

Mother (Nanny)

Nanny was born June 10, 1876 in Saratov, Russia. In southwestern part of Russia. Hundreds of years ago, many people from Germany moved to Russia. Hard times in Germany. Settled in one spot and kept to themselves. Kept their language and customs. The Russian people did not bother them, left them alone. The only thing that govt. demanded from their people was that when each boy reached 18, he had to serve 5 yrs. in the Russian army. My father was in the army, and since he was an excellent horseman he was a general on the western border. He had a very very good voice, so he was in the choir. Many times sang with the choir for the Czar and the high-ups. The settlement was very large. As for the nearest Dr. was 100 miles away. He was not called too often. Everyone had a farm, and each farm was very large. Many times was away from the house for days. Slept on the ground under the wagon. Nanny got married very young. Needed another man to help grandfather with the farm work. Winters were hard and long. All doors in the house opened out. Have no idea why. Many times during the night's snow storm, door was completely snowed shut and could not be opened for hours. Hard living. Many times weather was so bitter cold all the animals had to be brought inside at night and kept in kitchen so they would not freeze to death. Horses, cows, pigs. We had a clean-up in the morning. Everyone carried their own home. Were hung on nails from kitchen ceiling. Gypsies were important. Usually came once or twice during the summer. Never stole, but were helpful. Grandmother had been sick for some time. In bed getting worse. Gypsies came one day, knew grandmother was sick, went right in to look at her. Just looked at her, went into kitchen, made some medicine from herbs, leaves and grass, which they carried with them. Grandmother took the medicine, and in 2 days up and around and feeling fine. Never was that sick again. All the gypsies wanted in exchange was one ham. Certainly was worth it. Always glad to see the gypsies.

The people in the community were very religious. Everyone, who possibly could, went to church on Christmas Eve. Everyone walked. On the way home, the hundreds of people would sing carols. In the crisp clear air, it was a beautiful sound. Nanny always said it sounded as if the angels were singing too. Whenever Nanny would talk about it, she had a far-away look in her eyes, and a smile on her face. Maybe the angels did join in, who knows. Beautiful times and memories.

Nearby the community, there was a short mountain. Every Easter morning, before daybreak those who were able, climbed to the top of the mountain, and sat on the ground. As the sun came up to the Herald Easter, everyone sang hymns. Sometimes for two hours. What a wonderful way to proclaim "Christ is Risen."

One day a neighbor went to the field to work. It was important that the work be done at that time. The man had not been working long, when a heavy rain storm came. The man had to stop work. It made him so angry, that he shook his fist at the sky and he cursed the Lord. He was still shaking his fist, there was a bold of lightening hit him and killed him. Soon after he was buried. Whenever someone came near his grave, the man appeared "asking for help." He was in pain because he cursed the Lord, and could not rest. The people told the pastor. He went there a

number of times, but the man did not appear. Probably too ashamed. Then the pastor went to his grave, prayed for him, stayed with him quite a time. The man was never seen again. Finally at peace with the Lord and could rest.

Winters were bitter cold. Washing clothes was a chore. Large pieces were kept all winter and in the spring, they were washed. Everyone would go down to river, and everything was washed. Then laid in the grass to dry. Sometimes it took a week to get done. What fun! No one complained, everyone took it for granted. Often think what the people did without, washers, dryers, electricity, telephone, vacuum, radio, TV's, microwaves, fryers, refrigerators, furnace heat, dishwashers, air conditioning, and many more. No one was ever bored just very tired.

Things were getting bad at the farm. Grandfather died, and my father was left with all the work. Too much for one person. Things were getting bad all over the community. Many people left and moved to America. Nanny received letters from her friends in America, and they all liked it., and told Nanny to sell farm and come to America. It was 1897 and decided to move. Went to authorities and made plans and arrangements. Had to wait until 1899 before they could leave. Only so many people could leave each year. There was a "quota" each year for each country. They had to wait 2 year. America did not want "too many" from any one country. Should do the same today.

So in 1899 they left. "They" were mother, (Catherine) Father, (John), Aunt, (Elizabeth) Grandmother, and mother's two children, both boys (Peter and John). All their clothes and other things were put in a bed quilt and a few bags. Way over was uneventful, but long. A couple of the passengers died on the way, and their burial place was the ocean. When they arrived, they were kept on Ellis Island for 2 days, to be sure no one brought a disease with them. A precaution that should still be in force.

The "gang" settling in Hudson, New York, the small town where their friends were. Rented a small place, but things were hard. Had no furniture, so Nanny saved wood (a whole day) for a piece of very used furniture. But we were taken care of and loved. It was the Jewish people who helped the most. More so than the people from church. There was eight children, 4 boys, 4 girls. Everyone had to help with the chores but it didn't hurt any of us. It took years to get the house livable. For a couple of years Nanny kept in touch with the friends she left in Russia. Things gradually got worse in Russia, a lot of starvation. After a while, her friends wrote they were eating the leaves from trees. It wasn't too long after that, that no more letters were received. Never learned what really happened. Think the family moved to America at the right time. We were a close knit family, and had a good time growing up.

Nanny died in Oct. 1944, she was very tired.

Written by Marie Wagner, one of the daughters. She died May 28th 2000.

****Written in the middle of the first page****

Elizabeth

Catherine Kraft

John Wagner

Born? –Northeastern Germany

****Written at the top of the second page****

Easter

Christmas

Man-lightning

****Written on the side of the third page****

Peter died in USA very young of Pneumonia