

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF SAM EFFRON

PART III

The Jewish Colonies in Argentina

In the beginning of the year of 1880 there were great disturbances in the Ukraine provinces. There was a Pogrom of Jews in the city of Kishinev, as well as in many of the districts in the south of Russia. There was a Jew in Paris by the name of Baron De Hirsh, a multimillionaire. He decided to take some of the Jews from the Ukraine and settle them on lands where they could make a living from the soil, instead of chasing after the wind. For this purpose he formed an organization under the name of J.C.A., Jewish Colonization Association. A lot of land was bought in Argentina in the provinces of Mosses Will and Entre Rios to place the many families that wanted to leave Russia forever and go there to till the soil. Many offices were opened in south Russia. Jews with large families that were willing to go to a foreign land to become farmers were taken as such.

The J.C.A. furnished the transportation. On arrival there, the family received 50 acres of tillable land and 25 acres for pasture. The first year they received nine pesos per month for each person in the family to live on. They also received all the farm implements, eight oxen, two or three horses, three cows, six chickens and all other machinery that they needed to work with the land. But as for the houses, they were compelled to build them by themselves. Between 1880 and 1885, many colonies were established. In the province of Entre Rios were established Colonies Baso Vil Baso, Las Machis, Rosh Pina, Carmel, Baron Hirsh, Rachel, Saint Gregory, Spindelberg and many others. There were also many colonies in the province of Mosesville.

There was no architectural design to the houses that they had to build. It consisted of two rooms and a roof. The brick was made from the black soil, 10" x 6", dried in the sun, but not burned. When put in the wall, no cement or lime was used, but that same black soil was used just like cement. The floor was made of the same black soil, just the way a concrete floor is made but not as strong, but it answered the purpose. The roof was covered with long native straw that grew very tall in the swampy land, like very thin palms, and it was very strong. There was no ceiling because the roof was the ceiling.

For four or five years many hundreds of families were settled on that land. Offices were opened throughout Eastern Europe, and especially in the government of Grodno. Anyone that had a large family was accepted by the committee. Many families combined with others. If there were only girls in the family, they found boys to marry them, and went together to work the soil. As far as my father was concerned, he had only the one daughter in the house. But my oldest brother had three boys and two girls, and he was disgusted with the life there. From the dairy, nothing much became of it, and he didn't know where his bread would come from the next day. My brother that served the Csar for four years came home that year and he had nothing to do.

So my father and brothers talked the matter over. Perhaps it will be a good idea that they combine together, sign up with the committee and go as one family. My father wrote to me about what was going on there, that many families are combining up to go together to the land of Baron Hirsh. None of those people had a bright outlook toward the future in the places where they were, where everything was nothing but poverty. When I read father's letter, I didn't pay much attention to it. I thought that the whole thing was a joke.

I Make a Plan

A couple of weeks later, about February, 1895, I got another letter from father that the family had signed up with the committee, and that he and his partner are selling the inn to a gentile who is willing to buy. The partner is also going to Argentina to work on the land, and to have enough to eat. "Now, when

you finish the remaining three years' service, you will come to us in Argentina." After reading that letter I became sour in the face. The whole family going away, to begin a new life, a distance of about 10,000 miles, and I have to remain to finish my service to the Tsar for three more years. That night, laying on my bag of straw, I didn't sleep, I was just thinking. I asked myself, why couldn't I go with them? I can get away from the company and reach home all right. The only thing is to get over the border into Germany. Then, I thought, so many are going over the border into Germany while they are on the way to America. Why couldn't I go the same way after I reach home?

I made up my mind to desert, and I laid out plans how to do it. And I took a chance. My father wrote to me with the date when they were supposed to leave for Grodno. That was the first move. In a couple of days I wrote him of my decision and told him the exact hour in the evening when I would be home. I told him not to write to me anymore because too many correspondences may arouse suspicion as all the mail came through the company. Another thing I did not like was that the person who wrote the address on the envelope also wrote "Very Urgent." I didn't like that expression, so I said not to write any more. For a couple of days I was walking around like in a dream, talking to myself. Some of my comrades noticed that I had changed, especially my buddy, as he was close to me. He was asking me, "What is the matter, bad news from home?" I just brushed aside the question and assured him that everything was O.K.

It was three days before Pesach. My plan was to leave on the third day. I wrote to father that I would be home in the evening of the fourth day of Pesach. The time was getting short. The first two days of Pesach were Tuesday and Wednesday, so I was scheduled to be home on Friday night. All the Jewish soldiers were excused for the first two days. That was the order of the main Shtabe for the entire army. There was a shochet in that village and he invited me to come to his house for the Seder. He was a good, friendly Jew, and so was his wife. I didn't talk much, always in thought of my plans. Any questions they put to me, I gave a short answer, and no more.

We had in the company a Jewish soldier who was the secretary of the captain. He kept all the records of the company. His name was Freed, and he came from Lodz. Thursday morning, I went over to him and asked him to make out for me a leave of absence for Friday for 24 hours, that I would take it over to the captain for his signature. He made it out, handed it to me, and I went over to the captain. He asked me why I am going to the city. I told him that I received linen for shirts and underwear, and leather for boots, so I am going to the city of Ostrolensky to make them up and get ready for the summer. Of course, I planned that excuse before I saw him. He signed the paper and handed it to me. With my paper in my coat sleeve I went to report to my top sergeant before I left. First, he inspected my clothes as to whether I was clothed properly. I was going to pass through a street in the city where the commander of the brigade was living. As a rule, whenever the commander noticed a soldier not dressed properly he would call it to the attention of the captain of the company, so the sergeant was taking good care that it would not happen. He also gave me instruction that on my way back I should stop into the regimental office and ask for certain documents and bring them back. My answer was in the positive.

I went back to the house where I was staying and picked up my bundle which contained leather for boots and linen, which every man received from the army every year in the Spring. Then, I was on my way, never to return. Before I got through with all the details it was two o'clock in the afternoon. The distance from Miastkowa to Ostrolensky was 20 miles, on a good government highway. Before I started out on my undertaking, I went to the shoemaker in the company and saw to it that my boots were in good condition. I knew that I would have to do a lot of walking, and in the Spring on bad roads that were very muddy. I was walking slowly, and in no rush. I knew that when I reached Ostrolensky it would be dusk, and so it was when I got there.

I had a few rubles in my pocket which I had saved for this emergency. First thing I did was to go to a Jewish storekeeper and sold my leather and linen. Then, I felt like having something to eat. I asked the storekeeper where there is a restaurant. He showed me where there was a private house and I had a meal of matzos, potatoes, and borscht. And I was on my way again.

I knew that there was a railway running from Ostrolensky to Malkin, where the main rail line was running from Warsaw to St. Petersburg. This line from Ostrolensky was a single track. As I have now been reading about it, during after Hitler's time the gas ovens of Treblinka were located on that line near Malkin. I inquired when the train would leave for Malkin, and was told at ten o'clock in the evening. The station was about two miles from the city. There was a horse vehicle that was taking passengers to and from the station so I got on it, and arrived at the depot. Before I walked into the station, through the doorway my eyes ran over the inside, to see whether there were military officers inside the station. Seeing none, I walked in to the ticket office and got a ticket to Malkin. In the station there was a policeman, but I didn't pay attention to him, nor he to me. There is always a policeman at all the stations, especially when trains are coming in or leaving. But I was on the lookout for army officers, because you must give them the right kind of salute. In case a soldier makes a mistake in saluting, the officer reprimands him, and sometimes they ask questions. In my case a shalle would be treif, so I kept my eyes open to avoid them.

While I was standing in the station, a young couple approached me and by looking at my uniform, they said to me, "you are from the 22nd Nisegorodsky regiment." The girl said to me, "I have a brother there in the 14th company. Possibly, you know him." Of course my answer was no, since I didn't care to have much conversation with them. She told me that they were just married and they were going to say goodbye to her brother, as they are going away to Argentina within two weeks. I didn't say anything, and turned away to get into the car for Malkin, where I would have to change to the train which runs from Warsaw to Bialystok and Sokolsky. I would have to disembark at Sokolka and walk home. My train came to Malkin at 12:30 in the morning, and I missed the train that was going to Bialystok by ten minutes. At the station of Malkin there were a few Jewish people of whom I inquired when I could get another train. I was told, not before one o'clock in the afternoon. So I was compelled to stay there 12 hours. Then I asked them where I can get a place to stay overnight. They showed me, in a distance, a small light. "Go there, they have rooms for a traveler." So I went as directed. They asked, "Where are you going, soldier?" My answer was that I had a leave for ten days for home, and no more questions were asked. The next day I didn't go out from the house until 12:30. I knew that the train would be at the station soon after that. I managed to have just enough time to get a ticket, so as soon as the train came in, I jumped right in the car, so as not to be in the station. When the train pulled out, I felt relieved, as I would not have to face anymore stations, which were full of danger for me.

On My Way Home

The train arrived in Bialystok at about two in the afternoon. Many passengers disembarked as Bialystok was a large, commercial city. Quite a few boarded the train to go north. When the train left Bialystok, I noticed a big Jew was sitting on the opposite side and looking at me. When I took another look at him, I recognized him. He was from Amdur, a cattle dealer. He was called "Motte the Big One" on account of his bulky size. He came over to me and said, "aren't you Israel Lasher's son?" My answer was in the positive. But I told him not to tell, when he came to Amdur, that he saw me on the train, as I am deserting to go to Argentina. He said, "I suppose you will disembark at the next station. Don't stop anywhere. Go straight to the village where your father and mother are living." He left me to myself and went to sit at the other end of the car.

When the train reached Sokolka, I didn't go into the station. I walked northward because I knew that there was a road crossing the track which would take me to my destination: home. That road I knew from when I was 12 years old and took my mother and my brother Tanchun to the same station, Sokolka, to go to Bialystok. I went by myself back home with the horse and wagon, so I knew that road, every turn, from my younger days. This time I was sure of myself. When I left the train it was about four o'clock in the afternoon. I had 20 miles ahead of me, and bad going. First, it was the beginning of spring, after the snow melted away. The poor farmers' roads were full of mud holes and water. I picked out the best places on the side of the road and walked slowly, with the steady cadence of a soldier.

While walking, I was thinking about a small stream which was ahead on my way. There was no bridge to cross it, and I figured that the water was going to be high at this time of the year, possibly three or four feet deep. I would reach there about ten o'clock in the evening. I was thinking that the only way to cross that stream was to take off my boots and my clothes, to keep them dry, then after I cross, put them on again and proceed. But there is a saying, "Do not cross the stream until you get there."

So I walked quietly, full of thoughts and hopes. The sun began to set and I was approaching the little town of Odelsk, that small town that I mentioned quite a distance back, when I had taken my mother and brother to the station at Sokolka when I was 12 years old. We stayed overnight at this town Odelsk with a family. The daughter got a wood splinter in her hand which I operated with a needle, and relieved her pain. Now I am passing the house, Friday evening, and I can see the Sabbath candles through the window. Now I am a grown man, passing by the same house, in soldiers' clothes, while deep in thought about the future. I didn't dare to go in the house and introduce myself. No doubt, I would partake of a good Friday evening meal, which I needed very bad. I didn't eat have anything for my stomach since that morning when I had a skimpy breakfast in Malkin. But my mission was urgent, and I was not thinking of food. A very small distance from town, there were three young girls who were taking a pleasure walk. I looked at them while passing, and bowed just a little. They looked after me for quite a distance. I suppose that they suspected that I was Jewish. I didn't say a word, and neither did they. I walked again with the stream on my mind. I was afraid of it. I knew that water was going to be very cold. Again I thought: I am a soldier, subject to emergencies.

It began to get dark, and my stockings were already wet. Now I was approaching a village. I knew that the stream lay right after you pass that village. Although it was dark, I knew that I was going the right way. I decided to go in to some farmer, get a little rest, and dry up my boots and change my stockings, as I still had seven miles to walk to get home. So, I chose a house at the end of the village with a small light in a window. I decided I would go in, and with their permission take a rest and dry up a little. I came to the door and gave a knock. A woman came to the door and I told her – in pure Russian language, "Good evening Chazaika, lady of the house." She stood there and didn't say a word. Then I spoke again, "Will you allow me to rest awhile in your house, and dry up my boots?" The man was there in the house, and they said yes. Then they asked me, where is my home. I gave them the name of a village twice the distance away. Meantime, I took off my boots and the lady put them on top of the warm brick oven to dry. She did not suspect that I was a Jew, as I spoke Russian fluently, and they spoke a mixture of Polish chochlish, the dialect of some of the villagers that has a funny sing-song. They asked me, if I wanted to, I could stay overnight with them. I told them that my mother was waiting for me, and I wanted to get home the same night. "Yes," the woman told me in her mixed language, "I have a son in the army, and when I opened the door, I thought that my son had come home. For that reason I stood there in the door, looking at you without saying a word. Now, are you hungry?" I told them, yes, I would like to eat, so she cooked three eggs. She had some cooked potatoes and milk and bread. I was refreshed and rested a little.

Then I talked to them about the stream near the village which I would have to cross. I asked them how deep the water, at this time, is in the stream. I was told that it would be close to a man's chest. By this time their son came in from somewhere. I told them that possibly I would have to take off my clothes and wade across. They told me that the water would be very cold at this time of the year. I told them that a soldier must face any emergencies, but if you have a couple of horses, and you are willing to take me over on horseback, I will be very thankful to you. Yes, the father said, we have two horses, and he asked his son if he would take me across. The son was hesitating for a while. Then I spoke to him, to do it for a soldier, and I took out from my pocket a silver half ruble. I placed it in his hand, and he went after the horses. In the meantime, I put on my dry boots, and when I came out of the house, he was on one of the horses, and one was for me. They were a pair of very poor horses. If not for the skin which held their bones together, the bones would have fallen apart. But, I had no choice. I got on the one near me. I felt as if I was sitting on the edge of a board. I saw that the boy was suspicious of me. He didn't let me have the reins of the bridle but held onto them in his hands. He had in his mind that I might steal his horse. In a

short time we came to the stream, and the horses began to walk into the water. In the middle it was quite deep, up to their bellies. I picked up my feet, way up, so as not to get wet again. When we were on the other side, I jumped off the horse and waved to him by saying "Prostchai bratetz," goodbye brother. By the way, that stream had a name. It was called the "Babona River."

So, that stream was off my mind. My boots were dry and my belly was full. I increased my cadence of walk a little, although I was tired. But I was getting close to home. I came to a village that I knew well. I didn't go through the village street, but on a side way as I didn't want to arouse the barking of the dogs. It was after midnight. Then I came to the village of "Knuchy," which was next to our village. That is where we were going to minions on Sabbath and holidays. I passed the house of the old blacksmith, Simon Sokolsky. Someone was still up, as there was a light on in the house. I passed right on my way, thinking how they would be glad to see me. Now, all I had left was to walk just a mile and a half. I had folded my top coat over my left shoulder to make it was easier to carry. I kept warm by walking. At last, I was at our village. I entered, not through the center, but in the rear of the barns, as quietly as possible. All the farmers knew me, and it would be dangerous if anyone should see me. Our house was on the other end of the village. Finally, I was near the house. It was dark all over, as everyone was asleep.

I got to the door and knocked. My sister came to the door, asking "Who's there?" I said "Me," but she didn't recognize my voice. I told her my name. Then she opened the door, grabbed me and kissed me. She ran in and aroused everyone, including our partner. Most of them got scared because I was a deserter. Police might come and search for me. I quieted them down by telling them that the army will make no search, as they know well that if a Jew deserts the army, he gets right into Germany, as that was only a few miles away. My father was not afraid. He complemented me for carrying out my escape according to my plan, by coming home at just the right hour, right on schedule, just as I had written them.

While I sit here now and write my life's story, and think about what sort of an undertaking I accomplished 59 years ago when I was 19, that was full of danger and difficulties, without the help of anyone, I am very satisfied. On time, just as I made my plan. When my father complimented me on my achievement, I knew that it was a piece of work well done.

When I came into the house, the first thing I did was to take off my army clothes. I looked around at my father, mother, and sister. Also there was my brother, who was released from the army after serving four years. They were all in good health. I noticed a beautiful girl about 18 years old. I was introduced. She was my brother's bride. They just got married, and she would go with him to Argentina. I didn't stay up very long as I was tired and needed sleep, and so did everyone else. I slept soundly, but the family didn't. They didn't know where to keep me. In the house it was impossible, as all the farmers knew me. So, Saturday morning, father and brother went for prayers to the next village. After I had something to eat, I went up to the garret of the house. There I was, all day. I had a book and did some reading. I knew that no one would see me there. In this way I continued the next two days of Pesach. But we all agreed that it was no place for me in the garret.

To the Water's Edge

On Monday evening, when the holiday was over, my brother and me took a walk to Amdur at night so that no one would see me. We went to my uncle, my father's brother. They had a large family and a large house with many garrets on top of their house, under the roof. They were the parents of my pal Victor, the lover of dogs, who was then in America for several years. They consented for me to stay with them for several days, until the day when all the families would depart for Argentina. I would be among them for about ten days. My uncle had a large, established business. In that house there was a bakery and a saloon. They bought grain from the farmers and sold it to all the expressmen in town. He was well known by all the farmers for a radius of 75 miles around Amdur as an honest Jew. He was called "Mote the Baker." During the day I was up in the garret. At night, their son had rooms in the big yard of the

main house. He lived there with his wife and children. His children were all small. I slept there. During the day, I was in the garret, and no one was able to notice me.

Our plan was that while all the families assemble at the rail station in Grodno, to go to Libau on the Baltic to embark there on a ship, (there would be 45 families, with anywhere from six to ten souls to a family), I would become one of them and not be noticed. That is exactly the way that it happened. As far as getting on the ship is concerned, we had the same slogan: I shall not cross the stream until I get there. Every family got a passport with the names of each person in the family. Father had a passport for a family of 11 souls, including my older brother and his family, who were six souls. But my name was not on the passport, as I was in the army. They would not discharge a soldier before his army time was up, so I was taking a big chance.

In the last week of preparation all the families that were leaving had to get their baggage to Grodno to be shipped by rail to Libau, the port of embarkation. For every family, all their belongings – household furniture, pots and pans, even wagons, double and single – everything went to Grodno to be shipped.

Then came the last days. Our family left the village of Kosly forever, not to return. So did my father's partner and his family. That was on Friday, May 12th, 1889. On the 15th of May all the immigrants had to be in Grodno at the railway station at 12 noon. So, Saturday and Sunday our family stayed with my uncle the baker. At the Friday evening meal they set a long table, and all the families, ours and theirs, sat around it. My father was told that he should make Kaddish over the wine. While he began to say the blessing, he broke down, crying and sobbing so much that he was not able to finish the Kaddish. It was quite a sensation to be torn away from one's place of birth, and close family, to go to a land of unknowns, thousands of miles away. Not to look for riches, but for just enough to keep body and soul together.

Sunday was the last day in old Amdur. Sunday night, about 12 o'clock midnight, my brother and I said goodbye to our uncle, aunt and their children, and both of us walked all the way to Grodno. We came there early Monday morning. We had a friend that was leaving just as we came in. My brother went into the house and told him that I was outside, as possibly he wouldn't like it that I should come in. But he said to go and bring me into the house. We all had breakfast. At 10 o'clock, I told them goodbye and I went by myself to the railroad station which was across the river Neiman, in the northwestern part of the city. I crossed the river on the small ferry. There were quite a few people on the ferry who were going to Argentina, so I became one of them. They were strangers to me, as I was to them. But my fear of suspicion disappeared as I knew that no one would detect that I was a deserter, but just an emigrant on the way to Argentina, like the rest of them.

When I arrived at the station there was a mob. There was such a crowd that I was not able to find my family. But I liked it. There were 45 families altogether going away from all the small towns around Grodno, and many relatives came to see them go away and bid them goodbye. The station was a mad house. There were a few people from Amdur that knew me, and they knew that I was in the army. They didn't say anything, and neither did I.

At last, at about one o'clock, the train started on its way. It was a chartered train, just for the immigrants. All this was arranged through the agents of the J.C.A. The coaches were crowded, as many of the relatives accompanied their people for two or three stations. Each time, when the relatives parted, it was heartbreaking, with all the crying and sobbing. At last, all those that followed their relatives were left behind and it became quiet in the cars. We were on the main line of the St. Petersburg and Warsaw Railroad. For Libau, our destination, we needed to change to a different railway line. When we came to change trains, the new rail line had no passenger cars, so they put us in freight cars. We were riding in those cars for nearly two days, as the line had only a single track. Many times we were waiting on a siding for several hours to let a passenger train go by. After two days of travel in the freight cars, we arrived at Libau, a port city on the Baltic. We arrived at about two o'clock in the morning. There, the agents made arrangements for our accommodations at boarding houses for a few days until we got on the

ship. In the meantime, all the immigrants were given good food, and were entertained by the Jewish population.

While my father was in Grodno, he told one of the agents of the J.C.A. that I was going with them, and that I was a deserter from the army. He told my father a little story. His brother, by the name of Mathus, was serving in the same regiment, and the same battalion with me. A few days before I left he got a leave of absence for 20 days. A week later, he got a notice to return immediately on account of my desertion. But it didn't make any difference. They would take me along with them, and they would get me on board the ship, somehow. When all the 45 families reached Libau, the agent had a copy of all the families' passports. He found that one family was minus a boy of 20 years by the name of Yudel Freedman. That boy had died in infancy, but was never reported as dead in the registration books. When the passport was issued to the family, Yudel's name was placed on the passport. So the agent told this to my father. My father went to the Freedman family and made a deal for 5 rubles, and I became Yudel Freedman, just to get across the gangplank of the ship.

Our Exodus

It was Saturday afternoon. All the immigrants stood on the pier in front of a small steamer. There was a bridge from the pier to the steamer. There stood the chief of police with his officials on one side of the gangplank. In their hands were all the passports of each family. On the other side were the agents of the J.C.A. Before the chief of police began to call names, he made a remark in Russian: "Be careful that Chaims shall not go for Yankels." I stood right in front of him, listened, and laughed to myself. Then he began to call names: mother, father and so on. Each, when their names were called, answered, and went past the official to board. Then the name of Family Freedman was called. Father, mother, then Yudel. I answered that I am 21 years old, and I went over the bridge. Then I felt a great relief, and so did all my family, as they were still standing on the pier, waiting to be called. As soon as everybody was on board, the bridge was taken away by the stevedores, and the small steamer began to move into the channel with its human cargo, toward the Baltic Sea.

It was a beautiful Saturday afternoon. The partner of my father brought a large bottle of whiskey. He always liked the bitter drops. He began to serve drinks to our families. There was a young man among the people who played the violin. We danced a Russian dance (Kamariska) on the deck of the ship, as we were all drunk for joy. The little steamer came out of the channel into the Baltic Sea. The sea was calm, just like a looking glass. The steamer was a small freighter, not a passenger ship. In the hold were erected some platforms to sleep on. That small freighter was taking its cargo to Bremen Harbor, a distance of three days. There we embarked on a large steamer.

Night came, and all the passengers went down into the hold to sleep, as everybody was tired from all the excitement of the day. In the morning, everybody was up. The sea was as calm as the previous day. Breakfast was served. And at noon, dinner. It was arranged that everything was kosher. The pots and pans in the kitchen were new. Women were taking care of things in the kitchen. There were new knives, spoons and plates for all the people. A committee of young men was formed, that they would be in charge of all complaints among the passengers and also to see that food was served out of the kitchen to each family. There would be a line, and everyone was to stay in their place in the line. They kept order and a little decorum. My older brother was one of the committee. That day, Sunday, at noon, dinner was served to each family as a group. It consisted of bean and barley soup, and plenty of beef, pickled in brine and cooked in the soup. None of the people had ever got so much meat at one meal. They went at it. After the soup and meat, a compote with pears and prunes were served. It was a machaia.

Right after that meal was served, the small steamer started to dance a little, slowly, up and down. Small waves formed on the surface of the quiet Baltic. People began to lean over the rail and empty the soup, meat and compote and from their stomachs into the sea. I saw my brother, the committee man, walk unsteady to the rail and begin to dump his portion. No one was left on the deck. Men, women and children went downstairs into the stinking hold, and laid down with sea sickness. I became seasick as

well. For all night and the next day they were all in the hold. No one knew where they were. Toward evening, the next day, I managed somehow to get on the deck, but I couldn't remain very long. The waves and spray were very heavy, and the small steamer was rolling in all directions. When I came downstairs again a group of men were standing and praying and lamenting. Everybody thought that we will never come out of it, and that the little steamer will reach the bottom of the Baltic. But the officers and the seamen assured the people they would bring us safe to Bremenhaven.

So it was. The next morning we were in the quiet harbor of Bremen. Our small steamer was anchored a small distance from a large freighter. The name on it was "Bismarck." We were told that we were going to be transferred to that freighter, which would take us to Argentina, about 8000 miles away. That same afternoon the transfer was made. Everyone found more room on the deck. In the large holds downstairs, single berths were erected with mattresses to sleep on. It wasn't a passenger steamer. But for such passengers as the poor immigrants, it was big enough. Our committee got together with the officers and the agents of the J.C.A. and arranged all the details, especially for the kosher food in the kitchen. We had our first dinner on the large steamer. There was plenty of room on the promenade deck.

All day the steamer was taking on freight bound for Montevideo and Buenos Aires. It started out, southward, and onto Belgium. It stopped at the city of Antwerp and took on more freight. We had a niece of mine with us. Her mother, my oldest sister, was in New York. She sent money to my father to take her along as far as Antwerp. From there, he would send her to New York. That is what my father did. The "Bismarck" was docked in port, so anyone who wanted to see the city could do so. As I was free of the Russian officials I went to see the city. There, I saw for the first time electric lights. Also, there were many boys on bicycles on the streets. There the "Bismarck" stayed a few days. Then, she started out again on a straight run south, through the river Scheldt, into the North Sea, and into the Atlantic. It was a very slow steamer, about 6 knots an hour, but the time of the passengers did not count. Everybody made themselves comfortable.

During the day, most of the people were on deck, promenading and playing cards. The man with the violin played quite often. Some elderly people used to get together, telling stories and their experiences in life. The first couple of days while I was sitting on deck a young couple passed me and gave me a look. I thought that I had seen them somewhere before, but I couldn't remember where. On their way back they stood near me. The young man said to me "aren't you the soldier we had met in Ostrolensky at the railroad station? I then remembered them. They asked me if I knew their brother who served in the same regiment. They complimented me on my daring getaway. I wish, she said, that my brother had done the same as you did. Now he is going to have to serve his 4 years. In the end he will have to leave the country, as there is no future there for any of us Jews.

So the propeller in the rear of the steamer kept on turning in the water and pushing the "Bismarck" to the south at a very slow pace. Day after day, the young people used to get into groups. They sang, if anyone was able to carry a tune, and they played games of different kinds. But the time was getting monotonous for everybody and no one was able to do anything about it. For 25 days we didn't see any land. All we saw, some days, were a lot of porpoises. Big ones, in the millions, as far as a person was able to see, lifting themselves over the surface of the water and then dip in. That was a sign of bad weather ahead.

An Island Stopover

Then we arrived at an island called St. Vincent, where there were tremendous high mountains. We saw the mountains, their peaks over the clouds, in the morning. We reached there at three o'clock in the afternoon. The steamer came in between two mountains in the middle of the Atlantic. It was an English coal station. Every steamer going to South America, or coming from there, stopped there to take on a supply of coal. It had to last long enough to get the ship as far as Buenos Aires, and then back to the station. Every steamer was using thousands of tons of coal on their way to and return. There was a city

near the water front, near one of the mountains. Most of the people were Africans or West Indians. When the "Bismarck" dropped anchor in the bay, not far from that city, there came a swarm of row boats. Natives were diving for money. A few merchants came up to sell merchandise to the passengers. A peddler was selling tropical fruit like bananas and oranges. Some clothing dealers would buy anything you offered to sell, old clothes or shoes. But no one wanted to sell anything. They knew that they would need the clothes where they were going.

Then came to the side of the "Bismarck" a large barge with soft coal. About 25 negroes came on the steamer. A crane was pulling up the coal in large hampers. The negroes put it in the hold where the stokers were. They worked, themselves as black as coal, and the sweat was pouring from them, as the climate was very hot, being not too far from the equator.

Our kosher supply of meat was getting low. We had a shochet on board, one of the immigrants. Like us, he was going with his large family to work on the land of the J.C.A. In that small city in the middle of the Atlantic there were some cattle. It was arranged with the officers that the shochet would go down and get one or two cattle, and it would be slaughtered by the shochet so that the people could have a supply of meat for the continuation of the voyage. He was taken down in a small boat, and they brought fresh meat. When he returned, he said that he met a Jewish family there. They came there from Portugal. When the man saw him killing the steer with the large knife, he knew that he was a Jew and began talking to him in broken Hebrew. They were the only Jewish family on that island.

After staying there a day and a half, the "Bismarck" lifted anchor and passed between the two great mountains and again onto the open sea, pushing forward and getting closer to the equator. It was getting very warm. All over the deck was canvas to keep the sun out. Most of the people were on deck all night as it was impossible to sleep down in the hold, as the heat was suffocating. That condition kept up for about five days. As we were getting further south it began to get a little cooler. Everyone sighed with relief. Now the ship was not far from the Brazilian coast. At night, we could see the beacon lights on the coast. All the people had a better feeling. Especially when a person travels on water for many weeks, the sight of land is very welcome.

Before we reached the Brazilian coast, a boy of about seven years old got sick. I don't remember if there was a doctor on board of the "Bismarck." I think there was some kind of doctor, but not of the best kind. That boy was sick for two days and died. The ship's carpenter made a box, and they put in a lot of burned-out grating to make it go to the bottom. They put the boy in and took it away to the rear where the rudder was. They dropped it in the sea, as they say: "buried at sea." That whole day all the population of the "Bismarck" had a feeling of depression, except the seamen. They took it all as a matter of course as a daily occurrence.

Arriving at Our New Home

Now we were getting close to Montevideo. The "Bismarck" anchored in the bay as there was no regular port. There she stood for two days unloading freight. The passengers were not allowed to go on land.

By the way, Montevideo is a city in the Republic of Uruguay, and borders the Atlantic Ocean. Buenos Aires lays on the Rio De La Plata. The Plata River begins right near Montevideo. The water in the river was very shallow, so the Argentine government dug a channel the distance of 128 kilometers, deep enough and wide enough to get the ships through that were going to Buenos Aires. The large and up-to-date port of Buenos Aires is not a natural port. It was made by man. It is said, God made the port of Rio De Janeiro, but man made the port of Buenos Aires. The channel is about a half mile wide. On each side, every kilometer, is a floating buoy with a beacon reflector to guide the ships in the channel. All the buoys are numbered, beginning at Buenos Aires with number 1 and ending at Montevideo with number 128.

That night, while we were on the River Plata, a terrific storm came up with thunder and lightning and wind. In that period, there were many sail boats on the ocean and some very large, four-masted ships. During that storm one of those four-masted ships went out of control and rammed the side of the

"Bismarck." It tore off half the railing of the deck and the anchor on that side. Most of the passengers were asleep. It happened about midnight. Everybody was awakened, and ordered to be on deck, just in case. But after the damage was inspected, they sent everyone back down with the assurance that there was no danger. In the morning the "Bismarck" stood still in the river, still some distance from Buenos Aires. That was the end of the trip, as far as she took the immigrants.

Argentina, a New Life

It was a beautiful morning on that river. The sun was shining, but land could not be seen. The Plata is a very large river – one shore cannot be seen from the other. A small steamer began to approach. It was the doctors from the health department. After their inspection was over, we were put on a small steamer and dispatched to a small island on the river Plata where we were quarantined for four days. There were large buildings there, like army barracks. There were also some soldiers on that island. After the four days, the whole outfit was placed on a large barge with a steamer in tow. It took us up the River Uruguay. Included were all of our small belongings that we carried with us on the "Bismarck." We were now close to the shores of the river on both sides. The River Uruguay is very long. It begins somewhere in Bolivia, and flows a distance of possibly 1500 miles, from North to South. On the east bank of the river is the Republic of Uruguay, on the west side is Argentina.

Now we began to see the land that we came to live on and work. On either side there were very few habitations. All we were able to see in the distance were cattle grazing. There were no houses, towns or people. Sometimes we saw a human among the cattle. As to my recollection, it was Thursday, the last part of July. We were on that barge for about 24 hours until the next morning. Everybody tried to sleep among their belongings, but it was impossible as there was no room to lie down. Besides, it was winter down there. It was very chilly at night, especially on the river. In the morning, the barge and steamer with their cargo reached their destination. The place was called "Vizugwat," a small city on the Argentina side. There we were told to disembark, which we did. There were high banks to climb from the river. When we reached the level ground, there was the beginning of a railway with some kind of passenger cars on the track.

Before we went into the cars, a native of that city came with a large basket of oranges, and began to hand them out to the people. But everyone started to jump and push themselves toward the man to get at the oranges. It became a mob of confusion. So he dumped out the basket of oranges on the ground. They fell all over one another to get it. Some got two or three. Some got none. Then we were told to get on the cars. Right there, at the beginning of the railroad, a representative from the J.C.A. from the office in Buenos Aires met the immigrants and followed them to their destination, to the province of "Entre Rios." The meaning of this is "between rivers" the Parana and the Uruguay rivers.

So we all got in what was called passenger cars, and the small locomotive began to move westward. The cavalcade of passenger cars, not many, possibly four or five, he dragged after him. For fuel, he burned wood. He was going at a very slow rate of speed. There was no time schedule on that line – if he didn't arrive today, he would be there tomorrow. So what's the use in hurrying? Everyone was watching through the windows of the cars (I think there were windows). And so we watched the landscape while the train was moving – level ground as far as the eye could see, with a lot of cattle, horses, ostriches and deer. There was all kinds of beautiful birds, all over the place, but no villages, and very few people.

About two o'clock in the afternoon we arrived at a railroad station. It was called "Basso Will Basso." There, quite a number of Jews, men and women, came to meet us. They were told that new people from Russia were coming on the train and going to settle on the land a distance further up. So they all came out to bid us welcome. They had been there for between four or five years. They all came from southern Russia from around the Dnieper River. Our older men asked them many questions, how they are getting along on the land, and if there is a good future on the land of the J.C.A. All they told them was that they were not sorry that they left the land of Jewish persecution.

As to the best of my recollection, at that station we changed to a different train and started out again. We had food on the train. It was handed out to everyone, some crackers and sardines. The landscape was about the same – cattle, horses, and all kinds of birds. At one place, there were cattle on the tracks. When the engineer blew his whistle they began to run in every direction. They were all wild, and any unusual sight stirred them up into a stampede. So we were dragging along at a slow moving rate until evening. Just when it got dark we arrived at what was supposed to be a small railroad station in the middle of nowhere. When the engine and cars stopped, certain families were called by name and were told to disembark. When this was accomplished the train with the remaining families proceeded on its way to the station of Dominique which was about six kilometers further up. Ten families were left at a place of debarkation which was called "Las Moscas." The meaning of this is "The Flies." Our family, and others, were left right in the middle of nowhere. Right in the middle of a field. The station was nothing but a small shanty.

It was wet, cold, and dreary weather. There were no houses anywhere around. There were about six or eight Spaniards or native gauchos who were camping nearby. They had two wheel trucks. Each wheel was about seven or eight feet high, and a stack body rested on an axle on those two wheels. Two shafts, like two pieces of 2x4, were sticking out in front of the truck, about six feet long. That was for the center horse to keep the balance of the vehicle. While they were camping there their horses, or mules, were grazing somewhere in the fields. The gauchos wore large sombreros, white bombachos, and a large blanket with a split in the center over their shoulder. We didn't know that those Spaniards would take us Saturday morning somewhere. That was the reason that they camped there. The agent, before he left, told them to build a log fire near where we were. They did. All night long the ten families huddled together on the damp ground.

The elderly people were crying all night. My father and mother were 64 and 65 years old. There was another family, of Yankel Moshe the tailor. He and his wife were over 70 years old. They had with them four sons and four daughter-in-laws, and each had children. Nobody in that group slept that night, though everyone was tired from the previous sleepless night on the barge.

There was not far from the station a family that arrived there about a month before we did. They came from Grodno. They were settled on a piece of land not far from the station. When the train arrived at Las Moscas, the man came to see his landsmen. Seeing my father, he knew him well as a distant relative. He took him with him as his guest over Saturday. He had accommodations for only one person. Saturday morning, the Spaniards in their big carts, or trucks, were ready to take us somewhere. But it was Saturday. My mother and brother had never defiled the Sabbath by riding on a wagon. First, they said that they would walk behind the truck, but they saw that it was impossible to follow, so they got on.

To get on the two wheel carts there is some kind of a step ladder, as the bottom of the stake body was about five feet from the ground. There were seven horses hitched to the cart. One in the center between the two shafts to hold the balance of the cart, and three horses on each side, attached with a leather rope to their saddles. In this way they were pulling the cart. There were no reins to steer them. For a left turn, the driver drove the three horses on the right to run faster. That turned the cart to the left. To turn to the right, the left was speeded up. It was a hard ride for young and old. It was going bumpety-bump all the way, most of the way on no kind of road, just prairie land. The land wasn't inhabited by man since creation. It was all just grazing land before the J.C.A. bought it.

As soon as we left the railroad station we passed a few established colonies that had been there for four or five years. But as we traveled further, there was no human habitation. About noontime, we noticed in the distance two houses. One mile further, two more, and again two more. They were red brick houses. Then the cart with our family drove up to one of the houses and came to a stop. One of the agents was following on horseback. We went down from the cart. We were told by the agent that this was our house to live in. The land in the distance that we saw was for cultivation. On the outside of the wire fence, the land was for pasture for the cattle and horses. Then he got in the saddle again and galloped away to give instructions to the next two houses, about one mile away. Another family was brought to a second house, near our house. That district was called "The Grupes of Sagastuna."

The pasture in the center of the 12 houses was an oblong circle about three miles long and about one mile wide. All around it was a wire fence. That was the pasture. All around that corral there were six pairs of houses, and a water well between each pair. They were close by the wire fence, and each had a smaller corral inside the fence to drive in cattle or horses when they needed to work, or for milking the cows.

When we came down from the cart we took a look inside the house through a door. No one dared to go inside. There were two rooms, each room about 20 x 20 feet. It had a corrugated tin roof, no ceiling. As the roof was flat, that acted as the ceiling. The height of the ceiling from the ground was about 10 or 11 feet. There were two windows in each room. There was a brick oven outside the rear wall. The opening of the oven was inside one of the rooms. The walls were not plastered. A contractor had the contract to build the houses for the new comers. I suppose that they built them according to the plans and specifications furnished by the J.C.A. in Buenos Aires. So they built the houses accordingly.

The soil of that area is black clay, the top layer, about 24 inches. So they made bricks out of it and baked it. It became red bricks, twelve inches long, eight inches wide, and four inches thick. They dug out for the foundation only about six or eight inches, as there was no frost there. They began to build out the walls. No cement or lime was used. They mixed the black clay with water and it was used as mortar. They laid the bricks on that and it was strong. When it got dry it looked like red brick laid in black mortar.

When they finished the brick work, did all the digging for the foundation, and mixing of the mortar, they left broken bricks, in the middle of the two rooms. The whole thing was a mess of wet, black clay and broken brick. We couldn't get in. So we all remained outside. If we had wanted to straighten out the ground in the rooms, we had nothing to do it with. We had only the few belongings that we had on the "Bismarck." So we all remained as we were, outside.

At about two o'clock on Saturday afternoon we saw another cart coming with seven horses abreast and a man on horseback following. They came to a stop near the house. The man on horseback was the agent from the J.C.A. Two Spaniards began to unload the cart: shovels, a saw, two rakes. Then the utensils: Pots, pans, knives, spoons, forks, tin plates, cups, glasses, and pails. Then a bag full of "galletos," baked through, very dry and tasty, that was used instead of bread. Then a bag of flour, some rice, beans and salt. He said that a butcher would come on Sunday to give us meat for the family. He left some sardines, so at least we had something to eat. But my mother would not cook on Saturday, so we waited until it got dark. My brother and I prepared some wood that was left around, to start a fire and cook something warm. We made a good fire on the ground with bricks around it. We put up a pail of water. Mother took some flour and made farfel, as well as she was able to under the circumstances. She made a soup. Just water and dough and salt. Everybody went at it, as we hadn't had a plate of soup since we left the "Bismarck." In the meantime, we straightened a little bit of the grounds so that we would be able to get inside the two rooms to sleep during the night. Each one did as well as they were able. But most of the night we didn't sleep.

It was Sunday morning. We were standing outside and observing our position in the new world, and our surroundings. In the distance we saw two houses, just like the one that we were standing in front of. In another direction, there were two more houses, and so on. Nearest to us we saw people standing by their house, and looking toward us. We communicated by waving our hands or some object. We knew that they were a family that came with us on the "Bismarck." It was a sunny day, about the last part of July. The nights were very cold, like the last of October in the States. We looked for a distance. The land was rolling. No mountains, and not a tree or a bush to be seen anywhere. All that we were able to see for a distance of four or five miles were a lot of cattle, grazing, and sometimes a rider galloping about on a horse. No houses of any kind except a shanty in two different sections quite a distance away. To eat that morning we had the rolls that the agent left, and we had water from the well. We made the best of it. As long as we had the sun to keep us warm, we were satisfied.

That forenoon someone brought my father, as he was left with his relation at the station, or nearby, for the Sabbath. When he looked inside the house he wasn't surprised. While he was coming to us that morning, he passed through a colony called Carmel. That colony was the first settled on the land about five years before. When they arrived on the land, there were no houses, and they were compelled to

build the houses themselves. We, at least, had the houses built for us. Now, he said, let us get to work to straighten out the ground in the rooms and clean up all the dirt that was left by the men while they were building the house. Since we came here to stay here, we must make the best of it.

A New Home

The three of us went at it. We picked up all the bricks and put them in a pile outside. Then we leveled up the dirt in the rooms, and stamped it down as good as possible. They began to look like rooms, but empty. Our baggage came on the "Bismarck," but it took over a week to get to the station of Las Moscas. First it was put on a barge to go up the river Uruguay, and then onto the train – just like we did. With freight, it was slower going. All we were able to do was wait until it arrived. That Sunday afternoon we saw someone that was coming toward us with a Russian outfit. Three horses abreast and a wagon with 4 wheels. He came to a stop near the house and began to talk in Yiddish, that he was the butcher from one of the colonies. He was ordered to deliver to us Kosher meat. In the meantime, he did a lot of talking, and gave us his whole biography. He was a colonist from the first settlers of the J.C.A. from the Ukraine. His children were working the land and he became a butcher. He came to serve us with meat, and he left for our family about 25 pounds of meat.

The women got busy right away, beginning to kosher the meat by sucking and salting it before cooking. Then we gathered some wood to cook with. That was a very scarce item over there as there were no trees or shrubs anywhere to be seen for a distance of 25 or 30 miles, nothing but flat prairie land. There were a few of the posts left from the building of the wire fences. So we gathered them and sawed them up and chopped them for wood to cook with. We were a large family of 12 souls. My older brother had four children, that made six of them, and my father, mother, second brother with his wife, my sister and me made 12. This time, the meal was cooked in the oven, in two large pots, half of the meat with some beans and rice. That was the first good meal we all ate in the new land of Baron De Hirsh.

In the meantime, we communicated with the rest of the colonists, the new-comers. Father went to Yankel Moshe the tailor and made arrangements to have a "minion" at his house, at least on Saturday. When we left Amdur, he was given a sefer torah to take along for the Amdur people. So he kept the scroll in his house. On Saturday, or during the holidays, we went there. All the new colonists of the 12 houses did the same thing and came to his house.

During that week the baggage came. It was delivered with the two wheel carts by the Spaniards ordered by the J.C.A. There was my brother's household furniture, and my father's. It wasn't fancy – beds, tables, benches, some clothes. Even my army top coat was in the baggage. It was very risky to do that, but it got through all right. Also, we had shipped two wagons with four wheels. One single, for one horse, and one double. There were also harnesses, for one horse and for double team. In a couple of days all things were put in place, as best as possible under the circumstances. My older brother took one room, and the second room was for our family of six. It was very tight quarters in the beginning. But we got used to it. Most of the time we slept outside. So did my brother and his young wife. Unless it rained, then we didn't sleep outside.

That week we saw two Spaniards driving a yoke of oxen hitched to a trailer – a small house built on four wheels. They brought that small trailer near our two houses, unhitched the yoke and went back where they came from. The trailer remained. It was locked of course. Later, two horsemen came. One introduced himself as an agent from the J.C.A. He was going to remain with the colonists for quite a while to show them how to conduct the farming. He was going to live in that trailer. He was a Jew and he was sent from Buenos Aires. He was talking Spanish and French, but very little Jewish. The other man with him was his peon. He was making the meals for him. The trailer was his headquarters. Most of the day he was on his horse, going from colonist to colonist, and giving instructions on how to do things.

The headquarters of the J.C.A., in Entre Rios, the province, was a place called Bulvanera, about 30 miles' distance from our settlement. That agent used to go there two or three times a week. The second week, the Monday since we landed, the agent told the colonists that they shall come to the headquarters of the J.C.A. and get cows and horses. My two brothers went there and they got three horses and three cows.

One was half wild and we had quite a job to get him trained. The three horses were good for the saddle. But one horse, we broke him in good in one day to pull the single wagon to drive around. A day later the agent told my father that he would go to one of the new colonies, not far from there, and he would get money as support for the family to live on, as we had to eat. He went there. There was a cashier, and he gave father nine pesos per person for a month. On the list there were only 11 persons in our family. My name wasn't on the passport. So they didn't allow support for me. So, my father receive 99 pesos for that month of August 1895.

It looked like a lot of money for one month. We were told that there was a small town, about 20 kilometers distant, where there are stores run by Jewish people. There could be bought all the necessities of life. The next day, my older brother hitched up one of the horses to the small wagon. He took father and mother and drove to the town that was called Capilla to buy necessities, especially food. First of all, a bag of flour to bake bread, then beans, rice, sugar and kerosene. There was a German farmer that raised vegetables, so they got some beets, carrots and cabbage. They bought a bottle of whiskey, and more things. When they were through buying, more than half of their 99 pesos were gone. That supply was not enough for the whole month. And then, you still had to buy meat. But that was the allotment of the J.C.A., nine pesos per month per person until people began to raise crops and sell their own produce. Then they would be able to better themselves. For the present, though, they must be content with their allotment.

Some of the newcomers began to rebel, right from the beginning. They rebelled against the J.C.A. administration. Yankel Moshe the tailor and his four sons, especially, they began to talk, as soon as they came, that they were better off in Amdur, and that nine pesos per person per month was not enough to live on. The administration didn't pay attention to their complaints, as they saw right away from the beginning that they were a family of rebels among the new-comers. Nevertheless, they were treated like the rest, and got their allotment each month.

A few days later, the agent again told the new-comers that each one shall go to the administration, this time to get oxen and all the farm implements, like plows and harrows. So they went. They received eight big oxen, two plows, two harrows, chains, yokes, straps, and a large new truck. Everything that was needed for land cultivation. For a few days, the J.C.A. provided some of the experienced colonists to give instruction to the new-comers as to how to handle the oxen, and how to do everything, and they got paid for their time. In three days we were handling the big oxen. We began to plow. We used four oxen on one plow. That land was never plowed before, and the ground was very hard. The four oxen had all they could do to pull the plow and turn over the sod. It was very slow going. Oxen have one cadence: slow, no matter how you push them.

The house next to us wasn't occupied yet. There was another shipload that was coming from the same section around Grodno. Of the 12 houses on that circle of land, six of them were taken up by the people who came in with the first ship. We were waiting for my father's cousin's family on that second ship. On that ship was the family of Charles Effron. His father Motte had six sons. The oldest, David, had a wife and two children. Next was Charles 21, Shevach 19, Yedidio 16, Leon 14, and Yudel 10. One married son, Chaim, was left in Amdur. They were all scholars and didn't know anything about farm work. The father was called Mote Taibe's. That was his mother, Taibe, so he was known by that name. He and his wife had a small grocery store and were making a very hard living. He was a scholar, and he saw to it that his boys receive a good Hebrew education. And they did. As to farm work, they didn't know the difference between an axe and a cow, or from a horse to a mule. But they learned quick. It was hard for them in the beginning to handle the big oxen, or to ride a horse, half wild. My oldest brother was always around cattle and horses. I had some experience with horses and cattle. As soon as they arrived, we went over and helped them to settle down with everything. Their house was about ten miles' distance from us.

Next door to them was a family named Mendelowski. A father, mother, one son and seven daughters. The oldest one, about 21, was married to a man by the name of Louis Katz. He had come home after serving in the Russian army for four years. So he married the 21 year old beautiful girl and came with the family to work the land. The rest of the girls were from 19 down, and the youngest was four. The one son was about 14 years old. They were all nice children. The father was a well educated man, but not for agriculture – although he was always saying much about himself, that he knew everything about farm

work. But we couldn't see it. We used to come together evenings, especially Saturday night. It was lonesome to stay in the house, so we used to go for kibitzing, and to listen to his tales. We stayed there until one or two o'clock in the morning, the three families. They were glad that we came, as they were also lonesome in a strange land, and a wild surrounding.

The entire section was called Sagastuna. It was about 30 miles from the railway station. Near to the station there were several colonies close to one another. Some of the new-comers were settled in some of these colonies, as there were vacancies. Some of the old colonists got tired of the farm work and left for Buenos Aires, to get into business. So their places were taken up by the newcomers. They had an easier life than we did. We were isolated in a lonely section. All around in the distance all there was to be seen were wild cattle. If any stranger came on horseback, everybody ran out of their houses to see this unusual thing that has happened. There was no road that led to anywhere. It can be said that we were isolated from civilization. But we were compensated with certain assets. We had plenty of pasture for the cattle, and plenty of water for them, too. Through the pasture lot was running a creek so that in the driest season there was enough water for the cattle. That was a big asset for the colonists, as water was very essential in dry weather. So none of the colonists paid attention to the loneliness. We went to work. Every day we were plowing the ground to make ready for planting corn in the Spring. It was the beginning of September.

Our Neighbors

Next to our house, they brought in a family by the name of "Cowal." In the Russian language, Cowal is a blacksmith, and they were blacksmiths. It was two families in one. There were two brothers, young men about 30 or 35. Both were married. The older had a few children. The younger had one child, and there was a girl about 16 who was his wife's sister. The two families got together and came to work the land, and to live off of the fat of the land. They were our neighbors, next door, with the same type of house as ours. Each family took one room and settled down for the work. They had the same amount of horses, cows, oxen, and farm implements as we did. For a couple of months, everything was good. They were working together. But after a while, the women began to dislike one another. The younger woman was nicer looking than the older, and her husband paid more attention to her. They lived in the same house. There were fights. First among the women. Of course at first the brothers tried their best to keep peace among them, but without success. My father, mother, and our whole family tried to make peace among them. But they kept on fighting. And the men came into the fight. There were real nasty fights between them, not only with their fists, but anything that they were able to get their hands on. There were no stones on the ground, but there were plenty of bricks around the house. Also, they brought with them their blacksmith tools. They were using them, sometimes, on one another. Every time that they came together we went between them, and broke them apart. We couldn't stay there and watch them, as we had plenty to do to prepare for a crop. It was September and the holidays were coming. We were going to the minion, to Moshe Yankel the tailor, as he had the Torah in his house. My father used to read from the Torah on Saturdays or holidays.

As soon as we received the horses and oxen and worked them a couple of weeks to get used to them, and they to us, we decided that we had to go get wood for baking and cooking. There was none around the area. As an emergency we had been using the droppings of the cattle. We used to go into the pasture lot and pick up the dried droppings. That burned, but it smelled bad. We found out that there was a forest about 35 kilometers' distance. We hitched up the two yokes to the new big truck and went for a load of wood, me and my brothers. They were in the truck and I was on horseback. Wherever we went with oxen, we needed a horse to take care of them after they're let out to pasture, otherwise, you can not get them back to the truck. The cattle over there always obeyed a man on horseback. But if you tried to drive them on foot, they would stampede immediately. This applied to wild cattle as well as tame. So, you always needed a horse with you. We started out in the morning. Our neighbors, the two brothers, came with their oxen to get wood too. That was before they began to fight. We came to the woods late in the

afternoon. With oxen, it was very slow progress on the road, or anywhere else. But you were assured, with them, to get there. We took off the yokes from them and let them go out to pasture for the night.

We and our neighbors made a large fire near our trucks. We took along some bread and meat to roast. We had something to eat, and then went to sleep on the ground near our trucks. In the morning, as soon as the sun appeared, we were up. My oldest brother and our two neighbors stood up for the morning prayers. They put on their phylacteries. But my other brother and myself gave up praying. We didn't pray in the army and nothing bad happened. So we continued not to pray.

The horses were kept on a long rope during the night, so we wouldn't have to go look for them in the morning. I jumped on one and gathered all the oxen, and yoked them to the truck. When the others got finished praying, we had something to eat, and went in the wagons to gather some dry wood. There were a lot of trees, but we were getting only dead trees, which were scattered. It took us until late afternoon to get that load of wood. The heat was terrific. There was no water around there. The oxen were hanging out their tongues, and were breathing heavy, as they had no water to drink all day. As for ourselves, we were all in and tired out. Then we started for home. Toward night it got a little cooler, so man and beast breathed easier. Going homeward, the oxen didn't have to be urged to go on quick. An animal, when they feel that they are going home, are going on double time. That is their nature, to get to their place. We reached home after midnight, and rested the next day and didn't do anything. But we got a load of good wood, and the womenfolk were able to bake and cook for the holidays.

High Water on the High Holidays

Little by little we got used to the isolated life. We kept on plowing. Rosh Hashanah came, and it was very lonesome for everybody. We went to the minion both days and on Saturday. No work of any kind was done. It was a strict day of rest for man and beast. But on Sunday, it was a work day. To go to Yankel Moshe the tailor to the minion we were going through the pasture and crossing the creek. Their house was on the other side of the creek. When the weather was dry, with no rain, the creek was low, except in stretches in very low spots. In those spots there was an accumulation of water. In many places it was dry, so we were able to pass on foot. After the two days of holidays it began to rain. It kept up for two days without a stop. The water in the creek got high. We saw that on Yom Kippur we would not be able to cross the creek to go to the minion. I was always ready for some inventions. I said to my father and brothers, let us take the new truck and put it across the creek, and it will act like a bridge. So we put two oxen, and placed the truck across the creek. The evening of Yom Kippur we went over to the minion, over the truck. After services we returned and went to sleep. During that night an electrical storm came up with a cloud burst. We had never seen a rain like it, with thunder and lightning all night. When we arose in the morning to go to the minion, we found that the creek overflowed its banks, and the truck was not to be seen as the water was about 25 feet deep. We stood near the bank and looked across to the house where we were supposed to go to, to be there for services in the morning. So, we all prayed in the house, by ourselves. I suppose that God listened to our individual prayers as well as collective prayers. As to my father, that was the biggest catastrophe in his life. On the Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, not to pray in unison with a congregation. But a thing like this can only happen in a strange land like Argentina, on the pampas. After a few days, the high water in the creek came down to normal, and we were again passing the creek, on foot, in dry spots, to go to prayers on Saturday and holidays.

A Fish Story

One day, I was walking near that creek and I noticed that a fish was playing and sunning itself in the water, near the grass. Ever since I was a young boy, I was interested in fishing. When I used to come to a body of water, I kept my eyes open to see if there were any fish that I could detect. I knew how to go about it to get them. In this case, I stood there very quiet and watched him. I advanced a little closer and stood very still again. Then I made out that, without doubt, it was quite a good sized fish. It was the spawning time of the year and some of them came out to shallow water to deposit the roe. At that stage,

sometimes you can catch them with your hands, if you know how. But, I didn't want to risk that catch by hand. So, I ran to the house, took a grain bag and found a hoop, and rigged up a net. I was back at the spot again. I saw from a distance that the fish was still wriggling around in the water near the grass. I was very cautious. The least little noise, it'll get to deeper water and I'll lose it. I made advances, one step at a time and held my breath. When I was close over the spot, it stopped wriggling as it suspected some danger. I stood still for quite a while as I knew it could sense I was there. It started to wiggle again. Then I was able to make out where the head and tail were. I bent down close to the water and stuck the small net in the water, a distance away from the fish. I waited again. I managed to get that net under the fish and pulled it out onto dry grass. It was quite a specimen, five pounds in weight. Everybody came out to see it. "Where did you get such a big fish?" everyone was asking. Since then, I became a real good fisherman. Later on, I began to explore where there was a lot of fish. I took a spade and made it sharp. On a sunny day, they used to come out to the narrow and shallow water and play there. So I used to kill them with the spade. But it didn't look good as I chopped them in two. Then I went to a blacksmith, and he made me a spear. Then I used to get all the fish that I was able to carry. I gave them away to all the neighbors, as you weren't able to keep them very long as the weather was hot and the fish were soft, something like our shad, of the same type. Well, it sounds like a real fish story, but I can't overlook that incident.

Surviving in Sagastuna

After all the holidays were over, we went to work with full energy. My oldest brother was in command as he knew much about farm work. We followed his advice. We were out plowing every day. Some of the new colonists were rebelling against the administration, and refused to work the land, claiming that they were better off in the land that they came from. They wanted the J.C.A. to send them back, but the J.C.A. refused to do it. There were only two or three rebellious families, so we didn't pay attention to them. We kept on working. In the month of October we planted some corn and some alfalfa. There were a few good spring rains and the corn and alfalfa began to sprout out of the ground. Everybody was overjoyed to see the first crop of our toil. In the meantime, we were getting help from the J.C.A., nine pesos per month per person for food. That was just enough not to go hungry. At the same time, father managed to take out five or ten pesos and we bought a few chickens and ducks, and a couple of geese.

Meanwhile, time was passing by, and in a few months we were raising chickens and ducks and our crop of corn was getting ripe. That was in December. While the corn and alfalfa was growing, we kept on plowing for wheat, sowing so that it would be ready in about July or August. We were given three cows by the J.C.A., and two of them had calves. They began to get large out on the pasture. Our corn got ripe. The crop was not so good, because we didn't know how to cultivate it right. But we had enough to feed the chickens, ducks, and geese. By this time there was quite a number of these fowls. We had a few bags of corn to sell to the neighbors. They had chickens and ducks, but they had no corn. As our flock of fowl increased, our meat bill got smaller, as we used the fowl instead. We also had plenty of eggs. So we began to live off of the fat of the land.

As for myself, not being married, I began to realize that I needed to learn the Spanish language. There weren't many native Spaniards around that location except one family that lived not too far distant, about two kilometers. He was taking care of the cattle that belonged to a Stanchiero. There were thousands of acres of pasture there, and thousands upon thousands of wild cattle. There was a wire fence around the property that belonged to that Stanchiero, and there were many peons on the property to look after the cattle. All the cattle or horses in Argentina bore a brand mark on their bodies so that everyone would know who owns that cattle. If a rancher sold some of his cattle with his mark on them, he gave a certificate to the buyer that he sold so many head with a certain mark and certain color. The certificate was registered in the town clerk's office. That family, not far from us, was the one that was taking care of branding the young calves and the sorting out of young steers to keep them separate from the two year old yearlings that were were ready for the slaughter houses. You saw them many times in different pastures. Thousands of them, just alike, grazing.

I got acquainted with that peon and I used to go over there. I tried to learn a few words from them, as to the best of my ability. From the Mote Taibe's Effron family a young boy by the name of Leon was also anxious to learn the language. So when each of us possessed a new word, we communicated to each other the great treasure. We got acquainted with a man from the old settlers. We knew that he was going to Buenos Aires. He got for us a translator, a grammar, in Spanish and in German. When we got this we studied hard and we gained the reputation of being Spanish interpreters, though our Spanish vocabulary was very limited. But everybody knew that we were at it. If any Spaniard or gaucho came to ask any questions, they sent them to me or Leon Effron and we interpreted as to the best of our abilities.

In this way we were progressing from month to month. Most of the colonists, now, were working the land every day to make a crop of wheat and flax for the coming year. All, that is, except the Yankel Moshe family. They were still rebellious. They began to do some plowing, but stopped it once and for all. They went to the administration, that they should send them all back to Amdur where they came from. By about June, we had 25 acres plowed, for seeding of wheat and flax. The administration furnished the seed. We planted the whole 25 acres and many colonists did the same. In a couple of weeks the grain and the flax began to grow, and all the black ground color changed to green. During the months of July, August, and September it didn't grow, as winter had set in over there. After September, the fields began to show life again.

A Pestilence and a Profit

About the 15th of October, the wheat was about 15 inches in height, and it was beautiful. That afternoon, the sun was shining, but we noticed that it was getting cloudy in the north. Then it got noisy. Everyone thought that a storm was coming. Then we saw the locusts. In the beginning, just a few, singly advanced. A few minutes later they came so heavy, like a heavy cloud, that the sun could not be seen. They rested on the young green wheat, and in two hours nothing was left of the green. Again just the black soil. They remained there overnight in clusters on the fence posts and on anything that stood up. We saw that all the work that we put in was in vain. Then, the next day, the sun came out in the morning and the locusts came to life again. They were large as a sparrow bird with a wing span of four inches, with a long tail, and a big head with two big eyes and two long legs sharp like a saw. While they were eating the young vegetation, it went through their long bodies and tail, and became droppings. After a day or two they began to mate. When the mating was over, the female deposited her long tail in the ground, especially where the ground was plowed, and seeded. They discharged a liquid. It germinated there. After 30 days in the ground, then it came out to life. On the tenth day they began to jump, following one another. While they were jumping, as they had no wings and couldn't fly, they did more damage than the ones that came in the beginning. The adults had lasted only three or four days and after the mating they disappeared. But the jumpers lasted until they got their wings. Then they disappeared. It was said that they came every seven years.

The Argentine government began a campaign to destroy the locusts, so they issued an order. When the locusts arrive and settle for the night on bushes and fences, the colonists shall go out with pots, pans, and baskets and gather them and put them in bags. The government will pay one peso per bag gathered. So, when the locusts arrived all the colonists of Sagastuna went out strong, and in two days they gathered 75 bags. Those bags were laying in the fields waiting for the government representative to arrive, count the bags, and pay the 75 pesos to which they agreed. But the representative didn't show up. When the representative came the first time, I made all arrangements for the transaction, as I was the Spanish interpreter.

Now all the locust gatherers were looking to me: "Nu, where is your representative with the money?" I told them, let us wait a few days, and if he doesn't show up, I will go up to them, though it was a far distance, about 75 kilometers. The only way to go there was by horseback through the large stanchiero's pastures, as there were no roads. But you go in a certain direction. The horse which I had been riding, I knew, could not stand to make that trip, there and back, the same day. One of the colonists

had a young horse that was half tame. But they were afraid to ride on him, as he was full of life. I told the colonist that I wanted to ride his horse for that journey. He said to take him.

I was up early in the morning, brought that colt into the corral, and put the bridal and saddle on him. Then I went in the house, put on my shoes and very light clothes. Then I jumped on him and galloped away to the south. It was about seven in the morning. I didn't drive hard as I wanted to come home the same day. I went from stanchiero to stanchiero. Wherever there was a peon, situated in the stanchiero to take care of the cattle, I came to inquire how to go to the estancio of a certain name. I was directed how to go. I arrived at that estancio about 11 o'clock before noon. It was a built-up place with many good buildings. An estate. I asked for a person of a certain name, which he gave at the time that he came to make the arrangement for getting the locusts. I was told that he was not home, but I could find him near the estacion Fiera Carill, and that was 12 kilometers further, near the railroad station. I again mounted my steed and went there. I found him in a hotel in the company of 2 more officials of the government. I explained to them my mission. 75 bags of locusts was gathered and no one came to take count or pay the money. First of all, he said, let us go and have lunch, and then I will explain to you why no one came to take care of the bags that were gathered. In the meantime, I unsaddled the horse, took him on a long rope, and he was feeding in the pasture. I had a good lunch with them, and then he explained to me what happened. The colonists of Sagastuna were a very long distance from that jurisdiction of the Estancio Arrera, which was in charge of destroying the locusts. So they turned over Sagastuna to the district where the administration of the J.C.A. is situated. That was only about 30 kilometers. From now on, the administration of the J.C.A. will be in charge of that matter. But for the bags that were gathered, I will give you the money. He made out a receipt for the 75 pesos, and I signed it, and he gave me the cash. After waiting about three hours, until the horse was filled up, I mounted again, and was on my way home. I speeded up my steed, and he was willing, as he knew that he was going homeward to his horse companions. I came home late that night, very tired.

I gave a few of the pesos to some of the gatherers. About 50 percent I kept for my services. Everyone was satisfied.

The government had spent a lot of money trying to destroy the "langostas," as they were called in Español, but with no success. The territory south of the equator was too large. They originated in the Grand Chakress, near Bolivia. From there, they came northward. When they came, it was just like a snow blizzard, with very large snow flakes coming down. While they were flying, you couldn't ride on horseback for you would get them in your face or eyes while you are galloping, and they would strike against your face.

That was our first year in the land, so most of the colonists didn't lose faith in the colonization. Most of them began to prepare for next year, to make a crop. It was decided to sow the grain earlier than the previous year. In that way, it comes up in the month of October. The wheat should be well advanced to begin to harden up. The locusts come in October, and it was proven that they destroyed the very green, young and tender grain. The kind that hardened up, they didn't touch, as it was too hard for them to chew.

In the meantime, every family was getting their monthly support from the J.C.A. They got milk from the cows and eggs from the chickens. The cattle and flocks of chickens increased slowly, and it was noticeable. Also, the human family began to increase. That was also noticeable, as many young couples got married for that purpose. They didn't waste their time. We had quite a few acres of maize corn that year. The administration did not consider that as a crop. When it got ripe, we kept on threshing it with a hand corn sheller which the administration provided. My brother and I filled 20 bags of maize. In the distance there was an old colony. We were told that they had no maize. We went there and sold all that we had at three pesos per bag. We now had a surplus of cash, so we went to a place and bought ten young heifers, about one and one and a half years old, and two cows. Altogether there were twelve head. I brought them back in and let them out in the pasture. They took care of themselves. They had grass and water, all they needed.

Our neighboring brothers were fighting more than ever. As soon as we saw that they were beginning to fight, we were there to break them apart. My older brother and my father went to the administration and told them that they must divide the brothers, that they should not be together,

otherwise, one of them would be killed. The administration knew this, so they arranged that the young brother should move apart. One was given a plot of land in one of the old colonies that was vacated by a family that left for Buenos Aires. After several months and the younger brother moved away to the other place. Since then it was quiet.

To get food supplies, my father and mother and older brother used to go once a month, after receiving the 99 pesos from the J.C.A., to Capilla, the small town of about four houses, including the store that was there. My brother used to hitch up two horses to one of the wagons that had come over on the "Bismarck." They went to Capilla to buy all the necessities for the month. It was about 25 kilometers away.

At first, there was no road, just a path through fields that horse riders made. Then there was a wide highway for about ten kilometers, about 50 feet wide, with a fence on each side and two lengths of barbed wire and two plain wire all the way along the fence. On each side was a large stanchiero with thousands upon thousands of wild cattle. Just about midway there was a creek crossing the highway. The water did not flow, it just stood there. That's because down stream about one kilometer, where the cattle were, they made a dam to keep drinking water for the cattle. That was part of the reservoir crossing the path between the two fences. The colonists of Sagastuna had a lot of trouble going to and coming from civilization. The trouble was, as soon as the horses came to the stream along the highway, they stopped to drink the water, as they were thirsty, but, when they finished drinking, they wouldn't go any further. One wasn't able to do anything with them but sit in the wagon and look at them.

It happened a few times that we got a yoke of oxen in the middle of the night. We expected them to be home in the evening, and they didn't arrive. So we knew that they were waiting in that stream for us to come and pull them out with the yoke by driving them on horseback. When I got there, father, mother and brother were sitting in the wagon and waiting. The water was about two feet deep. I took off my pants, got in the stream, unhooked the horses, attached the yoke with a chain to the wagon and pulled them out onto dry land. Then I hitched up the horses again on dry land, and they went ahead. Many colonists from Sagastuna had the same experience.

All the colonists from that section went after the administration to move them to a different location that was more convenient to civilization. The administration realized that the colonists of that section were under a hardship as to major transportation centers. So they took it under consideration and planned accordingly. The only good thing was that there was plenty of pasture for the cattle and plenty of water.

We were there for a second year. We had about 25 head of cattle, not including the horses. As soon as we had a few pesos surplus we began buying young calves, three or four months old. We let them go to pasture and they grew. In the meantime, we had been plowing for the next season crops for wheat and flax and maize. The family of Yankel Moshe the tailor was in rebellion as always. They went to Buenos Aires to the J.C.A. They wanted the J.C.A. to send them back to Amdur or Grodno where they came from. But the J.C.A. didn't pay attention to them, as they were not the only ones that wanted to return. However, they found a few more followers that joined them. One day Yankel Moshe and his wife picked themselves up and said goodbye to their sons and families and went to Buenos Aires to a steamer, and went back to Amdur. Their sons, there were four of them, remained for the time being. They decided that while they are in this place they would try to do a little work and make a crop. Possibly, they would be successful and make some money that year.

Everybody was trying to sow the grain as early as possible so that the locusts, when they arrived in October, would find the wheat and the flax too much advanced in growth and they would not do so much damage to the crops. That was exactly what happened. Most of the grain was planted in the month of August. In October, the wheat hardened up and was strong enough to withstand the attack of the locusts. When they arrived about the 15th of October, we saw that they did not do much damage to the plants too heavy for them to destroy. The grain that was sowed late disappeared in a few hours. So, the second year's crop looked very good. We planted about 30 acres of wheat and 8 acres of flax. We figured that it would bring between two and three thousand pesos, provided that it was harvested in good weather and brought to the market in good shape. So we were living in hope.

About the first of November we began to get ready for the harvest. We received from the administration a reaper and binder for the wheat and a harvesting machine for the flax. After the 15th of November the wheat was ripe and we began to harvest. The heat was terrific. We hooked up two yokes to the reaper and binder. All the oxen could stand was not more than two hours, then they would stick out their tongues, all of them, and would not go any further on account of that heat. Then we would let them out and bring two fresh yokes from the pasture. They were the same way. They were soft, as their food was nothing but grass. They were big, but there was no strength in them. We changed yokes every two hours. Some of the oxen were very smart. As soon as they saw someone on horseback coming after them, they suspected that we will take them to work again, after several hours of rest. They would run to the dam, get in the deep water and wouldn't come out, no matter what you tried to do to them to get them out. After two days of harvesting we began to put the shucks in stacks. As soon as we put up one stack, it began to rain, steadily, day after day.

The wheat that was cut was laying on the ground to be put into stacks. But we couldn't do it as it was wet, and the weather was such that it didn't give the wheat a chance to dry. After about ten days of rain, with the sun shining once in a while, we were able to stack up the grain that was harvested before the rain started again. But it got black. All of the grain lost its color. The same thing happened with the standing wheat and flax. It got too ripe. The flocks of birds got at it, and consumed half the wheat. With much difficulty we finished up the harvest, and put it together in stacks ready for the threshing machine. The rest of the colonists did as much as they could to put the stacks up for threshing.

The threshing machine was used among the colonies that were established before we arrived. There was a lot of threshing to be done there, so they got it first. The owner of the machine didn't care to come to Sagastuna to do the threshing, for he knew that the crop was poor, and he wouldn't make any money. He was charging \$1.75 per bag for threshing. If the crop was good, he was able to thresh 150 to 200 bags a day. If the crop was poor, he might thresh 50 bags or less during the day. He had to furnish all the labor to run the machine for the day. It took 15 or 20 men. He paid them four or five pesos a day and fed them three meals a day. So he saw that he couldn't make any money in Sagastuna, that it might be a losing proposition. At first, he refused to go there. But the J.C.A. insisted that he must go. Otherwise, they would order another contractor for all the colonies in that section. So he consented to come. But the colonist of Sagastuna would have to furnish about 10 yokes of oxen to bring the machines.

The threshing machine was a large machine that took five yokes to move. Then there was the steamer with the engine and all the belongings. That took another five yokes. They knew that they will have a big job to cross that stream that all the colonists had trouble crossing. So the colonists of Sagastuna sent over ten yokes of oxen and a lot of men. They moved the machines as far as the stream. Before they began to cross it, they hooked up the whole ten yokes and were trying to drive through without a stop. They knew that once they stopped, they would stay there. And that is exactly what happened. When it came to the middle of the stream it stopped – the ten yokes couldn't pull it. It stayed there for two days, as the bottom of the stream was soft black muck, and the wheels sank in over the hubs. The oxen could do nothing. They brought wide planks, jacked up the machine, and put them under the wheels. Then it was pulled out. It took a week's time before they began to do the threshing. Our crop was the largest among all the colonists in Sagastuna, so he began to thresh ours first. But the yield was disappointing. There was a lot of straw, but not much grain, and the grain was good only for chicken feed. It was shriveled and dark on account of the rain. The linseed was just as bad. The thresher was finished with us and went to another colonist. They put the machine between the stacks and were ready to start in the morning.

During that night, an electrical storm came, with thunder and lightning. On the pampas, when a storm of thunder and lightning comes, it terrifies the wild cattle in the pastures. When a storm comes, they congregate in groups in a circle to protect their hides from the wind. Many times lightning strikes and kills the whole group. You see about ten or twelve lying together, dead. Well, that night, the lightning struck the threshing machine, and there was no more threshing in Sagastuna. The colonists were left just as they came, without a crop to support them to live during the year. So the administration decided to keep up the support of nine pesos per person for another year. In the meantime, they were making plans to remove the colonists from Sagastuna to move them closer to civilization.

As for that year's crop, despite how bad it was, we came out in very good shape. We had over 100 bags of wheat and linseed, but there were a lot of expenses to it. The threshing was \$1.75 per bag. The bag cost \$.50, and there was twine and oil for the reaper and binder. Although the grain was very poor, we found a market for it, after we got through with the crop. After paying all the expenses, there was about 500 or 600 pesos left. Meanwhile, we were receiving nine pesos support per person like the rest of the colonists. We had a surplus of money and enough chicken feed left to invest the surplus. We decided to buy young stock. As I spoke a little of the Spanish language, it was my job to look for cattle.

There was our neighbor next door, whose brother separated from him. He wanted to go in partnership with me, so we got on our horses and went off a far distance to look for cattle. We bought 35 head. There was among them six cows with calves about three months old. There were yearlings, some one year olds and some two year olds. We bought them at so much a head – as they ran – the young and the old at the same price. As to my recollection, it was 13 pesos per head. It took us a week to transact that deal. Then it took us two days to drive the cattle back to our place in Sagastuna, where we left them in the pasture. The whole deal amounted to 400 pesos. Then the partners wanted to divide the cattle, each of us to take half of the cattle. But we came to the conclusion, it would not be practical, as the cattle weren't even. So we decided to make it into the form of an auction. The one that offered more money for each animal would get it. So we auctioned them off to each other, and each got some cattle for a price that was satisfactory.

We knew that we were going to move to a different location, but we didn't expect that it would be that same year, so we began to plow again to make another crop of wheat and linseed. All that we were doing was to taking a chance on the labor, but we had nothing to do, anyway. So we plowed the ground to prepare it.

I Learn Something About Horses

In the meantime, the young people were getting married. Whenever there was a wedding, all the boys and girls from the distant sections came to the wedding, even though they were not invited. There was dancing all night. The dancing was done outside, at the bride's house. Large oil lamps were used as there was no electricity in those days on the pampas. The young boys and girls, mostly came on horseback, two on one horse, a boy and a girl. There were quite a number of boys and girls in Sagastuna. Once, when there was a wedding, there were not enough horses for all of us to go. I made a suggestion. I told them that I had in our pasture enclosure four unknown horses. I told them that I would try them during the day to see if they were broken in for the saddle. If so, we would ride them that night. I was considered a good horseman. That afternoon, I got on my horse and brought the four strange horses into my corral. It seemed that they were all tame. They were not afraid of me, like the usual wild ones are. I put the bridle on one of them, jumped on, and galloped around for a distance. He was OK. Then I put the bridle on another, a black, chunky horse. He was tame, like a kitten. I led him out of the corral, and jumped on him. Before I had a chance to straighten up on him, he showed me what a bucking bronco he was. He jumped with me up and down several times, just as you see sometimes in the movies of the wild west – the cowboy on the bucking bronco. Down I went, with my shoulder striking the ground with such force that I was lying there unconscious for a minute or so. The bronco was standing right near me with the reins of the bridle hanging. He was looking at me, just as though he was thinking to himself, "Now you'll know better how to treat a stranger that you don't know much about."

When I came to myself, I was laying on my back. I picked up my body at the waist and supported myself on both hands. I felt like my mouth was salty, and I spit out a mouth full of blood. After resting for a while, I stood up and took the bridle off the horse. Never again did I try to tame a strange horse, as they surely knew the trick as to how to get the best of you. None of us went to the wedding that night. For the first couple of days, I had some pain in my shoulder, and I was spitting blood for about two weeks. The shoulder pain disappeared, but I was still bleeding, but every day a little less. I was ashamed to tell anyone what happened to me, even to father and mother. I made light of the whole thing. Although, they knew that I wasn't the same full of life person like I used to be. For a month's time I was taking it easy

with very little horseback riding until all the bleeding disappeared, and then I began to feel as good as usual. That was the end of the year 1896.

A Very Good Crop

We were hustling to make a good crop for 1897, as we knew that we would be moved to a different section, closer to the center of activity and to the railroad. Some of the Sagastuna colonists had already been moved. About August, 1897, all the seeds were in the ground, and it came up very good. Then it was dormant during September, and began to grow again in October. The locust were late in coming, and when they came they didn't do much damage. The weather was very good, and when the grain got ripe we went at it in full force and we harvested a good crop of wheat and linseed. A diesel machine came and we threshed out quite a few hundred bags of wheat and linseed. When we harvested the crop, we were thinking that we had struck it rich. After threshing, the wheat and linseed was sold to a dealer who came from Buenos Aires. There was very little competition among all the grain dealers, so we took the price, whatever they offered. After paying all the expenses that were piled up, we came to the conclusion that we didn't strike it as rich as we thought we did. But our family had enough out of the crop to live the coming year without the support of the J.C.A.

All the expenditures that the J.C.A. spent on the colonists, bringing them over, giving them land, cattle, horses, farm implements, and support for three years, that was not made as a gift to the colonists. Whenever the colonists received something from the J.C.A., we signed a receipt. At the end of three or four years the J.C.A. presented to each colonist a bill of particulars of the articles that he received, and the amount of money it represented. They also presented them with a contract to sign. It was for a term of 25 or 30 years. The colonist would pay an amount in installments, each and every year, until all the amount was paid in full. Then the colonist would receive a clear deed and title to his land. There was quite a dispute between the colonists and the J.C.A. The colonists claimed that the terms of the contract were too harsh and that they would not be able to live up to the terms of the contract. The argument was going on for several years, between the administration and the colonists. Some of the colonists didn't accept the contracts and left with their families for Buenos Aires, or for other provinces. In the colony of Rosh Pino, 16 families altogether left for different places. The same happened in the colony of Baron De Hirsh, where every family left. All of those colonies were closer to the center of habitation, and also closer to the railway station.

The administration took all the colonists from Sagastuna and replanted them in those vacant colonies. Our family was moved to the colony of Rosh Pino. There we received the same amount of land, including pasture land. It was a distance from Sagastuna of 25 kilometers, and three kilometers from the small village Alominguez and the railroad station. By this time we had quite a sizeable herd of cattle. Our family was considered prosperous colonists. As far as the moving was concerned, it didn't take very long. Everything was put on trucks, including the household goods and furniture that was brought over from the village of Kosly and my brother's furniture from Amdur. All the moving was done in one day.

To move the cattle, that was my job, and it was a hard one at that. There were some cattle in our ranch that did not belong to us. It took me half a day to sort out our cattle. Many times, I'd get them nearly separated, but then one or two would run back to the other cattle, as they had been in their company for a while, and they didn't want to be separated. All the time I was on horseback. In the afternoon, I started out with them. All together there were about 50 head. One young heifer, about two years old, I couldn't make come along, so I left it there for the time being. My two brothers were already in the new location putting everything in place. Once I got them on the road, between the two fences on either side, they couldn't scatter all over the place. They kept walking ahead, and I was on my horse with a long whip. I drove them on, and crossed that stream which I described before. Toward evening, I brought them to a colony where one of our neighbors lived, the one that used to fight with his brother. I drove all the cattle into their ranch for the night, and I went to their house. They were glad to see me, and I stayed with them overnight. The next morning after breakfast I got on my horse and got the stock together. It began to rain, but I kept driving them right through the rain until we reached the colony of Rosh Pino. After a few days' rest, I

went out to look for a few more cattle, as we had several hundred pesos surplus from the past crop. I bought 25 more head of young stock.

After we settled down at our new place, we began to work again to make a crop for the coming year, 1898. When the Spanish-American War broke out, the price of wheat began to go up. We didn't have any to sell, but we hoped to make a large crop that year. So we were working hard. The land we got was already worked, by the previous colonists, so it was easier to till. Instead of hooking up two yokes to the plow, as we used to do in Sagastuna, one yoke was enough. We managed to make a good size crop. The weather was in our favor all of the time. The seed went into the ground, so much wheat, and so much linseed. In about ten days the green sprouts appeared, and it looked very promising. But you can never tell until you have it in the bag.

I See the Future

Just about that time, I decided to leave my people and go to the U.S. They tried to talk me out of it, but it didn't do them any good. I told them that as soon as we harvest the crop and thresh it, I'll be on my way. I came to that conclusion because I could not see a good future for me on the pampas of Argentina. In the same Colony of Rosh Pino there was my fathers' old partner of the Kosly village Inn. When his son, who was my age, heard that I was going to the U.S., he decided that he would also go. I accepted him as good company. We had grown up together since we were kids ten years old. Then there was my cousin Charles Effron. He was two years older than me. He was a Hebrew teacher in one of the colonies, Basso Will Basso. He wanted to go to the U.S., but he had no money for the passage. My sister, she was older than me by three years, was not married. Someone made a proposition, that Charles should marry my sister, and our family would pay his fare to the U.S. Charlie accepted the proposition to marry my sister. That was all arranged before the harvest was ripe, with the understanding that when the harvest is over, they would get married, and then we would leave for the U.S.

The harvest was very promising. We had exceptionally hot weather, and that was good for making the grain ripe. The locusts did not arrive that year. The price of grain was soaring skyward on account of the Spanish-American War, and everything looked good. About ten days before we started to reap the wheat, I saw to it that the machinery of the reaper and binder were in good working condition. I was the mechanic, right from the beginning. In the two previous years, I learned everything about the farm machinery. I knew the weak parts of the machinery which were bound to give trouble. If trouble came while the colonists were right in the field trying to cut the grain, and put it in stacks, then someone had to go on horseback to find a mechanic to fix the trouble, and it might take two or three days before it is done. But we were prepared for such an emergency.

The reaping of the grain was done, and it was in good condition. But the work was very hard on account of the heat. We had my brother's two boys on horseback, one was ten and one was twelve. The older one kept the two alternate yokes of oxen nearby. As soon as the two yokes on the machine gave out, we changed to the fresh ones and kept going. The younger boy on horseback would go to the house, which was quite a distance from our field, to bring cold water from our well in a copper three gallon. As soon as he returned we went at it. In a short time, it was all gone, and he was running again to the well. The sun was so strong that it burned the skin if it was not covered. Our faces and our hands were exposed, but the rest of the body was under cover. Otherwise, the skin would burn so much that it would come off.

We worked in this way about a month, beginning about the 15th of November until December 15th. During this time I had a few days to spare to go to work at some places where they were short of help. They were glad to get me either at the machine or to put the grain into stacks. That was a particular job, the stacking. Motte and I knew how to put up the stacks so that if it rained, the water would not get inside the stacks and ruin the grain. Our wages were from eight to ten pesos per day. That was a good wage. Otherwise, the pay was from five to six pesos per day for the peons. That was only during harvest time. Otherwise, during the year, a peon was working for one or two pesos per day for ten hours. About December 15th, the threshing machine began to work. It gave a good yield, especially for the wheat. When the crop was ready to reap, dealers came from Buenos Aires and offered all kinds of prices. Our

wheat wasn't threshed yet, but they came to my father to make a contract for the wheat that would be threshed later. He made a contract for a certain number of bags of wheat, at a certain price. It was the highest price for that season, to be delivered when the threshing was done. The war ended in December 1898. The same day, the price of wheat went with it. But we delivered the wheat, and got the price as agreed. Altogether, it was a good year for all the colonists – a good crop and good prices.

Right after everything was sold came the wedding of my sister to Charles Effron. We planned a big wedding right in Rosh Pino, where we were living. We rented a large tent that about 40 x 40 feet and put it up in our back yard. There were all kinds of baking, especially many kinds of cake. There was a tremendously large crowd, as the Effrons were well known. Many people came without invitations, but there was plenty to eat and plenty of wine. After the meal was over, there were two musicians, and the boys and girls were dancing square and polka dances until two o'clock in the morning.

The day before the wedding, three fellows and I borrowed a fish net and went a small distance beyond Sagastuna where there was a Stanchiero with whom I was acquainted. On his premises were several deep creeks with water for his cattle. I knew that there were a lot of fish in those creeks because no one had ever done any fishing there. I asked his permission to fish. He said, go ahead and fish. We came there in the morning. The stream was about 50 feet wide and about 100 feet long and possibly six to eight feet deep. So we started with the net from one end, two men on each side of the stream pulling the net with ropes. By the time we reached the other end we could see some big fish jumping around in the net. We pulled the net onto dry land and put the fish in a big barrel of water. We thought that we hadn't quite enough, so we repeated the process. In the next stream we got just as much. It was afternoon, so we gathered our net and fish and went home. The barrel kept them alive for many hours until we reached home. The next morning, everybody was surprised as to where we got so much fish. The wedding was to be the next day, so we killed the fish and made gefilte fish, and plenty of it. That was a big surprise for that occasion. Meat, everybody had plenty, but fish was scarce. No one bothered to catch fish or make a business out of it. That gefilte fish was a novelty at that wedding. In the tent we had tables and benches made out of rough lumber.

We Voyage to America

In a couple of days, when the excitement of the wedding was over, we began to pack up for the trip to the U.S. As for myself, I had nothing to pack. I had a couple of shirts and the suit that I wore. Just about January, between the 20th and 25th, we said goodby to everyone, especially to our parents and we were taken down to the train for Buenos Aires. Before parting from my father and mother, my father handed me 500 pesos to take along to pay for the passage, and to have some left on arrival in the U.S. But I told them that I didn't have to have so much. They were left there, and they didn't know what the crop would be in the next year. Possibly they would have more need of the money than I. I handed him back 200 pesos. I took the 300 pesos and that was just enough to bring me to Poughkeepsie with one English pound – five dollars in gold – left.

The train took us as far as the Uruguay River. There we embarked on the steamer "Diana," and overnight we were in Buenos Aires. This was in 1899, when the city of Buenos Aires was small in comparison with what it is today. Just as New York city had a count of about three million in those days, so was Buenos Aires only one million. There were not many Jews in Buenos Aires. They were newcomers who came in from the colonies, and they were poor. They occupied themselves with peddling and some of them had small establishments of different kinds. The business of White Slavery was blooming in those days in Buenos Aires, where some German and Sephardic Jews made large fortunes out of it. We stayed on the street of Carientes. That was the Jewish quarter in that section. There was a Jewish rooming house, and we rented two rooms, by the day, as we expected to leave on a boat any day. We stayed there until about the tenth of February. Boats in those days didn't sail directly to the U.S., so we got a steamer that carried freight and passengers to the Mediterranean. It was a French liner, and the name of the steamer was "Albia." We paid a through fare to New York. It was something like 275 pesos per person. There were four of us: Charles Effron, my sister, my pal Chaim Abrams, and myself.

That steamer carried a lot of bags of wheat for different Mediterranean ports. There were about 50 or 60 passengers, including a few Spaniards for Barcelona. Most were Italians returning to their native land. We were the only four Jews. The small steamer with its cargo of freight and passengers left Buenos Aires about February tenth, out of the Rio de La Plata River and into the Atlantic. For about three weeks we didn't see any land. The food was good. It was french style, tasty baked goods, bread, and wine – all you could drink. Twice a day they served meat. For pastime, we played games or cards with the Italian people. There were quite a few good singers among them who gave us entertainment. At the beginning, Charlie Effron didn't eat the food, as it wasn't kosher. After a few days, though, he realized that he would not be able to continue to live on bread and potatoes. Then he began to partake of the food as we did.

In about 20 days we reached the two mountains in the middle of the Atlantic. The steamer stopped there for one day to take on coal, and we left again for the Mediterranean. When we reached the Canary Islands, the steamer encountered engine trouble. For a day we were drifting without power, as the mechanics were working on the engine to repair it. When it was fixed, the steamer started off again at the same slow rate of speed as before. Of course, we weren't in any rush. After about four weeks on the Atlantic we reached Gibraltar and entered the Mediterranean. Our first stop was Barcelona, Spain, where we stayed for two days. A lot of wheat was unloaded there. Then we went to the city of Marseille, France. That was the home port of the steamer "Albia."

At Marseille we changed to a different steamer, of the same company. That ship's name was "Alisia." It was about the 25th of March, and we knew that Passover was coming in a few days. We decided to get matzo while we were in Marseille, so we inquired where we could get some. A man took us over to the Jewish community. We obtained matzo, several packages. We came back to the ship and she started for the port of Naples to take on Italian passengers for the U.S. On the way to Naples, we stopped at the city of Genoa, just for a short time. In Naples we stood the whole day taking on passengers. It took time, especially because the slow Italian government officials were examining the clearance papers of the passengers leaving the country. While we were in Naples, we bought a lot of oranges and something different for us, a new fruit, grapes. Toward evening, the "Alisia" started out westward toward the Atlantic and the U.S. There were possibly 100 passengers, some with their wives and children. All of them from Italy. Again, we four were the only Jews on board.

The steamer "Alisia" was about the same size as the "Albia," but she was a little faster. This was possibly on account of the fact that she wasn't loaded with freight, as the "Albia" was. Three days after we left Naples, the first day of Passover came. The only thing we had to eat was Matzo. We knew it would not be pleasant to live on matzo and fruit for eight days. The first couple of days, we got along somehow on the matzo and fruit, and potatoes that we baked in the kitchen. Then my pal and me gave up our stubbornness and began to eat at the table. But Charles didn't give in. After a few more days, my sister also gave in, and followed our example. But Charles still kept on eating matzo and potatoes for a couple of days more. When he could not stand it any longer, he too began to get his meals at the table.

Many of the Italian passengers became sea sick, as this was their first voyage on the Atlantic, and the weather was not too good. It was rough, especially on the north Atlantic. Of course we four passengers were feeling fine, as we were accustomed to the ocean. We were proceeding, slowly, until we reached the Newfoundland coast, about four days before we would reach New York. Then the weather became very stormy. No one dared to go on deck, as the gales were coming over the rails. The small steamer was rolling in all directions. That was the roughest day of seagoing since we left Bremen for Argentina. The gales, the sea and the wind, the pounding of the surf against the ship was deafening. While lying in bed we were compelled to tie ourselves down to something, otherwise, when she would roll to the side you would fall out. Most of the passengers were in bed day and night. My pal and myself made use of ourselves, as we were not sick. We helped the attendants to bring food and water to the sick, as they were in bed for more than two days. A boy, about eight years old, tried to go up the stairs. When the ship rolled one way, he lost his balance and dropped down to the floor below. I went over and picked him up and took him to the doctor. The weather kept up for three days. On the fourth day we came into an open channel somewhere between Brooklyn and Staten Island. She stayed there until the doctors of the immigration department arrived to inspect the cargo of human flesh. After inspection, we proceeded to

Hoboken, in New Jersey. We were put onto small boats and brought to Castle Garden. There we went through the formalities of the immigration department. Each of us had a tag hanging from one of our buttons with our name and destination written on it.

After the processing, we saw that there was a stand with all kinds of food and drinks. My pal and me bought a lemon pie. We really went at it, as we had never had anything like it. We knew that we were going to part, as my pal was going to Boston and we were going to Poughkeepsie. So we bid goodbye to each other, after being together since we were ten years old. Then a guide took us on a small boat to Battery Park, put us on a small delivery wagon, and up we went to Grand Central where he placed us on a train bound for Poughkeepsie. The date was April 11th, 1899. We had left Buenos Aires about the 15th of February.

I suppose the train left Grand Central at about seven pm. We disembarked at the Poughkeepsie station at about ten o'clock. The station was vacant, except for a big policeman who was there. He began to speak to us. I knew a few words, so I told him: "me no spick English." On our leaving Grand Central we telegraphed to brother Dave that we were coming on the train. So we waited at the depot for a while, and Dave walked in. We walked with our bundles to 150 Church Street, where my brother David Effron was living.

AND THUS ENDED OUR JOURNEY TO THE PROMISED LAND.