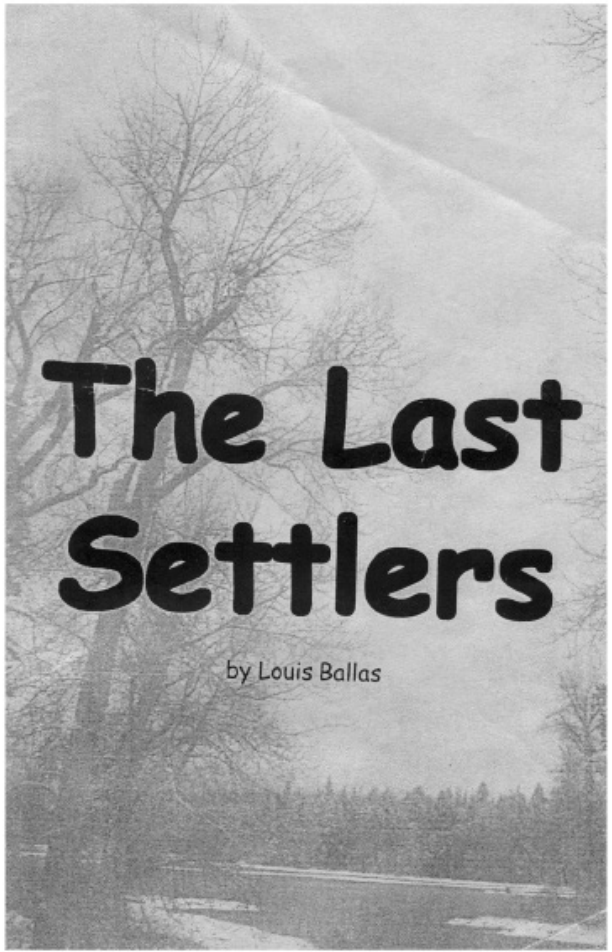


This is a story of a man and his five sons. The events told here happened some time ago, when America was young, and its' gates were wide open to immigrants from most of the civilized world. They came to make their homes and share the wealth in the country of boundless opportunity.

Back in the year 1905, James Ballas and his son John (who was fourteen years old at the time) came to America and settled in Chicago with the hope of finding work. Through an employment agency, they shipped out on an "extra" gang on the railroad. They worked the railroad for a while together, and in a years time the "old man" sent word for another son to come and join them in America.

As time went by, year after year, the "old man" had brought more sons to the new country and they all worked on the railroad, from place to place, making their home in box cars. Some time later, John and Bill went to night school to learn English and after a while, they began to understand the language fairly well.

In 1914 they were all working for the railroad on the "extra" gang, and in the fall of that year, they were laid off. The Road Master went to see the "old man" and his sons to tell them that before he left, he had found them a job for the winter in the Savannah-Illinois yards. The boys were very good workers, and the Road Master promoted John (the oldest son) to the position of Foreman and the second son to Assistant Foreman in the Savannah yards (which was a fifty yard). So they moved their camp and settled on the side of the yard and took care of it. They worked through the winter and in the spring of that year, after all the boys were settled and were secure in their jobs, the "old man" decided to go back to his home.

One Sunday afternoon, after the "old man" had a nice dinner, the boys came in and as they were sharing stories,

the father said, "My boys, we all came to this country when we were young, and now that you have grown up and most of you are men, you realize the responsibility I have back home. I must depart from you and go back and take care of your mother and your two brothers. I realize that my home is split - half here, and half over there, but you boys know what you are doing and I must go back and take care of those I have left behind. Now that you are all here together, I hope you will always stay together. You have in front of you a great country. Opportunities and everything a man could want have been laid before you. I want you all to remember that truth and honesty are the best insurance for your future. You're actions have proven your good work. We may never see each other again - that's the way the world is sometimes. I wish from the bottom of my heart that you boys make your home and be contented and happy with the things you have, and that every time you pick up dirt - it will turn to gold. You all have my blessing and tomorrow I will take the train and go back to your dear 'old mother.' One thing I want to say to Sam and Louis. I want you boys to give your checks each payday to Bill for one year. After that, you can keep your checks for yourselves. As you know, Bill, John, Pete and the two younger boys have always given me their checks and now that I'm going back, I want you two boys to help Bill out as he helped me before you came to this country."

The train was leaving the next morning at nine o'clock. The "old man" planned to take the No. 7 train; he also decided to take Bill with him as far as Chicago. All the boys went to the depot and bade he and Bill good-bye. After arriving in Chicago, they had to wait several hours at the Union Depot before making the connection to New York. While they were waiting, the old man said "Bill, I want you to take care of the younger boys in my place. You are the second oldest and I am leaving you with the responsibility of watching out for them, and taking good care of them. See that they are

doing well and don't forget to write so I know how you and the boys are coming along. I know you have good jobs in the yards and you must do your best to keep them. Listen to John, as he is the oldest, and some day, if you're ever prosperous enough to afford the trip, come to the old country and see us."

As Bill and the old man were talking, a young girl passed in front of them. Bill looked up at her, and the old man, noticing, patted Bill on the shoulder and said, "Don't worry, son - some day you'll get your wish. I know you're old enough to have someone like that, and one day you will find your partner. Let's hope that day will come soon." Tears came from the "old man's" eyes. Bill looked at him and said, "That's okay, Dad. All things come in good time. I just hope we will be together again soon." Soon it came time to leave. Bill helped the "old man" up from his seat, saying "There's your train." They walked to the train together, the "old man" boarded and said to Bill, "This is the last kiss and goodbye," and a few moments later, the train pulled out. Bill took the No. 11 back to Savannah, and joined the rest of the boys back in camp.

The following day, they went on with their work. John told Bill to take yard "A" and he told Pete to take charge of yard "C". He instructed Louis, the youngest of the brothers, to stay in the car and do the cooking. "While we had the 'old man'," he said, "he did the cooking for us. You're the youngest, so you can take care of that job." The boys all seemed contented and did their work so well that the Yard Master was extremely pleased with them.

The next few months were uneventful, until one day, a fellow, named Tony, who was working for John as a section hand said to him, "John, why don't you settle down and get married?" "I don't know." John replied, "I can't find a girl around here, and it's hard for me to think of getting married while I have my brothers to look after."

Tony said, "You don't have to worry about your brothers any more. They're all big enough to take care of themselves. I'll tell you what to do. You come with me next Sunday to Chicago; I have a very good friend there who has a nice young daughter. I'd like to have you two get acquainted with her and see what you think about her.

John said "Alright, we have passes anyway, so it won't cost us anything. We'll go next Sunday. On Sunday, they took the Number 7 and when they arrived in Chicago, they went directly to the home of Tony's friend. Tony introduced John to his friend, who was also named Tony. Young Tony said to his friend, "This boy is from Savannah, where he is a yard foreman. He has four more brothers, and I think he's old enough to settle down. I understand your daughter Lucy is getting to the age where she might consider marriage, and I thought it would be a good idea if John and Lucy were to get married." The older Tony said "Yes, I agree. I think it would be a good idea."

While dinner was being prepared, they relaxed and talked, and after a while, Lucy entered the room. John looked at Lucy, and she looked at John. She didn't know at the time why they were there, or the plans the they had for her. After dinner was finished, they had a few glasses of wine and then young Tony said to John, "Well, we had better be going back." "We'll see you next Sunday" he told his friend. The old man bid them good-bye and added that he looked forward to seeing them the following Sunday. Young Tony and John then left for the return trip to Savannah.

The following Sunday, Tony and John returned to Chicago to see the older Tony and talk things over. The old man told them that he would travel to Savannah to visit John and the rest of the brothers, and that he would bring Lucy along, and in the middle of the following week, Tony, his

wife and daughter Lucy made their way to Savannah and went to the box cars to see John, Bill, Pete, Sam and Louis. The old man remarked "You sure have a lot of brothers! They're all husky and everything looks pretty good." At the same time, all the boys were looking over Lucy, and every one of them was satisfied as she was pretty, young, and very nice. When John asked them if they liked her, they all agreed that she would make John a good wife. With the encouragement of his brothers, John asked Tony for his consent to marry his daughter. Tony said, "You bet, Johnny, you can marry my daughter, but I want you to get a house and live in town, because a box car isn't the place for a woman to live." John agreed, and in a few days he and Lucy found a house, bought some furniture, and set a wedding date. The wedding was to be held in Chicago.

A week later, all the boys dressed up and made the trip to Chicago to attend John's wedding. After John and Lucy were married, the boys spent many a Sunday visiting them at their home.

For about three years, the boys went about their daily routine. John's father-in-law (Tony) came to Savannah to start a grocery store and asked John to quit his job as yard foreman and go into business with him. He explained that John could earn a better living and would have a much brighter future by doing so. John took the old man up on the offer and together, they started the business. John had a little money set aside that he invested in the store, and he told Bill (the second brother) that he would see the Yard Master and try to get him to give Bill the job as yard foreman. Bill refused however; he figured it was too much responsibility for him, so the Yard Master had to find someone else to take John's place.

Some time after the newJforeman came, Pete decided to quit his job. He too wanted to go to Chicago and go into business for himself. Bill told him, "Pete, don't quit your job. We were all raised in the outside world and it will be pretty hard for you to get used to an inside job. In the first place, you don't know much about business, and you're liable to loose the little money you've saved." Pete didn't listen however; he found a partner and together they went into the restaurant business.

With John and Pete gone, the only ones left back at the camp were Bill, Sam and Louis. They stuck to their jobs for quite a while, and every so often they took the train to Chicago to see Pete. One day, they got a letter from Pete's partner, advising them that Pete was very sick and that one of the boys should come to Chicago to look after him. The following day, all three brothers made the trip to see Pete. Pete asked Sam to move to Chicago and stand in for him in the business. Sam agreed, quit his job, and went on working for Pete.

One day, Bill and Louis traveled to Chicago to see how Pete and Sam were getting along. At the dinner table, Bill said, "Sam, how do you like it here?" Sam replied that he didn't like it, that he couldn't get used to being inside, and that there seemed to be no let up in the work. It was twenty four hours of work every day and he was disgusted at the way things were going.

While this conversation was going on, Louis had picked up a newspaper and while reading an advertisement caught his eye. It read, "Farms For Sale in Northern Wisconsin and cut over lands. Make your home in Wisconsin — the land of milk and honey. See the employment agency at LaSalle Street in downtown Chicago." He showed the ad to Bill and suggested that they immediately look into it. Louis said "I know you have always liked the farm, and so do I, so let's go

to this agency right away and check this out." Bill agreed, and together they went to the 14th floor of the building where the employment agency was located. They walked into the office and explained that they had seen the ad in the paper and that they would like to buy the land and make their home in Wisconsin.

The man at the agency was pleased with the boys enthusiasm and told them he thought they had a good idea. He went on to explain that the agency had a representative in Merrill, Wisconsin who would show them around to the various land sites and let them pick out the one they liked the best.

The youngest brother was excited and ready to start immediately. Bill said that they would make the trip the following night and they would take Sam along. They called the train station and made reservations for the trip. The ticket agent asked if the boys would like to sleep on the train. Louis said he had never slept on a train and because it was going to be an all night trip, they decided that they would take a berth. The agent advised them that if they took the 8:00pm train, they would arrive in Merrill at nine o'clock the next morning. The land agent told them that when they arrived, they were to stop at "Brown's Land Agency," where they would be taken care of because he would call ahead that the boys would be coming. Bill said that that would be fine and they would leave the following night. The agent bade them good-bye and good luck. The boys left the office and took a street car back to the restaurant. There, they talked their plans over and Sam, as well as the rest, was anxious to take the trip to Northern Wisconsin.

The following evening, as planned, Bill, Sam and Louis went to the Union Depot and took the eight o'clock train heading North. They arrived at Merrill about 9:30 the next

morning. They got off the train, looked around the depot, and started walking toward town. Bill said, "This is a beautiful town. They sure have a lot of Evergreens and they sure are pretty." They walked along and soon came to the center of the town. Bill said that it was about time they inquired as to where they could find Brown's Land Agency. A fellow happened to walk by them and Bill stopped him and asked if he could direct them to Brown's Land Agency. The man pointed and said "Right there, next to the bank." Bill thanked him and they walked over to the office and all went in. A gentleman (Mr. Brown) got up from his desk and greeted them as they entered. He had a pleasant smile for them and asked if they were the boys from Chicago. Bill said, "Yes, we just came up."

"Well," Mr. Brown replied, "I am glad to see you boys. I suppose you are going to say here for a few days." The boys said that they were in fact going to stay a little while because it would be like a vacation. Mr. Brown put his coat on and said that if the boys would follow him he would take them across the street to the Lincoln hotel — "a very nice place." He told them to leave their suitcases at the hotel as they would go to dinner after they registered. They walked over to the hotel, registered and then had dinner with Mr. Brown — which they enjoyed very much.

After dinner, they walked around town and looked things over. Mr. Brown said, "I suppose you boys are anxious to look over the land around the country. It's getting sort of late to do that today, so we can start tomorrow morning. We'll show you boys the different land sites and you can pick out the spot you like the best."
The boys said it would be okay with them if they started in the morning and Mr. Brown, explaining that he had work to do back at the office, said he was looking forward to seeing the boys the following day. He excused himself and told the boys to have a good time. "You bet we will," said

the boys, and they walked about the town, getting acquainted with the town, and after a while, they went back to the hotel to retire.

After they awakened the following morning, Bill remarked "Boy, it's nice to sleep up here - nice and cool - it sure isn't like Chicago. There, it's so hot, it's impossible to sleep." Louis added, "It's awfully hot around Chicago at this time of year (June), but it sure is nice and cool up here. Boy this is the country to live in!"

They had breakfast and went to Mr. Brown's office. Mr. Brown asked if they were ready to look at land and they said they were. They got into Mr. Brown's car and drove out along a road that Mr. Brown explained used to be called "Grandfather's Road." They drove on this road for eight or nine miles, after which Mr. Brown stopped the car and told the boys about a track of land they could purchase at a cheap price, "But," he said, "there are quite a few rocks on the land." They looked things over, saw that there was quite a bit of timber they could harvest to make some extra money, in addition to the profits they would make from the farm. They decided against that particular piece of land however, because of all the rocks.

They drove on, taking a different road and finally stopped at another spot where Mr. Brown said, "There is some land for you boys. It has good timber on it, and if you boys decide to take it, I know you will come out fine." Bill asked how much land there was in the track, to which Mr. Brown replied "There's about 120 acres here, and it sells for about $50 an acre."

Bill discussed it with Sam and Louis, saying "I don't think we want to buy this. There won't be enough land for all of us, and it's too expensive. Besides, we don't know anything about timber. We'd better go along and have him show us a different place."

They told Mr. Brown that they were not interested in that particular piece of land. Mr. Brown replied that they had a lot of land around, and so he took them to another area. Around dinner time, Mr. Brown asked if the boys would like to have a little venison. The boys laughed and Mr. Brown said, "We'll go up to this place and then we'll get some to eat."

They drove two or three miles further and came to a place by the name of Bunker Hill. In this place there was a general store and a sort of larding for logs, ties, and there were a few lumberjacks that stayed there. Mr. Brown took the boys inside the general store and told the man to fix up food enough for four men. They had dinner and everything seemed to taste very good. After dinner, Mr. Brown took the brothers to look at yet another piece of land. When they arrived, he said "Here is a farm for you boys. There's a house and 160 acres; about fifteen acres are clear and ready to start farming. The boys looked around the farm and the house and decided they didn't like it. They said that in the near future, it still wouldn't be enough for all of them. They said that what they wanted was a really big place. Mr. Brown said that he had one more place for them to look at, but that it was too far for them to go look at right then. "We'll go there tomorrow and see what you boys think about it." he said, and they drove back to town.

The next morning the boys went over to Mr. Brown's office where they found him waiting for them. They got into his car and they headed out on highway 64. The gravel road was long and hilly. Bill remarked "This looks pretty hard for farming because of all the hills and rocks, wouldn't you agree, Mr. Brown?" Mr. Brown replied, "Yes, it is hilly, but there are some good dairy farms along this road; it's good land."

As the boys were looking around the countryside, they notice several farms with lots of dairy cows and everything looked beautiful to them. They had their hearts set on just that kind of farm.

They traveled along about 15 miles out of Merrill on the same road. As they were getting close to the other farm the road became narrower, almost like a logging road, for about two miles. As they got closer, Mr. Brown told them that about forty feet away there was a railroad track. They stopped, the boys got out of the car and walked around - soon finding themselves standing next to the railroad track.

Bill said, "Oh boy, I feel at home now. There's a railroad track in these woods." He asked Mr. Brown whose railroad it was and Mr. Brown told him it was the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railroad. Then they called it the Hinniman Branch. He told them that a train passed by at least two times a week, and in fact, while they were talking, they heard a whistle blow from far off in the woods. Shortly after, a small engine came puffing, at about ten miles an hour, pulling three or four flat cars that were loaded with logs. There was a passenger car at the end of the flat cars. As the train approached the engineer highballed and the conductor, sitting on his chair in the middle of the door, waved to them as the train passed by. The boys were glad to see such a train as they were accustomed to the fast trains back home.

Bill commented, "This is beautiful. Everything around looks so clean and so nice." All the boys were enthusiastic and Bill asked Mr. Brown if he owned the land around there. As they walked a little further, they saw a small frame building with the word "Bannister" on it. Bill asked Mr. Brown what that building was... Mr. Brown replied that it was a depot. "That's where the train sometimes unloads a few things for the farmers and lumberjacks. Do you see that

by the side tracks?, he asked. "That's where they load wood, logs, posts, and various other things."

Bill asked, "How is the land around here?", to which Mr. Brown replied, "The land is good, and easy to clean. This land was burned by a fire a few years ago and it was logged about forty years ago. That's what you call "cut over" land. I think you boys could make quick farms out of this place." he said.

The boys asked Mr. Brown how many acres were in the piece of land and he told them they could buy all they wanted with the exception of the land next to the railroad tracks which was owned by another fellow. The boys said they wanted to buy everything around the railroad and asked if there was any way to buy the land by the tracks. Mr. Brown said he guessed they could buy the man out; his name was Columbus and he had a log house not very far from the land they were looking at. The boys decided to go and talk with him at once.

When they got to his house, they found Mr. Columbus outside the house, sawing wood by hand. Mr. Brown and he had quite a talk, after which Mr. Columbus agreed to sell. Mr. Brown explained that there were about 120 acres that they could buy from Mr. Columbus and that they could buy all the more land he wanted. He told the brothers that in that part of the country it was common to buy land in 40's or 80's.

Bill, Sam and Louis talked things over and started walking to explore some of the land. The boys decided to buy enough land for all of them. They wanted all the land around this particular place and they asked Mr. Brown how many acres that could be. Mr. Brown said, "If you buy both sides of the road and also buy this fellow out, that will be about 480 acres. Bill told him that that would be okay. "That

isn't any too much land for four farmers and someday, there might be more, so it's always best to have plenty of land."

Bill asked how far the long road came through. Mr. Brown said, "Well, that's the end of the road, but there's a road coming from the other direction. They're building a road from Antigo... that's about fourteen miles from here and they're going to meet with this road from Merrill. You boys will have a good road to Merrill or Antigo, and in time, I believe it's going to be a state road. The boys were glad to hear that and as they walked around, Louis commented, "Why this is nothing to clean. We can easily clean this land up in no time." They took one more look around and decided that they were all well satisfied with how things were going and that they would go back to town and discuss the price.

When they got to the office, Bill asked Mr. Brown "How much will it take to buy the 480 acres?" Mr. Brown said, "Some of the land comes to about fifteen dollars an acre, some twenty dollars an acre and some will be thirty-five dollars an acre. In addition, the land that Columbus has will sell for about fifty an acre." Bill asked what the total cost of the land would come to and after some calculating, Mr. Brown told them it would all come to about $10,300. The boys looked at one another; Bill asked, "What do you think? Should we buy it?"

Louis and Sam both agreed that they'd like to buy it, but "we don't have enough money to pay cash for it." Bill said, "We have John. He'll help us. We can call him long distance, tell him we want to buy the land up here and get his opinion about the whole thing." Sam and Louis agreed that that would be fine and that Bill should go ahead and call him.
The boys told Mr. Brown that they would be back later. They told him they were going to call their brother in Savannah, Illinois and they left and made the call to John.

Bill explained everything to him and John said, "Whatever you boys do is okay with me." Bill told him that they would see him in a day or two because they were coming to Savannah. They then went back to Mr. Brown's office and advised him that they'd decided to buy the land.

Mr. Brown told them that if they would give him a small deposit, he would make the order legal. Bill replied, "We'll give you $300 and we'll pay the rest when we move up here." Mr. Brown told them that would be okay. The boys told him they were leaving for Chicago and they expected to be back in a week or so. They asked Mr. Brown if he could arrange to have Mr. Columbus move so that they could move in as soon as they got back. Mr. Brown assured them that everything would be settled, including the deeds, abstracts, and everything else so that when the boys got back, they'd be all set to take immediate possession of the land. They bade Mr. Brown good-bye and that same night, they took the train back to Chicago.

They went to the restaurant to see their brother, Pete, and then took a train to Savannah to talk over the events with John. When they got to Savannah, Bill told John, "We have some nice land in Wisconsin and it's a beautiful country! I think we made a good buy. As you know, around here in Illinois, the land is pretty high. We got pretty cheap land, and enough of it for all of us." John said "That's fine, how much money do you need?" The boys had about $7,000 and John told them "We'll put up the other $3,000 and you can go ahead and pay cash for it. I know you won't have any money left to work on, but it's best to pay for the land up front. Then you'll know it's yours."

John's wife spoke up. She said, "I don't think the boys should buy a farm up there in the woods. In the first place, they have never farmed in their lives - they don't know how. If you want to go along with them, you can help them

buy this land, but I won't approve of my moving up there." John said, "Well, that's okey. Someday, we might go further ourselves. You can never tell."

The next day they all went to Chicago to see Pete. They talked with Pete and he was just as interested in the farm as the rest of the boys. He decided to sell his share of the restaurant to his partner and go with the boys.

A few days later they all went back to Savannah and went to John's house to talk everything over with him. A day later the boys went to the bank and drew their money out. They stayed in Savannah a few more days and then decided that they had better head back to Wisconsin. John told them "I have a car, an old Overland. You boys can have this car to take along with you; you can start your trip in the morning."

That evening the boys made all the necessary arrangements, packed up the few clothes they had and then the next morning they began their trip back to Wisconsin. In those days the roads were pretty rugged - mostly dirt, sand, gravel - so it took them two days time to complete the trip which was only about 100 miles. They had a lot of fun on the way however. They passed through the Indian reservation, Shannon, and later to Antigo. They stopped at Antigo and got something to eat at a local restaurant. They had planned to go west on route 64, but a fellow told them that the road had just been completed and he didn't know if the boys could go to Merrill. He said the road hadn't been opened, but that they figured on opening it in a week or so. The boys told this fellow that they lived west, about fourteen miles and that road happened to be the only one that would take them there.
After they had bought a few supplies, the boys got into their Overland and headed west on route 64. After they'd driven about four or five miles, they came upon a road crew.

A fellow in the middle of the road flagged them down and told them they couldn't go through. Bill said, "We bought some land up here and I understand this is the only road that will get us to our land. The man asked how far they were going and Bill told him they were going as far as it took to hit the railroad track. The fellow said it would be okay if they went through. The road had just been graded and the boys' car was the first car that had ever traveled on that road. They drove until they came pretty near to Vansper, parked the car by the side of the road and got out. Bill said, "Boy, am I glad we got here. At last... we are home!"

From where they parked, they walked over to Mr. Columbus' log house. Mr. Columbus, his wife and two little children were there. They were glad to see the boys. Bill said, "We are the boys who bought all this land." Columbus replied, "Yes, I know all about it. You boys can have this log house. Tomorrow morning I'm moving out and if you boys care to, you can stay here tonight."

The boys said that they would drive back to Merrill, as they thought the log house wouldn't be large enough to accommodate all of them - it had but one room. They said they would come back in the morning. Before leaving, they asked Mr. Columbus about the land. He told them, "It's good land. It's easy to clean; some is a little wet, but after you clear it, I think it will dry up. You boys will make a quick farm." Bill asked him how long he had been there and Columbus replied that he had only been there for three months - since the spring. Bill said, "We'll see you in the morning.", but before they were able to leave, Mr. Columbus asked him if he warted to buy his miscellaneous property.

"I have two horses, a wagon and a cow. I also have a little pile of hay which is known as 'bluejoint' stacked back of the

house." Bill told him they would come back in the morning and tell him then what they had decided. Then they left for Merrill.

When they got to Merrill they went directly to Mr. Brown's office... he was glad to see them. He asked if they planned on moving on the place. Bill said, "Yes, we went down and asked Columbus and he said he was going to move in the morning. We'll pay for the land in cash tomorrow since the banks are closed now and we can't cash any checks." The boys went over to the hotel for the night.

The next day they went over to Mr. Brown's office and from there they went to the bank. Mr. Brown had all the deeds, abstracts, and the title for the land ready. Bill gave Mr. Brown a check for $10,000 and Mr. Brown gave them the abstract. Bill asked him if he had all of their names on it and Mr. Brown said all of the names, John, Bill, Pete, Sam and Louis were on the title. He told them that the land now belonged to them, and he wished them good luck.

With the transaction completed with Mr. Brown, they bought some groceries and drove out to the land where Mr. Columbus was waiting for them. He was all packed and ready to move out. Louis said to Bill, "We had better buy those two horses, the cow and wagon. He has a light sleigh too. We'll need it after a while." Bill agreed. He said, "We only have a couple hundred dollars left; that's not very much." They asked Mr. Columbus how much he wanted for everything. He replied, "You can have the team pretty cheap. One horse is blind and the other is old, but they're good workers. They're good enough for you boys to start out with, and I'll throw in the harness for $50." Bill said "OK," and they bought the wagon for $15, the cow for $30, and the sleigh for $5. Altogether, everything cost them $100. Mr. Columbus said they could have the old crosscut saw. Louis asked what it was used for.

"To saw wood." he told him.
"What kind of wood?" asked Louis.
"Wood to burn in your stove." Mr. Columbus answered.

The boys paid Mr. Columbus and at last they felt that their life of farming had really begun. The boys looked around the house. On the side of the house there was an addition for the team and the cow. There was a door from the log house where they could look into the stock room, where they kept the animals. Bill told Louis, "You're the youngest, you can milk the cow. That way, you'll be learning something about farming."

The log house was one large room. Mr. Columbus had left one bed and Bill and Sam suggested that they get a couple more beds and also give the house a nice white wash. The next day, Louis drove to Antigo - he was the handiest with the car. Bill went along and in Antigo they bought three beds, some white sheets, a couple pillows, bacon, beans, flour, and some other groceries. Then they headed back to the property. When they got home, Pete and Sam were sawing wood with the old saw. Sam said, "We've been sawing all afternoon and we've only got six pieces of wood cut. Boy, this is hard work!"

Louis took the flour, bacon, beans, etc. into the house. Sam said, "I bet you forgot some tobacco." "Yes, we sure did" replied Louis, "but don't worry, we'll go to town tomorrow to get things lined up. We'll buy some tobacco then."

They took the beds off the car and put them in the log house, placing one bed in each corner, with the old cook stove that Columbus had left for them in the middle of the room.

There were two windows in the house and they covered them with some curtains. They fixed up their beds, and

decided that everything looked good. That evening, they made their supper from the bacon, beans and bread they had bought in town.

Bill said, "So this is the farm. It won't be so bad if we start cutting some of this brush outside and cut some of the stumps out so we can see a little ways." The boys talked about the farm and their plans for it until it started to get dark, and it was then that they realized they didn't have a lamp. They decided that the only thing to do was to go to sleep.

After they had been in bed about an hour, they could hear the horse eating, and he seemed to go on and on. Bill said to Sam, "What did you feed that horse?" Sam told him that there had been a little feed that Columbus had left, but that he had given it to the horse nearly two hours earlier and he couldn't have been eating all that time. Bill said, "I can hear him yet." The boys got up, and Bill, whose bed was right next to the logs they had cut earlier, noticed that the horse had been eating on one of the logs.

"Look at that," said Sam. "He has almost half of the log ate up. I wonder what's wrong?"

Louis said, "I bet he's just hungry." Maybe he didn't get enough to eat."

They gave the horse a bucketful of grain from the sack and part of a bail of hay. After he had this, he was fine. Bill said, "So that was what was wrong with him. He was hungry." Again, the boys retired to their beds for the rest of the night.

In the morning, they got up, made breakfast, and after breakfast, Bill said, "Louis, you stay and wash the dishes and clean up the place. We also have to bake some bread."

Louis said, "I don't know how to bake bread." Sam said he'd do it, he said he'd mix the flour and make the dough. Bill said, "Alright, the rest of us will get out and start to cut some of this brush and clean up around here so we can see out to the road."

They started clearing the brush and a stump that was close to the log house. Bill said that it would be better if they had that stump out, so they went to get the team. They took one horse out and had a difficult time getting the blind one out. It took a while, but they finally got him outside. Pete held the horses and Bill went in to get the harness. None of the boys knew how to put the harness on. They put the collars on, then struggled to get the harness on. After they finally got it on, they tried to drive the team, but the lines pulled together, which just drew the horses up against one another. Bill said, "That doesn't work." They then took the lines apart, put them on again, and once more tried to drive the team. This time, each horse was pulling toward the outside. Again, they took the harness off, and again they started all over.

While all this was going on, a fellow happened to walk in. He walked up to the boys and said, "Hello, are you the boys who bought lots of land up here?" Bill said that they were, and the man said "Well, I'm your neighbor. My name is Al Smith. I live about two miles from here. I just brought a load of wood to the landing."

Bill said, "I'm very glad to know you. Right now we're having quite a job here trying to harness up this team."

"Maybe I'll be able to help you." said Al. "In the first place, you have the collar on upside down and you have your lines all wrong. I'll fix that up." He put the harness on the proper way, and when he was finishec, he asked "How much land do you own?"

Bill replied, "Oh, quite a bit. We own almost this whole section."

What are you boys going to do with all of this land?" Mr. Smith asked.

"We're going to make farms." replied Bill.

"Did you pay for this land?"
"Yes."

"I'm sorry I didn't know you boys before. But I know how it is. Those real estate fellows never give you a chance to walk around and find out for yourself."
"Why, what's wrong with this land?" asked Bill.
Mr. Smith replied, "You boys bought all swamp. Around this time of year, in August, it's quite dry up here. But the rest of the year it's mostly all wet. It's pretty hard to farm on wet land. I don't want to discourage you boys, but you'll find out for yourselves."

"Well," Bill said, "I don't know. After we clear it up, it'll dry up. I think it will be pretty good."

Mr. Smith said, "I have to go and unload my load and I'll see you boys again. I understand you boys bought the land in here and anyone who unloads cars of wood has to pay a dollar a car for the use of the land. Now you boys want to collect that as long as you are the owners." Bill thanked him, and Mr. Smith left.

After he had gone, the boys started working on pulling out the stump that was in their way. They had a piece of a chain and a hook around the stump, and then the whipple tree broke. They fixed that up, and then got some wire and hooked up the stump again. Bill and the rest of the boys started to dig around the roots, and they finally were

able to pry the stump out. Bill said, "It's almost dinner time. Let's feed the horses. We might as well take the harness off. I don't believe we'll use them this afternoon."

They all went to dinner and left the horses out in the brush so they could eat some of the green grass. When they got in the house, Bill asked Sam how the bread was coming along. Sam replied, "I mixed it the same as I always did, but it didn't come out at all... it didn't rise. I've a couple loaves in the oven. We can eat them." Sam took them out and they looked like pie cakes. Bill asked Sam, "Where did you learn to bake bread? You need yeast. Don't you remember how the old lady used to bake at home. She used to save a little bit of dough for the next time."

Sam said, "Don't worry. I'm going to save a little piece of this and make better bread next time." They got the bread out of the oven and started to eat it. Louis had some beans, a few potatoes... so far, so good. Louis said to Bill, "We have to go to town and get supplies so we have something to cook." Bill said, "Well, we'll get along fine today. We'll go tomorrow."

After dinner they went out to chop some more brush and Bill said, "After we clear this little spot, we ought to build a garage for the car." The boys went to the landing and picked up a few logs and there was a bit of old lumber laying around. They planned on going to town the next day to get some nails and other supplies they would need to build the garage.

Night came, and Sam prepared supper again. Louis milked the cow, and they had coffee with their light lunch. After they had finished eating, they started talking about how they were going to make a living... where was the income going to come from?

Bill said, "This is dairy country. We ought to get a few more cows and start to sell milk." The boys agreed that they should get some more cows so they could get enough income to keep them going. Before they retired for the night, they took the team and put them in the barn. Bill said, "Louis, don't feed those horses very much. They aren't going to do anything tomorrow."

After everything was said and done, they went to bed, and in a little while they heard the same horse they'd heard the previous night. He was eating up the mangers and Bill and Sam got up and looked at the horse. He had all his box almost eaten up and they agreed that something must be wrong with the horse.

"Yeah," said Sam, "I think there's something wrong alright. What do you suppose he's got? Well, that is what we get for buying cheap horses." The horse kept this up nearly the entire night.

The next morning, after breakfast, they were getting ready to go to town with the car when an old man appeared. His name was Belldo; he lived about four miles in the woods and had been around those parts for about fifty years. He walked with a cane and as he approached the boys, he said,
"You boys bought some land here, didn't you?"
"Yes, lots of it."
"I live back here in the woods. I have a cabin there and I live all alone. I logged this land about thirty-five years ago. What are you going to do with this land?"

Bill said, "We're going to clear this land and make farms."

"That's okay" he said, "but you boys can make a little money while you're clearing land."

"How?", asked Bill.

"Do you see those rotten logs that are laying around your land? You can cut them four feet long, split them, load them in a boxcar and ship them to the land company. You get three or four dollars a cord."

"Are you sure," asked Bill.

"Well," he said, "do you see that car in the landing? Come over and I'll show you."

All the boys walked up to the landing with him and they saw all the wood by the side of the landing. Some was loaded in the car.

The old man said, "Now you boys can make your living and clear land as you go along." They were very glad to hear that. They invited the old man into the cabin where they made some coffee and talkec for quite a while about the country. After a while, the old man left the boys' home and Louis said, "Boy, we don't have to worry any more. We'll make some money on this wood."

The next day they took the car and went to town where they bought an ax, saw, nails for the garage, and some groceries. Day by day, they were getting used to the place. They cleared more land and after a while they had cleared nearly five acres and had about two cords of kindling wood cut. They shipped it to the Mayville Land Company and they got $3.50 a cord for it. They had quite a few pine stumps they had yet to get out, so with the money they got for the wood, they bought some dynamite.

They started blasting the biggest stumps first. They tied the horses up to carry parts of the stumps, but that was hard work for the horses, so they put them aside and they pried around the stumps by hand. Bill said, "We can make all these stumps into kindling wood and ship it to the land

company." This they did. They cut up all of the stumps into three and four foot lengths. They were mostly all pine stumps and they took them to the landing and loaded them into the rail cars.

About a week later, they got a letter telling them they shouldn't ship any more of that kind of wood. The letter read "It's hard to handle, ard all we can pay for is the freight." "But," the letter read, "we will allow you ten cords out of the whole two car loads." The boys had worked for the better part of three weeks for nothing. From that time on, they burned the stumps.

Time went by, and one morning they went out to get the team and found one horse dead. Bill said, "Better for him. He never would have pulled through the winter anyway. We have to get another horse though, in order to make up a team."

They took the dead horse, pulled it out to where they had a clearing and buried it in a big stump hole. The following day, they went into Merrill and went to see the horse dealer. After looking over what was available, they bought a horse for $35, and that was all the money they had. They walked the horse back to the farm.

This was the first winter the boys had lived in their new place. In November it started snowing and kept snowing for two or three days. The roads at this time were never opened to Merrill or Antigo. The boys decided to go to town with the team and sleigh. They travelled about a mile or so; it was pretty hard for the team to pull the sled, so they went back to the farm. Bill said, "We had better wait until the train comes. We'll go to Merrill and get our groceries and some hay and feed for the horses. We can get this shipped on the train tomorrow and we can walk back with the small things tonight.

The next day around noon, they took the train to Merrill and arrived about five in the evening. They bought hay, groceries, and everything they needed at an establishment by the name of Pettermans. Bill and Louis decided that it would be better if they stayed in Merrill that evening, as it was getting dark.

In the morning, they shipped what they needed to and went along with the train. When they got home, they unloaded the ton of hay and the groceries. Since the snow was getting deeper and deeper, and the wind was getting stronger, they all stayed in the log house. There wasn't much to do in the winter because there wasn't any timber to cut, and therefore, no work to do.

About a quarter of a mile from their place they had a neighbor. He was away most of the time, but he always came back for the winter. He had a wife and three or four children. One day he and his wife came to visit the boys. He introduced himself as Mcrtin Jensen, and while they were getting acquainted, his wife noticed Sam making some bread and remarked, "You boys don't have to make bread. I'll do it for you."

Bill said, "Oh, you don't have to. We don't like to bother you. Sam is getting pretty good at it." Louis said, "It'd be nice to have some good bread sometime. Why not let Mrs. Jensen bake us some bread."

Mrs. Jensen said if they furnished her with the flour, she would bake the bread for nothing. They took some flour over to her and she made some nice, big loaves. From that time on she made all the bread for the boys, and on Sundays, she would sometimes give them a cake.

As winter passed, and spring came near, the boys got tired of "Batching" it. Bill said, "I don't know how we can make a

farm here without a woman." Louis remarked, "One of us has got to get married. After all, there should be a woman on the farm to make a home."

"But where are you going to get a woman around here?" Bill asked. "We're strangers and there are very few neighbors around. Besides that, I don't know if a woman would stay here with all of us "coyotes."

When spring arrived, once again they started cutting the brush, pulling stumps, and clearing the land. All summer long, they kept on clearing the land. At that time the boys realized that it was hard work and each one began to come to the realization that it would take years to clear the land and make a farm. As they all grew older, a day came while they were cutting wood in the land when Louis suggested dividing up the land so that each one knew what they had. That way, they would not have any trouble later on and at the same time they would all be willing to help the one that got married first so he could have his farm as soon as possible.

Bill responded angrily, "You boys must have forgotten what the old man said before he left. He said we should stick together. Now you're anxious to divide up already and we've only been here a couple of years. Now it looks as if each one would like to go be by himself. You realize I'm the oldest and I put in most of the money to buy this land - for the good of all of us. A little hardship like this is changing your minds. If that's the way you want it, we'll divide it up, but remember, we have another brother, John. He has a part of this land and he has something to say about this. If you boys really want to have it this way, we'll go to town and call John. We'll see what he wants to do."

So they went to Antigo and placed a long-distance telephone call to John. Bill told him that the boys weren't

very much satisfied with the way things were going and they'd like to know what pcrt of the land they owned individually. John's reply was that the boys should go ahead and divide up the land. They could give him what was left over, he told them. He said that whatever the boys did was acceptable to him.

So the boys got busy and went to the Land Abstract Company where they had the land divided up, to the satisfaction of each one of them. It was recorded at the county seat of Langlade County in Antigo, Wisconsin.

After everything was done, the boys went back to the farm and started working to clear Bill's land. Everyone was glad to help him out as he was the oldest. They worked with him until the fall of the year.

Time went by, and one day, as they were talking about their state of affairs, Bill said, "We can never make a home and be contented unless we have a woman to take care of us." They all talked this over and Louis said, "Bill, you're the oldest. Why don't you get married? You come next to John to get married."

Bill replied, "It's pretty hard to get married around here. You can see that for yourselves. There's nobody around to get acquainted with, and if we go to town and pick up a girl, I doubt that she would ever stick with us, considering our circumstances."

Sam said, "Bill, why don't you write to the old country and have our father send a girl for you to marry. I'm pretty sure that would be the best for you, as well as the rest of us, and I know you can trust the old man. Whatever he sends you, I'm pretty certain will fulfill the purpose needed on this farm."

Bill considered this for a while. "Well," he said, "It's the only thing we can do - to send for a girl from the old country." Louis said, "Bill, wr te the old man a letter and explain to him how we're situcted and I'm pretty sure our dad will understand our proposition. I believe he'll do all he can to send you a nice wife. He understands you, as he does all of us, and I know we can't go wrong. Bill gave the whole thing considerable thought, and the next day he decided to go ahead and write to the old man. He wrote the following letter.

My Dear Dad,

As you know, we are on a farm now. I'm here with all of the boys and I think it's about time for me to get married. Around this part of the country it's hard to find a girl, so I want you to find a girl who is willing to come over to this country and become my wife. She should be satisfied with whatever she finds here on the farm. I don't want to promise anything. All I'll promise is that the minute she comes over here, I will marry her, give her a home and do the best I can. Now, understand, your judgment is far greater than ours. Understand just what we want. It's up to you to send a girl that will serve the purpose and a girl that is willing to take this opportunity to come to America and make it her home forever. I am closing, anxious to here from you as soon as you can answer.

Your loving son,

Bill

The rest of the boys thought the letter was pretty good, so Louis took it to the mail box which was three miles away, and mailed it.

Time passed, and the boys continued clearing the land, as

usual, until the winter came again. Around November, they received a letter from the old man. It read...

Dear Son Bill,

I got your letter and I understand perfectly. I am getting busy right away. I'll find you a girl that looks like an American girl - just as nice and just as beautiful. I already have one in mind. All I want you to do is make out the proper papers so she can come directly to you without any trouble. You need to send me a ticket for her and the papers. That's all that is necessary on your part. The girl will be over sometime next summer.

Your loving Dad

When Bill got the letter, all the boys were excited and decided that they had better start building another log house since they all couldn't live in one house together. The boys started gathering logs. They found dry timber around the swamps, and they collected all the wood they could find. The snow was getting pretty deep though, and so they really couldn't do very much.

They decided that Pete, Louis, and Sam should go out to work for the winter. Bill stayed home to take care of his stock and horses. The other boys got jobs in Milwaukee - in the railroad freight houses. They worked about three or four months and saved about $300. In March, they went back to the farm and gave the money to Bill to send for the girl.

Bill got busy right away. He went into Antigo to see a lawyer named Avery. Bill told Mr. Avery what he was planning to do and that he wanted to bring a girl to America and marry her. He said he wanted Mr. Avery to draw up the necessary papers, which he did right away. Bill bought

the ticket for his future wife's passage and sent it, together with the papers to his father in the old country.

When Bill got back to the farm the boys were all together again. Spring was just around the corner, and they started to build the second log house. They didn't know very much about building a house, but they took a chance on it and it took them pretty near all sumner. It was a nice, square log house. Louis built up the chimney and plastered the inside. He also plastered outside between the logs, which gave the house a very nice appearance. It had four rooms - a kitchen, dining room, and two bedrooms. They decided it looked fine.

One day, as they were finishing up work on the log house, Louis went to the mail box and brought back a letter. The letter was from the old man.

"Dear Bill," it said. "I got your letter and the ticket, and I got the girl. She's a nice girl; I had her in my home for almost three months and I know you'll be satisfied. She's leaving about July 15th. She will be there about the first part of August. I want you to accept her as your wife because I already engaged her and I gave her the engagement ring. That means that I took her as my daughter-in-law, and as your wife. When she comes over there, I expect you to fulfill the promise that I made to this girl. I took your place and you understand that what I did was follow your wishes. I know from the bottom of my heart that you won't disappoint me. Your loving father."

Louis said, "Look Bill, there's another letter in the same envelope. I guess this one is for us." It read, "Dear Boys (Pete, Sam and Louis), I am writing you this letter to make you understand that I am sending a girl over there for Bill. I understand that you all live together on the farm and I want you boys to respect her cnd do all you can to help Bill

and his wife. Stick by them ard help them. I hope you boys get along better than you ever did and I don't want to hear any complaints or anything that will cause hard feelings between you. You must obey Bill, your older brother, do the right thing, and get along the best you know how. I hope you all will have good farms and live happily. I will close with kisses from your mother. Your loving father."

"Well," said Bill, "I guess we're going to get a girl here after all. I hope she'll be sat sfied with this log house."

Louis remarked, "Sure! Look at the nice plaster job and look at that chimney. Why, this is the nicest log house in Northern Wisconsin. It took us three months to build it."

The next day they finished with the log house and started digging a well. They dug it about thirty feet deep, made a box out of pine lumber and they bought a pump and put it near the log house. After the log house and pump was completed, they started clecring land, cutting wood, and blasting stumps again. They were more ambitious than ever, and sang while they worked, "She'll be coming 'round the mountain when she comes. She'll be driving six white horses when she comes." Everyone was happy. Sometimes, when they were cutting brush, they would find blueberries and branberries. They'd get their feet wet picking them, but they didn't seem to mind that.

They went along, waiting for the day when they would hear from the girl. They went to town and bought a bed, stove, curtains, a little furniture, and dressed up the log house. The painted the inside of the house, and it looked swell.

Bill said, "Boy, won't she be surprised! We have everything nice and clean, and I know she will be well satisfied when she sees it."

A few days later, a messenger came from Merrill, with a telegram. He asked if the Ballas brothers lived there. Bill took the telegram and paid the messenger. The telegram was sent from a steamship and it read as follows.

"Arriving in New York Thursday, August 2. Christina Janes"

Bill said, "Boys, she'll be in New York tomorrow. It'll take until Saturday night before she'll be in Antigo."

The boys were anxious to meet her on the train. They went into Antigo Friday night, just n case she came sooner. They waited by the train, but she didn't show up, so they went back home. The next day they went to the train station again, but come Saturday night, she still didn't arrive. On Sunday, they again went to the train station, but by afternoon she still hadn't arrived. After the last of the incoming trains had arrived Sunday night and she still hadn't arrived, they went back home. All were wondering what had happened to the girl. "Bill," Sam said, "you should go to New York and get her. I don't believe they let girls come out here without an escort, someone to protect her."

The entire night the boys minds were filled with questions and confusion as to why she hadn't arrived. About five o'clock in the morning, a young fellow knocked at the door. All the boys were sleeping, and he kept knocking. Finally, he yelled "Bill, Sam, get up! Your girl is here."

Bill asked him what he was talking about. This boy was the neighbor boy, Willie (Mr. Jensens boy). He was about fourteen years old. Again, he shouted, "Bill, get up! Your girl is here." Bill said, "I dont believe it. Where is she?"

"She's up at our house," the boy responded.

Bill thought he was fooling around, so he didn't get up. Louis got up though, and let Willie in. Willie told Louis that the girl was up at the house. Louis, not completely convinced that the boy was serious, asked if he really meant it.

"Yes," the boy responded. "The taxi brought her this morning from Merrill."

Louis told the boy to wait while he put on his pants. He told the boy, "I'll go up to the house with you."

As Louis went out the door, he yelled at Bill and the rest of the boys, telling them to get up. "The boy didn't lie," he told them, the girl really was there.

Then Louis and Willie started for Willie's house. When they arrived, Louis went anxiously into the house. As they opened the door and went inside Louis could see Christina sitting in the chair, with Mrs. Jensen sitting beside her. she got up and Louis went over to her to introduce himself. "Hello, Christina. I'm Louis." he said.

They shook hands, he kissed her and she said, "I'm glad I've found you." Where is Bill?" she asked.

"He's down at the house," Louis told her. "He'll be up pretty soon. I'll go over there right away and tell him you're here. He didn't believe that you really had come."

Louis was very excited. He left to go get Bill, but before he got to the road, he saw Sam. Sam was going to cut some hay along the logging road. Louis yelled to him that Christina was there. In the meantime, Christina came out of the house with Mrs. Jensen and Louis stood and talked with them until Sam got over to where they were. Christina asked if that was Bill; Louis replied, "No, that's Sam." "Bill's a big fellow." he told her. Christina was very anxious to see which one of the boys was Bill.

Louis ran down the road, about a quarter of a mile to the house. When he got there, Bill was just getting out of bed. Louis told him that the girl had come and he had better hurry and dress as she was coming down the road at that moment. Bill was very excited. He dressed quickly and went up the road, about 200 feet to where the railroad track was and stood, looking in the direction from which the girl would be coming. All the rest of them were walking down the road. Louis ran and joined the rest of them. They saw Bill from quite a distance.

Sam said, "Do you see that fellow over there? That's Bill." Christina asked why Bill didnt come to meet them. Sam said, "I don't know what's wrong with him. He must be frozen. He's standing there like a telephone pole."

Bill just stood there, looking at them and the girl. When they were about fifty feet from each other, Christina stopped. She said, "Bill!" Bill didn't answer. He kept looking straight ahead. Mrs. Jensen yelled at him and asked him if he could say something, but Bill couldn't talk. Then Christina spoke again. "I've traveled 4,000 miles to meet you. Can't you walk four or five steps to meet me?"

Then Bill started moving slowly towards them, and said in a very low voice, "Christina." She walked up to him and they looked at each other for a few moments. They shook hands, kissed, and Christina started crying.

I'm glad you're here." Bill said. "I was looking for you for the past three days in Antigo. Now that you're hear, let's go into the house."

The entire party walked down the road and went into the house where all the boys stayed - the first log house. Christina was very surprised to see the wooden houses. She looked outside and saw that everything was brush and

stumps. Bill explained that this was their first log house and that they had built another one a little ways down the road. He told her that he knew she would be glad to see it because it was going to be their home. Together, they all left and started out for the new house that they had built in the summer.

As they were walking, Bill asked Christina how she liked the country. She replied, "I don't know. It's more like a dream to me. I was talking with your father in the old country and he told me that American farmers raise corn, wheat, and lots of things. I had in mind that I would find a farm like that, but I guess this is okay."

"We'll have corn, wheat, and all kinds of crops after we clear more land," Bill told her

They arrived at the new house, walked in and Bill asked her what she thought about it. "Pretty nice." she said. She was surprised to find curtains on the windows and everything so nice and clean.

They talked for quite some time, getting well acquainted, and eventually Christina said to Bill, "We ought to get married right away."

"I think we ought to go to Savannah, Illinois where my brother John lives." replied Bil. "We can get married there and come right back."

This suited her. Bill told Louis to go to town with the car and send a telegram to John, telling him that the girl had arrived and they were all coming down so Bill and Christina could get married.

The next day they started the old Overland, locked up the log houses, and left for Savannah to see John and have the

wedding of Bill and Christina. When they arrived, Bill and Christina got married and they had a big dinner at John's house. All the brothers and a few friends were there.

After the festivities were over, they left for home and arrived in the evening. They all went over to Bill's log house and had a little supper. At one point after supper, while they were talking, Bill told the boys it was time for them to go back to their own house, so the boys bade Bill and Christina good night and retired to their home.

The next morning they went or with their usual work. They cleared Bill's land, which pleased Christina very much. She started doing the housework and cooking the meals for the boys. She washed their clothes, and generally kept things going.

Everything seemed to be going along fine until winter set in. Louis and Pete decided to go out and work; they figured they'd come back in the spring. Bill said it was okay with him. "Sam," he said, "you stay with me this winter. We'll go out this winter and pick up some tamerack logs from the swamp and in the spring we'll build a log barn.

Louis and Pete left; Bill and Sam stayed on the farm with Christina for the winter. She was quite surprised to see so much snow. There were snow drifts so high that they nearly covered the log house.

They made it through the winter without incident and in the spring Bill and Sam had quite a pile of logs stacked in the yard. Around April, Louis came back, but without Pete. Louis had a little money and he helped Bill with the log barn.

The bar was 30 feet by 60 feet - built primarily to hold hay. It was about 12 feet high, and there was an addition on the South side for a stock barn. The addition was about

8 feet high and about 12 feet wide. It was big enough for twelve cows and a team of horses. After they had completed the barn, they started clearing land again.

Bill bought a few more cows. They were kept busy cutting wood, hay, and they had seeded about 34 acres with timothy clover. They had cleared the land free of stones. Things were going along fairly well until winter was approaching once again.

In the fall, about the first of October, Christina told Bill that she was expecting to become a mother sometime in December. She was afraid to have a baby so far away from town, what with no other woman around. She said she'd like to go to Savannah where John and his wife lived because she felt it would be much safer than there on the farm.

Bill said it would be pretty hard to leave the stock and he talked it over with Sam. "Sam," he said, "I don't know if this farm is going to pay at all. In think we're wasting our time. You see Pete and Louis left, and I don't know if they're coming back or not. I don't think John will ever move here either. It's pretty hard going and I think it would be a good idea if we were to move out of here. Anyway, we can get out and get a job. Then, after the baby is born, we can still come back and try one more time to make a go of it."

Bill and Christina decided to go. Bill said, "We can have an auction next week sometime and sell everything except the model "T" Ford. We'll use that to drive down to Savannah with. It isn't very good, but I think it will make the trip."

They had the auction; sold the team, all of the cows, and a little hay. After the auction, they boarded up the windows of the log houses and started back to Savannah. It took them about two days to make the trip. On a Sunday afternoon, they arrived in Savannah and went directly to John's house.

John's wife happened to look out the window and saw the model "T" Ford outside, parked up on the lawn, with pots, pans, brooms, and various other belongings hanging from the car. She yelled to John, "Come here quick. I think some gypsy's parked on our lawn." John looked out the window; just as Bill was getting out of the car.

"Why, that's Bill, Christina and Sam." she exclaimed. They opened the door to let them in, and asked, "For the love of Mike! What happened?"

"Oh," Bill said, "We sold out. We're going to stay here this winter."

They all went into the house. At that time, John had three children and Louis was at living at John's because he was working in John's grocery store for the winter. He went out and drove the model "T" to the back of the garage. John said to Bill, "What do you figure on doing?"

"Oh," said Bill, "I think we - that is, Sam and I - can get jobs on the railroad until the baby is born. We probably will go back to the farm in the spring."

John thought that was a pretty good idea. He was glad that they had come down - he was happy to see them. Later, Bill and Christina started looking around for a house to stay for the winter.

John inquired as to whether cr not they had cleared much land. "It's going pretty slow,' said Bill. "The winters are too long and it doesn't give us much of a chance to get things cleaned up. It takes money, too. We only tried raising hay. We had a garden, but it froze up before we could get anything out of it. I believe after we get things cleared up, we can raise different crops." Bill and John talked a while about farming, and after a while, they all retired for the night.

The next day, they found a little house to rent, and Sam, Bill, and Christina moved into it. Bill went to see the fellow in charge of the railroad yard office and asked him for a job. At that time, the jobs were pretty well filled up, he was told. There were different yard masters and different foreman, and Bill didn't know any of them. He went over to the round house where he did know a few of the foreman, and one of them gave both he and Sam a job in the round house.

They went along with their work fine until the first part of December. One day, as John's wife (Lucy) was visiting with Christina she told her that she had better get ready and go to the hospital and not to take any chances by waiting until it was too late.

Bill came home and Louis told Bill that he had better take his wife to the hospital. She was expecting at any time. They took Christina to the hospital, and within a couple of days, their son was born. Christina stayed at the hospital a while longer before she came home.

As they went along through the winter, Bill and Sam had a lot of fun playing with the baby, but they still weren't satisfied. It didn't seem like home; their minds were on the farm most of the time.

In the spring, Bill said to Sam, "We had better go back to the farm. We've invested a lot of money in that farm; we built buildings, the log barn and houses; we worked hard for all the land we cleared and we can't let it all go to waste." They all agreed on this.

Around the middle of April they packed up and took the model "T" and left for Wisconsin. Louis remained with John to work in the store, as John needed him for a while longer.

Bill and Christina arrived back on the farm on a cold day, while there was still snow on the ground. They found the buildings just as they had left them. They started a fire to warm up the house, and in short order, they were back into the routine of running their farm.

Bill went around with Sam to auctions and they bought a wagon, a team of horses, six cows, and some young stock. They began selling milk, once again, and everything seemed to be going well. The warm weather set in and they went about clearing land again. It was kind of a wet year and there was water all around the land. In most places, they had to wear boots as they cleared the land. They kept right on cutting hay, and they sold a little wood. Once in a while, Christina would help Bill clear the land, pile up brush, and burn it.

They kept up the routine all summer, and soon winter was once again knocking at the door. In the fall, Sam decided to go back to the old country and get married so he could make a start for himself. Christina was very anxious for Sam to get married because she wanted some company on the farm. So Sam left Bill and Christina and went back to the old country the first part of October. After a while, Sam returned from the old country with a wife. He stopped in Savanna and visited with John and his wife for a while, then he went directly to the farm.

Bill and Christina were glad to see them. Christina was especially happy that at last she had a sister-in-law.

Sam, Bill and their wives lived temporarily in the same log house. They went along very nicely until the winter came again. The cold weather came and the snow was beginning to pile up around the country. One day, Christina told Sam's wife (Deanna) that she was expecting another baby, and she was glad that Deanna was there to take care of her.

She told her that when the first baby was born, they had gone to John's home in Savanrah, but this time, she would stay put.

After a while, she realized that the time was getting near. Bill told her, "Don't worry. I'll take you to town in plenty of time."

The weather got pretty bad. It snowed and drifted for about three days continuously. The roads at that time were not open for traveling and it was impossible to make the trip to town.

Christina got pretty nervous about the situation and one day she said to Bill, "We have to go to town to see a doctor. We have to do that in a hurry because I know the time is near."

Bill and Sam decided to go, even though it was storming. The roads were packed with two feet of snow and it was still snowing. They took Christina and wrapped her in blankets, got out the model "T" and started for town. It was about forty degrees below zero. They had to make their own road through the high drifts; they shoveled over half of the way.

"Christina", Bill said, "Have patience. We'll soon be to town." Considering the circumstances, Christina was as patient as she could be. They worked desperately to get to the hospital on time and finally, they reached the city limits. The hospital was very near by and they flagged down a passing car and rushed Christina to the hospital. Within a half hour of their arrival, the baby was born. It was a boy. "We got here just in time." Bill said.

As it turned out, Christina was a very sick woman, she was enduring a great deal of suffering. The pain she endured

caused her to lose all self control, and it affected her mental state. She begged to go home.

Bill, upon hearing of this went to her room and tried to calm her. "The baby is fine and everything will be okay." he told her, but through her pain she wasn't able to comprehend what he was telling her. She kept pleading for Bill to take her home, and there was nothing the doctors seemed to be able to do to calm her down.

Bill told her, "Okay, "I'll take you home, but you must wait a few more days until you're feeling better."

"If you don't get me out of here, I'll die." Christina told him. "I'd rather die at home with my baby. Bill was getting nervous about the situation and told the doctor that his wife was insisting that he take her home. The doctor told him, "I've done all I can for her. She should be patient and stay here until she's feeling better. If you take her home, the trip will more than likely worsen her condition. But," he told him, "she's your wife... do what you please."

Bill thought it over and finally agreed that he would take Christina home. He told her to get her things together; they wrapped her and the baby in blankets and left for home.

They got home without incident, and after they got home, Sam's wife (Deanna) took care of Christina. After about a week in bed however, she wasn't getting any better, and seemed completely out of her mind. Bill and Sam talked the situation over and decided that there must have been something seriously wrong with Christina. Bill told Sam, "I think I'll go over to Merrill and get a doctor to come out here and examine her."

So, the following day, Bill went to town and sought out a doctor who accompanied him back to the farm. After examining Christina, the doctor said that there was not much wrong with her, that the excitement and fear she had experienced having the baby had gone to her head and that was what had been causing her to be so irrational.

Bill asked the doctor what should be done for her; the doctor told him to bring her to the Holy Cross Hospital in Merrill where she could get peace and quiet. If they did this, he assured them, she would come out of this situation just fine. He assured them that he would watch over her very closely the entire time she was in the hospital. Christina started crying... she told Bill that all she wanted was her baby and that she didn't care where she went, so he took both her and the baby to the hospital.

The next day however, the doctor told Bill that there wasn't any use in having the baby there in the hospital with Christina. He told him that it would be much better if they took the baby home and fed t bottled milk as Christina's milk didn't seem to agree with the baby anyway. So, after Christina went to sleep, Bill took the baby home, where Sam and Deanna would care for it. He told them to look after his stock also, as he was going to stay at the hospital until Christina got better.

It took three months time before Christina was fully herself again. Most of that time Bill spent walking the streets of Merrill, all the time worrying about Christina and hoping and praying that she would soon be herself again. In the spring of that year (around March), Christina was feeling much better and Bill told her that it was time they went home; he had a lot of work ahead of him.

They left the hospital and went back home. On their arrival, they found the baby and Jimmy, their oldest child,

were fine. Christina was pleased and life went on as it always had... things began to look much brighter for everyone.

When spring arrived, Sam began to clear part of his land and told Bill that he had a nice start... he had his home and a barn, and he'd like to start for himself. Bill and Sam set about clearing Sam's land. One day, they received a letter from brother John in Savannah, it read as follows:

"I'm writing you this letter to inform you that I've got a pretty good friend here in Savannah - an honest worker, and he has four little children. He likes farming and would like to buy my share of the land, but he hasn't enough money to pay for it. I'd like to see him get started anyway, so I figure on sending Louis up with him and his family to help them build a house on my land. I'll pay for the house and I know he's a good worker. You boys know him, his name is Sam Kompus. It will be much better for you boys up there to have company, and some day I might come up myself, but in the meantime, you should get something started. You can expect them to arrive next week; he's going to load the furniture in the box car and he'll come along with Louis. Do everything you can to help him get started.

Your brother,
John"

Bill and Sam were both pleased to hear the news. Bill commented, "I told you that some day we'd make a home of our own. Why, we could have a school and a little community."

A week later, the train bearing the name "Blueberry Special" arrived. It parked on the side track and Louis, Kompus and his wife, and four small children all got off the train. The boys were glad to meet them all, and Louis was

very anxious to see the farm and visit with his brothers. "This is the place - an ideal spot." said Louis. "It looks so beautiful. I can hardly wait until I can start my own home."

Kompus bought a jug of wine with him and he and Louis had a good time talking things over. Bill said to Kompus, "There's a log house where we boys lived in years ago. You can make your home there until we build a house."

Kompus took his family over to the old log house, along with the furniture, and they got busy preparing the place. They cleared about an acre, had some lumber delivered and started to build themselves a house. When it was completed, Kompus and family moved in. Louis went back to Savannah and that summer he got married.

Bill, Sam, and Kompus worked together back and forth, clearing the land, cutting wood, and selling some of the wood they cut. In short order, winter was upon them once again.

They went along until about the middle of March when Bill and Sam received a letter from Savannah. It was from Louis; he was writing to tell them he was coming to live on his farm.

Both Bill and Sam were glad to hear this, and shortly thereafter, Louis, his wife and baby moved there. Bill and Sam were happy to have everyone together again. Together they would build Louis' home and they would all be well satisfied.

Louis moved into the first log house with his wife and baby, and he started clearing his own piece of land. Bill, Sam, and Kompus helped him clear a few acres and soon Louis was building his house and barn. He dug a well, and got everything pretty well lined up. The boys worked in harmony to develop something for their respective futures, and they believed that some day their dreams would come true by establishing farms and nice homes for themselves.

The following summer Sam started to build his house on his part of the land. He was building a house and barn, and with everyone's help, he had a nice start. Once all of the buildings were finished, the boys got busy again clearing land so that they could have room for more cows, hoping that this would lead to an increase in their income.

Behind Louis' house, there stood about sixty acres of evergreen and spruce, standing from one foot to ten feet high, and just as thick as could be. It was August and it happened to be a very dry year, and somehow or other, while they were clearing and burning brush, a fire started on the Northwest corner, across the railroad track. The woods started to burn. The wind was blowing in the right direction to blow the fire through the young spruce. The boys worked desperately to fight the fire; they got all the outside help they could get, but it was impossible to get it under control.

There was a smoke screen for miles around. The county sent out crews of men to help fight the fire; many of the C.C.C. boys were sent out also, and they all worked very hard to stop the fire, but it got into the dry weeds and spread all over the land as fast as it could go. All the roads which led to the farm were blocked by the highway department, and everyone was suffering from smoke inhalation. Many times, the boys didn't know whether they should stay in their homes, or abandon them.

Most everything was burned out - all sixty acres of spruce, and all the swamps were burned, clear up to the boys' homes. Everything was burned down to the clay, and in some places, the fire had burned four or five feet deep into the earth. Bill commented, "We don't have to do much clearing now. The fire has pretty much done all of that for us, but the damage done to the land itself is much worse than what it did to the trees and brush. It will take years to bring life back into that soil."

Time passed, and the boys cleared land faster than they had previously, and in no time they had it fairly well cleaned. Each of them had about twenty acres of land. They went along clearing land, cutting brush, blowing out stones, and burning the brush piles. In the summer they made hay. They tried to grow oats, barley, and grain, but it was hopeless. They couldn't raise a thing. The only crop was timothy hay, and sometimes alsack clover. They helped one another as they went along; they did the best they could.

Winter came and went, and soon summer had come. They were making hay, when on one July day, John, his wife, and their three children came to spend their vacation. They stayed at Louis' house.

They were all helping Louis put hay in his barn. Bill's barn was already full with about thirty tons of hay so Bill, Sam and Kompus were helping Louis with his. At that time, none of the barns had hooks, forks, or carriers to unload hay from the wagons, and so everything was done by hand. On this particular day, they were helping Louis with a load of hay... Sam and Kompus were in the barn distributing the hay around; Bill and Louis were outside, forking the hay into the barn. Suddenly, Louis looked across the road and saw that there was smoke coming out of the top of Bill's barn. Louis told Bill about it and they shouted to Sam and Kompus to come out quickly. Sam and Kompus dropped their forks and ran over to the fire. By the time they got there, the roof was ablaze and the hay was going fast. There was no time to spare. Flames rose into the air as high as 200 feet.
By that time, the women, children and some of the neighbors has noticed the fire. Cars stopped and everyone rushed to the scene of the fire. Bill had a machine across from the barn where he kept his wagon, plow, car, Louis' small truck, and various other items. They all rushed with buckets of water, trying to put the fire out, but it was too far gone to do much of anything to stop it, so they turned

their attention to getting the wagon and tools out. They tried to save all that they could.

They were working as hard as they could to save what they could when they heard a woman screaming. She was running to the middle of the road and she kept on screaming as loud as she could. They saw her coming, but they didn't know what she was screaming about. As she got closer, she yelled to her husband, "Where are my babies?" She had two children, ages four and five. Her husband said that he hadn't seen them, and everyone started looking about for the children. The woman said, "I know the babies went into the fire." She started to go into the fire to get them, but three women held her back. The father also tried going into the fire to look for the children, but they held him back too.

Bill, Sam and Louis were trying to convince them both that the children weren't in the fire, but the fact remained that they knew that there was a real possibility that the children might have gone into the fire after all. By that time, the fire was going full blast. Bill didn't try to save the wagons or any of the farm equipment, since everyone's attention was riveted on the children, and the possibility that they might be in the barn, burning to death. No one cared to try to save anything but the children. They all did what they could to keep the parents from going into the fire, and everyone looked for the children, but there was no trace of them. After a half hour had passed and the children still hadn't shown up, the mother fainted and the father lost control. Bill and Louis decided to take them to town to the doctor, as they knew there wasn't anything they could do to bring the children out of the fire alive, if in fact, they were in the barn.

Louis, some neighbors, and John's oldest son took the car and rushed the children's parents to Antigo to see

Dr. Donahue. The doctor wasn't in. They told the office girl what had happened and they laid the mother down. She was still unconscious and the father was steadily weeping. A few minutes later, the doctor walked in and they told him what had happened. The doctor tried reviving the mother, but she was so far gone she just wasn't coming around. They stayed in the doctor's office for nearly an hour, when they heard a noise downstairs. Two fellows rushed up the stairs, with the children in their arms. When they saw the children, everyone started cry ng for joy. Louis said, "There are the kids!", Sam couldn't say anything at all.

They brought the children to their mother and tried to wake her up. Her husband was talking to her, trying to get her to understand that the children were alive and well. After a while she seemed to be coming to; she took one look at the children and fainted again. A while later, she came to again, and it was hard to convince her that the children were actually alive.

They all went back to the car and drove home where everyone was happy to see that the children were alive. Bill asked them how they happened to go into the barn, and perhaps, because they were so young, they simply blurted out the truth.

"We went into the horse barn through the little window above the manager." they told them. "We crawled in that little window and went on top of the hay. We had two matches and we struck them together. At first they didn't light, so we tried it again. Then the matches lit and we put them on top of the hay and built a fire so mama wouldn't see us."

Bill asked them what they did next. "We stayed a little while, and it got pretty smoky. so we crawled back through the window and ran out the back door of the horse barn,

far into the woods. We knew mama would give us a spanking if she found out. We went in the woods and watched the fire get bigger and bigger, and we were laughing. But after a while we saw some people walking around the wood stand and we heard them yelling for us. We got scared and we started to run from the woods to the back pasture for home. The fellows saw us anc caught us."

"This is true," the mother said, "because yesterday they were building fires outside the house in a stump. I went over there and spanked them and took the matches away and told them never to build a fire again of they'd get another spanking. That's why I thought they were in the barn when I saw it burning. Thank God they weren't."

After a couple of days, the fire had completely settled down, and nothing was left but the ashes and Bill's log house. Shortly after, they finished making hay, and then the boys began building another barn for Bill. Everyone helped. They built a frame barn since it wcs quicker to build than a log barn; this barn had a hook and carrier.

Soon, another winter was upcn them and Kompus decided to go back to Savannah. "It's hard work, and it's hard to make a living." he said. "No one buys keel wood any more, and it's impossible to sell it. I haven't any cows and because the land is so low and there's water standing all around, is very hard to clear. With you boys it's different, you have your land paid for. You have a start, but I'll never make it." The next day he ordered a box car to load up what little furniture he had and he and his family headed back to Savannah.

Bill, Sam and Louis kept wcrking at clearing land and cutting hay. Some years it was very wet, but they always fought their way through the worst of it. Soon the children had become old enough to go to school. Bill had

two children, Sam had three, and Louis had two. The boys began thinking about where they were going to send the children to school. Bill's was the first to get ready to go; he was six.

The nearest school was eight miles away and that presented some problems. One day they went to the county courthouse and talked their situation over with the Superintendent of Schools. He told them that they could transport their children to school and the county would pay them 20¢ for the first child, and 10¢ for the second one. Bill replied, "That won't even pay for the gas. Is there no way of building a school out there?" He told the Superintendent "We hope someday we'll have our own school, in fact, we thought we'd have our own town."

The Superintendent responded, "There aren't enough settlers out there to have a school. Now you boys have been there for years, and nobody else has moved there. The valuation of that land is very low; it'll probably never have enough residents to build a school. The best thing for you to do is to board them out and the town will pay for the board. Or you can take your boys to the Limelen County School; I think it's a little closer."

Bill said that that was probably the best thing for them to do, as it would only be about five or six miles away. If they couldn't transport the children themselves, they could probably arrange to have some of the neighbors pick up the children when they picked up their own. When the school term started, a man from Lincoln County who had a school route picked up Bill's child and took him along.

As time went by, and the rest of the children started attending school, Sam decided to take Louis', Bill's, and his own children to school every day himself.

Time passed, and they cleared more land, and raised more stock. They planned to raise different crops, but they weren't very successful at it. Everything they tried ended in failure. It seemed that the more land they cleared, the less income they had. It got so they couldn't get enough hay to keep up the stock. All the profits they got from the milk they sold went back out for hay, grain and cows. In the winter, they couldn't make headway at all and they began to get discouraged. The families got larger, and expenses got larger too. There were doctor bills and it seemed it was always one thing or another. People often came around and told the boys that they were wasting their time. They knew what the land was like; they said the soil was poor and they would never be able to raise anything but timothy hay. The boys knew it was true because in previous years, they had triec raising different crops, and they always failed.

The boys saw that the future looked pretty bleak, so one day they went to the courthcuse and had a long talk with the county agent concerning their land. The agent told them that all they had been told was true. The land was very sour and there was a hard pan underneath where the water stayed in the land, and it was pretty hard to succeed under those circumstances. "I don't want to discourage you boys. I know you have invested a lot of money and hard work for many years, but my advice would be for you boys to get a better plot of land, closer to a school; land that you can depend on for future farming."

The county agent went on to say, "There'll be no one for years who will try to buy that land for the purpose of making a farm of their own. If you boys want my assistance, I'll be glad to help you along, and I'll try to do whatever I can." Bill thanked him and told him he would see him again, the next time they were in town.

The boys went home. They kept on clearing land and worked together and tried to make things go, but after the depression began, their was ro market for keel wood, and milk prices were extremely low. They were up against it for feed for the cows in the winter, and were forced to ask for relief in order to feed them for the winter. In the summer, they could depend on their own hay, but there wasn't an abundance of that either.

They carried on for two or three years like that, and one winder day the County Relief Agent came out and brought some blankets, a few groceries, and some things for the children. They had quite a talk about the land and things as they existed. The relief agent told the boys to write to the government. He told them that the government had a program that would reinstate many farmers that were in the same fix as they were in. Bill responded that he didn't know who to write to, and the agent told them to write to President Roosevelt. He said to tell him of their circumstances and he was certain that the boys would get a reply. So the boys decided to write to the President and find out what could be done.

That summer, the railroad cecided to do away with the branch they had running through Sam's land. There were no more logs to haul, so they took away the rails, and some of the ties. That discouraged the boys more than ever, and they decided it no longer made sense for them to stay on the farm.

In the meantime, the County Board passed a resolution that put most of the town of West Ackley on forest crops, which covered all the land around (except for the boys farms), and prohibited anyone from buying land near the farms for the purpose of establishing a farm or homestead.

The boys gave much consideration to this happening and decided that there certainly wasn't any future for them on

the farms. Because of the County Boards' decision, no one would settle near them in the future, just as no one had done so in the past. They were very anxious to sell out, but they found it impossible to sell to any one individual with a clear conscience because they knew that whoever bought the land would have the same results as them. The only solution, they decided, was to write to the government and see if they could dispose of the land for forest crops. Sam, Louis and Bill talked it over at length and decided to write the President. With Louis and Bill's input, Louis' wife wrote the following letter.

Merrill Wisconsin
Route 6
February 21, 1934

Franklin D. Roosevelt
Washington, D.C.

Our Dear President:

We are located in the town of West Ackley, Langlade County, Antigo, Wisconsin, in sections 19, 29 and 30. I am writing this letter to inform you of the situation we find ourselves in. We hope this letter will make clear the situation we find ourselves in, and in order to explain our circumstances as simply as possible, I've broken this letter down into three basic areas.

1. Condition of the Land. We bought this land thirteen years ago as cutover land for farming purposes. We have been trying our best to establish a farm and to keep our taxes paid up-to-date. For the past thirteen years, we've worked hard, with all the ambition we could muster, in our attempt to succeed in farming. Much to our dismay, we discovered that we have been working against ourselves, attempting to produce crops on soil that has been burned

out and will never be any good. In addition, we are in a perpetual frost belt which has throughout the years made it nearly impossible to raise sufficient crops to keep us going. Because of this, we are unable to see a future for ourselves, or for our children.

2. Condition of the School. It's of utmost importance that our children get a good education, but we find it a hard proposition to send the children to school for several reasons. In the winter months, it is more than inconvenient; the school is about eight miles East of where we live, and makes it nearly impossible to reach in the worst of the winter conditions. We had thought that by this time there would have been enough settlers to build a school closer to home, but now it seems that this will never happen.

3. The Community. We haven't got a community. We live 14 miles from the city of Antigo, and in the event of illness, which we have experienced in our family, it costs fourteen dollars to call for the Doctor, and that's a very difficult expense for us to meet, given the difficulty we've experienced in earning a decent living from our farms.

The nearest church is fourteen miles, also in the city of Antigo, and this makes it very difficult for us and our families to attend church.

Because we are so far away from everyone else, we find it very hard to get someone with a threshing machine to come out here and do our threshing, and as a final obstacle in our attempt to successfully farm our land and make a homestead, the County Board recently passed a resolution that virtually isolates us and makes it impossible for us to continue farming.

We will gladly cooperate with the government in any way that would make it possible for them to buy us out. For

the sake of our families we hope you will give this matter your most serious consideration.

Yours respectfully,

Sam, Louis, Bill Ballas & families

The following day, Louis mailed the letter, and they went about the business for the next five or six days. Then, they received an answer. Louis took the letter to Bill's house. It read,

"Dear Friends,

I received your letter in regard to the condition of your land. We have established a program which now is serving all over the United States in cases such as yours, and others with similar circumstances. It's a rehabilitation program which I am sure will address itself to your needs.

We never grant individual favors, but I am sure our program will reach you in the near future."

The boys felt a little encouragement from the letter and believed that someday they would be able to sell their land to the government.

For another year, they carried on as usual, and then went to the County Agent and talked their situation over. The County Agent told them the same thing - that there was a relief program going on, and that they would try to put the boys at the top of the list. He explained that they were buying many farms here, and that there were a lot of properties all over the country in need of the government's assistance. He told the boys that he would try to help them and see to it that they got situated into an area with better land for farming.

Another year passed and the boys continued to have high hopes that the government would provide better land for them. They wrote to various agricultural and forestry officials and continued to take their situation before the County Board, as well as going to see the County Chairman personally to ask for assistance.

Still another year passed, and on one spring day in 1938, an appraiser from the local government office appeared to appraise all of the farms. Shortly after that, another government agent came to the boys to take an option for the land. The boys were elated. At last, they knew the government was really going to buy them out. The agent made an offer, and the boys happily accepted.

In the fall of 1939, everything was settled. This was a glorious day for the boys and their families, a day they had been looking forward to for years. They remembered the days they had worked so hard to settle the land, the days they had lived patiently waiting for things to get better, and they knew that the memory of those days would be with them for the rest of their lives.

Bill commented "Now we can look forward to a better life, knowing that experience has taught us that where there is life, there is hope.

The land has gone back to forest. A young plantation of trees that will mark "The Last Settlers."

The end