

The Story of the John Shada Family
by Alma Shada Fehr
originally written sometime between 1974 and 1994

Transcribed exactly as typed by Alma Fehr
by Marci Duryea, September 2000

Notes commenting about the transcription are italicized and enclosed in brackets []

[Note about the author: Alma was the youngest daughter of John Shada and Mary Saba. She was born April 12, 1916 in Lexington or Kearney, Nebraska and died May 22, 1994; she was 78 years old. She is buried in Denver, Colorado. Her christening record at St. George Syrian Orthodox Church in Kearney is from July 24, 1916 and states her full baptized name as Anastasia Alma Shada. Her godmother was Labeebah Abdullah Shada (John Shada's sister). Alma married Gerald Fehr and they had no children. Alma's sister Lillian began work on the Shada family tree in 1974 when the reunion was held at the fairgrounds near Fremont, Nebraska; it was the same year their mother had died. Alma wrote this family history.]

[Original title unreadable because of bad photocopy]

John Shada – born August 28, 1874, died Aug. 28, 1927

Mary Saba Shada – born October 12, 1877, died April 24, 1974

The small village of Fieh el-Kura, Lebanon, sits high above the Mediterranean Sea, in the foothills of the mountains. *[Nowadays the common spelling for the town is Fih, El-Koura]* Its houses are small, square, built of white stones that are quarried from the sides of the hill. Wherever the ground is level enough, groves of olive and fig trees are planted. The villagers walk to Tripoli (Traubulus) about ten miles away whenever they had need to go into the city. Tripoli, which is a seaport city, is located about 50 miles north of Beirut and is one of the oldest cities in Lebanon. Lebanon is an ancient country and has been ruled by many different foreign powers. In the last hundred years, it was overrun by the Turks, ruled by the English and was a protectorate of France. Shortly before World War II it was part of Syria. It was granted independence in 1941. It is a curious mixture of Christians, Moslems and Druze and many of its problems go back to the time before Christ when hatreds were formed and still continue. Many of the Christians were of the Maronite faith which is a branch of Roman Catholicism and others were of Greek Orthodox faith. Near Fieh is the monastery of Belmont (Bella Mund) where the hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox Church were *[are]* educated as a monastic priesthood.

Located near the end of the village of Fieh el-Kura was the home of Albert and Rebecca Shada with their family of five sons and a daughter. They were of the Greek Orthodox faith. Albert was a tall, spare man with a mustache. He was well-respected and owned a caravan of camels as well as a grove of fig and olive trees. He was a stern father but loved his boys, Michael, Abraham, Gabriel, John and Moses and his baby daughter Lillie Martha. She would be called "LaBebe" and endearing French name meaning "the baby." *[Sources in Fih tell us that the name Labibe means "intelligent," and has nothing to do with being the baby of the family.]* His wife, Rebecca, was a short, stout lady who was a

warm, loving person and was a well-loved matron in the village. Nothing aggravated her more than Albert demanding that one or more of their sons accompany him on the caravan treks when he hauled wheat from the village to Damascus, Syria. The trip took several weeks though the distance isn't that great when we think of it today. [*The distance is approximately 75 miles and crosses a mountain range in eastern Lebanon*] She hated the camels and still remembered the day when one bit John on his head leaving a permanent scar. They were mean, dirty beasts and the trips were dangerous. She was determined that her sons would not follow in their father's footsteps. She recently had heard of a villager who had gone to America and found a good life there. She knew her sons had good business abilities, especially John and Gabriel.

In the early summer of ~~1894~~ 1890? [*1894 was crossed out and 1890? handwritten in – the actual year has not yet been determined*] Albert was arranging for a shipment of wheat and had asked his son Abe to accompany him. Rebecca saw it as the opportunity she had been waiting for as she heard there was a ship leaving Tripoli for America in a few days. She needed to bake an ample supply of bread for Albert to take on his journey, so she baked a much larger quantity and hid it away. On the day Albert left, on the pretext of going to Tripoli for material for clothing for the children, Rebecca rose early. She hid her jewelry in her skirt and hastily left for the city. When she arrived there, she went directly to a jeweler and dickered for the best possible price she could get for the gold pieces. Then she went to the ship that was docked and was loading for the trip to the United States and she booked passage for herself and her three sons, Michael, Gabriel and John. They informed her that the ship would be sailing in five days. She returned home and told her sons what she had done and urged them to get ready quickly. They too had heard the stories about America and were anxious to go as none of them cared about the life of a caravansary. Rebecca went to see her old aunt who was her confidant. She asked her to keep the two youngest children as they were too young to travel and she had used all the money to book four passages. Michael and Gabriel were both married and had children but they convinced their wives they would return in a couple of years with money to live comfortably. She new Albert would be enraged when he found out what she had done but her thoughts were for her sons. [*This account differs from another story, which says that Gabriel married upon his return to Fih.*]

Three days later Rebecca packed the bread, olives and cured cheese in a basket and made bundles of the clothes she and John were taking to America. At the homes of Michael and Gabriel, their wives were busy mending and washing the clothes their husbands would require. Everyone was feeling very apprehensive but no one wanted their feelings to show. Moses and LaBebe were dressed early and taken to their old aunt's home. Rebecca's arms aches from embracing them and her eyes were brimming with tears as she bade them to behave while they were with their aunt. She promised them she would be back before long and take them home again. Soon she and her sons were on their way to Tripoli.

They stayed with relatives that night and early the next morning boarded the ship and were led below decks to the steerage section which was rapidly filling up with people

from various parts of the country. Rebecca and her sons located an area where they could stow their belongings behind them. For a month they would sleep resting against the bundles and would eat from the food Rebecca had brought with her. The section was overcrowded and poorly ventilated. Many of the passengers were seasick and the stench grew worse daily but everyone kept their spirits up by repeating the stories they had heard about America. No one tired of hearing them. Rebecca told her sons the history of the families they were going to visit in Pittsburgh and Wilkes-Barre, Pa. She thought the distance might be the same as that from Fieh to Beirut.

[Historical note: There did not seem to be any ships which took passengers directly from Tripoli or Beirut to the United States. The French Line and Fabre Steamship Lines carried many Lebanese and Syrians to America, docking first at Havre or Marseilles in France, and then on to New York. We do not currently know which ship first carried the Shada family to the U.S., or what year.]

As the month drew to a close, excitement was mounting. The passengers would all be glad to set foot on land again and to breathe fresh air. Someone came in and said that they were nearing land. For the thousandth time, Rebecca wished she could have brought Abraham, Moses and Lillie with her. She prayed that she had done the right thing in coming to this new country. She thought of how angry Albert must be for he would have returned home by then, he would be fierce in his thoughts toward her and she wondered if he would ever forgive her.

[Historical note: The New York immigrant processing center at Ellis Island did not begin operation until 1892. Previous to Ellis Island was Castle Garden; located in Battery Park on the southern-most tip of Manhattan, Castle Garden was the arrival point of some eight million immigrants who entered New York harbor from 1855 to 1890. In between, (and also later when Ellis Island was under reconstruction following a devastating fire) the Port of New York used a temporary facility called the Barge Office. Immigrant records for Ellis Island are supposed to be available on-line around the year 2002, but it is not clear whether all of the Barge Office records will be included. If the Shada family did arrive before 1892 they would not have been processed at Ellis Island, but the Barge Office. Following are dates for each location and years of operation:

*August 1, 1855- April 18, 1890 : Castle Garden
April 19, 1890-December 31, 1891: Barge Office
January 1, 1892- June 13, 1897: Ellis Island
June 14, 1897 - December 16, 1900: Barge Office
December 17, 1900-1924: Ellis Island]*

New York! The ship moored at one of the docks at Ellis Island and word spread quickly that some may not be allowed to enter the country. They tugged and carried their bundles up the steps into the big barn-like structure to register. If anyone had the "eye disease" [*very likely trachoma, an extremely contagious disease which caused many immigrants to be deported*] they would not be able to enter. Rebecca and her sons were among the fortunate ones who passed the tests and were registered. They showed the interrogator the name and address of the relatives they were going to stay with in

Wilkes-Barre. As they waited at Ellis Island, they struck up an acquaintance with a young man and his family who were from a nearby village [*in Lebanon*]. They told them they planned to walk to Wilkes-Barre the next day. The young man laughed and told them that it was several hundred miles away. [*Actual distance from NYC to Wilkes-Barre is 125 miles, give or take.*] He had been to America before and he and his family were going to Youngstown, Ohio. He promised them if they would meet him in the morning, he would show them how to ride a freight train. They made arrangements to meet him and his family the next morning on Washington St. That night they found shelter behind some buildings.

The next morning, the young man took them to the freight yards at daybreak and they boarded an empty freight car on the Pennsylvania Line. Before long they heard the train whistle and soon the train began to move. They were all excited as except for the young man none of them had been on a train before. They were able to see the countryside through the open door and were amazed at the vastness of the country. Rebecca was apprehensive about getting off when they reached Wilkes-Barre, she thought the train would be moving at the same speed. But the young man reassured her that the train would be stopping at the rail yards in Wilkes-Barre and that he could direct her and her sons to a place to stay until they located their relatives. They marveled at how different the country was, the mountains were not so stony and the houses they saw from the train were so much larger. Someone on the ship had told them you could ride a train for five days and not reach the other end of the country.

When her sons grew tired or bored Rebecca would repeat the names of their relatives and how they were related. She told them how successful their kinfolk were in this new country. They never tired hearing of it.

They reached Wilkes-Barre early in the morning of the second day out of New York City, after the train had made stops in several cities. They had been bumped about as some cars were switched off the train and others added. As the train began to slow down for the Wilkes-Barre yards, their young friend taught them to pile their belongings near the open door of the car so they could jump off as soon as the train stopped and quickly reach their bundles. John and Gabriel jumped off first and Rebecca and Michael tossed their bundles down to them. As soon as the train halted, John and Gabriel helped their mother off as Michael jumped down unassisted. They bade a fond farewell to their new found friends and quickly made their way to the boarding house that he had directed them to. The next day by showing people the address of the relatives, they found their way to the home where their relations lived.

Rebecca's cousins were delighted to see her and her sons and asked for news of their families that were still in Lebanon. They spoke of getting jobs for Rebecca's sons in the steel mills as the Lebanese had a good reputation as hard workers but Rebecca had other plans. The following day they moved their belongings to the home of her cousins and stayed with them for a couple of weeks. Rebecca was anxious to move on and get her sons established with a merchant that she had heard about in East Libertyville, Pa.

Since they now knew how to ride a freight, they left their cousins and rode a freight to East Libertyville.

[After an exhaustive search of place names in Pennsylvania, it has been determined that the town to which they were heading was almost certainly East Liberty (Village), now a very small neighborhood in Pittsburgh. There is a town of Liberty somewhat near Wilkes-Barre in northeast PA, but no East Liberty other than the town by Pittsburgh.]

Upon arriving there, they established themselves in a boarding house and then inquired directions to the merchant Rebecca had heard of. The merchant was glad to see some of his native people and explained to them his method of doing business. He would consign to each of the young men a couple of suitcases which were stocked with needles, pins, thimbles, thread, socks, underwear and many other items which homesteaders needed. They would go out to an area where the farms were scattered away from villages to sell their wares. After two months of traveling and selling, they would be expected to return to East Libertyville and at that time an inventory would be made of the remaining items. He would figure the profit they had made and it would be divided in half between him and the young men. However he wanted a day to make his decision about staking them so he told them to return on the morrow. Meanwhile he went to people in the Lebanese colony who were from Fieh and asked them about the reliability of the sons of Albert Shada. Upon hearing what a fine respectable family it was, he decided to stake the boys to the merchandise and to the cases they needed to carry them. He spent several days with them teaching them how to price the merchandise and what each item was and also teaching them a few words of English. They were anxious to learn and were pleased at their good fortune at being backed by the Lebanese merchant.

The night before their journeys started they spent making plans with their mother and with each other. They were to meet back in Wilkes-Barre in August. Their mother had rented a room in a boarding house and had found work as a menial. In the morning she blessed each one as he started out. *[Details between this account and others seem to conflict; it seems unclear whether Rebecca stayed in East Liberty or went back to Wilkes-Barre by herself. It seems more likely that she settled in East Liberty.]* Michael was quite shy so he preferred going with John as John knew more words of English. Gabriel opted to go west while John and Michael struck out in a southerly direction. The first few days the going was slow as they hadn't learned enough words to make themselves understood but soon they found a way to approach the farmers and it was indeed as the supplier had told them, the farm wives were running short of sewing materials and supplies and were anxious to see what the men had in their suitcases. The farmers were kindly people and would often ask the young men to eat with them. Seldom were they denied a place to sleep although often it was a hay mow. From each of the families they managed to pick up a few more words of English. They ventured as far as southern Kentucky on their first trip but were back in August to meet Gabriel and their mother as they had arranged. What a happy reunion it was! And how proud Rebecca was of her sons.

The supplier was happy too at the success they had and when they figured up the profits everyone was pleased. The young men decided to keep half their profits and use the other half to pay for some of the goods outright. This pleased the supplier immensely as it told him these young men were very serious about their work. The boys thought their mother looked tired but she reassured them that she was all right. She hadn't been sleeping well as she was worried about the younger children in Lebanon. She didn't tell them about the letter she had received from Albert in which he scathingly denounced her for taking their sons to America. The letter also said that she was not welcome in their home ever again. He told her that the younger children were back home with him and she would never see them again. Of course, Rebecca was heartbroken. She knew that he was going to be very angry, but to deny her the possibility of seeing her own children had never entered her mind.

After a week in East Libertyville *[another mention reinforces the idea that Rebecca resided there]*, the young men were anxious to be on their way again. Michael and Gabriel wanted to accumulate their money as soon as possible so they could return home to Lebanon and their families. Each of her sons tried to give Rebecca some of their profits for her own personal use, but she refused. She kept each son's money for him and she praised each of them for his success.

The third time out, Gabriel came back with the news that some Lebanese people in Iowa had told him about another supplier, M.B. Khoury, who lived in Omaha, Nebr. They told him that Nebraska was still being settled, that it was a part of the country much like Iowa with good rich farmlands and many new settlers.

However with their mother living in Pennsylvania, they decided to stay with the business setup they had with the Pennsylvania supplier. He was a good and honest man and had taken them for customers without any money on their part. Rebecca didn't seem to be getting any better and when they questioned her only complained about a light pain in her stomach. When they returned from their seventh trip out *[possibly 12-18 months after beginning business]* they found their mother had died while they were gone. What a shock it was for them to lose their lovely mother. Her friends told them she had gone to see the Dr. several months earlier and he told her there was no medication for her condition. She had known the last time she saw her sons that she probably would never see them or her other children again but she had bravely gone on. Her closest friend revealed to them the letter Rebecca had received from Albert and they knew how much she had sacrificed for them. They went to the cemetery to visit her grave but it only drove home the point that their mother was gone. She had given her friend the money for each of her sons. They grieved deeply for their mother.

[A search for Rebecca's final resting place has yielded nothing at this time. She would almost certainly have been buried in a pauper's grave, knowing no English and with few friends to assist with her arrangements. Also, several older cemeteries in Pittsburgh were moved and consolidated in the early part of the 20th Century. So far, no death record or cemetery record has been found.]

Now that she was gone they decided to return home to Fieh, they had accumulated enough money for their passage and would have a nice nest egg left over. They cashed in their merchandise and explained to the dealer that their mother was gone and they must go back to see their father and their families. He understood and promised them that if they ever returned to America he would be happy to stake them again.

Albert was glad to see his sons, although he let each of them know that they had gone against his wishes and that he expected them to follow his instructions from there on out. Moses and LaBebe were glad to see their brothers home again but they missed their mother very much and couldn't understand why she hadn't come home too. Albert thought his sons had learned their lessons and he wouldn't listen to a word that they had to say about America. He hadn't mentioned his wife's name in his home from the day that she left. Their old aunt told them that he did ask what had happened to Rebecca that she had died so soon after going to America.

Although Albert didn't want to hear about America, the rest of the villagers did. John, Gabriel and Michael were asked time and again of what the country was like. They could hardly believe how large it was and couldn't understand how the young men had traveled by freight cars. They wanted to know how they made their money and what the rest of the relatives were doing. And of course everyone wanted to know what happened to Rebecca. It seemed everyone in the village knew of the ultimatum that Albert had issued to her.

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It was the summer of 1890 in Fieh el-Kura in a whitewashed home built of native stone that Anastasia Saba stirred restlessly on her bed as the pain in her leg became more severe. She called her daughter Mary who was twelve years old and reminded her to pick the mulberry leaves to feed the silkworms. They lay on trays in a low shed behind the house. Since Anastasia's husband, Moses, had died four years before, she and Mary had continued tending the silkworms which provided them with an ample living. Moses had developed a bad cough following a severe cold and they had been unable to alleviate it. One stormy evening his cough had grown much worse and by morning Anastasia knew that he couldn't live much longer. She had sent for the older children, Abraham, Nuzha and Missirah. Their second son, George, was still a youngster and lived at home as did the youngest child Mary. Later she sent Mary and George to the home of her closest relatives so that they wouldn't see their father die.

But now as Anastasia lay feverishly upon her bed, her thoughts turned to her younger son, George. He had recently married a girl from a nearby village and had gone there to live. George was only 19 but he was mature for his age and he would be all right. It was Mary she was worried about. She was so young and so sensitive to lose both parents. The leg she had broken felt so hot and swollen and Anastasia knew the pain she felt in her underarm was not a good sign. Abraham had set the bone for her but the broken bone had penetrated the skin and the wound refused to heal. She fell into a light sleep and when she wakened Mary was putting cold cloths on her leg to cool the

fever in it. She had dreamt about Moses again, it seemed to her that he was waiting just down the lane for her. She raised her hand and felt her forehead, it was very hot. She fell asleep again and this time she seemed to see her long-dead parents and she heard Moses' voice. When she awakened, she felt a new throbbing in her leg and a long dark red stain ran from the wound down to her foot and up to her knee. Her breathing had become more labored too. This was like the final night when Moses had struggled so to keep breathing.

Softly she called to Mary and the girl responded immediately. She asked her to go quickly and call Abraham and his wife, Nuzha and her husband Albert, and Missirah and her husband Fr. Simon who was the village priest. Mary was frightened by this request but she ran quickly and called them. When they arrived at her bedside, Anastasia signaled with her eyes that she didn't want Mary to stay there. Missirah got the message and asked Mary to go to their home and look after their baby who was sleeping. As soon as Mary was gone, Anastasia asked Fr. Simon to give her the last rites and they all knew the time had come. In the darkened room, Anastasia drifted between consciousness and unconsciousness while her children kept her as comfortable as possible. Finally she gave a light sigh and was gone.

Anastasia had always told Nuzha that she must look after Mary if anything should happen and Mary become an orphan. So Mary dutifully moved in with her sister and brother-in-law. She loved looking after her nephew, George, who was about a year old and she helped Nuzha with the housework while Albert tended their small grove of olive and fig trees. Mary missed her parents very much and under the pretext of feeding the silkworms she went to her mother's old home often. Albert worked hard in his groves but they didn't produce much and money was always very scarce. In a few months Nuzha told Mary that she and Albert were expecting a second child and Mary was excited about the coming of a new baby. Several months later, Nuzha gave birth to a second son and they named him Simon. Mary was like a little mother caring for him and asked Nuzha if she could be his godmother. Nuzha consented. But when the time came for his baptism she forgot all about her promise and she and Albert asked one of his sisters to be Simon's godmother. Poor Mary! She was crushed to think she had been denied the honor of being the baby's godmother.

Quickly she gathered up her clothing and no amount of pleading would stop her. She moved back to her parents' house alone. Nuzha was beside herself with worry and anger. She had promised her mother she would take care of Mary. Exhausted with worry and frightened for Mary's safety, she went to see her sister Missirah and her brother-in-law Simon. They both consoled her and told her that Mary was having a hard time handling her grief. Missirah told Nuzha that she would bring Mary home to live with them. Missirah was a warm, tender-hearted young woman who had always been close to her sister Mary as they were nearer each other in age.

Missirah hurried to her parents' home and found Mary there crying softly to herself as she made preparations to live alone. She comforted her little sister and told her that

there was great danger for her alone, that she and Fr. Simon would be pleased to have her live with them.

Life at the home of Fr. Simon was interesting and varied for Mary. Fr. Simon taught at the monastery of Bella Mund and was beloved by the students and the other priests who taught there, many of whom were of the monastic order. Fr. Simon and Missirah were both hospitable, caring people and their doors were always open to any of the students or instructors. Seldom an evening passed when there weren't extra guests for dinner. Missirah was a good cook and Mary loved helping her in the kitchen and with being a gracious hostess. Mary soon learned a reputation of being an excellent cook and her manners were always impeccable. She grew tall in stature and was slender and graceful. Her thick brown hair had a natural curl and her brown eyes were clear and sparkling. When she and her dearest friend, Barbara, the daughter of the *shike* or mayor, walked through the village, the young men soon began thinking what a fine wife either one of them would make. (And if the young man didn't think of it, his parents did.) Even stern old Albert Shada would notice them as they walked by.

The years passed quickly and soon Mary was 18 years old. Abe Hydar, a relative of her brother-in-law Albert, began finding reasons to come to the rectory quite frequently and when he had the chance would say a few pleasant words to Mary. She didn't give him much attention even though her sister Nuzha encouraged her to do so. Instead if she saw him coming, she would find a reason to be busy elsewhere. *[Later in the story there is an inference that this Hydar boy may be Anthony Hydar, later the father of Margaret Hydar. See notes at end.]*

The big news in the village had been for some time the return of the sons of Albert Shada from America, and the exciting experiences they had to relate. They also told of the money that they had earned there and the money they had brought back with them. Gabriel had even bought himself a camel and drayed wheat with his father. Since Gabriel and Michael were both married, the girls in the village concentrated their thoughts on John. Barbara and Mary both remarked about his being a handsome man.

John had grown up a lot while he was away. He was about 5 feet 10 inches in height. He had brown hair with auburn lights in it, hazel eyes and he wore a mustache. He had no intention of draying with his father, his mother too often had told him about the dangers of traveling between Tripoli and Damascus. Besides he hated camels, they were dirty, ugly, mean beasts, always spitting at the men. Instead he stayed in the village and bought and sold linens. He was very aware of young Mary Saba and his glance would linger on her long after she had passed his place of business, accompanied by her friend Barbara. Albert told him of her reputation of being a well-brought-up girl and it wasn't long before John, too, found that he needed Fr. Simon's advice often. Missirah liked John the best of any of the young men in the village.

Despite Nuzha's urgings to choose Abe Hydar, Mary still hung back. She liked John Shada the best and was sure one day he would ask for her hand in marriage. Her suspicions were right as it wasn't long until Fr. Simon told her he wanted to talk to her

in private. He told her that John had asked if he might marry her. She replied that she preferred him above the rest. Missirah was pleased but Nuzha was quite upset but Mary was adamant and she said she knew whom she wanted to marry.

Theirs was a pretty wedding with Mary's best friend, Barbara, as her maid of honor. She was a lovely bride, tall for her age. She wore a pink satin heavy-lined skirt which was brocaded in gold and a lovely white batiste blouse, which John had bought for her in Tripoli. She wore a long white sheer veil; her jewelry was a pair of beautiful gold bracelets and gold earrings which John had made especially for her in Beirut. It was customary for the groom to give his bride gifts of jewelry and John was more lavish than most in his giving as he not only gave her the bracelets and earrings but a half dozen other pieces of gold jewelry. John was attended by his brother Gabriel and Fr. Simon performed the ceremony in the village church, St. Simon Orthodox Church. *[Here is handwritten "in 189x", the last number of the date unreadable.]*

During the several months of their engagement, John had built their home in the village and Gabriel built his house next door. Mary was delighted with her new home and made it very comfortable for the two of them. Even old Albert Shada was impressed and proud when they invited him to their home for dinner and Mary served a huge delicious supper to him and the younger children, Moses and LaBebe.

But life in the village was becoming quite uncomfortable because of the Turks, Moslems and Druze who were harassing them. They were ruthless and a law unto themselves. The women of the village were so frightened of them that they didn't go out alone but only in the company of a male member of the family. Their were stories of young women being raped and jewelry being ripped from their necks or arms. Life began to be anything but pleasant.

John began talking to Mary about going to America and told his brother Gabriel of his intentions. He felt they could at least go there until things in Lebanon returned to normal. Gabriel too longed to return to the freedom and safety of America but he was tied to his father's business because of his investment in the camel. Mary's sister Nuzha had left for America a few weeks before, they had been encouraged by some of Albert's relatives to move to Omaha. Missirah spoke longingly of South America, their brothers Abraham and George had already moved to Argentina and wrote glowingly of the new land and opportunities. Mary and Missirah were so naive about the new world, they didn't suppose they would be thousands of miles away from each other. Anyway they all said they were only going to live there until the conditions in Lebanon grew better and they could come home with enough money to live comfortably.

John and Mary discussed their finances and John knew he didn't have enough money to pay for their trip. He didn't want to ask his father for a loan as Albert was against any of his family leaving. John would not leave without Mary and he kept delaying their departure. Finally Mary realized the problem was financial. She gave him all the gold jewelry he had given her as engagement and wedding presents and insisted that he sell it. When he went to Tripoli, he went to the jeweler and sold only as much of it

as they would need to buy their two fares. The rest he brought home to her, she still had the two gold bracelets and the earrings. They had to make haste as the ship would be sailing in a week.

There was so much to be done. Mary baked bread for the journey, as her mother-in-law had done before her and she prepared cheese and olives for the first leg of their journey which would take them to France. She could only take as many clothes as they could hand carry on to the ship ... decisions had to be made about their wedding gifts. They finally packed them in her beautiful cedar trunk with the Ivory plate on the front. It had been her mother's. They would leave it with a cousin in the village until they came back from America, so sure were they that this was only a temporary living arrangement. The last week Mary and John were invited to dinner at various homes, although not to Albert Shada's home. He still cursed the day Rebecca had taken them to America. Moses and LaBebe were teenagers and spent most of their time living with their old aunt as Albert was still draying wheat.

John was saddened that his brother Gabriel was not going with them. Mike and Abe had promised they would be coming as soon as they could get their finances arranged.

The morning of their departure came and there were many tearful goodbyes. Gabriel promised that he would seriously consider coming back to America. So John and Mary left Fieh el-Kura for what would be the last time although John assured his father they would be coming back to visit if not to stay and that was certainly their intention. Mary never dreamed that she would not see any of her family, except Nuzha, in her entire life. God is so protective that he doesn't let us see our future.

They arrived in Tripoli about midday and went to an inn to spend the night as the ship would load very early the next day. [*The other account says they went to Beirut to get on the ship.*] As they neared the dock the next morning, John heard someone calling his name. When he looked around he saw his brother Gabriel, baggage in hand, coming toward him. (Here there is some disagreement as to whether Gabriel's wife came with him or he sent for her later.) In any event John was surprised to see his brother and asked what happened. Gabriel replied with the now famous words "my camel died."

The ship they boarded carried both passengers and freight. Because of the freight, they were routed to several out-of-the-way ports. After they left Tripoli they sailed through the Dardanelles to the Black Sea and made port at Istanbul to unload part of their cargo. The next stop was Salonika, Greece. John left the ship at the port to see if he could find some fresh fruit for Mary as she had been seasick because of the crowded conditions and smells and the motion of the boat. After she ate some of the fruit she felt somewhat strengthened. After they left Greece, they sailed around the island of Cyprus, past Italy, through the Straits of Gibraltar to LeHavre, France where they left the ship. They would have to wait for passage on another ship that would take them to America from France.

John checked the time of the next ship for the United States and was told it was still on the high seas, and it would be six weeks before they would sail again. Glad to be off the ship for a while, they found a place to live while they waited. Although she was glad to be on solid ground again, Mary still had a difficult time with eating. The water tasted bad and she didn't drink wine. She found the French were not at all concerned about uncleanness. Most of the time she subsisted on fresh fruit and vegetables, bread and fresh fish.

At long last, it was time for them to board the ship for their trip to America. Again the steerage area was very crowded and again Mary was seasick. John and Gabriel fared well and spent many hours visiting with people from Lebanon and Syria. They watched their food very carefully as not everyone had planned their rations well and some ran out of food. They could buy bread from the ship's kitchen but that was all. Mary and John had an ample amount of olives and cheese with them.

At last the passengers knew they must be nearing New York and talk shifted to Ellis Island and the entry procedure. John and Gabriel reassured Mary it was not nearly as difficult as many said, as they had gone through it before. When the boat docked at Ellis Island, everyone disembarked into a huge cavern-like room. The area was filled with anxious immigrants with their boxes, trunks and bundles of belongings. John and Gabriel carried Mary's trunk ashore, they had bought it in France. The men queued up for the registration while the women and children sat on benches and waited. The wait was long. Many of the immigrants had a hard time making their names clear to the registrars and when some members of a family went to different registrars they ended up with their names spelled differently. They could only spell them the way they sounded. John and Gabriel went through faster than most as they could speak the language a little and spell their names. Mary was relieved when she passed the physical tests for entry. Then they boarded the ferryboat that took them to New York City. Mary was very nervous at entering the new country and wondered if they would get lost in the city. Little did she know that they had arrived with only five dollars, American money, in their pockets as their stay in France had dwindled their finances.

This time John and Gabriel knew their way to the Pennsylvania Railroad yards and they lost little time going there. They brought along some of their new Lebanese friends who were headed west and showed them how to board an empty freight car. This time they knew just what to expect of their rail journey and the second day found them at Wilkes-Barre, Pa. They went to the home of their Saba cousins. What a wonderful reunion it was. Mary was so glad to see some of their relatives in this new land. Every evening was spent talking about those that were still in the old country and those who had gone to South America. Everyone from the area around Fieh came to call when they knew the Shada boys had returned. Many learned for the first time that some of their families would be arriving soon.

After four weeks of visiting, they were growing restless and anxious to get to Omaha, where they knew that M.B. Khoury would stake them to merchandise and direct them to mercantile routes. Mary was especially anxious to get there and see her sister Nuzha

and her family. When John told her they were leaving in two days, she quickly assembled all their belongings. They left her trunk with her cousins who would ship it to Omaha when they had an address. They bade a tearful goodbye to their cousins and friends in Wilkes-Barre, ever grateful for what the Sabas had done for them.

It was back to the freight yards, this time headed for Iowa and Nebraska. They settled themselves aboard an empty freight car and soon were on their way. This time the three Shadas were traveling alone. As the train arrived in Pittsburgh, it began a series of switching cars and there was no way of avoiding the bumping and jerking at each stop and start. Mary got very sick at her stomach and it was apparent that she was unable to eat anything. John was glad when the train began to move westward, he hoped the steady rocking motion would relieve Mary's upset stomach but instead for a day and a half she was sick and retched at the least bump. When John grew very concerned about her, she finally told him that she believed that she was pregnant and that's why she was so sick. John was thrilled at the thought of a baby, but he was afraid if she continued to be so sick, there might not be one. He also knew he only had a couple of dollars left and Gabriel had hardly any money. The city where they stopped must remain nameless but John was able to sell his watch for enough that they were able to buy Mary a passenger ticket for Omaha. He told her when she arrived to wait at the train station until they came for her. Mary was overjoyed when they finally reached Nuzha's house, happy to see her family and glad that the trip was over.

In a couple of days John and Gabriel contacted M.B. Khoury and true to his reputation he staked them to their consignments of merchandise and told them to go to Kearney, Nebr. From there, John was to take a route west and south and Gabriel was to go north out of Kearney. They disagreed on the type of merchandise that each would carry, Gabriel wanted larger items that sold for more money each and John wanted the smaller more frequently used items. But these two brothers forgave each other easily as they cared for each other so much. They decided each would take the kind of merchandise he wanted. They bade each other goodbye and set a date six weeks hence when they would meet in Kearney and go back to Omaha together. John left Kearney and headed west into the area that would later be known to him as the Holdrege-Bertrand-Smithfield area then turned north to Lexington and on to the villages of Cozad and Gothenburg. Gabriel went northward toward the Riverdale areas on to Pleasanton, Mason City, Broken Bow, Oconto and Callaway. They were both quite successful in their mercantile business and enjoyed it very much. Soon Gabriel was able to send for his family to join him in Omaha. *[Another question raised about whether Gabriel's family stayed behind in Lebanon]* John and Gabriel would return to Omaha about every six weeks to spend a week with their families and replenish their merchandise.

As the time grew near for Mary to have her baby, John spent longer periods of time in Omaha so he could be there when the baby was born. On July 11, 1897, a son was born to John and Mary and they named him Simon. Mary had prayed to St. Simon that she would be able to carry the baby full term and that he would be born healthy. Nuzha and Gabriel's wife Sadie had acted as midwives at the birth. A few months later Sadie

gave birth to a son, whom they named Amen. Two older sons, George and Salem had been born and Lebanon. Salem died as a young boy. Simon was the apple of John's eye and a delight to his mother. He was a very alert child and would grow to be his mother's great helper even as a youngster. *[Simon's birth date leads us to believe that the Shadas left Lebanon in late 1896 or early 1897 to come to the U.S.]*

As time progressed, John and Gabriel learned the railroads could deliver freight anywhere. They spoke to each other of the convenience of living in Kearney as that was the central point from which they departed their selling trips. In Omaha, their wives were growing uneasy as there was racial trouble. A black man had raped a white woman and he had been caught and lynched. All women were afraid to leave their homes to even go shopping. Nuzha and Albert had already moved to Kearney and had rented a house at 33rd and N Sts. John knew Mary would be happier living nearer her sister. So plans were made with M.B. Khoury for shipping their merchandise and John and Gabriel made the decision to move. Their wives were very happy as it meant their men could get home more often. During the spring of 1899, the move was made. Some disagreement occurs in the family as to how they moved; whether they walked the 180 miles from Omaha to Kearney or if they came by train. By the time they left Omaha, John had attended night school and had learned how to read and write probably at a second or third grade level. Mary would wish all the rest of her life that she had had the courage to go to school too for one of her greatest longings was for the ability to read and write. But she had been too shy.

In Kearney as well as Omaha, the women in the family experienced great difficulty with shopping when their husbands were away. They could not make themselves understood by the storekeepers and were happy when John finally taught them to say "lamb." As for spices, they would save the old container and take it to the store with them. It was frustrating to know that the store had what they wanted but they couldn't ask for it because they didn't know the words. So when their husbands came home, each would have a long list of items in her mind that her husband would buy for her as he could translate.

When they moved to Kearney, *[handwritten insertion, "in 1899"]* John and Mary temporarily made their home with Nuzha and Albert, and Gabriel and his family rented the house next door. Nuzha did not get along well with Gabriel and his wife so there was some amount of strain. The reason Nuzha and Albert moved to Kearney was to farm, as Albert did not have the personality to be a merchant. So talk in their home was about the various farms that were for sale. In June of that year, Mary had her second child, another son whom she named Nicholas. Shortly after his birth, Albert and Nuzha purchased a farm a couple of miles south of Kearney and they moved to it. John and Gabriel had begun seeing the possibilities of farming and looked at farmlands east of the town where the ground was richer and better for growing crops. Gabriel found a farm about six miles east of town. It had a comfortable house and several outbuildings. Large cottonwoods grew in the yard. Shortly after moving to their new home, Sadie gave birth to a son whom they named Charles. Gabriel was

tired of the mercantile route and his wife didn't like his being away so much so he gave up selling in favor of farming.

Soon after, John located a farm three miles east of the town, 80 acres with a nice two story house and several farm buildings. It was located within walking distance, about half a mile, from what was called the Old Stone School. John was a proponent of education and Mary agreed. They both wanted their children to get the best education they could afford for they knew it was the key to their future success.

In order to make the payments on the farm, John felt he had to continue with his mercantile route as he was quite successful at selling. But he made a promise to Mary that he would have a telephone installed for her and that he would call her as often as possible to make sure she and the children were all right. They arranged for hired help to farm the land as they did not know anything about the cultivation of crops in America. Part of the land was used to grow corn, some for wheat and some left in pasture lands. As soon as possible, they acquired horses, cows, chickens and sheep. Although farm life was new to Mary, she seemed to adapt to it and with the hired help, crops were brought in each year and the farm became self-supporting.

The house on the farm was a very comfortable home with a large kitchen, living room, bedroom and pantry on the first floor and a room that covered the cellar entrance and served as a laundry and storage room. The big coal and wood range in the kitchen caused the room to be very hot in summer when baking and a lot of cooking was done and one of the thrills for the children, over many years, was getting to take the baking table outside to have dinner at it. This was a special table with legs about eight inches high so the women could sit on either side of it to pat out the Syrian bread and still be in a good position to slide the bread loaves into the oven without moving from their sitting positions. Because it only took a few minutes for the bread to brown on the bottom, they were constantly opening the oven door to move the loaves from the bottom plate to the middle rack so the top of the bread would brown. Baking bread was a major work as each week, the family would use a 48 lb. sack of flour for baking. The oven had to be quite hot so while they were baking, the women were exposed to a great amount of heat. They usually planned to start very early in the morning, so the dough was kneaded the night before and left to rise overnight.

Washing clothes was another major undertaking as water had to be heated on the kitchen range and carried to two large laundry tubs. These probably held 20 gallons or more of water and were made of galvanized iron. The tubs were set side by side on a bench especially made for them. In the first tub, the water was very hot, kept so by pouring more tea kettles full of boiling water into the tub as the washing progressed. Clothes were placed in the tub and then were scrubbed on a washboard which had raised and indented contours. The clothes were then taken from the tub, wrung out and put in a large basin and carried to the wash boiler which was on the stove. This usually contained a mixture of steaming hot water, soap shavings and lye. The clothes were boiled in this water for about ten minutes and then were taken out with a wooden rod and put in an enamel basin and taken to the second tub where they were

rinsed, wrung out and then hung on the lines in the yard. Washing would take all morning long and usually the clothes were brought in for folding in the afternoon.

Clothes that required ironing were put in a separate pile. Later in the day, those clothes were sprinkled lightly with water, rolled up and placed in a basket, ready for the next day. The following morning the kitchen range had to be heated to a fairly high degree so the sadirons could be heated on it. These were about half the size of our present day irons and were made of solid metal. There was a removable wooden handle that clamped on to the top of the iron so while a person was ironing with one iron, another was heating on the stove. Oftentimes the iron would begin to cool down and another had to be brought to finish ironing one garment. Pillowcases, tablecloths and outer garments were usually ironed, so it took several hours of ironing and as the family grew older each of the girls was assigned certain ironing responsibilities.

Another big household chore which was usually done on Saturday was the washing and polishing of lamp chimneys and refilling the lamps with kerosene. Since this was the primary method of lighting up the house there were several lamps to be taken care of. By the end of the week the chimneys would become blackened from smoke of the wick. Wicks had to be trimmed, too, to keep them burning more evenly. Beds had to be changed, floors mopped and cooking done in preparation for Sunday.

A phenomenon of bed linens in those days was the use of double blankets. These were blankets that were more than twice as long as a normal blanket. The advantage of them being that you couldn't kick the bottom of the blanket loose at night during the cold winter weather. Mary made her own tied quilts and in order to keep them neat and clean would sew temporary tops on them. This consisted of a homemade sheet that was about six inches wider than the quilt and a print sheet that just fit the top of the quilt. Every month, the bottom sheet was laid on the floor and covered with the quilt and top sheet, then the women would sit on the floor and fold the bottom sheet over the edge of the quilt and stitch to the print sheet. A good housewife had a goodly supply of these quilts on hand. Pillowcases almost always had a crocheted edging on them. Pillowcases without lace were the sign of a lazy housewife. Towels that were used for company always had lace edging on them too and occasional tables were always decorated with handmade lace doilies.

Since the farm had cows, butter was churned by hand. First someone had to milk the cows and bring in the milk. It was a job that was cold in winter and one that was bedeviled by flies in the summer. If the flies bothered the cow too much while she was being milked, she would try to swish them off with her tail and the person milking would get swatted by the cow's tail. After the milk was brought in, it had to be run through a separator to remove the cream. This was an iron and steel monstrosity that sat in the middle of the pantry area. Running the milk through it wasn't the worst part of it; washing the separator parts was. The separated milk and cream was then put in special containers and in summer was carried out to the pump well for storage.

The pump sat about ten feet behind the house and had a platform made of planks. A plank had to be lifted and moved aside to reach a ledge around the well area. Because of the water in the well, it was usually fairly cool. When butter had to be churned it was made by pouring a large quantity of cream into a special crock which was deeper and narrower than most crocks. It had a wooden lid with a hole in it and a wooden plunger was fitted into the hole with only the handle coming out of the top. Butter was made by raising and lowering the plunger as fast as one could. Periodically the churner would lift the lid to see if butter curds were being formed. When the curds were about the size of a nickel, the top of the churn was removed and the buttermilk strained off, leaving the curds of butter. These were taken out, salted and squeezed to remove any additional buttermilk that clung to them. The butter was then put in butter molds to form round or oblong molds, usually with a fancy design imprinted into the top of the butter. The buttermilk could either be drunk or used for baking.

Cheese was another product of the milk that the farmers had. Mary usually made rennet cheese, which formed by heating the milk with a rennet tablet in it. Then it was allowed to sit for a specified time, strained and then made into patties. Nowadays this type of cheese is called hand cheese or farmers cheese. Salt was added to the water to keep the cheese fresh.

Most families in the Lebanese culture made yogurt every week [*called labne or lubbin in Arabic*]. A culture was kept from a previous batch and was used to start another setting. Milk was heated to nearly scalding then removed from the fire and allowed to cool to a little warmer than lukewarm. Mary would stick her little finger in the milk; if she could count to ten without having to remove it, the temperature was right. She would remove about a quarter cup of the milk and mix it with a like amount of yogurt and stir the resulting mixture into the warm milk. It was then covered and set in a warm place. The best spot was on top of the water reservoir which was at the far end of the cook stove. Oftentimes the yogurt was set in the evening and by the next day it had properly cultured. Nuzha would make cheese from yogurt that was quite similar to bleu cheese. She would strain the yogurt until all the water was drained from it [*to the consistency of firm cream cheese*] and then form it into balls about two inches in diameter. She would fill a crock with the cheese balls, cover it securely and place it in the cellar where it was dark and the temperature was constant. She would allow the cheese to stay about six weeks before bringing it out. At that time a heavy mold would have formed on the outside but when that was peeled away, a rich creamy gorgonzola type cheese was at the center. Many Lebanese women would not take it all the way to making that type of cheese, rather when they formed the balls would put them in a fruit jar and add oil to keep them fresh.

Cooking was a major undertaking as all the cooking had to be done on the coal and wood range. It was a large iron affair that had six solid plates in the top. These were round plates made of cast iron. The first two were directly over the firebox and were used for frying and cooking foods that required a high temperature. The next two were directly over the oven and were excellent for foods like stews that required slower longer cooking. Finally the two at the back were used for keeping food warm. In most

homes, the coffeepot was always on, on the back burners. At the very end was a reservoir that had to be filled with water. When the stove was hot, the water in the reservoir was always pleasantly warm for washing one's hands and face. The oven which was located below the middle two burners usually did not have a temperature gauge on it. The housewife learned by putting her hand in the oven for a few seconds whether it was hot enough to bake breads, cakes or pies. On very cold days the oven door would be left open to help heat the room. Often there were pieces of wet or damp wood lying on the oven door, so they would dry to be used for burning later.

Much of the family life revolved around the kitchen stove, it seemed it was only cold during the night hours. The rest of the time there was something cooking or baking or both. The best stews and scrambled eggs were those that were cooked on a wood range.

Because of the amount of work to be done, there was little time for Mary or the children to waste. Mary sewed the children's clothes and she cut their hair and taught them how to do their chores. One wonders where all the stamina came from during her childbearing years but she didn't complain.

Social life consisted of visiting with relatives and friends and attending school gatherings. Mary was noted among her neighbors for the fine cakes that she baked and for the potato salad that she made. Since she could not read or write, she enlisted the help of the children to read recipes to her and she also enlisted their help in reading crochet patterns.

The home of John and Mary Shada was well-known in the central part of the country for the hospitality that they showed visitors. There seemed to be a continuous string of house guests from the time they moved to Kearney until Mary gave up her home in her old age. John and Mary were both hardworking people but when they had guests their attention was all focused on seeing to their welfare.

As Mary grew used to living on the farm, she began developing a routine that kept her busy while John was gone but the telephone calls from him were of the utmost importance. It kept her in touch of the area he was in. Having Sadie and Gabriel on the farm not too far away and Nuzha and Albert a few miles away was a lot of consolation to her. She knew in a dire emergency they would be there to help her. However, life seemed to progress smoothly and the two little boys were a lot of company for her. During the early summer of 1901, Mary realized she was pregnant again. She so much wanted a little girl and prayed to St. Simon that the Lord would send her one. A little later in the summer, John heard that his little sister LaBebe who was now married to a man by the last name of Hayek had lost both her little infant son and another who was a year and a half old. She was losing weight because of her grieving. So John sent a ticket to her to come to Nebr. He felt that she needed to be away from her husband for a while and that the change in climate might help her to recover. The ship that she came on docked at Providence, R.I. and that seemed to simplify the process of entering

the country. Neither the ship she came on or the city of Providence were as overwhelming as previous new arrivals had encountered.

John had also sent her money for a train ticket to Kearney, so she was able to make the trip with the least possible worries and annoyances. She was very happy to be with John again and to see his children, also to see her other brothers and their families. By that time, Abraham and his wife and family and Michael and his son, Sam, had both come to Kearney. Their father had died a year or so before. LaBebe was a short, stout lady whose love would become almost legendary. Everyone needs an aunt like Aunt LeBebe. She and Sadie were the midwives when Mary had her third child on December 6, 1901. She was a girl whom she named Barbara after her best friend in Lebanon. If Mary was happy with her girl-child, John was delighted. Barbara was a bright, happy child who was quick to learn. She often had to help her older brother Nicholas with his work, even though she was younger. She had her father's hazel eyes and his auburn hair. Mary loved making clothes for Barbara and she kept her hair dressed better than most of the rest of the girls in the community.

Shortly after Barbara was born, Sadie gave birth to a daughter, whom they named Minnie. It was noteworthy that when Mary and Sadie had a child each that were born close together, they were of the same sex and so they grew up being not only cousins but usually the best of friends. The two families visited with the rest of the relatives but always the special times were the dinners and picnics that they planned together.

In 1902, the Bill Cody Wild West Show came to Omaha and John wanted to go see it. Since his sister LaBeebe was living with them, he convinced Mary that she could leave the children in her charge and she could accompany him to Omaha. Mary never forgot the spectacular beauty of the Wild West Show and she remembered Bill Cody as an extremely handsome man with long flowing hair. While they were in Omaha they had a chance to visit with old friends there and to talk to some of the new arrivals from the old country. Meanwhile at home, LaBeebe and the children got along well.

[Historical note: Col. William F. Cody was born in Iowa in 1846. After a notable career as a Pony Express rider and Indian scout, he began staging his famous Wild West Show in 1883; the first was in Omaha. Ten years later the Wild West Show had a prominent place at the World's Columbian Exhibition in Chicago; it also toured Europe. By 1902, when the Shadas attended the show in Omaha mentioned above, Buffalo Bill was 56 years old, and the renowned sharpshooter Annie Oakley had just resigned from performing with the Wild West Show after 17 years. Teddy Roosevelt was president. Bill Cody continued to appear in the Wild West Show for many years, and died in 1917 at the age of 71.]

1903 was the year that Sadie had her child first, a son named Casper. It was also the same year that John sent to Lebanon to bring his cousin Charlie Wehbe Shada and his wife Yasmeen, to this country. John was anxious for all his relatives to enjoy the possibilities of a good life and opportunities. Charlie and Yasmeen lived with John and Mary and their family for most of the year until Charlie was able to find work and to

rent a home for themselves. At that time, Charlie already had a daughter, Norma, who was about Nick's age.

On January 14th, 1904, Mary and John had another son whom they named Albert after his grandfather Shada. LaBeebe was still living with them and had helped to deliver the baby and he immediately became her delight. She loved caring for him and would sit and stroke his hair which was like his father's.

That year was a most important year in their lives for another reason. They had always to wait for visiting priests to come through before having a chance to baptize their children and they were strong believers in infant baptism. In fact, Mary had been taught by her brother-in-law, Fr. Simon, that an infant should be baptized as soon as they were a month or six weeks old. John discussed the lack of an Orthodox church with his brothers and with other members of the Lebanese community in Kearney. They decided to write to the Patriarch in Lebanon to obtain information about establishing a church. The Patriarch informed them that they needed a man who could read and write who could be instructed and ordained. The Kearney group decided on Nicholas Yanney and he was sent to New York (?) for training and was ordained priest of the church in Kearney. It was dedicated to St. George and was named St. George Orthodox Church. The first building was a small frame church which they were able to buy and services were held there for the first time in 1904.

From its inception, John and Gabriel were solid members who backed the church both financially and with physical labor. The women were so happy to finally have a church they could attend and the first year quite a number of children were baptized. It was to become the centerpiece of activities for the Lebanese community. It was also attended by some of the Maronite Catholics who enjoyed hearing the mass celebrated in Lebanese. By 1904 there were probably 30 families that lived in the Kearney area. St. George's church was the first Lebanese Greek[*actually Eastern*] Orthodox Church west of the Mississippi. It wasn't long until the Greek community in Kearney realized there was an Orthodox church and began a lifetime of faithful attendance.

[Excerpt from an article in the Kearney Hub, March 6, 1953, on the occasion of the 50th Anniversary of St. George:

"In the year 1903 a small group of people immigrated from the Oriental land of Syria to America, seeking freedom of worship. Settling together in the city of Kearney, they founded the St. George Orthodox Church and organized an Orthodox Society. A total of \$125 in donations was received at the first gathering.

"With continuous donations this small group raised enough money to purchase the Cottonmill School, moved it to 14th Street and 3rd Avenue, and remodeled it into the first Orthodox Church in Nebraska, and the second Syrian Orthodox Church in the United States.

"Devoting much of their time and effort to the promotion of the church were Reverend Nicola Yanney, John A. Shada and brothers, Gabriel and Moses, Mike Hayek, George Abood and brother Amen Abood.

"In 1917 the church was moved to the present location of the St. George Orthodox Church, 15th Street and Avenue G. Later, in 1923 the building was sold for a private home and the erection of the present church was begun.

"Father Nicola Yanney was ordained as the second priest of a Syrian Orthodox Church in the United States of America by Bishop Ropheal Hawani. He served as the first priest of the Kearney congregation until his death in 1918."]

1904 was also the year that John's brother Moses and his wife Sadie and their young child Albert moved to Kearney and lived with John and Mary for several months. Moses had grown up under the tutelage of his elderly aunt and his father and had suffered for it because his father was away on draying trips so often. He had grown up without the self-confidence that John and Gabriel possessed. He was a large man, always kind and gentle and a person who kept up with politics and current events. John and Gabriel would become Republicans but Moses always chided them about the Republicans being the rich man's party and what were they doing in it. He possessed a wealth of information about weather and railroads and many other subjects. His wife, Sadie was a jolly person who loved to laugh and to make others laugh too. Although they would never have more than a mediocre living, their home was a hospitable one.

By 1904, Simon and his cousin Amen were old enough to be in school so they attended the Old Stone School. Education in those days usually consisted of eight years of schooling and most youngsters were expected to take part in the family farm after that age. The Stone School consisted of two rooms with the first to sixth grades in one room and the 7th and 8th grade in the other. Children were expected to be in school by 8:00 A.M. and were dismissed at 4:00 P.M. They carried their lunches and were used to the outhouses that served as rest rooms. Country schools adapted their school year to the needs of the farm families which meant school started later in the fall and classes were dismissed by early May. Nick and Charlie started going to school when they were about six years old. Charlie threatened in later years if he ever met his first grade teacher, he was going to smack her one. He recalls the day when she told him to read and he didn't know how so he stood up and wouldn't answer. She would hit him across the palm of his hand demanding of him to "Read" and as Charlie later related, "What the hell was I going to do, I didn't know how to read. So she'd say 'read,' I'd shake my head 'no' and she'd smack me with the ruler". Fortunately for her, Charlie never saw her again.

1904 was also the year that LaBeebe developed arthritis. She thought maybe it was the climate in Nebr. being so severe in the winter that had a lot to do with it. Then too she was developing a sense of guilt at having been away from her husband so long. Her sister-in-law Carrie Hayek lived in Omaha and would visit in Kearney. She would relate to LaBeebe how her husband wished she would come back home to Lebanon even though he was unkind to her when she was there. She made plans to return in the late summer and not spend another cold winter in Nebr.

During that summer before she left, there was a large exposition in St. Louis, comparable to a World's Fair. John wanted to take Mary to see it, they both enjoyed

such affairs so they prevailed on LaBeebe to stay with the children while they took the train and visited the Exposition.

[Historical note: Beginning April 30, 1904 St. Louis held a World's Fair to mark the centennial of the Louisiana Purchase. Following is an interesting excerpt about it from Chronicle of America: "Three ice cream vendors (of the 50 stationed at the fair) now claim to have come up with the idea for edible ice cream holders made from waffle pastry. A Syrian immigrant, Ernest A. Hamwi, says that he first rolled a Persian pastry called zalabia into a cone-shaped holder when a colleague ran out of ice cream dishes. David Avayou, a Turkish vendor, insists that he took the idea from paper cones he had seen in France. And Abe Doumar claims his 'cornucopias' were being sold first, at the 'Old City of Jerusalem' section of the fair. Whoever was the first to sell ice cream in cones, the idea of licking one's ice cream and then eating the container that held it seems to be a delicious new treat as well as an excellent way to cut down on waste." The Olympic Games were also held in St. Louis in May 1904.]

By 1905, the farm was almost entirely paid free from debt. It was the same year Nick and Sadie Gibreal had come from Lebanon and spent a couple of months living with John and Mary. Nick Gibreal convinced John that money could be made in a retail store and he wouldn't have to travel the mercantile route any longer. Money was obtained by re-mortgaging the farm and they soon were in business in a mercantile store. Stores of that caliber usually had half of the store stocked with groceries and the other half of the store with dry goods and sundries. Their business seemed to prosper with John handling most of the buying and selling and Nick Gibreal keeping the books. In those days, people ran charge accounts for their groceries, clothing and even their farm seeds and supplies. John couldn't understand why there was never any money for living expenses and they were always scratching to keep their bills paid. When he finally demanded a reckoning, he found many past due bills for customers who were way in over their heads and there was no way they could ever pay those bills. It was the same year too of the 1906 Panic, which was a depression that lasted several months. Finally John decided the only way out was to buy Nick Gibreal's interest out and try to operate it himself. Being the honest person that he was, he was determined all the creditors would be paid off, so he worked long and hard trying to make a go of it.

Fortunately as the children grew up a little, the farm was able to get along without as much hired help though it meant Mary had to do a lot of heavy work. Late that year, Mary knew she was pregnant again. It was not unusual in those days for a couple to have a large family especially if they lived on a farm. It was understood by everyone that farmers had to have large families in order to make a living farming. On June 30th, 1906 Mary gave birth to a son whom she named George after her brother who lived in South America.

Sure enough early in 1907, Sadie and Gabriel had a son whom they named John. The two boys who were so nearly the same age were to grow up to be the dearest of friends. That year, Sadie and Moses also had a son whom they named George. They also had an older son Albert. Abraham and Mary's family consisted of three children

by this time, two daughters Sadie (Gibreal) and Rebecca and a son named Eli who was about Nick and Charlie's age. John's brother Mike had come to Nebraska with his son Sam, he hoped his wife would change her mind and follow soon but she would never leave Lebanon. Mike stayed until his son Sam was grown up and had married a girl from Omaha whose name was Selma. Selma was a sister to Moses' wife. That year was also the year that George W. and his wife Katherine and their eldest son, Simon, lived with John and Mary for a few months. John had sent for them in 1906. *[On his naturalization declaration George says he arrived in NY on August 27, 1907.]*

John's success with the store was very meager as times were still hard following the Panic so in 1908 he traded the store to Mrs. Wareham in exchange for some land near Eddyville, Nebr. Later that year on Sept. 8th, 1908 a daughter was born to John and Mary. They named her Lillian after her Aunt Beebe. John was so delighted to have another daughter and Barbara loved her baby sister. The boys were pretty taken with her too. From birth, Lillian was a gentle child and got along well with everyone. She had her mother's coloring with fine black hair and her mother's pretty eyes.

Later in the year even though she knew she would have to withstand Nebr.'s cold winters, LaBeebe returned from Lebanon. She had become pregnant shortly after her return and the baby had lived only a few months. She miscarried another when her husband beat her and she couldn't tolerate being around him. When John heard of it he sent the money for her fare immediately telling her that his and Mary's home would be her home. She was to live with them for the rest of her life. She and Mary became closer than natural sisters.

Since Mary had a girl in 1908, Sadie had a girl in 1909[named Mary] there was no envy or challenge it was just God's plan that their children were born that way. Moses and his wife also had a daughter who they named Mary.

The Lebanese settlement was pretty well known in Kearney, some people were delighted to have them there and others resented them. Much of their social life revolved around the church. Visitors would come from out of state and out of town and spend anywhere from two days to two months visiting. They were always wined and dined by the Lebanese community especially by the Shada families. How often there were huge gatherings at one of the Shada homes, because if guests were invited for dinner so were all the relatives. The community was enlarged by the arrival of the George families, the Hayeks, and many people from the villages which are now a part of Syria. The church served as a catalyst to bring them all together.

Life on the farms became pretty routine with the children starting school as soon as they were six years old. And not many years after that, they become part of the help around the farm. One of the highlights of the farm year was when harvest time came and the harvesters came in to reap the grain. It was customary in those days for neighbor to help neighbor. They would begin with the field of grain that ripened first; all the neighbors would take their horses and wagons and be at the farm at sunup.

In the house the women would join together to do the cooking. Harvesting was hard, hot work and they knew the men would be hungry when they came in for their noonday meal. Usually outdoor tables were set up with sawhorses and planks and covered with older tablecloths. There were no paper plates in those days. Plates were either china or graniteware. The food had to be hearty and there needed to be plenty of it. Along with the fathers there were sons who had even healthier appetites. Great kettles of stew, of fried chicken, mashed potatoes and gravy, hams, and roasts had to be prepared. And of course, desserts—it would be unthinkable to serve the harvesters without a big selection of pies, cakes and fruit sauces. The coffee cups were never allowed to be empty and huge batches of lemonade were served. The day before the harvesters came, the housewife would have spent the day baking bread and rolls. After the harvesters went back to work, the dishes had to be washed and the tables taken down for the next day. Sometimes it took 3 or 4 days to finish the harvest on one farm. By that time, the farmer's wife was about finished too.

Beside the main crops that grew on the farm, there was the farmers' vegetable garden to be attended to. It was no small patch. When you have a family of 6 to 12 people to feed, not only do you have to have vegetables to serve during the summer of the year, but there was canning to be done to last through the winter and spring months. Almost every farm house had either a cellar or a basement. There were racks upon racks of fruit jars that had to be filled with the bounty from the garden and the orchard. If a farmer did not have his own fruit trees, then he bought fruit from someone else. If there was a farmer's wife who didn't have at least two hundred jars of fruit, vegetables and jellies put away for the winter, she would be the talk of the neighborhood for her laziness. There were also vegetables to be dried. The younger children would sit at the table with a pan of string beans or okra in front of them and with a needle and thread, they would pierce the center of the vegetable the narrow way until the string was more than two feet long. It was then tied together to resemble a necklace and then hung to dry in an attic or dry storage room. Sliced fruits were also strung the same way. Sweet corn was parboiled, cut from the cob and put out on large sheets of clean cloth to dry. It was then stored in flour sacks. Eggplant was cut in slices and dried on large sheets of paper and then strung into necklace-like strands. Dried vegetables or fruits always had to be soaked overnight before they could be cooked.

In July 1911, Mary had another girl baby whom they named Rosa. She was a bright child from the very beginning, a quick learner and was interested in everything around her. This time Sadie did not have another child within the year, but in 1913, she had a girl child whom they named Esther. Mary fell in love with Esther immediately after her birth, and she was to remain a favorite of Mary's (John's wife) all her life. Esther knew she was beloved by her Aunt Mary and returned that love.

In 1914, a bright boy child was born to John and Mary and he was named Mike. He was his father's pride and joy and as he grew up, he was his father's shadow. He was to develop so many of the same traits his father had.

The last child born to John and Mary was born April 1, 1916. Mary was quite sick during her pregnancy and had a hard delivery. She consented quickly when the oldest son, Simon who was 18 at the time wanted to name her Alma. She would long be a favorite of his. *[Alma is the author of this family history.]*

Mary's health grew worse after Alma was born and six weeks after the birth, John took her to Omaha to have her examined. She was having terrible pains in her abdomen. The Drs. could not diagnose what her ailment was and did an exploratory on her but still could not find the cause of all her pain. In later years, we thought she was probably troubled by a spastic colon that was in spasm most of the time. Since Mary was not well enough to take care of her younger children, Aunt Beebe said she would care for them and developed a real attachment to the two younger ones.

It was 1917 and the United States had entered the war in Europe. Mothers were concerned for their sons who had become draft age. One of the first to leave was Nuzha's son, Simon Simon. He eventually ended up in the battle of Chateau Thierry in France and in his later years would become very active in the Veterans of Foreign Wars, serving as adjutant and State Commander. Nuzha had four children by that time, the eldest, George, then Simon, Sam and Rose. Simon had served in the Mexican War. He was stationed in Texas and helped in the battle against Pancho Villa. Later, Casper Gabriel who lived with Gabriel and Sadie and was Sadie's nephew was also called into service and sent overseas too. Then George Gibreal was the next to leave. In Pennsylvania, E.G. Casper who was later to become part of the Moses Shada sons-in-law, also served during World War I and went to France too.

Abraham Shada had passed away in about 1911 *[actually 1914]*. He had worked on the Union Pacific Railroad. The family of Abraham and Mary had grown to include their daughters Sadie and Rebecca, then a son Eli, a daughter Nellie and finally a son John. Sadie was considerably older than the two youngest children and had a family of her own before all of Abraham and Mary's children had been born. Sadie married Nicholas Gibreal, Rebecca married George Yanney, Eli married Mary Hydar, Nellie married John Nimie and although John was married for a while and had a son, his former wife shall remain nameless. *[Further research seems to indicate her name was Vomar.]*

In 1918, the Spanish Influenza struck the country and hit the Kearney community as hard as it hit many other areas. The Rev. Nicholas Yanney was one of the casualties and the one that hit closest to the Shada family was the loss of George, the eldest son of Gabriel and Sadie. He had married Carrie Abood *[her name was actually Katie]* and three children were born to the union; Sadie, Jimmy and Tofy. *[After George's death Katie married William Toomey and the family took on his name.]* Moses and Sadie lost their son, Cecil; Barbara our sister was his godmother.

At this point the writer is going to change tactics
* * * and begin referring to John and Mary as Mama and Papa. * * *

Mama recalled hearing the church bells toll the funeral toll almost every day and they would wonder who it was that had succumbed to the flu. Nick and Rose were both very sick with the flu. One night, Nick was so near death that Papa went outdoors into the snow in his long underwear and knelt to pray that God would spare his son. Mama always felt Nick's subsequent illnesses had their foundation in the flu. Many of the people who survived the flu had heart damage caused by rheumatic fever. One of the most memorable was Sam Simon.

In summer of that year, our brother Simon was called into the service. By the time he had taken his basic training in the SATC in Lincoln, Nebr., the war was nearing its end and the military knew the armistice was near so Simon didn't have to do any more than just basic training. However, he was a lifelong member of the American Legion in subsequent years and held several state offices in the Legion in Nebr. and in Calif.

Mama and Papa had gone into full time farming by that time and had increased the number of livestock on the farm. The older boys were kept busy with farm work and school and with their cousins had developed a social life of their own. Al was always fascinated with cars and finally talked Papa into buying a Model T. How proud they were the first day they drove it to town. Owning a car was a real status symbol. Papa never learned how to drive, the first time he tried it was a disaster and he didn't try again. He was always proud of the fact that his sons were the first in the St. George Church community to wear Oxford shoes. Up to that time, all the boys had worn high tops.

Although Papa gave his best in doing farm work, he never felt he was cut out to be a farmer, he was always interested in business and he began looking around for the opportunity to start a business of his own; one he could finance himself if possible. He still smarted from the experience of the partnership he had had with Nick Gibreal. Gabriel [*Shada*] was more satisfied with farming but wanted a better farm than the one he first bought. He found what he was looking for just a few miles from the old farm closer to the river bottom area where the soil was richer.

The congregation of St. George Orthodox Church could no longer be contained in the small frame church in which it had originated so in 1918, work began on a new church at 15th Ave and G Streets. The men of the parish had decided to do as much of the labor as they could so the basement was begun and all the fathers and sons in the parish took turns digging. They decided to build it big enough to handle more than the present number of persons who were members.

Life on the farm continued to be a routine of work, school, family and family get-togethers. The boys had acquired a large black horse they named Daisy. She was a gentle beast and they could ride her bareback. Almost every Sunday found them taking Daisy out for rides, their cousins (Uncle Gabriel's boys) would be there too.

George was a good student from his first day at Old Stone School, he was proficient in reading, arithmetic, and spelling. In fact in 1918 he won the Buffalo County spelling bee and received as an award a small decorative plate with a picture of the Buffalo County Courthouse on it.

The following year, it was decided that a new priest must be ordained at St. George's church, so they contacted the Archbishop in New York and he sent out the Rev. Hamaty and his family. They were from Massachusetts and Mrs. Hamaty didn't like living in the West so their tenure wasn't very long. At that time, St. George's was the only Orthodox (Syrian) west of the Mississippi.

The Yanneys had an unexpected visitor when Anthony E. Zamer from Johnstown, PA came to find his relatives. He had served in the Army during World War I. His mother was related to the Yanney family. He was a young, good-looking, personable man, and while he was in Kearney he discovered he was also related to the John Shada family on his father's side. His father's family was related to the Sabas which were Mama's family. It was in October 1919 that he came to Kearney and our sister Barbara was almost 18 years old at the time. She was a very lovely, well-mannered girl and he was quite smitten with her. Before he left, he asked Papa if he could correspond with her and Papa agreed. Mama wasn't too happy about it as she told me years later that she was worried that Barbara would marry Anthony and would move too far away. Anthony asked for Barbara's hand and Papa granted him his wish.

Papa was always concerned for his children that each would marry someone among their relatives or at least someone with a Lebanese ancestry. Simon was 23 years old and had not apparently chosen anyone from the Kearney congregation so Papa suggested his going to Michigan and meeting some of the relatives there. Amen decided to go with him and they spent time visiting in the Detroit, Iron Mountain, Iron River and Crystal Falls areas. In Iron Mountain, Michigan they met the Abe Khoury family. Abe Khoury was related to both Mama and Papa but a closer cousin on Mama's side. He ran a Candy Kitchen there and was successful at it. I remember Uncle Abe or "Big Abe" as some used to call him, as a tall, handsome man with a wonderful carriage. He could speak eloquently and I remember in later years when he would visit our home, he would spend an entire evening reviewing a book he had read and everyone was fascinated listening to him.

Abe Khoury had a large family and a couple of daughters of marriageable age. The eldest was Estelle and next eldest was Sophie. They dressed fashionably and looked well-groomed all the time. Simon was smitten with Estelle while Amen thought Sophie was pretty much the cat's meow. The young men came home and reported to Papa and to Uncle Gabriel that they had found the girls they would like to marry. So by telephone and letter arrangements were made for the weddings and on Jan. 25th, 1920, the wedding took place in Michigan. Parents of the bridegrooms were there as was a couple from each family. They planned to live in Nebr. so came there shortly after the weddings.

On May 16th, 1920, our sister Barbara and Anthony Zamer were married at St. George's Orthodox Church. What a lovely bride she was and he was handsome in a Naval officer's uniform. Mama and Papa hosted a large wedding dinner and party for them but there was a sadness in the hearts of most all of the children as they didn't want to see Barbara move so far away. She was such a dear and loving sister, we all knew we would miss her so. She crocheted beautifully and was a good cook like her mother. Several of the young men around Kearney were sorry to see her marry as they had their eye on her too. Rev. Hamaty was the priest at St. George then and he and his family were great friends with our family. We often ate Sunday dinner with them.

It was late in the summer and there had been a big rainstorm when George came in from the field crying and no one knew why. He was sobbing so hard, he couldn't explain what happened, right away. But when he did, he told us he had found their favorite horse, Daisy, lying dead in the field. She had eaten wet alfalfa and died from it. The children had lost a wonderful pet.

Late that summer another incident occurred that remains stamped in all our memories. Papa had been having trouble with young men from town coming out to steal watermelons. They not only stole watermelons to eat, but they wantonly broke a lot of melons in the field. Late one night, the boys had been out and came home and told Papa there were some young men out in the melon patch. Papa was up and dressed quickly and with the boys went down the road where the young thieves had left their car. They started it up and drove it into the back yard. The thieves found their car gone and knew where it was and came to the house begging for it. Papa finally let them have it after putting the fear of God into them. But what a traumatic night that was.

It was in the spring of 1920 that there was a smallpox epidemic in the Buffalo County area. Mike, our brother, had a few pox on the back of his hand but Nick was quite sick with them. We all had to be vaccinated, Dr. Gibbons came out with a hooded cape which the Drs. wore when they went into an infected home and he vaccinated us, telling me it would only feel like a kitty scratching. Later when Nick was recovered, the house had to be fumigated with sulphur to get rid of the germs. We all had to go out and spend the day in the granary and machine shed as we couldn't go into the house for several hours.

It was also about that year the smaller children were playing in the barn. Most always they played house rigging up tables and cupboards and chairs out of old orange crates. They would pick up whatever utensils they found thrown away to use for their kitchen accessories. It was during one of their play periods that Mike and Rose began arguing over something and he threw a rusty spoon at her and as a result she had a small dimple on the side of her face for the rest of her life. It would show when she would smile.

Mama complained to Papa the rats were killing her baby chicks that spring. She would go to the chicken pen and each few days she would find a few dead chicks scattered around. Papa set some rat traps but never caught anything but later Mama discovered

Alma sitting in the chicken yard one morning. As a chick would go by, she would grab for it and if she caught it, she wrung its neck and threw it to one side. She got her bottom tanned with a razor strop that day and never did it again.

One of the joys of Sunday afternoons in summer was making homemade ice cream. The boys would go to the ice house in town and buy a chunk of ice. Meanwhile Mama would make a rich mixture of whole milk, cream, flavorings and whatever else she needed and pour it into the ice cream churn. When the boys got back, the ice was broken in small pieces and layered generously with salt around the ice cream churn. Then the metal top was fitted on and each one of the children would take turns turning the handle until it got too difficult to move. It was allowed to sit and then it was time to open the churn to some of the most delicious ice cream ever made. Often times Mama would have baked one of her delicious "Cold Water Cakes." She always iced them with a pure cream icing that was transparent but oh, so rich. I've never found a recipe for either the cake or the icing but my mouth waters just remembering it.

Estelle, Simon's wife, never liked Nebraska, she thought the weather was harsh and much too warm and she missed her family in Michigan. So in 1921, Simon and Estelle moved back to Michigan where he opened a "Sweet Shop" and began later to make his own bottled soft drinks.

The different Shada families had increased in numbers by this time. Moses and Sadie not only had Albert, George and Mary whom I mentioned before, but also had Barbara, Ruby, Eli and Elizabeth. A few short years later they would have two more sons, Francis Michael "Mike" and Paul. Sam and Selma Shada had Eli, George, Katherine, Sadie, Paul and would later have Mary and Perry. I almost forgot their son, Albert who was next to George in age.

On the Wehbi side of the family, Uncle Charlie and Aunt Yasmeeen had Norma, John, Mary, Rose, Gabe, Lorraine, and later Tony and Eli, while George and Katherine had Simon, Charlie and Eli. John and Helen, also on the Wehbi side had Nick, Norma, Mabel, George, Josephine and later Leo, Tony, Victor and Victoria, John and Maxine.

Papa was growing restless on the farm. He had always liked the town of Lexington as he had traveled through and around that area a lot while he was on the mercantile wagon. He had made friends with a lot of the people and was pretty well known. He was especially fond of the Jacobsen family who lived in the country. He often stayed at their home when he was on the mercantile route and would have dinner with them. They were a rather poor but always generous family with four sons, Frank, John, Kenneth and Roy plus a couple of daughters. They would be having supper when the boys would get into an argument. Since their dinner usually consisted of boiled potatoes and a few other things, one of the boys would urge his brother "Hit him with a potato" and a real battle would ensue with boiled potatoes flying back and forth across the table. In later years, this friendship with the Jacobsens would prove a real boon to our family.

It was while Papa and Mama were attending a funeral in Lexington in 1921 that Papa noticed the number of floral pieces at the services. He made inquiries as to where the flowers came from and was told they came from Kearney and North Platte. He went back to Kearney to his banker and talked with him about the possibility of opening a greenhouse and flower shop in Lexington. His banker thought it was a good opportunity and suggested he look further into.

Papa found a piece of property in Lexington located just four blocks from the Main Street, it was on the corner of Third and Pacific. It was owned by Alec Schetrompf, an old widower who was willing to sell it. The property was an odd-shaped piece of ground as the south edge of it was bounded by Pacific Avenue which was the same as U.S. Highway 30, and it cut diagonally, parallel to the Union Pacific Railroad which was a half block on the other side of the highway. The property was two blocks long at the east side and about one and a half blocks long on the west side. It had a deeded vacated street that made the land all one piece. There were quite a few outbuildings at the north edge of the south block and the two story house sat on the southeast corner of the block. The back block was all vacant. The west half of the front block was also vacant except for a tool shed. The younger children would later spend hours playing in the old tool shed. Old Alec had left dozens and dozens of empty tobacco cans in it. What a perfect place to play store. There had once been a flour mill on the back block but it had burned down and for years we dug up and carried out old stone pieces that had been embedded in the soil after the fire. Alec had also hauled a lot of cinders into the side yard and we were to spend many hours picking up old nails and glass out of the cinders to prevent tires from going flat.

Papa was able to make a deal on the property following his banker's advice to accept a letter of introduction to A.E. Grantham, president of the Farmer's State Bank in Lexington. Mr. Grantham granted him a loan on the property in the name of John Shada and his son-in-law Anthony Zamer. Earlier in the year Barbara and Anthony had moved back to Nebr. from Pennsylvania and they were expecting their first child.

While Mama liked the idea of having Papa at home all the time, she hated having to leave her home on the farm. The last seven of her children had been born there, and she liked being close to the church and to all their relatives. Papa promised her that they would attend church every Sunday and spend the rest of the day in Kearney, even though it meant a forty mile drive (one way) and the weather could be bad.

So it was with mixed emotions that Mama agreed to the move, and early Sept. was set for the moving. Her heart sank when she arrived in Lexington and she saw the house that was to become home. Alec Schetrompf had lived in the house many years, most of them as a widower. He smoked a pipe and Prince Albert tobacco cans were nailed to the door jambs of each room and the walls were streaked where he had struck matches on them. There were nails all over the walls and it was just generally dirty and ill-kept. Mama and the girls spent hours washing walls and windows and scrubbing floors, while the men made a project of removing nails and tobacco cans from the walls.

The house had been built in three sections, first the two front rooms, one a bedroom and the other a small living room. Above them were two bedrooms with a small closet in each. Secondly he built on a large dining room with a large bedroom over it. But when he did he dropped the floor level of both the upstairs and downstairs by about 8 inches. Lastly, he built on the kitchen and the room above it. The bedrooms above the dining room and kitchen had dropped ceilings in them. In fact, the room above the kitchen had only one north window in it and was hotter than Hades in the summer and colder than a witch's broom in winter. It became known as the "north room" and was used only for storage.

There was no electricity in the house but Papa soon had the first floor wired for lights but the upstairs was still lighted by kerosene lamps. It had outdoor privies but the family was used to that from the farm. Water had to be brought in from the pump north of the house and a slop bucket was used to gather waste water. George used to say "Why is the water bucket always empty and the slop bucket always full?" Bringing in water and carrying out slop was no one's favorite chore.

Because the outbuildings were secure and the property located at what was then the edge of town, Papa and Mama decided to bring some of the animals and chickens with them. A few pigs, some chickens, a cow named Colton and a team of horses named Dan and Bird were all of the livestock. The barn was a two story building so hay was stored in the loft and the cow was kept on one side and the horses on the other. Mama wasn't fond of the smell of pigs and in a couple of years they decided pigs weren't necessary. But she always preferred to raise and kill her own chickens and the eggs were a mainstay in the kitchen. It was part of the "chores" of the younger children to swish the flies off the cow while one of the older ones milked her. Sunflower plants were pulled to be used as swishers and it was important to keep the flies off or the cow might kick her foot to ward off flies and instead spill the milk bucket. Mama made delicious cheese, butter and yogurt from the fresh milk. Almost every Sunday, she would have fried or baked chicken from one selected from her flock. Even in later years she preferred going to the poultry dealer to pick out her own live chicken and she would never eat one that had had its neck wrung.

After much painting and papering the house began to be livable. Most of the family's time was spent in the large dining room as it had plenty of space. The living was a dark, rather dreary room even after the wallpaper with big cabbage roses on it had been papered over with a lighter more attractive paper.

Papa was true to his word, almost every Sunday found the family in church on Sunday mornings and the day was spent visiting with relatives. The only time, the trip wasn't made was when the weather was so terribly bad it was unsafe to be on the roads. Cold didn't matter, it just meant bundling up with more blankets and putting hot bricks on the floor boards to keep warm.

On the staircase that led from the living room to the upstairs, about midway in its length was an overhead shelf where photographs and seldom used items were stored.

It was a blizzard day's thrill to get to go through those items although it had to be one of the older children who could reach up that high, the smaller ones were too short.

Another favorite pastime for the children came right after the dinner dishes were done in the evening. The dining room was heated by a coal burning heating stove and we all gathered round it to keep warmer. Mama would bring out the bag of material scraps and the younger children would sew strips together. Later Mama would braid the strips together and sew throw rugs for the bedrooms. While we were sitting and sewing she would tell us stories of "The Three Magic Walnuts" or other similar tales. Sometimes it would take two or three evenings to finish the story. So we were always anxious to get to our sewing on those nights.

Other nights, Papa would bring home 100-lb. bags of dried beans and we'd all gather around the kitchen table to sort the bad beans and other trash out of them. He would then sell them at wholesale.

Construction of the greenhouse started soon after moving to Lexington. George Wheeler who was the stone mason brought his cement block making machine to the property and he constructed not only the base for the greenhouse but used faced cement blocks to construct the flower shop and poured the cement for the basement beneath it. When the flower shop was built, it included a restroom which opened both to the shop and also had an outside door. It was a distinct improvement over the outdoor privy and we thought nothing of running to the restroom at any hour of the day or night. After all, it even had electric lights in it.

The kitchen in our house was a pleasant place because there was almost always the smell of good food in it. Mama and Aunt Beebe were both good cooks although Mama did most of the cooking and Aunt Beebe helped in preparing vegetables or just keeping the dishes washed up. Sometimes we used the same pan four times while getting dinner because as soon as we finished preparing something in it, Aunt Beebe would wash it and have it ready for its next use. The kitchen was a big room and could have accommodated a breakfast table, but we always ate in the dining room and the table was always covered with a white damask cloth. Usually there were three large damask cloths in every week's wash.

Upstairs, opening of the small hallway at the top of the stairs were three bedrooms. The two to the left were known as the boys' rooms and the large one on the right was for Aunt Beebe and we three girls. The large bedroom was heated by a register that was over the dining room stove, but the other bedrooms had no direct heat in them. For several years, no one knew that Mike and Alma were eager to go to bed early on Christmas Eve because they could peer through the register and watch the gifts being wrapped.

One had to walk through the big bedroom to get to the north room but it was a very interesting room. Along the east wall were metal barrels, quite large ones. Each fall one was filled with sugar, one with rice, one with fine burgul. Besides there were smaller

containers of lentils, cases of Pet milk [*canned evaporated milk*], rows of leis of dried okra, green beans and eggplant, and bags of dried corn.

Along the west wall of the north room was Mama's steamer trunk and what delights it held. Her wedding dress, a lovely satin and velvet quilt, linens and laces and many keepsake items. Next to that was a small trunk which Papa had carried in his mercantile wagon. It had an unusual arrangement of drawers which held buttons, snaps, hooks and eyes, needles, thimbles, fancy dress combs and other small trinkets. Aunt Beebe's trunk with its rounded top stood next to it and was filled with sheets, pillowcases and other linens. A reserve supply of quilts and blankets were stored there too. On top of a small old-fashioned cupboard in the other corner were books, embroidery baskets and small items that need to be stored.

Just behind the house was a little building which we called "the shanty." It was used for storage when we first moved there but later became the laundry area. When natural gas came to Lexington and the coal stove became obsolete, it was moved into the shanty. It had been enlarged to include the pump. Laundry tubs, washer and stands were all included inside it.

Just behind the shanty, Papa built a windmill to help supply water for the house and greenhouse, it wasn't used very many months. But in winter, Papa would send to Minnesota for frozen fish and it would be stored in the windmill shed. Even though Lexington always had trouble with water in basements, Alec Schetrompf had constructed the cellar so it remained dry. Mary's canning was placed on shelves on the north and east sides and below them were bins for potatoes, carrots, cabbage, onions, beets and turnips. On a small four shelved cabinet on the west side of the cellar, choke-cherry, wild plum, wild grape jellies and watermelon and fig preserves were stored. Next to the cupboard was a barrel of apples, then came crocks of cucumber pickles, stuffed peppers filled with cabbage relish, pickled eggplant and sometimes crocks of salt in which eggs were stored. In the corner were two five gallon cans of Mazola oil.

If there was danger from a tornado, the family quickly ran to the cellar. Papa would stand at the open door watching the storm. As it drew near, he would pull the cellar door closed. Papa would then light the kerosene lamp that was kept there and usually wait 20 minutes to half an hour before going out to see if the storm had passed. Fortunately we never suffered damage from a tornado although a railroad house a half mile east was partially destroyed one summer by tornado.

The five youngest children all started school in Lexington in the fall of 1921. George was in 9th grade in high school, while Lillian attended junior high at the West Ward School. The East Ward School was only four blocks from home for the three youngest children.

Work progressed nicely on the greenhouse and flower shop and by early spring in 1922, planting had begun inside it and a grand opening was held after it was stocked.

The view from the top of the steps leading from the shop to the greenhouse provided an overview that delighted the customers.

Nick had decided to farm the home place in Kearney so the spring of 1922 was a busy time for him on the farm. He however was not a very good farmer and that arrangement only lasted for two seasons. He was helped at times by Charlie and Big Mary. Nick often teased Mary about the time they came in from the fields and walked into the kitchen in their stocking feet only to have them stick to the floor. Mary had baked a cherry pie that day and to say it was a bit runny when she carried it from the stove to the table was putting it mildly. Mary had not had any training in food preparation as her father was rather penurious and was afraid she would waste food. So she had married without much training and being quite young she had a lot to learn.

In 1923, Barbara and Anthony rented the farm and lived there about two years. Anthony always loved growing things but didn't really have the background for it, so it was difficult for them.

Along with the greenhouse, Papa always had the dream of having a fruit and vegetable wholesale. In view of this, in 1922 he rented four acres of unimproved land from Alfred Grantham and planted truck garden produce. An irrigation ditch ran along the north side of the property which made it ideal. Two years later, he decided to rent instead the property across the road from it, known as Abel's Corner. It was the four youngest children that were his companions in working in the garden, also his sister Aunt Beebe. The kids decided the worst possible job on the farm was weeding onions on their hands and knees. In the late afternoons, it was time to irrigate the garden and pick the produce. When Alma was little she used to run along the rows that had been irrigated and pick up the crawdads that had come down with the water. Papa loved them after Mama would drop them in boiling water, they were (and still are) a real delicacy. (In the South, they are called crayfish.) The sound of the turtledoves could be heard in the evening and except for the mosquitoes, everything was peaceful and quiet.

It soon became evident the greenhouse could not support two families so Anthony sold out his interest to Papa. Papa continued to deal in fresh fruits and vegetables and very soon developed a route which took him to the towns west and south of Lexington. Al usually drove the truck for him though sometimes George would drive. In 1924, Papa rented a small acreage from Mr. Shepherd, then later a different acreage from Mr. Browne southwest of town in the area where the soil was sandier. He knew it was the proper medium for growing good melons. It was about that time, that he bought a little truck that must have been ancient even at that time. It had solid rather than inflated tires and the top of the cab extended back over the body in a porch-like effect. This was the car Mike first learned to drive and he couldn't have been more than 10 or 11 when Papa would say, "let's go out to the melon farm" and off they would go. Late in that year Papa rented a store space just off main street and most of the time, Lillian and one of the younger children would tend the store while Papa and one of the

boys would be out on the route selling. Al many times wasn't feeling well as he had a lot of stomach problems. It was in the early twenties he underwent his first surgery for an ulcer.

Papa and Mama missed Simon a lot after he moved to Michigan and Mama was lonely for him. Aunt Sadie and Uncle Gabriel were lonely for Amen too, so in the fall of 1923, Papa and Uncle Gabriel each bought a new Model T Ford. With Al and Casper as drivers, they planned a trip east. Aunt Beebe and Aunt Sadie's sister, Mirianna *[seems to have been typed over to look like Marianna]* went along too. It was quite an extensive trip. They started out for Michigan and visited in the Detroit area before going on to Iron Mountain where they spent several days with Simon and Amen and their wives. They also visited relatives in Ironwood and Crystal Falls, they had relatives everywhere they went. From Michigan they stopped in Youngstown, Ohio then on to Pennsylvania and finally to New York City. Mike and Alma stayed with Barbara and Anthony and attended the Old Stone School for the 7 weeks they were away.

Early in 1924, Barbara and Anthony decided to move back to Johnstown, Pa. and Al helped them with the driving. That was also the year that George graduated from high school. How proud Mama and Papa were that their son was a high school graduate. Papa had always been a devout believer in education. George also lettered in football.

On December 15th, *[1925? Added by hand, not readable]* Barbara and Anthony had their second child, a beautiful little girl whom they named Bette. She was a bright and darling baby with big blue eyes and a healthy head of dark brown hair.

The greenhouse business was booming so Papa decided he needed additional space for growing. Vegetable plants were especially popular so he reasoned he could get along with a structure that would be operated only part of the year. The new greenhouse was built at right angles to the first house and was a different type of structure. The north wall was made of cement blocks and was about 15 ft. high. The glass roof extended from that wall to the south wall which was glass and about 4 1/2 ft. tall. All along the south side of the new greenhouse and the east side of the main house, Papa built hotbeds in which vegetable plants were also grown.

Papa had a real insight for the kind of businesses that could succeed and in 1925 he began construction on a business building on West 5th St. One half of it was to house the wholesale fruit and vegetable business and the other half was constructed to house a commercial laundry which Barbara and Anthony wanted to begin. They had returned from Pennsylvania. It was one of the finest laundries west of Omaha with huge boilers and mangles and the latest of equipment.

While all of the businesses were being started and worked on, family life was still occupying a most important part of our lives. Uncle Gabriel's family and ours were as close as ever. And it seemed very often after church we would be at Uncle Moses' house for Sunday dinner. Aunt Sadie would cook the most marvelous cabbage rolls and kibbee. I still remember coming into the house on a cold winter day and seeing her

open the door of the coal heater and send a splash of kerosene into it. It would backfire with a loud noise but soon a pleasant warmth would invade the room. Later in the day, we would visit at Uncle Abe's house or at Rebecca and George Yanney's or we'd stop to see Sam and Selma and their family.

In 1926, Casper married Margaret Hydar from St. Louis. It was her father who had courted Mama when she was young. *[Earlier in the story we saw a note that a boy named Abe Hydar courted Mary Saba back in the village of Fih. Margaret's father's name was Anthony. We do not know for certain where Anthony was born. The Hydar family came from St. Louis. Anthony Hydar was a very learned man, and was said to speak seven languages.]*

A big year for marriages in our family was 1926 when Nick and Daisy Gasson were married in O'Neill, Neb. on June 6th. Late in 1925, Nick and Al had taken a tour of Nebr. and South Dakota and had met a number of young Lebanese gals and Nick had fallen in love with Daisy. They had a big wedding in O'Neill with quite a caravan of friends and relatives going from Kearney. There was a huge reception to follow at Uncle Gabriel and Aunt Sadie's house on Tuesday. It was overshadowed by the news that Al had eloped with Ann Shaheen following Nick's wedding. Charlie had driven them to Smith Center, Kansas, where they were married in a civil ceremony, and on the 8th they were married at Uncle Gabriel's in a church ceremony. Ann's family were quite upset over the elopement but in a few months it all simmered down.

[Casper and Margaret actually married after the couples named above, and they eloped to Smith Center as well. Margaret's father Anthony Hydar died 13 August 1926, only 9 days after her elopement with Casper. Her father insisted that Margaret was "not really married" because they had eloped. This bothered Margaret so much over the ensuing weeks after his death, that she and Casper were remarried in St. George Orthodox Church in Kearney on 13 September 1926.]

Late that summer, Mrs. Abe Khoury and her mother whom everyone called Grandma, and her daughter Ann and son Albert came to visit in Kearney and Lexington. There were dinners and evenings galore celebrated while they were there.

At St. George's Church, Rev. Hamaty had left after a few years and the congregation was again looking for a priest. They decided they would rather have someone they knew, so they elected Michael Yanney, nephew of the late Rev. Nicholas Yanney, and they sent him to New York to study for the priesthood. Upon his return, he was accompanied by the Archbishop from New York who ordained and installed him as rector of St. George's Church. The membership had increased and there were many young people in the congregation. One of their favorite activities was having an annual box social. Each of the young ladies would spend hours decorating a fair sized box with elaborate trim and fill it with a delicious dinner. They were careful not to let any of the young men see which box was theirs (a few cheated). The boxes were then individually auctioned off with Charlie usually being the auctioneer. Word would get out that a certain box belonged to one of the favorite young ladies and the bidding

would become pretty heated. Sometimes there would be an invitation to step outside to settle it but usually it simmered down quickly.

There was almost always a summer picnic for the young people especially a few years later when the Jr. League was organized. There was softball and running games, Too Late for Supper, Pum-Pum-Pullaway and many other games. Lots of fried chicken, salads and always 5 gallons of ice cream. The day usually ended with the group sitting around a big bonfire and singing. Membership in the Jr. League was for those 16 and over to the age of 45, so it included most of the "young people"

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[Here the typewritten, photocopied narrative ends, on the page labeled 26. Pages were lost, which we are still seeking to replace. We don't know how much longer the narrative continues. Alma's father John was tragically murdered in August of 1927 by town ruffians in Kearney spoiling for a fight with some young Lebanese men gathered for a baptismal celebration at Gabriel Shada's farm. There are 18 newspaper articles in the Kearney Hub, dating from Monday, August 29, 1927, until December 19, 1927. Alma may or may not have wanted to include these devastating events in her story.]