

Hand Sickles for Harvesting in Teplitz, Bessarabia

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I have been reading with interest the stories about shocking grain. In the early days of Teplitz, Bessarabia our ancestors cut the grain with hand sickles and later hand scythes. The grain was then bound with ties made of twisted straw, and the bundles were stood up into "kopitza" - what is known in America as shocking. Our farmer-forefathers in the old country abandoned the system of hand-harvesting in the late 1800's after they bought their first Reaper with a mowing apparatus. This machine had four rake-like wings that with one stroke piled the cut grain into equal piles. Men would then hoist the cut heaps of grain up onto a "Harbiwagen" - a wagon with two ladder-like uprights on the sides to hold the load. To hoist the cut heaps onto the "Harbi", a the person loading used a long-handled pitchfork. Another person working up on the "Harbi" carefully placed these heaps in order so that they could be unloaded without disturbing the kernels in the heads. A team of horses then hauled the wagon-load of cut grain to the thrashing area at the rear of the farm yard property. Thrashing of the grain was done with the use of stone rollers right to the end of our time in Bessarabia in 1940. Ancient, yes, but an inexpensive method for our people, and it did the job. In Schwabenland, shocking was practiced by many until 1950. In Poland we used ties made from straw; in Germany we used twine to tie the bundles. I worked in both places and know all about it. One had to have strong hands and knowledge to tie these bundles properly. That was a woman's job in those days. Many people today have no memory of the use of a "Dredstoi" "Dredstoe" - a stone roller.