

LUCAN

In the 1920's the word was spreading quickly throughout Czechoslovakia, that in the "New Land" of Canada, there were many job opportunities, but as you'll hear, times haven't changed much; there was no, or very little work then, as it is now.

My 28 year old grandfather, Andrew Lucan, immigrated to Canada, in Sept. 1926. He had to borrow \$250.00 (our currency) for his passage. He left alone, by train, travelling to Belgium, there boarding a Polish Ocean-liner, for a nine day voyage across the Atlantic Ocean. He landed at Halifax, where grandfather was met by employers, who sent him from there, by rail to Winnipeg. This trip took five days by rail. As there was no work in Winnipeg, he was sent another 50 miles, to a German Ukrainian settlement. There he lived with a German family, helping to harvest wheat and oats, earning \$1.50 daily. He ran a steam engine thrashing machine. It was cold and starting to snow already. Grandfather stayed there for 2½ months.

Once harvest was completed, word was passed that the coal mines in Flin Flon were starting to open. He travelled there, but since there were no buildings to live in, he went back to Winnipeg, finding no work there, grandfather journeyed to an Ukrainian settlement near Ottawa and there worked at a saw mill for only 2 weeks, because the employers couldn't afford to pay the employees. They just gave them room and board.

From here, grandfather went to Kapuskasing a Slovak settlement, and there worked at a Pulp & Paper Mill for one year. There he got pneumonia, lived with a Czech family, and was paid \$3.00 daily. Since there was no further work, he travelled to Toronto in November of 1928. Grandfather got work with the Hydro company for 6 months. There was another 10-12 Slovak men employed at the Hydro Co. also. After the Hydro project was completed, he railed back to Fort William, working for 3 months on the CPR track working 12 hr. shifts at 10 cents an hour. He lived in rail cars while working for the CPR. When this project was completed, he railed back to Toronto and got a job building bridges, working there for 6 months (1929).

By 1930, he saved enough money and was very lonesome for his wife and 2 young children, he returned to Czechoslovakia. While there he built a new home on the farm they owned. When grandfather returned home, my father Joe Lucan was 7 yrs. old.



Mr. and Mrs. Andy Lucan

By 1935 the talk was that there was going to be another world war. When my grandfather was 16 yr. old he was a soldier in World War I. He was on boarder patrol; and since my dad was now 12 yrs. old, grandfather was afraid my dad would be drafted into the army. In order to avoid this, they sold their farm and the whole family immigrated to Canada.

They landed in Halifax, after crossing the ocean by ship and left by rail to Toronto. This was in April of 1935. My grandmother and the 4 children stayed in Toronto for 1 week, with another Slovak family, and in the mean time

grandfather came to John Bahro's who lived in Watford area then. Mr. Bahro helped the new immigrants find farms in this area. He was a real estate agent.

Grandfather stayed in the Alvinston Columbia Hotel, until he purchased the present farm, which is 2 miles south of Alvinston, and my Uncle John Lucan and family all lived there.

Grandfather purchased these 100 acres for \$3,950.00 starting with a \$1,200.00 mortgage. The farm was purchased from a mortgage company in Sarnia, Archie Wakes had owned the farm, and he went bankrupt. My grandmother and siblings joined grandfather here on April 6, 1935. They hired a 3-ton truck to bring them to Alvinston. All they brought, with them from Czechoslovakia, was their clothes.

The home on their farm was being rented by a Walter Brown family. Therefore the Lucan family stayed upstairs, in the house for 1 week, till the Brown's moved out.

Their first spring here was very cold and my dad remembers the trees being tapped for syrup. This was a first for him, as this was not done in Czechoslovakia. Everybody that owned a bush tapped for syrup.

They purchased used furniture at auction sales. Bought a team of Percheron horses with harnesses for \$275.00 from John Bahro. One holstein cow for \$38.00 and 15 chickens for 50 cents each, at a sale. They also purchased some old machinery from the Brown's for \$150.00. They grew a garden here, had a large cucumber patch and sold cucumbers. Their first crops, in Canada, consisted of oats, barley, wheat, peas, canning beans, white beans and small field of sweet corn. Grandfather purchased the seeds from his neighbour Mr. Black and from the mill in Alvinston. The purchase price for oats was 15 cents a bushel, barley 25 cents a bushel, wheat 35 cents a bushel - same price to buy and to sell it - but as the Depression was here, they were unable to sell their grains for 2 years. Therefore they fed it to their livestock. They also grew peas, selling them for \$40. a ton; canning beans \$35. a ton; white beans sold for 50 cents a bushel and sweet corn sold at \$35. a ton.

From a pig dealer Leonard Annett, grandfather purchased 12 pigs for \$7.00 a pig, a market pig sold for \$17.00 Gordon McTaggart bought market pigs from farmers and shopped the pigs to Coleman Packers in London.

My dad and aunt Pauline White started school in April 30, 1935 at Dolbears School. They both started in Grade 1, as they didn't know the English language. My dad was 13 yrs. old that Sept. and in Czechoslovakia would have been starting high school. My dad stayed in school till

June of 1936.

There were 5 grocery stores in Alvinston. A man by the name of George Whitton owned a grocery and dry good store in Alvinston (the building north of the bank now). This Mr. Whitton was very good to the new immigrants. He helped them out when they were in need. Mr. Whitton was one of Alvinston's original settlers. Mr. Whitton let the Lucan family buy only what they needed, and by Nov. 1/35 they had a \$62.00 bill there. The bill was paid off when they received money from their pea crop. Their pea crop yielded about a ton per acre of shelled peas. They received \$1.00 a bushel for white beans, and in the fall of 1936 they got 35 cents a bushel of white beans.

A loaf of bread cost 5 cents, grandmother purchased bread for 1 week and after that she purchased a bag of flour for \$3.15 (98 lb. bag) and made her own bread. They purchased sugar bags for 5 cents a piece and handmade and dyed their clothing out of these bags.

The Lucan family was the first Slovak family to settle in Alvinston farming area. Tony Dobias and family were the next Slovak family to settle in Alvinston area.

In the fall of 1935 Nicholas Nemcek and family immigrated and stayed with my grandparents for 6 weeks. The Nemceks purchased a 50 acre farm. Many more Slovak families came to this area, and stayed with the Lucans till they purchased their own farms.

The Frank Luhovy's came in the fall of 1936 and stayed with them for 2 months. The John Pokolinsky family came in the spring of 1938 staying for 2 months with the Lucan family. The Lucan family were more than happy to help their fellow countrymen out in their time of need.

The Lucans purchased their first car in 1938, a 1929 Plymouth Sedan for \$75. from Jim Dean's garage in Alvinston. Gas at that time cost 35 cents a gallon. The first tractor was purchased in 1946, a little Ford, for \$800. from Percy Willis.

My dad bought his present farm in 1941 from the Sinclair estate.

My mother's people - Andrew and Theresa Varsava came to my grandparents place in May of 1937 staying with them till Oct. 1937, when they purchased a 75 acre farm in Glen Ray in Enniskillen Township. My mom came to Canada in March 1938 as they didn't have enough money for her passage.

My grandfather Lucan will be 87 years old in Nov./85 and still in very good health. My grandmother Lucan passed away May 2, 1977 aged 75 yrs.

My uncle John Lucan was born in Nov./35 at the home farm here in Canada.