one day the cow was gone, and father and I looked for it, and we found her south in the prairie with a herd of cattle.

Our neighbor, Brainard Edgerton, built a small frame house on forty acres near where the Barrington Campground is now. It was bricked up between the two by four studding, and father rented it from him. One stormy day Father was gone to a meeting at Deer Grove, and the brick got loose, and I held it until Mother got a stick and propped it to keep it from falling. There was a small shanty built on, and when we were in bed, we could see the stars in the sky.

Mr. Edgerton came over sometimes and taught us children English, and when I was seven years old, my sister, Dena and I went to a little schoolhouse about where Dr. Richardson's house used to be located. Lester D. Castle was our teacher, and Cassius Beverly was my classmate. He taught me English, and I taught him German.

One day Father and I went to get a calf from a man by the name of Felter, and we walked across where the C. and N.W. tracks are now, and there were some little sticks stuck in the ground with some white cloth on them. I asked Father what they were, and he told me they were going to put a railroad through here, and I asked, "Father, what is a railroad?" as I never saw a railroad in my life. Father said that they laid wood on the ground with iron on it, and ran a wagon on it, and I asked what made the wagon run, and he said a machine pulled it. Father paid fourteen shillings for the calf and carried the calf home on his back, and we raised it, and called the cow "Felter."

I was about eight years old and the oldest boy, and Father had not much help. I always was with Father and helped him whatever I could do. I think I loaded about thirty loads of hay that summer. It was in 1854 my father bought eighty acres of prairie land from Woodbridge Hawley, about three-and-a-half miles south, for \$700. I think he had about \$30 to pay down on it, and that summer Father and I broke up about ten acres of prairie. We had one yoke of oxen, and Uncle Elfrink loaned us one yoke of oxen, and I drove the oxen for Father.

In 1855 Father bought a larger log house from Henry Elfrink of Deer Grove, and moved it on eighty acres that my father owned.



I had a good time with the prairie chickens and made me a trap and caught some of them. One spring I had five dozen prairie chicken eggs, and I set them under hens, but when they hatched, they ran away, and I could not raise any of them.

One day I was in the prairie and saw two young sandhill cranes, and I caught them and brought them home and raised them so that they would eat from my hand, and got them quite large. One day the wind blew so hard, they got hurt and died, which made me feel quite bad.

In the winter of 1856 I went with Father to the woods to help him saw some logs for firewood, and I froze my feet so badly that in the spring I had to follow the oxen in my stockings as I could not wear any shoes.

I did not go to school on the prairie as we had no schoolhouse close by. I did not go to school there until fourteen years old, as I had to go to the woods every winter and haul timber for fence posts and also for fuel. They built a new schoolhouse in Henry Hawley's woods near the bridge when I was fourteen. I had my first reader, and had a lady for a teacher.

When I was fifteen years old, Mother gave me some eggs, and I went to Barrington and got a Thompson's Practical Arithmetic for myself. One winter I had about eight days of school. That was my best schooling I ever had. I remember that I started in addition and went clear through into fractions.

I grew up and became a carpenter, and built churches, houses, and barns. One day I walked to a meeting at Deer Grove, and J. C. Plagge met me on the C. and N.W. track near the lumber yard where he worked. I said to J. C. Plagge that I had been thinking of starting up business as there was only one German store in the town at that time. He said that was what he was thinking about, and I said to him, "Let us start up in partnership."

So in March, 1878, we started our business in Ela's old store, and then we rented the old Townsend store. — G. L.

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"You name it — we have it," general storekeepers proudly said. They were right, too.



*Garret H. Landwer family in late 1800's. Landwer and wife with son Julius between them. Back row: Ben, William, Charley, Matilda, and Rose.*

The country store was more than a marketplace. It was a meeting place. It was there the whole community went to do their shopping and to pick up their mail. Soon they became friends, and when they met in the store, much time was spent in chatting. Every country store had a large pot-bellied stove, the focal point for gathering to visit, to play checkers or cards.

The store's customers sat on boxes, barrels, kegs, or chairs while chatting around the stove. It was here they found out who was sick, who died, who had a new baby, or who might be moving into or out of town. They cussed and discussed the news, weather, crops, sports, inventions, books, politics, and religion.

Barrels stood all around the floor filled with crackers, coffee, sugar, dried peas, beans, and molasses. Many other supplies hung by rope and wire from the ceiling. You'd look up and see pails, cowbells, horse collars, bird cages, baskets, and coffee pots.

"These hanging supplies were our second floor," one old time storekeeper used to say.

The country store was a conglomeration of wooden buckets, wooden tubs used for your Saturday baths and washing clothes, saddles, harness, chains, rope, hayforks and spades, and guns.

In sheds or rooms adjoining, you found harrows, ox yokes, and plows rubbing elbows with the extra barrels of flour. White and brown sugar came in one-hundred pound sacks, corn meal in fifty pound sacks. Sorghum syrup and honey came in gallon buckets.

They bought dried fruit, peaches, apples, prunes, raisins, and sometimes apricots in twenty-five pound boxes, kerosene for lamps in five-gallon cans, kegs of whiskey, the lather used for household purposes, quinine, castor oil, different kinds of herbs to administer to the sick. You used coal oil (sometimes called kerosene) and grease on hot wool rags on your chest for the croup. Honey, soda, and whiskey were cures for coughs.

Country stores were a treat to the nose. You could smell peppermint, apples, cheese, salami, kerosene. Add to this the pungency of pound upon pound of plug tobacco, all cuts marked with tin tags denoting the various brands of the day.

At any season through the air from the rear of the store came the deep fragrance of freshly ground coffee. — M.S.

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The old country store at Cuba Station, where the railroad met Kelsey Road, was the focal point of activity in those days. And after it got to be so you could ship things parcel post, that hindered our business and took it all away. And bigger stores opened in Barrington, too, and well then, we just had to close shop finally.



*John Plagge in door of post office in 1891 when it was located on South Cook Street just behind his store on Railroad Street (later Park Avenue) where the First National Bank building was later. The girl in the wicker carriage is Myrtle Plagge, daughter of John's cousin, Frank H. Plagge.*

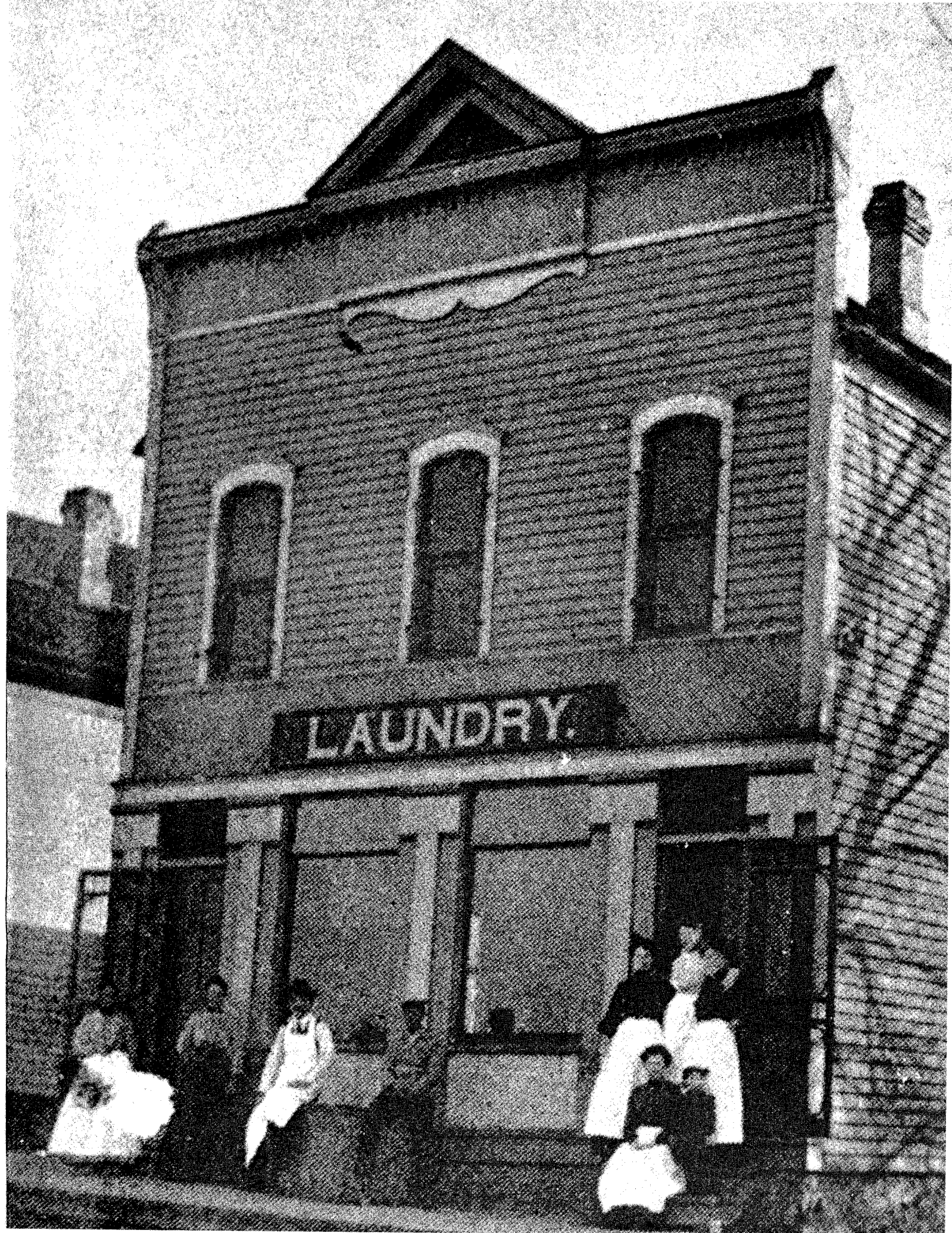


My father was a carpenter, and he built all the barns from Algonquin area up Kelsey Road and over to Fox River Grove and Cary. That was his territory mostly. Once in awhile he would have a barn to build down to Palatine. And when he had one down to Buffalo Grove, he used to walk there on Sunday. He would walk back to Buffalo Grove and stay there all week with the people. He would have his meals there and sleep there and everything. And he would work all week and then walk back again to home.

My mother took care of the store, and she was postmistress. She used to hang the sack of mail on a crane out by the track. And then the train would come along and nip it off. And they would throw the pouch with the mail that belonged around there to the ground, and she would go get that.

Cuba Station was called Langanheim after the oldest settler there. He had the farm right in back of our store. And our store was located where what is now the corner of Kelsey Road and the Northwest Highway. It faced west originally. Then it was turned to face south. —  
E. K. K.

*The Gieske laundry on south side of Station Street in early 1900's. The laundry was behind Garret Landwer's store at Cook and Station with Schwemm's Livery Stable in between. On the steps are the "laundry queens" and other staff.*



LAUNDRY.